

Land West of Ashgrove Road, Sevenoaks

Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment
September 2022

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This document has been prepared and checked in accordance with ISO 9001:2015.

1.0 Introduction

1.1. Background

LDA Design was commissioned in March 2022 to provide landscape design and assessment services in relation to the proposed residential development on the land west of Ashgrove Road, Sevenoaks (the 'Site'), on behalf of Sigma Strategic Land Limited.

Sigma Strategic Land Limited promoted the Site to Sevenoaks District Council during its Call for Sites in January 2022. The Site has been promoted with an indicative capacity of 47 dwellings as an edge of settlement Site and as a sustainable and logical extension to Sevenoaks.

The Proposed Development comprises an Outline Planning Application (OPA) for 50 homes, together with associated green infrastructure. All matters reserved except for access.

This Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) defines the existing landscape and visual baseline environments; assesses their sensitivity to change; describes the key landscape and visual related aspects of the Proposed Development; describes the nature of the anticipated change upon both the landscape and visual environments; assesses the effects during construction; the period following completion prior to the maturing of mitigation planting (short- to medium-term) and once the mitigation planting is mature (long-term) (the 'operational phase').

The assessment has been carried out by Paul Lishman and Nicholas Atkinson, both of whom are Chartered Members of the Landscape Institute with experience of undertaking LVIA's for similar proposals.

This LVIA forms part of a suite of documents supporting the OPA for the Proposed Development. It should be read in conjunction with the following documents: the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Report, which considers the contribution the Sites makes to the natural beauty and special character of the AONB; and the Green Belt Report, which considers the contribution the Site makes to the purposes and function of the Green Belt.

1.2. Report Structure

The report is structured as follows:

- **Section 1.0.** Introduction
- **Section 2.0.** Methodology
- **Section 3.0.** Planning Policy
- **Section 4.0.** Baseline
- **Section 5.0.** The Proposed Development
- **Section 6.0.** Landscape and Visual Effects
- **Section 7.0.** Summary

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A series of supporting figures and appendices is included at the end of this report, as follows:

- **Figure 1:** Site Location
- **Figure 2:** Immediate Site Context
- **Figure 3:** Landscape Designations
- **Figure 4:** Topography
- **Figure 5:** Local Landscape Character
- **Figure 6:** Access and Recreation
- **Figure 7:** Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) study and Viewpoint Locations
- **Figure 8:** Photograph Panels
- **Appendix 1:** Glossary
- **Appendix 2:** References
- **Appendix 3:** Methodology
- **Appendix 4:** Visualisations and ZTV Studies
- **Appendix 5:** National Planning Policy and Guidance
- **Appendix 6:** Extracts from Key Local Guidance Documents and Landscape Character Assessments

The appendices are important to the assessment and should be read alongside this report as they supplement sections regarding methodology, planning policy and baseline.

1.3. Site Location and Context

The Site is located to the south-west of Sevenoaks, adjoining the existing settlement edge to the north; and lying between Ashgrove Road to the east and Oak Lane to the west. The Site comprises a single field parcel of rough grassland pasture, which is accessed via a neighbouring field to the south. The Site extends to approximately 2.3ha. **Figure 1** places the Site in its local context.

Figure 2 places the Site in its immediate context and illustrates that its boundaries are defined by a combination of vegetation comprising native trees, shrubs and hedgerows. As shown on **Figure 2**, there is a small area of woodland to the south-east corner of the Site and a small overgrown pond along its eastern boundary. **Figure 2** also labels key features within the vicinity of the Site, including Public Rights of Way (PRoW) and local roads referred to within the LVIA.

The Site's boundaries are defined as follows:

- To the north, the Site adjoins existing residential properties (comprising detached and semi-detached dwellings situated between Oak Lane and Ashgrove Road), delineated by close-board fencing and rear garden hedgerows. Further north lies numerous residential properties to the east of Brittain's Lane, alongside The New Beacon School to the west of Brittain's Lane. Immediately to the north-west of the Site lies a small collection of agricultural fields, associated with isolated properties / buildings, beyond

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which lies woodland. Further north lies two expansive and well-established woodlands – Great Britain’s Wood and Mill Bank Wood.

- To the east, the Site abuts Ashgrove Road, along which lies a row of residential properties that form the southern-eastern extent of the built-up area of Sevenoaks. Beyond the residential area extends north-eastwards towards the town centre.
- To the south, the Site adjoins another field that is marked by a row of tree / shrub planting and a post-and-wire fence. Further south, the landscape comprises some isolated properties (with expansive curtilages), which are surrounded by well-established woodland (which are unnamed).
- To the west, the boundary of the Site is delineated by a combination of well-established tree and shrub vegetation that line Oak Lane. To the immediate west of Oak Lane lies a small collection of agricultural fields, associated with a nearby two properties along Oak Lane. These fields border Mill Bank Wood and A21 / Sevenoaks Bypass, which is a strategic route north-south, connecting London / M25 to Hastings on the south coast.

Oak Lane and Ashgrove Road are relatively narrow and partly sunken lanes, defined for much of their length by hedgerows and established hedgerow trees where they border the Site’s boundaries. Historic mapping¹ indicates that this pattern of roads and field boundaries has been established for over a century. The ‘*Sevenoaks Residential Character Area Assessment*’² identifies this area of the town as being within the ‘H01. Hopgarden Lane’ character area. This records development was laid out from the 1930s onwards, with many houses developed in the 1960s.

The Site is located fully within the extent of the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the Metropolitan Green Belt, as shown on **Figure 3**.

The Site contains no Tree Preservation Orders and is not within a Conservation Area. There are no PRoWs or cycling routes within the Site, albeit a PRoW does run to the south-east of the Site and adjoins a short section of the Site boundary. The Site is not designated for its heritage or biodiversity value; it contains no Listed Buildings or locally listed heritage assets; and is not Registered Common Land³.

Figure 4 presents the topography of the Site and its wider context. In general, the topography of the Site and its surroundings is characterised by an undulating landform, that broadly rises to a local ridgeline that is formed around Goathurst Common, Bayley Hill and Hubbard’s Hill. The surrounding residential areas sits at a similar elevation as the Site, with the south-western edge of Sevenoaks extending up the base of the ridge, before giving way to steeper ground and areas of woodland. However, to the south of Sevenoaks, the urban area encompasses higher ground around Weald Road and Tonbridge Road.

The Site itself comprises gentle undulations, generally falling from west to east. The highest area of landform is located within the south-western corner, at approximately 170m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD). It falls towards the eastern extent the Site, which is at 158m AOD. Along the Site’s eastern and western boundaries, there are in places, a difference in levels

¹ Scottish National Library Map Finder

<https://maps.nls.uk/geo/explore/#zoom=18&lat=51.25939&lon=0.17891&layers=168&b=1> (accessed 20 May 2022)

² Sevenoaks Residential Character Assessment Supplementary Planning Document (Adopted April 2012)

³ Sevenoaks District Planning Map <https://maps.sevenoaks.gov.uk/planning/> (accessed 10 May 2022)

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up to 2m in height (approximately) between the Site's field and the adjoining Ashgrove Road. Where this occurs, vegetated embankments are found.

1.4. The Study Area

It is accepted practice within landscape and visual assessment work that the extent of the study area for a development proposal is broadly defined by the visual envelope of the Site of the Proposed Development, and the anticipated extent of visibility arising from the development itself, based on a Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) study undertaken at the outset of the project. In this case, a study area of 2km has been assessed as being appropriate to cover all potentially material landscape and visual impacts.

2.0 Methodology

2.1. Overview

"Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment is a tool used to identify and assess the significance of and the effects of change resulting from development on both the landscape as an environmental resource in its own right and people's views and visual amenity." (GLVIA 3, para. 1.1).

Paras. 2.20-2.22 of the same guidance indicate that the two components (assessment of landscape effects, and assessment of visual effects) are *"related but very different considerations"*.

The assessment method for this LVIA draws upon the established GLVIA3; An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment (Natural England, 2014), Landscape Institute Technical Information Note (LI TIN) 05/2017 regarding townscape character; LI TGN 02/2019 Residential Visual amenity assessment (RVAA); Landscape Institute's Technical Guidance Notes 02-21: Assessing landscape value outside national designations; LI Technical Guidance Note 06/19 Visual Representation of development proposals and other recognised guidelines.

The methodology is described in more detail in **Appendices 3 and 4**.

2.2. Assessment Terminology and Judgements

A full glossary is provided in **Appendix 1**. The key terms used within this assessment are:

- Susceptibility and Value – which contribute to Sensitivity of the receptor;
- Scale, Duration and Extent - which contribute to the Magnitude of effect; and
- Significance.

These terms are described in more detail below

2.2.1. Sensitivity of the Receptor

Susceptibility indicates the ability of a landscape or visual receptor to accommodate the Proposed Development *"without undue consequences for the maintenance of the baseline situation and/or the achievement of landscape planning policies and strategies."* (GLVIA3, para. 5.40).

High	Undue consequences are likely to arise from the Proposed Development.
Medium	Undue consequences may arise from the Proposed Development.
Low	Undue consequences are unlikely to arise from the Proposed Development.

Susceptibility of landscape character areas is influenced by their characteristics and is frequently considered (though often recorded as 'sensitivity' rather than susceptibility) within documented landscape character assessments and capacity studies.

Susceptibility of designated landscapes is influenced by the nature of the special qualities and purposes of designation and/or the valued elements, qualities or characteristics, indicating the degree to which these may be unduly affected by the development proposed.

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Susceptibility of accessible or recreational landscapes is influenced by the nature of the landscape involved; the likely activities and expectations of people within that landscape and the degree to which those activities and expectations may be unduly affected by the development proposed.

Susceptibility of visual receptors is primarily a function of the expectations and occupation or activity of the receptors (GLVIA 3rd version, para 6.32).

Landscape Value is “the relative value that is attached to different landscapes by society” (GLVIA3, page 157).

National/International	Designated landscapes which are nationally or internationally designated for their landscape value.
Local / District	Locally or regionally designated landscapes; also areas which documentary evidence and/or Site observation indicates as being more valued than the surrounding area.
Community	‘Everyday’ landscape which is appreciated by the local community but has little or no wider recognition of its value.
Limited	Despoiled or degraded landscape with little or no evidence of being valued by the community.

Areas of landscape of greater than Community value may be considered to be ‘valued landscapes’ in the context of NPPF paragraph 170.

Sensitivity is assessed by combining the considerations of susceptibility and value described above. The differences in the tables below reflect a slightly greater emphasis on value in considering landscape receptors, and a greater emphasis on susceptibility in considering visual receptors.

Landscape Sensitivity		Susceptibility		
		High	Medium	Low
Value	National/International	High	High-Medium	Medium
	Local/District	High-Medium	Medium	Medium-Low
	Community	Medium	Medium-Low	Low
	Limited	Low	Low-Negligible	Negligible
Visual Receptor Sensitivity		Susceptibility		
		High	Medium	Low
Value	National/International	High	High-Medium	Medium
	Local/District	High-Medium	High-Medium	Medium
	Community	High-Medium	Medium	Medium-Low
	Limited	Medium	Medium-Low	Low

For visual receptors; susceptibility and value are closely linked - the most valued views are also likely to be those where viewer’s expectations will be highest. The value attributed relates to the value of the view, e.g. a National Trail is nationally valued for access, not

necessarily for the available views. Typical examples of visual receptor sensitivity are plotted in a diagram in **Appendix 3**.

2.2.2. Magnitude of Effect

Scale of effect is assessed for all landscape and visual receptors and identifies the degree of change which would arise from the development.

Large	Total or major alteration to key elements, features, qualities or characteristics, such that post development the baseline will be fundamentally changed.
Medium	Partial alteration to key elements, features, qualities or characteristics, such that post development the baseline will be noticeably changed.
Small	Minor alteration to key elements, features, qualities or characteristics, such that post development the baseline will be largely unchanged despite discernible differences.
Negligible	Very minor alteration to key elements, features, qualities or characteristics, such that post development the baseline will be fundamentally unchanged with barely perceptible differences.

Duration of effect is assessed for all landscape and visual receptors and identifies the time period over which the change to the receptor as a result of the development would arise.

Permanent	The change is expected to be permanent and there is no intention for it to be reversed.
Long-term	The change is expected to be in place for 10-25 years and will be reversed, fully mitigated or no longer occurring beyond that timeframe.
Medium-term	The change is expected to be in place for 2-10 years and will be reversed, fully mitigated or no longer occurring beyond that timeframe.
Short-term	The change is expected to be in place for 0-2 years and will be reversed, fully mitigated or no longer occurring beyond that timeframe.

Most effects will be Long term or Permanent; however, Medium or Short term effects may be identified where mitigation planting is proposed, or local factors will result in a reduced duration of effect (for example where maturing woodland will screen views in future). The effects arising from the construction of the development will usually be Short term.

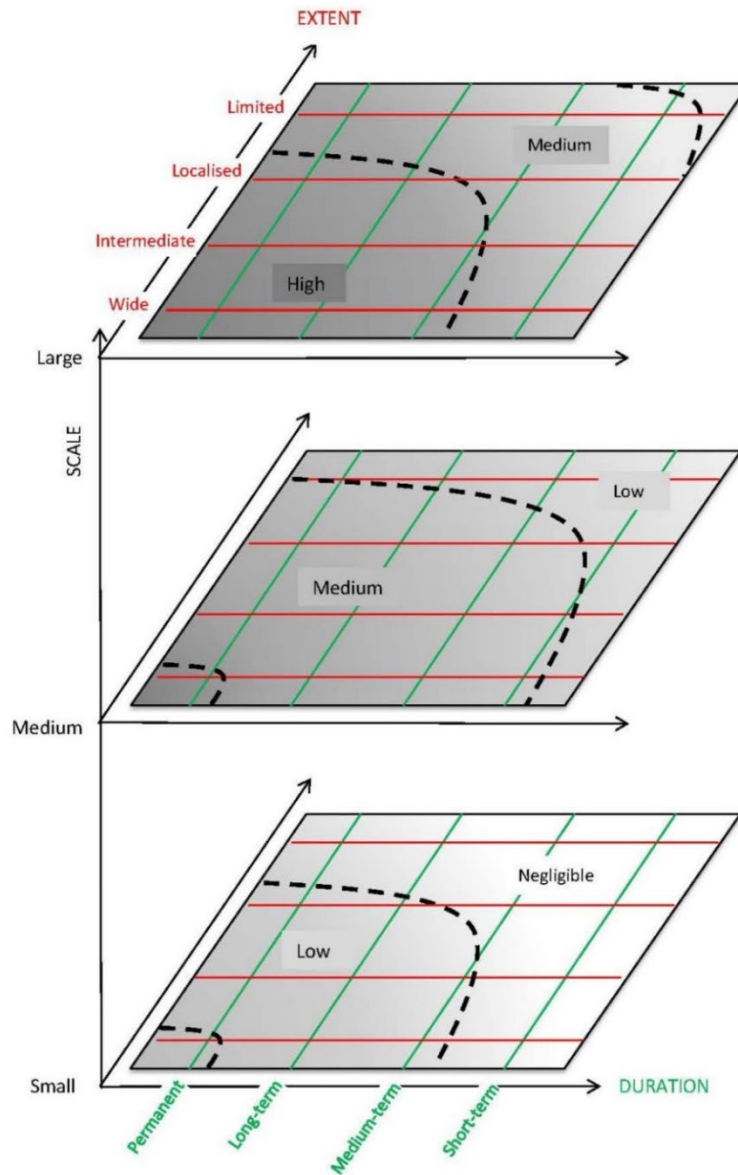
Extent of effects is assessed for all receptors and indicates the geographic area over which the effects will be felt.

Wide	Beyond 4km, or more than half of receptor.
Intermediate	Up to approx. 2-4km, or around half of receptor area.
Localised	Site and surroundings up to 2km, or part of receptor area (up to approx. 25%).
Limited	Site, or part of Site, or small part of a receptor area (< approx. 10%).

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The **Magnitude** of effect is informed by combining the scale, duration and extent of effect. **Diagram 1** below illustrates the judgement process:

Diagram 1: Magnitude of Effect

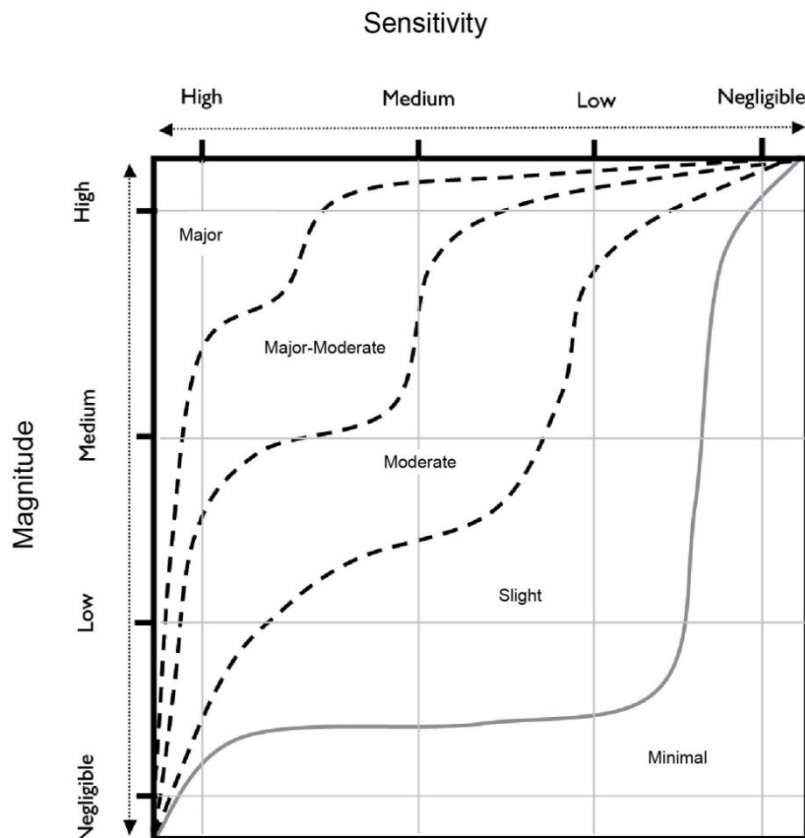


As can be seen from the illustration above, scale (shown as the layers of the diagram) is the primary factor in determining magnitude; most of each layer indicates that magnitude will typically be judged to be the same as scale but may be higher if the effect is particularly widespread and long lasting, or lower if it is constrained in geographic extent or timescale. Where the Scale of effect is judged to be Negligible the Magnitude is also assumed to be Negligible and no further judgement is required.

2.2.3. Significance

Significance indicates the importance or gravity of the effect. The process of forming a judgement as to the degree of significance of the effect is based upon the assessments of magnitude of effects and sensitivity of the receptor to come to a professional judgement of how important this effect is. This judgement is illustrated by the diagram below:

Diagram 2: Significance



The significance ratings indicate a 'sliding scale' of the relative importance of the effect, with Major being the most important and Minimal being the least. Effects that are towards the higher level of the scale (Major) are those judged to be most important, whilst those towards the bottom of the scale are "of lesser concern" (GLVIA, 3rd edition, para 3.35).

Where intermediate ratings are given, e.g. "Moderate-Slight", this indicates an effect that is both less than Moderate and more than Slight, rather than one which varies across the range. In such cases, the higher rating will always be given first; this does not mean that the impact is closer to that higher rating but is done to facilitate the identification of the more significant effects within tables. Intermediate judgements may also be used for judgements of Magnitude.

2.2.4. Positive / Neutral / Adverse

Effects are defined as adverse, neutral or positive. Neutral effects are those which overall are neither adverse nor positive but may incorporate a combination of both.

The decision regarding the significance of effect and the decision regarding whether an effect is beneficial or adverse are entirely separate. For example, a rating of Major and Positive would indicate an effect that was of great significance and on balance positive, but not necessarily that the proposals would be extremely beneficial.

Whether an effect is Positive, Neutral or Adverse is identified based on professional judgement. GLVIA 3rd edition indicates at paragraph 2.15 that this is a “*particularly challenging*” aspect of assessment, particularly in the context of a changing landscape.

2.3. Cumulative Assessment

Cumulative assessment relates to the assessment of the effects of more than one development. For each of the identified cumulative schemes within the study area agreement is reached with the Planning Authority as to whether and how they should be included in the assessment.

Developments that are subject to a valid planning application are included where specific circumstances indicate there is potential for cumulative effects to occur, with progressively decreasing emphasis placed on those which are less certain to proceed. Typically, operational and consented developments are treated as being part of the landscape and visual baseline. i.e. it is assumed that consented schemes will be built except for occasional exceptions where there is good reason to assume that they will not be constructed.

No developments requiring cumulative assessment were identified in this instance.

2.4. Residential Amenity

This LVIA does not include a separate residential amenity assessment. It is considered that the effects resulting from the Proposed Development would fall below the Residential Visual Amenity Threshold referred to in LI TGN 02/2019 as visual effects “*of such nature and / or magnitude that it potentially affects ‘living conditions’ or Residential Amenity*”. The guidance note further indicates that “*It is not uncommon for significant adverse effects on views and visual amenity to be experienced by people at their place of residence as a result of introducing a new development into the landscape. In itself this does not necessarily cause particular planning concern. However, there are situations where the effect on the outlook / visual amenity of a residential property is so great that it is not generally considered to be in the public interest to permit such conditions to occur where they did not exist before.*”

2.5. Green Belt

Green Belt is a land use designation rather than one which indicates a valued landscape. Effects on Green Belt do not fall under the remit of this LVIA. However, landscape and visual matters such as effects on openness inform Green Belt considerations. As the Site lies within Green Belt, the assessors undertaking this LVIA have contributed to the consideration of effects on Green Belt and the relevant findings are reported within the standalone ‘Green Belt Report’ which has been submitted as part of this outline planning application.

2.6. Distances

Where distances are given in the assessment, these are approximate distances between the nearest part of the Site and the nearest part of the receptor in question, unless explicitly stated otherwise.

2.7. Assumptions and Limitations

2.7.1. Desk-study & Fieldwork

The baseline conditions of the Site and the surrounding landscape described in the subsequent sections has been informed by desk-study and fieldwork (undertaken in March and May 2022).

A ZTV study (**Figure 7**) has been produced and used as tools to inform the professional judgements made in this LVIA during the iterative masterplan process and stages. The ZTV study has been modelled on the maximum building height parameters and accounts for the screening effect of existing vegetation and buildings recorded within the available datasets at the time of assessment.

The assessment of potential effects and representative photography was undertaken in May 2022, when the vegetation was in-leaf, which represents a scenario where the screening effect of vegetation is likely to be at its greatest. It is important to stress that throughout this LVIA, the judgements have been made with consideration to the likely winter conditions – i.e. when the vegetation is out-of-leaf – and have been calibrated accordingly. Initial fieldwork observations in March 2022 (when the vegetation was broadly out-of-leaf) has provided the assessors with an understanding of the likely extent of visibility when the screening effect of vegetation would be reduced. All references to the role of intervening / boundary vegetation in filtering / screening views (which has been considered within the assessment) have assumed a degree of permeability based on the initial fieldwork undertaken and professional judgement.

2.7.2. Potential Night-time Effects and Lighting

The Site is located in close proximity to the existing settlement of Sevenoaks and presently is influenced by the adjacent residential properties.

Ambient illumination within the landscape comprises that from existing and adjacent residential properties within the immediate context of the Site. It is anticipated that any additional lighting produced and subsequently experienced by potential receptors would not be dissimilar to the amount of lighting presently experienced within the Site's general vicinity and the wider context of Sevenoaks. It is judged the any potential night-time effects to landscape character and visual amenity would not exceed the assessed effects presented in the preceding sections of this assessment.

It is anticipated that a detailed lighting strategy will be prepared for the Proposed Development, secured through relevant planning conditions. This should aim to reduce sky glow, luminaire intensity and light intrusion, and thus limit visual impact at night. These issues can be addressed by the careful selection of luminaires that would neither project light upwards nor throw too much light directly on to objects (thereby reflecting back upwards). Key lighting design measures will include:

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- Lighting will be to the minimum level necessary to provide the required level of illumination.
- LED lights will be used to that enable increased control, improve colour definition, and save on energy.
- Luminaires will be designed and oriented to restrict light directionality only to the areas necessary. This will include double asymmetrical luminaires and full horizontal cut-off designs to prevent light spill.
- In pedestrian or cycleway areas lights will be low-level cowled lighting design.
- Lighting will be zoned to provide higher lighting levels along main routes (albeit whilst aiming for minimum standards of illumination).
- If security lights are to be provided on buildings these will be of a full horizontal cut-off design with appropriate accessories to prevent light spill. They will also be fitted with motion sensors with timers set to the minimum value.

3.0 Planning Policy

3.1. National Planning Policy

Relevant national planning policy is set out in **Appendix 5**.

3.2. Local Planning Policy

Adopted local planning policy, relevant to this LVIA, is set out in the 'Core Strategy' (adopted 22 February 2011) and 'Allocations and Development Management Plan' (adopted February 2015). Policies of relevance are outlined below:

3.2.1. Core Strategy (February 2011)

Policy LO1 – Distribution of Development states that:

"Development will be focused within the built confines of existing settlements.

The Sevenoaks urban area, which includes Sevenoaks town, Riverhead, Dunton Green, Chipstead and Bessels Green, will be the principal focus for development in the District in accordance with Policies LO2 and LO3....

In other locations priority will be given to protecting the rural character of the District. Development will only take place where it is compatible with policies for protecting the Green Belt and the High Weald and Kent Downs Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, where relevant".

Policy LO2 – Development in Sevenoaks Urban Area requires that [inter alia]:

"...In bringing forward Sites for development the emphasis in this area will be on:

- ...
- *protection of the setting of the urban area and the distinctive character of the local environment and also respecting the physical and community identity of the adjoining settlements, and prevention of further coalescence."*

Policy LO8 – The Countryside and the Rural Economy requires that [inter alia]:

"The extent of the Green Belt will be maintained.

The countryside will be conserved and the distinctive features that contribute to the special character of its landscape and its biodiversity will be protected and enhanced where possible. The distinctive character of the Kent Downs and High Weald Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and their settings, will be conserved and enhanced.

Particular regard will be given to the condition and sensitivity of the landscape character and securing the recommended landscape actions in the proposed SPD to ensure that all development conserves and enhances local landscape character and that appropriate mitigation is provided where damage to local character cannot be avoided..."

Policy SP 1 – Design of New Development and Conservation requires that [inter alia]:

"All new development should be designed to a high quality and should respond to the distinctive local character of the area in which it is situated. Account should be taken of guidance adopted by the Council in the form of Kent Design, local Character Area Assessments, Conservation Area

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Appraisals and Management Plans, Village Design Statements and Parish Plans. In rural areas account should be taken of guidance in the Countryside Assessment and AONB Management Plans.

In areas where the local environment lacks positive features new development should contribute to an improvement in the quality of the environment.

New development should create safe, inclusive and attractive environments that meet the needs of users, incorporate principles of sustainable development and maintain and enhance biodiversity.

The District's heritage assets and their settings, including listed buildings, conservation areas, archaeological remains, ancient monuments, historic parks and gardens, historic buildings, landscapes and outstanding views will be protected and enhanced."

Policy SP 10 – Green Infrastructure, Open Space, Sport and Recreation Provision requires that [inter alia]:

"A Green Infrastructure Network will be developed of accessible multi-functional green space, primarily based on maintaining and linking existing areas of open space.

Open space, sport and recreation facilities, including indoor sports facilities of value to the local community will be retained. Development may exceptionally be allowed where replacement provision of at least equivalent value to the local community is provided.

Residential development proposals in areas where there is an existing shortage in open space provision, or where the development would otherwise result in a shortage in provision, will be expected to contribute to overcoming the shortage, either through on Site provision or a financial contribution to off Site provision. Provision should include arrangements for maintenance of the open space.

For the purposes of this policy, open space includes amenity open space, parks and formal gardens, natural and semi natural open space, children's play areas, outdoor sports facilities, churchyards and allotments."

3.2.2. Allocations and Development Management Plan (February 2015)

Policy EN1 – Design Principles requires that [inter alia]:

"Proposals which would create high quality design and meet the following criteria will be permitted:

- a) the form of the Proposed Development would respond to the scale, height, materials and Site coverage of the area;*
- b) the layout of the Proposed Development would respect the topography and character of the Site and the surrounding area and sensitively incorporate natural features such as trees, hedges and ponds within the Site;*
- c) the proposal would not result in the loss of buildings, open spaces or green infrastructure that would have an unacceptable impact on the character of the area;*
- d) the proposal would ensure satisfactory means of access for vehicles and pedestrians and provide adequate parking and refuse facilities;*
- e) the proposal would incorporate, within the design opportunities for increasing biodiversity potential, where possible, and retaining and enhancing Green Infrastructure features including*

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sustainable drainage systems. Proposals that affect a Site's existing biodiversity and Green Infrastructure should be designed in a way that avoids or mitigates any potential harm;

- f) the design of new buildings and the layout of spaces, including footways, car and cycle parking areas, would be permeable and provide connectivity with neighbouring areas;*
- g) new development would be inclusive and where appropriate make satisfactory provision for the safe and easy access of those with disabilities; and*
- h) the design of new developments would result in the creation of a safe and secure environment and incorporate adequate security measures and features to deter crime, fear of crime, disorder and anti-social behaviour.*

[...] Subject to the above considerations development should make efficient use of the land on which it is proposed.

Where appropriate, proposals should include details and strategies for the effective management and maintenance of Sites following their completion."

Policy EN2 – Amenity Protection requires that [inter alia]:

"Proposals will be permitted where they would provide adequate residential amenities for existing and future occupiers of the development and would safeguard the amenities of existing and future occupants of nearby properties by ensuring that development does not result in, and is not located in areas where occupiers of the development would be subject to, excessive noise, vibration, odour, air pollution, activity or vehicle movements, overlooking or visual intrusion and where the built form would not result in an unacceptable loss of privacy, or light enjoyed by the occupiers of nearby properties."

Policy EN5 – Landscape requires that [inter alia]:

"The Kent Downs and High Weald Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and their settings will be given the highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty.

Proposals within the AONB will be permitted where the form, scale, materials and design would conserve and enhance the character of the landscape and have regard to the relevant Management Plan and associated guidance.

Proposals that affect the landscape throughout the District will be permitted where they would:

- a) conserve the character of the landscape, including areas of tranquillity; and*
- b) where feasible help secure enhancements in accordance with landscape actions in accordance with the Sevenoaks Countryside Assessment SPD."*

Policy EN6 – Outdoor Lighting requires that [inter alia]:

"Proposals for lighting that affect the outdoor environment which meet the following criteria will be permitted:

- a) where associated with a wider development, the proposal would be well integrated within the scheme;*
- b) any impact on the night sky would be minimised through time-limited and user activated lighting, the alignment of lamps, provision of shielding and selection of appropriate lighting type and intensity;*

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- c) *there would be no harmful impact on privacy or amenity for nearby residential properties;*
- d) *[...]*
- e) *[...]*
- f) *where proposals affect Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty or open countryside, it can be demonstrated that the lighting is essential for safety or security reasons.*

Where these criteria are met, proposals incorporating the use of low energy lighting will be encouraged."

Policy GI1 – Green Infrastructure and New Development requires that [inter alia]:

"Proposals will be permitted where opportunities for provision of additional Green Infrastructure have been fully considered and would be provided where justified by the character of the area or the need for open space.

Any open spaces provided as part of new development should, wherever practical and appropriate, be located where they can provide a safe link for the population and connectivity for biodiversity with the existing features of the Green Infrastructure Network.

Additional green infrastructure and habitat restoration and/or re-creation, should be provided in accordance with the appropriate guidance contained in the Kent Design Guide and the Sevenoaks Countryside Assessment SPD and should take account of the guidance within the AONB Management Plans and associated guidance where appropriate."

3.3. Local Guidance

In addition to the policy documents identified above, there are a number of local guidance documents that form part of the documented baseline, which are reviewed in **Section 4.0**. Appropriate commentary, covering relevant matters such as development siting / design; and assessment methodology implications, is provided as necessary. These include:

- The Kent Design Guide
- The Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan
- The Kent Downs AONB Landscape Design Handbook
- The Kent Downs AONB Rural Streets and Lanes: A Design Handbook

4.0 Baseline

4.1. Introduction

An overview of the baseline study is provided in this section, presenting a review of the key local guidance documents and all of the landscape and visual receptors identified within the extent of the study area.

This section has undertaken an initial assessment of all the identified receptors, and sets out which receptors merit further detailed consideration in **Section 6.0 Landscape and Visual Effects**; and which receptors are not taken forward for further assessment, as effects *“have been judged unlikely to occur or so insignificant that it is not essential to consider them further”* (GLVIA3, para. 3.19). Full baseline descriptions are provided alongside the assessment of effects for those receptors taken forward to **Section 6.0**, for ease of reference.

Both this baseline study section and **Section 6.0** describe landscape character and visual receptors before considering designated landscape. It is common for designations to encompass both character and visual considerations within their special qualities or purposes of designation. It therefore makes a more natural reading sequence to draw together those aspects of character and views which relate to the designation if they have been described earlier in the report.

4.2. Key Local Guidance Documents

The following guidance documents provide advice relevant to this assessment, as follows:

- The Kent Design Guide
- The Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan
- The Kent Downs AONB Landscape Design Handbook
- The Kent Downs AONB Rural Streets and Lanes: A Design Handbook

There are also a number of baseline landscape character studies which are considered in **Section 4.4. Landscape Character** below.

4.2.1. The Kent Design Guide (undated)

The Kent Design Guide is adopted by Sevenoaks District Council as a supplementary planning document (‘SPD’) and champions good design within Kent, setting out guidance and case studies as to how this may be achieved. In relation to the landscape, the guide states:

- *“Landscape is a combination of nature and culture; it is formed by topography, trees, hedges, paths, roads, structures and materials. These elements determine the landscape character of an area.*
- *A well-designed landscape will provide:*
 - *an attractive setting for a development, its users and occupiers a positive environment of wider economic benefit*
 - *a sense of place with a clear identity*

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- *a sense of space and enclosure*
- *spatial benefits including integrating the visual impact of the built environment with nature environmental benefits including micro-climate creation, pollution attenuation and the reduction of water and energy consumption*
- *noise and visual screening, and*
- *retention of cultural associations with the natural environment.”*

Information pertinent to design is considered in relation to landscape and visual matters in in **Section 5.3**.

4.2.2. The Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan (2021)

The Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan ('AONB Management Plan') identifies the key issues, opportunities and threats facing the AONB landscape, and sets out aims and principles for the positive conservation and enhancement of the Kent Downs for a five-year period. The AONB Management Plan also defines the special components, characteristics and qualities of the Kent Downs AONB.

Further to this LVIA, a standalone 'AONB Report' has been submitted in support of this OPA, which considers the contribution the Sites makes to the natural beauty and special character of the AONB.

The findings of this report have been used to inform judgments on the overall effects of AONB, as detailed in **Section 6.4. Effects on Designated Landscapes**.

4.2.3. The Kent Downs AONB Landscape Design Handbook (undated)

The purpose of the 'Kent Downs AONB Landscape Design Handbook' ('LDH') is to provide practical, readily accessible design guidance to contribute to the conservation and enhancement of the special characteristics of the AONB and the distinctiveness of its 13 individually identified 'local character areas'.

At the AONB-wide scale, the following design guidance is provided for urban edge housing:

- *“The presumption should be against AONB edge developments where they impact upon views into and out of the AONB landscape.*
- *Where this is unavoidable ensure that buildings and infrastructure are located to avoid loss of important off-Site views towards features such as church towers, fine buildings, or the wider landscape, as well as avoiding intrusion onto sensitive ridgelines, prominent slopes and damage to distinctive landscape settings.*
- *Seek to retain key landscape features on development Sites – such as woodland, shaws (narrow belts of woodland), hedgerows, orchards, mature trees, watercourses and ponds as a basis for the new landscape structure and setting of the Site.*
- *Avoid straight lines or regimented buildings on the settlement edge for new development.*
- *Integrate new development in keeping with local character, using open space and planting to provide a visual link to the countryside and an attractive backdrop/foil to development.*

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- *Secure and manage native woodland, shaw, hedgerow and tree planting to integrate and/or screen new and existing developments.*
- *Consider massing, form, height and colour, texture of buildings and structures, taking account of local distinctiveness and characteristics.*
- *Seek the use of appropriate local materials.*
- *Co-ordinate building colour to secure a complementary effect between buildings and the surrounding landscape (e.g. use of matt neutral colours to minimise reflectivity).*
- *Ensure Site entrances and approaches are designed to fit within the landscape and use discrete signage.*
- *Consider the need for lighting and where essential seek to minimise its impact in the landscape through choice of light source and control of light spillage.*
- *Consider the need for fencing. Where security fencing is required use wooden posts and galvanised wire and screen with thorny hedges of native plants.*
- *Consider the impact of development on the Public Rights of Way network”.*

The Site falls within the Westerham Greensand Ridge local character area as defined by the LDH, which is described as an of predominately large arable fields and dense mixed woodland.

Key design guidelines include:

- *“Conserve and manage dense woodland cover of stands of oak and beech, sweet chestnut coppice and thickets of birch.*
- *Restore and manage heaths and acid grassland.*
- *Reinforce wooded edges.*
- *Conserve, manage and restore wide shaws in the farmland.*
- *Maintain the character of the narrow lanes including distinctive oblique angle junctions.*
- *Conserve the wooded setting of existing small settlements, and ensure any new small-scale development does not intrude on long views.*
- *Seek the use of sympathetic building materials such as ragstone, brick and tile.*
- *Avoid further development on the skyline.*
- *Integrate new development on edge of villages with small woodlands and hedgerow trees”.*

Information pertinent to design is considered in relation to landscape and visual matters in **Section 5.3**, while information pertinent to the understanding of landscape character is considered in **Section 6.2**

4.2.4. Kent Downs AONB Rural Streets and Lanes: A Design Handbook (2009)

The ‘Kent Downs AONB Rural Streets and Lanes: a design handbook’ (‘RLH’) aims to identify the special characteristics and features of the rural roads network within the AONB and provide design guidance.

In relation to the Westerham Greensand Ridge local character, the RLH states:

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- *“The ridge is home to ancient drove routes, typically wooded and sunken, and concealed in the wider landscape;*
- *Distinctive oblique angle road junctions;*
- *Woodbanks are marked by pollarded beech and oak, and an old chestnut coppice;*
- *Heathy commons and acid grassland verges abut ridgetop roads and tracks;*
- *Some panoramic views are evident across the Low Weald from minor roads on the higher part of the south facing greens and scarp;*
- *Ragstone/sandstone walls are a distinctive boundary feature to historic properties in the small settlements;*
- *The A25 on the northern edge of the greensand has a wooded character in places as a result of parkland tree belts adjacent to it”.*

Information pertinent to design is considered in relation to landscape and visual matters in in **Section 5.3**.

4.3. Zone of Theoretical Visibility Study

A Zone of Theoretical Visibility (‘ZTV’) study has been used as a tool to inform the professional judgements made in this LVIA during the iterative masterplan process and stages.

The Proposed Development is modelled based on the Illustrative Masterplan (as contained within the Design and Access Statement) and assuming building height of between 7.5m and 9.5m.

The ZTV is shown on **Figure 7** and indicates areas of potential visibility. The analysis was carried out using a topographic model including settlements and woodlands (with heights derived from NEXTMAP 25 surface mapping data) as visual barriers in order to provide a more realistic indication of potential visibility.

The ZTV study was used to determine which landscape and visual receptors are likely to be affected and merit detailed consideration in the assessment of effects, and those which are unlikely to have visibility.

It should be borne in mind that the ZTV represents a theoretical model of the potential visibility of the Proposed Development. In reality, landscape features such as trees, hedgerows, embankments, landform and / or buildings found on the ground, but not accounted for within the surface mapping dataset, are likely to combine to screen the Proposed Development to a greater degree. As a result, the extent of actual visibility experienced on the ground will be less than suggested by the ZTV study.

4.3.1. ZTV and Zone of Visual Influence (‘ZVI’)

The ZTV study shown on **Figure 7** indicates that the theoretical visibility of the Proposed Development would be, in general, contained to areas within the local context of the Site.

To the north / north-east / east of the Site, theoretical visibility would extend to approximately 1km, spreading across the southern extents of Sevenoaks. To the south and west, theoretical visibility would be contained to the immediate context of the Site,

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screened from locations further afield by the mature and prevalent vegetation and woodland that surround it. A small band of theoretical visibility would be possible from the local road to the south of Green Lane, at a localised high point (circa 155m AOD), where there is a clearing in the surrounding woodland.

Fieldwork observations however have shown that various features in the intervening landscape (which have not been accounted for in the dataset used for the ZTV) would, on-the-ground, contain the spread of visibility to a greater degree than theoretically indicated, as shown at Viewpoints 3, 5, 6 and 7 (**Figures 8.3 and 8.5 – 8.7**).

Visibility, in reality, would be restricted to the Site's immediate context, from the local roads (Ashgrove Road and Oak Lane) that surround it, and a short section of the PRoW (ref. 0221/SU36/1) to the south of it. Viewpoints 1, 2 and 4 represent available views (**Figures 8.1, 8.2 and 8.4**). Visibility from the wider landscape would, in places and during the winter months when the vegetation is out-of-leaf, extend up to approximately 1km from the Site's boundaries, however, such views would be limited to locations on elevated landform where intervening vegetation and/or buildings does not screen views (or there are gaps), and likely to be glimpsed views at most.

