



# Land South of Reeds Lane, Sayers Common

## Landscape and Visual Appraisal

On behalf of **Berkeley Latimer Estates Limited**

## Document Control Sheet

**Project Name:** Land South of Reeds Lane, Sayers Common  
**Project Ref:** 34850  
**Report Title:** Landscape and Visual Appraisal  
**Doc Ref:** 34850/A5/LVA  
**Date:** October 2023

	Name	Position	Date
<b>Prepared by:</b>	Roshni Nicholls and Fiona Sharman	Landscape Planner and Landscape Associate	September 2023
<b>Reviewed by:</b>	Lisa Toyne	Landscape Associate Director	September 2023
<b>Approved by:</b>	Matthew Chard	Landscape Director	June 2023
<b>For and on behalf of Stantec UK Limited</b>			

Revision	Date	Description	Prepared	Reviewed	Approved
Final	26/09/2023	Final	LT	LT	MDC
Update	28/06/2024	Draft Update	LT	LT	MDC
Final Update	29/07/2024	Final Update for Issue	LT	LT	MDC
Final	03/10/2024	Final	LT	LT	MDC
Final 2025	12/02/2025	Final	LT	LT	MDC

This report has been prepared by Stantec UK Limited ('Stantec') on behalf of its client to whom this report is addressed ('Client') in connection with the project described in this report and takes into account the Client's particular instructions and requirements. This report was prepared in accordance with the professional services appointment under which Stantec was appointed by its Client. This report is not intended for and should not be relied on by any third party (i.e. parties other than the Client). Stantec accepts no duty or responsibility (including in negligence) to any party other than the Client and disclaims all liability of any nature whatsoever to any such party in respect of this report.

**Contents**

- 1 Introduction..... 1**
- 2 Methodology ..... 5**
  - 2.1 Landscape and Visual Appraisal Methodology ..... 5
- 3 Relevant Policy ..... 7**
  - 3.1 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), 2023 ..... 7
  - 3.2 National Planning Practice Guidance, 2021..... 11
  - 3.3 National Design Guide, 2021 ..... 11
  - 3.4 Local Policy ..... 12
  - 3.5 South Downs National Park ..... 29
  - 3.6 Summary of Key Policy Considerations ..... 34
- 4 Landscape and Visual Context ..... 39**
  - 4.1 Site Context: DPSC3 ..... 39
  - 4.2 Topography ..... 39
  - 4.3 Water courses and drainage ..... 39
  - 4.4 Landcover ..... 39
  - 4.5 Access and Public Rights of Way (PRoW)..... 40
  - 4.6 Designations ..... 40
  - 4.7 Landscape Character ..... 40
  - 4.8 Landscape Capacity (Susceptibility) ..... 42
- 5 Landscape and Visual Appraisal ..... 45**
  - 5.1 Overview..... 45
  - 5.2 Landscape Appraisal ..... 45
  - 5.3 Visual Appraisal..... 48
  - 5.4 Value, Susceptibility (Capacity) and Sensitivity ..... 51
- 6 Landscape and Visual Opportunities and Constraints and Landscape and Visual Strategies53**
- 7 Consideration of the Special Qualities of the SDNP for Proposed Allocation DPSC3 ... 58**
  - 7.1 Proposed Development on Proposed Allocation DPSC3..... 58
  - 7.2 Conclusion ..... 63
- 8 Landscape and Visual Considerations for Potential Combined Development on Proposed Allocations DPSC3, DPSC4, DPSC5, DPSC6 and DPSC7 at Sayers Common ..... 64**
  - 8.1 Potential Combined Development on Proposed Allocations at Sayers Common ..... 64
  - 8.3 Consideration of the Special Qualities of the SDNP ..... 65
  - 8.4 Conclusion ..... 70
- 9 Summary and Conclusion ..... 71**
  - 9.1 Landscape and Visual Context..... 71
  - 9.2 Landscape and Visual Strategies..... 74
  - 9.3 Conclusion ..... 76

## Figures

Figure 1: Site Context Plan

Figure 2: South Downs National Park Tranquillity Map Extract Plan

Figure 3: Topography Plan

Figure 4: Landscape Character Plan

Figure 5: Local Landscape Character Plan

Figure 6: Site Appraisal Plan

Figure 7: Visual Appraisal Plan

Figure 8: Landscape Opportunities and Constraints

## Appendices

Appendix A

Site Appraisal Photographs: A - Y and A(i) – B(i)

Site Context Photographs: 1 - 23

Site Context Night-time Photograph 22

### Appendix B

Figure 9: Site Context Plan for Combined Proposed Allocations

Figure 10: Site Appraisal Plan for Combined Proposed Allocations

Site Appraisal Photograph for DPSC4

Site Appraisal Photographs for DPSC5

Site Appraisal Photographs for DPSC6

Site Appraisal Photographs for DPSC7

### Appendix C

Framework Masterplan Document: Land South of Reeds Lane, October 2023

### Appendix D

Framework Masterplan Document: Sayers Common Sustainable Community, Mid Sussex, July 2024

This page is intentionally blank

# 1 Introduction

- 1.1.1 Stantec have been commissioned by Berkeley Latimer Estates Limited to undertake a Landscape and Visual Appraisal of the Land South of Reeds Lane, Sayers Common, Mid-Sussex, (the 'Site'), in relation to, and in support of, its suitability for housing and supporting development in the context of the preparation of the emerging Mid Sussex District Local Plan. The Site is a proposed allocation for a sustainable community at Sayers Common in the emerging Mid Sussex District Local Plan, Regulation 19 Consultation Draft, as set out in draft Policy DPSC3: Land South of Reeds Lane, Sayers Common.
- 1.1.2 The Site is located to the immediate west of, and adjoins the south-western edge of, Sayers Common. The Site is formed of two parcels of land: a larger parcel in the east, and a smaller parcel in the west. The eastern parcel immediately adjoins the south-western edge of Sayers Common; and the London Road/B2118 in the east, Reed's Lane to the north, and Henfield Road/B2116 to the south. The western parcel abuts Henfield Road in the north, an unnamed lane in the east, Priestfield Farm in the south, and Truslers Hill Lane in the west. The Site therefore forms a direct connection with Sayers Common to its north-east, as illustrated on **Figure 1: Site Context Plan**.
- 1.1.3 Albourne, Albourne Green, and some scattered properties and farmhouses are located south of the Site.
- 1.1.4 Existing substantial office, commercial and industrial development is located to the north of Reed's Lane.
- 1.1.5 The Site is located some 1.9 km from the northern boundary of the South Downs National Park (SDNP), at its closest point.
- 1.1.6 The Site is located some 4.25 km from the southern boundary of the High Weald AONB. However, due to the combination of intervening landform and existing vegetation and built form, there is no intervisibility between the High Weald AONB and the Site, and therefore no potential effect on the setting of the High Weald AONB.
- 1.1.7 The Site, DPSC3: Land South of Reeds Lane, Sayers Common, is one of five proposed allocations at Sayers Common. The four other draft proposed sustainable communities allocations are:
- DPSC4: Land at Chesapeake and Meadow View, Reeds Lane;
  - DPSC5: Land at Coombe Farm, London Road;
  - DPSC6: Land to West of Kings Business Centre, Reeds Lane; and
  - DPSC7: Land South of LVS Hassocks, London Road.
- 1.1.8 The locations of DPSC 4, DPSC5, DPSC6 and DPSC7 are illustrated on Figure 9: Site Context Plan for Plan for Combined Proposed Allocations, in Appendix B.
- 1.1.9 The objectives of this study are to:
- Assess the landscape characteristics and quality of the Site and its surrounding and their function within the landscape;
  - Assess the visibility of the Site and the nature and quality of the existing views from the surrounding area;

- Identify opportunities and constraints to development on the Site, from a landscape and visual perspective.

1.1.10 Supporting illustrative information is presented in the following plans and photographs:

- **Figure 1: Site Context Plan;**
- **Figure 2: South Downs National Park Tranquillity Map Extract Plan**
- **Figure 3: Topography Plan;**
- **Figure 4: Landscape Character Plan;**
- **Figure 5: Local Landscape Character Plan;**
- **Figure 6: Site Appraisal Plan;**
- **Figure 7: Visual Appraisal Plan;**
- **Figure 8: Landscape and Visual Opportunities and Constraints Plan**
  
- **Site Appraisal Photographs A – Y and A(i) – B(i) in Appendix A**
- **Site Context Photographs 1 – 23 in Appendix A**
  
- **Figure 9: Site Context Plan for Combined Proposed Allocations**
- **Figure 10: Site Appraisal Plan for Combined Proposed Allocations**
- **Site Appraisal Photographs for DPSC4 in Appendix B**
- **Site Appraisal Photographs for DPSC5 in Appendix B**
- **Site Appraisal Photographs for DPSC6 in Appendix B**
- **Site Appraisal Photographs for DPSC7 in Appendix B**
  
- **Framework Masterplan Document: Land South of Reeds Lane, October 2023 in Appendix C**
- **Framework Masterplan Document: Sayers Common Sustainable Community, Mid Sussex, July 2024 in Appendix D**

1.1.11 The landscape and visual appraisal of the Site has been prepared to demonstrate that the Site, DPSC3, is suitable to accommodate housing and associated development and that the potential landscape and visual effects arising from development on the Site, DPSC3, would be limited to the immediate locality of the Site, with no significant effect on the wider landscape and visual context, including the special qualities and setting of the South Downs National Park (SDNP).

1.1.12 The landscape and visual appraisal provides support for the proposed sustainable communities allocation of the Site, DPSC3, and sets out how the landscape-led approach to proposals for

the Site, DPSC3, respond to the location of Sayers Common to the north of the SDNP and to the landscape and visual considerations for the SDNP. These include considering:

- The Special Qualities of the SDNP, including Key Views from the SDNP towards Sayers Common
- Policies for the protection and enhancement of the SDNP
- Policies guiding development within the setting of the SDNP

1.1.13 The landscape and visual considerations have been drawn from an evidence base including the following:

- SDNP Partnership Management Plan (2020 – 2025)
- South Downs Local Plan 2014 – 2033 (Adopted 2019)
- SDNP: View Characterisation and Analysis Report (2015)
- SDNPA Tranquillity Study (2017)
- Mid Sussex District Plan 2014 – 2031(Adopted 2018)
- Mid Sussex Draft District Plan 2021 – 2039 (Regulation 18 Consultation Draft)
- Mid Sussex Draft District Plan 2021 – 2039 (Regulation 19 Consultation Draft)
- Setting of South Downs National Park, Assessment of SHELAA Sites (October 2022)
- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2023

1.1.14 The SDNP and its Special Qualities, in acknowledgement of National Parks being afforded the highest status of protection regarding conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty, have been considered from the outset in informing landscape-led proposals for the Site, DPSC3, as set out in the MSDC Reg 19 Consultation Draft Plan, and as illustrated on the Indicative Plan for the Site, DPSC3, on Page 171 of the MSDC Reg 19 Consultation Draft Plan. This is supported by the Development Concept and Framework Masterplan included within the Framework Masterplan Document: Land South of Reeds Lane, prepared by Berkeley Latimer, included within Appendix C.

1.1.15 A Framework Masterplan Document for all five proposed allocations at Sayers Common, the Framework Masterplan Document: Sayers Common Sustainable Community, has been prepared on behalf of the joint promoters, and is included within Appendix D, and also illustrates the landscape-led proposals for DPSC3, DPSC4, DPSC5, DPSC6 and DPSC7, as set out in the Framework Masterplan Document: Land South of Reeds Lane.

1.1.16 The potential effect on the Special Qualities and landscape and scenic beauty of the SDNP has been considered regarding the Site, DPSC3 and, in addition, the potential combined effect of the proposed allocated sites of DPSC4, DPSC5, DPSC6 and DPSC7, at Sayers Common, to demonstrate how development could come forward at Sayers Common, again responding to the landscape and visual considerations for the SDNP, its Special Qualities and its setting.

1.1.17 Through the consultation process for the emerging MSDC Local Plan, in particular the MSDC Regulation 19 Consultation Draft Plan, the South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) have raised issues regarding the draft allocation of DPSC3: Land South of Reeds, Sayers Common; in particular concerning the potential effect on the special qualities of the SDNP, and setting of the SDNP, both in terms of the landscape character, and views from SDNP looking north across the Low Weald landscape. The view from Wolstonbury Hill has been identified by the SDNPA as a location from which there will be views of DPSC3. The daytime and night-time views from

Wolstonbury Hill are illustrated by **Site Context Photograph 22** and **Site Context Night-time Photograph 22**, respectively, included within **Appendix A**, the locations of which are shown on **Figure 7: Visual Appraisal Plan**.

## 2 Methodology

### 2.1 Landscape and Visual Appraisal Methodology

- 2.1.1 The Landscape and Visual Appraisal has been prepared with reference to the guidelines as set out in the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment 3rd Edition, prepared by the Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment.
- 2.1.2 A desktop review of the study area was undertaken, including a review of the published landscape character information, landform, landscape features, relevant landscape and visual policy and landscape designations. This information was used as the initial basis against which to appraise the Site, DPSC3. Visits to the Site, DPSC3, and surrounding areas were subsequently undertaken in November 2019, April 2023, April 2024 and May 2024, to verify the desk-based review findings and add further information to the landscape and visual context of the Site, DPSC3. A site visit was also undertaken to the proposed allocations of DPSC4, DPSC5, DPSC6 and DPSC7 in May 2024.
- 2.1.3 A description of the existing land use of the landscape and visual context is provided and includes reference to existing areas of settlement, transport routes and vegetation cover, as well as local landscape designations. These factors combine to provide an understanding of landscape value and sensitivity and provide an indication of key views and viewpoints that are available to visual receptors.
- 2.1.4 To determine the extent of visual influence, a visual appraisal was undertaken of the Site, DPSC3, to consider the nature of existing views from publicly accessible viewpoints including roads, Public Right(s) of Way (PRoW) and public open spaces. Consideration was given to private views, however access to private properties was not obtained. Views were considered from all directions and from a range of distances. The Site Context Photographs chosen are not intended to be exhaustive, but rather to represent the potential views obtained towards the Site, DPSC3. In addition, the combined visual influence of the Site, DPSC3, and the proposed allocations of DPSC4, DPSC5, DPSC6 and DPSC7 has also been appraised.
- 2.1.5 The inherent sensitivity of the Site, DPSC3, is considered in terms of the following:
- **Landscape Character:** i.e., landform, vegetation cover, land use, scale, state of repair of individual elements, representation of typological character, enclosure pattern, form/line and movement;
  - **Landscape Sensitivity:** The sensitivity of the landscape is a combination of the **value** of the landscape and the **susceptibility** (in other words 'vulnerability') of the landscape to the type of change proposed, using professional judgement.
  - **Landscape Value:** landscape value is a consideration of the following criteria:
    - Natural and Cultural Heritage
    - Landscape quality (condition): the measure of the physical state of the landscape. It may include the extent to which typical landscape character is represented in individual areas, the intactness of the landscape and the condition of individual elements.
    - Scenic quality: the extent that the landscape receptor appeals to the visual senses;
    - Perceptual aspects: the extent that the landscape receptor is recognised for its perceptual qualities (e.g. remoteness or tranquillity);
    - Rarity: the presence of unusual elements or features;
    - Representativeness: the presence of particularly characteristic features;
    - Recreation: the extent that recreational activities contribute to the landscape receptor;
    - Associations: the extent that cultural or historical associations contribute to the landscape receptor;

- Distinctiveness; and
  - Functionality.
- **Landscape Susceptibility:** i.e. the measure of vulnerability of the landscape to the type of development proposed, without undue consequences for the maintenance of the baseline situation. Landscape character/features of low susceptibility would have a high capacity to accommodate change, and landscape character/features of high susceptibility would have a low capacity to accommodate change. The following criteria are taken into consideration in the assessment of the susceptibility of landscape character, although not all criteria are equally applicable or important within a given landscape / type of development proposed:
- Landform;
  - Pattern/Complexity;
  - Composition;
  - Landcover;
  - Relationship of a given landscape area or feature to the surrounding context and/or to existing settlements or developments; and
  - Potential for appropriate mitigation within the context of existing character and guidelines.
- **Visual Influence:** i.e., landform influences, tree and woodland cover, numbers and types of residents, numbers and types of visitors and scope for mitigating potential for visual impacts
- 2.1.6 The landscape appraisal of the Site, DPSC3, in combination with the wider visual appraisal, assists in the identification of landscape and visual opportunities and constraints that would assist in successfully integrating predominantly residential development within the existing landscape and visual context of the Site, DPSC3. These landscape and visual opportunities and constraints are also relevant to accommodating predominantly residential development on the proposed allocations of DPSC4, DPSC5, DPSC6 and DPSC7.

## 3 Relevant Policy

### 3.1 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), 2023<sup>1</sup>

- 3.1.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) outlines, at Paragraph 7, that ***“the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development including the provision of homes, commercial development, and supporting infrastructure in a sustainable manner”, which is defined as “meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”.***
- 3.1.2 “The NPPF, at paragraph 8, states that the planning system has three overarching objectives: economic, social and environmental. The environmental objective is described as follows: ***“to protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, improving biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.”***
- 3.1.3 Paragraph 9 of the NPPF also notes that the objectives should be delivered through the planning process but recognises that planning policies and decisions should ***“take local circumstances into account, to reflect the character, needs and opportunities of each area”.***
- 3.1.4 Paragraph 11 notes that “plans and decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development”, stating that:

*“For plan-making this means that:*

- a. all plans should promote a sustainable pattern of development that seeks to: meet the development needs of their area; align growth and infrastructure; improve the environment; mitigate climate change (including by making effective use of land in urban areas) and adapt to its effects;*
- b. strategic policies should, as a minimum, provide for objectively assessed needs for housing and other uses, as well as any needs that cannot be met within neighbouring areas, unless:*
  - i. the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a strong reason for restricting the overall scale, type or distribution of development in the plan area; or*
  - ii. any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole.”*

- 3.1.5 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) therefore promotes a presumption in favour of sustainable development, with policies identifying restrictions with regard to designated areas, such as National Parks, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and Green Belt.

- 3.1.6 Paragraph 39 relates to decision making and states:

*“Local planning authorities should approach decisions on proposed development in a positive and creative way. They should use the full range of planning tools available, including brownfield registers and permission in principle, and work proactively with applicants to secure developments that will improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area. Decision-makers at*

---

<sup>1</sup> Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. National Planning Policy Framework, 2023. Accessed April 2024. Available at: National Planning Policy Framework - Guidance - GOV.UK ([www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk))

*every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible.”*

3.1.7 Section 11 is concerned with making effective use of land, with Paragraph 124 stating:

*“Planning policies and decisions should promote an effective use of land in meeting the need for homes and other uses, while safeguarding and improving the environment and ensuring safe and healthy living conditions...”*

3.1.8 Paragraph 125 states that planning policies and decisions should:

- a. *“encourage multiple benefits from both urban and rural land, including through mixed use schemes and taking opportunities to achieve net environmental gains – such as developments that would enable new habitat creation or improve public access to the countryside;*
- b. *recognise that some undeveloped land can perform many functions, such as for wildlife, recreation, flood risk mitigation, cooling/shading, carbon storage or food production...”*
- c. *give substantial weight to the value of using suitable brownfield land within settlements for homes and other identified needs, and support appropriate opportunities to remediate despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated or unstable land;*
- d. *promote and support the development of under-utilised land and buildings, especially if this would help to meet identified needs for housing where land supply is constrained and available sites could be used more effectively (for example converting space above shops, and building on or above service yards, car parks, lock-ups and railway infrastructure); .. “*

3.1.9 Paragraph 129 states that planning policies and decisions should support development that makes efficient use of land by taking account of:

- a. *“the identified need for different types of housing and other forms of development, and the availability of land suitable for accommodating it;*
- b. *local market conditions and viability;*
- c. *the availability and capacity of infrastructure and services – both existing and proposed – as well as their potential for further improvement and the scope to promote sustainable travel modes that limit future car use;*
- d. *the desirability of maintaining an area’s prevailing character and setting (including residential gardens), or of promoting regeneration and change; and*
- e. *the importance of securing well-designed, attractive and healthy places.”*

3.1.10 Paragraphs 130 outlines area-based character assessments, design guides and codes and masterplans can be used to help ensure that land is used efficiently while also creating beautiful and sustainable places. It states that where there is an existing or anticipated shortage of land for meeting identified housing needs, it is especially important that planning policies and decisions avoid homes being built at low densities and ensure that developments make optimal use of the potential of each site. In these circumstances:

- a. *“plans should contain policies to optimise the use of land in their area and meet as much of the identified need for housing as possible. This will be tested robustly at examination, and should include the use of minimum*

*density standards for city and town centres and other locations that are well served by public transport. These standards should seek a significant uplift in the average density of residential development within these areas, unless it can be shown that there are strong reasons why this would be inappropriate;*

- b. the use of minimum density standards should also be considered for other parts of the plan area. It may be appropriate to set out a range of densities that reflect the accessibility and potential of different areas, rather than one broad density range; and*
- c. local planning authorities should refuse applications which they consider fail to make efficient use of land, taking into account the policies in this Framework. In this context, when considering applications for housing, authorities should take a flexible approach in applying policies or guidance relating to daylight and sunlight, where they would otherwise inhibit making efficient use of a site (as long as the resulting scheme would provide acceptable living standards)."*

3.1.11 Paragraphs 131-141 focus on achieving well-designed and beautiful places and promote good design of the built environment. This approach is set out in Paragraph 135, which states:

*"Planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments:*

- a. will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;*
- b. are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;*
- c. are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities);*
- d. establish or maintain a strong sense of place, using the arrangement of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live, work and visit;*
- e. optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development (including green and other public space) and support local facilities and transport networks; and*
- f. create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users and where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion and resilience."*

3.1.12 Paragraph 136 states:

*"Trees make an important contribution to the character and quality of urban environments, and can also help mitigate and adapt to climate change. Planning policies and decisions should ensure that new streets are tree-lined, that opportunities are taken to incorporate trees elsewhere in developments (such as parks and community orchards), that appropriate measures are in place to secure the long-term maintenance of newly-planted trees, and that existing trees are retained wherever possible. Applicants and local planning authorities should work with highways officers and tree officers to ensure that the right trees are planted in the right places, and solutions are found that are compatible with highways standards and the needs of different users."*

3.1.13 Paragraph 139 states:

*“Development that is not well designed should be refused, especially where it fails to reflect local design policies and government guidance on design, taking into account any local design guidance and supplementary planning documents such as design guides and codes. Conversely, significant weight should be given to:*

- a. development which reflects local design policies and government guidance on design, taking into account any local design guidance and supplementary planning documents such as design guides and codes; and/or*
- b. outstanding or innovative designs which promote high levels of sustainability, or help raise the standard of design more generally in an area, so long as they fit in with the overall form and layout of their surroundings...”*

3.1.14 Section 15 covers Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment, stating at Paragraph 187 that:

*“Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:*

- a. protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan);*
- b. recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland;*
- c. maintaining the character of the undeveloped coast, while improving public access to it where appropriate;*
- d. minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures ....;*
- e. preventing new and existing development from contributing to, being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by, unacceptable levels of soil, air, water or noise pollution or land instability. Development should, wherever possible, help to improve local environmental conditions such as air and water quality, taking into account relevant information such as river basin management plans; and*
- f. remediating and mitigating despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated and unstable land, where appropriate.”*

3.1.15 Paragraph 188 then goes on to state that:

*“Plans should: distinguish between the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites; allocate land with the least environmental or amenity value, where consistent with other policies in this Framework; take a strategic approach to maintaining and enhancing networks of habitats and green infrastructure; and plan for the enhancement of natural capital at a catchment or landscape scale across local authority boundaries.”*

3.1.16 Paragraph 189 also 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 ...*

*..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.”*

### 3.2 National Planning Practice Guidance, 2021<sup>2</sup>

- 3.2.1 The Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) supports the NPPF. Under the Natural Environment PPG (July 2019), the sub-section ‘Landscape’ in Paragraph 037 supports the use of landscape character assessment as a tool for understanding the character and local distinctiveness of the landscape and identifying the features that give it a sense of place, as a means to informing, planning and managing change. The Natural Environment PPG makes reference to Natural England guidance on landscape character assessment.
- 3.2.2 Under the sub-section ‘Green Infrastructure’, the Natural Environment PPG’s Paragraph 006 recognises that well-designed green infrastructure can help to create a sense of place and contribute to place-making, and that green infrastructure can help create safe and accessible environments.
- 3.2.3 Within the Design: process and tools PPG (October 2019), in the sub-section ‘Planning for well-designed places’, Paragraph 001 notes that well-designed places can be achieved through active input at all stages of the planning process. The Design PPG goes on to note that permission ought to be refused for poorly designed development failing to utilise opportunities to improve the character, quality, and function of a place.

### 3.3 National Design Guide, 2021<sup>3</sup>

- 3.3.1 The National Design Guide identifies the key influencing factors for good design and aims to influence the production of local plans, guidance and the determination of planning applications through the consideration of ten characteristics:
- Context,
  - Identity,
  - Built Form,
  - Movement,
  - Nature,
  - Public Space,
  - Uses,
  - Homes and Buildings,
  - Resources, and

<sup>2</sup> Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. Planning Practice Guidance, 2021. Accessed May 2023. Available at: [Planning practice guidance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/planning-practice-guidance)

<sup>3</sup> Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. National Design Guide, 2021. Accessed June 2023. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-design-guide>

- Lifespan.

### 3.4 Local Policy

#### Mid Sussex District Plan, 2018<sup>4</sup>

3.4.1 The Mid Sussex District Plan was adopted in October March 2018. The Mid Sussex District Plan is a key planning document that sets out a vision for how Mid Sussex wishes to evolve and a delivery strategy for how that will be achieved. It sets out broad guidance on the distribution and quality of development under strategic objectives and supporting policies that will guide and determine the future pattern of development in the Mid Sussex District up until 2031.

3.4.2 The policies of relevance to the Site and landscape and visual matters are listed below.

3.4.3 Policy DP12: Protection and Enhancement of the Countryside refers to:

*“Strategic Objectives: 3) To protect valued landscapes for their visual, historical and biodiversity qualities; 11) To support and enhance the attractiveness of Mid Sussex as a visitor destination; and 15) To create places that encourage a healthy and enjoyable lifestyle by the provision of first class cultural and sporting facilities, informal leisure space and the opportunity to walk, cycle or ride to common destinations.*

*Evidence Base: A Landscape Character Assessment for Mid Sussex, A Strategy for the West Sussex Landscape, Capacity of Mid Sussex District to Accommodate Development Study.”*

3.4.4 Policy DP12: Protection and Enhancement of the Countryside states that:

*“The countryside will be protected in recognition of its intrinsic character and beauty. Development will be permitted in the countryside, defined as the area outside of built-up area boundaries on the Policies Map, provided it maintains or where possible enhances the quality of the rural and landscape character of the District, and:*

- *it is necessary for the purposes of agriculture; or*
- *it is supported by a specific policy reference either elsewhere in the Plan, a Development Plan Document or relevant Neighbourhood Plan.*

...

*The Mid Sussex Landscape Character Assessment, the West Sussex County Council Strategy for the West Sussex Landscape, the Capacity of Mid Sussex District to Accommodate Development Study and other available landscape evidence (including that gathered to support Neighbourhood Plans) will be used to assess the impact of development proposals on the quality of rural and landscape character.*

*Built-up area boundaries are subject to review by Neighbourhood Plans or through a Site Allocations Development Plan Document, produced by the District Council. ...”*

3.4.5 Policy DP13: Preventing Coalescence refers to:

---

<sup>4</sup> Mid Sussex District Council. Mid Sussex District Plan 2014-2031, March 2018. Accessed May 2024. Available at: <https://www.midsussex.gov.uk/media/3406/mid-sussex-district-plan.pdf>

*“Strategic Objective: 2) To promote well located and designed development that reflects the District’s distinctive towns and villages, retains their separate identity and character and prevents coalescence.*

*Evidence Base: Mid Sussex Landscape Character Assessment; Capacity of Mid Sussex District to Accommodate Development Study.”*

3.4.6 Policy DP13: Preventing Coalescence states that:

*“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 existing local and national policies cannot provide the necessary protection.”*

3.4.7 Policy DP16: High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty refers to:

*“Strategic Objectives: 3) To protect valued landscapes for their visual, historical and biodiversity qualities; and 11) To support and enhance the attractiveness of Mid Sussex as a visitor destination.*

*Evidence Base: The High Weald AONB Management Plan.”*

3.4.8 Policy DP16: High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty states that:

*“Development within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), as shown on the Policies Maps, will only be permitted where it conserves or enhances natural beauty and has regard to the High Weald AONB Management Plan, in particular;*

- *the identified landscape features or components of natural beauty and to their setting;*
- *the traditional interaction of people with nature, and appropriate land management;*
- *character and local distinctiveness, settlement pattern, sense of place and setting of the AONB; and*
- *the conservation of wildlife and cultural heritage.*

....

