



Land North of Camer Road, Meopham Environmental Statement

Chapter 12: Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment

Iceni Projects on behalf of the
McManus Family

February 2026

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12. LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Introduction

12.1 This chapter of the ES has been prepared by Icen Projects and presents an assessment of the likely significant effects of the Proposed Development with respect to landscape character and visual amenity (people's views). Mitigation measures are identified, where appropriate, to avoid, reduce or offset any significant adverse effects identified and/or enhance likely beneficial effects. Taking into account the mitigation measures, the nature and significance of the likely residual effects are reported.

12.2 This chapter is supported by the following technical appendices:

- **Appendix 12.1: National Policy Summary**
- **Appendix 12.2: LVIA Methodology**
- **Appendix 12.3: Extracts from Published Characterisations**
- **Appendix 12.4: Illustrative Material**
 - Figure 12.1 – Site Location Plan
 - Figure 12.2 – Aerial Photograph Plan
 - Figure 12.3 – Site Designations Plan
 - Figure 12.4 – ZTV (Bare Earth) Plan
 - Figure 12.5 – ZTV (Visual Barriers) Plan
 - Figure 12.6 – Green Infrastructure Strategy Plan
- **Appendix 12.5 – Context Photographs**
- **Appendix 12.6 – Type 3 Visualisations**
- **Appendix 12.7 – Landscape Assessment Table**
- **Appendix 12.8 – Visual Assessment Table**
- **Appendix 12.9 – Green Belt Assessment**

Legislation and Policy Context

National Planning Policy

National Planning Policy Framework (2025)

12.3 The national planning policies and guidance relevant to this assessment are summarised in **Appendix 12.1**.

Local Planning Policy

12.4 The following local planning policies are relevant to landscape and visual matters in relation to the Proposed Development.

Gravesham Core Strategy (2014)

12.5 The Gravesham Borough Council (GBC) Core Strategy (adopted 2014)¹ sets out the long-term vision and strategic context for managing and accommodating growth within Gravesham Borough. Policies of relevance are noted below:

- **Policy CS01: Sustainable Development** states that the council will take a positive approach that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development.
- **Policy CS02: Scale and Distribution of Development** states that development will be supported in the rural area where it is compatible with national policies for protecting the Green Belt and policies in the Core Strategy.
- **Policy CS12: Green Infrastructure** highlights the need to capitalise on the opportunities for the enhancement, restoration and creation of habitats, while noting that proposals are to take into account the Kent Downs AONB Management Plan, the Gravesham Landscape Character Assessment, and the Cluster Studies where relevant.
- **Policy CS14: Housing Type and Size** notes that the Council will expect new housing development to provide a range of dwelling types and sizes taking into account the existing character of the area.
- **Policy CS15: Housing Density** sets out that residential developments should be of a density that is consistent with achieving good design and does not compromise the distinctive character of the area in which it is situated.
- **Policy CS19: Development and Design Principles** notes that new development should be visually attractive and locally distinctive, with reference to the Kent Design Guide and the Residential Layout Guidelines SPG, in addition to taking into account the wide site context, incorporating appropriate hard and soft landscaping and enhancing the green infrastructure network.

Other Relevant Guidance

12.6 The following guidance and documentation is relevant to the Proposed Development;

- Residential Layout Guidelines SPG2 (2020)²;
- Design for Gravesham – Design Code SPD (2024)³;
- Kent Design Guide (2005)⁴;
- Gravesham Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Study (2016)⁵;
- Draft Development Management Policies Document (2020)⁶;

- Draft Strategic Housing Landscape Availability Assessment (SHLAA) (2020)⁷;
- Gravesham Stage 2 Green Belt Study and Appendices (2020)⁸;
- The Landscape Assessment of Kent (2004)⁹;
- Kent Downs National Landscape Setting Position Statement (2024)¹⁰;
- Kent Downs Landscape Character Assessment Update (2023)¹¹;
- Kent Downs Management Plan (2021)¹²; and
- Gravesham Landscape Character Assessment (2009)¹³.

Assessment Methodology and Significance Criteria

- 12.7 This section presents the methodology used to assess the potential effects of the Proposed Development in relation to landscape character and visual amenity.

Consultation

- 12.8 A Scoping Report (**Appendix 1.3**) was submitted to GBC, which set out the proposed study area and scope of assessment for landscape and visual effects, including the approach to the assessment methodology and proposed viewpoints. Over and above that set out in the Scoping Report, the Scoping Opinion (**Appendix 1.4**) requested that night-time effects on the Kent Downs National Landscape be considered as part of the assessment, and that it may be helpful to also include an assessment at Year 15 of operation in winter. These aspects are considered in the relevant section of this ES chapter.

Study Area and Scope

Study Area

- 12.9 The Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Third Edition (GLVIA3)¹⁴ defines the purpose of the 'landscape Study Area' as the area which the Proposed Development may influence in a significant manner. The 'visual Study Area' is defined by the area across which the Proposed Development is potentially visible, and the individuals or groups of people who may be significantly affected by changes in the composition of their views. The landscape and visual study areas are intrinsically linked and are therefore combined to form the overall 'LVIA Study Area'. This was guided by the rationale set out below and determined by professional judgement.
- 12.10 The Site is located to the east of Hook Green and to the southwest of Sole Street and is bordered by the Chatham Main Line to the north, Camer Road to the southeast, and Norwood Lane to the southwest. The northwestern boundary is marked by the rear gardens of the properties along Nursery Road and Fairview Gardens, within the village of Hook Green. Overall, the Site is well-contained and is bordered by defensible boundaries on all four sides. The Site predominantly comprises flat, agricultural land. There are few buildings of note on Site with the only exceptions being a residential property situated off Norwood Lane and an associated small stable block with a small pastoral field north of the residential property, both situated in the western portion of the Site.

- 12.11 The Site falls within the administrative boundary of GBC, within the Green Belt. It has no other significant planning policy designations. There are no statutory landscape or ecology designations on Site, and no heritage constraints within the Site. There are several Listed Buildings in proximity to the Site, including Norwood Farmhouse (Grade II Listed) located along Norwood Lane adjacent to the Site and conservation areas. South-east of the Site, the Kent Downs National Landscape abuts Camer Road, running along the Site's south-east / eastern boundary.
- 12.12 Due to the combination of a relatively flat and low-lying Site and existing landscape features both within and surrounding the Site, visibility is generally localised and restricted to those areas within the immediate vicinity. With longer range views screened by vegetation, transport infrastructure and built form. Parts of the Site are visible, albeit heavily filtered, from the National Landscape to the east of the Site, viewed from the Public Right of Way (PRoW) that cross the adjacent fields beyond Camer Road and the roadside vegetation.
- 12.13 A study area of approximately 2km around the Site has been applied for the assessment of landscape and visual effects, which has been based on desktop findings (including a Zone of Theoretical Visibility projection) and verified through field-survey. A bare earth Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) is provided in **Figure 12.4** and a visual barriers ZTV is provided in **Figure 12.5** in **Appendix 12.4**.
- 12.14 The ZTV, alongside fieldwork, were used to identify representative viewpoints within the Study Area. In line with GLVIA3, these viewpoints were selected for the illustration of the visual effects likely to be experienced by different visual receptors (people). The viewpoints have been selected to inform and illustrate the visual assessment, capturing views experienced by visual receptors and demonstrating the difference in visibility across different viewing distances, elevation, and orientations from across the Study Area. They are not intended to show all locations where the Proposed Development could be visible from. All representative viewpoints have been located in publicly accessible locations, as is best practice. All receptors within the Study Area that are outside of the ZTV will have no view of the Proposed Development. The ZTV and baseline photography have been supplemented by 3D modelling which has been illustrated through the Type 3 visualisations in **Appendix 12.6**.

Spatial Scope

- 12.15 Potential landscape effects will be assessed for the following receptors:
- The constituent landscape elements of the Site;
 - Landscape character of Site and its immediate surroundings;
 - Kent Downs National Landscape;
 - Kent - Ash Downs LCA;
 - Kent – Luddesdown: West Kent Downs LCA; and

- Gravesham - Meopham Downs LCA.

12.16 Potential visual effects will be assessed for the following receptors:

- Residents on Camer Road;
- Residents on Camer Street;
- Residents on Norwood Lane;
- Residents on Nursery Road;
- Residents on Fairview Gardens;
- Residents on Tradescant Drive;
- Residents on Manor Road;
- Residents on Melliker Hill;
- Users of Camer Road;
- Users of Camer Street;
- Users of Norwood Lane;
- Users of Camer Park;
- Users of the PRoW NS250;
- Users of the PRoW NS252;
- Users of the PRoW NS192;
- Users of the PRoW NS308;
- Users of the PRoW NS242;
- Users of the PRoW NS223;
- Users of the PRoW NS304;
- Users of the PRoW NS191;
- Users of the PRoW NS190; and
- Users of the PRoW NS173.

Temporal Scope

12.17 The temporal scope of this assessment is the entire life of the Proposed Development, which therefore covers construction works and completion/ operation of the Proposed Development, as well as 15 years following completion.

