

Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA)

**LAND AT FINCHES FARM, FIVE OAK GREEN ROAD**

Rydon Homes Ltd

February 2024



Site Location: **Land at Finches Farm, Five Oak Green Road**

Local Planning Authority: **Tunbridge Wells Borough Council**

Approximate Site area: **10.5ha**

Client: **Rydon Homes Ltd**

Landscape Character Assessments	
National <sup>1</sup>	National Character Area (NCA) Area 121: Low Weald and Area 122: High Weald
County <sup>2</sup>	Kent County Council Landscape Character Assessment, 2004: Kent Fruit Belt: Kentish High Weald
District <sup>3</sup>	Tunbridge Wells Borough Council Landscape Character Assessment: LCA 13 Paddock Wood / Five Oak Green Low Weald Farmland

Designations	
Landscape	<p>The well contained Site is located on agricultural land adjoining the west edge of Five Oak Green, being bound by a well vegetated, elevated railway line to the north, residential development to the east, together with Five Oak Green Road (B2017) and residential development to the south, as well as a strong tree belt field boundary to the western edge, alongside Capel Primary School.</p> <p>The High Weald AONB lies approximately 0.9km to the south of Five Oak Green and the Site at its nearest point; however, visibility is very limited by extensive woodland around Capel village to the south of Five Oak Green.</p> <p>A number of Public Rights of Way (PRoW), are located close to the Site, including WT 158 along the eastern edge, which continues north beyond the railway line. WT 185 is a short path that crosses an open field to the south between Sychem Lane and Church Lane. <b>Refer: Figure 3 Landscape and Heritage Designations with Public Rights of Way.</b></p> <p>The Site also lies within the Metropolitan Green Belt, whilst Five Oak Green is an inset settlement (beyond the Green Belt). <b>Refer: Figure 5 Metropolitan Green Belt.</b></p>
Environmental	The Site is not covered by any environmental designations; however the wider landscape contains various blocks of Ancient and Semi-Natural Deciduous Woodland, Ancient Replanted Woodland and Deciduous Woodland, mostly 1-2km and beyond. There is also priority habitat

<sup>1</sup> Natural England; Landscape Character Assessments; Area 121: Low Weald and Area 122: High Weald

<sup>2</sup> Kent County Council Landscape Character Assessment (2004)

<sup>3</sup> Tunbridge Wells Borough Landscape Character Assessment (2017)

	inventory of wood pasture and parkland, which are the grounds at Somerhill Independent School in Tonbridge (west of Tudeley). <b>Refer. Figure 4 Environmental Designations.</b>
Heritage	<p>There are no Listed Buildings on the Historic England register within the Site itself. The closest in proximity to the Site are Grade II Listed <i>Capel County Primary School, including boundary wall to the south</i> (List Entry Number: 1262836), located to the south western edge of the Site, <i>Finches Farmhouse</i> (List Entry Number: 1262826), located approximately 85m north east of the Site, Grade II* Listed <i>Tatlingbury Farmhouse, including garden walls adjoining to the west</i> (List Entry Number: 1262828), together with its barn (List Entry Number: 1251322) and Oasthouse (List Entry Number: 1261896), located south west of the Site. Tatlingbury Farm has recently undergone building work to convert various barns at the farmstead to high end residential accommodation.</p> <p>There are no scheduled monuments within the Site or within 2km of the Site. There are no Registered Parks and Gardens (RP&amp;Gs) either within the Site or within a 2km radius of the Site. The Site also does not lie within any Conservation Areas. <b>Refer. Figure 3 Landscape and Heritage Designations with Public Rights of Way.</b></p>

Element	Landscape Character: Appraisal/ Review - NCA 121: Low Weald	Landscape Character: Appraisal/ Review - NCA 122: High Weald
Key Characteristics of the National Character Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>“Broad, low-lying, gently undulating clay vales with outcrops of limestone or sandstone providing local variation.</i></li> <li>• <i>The underlying geology has provided materials for industries including iron working, brick and glass making, leaving pits, lime kilns and quarries. Many of the resulting exposures are critical to our understanding of the Wealden environment.</i></li> <li>• <i>A generally pastoral landscape with arable farming associated with lighter soils on higher ground and areas of fruit cultivation in Kent. Land use is predominantly agricultural but with urban influences,</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>“A faulted landform of clays, sand and soft sandstones with outcrops of fissured sandrock and ridges running east–west, deeply incised and intersected with numerous gill streams forming the headwaters of a number of the major rivers – the Rother, Brede, Ouse and Medway – which flow in broad valleys.</i></li> <li>• <i>High density of extraction pits, quarries and ponds, in part a consequence of diverse geology and highly variable soils over short distances.</i></li> <li>• <i>A dispersed settlement pattern of hamlets and scattered farmsteads and medieval ridgetop villages founded on trade and non-agricultural</i></li> </ul>