3.4.9 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, and in particular should not adversely affect the views into and out of the AONB by virtue of its location or design.

3.4.10 Policy DP18: Setting of the South Downs National Park refers to:

*“Strategic Objectives: 3) To protect valued landscapes for their visual, historical and biodiversity qualities; and 11) To support and enhance the attractiveness of Mid Sussex as a visitor destination.*

3.4.11 Policy DP18: Setting of the South Downs National Park refers to:

*“Strategic Objectives: 3) To protect valued landscapes for their visual, historical and biodiversity qualities; and 11) To support and enhance the attractiveness of Mid Sussex as a visitor destination.*

*Evidence Base: The South Downs Partnership Management Plan, South Downs Integrated Landscape Character Assessment, Defra Duty of Regard.”*

3.4.12 Policy DP18: Setting of the South Downs National Park states that:

*“Development within land that contributes to the setting of the South Downs National Park will only be permitted where it does not detract from, or cause detriment to, the visual and special qualities (including dark skies), tranquillity and essential characteristics of the National Park, and in particular should not adversely affect transitional open green spaces between the site and the boundary of the South Downs National Park, and the views, outlook and aspect, into and out of the National Park by virtue of its location, scale, form or design.*

*Development should be consistent with National Park purposes and must not significantly harm the National Park or its setting. Assessment of such development proposals will also have regard to the South Downs Partnership Management Plan and emerging National Park Local Plan and other adopted planning documents and strategies.”*

3.4.13 Policy DP22: Rights of Way and other Recreational Routes refers to:

*“Strategic Objectives: 5) To create and maintain easily accessible green infrastructure, green corridors and spaces around and within the towns and villages to act as wildlife corridors, sustainable transport links and leisure and recreational routes; and 15) To create places that encourage a healthy and enjoyable lifestyle by the provision of first class cultural and sporting facilities, informal leisure space and the opportunity to walk, cycle or ride to common destinations.”*

3.4.14 Policy DP22: Rights of Way and other Recreational Routes states that:

*“Rights of way, Sustrans national cycle routes and recreational routes will be protected by ensuring development does not result in the loss of or does not adversely affect a right of way or other recreational routes unless a new route is provided which is of at least an equivalent value and which does not sever important routes.*

*Access to the countryside will be encouraged by:*

*Ensuring that (where appropriate) development provides safe and convenient links to rights of way and other recreational routes;*

*Supporting the provision of additional routes within and between settlements that contribute to providing a joined up network of routes where possible;*

*Where appropriate, encouraging making new or existing rights of way multi-functional to allow for benefits for a range of users. (Note: 'multi-functional' will generally mean able to be used by walkers, cyclists and horse-riders)."*

3.4.15 Policy DP26: Character and Design refers to:

*"Strategic Objectives: 2) To promote well located and designed development that reflects the District's distinctive towns and villages, retains their separate identity and character and prevents coalescence; 4) To protect valued characteristics of the built environment for their historical and visual qualities; 12) To support sustainable communities which are safe, healthy and inclusive; and 14) To create environments that are accessible to all members of the community."*

3.4.16 Policy DP26: Character and Design states that:

*"All development and surrounding spaces, including alterations and extensions to existing buildings and replacement dwellings, will be well designed and reflect the distinctive character of the towns and villages while being sensitive to the countryside. All applicants will be required to demonstrate that development:*

- *is of high quality design and layout and includes appropriate landscaping and greenspace;*
- *contributes positively to, and clearly defines, public and private realms and should normally be designed with active building frontages facing streets and public open spaces to animate and provide natural surveillance;*
- *creates a sense of place while addressing the character and scale of the surrounding buildings and landscape;*
- *protects open spaces, trees and gardens that contribute to the character of the area;*
- *protects valued townscapes and the separate identity and character of towns and villages;*
- *does not cause significant harm to the amenities of existing nearby residents and future occupants of new dwellings, including taking account of the impact on privacy, outlook, daylight and sunlight, and noise, air and light pollution (see Policy DP29);*
- *creates a pedestrian-friendly layout that is safe, well connected, legible and accessible;*
- *incorporates well integrated parking that does not dominate the street environment, particularly where high density housing is proposed;*
- *positively addresses sustainability considerations in the layout and the building design;*
- *take the opportunity to encourage community interaction by creating layouts with a strong neighbourhood focus/centre; larger (300+ unit) schemes will also normally be expected to incorporate a mixed use element;*
- *optimises the potential of the site to accommodate development."*

3.4.17 Policy DP37: Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows refers to:

*“Strategic Objectives: 3) To protect valued landscapes for their visual, historical and biodiversity qualities; 4) To protect valued characteristics of the built environment for their historical and visual qualities; and 5) To create and maintain easily accessible green infrastructure, green corridors and spaces around and within the towns and villages to act as wildlife corridors, sustainable transport links and leisure and recreational routes.”*

3.4.18 Policy DP37: Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows states that:

*“The District Council will support the protection and enhancement of trees, woodland and hedgerows, and encourage new planting. In particular, ancient woodland and aged or veteran trees will be protected.*

*Development that will damage or lead to the loss of trees, woodland or hedgerows that contribute, either individually or as part of a group, to the visual amenity value or character of an area, and/ or that have landscape, historic or wildlife importance, will not normally be permitted.*

*Proposals for new trees, woodland and hedgerows should be of suitable species, usually native, and where required for visual, noise or light screening purposes, trees, woodland and hedgerows should be of a size and species that will achieve this purpose.*

*Trees, woodland and hedgerows will be protected and enhanced by ensuring development:*

- *incorporates existing important trees, woodland and hedgerows into the design of new development and its landscape scheme; and*
- *prevents damage to root systems and takes account of expected future growth; and*
- *where possible, incorporates retained trees, woodland and hedgerows within public open space rather than private space to safeguard their long-term management; and*
- *has appropriate protection measures throughout the development process; and*
- *takes opportunities to plant new trees, woodland and hedgerows within the new development to enhance on-site green infrastructure and increase resilience to the effects of climate change; and*
- *does not sever ecological corridors created by these assets.*

*Proposals for works to trees will be considered taking into account:*

- *the condition and health of the trees; and*
- *the contribution of the trees to the character and visual amenity of the local area; and*
- *the amenity and nature conservation value of the trees; and*
- *the extent and impact of the works; and*
- *any replanting proposals.*

*The felling of protected trees will only be permitted if there is no appropriate alternative. Where a protected tree or group of trees is felled, a replacement tree or group of trees, on a minimum of a 1:1 basis and of an appropriate size and type, will normally be required. The replanting should take place as close to the felled tree or trees as possible having regard to the proximity of adjacent properties.*

*Development should be positioned as far as possible from ancient woodland with a minimum buffer of 15 metres maintained between ancient woodland and the development boundary.”*

3.4.19 Policy DP38: Biodiversity refers to:

*“Strategic Objectives: 3) To protect valued landscapes for their visual, historical and biodiversity qualities; and 5) To create and maintain easily accessible green infrastructure, green corridors and spaces around and within the towns and villages to act as wildlife corridors, sustainable transport links and leisure and recreational routes.”*

3.4.20 Policy DP38: Biodiversity states that:

*“Biodiversity will be protected and enhanced by ensuring development:*

- *Contributes and takes opportunities to improve, enhance, manage and restore biodiversity and green infrastructure, so that there is a net gain in biodiversity, including through creating new designated sites and locally relevant habitats, and incorporating biodiversity features within developments; and*
- *Protects existing biodiversity, so that there is no net loss of biodiversity. Appropriate measures should be taken to avoid and reduce disturbance to sensitive habitats and species. Unavoidable damage to biodiversity must be offset through ecological enhancements and mitigation measures (or compensation measures in exceptional circumstances); and*
- *Minimises habitat and species fragmentation and maximises opportunities to enhance and restore ecological corridors to connect natural habitats and increase coherence and resilience; and*
- *Promotes the restoration, management and expansion of priority habitats in the District; and*
- *Avoids damage to, protects and enhances the special characteristics of internationally designated Special Protection Areas, Special Areas of Conservation; nationally designated Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty; and locally designated Sites of Nature Conservation Importance, Local Nature Reserves and Ancient Woodland or to other areas identified as being of nature conservation or geological interest, including wildlife corridors, aged or veteran trees, Biodiversity Opportunity Areas, and Nature Improvement Areas.*

*Designated sites will be given protection and appropriate weight according to their importance and the contribution they make to wider ecological networks...”*

## Mid Sussex District Plan 2021 – 2039, Consultation Draft (Regulation 18)<sup>5</sup> and Regulation 19<sup>6</sup>

3.4.21 The emerging Mid Sussex District Plan reflects the outcome of a review process. It contains an updated vision, strategy, site allocations and policies and will supersede the adopted Mid Sussex District Plan upon its adoption which is anticipated in 2025. This will form the basis on which future planning applications will be determined, once the draft plan has been adopted. The vision, strategy and policies have informed the provision of housing and associated development on the Site, DPSC3, to support its draft allocation within both the Regulation 18 and 19 Consultation Draft MSDC Local Plan.

3.4.22 The policies within the Regulation 19 Consultation Draft MSDC Local Plan of relevance to the Site, DPSC3, and landscape and visual matters are set out below:

3.4.23 Within Chapter 9: Natural Environment & Green Infrastructure, Policy DPN1: Biodiversity, Geodiversity and Nature Recovery states:

*“Biodiversity and geodiversity will be protected because they are important natural capital assets and provide benefits as part of ecosystem services. Nature recovery will be supported and encouraged because it is important for delivering improvements to nature, ecological networks and green and blue infrastructure.”*

...

3.4.24 Policy DPN1: Biodiversity, Geodiversity and Nature Recovery covers Protecting Biodiversity, including protected landscapes including Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and National Parks; and Biodiversity in New Developments; and Nature Recovery.

3.4.25 Policy DPN2: Biodiversity Net Gain states that:

*“Development ... will need to deliver a net gain in biodiversity which will contribute to the delivery of ecological networks, green and blue infrastructure and nature recovery.”*

....

*“Development must ensure that biodiversity net gain will be appropriately managed, maintained and funded for a minimum of 30 years after the completion of the development and this will need to be demonstrated in a Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan.”*

3.4.26 Policy DPN3: Green and Blue Infrastructure states that:

*“The protection of existing and provision of new green and blue infrastructure will be supported because it delivers a range of environmental, social and economic benefits including resilience to the effects of climate change, positive health and wellbeing effects, active travel opportunities, nature-based solutions and supporting nature recovery.”*

---

<sup>5</sup> Mid Sussex District Council. Mid Sussex District Plan 2021- 2039, Consultation Draft (Regulation 18), 2022. Accessed June 2023. Available at: <https://www.midsussex.gov.uk/planning-building/mid-sussex-district-plan/district-plan-review>

<sup>6</sup> Mid Sussex District Council. Mid Sussex District Plan 2021- 2039, Consultation Draft (Regulation 19), 2023. Accessed April 2024. Available at: <https://www.midsussex.gov.uk/planning-building/mid-sussex-district-plan/district-plan-review>

*Green and blue infrastructure assets, links and the overall multi-functional network will be protected and enhanced by ensuring development:*

- 1. Responds to and incorporates existing on-site and off-site green and blue infrastructure into the development design and layout.*
- 2. Provides new green and blue infrastructure integrated into the development design.*
- 3. Contributes to the wider green and blue infrastructure network by taking opportunities to improve, enhance, manage and restore green and blue infrastructure, and providing and reinforcing links to existing green and blue infrastructure including outside the development's boundaries to develop a connected network of multifunctional greenspace, including incorporating opportunities to contribute to strategic green and blue infrastructure.*

*Applicants will need to consider from the outset the landscape assets of the site and how they may be used to create part of a coherent landscape structure that links to existing and proposed landscapes to form open space networks whenever possible, revealing existing landscape features."*

3.4.27 Policy DPN4: Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows states that:

*"Trees, woodland and hedgerows will be protected because they are valuable natural capital assets including for biodiversity, nature recovery, green infrastructure, health and wellbeing, and increasing resilience to the effects of climate change.*

*Protection of trees, woodland and hedgerows*

*The District Council will support the protection and enhancement of trees, woodland and hedgerows, and encourage new planting. As an irreplaceable habitat, ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees and their soils will be protected. Where ancient wood pasture and historic parkland are identified, these areas will have the same consideration as other forms of ancient woodland.*

*Development (including construction and operational activities) that is adjacent to irreplaceable habitats including ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees must incorporate appropriate buffers and/or root protection areas.*

*Development that will damage or lead to the loss of trees, woodland or hedgerows that contribute, either individually or as part of a group, to the visual amenity value or character of an area, and/or that have landscape, historic or wildlife importance, will not normally be permitted.*

*Development (including construction and operational activities) resulting in the direct or indirect deterioration, damage or loss of irreplaceable habitats including ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees will not be permitted unless there are wholly exceptional reasons and, in such circumstances, a suitable compensation strategy will be provided, including measures that respect the features and characteristics of the ancient woodland and ancient, aged or veteran trees.*

*The value of trees, woodland and hedgerows individually and cumulatively in providing connectivity and continuity across the landscape and a network for nature recovery will be taken into account so that habitat fragmentation, particularly of large and extensive woodland areas, is minimised.*

*New trees, woodland and hedgerows*

*Proposals for new trees, woodland and hedgerows must be of suitable species, usually native and from local or UK sourced stock, and where required for visual, noise or light screening purposes, trees, woodland and hedgerows must be of a size and species that will achieve this purpose.*

*Proposals for new woodland creation will need to follow best practice guidance and take into account a range of considerations including all of the following:*

- *The biodiversity and amenity value of the existing habitat*
- *The landscape and its character*
- *Soil conditions*
- *Heritage and archaeology features*
- *Protected species*
- *Opportunities for natural regeneration*
- *Opportunities to connect to and extend existing woodland*
- *The long-term management arrangements for new woodland planting*
- *Resilience to the effects of pests, disease and climate change.*

*Development and trees, woodland and hedgerows*

*Trees, woodland and hedgerows will be protected and enhanced by ensuring development:*

1. *Retains and incorporates existing trees, woodland and hedgerows, including along the boundaries, into the design of new development and its landscape scheme.*
2. *Is orientated to have a positive edge to these features and the wider countryside.*
3. *Is designed to avoid the overshadowing of residential gardens which can lead to pressure for the removal of trees.*
4. *Prevents damage to root systems and takes account of expected future growth through respecting the root protection area.*
5. *Has appropriate protection measures throughout the development and construction process.*
6. *Secures appropriate long-term management and stewardship arrangements.*
7. *Where possible, incorporates retained trees, woodland and hedgerows within public open space rather than private space to safeguard their long-term management and stewardship.*
8. *Takes opportunities to plant new trees, woodland and hedgerows within the new development to enhance on-site green infrastructure and increase resilience to the effects of climate change.*

9. *Does not sever ecological corridors created by these assets and makes a positive contribution to the local nature recovery network and green infrastructure network.*

*All development proposed within 15 metres of any trees, measured from the trunk, will be required to submit an Arboricultural Impact Assessment and Arboricultural Method Statement prepared by a qualified arboriculturist.*

*Developments should integrate street trees and other urban greening measures into new streets and open spaces, and tree-lined streets will be encouraged. Appropriate species must be selected ensuring tree roots have sufficient space to support healthy, long-lived trees. Appropriate long-term management and stewardship arrangements will need to be in place and secured by planning conditions and/or planning obligations.”*

3.4.28 Policy DPN8: Light Impacts and Dark Skies notes that:

*“People’s health and quality of life and the natural environment will be protected from unacceptable levels of light pollution.*

*Development proposals must demonstrate that all opportunities to reduce light pollution (including sky glow, glare and light spillage) have been taken including minimising impacts on local amenity, intrinsically dark landscapes including protected landscapes, the South Downs International Dark Sky Reserve (Moore’s Reserve) and areas important for nature conservation and nature recovery.*

*Artificial lighting proposals (including outdoor lighting, floodlighting and new street lighting) should be minimised in terms of intensity and number of fittings. The applicant must demonstrate all of the following:*

1. *The minimum amount of lighting necessary to achieve its purpose is specified or otherwise justified on safety or security grounds.*
2. *The design and specification of the lighting would minimise sky glow, glare and light spillage in relation to the visibility of the night sky, local amenity and local character.*
3. *The means of lighting would be unobtrusively sited.*
4. *Low energy lighting is used.*
5. *There would not be an adverse impact on wildlife such as through consideration of the appropriate siting, fitting, design, colour and temperature of lighting.*

*Development proposals must carefully consider the design and layout of parking arrangements to avoid headlight nuisance.*

*Where lighting of a landmark or heritage feature is proposed, the level and type of illumination used would need to enhance the feature itself as well as meeting the above requirements.*

*Development proposals will need to take into account the Institute of Lighting Professionals guidance and other relevant guidance.”*

3.4.29 Within Chapter 10: Countryside, Policy DPC1: Protection and Enhancement of the Countryside states that:

*“The countryside will be protected in recognition of its intrinsic character and beauty, and for the benefits it has for agriculture, natural capital, ecosystem services, health and wellbeing, delivering a nature recovery network and resilience to the effects of climate change.*

*Development will be permitted in the countryside, defined as the area outside of built-up area boundaries on the Policies Map, provided it maintains or where possible enhances the quality of the rural and landscape character of the district including not adversely affecting the environmental and social benefits that the countryside delivers, and:*

- 1. It is necessary for the purposes of agriculture; or*
- 2. It is supported by a specific policy reference either elsewhere in the Plan, a Development Plan Document or relevant Neighbourhood Plan. ...*

*Development proposals will need to demonstrate they are informed by landscape character. The Mid Sussex Landscape Character Assessment, the West Sussex County Council Strategy for the West Sussex Landscape, the Capacity of Mid Sussex District to Accommodate Development Study and other available landscape evidence (including that specific to the High Weald AONB and that gathered to support Neighbourhood Plans) will be used to assess the impact of development proposals on the rural and landscape character.*

*Major applications must be accompanied by a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment or Appraisal (LVIA) for proposed development on greenfield, rural and edge of settlement sites. The LVIA will need to inform the site design, layout, capacity and any mitigation requirements. In the High Weald AONB, the LVIA will utilise the AONB Management Plan components as landscape receptors.*

*For major applications, a Landscape Strategy will need to be provided to identify how the natural features and characteristics of a site have been retained and incorporated into the landscape structure and design of the site and how they have informed the landscaping proposals for the site.”*

#### 3.4.30 Policy DPC2: Preventing Coalescence notes that:

*“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 DPC1: Protection and Enhancement of the Countryside, development will be permitted if, individually or cumulatively, 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 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 existing local and national policies cannot provide the necessary protection.*

#### 3.4.31 Policy DPC5: Setting of the South Downs National Park states that:

*“Development within land that contributes to the characteristics of the South Downs National Park will only be permitted where it does not detract from, or*

*cause detriment to, the visual and special qualities (including dark skies), tranquillity and essential characteristics of the National Park, and the views, outlook and aspect, into and out of the National Park by virtue of the development's location, scale, form or design.*

*Development proposals in the setting of the National Park should be sensitively located and designed, be consistent with National Park purposes, should not adversely affect transitional landscape character, and must not significantly harm the National Park or its setting.*

*Assessment of such development proposals will have regard to the South Downs Partnership Management Plan, South Downs Local Plan and other adopted planning documents and strategies.*

*Development proposals should consider and address potential impacts on roads within the National Park or in the setting of the National Park. A Transport Statement/ Assessment and/or landscape assessment may be required for development likely to generate significant amounts of movement."*

3.4.32 Within Chapter 11: Built Environment, Policy DPB1: Character and Design states that:

*"All new development must be designed in accordance with the Mid Sussex Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (SPD).*

*All new development must be of high quality and must respond appropriately to its context, be inclusive and prioritise sustainability. This includes the design and layout of new buildings and streets, alterations to existing buildings and the design of surrounding spaces.*

*All development proposals will be required to demonstrate all of the following, to ensure that development:*

*Understanding the Context*

- 1. Reflects the distinctive character of the towns and villages and protects their separate identity, heritage assets and valued townscapes.*
- 2. Is sensitive to the countryside including the topography."*

3.4.33 Chapter 15 addresses the provision for Sustainable Communities, and notes that there are:

*"Opportunities for extensions to improve sustainability of existing settlements. Policy DPSC3: Land to the south of Reeds Lane, Sayers Common proposes services and facilities on-site to support this development. Four smaller allocations (DPSC4 – DPSC7) are proposed which will also benefit from such day-to-day needs being provided in close proximity. Sayers Common has a limited range of services and facilities, therefore growth at this settlement supported by new on-site infrastructure such as Primary/Secondary education and community facilities will support improved sustainability for the settlement as a whole. The quantum of development will also support provision of additional infrastructure (such as wastewater treatment and drainage) to alleviate existing known issues."*

3.4.34 The Site, DPSC3, is a preferred Sustainable Communities Allocation: DPSC3: Land South of Reeds Lane, Sayers Common. It is defined as a 'Significant Site, and therefore is covered by Policy DPSC GEN: Significant Site Requirements, which states that:

*“All significant housing allocations must be delivered in accordance with the development plan policies when read as a whole, and site-specific requirements set out in individual allocation policies.*

*Sustainable Communities: Significant Sites: DPSC1 – DPSC3*

*In addition, all Significant Sites must address all of the following:*

- 1. Progress in accordance with an allocation-wide Masterplan, Design Code, Infrastructure Delivery Strategy and Phasing Plan which will have been submitted to and approved by the local planning authority. Each planning application should be determined in accordance with these documents. The Masterplan must be informed by a community engagement exercise and must consider relationships with existing settlements and other Site Allocations in order to ensure all future development is integrated with the existing community. The Infrastructure Delivery Strategy must demonstrate how the infrastructure will be delivered in a timely manner to meet the needs of the new community and to mitigate impacts of the development on the existing community.*
- 2. Support a vibrant and inclusive community which embodies the local living/20-minute neighbourhood principles of a complete, compact, and well-connected neighbourhood with advanced digital infrastructure, in which people can meet most of their daily needs within a convenient walk or cycle ride.*
- 3. Provide a variety of housing types of varying sizes, levels of affordability and tenure that supports diversity, includes housing for older people and at densities that can support local services.*
- 4. The development of the Sustainable Communities must be supported by a Community Development Officer (to be secured by the legal agreement) to facilitate the development of a secure, sustainable and inclusive community which is well integrated with the existing settlement.*
- 5. Provide high quality, easily accessible green space, central to the development with formal and informal areas for play and include opportunities for food growing areas.*
- 6. Prepare a site-wide Infrastructure Delivery Strategy demonstrating that the development will deliver, in a timely manner, sufficient infrastructure to cater for the needs of the proposed development as a whole and also mitigate to an acceptable level the effect of the whole development upon the surrounding area and community. Key elements including shops and transport hubs must be delivered at the earliest opportunity to encourage maximum patronage and long-term success.*
- 7. Deliver a layout that prioritises sustainable and active modes of travel, providing safe and convenient routes for walking, wheeling and cycling through the development and linking with existing and enhanced networks beyond.*
- 8. Support delivery of new inter-urban active travel routes to nearby towns, including those identified in the West Sussex Walking and Cycling Strategy 2016-2026 suggested schemes listed at Appendix 1.*
- 9. Consolidate any commercial and community uses, along with extra care housing facilities and transport hub and integrate them with movement routes to create a thriving and coherent centre/ focal point to the*

*development, and exploit opportunities to incorporate measures to discourage/remove through motor traffic from this centre.*

10. *Co-locate provision of new schools within/close to the centre of the development and demonstrate how vehicular traffic will be managed to encourage walking and cycling, including the potential for low/no traffic streets/'School Streets' schemes.*
11. *Design new schools to enable facilities to be open to the community when not in use by the school during evenings, weekends and holiday periods and facilitate a community use agreement as part of any planning application.*
12. *Secure a minimum biodiversity net gain of 20% to be demonstrated through a Biodiversity Gain Plan which sets out how net gains for biodiversity will be achieved, secured and managed appropriately taking into account the Council's objectives and priorities for biodiversity net gain and nature recovery.*
13. *Engage with Gatwick Airport at an early stage of proposals to ensure Aerodrome Safeguarding Requirements (Air Safety) are fully addressed.*
14. *Develop a strategy for the long-term management and stewardship of open space and green infrastructure including initiatives for income generation that could be integrated into the scheme.*
15. *Submit an Employment and Skills Plan with the planning application to secure improvements to the skills of local people and to enable them to take advantage of the resulting employment opportunities."*

...

*"Significant Sites:*

*Sites over 1,000 dwellings which will provide on-site services and facilities.*

.....

- *DPSC3: Land to the south of Reeds Lane, Sayers Common*

....

*Sustainable Communities - Housing Sites:*

*Located in proximity to a Significant Site and therefore benefitting and contributing to improved sustainability in the settlement.*

- *DPSC4: Land at Chesapeake and Meadow View, Reeds Lane*
- *DPSC5: Land at Coombe Farm, London Road*
- *DPSC6: Land to the west of Kings Business Centre, Reeds Lane*
- *DPSC7: Land at LVS Hassocks, London Road"*

3.4.35 With regard to the Vision and Objectives for Growth at Sayers Common, Policy DPSC GEN: Significant Site Requirements notes that:

*“Following application of the Site Selection Methodology, a series of sites were considered suitable for allocation at Sayers Common.”*

3.4.36 DPSC3: Land to the South of Reeds Lane is identified as delivering:

*“... 1,850 dwellings, extra care housing provision, primary/secondary school, playspace, library, leisure facilities, healthcare provision, community facilities, open space.”*

3.4.37 It also notes that:

*“These sites accord with the Plan Strategy to seek Opportunities for extensions to improve sustainability of existing settlements. To achieve this Plan Strategy objective, it will be crucial that these developments are considered collectively rather than individually, integrating with the existing settlement of Sayers Common, and promoting opportunities for enhanced connectivity between the sites themselves and the existing community so that the entire settlement can take advantage from the services and facilities being provided in proximity.”*

3.4.38 Policy DPSC3: Land to the South of Reeds Lane sets out the following:

*“The significant site at Reeds Lane lies to the west of Sayers Common and north of Albourne. The site will deliver a sustainable urban extension to Sayers Common, bringing new community facilities and services to the area as part of a mixed-use development.*

*The boundary shown on the site map below represents the extent of the site inclusive of all allocations (residential, employment, facilities and services) listed under “Allocation” below. Built development may not extend to the site boundary; for instance, landscape buffers, retention of existing natural boundaries, open space and village/country parks will be included within and/or on the site boundary.*

*... An indicative plan showing the approximate location of uses and mitigation is available [below]. This is for illustrative purposes only and subject to detailed masterplanning by the promoter at the planning application stage.”*

### **Setting of South Downs National Park, Assessment of SHELAA Sites<sup>7</sup>**

3.4.39 An Assessment of SHELAA Sites was initially carried out in 2022 to ensure the compliance of the emerging Mid Sussex District Local Plan 2021 – 2039 with national planning policy with regard to development in the setting of the SDNP. The Setting of the SDNP, Assessment of SHELAA Sites was then updated and confirmed as a Submission Document in June 2024. Both assessments set out the approach to assessing the potential impact of SHELAA sites potentially located within the setting of the SDNP, assessing sites with regard to Settlement Pattern, Landscape Character, Visual Impact, Tranquillity, Dark Night Skies, Esosystems, Green Infrastructure, and Historic Environment. The Assessment of SHELAA Sites, June 2024, also considers and additional factor: ‘Understanding and Enjoyment of the SDNP.

3.4.40 The Site, DPSC3, is identified within the assessment as SHELAA ID – 799: Land South of Reeds Lane, Albourne, in both the 2022 Assessment and 2024 Assessment (of SHELAA Sites).

