



LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL TECHNICAL NOTE

relating to

Land to South of Kithurst Lane

Storrington, West Sussex

on behalf of

Mr. Philip Orpwood FRICS

March 2020

Date of Issue: 13th March 2020
Revision: C

File ref: P:\827 - Kithurst Lane, Storrington\Reports\HBA\Current

Checked: DH Approved: DH

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1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

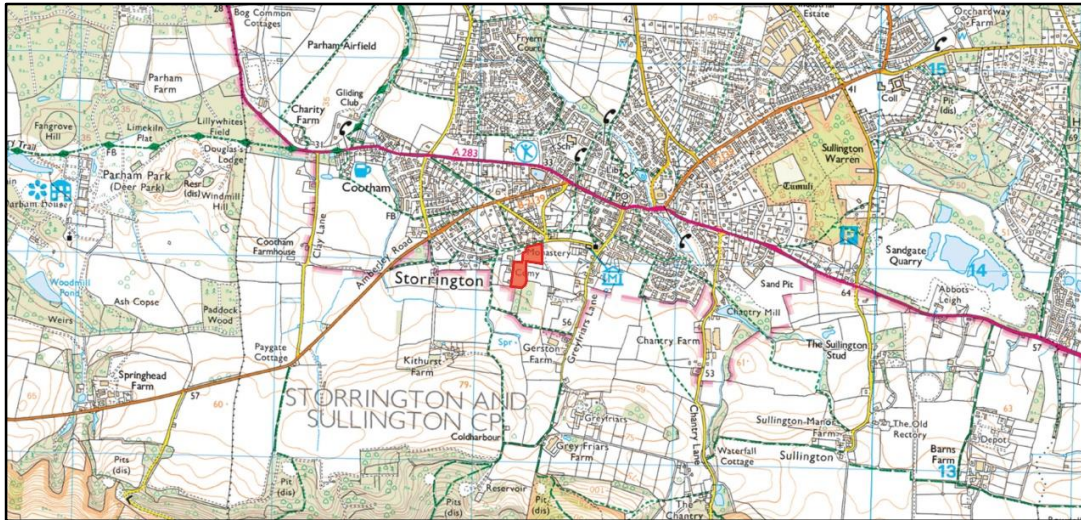
- 1.1 Huskisson Brown Associates (HBA) is a firm of Chartered Landscape Architects, established in 1987 and registered since then with the Landscape Institute. HBA has been a member of the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment since 1992. The practice is Quality Assured to BS ISO 9001:2015. All directors of the practice are Chartered Members of the Landscape Institute.
- 1.2 The practice has undertaken a range of landscape and visual assessment work for many clients including public bodies, private companies and individuals. This includes projects in the commercial, industrial, retail, recreational, healthcare, agricultural, infrastructure and residential development sectors including the presentation of evidence at Public Inquiries. The Practice has also given extensive development management and strategic planning advice to Local Planning Authorities on a wide range of projects.
- 1.3 HBA is now retained by Mr. Philip Orpwood FRICS to provide a 'high level' Landscape and Visual Appraisal, set out in this Technical Note, of the site which lies upon land to the south of Kithurst Lane. Mr. Orpwood is seeking consideration of the site through the Horsham District Planning Framework (HDPF) Regulation 18 Consultation.
- 1.4 The purpose of this Technical Note is to advise on the potential landscape and visual implications of in principle residential development on the site.
- 1.5 This Technical Note records the landscape and visual baseline, identifying the key landscape and visual attributes and sensitivities of the site and its landscape context. It considers the range of landscape and visual opportunities and constraints that might inform the development potential of the site. Where appropriate, broad landscape and visual mitigation measures and parameters for development are identified, in particular with regard to overcoming potential landscape and visual constraints.
- 1.6 The preparation of this Technical Note has involved both desk-based and site work. Site work involved a walkover review of the site and walking some of the Public Rights of Way (PRoW) and roads in the local area to help determine the landscape character and visual context of the site and surrounding area, and to start to evaluate the degree of change that might be expected to arise from any proposed development. Site visits were carried out in December 2019 and January 2020 in fair weather conditions, when deciduous trees were defoliated.
- 1.7 The following documents and sources are considered to be the primary ones of relevance to the landscape and visual context of the site and its immediately surrounding area:
 - National Planning Policy Framework (Feb 2019);
 - National Planning Practice Guidance (Ongoing);
 - National Design Guide (Sep 2019);
 - Horsham District Planning Framework (HDPF) (Nov 2015);
 - HDC Regulation 18 Draft Local Plan (Feb 2020);
 - HDC Regulation 18 Site Assessment Report (Feb 2020);

- HDC Local Development Scheme 2019 – 2022;
- HDC Strategic Housing & Economic Land Availability Assessment (SHELAA) (Jan 2019);
- HDC Landscape Capacity Assessment (Feb 2020);
- Storrington Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan (SCAAMP) (Jan 2018);
- Storrington, Sullington & Washington Neighbourhood Plan 2018 – 2031 (Sep 2019);
- South Downs Local Plan 2014 – 33 (Jul 2019);
- South Downs National Park: View Characterisation and Analysis (Nov 2015);
- The Countryside Agency (now Natural England), Countryside Character, Volume 7: South East & London (first published 1999 and now extensively updated);
- A Strategy for the West Sussex Landscape (West Sussex County Council, Oct 2005);
- The Landscape Character Assessment of West Sussex (Chris Blandford Associates for WSCC, 2003) with supporting Land Management Guidelines;
- Local Distinctiveness Study of West Sussex (WSCC, Ongoing);
- Historic Character Assessment of Storrington (Jun 2005)
- Defra MAGIC website;
- Historic England website;
- Online review of Historic Ordnance Survey mapping;
- Bing Maps; and
- Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, (GLVIA3) published in April 2013 by the Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment.

1.8 This Technical Note is not a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) or a Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) and accordingly does not assess in any detail the predicted impacts of any proposal upon landscape and visual receptors.

2 LOCATION & BASELINE CONTEXT

- 2.1 The site and its local context is illustrated on the Ordnance Survey map extract and aerial photograph below:



HBA Figure 1 - Site Location (OS mapping from Bing Maps)



HBA Figure 2 - Aerial View (Image from Bing Maps)

- 2.2 The site is located on the southern edge of Kithurst Lane just beyond the defined Built Up Area Boundary (BUAB) to Storrington, which is categorised in the Horsham District Planning Framework (HDPF) as a 'Small Town or Larger Village' with "a good range of services and facilities, strong community networks and local employment provision, together with reasonable rail and/or bus services. The settlements act as hubs for smaller villages to meet their daily needs, but also have some reliance on larger settlements/each other to meet some of their requirements".
- 2.3 The site itself is an irregular shape and formed from two conjoined paddocks, which are described within this report as the 'south' and 'north' paddock respectively. The south paddock lies adjacent to and east of Birklands, Kithurst Lane. The north paddock lies to the south of

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Kithurst Lane and to the north of the Priory Fields cemetery. The two paddocks are linked by a piece of land between the cemetery to the east, and the garden to a private dwelling to the west.

Boundaries

- 2.4 The southern boundary to the south paddock adjoins a medium-sized woodland copse formed from deciduous trees, predominantly oak of approximately 16m height. The site's southern boundary is a slightly mounded embankment with a post and wire fence on top, and partially adjoins the South Downs National Park for 10m at the site's south-west corner.
- 2.5 The southern 25m of the western boundary adjoins open fields and is defined by a post and barbed wire fence. A stable block in poor repair is located within these fields adjacent to the site boundary. The remainder of the western boundary is formed from a well maintained 1.5m high deciduous hedgerow that separates the site from the residential properties of 'Hillview' and 'Birklands' a three storey apartment block built in 2004.
- 2.6 A short section of outgrown hedgerow forms the northern site boundary, with a post and wire fence to the front of low hedgerow forming the remainder of this boundary with Cherry House. The north-east corner of the site links the south and north paddocks and adjoins the cemetery. This boundary is characterised by Leylandii cypress trees topped to approximately 6m, with a line of 16m tall poplars immediately to their rear (offsite to the perimeter of the cemetery). The remainder of the eastern boundary has a semi-open aspect to the nearby vineyards, with intervisibility reduced by an intervening plantation of new woodland.
- 2.7 The southern boundary to the north paddock largely adjoins the cemetery and is formed from a line of Leylandii cypress trees. The south-western 25m of this treeline has been topped to approximately 4m, whilst the remaining trees have been maintained at an approximate height of 19m. This measure was undertaken to allow more sunlight to reach the new tree plantation within the southern half of the north paddock. The new trees are protected by a timber post and split rail fence.
- 2.8 The western boundary of the northern paddock is formed from a hedgerow with post and wire fencing that adjoins two private properties 'Cherry House' and 'Furzedown'. There is a gated access to the north paddock from Kithurst Lane in the north-western corner of the site. The remainder of the northern boundary is formed from an outgrown hedge along Kithurst Lane, with post and wire fencing, and an overhead cable. This hedgerow includes several mid-sized trees to a maximum approximate height of 11m.
- 2.9 There are a group of mature pine trees and Leylandii in the north-eastern corner of the north paddock near to the existing (onsite) substation. The main access to the site lies approximately 15-20m to the south of the north-eastern corner of the north site, where there is double-gated and tarmac ramped access into the site from the road leading to the cemetery. A secondary, unmade access lies immediately to the south of the main site access. The remainder of the eastern boundary is formed from an avenue of mature Leylandii cypress trees that line the access road to the cemetery, with a post and wire fence beneath.

