



**TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990, SECTION 78  
PROOF OF EVIDENCE OF JOSH PEACOCK, CMLI  
REGARDING LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL EFFECTS ON  
BEHALF OF MID SUSSEX DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**Appeal relating to Land East Of Ansty,  
Cuckfield Bypass, Cuckfield, West Sussex**

**Regarding an outline planning application (All matters reserved except for access) for the redevelopment of land to the east of Ansty to create a new Garden Community, comprising of the erection of up to 1,450 homes (including 30% affordable housing), up to 90 residential care units (C2 class), a primary school, a SEND school, health hub, sports facilities including all weather hockey pitches and tennis centre, allotments, retail, community and employment uses together with ancillary and associated development including new and enhanced pedestrian/cycle routes, open spaces, and landscaping.**

May 2026

**PINS reference: 6002030**

## Mid Sussex District Council reference: DM/23/2866

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## **1.0 PERSONAL**

- 1.1 The Statement has been prepared by Josh Peacock, Technical Lead of Landscape Planning at Lizard Landscape Design and Ecology with over 20 years of experience across the public and private sector in Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA).
- 1.2 I hold a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Fine Art from Southampton Solent University and a Post Graduate Diploma and Master of Arts Degree with Distinction in Landscape Architecture from Leeds Beckett University. I have been a member of the Landscape Institute since 2001 and a Chartered Member since 2011.
- 1.3 I have over twenty years of experience in the public and private sectors as a Landscape Architect / Planner and Environmental Project Manager, encompassing landscape and environmental design and specialised in landscape planning and environmental risk management tools, including Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment for Environmental Impact Assessment. I have provided evidence for planning appeals, including Hearings and Public Inquiries on behalf of various clients including Mid Sussex DC, Waverley DC, Developer and Landowner applicants and Rule 6 Parties such as Samuel Smith Old Brewery, Tadcaster.
- 1.4 The evidence which I have prepared and provide for this appeal in this Proof of Evidence represents my professional opinion on the objective and subjective landscape and visual aspects of the development. Based on my knowledge, I confirm that the opinions expressed are my true and professional opinions and I have complied with the Landscape Institute Code of Conduct.

## 2.0 **INTRODUCTION**

2.1 This Proof of Evidence is submitted on behalf of Mid Sussex District Council (“the Council”), in respect of an appeal by Fairfax Acquisitions Limited and the Norris Family (“The Appellant”) regarding Land East of Ansty Way, Cuckfield Bypass.

2.2 I was instructed on the 1 April 2026 and undertook a field survey from publicly accessible land within and surrounding the Site on the 23 April 2026.

2.3 My evidence deals specifically with the following reason for refusal, as contained in the Decision Notice dated the 17th October 2025, namely:

*‘The proposal consists of major development within the countryside, out of keeping with the rural character, which fails to protect the distinctiveness of the area by extending the settlement boundary of Ansty, resulting in the perceived coalescence with Cuckfield, eroding the rural nature of the site which is further harmed by the proposed loss of trees.*

*Due to the location and scale of the development the proposal would result in an unacceptable urbanising feature, eroding the rural nature of the site that makes a positive contribution to the setting of the HWNL. The proposal would therefore fail to avoid and minimise the adverse impact on the High Weald National Landscape to the detriment of the scenic beauty of the designated area.’*

2.4 My evidence includes supporting Landscape and Visual evidence which provides additional Study Area Figures, Viewpoint Photographs and an extract from the CPRE Dark Night Skies Map, specifically defined to inform an understanding of the reasons for refusal, respectively provided as **Appendices A, B and C** within this PoE. I have consistently defined the Study Area shown within the Figures at some 2km offset from the Site.

2.5 There was no scoping report submitted to the Council in advance of the application. Due to this the Study Area, Landscape Receptors and Viewpoint Locations were not subject to consultation or agreement. However, during the determination of the application, the Council did not seek to challenge any elements of the Environmental Statement submitted under Volume 3 – Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, (November 2023) (**CD2.16**). The LVIA was updated to address the Council’s comments in May 2024, (**CD2.17**).

2.6 In addition to the Fabrik LVIA I consider various documents including the Fabrik response to the November 2023 LVIA Review undertaken by Place Services, (January 2024) which resulted in the Fabrik LVIA update, (May 2024) (**CD2.18**).

- 2.7 Reference is made to the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Third Edition, (GLVIA3) (CD17.3), the LI Technical Guidance Note 02-21: Assessing Landscape Value Outside National Designations (CD17.16) the High Weald AONB Management Plan 2024-2029 (HWNL MP) (CD17.12) and the consultee response from the High Weald Joint Advisory Committee, (HWJAC) (CD4.7).
- 2.8 My evidence is limited to consideration of the relevant policies, which seek to avoid adverse landscape/visual effects and does not go wider. The Planning Proof of Evidence from Martin Dale attends to policy matters and the planning balance.
- 2.9 Within the HWNL MP, (p11) regarding the setting of the High Weald National Landscape, (HWNL) it is noted that due to the high synergy in character between the HWNL and the wider High Weald National Character Area (NCA 122), (p8) (CD17.17) that land within the NCA should be considered as falling within the setting of the National Landscape. Section 85 of the CRoW Act 2000 is highlighted as requiring public bodies to consider whether any activities outside the AONB may affect land in an AONB.
- 2.10 Regarding the degree of harm development may have on general landscape character of the area and on the setting of the HWNL, MSDC Policy DP16 identifies that: *‘Development on land that contributes to the setting of the AONB will only be permitted where it does not detract from the visual qualities and essential characteristics of the AONB, and in particular should not adversely affect the views into and out of the AONB by virtue of its location or design.’*
- 2.11 Para 189 of the NPPF states that (emphasis added):
- “Great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and National Landscapes which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues. The conservation and enhancement of wildlife and cultural heritage are also important considerations in these areas and should be given great weight in National Parks and the Broads. 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.”

### **3.0 MATTERS IN DISPUTE**

3.1 The following matters are in dispute:

- The degree of harm the development will have on general landscape character of the area and in particular its impact on the setting of the High Weald National Landscape.
- The degree of impact the development has on the perceived coalescence between Ansty and Cuckfield.

#### **The degree of harm the development will have on general landscape character of the area and in particular its impact on the setting of the High Weald National Landscape**

##### ***General Landscape Character of the Area***

- 3.2 Landscape characterisation identifies and describes variation in the character of the landscape, through identifying and explaining the unique combination of elements and features that makes landscapes distinctive and different from one another, (GLVIA3 glossary, p157). This is undertaken at the National, County and District scale and more infrequently at the Local Parish scale.
- 3.3 Existing landscape character assessments, including historic characterisations are reviewed to inform the description of landscape character across the Study Area in advance of the field survey work as guided by GLVIA3, (p77, Para 5.15) and informed by review of landform and designations.
- 3.4 The field survey provides an opportunity to both record the specific characteristics of the more limited area of the Site and surrounds, but also to analyse to what extent the Site and surrounds confirm to or are different from the wider landscape character assessments that exist, as guided by GLVIA3, (p79, Para 5.16).
- 3.5 Landscape Capacity Studies and Parish characterisations are useful for providing additional granularity of detail to identify where representative character from these larger areas occur and provide guidelines on sensitivity of landscape for accepting change. However, they are of limited additional benefit in determining landscape characteristics at the scale proposed by this Scheme and are not considered as landscape receptors within this proof.
- 3.6 The Study Area is located within the High Weald National Character Area (NCA 122) and the High Weald Fringes Landscape Character Area, (LCA) as defined at both County and District scale.