3.4.41 In terms of settlement pattern, the 2024 Assessment it is noted that **“development of this site [DPSC3] would represent an incursion into the countryside”**. This is a reduction in effect

---

<sup>7</sup> Mid Sussex District Council. Setting of the South Downs National Park, Assessment of SHELAA Sites, 2021-2039. Accessed October 2024. Available at: <https://www.midsussex.gov.uk/media/8598/sdnp-setting-assessment-v070724.pdf>

- compared with the 2022 Assessment, which noted that “development of this site would represent a significant incursion into the countryside”.
- 3.4.42 In terms of landscape character, it is acknowledged that the Site [DPSC3] **“is unlikely to form part of the transitional landscape character for the South Downs National Park due to the distance from the National Park, however, detailed landscape studies may be required to demonstrate this”**.
- 3.4.43 With regard to visual impact, it is noted in the 2024 Assessment that **“although the site [DPSC3] is not likely to be visible from the nearest areas of the South Downs National Park due to intervening topography and screening, as a site in open countryside to the south of Sayers Common, any development on the site may be visible from wider viewpoints within the South Downs National Park. As such, the site may form part of the visual setting for the National Park”**.
- 3.4.44 When assessed for Tranquillity in the 2024 Assessment, the Site, DPSC3, is recorded as **“in an area that is less tranquil than other parts of the South Downs National Park, however, it may more tranquil than areas close to existing settlements such as Hurstpierpoint and Hassocks although the A23 may also affect tranquillity”**.
- 3.4.45 Under the assessment for Dark Night Skies, the 2024 Assessment notes that, **“according to the South Downs National Park Authority map of dark night skies, the area to the south of Albourne has been assessed as E1b: Transition Zone. This classification is generally given to rural environments on the edge of the National Park or near to urban areas. This zone forms the transition between dark zones and the urban environment. Areas to the south of Albourne are also within dark night sky zone E1a: Intrinsic Rural Darkness and 2km Buffer Zone. This classification is generally given to most rural locations outside of the central area of the South Downs National Park. This zone has dark skies and includes areas vulnerable to light pollution. Any development of this site [DPSC3] should take opportunities to reduce light pollution (including sky glow, glare and light spillage) to minimise adverse impacts on the South Downs National Park in accordance with policy requirements”**.
- 3.4.46 With reference to Understanding and Enjoyment, the 2024 Assessment notes that **“should the site [DPSC3] be developed, the user experience of the PROW will change. For example, views may change, the characteristics of the PROW will change, and the rural nature of the PROW will change. Should the site be developed, there is also the potential for the PROW to be used more frequently and regularly”**.
- 3.4.47 In terms of Ecosystem Services, the 2024 Assessment notes that **“the site [DPSC3] is predominantly grazing land and rough grassland with field boundaries of mature trees and hedgerows. The site provides Provisioning, Regulating and Supporting Services. For example, food production, climate regulation, soil quality, pollination and biodiversity”**.
- 3.4.48 In terms of the Historic Environment, the 2024 Assessment records that **“there are no conservation areas close to the site [DPSC3]. Coombe Farm House (Grade II) and Coombe Barn (Grade II) are listed buildings outside of the site but surrounded by the site [DPSC3]”**.
- 3.4.49 With regard to Green Infrastructure, the 2024 Assessment notes that **“the public rights of way running through the site provide opportunities to connect to the wider countryside. Should the site be developed, it would be beneficial to retain the existing mature trees and hedgerows as these are valuable characteristics of the site. Connectivity should be provided to the ancient woodland surrounding the site. Any development of this site should incorporate ecological corridors to the wider countryside to avoid fragmentation. The site should also incorporate new green infrastructure in accordance with policy requirements”**.

3.4.50 The MSDC SHELAA Assessment of DPSC3 concludes:

*“Taking into account the factors considered as part of this assessment, it is considered that this site is not directly within the setting of the South Downs National Park since the site and the National Park are separated by open countryside. However, as a site that would extend Sayers Common to the south and in combination with the other sites at Sayers Common, this site may be visible from long views within the National Park and thus may form part of the visual setting for the National Park. Should this site be developed, it should be carefully designed to avoid any adverse impacts. Regard should be had to the purposes for which the National Park was designated. A Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment is recommended to inform the site’s design and any mitigation.”*

3.4.51 Whilst the MSDC Setting of South Downs National Park: Assessment of SHELAA Sites considers that the Site, DPSC3, **“is not directly within the setting of the South Downs National Park since the site and the National Park are separated by open countryside”**, considering it is also noted that any development on the Site [DPSC3] may be visible from wider viewpoints within the South Downs National Park. As such, the Site may form part of the visual setting for the National Park. the principles and policies providing guidance for accommodating development within the setting of the SDNP should be reflected in a landscape-led approach to developing the Site, DPSC3.

#### **Albourne Parish Council Neighbourhood Plan 2014 – 2031<sup>8</sup>**

3.4.52 The Albourne Parish Council Neighbourhood Plan sets out development principles and the allocation of areas for potential building in the area until 2031. The majority of the Site, DPSC3, falls within the Albourne Neighbourhood Plan Area as outlined on the Neighbourhood Plan Area Map within the document.

3.4.53 The following strategic objectives for the Albourne Parish Council Neighbourhood Plan are as follows:

- *“Keeping the “village-feel” and sense of place.*
- *Protecting and enhancing the environment;*
- *Promoting economic vitality and diversity; and*
- *Ensuring cohesive and safe communities”*

3.4.54 Policy Countryside - ALC3: Local Gaps and Preventing Coalescence states that:

*“Development will only be permitted in the countryside provided that it does not individually or cumulatively result in coalescence and loss of separate identity of neighbouring settlements or perception thereof; and provided that it does not conflict with other Countryside policies in this Plan. Development for essential infrastructure will be acceptable only where it can be demonstrated that there are no alternative sites suitable and available, and that the benefit outweighs any harm or loss. Local Gaps between the following settlements define those areas covered by this policy and are shown on Map 9.2 on Page 24.*

<sup>8</sup> Albourne Parish Council. Albourne Parish Council Neighbourhood Plan, 2014-2031. Accessed August 2023. Available at: [http://www.albourneparishcouncil.co.uk/Core/Albourne-PC/Pages/Neighbourhood\\_Plan\\_1.aspx](http://www.albourneparishcouncil.co.uk/Core/Albourne-PC/Pages/Neighbourhood_Plan_1.aspx)

### 3.5 South Downs National Park

#### South Downs National Park Partnership Management Plan 2020-2025<sup>9</sup>

3.5.1 The SDNP is an expansive area located to the south of the Site, and any development in the SDNP or within its setting must take into account the SDNP Partnership Management Plan (SDNPPMP) to ensure that there are no adverse impacts on the SDNP as a result of development.

3.5.2 There are seven Special Qualities of the SDNP identified in the SDNPPMP: these are:

- *“Distinctive towns and villages with, and communities with real pride in their area;*
- *Great opportunities for recreational activities and learning experiences;*
- *Well-conserved historical features and a rich cultural heritage;*
- *Tranquil and unspoilt places;*
- *A rich variety of wildlife and habitats including rare and internationally important species;*
- *An environment shaped by centuries of farming and embracing new enterprise; and*
- *Diverse, inspirational landscape and breathtaking views.”*

3.5.3 The SDNPPMP identifies the major issues with regard to new housing and infrastructure as being:

*“Working with neighbouring authorities: Situated in the heavily populated South East, the National Park is already experiencing major housing development around its borders. These new communities will inevitably have a significant impact; for example, on water abstraction and treatment, transport systems and because people will want to and should have access to enjoy the South Downs. This Plan therefore includes commitments to work with neighbouring local authorities to develop people and nature networks across boundaries.”*

3.5.4 The SDNPPMP also sets out the required outcomes with regard to Landscape and Natural Beauty to achieve by 2050:

#### *“OUTCOME 1: LANDSCAPE & NATURAL BEAUTY*

*The landscape character of the South Downs, its special qualities, natural beauty and local distinctiveness have been conserved and enhanced by avoiding or mitigating the negative impacts of development and cumulative change.*

*For this outcome our priorities for the next five years are:*

*1.1 PROTECT LANDSCAPE CHARACTER To protect and enhance the natural beauty and character of the National Park and seek environmental net-gain from any infrastructure projects*

---

<sup>9</sup> The South Downs National Park Authority. Partnership Management Plan, 2020. Accessed June 2023. Available at: <https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/partnership-management-plan/>

*1.2 CREATE GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE To improve green and blue infrastructure to deliver nature recovery networks and connect people to nature within and around the National Park*

*1.3 TARGET NEW PAYMENTS To maximise environmental, cultural and economic benefits of agrienvironment and forestry schemes across the National Park.”*

3.5.5 The relevant policies within the SDNPPMP include:

- *“POLICY 1: Conserve and enhance the natural beauty and special qualities of the landscape and its setting, in ways that allow it to continue to evolve and become more resilient to the impacts of climate change and other pressures.*
- *POLICY 4: Create more, bigger, better managed and connected areas of habitat in and around the National Park, which deliver multiple benefits for people and wildlife.*
- *POLICY 19: Enhance the landscape, habitat connectivity, carbon storage and flood risk management with woodland creation by natural regeneration or tree planting with appropriate species, on an appropriate scale and in suitable locations.”*

### **The South Downs Local Plan<sup>10</sup>**

3.5.6 The Thriving Living Landscape section of the South Downs Local Plan includes five strategic policies which relate to special qualities and the landscape of the National Park. Of the five policies Strategic Policies SD6: Safeguarding Views and Policy SD7: Relative Tranquillity are relevant to the setting of the SDNP.

3.5.7 Strategic Policy SD6: Safeguarding Views states:

- 1) *“Development proposals will only be permitted where they preserve the visual integrity, identity and scenic quality of the National Park, in particular by conserving and enhancing key views and views of key landmarks within the National Park.*
- 2) *Development proposals will be permitted that conserve and enhance the following view types and patterns identified in the Viewshed Characterisation & Analysis Study:*
  - a. *Landmark views to and from viewpoints and tourism and recreational destinations;*
  - b. *Views from publically accessible areas which are within, to and from settlements which contribute to the viewers’ enjoyment of the National Park;*
  - c. *Views from public rights of way, open access land and other publically accessible areas; and*
  - d. *Views which include or otherwise relate to specific features relevant to the National Park and its special qualities, such as key landmarks including those identified in Appendix 2 of the Viewshed Characterisation & Analysis*

<sup>10</sup> South Downs National Park Authority. The South Downs Local Plan, July 2019. Accessed July 20223. Available at: <https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Chapter1-Introduction.pdf>

*Study, heritage assets (either in view or the view from) and biodiversity features.*

- 3) *Development proposals will be permitted provided they conserve and enhance sequential views, and do not result in adverse cumulative impacts within views.”*

3.5.8 Strategic Policy SD7: Relative Tranquillity states:

- 1) *“Development proposals will only be permitted where they conserve and enhance relative tranquillity and should consider the following impacts:*
  - a. *Direct impacts that the proposals are likely to cause by changes in the visual and aural environment in the immediate vicinity of the proposals;*
  - b. *Indirect impacts that may be caused within the National Park that are remote from the location of the proposals themselves such as vehicular movements; and*
  - c. *Experience of users of the PRow network and other publicly accessible locations.*
- 2) *Development proposals in highly tranquil and intermediate tranquillity areas should conserve and enhance, and not cause harm to, relative tranquillity.*
- 3) *Development proposals in poor tranquillity areas should take opportunities to enhance relative tranquillity where these exist.”*

### **South Downs National Park: View Characterisation and Analysis<sup>11</sup>**

3.5.9 The South Downs National Park: View Characterisation and Analysis provides an appraisal of views to, from and within the SDNP. The SDNP View Characterisation and Analysis identifies:

- *“Iconic/promoted views from specific viewpoints;*
- *Extensive and/or repeating views that may represent certain special qualities or characteristics of the South Downs, or represent sequential views from routes; and*
- *Views of specific landmarks and features”*

3.5.10 The SDNP: View Characterisation and Analysis provides locations of representative viewpoints and descriptions. Relevant to the Site, DPSC3, are **“views from the scarp looking north across the Low Weald outside the National Park”**, within which Sayers Common, other settlements north of the SDNP, and the Site, DPSC3, are located, set within a wooded and well vegetated context. Within this type of view, Representative View 2: Devil’s Dyke and Representative View 29: Wolstonbury Hill look north towards the Site, DPSC3. These type of views are described as:

*“This view type includes views from the steep chalk scarp, east of the Arun Valley, looking north across the scarp footslopes (within the National Park) and the Low Weald (outside the National Park). These views are probably the most iconic of the views from the South Downs National Park and many of these views are experienced from the South Downs Way National Trail.”*

<sup>11</sup> Land Use Consultants. South Downs National Park: View Characterisation and Analysis, 2015. Accessed July 2023. Available at: <https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Viewshed-Study-Report.pdf>

3.5.11 Representative View 2: Devil's Dyke is described as:

*"There are a range of viewpoints in this popular recreational area, offering views that are noted in the [South Downs Integrated Landscape Character Assessment] SDILCA and in literature about the South Downs Way National Trail. These include views into the large dry valley of the Devil's Dyke, a key and distinctive landscape feature of the SDNP, views north from the Adur to Ouse Downs Scarp (LCA H2) over the Low Weald (noted in the SDILCA), and also views southwards to the coast. The selected view, from close to the OS trig point to the west of the Dyke, provides panoramic views over the Weald, along the scarp and also south over the rolling chalk dip-slope down to the sea at Hove."*

3.5.12 Viewpoint 29: Wolstonbury Hill is the closest identified view to the Site, DPSC3, (out of 78no. views) within the SDNP: View Characterisation and Analysis, which is described as:

*"This viewpoint is located on a prominent hill and is a natural vantage point from which to enjoy views of the weald, the sea and the downs, including Newtimber Hill and Devil's Dyke. The "breathtaking panoramic views" are noted in information about the hill on the National Trust's website."*

3.5.13 Threats to this type of view are identified as "changes that could affect, disrupt or alter the scale and shape of field patterns, change the distinctive settlement pattern of small historic villages, or form intrusive new developments within the view either by day or night".

3.5.14 The Aims and Management Guidance for these type of views from the SDNP are set out as:

- *"Maintain the ability to access and appreciate the panoramic views across the Low Weald as well as the views along the scarp.*
- *Maintain the generally undeveloped character of the view, especially within the National Park.*
- *Ensure that development outside the National Park does not detract from the general rural farmland patchwork setting to the Park.*
- *Ensure that any built development is integrated into its rural landscape context using native vegetation and minimise visibility from the Park.*
- *Maintain the distinctive profile of the scarp face and its iconic chalk grassland, juniper scrub and woodland habitats.*
- *Maintain the scale and shape of the distinctive field patterns associated with the scarp footslopes and Low Weald beyond the Park.*
- *Maintain heritage assets, such as church towers and country houses, as features and landmarks within the views.*
- *Refer to guidance for landscape type I contained in the South Downs Integrated Landscape Character Assessment."*

3.5.15 However, the Site, DPSC3, is over 6.3km from Representative View 2 and over 3.7km from Representative View 29, beyond a substantial swathe of land, including the **"distinctive pattern of the spring line villages at the foot of the scarp"**.

### South Downs National Park Authority Tranquillity Study 2017<sup>12</sup>

3.5.16 The SDNPA Tranquillity Study considers 'Tranquillity' as:

*"Tranquillity is considered to be a state of calm, quietude and is associated with a feeling of peace. It relates to quality of life, and there is good scientific evidence that it also helps to promote health and well-being. It is a perceptual quality of the landscape, and is influenced by things that people can both see and hear in the landscape around them."*

3.5.17 Tranquillity is a key special quality of the SDNP, which is greatly valued by both visitors and residents.

3.5.18 Positive tranquillity factors that add to the tranquillity of an area include wide open spaces, a natural landscape, remote area, trees, woodland, wildlife, birdsong etc. Negative tranquillity factors that detract from the tranquillity of an area include a lot of people, power lines, railways, roads, urban development, wind turbines etc.

3.5.19 SDNPA Tranquillity Study Appendix 1: Relative tranquillity scores for the SDNP provides a colour coded map identifying the relative tranquillity of different parts of the SDNP, from dark blue at the highest level of tranquillity through light blue, green, yellow, and orange to red at the least level of tranquillity, as shown on Page 7, and replicated on **Figure 2: SDNP Tranquillity Map Extract Plan** for reference. It demonstrates that the higher areas of tranquillity are generally located within the more central and remote areas of the SDNP. Lower areas of tranquillity are commonly located at the peripheries of the SDNP, in closer proximity to areas of settlement.

3.5.20 In the vicinity of Sayers Common and the Site, DPSC3, the latter of which is identified on **Figure 2: SDNP Tranquillity Map Extract Plan**, the lowest levels of tranquillity are identified on the fringes of the north edge of the SDNP to the south of Hurstpierpoint and Burgess Hill, as indicated by areas of red and orange. The A23 also influences the levels of tranquillity, both on approach to the northern boundary of the SDNP and as it passes south through the SDNP to Brighton, as indicated by the areas of red, orange and yellow. This is as a result of the physical presence of, and views of, the road and associated highway infrastructure and traffic, both at daytime and night-time, and the very audible traffic noise. The fringes of, and the northern edge of the SDNP to the south of Sayers Common and the Site, DPSC3, exhibit variable tranquillity, as indicated by the areas ranging from orange, yellow and green.

3.5.21 Sayers Common and the Site, DPSC3, are therefore located to the north of an area of the SDNP which generally exhibits lower levels of tranquillity, when considering the wider extent of the SDNP as a whole, as illustrated by **Figure 2: SDNP Tranquillity Map Extract Plan**.

### South Downs Green Infrastructure Framework<sup>13</sup>

3.5.22 This document discusses green infrastructure for the South Downs and the wider area. Aims and Objectives relevant to landscape are listed below:

*"Aim of the Framework*

*To create, protect and enhance a connected network of green and blue spaces; which sustainably meet the needs of local communities and supports the special qualities of the South Downs National Park; by achieving a consensus about the*

<sup>12</sup> South Downs National Park Authority. Tranquillity Study, 2017. Accessed July 2023. Available at: <https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/13-04-17-South-Downs-National-Park-Tranquillity-Study.pdf>

<sup>13</sup> South Downs National Park Authority and Partners. South Downs Green Infrastructure Framework, A Roadmap for Green Infrastructure, March 2016. Accessed July 2023. Available at: [https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/PP\\_2017\\_February28\\_Agenda-Item-9-Appendix-1.pdf](https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/PP_2017_February28_Agenda-Item-9-Appendix-1.pdf)

*strategic principles for planning, delivery and management of green infrastructure.”*

*Objectives*

...

- *Demonstrate and deliver economic benefits through the green infrastructure Framework;*
- *Protect and enhance biodiversity and improve habitat connectivity to maintain and improve the health of the environment;*
- *Protect and enhance the natural beauty of the landscape in the Framework area;*
- *Improve resilience to the effects of climate change;*

...

- *Improve opportunities for enjoyment and understanding of the wildlife, natural beauty, cultural heritage and the special qualities of the National Park;*

- *Use green infrastructure to support the delivery of ecosystem services;*

...

- *Improve access opportunities to natural greenspace in the Framework area for all sectors of society;*

- *Identify and prioritise opportunities to enhance and deliver optimum benefits from strategic green infrastructure;*

...”

### **3.6 Summary of Key Policy Considerations**

#### **NPPF**

- 3.6.1 The NPPF sets out the approach to protecting and enhancing the natural environment. Paragraphs 131 – 141, in particular Paragraph 135, promote achieving well designed and beautiful places and good design of the built environment; and note that planning policies/decisions should ensure attractive developments with effective landscaping, sympathetic to the existing local context; creating a strong sense of place which are safe, inclusive and accessible, and which promote health and wellbeing.
- 3.6.2 Paragraph 181 recognises the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites noting that plans should allocate land with the least environmental or amenity value; and take a strategic approach to maintaining and enhancing networks of habitats and green infrastructure and plan for the enhancement of natural capital at a catchment or landscape scale.
- 3.6.3 Paragraph 182 refers to the significance that should be given to National Parks, in this case the SDNP, located south of the Site, DPSC3; noting that development within their setting should be sensitively located and designed to avoid or minimise adverse impacts on the designated areas.
- 3.6.4 Paragraph 180 notes that policies should enhance the natural and local environment by protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of

the countryside and the benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and trees and woodland.

### Mid Sussex District Plan

- 3.6.5 Policy DP12: Protection and Enhancement of the Countryside states strategic objectives to protect valued landscapes for their visual, historical and biodiversity qualities, and to support and enhance the attractiveness of Mid Sussex as a visitor destination; and both Policy DP12 and draft Policy DPC1: Protection and Enhancement of the Countryside state that countryside will be protected in recognition of its intrinsic character and beauty.
- 3.6.6 Policy DP13: Preventing Coalescence and Draft Policy DPC2: Preventing Coalescence require that the individual unique characteristics towns and villages, their separate identity should be maintained, and that when travelling between settlements people should have a sense that they have left one before arriving at the next.
- 3.6.7 Policy DP18: Setting of the South Downs National Park states the strategic objectives of protecting valued landscapes for their visual, historical and biodiversity qualities and to support and enhance the attractiveness of Mid Sussex as a visitor destination; and both Policy DP18 and Draft Policy DPC5: Setting of the South Downs National Park require that development within the setting of the SDNP will only be permitted where it does not detract from, or cause detriment to, the visual and special qualities of the SDNP (including dark skies), tranquillity and the essential characteristics of the SDNP, nor views into and out of the SDNP, nor the outlook and aspect of SDNP, with regard to its location, scale, form or design. Development proposals in the setting of the National Park should be sensitively located and designed, be consistent with National Park purposes, should not adversely affect transitional landscape character, and must not significantly harm the National Park or its setting.
- 3.6.8 Policy DP22: Rights of Way and other Recreational Routes Rights states objectives to create and maintain accessible green infrastructure, including green corridors to act as wildlife corridors, recreational routes, provision of sports and recreational facilities to promote health, and cycling and walking routes.
- 3.6.9 Policy DP26: Character and Design and Draft Policy DPB1: Character and Design set out objectives of retaining the individual and separate identity and character of towns. All development should be well located, and designed to a high quality, to create a sense of place with regard to the character and scale of the surrounding context.
- 3.6.10 Policy DP37: Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows Trees states the strategic objectives of protecting valued landscapes for their visual qualities and creating green infrastructure. Policy DP37 and Draft Policy: Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows state that council supports the protection and enhancement of trees, woodland and hedgerow and encourages new planting to enhance on site green infrastructure. Loss of trees, woodland or hedgerow that contribute to visual amenity, character or landscape importance will not normally be permitted. New proposals including trees, woodland and hedgerow must be of suitable size and species for their purpose such as screening. Development must incorporate important, existing landscape features into the landscape scheme, incorporate existing trees, woodland and hedgerows in the public domain for management purposes.
- 3.6.11 Policy DP38: Biodiversity states that biodiversity will be protected and enhanced, and that development should improve, enhance, manage and restore biodiversity and green infrastructure, so that there is a net gain in biodiversity, and that designated sites will be given protection and appropriate weight according to their importance and the contribution they make to wider ecological networks.
- 3.6.12 Draft Policy DPN1: Biodiversity, Geodiversity and Nature Recovery states that biodiversity and geodiversity will be protected because they are important natural capital assets and provide benefits as part of ecosystem services, and covers protecting biodiversity, including protected landscapes including Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and National Parks; and biodiversity

in new developments; and nature recovery. Draft Policy DPN2: Biodiversity Net Gain requires that development will need to deliver a net gain in biodiversity which will contribute to the delivery of ecological networks, green and blue infrastructure and nature recovery.

- 3.6.13 Draft Policy DPN3: Green Infrastructure states the environmental and socio-economic benefits of green infrastructure, including resilience to climate change, health and wellbeing benefits. Development must provide on and off-site green infrastructure and contribute to the wider green infrastructure network. Development should ideally link to existing features of the landscape to form a coherent structure.
- 3.6.14 Draft Policy DPN8: Light Impacts and Dark Skies aims to protect the exposure of unacceptable levels of light to people and the natural environment. Proposals must minimise the impact of light pollution on local amenity and intrinsically dark landscapes, including protected landscape.
- 3.6.15 Draft Policy DPSC3: Land to the South of Reeds Lane, Sayers Common refers to the Site, specifically, setting the development requirements for new homes, community and associated facilities.

### **Albourne Parish Council Neighbourhood Plan**

- 3.6.16 The Albourne Parish Council Neighbourhood Plan includes Policy Countryside – ALC3: Local Gaps and Preventing Coalescence. It refers to retention of a suitable gap between Sayers Common and Albourne, to secure visual separation and maintain the separate identity of these villages.

### **South Downs National Park Partnership Management Plan**

- 3.6.17 Development on the Site should take into account the setting of the SDNP located some 1.9km to the south of the Site, DPSC3, and ensure it does not adversely impact the SDNP. Outcome 1: Landscape & Natural Beauty requires that the landscape character of the SDNP, including its special qualities, are conserved and enhanced by avoiding and mitigating impacts of development.
- 3.6.18 The seven Special Qualities of the SDNP are:
- *“Distinctive towns and villages with, and communities with real pride in their area;*
  - *Great opportunities for recreational activities and learning experiences;*
  - *Well-conserved historical features and a rich cultural heritage;*
  - *Tranquil and unspoilt places;*
  - *A rich variety of wildlife and habitats including rare and internationally important species;*
  - *An environment shaped by centuries of farming and embracing new enterprise; and*
  - *Diverse, inspirational landscape and breathtaking views.”*
- 3.6.19 Priorities for the next five years are to protect and enhance the natural beauty and character of the SDNP and seek environmental net gain; and to improve green-blue infrastructure and connect people to nature around the SDNP.

### South Downs Local Plan

- 3.6.20 Strategic Policy SD6: Safeguarding Views states that development proposals will only be permitted where they preserve the visual integrity, identity and scenic quality of the SDNP, in particular by conserving and enhancing key views and views of key landmarks within the SDNP.
- 3.6.21 Strategic Policy SD7: Relative Tranquillity states requires that development proposals will only be permitted where they conserve and enhance relative tranquillity; with consideration of the visual and aural environment, indirect impacts that may occur from locations remote to the SDNP; and experience of users of the PRow network.

### South Downs National Park: View Characterisation and Analysis

- 3.6.22 An analysis of views within and surrounding the SDNP is set out in The South Downs National Park Viewshed Characterisation Map, which shows representative viewpoint locations with accompanying descriptions. Relevant to the Site, DPSC3, are **“views from the scarp looking north across the Low Weald outside the National Park”**, which include Representative View 2: Devil’s Dyke and Representative View 29: Wolstonbury Hill, at distances of over 6.3km and 3.7km respectively, and within which Sayers Common, other settlements north of the SDNP, and the Site, DPSC3, are located, set within a wooded and well vegetated context.
- 3.6.23 The Aims and Management Guidance for these type of views from the SDNP are set out as:
- *“Maintain the ability to access and appreciate the panoramic views across the Low Weald as well as the views along the scarp.*
  - *Maintain the generally undeveloped character of the view, especially within the National Park.*
  - *Ensure that development outside the National Park does not detract from the general rural farmland patchwork setting to the Park.*
  - *Ensure that any built development is integrated into its rural landscape context using native vegetation and minimise visibility from the Park.*
  - ....
  - *Maintain the scale and shape of the distinctive field patterns associated with the scarp footslopes and Low Weald beyond the Park.*
  - *Maintain heritage assets, such as church towers and country houses, as features and landmarks within the views. ...*

### South Downs National Park Authority Tranquillity Study 2017

- 3.6.24 Tranquillity is a greatly valued, key special quality of the SDNP. However, in relation to Sayers Common, in the vicinity of Sayers Common and DPSC3, the lowest levels of tranquillity are identified on the fringes of the north edge of the SDNP to the south of Hurstpierpoint and Burgess Hill, and the A23 also influences the levels of tranquillity, both on approach to the northern boundary of the SDNP and as it passes south through the SDNP to Brighton. The fringes of, and the northern edge of, the SDNP to the south of Sayers Common and DPSC3 exhibit variable tranquillity. Therefore, Sayers Common and DPSC3 are located to the north of an area of the SDNP which generally exhibits lower levels of tranquillity, when considering the wider extent of the SDNP.

### **South Downs Green Infrastructure Framework**

- 3.6.25 The aim of the South Downs Green Infrastructure Framework is to create, protect and enhance a connected network of green-blue infrastructure whilst meeting the needs of the community and supporting the special qualities of the SDNP. Objectives are to deliver economic benefit through green infrastructure; protect and enhance biodiversity and natural beauty of the landscape; improve habitat connectivity; and improve access to green space.

