



THE SITE



3.1 The Site

3.1.1 Site and site boundary

The northern boundary of the Hybrid Application Area (the Site) abuts Charlwood Road, Ifield Avenue, Bonnets Lane, and Ifield Green. Ifield Wood and Cophall Wood are directly adjacent to the Site's north-west boundary. Moving to the west the boundary follows the course of the tree lined River Mole which then enters the site flowing eastward to join Ifield Brook in the east of the site.

The Site's eastern boundary abuts Ifield Brook Wood and Meadows and Ifield Conservation area which comprise the historic core of Ifield and is focused upon the Church of St Margaret and public house. Ifield Brook Wood and Meadows is a Site of Nature Conservation Importance and has footpaths and other pathways through it. In 2015 it was designated, along with the meadows further south, as a Local Green Space.

The eastern boundary runs along the Ifield Brook from the boundary of 'The Maples' residential estate in the south, until it feeds into the River Mole. Beyond the Ifield Brook is Ifield Brook Meadows and Rusper Road Playing Fields. The area adjacent to the eastern boundary of Ifield Brook Meadows and beyond is mostly residential in land-use, with the closest buildings located along Rusper Road.

Rusper Road bisects the Site for a short section near the golf course where the site adjoins the rear boundaries of residential properties that front onto Rusper Road. To the south-east the Site is bounded by the gardens of The Hyde, Whitehall Drive, Peverel Road and Hyde Hill Brook, beyond which is the residential neighbourhood of Ifield West. Adjoining the south-western edge of the boundary beyond Hyde Hill Brook is the ancient and semi-natural woodland of Hyde Hill.

The Site's western boundary adjoins countryside and is characterised by woodland, woodland belts known as 'shaws', understorey vegetation, and fields used for grazing. It is adjacent to farmland, associated farm buildings, and isolated residential properties. An area of wet ancient woodland known as the Grove adjoins the north-western boundary south of the river Mole

The Site is predominantly occupied by a mixture of arable and pastoral fields north of Rusper Road and includes the Ifield Golf Course and Country Club south of Rusper Road. The River Mole bisects the Site and flows from south-west to north-east.

