

# CAMPSFIELD, SOUTHWATER

LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL APPRAISAL WITH IMPACT STATEMENT  
DECEMBER 2024

# ISSUE SHEET

**JOB NAME: CAMPSFIELD, SOUTHWATER**

**JOB NUMBER: D3270**

**CLIENT: MILLER HOMES**

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

fabrik Chartered Landscape Architects have been appointed by Miller Homes to carry out a Landscape and Visual Appraisal with Impact Statement (LVAIS) of the Site at Campsfield, Southwater and its surrounding area, in order to consider the likely physical and visual impacts arising as a result of the proposed development.

This LVAIS sets out landscape policy pertinent to the Site and any supporting guidance documents. Baseline landscape elements are described and inform landscape character, landscape condition and value. The baseline character and amenity of the identified visual receptors are then described (considering the visual envelope and the different groups of people affected). The development proposals are summarised, with landscape and visual considerations referenced and mitigation measures explained. The effects of the proposed development are considered against the pertinent landscape and visual receptors relative to the particular stages of the project. The LVAIS is concluded with a landscape policy assessment and overall summary.

A formal pre-application submission was made in June 2024. A written response was received on the 13th September 2024. The LVAIS has addressed the comments relevant to landscape and visual matters wherever possible.

## SUMMARY OF BASELINE

### Policies and designations

There are no landscape or ecological designations of international or national significance within the Site, nor does the site lie within a viewing corridor protected by policy. Hogs Wood to the west of the Site is an area of Ancient Woodland that lies adjacent to the Site boundary. A 15m buffer within the Site is required.

### Published Landscape Character

The Horsham DC Landscape Character Assessment (CBA, Final Report, October 2003) subdivides the District into a number of Landscape Character Areas. The Site and majority of the study area lie within LCA G4 Southwater and Shipley Wooded Farmlands. The key characteristics of the district level character assessment pertinent to the Site and its contextual landscape include the following:

- “Gently undulating, strongly wooded landscape.
- Many small to medium size woodland blocks enclosing an irregular pattern of pasture fields.
- Small hamlets and isolated farms.
- Local mix of traditional building materials, brick, tile hanging and Horsham stone slabs
- Visual and noise intrusion from the A24/A272.”

The Planning and Land Management Guidelines recommend the following:

- “Conserve the rural mostly undeveloped character of the area.
- Ensure any appropriate new development on the A24 corridor is well integrated into the existing landscape pattern with new woodland and hedgerow planting.
- Conserve and manage existing woodlands.
- Restore deciduous woodland to conifer plantations where possible.
- Restore hedgerows where they have been lost.”

### Summary of Baseline Landscape Survey

The key characteristics of the contextual landscape are considered to be the existing woodlands, tree belts and hedgerows, which contribute to a well defined landscape structure and field pattern. The settlement of Southwater is characterised by its relationship and relative enclosure by woodland and transport corridors, with trees, woodlands and open spaces integrated throughout. The settlement is surrounded by agricultural fields and the gently undulating topography creates an agricultural landscape of varied aspects. The woodland and tree belts defining the field patterns are unifying features throughout and are broadly representative of the area as a whole.

The key characteristics of the Site are considered to be the mature field boundary vegetation around the edges of the Site and along the central field boundary, which create two well defined field parcels. Hogs Wood on the western Site boundary is also a key landscape feature. The Poplar plantation within the Site is broadly representative of other areas of plantation to the west and south of the Site. The field patterns and boundaries within the Site are characteristic of the local area. The Site is located adjacent to the existing settlement edge and the A24 road corridor, which detract from the sense of tranquillity and remoteness.

### Summary of Baseline Visual Survey

Views out from the Site are generally restricted due to the combination of topography and vegetation, limiting wider views. However, the residential façades and rooftops to the north are apparent filtered between the plantation and boundary vegetation. Although outside of the Site boundary, there are open views from PRoW 2804 adjacent to the southern boundary of the Site to the ridge line of the South Downs National Park. The southern boundary vegetation however limits views of the South Downs from within the Site. From the wider study area, open views are limited to those receptors within close proximity, in particular adjacent to the Site boundaries. The combination of woodlands and tree belts defining field boundaries and road corridors create a sense of enclosure and truncate views from the wider study area to the east and west.

## SUMMARY OF PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The Proposed Development is a residential development of up to 82 new dwellings of 2 - 2.5 storeys in height with associated infrastructure, public open space, a Local Area for Play and SuDS attenuation. The residential properties are located within two development parcels that lie to the east and west of the central field boundary. Both development parcels are surrounded by the proposed green infrastructure network, which retains the existing boundary vegetation as far as possible and provides opportunities for play and informal recreation. The western part of the Site incorporates the main area of public open space and SuDS attenuation with the 15m buffer to the Ancient Woodland beyond along the western boundary of the Site. Vehicular access is taken from Centenary Road within Mulberry Fields to the north. Two pedestrian connections to PRoW Footpath 2804 along the southern boundary of the Site are also proposed.

## SUMMARY OF LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL EFFECTS

The Proposed Development would see the removal of two areas of commercial poplar plantation to facilitate the residential development parcels and associated areas of

public open space. The scale and density of the Proposed Development is considered to be in keeping with the Mulberry Fields development to the north, ensuring built form remains below the existing tree line and set back from the PRoW along the southern boundary. The landscape proposals further enhance the field boundaries, creating a green settlement edge to the south. In landscape and visual terms the Proposed Development is considered to result in the introduction of a visually discreet residential development that sits appropriately within the existing landscape framework of retained tree belts and woodlands, resulting in a limited number of locations from which it would be visible. Despite this, the change of use from commercial plantation to residential development, like development on any greenfield site, would still result in inevitable landscape harm at the Site level. As the Site is visually well contained, the Proposed Development is not considered to extend the existing visual envelope associated with the existing Site and therefore visual effects from the wider study area are not considered to be significant.

## 2.0

# INTRODUCTION

## 2.1 SCOPE

fabrik Chartered Landscape Architects have been appointed by Miller Homes to carry out a Landscape and Visual Appraisal with Impact Statement (LVAIS) of the Site at Campsfield, Southwater and its surrounding area, in order to consider the likely physical and visual impacts arising as a result of the proposed development.

This LVAIS sets out landscape policy pertinent to the Site and any supporting guidance documents. Baseline landscape elements are described and inform landscape character, landscape condition and value. The baseline character and amenity of the identified visual receptors are then described (considering the visual envelope and the different groups of people affected). The development proposals are summarised, with landscape and visual considerations referenced and mitigation measures explained. The effects of the proposed development are considered against the pertinent landscape and visual receptors relative to the particular stages of the project. The LVAIS is concluded with a landscape policy assessment and overall summary.

The location of the Site is shown on the plan opposite. The red line area extends to 4.87 ha.

The methodology for the LVA is based on the 'Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment' (third edition) by the Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (Routledge, 2013). A full methodology is set out at Appendix 1.

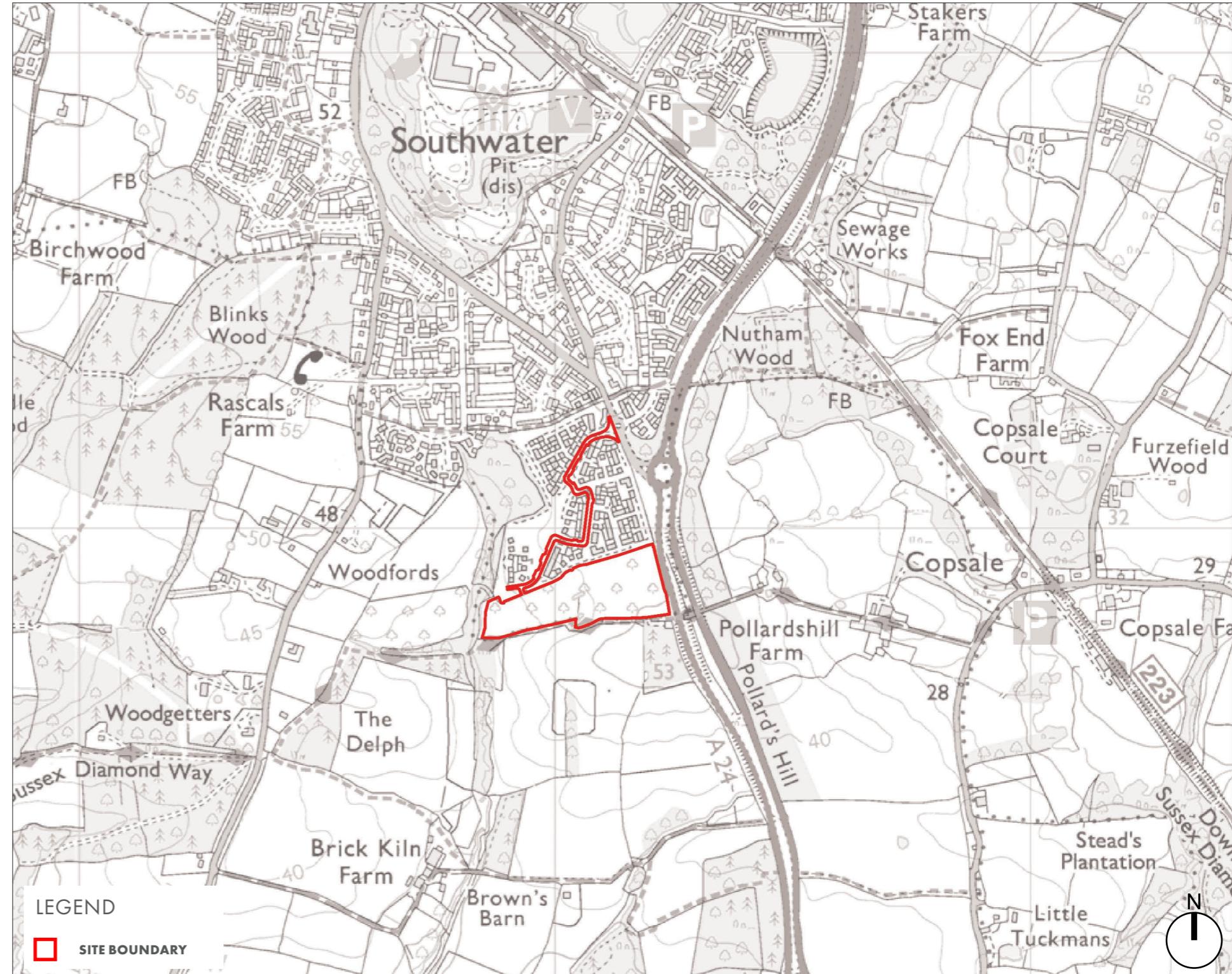
## 2.2 DESKTOP RESEARCH AND FIELD WORK

The desktop survey included the review of Ordnance Survey maps, interactive maps, aerial photography, published landscape character assessment documents, planning policy and any likely changes to the current baseline situation which are likely to be in place prior to the proposed development.