- 3.7 The High Weald National Character Area, (NCA 122) is described as a faulted landform of clays, sand and soft sandstones with outcrops of fissured sandrock and ridges running east–west, deeply incised and intersected with numerous gill streams forming the headwaters of a number of the major rivers. Landscape attributes are identified including: 'Dispersed historic settlement pattern, farmsteads and hamlets with late medieval villages; [...] Small irregularly shaped fields bounded by hedgerows, shaws and woodlands; Woodlands – ancient woods, gill woodlands, and shaws; A landscape rich in heritage assets and historic environment features and elements; Tranquillity [...] accentuated by the traditional character of villages, sunken lanes, the wooded ghyll (gill)s and intimate views, which together also create a strong sense of timelessness.'
- 3.8 The High Weald Fringes LCA is consistently defined in name, area, and description at the West Sussex County, (2003) (**CD17.10**) and Mid Sussex District, (2005) (**CD17.9**) level, albeit labelled differently as LCA HW4, (2003) and LCA10, (2005), (see **Appendix A** Figure 4).
- 3.9 The Mid Sussex District characterisation does provide additional, supporting text which provides a more comprehensive description of various characteristics and experience of the aspects of the landscape. This is explored below, before considering Site Landscape Receptors.
- 3.10 Within the Mid Sussex District description of the High Weald Fringes LCA, the following characteristics are noted, against which I provide a consideration at the Site level:
- Regarding the HWNL: *'the landscape shares many of the characteristics of the High Weald proper, but is generally lower and gentler, the gill streams far less deeply incised, the woodland cover rather less dense.'* (Ibid, p107)
- 3.11 It should be noted that the incised ghyll streams, which extend through and about the Site are deeply incised ghylls, in keeping with those within the HWNL.
- Regarding woodland cover: *'Although there are numerous small woodlands, many woods are medium-sized or large, occurring in networks and blocks associated with gills and ancient woodland. There is a particular concentration of woodlands centred on Raggets Wood near Ansty'* (Ibid, p107).
- 3.12 It should be noted through reference to **Appendix A**, Figure 2 - Relevant Designations, that the highest density of woodland within the area is located some 1km east and west of the Site, (with Raggets Wood to the west) between which belts of woodland extend, including across the Site, with a high density to the east of the Site along the ghyll landform.

- Regarding field pattern: *'The landscape of small, irregular-shaped fields characteristic of historic assart pastures are far less common here than in the High Weald proper, making this a transitional landscape between the High and Low Wealds.'* (Ibid, p107).
- 3.13 It should be noted that the field systems within the Site area are assarted, and so more in keeping with the High Weald, rather than the more generally transitional landscape between the HWNL and the Low Weald, with assarted pasture fields to the eastern end of the Site.
- Regarding settlement form and local distinctiveness: *'The typically dispersed historic settlement pattern of the area reflects that of the High Weald proper. Apart from Cuckfield, Lindfield and the ridge line settlements, the villages are few and small: Ansty, Bolney, Scaynes Hill and Warninglid.'* (Ibid, p109).
- 3.14 This recognises the dispersed historic settlement pattern, including that surrounding the Site and the small village of Ansty, being reflective of that within the HWNL.
- Regarding settlement form and local distinctiveness of Cuckfield: *'A former medieval market town, Cuckfield has retained its character admirably, with a mixture of housing styles from many periods. [...] The 14th Century parish church of Holy Trinity lies on the south side of the village, close to open, rising ground, nearly on the crest of the ridge, a church of nobility and substance. Its shingled spire is a landmark [...]'* (Ibid, p109-110).
- 3.15 This recognises the distinct identity of Cuckfield, which is contributed from visibility towards its landmark shingled spire upon the ridge top.
- 3.16 From this review, Lizard consider that the Site area is representative of the High Weald Fringes LCA, albeit forming a more distinctive landscape in keeping with that of the High Weald proper, (the HWNL) rather than the wider area which more generally does form a more transitional landscape character between the High Weald proper and the Low Weald.
- 3.17 This is due to the presence of deeply incised ghyll streams, which extend through and about the Site, belts of woodland associated with gills and ancient woodland, assarted field systems within the Site area, with assarted pasture fields to the eastern end of the Site, the dispersed historic settlement pattern surrounding the Site and the small village of Ansty and visibility towards the landmark shingled spire upon the ridge top at Cuckfield.

### ***Landscape character of the Site area***

- 3.18 The landscape within the Site forms the undulating lower lying ground between the ridgetop settlements of Cuckfield offset to the north and Ansty to the west. Historic field systems likely deriving from the medieval period fall across the undulating landform towards ghyll streams within incised landform. The fields are enclosed within hedgerows or belts of deciduous woodland patches of which are ancient woodland. Dispersed historic settlement extends about the edge of the Site. The HWNL borders to the north-west along the A272 and at an offset west of the Site.
- 3.19 The value of the Site area is considered below, structured through reference to factors defined within LI Technical Guidance Note 02-21: Assessing Landscape Value Outside National Designations, (LI TGN 02-21) and Box 5.1, (p84) within GLVIA3, as follows, with some consideration of how these characteristics are identified within the Fabrik LVIA Baseline. This exercise is undertaken to explore how the distinctive characteristics of the High Weald Fringes LCA are considered within the Site.

### ***Natural heritage character – Landform and Ghyll streams***

- 3.20 The undulating landform either side of the falling ridge east of Ansty falling towards the incised ghyll stream landforms and streams, with the main ghyll landform extending across the Site from the HWNL to the north-west, forming a confluence offset to the east of the Site, where the Copyhold Gill is named, (see Figure 5. Landform within **Appendix A**).
- 3.21 Fabrik demonstrate some awareness of the streams within the ghyll landform, under 4.1.6 Site Description / Natural / Landform and drainage, where watercourses are described within valleys, draining from west to east and connecting with a larger watercourse to the south-east, attributed a Medium value, (p23) and more clearly within Natural / Key natural elements, features and characteristics, where the undulating landform is described as generally funneling water into two steeply incised wooded gills, which alongside of other considerations, is attributed a High value (p24).
- 3.22 No reference is made to the continuity of the ghyll stream feature from within the HWNL to the north-west, nor the name of the Copyhold Gill. If the characteristic of the undulating landform draining to the steeply incised wooded gills was included under / Landform and drainage, it is possible that the value of the distinctive landform within the Site would have been attributed a 'High value' by Fabrik. This would recognise that this is a distinctive characteristic within published overlying National, County and District Landscape Characterisations, with continuity of characteristic with the HWNL to the north-west.

