

## **7.0. LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL IMPACT**

### **Introduction**

- 7.1 This chapter of the ES assesses the likely significant effects of the Proposed Development in terms of landscape and visual impact and is supported by Appendices 7.1, 7.2 and 7.3.
- 7.2 The chapter describes: the assessment methodology; the baseline conditions currently existing at the Application Site and in the surrounding area; the likely significant environmental effects; the mitigation measures required to prevent, reduce or offset any significant adverse effects; and the likely residual effects after these measures have been employed.
- 7.3 This chapter should be read in conjunction with Chapter 9 Historic Environment, Chapter 14 Lighting and Night Time Assessment and Appendix 6.2 Arboricultural Report.

### **Legislation, Policy and Guidance**

- 7.4 This section addresses the planning context of the Application Site and the Proposed Development in relation to policies relevant to determining the potential impacts and effects of the Proposed Development on the quality, condition and character of the landscape, and on the visual amenity of sensitive visual receptors.

### ***National Planning Guidance***

- 7.5 The NPPF<sup>1</sup> aims to provide a planning framework within which the local community and local authorities can produce distinctive local plans which respond to local needs and priorities.
- 7.6 The NPPF confirms the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. In defining sustainable development, the NPPF considers there to be three key dimensions: economic, social and

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<sup>1</sup> Department for Communities and Local Government (2012). National Planning Policy Framework.

environmental. These roles should not be undertaken in isolation, because they are mutually dependent.

- 7.7 Twelve Core Planning Principles are set out at Paragraph 17, of which the following are relevant to landscape and visual matters, stating that planning should:

*‘...Not simply be about scrutiny, but instead be a creative exercise in finding ways to enhance and improve the places in which people live their lives;*

*Always seek to secure high quality design and a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings;*

*Take account of the different roles and character of different areas, promoting the vitality of our main urban areas, protecting the Green Belts around them, recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and supporting thriving rural communities within it;*

*Contribute to conserving and enhancing the natural environment and reducing pollution. Allocations of land for development should prefer land of lesser environmental value, where consistent with other policies in this Framework; and*

*Promote mixed use developments, and encourage multiple benefits from the use of land in urban and rural areas, recognising that some open land can perform many functions (such as for wildlife, recreation, flood risk mitigation, carbon storage or food production).’*

- 7.8 The NPPF then identifies 13 aspects which should be considered in developing local plans and reviewing planning applications. Those of relevance to landscape and visual considerations of the application site and proposed development include Section 7: Requiring good design. Paragraph 58 states that planning policies and decisions should aim to ensure that developments, inter alia:

*‘...Establish a strong sense of place...respond to local character and history, and reflect the identity of local surroundings...are visually attractive as a result of good architecture and appropriate landscaping.’*

- 7.9 Paragraph 61 states that:

*‘Planning policies and decisions should address the connections between people and places and the integration of new development into the natural, built and historic environment.’*

- 7.10 Section 11: Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment notes in paragraph 109 that the planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by *‘protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, geological conservation interests and soils’*.
- 7.11 Paragraph 110 sets out that, in preparing plans for development, the aim should be to minimise adverse effects on the local and natural environment, and that plans should allocate land with the least environmental or amenity value.
- 7.12 Paragraph 113 notes that distinction should be made between the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites so that protection is commensurate with the status and gives appropriate weight to their importance and the contribution that they make to wider ecological networks.
- 7.13 Paragraph 114 notes that furthermore, local planning authorities should:
- ‘set out a strategic approach in their Local Plans, planning positively for the creation, protection, enhancement and management of networks of biodiversity and green infrastructure.’*

### ***Planning Practice Guidance***

- 7.14 The landscape section of the Planning Practice Guidance: Natural Environment<sup>2</sup> supports the use of landscape character assessment as a tool for understanding the character and local distinctiveness of the landscape and identifying the features that give it a sense of place, as a means to informing, planning and managing change. The Planning Practice Guidance makes reference to Natural England guidance on landscape character assessment which is explored in this assessment.

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<sup>2</sup> Department for Communities and Local Government (January 2016) Planning Practice Guidance Natural Environment  
Reference ID: 8-001-20140306

- 7.15 Paragraphs 027 and 28 within the Green Infrastructure section of the Planning Practice Guidance state that green infrastructure is a network of multifunctional green space and is important to the delivery of high quality sustainable development, and provide multiple benefits. Paragraph 30 states that green infrastructure should be well designed to create a sense of place by responding to local landscape character, and help create safe and accessible environments and regeneration of brownfield sites in existing built up areas.

### ***Local Planning Policy***

- 7.16 Maidstone Borough Council (MBC) is part way through its new local plan process. Certain policies have been retained from the 2000 Borough Wide Local Plan<sup>3</sup> and these will be gradually replaced by those within the emerging local plan. The relevant policies are described below in more detail.

#### *Maidstone Borough Wide Local Plan (2000) Saved Policies*

- 7.17 The following saved policies within Maidstone Borough Wide Local Plan are considered relevant to this assessment
- Policy ENV6 relates to the preparation of planting schemes for new developments and states that schemes should incorporate existing trees and hedgerows, as well as planting new trees and hedgerows
  - Policy ENV21 states that development must not harm the character, appearance and functioning of strategic routes within the borough;
  - Policy ENV28 states that development in the countryside must not harm the character and appearance of the area;
  - Policy ENV33 relates to the Kent Downs AONB but only development which occurs within its boundary and therefore this policy is not applicable to the Proposed Development;
  - Policy ENV34 relates to the Special Landscape Area (SLA), which still exists as a policy designation, despite the demise of the Kent Structure Plan; and
  - Policy ENV49 relates to external lighting and states that such lighting must not adversely impact upon the wider landscape setting.

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<sup>3</sup> Maidstone Borough Council (2000). Maidstone Borough Wide Local Plan 2000. URL

*Maidstone Borough Local Plan Publication (Regulation 19) (Feb 2016) with Proposed Main Modifications (March 2017)*

7.18 The Spatial Vision within the emerging Local Plan<sup>4</sup> states that, by 2031:

*'3. Maidstone town will be an enhanced vibrant, prosperous and sustainable community benefiting from an exceptional urban and rural environment with a vital and viable town centre;*

*6. The distinctive character of the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and its setting and the setting of the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, together with the landscape quality of the Areas of Local Landscape Value and the openness of the Metropolitan Green Belt, will be rigorously conserved, maintained and enhanced...'*

7.19 The Spatial Objectives for the Borough include the following:

*'6. To safeguard and maintain the character of the borough's landscapes including the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and its setting, the setting of the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and other distinctive landscapes of local value whilst facilitating the economic and social well-being of these areas including the diversification of the rural economy;*

*7. To retain and enhance the character of the existing green and blue infrastructure and to promote linkages between areas of environmental value;*

*9. To ensure that new development is of high quality design, making a positive contribution to the area including protection of built and natural heritage and biodiversity...'*

7.20 The following policies, updated as per the Main Modifications (March 2017), are considered relevant to this assessment.

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<sup>4</sup> Maidstone Borough Council (2016). Maidstone Borough Local Plan Publication (Regulation 19) with Proposed Main Modifications (March 2017)

- 7.21 Policy SS1 Part 10 states *'The green and blue network of multi-functional open spaces, rivers and water courses, the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and its setting, the setting of the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and landscapes of local value will be conserved and enhanced'*.
- 7.22 Policy SP 17: 'The Countryside' states that *'Development proposals in the countryside will not be permitted unless they...will not result in harm to the character and appearance of the area.'* It goes on to state that *'Great weight should be given to the conservation and enhancement of the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty'* and that *'The distinctive landscape character of the Greensand Ridge, Medway Valley, Len Valley, Loose Valley, and Low Weald as defined on the policies map, will be conserved and enhanced as landscapes of local value.'* The Policy also states that development within the countryside must maintain the separation of settlements and that it should take into account the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan and the Maidstone Borough Landscape Character Guidelines supplementary planning document'.
- 7.23 Policy SP 18 – 'the Historic Environment' states that the Council will seek to protect the heritage assets of the Borough *'to ensure their continued contribution to the quality of life in Maidstone borough'*.
- 7.24 Policy EMP1(4): 'Woodcut Farm, Ashford Road, Bearsted' relates specifically to the Application Site and sets out a number of design principles with which any development within the Site should accord. These include the following:
- The creation of a *'spacious parkland setting for development through the addition of substantial internal landscaping which will be sympathetic to the site's countryside context and which will help to break up the visual appearance of the development including parking areas in particular in views from the AONB including through the use of substantial tracts of planting extending into the body of the development to achieve clear visual separation between individual buildings and between parking areas; buildings will cover not more than 40% of the developed site area'*;
  - The development must *'respect the topography of the site by minimising the need for site excavation'*;

- A new woodland shall as part of a 35m landscape buffer must be established along the site's boundary to the M20, a 15m buffer must be established along the boundary to Musket Lane, 25m to the A20 including a planted bund and at least a 30m buffer on the western boundary. Structural landscaping within the development should be at least 15m in width;
- A 9ha area of open space will be secured as an additional buffer of at least 30m along the eastern boundary and will be planted as open woodland;
- Large buildings will be located in the field to the east of the stream with ridge heights no taller than 12m and located end on to the AONB to reduce visual impact;
- Smaller units must be accommodated within the field to the west of the stream with graded building heights to take account of the varying topography within the Application Site and to reduce impact upon the setting of Woodcut Farm;
- Development must be designed to limit visual impact including *'through the use of curved roofs on buildings, non-reflective materials, sensitive colouring, green roofs and walls on smaller footprint buildings (500sqm and below), and sensitive lighting proposals. Buildings should include active frontage elements incorporating glazing, and address both the A20 and M20.'*
- The development must be designed to take into account the results of an LVIA and the assessment should specifically address the impact of development on views from the Kent Downs AONB escarpment and will *'include environmental enhancements of the wider landscape beyond the allocation boundaries through financial contributions using the mechanism of a S106 agreement'*.

7.25 Policy DM 1: 'Principles of good design' states that development will be permitted if it responds *'positively to and where possible enhance, the local, natural or historic character of the area. Particular regard will be paid to scale, height, materials, detailing, mass, bulk, articulation and site coverage - incorporating a high quality, modern design approach and making use of vernacular materials where appropriate'*. Development must also *'respect the topography and respond to the location of the site and sensitively incorporate natural features such as trees, hedges and ponds worthy of retention within the site. Particular attention should be paid in rural and semi-rural areas where the retention and addition of native vegetation along the site frontage should be used as positive tool to help assimilate development in a manner which reflects and respects the local and natural character of the area'*. Development must respond to *'areas of heritage, townscape and landscape value or uplifts an area*

*of poor environmental quality’ and must take into account ‘Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plans, Character Area Assessments, the Maidstone Borough Landscape Character Guidelines SPD, the Kent Design Guide and the Kent Downs Area of Natural Beauty Management Plan.’*

- 7.26 Policy DM 3: ‘Natural environment’ states that new development must protect and enhance the historic and natural environment by protecting *‘positive historic and landscape character, heritage assets and their settings, areas of Ancient Woodland, veteran trees, trees with significant amenity value, important hedgerows, features of biological or geological interest, and the existing public rights of way network’*. Development must protect and enhance biodiversity habitats and must *‘provide for the long term maintenance and management of all heritage and natural assets, including landscape character, associated with the development’*. Development must contribute to the improvement of accessibility of natural green space and creating a network of links between green and blue space. Development must *‘protect and enhance the character, distinctiveness, diversity and quality of Maidstone’s landscape and townscape by the careful, sensitive management and design of development.’* Development will also be expected to appraise the value of the borough’s natural environment through the provision of *‘a landscape and visual impact assessment to take full account of the significance of, and potential effects of change on, the landscape as an environmental resource together with views and visual amenity.... Account should be taken of the Landscape Character Guidelines SPD, the Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy and the Kent Downs AONB Management Plan’*.
- 7.27 Policy SP23: ‘Sustainable transport’ states that development must protect and enhance public rights of way.
- 7.28 Policy DM 30: ‘Design principles in the countryside’ states that new development outside the settlement boundaries must *‘conserve and enhance the landscape and scenic beauty of the Kent Downs AONB and its setting... outside of the Kent Downs AONB, not result in harm to the identified landscapes of local value, landscapes which have been shown to have a low capacity to accommodate change, and in all other locations respect the landscape character of the locality’* and *‘outside the Kent Downs AONB, not result in harm to landscape of highest value and respect the landscape character of the locality.’* It goes on to state that account should be taken



of the Kent Downs AONB Management Plan and the Maidstone Borough Landscape Character Guidelines SPD.

## **Assessment Methodology and Significance Criteria**

### ***Guidance and Approach***

7.29 The assessment methodology has been informed and guided by the following key texts:

- The Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment, Third Edition, 2013. Guidance for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment<sup>5</sup>;
- Natural England, 2014. An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment<sup>6</sup>; and
- Landscape Institute Advice Note 01/11. Photography and Photomontage in Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment<sup>7</sup>;

7.30 Landscape and visual assessments are independent but are concerned with related issues. Landscape assessment identifies changes to the physical landscape whereas visual assessment relates to the interrelated effects on people and their views.

7.31 Landscape effects derive from changes to the physical landscape of discrete character areas and/or character types comprising features possessing a particular quality or merit, which may lead to changes in its character and how it is experienced and, hence, may in turn affect its perceived value. Visual effects relate to changes that arise in the composition of available views.

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<sup>5</sup> The Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (2013) Guidance for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Third Edition.

<sup>6</sup> Natural England (2014) An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment

<sup>7</sup> Landscape Institute (date unknown) Advice Note 01/11. Photography and Photomontage in Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment

## ***Assumptions***

### *Landscape Design Scheme*

- 7.32 A strategic planting strategy has been evolved for the Application Site, involving a variety of landscape types, including forestry planting belts, specimen trees in parkland, hedgerows, avenue tree planting, grassland areas and wetland planting. Further details of the proposed landscape masterplan and recommendations for the type of planting are included within the mitigation section and are shown on the 'Proposed Landscape Masterplan', as shown in Appendix 7.3.
- 7.33 The initial assessment has been undertaken without planting considered (year 0) in order to present a 'worst-case scenario' but the residual impacts and effects after mitigation has been implemented (year 10-15) are assessed within the 'residual effects' section of this chapter.

### *Changes to Topography*

- 7.34 For the Application Site to accommodate the proposed buildings and supporting infrastructure, such as roads, existing ground levels on the Application Site, which are sloping, will be altered by 'cut and fill' to create a level platforms prior to construction. The extent and depth of the proposed changes in level across the Application Site are shown on Figure 4.7a.

### *Views from the M20*

- 7.35 There is no representative image for the view from the M20. For reasons of health and safety, capturing photographic views from the hard shoulder of the M20 was not possible as part of the baseline assessment work. It was also not possible to publish Google Street View images in print due to data protection and copyright laws and the possibility that such an image could become quickly be out of date.
- 7.36 Regardless of the above, the nature of the viewing experience from sections of the M20 to the north of the Application Site is one of a succession of views, gained from a moving vehicle. A single two-dimensional image or photo cannot, therefore,

accurately represent this viewing experience which would need to be visited in person by the relevant decision makers under appropriate conditions.

- 7.37 The views from the M20 are referred to as such and are not given a specific viewpoint number.

*Other Assumptions*

- 7.38 The initial appraisal was undertaken between January and March 2015 for the Original Scheme (LPA Ref: 15/503288/OUT) when there was no foliage on the trees and shrubs in the area. Additional viewpoints, numbers 11-14, were assessed between September and November 2015 as a result of consultation with MBC. Further assessment of all 14 viewpoints was undertaken again in March 2017 to understand any changes within the baseline that has occurred in the intervening time. Photographs and the assessment were undertaken during the best weather conditions possible. However, it should be noted that any assessment is undertaken on site as opposed to using photographic views. Despite guidance on how such photographs are taken, they are intended to be illustrative and are not meant to replace the experience of visiting the viewpoint in person.
- 7.39 It is not possible or practicable to assess the Zone of Visual Influence of the Application Site from every part of the local area. Narrowing the assessment to a series of representative viewpoints is generally considered to be sufficient to fulfil these tasks. The 14 viewpoints identified were agreed with MBC and include four viewpoints requested by Natural England.
- 7.40 This assessment is concerned purely with the scale, massing, colour and setting of the proposed buildings. The only references to architectural style are in relation to townscape assessment where homogeneity or variety in architectural style may be a contributing factor towards townscape character.
- 7.41 It was not possible or practicable to enter each of the residences identified within the assessment and therefore assessment of impacts upon these receptors are made using professional judgement. Reference is made to impacts upon residences immediately adjacent to the Application Site but the effects will vary between properties depending on orientation and intervening vegetation.

### ***Baseline Studies***

- 7.42 The purpose of the baseline studies is to record and analyse the existing landscape features, characteristics, the way the landscape is experienced and the value or importance of the landscape and visual resources in the vicinity of the Proposed Development and to identify receptors to change.