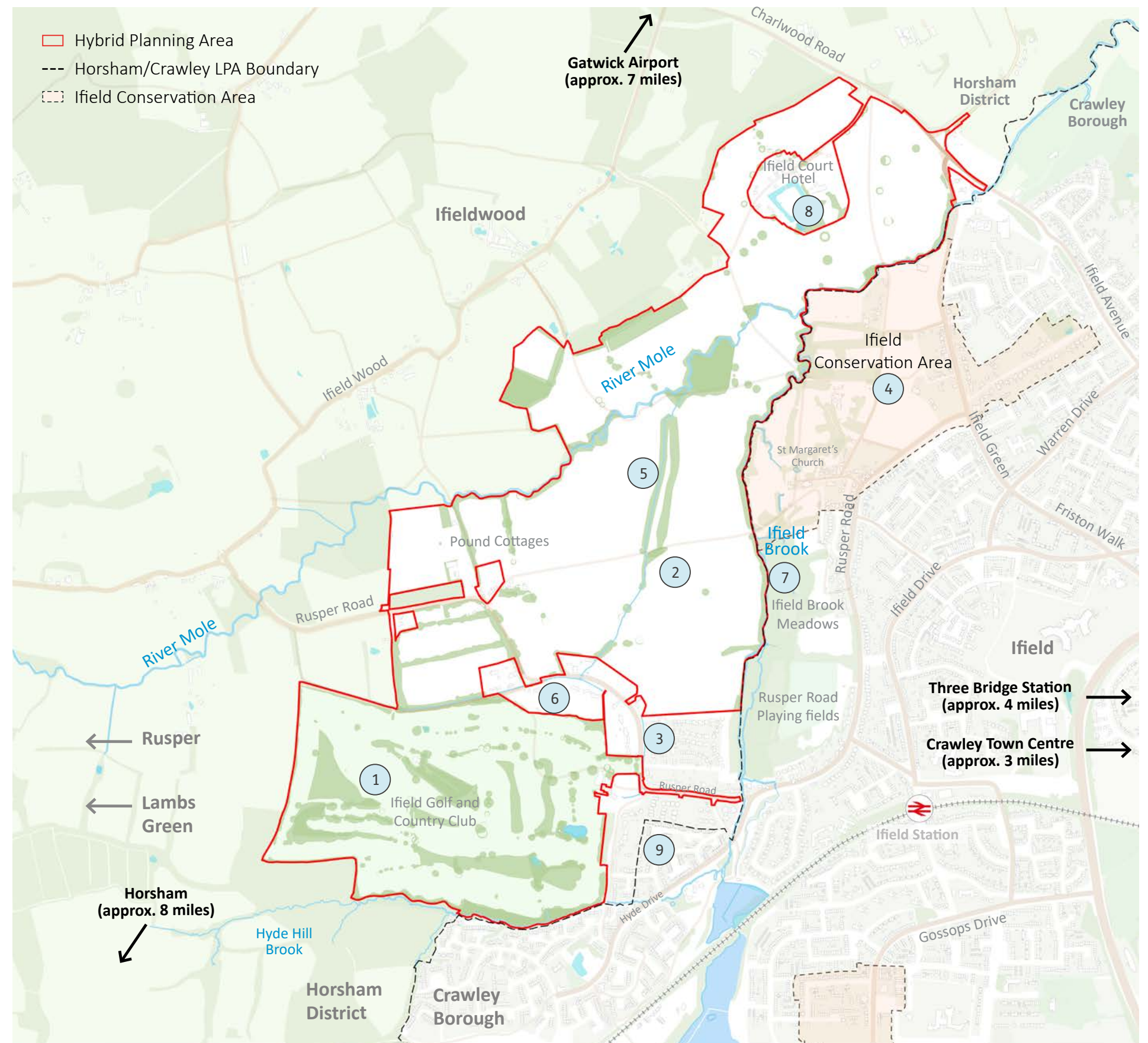


FIGURE 24 Hybrid Application Area

3.2 Site Photos



FIGURE 25 Ifield Golf Course



FIGURE 28 Ifield Village Historic Core



FIGURE 31 Ifield Meadows



FIGURE 26 Ifield Brook Open Farmland



FIGURE 29 Droveway Enclosed Field Strip



FIGURE 32 Ifield Court



FIGURE 27 Rusper Road Estate Housing



FIGURE 30 Rusper Road Scattered Settlement



FIGURE 33 Bewbush New Town

3.3 Topography, Views and land use

3.3.1 Topography and visual character

The Site topography is generally gently undulating and low-lying within the upper River Mole valley which drains to the north-east, with ridges to the south and west, as shown on Figure 39. The first of these ridges passes through the southern part of the Site within the golf course in an approximate east-west alignment creating some steeper north facing slopes and this rises up from 76m AOD in the south-west to approximately 85m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD) at Hyde Hill. The second ridge is located approximately 1km to the north-west at Russ Hill. It is orientated in an approximate south-west to north-east alignment which rises up from 68m AOD on Site and extends up to 100m AOD at Russ Hill. The low-lying land between these two ridges lies at approximately 60-70m AOD and is dissected by the narrow watercourses of Ifield Brook and the River Mole.

The central and northern parts of the Site comprise mainly pastoral or arable farmland with a mixture of small, medium and large fields bordered by hedgerows with hedgerow trees. The field pattern varies across the Site with land to the west of Ifield Brook Wood and Meadows comprising large scale pattern of largely arable fields due to historic field amalgamation and associated loss of boundary hedgerows and trees. To the west of the Site adjacent to Rusper Road and to the north of the River Mole the historic field pattern is intact with small to medium sized pasture fields contained by wooded shaws. In the north-east of the Site adjacent to Ifield Court an area of more open former historic parkland exists with mature parkland trees within pasture fields.

The southern part of the Site is currently occupied by Ifield Golf Course and Country Club, a landscape of short mown fairways and a high cover of individual mature trees and small woodland copses. Within the golf course older mature trees remain as remnants of the original field boundaries that have been incorporated within the golf course landscape.

Although close to the edge of Crawley and Gatwick Airport which introduces regular noise and visual disturbance, the majority of the Site has a rural character and quality. To the south, the areas of the golf course have a more suburban influence which the manicured fairways and clubhouse buildings.

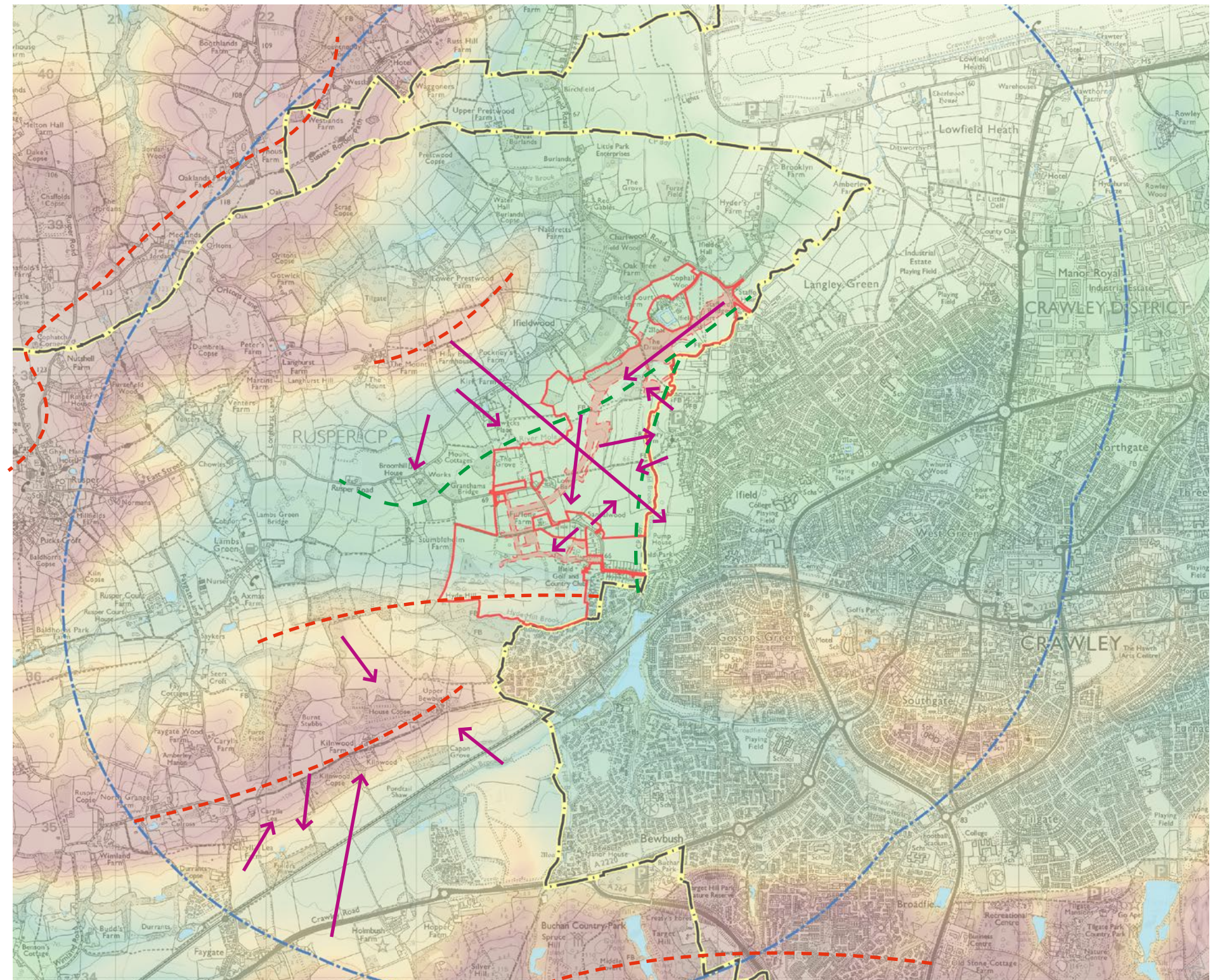
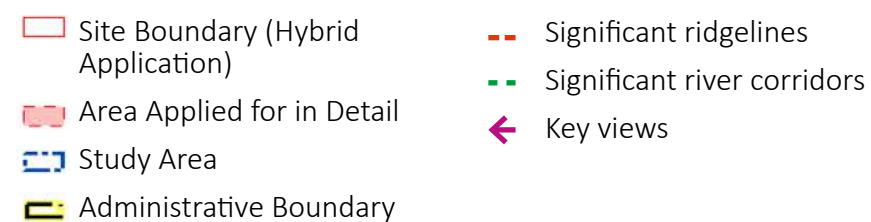


