



LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL APPRAISAL

UPPER AUSTIN LODGE FARM, EYNSFORD

On Behalf of Hawkspare Limited

Date January 2021:



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Contents

Contents

1. Introduction.....	3
2. Methodology.....	4
3. Baseline Conditions	5
4. Description of the Proposed Development.....	17
5. Planning Context.....	18
6. Effect on Landscape Elements and Features.....	25
7. Effect on Landscape Character	28
8. Effect on Visual Amenity.....	31
9. Summary and Conclusions.....	45
10. Appendices	47

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Site Location Plan

Appendix 2 – Detailed Methodology

Appendix 3 – Landscape Features Plan

Appendix 4 – Landscape Features Plan

Appendix 5 – Kingsdown West Down LCA

Appendix 6 – 2b Eynsford and Horton Kirby LCA

Appendix 7 – Illustrative Masterplan

Appendix 8 – Viewpoint Location Plan

Appendix 9 – Representative Viewpoints

1. Introduction

1.1 This Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) has been prepared by Briarwood Landscape Architecture by a Chartered Member of the Landscape Institute, on behalf of Hawkspare Limited in respect of a proposed residential development of two dwellings to replace an existing agricultural barn at Upper Austin Lodge Farm, Eynsford. The location of the proposed development is shown on the Site Location Plan at Appendix 1.

1.2 The LVA considers the potential effects of the proposed development on:

- Landscape elements and features such as vegetation, topography and water bodies etc.,
- Landscape character and,
- Visual amenity

1.3 The primary objectives of the LVA are as follows:

- To identify, describe and evaluate the current landscape character of the site and its surrounding area
- To identify, describe and evaluate any notable individual landscape elements and/or features within the site
- To determine the sensitivity of the landscape to the type of development proposed
- To identify potential visual receptors (i.e., people who would be able to view the proposed development) and to evaluate their sensitivity to the type of changes proposed
- To identify and describe any effects of the proposed development in so far as they affect the landscape and/or views and to evaluate the magnitude of change owing to those effects

1.4 The visual assessment was undertaken in winter (27th January 2021) with no leaf cover on the existing deciduous vegetation. Consideration has also been given to the effect on visibility with the vegetation having full leaf cover and minimum visibility.

2. Methodology

Guidance

- 2.1** This LVA has been undertaken with regard to the following best practice guidance:
- Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (3rd Edition) – Landscape Institute/Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA).
- 2.2** A detailed methodology is given in Appendix 3. As recommended within the published guidance, landscape (elements and character) and visual effects are assessed separately.

Nature of Effects

- 2.3** The nature of effects on landscape, character and visual amenity can be neutral, adverse or beneficial. Neutral effects are those that would maintain, on balance, the existing integrity, quality or key characteristics of a landscape or view.
- 2.4** For the purposes of this assessment, unless otherwise stated, any change to the landscape and visual amenity as a result of the proposed development is considered to be permanent and non-reversible and adverse in nature.

Photography and Photoviews

- 2.5** Photographs used as part of the detailed visual assessment have been taken using a Canon E05 Mark III, full frame sensor, digital camera with a 50mm lens. The lens has a standard focal length and is considered to best represent the human eye.
- 2.6** Photography took place in sunny weather, with good visibility, on the 27th January 2021. The camera was had held at a height of approximately 1.6 metres.
- 2.7** The Photoviews used for the visual assessment are presented at A3 size as single shots or at A1 (printable size) for panoramic views in accordance with the Landscape Institute Technical Guidance Note (TGN) 0/19 Visualisations of development.

3. Baseline Conditions

Site Description

- 3.1** The site is a single parcel of land that is broadly triangular in shape; the apex of the site faces almost due north (see Appendix 3 – Landscape Features Plan). A series of context views help give an understanding of the nature of the site (see Appendix 4).
- 3.2** The site is contained by the metalled, black top surfaced, Upper Austin Lodge Road to the east and by the similar surfaced access road to the residential property of Fairways along its western boundary. The site’s southern boundary is defined by a post and barbed wire fence.
- 3.3** An existing storage barn building occupies part of the site. The existing building is situated slightly north and east of the centre of the site and is orientated north-south, parallel to Upper Austin Lodge Road. The storage barn is steel clad and painted in dark green, with a shallow pitch roof and no fenestration. A galvanised steel door is situated at the northern gable end of the building.
- 3.4** The public right of way SD201 connects through the southern edge of the site between Upper Austin Lodge Road and the access road to Fairways. Apart from this right of way, the site is private with no public access.
- 3.5** Internally, the site is mostly grassland. Some specimen trees are located along the site’s western edge but the boundary is mostly open. A small area of scrub is located in the south-west corner of the site on a small mound. A group of trees is located at the northern end of the site and a couple of disjointed short sections of hedgerow with some small hedgerow trees are present along the site’s eastern boundary with Upper Austin Lodge Road.
- 3.6** The site, except for a few minor undulations is broadly level with a gentle rise from north to south. The 85 metre contour line passes north to south through the site.

Site Context

- 3.7** The site and its surrounding area are located in the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and the Metropolitan Green Belt.
- 3.8** The site is located at the northern end of the small hamlet of Upper Austin Lodge. Both the site and settlement are located at the southern end of a relatively deep narrow valley.

Upper Austin Lodge Road provides access to the site and the wider settlement from the north (and the village of Eynsford approximately 2km distant). The road forms a slightly sinuous route along the valley bottom. Apart from the residential properties and existing buildings associated with Upper and Lower Austin Lodges, there is almost no other built form within the valley.

- 3.9** To either side of Upper Austin Lodge Road the topography rises sharply to a height of approximately 150 metres Above Ordnance Datum (AOD). To the south of the site and Upper Austin Lodge, the topography rises in a series of undulating hills to a height of approximately 170 metres AOB approximately 1.5km from the site boundary.

Published Landscape Character Assessments

- 3.10** A hierarchy of national/regional, county and borough published landscape character assessments are available. These respective documents describe the host landscape of the site at an increasingly refined level. The published landscape assessments are intended to provide a foundation for understanding the key component elements and features that characterise the host landscape and potential the site itself.
- 3.11** With respect to scale and geographically extent, the site is considered to be small. Within the site, the proposed development would only occupy a limited portion and is also considered to be small in scale. Consideration has therefore been given to the published county and district landscape character assessments, which demonstrate a slightly finer grain of assessment but nevertheless cover very large geographic areas relative to the scale of the site.

County Landscape Assessment

- 3.12** At the County level, as identified in the Kent Landscape Character Assessment (October 2004) the site is located within the Kingsdown West Kent Down landscape character area (LCA) (see Appendix 5). The characteristic features are given as being:
- Rolling downland
 - Intensive arable cultivation in north with open fields of chalky-white soils.
 - Enclosed, irregular pastures in south, thick coppice and mixed woodland.
 - Suburbanisation, horseculture and smallholdings
- 3.13** The published assessment considers the condition of the landscape within the LCA as being ‘very good’. The assessment considers the sensitivity of the landscape to be ‘high’.

3.14 Overall, the landscape actions recommended in the assessment is to ‘conserve’ the landscape. Specifically, to:

- Conserve woodland
- Conserve and manage tall hedges on roadside
- Conserve the range of species in woodland and hedgerow
- Conserve pastures and irregular field patterns
- Conserve historic, isolated settlement

3.15 The Kent Landscape Character Assessment is now over 16 years old and assesses the Kingsdown West Kent Down landscape has having a ‘high’ sensitivity. For the purposes of this assessment, it is considered that the Kingsdown West Kent Downs retains a high value reflective of its AONB designation. However, to the specific type and scale of development being proposed it is assessed that the landscape of the LCA has a low susceptibility; giving an overall medium sensitivity.

District Landscape Character Assessment

3.16 Within the Sevenoaks Landscape Character Assessment – 2017, the site is located within the Downs landscape character type and the 2b Eynsford and Horton Kirby Downs LCA (see Appendix 6).

3.17 The key characteristics of the 2b Eynsford and Horton Kirby Downs LCA are:

- Gently undulating chalk landscape with deep dry valleys, broad plateau tops and a steep slope adjacent to the Darent Valley.
- Medium-large scale parliamentary field pattern used for arable crops and pasture, enclosed by mature hedgerows or post and wire.
- Small paddocks are associated with farmsteads and chalk grassland survives on some steeper slopes.
- Mixed woodland on valley ridgelines and on valley slopes, including areas of coppice.
- Scattered, isolated farmsteads often with traditional flint and weatherboard buildings.
- Small isolated hamlets with some vernacular flint and weatherboard houses.
- Narrow winding lanes, contained by banks juxtapose with the busy roads of A20/M20.

- Mostly rural and tranquil, although there is urban development adjacent to South Darenth and at Horton Kirby.
- Strong feeling of enclosure in the woodlands contrasts with long views along the Darent Valley from the valley sides and across the Eynsford Downs.
- Views towards London from high ground.

3.18 In respect of the 2b Eynsford and Horton Kirby Downs LCA as part of the host landscape of the site, it is assessed that the character of the landscape is high- reflective of it being in the AONB. With reference to the specific type and scale of development being proposed, it is assessed that the landscape of the LCA has a low susceptibility; giving an overall medium sensitivity.

Author's Own Assessment of Character

3.19 An assessment of the existing landscape character up to 1km from the site has been undertaken by the report's author. The landscape surrounding the application site is all within the boundary of the AONB.

3.20 The author's assessment considers the site and its immediate surroundings and reviews the sensitivity and the capacity of the local landscape to accommodate the type and scale of development being proposed. The following criteria will be used:

- Landscape scale
- Landform and enclosure
- Landscape pattern and complexity
- Settlement pattern and human influences
- Skylines
- Intervisibility
- Tranquillity

Landscape scale

3.21 The landscape is predominantly mixed pastoral and arable agricultural in nature but with areas of extensive of woodland along the tops of the higher ground and on steeper slopes. The combination of topography and woodland form a generally medium to large scale landscape.

Landscape and enclosure

- 3.22** Where hedgerows, areas of scrub and woodland are present there is a strong sense of enclosure. This sense of enclosure is accentuated in combination with local changes in landform. On the valley slopes the fields are typically open and there is little sense of enclosure.

Landscape pattern and complexity

- 3.23** The pattern and complexity of the landscape within 1km of the site is quite limited. The general pattern in the landscape is of agricultural fields adjoined by areas of woodland and or scrub. Large parts of the former Austin Lodge Golf Club (closed 2014) have become scrub covered.

Settlement pattern and human influences

- 3.24** The settlement pattern is sparse. Nearly all built form in the landscape is found close to the site boundary and the hamlet of Upper Austin Lodge. An overhead transmission line and towers to the north of the site is a manmade visual detractor.

Skylines

- 3.25** Skylines in the landscape around the site are typically formed by higher ground that is most often completely or partially tree covered. The site, owing to its low-lying location in the valley bottom does not form a notable feature on the skyline.

Intervisibility

- 3.26** From the valley floor there is a near constant intervisibility with the surrounding higher ground of the valley sides. However, expansive views are often restricted by the presence of scrub, hedges, built form and minor changes in the landform.

Tranquillity

- 3.27** Tranquillity is defined as being the absence of noise and activity. In this context, the area landscape around the site is relatively tranquil.

Local Landscape Sensitivity

- 3.28** The site and its host landscape are within the Kent Downs AONB which is a nationally important designation. However, the application site is small scale and contains no rare or unusual landscape features. The existing building on the site is modern and of a little

architectural or vernacular merit. The condition and quality of the landscape inside the site is considered to be poor. Away from the site boundary, the quality and condition of the landscape varies but is generally considered to be good.