## 4 Landscape and Visual Context

### 4.1 Site Context: DPSC3

- 4.1.1 The Site, DPSC3, is located to the immediate west of, and adjoins the south-western edge of, Sayers Common, as illustrated on **Figure 1: Site Context Plan**. The Site, DPSC3, is formed of two parcels of land: a larger parcel in the east, and a smaller parcel in the west. The eastern parcel relates to Sayers Common by adjoining the south-western edge of the settlement; and abutting the London Road/B2118 in the east, Reed's Lane to the north, and Henfield Road/B2116 to the south. The western parcel abuts Henfield Road in the north, an unnamed lane in the east, Priestfield Farm in the south, and Truslers Hill Lane in the west. The Site, DPSC3, therefore forms a direct connection with Sayers Common to its north-east.
- 4.1.2 Albourne, Albourne Green, and some scattered properties and farmhouses are located south of the Site, DPSC3.
- 4.1.3 Existing substantial office, commercial and industrial development is located to the north of Reed's Lane.

### 4.2 Topography

- 4.2.1 The Site, DPSC3, is located in the shallow valley created by the River Adur, between the higher ground of the SDNP to the south and the High Weald to the north, as illustrated on **Figure 3: Topography Plan**. The land within the vicinity of the Site, DPSC3 is gently undulating, lying predominantly at elevations of between 15 - 40m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD). The Site, DPSC3, is located at an elevation of 15 - 20m AOD. To the south, within the undulating landscape there are areas of slightly more elevated land, at 30 – 40m AOD, such as around Albourne Green and Albourne.
- 4.2.2 Further to the south, the land rises steeply through the north scarp of the SDNP, up to elevations of 150m + AOD. To the north, the land rises up to the High Weald more gradually, up to elevations of 130m+ AOD.

### 4.3 Water courses and drainage

- 4.3.1 Cutler's Brook flows through land to the south of the Site, DPSC3 and links to a number of ponds. The route of the watercourse is lined in some places by mature vegetation and areas of scrubby land. Other, smaller tributaries of the River Adur cross the land surrounding the Site and generally follow field boundaries.
- 4.3.2 A drainage ditch runs along the eastern boundary of the western parcel of the Site DPSC3, and several drainage ditches traverse the eastern parcel in the north-east and southern areas. These ditches form part of a wider drainage network.
- 4.3.3 Although the water courses can present a constraint to development, they also present an opportunity to meet the requirements of policies relating to access and recreation, green infrastructure, landscape character, biodiversity and flooding.

### 4.4 Landcover

- 4.4.1 The landscape pattern of the Site, DPSC3, and surrounding area is generally small-scale and enclosed, with an intricate mix of field boundary vegetation that divides the irregular arable land and pasture that is generally devoid of substantial tracts or areas of woodland. There is a small block woodland located in the southern area of the western parcel.
- 4.4.2 There are several blocks of woodland to the north and east of the Site, DPSC3, including Furze Field to the north of Reed's Land; and Sayers Common Wood (Ancient Woodland), Coombe

Wood (Ancient Woodland) and Chloe Wood the east of the Site, to the east of the London Road/B2118.

#### 4.5 Access and Public Rights of Way (PRoW)

- 4.5.1 The eastern parcel of the Site, DPSC3, immediately adjoins Reeds Lane in the north, the B2118 road in the east, and the B2116/Henfield Road in the south. The western parcel adjoins Henfield Road in the north, Truslers Hill Lane in the west and an unnamed track in the east.
- 4.5.2 PRoW 1/1A1 runs from Reeds Lane along part of the north-eastern boundary of the Site, DPSC3, before connecting with PRoW 11 Hu to the south, which in turn connects with the B2118, and a Sustrans route that runs along the B2118, as illustrated on **Figure 1: Site Context Plan**. PRoW 3/1A1 crosses Reeds Lane and runs north to south through the eastern parcel of the Site, DPSC3, continuing southward to Albourne Green. PRoW 7A1 and 8A1 run north bound from the southern part of the eastern parcel, where they converge and meet Reeds Lane. PRoW 30A1 runs along the eastern Site, DPSC3, boundary of the western parcel. There is a wider network of PRoWs within the surrounding landscape connecting both parcels to Albourne, Sayers Common, Blackstone and the SDNP.
- 4.5.3 The linear road corridor of the B2118 and the A23 passes in a north to south direction to the east of the Site, DPSC3. Reeds Lane forms the northern boundary of the eastern parcel of the Site, DPSC3, connecting with the B2118 in the north-east, forming the eastern boundary of the eastern parcel. The B2116/ Henfield Road forms part of the northern boundary of the western parcel of the Site, DPSC3, and continues eastward to form the southern boundary of the eastern parcel. Truslers Hill Lane forms the western boundary of the western parcel.

#### 4.6 Designations

- 4.6.1 The Site, DPSC3, is not covered by any national, regional or local landscape designations.
- 4.6.2 The SDNP is located some 1.9 km to the south of the Site, DPSC3, at its closest point, and expands to the north-east where it extends to the settlement edge of Hurstpierpoint. It forms part of the wider setting of the landscape and comprises an abundance of Ancient Woodland.
- 4.6.3 There is one Grade II Listed Building, Wellington Cottage, located in the middle of the two parcels forming the Site, DPSC3, just off Henfield Road. A Grade II Listed Building, Potters Field, is also located to the east of the southern extent of the Site, DPSC3, on the northern edge of Albourne Green. Two Listed Buildings are located within Sayers Common, to the north of the Site, DPSC3, but separated from the Site, DPSC3, by existing residential development. Numerous Listed Buildings are located within Albourne and Hurstpierpoint, to the south; and dispersed within the surrounding landscape.
- 4.6.4 There are no Conservation Areas that form part of the Site, DPSC3, here are several in the wider area with the closest, Albourne Conservation Area, approximately 350m to the south.
- 4.6.5 No Ancient Woodland is located on, or adjoining, the Site, DPSC3. Several small blocks of Ancient Woodland occur in the surrounding landscape, to the east; Sayers Common Wood, Coombe Wood and woodland at Coombe Farm, located in between the A23/B2118 road corridor to the south of Sayers Common.
- 4.6.6 The Site is a proposed allocation for a sustainable community at Sayers Common in the emerging Mid Sussex District Local Plan, Regulation 19 Consultation Draft, as set out in draft Policy DPSC3: Land South of Reeds Lane, Sayers Common.

#### 4.7 Landscape Character

- 4.7.1 The landscape character assessment approach is a descriptive approach that seeks to identify and define the distinct character of landscapes that make up the country. This approach

recognises the intrinsic value of all landscapes, not just 'special' landscapes, as contributing factors in people's quality of life, in accordance with the European Landscape Convention. It also ensures that account is taken of the different roles and character of different areas, in accordance with the NPPF Core Principles.

- 4.7.2 In order to inform the potential opportunities and constraints relating to the siting and design of new development so that it may be successfully accommodated and assimilated within the existing landscape and visual context, it is necessary to review published landscape character assessments and establish the key landscape characteristics of the Site, DPSC3. This includes the pattern of land cover, the pattern and distribution of existing built form, and the character of any key views, in particular from the SDNP and High Weald.
- 4.7.3 The description of each landscape is used as a basis for evaluation in order to make judgements to guide, for example, development or landscape management. The extent of published landscape character areas are illustrated on **Figure 4: Landscape Character Plan** and **Figure 5: Local Landscape Character Plan**.
- 4.7.4 All of the Landscape Character Assessments at national, county and district levels identify that the Site generally falls within a Low Weald landscape, which then rises up through foot-slopes to the SDNP south of the Site, DPSC3, and up through Wealden fringes to the High Weald landscape north of the Site, DPSC3. The long views to and from the steep downland scarp of the SDNP south of the Site, DPSC3, and the High Weald fringes of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty north of the Site, DPSC3, are key features of the local landscape.

#### National Landscape Character

- 4.7.5 At a national level, Natural England has produced a Countryside Character Map of England. Volume 7: South-East and London, of their Countryside Character which describes the different landscape character areas covering Sussex. The Site, DPSC3, falls within National Character Area 121: Low Weald, with National Character Area 125: South Downs, to the south and National Character Area 122: High Weald, to the north, as illustrated on **Figure 4: Landscape Character Plan**.

#### County Landscape Character

- 4.7.6 The Site, DPSC3, falls within Landscape Character Area LW6: Central Low Weald and Landscape Character Area LW7: Wiston Low Weald, as identified in the by the West Sussex Landscape Character Assessment (2003)<sup>14</sup>, and as illustrated on **Figure 5: Landscape Character Plan**.

#### District Landscape Character

- 4.7.7 The Site, DPSC3, falls within Landscape Character Area 4: Hickstead Low Weald, as identified in the Landscape Character Assessment for Mid Sussex, (2005)<sup>15</sup>, and illustrated on **Figure 5: Local Landscape Character Plan**.
- 4.7.8 Landscape Character Area 4: Hickstead Low Weald is summarised as a lowland mixed arable and pastoral landscape with a strong hedgerow pattern, lying over low ridges and clay vales drained by the upper Adur streams.
- 4.7.9 Key characteristics include:

<sup>14</sup> West Sussex County Council. Landscape character area map, 2003. Accessed June 2023. Available at: <https://www.westsussex.gov.uk/land-waste-and-housing/landscape-and-environment/landscape-character-assessment-of-west-sussex/>

<sup>15</sup> Mid Sussex District Council. A Landscape Character Assessment for Mid Sussex, 2005. Accessed June 2023. Available at: <https://www.midsussex.gov.uk/media/1755/lca-cover-title-contents-foreword-guide.pdf>

- *Alternating west-east trending low ridges with sandstone beds and clay vales carrying long, sinuous upper Adur streams.*
- *Views dominated by the steep downland scarp to the south and the High Weald fringes to the north.*
- *Arable and pastoral rural landscape, a mosaic of small and larger fields, scattered woodlands, shaws and hedgerows with hedgerow trees.*
- *Quieter and more secluded, confined rural landscape to the west, much more development to the east, centred on Burgess Hill.*
- *Biodiversity in woodland, meadowland, ponds and wetland.*
- *Mix of farmsteads and hamlets favouring ridgeline locations, strung out along lanes.*
- *Crossed by north-south roads including the A23 Trunk Road, with a rectilinear network of narrow rural lanes.*
- *London to Brighton Railway Line crosses the area through Burgess Hill.*
- *Varied traditional rural buildings built with diverse materials including timberframing, weatherboarding, Horsham Stone roofing and varieties of local brick and tile-hanging.*
- *Principal visitor attraction is the Hickstead All England Equestrian Showground.*

4.7.10 A key characteristic of LCA 4 is described as ***‘Quieter and more secluded, confined rural landscape to the west, much more development to the east, centred on Burgess Hill.’*** Therefore, in the east of LCA4, the area has experiences high levels of development centred on Burgess Hill.

4.7.11 In consideration of this key characteristic, the Site, DPSC3, is in a location that is more developed than the more rural areas to the west of LCA4 due to its proximity to commercial premises, the settlement of Sayers Common and variety of uses that reflect edge of settlement activity.

#### **South Downs National Park South Downs Landscape Character Assessment<sup>16</sup>**

4.7.12 Land Use Consultants have produced the South Downs Landscape Character Assessment which covers the landscape character types relevant to the SDNP. It sets out the formative physical and human influences, and the historic environment, all which have shaped the landscape. The Site, DPSC3, is not covered by this landscape character assessment.

## **4.8 Landscape Capacity (Susceptibility)**

### **Mid Sussex District Council Landscape Capacity Study (July 2007)<sup>17</sup>**

4.8.1 Mid Sussex District Council Landscape Capacity Study (July 2007) provides a finer grain of landscape character assessment for Mid Sussex and an assessment of the capacity of the Landscape Character Areas to accommodate development. The Landscape Capacity Study

<sup>16</sup> Land Use Consultants. South Downs Landscape Character Assessment, 2020. Accessed July 2023. Available at: <https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/landscape-design-conservation/south-downs-landscape-character-assessment/>

<sup>17</sup> Hankinson Duckett Associates. Mid Sussex Landscape Capacity Study, July 2007. Accessed June 2023. Available at: [https://www.midsussex.gov.uk/media/3236/ep48i\\_landscapecapacitystudy\\_combined.pdf](https://www.midsussex.gov.uk/media/3236/ep48i_landscapecapacitystudy_combined.pdf)

aims to identify where strategic development might be accommodated in the Mid Sussex District without unacceptable impact on landscape character or the setting of outstanding assets.

- 4.8.2 The Landscape Capacity Study is based on the assumption that development would be largely 2 or 3 storeys in height with occasional landmark buildings of 4-5 storeys, and that there would be open space provision and an appropriate scale landscape framework to ensure that the development achieves a good fit in the landscape. The Landscape Capacity Study considers the sensitivity and value of the landscape in order to determine its capacity to accommodate development.
- 4.8.3 The Landscape Capacity Study identifies that the landscape between the SDNP and High Weald, formed by the Low Weald, High Weald Fringes and Ouse Valley and including the Site, is a more gentle and less dramatic landscape. Whilst these landscapes are not of such a high quality as the SDNP and the High Weald AONB, they are considered to be distinctive landscapes that provide a context for the setting of the SDNP and the High Weald AONB as well as to settlements within the Mid Sussex District.
- 4.8.4 It is of note, as stated in the Landscape Capacity Study that around 60% of Mid Sussex is under national landscape protection designations, with 50% in the High Weald AONB in the northern part of the Mid Sussex District and 10% in the SDNP covering the southern corner of the Mid Sussex District.
- 4.8.5 With regard to the capacity of the Site, DPSC3, to accommodate residential development, as identified in the Landscape Capacity Study, the eastern parcel of the Site, DPSC3, is located in the LCA 63: Albourne Low Weald, and the western parcel is located LCA 80: Trusler's Hill Footslopes; and immediately adjoins the LCA 62: Hickstead-Sayers Common Low Weald which includes Sayers Common, to the north, and LCA 64: Albourne Foothills, to the south and east. LCA 63 and LCA 80 have a Low/Medium capacity to accommodate residential development, as does LCA 64; whilst LCA 62 has a Medium capacity to accommodate residential development.
- 4.8.6 Many of the Landscape Character Areas assessed in the Landscape Capacity Study are considered to have a Negligible, Negligible to Low, or Low capacity with very few areas of the Mid Sussex District identified as having a Low to Medium, Medium, Medium to High or High capacity for residential development. Therefore, the Site, DPSC3, is relatively well suited to accommodate development when compared with the wider Mid Sussex District.
- 4.8.7 The Landscape Capacity Study recommends that any new development promoted within the district should take account of the inherent character of the LCA it is located within, and consider:
- *“Features or characteristics that give an area its special identity and local distinctiveness,*
  - *The need to protect or enhance special or valued characteristics within the local landscape,*
  - *The importance of the character of adjacent landscape character areas, particularly highly valued and high quality landscapes, and views to and from these landscapes.”*
- 4.8.8 In addition, the specific landscape opportunities and constraints of areas promoted for development should be identified and addressed. The Landscape Capacity Study recommends that this is achieved with the preparation of the following:

*“A Landscape strategy which is consistent with local landscape character, taking into account identified landscape sensitivities,..*

*A land use strategy and built form which is characteristic of, and compatible with, the existing settlement pattern, Proposals which avoid landscape and visual impacts on surrounding landscape character areas or the setting to the District’s*

*outstanding assets, and Development proposals which have regard for the setting of, and separation between, existing settlements.” (p55)*

### **The Capacity of Mid Sussex District to Accommodate Development (June 2014)<sup>18</sup>**

- 4.8.9 The Capacity of Mid Sussex District to Accommodate Development (June 2014) provides an update to the Landscape Capacity Study (2007).
- 4.8.10 The Capacity Study states that “a Low/Medium capacity rating indicates that development is likely to have an adverse effect on most of the character area and while smaller development may be possible in a very few locations within the character area, it will not be suitable for strategic scale development” and that “a Medium capacity rating indicates that there is the potential for limited smaller-scale development to be located in some parts of the character area, so long as there is regard for existing features and sensitivities within the landscape”, and paragraph 1.15 of the Capacity Study states that “it is possible to mitigate and compensate for the impacts of development in such a way as to ensure that environmental capacity is not breached.”
- 4.8.11 The Site, DPSC3, remains within LCA 63 and LCA 80, remaining with a Low/Medium capacity to accommodate residential development, as does LCA 64; whilst LCA 62 remains with a Medium capacity to accommodate development.
- 4.8.12 The majority of areas assessed in the Mid Sussex District are still considered to have a Low/Medium or Low Landscape Capacity, with only small pockets Medium and Medium/High Landscape Capacity located around the larger settlements. The Capacity Study has not identified any areas within the Mid Sussex District as having a High Landscape Capacity. Therefore, the Capacity Study continues to identify the Site, DPSC3, as being located within one of the least constrained areas of the Mid Sussex District; and in an area considerably less sensitive than much of the rest of the Mid Sussex District, a large proportion of which remains is covered by the national level landscape designations for the High Weald AONB and the SDNP.

---

<sup>18</sup> Land Use Consultants. Capacity of Mid Sussex District to accommodate development, 2014. Accessed June 2023. Available at: <https://www.midsussex.gov.uk/media/2485/mid-sussex-capacity-study.pdf>

## 5 Landscape and Visual Appraisal

### 5.1 Overview

- 5.1.1 A landscape and visual appraisal of the Site, DPSC3, is intended to identify the sensitivity of the Site, based on the combination of the value and sensitivity of the Site, DPSC3, and then capacity (or susceptibility) of the Site, DPSC3, to accommodate predominantly residential development, taking into account the context of the SDNP and location of the Site, DPSC3, within the setting of the SDNP. The appraisal is intended to guide the layout and appearance of predominantly residential development on the Site, DPSC3, and takes account of any landscape and visual constraints and opportunities identified as part of the baseline studies, as illustrated on **Figure 8: Landscape and Visual Opportunities and Constraints Plan**.
- 5.1.2 The Landscape Appraisal provides a description of the Site, DPSC3, with reference to **Figure 6: Site Appraisal Plan, Site Appraisal Photographs A – Y**, in **Appendix A**, illustrating the existing character of the Site, DPSC3, in the eastern parcel, and **Site Appraisal Photographs A(i) - B(i)**, in **Appendix A**, illustrating the character of the western parcel of the Site, DPSC3. The locations from which the Site Appraisal Photographs were taken are shown on **Figure 6: Site Appraisal Plan**. The landscape character of the Site, DPSC3, is described and its context within the setting of the SDNP is considered, drawing a comparison with key characteristics identified in published character area appraisals as set out in Chapter 4 and **Figures 4 and 5: Landscape Character Plans**.
- 5.1.3 The Visual Appraisal includes consideration of sensitive visual receptors identified in the baseline, with particular reference to the following key visual sensitivities:
- Views from elevated locations within the SDNP with reference to the View Characterisation Study<sup>19</sup>.
  - Views from the edge of the SDNP
  - Users of PRow between the SDNP and the Site i.e within the setting of the SDNP. A narrative is provided to describe the visual experience of users along a number of connected PRow where there is the potential to experience views of the Site.
- 5.1.4 The visual context of the Site, DPSC3, is illustrated by **Site Context Photographs 1 - 23**, in **Appendix A**, the locations of which are illustrated on **Figure 7: Visual Appraisal Plan**.

### 5.2 Landscape Appraisal

#### Description and Appraisal of the Site

- 5.2.1 The landscape character, which is the combination of landscape elements, and quality of the landscape, varies across the Site, DPSC3, and as a result there are differing areas of sensitivity as shown on **Figure 8: Landscape and Visual Constraints and Opportunities Plan**.
- 5.2.2 The Site, DPSC3, exhibits some, but not all, of the key characteristics identified in published character area appraisals and contributes to the landscape setting of the SDNP.
- 5.2.3 The Site, DPSC3, is influenced by its proximity to the existing settlement of Sayers Common, as illustrated by **Site Context Photograph A**, with other settlements such as the village of Albourne Green and Albourne and the hamlet of High Cross in the vicinity. Residential development would not be out of keeping within this settled landscape.

<sup>19</sup> Land Use Consultants. South Downs National Park: View Characterisation and Analysis, 2015. Accessed July 2023. Available at: <https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Viewshed-Study-Report.pdf>

- 5.2.4 The Site, DPSC3, is comprised of two parcels, an eastern and western parcel, that total an area of 90.04ha in size. The parcels are made up of a mosaic of irregular and regular shaped fields of small to medium sizes comprising a mix of rough pasture, arable and amenity use such as equestrian use. This landscape character is more representative of the more developed area to the east of LCA4: Landscape Character Area 4: Hickstead Low Weald<sup>20</sup>, around Burgess Hill and is less quiet, rural and secluded in nature compared to the west of LCA4.
- 5.2.5 As illustrated by **Site Appraisal Photographs A – Y** and **A(i) - B(i)**, the eastern and western parcels slope gently upwards towards the south and south-east to form a low ridgeline. The land also undulates very gently across both parcels of land from east to west. The undulating landform and series of low ridgelines is a key characteristic identified in LCA4. It is this very characteristic that would allow residential development to be successfully accommodated in this location.
- 5.2.6 Key features that provide distinctiveness are the boundary vegetation, mature hedgerows and hedgerow trees within the Site, DPSC3, and on its boundaries, including a small linear block of woodland that is located in the southern part of the western parcel, as illustrated by **Site Appraisal Photograph Bi**. All of these elements are identified as key characteristics in LCA A 4. Water filled ditches are also present and collectively all these elements provide strong biodiversity. This vegetation provides a structure and level of enclosure that would provide a landscape framework for residential development, filtering views, reflecting the pattern of the wider landscape, and assimilating development into the immediate and wider landscape and visual context.
- 5.2.7 However, the quality of the boundary vegetation does vary on Site, DPSC3, with scrubby vegetation along the eastern boundary, as illustrated by **Site Appraisal Photograph G**. Some hedgerows are less maintained and gappy in their appearance and in contrast there is a trimmed uniform hedgerow along the northern boundary with Reeds Lane, as illustrated by **Site Appraisal Photographs O and H**. There is an opportunity for residential development to contribute to improving and enhancing these elements.
- 5.2.8 In terms of aesthetic and perceptual factors the Site, DPSC3, does not exhibit a particular sense of place and scenic quality is moderate. The complexity of field patterns and enclosure from hedgerows with hidden areas beyond ridgelines, provides some identity and character as does the occasional opportunity for longer distance vistas.
- 5.2.9 The visually prominent built form of Valley Farm/King Business Park and the AvTrade Headquarters buildings located close to the northern Site boundary are an incongruous element within this landscape and are noticeable within views from the SDNP and from within its setting. Residential development within this context would therefore not be out of keeping with its surroundings.
- 5.2.10 The proximity of the Listed Building Wellington Cottage, located between the boundaries of both parcels, and the Listed Building, Potters Field, to the east of the southern part of the eastern parcels, on the northern edge of Albourne Green, are important considerations with regard to potential effects on their setting and the siting of any development.

### The Eastern Parcel of the Site

- 5.2.11 As shown by **Figure 6: Site Appraisal Plan**, the eastern parcel rises gently in a south-easterly direction, from around 15mAOD at its northern boundary up to approximately 37m AOD along its southernmost boundaries. It is initially predominantly relatively flat, as shown by **Site Appraisal Photographs A, D, and S**, and starts to rise in the lower portion of this parcel, as shown by **Site Appraisal Photographs F, G, L and W**, and it is from these more elevated parts

<sup>20</sup> Mid Sussex District Council. A Landscape Character Assessment for Mid Sussex, 2005. Accessed June 2023. Available at: <https://www.midsussex.gov.uk/media/1755/lca-cover-title-contents-foreword-guide.pdf>

of the Site, DPSC3, that there is greater potential for intervisibility with the surrounding landscape particularly to the south.

- 5.2.12 As previously identified, the Site, DPSC3, is located in a settled landscape and the eastern parcel has a strong relationship with built form on its northern and eastern boundaries. Residential development would be in keeping with this character.
- 5.2.13 **Site Appraisal Photographs A and B** show the visual relationship with the settlement of Sayers Common where existing residential properties in Meadow View are clearly seen beyond the eastern boundary.
- 5.2.14 **Site Appraisal Photographs E, H- J, O, P and S** illustrate the dominant presence of the Valley Farm/ King Business Park and the AvTrade Headquarters, located to the immediate north of Reeds Lane.
- 5.2.15 As demonstrated by **Site Appraisal Photographs D, E, F J, I and M**, general visibility across the eastern parcel is restricted to short range views within each field. Where the land slopes down to the north and northwest a slightly greater visibility is revealed, as illustrated by **Site Appraisal Photographs Photos A, B, H & Y**.
- 5.2.16 The eastern parcel cannot be viewed in its entirety from any location within the Site, DPSC3, due to the undulations, complex mosaic of field patterns, and the enclosure by the abundance of hedgerows and trees that foreshorten and limit views. This landscape framework would equally fragment views of residential development.
- 5.2.17 In some areas fields are subdivided with post and wire fencing that appears to relate to equestrian usage, as illustrated by **Site Appraisal Photographs X and Y**, and this detracts from the characteristic and aesthetically appealing enclosure provided by hedgerows and trees.

### The Western Parcel of the Site

- 5.2.18 The western parcel of land rises gently upwards in a southerly direction. The majority of this parcel of land lies between 15m AOD and 25m AOD and intervisibility with the landscape to the south is limited by intervening vegetation and the land rising at its southern boundary to approximately 35m AOD, as illustrated by **Site Appraisal Photographs A(i) And B(i)**. On the southern edge of the western parcel, it forms part of a characteristic low ridgeline which is marked by a small woodland area located within the Site, DPSC3. It is from these more elevated parts of the western parcel that there is the potential for intervisibility with the surrounding landscape, particularly to the south. Residential development in this area is likely to be more noticeable in views from the south.
- 5.2.19 **Site Appraisal Photographs (A(i) and B(i))** illustrate the settled context to the Site, DPSC3, where built form comprising farmsteads, isolated dwellings and clusters of dwellings near the boundaries are evident, creating a context in which residential development would not be out of place.
- 5.2.20 The low level, very gently undulating landscape with irregular small to medium sized fields and well-established hedgerow boundaries and trees, results in a moderate level of enclosure and sense of intimacy. Views are foreshortened by intervening vegetation and trees marking the boundaries of successive fields that would provide a strong landscape framework in which to incorporate residential development.
- 5.2.21 As illustrated by **Site Appraisal Photograph B(i)** the land rises to the south of western parcel starts to afford more elevated views to distant horizons to the north and northwest beyond the Site, DPSC3, with limited views of the Site, DPSC3, as the Site, DPSC3, is relatively concealed amongst vegetation.

5.2.22 In some areas fields are subdivided with post and wire fence that appears to relate to equestrian usage, as illustrated by **Site Appraisal Photograph B(i)**, and this detracts from the characteristic and aesthetically appealing enclosure provided by hedgerows and trees.

### 5.3 Visual Appraisal

5.3.1 A visual analysis considers the nature of views experienced of the Site, DPSC3, from receptors of high visual sensitivity i.e., those within the setting to the SDNP and from within the SDNP. Selected representative **Site Context Photographs 1 – 23** illustrate these views, and **Figure 7: Visual Appraisal Plan** identifies their locations.

5.3.2 Viewers at all the Site Context Photograph locations are considered to have a high susceptibility to change as they are located along PRoWs where their focus is likely to be primarily on their setting or enjoyment of the countryside. A high value is attached to their views inter alia due to the viewers location both within the SDNP and its setting. The visual sensitivity of receptors at these Site Context Photographs is therefore high.

5.3.3 The visibility of the Site, DPSC3, is considered from elevated locations within the SDNP, as illustrated by **Site Context Photographs 1 to 5, 22 and 23**. **Site Context Photograph 2: Devils Dyke** and **Site Context Photograph 22: Wolstonbury Hill** are identified as key views, as referred to as Representative View 2 and Representative View 29, respectively, in the South Downs National Park: View Characterisation and Analysis.<sup>21</sup> The analysis also considers the potential for views at the edge of the SDNP as illustrated by **Site Context Photographs 6 to 8**.

5.3.4 The Site, DPSC3, is also within the setting of the SDNP. **Site Context Photograph 9 - 13 and 14 – 20, and 21** are illustrative of the visual experience within this area, and as experienced from PRoW 15/1A, in a west to east direction.

5.3.5 The series of views demonstrate the very limited zone of visual influence of the Site, DPSC3. This is due to a combination of elements such as the nature of the intervening topography, including ridgelines and subtle undulations may block or curtail views towards the Site, DPSC3, and vegetation, such as woodland, tree-belts or built forms that may contribute to additional screening, filtering or curtailing of views; that serves to screen or partially screen views of the Site, DPSC3. The whole Site, DPSC3, cannot be viewed in its entirety from any location.