FIGURE 34 Topography and Views

The site is mostly flat south of the River Mole and north of Rusper Road, with areas of flood plain focused around the River Mole.

South of Rusper Road there is a 10m level change within the Golf course land.

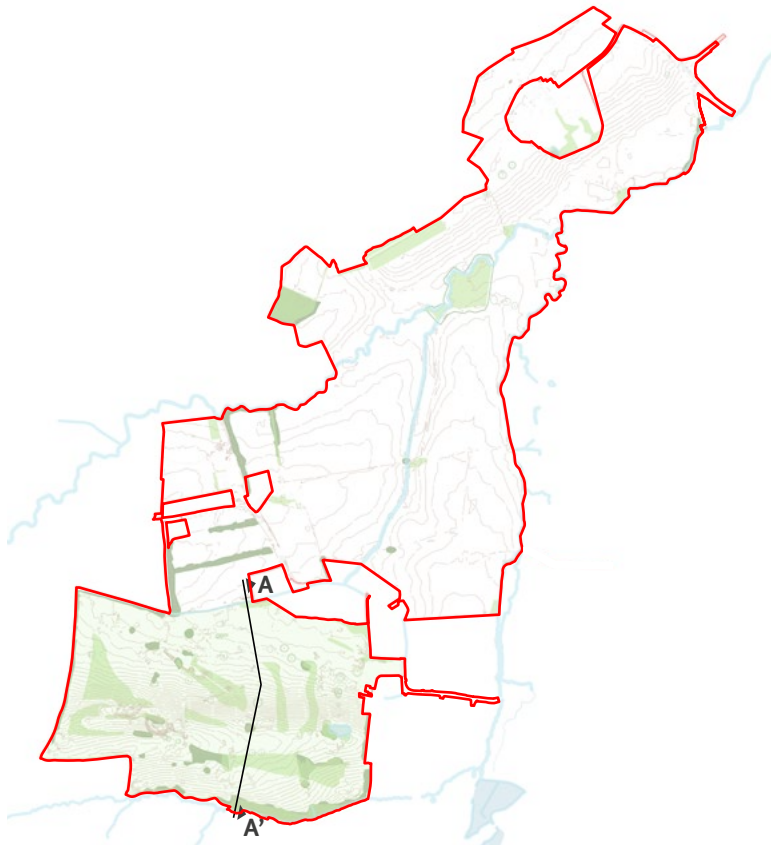
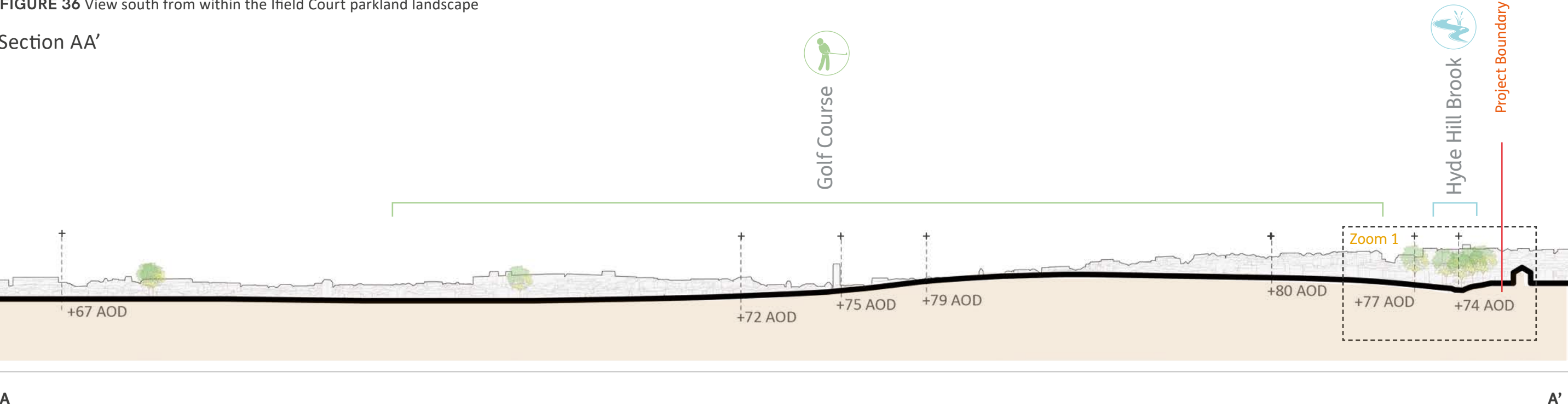


