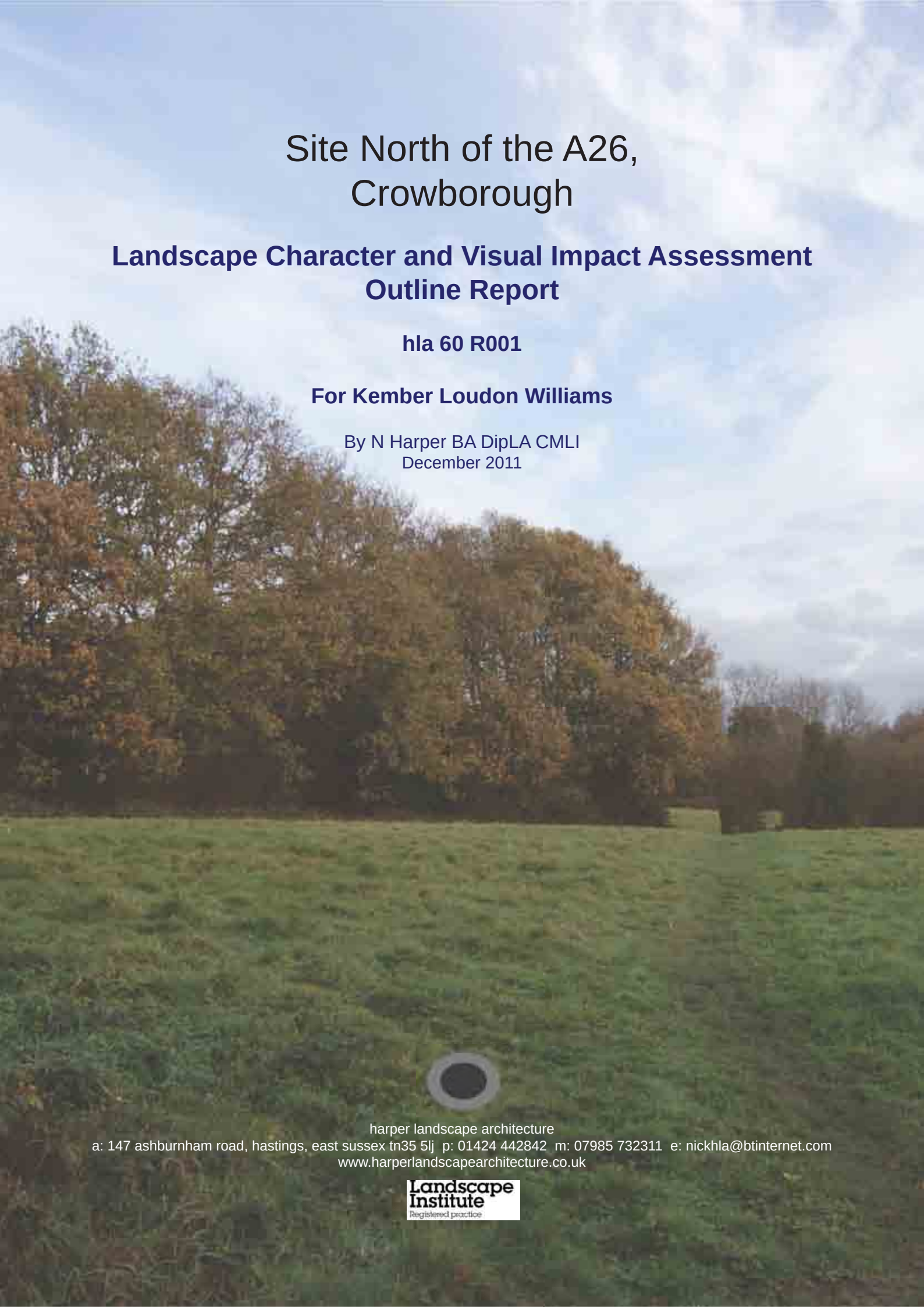


Site North of the A26, Crowborough

Landscape Character and Visual Impact Assessment Outline Report

hla 60 R001

For Kember Loudon Williams

By N Harper BA DipLA CMLI

December 2011

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Landscape Institute
Registered practice

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Contents

		Page
	Introduction	
1.0	Qualifications and Experience	5
2.0	Description of Proposal	6
3.0	Scope and Structure of Report	11
4.0	Relevant Planning Policy	12
5.0	Proposal Site and Surrounding Area	15
6.0	Landscape Character and Visual Impact	17
7.0	Summary, Conclusion and Mitigation	28

FIGURES

Figure 1 Location Plan,

Figure 2 Concept Masterplan, KLW/SA,

Figure 3 Concept Masterplan, KLW/SA - Supporting Sketches,

Figure 4 Concept Masterplan, KLW/SA and Aerial Photograph Context,

Figure 5 High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Public Rights of Way (prow),

Figure 6 Wealden District Council, Core Strategy Plan for Crowborough,

Figure 7 Landscape Character Plan,

Figure 8 Viewpoints Plan,

Figure 9 Photosheet 1 Near Distance Viewpoints 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6,

Figure 10 Photosheet 2 Middle Distance Viewpoints 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12,

Figure 11 Photosheet 3 Long Distance Viewpoint 13.

TABLES (Tables extracted from the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Second Edition, 2002, by the Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment Methodology)

Table 1 Sensitivity of Landscape Receptors

Table 2 Visual Impact Magnitude

Table 3 Assessment of Landscape or Visual Significance

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 Natural England, National Character Assessment No 122, The High weald,

Appendix 2 East Sussex County Council (ESCC), Landscape Character Area Assessment 4, the High Weald,

Appendix 3 East Sussex County Council, Landscape Character Area Assessment 37, Crowborough.

Introduction

This report has been prepared by Nick harper of harper landscape architecture. It was commissioned by Martin Hull, Kember Loudon Williams (KLW) December 2011, and it is prepared in conjunction with work carried out by Smart Architecture (SA).