#### Key Views from elevated locations within the SDNP (Site Context Photographs 1 – 5, 22 and 23)

5.3.6 **Site Context Photograph 1 to 5, 22 and 23**, are taken from elevated locations within the SDNP where there is the potential for intervisibility with the Site, DPSC3. As noted, **Site Context Photograph 2**, from Devils Dyke, and **Site Context Photograph 22**, from Wolstonbury Hill are also identified as key view in the South Downs National Park: View Characterisation and Analysis<sup>22</sup>, as Representative View 2: Devil's Dyke, and Representative View 29: Wolstonbury Hill, respectively.

5.3.7 Views from these elevated locations within the SDNP illustrate the existing landscape character of the Low Weald when looking north, and are characterised by a patchwork of irregular medium to large sized fields; woodland, hedgerows, and trees; within the foothills and low weald landscape; with towns, villages and scattered settlement set within this landscape framework, particularly in the vicinity of Sayers Common and the Site DPSC3. Scattered settlements, such as Henfield, Albourne, Hurstpierpoint and Hassocks, are identified in The South Downs National Park: View Characterisation and Analysis as a characteristic component of views and can be seen in the panoramic view together with the larger settlement of Burgess Hill. Sayers

<sup>21</sup> Land Use Consultants. South Downs National Park: View Characterisation and Analysis, 2015. Accessed July 2023. Available at: <https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Viewshed-Study-Report.pdf>

Common, and the Site, DPSC3, are set within this context, set beyond a broad swathe of low ridges and vales and within a strong complex landscape framework of mature woodlands, treebelts, trees and hedgerows, which assists in screening views of both Sayers Common and the Site, DPSC3. It is notable that the AvTrade Headquarters buildings, to the north of the Site, DPSC3, are prominent in these many of the views. Any distant views of residential development on the Site, DPSC3, would also be set within this framework of landscape and settlement, would not be conspicuous within these views, and would be characteristic of the existing components of the views.

- 5.3.8 **Site Context Photographs 1 to 5, 22 and 23**, demonstrate that that the Site, DPSC3, is partially and only just discernible within the context of much wider, expansive, elevated long distance panoramic views over the Low Weald landscape. Noticeable elements of built form such as the proximity of the AvTrade Headquarters to the north of the Site, DPSC3, and Reeds Lane, provide visual markers as to the location of the Site, DPSC3, which otherwise would not be easily discernible.
- 5.3.9 Within this context residential development would be partially discernible in the distance within what are expansive longer distance elevated panoramic views and would constitute a minor change to the view overall, which would be unobtrusive. The layout and appearance of residential development would not be out of keeping with its surrounding landscape context, settlement pattern, and character of the existing view. Therefore, at these distances, it is unlikely that there will be unobscured views towards the Site, DPSC3, from elevated locations within the SDNP, as illustrated by **Site Context Photographs 1 to 5, 22 and 23**, and Representative Viewpoints 2 and 29.
- 5.3.10 The retention of key landscape features, such as woodland, hedgerows, and trees together with an enhanced landscape buffer and set-back lower density of development on the most visually sensitive areas, predominantly on the southern boundary of the Site, DPSC3, located the closest to the SDNP and the highest part of the Site, DPSC3, would ensure that development on the Site, DPSC3, would be well contained in views from the SDNP. This would also safeguard visual separation between Albourne and Sayers Common, and the retention of their separate identities. Taking into account the distance from the SDNP and the existing characteristics of views, residential development on the Site, DPSC3, would not be conspicuous in views from the SDNP.

### Views from the edge of SDNP (Site Context Photographs 6 - 8)

- 5.3.11 **Site Context Photograph 6 - 8** are taken from the edge of the SDNP on the lower slopes where there is the potential for intervisibility with the Site, DPSC3. **Site Context Photograph 6** is located just outside of the SDNP within the setting of the SDNP. **Site Context Photographs 7 and 8** are located on the boundary of the SDNP. The land at these Site Context Photographs is slightly elevated in relation to the Site, DPSC3, varying between 35m to 50m AOD.
- 5.3.12 **Site Context Photographs 6 - 8** illustrate the limited extent of visibility of the Site, DPSC3, from the edge of the SDNP and from within its setting. **Site Context Photograph 6** shows that the Site, DPSC3, is entirely screened from view by existing intervening woodland and the nature of the rolling topography, and residential development would also be screened from view.
- 5.3.13 **Site Context Photographs 7 and 8** also illustrate the character of the landscape within the setting of the SDNP, including gentle rolling hills, low ridge lines, wooded areas, hedgerows and trees and the high degree of enclosure, in which any views of the Site, DPSC3, are very limited, restricted to glimpses of hedgerow boundaries and trees seen beyond intervening hedgerows and trees. These views also demonstrate the settled nature of the landscape where built form is evident and characteristic and residential development on the Site, DPSC3, would not out of place.
- 5.3.14 Within this context residential development is unlikely to be noticeable or would constitute a very minor change within these views from these locations. The retention of key landscape features such as the framework of hedgerows and trees and setting back of the development

away from the more visually sensitive areas to the south of the Site, DPSC3, as illustrated on **Figure 8: Landscape and Visual Opportunities and Constraints Plan**, would ensure that residential development would be unlikely to be noticeable within these views. The setting of the SDNP and views from the SDNP would therefore remain unharmed.

### Sequence of views between the SDNP and the Site (Site Context Photographs 9 - 12 and 14 - 20)

- 5.3.15 **Site Context Photograph locations 9 - 11** are selected to demonstrate the visual experience of users of PRowS within the setting of the SDNP and their visual relationship with the Site, DPSC3. These views are from a ridgeline that is at a slightly higher elevation than the Site, DPSC3, and therefore have the potential to afford visibility of the Site, DPSC3.
- 5.3.16 The Site, DPSC3, due to the undulating nature of the land, tends to be hidden or concealed behind and between intervening ridge lines and substantial lines of vegetation, including that on the Site boundary. The views are more expansive and longer distance in nature, tending to look over and beyond the Site towards the North Weald AONB. The settled nature of the landscape is apparent, with isolated dwellings appearing in the views and the settlement of Albourne being visible in the east of the view, as illustrated by **Site Context Photograph 10**.
- 5.3.17 In the vicinity of **Site Context Photograph 12** the land slopes downwards towards Cutters Brook and the PRow is closer to the Site, DPSC3. Views in this area tend to look across the fields and vegetation around Cutters Brook and upwards towards another ridgeline that forms the skyline. The southern Site boundaries are located just over this skyline, the hedges and wooded areas of which are partially visible. Residential development should be set back from this ridge to limit harm to visual amenity.

### Site Context Photographs 14 - 20

- 5.3.18 **Site Context Photographs 14 - 20** capture the visual experience of users of PRow 15/1A that traverses an undulating ridge line close to the southern boundaries of the Site. **Site Context Photographs 14 – 20** demonstrate that the Site, DPSC3, is mostly screened from view. Where views are afforded, they are partial and intermittent due to the Site, DPSC3, being screened by the nature of the intervening topography, vegetation along its boundaries and field boundaries within the Site, DPSC3.
- 5.3.19 **Site Context Photographs 14, 15 and 16** look towards a field that slopes upwards towards the southern boundary of the western parcel of the Site, DPSC3. Other than the vegetation on its southern boundaries the Site, DPSC3, is not visible.
- 5.3.20 At **Site Context Photographs 17 and 18** the land rises and the Site, DPSC3, is barely discernible. There are filtered views of vegetation within the Site, DPSC3, and on its Site boundaries, which are largely screened, due to the presence of intervening hedgerows, field patterns and a high degree of enclosure that restrict visibility.
- 5.3.21 Around **Site Context Photograph 19** glimpses of the southern portion of the western parcel of the Site, DPSC3, are afforded, in which AvTrade Headquarters, located beyond the northern boundary of the Site, DPSC3, is prominent.
- 5.3.22 In the vicinity of **Site Context Photograph 20**, on approach to Albourne Green. the most southern elevated portion of the western parcel of the Site is visible. The remainder of the Site, DPSC3, is not visible in the view due to the landform.
- 5.3.23 The sequence of views illustrated by **Site Context Photographs 14 - 20** demonstrates that residential development could be accommodated without undue harm to visual amenity. Residential development should be set back from the southern boundary, set beyond a landscape buffer, to limit visibility and ensure that it would not be visible or noticeable in the vicinity of **Site Context Photographs 14 -18**. Around **Site Context Photographs 19 - 20** the introduction of residential development is unlikely to detract from the visual amenity of users

due to the existing detracting presence of the AvTrade Headquarters and the existing topography and framework of trees and hedgerows that would afford only partial views of residential development.

### Site Context Photograph 21

5.3.24 **Site Context Photograph 21** shows a slightly elevated view that tends to look over the Site, DPSC3, to the north and north-west to distant views beyond the Site, DPSC3. A larger portion of the eastern parcel is visible but not in its entirety. The view shows filtered views of the eastern parcel, all in the context of existing and prominent built form where residential development would be set within existing vegetation and would not be likely to be out of keeping with its context.

## 5.4 Value, Susceptibility (Capacity) and Sensitivity

5.4.1 The landscape and visual sensitivity to development varies across the Site, as illustrated by **Figure 8: Landscape and Visual Opportunities and Constraints Plan**.

5.4.2 In terms of value, although the Site, DPSC3, is not highly distinctive at a national level, and whilst it is not covered by any landscape designation, it is recognised that it forms part of the landscape context for the setting of the SDNP and may be of high value at a local level.

5.4.3 In terms of susceptibility, the Site, DPSC3, has a medium/moderate ability to accommodate development of the nature proposed, that is predominantly residential development, without undue consequences for the maintenance of the baseline situation, as recognised by the allocation of the Site for a sustainable community at Sayers Common in the emerging Mid Sussex District Local Plan.

5.4.4 Certain features are more susceptible than others to change, such as the characteristic pattern of enclosure created by hedgerows and trees and the nature of the topography. It is these very features that would also perform an important screening function, form coherent parcels within which to accommodate residential development, break up the occurrence of built form, and successfully assimilate residential development with its surrounding environment.

5.4.5 The Site, DPSC3, is located within LCA 4: Hickstead Low Weald, and a key characteristic of LCA 4 is described as ***'Quieter and more secluded, confined rural landscape to the west, much more development to the east, centred on Burgess Hill.'*** In consideration of this key characteristic, the Site, DPSC3, is in a location that is more developed than the more rural areas to the west of LCA4 due to its proximity to commercial premises, the settlement of Sayers Common and variety of uses that reflect edge of settlement activity.

5.4.6 The viewers at all the representative Site Context Photographs are afforded high sensitivity. However, the analysis of the key representative Site Context Photographs demonstrates that residential development could be accommodated without detracting from their visual amenity.

5.4.7 As demonstrated by the Site Context Photograph analysis, the Site, DPSC3, is barely discernible or not visible within views from the edge of the SDNP and from elevated locations within the SDNP, and cannot be seen in its entirety; therefore, it is considered that residential development on the Site, DPSC3, would be in accordance with Adopted Policy DP18<sup>23</sup> and Draft Policy DPC5<sup>24</sup> of the MSDC Adopted Local Plan and draft MSD Regulation 19 Local Plan.

5.4.8 It is evident that, due to the land rising within the southern areas of the Site, DPSC3, these are more susceptible to development due to their potential for increased visibility of residential

<sup>23</sup> Mid Sussex District Council. Mid Sussex District Plan 2014-2031, March 2018. Accessed June 2023. Available at: <https://www.midsussex.gov.uk/media/3406/mid-sussex-district-plan.pdf>

<sup>24</sup> Mid Sussex District Council. Mid Sussex District Plan 2021- 2039, Consultation Draft (Regulation 19), 2022. Accessed May 2024. Available at: <https://www.midsussex.gov.uk/planning-building/mid-sussex-district-plan/district-plan-review>

development in views. This does not preclude development in these areas; however, it will require taking into account the sensitivities of a higher elevation by including buffer planting and offering a reduced density of development. An enhanced landscape buffer should be located to the southern boundaries of the Site, DPSC3, to contain views from the SDNP located further south, as well as provide a visual separation and retention of identities between Albourne and Sayers Common and the Site, DPSC3. This would also have the added benefit of screening views of the AvTrade Headquarters to the north of the Site, DPSC3, which are conspicuous in views from elevated parts of the SDNP.

- 5.4.9 As a result of the above, the Site, DPSC3, is assessed as having a moderate capacity to accommodate development of the nature proposed.
- 5.4.10 This broadly accords with the findings of the Mid Sussex District Council Landscape Capacity Study<sup>25</sup> that identified the Site, DPSC3, as being in areas LCA 63: Albourne Low Weald and LCA 80: Trusler's Hill Footslopes; and of low to medium capacity to accommodate residential development. However, the Site, DPSC3, is at the very northern edge of LCA 63 and LCA 80, and adjoins LCA 62 which has a medium capacity to accommodate development, and therefore increased capacity to accommodate development.
- 5.4.11 It is of note, as stated in the Landscape Capacity Study, that around 60% of Mid Sussex is under national landscape protection designations, with 50% in the High Weald AONB in the northern part of the Mid Sussex District and 10% in the SDNP covering the southern corner of the Mid Sussex District.
- 5.4.12 The majority of areas assessed in the Mid Sussex District are considered to have a Low/Medium or Low Landscape Capacity, with only small pockets Medium and Medium/High Landscape Capacity located around the large settlements. The Capacity Study has not identified any areas within the Mid Sussex District as having a High Landscape Capacity. Therefore, the Capacity Study identifies the Site, DPSC3, as being located within one of the least constrained areas of the Mid Sussex District; and in an area considerably less sensitive than much of the rest of the Mid Sussex District, a large proportion of which remains is covered by the national level landscape designations for the High Weald AONB and the SDNP.

---

<sup>25</sup> Land Use Consultants. Capacity of Mid Sussex District to accommodate development, 2014. Accessed June 2023. Available at: <https://www.midsussex.gov.uk/media/2485/mid-sussex-capacity-study.pdf>

## 6 Landscape and Visual Opportunities and Constraints and Landscape and Visual Strategies

### 6.1 Landscape Opportunities and Constraints

- 6.1.1 **Figure 8: Landscape and Visual Opportunities and Constraints Plan** sets out the landscape and visual strategies that will assist in successfully accommodating development sensitively within the Site, DPSC3, its immediate and wider locality, and the setting of the SDNP; taking into account the landscape and visual considerations; and the landscape policy guidance, including the NPPF, the Mid Sussex Local Plan, and the SDNP.
- 6.1.2 Predominantly residential development on the Site would be well contained by the surrounding existing development and vegetation, limiting the encroachment of development into the immediate surrounding landscape to the east, north and west. The southern boundary is more open; however, with the appropriate landscape strategy, including a landscape buffer, a sensitive transition from settlement edge to the immediate landscape to the south, characteristic of the existing settlement pattern in the landscape, would be created; successfully assimilating development into the immediate and wider landscape, with limited encroachment.
- 6.1.3 It would, therefore, be possible to accommodate predominantly residential development on the Site, retaining, protecting and enhancing the existing vegetation and trees on the eastern and southern boundary of the Site, with the loss of any landscape features generally limited to a length of trimmed uniform hedge along Reeds Lane, Henfield Road and B2118 London Road to facilitate access into the Site. Trees located along the boundaries of the Site would be retained, with development within the Site offset to accommodate any required root protection areas within the development. PRoW 1/1A1 would also be accommodated within the development along the eastern boundary. Again, the enhancement to the existing vegetation on the southern boundary would create a robust defined boundary to the settlement edge of Sayers Common.
- 6.1.4 Furthermore, the Site is not located close to the SDNP. The Site is, and residential development on the Site would be, screened in views from the SDNP through the combination of a southern landscape boundary treatment and the distance from the SDNP; and would not be conspicuous in views from the SDNP due to the existing characteristics of views from the SDNP.
- 6.1.5 The Indicative Plan for the Site, DPSC3, setting out the approximate location of uses and mitigation, in the draft MSDC Regulation 19 Local Plan, on Page 171, also illustrates the landscape and visual strategies that will assist in successfully accommodating development sensitively within the Site, DPSC3, within its immediate and wider locality, and within the setting of the SDNP. These strategies have been informed by the landscape and visual appraisal of the Site, DPSC3, as illustrated on **Figure 8 Landscape and Visual Constraints Plan**, along with consideration of the special qualities of the SDNP, the setting of the SDNP, and elevated views from the SDNP, north towards Sayers Common and the Site, DPSC3. The landscape and visual strategies also respond to relevant policies as set out in the SDNP Partnership Management Plan, SDNP Local Plan, NPPF, and the MSDC Adopted Local Plan and emerging Local Plan. These strategies have been distilled within the Indicative Plan shown on Page 171 of the draft MSDC Regulation 19 Local Plan and the **Development Concept and Framework Masterplan** set out within the **Framework Masterplan Document: Land South of Reeds Lane**, included in **Appendix C**, and within the **Framework Masterplan Document: Sayers Common Sustainable Community**, included within **Appendix D**.

### 6.2 Landscape and Visual Strategies

- 6.2.1 The following landscape and visual strategies have informed the initial proposals for the development of the Site, DPSC3, to ensure that development can be successfully assimilated

within the Site, DPSC3 and its immediate and wider surroundings, and, as required by Policy DP18 of the Adopted MSDC Local Plan and Draft Policy DPC 5: Setting of the South Downs National Park of the MSDC Regulation 19 Local Plan, would not detract from, or cause detriment to, the visual and special qualities (including dark skies), tranquillity and essential characteristics of the National Park, and the views, outlook and aspect, into and out of the National Park by virtue of the development's location, scale, form or design; and would be sensitively located and designed, be consistent with National Park purposes, would not adversely affect transitional landscape character, and would not significantly harm the National Park or its setting.

- Development should be generally set within the existing retained field pattern, to sensitively accommodate development within the existing robust framework of substantial woodland, hedgerows, hedgerows with trees, and tree belts which divide the fields and provide containment along the boundaries of the Site, DPSC3. The retained robust framework of vegetation should provide the basis for an enhanced landscape framework to further contain potential development, reflecting the characteristic relationship between the landscape and settlement. (SDNPPMP: Policy1; SD Local Plan Policies 1, 4 and 19; MSDC Draft Policy DPC1: Protection and Enhancement of the Countryside; Adopted Policy 37: Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows and Draft Policy DPN4: Trees Woodland and Hedgerows)
- An enhanced landscape framework within which to accommodate potential development should provide buffer planting along the southern boundary of the Site, DPSC3, which along with a lower density of development on the southern edges of, and on the relatively more elevated parts of the Site, DPSC3, should ensure development is contained within the Site, DPSC3, and limit any adverse effects beyond the Site, DPSC3, to sensitively respond to the most visually sensitive areas located closest to the SDNP. (SDNPPMP: Policy1; MSDC Adopted Policy DP18: Setting of the South Downs National Park and Draft Policy DPC5: Setting of the South Downs National Park)
- An enhanced landscape framework should take into account possible views from elevated locations within the SDNP, reinforcing the existing framework of vegetation in the most visually sensitive areas to enhance the containment of development, and provide screening and mitigation of views of development within views from the SDNP. (SDNPPMP: Policy1; SD Local Plan Strategic Policy SD 6: Safeguarding Views; MSDC Adopted Policy DP18: Setting of the South Downs National Park and Draft Policy DPC5: Setting of the South Downs National Park)
- The Tranquillity of the SDNP, which is a key special quality of the SDNP, should be maintained. Development on the Site, DPSC3, should not adversely impact the tranquillity of the SDNP and should minimise the perceptual appreciation of any increase in urban development, roads and people; and maintain the appreciation of wide, open spaces, natural landscapes, and trees, woodland and wildlife. An enhanced landscape framework should assist in assimilating development into its immediate context, limiting the perception of an increase in urban development, roads and people from the SDNP; and being at distance from the SDNP, the perception of loss of open wide spaces, natural landscapes, trees, woodland and wildlife should also be limited. (SDNPPMP: Policy1; SD Local Plan Strategic Policy SD7: Relative Tranquillity; MSDC Adopted Policy DP18: Setting of the South Downs National Park and Draft Policy DPC5: Setting of the South Downs National Park)
- Development of the Site, DPSC3, should respect the dark skies of the SDNP. Potential development should take all opportunities to reduce light pollution, (including sky glow, glare and light spillage) to minimise the impacts on local amenity, intrinsically dark landscapes and the SDNP. This should include considering using the minimum amount of lighting necessary to achieve its purpose; the design and specification of the lighting to minimise light pollution; siting lighting as unobtrusively as possible; considering the appropriate siting, fitting, design, colour and temperature of lighting to limit the adverse impact on wildlife; and the use of a recessive material palette for potential development,

acknowledging the sensitivity in the visibility of the night. Specifically, the enhanced landscape framework should also aim to strategically screen lighting so that night-time visibility in the immediate locality, and from within the SDNP, is reduced, and dark skies within the SDNP are maintained. (SDNPPMP: Policy1; SD Local Plan Strategic Policy SD7: Relative Tranquillity; MSDC Adopted Policy DP18: Setting of the South Downs National Park, Draft Policy DPC5: Setting of the South Downs National Park and Draft Policy DPN8: Light Impacts and Dark Skies)

- The existing Green-Blue Infrastructure within the Site, DPSC3, should be retained and enhanced. (SDNPPMP Policy 4 and 19; MSDC Adopted Policy 38: Biodiversity, Draft Policies DPN1: Biodiversity, Geodiversity and Nature Recovery, DPN2: Biodiversity Net Gain, and DPN3: Green and Blue Infrastructure, and DPSC3: Point 12)
- The Site, DPSC3, benefits from a network of existing hedgerows and hedgerow trees, and these key features should be retained wherever possible and enhanced with further planting where possible. This would maintain and strengthen the existing pattern of field enclosure, and strengthen the existing green-blue infrastructure framework, enhancing biodiversity, and reinforcing and extending green wildlife corridors. (SDNPPMP Policy 4 and 19; MSDC Adopted Policy 38: Biodiversity and Draft Policies DPN1: Biodiversity, Geodiversity and Nature Recovery, DPN2: Biodiversity Net Gain, DPN3: Green and Blue Infrastructure, and DPSC3: Point 12)
- Existing water features should also be retained and enhanced. These are often located alongside hedgerows which should be retained and enhanced with further planting/landscaping, or alongside PRowS which should be retained or created, located within green corridors providing green-blue and biodiversity benefits. (SDNPPMP Policy 4 and 19; MSDC Adopted Policy 38: Biodiversity and Draft Policies DPN1: Biodiversity, Geodiversity and Nature Recovery, DPN2: Biodiversity Net Gain, DPN3: Green and Blue Infrastructure, and DPSC3: Point 12)
- An enhanced landscape framework should also provide integration with the existing settlement edge of Sayers Common, with the retained and extended network of PRowS providing greater connectivity, both to the existing settlement, and to the wider countryside, beyond the Site, DPSC3. (MSDC Adopted Policy DP22: Rights of Way and other Recreational Routes, Draft Policy DPSC3: Points 5, 7 and 8)
- The setting to heritage assets such as Listed Buildings close to DPSC3 should be respected by providing landscape buffers and frontages at the boundaries of DPSC3 to physically and visually contain development on the Site, DPSC3, to conserve the setting of Listed Building and heritage assets.
- The individual identity of Sayers Common, including the Site, DPSC3 on the edge of the settlement of Sayers Common, and that of Albourne should be maintained, through a comprehensive landscape strategy, based on the retained and enhanced existing landscape framework; including the retention of existing vegetation along the southern boundary of the Site, DPSC3, enhanced with a landscape buffer to clearly differentiate between the separate settlements. Retention of a gap and landscape buffer should secure visual separation, and maintain the perception of the separate identities, of these settlements. (MSDC Draft Policy DPC2: Preventing Coalescence, and Albourne Parish Council Neighbourhood Plan: Policy Countryside – ALC3: Local Gaps and Preventing Coalescence)
- Development should be of high architectural quality set within a comprehensive landscape framework of green and blue infrastructure, and a network of recreational routes, formal and informal open space and recreational opportunities. Materials should be specifically selected to reflect the local vernacular of the area and create a sense of place, so that potential development reflects the character of the local built environment and will be well assimilated into its immediate and wider surroundings. (MSDC Adopted Policy DP26: Character and Design and Draft Policy DPB1: Character and Design).

- An enhanced landscape framework should provide a key screening opportunity in north-facing views from the SDNP towards the visually prominent AvTrade headquarter buildings. The location of the Site, DPSC3, in the foreground of these buildings would assist in softening the existing visually conspicuous nature of the AvTrade headquarters in views from the SDNP, both at day and night. (MSDC Adopted Policy DP18: Setting of the South Downs National Park, Draft Policy DPC5: Setting of the South Downs National Park and Draft Policy DPN8: Light Impacts and Dark Skies)
- 6.2.2 The Site, DPSC3, is located within LCA 4: Hickstead Low Weald, as defined in the Landscape Character Assessment for Mid Sussex (2005), which forms part of the evidence base supporting the Mid Sussex Local Plan. A key characteristic of LCA 4 is described as ***'Quieter and more secluded, confined rural landscape to the west, much more development to the east, centred on Burgess Hill.'*** In consideration of this key characteristic, the Site, DPSC3, is in a location that is more developed than the more rural areas to the west of LCA4 due to its proximity to commercial premises, the settlement of Sayers Common and variety of uses that reflect edge of settlement activity.
- 6.2.3 The evidence supporting the Mid Sussex Local Plan also includes a Mid Sussex District Council Landscape Capacity Study (July 2007), and The Capacity of Mid Sussex District to Accommodate Development (June 2014), which provides an update to the Landscape Capacity Study (2007). These Landscape Capacity Studies provide an assessment of areas of Mid Sussex to accommodate residential development and aim to identify where strategic development might be accommodated in the Mid Sussex District without unacceptable impact on landscape character or the setting of outstanding assets. These Landscape Capacity Studies provide a finer grain of landscape character assessment based on the relative capacity of areas to accommodate residential development.
- 6.2.4 With regard to the capacity of the Site, DPSC3, to accommodate residential development, as identified in the Landscape Capacity Studies, the eastern parcel of the Site, DPSC3, is located in the LCA 63: Albourne Low Weald, and the western parcel is located LCA 80: Trusler's Hill Footholpes; and immediately adjoins the LCA 62: Hickstead-Sayers Common Low Weald which includes Sayers Common, to the north, and LCA 64: Albourne Foothills, to the south and east. LCA 63 and LCA 80 have a Low/Medium capacity to accommodate residential development, as does LCA 64; whilst LCA 62 has a Medium capacity to accommodate development, and therefore increased capacity to accommodate residential development.
- 6.2.5 The Mid Sussex District Council Landscape Capacity Study (July 2007) recommends that any new development promoted within the Mid Sussex District should take account of the inherent character of the LCA it is located within and consider features or characteristics that add to the special identity or local distinctiveness of an area; the need to protect or enhance valued characteristics within landscape; the importance of adjacent landscape character areas, particularly highly valued or high-quality landscapes, and views to and from these areas. The Landscape Capacity Study recommends that this is achieved through a landscape strategy consistent with local landscape character; which considers landscape sensitivities, a land use strategy, and built form reflecting the local vernacular and existing built form, and the avoidance of landscape and visual impacts on surrounding landscape character areas or the setting to the SDNP.
- 6.2.6 Based on the above, the Site, DPSC3, has capacity to successfully accommodate predominantly residential development. The southernmost areas of the eastern and western parcels have been identified as the most visually sensitive areas, as they are located the closest to the SDNP and they are the highest part of the Site, DPSC3, and therefore more exposed to views.
- 6.2.7 This does not preclude development in these areas; however, it will require taking into account the sensitivities of a higher elevation by including buffer planting and offering a reduced density of development. An enhanced landscape buffer should be located to the southern boundaries of the Site, DPSC3, to contain views from the SDNP located further south, as well as provide a visual separation and retention of identities between Albourne and Sayers Common and the

Site. This would also have the added benefit of screening views of the AvTrade Headquarters to the north of the Site, DPSC3, which are conspicuous in views from elevated parts of the SDNP.

6.2.8 In addition, the Site, DPSC3, already benefits from a framework of hedgerows which can be retained and further enhanced with planting to provide a setting for residential development. There are opportunities for an enhanced landscape framework, with landscape frontages to roads and lanes along the northern and western Site boundaries of both parcels, providing an attractive, green frontage to the Site, DPSC3. There are further opportunities for green corridors to be aligned along public rights of way, to create a connected network of accessible green infrastructure across the Site and linking to the wider landscape beyond Sayers Common and the Site, DPSC3.

