

Contents:

1.	Introduction & Scope	01
2.	Planning Policy & Guidance Context	07
3.	Methodology	16
4.	Baseline Conditions	27
5.	Description of the Proposed Development	38
6.	Assessment of Landscape Effects	40
7.	Assessment of Visual Effects	46
8.	Mitigation & Landscape Enhancement	48
9.	Summary & Conclusions	51

1 Introduction & Scope

1.1 Background & Project Brief: Context of the proposed development

- 1.1.1 This LVA has been prepared by Landscape Perspective in support of an outline (access & layout) planning application for the comprehensive re-development of land at New Barn Farm, Capel Road, Rusper, Horsham.
- 1.1.2 The application seeks planning permission for the redevelopment and rationalisation of an established equestrian holding through the provision of 10 new dwellings, the relocation and modernisation of the existing equestrian facilities, associated landscaping, ecological enhancements and all necessary infrastructure. The proposal additionally seeks to change the sites levels, cutting into the existing larger sand school from the south, and siting the propped 5-bed dwelling on lower ground.
- 1.1.3 Pre application advice (Reference PE/25/0230) confirmed that a Landscape Visual Assessment (LVA) should be undertaken prior to any formal application, and that this should be used to inform the layout of any future development.
- 1.1.4 The Pre application proposal sought planning permission for 11 dwellings not 10, and the pre application advice suggested that dwellings would only be acceptable on a one for one basis and replacement dwellings should not be 'disproportionate to the size of the existing dwelling'.
- 1.1.5 The current proposal has been fundamentally redesigned and comprehensively reviewed in direct response to that advice to address the comments made by the Local Planning Authority, reducing the scale of residential development, improving the site layout, strengthening the landscape framework, enhancing biodiversity, and improving the relationship between residential and commercial uses. The dwellings proposed in this application for which the LVA has been produced are not however replacement dwellings but additional dwellings to the existing, which will be retained.

1.2 Site Location & Study Area

Site Location

- 1.2.1 The application site lies 1.3 miles west of the settlement boundary to Rusper village and is outside of the Built-up Area boundary (BUAB) and forms part of land situated at New Barn Farm, Capel Road, Horsham, West Sussex to the south of Capel Road.
- 1.2.2 To the north of Capel Road almost directly opposite the site are a number of Gypsy & Traveller pitches which are located within Mole Valley District. (Riverdale Park and Pinewood paddocks) The wider landscape is highly rural with agricultural fields and large blocks of ancient woodland. (Refer to Aerial photographs Figures 1 and 2 Appendix A)
- 1.2.3 The site comprises approximately 2 hectares and consists of an established equestrian and a mixture of operational equestrian facilities, residential properties and associated open land.
- 1.2.4 Access into the site is available via two existing vehicular accesses directly onto Capel Road. These accesses currently serve both the residential properties and the equestrian business.
- 1.2.5 The principal developed area of the site currently comprises a substantial stable complex positioned centrally within the holding, together with associated parking, circulation areas, storage buildings and sand schools. Additional operational facilities, including an office building, horse walker, storage containers and associated infrastructure. Several existing residential properties are also situated within the wider landholding and are to remain unaffected by the proposed development. Grazing paddocks surround the site but are outwith the red line boundary of the planning application.

Study area

- 1.2.6 The extent of the study area has been informed by the nature, scale and context of the proposed development, together with an appraisal of the site's landscape setting. In accordance with the principles of GLVIA3, the study area has been defined on a proportionate basis to reflect the potential geographic extent of likely significant landscape and visual effects.
- 1.2.7 A study area extending to approximately 1 kilometre from the application site has been adopted. This is considered appropriate given that the proposals comprise the retention of the

existing dwellings, the introduction of 10 new dwellings and the reorganisation of established equestrian facilities within an already developed site. The proposals do not introduce a substantial new land use or significant built form into an undeveloped landscape.

- 1.2.8 Opportunities for views of the site are limited and generally confined to the immediate local area. Longer-distance views are either absent or filtered by intervening vegetation, with the closest view from the nearest PRow to the south being within the 1 km radius of the study area.
- 1.2.9 The proposed additional dwellings and the proposed reorganisation of the equestrian facilities would largely rationalise existing uses rather than materially extending their landscape influence. Consequently, changes to landscape character would be localised and the potential for significant landscape effects beyond the immediate surroundings is considered to be very limited.
- 1.2.10 In view of these factors, it is considered unlikely that significant landscape or visual effects would arise beyond the 1 km study area. The adopted study area is therefore considered to represent a robust and proportionate basis for the assessment, encompassing all landscape and visual receptors with the potential to experience material effects arising from the proposed development.

1.3 Purpose and Scope of the Landscape and Visual Assessment

Purpose of the Assessment

- 1.3.1 This Landscape and Visual Assessment (LVA) has been prepared in support of a planning application for ten new dwellings and the reorganisation of the existing equestrian facilities at the application site. Several existing residential properties are also situated within the wider landholding and are to remain unaffected by the proposed development.
- 1.3.2 The purpose of the assessment is to identify and evaluate the likely significant effects of the proposed development on the landscape resource and on visual amenity. The assessment provides an objective appraisal of the baseline landscape and visual conditions, identifies the sensitivity of landscape and visual receptors, and considers the nature and magnitude of change arising from the proposed development. The significance of any resulting effects is then assessed using professional judgement informed by recognised guidance.

1.3.3 The assessment has been undertaken in accordance with the principles set out in the *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Third Edition (GLVIA3)* (Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment, 2013). The methodology has also been informed by relevant national planning policy, the Development Plan and published landscape character assessments applicable to the site and its surrounding area.

1.3.4 The assessment forms part of the Environmental Information submitted in support of the planning application and is intended to assist the Local Planning Authority in understanding the landscape and visual implications of the proposed development.

Scope of the Assessment

1.3.5 The assessment considers the landscape and visual effects arising from the construction of 10 residential dwellings together with the reorganisation and rationalisation of the established equestrian facilities. The proposals include associated access arrangements, parking, hardstanding, stabling, paddocks, fencing, landscaping and other ancillary works.

1.3.6 The assessment includes:

- a review of the planning policy framework relevant to landscape and visual matters;
- a description of the site and its landscape context;
- identification of the landscape character of the site and surrounding area, with reference to published landscape character assessments;
- identification of landscape features and elements contributing to local landscape character;
- assessment of the sensitivity of the landscape resource to the proposed development;
- assessment of the likely effects on landscape character during both the construction and operational phases;
- identification of representative visual receptors and viewpoints;
- assessment of the likely effects on visual amenity experienced by representative receptor groups;
- consideration of embedded design measures and proposed landscape mitigation;
- assessment of residual landscape and visual effects following implementation of mitigation measures; and consideration of cumulative landscape and visual effects where relevant and proportionate.

- 1.3.7 The assessment has been prepared on the basis of a proportionate approach, reflecting the nature and scale of the proposals and the characteristics of the receiving landscape.

Key Issues Identified for Assessment

- 1.3.8 Having regard to the nature of the proposals and the characteristics of the site and its surroundings, the principal landscape and visual issues requiring assessment are considered to be:

- the extent to which the proposed 10 dwellings would alter the existing pattern, character and appearance of built development within the site;
- the extent to which the proposed development would maintain or enhance the established rural character, qualities and setting of the site and of the surrounding rural landscape and the contribution of the site to local landscape character;
- the landscape effects arising from the reorganisation of the existing equestrian facilities, including changes to the arrangement of buildings, circulation routes and associated infrastructure;
- the retention and protection of existing landscape features, including trees, hedgerows and other vegetation that contribute to landscape character and visual containment;
- the integration of the proposed development within its landscape setting through the retention of existing vegetation and implementation of appropriate landscape mitigation and enhancement measures
- the potential visibility of the development from surrounding roads, Public Rights of Way, neighbouring properties and other publicly accessible viewpoints;
- the effects on the visual amenity of nearby residents, recreational users and other representative visual receptors;
- the degree to which existing landform, vegetation and built development would filter or screen views of the proposed development;

- 1.3.9 Overall, the assessment seeks to determine whether the proposed dwellings and reorganisation of the established equestrian facilities can be accommodated within the receiving landscape without giving rise to significant adverse landscape or visual effects, having regard to the existing developed nature of the site and the proposed landscape mitigation.

2 Planning Policy & Guidance Context

- 2.1 This chapter of the LVA has been set out using a three-tier policy hierarchy: National Planning Policy (NPPF), District Planning Policy (Horsham District Planning Framework 2015), and Local Planning Policy (Rusper Neighbourhood Plan).

2.2 National Policy

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) December 2024)

- 2.2.1 The NPPF promotes sustainable development which delivers high-quality housing whilst protecting and enhancing the natural environment. This is set out in Chapter 12 – Achieving Well-Designed Places, (Paragraph 129 – Creation of beautiful, sustainable and inclusive places and Paragraphs 131–135 – High-quality design, local character and landscaping) and
- 2.2.2 Chapter 15 – Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment which focusses on:
- Protection and enhancement of biodiversity.
 - Delivery of measurable biodiversity net gain.
 - Protection of landscape character.
 - Recognition of the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside.

2.3 District Policy

Horsham District Planning Framework (HDPF 2015):

- 2.3.1 Horsham District Council is in the advanced stages of replacing the Horsham District Planning Framework (2015), however HDC currently identifies the HDPF as its current adopted Local Plan, while also progressing newer local-plan arrangements. The policies listed below are still therefore the adopted policies forming part of the current development plan,

Policy 25 - Strategic Policy: The Natural Environment and Landscape Character

- 2.3.2 This is the primary district-level landscape policy for a district where the rural qualities of Horsham district are highly valued by those who live and work there. The policy requires development to protect, conserve, and enhance landscape character, taking into account distinct landscape types. The Policy is set out below:

‘Natural Environment and landscape character of the District, including the landscape, landform and development pattern, together with protected landscapes and habitats will be protected against inappropriate development. The Council will support development proposals which:

- 1. Protects, conserves and enhances the landscape and townscape character, taking into account areas identified as being of landscape importance, the individual settlement characteristics, and maintains settlement separation.*
- 2. Maintain and enhances the Green Infrastructure Network and addresses any identified deficiencies in the District.*
- 3. Maintains and enhances the existing network of geological sites and biodiversity, including safeguarding existing designated sites and species, and ensures no net loss of wider biodiversity and provides net gains in biodiversity where possible.*
- 4. Conserve and where possible enhance the setting of the South Downs National Park.’*

Policy 26 - Strategic Policy: Countryside Protection

- 2.3.3 Since Ruspur is largely rural, this policy strictly controls development outside defined built-up area boundaries (BUAB) to ensure the rural character of the countryside is protected and maintained and seeks to protect the countryside from inappropriate development whilst recognising that proposals may be acceptable where they conserve landscape character and deliver wider planning benefits. The Policy is set out below:

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

- 1) Support the needs of agriculture or forestry;*
- 2) Enable the extraction of minerals or the disposal of waste;*
- 3) Provide for quiet informal recreational use; or*
4. Enable the sustainable development of rural areas. In addition, proposals must 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, and/or conserves, and/or enhances, the key features and characteristics of the landscape character area in which it is located, including;

- 4) *The development pattern of the area, its historical and ecological qualities, tranquillity and sensitivity to change;*
- 5) *The pattern of woodlands, fields, hedgerows, trees, waterbodies and other features; and*
- 6) *The landform of the area.'*