1.0 Qualifications and Experience

1.1 Qualifications

1.11 Nick is a Chartered Landscape Architect with a BA(Hons) degree in Landscape Design, a Post Graduate Diploma in Landscape Architecture (Hons) and he is a full Chartered Landscape Architect Member of the Landscape Institute since 1995.

1.2 Experience

1.21 Nick runs the business of harper landscape architecture (hla) which operates as a Landscape Architecture consultancy. It is a registered practice of the Landscape Institute. He is also a Part Time Lecturer in Landscape Design for the Landscape Architecture BA (Hons) Degree Course at Greenwich University and a member of the Eastbourne Borough Council's Design Review Panel.

1.22 Nick has good experience of Landscape Character and Visual Impact Assessment and of working on residential developments.

1.23 Nick has 22 years professional experience including most recently, a Principal to Hyder Consulting, an Associate at Chris Blandford Associates and a Senior Landscape Architect with Battle McCarthy and also with the London Borough of Enfield.

1.24 Nick has lived in Hastings for the past 12 years and has lived in East Sussex most of his life. Nick has been a frequent visitor to Crowborough and has good knowledge of the Site area and it's context.

2.0 Description of Proposal

2.1 General Proposal

The proposed development Site (known as the Site for this report) is located to the north east of Crowborough on land between Goldsmith's Leisure Centre and Luxford Farm, and directly to the west of the A26 (See Fig 1 Location Plan).

There are four proposed development Plots, described as Plots, A, B, C and D, for this report, (see Fig 2 Concept Masterplan, KLW/SA and Figure 3, Concept Masterplan, KLW/SA - Supporting Sketches and Figure 4 Concept Masterplan and Aerial Photograph Context) which, along with the highway and landscape proposals, make up the overall Site for the proposed development. The Plots are described as follows,

- Plot A is located to the west of the Site and abutts the A26, the Model Railway, the Running Track and Plots B and D,

- Plot B is located to the east side and abutts the A26 and Plots A, D and C,

- Plot C is located to the north and abutts the A26, Luxford Farm, and Plots B and D,

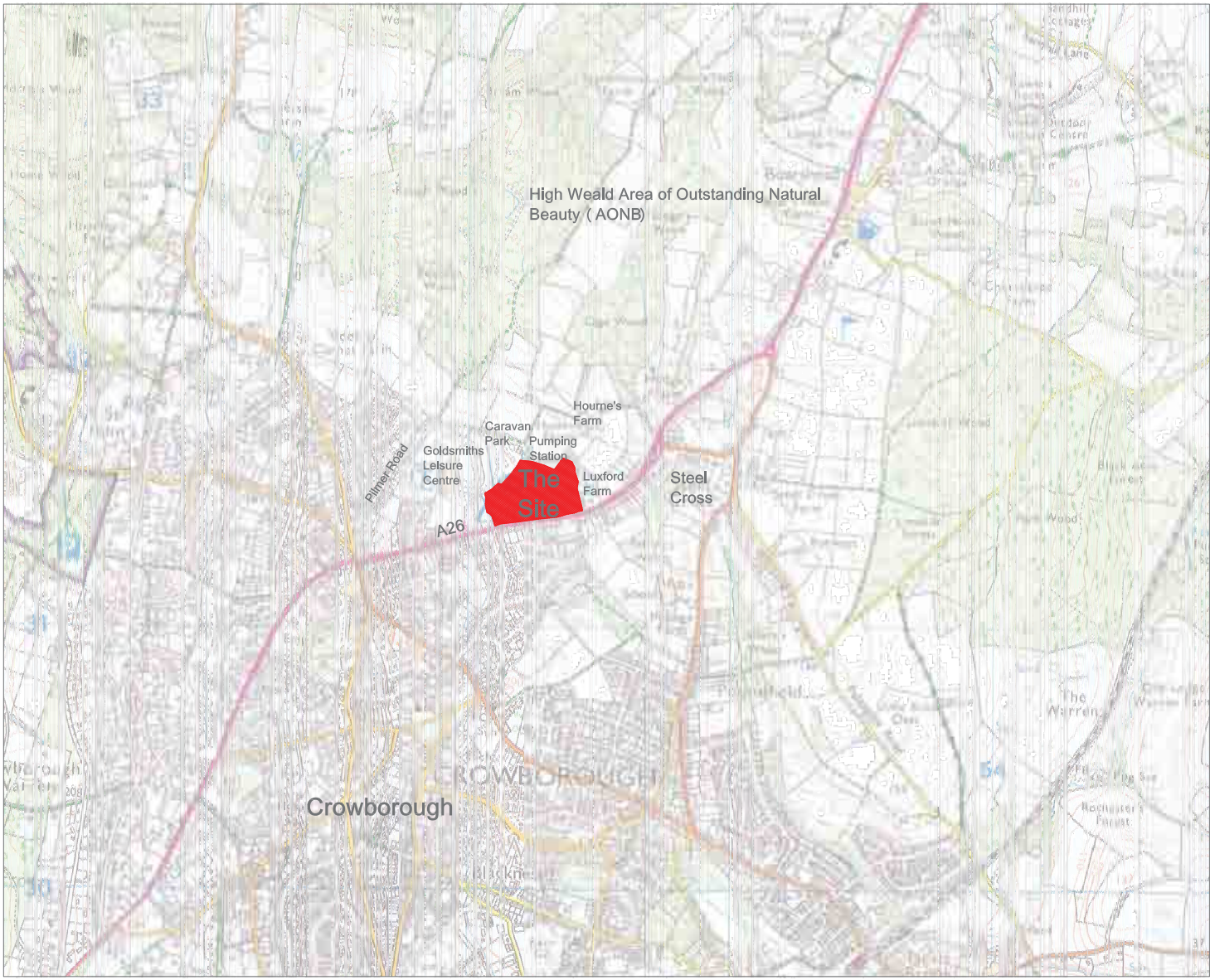
- Plot D is located to the west side and abuts the Caravan Park, and Plots A, B and C,

Figures 2, 3 and 4 show the following specifically designed areas within the proposal,

- residential development areas (Plots A to D),
- internal road connections between Plots, one main entrance located to the south west of the Site and a second emergency access to the south east,
- open space areas with focal points,
- large areas of enhanced planting including, a softened edge to the AONB (See Fig 3 for detailed strategy), new buffer planting to the northern boundary, enhanced planting to the A26 boundary and between the Plots,
- a number of new footpaths and cycleways proposed to link in with the existing public rights of way located outside the Site.