### Natural heritage character – Ancient woodland

- 3.23 There are various patches of ancient woodland within the Site along the incised and wooded ghyll stream landform, including substantial patches of Biddens Wood and Furnace Wood to the south-east, Highbridge / Highbridge Mill Shaw to the north and Mackrill Shaw to the north-east, (see Figure 2. Relevant Designations within Appendix A).
- 3.24 Fabrik demonstrate a limited generic awareness of the presence of ancient woodland, under Natural / Vegetation cover (p23) described as being identified within locations within the Site's valley floor and slopes and Cultural/Social / Time depth (p24) where ancient woodland is described as providing an indication of time depth and heritage alongside of the historic field pattern. Both topics are attributed a High value.
- 3.25 No reference is made to the name of the ancient woodlands, their spatial distribution across the Site or their association with the ghyll landforms, or continuity along the ghyll landforms into the more densely wooded areas within the HWNL to the west and offset to the east.

### Cultural heritage character – Assarted field system

- 3.26 The fields across the Site, other than that to the north-east are historically characterised as assarted within the Sussex Historic Landscape Characterisation, (Bannister, 2010) GIS dataset. This means that they have the rounded edges of fields cut out from the earlier woodland expanse, generally associated with clearance in the medieval period and with ancient woodland. See Figure 3. Sussex Historic Landscape Character Types, within **Appendix A**, which is derived from the GIS Dataset.
- 3.27 This shows that the fields within the Site and surrounding area are defined under the Historic Landscape Character Type (HLCT) 'Assarts'. Summary information provided within the GIS data set attribute data, distinguishes the area of the Site to the north of the ridge line track as Aggregate Assart and that to the south as Cohesive Assart. Respective descriptions of these sub types are provided within Volume V: Appendices of the 2010 Study, (p37) **(CD17.19)**. A description of the period from which the sub types would generally have occurred is provided within Volume IV: Gazetteer of Typology of the 2010 Study, which highlights that: *'It is thought that the main period in which assarting took place was in the 12th and 13th centuries when the process was recorded in the manorial records, but the assarting of woodlands to create fields was probably taking place much earlier, before the Conquest.'* (p8), **(CD17.18)**.

- 3.28 This HLCT is the main type within the Study Area and within the HWNL to the west. A parcel of later Formal Enclosure HLCT extends into the north-eastern part of the Site, south of the A272. Historic dispersed settlement HLCT is characterised within the centre of the Site and about the fringes. The centre of Ansty offset to the south-west and Cuckfield further offset to the north are defined with Historic Core HLCT, with later Settlement expansion HLCT in places surrounding.
- 3.1 Fabrik demonstrate awareness of the time depth of the assarted fields under Cultural/Social / Time depth (p24) where historic field pattern is described as providing an indication of time depth and heritage, which is attributed a 'High value' (p24). Reference is made to the historic characterisation of the fields as assarted, deriving from the medieval period. However, no mention is provided of the continuity of the characteristic with the HWNL to the north-west.

#### Recreational use

- 3.2 There is a high density of Public Footpaths to the lower lying landscape about the eastern part of the Site, providing connectivity to and between historic dispersed settlement including Mackerell Cottage, (Grade II Listed) along the edge of the Site and along the falling ridgeline east of Ansty, which extends through the centre of the Site, and along which experience of the landscape is important, (see Figure 7. within my LVIA).
- 3.3 Fabrik demonstrate an awareness of the Public Rights of Way under Section 2. Planning Policy / Legislation and Landscape Related Designations / Public Rights of Way Context, where a number of public rights of way are noted crossing the Site providing foot and cycle connections between Ansty, Cuckfield and the surrounding landscape.
- 3.4 No reference is made to these Public Rights of Way as receptors. They might have been included under Cultural/Social / Land Use (p24) or Landscape Character, (p24) for example, or as a separate receptor.

#### Perceptual aspects - Dark Night Skies

- 3.5 Through reference to the CPRE night blight website, (see extract provided as **Appendix C**) the Site is located within an area of dark skies of between 0.5 - 1 NanoWatts, bordering the HWNL with darker skies of 0.25 - 0.5 NanoWatts offset to the north-west within the HWNL.
- 3.6 Fabrik under Night Time Character, (p24) describe the Site and surrounds as characterised by dark night skies in keeping with the surrounding rural areas, which is attributed a 'Medium-High value'.

- 3.7 They identify that this area is predominantly dark with limited street lighting associated with the junction of the A272 and B2036 in the centre of Ansty, transient low level temporary light sources from car headlights and light spill from residential properties within Ansty and Cuckfield.
- 3.8 I agree, but would have some consideration of the bordering HWNL, where dark night skies are one of the eight core character components.

#### Perceptual aspects – Tranquillity

- 3.9 The undulating, enclosed character of the Site associated with the falling ground about the incised and wooded ghyll streams, including substantial patches of surrounding woodland, results in a deeply rural landscape across the Site, which has high tranquillity, contiguous with, and of similar character to, the adjacent HWNL. There is relatively lower tranquillity where adjacent and in proximity to the well trafficked A272 to the west and north.
- 3.10 The Fabrik LVIA includes tranquillity as a receptor as part of the Contextual Townscape Elements, where this is described in association with the built areas of Ansty and Cuckfield, with areas of tranquillity noted to the churchyard to the south of Cuckfield and within the HWNL to the west, which is attributed a Low Value, (p23). Contextual Townscape Elements as a Landscape Receptor within Fabrik's LVIA include historical development, urban structure, and green infrastructure and public realm, amongst various other considerations including tranquillity which are collectively attributed Medium – Low Value within Table 4.1 – Summary of Landscape Receptors, (p25).
- 3.11 At the Site level there is no explicit consideration of tranquillity, beyond elements which detract from this. Landscape Character, (p24) includes the sub heading of 'The role of the Site in the wider landscape' which identifies impact on tranquillity from the A272 and the sewerage works to the north-east following identification of a number of bulleted characteristics.

#### Perceptual aspects – Scenic qualities

- 3.12 From along the falling ridge east of Ansty there are views towards the landmark spire of the Grade I Listed Parish Church of Holy Trinity, upon the ridgetop south of Cuckfield. This is glimpsed from over and about intervening vegetation for users of Public Footpath WS 3883 / 62 CR, (see **Appendix B** Viewpoint's No. 08 and 09).
- 3.13 Visibility towards the landmark spire informs scenic quality more generally within the Site area outside of the publicly accessible land, particularly along the northern edge of the ridge, which can be noted through reference to the Fabrik LVIA, Internal Viewpoints S2, S5, S7, p27/29/30).

- 3.14 There is also a scenic quality associated with views along the sloping landform within the Site, enclosed within woodland and trees.
- 3.15 At the Site level, the Fabrik LVIA, (p24) under Natural / Key natural elements, features and characteristics, identifies that the scenic quality of the local area is contributed from areas of both enclosure and openness, resulting from landform and vegetation, which is attributed a High Value (albeit this includes consideration of the fields in agricultural use and the undulating landform which drains into two steeply incised wooded gills. This should better have been considered under Perceptual and Aesthetic, (p24) where views to local landmarks, (such as Cuckfield Church Spire) is identified as a notable quality, contributing to a Medium – High value.
- 3.16 Under Perceptual and Aesthetic, Fabrik do additionally consider the relatively intimate and enclosed landscape from the undulating topography and steeply incised wooded ghylls.