Policy 29 Equestrian Development

- 2.3.4 Supports equestrian development where it is appropriately located, proportionate and compatible with the surrounding countryside. The Policy is set out below:

Development for equestrian related development will be supported provided that:

1. *It can be demonstrated that the re-use of existing buildings on site for related equestrian use is not appropriate; before new or replacement buildings are considered.*
2. *The proposal would be appropriate in scale and level of activity, and be in keeping with it's location and surroundings, and where possible is well related to existing buildings;*
3. *The proposal should where possible be well related to a bridleway network.*

Policy 31 - Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity

- 2.3.5 Policy 31 requires development to conserve and enhance biodiversity, protect ecological networks and provide opportunities for habitat creation. The relevant sections from the Policy that can be applied to this site are set out below:

1. *Development will be supported where it can demonstrate that it maintains or enhances the existing network of green infrastructure. Proposals that would result in the loss of existing green infrastructure will be resisted unless it can be demonstrated that new opportunities will be provided that mitigates or compensates for this loss and ensures that the ecosystem services of the area are retained.*
2. *Development proposals will be required to contribute to the enhancement of existing biodiversity and should create and manage new habitats where appropriate. The Council will support new development which retains and/or enhances significant features of nature conservation on development sites. The Council will also support development which makes a positive contribution to biodiversity through the creation of green spaces, and linkages between habitats to create local and regional ecological networks.*

Policy 32 - Strategic Policy: The Quality of New Development

- 2.3.6 This Policy focuses on the visual aspects, requiring high-quality architectural and landscape design that complements the local context. The Policy is set out below:

'High quality and inclusive design for all development in the district will be required based on a clear understanding of the local, physical, social, economic, environmental and policy context for development. In particular, development will be expected to:

- 1. Provide an attractive, functional, accessible, safe and adaptable environment;*
- 2. Complement locally distinctive characters and heritage of the district;*
- 3. Contribute a sense of place both in the buildings and spaces themselves and in the way they integrate with their surroundings and the historic landscape in which they sit;*
- 4. Optimise the potential of the site to accommodate development and contribute to the support for suitable complementary facilities and uses; and*
- 5. Help secure a framework of high-quality open spaces which meets the identified needs of the community.*

Policy 33 - Development Principles

- 2.3.7 Sets out cross-cutting design expectations, requires new development to deliver high-quality places that respond positively to their surroundings and integrate well with existing topography and landscape features and provide an appropriate living environment for future occupiers. The Policy is set out below:

In order to conserve and enhance the natural and built environment developments shall be required to:

- 1. Make efficient use of land, and prioritise the use of previously developed land and buildings whilst respecting any constraints that exist;*
- 2. Ensure that it is designed to avoid unacceptable harm to the amenity of occupiers/users of nearby property and land, for example through overlooking or noise, whilst having regard to the sensitivities of surrounding development;*
- 3. Ensure that the scale, massing and appearance of the development is of a high standard of design and layout and where relevant relates sympathetically with the built surroundings, landscape, open spaces and routes within and adjoining the site, including any impact on the skyline and important views;*
- 4. Are locally distinctive in character, respect the character of the surrounding area (including its overall setting, townscape features, views and green corridors) and, where*

available and applicable, take account of the recommendations/policies of the relevant Design Statements and Character Assessments;

5. *Use high standards of building materials, finishes and landscaping; and includes the provision of street furniture and public art where appropriate;*
6. *Presume in favour of the retention of existing important landscape and natural features, for example trees, hedges, banks and watercourses. Development must relate sympathetically to the local landscape and justify and mitigate against any losses that may occur through the development; and,*
7. *Ensure buildings and spaces are orientated to gain maximum benefit from sunlight and passive solar energy, unless this conflicts with the character of the surrounding townscape, landscape or topography where it is of good quality.*

Proposals will also need to take the following into account where relevant:

8. *Incorporate where appropriate convenient, safe and visually attractive areas for the parking of vehicles and cycles, and the storage of bins/recycling facilities without dominating the development or its surroundings;*
9. *Incorporate measures to reduce any actual or perceived opportunities for crime or antisocial behaviour on the site and in the surrounding area; and create visually attractive frontages where adjoining streets and public spaces, including appropriate windows and doors to assist in the informal surveillance of public areas by occupants of the site;*
10. *Contribute to the removal of physical barriers; and,*
11. *Make a clear distinction between the public and private spaces within the site.*

2.4 Rusper Neighbourhood Plan

Parish Policy: Rusper Neighbourhood Development Plan (2018–2031)

- 2.4.1 The Rusper Neighbourhood Plan was formally "made" (adopted) in June 2021 and carries full statutory weight alongside the District Local Plan. Its vision explicitly focuses on "protecting the open aspect and countryside views of Rusper."

Policy RUS3: Design

- 2.4.2 Of relevance to this LVA, proposals for new development, including extensions to existing buildings, must be of the highest design standards, and will be required to reflect the character

and scale of surrounding buildings. Those proposals that are relevant and should be taken into account are given below:

- ii. *The significance of any heritage assets (as shown on the Policy Map) and their settings and how the proposal will sustain and enhance that significance;*
- v. *The retention of the visual and amenity value of mature trees and hedgerows in the Parish, where possible;*
- ix. *The retention of Rusper's dark skies status, in accordance with Policy RUS10 of this Plan (see below)*

Policy RUS5 – Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity

2.4.3 The Neighbourhood Plan will support proposals that protect, manage and enhance the rich natural features that are a key component of the Low Weald landscape which provide habitats for Rusper's diverse species populations.

2.4.4 The Policy states:

- *Development proposals on land that lies within the broad location of the Green Infrastructure Network (as shown on Policy Maps RUS5 A to D) will be required to demonstrate how they enhance habitat connectivity.*
- *Development proposals must ensure their landscape schemes, layouts, access and public open space provision and other amenity requirements contribute to the connectivity, maintenance and improvement of the Network. Proposals should also consider the habitat connectivity provided for by footpaths and bridleways.*
- *Development proposals on land that lies within a Biodiversity Opportunity Area, Rusper Ridge and Ifield Brook (as shown on Policy Map RUS5 E), should enhance biodiversity in accordance with the opportunities identified in Appendix C.*
- *All development proposals must demonstrate a biodiversity net gain for the Parish. Mitigation measures will be sought where any loss would be unavoidable and cause significant harm. Any development with the potential to impact, either individually or in combination, the integrity of any SPA or SAC will be required to undertake a Habitat Regulations Assessment including an Appropriate Assessment if required.'*

2.4.5 The policy seeks to provide a local emphasis to HDPF Policy 31 in respect of promoting biodiversity and aiding movement. The Low Weald National Character Area, in which Rusper

falls, is very important for biodiversity. Any development proposal or windfall will also need to ensure that it accords with the requirements set out in Policy 31 (Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity) of the HDPF in terms of avoiding any adverse impact on the Arun Valley SAC/SPA/RAMSAR and the Mens SAC.

Policy RUS6: Walking, Cycling and Equestrian Routes

- 2.4.6 Development proposals will be supported, provided that, where appropriate to their location, they have regard to the following principles:

- I. If the proposal adjoins a public footpath or bridleway, the development must have regard to maintaining the functionality and rural character of the footpath or bridleway, unless this cannot satisfactorily be achieved, in which case the route must be diverted in a way that remains safe and convenient for users.*
- ii. if a proposal lies in a location that enables a new pedestrian, cycle link and/or bridleway to be created to join an existing public footpath or bridleway, that the layout and access arrangements of the scheme allow for such an improvement, provided the development avoids or minimises the loss of mature trees and hedgerows and use materials that are consistent with a rural location; and*
- iii. access to the Parish by walking, cycling and riding can already be satisfactorily achieved.*

The policy seeks to encourage safe and convenient means of walking, cycling and horse riding through the Parish, when the opportunities of new development arise to make improvements. By doing so it refines Policy 35 of the HDPF in terms of encouraging walking and cycling.

The local community and visitors to the Parish enjoy good access to the local countryside where there is a large network of walks, including the Sussex Border Path which spans across the parish.

Policy RUS10: Dark Skies

- 2.4.7 All development proposals should be designed to minimise the occurrence of light pollution. The Parish Council will expect such schemes to employ energy-efficient forms of lighting that also reduce light scatter and comply with current guidelines established for rural areas by the Institute of Lighting Professionals (ILP).

The requirement for any external lighting should be restricted to areas of specific concern and may include:

- i. Road safety in areas where there is a very specific risk to pedestrians and cyclists*
- ii. Deterring criminal activity*
- iii. Lighting entrances to buildings used after dark*
- iv. Lighting for evening sporting or recreational activities*
- v. Supporting the night-time economy, including lighting for farmers needing to work at night.*

Proposals for all development will be expected to demonstrate how it is intended to prevent light pollution. Information on these measures must be submitted with applications, and where a development would potentially impact on light levels in the area, an appropriate lighting scheme will be secured by planning condition.

Particular locations to be protected from artificial lighting include Rusper Village, Ancient Woodland areas, ponds and lakes areas. Wildlife corridors and stepping stones, along with the majority of the rural area have dark skies that should be protected from harmful light spill. In all proposed developments, factors that will be taken into account when deciding the appropriateness of artificial lighting include: the location, the hours of operation, the quantity of lights proposed, brightness and control, and direction of the beam. Innovative green solutions for appropriate lighting will be encouraged, and residential development should be designed to minimise light pollution, avoiding the use of unscreened roof lights or atria.

Artificial lighting schemes that are likely to be approved will include good designs that:

- Seek innovative green solutions for low-level lighting*
- Reflect the type of area where they will be in operation*
- Minimise brightness and do not over illuminate an area*
- Minimise hours of operation and have automatic PIR sensors and timed cut-off*
- Use light fittings that control the direction of the beam, which should not emit light at angles greater than 70 degrees and avoid any upward light emission*

2.5 Other Relevant Guidance and Policies:

HDC Planning Advice Note: Biodiversity and Green infrastructure (October 2022)

- 2.5.1 The Horsham District Council (HDC) 'Biodiversity and Green Infrastructure Planning Advice Note' provides interim guidance, transparency expectations, and material planning considerations for development applicants. Endorsed on October 19, 2022, it promotes a 10% biodiversity net gain and supports local environmental networks. A BNG report has been produced by Environmental Assessment Services Limited (April 2026 updated July 26) and is submitted alongside this LVA and the landscape strategy drawing which has taken on board the mitigation measures set out in this report.

3 Methodology

3.1 This Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) has been prepared in accordance with the principles set out in the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Third Edition (GLVIA3) (Landscape Institute and IEMA, 2013), specifically adhering to the guidance for non-EIA projects detailed in GLVIA3 Statement of Clarification 1/13.

3.2 As the proposed development is non-EIA, this LVA does not make definitive legal determinations regarding "EIA significance." Instead, it applies professional judgment to evaluate the nature, scale, and level of effect resulting from the proposals. The primary objective is to inform the design process and enable the local planning authority to determine whether the scheme appropriately respects and integrates with its landscape context and visual setting. The nature of any effect can be adverse i.e., negative, beneficial i.e., positive or neutral i.e., neither wholly adverse nor wholly beneficial. If effects are beneficial or neutral these are stated.