FIGURE 35 View south towards the site from Russ Hill



FIGURE 36 View south from within the Ifield Court parkland landscape

Section AA'



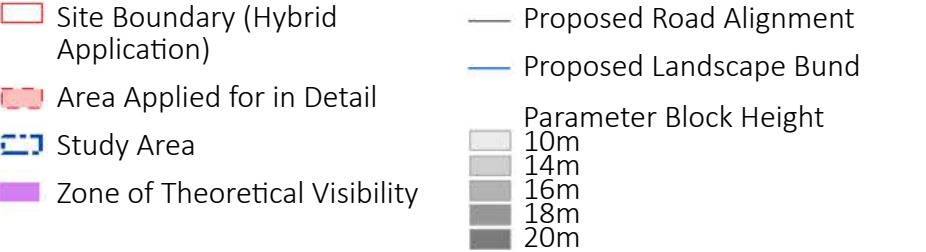
3.3.2 Views

The Site is set within the low lying and gently undulating land adjoining Ifield Brook Wood and Meadows, which lies to the west of Ifield rising more steeply within the golf course to the ridge along Hyde Hill. The edge of Ifield is characterised by a high coverage of trees and woodland, both within and around the residential areas, along the course of Ifield Brook and within Ifield Brook Wood and Meadows. This restricts clear views out from the built up area, including from Ifield Village Conservation Area. Where views are available, these are typically of enclosed pastures bordered by mature hedgerows with trees, or areas of larger more open arable fields, created by loss of hedgerows and fields amalgamation. To the south there are restricted views across the golf course landscape with its mature trees and manicured fairways.

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The enclosed flat to gently undulating nature of the topography and high woodland and tree cover across and surrounding the Site, means that intervisibility with the surrounding countryside is limited. There are however some locations on elevated public rights of way or country lanes, particularly to the north and west, where the Site and buildings within Ifield can be seen above a treed rural foreground. This includes the Open Access Land adjoining Ifield Wood. For the most part, the Site is not very visible as shown by the ZTV on Figure 38.

Long views across and out of the Site from the low lying areas are limited by the high tree and hedgerow cover. Some of the footpaths which cross the Site afford filtered views of the built up area, but the most distinctive landmarks are the spire of St Margaret’s Church to the east and the new housing area at the Maples to the south. The ridge in the south of the Site within the golf course offers long views down the golf course fairways north across the Mole Valley countryside. Views south and west along and across the country side of the River Mole Valley are also possible from the land around Ifield Court.



3.3.3 LVIA Panoramic Views

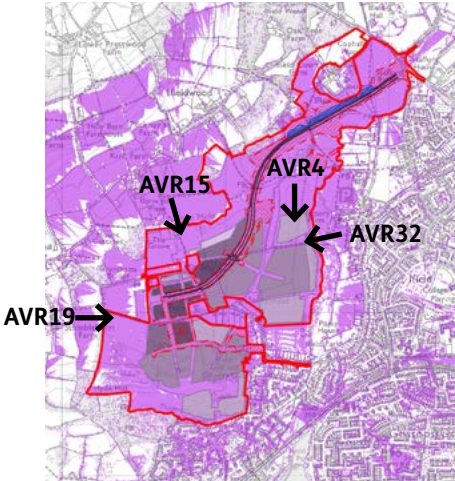


FIGURE 38 AVR4 - View looking south from farmland south of the River Mole, within the site



FIGURE 39 AVR15 - View looking south from Ifieldwood, outside the site



FIGURE 40 AVR19 - View looking east towards the Golf Course from an adjacent field outside the site



FIGURE 41 AVR32 - View looking east from Ifield Brook Meadows

3.4 Landscape Baseline

3.3.4 Landscape Character

This section provides a summary of assessed landscape character of the development site and its context at national, regional and district / borough levels. For full details refer to the Landscape / Townscape Character of the LVIA section of the West of Ifield EIA chapter 11 of the Environmental Statement.

Assessment of the designated landscape character has been used to help identify the unique characteristics and special features of the site and its context. These have guided the landscape and masterplanning spatial layout, informing the character of the new neighbourhoods and open space, and protecting key features and views.

National Character

At a national level, the site is located within NCA 121: Low Weald, a broad, gently sloping clay vale that encircles the northern, western, and southern borders of the High Weald. Predominantly agricultural, the area mainly supports pastoral farming due to its heavy clay soils, while lighter soils in the east support horticulture and some arable farming. The landscape is rich in woodland, particularly ancient woodlands. Around 9% of the Low Weald is located within designated National Landscape (AONB) including the Surrey Hills, Kent Downs, and High Weald, as well as the South Downs National Park. Approximately 23% of the region is designated as greenbelt land.