The Concept Masterplan is used as the basis for making Landscape Character and Visual Impact Assessment judgements in the report.

Figure 1 Location Plan



Key

The Site

0 1km

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Drawing: Location Plan
Project/Client: Housing Plots North of A26 Crowborough
KIW
Job: hla 60 | Drawing number: hla-060-001 | Revision:

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Figure 2 Concept Masterplan, KLW/SA



Extract from Smart Architecture Drawing, Indicative Layout,April 2011

Figure 3 Concept Masterplan, KLW/SA - Supporting Sketches



Extract from Smart Architecture Drawing, Indicative Layout and Cross Section through AONB Site Edge, April 2011

Figure 4 Concept Masterplan, KLW/SA and Aerial Photograph Context



Extract from Smart Architecture Drawing, Indicative Layout, April 2011 superimposed on to an aerial photograph

3.0 Scope and Structure of Report

3.1 Scope of the Report

3.11 The report aims to assess the likely Landscape Character and Visual Impacts (LVIA) that could occur as a result of the implementation of the residential development on the four Plots. Whilst the report seeks to use the principles as set out in the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Second Edition, 2002, by the Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment, it is not a full LVIA, rather an Outline Assessment to assist in reviewing the viability of the Site for residential development.

The Site survey work was carried out 24th November 2011 and 8th December 2011. On the 24th the weather was clear allowing good visual access, on the 8th it was a drizzly and grey but long distance views were still poossible. Whilst it was early winter some leaves were still visible on the deciduous trees.

3.2 Structure of the Report

3.21 The following Sections of the report are structured as follows. In Section 4.0 the Site is reviewed in terms of relevant Planning Policy, national and local legislation and designations, in Section 5.0 the Proposal Site and it's surrounding area are described in more detail, in Section 6.0 the Landscape Character and Visual Impacts are judged and finally in Section 7.0 the Summary, Conclusions and Mitigation are put forward.

4.0 Relevant Planning Policy

4.1 Introduction

4.11 With regards to Planning Policy this report highlights the relevant national and local planning policies which are relevant to the potential design and development of the residential development proposal.

4.2 National Planning Policy

There are a number of policies relevant to the Site, the following are listed as being specifically important.

- Regional Planning Guidance for the South East (RPG 10), March 2001,
- Planning Policy Statement 1 (PPS1): Delivering Sustainable Development,
- Planning Policy Statement 3 (PPS3): Housing,
- Planning Policy Statement 7 (PPS7): Sustainable Development in Rural Areas,
- Planning Policy Statement 9 (PPS9): Biodiversity and Geological Conservation,
- Planning Policy Statement 12 (PPS12): Local Spatial Planning,
- Planning Policy Statement 17 (PPS17): Planning Open Space, Sport and Recreation and,
- The High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) (See Figure 5 High Weald AONB and Public Rights of Way Plan).

4.3 Local Planning Policy

There are a number of policies from the Wealden District Local Plan (adopted December 1998) which are relevant to the Site, the following are listed as having most likely signifigance to the Site,

- NE5 Landscape Conservation of the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty,
- NE14 Protected Species,
- NE15 Protection of trees, hedgerows and woodland,
- BE1 Design Criteria,
- HG 8 Design and Layout of New Housing Estates,
- TR1 Accessibility of New Development,
- TR8 Pedestrian and Cycle Routes,
- LR4 Informal Amenity Space in New Housing Developments.