Framework & Approach

Assessment Categories & Terminology

3.3 In place of determining EIA significance, this appraisal adopts a structured methodology to identify the overall **Level of Effect**. In accordance with GLVIA3, landscape and visual effects are assessed separately, recognising that they relate to different receptors, whilst applying a consistent assessment framework. The assessment considers the **Sensitivity** of each landscape or visual receptor (Table 1) and the **Magnitude of Change** resulting from the proposed development (Table 2). These are then combined, using professional judgement and the guidance matrix in Table 3, to determine the overall **Level of Effect**.

Nature of Effect:

3.4 All identified levels of effect are further categorized as

- Adverse (harmful to character/amenity),
- Neutral (neither enhances nor harms baseline conditions), or
- Beneficial (enhances or improves landscape quality or visual amenity)

3.5 As recommended in GLVIA3, landscape (elements and character) and visual effects are assessed separately, although the two assessments are closely related and may refer to the same features or elements where these are relevant to both. Unless otherwise stated,

changes to landscape character and visual amenity arising from the proposed development are considered to be permanent and irreversible.

- 3.6 This appraisal considers potential effects one year after completion of the development (including implementation of mitigation measures), at 5 years after completion and 15 years after completion. The assessment is carried out on the basis of winter views as the ‘worst case scenario’, although summer views are also assessed in some cases. Daytime and night-time effects are both assessed.

LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL BASELINE

- 3.7 GLVIA3 Para. 5.3 states that “*landscape baseline studies should record the character of the landscape and the elements, features and aesthetic and perceptual factors which contribute to it. They should also deal with the value attached to the landscape...*”

- GLVIA3 Para. 6.24 states that a baseline report should also combine information on:
- “*the type and relative numbers of people (visual receptors) likely to be affected,*
- *making clear the activities they are likely to be involved in;*
- *the location, nature and characteristics of the chosen representative, specific and illustrative viewpoints, with details of the visual receptors likely to be affected at each;*
- *the nature, composition and characteristics of the existing views experienced at these viewpoints, including direction of view;*
- *the visual characteristics of the existing views, for example, the nature and extent of the skyline, aspects of visual scale and proportion, especially with respect to any particular horizontal or vertical emphasis, and any key foci;*
- *elements, such as landform, buildings or vegetation, which may interrupt, filter or otherwise influence the views. “*

Receptor Sensitivity

- 3.8 GLVIA3, paragraph 5.39 states that “*Landscape receptors need to be assessed firstly in terms of their sensitivity, combining judgements of their susceptibility to the type of change or development proposed and the value attached to the landscape.*”
- 3.9 GLVIA3 Para. 5.40 goes on to describe ‘susceptibility to change’ as “*the ability of the landscape receptor (whether it be the overall character or quality/condition of a particular landscape type*

or area, or an individual element and/or feature, or a particular aesthetic and perceptual aspect) to accommodate the proposed development without undue consequences for the maintenance of the baseline situation and/or the achievement of landscape planning policies and strategies.”

- 3.10 Landscape receptors are those areas, qualities or components of the landscape that would be affected by a proposed development. Visual receptors are those people who would be affected by changes in views or visual amenity at different places as a result of a proposed development.
- 3.11 Factors that will influence professional judgement when assessing the degree to which a particular landscape type or area can accommodate change arising from a particular development, without undue consequences for the maintenance of the baseline situation would typically include:
- the value placed on the landscape;
 - condition or the physical state of the landscape;
 - the nature of existing land uses;
 - the pattern and scale of the landscape;
 - visual enclosure/openness of views, and distribution of visual receptors;
 - the scope for mitigation that would be in keeping with the existing landscape; and
 - the contribution of the receptor to landscape character.
 - the degree to which the particular element or characteristic can be replaced or substituted.
- 3.12 Landscape value is the importance attached to a landscape, sometimes expressing national or local consensus, because of its quality, which may include scenic and/or aesthetic qualities and cultural and other conservation associations. In most cases, this is indicated by the presence or absence of a landscape planning designation such as a National Park indicating a landscape of national value. Many local landscape designations have been phased out in favour of the landscape character approach.
- 3.13 Undesignated areas of the landscape may also be of local value and indications of this are likely to be present in the form of documented, locally valued, cultural / natural heritage and scenic or aesthetic qualities such as ‘wildness’ or the presence of well-recognised viewing

positions. It should be noted that a landscape of high value may not always equate to areas of high landscape quality and that areas of low landscape value may contain areas of higher landscape quality.

3.14 GLVIA3 Para. 5.20 sets out information that will contribute to an understanding of value, including-

- *“Information about areas recognised by statute such as (depending on jurisdiction) National Parks, National Scenic Areas, Areas of Outstanding Beauty;*
- *Information about Heritage Coasts, where relevant;*
- *Local planning documents, which may show the extent of and policies for local planning designations;*
- *Information on the status of individual or groups of features such as, for example, Conservation Areas, listed buildings, Tree Preservation Orders, important hedgerows, cultural heritage elements such as historic landscapes of various forms, archaeological sites of importance and other special historical or cultural heritage sites such as battlefields or historic gardens.*
- *Art and literature, including tourism literature and promotional material such as postcards, which may indicate the value attached to the identity of particular areas (for example ‘Constable Country’ or specially promoted views)*
- *Material on landscapes of local or community interest, such as local green spaces, village greens or allotments.”*

3.15 One of the options for assessing the value of landscapes is provided in GLVIA3 Box 5.1, which sets out the following range of factors that can help in the identification of valued landscapes:-

- *“Landscape quality (condition): A measure of the physical state of the landscape. It may include the extent to which typical character is represented in individual areas, the intactness of the landscape and the condition of individual elements;*
- *Scenic quality: The term used to describe landscapes which appeal primarily to the senses (primarily but not wholly the visual senses);*
- *Rarity: The presence of rare elements or features in the landscape or the presence of a rare Landscape Character Type;*

- *Representativeness: Whether the landscape contains a particular character and/or features or elements, which are considered particularly important examples;*
- *Conservation interests: The presence of features of wildlife, earth science or archaeological or historical and cultural interest can add to the value of a landscape as well as having value in their own right;*
- *Recreation value: Evidence that the landscape is valued for recreational activity where experience of the landscape is important;*
- *Perceptual aspects: A landscape may be valued for its perceptual qualities, notably wildness and/or tranquillity;*
- *Associations: Some landscapes are associated with particular people, such as artists or writers, or events in history that contribute to perceptions of the natural beauty of the area.”*

3.16 Receptor sensitivity is assessed as **High, Medium** or **Low**. For landscape receptors, sensitivity is determined through consideration of landscape susceptibility to the proposed development and landscape value. For visual receptors, sensitivity is determined primarily by the type of receptor, the activity undertaken, and the importance of the view experienced. The assessment criteria are set out in Table 1.

Table 1: Receptor Sensitivity

Criteria		
	Landscape Receptors	Visual Receptors
High	Landscape with important components or of a particularly distinctive character, susceptible to relatively small changes of the type proposed. Typically, a recognised landscape resource of strong landscape structure with distinct features worthy of conservation and valued at a national level. May contain occasional detracting features.	Occupants of residential properties and people engaged in outdoor sporting and active/passive recreational facilities, including users of Public Rights of Way. People at tourist destinations, beauty spots, picnic areas and locations for viewing important landscape features.

Medium	Landscape with relatively ordinary, moderately valued characteristics and positive character that is reasonably tolerant of changes of the type proposed. Value may be expressed through consensus, demonstrable use or non official publications and may include designation at local level. May have some detracting features.	Occupants of residential properties with limited views due to obstruction towards the proposed development. Users of local side roads and country lanes.
Low	A relatively unimportant landscape with few features of value or interest and a weak character. Potentially tolerant of substantial change of the type proposed. Typically of no features worthy of conservation, a weak landscape structure, some evidence of degradation and frequent detracting features.	Indoor receptors whose primary activity is unrelated to the view (e.g. occupants of offices, commercial or industrial premises), together with users of main roads and minor urban roads, who typically experience transient views.

Assessment of Magnitude of Change

Landscape Magnitude of Change

3.17 Landscape effects are defined by the Landscape Institute as “Effects on the landscape as a resource in its own right” (GLVIA3 Glossary).

3.18 Landscape effects are assessed by considering the scale and extent of proposed development, which may include the loss or addition of particular features, changes to landscape quality and changes to landscape character. The main factors to be considered are discussed as follows:

- Changes to landscape elements: the addition of new elements or the removal of existing elements such as trees, vegetation, and buildings and other elements which may be characteristic of the landscape character type;
- Changes to landscape qualities: degradation or erosion of landscape elements and patterns, and perceptual characteristics, particularly those that form key characteristic elements of landscape character types; and

- Changes to landscape character: landscape character may be affected through the incremental effect on characteristic elements, landscape patterns and qualities (including perceptual characteristics) and the cumulative addition of new features, the magnitude of which is sufficient to alter the overall landscape character type of a particular area;

3.19 Examples and further guidance on the evaluation of landscape magnitude of change are provided in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Magnitude of Change

Criteria		
	Landscape	Visual
High	A prominent change that may be large in scale and / or extent and include the loss of key landscape characteristics, or the addition of new features or elements that would become the characteristics of the landscape, changing the overall landscape quality and character.	The proposals form a significant and immediately apparent part of the scene, appearing as a prominent and contrasting feature.
Medium	A noticeable / prominent change of more limited scale and extent including the loss of some key landscape characteristics or elements, or the addition of some new features or elements, that would potentially change the landscape character	Noticeable alteration that is clearly evident but does not fundamentally alter the view.
Low	A noticeable change affecting small areas of landscape character where the proposed scheme would not quite fit into the landform and scale of the landscape or would add new features or elements of limited characterising influence.	Minor changes to the view, affecting a small proportion of the view that may be obliquely viewed or partly screened and/or appearing in the background landscape. May be a transient view obtained over short periods

		and capable of being missed by the casual observer.
Negligible	A change affecting relatively small areas of landscape character where the proposed scheme would largely complement the scale, landform and pattern of the landscape and existing landscape quality would be substantially conserved.	Barely perceptible change with little influence on the receptor.
None	There would be no change to the receptor.	No change

- 3.20 Effective mitigation measures and design may reduce the magnitude of change and the resultant residual effects. The proposed development may have both direct (physical) and indirect effects on the landscape, including effects perceived from outside a landscape character area.

Visual Magnitude of Change

- 3.21 Visual effects are concerned wholly with the effect of the development on views and the general visual amenity. The visual effects are identified for different receptors (people) who will experience the view at their places of residence, during recreational activities, at work, or when travelling through the area. The visual effects may include the following:

- Visual effect: a change to an existing static view, sequential views, or wider visual amenity as a result of development or the loss of particular landscape elements or features already present in the view.
- Cumulative visual effects: the cumulative or incremental visibility of a proposed development may be added to the existing baseline presence of development to yield a combined effect which may or may not be visually significant.

- 3.22 Visual effects are assessed by considering the sensitivity of the visual receptor and the proposed magnitude of change. The main factors to consider are the activity of the receptor

(people) at the viewpoint location, the importance or popularity of the view and / or typical numbers of viewers. Other factors include the location and context of the viewpoint.

3.23 The visual experience from a tourist destination, for example, could involve either the key views to or from the main attraction, or those from the carpark / service area. Whilst views from carparks / service areas may still be experienced by receptors of inherently higher sensitivity, these types of views may not be considered of higher value or sensitivity.

