



Henfield Road Sayers Common

Preliminary Landscape Assessments

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Contents

1 Introduction	4
2 Baseline Landscape Character	6
3 Landscape Strategy	12
4 Settlement Pattern	13
5 Preliminary Landscape Assessments	14
6 Conclusion	15

1. Introduction

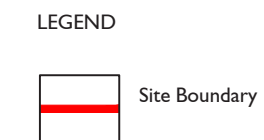
These Preliminary Landscape Assessments have been prepared by Green Landscape Studio on behalf of Pyxis Land Ltd to inform the Examination in Public of the Mid Sussex Local Plan in relation to allocation MM92 at Henfield Road, Sayers Common. The assessments draw upon the detailed landscape evidence gathered as part of the iterative Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment process, and include the following:

- Description of the baseline landscape character of the individual elements within the allocation site and the contextual landscape character areas.
- Overview of the Landscape Strategy, including the recommended measures for landscape mitigation and enhancement.
- Consideration of the settlement pattern, with particular reference to preventing coalescence between Sayers Common and Albourne.
- Preliminary landscape assessments of the interactions between the allocation and the identified landscape receptors, including the likely effects.

The Preliminary Landscape Assessments are intended to provide a proportionate overview of landscape matters relevant to planmaking, and the detailed Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment is work in progress at the time of writing. The allocation site forms part of a proposed comprehensive extension to Sayers Common and has been subject to a landscape led design process informed by landscape character, topography, vegetation structure, Public Rights of Way and the relationship between the settlement and the surrounding countryside.

The allocation comprises a mixture of pasture, paddocks and equestrian land uses contained within a robust framework of mature hedgerows, hedgerow trees, shaws and woodland vegetation. Existing Public Rights of Way cross the allocation site and connect to the wider countryside. The proposed allocation has evolved to retain and strengthen these landscape assets whilst accommodating development in a manner that responds positively to the character of the Low Weald.

Figure 1.1 provides the location of allocation MM92.



Aerial photograph from Google Earth (Accessed 22.10.25)

FIGURE 1.1: MM92 LOCATION PLAN (GLS, 2026)

2. Baseline landscape character

The MM92 allocation lies within National Character Area 121: Low Weald (Natural England, September 2013). At the County scale, the allocation is covered by the West Sussex County Council Strategy for the West Sussex Landscape and the associated Landscape Character Assessment (West Sussex County Council, October 2005). The allocation site falls within Landscape Character Area LW10 Eastern Low Weald. The following relevant key characteristics are identified for the Landscape Character Area:

- *'Gently undulating low ridges and clay vales.*
- *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...*
- *Biodiversity in woodland, meadowland, ponds and wetland.*
- *...suburban village development at ... Sayers Common.*
- *Mix of farmsteads and hamlets favouring ridge-line locations, strung out along lanes.*
- *A modest spread of designed landscapes.*
- *Crossed by north-south roads with a rectilinear network of narrow rural lanes.*
- *London to Brighton Railway Line crosses the area ...*
- *Varied traditional rural buildings built with diverse materials including timber-framing, weatherboarding, Horsham Stone roofing and varieties of local brick and tile-hanging.*
- *Major landmarks include Hurstpierpoint College ...'*

Locally, a Landscape Character Assessment for Mid Sussex (Mid Sussex District Council, November 2005) encompasses the allocation, which lies within Landscape Character Area 4 Hickstead Low Weald. The following relevant key characteristics identified for the Landscape Character Area are similar to those set out by West Sussex County Council:

- *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...*
- *Biodiversity in woodland, meadowland, ponds and wetland.*
- *Mix of farmsteads and hamlets favouring ridgeline locations, strung out along lanes.*
- *A modest spread of designed landscapes and major landmark of Hurstpierpoint College.*
- *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...*
- *Varied traditional rural buildings built with diverse materials including timber framing, weatherboarding, Horsham Stone roofing and varieties of local brick and tile-hanging...*

The extents of these Landscape Character Areas are shown on Figures 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3.

The allocation site itself reflects many of these characteristics, as illustrated on Figure 2.4. The allocation site is underlain by the Weald Clay Formation, with possible localised drift or seepage deposits. Heavy clay soils are generally poorly drained in winter and hard setting during dry periods. The land rises from approximately 18m AOD in the north west to 41m AOD along the southern boundary ridge, and is crossed by a central stream.