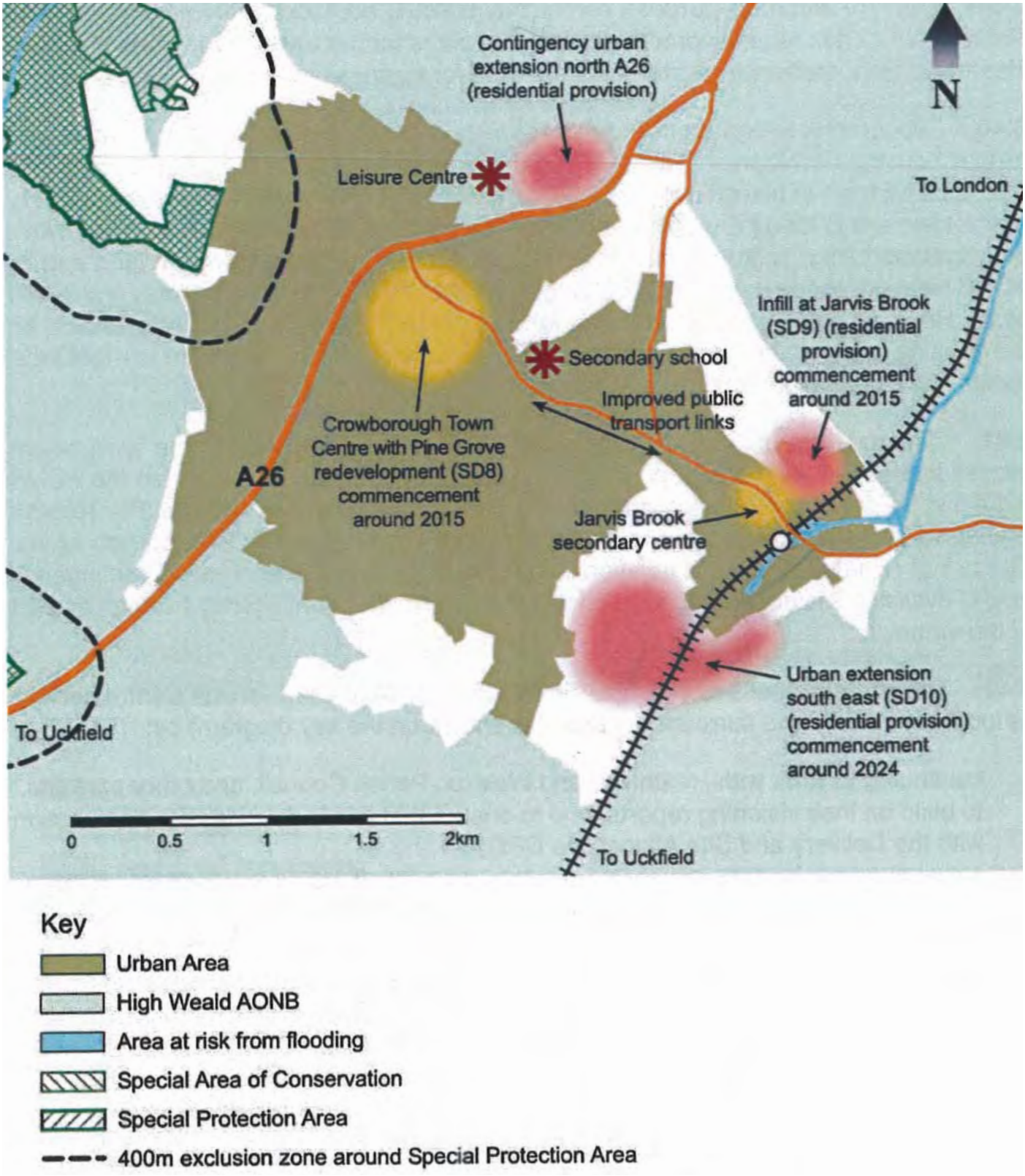
4.4 Local Development Framework

Another important document relevant to the Site is the Wealden District Council Local Developemnt Framework - Landscape Character Assessment and Development Option Evaluation Study, Feb 2009, Vol 1, Chapters 3.1 and 3.2.

Figure 5 High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Public Rights of Way



Figure 6 Wealden District Council, Core Strategy Plan for Crowborough



Plan Extract from Wealden District Council, Local Development Framework, Proposed Submission Core Strategy 2011 their Figure 9 Crowborough Area

5.0 The Site and Surrounding Area

5.1 The Proposal Site Location

5.11 The development proposal is located to the north east of Crowborough, on the north side of the A26 at an approximate OS grid reference 522000, 131500 to the centre of the Site. Crowborough is the highest town in the County and is situated on the crest of the Wealden Ridge to the east of Ashdown Forest. The Site contours are highest to the west at approximately 180-185m AOD and lowest to the east at approximately 155-160m AOD. The four development Plots, A, B, C and D vary in shape and size and together have an overall Site area of 6.76ha.

The Site is bounded by the A26 residential housing to the south, to Luxford Farm buildings to the east, a Caravan Park and Pumping Station to the west, Goldsmiths Leisure Centre (car park and running track) to the south east and the Crowborough Petanque Club and the Model Railway to the south.

Whilst there are no public footpaths within the Site the main land use appears to be dog walking.

5.2 General Landscape Character and Visual Baseline

5.21 The overall landscape character of the Site and it's surroundings is typical of the High Weald as defined in the Landscape Character Assessment by Natural England, National Character Area 122, the High Weald. This is further defined in the East Sussex Landscape Character Area Assessment, the Site is located within and to the edge of Character Area 4, the Central High Weald and directly adjacent to Character Area 37, Crowborough. The landscape character of Crowborough and the Site specifically is further described in the Local Development Framework, Section 3.

The important landscape elements that inform the Site's Landscape Character and Visual Baseline conditions are described as follows.

5.3 Landscape Character Baseline (See Figure 7 Landscape Character Plan)

5.31 The Site's landscape character is influenced by the grassland fields bounded by mature indigenous tree and hedge species. The topography, which varies by approximately 20 to 30m across the Site (east to west), also has some influence on the landscape character although the full gradient is not fully perceived as each Plot is separated from the next by enclosing boundary planting.

5.32 The Landscape Character Areas (LCAs) which cover the Site or which directly abutt the Site (see Figure 7 Landscape Character Plan) are described as follows,

- LCA 1, Fields and Woodland. This LCA is typical of the description in ESCC Landscape Character Area 4 the High Central Weald,

  'rolling heavily wooded landscape,'

There are also a number of farms and roads which are also important features that assist in defining the landscape character.

- LCA 2, Town Edge. This LCA includes the northern area of Crowborough, it is strongly influenced by the A26 and its heavy traffic and by the large areas of residential housing predominantly opposite the Site, .

- LCA 3, Leisure Centre, Caravan Park, and Parkland. This LCA includes the Leisure Centre complex including its car park and pitches, Crowborough Petanque Club and the Model Railway all of which sit on higher ground above and to the south east of the Site. The Caravan Park is more enclosed by existing vegetation and local topography and less visually prominent, the Park includes a number of carvan plots and ancillary buildings and is located to the west of the Site. The parkland is on high ground to the west of the Site and includes a formal playground, open space and a number of footpaths.

5.4 Visual Baseline *(See Figure 8 Viewpoints Plan)*

The Site has a perceived openness although it is fairly well enclosed by the topography and the tree and hedge planting. The Viewpoints as seen in Figure 8 are described as follows,

5.41 Near Distance Views

The near distance views (See photosheet 1, Near Distance Viewpoints, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6) generally of the Site's boundary planting although views into the centre of the Plots are more open, as the visual receptor gets closer to the boundary of the Site, close to the existing entrance and when the trees are not in leaf. The near distance views are from the properties accessed from the A26 which are opposite or near to the Site, from Luxford Farm, from the A26 (road and footpaths), from the Model Railway, from the Crowborough Petanque Club and from the outfields of the Leisure Centre.

5.42 Middle Distance Views

The middle distance views (See photosheet 2 Middle Distance Viewpoints, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12) are also generally of the Site's boundary planting with obscured to almost entirely screened views to the centre of the Site. The key visual receptor viewpoints from public locations are, the A26 (road and footpath) and the prow footpaths that run on the south side of the A26 and which follow the route from the A26, north east of the Site and run via Hourne Farm towards Pilmer Road. It is possible that there could be views from upper storey windows in residential and other buildings to the south and south west of the Site.

