LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL STATEMENT

LAND AT CHITTENDEN FIELD, HAWKHURST
MILLWOOD DESIGNER HOMES

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CONTENTS

3. INTRODUCTION .......................................................... 3
4. PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK ...................................... 4
   Planning Policies ....................................................... 4
5. SITE CONTEXT ANALYSIS ................................................ 5
   The Site and Surroundings ........................................... 5
   Land cover and vegetation .......................................... 6
   Topography ............................................................ 7
   Ancient Woodlands ................................................... 8
   Public Rights of Way .................................................. 9
   Cultural and Historic Significance ............................... 10
   Landscape Character Areas ....................................... 13
6. DISCUSSION ............................................................ 19
7. LANDSCAPE DESIGN PRINCIPLES .................................... 21
8. CONCLUSION ............................................................ 22
3. INTRODUCTION

3.1 This is an update of a 2017 scoping landscape and visual statement relating to land at Chittenden Field, Hawkhurst, Kent.

3.2 Lloyd Bore were instructed to advise the client of key landscape and visual issues relating to the potential development of the site for residential development.

3.3 This updated report has been prepared to support the proposed allocation of the site for housing through preparation of the Local Plan. The report considers the acceptability of developing the site for housing in terms of the landscape and visual context and sensitivity.

3.4 This work does not represent a full Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, and its purpose is to identify principal issues that would need to be addressed should the site be brought forward for a residential allocation.

3.5 This report has involved desktop and site-based work.
4.3 Para 172 states:
‘Great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues. The conservation and enhancement of wildlife and cultural heritage are also important considerations in these areas, and should be given great weight in National Parks and the Broads. The scale and extent of development within these designated areas should be limited. Planning permission should be refused for major development other than in exceptional circumstances, and where it can be demonstrated that the development is in the public interest. Consideration of such applications should include an assessment of:

a) the need for the development, including in terms of any national considerations, and the impact of permitting it, or refusing it, upon the local economy;

b) the cost of, and scope for, developing outside the designated area, or meeting the need for it in some other way; and

c) any detrimental effect on the environment, the landscape and recreational opportunities, and the extent to which that could be moderated.’

4.8 This analysis is reflected in the Landscape Study prepared by LUC for the Council in 2018 (again forming part of the evidence base). Pages 93 and 101-103 in the LUC study deal with the Chittenden Field site which is identified as forming part of wider area HA1 which included the golf course site to the east.

4.9 The LUC study concludes for this sub-area (HA1):
• ‘The key sensitivities of the area relate to its physical characteristics which are typical of the character area and the AONB involving ridge top settlement, with topography dropping away to the narrow valley and ancient woodland at Slip Mill. Despite the scattered development along the A268 it forms a rural approach and gateway to Hawkhurst including the small Conservation Area centered around a green at Iddenden. It provides separation from this area and other small settlement clusters at Lightfoot and Slip Mill. It also forms an open rural landscape to the west of the A229 on the northern approach to Hawkhurst. The overall sensitivity is high, although it is noted that there may be smaller areas of lower sensitivity adjacent to the immediate settlement edge and golf course.’

With regard to guidance on potential mitigation/enhancement measures, the LUC study offers the following:
• ‘The area is a narrow ridgetop forming a rural approach to Hawkhurst from the west, with a rapid transition dropping north of the ridge top to the ghyll valley at Slip Mill - a rural landscape expressing all the distinctive qualities of the AONB. While there may be some potential for small development or re-development of sites along the ridge or the immediate north west settlement edge of Hawkhurst, this would need to be of a very small scale and sensitive to the character of the landscape and role as the rural approach to Hawkhurst along the A268 and A229, and separation from outlying settlement clusters.’

4.11 Whilst the Chittenden Field site is excluded from the Draft Policy STR/HA1, land at the adjacent golf course is allocated, under draft Policy AL/HA1. This is the largest of the draft allocation sites for Hawkhurst, for 400-450 dwellings, a relief road, community centre and public car park. It extends from Slip Mill Rd to the west, Cranbrook Rd to the east, Wellington Cottages (Gills Green) to the north and the High Street to the south. This site is also within the AONB.

4.4 Draft Policy STR/HA1 sets out the proposed strategy for Hawkhurst Parish, suggesting that approximately 681-731 new dwellings are being planned for across 7 sites.

4.5 Tunbridge Wells Borough Council have not identified the Chittenden Field site for allocation in the Consultation Draft of the local plan.

4.6 The evidence base for the new Local Plan includes a 2019 Strategic Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment (SHELAA) in which the site is assessed (July 2019).

