whole life management and maintenance of the SuDS are appropriate, deliverable and will not cause harm to the natural environment and/or landscape.

Strategic Policy 14: Countryside Protection

6.23 Horsham District covers a large area and contains a diverse range of landscapes, from the heavily wooded character in the north, to more open river floodplains in the south. The Council is seeking to ensure that the most valued parts of the District are protected, and the unique characteristics of the District's landscapes, including the natural beauty and amenity of the countryside, are retained and where practicable, enhanced. It will be necessary to ensure that development proposals take into account the key characteristics of the landscape character areas as identified in documents such as the Horsham District Landscape Character Assessment 2003. The South Downs National Park has been designated an International Dark Skies Reserve which is a material landscape consideration. Non-designated dark night sky characteristics may also be considered to form part of the landscape character and a material consideration, especially within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) in accordance with its Management Plan and guidance.

6.24 As part of the requirement to deliver housing growth, the Council is allocating several urban extensions as part of a plan-led approach. Areas outside new allocations and other designated settlement boundaries will be expected to retain their predominantly rural character. However, it is important not to unduly restrict rural communities and to maintain some flexibility to enable organic growth of existing appropriately located enterprises, such as rural businesses, forestry and horticultural farming practices, rural housing exception sites and rural worker's accommodation.

6.25 For the purposes of this policy, sustainable development of rural areas includes the diversification of activities on existing farm units which facilitate and do not prejudice the agricultural use. It also includes the suitably scaled expansion of existing appropriately located uses (premises and / or site) and the re-use / redevelopment of brownfield sites for equestrian, business or tourism use. The policy enables appropriate regard to be given to new development often located within the countryside such as equestrian facilities / stables; small scale camping facilities especially where linked to existing premises; green energy generating facilities ancillary to an existing premises or demonstrated to be of regional or wider importance; and petrol filling / electric charging stations located on an 'A' road. Where appropriate, the Council may seek evidence as to why a proposed use cannot be located within a built-up area boundary.

Strategic Policy 14: Countryside Protection

1. Outside built-up area boundaries and secondary settlements, the rural character and undeveloped nature of the countryside will be protected against inappropriate development. Any proposal must be essential to, and justify, its countryside location, and must meet one of the following criteria:

   a) Support the needs of agriculture or forestry
   b) Enable the extraction of minerals or the disposal of waste;
   c) Provide for quiet informal recreational use; or
   d) Enable the sustainable development of rural areas.

2. In addition, all proposals must be appropriately integrated within the landscape and be of a scale appropriate to its countryside character and location. Development will be considered acceptable where it does not lead, either individually or cumulatively, to a significant increase in the overall level of activity in the countryside, and protects, conserves, and seeks to enhance, the key features and characteristics of the landscape character area in which it is located, including;

   a) The development pattern of the area, its historical and ecological qualities, tranquillity and sensitivity to change;
   b) The pattern of woodlands, fields, hedgerows, trees, waterbodies and other features;
   c) The landform of the area; and
   d) The protection of dark skies, in particular where it may impact on a designated International Dark Sky Reserve (IDSR), Neighbourhood Plan designations and High Weald AONB Management Plan objectives.

Strategic Policy 15: Settlement Coalescence

6.26 Horsham District is characterised by rural countryside interspersed with a network of market towns, villages and small hamlets. There is a need to retain this network of rural settlements and their separate identities and maintain the sense of leaving one place and arriving at another. There are places where further development in the gap between settlements would result in the areas joining and losing their own individual sense of place. Even where there is countryside between settlements, the presence of buildings, signs and other development along roads prevents the sense of leaving a settlement and passing through the countryside. At night, various forms of artificial lighting can also lead to a sense of continuous urbanisation; a particular example of this is the A264 between the north-eastern edge of Horsham and Crawley.