5.43 Long Distance Views

There are very few long distance views of the Site (See photosheet 3 Long Distance Viewpoint 13) and views to the centre of the Site are almost indiscernible as they are al most entirely obscured by surrounding existing tree planting around and to the boundary of the Site.

6.0 Landscape Character and Visual Impact

6.1 Introduction

This section addresses the Landscape Character and Visual Impacts. The following assessment seeks to address, in outline terms, how the Landscape Character and Visual baselines might be impacted by the proposed residential development.

6.2 Landscape Character Impacts

6.3 Methodology

6.31 There is no standard methodology for the quantification of the scale or magnitude of relative effects for Landscape Character and as such the following descriptions are provided.

6.4 Landscape Character and Planning Designations

6.41 In terms of National Planning Policy the following is relevant.

- It is assumed that the development will adhere to the relevant Regional Planning Guidance and the Planning Policy Statements,

- As the development proposal is generally made up of contained Plots it is unlikely that the development will have any signifigant impact upon the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty landscape character (although 6.76ha of the AONB will be lost).

6.42 In terms of Local Planning Policy the following is relevant.

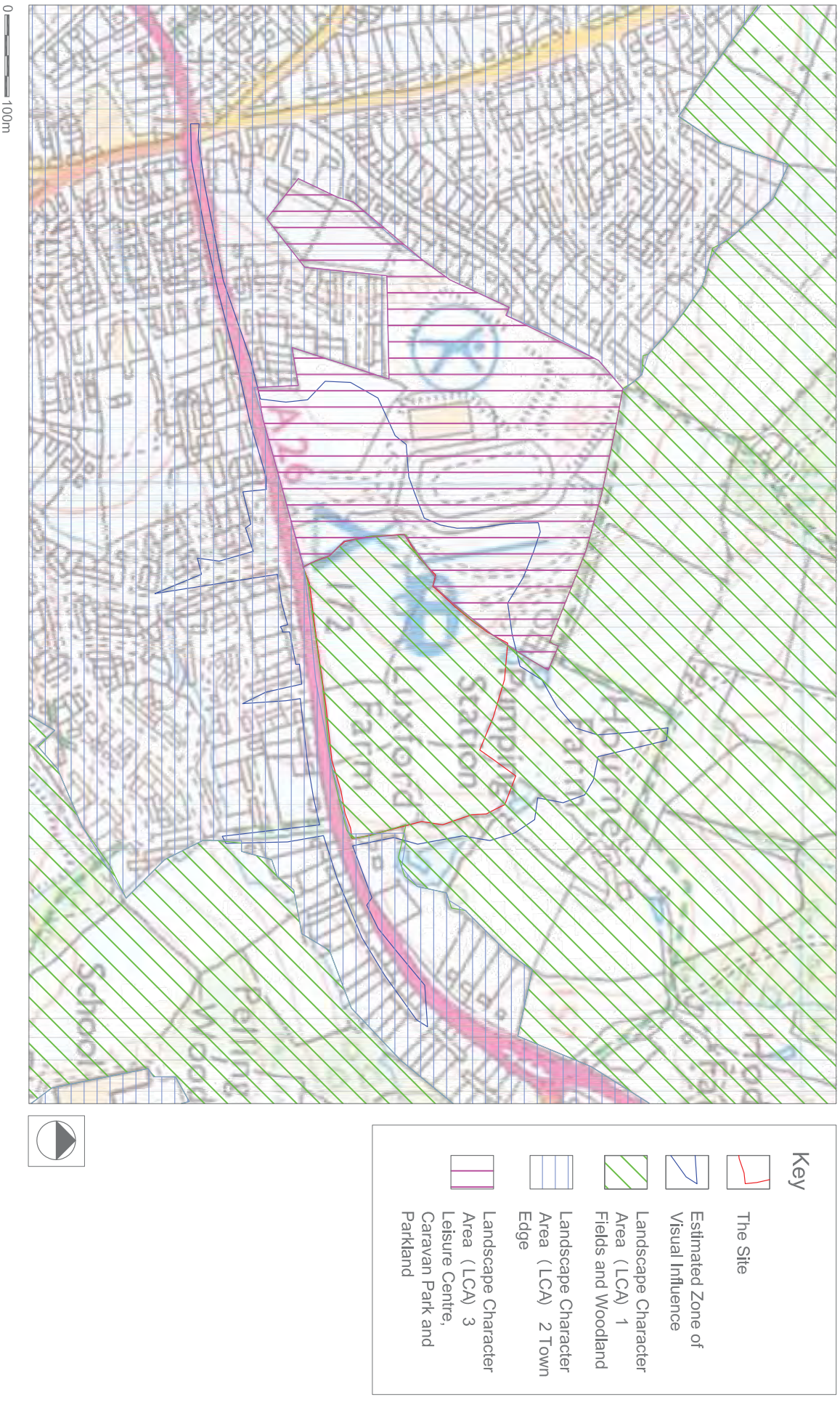
- It is assumed that the development will adhere to the relevant Wealden District Council policies as listed in 4.3 and the guidance advised in the Local Development Framework, Feb 2009, as named in 4.4.

6.5 Landscape Character Judgement

The impacts upon all three Character Areas, Character Area 1, Fields and Woodland, Character Area 2, Town Edge and Character area 3, Leisure Centre, Caravan Park and Parkland are likely to experience the same level of change described as follows

There are few views into the Site and the proposed enhanced boundary planting is likely to further screen views from outside the Site as such it is judged that there will be ***negligible to no change*** upon the overall landscape character.