This defined area of most visibility, hereafter referred to as the 'Zone of Visual Influence' (ZVI), is shown on **Figure 7** for reference. Based on fieldwork observations, it is judged that effects on landscape or visual receptors outside the ZVI would experience **Negligible** change and are not assessed in further detail in this report.

4.4. Landscape Character

Paragraphs 5.13-5.15 of GLVIA, 3rd edition indicates that landscape character studies at the national or regional level are best used to "*set the scene*" and understand the landscape context. It indicates that Local Authority Assessments provide more detail and that these should be used to form the basis of the assessment of effects on landscape character – with (appropriately justified) adaptation, refinement and interpretation where required.

Relevant assessments are set out in the following sections, with copies of relevant maps and character assessment descriptions of areas taken forward for assessment in **Section 7.2** are included in **Appendix 6**.

4.4.1. National Landscape Character Profiles (2014)

Natural England's National Character Areas ('NCA') identify landscape character at the strategic level for the whole of England. The Site lies within the extent of 'NCA 121: *Low Weald*'. A description of this NCA is include in **Appendix 6** for reference. Whilst the NCA provides context to the LVIA, given its scale, and the presence of more detailed character areas at a local level, effects on NCAs are not assessed in further detail.

4.4.2. Regional Landscape Character

Landscape Assessment of Kent (2004)

The '*Landscape Assessment Kent*' ('LAK') is a landscape character based study that draws together existing landscape character assessments of the county, with the objective of ensuring that decisions on the rural landscape are underpinned by a robust and widely

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accepted assessment of the landscape character. It describes each character areas identified and summarise the conditions and sensitivity of the area before offering guidance on what actions would be appropriate to protect and enhance the landscape character.

The LAK makes clear that that local landscape assessments undertaken at a district scale or for specific Sites / areas can focus on a greater level of detail and therefore give more targeted information. Given the presence of a district level landscape character assessment, potential effects on regional landscape character areas are not assessment further detail.

4.4.3. Local Landscape Character

Sevenoaks Landscape Character Assessment (2017)

The 'Sevenoaks Landscape Character Assessment' ('SLCA') sets out the sets out the primary evidence base for landscape character within the district, mapping and describing the key characteristics of the landscape. It identifies and describes 13 Landscape Character Types ('LCT') and 31 individual Landscape Character Areas ('LCA'). Within the study area, the following LCTs and LCAs have been identified:

- LCT 10. Charts – LCA 10b. Sevenoaks Western Chart (Site within);
- LCT. 9 Greensand Parks and Farmlands – LCA 9a. Westerham to Sundridge P and F; and
- LCT. 9 Greensand Parks and Farmlands – LCA 9c. Knole Park

The Site is located with *LCA 10b: Sevenoaks Western Chart*. This is described as an undulating and wooded agricultural landscape, extending between Sevenoaks to the east and Goathurst Common to the west, and encompassing the A421 Sevenoaks Bypass. The 'charts' are described as wooded commons that are particularly distinctive of east Surrey and west Kent. The extensive woodlands provide a strong sense of containment, however, there are occasional views from the central hills.

Given the Proposed Development is located within this LCA, and part of the present land-uses of the Site will change to a new built development, it is assessed in further detail in **Section 6.2**.

Analysis of the remaining LCAs, along with a review of the ZVI (see **Section 4.3**), show that the visibility of the Proposed Development would be limited from the majority of the remaining LCAs. Where intervisibility would be possible between the surrounding LCAs and the Site, it is judged that the intrinsic and prevailing characteristics of the LCAs would not be discernibly affected through the introduction of the Proposed Development, and its development would not be a prominent or uncharacteristic feature; would be perceived as part of the existing settlement of Sevenoaks; and would have no discernible impact on the wider appreciation of the countryside. It is therefore assessed that the remaining LCAs listed above are not taken forward for further detailed assessment this LVIA.

While it is noted that LDH identifies further 'local character area' within the context of the AONB, the description of the Westerham Greensand Ridge local character area (within which the Site is located and is similar to size / extent as the Sevenoaks Western Chart) provides no further detail or guidance beyond that contained within the SLCA.

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Landscape Sensitivity Study (May 2017)

The 'Landscape Sensitivity Assessment' ('LSA') provides a general overview of comparative landscape sensitivity around the key settlements (based on landscape character) for Sevenoaks District. It provides information within each assessment area from which key sensitivities can be identified and achieve the best integration of built development.

The LSA considers sensitivity to the most likely type of development to come forward in Sevenoaks, which were concluded as being residential development (defined as 2/3 storey properties); and commercial development (defined as small-scale office, light industry or small sheds (B1/B2)). The assessment considers sensitivity to the 'principle' of these development types, without knowing the specific size or location of potential development.

The Site lies within assessment area 'S3. Sevenoaks south-west', which is described as a "well-wooded, undulating area with a generally higher sensitivity to development".

Information contained within the LSA, related to S3. Sevenoaks south-west and residential housing is used as part of the assessment of potential effects on landscape character in **Section 6.2**.

Sevenoaks Residential Character Area Assessment (April 2012)

The 'Sevenoaks Residential Character Area Assessment' ('SRCAA') identifies the local distinctive character, and sets out design guidance, to assist Sevenoaks District Council in making decisions about the appropriateness of development proposals. The SRCAA aims to:

- "To supplement adopted design policies for assessing development proposals within an area;
- To identify the locally distinctive features that define the character of those residential areas within Sevenoaks urban area which are not included within the town's Conservation Areas;
- To raise awareness of, and provide guidance on, the appropriateness of the design of development within an area in order to strengthen diversity rather than erode character and local distinctiveness;
- To assist the appraisal of planning and allied applications; and
- To deliver improved designs, in practice, which enhance the character of the area."

The SRCAA identifies 15 broad character areas and 170 individual character areas within the townscape of Sevenoaks. For each of the individual character areas, there is an assessment of the locally distinctive contextual features such as age, height and types of buildings; main uses; prominent building materials and boundary treatments and open spaces. Locally distinctive positive features and negative features are also recorded.

Within the extent of the study area, there are numerous individual character areas identified by the SRCAA. It is assessed that, in light of the ZTV study and fieldwork, those character areas adjacent to the Site would experience a degree of change as result of the Proposed Development and are taken forward for assessment in **Section 6.2**. These character areas include:

- 'H01. Hopgarden Lane' (Site adjacent, east / north-west)
- 'B08. Ashgrove Road' (Site adjacent, north-east)

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H01 Hopgarden Lane is described as an area that historically comprised open fields with hedgerows and criss-crossed by a network of lanes. Development was laid out from the 1930's onwards, with large, detached houses set back from the road and working within the historic landscape structure.

B08 Ashgrove Road is described as a small area of interwar housing laid out at the junction of Ashgrove Road and Oak Lane. They are set above the road behind stone retaining walls, hedges and planting that help maintain the rural character of the lanes.

Beyond the character areas listed above, it is judged that the intrinsic and prevailing characteristics of these remaining character areas of the SRCAA would not be discernibly affected through the introduction of the Proposed Development. The Proposed Development would not be a prominent or uncharacteristic feature; would be perceived as part of the existing settlement of Sevenoaks; and would have no discernible impact on the wider appreciation of the existing townscape or character areas. It is therefore assessed that the remaining character areas identified by the SRCAA (listed for reference in **Appendix 6**) do not merit further detailed consideration and are not assessed further in this LVIA.

4.5. Visual Receptors

Visual receptors are *"the different groups of people who may experience views of the development"* (GLVIA, 3rd edition, para 6.3). In order to identify those groups who may be significantly affected the ZTV study, baseline desk study and Site visits have been used.

The different types of groups assessed within this report encompass local residents; people using key routes such as roads; cycle ways, people within accessible or recreational landscapes; people using Public Rights of Way; or people visiting key viewpoints. In dealing with areas of settlement, Public Rights of Way and local roads, receptors are grouped into areas where effects might be expected to be broadly similar, or areas which share particular factors in common.

Seven representative viewpoints have been selected to assess the effects on visual receptor. In additional specific viewpoints may be identified where there are key promoted viewpoints within the study area, or illustrative viewpoints to *"demonstrate a particular effect or specific issues, which might, for example, be the restricted visibility at certain locations"* (GLVIA, 3rd edition, para 6.19).

The representative viewpoints are listed below:

- Viewpoint 1 – Ashgrove Road (**Figure 8.1**);
- Viewpoint 2 – Oak Lane (**Figure 8.2**);
- Viewpoint 3 – Public Bridleway (0221/SR217/1) (**Figure 8.3**);
- Viewpoint 4 – Byway (0221/SU36/1) (**Figure 8.4**);
- Viewpoint 5 – Greensand Way, Knole Park (**Figure 8.5**);
- Viewpoint 6 – Public Bridleway (0058/SR186/1) (**Figure 8.6**); and
- Viewpoint 7 – Cross Keys (**Figure 8.7**)

4.5.1. Visual Receptor Groups

Visual effects are assessed for groups of visual receptors within close proximity of each other and that are judged to experience similar visual effects arising from the Proposed Development. These are referred to as ‘visual receptor groups’ and include motorists on local roads, users of rights of way and local residents or visitors to settlements.

The following visual receptor groups have been identified within the extent of the ZVI (described in **Section 4.3**) and are taken forward for detailed assessment in **Section 6.0**. The extents of the Visual Receptor Groups described below.

It is judged that for those visual receptors located outside of the ZVI there would be little to no visibility of the Proposed Development, and that effects would be **Negligible** at most. Visual receptors located outside of the ZVI are not taken forward for detailed assessment.

Table 1: Visual Receptor Groups taken forward for assessment

Visual Receptor Group	Location / Description
(1) Visual Receptors within the Site’s immediate context	Residents and visitors using the local roads – Ashgrove Road and Oak Lane; and the PRoW (ref. 0221/SU36/1), within the immediate context of the Site.

4.5.2. Roads and Rail

Figure 1 shows that there is numerous key routes present in study area, which are as follows:

- A21 (390m, west);
- A225 (1km, east); and
- South Eastern railway line (1.1km, north-east).

The ZTV study (**Figure 7**) indicates that there would be theoretical visibility from parts of each of these routes. Fieldwork has shown however that, as described in **Section 4.3**, there would be little to no visibility of the Proposed Development as a result of the intervening vegetation, landform and buildings. Where glimpsed views might be possible, effects on users of these routes are judged to be **Negligible** given the limited extent which visibility would be possible; and the developed context of Sevenoaks that would be visible within the context of the Proposed Development.

4.5.3. Long Distance Walking Routes

Figure 6 shows that there one long distance walking route within the study area - Greensand Way – which is located at its closest point, 1.5km from the Site’s southern boundary

The ZTV study (**Figure 7**) indicates that there would be theoretical visibility from sections of the Greensand Way to the north-east of the Site within Knole Park. Fieldwork has shown however that, as described in **Section 4.3**, there would be little to no visibility of the Proposed Development as a result of the intervening vegetation, landform and buildings. Where glimpsed views might be possible, effects on users of these routes are judged to be **Negligible** given the limited extent which visibility would be possible; and the developed

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context of Sevenoaks that would be visible within the context of the Proposed Development. Potential visual effects on users of the Greensand Way are therefore not assessed further in this report.

4.5.4. National, Regional and Local Cycles Routes

No National or Regional Cycles routes have been identified within the 2km study area.

4.5.5. Accessible and Recreational Landscapes

Figure 6 shows that there is a number of accessible and / or recreational landscapes within the study area, which are as follows:

- Julian's Meadow Playing Fields (365m, north)
- Solefields Playing Fields (425m, south-east);
- Sole Fields (895m, north-east);
- Knole Park (1km, north-east);
- St Nicholas' Church (1km, north-east);
- Kippington Meadow Recreation Ground (1.1km, north-east)
- St Mary's Church (1.1km, north)
- Duke Meadow Playing Fields (1.6km, north-east)
- Knole Paddock (1.8km, north-east)
- Montreal Park (1.8km, north-west)
- The Vine (1.8km, north-east)

The ZTV study (**Figure 7**) indicates that there would be theoretical visibility from parts of each of these accessible and recreational landscape. Fieldwork has shown however that, as described in **Section 4.3**, there would be little to no visibility of the Proposed Development as a result of the intervening vegetation, landform and buildings. Where glimpsed views might be possible, effects on users of these routes are judged to be **Negligible** given the limited extent which visibility would be possible; and the developed context of Sevenoaks that would be visible within the context of the Proposed Development.

4.5.6. Specific Viewpoints

No specific viewpoints have been identified from Ordnance Survey Mapping within the 2km study area.

4.6. Landscape Designations and Value

4.6.1. Designated Landscapes

Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Figure 3 shows the Site within the extent of the Kents Downs AONB.

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The Kent Downs AONB is a designation afforded to landscapes of national importance with the primary purpose to “*conserve and enhance the natural beauty*” of the area, considering landscape, landform and geology, plants and animals, landscape features and the rich history of human settlement over the centuries.

Due the Site’s location within the Kents Downs AONB, potential impacts on this designated landscape are assessed in detail in **Section 6.4.1**. The LVIA will draw upon the judgements made in relation to landscape character and visual receptors in **Section 6.0**.

Landscape and Visual Effects, along with the findings / recommendations of the accompanying ‘AONB Report’.

4.6.2. Landscape Value

The landscape within the Kents Down AONB is considered of National Value.

Beyond this area, it is considered that the landscape / townscape would be of a Community Value – while it may contain features or landmarks of local interest, they have little or no wider recognition of their value.

5.0 The Proposed Development

5.1. The Proposal

The Proposed Development comprises an OPA for up to 50 homes, together with associated green infrastructure. All matters reserved except for access. Further details of the Proposed Development are described in the accompanying Design and Access Statement (DAS).

5.2. Site Fabric

A number of landscape features, comprising parts of the Site's physical fabric, would be modified or removed, as follows:

- Loss of a single field of rough grassland pasture.
- Removal of a small section of relatively young vegetation along the Site's eastern boundary to facilitate the main vehicular access into the Site.
- Removal of small sections of hedgerow within the north-eastern and south-eastern corners of the Site to facilitate pedestrian access points.

Overall, the Proposed Development – and associated access strategy – has been carefully designed to limit the loss of existing vegetation. The boundaries of the Site that are retained will be enhanced and managed as part of landscape proposals, and new native planting (including street trees) will be incorporated across the Proposed Development.

5.3. Landscape Strategy

As set out in the DAS, the landscape strategy for the Proposed Development has been informed by the findings and recommendations of the LVIA; supporting AONB and Green Belt studies; and relevant policy and guidance.

The landscape strategy has been guided by the following principles, which have evolved through the iterative design process and informed the final masterplan:

- Carefully consider the location of the Site's entrance to minimise the loss of mature vegetation / change in levels and maintain the existing character of Ashgrove Road. Avoid the passing places along Ashgrove Road.
- Retain and enhance existing boundary vegetation to provide visual containment and provide the basis of multifunctional green infrastructure.
- Enhance the existing pond as a characteristic feature of the Site.
- Reinforce the southern Site boundary to better define the new outer edge of the settlement area and provide a defensive new Green Belt boundary (if required)
- Create new areas of planting throughout the Site to help integrate the Proposed Development into its surrounding landscape fabric, whilst also reflecting the well-wooded wider landscape.
- Seek opportunities to create new areas of public open space within the Site for the benefit of new / existing residents and helping create a strong sense of place. This

includes an area of proposed open space in the south-west corner of the Site that is on rising ground and offers long distance views east towards Knole Park – a large areas of parkland to the east of Sevenoaks.

- Create new pedestrian routes within the Site and connect with the Public Byway to the south of the Site, providing access to the wider PRow network beyond the Site.
- Carefully consider building heights to ensure that the Proposed Development relates well to the scale of surrounding housing. Housing will typically be 2 storeys with some single storey development on higher ground.
- Carefully consider building materials, colour and detailing that responds to the local vernacular of the area. This includes the use of ragstone, brick and tile.

Additional mitigation measures that should be adopted, beyond those inherent within the design, include:

- Adoption of a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP)
- Implementation of a Landscape and Ecological Management Plan (LEMP)

A CEMP will play an important in ensuring considerate construction activity and that the identified woodland, trees and other landscape / habitat features are protected during the construction phase.

A LEMP is important to ensure the identified landscape / habitat features are appropriately managed, in particular in ensuring the long-term health and robustness of perimeter woodland which provides an important screen. The LEMP should build on the Framework Ecological Mitigation Strategy (prepared by Middlemarch) which sets out the approach to retention, creation and management of ecology features.

It is considered that the implementation of these mitigation measures it would not alter the overall assessment findings. The significance of effects for landscape and visual receptors, during both construction and operational phases, would therefore remain as assessed in **Section 6.0**.

5.4. Response to Policy and Guidance

Table 2 sets out how the design of the Proposed Development has considered and responded to local policies / guidance concerning landscape and resources.

Table 2: Response to landscape / visual policies and guidance

Policy / Guidance	Project response / Comment
Core Strategy (February 2011)	
Policy L02 Development in Sevenoaks Urban Area / Policy L08 The Countryside and Rural Economy / Policy SP 1	The design of the Proposed Development has been informed the Site's local context / character and seeks to minimise landscape and visual effects through appropriate design and mitigation which accounts for relevant guidance. The Proposed Development would retain the vast majority of existing landscape / habitat features and create new attractive and accessible green space.

Design of New Development and Conservation	
Policy SP 10 Green Infrastructure, Open Space, Sport and Recreation Provision	The Proposed Development will provide a new network of multi-functional green infrastructure and open space.
Allocations and Development Management Plan (February 2015)	
Policy EN1 Design Principles	The design of the Proposed Development has been informed the Site's local context / character; retains the vast majority of existing landscape features; and provides a network of new green infrastructure. Careful consideration has been given to the scale and appearance of the proposed buildings to ensure they relate well to local settlement character in terms of scale and appearance. Proposed buildings will be set back from the Site's eastern boundary along Ashgrove Road, with new vegetation planted.
Policy EN2 Amenity Protection	This LVIA concludes that the Proposed Development would not materially impact on residential amenity.
Policy EN5 Landscape	The design of the Proposed Development has been informed the Site's local context / character, and particular consideration has been given to conserving the natural beauty / special qualities of the AONB.
Policy EN6 Outdoor Lighting	It is anticipated that an appropriate lighting strategy will be prepared that will minimise sky glow, luminaire intensity and light intrusion, and thus limit visual impact at night.
Policy GI1 Green Infrastructure	The Proposed Development will provide a new network of multi-functional green infrastructure.
The Kent Design Guide	
The design of the Proposed Development has been landscape-led and informed the topography and fabric of the Site. The proposed landscape strategy helps establish create a strong sense of place, whilst helping to integrate the development into the landscape and providing multi-functional green infrastructure.	
The Kent Downs AONB Landscape Design Handbook	
The Proposed Development has responded to the following AONB-wide landscape design principles:	
Avoid the loss of important views, including those of landmark features, wider landscape and prominent slopes.	The design of the Proposed Development seeks to retain the vast majority of the boundary vegetation which provides a degree of containment. While there will be changes to very localised views from

	adjoining routes, the location and context of the Site – sitting at the base of the ridge and enclosed by surrounding built form and woodland - is such that there are no existing views to landmark features, wider landscape and prominent slopes.
Retain key landscape features, such as hedgerows, trees and woodland Integrate new development through management of existing / creation of open space and planting	As set out above, the Proposed Development retains the vast majority of existing landscape features, along with establishing new planting and green infrastructure, which will help integrate the development into the local context.
Consider massing, form, height, colour, texture of buildings and structures, including use of local materials	The design of the housing has been informed by the scale of surrounding residential area and the use of materials, colour and detailing that responds to the local vernacular, This includes the use of ragstone, brick and tile.
Ensure Site entrances and approaches are designed to fit within the landscape	The design of the Site entrance seeks to minimise the impact on Ashgrove Road, located where there would be least disruption to vegetation and ground levels. Buildings are set back from the entrance and the Site's eastern boundary to avoid creating a new frontage along Ashgrove Road, and the entrance way is defined by characteristic features, include ragstone walls and groups of native trees.
Consider the need for lighting to minimise its impact in the landscape	It is anticipated that an appropriate lighting strategy will be prepared that will minimise sky glow, luminaire intensity and light intrusion, and thus limit visual impact at night.
Consider the need for fencing	No security fencing is proposed. Private rear gardens will be defined by fencing; however, the layout has been designed to avoid large sections of fencing adjoining area of public realm and/or screened by new planting. Private front gardens will be typically by open or defined by low, unobtrusive boundary features.
Consider the impact of development on the Public Rights of Way network	The Proposed Development is likely to increase the number of users on local PRoW, however, is not of sufficient scale to give rise to any significant recreational impacts. A new connection is proposed to the Public Byway along the southern Site boundary, providing access to the wider countryside for recreation and leisure.
The Proposed Development has responded to the following Greensand Ridge landscape design principles:	

Conserve and manage woodland; woodland edges, shaws, heaths and acid grassland	The Site does not contain any woodland, woodland edges, shaws, heaths and acid grassland. However, existing hedgerow boundaries and trees will be retained and enhanced, contributing to the mosaic of landscape and habitat features within the local landscape.
Maintain the character of narrow lanes	There will be no overall change to the character of Ashgrove Road, which is of a sunken adjoined by residential land uses and with regular road junctions. The design of the Site entrance seeks to minimise the impact on Ashgrove Road, located where there would be least disruption to vegetation and ground levels. Passing places have not been proposed along Ashgrove Road to avoid this potential impact on the character of the lane.
Ensure development does not intrude on long views and avoid skyline development	The location and context of the Site – sitting at the base of the ridge and enclosed by surrounding built form and woodland - is such that there are long distance views that encompass the Site.
Seek the use of sympathetic building materials	The design of the housing will utilise materials, colour and detailing that responds to the local vernacular. This includes the use of ragstone, brick and tile.
Integrate new development with small woodlands and hedgerow trees	The Proposed Development will be integrated into the landscape through the retention / enhancement of existing planting and the creation of new trees and hedgerows.
Kent Downs AONB Rural Streets and Lanes: A Design Handbook (July 2009)	
The Proposed Development will not change the alignment of Ashgrove Road, and there will be no change to the overall character, which is of a sunken adjoined by residential land uses and with regular road junctions. There will also no change to any panoramic views from along the road, which is heavily enclosed by embankments, planting and surrounding development. The location of the entrance has been carefully sited to minimise disruption to vegetation and ground levels. Buildings will be set back from the entrance to avoid creating a new frontage along Ashgrove Road, and the entrance way will be defined by characteristic features, include ragstone walls and groups of native trees. No passing places are proposed along Ashgrove Road to avoid potential impacts beyond the location of the Site entrance.	

6.0 Landscape and Visual Effects

6.1. Introduction

This section sets out the potential landscape and visual effects that the Proposed Development would have on landscape and visual receptors identified in **Section 4.0. Baseline** that merited further detailed consideration.

6.1.1. Construction Phase

There will be temporary effects arising during the construction phase in the short- to medium-term. The total anticipated construction period will be approximately 2 years.

Impacts during the Construction Phase will include the effects of vehicles and plant within the Site and in surrounding areas including earth-moving equipment, cranes, lorries and other vehicles; the erection, use and dismantling of scaffolding, use of small cranes / platforms and the creation of stockpiles of materials and construction compounds. Other components typical of construction activities, such as workers' facilities, stockpiles of materials, lighting of specific areas (such as construction or storage compounds) will also result in temporary landscape and visual effects.

Although construction activity is different in nature to the completed development, it is judged that the construction phase would not give rise to effects over and above those of the completed development. While the scale of effect may be larger during the Construction Phase, the duration of construction effects would temporary and be much shorter in comparison to the permanent development. Therefore, effects identified within this assessment are judged to apply to the completed scheme (once construction is complete and operational).

6.1.2. Operational Phase

Medium-term effects are assessed during the period following completion, when construction is complete but before embedded mitigation measures (such as proposed planting) has been fully implemented / established. During this period, effects will gradually reduce as the proposed landscape plantings and planting matures. During this early part of this period, effects are likely to be at their greatest.

The Proposed Development includes a comprehensive landscape scheme, which includes retained and enhanced planting within the Site, along with new green infrastructure. The maturity of the proposed planting would be beneficial in the longer-term, helping integrate the Proposed Development into the landscape whilst also providing additional screening. – It is also assumed that all existing and proposed landscape features within the Site will be subject to appropriate management, such that the amenity and / or screening benefits of the vegetation is maintained permanently. As such, the long-term Permanent effects – once the proposed vegetation has established and proposed management of the existing vegetation has been fully implemented – are also assessed as necessary.

6.2. Effects on Landscape Character

The local landscape character is described in the prevailing landscape character assessment, the *'Sevenoaks Landscape Character Assessment'* (2017) and the *'Sevenoaks Residential Character Area Assessment'* (2012).

Fieldwork has confirmed that the Site characterised by a single field parcel of rough pasture, with boundaries that mostly well-vegetated, which adjoins the existing settlement edge of Sevenoaks. Existing residential areas are located to the immediate north and east of the Site, and the Site is closely associated with the existing residential areas.

Effects on the landscape character would be as follows:

Large-scale effect would occur within the Site and its immediate context, where there would be a visible change to the landscape from a field of rough grassland pasture to a new area of built development.

Beyond the extent of the Site and its immediate context, effects on landscape character would decrease to a Negligible-scale. It is judged that the intrinsic and prevailing characteristics of the landscape would not be discernibly affected through the introduction of the Proposed Development. Whilst the Proposed Development would change the existing land-use from a field of rough grassland pasture to a new area of development, it would be perceived as part of the existing settlement; sitting at a similar elevation to the nearest existing properties; and would not extend Sevenoaks substantially into the wider rural landscape. Furthermore, fieldwork has shown that within the Site's surroundings, a well-vegetated and strong network of established vegetation (including large areas of woodland); a broadly undulating landform; and the existing built infrastructure of Sevenoaks and its surrounding, would combine to limit intervisibility between the Site and the wider landscape / townscape.

Description of the assessed landscape character areas and townscape character areas are briefly summarised below, along with further observations from fieldwork.

6.2.1. Local Landscape Character: Sevenoaks Landscape Character Assessment (2017)

Sevenoaks Western Chart

The Site and the surrounding area fall within Sevenoaks's Landscape Character Area (LCA) 10b – *Sevenoaks Western Chart*, as shown on **Figure 5**. The key characteristics of this area are described as follows [inter alia]:

- *"Undulating woodland and agricultural landscape, steeply climbing to central hills reaching over 200m AOD.*
- *Extensive wooded commons of dense, mixed broadleaf, acid woodland with irregular pasture clearings and heath.*
- *Historic land uses such as wood pasture, coppice used for charcoal burning.*
- *Rural settlement set around greens or in a linear pattern fringing commons.*
- *Large mansion houses set in woodland on the ridge, for example West Heath School.*
- *Generally enclosed landscape with occasional glimpsed views over the Low Weald from the steep south facing scarp."*

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The 'Landscape Evaluation' of LCA 10b – *Sevenoaks Western Chart* describes that the landscape is generally in 'good' condition with a unified and intact pattern of woodland and pasture. However, it is noted that there is some decline in places, and that large modern properties; horsiculture; and the A21 Sevenoaks Bypass all detract from the rural character of the area.

The key sensitivities / valued attributes that relate to the Site and its context include:

- *"The mosaic of heath, unimproved pasture and woodland that provides a distinct sense of place and important habitats.*
- *Extensive mature woodlands and coppice that provide a strong sense of containment and sense of place as well as tranquillity and recreational opportunities.*
- *Historic assarts representing fields converted from woodland from the Medieval period.*
- *Rural settlement character comprising villages set around greens or scattered in a linear form along the edge of commons which reflect an historic form of settlement.*
- *Large mansions amongst the charts and associated gardens which provide a sense of history.*
- *Narrow wooded lanes that cross over the Greensand Ridge.*
- *The long distance views from clearings on the southern scarp slope that provide a strong sense of elevation and contribute to scenic quality."*

Sevenoaks Greensand Ridge

The key characteristics of LCA 10b – *Sevenoaks Western Chart* align with the description set out in the LHD in relation to '2. *Sevenoaks Greensand Ridge*', within which the Site is located, confirming this area as a well wooded landscape with a mosaic of heaths and pasture. The key characteristics of this area are described as [inter alia]:

- *"Extensive, often dense, deciduous and coniferous woodlands.*
- *Heathy commons.*
- *Small orchards.*
- *Magnificent views across the Low Weald.*
- *Small pastures divided by lines of mature trees and species-rich hedgerows.*
- *Ragstone buildings and walls.*
- *Occasional cobnut groves or platts.*
- *Split chestnut post and rail fencing and chestnut-paling"*

A copy of 2. *Sevenoaks Greensand Ridge* description and map is included in **Appendix 6** for reference.

Sevenoaks South-west

The LSA reflects similar landscape characteristics in its description of area S3. *Sevenoaks south-west*, which forms part of LCA) 10b – *Sevenoaks Western Chart*. It records [inter alia]:

"Physical character

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The undulating nature of the area and presence of some steep slopes indicate a higher sensitivity to development. The landform is overlain by a variable scale landscape pattern of fields (mostly pasture, some arable) and woodlands (many ancient) and wooded commons which also increase sensitivity. The arable fields are generally less sensitive as they are less characteristic of the Cherts than other landscape features.

Settlement form & edge

This area wraps around the south-western edge of Sevenoaks, which comprises various 20th century estates and is very well enclosed by high hedgerows with trees or woodland. The edge is therefore not particularly sensitive in this respect, nor particularly in need of improvement. There are many scattered large houses in woodland beyond the settlement edge with a rural character, which increase sensitivity to dense development in these areas.

Settlement setting

Although the rural nature of the landscape and its features, particularly the woodland and commons, are valued in their own right and as a setting to Sevenoaks, the area does not form an important backdrop or role in views because there is a well vegetated edge to Sevenoaks which separates it from the wider landscape in this direction. Neither does the area provide a role in separating settlements.

Visual character

The area has a lot of woodland and high hedges which provides a sense of enclosure and reduces sensitivity to built development. However, there are some elevated ridges and hills that increase sensitivity.

Perceptual qualities

This is a highly rural landscape with moderately dark skies and a high scenic value which indicate a higher sensitivity to built development. There are modern human influences on the very edges of Sevenoaks, along Britains Lane which reduce sensitivity locally.

Historic character

The HLC indicates that this area comprises a mixture of pre-1810 woodland, pre-19th century copses, scattered settlement with paddocks, irregular fields with straight boundaries, small rectilinear fields with wavy boundaries, commons and assarts. The areas of ancient woodland, commons and assarts are particularly sensitive in terms of historic character. There are also a couple of listed buildings that would increase sensitivity to new development in these areas."

The LSA provides a more detailed description of the landscape to the west of Sevenoaks, and highlights its predominately rural character, however, it does indicate that this area is less typical of the wider 'charts'; has a high degree of enclosure; and is influenced by the settlement edge.

The LSA states that the overall sensitivity of the landscape to residential development is medium-high due to the highly rural character, although it is noted that land along the settlement edge of Sevenoaks it likely to be less sensitive:

"Areas with lower sensitivity would be the areas of flat land well enclosed by trees on the modern edges of Sevenoaks while areas of higher sensitivity would include elevated hills and ridges including the scarptop, areas of common and areas that are disconnected from the settlement edge."

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The study also notes that there is a well vegetated edge to Sevenoaks which separates it from the wider landscape; this area plays no role in providing separation between settlements; and that land to the west of the A21 Sevenoaks bypass has not been assessed as the road forms a physical barrier within the landscape. All these judgements this would suggest that the land to the east of the A21 is closely associated with the urban area of Sevenoaks.

Sensitivity

It is assessed that, as a result of the Site's location within the Kents Downs AONB (a nationally designated landscape), the LCA would be of a High Value.

Fieldwork has confirmed that while the landscape has a predominantly rural character, the degree of enclosure around the Site and proximity / influence of the existing built up area is such that it is judged that the intrinsic and prevailing characteristics of the wider LCA would not be discernibly changed through the introduction of an additional area of development (circa 2.34ha). As such the landscape susceptibility would be at most of a Medium susceptibility.

Combining value and susceptibility results in a of **High – Medium Landscape Sensitivity**.

Assessment

Large-scale effects would be confined to the Site and its immediate context. It is judged that whilst landscape proposals (as set out in **Section 5.0**) would retain and enhance existing vegetation on the Site's boundaries and create new areas of green space around the peripheries of the Site (such that the Proposed Development would reflect some of the key characteristics of the wider landscape), there would remain a notable change from a field of rough grassland pasture to new area of development. In addition, while over time the Proposed Development would become more integrated into its surroundings, there would not be any discernible difference between effects during the period immediately following completion (Medium-term) and Permanently.

Permanent effects would affect a Limited extent of the overall LCA, resulting in effects of a **Medium Magnitude**, which are judged to be **Moderate**. Effects would be **Adverse** owing to the change from a field of rough grassland pasture to new housing, albeit the Site would relate well to, and be characteristic of, the existing developed edge of Sevenoaks; would not extend into the more rural landscape to the west or south of the Site; and would not disrupt any intervisibility with the wider countryside, with the Site and its immediate surroundings being enclosed by woodland and built form.

Beyond the extent of the Site and its immediate context, effects on landscape character (in the Medium-term following completion and Permanently) would decrease to a Negligible-scale, **Negligible Magnitude**, **Minimal Significance**. Effects are judged to be **Neutral**, as there would be limited intervisibility between the wider LCA and the Proposed Development. The intrinsic and prevailing characteristics of the landscape would not be discernibly affected through the introduction of the Proposed Development, and whilst views from further afield might be possible, the Proposed Development would be perceived as part of the existing settlement; would sit at a similar elevation to the nearest existing properties; and would not extend Sevenoaks substantially into the wider rural landscape.

6.2.2. Local Townscape Character: Sevenoaks Residential Character Area Assessment (2012)

Figure 5 shows that the Site lies adjacent to the following two individual TCAs, as identified by the SRCAA: 'H01. Hopgarden Lane Area' and 'B08. Ashgrove Road'

Hopgarden Lane

H01' characteristics are described as follows [inter alia]:

"... Oak Lane and Ashgrove Road are narrow, undulating and winding tree-lined lanes with no footways creating an informal rural character. Hedges and trees about the lanes and development is generally well hidden by vegetation and narrow entrances. The curved, narrow, verdant lanes have a strong sense of enclosure. The character of the lanes is unified by the verdant landscape framework and the discrete appearance of buildings. The north western side of Oak Lane is part of the setting of the Kippington Conservation Area which is characterised by trees and shrubs which screen views of the houses from the road. Development is set closer to the road and is slightly more prominent along the northern part of Oak Lane..."

Locally Distinctive Positive Features include:

- *"Narrow and winding tree and hedge lined lanes with no footways or single footway create an informal rural character and a strong sense of enclosure*
- *Large individually designed mostly 2 storey detached houses are well spaced and set well back from the road behind hedged and treed front gardens*
- *Buildings are generally well screened by vegetation and narrow entrances and generally have a minimal impact on the street scene*
- *The character of the lanes is unified by the verdant landscape framework and the discrete appearance of buildings"*

Negative Features include:

- *"Loss of mature hedge boundaries to the back edge of pavement, wide access openings or substantial paved areas adversely affect the character of the lanes*
- *Where visible, the introduction of bulky garage buildings to the front of the house towards the front of the building curtilage can adversely affect the character of the area*
- *Urbanisation of the lanes by kerbs, fencing or walls, street signs, lighting and overhead wires."*

Ashgrove Road

B08 is described as follows [inter alia]:

"Ashgrove Road and Oak Lane have the character of rural lanes and are narrow and curving with no pavements. They are strongly enclosed by high hedges and trees. The three pairs of semi-detached flat fronted rendered properties of uniform design form a cohesive group. They are set above the road behind stone retaining walls, hedges and planting that maintain the rural character of the lane. The painted rendered flat elevations, pantiled hipped roofs with chimneys, distinctive brick porches and sills contribute to a cottage character, which is enhanced by the informal front gardens and ragstone retaining walls. Long views are prevented by the curving lanes and vegetation but there is a vista of the listed building at the junction."

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Locally Distinctive Positive Features include:

- *“Rural lane character of Oak Lane and Ashgrove Road, enclosed by hedges and trees*
- *Cottage style semi-detached interwar properties form a cohesive group due to even roofline, repeated designs, colours and materials*
- *Informal boundaries including ragstone retaining walls and hedges. Landscaped front gardens*
- *Individually designed detached properties*
- *Vista of listed building at junction”*

No negative features are identified.

Sensitivity

The SRCAA does not provide a sensitivity rating in relation to its character areas. It is judged that as B08 and H01 do not lie within the extent of any designated landscape, they would be of Community Value.

The susceptibility to change is judged to be Medium, as whilst residential development would not be uncommon adjoining existing areas of townscape and it is considered that that there would be little change to the character of Ashgrove Road, it is acknowledged that the Proposed Development has the potential to change the ‘landscape’ character of the settlement edge. Therefore, it is assessed that the character areas of SCRAA would be of a **Medium – Low Landscape Sensitivity**.

Assessment

Effects of the character of the two character areas – B08 and H01 – would be similar nature and affect similar extents. From the edges of each character area that abut the Site (B08 to the north and H01 to the east), there would be a change to the immediate setting as a result of the Proposed Development, however, it is acknowledged that there would remain a wooded backdrop in place and an overall sense of enclosure / separation from the wider countryside.

Large-scale effects would occur from the edges of the character areas where they abut the Site. It is judged that whilst the Proposed Development (as set out in **Section 5.0**) have been designed to be well integrated into the landscape and setback from Ashgrove Road, there would remain a notable change from a field of rough grassland pasture to new area of development, especially where the new entrance is proposed.

It is judged that whilst Proposed Development would become more integrated into its surroundings over time as landscape proposals establish, there would not be any discernible difference between effects during the period immediately following completion (Medium-term) and Permanently.

Permanent effects would affect a Limited extent of the overall character area, resulting in effects of a **Medium Magnitude**, which are judged to be **Slight**. Effects would **Adverse** owing to the change from a field of rough grassland pasture to new housing, albeit the Proposed Development would relate well to, and be characteristic of, the existing developed edge of Sevenoaks; and visibility of residential properties is not uncommon in exiting views.

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Beyond the areas of the character areas that abut the Site, effects would decrease to a Negligible-scale, **Negligible Magnitude**, **Minimal Significance** and be **Neutral**, as there would be limited intervisibility between the wider character areas and the Proposed Development. The intrinsic and prevailing characteristics of the townscape would not be discernibly affected through the introduction of the Proposed Development, and whilst views from further afield might be possible, the Proposed Development would be perceived as part of the existing settlement; would sit at a similar elevation to the nearest existing properties; and would not extend Sevenoaks substantially into the wider rural landscape.

6.2.3. Settlement form and context

The Site is located adjacent to the existing settlement of Sevenoaks, neighbouring residential properties along Ashgrove Road and Oak Lane. Within the vicinity of the Site; following properties have been identified:

- Three large properties – Sandown, Acorn Cottage and The Pines – are set back from Ashgrove Road. They are accessed via a private road from Ashgrove Road opposite the Site. A further four large properties are located on the eastern side of the Ashgrove Road, to the north-east from the Site.
- The neighbouring house on Ashgrove Road (Larches), to north of the Site, comprises a large garden with mature vegetation that abuts the Site. Further north, a row of semi-detached homes is set back from the Oak Lane with verdant front gardens.
- A listed building (Cross Key Cottages) is located approximately 400m from the Site, close the junction between Ashgrove Road and Oak Lane.
- At the time of this assessment, three large residential properties are in construction on neighbouring land accessed from Oak Lane to the north of the Site (previously known as Hyde Cottage).
- There are residential houses south of the Site. Two large properties (Woodside and Ashgrove Place) are accessed via the nearby Byway. There are also residential houses on higher ground south of the Site accessed from Oak Lane.

Whilst the Proposed Development would change the existing land use; the character of the Site; and extend the existing settlement further east into the surrounding countryside, it would not alter the overall settlement form or context of Sevenoaks.

The Proposed Development would sit within a context of the existing built development that currently forms the western edge of Sevenoaks, and with it in place, there would remain a 'rural fringe' to the town, with agricultural fields remaining prevalent immediately beyond the edge of the Site to the north, south and west. The Proposed Development would be visually well-contained within the wider landscape and would not be a prominent or uncharacteristic feature; would be perceived as part of the existing settlement of Sevenoaks; and would have no discernible impact on the wider appreciation or character of the countryside.

6.3. Effects on Visual Receptors

6.3.1. Visual Aids

Annotated photographs are shown on figures supporting this LVIA. The method of presentation for each viewpoint has been informed by Landscape Institute Technical Note 06/19 'Visual representation'. The viewpoint description, description of effects and scale of effect for each viewpoint (see **Figure 7** for locations) is set out on the relevant photograph. The scale of effect at each viewpoint is summarised in **Table 3** below:

Table 3: Representative viewpoints

Viewpoint Reference & Location	Distance, direction	Scale of effect <i>Adverse / Neutral / Positive</i>	
		Medium- term	Permanent
Viewpoint 1 – Ashgrove Road	10m North-east	Medium-scale <i>Adverse</i>	Medium-scale <i>Adverse</i>
Viewpoint 2 – Oak Lane	15m West	Medium-scale <i>Neutral</i>	Medium-scale <i>Neutral</i>
Viewpoint 3 – Public Bridleway (0221/SR217/1)	175m South-west	Negligible-scale <i>Neutral</i>	Negligible-scale <i>Neutral</i>
Viewpoint 4 – Byway (0221/SU36/1)	45m South	Small-scale <i>Neutral</i>	Negligible-scale <i>Neutral</i>
Viewpoint 5 – Greensand Way, Knole Park	1.7km North-east	Negligible-scale <i>Neutral</i>	Negligible-scale <i>Neutral</i>
Viewpoint 6 – Public Bridleway (0058/SR186/1)	1.6km North-west	Negligible-scale <i>Neutral</i>	Negligible-scale <i>Neutral</i>
Viewpoint 7 – Cross Keys	155m North	Negligible-scale <i>Neutral</i>	Negligible-scale <i>Neutral</i>

Each of the viewpoints is a 'sample' of the potential effects, representing a wide range of receptors – including not only those actually at the viewpoint, but also those nearby, at a similar distance and/or direction.