#### *Establishing the Study Area*

- 7.43 A study area of approximately 3-4km radius from the Application Site has been chosen. This broad study area has been selected because the proposed buildings would be located on relatively low land to the south of the North Downs escarpment, which offers elevated views over a wide area.
- 7.44 The study area for this assessment is shown in Figure 7.1, Appendix 7.1. Areas have then been scoped out to the extent of the landscape character areas demonstrated on Figures 7.6-7.8 inclusive and the Assessment of Viewpoint Origins diagram shown on Figure 7.9 in Appendix 7.1.
- 7.45 It is not possible or practicable to assess the potential visual impact of a potential development from every part of the local area. The purposes of the LVIA are to identify significant effects that may arise from the Proposed Development. Narrowing the assessment to a series of publicly accessible representative viewpoints, in this case agreed with MBC for the Original Scheme<sup>8</sup>, is reflective of standard and best practice within the industry and is considered sufficient to assess the potential visual impact of the Proposed Development. A Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) modelling exercise was undertaken to help identify any viewpoints on which effects may occur. This is shown on Figure 7.10 in Appendix 7.1.

#### *Desktop Study*

- 7.46 A brief description of the existing land use of the area is provided which includes reference to existing settlement, transport routes and vegetation cover, as well as local landscape designations, elements of cultural and heritage value and local

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<sup>8</sup> Due to the similarities between the Original Scheme and the Proposed Development the viewpoints agreed for the Original Scheme have been also used in this assessment.

landmarks or tourist destinations. Analysis is also made of the available published character information which is then compared to the experience when visiting the area. These factors combine to provide an understanding of landscape value and sensitivity, and an indication of key views and viewpoints that are available to visual receptors and therefore are to be included in the visual assessment. A ZTV modelling exercise was also undertaken and is included in Figure 7.10 in Appendix 7.1.

#### Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) model

- 7.47 ZTV models display the worst-case scenario presented by a proposal. The model included in Figure 7.10 in Appendix 7.1 takes into account areas of woodland and significant tree belts, but does not take into account localised features and the reduced contrast in long distance views caused by atmospheric conditions as they are based on 'bare-earth' data, i.e. without trees or shrubs. ZTV models are intended to be used for comparative analysis, to help scope out areas from which the Proposed Development is not visible and for the identification of individual viewpoints which may merit on-site investigation. The Proposed Development may not be visible from all areas indicated within the ZTV model. However, the areas from which the Proposed Development is shown to not be visible are likely to be accurate.
- 7.48 The model was created using Global Mapper v17.0 and using a terrain model created from OS Terrain 5 data. A representative beacon point of 68.2m AOD high was placed within the centre of the Application Site to represent the highest point of the Proposed Development. Built development blocks were plotted into the model at a height of 7.5m and woodland and tree belts were shown at a height of 10m. The receiver height was calculated at 1.6m which is taken to be an average eye height and is standard in the industry.

#### *Field Study*

- 7.49 Information collated in the desktop study is checked and confirmed by direct field observations, particularly in urban and urban fringe areas where map and aerial data can be out of date. Observations are made from selected representative viewpoints across the study area.

*Baseline Photography & Accurate Verified Representations (AVRs)*

- 7.50 Baseline photography and production of Accurate Verified Representations (AVRs), undertaken to level 3, i.e. fully rendered, were undertaken by a specialist visualisation consultant, Realm Communications. Copies of the AVRs and details of methodology for this work is included in Appendix 7.2.

**Assessment Methodology**

- 7.51 The purpose of Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) is to identify significant adverse effects which may arise from the Proposed Development and to then identify methods to mitigate against those effects. Significance of effects is a product of the sensitivity of receptors against the magnitude of predicted impacts. The term 'significance' is defined in the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment 2013 as '*a measure of the importance or gravity of the environmental effect, defined by significance criteria specific to the environmental topic*'. For the purposes of this assessment, therefore, 'significant' effects are those which are assessed to be of 'major' or 'major/moderate' significance as defined in Table 7.5.

*Receptor*

- 7.52 A receptor is anything which may be impacted upon by the Proposed Development. For the purposes of landscape assessment, it may include individual elements (e.g. hedgerows and trees), wider patterns (e.g. field patterns) or character (made up through the unique combination of elements and patterns within a particular area). These are referred to as 'landscape receptors'. For the purposes of visual assessment, a receptor is any person who may be able to experience a view. These are referred to as 'visual receptors'.

*Sensitivity (of Receptors), Susceptibility and Value*

- 7.53 The sensitivity of a receptor is based upon two key elements: its value and its susceptibility to the type of development proposed. Consistent with GLVIA guidelines, the sensitivity of the receptor is assessed using professional judgement. However, tables have been used to form the basis for this assessment and to create

some consistency throughout the assessment process. Criteria used to assess value, susceptibility and sensitivity are included in Tables 7.1- 7.3 below.

### Susceptibility

- 7.54 The susceptibility of a receptor is a measure of its vulnerability to the type of development proposed without undue consequences for the maintenance of the baseline situation. Landscape character/features/views of low susceptibility would have a high capacity to accommodate change, and landscape character/features/views of high susceptibility would have a low capacity to accommodate change.
- 7.55 The following criteria have been taken into consideration in the assessment of the susceptibility of landscape character, although not all criteria are equally applicable or important within a given landscape / type of development proposed:
- Landform;
  - Pattern/Complexity;
  - Composition;
  - Landcover;
  - Relationship of a given landscape area to existing settlements or developments; and
  - Potential for appropriate mitigation within the context of existing character and guidelines.
- 7.56 With regard to landscape features, susceptibility relates to the potential for loss/retention of the relevant features in relation to the type of development proposed (for example trees within a site are potentially highly susceptible to construction of an industrial shed, where they might not be to construction of residential units, as the latter provides more scope to mitigate by design); and the facility with which such elements may be replaced, where appropriate.
- 7.57 The susceptibility of visual receptors relates to both the type of development proposed, as set out above, in combination with the activity that the person is undertaking. For example, a person who is using rights of way may be considered to

be more susceptible to a change in the view than someone who is concentrating at their place of work.

**Table 7.1: Susceptibility of Receptors**

Susceptibility	Typical Classification
High	<p>The Proposed Development will be notably inappropriate to its context in terms of scale, use or design.</p> <p>People at their place of residence.</p> <p>People engaged in outdoor recreation, including users of Public Rights of Way (PRoW), whose attention is likely to be focused on the landscape.</p> <p>People travelling along recognised scenic routes or where their appreciation of the view contributes to the amenity experience of their journey.</p>
Medium	<p>The Proposed Development will be somewhat out of context in terms of scale, use or design.</p> <p>People engaged in outdoor sport and recreation, where their appreciation of their surroundings is incidental to their enjoyment.</p> <p>People travelling on secondary roads or country lanes, rail or other transport routes.</p>
Low	<p>The Proposed Development will be mainly appropriate to its context in terms of scale, use or design.</p> <p>People travelling on major roads.</p> <p>People at their place of work.</p>

Value

7.58 The assessment of value is based on a combination of the following attributes:

- Quality (condition): the measure of the physical state of the landscape or the view. It may include the extent to which typical landscape character is represented in individual areas, the intactness of the landscape and the condition of individual elements.
- Scenic quality: the extent that the landscape receptor appeals to the visual senses;
- Perceptual aspects: the extent that the landscape receptor is recognised for its perceptual qualities (e.g. remoteness or tranquillity);
- Rarity: the presence of unusual elements or features;
- Representativeness: the presence of particularly characteristic features;



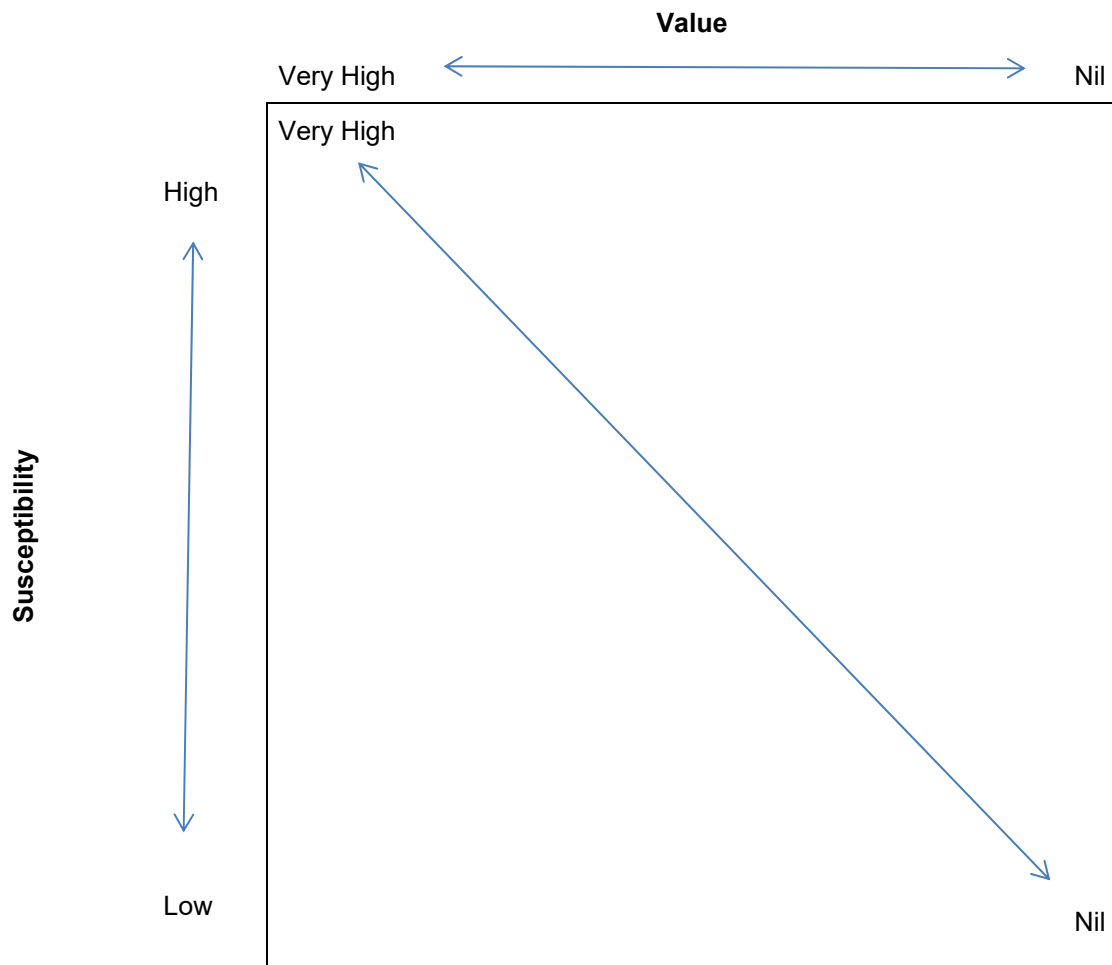
- Recreation: the extent that recreational activities contribute to the landscape receptor; and
- Association: the extent that cultural or historical associations contribute to the landscape receptor.

7.59 Landscapes, including their character and features, may be designated for their landscape and visual qualities at a range of levels (national, county and local level), in accordance with Paragraph 113 of the NPPF, and this has been taken into account in the assessment.

**Table 7.2: Value of Receptors**

Value	Typical Classification
Very High	International, National and Regional protected landscapes and features such as World Heritage Sites, National Parks, AONB, the setting of a scheduled Monument or Grade 1 listed building, or views from within them. Recognised strategic views.
High	District or Borough level protected landscapes and features such as Conservation Areas, local landscape designations, protected Public Open Space or the setting of a Grade 2 listed building, or views from within them. Tourist attractions.
Medium	Landscape area of common components and characteristics which may be designated at county or borough level for its landscape and visual qualities. A landscape feature which makes some positive contribution to landscape character.
Low	Landscape area/feature of inconsequential components and characteristics, undesignated and with little or no wider recognition of value, although potentially of importance to the local community.
Negligible	Landscape area or feature that is undesignated and providing no positive contribution to the landscape.

**Table 7.3 Sensitivity of Receptors**



*Magnitude (of impact), Scale, Extent and Duration*

7.60 The magnitude of impact, also referred to as the magnitude of change, relates to the physical impact of the development on the receiving landscape or view. Magnitude is determined from a balance of the scale of the change (i.e. how much of the receptor is impacted upon), the geographical extent (i.e. over how big an area the effect is experienced) and the duration (i.e. if it is a temporary change or permanent). For example, a development which obscured the entirety of the view would be considered to create a greater impact than one which made a small intrusion; a temporary development would have a lower magnitude of impact than one which was permanent. Magnitude is determined through a professional judgement of these issues balanced against each other for each identified receptor.

7.61 For visual assessment, the magnitude may also be affected by the type of impact upon the view, i.e. whether the Proposed Development intrudes into the view or

obstructs it. Developments which obstruct views rather than intrude into them are often considered to have a comparatively higher magnitude of impact.

7.62 Magnitude is determined through professional judgement of all of the factors identified above but tables are used to provide guidance and consistency. Criteria for assessing magnitude of impacts are identified in Table 7.4 below.

**Table 7.4: Magnitude of Change Classification**

Magnitude	Typical Criteria
High	Landscape: Total loss of, addition or major alteration to key elements/features/characteristics of the existing landscape. Views: Development becomes dominant/significant feature in the view. Development experienced over a wide extent and/or Development is permanent and/or Development is irreversible
Medium	Landscape: Partial loss of, addition or alteration to one or more key elements/features/characteristics of the existing landscape. Views: Development forms a recognisable new element in the view.
Low	Landscape: Minor loss of, addition or alteration to one or more key elements/features/characteristics of the existing landscape. Views: Development is only a minor component of the view.
Negligible	Landscape: Very minor loss of, or alteration to or addition of one or more elements /features/ characteristics of the existing landscape. Views: Only a small part of the development is discernible, having little effect on the view. Development experienced over an extremely limited extent and/or Development is temporary and/or Development is reversible
No Change	The Proposed Development will make no change to the receiving view or landscape.

*Significance (of effect)*

7.63 The significance of the effect is the product of the sensitivity of the identified receptor balanced against the magnitude of the impact. The determination of the sensitivity of the receptor balanced against the magnitude of the impact to determine the significance of the resulting effect is undertaken using professional judgement. However, a matrix is used as a guideline to ensure consistency. Where deviation is

made from the results of the matrix, an explanation will be given. Table 7.5 below provides a matrix for determining significance of effects.

**Table 7.5: Significance of Effects**

		<b>Magnitude of Change</b> This lies along a continuum from high to no change, with an area of overlap between each defined category.				
		High	Medium	Low	Negligible	No Change
<b>Sensitivity to Change</b> This lies along a continuum from very high to negligible, with an area of overlap between each defined category.	Very High	Major	Major	Moderate	Negligible	Nil
			Moderate			
	High	Major	Moderate	Moderate	Negligible	Nil
		Moderate		Minor		
	Medium	Moderate	Moderate	Minor	Negligible	Nil
			Minor			
	Low	Minor	Minor	Negligible	Negligible	Nil
Negligible						
Negligible	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible	Nil	
Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	

Note: The above matrix is provided as a general guide only; the significance in any specific situation will be based upon professional judgement, and will take into account all relevant identified factors.

*Nature (of effect)*

- 7.64 Magnitude does not reflect whether the predicted impact is beneficial or adverse and therefore neither does the significance. Impacts and effects may be beneficial, neutral or adverse or may have elements of more than one.

*Mitigation*

- 7.65 The key purpose of EIA is to identify likely significant adverse effects so that they can be mitigated against. Mitigation is described as measures to reduce, remedy or offset the identified effects with reduction and remedy being the preferred options. As design is an iterative process, mitigation measures may be incorporated into the scheme as the project progresses and form part of the final proposals. Assessment is undertaken without mitigation measures implemented beyond those incorporated directly into the Propsoed Development, taken to be year 0. Assessment with mitigation, i.e. once planting has matured is taken to be year 10-15.

### *Residual Effects*

- 7.66 It is not always possible to mitigate against all adverse effects identified within the assessment. Once mitigation measures have been taken into account, the adverse effects are reassessed to determine any remaining residual effects.

### **Baseline Conditions**

- 7.67 The location and extent of the Application Site is shown in Figure 7.1, Appendix 7.1.
- 7.68 The Application Site comprises two arable fields to the immediate south-west of Junction 8 of the M20 motorway. The two fields are separated by a stream with associated tree and shrub planting. The northern boundary of the Application Site is defined by the embankment of the M20, with the HS1 rail link running parallel and just to the north east of the motorway. The western boundary is formed by a series of field boundaries and part of the curtilage of Woodcut Farm. The majority of the southern boundary is marked by a native hedgerow running alongside the A20, save for the stretches which pass around the northern edge of the curtilages of residential and commercial properties fronting the A20. The western boundary is partially formed by Musket Lane, a dirt track bordered by native hedgerows, running north-east from the A20 Ashford Road.
- 7.69 The Site contains 30 individual trees, 13 groups and 1 area of woodland. Further details are included within Appendix 6.2 Arboricultural Report. Of these, none are classified as grade A. Thirteen trees, four groups and one wooded area have been categorised as B grade trees of moderate quality and value, while 15 individual trees and nine groups have been categorised as C grade trees of low quality and value. In addition, two trees have been categorised as U grade tree which should be removed for reasons of sound arboricultural management. The categories are explained in Appendix 6.2.
- 7.70 Additional areas of land are included and identified in blue on Figure 7.1 in Appendix 7.1. These areas have been identified for additional parkland planting to enhance and restore local landscape character.