Figure 7 Landscape Character Plan



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Revisions

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Drawing: Landscape Character Areas Plan
Project: Housing Plots North of A26 Crowborough
Job: hla 60
Drawing number: hla-060-007
Revision:
Date: 01-12-11
Scale: 1:2000@A1
Purpose: Planning

6.6 Visual Impact (see Figure 8, Viewpoints Plan, Figure 9 Photosheet 1, Near Distance Viewpoints 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6, Figure 10, Photosheet 2 Middle Distance Viewpoints 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12 and Figure 11 Photosheet 3 Long Distance View 13)

6.61 This section assesses near, middle and long distance viewpoints from various visual receptor locations. This section summarises the methodology and looks at the viewpoints highlighted on the Figures 8 to 11.

6.7 Methodology

6.71 Photographic Methodology

6.72 Photographic viewpoints were selected to give typical or representative views from a variety of locations and from near, middle and long distance towards the Site. All Viewpoints used were from publically accessible land including footpaths and open spaces.

6.73 Each photograph has been taken from a height approximately 1.5m above ground level.

6.74 The camera used was a Sony 230 digital single lens reflex camera with a 18-55mm lens on a focal distance of 35. The suppliers of the camera prescribe this as the set up which most closely resembles the image as seen by the human eye.

6.75 All photographs were taken at a time when views were clear during the day and when some leaves were still on the deciduous trees.

6.8 The Visual Impact Assessment Structure

6.81 This is described under the following headings,

- Near Distance Views (under 50m from Site),
- Middle Distance Views (50 to 500m from Site),
- Long Distance Views (Over 500m from Site).

6.82 All judgements regarding impacts are made using Tables 1, 2 ad 3 on page 20.

Table 1 Sensitivity of Landscape Receptors

Sensitivity	Visual Receptor
High	Viewers with proprietary interest and/or prolonged viewing opportunities and/or who have a particular interest in their visual environment, for example residents, or visitors to National Parks, AONBs or Heritage Coasts
Medium	Viewers with moderate interest in their visual environment, for example users of local open space facilities and walkers on footpaths.
Low	Viewers with passing or momentary interest in their everyday surroundings, for example motorists or people at their place of work, whose attention is focussed on other activities and are therefore less susceptible to change

Table 2 Visual Impact magnitude

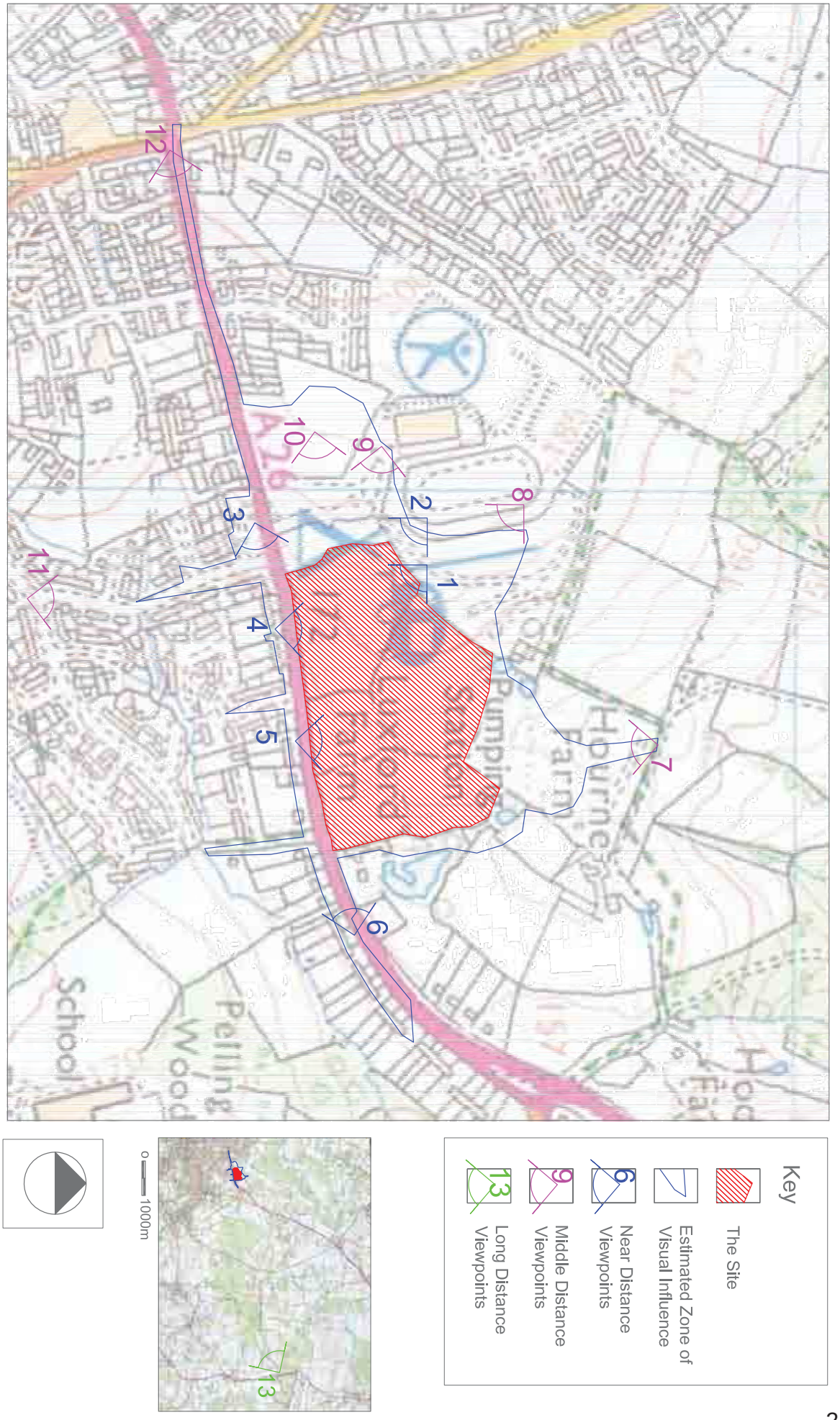
Visual Impact Magnitude	Description
Major adverse visual impact or benefit	The proposals will cause a dominant or complete change to the composition of the view, the appreciation of the landscape character, the ability to take or enjoy the view
Moderate adverse visual impact or benefit	The proposals will cause a clearly noticeable change to the view, which would affect the composition, the appreciation of landscape character or the ability to take or enjoy the view.
Slight adverse visual impact or benefit	The proposals will cause a perceptible change to the view, but which would not materially affect the composition, the appreciation of landscape character or the ability to take or enjoy the view
Negligible adverse visual impact or benefit	The proposals will cause a barely perceptible change to the view, which would not affect the composition, the appreciation of landscape character, or the ability to take or enjoy the view
No change	The proposals will cause no change to the view
Neutral	There will be a change to the view, but it is not possible to judge whether this change is an adverse or beneficial impact