Landform & Geology

- 2.10 Storrington is located close to the lower slopes of the chalk escarpment that forms the South Downs National Park to the south of the settlement. The topography of Storrington is gently undulating, sloping gently downwards to the River Stor that flows through the middle of the village, before the landform rises gradually to the northeast. There is little height variation in the centre of Storrington, where the river valley is the lowest area at approximately 40m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD). The town centre does not rise beyond 50m AOD to the north and south.
- 2.11 The chalk escarpment of the South Downs dominates the local landform, with Kithurst Hill rising to 213 AOD to the south of the site. Between the chalk scarp and the town itself are the interbedded siltstones and limestones of the Upper Greensand Formation, and the mudstones (commonly called clays) of the Gault Formation (both Lower Cretaceous).
- 2.12 The site (and most of Storrington) lies on an approximately 800m wide band of sandstone of the Folkestone Formation (from which comes the brown sandy ironstone, or 'carstone', used for several buildings in Storrington), which is part of the Lower Greensand Group (Lower Cretaceous).
- 2.13 Over this geology the northern site boundary with Kithurst Lane is banked with the site lying up to approximately 3m above Kithurst Lane. The north paddock slopes uphill to the south and towards the boundary with the cemetery, before reaching a high point of 57.85m AOD at the narrow linkage between the north and south paddocks. From this point onwards the south paddock falls gently towards its south-west corner to a low point of 52.00m AOD. There is a small man made clay lined pond in this corner overlooked by a smaller timber chalet.
- 2.14 Please see **HBA Appendix 1** for the topographic survey of the site.

Local Built Context

- 2.15 The site is located on the southern edge of Kithurst Lane just beyond the defined Built Up Area Boundary (BUAB) to Storrington, which includes the residential northern edge of Kithurst Lane together with buildings to the west of the site. A newly constructed timber barn is located within the north-eastern corner of the site, immediately adjacent to the main site entrance. An electricity substation is also located in the north-eastern corner of the site.
- 2.16 The dwellings to the north of Kithurst Lane generally face towards the embankment and high hedgerow that forms the site boundary along the southern edge of Kithurst Lane. It is likely that the only upstairs views into the site would be possible from these properties, where some are at a lower level than Kithurst Lane, including The Old Sanctuary and April Cottage. These properties are generally of two storey height with pitched roofs and peg tiles, but otherwise exhibit a range of architectural styles. The former Roman Catholic school has been converted to a residential dwelling known as 'Norbert House' and is located to the north of the site at the eastern-end of Kithurst Lane.
- 2.17 The western edge of the north paddock is abutted by two residential dwellings and their gardens. Located immediately adjacent to the north-western corner of the site is 'Furzedown', which is a single storey dwelling with a pitched roof, surrounded by a small garden that shares

its perimeter hedgerow with the site. To the west of this property lies 'Cherry House' which is a larger two-storey property with pitched roof, which also features a large garden to the south of the building. The perimeter trees and hedgerow to this property form a shared boundary to the site, including the western boundary of the north paddock and the northern boundary of the south paddock. The upper floors would potentially have views into both the north and south paddocks.

- 2.18 The western boundary to the south paddock abuts the more recent development of 'Birklands', which includes a three-storey apartment building, with several two-storey dwellings further to the south. The upper floors of this development would potentially have views into both the south paddock, however, views towards the north paddock would be screened and filtered by the boundary vegetation to the Cherry House garden and the site more generally.
- 2.19 The access road that services these properties terminates at 'Hillview', which is an older detached two-storey property that faces south towards the South Downs. This property overlooks the field immediately to the west of the south paddock and would potentially have views into the south paddock, although any views would likely be screened and filtered by boundary vegetation.
- 2.20 The 'Our Lady of England Priory' is located immediately to the north-east of the site on the opposite side of School Lane, built in 1902-09.

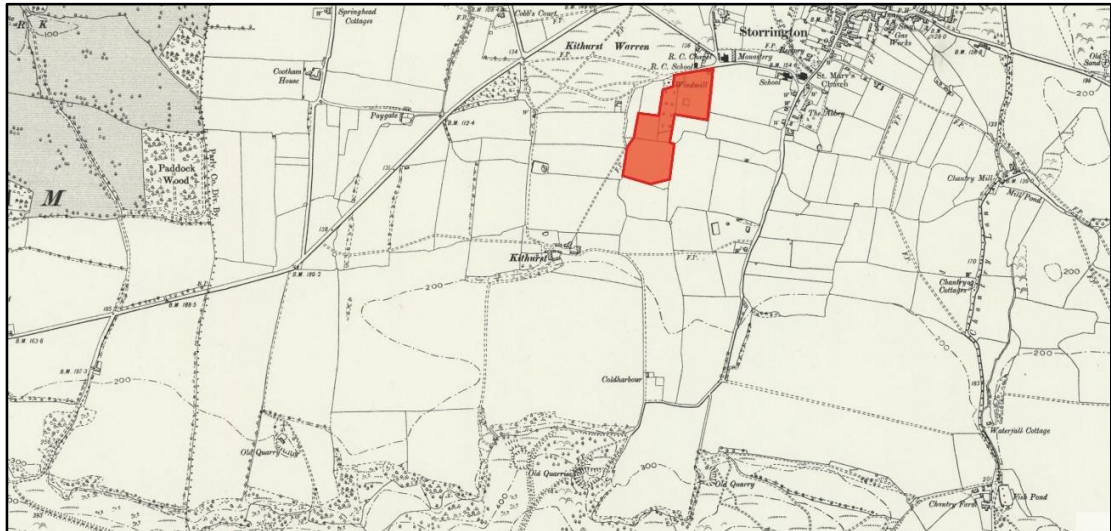
Historical Context

- 2.21 The historical mapping shows that the original field patterns have largely been maintained and that built form was largely absent from the site's immediate surroundings until the late 19th century when the Roman Catholic church expanded in Storrington, with residential development along Kithurst Lane only evident from the mid-20th century.
- 2.22 The site was previously owned by the Norbertine order and as noted above the Our Lady of England Priory is located immediately to the north-east of the site. This Roman Catholic influence dates back to the enforced closure of the Premonstratensian Abbey of St Michele de Frigolet in the lower Rhone Valley in 1880, when five evicted canons came to Storrington at the invitation of the Duke of Norfolk, arriving in 1882. They were able to build permanent monastic buildings (including a small chapel) in the 1890s, followed by the substantial Priory Church of Our Lady of England in 1902-9. A Roman Catholic school was built nearby in 1893, which was closed in the 1950s and converted into the residential property 'Norbert House' that is located directly to the north of the site.
- 2.23 After the First World War, the piecemeal expansion of housing on to the commons accelerated sharply. Development on Storrington Common, that was enclosed in the 1850s, ranged from the small-scale terraced housing of 5-19 Amberley Road, to detached houses with large grounds, such as Four Winds, Kithurst Lane (now with its grounds largely built over by later infill). The colonisation of Kithurst Lane, was part of the post-1945 expansion of housing in Storrington that more than doubled the area of the town. Along Kithurst Lane this development was comparatively spacious and haphazard, with detached houses dominating.

- 2.24 The *Historic Character Assessment of Storrington (2005)* notes that the site adjoins the Historic Urban Character Area 5 (HUCA 5) of Storrington Common outside the pre-1800 (and largely pre-1900) town and concludes that the area has the lowest historic value:

“The dominance of the 20th-century development, the lack of historic buildings or historic boundaries, and the limited archaeological potential give this HUCA a Historic Environment Value (HEV) of 1. The Historic Environment Value of the area and the lack of opportunity for significant further infill mean that its vulnerability is low.”

- 2.25 Please see **HBA Figure 3** below, which shows historic mapping published in 1899:



HBA Figure 3 – OS Six-inch England and Wales 1842 – 1952, revised 1896, published 1899

On site Vegetation

- 2.26 The western and northern boundaries of the south paddock are formed from a hedgerow of an approximate height of 1.5m. The majority of the southern paddock has been planted with a variety of deciduous, native trees ranging in height from 1.5 – 2.5m. These trees have been planted in groupings throughout the paddock to allow a sweeping pedestrian route to be mown into the grassland and allow the owner's access to the pond and chalet.
- 2.27 The north paddock also features perimeter vegetation as described in the 'Boundaries' section above. Of particular note is the outgrown hedge that forms the northern boundary with Kithurst Lane, which screens views into the site from the residential dwellings along Kithurst Lane. The below canopy element to this hedge is approximately 3m tall, with several outgrown trees to approximately 8 – 11m in height.
- 2.28 The eastern and southern boundaries of the north paddock are formed from mature *Leylandii* cypress trees to an approximate height of 19m. The trees along the western half of the south boundary have been topped to a height of 4m to allow additional sunlight into the paddock. This measure was undertaken to support a further woodland plantation of native trees, enclosing approximately 40% of the north paddock.
- 2.29 Beyond this plantation area and in towards the north-eastern corner of the paddock are three mature lime trees of approximately 16m in height, which are located adjacent to the ramped main entrance to the site. The ramped access into the site has been designed to incorporate

brick retaining walls and the area to the north of this access has been planted with a variety of ornamental trees and shrubs.