From these viewpoints it can be seen that:

The extent of Medium-scale visual effects, where the Proposed Development would form a major alteration to key elements, features, qualities and characteristics of the view such that the baseline will be fundamentally changed, would be limited to locations within or immediately adjacent to the Site, where the Proposed Development would be visible above or through intervening vegetation.

Beyond the boundaries of the Site, within its immediate context (but not adjacent to the Site), effects would reduce from a Large-scale to Small-scale, particularly once the proposed planting within and along the Site's boundaries have established, breaking up the built form and filtering / screening visibility of the Proposed Development.

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Beyond the immediate context of the Site, the Proposed Development would either be screened from visual receptors by vegetation, landform and / or buildings within the landscape, or the Proposed Development would form a very limited change in views, being seen in the context of existing residential properties on the edge of Sevenoaks. Effects beyond the Site would reduce to a Negligible-scale.

6.3.2. Visual Receptor Groups

This assessment focuses on effects on groups of visual receptors, incorporating effects on views from public spaces and streets within settlements (or around the houses in areas with isolated dwellings), and the routes and accessible landscape in the surrounding countryside. Residents and visitors within these communities are assessed to be of **High – Medium sensitivity**.

The assessment of effects on settlements focuses on the visual amenity of public spaces, though views from groups of dwellings will also be noted in the descriptions. Effects on private residential amenity are a separate matter, and only require assessment when a development is likely to have effects over the Residential Visual Amenity Threshold referred to in LI TGN 02/2019 (as set out within **Section 2.4** and **Appendix 3**), which is not the case in respect of this development.

Visual Receptor Group 1 – Visual Receptors within the Site's immediate context

This receptor group comprises residents and users of publicly accessible areas, rights of way, footways, and local roads from area within the Site's immediate context (up to approximately 100m). It includes Ashgrove Road, Oak Lane and the PRoW to the south of the Site (ref. 0221/SU36/1). Views are represented by Viewpoints 1, 2 and 3 (**Figures 8.1, 8.2 and 8.4**)

The greatest effects within this receptor groups would be experienced from Ashgrove Road and Oak Lane, from sections of these roads that run alongside the eastern and western boundaries of the Site. Viewpoints 1 and 2 represent available views.

From these sections of the local roads adjacent to the Site, views would be possible above and through existing boundary vegetation (the majority of which would be retained and enhanced as part of landscape proposals), especially during the winter months when vegetation is out-of-leaf. Where the new entrance is proposed along Ashgrove Road, clear views into the Proposed Development would be possible.

The design of the Proposed Development ensures that where visual receptors pass closest to the newly built components within the Site, it would be offset (in so far as possible) from the roads to make space available to propose new vegetation planting (hedgerows, shrub and / or trees) in combination with the enhancement of retained vegetation. Whilst visibility to the built components of the Proposed Development would remain, its design seeks to integrate it into its surroundings as sympathetically as possible through appropriate layout and design.

Effects would be at their greatest upon completion before proposed planting has established. Views to new buildings pass retained / proposed vegetation would most apparent during this initial period, albeit given the close proximity of these receptors to the Proposed Development, it is judged that effects would remain the comparable in the long-term.

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Permanent visual effects on these visual receptors adjacent to the Site would be Medium-scale, affecting a Limited extent of the receptor group. The resultant visual effects would be of a **Medium – Low Magnitude, Moderate** and **Neutral**. Whilst existing views would change in the immediate foreground; it is judged that residential properties on the edge of Sevenoaks form part of the existing view when looking in the direction of the Site. In addition, no long-distance views would be lost as intervening vegetation and landform presently curtailed long-range views out from the vicinity of the Site towards the wider countryside.

Beyond locations adjacent to the Site (up to approximately 100m), from Ashgrove Road and Oak Lane; or the PRoW to the south of the Site (ref. 0221/SU36/1), the degree of visibility of the Proposed Development would reduce.

Fieldwork has shown that the narrow and winding character of Ashgrove Road and Oak Lane, in combination with level changes and vegetation in the intervening landscape, would reduce visibility of the Proposed Development with distance. Beyond approximately 100m, fieldwork has shown that there would be little to no visibility. Similarly, from the PRoW to the south of the Site (ref. 0221/SU36/1) (represented by Viewpoint 4), fieldwork has shown that the combination of the rising landform in the foreground and existing / proposed vegetation along the Site's southern boundary, would restrict views to the southernmost properties within the Site.

It is assessed that for visual receptors within approximately 100m of the Site, effects would be Small-scale at most. Where views are possible, it is judged that whilst existing views would change as a result of the Proposed Development, the proposed buildings would be similar in scale and massing of existing residential buildings already seen in existing views; be seen within the existing context of the developed edge of Sevenoaks; and would be perceived as a continuation of the settlement of Sevenoaks.

Effects would be at their greatest upon completion before proposed planting has established where views to the new buildings are possible, beyond intervening vegetation. Effects during the period completion (Medium-term) would be of Small-scale, affecting a Limited extent of the receptor group. Resultant effects would be **Negligible Magnitude** and **Minimal**. Effects are judged to be **Neutral** as existing views presently comprise a degree of visibility of residential properties on the edge of Sevenoaks (as seen at Viewpoint 4) and the Proposed Development would be perceived as part of the existing settlement of Sevenoaks.

Over time as proposed planting established, and screens the Proposed Development to a greater degree, Permanent effects would reduce to a Negligible-scale, affecting a Limited extent of the receptor group. Resultant effects would be **Negligible Magnitude, Minimal** and **Neutral**, as there would be little to no visibility of the Proposed Development.

6.3.3. Road and Rail

No key road or railway routes have been identified within the study area as part of the baseline study that merited further detailed consideration in the assessment of effects.

6.3.4. Long Distance Walking Routes

No Long Distance Walking Routes have been identified within the study area as part of the baseline study that merited further detailed consideration in the assessment of effects.

6.3.5. National, Regional and Local Cycle Routes

No National, Regional or Local Cycles routes have been identified within the 2km study area.

6.3.6. Accessible and Recreational Landscapes

No accessible or recreational landscapes have been identified within the study area as part of the baseline study that merited further detailed consideration in the assessment of effects.

6.3.7. Specific Viewpoints

No specific viewpoints have been identified within the study area.

6.4. Effects on Designated Landscapes

6.4.1. Kent Downs AONB

Figure 3 shows the Site's locations within the extent of the Kents Downs AONB, a nationally designated landscape that is considered to be of High Value.

The AONB Management Plan records the special components, characteristics and qualities of the Kent Downs AONB that define its 'natural beauty'. The special components, characteristics and qualities (hereafter referred to as 'special qualities') are set out below [inter alia]:

Natural Beauty Indicators of the Kent Downs AONB

Dramatic landform and views; a distinctive landscape character

"The Kent Downs dramatic and diverse topography is based on the underlying geology. Key features comprise impressive south-facing steep slopes (scarps) of chalk and greensand; scalloped and hidden dry valleys, especially valued where they have a downland character; expansive plateaux; broad, steep-sided river valleys, and the dramatic, wild and iconic white cliffs and foreshore.

Breath-taking, long-distance panoramas are offered, often across open countryside, estuaries and the sea from the scarp, cliffs and plateaux. The dip slope dry valleys and river valleys provide more intimate and enclosed vistas.

The character of the Kent Downs is much valued; it arises from a distinctive, recognisable and pattern of elements in the landscape that make the Kent Downs particular and special as well as significant nationally and internationally."

Biodiversity-rich habitats

"The unique landscapes of the Kent Downs create and contain a rich and distinctive biodiversity of local and often national or international importance. This landscape provides a home to several species that are largely or wholly confined to the Kent Downs in Britain. Habitats found in the Kent

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Downs include chalk grassland and chalk scrub; woodlands (ancient woodland, veteran trees and wood pasture), traditional orchards and cobnut platts, chalk cliffs and the foreshore, chalk streams and wet pasture, ponds and spring lines; heath and acid grassland. Hedgerows and trees outside woodlands are key features of the landscape and serve an important wildlife function along with networks of linear features of shaws, flower-rich field margins and road verges.

The wildlife of the farmed landscape is special in the Kent Downs. Many key habitats are farmed and the Downs support some of the most important arable weed communities in Britain."

Farmed landscape

"A long-established tradition of mixed farming has helped create and maintain the natural beauty of the Kent Downs. The pastoral scenery is a particularly valued part of the landscape. Farming covers around 64% of the AONB. Disconnected 'ribbons' of permanent grassland (shaves) are found along the steep scarp, valley sides, and on less-productive land having been created by grazing. Locally concentrated areas of orchards, cobnut plats (nut orchards), hop gardens other horticultural production are also present, their regular striate form can enhance the rise and fall of the land, increasingly widespread vineyards add to this ordered character."

Woodland and trees

"The Kent Downs is one of Britain's most wooded landscapes. Broadleaf and mixed woodland cover around 23% of the Kent Downs and frame the upper slopes of the scarp, dry valleys and plateaux tops. Almost 70% of the woodlands are ancient woodland meaning they have been continuously present at least since at least 1600; they support nationally important woodland plant and animal species. Large areas of sweet chestnut coppice are present throughout the Downs. Woodland is a much-valued component of the landscape, the sights, changing colours, smells and sounds adding to the perceptual qualities of the landscape.

Individual, hedgerow, fine and ancient trees outside woodlands are a most important, characteristic and sometimes dramatic element of the landscape."

A rich legacy of historic and cultural heritage

"...Fields of varying shapes and sizes and ancient wood-banks and hedges, set within networks of droveways and sunken lanes have produced a rich historic mosaic, which is the rural landscape of today. Architectural distinctiveness is ever present in the scattered villages and farmsteads and oast houses, barns and other characteristic agricultural buildings, farmsteads, churches and historic country houses. The diverse range of local materials used, which includes flint, chalk, ragstone, timber, brick and peg tile, contributes to the character, colour, tone and texture of the countryside..."

The Heritage Coasts

"The Heritage Coasts either side of Dover, include the shoreline, marine flora and fauna cliffs, heritage features and adjacent downland. The White Cliffs form part of our national identity and display internationally important geological exposures, they form a soaring land and seascape of vast horizons of sea and sky extending westwards to the subtle crumbling Greensand and Clay cliffs of Folkestone.

The wildlife of the Heritage Coasts is internationally important, the clifftops consisting of nationally important chalk grassland and scrub, the cliff-faces supporting important breeding sea bird colonies

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including Fulmars, Rock Pipits, Lesser-black backed Gulls and the only Kent population of Kittiwakes. Seabirds wheeling high in the sky connect the sea and sky."

Geology and natural resources

"The imposing landform and special characteristics of the Kent Downs is underpinned by its geology. This is also the basis for the considerable natural capital and natural resources which benefit society. These include the soils which support an important farming sector and can sequester carbon; soil represent and is important biodiversity resource in its own right. The water and the water resources which support rivers teeming with wildlife and offering enchanting landscapes. Hidden below the chalk is a significant aquifer providing 75% of Kent's drinking water and feeding the much-valued chalk streams of the Downs. Fresh, clean air is experienced across the AONB and the vegetation patterns of the Downs are effective at removing air pollution."

Tranquillity and remoteness

"Much of the AONB provides surprisingly tranquil and remote countryside – offering dark night skies, space, beauty and peace. Simply seeing a natural landscape, hearing birdsong, seeing and hearing the sea, watching stars at night or 'bathing' in woodland are important perceptual qualities of the AONB."

Additional 'Natural Beauty Indicators' of the Kent Downs AONB

In a section titled 'What is special about the Kent Downs' the Kent Downs AONB website⁴ refers to the majority of the 'natural beauty indicators' and 'other factors' described in the AONB Management Plan, with additional details provided in some cases. An additional category of what can be reasonably considered as a 'natural beauty indicator' is provided, as follows [inter alia]:

Water and wetlands

"Rivers, marshes and ponds are important components of the landscape of the Kent Downs and also provide valuable habitat for wildlife."

Rivers, streams, springs and ditches include a great variety of habitat and landscape types and are important features of the Kent Downs. The Kent Downs is crossed by three major rivers, the Darent, Medway and Stour which carve their way through the Kent Downs landscape."

Marsh can be defined as land that is waterlogged for at least part of the year. Marsh land is not common in the Kent Downs AONB because of the free-draining nature of much of the underlying rock such as chalk. However, small areas of marsh can be found which are important for wildlife and contribute to the variety of the landscape. Marshy areas can be found at the base of the Downs and depending on the soil type, are referred to marsh, fen or bog. A great deal of marshland has been lost, having been drained and ploughed for agriculture. This is particularly the case on Romney Marsh, a small area of which is included in the Kent Downs."

Ponds are generally uncommon in the AONB because of the underlying nature of the chalk with most found in the Low Weald. Approximately 75% of ponds in Britain have been lost in the last 100 years mainly because of drainage and land intensification. Yet ponds are vital for wildlife and an important feature in the landscape."

⁴ <https://kentdowns.org.uk/about-us/special-characteristics/> (accessed 19 May 2022)

Other Components/Special Qualities of the Kent Downs AONB

While not defined as characteristics and qualities of the landscape, the social and economic components of the Kent Downs are vital to the communities of Kent, the Kent Downs and beyond and key to its future conservation and enhancement.

Vibrant communities

“The Kent Downs is a living, working landscape shaped and managed by people. The most up to date population estimate as shows a total population of 96,000. While changing in nature, many of the Kent Downs communities are strong and vibrant, assertively seeking to conserve and enhance the place that they live in. Surrounding the AONB are large, rapidly growing and increasingly diverse urban communities, the Kent Downs offer a greatly valued landscape of peace, beauty and space to breath”

Access, enjoyment and understanding

“The Kent Downs is an easily accessible and charming landscape well provided with access opportunities; well over 1 million people live within a kilometre of the AONB boundary. There is considerable demand for access and recreation in the Kent Downs and providing this in a way which supports the special characteristics and qualities of the AONB is an increasingly important but challenging task; many Site managers are reporting ‘over-visiting’ with Sites being at and beyond their capacity on many occasions.

The AONB provides a public rights of way network four times as dense as the national average and there is a high relative density of bridleways and byways. Active user groups help to promote the sustainable management and use of the AONB for quiet countryside recreation.

Access to the Kent Downs AONB particularly through walking, cycling and riding provide demonstrable benefits to health and well-being at the same time visiting can support the local economy and services.

Improving the understanding and enjoyment of the AONB is an important task, without this the landscape may not be fully recognised, valued or enjoyed and its future conservation and enhancement may not be assured.”

The AONB Management Plan sets out in greater details the ‘special qualities’ of the Kent Downs AONB. Extracts from the AONB Management Plan are included in **Appendix 6** for reference.

As set out in **Section 4.3.1**, there would be little to no visibility of the Proposed Development beyond the immediate context of the Site. Resultant effects on landscape and visual resources, as set out in **Sections 6.2** and **6.3**, would not be widespread beyond the Site’s boundaries or local context. It is judged that potential effects on the Kent Downs’ AONB’s recorded special qualities would spread to a similar extent, affecting a Limited area of the overall AONB. The degree to which the special qualities could be affected, as a result of the Proposed Development, are considered below.

Sensitivity & Scale of Effect

Dramatic landform and views; a distinctive landscape character

The Proposed Development would result in the loss of a single field of rough grassland pasture; localised changes to the landform; and the removal of existing vegetation to

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accommodate access and visibility splays. This would affect the character of the existing field and, to a degree, the sunken lane of Ashgrove Road. Removed boundary vegetation would open views to and from the Site from the neighbouring suburban and rural landscapes, and visibility of the wooded ridgeline in the vicinity of Knole Park would be potentially obscured from elevated landform within the Site.

Whilst the Proposed Development would result in the loss of some of the recorded special qualities, these would be limited to the Site and its immediate context. The Site itself does not exhibit many of the recorded special qualities, being relatively flat without any dramatic landform features, such as steep scarp slopes, dry valleys, expansive plateaux, steep sided river valleys or coastal cliffs. Views from the Site are relatively contained by adjacent development and vegetation – the northern extents of the Site do not offer any long-distance panoramas, nor form part of a panorama visible from elsewhere. Views from the southern extents of the Site, upon on the Site's elevated landform, towards the distant wooded ridgeline in the vicinity of Knole Park would be potentially obscured, although it is important to note that such views are not presently accessible to the public.

As assessed in **Section 6.2**, beyond the Site's boundaries, there would be limited intervisibility between the wider landscape and the Proposed Development, and effects would be minimal. The intrinsic and prevailing characteristics of the landscape would not be discernibly affected through the introduction of the Proposed Development, and whilst views from further afield might be possible, the Proposed Development would be perceived as part of the existing settlement; would sit at a similar elevation to the nearest existing properties; and would not extend Sevenoaks substantially into the wider rural landscape. The Proposed Development will ensure – in order to avoid and mitigate any adverse effects on the 'special qualities' of the AONB – that the following measures are implemented:

- Avoidance of any significant changes to the topography of the Site;
- Minimise (in so far as possible) the impact on the sunken lane characteristics of Ashgrove Road through the careful placement of the Site entrance at a location where the banking is lower; ensure maintenance of the planted boundaries behind the visibility splays to reflect the existing character of the lane; and simplify the form of the entrance as much as possible; and
- Conserve the visual enclosure of the Site and create a new area of publicly accessible space that permits views from elevated landform toward the wooded ridgeline in the vicinity of Knole Park.

It is assessed that this special quality would be of a Low susceptibility to the Proposed Development. Combining value and susceptibility, this special quality would be of a **Medium sensitivity**.

Effects on this special quality would be of a Small-scale.

Biodiversity-rich habitats

An assessment of the potential impacts of the Proposed Development on biodiversity and ecology is set out in the **Preliminary Ecological Appraisal Report**, which has been submitted as part of this OPA, and should be read in conjunction with this section. With regard with the AONB's landscape and its associated ecology and habitat, the Site does not

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contain any biodiversity designations or distinctive / valued habitats such as species rich chalk grassland, chalk scrub, heath, acid grassland, ancient woodland, veteran trees and wood pasture), traditional orchards, wet pasture, heath and acid grassland. A small area of broadleaved woodland is located in the south-eastern corner of the Site. Open areas support a mixture of native and non-native woodland species including bluebell. A small amount of deadwood was recorded in the form of a dead stump. The key habitat feature on Site are the hedgerows (Habitat of Principal Importance), which are located along the Site boundaries. Hedgerows and trees outside woodlands are noted in the AONB Management Plan as serving an important wildlife function. A field pond surrounded by trees and scrubby vegetation is located within the Site, albeit its ecological interest is limited due to its small size, poor condition and transitional status⁵.

The Proposed Development would result in the loss of established vegetation and habitat features within and defining the Site – notably the pond, trees, hedgerows and shrubby vegetation. As such, the Proposed Development will ensure – in order to avoid and mitigate any adverse effects on the ‘special qualities’ of the AONB – that the following measures are implemented:

- Create a new pond as part of a green infrastructure network within the Site, with the objective of increasing habitat availability for species groups such as amphibians and invertebrates. The ponds should be profiled to incorporate a variety of depths, with shallow sloping sides providing access points for wildlife, and planted with appropriate native vegetation;
- Retain and protect all hedgerows during construction to maintain their ecological functions;
- Create new sections of species-rich native hedgerow along the southern boundary;
- Retain and enhance the native scrub along the northern boundary and create a stepped mosaic of habitat. These features would provide connectivity throughout the Site and with woodland habitats in the wider area and create new ‘commuting’ routes and cover for a range of protected species / species groups;
- Removal of boundary vegetation to be kept to a minimum;
- Seek opportunities to create new habitats, such as species rich grassland and woodland should be incorporated into the design of the proposals, with particular attention to connecting habitats and providing access to nature and natural systems for local residents as part of a green infrastructure strategy for the Site;
- Existing and new habitats, including woodlands, should be managed to enhance their biodiversity value in the long term;
- Tree and shrub planting should be designed to provide nesting sites for birds and food resources for a range of species. Plant stock will be sourced from a local supplier and ensure it is of local provenance;
- Habitat piles will be created within areas of retained or created vegetation at the edges of the Site close to the woodland and hedgerows. These will provide additional hibernation and shelter resources for wildlife;

⁵ Urban Edge Environmental Consulting (April 2022) Technical Note (Ashgrove Road, Sevenoaks)

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- Bat and bird boxes should be installed across the buildings and existing semi-mature / mature trees within the hedgerows and woodland;

It is assessed that this special quality would be of a Medium susceptibility to the Proposed Development. Combining value and susceptibility, this special quality would be of a **High – Medium sensitivity**.

Effects on this special quality would be of a Medium-scale.

Farmed landscape

The Proposed Development would result in the loss of a single field of rough grassland pasture but would not result in the loss of any orchards, cobnut plots (nut orchards), hop gardens or other horticultural production. The Proposed Development would offer the opportunities for new residents to grow their own food on-site, as part of proposals.

The Proposed Development will not fundamentally alter the pattern of the farmed landscape, and it is assessed that the susceptibility would be Low. Combining value and susceptibility, this special quality would be of a **Medium sensitivity**.

Effects on this special quality would be of a Small-scale.

Woodland and trees

The Site's existing fabric (comprising a small area of woodland in the south-east corner and hedgerow trees) would be retained in so far as possible, save where access to the Site is required. A Construction and Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) would include control measures to safeguard retained landscape features within and in close proximity to the Site. In addition, the Proposed Development proposes to enhance existing vegetation on-site, and implemented new areas of planting, which would improve habitat connectivity both within and beyond the Site and ensure the long-term resilience of ecosystems within the AONB.

The Proposed Development would not change the pattern and distribution woodland within the AONB and would enhance the biodiversity value of existing woodland through improved habitat networks. It is assessed that the susceptibility would be Low. Combining value and susceptibility, this special quality would be of a **Medium sensitivity**.

Effects on this special quality would be of a Negligible-scale.

A rich legacy of historic and cultural heritage

The Proposed Development would not affect any droveways / sunken lanes within the AONB's extent; and proposals indicate that the architectural response the scheme would respond to is local context, respecting its local distinctiveness in design terms.

The Proposed Development would result in the loss of a single field of rough grassland pasture and affect a local sunken road Ashgrove Road which lies adjacent to the Site in the setting of the AONB. Ashgrove Road exhibits (in part) characteristics of a sunken lane, and as a result of vegetation removal to permit access into the Site, some potential impacts would arise. The Proposed Development would not significantly affect any nearby designated or non-designated heritage assets.

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The Proposed Development will ensure – in order to avoid and mitigate any adverse effects on the ‘special qualities’ of the AONB – that the following measures are implemented:

- Retain and manage boundary vegetation, notably on the south-easter spur of the Site; and
- Minimise (in so far as possible) the impact on the sunken lane characteristics of Ashgrove Road through the careful placement of the Site entrance at a location where the banking is lower; ensure maintenance of the planted boundaries behind the visibility splays to reflect the existing character of the lane; and simplify the form of the entrance as much as possible.

It is judged that, whilst the Proposed Development would not change the pattern and distribution of fields within the AONB, nor would it significantly alter the character or pattern of droveways / sunken lanes within the setting of the AONB, the susceptibility would be Medium. Combining value and susceptibility, this special quality would be of a **High – Medium sensitivity**.

Effects on this special quality would be of a Small-scale.

The Heritage Coasts

The Site is not located within, or the setting of, a Heritage Coast. Effects on this special quality of the AONB would be Negligible.

Geology and natural resources

The Proposed Development would affect the geology and natural resources within this part of the AONB through its enabling works. Site clearance (including earthworks and vegetation removal) would have the potential to affect the embedded carbon; significant areas of impermeable surfaces will limit groundwater infiltration; and the removal of trees and vegetation along the boundaries of the Site could increase air pollution locally.

The Proposed Development will ensure – in order to avoid and mitigate any adverse effects on the ‘special qualities’ of the AONB – that the following measures are implemented:

- Reduce cut and fill and manage soils to reduce emissions of embedded carbon.
- Retain existing established vegetation for its embedded carbon.
- Establish areas of open space, SUDs and permeable paving to optimise ground water penetration.
- Retain existing trees and vegetation bordering the Site and plant new trees to contribute to the reduction in air pollution.

It is judged that the Proposed Development would not fundamentally disrupt the geology or natural resources of the AONB, and the susceptibility would be Medium. Combining value and susceptibility, this special quality would be of a **High – Medium sensitivity**.

Effects on this special quality would be of a Small-scale.

Tranquillity and remoteness

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The Proposed Development would increase, marginally, the amount of ambient illumination within the landscape, which would potentially affect the dark night skies of the AONB. However, as set out in **Section 2.7. Assumptions and Limitations**, the Site is located in close proximity to the existing settlement of Sevenoaks and presently is influenced by the ambient illumination from existing and adjacent residential properties within the Site's immediate context. It is anticipated that any additional lighting produced and subsequently experienced by potential receptors would not be dissimilar to the amount of lighting presently experienced within the Site's general vicinity and the wider context of Sevenoaks. The Proposed Development would also potentially affect the presence of bird that are audible from within and adjacent to the Site as a result of vegetation loss within the Site.

The Proposed Development will ensure – in order to avoid and mitigate any adverse effects on the 'special qualities' of the AONB – that the following measures are implemented:

- Seek to retain Ashgrove Road and Oak Lane as dark and well-vegetated routes;
- Minimise light spill from new development; and
- Retain and enhance existing vegetation and create new habitats including for birds.

It is judged that whilst the Proposed Development would not fundamentally disrupt the tranquillity or remoteness of the AONB, the susceptibility would be Medium. Combining value and susceptibility, this special quality would be of a **High – Medium sensitivity**.

Effects on this special quality would be of a Small-scale.

Water and Wetlands

The Proposed Development has the potential to remove the existing pond within the Site, albeit proposals will create a new pond feature as part of the Site's green infrastructure strategy, alongside SUDS and other features that have to potential to enhance the sites biodiversity and amenity value.

It is judged that the Proposed Development would not fundamentally disrupt the water and wetlands of the AONB, and the susceptibility would be Low. Combining value and susceptibility, this special quality would be of a **Medium sensitivity**.

Effects on this additional natural beauty indicator would be of a Negligible-scale.

Vibrant Communities

The Proposed Development would remove an area of farmland immediately adjacent to the suburban edge of Sevenoaks, albeit it is not accessible to the public. The Proposed Development would offer a new opportunity to provide a new and publicly accessible open space, with enhanced biodiversity and amenity interest and that provides a more effective edge to the town and gateway to the rural areas of the Kent Downs AONB.

It is judge that the susceptibility to the Proposed Development would be Low. Combining value and susceptibility, this other component / special quality would be of a **Medium sensitivity**.

Effects on this other component / special quality would be of a Negligible-scale.

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Access, enjoyment and understanding

There is no existing access to the Site, and as such, there is limited potential for the Proposed Development to adversely affect this other component / special quality, and the susceptibility would be Low. Combining value and susceptibility, this other component / special quality would be of a **Medium sensitivity**.

Effects on this other components / special quality would be of a Negligible-scale.

Assessment

The greatest effects, as a result of the Proposed Development, would affect special qualities that are directly associated with the Site, such as: 'dramatic landform and views; distinctive landscape character'; 'biodiversity-rich habitats'; 'farmed landscape'; 'a rich legacy of historic and cultural heritage' and 'tranquillity and remoteness', albeit the Proposed Development would only affect a small number of components within each special quality as a result of the loss of the land and a small amount of vegetation removal.

Permanent effects would affect a Limited the extent of the overall AONB, and would be, at most, of a **Negligible Magnitude** and **Minimal**. Effects would be **Neutral**, in LVIA terms, as the Site does not display many characteristics of the recorded special qualities, falls within a landscape that is closely associated with the existing edge of Sevenoaks; would relate well to, and be characteristic of, the existing developed edge of Sevenoaks; and would not extend into the AONB's landscape to the west or south of the Site. Various mitigation measures, as outlined in the preceding sections, considered and implemented throughout the iterative design process, would also assist in reducing any potential adverse effects on the recorded special qualities of the Kent Downs AONB.

6.5. Summary of Landscape and Visual Effects

Effects on the receptors assessed above are summarised in **Table 4: Summary of Effects**, over page. For receptors where the significance of effects varies, the distribution of effects is summarised.

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Table 4: Summary of Effects

Receptor	Comments	Distance, Direction	Sensitivity	Magnitude	Significance	Positive / Neutral / Adverse
Landscape Character						
LCA 10b. Sevenoaks Western Charts	Effects on landscape character within the Site and its immediate context – <i>Medium-term and Permanent</i>	Site Within	High – Medium	Medium	Moderate	Adverse
	Effects on landscape character beyond the Site’s immediate context – <i>Medium-term and Permanent</i>			Negligible	Minimal	Neutral
	Overall effects on the LCA within the study area – <i>Medium-term and Permanent</i>			Negligible	Minimal	Neutral
B08. Ashgrove Road; and H01. Hopgarden Lane Area	Effects on the character areas, where they adjoin the Site – <i>Medium-term and Permanent</i>	Site adjacent (north and east)	Medium – Low	Medium	Slight	Neutral
	Effects on the character area beyond the edges that abut the Site – <i>Medium-term and Permanent</i>			Negligible	Minimal	Neutral
	Overall effects on the character areas within the study area – <i>Medium-term and Permanent</i>			Negligible	Minimal	Neutral
Visual Receptor Groups						
(1) Visual Receptors within the Site’s immediate context	Ashgrove Road and Oak Lane, from sections of these roads that run alongside the eastern and western boundaries of the Site – <i>Medium-term and Permanent</i>	Site adjacent (east)	High – Medium	Medium – Low	Moderate	Neutral
	Beyond locations adjacent to the Site (up to approximately 100m), from Ashgrove Road and Oak Lane; or the PRow to the south of the Site (ref. 0221/SU36/1) – <i>Medium-term and Permanent</i>	Site adjacent (all directions)		Negligible	Minimal	Neutral

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Receptor	Comments	Distance, Direction	Sensitivity	Magnitude	Significance	Positive / Neutral / Adverse
Road and Rail						
No key road or railway routes have been identified within the study area as part of the baseline study that merited further detailed consideration in the assessment of effects.						
Long Distance Walking Route						
No Long Distance Walking Routes have been identified within the study area as part of the baseline study that merited further detailed consideration in the assessment of effects.						
National and Regional Cycle Routes						
No National, Regional or Local Cycles routes have been identified within the 2km study area.						
Accessible and Recreational Landscape						
No accessible or recreational landscapes have been identified within the study area as part of the baseline study that merited further detailed consideration in the assessment of effects.						
Specific Viewpoints						
No specific viewpoints have been identified within the 2km study area.						
Designated Landscapes						
Kent Downs AONB	<u>Special Qualities of the Kents Down AONB</u>					
	Dramatic landform and view; distinctive landscape character – <i>Medium-term and Permanent</i>	Within Site	Medium	Negligible	Minimal	Neutral
	Biodiversity-rich habitats – <i>Medium-term and Permanent</i>		High – Medium	Medium – Low	Moderate	Neutral
	Farmed landscape – <i>Medium-term and Permanent</i>		Medium	Negligible	Minimal	Neutral
	Woodland and trees – <i>Medium-term and Permanent</i>		Medium	Negligible	Minimal	Neutral

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Receptor	Comments	Distance, Direction	Sensitivity	Magnitude	Significance	Positive / Neutral / Adverse
	A rich legacy of historic and cultural heritage – <i>Medium-term and Permanent</i>		High – Medium	Negligible	Minimal	Neutral
	The Heritage Coasts – <i>Medium-term and Permanent</i>	Beyond Site	Low	Negligible	Minimal	Neutral
	Geology and natural resources – <i>Medium-term and Permanent</i>	Within Site	High – Medium	Negligible	Minimal	Neutral
	Tranquillity and remoteness – <i>Medium-term and Permanent</i>		High – Medium	Negligible	Minimal	Neutral
	<u>Additional natural beauty indicators</u>					
	Water and wetlands – <i>Medium-term and Permanent</i>	Within Site	Negligible	Negligible	Minimal	Neutral
	<u>Other components / special qualities</u>					
	Vibrant Communities – <i>Medium-term and Permanent</i>	Site adjacent (all directions)	Medium	Negligible	Minimal	Neutral
	Access, enjoyment and understanding – <i>Medium-term and Permanent</i>		Medium	Negligible	Minimal	Neutral

7.0 Summary

The LVIA describes the existing landscape character and views; considers their sensitivity to change; identifies the changes likely to arise from the Proposed Development; and provides judgements of the importance of effects on landscape and visual receptors that would arise. The LVIA forms part of a suite of documents supporting the outline planning application for this development proposal.

7.1. Effects on Landscape Character

Effects on landscape character would be at their greatest within the Site and its immediate context, being at most of a **Medium Magnitude** and **Moderate**. It is judged that effects would be **Adverse** owing to the change from a field of rough grassland pasture to new housing, albeit it is acknowledged that the Proposed Development would be seen within the developed context of Sevenoaks and reflective of its townscape character.

Beyond the Site's boundaries and its immediate context, effects (in the Medium-term following completion and Permanently) would reduce with distance due to the limited intervisibility between the Proposed Development and the wider landscape. It has been assessed that within the immediate context of the Site (up to approximately 100m), effects would be of a **Negligible Magnitude** and **Minimal**. In LVIA terms, effects would be **Neutral** as the assessment found that where new buildings would be visible, the existing view already comprises visibility of residential buildings on the edge of Sevenoaks, and it would not be discernibly different as a result of Proposed Development. Effects would reduce over time as landscape proposals establish and further screen and filter of views to the Proposed Development the landscape beyond the Site's boundaries.

Overall, the Proposed Development would affect a comparatively small proportion of a wider landscape character, such that the intrinsic and prevailing characteristics would not be discernibly affected through the introduction of the Proposed Development. Whilst the Proposed Development would add to the existing settlement of Sevenoaks, it would be perceived as part of the existing settlement and reflect the key characteristics of the surrounding area.

7.2. Effects on Visual Receptors

The greatest effects within this receptor groups would be experienced from Ashgrove Road and Oak Lane, from sections of these roads that run alongside the eastern and western boundaries of the Site. From these locations, views to the Proposed Development views would be possible above and through existing boundary vegetation (the majority of which would be retained and enhanced as part of landscape proposals), especially during the winter months when vegetation is out-of-leaf. Where the new entrance is proposed along Ashgrove Road, clear views into the Proposed Development would be possible.

Effects on visual receptors would be, at most, of a **Medium – Low Magnitude** and **Moderate**. Effects would be **Neural** (in LVIA terms) as it has been assessed that whilst existing views would change in the immediate foreground, they would be broadly similar to the existing visibility of residential buildings along the edge of Sevenoaks.

With distance from the Site's boundaries, visual effects would gradually reduce. Effects would be, at most, of a **Negligible Magnitude** and **Minimal**. Effects are judged to be

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Neutral as existing views presently comprise a degree of visibility of residential properties on the edge of Sevenoaks and the Proposed Development would be perceived as part of the existing settlement of Sevenoaks. Over time, as proposed planting establishes and screens / filters views to the Proposed Development to a greater degree, visual effects would reduce.

From further afield, beyond the Site's immediate context, visual effects would rapidly reduce as a result of intervening vegetation, buildings and landform screening views to the Proposed Development. Effects at most would be **Negligible Magnitude**, **Minimal** and **Neutral**.

No key roads or railways; long-distance walking routes; national, regional, and local cycle routes; specific viewpoints were identified within the extent of the study area that required detailed assessment.

The proposal would not give rise to 'overbearing' or 'overwhelming' effects on residential properties.

7.3. Effects on Designated Landscapes

The greatest effects, as a result of the Proposed Development, would affect special qualities that are directly associated with the Site, albeit the Proposed Development would only affect a small number of components within each special quality as a result of the loss of the land and a small amount of vegetation removal.

Effects would be, at most, of a **Negligible Magnitude** and **Minimal**. Effects would be **Neutral**, in LVIA terms, as the Site does not display many characteristics of the recorded special qualities, falls within a landscape that is closely associated with the existing edge of Sevenoaks; would relate well to, and be characteristic of, the existing developed edge of Sevenoaks; and would not extend into the AONB's landscape to the west or south of the Site.

7.4. Cumulative Assessment

No cumulative schemes were identified within the extent of the study area that required cumulative assessment.

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Appendices to the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment
July 2022

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Comment Final

This document has been prepared and checked in accordance with ISO 9001:2015.

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Appendix 1. Glossary

Cumulative effects. The additional changes caused by a proposed development in conjunction with other similar developments or as the combined effect of a set of developments, taken together.

Illustrative Viewpoint. A viewpoint chosen specifically to demonstrate a particular effect or specific issues, which might, for example, be the restricted visibility at certain locations.

Landscape Character Areas These are single unique areas which are the discrete geographical areas of a particular landscape type.

Landscape Character Type. These are distinct types of landscape that are relatively homogeneous in character. They are generic in nature in that they may occur in different areas in different parts of the country, but wherever they occur they share broadly similar combinations of geology, topography, drainage patterns, vegetation, and historical land use, and settlement pattern, and perceptual and aesthetic attributes.

Landscape effects. Effects on the landscape as a resource in its own right.

Landscape character. A distinct, recognisable and consistent pattern of elements in the landscape that makes one landscape different from another, rather than better or worse.

Landscape quality (or condition). A measure of the physical state of the landscape. It may include the extent to which typical character is represented in individual areas, the intactness of the landscape and the condition of individual elements.

Landscape receptors. Defined aspects of the landscape resource that have the potential to be affected by a proposal.

Landscape value. The relative value that is attached to different landscapes by society. A landscape may be valued by different stakeholders for a whole variety of reasons.

Magnitude (of effect). A term that combines judgements about the size and scale of the effect, the extent of the area over which it occurs, whether it is reversible or irreversible and whether it is short or long term, in duration.

Mitigation. Measures which are proposed to prevent, reduce and where possible offset any significant adverse effects (or to avoid, reduce and if possible remedy identified effects).

Representative Viewpoint. A viewpoint selected to represent the experience of different types of visual receptor, where larger numbers of viewpoints cannot all be included individually and where the significant effects are unlikely to differ.

Sensitivity. A term applied to specific receptors, combining judgements of the susceptibility of the receptor to the specific type of change or development proposed and the value related to that receptor.

Specific Viewpoint. A viewpoint because it is key and sometimes a promoted viewpoint within the landscape, including for example specific local visitor attractions, viewpoints in areas of particularly noteworthy visual and/or recreational amenity such as landscapes with statutory landscape designations, or viewpoints with particular cultural landscape associations.

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Susceptibility. The ability of a defined landscape or visual receptor to accommodate the specific proposed development without undue negative consequences.

Visual amenity. The overall pleasantness of the views people enjoy of their surroundings, which provides an attractive visual setting or backdrop for the enjoyment of activities of people living, working, recreating, visiting or travelling through an area.

Visual effect. Effects on specific views and on the general visual amenity experienced by people.

Visual receptor. Individuals and/or defined groups of people who have the potential to be affected by a proposal.

Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV). A map, usually digitally produced, showing areas of land within which a development is theoretically visible.

Definitions from *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment*, 3rd Edition, Landscape Institute with the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment, 2013

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Appendix 2. References

- 1) The Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, 3rd Edition, Landscape Institute with the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment, 2013.
- 2) An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment, Natural England, 2014.
- 3) Special Report – The State of Environmental Impact Assessment Practice in the UK, Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment, 2011
- 4) Landscape Institute Technical Guidance Note 06/19 Visual Representation of development proposals
- 5) Landscape Institute Technical Note 06/17 – Townscape Character Assessment
- 6) Landscape Institute Technical Guidance Note 02/2019 Residential Visual amenity assessment
- 7) Landscape Institute's Technical Guidance Notes 02-21: Assessing landscape value outside national designations
- 8) European Landscape Convention, 2000.
- 9) Core Strategy, Sevenoaks District Council, February 2011.
- 10) Allocations and Development Management Plan, Sevenoaks District Council, February 2015.
- 11) The Kent Design Guide, Kent County Council.
- 12) The Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan 2021 – 2026, Kent Downs AONB Unit.
- 13) The Kent Downs AONB Landscape Design Handbook, Kent Downs AONB Unit.
- 14) Kent Downs AONB Rural Streets and Lanes: a design handbook (July 2009), Kent Downs AONB Unit.
- 15) National Landscape Character Profiles, Natural England, 2014.
- 16) Landscape Assessment of Kent, Kent County Council, October 2004.
- 17) Sevenoaks Landscape Character Assessment, Sevenoaks District Council, January 2017.
- 18) Landscape Sensitivity Study, Sevenoaks District Council, May 2017.
- 19) Sevenoaks Residential Character Area Assessment, Sevenoaks District Council, April 2012.

Appendix 3. Methodology

Introduction

This appendix contains additional detail regarding the assessment methodology, supplementing the information provided within the LVIA text. This appendix sets out a standard approach – specific matters in terms of the scope of assessment, study area and modifications to the standard approach for this assessment are set out within the LVIA.