Table 3 Assessment of Landscape or Visual Significance

Sensitivity of Resource	Major Impact or Benefit	Moderate Impact or Benefit	Slight Impact or Benefit	Negligible Impact or Benefit	Neutral Impact
High	Key significant	Key significant	Significant	Not Significant	Not Significant
Medium	Significant	Significant	Not Significant	Not Significant	Not Significant
Low	Significant	Not Significant	Not Significant	Not Significant	Not Significant

(Extracted from the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Second Edition, 2002, by the Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment.

Figure 8 Viewpoints Plan



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Title	Viewpoints Plan
Project/Sheet	Housing Plots North of A26 Crowborough
Job	hla 60
Drawing number	hla-060-007
Revision	
Purpose	Planning
Date	07-12-11
Scale	1:20000@A1

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Figure 9 Photosheet 1 Near Distance Viewpoints 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6



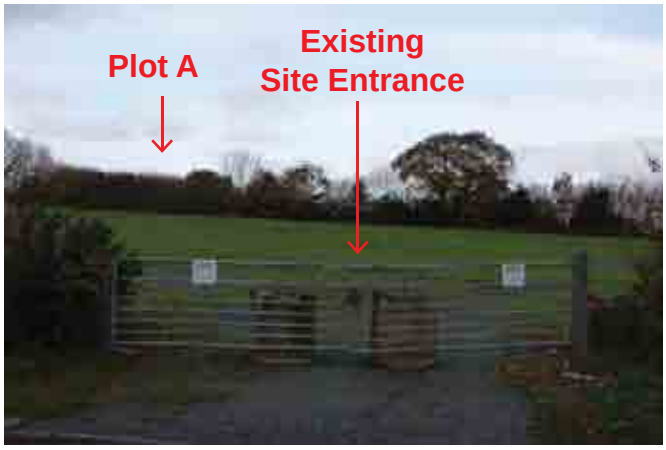
Viewpoint 1



Viewpoint 2



Viewpoint 3



Viewpoint 4



Viewpoint 5



Viewpoint 6

Figure 10 Photosheet 2 Middle Distance Viewpoints 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12



Viewpoint 7



Viewpoint 8



Viewpoint 9



Viewpoint 10



Viewpoint 11



Viewpoint 12

Figure 11 Photosheet 3 Long Distance Viewpoints 13



6.9 **Near distance views** (see Figure 8 Viewpoints Plan and Figure 9 Photosheet 1, Near Distance Views 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6).

6.91 *Location:* Near distance views were selected from public viewpoints directly around the Site, these include Viewpoint 1 looking south east from the Caravan Park access road to Plot A, Viewpoint 2 looking south east from the bank above the running track towards the front of the Leisure Centre building towards the Site, Viewpoint 3 looking north east from the bus stop on the A26 opposite the Leisure Centre entrance towards Plot A, Viewpoint 4 looking north from the pavement in front of Lansdowne House towards Plot A, Viewpoint 5 from the footpath at the junction of Farthings and the A26 looking north towards Plot B and Viewpoint 6 looking west towards Plot C from the pavement on the A26 opposite Luxford Farm.

6.92 *Photographic Height:* The lowest viewpoint is 6 at approximately 155m AOD (plus 1.5m photographers view) and the highest point is at viewpoint 2 at approximately 175m AOD (plus 1.5m photographers view).

6.93 *Sensitivity of Receptors:* **Generally Low to Medium** (footpath and vehicle users). Some residential users have views to the boundaries (these views vary and will need further assessment to ensure specific mitigation measures are put in place).

6.94 *Existing Views Description:* The existing views are generally to the boundary of the site which is effectively screened by mature tree and shrub planting.

6.95 *During Construction Magnitude of Impact:* **Slight Adverse to Neutral.** The rationale for this is that there is likely to be increased traffic on the surrounding roads.

6.96 *On Completion Magnitude of Impact:* **Slight Adverse to Neutral** (although specific residential receptors may need more consideration).

6.97 *20 years after planting, Magnitude of Impact*: **Slight Adverse** to **Neutral.**

6.98 *Type and Nature of Impact:* **Slight Adverse** to **Neutral.**

6.99 *Significance of Impact:* **Not Significant.**

6.10 Middle distance views (See Fig 8 Viewpoints Plan and Figure 10 Photosheet 2, Middle Distance Views 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12).

6.101 *Location:* Middle distance views have been selected from public viewpoints 50 to 500m away from the Site around these include Viewpoint 7 looking south from the public right of way footpath west of Hourne's Farm towards Plot D, Viewpoint 8 is looking south east from the north east corner of the running track public right towards Plots A and D, Viewpoint 9 looking east from the Leisure Centre car park towards Plot A, Viewpoint 10 looking east from the sports pitch, across the car park and the Model Railway towards Plot A, Viewpoint 11 looking north from the pavement adjacent to the roundaout junction, Millbrook Road and Eridge Gardens the pavement towards Plot A and Viewpoint 12 looking east from the pavement on the A26 at the junction with the B2100 towards Plot A.

6.102 Photographic Height: Viewpoint 12 is the highest at approximately 200m AOD (plus 1.5m photographers view) and Viewpoint 7 is the lowest at approximately 160m AOD (plus 1.5m photographers view).

6.103 *Sensitivity of Receptors:* **Generally Low to Medium** (footpath and vehicle users) although Viewpoint 7 is **High** (footpath in the AONB). Some residential users have views to the boundariy but these views are unlikely to experience any significant visual impact.