There is a mix of equestrian and agricultural land uses within the allocation site. The northern and western parts of the allocation site comprise grass paddocks and pasture, enclosed by mature mixed hedgerows with hedgerow trees, scrub and narrow shaws. A larger, more open field complex occupies the south eastern part of the allocation site and contains two notable specimen oak trees, separated from the south western field parcel by a small woodland block. The hedgerow lined access track to West House Farm passes through the allocation site, whilst the listed farmhouse and barn (Grade II) are inset from the allocation site.

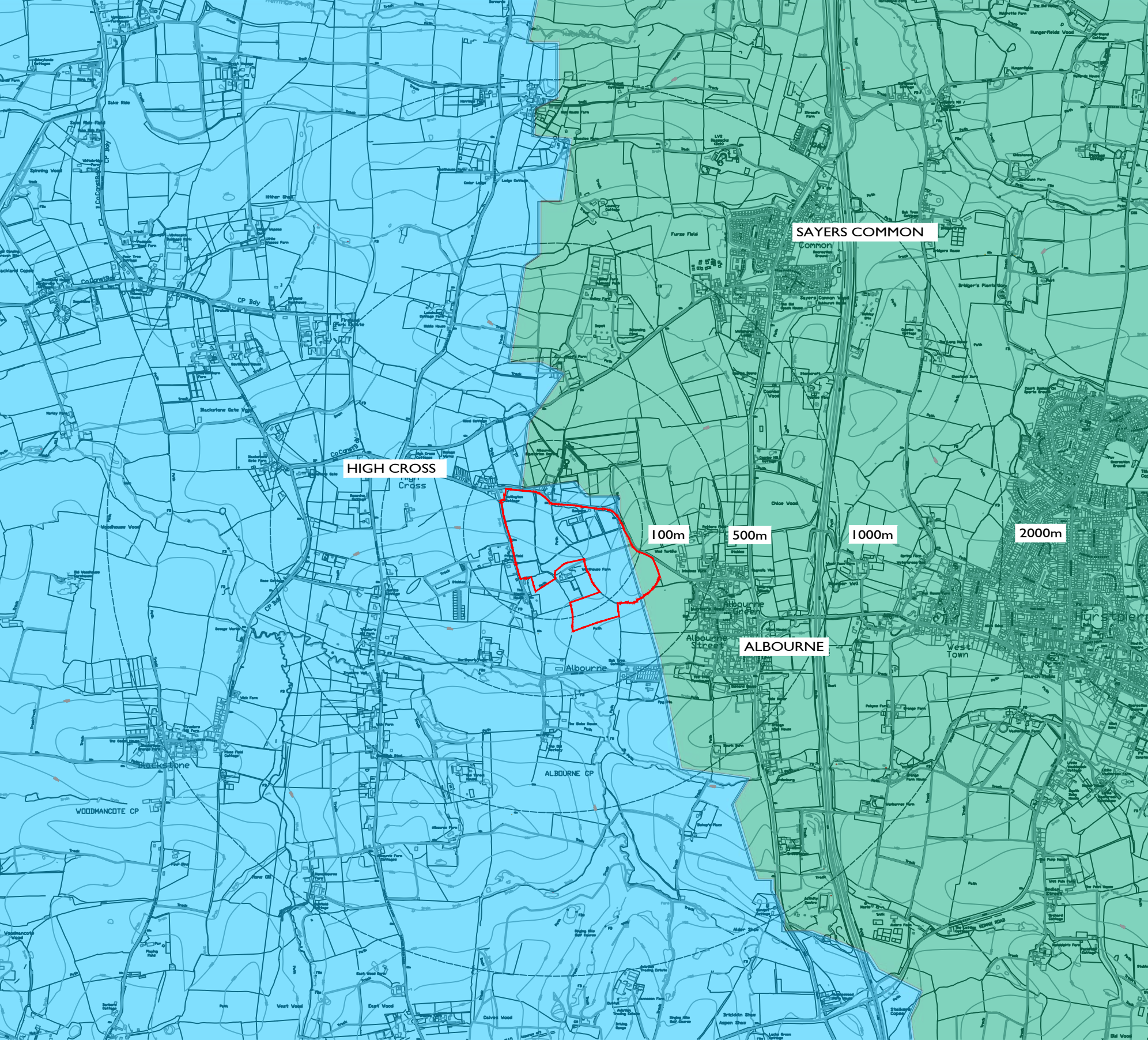
The northern part of the allocation site has a distinct equestrian character arising from the presence of paddocks, stables and a manege, reducing any sense of remoteness. By contrast, the southern field affords more expansive views northwards, whilst the strong hedgerow structure across the western part of the allocation site creates a greater sense of enclosure.