- 3.29** There is some limited historic interest to the landscape through the presence of a listed building in the hamlet. The local landscape surrounding the site also has some associations with the early aviator Percy Sinclair Pilcher who experimented with a self-designed hang-glider in the area close to Fairways – the former club house for the now closed golf course.
- 3.30** The landscape has some recreational value. Three public rights of way converge on Upper Austin Lodge.
- 3.31** The hamlet of Upper Austin Lodge contains a variety of residential dwellings of differing styles and ages. Several dwellings are new or modern conversions.
- 3.32** Overall, the host landscape is assessed as having a high value. However, it is considered that the local landscape does have a well-defined ability to accommodate the type of development being proposed without experiencing unacceptable adverse effects. The susceptibility of the local landscape to the proposed development is assessed as low. The overall baseline sensitivity of the local landscape within approximately 1km of the site boundary is assessed as medium.

Baseline Visual Receptors

- 3.33** A visual assessment of the proposed development has been undertaken to determine how the proposals would have a bearing on the visual amenity of the surrounding landscape. This assessment was undertaken in January 2021, when leaf cover was completely absent from deciduous vegetation but consideration has been given to when there are = leaves on the vegetation and potential visibility is at a minimum.
- 3.34** Having undertaken a visual assessment, it is demonstrable that the visual envelope i.e., the area in which the proposed development would be visible, is a restricted one. Local topography, existing development and the layering effect of existing vegetation in the intervening landscape, especially on or close to the site's boundaries, between the person viewing (the visual receptor) the proposed development and the site boundary would restrict many potential views from publicly accessible locations within the surrounding landscape.
- 3.35** A number of representative viewpoints have been identified on which to base a visual assessment. The detailed assessment of these representative viewpoints is given in section

8 (refer to Appendices 8 and 9 – Photoview Location Plan and Detailed Visual Assessment Photoviews).

Residential Properties

- 3.36** The potential for any intervisibility between existing residential properties and the proposed development would be limited. Few residential properties are close to the site boundary. For those that are, views of and into the site are typically restricted through the orientation of the particular property, a combination of landform and the presence of other built form and/or vegetation in the landscape between the site and the visual receptor. There is an absence in the landscape of other residential properties away from the hamlet of Upper Austin Lodge for approximately 1km in any direction. Topography restricts views of the site beyond a kilometre.

Public Highways

- 3.37** The public highway network in the vicinity of the site is extremely limited. Views of the site are only afforded from Upper Austin Lodge Road itself.

Public Rights of Way

- 3.38** There are a several of public rights of way (PROW) within 1 km of the site boundary. For most PROW passing through the surrounding landscape many potential views are restricted through the layering effect of vegetation associated with woodlands, hedgerow field boundaries, areas of scrub and local changes in topography.
- 3.39** PROW SD199 passes along the southern section of Upper Austin Lodge Road and passes the eastern boundary of the site before continuing south through the hamlet and beyond to connect to the hamlet of Romney Street. Views of and into the site is from PROW SD199 is limited to very close proximity of the site boundary.
- 3.40** PROW SD201 passes through the site, running along the site's southern boundary (linking at its western end to SD199). The PROW affords view across the site where it passes through.
- 3.41** It is demonstrable that the proposals would not be readily discernible from much of the PROW network (see Section 8). Physically and experientially the proposals would have little effect on the visual amenity of users of the public right of way network within the local landscape surrounding the site.

Selection of representative viewpoints

- 3.42** A comprehensive visual assessment has been undertaken of the study area. In line with the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (3rd Edition), a number of representative viewpoints (9 in total) have been selected to form the basis of a detailed visual assessment.
- 3.43** The chosen viewpoints are regarded as being representative of the range of potential views and receptors e.g., users of the public highway and PROW networks, etc. from various distances and directions around the site. A desk top study and field surveys has refined the number and exact location of the representative viewpoints and their locations are ones from which there is anticipated to be an effect. The representative viewpoints are not intended to be exhaustive. A greater number of locations would have demonstrated no visual effect. The locations of the representative viewpoints are given in Appendix 8.
- 3.44** The following table summarises the overall sensitivity of the representative viewpoints.

Table 1 – Summary of viewpoint susceptibility, value and overall sensitivity

Viewpoint	Type of visual receptor	Susceptibility	Value	Overall sensitivity
Viewpoint 1 – View looking south in direction of the site from Upper Austin Lodge Road Distance from site: 0.43 kilometres Coordinates: 51deg. 21'01.18"N 0 deg. 12'48.96"E	Users of the public right of way network	High	High	High

Viewpoint	Type of visual receptor	Susceptibility	Value	Overall sensitivity
<p>Viewpoint 2 – Looking south towards the northern apex of the site</p> <p>Distance from site: 40 metres</p> <p>Coordinates: 51 deg.20'49.28"N 0 deg.12'43'.77"E</p>	Users of the public right of way network	High	High	High
<p>Viewpoint 3 – Looking south from the Upper Austin Lodge Farm Road along the eastern site boundary</p> <p>Distance from site: 0 metres</p> <p>Coordinates: 51 deg.20'48.25"N 0 deg.12'43.27"E</p>	Users of the public right of way network	High	High	High

Viewpoint	Type of visual receptor	Susceptibility	Value	Overall sensitivity
<p>Viewpoint 4 – View looking east across the site from PROW SD201</p> <p>Distance from site: On site</p> <p>Coordinates: 51 deg. 20'44.24"N 0 deg. 012'39.69"E</p>	Users of the public right of way network	High	High	High
<p>Viewpoint 5 – View looking north-east from PROW SD201</p> <p>Distance from site: 0.03km</p> <p>Coordinates: 51 deg. 20'43'38"N 0 deg. 12'37.40"E</p>	Users of the public right of way network	High	High	High
<p>Viewpoint 6 – View looking north from PROW SD201</p> <p>Distance from site:</p>	Users of the public right of way network	High	High	High

Viewpoint	Type of visual receptor	Susceptibility	Value	Overall sensitivity
0.18km Coordinates: 51 deg. 20'40.10"N 0 deg. 12'32.00"E				
Viewpoint 7 - View from Upper Austin Lodge Road looking north- west Distance from site: 0.1km Coordinates: 51 deg. 20'41.95"N 0 deg. 12'44.53"E	Users of the public right of way network	High	High	High
Viewpoint 8 – View looking north from permissive right of way Distance from site: 0.48km Coordinates: 51 deg. 20'29.23"N	Users of the public right of way network	High	High	High

Viewpoint				
	Type of visual receptor	Susceptibility	Value	Overall sensitivity
0 deg.12'47.22"E				
<p>Viewpoint 9 – View looking north from permissive right of way close to Fairways (former club house)</p> <p>Distance from site: 0.47km</p> <p>Coordinates: 51 deg. 20'29.23"N 0 deg.12'45.35"E</p>				

4. Description of the Proposed Development

- 4.1** The proposed development envisages the demolition of the current modern steel frame and clad storage barn on the site with two new residential properties. The proposed dwellings would be accessed from Upper Austin Lodge Road and would be sited mainly within the footprint of the existing barn (see Appendix 7).
- 4.2** One of the proposed properties and its curtilage would occupy the northern part of the site. The other property would have a smaller residential curtilage. This would allow the southern and south-western part of the site to remain open and managed for ecological/wildlife/landscape benefits. The southern part of the site would allow for the retention of the existing public footpath (SD201) unaltered on its existing alignment but in an enhanced setting.
- 4.3** The proposals seek to retain the existing trees and hedgerow vegetation on the site. The proposed dwellings would be accessed from Upper Austin Lodge Road through an existing break in the boundary vegetation.
- 4.4** As part of the proposed development hard standing areas would be kept to a minimum. The opportunity would be taken to introduce new tree, shrub and hedgerow planting onto the site. New hedgerows and tree planting would be introduced to help define the site and the new dwelling curtilages and to provide additional physical and visual enclosure.

5. Planning Context

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

5.1 The revised NPPF was published in February 2019 and superseded the previous version. The new NPPF has a presumption in favour of sustainable development (paragraph 10). Specifically, paragraph 11 of the NPPF states that:

“Plans and decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development. For plan-making this means that:

a) plans should positively seek opportunities to meet the development needs of their area, and be sufficiently flexible to adapt to rapid change;

b) strategic policies should, as a minimum, provide for objectively assessed needs for housing and other uses, as well as any needs that cannot be met within neighbouring areas 5, unless:

i. the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a strong reason for restricting the overall scale, type or distribution of development in the plan area; or

ii. any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole. For decision-taking this means:

c) approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay; or

d) where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, granting permission unless:

i. the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed; or

ii. any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole.”

- 5.2** Paragraph 8 of the NPPF defines the three dimensions to sustainable development. These dimensions are economic, social and environmental. In detail the environmental dimension is explained in the following terms:
- “an environmental objective – to contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, helping to improve biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy...”
- 5.3** Section 12 of the NPPF is entitled ‘Achieving well-designed places’. The opening line of paragraph 125 states:
- “Plans should, at the most appropriate level, set out a clear design vision and expectations, so that applicants have as much certainty as possible about what is likely to be acceptable...”
- 5.4** Paragraph 127 states:
- “Planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments:
- a) will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;
 - b) are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;
 - c) are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities);
 - d) establish or maintain a strong sense of place, using the arrangement of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live, work and visit;
 - e) optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development (including green and other public space) and support local facilities and transport networks; and
 - f) create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users; and where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion and resilience.”

5.5 Section 15 of the NPPF refers to ‘Conserving and enhancing the natural environment’. Paragraph 170 states:

“Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:

- a) protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan);
- b) recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland;
- c) maintaining the character of the undeveloped coast, while improving public access to it where appropriate;
- d) minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures;
- e) preventing new and existing development from contributing to, being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by, unacceptable levels of soil, air, water or noise pollution or land instability. Development should, wherever possible, help to improve local environmental conditions such as air and water quality, taking into account relevant information such as river basin management plans; and
- f) remediating and mitigating despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated and unstable land, where appropriate.”

5.6 Paragraph 171 of the NPPF states:

“Plans should: distinguish between the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites; allocate land with the least environmental or amenity value, where consistent with other policies in this Framework ; take a strategic approach to maintaining and enhancing networks of habitats and green infrastructure; and plan for the enhancement of natural capital at a catchment or landscape scale across local authority boundaries.”

5.7 The first line of paragraph 172 expands on the requirements of paragraph 171 by saying:

“Great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues.”

Local Plan Policy.

5.8 At the local level, the current Sevenoaks Local Plan includes the Core Strategy Plan (adopted 22nd February 2011) and the Allocations and Development Management Plan. A new Local Plan is still emerging. Policies relevant to landscape and visual matters include the following.

5.9 Policy LO8 The Countryside and the Rural Economy, of the adopted Core Strategy states:

“The extent of the Green Belt will be maintained.

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

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

Development that supports the maintenance and diversification of the rural economy, including development for agriculture, forestry, small scale business development and rural tourism projects, and the vitality of local communities will be supported provided it is compatible with policies for protecting the Green Belt, the Kent Downs and High Weald Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty conserves and enhances the value and character of the District’s woodland and the landscape character of other rural parts of the District and that it takes account of infrastructure requirements.”

