



FIGURE 78 . Illustrative Masterplan

4 PREDICTED IMPACTS

4.1 TIMESCALE AND NATURE OF EFFECTS

This preliminary visual appraisal is based on a photographic survey of the site with assessment of visual impact and effect on landscape character determined with the use of outline proposals and initial 3D modelling provided by Clague Architects.

The likely effects of the scheme in the operational phase have been considered with further consideration of effects at 15-20 years, at which point the maturity of proposed advanced structural planting will have mitigated early impacts.

Construction phase effects have not been considered at this stage but it is anticipated these will be assessed when detailed layouts and construction phasing are available.

4.2 SCOPE OF STUDY AREA

The study area extends to approximately 2km around the site. This was established following a visibility analysis on site, and with reference to the comprehensive Landscape Appraisals produced in support of the main Chilmington Green development. The selected local views of the site include viewpoints from local PRoWs, Byways and footpaths and Public Roads.

4.3 PREDICTED LIKELY IMPACTS

The predicted impact of the proposed development (see FIGURE 78 for Landscape Masterplan) can be defined by the sensitivity of the landscape and visual receptors. These include:

Views along PRoW Byway 245 and start of footpath AW220 (closed off at time of site visit)

Views 1-7 are taken from the east of the site. The predicted initial impact on views at these locations varies from MAJOR-MODERATE AND ADVERSE to MINOR and NEGLIGIBLE dependant on location. The Proposed Development would change an area of extensively farmed agricultural fields to a medium to low-density mixed-use development set within a landscaped environment. In the longer term when the proposed, extensive structural and advanced planting arrangements have reached early maturity (i.e. 15-20 years growth), adverse effects will be mitigated with a corresponding

reduction in significance of impact in all instances.

Views from the south and from the A28 Ashford Road to the west of the Application Site.

Views from PRowS AW245, AW239 and AW237 which converge on the area of land to the south of listed buildings at Possingham Farm and Lodge Place are generally well screened from the Application Site. Despite views from these locations being of higher sensitivity to those elsewhere along the A28 (due to the importance of preserving the local setting of the listed buildings) impacts are likely to be MINIMAL and of NEUTRAL significance. More open views to the site are available along the A28, partly due to the effects of topography but predominantly due to the paucity of the hedgerow vegetation bordering the site. Impacts are expected to be at greatest, MAJOR MODERATE and ADVERSE significance prior to the implementation of mitigation measures. The Proposed Development allows for extensive tree, hedgerow and parkland style planting which will provide significant mitigation in the longer term.

On occupation and with the maturing of the structural landscape, the Proposed Development when viewed from the A28 will be perceived as a natural extension of Chilmington Green and will benefit from the proposed mitigating measures, containing the development with enhanced boundary planting and softening views by widespread tree planting throughout the site.

Views from elevated areas to the north of Chilmington Green,

Long views from higher ground at Great Chart Ridge will experience impacts of MINIMAL and NEUTRAL significance following the implementation of mitigation measures. The magnitude of impact in views from the ridge is LOW, and the Proposed Development would appear as a minor but natural extension to Chilmington Green.



FIGURE 79. Landscape Strategy and Parameter Plan

4.4 MITIGATION OF IMPACTS

Landscape mitigation for a mixed residential scheme typically considers and addresses:

- The positioning of the proposed built development within proposed green infrastructure, to include retained landscape features and new landscape planting where needed to assist in providing screening and containment.
- Appropriate choices of building form, height, massing and materials to relate to the existing built form.

The specific objectives for the landscape strategy are to (see also FIGURE 79 Landscape Strategy):

- Retain and enhance the existing vegetation and boundary trees on and adjacent to the site where possible and integrate these elements with the masterplan proposals. The Arboricultural Report highlights important trees and hedgerows to be retained, including any protected specimens or groups;
- Mitigate existing open boundaries of the western section of the site with proposed trees, native hedgerow and parkland planting to integrate the proposed development into the surrounding landscape whilst maintaining the impression of buildings set within a greened, sylvan environment;
- Maintain open areas in appropriate locations in order to maximize the contribution of green space to the any proposed development and the wider visual amenity of the site and to assimilate the built form within the emerging urban context to the north and east;
- Maximise opportunities for new habitat creation and wildlife preservation to enhance the site ecology. The accompanying Ecological Report details specific objectives and enhancements of the proposals.
- Protect the visual amenity of existing, adjoining listed properties to the south and west, with a design sensitive to the greened, agricultural character of the building settings;

- Combine the green components of the site with a sustainable drainage system to create an environmental infrastructure that minimises site run off.

In more detail, the landscape layout is designed around an integrated Sustainable urban Drainage System (SuDS) which combines new and existing drainage features. This means that the landscape forms will direct and collect rainwater in areas where it can gradually soak away into the ground without needing to enter the main drainage system. In the detailed scheme, ample zones of permeable hard surfacing will be provided to facilitate this arrangement.

To enhance the existing hedgerow and scrub boundaries, wide structural screening belts will be planted with semi-mature, native trees to create long term greening of the site. This will also provide further screening and softening of the development from immediate and long views.

New hedgerow planting of native varieties of wildlife value will be planted to define and encompass the open public spaces as well as to new car parking areas throughout the development to ensure visual and wildlife interest throughout the Application Site.

The residential open spaces will be landscaped to create active and passive greened settings for the housing that surrounds them. The main planting design for the Communal Areas, together with the building frontages will consist of a mixture of small native trees and cultivars, hedging and low 'tableaux' shrub planting defining the pedestrian spaces and car parking.

For more details, refer to the Landscape Design Statement.

5 MONITORING

A Landscape Management and Maintenance Plan will be developed in line with the detailed design at the appropriate stage. This document should cover a minimum period of five years post establishment and set out best practice guidelines for the establishment and maintenance of retained and proposed landscape features/types e.g. SUDs areas, trees and hedges within the site to ensure that the aims of the 'mitigation by design' strategy for the site are being met.

Any remedial action required to address the failures of landscape features/types should be dealt with at an early stage to ensure the best establishment.

The Management and Maintenance Plan should address the following issues:

- Protection of retained features during construction (e.g. hedges, trees, water courses);
- Management and Maintenance for each landscape feature/ type;
- Monitoring procedures (Rate of Annual Inspections);
- Replacement planting including targets for specific landscape features/types.

The Landscape Management and Maintenance Plan can be secured by a Planning Condition or form part of a Detailed or Reserved Matters Application as appropriate.

6 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

6.1 SUMMARY

This Landscape and Visual Impact Appraisal (LVIA) has been prepared by Neil Tully Associates for the proposed mixed residential development at Possingham Farm Ashford.