The landscape retains a strong degree of continuity as part of Westhouse Farm. Field boundaries are largely unchanged since the early nineteenth century. Former internal field boundaries within the south eastern field have eroded over time, leaving the two specimen oak trees as the principal evidence of the earlier field pattern. The equestrian use of the north eastern field represents a relatively recent change, dating from the latter half of the twentieth century.

Whilst many of the key characteristics are represented, the allocation site does not represent a defining or extensive component of either the Eastern Low Weald or Hickstead Low Weald Landscape Character Areas. The wider Landscape Character Areas extend well beyond the allocation, and derive their character from a combined pattern of farmland, woodland, hedgerows, watercourses and dispersed settlement. The allocation site is experienced within the settled landscape context, influenced by the equestrian built form within its boundaries, nearby residential properties and farmsteads. Consequently, the allocation site forms only a modest part of the wider landscape resource, and is understood as part of the dispersed settlement pattern between Sayers Common and Albourne.



FIGURE 2.1: LOCAL DESIGNATIONS (GLS, 2026)



LEGEND

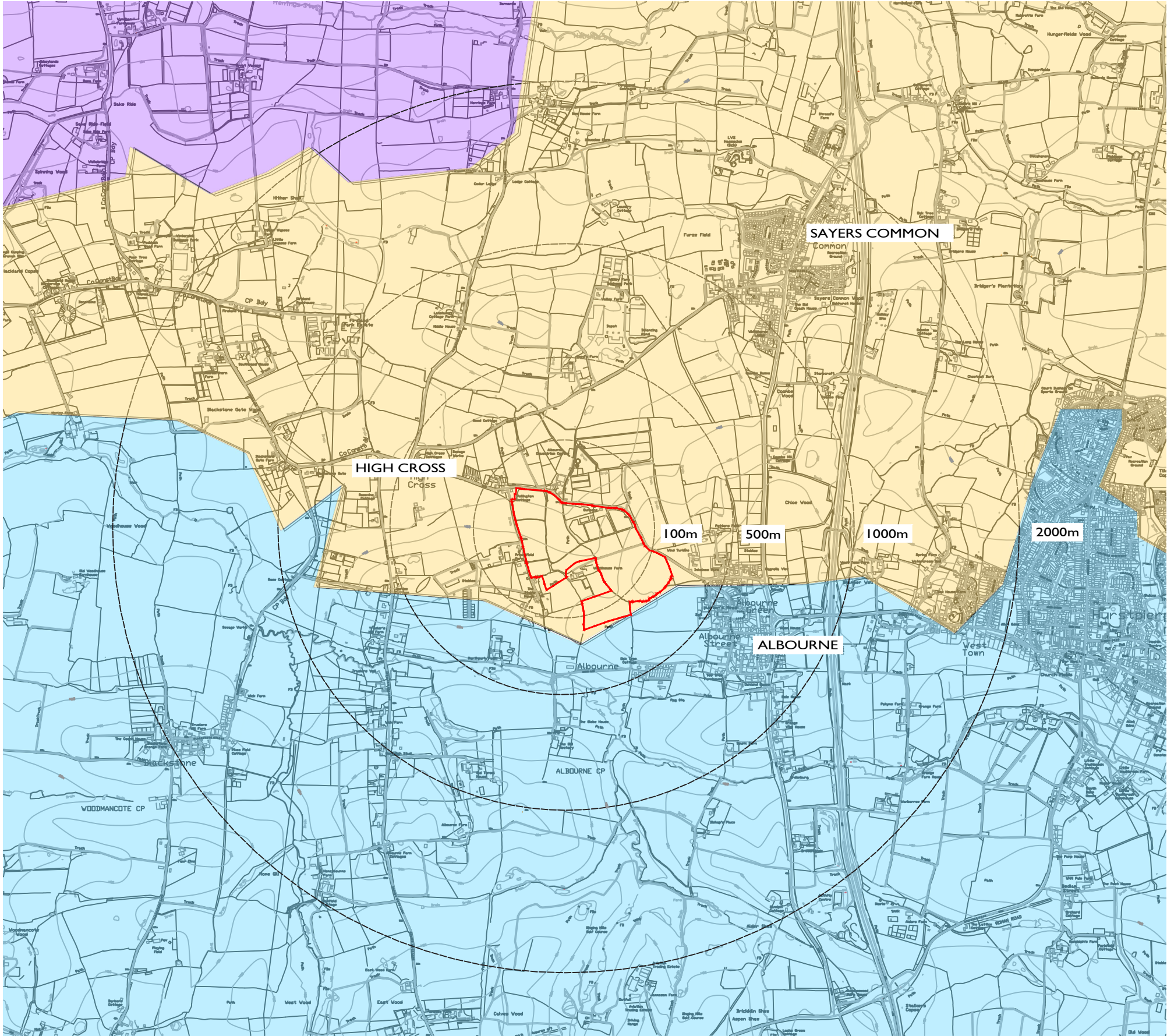
Site Boundary

National CA - Mid Sussex

National CA - Horsham

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FIGURE 2.2: NATIONAL LANDSCAPE CHARACTER (GLS, 2026)