5.10 Policy SP1 Design of New Development and Conservation, of the adopted Core Strategy states:

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

Village Design Statements and Parish Plans. In rural areas account should be taken of guidance in the Countryside Assessment and AONB Management Plans. In areas where the local environment lacks positive features new development should contribute to an improvement in the quality of the environment. New development should create safe, inclusive and attractive environments that meet the needs of users, incorporate principles of sustainable development and maintain and enhance biodiversity. The District’s heritage assets and their settings, including listed buildings, conservation areas, archaeological remains, ancient monuments, historic parks and gardens, historic buildings, landscapes and outstanding views will be protected and enhanced.”

Kent Downs AONB Management Plan

- 5.11** According to the website of the Kent Downs AONB, the current Management Plan remains that of 2014-2019. Reference link: <https://s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/explore-kent-bucket/uploads/sites/7/2018/04/18113849/KDAONB-Management-Plan.pdf>
- 5.12** Within the Landform and Landscape Character section, the following policy is relevant.
- “LLC1 The protection, conservation and enhancement of special characteristics and qualities, natural beauty and landscape character of the Kent Downs AONB will be supported and pursued.”
- 5.13** Within the Farmed Landscape section, the following policies are relevant.
- “FL1 The AONB will retain the principally farmed character for which it is valued...
- FL7 Conversion from agricultural to leisure use and the creation of non-agricultural structures will only be supported where there is not a cumulative loss to the principally farmed landscape of the AONB.”
- 5.14** Within the Sustainable Development section, the following policies are relevant.
- “SD1 The need to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the Kent Downs AONB is recognised as the primary purpose of the designation and given the highest level of protection within statutory and other appropriate planning and development strategies and development control decisions.
- SD2 The local character, qualities and distinctiveness of the Kent Downs AONB will be conserved and enhanced in the design, scale, setting and materials of new development, redevelopment and infrastructure and will be pursued through the

application of appropriate design guidance and position statements which are adopted as components of the AONB Management Plan.

SD3 New development or changes to land use will be opposed where they disregard or run counter to the primary purpose of the Kent Downs AONB...

SD8 Proposals which negatively impact on the distinctive landform, landscape character, special characteristics and qualities, the setting and views to and from the AONB will be opposed unless they can be satisfactorily mitigated.

SD9 The particular historic and locally distinctive character of rural settlements and buildings of the Kent Downs AONB will be maintained and strengthened. The use of locally-derived materials for restoration and conversion work will be encouraged. New developments will be expected to apply appropriate design guidance and to be complementary to local character in form, setting, scale, contribution to settlement pattern and choice of materials. This will apply to all development, including road design (pursued through the adoption and implementation of the AONB Rural Streets and Lanes Design Handbook), affordable housing, development on farm holdings (pursued through the farmstead design guidance), and rights of way signage.”

Response to policy

- 5.15** Situated within the Kent Downs AONB, the proposed development would constitute the re-development of a previously developed site that presently contains a substantial building. This existing building, which is to be demolished as part of the proposed development, is visible from publicly accessible locations. As a modern utilitarian storage barn, the existing building is generic in its design and has no reference to the local vernacular in its style or use of materials. The existing building does not contribute positively to the AONB character.
- 5.16** The proposed development is intended to provide two high quality residential dwellings to replace the existing storage barn. The new dwellings would be contemporary in their design but would allow for reference to be made, in their styling and use of materials, to the local vernacular. The proposed dwellings are to be of a scale and style, with a careful choice of materials, which reflects and compliments the local character of the settlement of Upper Austin Lodge Farm and the wider AONB.
- 5.17** With the proposals in place, the AONB would still maintain its function of providing the highest level of protection to a landscape and an area of scenic beauty as advocated in the NPPF and within the AONB Management Plan. It is considered that in this context,

as a consequence of the proposed dwellings being in place, any resultant alteration to the overall rural and primarily farmed character and appearance of the landscape of the AONB would be limited and that any alteration would be largely positive in their nature.

- 5.18** The change in the character and appearance of the wider landscape of the AONB brought about by the proposed development would not be so great as to produce a noticeable level of harm that would so alter the nature of the character of the AONB in terms of scale, landform, land cover or pattern, to the extent that one would consider the change to be important. The primarily agricultural nature of the AONB landscape would continue to prevail with the proposals in place.
- 5.19** The proposals allow for the retention of the existing tree and hedgerow resource on site and would provide the opportunity for further tree, shrub and hedgerow planting as part of a comprehensive soft landscape scheme.

6. Effect on Landscape Elements and Features

- 6.1** There are no anticipated works associated with the proposed development that would take place outside the site boundary except potentially for underground utility connections. Therefore, this section assesses the effect of the proposals on those location elements and features that currently characterise the site (see Site Features Plan – Appendix 4).

Topography

- 6.2** The topography profile of the site is essential level with some minor undulations and a gentle rise from north to south. The landform of the site is typical of the gently sloping and undulating nature of the topography of the valley bottom in which the site is situated. The topography of the site is assessed as having a medium value.
- 6.3** The topography of the site is already accommodating of built form and infrastructure. It is anticipated that only limited earthworks would be required on site so as to accommodate the proposed development.
- 6.4** The susceptibility of the topography to the specific nature of the type of development being proposed is low. With a medium value and low susceptibility, the overall sensitivity of the topography to the proposed development is considered to be low.
- 6.5** Any changes to the topography of the site during the lifetime of the proposed development are considered to be irreversible. Any changes would be localised ones and would relate to the setting of levels necessary to allow the construction of the proposed building. There would be no requirement for large scale remodelling of the existing landform and the overall magnitude of change on the site's topography would be low. With a low sensitivity and low magnitude of change, the overall effect at year 1 on topography would be negligible. It is assessed that the effect would remain negligible at year 10.

Trees, shrubs and hedgerows

- 6.6** The trees, shrubs and hedgerows on the site are predominantly native species and whilst reflective of the nature trees and shrubs which characterise the wider landscape are not considered unusual or rare. There are no Tree Preservation Orders in place on the site

and the existing tree, shrub and hedgerow resource is assessed as being of low value and of medium susceptibility to the type of development proposed. With a low value and a medium susceptibility, the overall sensitivity of the existing tree, shrub and hedgerow resource is low.

- 6.7** It is anticipated that the proposed development would allow the existing tree, shrub and hedgerow resource on the site to be retained. The proposed development allows for the introduction of new tree and shrub planting onto the site to reinforce and to enhance the existing retained resource.
- 6.8** The magnitude of change on the existing tree, shrub and hedgerow resource at year 1 is assessed as medium. With a low sensitivity, and a medium magnitude of change, the effect on the tree, shrub and hedgerow resource on the site with the proposed development in place at year 1 would be minor and beneficial.
- 6.9** It is considered that by year 10 of the operational phase of the proposed development, that any proposed new planting would have become established and beginning to mature. In addition, the existing retained resource will have been well managed and would have continued to thrive. At year 10, it is assessed that the magnitude of change would have increased to high. With a low sensitivity, and a high magnitude of change, the effect on the tree, shrub and hedgerow resource on the site with the proposed development in place at year 1 would be moderate and beneficial.

Summary of the effects on landscape elements and features

- 6.10** As a result of the proposed development being in place there would be no important adverse effects, i.e., an effect that would result in a total or substantial loss, upon the other landscape elements and features (namely topography, hedgerows, shrubs and trees) that currently characterise the site.
- 6.11** It is possible to draw the following conclusions:
- The underlining upward north to south slope of the site would remain substantially unchanged.
 - The retained existing tree, shrub and hedgerow resource on the site would form an integral part of the proposed residential development. It is anticipated that the retained vegetation would be reinforced and enhanced through additional tree and hedgerow planting. Once established and beginning to mature any new tree and hedgerow planting would lead to a beneficial effect upon the site's existing tree, shrub and hedgerow resource.

- No physical works are required beyond the site boundary as part of the proposed development. Consequently, the physical fabric of the landscape surrounding the site would remain physically unaffected with the proposals in place.

7. Effect on Landscape Character

Effect on Local Landscape Character within the AONB

- 7.1** At the finer grain level of assessment as expressed in the published County and District landscape character assessments and the AONB Management Plan (supported by the author's own assessment of the landscape up to 1km from the site), the site's host landscape does reflect many of the key characteristics identified in the baseline conditions. In particular, the host landscape reflects a dispersed settlement pattern of isolated farmsteads and properties in a broadly rural and agricultural context.
- 7.2** The proposed development would be contained within a single well-defined area. There would be some change to the appearance and character of the site with the proposals in place. However, the existing landscape elements and features including topography, trees, shrubs and hedgerows that help characterise the site would not experience any fundamentally unfavourable effects. With the possible exception of underground utilities, there would be no physical effects beyond the site boundaries. Only experiential factors such as tranquillity and visual appearance would be affected beyond the site boundary and only to a limited degree.
- 7.3** The proposed development would remove some built form from the site. The existing building to be removed is a modern and utilitarian agricultural storage barn which although characteristic of the host landscape has little aesthetic or inherent qualities that allows it, beyond its function, to contribute positively to the character or appearance of the landscape. The existing building makes no reference to the traditional local vernacular in its style, detailing or use of materials .
- 7.4** As part of the proposals, new residential built form would be introduced onto the site and rather than being extensive would reduce the current volume of built form present. Much of the site would be open space or garden curtilage. The existing tree, shrub and hedgerow resource on the site would be retained. In particular, the trees and vegetation along the site's northern, western and eastern boundaries, which contribute to the appearance of the wider landscape would be kept as an integral feature of the proposed development.
- 7.5** The careful design of the proposed development allows for enhancement of the existing landscape elements and features of the site. Consideration has been given in the layout design of the proposed development that would be reflective of the form of existing

individual properties already found in the host landscape and identified, in the published within the AONB.

- 7.6** The physical characteristics of the local landscape of the AONB beyond the site would remain unchanged with the proposed residential development in place. The existing scale and pattern of the landscape with its landcover of woodland, mainly arable agricultural fields, undulating topography and dispersed and isolated settlements would all continue to prevail with the proposals in place.
- 7.7** The tranquillity of the site and of the wider local landscape would be unchanged with the proposed development in place. The proposed replacement dwellings would create some movement and noise but this would be in the context of being part of the wider hamlet of Upper Austin Lodge and it is considered would not fundamentally alter this baseline context.
- 7.8** Visually, the site benefits from a relatively high level of containment from within the wider landscape. The proposed development would influence the visual amenity experienced by those people in the surrounding area to a limited degree. Any change in the visual appearance of the site would not alter substantially the material perception of the local host landscape as being a settled rural one. In certain instances where the existing storage barn is more prominent the proposed replacement dwellings with their reduced scale would actually improve the intervisibility with the local landscape. The proposals would remove the existing non-descript storage barn and replace it with two dwellings that would only be seen as discrete elements in a landscape where existing residential properties are already a feature of most views .
- 7.9** The local landscape of the AONB already accommodates settlement of mixed style residential properties to the extent that they are integral component of the character of the AONB. In this context, the sight of the proposed new residential properties, in their proposed form, would not unduly affect the visual experience, appearance or perception of the landscape's character.
- 7.10** The character of the local landscape of the AONB is assessed as having a medium sensitivity. The magnitude of change that would be brought to the character of the local landscape of the AONB with the proposed development in place is assessed as low. With a low magnitude of change and an overall medium sensitivity, the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the local landscape of the AONB is assessed as minor neutral at year 1 and year10.