12.18 To understand how seasonality can impact the likely effects, the assessment considers the peak construction works and the operation Year 1 of the Proposed Development based on winter

conditions when vegetation is not in leaf, therefore representing a reasonable worst-case scenario. The assessment also considers operation Year 15 of the Proposed Development based on summer conditions when the proposed planting has established and is in leaf.

12.19 The assessment has been undertaken in the following scenarios:

- Peak construction activity in winter;
- Year 1 operation in winter; and
- Year 15 operation in summer, presenting the established proposed planting.

Assessment Methodology

12.20 In accordance with the GLVIA3 process, the LVIA methodology comprises the following key stages:

- A baseline review of published landscape assessments, studies, relevant supporting evidence base documents, aerial photography, mapping, and fieldwork to identify the landscape and visual baseline and receptors;
- An assessment of the sensitivity of landscape and visual receptors, based on the assessment of their respective value and susceptibility to change;
- An assessment of the magnitude of effect resulting from the Proposed Development during construction, Year 1 and Year 15. The assessment of magnitude of effect considers the scale, duration, and reversibility of the effect;
- Combination of the receptor's sensitivity and the magnitude of effect experienced to determine the resultant level of effect; and
- An assessment of the significance of the effect to the landscape and visual receptors is identified.

12.21 The detailed assessment methodology is set out in **Appendix 12.2**.

Significance of Landscape and Visual Effects

12.22 In assessing EIA development, a judgment needs to be made about whether an effect is likely to be 'significant'. GLVIA3 advises that: *"There are no hard and fast rules about what makes a significant effect and there cannot be a standard approach since circumstances vary with the location and landscape context and with the type of proposal"*.

12.23 In terms of the significant landscape effects GLVIA3 provides the following advice:

- *"Major loss or irreversible negative effects, over an extensive area, on elements and/or aesthetic and perceptual aspects that are key to the character of nationally valued landscapes are likely to be of the greatest significance;*
- *Reversible negative effects of short duration, over a restricted area, on elements and/or aesthetic and perceptual aspects that contribute to but are not key characteristics of the character of the landscapes of community value are likely to be of the least significance and may, depending on circumstances, be judged as not significant; and*

- *Where assessments of significance place landscape effects between these extremes, judgements must be made about whether or not they are significant with full explanations of why these conclusions have been reached.” (Paragraph 5.56).*

12.24 In terms of the significant visual effects GLVIA3 provides the following advice:

- *“Effects on people who are particularly sensitive to changes in views and visual amenity are more likely to be significant;*
- *Effects on people at recognised and important viewpoints or from recognised scenic routes are more likely to be significant; and*
- *Large-scale changes which introduce new, non-characteristic or discordant or intrusive elements into the view are more likely to be significant than small changes or changes already involving features already present within the view.” (Paragraph 6.44).*

12.25 For the purpose of this chapter, the following criteria have been applied:

- Effects of Major, and Major to Moderate Significance are likely to be important considerations at a regional or district scale, and/ or an important consideration for decision makers. As such these are considered significant effects.
- Moderate effects, while important at a local scale, may be considered as significant depending on the receptor in question. These effects are not anticipated to be key decision-making issues, and it is up to the discretion of the professional making the assessment as to whether this effect is considered significant. These are identified accordingly in this chapter.
- Minor effects may be of local concern and are not considered ‘significant’. These effects should not be wholly disregarded; however, they are of limited importance in the decision-making process. Negligible or neutral effects would see limited or no change or effects. Where significant adverse effects are identified, measures to avoid, prevent, reduce or, if possible, offset these effects are recommended (i.e. mitigation measures). The level of effect is then assessed with these measures in place i.e. residual effects.

Mitigation and Residual Effects

12.26 Mitigation measures are described as those measures, including any process or activity, designed to avoid, prevent, reduce and/or, if possible, (offset) compensate for any adverse landscape and/or visual effects likely to occur as a result of the Proposed Development. Residual effects are those that are predicted to remain once mitigation measures are in place.

12.27 In situations where proposed mitigation measures are likely to change over time, for example landscape planting to screen built development, it is important to make a distinction between any likely effects that will arise in the short-term and those that will occur in the long-term or ‘residual effects’ once mitigation measures have established. In this assessment, construction effects are assessed for the duration of the construction period. The operational effects of the Proposed Development have been considered at Year 1 and once mitigation has established (after 15 years).

12.28 Inherent mitigation measures have been included as part of the landscape planning of the Site and a series of landscape and visual principles used in developing the layout are set out in the mitigation section, including keeping the more sensitive areas free of development. Any further mitigation measures are additional to these inherent/embedded measures.

Cumulative Effects

12.29 Cumulative Effects are:

“the additional changes caused by a Proposed Development in conjunction with other similar developments or as the combined effects of a set of developments, taken together” (GLVIA 3, Page 120, paragraph 7.3).

12.30 In carrying out the Landscape and Visual Assessment, it is for the author to form a judgment on whether or not it is necessary to consider any planned developments and to form a judgment on how these could potentially affect a project.

12.31 A list of potential projects to consider cumulatively are included in **Chapter 13: Residual Effects, Mitigation, Monitoring and Cumulative Effects** of the ES.

Visualisation Type Methodology

12.32 The photographs and visualisations within this Chapter have been prepared in general conformance with the Landscape Institute’s Technical Guidance Note 06/19¹⁵. The ‘types’, as set out within the Guidance, comprise the following:

- Type 1 - annotated viewpoint photographs;
- Type 2 - 3D wireline/ model;
- Type 3 - photomontage/ photowire; and
- Type 4 - photomontage/ photowire (survey/ scale verifiable).

12.33 The baseline photographs within this report include a combination of context photographs (showing the character of the Site and surroundings), as well as Type 1 photographs (which are displayed at a recognised scale and angle of view, as per the guidelines). Type 3 photomontages have been provided in **Appendix 12.6** to aid in showing the visual impacts of the Proposed Development.

12.34 Photographs were taken with a digital camera approximating a 50mm lens, to give a similar depth of view to the human eye. In some cases, images have been joined together to form a panorama. The prevailing weather, and any effects on visibility are noted. Images are displayed at the most appropriate size, taking into account the published guidance, legibility at A3 paper size, and context (which is often shown for illustrative purposes only), and allows for enlarged scale printing if required.

Limitations and Assumptions

12.35 Owing to the outline nature of the planning application, the assessment within this chapter is based on the parameter plans prepared (land use, movement and access, and building heights) for the Proposed Development. The assessment of the Proposed Development, once fully complete, took

into account the embedded landscape mitigation (including the public open space that incorporates areas of hard and soft landscape features, planting and SuDS), as shown on the Land Use Parameter Plan (**Appendix 3.2**). It also took into account the Illustrative Landscape Strategy Plan/Green Infrastructure Framework Plan (see **Figure 12.6** in **Appendix 12.4**), as a reasonable interpretation of suggested landscape treatment and therefore residual landscape and visual effects, in addition to the information outlined within the Design and Access Statement as appropriate.

12.36 The Building Heights Parameter Plan (**Appendix 3.2**) depicts the maximum 'envelope' for which development could come forward under a future Reserved Matters application. The actual quantum of development would likely be much reduced from this and space between individual buildings would break up massing. The assumptions made for maximum building heights are:

- 2 storeys – 9m tall;
- 2.5 storeys – 12m tall; and
- 3 storeys – 14m tall.

12.37 All fieldwork has been undertaken from publicly accessible locations within the Study Area. Professional judgement has been used to assess residents' views, aided by aerial photography and fieldwork from the surrounding area.

12.38 The assessment of construction activities is based on typical construction activity and practices for a development of this type.

12.39 The assumptions for the Year 1 operational assessment are:

- The Proposed Development would be fully completed and operational across the Site during winter, when deciduous vegetation is not in leaf, thereby representing the worst-case scenario;
- The landscape design would be implemented in line with the Landscape Strategy / Green Infrastructure Framework Plan in **Figure 12.6** in **Appendix 12.4**. New planting would be planted but would not be established at Year 1; and
- Proposed hedgerows would be 0.6m - 0.8m tall and proposed trees would be 1.0m - 3.5m tall, depending on available plants and natural variations in height. Planting is assumed to grow at a rate of 300mm per year.

12.40 The assumptions for the Year 15 operational assessment are:

- The Proposed Development would be fully complete and operational across Site during summer, when deciduous vegetation is in leaf; and
- All new planting would have established. Tree planting would have grown such that they would be between 6m and 7.5m tall. Hedgerows would be managed and at least 2.5m tall.

Baseline Conditions

Establishing Baseline Conditions

- 12.41 The landscape and visual baseline were informed by a desk-based review of published landscape character assessments, relevant green and blue infrastructure studies, Ordnance Survey (OS) mapping, aerial photography, topographical data and the ZTV.
- 12.42 Field surveys were undertaken to review and record the baseline landscape character and visual amenity across the Site and study area. Site visits were undertaken in March 2025 to capture winter conditions. These were supplemented by Site visits in September 2025 to understand and capture summer conditions. Viewpoint photography was undertaken in fair weather conditions with good visibility.

Landscape Baseline

- 12.43 Below is an overview of the landscape baseline, including a summary of published landscape character assessments, as well as an overview of the landscape character of the Study Area and the Site.