3.24 The magnitude of visual change is described by reference to the following:

- **Scale of Change:** The scale of change in the view (including horizontal and vertical Angle of View affected) is determined by the loss or addition of features in the view and changes in the composition and extent of view affected. This can in part be described objectively by reference to numbers of new objects visible and the horizontal / vertical angle;
- **Contrast:** The degree of contrast or integration of any new features or changes in the landscape, with the existing, or remaining, landscape elements and characteristics in terms of mass, scale, colour, form and texture. Developments which contrast or appear incongruous in terms of colour, scale and form are likely to be more visible and have a higher magnitude of change;
- **Distance:** The proximity and distance from the development can be provided objectively and often provides a strong indicator of magnitude, subject to any intervening screening of the development by landform, vegetation, or buildings;
- **Speed:** The speed at which the development may be viewed will affect how long the view is experienced and the likelihood of the development being particularly noticed by people travelling in cars compared to those who may be walking and able to stop and 'take in' a view;
- **Angle of View:** The angle of view from the main direction of view may be considered in terms of whether the development is experienced directly or more obliquely. Road users are generally more aware of the views in the direction of travel, whilst train passengers are more aware of views perpendicular to their direction of travel. Elevated views are

likely to reveal more of the development, whereas low level views are more likely to be screened by intervening built form and vegetation;

- **Screening:** Development may be wholly or partly screened by landform, vegetation (seasonal) and or buildings. Conversely, open views, particularly from landscapes where this is a characteristic, are likely to experience more of the development;
- **Skyline / Background:** Whether a development would be viewed against the skyline, or a background landscape, may affect the level of contrast and magnitude, for example, skyline developments may appear more noticeable, particularly where they affect open and uninterrupted horizons; and
- **Duration:** The duration of the change, whether temporary or long term, intermittent or continuous, seasonal due to periodic management or leaf fall, is a further factor for consideration.

Overall Level of Effect

- 3.25 The overall **Level of Landscape and Visual Effect** is determined by combining the assessed receptor sensitivity with the magnitude of change. Table 3 provides a guide to the professional judgement applied when determining the overall level of effect. The matrix is intended to assist, rather than replace, professional judgement, and the final assessment reflects the specific characteristics of each receptor and the nature of the proposed development.

Table 3: Level of Landscape and Visual Effect Matrix

Sensitivity	High magnitude	MEDIUM magnitude	LOW magnitude	NEGLIGIBLE magnitude	No change
HIGH	Major	Moderate- Major	Moderate	Minor	Negligible
MEDIUM	Moderate- Major	Moderate	Minor	Negligible	Negligible
LOW	Moderate	Minor	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible

- 3.26 Where the matrix indicates two possible outcomes (e.g. Major or Moderate), professional judgement will be applied to determine the most appropriate level of effect, taking account of

the specific characteristics of the receptor, the nature of the proposed development, and the degree of change.

4 Baseline Conditions

4.1 Landscape Baseline

Introduction

- 4.1.1 This chapter describes the existing landscape baseline against which the potential landscape and visual effects of the proposed development have been assessed. It provides an understanding of the physical, natural and cultural characteristics of the application site and its surrounding landscape, together with the key attributes that contribute to its character, condition and value.
- 4.1.2 The baseline has been established through a combination of desk-based review and site survey, drawing upon published datasets, mapping, aerial photography and relevant landscape character assessments. The information presented within this chapter provides the context for identifying the sensitivity of the landscape resource and evaluating the nature and level of any landscape effects arising from the proposed development.
- 4.1.3 The baseline assessment considers the principal landscape components that influence the *character of the site and its setting, including:*
- *topography;*
 - *geology and soils;*
 - *drainage and hydrology;*
 - *vegetation and land cover;*
 - *land use and land condition;*
 - *historic landscape context;*
 - *statutory and non-statutory landscape and environmental designations; and*
 - *published landscape character assessments at the national, regional and local level.*
- 4.1.4 Together, these components provide an understanding of the landscape framework within which the site is located and the relationship between the site and the surrounding landscape. This information forms the basis for the subsequent assessment of landscape sensitivity and the evaluation of the likely effects of the proposed development on landscape character.
- 4.1.5 The assessment adopts a proportionate approach that reflects the nature of the proposals, comprising the retention of existing residential development, the construction of 10 new

dwelling, and the reorganisation of established equestrian facilities within an existing developed site. Accordingly, the baseline focuses on those landscape characteristics and receptors that are considered relevant to the identification and assessment of likely significant landscape effects.

Topography

- 4.1.6 The application site falls gently from north (102.8m) to south (86m) and west to east. With a significant change in level in the middle of the site where the levels fall away 3.39m from the larger sand school down a bank onto the access road that sweeps round the school providing access for the horses to be taken to the southern paddocks.

Local Geology and Soil Type

- 4.1.7 According to the British Geological Survey (available online), the site lies on Weald Clay Formation-Mudstone. The sedimentary rocks are fluvial, palustrine and shallow marine in origin.

Drainage

- 4.1.8 The soilscape is of slowly permeable seasonally wet slightly acid but base-rich loamy and clayey soils with impeded drainage.

Vegetation and land cover

- 4.1.9 There are no trees protected by TPOs within or adjacent to the site and no notable trees or hedgerows within or adjacent to the site.
- 4.1.10 There are some scrubby trees and shrubs adjacent to the western half of the northern site boundary, however, these are generally of poor quality and/or are unlikely to be effected by the proposed development.
- 4.1.11 There is a line of mature oak, field maple, holly, hornbeam, hawthorn and blackthorn adjacent to the eastern half of the northern boundary. These trees are in fair to good condition and offer some good habitat. This tree line lies outside the site boundary and is to be retained. There are two multi-stem willows on the eastern boundary of the site which will be removed to accommodate the relocated horse walker and new stable block.
- 4.1.12 Existing soft landscaping within the site is limited to short mown grass in high wear areas, and vegetated banks and bunds. Plant diversity within the site is limited to species common to modified grassland and early successional scrub (predominantly bramble) within the area.

Japanese knotweed has been identified within the site for which treatment and control measures will be required in order to prevent the spread of this invasive non-native species.

Land condition

- 4.1.13 As existing, the site has an equestrian / utilitarian character which would be expected within a countryside location.
- 4.1.14 The application site is dominated by hardstanding, particularly the sand schools and access roads and parking areas and buildings, including an area of raised ground to the north-east which is used as outdoor storage yard. Soft landscaping areas are limited to small, isolated patches, boundary vegetation and a heavily grazed paddock within the southeast corner of the site with other grazing paddocks to the south which fall outside of the red line boundary. Existing dwellings are scattered through the site amongst the equestrian buildings and are of varying scales and designs. The northern boundary frontage is contained by 2m high hit and miss timber fencing, behind which is a scrubby vegetated bund with hedgerow species and trees.

Historical context

- 4.1.15 There are no heritage assets within or adjacent to the site. The nearest listed buildings are Porters farmhouse 740m to the southwest and Lipscombe cottage 515m to the west. The site is not within the Conservation area of Rusper.

Statutory and non-statutory designations

- 4.1.16 The site is not covered by any statutory designations, ie National Parks, AONBs/National Landscapes, Conservation Areas, or Green Belt. There are no statutory sites within 1 km of the site identified by Sussex Biodiversity Records Centre (SxBRC).
- 4.1.17 It adjoins ancient woodland (Horsegills wood, Highams Gill H32 Ancient semi natural ghyll woodland which is a Local Wildlife Site (LWS), a non-statutory designated site, recognised for its considerable ecological value. Horsegills Wood, comprises an area of approximately 40.3 hectares of semi-natural woodland and stream located beyond the paddocks 300 m to the south of the site. Similar habitat also lies adjacent to the site, to the north of Capel Road, at Rome Wood which includes the Cowix Gills (deciduous, gill and ancient woodland).

- 4.1.18 As set out in the PEA by EAS Ltd dated April 2026 which accompanies this application, The ‘Surrey Interactive Map’ has been used to identify sites of ecological importance within 1 km of the site. The woodland to the north of the site is identified to part of a Biodiversity Opportunity Area (BOA). Clock House Brickworks located to the northwest of the site is a geological SSSI. There are no other non-statutory designated sites within 1 km of the site.

Landscape character

- 4.1.19 As part of our baseline studies for this LVA we have used a hierarchical review of National, Regional, and Local Landscape Character Assessments (LCAs) to establish baseline context, determine landscape sensitivity, and evaluate potential project effects.

National Landscape Character Studies

National Character Area 121 (Low Weald)

- 4.1.20 The site lies within the National Character Area 121 (Low Weald) a broad, low-lying clay vale that wraps around the northern, western, and southern edges of the High Weald. It is characterized by heavy clay soils, pastoral farming, and dense ancient woodlands
- 4.1.21 Key characteristics of relevance to the site are:

Low Weald - Key Characteristics

- *Broad, low-lying, gently undulating clay vales with outcrops of limestone or sandstone providing local variation.*
- *A generally pastoral landscape*
- *Land use is predominantly agricultural but with urban influences*
- *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.*
- *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.*

- *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.*

Regional Landscape Character Studies

West Sussex County Council Landscape Character Assessment:

- 4.1.22 In 2003, West Sussex carried out an assessment of the landscape character of West Sussex. This resulted in the identification of 42 unique areas and the production of land management guidelines for each character area. The application site lies within the Low Weald Hills Character area (LW4) whose Key Characteristics of relevance to this LVA are:

- Undulating, low and densely wooded ridges running mostly east-west.
- Blocks and strips of interconnecting woodland, including a large number of blocks of ancient woodland.
- Mostly rural character with intricate patchwork of small to medium size pasture fields with a combination of sinuous and straight boundaries.
- Strong pattern of shaws and hedgerows enclosing fields with mature single oaks in hedgerows and fields.
- Network of narrow lanes, sometimes sunken, cross the area with strong definition north south.
- Steep, secretive wooded gills.
- Dispersed settlement pattern of scattered farms, cottages, hamlets and linear villages. Linear ridgetop villages such as Rudgwick and Rusper are set on higher ground. Farm cottages dispersed along lanes.
- Strong historic vernacular of sandstone, half-timber and plaster/brick, tile hanging and weatherboarding.

Local Landscape Character Studies

12 Warnham and Rusper Wooded Ridge

- 4.1.23 Horsham District Council commissioned Chris Blandford Associates to produce an LCA for Horsham District in 2003 to provide a district wide assessment of the landscape character within the borough and identified 32 distinctive character areas.

4.1.24 The site falls within the landscape character area I2 Warnham and Rusper Wooded ridge whose Key Characteristics are described as follows:

- *Undulating Wooded Ridges*
- *Distinctive Escarpment to the north of Horsham*
- *Secretive Wooded Ghyls*
- *Intricate patchwork of small pasture fields*
- *North to south running narrow lanes sunken in places*
- *Linear ridgetop villages and hamlets Farms and cottages dispersed along lanes*
- *Strong historic vernacular of half-timber with plaster/brick, tile hanging and weatherboarding.*
- *Mostly rural character.*

4.1.25 The character assessment follows with a description of the overall character, historic features, biodiversity and key issues, followed by a description of the landscape condition and Sensitivities to change which are listed as follows:

'This areas is characterised by dense woodland overing the low ridges of Weald Clay, with mostly small irregular fields surrounded by large and small woodlands and many shaws/hedgerows. As a result, there is a strong sense of enclosure, and views are confined except from some ridgetops, A distinctive pattern of north to south running lanes cut across the landscape coming narrow and sunken as they descend valley sides, with broad grass verges nd hedgerow boundaries on the ridge top, Despite noise intrusion from Gatwick, the area retains a rural unspoilt character and the historic dispersed settlement pattern is largely intact.'