7.71 Typical urban fringe development occurs in the area with land uses such as the nearby Bearsted Caravan Club, Biffa depot, car wash and used car sales forecourt. Maidstone Motorway Service Area is located to the north of the M20 / A20 junction. This development is surrounded by dense planting. Despite these urban fringe developments, the area still retains some rural character, particularly to the east. To the north, these rural characteristics become heavily influenced by the impact of the M20 motorway, which is elevated above the Application Site on a substantial embankment. The motorway traffic, local traffic on the A20 Ashford Road and frequent trains passing along the HS1 rail link combine to create noise and movement on these site boundaries which is experienced across the entire Application Site, resulting in a distinct lack of tranquillity. To the west, land uses become more typical of the urban edge, with private residential plots close to agricultural structures at Woodcut Farm. The Application Site is located close to the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and within the North Downs Special Landscape Area (SLA) and close to the Len Valley Landscape of Local Value, and impacts upon the designated landscape are a key issue explored within this assessment.

### ***Topography***

7.72 The general topography of the Application Site and study area is shown in Figure 7.2, Appendix 7.1.

7.73 The Application Site is located in the valley of the River Medway and the River Len, a tributary of the Medway. The river valley is located at approximately 20-40m AOD (Above Ordnance Datum). To the north, the land rises up to approximately 200m AOD along the ridgeline of the North Downs. The resulting effect is that views towards the Application Site are generally from higher ground from where it is viewed within its wider context.

7.74 To the south, the land rises up to the Greensand Ridge which also offers elevated views over the local countryside and towards the Kent Downs AONB. However, the ground is more undulating to the south and views are generally more filtered and glimpsed as a result of localised changes in landform and vegetation patterns.

7.75 The Application Site slopes steeply down from 68m above Ordnance Datum (AOD) at the main complex at Woodcut Farm in the north-west which is on a plateau of

higher ground, south-eastwards towards a watercourse that flows through the Application Site approximately 200m from the north-western Application Site boundary at 50 to 53m AOD. The land then rises more gently south-east of the stream to 58m AOD in the north-eastern corner of the Application Site. There is also a gentle rise in the land from the A20 Ashford Road northwards towards the elevated M20.

### ***Protected / Designated Areas***

- 7.76 The relevant protected and designated landscape areas within the study area are shown in Figure 7.3, Appendix 7.1
- 7.77 This information has been taken from MAGIC<sup>9</sup> and Kent County Council's 'Explore Kent' interactive website<sup>10</sup>. It indicates that there are sites of historic and landscape importance in proximity to or adjoining the Application Site.

### ***Landscape Designations***

- 7.78 The most important landscape designation in proximity to the Application Site is the Kent Downs AONB. This designation includes land north of the M20/HS1 corridor. The Application Site is not within the AONB designation, but forms part of the setting of the AONB. Consequently, views towards and from the Kent Downs AONB are considered within the visual appraisal.
- 7.79 In the Maidstone Borough Local Plan (2000), the area of the Application Site is included within an area designated as a Special Landscape Area (SLA). This is a dated policy surviving from the Kent Structure Plan, which is no longer in existence. Far less weight is therefore attached to this local policy than the national AONB policy. The Application Site is also located close to the Len Valley Landscape of Local Value within the emerging Local Plan.
- 7.80 There are ancient woodlands to the north, particularly within the Kent Downs AONB. None of these will be physically impacted upon by the Proposed Development. There are two Tree Preservation Orders covering within the Site, the first covering all of the

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<sup>9</sup> [www.magic.gov.uk](http://www.magic.gov.uk)

<sup>10</sup> <http://webapps.kent.gov.uk/KCC.ExploreKent.Web.Sites.Public/Default.aspx>

trees within the field to the north-west of Woodcut Farm, and the second comprising the trees along Musket Lane. In total, these comprises 18 individual trees, two groups and an area of woodland. These are detailed within the Arboricultural Impact Assessment in Appendix 6.2. No trees covered by a TPO are to be removed as part of the proposals.

#### *Historic Designations*

- 7.81 There are eight historic parklands within the study area and these are marked on Figure 7.4, Appendix 7.1. The closest of these is the Grade II\* Parkland of Leeds Castle which is located approximately 1.5km to the south east of the Application Site. Although the Proposed Development will not physically impact upon the Leeds Castle's grounds, views from the area are considered within the visual assessment.
- 7.82 There are five Scheduled Monuments located within the study area but none of these will be physically impacted upon by the Proposed Development. Thurnham Castle Scheduled Monument is located approximately 3km to the north west on the edge of the North Downs escarpment and within the Kent Downs AONB. Views from Thurnham Castle and its setting are considered within the visual assessment.
- 7.83 There are also ten Conservation Areas within the study area but the Proposed Development will not physically impact upon these and therefore they have been scoped out of this assessment.
- 7.84 There is also a high density of listed buildings within the area. The nearest of these to the Application Site are: Woodcut Farmhouse, located close to the west; Mantels Farmhouse, approximately 350m to the south west; and Old England Cottage, approximately 500m to the south east. Further away at approximately 1.5km is Leeds Castle Grade I Listed building which is set within Grade II\* Parkland described above. The Proposed Development will not physically impact upon these but views from their setting are included within this assessment.
- 7.85 Further information on the archaeology and cultural heritage context of the Application Site and the impacts upon the setting of Listed Buildings and heritage assets is provided in Chapter 9.



### ***Public Rights of Way (PRoW)***

- 7.86 There is a dense network of Public Rights of Way (PRoW) in the local area. Those within the study area are shown on Figure 7.5, Appendix 7.1.
- 7.87 The most significant PRoW are the North Downs Way National Trail, which runs along the top of the North Downs escarpment, and the Pilgrim's Way National Trail which runs along the bottom. No views were identified from the Pilgrim's Way but views from the North Downs Way have been considered within the visual assessment.
- 7.88 There are no PRoW within the Application Site, the closest being restricted byway KH641 which runs along the track to Woodcut Farm, to the west of the Application Site. The Proposed Development will not physically impact upon any Public Rights of Way but views from key PRoW in the local area are considered within the visual assessment.

### ***Landscape Character Area Assessments***

- 7.89 Assessments of landscape character are undertaken at different scales, from national through to county/district, and local level. Ideally, assessments at these different scales should fit together as a nested hierarchy of landscape character types, with each assessment lower in the hierarchy adding more detail to the one above. Where published character assessments occur at all levels, assessment is not made of impacts upon national character areas as the comparative difference in scale will result in negligible effects.
- 7.90 The study area is covered by the following landscape character area assessments:
- National Landscape Character Areas (2012) - Natural England<sup>11</sup>;
  - The Landscape Assessment of Kent (2004) - Kent County Council<sup>12</sup>;
  - Historic Landscape Characterisation of Kent (2001) - Kent County Council and English Heritage<sup>13</sup>;

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<sup>11</sup> Natural England (2012) National Landscape Character Areas

<sup>12</sup> Kent County Council (2004) The Landscape Assessment of Kent

<sup>13</sup> Kent County Council and English Heritage (2001) Historic Landscape Characterisation of Kent

- Kent Downs AONB Management Plan (2014-19) - Kent Downs AONB Partnership<sup>14</sup>;
- Borough Landscape Character Assessment (2012, amended 2013) - Maidstone Borough Council<sup>15</sup>;
- Maidstone Landscape Capacity Study: Sensitivity Assessment (January 2015) – Maidstone Borough Council<sup>16</sup>; and
- Maidstone Landscape Capacity Study: Site Assessments (January 2015)<sup>17</sup>.

7.91 National Character Areas are broad-brush in nature and cover large areas of the country. As such, they can often lose local and detailed variations in character, but they can form a useful baseline against which to evaluate the more detailed areas. All levels are considered relevant to this study, and therefore are referred to below. This is to ensure that wider issues are taken into account, particularly in relation to the Kent Downs AONB, as well as ensuring that local variations in character are not overlooked. However, impacts upon National Character areas are not assessed due to the relative difference in scale resulting in negligible effects.

*National Landscape Character Areas (NCAs) - Natural England*

7.92 The identified National Character Areas relating to the study area are shown in Figure 7.6, Appendix 7.1. The study area is covered by the character area classified as NCA 120 Wealden Greensand but is located close to NCA 119 North Downs.

7.93 National Character Area 120: Wealden Greensand forms a ridge of land running parallel to the North Downs through Kent. The area is described as being made up of over one quarter woodland but as also containing areas of heathland, river valleys, farmland and fruit crops. The area is described as more urbanised in the region of the study area with the transport corridors of the M20 and HS1 running between large settlements, such as Maidstone and Ashford.

7.94 The landform is characterised by a series of ridges separated by clay valleys which creates intimate valleys with longer distance views from the higher ground. One such ridge is located south of the study area, to the south of Maidstone and the Application

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<sup>14</sup> Kent AONB Partnership (April 2004) Kent Downs AONB Management Plan 2009-2014

<sup>15</sup> Maidstone Borough Council (2012, amended 2013) Borough Landscape Character Assessment

<sup>16</sup> Maidstone Borough Council (January 2015) Maidstone Landscape Capacity Study: Sensitivity Assessment

<sup>17</sup> Maidstone Borough Council (January 2015) Maidstone Landscape Capacity Study: Site Assessments

Site. There are large areas of woodland, some of which have been adapted for the coppicing of Sweet Chestnut. The field pattern is described as small to medium and irregular in layout and separated by hedgerows with specimen trees or shaws (remnant woodland belts).

- 7.95 The area is predominantly in farming use with a mix of arable, pastoral and fruit farming interspersed. Settlement is described as comprising a mix of farmsteads, hamlets and villages with some large houses set in spacious grounds, and this pattern is evident within the wider landscape context of the Application Site. Further to the east, within the Study Area, the transport corridors of the M20 and HS1 are described as becoming more marked.
- 7.96 The nearby National Character Area 119: North Downs forms a line of chalk hills running between Surrey and the White Cliffs of Dover. It runs along the northern side of the Wealden Greensands, described above, providing elevated views over the surrounding countryside. The valleys of the rivers Wey, Mole and Darent separate the North Downs from the Wealden Greensand, the latter running through the study area. The M20 runs along the southern boundary, cutting through the study area. The south facing slope of the scarp is marked by narrow, 'bowl-shaped' dry valleys known as combes.
- 7.97 The lower slopes of the North Downs are described as supporting a mix of arable and pastoral farming. Woodland mainly occurs on the higher slopes, with fields on the lower slopes separated by wooded hedgerows and shaws. These combine to give a wooded character.
- 7.98 Ancient and sunken roads cross the North Downs and the area contains numerous historic features, particularly defensive features such as hill forts. The area is characterised by dispersed farmsteads and small settlements, and by the distinctive architecture of oast houses.

*The Landscape Assessment of Kent (2004) - Kent County Council*

- 7.99 The Landscape Character Areas relating to the study area, as defined by the Landscape Assessment of Kent, are shown in Figure 7.7, Appendix 7.1. The Application Site is located within the character area Leeds - Lenham Farmlands but

is located close to the character area entitled Hollingbourne Vale: West. The area to the immediate north of the Application Site is located within the character area Hollingbourne Vale.

#### Leeds-Lenham Farmlands.

- 7.100 The Leeds-Lenham farmland is described as an undulating rural landscape with narrow lanes and a medium-sized field pattern containing arable crops and pastoral farmland. There are few orchards in this area due to the nature of the soils. Settlement comprises isolated farmsteads and parkland estates, notably that of Leeds Castle. The character area is described as being heavily influenced by the presence of the M20 and HS1.
- 7.101 The condition of this character area has been assessed in the Kent document as 'very poor' due to the interruption of the landscape by the motorway and railway line. Although vernacular villages still exist, these are isolated by the transport routes and interspersed with less characteristic settlement. The sensitivity of the character area has been assessed as low.

#### Hollingbourne Vale: West

- 7.102 This character area is generally located between the M20 and the railway east of Maidstone, with the key exception of an area of land to the north of the railway but outside the Kent Downs AONB. The area is typified by small broad leaved woodlands and irregular fields. However, the largest areas of woodland have been bisected by the M20 and HS1 corridor.
- 7.103 The condition of this character area has been assessed as 'poor' due to the presence of the major transport routes, as well as industrial and suburban development. Although the woodland network remains strong, hedgerows are in decline. The sensitivity of the character area has been assessed as being moderate.

#### Hollingbourne Vale

- 7.104 The Hollingbourne Vale character area relates to the steep southern slope of the Downs which is mainly grassland with minor areas of arable farmland. The area is

located within the Kent Downs AONB. The field pattern is generally regular in nature although areas of smaller and more irregular fields occur in parts, separated by greater amounts of tree cover. Hedgerow and tree loss has been apparent, creating what are described as 'prairies' which are inappropriate to the context. This is evident in the area close to the Application Site and to the north east, and is in contrast to the description of the wider North Downs landscape described within the NCA.

- 7.105 The foot of the escarpment is characterised by a series of villages, including Hollingbourne, which have evolved around springlines at the base of the slope. Ancient roadways run through the area, often bordered by thick hedgerows. The North Downs Way runs along the top of the escarpment and the Pilgrim's Way runs along the bottom. These are described as offering open views across the surrounding countryside, making the area sensitive to new development. The M20 and HS1 corridor are described as having had a significant impact upon the views.
- 7.106 The condition of the landscape is described as 'poor' due to the loss of hedgerows and trees and the presence of visual detractors. The sensitivity is described as moderate.

*Historic Landscape Characterisation of Kent (2001) - Kent County Council and English Heritage*

- 7.107 The Application Site falls within Historic Landscape Character Area (HLCA) 31 - Central Valley Area. This area is described as varied with its definition relating more to its difference from neighbouring character areas rather than its own unified character. The area is dominated by regular and wavy bounded fields with a considerable subsidiary element of 'prairie' fields, all of which indicate extensive agricultural activity over the last 200+ years.
- 7.108 The study area also partly falls within the type of landscape described as HLCA 1.6 - Large Wavy Boundaries. This area is described as likely relating to 17th/18th Century informal enclosure. The fields are described as regular in shape but varying in size. Boundaries are described as 'wavy'.

*Kent Downs AONB Management Plan (2014-2019) - Kent Downs AONB Partnership*

7.109 Although the Application Site is not located within the Kent Downs AONB, it is located close to its boundary, and the following two character areas fall within the study area:

- 7: Mid Kent Downs; and
- 8: Hollingbourne Vale.

7.110 The 2014-19 Management Plan refers to the 2004 Landscape Assessment of Kent (2004) detailed above. It is anticipated that there will be no significant landscape impacts on these areas and therefore no further assessment has been included in this regard. Visual impacts on views gained from the Kent Downs AONB are assessed separately in the assessment of visual effects.

*Borough Landscape Character Assessment (2012, amended 2013) - Maidstone Borough Council*

7.111 The Landscape Character Areas of the study area, as defined by the Maidstone Borough Council Landscape Character Assessment are shown in Figure 7.8, Appendix 7.1. The Application Site is located within LCA 49 - Leeds Castle Parklands which can be further be refined into LCA 49-2 - White Heath Farmlands. The neighbouring character areas have not been assessed as the Landscape Assessment of Kent gives a sufficient assessment of the local landscape character in the wider study area. This assessment focuses on the immediate area of the Application Site.

LCA 49 - Leeds Castle Parklands

7.112 This character area is located to the east of Maidstone and includes the Len Valley. It is located to the south of the M20 and HS1 transport corridor and the western boundary is formed by Maidstone's urban edge and the eastern edge is defined by the urban edge of Harrietsham.

7.113 The area contains small scattered blocks of woodland and planting along transport corridors. The most notable areas of woodland cover are located around Leeds Castle. The field pattern is described as irregular due to the large areas of parkland

and the presence of the transport routes. The field pattern becomes finer grained closer to Maidstone where fields have been subdivided over time.

- 7.114 Built development is concentrated along the A20, particularly in the region of Harrietsham. Commercial development occurring outside the settlements includes a hotel, Bearsted Caravan Club, depot and garden centre. Eyhorne Street still retains its strong historic pattern and has been designated a conservation area.
- 7.115 The assessment states that the motorway and railway cause fragmentation within the landscape and that built elements, such as the commercial uses and the Bearsted Caravan Club form visual detractors. Despite this, the landscape infrastructure is assessed as being in good condition but that it is severed in places by the transport infrastructure corridor. Historic villages remain and the local vernacular is still evident in the built form.
- 7.116 The condition of the landscape has been assessed as moderate and the sensitivity as high.