Published Landscape Character Assessments and relevant studies

- 12.44 The Site and study area are covered by several published LCAs, which set out the key characteristics of the landscape and guidelines for the management of future change. Extracts from the relevant published landscape character assessments can be found in **Appendix 12.3**.

National Landscape Character Assessment

- 12.45 Natural England has produced profiles for England's National Character Areas ('NCAs'), which divides England into 159 distinct natural areas, defined by a unique combination of landscape, biodiversity, geodiversity and cultural and economic activity. The Site lies within the North Downs National Character Area (NCA 119)¹⁶.
- 12.46 The study describes NCA 119 as "*a chain of chalk hills extending from the Hog's Back in Surrey and ending dramatically at the internationally renowned White Cliffs of Dover...Twisting sunken lanes, often aligned along ancient drove roads, cut across the scarp and are a feature of much of the dip slope*".
- 12.47 The key characteristics of NCA 119 of relevance to the Site and surrounding area are outlined as follows:
- *"...A distinctive chalk downland ridge rises up from the surrounding land, with a steep scarp slope to the south providing extensive views across Kent, Surrey and Sussex and across the Channel seascape to France;*
 - *The broad dip slope gradually drops towards the Thames and the English Channel, affording extensive views across London and the Thames Estuary. The carved topography provides a series of dry valleys, ridges and plateaux;*

- *The area is cut by the deep valleys of the Stour, Medway, Darent, Wey and Mole. The river valleys cut through the chalk ridge, providing distinctive local landscapes which contrast with the steep scarp slope;*
- *The south-facing scarp is incised by a number of short, bowl-shaped dry valleys, cut by periglacial streams and often referred to as combes. The undulating topography of the dip slope has also been etched by streams and rivers, today forming dry valleys, some of which carry winterbournes that occasionally flow in the dip slope, depending on the level of the chalk aquifer;*
- *The footslope of the escarpment supports arable cropping, the dominant land use within the NCA. In the east, the richer, loamy soils of the lower dip slope support large tracts of mixed arable and horticultural production;*
- *Woodland is found primarily on the steeper slopes of the scarp, valley sides and areas of the dip slope capped with clay-with-flints. Well-wooded hedgerows and shaws are an important component of the field boundaries, contributing to a strongly wooded character. Much of the woodland is ancient...; and*
- *Small, nucleated villages and scattered farmsteads including oasts and barns form the settlement pattern, with local flint, chalk and Wealden brick the vernacular materials..."*

12.48 The assessment identifies a series of Statements of Environmental Opportunity (SEO) for NCA 119, of which the following are of relevance to the Site:

- *"SEO 1: Manage, conserve and enhance the distinctive rural character and historic environment of the North Downs, including the long-established settlement pattern, ancient routeways and traditional buildings. Protect the tranquillity of the landscape and sensitively manage, promote and celebrate the area's rich cultural and natural heritage, famous landmarks and views for future generations;*
- *SEO 2: Protect, enhance and restore active management to the diverse range of woodlands and trees of the North Downs.... recognising their contribution to sense of place, sense of history and tranquillity...; and*
- *SEO 4: Plan to deliver integrated, well-managed multi-functional green space in existing and developing urban areas, providing social, economic and environmental benefits and reinforcing landscape character and local distinctiveness..."*

12.49 The following landscape opportunities of relevance to the Site are identified:

- *"...Protect, conserve and enhance the characteristic medieval settlement pattern of small, nucleated villages along spring lines, within valleys and on the lower dip slope linked by winding, often sunken lanes, along with the strong local flint, chalk and Wealden brick vernacular of traditional architecture, with new building sensitive to local styles and materials...; and*
- *Manage, conserve, enhance and restore the characteristic pattern of thick welltreed hedgerows and shaws, forming a predominantly irregular field pattern..."*

The Landscape Assessment of Kent (2004)

- 12.50 The Landscape Assessment of Kent (2004) was prepared by Jacobs Babbie on behalf of Kent County Council and was published in October 2004. The Landscape Assessment of Kent identifies a number of different Landscape Character Areas (LCAs) across Kent and provides a description of and vision for each LCA.
- 12.51 The Site is located within the Ash Downs LCA, which consists of deep, dry valleys with wooded ridges and broad plateau tops. The area features a mix of small villages and 20th-century settlements, with extensive arable farmland on the plateaus and well-maintained hedgerows along winding lanes. It stretches from the A20 to the A227 and includes the settlements of Meopham and Longfield.
- 12.52 The key characteristics of the Ash Downs LCA identified in the assessment include:
- *"A pleasant mix of deep, dry pastoral valleys enclosed by wooded ridges and species rich hedgerows, with broad plateau tops beyond;*
 - *Small valley-bottom villages and large 20th century settlements on plateau; and*
 - *A winding network of narrow, historic lanes often eroded by traffic."*
- 12.53 The condition of the Ash Downs LCA is identified as 'Good', noting *"the pattern of landscape elements is coherent and, in most cases, reflects the underlying landform"* and that *"some visual detractors such as commercial buildings and unsympathetic land uses intrude into some of the views"*. Additionally, it notes *"the condition of heritage features such as field boundaries and vernacular buildings is good, however, much recent isolated development using unsympathetic materials has a negative impact"*.
- 12.54 The sensitivity of the Ash Downs LCA is identified as 'High', stating:
- "The characteristic features of this landscape are strongly represented and portray both an historic and ancient time-depth. Recent development of urban areas has a localised effect; the area retains local distinctiveness and a strong sense of continuity. The existing highways and the evidence of vernacular materials (such as flint) in historic buildings, in particular, enhance the sense of place. Visibility is moderate due to the intermittent tree cover."*
- 12.55 Landscape management and development guidelines for the Ash Downs LCA include the following landscape actions:
- *"Conserve broadleaf woodland cover;*
 - *Conserve small scale field pattern on valley sides;*

- *Conserve wooded edges to arable plateau;*
- *Conserve the impact of vernacular materials and the historic scale of built form;*
- *Conserve the enclosure of settlements within wooded areas; and*
- *Conserve original highway characteristics.”*

12.56 The Luddesdown: West Kent Downs LCA lies to the east of the Site, which comprises a rolling agricultural landscape in predominant arable use, where mixed woodland frequently dominates the skyline and forms a backdrop to the rolling landform. The landscape has over the years experienced hedgerow removal resulting in the amalgamation of large arable fields, and while there are occasional urban and industrial influences, the area retains a peaceful tranquillity and perception of rurality.

12.57 The key characteristics of the Luddesdown: West Kent Downs LCA identified in the assessment include:

- *“Rolling valleyside pasture and extensive undulating arable fields;*
- *Large areas of mixed woodland dominate skyline;*
- *Peaceful and rural, but threatened by suburban influences and industrial developments; and*
- *Many hedgerows removed.”*

12.58 The condition of the Luddesdown: West Kent Downs LCA is identified as ‘Good’, although noting *“the unity between landform and landscape elements is slightly interrupted by loss of hedgerow and the intensity of some areas of cultivation”* while recognising that *“there are very few visual detractors - some unsympathetic farm complexes and pylons amongst other minor detractors”*. The assessment also notes that *“the scattered and isolated historic farmsteads are dominated by piecemeal residential development in the west of the character area”*.

12.59 The sensitivity of the Luddesdown: West Kent Downs LCA is identified as ‘High’, stating:

“The area has a strong time-depth, reinforced by the distinctive ridgeline woodland and ancient highway routes. The historic hedgerow pattern is in decline and no longer contributes to the local distinctiveness. Many of the characteristic narrow, banked roads are open within arable areas, having lost their hedged boundaries. However, where they persist, they have a distinctive mix of species and are characteristically tall. Visibility is moderate as the landform is apparent and tree cover is intermittent.”

12.60 Landscape management and development guidelines for the Luddesdown: West Kent Downs LCA include the following landscape actions:

- *“Conserve the ancient characteristics of the landscape such as woodland cover and the isolation of settlements;*
- *Conserve woodland on ridges, and enhance woodland by extending wooded shaws into lower slopes;*
- *Conserve mix of hedgerow species and management of tall hedgerow; and*
- *Conserve the characteristics and enclosure of ancient highways.”*

Gravesham Landscape Character Assessment (2009)

12.61 The Gravesham Landscape Character Assessment, which identifies eleven distinct LCAs within Gravesham Borough, was prepared by Jacobs on behalf of GBC and was published in May 2009. The Site and the surrounding area is identified within the Meopham Downs LCA, the key characteristics of which are outlined as follows:

- *“Gently undulating topography with a mixture of arable and pasture farmland;*
- *Neat pattern of small square fields in the south;*
- *Broader irregular shaped fields to the north;*
- *Narrow lanes and roads lined with hedgerows;*
- *Three large settlements located along A227 running north and south [sic]; and*
- *Traditional architecture surrounding village greens provide local vernacular.”*

12.62 It is noted that the condition of the LCA is 'Good' and that *"the pattern of landscape elements is coherent, with few visual detractors. Established hedgerows and small woodland clumps limit the visual impact of detractors. Hedgerows are native and in good condition, providing ecological corridors along field boundaries. Woodland clumps are mostly native and mature and vary in condition, whilst the remains of orchards are in poor condition"*, while the sensitivity of the LCA is assessed as 'Moderate', stating:

"The key characteristic elements of the landscape are distinct, providing coherency and a strong sense of place within the landscape. Although woodland is restricted to small woodland clumps, hedgerows that run along field boundaries are historic and distinct. Both the settlements of Meopham and Meopham Green have distinct traditional village centres. In addition, traditional vernacular architecture can be found scattered across the landscape. The other two remaining settlements have more recent architecture that is less in keeping with the local vernacular. Strength of character and visibility are moderate, providing a moderate sensitivity overall."