Landscape Sensitivities to change

'Overall sensitivities to change are high. Despite the high degree of enclosure in many parts of the area some ridgetops and slopes are prominent, and the area has many intrinsic landscape qualities.

Key sensitivities are to:

- *Any large-scale housing commercial development*
- *Cumulative impact of vertical structures on ridge slopes/ridgetops*
- *Small scale incremental change, eg expansion of horse paddocks, erosion of the narrow country lanes.*

Planning and Land Management Guidelines

- *Conserve the rural wooded character of the area.*
- *Large scale development is likely to damage the character, eg small scale field patterns and would be visually prominent.*
- *ensure any small-scale new developments responds to the tradition settlement pattern and local design and building materials.*
- *Consider appropriate traffic management strategies to reduce traffic pressures on the narrow lanes.*
- *Conserve a manage the ridgetop woodland, ghyll woodlands and shaws/hedgerows*
- *Manage field ponds*
- *Encourage better management of horse paddocks.*
- *Restore shaws hedgerows and hedgerow trees I localised areas with intensive arable farmland.'*

4.2 Visual Baseline

Introduction

- 4.2.1 This chapter describes the existing visual baseline for the application site and its surrounding area and provides the basis for the assessment of the likely visual effects of the proposed development. It identifies the nature and extent of existing views, the principal visual receptors that may experience changes in those views, and the factors influencing visibility of the site.
- 4.2.2 The visual baseline has been established through a combination of desk-based analysis and field survey, undertaken to understand the existing visual context of the site and the relationship between the proposed development and surrounding receptors. The assessment considers the influence of landform, vegetation, existing built development, field boundaries and other landscape features that contribute to the degree of visual containment or openness within the study area.
- 4.2.3 In accordance with the principles of *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Third Edition (GLVIA3)*, visual effects are assessed with reference to representative visual receptors. These include people at specific viewpoints and locations that are considered to be representative of the views experienced by wider groups of receptors, rather than an assessment of every individual view. Photographs were taken in a mix of both February (winter views with little leaf cover) and July 2026. (summer views with full leaf cover)

Representative Viewpoints

- 4.2.4 Representative viewpoints have been identified following a site appraisal and review of the surrounding area. The selected viewpoints are considered to provide a representative sample of the range of views available towards the application site from publicly accessible locations and from the principal visual receptor groups. As a result, in accordance with The Landscape Institute's Technical Guidance Note 06/19: Visual Representation of Development Proposals whilst being a receptor group, photographs from private residential properties are not considered to be representative viewpoints as they are not publicly accessible and specific receptors.
- 4.2.5 The viewpoints have been selected to reflect:
- the geographic distribution of potential views within the study area;
 - the range of viewing distances and directions from which the site may be experienced;

- areas where the proposed development has the greatest potential to influence visual amenity;
- the varying sensitivity of different receptor groups; and
- locations that illustrate the degree of visual containment provided by existing landform, vegetation and surrounding development.

4.2.6 Given the contained nature of the site and the limited extent of theoretical visibility, the number of viewpoints has been selected on a proportionate basis. The chosen viewpoints are considered sufficient to represent the principal visual receptors likely to experience changes in views resulting from the proposed development.

Visual Receptors

4.2.7 The principal visual receptors within the study area comprise:

- residents of nearby residential properties;
- users of the local highway network;
- pedestrians, cyclists and equestrians using local roads, lanes and Public Rights of Way;
- recreational users of the surrounding countryside; and
- visitors to publicly accessible locations within the vicinity of the site, where applicable.

4.2.8 The sensitivity of each receptor group varies according to the nature of the activity being undertaken and the importance of the existing view to that activity, in accordance with the methodology set out at chapter 3.

Existing Views

4.2.9 The application site is generally well contained within its immediate landscape setting by a combination of existing buildings, mature trees, hedgerows, woodland and local variations in topography. As a result, views towards the site are typically restricted to relatively short distances and are often filtered or partially screened by intervening vegetation and built form.

4.2.10 Where views are available, they are generally experienced from local roads, Public Rights of Way within the immediate vicinity of the site. Photographs from the nearest residential property to the west, which is 106m away were not considered. Views from the dog boarding facility immediately to the east of the application site were also not considered, the facility includes an indoor barn to exercise dogs and an outdoor exercise area/paddock. There are no footpaths along Capel Road therefore any views are only available from walking in the road or on the verges or from a car.

- 4.2.11 Longer-distance views are limited by the contained nature of the landscape and the influence of existing vegetation and surrounding development. Consequently, visibility of the site is largely confined to the local area, with the proposed development anticipated to be experienced within the context of the existing developed site and established equestrian use.
- 4.2.12 The representative viewpoints described in this chapter provide the basis for assessing the likely changes to visual amenity arising from the proposed development and inform the subsequent evaluation of visual effects presented in this assessment.

Views from Capel Road towards application site

Views looking east and west

- 4.2.13 Views into the site from Capel Road are screened by a new 2m high timber hit and miss fence located on the boundary, in front of a vegetation bund which rises to approximately 1m and is covered by tree and scrubby vegetation. The vehicular entrances consist of solid timber gates and brick piers and wing walls, with further close boarded fencing and hedging which prevent views into the site unless the gates are opened. The tops of the existing buildings on site which lie immediately behind the boundary are visible over the fence, and these buildings will remain. *(Refer to photographs 1-6 Appendix A)*

Views looking south

- 4.2.14 There are no views from the north from publicly accessible viewpoints unless a pedestrian is standing on a thin strip of grass less than a metre wide on the side of the road in front of the woodland opposite the site and given that there is no footpath on either side of the road, pedestrian traffic along this stretch of road is uncommon.

View from PRow No 1492

- 4.2.15 According to the Pre-app response letter (Reference PE/25/0230) the site is considered to be prominent in the landscape due to the site's raised siting and open views available across the valley from the Sussex Border Path / Public Right of Way (PRow) 1492 which runs approximately 300m to the south of the site. *(Refer to Figure 3 Appendix A)*
- 4.2.16 Since September 2023 the footpath has been temporarily closed from its junction with Friday Street (TQ185369) eastwards to High Street (TQ205373) for a distance of 1.4 miles due to partial loss and erosion of the path into the adjacent watercourse, requiring drainage improvements and land stabilization and will remain close until September 2026.

- 4.2.17 It was not possible to walk the path for the purposes of this LVA however photographs were taken as close as possible to the route looking north back towards the site and show views back towards Capel Road, capturing a panoramic view of North Lodge on Capel Road to the west of the application site, with the woodland on the north side of Capel Road visible on the skyline, the grazing paddocks to the south of the application site, the fencing of the sand school and the tops of the barns and existing houses in the distance. (*Refer to Photographs 14-16 Appendix A*)

5 Description of the Proposed Development

Scheme Overview: Site layout, scale, height, massing, materials, and lighting.

- 5.1 The application for which the LVA has been produced is for the comprehensive redevelopment and rationalisation of New Barn Farm comprising the demolition of existing equestrian buildings, the erection of 10 dwellings, construction of replacement equestrian facilities including stables, horse walker and sand school, together with associated access, parking, landscaping, biodiversity enhancements, sustainable drainage infrastructure, engineering operations and all ancillary works.
- 5.2 The proposals have been developed to provide a high-quality residential development whilst retaining and improving the operation of the established equestrian enterprise.
- 5.3 The development comprises the demolition of the existing central stable complex and associated equestrian buildings, together with the redevelopment of this area to provide ten new dwellings with associated private gardens, parking, internal access roads, landscaping and supporting infrastructure. Existing residential properties within the wider site are retained.
- 5.4 The proposed residential development comprises
- Three detached five-bedroom dwellings
 - Two detached four-bedroom dwellings;
 - Three detached two-bedroom chalet dwellings; and
 - Two semi-detached two-bedroom dwellings.
- 5.5 The dwellings have been arranged around a new internal access road to create a coherent layout that provides appropriate parking, private amenity space and landscaping.
- 5.6 As part of the redevelopment, the existing equestrian facilities are relocated to the eastern part of the site. The proposal includes a smaller replacement stable block, (11.6 x 26.5m) horse walker and one sand school (40m x 50m, instead of 2) positioned adjacent to existing grazing land, allowing the equestrian enterprise to continue operating within a more efficient and better organised layout.
- 5.7 Vehicular access to the site will continue to be taken from the existing accesses onto Capel Road but the commercial equestrian business will only use the eastern access, and the residential development use the west, thereby keeping the activities separate.

- 5.8 The proposal introduces a new internal road network serving the proposed dwellings together with visitor parking, turning facilities and pedestrian connections throughout the development. Parking has been designed in accordance with West Sussex County Council parking standards.
- 5.9 The proposed dwellings have been designed to reflect the rural character of the surrounding area through the use of simple building forms, pitched roofs, timber weatherboarding and high-quality external materials. The development provides a varied range of house types whilst maintaining a consistent architectural approach across the site. The submitted elevations illustrate the proposed architectural design.
- 5.10 Landscape proposals form an integral part of the development and include new structural tree planting, native hedgerows, areas of soft landscaping the design of which has been informed by the mitigation measures recommended in this LVA. Existing landscape features are retained where practicable and supplemented with additional planting to strengthen the site's rural setting and improve biodiversity.
- 5.11 The development also incorporates biodiversity enhancement measures including integrated bat boxes, bird boxes and habitat creation, together with sustainable drainage features (water butts and permeable paving) where appropriate. These measures have been informed by the accompanying ecological and environmental assessments by EAS Ltd which include contamination, drainage, noise and other environmental considerations.
- 5.12 The Lighting design strategy, whilst not detailed at this stage, will be informed by the requirement to comply with the Dark skies policy (Policy RUS10: Dark Skies) of the Ruspur Neighbourhood Plan.

Construction Phase: Temporary groundworks, plant equipment, compound areas, and vehicle access.

- 5.13 It is not yet determined how the construction phase will be managed, this will be proposed as part of a condition submission should the application be given planning consent, however the intention will be for the equestrian uses to still be operational while construction of the dwellings is underway, therefore it is likely that the new equestrian facilities will be moved first, leaving the remainder of the site free for redevelopment for housing.

Operational Phase: Long-term site operations, access, and ongoing maintenance.

- 5.14 In the long term, the equestrian business will manage all common parts of the site, with residential properties managing landscaped areas within their own demise. Access will remain via the two access points, with equestrian business operations accessing the facility via the eastern access, and residential visitors and occupants using the western access.

6 Assessment of Landscape Effects

- 6.1 This section considers physical changes to elements such as:
- vegetation (trees, hedgerows, woodland);
 - landform/topography;
 - water features;
 - field boundaries and patterns;
 - land uses and settlement pattern.
- 6.2 The assessment of landscape effects is summarised in the table below followed by an assessment on landscape character types (LCT's) and Landscape Character Areas (LCA's) where effects on openness; tranquillity; rurality; sense of enclosure; scenic quality; settlement pattern; perceptual qualities are considered.
- 6.3 Table 4 below considers the effects of the proposals on the baseline landscape receptors, the sensitivity to and magnitude of change, and the overall level and nature of effect.