Despite its proximity to London and continuing pressure for development, the Low Weald remains essentially rural in character, with small-scale villages nestled in woodland and many traditional farm buildings

District / Borough Landscape Character

The Horsham District Landscape Character Assessment, which was prepared in 2003, identifies and explains the unique combination of elements and features that make the Horsham District landscape distinctive. It identifies the landscape of the Site as being part of K1 Narrow Clay Vale Farmlands. These character areas as shown on Figure 46.

The key characteristics of this area include:

- 'Flat to very gently undulating landscape, crossed by the upper tributaries of the Upper Mole;

- Small to medium irregular field pattern divided by thick hedgerows;
- Predominantly pasture farmland;
- Occasional small blocks of woodlands and copses;
- Distinctive field trees and farm ponds;
- Noise and visual intrusion in the north of the area due to proximity of Crawley and Gatwick Airport; and
- Large golf course near Ifield'.

The landscape condition in 2003 was recorded as being in decline due to visual impact of urban fringe uses including development of horse paddocks, smallholdings, untidy small scale industrial uses and fly tipping.

To the south of the Site is I2 Warnham and Rusper Wooded Ridge, the key characteristics of which are:

- Undulating wooded ridges;
- Distinct escarpment to the north of Horsham;
- Secretive wooded ghylls;
- Strong pattern of shaws and hedgerows;
- Intricate patchwork of small pasture fields;
- North to south running lanes, sunken in places;
- Linear ridgetop villages and hamlets with farms and cottages dispersed along lanes;
- Strong historic vernacular of half time with plaster/brick, tile hanging and weatherboarding; and
- Mostly rural character.

The landscape condition in 2003 was recorded as being mostly good.

Horsham District Landscape Capacity Assessment (2014)

In 2014, Horsham District Council undertook an assessment of the capacity of the landscapes around and between settlements to accommodate new large-scale housing and employment development was used to inform the preparation of the Local Plan. Both desk-based and field survey analysis was used to identify discrete 'Local Landscape Character Areas' at a 1:10,000 scale for the purposes of the capacity assessment. This is summarised within Chapter 11 LVIA of the ES.



FIGURE 42 Ifield Meadows/Rural Fringe



FIGURE 44 Land West of Ifield Brook



FIGURE 43 Ifield Golf Course



FIGURE 47 River Mole Valley

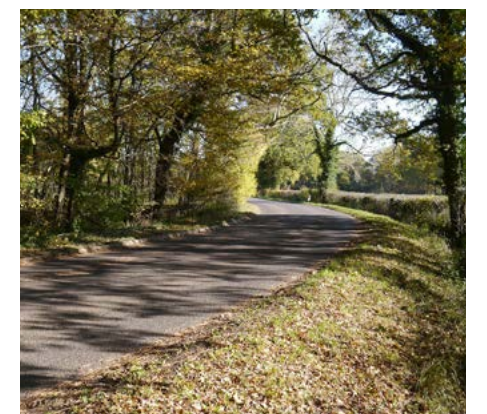


FIGURE 46 Rusper Road Enclosed Fields



FIGURE 45 Rusper Road

Horsham District Landscape Capacity Assessment (2021)

The capacity assessment was updated in 2021, adding additional areas within Horsham. The proposals for West of Ifield locate the majority of development within zones identified as having a Moderate-High capacity for development. The guidance notes that these areas are 'likely to be able accommodate a significant proportion of development without unacceptable adverse landscape and visual impacts or compromising the values attached to it, taking account of any appropriate mitigation.'

One area within the site boundary was noted as having Low-Moderate capacity for development. Within this area impact of development will be limited by ensuring building heights do not exceed the height of the enclosing field boundaries and trees. The majority of these existing teed boundaries will be retained, with tree loss limited to that needed to create access to land parcels.

No residential or commercial development is proposed within areas identified as having No / Low Capacity.

Project Local Landscape Character Assessment

In order to backcheck and verify the published landscape character assessments above and provide additional information to the design team, a detailed review of existing landscape character was undertaken by Gillespies in 2020. This report is presented in the Environmental statement Appendix 11.2. The landscape character areas identified within this study principally correspond to the local landscape character areas identified in the Horsham District Landscape Capacity Assessment, although extended to cover areas outside the Horsham administrative boundary, as shown on Figure xxx. An overview of the key characteristics of each local landscape area is provided on the following pages and have informed and guided this landscape led masterplan.