12.63 The following guidelines of relevance to the Site are provided for the Meopham Downs LCA:

- *"Conserve and reinforce the traditional landscape structure and where necessary introduce new elements they should respect and enhance the pattern;*

- *Conserve characteristic narrow winding lanes and dense native hedgerows;*
- *Conserve traditional character of built environment by drawing on traditional building materials and techniques for new development;*
- *Reinforce the enclosure of settlements within wooded areas;*
- *Conserve and reinforce broadleaf woodland cover and wooded edges to arable plateau;*
- *Encourage the use of local produce to support traditional land uses such as orchards;*
- *Explore new horticultural land uses; and*
- *Conserve and reinforce agricultural land use.”*

Landscape Character of the Study Area

Land Use and Land Cover

- 12.64 As demonstrated in **Figure 12.1** in **Appendix 12.4** the Site extends to approximately 43.67 hectares and is located between the settlements of Hook Green and Sole Street, within the administrative area of GBC.
- 12.65 The study area features the aforementioned settlements as well as Istead Rise and Longfield to the north-west, Cobham to the north-east, and Meopham and Meopham Green to the south. Scattered farmsteads are also present throughout the surrounding landscape as well as a small pocket of ribbon development to the east in the form of Henley Street.
- 12.66 Agriculture is the dominant land use across the study area, with the fieldscape characterised by its irregular form, including both arable and pastoral uses. Field enclosure is variable. Some fields are enclosed by hedgerows or treebelts, while open field boundaries are also common. Irregular woodland blocks of varying size are frequently interspersed amongst the agricultural landscape as well as often partly containing settlements, much of which is defined as ancient woodland.
- 12.67 Publicly accessible open and recreational space is generally reserved for the extensive PRow network that traverses the agricultural landscape, supplemented by the occasional pocket park/village green, with Judson’s Recreation Ground a good example of this provision in the surrounding landscape. Camer Park also adjoins the Site to the south, which is open year-round.
- 12.68 Sole Street train station lies to the north-east of the Site, while Meopham train station lies to the north-west. A public house is located in proximity to the former, while light industrial uses and a retail parade are located in proximity to the latter. A more extensive retail parade also lies at the southern end of Hook Green on the A227/Wrotham Road.
- 12.69 The vernacular of built form within the area does vary, although typically is defined by its timber-framed and/or brick form, much of which is domestic in scale and of two-storeys in height, dating from several periods. Roofscapes are typically hipped or gabled and feature a mix of slate or Kent peg-clay tiles, while stuccoed facades are not uncommon.

Topography and Hydrology

- 12.70 The surrounding landscape is part of a gently rolling chalk plateau forming the dip slope of the North Downs. The terrain gradually descends from approximately 150m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD) near Meopham Green in the south, down to around 50m AOD close in the vicinity of Istead Rise. Several spurs of gently sloping high ground extend northward from the main ridgeline of the North Downs. This creates a landscape that is gently undulating and carved by numerous dry valleys. These valleys are steeper and more distinct in the southern areas, becoming gentler as they stretch north.
- 12.71 One such spur extends through Meopham to the south of the Site in the direction of Cobham to the north-east. Camer Road broadly follows the ridgeline of this spur. Accordingly, the southernmost point of the Site forms its highest point at approximately 105m AOD, dropping to approximately 92m AOD in the north-east and 87m AOD in the north-west respectively. Blundells Shaw, which lies in the centre of the Site, straddles a localised rise at around 95m AOD. The undulating nature of the landscape results in a slightly enclosed character, whereby subtle rises in the landform provide a degree of containment.
- 12.72 There are no notable hydrological features within the vicinity of the Site.

Designations and Heritage Assets

- 12.73 Much of the surrounding landscape is designated as Green Belt, with the areas of settlement at Hook Green and Sole Street inset from the Green Belt. The Kent Downs National Landscape adjoins the Site to the east. There are no notable ecological designations within the immediate vicinity of the Site. The relevant designations within the study area are shown on **Figure 12.3** in **Appendix 12.4**.
- 12.74 The Hook Green Conservation Area is located approximately 300m to the west of the Site, within which there are seven Grade II listed properties. In addition, there are a further seven Grade II listed properties within Camer Park to the south, as well as three more within Sole Street to the north-east of the Site. The nearest listed property to the Site however is the Grade II listed Norwood Farmhouse, which adjoins the Site to the west off Norwood Lane. With respect to the conservation area, the Conservation Area Appraisal¹⁷ notes that as the conservation area is enveloped by 20th century development there are no views of it from open countryside.

Access and PRow

- 12.75 The key transport routes within the vicinity of the Site include:
- Camer Road, which runs broadly north-east to south-west, along the south-eastern boundary of the Site (and which in turn is also named Sole Street and Green Lane);
 - Norwood Lane, which runs broadly north-west to south-east, along the south-western boundary of the Site;
 - The Chatham Main Line railway, which extends east-west across the landscape and defines the northern extent of the Site; and

- The A227 South Street, aligned broadly north-south, passing through the centre of Hook Green.

12.76 There is an extensive PRoW network within the setting of the Site, as shown on **Figure 12.1** in **Appendix 12.4**, with PRoW frequently running alongside the course of establish field boundaries connecting the areas of dispersed settlement together. The network provides recreational connections across the area, increasing the value of the landscape somewhat. PRoW NS192 also passes broadly east-west through the Site, connecting Hook Green with Sole Street.

12.77 There are no areas of Countryside and Rights of Way (CRoW) Act Land within the vicinity of the Site, although Camer Park country park does adjoin the Site to the south beyond Camer Road. Judson Recreation Ground is also present in the vicinity of the Site, lying approximately 120m to the west.

Character of the Night Sky

12.78 With reference to CPRE's Light Pollution and Dark Skies Mapping¹⁸ the night sky around the Site and wider area are influenced by surrounding urban areas, with light pollution appearing to emanate from the urban areas of Strood, Gravesend, Ebbsfleet and Dartford, in addition to the more localised areas of settlement in the vicinity of the Site including Meopham, Hook Green and Sole Street. The Site and immediate landscape setting is considered to be of moderate brightness, with the night-time sky noticeably affected by artificial light.

Landscape Character of the Site and its Immediate Surroundings

12.79 A landscape appraisal has been undertaken to ascertain the existing character of the Site. This is accomplished through recording and analysing the existing landscape features and characteristics, the way the landscape is experienced, and the value or importance of the landscape and visual resources in the vicinity of the Site. The elements of the landscape that contribute to landscape character include the built and natural form, the pattern of features, detailing, scale, planting, land use and human perception. In this regard, landscape character is derived as a result of the perception of, and action and interaction of, natural and human factors.

12.80 The Site comprises a large irregular tract of predominantly arable land that equates to an area of 43.32ha. Mainly under cereal crop, the field margins comprise a mix of scrub and grassland with no notable or rare species recorded. Three woodland blocks are present within the Site, two of which are central while a third much smaller block forms the north-western corner of the Site.

12.81 The southernmost point of the Site forms its highest point at approximately 105m AOD, dropping to approximately 92m AOD in the north-east and 87m AOD in the north-west respectively. Blundells Shaw, which is the larger of the centrally located woodland blocks, straddles a localised rise at around 95m AOD. This effectively creates a subtle ridgeline that bisects the Site, with the eastern half presenting with a north-easterly aspect, and the western half presenting with a north-westerly aspect.

12.82 The field boundaries are invariably defined, where along both Norwood Lane (which contains the Site to the south-west) and Camer Road (defining the south-eastern extent) scrub vegetation frequently gives way to an open and unmarked boundary/interface with the highway. The Chatham

Main Line railway is lined by treebelt vegetation, as is the boundary to the public house in the north-east of the Site and in part along the western boundary in the vicinity of the rear curtilage of properties off Nursery Road, Fairview Gardens and Norwood Lane.