	<p><i>particularly around Gatwick, Horley and Crawley.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>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.</i></li> <li>• <i>Small towns and villages are scattered among areas of woodland, permanent grassland and hedgerows on the heavy clay soils where larger 20th-century villages have grown around major transport routes.</i></li> <li>• <i>Frequent north–south routeways and lanes, many originating as drove roads, along which livestock were moved to downland grazing or to forests to feed on acorns.</i></li> <li>• <i>Small areas of heathland particularly associated with commons such as Ditchling and Chailey. Also significant historic houses often in parkland or other designed landscapes.</i></li> <li>• <i>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.</i></li> <li>• <i>Many small rivers, streams and</i></li> </ul>	<p><i>rural industries, with a dominance of timber- framed buildings with steep roofs often hipped or half-hipped, and an extremely high survival rate of farm buildings dating from the 17th century or earlier.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Ancient routeways in the form of ridgetop roads and a dense system of radiating droveways, often narrow, deeply sunken and edged with trees and wild flower-rich verges and boundary banks. Church towers and spires on the ridges are an important local landmark. There is a dense network of small, narrow and winding lanes, often sunken and enclosed by high hedgerows or woodland strips. The area includes several large towns such as Tunbridge Wells, Crowborough, Battle and Heathfield and is closely bordered by others such as Crawley, East Grinstead, Hastings and Horsham.</i></li> <li>• <i>An intimate, hidden and small-scale landscape with glimpses of farreaching views, giving a sense of remoteness and tranquillity yet concealing the highest density of timber-framed buildings anywhere in Europe amidst lanes and paths.</i></li> <li>• <i>Strong feeling of remoteness due to very rural, wooded character. A great extent of interconnected ancient woods, steep-sided gill woodlands, wooded heaths and shaws in generally small holdings with extensive archaeology and</i></li> </ul>
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	<p><i>watercourses with associated watermeadows and wet woodland.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Abundance of ponds, some from brick making and quarrying, and hammer and furnace ponds, legacies of the Wealden iron industry.</i></li> <li>• <i>Traditional rural vernacular of local brick, weatherboard and tile-hung buildings plus local use of distinctive Horsham slabs as a roofing material. Weatherboard barns are a feature. Oast houses occur in the east and use of flint is notable in the south towards the South Downs.”</i></li> </ul>	<p><i>evidence of long-term management.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Extensive broadleaved woodland cover with a very high proportion of ancient woodland with high forest, small woods and shaws, plus steep valleys with gill woodland.</i></li> <li>• <i>Small and medium-sized irregularly shaped fields enclosed by a network of hedgerows and wooded shaws, predominantly of medieval origin and managed historically as a mosaic of small agricultural holdings typically used for livestock grazing.</i></li> <li>• <i>A predominantly grassland agricultural landscape grazed mainly with sheep and some cattle.</i></li> <li>• <i>There is a strong influence of the Wealden iron industry which started in Roman times, until coke fuel replaced wood and charcoal. There are features such as a notably high number of small hammer ponds surviving today.</i></li> <li>• <i>An essentially medieval landscape reflected in the patterns of settlement, fields and woodland.</i></li> <li>• <i>High-quality vernacular architecture with distinct local variation using local materials. Horsham Slate is used on mainly timber structures and timber-framed barns are a particularly notable Wealden characteristic feature of the High Weald.”</i></li> </ul>
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<p><b>Key Characteristics of the County LCA: Kent Fruit Belt: Kentish High Weald</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>“Small-scale intimate enclosed valleys and ridges.</i></li> <li>• <i>Small scale orchards and high hedges. Some hops.</i></li> <li>• <i>Mixed woodland, intensive cultivation. Small lanes, many small villages and dense settlements.”</i></li> </ul>
<p><b>Overall Character:</b></p>	<p><i>“An intimate, densely settled area, small lanes twist through a seemingly endless maze of high hedges and tidy orchards. During the summer, when the fruit trees are in leaf, there is a sense of being submerged in this landscape. The valleys and ridges to the north-west, around Matfield and Brenchley, are small and gentle, rarely offering long views out, so that the occasional open fields between the orchards seem to provide a breathing space and a slight sense of relief.</i></p> <p><i>Intensive fruit cultivation gives way to large arable fields along the Teise Valley, between Lamberhurst and Horsmonden. These fields are backed by extensive tracts of mixed woodland, in which a certain amount of coppicing takes place. The fairy-tale manor house of Scotney Castle lies hidden beside the River Bewl, which feeds into the Teise through a landscape of open, tree-lined pastures. Around Goudhurst and Spelmonden, regimented ranks of hop poles cast harsh shadows in the winter sunlight. In summer they disappear under a mass of coarse leaves and clinging tendrils, which snake out along the overhead wires to intertwine with each other.</i></p> <p><i>The intensity of cultivation in this area has resulted in a thick scattering of houses along the lanes, from tile-hung cottage to twentieth century bungalow. Oasthouses and packing sheds serve as a reminder that this has always been, and remains, a working landscape. In spring, a closer look at the apparently timeless fields of apple-blossom reveals that the flowers are emerging from trees festooned with the latest technology, where artificial 'spiders webs' are wrapped around the trees to prevent bird damage.</i></p> <p><i>The Kent Fruit Belt is part of the larger character area of the Kentish High Weald.”</i></p>
<p><b>Landscape Condition:</b></p>	<p><b>“Condition – High:</b></p> <p><i>“The uniformity of the small-scale landscape pattern is interrupted by the significant decline in orchards. The rural landscape elements reflect the underlying landform. The pattern of elements within the area is considered to be coherent and there are few visual detractors. The patchwork of small woodlands, hedges and streams provide a moderate ecological base as their value is modified by areas of open arable fields. The functional integrity of the area varies; built development has strongly vernacular appeal, but the small scale of the rural landscape is vulnerable to changes in land use. The farming basis of this landscape is not robust. However, this is a largely unified landscape and the condition is considered to be high.</i></p>
<p><b>Landscape Sensitivity:</b></p>	<p><b>“Sensitivity – Moderate:</b></p> <p><i>“Although there are ancient overtones of woodland and routes of highways, the time-depth of the area is mostly historic. The small-scale and variety of rural land use is characteristic along with scattered small-scale built development. In some areas, the characteristic scale has been</i></p>