4.7 The Chittenden Field site is assessed as having mostly neutral scores, and positive scores in respect of accessibility. However, the overall conclusion is that whilst it is available, it is considered unsuitable due to concerns regarding the impact on landscape and the pattern of development.
4.12 Map Extract of the Appraisal Site from the LUC Landscape Study (2018)

4.13 A planning application has been submitted for development on the golf course site to the east of Chittenden Field. Hybrid Application 19/02025/HYBRID is for demolition of an existing clubhouse, squash courts and ancillary structures, and redevelopment of existing golf course. Full planning permission is sought for a new relief road and associated earthworks and junctions with A268 and A229.

4.14 Outline planning permission (all matters reserved for future determination) is sought for residential development of up to 417 dwellings, a C2/C3 care home, class D1 facilities such as a doctors’ surgery and/or community hall, public car park, public park and associated parking, servicing, utilities, footpath and cycle links, formal and informal open space and recreation facilities, ground and infrastructure works.
5. SITE CONTEXT ANALYSIS - CHITTENDEN FIELD

THE SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

5.1 The location and extent of the Chittenden Field site is shown in Fig. 1. A nominal study area circle of 1km diameter has been selected to provide scale and context.

5.2 The site is located to the west of Hawkhurst, within the Tunbridge Wells Borough Council area. Hawkhurst and its surroundings lie within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

5.3 The site is irregular in shape. It is bounded to east and west by Slip Mill Road, which come to an apex at the northern end of the site at Lightfoot Green.

5.4 No Public Rights of Way cross the site. PROW WC219 extends from Lightfoot Green towards the north west.

5.5 The site comprises open grassland with mature belts of trees and understorey along the verges of Slip Mill Road. Slip Mill Road (east) is lined by low density residential development on its eastern boundary, whilst development is absent from Slip Mill Road (west), where it bounds the site.

5.6 The southern part of the site includes a paddock of land fronting the High Street (A268). This is semi-ornamental in character, supporting a number of conifer trees. Chittenden Cottage, Chittenden and Chittenden Lodge are located to the east of the frontage paddock, and Windmill Field is to the west. Immediately to the south of the High Street, opposite the paddock, is Marlborough House School.
LAND COVER AND VEGETATION

5.7 General land cover characteristics of the area is shown on the aerial photograph Fig. 2.

5.8 The corridor along the High Street, and along Slip Mill Road (east) is characterised generally high quality, low-density residential use, with educational uses to the south.

5.9 North and south of the corridor the landscape is rural/agricultural, with field sizes generally larger to the north. The settlement of Hawkhurst is to the east, with the Hawkhurst Golf Club occupying a substantial area of land between the site and the centre of the settlement.

5.10 The landscape is not heavily afforested, but many of the lanes are sunken with mature trees and understorey on their embankments. This characteristic, combined with extensive plantings of native and ornamental trees and shrubs in private garden curtilages, gives the area a mature, sylvan character, which tends to reduce visibility across the landscape.

5.11 The embankments of Slip Mill Road (east and west) support mature belts of native species trees and understorey, whilst the main part of the site comprises open managed grassland. The paddock fronting High Street is more ornamental in character, containing some introduced species.

5.12 On the site frontage paddock there are two trees protected by Tree Preservation Order Ref: 5067/2015/TPO (Silver birch and Hornbeam). Close to the site boundary on adjacent land to the west are two oak trees subject to Tree Preservation Order Ref: 031/2008. These are referred to in more detail below.
The general topography of the site and study area, based upon OS 10m contour data is shown in Figure 3.

The A268 / High Street runs along a ridge of terrain eastwards approaching Hawkhurst, at an elevation of approximately 80-86m AOD. The Chittenden Field site is on a tract of land that is aspected gently away from the ridge, towards the north east, although site levels still remain between approximately 70 - 80m AOD.
ANCIENT WOODLANDS

5.19 **Figure 4** shows Ancient & Replanted Woodland within and outside the study area.

5.20 Ancient woodland is land that has had continuous woodland cover since at least 1600 AD. These areas are rich in wildlife, and act as reservoirs from which wildlife can migrate into new woodland areas. Ancient semi-natural woodland retains a native tree and shrub cover that has not been planted, but may have been managed by coppicing or felling.

5.21 Principal areas of ancient woodland are located north of the site, with another to the south west approximately 1km distant. There are no areas of ancient or replanted woodland that would be affected by residential development of the site.

TREE PRESERVATION ORDER

5.22 On the frontage paddock there are two trees protected by Tree Preservation Order Ref: 5067/2015/TPO (Silver birch and Hornbeam). Close to the site boundary on adjacent land to the west are two oak trees subject to Tree Preservation Order Ref: 031/2008, whose root protection zones have the potential to extend into the western part of the site, although any proposal for development would be designed to ensure protected trees are unaffected.

5.23 **Figure 4** shows the Tree Preservation Order associated with the two trees within the site boundary:
- Tree Preservation Order Number: 5067/2015/TPO
- Address: OS Plot 2074 High Street Hawkhurst Cranbrook Kent.