- 12.83 PRow NS192 passes broadly east-west through the Site, connecting Hook Green with Sole Street. Three pylons supporting high-voltage overhead powerlines are also present within the Site, which cut across the north-eastern and northern segment of the Site in a broadly south-easterly to north-westerly direction. Neither Camer Road nor Norwood Lane feature street lighting columns. As a result, light sources within the vicinity of the Site are restricted to the light emitted from those properties in the vicinity of the Site as well as floodlighting in the car park to the public house.
- 12.84 With regard to the above there is a degree of tranquil character, although this is somewhat suppressed by the audible intrusion from passing trains and vehicles in proximity to the Site, while intervisibility with nearby built forms diminishes any strong perception of remoteness. The Site is not covered by any statutory or non-statutory designations for landscape, ecological, or historic value or quality, although it does lie within the setting of the Kent Downs National Landscape and in proximity to the Camer Park Country Park. The undulating nature of the landscape setting and extent of containment provided by treebelts and woodland blocks does however limit the extent to which the Site contributes to the setting of these areas.
- 12.85 Overall, the character of the Site and its Immediate Surroundings is assessed as being of medium landscape quality. As set out above, public access to the Site is limited to that along PRow NS192, and the Site is not inherently scenic beyond being an everyday ordinary countryside landscape. The Site's character is influenced by the adjoining urbanising features of development at Sole Street and Hook Green, in addition to the interface with the railway infrastructure and the pylons and high-voltage wires that oversail the Site. These features detract from what would otherwise be a rural landscape. There are no known associations with the Site that would elevate its value and on the basis of the above, the character of the Site and its Immediate Surroundings is assessed as being of medium value.
- 12.86 Given that the Site is gently sloping and adjoined by built form to the west and east, that it is in proximity to two railway stations, and has a good ability to accommodate residential development without the need for vegetation removal, the character of the Site and its Immediate Surroundings is considered to have a medium to low landscape susceptibility to the type of development proposed.
- 12.87 Overall, the character of the Site and its Immediate Surroundings is assessed as being of medium landscape sensitivity.

Visual Baseline

Near Distance Views

- 12.88 Recreational users of Camer Park largely experience no visibility of the Site from within the park, owing to the intervening mature parkland trees and vegetation, which provide a high level of visual

enclosure during both summer and winter (Photographs 3 and 23 in **Appendix 12.5**). However, there are limited and filtered glimpses available from the north-eastern extent of the park, along the avenue of trees towards Camer Road, where the Site becomes partly visible adjacent to The Railway Inn car park (Photographs 4 and 5 in **Appendix 12.5**). From these locations, the rooflines of existing houses along Camer Road, close to the Railway Inn car park, are also perceptible in the distance.

- 12.89 Recreational users of Footpath NS250 experience open near-distance views across the Site, where the land slopes down to the north. At this point, the Site is visible immediately beyond an unmaintained hedgerow and broken post-and-rail fencing, with open views across the grassed field contained by sparse boundary vegetation (Photograph 6 in **Appendix 12.5**). Further west along Footpath NS250 towards Hook Green, the Site remains visible through large breaks in the intervening field boundary vegetation, with the rising topography revealing the interior of the Site (Photograph 7 in **Appendix 12.5**). Pylons located within the Site are also perceptible in these views.
- 12.90 Recreational users of Footpath NS192 experience a range of views as the route runs from Judson's Recreation Ground, across Norwood Lane, and through fields into the Site. Within the north-western part of the Site, the footpath affords open views across the Site's interior towards Camer Farm, the listed buildings, and Blundell's Shaw woodland (Photographs 9a–9b and 14 in **Appendix 12.5**). Beyond the northern Site boundary, where the footpath crosses the railway, views become fully enclosed by boundary planting and vegetation, and the Site is no longer visible (Photograph 13 in **Appendix 12.5**). Similarly, in Judson's Recreation Ground, the Site is fully screened by housing and trees (Photograph 10 in **Appendix 12.5**).
- 12.91 Recreational users of Footpath NS191, located in the National Landscape, experience limited and filtered views towards the north-western boundary of the Site, as visibility is obstructed by intervening field boundary vegetation and dwellings along Sole Street (Photograph 19 in **Appendix 12.5**). However, where the footpath reaches Sole Street, clearer views are available across the Site adjacent to The Railway Inn and its car park, looking over the low hedgerow and timber post-and-rail fence that define the roadside boundary (Photograph 16 in **Appendix 12.5**). From this point, Blundell's Shaw woodland within the Site is visible, and views extend across the open field to the western boundary.
- 12.92 Recreational users of the Footpath NS242 (Wealdway) at Camer Road experience near open views across the Site, looking over the low roadside hedgerow (Photograph 17 in **Appendix 12.5**). There are clear views across the Site towards the western boundary, with Blundell's Shaw woodland visible in the distance.
- 12.93 Recreational users of Footpath NS223, west of the Site, experience contained and heavily filtered views due to woodland and boundary vegetation along the path (Photograph 18 in **Appendix 12.5**). In winter, limited glimpses may occur through treeline gaps, though the development would be barely perceptible.
- 12.94 Some residents along Manor Road, to the west of the Site, generally experience no clear views due to intervening boundary and railway vegetation. Occasional filtered glimpses may occur from first

floors over intervening vegetation, but the Site remains largely screened (Photograph 15 in **Appendix 12.5**).

12.95 Some residents along Norwood Lane would experience near-distance views of the Site over garden boundary vegetation, which generally comprises low to moderate-height fences, hedges and trees (Photograph 8 in **Appendix 12.5**). The sloping topography towards the north allows visibility across the open fields within the Site, particularly from upper floors and garden areas of properties.

12.96 Residents along Camer Road, Nursery Road, and Fairview Gardens generally have gardens that back directly onto the Site, where open views of the Site are available from rear gardens and upper floors. In some locations, intervening dwellings or garden vegetation provide partial screening, resulting in varying levels of visibility. Camer Street residents are partially visually separated from the Site by intervening land and roadside vegetation, allowing only limited or no direct views. Similarly, residents on Tradescant Drive are set back behind an intervening field, and therefore do not experience direct visibility of the Site.

Middle - Long Distance Views

12.97 Recreational users of Footpath NS252, west of Camer Park Road, experience no clear visibility of the Site due to intervening vegetation and field boundaries (Photograph 1 in **Appendix 12.5**). In winter, views remain heavily screened, with only occasional filtered glimpses possible through hedgerow gaps.

12.98 Recreational users of Footpath NS173, which runs to the south of Camer Park, experience no direct views of the Site due to the dense intervening parkland trees and vegetation within Camer Park, which provide strong year-round screening (Photographs 1, 21 and 22 in **Appendix 12.5**). Pylons extending northwards into the Site are visible above the treeline; however, the interior of the Site itself remains obscured by intervening trees and topography.

12.99 Recreational users of Footpath NS304 (Wealdway), north of the Site, experience no visibility due to intervening woodland at Broadfield Shaw (Photograph 12 in **Appendix 12.5**). In winter, the Site remains heavily screened, with the vegetation providing complete containment in summer.

12.100 Recreational users of Footpath NS190, located in the National Landscape south west of the Site, experience heavily filtered views due to intervening woodland and landform (Photograph 20 in **Appendix 12.5**). The Site lies beyond Camer Park, with no open visibility of the Site.

12.101 Residents and road users on Melliker Hill experience no discernible views of the Site, which is screened by intervening roadside vegetation and buildings (Photograph 11 in **Appendix 12.5**).

Future Baseline

12.102 It is anticipated that, in the absence of the Proposed Development, the prevailing landscape character and visual amenity of the Site would remain the same as the present baseline condition. The land use is predominantly arable. It is anticipated that this land use will remain were the Proposed Development not to go forward, with the fields continuing to be farmed and managed as is.

Receptors

12.103 A list of existing and future receptors is included in **Table 12.1**

Table 12.1 Existing Receptors

Receptor	Sensitivity
Existing Receptors: Landscape	
Cropland	Medium
Grassland	Medium
Hedgerows, scrub and treebelts	Low
Public Footpaths on Site	Medium
Woodland	High
Ash Downs LCA	Medium
Luddesdown: West Kent Downs LCA	High
Meopham Downs LCA	Medium
Character of the Site and its immediate surroundings	Medium
Kent Downs National Landscape	Very High
Existing Receptors (i.e. location of people): Visual	
Residents on Camer Road and Camer Street	Medium
Residents on Nursery Road and Fairview Gardens	Medium
Residents on Tradescant Drive	Medium
Residents on Norwood Lane	Medium
Residents on Manor Road	Medium
Residents on Melliker Hill	Medium
Users of Camer Road / Green Lane	Low
Users of Camer Street	Low
Users of Norwood Lane	Low
Users of Camer Park	High
Users of the PRow NS250	High
Users of the PRow NS252	High

Receptor	Sensitivity
Users of the PRow NS192	High
Users of the PRow NS308	High
Users of the PRow NS242 (Wealdway)	High
Users of the PRow NS223	High
Users of the PRow NS304 (Wealdway)	High
Users of the PRow NS191	High
Users of the PRow NS190	High
Users of the PRow NS173	High

Assessment of Effects

- 12.104 A full assessment of the landscape and visual effects arising from the construction works and the operation of the Proposed Development can be found in **Appendices 12.7** and **12.8**. A summary of these can be found below and in **Table 12.2**. An assessment of the Proposed Development on Green Belt matters is provided in **Appendix 12.9**.

Environmental Design and Management

- 12.105 Mitigation measures are described as those measures, including any process or activity, designed to avoid, prevent, reduce and/ or, if possible, offset/compensate for any adverse landscape and/or visual effects likely to occur as a result of the Proposed Development.