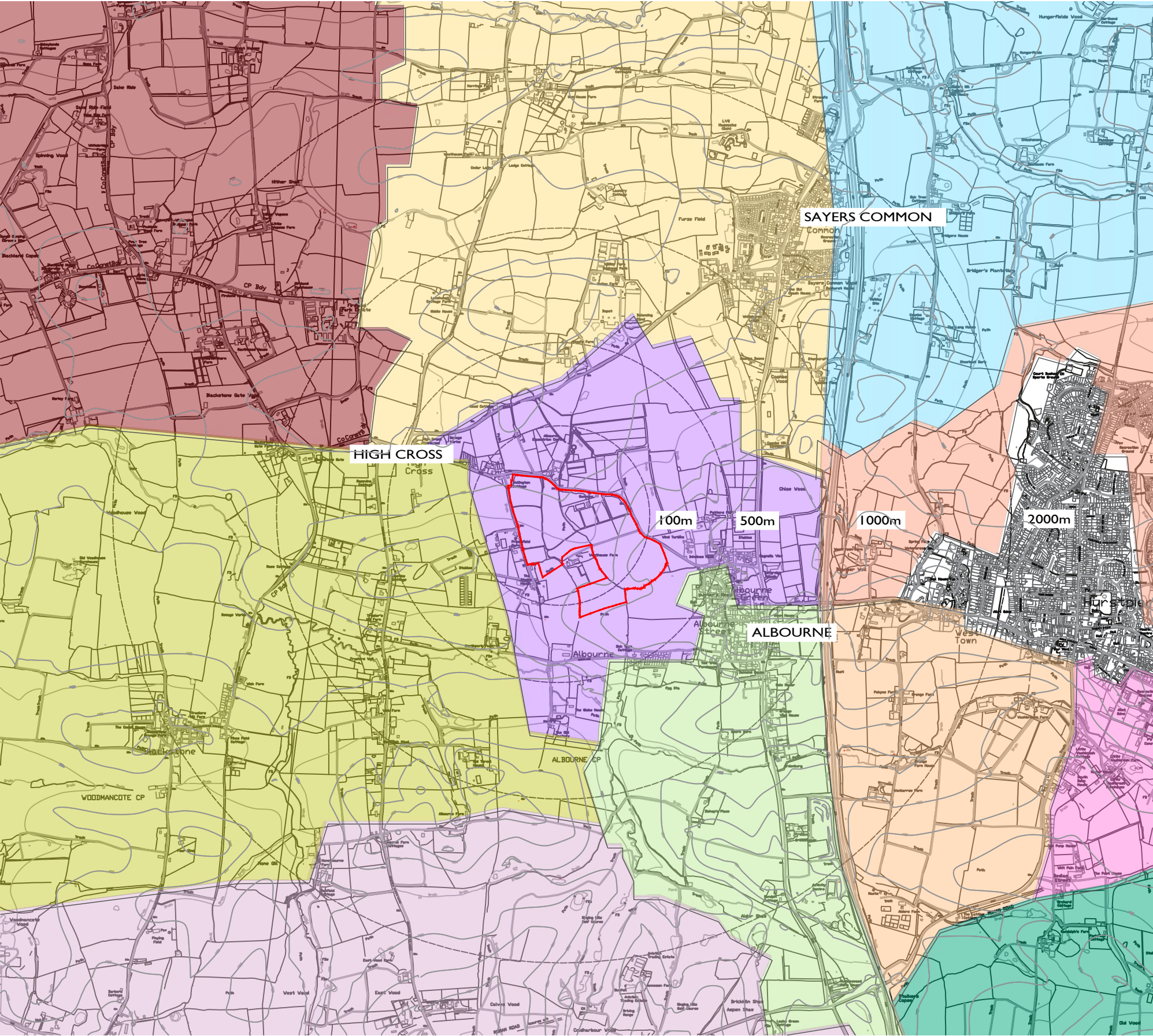


LEGEND

-  Site Boundary
-  County LCA - Eastern Low Weald
-  County LCA - Upper Adur Valley
-  County LCA - Eastern Scarp Footslopes

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FIGURE 2.3: COUNTY LANDSCAPE CHARACTER (GLS, 2026)



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FIGURE 2.4: DISTRICT LANDSCAPE CHARACTER (GLS, 2026)

- LEGEND
- Site boundary
 - District LCA - 62 Hickstead Sayers Common Low Weald
 - District LCA - Albourne Low Weald
 - District LCA - Hurstpierpoint Low Weald
 - District LCA - Albourne Foothills
 - District LCA - Cobb's Mill Low Weald
 - District LCA - Wanbarrow Foothills
 - District LCA - Hurstpierpoint Southern Fringe
 - District LCA - Danny Wooded Foothills
 - District LCA - Danny Wooded Foothills
 - District LCA - Henfield & Small Dole Farlands
 - District LCA - Cowfold & Shermanbury Farlands



Aerial photograph from Google Earth (Accessed 27.10.25)

FIGURE 2.5: MM92 LANDSCAPE CHARACTER (GLS, 2026)

LEGEND

- Site Boundary
- Existing Vegetation
- Built Form
- Listed Building - Grade II
- Public Right of Way - Footpath

3. Landscape Strategy

The parameters of the MM92 allocation have evolved through an iterative landscape led assessment and design process. The Landscape Strategy focuses development within the northern and western parts of the allocation, retaining the more open and elevated southern land as a substantial countryside open space and creating a strong landscape framework throughout the development.

Key components of the Landscape Strategy include the following:

- Concentration of built development within the northern and western parts of the allocation site, retaining open areas along the southern and eastern boundaries.
- Provision of a substantial southern countryside open space that creates a transitional landscape between the proposed development and the wider countryside. The southern countryside open space retains the relatively open part of the allocation site, and the expansive views to the north.