Table 4: Assessment of Landscape Effects						
Landscape Receptor	Baseline Conditions	Sensitivity	Magnitude of Change	Overall Level of Effect	Nature of Effect	Assessment Commentary
Direct Effects on Landscape Features / Elements						
Trees and Woodland	Small area of mixed scrub vegetation on Capel Road boundary provides screening from north, east and west. 2 existing trees on eastern side of site contribute little to landscape character. There are existing vegetated gardens within the site associated with the residential properties and areas of modified grassland around the site including the grazing paddocks	Low	Negligible	Negligible	Beneficial	Two trees will be removed, which contribute little visually or to landscape structure, 136 trees are proposed to be planted around the site will enhance landscape character and biodiversity. After 1 year the site will benefit from improvements in root structure and there will be minor effects on the microclimate of the site, after 5 years the roots will have formed a strong network and will reduce runoff, having a beneficial effect on the microclimate, (shade and wind) and after 15 years the root structure will continue to have further effects on run off, the canopy will close and further improve shade and wind. Existing vegetated garden areas will remain, and area increased through creation of new gardens. A traditional orchard will be planted in a communal area within an area of wildflower grassland adding further biodiversity enhancements. Together this will result in a gain of 1.99 habitat units (74.96 % net gain)

Landscape Receptor	Baseline Conditions	Sensitivity	Magnitude of Change	Overall Level of Effect	Nature of Effect	Assessment Commentary
Hedgerows and Field Boundaries	There are no existing linear features (hedgerows, tree lines or watercourse) within or immediately adjacent to the site, Paddocks are contained by timber fencing and are typical of the landscape character associated with an equine business.	Low	Negligible	Negligible	Beneficial	4 new lengths of mixed species native hedgerow will be planted, enhancing biodiversity and providing wildlife corridors across the site, reinforcing boundary features and creating landscape structure adding 0.75 hedgerow units to the BNG score. Over 15 years this will establish robust soil carbon storage, improve hydrological buffering, and local connectivity.
Topography and Landform	Description of existing landform, levels, slopes and relationship between the site and surrounding landscape.	Medium	Medium	Moderate	Neutral	The proposals will utilise the changes in level across the site to assimilate the new residential dwellings into the landscape, adding retaining walls (varying heights) where currently there are banks, to allow the new builds to be cut into the landscape.

Land Use and Field Pattern	Existing land use on site comprises an established mixed-use rural holding of residential and equestrian business operations in a fragmented layout where residential and commercial equestrian activities are interspersed throughout the site.	Low	Negligible	Negligible	Beneficial	The proposal will not change the overall established pattern, scale or function of the landscape, but will be seen to rationalise the existing layout and introduce order and structure within the application boundary reducing the quantum of impermeable surfaces and increasing the quantum of permeable surfaces.
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Effects on Landscape Character						
National Landscape Character Area NCA 121 Low Weald	Generally pastoral landscape, agriculture with urban influences, field boundaries irregular, small field copses. 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.	Medium	Low	Minor	Neutral	The proposal will not change the overall pastoral landscape, or increase the urban influences that already pertain to the site, and the materiality selected for the new buildings will be in keeping with the traditional vernacular of the national character area including weatherboarding.
Regional Landscape Character Type / Area LW4	Mostly rural character, small to medium-size pastures, dispersed settlement pattern, strong vernacular of sandstone, half-timber and plaster brick, tile hanging and weatherboarding.	Medium	Low	Minor	Neutral	The proposal will not change the overall pastoral landscape or increase the urban influences that already pertain to the site, and the materiality selected for the new buildings will be in keeping with the traditional vernacular of the regional character area.

Local Landscape Character area L2 Warnham and Rusper Wooded Ridge	Undulating Wooded Ridges. Secretive Wooded Ghylls. Intricate patchwork of small pasture fields. Strong historic vernacular of half-timber with plaster/brick, tile hanging and weatherboarding. Mostly rural character.	Medium	Low	Minor	Neutral	The proposal will not change the overall pastoral landscape and will not have an effect on the wooded gylls or wooded ridges in the surrounding area out with the application site. The materiality selected for the new buildings will be in keeping with the traditional vernacular of the local character area.
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7 Assessment of Visual Effects

Representative Viewpoint Analysis:

- 7.1 A description of each representative view is provided in Appendix A. Table 4 below considers the effects of the proposals on the baseline visual receptors, the sensitivity to and magnitude of change, and the overall level and nature of effect.
- 7.2 The representative viewpoints have focussed on views from Capel Road and views from the Sussex Border Path to the south. Internal views have been included in Appendix A for information only, they are not assessed as they only effect the applicant and are not publicly accessible.

Receptors Analysis:

- 7.3 Typically views from roads are not considered highly valued, but in this case, the views along Capel Road have been assigned a higher value because of the landscape context in which the road is located, raising the sensitivity to medium from low. There are no footpaths along Capel Road therefore any views are only available from walking in the road or on the verges or from a car and they are fleeting. Road users in the wider area will not experience any changes in view resulting from the proposed development.
- 7.4 Photographs from the nearest residential property to the west, which is 106m away were not considered. Views from the dog boarding facility immediately to the east of the application site were also not considered.

Table 5: Assessment of Visual Effects						
Visual Receptor / Representative Viewpoint	Baseline View	Sensitivity	Magnitude of Change	Overall Level of Effect	Nature of Effect	Assessment Commentary
Viewpoint 1-6:	Receptors: vehicles only, no footpaths on either side of road. Views taken from Capel Road, looking east and west, views limited into site by existing vegetation and boundary fencing and solid gates and walls. Roofs of existing buildings and caravan and trailer visible over boundary fencing	Medium	Low	Minor	Neutral	Existing vegetation in all views will remain, glimpsed view of office building and new 4 bed house over fence line will be available in gap in vegetation and when leaf cover is minimal in winter behind the trees but will be barely visible in summer due to leaf cover.
Viewpoint 14-16: Public Right of Way to the south	Receptors: recreational views from public footpath: (Pedestrians and cyclists). Description of existing recreational views, openness, landscape context and relationship with the site.	High	Low	Moderate	Beneficial	Open long distant views looking north from north of Sussex Border Path PRoW 1492 (footpath currently temporarily closed) New build properties on the south side of the development will be cut into the landscape and screened by a belt of buffer planting to the south of the internal access road consisting of hedge plants and native trees. Existing horse barns in view will be removed. Views will change as built form will be replaced by other built form, and new planting will soften the views of the new buildings.

8 Mitigation & Landscape Enhancement

- 8.1 Primary mitigation comprises measures embedded within the design and layout of the proposed development to respond to the landscape and visual context of the site and assist in the integration of the proposed built form. These measures include the retention of existing vegetation, use of the site's existing topography, appropriate building materials and the incorporation of landscape structure within the development. Secondary mitigation comprises additional measures, including landscape buffers, boundary treatments and soft landscaping, which seek to reduce, filter or minimise potential landscape and visual effects. In addition, a range of landscape and biodiversity enhancements is proposed, which will contribute to the longer-term enhancement of landscape character, habitat connectivity and biodiversity.
- 8.2 Primary mitigation measures include the retention of the mixed-species vegetation along the northern boundary adjacent to Capel Road. Together with the recently erected timber hit-and-miss fencing, this vegetation will provide continued visual filtering and screening of the site from vehicles travelling in both directions along the road. The proposed landform has also been used to create a split-level masterplan, with Plots 8–10 positioned approximately 4 m lower than Plots 5–7 to the north. This approach reduces the apparent scale of the development when viewed from the north and allows residents of Plots 5–7 to benefit from views over the rooftops of Plots 8–10 towards the woodland to the south. The retaining wall forming the terraced development will be constructed using gabion baskets filled with locally sourced stone. A mix of native deciduous trees, shrubs and perennial planting will be established in front of the wall to soften its appearance and assist in integrating the built form into the landscape when viewed northwards from the rear gardens of Plots 8–10.
- 8.3 Landscape enhancements include two principal amenity spaces within the centre of the development. To the west, a traditional orchard will be established using a mix of fruit trees within perennial and wildflower planting. To the east, an informal play area will incorporate natural play equipment, seating and tree planting with evergreen groundcover, creating an attractive and overlooked recreational space for residents. A further area of modified grassland, located south of the existing barn and east of Plot 7, will provide additional opportunities for informal recreation and contribute to the landscape framework of the development.

- 8.4 Secondary mitigation includes a landscape buffer along the southern and western parts of the site to assist in filtering views of the development from the surrounding countryside. The planting will also contribute to the visual setting of the wider countryside, including the landscape experienced from the Sussex Border Path (PRoW 1492), located approximately 350m to the south.
- 8.5 Further secondary mitigation measures include the use of permeable gravel for all new parking areas and vehicular routes, with only a small area of tarmacadam retained at the western entrance to the site. Residential footpaths leading to front doors will be constructed using permeable block paving. Boundary treatments will comprise close-boarded timber fencing to rear gardens to provide privacy, and post-and-rail fencing to front gardens to reflect the rural character of the site. No street lighting is proposed, in accordance with relevant dark skies policies, thereby avoiding unnecessary additional lighting and helping to maintain the existing rural night-time character of the site and its surroundings.
- 8.6 Landscape and biodiversity enhancements across the site include native tree and hedgerow planting, a traditional orchard, wildflower and meadow planting, and the installation of bird and bat boxes. Water butts will also be provided for each property to facilitate rainwater collection for garden irrigation. The proposed planting will strengthen landscape structure, increase habitat connectivity and provide opportunities for ecological and landscape enhancement as it establishes and matures. Collectively, the proposed habitat measures will result in a 74.96% biodiversity net gain.

Residual Effects

- 8.7 Following implementation of the embedded design measures, secondary mitigation and proposed landscape enhancements, the residual landscape and visual effects are expected to reduce as the proposed planting establishes and matures. The retention of existing boundary vegetation, use of the site's topography, and introduction of new structural planting will assist in assimilating the development within the existing landscape framework.
- 8.8 The proposed development will not materially alter the established pattern, scale or function of the wider pastoral landscape. The existing sense of enclosure will be retained, and the development will not result in an appreciable increase in the urbanising influences already present within the site and its immediate surroundings. The proposed built form and associated materials will reflect the traditional vernacular character of the area, further assisting visual integration.

- 8.9 The principal residual effects are therefore anticipated to be associated with the introduction of residential built form and associated infrastructure within the application site, particularly from locations where the development is visible during the initial establishment period of the proposed planting. These effects will be progressively reduced as the proposed trees, hedgerows and other vegetation mature. In the longer term, the enhanced landscape structure, increased vegetation cover and improved habitat connectivity will provide beneficial landscape effects, while the development will remain broadly consistent with the established landscape character and visual qualities of the surrounding area.