#### LCA 49-2 White Heath Farmlands

- 7.117 The character assessment for Leeds Castle Parkland is further refined, with the Application Site being part of LCA 49-2. This area is described as heavily influenced by the M20/HS1 corridor. Fields are large and in arable use with little woodland cover, with the key exception of the head of the Len Valley. There is little development in the area but commercial uses occur along the A20 which gives the area a suburban feel. The assessment states that the area is heavily influenced by the edge of Maidstone. The condition of this area is assessed as poor and the sensitivity as moderate, taken to be equivalent to medium level sensitivity, as used as part of the assessment of significance, indicated on Table 7.5.

#### *Maidstone Landscape Capacity Study: Sensitivity Assessment (January 2015)*

- 7.118 The above document reiterates the information included within the MBC Character Assessment. It identifies the character area as being of high overall landscape sensitivity and sensitivity to change. This document is further refined at a site level by the following document.

*Maidstone Landscape Capacity Study: Site Assessments (January 2015)*

7.119 The Application Site is described as ED-12 Woodcut Farm, Ashford Road in the above document and is described as having moderate character sensitivity, high visual sensitivity and moderate landscape value.

7.120 Under landscape character sensitivity, the following characteristics are identified:

- The landform is composed of the undulating valley either side of a small stream at the foot of the North Downs;
- This is a very large scale landscape with extensive arable cultivation with relatively sparse tree cover and few hedgerows;
- Trees within gardens on the boundary of the site;
- The stream corridor supports a corridor of vegetation and there is a prominent group of trees along Crismill Lane, but the extensive arable use gives little opportunity for wildlife;
- The M20, A20 and HS1 are nearby detracting features;
- No obvious historical features; and
- The site's location at the foot of the North Downs, its landform which is a continuation of the downland topography and the large-scale field pattern is distinctive and characteristic of the area.

7.121 Under the heading of visual sensitivity, the following characteristics are identified:

- Potential visual receptors at close range include scattered housing along the southern and western boundaries;
- Longer elevated views from the Kent Downs AONB;
- Upper valley sides have increased visibility; and
- An open landscape which has high visibility although mitigation with tree belts may be possible, but the elevated location of the Downs would make screening problematic.

7.122 Under landscape value, the following characteristics are identified:



- Although it is not designated the site has a countryside feel despite the adjoining transport corridors, although there is little tranquillity;
- Low potential to be of wildlife conservation interest;
- Potentially sensitive location close to and providing the setting of the nationally designated Kent Downs AONB; and
- Woodcut Farm is an adjoining listed building.

#### *Site Level Assessment*

- 7.123 NCA 120 and NCA 119 share some similarities, but their geology and topography are very different. The Application Site is situated in the settled valley between the two character areas. This accommodates the routes of the M20 and HS1 which form dominant features cutting across the landscape. Both assessments describe the wooded mosaic of arable and pastoral farmland with a finer grain in NCA120 and a more open character on the slopes of NCA119 within the study area.
- 7.124 In the vicinity of the Application Site, this character area appears to be more open than suggested in the NCA with fewer hedgerows, suggesting either local degradation in the landscape, a local variation in character, or both. This is reinforced within the Kent Landscape Character Assessment which states the area as suffering a loss of vegetation and the creation of uncharacteristic 'prairies' and which goes on to identify the area as being in very poor condition and of low sensitivity.
- 7.125 The Application Site is located within the edge of the North Downs SLA but has not been included within the Len Valley Landscape of Local Value, and is close to the Kent Downs AONB boundary. The underlying landform forms part of the setting of the AONB at the foot of the North Downs escarpment. It forms part of the SLA, which is mainly unspoilt, gently undulating land which supports rural, agricultural land uses, occasional woodland groups and local ditches and streams. However, areas of landform immediately adjoining the Application Site have been modified locally for agricultural purposes and to a greater extent, to form the road cutting and embankments of the M20 motorway and the J8 interchange. The Application Site has also been subject to hedgerow removal and remaining hedgerows are in poor condition.

7.126 The land does not form part of the Kent Downs AONB but forms part of its setting and is within the SLA. However, the areas immediately adjacent to the Application Site are heavily influenced by the presence of the M20 and the Application Site itself has been subject to poor hedgerow maintenance. The Application Site is of medium sensitivity to change.

#### *Landscape Guidelines*

7.127 At a national level, NCA 120 outlines a list of four Statements of Environmental Opportunity (SEOs). These relate to identified pressures on the character area, and measures to mitigate those pressures. They can be summarised as follows:

- Protect the distinct character of the landscape, particularly in relation to its historic character, and improve access where possible;
- Protect and manage the network of semi-natural habitats, including woodland;
- Manage and enhance the blue network of the character area, including wetlands and watercourses, to improve biodiversity but also to manage flood risk; and
- Plan for a network of 'integrated, well-managed' green spaces, reinforcing landscape character amongst other benefits.

7.128 NCA 119 identifies four SEOs for the North Downs Character Area. These relate broadly to those identified for NCA120 and can be summarised as:

- Conserve the distinct landscape and historic character of the Downs, including the settlement pattern, ancient transport routes and buildings;
- Protect and enhance the trees and woodlands of the Downs, including through commercial activities;
- Manage and enhance the mosaic of semi-natural habitats; and
- Deliver a network of multi-functional green space, particularly on the borders of the Downs.

7.129 At a County level, the landscape action for the Leeds Lenham Farmlands identified within the assessment is to 'create' with the key recommendations relating to the creation of a landscape framework of trees and hedgerows for the transport corridors and to reinstate the setting of local villages using parkland features and copses.

- 7.130 Landscape actions for the Hollingbourne Vale: West include the restoration of wooded edges, the control of the impact of visual detractors and the creation of a wooded framework to transport corridors.
- 7.131 At a Borough level, the action for LCA 49 Leeds Castle Parklands is to 'conserve and restore' with key actions including the protection of the parkland character of the landscape, the strengthening of the vegetation along the River Len, restoration of hedgerow boundaries and the conservation and restoration of tree cover.
- 7.132 For LCA 49-2 the assessment recommends a process of 'restore and improve' with key actions including the need to observe the rural setting of the Kent Downs AONB, the improvement of connections between areas of woodland and the restoration and improvement of woodlands and vegetation along field drains and ditches.
- 7.133 Within the site level capacity study, the document identified the following mitigation measures for development within the Application Site:
- Retain and reinforce streamside vegetation, other tree belts and significant vegetation;
  - Retain the rural landscape character and the distinctive landform which forms an integral part of a wider pattern of undulations along the scarp foot of the North Downs;
  - Respect the setting of surrounding heritage assets;
  - Respect views from, and the setting of, Kent Downs AONB.

#### ***Visual Context and Accessibility***

- 7.134 The following section identifies the baseline visual context and setting of the Application Site. It also considers the visibility of the Application Site and the Proposed Development from the surrounding areas.
- 7.135 The nature of the local topography means that views down towards the lower lying land and the Len Valley surrounding the Application Site can be gained from locations on the higher ground of the Kent Downs AONB and Greensand Ridge. The AONB designation and the high occurrence of Public Rights of Way (PRoW) routes in the

area, mean that there are visual receptors of high susceptibility and value. Views from within the valley are more restricted due to the strong landscape structure and the gently undulating nature of the Greensand Ridge. The undulating topography creates isolated views which allow glimpses of the Application Site from a wider area.

7.136 Overall, the Proposed Development has a visual envelope of over 3km from the high points on the Kent Downs AONB escarpment. Glimpsed views are also possible from within the undulating landscape of the Greensand Ridge. From these locations, the Application Site forms a small element in the view. More immediate views towards the Application Site are possible from the A20 Ashford Road, M20 and the properties adjoining the Application Site.

7.137 Within this visual envelope 14 viewpoints have been identified which are representative of the following visual receptors:

- Domestic properties adjacent to the Application Site;
- Public Rights of Way within the Kent Downs AONB;
- Public Rights of Way to the south;
- Public Rights of Way in the region of Leeds Castle;
- The A20 in the vicinity of the Application Site; and
- The M20 in the close vicinity of the Application Site.

7.138 The existing views from the selected visual receptor locations are shown in the photos and photomontages in Appendix 7.2. For reasons of safety it was not possible to take a photograph from the M20 but impacts and effects from this area are assessed below.

#### View 1 - Thurnham Castle

7.139 This view is representative of those gained from the North Downs Way in the vicinity of Thurnham Castle. This viewpoint is located approximately 2.7km to the north west of the Application Site and approximately 100m higher up. This viewpoint represents receptors on PRow within the Kent Downs AONB and from Thurnham Castle.

7.140 The view from this point is panoramic, taking in a large area of the valley between the North Downs and the Greensand Ridge to the south. The contrast between the

less vegetated lower scarp slope of the North Downs and the more wooded character of the Greensand Ridge is evident. Agricultural plastic sheeting is a prominent feature, particularly on the Greensand Ridge.

- 7.141 The eastern and western parts of the Application Site are visible as small elements above woodland in the left of the photograph, as identified by the buildings of Woodcut Farm, the Biffa site and the two individual trees on Musket Lane. The central section of the Application Site is hidden in a dip in the landform.

#### View 2 - Broad Street Hill

- 7.142 This view is representative of the views from the North Downs Way in the region of Broad Street, 2.4km to the north. It demonstrates the screening effect of the hill and tree cover of Snarkhurst Wood on views from this section of the North Downs Way. This viewpoint is located within the Kent Downs AONB.
- 7.143 It is possible to see the buildings of Woodcut Farm and the M20 in this view. However, much of the Application Site is obscured behind Snarkhurst Wood and this is the case for some distance to the east and west on the North Downs Way.

#### View 3 - West of Hollingbourne Hill

- 7.144 This viewpoint is representative of views from the North Downs Way in the vicinity of Hollingbourne. It is located both within the Kent Downs AONB 2.6km to the north-east of the Application Site.
- 7.145 This viewpoint offers panoramic views along the valley. From this angle, the M20 and HS1 are screened behind the intervening landform and vegetation. The central part of the Application Site is screened within a dip in the landform, but it is possible to see the eastern and western extremes. The eastern area is marked by the two trees on Musket Lane and the nearby Biffa depot, and the western area is marked by the Woodcut farm buildings and the nearby hedgerows.

#### View 4 - West of Broomfield Road

- 7.146 This viewpoint represents the sporadic long distance views that can be gained towards the Application Site from the area to the south east. The viewpoint is located approximately 3km to the south east and approximately 50m higher than the Application Site. Although views towards the Application Site can be gained from this area, they are not extensive and are channelled along isolated shallow valleys.
- 7.147 The landform in this area has created a funnelled view towards the Application Site. It is possible to see the buildings of Woodcut Farm and the western boundary of the Application Site to the right. The northern boundary of the Application Site is visible in the same area as marked by the M20. It is also possible to see the trees marking the stream running through the centre of the Application Site, but the eastern part of the Application Site is obscured by the intervening landform.

#### View 5 - Leeds Castle East of Burberry Lane

- 7.148 This view is representative of views from Public Rights of Way close to Leeds Castle Grade I Listed Buildings and from the grounds of the Grade II\* Parkland. It is also located within the North Downs SLA and Len Valley Landscape of Local Value. The viewpoint is located approximately 2km to the south-east of the Application Site and approximately 20m higher than the Application Site. Views from this area towards the Application Site are not extensive, mainly due to the effects of intervening landform and vegetation. As with the previous viewpoint, views from this area are sporadic and are filtered along shallow valleys.
- 7.149 The topography in this area creates an isolated view towards the Application Site, as per the previous viewpoint. It is possible to see the M20 through the trees and a small section of the Application Site to the left of the motorway. The majority of the Application Site is obscured by the intervening vegetation and topography.

#### View 6 - East of Old Mill Lane

- 7.150 This view is representative of those from Public Rights of Way to the south of the Application Site. The viewpoint is located approximately 1.2km to the south of the

Application Site and approximately 20m higher up. It is within the southern edge of the Len Valley Landscape of Local Value.

- 7.151 This viewpoint offers an elevated view across the intervening land towards the western part of the Application Site and the M20 beyond. It is possible to see the western boundary and the nearby Woodcut Farm buildings. The majority of the Application Site is hidden by the intervening landform. The Biffa site is in the right of the view and the roof of an agricultural building is visible in the foreground.

#### View 7 - Forge Lane / Caring Lane

- 7.152 This viewpoint is representative of receptors in the area to the south/south east of the Application Site. The viewpoint is located approximately 1.5km to the south and approximately 20m higher than the Application Site. It is located at the junction of two roads and within the Len Valley Landscape of Local Value.
- 7.153 It is possible to see the westernmost part of the Application Site. The hedgerow with trees along the western boundary is visible running from Woodcut Farm towards the M20 and the agricultural sheds can be seen to the left of this. The majority of the Application Site is obscured within the dip in the landform.

#### View 8 - A20

- 7.154 This view is taken from the A20 Ashford Road where it runs along the southern boundary of the Application Site. From much of the A20 Ashford Road, the Application Site is located behind intervening hedgerows, dwellings and garden planting, but there are short stretches of road from where it is possible to see directly into the Application Site. This viewpoint is located on the northern edge of the Len Valley Landscape of Local Value and the southern edge of the SLA.
- 7.155 From this point, it is possible to see directly into the Application Site. This is a relatively isolated view as, from most locations along the A20 Ashford Road, the Application Site is screened behind intervening built form and vegetation. The M20 forms a notable element within the view and there are visual detractors out of shot, such as the car wash, pylons and gantries associated with the transport corridor. However,

there are views towards the Kent Downs AONB which are only broken by the motorway.

#### View 9 - Footpath to Woodcut Farm

- 7.156 This viewpoint is representative of views from receptors on the footpath and in the adjacent dwellings along the route of the footpath. It is located approximately 300m west of the Application Site and 5-10m higher up. The viewpoint is separated from the Application Site by part of the land which will be planted as open woodland.
- 7.157 The existing view is of a rural countryside with the M20 being the only notable detractor. The motorway draws attention to itself through noise but the general character is rural in nature and relatively unspoilt. It is possible to see the majority of the Application Site with the stream running through the centre.

#### View 10 - Fifth Tee at Leeds Castle

- 7.158 This viewpoint is representative of a specific view from the fifth tee of Leeds Castle golf course. This viewpoint is not publicly accessible but is available to users of the golf course. It is located approximately 2.5km to the south east of the Application Site. It is located both within the Len Valley Landscape of Local Value and the SLA, and within a Grade II\* Parkland.
- 7.159 The existing view is of a rural countryside with the M20 forming a distinctive feature in the landscape. Residential development is visible in the view but there are no large shed-type buildings. It is possible to see the western part of the Application Site as it rises up to the western boundary. The eastern and central parts of the Application Site are obscured behind the intervening landform. The focal point of the view is Leeds Castle Grade I Listed Building.

#### View 11 – White Horse Wood Country Park

- 7.160 This view is taken from the public viewing point in White Horse Wood Country Park and is representative of those from the Country Park looking south towards the Application Site. It is located approximately 3.4km north west of the Application Site. This viewpoint is located within the Kent Downs AONB.



- 7.161 From this point, it is possible to see south across the Len Valley towards the Greensand Ridge to the south of Maidstone. Detling is visible in the right side of the photograph with houses laid out along Hockers Lane. The M20 and HS1 are generally obscured by the intervening vegetation but the transport corridor forms a line through the landscape, cutting through Honeyhills Wood south of Detling. The motorway gives a frame of reference and it is possible to see that the majority of the Application Site is obscured behind the intervening landform and vegetation.

View 12 – North Downs Way at Cat’s Mount

- 7.162 This view is taken from the junction of the North Downs Way with other PRow on the edge of the higher ground north west of Broad Street. It is representative of views from PRow within a small area of Kent Downs AONB. It is located approximately 2.3km north of the Application Site.
- 7.163 The PRow extends downhill on the right side of the image, crossing Pilgrim’s Way and meeting Whitehall Road. The residence known as Ripple is visible to the right of the electricity pylon in the right third of the image. Pilgrim’s Way is marked by the line of trees in the centre of the image and to the left of this, within an area of tree planting, is Broad Street. Behind the trees on Pilgrim’s Way it is possible to see Snarkhurst Hill and Snarkhurst Woods. From this viewpoint, the Application Site is located to the right of Snarkhurst Hill.

View 13 – North Downs Way south west of Bolton’s Wood

- 7.164 This view is taken from the location of a bench on the North Downs Way between Broad Street Hill and Hollingbourne Hill. It is representative of views from PRow within the Kent Downs AONB looking south west towards the Application Site. It is located approximately 2.5km north east of the Application Site.
- 7.165 It is possible to see the Biffa site to the right of the centre of the photo with Snarkhurst Woods and Hill to the right of that. It is possible to see the rising land to the south of the Application Site but the ground of the Application Site itself is hidden within the dip in the landform.