The study area is defined by the Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) as determined by the initial desk study and verified in the field and therefore extends to 2km from the Site.

The field work was carried out on 14<sup>th</sup> March 2024 and recorded the existing landscape elements within the Site; the contextual landscape elements; and photographs from key representative viewpoints, chosen to represent a range of receptors, distances and directions from the Site.

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## 2.0

# INTRODUCTION

## 2.3 CONSULTATION

A formal pre-application submission was made in June 2024. A written response was received on the 13th September 2024. The responses of relevance to this LVAIS are set out below:

### LANDSCAPE AND TREES

*"Policy 31 of the HDPF states that development will be supported where it demonstrates that it maintains or enhances the existing network of green infrastructure. Development proposals will be required to contribute to the enhancement of existing biodiversity and should create and manage new habitats where appropriate. Policy 33 of the HDPF also requires developments to presume in favour of the retention of existing important landscape and natural features, including trees. Strategic Policy 17 of the submission HDLP resists any loss of green infrastructure unless it can be demonstrated that new opportunities will be provided that appropriately mitigates and/or compensates for the respective harm and ensures that the ecosystem services or the area are retained and enhanced. Strategic Policy 17 also expects existing priority habitats and trees to be retained, with habitat enhancement including additional hedgerow and tree planting. Where the felling of a tree is necessary, for example due to disease, Strategic Policy 17 would require replacement planting with a suitable tree species, age, and location to retain and enhance the link with the wider network of habitats and Green Infrastructure, will be required."*

#### Landscape Character

*"The HDC Reg 19 Site Assessment Report Part IV (December 2023) considered the impacts of the pre-application site and rejected the site in part due to biodiversity and landscape issues. The pre-application site is countryside fringe with strong woodland features. The pre-application layout does not address the concerns set out in the Site Assessment Report and Horsham District Landscape Capacity Assessment 2021. The Landscape Officer strongly recommends reviewing the concerns and details of the Local Landscape Character Area 26: Land South of Southwater within the Landscape Capacity Assessment and addressing this within any submission."*

#### fabrik commentary relative to the scope of this LVAIS

The HDC Reg 19 Site Assessment Report Part IV (December 2023) assesses the site jointly as parcels SA725 and SA896. The site itself is defined as SA896 only. The published assessment identifies "neutral impacts for environmental considerations". It states in relation to landscape that: "The site does not lie within a protected landscape. The Landscape Capacity Study (2021) assesses that the site has no-low capacity to accommodate development and any development would need to carefully consider its landscape impact." In relation to biodiversity it states: "The site adjoins and is bisected by the wooded gully that lies to the immediate east of Hogs Wood ancient woodland. A buffer of 15m from ancient woodland would be required."

The Site Assessment Report does not present a full picture of the Landscape Capacity Assessment (May 2021) findings relevant to the site. The identified "no-low capacity to accommodate development" relates to large scale development and employment uses. The assessment for the same area in relation to "medium scale housing" identifies a "low-moderate capacity". Medium scale housing is defined as "development of approximately 100-500 dwellings associated with urban extensions".

Significantly larger than the proposals for the site.

The SAR conclusion states *"The site is not recommended for allocation. Any scheme would need to address biodiversity and landscape issues before it could be considered in the local plan as a residential allocation. While the site lies to the immediate south of the existing built up area boundary of Southwater and adjoins it, it is considered that existing constraints on site (such as the neighbouring ancient woodland) and access issues (i.e. whether access could be provided from the Mulberry Fields development to the immediate north) present uncertainty over whether development can be implemented or deliverable. The site is not included as an allocation in either the Shipley Neighbourhood Plan or Southwater Neighbourhood Plan but relevant policies would apply should an application be submitted."*

The Site includes land to the east of Hogs Wood Ancient Woodland only. The pre-application layout demonstrates that it is feasible to retain a 15m buffer to this in line with the Natural England standing advice. It also demonstrates that access is achievable via the Mulberry Fields development without impacting the Ancient Woodland. Whilst the Neighbourhood Plan policies have been reviewed and considered, the Site sits outside of the Southwater and Shipley Neighbourhood Plan boundaries and therefore their policies do not apply. It is therefore considered that the SAR has incorrectly assessed the Site in relation to the published capacity assessment. The identified biodiversity and landscape issues are incorporated into the pre-application masterplan and are therefore not considered to preclude development in this location. The LVAIS will consider the above in more detail.

#### Trees

*"The retention of perimeter and central trees and inclusion of a minimum 15m buffer from the Ancient Woodland (AW) is supported. The 15m buffer should exclude any SuDS including the proposed attenuation basin, and instead should comprise solely of woodland planting. The unallocated parking for plots 1-3 should also preferably be located further to the east to minimise hard standing, underground utilities and potential sources of lighting in proximity of the AW."*

*As mentioned in the density and quantum of units section above, trees are expected along the primary road in line with the requirement of NPPF 136 and within larger groupings of car parking. I also consider that more tree planting could be included within the site layout in general. This will assist with BNG and creating a well-designed and attractive development. Any additional tree planting should be native species. The location of trees needs to be coordinated with underground services (utilities) and it is recommended that a drawing showing the location of utilities and trees RPAs is provided any submission.*

*From a design and layout perspective, it is noted that the trees outside plots 65 and 72 are quite important for screening and separating parking and rear gardens. Therefore, it is important to ensure sufficient space is included for the trees and root protection areas outside of underground facilities and hardstanding, and without impeding pedestrian footpaths.*

*It is noted that the site currently planted within plantation woodland and the impact of this loss will need to be fully considered and justified within any submission.*

*Any submission would need to include a Tree Survey, details of tree removal, retention and protection (including a tree protection plan), an Arboricultural Impact*

*Assessment and details of proposed tree planting and maintenance/management."*

#### fabrik commentary relative to the scope of this LVAIS

This LVAIS has been informed by the Arboricultural Survey in relation to the description of the baseline conditions and Arboricultural Impact Assessment in relation to the assessment of effects upon trees and landscape features. Further detail is provided in the relevant sections of the LVAIS.

#### SuDS

*"Proposed surface water attenuation areas focus predominantly on end of pipe solutions by concentrating on the water storage and slow-release aspects of SuDS. We encourage the surface water strategy to be revisited to explore the 4 pillars of SuDS which include amenity, water quality, water quantity and biodiversity. There are a number of opportunities that can be introduced by implementing tiers or hierarchies of landscape features (no more than 150mm to 300mm deep) such as swales, rain gardens, rills, blue green roofs, etc. The introduction of these features would likely reduce the size or depth of the proposed basins, providing opportunity for better integration within the landscape and amenity space."*

*Drawings and levels for the attenuation basins and further potential SuDS proposals should be included in any submission.*

*The ground contouring, planting and inlet and outlet design should be carefully considered to maximise the amenity value. If headwalls are proposed, Landscape Officers recommend a soft, naturalistic approach such as cladding in Horsham stone and introducing planting.*

*The proposed attenuation basin in the west of the site currently appears quite square and an alien feature within the landscape. Attenuation basins should blend aesthetically into the surroundings and must not look like steep sided engineered structures. Landscape Officers recommend introducing varied depths using a combination of shelves/benches with a max 1:3 slope in between. This will provide the opportunity for marginal planting and a wildlife habitat which has high potential for biodiversity and therefore ecological and amenity benefits.*

*Attenuation areas and swales should additionally be combined with variations in vegetation structure to ensure habitat diversity and landscape effect. As per HDC's Open Space, Sports & Recreation Review, we advise using solely UK native species and a range of vegetation types including wildflowers and other nectar rich plants, trees, shrubs and grasses of various heights.*

*These should be included within the planting schedule and their specific maintenance within a LMMP.*

*In view of the above, I recommend reviewing the SuDS approach and redesigning the attenuation basin to appear more naturalistic in shape and with edge planting, as well as being located outside the AW buffer and mindfully located in relation to surrounding tree roots."*

#### fabrik commentary relative to the scope of this LVAIS

The detailed matters raised in relation to SuDS are considered within the design information presented within the DAS. This LVAIS has taken account of the approach to SuDS as part of the assessment of effects.

## 2.0

# INTRODUCTION

## **Neighbouring Amenity**

Policy 33 of the HDPF states that development should consider the scale, massing, and orientation between buildings, respecting the amenities and sensitivities of neighbouring properties and ensuring unacceptable harm to amenity of neighbouring properties, such as overlooking or noise, is avoided. Strategic Policy 11 of the submission HDLP requires development proposals to minimise lighting impacts on neighbouring sites. Strategic Policy 20 of the submission HDLP requires development to be designed to avoid unacceptable harm to the amenity of existing and future occupiers or users of nearby property and land, for example due to overlooking, over dominance or overshadowing, light pollution, traffic generation, and general activity, noise, odour and/or vibration.

*The proposed development is likely to have some visual impact to the existing Mulberry Fields dwellings bordering the pre-application site, although this is expected to be largely screened by the retention of the existing tree belt. The proposed development would also have temporary construction impacts and occupational traffic impacts, which will need assessing and appropriately mitigating as part of any application submission.*

*The provision of footpath connections and additional open space within the pre-application site would be a benefit to neighbouring residents' amenity. Details of how this will be managed and any impact to future site occupants should be explored within any application submission.*

## **fabrik commentary relative to the scope of this LVAIS**

The effects on the existing residents of properties, users of roads and open spaces in Mulberry Fields will be appropriately considered as receptors within this LVAIS. Appropriate mitigation measures incorporated into the masterplan will also be fully described.