Embedded Mitigation During Construction

- 12.106 Due to the nature of construction activities, it is inevitable that some adverse effects would occur to the landscape and visual amenity of the Site and its surroundings. It is anticipated that the PRow will require temporary closure and/or diversion during the construction phase. However, the following mitigation measures are assumed to be followed to reduce the likelihood for significant landscape and visual effects to arise during construction:
- A Construction and Environmental Management Plan will be agreed with the Local Planning Authority before the construction of the Proposed Development commences, and it will include measures to control impacts from construction activities;
 - Site hoarding and fencing will be erected to screen the construction site and to limit access;
 - The location and extent of the contractor's compound/office is yet to be determined. This should be agreed through discussion between the contractor and landscape consultant, in order to reduce the landscape and visual impact of these elements where practicable. All cabins and storage mounds should be as low as practicable (maximum two cabins high) to minimise the

visual effects of these elements. The contractor's cabins are to be of a muted and visually recessive colour to minimise the visual effect of these temporary elements in localised views;

- Soil stockpiles will be kept as low as possible to minimise visual effects;
- Tree protection fencing will be installed and maintained in accordance with BS5837, 2012, 'Trees in Relation to Design, Demolition and Construction'; and
- Lighting would generally be limited to the working hours and when seasonal changes in natural daylight require it. Modern lighting would be used, and light shielding considered. Site lighting shall be kept to a minimum, sensitively placed and directional to specific tasks.

Mitigation Once the Proposed Development is Operational

12.107 Once the Proposed Development is operational, mitigation will be as per the embedded design principles described below. The design of the Proposed Development has evolved as part of an iterative process and has been informed by the findings of the landscape and visual amenity baseline conditions. Consideration of these baseline conditions has informed the proposed layout within the Site, the scale and massing of introduced built elements and appropriate ground levels across the Site. Further consideration has also been given to different landscape treatments to the Site in order to deliver the aims of the landscape strategy / green infrastructure framework plan.

12.108 Those aims of the landscape strategy / green infrastructure framework plan include:

- To integrate the Proposed Development within the landscape to minimise the potential for adverse landscape and visual effects to arise;
- To provide an attractive setting to the built elements of the Proposed Development based upon the character of the Site and its immediate surroundings; and
- To respond to the landscape strategy management guidelines set out in published characterisation assessment documents and relevant design guidance.

12.109 In situations where proposed mitigation measures are likely to change over time, for example landscape planting to screen development, it is important to make a distinction between any likely effects that will arise in the short-term and those that will occur in the long-term or 'residual effects' once mitigation measures have established. In this assessment, construction effects are assessed for the duration of the construction period. The operational effects of the Proposed Development have been considered at year 1 and once mitigation has established at year 15. As such, judgements for year 15 are considered to comprise the 'residual effects'.

12.110 Key areas of mitigation that have been embedded within the design include:

- Ensuring the eastern part of the Site remains free of built form to provide a sympathetic response to the immediate setting of the Kent Downs National Landscape, while in turn creating an extension to Camer Park;

- Retaining areas of woodland within the Site and hedgerow vegetation where practicable, incorporating sufficient Root Protection Area setbacks to respect the existing established landscape features;
- Introducing SuDS features such as swales and basins as landscape elements to contribute positively to the character and function of the landscape;
- Incorporating a central spine of open space in order to deliver a connected network of green infrastructure, including naturalistic open space, ecological corridors that support both biodiversity and help to soften to the appearance of introduced built form;
- Retaining the course of the existing footpath that passes through the Site within the aforementioned central spine so that the visual amenity experience is not dominated by built form, while tying-in to the location of proposed recreational facility provision. This is alongside additional proposed active travel routes within the Site to enhance its recreational value within the landscape; and
- Reflecting the existing scale and typology of built form in the surrounding context by establishing a predominantly 2 to 2.5 storey scale to the proposed residential development. Overall, limiting the maximum height of proposed built form to 3 storeys, equating to no more than 14m, with the layout and disposition of built form arranged to both reflect the proposed street/neighbourhood hierarchy and assist in wayfinding and legibility, while acknowledging the underlying landform datum.

Effects During Construction (During Winter)

Landscape

- 12.111 Construction activities will result in a **moderate adverse (significant)** effect on the cropland within the Site, as the introduction of plant and machinery into the landscape will mean that farming activities will cease to continue and the cropland will be wholly lost as a landscape element within the Site. A **minor adverse (not significant)** effect will arise for the Public Footpaths on the Site during construction as it may be necessary to temporarily divert the course, or put in place a temporary closure, of PRoW NS192. However, the duration within which this occurs will be limited, being primarily restricted to Phase 3 of the Indicative Phasing Plan.
- 12.112 For the remaining landscape features within the Site the likely effect will be **negligible adverse (not significant)** or **neutral (not significant)**, as either the extent of disturbance will be minimal or the feature will be wholly retained as part of the embedded mitigation, as is the case for the woodland, which will be protected in accordance with BS5837:2012.
- 12.113 Concerning landscape character, a **moderate adverse (significant)** effect will be experienced on the character of the Site and its Immediate Surroundings during the construction phase. This is due to the direct alteration to the fabric of the landscape, whereby an inherently open and farmed landscape that features minimal activity and animation (beyond low-intensity occasional farming

activities and people travelling along the course of the footpath) will be changed to an active and intensive construction site, featuring the movement and tracking of heavy plant and machinery, material stockpiles, and welfare facilities.

12.114 A **minor adverse (not significant)** effect will also be experienced for both the Ash Downs LCA and the Meopham Downs LCA as the ongoing works will present as detracting elements in a localised part of the landscape. For the Luddesdown: West Kent Downs LCA **negligible adverse (not significant)** effects will arise during the construction phase on account of the more indirect nature of the effects.

12.115 Concerning the Kent Downs National Landscape, it is accepted that from exceptionally localised parts of the nationally designated landscape the introduction of plant and machinery in its setting will diminish the sense of tranquillity and rurality, and accordingly a **negligible adverse (not significant)** effect has been identified.

Visual

12.116 **Major adverse (significant)** visual effects will be experienced by users of PRoW NS192, which passes through the Site, while a **moderate adverse (significant)** effect will arise for users of PRoW NS250 during the construction phase. For people travelling along the remaining PRoW the effects will range between **minor adverse (not significant)** and **neutral (not significant)**. This includes those people in Camer Park, who will experience a **negligible adverse (not significant)** effect as construction.

12.117 For residents on Nursery Road, Fairview Gardens, and Norwood Lane they will experience a **moderate adverse (significant)** effect due to intervisibility with plant and machinery during the construction phase. For residences on Camer Road, Camer Street and Tradescant Drive the effect will be **minor adverse (not significant)**, while for those on Manor Road and Melliker Hill it will be **neutral (not significant)**.

12.118 Motorists using Camer Road, Green Lane and Norwood Lane will experience **minor adverse (not significant)** effects, while for those travelling along Camer Street they will experience a reduced effect of **negligible adverse (not significant)** during the construction phase.

12.119 These visual effects will be temporary, and will be due to the construction activities being present in near distance views, their associated movement, and as these activities will not be wholly in keeping with the character of the settlement.

Effects Once the Proposed Development is Operational

Landscape

Year 1 – Winter

- 12.120 Once complete, the Proposed Development will include new residential areas set within an establishing landscape. New vegetation would be yet to mature and existing vegetation would not be in leaf.
- 12.121 As during construction, there will be a **moderate adverse (significant)** effect on the cropland as a landscape feature of the Site, given its replacement with a new residential-led community. This contrasts with the **moderate beneficial (significant)** effect that will arise for the grassland landscape element of the Site primarily due to the creation of the park extension in the east of the Site. A **moderate beneficial (significant)** effect will also be appreciated for the Public Footpaths within the Site, whereby several new active travel routes will be created that will enhance the recreational function of the Site.
- 12.122 A **negligible beneficial (not significant)** effect on woodland will arise, as the existing woodland will be retained and new woodland will be introduced (albeit it will not be established at Year 1). A **neutral (not significant)** effect will arise for the hedgerows, scrub and treebelts, with the design intention for the parkland to feature new areas of planting and gapping-up of hedgerows to occur.
- 12.123 With regards to published landscape character, a **negligible adverse (not significant)** effect will arise for the Ash Downs LCA, the Luddesdown: West Kent Downs LCA, and the Meopham Downs LCA. Whereby the alterations to the fabric of the landscape will be restricted to a limited geographical extent and the influence this will have on the characteristics of the landscape will be localised.
- 12.124 Concerning the character of the Site and its Immediate Surroundings a **minor adverse (not significant)** effect will occur. Built development will be consolidated within the western part of the Site, primarily serving two functions, with an area of parkland in the east, offering the potential to feature planting to form a wooded edge to the settlement in line with published character guidelines, delivering a sympathetic response to the Kent Downs National Landscape that adjoins the Site to the east.
- 12.125 A **neutral (not significant)** effect will occur for the Kent Downs National Landscape at Year 1. The overall integrity of this designated landscape will remain unaltered. In the exceptionally localised area where the Proposed Development exerts an influence, this will be due to the perception of Hook Green being expanded but set beyond an intervening parkland landscape that provides a sympathetic transition. Appreciable effects on the dark-skies at night are unlikely to occur as it is anticipated that floodlighting will not form part of the Proposed Development.