6.104 *Existing Views Description:* There are very few middle distance views to the south, east and north. Most middle distance views of the Site are from the A 26 corridor and the open area around the Leisure Centre to the west. Viewpoint 7 has an obscured view of the existing planting at the Site's northern boundary.

6.105 *During Construction, Magnitude of Impact:* **Neutral.**

6.106 *On Completion, Magnitude of Impact:* **Neutral.**

6.107 *20 years after planting, Magnitude of Impact*: **Neutral.**

6.108 *Type and Nature of Impact:* **Neutral.**

6.109 *Significance of Impact:* **Not Significant.**

6.11 Long distance views (See Fig 8 Viewpoints Plan and Figure 11 Photosheet 3, Long Distance View 13)

6.111 *Location:* Long distance view 13 is from the footpath located on the west side of the A267 close to Saxonbury Farm and 1.5km north of Mark Cross, it is approximately 5.5km from the Site.

6.112 Photographic Height: Viewpoint 13 is approximately 185m AOD (plus 1.5m photographers view).

6.113 *Sensitivity of Receptors:* **High** (footpath users in the AONB).

6.114 *Existing Views Description:* There are no long distance views to the south, west or north. There is potential for views from the east but these are limited from public viewpoints and the Site is generally screened or obscured by existing foreground planting. Viewpoint 13 shows the indiscernible nature of the Site for long range visual receptors

6.115 *During Construction, Magnitude of Impact:* **Neutral.**

6.116 *On Completion, Magnitude of Impact:* **Neutral.**

6.117 *20 years after planting, Magnitude of Impact*: **Neutral.**

6.118 *Type and Nature of Impact:* **Neutral.**

6.119 *Significance of Impact:* **Not Significant.**

7.0 Summary, Conclusion and Mitigation

7.1 Summary

7.2 Landscape Character Impact

7.21 This report proposes 3 key Landscape Character Areas associated with the Site, LCA 1, Fields and Woodland, LCA 2, Town Edge, LCA 3, Leisure Centre, Caravan Park, and Parkland.

7.22 It is proposed that all the signifigant existing vegetation is retained and enhanced at the boundaries and within the Plots, so that it is judged that the impact upon the LCAs would be ***Neutral***.

7.23 The High Weald AONB, at it's Crowborough edge, will have approximately 1.76 to 2.26 hectares of new and enhanced existing planting and 4.5 to 5 hectares of new built environment which will replace existing grassland open space. During the Site visits to the prow footpaths in the AONB where there were potential views it was judged that the proposed development would have a ***Neutral*** impact on the landscape character of the .

7.3 Visual Impact

7.31 Whilst the Plots are on high ground and potentially in prominent positions they are generally well screened or obscured by mature existing boundary vegetation and the local topography It is generally difficult to receive views to the internal areas of the Site from near, middle or long distance viewpoints. Where there are views of the Site, such as directly at the boundary or adjacent to the entrances, the amount of built development is likely to be minimal as each Plot is enclosed and screened by existing and new enhanced planting from the next. During the Site visits to the prow footpaths in the AONB where there were potential views it was judged that the proposed development would have a ***Neutral*** impact as it was felt that the proposed development would be generally indiscernible.

7.32 The Estimated ZVI shows that the new proposed development will be seen from few and specific near distance viewpoints these are, public footpaths, roads and vehicle users and some residential properties, predominantly on the south side of the A26. The Visual Impact caused by the proposed development upon near distance viewpoints is likely to be ***Neutral to Slight Adverse*** (although several properties located opposite the proposed main and emergency entrance may have a Slight to Moderate Adverse impact where they are located near to the new entrance).

7.33 The Estimated ZVI shows that the Site can be seen from occasional middle distance viewpoints (mainly from the A26 corridor a few hundred metres either side of the Site) and very few long distance viewpoints. Long distance views of the Site are difficult to discern owing to obscuring or screening of views by existing vegetation on or adjacent to the Site. The visual impact caused by the proposed development upon middle and long distance viewpoints is judged as ***Neutral***.

7.4 Conclusion

In conclusion and with regard to landscape character and visual impact this report proposes that the Site is justified as a housing allocation Site. The Site is visually well contained by topography and existing mature planting. Its local character which includes the Leisure centre, houses to the south and the A26, would blend well with the new development and minimise landscape character impact. Whilst the AONB would integrate 6.76ha of new development it is felt that this is at it's periphery and in an area adjacent to the existing built up character of Crowborough, as such there are no landscape character or visual impact reasons why the site should not continue to be identified as a housing allocation.

7.5 Mitigation

7.51 The Wealden District Council, Local Development Framework, pt 3.1.3 (and endosred in 3.2.8) with reference to the Site states

'there would be scope to improve conserve and enhance the landscape structure (of the AONB) through development and associated mitigation.'

It is with this in mind that the following mitigation recommendations are made.

7.52 As designed the new and enhancing buffer zone and other planting will ensure that the new development blends into the local Crowborough townscape.

7.53 The design needs to show careful consideration of units in relation to size (storey height), scale, massing and orientation (to ensure reflectivity off glass from cars and buildings is minimal) and also to consider the careful location of buildings and layout in relation to topography and existing vegetation.

7.54 The layout around the proposed main entrance and the secondary emergency entrance should be carefully considered so that open views of the development are limited, obscured or screened.

7.55 The development should utilise cut and fill techniques (wherever possible) to create bunds and lowered areas to reinforce the screening of the development.

7.56 The use of sustainable technologies should be employed where they assist in blending the Site with the surrounding Landscape Character. These could include the use of green roof systems, sustainable drainage systems, the use of natural and local building materials, a transport strategy, and designing the site using Green Infrastructure systems, all from Day One.

Appendices

Appendix 1 Natural England, National Character Assessment No 122, The High weald,

Appendix 2 East Sussex County Council, Landscape Character Area Assessment 4, the High Weald,

Appendix 3 East Sussex County Council, Landscape Character Area Assessment 37, Crowborough.