	<i>lost due to the decline in field boundaries and loss of woodland. There is a moderate sense of place which is due to the significance of the historic landscape features. The enclosed valleys and ridges are apparent and views are intermittently enclosed by shelterbelts and small areas of woodland. Visibility throughout the area is therefore moderate.”</i>
<b>Landscape Actions:</b>	<p><i>“Conserve and Reinforce –</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>• Conserve and reinforce woodland</i></li> <li><i>• Conserve and reinforce broadleaf hedgerow</i></li> <li><i>• Reinforce the small-scale of land use</i></li> <li><i>• Reinforce the use of vernacular materials”</i></li> </ul>
<b>Key Characteristics of the District LCA: 13 Paddock Wood / Five Oak Green Low Weald Farmland</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>• “Flat or gently undulating land at the footslopes, backed by the adjacent ridge of the High Weald plateau.</i></li> <li><i>• A mixed farmed landscape with extensive open arable fields, dwarf fruit orchards and pockets of pasture.</i></li> <li><i>• Remnant alder or poplar windbreaks, as well as individual trees and hedges provide vertical elements in this open flat landscape.</i></li> <li><i>• Crossed by a connecting network of rural lanes characterised by broad grass verges and ditches, hedges or trees.</i></li> <li><i>• Large, arable fields drained by a network of ditches.</i></li> <li><i>• Very mixed settlement pattern with extensive suburban development at Paddock Wood and on a smaller scale at Five Oak Green, with the remainder of settlement characterised by dispersed farmsteads and small hamlets.</i></li> <li><i>• Five Oak Green is a modern linear development, which sprawls along the busy B2017 road. There is extensive suburban development backing the road and an abrupt transition with the farmland beyond. The village green provides a focal point and local character.</i></li> <li><i>• A variety of building styles ranging from groups of oasts, which are highly visible, to more modern suburban houses and bungalows.</i></li> <li><i>• Open views across this intensively farmed landscape are frequently punctuated by the cowls of clustered groups of oast houses and extensive farm building complexes. The Greensand Ridge to the north provides a distinctive skyline, whilst the High Weald to the south provides wooded enclosure.”</i></li> </ul>
<b>Overall Character</b>	<i>“This area occupies the gentle footslopes of the High Weald and is an important transition between the Fruit Belt and the flat arable and pasture land of the Low Weald and the Medway Valley from which it derives much of its character. It is an agricultural landscape with extensive arable fields and local areas of fruit orchards and includes the urban are of Paddock Wood, which has grown up around the rail station.”</i>
<b>Valued Features and Qualities</b>	<i>“1) The slopes in the south of the area which rise up to the High Weald and provide an important transition between the High Weald to the south and the Low Weald. The extensive, panoramic views from within the AONB from the scarp slope at the public Millennium Viewing Point in Brenchley which look across the whole of the character area, and across the Low Weald.</i>