The methodology has the following key stages, which are described in more detail in subsequent sections, as follows:

- **Baseline** – includes the gathering of documented information; agreement of the scope of the assessment with the EIA co-ordinator and local planning authority; site visits and initial reports to the EIA co-ordinator of issues that may need to be addressed within the design.
- **Design** – input into the design / review of initial design / layout / options and mitigation options.
- **Assessment** – includes an assessment of the landscape and visual effects of the scheme, requiring site based work and the completion of a full report and supporting graphics.
- **Cumulative Assessment** – assesses the effects of the proposal in combination with other developments, where required.

Baseline

The baseline study establishes the planning policy context, the scope of the assessment and the key receptors. It typically includes the following key activities:

- A desk study of relevant current national and local planning policy, in respect of landscape and visual matters, for the site and surrounding areas.
- Agreement of the main study area radius with the local planning authority.
- A desk study of nationally and locally designated landscapes for the site and surrounding areas.
- A desk study of existing landscape character assessments and capacity and sensitivity studies for the site and surrounding areas.
- A desk study of historic landscape character assessments (where available) and other information sources required to gain an understanding of the contribution of heritage assets to the present day landscape.
- Collation and evaluation of other indicators of local landscape value such as references in landscape character studies or parish plans, tourist information, local walking & cycling guides, references in art and literature.
- The identification of valued character types, landscape elements and features which may be affected by the proposal, including rare landscape types.
- Exchanging information with other consultants working on other assessment topics for the development as required to inform the assessment.

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- Draft Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) studies to assist in identifying potential viewpoints and indicate the potential visibility of the proposed development, and therefore scope of receptors likely to be affected. The methodology used in the preparation of ZTV studies is described within Appendix 12.4.
- The identification of and agreement upon, through consultation, the scope of assessment for cumulative effects.
- The identification of and agreement upon, through consultation, the number and location of representative and specific viewpoints within the study area.
- The identification of the range of other visual receptors (e.g. people travelling along routes, or within open access land, settlements and residential properties) within the study area.
- Site visits to become familiar with the site and surrounding landscape; verify documented baseline; and to identify viewpoints and receptors.
- Input to the design process.

The information gathered during the baseline assessment is drawn together and summarised in the baseline section of the report and reasoned judgements are made as to which receptors are likely to be significantly affected. Only these receptors are then taken forward for the detailed assessment of effects (ref. GLVIA 3rd edition, 2013, para 3.19).

Design

The design and assessment stages are necessarily iterative, with stages overlapping in parts. Details of any mitigation measures incorporated within the proposals to help reduce identified potential landscape and visual effects are set out within the LVIA.

Assessment

The assessment of effects includes further desk and site based work, covering the following key activities:

- The preparation of a ZTV based on the finalised design for the development.
- An assessment, based on both desk study and site visits, of the sensitivity of receptors to the proposed development.
- An assessment, based on both desk study and site visits, of the magnitude and significance of effects upon the landscape character, designated and recreational landscape and the existing visual environment arising from the proposed development.
- An informed professional judgements as to whether each identified effect is positive, neutral or adverse.
- A clear description of the effects identified, with supporting information setting out the rationale for judgements.
- Identification of which effects are judged to be significant based on the significance thresholds set out within the LVIA

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- The production of photomontages from a selection of the agreed viewpoints showing the anticipated view following construction of the proposed development.

Site

The effect of physical changes to the site are assessed in terms of the effects on the landscape fabric.

Landscape and Townscape Character Considerations

The European Landscape Convention (2000) provides the following definition:

“Landscape means an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors.”

And notes also in Article 2 that landscape includes *“natural, rural, urban and peri-urban areas. It includes land, inland water and marine areas”*.

An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment (Natural England, 2014) defines landscape character as:

“a distinct and recognisable pattern of elements, or characteristics, in the landscape that make one landscape different from another, rather than better or worse.”

The susceptibility of landscape character areas is judged based on both the attributes of the receiving environment and the characteristics of the proposed development as discussed under ‘susceptibility’ within the methodology section of the LVIA. Thus, the key characteristics of the landscape character types/areas are considered, along with scale, openness, topography; the absence of, or presence, nature and patterns of development, settlement, landcover, the contribution of heritage assets and historic landscape elements and patterns, and land uses in forming the character. The condition of the receiving landscape, i.e. the intactness of the existing character will also be relevant in determining susceptibility. The likelihood of material effects on the landscape character areas can be judged based on the scale and layout of the proposal and how this relates to the characteristics of the receiving landscape.

The introduction of any development into a landscape adds a new feature which can affect the ‘sense of place’ in its near vicinity, but with distance, the existing characteristics reassert themselves.

The baseline is informed by desk study of published landscape character assessments and field survey. It is specifically noted within An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment (Natural England, 2014) that:

“Our landscapes have evolved over time and they will continue to evolve – change is a constant but outcomes vary. The management of change is essential to ensure that we achieve sustainable outcomes – social, environmental and economic. Decision makers need to understand the baseline and the implications of their decisions for that baseline.”

At page 51 it describes the function of Key Characteristics in landscape assessment, as follows:

“Key characteristics are those combinations of elements which help to give an area its distinctive sense of place. If these characteristics change, or are lost, there would be significant consequences for

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the current character of the landscape. Key characteristics are particularly important in the development of planning and management policies. They are important for monitoring change and can provide a useful reference point against which landscape change can be assessed. They can be used as indicators to inform thinking about whether and how the landscape is changing and whether, or not, particular policies – for example - are effective and having the desired effect on landscape character."

It follows from the above that in order to assess whether landscape character is significantly affected by a development, it should be determined how each of the key characteristics would be affected. The judgement of magnitude therefore reflects the degree to which the key characteristics and elements which form those characteristics will be altered by the proposals.

Landscape value - considerations

Paragraph 5.19 of GLVIA states that "A review of existing landscape designations is usually the starting point in understanding landscape value, but the value attached to undesignated landscapes also needs to be carefully considered and individual elements of the landscape- such as trees, buildings or hedgerows -may also have value. All need to be considered where relevant."

Paragraph 5.20 of GLVIA indicates information which might indicate landscape value, including:

- Information about areas recognised by statute such as National Parks, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty;
- Information about Heritage Coasts, where relevant;
- Local planning documents for local landscape designations;
- Information on features such as Conservation Areas, listed buildings, historic or cultural sites;
- Art and literature, identifying value attached to particular areas or views; and
- Material on landscapes of local or community interest, such as local green spaces, village greens or allotments.

An assessment of landscape value is made based on the following factors outlined in Table 1 of the Landscape Institute's 'Technical Guidance Notes 02-21: Assessing landscape value outside national designations': natural heritage; cultural heritage; landscape condition; associations; distinctiveness; recreational; perceptual (scenic); perceptual (wildness and tranquillity); and functional.

In addition to the above list, consideration is given to any evidence that indicates whether the landscape has particular value to people that would suggest that it is of greater than Community value.

Viewpoints and Visual Receptors - considerations

A wide variety of visual receptors can reasonably be anticipated to be affected by the proposed development. Within the baseline assessment, the ZTV study and site visits are used to determine which visual receptors are likely to be significantly affected and therefore merit detailed assessment. In line with guidance (GLVIA, 3rd Edition, 2013); both

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representative and specific viewpoints may be identified to inform the assessment. In general, the majority of viewpoints will be representative – representing the visual receptors at the distance and direction in which they are located and of the type(s) that would be present at that location. The representative viewpoints have generally been selected in locations where significant effects would be anticipated; though some may be selected outside of that zone – either to demonstrate the reduction of effects with distance; or to specifically ensure the representation of a particularly sensitive receptor.

- The types of visual receptors likely to be included with the assessment are:
- Users of walking routes or accessible landscapes including Public Rights of Way, National and Regional Trails and other long distance routes, Common Land, Open Access Land, permissive paths, land held in trust (e.g. Woodland Trust, National Trust) offering free public access, and other regularly used, permitted walking routes;
- Visitors to and residents of settlements;
- Visitors to specific valued viewpoints;
- Visitors to attractions or heritage assets for which landscape and views contribute to the experience; and
- Users of roads or identified scenic routes.

Visual receptors are grouped for assessment into areas which include all of the routes, public spaces and homes within that area. Groups are selected as follows:

- Based around settlements in order to describe effects on that that community – e.g. a settlement and routes radiating from that settlement; or
- An area of open countryside encompassing a number of routes, accessible spaces and individual dwellings; or
- An area of accessible landscape and the routes within and around it e.g. a country park; and
- such that effects within a single visual receptor group are similar enough to be readily described and assessed.

With the exception of specific viewpoints, each route, settlement or location will encompass a range of possible views, which might vary from no view of the development to very clear, close views. Therefore, effects are described in such a way as to identify where views towards the development are likely to arise and what the scale, duration and extent of those views are likely to be. In some cases, this will be further informed by a nearby viewpoint and in others it will be informed with reference to the ZTV, aerial photography and site visits. Each of these individual effects are then considered together in order to reach a judgement of the effects on the visual receptors along that route, or in that place.

The representative viewpoints are used as ‘samples’ on which to base judgements of the scale of effects on visual receptors. The viewpoints represent multiple visual receptors, and duration and extent are judged when assessing impacts on the visual receptors.

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For

specific viewpoints (key and sometimes promoted viewpoints within the landscape), duration and extent are assessed, with extent reflecting the extent to which the development affects the valued qualities of the view from the specific viewpoint.

Visual Receptor Sensitivity – typical examples

	High	Medium	Low
National/International	1	4	8
Local/District	2	5	8
Community	3	6	9
Limited		7	10

- 1) Visitors to valued viewpoints or routes which people might visit purely to experience the view, e.g. promoted or well-known viewpoints, routes from which views that form part of the special qualities of a designated landscape can be well appreciated; key designed views; panoramic viewpoints marked on maps.
- 2) People in locations where they are likely to pause to appreciate the view, such as from local waypoints such as benches; or at key views to/from local landmarks. Visitors to local attractions, heritage assets or public parks where views are an important contributor to the experience, or key views into/out of Conservation Areas.
- 3) People in the streets around their home, or using public rights of way, navigable waterways or accessible open space (public parks, open access land).
- 4) Users of promoted scenic rail routes.
- 5) Users of promoted scenic local road routes.
- 6) Users of cycle routes, local roads and railways.
- 7) Outdoor workers.
- 8) Users of A-roads which are nationally or locally promoted scenic routes.
- 9) Users of sports facilities such as cricket grounds and golf courses.
- 10) Users of Motorways and A-roads; shoppers at retail parks, people at their (indoor) places of work.

Preparation and use of Visuals

The ZTVs are used to inform the field study assessment work, providing additional detail and accuracy to observations made on site. Photomontages may also be produced in order to assist readers of the assessment in visualising the proposals, but are not used in reaching judgements of effect. The preparation of the ZTVs (and photomontages where applicable) is informed by the Landscape Institute's Technical Guidance Note 06/19 'Visual Representation of development proposals' and SNH 'Visual Representation of Wind Farms Best Practice Guidance' (both the 2007 and 2017 editions).

The following points should be borne in mind in respect of the ZTV study:

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- Areas shown as having potential visibility may have visibility of the development obscured by local features such as trees, hedgerows, embankments or buildings.

A detailed description of the methods by which ZTVs and visualisations are prepared is included in **Appendix 4**.

In addition to the main visualisations, illustrative views are used as appropriate to illustrate particular points made within the assessment. These are not prepared to the same standard as they simply depict existing views, character or features rather than forming the basis for visualisations.

Cumulative Assessment

Cumulative assessment relates to the assessment of the effects of more than one development. A search area from the proposal site (typically of a similar scale to the study area) is agreed with the planning authority. For each of the identified cumulative schemes agreement is reached with the Planning Authority as to whether and how they should be included in the assessment.

Developments that are subject to a valid planning application are included where specific circumstances indicate there is potential for cumulative effects to occur, with progressively decreasing emphasis placed on those which are less certain to proceed. Typically, operational and consented developments are treated as being part of the landscape and visual baseline. i.e. it is assumed that consented schemes will be built except for occasional exceptions where there is good reason to assume that they will not be constructed.

The cumulative assessment examines the same groups of landscape and visual receptors as the assessment for the main scheme, though different viewpoints may be used in order to better represent the likely range of effects arising from the combination of schemes. The assessment is informed by cumulative ZTVs as necessary, showing the extent of visual effects of the schemes in different colours to illustrate where visibility of more than one development is likely to arise. Cumulative wirelines or photomontages may also be prepared.

In addition, the effects on users of routes through the area, from which developments may be sequentially visible as one passes through the landscape are also considered, if appropriate. This assessment is based on the desk study of ZTVs and aerial photography, and site visits to travel along the routes being assessed.

In relation to landscape and visual cumulative assessment, it is important to note the following:

- For each assessed receptor, combined cumulative effects may be the same as for the application scheme, or greater (where the influence of multiple schemes would increase effects, or where schemes in planning other than the application scheme would have the predominant effects).
- For each assessed receptor, incremental cumulative effects may be the same as for the application scheme, or reduced (where the influence of other schemes in planning would be such that were they consented and considered to be part of the baseline, the incremental change arising from the addition of the application scheme would be less).

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- Subject to the distance and degree of intervening landform, vegetation and structures there may be no cumulative effects.

The way in which the assessment is described and presented is varied depending on the number and nature of scenarios which may arise. This variation is needed in order to convey to the reader the key points of each assessment. For example, the three different cumulative combinations that may arise for an assessment in which there are two existing undetermined applications each can be assessed individually. A situation in which there are 10 applications cannot reasonably be assessed in this way and the developments may need to be grouped for analysis.

Residential Amenity

Paragraph 6.17 of GLVIA, 3rd edition notes that:

"In some instances it may also be appropriate to consider private viewpoints, mainly from residential properties.... Effects of development in private property are frequently dealt with mainly through 'residential amenity assessments'. These are separate from LVIA although visual effects assessment may sometimes be carried out as part of a residential amenity assessment, in which case this will supplement and form part of the LVIA for a project. Some of the principles set out here for dealing with visual effects may help in such assessments but there are specific requirements in residential amenity assessment"

The guidance also notes that:

"In respect of private views and visual amenity, it is widely known that, no one has 'a right to a view.' This includes situations where a residential property's outlook / visual amenity is judged to be 'significantly' affected by a proposed development, a matter which has been confirmed in a number of appeal / public inquiry decisions."

It is important to note:

"Judgements formed in respect of Residential Visual Amenity should not be confused with the judgement regarding Residential Amenity because the latter is a planning matter. Nor should the judgment therefore be seen as a 'test' with a simple 'pass' or 'fail'.

... The final judgement regarding effect on Residential Amenity ... requires weighing all factors and likely effects (positive as well as negative) in the 'planning balance'."

The guidance notes that many appeal decisions in which residential visual amenity is considered relate to wind farms. Wind farms are unusually tall developments with a greater chance that they could have such an effect. Most forms of development are unlikely to cause effects of such a high magnitude to render a property an unattractive place in which to live unless in very close to the property and occupying a large proportion of views.

Residential properties closest to the site are viewed on site and from aerial photography to consider whether a residential amenity assessment is required. Where such an assessment is required, it is provided as an appendix to the LVIA and in accordance with the guidance provided in LI TGN 02/2019.

Appendix 4 Visualisations and ZTV Studies

ZTV Studies

ZTV studies are prepared using the ESRI ArcGIS Viewshed routine. This creates a raster image that indicates the visibility (or not) of the points modelled. LDA Design undertake a ZTV study that is designed to include visual barriers from settlements and woodlands (with heights derived from NEXTMAP 25 surface mapping data). If significant deviations from these assumed heights are noted during site visits, for example young or felled areas of woodland, or recent changes to built form, the features concerned will be adjusted within the model or the adoption of a digital surface model will be used to obtain actual heights for these barriers.

The model is also designed to take into account both the curvature of the earth and light refraction, informed by the SNH guidance. LDA Design undertake all ZTV studies with observer heights of 2m.

The ZTV analysis begins at 1m from the observation feature and will work outwards in a grid of the set resolution until it reaches the end of the terrain map for the project.

For all plan production LDA Design will produce a ZTV that has a base and overlay of the 1:50,000 Ordnance Survey Raster mapping or better. The ZTV will be reproduced at a suitable scale on an A3 template to encompass the study area.

Ground model accuracy

Depending on the project and level of detail required, different height datasets may be used. Below is listed the different data products and their specifications:

Product	Distance Between Points	Vertical RMSE Error
LiDAR	50cm – 2m	up to +/- 5cm
Photogrammetrically Derived Heights	2m – 5m	up to +/- 1.5m
Ordnance Survey OS terrain 5	5 m	up to +/- 2.5m
NextMap25 DTM	25 m	+/- 2.06m
Ordnance Survey OS terrain 50	50 m	+/- 4m

Site-specific topographical survey data may also be used where available.

Photomontages and Photowires

Verified / verifiable photomontages are produced in seven stages. Photowires are produced using the same overall approach, but only require some of the steps outlined below.

- 1) Photography is undertaken using a full frame digital SLR camera and 50mm lens. A tripod is used to take overlapping photographs which are joined together using an industry standard application to create a single panoramic image for each viewpoint. These are then saved at a fixed height and resolution to enable correct sizing when

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reproduced in the final images. The photographer also notes the GPS location of the viewpoint and takes bearings to visible landmarks whilst at the viewpoint.

- 2) Creation of a ground model and 3D mesh to illustrate that model. This is created using NextMap25 DTM point data (or occasionally other terrain datasets where required, such as site-specific topographical data or Photogrammetrically Derived Heights) and ground modelling software.
- 3) The addition of the proposed development to the 3D model. The main components of the proposed development are accurately modelled in CAD and are then inserted into the 3D model at the proposed locations and elevations.
- 4) Wireline generation – The viewpoints are added within the 3D CAD model with each observer point being inserted at 1.5m above the modelled ground plane. The location of the landmarks identified by the photographer may also be included in the model. The view from the viewpoint is then replicated using virtual cameras to create a series of single frame images, which also include bearing markers. As with the photographs, these single frame images are joined together using an industry standard application to create a single panoramic image for each viewpoint. These are then saved at a fixed height and resolution to ensure that they are the same size as the photographs.
- 5) Wireline matching – The photographs are matched to the wirelines using a combination of the visible topography, bearing markers and the landmarks that have been included in the 3D model.
- 6) For the photomontage, an industry standard 3D rendering application is used to produce a rendered 3D view of the proposed development from the viewpoint. The rendering uses materials to match the intended surface finishes of the development and lighting conditions according to the date and time of the viewpoint photograph.
- 7) The rendered development is then added to the photograph in the position identified by the wireline (using an image processing application) to ensure accuracy. The images are then layered to ensure that the development appears in front of and behind the correct elements visible within the photograph. Where vegetation is proposed as part of the development, this is then added to the final photomontage.

In accordance with the guidance provided in Landscape Institute Technical Guidance Note 06/19 (Ref. 6), visualisations will be prepared to the technical methodology set out in below. The photowires and photomontages prepared in support of the LVIA will adhere to the Type 3 visualisation specification as surveyed locational accuracy is not generally necessary but image enlargement, to illustrate perceived scale, would be appropriate.

Technical Methodology

Information	Technical Response
Photography	
Method used to establish the camera location	Aerial photography in ESRI ArcGIS along with GPS reading taken on site
Likely level of accuracy of location	Better than 1m

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Information	Technical Response
If lenses other than 50mm have been used, explain why a different lens is appropriate	N/A
Written description of procedures for image capture and processing	See paragraph 6I.10.1 point 1 above
Make and type of Panoramic head and equipment used to level head	Manfrotto Levelling Head 338 and Manfrotto Panoramic Head MH057A5
If working outside the UK, geographic co-ordinate system (GCS) used	N/A
3D Model/Visualisation	
Source of topographic height data and its resolution	TBC
How have the model and the camera locations been placed in the software?	Georeferenced model supplied by engineers/architects Camera locations taken from photography viewpoint locations
Elements in the view used as target points to check the horizontal alignment	Existing buildings, infrastructure/road alignments, telegraph poles/street lighting/signage, field boundaries, DSM
Elements in the view used as target points to check the vertical alignment	Topography, existing buildings
3D Modelling / Rendering Software	Civil 3D / AutoCAD / 3DS Max / Rhino / V-Ray

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Appendix 5 National Planning Policy

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, July 2021) makes clear that the purpose of planning is to help achieve sustainable development (Section 2), and that design (Section 12), and effects on the natural environment (Section 15) are important components of this.

Paragraph 11 sets out that in determining applications for development this means that developments which accord with an up-to-date development plan should be approved. Where the development plan is not fit for the purpose of determining the application, paragraph 11 directs that the permission should be granted unless *“any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole”* or *“the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a strong reason for restricting the overall scale, type or distribution of development in the plan”*. The areas or assets of particular importance in respect of landscape and visual matters referred to within the relevant footnote 7 are:

- Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB);
- National Parks including the Norfolk Broads;
- Heritage Coast.

The list also includes important habitats sites, irreplaceable habitats and / or designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest; land designated as Green Belt or Local Green Space; designated heritage assets or heritage assets of archaeological interest; and areas at risk of flooding or coastal change.

Section 11 sets out considerations in ‘Making Effective Use of Land’ and notes in paragraph 124 that in respect of development density the considerations should include whether a place is well-designed and *“the desirability of maintaining an area’s prevailing character and setting ... or of promoting regeneration and change”*.

Section 12 sets out consideration in ‘Achieving well-designed places’ and indicates in paragraph 127 (Section 12) that decisions should ensure that developments:

“a) will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;

b) are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;

c) are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities);

d) establish or maintain a strong sense of place, using the arrangement of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live, work and visit;

e) optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development (including green and other public space) ...

Section 15 of the NPPF covers both ecological and landscape matters. Paragraph 174 requires that decisions should contribute by:

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“a)

protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, ... (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan);

b) recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland;

c) maintaining the character of the undeveloped coast, while improving public access to it where appropriate; ...”

In respect of valued landscapes, paragraph 175 notes that planning policy should “distinguish between the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites”.

Paragraphs 176 – 178 require that:

“176. Great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, 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.

177. When considering applications for development within National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, permission should be refused for major development⁶⁰ other than in exceptional circumstances, and where it can be demonstrated that the development is in the public interest. Consideration of such applications should include an assessment of:

a) the need for the development, including in terms of any national considerations, and the impact of permitting it, or refusing it, upon the local economy;

b) the cost of, and scope for, developing outside the designated area, or meeting the need for it in some other way; and

c) any detrimental effect on the environment, the landscape and recreational opportunities, and the extent to which that could be moderated.

178. Within areas defined as Heritage Coast (and that do not already fall within one of the designated areas mentioned in paragraph 176), planning policies and decisions should be consistent with the special character of the area and the importance of its conservation. Major development within a Heritage Coast is unlikely to be appropriate, unless it is compatible with its special character.”

Footnote 60 notes that “whether a proposal is ‘major development’ is a matter for the decision maker, taking into account its nature, scale and setting, and whether it could have a significant adverse impact on the purposes for which the area has been designated or defined”.

Paragraph 85 requires decisions to ensure that “...new development is appropriate for its location...” including by limiting the impact of light pollution on local amenity and “intrinsically dark landscapes”.

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Planning Practice Guidance for Natural Environment, July 2019

This document is intended to explain the key issues in implementing policy to protect biodiversity, enhance green infrastructure and also contains a section on landscape. This section reiterates the policy set out in the NPPF, highlights the importance of identifying the special characteristics of locally valued landscapes and recommends the use of landscape character assessments.

With regards to National Parks, the Broads and AONBs, the guidance states that:

“Section 11A(2) of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949, section 17A of the Norfolk and Suffolk Broads Act 1988 and section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 require that ‘in exercising or performing any functions in relation to, or so as to affect, land’ in National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, relevant authorities ‘shall have regard’ to their purposes for which these areas are designated” (para 039). The same paragraph also requires consideration of the effects of development on the setting of AONBs.

The guidance also highlights that Natural England has published advice on Heritage Coasts. This guidance indicates that heritage coasts are *“managed to conserve their natural beauty and, where appropriate, to improve accessibility for visitors” (para 043).*

This document also provides guidance on green infrastructure, highlighting types of green infrastructure (para 004) and the benefits which they provide (005), including achieving well-designed places as *“green infrastructure exists within a wider landscape context and can reinforce and enhance local landscape character, contributing to a sense of place and natural beauty” (para 006).*

Planning Practice Guidance for Design: process and tools, October 2019

The guidance should be read alongside the National Design Guide and sets out the characteristics of well-designed places and demonstrates what good design means in practice. The guidance indicates that good design relates to 10 characteristics:

- context
- identity
- built form
- movement
- nature
- public spaces
- uses
- homes and buildings
- resources
- lifespan

In respect of the determining applications and the relationship between a proposal and the surrounding context, the guidance notes that:

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“permission should be refused for development of poor design that fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions ...”

National Design Guide, January 2021

The guidance sets out characteristics of ‘*beautiful, enduring and successful places*’ that reflect the ‘*Government’s priorities and a common overarching framework*’ and provides cross references to the National Planning Policy Framework.

The guidance indicates that ‘*context, history and the cultural characteristics of a site, neighbourhood and region influences the location, siting and design of new developments*’.

In respect of context, the guidance indicates a positive sense of place and further notes that well-designed places are:

- based on a sound understanding of the features of the site and the surrounding context, using baseline studies as a starting point for design
- integrated into their surroundings so they relate well to them
- influenced by and influence their context positively; and
- responsive to local history, culture and heritage.

The guidance indicates that identity ‘*or character of a place comes from the way that buildings, streets and spaces, landscape and infrastructure combine together... Local character makes places distinctive.*’

In respect of identity, the guidance further notes that well-designed places, buildings and spaces:

- have a positive and coherent identity that everyone can identify with...;
- have a character that suits the context, its history...;
- are visually attractive...

The guidance indicates that nature ‘*contributes to the quality of a place, and to people’s quality of life, and it is a critical component of well-designed places.*’ Natural features include ‘*natural and designed landscapes, high quality public open spaces, street trees, and other trees, grass, planting and water*’.

In respect of nature, the guidance further notes that well-designed places:

- integrate existing and incorporate new natural features into a multifunctional network that supports quality of place
- prioritise nature so that diverse ecosystems can flourish to ensure a healthy natural environment that supports and enhances biodiversity
- provide attractive open spaces in locations that are easy to access

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Appendix 6. Extracts from Key Local Guidance Documents and Landscape Character Assessments

4. Landform and Landscape Character

4.1 Our vision for landform and landscape character in the Kent Downs AONB

In 2031... the rich diversity of landscape character and qualities distinctive to the Kent Downs are protected, enhanced and managed to the highest standards in a co-ordinated and continual programme. The special characteristics and qualities of the Kent Downs AONB are widely recognised, valued and strengthened and landscape character informs land and resource management, nature recovery plans, intended net gain and natural capital investments, responses to climate change and development decisions.

4.2 Overview

The fundamental and special characteristics that distinguish the natural beauty of the Kent Downs landscape were identified when the Kent Downs AONB was designated in 1968. These were reconfirmed in the 1995 Kent Downs AONB Landscape Assessment and its reviews and again in the views expressed in the public and stakeholder consultation for the original AONB Management Plan and its subsequent reviews.

4.3 Landscape Character Types and Areas within the Kent Downs AONB

Landscape character

Landscape character is described as a distinct, recognisable and consistent pattern of elements in the landscape that makes one landscape different from another and can provide a helpful description and sense of place to our surroundings. A landscape led, Landscape Character supported approach, further supported by historic landscape character assessment, can assist in informing landscape management decisions and its use is supported by Planning Practice Guidance for the Natural Environment.

The founding Kent Downs AONB Landscape Assessment was prepared by the Countryside Commission (1995 CCP 479); it identified 13 Landscape Character Areas in the AONB. Many of these have been divided into local character areas which detail specific local characteristics and identify some of the pressures facing them. Drawing from these descriptions, the 2004 Landscape Assessment of Kent described Landscape Character Area condition and sensitivity assessments. At a local level landscape character assessments have been prepared as part of the Local Plan Process for several Kent Downs Local Authorities.

As part of this review of the Management Plan a full review of the **Landscape Character Areas** (LCAs) was taken forward. This used a professionally led approach and up to date guidance and included defining Landscape Character Types and reviewing the established Landscape Character Area descriptions and some boundaries.

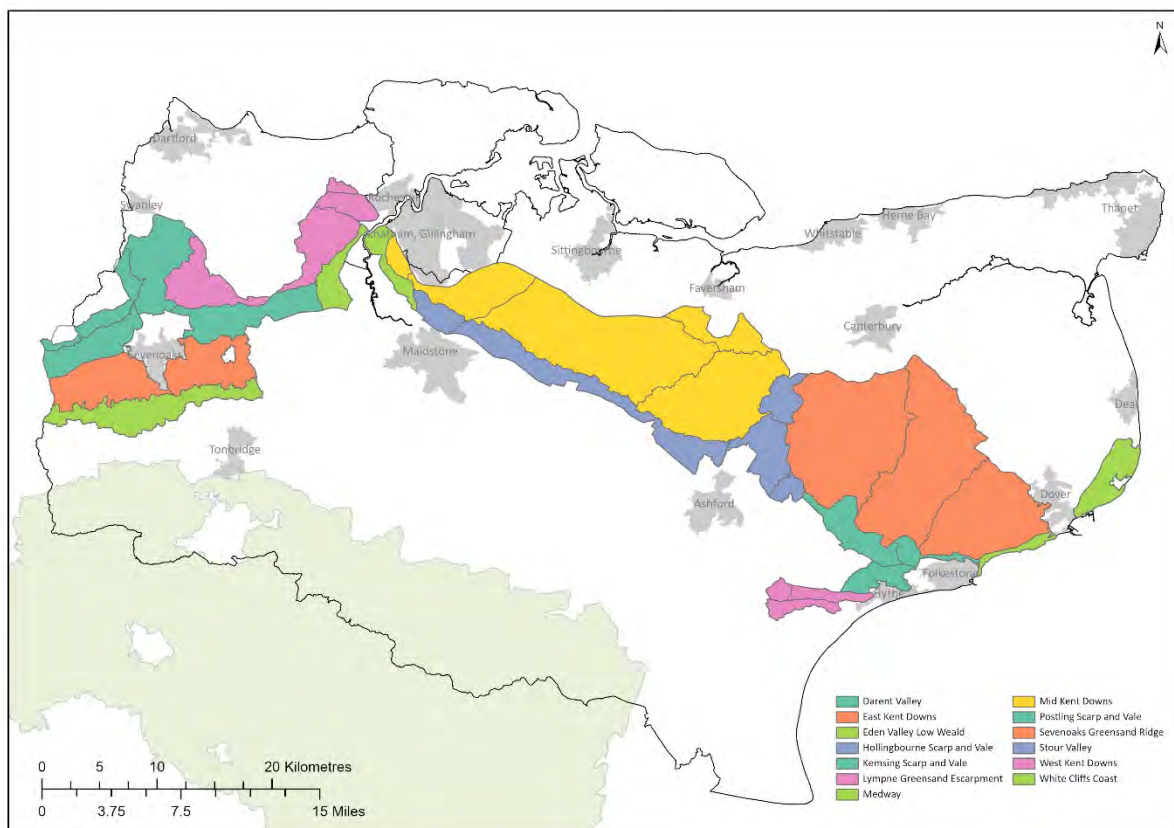


Figure 4.1 Kent Downs AONB landscape character areas

Landscape Character Types (LCTs) are defined as distinct types of landscape that are relatively homogenous in character. They are generic in nature in that they may occur in different areas but wherever they occur, they share broadly similar combinations of geology, topography, drainage patterns, vegetation, historical land use and settlement pattern.

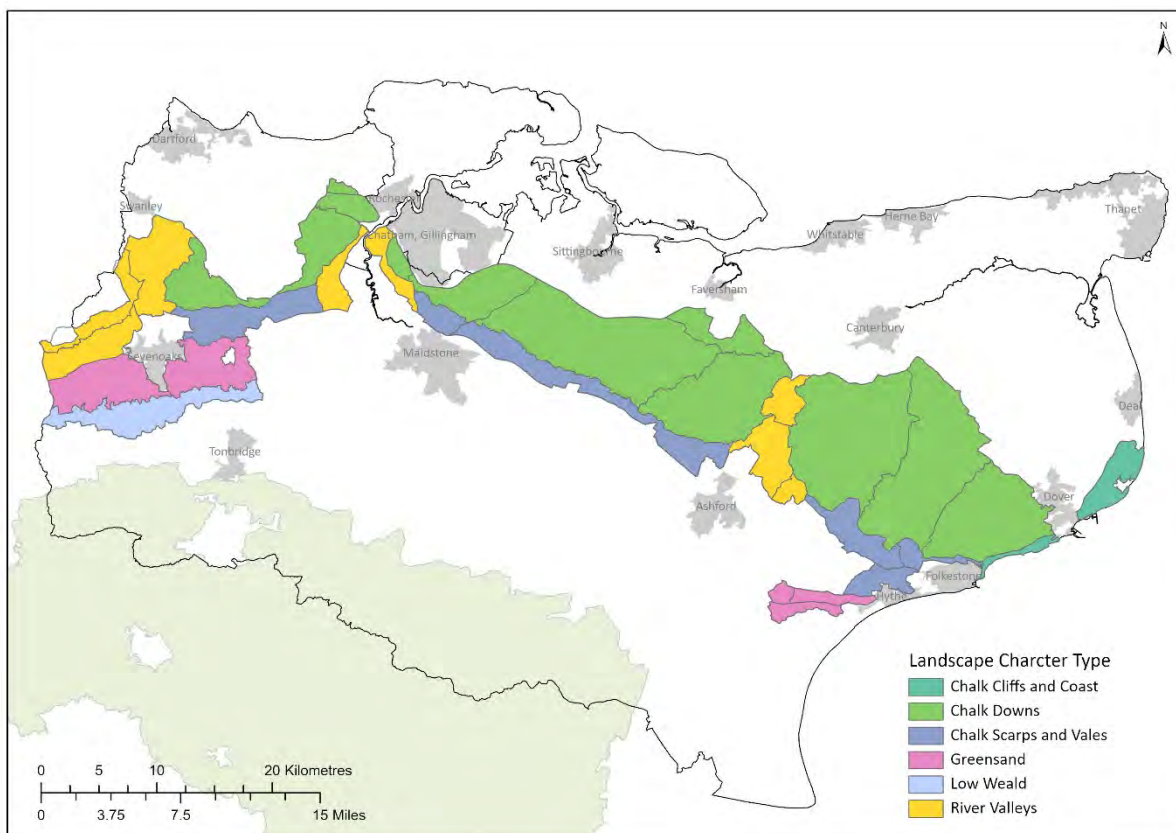


Figure 4.2 Kent Downs AONB landscape character types

There are six LCTs within the Kent Downs AONB, reflecting the area's underlying geology and its topography; these are Chalk Scarp and Vales, Chalk Cliffs and Coast, Chalk Downs, Greensand, Low Weald and River Valleys.

The Chalk Scarp and Vales

The long arc of the North Downs chalk ridge is the most dominant element of the AONB, consisting of the steep, south-facing scarp slope rising above the Gault clay vale below. Spectacular views are offered along the chalk escarpment across the Vale of Holmesdale; the scarp along with the dramatic views it affords was a key target for the original designation of the Kent Downs AONB.

The Chalk Cliffs and Coast

The Chalk scarp ends dramatically at the English Channel forming the White Cliffs, one of the most evocative and best-known British landmarks. The scale of the Kent Downs landscape is at its greatest here. The high vertical cliffs and the white chalk contrast starkly with the foreshore and constantly changing sea below with the bustle of ferries and shipping; overall the coast provides an awe-inspiring panorama. The expansiveness and drama is increased further by enticing glimpses of the French coast on the horizon.

The Greensand

The undulating Greensand Ridge rises to one of the highest points in southeast England at 250 metres at Toy's Hill. The views from along the length of the Greensand Ridge are some

of the best in southern England, and on a clear day, the High Weald and the South Downs beyond can be seen. In the east Kent Downs, the Lympne escarpment of calcareous Sandstone and Ragstone provides a spur of higher ground affording dramatic views across the near-level Romney Marsh and Hythe Bay.

The river valleys

Further diversity is provided at the points where the three main rivers, the Darent, Medway and the Great Stour cut through the chalk. Each river flows in a northerly direction and they form broad, steep-sided valleys with open vistas along the river corridors. The River Medway does not lie in the AONB itself, although parts of its tidal flood plain are within the boundary.

Chalk Downs

Behind the scarp, open plateau and dry valleys offer a beautiful, greatly valued and intimate feature of much of the Kent Downs landscape and they are often criss-crossed by a maze of tiny, sunken one-track lanes. The downland valleys often have a narrow strip of rough grassland, scrub or woodland along their steepest slopes, locally known as shaves, which are important for wildlife. The larger dry valleys such as Elham and Alkham have the sporadic winterbournes such as the Nailbourne in Elham, flowing occasionally during the very wettest winters. The plateaux areas often dominated by stiff clay with flint soils overlying the solid chalk, the soils were historically difficult to cultivate and were used extensively for sheep grazing. Much of the ancient woodland remains framing the plateaux and enclosing the dry valleys.

National Character Areas

Natural England has described National Character Areas (NCAs) which divide England into 159 distinct natural areas. Each is defined by a unique combination of landscape, biodiversity, geodiversity and cultural and economic activity. Their boundaries follow natural lines in the landscape rather than administrative boundaries, making them a good decision making framework for the natural environment. The National Character Areas Profiles which cover the Kent Downs AONB include the North Downs (119), Wealden Greensand (120) and Romney Marshes (123).

Landscape condition and change

Landscape condition is strongly influenced by external factors which can contribute to or detract from landscape character. The assessment of condition evaluates the landscape pattern and the presence of incongruous features (detractors). It also evaluates how well the landscape functions as a habitat for wildlife and the condition of cultural or 'man-made' elements such as enclosures, built elements and roads. Urban fringe areas are often under pressure and are therefore often described as being in poor condition whilst other more remote areas may still have the same basic features but be described as in a better condition. It is therefore practical to assume that condition may vary throughout a character area and any conclusions should be regarded as a summary of the overall situation.

Landscapes are not static; they change and evolve over time. In a Protected landscape setting the purpose of management planning is to drive positive change that '*conserves and enhances*' the character and qualities that are valued and for which the landscape was designated. It is remarkable and re-assuring how consistently the public attitude of what is most valued in the Kent Downs reflects the original targets for designation.

More than for any previous revision of the Kent Downs AONB Management Plan the context is changing rapidly; there are new opportunities and threats from leaving the EU and a

shared urgency to respond to climate change, biodiversity loss and the economic and social impacts of the Covid pandemic. In this context this Management Plan seeks to be forward looking and to promote positive landscape change that supports the purposes of the designation, reflects what is valued by the public and takes a positive approach to the climate and ecological emergencies, this means that the plan will promote more tree establishment than has been suggested in the past, is positive about wilding and will be more active on low carbon land management and encourage new opportunities for access for health and well-being.

4.4 Landform and landscape character - main issues, opportunities and threats

While the Landscape Character Area review found an overall positive picture driven by the interventions of the AONB partnership, partner organisations, farmers and land managers and many others there remains concern and further opportunity, these are picked up in detail in the revised Landscape Character Assessment of the Kent Downs AONB 2020.

- a. Loss of and damage to the quality and character of the AONB through the cumulative effect of inappropriate, poorly designed general development, unsustainable land management approaches and land use change, the impacts of growth in visitor pressure.
- b. Degradation of the setting and urban fringe impacts in certain Kent Downs landscape character areas through development, infrastructure, urbanisation and recreational pressure.
- c. The impact of Ash Dieback disease with the consequent loss of tree cover in woodland, roadsides and in open landscapes is already impacting significantly on landscape character and will continue to do so.
- d. The erosion of natural beauty and special character through illegal and antisocial activities such as fly tipping, abandoned cars and illegal off-road vehicles.
- e. The opportunity to promote landscape character conservation and enhancement through at a substantial scale new funding mechanisms (E.L.M.s, Net Gain etc.) and new partnerships specifically focusing on proposed positive management actions as well as addressing the enhancement to ecosystems services and seeking to remove or mitigate identified detractors.
- f. General lack of awareness of the importance and value of the Kent Downs landscape, its characteristic features and the social and economic benefits it brings.
- g. A landscape led approach, supported by a landscape character assessment is not used sufficiently or appropriately in land-use, land management, design and development management decisions, Landscape and Visual Appraisals, Landscape and Visual Impact Assessments and design; landscape character assessments are not always consistent or up to date.
- h. Major potential threats and opportunities lie in responses to climate change, the Covid-19 pandemic, the introduction of intended net gain policies and natural capital/ ecosystems services payments. These could drive outcomes which are either

contrary or supportive of the valued landscape characteristics and qualities of the Kent Downs.

- i. New and innovative forms of land management which meet natural capital enhancement objectives (such as wilding, regenerative agriculture and agro-forestry) may bring new and potentially valued character to the landscape.

4.5 Landform and landscape character - aims

A landscape in which:

1. The diversity of landscape character across the Kent Downs is properly described and understood, maintained, conserved and enhanced, and the strong sense of place of individual localities is recognised, reinforced and celebrated.
2. A landscape led approach supported by landscape character is used to inform AONB management decisions and areas of opportunity and threat are identified and become the focus for action.
3. The highest standards of landscape conservation, restoration and enhancement are encouraged and integrated into all land uses in the Kent Downs and its setting.
4. There is better understanding of which landscape features local people and visitors value and all people are encouraged to play a part in retaining and enhancing these features.
5. New interventions in the landscape developed to provide, public good, intended net gain, natural capital enhancement, nature recovery and climate mitigation support the valued characteristics of the Kent Downs, seeking to manage, enhance, change positively so as to amplify and augment landscape character and qualities and make it more resilient and more valued for the future.