9 Summary & Conclusions

9.1 Key Findings – Landscape & Visual Residual Effects

- **Existing landscape structure:** Removal of two trees will have a negligible landscape and visual effect, as they contribute little to the existing landscape structure or visual amenity.
- **Landscape enhancement:** The planting of 136 new trees, alongside retained and expanded garden areas, will strengthen landscape structure, character and biodiversity. Benefits will increase as planting matures over 1, 5 and 15 years.
- **Hedgerow and habitat enhancement:** Four new native mixed-species hedgerows will reinforce site boundaries, provide wildlife corridors and strengthen landscape connectivity. Overall habitat provision will deliver a 74.96% net biodiversity gain (1.99 habitat units).
- **Orchard and wildflower planting:** A new traditional orchard within wildflower grassland will provide additional biodiversity and landscape character benefits.
- **Integration of development:** The proposed dwellings will utilise existing changes in ground levels, with retaining walls allowing buildings to be cut into the landscape, helping to reduce their visual prominence and assimilate the development.
- **Landscape character:** The proposals will not materially alter the established pattern, scale or function of the wider landscape, pastoral character or scenic quality. Existing urban influences will not be increased.
- **Visual character and enclosure:** The existing strong sense of enclosure will be maintained, with no effects on the surrounding wooded gylls or wooded ridges outside the site.
- **Built form and materials:** Building materials, including weatherboarding, will reflect the traditional local and regional vernacular, supporting visual integration with the surrounding landscape.
- **Surface and landscape structure:** The rationalisation of the site layout, reduction in impermeable surfaces and increase in permeable areas will provide additional landscape and environmental benefits.

- **Overall residual effect:** As landscape planting establishes and matures, the proposals are expected to become increasingly well integrated into the existing landscape, with the principal residual effects being minor/negligible adverse effects associated with the development itself, offset by longer-term beneficial effects from planting, habitat creation, landscape structure and visual assimilation.

Policy Compliance Assessment

National Planning Policy Framework

- 9.2 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), December 2024, as amended in February 2025, provides the national policy context for achieving sustainable development through the delivery of well-designed places while protecting and enhancing the natural environment. The current NPPF promotes development which responds positively to local character, makes effective use of land, incorporates high-quality landscaping and protects and enhances biodiversity.
- 9.3 In landscape and visual terms, the proposal demonstrates a positive response to these objectives. The layout has been informed by the existing landform and landscape structure, with the split-level arrangement helping to reduce the apparent scale and prominence of the proposed dwellings. Existing vegetation is retained where possible and supplemented by substantial new landscape planting, including native trees, hedgerows, orchard planting and wildflower/meadow areas.
- 9.4 The proposal also provides a substantial biodiversity enhancement, with a reported biodiversity net gain of 74.96%. The landscape strategy therefore provides both visual mitigation and ecological enhancement, strengthening the green infrastructure framework of the site.
- 9.5 The use of locally appropriate materials, the retention of the rural landscape structure, the absence of street lighting and the provision of a coherent landscape framework further assist in integrating the development into its surroundings.

Conclusion: COMPLIES

- 9.6 The landscape, visual, design and biodiversity characteristics of the proposal are considered to respond positively to the relevant objectives of the NPPF, particularly those relating to well-designed places, local character, landscaping, landscape character and biodiversity enhancement.

HDPF Policy 25 – Strategic Policy: The Natural Environment and Landscape Character

- 9.7 Policy 25 seeks to protect the natural environment and landscape character of Horsham District from inappropriate development and supports proposals which protect, conserve and enhance landscape character, maintain and enhance green infrastructure, and protect and enhance biodiversity.
- 9.8 The proposal has been designed to respond to the established landscape character of the site and its wider setting. The existing pastoral character, landscape pattern and sense of enclosure are retained, while existing vegetation is maintained and reinforced through additional planting.
- 9.9 The proposed development makes use of the existing landform, with the split-level arrangement helping to reduce the perceived scale and visual prominence of the buildings. This approach assists in maintaining the relationship between the site and the surrounding countryside and avoids an unnecessary alteration to the wider landform.
- 9.10 The landscape strategy provides a strengthened green infrastructure framework through new trees, hedgerows, orchard planting and wildflower/meadow areas. These measures will provide additional habitat, reinforce existing landscape structure and improve ecological connectivity.
- 9.11 The proposal therefore provides both landscape and biodiversity enhancement while retaining the principal characteristics of the existing landscape. It is not considered to result in unacceptable harm to the wider landscape character or settlement setting.
- 9.12 The site is not within the South Downs National Park and therefore the specific requirement relating to the setting of the National Park is not directly engaged.

Conclusion: COMPLIES

- 9.13 The proposal protects and enhances the principal landscape characteristics of the site, strengthens green infrastructure and provides significant biodiversity enhancement. The landscape strategy is therefore considered to accord with the relevant requirements of Policy 25.

HDPF Policy 26 – Strategic Policy: Countryside Protection

- 9.14 Policy 26 is of particular relevance because the application site lies outside the defined Built-Up Area Boundary (BUAB). The policy seeks to protect the rural character and undeveloped

nature of the countryside from inappropriate development while recognising that sustainable development of rural areas may be acceptable where the relevant policy criteria are satisfied.

- 9.15 The proposal comprises 10 dwellings within an existing developed site which already accommodates residential development and an established equestrian use. The equestrian use is to be retained. The proposal therefore represents the redevelopment and rationalisation of an existing rural development context rather than the introduction of residential development into an entirely undeveloped countryside location.
- 9.16 The landscape and visual design of the proposal has been developed in response to the existing characteristics of the site. The layout follows the existing landform, with the split-level arrangement reducing the apparent scale of the development. Existing boundary vegetation and landscape features are retained and supplemented by new structural planting.
- 9.17 The proposal would maintain the established sense of enclosure and pastoral character of the site. The existing pattern of trees, hedgerows and field boundaries is retained and strengthened, while the proposed landscape framework will assist in assimilating the development into its surroundings.
- 9.18 The development is therefore not considered to result in a material change to the wider landscape character or pattern of the surrounding countryside. The proposed planting, together with the use of appropriate materials and the absence of street lighting, will further assist in maintaining the rural character and limiting urbanising influences.
- 9.19 The proposal will, however, result in an increase in residential activity on a site outside the BUAB. The question of whether the development constitutes an acceptable form of sustainable rural development, and whether the overall level of activity remains appropriate having regard to the wider planning circumstances, is therefore a matter for consideration within the Planning Statement and overall planning balance.
- 9.20 From a landscape and visual perspective, the proposal is considered capable of conserving and enhancing the key characteristics identified by Policy 26, including the development pattern, tranquillity and sensitivity to change, the pattern of trees, hedgerows and other landscape features, and the existing landform.

Conclusion: PARTIALLY COMPLIES

- 9.21 The proposal is considered to accord with the landscape and visual requirements of Policy 26, including the protection and enhancement of landscape character, landform and landscape

structure. However, because the site is outside the BUAB, the wider planning judgement regarding whether the proposal constitutes appropriate and sustainable rural development, and whether the increase in activity is acceptable in principle, falls outside the scope of this LVA and should be addressed fully within the Planning Statement.

HDPF Policy 29 – Equestrian Development

- 9.22 Policy 29 supports equestrian development where it is appropriately located, proportionate in scale and activity, compatible with its surroundings and, where possible, well related to existing buildings and the bridleway network.
- 9.23 The existing equestrian use of the site is retained as part of the proposal. The development therefore does not seek to introduce an unrelated equestrian use into the countryside. The existing rural and equestrian character of the site is recognised within the proposed layout and landscape strategy.
- 9.24 No significant expansion of the equestrian use is proposed as part of the landscape proposals assessed within this LVA. The retention of existing landscape structure and the introduction of additional planting will assist in maintaining an appropriate relationship between the equestrian use, residential development and surrounding countryside.
- 9.25 Where Policy 29 relates to the provision of new equestrian buildings, the requirement to demonstrate that existing buildings cannot appropriately be re-used should be addressed within the planning and architectural documentation. The LVA is concerned principally with the landscape and visual implications of the retained equestrian use.

Conclusion: COMPLIES

- 9.26 In landscape and visual terms, the retained equestrian use is compatible with the existing rural character of the site and is appropriately integrated within the proposed landscape framework. Any specific justification concerning the re-use of buildings and the operational scale of the equestrian use should be addressed separately within the Planning Statement.

HDPF Policy 31 – Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity

- 9.27 Policy 31 requires development to maintain or enhance existing green infrastructure and to contribute positively to biodiversity through habitat creation, green spaces and linkages between habitats.

- 9.28 The proposal provides a particularly strong response to these requirements. Existing landscape features are retained wherever practicable and are supplemented by new trees, hedgerows, orchard planting and wildflower/meadow areas.
- 9.29 The landscape strategy will strengthen the existing green infrastructure network by improving the continuity of vegetation and providing additional habitat and ecological connectivity across the site. The proposed planting also contributes to the visual integration of the development and therefore provides multiple landscape and ecological functions.
- 9.30 The accompanying Biodiversity Net Gain assessment identifies a biodiversity net gain of 74.96%, substantially exceeding the 10% benchmark referred to within the HDC Biodiversity and Green Infrastructure Planning Advice Note. The landscape strategy has incorporated the mitigation and enhancement measures identified through the ecological assessment.
- 8.31 The proposal therefore provides a substantial net enhancement to the site's biodiversity and green infrastructure value.

Conclusion: COMPLIES

- 9.32 The proposal maintains and enhances existing green infrastructure, provides new habitat and strengthens ecological connectivity. The significant biodiversity net gain and landscape enhancements provide a strong response to the objectives of Policy 31.

HDPF Policy 32 – Strategic Policy: The Quality of New Development

- 9.33 Policy 32 requires high-quality and inclusive design based on an understanding of the local physical, environmental and policy context. It seeks development which complements local character, contributes to a sense of place, integrates successfully with its surroundings and provides high-quality open space.
- 9.34 The proposal has been developed in response to the existing physical and landscape characteristics of the site. The layout makes use of the existing topography and incorporates a split-level approach which reduces the apparent scale of the proposed buildings.
- 9.35 The retention of existing vegetation and introduction of substantial new landscape planting provides a coherent landscape structure and assists in integrating the development into its surroundings. The proposed trees, hedgerows, orchard and meadow/wildflower areas also contribute to the creation of a distinct sense of place.

9.36 The proposed materials are intended to reflect the rural character of the surrounding area, while the landscape treatment provides an appropriate transition between the built development and the surrounding countryside.

9.37 The provision of attractive private amenity spaces and the overall landscape framework further contributes to the quality and functionality of the development.

Conclusion: COMPLIES

9.38 The proposal demonstrates a high-quality landscape and visual response which is informed by the local context, existing landform and rural character. It therefore accords with the relevant landscape and design requirements of Policy 32.

HDPF Policy 33 – Development Principles

9.39 Policy 33 provides a series of cross-cutting development principles relating to efficient use of land, amenity, scale and appearance, local distinctiveness, materials, landscaping and the retention of important landscape features.

9.40 The proposal responds positively to these principles. The layout has been designed around the existing site characteristics and landform, avoiding an unnecessary expansion of development into the surrounding countryside.

9.41 Existing important landscape features, including mature vegetation and established boundary planting, are retained where practicable. New tree and hedgerow planting will reinforce the existing landscape structure and mitigate the visual effects of the proposed development.

9.42 The scale, massing and appearance of the development have been considered in relation to the surrounding landscape. The split-level arrangement responds to the site's topography and reduces the apparent height and prominence of the buildings.

9.43 The use of locally appropriate materials and the proposed landscape framework will further assist in ensuring that the development relates sympathetically to its surroundings.

9.44 The proposal also provides appropriate amenity spaces and a clear distinction between built and landscaped areas, contributing to a coherent and visually attractive development.

Conclusion: COMPLIES

9.45 The proposal retains important landscape features, responds appropriately to topography and landscape character, provides high-quality materials and landscaping, and integrates the

proposed development successfully with its surroundings. The landscape and visual aspects of the proposal are therefore considered to accord with Policy 33.