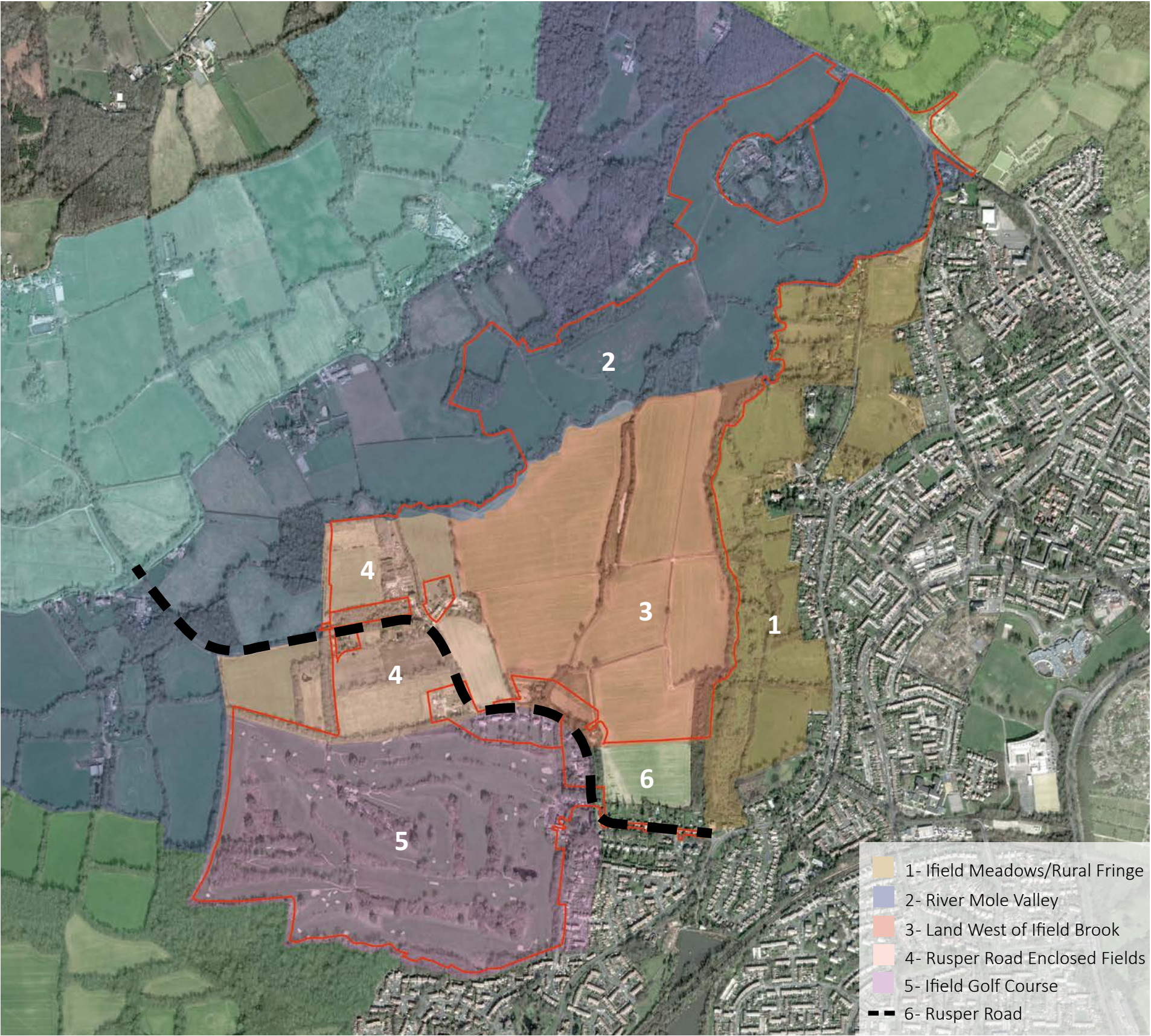


FIGURE 48 Landscape Character Areas

3.4.1 Ifield Meadows/Rural Fringe

Ifield Meadows/Rural Fringe: Ifield Rural Fringe is situated to the west of Ifield and extending from Ifield Park in the south to Ifield Green in the north, the character area encompasses the undeveloped land to the shared administrative boundary. This character lies wholly within Crawley Borough.

Key Characteristics

- Small to medium fields of rough grassland enclosed by mosaic of trees and woodland, some of it ancient.
- Some formal recreation facilities located to the north and south of the character area are in contrast with the informality found elsewhere.
- Predominantly flat topography.
- The tree lined Ifield Brook delineates western boundary of character area, the channel is deeply cut throughout the character area.
- Forms an important green edge to Crawley.
- The boundaries of the character area are generally in good condition, mature hedgerows and tree cover limiting views into adjacent character areas and urban areas.
- Some attractive outward views of the countryside to the west and of St Margaret's Church.
- Much of the character area is designated as 'Local Green Space'. The area has a high amenity value and is well used by nearby residents of Ifield.

Implications for the Masterplan

- Ifield Brook Woodland and Meadows is a valuable area for nature conservation and also has historical importance due to its location within the Ifield conservation area. It also performs an important flood management function, and is highly valued local community for recreation. As a result, it is important that the masterplan should not negatively impact this sensitive area.
- Masterplan proposals should avoid increasing recreational pressure on Ifield Brook Woodland and Meadows, providing a suitable buffer against this edge.
- There is an opportunity to further enhance the biodiversity of Ifield Meadows and improve ecological connectivity through a nature conservation management regime that is linked to the creation of new habitats within the Mole River valley to the north.
- There is scope to enhance connectivity along the west side of the brook by connecting into the informal paths which run through the woodland (including some ancient woodland).