4.4 Landform and landscape character - principles

- LLC1 The protection, conservation and enhancement of special characteristics and qualities, natural beauty and landscape character of the Kent Downs AONB will be supported and pursued.
- LLC2 The promotion, management, restoration and appropriate creation of viewpoints will be supported.
- LLC3 The provision of co-ordinated and high-quality landscape conservation guidance will be pursued, focusing on the special characteristics and qualities, natural beauty and the landscape character of the Kent Downs AONB.
- LLC4 The prevention, detection and enforcement action against illegal and overtly damaging activities which detract from landscape character will be pursued.
- LLC5 The revised Kent Downs AONB Landscape Character Assessment forms an integral,

interconnected, component part of the AONB Management Plan and should be used to inform proposals and land management impacting the AONB.

- LLC6 The improved awareness and appreciation of all the special qualities of the Kent Downs AONB landscape and its conservation to people who influence the future of, live, work in or visit the AONB will be pursued.
- LLC7 The development of strategic, long-term, landscape action and enhancement plans for areas of the Kent Downs AONB which present the greatest threats or opportunities or where natural capital enhancement, intended net gain, nature recovery, ELM or climate mitigation investments are proposed, will be pursued.

6. Farmed Landscape

Our vision for the farmed landscape of the Kent Downs AONB

In 2031... the Kent Downs AONB is a place where agriculture takes and is appreciated for a pivotal role in the conservation of natural beauty and landscape qualities and character of the Kent Downs. Sustainable farming is the predominant land-use of the AONB and the heritage of mixed farming is retained in a contemporary context, supporting and enhancing landscape character, soils health, nature and is an important part of the Kent Downs contribution to achieving net zero carbon emissions. There is a greater public understanding of the roles of farming and more opportunities to gain carefully managed access to farmed landscape and to understand farming systems. Despite the changing context a broad range of crops are sustainably produced and are suited to the increasing extremes of climate, local conditions and market forces as well as the landscape. Naturally diverse permanent grasslands are well managed and orchards, plots and hop gardens retain an important place in the landscape. The flourishing number of vineyards are managed in a way that conserves the characteristics and qualities of the AONB. The high-quality products of the Kent Downs are commercially successful and high environmental quality is a market advantage.

6.1 Overview and context

The Kent Downs AONB is principally a farmed landscape, with around 64% of its land classed as agricultural. Centuries of changing farming practices have shaped the landscape to create an important part of the natural beauty which is celebrated today. Historically the range of soil types of the Kent Downs has supported mixed farming practices where arable crop production has co-existed with livestock grazing and horticulture. The patchwork of land-use created by mixed farming is also vital for many valued plant and animal species associated with farmland. The farmed landscape is much valued for the access afforded along public rights of way, permissive paths and open access land.

Departure from the European Union is expected to be the most significant change to the context for farmers and land managers in the Kent Downs, since the UK joined the European Community in 1972. This management plan will operate during a period of substantial change in the farming economy. The intended direction of travel has been signalled in the Government's 25 Year Environment Plan the Agriculture Act (2020) and Environment Bill but agriculture is operating in an increasingly uncertain and volatile environment.

Farm tenure and farming type in the Kent Downs

Figure 6.1 indicates that the Kent Downs AONB continues to be a landscape of mixed agricultural use. There has been a reduction in overall farmland area as well as a rationalisation of farming practice. *This data originates from Defra, Geographical breakdowns are only available in the years that correspond to the EU Farm Structure Survey, next updates expected early 2021 which will be inserted if available.*

% of Farmed Land cover	1961	1972	1990	1999	2007	2008	2009	2010	2013	2016
Arable	53	64	58	55	50	54	55	54	52	54

Grassland	37	27	35	30	34	35	34	34	35	32
Grassland with scrub	0	0	1	9	Data not available					
Orchards and hops	7	6	4	4	2	3	2	2	2	2
Parkland	3	3	2	3	Data not available					
Area of Farmed Land (ha)	64,227	64,925	64,141	64,546	60,836	57,833	57,213	55,797	55,477	58,132

Figure 6.2 shows an increase in the changing nature of farm holdings in the Kent Downs, this picture is expected to change still further in the plan period. There has been a move to larger 'contract' farming and cooperative farming ventures, especially on the most productive land in order to achieve economies of scale, this can lead to larger fields to accommodate larger machinery and to crop rotations on a whole farm rather than field scale. The move to larger scale farming shown in Figure 6.2, can also lead to monocultures over large areas which

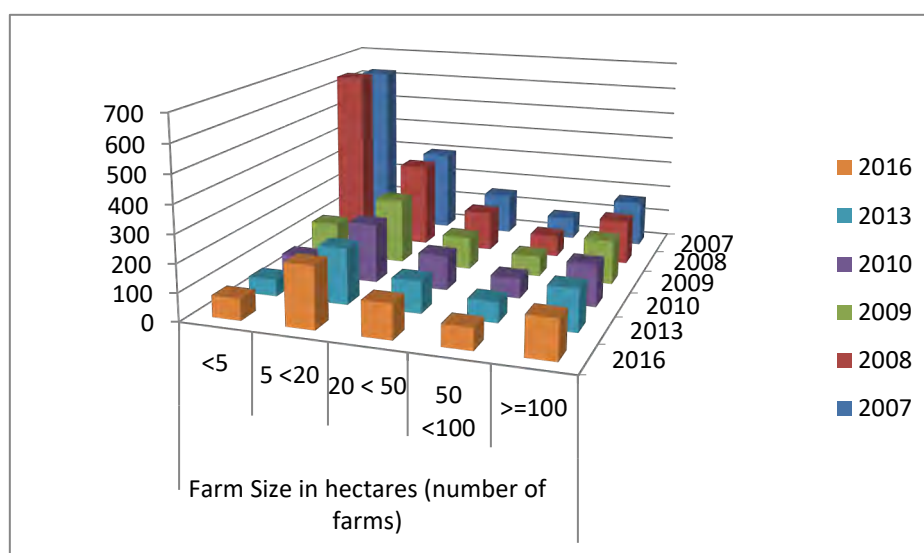


Figure 6.2 Farm Size in the Kent Downs AONB

consequently leads to lack of mosaic and therefore reduced opportunity for natural biodiversity, and increasing fragmentation of natural biodiverse pathways.

When medium sized farms are absorbed into larger holdings, farmhouses and buildings can be sold off with small holdings or to 'amenity' farmers and landowners who are not reliant on agriculture as a main income. The general setting and relationship between buildings in farmsteads and immediate landscape around farm buildings is becoming more 'suburbanised'. The separation of farm holdings and farm cottages and the increasing price of housing effectively prices agricultural workers out of the rural housing market.

An increasing focus for farm business is to enhance the skill base or human resource so that farm enterprises can remain viable, resilient and effective; operating sustainably with a strong knowledge base that encompasses the wide context that farming now operates within. At the same time the automation of elements farming means that low skilled work is less

likely to be available.

Changing financial signals to farmers.

Since WWII early government policy and incentives encouraged increased food production. Farm businesses responded by adopting new crops, technologies and practices, which have seen a marked increase in crop production and efficiency of scale. In some cases, the cost has been the loss of landscape quality, biodiversity and historic features that have been part of the mixed farming landscape for centuries; elsewhere farmers have chosen to conserve and enhance the landscape at the same time as increasing productivity.

Where there has been removal of hedgerows, woodlands and field margins, deep ploughing of grassland and drainage of wetlands, as well as the intensive use of pesticides and inorganic fertilisers the result is sometimes sterile farmscapes with little wildlife or reduced landscape interest, and damaged soils, albeit this form of agriculture is highly productive.

More recently the agricultural economy has been subject both to the removal of production-based subsidy and to increasing volatility driven by global markets and climatic fluctuations affecting both produce value and production costs. These pressures require farmers to make increasingly market led decisions and to use up to date methods to retain competitive advantage, reduce risk and add financial and environmental resilience. At the same time public opinion and Government policy has strengthened in favour of environmentally sensitive farming that produces high-quality food with less cost on the public purse.

The departure of the UK from the EU brings with it potentially significant changes and challenges and substantial amounts of uncertainty. The signals from Government through the Agriculture Act and Environment Bill indicate that future public financial support for agriculture will be focused on 'the public good'; this will include new access opportunities; enhancement of water, soil and air, investments in nature recovery and in landscape beauty, so called ecosystems services. The details of the new Environmental Land Management systems will be piloted and implemented during the plan period and the Kent Downs AONB Unit will be delivering a 'Farming in Protected Landscapes' programme.

Livestock farming in the Kent Downs

Sheep and beef cattle play an important part in the AONB land-based economy and form an important part of the mixed farming landscape. There has been a continued decline in livestock numbers (particularly sheep which have nearly halved in number since 1990). Grazing is important to retain the special character of the AONB particularly in permanent semi natural grasslands. Grazing animals are linked to greenhouse gas emissions and there is a focus on reducing meat consumption as part of the response to climate change; in this context it is important to note that low intensity grazing on natural sites has a much lower greenhouse gas footprint than many other sources of beef and lamb. The decline in livestock numbers is expected to continue following the UK exit from the EU the High Weald AONB has researched opportunities to redress the change (Restocking the High Weald report) – many of the proposals are applicable to the Kent Downs.

There are multiple pressures faced by livestock enterprises. The loss of grazing livestock and skilled graziers due to the poor economics of grazing, has led to areas of grassland that were previously grazed, falling out of use only to be ploughed up for crops, planted with trees, converted to leisure use or scrubbed over through abandonment, indeed research by the [University of Sheffield \(2020\)](#) shows that tree planting may become more financially viable than sheep farming. At the same time the role of sustainably managed livestock in

improving soil quality is increasingly understood and there is a potential that rotational agriculture may increase in response to soil degradation.

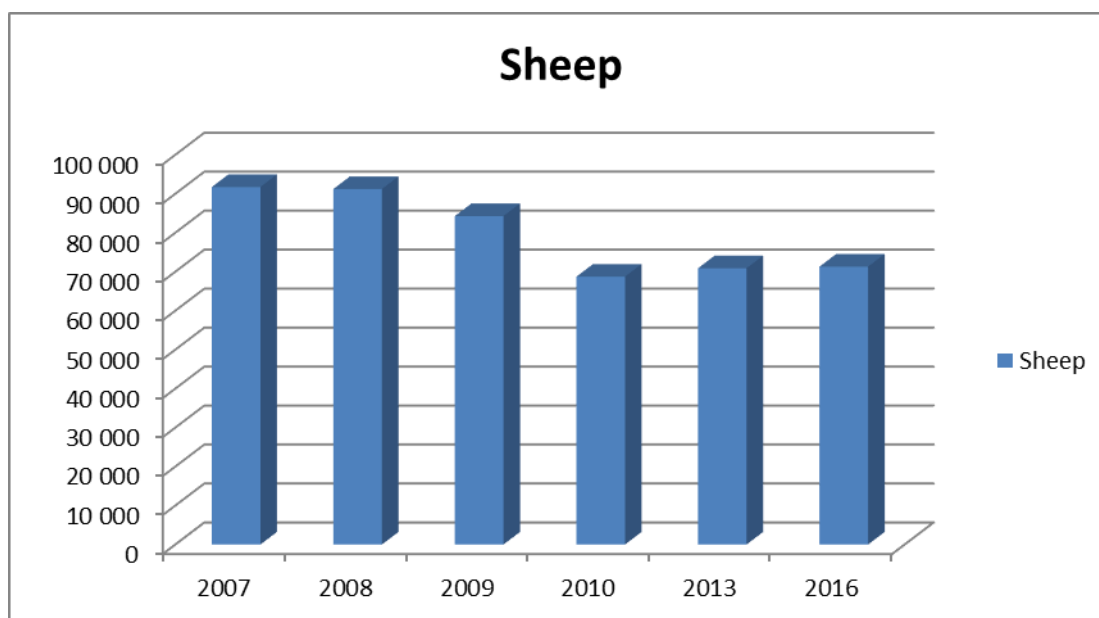


Figure 6.3 Sheep numbers in the Kent Downs AONB

Horses are an increasingly common grazing animal in the AONB; equine management is classed as leisure rather than agricultural use. Equine activities play an important role in the AONB land-based economy and can provide a market for local farm produce for feed and bedding for instance. If managed in a sustainable and sympathetic manner, horse grazing can make a positive contribution to the management of the pastoral quality of the AONB's natural beauty. However examples of good practice can be difficult to find and the impacts of growth in equine enterprises have tended to detract from the Kent Downs landscape character, creating subdivided paddocks, new structures, overgrazing, lighting and ménages. Good practice guidance has been published for the management of land for horses in the Kent Downs AONB.

Arable agriculture

Part of the mixed farm picture of the Kent Downs landscape arable agriculture is an important economic component of the Kent Downs. Key crops include wheat, oil seed rape and barley. There is an unusually high amount of grade 2 and 3 agricultural soils in the AONB, when compared with other Protected Landscapes, making arable agriculture viable with parts of the AONB being a focus for production based agriculture. Arable crops are undifferentiated commodities with generally little opportunity to add value in the farm enterprise and local economy. Like many types of agriculture, arable farming is increasingly driven by technological innovation which can lead to the simplification of crop rotations and field patterns but can also drive greater precision and efficiency. At the same time the role of minimal or no tillage farming in improving soil quality is increasingly understood and there is a potential that this form of cultivation as well as other regenerative agricultural practice may increase in response to soil degradation and climate change mitigation and resilience.

Arable field wild-flowers are amongst the most threatened groups of plants in the UK. Some of the arable farmland of the Kent Downs include some of the most valuable sites for these plants in Britain, notably Ranscombe Farm nature reserve. The Kent Downs offers the potential to enhance the abundance of these most threatened plants

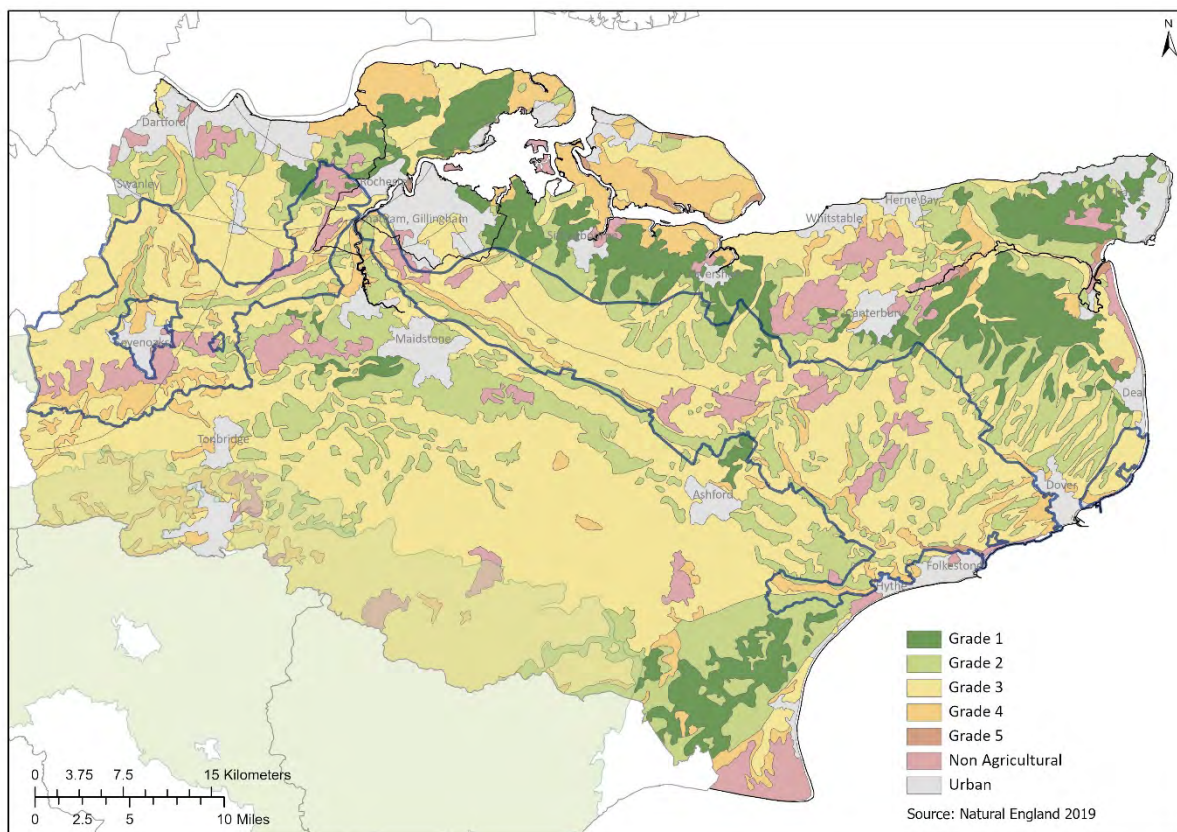


Figure 6.1 Agricultural land classification in Kent

Orchards and Fruit

Traditional orchards of large trees with understorey grazing are much valued in the landscape and rich in wildlife however they are difficult and uneconomic to manage and many have been grubbed or replaced by more productive and labour-efficient, safer, smaller fruit trees grown in closely spaced rows. Their greater uniformity and more intensive management have reduced the associated wildlife and landscape value of these orchards. They do, however, provide a modern and important link to a valued historic landscape; orchards can be important for biodiversity, carbon storage and the local economy.

Other horticultural activities add variety and interest to the AONB landscape. For example, lavender, as a crop for essential oils has replaced a number of hop gardens, and a rapidly increasing number of vineyards have been planted adding a new hue to the AONB scenery. A further locally distinct landscape feature is the production of cobnuts in the south east corner of the Greensand Ridge, centred around Platt and Plaxtol (a cobnut orchard being called a plat)

The area of orchards and hop gardens in the AONB has decreased by nearly 50% since 1961 (70% nationally). There has however been a recent upturn in orchard planting including

walnuts and new fruit varieties such as apricots which could increase significantly if the predicted climate changes take place. Additionally, the use of polytunnels has increased slightly.

Vineyards are a rapidly increasing component of fruit growing in the Kent Downs Vineyards are often located in prominent positions in the landscape and by their nature tend to be highly visible. Viticulture is a high value, high profile activity, generating relatively high levels of employment when compared with other agricultural uses. Careful vineyard management can present opportunities to create new areas of flower-rich grasslands and species rich hedgerows, however there are often development pressures associated with viticulture, including the establishment of wineries, visitor centres, wire works and provision for workers which can be landscape detractors. The Kent Downs AONB Unit has led a Test and Trial researching best practice in vineyards for Defra's Environmental Land Management scheme; the recommendations will be promoted in the AONB and amongst other National Landscapes.

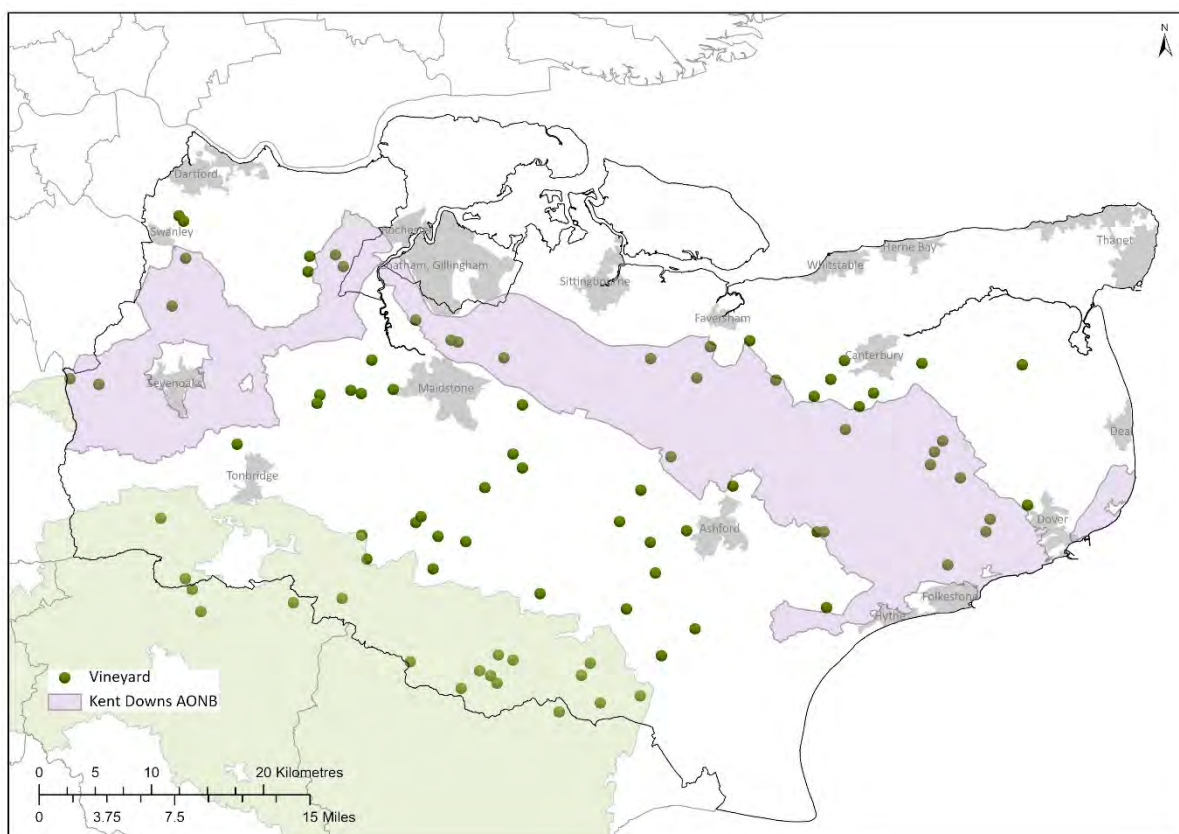


Figure 6.2 Vineyards in the Kent Downs AONB (will be updated in final plan)

While currently covering a small area of the AONB the use of polytunnels and glass houses is anticipated to continue increasing (together with the associated transport and storage infrastructure) in order to meet the needs of post EU exit fresh food supply, quality standards and a longer season as required by customers. Polytunnels can be significant detractors from landscape character and qualities in the Kent Downs and in its setting, poly tunnels and glass houses can create high demands for water and create drainage problems. Poly tunnels are temporary developments and often now use hydroponics meaning that their location is no longer connected to soil type, meaning that less sensitive locations can be chosen. As

temporary developments decommissioning strategies should be established and enforced. The horticultural sector is a small but often prominent feature in the AONB landscape and significant to the rural economy. [Link to guidance](#)

Agriculture and Climate Change

Climate change adds a further powerful influence with agriculture having an important role both in adapting to the changes already in train and mitigating further impacts. The IPCC Special report on Climate Change and Land (2019) brings a special focus on the place land management and agriculture has in responding to climate change. Agriculture has been a significant net contributor to carbon, methane and nitrous oxide emissions globally, at the same time agriculture is extremely sensitive to climate change impacts, in particular changing weather patterns and increasing extremes in weather events.

The IPCC report emphasises that most land-related responses that contribute to climate change adaptation and mitigation also combat land degradation and enhance food security, as well as contributing to sustainable development and other societal goals, so called 'co-benefits'. The Committee on Climate Change report on land use (2020) promotes low carbon farming techniques, a reduction in the most carbon intensive products, more tree planting and increasing agro-forestry and further increases in bioenergy crops.

The National Farmer's Union (NFU) and Country Land and Business Association (CLA) have both recognised the important risks of climate change and role that farming has in response. The NFU have published a plan to meet net zero carbon from agriculture by 2040 which includes increasing efficiency, enhancing carbon storage in soils and woodlands and coupling bioenergy with carbon capture. Other approaches where agriculture can have an important mitigating effect as well as engendering adaptation include evolving agricultural systems including supporting nature-based solutions to climate change and carbon management, regenerative agriculture and agro-forestry.

There is an important role for agriculture in Kent Downs to adapt to and mitigate the urgent climate impacts.

Farmsteads and Historic farm buildings

Historic farm buildings are an important cultural part of the landscape and are the category of historic building most at risk; farmstead guidance prepared by the Kent Downs AONB Unit in partnership with English Heritage and Kent County Council seeks to secure this important special characteristic in the Kent Downs.

Agri-environment schemes and Environmental Land Management

The public farm payment arrangements are critical to the management of the Kent Downs landscape with agri-environment and cross compliance schemes having made an important contribution to landscape conservation.

Since its inception in 1991, the Countryside Stewardship Scheme (CSS) which was followed by the Environmental Stewardship Scheme (ESS) and subsequently the current Countryside Stewardship (CS) have brought positive changes to the landscape, wildlife and historic features of the AONB and continue to do so. Such schemes have achieved significant enhancements to the landscapes of the Kent Downs, 39,699ha (45%) of the AONB (this equates to 74% of the utilisable agricultural area) is managed under agri-environment schemes, 262 agreements are in place. This includes 5,538ha of managed grassland with 487ha with public access payments. 734ha of unimproved chalk grassland and 250ha of

semi improved chalk grassland.

The eastern part of the Kent Downs AONB has been the focus of a 20-year programme which has applied Countryside Stewardship payments to deliver landscape scale conservation in the farmed environment. A consistent 1:1 approach of advice and support in five focused areas of 50-80km² and to groups of 12 to 20 farmers has created large areas of restored and recreated grassland. The figures and outcomes are impressive with over 900Ha of arable and species poor grassland now converted to wild-flower rich meadows 300Ha of which have been sown with native, local wildflower mixes.

The exit of the UK from the EU brings with it an opportunity to look again at how public funding supports farming and land management to enhance landscapes, improve access and respond to the climate emergency and take part in nature recovery. The Environmental Land Management systems are being tested and co-designed with farmers and land managers and pilots of a new scheme which will use public money for public good will run in the mid-term of the plan period and the Farming in Protected Landscapes Scheme will be established. Much remains to be defined but the 'public goods' have been clearly signalled by the 25 Year Environment Plan and the AONB Unit has run three tests and trials for Defra.

Collaborative approaches to farming and the landscape

Research and pilots in various Nature Improvement Areas, such as the Marlborough and South Downs add to the east Kent work led by Natural England and show the greater potential for landscape and biodiversity gain from wide collaborative management across farm holdings (clusters) rather than at a single farm holding level. This approach can address the issues of managing ecosystem services and seeking payment for them. Given future natural resource management issues and the importance of the farmed landscape to the natural beauty of the Kent Downs, a wide collaborative approach to farming and landscape could form an innovative future approach to landscape management in the Kent Downs. Farmer cooperation is an important theme in the developing Environmental Land Management approach.

Nitrate Vulnerable Zones and catchment sensitive farming

An important part of the AONB is covered by Nitrate Vulnerable Zones (NVZ). The NVZ programme aims to reduce nitrate pollution in water through regulation of how and when nitrogen is applied to land, the management and storage of manure and the use of cover crops. Farmers in a Nitrate Vulnerable Zone are required to follow mandatory rules to tackle nitrate loss from agriculture, Countryside Stewardship schemes target areas of the Kent Downs AONB to assist with the management of the water environment.

Catchment Sensitive farming advice (provided by Natural England and Commercial Water Companies) looks to address the diffuse water pollution from agriculture at source, pathway and receptor sites. It provides both 1-2-1 advice and farm cluster workshop and training events for farmers and looks to collaborate, negotiate and influence in a well-informed way to achieve pragmatic outcomes. Relevant to this is the ban on Metaldehyde for outdoor use in agriculture and the recent Farming Rules for Water legislation which protects water from runoff (soil, fertiliser and manures); this has 8 rules based around assessing risk and taking the appropriate steps to avoid or mitigate.

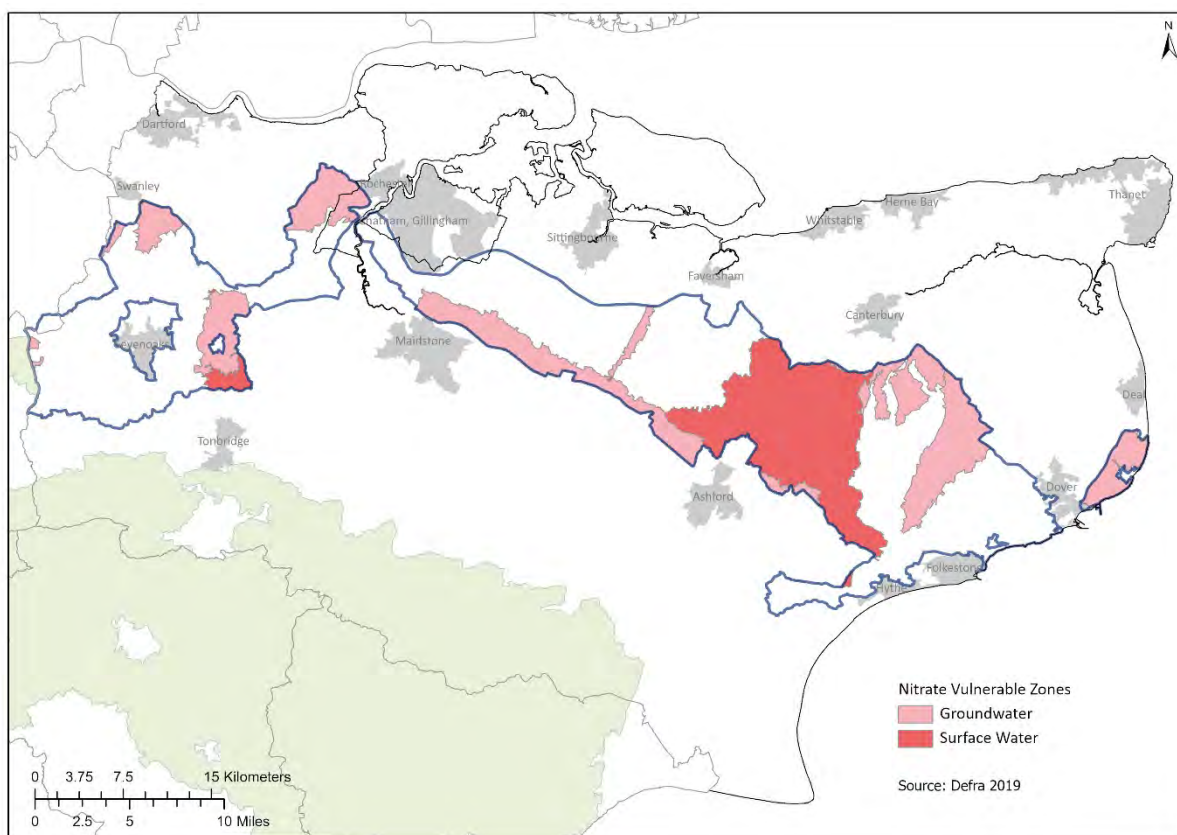


Figure 6.3 Nitrate Vulnerable Zones

Farm Diversification Activity

Farms have been diversifying their businesses for many years; this provides a way to increase returns for the enterprise, stabilise incomes and utilise farm resources effectively. Farm diversification can be carried out in a way which supports the wide objectives of the Kent Downs AONB Management Plan. Equally diversification, for instance to some renewable energy technologies or intrusive leisure activities can run counter to the characteristics and qualities which are valued. The Kent Downs AONB partnership promotes an integrated approach to farm diversification, balancing business, planning and environmental issues when considering diversification proposals.

Access and Understanding

Access to the farmed landscape is much valued and important for health and well-being; at the same time the negative impact of access on farm enterprises is an increasing concern of farmers and farm managers. In the context of new arrangements for farm payments carefully managed access could form a diversification opportunity at the same time as providing public good and managing and mitigating impacts on the farm enterprise. The findings of the Kent Downs access Test and Trial clearly set out exciting opportunities to overcome the barriers to access for more and more diverse people in a way that can benefit farmers and land managers.

6.2 Farmed landscape - special characteristics and qualities

A mixed farm landscape

Kent Downs farmland is characterised by a tradition of mixed farming, with arable crops and grasslands, occasional orchards and platts set among a lattice of ancient woodland, hedgerows, copses and individual in field and hedgerow trees.

A key part of this mixed farm landscape, arable agriculture has always been an important part of the character of this landscape. The area of arable land has fluctuated only slightly over the 50 years since designation. The seasonally changing colours and hues of arable agriculture and grassland typify the rich heritage of mixed farming. The Kent Downs are particularly notable for rare species associated with arable agriculture particularly the rare wildflowers found on reserves such as Ranscombe Farm and farmland birds.

Pastoral landscapes are a particularly valued component of the Kent Downs; permanent, flower rich grassland, including neutral grassland in some valley bottoms, grazed flood meadows but most notably chalk grassland found often on the dramatic chalk scarps and on 'shaves' in the dry valleys. In many cases the chalk grassland is of International importance for its wildlife. More productive grasslands, sometimes form part of farm rotations.

Orchards and horticulture play an important part in the special character of the AONB landscape, the regular striate form enhancing the rise and fall of the land. Teynham (just north of the AONB) became the site of the first 'mother' nursery for commercial fruit orchards in England in the days of Henry VIII, and there is still a concentration of top and stone fruit (tree fruit) and hop growing along the northern fringes of the Mid Kent Downs. In the Kent Downs it is the traditional cherry orchards which are particularly distinctive.

The Kent Downs AONB has, along with the South Downs National Park and Surrey Hills AONB, has become the target for increasingly confident and capable English wine growing and production. There has been a rapid expansion of vineyard areas in the AONB have been planted with vineyards since the publication of the last AONB Management Plan; subject to market conditions this is expected to continue to grow at a rapid rate and is creating a new character. Studies (2020, 2021) prepared by the Kent Downs AONB Unit and South Downs National Park Authority into the impacts and opportunities arising from viticulture conducted in the Kent Downs, Surrey Hills AONBs and the South Downs National Park clearly demonstrate both the potential impacts of viticulture on the landscape and how to draw public good benefits from viticulture as well as other row fruit growing.

6.3 Farmed landscape - main issues, opportunities and threats

- a. Need to balance viable, resilient and competitive farming enterprises with the need for sensitive environmental management in a landscape of national importance.
- b. Decline in farmland area of the Kent Downs, grazing livestock enterprises and loss of skilled graziers.
- c. Substantial uncertainty about the farming and land management economy and its wider context driven by volatility in agricultural commodity prices (both scale and speed), the impact of trade negotiations and future public payment arrangements post EU exit.
- d. Uncertainty and limited funding for agri-environment (Environmental Land

Management) schemes and the incentives they offer, particularly in the face of rising farm gate prices, along with the ending of long run Stewardship schemes. This issue is counter balanced by the considerable opportunities to enhance farming's role in responding to climate change, delivering nature recovery and new access opportunities as well as other 'public goods' identified by ELMs.

- e. Ploughing of permanent grassland and previous stewardship land as a response to uncertainty about the future farm payment environment is an identified risk.
- f. Changes in landholdings and land management practice. Loss or amalgamation of medium-sized mixed farms and growth of large units with 'share' or 'contract' farming often with an associated loss of crop diversity and establishment of small farming units/residential or leisure owners, where farming is not the main source of income and experience and continuity of land management are not guaranteed.
- g. Rationalisation of the farming system and loss of the mixed farming landscape, diversity and distinctiveness and selling off of farmhouse and buildings/cottages from the farmland estate; separating land and accommodation changing the character and landscape setting of former farmhouses; estate cottages and farm buildings.
- h. Given the relatively high proportion of grade 2 and 3 land there is a need to encourage investment in landscape character management in areas of 'productive' agriculture.
- i. Farm diversification and development activities such as increased equine facilities, permitted rights afforded to farm building conversions, shooting and field sports, alternative crops (e.g. lavender, biomass energy crops, vineyards) and non-agricultural enterprises (e.g. self-catering cottages, glamping and new uses for traditional farm buildings) can have important detracting impacts as well as benefits to the characteristics, qualities, and rural economy of the Kent Downs.
- j. Increasing use of polytunnels to provide high quality, low 'food mile' soft and stone fruit and other high value produce but can be important detractors from the landscape.
- k. The need to manage adaptation and mitigation strategies for climate change in a way that supports landscape character and qualities; for instance promote low carbon farming, soil restoration, regenerative agriculture, agro-forestry, natural flood management, sensitive water storage sensitive design in new agricultural buildings.
- l. The opportunity to develop a wide collaborative approach to farmland management in the Kent Downs and build on the long-term strategic approaches and to create a nature recovery network in the Kent Downs.
- m. Lack of public awareness of the links between food and farming and land-based activities, environmental issues, landscape conservation and management is combined with an increasing wish for access to land and the opportunity presented by the development of the ELMs to radically change this position and manage the impacts of access in a positive way.
- n. Historic farm buildings are the category of historic building identified as being most at risk and the historic character of farmsteads is being lost.

- o. Rural crime and antisocial behaviour are an important cost to farm economies making it harder for farmers and land managers to accept further access or manage land sensitively and can make the landscape feel unmanaged and unwelcoming to the public.

6.4 Farmed landscape – aims

The Kent Downs remains principally a farmed landscape where the character and qualities of the landscape are supported by strong, viable, resilient and sustainable farming enterprises and where:

1. Public payments support the objectives of the AONB management plan which forms the strategic framework for Environmental Land Management. The conservation of landscape character and diversity, the restoration and enhancement of wildlife habitats, the conservation of historic and cultural features, responses to climate change and the welcoming of people to enjoy the landscape, are all integrated and complementary activities to contemporary, competitive, sustainable and resilient farming.
2. The mixed farming landscape is promoted in a modern collaborative context and at a landscape scale; the benefits of previous public investment in agri-environment and former set aside schemes are retained and good and innovative land management practice which supports and enhances the ecosystem services of the AONB is encouraged to all agricultural enterprises, farm owners and managers.
3. Farm diversification and development activities conserve and strengthen landscape character, qualities and local distinctiveness.
4. Locally produced, high-quality and sustainably produced food is available and environmental quality is a market advantage.
5. There is heightened awareness and understanding by residents and AONB visitors of the importance and fundamental role played by farming, and the connection between landscape conservation, environmentally responsible farming and high-quality food are appreciated by all people.

6.5 Farmed landscape - principles

- FL1 The Kent Downs AONB will retain the mixed farming character for which it is valued.
- FL2 The targeting of public agricultural payments to make a positive, landscape scale contribution to conserving and enhancing the special characteristics, qualities and landscape character of the Kent Downs AONB and supporting ecosystems services and public wellbeing will be pursued using the AONB Management Plan as the strategic framework.
- FL3 Farming practices that improve the Kent Downs AONB landscape character and qualities, or mitigate damaging impacts, will be supported and pursued through guidance.

- FL4 The use of integrated whole farm and farm cluster planning which includes a business planning, landscape, heritage, biodiversity and habitat assessments and supports ecosystems services will be pursued.
- FL5 Farm diversification activities will be supported if they help achieve the vision, aims and principles of the Kent Downs AONB Management Plan.
- FL6 The production, supply and marketing of Kent Downs AONB produce derived from environmentally sensitive management will be encouraged and supported.
- FL7 Proposals for conversion from agricultural land to leisure use and the creation of both agricultural and non-agricultural structures must demonstrate that there will be no individual or cumulative negative impact on the landscape character and qualities of the Kent Downs AONB.
- FL8 A collaborative, long term 'cluster farm' approach to achieving the farmed landscape objectives of the Kent Downs AONB will be pursued.
- FL9 To meet the green house gas targets for the Kent Downs AONB the adoption of new and modified farming approaches to climate mitigation and adaptation and soil enhancement that produce co-benefits for landscape and biodiversity will be supported where they support the character and qualities of the Kent Downs.
- FL10 Activities will be supported that increase wider public understanding of farming and the benefits that the farmed landscape can bring for high quality food production, recreation, well-being, nature conservation, the historic environment, landscape and a buoyant rural economy will be supported.

7. Woodland and Trees

Our vision for woodland and trees in the Kent Downs AONB

In 2031... the characteristic Kent Downs network of woodland and trees is greater in extent and is conserved and enhanced for its landscape, wildlife and historic value as well as its vital role in mitigating climate change and supporting nature recovery. Sustainably managed woodlands and trees are resilient to stressors such as pests, disease, visitor pressure and climate change, they provide inherent mitigation and adaption to that change. Buoyant markets for woodland products support the productive, sustainable management of trees and woodlands; new woodland and tree establishment; high quality multi-functional management provides well-used places for leisure and recreation, health and wellbeing and are rich in characteristic wildlife.

7. Overview

The Kent Downs AONB is one of Britain's most wooded landscapes and it contains a nationally significant amount of ancient woodland. The woodland component of the landscape has its roots in the often poor clay with flints soils on valley sides or steep slopes which are difficult to farm, woodlands have been retained in some of the sporting estates. Woodland covers around 23% of the AONB and is the second largest land-use after farming, tree canopy cover which includes trees outside woodlands in the Kent Downs.

Difference between England National Forest Inventory Map 2012 & England NFI Map 2018

(source: Forestry Commission 2020)

Interpreted Forest Types	Gained 2012-2018 (ha)	Lost 2012-2018 (ha)	Net (ha)
Assumed woodland	4.40	1.69	2.71
Broadleaved	82.48	40.02	42.46
Conifer	10.58	2.22	8.36
Coppice	3.40	0.00	3.40
Felled	0.64	0.00	0.64
Ground prep	1.11	1.59	-0.48
Low density	3.13	0.00	3.13
Mixed mainly broadleaved	1.07	0.00	1.07
Mixed mainly conifer	1.13	0.81	0.32
Young trees	19.91	11.76	8.15
Woodland	127.86	58.09	69.76

The highest woodland concentrations in the AONB are found on the Greensand Ridge between Sevenoaks and Tonbridge; along the chalk escarpment in West Kent; in large blocks in the mid Kent Downs; above the Stour Valley and in areas of the East Kent Downs

plateaux. Much of the AONB's woodland comprises, fragmented sites in disparate ownership, a situation exacerbated by the increase of wood lotting (breaking up woods into multiple small ownerships). Wood lotting research in Kent has found some negative impacts; often woodland management is absent and the ability to manage woodlands as a whole can be compromised. However, new owners are often motivated to improve and understand woodland wildlife and heritage.

