COLEBROOKE PARK, TUNBRIDGE WELLS

Proposed Office Campus

LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL APPRAISAL

October 2017

Jon Etchells Consulting
Orchard House
Wimbish Manor Estate
Fowlmere Road
Shepreth
SG8 6QP
01763 269946
COLEBROOKE PARK, TUNBRIDGE WELLS

Proposed Office Campus

LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL ASSESSMENT

October 2017

CONTENTS

1. Introduction and Methodology 1
2. The Baseline Situation 3
3. The Proposed Development 35
4. Potential Landscape and Visual Effects 38
5. Summary and Conclusions 45

Appendix A ~ Methodology

Figures:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Following Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Figure 1</td>
<td>Location Plan</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 2</td>
<td>Aerial Photograph and Photograph Viewpoints</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1. INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

1.1 General

1.1.1 This report has been prepared in connection with the promotion for development as an office campus of a site at Colebrooke Park, on the north eastern edge of Tunbridge Wells, in Kent. The site lies within the administrative area of Tunbridge Wells Borough Council (TWBC), and its location is shown on Figure 1.

1.1.2 The site is the extensive parkland curtilage of Colebrooke House, which is a large, unlisted property constructed in the 19th century. The site is enclosed by woodland and mature trees on all sides, and adjoins the recently completed A21 dual carriageway, which runs just to the east of the site. The road improvement works involved the removal of some Ancient Woodland from what was the south eastern part of the site, and as part of the works there will be extensive compensatory woodland planting to the north, south and west of the site, further enclosing it over time. The A21 improvement works have also provided a new access to the site, directly from the new Fairthorne junction to the north.

1.1.3 The site lies within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), which extends to the existing Limits to Built Development (as shown on the Local Plan Proposals Map) of Tunbridge Wells to the west, and is also within the Green Belt.

1.1.4 There are no firm or detailed proposals for development of the site at the moment, and this report therefore takes the form of a high level, broad brush appraisal of potential landscape and visual effects and the potential suitability of the site for office development in landscape terms, rather than a full and detailed landscape and visual impact assessment.

1.1.5 This report provides information on the character and quality of the landscape of and around the site, and the likely landscape and visual effects which would result from the proposed development, including effects on the AONB landscape and on the purposes of including land within the Green Belt, in order to inform TWBC and assist with their consideration of the potential allocation of the site for development.

1.1.6 The appraisal of potential landscape and visual effects has been undertaken by Jon Etchells Consulting (JEC) - a practice registered with the Landscape Institute, with extensive experience of landscape design and assessment, particularly in Kent.
Colebrooke Park, Tunbridge Wells
Proposed Office Campus

Landscape and Visual Appraisal

Figure 1 ~ Location Plan and Photograph Viewpoints

Photograph viewpoints and direction of view
See Figure 2 for remaining viewpoints
1.2 Methodology

1.2.1 In landscape and visual assessments, a distinction is normally drawn between landscape effects (i.e. effects on the character or quality of the landscape, irrespective of whether there are any views of the landscape, or viewers to see them) and visual effects (i.e. effects on people’s views of the landscape, principally from residential properties, but also from public rights of way and other areas with public access). Thus, a development may have extensive landscape effects but few visual effects (if, for example, there are no properties or public viewpoints), or few landscape effects but significant visual effects (if, for example, the landscape is already degraded or the development is not out of character with it, but can clearly be seen from many residential properties).

1.2.2 The methodology followed is as set out in the ‘Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment’, produced jointly by the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment and the Landscape Institute (‘the GLVIA’, 1995, revised 2002 and again in 2013). This methodology is suitable for use in more general appraisals of potential site suitability as well as detailed assessments of development proposals. The document ‘Landscape Character Assessment, Guidance for England and Scotland, 2002’ (The Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage) also stresses the need for a holistic assessment of landscape character, including physical, biological and social factors. The detailed methodology used is set out in Appendix A.

1.2.3 The site visit was undertaken in September 2017, and photographs were taken from within the site and from publicly accessible points in the area around it. It has therefore not been possible to assess the site in the winter, when deciduous vegetation is not in leaf and when views tend to be more open, but judgements have been made about how effects may vary in the winter, based on observation of the vegetation within and around the site and on experience of the changes in terms of local landscape character and visibility which occur with the seasons.

1.3 Structure and Coverage of this Report

1.3.1 Section 2 of this report describes the baseline situation in terms of the existing site and the character and quality of the surrounding landscape. Section 3 describes the proposed development in terms of the proposed buildings and also the accompanying landscape proposals for the site. Section 4 sets out the in-principle landscape and visual effects which would be likely to result from the development, and a summary and conclusions are provided in Section 5.
2. THE BASELINE SITUATION

2.1 Landscape Context

Site Location and Boundaries

2.1.1 The site is on the north eastern edge of Tunbridge Wells, with a sloping grassed area used for events to its west (with the Kingstanding Way/ North Farm employment area beyond that) and the widened A21 just to its east. It is outside the Limits to Built Development as shown on the Local Plan Proposals Map, but is in effect the large curtilage to Colebrooke House, and there are two other properties along its north eastern side, between the site and the A21. The improved A21, with its flyover above the Longfield Road junction, creates a visual and physical barrier, and the site and the area to its west relate more closely to the urban area to the west than they do to the wider countryside to the east, beyond the A21.

2.1.2 The site is well enclosed by mature trees and woodland on each side, and its boundaries are described below:

- The northern boundary extends along the entrance drive up to the new Fairthorne junction on the A21 (see Photograph 1), and the drive is lined by mature trees (mainly birch, with other parkland trees to the east and more open land which is being replanted as woodland as part of the A21 works to the west - see Photographs 11 to 13). To the west of the drive the boundary runs along the north side of a more open area within the site, and is marked by a row of tall birch trees around 9m in height.

- The eastern boundary runs along the west side of the curtilages of two detached properties which lie between the site and the A21 (Garden Cottage to the north and the Coach House to the south), before returning to the east to run along the new A21 highway boundary, where it is marked by a 2 to 3m high timber noise barrier (see Photographs 2 and 3). Inside that fence line is a belt of mature trees including oak and beech which is the remaining part of a strip of Ancient Woodland which formerly ran alongside the old A21, and has now been substantially removed to facilitate the road widening (see Photograph 4).

- The southern boundary is marked by a broad belt of native species thicket woodland around 40m in width and up to 15m in height, comprising oak, field maple, cherry, sweet chestnut and rowan (see Photographs 5 and 6). The
Landscape and Visual Appraisal

Colebrooke Park, Tunbridge Wells
Proposed Office Campus

Figure 2 ~ Aerial Photograph and Photograph Viewpoints
woodland is dense but some of the trees are at close centres and in places there is little understorey - the woodland would benefit from some management to encourage understorey vegetation, which would also provide an improved screen at lower levels and in the winter.

- The western boundary is formed by a similar belt of woodland, broadening at its central point where there is a group of mature limes within the site on its eastern edge, and narrowing towards the north.

**Existing Land Use and Vegetation Within the Site**

2.1.3 Within the boundaries described above, the site comprises, from north to south:

- An area of parkland trees and woodland between the entrance drive and the rear of the house, including some mature oak, pine, beech, sweet chestnut and pine, with some rhododendron understorey and other areas grassed (see Photographs 12 and 13).

- To the west of the drive, in the north western part of the site, a more open grassed area exposed to views from the west and with a small maintenance compound at its eastern end, adjacent to the drive. There is a group of tall mature lime trees roughly in the centre of this area (see Photograph 10).

- To the south of this area (and to the west of the house) is an area of mature trees including beech, pine, sweet chestnut and birch within which there is a hard surfaced tennis court (see Photograph 18).

- To the east of this area is the house - this is a large, brick-built 19th century mansion with two tall storeys, tall chimneys and steeply pitched slate roofs (see Photographs 14 and 23). It faces just to the west of south, with its southern façade overlooking an area of formal lawns and shrubs, to the south of which is a brick ha-ha, which separates the formal gardens from the parkland to the south (see Photographs 16, 17 and 21). To the north of the house is the vehicle access and service areas, with some areas of lawn leading to the north into the woodland. To the west of the house there is an open air swimming pool, and to the east there are some tall gates leading to the former eastern access drive (see Photograph 15). There are also some tall trees including oak and pine around this side of the house, which provide an effective screen to the two adjoining properties.

- To the south of the house, with the ha-ha along its northern side and the wooded boundaries described above to its east, south and west, is a large
area of parkland, measuring around 170m from north to south and up to 190m from east to west. This contains a number of fine specimen trees, mainly large parkland oaks, but also including pine and birch (see Photographs 17, 19 and 20 to 23). The trees appear to be in good condition, though there is one large dead oak tree just to the east of centre within the parkland. There are also some more recently planted trees, including beech and ash.

*The Surrounding Area*

2.1.4 The area around the site has been strongly affected by the recent A21 improvement works, and is as follows:

- To the north of the site is the new Fairthorne junction, and beyond that is the extensive Ancient Woodland of Well Wood. To the north west of the site, between it and Well Wood, is an area of ongoing woodland planting which is part of the A21 mitigation and compensation works (see Photograph 7).

- The widened A21 runs immediately to the east of the site, and beyond that is the extensive woodland area of Pembury Walks.

- To the south of the site is another large area of ongoing woodland planting as part of the A21 works, between the site and the Longfield Road junction, and to the south of Longfield Road is the extensive area of Robingate Wood.

- To the west of the site there is a further area of ongoing A21 woodland planting, beyond which is the remainder of the sloping grassed field used in the past for a variety of events (see Photographs 8 and 9). To the west of that field are the retail and employment buildings along Kingstanding Way, set down at a lower level than the adjoining field and with a small block of ancient woodland between the buildings and the field.

2.1.5 It can be seen from the above that the site (which itself contains significant enclosing perimeter woodland) is also enclosed (or will be once it has established) by new woodland planting to the north, south and west, and is further contained by large areas of woodland in the wider landscape to the north, east and south. The landscape is more open to the west of the site, but only for a short distance as far as the urban edge, and this is not open countryside.
Topography

2.1.6 The site slopes gradually down from north to south, with levels just below 105m AOD (above Ordnance Datum, or mean sea level) around the house and around 100m AOD in the centre of the parkland.

2.2.7 Around the site the land is undulating to the north (with the natural landform altered by the grade-separated Fairthorne junction with its underpass beneath the A21) and falls away generally to the east, beyond the A21. The land is broadly level along the A21 to the south of the site, though again with an artificial landform for the flyover across the Longfield Road junction, but falls away markedly to the west, with levels around 70m AOD at Kingstanding Way to the west of the site. The land continues to fall into the urban area along Longfield Road but then rises again on the far side of the railway line towards Southborough.