FIGURE 50 Ifield Meadows Local Wildlife Site

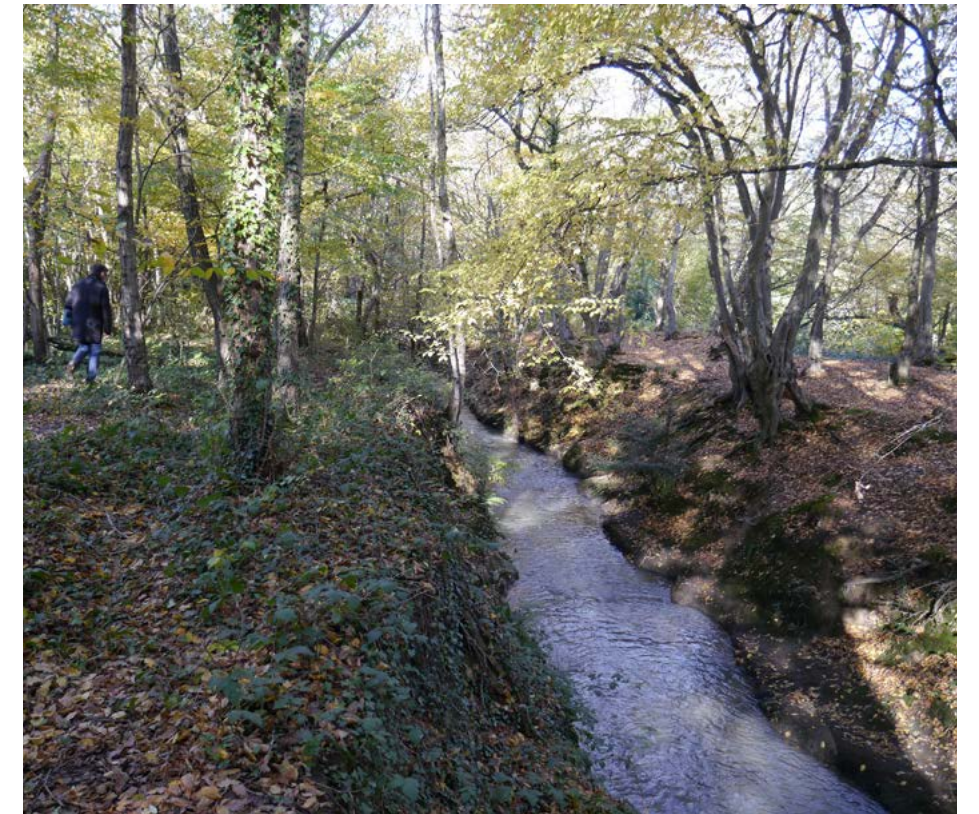


FIGURE 51 Ifield Brook



FIGURE 49 Ifield Parish Church

3.4.2 River Mole Valley

River Mole Valley: The River Mole is located centrally within the study area, aligned southwest – northeast. The river flows from close to its source at Lambs Green towards Gatwick airport. This character area lies wholly within Horsham District.

Key Characteristics

- Broad valley of the River Mole with a distinctive meandering course; although the river itself is generally unseen within the landscape as obscured by tree cover. The density of riverside vegetation varies.
- There are small-medium scale pasture fields and pockets of woodland linked by thick hedgerows or shaws, including remnants of medieval field patterns; as a result much of the area is generally well enclosed.
- Scattered historic cottages and farmsteads are present on higher ground.
- Generally unspoilt rural character and in overall in good condition, with well used and good PRoW access.
- More open historic parkland character in the north of the area around Ifield Court Scheduled Ancient Monument with mature parkland trees.
- The area has low – moderate tranquillity. There is a higher level of noise intrusion in the north of the area from Gatwick Airport in particular.
- Ancient Woodland and shaws in addition to the riverside habitat provide a good level of ecological interest in the area.

Implications for the Masterplan

- The new site entrance and access road is proposed to be located within this area, and will require sensitive integration.
- Decision to retain the historic open parkland character of Ifield Court and parkland trees where possible.
- Decision to retain expansive views down the Mole Valley to the south-west.
- Potential to enhance the informal recreation opportunities with a network of paths.
- Potential to enhance the biodiversity of this area using a biodiversity / landscape management strategy that strengthening connections to Ifield Brook Meadows across the river and low lying wet ground.