- 2.30 The very north-eastern corner of the site, adjacent to the newly constructed timber frame barn, features two pine trees, a lime and several Leylandii to an approximate height of 12m. These trees serve to conceal the electrical substation that is also located in this part of the site.

Off site Vegetation

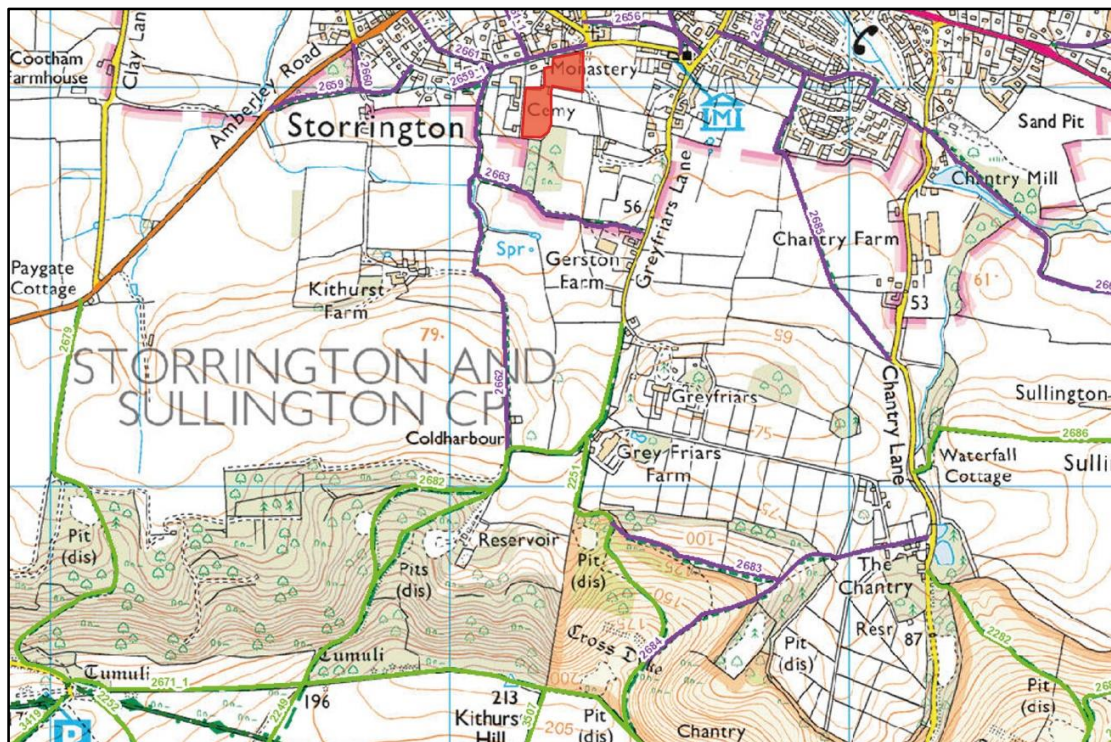
- 2.31 The site is located to the immediate south of the defined Built Up Area Boundary (BUAB) to Storrington, so the majority of the vegetation to the north of the site lies within private gardens associated with the dwellings along Kithurst Lane, Fern Road and Monastery Lane. These properties tend to be detached homes located within reasonably spacious plots that allow for a large number of mature trees, hedgerows and shrubs, giving an overwhelmingly green feel to the site's northern context.
- 2.32 The eastern boundary of the north paddock is defined by the avenue of mature Leylandii cypress trees that line the access road to Priory Fields and the cemetery to the east of the site, which is bounded by mature poplar trees of approximately 16m in height.
- 2.33 Beyond this avenue of trees is 'Matt's Wood' sometimes known as 'Matt's Meadow', created by the client to plant 500 native British trees, with a further 1,100 mixed native sapling bushes and wild roses around paths and benches. The land is still owned by the Norbertine Order, however, the space is publicly accessible and has been included within the recently extended Storrington Conservation Area.
- 2.34 To the immediate south of Matt's Wood and the cemetery are vineyards originally planted by the Norbertine order, but now in private hands. The vineyards adjoin the mature trees and parkland of St Joseph's Hall. The grounds of St Joseph's Hall are framed to the east by the trees along Greyfriars Lane and to the west by the woodland that forms the southern boundary to the south paddock.
- 2.35 A woodland of approximately 1.4ha adjoins the southern boundary to the site, interrupting views from the south. Elsewhere, the land to the south and west of the site is almost entirely farmland that maintains the historic field patterns, with larger straight edged arable fields on upper slopes, and fields of a more varied shapes and sizes on lower slopes adjacent to the south paddock.
- 2.36 This landscape also features narrow linear woodlands often near the streams, interlaced with a varied pattern of hedgerows that are typical of the Central Scarp Footslopes. The density of copses, streamside woodlands and hedgerow trees increase towards the edges of settlements and lower slopes, including a woodland belt to the south of Kithurst Farm to the south-west of the site, and the woodland surrounding Oakwood House, Orchard House and Grey Friars Barn to the south of the site.

Public Rights of Way (PRoW)

- 2.37 There are no public rights of way within the site, but there are a number of public footpaths and bridleways in the vicinity of the site including footpath 2659 that follows Kithurst Lane and

terminates at 'Apple Barn' to the west of the site. Footpath 2661_1 runs from the midpoint of Kithurst Lane at 'Beehive Cottage' north towards Amberley Road.

- 2.38 Footpath 2662 cuts south from Kithurst Lane, between 'Silhill House' and 'Brambledown' and continues in this direction to 'Coldharbour' approximately 700m to the south of the site. This footpath crosses a ford to the north of Kithurst Farm, where footpath 2663 heads due east towards 'Gerston Farm' and 'Gerston Business Park', which are located to the south of St Joseph's Hall on Greyfriars Road. This footpath runs to the south of the offsite woodland that adjoins the southern site boundary.
- 2.39 To the south of Coldharbour pathway 2662 meets bridleway 2249 (and 2682) that runs from the southern point of Greyfriars Lane, up through the hanger woodland and over the chalk escarpment to Burpham, approximately 6.2km to the south-west of the site. This bridleway meets bridleway 2671_1 at the peak of the escarpment, before intersecting the South Downs Way, slightly to the south of ridgeline near the summit of Kithurst Hill.
- 2.40 Please see **HBA Figure 4** below that illustrates the location of the public footpaths (purple) and bridleways (green) within the immediate context of the site:



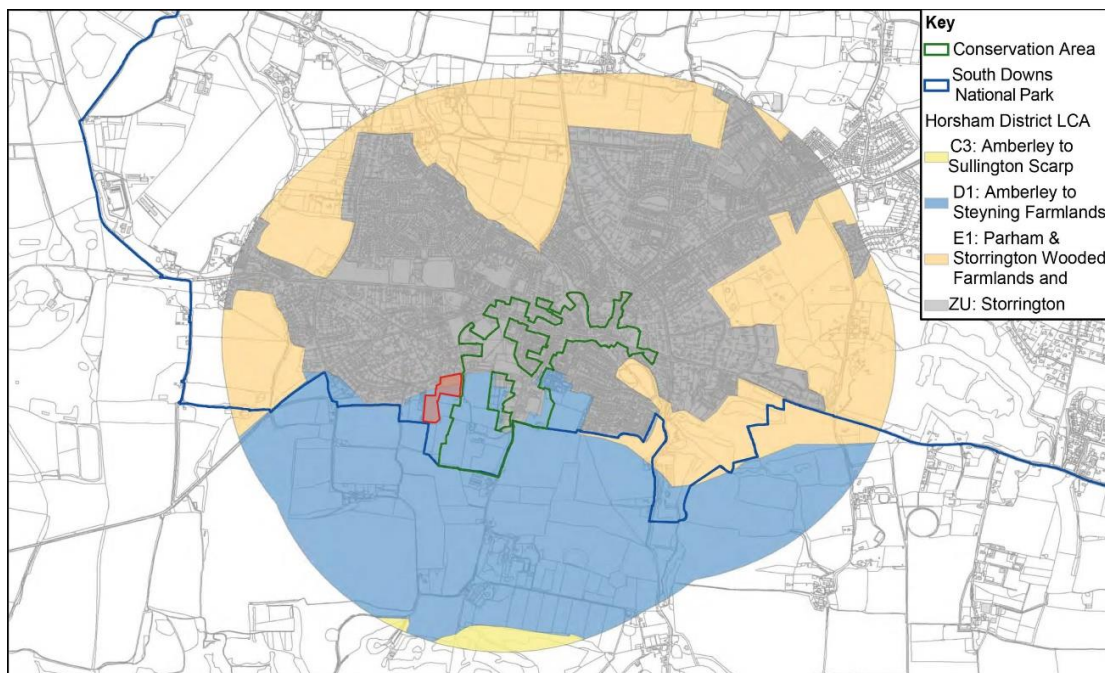
HBA Figure 4 – Storrington Public Footpaths (Image from West Sussex Interactive Map)

Designations

South Downs National Park

- 2.41 The south-western corner of the south paddock adjoins the South Downs National Park, although the National Park boundary almost immediately diverts to the south to encompass the woodland to the south of the site and the parkland setting to St Joseph's Hall, before turning north along Greyfriars Lane to St. Joseph's Abbey.