#### View 14 – Hollingbourne Hill to the north east of Hollingbourne

- 7.166 This viewpoint is located to the north of Hollingbourne on the North Downs Way within the Kent Downs AONB where it runs alongside Hollingbourne Hill and enters the Open Access Land to the north. The viewpoint is located approximately 2.45km to the north east of the Application Site and is representative of views from a short stretch of the PRoW as it passes through the Open Access Land within the Kent Downs AONB.
- 7.167 It is possible to see the roof of Manorsfield, a property on the Pilgrim's Way, between Lime Trees and Pilgrim's View. Beyond this, the M20 and HS1 are obscured within the dip in the land but properties on the far side of the valley are visible. The Application Site is located within the valley and is not visible from this point.

#### Views from the M20

- 7.168 Views from the M20 were considered as part of the assessment . The motorway forms the northern boundary of the Application Site and for much of this boundary it is at a higher elevation than the Application Site. The viewpoint is located adjacent to the Application Site and is representative of fast moving receptors on the motorway.

### **Assessment of Effects**

#### ***Construction Effects***

##### *Effects on Designations*

- 7.169 The Proposed Development will not result in direct effects on the Len Valley Landscape of Local Value or the AONB. Views form within the designated areas are assessed as part of the visual assessment below. No other landscape designations will be affected by the construction phase of the Proposed Development.

##### *Landscape Effects*

- 7.170 The Proposed Development will not involve any demolition, but it will involve a cut and fill exercise to create the development platforms prior to construction of the new

units as well as the removal of two groups of trees and part of a third group. None of the trees to be removed are subject to TPOs.

- 7.171 Effects during the construction stage will arise from the presence and movement of large scale construction plant and the exposure of soil during earthworks. There will be temporary stockpiling of excavated materials and topsoil, and storage of construction materials on the Application Site. Cranes will be required on the Application Site for part of the construction period. These elements may be taller in some cases than the surrounding trees and woodland, making them visible from a wide area, including PROW, the M20 and other public highways and private land. They will also be taller than the finished new buildings, so in terms of visual envelope, construction phase visual effects are likely to extend over a wider area than those for the operational phase. The engineering works at the proposed new A20 Ashford Road site access will also be visible at close range for receptors passing along the road. Hoarding will also be established around the perimeter of the Application Site during construction works, rising to 2.4m.
- 7.172 Construction activity will be partially screened by peripheral site vegetation, including vegetation along public roads and within the curtilages of private properties. The effects will be for a limited duration, and will be experienced from viewpoints that are both rural and urban fringe in character, including the Kent Downs AONB and A20 Ashford Road. The nature of views during the construction phase will not be dissimilar to any large-scale construction project, and will be of an uncompleted building project with associated construction activity, but being progressively completed, to a point where effects will change from those associated with a temporary construction phase to a permanent operational phase.

### Sensitivity to Change

#### Local Landscape Character

- 7.173 The document 'the Landscape Character of Kent' identifies the condition of the Leeds-Lenham Farmland as being very poor with the sensitivity of the character area being assessed as low. The landscape of the Hollingbourne Vale: West is assessed as being in poor condition and of moderate sensitivity and the landscape of Hollingbourne (i.e. the land within the AONB) is identified as being in poor condition

and of moderate sensitivity. The Maidstone Landscape Character Assessment identifies the White Heath Farmlands as being in poor condition and of moderate sensitivity.

- 7.174 The landscape of the AONB is of very high value as reflected by its designation, the area of the Landscape of Local Value is of high to medium value whereas the value of much of the local landscape is of medium value, reflecting its lack of landscape designation. The presence of detractors and fringe land uses also affects the value of the landscape. The local landscape is of high value.
- 7.175 The local landscape contains large infrastructure, such as the M20 and Junction 8, HS1 and fringe uses, such as the Biffa and caravan sites, and the car dealership and car wash. The junction 8 services are also present but are generally hidden within deep woodland planting, reducing their effect on local landscape character. Construction activity would be incongruous within the landscape and therefore the local landscape character is of high susceptibility to the construction phase.
- 7.176 The sensitivity of the local landscape character to the construction phase is high.

#### Character of the Site

- 7.177 The land does not form part of the Kent Downs AONB but forms part of its setting and is otherwise undesignated. The value of the landscape of the Application Site is high to medium. The landscape structure of the Application Site itself is in degraded condition with the presence of the M20, A20 Ashford Road and neighbouring commercial uses forming detractors to character and tranquillity. The susceptibility of the character of the Application Site to the changes in level and the introduction of spoil heaps will be in the context of the neighbouring motorway and its associated groundworks. The character of the Application Site will be of medium susceptibility to the construction phase.
- 7.178 The sensitivity of the character of the Application Site to the construction phase is high to medium.

### Magnitude of Change

- 7.179 The construction phase will result in the removal of existing landscape features, including a small number of trees and a stretch of hedgerow, none of which have been identified as being of importance. The balance of cut and fill achieved within the Application Site will represent an alteration in the baseline condition, as opposed to a fundamental change to it (which might be caused by, for example, significant excavations which alter the nature of the prevailing natural topography, or wholesale removal from site of large quantities of excavated materials). The magnitude change to the local landscape character will be medium due to the comparatively small scale of the change within the landscape but the wider extent over which it will be experienced. The change will be temporary and reversible.
- 7.180 The change in character of the Application Site will be total, changing from a rural field to a construction site but this will be short term. However, with the exception of the removal of poor quality trees, no landscape features will be removed. The magnitude of change will be medium.

### Significance of Effect

#### Local Landscape Character

- 7.181 Impacts of medium magnitude on receptors of high to medium sensitivity will result in effects of moderate significance on local landscape character. Effects will be adverse as they will relate to the introduction of incongruous new features into the landscape.

#### Site Level Assessment

- 7.182 Impacts of medium magnitude on receptors of medium sensitivity will result in effects of moderate to minor significance. These effects will be adverse as they will result in the introduction of incongruous new features into the landscape.

### Summary of Construction Phase Impacts and Effects upon Landscape Character

- 7.183 No significant adverse effects have been identified.

7.184 The assessed effects upon landscape resources is summarised in Table 7.6 below:

**Table 7.6: Summary of Landscape Effects During Construction**

Character Area	Sensitivity of Receptor	Magnitude of Change	Significance of Effect
Local Landscape Character	High	Medium	Moderate Adverse
Site Character	High to Medium	Medium	Moderate to Minor Adverse

*Visual Effects*

View 1 - Thurnham Castle

7.185 This represents receptors within the Kent Downs AONB, which are of very high value. The eastern portion of the Application Site appears in the view as a small area of arable field set within a strong landscape structure. The construction phase will result in the introduction of incongruous elements into the view and will affect receptors using a Public Right of Way. The susceptibility to the construction phase is high. Sensitivity of receptors represented by this viewpoint are very high.

7.186 The construction activity will be of small scale within the view when seen from the area of Thurnham Castle. This impact will likely occur over a moderate extent of the landscape but will be short term in duration. The resulting magnitude of impact will be low to negligible.

7.187 According to Table 7.5, impacts of low magnitude on receptors of very high sensitivity result in effects of moderate to negligible significance. The significance of the effects on receptors represented by this viewpoint are assessed as being minor adverse.

View 2 - Broad Street Hill

7.188 The value of this and similar viewpoints is 'very high' due to their location within the Kent Downs AONB. The construction phase of the Proposed Development will form an incongruous element within the view and will affect receptors on the North Downs

Way National Trail. The susceptibility of receptors represented by this viewpoint is high resulting in a sensitivity of very high.

- 7.189 The construction activity within the Application Site will primarily be obscured by Snarkhurst Hill although the larger buildings in the eastern part of the Application Site will be visible. The scale of the impact upon the view will be negligible when viewed over this local area of the PRoW and will be short term in duration, resulting in impacts of negligible magnitude.
- 7.190 Any impacts of negligible magnitude will result in effects of negligible significance.

#### View 3 - West of Hollingbourne Hill

- 7.191 The value of the receptors represented by this viewpoint is very high due to their location within the Kent Downs AONB. The susceptibility of the receptors is also assessed as being high due to their location on the National Trail and the the incongruous nature of the construction phase. The sensitivity of receptors in this location is very high.
- 7.192 The scale of the construction activity within the view will be small but will be visible over a wider area. Despite this, the duration will be short term and the resulting impact will have a low to negligible magnitude.
- 7.193 Impacts of low to negligible magnitude on receptors of very high sensitivity result in effects of moderate to negligible significance according to Table 7.5. Effects on this viewpoint have been assessed as being of minor adverse significance.

#### View 4 - West of Broomfield Road

- 7.194 The value of receptors represented by this viewpoint are generally medium as they relate to views outside of a designation landscape. The construction phase will result in the introduction of moving plant and a variety of temporary structures and areas of spoil. The receptors affected by the impacts on this view relate to users of a rural lane within rural landscape with some visual detractors. Susceptibility of receptors in this location is medium. The sensitivity of the receptors represented by this viewpoint to the type of development proposed is medium.

- 7.195 The scale of the construction activity visible within the view will be small, will be visible over a local extent, and will be temporary and short term. The magnitude of impact is therefore predicted to be low/negligible.
- 7.196 The resulting effects on the receptors will be of minor/negligible adverse significance.

View 5 - Leeds Castle East of Burberry Lane

- 7.197 This viewpoint represents receptors within the Grade II\* Parkland surrounding Leeds Castle Grade I Listed Building and the value of receptors at this location are therefore very high. The construction activity within the Application Site will be viewed in the context of the neighbouring HS1/M20 transport corridor which forms an existing visual detractor in views as well as the buildings in the foreground of the view. Receptors will be using Public Rights of Way. The susceptibility of receptors at this viewpoint and in similar locations is medium to high. The sensitivity of receptors in this location to change is high.
- 7.198 The Application Site is negligible in scale within the view and will be visible over a localised extent and will be temporary and short term. The predicted magnitude of impact will be negligible.
- 7.199 Any impact of negligible magnitude will create a negligible effect.

View 6 - East of Old Mill Lane

- 7.200 This viewpoint and the receptors which it represents, is located within the Len Valley Landscape of Local Value, and therefore of high to medium value. The view is towards the Kent Downs AONB and is generally unbuilt. It is possible to see the M20 motorway and the Biffa site in the distance and sheds in the foreground but the view remains generally rural in character. Receptors are using PRow and the susceptibility of these receptors to the construction activity is high. The sensitivity to the type of development proposed of the receptors represented by this viewpoint is high.



- 7.201 The construction activity will be small scale within the view and the impact will be localised in extent as well as being temporary and short term. The magnitude of change will be low to negligible.
- 7.202 Impacts of low to negligible magnitude on receptors of high sensitivity result in effects of moderate to negligible significance according to Table 7.5. Effects on this viewpoint are assessed as being of minor adverse significance.

View 7 - Forge Lane / Caring Lane

- 7.203 The viewpoint is located within the Len Valley Landscape of Local Value and is therefore of high to medium value. It is representative of users of the nearby PRoW and takes in a rural landscape with few detractors. Susceptibility of receptors to construction activity within the Application Site is high. The sensitivity of receptors represented by this view is high.
- 7.204 Only a small part of the construction activity will be visible and will appear small in scale within the view. It will be visible over a localised extent and will be temporary and short term. The magnitude of change will be low to negligible.
- 7.205 Impacts of low to negligible magnitude on receptors of high sensitivity will result in an effect ranging from moderate to negligible significance according to Table 7.5. For the purposes of this viewpoint, the effects are assessed as being of minor adverse significance.

View 8 - A20 and Adjacent Dwellings

- 7.206 This viewpoint is located on the northern edge of the Len Valley Landscape of Local Value and within the setting of the AONB and is therefore of high value. The construction activity will be seen in the context of the neighbouring motorway and roads but will still result in a complete change to the existing Application Site. The landscape structure of the Application Site is partly degraded but it is still rural in character and the susceptibility of viewers within residential dwellings is high. This viewpoint is located on the A20 Ashford Road but is also representative of residents within the adjacent residential dwellings (particularly the Chestnuts and White Heath) which are of high susceptibility. The sensitivity of receptors on the A20 Ashford Road

is low whereas that of receptors in adjacent residential dwellings is high. The assessment of this viewpoint concentrates on receptors within the adjacent residences.

- 7.207 The hoarding around the construction site will obstruct some longer distance views and areas of spoil and moving plant will be most notable from this location. The scale of the construction activity in the view will be large but the extent of the impact will be localised and these activities will be temporary and short term. The magnitude of impact upon these views will be medium.
- 7.208 Effects of medium magnitude on receptors of high sensitivity will result in effects of moderate adverse significance on adjacent residential dwellings.

#### View 9 - Footpath to Woodcut Farm and Adjacent Dwellings

- 7.209 These receptors represent views from outside the Len Valley Landscape of Local Valley but form part of the setting of the AONB and are of high value. The construction activity will result in the introduction of hoarding as well as large areas of spoil and moving plant. This view represents residents within the adjacent dwellings and looks towards the Kent Downs AONB and is rural in nature with few visual detractors. The susceptibility of receptors in these locations to such a change is high. The sensitivity of these receptors to change is high.
- 7.210 The scale of the construction activity within the view will be high but the extent of the impact will be localised and the duration short. The resulting magnitude of impacts upon this view will be medium.
- 7.211 Impacts of medium magnitude on receptors of high sensitivity will result in effects of moderate adverse significance.

#### View 10 - Fifth Tee at Leeds Castle

- 7.212 The view is located within the Grade II\* Parkland associated with Leeds Castle Grade I Listed Building. The value of such receptors are high. The receptors represented by this view are users of the private golf course and do not represent users of the PRow. The construction activity on the Application Site will result in a change in the

backdrop of the castle as viewed from this location. The susceptibility of these receptors to the type of change proposed is medium. The sensitivity of these receptors to change is high to medium.

- 7.213 The construction activity will form an intrusion into the view but will be a small-scale element. Its location in the view behind Leeds Castle, which is the focus of the view, makes it more prominent than might otherwise be the case but the change will affect a localised extent of the countryside and be temporary and short term. The magnitude of impact upon this view will be low to negligible.
- 7.214 Impacts of low to negligible magnitude on receptors of medium to high sensitivity will result in effects of minor adverse significance.

#### View 11 - White Horse Wood Country Park

- 7.215 The value of this and similar viewpoints is very high due to their location within the Kent Downs AONB. Receptors represented by this viewpoint are users of the North Downs Way National Trail. The construction phase of the Proposed Development will form an incongruous element within the view meaning that susceptibility will be high. The sensitivity of this viewpoint is very high.
- 7.216 Taller plant and the later stages of building construction may be visible but the scale of impact within the view will be negligible and will be short term and temporary in nature. The magnitude of change will be negligible.
- 7.217 Any impact with a negligible magnitude will result in an effect of negligible significance.

#### View 12 – North Downs Way at Cat’s Mount

- 7.218 The value of this and similar viewpoints is very high due to their location within the Kent Downs AONB. Receptors represented by this viewpoint are users of the North Downs Way National Trail. The construction phase of the Proposed Development will form an incongruous element within the view meaning that susceptibility will be high. The sensitivity of this viewpoint is very high.

- 7.219 Construction activity within the Application Site and the later stages of building construction may be visible from this point but will form a small-scale element within the view. It will be visible over a wide area but will be short term and temporary in nature and therefore the magnitude of impact will be negligible.
- 7.220 Any impact of negligible magnitude will result in an effect of negligible significance.

View 13 – North Downs Way south west of Bolton’s Wood

- 7.221 The value of this and similar viewpoints is very high due to their location within the Kent Downs AONB. Receptors represented by this viewpoint are users of the North Downs Way National Trail. The construction phase of the Proposed Development will form an incongruous element within the view meaning that susceptibility will be high. The sensitivity of this viewpoint is very high.
- 7.222 Whilst the ground level of the Application Site is obscured behind the intervening landform and vegetation, it may be possible to see taller elements during the construction process. The construction activity will form a small-scale element within the view but will be visible over a wider area. The duration of the change will be temporary and short term and therefore the magnitude of impact will be negligible.
- 7.223 An impact of negligible magnitude on a receptor of very high sensitivity will result in an effect of negligible significance.

View 14 – Hollingbourne Hill to the north east of Hollingbourne

- 7.224 The value of this and similar viewpoints is very high due to their location within the Kent Downs AONB. Receptors represented by this viewpoint are users of the North Downs Way National Trail. The construction phase of the Proposed Development will form an incongruous element within the view meaning that susceptibility will be high. The sensitivity of this viewpoint is very high.
- 7.225 The Application Site and construction activity within it will likely not be visible from this point and therefore impacts will be of negligible magnitude.

- 7.226 An impact of negligible magnitude on a receptor of very high sensitivity will result in an effect of negligible significance.