- Creation of a central green corridor that breaks up the extent of built form and provides visual, recreational and ecological connectivity across the allocation site.
- Retention and incorporation of existing hedgerows, mature trees and vegetation where practicable, with development parcels set within the existing landscape framework, together with extensive planting designed to reflect the local landscape character of the Low Weald.
- Native hedgerow planting provided across the allocation site, to mitigate the clearance of hedgerow along Henfield Road.
- Public Open Space would be provided in excess of the relevant standards, including natural greenspace, formal and informal recreation areas, and play provision.
- Retention and reinforcement of existing landscape corridors through the provision of Public Open Space and structural planting, enhancing ecological connectivity across the allocation site.
- Provision of structural planting around development parcels, and along allocation site boundaries which interface with the countryside, to assist integration with the surrounding landscape.
- Development of a domestic scale and mass across the allocation site, with limited medium scale development focused within the internal and northern areas, away from the principal countryside interfaces.
- Establishment of species rich grassland, meadow habitats and biodiversity areas throughout the allocation site, together with habitat enhancements including bird and bat boxes, hibernacula and other biodiversity features.
- Retention and integration of existing Public Rights of Way within the masterplan, together with new pedestrian and cycle connections.
- Integration of SuDS features within areas of Public Open Space and green infrastructure, providing both drainage and landscape functions. SuDS are proposed within the northern and central areas of the allocation site.