Public Rights of Way

2.1.8 There are no Public Rights of Way within or close to the site, and the nearest route is a public footpath which runs to the north of the site, from the new Fairthorne junction to the west, down the slope towards the north end of Kingstanding Way. There are also other routes within the Pembury Walks area, to the east of the A21, but none with any significant views towards the site.
2. View north to the site from the north end of the Longfield Road flyover on the A21. The site is behind the trees and noise barrier on the left of the road. September 2017.

3. View south west across the A21 as it passes the site. One of the detached properties adjacent to the site can be seen over the noise barrier, and the site is beyond that property, screened by the woodland. September 2017.
4. View south east from within the parkland in the south eastern part of the site, showing glimpse views of A21 traffic though the perimeter woodland. September 2017.

5. View north towards the site across the Longfield Road junction on the A21. The site is behind the woodland on the right of the view, which is along its southern boundary. September 2017.
6. View north east towards the site from the edge of the events field near Longfield Road - the site is well screened by the woodland along its southern boundary. Two images combined, September 2017.

7. View south towards the site from the public footpath to its north - the site is well screened by perimeter trees and woodland, and A21 planting is taking place within this area. Two images combined, September 2017.
8. View south west from the western site boundary, showing the recent A21 planting in the middle ground and the events field beyond that, with the edge of Tunbridge Wells in the background. Two images combined, September 2017.

9. View west from the western site boundary, showing commercial buildings at the north end of Kingstanding Way to the right of the small block of woodland which is on the edge of the urban area, on the far side of the events field. Two images combined, September 2017.
10. View west from the north western part of the site, showing the group of mature lime trees in the centre of the view and the birch trees along the northern site boundary on the right. Two images combined, September 2017.

12. View north along the access drive, showing the line of birch trees alongside the access. Two images combined, September 2017.

13. View south along the access drive, showing the birch trees on the right and parkland trees to the north of the house on the left. Two images combined, September 2017.

15. View east through the metal gates on the eastern site boundary. Two images combined, September 2017.
16. View south east from just to the south of the house - note the parkland vegetation and the lack of any views out of the site. Two images combined, September 2017.

17. View west from just to the south of the house - note the parkland vegetation and the lack of any views out of the site. Two images combined, September 2017.
18. View west to the tennis court in the north western part of the site. Two images combined, September 2017.

19. View south from just outside the house, showing the perimeter woodland along the southern site boundary on the far side of the open parkland. Two images combined, September 2017.
20. View south east across the parkland from the southern edge of the formal lawns to the south of the house. Two images combined, September 2017.

21. View east along the line of the ha-ha to the south of the house, with the parkland on the right. Two images combined, September 2017.
22. View south east within the parkland - most of the mature trees appear to be in good condition, but there is one dead oak. Two images combined, September 2017.


2.2 Landscape Character

2.2.1 In terms of wider landscape character, the site lies in the northern part of the ‘High Weald’ National Character Area (NCA) - NCAs are identified by Natural England, and are described on their website as ‘areas that share similar landscape characteristics, and which follow natural lines in the landscape rather than administrative boundaries, making them a good decision-making framework for the natural environment.’ The High Weald is
a large character area, extending from Horsham and Crawley in the west to Tenterden in the east, and from Tonbridge in the north to Bexhill in the south.

2.2.2 Key characteristics of the NCA are stated to include:

- **‘A dispersed settlement pattern of hamlets and scattered farmsteads and medieval ridgetop villages founded on trade and non-agricultural rural industries, with a dominance of timber-framed buildings with steep roofs often hipped or half-hipped, and an extremely high survival rate of farm buildings dating from the 17th century or earlier.**

- **Extensive broadleaved woodland cover with a very high proportion of ancient woodland with high forest, small woods and shaws, plus steep valleys with gill woodland.**

- **Small and medium-sized irregularly shaped fields enclosed by a network of hedgerows and wooded shaws, predominantly of medieval origin and managed historically as a mosaic of small agricultural holdings typically used for livestock grazing.’**

2.2.3 Further description includes the following:

“The distinctive pattern of dispersed historic settlements survives although the character of farmsteads has changed with the widespread conversion of traditional farm buildings to dwellings and the associated disappearance of agriculture and industry from farmsteads. The changing character of the farmsteads and surrounding landscapes through gentrification ultimately also leads to a changing character of wildlife in terms of the assemblage of species present.

Typically, towns such as Tunbridge Wells and villages such as Goudhurst are sited on the ridges, with a dispersed pattern of historic farmsteads and hamlets covering the wooded valleys and field systems. Vernacular buildings have a strong local character influenced by a variation in locally available building materials, resulting in an abundance of weatherboard, brick, tile, and stone or rendered buildings.’

2.2.4 The NCA Profile includes a number of ‘Statements of Environmental Opportunity’ (SEOs) which seek to guide future change. SEO3 is to:

‘Maintain and enhance the distinctive dispersed settlement pattern, parkland and historic pattern and features of the routeways of the High Weald, encouraging the use of locally characteristic materials and Wealden practices to ensure that any development recognises and retains the distinctiveness, biodiversity, geodiversity and heritage assets present, reaffirm sense of place and enhance the ecological function of routeways to improve the connectivity of habitats and provide wildlife corridors.’

2.2.5 The NCA Profile also includes a series of ‘Landscape Opportunities’, which include the following:
• ‘Maintain and enhance the distinctive pattern of dispersed settlement of historic farmsteads, hamlets and villages, to promote sustainable development in rural locations and meet local needs for affordable and where possible land based workers, and enhance the design and quality of new development in the landscape meeting local distinctiveness and design guidance.

• Manage existing and future developments to ensure that sense of place is maintained by making reference to local vernacular building styles and materials, and settlement patterns and distributions. Ensure that proposed growth is sustainable and protects and enhances the character of the area with new building sympathetic to local styles. Where development is permitted, ensure good green infrastructure is included to bring about multiple benefits for people and the environment.

County Landscape Character

2.2.6 Kent County Council (KCC) have published a landscape character assessment ('Landscape Assessment of Kent', 2004) for the county. This assessment divides the county into 114 separate landscape character areas, with the site being in the southern part of the ‘Pembury: Central High Weald’ character area. The description of this character area includes the following:

‘This is a small, secretive pocket of woodland, mature parkland and pasture. Despite the proximity of Tunbridge Wells and Tonbridge, there are surprisingly few houses, but the presence of the towns is felt through the roar of the traffic on the A21, which slices through this area, and the looming industrial estates which stalk the northern boundary of the AONB.’

‘Pembury lies within the larger character area of the Central High Weald. The Central High Weald surrounds Tunbridge Wells, which exerts a strong influence on the neighbouring countryside.’

2.2.7 Characteristic features of the area are listed as:

- ‘Ridges and small valleys.
- Wooded valleys, mature parkland and pasture.
- Coppice woodland, thickets of laurel and rhododendron.
- Some orchards.
- Noise and influence of A21.’

2.2.8 The condition of the area is noted to be good, but the sensitivity is stated to be low, largely as a result of the generally low level of visibility within the landscape due to the high level of enclosure.
2.2.9 The overall landscape action is to ‘reinforce’ enclosing elements of the landscape and time-depth, by planting new woodland and resisting the impact of the A21 road corridor.

Borough Landscape Character

2.2.10 TWBC have produced an updated version of the ‘Tunbridge Wells Borough Landscape Character Assessment’, which is currently awaiting adoption. This assessment divides the borough into 19 Character Areas, with the site shown as within the western part of the ‘Pembury Forested Plateau’ character area. The Key Characteristics of this area are stated to include:

‘2) Extensive woodland and forest cover dominates and tends to conceal local topographic variations and limits views both within the area and beyond.

The character area is defined by its land cover comprising an extensive wooded mosaic, including extensive areas of ancient and semi-natural woodland and ancient replanted woodland as at Snipe Wood, Brakey Bank Wood, The Plants, Marshley Harbour Wood, Brenchley Wood and Cinderhill Wood. There are huge swathes of managed sweet chestnut coppice plantation, derelict mixed coppice and a large area of coniferous pine and larch forest.

The extensive forest cover tends to disguise local topographic variations. The nature of the land cover with its large-scale blocks of woodland means that the area is very contained, lacking the extensive views out across successive ridges that are common in many other parts of the High Weald. However, there are occasional ‘surprise’ views from clearings in the woodland, which, due to their relative elevation are long-reaching and offer a sense of vastness across wooded ridges and slopes, such as views northwards to the Greensand Ridge past Tonbridge.’

‘3) Wooded slopes form a backdrop to views from the surrounding areas including from Royal Tunbridge Wells.

The wooded hills and slopes of the character area form a dark, dense wooded backdrop in many views, including views from the north such as the approach to Tunbridge Wells along the A21 and the wooded backdrop it provides to views from within the north-eastern part of Royal Tunbridge Wells and Southborough. Recent upgrading of the A21 to dual carriageway has opened up the highway to new views and although mitigation planting has been carried out it will be some time before the full effects will be appreciated.’

2.2.11 The assessment stresses the natural character and remoteness of the area, and those aspects are more readily found in the central part of the character area, rather than around the site and alongside the A21. The assessments includes the following under the heading of ‘Detractors and Opportunities’:
1) ‘Impact of busy main roads cutting through the landscape introducing background noise, visual intrusion and movement, including the A21 - especially the new flyover at Longfield Road.

Ensure locally sensitive screen planting (as appropriate), in association with development proposals along main road corridors, to reduce visual impact and the wider infiltration of traffic noise.

2) Vulnerability to visual effects of the development beyond the AONB boundary, including the industrial estates and warehouse developments on the north east edge of the town of Royal Tunbridge Wells and in the area between Pembury and Royal Tunbridge Wells. Opportunities for woodland planting around Royal Tunbridge Wells should be considered to help integrate this urban edge into the forested landscape and provide a measure of screening from the AONB. The former tip site represents an important opportunity for woodland planting. Species mixes and design should reflect the existing woodland character of the area.’

2.2.12 The Landscape Strategy for the character area is as follows:

The Local Character Area should be considered in the context of the High Weald AONB, and the potential role of certain parts of the character in the setting of the AONB. The valued features and qualities of the landscape should be conserved and enhanced.

1) Ensure development proposals will not impact on the ‘remote’, ‘secretive’ and ‘empty’ forested and heathland character of this area.