- 2.42 The South Downs National Park covers over 1 600 square kilometres of England's most valued lowland landscapes in the busiest part of the UK. The following seven Special Qualities were agreed by the South Downs National Park Authority in 2011:
- 1) *"Diverse, inspirational landscapes and breath taking views;*
 - 2) *A rich variety of wildlife and habitats including rare and internationally important species;*
 - 3) *Tranquil and unspoilt places;*
 - 4) *An environment shaped by centuries of farming and embracing new enterprise;*
 - 5) *Great opportunities for recreational activities and learning experiences;*
 - 6) *Well-conserved historical features and a rich cultural heritage; and*
 - 7) *Distinctive towns and villages, and communities with real pride in their area."*
- 2.43 Previous correspondence with the SDNPA confirms their opinion that *"the area of the site between the cemetery, and Kithurst Lane is well screened from the downs to the South and its development would have little visual impact upon the downs"* – see **HBA Appendix 2**.
- 2.44 Please see **HBA Figure 5** below for an extract from the landscape character map from the SCAAMP (Jan 2018), which illustrates the boundary to the South Downs National Park:

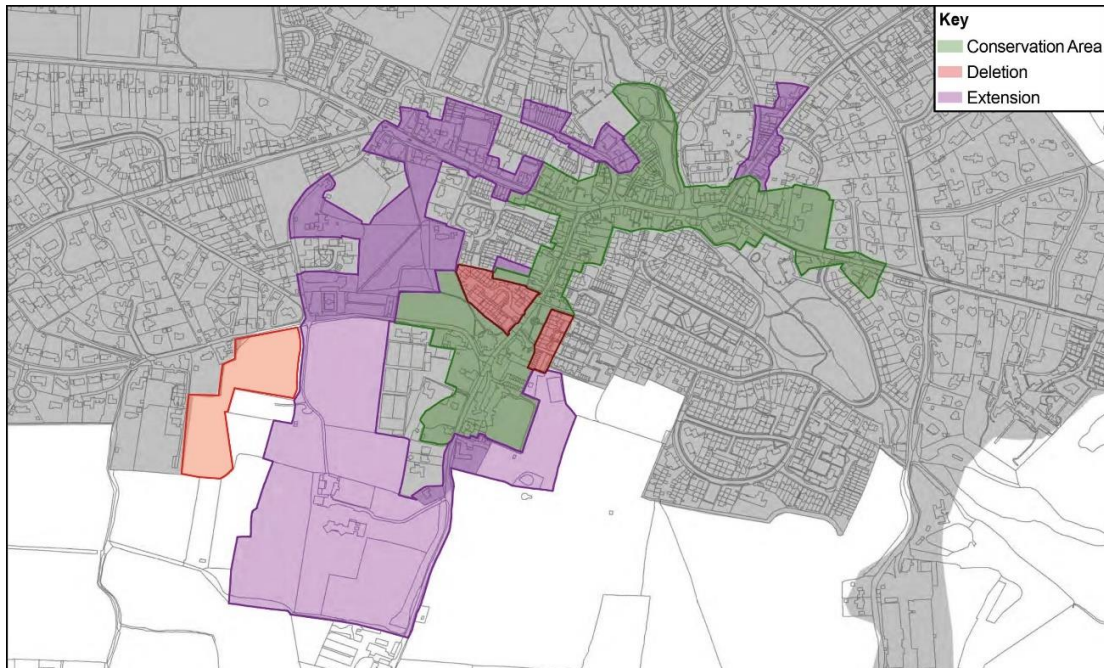


HBA Figure 5 – Extract from Storrington Landscape Character Map (Image from SCAAMP, 2018)

Storrington Conservation Area

- 2.45 The eastern boundary of the north paddock adjoins the recently extended Conservation Area, and the *Storrington Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan (SCAAMP, Jan 2018)* identifies the northern half of the north paddock as lying within the Horsham District Landscape Character Area (LCA) of ZU: Storrington, with the remainder of the site lying within LCA D1: Amberley to Steyning Farmlands (see Section 3 for further information).

- 2.46 The landscape fringe where the Conservation Area adjoins the surrounding landscape is the most prominent landform associated with the Conservation Area. The SCAAMP notes that Conservation Area edge is moderately well integrated by landform and mature vegetation and whilst there are historic associations with this edge, modern development has intruded in part.
- 2.47 Please see **HBA Figure 6** below for an extract from Conservation Area map from the SCAAMP (Jan 2018) that illustrates recent changes to the Storrington Conservation Area:



HBA Figure 6 – Extract from Storrington Conservation Area Map (Image from SCAAMP, 2018)

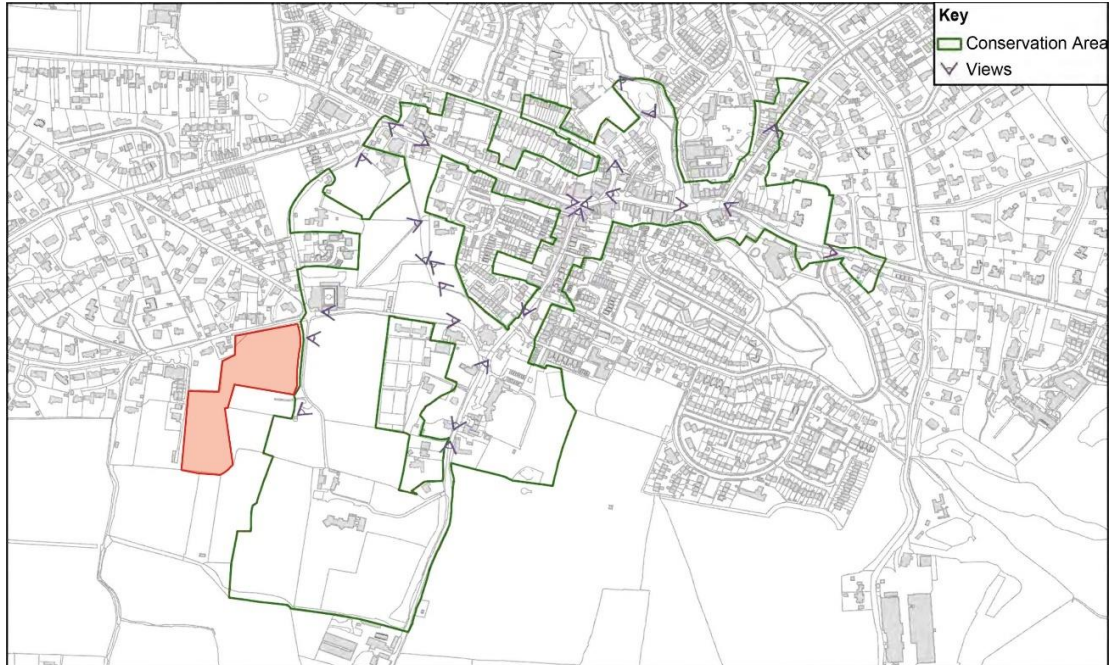
Listed Buildings

- 2.48 There are no listed buildings located within the immediate context of the site. The nearest listed buildings are Ladye House (Grade II) approximately 170m to the north-east of the north paddock, a pair of cottages attached to a wall at St. Joseph's Hall (Grade II) approximately 135m to the east of the south paddock, and St Joseph's Hall (Grade II) approximately 180m to the south-east of the south paddock.

Visibility

- 2.49 The north paddock is relatively enclosed, because of the perimeter vegetation, but glimpsed views are possible from the western edge of Matt's Wood. Views into the north paddock are possible from the access road to the cemetery, but it is not possible to see into the site from the public footpath that follows Kithurst Lane given the embankment and the hedgerow.
- 2.50 Upper storey views into the site are considered possible from the private residences that face the site, but many of those views would likely be screened by the canopies of the outgrown hedgerow trees. It is noted that none of these properties is listed and most are of relatively recent (mid-20th century) construction.

- 2.51 It is noted that the *Storrington Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan (Jan 2018)* does not identify any sensitive views looking from the Conservation Area towards the site (see **HBA Figure 7** below).
- 2.52 Mid-distance views may be possible from public footpath 2662, when facing eastwards towards the south paddock. This pathway is located approximately 100m to the west of the



HBA Figure 7 – Extract from *Storrington Views Map* (Image from SCAAMP, 2018)

south paddock, with the intervening land comprised of small to mid-sized fields. The stable mentioned in Paragraph 2.5 will potentially block some views from this footpath, as will any intervening vegetation.