The declarations of climate and environmental emergencies has placed a new focus on woodlands and trees and in particular woodland and tree establishment – the Kent Downs AONB landscape can support more woodlands and in particular trees outside woodlands.

Trees and woodlands provide significant amenity and economic value, iTree surveys can assist in quantifying this benefit and in Kent a Natural Capital account is being prepared which will provide more information on the ecosystems services and value of trees and woodlands as well as other natural assets in Kent and the Kent Downs.

7.1 Ancient woodland

Whilst all woodland is important to the character and qualities of the AONB almost 70% of the Kent Downs woodland is ancient woodland, around 30% of this is plantation on ancient woodland sites (PAWS) (3,585ha); areas of ancient woodland where non-native species have been planted, generally in the 20th century. The careful, gradual restoration of PAWS sites to native species composition is a current priority for woodland management. The Forestry Commission strategy for ancient woodland is described in the <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/managing-ancient-and-native-woodland-in-england>.

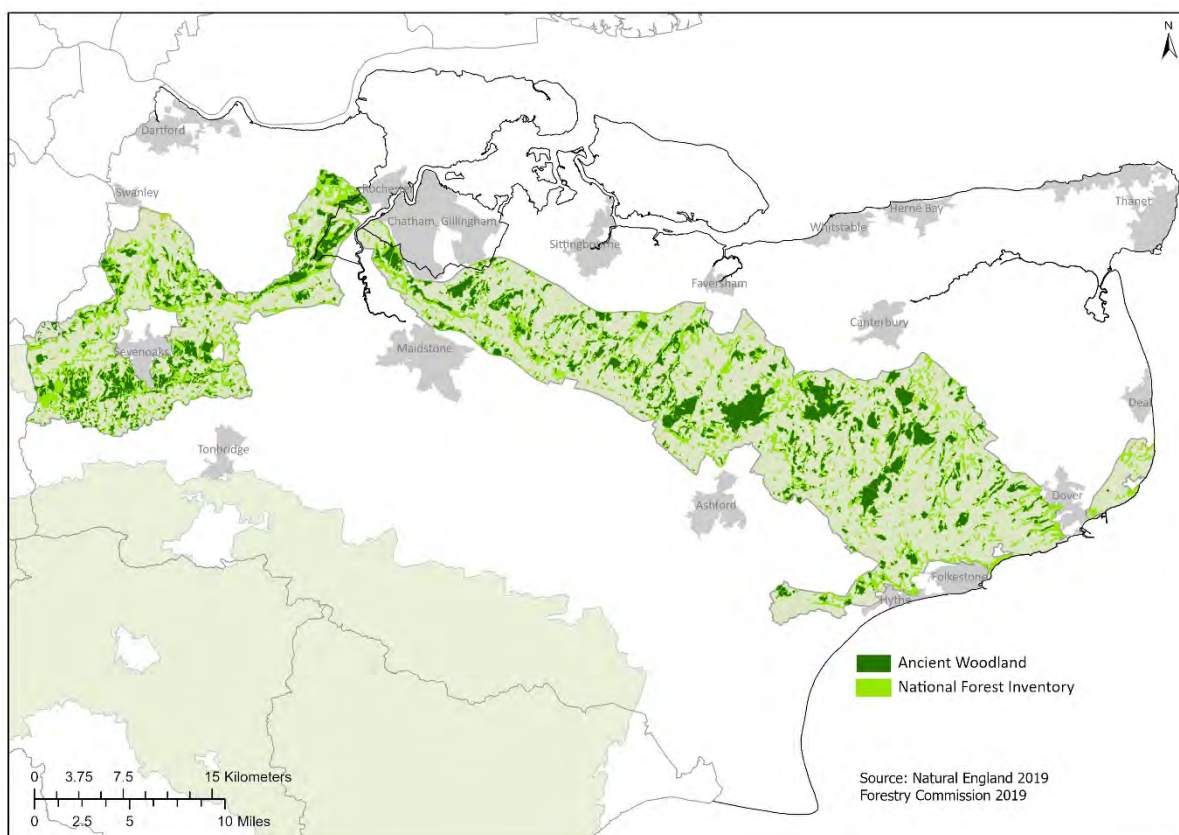


Figure 7.2 Woodland cover in the Kent Downs AONB

7.2 Tree pests and diseases

Ash is a particularly prominent tree in the Kent Downs AONB, both in the woodlands and hedgerows ash forms an important component of the landscape and was a major component of regeneration following the 1987 storm. The Kent Downs woodlands were one of the first areas in Britain to experience widespread infection from Ash Dieback (*Hymenoscyphus fraxineus*); the landscape implications are already serious with whole woodlands filled with dead and dying ash trees, trees outside woodlands dying and being felled and clear evidence that the impact is intensifying and spreading across the Downs. There is an increasingly serious risk to the ecosystems services provided woodlands and the health and safety of the public and woodland workers in particular. The Kent Downs has been identified as an Important Ash Area by the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC), reflecting the prominence of Ash in the landscape and the associated nature conservation interest.

Ash Dieback is only one of many tree diseases and pests which are affecting or expected to affect the Kent Downs landscape; in the period of the last plan sweet chestnut blight and Oriental chestnut gall wasp have been recorded in Kent; *Phytophthora* spp have potential serious tree health implications; oak processionary moth has been extending from London into the Downs and in 2019 infected imported oak trees were intercepted in or near the Kent Downs. An important issue for the commercial woodlands is the eight-toothed spruce bark beetle (*Ips typographus*) which has been recorded in Kent; it is a serious pest of spruce with a potentially significant impact on the British forestry industry. Grey Squirrel have an important impact on the ability to produce high quality timber and various species of deer are reported to be increasing and spreading in the Downs affecting planted and regenerating

trees and the woodland ground flora. The Government has published a Tree Health Resilience Strategy (2018) and Research Strategy for Ash Dieback (2019) along with an Ash Dieback tool kit which was developed by the Tree Council that have informed the drafting of the revised plan and provide a helpful strategic context but do not create a landscape recovery plan. It is important that woodland management to mitigate the impacts of pests and diseases is as carefully conducted as in other circumstances.

Tree planting and woodland establishment is an increasingly important priority nationally, there is a target to establish 30,000Ha of new woodland in England by 2025 and 30,000Ha across the UK every year until 2050. Ensuring the biosecurity of nursery trees is vitally important to ensure that more tree diseases are not established which are likely to vastly outweigh any benefit that new planting might bring; a bio-secure standard for nursery stock (Plant Healthy) was established in 2020. Trees can be very good at establishing themselves, especially where there are nearby appropriate seed sources; new planting is not always the best or most effective way to establish new woods or even trees outside woodlands, tree planting should be used where natural regeneration is not a viable option or the outcome would be detrimental, for instance where unsuitable seed trees are common.

7.3 Coppice woodlands

Throughout the AONB coppiced sweet chestnut is common, often planted into ancient woodland over the last two centuries. Historically sweet chestnut coppice was used for pit props in the east Kent coalfields and for fencing and hop poles. Latterly, as these industries declined, chestnut coppice went for hardwood pulp at the nearby paper mills which have now closed. Chestnut is still coppiced for high value fencing and more recently for the supply of wood chip for heat and fuel for Sandwich combined heat and power. Like ash, sweet chestnut is facing several diseases which may seriously affect its productivity and viability in the Kent Downs and there is concern about the future resilience of single species woodlands.

The continuation of coppicing is important for landscape and biodiversity conservation. Much of the AONB's woodland landscape was once characterised by blocks (cants) of coppice stools cut on regular cycles. Many ancient woodland animal and plant species require coppice management which cyclically opens up the woodland floor to light. Coppice with standards creates edges and mosaics of high canopy with taller and shorter coppice stands, providing a diversity of ecosystems within the woodland habitat. Establishing and managing coppicing is difficult where deer populations are high because re-growth can be browsed off. It has been noted that deer populations in Kent woodlands are growing (The Deer Initiative); it is important to maintain deer numbers at a level that does not prejudice the re-establishment of coppicing the regeneration of trees and woodlands and the quality of the woodland ground flora..

The relatively new practice of 'wilding' taken forward to enhance biodiversity may be a way to emulate some of the beneficial effects of coppice for woodland diversity and create open areas in woodland, but is likely to detract from the potential for woodland products to be harvested.

In Kent, Sussex and Surrey there remains a coppice industry which, although small and threatened, is showing signs of resurgence and could provide a basis from which to return the coppice woodland of the Kent Downs to rotational management and thus continue a management tradition with origins in the Neolithic period.

7.4 Shooting in woodlands

The Kent Downs landform and landscape character makes its woodlands suitable for shooting, particularly pheasant shooting which is thought to be one of the most important economic drivers for woodland management. Where game bird management is poor the quality of woodland biodiversity is damaged and grey squirrel numbers can increase, at the same time game management can align with conservation aims where not intensive and doesn't restrict woodland management.

7.5 Climate change, trees and woodlands

Climate change puts a special focus on the woodlands of the Kent Downs. The Forestry Commission has identified a series of key impacts which include declining tree health and limited mortality in some native species but increasing productivity for others, particularly where water and soil nutrients are available, changes to ground flora, loss of drought sensitive species particularly on shallow soils, damage from extreme events and the expectation that forests and woodland will become increasingly seen as a cool shady refuge for healthy exercise, whilst public access to forests may be interrupted by closures due to storm damage, and roads and paths being washed away. Trees and woodlands are acknowledged to be important carbon sinks through the biomass of trees and in the associated soils. The use of timber in building and for other permanent uses is an effective way of 'locking' carbon dioxide and removing it from the atmosphere; using timber from coppice for heat and heat and power is a low carbon emissions source of energy (compared with fossil fuels), it encourages woodland management which is effective at accelerating carbon sequestration and is a sustainable supply of energy but does not 'lock' carbon. The wood fuelled combined heat and power plant at Sandwich has provided a major new demand point for timber grown in Kent (160K tonnes each year).

The Woodland Trust report 'Adapt or Die' suggests that beech, a feature in parts of the Downs, may no longer be viable in the Kent Downs by as soon as 2050, anecdotal evidence suggests that mature trees are most vulnerable to the climatic changes. Forestry Commission research indicates that the Kent Downs will be a refuge for lowland woodland types as climatic conditions change. Additionally sweet chestnut, being a species of Southern Europe, is likely to be well adapted to the predicted conditions and coppicing is thought to be a way to make the woodland ecosystem more resilient. The relatively single species nature of many chestnut woodlands makes them potentially less resilient to the predicted impacts of climate change as well as disease.

As part of the strategy to reach net carbon zero by 2050 the Committee on Climate change has recommended bringing 80% of woodland into active management by 2030, it has also promoted significant new tree planting across Britain. The Kent Downs AONB can accommodate new woodland, woodland expansion and in particular trees outside wood while, at the same time enhancing landscape character and providing other 'co-benefits' such as flood amelioration, wildlife enhancement, new economic forestry and new access opportunities. During the plan period a tree establishment strategy will be published for the Kent Downs AONB.

7.6 Forestry and woodland in public ownership

The Kent Downs AONB contains large areas of Forestry England owned land (1,560ha); much of this is plantation on ancient woodland sites (conifer and broadleaf); the policy position for which is to return to broadleaved woodland over time. Forestry England owned woodlands are popular with visitors and public usage can be high near urban areas. Kings

Wood is home to the Stour Valley Creative Partnership collection of artist's interventions; several notable pieces appear on a sculpture trail albeit there has been limited commissions in recent years. There are several examples of community owned and managed woodlands in the Kent Downs and this enthusiasm is an important opportunity for the future sustainable management of the woodlands and trees of the AONB.

7.7 Health and wellbeing from trees and woodlands

Trees and woodlands have been demonstrated as providing many health and well-being benefits, Forest Research, for instance has identified key beneficial characteristics in its publication 'Trees and woodlands: Nature's health service', new approaches to woodland recreation for health and well-being, such as 'forest bathing', are increasingly popular and also have demonstrable benefits for participants. New research identifies the critical function of the vegetation of the Kent Downs, in particular trees and woodlands, in mitigating air pollution.

7.8 The canopy approach

The recognition of the importance of the whole tree canopy, not just woodland cover is growing. Woodlands and trees outside woodlands together provide an ecological and landscape network which is much valued for its scenic beauty but also for the functions, or ecosystems services it provides; supporting wildlife diversity, climate mitigation and adaptation, water management and clean air. There are significant challenges to the health and extent of the tree canopy of the Kent Downs in particular from tree disease and pests at the same time farming systems which integrate trees with other farm crops can be a way to extend and connect the canopy.

7.9 A Tree Champion and Tree Strategy

The Government has appointed Sir William Worsley as the Tree Champion with an agenda of setting a direction for the country's trees and woodlands over a 25 year period. More tree planting has been an important priority and it is expected that a draft England Tree Strategy will be published early in the plan period.

8 Woodland and trees - special characteristics and qualities

Woodlands and trees are a vital part of the Kent Downs' natural beauty, providing a green, tranquil mantle to the upper slopes of the escarpments and valleys. The woodlands emphasise the undulating nature of the dip slopes and scarp and frame the agricultural lower slopes and settlements. Individual, fine and ancient trees along with in field and hedgerow trees are an important, characteristic and sometimes dramatic element of the landscape. The woodlands and trees of the Kent Downs are much valued for the sights, sounds, wildlife, cultural meaning and narrative as well as for recreation, to improve health and well-being they provide.

Almost 70% (12,114 ha) of the Kent Downs woodland resource is ancient woodland (continuously present since at least 1600). The Kent Downs' ancient woodland is nationally significant representing (3.3%) of the total in England and Wales (Natural England, Ancient Woodland (England) Inventory).

Ancient woodland is irreplaceable and valued for its cultural, landscape and biodiversity importance and the products it supplies. Some ancient woodland may represent our only link

with the original post glacial 'wildwood' and is more likely to contain vulnerable animal and plant species than any other habitat. Ancient woodlands can also include physical evidence of former landscape management practices. The rich but sensitive ground flora of ancient woodlands – bluebells, wood anemones, ramsons and yellow archangel – and the bird song of warblers, nightingale and nightjar and the rare and beautiful butterflies, even the dank scents of rotting leaves in the winter are part of the natural beauty of the AONB. Much of the valued woodland wildlife, invertebrates, lichens and fungi, are associated with old trees, deadwood or open ground and are restricted to ancient woods and wood pasture. The ancient woodlands of the Kent Downs also preserve the evidence of thousands of years of human activity in earthworks, monuments and place names.

The diversity of woodland types broadly follows the different soil types within the AONB, including clay (with ash, hornbeam and oak); chalk (with ash, beech and yew) and free draining sands (with oak, birch and beech). Lowland beech yew woodland is particularly distinctive in the Kent Downs and is of European importance.

Trees outside woodlands; in field trees, hedgerow trees and individual notable trees are a particularly important and vulnerable part of the landscape of the Kent Downs and are generally unlikely to regenerate under current land management systems; each tree is an ecology and has a story. Often prominent in land and streetscapes, trees outside woodlands are an important quality of the landscape.

8.2 Woodland and trees - main issues, opportunities and threats

- a. There has been an increase and intensification of the impact of pests and diseases on woodlands and trees and this is expected to continue; the approach to woodland and trees in the landscape should be responsive and secure sustainable management as well as achieve resilience to this significant threat.
- b. There is a need to ensure that markets for woodland products secure sustainable woodland management which support landscape character, wildlife and the local economy.
- c. There is a need to build an appropriately trained and equipped work force with the capacity to both generate and take advantage of new markets.
- d. Restocking on woodland sites, woodland creation and tree planting needs to be resilient to future climates mixing natural regeneration and planting schemes use a diverse range of appropriate species which are certified as bio secure and ideally of local provenance. (NB the use of species found previously in the area, such as lime and elm, and appropriate non-native stock are being considered as a response to the impacts of climate change, pests and disease but this is not conclusive and there is a need to be open to new approaches).
- e. The implications of climate change put a special focus on Kent Downs woodlands for both adaptation and mitigation responses; the resilience of woodlands and trees and a strategic approach to woodland and tree cover expansion are a key consideration.
- f. The diversity of type and motivation of wood owners and the rapidly changing woodland context means there is a need for consistent intervention and advice to

support sustainable woodland management.

- g. The emphasis on multi-purpose woodland use is supported but can bring challenges for owners and managers and it can be the case that recreation, biodiversity and landscape management are do not bring commercial returns. Woodland recreation provides many benefits but increasing pressure is sometimes considered an increasing issue for woodland management, affecting commercial options, biodiversity and visitor experience.
- h. Intensive agriculture, infrastructure and building developments and pre-development felling can lead to the loss and fragmentation of woodland and transitional habitats around woods; there has been a reported increase in advance felling on sites where development is being sought.
- i. Pheasant and other game bird rearing can cause a loss of biodiversity and landscape value but where managed well can support sustainable woodland management.
- j. There is a need to take a strategic approach and propose long term management solutions to minimise biodiversity loss, to promote woodland regeneration and reduce fragmentation of woodlands and to limit the long term impact of disease and pest species in Kent Downs woodlands.
- k. There is a need to support the use of the UK Forestry Standard and Grown in Britain certification for woodland products.
- l. There is a need for the restoration and management of open space in woodlands, particularly woodland rides and glades and to carefully consider the opportunity for a wilding approach and the reintroduction of woodland species in certain circumstances.
- m. Insufficient understanding of the value, condition and location of 'veteran' trees, specimen trees outside woodlands and standing /lying deadwood in woodlands and parkland – for landscape, biodiversity, cultural and historic reasons.
- n. The need to harness the popular value of woodlands to improve understanding, engage new management arrangements and wider community and individual involvement, health and well-being.
- o. The historic features contained in woodlands can often be overlooked, there is a need to ensure that they are better understood conserved and protected during woodland management operations and through the application of the UK Forestry Standard.
- p. The need to continue to promote and secure the restoration of PAWS sites through guidance and management support.

8.3 Woodland and trees – aims that support the sustainable management of woodlands and trees

A landscape in which:

1. The irreplaceable fine tree and ancient woodland characteristics and qualities, cultural heritage and landscape character is restored, conserved and enhanced.
2. The retention and sustainable management of woodlands and trees provides beautiful landscapes, recreation and education, carbon sequestration, timber, a sustainable source of renewable energy, an important wildlife habitat and assists with adaptation to the impacts of climate change.
3. Existing woodland is retained and expanded areas of woodlands and trees form functional ecological networks alongside other key habitats of the AONB in order to encourage resilience to the impacts of climate change and enhance landscape character and quality; the canopy cover of the Kent Downs is increased. A tree establishment strategy is agreed for the AONB
4. Woodland ecology and archaeology is well understood, conserved, enhanced and recognised for its value.
5. There are sustainable levels of access to woodlands for, health, well-being, recreation and leisure with wider, more inclusive opportunities for people to benefit. Careful management ensures the conservation and enhancement of the special characteristics and qualities of woodlands and trees.
6. The sustainable production of high-quality timber and valuable underwood is stimulated through sustainable market demand.
7. A collaborative approach is taken to the management, enhancement and establishment of trees and woodlands of the Kent Downs is taken.

8.4 Woodland and trees - principles that support the sustainable management of woodlands and trees

- WT1 The extent of woodland, transitional habitats around woodland and trees outside woodland in the Kent Downs AONB will be retained, connected and extended.
- WT2 A strategic, collaborative approach will be pursued to secure sustainable multipurpose woodland and tree restoration, management and establishment that reduces fragmentation, responds carefully to the impact of pests and diseases and does not risk further pests and diseases, conserves and enhances the special qualities and character of the landscape, the resilience of woodlands and trees and benefits people's enjoyment, health and well-being.
- WT3 The managed, gradual conversion of plantations on ancient woodland to deciduous woodland will be supported where locally distinct woodland types, tree species and bio-secure principally local provenance tree stock or natural regeneration are used.*
- WT4 Training, accreditation and wider understanding of woodland management to woodland owners and workers, local people and visitors will be encouraged and supported.

- WT5 The restoration and management of woodland open habitats and spaces, such as rides, glades, and wood pasture, for landscape, biodiversity and archaeology conservation purposes will be supported.
- WT6 The identification, protection, management, planned replacement and reintroduction of trees outside woodlands including fine specimen and 'veteran' trees will be pursued. This will include developing a Kent Downs based ash dieback recovery plan as part of wider woodland and tree establishment plan for the AONB.
- WT7 Positive and strategic management interventions to overcome damage to woodlands, such as from disease, illegal and harmful recreation, an expanding deer population, poorly managed use for game rearing, livestock and development associated with wood lotting, will be pursued.
- WT8 In response to pressures on woodlands and the positive motivations of many new woodland owners, co-ordinated actions and the development and promotion of guidance and support which integrates sound landscape, heritage and biodiversity management will be supported.
- WT9 New markets for sustainably produced, appropriately certified woodland products and marketing initiatives will be supported.
- WT10 Research to understand the ownership patterns and motivations of woodland owners will be encouraged to support a coordinated, strategic approach to the conservation and enhancement of the woodlands and trees of the Kent Downs.
- WT11 The identification and review the extent of ancient woodlands using up to date methodology will be supported.

* Principle WT3 may be amended only on the basis of sound evidence to reflect the possibility that non-native tree stock of native species could be more resilient to climate change impacts, a position statement will be prepared as part of the delivery of the AONB Management Plan.

8. Historic, Cultural and Scientific Heritage

Our vision for the historic, cultural and scientific heritage of the Kent Downs AONB

In 2031... the rich heritage of historic landscape, buildings, settlements, sites and their settings that characterise the Kent Downs' historic and cultural fabric are maintained in favourable condition and are enhanced to reflect their local character and significance. The environmental performance of historic buildings is enhanced in a way that is sensitive to their character. They are understood and cherished by local people and visitors alike for their intrinsic value and for their important contribution to quality of life and rural economy. Vibrant and exciting artistic and cultural interpretation and celebration of the Kent Downs is supported and strong partnerships for the arts and cultural development in the Downs is in place and delivering extraordinary, contemporary work enjoyed, created by and inspiring wide and diverse publics.

8.1 Overview

The Kent Downs is a significant cultural landscape; the UN definition of cultural heritage encompasses natural heritage which is the understandable focus of much of the plan for an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty however the concept of landscape encompasses much more than nature and landform and if we are to conserve and enhance this cultural landscape the plan must encompass wider components of landscape, including tangible and intangible cultural heritage. By affording adequate focus to the historic and cultural heritage of the landscape the fundamental objective of the AONB; being recognised and valued, is more likely to be achieved as is its conservation and enhancement. This approach supports the IUCN objective to provide a framework to underpin active involvement by the community in the management of valued landscapes or seascapes and the natural and cultural heritage that they contain

Virtually every facet of the Kent Downs has been shaped by thousands of years of human activity – in the fields and woods, tracks and lanes and villages and hamlets, an indelible memory of past times has been left to us. At the same time the extraordinary landscapes Kent Downs are particularly closely linked to the lives and inspirations of many of our greatest artists, scientists and leaders. While the landform and geology underlies its beauty, the Kent Downs AONB is very much a cultural landscape.

8.2 Historic and cultural heritage - special characteristics

There is a strong 'time depth' to the Kent Downs landscape and in its setting which adds to its distinctive, ancient feel. Glimpses of prehistory can be caught at various places across the AONB. Numerous Palaeolithic flints have been discovered in the AONB taking human activity back to the lower Palaeolithic period. Artefacts found on the higher land of the Kent Downs indicate the, probably occasional, presence of Mesolithic people. Notable traces of Neolithic culture are present in the lower Medway Valley in the form of megalithic burial monuments and structures which include Kit's Coty, Little Kit's Coty and the Coldrum Stones.

There are also earthen long barrows, particularly in the Medway and Stour Valleys. Bronze Age round barrows are dotted across the landscape and the Iron Age saw the development of massive hill-forts like that at Oldbury Hill near Ightham as well as widespread farmsteads and rural settlements.

Kent was probably the scene of the Roman invasion of Britain in AD43 and almost 400 years of Roman occupation have left their mark. The Roman road network, stretching in straight lines across the landscape is still represented by, for example, Stone Street which connected Canterbury with the port at Lympne and sections of Watling Street linking Dover, Canterbury, Rochester and London. Indeed throughout history Kent has been in the front line of exchange and conflict; this role has left an indelible prints on the landscape expressed in routeways and castles, trenches and docks.

The increasing sophistication and landscape impact of agriculture is recorded in the lynchets found throughout the Kent Downs. There is evidence that Roman and Iron Age field and settlement patterns have strongly influenced the landscape we see today.

Estate centres like Wye and Charing were established in the Anglo-Saxon period. From this time on the carving out of fields from woodland, known as assarting, and unenclosed wood pasture commons appeared in the Kent Downs landscape. Churches were also erected which formed the beginnings of the parochial structure that has continued to the present day. Drove ways, connecting estate centres with summer pastures in the Weald have left their mark in the particularly distinctive north-east to south-west orientation of the road network across much of the Downs which provides a 'grain' to the landscape.

The commons or 'minnises' of the high clay caps of the Kent Downs are believed to have been established by the Anglo-Saxon or early medieval period and form distinctive open areas of rough grass, bracken, heather and gorse. Many have now been enclosed but open minnises most notably Ewell Minnis near Dover and Stelling Minnis remain as important remnants of previously more widespread landscape features.

The Norman invasion saw the coming of the castle, varying in scale from that at Dover, the 'key' to England, to smaller structures of local lords, such as the ring-work and bailey at Thurnham. Villages grew into towns and churches were rebuilt in stone, ecclesiastical interest in the countryside is witnessed by monastic houses and the palaces of the Archbishop of Canterbury for example at Otford and Charing, both of which are located on the 'Pilgrims Way' or old road, itself an ancient route linking England to the continent. Local man John Kempe established the medieval college at Wye, in 1447 when he was Archbishop of York.

The character of the Kent Downs landscape was well established by the Tudor period. There were many nucleated villages or hamlets clustered around flint and brick churches and greens, as well as settlements along river valleys and routeways and spring line settlements at the base of the escarpment. Land was cultivated and grazed throughout the AONB and the many isolated farmsteads bear testimony to this agricultural history. It is believed that complex patterns of enclosure, particularly in the more fertile areas, have been created in part by the influence of the Kentish custom of 'Gavelkind' inheritance where property was divided equally rather than being allotted to the oldest heir, producing a multiplicity of holdings.

The selling off of church lands following the Reformation led to the growth of country estates with their parks and gardens which cover an important part of the AONB. Designed

landscapes in the Kent Downs include Godmersham and Chilham in the Stour Valley, Doddington and Belmont Parks in the mid Kent Downs and Bourne Park and Higham Park on the River Nailbourne.

Along the White Cliffs Heritage Coast, facing as it did potential attack from mainland Europe, there is a rich heritage of defence structures, including Dover Castle and the Western Heights, 19th century Martello towers and the concrete and brick remains of anti-invasion structures and colossal gun emplacements of the two World Wars. Valuable but non-designated 20th century defensive heritage exist across the Downs but away from the coast, examples include the numerous structures and features at Detling airfield. Other, more contemporary heritage features include the remains of, brick fields, railway arches, lime kilns, chalk pits ranging from small village pits to large sites associated with the Medway cement industry remind us of the various scales of industry found in but mostly around the landscape of the Kent Downs.

Aside from these grand and dominant historic sites and structures, the multitude of smaller cultural and historic features also help characterise the landscape of the AONB. These are the traces of ordinary people who have worked the land for centuries and have shaped its special character. Networks of ancient, often 'laid' hedgerows which still provide enclosure for livestock; wood and field banks which marked boundaries between different manors or estates, picked out with pollarded or 'stubbed' ancient trees; field patterns and lynchets revealing ploughing patterns from centuries ago; hollow ways and sunken lanes, now often byways, carved into the land by millennia of passing feet and hooves; and dene holes (deep excavations into the chalk) and borrow pits where rock and minerals were excavated by hand.

The Kent Downs has a rich tradition of half-timbered and weather-boarded buildings. There is also a legacy of locally distinctive architecture in locally derived building materials such as Ragstone, Flint and Chalk. Soft red bricks and peg-tiles lend colour and here and there long-straw thatching can be seen. The conservation and enhancement of these diverse buildings requires local sources of building materials, as well as skilled crafts workers who understand and respect the building traditions of the past and the architectural vernacular.

There is still much to discover, for example, the Kent Downs continually reveals archaeological surprises, often of national importance; the significance of the unknown historic heritage, as well as that which is undesignated is felt to be underplayed and more focus should be afforded to it.

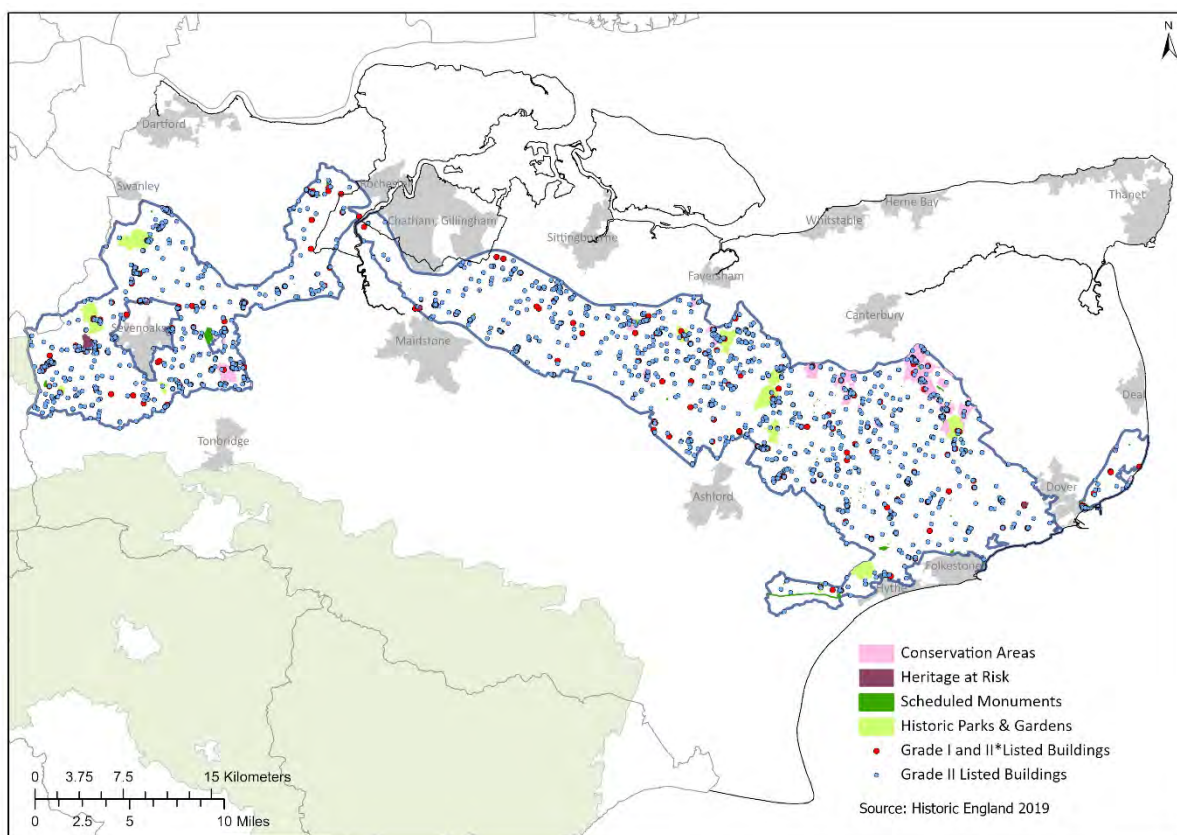


Figure 8.1 Heritage Features in the Kent Downs AONB

8.3 Historic Landscape Characterisation and Heritage Strategies

‘Every place, like every person, has its distinctive character, in large measure determined by its inherited features such as streets, hedges, archaeological sites, buildings or place names. Understanding this character is one of the starting points for deciding a place’s future, the first step in working out how places can be made better in the future’ (Historic England).

Historic Landscape Characterisation describes landscape character based on historical attributes surviving in the present landscape. Kent was one of the first counties to prepare a historic landscape character map on a county wide basis. The mapping is intended to provide broad scale and overall assessment of historic character.

The Kent Downs AONB is made up mainly of a ‘field pattern’ historic landscape type, covering approximately 63% of the area. Whilst this historic landscape type is further defined into subcategories, there is no predominant field type. Woodland landscape types also feature heavily with some large tracts being present in the east of the AONB. Also notable are the presence of a large number of areas of parkland, indicating the importance of the managed estates within the landscape.

As part of this review of the Kent Downs AONB Management Plan the Landscape Character Assessment has been revised and updated; closer attention to historic landscape character has been incorporated.

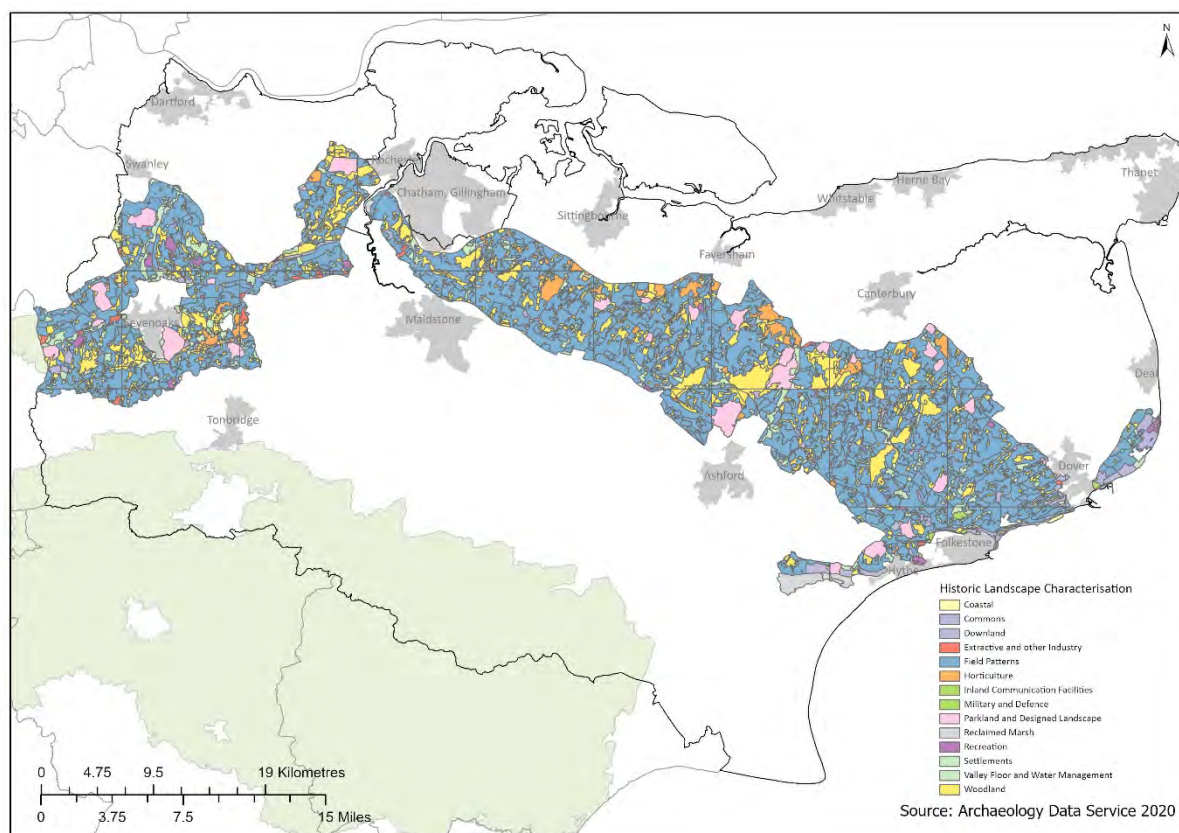


Figure 8.2 Historic Landscape Characterisation of the Kent Downs AONB

Several Local Authorities with land in the Kent Downs AONB have taken forward Heritage Strategies which contain comprehensive assessment of the heritage of the area and recommendations for its conservation and enhancement, such strategies cover the AONB and its wider setting. The NPPF states that plans should set out a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment, including heritage assets most at risk through neglect and decay. Heritage Strategies are an important source of evidence in support of the vision aims and principles of the AONB Management Plan.

It is recognised that there may be archaeological sites within the AONB that do not relate to the existing landscape. An example is Palaeolithic sites whose landscape of origin was very different from the landscape today. There will be times when the management of the modern landscape conflicts with the needs of such sites and it is important that they are not negatively impacted by modern landscape management needs.

8.4 Artistic, cultural and scientific importance

The extraordinary landscapes Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty are particularly closely linked to the lives and inspirations of many of our greatest artists, scientists and leaders.

When the nation voted in a BBC poll for our 'greatest Britons' the top vote was, perhaps unsurprisingly, for Sir Winston Churchill and 4th was Charles Darwin, both lived in and were inspired by the landscapes of the Kent Downs.

Churchill's early life is described as 'itinerant' but when he did decide to put down roots it was at Chartwell in the western part of the Kent Downs. It is said that the tranquillity of the place captivated him along with the views which stretch far across the Weald. Churchill apparently said that "I bought Chartwell for that view." It was, however, also only 25 miles from the House of Commons, despite this convenience, his view was that "a day away from Chartwell was a day wasted".

The characteristics of Chartwell which so inspired Churchill are also some of those which remain highly valued by people today; the views from the Downs were one of the most important 'targets' when the Kent Downs was designated an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and when we ask people what they most value about the Kent Downs today, it is the scenery and views which always come top. Along with this the tranquillity that the Downs afford in an increasingly busy county is much cherished.

Darwin lived and worked at Downe House just beyond the western edge of the Kent Downs, the chalk landscapes of the Downs were a crucial part of his studies. Dubbed 'Darwin's landscape laboratory' the downland landscape is of critical scientific importance and unique cultural significance as the place in which the theory of evolution by natural selection was developed. When Downe House and the surrounding landscape was placed on the tentative list for World Heritage Status it was the Chalk landscapes that 'provided unique insights into the scientific understanding of natural life and biodiversity. The ideas that were developed from daily observations and experiments at Downe have had a profound influence on the life sciences, medicine, agriculture, philosophy, the creative arts and general views of humankind's relation to other living creatures in the natural world.'

In the Canterbury Tales, Chaucer assembles a motley band of 29 pilgrims at the Tabbard Inn in Southwark. Together, they travel the old pilgrimage route to Canterbury Cathedral to visit the shrine of St Thomas. Famously Chaucer describes: *From every shire's end/Of England, to Canterbury they wend/The holy blissful martyr for to seek/That him hath helped when that they were sick*" There is no certain route that pilgrims followed but certainly the modern day North Downs Way and Pilgrims Way along with old routeways and churches which still punctuate the landscape of the Downs were features of pilgrimage.

Fine houses with their parks and gardens can be found across the Kent Downs, of these Godmersham frequently hosted Jane Austen 'who would spend weeks at a time with her brother Edward, his wife Elizabeth and their children, for whom she was a much loved aunt. Godmersham is believed by many to be the inspiration for her novel Mansfield Park (1814).

Charles Dickens had many connections with the Downs, including the village of Cobham where the Leather Bottle pub is known to many as Charles Dickens' favourite Ale House. According to the pub, 'the great man not only used the inn and often stayed; he also featured it in The Pickwick Papers, for it was here that the lovelorn Mr Tracy Tupman fled after being jilted by his sweetheart Rachel Wardle, where he drowned his sorrows in Mr Pickwick's company.'

Bishopsbourne was sometime home to novelist Joseph Conrad, Ian Fleming referenced the extraordinary views from the White Cliffs in *Moonraker* and much more recently Riddley Walker by Russell Hoban, a post-apocalyptic science fiction novel set in Kent where the Devil's Kneading Trough at Wye features as 'Mr Clevver's Roaling Place'.

Perhaps it is visual artists that draw most from landscape; in the Kent Downs the Darent Valley is especially notable as being 'indelibly associated with one of the greatest of English Romantic artists, Samuel Palmer. For a brief period, the landscape inspired some of the most intense paintings in the history of British art, so original that Palmer's contemporaries laughed; but they are now recognised as uniquely personal expressions of a vision of England much closer to that of William Blake than the more traditional views of J.M.W. Turner and John Constable.

'Few landscapes in England are so closely associated with a single artist. The only comparable example is the Stour Valley in East Anglia, where Constable, who was born at East Bergholt, captured the rivers and farmhouses, the gentle hills and varied vegetation, in a succession of naturalistic paintings from the beginning of his career to the late 1820s.... Palmer ..worked in a wholly individual manner, inspired by Blake's technique, by Old Master prints, and above all, by the possibility of experiencing in the Darent Valley the visions of ideal landscape, of paradise, that he had been seeking. For Palmer, like Blake, believed that the second coming of Christ would take place in England, not in the 'dark Satanic mills' of the north, but in the land of 'mountains green, 'pleasant pastures, and 'clouded hills'. In a sense, Palmer found in the Darent Valley the epitome of 'England's green and pleasant land' as described by Blake.' Colin Harrison Senior Curator of European Art Ashmolean Museum

More recently Thomas Sidney Cooper's painted in the Stour Valley and Henry Moore lived and worked in the Kent Downs at Kingston near Canterbury where again the landscapes of the Kent Downs were seminal in his work; 'It was this landscape that had a profound influence on Moore's work. His time there allowed him the space to carve in the open air and to indulge his life-long preference for a natural setting for his sculptures.'