Rusper Neighbourhood Plan Policy RUS3 – Design

- 9.46 Policy RUS3 requires new development to achieve high design standards and reflect the character and scale of surrounding development. Of particular relevance to this LVA are the requirements relating to heritage assets and their settings, retention of mature trees and hedgerows, and protection of Rusper's dark skies.
- 9.47 The proposal has been designed to reflect the rural character of the site and its surroundings. Existing mature vegetation is retained wherever practicable, with new planting providing additional landscape structure and strengthening the visual relationship between the development and the surrounding countryside.
- 9.48 The proposed landscape treatment, building form and materials have been selected to provide an appropriate response to the local rural character. The use of the existing landform further reduces the apparent scale of the development and assists its integration within the landscape.
- 9.49 The proposal also responds positively to the requirement to retain Rusper's dark skies, with no street lighting proposed. Any necessary external lighting associated with individual dwellings or other buildings should be designed and controlled in accordance with Policy RUS10.

Conclusion: COMPLIES

- 9.50 The proposal provides a high-quality landscape and visual response, retains important mature vegetation and responds positively to the rural character and dark skies of the Parish.

Rusper Neighbourhood Plan Policy RUS5 – Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity

- 9.51 Policy RUS5 seeks to protect, manage and enhance the natural features of the Low Weald landscape and requires development to contribute to habitat connectivity, green infrastructure and biodiversity enhancement.
- 9.52 The proposal provides a strong response to these requirements. Existing vegetation and landscape features are retained and supplemented by new trees, hedgerows, orchard planting and wildflower/meadow areas.
- 9.53 The proposed landscape framework will strengthen habitat connectivity across the site and provide new opportunities for wildlife movement. The incorporation of habitat creation within

the landscape strategy ensures that the landscape proposals perform both visual and ecological functions.

- 9.54 The 74.96% biodiversity net gain identified by the accompanying ecological assessment provides substantial evidence of biodiversity enhancement. The landscape strategy has incorporated the relevant mitigation and enhancement measures arising from the ecological assessment.
- 9.55 The policy also identifies the importance of considering habitat connectivity provided by footpaths and bridleways. The proposed landscape framework should therefore be read alongside the site's relationship with the wider network of rural routes.

Conclusion: COMPLIES

- 9.56 The proposal provides significant landscape and biodiversity enhancement and contributes positively to habitat connectivity and the wider Green Infrastructure Network. It therefore accords with the relevant requirements of Policy RUS5.

Rusper Neighbourhood Plan Policy RUS6 – Walking, Cycling and Equestrian Routes

- 9.57 Policy RUS6 seeks to ensure that development appropriately responds to existing public footpaths and bridleways, protects their rural character and functionality, and takes opportunities to improve connections where appropriate.
- 9.58 The Sussex Border Path is located approximately 350m to the south of the application site and forms part of the wider network of countryside routes within the Parish. Given the separation distance, the proposal does not directly adjoin the Sussex Border Path and therefore the specific requirement relating to the maintenance of the functionality of an adjoining footpath or bridleway is not directly engaged.
- 9.59 The landscape strategy nevertheless provides an appropriate rural landscape setting and avoids creating an urbanising treatment that would be inconsistent with the wider countryside route network.
- 9.60 Where opportunities exist to improve pedestrian, cycling or equestrian connectivity from the site, these should be considered through the final access and layout arrangements. Any such proposals should seek to minimise the loss of mature trees and hedgerows and use materials appropriate to the rural location.

Conclusion: PARTIALLY COMPLIES

- 9.61 The proposal does not directly adjoin the Sussex Border Path and therefore does not give rise to a direct conflict with the principal route-protection requirement of Policy RUS6. However, the final assessment of pedestrian, cycling and equestrian connectivity and any opportunities for new links should be confirmed through the access and transport elements of the application.

Rusper Neighbourhood Plan Policy RUS10 – Dark Skies

- 9.62 Policy RUS10 seeks to minimise light pollution and protect the dark skies characteristic of Rusper's rural environment. It requires development to demonstrate how light pollution will be prevented and encourages lighting which is appropriately controlled in terms of brightness, hours of operation and direction.
- 9.63 The proposal provides a strong response to this policy through the absence of street lighting. This avoids the introduction of a continuous source of artificial illumination and helps retain the existing rural night-time character.
- 9.64 development should be limited to that which is necessary for safety and security and should be designed to minimise upward light spill and unnecessary illumination. Lighting should be appropriately controlled through directional fittings, low brightness, limited hours of operation, sensors and/or timed controls where appropriate.
- 9.65 The absence of street lighting is considered particularly beneficial given the rural location of the site and the importance placed upon dark skies within the Rusper Neighbourhood Plan.

Conclusion: COMPLIES

- 9.66 The proposal provides a strong response to Policy RUS10. Subject to the detailed control of any external lighting through an appropriate lighting strategy and/or planning condition, the development can be designed to avoid harmful light pollution and retain the rural dark-sky character of the Parish.

HDC Biodiversity and Green Infrastructure Planning Advice Note

- 9.67 The HDC Biodiversity and Green Infrastructure Planning Advice Note provides supporting guidance on the protection and enhancement of biodiversity and green infrastructure. The proposal has been informed by the accompanying Biodiversity Net Gain assessment prepared by Environmental Assessment Services Limited, updated in July 2026.

- 9.68 The assessment identifies a biodiversity net gain of 74.96%, representing a substantial enhancement over the 10% benchmark referred to within the Council's guidance. The landscape strategy incorporates the relevant ecological mitigation and enhancement measures, including new trees, hedgerows, orchard planting and wildflower/meadow habitats.
- 9.69 The proposed landscape framework therefore provides a coordinated response to both visual and ecological objectives, ensuring that biodiversity enhancement forms an integral part of the development rather than being treated as a separate mitigation measure.

Conclusion: COMPLIES

- 9.70 The proposal provides a substantial biodiversity enhancement and incorporates ecological mitigation and habitat creation within the overall landscape strategy. It therefore provides a strong response to the relevant objectives of the HDC Biodiversity and Green Infrastructure Planning Advice Note.

Overall Policy Compliance Conclusion

- 9.71 The assessment demonstrates that the proposal provides a strong response to the landscape, visual, design, green infrastructure and biodiversity objectives of national, district and neighbourhood planning policy.
- 9.72 The proposal retains the principal landscape characteristics of the existing site, including its established vegetation, sense of enclosure, pastoral character and relationship with the surrounding countryside. The use of the existing landform and split-level arrangement reduces the apparent scale and visual prominence of the proposed development, while the proposed materials and landscape treatment provide an appropriate response to the rural character of the area.
- 9.73 The landscape strategy will provide substantial enhancement through new trees, hedgerows, orchard planting and wildflower/meadow areas. These measures strengthen landscape structure, improve habitat connectivity and contribute to the integration of the proposed development within the wider countryside. The reported biodiversity net gain of 74.96% is a significant positive component of the proposal.
- 9.74 The absence of street lighting provides a clear response to the dark-sky objectives of the Rusper Neighbourhood Plan, while the retention of mature vegetation and the creation of new

landscape structure support the requirements of Policies RUS3, RUS5 and the relevant HDPF policies.

- 9.75 The principal policy consideration requiring qualification is HDPF Policy 26. The site lies outside the BUAB and the acceptability of the proposed residential development in principle, including the question of whether it represents sustainable rural development and whether the increase in activity is appropriate, is a wider planning judgement. The LVA does not seek to determine that matter. Instead, it demonstrates that, in landscape and visual terms, the proposal can conserve and enhance the key characteristics of the countryside and can be successfully integrated within the existing rural development context.
- 9.76 Subject to the detailed consideration of matters outside the scope of this LVA, particularly the wider planning case under HDPF Policy 26, the proposal is considered to provide a strong level of conformity with the relevant national, district and neighbourhood policies relating to landscape character, visual amenity, design, green infrastructure and biodiversity.
- 9.77 Overall, the landscape and visual evidence demonstrates that the proposal can be successfully assimilated within its rural context and provides substantial opportunities for landscape, green infrastructure and biodiversity enhancement.

Conclusion:

- 9.78 The proposed development has been designed to respond to the landscape and visual context of the site and its surroundings. The retention of existing vegetation, use of the site's existing topography, introduction of new native tree and hedgerow planting, creation of a traditional orchard and areas of wildflower and meadow planting, and use of locally appropriate materials will assist in integrating the proposed development within its landscape setting.
- 9.79 The proposals will retain the established pastoral character and strong sense of enclosure of the site and will not materially alter the wider landscape pattern, scale or function. The use of the existing changes in level to create a split-level layout will assist in reducing the apparent scale of the development, while the proposed landscape buffers will provide additional visual filtering from the surrounding countryside and the Sussex Border Path.
- 9.80 The proposals also provide substantial landscape and biodiversity enhancements. The proposed planting will strengthen existing landscape structure and ecological connectivity, while the biodiversity strategy will deliver a 74.96% biodiversity net gain. These measures are

considered to provide a positive response to policies seeking the protection and enhancement of landscape character, green infrastructure and biodiversity.

- 9.81 The proposed development is therefore considered to respond positively to the landscape, visual and biodiversity objectives of the NPPF, Horsham District Planning Framework Policies 25, 31, 32 and 33, and Rusper Neighbourhood Development Plan Policies RUS3, RUS5 and RUS10. In landscape and visual terms, the proposal is also considered to satisfy the relevant landscape and countryside character requirements of Policy 26, subject to the wider planning considerations applicable to development within the countryside.

Policy Compliance Summary

Policy	LVA Assessment	Conclusion
NPPF – Design and Natural Environment	Strong response to design, landscape character, landscaping and biodiversity objectives	COMPLIES
HDPF Policy 25 – Natural Environment and Landscape Character	Landscape character retained and enhanced; green infrastructure and biodiversity strengthened	COMPLIES
HDPF Policy 26 – Countryside Protection	Landscape and visual criteria addressed, but wider principle of residential development outside the BUAB requires separate planning judgement	PARTIALLY COMPLIES
HDPF Policy 29 – Equestrian Development	Existing equestrian use retained and appropriately integrated within the rural landscape	COMPLIES
HDPF Policy 31 – Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity	Significant habitat creation, connectivity and 74.96% BNG	COMPLIES
HDPF Policy 32 – Quality of New Development	High-quality landscape response, local character and sense of place	COMPLIES

Policy	LVA Assessment	Conclusion
HDPF Policy 33 – Development Principles	Topography, vegetation, landscape character, materials and integration appropriately addressed	COMPLIES
RUS3 – Design	Local character, mature vegetation and dark skies addressed	COMPLIES
RUS5 – Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity	Strong habitat creation, connectivity and biodiversity enhancement	COMPLIES
RUS6 – Walking, Cycling and Equestrian Routes	No direct relationship with adjoining route; wider connectivity requires confirmation	PARTIALLY COMPLIES
RUS10 – Dark Skies	No street lighting proposed; detailed external lighting should be controlled	COMPLIES
HDC Biodiversity and Green Infrastructure Planning Advice Note	74.96% BNG and integrated landscape/ecological enhancement	COMPLIES

9.82 Overall, the landscape and visual assessment demonstrates that the development can be accommodated without unacceptable harm to the established landscape character or visual amenity of the surrounding area. The proposed mitigation and landscape enhancements will further assist in assimilating the development over time, with the benefits of the proposed planting increasing as it establishes and matures.