- 2.53 The dwellings at Birklands and Hillview will also provide some visual separation from footpath 2662, however, the likelihood of views may increase as the footpath crosses the open fields to the south of the site and starts to climb the escarpment. The offsite woodland to the south of the south paddock would be likely to minimize intervisibility.
- 2.54 Longer range views may be possible from public bridleway 2249 that crests the escarpment to meet the South Downs Way close to Kithurst Hill at 213m height. Much of this footpath runs through hanger woodland on the escarpment, which will serve to screen and filter views towards the site.
- 2.55 The *South Downs View Characterisation and Analysis Study* aims to provide a foundation for evidence on view types within the National Park and its setting. It identifies views from the steep chalk scarp, east of the Arun Valley, looking north across the scarp footslopes (within the National Park) and the Low Weald (outside the National Park). These views are considered the “most iconic of the views from the South Downs National Park and many of these views are experienced from the South Downs Way National Trail” – see **HBA Appendix 3**.
- 2.56 It is considered possible that there may be some potential for views of the site from the South Downs Way, but it is expected that these views will be well screened by intervening vegetation,

and that the site will be difficult to distinguish within the irregular southern fringe of Storrington's built form. The following views should be assessed to fully understand the intervisibility between the site and the South Downs Way:

- View 33: Chantry Hill – *"This viewpoint is located on the South Downs Way and is a good vantage point from which to enjoy panoramic views over the scarp footslopes and the Low Weald. It is noted in the SDILCA as representing views from the Arun to Adur Downs Scarp"; and*
- View 34: Sullington Hill – *"This viewpoint is located on Sullington Hill, adjacent to Chantry Hill. It is another good vantage point from which to experience panoramic views over the scarp footslopes and the Low Weald and view the scarp and is noted in the SDILCA as representing views from the Arun to Adur Downs Scarp".*

2.57 As noted above (Para 2.43) correspondence with SDNPA suggests that there will be little (if any) intervisibility between the site and the South Downs.

Planning Policy Context

2.58 A summary of planning policy relevant to the landscape and visual context of the site and the proposed development is set out below.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2019)

2.59 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (Revised February 2019) sets out the Government's national planning policy for England. The NPPF is a material consideration in determining planning applications (Paragraph 2). The Framework should be read as a whole (including its footnotes and annexes) (Paragraph 3). Its overall thrust is to promote sustainable development (Paragraph 7).

2.60 Paragraph 8 states that *"the planning system has three overarching objectives, which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supporting ways (so that opportunities can be taken to secure net gains across each of the different objectives).*

2.61 a) *an economic objective: ...*

2.62 b) *a social objective: ...*

2.63 c) *an environmental objective: This is described as "to contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, helping to improve biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy."*

2.64 Paragraph 11 deals with the presumption in favour of sustainable development. For decision-taking this means:

- *"approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay; or*
- *where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, granting permission unless:*

- i. *the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed; or*
 - ii. *any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole."*
- 2.65 NPPF Paragraph 127 states: *"Planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments 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)."*
- 2.66 Paragraph 170 of the NPPF requires that: Planning Policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:
- a) *"protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (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 best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland;"*
- 2.67 Paragraph 172 of the NPPF 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 ⁵³ Where significant development of agricultural land is demonstrated to be necessary, areas of poorer quality land should be preferred to those of a higher quality ⁵⁰ and the Broads ⁵⁴. The scale and extent of development within these designated areas should be limited. Planning permission should be refused for major development ⁵⁵ other than in exceptional circumstances, and where it can be demonstrated that the development is in the public interest. Consideration of such applications should include an assessment of:*
- a) *the need for the development, including in terms of any national considerations, and the impact of permitting it, or refusing it, upon the local economy;*
 - b) *the cost of, and scope for, developing outside the designated area, or meeting the need for it in some other way; and*
 - c) *any detrimental effect on the environment, the landscape and recreational opportunities, and the extent to which that could be moderated."*
- 2.68 NPPF footnote ⁵⁵ notes that for the purpose of paragraph 172 , *"whether a proposal is 'major development' is a matter for the decision maker, taking into account its nature, scale and setting, and whether it could have a significant adverse impact on the purposes for which the area has been designated or defined"*.

National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG, 2014)

2.69 The NPPG came into force on the 6th March 2014 and is an online planning resource which supports and informs the NPPF and replaces a number of earlier planning practice guidance documents and government circulars. The following sections and paragraphs of NPPG are of relevance to the scheme and landscape and visual matters.

2.70 In relation to 'Design', Reference ID: 26-007-20140306, paragraph 007 states that *"Planning should promote local character (including landscape setting)"*. In achieving this, NPPG states here that:

"When thinking about new development the site's landform should be taken into account. Natural features and local heritage resources can help give shape to a development and integrate it into the wider area, reinforce and sustain local distinctiveness, reduce its impact on nature and contribute to a sense of place. Views into and out of larger sites should also be carefully considered from the start of the design process";

And

"The opportunity for high quality hard and soft landscape design that helps to successfully integrate development into the wider environment should be carefully considered from the outset, to ensure it complements the architecture of the proposals and improves the overall quality of townscape or landscape..."

The National Design Guide (NDG, 2019)

2.71 The National Design Guide was published in September 2019. Paragraph 8 notes that *"the underlying purpose for design quality and the quality of new development at all scales is to create well-designed and well-built places that benefit people and communities. This includes people who use a place for various purposes such as:*

- to live, work, shop, for leisure and recreation, and to move around between these activities; and*
- those who visit or pass through."*

2.72 The National Design Guide sets out ten overarching characteristics that contribute to design quality. Under the heading of Context, paragraph 38 notes that:

"Well-designed places are:

- based on a sound understanding of the features of the site and the surrounding context, using baseline studies as a starting point for design;*
- integrated into their surroundings so they relate well to them;*
- influenced by and influence their context positively; and*
- responsive to local history, culture and heritage."*

Horsham District Planning Framework (HDPF, 2015) & Regulation 18 Public Consultation

- 2.73 The Horsham District Planning Framework (HDPF) was adopted in November 2015 as the overarching planning document for Horsham district outside the South Downs National Park (SDNP) and replaces the Core Strategy and General Development Control Policies documents (adopted in 2007).
- 2.74 In line with Government guidance, the HDPF is currently under review and the Regulation 18 Public Consultation on the new Local Plan is currently underway and due to conclude by 5pm, Monday 30th March. The new Local Plan will run from 2019 to 2036 and set the planning strategy for this period to meet the social, economic and environmental needs of the District.
- 2.75 The Regulation 18 Local Plan sets out the draft vision, objectives and strategy for the District over the coming years and contains a number of draft policies for guiding development. Chapter 3 provides an aspirational vision for the District supported by the inclusion of spatial objectives to allow for a more tangible way of taking forward the Plan's approach. The Plan includes the overarching approach by which development proposals are to be considered at Chapter 4 and sets out the Development Hierarchy for the District.
- 2.76 The new Local Plan also contains chapters relating to the following topics and associated approaches:
- Housing development: to help ensure that the government's step change in housing growth is achieved and local needs are met. This chapter includes the consideration of various levels of housing growth as well as the different site options with potential for allocation to deliver the housing required over the plan period.
 - Natural environment: to help ensure that development is delivered in a manner which is considerate of the need for a high quality of life in the District, including maintaining air and water quality as well as protecting local biodiversity and landscape character. This includes an approach to development which will achieve a 10% biodiversity net gain.
 - Development quality, design and heritage: to ensure that development is of a quality and design which is considerate of local character and designated and local heritage assets.

Strategic Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment (SHELAA, 2018)

- 2.77 The Strategic Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment (SHELAA) is a process used to find potential land for development. The assessment of land availability is promoted and set out in National Planning Practice Guidance. The SHELAA is a high level assessment that is part of a wider evidence base used as a starting point to decide whether sites could be developed for housing, business (economic) or other uses in the Local Plan.
- 2.78 The SHELAA cannot be construed as committing HDC to allocate any particular piece of land or approve planning permission. The site is currently included within the most recent 2018 SHELAA (published Jan 2019) as two separate sites (reference SA020 and SA021). Both sites are recorded as 'Available' but assessed as 'Not Currently Developable' on the basis that any development would be contrary to the following HDPF policies unless the combined site was

allocated through the current review of the HDPF or via a future review of the adopted Storrington, Sullington & Washington Neighbourhood Plan 2018 – 2031:

- Policy 1 – Sustainable Development;
- Policy 2 – Strategic Development;
- Policies 3 & 4 – Development Hierarchy and Settlement Expansion; and
- Policy 26 – Countryside Protection.

Storrington, Sullington & Washington Neighbourhood Plan 2018 – 2031 (SSWNP, 2019)

- 2.79 The Storrington & Sullington and Washington Parish Neighbourhood Development Plan to 2031 was 'made' with effect 5th September 2019.
- 2.80 The SSWNP indicates a series of actual or perceived 'Strengths' and 'Weaknesses' relative to other places, which in turn present a series of 'Opportunities' and 'Challenges' for the SSWNP to address, given there is likely to be a direct influence on land use planning and development decisions.
- 2.81 Stated opportunities for Storrington and Sullington include:
- *"The Neighbourhood Plan will enable us to provide the type of housing that is required to meet local needs including affordable and start-up homes.*
 - *The Plan allows us to protect key amenities and services, local green spaces and settlement boundaries between the villages and provides the opportunity to ensure that developments are designed to complement the locality."*
- 2.82 Whilst, an identified challenge is:
- *"The Plan aims to provide the necessary homes, facilities and opportunities for young families to maintain and improve the vitality of the area, making Storrington & Sullington the choice 'Place to Live'."*

3 LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

- 3.1 Landscape Character is defined in the Guidance for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment 3rd Edition (GLVIA3) as:

"A distinct, recognisable and consistent pattern of elements in the landscape that makes one landscape different from another, rather than better or worse."