Views from M20

- 7.227 This viewpoint is not located within the Len Valley Landscape of Local Value but does form part of the setting of the AONB. Receptors represented by this viewpoint are travelling at speed along the motorway and as such are of very low susceptibility in visual assessment terms. However, the construction activity will be out of context with the character of the view. Sensitivity of receptors in this location is low to negligible.
- 7.228 The change to the Application Site will be large and the construction activity will be large in scale in the view. However, the effects will be limited in extent, temporary and short term and the views will be glimpsed and transitory. The magnitude of change is medium.
- 7.229 The sensitivity of receptors represented by this view were assessed as being low to negligible. The resulting effects will be of minor to negligible adverse significance.

Summary of Visual Effects

- 7.230 The assessed visual impact upon the 14 assessment viewpoints is summarised in Table 7.7 for ease of reference below:

**Table 7.7: Summary of Visual Effects During Construction**

View No.	Sensitivity of Receptor	Magnitude of Change	Significance of Effect
1	Very High	Low to Negligible	Minor Adverse
2	Very High	Negligible	Negligible
3	Very High	Low to Negligible	Minor Adverse
4	Medium	Low to Negligible	Minor to Negligible Adverse
5	High	Negligible	Negligible

View No.	Sensitivity of Receptor	Magnitude of Change	Significance of Effect
6	High	Low to Negligible	Minor Adverse
7	High	Low to Negligible	Minor Adverse
8	High	Medium	Moderate Adverse
9	High	Medium	Moderate Adverse
10	High to Medium	Low to Negligible	Minor Adverse
11	Very High	Negligible	Negligible
12	Very High	Negligible	Negligible
13	Very High	Negligible	Negligible
14	Very High	Negligible	Negligible
M20	Low to Negligible	Medium	Minor to Negligible Adverse

#### Summary of Construction Phase Impacts and Effects upon Visual Receptors

7.231 No significant effects are predicted as a result of construction activity within the Application Site. From more sensitive viewpoints within the Kent Downs AONB, the Application Site is at such a distance that construction activity within the Application Site will form a negligible element within views. From sensitive locations close to the Application Site, i.e. views from the adjacent dwellings, the construction activity will be more prominent within the view but the temporary nature of the construction phase means that magnitude of impacts is medium resulting in moderate adverse effects.

#### ***Operational Effects***

##### *Effects on Designations*

7.232 The Proposed Development will not result in direct effects on the Len Valley Landscape of Local Value or the AONB. Views from within the designated areas are

assessed as part of the visual assessment below. No other landscape designations will be affected by the construction phase of the Proposed Development.

*Landscape Effects*

- 7.233 The Proposed Development will result in the introduction of 19 new buildings, ranging from approximately 1,250 sqm to 4,808 sqm in area and from 7.8 to 12m in height at the ridge (Figure 4.6). New areas of roads, parking and circulation will be constructed to service the buildings. A 3.5m high acoustic barrier will be established in the west of the Site between units A3 and A8, 2.4m high acoustic barriers will be established between the Application Site and White Heath and the Chestnuts. In addition, areas of tree planting will be removed along the southern boundary and along the route of the stream. However, large areas of new planting and wetland will be established within the Proposed Development and in areas outside of the Application Site, leading to a net gain in tree cover. The Proposed Development has been assessed at year 0, i.e. without planting having become established.

Sensitivity to Change

Local Landscape Character

- 7.234 As identified above, the local landscape is of high value.
- 7.235 The local landscape contains large infrastructure, such as the M20 and Junction 8, HS1 and fringe uses, such as the Biffa and caravan sites, and the car dealership and car wash. The junction 8 services are also present but are generally hidden within deep woodland planting, reducing their effect on local landscape character. Development of the type proposed would be incongruous within the landscape and therefore the local landscape character is of medium susceptibility to the type of development proposed.
- 7.236 The sensitivity of the local landscape character to the operational phase is high to Medium.

Character of the Site

7.237 As stated above, the value of the landscape of the Site is high to medium. The Proposed Development will result in the introduction of new buildings of a massing and scale that is out of context with the surroundings. The landscape structure of the Application Site itself is in degraded condition with the presence of the M20, A20 Ashford Road and neighbouring commercial uses forming detractors to character and tranquillity. The character of the Application Site will be of medium to low susceptibility to the construction phase.

7.238 The sensitivity of the character of the Application Site to the operational phase is medium.

#### Magnitude of Change

7.239 The operational phase will result in the introduction of new large-scale buildings in a range of heights. The magnitude change to the local landscape character will be high to medium due to the comparatively small scale of the change within the landscape but the wider extent over which it will be experienced. The change will be permanent and irreversible.

7.240 The change in character of the Application Site will be total, changing from a rural field to an area of employment uses. However, with the exception of the removal of poor quality trees, no landscape features will be removed. The magnitude of change will be high to medium.

#### Significance of Effect

##### Local Landscape Character

7.241 Impacts of high to medium magnitude on receptors of high to medium sensitivity will result in effects of moderate adverse significance on local landscape character as they will relate to the introduction of incongruous new features into the landscape.

##### Site Level Assessment

7.242 Impacts of high to medium magnitude on receptors of medium sensitivity will result in effects of moderate to minor adverse significance.



Summary of Construction Phase Impacts and Effects upon Landscape Character

- 7.243 No significant adverse effects have been identified.
- 7.244 The assessed effects upon landscape resources is summarised in Table 7.8 below:

**Table 7.8: Summary of Landscape Effects During Operation**

Character Area	Sensitivity of Receptor	Magnitude of Change	Significance of Effect
Local Landscape Character	High to Medium	High to Medium	Moderate Adverse
Site Character	Medium	High to Medium	Moderate to Minor Adverse

*Visual Effects*

View 1 - Thurnham Castle

- 7.245 This receptor represents views within the AONB which are of high value. Receptors represented by this viewpoint relate to walkers on the North Downs Way Nation Trail. The views from the Kent Downs AONB are rural in character and contain few visual detractors and none on the scale of the Proposed Development as amended, leading to higher susceptibility. The susceptibility to the type of development proposed is high. This, and similar views from within the area, are considered to have a very high visual sensitivity to change.
- 7.246 It will be possible to see the tops of the roofs of the Proposed Development as amended, viewed over the intervening woodland. The Proposed Development as amended will form a small-scale element within the view, due to the distance between the Application Site and the origin of the view. However, this impact will be felt over a wide extent of the countryside and will be long term. The magnitude of impact upon this view will be low.
- 7.247 The sensitivity of visual receptors represented by this viewpoint were assessed as being very high. Impacts of low magnitude on receptors of very high sensitivity result

in effects of moderate adverse significance. Such changes will result in the introduction of uncharacteristic features which may be visual detractors without mitigation.

#### View 2 - Broad Street Hill

- 7.248 The value of this and similar viewpoints is very high due to their location within the Kent Downs AONB. Although development appears in the view, the Proposed Development will be of a greater scale than the surrounding development and located away from the main area of development in the right side of the image. Receptors relate to walkers on the North Downs Way National Trail. Susceptibility of receptors at this location is high. The sensitivity of this viewpoint is therefore very high.
- 7.249 The Proposed Development will be largely obscured from this viewpoint. The tops of the roofs of the larger buildings in the east of the Application Site will be visible above the treeline from this point. The scale of the Proposed Development within the view will be negligible and the extent of the impact will be localised. The impact will be long term in nature but the magnitude of impact will be negligible.
- 7.250 Impacts of negligible magnitude will always result in effects of negligible significance.

#### View 3 - West of Hollingbourne Hill

- 7.251 The value of the receptors represented by this viewpoint are very high due to their location within the Kent Downs AONB. The susceptibility of the receptors is also assessed as being high as the Proposed Development will result in the addition of large new structures within an area of the view which currently has few and the receptors relate to walkers on the North Downs Way National Trail. The barns of Woodcut Farm are of a similar scale to some of the individual buildings proposed but these are isolated from other such structures by the intervening planting. The Proposed Development will result in the addition of an area of structures of varying size into the landscape. The sensitivity of receptors in this location is very high.
- 7.252 The Proposed Development will result in the introduction of large new buildings in the left side of the Application Site as it appears in the view and smaller units in the right side. The roofs of the sheds will be visible above the tree line and will appear as an

almost continuous mass within the view. The Proposed Development will result in the introduction of new buildings which will be out of scale with the surrounding development. There are nearby agricultural sheds at Woodcut Farm but these are of a lesser massing. The Proposed Development will form a medium to small scale element within the view and will be visible over a large area of the PRoW. The impacts will be long term in nature and the magnitude of impact upon this view will be medium-low.

- 7.253 The sensitivity of visual receptors represented by this viewpoint were assessed as very high. Impacts of medium-low magnitude on receptors of very high sensitivity result in effects of moderate adverse significance. Such changes will result in the introduction of uncharacteristic features which will be visual detractors.

#### View 4 - West of Broomfield Road

- 7.254 The value of receptors represented by this viewpoint are generally medium to low as they relate to land outside designated areas. From this location, the Application Site is visible beyond the Biffa depot, in front of the barns of Woodcut Farm, and adjacent to the lighting structures along the M20 and A20 Ashford Road. As such, it is not an area of the view which is free from development. However, the Proposed Development will be much larger in scale than the existing structures and will be out of context with their surroundings. Receptors represented by this viewpoint relate to drivers on a country lane. The susceptibility of receptors in this location, where views are possible, are medium. The sensitivity of the receptors represented by this viewpoint to the type of development proposed is medium.
- 7.255 From this location, it will be possible to see part of Units B1 and B2 in the central part of the Application Site. These will be larger in scale than the nearby Woodcut Farm buildings and will form incongruous elements within the view. The proposed buildings will be out of scale with the surroundings but will be viewed within the context of the farm, the nearby Biffa site, the M20 and HS1. The scale of the Proposed Development within the view will be small to negligible and localised in extent. It will be long term in duration and the magnitude of impact is therefore predicted to be low.

- 7.256 The resulting effects on the receptors will be of minor adverse significance as the Proposed Development will result in the introduction of uncharacteristic features which will be visual detractors without mitigation.

View 5 - Leeds Castle East of Burberry Lane

- 7.257 This viewpoint represents receptors within the grounds of the Grade II\* Parkland associated with Leeds Castle Grade I Listed Building, and the value of receptors at this location are therefore very high. The Proposed Development will be viewed in the context of the neighbouring HS1/M20 transport corridor which forms a visual detractor in views. Receptors represented by this viewpoint relate to walks on Public Rights of Way. The susceptibility of receptors at this viewpoint and in similar locations is high to medium. The sensitivity of receptors in this location to change is high.
- 7.258 From this location, it may be possible to see the tops of the roofs of the proposed buildings and this visibility may reduce slightly during summer months. Most of the Proposed Development will be screened behind the intervening topography. The Application Site forms a negligible scale element in the view and the impact will be localised. The predicted magnitude of impact will be negligible.
- 7.259 Any impact of negligible significance will create a negligible effect.

View 6 - East of Old Mill Lane

- 7.260 This viewpoint and the receptors which it represents, are located within the Len Valley Landscape of Local Value, and therefore of high value. Although it is possible to see the buildings of Woodcut Farm, the HS1/M20 transport corridor and the associated structures, the Proposed Development will result in the introduction of buildings of a scale which will be out of keeping with the context. Receptors represented by this viewpoint relate to walkers on the local PRow. The susceptibility of such a development is high for these receptors. The sensitivity to the type of development proposed of the receptors represented by this viewpoint is high.
- 7.261 The Proposed Development will result in the introduction of large new structures into the undeveloped field. These buildings will be located within the context of the neighbouring agricultural sheds and the M20. The view contains visual detractors but

the proposed buildings will be out of scale with the existing built elements within the view. The smaller buildings in the west of the Application Site will be visible from this point as will the roofs of the larger buildings in the east of the Application Site. The proposed buildings will form a small-scale element within the view and the impact will be localised. The duration of the impact will be long term. The magnitude of change will be low.

- 7.262 Receptors represented by this viewpoint were assessed as being of high sensitivity to change. The effect resulting from a change of low magnitude on these receptors will be of moderate/minor adverse significance.

#### View 7 - Forge Lane / Caring Lane

- 7.263 The viewpoint is located within the Len Valley Landscape of Local Value and is therefore of high to medium value. It is representative of users of the nearby PRow and takes in a rural landscape with few detractors. Susceptibility to the type of development proposed is high. The sensitivity of receptors represented by this view is high.

- 7.264 The roofs of the units in the west of the Application Site will be visible from this point, set away from the western boundary. The majority of the Proposed Development, including the larger buildings in the east of the Application Site, will be obscured within the dip in the landform. Only a small part of the Proposed Development will be visible and will be small scale in the view. The extent of the impact will be limited but will be long term. The magnitude of change will be low.

- 7.265 The sensitivity of receptors represented by this viewpoint were assessed as being of high sensitivity to change. Impacts of the magnitude predicted above will result in effects of moderate to minor adverse significance.

#### View 8 - A20 and Adjacent Dwellings

- 7.266 This viewpoint is located on the northern edge of the Len Valley Landscape of Local Valley and within the setting of the AONB and is therefore of high value. . This viewpoint is located on the A20 Ashford Road but is also representative of residents within the adjacent residential dwellings (particularly the Chestnuts and White Heath)

which are of high susceptibility. The current view is heavily influenced by the presence of the M20 and HS1 but the proposed buildings will be out of scale with the surroundings and will result in the introduction of large built structures into an area which is currently undeveloped. There are existing visual detractors in the vicinity, out of frame in this photograph, including the car wash. The susceptibility of receptors in this location are medium.

- 7.267 Receptors on the A20 are of low sensitivity but those within the houses are high.
- 7.268 The Proposed Development will result in the obstruction of long distance views from part of the A20 Ashford Road and some of the dwellings adjacent to the Application Site. It will result in the introduction of new built elements into a view which does not contain many at present. From the top storeys of residential dwellings, the Proposed Development is likely to form a major element, occupying the majority of the view and blocking longer distance views towards the Kent Downs AONB. In addition, areas of vehicle movement, such as car parks, will be brought close to the residences. Effects from the ground floor of residences and from gardens will depend on the nature of the existing boundary treatments but, where the Application Site and the Kent Downs AONB are visible, effects will be similar to those for higher storeys. The Proposed Development will alter this view to a notable degree by obstructing longer distance views and introducing large buildings which are out of scale with the surroundings, as well as the acoustic fence. The scale of the Proposed Development within the view will be large but the impact will be localised. Impacts will be long term and the magnitude of impact upon these views will be high.
- 7.269 Receptors on the A20 were assessed as being of low sensitivity to change whereas those within adjacent residential dwellings were assessed as being of high to medium sensitivity to change. These will combine to result in effects of major to moderate adverse significance on receptors in adjacent dwellings.

#### View 9 - Footpath to Woodcut Farm and Adjacent Dwellings

- 7.270 These receptors represent views from outside the Len Valley Landscape of Local Valley but form part of the setting of the AONB and are of high value. Although the M20 and HS1 form notable features within the view, the general character of the view is of a rural landscape with the Kent Downs AONB in the background. This view

represents residents within the adjacent dwellings and looks towards the Kent Downs AONB and is rural in nature with few visual detractors. The Proposed Development will result in the introduction of large buildings which are out of scale with the surroundings. The susceptibility of receptors in these locations to such a change is high. The sensitivity of these receptors to change is high.

- 7.271 The view is also representative of residences along the footpath, including Woodcut Farm, Little Woodcut, Pylegate, Woodcut Cottage, Winchmore and The Phoenix.
- 7.272 The Proposed Development will result in the introduction of large buildings but will not obscure long distance views towards the Kent Downs AONB. These buildings will be out of scale and context with other elements within the view. Effects from higher storeys will be greater. Views from ground level and from gardens will depend on the nature of boundary treatments. Where views of the Application Site are possible, effects will be as per those on views from upper storeys. The scale of the Proposed Development within this view will be large and long term but the extent will be localised. The magnitude of impact will be high.
- 7.273 Receptors represented by this viewpoint were assessed as being of high sensitivity to change. Impacts of high magnitude on receptors of high sensitivity will result in changes of major to moderate adverse significance.

#### View 10 - Fifth Tee at Leeds Castle

- 7.274 The view is located within the Grade II\* Parkland associated with Leeds Castle Grade I Listed Building. The value of such receptors are high. The receptors represented by this view are users of the private golf course and do not represent users of the PRow. The Proposed Development will result in the introduction of large buildings which are not present elsewhere in the view, other than Leeds Castle which is a cultural heritage asset of national significance. They will also feature in the centre of the view in the distant background of views towards the castle. The susceptibility of these receptors to the type of change proposed is high. The sensitivity of these receptors to change is high to medium.
- 7.275 The Proposed Development will result in the addition of new large buildings within the view. The buildings will be of a greater scale than other elements within the view

but will be mainly screened behind the intervening vegetation, even during winter months. The tops of the roofs will be visible above the treeline. The Proposed Development will form an intrusion into the view but will be a small to negligible scale element. Its location in the view behind Leeds Castle, which is the focus of the view, makes it more prominent than might otherwise be the case. The impact will be localised in extent and the duration long term. The magnitude of impact upon this view will be low to negligible.

- 7.276 Receptors represented by this location were assessed as being of medium to high sensitivity to change due to their high susceptibility. Impacts of low/negligible magnitude on receptors of medium to high sensitivity will result in effects of minor adverse significance.