## 3.0

# LANDSCAPE PLANNING CONTEXT

## 3.1 PERTINENT DESIGNATIONS AND POLICY

### 3.1.1 LOCAL DESIGNATIONS

#### Designations

The landscape to the south of Southwater, including the Site does not lie within any landscape designations at the national, regional or local level. Furthermore, the Site does not lie within a viewing corridor, protected by policy. The South Downs National Park is located approximately 11km to the south of the Site.

Hogs Wood is an area of Ancient Woodland adjacent to the western boundary of the Site. This woodland is also identified as a Priority Habitat (deciduous woodland), as is the woodland in the central reservation of the A24 to the east of the Site.

#### Historic and Cultural Landscape:

There are no Conservation Areas or Registered Parks and Gardens within the Site or study area. There are five Listed Buildings scattered throughout the southern and eastern parts of the study area, none of which have a visual relationship with the Site. The historic centre of Southwater is located to the north of the Site and north of the Country Park. The immediate built context within the intervening townscape is modern and set within a well treed environment.

#### Public Rights of Way Context

PRoW Footpath 2804 runs adjacent to the Site's southern boundary and the Sussex Diamond Way Long Distance Walking route runs east-west through the wider landscape to the south of the site. Other Public Rights of Way (PRoWs), including footpaths and bridleways, exist within the wider context of the site to the south, east and west. The Downs Link runs north-west to south-east through the eastern part of the wider landscape.

### 3.1.2 NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK (NPPF)

The December 2023 NPPF seeks the presumption in favour of sustainable development. The following issues and policies of the NPPF are pertinent to the proposed development and this LVIA.

Section 2 deals with achieving sustainable development. At para 8, subsection c relating to an environmental objective, it states: "to protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, improving biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change..."

Section 8 deals with promoting healthy and safe communities, para 98 under the open space and recreation sub-heading states that: "Access to a network of high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and physical activity is important for the health and well-being of communities, and can deliver wider benefits for nature and support effects to address climate change..."

Para 104 goes on to say that: "Planning policies and decisions should protect and enhance public rights of way and access, including taking opportunities to provide better facilities for users, for example by adding links to existing rights of way networks

including National Trails."

Paragraph 105 deals with Local Green Space and states that: "The designation of land as Local Green Space through local and neighbourhood plans allows communities to identify and protect green areas of particular importance to them..." ~~relevant? remove?~~

Section 12 sets out the requirements for achieving well-designed places. Para 131 states that: "The creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities..."

Para 132 states that: "Design policies should be developed with local communities so that they reflect local aspirations, and are grounded in an understanding and evaluation of each area's defining characteristics."

Para 135 goes on to state that: "Planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments:

- a Will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;
- b Are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;
- c Are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities);
- d Establish or maintain a strong sense of place, using the arrangement of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live, work and visit;
- e Optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development (including green and other public space) and support local facilities and transport networks; and
- f Create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users and where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion and resilience."

Para 136 deals with trees and states that: "Trees make an important contribution to the character and quality of urban environments, and can also help mitigate and adapt to climate change. Planning policies and decisions should ensure that new streets are tree-lined, that opportunities are taken to incorporate trees elsewhere in developments (such as parks and community orchards), that appropriate measures are in place to secure the long-term maintenance of newly-planted trees, and that existing trees are retained wherever possible. Applicants and local planning authorities should work with highways officers and tree officers to ensure that the right trees are planted in the right places, and solutions are found that are compatible with highways standards and the needs of different users."

Para 137 sets out that: "Design quality should be considered throughout the evolution and assessment of individual proposals."

Para 139 states that: "Development that is not well designed should be refused, especially where it fails to reflect local design policies and government guidance on design, taking into account any local design guidance and supplementary planning documents which use visual tools such as design guides and codes. Conversely,

significant weight should be given to:

- a. development which reflects local design policies and government guidance on design, taking into account any local design guidance and supplementary planning documents which use visual tools such as design guides and codes; and/or outstanding or innovative designs which promote high levels of sustainability, or help raise the standard of design more generally in an area, so long as they fit in with the overall form and layout of their surroundings.
- b. outstanding or innovative designs which promote high levels of sustainability, or help raise the standard of design more generally in an area, so long as they fit in with the overall form and layout of their surroundings."

Section 14 covers meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change. The elements relevant to landscape matters include para 159 states that: "New development should be planned for in ways that:

- a Avoid increased vulnerability to the range of impacts arising from climate change. When new development is brought forward in areas which are vulnerable, care should be taken to ensure that risks can be managed through suitable adaptation measures, including through the planning of green infrastructure; ...

Para 167, subsection c goes on to state that: "using opportunities provided by new development and improvements in green infrastructure to reduce the causes and impacts of flooding, (making as much use as possible of natural flood management techniques as part of an integrated approach to flood risk management."

Section 15 deals with conserving and enhancing the natural environment. Para 180 states that: "Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:

- a protecting and enhancing valued landscapes... (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan);
- b recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the most and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland.
- c maintaining the character of the undeveloped coast, while improving public access to it..."

Para 182 states that: "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 all these designated areas should be limited, while development within their setting should be sensitively located and designed to avoid or minimise adverse impacts on the designated areas."

With regard to the sub-section on ground conditions and pollution, para 189 states that: "Planning policies and decisions should also ensure that new development is appropriate for its location taking into account the likely effects (including cumulative effects) of pollution on health, living conditions and the natural environment, as well as the potential sensitivity of the site or the wider area to impacts that could arise from the development. In doing so they should:

- a Mitigate and reduce to a minimum potential adverse impacts resulting from noise from new development – and avoid noise giving rise to significant adverse impacts

#### LEGEND

- SITE BOUNDARY
- SITES OF NATURE CONSERVATION IMPORTANCE
- PRIORITY HABITAT (DECIDUOUS WOODLAND)
- ANCIENT WOODLAND
- LISTED BUILDINGS
- FOOTPATHS
- BRIDLEWAYS
- SUSSEX DIAMOND WAY - LONG DISTANCE ROUTE
- DOWNS LINK - LONG DISTANCE ROUTE

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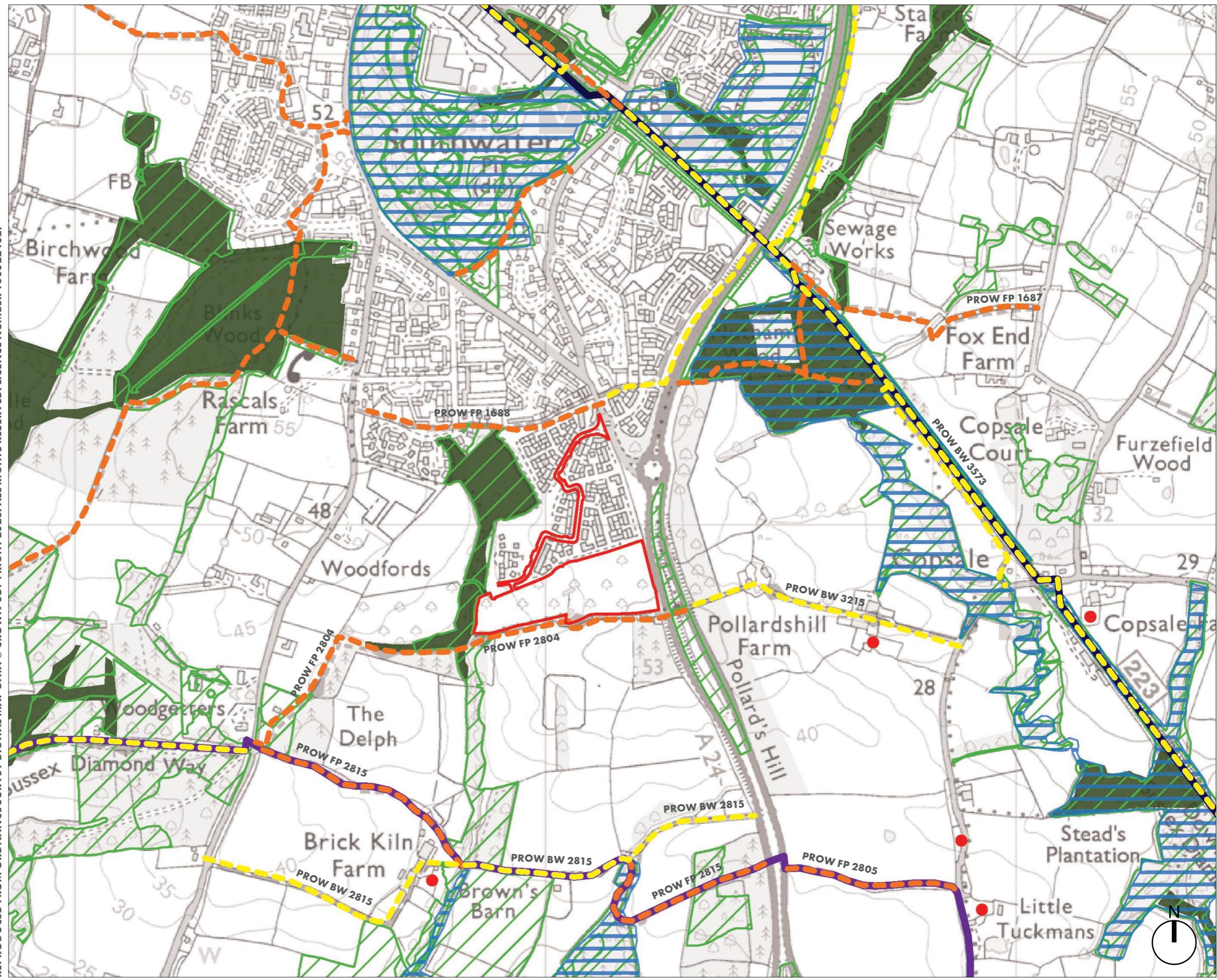


FIGURE 3.1 – LOCAL DESIGNATIONS AND PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY (FABRIK, 2024)

## 3.0

# LANDSCAPE PLANNING CONTEXT

on health and the quality of life;

- b Identify and protect tranquil areas which have remaining relatively undisturbed by noise and are prized for their recreational and amenity value for this reason;
- c Limit the impact of light pollution from artificial light on local amenity, intrinsically dark landscapes and nature conservation.”