2) Conserve the forested character of Pembury village and its setting. In this respect the areas of forest that lie within the A21 such as Forest Wood and Marshley Harbour Wood are particularly important to the character and setting of the village.

3) Conserve the ‘village’ character of Pembury, ensuring that new development has character, and appropriately designed landscaping to ensure it respects its surrounding context. New development should have a strong relationship to Pembury rather than looking ‘outwards’ (i.e. potential sprawl). Pembury village has potential for enhancement in relation to the sense of place at the high street, and enforcement of its local centre, such as increasing vibrancy of local services and public realm.

4) The extensive industrial estates and associated development on the north east edge of Royal Tunbridge Wells significantly impinges on the rural character but benefits from some containment by woodland and topography. Any new development should not exacerbate this effect and will need a firm boundary of robust tree and woodland planting.’

Local Landscape Character

2.2.13 The area of and immediately around the site itself displays some of the characteristics noted in the above character assessments, in that it is visually associated with the urban edge of Tunbridge Wells to the west and is largely enclosed by woodland blocks in the
wider landscape and also by the trees within the site. However its location on a west-facing slope, with the A21 immediately to its east, means that it does not have the ‘remote, secretive and empty forested and heathland character’ noted by the TWBC landscape assessment, and does not appear as part of the wider countryside to the east.

2.3 Landscape Designations, Quality, Value and Sensitivity

Landscape Designations

2.3.1 The site lies within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), with the boundary running along the edge of Tunbridge Wells to the west. The AONB is a national level designation and covers a large area (1,450 square kilometres, spread over four counties), and the site is in the northern part of the designated area.

2.3.2 The AONB landscape assessment (‘The High Weald: Exploring the landscape of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty’, published by the (then) Countryside Commission in 1994) divides the AONB into a number of distinct character areas, with the site being within the ‘Central High Weald’ character area. The assessment notes the influence of Tunbridge Wells on the neighbouring countryside and also the presence of frequent areas of parkland.

2.3.3 Within the Central High Weald, the AONB assessment identifies four separate local character areas, with the site being within the ‘Pembury’ area, reflecting the County assessment. The area around Pembury is described in very similar terms to those used in the County landscape assessment.

2.3.4 The High Weald AONB Management Plan, 2014 to 2019, describes the character of the AONB in the following terms (on page 5):

‘At first glance the High Weald appears to be a densely wooded landscape but closer examination reveals a detailed agricultural tapestry of fields, small woodlands and farmsteads. Wildflower meadows are now rare but the medieval pattern of small fields with sinuous edges surrounded by thick hedges and shaws (often surviving remnants of ancient woodland) remain. Extensive views punctuated by church spires can be glimpsed along the ridge-top roads. Around almost every corner a harmonious group of traditional farm buildings comes into view with their distinctive steep, clay tile and hipped roofs. Everything in the High Weald landscape is human scale. Its rich detail is best explored through the myriad of interconnecting paths and tracks. From early in its history this dense network of routeways linked the Weald with settlements on its fringes where farming was easier, and they remain a visible legacy of the value these communities placed on the resources of the forest.’
2.3.5 The Introduction to the Management Plan, on page 14, notes that, in respect of the Countryside and Rights of Way (CRoW) Act 2000:

- ‘Section 82 reaffirms the primary purpose of AONBs: to conserve and enhance natural beauty.

- Section 84 confirms the powers of local authorities to take ‘all such action as appears to them expedient for the accomplishment of the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of AONBs’.

- Section 85 places a duty on all public bodies and statutory undertakers to ‘have regard’ to the ‘purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area of outstanding natural beauty’.

2.3.6 The vision set out within the plan (on page 25) for the AONB landscape in 2024 includes the following:

‘Retains its remarkable character and scenic beauty, and is functioning successfully as an attractive place to live and work.’

2.3.7 The Statement of Significance on page 26 of the Management Plan defines the natural beauty of the High Weald AONB and sets out its special qualities as follows:

‘Time depth and objective analysis has defined the High Weald AONB as characterised by dispersed historic settlement, ancient routeways, an abundance of ancient woodland, wooded heaths and shaws, and small irregularly shaped fields. These are all draped over a deeply incised and ridged landform of clays and sandstones with numerous gill streams, and are closely related to socio-economic characteristics that have roots extending deep into history.

The essential character of the High Weald was established by the 14th century and has survived major historical events, and social and technological changes. It is considered to be one of the best surviving coherent medieval landscapes in Northern Europe. This fundamental and largely immutable character is the essence of the natural beauty of the AONB and the AONB Management Plan is structured around the five key components of this character:

- **Geology, landform, water systems and climate**: deeply incised, ridged and faulted landform of clays and sandstone. The ridges tend east-west, and from them spring numerous gill streams that form the headwaters of rivers. Wide river valleys dominate the eastern part of the AONB. The landform and water systems are subject to, and influence, a local variant of the British sub-oceanic climate.

- **Settlement**: dispersed historic settlements of farmsteads and hamlets, and late medieval villages founded on trade and non-agricultural rural industries.
- **Routeways**: ancient routeways (now roads, tracks and paths) in the form of ridge-top roads and a dense system of radiating droveways. These routeways are often narrow, deeply sunken, and edged with trees, hedges, wildflower-rich verges and boundary banks.
- **Woodland**: the great extent of ancient woods, gills, and shaws in small holdings, the value of which is inextricably linked to long-term management.
- **Field and heath**: small, irregularly shaped and productive fields often bounded by (and forming a mosaic with) hedgerows and small woodlands, and typically used for livestock grazing; small holdings; and a non-dominant agriculture; within which can be found distinctive zones of heaths and inned river valleys.

2.3.8 The High Weald AONB Unit have produced an advice note on ‘Legislation and Planning Policy in the High Weald AONB’ (October 2016), and this contains guidance on the landscape assessment of proposals affecting the AONB, stating that:

'A landscape and visual impact assessment (LVIA) which may accompany a planning application should distinguish between landscape impact at an AONB scale by reference to the Management Plan and impact on local landscape character.'

2.3.9 The advice note also states that:

'While the extent to which development is visible, especially from public vantage points, is an accepted planning consideration, the Courts have held that the fact that a development is not viewable by the general public does not mean that there is no harm to the intrinsic character of an AONB. This is particularly relevant in a largely enclosed landscape such as the High Weald.'

2.3.10 The advice note also includes a template which is intended to assist with testing development proposals against the objectives of the Management Plan (see Table 4.1 in Section 4).

2.3.11 The site itself, while it contains a 19th century house and mature parkland, carries no designations in terms of Listed Buildings or Registered Parks and Gardens.

*Landscape Quality, Value and Sensitivity*

2.3.12 The wider area around the site is nationally designated for its landscape quality and value, and is in general of very high quality and value. It would also in general be highly sensitive to new built development, though all of the landscape character assessments reviewed above note the presence of buildings within the landscape as being characteristic of the High Weald, and also note the degree of enclosure within the landscape.
2.3.13 However, within that overall high quality, value and sensitivity, the area around the site has been significantly affected by the A21 improvement works, and is also affected by the visible edge of Tunbridge Wells to the west, with its large scale commercial buildings. Using the definitions set out in Appendix A, the site itself has been assessed as of overall high landscape quality, as it is attractive with a strong sense of place, and has a number of distinctive landscape features in the shape of the house and the parkland trees. The area around the site is of much lower quality as a result of the significant recent loss of woodland and the presence of the busy A21, including the flyover at the Longfield Road junction, and also the urban edge to the west. The landscape will recover to some extent over time, but is at the moment of low quality.

2.3.14 In terms of the contribution which the site presently makes to the landscape of the AONB, its location, enclosed nature and the local topography mean that it relates more to the adjacent edge of the settlement than it does to the wider AONB landscape to the east.

2.3.15 As noted in Appendix A, the concept of landscape value is also important, and is included in assessments in order to avoid consideration only of how scenically attractive an area may be, and thus to avoid undervaluing areas of strong character but little scenic beauty. Factors such as cultural association, recreational use and intangible qualities such as wildness are important in terms of determining landscape value, but are not really applicable to the site (there are no Public Rights of Way through the site, and the house and parkland, while of some interest, have no specific cultural association and are not designated for their heritage interest), so in this case the landscape value of the site can be taken to be represented by its landscape quality, and to be high, with low value for the surrounding area.

2.3.16 Landscape sensitivity is judged according to the type of development proposed - as the proposals are in outline only at the moment, any assessment of sensitivity is at this stage therefore provisional. As noted above, the wider AONB landscape around the site is highly sensitive, but the site and immediate surrounds would be of lower sensitivity to a development of the type proposed, as the site has (see below) no significant visibility from the area around it, and none at all from the wider landscape of the AONB to the east. Assuming that the development would comprise well designed office buildings of no more than three stories in height, and that the mature parkland trees would be retained, the site has been assessed as of low to medium sensitivity to development of the type proposed.
2.4 Visibility

2.4.1 Visibility of the site in its current form is limited by the generally dense woodland vegetation around its perimeter within the site, and will be further limited (as the new planting grows) by the extensive A21 woodland planting around the site to the north, south and west. Visibility is also limited by the A21 to the east and the woodland in the wider landscape to the north, east and south. The main points from which the site can presently be seen are therefore:

- From the north there are some limited and filtered medium distance views of northern edge of the site from the public footpath which leads to the west from the Fairthorne junction (see Photograph 7), but the woodland to the north of this route prevents any views from further to the north, and all views from this direction will be screened once the new A21 woodland planting has established.

- From the east there are some limited and filtered views in the summer from the A21 as it passes the site, above the new acoustic fence and between the trees along the eastern side of the site (see Photographs 2 and 3). These views are likely to be more open in the winter. There are no significant views from any further to the east, as the land to the east of the A21 is largely wooded and the road and its traffic create a significant visual barrier.

- From the south there are some views of the woodland along the southern site boundary from the Longfield Road flyover, for northbound traffic (see Photograph 5), and also some views from the north side of Longfield Road, on the south side of the events field (see Photograph 6). There are clearer views from further to the north in this field, but there is no general public access to the field. All of these views will be screened once the new A21 woodland planting has established.