Summary

- 7.11** The proposed development would not materially change the key landscape characteristics or elements and features, identified in either the published landscape character assessment or the author’s own assessment for the local landscape of the AONB. The existing pattern of arable agricultural fields, paddocks and woodland containing both the site and Upper Austin Lodge as whole, would continue with the proposals in place.
- 7.12** The proposals would remove the current existing storage barn which, though not uncharacteristic of the local area, makes no appreciable contribution to the landscape. The proposed development would positively contribute to the character of the local landscape by introducing a style of residential development, in the form of two dwellings which would represent high quality contemporary design and through the use of appropriate materials and landscaping would both conserve and enhance the rural surroundings of the AONB in accordance with national and local policy.
- 7.13** The proposals would be detailed so as to respond to the existing landform of the site so that its general profile and rise north to south would continue to be evident. The existing vegetation along the site’s northern, eastern and western boundaries, would be retained as part of the proposals and would continue to help provide a degree of visual enclosure to the proposed development. The existing tree and hedgerow resource on the site would be reinforced and enhanced through new planting. Once established, this new planting would begin to make a positive contribution to the site and the wider landscape.
- 7.14** Overall, the physical characteristics of the surrounding wider landscape of the Kent Downs AONB beyond the site and its predominantly rural, farmed, nature would be materially unchanged with the proposed residential development in place. The landscape is accommodating of a wide variety of human influences including infrastructure and settlement but retains the natural beauty for which it is designated as an AONB. In this context, the sight of the proposed development would not unduly affect the visual experience and perception of the landscape’s character and the existing pattern and landcover of the landscape comprising woods, rural lanes and isolated properties and settlements over an undulating topography would all continue with the proposed residential in place.

8. Effect on Visual Amenity

Detailed visual assessment

- 8.1** A visual assessment has been undertaken from the representative viewpoints to determine how the proposed development might influence the visual amenity of the surrounding landscape. The assessment was undertaken as part of the site survey, with the photographic assessment recording the nature of the view and the existing visibility of the site.
- 8.2** The site survey and photographic assessment were undertaken in January 2021. Leaf cover on existing vegetation was at its minimum and visibility at its maximum but consideration has also been given to when the vegetation is in full leaf cover and visibility at its minimum. The detailed assessment of the effects of the proposed development on the various representative viewpoints is given below.

Viewpoint 1 – View looking south in the direction of the site from Upper Austin Lodge Road

Description of the baseline view and sensitivity of receptor

- 8.3** This view is taken from Upper Austin Lodge Road from the approach to Upper Austin Lodge and the site. The view looks south in the direction of the site. Views of and into the site are effectively screened by existing roadside vegetation.
- 8.4** Users of the public highway – roads – are assessed as having a medium susceptibility to the type of development being proposed. The view itself is assessed as having a high value (reflective of the fact that much of the landscape that can be seen is in the AONB). Overall, the sensitivity of the visual receptor (those people using the highway) is assessed as high.

Predicted view at year 1 and magnitude of effect

- 8.5** At year 1 of the operational phase, it is considered that the view would be largely unaltered. The layering effect of the existing roadside vegetation would continue to screen views of and into the site and of the proposed dwellings. In summer when there is full leaf cover on the intervening vegetation, it is considered that the screening effect will be increased further. The magnitude of change is assessed as negligible.

Scale of visual effect

- 8.6** With a high sensitivity and a negligible magnitude of change, there would be a minor effect at year 1. The nature of the effect is considered to be neutral. At year 10 the effect is assessed as remaining minor neutral.

Viewpoint 2 – Looking south towards the northern apex of the site

Description of the baseline view and sensitivity of receptor

- 8.7** This view is taken from Upper Austin Lodge Road as it approaches the junction with the access road to Fairways (to the right of the view). The view looks directly toward the site, most of which is screened from view by the layering effect of vegetation in the intervening space between the observer and the site boundary. The silhouette of the existing storage barn can just be distinguished on the site.
- 8.8** Users of the public highway – roads – are assessed as having a medium susceptibility to the type of development being proposed. The view itself is assessed as having a high value (reflective of the fact that the landscape that can be seen is in the AONB). Overall, the sensitivity of the visual receptor (those people using the highway) is assessed as high.

Predicted view at year 1 and magnitude of effect

- 8.9** At year 1 of the operational phase, it is considered that there would be a limited change to view. The existing storage barn would no longer be seen having been demolished. The layering effect of the existing roadside vegetation, including that retained on site, would continue to filter views of and into the site and of the proposed dwellings but a part of the roofline of the northern most proposed dwelling would just be discerned in winter. In summer when there is full leaf cover on the intervening vegetation, it is considered that the screening effect will be increased further and there would be no views of the proposals. The magnitude of change is assessed as low.

Scale of visual effect

- 8.10** With a high sensitivity and a low magnitude of change, there would be a moderate effect at year 1. The nature of the effect is considered to be neutral. At year 10 the effect is assessed as diminishing to minor neutral as the proposals become an integral feature in the view.

Viewpoint 3 – Looking south from Upper Austin Lodge Road along the eastern site boundary

Description of the baseline view and sensitivity of receptor

- 8.11** This view is taken from Upper Austin Lodge Road, at the point where it also becomes a public right of way, and looks along the eastern boundary of the site. Views of and into the site are effectively screened by existing roadside vegetation. Existing built form can be seen in the distance. The view is representative of users of the public right of way network.
- 8.12** Users of the public right of way network – are assessed as having a high susceptibility to the type of development being proposed. The view itself is assessed as having a high value (reflective of the fact that much of the landscape that can be seen is in the AONB). Overall, the sensitivity of the visual receptor is assessed as high.

Predicted view at year 1 and magnitude of effect

- 8.13** At year 1 of the operational phase, it is considered that the view would be largely unaltered. The layering effect of the existing roadside vegetation (the retained on site vegetation) would continue to screen views of and into the site and of the proposed dwellings. In summer when there is full leaf cover on the intervening vegetation, it is considered that the screening effect will be increased further. The magnitude of change is assessed as negligible.

Scale of visual effect

- 8.14** With a high sensitivity and a negligible magnitude of change, there would be a minor effect at year 1. The nature of the effect is considered to be neutral. At year 10 the effect is assessed as remaining minor neutral.

Viewpoint 4 – View looking east across the site from PRow SD201

Description of the baseline view and sensitivity of receptor

- 8.15** This view is taken from the public right of way SD201 as it passes through the site, and looks towards the eastern boundary of the site. Internally the site is open and the existing storage barn is prominent in the middle distance. Pastoral fields rise up the valley sides beyond the site and trees form the skyline on the valley's edge.

- 8.16** Users of the public right of way network – are assessed as having a high susceptibility to the type of development being proposed. The view itself is assessed as having a high value (reflective of the fact that much of the landscape that can be seen is in the AONB). Overall, the sensitivity of the visual receptor is assessed as high.

Predicted view at year 1 and magnitude of effect

- 8.17** At year 1 of the operational phase, there would be a change in the view. The existing storage barn would have been demolished and replaced by the southern most of the proposed dwellings. The southern elevation of the new dwelling would be clearly visible as would part of the properties curtilage. The magnitude of change is assessed as medium.

Scale of visual effect

- 8.18** With a high sensitivity and a medium magnitude of change, there would be a major effect at year 1. The nature of the effect is considered to be neutral. The barn to demolished is not a positive feature of the landscape and has no architectural or aesthetic merit. The dwelling that would replace it would be a high quality designed building that would be both contemporary and visually appealing with reference to the local vernacular. The backdrop to the site would be unchanged.
- 8.19** At year 10 the effect is assessed as remaining high but would be increasingly beneficial in nature. The site would remain green but would have been enhanced by new tree and shrub planting that at year 10 would have become established and would be beginning to mature. The expansive view would continue to prevail.

Viewpoint 5 – View looking north-east across from PRow SD201

Description of the baseline view and sensitivity of receptor

- 8.20** This view is taken from the public right of way SD201 as it approaches the site from the south-west, and looks towards the south-western corner of the site. The foreground is a grassland field headland and the access road to Fairways. Views of and into the site are largely filtered and screened by the layering effect of trees on the site and in the intervening landscape between the observer and the site boundary. The existing storage barn can just be discerned in the middle distance.
- 8.21** Users of the public right of way network – are assessed as having a high susceptibility to the type of development being proposed. The view itself is assessed as having a high

value (reflective of the fact that much of the landscape that can be seen is in the AONB). Overall, the sensitivity of the visual receptor is assessed as high.

Predicted view at year 1 and magnitude of effect

- 8.22** At year 1 of the operational phase, there would be a change in the view. The existing storage barn would have been demolished and replaced by the southern most of the proposed dwellings. The southern elevation of the new dwelling would be partially visible in the winter months but would be effectively screened in summer once the retained trees on the site and the vegetation off site are in full leaf. The magnitude of change is assessed as low.

Scale of visual effect

- 8.23** With a high sensitivity and a low magnitude of change, there would be a moderate effect at year 1. The nature of the effect is considered to be neutral. The barn to demolished is not a positive feature of the landscape and has no architectural or aesthetic merit. The dwelling that would replace it would be a high quality designed building that would be both contemporary and visually appealing with reference to the local vernacular. The backdrop to the site would be unchanged.
- 8.24** At year 10 the effect is assessed diminishing to minor and beneficial, as the existing retained trees continue to grow and proposed planting on the site has become established and is maturing.

Viewpoint 6 – View looking north from PRow SD201

Description of the baseline view and sensitivity of receptor

- 8.25** This view is sequential view taken from the public right of way SD201 as it approaches the site from the south-west, and looks towards the northern part of the site in the middle distance. The foreground is a ploughed field and scrub. Views of and into the site are largely filtered and screened by the layering effect of trees on the site and in the intervening landscape between the observer and the site boundary. Part of the existing storage barn can be seen in the centre of the view.
- 8.26** Users of the public right of way network – are assessed as having a high susceptibility to the type of development being proposed. The view itself is assessed as having a high value (reflective of the fact that much of the landscape that can be seen is in the AONB). Overall, the sensitivity of the visual receptor is assessed as high.

Predicted view at year 1 and magnitude of effect

- 8.27** At year 1 of the operational phase, there would be a change in the view. The existing storage barn would have been demolished and replaced by the northern most of the proposed dwellings. The western elevation of the new dwelling would be partially visible but the southern dwelling would be screened from view. The magnitude of change is assessed as low.

Scale of visual effect

- 8.28** With a high sensitivity and a low magnitude of change, there would be a moderate effect at year 1. The nature of the effect is considered to be neutral. The barn to demolished is not a positive feature of the landscape and has no architectural or aesthetic merit. The dwelling that would replace it would be a high quality designed building that would be both contemporary and visually appealing with reference to the local vernacular. The backdrop to the site and the foreground elements of the view would be unchanged.
- 8.29** At year 10 the effect is assessed diminishing to minor and beneficial, as the existing retained trees continue to grow and the proposed planting on the site has become established and is maturing.

Viewpoint 7 – View from Upper Austin Lodge Road looking north-west

Description of the baseline view and sensitivity of receptor

- 8.30** This view is taken from Upper Austin Lodge Road, also PRoW SD199, in the approximate centre of the hamlet of Upper Austin Lodge. The carriageway and existing built form are the dominant elements in the view. Views into the site are largely screened by a combination of vegetation and boundary fencing in the intervening landscape between the observer and the site boundary. The existing storage barn can be seen in part in the centre of the view.
- 8.31** Users of the public right of way network – are assessed as having a high susceptibility to the type of development being proposed. The view itself is assessed as having a high value (reflective of the fact that much of the landscape that can be seen is in the AONB). Overall, the sensitivity of the visual receptor is assessed as high.

Predicted view at year 1 and magnitude of effect

- 8.32** At year 1 of the operational phase, there would be a change in the view. The existing storage barn would have been demolished and replaced by the two proposed dwellings.

Both properties would be seen only as discrete elements. Existing built form and vegetation would continue to be the dominant elements in the view. The magnitude of change is assessed as low.