- 3.2 The general hierarchy of the Landscape Character studies relevant to the site and its surroundings are set out below:

National Character

The National Character Area (NCA) profiles have prepared by Natural England for the 159 NCA's defined across England. These NCA profiles include a description of the natural and cultural features that shape the landscape, how the landscape has changed over time, the current key drivers for ongoing change, and a broad analysis of each area's characteristics.

- 3.3 At this very broad landscape scale, the site lies within **NCA 120: Wealden Greensand**. This NCA is summarised as:

"A long narrow belt of Greensand, typified by scarp-and-dip slope topography, including outcrops of Upper Greensand Gault Clay and Lower Greensand. The Greensand escarpments separated by a clay vale: the overall undulating and organic landform - particularly in the west - gives a sense of intimacy to the landscape."

- 3.4 Statements of Environmental Opportunity for NCA 120 include:

"SEO1: Protect and manage the nationally recognised and distinctive character of the landscape, conserving and enhancing historic landscape character, tranquillity, sense of place, and the rich historical and geological heritage of the Wealden Greensand..."

Regional Character

- 3.5 At a county level, the Character of West Sussex Partnership Programme has carried out a series of character studies of the County, which are published in several separate but linked documents that are read in conjunction with each other and include:

- 'A Strategy for the West Sussex Landscape' (WSCC, October 2005)
- 'The Landscape Character Assessment of West Sussex' (Chris Blandford Associates for WSCC, 2003) with supporting Land Management Guidelines
- 'Local Distinctiveness Study of West Sussex' (WSCC, Ongoing)

- 3.6 'A Strategy for the West Sussex Landscape' sets out the vision for the landscape of the County and defines strategies "to protect and enhance the landscape of West Sussex as an asset for future generations" (Para 1.5). It considers the landscape in relation to the five national landscape character types found in the County and draws directly from earlier landscape character studies carried out in West Sussex.

- 3.7 The 'Landscape Character Assessment of West Sussex' identifies and maps 42 unique landscape character areas within West Sussex and provides Land Management Guidelines for

each character area. The site lies within the area **WG8: Central Scarp Footslopes** which *“extends between Amberley and Steyning at the foot of the adjacent chalk escarpment. Its landscape often appears diminished and intricate in scale when set against the bold chalk ridge above. The field and vegetation patterns, lying over sandstone and clay, are complex. Large, straight-edged arable fields contrast with a pattern of smaller, irregular pastures and arable fields, and narrow linear woodlands near the streams, creating sudden transitions.”*

3.8 Key characteristics include:

- *“Rolling relief of low ridges and vales.*
- *Dramatic views of the chalk escarpment to the south and glimpsed views of settlements through woodland and trees.*
- *Mixed farmland with fields of varied shapes and sizes on lower slopes.*
- *Density of copses, streamside woodlands and hedgerow trees increase towards the edges of settlements and lower slopes.*
- *Picturesque, traditional spring-line villages and settlements.*
- *Small settlement pattern often clustered or centred on manor houses, churches or mills, with a strong historic character and few suburban influences.*
- *Varied building materials including flint, brick, local sandstone (of the Upper Greensand) coloured blue or weathered rusty yellow (Amberley blue), some chalk (called ‘clunch’ locally), and half timber.”*

3.9 Key issues that result in landscape change are noted as including:

- *“Continuing hedgerow removal due to modern farming methods and management.*
- *Decline in the number and condition of hedgerow oaks.*
- *Important to maintain ecological connectivity between the Downland and the Weald.”*

3.10 Land management guidelines include:

- *“Conserve and maintain the open character of the scarp footslopes and views to scarp slope.*
- *Maintain the historic character of the area, including small-scale field patterns, historic parkland, sunken lanes and hedgebanks.*
- *Maintain and restore hedgerows, especially in arable farmland.*
- *Encourage the planting of tree groups around farm buildings.”*

3.11 Guidance on conservation and maintenance of the open character of the scarp footslopes and views to scarp slope include:

- *“Conserve the largely secluded, tranquil character of the area.*
- *Maintain the historic character of the area, including small-scale field patterns, historic parkland, sunken lanes and hedgebanks.*
- *Maintain and restore hedgerows, especially in arable farmland.*
- *Restore linear woodland across arable farmland to link with existing woodlands.*
- *Aim to create good linkages via trees, woodland and hedgerows across land parcels.*

- Encourage the planting of tree groups around farm buildings and single oak trees in arable fields.
 - Consider the cumulative impact on landscape character of small developments and land use change. Avoid the introduction of suburban styles and materials.
 - Ensure any new development is well integrated into the wider landscape. Use small woodland and new hedgerow planting as appropriate.
 - Plant thick hedgerows, hedgerow trees and tree belts in the southern fringes of Storrington to screen the area and link up with hanger woodlands where appropriate."
- 3.12 Under landscape and visual sensitivities, the assessment notes that key sensitivities include:
- "Inappropriate design and scale of development affecting long views, and open views to scarp slope.
 - Changes to the scattered low key settlement pattern or small scale incremental development in villages and hamlets bringing in urban and suburban features and materials."
- 3.13 The 'Local Distinctiveness Study of West Sussex' complements and expands upon the landscape character assessment of West Sussex and the associated land management guidelines. The site is located within the **Wealden Greensand** landscape character area, which the study describes as lying *"within the boundaries of the South Downs National Park. It is essentially a medieval landscape with a small scale, intimate and mysterious character which is in striking contrast to the openness of the rolling chalk hills of the neighbouring South Downs."*
- 3.14 The site is located to the south of the Wealden Greensand character area along the border with the South Downs. The study notes that *"To the south, where the impermeable gault clay meets the permeable chalk, hundreds of clear springs burst forth, known as the 'spring-line'. This spring-line has given rise to a line of settlements nestled at the foot of the north scarp of the downs which, in the past, utilised the springs' energy to drive their water mills."*
- 3.15 The study also provides information regarding dwelling character, where small plots with a mix of detached and semi-detached properties are typical. The relationship with of dwelling to roadway tends to be front on with some side on. Size tends to be 2-storey, with local Greensand stone, flint and clay tile common as building materials. Plot enclosure tends to be *"hedges – typically hawthorn, yew, beech, hornbeam, privet, box, mixed native hedge; cleft or riven chestnut post and rail fencing, timber picket fencing; sandstone walls, some with half round sandstone coping"*.

Local Landscape Character

- 3.16 The *Horsham District Landscape Character Assessment* (2003) has been undertaken at a District/Borough level by Chris Blandford Associates. It subdivides the landscape into 16

Landscape Character Types. These are then broken down further in to 32 Landscape Character Areas (LCA).

- 3.17 The site straddles two LCA with the northern paddock described within the settlement character area of **Storrington, Sullington and Heath Common (HBA Appendix 4)** and the southern paddock within the character area of **Amberley to Steyning Farmlands (HBA Appendix 5)**.
- 3.18 The settlement character area of Storrington, Sullington and Heath Common is described as *“one large straggling settlement with a strongly wooded /heathland setting within which there are local contrasts of character”*.
- 3.19 The planning and landscape enhancement guidelines advise:
- *“Conserve and enhance the well treed character of the area.*
 - *Seek opportunities to enhance the visual and ecological character of open spaces, ..., through encouraging more diverse margins and additional planting appropriate to underlying landscape character.”*
- 3.20 The Amberley to Steyning Farmlands are considered to have the following key characteristics:
- *“...Overlooked by the chalk escarpment to the south.*
 - *Varied patchwork of arable and pasture farmland, with fields of irregular shapes and sizes.*
 - *Small north flowing streams in steep narrow valleys.*
 - *Sunken lanes with high hedgebanks.*
 - *Small springline settlements and farmsteads dispersed along the edge of the greensand ridge.*
 - *Mix of local building materials, including brick and flint, sandstone and thatch.”*
- 3.21 The planning and landscape enhancement guidelines advise:
- *“Conserve the rural undeveloped character. Large scale housing and industrial development or cumulative small scale change could substantial damage its character, e.g. through loss of historic field pattern, hedgerows and woodland.”*
 - *Ensure that any appropriate new development responds to the historic pattern of the area and traditional local materials and design.*
 - *Conserve and manage the distinctive character of the sunken lanes and their hedge bank.*
 - *Conserve and restore the existing the existing hedgerows network. Priorities for restoration of hedgerows are within areas of arable farmland.*
 - *Encourage the planting of new small woods, copses in the narrow gault clay vale, as well as the edges of Storrington and Steyning.”*
- 3.22 These published assessments are considered to give a fair overall summary of the landscape character of the area in which the site lies and its landscape and visual context. Given the landscape and visual attributes of the site described in the baseline review, the above assessments are considered to give strong and clear guidance as to how any development should be planned. They indicate that a sensitive development of the site would be expected,

and that development should not prejudice the sensitive boundary with the SDNP or give rise to wider effects on views from the South Downs.