Moore began filling this rural landscape with wood obtained from a Canterbury timber yard and blocks of Hopton Wood stone that came from Derbyshire. These were erected in the garden and surrounding countryside. He later wrote, "Living at Burcroft was what probably clinched my interest in trying to make sculpture and nature enhance each other."

Ideas for his sculptures were taken directly from natural forms such as stone, pebbles and pieces of wood. Sketchbooks from the 1930s show the artist's constant obsession with nature and the progression from natural forms to sculptural ideas; some of them providing source material for much later sculptures. "Space, distance, landscape, plants, pebbles, rocks, bones, all excite me and give me ideas" explained Moore.

There is strong contemporary interpretation and artistic celebration of the Kent Downs AONB landscapes. In Kings Wood near Ashford a collection of sculptures within the forest respond to the place and the Stour Valley Creative Partnership commissions new and young artists to respond to the beauty of the woods. Along the National Cycle Route 2, a series of commissions forms the Chalk and Channel Way; from sculpture to poetry, artists have been inspired by the dramatic coastline between Folkestone and Dover. Most recently a commission taken forward by the AONB Unit's Ash Project titled 'Ash to Ash' by Ackroyd and Harvey creates a dramatic and fitting artistic response to the urgent issue of Ash dieback.

The Kent Downs landscape continues to be influential and inspirational to contemporary

artists and cultural life, and this quality needs to be celebrated, engagement widened and made more diverse linked to culturally led regeneration activities and promoted more widely.

8.3 Historic and cultural heritage - main issues, opportunities and threats identified

- a. The need to increase understanding, engagement, awareness of, and inspiration from, the historic, artistic, built and cultural heritage of the Kent Downs; and to encourage greater opportunities for the historic and cultural heritage to inform contemporary decisions, landscape management, regeneration and place making.
- b. The need to conserve and protect the historic environment, both above and below ground, designated and non-designated. Issues include the effect of deep ploughing, the introduction of (deep rooting) energy crops and arable conversion on sites containing buried archaeological remains, heritage crime, and development affecting or in the setting of historic buildings.
- c. The gradual degradation of the landscape and its historic features caused by localised actions of land managers, permitted developments, infrastructure development, utilities, roads and railways. These might include new or widened accesses, hedgerow damage and vehicle movements.
- d. Climate change also offers an increasing threat to heritage assets through the drying and waterlogging of archaeological sites and the impact of more severe weather events on both archaeological sites and historic buildings.
- e. Recognition and reinforcement of special historic landscape character and the local distinctiveness of settlements, settlement patterns, farmsteads, ancient routeways, buildings and design in the Kent Downs landscape through the planning process as well as in, detailed historic characterisation, Heritage Strategies, Neighbourhood Plans, Village Design Statements and Conservation Area Appraisals.
- f. Dearth and loss of skills and local sustainably sourced materials for historic building conservation, informing new developments and sustaining traditional management approaches important to landscape character and qualities.
- g. The recognition of the importance of 20th Century heritage in the landscape.
- h. The opportunity to work collaboratively with the Arts Council, Heritage Fund and cultural regeneration programmes such as the Medway City of Culture bid to secure new artistic and cultural activity and an intelligent, innovative curatorial approach to celebrate, understand and interpret the complex landscape components of the Kent Downs, research the dynamics of human experience in the landscape and support rural and urban regeneration.

8.4 Historic and cultural heritage - aims

A landscape in which:

- 1 The principal special characteristics and qualities of the historic character of the Kent Downs landscape, the sites and features, field and settlement patterns, villages,

hedgerows, routeways, woodlands and parklands are recognised, valued, conserved and enhanced.

2. The historic environment helps shape new development in the AONB and its setting and contributes to a distinctive sense of place. This will be achieved by ensuring that the heritage is considered from the earliest stages of project development.
3. The economic and 'quality of life' benefits of living, working in and visiting an historically-rich, artistically and culturally inspiring environment is recognised and actively supported.
4. New developments respect and reinforce the traditions of the past, whilst integrating sustainable technologies and sensitive design.
5. The landscape context and setting of historic buildings, features and settlements is protected, conserved and enhanced.
6. Restoration and conversion of the built heritage and new developments reflect local character and will meet high environmental standards, using sustainably sourced, locally derived materials and skilled workers.
7. Communities are engaged and involved in the historic and cultural environment of the Kent Downs through methods such as conservation area management planning, village design, neighbourhood planning, place making and interpretation.
8. Vibrant and contemporary artistic and cultural celebration of the Kent Downs supports the conservation, interpretation, enjoyment, understanding and enhancement of the landscape and engages diverse publics.

8.5 Historic and cultural heritage - principles

- HCH1 The conservation and enhancement of the historic character and features of the Kent Downs AONB landscape will be pursued and heritage-led sustainable economic activity and tourism encouraged.
- HCH2 A wider understanding of the historic, cultural, scientific and artistic importance of the Kent Downs landscape and its historic character, including a review of the Historic Landscape Characterisation of the AONB, will be supported in part to inform the interpretation and management of the AONB.
- HCH3 In recognition of the emerging national relationship with the Arts Council and arts and cultural regeneration efforts in Kent an arts and cultural strategy for the Kent Downs will be pursued.
- HCH4 The preparation and use of best practice guidance, promotion of skill acquisition and sourcing suitable sustainable materials for conserving, enhancing and adapting the historic and cultural environment to climate change will be supported.
- HCH5 Opportunities to develop contemporary and innovative artistic, historic, cultural and scientific interpretation and celebration of the landscape and people of the Kent Downs will be pursued.

- HCH6 The application of high standards of design sympathetic to cultural heritage within the AONB, identified in guidance including the AONB Landscape Design Handbook, Kent Downs Farmstead Guidance and any relevant local policy or management plans will be pursued.
- HCH7 The protection, conservation, and enhancement of heritage features under threat will be pursued through policies, projects, training and partnerships.

9. The Heritage Coasts

Our vision for the Heritage Coasts of the Kent Downs

AONB

In 2031... the special place that the White Cliffs of Dover have in the hearts and minds of millions of people is justified by the reality experienced on the ground. Collaborative effort continues to transform the management of the coasts which meets the needs of the landscape, natural and historic environment and communities, while supporting the Covid recovery and sustainable regeneration of the coastal economy including of the coastal towns.

9.1 Overview

The magnificent chalk cliffs between Folkestone and Kingsdown form one of Britain's most evocative and best-known landmarks. For many they are the first sight of Britain while views to France hold a special appeal, where chalk and clay cliffs, also held in great national regard, mirror the landscape drama. The Dover Strait is one of the world's most important, recognised and busiest seascapes.

The Kent Downs has a special place in some of our most renowned literature, the White Cliffs, forever in the hearts and minds of our nation, appear in many well-known songs, stories and poems sometimes as a metaphor for the whole country; they are never so well described as in King Lear as Gloucester entreates Edgar (Tom) to take him to the Dover Cliffs – he describes that;

*'There is a cliff, whose high and bending head,
Looks fearfully in the confinèd deep.
Bring me but to the very brim of it,
And I'll repair the misery thou dost bear
With something rich about me. From that place
I shall no leading need.'*

Edgar describes the cliff;

*'Come on, sir; here's the place: stand still. How fearful
And dizzy 'tis, to cast one's eyes so low!
The crows and choughs that wing the midway air
Show scarce so gross as beetles: half way down
Hangs one that gathers samphire, dreadful trade!
Methinks he seems no bigger than his head:
The fishermen, that walk upon the beach,
Appear like mice; and yond tall anchoring bark,
Diminish'd to her cock; her cock, a buoy
Almost too small for sight: the murmuring surge,
That on the unnumber'd idle pebbles chafes,
Cannot be heard so high. I'll look no more;
Lest my brain turn, and the deficient sight
Topple down headlong.'*

Globally coastal Chalk is scarce, the UK holds 57% of Europe's resource, Kent holds 35% of the UK resource.

The impacts of global climate change, including sea level rise and the greater frequency and intensity of storms, is projected to have a significant effect on the Heritage Coast, making adaptation strategies an important priority for the future management of the coast.

This extraordinary natural and cultural resource can strongly assist the regeneration and recovery of Dover and Folkestone and has been identified as the basis to secure World Heritage Site status for the Dover Strait. Recreation pressure has increased significantly in the plan period with the National Trust reporting over 10% year on year increases in visitor numbers and visitor car parks are regularly closed on account of capacity constraints. Visitor pressure is unevenly spread with Langdon Cliffs recording over 500,000 visitors each year and areas of Lydden Spout (also in National Trust ownership) only 4000 visitor movements.

Defence and invasion is one of the themes of the Heritage Coast and forms an important reference in the landscape. Features in the Kent Downs include the magnificent Dover Castle described as 'the key to England', Napoleonic Martello towers, the 'listening ears' built between the wars and superseded by radar installations some of which are now listed. World War II frontline fortifications, defences, gun emplacements and anti-tank devices are peppered along the coast.

Communication and cultural exchange are important themes. In 1899 the first international wireless transmission was sent from Wimereux to the South Foreland lighthouse. Cross channel trade and cultural exchange continues apace – the Strait of Dover being one of the world's busiest shipping lanes. The close proximity of Dover Harbour and views of the Strait's central shipping channel means ferries and large cargo vessels are frequent features.

Arising both from conflict and seagoing exchange and transport there is an extraordinary and outstanding collection of wrecks comprising both air and water-craft, including the Dover Boat, the oldest sea-going boat in the world. Another example is the protected wreck of the Langdon Bay, located on the edge of Dover Harbour. It is thought to be the remains of a Middle Bronze Age vessel carrying a scrap metal cargo from France to Britain, indicating early cross-channel trade.

Navigation marks are often conspicuous in the landscape for example the National Trust-managed South Foreland lighthouse, which stands 21 metres high on the headland, and a white windmill (near to the lighthouse).

The Heritage Coasts

England's 32 Heritage Coasts have been established in the best areas of undeveloped coast to:

- conserve, protect and enhance:
- the natural beauty of the coastline
- their terrestrial, coastal and marine flora and fauna
- their heritage features
- encourage and help the public to enjoy, understand and appreciate these areas

- maintain and improve the health of inshore waters affecting heritage coasts and their beaches through appropriate environmental management measures
- take account of the needs of agriculture, forestry and fishing and the economic and social needs of the small communities on these coasts

Natural England's Designation Strategy promotes AONB Management Plans incorporating policies for the management of Heritage Coasts at a strategic level. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) recognises the importance of the special character of Heritage Coasts and advises that development should be consistent with that character.

The White Cliffs Countryside Partnership (WCCP) has a Heritage Coast management function as part of its purpose. In the previous management plan period, the Kent Downs AONB Unit worked in partnership to secure and then chaired the 'Up on the Downs' Landscape Partnership Scheme funded by the (then) Heritage Lottery Fund, the Scheme made significant and lasting investments in improving the condition of and partnership arrangements affecting the Heritage Coast and a wider inland area.

In the plan period of the last AONB Management Plan the National Trust has made important land purchases in the two Heritage Coasts and invested further in their conservation and enhancement, this new ownership arrangement, along with local partnership working has greatly increased the delivery of the Heritage Coast purposes. As a testament to the value placed by people on this area of coast, a National Trust appeal to purchase land reached its target of £1.2 m in just 19 days.

Seascape assessment of the Strait of Dover

The description of seascape character, like landscape character describes what is distinctive, special and characteristic in an area of sea (and land in coastal areas). Seascape character assessment is a tool and spatial framework to help integrate management decisions. Completed in July 2015 a full seascape character assessment of the Strait of Dover represents an important management resource. The study provides evidence base to support marine planning and management as well as that of the coastal zone. The seascape character assessment has been used in support of the preparation of this Plan.

The assessment helped confirm the special characteristics and qualities of the Heritage Coasts and the priorities for management. The Strait is described as a cohesive seascape unified by geology, socio-economic functions, biodiversity, history, culture and intervisibility. The Strait is an area of multiple interests and values and the Assessment confirms the need for sensitive and integrated management which is clear in the vision, aims and principles of the plan.

The seascape character assessment has fed into the joint UK/ France Dover Strait Action Plan which while focusing on energy and climate change issues promotes several actions and activities which are coherent with the objectives of this Plan.

Marine Management Plans and Marine Conservation Zones.

Marine plans guide those who use and regulate the marine area to encourage sustainable development while considering the environment, economy and society. As a result marine plan policy topics across environmental sectors, economic sectors and social sectors are

relevant to Kent Downs. Such policy topics can include Seascape, Biodiversity and Land-based infrastructure. AONBs are referenced in many numerous policies.

Heritage Coasts are included in Policy S-HER-1 (Heritage Assets) and Policy S-SCP-1 (Seascape) in the South Marine Plan. It is expected to be in similar policies in the South East Marine Plan.

The Heritage Coast east of Samphire Hoe will be covered by policies within the South East Inshore Marine Plan prepared by the Marine Management Organisation. The south east marine plan area includes tidal waters and extends to the mean high water springs mark. The Kent coast west of Samphire Hoe is covered by policies within the 2018 statutory South Marine Plan.

Described as 'blue belt' around the English Coast Marine Conservation Zones are areas designated by the Government to protect a range of nationally important, rare or threatened habitats and species. There are three designated MCZs close to or within the Kent Downs Heritage Coasts: Dover to Folkestone; Dover to Deal and the Folkestone Pomerania.

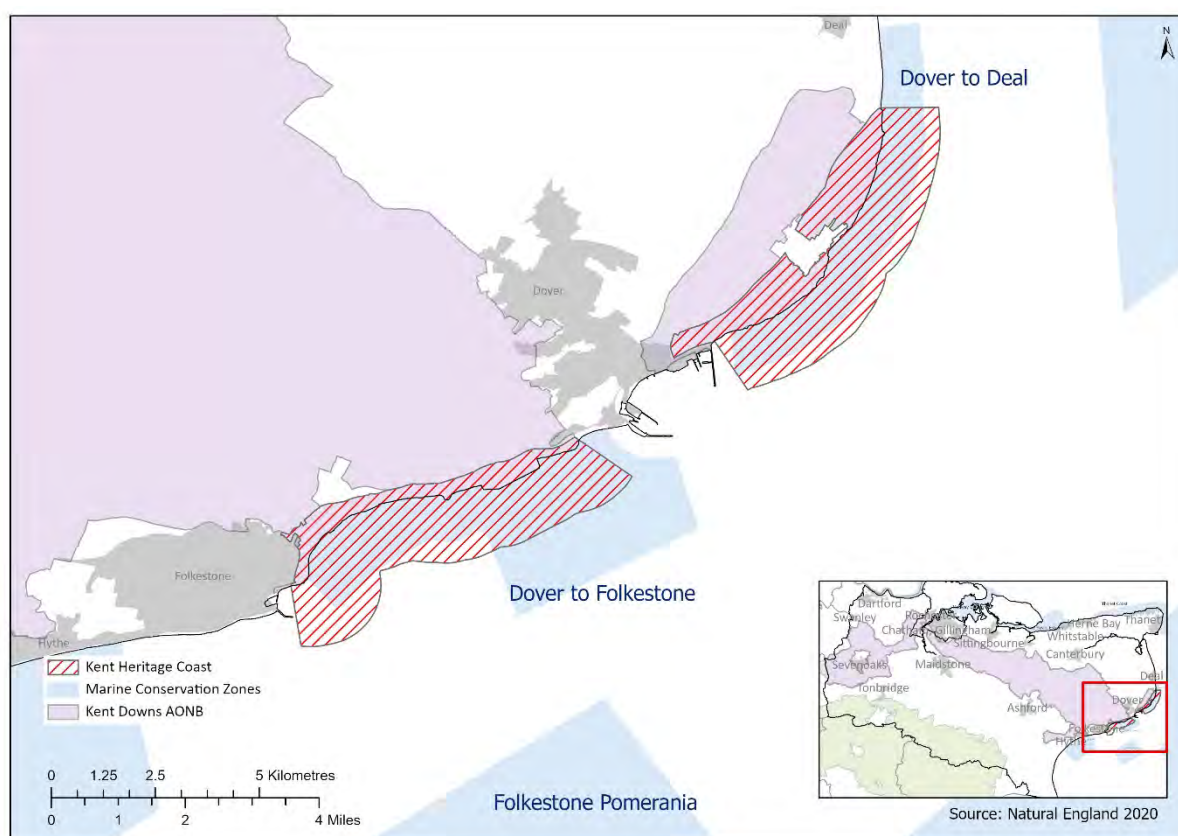


Figure 9.1 Kent Heritage Coast

9.2 The Heritage Coasts - special characteristics and qualities

The Heritage Coasts either side of Dover have been defined as some of the best undeveloped coast in England, they include the shoreline, cliffs and adjacent downland. The

White Cliffs form part of the UK's national identity; forming a soaring landscape with a seascape of vast horizons of sea and sky extending westwards to the subtle crumbling Greensand and Clay cliffs of Folkestone.

Behind the rearing cliffs is a landscape of windswept coastal chalk downs, with further undeveloped areas of salt-wind sculpted scrub, open downland, and farmland punctuated by the remnants of thousands of years of exchange and conflict. The Heritage Coasts are one of the few places in south east England which offer a true feeling of 'wildness'. The ever-changing chalk cliffs, foreshore and seabed platform are home to distinctive wildlife influenced by the sea, climate, geology and exposure.

The wildlife of the Heritage Coasts is internationally important, the clifftops consisting of nationally important chalk grassland and scrub, the cliff-faces supporting important breeding sea bird colonies including increasing numbers Fulmars, Rock Pipits, Lesser-black backed Gulls and Peregrines. Seabirds wheeling high in the sky connect the sea and sky.

The cliffs and grassland contain rare plants such as Hoary and Sea Stock, Rock Sea-Lavender, Sea Heath and Wild Cabbage. Most of the area is protected as SSSI, not just for the rich communities of birds, wildflowers but also seaweeds and particularly for the invertebrates. The Heritage Coasts are a vital landing point for migrating birds and insects and are home to many rare species. The proximity to mainland Europe places the Heritage Coasts in a key position as species migrate in response to climate change.

Marine habitats are a key part of the character and qualities of the two Heritage Coasts as is demonstrated by the two Marine Conservation Zones (MCZs) which cover broadly the same areas of the seaward extent.

Dover to Folkestone MCZ is an inshore site which includes the wave-cut intertidal chalk platforms that form an almost continuous reef between Kingsdown, Deal in the north east and Folkestone Warren in the south west.

This MCZ is a highly diverse area with a number of habitats and features of interest. The chalk communities on the seashore are one of the best examples in the region, supporting a range of seaweeds and the animals that associate with them. Rocky outcrops, ledges and boulders support intertidal under boulder communities, an important habitat, of which this example is considered to be one of the best examples in the region. Boulders create shaded areas that provide a refuge to sea squirts, sea mats, and sponges. The undersides of the boulder provide a habitat for animals like sea slugs, long-clawed porcelain crabs and brittlestars, which shelter and feed in the damp shaded conditions. Crabs, fish and young lobsters also scavenge for food and seek shelter amongst the boulders. On the seabed, mixed sediment is rich in mobile animals including brittlestars, squat lobsters, crabs, fish and molluscs, and wild native oysters are found scattered across the site.

Dover to Deal MCZ protects a number of habitats and species. The site helps to protect intertidal under boulder communities, where large boulders provide shaded, cave-like conditions for unusual algae to thrive, and mobile animals such as long-clawed porcelain crabs, sea slugs and brittlestars shelter amongst sponges. Crabs, fish and young lobsters also scavenge for food and seek shelter amongst the boulders. This site includes excellent examples of littoral chalk communities which are unique communities of seaweeds and the animals that associate with them. Areas of littoral chalk are small in range and such areas are limited within Britain. The area also includes the best example in the region of wave-cut platforms, flat areas at the base of a cliff formed by wave erosion. Below these platforms lie

gullies and rock pools, which support several types of seaweed. The chalk foreshore at St Margaret's Bay has one of the richest communities of algae in the south east. As well as Ross worm reefs subtidal off Kingsdown, there is a well-developed Ross worm reef between Dover and South Foreland, in the lower shore where sand fringes the edge of a chalk reef. The presence of Ross worm reefs on chalk reefs is extremely rare, and this reef is also thought to seed more vulnerable reefs offshore.

The geological exposures of the cliffs form an internationally important stratigraphic reference site for extensive and near-continuous exposures of Lower, Middle and Upper Chalk, historically important for their contribution to the sciences of geology and coastal geomorphology and are all designated as SSSI. The Chalk cliffs and to the west Gault Clay are rich in fossils. On the seashore at Copt Point the exposed Greensand forms a series of rock pools with important seaweed colonies. The Greensand was also the home of an active quern stone (corn grinding) industry dating to the first century BC.

Like the natural heritage, the historic and cultural heritage of the Heritage Coasts is of national and international significance, there are frequent cultural references in music, drama, literature, poetry and painting and the built heritage ranges from the magnificent Dover Castle to the underground scratches of graffiti in the chalk by a bored, or scared soldier from the Second World War.

The Heritage Coasts are a popular area for quiet countryside recreation; the cliff tops are crossed by the Saxon Shore Way Long Distance Path and the North Downs Way National Trail. The England Coast Path has been created along these sections of coast and there are several areas of open access land. Several areas offer extraordinary, panoramic views across to France. While access to the base of the cliffs can be difficult, it provides a feeling of remote wildness and relative tranquillity with exposure to the elements being a key feature.

9.3 The Heritage Coasts - main issues, opportunities and threats

- a. Cultivation and coastal erosion have reduced the botanically-rich chalk grassland and associated historic heritage on the cliff tops to a narrow strip, making management difficult and placing the habitat at risk, this has been addressed in several areas and there remains the opportunity to continue this important effort.
- b. High and rapidly increasing visitor pressure, particularly at the Dover to Kingsdown Heritage Coast and parts of the Folkestone Warren is degrading important habitats and placing the historic heritage at risk and reducing the valued sense of tranquillity as well as the visitor experience – key sites such as the National Trust Visitor Centre exceed their capacity for visitor parking on regular occasions.
- c. Arable agriculture can sit uncomfortably with the natural beauty and wild scenery of the cliff tops and can damage the historic heritage, a significant opportunity remains further to expand the valued coastal grassland, it is also thought to be causing diffuse pollution affecting the quality of the marine environment.
- d. Discordant development, for instance caravan parks, visitor resources, and unsympathetic screening attempts occur in the Heritage Coasts.
- e. The enthusiasm for the area brings an opportunity build on the collaborative

management activity and improve coordination and impact.

- f. Development pressure and traffic growth continues in and in the setting of the Heritage Coast.
- g. The need to increase understanding of the dynamic nature of the coast, accelerating coastal processes and the impacts of climate change.
- h. Despite improvements achieved through partnership management but there are remaining areas of inappropriate, antisocial and illegal activities, such as off-roading vehicles, disrespectful wild camping, fly-tipping and vandalism in parts of the Heritage Coasts.
- i. The safety, interpretation, conservation and potential sensitive re-purposing of remaining military and historic structures, many of which are un-designated is a new heritage priority.
- j. The very high quality, iconic natural and historic environment can be an important component of a programme to regenerate the coastal towns of Dover and Folkestone, but the Heritage Coasts are in themselves extremely sensitive to development and visitor pressure.
- k. Marine litter and air pollution are significant detractors from the character and qualities of the Heritage Coast.
- l. The opportunity identified and supported by Kent County Council and the Pas-de-Calais Department to secure World Heritage Site status for the Strait of Dover has yet to be realised. The UNESCO Sites Across the Channel (USAC) project offers an opportunity to help realise the ambition.
- m. Marine Conservation Zones identify nationally important areas of the marine environment and afford the opportunity to generate agreed management plans for each Zone.
- n. The Heritage Coasts are much loved, genuinely iconic national landscapes with partnerships in place to support their management.
- o. A new partnership has developed to promote the reintroduction of the chough to the Heritage Coasts; this distinctive and charismatic bird could be a trigger for further collaboration amongst land managers and wider improvements in the habitat of the Heritage Coasts. At the same time the once substantial Kittiwake Colony has disappeared, there is a general lack of trend data of the important wildlife features of the Heritage Coast.

9.4 The Heritage Coasts - aims

A landscape in which:

- 1. A wide, collaborative approach achieves careful, appropriate management of as well as respect and international recognition for the Heritage Coasts which reflects the

extremely high national esteem in which they are held.

2. The extreme importance and sensitivity of the Heritage Coasts are recognised publicly, through appropriate international status and in policy, projects and programmes.
3. The importance and value placed on these iconic landscapes delivers resources and partnerships to ensure their future management and which supports the regeneration of the nearby coastal towns.
4. Lost or damaged marine and coastal habitats and species are recovered and the wildness of our Heritage Coasts is protected and restored.

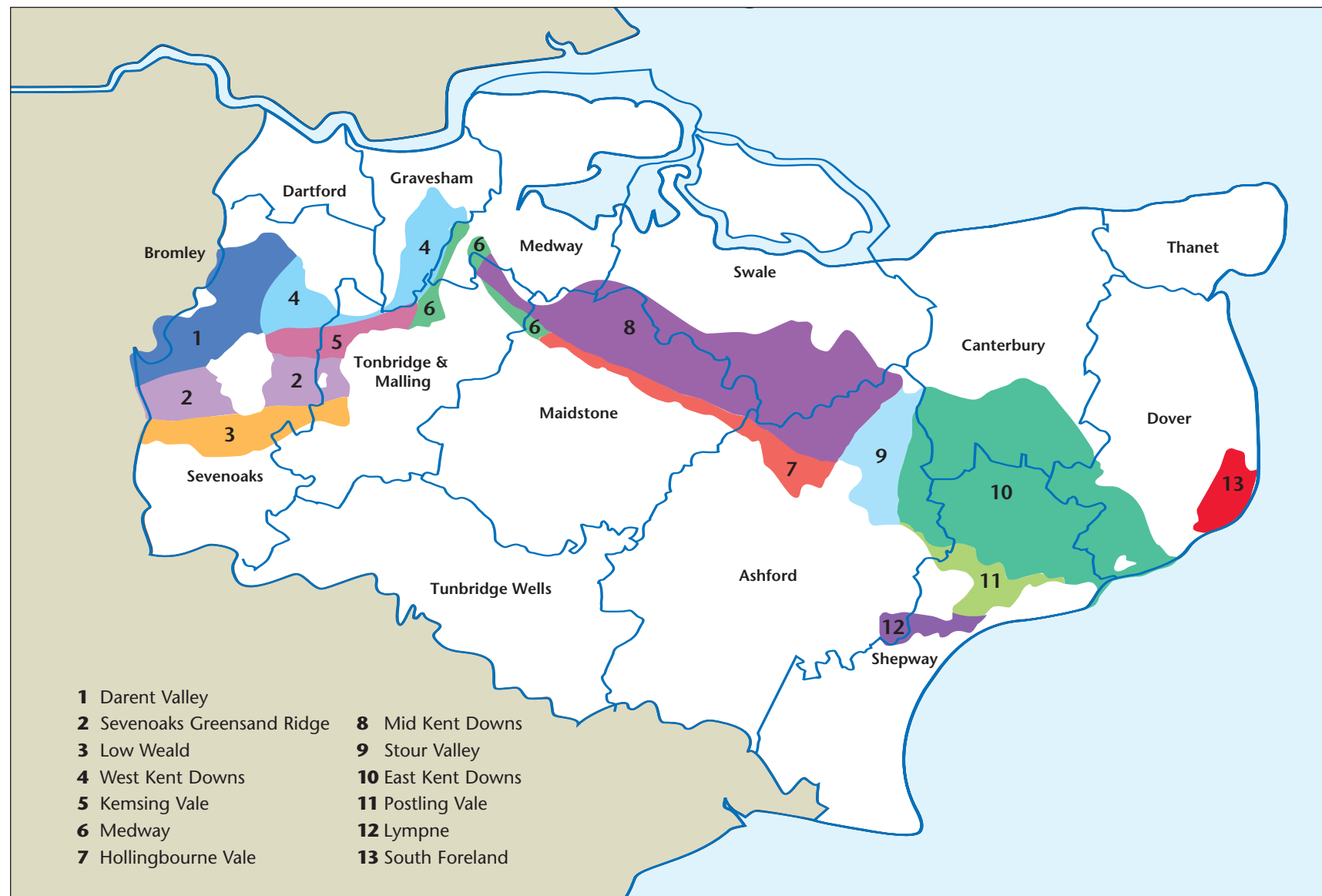
9.5 The Heritage Coasts - principles

- HC1 Coastal defence policies and approaches will respect the special character and qualities of the Heritage Coasts, allowing, where practicable, a naturally functioning coastline.
- HC2 The opportunity to support economic regeneration and recovery through the sustainable and integrated management of the Heritage Coasts in accordance with their defined purposes and those of the AONB will be pursued.
- HC3 Threats to the qualities and character of the Heritage Coasts will be resisted and managed.
- HC4 A collaborative approach, such as that employed by the WCCP and the Up on the Downs Landscape Partnership, will continue to be pursued to secure the objectives for Heritage Coast strategy and management and address the specific threats and opportunities identified.
- HC5 Achieving World Heritage Site status or other appropriate international recognition for the Strait of Dover will be supported.
- HC6 The conservation and enhancement of the special characteristics of the Heritage Coasts and Strait of Dover will be pursued through the Marine Plan making process, the development of new Heritage Coast Management Plans and the preparation of Marine Conservation Zone Management Plans.
- HC7 The England Coast Path National Trail will be managed in a manner that is sensitive to the landscape character and qualities and in partnership to meet and retain National Trail standards. The conservation and enhancement of the landscape of the corridor of the National Coastal Trail in the Heritage Coasts will be pursued.
- HC8 A collaborative strategic approach to manage visitor pressure to benefit the visitor experience, reduce impact, conserve the character and qualities of the area and support sustainable regeneration will be supported.
- HC9 New opportunities to secure 'protective ownership' of areas of the Heritage Coasts and partnerships to enhance management with existing private and public owners will

be supported.

- HC10 The extension of the definition of Heritage Coast/ AONB into the marine environment and inclusion of areas currently defined as Heritage Coast within the AONB will be supported.

The Kent Downs landscape character areas and local authority boundaries



Sevenoaks Greensand Ridge • Westerham to Ightham

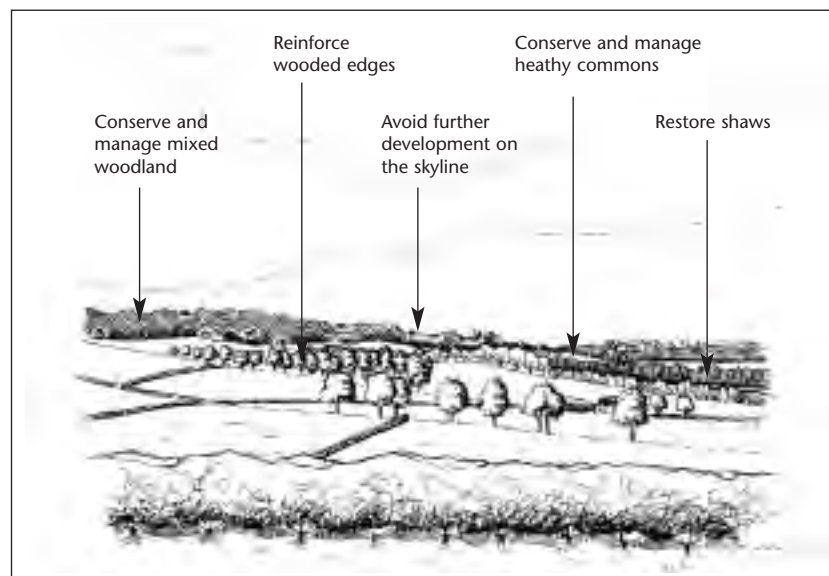
Local Character Areas: Westerham Greensand, Ightham Greensand.

Key Characteristics

- Extensive, often dense, deciduous and coniferous woodlands.
- Heathy commons.
- Small orchards.
- Magnificent views across the Low Weald.
- Small pastures divided by lines of mature trees and species-rich hedgerows.
- Ragstone buildings and walls.
- Occasional cobnut groves or platts.
- Split chestnut post and rail fencing and chestnut-paling.

Overall Landscape Character Objectives

- To maintain the existing overall wooded character of the ridge, encouraging deciduous woodlands, and a mosaic of small healthy spaces within the scarp top woodlands, and to retain and open up extensive and far-reaching views across the Low Weald.
- To maintain the intimate landscape of the orchard belt, preserving the tall shelterbelts, network of small lanes and the cobnut platts.



Westerham Greensand

Key Characteristics

- Areas of dense mixed woodland.
- Thickets of birch and gorse.
- Tall stands of oak and beech, conifer plantations and old chestnut coppice.
- Series of small lanes.
- Larger fields edged by thick strips of mature trees.
- Scattered farms.
- Sinuous pastures at valley bottom.
- Substantial modern houses surrounded by horse paddocks.



Westerham Greensand

Design Guidelines

- Conserve and manage dense woodland cover of stands of oak and beech, sweet chestnut coppice and thickets of birch.
- Restore and manage heaths and acid grassland.
- Reinforce wooded edges.
- Conserve, manage and restore wide shaws in the farmland.
- Maintain the character of the narrow lanes including distinctive oblique angle junctions.
- Conserve the wooded setting of existing small settlements, and ensure any new small-scale development does not intrude on long views.
- Seek the use of sympathetic building materials such as ragstone, brick and tile.
- Avoid further development on the skyline.
- Integrate new development on edge of villages with small woodlands and hedgerow trees.



Ightham Greensand

Key Characteristics

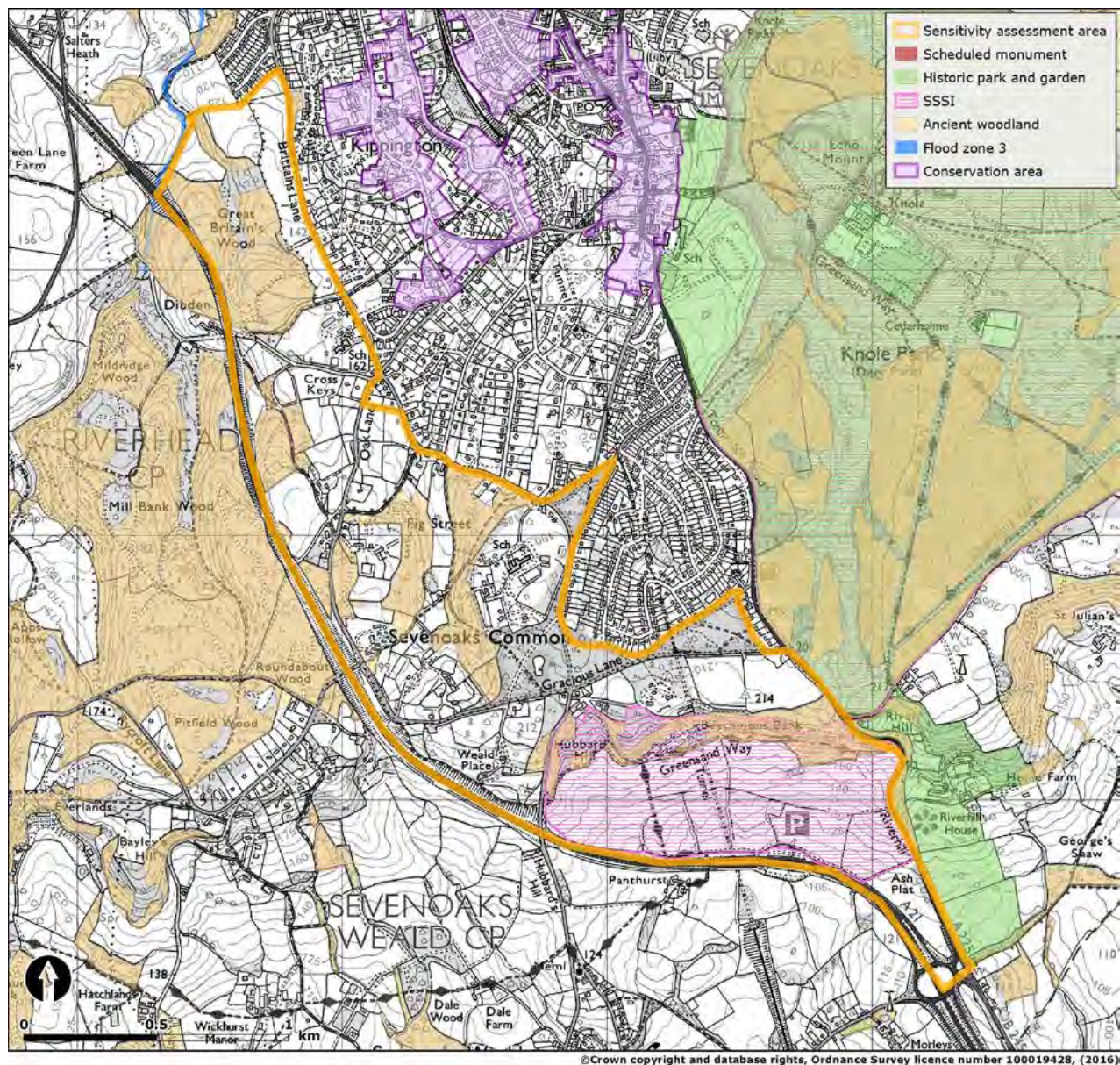
- Densely wooded appearance.
- Small, irregular pastures.
- Winding lanes.
- Dense stands of conifers and birch.
- Intensively cultivated apple and pear orchards (south-east of Ivy Hatch).
- Rows of poplars and alders.
- Steep wooded scarp slopes.
- Occasional cobnut groves or platts.
- Areas of unimproved acid grassland.
- Extensive area of Historic Parkland and wood pasture at Knole House.

Ightham Greensand

Design Guidelines

- Conserve ancient parkland trees and small irregular pastures and restore and manage heath and acid grasslands.
- Retain and manage dense hedgerows along narrow vergeless lanes.
- Manage heathy woodland and other mixed oak, beech and sweet chestnut woodlands.
- Reinforce wooded edges to existing small scale settlements and farmed areas, and around any new small scale development and land use change.
- Support the retention of apple/pear orchards, and cobnut platts.
- Seek the use of sympathetic building materials such as ragstone, brick, weatherboarding and tile.
- Conserve the routes and characteristics of the Greensand drove roads.

S3: Sevenoaks south-west



Landscape character & absolute constraints

The south-western edge of Sevenoaks adjoins the **Sevenoaks Western Chart landscape character area** which is an undulating wooded and agricultural landscape characterised by 'charts' (wooded commons distinctive of east Surrey and west Kent). There are several ancient woodlands and a (geological) SSSI in this area which form 'absolute constraints'¹² to development. The area beyond the A21 has not been assessed as the road forms a physical barrier.

¹² 'Absolute constraints' are Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Scheduled Monuments, Historic Parks and Gardens, Ancient Woodland and Flood Zone 3.

Representative photographs



Description by evaluation criteria

Criteria	Description
Physical character	The undulating nature of the area and presence of some steep slopes indicate a higher sensitivity to development. The landform is overlain by a variable scale landscape pattern of fields (mostly pasture, some arable) and woodlands (many ancient) and wooded commons which also increase sensitivity. The arable fields are generally less sensitive as they are less characteristic of the Charts than other landscape features.
Settlement form & edge	This area wraps around the south-western edge of Sevenoaks, which comprises various 20 th century estates and is very well enclosed by high hedgerows with trees or woodland. The edge is therefore not particularly sensitive in this respect, nor particularly in need of improvement. There are many scattered large houses in woodland beyond the settlement edge with a rural character, which increase sensitivity to dense development in these areas.
Settlement setting	Although the rural nature of the landscape and its features, particularly the woodland and commons, are valued in their own right and as a setting to Sevenoaks, the area does not form an important backdrop or role in views because there is a well vegetated edge to Sevenoaks which separates it from the wider landscape in this direction. Neither does the area provide a role in separating settlements.
Visual character	The area has a lot of woodland and high hedges which provides a sense of enclosure and reduces sensitivity to built development. However, there are some elevated ridges and hills that increase sensitivity.
Perceptual qualities	This is a highly rural landscape with moderately dark skies and a high scenic value which indicate a higher sensitivity to built development. There are modern human influences on the very edges of Sevenoaks, along Brittain's Lane which reduce sensitivity locally.
Historic character	The HLC indicates that this area comprises a mixture of pre-1810 woodland, pre-19 th century copses, scattered settlement with paddocks, irregular fields with straight boundaries, small rectilinear fields with wavy boundaries, commons and assarts. The areas of ancient woodland, commons and assarts are particularly sensitive in terms of historic character. There are also a couple of listed buildings that would increase sensitivity to new development in these areas.

Evaluation of criteria and landscape sensitivity judgement

Although the relatively modern edge to Sevenoaks and the sense of enclosure might indicate a lower sensitivity to built development, the highly rural character, high scenic value and presence of historic landscape features including woodland, historic fields (including assarts) and commons increase sensitivity to **medium-high** overall for housing development. The sensitivity to commercial development would be even higher (**high**) due to the highly rural character and residential nature of this settlement edge. There may be lower sensitivity to high quality low density rural style development within previously settled areas.