#### View 11 - White Horse Wood Country Park

- 7.277 The value of this and similar viewpoints is very high due to their location within the Kent Downs AONB. Although development appears in the view, the Proposed Receptors represented by this viewpoint are users of the North Downs Way National Trail. Development will be of a greater scale than the surrounding development. Susceptibility of receptors at this location are high. The sensitivity of this viewpoint is therefore very high.
- 7.278 The Proposed Development is obscured from this viewpoint by Snarkhurst Wood and Hill which is located between the two locations. However, very small areas of the rooftops will be visible from this point, viewed above the tree line. Any visible development will form a negligible scale element within the view. However, the impact will occur over a wider area of the countryside and will be long term in duration. The magnitude of effects will be negligible.
- 7.279 Any impact of negligible magnitude will result in effects of negligible significance.

#### View 12 – North Downs Way at Cat's Mount

- 7.280 The value of this and similar viewpoints is very high due to their location within the Kent Downs AONB. Receptors represented by this viewpoint are users of the North Downs Way National Trail. Although development appears in the view, the Proposed



Development will be of a greater scale than the surrounding development. Susceptibility of receptors at this location are high. The sensitivity of this viewpoint is very high.

- 7.281 The rooftops of the larger buildings in the central and eastern area of the Application Site will be visible from this point. The rooftops of larger buildings within the Proposed Development as amended will be visible from this point but will form a small to negligible scale element within the view. The impact will occur over a wider area and will be long term in duration. Predicted impacts are of low to negligible magnitude.
- 7.282 Impacts of low to negligible magnitude on a receptor of high sensitivity will result in effects of moderate to negligible effects according to Table 7.5. Effects on receptors represented by this view are assessed as being of minor adverse significance.

View 13 – North Downs Way south west of Bolton’s Wood

- 7.283 The value of this and similar viewpoints is very high due to their location within the Kent Downs AONB. Receptors represented by this viewpoint are users of the North Downs Way National Trail. Although development appears in the view, the Proposed Development will be of a greater scale than the surrounding development. Susceptibility of receptors at this location are high. The sensitivity of this viewpoint is very high.
- 7.284 The roofs of the buildings within the Application Site and the tops of the walls of units in the central and eastern areas of the Application Site will be visible from this point. The Proposed Development will result in the introduction of new built elements within the view. These will be of a scale that is larger than other shed type structures in the area and of greater massing due to the number of buildings proposed. However, only part of these buildings will be visible and, due to the distance from the viewpoint, they will form a small-scale element within the view. The extent of the impact will be wide and the duration long term. The magnitude of impact on views represented by this viewpoint will be low to negligible.
- 7.285 Impacts of low to negligible magnitude on receptors of very high sensitivity are classed as being of moderate to negligible significance in Table 7.5. In this case, the

significance of effect on receptors represented by this viewpoint is assessed as being minor adverse.

View 14 – Hollingbourne Hill to the north east of Hollingbourne

- 7.286 The value of this and similar viewpoints is very high due to their location within the Kent Downs AONB. Receptors represented by this viewpoint are users of the North Downs Way National Trail. Although development appears in the view, the Proposed Development will be of a greater scale than the surrounding development. Susceptibility of receptors at this location are high. The sensitivity of this viewpoint is very high.
- 7.287 Woodcut Farm is visible in the view but the Application Site is hidden within the valley and is not visible from this point. The Proposed Development as amended will not be visible from this point therefore changes will be negligible.
- 7.288 Any impacts which constitutes no change will result in an effect of nil significance.

Views from M20

- 7.289 This viewpoint is not located within the Len Valley Landscape of Local Value but does form part of the setting of the AONB. Receptors represented by this viewpoint are travelling at speed along the motorway and as such are of very low susceptibility in visual assessment terms. There are few built elements within the view with the exception of the sheds of Woodcut Farm. The Proposed Development will result in the introduction of large buildings which will be out of scale with the surroundings. Susceptibility to such a change is medium. The sensitivity of receptors in this location is low to negligible.
- 7.290 The Proposed Development will result in a new area of built development in what is currently an open field. The existing sheds at Woodcut Farm provide some context for the proposed buildings but they will still be notably out of scale with the surrounding development. The change to the Application Site will be large and the Proposed Development will occupy a large part of the view. The scale of the Proposed Development within the view will be large but the extent will be limited. The magnitude of change is high.

7.291 The resulting effects will be of minor to negligible adverse significance.

Summary of Visual Effects

7.292 The assessed visual impact upon the 14 assessment viewpoints is summarised in Table 7.9 for ease of reference below:

**Table 7.9: Summary of Visual Effects During Operation**

View No.	Sensitivity of Receptor	Magnitude of Change	Significance of Effect
1	Very High	Low	Moderate Adverse
2	Very High	Negligible	Negligible Adverse
3	Very High	Medium to Low	Moderate Adverse
4	Medium	Low	Minor Adverse
5	High	Negligible	Negligible Adverse
6	High	Low	Moderate to Minor Adverse
7	High	Low	Moderate to Minor Adverse
8	High	High	Major to Moderate Adverse
9	High	High	Major to Moderate Adverse
10	High to Medium	Low to Negligible	Minor Adverse
11	Very High	Negligible	Negligible
12	Very High	Low to Negligible	Minor Adverse
13	Very High	Low to Negligible	Minor Adverse
14	Very High	Negligible	Negligible

View No.	Sensitivity of Receptor	Magnitude of Change	Significance of Effect
M20	Low to Negligible	High	Minor to Negligible Adverse

#### Summary of Impacts and Effects upon Visual Receptors

- 7.293 The views from the neighbouring higher ground, particularly those within the Kent Downs AONB, are of higher sensitivity to change. However, due to the intervening distance or the effect of intervening landform and vegetation, the magnitude of impact upon these views tends to be low. Impacts upon receptors which are closer to the Application Site tend to be of a greater magnitude but these receptors tend to be of lower sensitivity to change.
- 7.294 The two key exceptions are the predicted effects upon receptors represented by viewpoints 8 and 9. These viewpoints relate to receptors on the footpath to Woodcut Farm and on those within dwellings adjacent to the Application Site to the west and south. The proximity of the viewpoints to the Application Site means that the proposed buildings will form notable elements which will obstruct longer distance views towards the countryside beyond. The resulting predicted effects on these receptors are major/moderate adverse and are considered to be significant. Moderate adverse effects were also predicted on receptors represented by viewpoint 3 which includes walkers on the PRow on the edge of the Kent Downs AONB.
- 7.295 All the predicted impacts and effects will be adverse in nature as the Proposed Development will result in the introduction of large buildings which will be out of scale and context with much of their surroundings and will not contribute to local character.

#### **Mitigation Measures**

- 7.296 This section provides a description of the mitigation measures proposed to minimise the potential significant adverse effects identified by the assessment as set out previously. Mitigation measures reduce the severity of impacts, and hence the levels at which effects are considered significant. Mitigation measures are to be implemented for the construction phase but these measures do not relate specifically to landscape or visual impact and are referred to in the relevant subject chapters.

- 7.297 The final details of any mitigation measures are likely to be developed as part of compliance with planning conditions for the Proposed Development, and will form part of any detailed environmental management undertaken. The contractor and relevant statutory agencies may be involved in this, and measures relating to construction activities will be set out in a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP).

### ***Construction***

- 7.298 Depending on the timing of the commencement of construction works, it is possible that substantial areas of advance structural planting could be undertaken prior to commencement of the main body of building works. This is unlikely to take place before the site cut and fill exercise has been completed, and the young planting is unlikely to contribute any meaningful mitigating effects during the construction phase.
- 7.299 Hoarding is to be established around the boundary of the Application Site and this could be painted green or other similar hue with the possibility of a mural, e.g. of images of the completed scheme. This would provide a more pleasant frontage to the Application Site, particularly from the A20 Ashford Road.
- 7.300 Areas of topsoil will be stored on areas of lower ground where practicable to reduce visual impact. These will also be stored away from the neighbouring residences and the A20 Ashford Road.
- 7.301 The main contractor should be part of the 'Considerate Constructors Scheme', thereby agreeing to abide by the Code of Considerate Practice, designed to encourage best practice beyond statutory requirements on construction suite. The Code of Considerate Practice commits those sites and companies registered with the Scheme to care about appearance, respect the community, protect the environment, secure everyone's safety and value their workforce.

### ***Operation***

- 7.302 The mitigation measures proposed below follow the following hierarchy:

- Avoidance – e.g. remove the element from the scheme or move its location;
- Reduction – e.g. reduce height of buildings;
- Compensation – e.g. replacing a removed element with another one;
- Remediation – e.g. reducing visual impact through the addition of planting; and
- Enhancement – e.g. providing additional benefits over and above the baseline.

#### *Avoidance*

- 7.303 During the design process, buildings have been removed from the masterplan, reduced in size and relocated further away from sensitive receptors, such as the adjacent residences of Chestnuts, White Heath and Woodcut Farm. Larger buildings were relocated to the areas of lower ground, further away from the residential properties to the north west.

#### *Reduction*

- 7.304 During the design process, the building heights and amount of floor space have been reduced and more variety created within the building line, allowing more space for planting around and between buildings.

#### *Compensation*

- 7.305 Very few trees will be removed as part of the Proposed Development and these will be more than compensated for by the areas of new tree planting proposed. Further details of the trees to be removed are included within Appendix 6.2. The planting scheme is shown on the landscape masterplan (Appendix 7.3) and further details are included below.

#### *Remediation*

- 7.306 Two key types of remediation are proposed: planting and use of materials. These are outlined below in greater detail.

### Planting

- 7.307 In addition to the proposed buildings, the proposed masterplan (Appendix 7.3) includes large areas of tree and shrub planting between and around the buildings, and an extensive area of traditional grazed parkland and open woodland to the east, north and north west of Woodcut Farm. This planting will be in keeping with the surrounding landscape structure and will reinforce landscape character. It will also contribute to the greening and screening of the M20 corridor as highlighted within the published landscape character assessments. The woodlands and planting belts will take time to mature but the use of large scale native tree species will ensure that the visual impact of the Proposed Development will reduce significantly over time. A notable example of this is the nearby Maidstone Motorway Service Area at Junction 8 of the M20. The Maidstone Motorway Service Area includes a two-storey hotel, a large retail building, covered fuel station and lorry parking area. None of these elements are visible in the views described previously despite the prominent location of the Maidstone Motorway Service Area. This is due to the strong landscape infrastructure which has been established around and within the Maidstone Motorway Service Area.
- 7.308 The appraisal of the landscape baseline identified opportunities to contribute to the landscape structure of the study area by reversing the loss of hedgerows and trees and by adding new native planting where appropriate. The proposed masterplan includes extensive new areas of tree planting and retention and management of existing trees and hedgerows. The creation of large new areas of grazed parkland to the north-west of the Proposed Development will introduce a traditional character to the landscape. Extensive new areas of wetland will be created within the Application Site, together with retention and enhancement of the stream running through its centre, contributing to the landscape's 'blue network.'
- 7.309 The adverse visual impact of the M20/HS1 corridor is referred to in all the published landscape character assessments and there are opportunities to mitigate these impacts by the creation of extensive proposed areas of new tree planting. Trees and shrubs have little effect in reducing noise, but they are very effective in removing particulates generated by motor vehicle exhausts.

7.310 The selection of plant species to be introduced to the Proposed Development has considered the lists of plant species recommended in The Maidstone Landscape Character Assessment Supplement (2012)<sup>18</sup>. The planting will reinforce local distinctiveness and contribute to the existing landscape infrastructure. The selection of species for the Proposed Development might vary with local soil characteristics. Tables 7.10 and 7.11 provide species list recommended for LCA49 within which the Proposed Development is sited.

**Table 7.10: Woodland Mix**

Dry Central Areas: Common Name	% mix	Damp Areas and Watercourses: Common Name	% mix	Western End: Common Name	% mix
Broom ( <i>Cytisus scoparius</i> )	5	Alder ( <i>Alnus glutinosa</i> )	35	Ash ( <i>Fraxinus</i> )	5
Field Maple ( <i>Acer campestre</i> )	10	Guelder Rose ( <i>Viburnum opulus</i> )	10	Aspen ( <i>Populus</i> <i>ulus tremuloides</i> )	5
Gorse ( <i>Ulex europaeus</i> )	10	Hawthorn ( <i>Crataegus monogyna</i> )	20	Field Maple ( <i>Acer campestre</i> )	10
Guelder Rose ( <i>Viburnum opulus</i> )	5	Hazel ( <i>Corylus avellana</i> )	10	Hazel ( <i>Corylus avellana</i> )	10
Hazel ( <i>Corylus avellana</i> )	20	Sweet Gale ( <i>Myrica</i> )	10	Hornbeam ( <i>Carpinus betulus</i> )	30
Holly ( <i>Ilex aquifolium</i> )	10	Willow ( <i>Salix</i> )	15	Hawthorn ( <i>Crataegus monogyna</i> )	15
Sessile Oak ( <i>Quercus petraea</i> )	35			Holly ( <i>Ilex aquifolium</i> )	5
Spindle ( <i>Euonymus europaeus</i> )	5			Sessile Oak ( <i>Quercus petraea</i> )	10
				Sweet Gale ( <i>Myrica</i> )	10

**Table 7.11: Hedgerow Mix**

Common Name	% mix
Field Maple ( <i>Acer campestre</i> )	10
Guelder Rose ( <i>Viburnum opulus</i> )	5
Hawthorn ( <i>Crataegus monogyna</i> )	65
Hazel ( <i>Corylus avellana</i> )	5

<sup>18</sup> Maidstone Borough Council (2012) Maidstone Landscape Character Assessment Supplement 2012 (saved sections of the Landscape Character Assessment and Landscape Guidelines 2000)



Common Name	% mix
Sallow ( <i>Salix caprea</i> )	5
Spindle ( <i>Euonymus europaeus</i> )	5
Sweet Gale ( <i>Myrica</i> )	5

- 7.311 All species will be of local provenance where possible. Due to the emergence of Ash die-back disease since these guide species mixes were produced, Ash will be replaced with an alternative species of tree such as Field Maple or Hornbeam.

#### Use of Materials

- 7.312 One of the key issues which will determine the magnitude of impact upon views is the colour, type and reflectivity of the materials used. Whilst final selection of architectural materials will be subject to agreement with the local planning authority, building roofs will be finished in a material that is non-reflective, of a colour that is not visually assertive in the landscape, consistent with the tones of the surrounding landscape and nearby agricultural buildings, and within the grey/green/blue/brown spectrum as discussed further in Chapter 4. This can be achieved by testing the visual appearance of alternative colours and textures in the landscape by computer modelling. The submitted scheme shows horizontal banding of grey / greens on building elevations becoming progressively lighter in colour from the ground upwards, but retaining a darker roof.
- 7.313 There will be acoustic barriers installed on the Application Site to mitigate sound impacts from the Proposed Development. These will be constructed in timber which would be natural self-colour in appearance, rather than colour-stained. Further detail on the location of the acoustic barriers is provided in Chapter 11.

#### *Enhancement*

- 7.314 The landscape and planning policy baselines, assessed within previous sections of this chapter, identified opportunities to contribute to the landscape structure of the study area by reversing the loss of hedgerows and trees and by adding new native planting where appropriate. Opportunities to contribute to the 'blue network' through the protection, enhancement and creation of waterbodies were also raised. The

proposed masterplan will include new areas of tree planting and will involve the reinforcement and management of existing trees and hedgerows. New areas of wetland are planned along the route of the stream running through the centre of the Application Site.

- 7.315 In addition, a large area of grazed parkland are proposed to the west and north west of the main development footprint (outside of the Application Site) as shown on the proposed landscape masterplan (Appendix 7.3), on land east and north of Woodcut Farm. This will consist of large native species canopy trees set within a grazed parkland setting, reintroducing a traditional characteristic appearance to the landscape, as well as a new habitat type. This will comprise 2.37 Ha of Wooded Paddock, 6.77 Ha of Grazed Parkland (Woodland Pasture) and 1.89Ha of Parkland to be gifted to a land trust.
- 7.316 The visual impact of the M20/HS1 transport corridor is referred to in all of the character assessments, and there are opportunities to reduce this impact through the use of structural planting within the Application Site.

### **Residual Effects**

- 7.317 Following implementation of the mitigation measures set out in the previous section, any residual effects are described below and are summarised in Table 7.12.

### **Construction**

- 7.318 No significant construction phase effects were predicted. Mitigation measures have been proposed but these will be unlikely to change the significance of effects. This is due to the nature of the available views, i.e. from elevation locations. As a result, disguising the Application Site by using hoarding will not result in the successful screening of the construction activities from the distant elevated views. However, the hoarding will help in close distance views from the neighbouring dwellings, Woodcut Lane and the A20 Ashford Road. From these locations, hoarding will reduce the degree to which the effects are adverse but will cause obstruction of long distance views. Taller plant and areas of spoil will still likely be visible above the proposed hoarding. Therefore, residual construction effects will be as per those without mitigation measures implemented.