The LVIA considers both effects on landscape and effects on visual amenity. A desktop study was undertaken to document existing landscape character assessments, landscape designations, relevant policies as well as location of potential visual receptors in relation to the site. This was followed by a site visit where local land-scape character was assessed against existing written documentation and a series of viewpoints established and documented with photographs. The following is a summary of the findings.

LANDSCAPE EFFECTS

Regarding the landscape character, the site lies within National Landscape Area (LCA) 120 Wealden Greensand with the site set within the developing urban fringe of Ashford. At the local district level the site falls within landscape character area BF5a 'Chilmington Open Arable with Remnants' which is described as being of 'ordinary' quality and of 'medium' to 'low' sensitivity, (Ashford LDF Landscape Character Study, Studio Engleback 2005).

Effects on landscape character would remain localised, considering that:

- a) the new development would be sensitive to the emerging built environment and resulting landscape character, representing a natural extension to the Chilmington Green masterplan.
- b) existing landscape features to the boundary are retained and enhanced wherever possible, as well as
- c) new landscape and ecological features are implemented so that site biodiversity is increased and ex-change between the site and other habitats

in the site's surroundings is improved. This principle is particularly pertinent in respect of the current denuded and degraded nature of the existing hedgerow structure which would be significantly improved by the proposals.

VISUAL EFFECTS

Visual effects were assessed from the A28 to the west, and the Public Rights of Way to the east and south. Additional views from the locally high ground at Great Chart Ridge (which defines the visual envelope in this location). Viewpoints were selected as being most typical of those available from the locally accessible area and conform with those undertaken in respect of the Chilmington Green assessment undertaken in 2012, (Grontmij, 'Chilmington Green Urban Extension: Landscape & Visual Impact Assessment for AAP, February 2012')

Due to the Site's topographical position, existing vegetational cover, and the long term screening that would be provided by the building out of the Chilmington Green permitted development, visual effects will be largely limited to local views only. Closer views from the byway, AW245, and the Ashford Road, A28 would be the most effected but also have excellent potential for the mitigation of effects. Thus, after mitigation such as careful consideration of building heights, sensitive layout design, and enhanced boundary planting has been considered, and structural planting has reached a level of maturity (at around 15-20 years) any remaining effects are expected to reduce to MINIMAL and SLIGHT ADVERSE or NEUTRAL for views along the byway and in worse case, MODERATE and SLIGHT ADVERSE for the more open views from the A28.

CONCLUSION

Overall, the impact of the proposed development on landscape and visual character is expected to be localised and low. The biggest effect would stem from the change of use from extensive (and denuded) agriculture to residential. This change has detrimental effects in the shorter term (such as the building work involved during the construction phase) but also positive effects in the longer term (15 to 20 years after completion) and upon the maturing of the advanced and structural planting, and through the implementation of ecological features, enhancement of existing vegetation and introduction of additional, native species.

The developed site will be viewed as a natural and positive extension to the developing Chilmington Green masterplan, providing a greened and low density setting for travellers approaching Ashford from the south.

APPENDIX 1 - LANDSCAPE CHARACTER APPRAISAL
PUBLISHED DOCUMENTS EXTRACTS



10 LANDSCAPE CHARACTER APPRAISAL

10.1 SUMMARY

Documents referred to include:

- Natural England "National Character, Area profile:
- Landscape Character Assessment (County)
- Landscape Character Assessment (Local

Landscape Character on different administrative levels included are shown in APP TABLE 1.

10.2 NATIONAL LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA

Ashford is set within National Character Area profile: 120. Wealden Greensand (see Figure App 1). In the following, the LCA's key characteristics are presented.

Key characteristics:

- A long, narrow belt of Greensand, typified by scarp-and-dip slope topography, including outcrops of Upper Greensand, Gault Clay and Lower Greensand. The Greensand forms escarpments separated by a clay vale: the overall undulating and organic landform – particularly in the west – gives a sense of intimacy to the landscape. Leith Hill in Surrey is the highest point in south-east England.
- There are extensive areas of ancient mixed woodland of hazel, oak and birch, with some areas having been converted to sweet chestnut coppice in past centuries. These areas reflect the diverse geology, including the distinctive chalk grassland elements within the East Hampshire Hangers Special Area of Conservation (SAC), the wooded commons ('charts') of East Surrey and West Kent, and conifer plantations.
- Semi-natural habitats include: remnant lowland heathland, mostly concentrated in West Sussex, Hampshire and West Surrey; the wetlands associated with the River Arun in West Sussex; and unimproved acid grasslands found in commons, parklands, heathland and other areas of unimproved pasture.
- Fields are predominantly small or medium, in irregular patterns derived from medieval enclosure. Boundaries are formed by hedgerows and shaws, with character and species reflecting the underlying soils. On the clay, hedgerows are dense and species-rich, with occasional standard oaks. On

more acidic soils they generally consist of hawthorn and blackthorn, also with occasional oak trees, and often trimmed low.

- Agricultural land comprises a mosaic of mixed farming, with pasture and arable land set within a wooded framework. There is a fruit-growing orchard belt in Kent and also around Selborne in Hampshire.
- The rural settlement pattern is a mixture of dispersed farmsteads, hamlets and some nucleated villages. Large houses set within extensive parks and gardens are found throughout the area.
- In the east of Kent, the Wealden Greensand has a gentler and more open aspect than in the wooded west. This part of the area is also more marked by development, with the presence of major towns and communication corridors such as the M26, M25 and M20 motorways and railway lines including the Channel Tunnel Rail Link (High Speed 1).
- The local built vernacular includes the use of Greensand, ragstone and, in the west, malmstone, bargate stone, plus dark carrstone patterned in the mortar between stones ('galleting') in Surrey, as well as timber-framing and weatherboarding.
- There are a range of historic landscape features, including field monuments, old military defences, prehistoric tumuli, iron-age hill forts, Roman forts, the Royal Military Canal, small quarries and relics of the iron industry (including hammer ponds). Sunken lanes cut into the sandstone are a historic and characteristic feature, as are older deer parks and more recent 18th-century parklands.
- Surface water is an important feature across the Greensand, with many streams and rivers passing through the NCA: the Western Rother, Wey, Arun, Medway and the Great and East Stour.
- The Greensand ridge meets the coast of Kent between Folkestone Warren and Hythe. While most of the coastal strip is now built up and protected by sea defences, the undeveloped sea cliffs at Copt Point provide important geological exposures, are designated for their nature conservation interest and fall within the Dover-Folkestone Heritage Coast.