Section 16 deals with conserving and enhancing the historic environment. Para's 205 states that: “When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation...”

Para 206 states that: “Any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification. Substantial harm to or loss of:

- a grade II listed buildings, or grade II registered parks and gardens, should be exceptional;
- b assets of the highest significance, notably scheduled monuments, protected wreck sites, registered battlefields, grade I and grade II\* listed buildings, grade I and II\* registered parks and gardens, and World Heritage Sites, should be wholly exceptional.”

The Government issued a revised version of the NPPF on 30 July 2024 for consultation which closed on 24 September 2024. Adoption is expected by the end of the year.

### 3.1.3 PLANNING PRACTICE GUIDANCE

The NPPF is supported by the on-line resource Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) There are a number of sections that relate to this LVA as set out below.

Climate change is considered in Section ID 6-001-20140306 (Revision date :15 March 2019). Paragraph 001 states that: ‘local planning authorities should ensure that protecting the local environment is properly considered alongside the broader issues of protecting the global environment. Planning can also help increase resilience to climate change impact through the location, mix and design of development. Addressing climate change is one of the core land use planning principles which the National Planning Policy Framework expects to underpin both plan-making and decision-taking’.

Guidance on the natural environment is set out within Section ID 8-20190721 (Revision date: 21 July 2019). Paragraph 029 relates to trees and woodlands, and states that: ‘Well-placed and well-chosen trees on streets and in urban spaces can provide a range of benefits: encouraging walking and enhanced physical and mental health; contributing to local environmental character and distinctiveness; providing habitats for wildlife; reducing noise and excessive heat; and supporting sustainable drainage. Changing climate, in particular hotter summers and more frequent periods of dry weather, and unknown pests and diseases, will place new pressures on green infrastructure in the long-term, so trees of the right species and age profile are essential’.

Guidance on the historic environment is set out at Section ID 18a-20190723 (Revision Date: 23 July 2019). Paragraph 013 sets out that: ‘The extent and importance of setting is often expressed by reference to the visual relationship between the asset

and the proposed development and associated visual / physical considerations Although views of or from an asset will play an important part in the assessment of impacts on setting, the way in which we experience an asset in its setting is also influenced by other environmental factors such as noise, dust, smell and vibration from other land uses in the vicinity, and by our understanding of the historic relationship between places....The contribution that setting makes to the significance of the heritage asset does not depend on there being public rights of way or an ability to otherwise access or experience that setting. The contribution may vary over time’.

Paragraph 036 of this section considers landscape and identifies that: ‘The National Planning Policy Framework is clear that plans should recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and that strategic policies should provide for the conservation and enhancement of landscapes. This can include nationally and locally designated landscapes but also the wider countryside. Where landscapes have a particular local value, it is important for policies to identify their special characteristics and be supported by proportionate evidence...The cumulative impacts of development on the landscape need to be considered carefully’.

The guidance on design is set out at Section ID: 26-20191001 (Revision date 1 October 2019). Paragraph 001 under this section reiterates paragraph 130 of the NPPF and identifies that: ‘permission should be refused for development of poor design that fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions, taking into account any local design standards or style guides in plans or supplementary planning documents. Conversely, where the design of a development accords with clear expectations in plan policies, design should not be used by the decision-maker as a valid reason to object to development’.

### 3.1.4 NATIONAL DESIGN GUIDE

The National Design Guide illustrates how well-designed places that are beautiful, enduring and successful can be achieved in practice. Paragraph 20 sets out the components of good design, including layout, form and scale, appearance, landscape, materials and detailing. The 10 characteristics of a well designed place are described in paragraph 35 as follows:

‘Context - enhances the surroundings.  
Identity - attractive and distinctive.  
Built form - a coherent pattern of development.  
Movement - accessible and easy to move around.  
Nature - enhanced and optimised.  
Public spaces - safe, social and inclusive.  
Uses - mixed and integrated.  
Homes and buildings - functional, healthy and sustainable.  
Resources - efficient and resilient.  
Lifespan - made to last’.

### 3.1.5 NATIONAL MODEL DESIGN CODE

The National Model Design Code forms part of the Planning Practice Guidance expanding on the characteristics of good design set out in the National Design Guide.

### 3.1.6 LOCAL

Horsham District Council's relevant development plan policy is set out within the following documents:

- Horsham District Planning Framework (November 2015)
- Southwater Neighbourhood Plan 2019-2031 (August 2020)

The Site is located within Southwater Parish but is located outside of the Neighbourhood Plan boundary. Although the policies within the Southwater Neighbourhood Plan are technically not relevant to the Site or Proposed Development, the following have been considered as part of this LVAIS:

- Policy SNP12.1: Outdoor Play Space
- Policy SNP16: Design
- Policy SNP17: Site Levels
- Policy SNP18: A Treed Landscape

Whilst the Site is not subject to a landscape designation, it is subject to the following landscape-related policies set out within the Horsham District Planning Framework (HDPF 2015), which will be taken into consideration as part of the design of the new neighbourhood. Figure 3.1 on the following page sets out the local designations of relevance to the Site and study area.

#### **Policy 25: District Character and the Natural Environment**

This policy protects the natural environment and landscape character of the District.

#### **Policy 26: Countryside Protection**

This policy covers development outside of built-up area boundaries (the Site adjoins settlement boundary).

#### **Policy 31: Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity**

This policy requires existing green infrastructure networks to be maintained and enhanced, it covers designated landscapes such as Ancient Woodland and priority habitats as identified on Figure 3.1.

#### **Policy 32: The Quality of New Development**

This policy sets out requirements for high quality and inclusive design, character and open space.

#### **Policy 33: Development Principles**

This policy covers scale, massing, local distinctiveness and the retention of existing important landscape and natural features.

#### **Policy 35: Climate Change**

This policy sets the expectations for the design of development in response to climate change including the use of green infrastructure and SuDS.

#### **Policy 38: Flooding**

This policy covers flood risk and requires new development to incorporate SuDS where possible.

### 3.0

## LANDSCAPE PLANNING CONTEXT

### Emerging Policy

The Horsham District Local Plan 2023-2040 (Regulation 19) Draft was published for consultation from the 19th January until the 1st March 2024. The following emerging policies are of relevance to the Site.

- Strategic Policy 6: Climate Change
- Strategic Policy 8: Sustainable Design and Construction
- Strategic Policy 10: Flooding
- Strategic Policy 13: The Natural Environment and Landscape Character
- Strategic Policy 14: Countryside Protection
- Strategic Policy 16: Protected Landscapes
- Strategic Policy 17: Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity
- Strategic Policy 19: Development Quality
- Strategic Policy 20: Development Principles
- Strategic Policy 24: Sustainable Transport

### 3.1.7 GUIDANCE DOCUMENTS / INFORMATIVES

#### BIODIVERSITY AND GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE PLANNING ADVICE NOTE (2022)

This Planning Advice Note (PAN) provides interim guidance for applicants and decision makers on how Biodiversity and Green Infrastructure should be taken into account within development proposals in accordance with the Horsham District Development Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) following the enactment of the Environment Act 2021 but before all the necessary secondary legislation is in place and enacted in respect of the emerging statutory 10% biodiversity net gain requirement. Requiring Biodiversity Net Gain to be achieved on all major development sites.

#### HORSHAM DISTRICT GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEGY AND GUIDE (JANUARY, 2024)

The HDC Green Infrastructure Strategy and Guide (2024) sets the vision for the District as: *“A network of high quality multifunctional greenspaces and waterways that are protected and managed in partnership, and delivering environmental, social and economic benefits for businesses, communities and the environment of the District.”* Section 3 sets out the Key Green Infrastructure Design Principles. These are:

- 1 *“Landscape design and green infrastructure principles must inform the design and layout of a proposal from the outset, and not left to be added in at the end.”*
- 2 *“Protect and enhance existing habitats, create new habitats, and deliver biodiversity net gain:*
  - Connect existing and new habitats. Safeguard existing or create new movement corridors for wildlife.
  - Seek to reintroduce lost habitats and species within movement corridors. Examples include hedgehog highways, bird boxes, swift nesting bricks and bat bricks. These are not the only types of greening provision.
  - Use existing green infrastructure assets as anchor features, such as mature

*trees and other existing features.*

- *Where retained avoid incorporating hedgerows into individual property boundaries. They should remain in the public realm, and their future retention and management safeguarded.*
- *Take account of soil and optimise biodiversity – such as, appropriate habitats and types of space for the soil in situ taking account of nutrient levels, retention of historic soils for regeneration, impact of introduction of soil, appropriate enhancements, compaction during development and intensity of use.*
- 3 *Consider the function of new spaces and how they will be used and managed:*
  - *Consider the function and character of any public open space. Will it be woodland, allotments, wildflower meadows or species rich grassland? Make this clear in any proposal. This should be informed by existing soil, habitats and consequent appropriate use.*
  - *Open spaces should be connected and accessible with paths / routes into and through them. Green spaces and corridors should be capable of adoption (eg as public footpath / bridleway) and have potential to be extended / link to other routes in the future (eg extend up to the site edge).*
  - *Design public open spaces to have strong levels of natural surveillance. Play and other recreational areas should not be placed in hidden or out of the way places to encourage use and new and existing residents to come together and share spaces.*
  - *Provide places where people can meet, like public squares. Provide places to sit, chat and play in the street. Frequent benches allow those with mobility difficulties to walk more easily between places and different types of seating suit different sectors of the community.*
  - *Create ways to encourage physical activity and social interaction (eg create park run routes on larger developments).*
  - *Create spaces attractive to all with multiple functions that seek to meet the needs of all sectors of the community.*
  - *Long term management must be robust. It must ensure that legal obligations to maintain green infrastructure features are in place. The proposed long term maintenance should align with the design and provision.*
- 4 *Consider how landscaping will be used to develop the character of the area and deliver green infrastructure:*
  - *Provide structural landscaping so that it creates places with a memorable character and provide memorable spaces and building groupings.*
  - *Provide well-defined streets and spaces, using buildings, landscaping and / or water to enclose and define spaces. Buildings should appropriately front public spaces.*
  - *Enough space must be provided for tree lined streets, with above and below ground growing space and regard to utilities, and the provision of attractive pedestrian and cycle friendly routes, access for waste and emergency vehicles, and the capitalisation of features such as open views.*
  - *There should be defensible space and strong boundary treatment to clearly define private spaces and no ‘left over’ land with no clear public or private function.*
  - *Building orientations and designs must capitalize on features such as open views.*
  - *Frame views of features on or beyond a site and reinforce legible features.*
  - *Create landscape layers that add sensory richness to a place – visual, scent and sound. Create navigable features for those with visual, mobility or other limitations.*
- 5 *For sustainable drainage systems:*