Figure 4: Ancient & Replanted Woodland and Tree Preservation Orders
5.15 Public Rights of Way (PRoW) within the study area are shown in Figure 5.

5.16 There is a fairly sparse PRoW network in the vicinity of the Chittenden Fields site. WC170, WC219 and WC173 cross terrain to the north of the proposal site. WC219 approaches the site at Lightfoot Green, and joins the public highway here. There is potential for new residential development on the site to be glimpsed from this position, although there is considerable screening from intervening vegetation.

5.17 The long distance Sussex Border Path WC196 passes approximately 500m to the south west of the site.

5.18 Views towards the site from other PROW in the vicinity would remain unaffected due to landform, intervening vegetation, and distance.
CULTURAL AND HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE

5.24 Conservation areas and listed buildings in the vicinity of the Chittenden Field site are shown in Fig. 6.

5.25 There are two conservation areas west and east of the site, each containing a number of Grade II Listed Buildings.

a. High Street (Iddenden Green)

Highgate sits on an east-west sandstone ridge within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The elevated position of the village, and the spire of All Saints Church, ensure that the presence of the village is evident from the surrounding countryside. The age and style of the buildings varies with the majority dating from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries but some from much earlier.

b. Highgate & All Saints Church

Iddenden Green (Sawyers Green) conservation area provides views across the Wealden countryside. The buildings fronting the green are characterised by local materials particularly white weatherboarding, brick, and clay tile, and contrast with the larger properties along the High Street which are set back and enclosed in larger grounds behind strong boundary features. Approximately a third of the buildings within the conservation area are listed, reflecting the area’s architectural and historical importance.

5.26 The proposal site is located some distance from both these designations, separated by developed land and mature vegetation, to the extent that new residential development on the proposal site would have no impact on the conservation areas or their settings.

5.27 There is a collection of listed buildings to the south and east of the Chittenden Field site, the closest of which is Chittenden Cottage (Grade II), adjacent to the south eastern apex of the southern paddock. Marlborough House School to the south of the High Street is Grade II* status, whilst Chittenden / Chittenden Lodge to the east are of Grade II status.

5.28 The retention of the undeveloped paddock fronting onto High Street will ensure these listed buildings and their settings will be unaffected by proposals to bring forward residential development onto the Chittenden Field site.
SSSI - Sites of Special Scientific Interest - Local Wildlife Sites

5.29 SSSIs are nationally designated sites that of special interest due to their fauna, flora, geological or physiographical features. There are no SSSI sites in the vicinity of the proposal site.

5.30 Bedgebury Forest (Basden Wood) is located approximately 1km to the north west, and is a local wildlife site (local non-statutory designation). This will be unaffected by residential development on the appraisal site.
Parks and Gardens

5.31 Historic Parks and Gardens in the vicinity of the Chittenden Field site are shown on Fig. 8.

5.32 Although there are historic parks and gardens represented locally (Hensill House, Primrose House, Slipmill), they are located in excess of 500m from the centre of the site.

5.33 New residential development on the proposal site would have no impact on these designations or their settings due to the extent of physical and visual separation between them.
5.34 The study area is covered by the county scale Landscape Assessment of Kent (October 2004), as shown in Fig. 9.

**Bodiam: Lower Rother Valley**

5.35 The Chittenden Fields site lies within this identified LCA. The LCA is described in the Kent assessment as follows: "This flat floodplain with water margin trees of willow and alder and gently undulating surroundings with wooded ridges and copes, has a unified pattern of elements. Agriculture is mainly arable, often with a large field pattern but with some pasture enclosed by overgrown hedgerows with mature oaks. Ditches, orchards and hop gardens contribute to the diversity of the landscape. There are few visual detractors, mostly confined to commercial developments on main roads. The ecological integrity is strong with well developed networks of wildlife corridors, and a moderate intensity of land use. The linear villages and scattered historic farmsteads (often regularly sited on distinct ridgeline roads) are of predominantly red brick, tile hung or weather boarded construction."

5.36 Characteristic features are described as: Large scale landscape, wide views. Valley floodplain meets low wooded ridges. High hedges, unmanaged shaws, some trees and scrub on valley floor.

5.37 The landscape is assessed as being in very good condition, with high sensitivity, and policy actions to 'conserve.'

5.38 The Chittenden Fields site is more akin in character to the 'wooded ridge' landscape, than that of the 'flat floodplain.'
5.39 This document prepared by LUC includes the Chittenden Field site, and the adjacent golf course site, within Local Character Area (LCA)11 - Hawkhurst Wooded Farmland.