Areas with lower sensitivity would be the areas of flat land well enclosed by trees on the modern edges of Sevenoaks while areas of higher sensitivity would include elevated hills and ridges including the scarp top, areas of common land and areas that are disconnected from the settlement edge.

Development scenario	Sensitivity				
	L	L-M	M	M-H	H
Residential housing 2-3 stories	L	L-M	M	M-H	H
Commercial development	L	L-M	M	M-H	H

Key landscape sensitivities to development within the area

- The steep slopes and elevated hill tops/ridges, including the Greensand Scarp in the south of the area.
- The woodlands and commons (including the characteristic 'Charts').
- The rural nature of the landscape including relatively dark skies and high scenic quality.
- The pre-1810 woodland, pre-19th century copses, historic field patterns (including assarts) and commons.
- The historic buildings in the countryside which are sensitive to change in their setting.

Guidance

This area forms part of the Kent Downs AONB. There are several ancient woodlands and a (geological) SSSI in this area which form 'absolute constraints' to development and the remainder of the area has a relatively high sensitivity to built development for the reasons set out above. Areas closer to the existing modern settlement edges of Sevenoaks and areas that are well enclosed by trees would have a slightly lower sensitivity. Any new development should:

- be located on less steep landform and avoid the elevated hill tops/ridges or the Greensand Scarp;
- retain the woodlands and commons (including the characteristic 'Charts') and ensure any new built development is well integrated into the landscape, improving and enhancing these features where possible;
- retain the highly rural character – special care should be paid to boundaries (which should be rural in nature where they adjoin countryside) and lighting (which should be minimised);
- retain the pre-1810 woodland, pre-19th century copses, historic field patterns (including assarts) and commons;
- fit with the density and character of development that defines the character of areas that border this part of Sevenoaks;
- ensure that any development pays some regard to the Kentish vernacular which comprises brick or ragstone walls and buildings, clay tiled roofs, vertical tile hanging on first floor walls, and white painted weather boarding;
- retain the character of the narrow rural lanes, avoiding widening of roads and suburban features

such as kerbs and street lighting where possible.

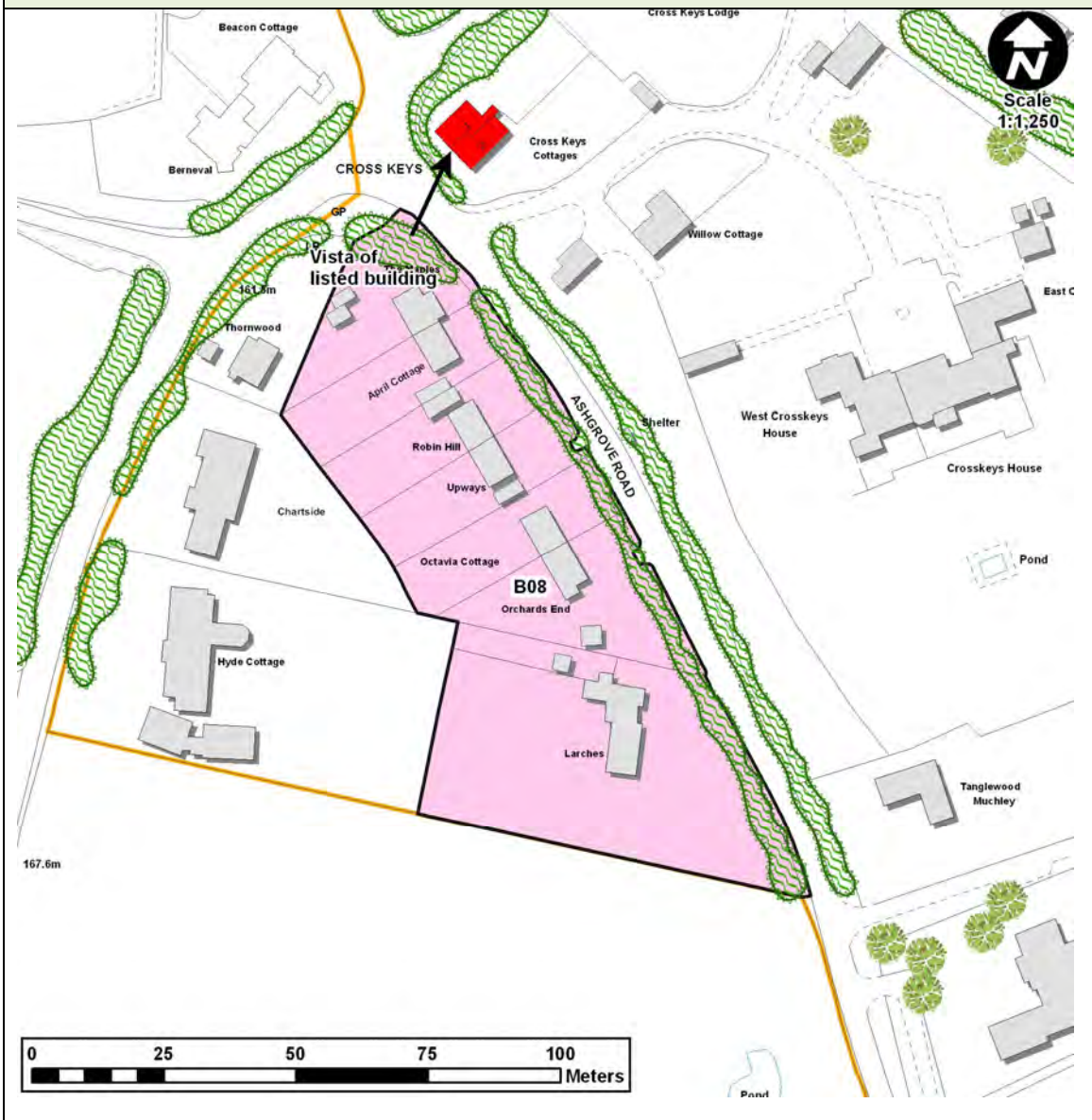
B08 – ASHGROVE ROAD

Comprising Ashgrove Road (part)

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

This development comprises interwar linear development at the junction of two historic lanes, Ashgrove Road and Oak Lane, and two 1950s properties.

TOWNSCAPE MAP



Locally Distinctive Contextual Features	
Age of buildings	1930s to 1950s
Type of buildings	Detached and semi-detached
Main uses	Residential
Building heights	Two storeys
Prominent building materials	Red/brown brick, white painted render, brown pantiles
Predominant boundary treatments	Hedges and some trees
Open space/ vegetation	Lanes strongly enclosed by high hedges and trees

Area Characteristics



Ashgrove Road (above left) and Oak Lane have the character of rural lanes and are narrow and curving with no pavements. They are strongly enclosed by high hedges and trees. The three pairs of semi-detached flat fronted rendered properties of uniform design form a cohesive group (above right). They are set above the road behind stone retaining walls, hedges and planting that maintain the rural character of the lane (below). The painted rendered flat elevations, pantiled hipped roofs with chimneys, distinctive brick porches and sills contribute to a cottage character, which is enhanced by the informal front gardens and ragstone retaining walls. Long views are prevented by the curving lanes and vegetation but there is a vista of the listed building at the junction.





The detached properties are individually designed and have been significantly extended and altered.

Locally Distinctive Positive Features

Rural lane character of Oak Lane and Ashgrove Road, enclosed by hedges and trees

Cottage style semi-detached interwar properties form a cohesive group due to even roofline, repeated designs, colours and materials

Informal boundaries including ragstone retaining walls and hedges. Landscaped front gardens

Individually designed detached properties

Vista of listed building at junction

Negative Features

No significant detractors

Design Guidance

The grain of the area with substantially built up frontages leaves little scope for new development and the area is likely to remain largely unchanged over time.

There may be pressure for extensions to existing buildings.

In proposing new development within the Ashgrove Road Character Area:

The characteristic roof profile of the semi-detached interwar houses should be respected

The harmonious palette of red/brown brick, white painted render and brown pantiled roofs should be respected

Traditional detailing should be retained

The ragstone boundary wall, hedges and mature trees which contribute to the character of the road should be retained

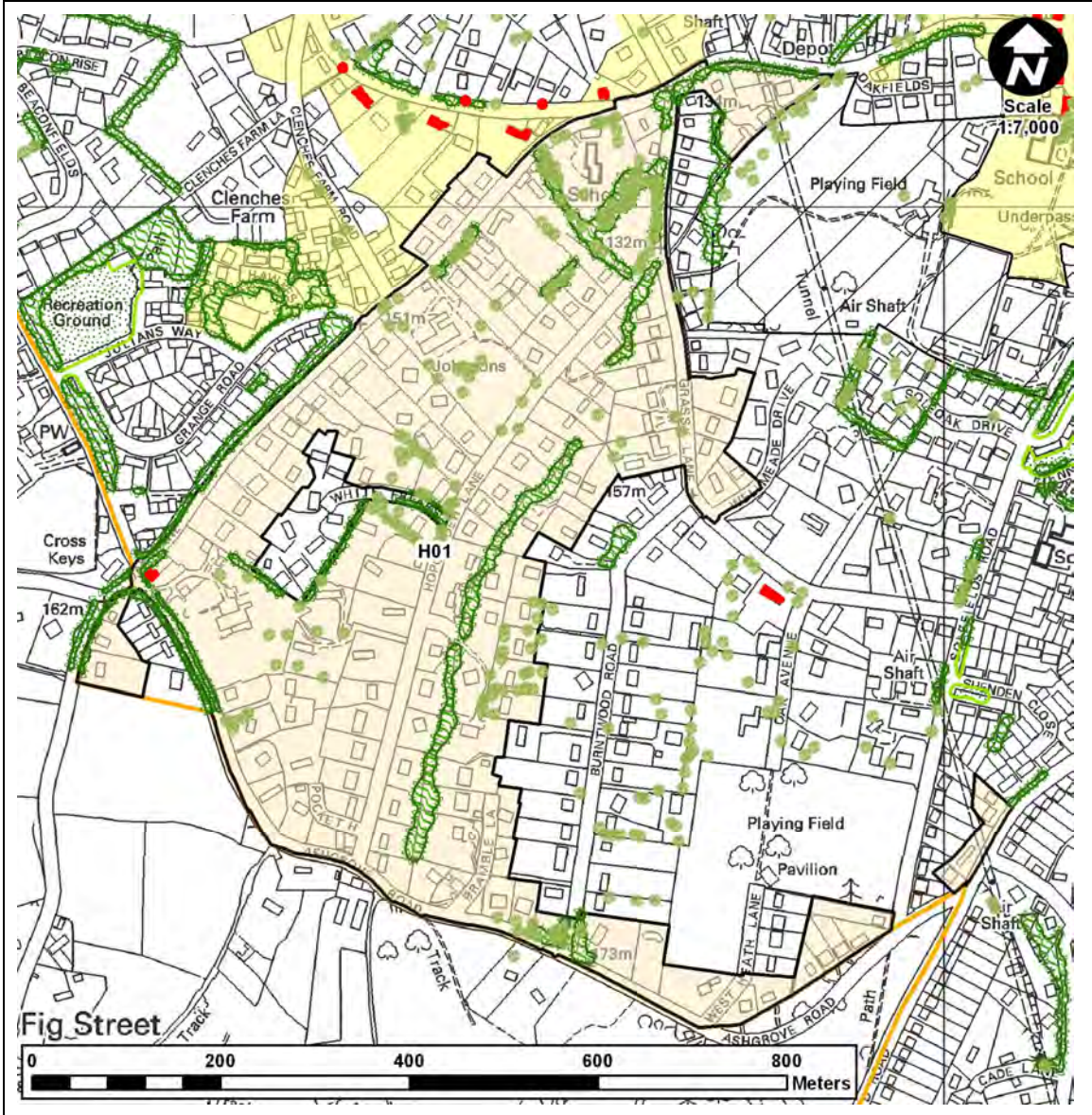
H01 HOPGARDEN LANE AREA

Comprising Hopgarden Lane; Little Julian's Hill; Pocket Hill; Ashgrove Road; Burntwood Grove; West Heath Lane; Oak Lane; Grassy Lane (west side), Weald Road (part)

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

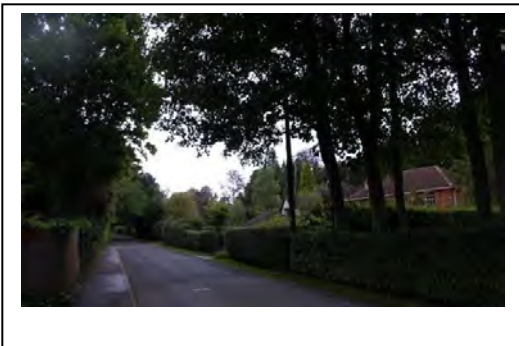
Hop Garden Lane is an ancient route which has retained its original alignment and is part of a network of lanes in the area. Historically the area comprised open fields with hedgerows and trees some of which still survive today - criss-crossed by the lanes. Development was laid out from the 1930's onwards with many houses developed in the 1960s.

TOWNSCAPE MAP

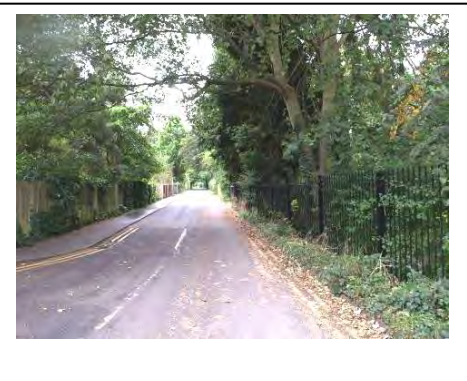


Locally Distinctive Contextual Features	
Age of buildings	1930s to present day
Type of buildings	Detached
Main uses	Residential
Building heights	Two storeys with a few bungalows and three storey properties
Prominent building materials	Various
Predominant boundary treatments	Tall dense hedges with mature trees
Open space/ vegetation	Trees and planting to front, side or rear gardens, hedging enclosing side gardens

Area Characteristics



Large individually designed generally 2 storey detached houses and bungalows are well spaced along Hopgarden Lane. The houses are set well back from the road behind hedged and treed front gardens. Buildings are well screened and generally have a minimal impact on the street scene. The character of the lane is unified not by the buildings themselves, but the verdant landscape framework and the discrete appearance of buildings.



Hopgarden Lane is enclosed by hedges and mature trees, several arching across the road to add to the sense of enclosure. The curve in the road foreshortens vistas and provides additional enclosure. The verdant edges and the single footpath create a rural character to this lane.

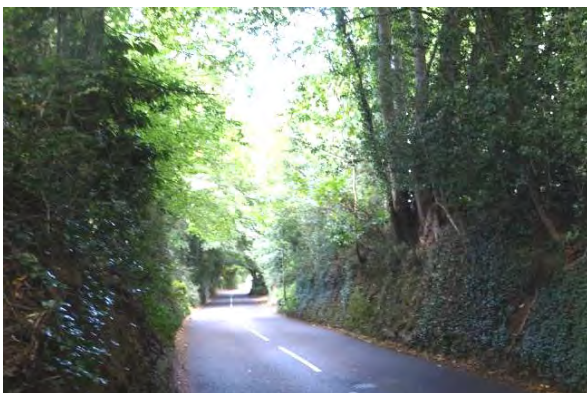
Mature trees are also prevalent on the upper slopes either side of Hopgarden Lane forming the backdrop and setting for development and a skyline feature.

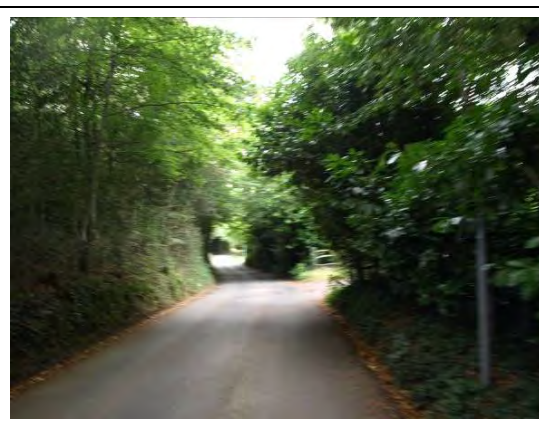


Two areas of private open space are glimpsed along Hopgarden Lane through hedged and treed boundaries but are not generally predominant in the street scene. Trees within and surrounding the sites add to the generally verdant character of the area.



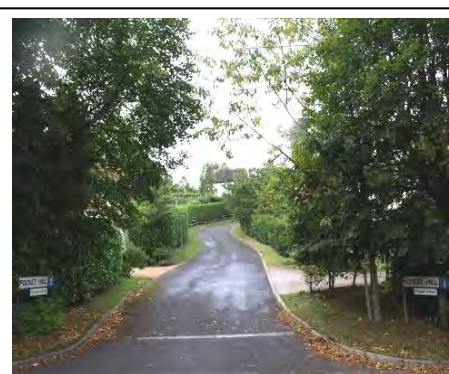
Houses on the western side of Hopgarden Lane are generally set on higher ground and can be more prominent in the street scene because of their elevation. A lack of mature hedging to the back edge of pavement changes the character of the lane. Garages and other buildings set close to, and visible from, the lane urbanise its character.





Oak Lane (above) and Ashgrove Road (below) are narrow, undulating and winding tree-lined lanes with no footways creating an informal rural character. Hedges and trees about the lanes and development is generally well hidden by vegetation and narrow entrances. The curved, narrow, verdant lanes have a strong sense of enclosure. The character of the lanes is unified by the verdant landscape framework and the discrete appearance of buildings. The north western side of Oak Lane is part of the setting of the Kippington Conservation Area which is characterised by trees and shrubs which screen views of the houses from the road.

Development is set closer to the road and is slightly more prominent along the northern part of Oak Lane.



A number of narrow drives lead away from the main roads in this area: Little Julian's Hill (top left); Pocket Hill (top right); Bramble Lane (bottom left) and West Heath Lane (bottom right). These replicate the informal hedge and tree-lined characteristics of the principal roads with generally well screened development dispersed along a warren of small lanes.



Burntwood Grove, served from Burntwood Road, comprises discretely located detached houses set amongst mature trees. The development is approached through a hedge lined drive and some of the houses have hedged front gardens.



The eastern side of Grassy Lane represents a transition between the dispersed detached character of the rest of the area and the formal detached character of the western side of the road.

Large individually designed detached houses are well spaced along the steeply sloping road and set well back behind hedged and treed front gardens. The vegetation is less consistent than elsewhere in the area and the buildings are generally more visible.

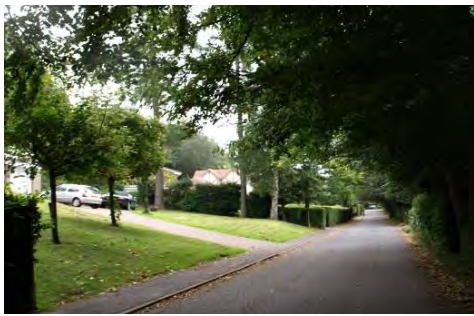
Townscape Feature



Short length of Weald Road within this character area contains this Victorian terrace. Faced in ragstone with brick detailing around the windows, modest open porches and red tiled roof topped by two chimneys, this historic townscape feature adds significantly to the character of the area.

Detractors





The absence of mature hedging to the back edge of pavement, wide openings or substantial paved areas changes the character of the lanes.



Where visible, the introduction of bulky garage buildings to the front of the house towards the front of the building curtilage can change the character of the lanes which are characterised by well screened buildings set well back from the road behind hedged and treed front gardens and generally having a minimal impact on the street scene.

The informal rural lanes can become urbanised by kerbs, fencing or walls, street signs, lighting and overhead wires.



Listed Building

Nos 1 and 2 Ashgrove Road (Cross Keys Cottage)
 18th Century cottage, previously one dwelling now divided into 2. 2 storeys, 3 windows. Old centre door and new side entrances to left and right. Brick ground floor painted white, tile hung above. Half hipped tiled roof with one gabled dormer to right.
 Grade 2

Locally Distinctive Positive Features

Narrow and winding tree and hedge lined lanes with no footways or single footway create an informal rural character and a strong sense of enclosure

Large individually designed mostly 2 storey detached houses are well spaced and set well back from the road behind hedged and treed front gardens

Buildings are generally well screened by vegetation and narrow entrances and generally have a minimal impact on the street scene

Mature trees on the slopes either side of Hopgarden Lane forming the backdrop and setting for development and a skyline feature for the area

The character of the lanes is unified by the verdant landscape framework and the discrete appearance of buildings

Victorian terrace townscape feature

Listed building

Negative Features

Loss of mature hedge boundaries to the back edge of pavement, wide access openings or substantial paved areas adversely affect the character of the lanes

Where visible, the introduction of bulky garage buildings to the front of the house towards the front of the building curtilage can adversely affect the character of the area

Urbanisation of the lanes by kerbs, fencing or walls, street signs, lighting and overhead wires

Design Guidance

Some long back gardens have been developed with discrete backland development and further such development may prove acceptable subject to meeting the guidance of this SPD. There are also two areas of private open space in Hopgarden Lane which may be suitable for residential development but any such development should meet the guidance included in this SPD.

There has been pressure to redevelop some properties or for large two storey garages. In addition, the pressure for large areas for car parking may impact on the character of front boundaries and gardens.

In judging proposals, the fragile balance in favour of the landscape dominating the built form should be retained.

In proposing new development within the Hopgarden Lane Character Area:

Buildings should be well screened and well set back from the front boundary to avoid a significant impact on the rural character of the lanes

Garages should be of a scale, form, materials and location that fit unobtrusively with the house, surrounding garden and the street scene

Development should be served by narrow and hedge lined access drives

Mature trees and hedged boundaries which contribute to the character of a lane should be retained or reinstated

The rural character of the lanes at the edge of the character area should be retained

The character of the Victorian terrace townscape feature should be retained

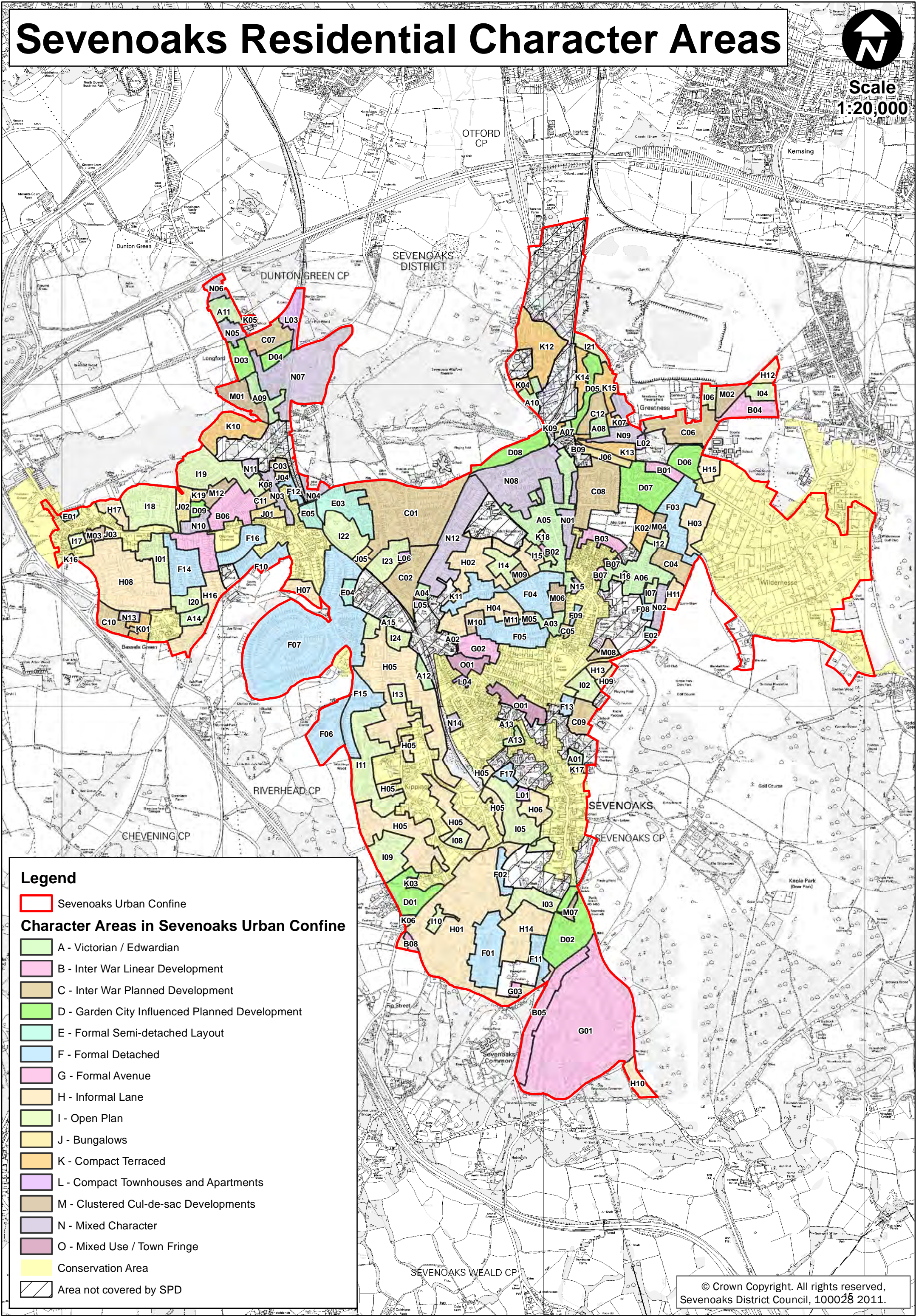
The listed building and its setting should be protected

The setting of the adjoining Kippington Conservation Area should be protected or enhanced

Sevenoaks Residential Character Areas



Scale
1:20,000



Legend

Sevenoaks Urban Confine

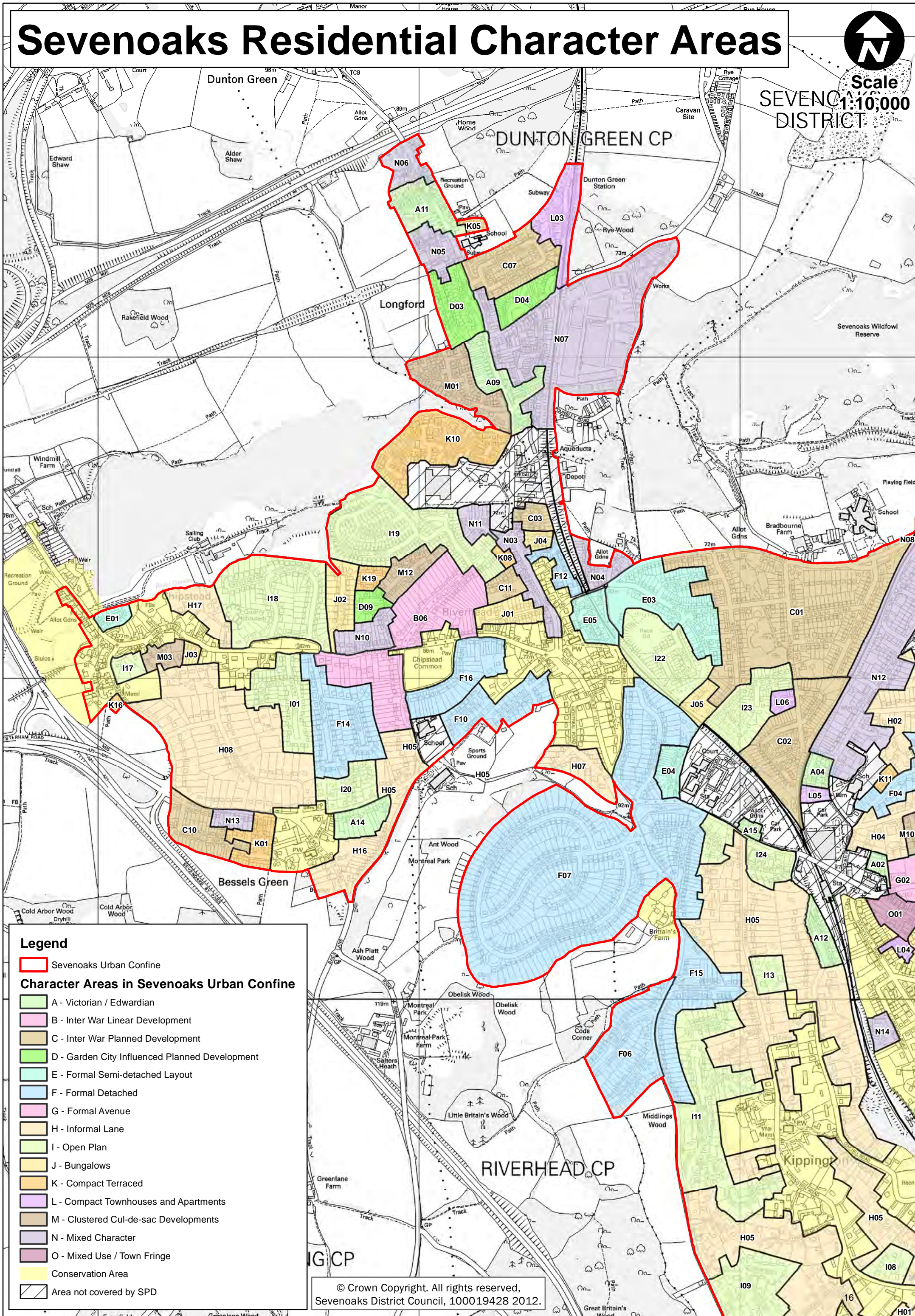
Character Areas in Sevenoaks Urban Confine

- A - Victorian / Edwardian
- B - Inter War Linear Development
- C - Inter War Planned Development
- D - Garden City Influenced Planned Development
- E - Formal Semi-detached Layout
- F - Formal Detached
- G - Formal Avenue
- H - Informal Lane
- I - Open Plan
- J - Bungalows
- K - Compact Terraced
- L - Compact Townhouses and Apartments
- M - Clustered Cul-de-sac Developments
- N - Mixed Character
- O - Mixed Use / Town Fringe
- Conservation Area
- Area not covered by SPD

Sevenoaks Residential Character Areas



Scale
1:10,000
SEVENOAKS
DISTRICT



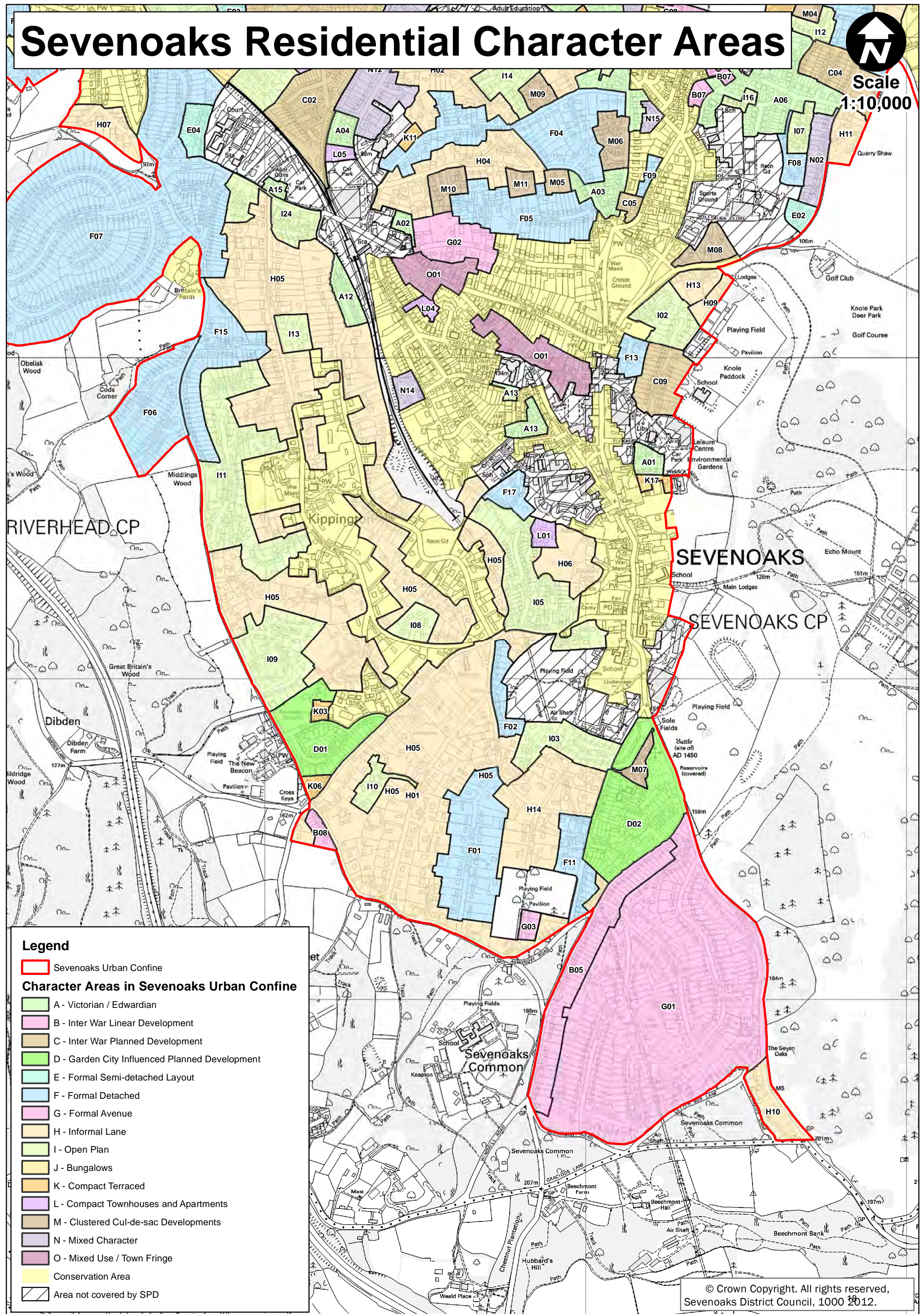
Scale
1:10,000



Sevenoaks Residential Character Areas



Scale
1:10,000



Legend

Sevenoaks Urban Confine

Character Areas in Sevenoaks Urban Confine

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Conservation Area

Area not covered by SPD

Legend

→ Views

Visual Intrusion

Important Boundary

Landmark

Important Tree

Townscape Feature

Listed Lamppost

Listed Building

Important Tree And Hedge Belt

Node

Open Space

Urban Confine Boundary

Character Areas in Sevenoaks Urban Confine

A - Victorian / Edwardian

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Conservation Area

Area not covered by SPD

8 List of Character Areas

A Victorian/ Edwardian

- A01 Buckhurst Avenue p.29
- A02 St. Botolph's Avenue p.33
- A03 Dartford Road/ Hitchen Hatch Lane p.37
- A04 Bosville Road p.43
- A05 St John's Road Area p.46
- A06 Bayham Road Area p.58
- A07 Seal Road/ Chatham Hill Road p.66
- A08 Seal Road/ Greatness Road/Grove Road p.70
- A09 London Road/ Milton Road Area p.75
- A10 Otford Road/ Cramptons Road p.79
- A11 London Road/ Donnington Road p.83
- A12 Holyoake Terrace p.88
- A13 Victoria Road Area p.91
- A14 Westerham Road (east) p.95
- A15 Quarry Cottages p.101

B Inter War Linear Development

- B01 Hillingdon Avenue (east) p.107
- B02 Bradbourne Road p.110
- B03 Quaker's Hall Lane p.113
- B04 Seal Road p.117
- B05 Weald Road p.121
- B06 Bullfinch Lane p.125
- B07 Bayham Road p.130
- B08 Ashgrove Road p.133
- B09 Hospital Road p.136

C Inter War Planned Development

- C01 Lambarde Road p.141

C02 Bosville Drive p.147
C03 Hamlin Road p.151
C04 Hillside Road p.155
C05 Vine Court Road p.159
C06 Pinewood Avenue p.163
C07 Lennard Road p.168
C08 Wickenden Road p.172
C09 Knole Way p.177
C10 Larkfield Road p.181
C11 Orchard Road p.185
C12 Greatness Lane p.189

D Garden City Influence Planned Development

D01 Grange Road p.195
D02 Solefields Road p.199
D03 Lusted Road p.204
D04 Crescent Cottages p.208
D05 Orchard Close p.212
D06 The Crescent p.215
D07 Hillingdon Rise p.219
D08 Bradbourne Vale Road p.225
D09 Bullfinch Close West p.229

E Formal Semi-detached Layout

E01 Darent Close p.235
E02 The Paddocks p.238
E03 Betenson Avenue p.241
E04 Uplands Close p.245
E05 Church Fields p.248

F Formal Detached

F01 Burntwood Road p.255

F02 Grassy Lane (east side) p.259
F03 Wildernesse Mount Area p.262
F04 Mount Harry Road Area p.267
F05 Vine Avenue/Ashley Road Area p.273
F06 Downsvie Road p.278
F07 Montreal Park p.282
F08 Knole Road p.288
F09 Vine Court Road p.291
F10 St Mary's Drive p.294
F11 Solefield• p.298
F12 Scotts Way p.302
F13 Warren Court p.305
F14 Woodfields p.308
F15 Redlands Road/Brittains Lane p.311
F16 Barnfield Road p.316
F17 Crownfields p.320

G Formal Avenue

G01 White Hart Area p.325
G02 St Botolph's Road p.335
G03 West Heath Lane p.339

H Informal Lane

H01 Hopgarden Lane p.345
H02 Linden Chase/Woodside Road p.353
H03 Seal Hollow Road/Blackhall Lane Area p.360
H04 Hitchen Hatch Lane p.364
H05 Kippington Road Area p.370
H06 Rectory Lane p.382
H07 Montreal Road p.386

H08 Packhorse Road p.390
H09 Knole Estate Road p.397
H10 Tonbridge Road p.400
H11 Seal Hollow Road (near Bayham Road) p.403
H12 Ash Platt Road p.406
H13 Seal Hollow Road (near Park Lane) p.409
H14 Oak Avenue Area p.412
H15 Seal Hollow Road (near Wildernesse Avenue) p.419
H16 Cold Arbour Road p.422
H17 Off Chipstead Lane p.427

I Open Plan

I01 Nursery Place p.433
I02 Plymouth Park p.436
I03 Soleoak Drive p.440
I04 Highlands p.444
I05 The Dene p.447
I06 Filmer Lane p.452
I07 Quaker Close p.455
I08 Garvock Drive p.458
I09 Beaconfields p.461
I10 Whitefriars p.464
I11 The Middlings p.467
I12 Serpentine Court p.471
I13 Rosefield p.474
I14 Pineneedle Lane p.477
I15 Lyle Park p.481
I16 Serpentine Road p.484
I17 Rookdean p.487

I18 Chipstead Park p.490
I19 Chesterfield Drive p.493
I20 Springshaw Close p.497
I21 Watercress Drive p.500
I22 Pontoise Close p.503
I23 Lake View Road p.507
I24 Courtwood Drive Area p.511

J Bungalows

J01 Homefield Road p.517
J02 Sandilands p.520
J03 Off Chipstead High Street p.524
J04 The Patch p.527
J05 Mount Close p.530
J06 Hillingdon Avenue (west) p.533

K Compact Terraced and Apartments

K01 Bessels Way p.539
K02 Kennedy Gardens p.543
K03 Julians Close p.547
K04 Berwick Y æ p.550
K05 Glyn Davies Close p.553
K06 Cross Keys Close p.556
K07 Silk Mills Close p.559
K08 Elmstead Close p.562
K09 Chatham Hill Road p.565
K10 Longmeadow p.568
K11 Kirk Court p.572
K12 Crampton• Road p.575
K13 Hillingdon Avenue p.580

K14 Queens Drive p.584

K15 Farm Road p.587

K16 Denes Field Court p.591

K17 Akehurst Lane p.594

K18 Morel Court p.598

K19 Bullfinch Close p.601

L Compact Townhouses and Apartments

L01 Valley Drive p.607

L02 Mill Pond Close p.610

L03 The Sidings p.614

L04 Knotts Place p.618

L05 The Acorns p.622

L06 Meadow Close p.625

M Clustered Cul-de-sac Developments

M01 Mill Road p.631

M02 Pinehurst p.635

M03 Martin's Shaw p.638

M04 Lansdowne Road p.641

M05 Hitchen Hatch Place p.644

M06 The Thicketts p.647

M07 Fiennes Way p.651

M08 Hollybush Close p.654

M09 Birch Close p.657

M10 Winchester Grove and Oakwood Drive p.660

M11 White Lodge Close p.663

M12 Bullfinch Dene p.666

N Mixed Character

N01 St John's Hill p.673

N02 Seal Hollow Road (near Bayham Road) p.678

N03 London Road p.681

N04 Bradbourne Vale Road/Heathfield Road p.686

N05 London Road Barretts Road Area p.690

N06 London Road /Vicarage Lane p.693

N07 London Road /Kingswood Road Area p.696

N08 St James's Road St Georges Area p.701

N09 Mill Lane/ Seal Road p.709

N10 Bullfinch Close Area p.713

N11 Baden Powell Road p.716

N12 Bradbourne Park Road p.719

N13 Westerham Road (west) p.725

N14 Clarendon Road p.728

N15 Hollybush Lane p.732

O Town Centre Fringe Mixed Use Area

O01 Tubbs Hill/ London Road/ Pembroke Road p.737

July 2022

Land West of Ashgrove Road, Sevenoaks

Appendix 7. Figures

Figure 1 Site Location

Figure 2 Immediate Site Context

Figure 3 Landscape Designations

Figure 4 Topography

Figure 5 Local Landscape Character

Figure 6 Access and Recreation

Figure 7 Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) study and Viewpoint Locations

Figure 8 Photograph Panels