- From the west there are very limited views from the retail and commercial areas along the east side of Kingstanding Way, as the parking and circulation areas are set down below adjacent levels in the field to the east, and are also largely screened by boundary vegetation and the small area of woodland (see Photographs 8 and 9). The large scale buildings themselves help to screen any views from further to the west, though there are some partial and distant views from higher ground towards Southborough. In all these views it is the woodland around the western side of the site which can be seen, rather than the central part of the site proposed for development, and again all of these views will be screened once the new A21 woodland planting to the west of the site has established.
2.5 Planning Context

National Planning Policy

2.5.1 The Government’s national planning policy and guidance on various aspects of planning are set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, March 2012). The NPPF states that ‘the purpose of planning is to help achieve sustainable development’, and that in order to do so, the planning system must perform mutually dependent economic, social and environmental roles.

2.5.2 The NPPF states in Paragraph 14 that the ‘presumption in favour of sustainable development’ ‘should be seen as a golden thread running through both plan-making and decision-taking’. The NPPF goes on to state that for decision-taking this means:

- ‘Approving development proposals that accord with the development plan without delay; and
- where the development plan is absent, silent or relevant policies are out-of-date, granting permission unless:
  - any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole; or
  - specific policies in this Framework indicate development should be restricted.’

2.5.3 The 12 principles set out in the NPPF include:

- ‘... recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and supporting thriving rural communities within it.’
- ‘contribute to conserving and enhancing the natural environment ...’

2.5.4 Paragraph 109 of the NPPF states 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;
- Recognising the wider benefits of ecosystem services;
- Minimising impacts on biodiversity and providing net gains in biodiversity where possible, contributing to the Government’s commitment to halt the overall decline in biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures.’

2.5.5 The NPPF states in Paragraph 115 that:

‘Great weight should be given to conserving landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which have the highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty.’
2.5.6 The supporting Planning Practice Guidance to the NPPF states that:

“One of the core principles in the National Planning Policy Framework is that planning should recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside. Local plans should include strategic policies for the conservation and enhancement of the natural environment, including landscape. This includes designated landscapes but also the wider countryside.”

2.5.7 Green Belts are a planning rather than a landscape designation, and are not designated according to the quality of the landscape concerned, but are intended to keep land open. Government policy on Green Belts is set out in the NPPF, which states in paragraph 79 that:

“The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence.”

2.5.8 In paragraph 80 it goes on to state that the five purposes of Green Belts are:

- to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
- to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;
- to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
- to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and
- to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

2.5.9 In paragraph 81 the NPPF states that:

“Once Green Belts have been defined, local planning authorities should plan positively to enhance the beneficial use of the Green Belt, such as looking for opportunities to provide access; to provide opportunities for outdoor sport and recreation; to retain and enhance landscapes, visual amenity and biodiversity; or to improve damaged and derelict land.”

2.5.10 Paragraph 87 states that:

“As with previous Green Belt policy, inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances.”

2.5.11 Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act places a duty on ‘relevant authorities’ (in this case TWBC) to have regard to the statutory purposes of designation of areas including AONBs when making decisions which may affect them. That means that the relevant authority have to consider effects on an AONB or its setting in coming to any decision.
Local Planning Policy

2.5.12 The Tunbridge Wells Borough Local Plan was adopted in March 2006, with most policies saved following a direction from the Secretary of State in March 2009. Following the adoption of the Core Strategy in June 2010, three further policies (including Policy EN26 on the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Policy EN27 on Special Landscape Areas) were superseded by policies in the Core Strategy, and the Site Allocations Local Plan was adopted in July 2016. The Local Plan Proposals Map shows the site as being outside the Limits to Built Development for Tunbridge Wells, and therefore in the countryside in planning terms.

2.5.13 The Local Plan contains a number of relevant environmental policies, including the following:

**POLICY LBD1**

‘Outside the Limits to Built Development, as defined on the Proposals Map, development will only be permitted where it would be in accordance with all relevant policies contained in this Local Plan and the Kent Structure Plan 1996 and the Kent & Medway Structure Plan 2006 rural settlement and countryside policies.’

**POLICY EN1**

‘All proposals for development within the Plan area will be required to satisfy all of the following criteria:

1. The nature and intensity of the proposed use would be compatible with neighbouring uses and would not cause significant harm to the amenities or character of the area in terms of noise, vibration, smell, safety or health impacts, or excessive traffic generation;

2. The proposal would not cause significant harm to the residential amenities of adjoining occupiers, and would provide adequate residential amenities for future occupiers of the development, when assessed in terms of daylight, sunlight and privacy;

3. The design of the proposal, encompassing scale, layout and orientation of buildings, site coverage by buildings, external appearance, roofscape, materials and landscaping, would respect the context of the site and take account of the efficient use of energy;

4. The proposal would not result in the loss of significant buildings, related spaces, trees, shrubs, hedges, or other features important to the character of the built up area or landscape;

5. There would be no significant adverse effect on any features of nature conservation importance which could not be prevented by conditions or agreements;
6 The design, layout and landscaping of all development should take account of the security of people and property and incorporate measures to reduce or eliminate crime; and

7 The design of public spaces and pedestrian routes to all new development proposals should provide safe and easy access for people with disabilities and people with particular access requirements.

POLICY EN25

‘Outside of the Limits to Built Development, as defined on the Proposals Map, all proposals for development will be required to satisfy all of the following criteria:

1 The proposal would have a minimal impact on the landscape character of the locality;

2 The development proposal would have no detrimental impact on the landscape setting of settlements;

3 The development proposal would not result in unsympathetic change to the character of a rural lane which is of landscape, amenity, nature conservation, or historic or archaeological importance;

4 Where built development is proposed, there would be no existing building or structure suitable for conversion or re-use to provide the required facilities. Any new buildings should, where practicable, be located adjacent to existing buildings or be well screened by existing vegetation; and

5 Where an extension or alteration to an existing building is proposed, it would respect local building styles and materials, have no significant adverse impact on the form, appearance or setting of the building, and would respect the architectural and historic integrity of any adjoining building or group of buildings of which it forms part.’

2.5.14 The Local Plan ‘Notes for Guidance on the Implementation of Policy EN1’ include the following:

‘Landscaping

4.23 The location of a development proposal and the design of all associated surrounding spaces are regarded as an integral part of the acceptability of a scheme.

4.24 A poorly located or designed scheme will not be made acceptable through the inclusion of a high quality landscape scheme.
4.25 Development proposals should ensure that existing site features, such as individual, or
groups of, trees, hedges, shrubs, field patterns, ponds or watercourses, are not only
retained as part of the overall landscaping scheme but are supplemented, where
appropriate, by additional planting. This will offer opportunities for habitat creation, and
will also add considerable value to the appearance of the development.’

2.5.15 The Local Development Framework Core Strategy Development Plan Document was
adopted in June 2010, and contains the following relevant policies:

Core Policy 4

Environment

‘The Borough’s built and natural environments are rich in heritage assets, landscape value and
biodiversity, which combine to create a unique and distinctive local character much prized by
residents and visitors alike. This locally distinctive sense of place and character will be
conserved and enhanced as follows:

1. The Borough’s urban and rural landscapes, including the designated High Weald Area of
   Outstanding Natural Beauty, will be conserved and enhanced

2. The Borough Landscape Character Area assessment 2002 will be utilised to manage,
   conserve and enhance the landscape as a whole

3. A hierarchical approach to nature conservation and the protection of biodiversity and
   geodiversity will be applied across the sites and habitats of national, regional and local
   importance within the Borough. The objective will be to avoid net loss of biodiversity and
   geodiversity across the Borough as a whole

4. Opportunities and locations for biodiversity enhancements will be identified and pursued
   by the creation, protection, enhancement, extension and management of green corridors
   and through the development of green infrastructure networks in urban and rural areas to
   improve connectivity between habitats

5. The Borough’s heritage assets, including Listed Buildings, Conservation Areas,
   Scheduled Ancient Monuments, archaeological sites and Historic Parks and Gardens will
   be conserved and enhanced and special regard will be had to their settings

6. The positive management of heritage assets through partnership approaches and
   measures will be encouraged, including by the use of Conservation Area Management
   Plans

The justification for the policy notes that:

‘This Policy seeks to ensure that the delivery of new development (such as for housing, retail
and employment) is balanced against the need to conserve and enhance the character and
distinctiveness of the Borough’s natural and built environment, in terms of the intrinsic
character and diversity of the landscape, its biodiversity and geodiversity and its heritage assets.

Core Policy 14

Development in the Villages and Rural Areas

This Policy contains the following relevant parts:

6. The countryside will be protected for its own sake and a policy of restraint will operate in order to maintain the landscape character and quality of the countryside.

7. The interrelationship between the natural and built features of the landscape will be preserved, enhanced and, where necessary, restored, this being the principal determinant of the character and quality of the countryside.

2.5.16 TWBC have also carried out a number of studies of the sensitivity of the landscape around Tunbridge Wells to potential development, and also of the contribution which the various areas of Green Belt around the town make in terms of the purposes of including land within the Green Belt, in order to identify areas which may be appropriate for future development, as part of the Local Plan process. The studies relevant to this assessment are summarised below.

Landscape Sensitivity Assessment

2.5.17 TWBC have produced the ‘Landscape Sensitivity Assessment of Countryside around Tunbridge Wells’ (LUC, February 2017), which considers the sensitivity to development of the landscape character areas and also identified sub-areas around the town. Three development scenarios are considered: small scale (2 or 2½ storey housing), medium (up to 4 storey residential development or small scale commercial use up to 3 storeys in height) and large scale (warehouses or larger office blocks). The proposed development on the site (see Section 3 below) would therefore fit into the medium scale development scenario.

2.5.18 The site falls within sub-area Pe3, which includes the site and the area to its west, south of Well Wood to the north, and north of Longfield Road. The ‘sensitivity conclusions’ for this area are stated to be:

‘There is some sensitivity associated with the undulating slopes of this sub-area, rising up above existing development immediately to the west, but there is no inconsistency with settlement form in the broader Tunbridge Wells context, in which ‘inward-facing’ development typically occupies sloping higher ground, including the new development at Knights Wood to the south of Longfield Road. The sub-area’s location between commercial development on
Kingstanding Way, Longfield Road and the A21 means that it is relatively well contained visually, and already significantly influenced by built development and traffic movement. Overall sensitivity to small scale development is considered to be medium-low.

It is important to retain a wooded settlement setting, particularly to residential areas, so there would be greater sensitivity to development which had a skyline impact. Large scale development on this rising ground would have a greater impact on landscape character than the adjacent commercial development on lower ground to the west, which although prominent locally has a sense of being contained within the landscape rather than dominating it, so there is a medium sensitivity to medium-scale development and medium-high to large-scale development.