Distinctiveness - Settlement pattern / setting

- 3.17 The landscape within the Site forms the undulating lower lying ground between the ridgetop settlements of Cuckfield and Ansty and contributes to views that are important to the character and identity of the settlements, (see **Appendix A** Figure 5. Landform and Figure 7. Key Viewpoint Locations, alongside of **Appendix B** Viewpoint's No. 06, 08 and 09).
- 3.18 At the Site level, this is considered by Fabrik under Perceptual and Aesthetic, (p24) where the following is noted: 'Built form is prevalent within the local area with isolated farmsteads and the settlement edges of Ansty and Cuckfield visible against a wooded backdrop', contributing to a Medium – High value.
- 3.19 This statement is understood to understate the intimate and enclosed character of the Site and to overstate the presence of built form. From my field survey, the presence of Cuckfield is substantially defined by the landmark church spire, whilst settlement boundaries and dispersed historic settlement is otherwise well enclosed by intervening vegetation.
- 3.20 Under Para 4.1.5 Contextual Townscape Elements / Green Infrastructure and Public Realm (p23), which is attributed a 'High value' Ansty is described as surrounded by a predominantly agricultural landscape, with hedgerows, linear tree belts and woodland blocks, which define the field pattern and create a sense of enclosure.
- 3.21 The Cuckfield Conservation Area Appraisal (2006) (**CD 18.6**) is quoted from, which describes the magnificent views of the South Downs to the south from the churchyard as a quiet space of contemplation.

- 3.22 Within Fabrik Para 4.1.4 Topographic context, (p22) the village of Ansty is described as sitting on a local ridgeline broadly on a north-west to south-east alignment.
- 3.23 It is unclear where settlement pattern / setting is considered within the receptor groupings provided within the Table 4.1 – Summary of Landscape Receptors. Through reference to the descriptions of change provided within Table V3.2.1 Contextual Landscape Receptors, the receptor where Settlement pattern / setting is most discussed is: ‘Historical Development, Movement and Connectivity, Urban Structure and Built Form, Green Infrastructure and Public Realm, Tranquillity’ which is discussed in further detail later within this PoE regarding effect.

#### Distinctiveness - Settlement pattern / setting

- 3.24 A dispersed settlement pattern presents about the edges of the Site, associated with C16 / C17 farming and the ghyll streams, including the early C19 Highbridge Mill Cottages to the north west, the C17 Mackerell Cottage to the north east, the C16 West Riddens Farmhouse to the south and upon the falling ridge east of Ansty, the C18 The Place and C17 Barn to the north of Forsyth's Farmhouse, to the centre of the Site, albeit outside of the Site boundary, (see my LVIA Figure 5. Landform and Figure 2. Designations).
- 3.25 Fabrik demonstrate an awareness of some of these historic buildings under ‘Time depth’ which is attributed a ‘High value’ (p24) but not the dispersed settlement pattern which this reflects.

#### Distinctiveness – Strength of Landscape Character / Sense of Place

- 3.26 The landscape within the Site represents a distinctive strength of character, as characterised at the National, County and District Scales and a strong sense of place. The Study Area is comparably characterised as part of the High Weald Fringes Landscape Character Area, (LCA HW4) within the County level Landscape Character Assessment of West Sussex (WSCC, 2003), and within the District level Character Assessment for Mid Sussex (MSCC, 2005), within which there is a more narrative based explanation of these characteristics as reported within my LVIA.
- 3.27 Fabrik reference these shared characteristics and demonstrate an understanding of their presence within their LVIA Summary of contextual landscape character, (Section 4.0, p20). Fabrik identify that the landscape character of the Study Area is defined by its landform, vegetation, land use and time depth, which have all informed the historic settlement pattern and growth over time.

- 3.28 Rural character, field patterns and steep gill valleys are described as characteristic of the local area, whilst contributing to the landscape quality and scenic quality of the Study Area alongside that of the HWNL to the west. Whilst presented as context, the language used by Fabrik is equally applicable to the Site, albeit not presented as such, or with a comparable summary provided within the baseline section. Within the Summary and Conclusions, Summary of the baseline, (Section 10.0, p111) Fabrik identify that the Site is representative of the character of the LCA within which it sits, with reasoning provided that its topography and wooded character are in keeping with the surrounding landscape.
- 3.29 Overall, I consider that the Fabrik LVIA is fairly comprehensive in its initial landscape baseline, albeit without describing some key characteristics and associations. I consider that a key weakness arises from how characteristics are structured within the text and grouped within Fabrik LVIA Table 4.1 - Summary of Landscape Receptors, for subsequent assessment. The approach taken removes the ability to directly analyse those characteristics of the Site and surrounding landscape which are particularly valued, by integrating these alongside of various other characteristics and not carrying the terminology defined within published characterisations which would enable their inherent value, and from reference to this, susceptibility to change to be clearly considered.
- 3.30 The multiple subheadings to organising baseline information across the context and the Site makes a critical analysis of this difficult, as the above exercise demonstrates. It also results in a range of value attributions being made, which are then averaged when grouped together. As a result of this, regarding contextual landscape receptors, the historic dispersed settlement pattern surrounding the Site is overlooked as a consideration, as is the settlement pattern of the small ridge top village of Ansty, and of the contribution to setting between Ansty and the ridge top market town settlement of Cuckfield. Dark night skies as a contextual receptor is also overlooked. Fabrik overlook the key components of character and setting of the adjacent HWNL, with no receptor for this National Landscape area. There is also no consideration of the continuity of character from the ghyll landforms, ancient woodland and assarted field systems within and across the Site with the HWNL. Landscape receptors at the Site level overlook tranquillity, other than the detracting elements of roads and sewerage works and do not consider strength of place and distinctiveness. Scenic qualities are split in consideration across Natural / Key natural elements, features and characteristics and / Perceptual and Aesthetic. This makes the quality difficult to subsequently appraise. Recreational use of Public Rights of Way is not considered as a landscape receptor.

3.31 I enclose a table which presents the various sub headings under which Fabrik consider Site and Context, with some consideration of how these are then carried into Fabrik LVIA Table 4.1 – Summary of Landscape Receptors in brackets:

<b>Table 3.1 – Headings and Subheading from the Fabrik LVIA Section 4.0 - Baseline Assessment and Identification of Key Receptors</b>	
4.1.3 CONTEXTUAL LANDSCAPE ELEMENTS	4.1.6 SITE DESCRIPTION
NATURAL Geology and Soils Landform and drainage Vegetation Cover <b>[1 Overall Receptor]</b>	NATURAL Geology and Soils Landform and drainage Vegetation Cover <b>[3 Receptors carried]</b>
	Key natural elements, features and characteristics <b>[Not carried]</b>
CULTURAL / SOCIAL Land Use Settlement Pattern / Setting / Building Heights / Urban Grain Enclosure Time Depth <b>[1 Overall Receptor carried]</b>	CULTURAL / SOCIAL Land Use Built form / Scale / Mass / Height / Grain Enclosure Time Depth <b>[1 Overall Receptor carried]</b>
PERCEPTUAL AND AESTHETIC <b>[1 Receptor carried]</b>	PERCEPTUAL AND AESTHETIC <b>[1 Receptor carried]</b>
SUMMARY OF CONTEXTUAL LANDSCAPE CHARACTER	LANDSCAPE CHARACTER The role of The Site in the wider landscape <b>[1 Receptor carried as 'Site Landscape Character']</b>
4.1.4 TOPOGRAPHIC CONTEXT <b>[Not carried]</b>	NIGHT TIME CHARACTER: <b>[Carried]</b>
4.1.5 CONTEXTUAL TOWNSCAPE ELEMENTS Historical Development Movement and Connectivity Urban Structure and Built Form Green Infrastructure and Public Realm Tranquillity <b>[1 Overall Receptor carried]</b>	