### **Operation**

- 7.319 Significant effects were identified on the local landscape character and on receptors represented by viewpoints 8 and 9 (i.e. residents living adjacent to the Application Site) when assessed at year 0. Effects of moderate adverse significance were also predicted on viewpoint 3 which represents walkers on the PRow in the area of the Kent Downs AONB closest to the Application Site.
- 7.320 The example of the Maidstone Motorway Service Area demonstrates that a strong planting scheme can ensure a development has a negligible impact upon available views from the surrounding area and on the local landscape character. This form of planting will take time to mature and for mitigation to start taking an effect at an early stage the key structural planting works will be carried out as soon as practicable, or timed to relate to phases of construction. This added landscape structure will contribute to the wooded character of the valley and reduce views of the M20/HS1 corridor in the landscape.
- 7.321 The mitigation set out above will mitigate most effects upon views and will potentially create beneficial effects through the restoration and enhancement of the landscape structure of the area, consistent with the recommendations of the published landscape character assessments and prevailing planning policy. However, it is not possible to mitigate against obstruction of views.
- 7.322 Consideration to the siting of buildings within the Application Site is unlikely to significantly reduce the degree of obstruction within the view. The introduction of strong areas of planting will not reduce the magnitude of the impact but will reduce the susceptibility of the receptor by replacing a more incongruous element (i.e. large buildings) with an element already occurring widely in the view (i.e. trees), therefore reducing sensitivity to the type of change proposed.
- 7.323 Residual effects of major/moderate adverse significance will remain for views from neighbouring properties, including Chestnuts, White Heath, Woodcut Farm, Little Woodcut, Pylegate, Woodcut Cottage, Winchmore and The Phoenix. However, the addition of a strong planting scheme will reduce some of the adverse nature of these effects.

**Table 7.12: Summary of Residual Effects**

Development Phase	Description of Effect	View	Pre-mitigation Significance (year 0)	Mitigation Measure	Post – Mitigation Significance (year 10-15 for operational effects)	
Construction	Local Landscape		Moderate Adverse	There are no mitigation measures for these effects	Moderate Adverse	
	Site Character		Moderate to Minor Adverse		Moderate to Minor Adverse	
	Views from Kent Downs AONB		1	Minor Adverse	Due to the elevated nature of the viewpoints, mitigation measures are unlikely to change the significance of the effects although early planting will soften later effects.	Minor Adverse
			2	Negligible		Negligible
			3	Minor Adverse		Minor Adverse
			11	Negligible		Negligible
			12	Negligible		Negligible
			13	Negligible		Negligible
			14	Negligible		Negligible
	View from countryside to south east	4	Minor to Negligible Adverse		Minor to Negligible Adverse	
	Views from grounds of Leeds Castle		5	Negligible Adverse		Negligible Adverse
			10	Minor Adverse		Minor Adverse
	Views from countryside to the south		6	Minor Adverse		Minor Adverse
			7	Minor Adverse		Minor Adverse
	Views from adjacent properties		8	Moderate Adverse	Hoarding will prevent some views of the activities within the site but will cause obstruction of longer distance views.	Moderate Adverse
9			Moderate Adverse	Moderate Adverse		
	Views from M20		Minor to Negligible	There are no mitigation measures for these effects	Minor to Negligible	

Development Phase	Description of Effect	View	Pre-mitigation Significance (year 0)	Mitigation Measure	Post – Mitigation Significance (year 10-15 for operational effects)	
Operation	Local Landscape Character		Moderate Adverse	Dense native planting around and between the buildings, as well as additional parkland planting to the west in the adjacent fields. Improvement of waterways and increase in wetland areas.  Planting around and between buildings forms a screening effect from nearby views but also breaks up the mass of the built form when viewed from longer distances.	Moderate to Minor Adverse	
	Site Character		Moderate to Minor Adverse		Minor Adverse	
	Views from Kent Downs AONB	1			Moderate Adverse	Minor to Negligible Beneficial effects relate to the greening of the motorway corridor, reducing its dominance in the landscape. Where buildings are visible, this will remain as an adverse effect.
			2		Negligible	Negligible
			3		Moderate Adverse	Minor to Negligible
			11		Negligible	Negligible
			12		Minor Adverse	Negligible
			13		Minor Adverse	Negligible
			14		Negligible	Negligible
	View from countryside to south east	4			Minor Adverse	Minor to Negligible Beneficial effects relate to the greening of the motorway corridor, reducing its dominance in the landscape. Where buildings are visible, this will remain as an adverse effect.

Development Phase	Description of Effect	View	Pre-mitigation Significance (year 0)	Mitigation Measure	Post – Mitigation Significance (year 10-15 for operational effects)
	Views from grounds of Leeds Castle	5	Negligible	<p>Planting around and between buildings forms a screening effect from nearby views but also breaks up the mass of the built form when viewed from longer distances.</p> <p>Planting along boundaries and additional parkland planting in neighbouring fields to north</p>	<p>Negligible</p> <p>Beneficial effects relate to the greening of the motorway corridor, reducing its dominance in the landscape. Where buildings are visible, this will remain as an adverse effect.</p>
		10	Minor Adverse		
	Views from countryside to the south	6	Moderate to Minor Adverse		<p>Minor</p> <p>Beneficial effects relate to the greening of the motorway corridor, reducing its dominance in the landscape. Where buildings are visible, this will remain as an adverse effect.</p>
		7	Moderate to Minor Adverse		
	Views from adjacent properties	8	Major to Moderate Adverse		<p>Major to Moderate Adverse</p> <p>Planting around the buildings will reduce some of the negative elements of their visual impact but there is no mitigation against obstruction of views.</p>
		9	Major to Moderate Adverse		
	Views from M20		Minor to Negligible		Negligible

## Summary

### *Key Issues Arising from Planning Policy*

- 7.324 The planning policies that are of relevance to this assessment generally relate to the protection of landscape character and assets, and the protection of the Areas of Local Landscape Value and the setting of the Kent Downs AONB. Policy EMP 1(4) sets out clear parameters for the design of any masterplan within the Application Site and states that development must respond to the findings of a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment.

### *Landscape Designations*

- 7.325 The most important landscape designation in proximity to the Application Site is the Kent Downs AONB. This designation includes land north of the M20/HS1 corridor. The Application Site is not within the AONB designation, but forms part of its setting.
- 7.326 In the Maidstone Borough Local Plan (2000), the area of the Application Site is included within an area designated as a Special Landscape Area (SLA). This is a dated policy surviving from the Kent Structure Plan, which is no longer in existence. Far less weight is therefore attached to this local policy than the national AONB policy. The Site has not been included within the area designated as a Landscape of Local Value in the merging Local Plan.

### *Key Headlines from the Character Assessment*

- 7.327 The Kent character assessment identifies the character area in which the Site is located as being in very poor condition and of medium sensitivity. The local level assessments identify the landscape character as being of moderate sensitivity.
- 7.328 The character assessments relating to the area of the Application Site describe the influence exerted by the major transport routes and the urban edge of Maidstone. Commercial activities along the A20 Ashford Road have further contributed to the pervasion of an urban fringe character to the immediate area. This is at odds with the high-quality landscape of the Grade II\* Parkland at Leeds Castle, and the Kent Downs AONB.

### *Visual Accessibility*

- 7.329 The nature of the local topography means that views down towards the lower lying land and the Len Valley in the location of the Application Site can be gained from locations on the higher ground of the Kent Downs AONB and Greensand Ridge. The AONB designation and the high occurrence of Public Rights of Way (PRoW) routes in the area, mean that there are a number of visual receptors of high susceptibility and value. Views from within the valley are more restricted due to the strong landscape structure and the gently undulating nature of the Greensand Ridge. The undulating topography creates isolated views which allow glimpses of the Application Site from a wider area.
- 7.330 Overall, the Proposed Development has a visual envelope of over 3km from the high points on the Kent Downs AONB escarpment. This is mainly due to the comparative heights of these viewpoints relative to the Application Site. Glimpsed views are also possible from within the undulating landscape of the Greensand Ridge. From these locations, the Application Site forms a small element in the view. More immediate views towards the Site are possible from the A20, M20 and the properties immediately adjoining the Site.

### ***Residual Effects***

#### *Construction*

- 7.331 No significant construction effects were identified as part of the assessment. Although mitigation measures for the construction phase visual impacts are predicted, due to the elevated nature of the viewpoints, mitigation measures are unlikely to change the significance of the effects. Hoarding will prevent some views of the activities within the site from the neighbouring residential properties but will cause obstruction of longer distance views.

#### *Operation*

- 7.332 The planting scheme will reduce the visual impacts of the Proposed Development and will also be used to improve upon the existing visual baseline.



- 7.333 The approaches outlined above will mitigate against most impacts upon views and will have the potential to create beneficial effects through the restoration and enhancement of the landscape structure of the area, in line with the recommendations of the published landscape character assessments and the prevailing planning policy. However, it is not possible to mitigate against obstruction of views.
- 7.334 Significant adverse effects will remain on receptors within the adjacent dwellings and represented by viewpoints 8 and 9. Such residual impacts and effects are common for receptors in close proximity to development sites. The introduction of strong areas of structural planting will reduce the degree to which the Proposed Development will be adverse but is unlikely to change the magnitude of impacts and therefore significance of effects. It is also likely that, particularly until planting has matured, there will be residual impacts and effects on views from the local area but these will not be significant.

### **Conclusion**

- 7.335 The Proposed Development will have an impact upon the surrounding landscape and on views from the local area, including the Kent Downs AONB. For receptors within dwellings adjacent to the Application Site, these effects are predicted to be 'significant'. The majority of predicted effects are assessed not to be significant, and there is scope to reduce them further during detailed design by careful choice of materials and through comprehensive planting. The example of the nearby motorway services (MSA) demonstrates that large buildings can be entirely screened from view through the use of planting, but those at the Proposed Development are larger than those at the services site, and cover a greater geographical area. Although no significant effects were identified upon Kent Downs AONB or the North Downs SLA (apart from those from the adjacent dwellings), effects of moderate significance were identified. Although these effects are not assessed as being significant, they have been accounted for when implementing mitigation measures.
- 7.336 The proposed planting scheme will, in the long term, improve upon the existing landscape structure, increase the quantum of trees, shrubs and hedgerow on the Application Site, and reduce the visual impact of the M20/HS1 corridor, albeit within the context of a developed site. This will be in line with the existing planning policy

and published landscape character assessments, but the planting works will not entirely screen the Proposed Development to all views.

7.337 Table 7.13 sets out the assessment of likely significant effects for the landscape and visual impact assessment.

**Table 7.13: Summary of the Likely Significant Effects for Landscape and Visual Impact**

Receptor/ Affected Group	View	Sensitivity of Receptor	Effect	Magnitude / Spatial Extent / Duration (Year 0)	Significance of Effect (Year 0)	Mitigation	Residual Magnitude of Impact (Year 15)	Significance of Residual Effect (Year 15)
<b>Construction</b>								
Local Landscape Character		High	Introduction of land use which is not characteristic of area	Medium / Local / Short term	Moderate Adverse	No mitigation measures available	Medium	Moderate Adverse
Site Character		High to Medium	Introduction of new built elements and supporting elements into rural fields	Medium / Immediate Area / Short term	Moderate to Minor Adverse		Medium	Moderate to Minor Adverse
Views from Kent Downs AONB	1	Very High	Intrusion	Low to Negligible / Wide / Short term	Minor Adverse	Due to the elevated nature of the viewpoints, mitigation measures are unlikely to change the significance of the effects. The proposed hoarding will still form an incongruous element within views.	Low to Negligible	Minor Adverse
	2	Very High	Intrusion	Negligible / Wide / Short term	Negligible		Negligible	Negligible
	3	Very High	Intrusion	Low to Negligible / Wide / Short term	Minor Adverse		Low to Negligible	Minor Adverse
	11	Very High	Intrusion	Negligible / Wide / Short term	Negligible		Negligible	Negligible
	12	Very High	Intrusion	Negligible / Wide / Short term	Negligible		Negligible	Negligible
	13	Very High	Intrusion	Negligible / Wide / Short term	Negligible		Negligible	Negligible
	14	Very High	Intrusion	Negligible / Wide / Short term	Negligible		Negligible	Negligible

Receptor/ Affected Group	View	Sensitivity of Receptor	Effect	Magnitude / Spatial Extent / Duration (Year 0)	Significance of Effect (Year 0)	Mitigation	Residual Magnitude of Impact (Year 15)	Significance of Residual Effect (Year 15)
View from countryside to south east	4	Medium	Intrusion	Low to Negligible / Local / Short term	Minor to Negligible Adverse		Low to Negligible	Minor to Negligible Adverse
Views from grounds of Leeds Castle	5	High	Intrusion	Negligible / Local / Short term	Negligible Adverse		Low to Negligible	Negligible
	10	High to Medium	Intrusion	Low to Negligible / Local / Short term	Minor Adverse		Low to Negligible	Minor Adverse
Views from countryside to the south	6	High	Intrusion	Low to Negligible / Local / Short term	Minor Adverse		Low to Negligible	Minor Adverse
	7	High	Intrusion	Low to Negligible / Local / Short term	Minor Adverse		Low to Negligible	Minor Adverse
Views from adjacent properties	8	High	Obstruction and Intrusion	Medium / Immediate Area / Short term	Moderate Adverse		Hoarding will prevent some views of the activities within the site but will cause obstruction of longer distance views.	Medium
	9	High	Obstruction and Intrusion	Medium / Immediate Area / Short term	Moderate Adverse	Medium		Moderate Adverse
Views from M20		Low to Negligible	Obstruction and Intrusion	Medium / Immediate Area / Short term	Minor to Negligible Adverse	No mitigation measures available	Medium	Minor to Negligible Adverse

Receptor/ Affected Group	View	Sensitivity of Receptor	Effect	Magnitude / Spatial Extent / Duration (Year 0)	Significance of Effect (Year 0)	Mitigation	Residual Magnitude of Impact (Year 15)	Significance of Residual Effect (Year 15)
Operation								
Local Landscape Character		High to Medium	Introduction of land use which is not characteristic of area	High to Medium / Local / Long- Term	Moderate Adverse	Creation of new areas of planting within the development and in areas to the west to reinforce local landscape character.	Medium	Moderate to Minor Adverse
Site Character		Medium	Introduction of new built elements and supporting elements into rural fields	High to Medium / Immediate Area / Long Term	Moderate to Minor Adverse		High	Minor Adverse
Views from Kent Downs AONB	1	Very High	Intrusion	Low / Wide / Long-Term	Moderate Adverse	Planting around and between buildings forms a screening effect from nearby views but also breaks up the mass of the built form when viewed from longer distances	Low	Minor to Negligible Adverse
	2	Very High	Intrusion	Negligible / Wide / Long Term	Negligible		Negligible	Negligible
	3	Very High	Intrusion	Medium to Low / Wide / Long Term	Moderate Adverse		Low	Minor to Negligible Adverse
	11	Very High	Intrusion	Negligible / Wide / Long term	Negligible		Negligible	Negligible
	12	Very High	Intrusion	Low to Negligible / Wide / Long Term	Minor Adverse		Negligible	Negligible
	13	Very High	Intrusion	Low to Negligible / Wide / Long Term	Minor Adverse		Negligible	Negligible
	14	Very High	Intrusion	Negligible / Wide / Long term	Negligible Adverse		Negligible	Negligible

Receptor/ Affected Group	View	Sensitivity of Receptor	Effect	Magnitude / Spatial Extent / Duration (Year 0)	Significance of Effect (Year 0)	Mitigation	Residual Magnitude of Impact (Year 15)	Significance of Residual Effect (Year 15)
View from countryside to south east	4	Medium	Intrusion	Low / Local / Long-Term	Minor Adverse	Planting along boundaries will screen some views of the development.	Low	Minor to Negligible Adverse
Views from grounds of Leeds Castle	5	High	Intrusion	Negligible / Local / Long- Term	Negligible		Low to Negligible	Negligible
	10	High to Medium	Intrusion	Low to Negligible / Local / Long term	Minor Adverse		Low to Negligible	Minor to Negligible Adverse
Views from countryside to the south	6	High	Intrusion	Low / Intermediate / Long-Term	Moderate to Minor Adverse		Low	Minor Adverse
	7	High	Intrusion	Low / Intermediate / Long-Term	Moderate to Minor Adverse		Low	Minor Adverse
Views from adjacent properties	8	High	Obstruction and Intrusion	High / Immediate / Long-Term	<b>Major to Moderate Adverse</b>		High	<b>Major to Moderate Adverse (significant)</b>
	9	High	Obstruction and Intrusion	High / Immediate / Long-Term	<b>Major to Moderate Adverse</b>		High	<b>Major to Moderate Adverse (significant)</b>
Views form the M20		Low to Negligible	Obstruction and Intrusion	High / Immediate / Long Term	Minor to Negligible Adverse	Negligible	Negligible	