2.5.19 This assessment is for the sub-area as a whole, so it can be reasonably assumed that sensitivity for the site itself, adjacent to the A21 and well enclosed by existing and newly planted woodland, would be lower than that for the more open areas to its west.

2.5.20 Table 4.1 in the report summarises the findings for all of the sub-areas, and shows that Pe3 is consistently rated to have the joint lowest level of sensitivity (with one other sub-area in each case) for each of the development scenarios considered, out of the 47 sub-areas.

Green Belt Study

2.5.21 TWBC have also produced the ‘Tunbridge Wells Green Belt Study’ (LUC July 2017), which assesses the contributions that various parcels of land make to the purposes of including land within the Green Belt, in order to assess the harm that may result from potential releases of Green Belt land for development.

2.5.22 The site is within Parcel TW4 as identified in the study, which is essentially the same area of land as sub-area Pe3 described above. The description of the parcel includes the following:

‘The rising eastward slope of the land and the presence of ancient woodland help to strengthen the existing edge, and landform and tree cover give the parcel some relationship in terms of landscape character with the area to the north. However the degree of containment around the parcel provided by roads and tree cover - containment that will increase with the realigned Longfield Road - A21 junction - limit the extent of this relationship. The isolated existing built development within the parcel is not urbanising, but the scale of adjacent development and the intrusive influence of the A21 and Longfield Road strengthen urban fringe character. Extensive woodlands on higher ground to the north, centred on Castle Hill, create strong separation between this edge of Tunbridge Wells and the town of Tonbridge. The industrial edge of Tunbridge Wells lacks relationship with the historic town centre and is atypical in that the edges of the town are for the most part on high ground. Tree cover in the parcel makes some
contribution to the rural setting of the town but wooded higher ground to the north and east is more important in this respect.’

2.5.23 The assessment found that the parcel makes a moderate or weak contribution only to each of the Green Belt purposes considered, which is one of the lowest ratings of any of the parcels around the town, and notes in respect of the purpose of safeguarding the countryside from encroachment that ‘The parcel relates more strongly to the settlement than to the wider countryside’.

2.5.24 Again it should be noted that this assessment is for the parcel as a whole, and the contribution made by the site itself, adjacent to the A21 and well enclosed by existing and newly planted woodland, is likely to be lower than that for the more open areas to its west.
3. THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

3.1 General

3.1.1 There are no firm or detailed development proposals at this stage, and the assessment set out in this report has been based on the Design Overview report produced in February 2017 by Axiom Developments.

3.1.2 This shows that the general intention is to create a premium office campus, with the following main elements:

- Access from the new Fairthorne junction on the A21, just to the north of the site.

- Conversion of the house to employment use, with high quality new office space.

- A new office park within the central open parkland area, configured around the existing mature trees, and with five office pavilions of 2 or 3 storeys in height. The new buildings would therefore be significantly lower than the existing mature trees around and within the site.

- A new café and clubhouse building in the north western part of the site, close to the tennis courts.

- The design and materials of the new buildings would be of a high quality and appropriate to the parkland setting.

- Car parking would be designed sensitively to avoid the sight of large expanses of parked cars, with some areas set into the ground and others enclosed by hedges, trees and shrubs.

- Retention (and refurbishment where required) of the other areas within the site, including the perimeter woodland, the pool and tennis court and an area of open space in the north western part of the site, as attractive landscape features for use by people working on the site.

- Retention of historic features such as the ha-ha.
• Lighting - there are no lighting proposals for the development at this stage, but any new light sources would be limited as far as possible consistent with requirements for safe and secure access, and would be low level where possible, with timers to control hours of operation.

3.2 Landscape Proposals

3.3.1 There are no detailed landscape proposals for the site at this stage, but it is presently envisaged that the main features of the landscape proposals would include the following:

• Retention and protection (in accordance with BS5837) during construction works of all mature parkland trees and also the perimeter woodland and trees.

• Management of the perimeter woodland areas to maximise their value as a screen and their nature conservation interest, with selective thinning, coppicing and replanting as appropriate. Any gaps (for example along the eastern boundary, where there are some glimpse views of the A21) would be filled with new planting.

• New tree planting around the new office buildings, to reflect the existing parkland setting.

• The high quality landscape around Colebrooke House would be maintained, with some clearance of rhododendrons, appropriate new planting and use of high quality natural hard landscape materials.

• Careful planting design around car parking areas, to screen and absorb them into the parkland setting and make them attractive areas in their own right.

• Informal paths between and around the buildings, to encourage use of the parkland setting by people working on the site. The main paths would be surfaced in bound gravel or similar, but there would also be a network of informal grassed paths, and bark-surfaced paths through the woodland areas.

• The above proposals are at the moment in outline only, and detailed proposals would be prepared as part of a planning condition on approval.
• Detailed proposals would include a Landscape and Ecology Management Plan to guide the maintenance and management of all of the soft landscape areas on the site, to ensure that the high quality landscape setting is maintained and enhanced into the future.
4. LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL EFFECTS

4.1 General

4.1.1 As there are no firm or detailed proposals for development of the site, the assessment set out below is of the potential effects which would be likely to result from development of the site, but is at this stage in-principle and general only.

4.2 Landscape and Visual Change

4.2.1 Before considering the likely landscape and visual effects of the proposed development, it is important to note the following important characteristics of both it and the surrounding landscape:

- The site is within the High Weald AONB, a nationally designated and generally sensitive landscape.

- The site is also within the Green Belt, which is not an indicator of landscape quality, but is a designation intended to keep the land open. It has been assumed that if the site were to be allocated for development then it would need to be removed from the Green Belt in a future boundary revision.

- However, within those high level designations, the studies carried out by TWBC as part of the emerging Local Plan have shown that the area including the site and land to the west is of lower sensitivity to development than other areas assessed around the town, and also makes a lower contribution to Green Belt purposes than most of the other green belt parcels around the town.

- The site is well enclosed by existing woodland on all sides, and that degree of enclosure will increase in the future as the new A21 woodland planting around the site to the north, west and south begins to mature. The new buildings on the site would be no more than three storeys in height and would therefore be lower than the perimeter woodlands, and would not be visible from beyond the site boundaries.

- The proposals would retain the perimeter woodlands and also the mature parkland trees, but the character of the parkland would change from an open and undeveloped (apart from the existing house) area into an office campus.
• The existing house would be refurbished and converted to office use, retaining its existing external appearance and relationship with the parkland to the south.

• The new buildings would be of a high design quality, appropriate to their parkland setting.

• However, the site is in the countryside, the Green Belt and also the AONB, and is presently largely undeveloped, so some adverse effects would be expected from its development, as would be the case for any greenfield development. The extent and nature of those effects is considered below.

4.2.2 Bearing the above in mind, the degree of landscape change brought about by the proposed development would be limited by the well enclosed nature of the site, and the fact that the site (as noted by the TWBC Green Belt study) relates more strongly to the settlement to the west than to the wider countryside to the east. On balance, while the area of the site itself would change significantly, from being an area of open parkland relating to the house to its north, to a high quality office campus in parkland setting, the degree of change to the local landscape around the site brought about by the proposed development would be negligible.

Visibility

4.2.3 The current visibility of the site has been described in Section 2.4 above. The new buildings on the site would not significantly alter that degree of visibility, as the site is so well enclosed. Any views of the new buildings would be in the winter only, filtered through the surrounding trees, and visibility would decrease further over time as the new A21 planting and also that proposed within the site begin to mature.

4.3 Landscape and Visual Effects

Landscape Effects

4.3.1 The landscape of and around the site has been assessed as of low to medium sensitivity to development of the type proposed, and the degree of change to the surrounding landscape brought about by the development would be negligible. With reference to the criteria set out in Appendix A, the anticipated overall effects on the landscape immediately around the site would therefore be no more than slight adverse at their greatest, in the winter soon after completion. Effects in the summer and over time as the proposed planting matures would be insignificant, as the proposals generally fit the landform and scale of the local landscape, would have very limited effects on views, can be mitigated to a reasonable extent and would avoid significant effects on designated
landscapes - the site is within the High Weald AONB but would have no significant effects upon the wider landscape (see below). Effects after around 10 years would be expected to be neutral.

4.3.2 The above effects have been categorised as adverse, as there would be some inevitable and in-principle harm as a result of the introduction of new buildings into what is presently a largely undeveloped site, but it should be noted that the new buildings would not in themselves be unsightly or intrusive and the office campus would be designed as an attractive place to work.

4.3.3 The area over which these effects would be experienced is very limited - there would be no significant views, and no significant effects, beyond the area of the site itself, and no significant effects on the wider landscape of the AONB.

Effects on the High Weald AONB

4.3.4 The above assessment has shown that there would be some very low level and localised effects on the landscape immediately around the site, and that these effects would decline over time. There would be no significant effects on the wider landscape of the AONB, as the major change would be confined to the site. However, the site itself is within the AONB, and as the AONB Unit advice note (see Section 2.3 above) states, ‘the fact that a development is not viewable by the general public does not mean that there is no harm to the intrinsic character of an AONB’

4.3.5 That part of the AONB laying within the site would be affected by the development, and there would be a significant change to the landscape of the site. However, any adverse effects would be minimised by the retention of the perimeter woodland and the mature parkland trees, by the restoration of the existing house and by the high design quality of the new buildings.

4.3.6 Considering the objectives of the AONB Management Plan in more detail, and using the assessment template set out in the advice note discussed in Section 2.3 above, the likely effects of the development on the relevant objectives would be as set out in Table 4.1 below.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Effects</th>
<th>Opportunities/ Mitigation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>S1: To reconnect settlements, residents and their supporting economic activity with the surrounding countryside.</td>
<td>The site is in the countryside and surrounded by woodland - there would therefore be some sense of connection with the countryside for people working on the site.</td>
<td>The new buildings could utilise locally sourced timber in their construction, and the design would allow for pedestrian access through the on-site woodlands.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S2: To protect the historic pattern of settlement.</td>
<td>The development would be outside the existing settlement boundary of Tunbridge Wells, but within the parkland curtilage of an existing large house.</td>
<td>The development would have no significant effects on the historic settlement pattern.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S3: To enhance the architectural quality of the High Weald.</td>
<td>This would be largely a matter for detailed design, and could be controlled by an appropriate planning condition.</td>
<td>The intention is to create a high quality office campus, with well-designed buildings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W1: To maintain the existing extent of woodland and particularly ancient woodland.</td>
<td>There is some remaining Ancient Woodland along the south eastern site boundary, and the proposals would preserve this and secure its extension with new planting and management into the future.</td>
<td>There would be no loss of woodland and some new planting would be carried out, together with improved management of the existing perimeter woodlands.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W2: To enhance the ecological functioning of woodland at a landscape scale.</td>
<td>The proposals would involve new woodland planting and improved management, for amenity, screening and nature conservation benefit.</td>
<td>The proposed planting and management would take existing ecological interest into account, and seek to enhance it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FH2: To maintain the pattern of small irregularly shaped fields bounded by hedgerows and woodlands.</td>
<td>The site is not a field as such, but is bounded by woodland.</td>
<td>The perimeter woodlands would be preserved and enhanced.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FH3: To enhance the ecological function of field and health as part of the complex mosaic of High Weald habitats.</td>
<td>The proposals would involve new woodland planting and improved management, for amenity, screening and nature conservation benefit.</td>
<td>The proposed planting and management would take existing ecological interest into account, and seek to enhance it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FH4: To protect the archaeology and historic assets of field and heath.</td>
<td>No known archaeological features would be affected. The site has some historic interest due to the house and parkland.</td>
<td>The house would be refurbished and the parkland would be retained and managed.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes:
1. The above is based on the Assessment Template set out in the AONB Unit Advice Note on Legislation and Planning.
2. See Section 2.3 for further details of the AONB Management Plan and Objectives.