### **Setting of the High Weald National Landscape / Degree of harm**

3.32 The HWNL MP Statement of Significance, (p16) identifies that the HWNL is one of the best-preserved medieval landscapes in north-west Europe. The natural beauty of the HWNL is described as deriving from the essentially rural and small-scale landscape character, rich in wildlife and cultural features, articulated through eight core character components, including the following:

*'1. Natural systems (geology, soils, water and climate) - A deeply incised, ridged and faulted landform of clays and sandstone with highly variable, relatively undisturbed soils and numerous headwaters (gill streams) [...]; 2. Settlement - Dispersed historic settlement including high densities of isolated farmsteads, hamlets and late-medieval villages founded on trade and non-agricultural rural industries; 3. Routeways - A dense network of historic routeways (now roads, tracks and paths); 4. Woodland - An abundance of ancient woodland mostly in small holdings, highly interconnected with hedges and shaws; 5. Fieldsapes and heath - Small, irregular and productive fields, bound by hedgerows and woods, and typically used for livestock grazing; with distinctive zones of lowland heaths and inned river valleys (reclaimed marshland); 6. Dark night skies - Intrinsically dark at night with our own galaxy (the Milky Way) visible; 7. Aesthetic and perceptual qualities - Arising from the interaction of people with the landscape, including the notion of a quintessential English pastoral landscape, intimacy of scale, a sense of history and timelessness; rurality and tranquillity; glimpsed long views; freedom to explore and make connections with the natural world, [...]; 8. Land-based economy and rural living - With roots extending deep into history, and which has visibly and culturally shaped the landscape.'* (Ibid, p17)

3.33 Within the consultee response from the HWJAC the loss of adjacent natural landscape contiguous with the HWNL is highlighted, with an abrupt change to landscape character identified as being contrary to objectives S1, S2, DS1 and PQ2 of the HWNL MP: *'S1: To protect the historic pattern and character of settlements; S2: To [...] ensure new development reflects the character of the High Weald in its siting, scale, layout and design; DS1: To preserve the dark skies of the High Weald AONB by minimising light pollution, obtrusive external lighting and internal light spill from domestic, commercial and public premises in both existing and new developments within the High Weald, and from highways lighting; PQ2: To protect the unspoilt rural landscape with its intrinsic sense of naturalness, valued views, and the extent of green space which foster experiences of rurality and tranquillity'*, (respectively p26, p42 and p46)

3.34 The response identifies that the Scheme would not be sensitively located and would not avoid or minimise adverse impacts on the HWNL, which would fail to conserve the natural beauty of the HWNL. I agree.

- 3.35 Within the Fabrik LVIA there is an absence of consideration of landscape impact on the setting of the HWNL. There is no specific receptor provided by Fabrik against which landscape impact on the setting of the HWNL is assessed. Within their LVIA Summary, (p111) Fabrik rely on the visual amenity baseline alone to consider potential impact on the HWNL.
- 3.36 The consultee response from the HWJAC provides an analysis of the proposal against the HWNL MP objectives introduced above as follows:
- 3.37 Objective S1 is underpinned by the following rationale: *'To protect the distinctive character and landscape settings of towns, villages, hamlets and farmsteads, remove despoiling influences, and maintain the hinterlands and other relationships (including separation and green infrastructure) between settlements that contribute to local identity.'* (Ibid, p26). The HWNL MP Statement of Significance, (p16) highlights that the pattern and landscape setting of dispersed historic settlements enriches the natural beauty of the area.
- 3.38 Objective S2 is underpinned by the following rationale: *'To [...] ensure new development reflects intrinsic High Weald character and place-making, embedded with a true sense of place, [...] as a means of protecting the environment and adding to local distinctiveness.'* (Ibid, p26)
- 3.39 The consultee response from the HWJAC identifies that the proposed development would not relate well to the established pattern of development in the area, subsuming and overwhelming the existing small village of Ansty, significantly altering its character and landscape setting, and creating a large new urbanisation adjacent to and abutting the HWNL, which would conflict with Objective S1, and that part of S2 that relates to scale. I agree.
- 3.40 The consultee response from the HWJAC identifies that there is a positive contribution to the setting of the HWNL from clear intervisibility with the Site. The response notes that the scale of development proposed would introduce an abrupt change of landscape character in close proximity to the HWNL, and a loss of natural landscape contiguous with, and of similar character to, the HWNL, thereby causing harm to the character of the setting of the HWNL. I agree.
- 3.41 The irregular Site area would extend development across the undulating landscape of historic fields, in some cases sub dividing fields about the Site boundary, resulting in an incoherent and sprawling development area adjacent to the HWNL, impacting on a landscape with characteristics which have continuity with those valued within the HWNL.

- 3.42 Objective DS1 is underpinned by the following rationale: *'To protect and maintain the existing dark skies within the High Weald for the benefit of all, including future generations, for our health, wellbeing and enjoyment, [...]*' (Ibid, p42) The HWNL MP highlights that dark skies contribute to the perceptual and scenic qualities people enjoy.
- 3.43 The consultee response from the HWJAC identifies that Ansty village currently has no streetlighting, and that should uncharacteristic street lighting be proposed that this would have an adverse impact on the setting of the HWNL. I agree.
- 3.44 Dark skies are one of the eight core character components through which natural beauty within the HWNL is articulated. As highlighted above Fabrik attribute a 'Medium-High value' on night time character within their LVIA, and within Table V3.2.2 a permanent Moderate adverse effect on night time character of the Site and immediate surrounds is identified. It is not clear why this permanent Moderate adverse effect on night time character of the Site and immediate surrounds is not then applied as a Moderate adverse effect on the setting of the HWNL due to the HWNL being immediately adjacent.
- 3.45 Objective PQ2 is underpinned by the following rationale: *'To prevent the loss of contained green space, glimpsed and long views, and tree-canopied skylines, especially regarding developments that fringe existing settlements in the High Weald, which would impinge on people's perception of greenness and rurality'* (Ibid, p46).
- 3.46 Aesthetic and perceptual qualities are one of the eight core character components through which natural beauty within the HWNL is articulated. The impact on the pleasantness of the view from publicly accessible locations, as identified through visual impact assessment, informs this.
- 3.47 The consultee response from the HWJAC identifies that the scale of the proposed development would adversely impact on perceptual qualities of the HWNL of tranquillity and rurality due to the level of noise, activity and lighting that would inevitably be associated with a development of 1,450 new houses and the associated education, health and recreational infrastructure, in such close proximity to the HWNL. I agree.
- 3.48 Regarding the HWNL, neither the impact on tranquillity within the HWNL from people's perception of greenness and rurality, nor the impact on the setting of the HWNL overall is assessed within the Fabrik LVIA, beyond an assessment from the contribution of visual amenity to this and upon dark night skies at the Site level.