The Landscape Strategy includes measures to avoid, reduce or offset potential landscape and visual effects. These mitigation measures are embedded alongside a series of enhancements to deliver recreational, ecological and landscape benefits. Over time, structural planting would mature and strengthen the transition between the settlement edge and surrounding countryside.

4. Settlement Pattern

As set out in Section 2, the MM92 allocation site is experienced within the surrounding settled landscape, influenced by the built form within its boundaries, together with nearby residential properties and farmsteads. Sayers Common and Albourne include areas of suburban development, whilst there is a mix of farmsteads and hamlets strung out along lanes in the immediate site context, characteristic of the LW10 Eastern Low Weald (West Sussex County Council, October 2025) and 4 Hickstead Low Weald (Mid Sussex District Council, November 2005) Landscape Character Areas.

The MM92 part of the planned settlement extension to Sayers Common supports the maintenance of the separation between Sayers Common and Albourne, avoiding settlement coalescence, through the provision of the southern countryside open space. The southern countryside open space would adjoin the area of mixed farmland between the settlement edge of Albourne and the proposed southern boundary of Sayers Common, providing a long term area of managed open space between the settlements and retaining the most open and elevated part of the allocation site as green infrastructure.

The southern countryside open space would also provide a clearly perceived landscape transition between the proposed settlement edge and the countryside separating Sayers Common and Albourne. The Landscape Strategy set out in Section 3 would ensure that Sayers Common and Albourne would continue to be perceived as separate settlements.

Upon implementation of the proposed allocation, views between the settlements would continue to be experienced across open land, green infrastructure and intervening countryside. The visual break between Sayers Common and Albourne would therefore remain clearly evident. Structural planting along the southern edge of the land identified for development, reinforcement of existing vegetation along the southern site boundary, and the proposed areas for habitat enhancement, as set out within the Landscape Strategy, would further reinforce the visual separation between the settlements.

In combination with the wider allocation of Sayers Common, the allocation would be understood as part of the planned extension to the settlement, with a well defined countryside interface, rather than giving rise to physical, perceptual or visual coalescence with Albourne.

5. Preliminary Landscape Assessments

As set out in Section 1, a detailed LVIA is work in progress at the time of writing. The LVIA is being prepared in accordance with the Guidelines for LVIA, Third Edition (Landscape Institute and Institute of Sustainability and Environmental Professionals, 2013), together with the Landscape Institute's Notes and Clarifications (2024), as part of the iterative assessment and design process. The significance of landscape effects will be determined through consideration of the sensitivity of landscape receptors, and the magnitude of change arising from the proposed development. Landscape effects will be considered during the construction and operational phases.

For the purposes of these summary landscape assessments, the residual effects of the implementation of the allocation on each landscape receptor are provided at Year 15, taking into account the embedded mitigation and enhancement measures proposed within the Landscape Strategy set out in Section 3.

Landscape Character Areas

Following implementation of the allocation, built form would replace part of the existing agricultural and equestrian landscape. However, the allocation site would continue to form a relatively small component of both the Eastern Low Weald and Hickstead Low Weald Landscape Character Areas.

The defining characteristics of the wider Landscape Character Areas, including the mosaic of farmland, woodland, hedgerows, watercourses and dispersed settlement pattern, would remain evident. The proposed development would be contained within a landscape framework incorporating retained vegetation, structural planting, Public Open Space and the southern countryside open space. Consequently, the preliminary landscape assessment indicates Minor Adverse effects on both Landscape Character Areas at Year 15.

Individual Landscape Elements

Topography and drainage

Whilst the implementation of the allocation would result in permanent localised changes to levels and drainage patterns, the allocation site's gently undulating character would be retained and sustainable drainage features would be integrated within the overall landscape framework. Consequently, the preliminary landscape assessment indicates Minor Adverse effects on topography and drainage at Year 15.