- *Capture water as close as possible to where it falls. Avoid funnelling rainwater away in underground pipes as the default water management strategy.*
- *Ensure water quantity, water quality, amenity and biodiversity are considered. Be creative with rain gardens, permeable surfaces, ponds and swales, and avoid steeply sided or fenced holes in the ground.*
- *Well-designed multi-functional sustainable drainage will incorporate play and recreational opportunities (enabling people to connect with water).*

#### 6 For housing proposals:

- *All dwellings, including apartments and maisonettes, should have access to their own planting / growing space. e.g in the form of a garden, balcony or terrace.*
- *The space around apartment buildings etc should be used to best effect which could include such provision for growing, clothes drying, and seating – taking into account the aesthetics of the street scene.*
- *Provide interlocking back gardens between existing and new development (where existing back gardens adjoin a site boundary).*
- *Avoid unmanaged gaps between development, including unmanaged privacy buffers to existing residents, and provide clarity over land ownership and management.*
- *Design open space to respond to existing or anticipated desire lines between public transport stops and building entrances.*
- *Adhere to the user hierarchy set out in Manual for Streets.*
- *Use landscaping to help settle cars / car parking and cycle parking into the street and building setting, having regard to the provision of secure and overlooked cycle parking close to entrance points.”*

#### SOUTHWATER PARISH DESIGN STATEMENT (2011)

*“The Parish Design Statement (PDS) aims to set out clear and simple guide lines for the design of all development in the Parish of Southwater, based on its particular Sussex character, so that new development is in harmony with its setting and makes a positive contribution to the immediate environment.”*

Whilst the boundary of the PDS does not cover the Site, it does provide relevant context and guidelines on local landscape and townscape character. The pertinent key character guidelines relevant to the Site include:

- CG3: Ensure medium and larger scale development provide street scenes with attractive, open, stepped house frontages, and preserve and use pre-existing streams, hedgerows and trees as natural boundaries.
- CG4 The design of vertical structures such as masts and buildings over two storeys should be appropriate to character and nature of the area.
- CG5 Ensure any development is well integrated into the existing landscape pattern of small woodlands, hedgerows and shaws, and do not disconnect or isolate patches of hedgerows and woodland.
- CG6 Look to conserve the rural undeveloped character, particularly in the hamlets where any large scale development is likely to damage character through loss of small scale field patterns and woodland.
- CG7 Look to conserve established woodland, hedges and shaws, and the open character of the parish landscape.
- CG8 Encourage native species screen planting around any visually intrusive developments.

## 4.0

# BASELINE CONDITIONS

## 4.1 PUBLISHED LANDSCAPE CHARACTER CONTEXT

The term 'landscape' commonly refers to the view or appearance of the land as perceived by people. Landscape applies to any natural, rural, urban or urban edge areas, in land, water and seascape areas.

Landscape character is the combination of both natural / physical, cultural / social and perceptual / aesthetic influences, which give rise to a distinct, recognisable and consistent pattern of elements in the landscape that makes one landscape different from another, rather than better or worse and which define the 'sense of place'. The landscape is not therefore simply a visual phenomenon.

The following sections set out the landscape character framework of the study area from the national level through to the district and parish scale based upon existing character assessments undertaken by Natural England and Horsham District Council.

### 4.1.1 NATIONAL LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT

The general character of the English countryside has been described at a national level by Natural England. Figure 4.1 illustrates the NCA of relevance to the study area. The key characteristics pertinent to the study area as described as:

- "Broad, low-lying, gently undulating clay vales with outcrops of limestone or sandstone providing local variation.
- The underlying geology has provided materials for industries including iron working, brick and glass making, leaving pits, lime kilns and quarries. Many of the resulting exposures are critical to our understanding of the Wealden environment.
- A generally pastoral landscape with arable farming associated with lighter soils on higher ground and areas of fruit cultivation in Kent. Land use is predominantly agricultural but with urban influences, particularly around Gatwick, Horley and Crawley.
- Field boundaries of hedgerows and shaws (remnant strips of cleared woodland) enclosing small, irregular fields and linking into small and scattered linear settlements along roadsides or centred on greens or commons. Rural lanes and tracks with wide grass verges and ditches.
- Small towns and villages are scattered among areas of woodland, permanent grassland and hedgerows on the heavy clay soils where larger 20th-century villages have grown around major transport routes.
- Frequent north-south routeways and lanes, many originating as drove roads, along which livestock were moved to downland grazing or to forests to feed on acorns.
- The Low Weald boasts an intricate mix of woodlands, much of it ancient, including extensive broadleaved oak over hazel and hornbeam coppice, shaws, small field copses and tree groups, and lines of riparian trees along watercourses. Veteran trees are a feature of hedgerows and in fields.
- Many small rivers, streams and watercourses with associated watermeadows and wet woodland.
- Abundance of ponds, some from brick making and quarrying, and hammer and furnace ponds, legacies of the Wealden iron industry.
- Traditional rural vernacular of local brick, weatherboard and tile-hung buildings plus local use of distinctive Horsham slabs as a roofing material.
- Weatherboard barns are a feature. Oast houses occur in the east and use of flint is notable in the south towards the South Downs."

The Statements of Environmental Opportunity pertinent to the study area are set out below.

*"SEO 1: Protect, manage and significantly enhance the area's intricate and characteristic mix of semi-natural ancient woodlands, gill woodland, shaws, small field copses, hedgerows and individual trees to reduce habitat fragmentation and benefit biodiversity, while seeking to improve and encourage access for health and wellbeing and reinforce sense of local identity..."*

*"SEO 4: Maintain the sustainable but productive pastoral landscape of the Low Weald, while expanding and connecting semi-natural habitats to benefit biodiversity, regulating soil and water quality by promoting good agricultural practice, and maintaining the extent and quality of unimproved permanent grassland and meadows. Restore degraded neutral grasslands to buffer sites and encourage pollinators and predators for pest regulation."*

The following additional opportunity has been identified:

- *"Plan for the creation of high-quality blue and green space and green corridors to provide a framework for new and existing development in urban areas and along major transport routes for the enjoyment and wellbeing of communities and to enhance biodiversity."*

In relation to recent changes and trends, the following are relevant to the study area:

- *"Field trees, usually oak, are particularly characteristic in the western part of the NCA but are now declining in both number and condition.*
- *There has been loss and decline of hedgerows and hedgerow trees, and consequential fragmentation of landscape structure, due to lack of management and farm diversification.*
- *There is continuing creeping fragmentation of farmland, particularly around houses with conversion to gardens or pony paddocks, sometimes with conifer hedges.*
- *While the Low Weald may be subject to a lower level of development pressure than some NCAs in south-east England, it is nevertheless within an area where demand for new building land is constant, particularly as most of it lies outside the adjacent protected landscapes and within commuting distance of London. Development pressure is focused mainly on the towns and the area on the boundary with the High Weald. New roads and road improvement schemes are also important issues which affect all habitats..."*

Landscape Opportunities relevant to the Proposed Development and the Study area include:

*"Plan new landscapes within and around predicted growth areas across the region, especially around Ashford, Crawley, Horsham and Tonbridge, by encouraging the incorporation of high-quality green infrastructure and buffering of zones drawing on the existing strong landscape pattern for example, the incorporation, creation and restoration of traditional shaws and meadows within new development."*

The landscape value of NCA 121 is considered to be Low - High.

### 4.1.2 DISTRICT CHARACTER ASSESSMENT

#### HORSHAM DISTRICT COUNCIL LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT (2003)

The Horsham DC Landscape Character Assessment (CBA, Final Report, October 2003) subdivides the District into a number of Landscape Character Areas. The district level Landscape Character Areas are shown on Figure 4.2 on page 14.

##### LCA G4 Southwater and Shipley Wooded Farmlands

The Site and majority of the study area lie within LCA G4 Southwater and Shipley Wooded Farmlands. The key characteristics of the district level character assessment pertinent to the Site and its contextual landscape include the following:

- *"Gently undulating, strongly wooded landscape.*
- *Many small to medium size woodland blocks enclosing an irregular pattern of pasture fields.*
- *Small hamlets and isolated farms.*
- *Local mix of traditional building materials, brick, tile hanging and Horsham stone slabs*
- *Visual and noise intrusion from the A24/A272."*

The overall landscape condition is defined as good.

In terms of the Area's sensitivity to change, the assessment states that: *"Overall sensitivity to change is high reflecting the area's many intrinsic landscape qualities. There are local areas such as the A24 corridor where it is moderate due to the erosion of character that has already taken place. Key sensitivities are to:*

- *Large scale urban development.*
- *Small scale incremental changes e.g. expansion of horse paddocks."*

The Planning and Land Management Guidelines are defined as:

- *"Conserve the rural mostly undeveloped character of the area.*
- *Ensure any appropriate new development on the A24 corridor is well integrated into the existing landscape pattern with new woodland and hedgerow planting.*
- *Conserve and manage existing woodlands.*
- *Restore deciduous woodland to conifer plantations where possible.*
- *Restore hedgerows where they have been lost."*

The landscape value of LCA G4 as a whole is considered to be Medium - Low.



FIGURE 4.1 – EXTRACT OF NATIONAL CHARACTER AREA 121 (NATIONAL ENGLAND, 2013)

## 4.0

# BASELINE CONDITIONS

## LCA M1 CRABTREE & NUTHURST RIDGES & GHYLLS

The eastern and southern part of the study area, which includes the Site, lies within LCA M1 Crabtree and Nuthurst Ridges and Ghylls. The key characteristics of the district level character assessment pertinent to the Site and its contextual landscape include the following:

- “Steep wooded ridges and ghylls.
- Strong pattern of woodlands, shaws and hedgerows.
- Ancient hedgerow oaks.
- Small to medium size irregular and regular-shaped pasture fields.
- Field ponds and small lakes.
- Dispersed settlement pattern of farmsteads and small hamlets, e.g. Nuthurst.
- Confined views.
- Traditional local building materials of sandstone, brick and tile hanging.”