5.40 The key characteristics of this LCA are set out as follows:

- ‘Strong upland ridge of Tunbridge Wells Sand dropping to valleys to the north and south incised by deep narrow tributary valleys that join the Hexden Channel and Kent Ditch and ultimately flow to the River Rother.’

- Mixed agricultural landscape of small-scale pasture and medium-large scale arable fields, with larger rolling arable slopes to the valleys and occasional fields of orchards and hops.

- Wooded character arising from thick linear ancient ghyll woodlands, shaws, hedgerow trees and overgrown hedgerows.

- Numerous rural lanes following a pattern of ancient routeways crossing north-south through the area and joining with the main east-west routeway following the ridgeline.

- Ridgetop settlements, dominated by brick and weatherboarded buildings. An occasional windmill or church tower provides distinctive landmarks in mid-distant views. Small farmsteads line the minor ridges separating the ghyll valleys.

- ‘A peaceful rural ambience with dark skies away from the main settlement of Hawkhurst.’

5.41 Valued features and qualities are set out in the assessment as follows:

- ‘The scenic rolling hills and wooded ghyll valleys. The ridgelines and gently undulating hills permit intermittent and glimpsed views within the area, which occasionally stretch for considerable distances across the High Weald.’

- ‘The pattern of dispersed historic farmsteads and hamlets and locally distinctive buildings which add important local character to the landscape and a sense of history.’

- ‘Ancient routeways that form a clear network of rural lanes, footpaths and tracks, lined by ditches, hedgerows or woodland which add historic interest and local distinctiveness to the landscape.’

- ‘Woodland – particularly ancient woodlands, ghylls and shaws. This is of value for many reasons including historic, aesthetic, biodiversity and recreation interest.’

- ‘The relatively intact ancient landscape pattern of irregular medieval fields bounded by woodland, shaws and ghylls, closely related to the presence of historic farmsteads and the network of ancient routeways.’

5.42 Other features and qualities considered to be of particular landscape and visual value to the character area are set out in the assessment as:

- ‘Sense of tranquility and dark skies across much of the area, as a result of a lack of modern intrusion, with settlement contained within the topographical and wooded framework.’

- ‘The distinctive character of the ridgetop villages and the distinctive landmark features.’

- ‘The strong natural character indicated by the presence of a number of ecological designations.’
The assessment sets out a ‘Landscapes Strategy’ for LCA 11:

- ‘The Character Area should be considered in the context of the High Weald AONB, particularly the role certain parts of the character area may play in the setting of the AONB. Protection of the valued features and qualities of the landscape should include appropriate planning to ensure any new development is appropriate in scale and character to the landscape context.

- Control further development proposals which could adversely affect the rural character of the landscape and tip the scales to a more urban character.

- Limit new large-scale development wherever possible because it is rare within the area and has the potential to be highly visible on the ridge lines and intrusive within the quieter picturesque ghyll wooded valleys.

- Avoid deterioration of the currently high quality built environment and vernacular heritage, particularly proximate to Hawkhurst.

- Recognise the profile of the area as a linkway for recreational users and seek appropriate improvements through, for example, Section 106 agreements as appropriate.’

High Weald AONB

AONB is a national policy aimed at protecting the natural beauty of the landscape. This dictates that for any development to be acceptable its design must be sensitive to, and respond to the prevailing characteristics of the landscape. In this regard design proposals for the site would need to respond to and reflect the key characteristics and design guidance set out in the High Weald AONB Unit’s Management Plan, and other published landscape character assessments.

The High Weald AONB is characterised by dispersed historic settlement, ancient routeways, an abundance of ancient woodland, wooded heaths and shaws, and small irregularly shaped fields. These are all accommodated within a deeply incised and ridged landform of clays and sandstones with numerous gill streams.

The underlying character of the High Weald was established by the 14th century and has survived social and technological changes, to become one of the best surviving coherent medieval landscapes in Northern Europe. 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 wild woodland, 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.

Management objectives are provided for each component. These are the agreed long term aims for the High Weald as a whole that need to be achieved in order to secure the purpose of designation and the vision for the AONB.

G1 Objective: To restore the natural function of rivers, water courses and water bodies.

In order to enhance the role of rivers, water courses and water bodies in increasing biodiversity, improving water quality, protecting people and communities from flooding and promoting enjoyment of the wetland environment.

G2 Objective: To protect and enhance soils, sandstone outcrops, and other important landform and geological features.

In order to conserve soil health, landform and geology on which the High Weald’s character depends, and maintain nationally important geological exposures, allowing for erosion where appropriate, conserving the fern, moss and liverwort communities they support and protecting their value as significant sites of prehistoric archaeology in the AONB.

54 Objective: To help secure climatic conditions and rates of change which support continued conservation and enhancement of the High Weald’s valued landscape and habitats.

In order to reduce locally arising greenhouse gas emissions and allow the High Weald to play its role in mitigating climate change.