TABLE APP 1. Landscape Character on different administrative levels

	NATIONAL	COUNTY	DISTRICT / LOCAL
	South East	Kent	Brentwood
Settlement: Ashford	120 Wealden Greensand	Low Weald	BF5a Chilmington Open Arable with Remnants
Site			

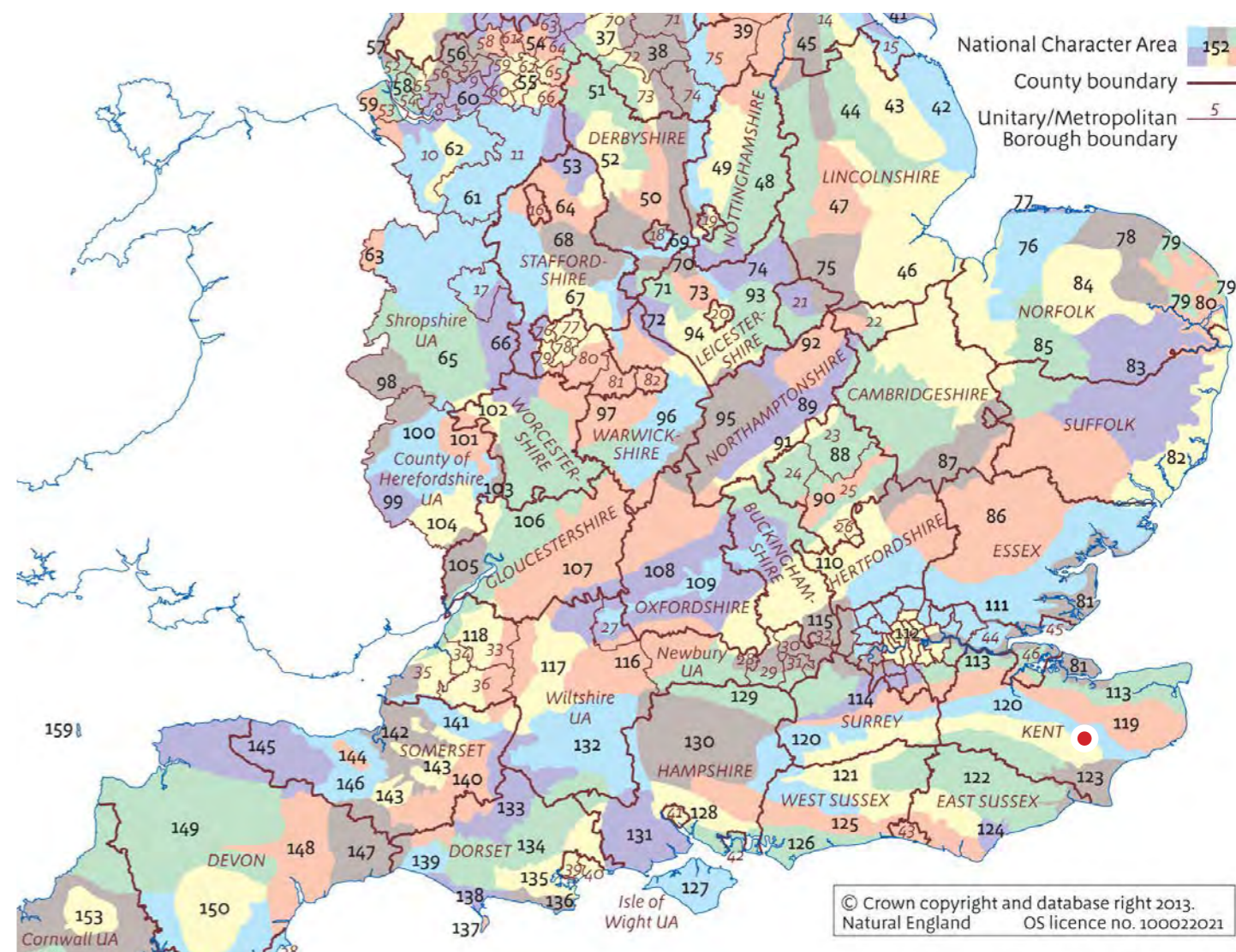


FIGURE APP 1. National Landscape Character Area 126 in the wider context. Source: Natural England.

10.3 COUNTY LANDSCAPE CHARACTER TYPE

This part of Ashford appears to be set in the Kent Landscape Character Area known as Low Weald,

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Open pastoral landscape.
- Small blocks of woodland.
- Small to medium sized pastures.
- Intensively grazed fields separated by thick shaws and trimmed hedges.
- Isolated former hedgerow field trees.
- Brick and ragstone buildings with hanging tiles.
- Timber-frame buildings.
- Wooded greensand scarp is prominent in views.
- Wetlands and standing water (Bough Beech Reservoir)
- Springs, Springholes and ponds on Wealden Clays.

OVERALL LANDSCAPE CHARACTER OBJECTIVE

- To retain the mosaic of small irregular fields and woodlands within a strong network of hedges and hedgerow trees.

10.4 LOCAL/DISTRICT/LANDSCAPE CHARACTER TYPE

The site is identified in the Ashford Landscape Character SPD (adopted April 2011) as lying within the Bethersden Farmlands Landscape Character Area in the District Landscape Type BF5 “Chilmington Open Arable”, compartment E32, (reference: Ashford Local Development Framework, Landscape Character study, Studio Engleback (November 2005); Bethersden, Farmlands, p28), and exhibits the following key characteristics:

- Large open prairie style arable fields with gentle slopes rising to Coleman’s Kitchen Wood
- Extensive loss of hedgerows, particularly between Chilmington Green and Long Length leaving remnant hedgerow trees isolated in the middle of vast fields. In other places there are continuous ancient laid hedges with oak, however this is rare.
- Pollarded willows along the B-road near Great Chilmington. Willow Wood is a remnant hornbeam coppice isolated within the large fields.
- The area is crisscrossed by a network of footpaths – the Greensand Way and two byways.
- Expansive views, especially around Coleman’s

Kitchen Wood but these are contained in proximity to Long Length.

The Engleback study notes the condition of the landscape as being of a “unified pattern of elements of vast open fields with ditches – an intensively farmed landscape which has undergone substantial hedgerow loss and removal of wildlife habitats and corridors”.

At a more detailed scale, certain District Landscape Types were considered in the study to be sufficiently distinctive in character to be separately described and assessed. These New District Landscape Types categorize the site as lying within ‘BF5a Chilmington Open Arable with Remnants’:

- Relatively flat large open prairie style arable fields;
- Excessive loss of hedgerows and fragmentation of woodlands, particularly towards Chilmington Green Road, leaving fragments of hedgerows and trees isolated in vast fields;
- Pollarded willows along Chilmington Green Road;
- Willow Wood is remnant hornbeam coppice isolated within large fields;
- Area is crisscrossed by a network of footpaths, including a byway;
- Area has a distinctive character, but weak sense of place and continuity;
- Remnants of historic landscape character, but degraded / disturbed: sinuous drainage, woodland, hedgerows / historic boundaries.