The overall landscape condition is defined as good, although there are localised areas where it is declining due to loss of hedgerows.

In terms of the Area's sensitivity to change, the assessment states that: “Overall sensitivity to change is high due to the many landscape qualities of the area, and locally visually prominent topography. Key sensitivities are to:

- Any large scale housing development.
- Incremental improvements to the character of minor roads.
- Suburbanisation.
- Changes in traditional land management.”

The Planning and Land Management Guidelines are defined as:

- “Conserve the strongly rural unspoilt character.
- Ensure any new development responds to the historic dispersed settlement pattern and local building design and materials. Infill development between looseknit groups of cottages along lanes would erode character.
- Conserve the strong pattern of woodland, shaw and hedgerows through coppice management, planting and natural regeneration.
- Encourage the planting of tree groups around modern farm buildings.
- Maintain and manage small field ponds and lakes.”

The landscape value of LCA G4 as a whole is considered to be Medium.

## TOWNSCAPE SETTING

The townscape character and landscape setting to Southwater are described within the Horsham District Council Landscape Character Assessment (2003). The overall character of Southwater is described as:

“... a large village which primarily developed in the 20th Century. Apart from a few 19th Century or earlier cottages/farmhouses, the growth of the village was primarily associated with the development of a large brickworks. The settlement is elongated spreading north - south along Worthing Road, but has considerably expanded to the east in the last 10-15 years. It is characterised by large 1930s to 1950s council estates, a small core of shops/community buildings of low townscape quality, and

discrete pockets of more recent cul-de-sac residential development. Woodland, remnant shaws, and frequent open spaces interwoven through the settlement strengthen its character and provide a visual link to the surrounding, often strongly wooded, countryside.”

The assessment goes on to describe the character of the landscape setting. The Site is located within Area 3, which has now been partially developed with the new development to the north of the Site. Area 3 is described as:

- “Open arable farmland.
- Ridgeline of Pollards Hill.
- Woodland in stream valley.”

The sensitivity of the area to urban extensions is summarised as having:

- “Some intrinsic landscape qualities.
- Providing no contribution to the distinctive settlement setting.
- Is of high visual prominence.
- Is of moderate intervisibility; and
- Is of moderate sensitivity overall.”

The planning and landscape enhancement guidelines for this setting area are defined as follows:

- “Conserve and enhance existing hedgerows and woodlands within the settlement through appropriate management.
- Take opportunities to provide new street tree planting.
- Improve existing playing fields, recreation grounds through additional planting and habitat improvements.”

## 4.1.4 LANDSCAPE CAPACITY ASSESSMENT

The HDC Landscape Capacity Assessment Rev C (May 2021), identifies the Site as falling within Local Landscape Character Area (LLCA) 26: Land South of Southwater. This LCA has been defined as part of the Capacity Assessment and further subdivides Zone 2 - South of Horsham to Southwater for the purposes of the Capacity Assessment. The boundary of LLCA 26 is set out on Figure 4.2. The landscape sensitivity, visual sensitivity, landscape value and landscape capacity are described as:

### Landscape Character Sensitivity

- This landscape area has a gently sloping to undulating landform with a medium scale field pattern
- A strong framework of thick hedgerows, shaws and woodland are present in the area
- The landscape in good condition and mostly has an unspoilt rural character notwithstanding scattered development along Shipley Road.

### Visual Sensitivity

The landscape has a low visual sensitivity to housing development due to the mostly

enclosed nature of the landscape which arises from its heavily wooded character. Employment development would be more visually intrusive due to its greater height and scale.

### Landscape Value

- Ecological and historic interest is provided by areas of ancient woodland and species rich hedgerows.
- There is moderate tranquillity with noise incursion from the A24.
- Amenity value of landscape is provided by a number of rights of way running through the area

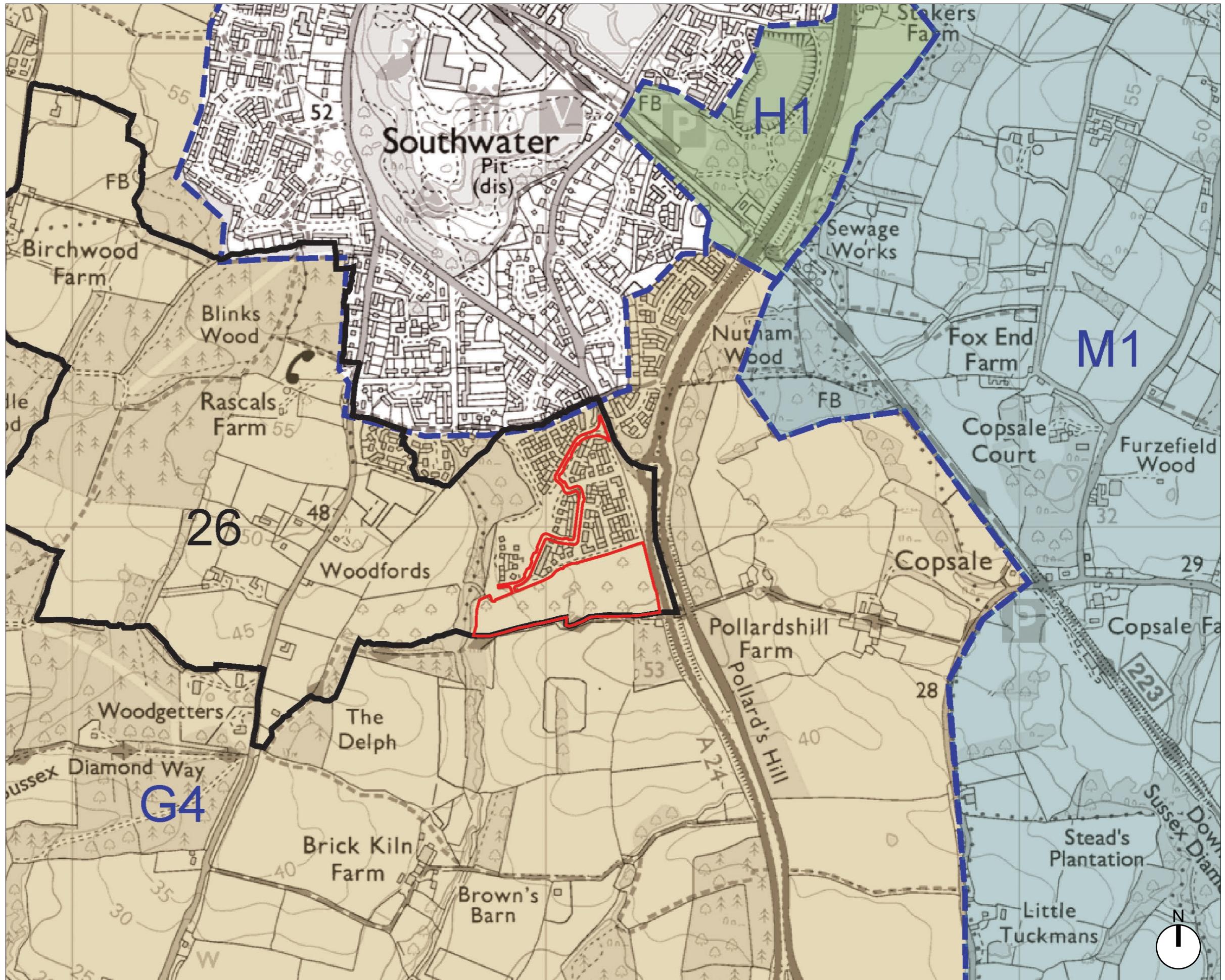
### Landscape Capacity

Key features and qualities of the landscape are highly sensitive to large scale development. Due to the areas strong unspoilt rural landscape character together with its good landscape condition there is no/low capacity for large scale development.

Medium scale housing is defined as: “development of approximately 100-500 dwellings associated with urban extensions”. The assessment summary for Medium Scale housing for Local LCA 26 is as follows:

- Landscape character sensitivity: Moderate - High
- Visual sensitivity: Low
- Combined landscape sensitivity: Moderate - High
- Landscape value: Moderate
- Overall landscape capacity: Low - Moderate.

A “Low - Moderate” landscape capacity is defined as: “The area only has potential to be able to accommodate development in limited locations without unacceptable adverse landscape and visual impacts or compromising the values attached to it, taking account of any appropriate mitigation.”



**FIGURE 4.2 – LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS (FABRIK, 2024)**

## 4.0

# BASELINE CONDITIONS

## 4.2 CONTEXTUAL LANDSCAPE APPRAISAL

This section describes the landscape elements beyond the Site boundary and therefore the landscape setting to the Site. Figure 4.3 on the following page illustrates the land cover within the Study Area.

### 4.2.1 NATURAL

#### Geology and Soils

In A Strategic Stone Study – A Building Stone Atlas of West Sussex (November 2015), Historic England describe the geology of West Sussex as "The solid geology of West Sussex comprises gently-dipping Cretaceous and younger Cenozoic sedimentary rocks which form a series of east-west trending ridges and vales across much of the southern and central parts of the county."

The Bedrock Geology surrounding Southwater is identified as two forms of the Wealden Group. The settlement itself is located on an interbedded sandstone and siltstone, with the wider surrounding landscape formed of mudstone, siltstone and sandstone.

In terms of soils, the Study Area is described as "Slowly permeable seasonally wet slightly acid but base-rich loamy and clayey soils" by the National Soil Resources Institute (NSRI) in Soilscape (England), published in 2005. The main surface texture class is loamy, and the natural drainage type is considered to be impeded. It is of moderate fertility and its characteristic semi-natural habitats are lowland seasonally wet pastures and woodlands. The main land cover is grassland and arable with some woodland.

#### Landform and drainage

Figure 4.4 on page 18 illustrates the landform and drainage pattern of the Study Area. The landform of the study area has a gently undulating topography with a series of hills and ridgelines around 50m-60m AOD surrounding the settlement of Southwater. A series of drainage channels and small streams run through the valleys between the hills and ridges, generally draining in a southerly direction towards the River Adur.