Scale of visual effect

- 8.33** With a high sensitivity and a low magnitude of change, there would be a moderate effect at year 1. The nature of the effect is considered to be neutral. The barn to be demolished is not a positive feature of the landscape and has no architectural or aesthetic merit. The dwelling that would replace it would be a high quality designed building that would be both contemporary and visually appealing with reference to the local vernacular. The backdrop to the site would be unchanged.
- 8.34** At year 10 the effect is assessed diminishing to minor and beneficial, as the existing retained trees continue to grow and proposed planting on the site has become established and is maturing.

Viewpoint 8 – View looking north from the permissive right of way

Description of the baseline view and sensitivity of receptor

- 8.35** This view is taken from the permissive right of way that leads from PRoW SD199 and connects to a vantage point to the west which houses a memorial to the earlier aviator Percy Sinclair Pilcher. The view looks across rough grassland and horse paddocks towards Upper Austin Lodge. Most of the settlement is screened from view by woodland in the intervening landscape between the observer and the site boundary. The existing storage barn on the site can just be discerned amongst the trees. The view continues with woodland and part of a high voltage electricity transmission line and towers forming the skyline.
- 8.36** Users of the public right of way network – are assessed as having a high susceptibility to the type of development being proposed. The view itself is assessed as having a high value (reflective of the fact that much of the landscape that can be seen is in the AONB). Overall, the sensitivity of the visual receptor is assessed as high.

Predicted view at year 1 and magnitude of effect

- 8.37** At year 1 of the operational phase, there would be a change in the view. The existing storage barn would have been demolished and replaced by the southern most of the two proposed dwellings. Only a small part of the new dwelling would be visible and the

northern dwelling would be screened from view. In summer with full leaf cover on the vegetation in the view, the proposals would be almost entirely screened from view. The magnitude of change is assessed as low.

Scale of visual effect

- 8.38** With a high sensitivity and a low magnitude of change, there would be a moderate effect at year 1. The nature of the effect is considered to be neutral. The barn to be demolished is not a positive feature of the landscape and has no architectural or aesthetic merit. The dwelling that would replace it would be a high quality designed building that would be both contemporary and visually appealing with reference to the local vernacular. The backdrop to the site and the foreground elements of the view would be unchanged.
- 8.39** At year 10 the effect is assessed as diminishing to minor and neutral.

Viewpoint 9 – View looking north from the permissive right of way close to Fairways (former club house)

Description of the baseline view and sensitivity of receptor

- 8.40** This view is taken from the permissive right of way that leads from PRow SD199 and connects to a vantage point to the west which houses a memorial to the earlier aviator Percy Sinclair Pilcher, close to the former club house, of the now closed, Upper Austin Lodge golf course and now converted to Fairways – a private residential property. The view looks across rough grassland and horse paddocks towards Upper Austin Lodge. Most of the settlement is screened from view but some agricultural buildings and residential properties can be seen in the middle distance. The existing storage barn on the site can just be discerned amongst the trees. The view continues with woodland and part of a high voltage electricity transmission line and towers forming the skyline.
- 8.41** Users of the public right of way network – are assessed as having a high susceptibility to the type of development being proposed. The view itself is assessed as having a high value (reflective of the fact that much of the landscape that can be seen is in the AONB). Overall, the sensitivity of the visual receptor is assessed as high.

Predicted view at year 1 and magnitude of effect

- 8.42** At year 1 of the operational phase, there would be a change in the view. The existing storage barn would have been demolished and replaced by the southern most of the two proposed dwellings. Only a small part of the new dwelling would be visible and the northern dwelling would be screened from view. In summer with full leaf cover on the

vegetation in the view, the proposals would be almost entirely screened from view. The magnitude of change is assessed as low.

Scale of visual effect

8.43 With a high sensitivity and a low magnitude of change, there would be a moderate effect at year 1. The nature of the effect is considered to be neutral. The barn to demolished is not a positive feature of the landscape and has no architectural or aesthetic merit. The dwelling that would replace it would be a high quality designed building that would be both contemporary and visually appealing with reference to the local vernacular. The backdrop to the site and the foreground elements of the view would be unchanged. The existing built form would be remain as more prominent features.

8.44 At year 10 the effect is assessed diminishing to minor and neutral

Summary of detailed visual assessment

8.45 A summary of the effects on visual amenity of the 9 representative viewpoints is given in Table 2 below.

Table 2 – Summary of the effects on representative viewpoints

Viewpoint	Visual Effect			
	Negligible	Minor	Moderate	High
Viewpoint 1 – View looking south in direction of the site from Upper Austin Lodge Road Distance from site: 0.43 kilometres Coordinates:		✓ neutral – year 1 ✓ neutral – year 10		

Viewpoint	Visual Effect			
	Negligible	Minor	Moderate	High
51deg. 21'01.18"N 0 deg. 12'48.96"E				
Viewpoint 2 – Looking south towards the northern apex of the site Distance from site: 40 metres Coordinates: 51 deg.20'49.28"N 0 deg.12'43'.77"E		√ neutral – year 10	√ neutral – year 1	
Viewpoint 3 – Looking south from the Upper Austin Lodge Farm Road along the eastern site boundary Distance from site: 0 metres		√ neutral – year 1 √ neutral – year 10		

Viewpoint	Visual Effect			
	Negligible	Minor	Moderate	High
Coordinates: 51 deg.20'48.25"N 0 deg.12'43.27"E				
Viewpoint 4 – View looking east across the site from PROW SD201 Distance from site: On site Coordinates: 51 deg. 20'44.24"N 0 deg.012'39.69"E				√ neutral – year 1 √ beneficial – year 10
Viewpoint 5 – View looking north-east from PROW SD201 Distance from site: 0.03km Coordinates: 51 deg. 20'43'38"N 0 deg.12'37.40"E		√ neutral – year 10	√ neutral – year 1	

Viewpoint	Visual Effect			
	Negligible	Minor	Moderate	High
<p>Viewpoint 6 – View looking north from PROW SD201</p> <p>Distance from site: 0.18km</p> <p>Coordinates: 51 deg. 20'40.10"N 0 deg. 12'32.00"E</p>		<p>√ neutral – year 10</p>	<p>√ neutral – year 1</p>	
<p>Viewpoint 7 - View from Upper Austin Lodge Road looking north- west</p> <p>Distance from site: 0.1km</p> <p>Coordinates: 51 deg. 20'41.95"N 0 deg. 12'44.53"E</p>		<p>√ neutral – year 10</p>	<p>√ neutral – year 1</p>	

Viewpoint	Visual Effect			
	Negligible	Minor	Moderate	High
<p>Viewpoint 8 – View looking north from permissive right of way</p> <p>Distance from site: 0.48km</p> <p>Coordinates: 51 deg. 20'29.23"N 0 deg.12'47.22"E</p>		<p>√ neutral – year 10</p>	<p>√ neutral – year 1</p>	
<p>Viewpoint 9 – View looking north from permissive right of way close to Fairways (former club house)</p> <p>Distance from site: 0.47km</p> <p>Coordinates: 51 deg. 20'29.23"N 0 deg.12'45.35"E</p>		<p>√ neutral – year 10</p>	<p>√ neutral – year 1</p>	

- 8.46** Of the 9 representative views, only one is assessed as experiencing a major effect; viewpoint 4. This view is taken from within the site. The change in the view would primarily reflect the removal of the existing storage barn. The existing building is not of any aesthetic merit, being entirely utilitarian in function, and does not contribute or enhance the appearance of the landscape. At year 1, its loss and replacement with two new attractively designed dwellings would lead to an effect that was neutral. By year 10 the site's visual appeal would be enhanced through the establishment of new trees and shrubs leading to the major effect becoming beneficial in nature.
- 8.47** Of the remaining 8 representative viewpoints, the majority are assessed as experiencing a moderate but neutral effect at both year 1 the operational phase of the proposed development. The level of effect is reflective of the fact that most visual receptors i.e., people observing the view would be users of the public right of way network. Such people would have a high susceptibility to any change in the landscape. However, no adverse effects are identified which is a response to the loss of the storage barn, which, although not quite a visual detractor, offers no enhancement to the visual amenity of the area.

Summary

- 8.48** The opportunity to view the site and the proposed development from publicly accessible locations in the wider landscape is limited. Such views that are afforded are typically in close or very close proximity to the site boundary and from the public right of way network and the public highway. Other locations are private with no public access.
- 8.49** In general, the proposed development, even from publicly accessible locations would typically be screened from view by the presence of changes in the local topography, existing built form or vegetation or a combination of all these elements in the intervening landscape between the observer and the site boundary. Where it is evident, the proposed development would typically be seen only as discrete elements rather than in its entirety.
- 8.50** Overall, it is considered that the proposed development would have a limited effect that would not be unacceptable on the visual amenity of the wider landscape beyond the site boundary.

9. Summary and Conclusions

- 9.1** This Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) has been prepared by Briarwood Landscape Architecture by a Chartered Member of the Landscape Institute, on behalf of Hawkspare Ltd in respect of a proposed residential development of two new dwellings to replace an existing agricultural storage barn at Upper Austin Lodge Farm, Eynsford.
- 9.2** The site is a single parcel of land that is broadly triangular in shape; the apex of the site faces almost due north. The site is contained by the metalled, black top surfaced, Upper Austin Lodge Road to the east and by the similar surfaced access road to the residential property of Fairways along its western boundary. The site's southern boundary is defined by a post and barbed wire fence. An existing storage barn building, made and clad in steel and painted dark green occupies part of the site.
- 9.3** The site is located at the northern end of the small hamlet of Upper Austin Lodge. The site and its surrounding area are located in the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and the Metropolitan Green Belt. A public right of way passes along the site's southern edge but the remainder of the site is private with no public access.
- 9.4** The proposed development envisages the demolition of the current modern steel frame and clad storage barn on the site and its replacement with two new residential properties. The proposed dwellings would be accessed from Upper Austin Lodge Road and would be sited mainly within the footprint of the existing barn.
- 9.5** The proposed residential development would not materially change the key landscape characteristics or elements and features, identified in either the published landscape character assessments for the local landscape of the AONB or the author's own assessment. The existing pattern of arable agricultural fields, paddocks and woodland containing both the site and Upper Austin Lodge as whole, would continue with the proposals in place.
- 9.6** The proposals would remove the current existing storage barn which, although not uncharacteristic of the local area, makes no appreciable contribution to the appearance or character of the landscape. The proposed development themselves would positively contribute to the character of the local landscape. Such a contribution would be made by introducing a style of residential development, in the form of two new dwellings that would represent high quality contemporary design. Through the use of appropriate materials and landscaping the new dwellings would both conserve and enhance the rural surroundings of the AONB in accordance with national and local policy.