Quality: Ordinary

Sensitivity: Medium - low

In greater detail, the study concludes the “area has a distinctive character in terms of the level of wide-open fields devoid of hedgerows with expansive views but has a weak sense of place and continuity. It is highly visible with long distance views especially on the gentle slopes towards Coleman’s Kitchen Wood”.

The 2005 policy recommendations for the area (including the main part of Chilmington Green which has subsequently been extensively developed as a major urban extension to Ashford), suggests restoration and create of landscape components, including restoration of hedgerows, extension and creation of new woodlands to link to Old Saxon Shoreline and to create a green grid, incorporating gently sloping visible land towards Coleman’s Kitchen Wood.

Opportunities

The relatively impoverished condition of the agricultural landscape provides many opportunities for enhancement, both visually and in terms of biodiversity. The flat and open landscape character has permitted the architects to design a rich and varied urban layout, intersected by greenways and surrounded by proposed and enhanced existing landscape features. A range of new habitat types will be created, ranging from wetlands associated with the SuDS network

to wide expanses of wildflower meadows throughout the interconnected green structure. The proposed landscape themes are examined in more detail in the Landscape Design Statement.

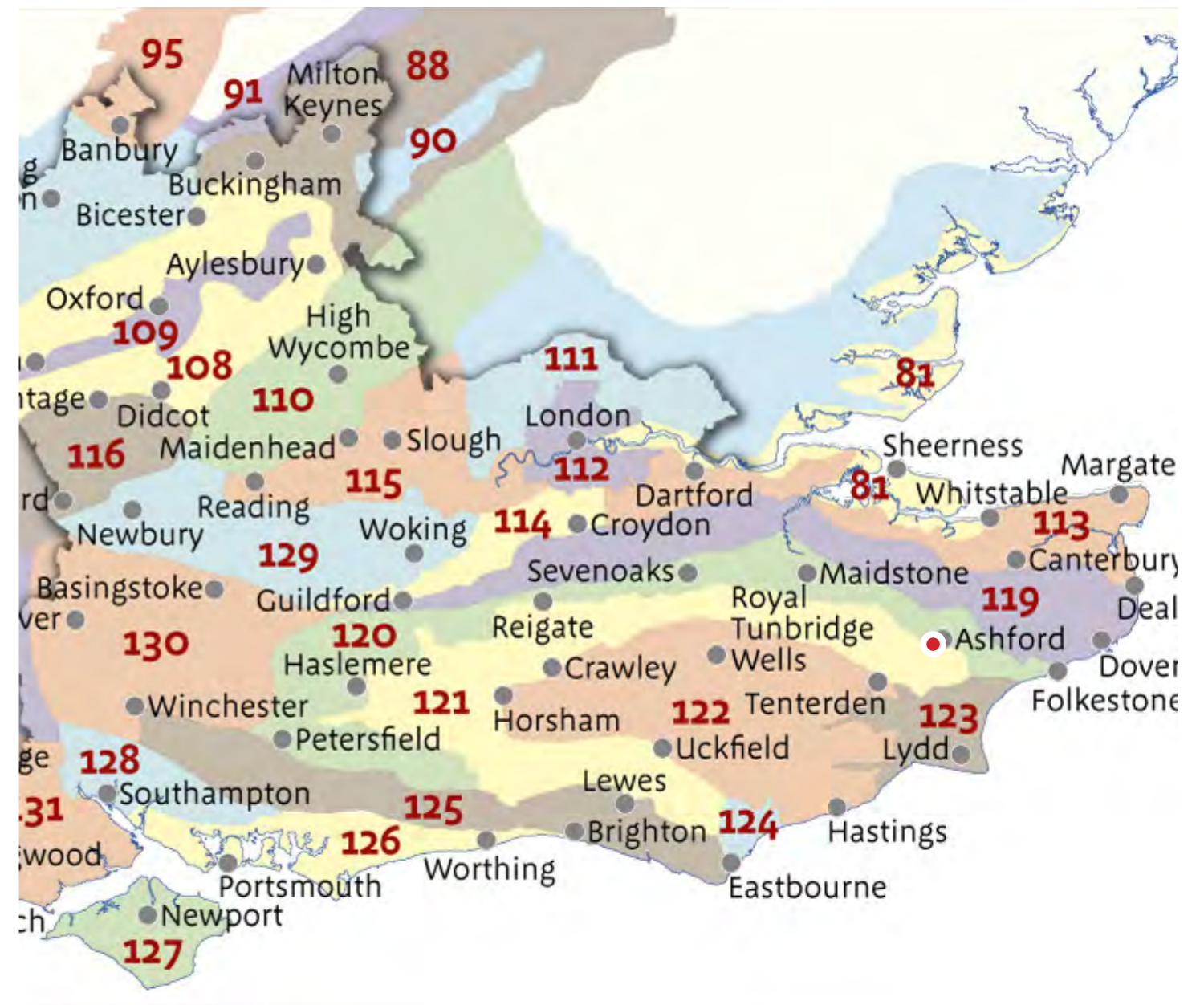


FIGURE APP 2. South East England National Character Areas, Source: gov.uk

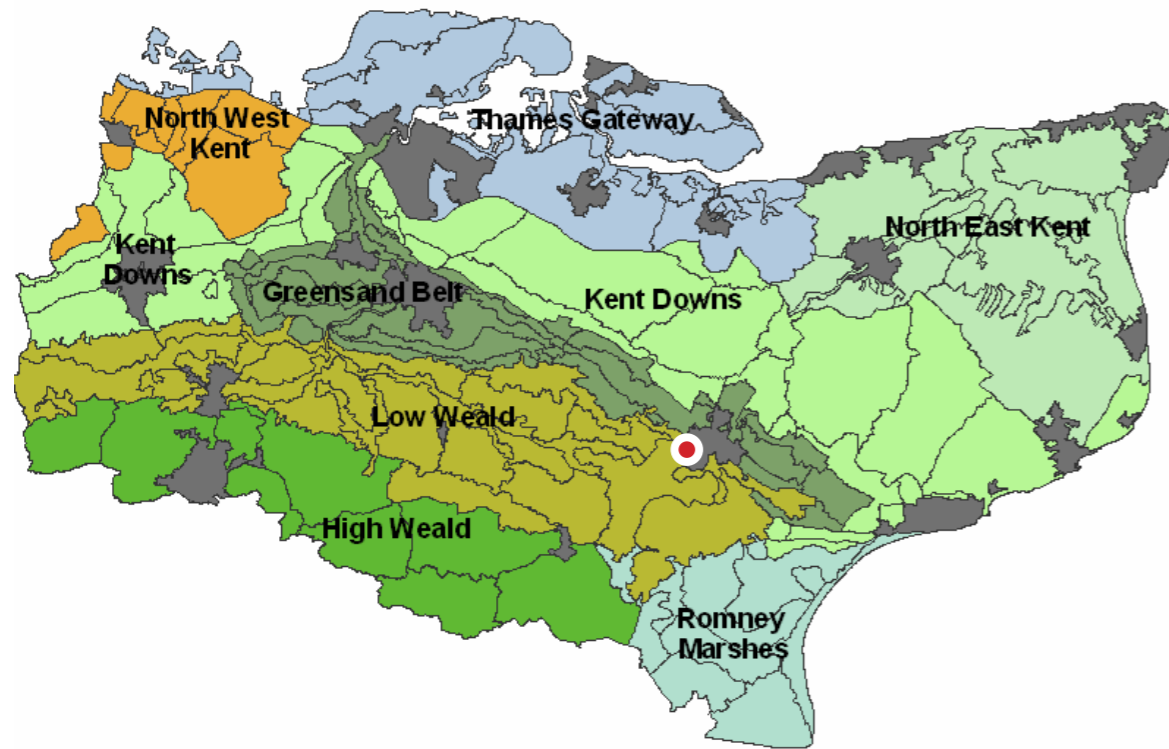
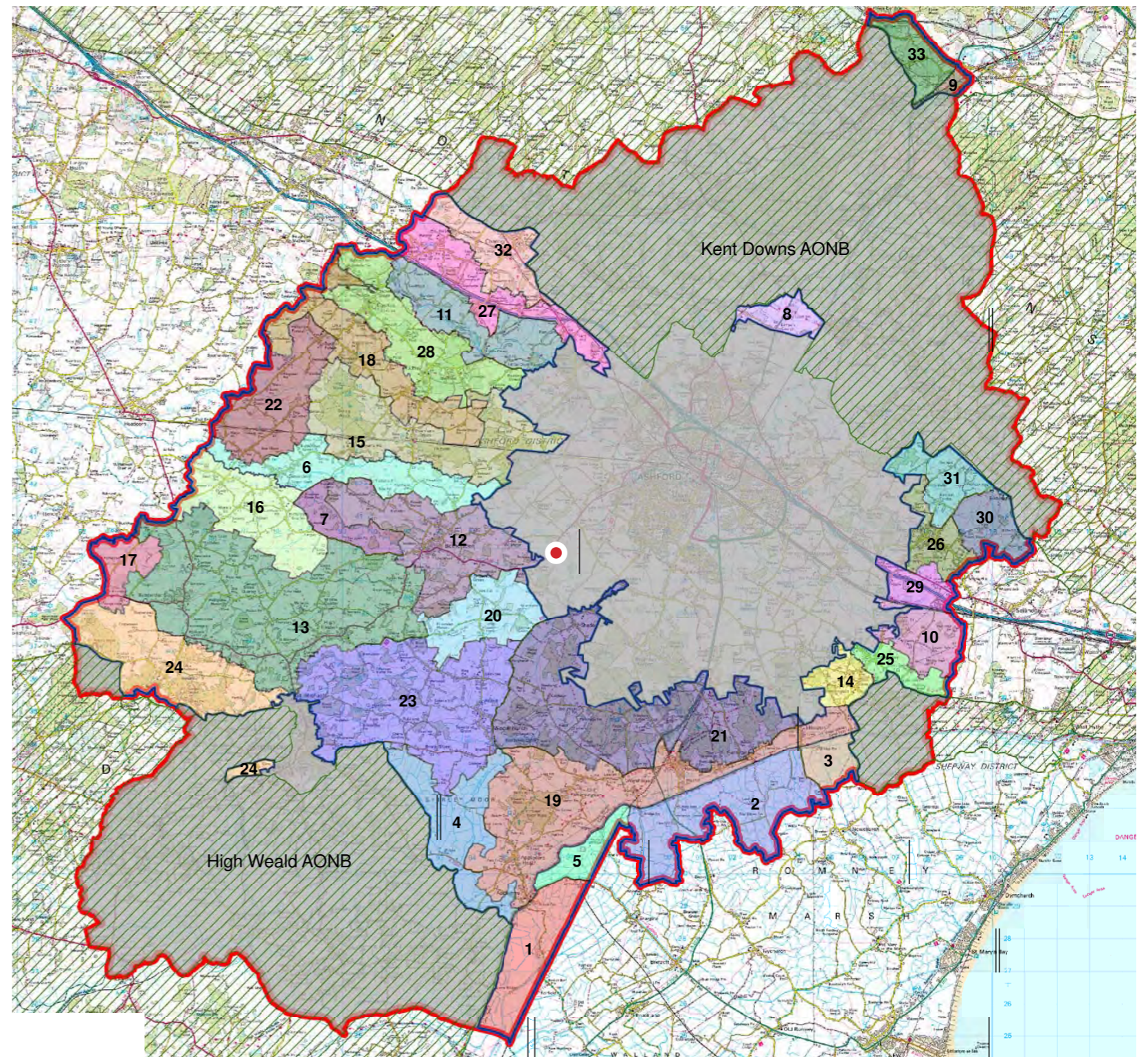