S1 Objective: To reconnect settlements, residents and their supporting economic activity with the surrounding countryside.

To understand and enhance the synergy of the local economy, society and environment, and the relationship with the surrounding countryside and wild species, that defines sustainable rural settlement. To provide opportunities for economic activity that supports land management objectives and AONB designation.

S2 Objective: To protect the historic pattern and character of settlement.

To protect the distinctive character of towns, villages, hamlets and farmsteads and to maintain the hinterlands and other relationships (including separation) between such settlements that contribute to local identity.

S3 Objective: To enhance the architectural quality of the High Weald and ensure development reflects the character of the High Weald in its scale, layout and design.

To protect and enhance the character and quality of buildings in the High Weald, and re-establish the use of local materials as a means of protecting the environment and adding to this distinctiveness.

R1 Objective: To maintain the historic pattern and features of routeways.

To maintain a routeway network that has a symbiotic relationship with settlement location, hinterlands and identity, and is a rare UK survival of an essentially Medieval landscape; and to protect the individual architectural features of historic routeways.

R2 Objective: To enhance the ecological function of routeways.

To protect, and improve the condition of, the complex mix of small scale habitats along routeways for wildlife, and maintain routeway boundaries as part of a highly interconnected habitat mosaic.

W1 Objective: To maintain existing extent of woodland and particularly ancient woodland.
To maintain irreplaceable habitats for biodiversity, to maintain a key component of the cultural landscape, and to maintain contribution to carbon storage.

**W2 Objective: To enhance the ecological functioning of woodland at a landscape scale.**

To increase the viability of the woodland habitat for wildlife, by identifying and extending the area of appropriately managed woodland (including restoring plantations on ancient woodland) to link and enhance isolated habitats and species populations, providing greater connectivity between woodlands and other important wildlife areas, and helping to facilitate species’ response to climate change.

**W3 Objective: To protect the archaeology and historic assets of AONB woodlands.**

To protect the historic environment of the AONB woodlands.

**W4 Objective: To increase the output of sustainably produced high-quality timber and underwood for local markets.**

To achieve the most effective management that will deliver the other objectives for woodland, to contribute to sustainable domestic timber production, and to support a working countryside.

**FH1 Objective: To secure agriculturally productive use for the fields of the High Weald, especially for local markets, as part of sustainable land management.**

To contribute to sustainable domestic food and non-food agricultural production, to support a working countryside, and to reduce the dependency of the UK on non-sustainably managed agricultural land and the need for long-distance transport that produces air pollutants, causing harm to health and the environment.

**FH2 Objective: To maintain the pattern of small irregularly shaped fields bounded by hedgerows and woodlands.**

To maintain fields and field boundaries that form a part of the habitat mosaic of the High Weald; and to maintain this key component of what is a rare UK survival of an essentially Medieval landscape.

**FH3 Objective: To enhance the ecological function of field and heath as part of the complex mosaic of High Weald habitats.**

To improve the condition, landscape permeability and connectivity of fields and heaths and their associated and interrelated habitats (such as hedges, woodlands, ditches, ponds and water systems) for wildlife.

**FH4 Objective: To protect the archaeology and historic assets of field and heath.**

To protect the historic environment of the AONB other than the pattern of fields: i.e. the individual archaeological features.

**OQ1 Objective: To increase opportunities for learning about and celebrating the character of the High Weald.**

To help develop emotional connection to the landscape encouraging people to care for the High Weald and support its conservation.

**OQ2 Objective: To increase the contribution of individuals to the conservation and enhancement of the AONB.**

To enable the 127,000 residents of the High Weald, and one million people living within 5km of the AONB, to take action to care for the AONB.

**OQ3 Objective: To develop and manage access to maximise opportunities for everyone to enjoy, appreciate and understand the character of the AONB while conserving its natural beauty.**

To meet demand for informal recreation from residents and the nearly one million people living within 5km of the AONB, ensuring infrastructure, services and activities are consistent with conserving and enhancing natural beauty and its quiet enjoyment.

**OQ4 Objective: To protect and promote the perceptual qualities that people value.**

To ensure that the special qualities people value, such as tranquillity, dark skies, sense of naturalness and clean air, are recognised and taken account of in AONB management.

**Legislation and Planning Policy**

5.48 The High Weald AONB Management Unit has produced an advice note (February 2019) ‘Legislation and Planning Policy in the High Weald AONB’, designed to assist all people involved in making, commenting on and deciding planning applications in, or affecting, the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

5.49 The advice note contains an assessment checklist template, to be used as an aide in assessing the degree to which a given development proposal is performing in meeting the objectives of the High Weald AONB Management Plan.