- 9.7** The proposals would be detailed so as to respond to the existing landform of the site so that its general profile and gentle rise north to south would continue to be evident. The existing vegetation along the site's northern, eastern and western boundaries, would be retained as part of the proposals and would continue to help provide a degree of visual enclosure to the proposed development.
- 9.8** The existing tree and hedgerow resource on the site would be reinforced and enhanced through new planting. Once established, this new planting would begin to make a positive contribution to the site and the wider landscape.
- 9.9** The physical characteristics of the surrounding wider landscape of the Kent Downs AONB beyond the site and its predominantly rural, farmed, nature would be materially unchanged with the proposed residential development in place. The landscape is accommodating of a wide variety of human influences including infrastructure and settlement but retains the natural beauty for which it is designated as an AONB. In this context, the sight of the proposed development would not unduly affect the visual experience and perception of the landscape's character. The existing pattern and landcover of the landscape comprising woods, fields, rural lanes and isolated properties and settlements over an undulating topography would all continue with the proposed residential in place.
- 9.10** The opportunity to view the site and the proposed development from publicly accessible locations in the wider landscape is limited. Such views that are afforded are typically in close or very close proximity to the site boundary and from the public right of way network and the public highway. Other locations are private with no public access.
- 9.11** In general, the proposed development, even from publicly accessible locations, would typically be screened from view by the presence of changes in the local topography, existing built form or vegetation or a combination of all these elements in the intervening landscape between the observer and the site boundary. Where it is evident, the proposed development would typically be seen only as discrete elements rather than in its entirety.
- 9.12** It is considered that the proposed development would have a limited effect that would not be unacceptable on the visual amenity of the wider landscape beyond the site boundary.

10. Appendices

Appendix 1 – Site Location Plan



Based upon Ordnance Survey Map - Crown Copyright.
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The site



PROJECT Upper Austin Lodge Farm			
CLIENT Hawkspace Limited			
DRAWING Site Location Plan			
SCALE As shown	DATE Jan. 2021	DRAWN SW	
DRAWING NUMBER BLA004-001		REVISION	

Appendix 2 – Detailed Methodology

DETAILED METHODOLOGY

Introduction

1. The Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) has been undertaken with reference to best practice, as outlined in the following published guidance:
 - Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (3rd edition) - Landscape Institute/ Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (2013)
 - GLVIA3 Statement of Clarification 1/13
 - An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment – Natural England (2014)
2. The proposed scheme is assessed for the purposes of the landscape and visual analysis.

Study Area

3. The initial study area for the LVA is taken to be a 5km radius from the site. Unless otherwise stated, the main focus of the assessment is taken as a radius of 2km from the site as it is considered that beyond this distance, even with good visibility, the proposed development would not be perceptible in the composite landscape.
4. The effects on settings of heritage assets or ecological/environmental assets are not considered within this LVA.

Nature of Effects

5. An impact is an action e.g. building a wall. An effect is the consequence of a particular action on the integrity of the landscape, feature or view.
6. The nature of any effect will be adverse beneficial or neutral and are summarised as:
 - Adverse - where on balance there is a negative effect on the quality, integrity or key characteristics of the landscape or visual receptor
 - Beneficial - where on balance there is a positive effect on the quality, integrity or key characteristics of the landscape or visual receptor
 - Neutral – where on balance the effect would maintain the quality, integrity or key characteristics of the landscape or visual receptor or where the change is different but represents neither a deterioration nor enhancement
7. Unless expressly noted, effects are deemed to be adverse in nature.

Landscape Elements and Character Assessment Methodology

8. A baseline landscape assessment is carried out to determine the current elements and character of the landscape within and surrounding the site. This involved an initial desktop study of but not necessarily limited to:

- Ordnance survey maps at 1:50,000, 1:25,000 scales
- Aerial photographs of the site and surrounding area
- Datasets for rural designations from the MAGIC website (Multi Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside)
- Relevant planning policy
- National and local scale landscape character assessments

Visual Assessment Methodology

9. The assessment of visual effects is undertaken on the basis of viewpoint analysis as recommended in best practice guidelines. The viewpoints which are in different directions from the site and are at varying distances and locations were selected to represent a range of views and visual receptor types.

10. The viewpoints are representational and not exhaustive. They are taken from publicly accessible land and not from any third party, private, land.

11. The viewpoints were used as the basis for determining the effects of visual receptors within the entire study area. The viewpoints were photographed at 1.6 metres above ground level.

Sensitivity of Landscape Elements and Features

12. The sensitivity attributed to a landscape element or feature is determined by a combination of the value that is attached to a particular landscape element feature and the susceptibility of the landscape element/feature to changes that would arise as a result of the Proposed Development as outlined in pages 88-90 of GLVIA3. Both value and susceptibility are assessed as high, medium or low.

Table 1: Value of Landscape Elements and Features

Low	<p>Ones that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • have no or little rarity and/or, • make no and/or make only a limited contribution to the character and local visual and amenity value and/or • are of such poor condition that the element/feature has lost its ability to contribute effectively to the character of the landscape
Medium	<p>Ones that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • are notable in the landscape, with some visual and/or amenity interest but, • do not make a particularly strong or important contribution to the character of the landscape and/or, • ones that are an intrinsic element of landscape but in poor condition
High	<p>Ones that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • make an important contribution to the character of the landscape and/or • have particular historical or cultural reference and/or • are distinctive or rare and typically of good condition

Table 2: Susceptibility of Landscape Elements and Features

Susceptibility to change	Criteria
High	A very limited ability of the landscape element of feature to accommodate the type of development being proposed – a particular susceptibility. Few opportunities for mitigation and enhancement.
Medium	A moderate ability of the landscape element of feature to accommodate the type of development being proposed – some susceptibility. Some opportunities for mitigation and enhancement .
Low	A well-defined ability of the landscape element of feature to accommodate the type of development being proposed – little susceptibility. Good opportunities for mitigation and enhancement .

Susceptibility of Landscape Elements and Features

13. The susceptibility criteria of landscape elements and features is given in Table 2 but a judgement has been made by linking back to the evidence gathered at the baseline stage.

Table 3: Sensitivity of Landscape Elements and Features

	VALUE			
		HIGH	MEDIUM	LOW
SUSCEPTIBILITY	HIGH	High	High	Medium
	MEDIUM	High	Medium	Low
	LOW	Medium	Low	Low

Magnitude of Change on Landscape Elements and Features

14. Professional judgement, using the criteria given in Table 4 , and also considering geographic extent and the duration and reversibility of the effect, has been used to determine the magnitude of direct physical impacts on individual existing landscape elements and features

Table 4: Criteria for magnitude of change for landscape elements and features

NB Alterations may include the addition of new elements and features

Negligible	No loss or very minor alteration to part of an existing landscape element and/or feature
Low	Minor loss or alteration to part of an existing landscape element and or feature
Medium	Some loss or alteration to part of an existing landscape element and/or feature
High	Total/major loss or alteration of an existing landscape element and/or feature

Sensitivity of Landscape Character

15. Sensitivity is determined by a combination of the value that is attached to a landscape and the susceptibility of the landscape to changes that would arise as a result of the Proposed Development as outlined in pages 88-90 of GLVIA3. Both value and susceptibility are assessed as high, medium or low.
16. Table 5 below provides a series of criteria by which the ‘value’ of the landscape is assessed. Such criteria are based upon Box 5.1 on page 84 of GLVIA3.

Table 5: Value of Landscape Character

Low	An area that is in a recognisably poor condition/quality and/or with a weak strength of character that typically has a clear indication of being damaged and/or contains a high number of detractors, and/or is of limited visual cohesion; rare or distinctive elements and features are not a notable component that contribute to the character of the area. No known associations with cultural/historic people.
Medium	An area is recognisable as being in reasonable condition/quality and/or with a strength of character but likely to exhibit some damage or deterioration and/or some visual cohesion and interest; rare or distinctive elements and features make some contribution to the character of the area. Possible or limited associations with cultural/historic people.
High	Areas with international or national landscape designations, i.e. National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty or occasionally landscapes non-designated landscape in particularly good condition/quality and/or strong strength of character or of particular local value and/or with few visual detractors; rare or distinctive elements and features are likely to be a key component that contribute to the character of the area. Recorded associations with cultural/historic people may be present.

Table 6: Susceptibility of Landscape Character

Susceptibility to change	Criteria
High	A very limited ability of the landscape to accommodate the type of development being proposed – a particular susceptibility. Few opportunities for mitigation and enhancement.
Medium	A moderate ability of the landscape to accommodate the type of development being proposed – some susceptibility. Some opportunities for mitigation and enhancement .
Low	A well-defined ability of the landscape to accommodate the type of development being proposed – little susceptibility. Good opportunities for mitigation and enhancement .

Susceptibility of Landscape Elements and Features

17. The susceptibility criteria of landscape elements and features is given in Table 6 but a judgement has been made by linking back to the evidence gathered at the baseline stage.

Table 7: Sensitivity of Landscape Character

	VALUE			
		HIGH	MEDIUM	LOW
SUSCEPTIBILITY	HIGH	High	High	Medium
	MEDIUM	High	Medium	Low
	LOW	Medium	Low	Low

Magnitude of Change on Landscape Character

18. Professional judgement using Table 8, and also considering geographic extent and the duration and reversibility of the effect, has been used to determine the magnitude change on landscape character

Table 8: Criteria for magnitude of change for landscape character

Negligible	No notable introduction of new elements into the landscape or change to the scale, landform, land cover or pattern of landscape
Low	Introduction of minor new elements into the landscape or some minor change to the scale, landform, land cover or pattern of landscape
Medium	Introduction of some notable elements into the landscape or some notable change to the scale, landform, land cover or pattern of landscape

High	Introduction of major elements into the landscape or some major change to the scale, landform, land cover or pattern of landscape
------	---

Sensitivity of Visual Receptors

19. Sensitivity is determined by a combination of the value that is attached to a view and the susceptibility of the receptor to changes in that view that would arise as a result of the Proposed Development as outlined in pages 113-114 of GLVIA3. Both value and susceptibility are assessed as high, medium or low.

20. GLVIA3 says a judgement should be made as to the value of a particular view being experienced. In making a professional judgement as to the value attached to a view, the following criteria have helped guide the process. Not all the criteria have to apply to a particular view and the criteria are not in a hierarchy.

Table 9: Criteria for judging levels of visual value

Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Views from within or towards undesignated landscapes and/or features of either importance to the site only or of no importance • View has little aesthetic merit e.g. has numerous visual detractors, is badly degraded etc. • View makes a limited contribution to the understanding of the function or wider pattern of the landscape • Views with no known social, cultural or historic associations • Views from locations that are not necessarily destination points or that are infrequently visited
Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Views from within or towards undesignated landscapes and/or features of local importance • View with some limited aesthetic appeal • View makes a reasonable contribution to the understanding of the

	<p>function or wider pattern of the landscape</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Views with some known local social, cultural or historic associations • Views from locations that are locally popular destination points or that are frequently visited by locals but not necessarily by visitors from further afield
High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Views from within or towards designated landscapes and/or features of importance at district level and above • View with great aesthetic appeal • View makes an important contribution to the understanding of the function or wider pattern of the landscape • Views with some known national or international social, cultural or historic associations especially to art and literature • Views from locations that are popular regional, national or international destination points or that are frequently visited by large numbers of visitors from further afield

Susceptibility of Visual Receptors

21. GLIVA3 advises (on page 113) that susceptibility of a particular visual receptor (observer) to change in a view is mainly a function of the nature of the activity or occupation of the person or people experiencing a view at a particular location and the extent to which their interest or attention is drawn to the view.

22. In general, it is considered that occupiers of residential properties and people using public rights of way (where enjoyment is primarily drawn from the view) have a high susceptibility to change. Users of roads, railways and open space or engaged in an activity where an appreciation of the view forms a part of the experience are considered to be of medium susceptibility. People engaged in formal sport or occupiers of commercial premises or in areas of employment, where the view has limited importance to the activity being undertaken, are considered to be of low susceptibility to change.