- 3.49 Dark skies are one of the eight core character components through which natural beauty within the HWNL is articulated. Within Table V3.2.2 Fabrik identify a permanent Moderate adverse effect on night time character of the Site and immediate surrounds. The same effect should apply
- 3.50 Whilst there is a Verified Visual Montage, (VVM) provided from Viewpoint 8 (p120) (Fabrik Original Viewpoint 52) this is not presented as a single frame upon A3, as recommended within LI TGN 06/19 (Visual Representation of Development Proposals, 2019), (CD17.6). This viewpoint is also only presented showing the daytime baseline. Night time baseline should also be presented to understand the potential for impact on sky glow and glare for visual receptors within the HWNL.
- 3.51 Fabrik identify that a number of (visual) receptors within the HWNL have been assessed to inform an overall judgement of the effects of the Proposed Development on setting to the AONB. The Fabrik LVIA concludes that there would be Minor Adverse residual visual effects on the setting of the HWNL, due to the role of the topography and vegetation in filtering and screening views of the Scheme from publicly accessible locations within the HWNL. This same effect should apply on the relative tranquillity of receptors within the HWNL.
- 3.52 The internal viewpoints are not publicly accessible. I consider that the external viewpoints do not always represent the visual character available through positioning, framing and presentation. For example, such as where the visual character extends to include the HWNL, or where the view might have been taken from an adjacent PRow, such as within the Churchyard to the north.
- 3.53 My Viewpoint Photographs No. 01 – 06, within **Appendix A** differ from those produced by Fabrik regarding location and orientation and I suggest should form part of the baseline for considering the impact on the scenic beauty and setting of the HWNL. The respective Fabrik Viewpoints that these are most associated with is noted under the view.
- 3.54 I consider that the effect on these views would be permanent Moderate adverse where along the roadside, (Viewpoint No's 01 and 02) due to the widening for the main access road into the Site, and streetlighting along the roadside which would suburbanise the rural context, and from the loss of continuity from the fields within the Site, forming part of the visual composition with the fields within the HWNL to the adjacent roadside. The viewpoints further offset within the HWNL would be subject to a more Minor adverse effect, (Viewpoint No's 03 – 06). As with Fabrik, this effect would equally apply where considering the visual setting of the HWNL, due to aesthetic (and perceptual) qualities forming one of the eight core character components through which natural beauty within the HWNL is articulated.

- 3.55 The HWNL is located immediately to the north-west of the site, with the boundary defined by the A272 corridor, which forms the north-western boundary of the Site. The Site therefore lies within the setting of the HWNL and is considered to have shared characteristics with the key components of character within the HWNL.
- 3.56 The change resulting from the impacts at Site level would have an overall Moderate adverse effect on the rural context of the HWNL and continuity of shared landscape characteristics, with perceptual qualities within the HWNL of dark night skies, scenic qualities and tranquillity adversely effected due to the built form, level of noise, activity and lighting that would inevitably be associated with a development of 1,450 new houses and the associated education, health and recreational infrastructure.

***Degree of harm – Contextual Landscape / Site Landscape***

- 3.57 The full details of the Fabrik Assessment are provided within their Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Tables, located within their Appendix V3.2. The Fabrik LVIA assessment departs from the granular detail provided within their baseline to appraise grouped receptors, where the more valued characteristics within the Site such as ancient woodland are presented alongside less valued characteristics, or are lost from within the appraisal text altogether, such as is the case for ghyll watercourses, and assorted field systems. There is a separate consideration of moderate adverse effects on dark night skies.
- 3.58 The Fabrik LVIA Summary and Conclusions, (section 10.0, p111) does not summarily describe the changes to the landscape which would cause adverse effects, beyond referring to numbers of receptors. Within their LVIA Summary, (p111) they identify some significant adverse landscape and visual effects, during construction, at year 1 and Year 15, without naming them. They proceed to state that the assessed landscape and visual receptors are not considered to experience residual effects of major adverse significance.
- 3.59 Through reference to the Fabrik Methodology, (p118) a 'Moderate - Minor effect' is their lowest threshold for indicating significance, which is as always subject to professional judgement.

***Contextual Landscape Receptors***

- 3.60 Within the Landscape Statement of Common Ground, (LSoCG) (CD7.3) the following Contextual Landscape Receptors are identified as being subject to permanent significant adverse effects within the Fabrik LVIA:

- Mid Sussex District Landscape Capacity Assessment LCA 77 Ansty High Weald Fringe - Within Landscape Impact Table V3.2.1, (p122) Fabrik attribute 'Medium – High Value' and 'Medium Sensitivity', with a 'Moderate - Minor adverse' effect at Year 15;
  - Cuckfield Parish Highbridge to Copyhold Slopes Local Landscape Character Area, (LLCA 22) - Within Landscape Impact Table V3.2.1, (p122) Fabrik attribute 'Medium Value' and 'Medium – High Sensitivity', with a 'Moderate adverse' effect at Year 15;
  - Contextual Townscape Elements - Within Landscape Impact Table V3.2.1, (p123) Fabrik attribute 'Medium - Low Value' and 'Medium – High Sensitivity', with a 'Moderate adverse' effect at Year 15.
- 3.61 Through reference to the Fabrik LVIA Appendix V3.2 Landscape Impact Tables, (p122) the High Weald Fringes LCA at both County and District levels is assessed with a Moderate – Minor adverse effect at Construction, reducing to a Minor adverse – Negligible effect into the Operational phase.
- 3.62 There is an inconsistency here with the Fabrik LVIA s6.0 Assessment, which describes differing impacts, with Moderate – Minor adverse and Moderate Adverse effects respectively into the operational phase at year 1. The Table is taken as the leading evidence here, but this should be clarified.
- 3.63 Within the descriptions of change provided by Fabrik within Table V3.2.1, (p122) I would anticipate the same description of change to be provided for the West Sussex County, (2003) and Mid Sussex District, (2005) characterisations, due to these being consistently defined in name, area, and characteristics within the respective characterisations.
- 3.64 Within Assessment Table V3.2.1 both refer to temporary construction activities including landform changes and built form. However, regarding operational changes there is a variation from County and District, with the County LCA assessment as follows: *'the introduction of additional residential uses in a part of the LCA where settlement is characteristic. It therefore would not alter the key characteristics.'* while the District LCA comments that: *'The proposals would increase the scale and character of the existing settlement in the immediate surrounding area but would remain set within a wooded landscape and retain the verdant skyline.'*

3.65 Within Fabrik's description of change there is no consideration of the shared key characteristics provided within the County and District characterisations, beyond being a wooded landscape, which should have included reference to: *'Wooded, often confined rural landscape of intimacy and complexity; south and east-draining gills and broad ridges sweeping gently down to the Low Weald; Long views over the Low Weald to the downs; Significant woodland cover, a substantial portion of it ancient, and a dense network of shaws, hedgerows and hedgerow trees; Pattern of small, irregular-shaped assart fields and larger fields; Dispersed historic settlement pattern; [...]*'

3.66 Fabrik look to suggest that the Site has a developed rather than rural context. This does not correlate with the Fabrik summary of the contextual landscape character, (Section 4.0, p20) as highlighted earlier within this PoE.