4.3.7 The Management Plan also advises that landscape and visual assessments should distinguish between landscape impact at an AONB scale by reference to the Management Plan, and impact on local landscape character. Assessment of the Management Plan objectives has been set out in the above table, and any impacts at the scale of the AONB would be insignificant. Effects on local landscape character are set out in Sections 4.2.1 to 4.2.3 above.

4.3.8 In summary, while there would be some inevitable landscape effects within the site itself, arising from the development of a largely undeveloped site, there would be no significant effects on the wider landscape of the AONB or upon the character of the AONB.
proposals would involve medium scale development within the AONB, but any harm in that respect would be offset by the enclosed nature of the site and by the proposed high design quality and retention of perimeter woodland and parkland trees.

*Effects on the Green Belt*

4.3.9 The landscape and visual effects of the development would be largely confined to the site itself, and the wider Green Belt beyond the site boundaries would not be significantly affected. However, the openness of that part of the Green Belt falling within the site would inevitably be affected by the new buildings, and there would be a clear and in-principle conflict with the openness of the Green Belt. It has been assumed that in order for the development to proceed the site (and also potentially the area to its west forming the remainder of the Green Belt parcel assessed in the TWBC study) would need to be allocated for development and released from the Green Belt, in which case there would be no harm in Green Belt terms.

4.3.10 However, taking the situation as it presently exists, with the site in the Green Belt, the effects in terms of the five purposes of including land within Green Belts would be as set out below (using the scale for the grading of harm set out in the TWBC Green Belt study):

- To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas - **low adverse effects**, as the development would involve new building, but would not constitute unrestricted sprawl, as it would be well contained within the existing site boundaries.

- To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another - **very low effects** - the site does not lie adjacent to any other towns, and the proposed development would not lead to any merging.

- To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment - **low to moderate effects** - the development would lead to there being new buildings in the countryside, but the buildings would be well contained and screened from the surrounding area, and there would be no significant encroachment into the wider countryside.

- To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns - **very low effects**, as the site is not close to any of the historic parts of the town.

- To encourage the recycling of derelict land - not directly relevant (this purpose was not assessed in the TWBC study).
Visual Effects

4.3.11 Landscape effects are those affecting the landscape as a resource, while visual effects are those affecting a specific visual receptor. Visual receptors are normally taken to be people in their homes or in publicly accessible points, or moving along public highways or footpaths. In the absence of any firm or detailed proposals for the development, it is not possible to make specific assessments of likely visual effects, but in-principle effects on receptors around the site would be very limited as a result of the well enclosed nature of the site, and would be at a low level.

4.4 Planning Policy

4.4.1 Most of the planning policies set out in Section 2 seek as a minimum to prevent significant harm, and to provide enhancement where possible. It therefore follows that, if no significant harm would result from the proposed development, and if there would be some localised enhancement over time, the development would not be in conflict with the policies. Relevant policies are considered below, together with an analysis of whether or not the proposed development would be in conflict with them.

National Policies

4.4.2 There would be no significant conflict with those parts of the NPPF which seek to conserve and enhance the natural environment, as the above assessment has shown that any landscape effects would be initially at a low level and would decline further with time. The wider landscape of the AONB would therefore be conserved, in accordance with Paragraph 115 of the NPPF - there would be some development within the AONB, but on a well contained site and the development would be of high quality. This assessment has also found that the proposed development would lead to some localised benefits in terms of some of the objectives set out in the AONB Management Plan.

4.4.3 There would be some generally low level harm in terms of the purposes of including land within Green Belts, but the TWBC study has shown that harm would be at a lower level in the case of the area including the site than for most other parcels of land around Tunbridge Wells. However, there would be a clear and in-principle conflict with the general Green Belt aim of keeping land permanently open, and it has been assumed that in order for the development to proceed the site would need to be allocated for development and released from the Green Belt, in which case there would be no harm in Green Belt terms.
Local Plan Policies

4.4.4 There would be some conflict with Local Plan policies in that the development would be in the countryside in planning terms, though any harm would be limited by the well enclosed nature of the site. As with Green Belt policies, if the site were to be allocated for development then the policy conflict would no longer apply.

4.4.5 Policy EN25 sets out criteria to be met by proposals outside the defined Limits to Built Development. Of these criteria, numbers 1 to 4 would be met, as there would be no significant or long term harm to landscape character, there would be no harm to the landscape setting of settlements, there would be no effects in terms of the character of rural lanes, the existing building on the site would be converted and re-used, and the site is well screened by existing vegetation. Criterion number 5 does not apply.

Core Strategy Policies

4.4.6 Turning to the relevant Core Strategy policies, the proposals would relate to them as follows:

- Core Policy 4 seeks to conserve and enhance the landscape in accordance with the Borough Landscape Character Assessment. The proposals would not significantly harm local landscape character, and would provide some local enhancement over time in the form of the new planting.

- Core Policy 14 again seeks to maintain the character and quality of the countryside, and to preserve and enhance the balance between built and natural. The proposals would therefore not be in conflict with this policy.
5. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

5.1 This report has been prepared in connection with the promotion for development as an office campus of a site at Colebrooke Park, on the north eastern edge of Tunbridge Wells, in Kent. The site lies within the administrative area of Tunbridge Wells Borough Council (TWBC), and is also within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and the Green Belt.

5.2 There are no firm or detailed proposals for development of the site at the moment, and this report therefore takes the form of a high level, broad brush appraisal of potential landscape and visual effects and the potential suitability of the site for office development in landscape terms, rather than a full and detailed landscape and visual impact assessment.

5.3 The site is the extensive parkland curtilage of Colebrooke House, which is a large, unlisted property constructed in the 19th century. The site is enclosed by woodland and mature trees on all sides, and adjoins the recently completed A21 dual carriageway, which runs just to the east of the site. The road improvement works involved the removal of some areas of Ancient Woodland, and as part of the works there will be extensive compensatory woodland planting to the north, south and west of the site, further enclosing it over time. The A21 improvement works have also provided a new access to the site, directly from the new Fairthorne junction to the north.

5.4 The area of and immediately around the site is largely enclosed by woodland blocks in the wider landscape and also by the trees within the site. Its location on a west-facing slope, with the A21 immediately to its east, means that it is visually associated with the urban edge of Tunbridge Wells to the west and does not appear as part of the wider countryside to the east.

5.5 The wider area around the site is nationally designated for its landscape quality and value, and is in general of very high quality and value. It would also in general be highly sensitive to new built development, though all of the landscape character assessments reviewed above note the presence of buildings within the landscape as being characteristic of the High Weald, and also note the degree of enclosure within the landscape.

5.6 Within that overall high quality, value and sensitivity, the area around the site has been significantly affected by the A21 improvement works, and is also affected by the visible edge of Tunbridge Wells to the west, with its large scale commercial buildings. The site
itself has been assessed as of overall high landscape quality, as it is attractive with a
strong sense of place, and has a number of distinctive landscape features in the shape
of the house and the parkland trees. The area around the site is of much lower quality
as a result of the significant recent loss of woodland and the presence of the busy A21,
including the flyover at the Longfield Road junction, and also the urban edge to the
west. The landscape will recover to some extent over time, but is at the moment of low
quality.

5.7 Assuming that the development would comprise well designed office buildings of no
more than three stories in height, and that the mature parkland trees would be retained,
the site has been assessed as of low to medium sensitivity to development of the type
proposed.

5.8 TWBC have conducted studies of landscape sensitivity and contribution to the purposes
of including land within the Green Belt of the land around the town, in order to identify
areas which may potentially be suitable for development and release from the Green
Belt. Those studies have found that the site and the area to its west are of relatively low
sensitivity and importance to Green Belt purposes in comparison with the other areas
considered, and concluded that the area including the site ‘relates more strongly to the
settlement than to the wider countryside’.

5.9 Access for the development would be from the new A21 Fairthorne junction to the north,
utilising the existing tree-lined drive into the site. All significant perimeter vegetation
would be retained and protected during construction, as would the mature parkland
trees. The proposed office buildings would be no more than three storeys in height and
would therefore be lower than the trees within and around the site.

5.10 The change brought about by the proposed development would be limited by the well
enclosed nature of the site, and the fact that the site relates more strongly to the
settlement to the west than to the wider countryside to the east. On balance, while the
area of the site itself would change significantly, from being an area of open parkland
relating to the house to its north, to a high quality office campus in parkland setting, the
degree of change to the local landscape around the site brought about by the proposed
development would be negligible.

5.11 The anticipated overall effects on the local landscape would be slight adverse at their
greatest, in the winter soon after completion. Effects in the summer and over time as the
proposed planting matures would be insignificant, as the proposals generally fit the
landform and scale of the landscape, would have limited effects on views, can be
mitigated to a reasonable extent and would avoid significant effects on designated
landscapes - the site is within the High Weald AONB but would have no significant
effects upon the wider landscape. Effects after around 10 years would be expected to be neutral.

5.12 That part of the AONB laying within the site would be affected by the development, and there would be a significant change to the landscape of the site. However, while there would be some inevitable landscape effects within the site itself, arising from the development of a largely undeveloped site, there would be no significant effects on the wider landscape of the AONB or upon the character of the AONB. The proposals would involve medium scale development within the AONB, but any harm in that respect would be offset by the enclosed nature of the site and by the proposed high design quality and retention of perimeter woodland and parkland trees.