FIGURE APP 3. Kent Character Areas, Source: tmbc.gov.uk



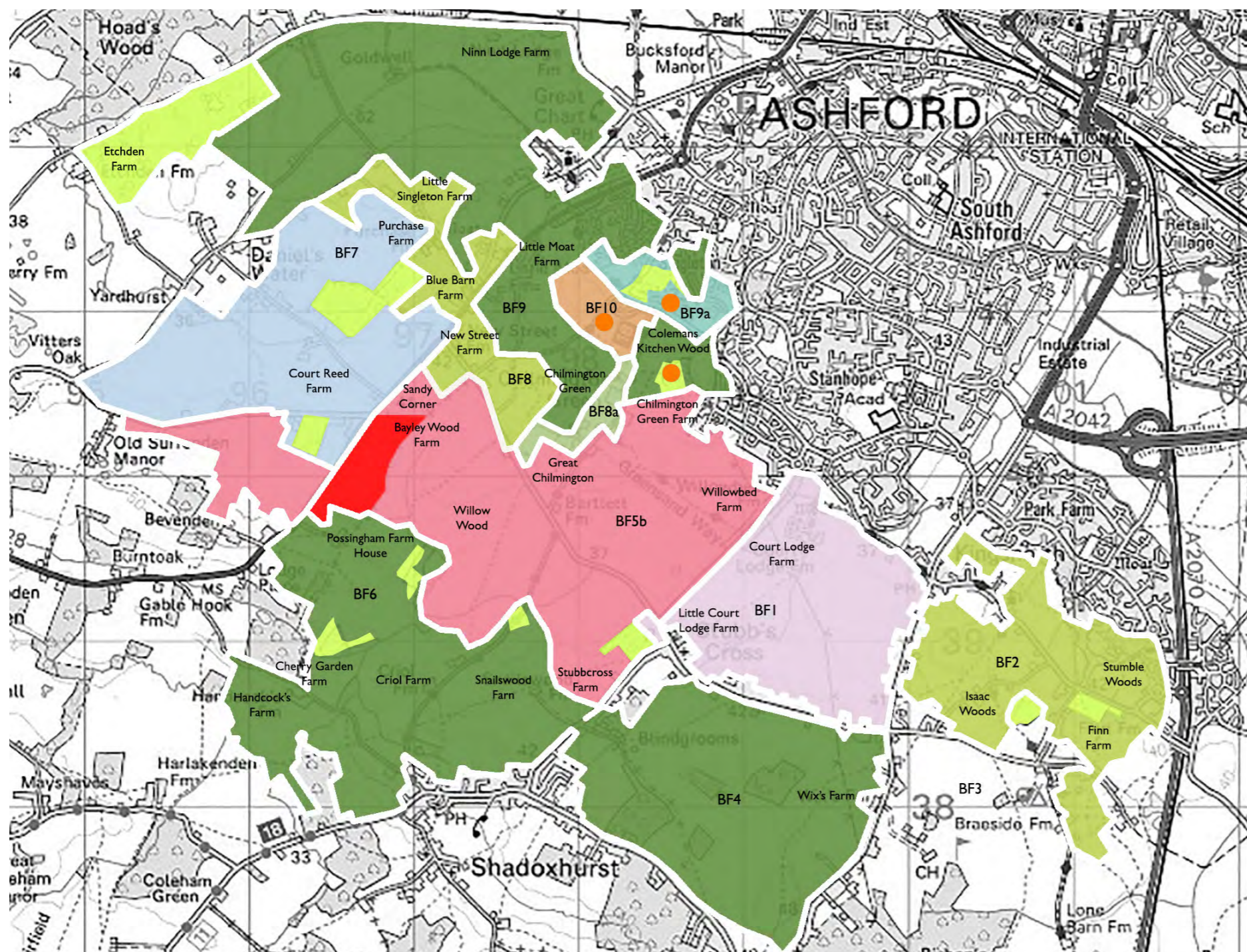
Legend

- Ashford Study Area
- Ashford Borough Boundary
- Non Study and Urban Areas
- Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Landscape Character Areas

- | | | | | | | |
|--|--|--|---|--|--|--|
| 1 Highknock Arable Marshlands | 6 Beult Valley Farmlands | 11 Great Stour Valley | 16 Haffenden Quarter Farmlands | 21 Shadoxhurst Wooded Farmlands | 26 Brabourne Lees Hilly Farmlands | 31 Brabourne Farmlands |
| 2 Romney Marsh Mixed Farmlands | 7 Beult Valley Wooded Farmlands | 12 Bethersden Mixed Farmlands | 17 Hareplain Farmlands | 22 Smarden Bell Farmlands | 27 Charing Heath Farmlands | 32 Charing Farmlands |
| 3 Royal Military Marshlands | 8 Boughton Lees Horticultural Valley | 13 Biddenden and High Halden Farmlands | 18 Mundy Bois Mixed Farmlands | 23 Woodchurch Undulating Farmlands | 28 Egerton - Pluckley Greensand Fruit Belt | 33 Old Wives Lees Orchards |
| 4 Shirley Moor Arable Lands | 9 Stour Valley Shalmsford | 14 Bonnington Wooded Farmlands | 19 Old Romney Shoreline Settlements | 24 Clapper Hill Wooded Farmlands | 29 Evegate Mixed Farmlands | |
| 5 The Dowels Marshland Pasture | 10 East Stour Valley | 15 Dering Wooded Farmlands | 20 Plurenden Arable Plateau | 25 Aldington Ridgeline | 30 Brabourne Arable Farmlands | |

FIGURE APP 4. Ashford Landscape Character Areas, , Source: ashford.gov.uk



- KEY
- Hilltop/ scenic views
 - █ Site location
 - BF5a Chilmington Open Arable with remnants
 - BF5b Chilmington Open Arable
 - BF6 North Shadoxhurst Bocage
 - BF8 Goldwell Lane Farmsteads
 - BF8a Chilmington Green Hamlet
 - BF9 Great Chart Farmlands
 - BF9a Ashford Community Woodland
 - BF10 Mock Lane Knoll

FIGURE APP 5. EXISTING LANDSCAPE CHARACTER based on Ashford Landscape Character Study Assessment & Data Set: Bethersden Farmlands

APPENDIX 2 - METHODOLOGY



11 METHODOLOGY

11.1 STRUCTURE

The methodology has three key stages, which are described in more detail in subsequent sections:

BASELINE. Includes the gathering of documented information; scoping of the appraisal and agreement of that scope with the client, relevant consultees and the local planning authority.

DESIGN. Review of initial design / options and mitigation options.

APPRAISAL. Includes an appraisal of the landscape and visual effects of the full scheme, requiring site based work and the completion of a report and supporting graphics.

The appraisal method draws upon the established Countryside Agency methodology (Landscape Character Appraisal Guidance, 2002) and other recognised guidelines, in particular the Institute of Environmental Management and Appraisal and the Landscape Institutes's Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Appraisal, third edition 2013 (GLVIA).

The significance of an effect on a landscape or visual receptor is a function of the sensitivity of the receptor to change and the magnitude of change caused by the proposed development. This is assessed for both landscape receptors such as designated areas and landscape character areas, and for visual receptors (people) at viewpoints.

11.2 BASELINE

The baseline study establishes the relevant landscape planning policy context, the scope of the appraisal and the key receptors. It includes the following key activities:

- A desk study of relevant current national and local planning policy for the site and surrounding area.
- A desk study of nationally and locally designated landscapes for the site and surrounding area.
- A desk study of existing landscape character appraisals for the site and surrounding area, at national, regional and local level.
- Where appropriate or necessary, a Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) study to assist in identifying potential viewpoints and indicate the potential visibility of the proposed development, and therefore scope of receptors likely to be affected.