Table 10: Sensitivity of Visual Receptors

SUSCEPTIBILITY	VALUE			
		HIGH	MEDIUM	LOW
	HIGH	High	High	Medium
	MEDIUM	High	Medium	Low
	LOW	Medium	Low	Low

Magnitude of Change on Visual Amenity

23. Professional judgement has been used to determine the magnitude change on landscape character based upon the criteria outline in Table 11 but also considering the size and scale of change (including the loss or addition of features, changes in visual composition etc.) , the geographic influence of the change (orientation and angle of view in relation to the visual receptor, distance of the viewpoint from the main development, extent of area over which change would occur etc.) and, the duration and potential reversibility of any change (short term 0-5 years, medium term 5-10 years, long term 20years +, temporary, permanent, intermittent, continuous and whether the views will be full, partial or glimpsed).

Table 11: Criteria for magnitude of change for visual receptors

Negligible	No notable change in the view
Low	Some change in the view that is not prominent / few visual receptors affected
Medium	Some change in the view that is clearly visible and forms an important but not defining element in the view
High	Major change in the view that has a defining influence on the overall view / many visual receptors affected

Scale of Effects

24. The scale of the landscape and visual effects is determined by cross referencing the sensitivity of the landscape feature, landscape character or view with the magnitude of change. The scale of effects is described as major, moderate, minor or negligible.

Table 12: Scale of effect thresholds for landscape character, landscape elements/features and visual receptors

		Magnitude of Change			
		High	Medium	Low	Negligible
Sensitivity	High	Major	Major	Moderate	Minor
	Medium	Major	Moderate	Minor	Negligible
	Low	Moderate	Minor	Negligible	Negligible

Appendix 3 – Landscape Features Plan



The site



PROJECT Upper Austin Lodge Farm			
CLIENT Hawkspare Limited			
DRAWING Landscape Features Plan			
SCALE NTS	DATE Jan. 2021	DRAWN SW	
DRAWING NUMBER BLA004-002		REVISION	

Appendix 4 – Context Views

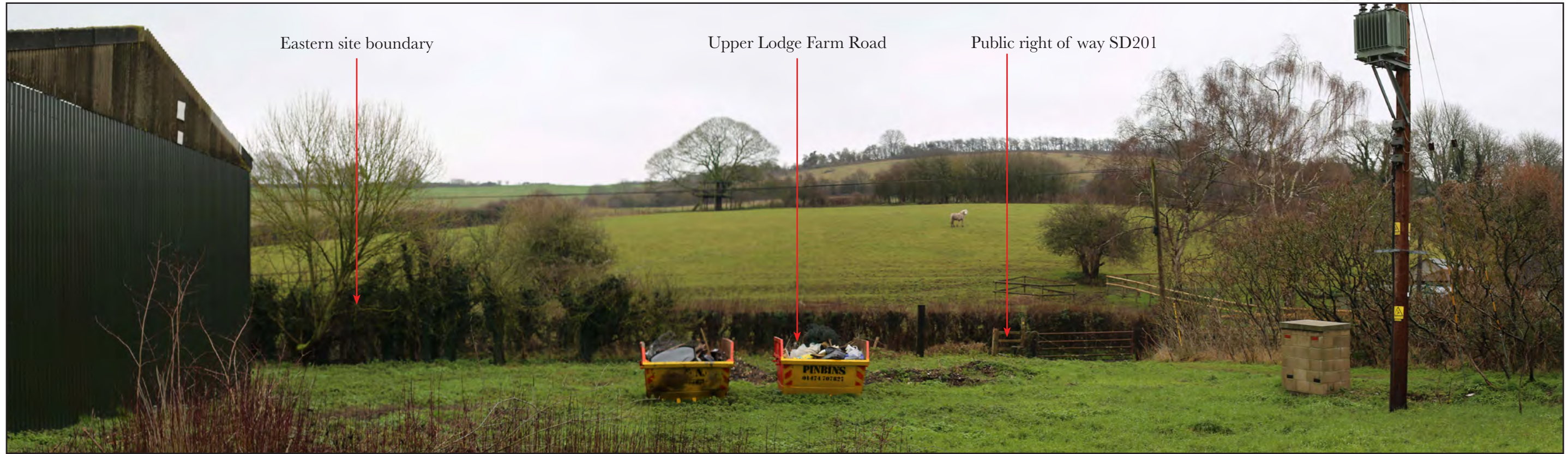
For Context Only



Photoview 1 - View looking south



Photoview 2 - View looking south along western site boundary



Photoview 3 - View looking east across the site



Photoview 4 - View looking towards site's southern boundary



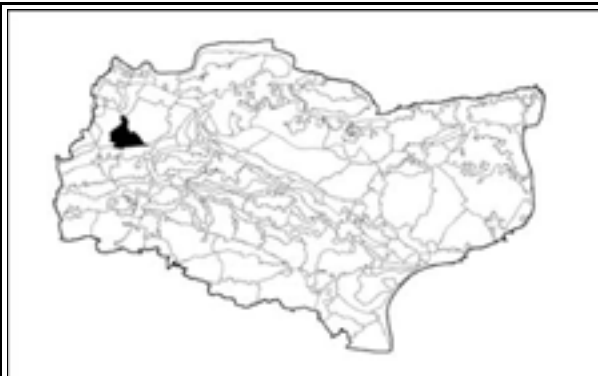
Photoview 5 - View from within site looking towards western site boundary



Photoview 6 - View from the site entrance looking north-east

Appendix 5 – Kingsdown West Down LCA

KINGSDOWN: WEST KENT DOWNS



KINGSDOWN

Kingsdown takes its name from having been part of a large pre-Norman Conquest royal estate, centred on the Darent Valley. In Kent "-down" or "-dun" implied thickly forested hills, indicating that at this time the area was heavily wooded. Today the southern part of this area still contains a considerable amount of formerly coppiced, mixed woodland and Scots pine, interspersed by small, irregular pastures and thick hedges. This results in an enclosed, intimate landscape, which succeeds in absorbing much of the bungalow development that has spread through the area. In the north, however, most of the former woodland has been lost, revealing rolling sweeps of downland and the chalky white soils of intensive arable cultivation.

There is considerable pressure in this area from suburbanisation. Many properties have long back gardens, which extend up the valley side or into the surrounding trees, resulting in a landscape of tiny smallholdings, horse pasture and "gardened" woodland. This has introduced a wide and disparate range of fences, sheds and ornamental conifers into the landscape, giving an inappropriate urban-edge feel to the area, reinforced by recreation developments, such as golf courses and caravan parks.

WEST KENT DOWNS

Kingsdown lies within the larger character area of the West Kent Downs.

The south-facing, chalk scarp between the Medway and the Darent provides a strong visual boundary, dividing the Kemsing Vale from the deep, dry valleys and wooded plateau of the West Kent Downs. This sense of separation is increased by the extensive tracts of ecologically valuable deciduous woodlands along the top of the scarp.

Woodland is very significant in this landscape, providing an important backdrop for the rolling landform, the network of small country lanes, the scattered settlements and the extensive valley pastures. In the east, around Luddesdown, the fields are contained by thick 'walls' of woodland, and strips of remnant coppice, or shaws, occur frequently along the steeper valley sides. Hidden away among the trees are several medieval buildings, such as Luddesdown Court, constructed from the local Kentish ragstone, while the villages of Vigo and West Kingsdown are set deep in the woodlands themselves.

The clay-with-flints soil on the plateau and ridge tops is reflected in the pasture and woodland dominating these areas; in the valleys, the extent of the finer silt soils is reflected by the predominance of arable cultivation. The downland becomes increasingly open in the north, where the intimate character of the scarp top gives way to a large-scale landscape of intensively farmed, rolling valleys and large blocks of deciduous woodland. West of Rochester, the mature woodlands and historic parkland of Cobham Hall are severed from the deciduous coppice woodlands of Shorne Wood Country Park by the busy A2 trunk road.

[next >>](#)

KINGSDOWN: WEST KENT DOWNS

PHOTOGRAPH



CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES

Rolling downland.
 Intensive arable cultivation in north with open fields of chalky-white soils.
 Enclosed, irregular pastures in south, thick coppice and mixed woodland.
 Suburbanisation, horseyculture and smallholdings.

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

Condition

This area of the Downs is considered to be in good condition, despite the detracting features associated with some amenity uses of the land and 20th century linear residential development of existing hamlets. The strong ecological value of the woodland and hedgerow network is reduced by the negative influence of the intensive arable cultivation in the north of the area, and is therefore considered to be moderate. However, in many areas, the landscape pattern is very strong and there is a maturity to the dense enclosures and other features, indicating the high functional and cultural integrity of the land use.

Sensitivity

The rolling landform is a dominant element in the view; but the tall, frequent enclosure reduces the visibility within the dominant landform to moderate.

20th century additions to the landscape, such as new housing and golf courses have added elements that do not contribute to the local distinctiveness. However, the historic and ancient landscape patterns remain the dominant elements in the wider countryside, and the sense of place and sensitivity remain strong.

LANDSCAPE ACTIONS

The dominance of broadleaf woodland in the area should be conserved. Conserve woodland as an edge to residential developments.
 Small-scale pastures and enclosures to be retained, and the use of small enclosed parcels of land to be monitored.
 Conserve the isolated nature of historic hamlets or cottages.
 Conserve roadside hedges, ensuring that they are consistently managed as tall hedges with standards
 Conserve the broad mix of species within hedgerow and woodland

CONTEXT

Regional: Kent Downs AONB

Condition

good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE
moderate	CREATE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & CREATE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
poor	CREATE	RESTORE & CREATE	RESTORE
	low	moderate	high

Sensitivity

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Condition **Very Good.**

Pattern of elements: Unified.
 Detracting features: Some.
 Visual Unity: Unified.
 Cultural integrity: Good.
 Ecological integrity: Moderate.
 Functional Integrity: Strong.

Sensitivity **High.**

Distinctiveness: Characteristic.
 Continuity: Ancient.
 Sense of Place: Strong.
 Landform: Dominant.
 Extent of tree cover: Enclosed.
 Visibility: Moderate.

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

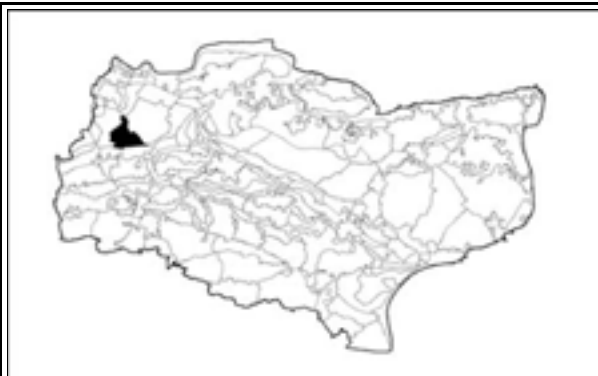
CONSERVE.

Conserve woodland
 Conserve and manage tall hedges on roadside
 Conserve the range of species in woodland and hedgerow
 Conserve pastures and irregular field patterns
 Conserve historic, isolated settlement

[previous <<](#)

Appendix 6 – 2b Eynsford and Horton kirby Down LCA

KINGSDOWN: WEST KENT DOWNS



KINGSDOWN

Kingsdown takes its name from having been part of a large pre-Norman Conquest royal estate, centred on the Darent Valley. In Kent "-down" or "-dun" implied thickly forested hills, indicating that at this time the area was heavily wooded. Today the southern part of this area still contains a considerable amount of formerly coppiced, mixed woodland and Scots pine, interspersed by small, irregular pastures and thick hedges. This results in an enclosed, intimate landscape, which succeeds in absorbing much of the bungalow development that has spread through the area. In the north, however, most of the former woodland has been lost, revealing rolling sweeps of downland and the chalky white soils of intensive arable cultivation.