5.50 Development proposals for the Chittenden Field site will need to be tested against these management objectives.
Photo 1: North east along High Street

Photo 2: North east along High Street

Photo 3: South from Lightfoot Green

Photo 4: West from Slip Mill Road (east)
Photo 5: South from PROW WC219

Photo 6: West from Slip Mill Road (east)

Photo 7: North west along High Street

Photo 8: East from Slip Mill Road (west)

Photo 9: Local vernacular - Slip Mill Rd
Visual Context

5.51 The above photographs were taken in 2017 and are intended to illustrate the general visual context of the site’s boundaries and surroundings.
6. **DISCUSSION**

**Visual accessibility**

6.1 Through a combination of existing development, topography and vegetation, the Chittenden Field appraisal site is very well screened from most publicly accessible viewpoints.

6.2 The site is defined by curtilages of built (residential) development on its southern boundary, and by public highways on its north west and north eastern boundaries. The southern and eastern boundaries are characterised by low density, high quality residential development.

6.3 No public rights of way cross the site. The lanes either side of the site are generally at a lower level than the surface of the site, to the extent that views into the site are highly restricted. There is an existing view into the site through the gated access from Slip Mill Road.

6.4 The verges of the sunken lanes are characterised by dense canopy and understorey vegetation, contributing additional visual screening.

6.5 The configuration of the local topography, together with the woodland belts and hedgerows restricts long distance views of the site from the surrounding landscape.

6.6 The combination of vegetation and local topography means that there are few direct views into the site from nearby residential properties, suggesting that the site has the potential to be developed to residential use without harming private amenity.

6.7 Although the proposed access from High Street would bring about a localised change in views, the retention and landscaping of the frontage paddock on High Street would maintain and enhance the visual character of this distinctive approach to / departure from Hawkhurst, would protect the settings of nearby listed buildings, and would screen the proposed residential development area to the north.

6.8 The golf course proposal would be far more visible in the landscape than the Chittenden Field proposal, due to its size, its extensive north-south attenuation, and associated infrastructure and engineering works (see Appendix 2).

**Landscape character**

**Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty**

6.9 The primary purpose of AONB designation is to conserve and enhance natural beauty.

6.10 AONB designation represents a major policy consideration, over and above policies aimed to prevent development in the countryside, such as TWBC’s Limits to Built Development policy. In general, AONB policies do not preclude development, but they do apply stringent criteria that need to be met.

6.11 The AONB designation washes over the entire Hawkhurst area, meaning that if there is to be any new residential development in Hawkhurst, it will be located within the AONB.

6.12 This applies to the much larger golf course site to the east. There are certain circumstances in which development within AONB is justified, and if those criteria are met, the design of any proposed development would need to demonstrate it meets the objectives of the High Weald AONB Management Plan 4th edition (2019-2024). This is a statutory plan setting out local authority policies for the management of the AONB.
6.13 The 2018 LUC landscape sensitivity assessment includes both the Chittenden Field and the golf course sites within the same landscape sub-character area (Ha1). This sub-character area is defined in terms of its physical character, settlement form and edge, settlement setting, visual character, perceptual qualities and landscape character.

6.14 The ‘sensitivity conclusions’ for sub-area Ha1 are as follows:

- ‘The key sensitivities of the area relate to its physical characteristics which are typical of the character area and the AONB involving ridge top settlement, with topography dropping away to the narrow valley and ancient woodland at Slip Mill. Despite the scattered development along the A268 it forms a rural approach and gateway to Hawkhurst including the small Conservation Area centered around a green at Iddenden. It provides separation from this area and other small settlement clusters at Lightfoot and Slip Mill. It also forms an open rural landscape to the west of the A229 on the northern approach to Hawkhurst. The overall sensitivity is high, although it is noted that there may be small areas of lower sensitivity adjacent to the immediate settlement edge and golf course.’

6.15 The 2018 LUC study then sets out guidance on potential mitigation / enhancement for any potential development within this sub-character area. This states:

- ‘The area is a narrow ridgetop forming a rural approach to Hawkhurst from the west, with a rapid transition dropping north of the ridge top to the ghyll valley at Slip Mill - a rural landscape expressing all the distinctive qualities of the AONB. While there may be some potential for small development or re-development of sites along the ridge or the immediate north west settlement edge of Hawkhurst, this would need to be of a very small scale and sensitive to the character of the landscape and role as the rural approach to Hawkhurst along the A268 and A229, and separation from outlying settlement clusters.’

6.16 The sensitivity study recognises some potential for small scale development on the ridge and the north western edge of Hawkhurst. Both Chittenden Field and the golf course site are within this part of Hawkhurst, within the same defined character area, but the proposals for the golf course are not small scale, are extensive in character, and have the potential to cause coalescence with outlying settlement to the north. Chittenden Field is much smaller, and being highly constrained by surrounding development, roads and lanes, does not generate the risk of coalescence.