3.67 Through reference to the descriptions of change provided within Table V3.2.1 Contextual Landscape Receptors, the receptor where Settlement pattern / setting is most discussed is: 'Historical Development, Movement and Connectivity, Urban Structure and Built Form, Green Infrastructure and Public Realm, Tranquillity' within which it is described that:

*'The proposed development would increase the scale and form of the existing settlement by introducing a significant urban extension to the east of Ansty. The character, form and scale of the existing settlement would be retained. The proposed urban structure, land uses and green infrastructure would integrate the proposed development into the landscape and townscape, ensuring built form is of a similar scale and is set below the existing treed horizon, retaining the key characteristics of a settlement nestled within a well vegetated setting.*

*The geographic extent of the proposals in comparison to the existing settlement have informed the assessment of the magnitude of effects, although the character and scale of the proposals are considered to moderate their significance. The proposed development does not adjoin Cuckfield to the north and development is confined to the south of the A272, set behind retained vegetation and a green corridor. The agricultural landscape within the intervening land retains a sense of separation to Cuckfield.'* (p123)

3.68 There are some contradictions within this statement. Clearly the scale of the existing small village of Ansty would not be retained. It is not clear where this description has originated from. Through reference to the Landscape Character Assessment for Mid Sussex (2005) the typically dispersed historic settlement pattern of the area including the small village of Ansty is described as reflecting that of the High Weald proper.

- 3.69 To understand this baseline understanding of scale which Fabrik are responding to, it is likely that this is of a 'settlement nestled within a well vegetated setting' with matters of scale addressed by suggesting that built form would be set below the existing treed horizon.
- 3.70 There is a shifting baseline of consideration presented within the Fabrik response to Place Services - Supporting statement, (January 2024) where when queried on the developed context, they respond that: *'At the scale of the character area, the eastern part of the LCA is more densely populated than the central and western parts due to the presence of the railway line and good road links via the A272 and A23. Haywards Heath straddles the railway line and Cuckfield and Ansty are located within the landscape west of the railway line and east of the A23, connected by the A272.'* And that: *'Whilst it is accepted that there would be some loss of open fields and other perceptual aspects within the Site, at the scale of the county LCA, these are of a small geographic extent, outside of the High Weald National Landscape and therefore not considered to be significant on this contextual landscape receptor.'*
- 3.71 Fabrik look to take an approach here which considers balance of settlement within the wider LCA, rather than the rural context presented within the Study Area and described within the key characteristics to the LCA. It is clear that consideration of the actual surrounding settlement pattern of the small ridge line village of Ansty and that of Cuckfield offset to the north and the otherwise dispersed settlement pattern, which is noted within the High Weald Fringes LCA, has not been effectively considered by Fabrik.
- 3.72 Finally, it is not clear how the Fabrik LVIA Moderate – Minor adverse effects on the High Weald Fringes LCA at County and District levels resulting from the modification of landform and building would substantially decrease at Year 1, to substantiate a reduced overall effect. Within the terms of consideration which Fabrik present within their LVIA and response it is difficult to see how such relatively small changes could modify their opinion of effect.
- 3.73 Due to the scale of the proposed change, which would impact on key characteristics within the High Weald Fringes LCA I consider that there would be a sustained Moderate adverse effect at County and District scale and a Minor adverse effect at the National scale, (see **Appendix D**, which provides my assessment tables, derived using the Fabric Methodology).

#### Site Landscape Receptors

- 3.74 There are a number of Site Landscape Receptors which Fabrik record as being subject to significant adverse effects within their LVIA Landscape Impact Table V3.2.2, as follows:

- Cultural/Social / Land Use, Built Form, Enclosure, Land Ownership, Time Depth – Fabrik attribute ‘High’ Value, Susceptibility and Sensitivity across the Site and immediate setting, with a ‘Moderate adverse’ effect at Year 15, (p125). Within the description of change Fabrik identify that the development of 1450 homes would create an urban extension immediately to the east of the existing settlement edge. This is described as altering the level of built form within the area, but that building height parameters have been located to ensure that built form does not break the wooded skyline.
- 3.75 It is not clear why impact on perceptual and aesthetic aspects are being considered here. There is no mention of the dispersed historic settlement about the Site, the assarted field systems about the incised ghyll streams, the patches of ancient woodland, or the recreational use.
- Perceptual and Aesthetic: Memories, Preferences, Sensory Forms, Pattern, Texture, Colour, Sense of Enclosure, Remoteness, Natural Beauty – Fabrik attribute ‘Medium - High’ Value, Susceptibility and Sensitivity across the Site and immediate setting, with a ‘Moderate – Minor adverse’ effect at Year 15, (p125). Within the description of change Fabrik identify that the perceptual qualities of the Site contributed from areas of enclosure and openness about the undulating topography about the central ridge would change from open fields surrounded by trees to a residential development and open space surrounded by trees. This is described as only being felt at the Site level and immediate surrounds due to the well-defined and vegetated Site boundaries. There is no consideration of tranquillity.
  - Site Landscape Character – Fabrik attribute ‘Medium - High’ Value, Susceptibility and Sensitivity across the Site and immediate setting, with a ‘Moderate – Minor adverse’ effect at Year 15, (p126). Within the description of change Fabrik identify that the development would have a close association with the existing residential area of Ansty and the High Weald area to the north and west, with landscape proposals considered to be in keeping with the Site, helping to reduce effects in Year 15.
- 3.76 Whilst there is a Verified Visual Montage, (VVM) provided from VVM Viewpoint 8 (p120) (Fabrik Original Viewpoint 52/My Viewpoint No. 05) this is not presented as a single frame upon A3, as recommended within LI TGN 06/19 (Visual Representation of Development Proposals, 2019), p20, **(CD17.6)**.
- 3.77 It is not clear what methodology has been used for the production of the VVM. This should be explored. It would be normal practice to present a wireframe on landform, to show modelled position, which is then shown superimposed on the photograph to be more transparent in the process taken.

- 3.78 Presentation and consideration of verified views – The approach can only be indicative, based on the parameter plan building heights as all matters are reserved. However, through reference to Technical Guidance Note 06/19 on Visual Representation of Development Proposals (Landscape Institute, 17 September 2019) the presentation of Type 3 Photomontages / Photowires are recommended at A3 for a single frame, (P20). It is recommended that this approach is taken, so that the proposed changes can be more clearly seen in mid distance views. It is not clear whether the photomontages are spatially verified views, subject to a three-dimensional model. Clarification on this should be sought, to enable the proposals building heights to be considered from key views, (My Vp05 / Consistent with Fabrik Vp52, subject to VVM Vp8) the Churchyard (My Vp06 / North of Fabrik Vp15) and the view along the ridge to the east of Cuckfield (My Vp07/ Consistent with Fabrik Vp17).
- 3.79 There is no consideration of the range of key characteristics included by Fabrik within their baseline and no mention of the undulating landform of assarted field about the incised ghyll streams and patches of ancient woodland, which was absent from this section of the Fabrik baseline.
- Night-Time Character – Fabrik attribute ‘Medium - High’ Value, Susceptibility and Sensitivity across the Site and immediate setting, with a ‘Moderate adverse’ effect remaining at Year 15, (p126). Within the description of change Fabrik identify that the development would introduce ‘domestic scale lighting’ associated with the dwellings and infrastructure and various facilities. The scale of impact however is noted as substantial.
- 3.80 In line with the approach taken within the LSoCG, for the Contextual Landscape Receptors within the Fabrik LVIA, these adverse effects should likewise have been recorded as being subject to permanent significant adverse effects.
- 3.81 In summary, the approach taken by Fabrik within their LVIA departs from the detail provided within their baseline through grouping receptors, where the more valued characteristics within the Site such as ancient woodland are presented alongside of less valued characteristics, or are lost from within the appraisal text altogether, such as is the case for ghyll watercourses, assarted field systems, recreational use, perceptual aspects of tranquillity and scenic quality, settlement setting and the dispersed settlement pattern of historic built form surrounding the Site. This is further exacerbated by descriptions of change within the Fabrik Assessment Tables which do not relate to the summary receptor being appraised.