#### Vegetation Cover

The contextual landscape has a wooded character with extensive blocks of woodland and linear treebelts creating a compartmentalised landscape with a strong sense of enclosure. Pockets of open agricultural fields are scattered amongst the woodland on undulating landform. A number of the woodland blocks within the study area are classified as Ancient and Semi-Natural Woodland or Ancient Replanted Woodland, including Hogs Wood immediately west of the Site.

Value: Medium

### 4.2.2 CULTURAL / SOCIAL

#### Land Use

The contextual land use within the study area consists of a mixture of settlement, agricultural land and woodland, including areas of Ancient Woodland. The study area

has a well wooded character with key transport corridors flanked by tree belts and the small - medium scale agricultural field pattern defined by a mixture of hedgerows and treebelts. The most extensive areas of woodland are in the west and south west of the study area with smaller woodland blocks and treebelts throughout the eastern parts of the study area. These features compartmentalise the landscape, creating a strong sense of enclosure.

The wider settlement of Southwater is located in the north of the study area and provides a built context to the northern edge of the Site. Southwater is set around a central Country Park, which is a wooded parkland set around a series of lakes. The A24 is a major road corridor, running north - south around the eastern edge of the settlement and the Site.

#### Settlement Pattern / Setting / Building Heights / Urban Grain:

Southwater has a nucleated settlement pattern, set around the former railway line, which now forms part of the Downs Link. The town centre sits at the junction of the former railway line and Worthing Road. Southwater Country Park and Business Park are prominent features to the south of the town centre. Residential uses radiate out from the centre to the A24, which defines the eastern edge of the settlement and is currently expanding westwards through new developments, which are pushing the settlement edge towards Shaw's Lane. In the south the existing settlement edge abuts the northern Site boundary through the recent construction of the Mulberry Fields development.

Building heights are predominantly 2 storeys with areas of 2.5 and 3 storey to aid legibility and create focal points within the townscape. The skyline is a mix of built form and woodland depending on the location within the settlement. The surrounding landscape is well wooded which creates a sense of enclosure to the settlement.

#### Enclosure

Historically, the enclosure pattern of the agricultural landscape within the study area is a mixture of woodland/plantation and medieval to modern, typically ancient form agricultural land. The dominant type is assart due to the presence of significant areas of woodland. In the modern day, the agricultural fields have a small to medium scale and irregular form with a strong sense of enclosure through well established hedgerows, tree belts and woodlands. The north of the study area is predominantly settled and has a man-made, urban enclosure pattern.

#### Land ownership

The land ownership within the study area is a mixture of small, private land holdings by a variety of individuals, groups and families. Agricultural land holdings are varied with a number of farmsteads in the area. This has a minor influence on the character of the area although the strong presence of woodland and similar field sizes/patterns means land ownership has a limited influence on the overall landscape character of the study area.

#### Time Depth

The study area has experienced significant change over the past 150 years changing from an almost entirely agricultural landscape with scattered farmsteads to a significant area of settlement surrounded by agriculture. Transport movements have

changed with the construction of the A24 leading to this becoming the main arterial route through the study area. The railway line is an indicator of the time depth of the local area. Although it is no longer in use, its alignment remains and it is now a well used walking/cycling route. Within the study area, ancient woodland and historic field patterns also provide an indication of the time depth of the area.

### 4.2.3 PERCEPTUAL AND AESTHETIC

The perceptual and aesthetic aspects of the study area are the sense of enclosure and compartmentalisation created by the extensive woodland and tree belts within the study area. The assart fields and small - medium scale field patterns further enhance this perception and provide natural forms/textures and a verdant skyline. Remoteness and tranquillity are limited somewhat by the audible presence of the A24 and the proximity to settlement. However, given the enclosed nature of the study area, there are areas where no settlement is perceived with the exception of isolated farmsteads.

Topographically, the gently undulating nature of the study area adds to the perceptual characteristics above. Within Southwater itself, the key perceptual characteristics are the built forms and public open space associated with the village.

### 4.2.4 SUMMARY OF CONTEXTUAL LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

The key characteristics of the contextual landscape are considered to be the existing woodlands, tree belts and hedgerows, which contribute to a well defined landscape structure and field pattern. The settlement of Southwater is characterised by its relationship and relative enclosure by woodland and transport corridors, with trees, woodlands and open spaces integrated throughout. The settlement is surrounded by agricultural fields and the gently undulating topography creates an agricultural landscape of varied aspects. The woodland and tree belts defining the field patterns are unifying features throughout and are broadly representative of the area as a whole.



FIGURE 4.3 – LAND COVER (FABRIK, 2024)

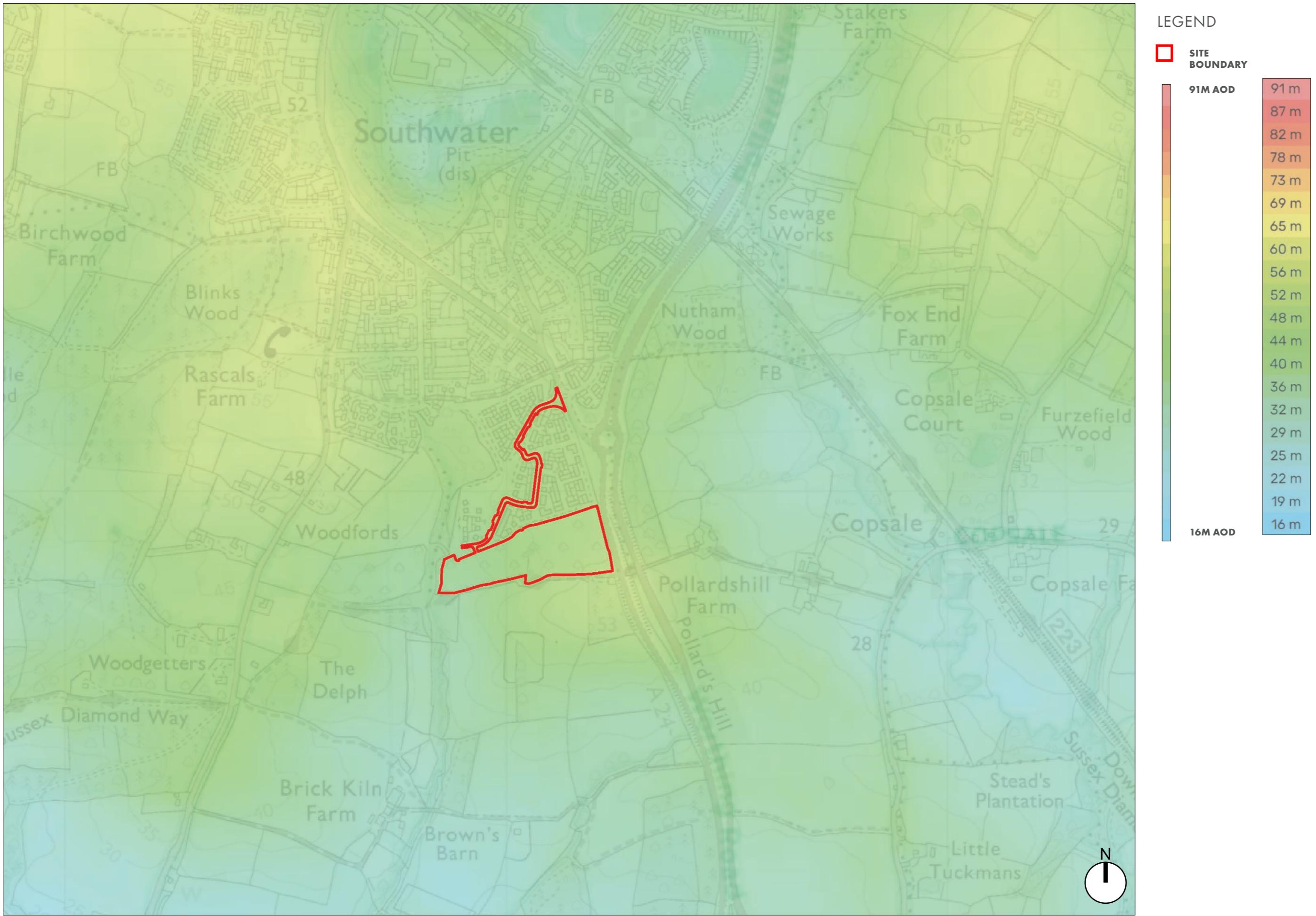


FIGURE 4.4 - TOPOGRAPHY AND DRAINAGE (FABRIK, 2024)

## 4.0

# BASELINE CONDITIONS

## 4.3 SITE APPRAISAL

The northern and southern Site boundaries are formed by existing field boundaries, which are predominantly made up of hedgerows with semi-mature Oak trees scattered along them. The western boundary is defined by the Ancient Woodland of Hogs Wood and the eastern boundary by the native hedgerow (predominantly Hawthorn and Blackthorn) of approximately 4m in height, which separates the Site from the A24 road corridor to the east.

Immediately north of the Site is the Mulberry Fields development, which includes properties actively fronting towards the northern boundary of the Site. To the south of the Site is PRoW Footpath 2804, which runs adjacent to the Site's southern boundary. Beyond this is the wider agricultural landscape with open fields defined by tree belts and woodlands.

Figure 4.5 on page 20 illustrates the character of the Site and its immediate surroundings.

### 4.3.1 NATURAL

#### Geology and Soils

The Bedrock Geology of the Site is Weald Clay Formation - Mudstone, formed during the Cretaceous period. In terms of soils, the Site is described as "Slowly permeable seasonally wet slightly acid but base-rich loamy and clayey soils" by the National Soil Resources Institute (NSRI) in Soilscape (England), published in 2005. The main surface texture class is loamy, and the natural drainage type is considered to be impeded. It is of moderate fertility and its characteristic semi-natural habitats are lowland seasonally wet pastures and woodlands. The main land cover is grassland and arable with some woodland.