- Where appropriate, the identification of and agreement upon, through consultation, the number and location of representative viewpoints within the study area, at which visual impacts will be assessed.
- Identification of the range of other visual receptors (public rights of way, settlements and residential properties) within the study area.
- Definition of the sensitivity of the landscape and visual receptors.

11.3 DESIGN

The Landscape Architect will play a leading role in the site design. The design and appraisal stages are necessarily iterative, with stages overlapping in parts.

11.4 APPRAISAL

The appraisal of effects includes further work covering the following key activities:

- An appraisal of the magnitude and significance of effects upon landscape character, landscape designations and the existing visual environment arising from the proposed development during construction and operational stages. If mitigation planting is proposed, which will help to integrate the development into the landscape over time, effects during operation are assessed at years 1 and 15. If such planting is not proposed effects are only assessed at year 1.

11.5 PREPARATION AND USE OF ZTVS

ZTVs are used to inform the field study appraisal work, providing additional detail and accuracy to observations made on site. ZTVs show the maximum theoretical visibility taking into account topography and principal woodlands and settlements, which are included in the model at the heights indicated. The model does not take into account every localised feature and thus gives an exaggerated impression of the extent of visibility. As a result, there may be areas which, although shown as zones of visibility on the ZTV, are screened or filtered by buildings, banks, walls, and/or vegetation, which would block views of the proposed development.

TABLE APP 2. Sensitivity of Landscape Receptors

SENSITIVITY	RECEPTOR TYPE	DEFINITION (EXAMPLES)
High	Landscape character area/ type	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Particularly distinctive, positive and coherent landscape character with high aesthetic appeal • Intact landscape structure and individual elements in good condition, absence of intrusive or detracting elements. • Overall low capacity to tolerate change of a specific type and scale without significant disruption to individual valued features, or the combination of landscape elements, that contribute to distinctive character.
	Designated landscape	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nationally designated landscape such as National Park, AONB. (Heritage Coasts, which though nationally designated, are protected only via local plan policy would have High-Medium value and sensitivity). • Locally designated landscape (e.g. AGLV), where the reasons for designation are well represented would have High-Medium value and sensitivity. • Overall low capacity to tolerate change without significant disruption to individual valued features, or the particular qualities of the landscape that contribute to the reasons for designation.
Medium	Landscape character area/ type	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A generally positive character but with some degradation or erosion of features resulting in areas of mixed character and condition. • Presence of some intrusive elements that detract from the distinctive character of the landscape. • Moderate capacity to accommodate some change of a particular type and scale without loss of essential character and local distinctiveness.
	Designated landscape	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Locally designated landscape (e.g. AGLV), where character and quality are partially degraded (Medium). • Moderate capacity to accommodate some change of a particular type and scale without significant disruption to individual valued features, or the particular qualities of the landscape that contribute to the reasons for designation.
Low	Landscape character area/ type	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lacks a coherent or distinctive positive character with some degradation or erosion of features resulting in areas of mixed character and poor condition. • Presence of intrusive elements that detract from the distinctive character of the landscape. • A landscape type or area which can potentially tolerate substantial change of a particular type and scale without unacceptable adverse effects on its character.
	Designated landscape	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A landscape which is not designated, nor of recognized importance, and is of limited value as a local landscape resource. • A landscape type or area which can potentially tolerate substantial change of a particular type and scale without unacceptable adverse effects on its value as a landscape resource.

11.6 APPRAISAL OF LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY AND MAGNITUDE

LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY

Sensitivity of landscape character areas or types is influenced by their characteristics and is frequently considered within documented landscape character appraisals and capacity studies. The sensitivity of designated landscapes is assessed based on their relative value as indicated by their designation.

A description of how sensitivity is assessed for landscape character areas or types and for designated landscapes is included below (TABLE APP1)

MAGNITUDE OF EFFECT ON LANDSCAPE RESOURCES

Magnitude of effect identifies the degree of change to the distinctive elements, features or characteristics of the landscape arising from the development and how this affects its distinctive character and qualities and its sense of place. It is rated as shown in the table below (TABLE APP 2).

11.7 APPRAISAL OF VISUAL SENSITIVITY AND MAGNITUDE

Significance of visual effect is assessed for the selected representative viewpoints. General overall effects on public rights of way within the locality are also described. An appraisal is made to identify whether any dwellings would be unacceptably harmed by views of the proposed development. This is described in more detail below.

Representative viewpoints for the appraisal of visual effects have been identified in the baseline appraisal. These are at publicly accessible locations such as roads and public rights of way and public open space. The sensitivity of receptor, magnitude of change to the view, and the significance of the impact on the receptor are assessed for each representative viewpoint.

Private dwellings Recent public inquiry decisions have determined that effects on private residences are not a material consideration unless they will be affected by views of the development to the extent that views of the development would be 'overwhelming'. The basis for such decision is clearly described in the Inspector's decision for Shooters Bottom Farm wind farm (APP/Q3305/A/05/1181087), as follows:

"The planning system does not exist to protect the private interests of one person against the activities of another. Rather, it functions to regulate the use and development of land in the public interest. In the case of living conditions, public and private interest may coincide where the impact of a specific development is such as to significantly affect the attractiveness of a particular dwelling as a place to live, but only if this was in a way that would be perceived by the community at large rather than, for example, in consequence of the disposition of a particular existing householder towards the generic type of development proposed."

For this reason, sensitivity, magnitude and significance are not assessed in relation to views from residential properties, but an appraisal is made to identify whether any dwellings would be unacceptably harmed by views of the proposed development. The appraisal is limited to dwellings where, in theory, due to their close proximity, large proportions of their views could potentially be occupied by a proposed development.

Public Rights of Way Effects on the visual amenity of Public Rights of Way (PROW) in the vicinity of the site are assessed.

SENSITIVITY OF VISUAL RECEPTORS

The sensitivity of visual receptors is primarily dependent upon:

- The location i.e. proximity and context of the viewpoint;
- The expectations and occupation or activity of the receptor, including awareness of their surroundings and duration of viewing opportunity, whether prolonged or intermittent;
- The importance of the view, which may be determined with respect to its popularity or numbers of people affected, its appearance in guidebooks, on tourist maps, and in the facilities provided for its enjoyment and references to it in literature or art.

A wide variety of visual receptors can reasonably be anticipated to be affected by a proposed solar farm development. The range of visual receptors will include pedestrians, and recreational users of the surrounding landscape such as walkers, cyclists and those otherwise engaged in the pursuit of leisure activities within the visual

envelope of the site, local residents, motorists, those working outdoors and other workers. All categories of receptors can potentially be affected to a greater or lesser degree by a solar farm development. The four main visual receptor groups are considered in more detail below under the headings of residents, workers, the travelling public, and visitors.