6.17 The landscape sensitivities that apply to the golf course site are also those for Chittenden Fields. They are both within the same landscape character sub-area, and both within AONB.

6.18 If the golf course site is considered suitable in the draft local plan for development of 400-450 dwellings, a relief road, community centre and public car park, then it follows that the Chittenden Field site, which is far smaller, better contained and much closer to the village centre than most of the golf course site, is also a very good candidate site for residential development.

AONB key character components

6.19 The baseline study mapping (above) has revealed that there are few individual landscape topics that would be adversely affected by the development of the Chittenden Field site. Turning to the High Weald AONB Management Plan’s five key components of character:

Geology, landform, water systems and climate:

6.20 The Chittenden Fields site is relatively flat and would not require significant repurposing to allow development to take place. AONB water systems would be unaffected by the proposed development, as sustainable drainage mechanisms would be integrated into the design. The modest scale of development proposed would have no measurable effect on the local variant of the British sub-oceanic climate.

Settlement:

6.21 Development of the Chittenden Field site would inevitably change the pattern of settlement in this part of Hawkhurst, but the site is contained within very well defined, historic landscape / infrastructure boundaries which will not change and can be reinforced.

6.22 The retention of the frontage paddock as undeveloped (with the exception of the access road), would reflect and protect the low density settlement pattern along High Street, and the prevailing streetscape character. The pattern of development in Hawkhurst is such that new development on the Chittenden Fields site would not cause coalescence of settlements, with the boundaries of the site being clearly defined and constrained by surrounding development and highways.

6.23 Development of the site would represent an infilling of built form between the two arms of existing low-density development along Slip Mill Lane (east) and High Street.

6.24 By contrast the golf course site is extensive and its development would result in a significant extension of the settlement pattern to the north of the village, and coalescence with existing development at Gill’s Green.

6.25 High Street and the Slip Mill Lanes are historic routeways; High Street being a ridge-top road whilst the Slip Mill Lanes are characteristically sunken, narrow, and edged with trees, hedgerows and boundary banks. The site boundaries therefore exhibit key characteristics identified in the High Weald AONB Management Plan. In the event that the Chittenden Fields site is developed for residential use, the character of these routeways will be protected and enhanced through design and long-term management.

6.26 Retention of the High Street frontage paddock and protection and enhancement of the Slip Mill Lane embankments and vegetation are key design considerations.

Woodland:

6.27 There is no ancient woodland on or adjacent to the Chittenden Field site. The existing trees and hedgerows alongside the sunken lanes on the eastern and north western boundaries of the site are characteristic features of the AONB and will be retained, protected and enhanced.

6.28 Development of the golf course site would require buffer zones to be incorporated into the layout to protect adjacent areas of ancient woodland from damage.

Field and Heath:

6.29 the Chittenden Fields site is typical of the small, irregularly shaped and productive fields characteristic of the AONB, often bounded by hedgerows and small woodlands, and typically used for livestock grazing; small holdings; and a non-dominant agriculture.

6.30 Development of the northern field for residential use will clearly change its land use function, but the boundaries are strongly defined, and the shape and grain of the field will remain the same.

6.31 The southern field adjacent to High Street will also change, with the introduction of the access road, but the impact on field and heath characteristics will be less, as it is to be landscaped and remain undeveloped.

6.32 Whilst the land use of Chittenden Field would clearly change from agricultural to residential, the historic boundaries of the field and its shape would remain.
LANDSCAPE DESIGN PRINCIPLES

As a result of this high level landscape study, the following key landscape design principles are set out to inform design for future development on the site. If these principles are adopted this site should have the capacity to accommodate new residential development.

Conservation and enhance the natural beauty of the AONB

- If Hawkhurst is to accommodate new residential development anywhere, it will be located within the AONB, because the designation washes over the entire area. Particular attention will therefore need to be paid to the siting, scale, design, external materials and visual appearance of new buildings, and their relationship with existing buildings, to ensure that they enhance, and do not detract from the visual quality and essential characteristics of the AONB, to create a high quality, well-managed new residential development.

- The site is highly contained visually, and any future layout for the site should respect and reinforce this characteristic.

- The layout should be designed to ensure private curtilage / garden boundary fencing is not presented in an uninhibited form to the open countryside or edge of settlement. New buildings should be designed in a layout that responds to and respects the AONB landscape, with access and parking areas sensitively located and appropriately designed.

- Retention of the frontage paddock addressing High Street as an undeveloped, landscaped tract of land will retain and protect the low-density ridge-line form of development along the A268. It will also mitigate views towards new development, protect the settings of nearby listed buildings, and provide for biodiversity enhancement.

Retain and enhance existing vegetated embankments along sunken lanes.