FIGURE 53 Existing mature landscape features



FIGURE 54 Historic cottages & farmsteads



FIGURE 52 Historic parkland setting of Ifield Court

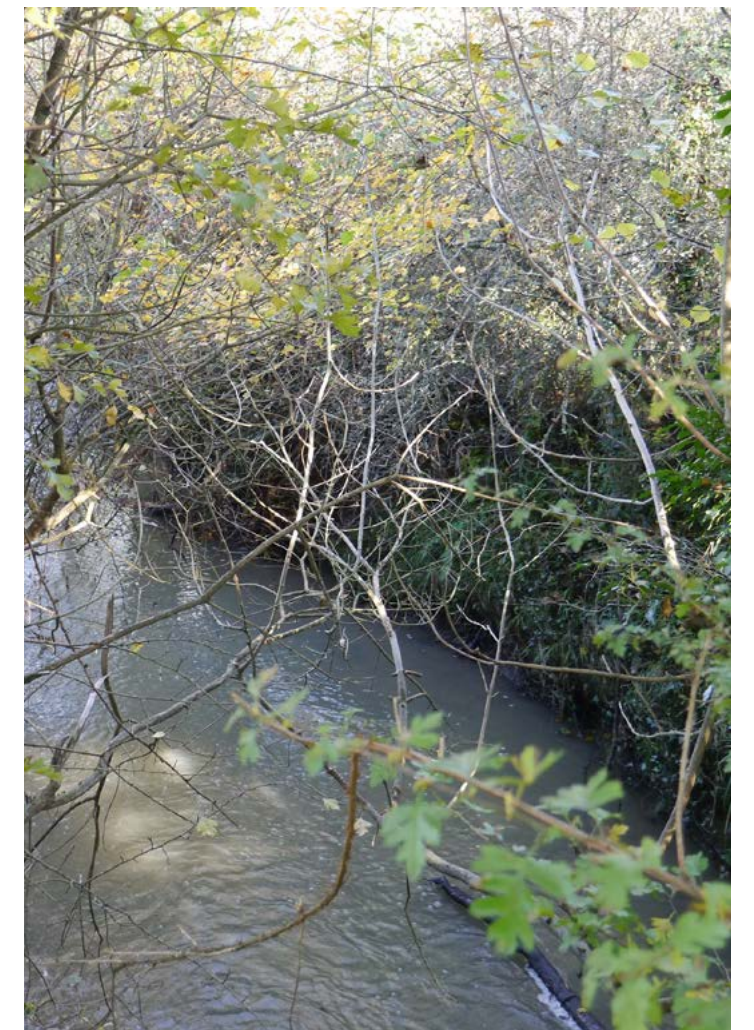


FIGURE 55 River Mole

3.4.3 Land West of Ifield Brook

Land West of Ifield Brook: Situated to the west of Ifield Brook this character area is defined by the River Mole to the north, Maples housing estate to the south and Lower Barn to the west. This character area lies wholly within Horsham District.

Key Characteristics

- A broad low lying vale containing a medium to large scale field pattern of mainly arable fields with flat topography.
- Although generally regular in form, the northern and eastern boundaries are defined by the more sinuous River Mole and Ifield Brook.
- Attractive views of surrounding countryside outside the character area are possible throughout the character area including views of the spire of St Margaret's Church.
- Access is good with PRow running east to west (centrally), and along the River Mole
- Remnant pre-enclosure field boundaries located centrally within the character area are reminiscent of former land management techniques.
- An area of wet pasture, enclosed by mature trees divides the northern fields of the character area and provides an interesting change in scale and feel.

Implications for the Masterplan

- Retain the pre-enclosure area of enclosed wet pasture and large ditch through the centre of the area, and incorporate into a linear park with amenity, ecological and flood management functions.
- Retain and enhance views to St Margaret's Church.
- Retain and develop the existing east-west footpath between Ifield Church and Rusper Road as an important cycle and pedestrian connection between the new and existing communities.
- In parallel, develop a second east-west pedestrian and cycle route linking through the southern edge of Ifield meadows to connect the new neighbourhood centre to Ifield station.
- Retain the ecologically important hedgerow in the south east of the area.



FIGURE 57 Public footpaths



FIGURE 58 Views of wider landscape setting



FIGURE 56 Historic field boundaries

3.4.4 Rusper Road Enclosed Fields

Rusper Road Enclosed Fields: Situated north of Ifield Golf Club, Rusper Road straddles the road of the same name while the River Mole defines its northern extent. This character area lies wholly within Horsham District and has an overall rural character.

Key Characteristics

- This area has a generally flat topography and a regular pattern of small to medium sized arable fields and pasture that form part of smallholdings and plant nursery.
- The condition of the landscape is generally good.
- Historic cottages and a well treed character to Rusper Road.
- Overall rural character with a lack of distinctive scenic qualities and limited access to the countryside.
- The regular, small to medium sized fields, and more limited woodland and hedgerows give this area a fairly open character.
- There is little inter-visibility of adjacent character areas possible. Views from the PRow are particularly constrained by overgrown vegetation.
- Low tranquillity due in part to the proximity of Gatwick airport and traffic.

Implications for the Masterplan

- This area is visually very contained with tall belts of trees. These provide very good screening from adjacent areas in all directions and this area has the capacity to accommodate taller buildings without them being visible in the wider landscape.
- Development in this area should minimise impacts on existing trees.
- Development to protect the residential amenity of the existing Rusper Road cottages including the Grade II listed Old Pound Cottages, by retaining trees around them.
- Potential to re-purpose the existing green lane running north-south from the Golf Course to Rusper Road as a pedestrian link.



3.4.5 Ifield Golf Course

Ifield Golf Course: Ifield Golf Course is situated to the west of Rusper Road and north of the Bewbush neighbourhood of Crawley, access to the course is possible from Rusper Road. This character area lies wholly within Horsham District.

Key Characteristics

- Gently undulating topography, falling from Hyde Hill (85m AOD) north-eastwards to a height of 66m AOD although some slopes are noticeably steeper.
- Golf course includes pockets of deciduous and coniferous woodland. The landscape condition is moderate - some landscape features have been retained but overall a suburban character.
- Enclosure within the area is provided by woodland and hedgerows; some of which are likely to be remnants of the field structure the course overlays.
- The boundaries of the course are generally in good condition. Mature hedgerows and woodland, some of which is ancient, limits views into adjacent character areas.
- Numerous small field drains link the golf course to Hyde Hill Brook in the south and to an unnamed tributary of the Mole in the north.
- Suburban developments within large plots are located along the eastern boundary that front Rusper Road.
- Long distance views towards Ifield Wood are possible from the upper slopes of the golf course.

Implications for the Masterplan

- The existing ridge of high ground running through this area is a distinctive feature and offers very good views, particularly to the north and north-west. There is an opportunity to capture this within the masterplan by locating new green space along the top of the ridge and encompassing many of the existing mature trees.
- The mature trees (many of which are oaks remnant from field boundaries pre-dating the golf course) are a distinctive feature of this area to be protected and retained.
- The steep slopes from the ridge down the golf course are a natural feature and pre-date the golf course – they cannot be slackened without a major regrading of the area, which would result in the loss of all existing trees. New roads should be designed to run across the slope to provide accessible routes.
- The upper slopes of the golf course will be visible from long views from the north. The design of the roof-line and its colour will be key to integrating development in this area. The heights of new development should not breach the tree line behind.
- Provide new linkages into the existing residential areas to the south and east.