5.13 There would be some generally low level harm in terms of the purposes of including land within Green Belts, but the TWBC study has shown that harm would be at a lower level in the case of the area including the site than for most other parcels of land around Tunbridge Wells. However, there would be a clear and in-principle conflict with the general Green Belt aim of keeping land permanently open, and it has been assumed that in order for the development to proceed the site would need to be allocated for development and released from the Green Belt, in which case there would be no harm in Green Belt terms.

5.14 In the absence of any firm or detailed proposals for the development, it is not possible to make specific assessments of likely visual effects, but in-principle effects on receptors around the site would be very limited as a result of the well enclosed nature of the site, and would be at a low level.
1 General

1.1 In landscape and visual assessments, a distinction is normally drawn between landscape effects (i.e. effects on the character or quality of the landscape, irrespective of whether there are any views of the landscape, or viewers to see them) and visual effects (i.e. effects on people’s views of the landscape, principally from residential properties, but also from public rights of way and other areas with public access). Thus, a development may have extensive landscape effects but few visual effects (if, for example, there are no properties or public viewpoints), or few landscape effects but significant visual effects (if, for example, the landscape is already degraded or the development is not out of character with it, but can clearly be seen from many residential properties).

1.2 The core methodology followed is that set out in the ‘Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment’, produced jointly by the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment and the Landscape Institute (‘the GLVIA’, 1995, revised 2002 and 2013). The document ‘Landscape Character Assessment, Guidance for England and Scotland, 2002’ (The Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage) also stresses the need for a holistic assessment of landscape character, including physical, biological and social factors.

1.3 ‘Landscape’ is defined in the European Landscape Convention as: ‘Landscape is an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors’.

1.4 The GLVIA guidance is on the principles and process of assessment, and stresses that the detailed approach adopted should be appropriate to the task in hand. It notes that professional judgement is at the core of LVIA, and that while some change can be quantified (for example the number of trees which may be lost), ‘much of the assessment must rely on qualitative judgements’ (GLVIA, section 2.23), and the Landscape Institute’s Technical Committee has advised that the 2013 revision of the GLVIA ‘places greater emphasis on professional judgement and less emphasis on a formulaic approach’. The judgements made as part of the assessment were based on the tables set out below.

1.5 Assessment of the baseline landscape was undertaken by means of a desk study of published information, including Ordnance Survey mapping and landscape character assessments at national, county and local scales.

2 Methodology for this Assessment

2.1 For the purposes of this assessment, the guidance set out above was generally adhered to, with the following specific refinements:
1. Landscape and visual effects were assessed in terms of the magnitude of the change brought about by the development (also referred to in the GLVIA as the 'nature of the effect') and also the sensitivity of the resource affected (also referred to in the GLVIA as the 'nature of the receptor'). There is some confusion in the guidance about the term 'impact'; the overall process is known as Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, but what is actually assessed is more usually referred to as effects, and the GLVIA does also use the word 'impact' to mean the action being taken, or the magnitude of change. In order to avoid this source of confusion, this assessment does not use the word 'impact', but instead refers to the magnitude of change caused by the development, which results (in combination with the sensitivity of the resource affected) in landscape and visual effects.

2. Landscape and visual effects have been considered in terms of whether they are direct or indirect, short term/temporary or long term/permanent, and beneficial or adverse.

3. The magnitude of change will generally decrease with distance from its source, until a point is reached where there is no discernible change. It will also vary with factors such as the scale and nature of the proposed development, the proportion of the view that would be occupied by the development, whether the view is clear and open, or partial and/or filtered, the duration and nature of the change (e.g. temporary or permanent, intermittent or continuous etc), whether the view would focus on the proposed development or whether the development would be incidental in the view, and the nature of the existing view (e.g. whether it contains existing detracting or intrusive elements).

4. Residential properties were taken to be of high sensitivity in general, although this can vary with the degree of openness of their view (see Table 1 below). Landscapes which carry a landscape quality designation and which are otherwise attractive or unspoilt will in general be more sensitive, while those which are less attractive or already affected by significant visual detractors and disturbance will be generally less sensitive (see Table 6 below).

5. For both landscape and visual effects, the assessment is of the development complete with the proposed mitigation measures. Those measures are an integral part of the proposed development, and there has therefore been no assessment of a hypothetical, unmitigated development. However, as many of the mitigation measures involve planting, they will take time to become fully effective, and the assessment therefore makes allowance for how effects may change over time.
VISUAL EFFECTS

6. For visual effects, the GLVIA (in section 2.20) differentiates between effects on specific views and effects on ‘the general visual amenity enjoyed by people’, which it defines as:

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

There is obviously some overlap between the two, with visual amenity largely being an amalgamation of a series of views. This assessment therefore considers effects on specific views, but then also goes on to consider the extent to which effects on those views may affect general visual amenity, taking into account considerations such as the number of views within which the development may be present, the magnitude of change to those views, the discordance of the development, the relative importance of those views, and also the number and importance of other views in which the development is not present.

7. In describing the nature and content of a view, the following terms may be used:

- No view - no views of the site or development.
- Glimpse - a limited view in which the site or development forms a small part only of the overall view.
- Partial - a clear view of part of the site or development only.
- Oblique - a view (usually through a window from within a property) at an angle, rather than in the direct line of sight out of the window.
- Fleeting - a transient view, usually obtained when moving, along a public right of way or transport corridor.
- Filtered - views of the site or development which are partially screened, usually by intervening vegetation, noting the degree of screening/filtering may change with the seasons.
- Open - a clear, unobstructed view of the site or development.

8. For the purpose of the assessment visual change was categorised as shown in Table 1 below, where each level (other than no change) can be either beneficial or adverse:
### Table 1 - Categorisation of Visual Change

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No change</td>
<td>No discernible change.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negligible</td>
<td>The development would be discernible but of no real significance - the character of the view would not materially change. The development may be present in the view, but not discordant.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>The development would cause a perceptible deterioration (or improvement) in existing views. The development would be discordant (or would add a positive element to the view), but not to a significant extent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>The development would cause an obvious deterioration (or improvement) in existing views. The development would be an obvious discordant (or positive) feature of the view, and/or would occupy a significant proportion of the view.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>The development would cause a dominant deterioration (or improvement) in existing views. The development would be a dominant discordant (or positive) feature of the view, and/or would occupy the majority of the view.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

9. Sensitivity was also taken into account in the assessment, such that a given magnitude of change would create a larger visual effect on a sensitive receptor than on one of lesser sensitivity (see Table 2 below).
Table 2 - Criteria for Determining Visual Sensitivity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sensitivity</th>
<th>Typical Criteria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>Residential properties’ with predominantly open views from windows, garden or curtilage. Views will normally be from ground and first floors and from two or more windows of rooms in use during the day. Users of Public Rights of Way with predominantly open views in sensitive or unspoilt areas. Non-motorised users of minor or unclassified roads in the countryside. Visitors to heritage assets where views of the surroundings are an important contributor to the experience, or visitors to recognised viewpoints or beauty spots. Users of outdoor recreational facilities with predominantly open views where the purpose of that recreation is enjoyment of the countryside - e.g. Country Parks, National Trust or other access land etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Residential properties’ with views from windows, garden or curtilage. Views will normally be from first floor windows only, or an oblique view from one ground floor window, or may be partially obscured by garden or other intervening vegetation. Users of Public Rights of Way with restricted views, in less sensitive areas or where there are significant existing intrusive features. Users of outdoor recreational facilities with restricted views or where the purpose of that recreation is incidental to the view. Schools and other institutional buildings, and their outdoor areas. Motorised users of minor or unclassified roads in the countryside.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>People in their place of work. Users of main roads or passengers in public transport on main routes. Users of outdoor recreational facilities with restricted views and where the purpose of that recreation is incidental to the view.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Note that the above criteria are indicators of the types of situation in which visual sensitivity of the given level may be expected - they are not intended to be definitions to be applied literally in all cases.

2. There is some discussion in the GLVIA as to whether private views from residential properties should be included within an LVIA, as they are a private (rather than a public) interest, but they have been included in this assessment on the basis that they are likely to matter most to local people. The appropriate weight to be applied to such views can then be determined by the decision maker.

3. When (as is usually the case) there has been no access into properties to be assessed, the assumption is made that ground floor windows are to habitable rooms in use during the day such as kitchens/dining rooms/living rooms, and that first floor rooms are bedrooms.

10. **Visual effects** were then determined according to the interaction between change and sensitivity (see Table 3 below), where effects can be either beneficial or adverse. Where the views are from a residential property, the receptor is assumed to be of high sensitivity unless otherwise stated.
### Table 3 - Significance Criteria for Visual Effects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Significance</th>
<th>Typical Criteria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>No change in the view.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insignificant</td>
<td>The proposals would not significantly change the view but would still be discernible.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slight</td>
<td>The proposals would cause limited deterioration (or improvement) in a view from a receptor of medium sensitivity, but would still be a noticeable element within the view, or greater deterioration (or improvement) in a view from a receptor of low sensitivity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>The proposals would cause some deterioration (or improvement) in a view from a sensitive receptor, or less deterioration (or improvement) in a view from a more sensitive receptor, and would be a readily discernible element in the view.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>The proposals would cause significant deterioration (or improvement) in a view from a sensitive receptor, or less deterioration (or improvement) in a view from a more sensitive receptor, and would be an obvious element in the view.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major</td>
<td>The proposals would cause a high degree of change in a view from a highly sensitive receptor, and would constitute a dominant element in the view.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Note that the above criteria are indicators of the types of situation in which visual effects of the given level of significance may be expected - they are not intended to be definitions to be applied literally in all cases.