3.82 I consider that a Major adverse effect would result on landscape character within the Site from the loss, fragmentation and reprofiling of the undulating lower lying landform of substantially assarted field systems, which would permanently impact on the landform and field pattern, removing the distinctive association of the fields with the incised ghyll streams, with patches of ancient woodland and dispersed historic settlement and reducing the associated tranquillity and scenic qualities, (see **Appendix D**, which provides my assessment tables, derived using the Fabric Methodology).

**The degree of impact the development has on the perceived coalescence between Ansty and Cuckfield**

3.83 Regarding settlement pattern, the Cuckfield Landscape Character Assessment, (HDA 2012) (**CD17.20**), identifies through reference to the settlement context and landscape structure Figure HDA 1, that the large village of Cuckfield is situated on a ridge within the undulating landscape of the High Weald Fringes, at the edge of the HWNL, whilst Ansty is located on a local high point within the High Weald Fringes to the south of Cuckfield. This is supported through reference Figure 5. Landform and Figure 3. Sussex Historic Landscape Character Types within **Appendix A**.

3.84 Settlement pattern about and within the Site comprises dispersed historic dwellings, most of which are Grade II Listed Buildings, including the early C19 Highbridge Mill Cottages to the north west, the C17 Mackerell Cottage to the north east and the C16 West Riddens Farmhouse to the south west. There are two Grade II Listed Buildings within the centre of the Site, upon the falling ridge east of Ansty, comprising of the C18 The Place and the C17 Barn to the north of Forsyth's Farmhouse. This is supported through reference Figure 2. Designations and Figure 5. Landform within **Appendix A**.

3.85 The Site forms the undulating lower lying ground between the ridgetop settlements of Cuckfield offset to the north and Ansty to the west. Situated either side of the falling ridge east of Ansty the assarted field systems across the Site fall to ghyll streams within incised landforms, enclosed within belts of deciduous woodland, patches of which are ancient woodland. Dispersed historic settlement extends about the edge of the Site. The fields, woodland, undulating landform which falls to the incised ghylls and dispersed historic settlement along the ghyll sides contribute to the sense of separation between Ansty and Cuckfield, and their separate identities.

- 3.86 The open visual character of fields experienced along the A272 and from Public Footpaths within and about the Site would be changed to more enclosed visual character, resulting from proposed built form and highway infrastructure and intervening planting. This would displace the distinctive character present within these views with built form and impact on the sense of separation between Ansty and Cuckfield, which informs their separate identities.
- 3.87 In contrast, Fabrik within their LVIA Summary, (p111) regarding coalescence, identify that the Scheme would form an easterly extension of Ansty, confined to the south of the A272 behind retained vegetation and a green corridor, with intervening agricultural landscape on rising ground towards Cuckfield remaining open and undeveloped. Further to these observations the Scheme is described as not leading to any actual or perceived coalescence with Cuckfield.
- 3.88 This overlooks that the replacement of the distinctive landscape character of fields with built form would both replace the immediate surrounding context to Ansty and draw a new settlement in place of this across to an offset south of Cuckfield, which would have a significantly major adverse effect on the sense of separation between Ansty and Cuckfield, and their separate identities.

#### **4.0 THE REASON FOR REFUSAL**

4.1 With reference to the above, the reason for refusal is well supported.

4.2 Should the inspector disagree, there are a number of considerations which have been overlooked by the applicant, which should apply to the various Parameter Plans produced for the Site:

- Visually Verified Montages, (VVM) – Through reference to Technical Guidance Note 06/19 on Visual Representation of Development Proposals (Landscape Institute, 17 September 2019) the presentation of Type 3 Photomontages / Photowires are recommended at A3 for a single frame, (P20). It is recommended that this approach is taken, so that the proposed changes can be more clearly seen in mid distance views. Additionally, it is not clear whether the photomontages are spatially verified views, subject to a three-dimensional model. Clarification on this should be sought, to enable the proposals building heights to be considered from key views, (My Vp05 / Consistent with Fabrik Vp52, subject to VVM Vp8) the Churchyard (My Vp06 / North of Fabrik Vp15) and the view along the ridge to the east of Cuckfield (My Vp07/ Consistent with Fabrik Vp17).
- Green Infrastructure Parameter Plan – Amenity Green Space - The 20m buffer to areas of ancient woodland (identified within the Fabrik Design Code, p27) should be maintained as semi-natural habitat and not form part of the proposed Amenity Green Space, in line with Standing Advice: 'Ancient Woodland and Veteran Trees: protecting them from development' (5 November 2018, Natural England and Forestry Commission); The same should apply to Veteran trees, with suitable offsets defined specific to the tree;
- Green Infrastructure Parameter Plan – Indicative SUDS Features – The land profiling for attenuation basins should likewise not be undertaken within the ancient woodland buffer, nor more generally within the root protection areas of trees;
- Building Heights Parameter Plan – Building Heights – The parameters for building heights should be informed by analysis of the viewpoints, so as to minimise the introduction of built form in key views, including from within or adjacent to the HWNL, (see my LVIA Viewpoints No's 01 – 10) and in particular those highlighted above across My Vp05, 06 and 07;

- Building Heights Parameter Plan – Building Heights and Street Lighting – Analysis of viewpoint impact should be undertaken at night to inform assessment of impact on dark night skies from glare and sky glow, particularly bearing in mind that dark night skies are one of the eight core character components through which natural beauty within the High Weald NL is articulated;
- Building Heights Parameter Plan – Building Heights – Scenic quality and sense of place from vistas towards the landmark spire of the Grade I Listed Parish Church of Holy Trinity, upon the ridgetop south of Cuckfield, should be incorporated into the layout and with consideration of intervening building height from north of the falling ridge east of Ansty, (see my Viewpoint's No. 08 and 09 within **Appendix A**, and particularly the Fabrik LVIA, Internal Viewpoints S2, S5, S7, p27/29/30).

## 5.0 APPENDICES

<b>Appendix A</b>	Figures
<b>Appendix B</b>	Viewpoint Photographs
<b>Appendix C</b>	CPRE Light Pollution Map
<b>Appendix D</b>	Lizard Assessment Tables