There is considerable pressure in this area from suburbanisation. Many properties have long back gardens, which extend up the valley side or into the surrounding trees, resulting in a landscape of tiny smallholdings, horse pasture and "gardened" woodland. This has introduced a wide and disparate range of fences, sheds and ornamental conifers into the landscape, giving an inappropriate urban-edge feel to the area, reinforced by recreation developments, such as golf courses and caravan parks.

WEST KENT DOWNS

Kingsdown lies within the larger character area of the West Kent Downs.

The south-facing, chalk scarp between the Medway and the Darent provides a strong visual boundary, dividing the Kemsing Vale from the deep, dry valleys and wooded plateau of the West Kent Downs. This sense of separation is increased by the extensive tracts of ecologically valuable deciduous woodlands along the top of the scarp.

Woodland is very significant in this landscape, providing an important backdrop for the rolling landform, the network of small country lanes, the scattered settlements and the extensive valley pastures. In the east, around Luddesdown, the fields are contained by thick 'walls' of woodland, and strips of remnant coppice, or shaws, occur frequently along the steeper valley sides. Hidden away among the trees are several medieval buildings, such as Luddesdown Court, constructed from the local Kentish ragstone, while the villages of Vigo and West Kingsdown are set deep in the woodlands themselves.

The clay-with-flints soil on the plateau and ridge tops is reflected in the pasture and woodland dominating these areas; in the valleys, the extent of the finer silt soils is reflected by the predominance of arable cultivation. The downland becomes increasingly open in the north, where the intimate character of the scarp top gives way to a large-scale landscape of intensively farmed, rolling valleys and large blocks of deciduous woodland. West of Rochester, the mature woodlands and historic parkland of Cobham Hall are severed from the deciduous coppice woodlands of Shorne Wood Country Park by the busy A2 trunk road.

[next >>](#)

KINGSDOWN: WEST KENT DOWNS

PHOTOGRAPH



CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES

Rolling downland.
 Intensive arable cultivation in north with open fields of chalky-white soils.
 Enclosed, irregular pastures in south, thick coppice and mixed woodland.
 Suburbanisation, horseyculture and smallholdings.

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

Condition

This area of the Downs is considered to be in good condition, despite the detracting features associated with some amenity uses of the land and 20th century linear residential development of existing hamlets. The strong ecological value of the woodland and hedgerow network is reduced by the negative influence of the intensive arable cultivation in the north of the area, and is therefore considered to be moderate. However, in many areas, the landscape pattern is very strong and there is a maturity to the dense enclosures and other features, indicating the high functional and cultural integrity of the land use.

Sensitivity

The rolling landform is a dominant element in the view; but the tall, frequent enclosure reduces the visibility within the dominant landform to moderate.

20th century additions to the landscape, such as new housing and golf courses have added elements that do not contribute to the local distinctiveness. However, the historic and ancient landscape patterns remain the dominant elements in the wider countryside, and the sense of place and sensitivity remain strong.

LANDSCAPE ACTIONS

The dominance of broadleaf woodland in the area should be conserved. Conserve woodland as an edge to residential developments.
 Small-scale pastures and enclosures to be retained, and the use of small enclosed parcels of land to be monitored.
 Conserve the isolated nature of historic hamlets or cottages.
 Conserve roadside hedges, ensuring that they are consistently managed as tall hedges with standards
 Conserve the broad mix of species within hedgerow and woodland

CONTEXT

Regional: Kent Downs AONB

Condition

good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE
moderate	CREATE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & CREATE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
poor	CREATE	RESTORE & CREATE	RESTORE
	low	moderate	high

Sensitivity

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Condition **Very Good.**

Pattern of elements: Unified.
 Detracting features: Some.
 Visual Unity: Unified.
 Cultural integrity: Good.
 Ecological integrity: Moderate.
 Functional Integrity: Strong.

Sensitivity **High.**

Distinctiveness: Characteristic.
 Continuity: Ancient.
 Sense of Place: Strong.
 Landform: Dominant.
 Extent of tree cover: Enclosed.
 Visibility: Moderate.

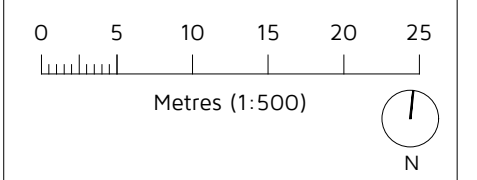
SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

CONSERVE.

Conserve woodland
 Conserve and manage tall hedges on roadside
 Conserve the range of species in woodland and hedgerow
 Conserve pastures and irregular field patterns
 Conserve historic, isolated settlement

[previous <<](#)

Appendix 7 – Illustrative Masterplan



- Site Area:** 0.6 Hectares
- Application Boundary
 - Existing Trees (*Not Surveyed*)
 - Proposed Trees

SCHEDULE OF ACCOMMODATION
(Circa.)

EXISTING

Footprint	GIA	Volume
782sqm	758sqm	6260cbm

(Ridge Height 8705mm, Eaves Height 7115mm)

PROPOSED

PLOT 1		
Footprint	GIA	Volume
235sqm	390sqm	1630cbm

PLOT 2		
Footprint	GIA	Volume
255sqm	420sqm	1730cbm

(Ridge Height 9735mm, Eaves Height 5550mm)

TOTAL PROPOSED

Footprint	GIA	Volume
490sqm (37% reduction)	810sqm	3630cbm (42% reduction)

NOTE: GIA's include space within car ports

Rev: Reason: Date:

Client:
HAWKSPARE LTD

Project:
THE BARN, UPPER AUSTIN LODGE ROAD
EYNSFORD, DARTFORD, DA4 0HU

Title:
ILLUSTRATIVE PROPOSED SITE LAYOUT PLAN

Drawing No: DHA/14625/12 Rev: Scale: 1:500 Date: SEPT 2020

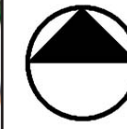
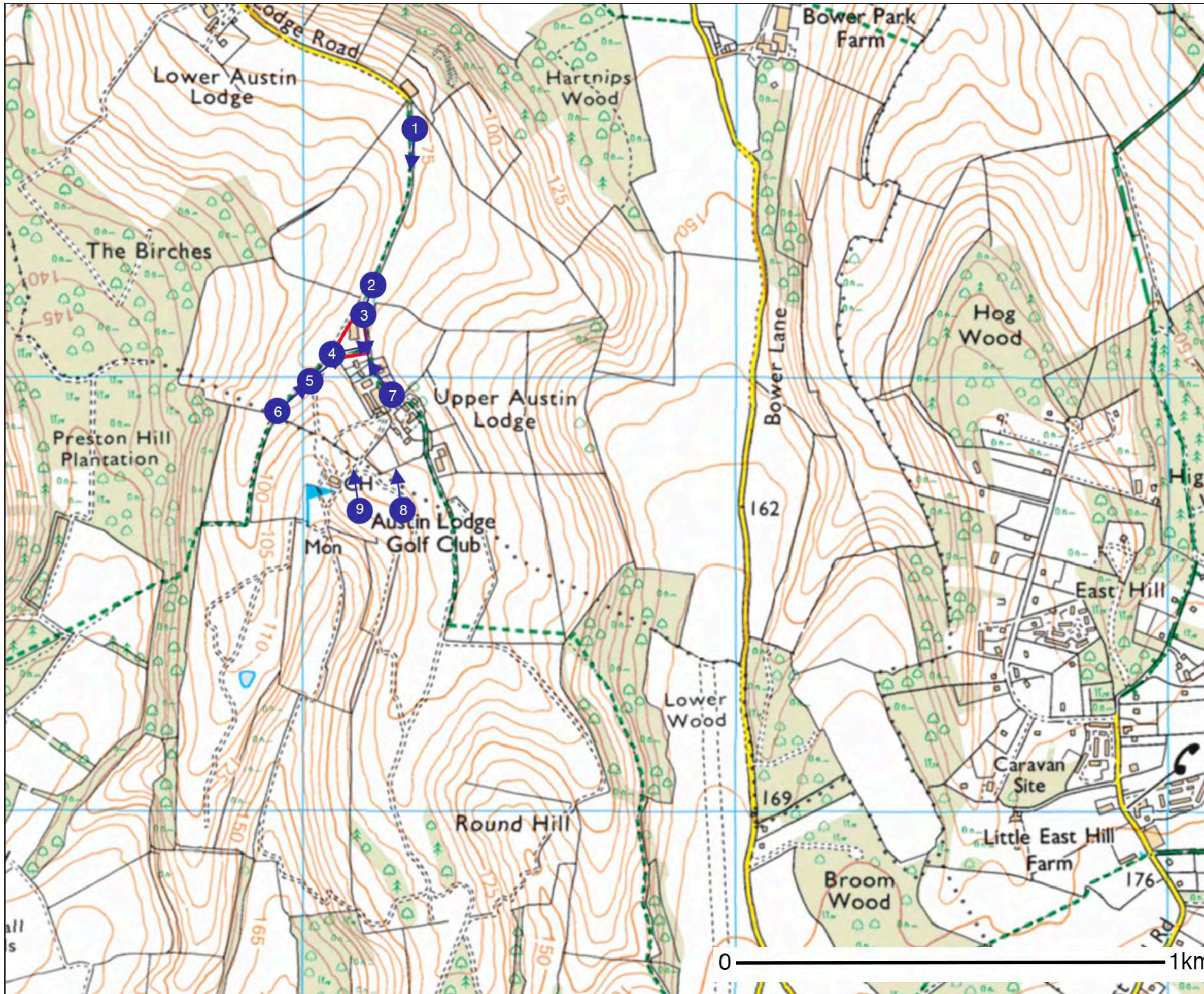


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Illustrative Proposed Site Layout Plan
1:500 @ A3

Appendix 8 – Viewpoint Location Plan



The site



DRAWING Viewpoint Location Plan			
PROJECT Upper Austin Lodge Farm			
CLIENT Hawkspace Limited			
SCALE As shown	DATE Jan. 2021	DRAWN SW	
DRAWING NUMBER BLA004 - 03		REVISION	

Appendix 9 – Representative Viewpoints



Viewpoint 1 - View looking south in direction of the site from Upper Austin Lodge Road

Single 'monocular' view - 390mm width x 260mm height when printed at A3 and viewed at 542mm



Approximate extent of site

Viewpoint 2 - Looking south towards northern apex of the site

Single 'monocular' view - 390mm width x 260mm height when printed at A3 and viewed at 542mm



Viewpoint 3 - looking south from Upper Austin Lodge Farm Road along the eastern site boundary

Single 'monocular' view - 390mm width x 260mm height when printed at A3 and viewed at 542mm



Approximate extent of site

Public right of way SD201

Viewpoint 4 - View looking east across the site from PRow SD201

Single 'monocular' view - 390mm width x 260mm height when printed at A3 and viewed at 542mm



Approximate extent of site

Public right of way SD201

Viewpoint 5 - View looking north-east from PRow SD201

Single 'monocular' view - 390mm width x 260mm height when printed at A3 and viewed at 542mm



Viewpoint 6 - View looking north from PRow SD201

Single 'monocular' view - 390mm width x 260mm height when printed at A3 and viewed at 542mm



Viewpoint 7 - View from Upper Austin Lodge Road looking north-west

Single 'monocular' view - 390mm width x 260mm height when printed at A3 and viewed at 542mm



Existing store barn

Viewpoint 8 - View looking north from permissive right of way

Single 'monocular' view - 390mm width x 260mm height when printed at A3 and viewed at 542mm



Fairways

Existing store barn

Viewpoint 9 - View looking north from permissive right of way close to Fairways (former club house)

Single 'monocular' view - 390mm width x 260mm height when printed at A3 and viewed at 542mm