Trees and hedgerows

The removal of vegetation associated with access creation and built development as part of the allocation would influence landscape character. By Year 15, the proposed structural planting, new hedgerows and retained vegetation, set out within the Landscape Strategy within Section 3, would have matured, substantially strengthening the landscape framework across the allocation site. The establishment of extensive new planting would substantially reduce the extent of change. Consequently, the preliminary landscape assessment indicates Minor Adverse effects on trees and hedgerows at Year 15.

Perceptual and aesthetic qualities

Scenic quality and openness

The proposed countryside open space would retain the openness of the southern part of the allocation site and preserve a key component of the landscape setting. Whilst the introduction of built development as part of the implementation of the allocation would alter the character of the northern and western areas of the site, openness would remain an important characteristic of the southern area and wider green infrastructure network. By Year 15, the planting within the Landscape Strategy set out in Section 3 would be fully established and would soften the perception of built development within the landscape. Consequently, the preliminary landscape assessment indicates Neutral effects on scenic quality and openness at Year 15.

Enclosure and continuity of landscape pattern

The retention of hedgerows and hedgerow trees, where practicable, would ensure that important elements of the existing landscape framework would remain evident following implementation of the allocation. However, the introduction of built development would alter parts of the existing field pattern and modify the continuity of the historic agricultural landscape. As structural planting matures and retained field boundaries become integrated within the wider landscape framework, the perception of enclosure would strengthen and continuity within the landscape pattern would progressively increase. However, the original field pattern would not be retained. Consequently, the preliminary landscape assessment indicates Minor Adverse effects on enclosure and continuity of landscape pattern at Year 15.

Landscape Benefits

The allocation would also deliver landscape benefits. These include the following:

- Creation of a substantial countryside open space.
- New Public Open Space exceeding minimum standards.
- Enhanced recreational access.
- Habitat creation and biodiversity enhancement.
- Additional native tree and hedgerow planting.
- Strengthened landscape corridors and ecological connectivity.

6. Conclusion

The Preliminary Landscape Assessments conclude that allocation MM92 can be accommodated within the landscape through a landscape led design approach informed by landscape character, topography, vegetation structure, Public Rights of Way and the relationship between Sayers Common and the surrounding countryside. The allocation comprises a mixture of pasture, paddocks and equestrian land enclosed by mature hedgerows, hedgerow trees, shaws and woodland vegetation, and forms only a modest component of the wider Eastern Low Weald and Hickstead Low Weald Landscape Character Areas.

The Landscape Strategy focuses built development within the northern and western parts of the allocation, whilst retaining the more open and elevated southern land as a substantial countryside open space. Key elements include the retention and enhancement of existing hedgerows, trees and vegetation, creation of a central green corridor, extensive native planting, provision of Public Open Space in excess of relevant standards, habitat creation and biodiversity enhancement, integration of SuDS within green infrastructure, and the retention and enhancement of existing Public Rights of Way.

In relation to settlement pattern, the allocation would maintain a clear separation between Sayers Common and Albourne. The southern countryside open space would provide a long term landscape feature between the settlements, ensuring that views continue to be experienced across open land and green infrastructure and preventing physical, perceptual or visual coalescence.

The Preliminary Landscape Assessments indicate that, at Year 15 and taking account of embedded mitigation and enhancement measures, residual effects on the Eastern Low Weald and Hickstead Low Weald Landscape Character Areas, topography and drainage, trees and hedgerows, and enclosure and continuity of landscape pattern would be Minor Adverse. Effects on scenic quality and openness are assessed as Neutral, reflecting the retention of the open southern part of the allocation and the establishment of structural planting.

The Preliminary Landscape Assessments also identify a range of landscape benefits arising from the allocation, including the creation of a substantial countryside open space, enhanced recreational access, habitat creation and biodiversity enhancement, additional native tree and hedgerow planting, and strengthened landscape corridors and ecological connectivity. Overall, the assessments conclude that the allocation can be successfully integrated within the landscape whilst maintaining the separate identity of Sayers Common and Albourne.



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