### LANDSCAPE EFFECTS

11. **Landscape change** was categorised as shown in Table 4 below, where each level (other than no change) can be either beneficial or adverse:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No change</td>
<td>No loss or alteration of key landscape characteristics, features or elements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negligible</td>
<td>Very minor loss or alteration (or improvement, restoration or addition) to one or more key landscape characteristics, features or elements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Minor loss of or alteration (or improvement, restoration or addition) to one or more key landscape characteristics, features or elements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Partial loss of or damage (or improvement, restoration or addition) to key characteristics, features or elements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>Total loss of or severe damage (or major improvement, restoration or addition) to key characteristics, features or elements.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

12. **Landscape quality** was judged on site by an experienced assessor, with reference to the criteria shown in Table 5 below. **Landscape condition** (i.e. the physical state of the landscape, including its intactness and the condition of individual landscape elements) can have a bearing on landscape quality, as indicated.
Table 5 – Criteria for Determining Landscape Quality

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Typical Criteria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very high quality</td>
<td>National Park or Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty standard - the area will usually (though not necessarily, especially for small areas) be so designated. It is also possible that some parts of designated areas may be of locally lower quality, if affected by detractors. Will generally be a landscape in good condition, with intact and distinctive elements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High quality</td>
<td>Attractive landscape, usually with a strong sense of place, varied topography and distinctive landscape or historic features, and few visual detractors. Will generally be a landscape in good condition, with intact and distinctive elements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium quality</td>
<td>Pleasant landscape with few detractors but with no particularly distinctive qualities. Will generally be a landscape in medium condition, with some intact elements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low quality</td>
<td>Unattractive or degraded landscape, affected by visual detractors. Will generally be a landscape in poor condition, with few intact elements.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Note that the above criteria are indicators of the types of landscapes which may be judged to be of the given quality - they are not intended to be applied in full or literally in all cases.

13. The concept of landscape value was also considered. The GLVIA considers landscape value as a measure to be assessed in association with landscape character, in order to avoid consideration only of how scenically attractive an area may be, and thus to avoid undervaluing areas of strong character but little scenic beauty. It is defined in the glossary of the GLVIA as:

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

Landscape value was judged on site by an experienced assessor, with reference to the criteria shown in Table 6 below.
Table 6 - Criteria for Determining Landscape Value

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Typical Criteria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very High Value</td>
<td>Often very high quality landscapes, usually in good condition, with intact and distinctive elements. Will often (though not necessarily, especially for small areas) be a designated landscape with strong scenic qualities. May have significant recreational value at national or regional scale and include recognised and/or popular viewpoints. May also be a rare landscape type, or one with strong wildlife, cultural or other interests or connections.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Value</td>
<td>Often high quality landscapes, usually in good condition, with some intact and distinctive elements. Will sometimes be a designated landscape with strong scenic qualities. May have significant recreational value at a local scale and include some recognised and/or popular viewpoints. May be a rare landscape type, or one with some wildlife, cultural or other interests or connections.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium Value</td>
<td>Often pleasant, medium quality landscapes, usually in reasonable condition, with some intact or distinctive elements. Unlikely to be a designated landscape, but may have some localised scenic qualities. May have some recreational value at a local scale or include some local viewpoints. May have some wildlife, cultural or other interests or connections.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Value</td>
<td>Likely to be a lower quality landscape, usually in poor condition, with few intact or distinctive elements. Likely to have limited recreational value at a local scale with no significant viewpoints. Few if any wildlife, cultural or other interests or connections.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Note that the above criteria are indicators of the types of landscapes which may be judged to be of the given value - they are not intended to be applied in full or literally in all cases.

14. **Landscape sensitivity** relates to the ability of the landscape to accommodate change of the type and scale proposed without adverse effects on its character (i.e. its susceptibility to change), and also to the value of the landscape concerned. As noted in the GLVIA (section 5.39), sensitivity is 'specific to the particular project or development that is being proposed and to the location in question'.

15. A landscape of high sensitivity will be one with a low ability to accommodate change, and vice versa. Landscape sensitivity was judged according to the criteria set out in Table 7 below, taking into account factors such as the presence or absence of designations for quality and the nature of the proposed change.
Table 7 - Criteria for Determining Landscape Sensitivity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sensitivity</th>
<th>Typical Criteria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Very High</strong></td>
<td>A landscape with a very low ability to accommodate change because such change would lead to a significant loss of valuable features or elements, resulting in a significant loss of character and quality. Development of the type proposed would be discordant and prominent. Will normally occur in a landscape of very high or high quality or value.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>High</strong></td>
<td>A landscape with limited ability to accommodate change because such change would lead to some loss of valuable features or elements, resulting in a significant loss of character and quality. Development of the type proposed would be discordant and visible. Will normally occur in a landscape of high quality or value, but can also occur where the landscape is of lower quality but where the type of development proposed would be significantly out of character.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Medium</strong></td>
<td>A landscape with reasonable ability to accommodate change. Change would lead to a limited loss of some features or elements, resulting in some loss of character and quality. Development of the type proposed would be visible but would not be especially discordant. Will normally occur in a landscape of medium quality or value, a low quality/value landscape which is particularly sensitive to the type of change proposed, or a high quality/value landscape which is well suited to accommodate change of the type proposed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Low</strong></td>
<td>A landscape with good ability to accommodate change. Change would not lead to a significant loss of features or elements, and there would be no significant loss of character or quality. Development of the type proposed would not be readily be visible or would not be discordant. Will normally occur in a landscape of low quality or value, or in higher quality landscapes but where the development is lower key.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

16. **Landscape effects** were determined according to the interaction between change and sensitivity, as summarised in Table 8 below. As noted in the GLVIA (section 5.55):

‘... susceptibility to change and value can be combined into an assessment of sensitivity for each receptor, and size/scale, geographical extent and duration and reversibility can be combined into an assessment of magnitude for each effect [i.e. magnitude of change]. Magnitude and sensitivity can then be combined to assess overall significance.’
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Significance</th>
<th>Typical Criteria¹</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Neutral</strong></td>
<td>The proposals:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• complement the scale, landform and pattern of the landscape</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• incorporate measures for mitigation to ensure that the scheme will blend in well with the surrounding landscape</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• avoid being visually intrusive and adverse effects on the current level of tranquillity of the landscape</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• maintain existing landscape character in an area which is not a designated landscape nor vulnerable to change.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Insignificant</strong></td>
<td>The proposals:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• generally fit the landform and scale of the landscape</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• have limited effects on views</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• can be mitigated to a reasonable extent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• avoid effects on designated landscapes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Slight Adverse</strong></td>
<td>The proposals:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• do not quite fit the landform and scale of the landscape</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• will impact on certain views into and across the area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• cannot be completely mitigated because of the nature of the proposal or the character of the landscape</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• affect an area of recognised landscape quality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• would lead to minor loss of or alteration to existing landscape features or elements, or introduce some minor new uncharacteristic elements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Moderate Adverse</strong></td>
<td>The proposals are:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• out of scale or at odds with the landscape</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• are visually intrusive and will adversely impact on the landscape</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• not possible to fully mitigate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• will have an adverse impact on a landscape of recognised quality or on vulnerable and important characteristic features or elements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• would lead to loss of or alteration to existing landscape features or elements, or introduce some new uncharacteristic elements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>High Adverse</strong></td>
<td>The proposals are damaging to the landscape in that they:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• are at variance with the landform, scale and pattern of the landscape</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• are visually intrusive and would disrupt important views</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• are likely to degrade or diminish the integrity of a range of characteristic features and elements and their setting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• will be damaging to a high quality or highly vulnerable landscape</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• cannot be adequately mitigated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• would lead to significant loss of or alteration to existing landscape features or elements, or introduce some significant new uncharacteristic elements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Major Adverse</strong></td>
<td>The proposals are very damaging to the landscape in that they:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• are at considerable variance with the landform, scale and pattern of the landscape</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• are visually intrusive and would disrupt fine and valued views</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• are likely to degrade, diminish or even destroy the integrity of a range of characteristic features and elements and their setting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• will be substantially damaging to a high quality or highly vulnerable landscape</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• cannot be adequately mitigated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• would lead to extensive loss of or alteration to existing landscape features or elements, or introduce some dominant new uncharacteristic elements.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹. Note that the above criteria are indicators of the types of situation in which landscape effects of the given level of significance may be expected - they are not intended to be definitions to be applied in full or literally in all cases.
### Table 8a - Significance Criteria for Landscape Effects (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Significance</th>
<th>Typical Criteria¹</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Insignificant</strong></td>
<td>The proposals:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- generally fit the landform and scale of the landscape</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- have limited beneficial effects on some views</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- can be mitigated to a reasonable extent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- retain most positive landscape features</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- introduce a limited number of new positive features.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Slight Beneficial</strong></td>
<td>The proposals:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- fit the landform and scale of the landscape</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- will improve certain views into and across the area to a limited extent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- can be effectively mitigated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- remove small scale unattractive or discordant features</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- benefit an area of recognised landscape quality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- would introduce some minor new or restored positive and characteristic elements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Moderate Beneficial</strong></td>
<td>The proposals:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- fit the landform and scale of the landscape</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- will improve certain views into and across the area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- can be effectively mitigated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- remove significant unattractive or discordant features</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- benefit a landscape of recognised quality or enhance vulnerable and important characteristic features or elements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- would introduce some new or restored positive and characteristic elements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>High Beneficial</strong></td>
<td>The proposals provide significant benefit to the landscape in that they:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- are in accord with the landform, scale and pattern of the landscape</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- will improve important views</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- are likely to enhance a range of characteristic features and elements and their setting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- will lead to improvement to a high quality or highly vulnerable landscape</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- need no significant mitigation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- would introduce some significant new or restored positive and characteristic elements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Major Beneficial</strong></td>
<td>The proposals provide very significant benefit to the landscape in that they:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- are in accord with the landform, scale and pattern of the landscape</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- will improve expansive and/or fine and valued views</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- are likely to significantly enhance a range of characteristic features and elements and their setting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- will lead to substantial improvement to a high quality or highly vulnerable landscape</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- need no mitigation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- would introduce some extensive or highly significant new or restored positive and characteristic elements.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹. Note that the above criteria are indicators of the types of situation in which landscape effects of the given level of significance may be expected - they are not intended to be definitions to be applied in full or literally in all cases.

17. The GLVIA advises that assessments should distinguish between those effects which are considered to be of significance to the decision maker and those which fall below that threshold. In this case the landscape and visual effects identified are all at relatively low levels, and would be below the threshold of significance in those terms.
18. **Photographs** were taken with a digital camera with a lens that approximates to 50mm. This is similar to a normal human field of view, though this field of view is extended where a number of separate images are joined together as a panorama. All photographs were taken in September 2017, and visibility during the site visits was good (by definitions set out on the Met Office website, i.e. visibility was 10 to 20km).

19. A useful concept in considering the potential visual effects of a development is that of the visual envelope (or zone of visual influence, ZVI). This is the area from within which the development would be visible. Any significant visual effects will therefore be contained within this area, and land falling outside it need not be considered in terms of visual effects. The area from within which the various elements of the proposed development would be visible is extremely limited, and in practice does not extend beyond the site boundaries, so no drawing of the visual envelop has been prepared, but a description of the area from within which the proposed development would be visible has been provided.