6.2.9 The Site, DPSC3, can, therefore, successfully accommodate predominantly residential development on the Site, DPSC3, when sensitively assimilated into the wider and landscape and visual context, respecting the Special Qualities, including views, tranquillity and dark skies, and essential characteristics of the SDNP, and setting of the SDNP; and being within the setting of the SDNP, has been sensitively located and designed to avoid or minimise adverse impacts on the SDNP.

## 7 Consideration of the Special Qualities of the SDNP for Proposed Allocation DPSC3

### 7.1 Proposed Development on Proposed Allocation DPSC3

7.1.1 Proposed development on the Site, DPSC3, should take into account the setting of the SDNP located some 1.9km to the south of the Site, DPSC3, at its closest point, and ensure it does not adversely impact the SDNP. Outcome 1: Landscape & Natural Beauty requires that the landscape character of the SDNP, including its special qualities, are conserved and enhanced by avoiding and mitigating impacts of development.

7.1.2 The seven Special Qualities of the SDNP are:

- “Distinctive towns and villages with, and communities with real pride in their area;
- Great opportunities for recreational activities and learning experiences;
- Well-conserved historical features and a rich cultural heritage;
- Tranquil and unspoilt places;
- A rich variety of wildlife and habitats including rare and internationally important species;
- An environment shaped by centuries of farming and embracing new enterprise; and
- Diverse, inspirational landscape and breathtaking views.”

7.1.3 The South Downs Local Plan Strategic Policy SD6: Safeguarding Views states that development proposals will only be permitted where they preserve the visual integrity, identity and scenic quality of the SDNP, in particular by conserving and enhancing key views and views of key landmarks within the SDNP. Views from the SDNO relevant to the Site, as set out in The South Downs National Park Viewshed Characterisation Map are “**views from the scarp looking north across the Low Weald outside the National Park**”, which include Representative View 2: Devil’s Dyke and Representative View 29: Wolstonbury Hill, at distances of over 6.3km and 3.7km respectively, and within which Sayers Common, other settlements north of the SDNP, and the Site, DPSC3, are located, set within a wooded and well vegetated context. These are also illustrated by **Site Context Photographs 1 to 5, and 22 and 23**, the locations of which are shown on **Figure 7: Visual Appraisal Plan**, with **Site Context Photograph 2: Devils Dyke** and **Site Context Photograph 22: Wolstonbury Hill** illustrating Representative View 2 and Representative View 29, respectively.

7.1.4 The Aims and Management Guidance for these type of views from the SDNP are set out as:

- Maintain the ability to access and appreciate the panoramic views across the Low Weald as well as the views along the scarp.
- Maintain the generally undeveloped character of the view, especially within the National Park.
- Ensure that development outside the National Park does not detract from the general rural farmland patchwork setting to the Park.
- Ensure that any built development is integrated into its rural landscape context using native vegetation and minimise visibility from the Park.

- Maintain the scale and shape of the distinctive field patterns associated with the scarp footslopes and Low Weald beyond the Park.
  - Maintain heritage assets, such as church towers and country houses, as features and landmarks within the views. ...
- 7.1.5 Strategic Policy SD7: Relative Tranquillity states that development proposals will only be permitted where they conserve and enhance relative tranquillity; with consideration of the visual and aural environment, indirect impacts that may occur from locations remote to the SDNP; and experience of users of the PRow network.
- 7.1.6 Tranquillity is a greatly valued, key special quality of the SDNP. However, in relation to Sayers Common, in the vicinity of Sayers Common and the Site, DPSC3, the lowest levels of tranquillity are identified on the fringes of the north edge of the SDNP to the south of Hurstpierpoint and Burgess Hill, and the A23 also influences the levels of tranquillity, both on approach to the northern boundary of the SDNP and as it passes south through the SDNP to Brighton. The fringes of, and the northern edge of, the SDNP to the south of Sayers Common and the Site, DPSC3, exhibit variable tranquillity. Therefore, Sayers Common and the Site, DPSC3, are located to the north of an area of the SDNP which generally exhibits lower levels of tranquillity, when considering the wider extent of the SDNP.

### Distinctive towns and villages with, and communities with real pride in their area

- 7.1.7 Settlement is a characteristic of the Low Weald landscape that is located on the fringes of, and to the north of, the SDNP; within which settlement is acknowledged as not harmful in itself. Potential development within the Site, DPSC3, is not within the SDNP but would have an influence on the pattern of settlement within the Low Weald landscape as appreciated in views from the SDNP, and as part of the setting of the SDNP. Potential development, as illustrated in the **Framework Masterplan Document: Land South of Reeds Lane**, in **Appendix C**, would be well contained by the surrounding existing development and vegetation, set within the existing retained and enhanced characteristic landscape framework/structure, limiting its encroachment into the immediate landscape to the east, north and west. As the southern boundary of the Site, DPSC3, is more open, an appropriate landscape strategy, including a landscape buffer, would provide a sensitive transition from settlement edge to the immediate landscape to the south, characteristic of the existing settlement pattern in the landscape; successfully assimilating development into the immediate and wider landscape, and resulting in limited encroachment into the wider landscape.
- 7.1.8 The proposed development within the Site, DPSC3, directly adjoins the settlement edge of Sayers Common. Whilst the proposed development would extend the settlement of Sayers Common, it would create a settlement no larger than, and characteristic of, other settlements within the Low Weald, such as Henfield, Hurstpierpoint, Hassock and Keymer, in the vicinity of Sayers Common. As such, Sayers Common and the Site, DPSC3, are located in a part of the Low Weald which is acknowledged as having a higher amount of settlement than other parts of the Low Weald, and in an area of the Low Weald characterised by larger towns, such as Burgess Hill, and larger villages, set within a surrounding landscape. The extension to Sayers Common, in terms of location and scale, would not create a disproportionately large settlement in this location; and would be in keeping with, and reflect, the existing characteristic settlement pattern of the Low Weald landscape.

### Diverse, inspirational landscape and breathtaking views

- 7.1.9 Views from the SDNP looking north across the Low Weald landscape, relevant to the Site, DPSC3, are illustrated by **Site Context Photographs 1 to 5, 22 and 23**, and **Site Context Night-time Photograph 22**, in **Appendix A**, the locations of which are illustrated on **Figure 7: Visual Appraisal Plan**.

- 7.1.10 **Site Context Photograph 22** demonstrates that the Site, DPSC3, is partially and only just discernible within the context of much wider, expansive, elevated long distance panoramic views over the Low Weald landscape. Noticeable elements of built form such as the proximity of the AvTrade Headquarters provides a visual marker as to its location, otherwise it would not be easily discernible.
- 7.1.11 These views illustrate the existing landscape character of the Low Weald. These aspects include the irregular medium to large sized fields, hedgerow enclosure, wooded areas and the settled nature of the landscape in the vicinity of Sayers Common and the Site, DPSC3. Scattered settlements, such as Henfield, Albourne, Hurstpierpoint and Hassocks, are identified in The South Downs National Park: View Characterisation and Analysis as a characteristic component of views, and can be seen in the panoramic view together with the larger settlement of Burgess Hill. Sayers Common is, and the Site, DPSC3 would be set within this context, set beyond a broad swathe of low ridges and vales and within a strong complex landscape framework of mature woodlands, treebelts, trees and hedgerows, which assists in screening views of both Sayers Common and the proposed development on the Site, DPSC3.
- 7.1.12 Within this context, the proposed development, set within a retained and enhanced landscape framework, would be partially discernible in the distance within what are expansive longer distance elevated panoramic views, and would constitute an unobtrusive change to the view overall. The layout and appearance of the development on the Site, DPSC3, would not be out of keeping with its surrounding landscape context, settlement pattern and character of the existing view.
- 7.1.13 The retention of key landscape features, such as woodland, hedgerows, and trees together with an enhanced landscape buffer and set-back lower density of development on the most visually sensitive areas, predominantly on the southern boundary of the Site, DPSC3, located the closest to the SDNP and the highest part of DPSC3, would ensure that development on the Site, DPSC3, would be well contained in views from the SDNP. This would also safeguard visual separation between Albourne and Sayers Common, and the retention of their separate identities. Taking into account the distance from the SDNP and the existing characteristics of views, proposed development on the Site, DPSC3 would not be conspicuous in views from the SDNP.
- 7.1.14 **Site Context Night-time Photograph 22** illustrates the character of the night-time view from Wolstonbury Hill. It illustrates that the Site, DPSC3, is located in an area where there is evident lighting, both scattered lighting throughout the night-time landscape in the vicinity of the Site, DPSC3, including prominent lighting from the AvTrade Headquarters immediately to the north of the Site, DPSC3; and distinctive lighting from the A23, the settlement of Burgess Hill, and skyglow from Gatwick Airport to the east of the Site, DPSC3. The Site, DPSC3 is, therefore, not located in an area of dark skies. There would be an increase in scattered sources of light within the night-time view, however using the minimum amount of lighting necessary to achieve its purpose, the design and specification of the lighting to minimise light pollution, and siting lighting as unobtrusively as possible; along with the screening effect of the retained and enhanced landscape framework; the visibility of lighting would be kept to a minimum. Potential lighting would not be as concentrated or prominent as that of the AvTrade Headquarters to the immediate north of the Site, DPSC3, but more likely to be similar to that of Hurstpierpoint or Hassocks, but further benefitting from advances in technology further reducing the visibility of light sources and light pollution such as light spill, trespass and skyglow. Whilst there would be an increase in scattered sources of light within the night-time view, it would not significantly alter the overall character of the night-time view in this location.
- 7.1.15 The proposed development on the Site, DPSC3 would therefore not significantly disrupt or alter the scale and shape of field patterns, change the distinctive settlement pattern of small historic villages, or form intrusive new developments within the view either by day or night.
- 7.1.16 With regard to the Aims and Management Guidance for these views:

- *Maintain the ability to access and appreciate the panoramic views across the Low Weald as well as the views along the scarp.*

The proposed development on the Site, DPSC3, would not affect the ability to access and appreciate the panoramic views across the Low Weald, nor the views along the scarp, as illustrated by **Site Context Photograph 22**.

- *Maintain the generally undeveloped character of the view, especially within the National Park*

The proposed development on the Site, DPSC3, is not with the SDNP. However, the retention of key landscape features, such as woodland, hedgerows, and trees, and an enhanced landscape buffer, along with a set back and/or lower density of the development, on the most visually sensitive areas predominantly on the southern boundary of the Site, DPSC3, located the closest to the SDNP and the highest part of the Site, DPSC3, would ensure that potential development on the Site, DPSC3, would be well contained in views from the SDNP. The proposed development within the Site, DPSC3, would also be well contained by the surrounding existing development and vegetation, set within the existing retained and enhanced characteristic landscape framework/structure, limiting the encroachment of development into the immediate surrounding landscape to the east, north and west, such that the character of the existing view of a settled Low Weald landscape character would remain largely unchanged, as illustrated by **Site Context Daytime Photograph 22**.

- *Ensure that development outside the National Park does not detract from the general rural farmland patchwork setting to the Park.*

The proposed development would be generally set within the existing retained and enhanced framework of fields, woodland, trees, treebelts and hedgerows, to sensitively accommodate development within the existing and enhanced robust rural farmland patchwork which provides containment to the proposed development on the Site, DPSC3. Therefore, development outside the SDNP, on the Site, DPSC3, would not detract from the general rural farmland patchwork of the landscape outside the SDNP and in the vicinity of Sayers Common.

- *Ensure that any built development is integrated into its rural landscape context using native vegetation and minimise visibility from the Park.*

Again, the proposed development would be generally set within the existing retained and enhanced field pattern, to sensitively accommodate development within the existing robust framework of substantial woodland, hedgerows, hedgerows with trees, and tree belts which divide the fields and provided containment along the boundaries of the Site, DPSC3. The enhanced landscape framework would contain development, reflecting the characteristic relationship between the landscape and settlement, integrating it into the rural context and would therefore minimise visibility from the SDNP.

- *Maintain the distinctive profile of the scarp face and its iconic chalk grassland, juniper scrub and woodland habitats.*

The Site, DPSC3, is located outside and to the north of the SDNP. It is located within the Low Weald landscape and not on the scarp face or iconic chalk grassland, juniper scrub or woodland habitats. Therefore, the proposed development on the Site, DPSC3, will not have an effect on these habitats.

- *Maintain the scale and shape of the distinctive field patterns associated with the scarp footslopes and Low Weald beyond the Park.*

The existing framework of fields, woodland, trees, treebelts and hedgerows would be retained to maintain the scale and shape of the distinctive field patterns associated with the

Low Weald landscape to the north of the SDNP. These would form the basis to sensitively accommodate the proposed development within the existing and enhanced robust rural farmland patchwork to provide containment to the development on the Site, DPSC3. Therefore, development outside the SDNP, on the Site, DPSC3, would not detract from the general rural farmland patchwork of the landscape outside the SDNP and in the vicinity of Sayers Common.

- *Maintain heritage assets, such as church towers and country houses, as features and landmarks within the views.*

The proposed development on the Site, DPSC3, would not interrupt existing views to church towers (such as at Hurstpierpoint), country houses (as in the foreground of views from Wolstonbury Hill), or positive landmarks within views, such that potential development on the Site, DPSC3, would not affect views to main heritage assets from the SDNP.

- *Refer to guidance for Landscape Type 1 contained in the South Downs Integrated Landscape Character Assessment.*

The Site, DPSC3, is not within the SDNP and is therefore not covered by the South Downs Integrated Landscape Character Assessment. However, development on the Site, DPSC3, can be sensitively assimilated into the immediate and wider landscape and visual context, responding to the Hickstead Low Weald Landscape Character Area (LCA4), without affecting the setting of the SDNP, and responding positively to local and national plan policy.

### Tranquil and unspoilt places

7.1.17 In the MSDC SHLEAA, with regard to 'Tranquillity', the Site, DPSC3 was assessed as *"unlikely to be affected by significant road or rail noise"*. A scoring system created by the SDNP Authority recognises the Site, DPSC3, to be in *"an area that is less tranquil than other parts of the South Downs National Park, however, it is more tranquil than areas close to existing settlements such as Hurstpierpoint and Hassocks"*.

7.1.18 The part of the SDNP to the south of Sayers Common and the Site, DPSC3, is influenced by the presence of the A23, both on approach to the northern boundary of the SDNP and as it passes south through the SDNP to Brighton, both as a result of the physical presence of, and views of, the road and associated highway infrastructure and traffic, both at daytime and night-time, and the very audible traffic noise. As noted, Sayers Common and the Site, DPSC3, are located in part of the Low Weald with higher levels of settlement and associated infrastructure, as is evident in **Site Context Photograph 22**, and in an area of greater existing lighting, including skyglow from Gatwick Airport, influencing the night-time character of views from the SDNP, as illustrated by **Site Context Night-time Photograph 22**.

7.1.19 Sayers Common and the Site, DPSC3, are therefore located to the north of an area of the SDNP which generally exhibits lower levels of tranquillity, when considering the wider extent of the SDNP, as illustrated by **Figure 2: SDNP Tranquillity Map Extract Plan**. Therefore, the proposed development on the Site, DPSC3, would not be in a highly tranquil or an intermediate tranquillity area, and an enhanced landscape framework would assist in assimilating the development into its immediate context, providing screening and filtering views of the development, limiting the perception of an increase in urban development, roads and people from within the SDNP. Being at distance of approximately 2km from the SDNP, the perception of loss of open wide spaces, natural landscapes, trees, woodland, and wildlife would also be limited. Therefore, there would be very limited harm to relative tranquillity of the SDNP.

### Great opportunities for recreational activities and learning experiences

7.1.20 The proposed development on the Site, DPSC3, would retain PRoWs 1/1AI, 3/1AI, 7AI and 8AI within the Site, DPSC3, providing and extending a footpath and open space network, creating greater connectivity, both to the existing settlement, and to the wider countryside, beyond the

Site, DPSC3. Experience of users of the PRoW network and other publicly accessible locations would not be adversely affected, and there would no change to the recreational activities or learning experiences within the SDNP.

### **A rich variety of wildlife and habitats including rare and internationally important species**

- 7.1.21 As the Site, DPSC3, is not within the SDNP, there would be no direct effect on the rich variety of wildlife and habitats, or rare or internationally important species within the SDNP. Furthermore, there are no rare or internationally species identified on the Site, DPSC3. It would, therefore, be possible to accommodate the proposed development on the Site, DPSC3, whilst retaining, protecting, and enhancing the existing vegetation and trees on the eastern and southern boundary of the Site, DPSC3, with the loss of any landscape features generally limited to a length of trimmed uniform hedge along Reeds Lane, B2118 London Road and Henfield Road to facilitate access into the Site, DPSC3. Trees located along the boundaries of the Site, DPSC3, would be retained, with potential development within the Site, DPSC3, offset to accommodate any required root protection areas within the potential development. Again, the enhancement to the existing vegetation on the southern boundary would create a robust defined boundary to the settlement edge of Sayers Common; and there would be limited harm to wildlife and habitats, with regard to the Special Qualities of the SDNP. There will be opportunities to provide an enhanced habitat and new habitats for nature to create a net gain in biodiversity.

### **An environment shaped by centuries of farming and embracing new enterprise**

- 7.1.22 This acknowledges that the landscape has been shaped by various interventions over centuries. There is a constant requirement to respond to the needs of the population and society, particularly in terms of housing need. This will be a constantly evolving influence, including needing to accommodate sustainable housing in the most sustainable and least environmentally harmful locations. Sayers Common and DPSC3 are outside the nationally designated SDNP, and the Site, DPSC3, is not covered by any landscape designation, and has been identified as a sustainable location for development.

## **7.2 Conclusion**

- 7.2.1 By adopting the landscape and visual strategies set out above, and which have been distilled into the Indicative Plan for the Site, DPSC3, in the draft MSD Regulation 19 Local Plan, and the supporting **Masterplan Framework Document: Land South of Reeds Lane**, in **Appendix C**, the Site, DPSC3, has the capacity to successfully accommodate development in the immediate and wider locality, respecting the Special Qualities, including views, tranquillity and dark skies, and essential characteristics, and setting of the SDNP.
- 7.2.2 Furthermore, as required by Policy DP18 of the Adopted MSDC Local Plan and Draft Policy DPC 5: Setting of the South Downs National Park of the MSDC Regulation 19 Local Plan, the proposed development on the Site, DPSC3, would not significantly detract from, or cause detriment to, the visual and special qualities (including dark skies), tranquillity and essential characteristics of the National Park, including the views, outlook and aspect, into and out of the National Park, by virtue of the development's location, scale, form or design. The proposed development on the Site, DPSC3, would be sensitively located and designed, be consistent with National Park purposes, would not adversely affect transitional landscape character, and being within the setting of the SDNP, has been sensitively located and designed to avoid or minimise adverse impacts on the SDNP.

## 8 Landscape and Visual Considerations for Potential Combined Development on Proposed Allocations DPSC3, DPSC4, DPSC5, DPSC6 and DPSC7 at Sayers Common

### 8.1 Potential Combined Development on Proposed Allocations at Sayers Common

- 8.1.1 The proposed allocations at Sayers Common are all located on the settlement edge of Sayers Common, as illustrated on Figure 9: Site Context Plan for Combined Proposed Allocations and Figure 10: Site Appraisal Plan for Combined Proposed Allocations, in Appendix B.
- 8.1.2 A comprehensive illustrative masterplan for the proposed sustainable communities allocations, DPSC3, DPSC4, DPSC5, DPSC6 and DPSC7, has been prepared jointly by the promoters of the proposed allocations, as shown in the **Framework Masterplan Document: Sayers Common Sustainable Community**, included within **Appendix D**, and also illustrates the landscape-led proposals for DPSC3, DPSC4, DPSC5, DPSC6 and DPSC7, based on similar landscape and visual strategies for DPSC3, as set out above, to demonstrate how development could come forward, and be sensitively assimilated into the immediate and wider landscape; and within the setting of and in views from the SDNP; on the combined allocated sites at Sayers Common.

### 8.2 Landscape and Visual Strategies

- Development should be generally set within the existing retained field pattern, to sensitively accommodate development within the existing robust framework of substantial woodland, hedgerows, hedgerows with trees, and tree belts which divide the fields and provide containment. The retained robust framework of vegetation should provide the basis for an enhanced landscape framework to further contain potential development, reflecting the characteristic relationship between the landscape and settlement. (SDNPPMP: Policy1; SD Local Plan Policies 1, 4 and 19; MSDC Draft Policy DPC1: Protection and Enhancement of the Countryside; Adopted Policy 37: Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows and Draft Policy DPN4: Trees Woodland and Hedgerows)
- An enhanced landscape framework should take into account possible views from elevated locations within the SDNP, reinforcing the existing framework of vegetation in the most visually sensitive areas to enhance the containment of development, and provide screening and mitigation of views of development within views from the SDNP. (SDNPPMP: Policy1; MSDC Adopted Policy DP18: Setting of the South Downs National Park and Draft Policy DPC5: Setting of the South Downs National Park)
- To maintain the Tranquillity of the SDNP, which is a key special quality of the SDNP potential development on DPSC3 should not adversely impact the tranquillity of the SDNP and should minimise the perceptual appreciation of any increase in urban development, roads and people; and maintain the appreciation of wide, open spaces, natural landscapes, and trees, woodland and wildlife. An enhanced landscape framework should assist in assimilating development into its immediate context, limiting the perception of an increase in urban development, roads and people from the SDNP; and being at distance from the SDNP, the perception of loss of open wide spaces, natural landscapes, trees, woodland and wildlife should also be limited. (SDNPPMP: Policy1; SD Local Plan Strategic Policy SD7: Relative Tranquillity; MSDC Adopted Policy DP18: Setting of the South Downs National Park and Draft Policy DPC5: Setting of the South Downs National Park)
- Development should respect the dark skies of the SDNP. Development should take all opportunities to reduce light pollution, (including sky glow, glare and light spillage) to

minimise the impacts on local amenity, intrinsically dark landscapes and the SDNP. This should include considering using the minimum amount of lighting necessary to achieve its purpose; the design and specification of the lighting to minimise light pollution; siting lighting as unobtrusively as possible; considering the appropriate siting, fitting, design, colour and temperature of lighting to limit the adverse impact on wildlife; and the use of a recessive material palette for potential development, acknowledging the sensitivity in the visibility of the night. Specifically, the enhanced landscape framework should also aim to strategically screen lighting so that night-time visibility in the immediate locality, and from within the SDNP, is reduced, and dark skies within the SDNP are maintained. (MSDC Draft Policy DPN8: Light Impacts and Dark Skies)

- The existing Green-Blue Infrastructure should be retained and enhanced. (SDNPPMP Policy 4 and 19; MSDC Adopted Policy 38: Biodiversity, Draft Policies DPN1: Biodiversity, Geodiversity and Nature Recovery, DPN2: Biodiversity Net Gain, and DPN3: Green and Blue Infrastructure, and DPSC3: Point 12)
- Key features, such as existing hedgerows and hedgerow trees, should be retained wherever possible and enhanced with further planting where possible. This would maintain and strengthen the existing pattern of field enclosure, and strengthen the existing green-blue infrastructure framework, enhancing biodiversity, and reinforcing and extending green wildlife corridors. (SDNPPMP Policy 4 and 19; MSDC Adopted Policy 38: Biodiversity and Draft Policies DPN1: Biodiversity, Geodiversity and Nature Recovery, DPN2: Biodiversity Net Gain, DPN3: Green and Blue Infrastructure, and DPSC3: Point 12)
- Existing water features should be retained and enhanced within green corridors providing green-blue and biodiversity benefits. (SDNPPMP Policy 4 and 19; MSDC Adopted Policy 38: Biodiversity and Draft Policies DPN1: Biodiversity, Geodiversity and Nature Recovery, DPN2: Biodiversity Net Gain, DPN3: Green and Blue Infrastructure, and DPSC3: Point 12)
- An enhanced landscape framework should also provide integration with the existing settlement edge of Sayers Common, with the retained and extended network of PRowWs providing greater connectivity, both to the existing settlement, and to the wider countryside. (MSDC Adopted Policy DP22: Rights of Way and other Recreational Routes, Draft Policy DPSC3: Points 5, 7 and 8)
- The setting of heritage assets such as Listed Buildings should be respected.
- The individual identities of Sayers Common and Albourne should be maintained, through a comprehensive landscape strategy, based on the retained and enhanced existing landscape framework. The retention of a gap and landscape buffer should secure visual separation, and maintain the perception of the separate identities, of these settlements. (MSDC Draft Policy DPC2: Preventing Coalescence)
- The development should be of high architectural quality set within a comprehensive landscape framework of green and blue infrastructure, and a network of recreational routes, formal and informal open space and recreational opportunities. Materials should be specifically selected to reflect the local vernacular of the area and create a sense of place, so that potential development reflects the character of the local built environment and will be well assimilated into its immediate and wider surroundings. (MSDC Adopted Policy DP26: Character and Design and Draft Policy DPB1: Character and Design)

### 8.3 Consideration of the Special Qualities of the SDNP

#### Distinctive towns and villages with, and communities with, real pride in their area

- 8.3.1 As noted, settlement is a characteristic component of the Low Weald landscape on the fringes of, and to the north of, the SDNP. Settlement within the Low Weald landscape is acknowledged as not harmful in itself. Whilst all five proposed allocations are not within the SDNP, as noted

- previously, the proposed development would have an influence on the pattern of settlement within the Low Weald landscape as appreciated in views from the SDNP, and as part of the setting of the SDNP.
- 8.3.2 The proposed development within all five proposed allocations at Sayers Common would be well contained by the surrounding existing development and vegetation, set within the existing retained and enhanced characteristic landscape framework/structure, limiting its encroachment into the immediate landscape.
- 8.3.3 The proposed development on DPSC4 would be contained by existing residential development to the east, and north and in part to the west, so set within the existing settlement edge of Sayers Common. It would also be contained by development on DPSC3 to the west, as illustrated in the **Framework Masterplan Document: Sayers Common Sustainable Community**, in **Appendix D**, and would therefore not contribute to any greater extension of Sayers Common.
- 8.3.4 The proposed development on DPSC5, on the south-eastern edge of Sayers Common, would be well contained by substantial existing woodland surrounding and within DPSC5, in particular ancient woodland to the north, woodland, some of which is ancient woodland, along the eastern boundary with the A23, and ancient woodland within the south-western part of DPSC5. Ancient woodland, being protected would be retained, and set within landscape buffers, such that the framework of existing vegetation would be retained and enhanced, providing further enclosure within which to accommodate development, as illustrated in the **Framework Masterplan Document: Sayers Common Sustainable Community**, in **Appendix D**. DPSC5 would extend the settlement of Sayers Common to the east, wrapping around the existing buildings associated with Coombe Farm and Stonecroft, which are located in the centre of, but not within, DPSC5. However, this extension would be no further east than the extent of existing settlement at Sayers Common to the north of DPSC5. The eastern edge of Sayers Common, both existing and the proposed development on DPSC5, would therefore be contained by the A23 to the east, with a broad swathe of largely open landscape to the east of the A23, providing separation between Sayers Common and Hurstpierpoint.
- 8.3.5 DPSC6 is located to the north of Reeds Lane, between existing development at King Business Park and housing under construction on the western edge of Sayers Common and the extensive development at Valley Farm Business Park and the AvTrade Headquarters. The proposed development on DPSC6 would be well enclosed by substantial treebelts on the southern and western boundary, and a substantial woodland block to the immediate north. The proposed development would be set within a framework of existing substantial vegetation, set between existing and emerging development to the east and substantial commercial development to the west, and would not extend the extent of the settlement any further north than existing settlement within Sayers Common to the east, as illustrated in the **Framework Masterplan Document: Sayers Common Sustainable Community**, in **Appendix D**. DPSC6 is located to the north of DPSC3, and would therefore not contribute to any greater extension of Sayers Common to the west.
- 8.3.6 DPSC7 is located on the north-western edge of Sayers Common, on the site of the LVS Hassocks Independent SEN School for Autism. DPSC7 immediately adjoins recently constructed and under construction housing at Sayers Common to the south. The proposed development would be set within the framework of existing vegetation, including substantial treebelts on the eastern, southern, and western boundaries, and a substantial woodland block on the northern boundary. Potential development on the eastern part of DPSC7 would broadly reflect the northern extent of the settlement of Sayers Common. Potential development on the western part of DPSC7 would extend the extent of settlement within Sayers Common further north; however, the **Framework Masterplan Document: Sayers Common Sustainable Community**, in **Appendix D**, demonstrates that the proposed development would be limited to the northern extent of existing buildings associated with the school, with a limited increase in the northern extent of settlement, with the opportunity to provide a transition from settlement edge and the open landscape to the north.