Landscape Capacity

- 3.23 The *Horsham District Landscape Capacity Assessment (2020)* is divided into two stages. The first stage of the study analyses the capacity of the landscape around and between the main town of Horsham, small towns or large villages, or new settlements. This includes areas proposed to the planning authority for large scale development (e.g. around Kingsfold) for both housing and employment development. These areas have been split into ten broad geographic zones. The second stage of the study examines the capacity of the landscape, around existing medium or smaller villages, to accommodate medium and small scale housing development. The key objectives of the assessment are to:
- 1) *“Provide a transparent, consistent and objective assessment of the landscape capacity of the land around existing and new settlements to accommodate housing and employment*
 - 2) *development.*
 - 3) *Identify areas where new development could best be accommodated without unacceptable adverse landscape and visual impacts.”*
- 3.24 The study notes *“that it should be noted that the levels of landscape sensitivity and capacity that are identified as part of the study are generalised statements across each area, and provide a pointer to detailed landscape and visual issues that would need to be addressed in a site allocation or development management context. Landscape sensitivity and capacity levels are indicative, and it is expected that further analysis at a smaller scale and a more detailed assessment of the area would be carried out in relation to specific applications to determine the actual capacity of the site. It is likely that there will be some instances where a detailed assessment of a local area”.*
- 3.25 The study describes the settlement of **Storrington, Sullington and West Chiltington Common** lying within the broad geographic **Zone 5**. Within this zone eleven distinctive study areas are further identified, where the site forms a small component of Landscape Character Area **63: Land South of Storrington**.
- 3.26 Overall, the Landscape Capacity for this character area is assessed as **No-Low**, given the area’s **High** Combined Landscape Sensitivity, its mostly good condition and its **Moderate-High** Landscape Value, it is considered that there is there is no or very limited capacity for development medium or large scale housing development (where medium scale development is defined as 100-500 dwellings associated with extensions to small towns or large villages, and large scale development is defined as 500 or more dwellings associated with more urban extensions, with both at an average of 35-40 dwellings per hectare). See **HBA Appendix 6** for further detail.
- 3.27 The study does not, however, assess Area 64’s capacity for small scale housing, defined as housing development of no more than 60 dwellings associated with village extensions, at an average of 25-30 dwellings per hectare.

4 LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL CONSIDERATIONS

Landscape considerations

- 4.1 Whilst the site lies in a sensitive location in the countryside, on the edge (but just beyond) the settlement boundary of Storrington and adjoining the South Downs National Park, the sloping site topography and surrounding boundary vegetation result in the site being relatively well enclosed. Offsite perimeter vegetation on the boundary with the neighbouring cemetery and 1.4ha woodland to the south of the site further increase the site's containment.
- 4.2 The south-western corner of the site of the south paddock adjoins the South Downs National Park (for approximately 15m), although the National Park boundary then follows the perimeter of the woodland to the south of the site and the parkland setting of St Joseph's Hall before heading to the north along Greyfriars Lane. The eastern boundary of the northern paddock adjoins the recently extended Storrington Conservation Area.
- 4.3 The site lies within National Character Area **120: Wealden Greensand**, which is described as *"...a long narrow belt of Greensand, typified by scarp-and-dip slope topography..."*. The Statement of Environmental Opportunity (SEO1) for this NCA guides *"protect and manage the nationally recognised and distinctive character of the landscape, conserving and enhancing historic landscape character, tranquillity, sense of place..."*. It is considered that the relative enclosure of the site would allow for a degree of modest development, without serious harm to the surrounding landscape context or sense of place. Indeed, the very irregular southern settlement boundary to Storrington could potentially absorb new development with minimal impact upon the surrounding landscape character. Mitigation measures could also be embedded within the design to conserve and enhance the existing landscape framework.
- 4.4 At a regional level the site lies within the West Sussex LCA of **WG8: Central Scarp Footslopes** character area, which is typified by the dramatic views of the chalk escarpment to the south, mixed farmland with fields of varied shapes and sizes on the lower slopes, and density of copses, streamside woodlands and hedgerow trees towards the edges of settlements. It is this landscape character that describes the existing landscape framework and structure within which the site perceived, offering the potential to absorb a modest degree of development.
- 4.5 At a local level the northern paddock lies within Horsham District LCA of **Storrington, Sullington and Heath Common** whilst the southern paddock lies within the LCA of **Amberley to Steyning Farmlands**. It is noted within this study that the built development of Storrington is widely visible from the South Downs, but considerably softened by woodland and mature trees, whilst the latter character area is composed of a varied patchwork of arable and pasture farm land, with fields of irregular shapes and sizes, and sunken lanes with high hedge banks.
- 4.6 Overall, the various landscape character assessments are considered to accurately represent the landscape and visual context of the site and its surroundings. On the basis of the landscape and visual attributes of the site described in the baseline review, the assessments are considered to give appropriate guidance with regard to the design and potential mitigation of any development. They indicate that a very sensitively designed, small scale development of the site could be absorbed, and that any proposed development should not prejudice the sensitive boundary with the SDNP or give rise to wider effects on views from the South Downs.

- 4.7 The most recent *Horsham District Landscape Capacity Assessment (HDLCA)* considers the site to be within **Area 63: Land South of Storrington** with a **No-Low** Landscape Capacity for medium or large scale residential development, given the area's **High** Combined Landscape Sensitivity, its mostly good condition and its **Moderate-High** Landscape Value.
- 4.8 As noted in Paragraph 3.25, the levels of landscape sensitivity and capacity that are identified as part of the HDLCA are generalised statements across each wider area, and the HDLCA itself considers it likely that there will be some instances where a detailed assessment of a local area will identify smaller parcels of land that are less constrained in landscape terms and could accommodate some changes without significant landscape and visual effects. This report believes the site to be a case in point.
- 4.9 This Technical Note considers that there is scope for different assessment rankings to be concluded, both when the smaller area of the site is considered and in relation to a specific development proposal. Whilst many of the characteristics noted in the HDLCA as contributing to visual and landscape sensitivity of Area 63 are relevant to the site, it is considered that the intrinsic qualities of the site itself could be addressed in a sensitive development approach that would respect key sensitivities and not intrude on the wider rural landscape.
- 4.10 The Landscape Character Sensitivity for Area 63 is assessed as **High** for medium to large scale housing to reflect the undulating landform, variable field pattern with a strong network of hedgerows, hedgerow trees and small copses. This Technical Note considers that the site's very enclosure and containment within the existing landscape framework of mature trees and hedgerows would serve to reduce the sensitivity to limited, small scale development of the site, without adversely effecting the surrounding landscape character. It is note that the first stage of the HDLCA does not assess the capacity for small scale development near to large villages, small towns or Horsham.
- 4.11 As a greenfield site, there would be an inherent loss of rural landscape resource (as would be the case for other greenfield development around Storrington), however, it is considered that within the context of the irregular, softly indented edge to Storrington, there is scope for a modest residential development to be sensitivity accommodated in the site, whilst generally respecting the intrinsic character and visual amenity of the locality.
- 4.12 Any development proposal for the site should respect the key sensitivities outlined in the various landscape characterisation studies, the LCA and within this Technical Note, in particular with regard to respecting the intrinsic landscape qualities that make an important contribution to Storrington's distinctive southern settlement boundary. In addition, proposals must also respond to the historic of the area and incorporate traditional local materials into the design.

Visual considerations

- 4.13 The limited visual effects from residential development would likely be most pronounced from the south, where partial views into the southern paddock are possible from various points on public footpath 2662 as it crosses the open fields on the scarp footslopes. Views from the west are mostly screened by hedgerow vegetation, but some glimpsed views are possible into the south paddock at the junction with footpath 2663 that runs east to Gerston Business Park.



HBA Image 1 – Junction of public footpaths 2662 and 2663 to west of the site

- 4.14 Footpath 2662 meets public bridleways 2249 and 2682 further to the south at Coldharbour, where views towards the site are largely screened by the intervening vegetation of the hanger as the bridleways climb the scarp. Heavily filtered views of the evergreen *Leylandii* that form the southern and eastern boundaries to the north paddock are the only perceptible site features that can be seen from clearings as bridleway 2249 reaches the top of the scarp slope. These trees effectively screen views into the site.



HBA Image 2 – Public footpath 2662 crossing open fields to south of the site

- 4.15 Views towards the site are not possible from the South Downs Way in this location, as it tends to be aligned to the south of the ridgeline of the scarp, such that the landform typically rises to the north of the pathway blocking views. Public bridleway 2671_1 follows the top edge of the hanger, but the intervening vegetation of the woodland prevents views north until it meets bridleway 3507 just to the east of the Kithurst Hill triangulation point. Views to the north over Storrington are available, although views into the site are screened by it the onsite boundary vegetation, and offsite vegetation including the woodland to the south of the site and perimeter vegetation to the cemetery.