Year 15 – Summer

- 12.126 At year 15 during the summer, proposed vegetation will have established and will be in leaf, helping to integrate the Proposed Development into the surrounding landscape. While a **moderate adverse (significant effect)** on the cropland will remain due to its complete loss within the Site, typically all

other landscape effects that are anticipated to arise will be beneficial in nature by Year 15. This is as a result of the establishment and maturation of planting proposals (including an enhanced settlement edge to Hook Green) that reflects the published key characteristics of the area, the introduction and subtle weathering of high quality built form that reflects and reinforces the local built vernacular of positive contributors to the landscape, and the increased recreation function that the Site delivers (particularly in the eastern parkland extension that accommodates several active travel routes, forming a sympathetic transitional landscape between Hook Green and the Kent Downs National Landscape).

- 12.127 A **moderate beneficial (significant)** effect will occur for grassland and public footpaths on Site, a **minor beneficial (not significant)** effect for woodland, and a **negligible beneficial (not significant)** effect for hedgerows, scrub and treebelts, the Ash Downs LCA, the Meopham Downs LCA, the character of the Site and its Immediate Surroundings, and indeed the Kent Downs National Landscape. A **neutral (not significant)** effect will occur for the Luddesdown: West Kent Downs LCA.
- 12.128 As is evidenced above, although the Proposed Development will represent a material change in character to the Site and its Immediate Setting, it will bring about a series of environmental and social benefits that on balance improves the fabric and character of the landscape.

Visual

Year 1 – Winter

- 12.129 Once complete, at Year 1 **moderate adverse (significant)** effects will be experienced by residents on Nursery Road, Fairview Gardens and Norwood Lane, while **minor adverse (not significant)** effects will be experienced by residents on Camer Road, Camer Street and Tradescant Drive. For other residential receptors in the surrounding area to the Site they will experience **neutral (not significant)** effects.
- 12.130 For those people travelling along Camer Road, Green Lane and Norwood Lane, they will experience **minor adverse (not significant)** effects on account of the immediate streetscape being altered and framed by new residential development. For those using Camer Street they will experience **negligible adverse (not significant)** effects.
- 12.131 A **moderate adverse (significant)** effect will be experienced by those passing through the Site using PRoW NS192, whereby the visual context will be altered from farmland to within a green spine associated with a residential-led development. A **moderate adverse (significant)** effect will also be experienced by those recreational users on PRoW NS250, with the built form visible in the middle ground of the views obtained. **negligible adverse (not significant)** effects will be experienced by users of Camer Park as well as those of PRoW NS242 and PRoW NS190, with all users of the remaining PRoW experiencing **neutral (not significant)** effects.

Year 15 - Summer

- 12.132 By year 15 during summer, proposed planting will have established and building materials (reflecting the local vernacular) will weather, therefore the new homes will become increasingly assimilated into their surroundings.
- 12.133 **Minor adverse (not significant)** effects will be experienced by residents on Camer Road, Camer Street, Tradescant Drive and Norwood Lane, while **negligible adverse (not significant)** effects will be experienced by residents on Nursery Road and Farview Gardens. With respect to the latter, the main appreciation of the views obtained will be of the allotments framed by vegetation as opposed to built-form. For the remaining residences in the area **neutral (not significant)** effects will arise.
- 12.134 **Negligible adverse (not significant)** effects will be experienced by the road users in the immediate vicinity of the Site.
- 12.135 With respect to recreational receptors, a **moderate adverse (significant)** effect will remain for users of PRow NS192, which passes through the Site. A **minor adverse (not significant)** effect will arise for those using PRow NS250, while a **minor beneficial (not significant)** effect will arise for those using PRow NS242. For the remaining recreational receptors a **neutral (not significant)** effect will occur.
- 12.136 Although significant effects identified will continue to represent a material change in the character and composition of views, this does not mean the Proposed Development will be unattractive but instead will comprise a well-designed built form set within a framework of green and blue infrastructure, as opposed to views of an existing agricultural landscape.

Further Mitigation

- 12.137 No further mitigation measures have been identified and therefore the assessment of effects as described above are the residual effects.

Future Monitoring

- 12.138 On completion, the landscape proposals would be monitored through the actions identified in the Landscape Maintenance and Management Plan, which will be agreed with the Local Planning Authority, and which would be delivered through a planning obligation. This will ensure that the design aspirations of the landscape masterplan are met and delivered in perpetuity.

Residual Effects

- 12.139 The residual effects arising from the Proposed Development are summarised in **Table 12.2** below.
- 12.140 Note that the purpose of the Year 15 assessment is to demonstrate the residual effects of the assessment with the application for mitigation, which in the case of landscape and visual effects includes the extent to which vegetation can assist in screening and softening of introduced built form through the establishment and maturation of planting proposals and with the benefit of leaf cover, and accordingly the assessment is undertaken for summer conditions.

12.141 For the purposes of this assessment and to reflect the maximum worst-case scenario, it is recommended that the Year 1 winter conditions assessment serves to represent the Year 15 winter scenario. In reality, it is likely that the actual significance of effect is likely to lie somewhere on the continuum between the Year 1 winter and Year 15 summer scenarios.

Table 12.2 Summary of Residual Effects

Receptor	Sensitivity	Phase	Magnitude of Effect	Likely Residual Effect
<i>Landscape Receptors</i>				
Cropland	Landscape Value Medium	Construction – Winter	Large	Moderate Adverse (Significant)
	Landscape Susceptibility Medium	Operation – Year 1 Winter	Large	Moderate Adverse (Significant)
	Landscape Sensitivity Medium	Operation – Year 15 Summer	Large	Moderate Adverse (Significant)
Grassland	Landscape Value Low	Construction – Winter	Very Small	Negligible Adverse (Not Significant)
	Landscape Susceptibility Medium	Operation – Year 1 Winter	Large	Moderate Beneficial (Significant)
	Landscape Sensitivity Medium	Operation – Year 15 Summer	Large	Moderate Beneficial (Significant)
Hedgerows, scrub and treebelts	Landscape Value Low	Construction – Winter	Small	Negligible Adverse (Not Significant)
	Landscape Susceptibility Low	Operation – Year 1 Winter	Very Small	Neutral (Not Significant)

Receptor	Sensitivity	Phase	Magnitude of Effect	Likely Residual Effect
	Landscape Sensitivity Low	Operation – Year 15 Summer	Small	Negligible Beneficial (Not Significant)
Public Footpaths on Site	Landscape Value Medium Landscape Susceptibility Low Landscape Sensitivity Medium	Construction – Winter	Medium	Minor Adverse (Not Significant)
		Operation – Year 1 Winter	Large	Moderate Beneficial (Significant)
		Operation – Year 15 Summer	Large	Moderate Beneficial (Significant)
Woodland	Landscape Value Medium Landscape Susceptibility High Landscape Sensitivity High	Construction – Winter	None	Neutral (Not Significant)
		Operation – Year 1 Winter	Very Small	Negligible Beneficial (Not Significant)
		Operation – Year 15 Summer	Small	Minor Beneficial (Not Significant)
Ash Downs LCA	Landscape Value Medium Landscape Susceptibility Medium	Construction – Winter	Small	Minor Adverse (Not Significant)
		Operation – Year 1 Winter	Very Small	Negligible Adverse (Not Significant)

Receptor	Sensitivity	Phase	Magnitude of Effect	Likely Residual Effect
	Landscape Sensitivity Medium	Operation – Year 15 Summer	Very Small	Negligible Beneficial (Not Significant)
Luddesdown: West Kent Downs LCA	Landscape Value Medium Landscape Susceptibility High Landscape Sensitivity High	Construction – Winter	Very Small	Negligible Adverse (Not Significant)
		Operation – Year 1 Winter	Very Small	Negligible Adverse (Not Significant)
		Operation – Year 15 Summer	Very Small	Neutral (Not Significant)
Meopham Downs LCA	Landscape Value Medium Landscape Susceptibility Medium Landscape Sensitivity Medium	Construction – Winter	Small	Minor Adverse (Not Significant)
		Operation – Year 1 Winter	Small	Negligible Adverse (Not Significant)
		Operation – Year 15 Summer	Small	Negligible Beneficial (Not Significant)
Character of the Site and its Immediate Surroundings	Landscape Value Medium Landscape Susceptibility Medium-Low	Construction – Winter	Large	Moderate Adverse (Significant)
		Operation – Year 1 Winter	Large	Minor Adverse (Not Significant)

Receptor	Sensitivity	Phase	Magnitude of Effect	Likely Residual Effect
	Landscape Sensitivity Medium	Operation – Year 15 Summer	Medium	Negligible Beneficial (Not Significant)
Kent Downs National Landscape	Landscape Value Very High	Construction – Winter	Very Small	Negligible Adverse (Not Significant)
	Landscape Susceptibility Medium	Operation – Year 1 Winter	Very Small	Neutral (Not Significant)
	Landscape Sensitivity Very High	Operation – Year 15 Summer	Very Small	Negligible Beneficial (Not Significant)
Visual Receptors				
Residents on Camer Road and Camer Street	Visual Value Low	Construction – Winter	Medium	Minor Adverse (Not Significant)
	Visual Susceptibility High	Operation – Year 1 Winter	Medium	Minor Adverse (Not Significant)
	Visual Sensitivity Medium	Operation – Year 15 Summer	Small	Minor Adverse (Not Significant)
Residents on Nursery Road and Fairview Gardens	Visual Value Low	Construction – Winter	Large	Moderate Adverse (Significant)