- 8.3.7 The proposed development on all five of the proposed allocations would directly adjoin, or be contained within, the settlement edge of Sayers Common. Whilst the proposed development would extend the settlement of Sayers Common, even with the combined extent from all five proposed allocations, it would create a settlement no larger than, and characteristic of, other settlements within the Low Weald, such as Henfield, Hurstpierpoint, Hassocks and Keymer, in the vicinity of Sayers Common. As such, Sayers Common is, and the proposed allocations would be, located in a part of the Low Weald with a higher amount of settlement than other parts of the Low Weald, and in an area of the Low Weald characterised by larger towns, such as Burgess Hill, and larger villages, set within a surrounding landscape. The expanded settlement of Sayers Common would not extend beyond the A23 to the east, with a broad swathe of undeveloped landscape retained between Sayers Common to the west of the A23 and Hurstpierpoint to the east of the A23, maintaining the physical and visual separation between these settlements. DPSC4, DPSC5, DPSC 6 and DPS7 are not located to the south of DPSC3, and would therefore not extend settlement any closer to Albourne. The provision of a comprehensive landscape strategy, based on the retained and enhanced existing landscape framework on DPSC3, particularly on the southern boundary of DPSC3, with a landscape buffer to clearly differentiate between the separate settlements, would retain visual separation, and maintain the perception of the separate identities, of Sayers Common and Albourne. Likewise, the combination of all five proposed allocations would not extend settlement any closer to the SDNP to the south.
- 8.3.8 The extension to Sayers Common, from the combination of all five of the proposed allocations, in terms of location and scale, would not create a disproportionately large settlement in this location; and would be in keeping with, and reflect, the existing characteristic settlement pattern within this part of the Low Weald.

### **Diverse, inspirational landscape and breathtaking views**

- 8.3.9 Views from the SDNP looking north across the Low Weald landscape, relevant to Sayers Common and all five proposed allocations, are illustrated by **Site Context Photographs 1 to 5, 22 and 23**, and **Site Context Night-time Photograph 22**, in **Appendix A**, the locations of which are illustrated on **Figure 7: Visual Appraisal Plan**. DPSC3 is the closest proposed draft allocation to the SDNP, at just over 3.75km from **Site Context Photograph 22** and **Site Context Night-time Photograph 22**, from Wolstonbury Hill.
- 8.3.10 The proposed development on all five of the proposed allocations would directly adjoin the settlement edge of Sayers Common. In addition to development on DPSC3, development within DPSC4, DPSC5, DPSC6 and DPSC7 would be well contained by the surrounding existing vegetation and development at Sayers Common, as described above, with each proposed draft allocation benefitting from enclosure and containment provided by a robust existing retained and enhanced landscape framework, which would limit encroachment into the immediate landscape and provide a robust settlement edge to Sayers Common, as illustrated in the **Framework Masterplan Document: Sayers Common Sustainable Community**, in **Appendix D**.
- 8.3.11 With regard to the extent of settlement for Sayers Common and all five proposed allocations, as previously noted, DPSC4, DPSC5, DPSC 6 and DPS7 are not located to the south of DPSC3, therefore the combination of all five proposed allocations would not extend settlement any closer to the SDNP, than that for DPSC3.
- 8.3.12 Again, whilst the expanded settlement of Sayers Common would extend further to the east, it would not extend beyond the A23 to the east, with a broad swathe of undeveloped landscape retained between Sayers Common to the west of the A23 and Hurstpierpoint to the east of the A23, maintaining the physical and visual separation between these settlements.
- 8.3.13 Again, whilst the proposed development would extend the settlement of Sayers Common, even with the combined extent from all five proposed allocations, it would not create a settlement of greater scale than other settlements within the Low Weald, such as Henfield, Hurstpierpoint, Hassock and Keymer, in the vicinity of Sayers Common.

- 8.3.14 Sayers Common and all five proposed allocations would be set within the Low Weald landscape, and amongst the scattered settlements of Henfield, Albourne, Hurstpierpoint, Hassocks and Burgess Hill. The proposed development would be accommodated within a retained field pattern structure and within a retained and enhanced landscape framework based on the existing woodland, treebelts and hedgerows. Sayers Common and all five proposed allocations would still be set beyond a broad swathe of low ridges and vales and a strong complex landscape framework of mature woodlands, treebelts, trees and hedgerows, which assists in screening views of both Sayers Common and the proposed development on all five proposed allocations from the SDNP, providing separation from the SDNP, and maintaining the character of the setting of the SDNP.
- 8.3.15 The extension to Sayers Common, from the combination of all five of the proposed allocations, in terms of location and scale, would not create a disproportionately large settlement in this location; and would be in keeping with, and reflect, the existing characteristic settlement pattern within this part of the Low Weald.
- 8.3.16 The additional proposed development on DPSC4, DPSC5, DPSC6 and DPSC7 on the edges of Sayers Common would be barely perceptible, set within the well wooded context surrounding and to the south of Sayers Common, as illustrated by **Site Context Photographs 1 to 5, 22 and 23**, in **Appendix A**. Sayers Common and all five proposed allocations would be no more visible in views from the SDNP than that of Sayers Common and DPSC3, that is being partially discernible, set within an enhanced landscape framework, in the distance and within what are expansive longer distance elevated panoramic views. Sayers Common and the combined five proposed allocations would still constitute an unobtrusive change to the view overall, which would not be out of keeping with its surrounding landscape context and, settlement pattern and character of the existing view.
- 8.3.17 **Site Context Night-time Photograph 22**, in **Appendix A**, illustrates the character of the night-time view from Wolstonbury Hill. Again, it illustrates that Sayers Common and all five proposed allocations are located in an area where there is evident lighting, both scattered lighting throughout the night-time landscape, including prominent lighting from the AvTrade Headquarters; and distinctive lighting from the A23, the settlement of Burgess Hill, and skyglow from Gatwick Airport, and therefore, not located in an area of dark skies.
- 8.3.18 Considering lighting from Sayers Common and proposed development on DPSC3, the additional lighting evident from DPSC4, DPSC5, DPSC6 and DPSC7 would be predominantly in the immediate context of the existing settlement of Sayers Common, with a limited further extent of evident lighting. There would be an increase in scattered sources of light within the night-time view, however as for DPSC3, proposed lighting would be located, designed and specified to minimise light pollution. Again, whilst there would be an increase in scattered sources of light within the night-time view, there would not be a significant increase in evident light sources or light pollution from DPSC4, DPSC5, DPSC6 and DPSC7, compared with that for Sayers Common and DPSC3, and therefore, there would not be a significant alteration in the overall character of the night-time view in this location.
- 8.3.19 The proposed development of all five proposed allocations at Sayers Common would not significantly disrupt or alter the scale and shape of field patterns, change the distinctive settlement pattern of small historic villages, or form intrusive new developments within the view either by day or night.
- 8.3.20 With regard to the Aims and Management Guidance for these views, the combined development of DPSC4, DPSC5, DPSC 6 and DPSC7, due to their location on the edge of Sayers Common, their size relative to DPSC3, and the distance from the SDNP, is unlikely to increase any harm to the following, compared with that arising from Sayers Common with the proposed development on DPSC3:
- *The ability to access and appreciate the panoramic views across the Low Weald as well as the views along the scarp.*

- *The generally undeveloped character of the view, especially within the National Park*
- *Ensuring that development outside the National Park does not detract from the general rural farmland patchwork setting to the Park.*
- *Ensuring that any built development is integrated into its rural landscape context using native vegetation and minimise visibility from the Park.*
- *Maintaining the distinctive profile of the scarp face and its iconic chalk grassland, juniper scrub and woodland habitats.*
- *Maintaining the scale and shape of the distinctive field patterns associated with the scarp footslopes and Low Weald beyond the Park.*
- *Maintaining heritage assets, such as church towers and country houses, as features and landmarks within the views.*
- *Adopting guidance for Landscape Type I contained in the South Downs Integrated Landscape Character Assessment.*

### Tranquil and unspoilt places

- 8.3.21 In the MSDC SHLEAA, with regard to ‘Tranquillity’, DPSC3 was assessed as “*unlikely to be affected by significant road or rail noise*”. A scoring system created by the SDNP Authority recognises DPSC3 to be in “*an area that is less tranquil than other parts of the South Downs National Park, however, it is more tranquil than areas close to existing settlements such as Hurstpierpoint and Hassocks*”.
- 8.3.22 As for Sayers Common and DPSC3, DPSC4, DPSC5, DPSC6 and DPSC7 are also located to the north of an area of the SDNP which generally exhibits lower levels of tranquillity, when considering the wider extent of the SDNP, as illustrated by **Figure 2: SDNP Tranquillity Map Extract Plan**. The proposed development on DPSC4, DPSC5 DPSC6 and DPSC7, being immediately adjoining the settlement edge, would not be in a highly tranquil or an intermediate tranquillity area. The proposed development on DPSC4, DPSC5, DPSC6 and DPSC7 would be set with a retained and enhanced landscape framework, adopting similar landscape and visual strategies as for site DPSC3, again as illustrated in the **Framework Masterplan Document: Sayers Common Sustainable Community, in Appendix D**; thus assimilating development into its immediate context, providing containment to the edges of the expanded settlement of Sayers Common, and providing screening and filtering views of development from the SDNP. This would limit the perception of an increase in urban development, roads and people from within the SDNP. Being at distance of approximately 2km from the SDNP, the perception of loss of open wide spaces, natural landscapes, trees, woodland and wildlife would also be limited, with a broad swathe of relatively undeveloped Low Weald landscape retained between the SDNP and an extended settlement of Sayers Common. Therefore, the extension to Sayers Common, from the combination of all five of the proposed allocations would still result in very limited harm to relative tranquillity of the SDNP.

### Great opportunities for recreational activities and learning experiences

- 8.3.23 DPSC4, DPSC5, DPSC6 and DPSC7 are all crossed by PRowS as illustrated by Figure 9: Site Context Plan for Combined Proposed Allocations and Figure 10: Site Appraisal Plan for Combined Proposed Allocations, in Appendix B. The proposed development on all five proposed allocations would retain the existing PRowS, incorporating them into the retained and enhanced landscape framework for each proposed draft allocation, as illustrated in the Framework Masterplan Document: Sayers Common Sustainable Community, in Appendix D. The combination of development on all five proposed allocations would contribute to an extended footpath and open space network, creating greater connectivity, both to the existing settlement, and to the wider countryside, such that the experience of users of the PRow network and other publicly accessible locations would not be adversely affected.

### A rich variety of wildlife and habitats including rare and internationally important species

8.3.24 As all five proposed allocations at Sayers Common are not within the SDNP, again, there would be no direct effect on the rich variety of wildlife and habitats, or rare or internationally important species within the SDNP. It is not anticipated that there are rare or internationally important species on DPSC4, DPSC5, DPSC6 and DPSC7. The key existing vegetation and landscape features would generally be retained, protected and enhanced, in particular the ancient woodland on DPSC5. Again, the enhancement to the existing vegetation at all five proposed allocations, as illustrated in the **Framework Masterplan Document: Sayers Common Sustainable Community**, in **Appendix D** would create a robust defined boundary to the settlement edge of Sayers Common; and there would be limited harm to wildlife and habitats. There will also be opportunities to provide an enhanced habitat and new habitats for nature to create a net gain in biodiversity.

### An environment shaped by centuries of farming and embracing new enterprise

8.3.25 This acknowledges that the landscape has been shaped by various interventions over centuries. There is a constant requirement to respond to the needs of the population and society, particularly in terms of housing need. This will be a constantly evolving influence, including needing to accommodate sustainable housing in the most sustainable and least environmentally harmful locations. Sayers Common, DPSC3, DPSC4, DPSC5, DPSC6 and DPSC7 are outside the nationally designated SDNP, are not covered by any landscape designations, and have been identified as sustainable locations for potential development.

## 8.4 Conclusion

8.4.1 The **Framework Masterplan Document: Sayers Common Sustainable Community**, in **Appendix D** demonstrates how the landscape and visual strategies, set out above, have been adopted within the proposals for development on DPSC3, DPSC4, DPSC5, DPSC6 and DPSC7; such that all five proposed allocations for Sayers Common, in combination, have the capacity to successfully accommodate development in the immediate and wider locality, respecting the Special Qualities, including views, tranquillity and dark skies, and essential characteristics, and setting of the SDNP.

8.4.2 In addition, in combination, the proposed development on DPSC4, DPSC5, DPSC6 and DPSC7 with that on DPSC3 would not increase the harm to the SDNP or its setting, such that, as required by Policy DP18 of the adopted MSDC Local Plan and Draft Policy DPC 5: Setting of the South Downs National Park of the MSDC Regulation 19 Local Plan, the proposed development of all five proposed allocations at Sayers Common would not significantly detract from, or cause detriment to, the visual and special qualities (including dark skies), tranquillity and essential characteristics of the National Park, including the views, outlook and aspect, into and out of the National Park, by virtue of the development's location, scale, form or design. The proposed development of all five proposed allocations at Sayers Common would be sensitively located and designed, be consistent with National Park purposes, would not adversely affect transitional landscape character, and being within the setting of the SDNP, has been sensitively located and designed to avoid or minimise adverse impacts on the SDNP.

## 9 Summary and Conclusion

### 9.1 Landscape and Visual Context

- 9.1.1 The Site, DPSC3, is located some 1.9km from the northern boundary of the SDNP at its closest point, as illustrated on **Figure 1: Site Context Plan**; and whilst some distance from the SDNP, it is located within the setting of the SDNP. The Site, DPSC3, is located within views from the elevated parts of the SDNP, with potential intervisibility between the SDNP and the Site. Consideration of the setting of the SDNP, and key views to and from the SDNP are a key consideration.
- 9.1.2 The Site, DPSC3, is located some 4.25 km from the southern boundary of the High Weald AONB. However, due to the combination of intervening landform and existing vegetation and built form, there is no intervisibility between the High Weald AONB and the Site, DPSC3, and therefore no potential effect on the setting of the High Weald AONB.
- 9.1.3 The Site, DPSC3, is a proposed allocation for a sustainable community for Sayers Common in the emerging Mid Sussex District Local Plan, Regulation 19 Consultation Draft, as set out in draft Policy DPSC3: Land South of Reeds Lane, Sayers Common.
- 9.1.4 The Site, DPSC3: Land South of Reeds Lane, Sayers Common, is one of five proposed allocations at Sayers Common. The four other draft proposed sustainable communities allocations are:
- DPSC4: Land at Chesapeake and Meadow View, Reeds Lane;
  - DPSC5: Land at Coombe Farm, London Road;
  - DPSC6: Land to West of Kings Business Centre, Reeds Lane; and
  - DPSC7: Land South of LVS Hassocks, London Road.
- 9.1.5 The locations of DPSC4, DPSC5, DPSC6 and DPSC7 are illustrated on Figure 9: Site Context Plan for Combined Proposed Allocations, in Appendix B.
- 9.1.6 The Site, DPSC3, is located to the immediate west of, and adjoins the south-western edge of, Sayers Common. The Site is formed of two parcels of land: a larger parcel in the east, and a smaller parcel in the west. The eastern parcel relates to Sayers Common by adjoining the south-western edge of the settlement; and abutting the London Road/B2118 in the east, Reed's Lane to the north, and Henfield Road/B2116 to the south. The western parcel abuts Henfield Road in the north, an unnamed lane in the east, Priestfield Farm in the south, and Truslers Hill Lane in the west. The Site therefore forms a direct connection with Sayers Common to its north-east, as illustrated on **Figure 1: Site Context Plan**.
- 9.1.7 Albourne, Albourne Green, and some scattered properties and farmhouses are located to the south of the Site, DPSC3.
- 9.1.8 Existing substantial office, commercial and industrial development is located to the north of Reeds Lane, immediately to the north of the Site, DPSC3.

### Landscape Appraisal

- 9.1.9 The Site, DPSC3, is located in the shallow valley created by the River Adur, within a Low Weald landscape, which then rises up through foot-slopes to the South Downs south of the Site, and up through Wealden Fringes to the High Weald landscape north of the Site, as illustrated on **Figure 3: Topography Plan** and **Figure 4: Landscape Character Plan**.

- 9.1.10 The Site, DPSC3, specifically falls within the Landscape Character Area 4: Hickstead Low Weald, as identified in the Landscape Character Assessment for Mid Sussex (2005), as illustrated on **Figure 5: Local Landscape Character Plan**. LCA 4: Hickstead Low Weald is summarised as a lowland mixed arable and pastoral landscape, with a mix of scattered farmsteads and hamlets, with a strong hedgerow pattern, lying over low ridges and clay vales drained by the upper Adur streams. Consequently, the landscape pattern of the surrounding area is generally small-scale and enclosed, with an intricate mix of field boundary vegetation that divides the irregular arable land and pasture that is generally devoid of substantial tracts or areas of woodland.
- 9.1.11 A key characteristic of LCA 4 is described as *‘Quieter and more secluded, confined rural landscape to the west, much more development to the east, centred on Burgess Hill.’* In consideration of this key characteristic, the Site, DPSC3, is in a location that is more developed than the more rural areas to the west of LCA4 due to its proximity to commercial premises, the settlement of Sayers Common and variety of uses that reflect edge of settlement activity.
- 9.1.12 The most noteworthy features of the Site, DPSC3, are the vegetation, hedgerows and trees on the Site, DPSC3, which, where present along the Site boundaries, would be largely retained, protected and enhanced in any event, as illustrated by **Figure 6: Site Appraisal Plan**.
- 9.1.13 There are no designated Listed Buildings, Conservation Areas, Scheduled Ancient Monuments, Registered Park and Gardens or nature conservation sites within the Site, DPSC3. There is one Grade II Listed Building, Wellington Cottage, located in the middle of the two parcels forming the Site, DPSC3, just off Henfield Road. The Site, DPSC3, is relatively unconstrained by landscape, heritage or nature conservation designations.
- 9.1.14 The character of the Site, DPSC3, is illustrated by Figure 6: Site Appraisal Plan, and Site Appraisal Photographs A – Y and A (i) – B(i), in Appendix A, the locations of which are shown on Figure 6: Site Appraisal Plan.
- 9.1.15 The Site, DPSC3 does not exhibit any particular special or valued characteristics; and is located in an area exhibiting a higher degree of existing development than the wider landscape character area of LCA4. Being located immediately adjacent to, and influenced by its proximity to, the existing settlement of Sayers Common, and substantial office, commercial and industrial development, residential development of the Site, DPSC3, would relate well to, and be compatible with the existing characteristic settlement pattern, reflecting the character of the immediate locality of the Site, DPSC3.
- 9.1.16 The Site, DPSC3, is, therefore, more characteristic of the more built-up areas of Landscape Character Area LCA 4: Hickstead Low Weald than it is of the more rural areas to the west of LCA 4, due to its proximity to commercial premises, the settlement of Sayers Common and variety of uses that reflect edge of settlement activity.

### Visual Appraisal

- 9.1.17 The visibility of the Site is considered from a series of representative views as illustrated by **Site Context Photographs 1 – 23**, in **Appendix A**, the locations of which are identified on **Figure 7: Visual Appraisal Plan**.
- 9.1.18 **Site Context Photograph 1 to 5, 22 and 23**, are taken from elevated locations within the SDNP where there is the potential for intervisibility with the Site, DPSC3. As noted, **Site Context Photograph 2**, from Devils Dyke, and **Site Context Photograph 22**, from Wolstonbury Hill are also identified as key view in the South Downs National Park: View Characterisation and Analysis<sup>26</sup>, as Representative View 2: Devil’s Dyke, and Representative View 29: Wolstonbury Hill, respectively.

- 9.1.19 Views from these elevated locations within the SDNP illustrate the existing landscape character of the Low Weald when looking north, and are characterised by a patchwork of irregular medium to large sized fields; woodland, hedgerows, and trees; within the foothills and low weald landscape; with towns, villages and scattered settlement set within this landscape framework, particularly in the vicinity of Sayers Common and the Site DPSC3. Scattered settlements, such as Henfield, Albourne, Hurstpierpoint and Hassocks, are a characteristic component of views and can be seen in the panoramic view together with the larger settlement of Burgess Hill. Sayers Common, and the Site, DPSC3, are set within this context, set beyond a broad swathe of low ridges and vales and within a strong complex landscape framework of mature woodlands, treebelts, trees and hedgerows, which assists in screening views of both Sayers Common and the Site, DPSC3.
- 9.1.20 Within this context, residential development would be partially discernible in the distance within what are expansive longer distance elevated panoramic views and would constitute a minor change to the view overall, which would be unobtrusive. The layout and appearance of residential development would not be out of keeping with its surrounding landscape context, settlement pattern, and character of the existing view. Therefore, at these distances, it is unlikely that there will be unobscured views towards the Site, DPSC3, from elevated locations within the SDNP, as illustrated by **Site Context Photographs 1 to 5, 22 and 23**, and Representative Viewpoints 2 and 29.
- 9.1.21 The appraisal also considers the potential for views at the edge of the SDNP as illustrated by **Site Context Photographs 6 to 8**. The Site, DPSC3, is also within the setting of the SDNP. **Site Context Photograph 9 - 13 and 14 – 20, and 21** are illustrative of potential views from within the setting of the SDNP.
- 9.1.22 The series of views demonstrate the very limited zone of visual influence of the Site, DPSC3. This is due to a combination of elements such as the nature of the intervening topography, including ridgelines and subtle undulations may block or curtail views towards the Site, DPSC3, and vegetation, such as woodland, tree-belts or built forms that may contribute to additional screening, filtering or curtailing of views; that serves to screen or partially screen views of the Site, DPSC3. The whole Site, DPSC3, cannot be viewed in its entirety from any location.
- 9.1.23 It is evident that, due to the land rising within the southern areas of the Site, DPSC3, these are more visually sensitive to development due to their potential for increased visibility of the proposed development in views.
- 9.1.24 However, as demonstrated by the Site Context Photographs, the Site, DPSC3, is generally barely discernible or not visible within views from the edge of the SDNP and from elevated locations within the SDNP.

### **Value, Susceptibility (Capacity) and Sensitivity**

- 9.1.25 In terms of value, although the Site, DPSC3, is not highly distinctive at a national level or covered by any landscape designation, it is recognised that it forms part of the landscape context for the setting of the SDNP and is of high value at a local level.
- 9.1.26 With regard to the capacity of the Site, DPSC3, to accommodate residential development, as identified in the Landscape Capacity Study (2007) and the updated Landscape Capacity Study (2014), the eastern parcel of the Site, DPSC3, is located in the LCA 63: Albourne Low Weald, and the western parcel is located LCA 80: Trusler's Hill Foothills; and immediately adjoins the LCA 62: Hickstead-Sayers Common Low Weald which includes Sayers Common, to the north, and LCA 64: Albourne Foothills, to the south and east. LCA 63 and LCA 80 have a Low/Medium capacity to accommodate residential development, as does LCA 64; whilst LCA 62 has a Medium capacity to accommodate development, and therefore increased capacity to accommodate residential development.
- 9.1.27 It is of note, as stated in the Landscape Capacity Study that around 60% of Mid Sussex is under national landscape protection designations, with 50% in the High Weald AONB in the northern

part of the Mid Sussex District and 10% in the SDNP covering the southern corner of the Mid Sussex District.

- 9.1.28 In addition, the majority of areas assessed in the Mid Sussex District are considered to have a Low/Medium or Low Landscape Capacity, with only small pockets Medium and Medium/High Landscape Capacity located around the larger settlements. The Capacity Study has not identified any areas within the Mid Sussex District as having a High Landscape Capacity. Therefore, the Capacity Study identifies the Site, DPSC3, as being located within one of the least constrained areas of the Mid Sussex District; and in an area considerably less sensitive than much of the rest of the Mid Sussex District, a large proportion of which remains is covered by the national level landscape designations for the High Weald AONB and the SDNP. Therefore, the Site, DPSC3, is relatively well suited to accommodate development when compared with the wider Mid Sussex District.
- 9.1.29 In terms of susceptibility, the Site, DPSC3, has a medium/moderate ability to accommodate development of the nature proposed, that is predominantly residential development, without undue consequences for the maintenance of the baseline situation, as recognised by the allocation of the Site for a sustainable community at Sayers Common in the emerging Mid Sussex District Local Plan.
- 9.1.30 It is evident that, due to the land rising within the southern areas of the Site, DPSC3, these are more visually sensitive to development due to their potential for increased visibility of residential development in views from the wider landscape. This does not preclude development in these areas; however, it will require taking into account the sensitivities of a higher elevation by including buffer planting and offering a reduced density of development. An enhanced landscape buffer should be located to the southern boundaries of the Site, DPSC3, to contain views from the SDNP located further south, as well as provide a visual separation and retention of identities between Albourne and Sayer Common and the Site, DPSC3. This would also have the added benefit of screening views of the AvTrade Headquarters to the north of the Site, DPSC3, which are conspicuous in views from elevated parts of the SDNP.