Value: Medium - Low

#### Landform and drainage

The topography of the Site broadly slopes from east to west from 50m AOD in the south eastern corner of the Site to 36m AOD in the south western corner of the Site. The fall is of a broadly consistent gradient of approximately 1:30. The drainage pattern of the Site follows the topographical profile and outfalls into the watercourse within Hogs Wood to the west of the Site. There are two basins within the central field boundary within the Site, which hold water in wetter periods.

Value: Medium - Low

#### Vegetation Cover

The vegetation cover within the Site is characterised by the mature Oak trees on the Site boundaries and within the central field boundary, surrounding the two basins. These trees are visually prominent on the edges of the Site. There are no Tree Preservation Orders (TPO) within the Site, with the only tree-related constraints being those which relate to the adjacent area of Ancient Woodland (known as Hogs Wood) to the west of the Site. The eastern boundary of the Site is defined by a circa 4m tall

native hedgerow (predominantly Hawthorn/Blackthorn), which creates a well defined edge to the A24 road corridor beyond.

Within the two field parcels in the Site are areas of plantation woodland. Groups of Poplars are planted in rows and grown to circa 20m in height with stem diameters not exceeding 35cm. These trees are regularly coppiced for their timber and therefore are identified as of low quality in the arboricultural survey.

Value: High

#### Key natural elements, features and characteristics

The key natural elements, features and characteristics of the Site are the mature Oak trees on the Site boundaries and within the central field boundary, as well as Hogs Wood Ancient Woodland to the west and the gently sloping topography in a westerly direction.

Value: Medium

### 4.3.2 CULTURAL / SOCIAL

#### Land Use

The land use of the Site is a plantation woodland surrounded by field boundary vegetation including mature Oak trees and the edge of Hogs Wood Ancient Woodland.

Value: Medium - Low

#### Built form / Scale / Mass / Height / Grain:

There is no built form within the Site but there is existing two - two and a half storey residential built form immediately north of the Site.

Value: Low

#### Enclosure

The Site consists of two field parcels, which are defined by hedgerows, mature Oak trees and woodland. Within the Site, the Poplar plantation and gently sloping topography adds to the sense of enclosure within the Site.

Value: Medium

#### Land ownership

The Site is under single ownership alongside the Mulberry Fields development to the north of the Site.

Value: Low

#### Time Depth

The field boundaries of the Site have not changed over time and therefore provide a sense of time depth in combination with Hogs Wood on the western boundary of the

Site. The land use within the Site has evolved over time from agricultural use to Poplar plantation. Contextually, the settlement edge of Southwater has expanded over time to now sit adjacent to the northern boundary of the Site.

Value: Medium - Low

Cultural / Social Landscape Value: Medium - Low.

### 4.3.3 PERCEPTUAL AND AESTHETIC

The perceptual and aesthetic aspects of the Site are the sense of enclosure created by the woodland and tree belts defining the Site boundaries as well as the Poplar plantation within the Site. Remoteness and tranquillity are limited by the audible presence of the A24 and the proximity to settlement edge to the north. Topographically, the gently undulating nature of the study area adds to the perceptual characteristics above.

Perceptual and Aesthetic Landscape Value: Medium - Low.

### 4.3.4 LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

The key characteristics of the Site are considered to be the mature field boundary vegetation around the edges of the Site and along the central field boundary, which create two well defined field parcels. Hogs Wood on the western Site boundary is also a key landscape feature. The Poplar plantation within the Site is broadly representative of other areas of plantation to the west and south of the Site. The field patterns and boundaries within the Site are characteristic of the local area. The Site is located adjacent to the existing settlement edge and the A24 road corridor, which detract from the sense of tranquillity.

Value: Medium - Low

#### Night Time Character:

There are no light sources within the Site but it is surrounded by lighting to the north and east. There is domestic scale lighting associated with the existing residential edge of the Mulberry Fields development to the north and to the east, the lighting columns along the A24 on approach to the roundabout to the north of the Site provide directional lighting of the road corridor. In addition to this headlights of vehicles travelling along the route are also temporary, transient light sources.

The southern and western boundaries of the Site are not lit and therefore have a darker night-time character, which is consistent with the wider landscape to the south.

In summary, the study area is a combination of lit townscapes and roadscapes to the north and east and dark landscape to the south and west. The Site lies on the lit townscape fringes.

Value: Medium - Low

## 4.0

# BASELINE CONDITIONS

### 4.3.5 THE ROLE OF THE SITE IN THE WIDER LANDSCAPE

The Site plays a minor role in the context of the wider landscape with the small scale fields on the settlement edge contributing to the well vegetated character of the wider landscape but also creating a sense of enclosure and limiting a wider perception of the Site from the local area. It is considered broadly representative of the study area it sits within and is well associated with the existing settlement edge to the north.

### 4.3.6 FUTURE BASELINE

It is anticipated that, without development taking place, the Site would continue to be used as a Poplar plantation on the edge of the existing settlement. Due to the commercial nature of the plantation, the Site's character alters through different growth cycles. The mature Oak trees on the Site boundaries remain consistent features and would continue to create a well vegetated edge to the settlement of Southwater in the event that development does not take place.

#### LEGEND

<span style="border: 1px solid black; display: inline-block; width: 10px; height: 10px;"></span>	SITE BOUNDARY
<span style="background-color: #ccc; display: inline-block; width: 10px; height: 10px;"></span>	EXISTING STREET NETWORK
<span style="background-color: #888; display: inline-block; width: 10px; height: 10px;"></span>	CONTOURS AT 1M INTERVALS
<span style="background-color: #669966; display: inline-block; width: 10px; height: 10px;"></span>	PRIORITY HABITAT DECIDUOUS WOODLAND
<span style="background-color: #669966; border: 1px dashed black; display: inline-block; width: 10px; height: 10px;"></span>	EXISTING ANCIENT WOODLAND
<span style="border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 50%; display: inline-block; width: 10px; height: 10px;"></span>	PUBLIC RIGHT OF WAY
<span style="background-color: #669966; display: inline-block; width: 10px; height: 10px;"></span>	EXISTING TREE/HEDGEROW
<span style="background-color: #669966; display: inline-block; width: 10px; height: 10px;"></span>	EXISTING PLANTATION WOODLAND
<span style="background-color: #669966; border: 1px solid black; display: inline-block; width: 10px; height: 10px;"></span>	EXISTING POND
<span style="border: 1px dashed black; display: inline-block; width: 10px; height: 10px;"></span>	EXISTING INFORMAL ROUTES

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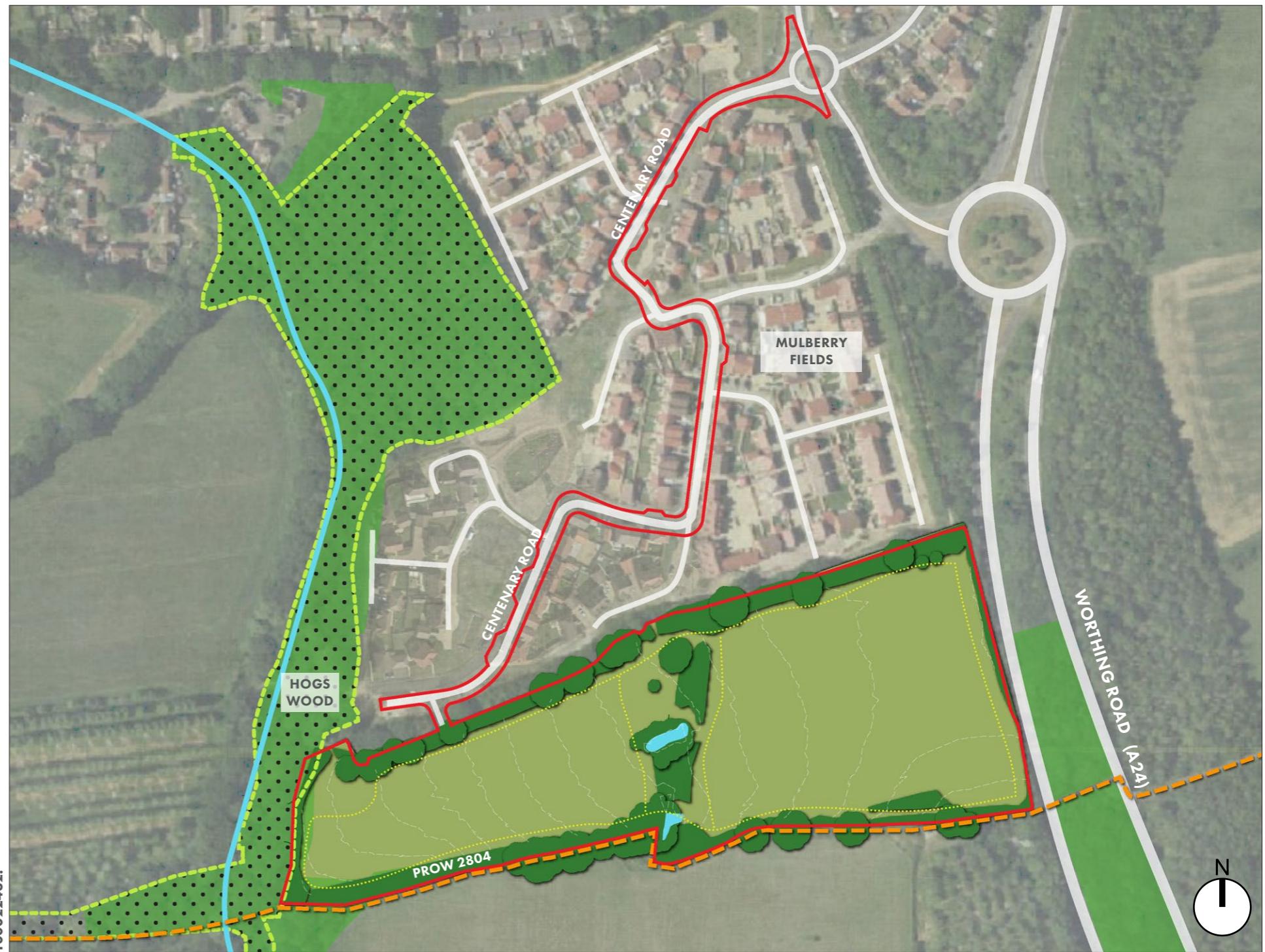


FIGURE 4.5 – SITE APPRAISAL (FABRIK, 2024)