I) RESIDENTS

Local residents tend to have a higher level of sensitivity to changes in their landscape and visual environment than those passing through. For residents, the most important views are those from their homes, although they will also be sensitive to other views such as those experienced when travelling to work or other local destinations. However, it is these latter views, from public areas nearby houses that are of relevance to the main body of the visual impact appraisal (appraisal of effects from the representative viewpoints).

II) WORKERS

Workers are generally less sensitive to effects as they are focussed on the tasks they are carrying out. Indoor workers generally have a Low sensitivity, and outdoor workers, such as farmers and those offering outdoor pursuits are considered to have a Low to Medium sensitivity.

III) THE TRAVELLING PUBLIC

This category of visual receptor group overlaps to a degree with the other categories in that it embraces local residents, workers and those who come to visit the area. This group of visual receptors will include the following:

Motorists - For major trunk routes and motorways, the sensitivity of users will be Low, as they will be travelling at speed and will be primarily focussed on achieving their destination. Users of other A-roads will have a Low to Medium sensitivity, unless these

TABLE APP 3 . Magnitude of Effect on Landscape Resources

SENSITIVITY	RECEPTOR TYPE	DEFINITION (EXAMPLES)
High	Landscape character area/type	Total or major alteration to key elements, features or characteristics of the local or wider landscape resource, such that post development the baseline situation will be fundamentally changed.
	Designated landscape	Total or major alteration to key elements, features or characteristics of the designated landscape, such that post development the reasons for designation will be fundamentally affected.
Medium	Landscape character area/type	Partial alteration to key to key elements, features or characteristics of the local or wider landscape resource, such that post development the baseline situation will be noticeably changed.
	Designated landscape	Partial alteration to key elements, features or characteristics of the landscape designation, such that post development the reasons for designation will be noticeably affected.
Low	Landscape character area/type	Minor alteration to key to key elements, features or characteristics of the local or wider landscape resource, such that post development the baseline situation will be largely unchanged, despite discernible differences.
	Designated landscape	Minor alteration to key to key elements, features or characteristics of the landscape designation, such that post development the reasons for designation will be largely unaffected.
Negligible	Landscape character area/type	Very minor alteration to key to key elements, features or characteristics of the local or wider landscape resource, such that post development the baseline situation will be fundamentally unchanged with barely perceptible differences.

are particularly scenic or slow routes, in which case the sensitivity may be assessed as Medium. The users of local roads will have a Medium sensitivity.

Cyclists and footpath users - These groups are addressed under the heading of visitors as they are generally less concerned with the object of reaching their destination than with the enjoyment of being outside and enjoying the landscape and available views.

IV) VISITORS

This category includes several visual receptor groups, each with different objectives and levels of sensitivity to any change in the fabric or character of the landscape and views arising from the proposed development. This group includes those who are mainly concerned with enjoyment of the outdoor environment but also those who may pursue indoor recreational pursuits and is anticipated to include the following (arranged in decreasing sensitivity):

- Those whose main preoccupation is the enjoyment of scenery (High sensitivity).
- Recreational walkers and equestrians (High sensitivity)
- Those visitors engaged in cultural pursuits (High-Medium sensitivity)
- Cyclists (High-Medium sensitivity)

11.8 MAGNITUDE OF EFFECT ON VIEWS FROM REPRESENTATIVE VIEWPOINTS

Magnitude of effect identifies the degree of change to the character and quality of views experienced by the visual receptor. This will be influenced by:

- The distance of the viewpoint from the proposed development and the scale of change in the view with respect to the loss or addition of features in the view and changes in its composition, including the proportion of the view occupied by the proposed development;
- 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 form, scale and mass, line, height, colour and texture.

Magnitude of effect is rated as shown in TABLE APP 4 below.

11.9 APPRAISAL OF SIGNIFICANCE OF LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL EFFECTS

Significance indicates the importance of the effect and whether it should be a material consideration in the decision making process, taking into account the sensitivity of the receptor and the magnitude of the effect. It is rated on the following scale:

MAJOR. Indicates an effect that is very important in the planning decision making process.

MAJOR-MODERATE. Indicates an effect that is, in itself, material in the planning decision making process.

MODERATE. Indicates a noticeable effect that is not, in itself, material in the planning decision making process.

SLIGHT. Indicates an effect that is trivial in the planning decision making process.

MINIMAL. Indicates an effect that is akin to no change and is thus not relevant to the planning decision making process.

Significant effects (in terms of whether it is a material consideration in the decision making process) are those that are Major-Moderate or Major.

Where intermediate ratings are given, e.g. "Moderate-Slight", this indicates an effect that is both less than Moderate and more than Slight, rather than one which varies across the range. In such cases, the higher rating will always be given first; this does not mean that the impact is closer to that higher rating, but is done to

facilitate the identification of the more significant effects within tables.

The process of forming a judgement of significance of effect is based upon the appraisals of magnitude of effects and sensitivity of the receptor to come to a professional judgement of how important this effect is in terms of making a decision about whether planning permission should be granted. This judgement is illustrated by the diagram below.

11.10 NATURE OF EFFECT

The Nature of effect (Definition) is categorised as indicated below.

ADVERSE. Effect that would result in damage to the condition, integrity or key characteristics of the landscape or visual resource.

NEUTRAL. Effect that would maintain, on balance, the existing level of condition, integrity or key characteristics of the landscape or visual resource. Whilst the nature of the change may be significant, the proposal does not compromise the inherent qualities of the resource and can incorporate a combination of positive and negative effects.

BENEFICIAL. Effect that would result in improvement to the condition, integrity or key characteristics of the landscape or visual resource.

The decision regarding the significance of effect and

the decision regarding whether an effect is beneficial or adverse (valency) are entirely separate. For example, a rating of Substantial, Beneficial would indicate an effect that was of great significance and on balance positive, but not necessarily that the proposals would be extremely beneficial.

TABLE APP 4. Magnitude of Effect on Views

SENSITIVITY	DEFINITION (EXAMPLES)
High	Total or major alteration to key elements, features or characteristics of the view, such that post development the baseline situation will be fundamentally changed.
Medium	Partial alteration to key elements, features or characteristics of the view, such that post development the baseline situation will be noticeably changed.
Low	Minor alteration to key elements, features or characteristics of the view, such that post development the baseline situation will be largely unchanged despite discernible differences.
Negligible	Very minor alteration to key elements, features or characteristics of the view, such that post development the baseline situation will be fundamentally unchanged with barely perceptible differences.