- These embankments are a key feature of the AONB and should be protected, enhanced and managed appropriately to ensure their contribution to landscape character is retained.

Enhance and diversify site ecology and improve connectivity with the wider ecological resource.

- Reinforce and manage the vegetation on the embankments and site boundaries to maximise ecological potential.

- Design a wildlife-friendly layout and planting design to create new habitats and deliver a net gain in biodiversity.

- Adopt a sustainable approach to species-selection. Species used for new planting should be represented locally in the existing woodlands and hedgerows, and should be native and preferably of local provenance.
7. CONCLUSION

7.1 This landscape study has been produced to inform proposals to bring forward land at Chittenden Field, Hawkhurst for residential use, through the local plan process.

7.2 It represents a high level landscape appraisal of the area, identifying key landscape and visual principles that should be taken into consideration in bringing forward the site for development. If these principles are adopted the site has the capacity to accommodate new residential development, as indicated on the landscape principles masterplan.

7.3 The site is covered by AONB, an important national policy designation which requires the design of any new development to meet key criteria, and be responsive and sensitive to identified landscape characteristics. Design standards need to be very high, also responding to requirements set out in local plan policy and published landscape character area assessments.

7.4 As the whole of Hawkhurst is washed over by the AONB designation, any new development that is going to make a contribution to Hawkhurst's housing needs will be subject to AONB policy considerations.

7.5 The potential for landscape and visual impacts and natural resource constraints will represent important design considerations in bringing this site forward, but the site is already very well contained and screened visually from the wider landscape, and offers good opportunities for mitigation, enhancement and successful integration with the existing development pattern of the village.

7.6 In the SHEELA assessment (July 2019) this site 'scored mostly neutral, with some positives.' It acknowledged that 'public views into the site are limited.' The main public view of the site is from High Street (frontage paddock to remain undeveloped) and from the gated access in Slip Mill Road (an existing access). The site is not prominent in the wider AONB landscape.

7.7 The SHEELA assessment states that the site is 'let down by its impact on the landscape (AONB).' As above, any site brought forward for allocation in the Hawkhurst area would be within AONB, and would be subject to AONB management plan objectives and design principles.

7.8 This high-level statement therefore concludes that the impact on the AONB of an appropriately designed development on Chittenden Field would in fact be very limited. It also concludes that if the golf course site (within the same landscape character sub-area) is considered suitable for development of 400-450 dwellings, a relief road, community centre and public car park, then it follows that the Chittenden Field site, which is far smaller, contained and much closer to the village centre than most of the golf course site, should also be considered a suitable candidate for residential development.
Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment Assessment for Draft Local Plan – Regulation 18 Consultation

Site ref: 2
Gross area (ha): 3.03

Site address: Chittenden Fields, adjacent to High Street and Slip Mill Road, Hawkhurst
Developable area (ha): 3.03

Parish: Hawkhurst
Settlement: Hawkhurst

Site Type: Greenfield site in semi-rural area

Potential site use: Site has been assessed for development potential, notably for residential use

Potential yield if residential: 91

Issues to consider: AONB (2 component parts); Ecological interest; Possible highway matters; Heritage matters (setting of Listed buildings); Landscape Sensitivity Study (HA1); ALC: Grade 3

Site description: The site consists of a managed greenfield. There are no existing buildings on the site. The site is adjoined by fields and residential properties along the eastern boundary of the site. The boundaries of the site comprise mostly of mature trees and hedging. There are mature trees within the site and hedging. There is a signed reference to a 40 miles per hour speed limit. There is a gated access to the site from Slip Mill Road. The access is slightly sunken.

There is vehicular access from High Street. There is a lack of...
Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (SHELAA) for Draft Local Plan – Regulation 18 Consultation

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Pavements along Slip Mill Road although pavements can be found along High Street. The site is raised from the road but is relatively flat within the site itself. Public views into the site are limited. The main public view of the site is from High Street and from the gated access in Slip Mill Road.</th>
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### Suitability:
Unsuitable: see reason below

### Availability:
Available
- Multiple ownership

### Achievability:
N/A

### Sustainability Assessment:
A site that scores mostly neutral, with some positives and which has a flat access from its frontage with High Street to the centre of the settlement. It is let down by its impact on the landscape (AONB), being loss of an historic field and in land use terms, being loss of grade 3 soils and greenfield site.

### Conclusion:
This site is considered unsuitable as a potential site allocation. There is a landscape concern about the allocation of this site, which would also not form a logical extension to the LBD, and would break the pattern of development.

### Reason:
There is a landscape concern about the allocation of this site, which would also not form a logical extension to the LBD, and would break the pattern of development.
9. APPENDIX 2: HAWKHURST GOLF COURSE - SITE LOCATION PLAN AND LANDSCAPE MASTERPLAN