Receptor	Sensitivity	Phase	Magnitude of Effect	Likely Residual Effect
	Visual Susceptibility High Visual Sensitivity Medium	Operation – Year 1 Winter	Large	Moderate Adverse (Significant)
		Operation – Year 15 Summer	Medium	Negligible Adverse (Not Significant)
Residents on Tradescant Drive	Visual Value Low Visual Susceptibility High Visual Sensitivity Medium	Construction – Winter	Medium	Minor Adverse (Not Significant)
		Operation – Year 1 Winter	Medium	Minor Adverse (Not Significant)
		Operation – Year 15 Summer	Medium	Minor Adverse (Not Significant)
Residents on Norwood Lane	Visual Value Low Visual Susceptibility High Visual Sensitivity Medium	Construction – Winter	Large	Moderate Adverse (Significant)
		Operation – Year 1 Winter	Large	Moderate Adverse (Significant)
		Operation – Year 15 Summer	Medium	Minor Adverse (Not Significant)
Residents on Manor Road	Visual Value Low	Construction – Winter	None	Neutral (Not Significant)

Receptor	Sensitivity	Phase	Magnitude of Effect	Likely Residual Effect
	Visual Susceptibility High Visual Sensitivity Medium	Operation – Year 1 Winter	None	Neutral (Not Significant)
		Operation – Year 15 Summer	None	Neutral (Not Significant)
Residents on Melliker Hill	Visual Value Low Visual Susceptibility High Visual Sensitivity Medium	Construction – Winter	None	Neutral (Not Significant)
		Operation – Year 1 Winter	None	Neutral (Not Significant)
		Operation – Year 15 Summer	None	Neutral (Not Significant)
Users of Camer Road / Green Lane	Visual Value Low Visual Susceptibility Low Visual Sensitivity Low	Construction – Winter	Large	Minor Adverse (Not Significant)
		Operation – Year 1 Winter	Large	Minor Adverse (Not Significant)
		Operation – Year 15 Summer	Medium	Negligible Adverse (Not Significant)
Users of Camer Street	Visual Value Low	Construction – Winter	Medium	Negligible Adverse (Not Significant)

Receptor	Sensitivity	Phase	Magnitude of Effect	Likely Residual Effect
	Visual Susceptibility Low Visual Sensitivity Low	Operation – Year 1 Winter	Medium	Negligible Adverse (Not Significant)
		Operation – Year 15 Summer	Medium	Negligible Adverse (Not Significant)
Users of Norwood Lane	Visual Value Low Visual Susceptibility Low Visual Sensitivity Low	Construction – Winter	Large	Minor Adverse (Not Significant)
		Operation – Year 1 Winter	Large	Minor Adverse (Not Significant)
		Operation – Year 15 Summer	Medium	Negligible Adverse (Not Significant)
Users of Camer Park	Visual Value High Visual Susceptibility High Visual Sensitivity High	Construction – Winter	Very Small	Negligible Adverse (Not Significant)
		Operation – Year 1 Winter	Very Small	Negligible Adverse (Not Significant)
		Operation – Year 15 Summer	Very Small	Neutral (Not Significant)
Users of the PRow NS250	Visual Value Medium	Construction – Winter	Medium	Moderate Adverse (Significant)

Receptor	Sensitivity	Phase	Magnitude of Effect	Likely Residual Effect
	Visual Susceptibility High Visual Sensitivity High	Operation – Year 1 Winter	Medium	Moderate Adverse (Significant)
		Operation – Year 15 Summer	Small	Minor Adverse (Not Significant)
Users of the PRow NS252	Visual Value Medium Visual Susceptibility High Visual Sensitivity High	Construction – Winter	None	Neutral (Not Significant)
		Operation – Year 1 Winter	None	Neutral (Not Significant)
		Operation – Year 15 Summer	None	Neutral (Not Significant)
Users of the PRow NS192	Visual Value Medium Visual Susceptibility High Visual Sensitivity High	Construction – Winter	Large	Major Adverse (Significant)
		Operation – Year 1 Winter	Medium	Moderate Adverse (Significant)
		Operation – Year 15 Summer	Medium	Moderate Adverse (Significant)
Users of the PRow NS308	Visual Value Medium	Construction – Winter	None	Neutral (Not Significant)

Receptor	Sensitivity	Phase	Magnitude of Effect	Likely Residual Effect
	Visual Susceptibility High Visual Sensitivity High	Operation – Year 1 Winter	None	Neutral (Not Significant)
		Operation – Year 15 Summer	None	Neutral (Not Significant)
Users of the PRow NS242	Visual Value Medium Visual Susceptibility High Visual Sensitivity High	Construction – Winter	Small	Minor Adverse (Not Significant)
		Operation – Year 1 Winter	Very Small	Negligible Adverse (Not Significant)
		Operation – Year 15 Summer	Very Small	Negligible Beneficial (Not Significant)
Users of the PRow NS223	Visual Value Medium Visual Susceptibility High Visual Sensitivity High	Construction – Winter	Very Small	Negligible Adverse (Not Significant)
		Operation – Year 1 Winter	Very Small	Neutral (Not Significant)
		Operation – Year 15 Summer	Very Small	Neutral (Not Significant)
Users of the PRow NS304	Visual Value Medium	Construction – Winter	None	Neutral (Not Significant)

Receptor	Sensitivity	Phase	Magnitude of Effect	Likely Residual Effect
	Visual Susceptibility High Visual Sensitivity High	Operation – Year 1 Winter	None	Neutral (Not Significant)
		Operation – Year 15 Summer	None	Neutral (Not Significant)
Users of the PRow NS191	Visual Value Medium Visual Susceptibility High Visual Sensitivity High	Construction – Winter	Very Small	Negligible Adverse (Not Significant)
		Operation – Year 1 Winter	Very Small	Neutral (Not Significant)
		Operation – Year 15 Summer	Very Small	Neutral (Not Significant)
Users of the PRow NS190	Visual Value Medium Visual Susceptibility High Visual Sensitivity High	Operation – Year 15 Summer	Small	Minor Adverse (Not Significant)
		Operation – Year 1 Winter	Very Small	Negligible Adverse (Not Significant)
		Operation – Year 15 Summer	Very Small	Neutral (Not Significant)

Receptor	Sensitivity	Phase	Magnitude of Effect	Likely Residual Effect
Users of the PRow NS173	Visual Value Medium Visual Susceptibility High Visual Sensitivity High	Operation – Year 15 Summer	None	Neutral (Not Significant)
		Operation – Year 1 Winter	None	Neutral (Not Significant)
		Operation – Year 15 Summer	None	Neutral (Not Significant)

Likely Significant Environmental Effects

12.142 **Table 12.3** sets out the likely significant residual effects on landscape and visual receptors arising from the Proposed Development. Likely significant residual effects will occur during construction works, although these will be temporary. Once the Proposed Development is completed, in many instances the effects will reduce over time and not be significant after 15 years, following establishment of mitigation vegetation.

Table 12.3 Summary of Likely Significant Residual Effects

Receptor	Phase	Likely Significant Residual Effect
<i>Landscape Receptors</i>		
Cropland	Construction	Moderate Adverse (Significant)
	Operation – Year 1 Winter	Moderate Adverse (Significant)
	Operation – Year 15 Summer	Moderate Adverse (Significant)
Grassland	Operation – Year 1 Winter	Moderate Beneficial (Significant)
	Operation – Year 15 Summer	Moderate Beneficial (Significant)
Public Footpaths on Site	Operation – Year 1 Winter	Moderate Beneficial (Significant)
	Operation – Year 15 Summer	Moderate Beneficial (Significant)
Landscape character of the Site and its Immediate Surroundings	Construction	Moderate Adverse (Significant)
<i>Visual Receptors</i>		
Residents on Nursery Road and Fairview Gardens	Construction	Moderate Adverse (Significant)
	Operation – Year 1 Winter	Moderate Adverse (Significant)
Residents on Norwood Lane	Construction	Moderate Adverse (Significant)
	Operation – Year 1 Winter	Moderate Adverse (Significant)
Users of the PRow NS250	Construction	Moderate Adverse (Significant)
	Operation – Year 1 Winter	Moderate Adverse (Significant)

Receptor	Phase	Likely Significant Residual Effect
Users of the PRow NS192	Construction	Major adverse (Significant)
	Operation – Year 1 Winter	Moderate Adverse (Significant)
	Operation – Year 15 Summer	Moderate Adverse (Significant)

Summary and Conclusions

- 12.143 Significant long-term adverse effects are expected on the arable (cropland) field of the Site, which will become a residential neighbourhood with associated public open space. There will also be significant long-term beneficial effects on the grassland and public footpath network as a result of the Proposed Development.
- 12.144 Significant long term visual effects will be experienced by users of the Public Right of Way network within the Site (PRow NS192) who will have near distance views of the Proposed Development.

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