## 9.2 Landscape and Visual Strategies

- 9.2.1 **Figure 8: Landscape and Visual Opportunities and Constraints Plan** sets out the landscape and visual strategies that will assist in successfully accommodating development sensitively within the Site, DPSC3, its immediate and wider locality, and the setting of the SDNP; taking into account the landscape and visual considerations; and the landscape policy guidance, including the NPPF, the Mid Sussex Local Plan, and the SDNP.
- 9.2.2 The following landscape and visual strategies, based on the landscape and visual appraisal of the Site, DPSC3, and **Figure 8: Landscape and Visual Opportunities and Constraints Plan**, have informed the development of the Site, DPSC3, to ensure that development can be successfully assimilated within the Site, DPSC3 and its immediate and wider surroundings, as required by Policy DP18 of the Adopted MSDC Local Plan and Draft Policy DPC 5: Setting of the South Downs National Park of the MSDC Regulation 19 Local Plan:
- Development should be generally set within the existing retained field pattern, to sensitively accommodate development within the existing robust framework of substantial woodland, hedgerows, hedgerows with trees, and tree belts which divide the fields and provide containment along the boundaries of the Site, DPSC3. The retained robust framework of vegetation should provide the basis for an enhanced landscape framework to further contain potential development, reflecting the characteristic relationship between the landscape and settlement. (SDNPPMP: Policy1; SD Local Plan Policies 1, 4 and 19; MSDC Draft Policy DPC1: Protection and Enhancement of the Countryside; Adopted Policy 37: Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows and Draft Policy DPN4: Trees Woodland and Hedgerows)
  - An enhanced landscape framework within which to accommodate potential development should provide buffer planting along the southern boundary of the Site, DPSC3, which along with a lower density of development on the southern edges of, and on the relatively more

elevated parts of the Site, DPSC3, should ensure development is contained within the Site, DPSC3, and limit any adverse effects beyond the Site, DPSC3, to sensitively respond to the most visually sensitive areas located closest to the SDNP. (SDNPPMP: Policy1; MSDC Adopted Policy DP18: Setting of the South Downs National Park and Draft Policy DPC5: Setting of the South Downs National Park)

- An enhanced landscape framework should take into account possible views from elevated locations within the SDNP, reinforcing the existing framework of vegetation in the most visually sensitive areas to enhance the containment of development, and provide screening and mitigation of views of development within views from the SDNP. (SDNPPMP: Policy1; SD Local Plan Strategic Policy SD 6: Safeguarding Views; MSDC Adopted Policy DP18: Setting of the South Downs National Park and Draft Policy DPC5: Setting of the South Downs National Park)
- The Tranquillity of the SDNP, which is a key special quality of the SDNP, should be maintained. Development on the Site, DPSC3, should not adversely impact the tranquillity of the SDNP and should minimise the perceptual appreciation of any increase in urban development, roads and people; and maintain the appreciation of wide, open spaces, natural landscapes, and trees, woodland and wildlife. An enhanced landscape framework should assist in assimilating development into its immediate context, limiting the perception of an increase in urban development, roads and people from the SDNP; and being at distance from the SDNP, the perception of loss of open wide spaces, natural landscapes, trees, woodland and wildlife should also be limited. (SDNPPMP: Policy1; SD Local Plan Strategic Policy SD7: Relative Tranquillity; MSDC Adopted Policy DP18: Setting of the South Downs National Park and Draft Policy DPC5: Setting of the South Downs National Park)
- Development of the Site, DPSC3, should respect the dark skies of the SDNP. Potential development should take all opportunities to reduce light pollution, (including sky glow, glare and light spillage) to minimise the impacts on local amenity, intrinsically dark landscapes and the SDNP. This should include considering using the minimum amount of lighting necessary to achieve its purpose; the design and specification of the lighting to minimise light pollution; siting lighting as unobtrusively as possible; considering the appropriate siting, fitting, design, colour and temperature of lighting to limit the adverse impact on wildlife; and the use of a recessive material palette for potential development, acknowledging the sensitivity in the visibility of the night. Specifically, the enhanced landscape framework should also aim to strategically screen lighting so that night-time visibility in the immediate locality, and from within the SDNP, is reduced, and dark skies within the SDNP are maintained. (SDNPPMP: Policy1; SD Local Plan Strategic Policy SD7: Relative Tranquillity; MSDC Adopted Policy DP18: Setting of the South Downs National Park, Draft Policy DPC5: Setting of the South Downs National Park and Draft Policy DPN8: Light Impacts and Dark Skies)
- The existing Green-Blue Infrastructure within the Site, DPSC3, should be retained and enhanced. (SDNPPMP Policy 4 and 19; MSDC Adopted Policy 38: Biodiversity, Draft Policies DPN1: Biodiversity, Geodiversity and Nature Recovery, DPN2: Biodiversity Net Gain, and DPN3: Green and Blue Infrastructure, and DPSC3: Point 12)
- The Site, DPSC3, benefits from a network of existing hedgerows and hedgerow trees, and these key features should be retained wherever possible and enhanced with further planting where possible. This would maintain and strengthen the existing pattern of field enclosure, and strengthen the existing green-blue infrastructure framework, enhancing biodiversity, and reinforcing and extending green wildlife corridors. (SDNPPMP Policy 4 and 19; MSDC Adopted Policy 38: Biodiversity and Draft Policies DPN1: Biodiversity, Geodiversity and Nature Recovery, DPN2: Biodiversity Net Gain, DPN3: Green and Blue Infrastructure, and DPSC3: Point 12)
- Existing water features should also be retained and enhanced. These are often located alongside hedgerows which should be retained and enhanced with further

planting/landscaping, or alongside PRowS which should be retained or created, located within green corridors providing green-blue and biodiversity benefits. (SDNPPMP Policy 4 and 19; MSDC Adopted Policy 38: Biodiversity and Draft Policies DPN1: Biodiversity, Geodiversity and Nature Recovery, DPN2: Biodiversity Net Gain, DPN3: Green and Blue Infrastructure, and DPSC3: Point 12)

- An enhanced landscape framework should also provide integration with the existing settlement edge of Sayers Common, with the retained and extended network of PRowS providing greater connectivity, both to the existing settlement, and to the wider countryside, beyond the Site, DPSC3. (MSDC Adopted Policy DP22: Rights of Way and other Recreational Routes, Draft Policy DPSC3: Points 5, 7 and 8)
- The setting to heritage assets such as Listed Buildings close to DPSC3 should be respected by providing landscape buffers and frontages at the boundaries of DPSC3 to physically and visually contain development on the Site, DPSC3, to conserve the setting of Listed Building and heritage assets.
- The individual identity of Sayers Common, including the Site, DPSC3 on the edge of the settlement of Sayers Common, and that of Albourne should be maintained, through a comprehensive landscape strategy, based on the retained and enhanced existing landscape framework; including the retention of existing vegetation along the southern boundary of the Site, DPSC3, enhanced with a landscape buffer to clearly differentiate between the separate settlements. Retention of a gap and landscape buffer should secure visual separation, and maintain the perception of the separate identities, of these settlements. (MSDC Draft Policy DPC2: Preventing Coalescence, and Albourne Parish Council Neighbourhood Plan: Policy Countryside – ALC3: Local Gaps and Preventing Coalescence)
- Development should be of high architectural quality set within a comprehensive landscape framework of green and blue infrastructure, and a network of recreational routes, formal and informal open space and recreational opportunities. Materials should be specifically selected to reflect the local vernacular of the area and create a sense of place, so that potential development reflects the character of the local built environment and will be well assimilated into its immediate and wider surroundings. (MSDC Adopted Policy DP26: Character and Design and Draft Policy DPB1: Character and Design).
- An enhanced landscape framework should provide a key screening opportunity in north-facing views from the SDNP towards the visually prominent AvTrade headquarter buildings. The location of the Site, DPSC3, in the foreground of these buildings would assist in softening the existing visually conspicuous nature of the AvTrade headquarters in views from the SDNP, both at day and night. (MSDC Adopted Policy DP18: Setting of the South Downs National Park, Draft Policy DPC5: Setting of the South Downs National Park and Draft Policy DPN8: Light Impacts and Dark Skies)

### 9.3 Conclusion

- 9.3.1 By adopting the landscape and visual strategies as set out on **Figure 8: Landscape and Visual Opportunities and Constraints**, and the landscape and visual strategies set out above, the Site, DPSC3, has capacity to successfully accommodate development. Establishment of an enhanced landscape buffer in the most visually sensitive areas, located the closest to the SDNP and on the most elevated part of the Site, DPSC3, will contain views from the SDNP located further south, as well as providing visual separation and retention of identities between Albourne and Sayer Common and the Site.
- 9.3.2 The development can therefore be sensitively assimilated into the immediate and wider landscape and visual context, responding to the Hickstead Low Weald Landscape Character Area (LCA4), and responding positively to local and national plan policy.

- 9.3.3 By adopting the landscape and visual strategies set out above, and which have been distilled into the Indicative Plan for the Site, DPSC3, in the draft MSD Regulation 19 Local Plan, and the supporting **Masterplan Framework Document: Land South of Reeds Lane**, in **Appendix C**, the Site, DPSC3, has the capacity to successfully accommodate development in the immediate and wider locality, respecting the Special Qualities, including views, tranquillity and dark skies, and essential characteristics, and setting of the SDNP.
- 9.3.4 Furthermore, as required by Policy DP18 of the Adopted MSDC Local Plan and Draft Policy DPC 5: Setting of the South Downs National Park of the MSDC Regulation 19 Local Plan, the proposed development on the Site, DPSC3, would not significantly detract from, or cause detriment to, the visual and special qualities (including dark skies), tranquillity and essential characteristics of the National Park, including the views, outlook and aspect, into and out of the National Park, by virtue of the development's location, scale, form or design. The proposed development on the Site, DPSC3, would be sensitively located and designed, be consistent with National Park purposes, would not adversely affect transitional landscape character, and being within the setting of the SDNP, has been sensitively located and designed to avoid or minimise adverse impacts on the SDNP.
- 9.3.5 The **Framework Masterplan Document: Sayers Common Sustainable Community**, in **Appendix D** demonstrates how the landscape and visual strategies, set out above, have been adopted within the proposals for development on DPSC3, DPSC4, DPSC5, DPSC6 and DPSC7; such that all five proposed allocations for Sayers Common, in combination, have the capacity to successfully accommodate development in the immediate and wider locality, respecting the Special Qualities, including views, tranquillity and dark skies, and essential characteristics, and setting of the SDNP.
- 9.3.6 In addition, in combination, the proposed development on DPSC4, DPSC5, DPSC6 and DPSC7 with that on DPSC3 would not increase the harm to the SDNP or its setting, such that, as required by Policy DP18 of the adopted MSDC Local Plan and Draft Policy DPC 5: Setting of the South Downs National Park of the MSDC Regulation 19 Local Plan, the proposed development of all five proposed allocations at Sayers Common would not significantly detract from, or cause detriment to, the visual and special qualities (including dark skies), tranquillity and essential characteristics of the National Park, including the views, outlook and aspect, into and out of the National Park, by virtue of the development's location, scale, form or design. The proposed development of all five proposed allocations at Sayers Common would be sensitively located and designed, be consistent with National Park purposes, would not adversely affect transitional landscape character, and being within the setting of the SDNP, has been sensitively located and designed to avoid or minimise adverse impacts on the SDNP.

## Figure 1: Site Context Plan

**LEGEND**

-  Site Boundary
-  Existing Woodlands, Copses and Tree Belts ^
-  Existing Scrub ^
-  Existing Water Courses and Features ^
-  Contours/Spot Heights (Metres AOD) ^
-  Public Rights of Way \*
-  Traditional Orchards #
-  Countryside Rights of Way Access Areas #
-  Cycle Route ++
-  Listed Buildings ~
-  Scheduled Monument ~
-  National Parks #
-  Sites of Special Scientific Interest #
-  Ancient Woodland #
-  Conservation Area ~/#/#

Sources:  
 ^ OS Mapping  
 # Natural England GIS Data Set  
 ~ Historic England National Monument Record GIS Data Set  
 ~ County Councils' Definitive Map  
 + Sustrans National Cycle Network GIS Data  
 ++ Department of Transport Cycle Network Model

Data collected for constraints and analysis mapping is based on publicly available sources at the time of preparation. Inherent in using the British National Grid and may itself not be accurate. Stantec shall not be liable for the accuracy of data derived from external sources.

**FIGURE 1**

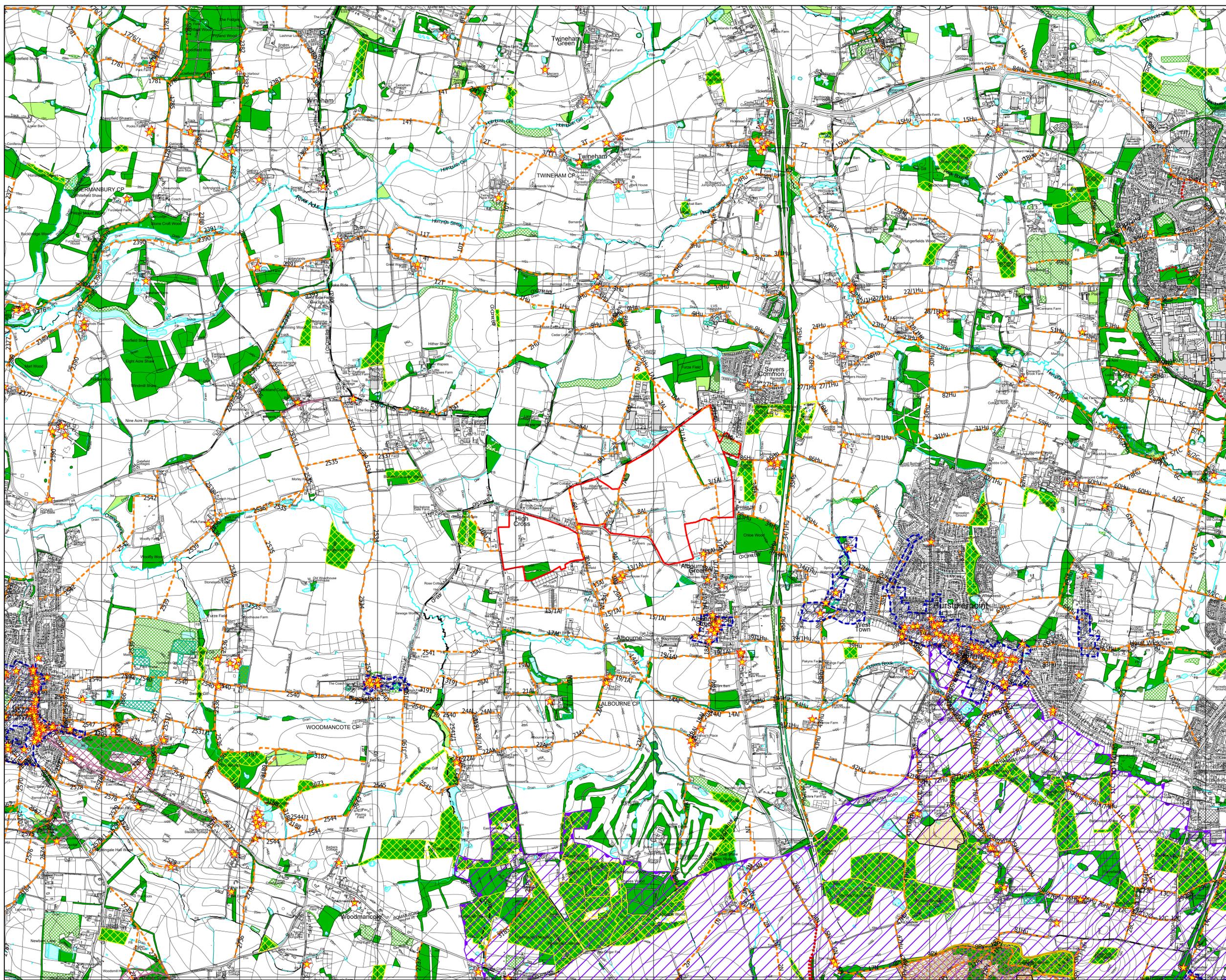
Project  
**Land South of Reeds Lane,  
 Sayers Common**  
 Drawing Title  
**Site Context Plan**

Date	Scale	Drawn by	Check by
15.05.2024	1:12,500 @A1 1:25,000 @A3	WD/OF	-
Project No	Drawing No	Revision	-
34850	LN-LP-101	-	-

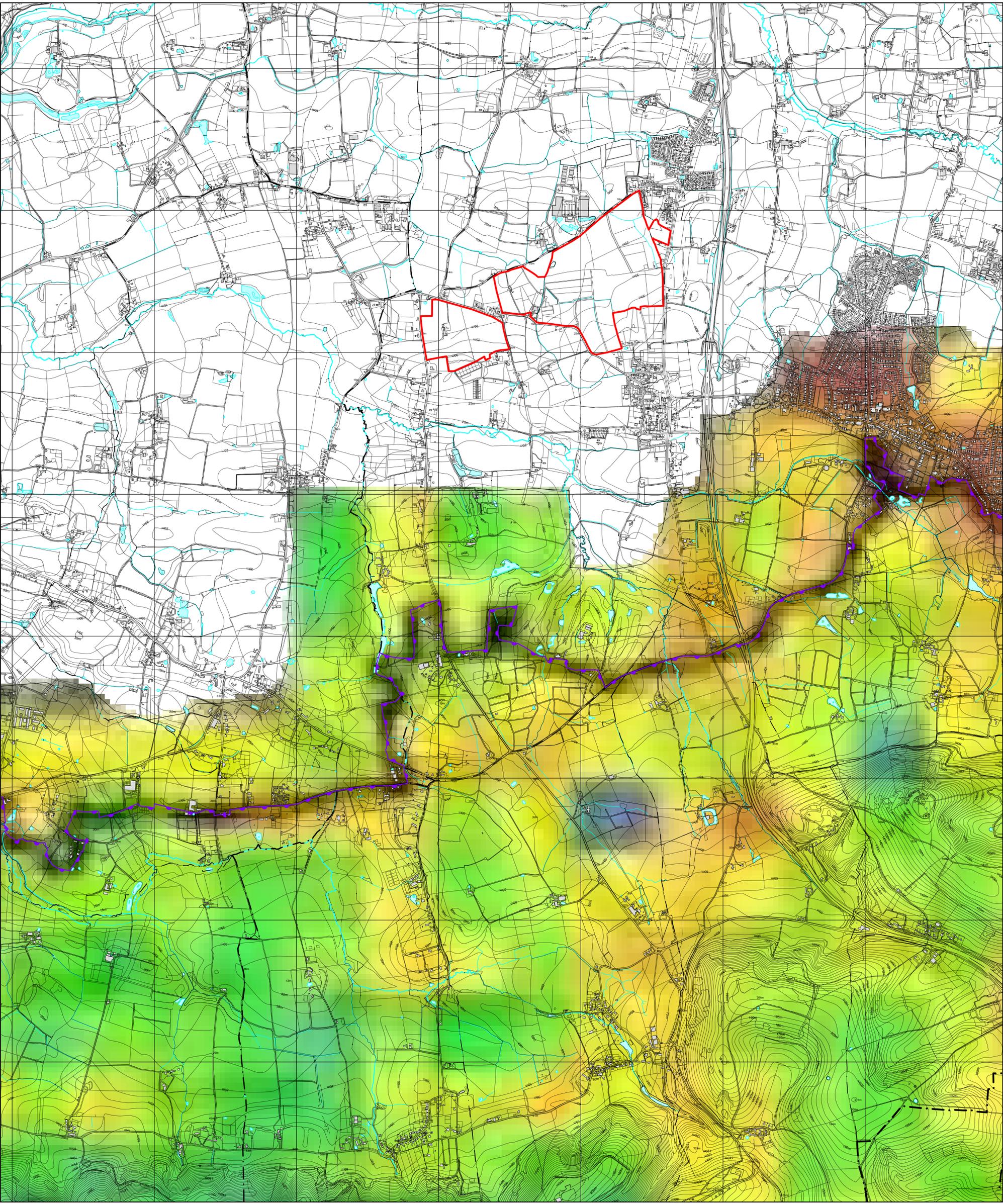


Stantec UK Limited  
 7 Soho Square  
 London  
 W1D 3Q9  
 T: 020 7446 6888

stantec.com/uk

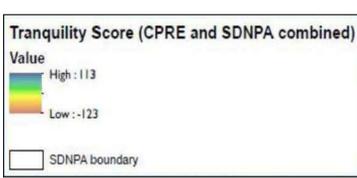


**Figure 2: South Downs National Park Tranquillity  
Map Extract Plan**



**LEGEND**

-  Site Boundary
-  Existing Water Courses and Features ^
-  Contours/Spot Heights (Metres AOD) ^
-  National Parks #



Sources:  
 ^ OS Mapping  
 # Natural England GIS Data Set  
 + South Downs National Park Authority - Tranquility Study 2017 - Appendix 1: Relative Tranquility Scores for the South Downs National Park Area  
 Data collated for constraints and analysis mapping is based on publicly available sources at the time of preparation inserted using the British National Grid and may itself not be accurate. Stantec shall not be liable for the accuracy of data derived from external sources.

**FIGURE 2**

Project  
 Land South of Reeds Lane,  
 Sayers Common

Drawing Title  
 SDNP Tranquility Map  
 Extract Plan

Date 29.04.2024 Scale 1:12,500 @A1  
 1:25,000 @A3

Project No 34850 Drawing No LN-LP-302

Drawn by OF Check by LT  
 Revision

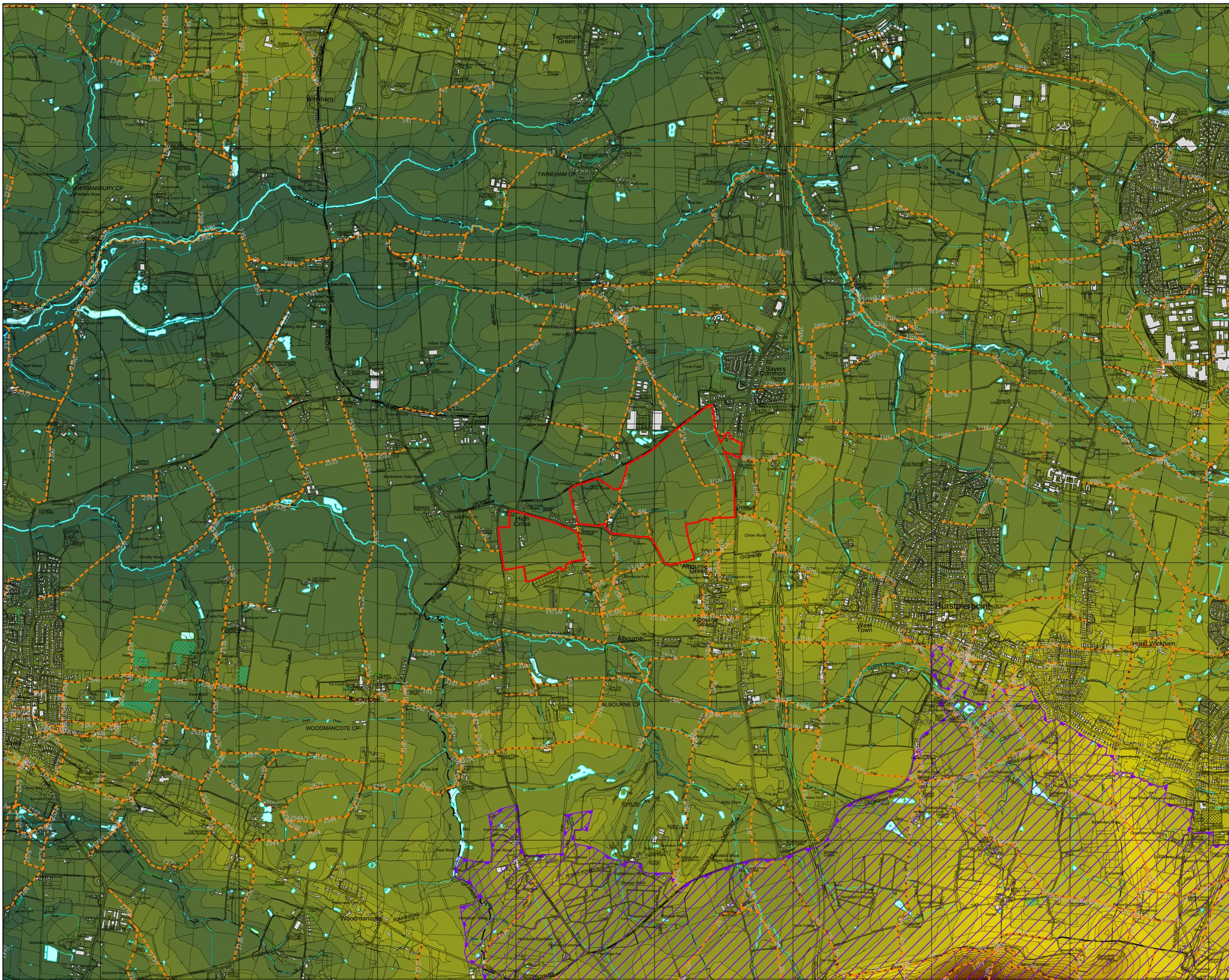



Stantec UK Limited  
 7 Soho Square  
 London  
 W1D 3QB  
 T: 020 7446 6888



stantec.com/uk

**Figure 3: Topography Plan**

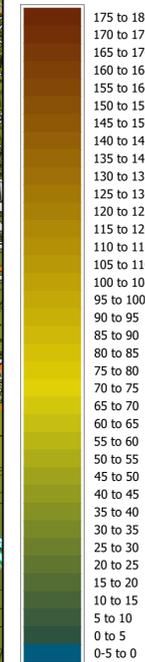


The scaling of this drawing cannot be assured  
 Revision \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_ Dm \_\_\_\_\_ Ckd \_\_\_\_\_

**LEGEND**

-  Site Boundary
-  Existing Water Courses and Features ^
-  Contours/Spot Heights (Metres AOD) ^
-  Public Rights of Way
-  National Parks #

**Elevation (Metres AOD)**



Sources:  
 ^ OS Mapping  
 # Natural England GIS Data Set  
 Data collected for constraints and analysis mapping is based on publicly available sources at the time of preparation inserted using the British National Grid and may itself not be accurate. Stantec shall not be liable for the accuracy of data derived from external sources.

**FIGURE 3**

Project  
**Land South of Reeds Lane,  
 Savers Common**  
 Drawing Title  
**Topography Plan**

Date	Scale	Drawn by	Check by
20.05.2024	1:12,500 @A1 1:25,000 @A3	WD/OF	LT
Project No	Drawing No	Revision	
34850	LN-LP-102	-	

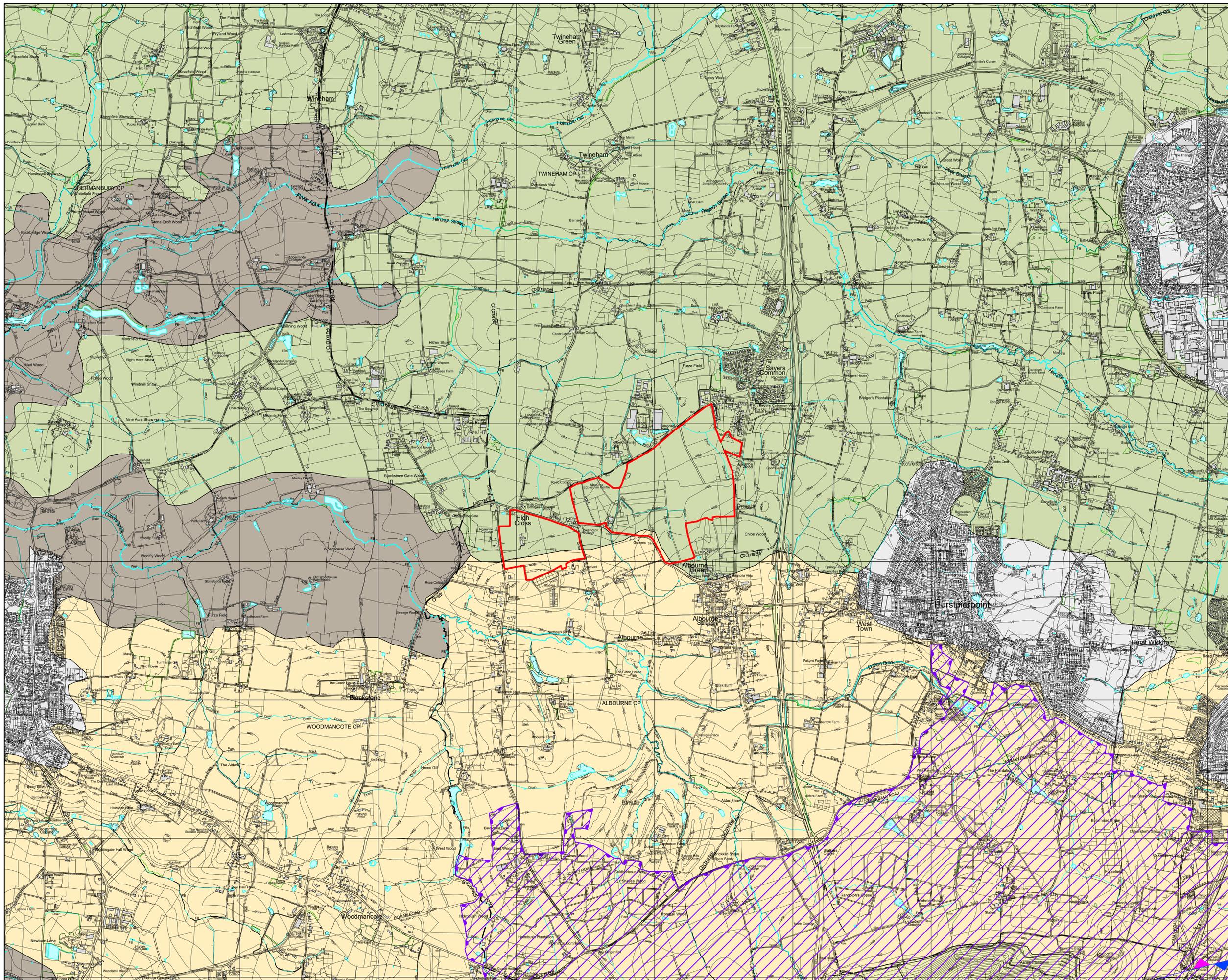


Stantec UK Limited  
 7 Soho Square  
 London  
 W1D 3QJ  
 T: 020 7446 6888



stantec.com/uk

**Figure 4: Landscape Character Plan**



**LEGEND**

- Site Boundary
- Existing Water Courses and Features ^
- Contours/Spot Heights (Metres AOD) ^
- National Parks #
- National Character Area (NCA) Profiles #
  - 121, Low Weald
  - 125, South Downs
- West Sussex Council Landscape Areas ~
  - LW9 Upper Adur Valley
  - LW6 Central Low Weald
  - LW7 Wiston Low Weald
  - SD4 Angmering Park
  - Urban-Built Up Areas



Sources:  
 ^ OS Mapping  
 # Natural England GIS Data Set  
 ~ West Sussex County Council, West Sussex Landscape Character Areas, 2007  
 Data collated for constraints and analysis mapping is based on publicly available sources at the time of preparation inserted using the British National Grid and may itself not be accurate. Stantec shall not be liable for the accuracy of data derived from external sources.

**FIGURE 4**

Project  
 Land South of Reeds Lane,  
 Sayers Common  
 Drawing Title  
 Landscape Character Plan

Date	Scale	Drawn/OF	Check by
20.05.2024	1:12,500 @A1 1:25,000 @A3	WD/OF	LT
Project No	Drawing No	Revision	
34850	LN-LP-103	-	

**Stantec**  
 DRAFT  
 Stantec UK Limited  
 7 Soho Square  
 London  
 W1D 3Q9  
 T: 020 7446 6888  
 stantec.com/uk

**Figure 5: Local Landscape Character Plan**