HBA Image 3 – Junction of public bridleways 2671_1 and 3507 at summit of Kithurst Hill to south of the site

- 4.16 Views towards the site are also possible from public bridleway 2251 and footpaths 2683 as they head down the scarp from the top of Chantry Hill. These views take in the wider context of Storrington and the site is largely lost against wider built form and development along Storrington's southern settlement boundary. The site can be identified by the tall boundary vegetation, in particular the offsite poplars on the cemetery perimeter, but views into the site are not possible. For the same reasons no views into the site are possible from the View 33: Chantry Hill as identified in the *South Down View Characterisation and Analysis Study*.



HBA Image 4 – Public bridleway 2251 traversing Chantry Hill to south-east of the site

- 4.17 At the bottom of public bridleway 2251, where it joins bridleway 2249, clear views of the cemetery poplars with their *Leylandii* backdrop are visible from the entrance to Grey Friars Farm.



HBA Image 5 – Junction of public bridleways 2249 and 2251 at entrance to Grey Friars Farm

- 4.18 Views towards Storrington are also possible from View 34: Sullington Hill as identified in the *View Characterisation and Analysis Study*, but again the site largely disappears when viewed against the backdrop of the surrounding townscape. Once again, views into the site from public bridleway 2282 are not possible given the onsite and offsite vegetation, which is the only means of identifying the site location.



HBA Image 6 – Public bridleway 2282 traversing Sullington Hill to south-east of the site

- 4.19 Views from Greyfriars Lane and public footpath 2249 are very much restricted by the hedgerows, intervening vegetation and onsite boundary vegetation. Indeed, it is very difficult to establish the location of the site from bridleway 2663 that runs to the north of Gerston Business Park and south of the offsite woodland at the bottom of the southern paddock, and views into the site are not possible given the intervening vegetation. On this basis, it is considered unlikely that views of any proposed development would also be unlikely from this footpath.
- 4.20 Views into the site from School Lane are also impossible due to the dense hedgerow vegetation, with the site only identifiable by the tall, evergreen *Leylandii* trees and pine trees that exist along the eastern boundary. Views into the site are possible at the junction with

Kithurst Lane, at which point there are views over the gates that form the main site access into the northern paddock from the cemetery access road.

- 4.21 Views from Kithurst Lane are very restricted given the sunken nature of the lane and the density of the hedgerow vegetation that forms the northern site boundary. Views into the northern paddock are, however, possible from the gated secondary access from Kithurst Lane.
- 4.22 It is possible that there would be views into the site from properties that adjoin the site including Furzedown (although the bungalow design of this property will likely limit views), Cherry House, Birklands and Hillview. Upper floor views would also likely be available into the northern paddock from some properties to the north of Kithurst Lane.
- 4.23 Overall, the Visual Sensitivity of Area 63 is assessed by the LCA to be **Moderate-High** for medium to large scale housing development, however, the report also concludes *“the area has a varied visual sensitivity to development, reflecting some parts that are fairly enclosed by trees and hedgerows and adjacent landform, other parts that are much less screened by vegetation and are more prominent on rising ground/slight ridgeline with high intervisibility with the South Downs”*.
- 4.24 The Technical Note concludes that the very enclosed nature of the site limits intervisibility with the South Downs to the south (as suggested by SDNPA – see **Appendix 2**), particularly on the elevated scarp slope where intervening vegetation prevents views into the site. Views into the site are not possible from School Lane or Kithurst Lane, except in the vicinity of the main site entrance. There are a number of neighbouring residential properties to the west of the site, including the three storey Birklands, and several properties to the north of Kithurst Lane. Views into the site would likely be possible from the upper floors of these properties. Overall, the Visual Sensitivity of the site is likely to be somewhat **lower** than for the wider area.

Mitigation measures

- 4.25 The overarching objective of the landscape strategy for any development proposal should be to protect and enhance the character of the wider landscape setting and ensure that the inevitable changes arising from the development would be appropriately mitigated over time.
- 4.26 Any future development proposal would need to be subject to iterative design informed by either an Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) or a Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA), and contributions from cultural heritage, arboriculture and ecology specialists to ensure the wider environmental setting is appropriately addressed.
- 4.27 The following key landscape and visual mitigation measures should also be given consideration to help achieve this:
- The degree of separation provided by the offsite woodland on the southern site boundary and the wider South Downs could be retained and enhanced through the creation of a new onsite woodland belt to the south of the site, and in particular the south-western corner of the site. This would have the effect of containing any development on the site and screening views of built form from the properties and public footpaths within the South Downs.
 - The creation of a strong woodland buffer to the south also has the potential to provide

biodiversity gain and habitat linkages and in general the vegetated site boundaries should be protected and enhanced to deliver quantifiable biodiversity net gain.

- Additional tree cover, hedgerows and scrub planting should also be incorporated both within the development and at its boundaries to help retain a strong sense of tree cover and to soften the settlement edge, without detracting from the character of the site.
- Careful consideration should be given to the existing primary and secondary access points, such that intrinsic sunken lane qualities of both School Lane and Kithurst Lane are conserved and enhanced. In particular, intervisibility between the surrounding road network at the site can be minimised through enhancements to the existing boundary planting. Development should be set back from the northern boundary to reduce the effect from development upon Kithurst Lane and allow suitable space for any necessary mitigation measures (i.e. additional hedgerow and tree planting).
- The overall planting strategy objective should be to embed the development into a landscape framework that respects the heavily indented settlement edge, where woodlands and hedgerowed fields make a distinctive contribution to the setting. The planting approach must ensure a sensitive transition between the new settlement edge and the wider, more open, countryside to the south. The *Horsham District Landscape Character Assessment* advises that landscape enhancement measures should include conservation and enhancement of the well treed nature of the Storrington character area, whilst also encouraging more diverse margins and additional planting to benefit the ecological and visual character of the area.
- The *Local Distinctiveness Study*, which complements and expands upon the *Landscape Character Assessment of West Sussex* provides guidance on dwelling character, where small plots with a mix of detached and semi-detached properties are typical. Any development proposals should fully embrace the local architectural vernacular and draw upon the existing patterns of local development to reflect the generally lower density, massing, scale and use of local materials.
- The extent of any proposed level changes and/or retaining walls should be carefully considered to ensure that any proposed development can be accommodated appropriately across the sloping landform of the site. Consideration should also be given to reducing the floor levels and ridge heights of any proposed development to minimise the landscape and visual effects, and in particular upon the character and appearance to the rural edge of Storrington.
- Any development proposals should also demonstrate a positive contribution towards achieving the objectives of the *South Downs Partnership Management Plan* (under review). In particular, sensitive design measures should also be employed to ensure that the dark skies and tranquility of the area and neighbouring SDNP are conserved.
- Any proposed development should also secure a method of ensuring the long-term management and maintenance of the existing and proposed perimeter vegetation, where the perimeter vegetation should be located outside the boundaries of individual development plots.

5 CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1 The wider area around the site has been assessed in the HDC Landscape Capacity Assessment (2020), which forms part of the draft Local Plan evidence base, as having a **No-Low** capacity to accommodate medium to large scale residential development, defined as 100 or more dwellings at an average density of 35-40 dwellings per hectare.
- 5.2 It is considered that there is scope for different assessment rankings to be concluded both when the smaller area of the site is considered and in relation to a specific development proposal. Whilst many of the characteristics noted in the LCA as contributing to visual and landscape sensitivity of Area 63 are relevant to the site, it is considered that the intrinsic qualities of the site itself could be addressed in a sensitive development approach that would respect key sensitivities and not intrude on the wider rural landscape. On this basis, both the Landscape Character Sensitivity and Visual Sensitivity of the site when considered at a finer grain would be lower than that of the wider Area 63.
- 5.3 Whilst development of the site would clearly result in a direct loss of the landscape resource (as would be the case for any greenfield development) and part of the site adjoins the South Downs National Park, the particular characteristics of the site suggest that the relatively enclosed nature of the site, as a result of the well vegetated on and offsite boundaries to the south and east of the site, offer some opportunities for sensitively designed residential development.
- 5.4 The site is currently included within the most recent 2018 SHELAA as two separate sites (reference SA020 and SA021). Both sites are recorded as 'Available' but assessed as 'Not Currently Developable' on the basis that any development would be contrary to Policies 1 to 4 and 26 of the HDPF, unless the combined site was allocated through the current review of the HDPF or via a future review of the adopted SSWNP 2018 – 2031.
- 5.5 From a landscape and visual perspective, the site could potentially accommodate a modest degree of residential development. This would need to be set within a robust landscape framework of retained hedgerows, new landscape buffers and woodland, to ensure the wider landscape character of the Storrington / Amberley to Steyning Farmland LCAs and the SDNP, as well as the visual amenity of the public footpath network to the south and west of the site are retained. It is assumed that an appropriate mitigation strategy could be conditioned through the planning process to ensure that the landscape and visual effects are minimised or achieved by unilateral undertaking.
- 5.6 Any development proposal would also need to retain and augment the characteristic thick hedgerows with hedgerow trees and small woodlands/copses to help to contain and soften the settlement edge and interface with both the countryside and Kithurst Lane.
- 5.7 The landscape framework will also be required to create a positive settlement-rural interface to restrict and minimise the impact of development on the wider setting of the Storrington / Amberley to Steyning Farmland LCAs and the SDNP.
- 5.8 The total number of dwellings to be accommodated within the site could be determined post allocation, at which stage more detailed architectural and landscape design proposals would be available for consideration by HDC and others.