	<p>2) A network of ancient routeways through the area which continue into the AONB, are remnants of the historic practices of transhumance and exploitation of the resources of the forest.</p> <p>3) Frequent historic farmsteads and oasts are conspicuous features in the landscape. These add local vernacular character typical of the Weald and the AONB, including oast houses, timber-framed farm buildings and details such as clay tiles and hipped roofs.</p> <p>4) Areas which retain a sense of the historic landscape, where the irregular and sinuous field boundaries are overlaid on more undulating slopes, divided by hedgerows and trees – particularly around the small hamlets of Tudeley and Capel.</p> <p>5) The hamlets of Tudeley and Capel which retain strong vernacular character as well as views to the surrounding countryside.</p> <p>6) The old Hawkhurst Branch Railway Line which cuts through the area and provides a local ecological and potential recreational resource, as well as serving as a reminder of the culture of ‘the hop-pickers line’ and the local hop industry in the area.</p> <p>7) Areas of woodland, trees and hedgerows – particularly the small remaining fragments of ancient woodland, which are particularly important for visual character as they are relatively fragmented in places, as well as being important for recreation and biodiversity.</p> <p>8) Traditional orchards which are managed in a low intensity way provide habitat mosaics along with a network of hedgerows, mature oak trees, wide grass verges and occasional woodlands.”</p>
<p><b>Detractors and Opportunities</b></p>	<p>“1) Extensive suburban residential development at Paddock Wood and, to a lesser extent, at Five Oak Green, often with a flat and open urban/rural interface. The settlements are frequently ringed by poorly managed urban fringe countryside. Large buildings on the edge of Paddock Wood are visually conspicuous due to their white or light colour which contrasts with the surrounding green/ brown landscape.</p> <p>New development around the edge of existing settlements should be unobtrusive and tie in with the local landscape character through appropriate planting treatments. It would be beneficial to target landscape enhancements anywhere but most importantly along the transport corridors and settlement margins.</p> <p>2) A proliferation of urban fringe land uses including machinery storage/haulage, particularly on the flatter land around Paddock Wood.</p> <p>3) Pockets of degraded farmland where post and barbed wire fencing has replaced hedgerows and buildings associated with paddocks or hobby farming occur. Enhancements should aim to promote sympathetic management of this land to retain its countryside character, particularly in association with development proposals.</p>

	<p>4) Conifer hedges are also a locally dominant feature and occur in association with the rural residential development scattered along the roads and lanes. More appropriate species of hedges should be sought as appropriate.</p> <p>5) The pylons which cut across the foot of the slope can be a significant visual detractor.”</p>
<b>Landscape Strategy</b>	<p>“1) Respect the vulnerability of the slopes rising up to the south to new developments/land use change. New developments can be highly visible over a wide area on these slopes and detract from the essential countryside character.</p> <p>2) Consider the vulnerability of this open lowland landscape to built development which is likely to be very visible in views. Pylons which cross east to west, at the foot of the High Weald slope, are a significant visual detractor within this flat, open landscape.</p> <p>3) Ensure that any urban/suburban edges are tied into the local landscape through planting (e.g. hedges, shelter belts, small woodland copses and orchards) as well as ensuring an appropriate graduation in scale of built development to create an appropriate setting and sympathetic transition from urban to rural.”</p>

<b>Element</b>	<b>Appraisal and Review</b>
<b>Site Overview</b>	<p>The Site is well contained and bound by a well vegetated, elevated railway line to the north, residential development to the east, together with Five Oak Green Road (B2017) and residential development to the south, as well as a strong tree belt field boundary to the western edge, alongside Capel Primary School. The site adjoins the built settlement edge of Five Oak Green, where development extends along Five Oak Green Road to the south and west. Accordingly, the Site lies in a built up context, resulting in a strong relationship with the settlement form/pattern (and lower sensitivity). The Site is strongly influenced by development/ human activity and transport infrastructure and has a limited relationship with the wider landscape due to containment, and therefore new development would not be out of character.</p> <p>The elevated/embanked railway line contains the settlement (and Site) from the wider landscape with linear tree belts, provide strong containment as a backdrop, including from a solar farm also located north of the railway line. The western boundary of the Site is also contained from the wider landscape by a strong tree belt on the field boundary, close to Capel Primary School and further reduces the contribution of the Site from being experienced in the context of the wider character of the surrounding area.</p> <p>There are no Public Rights of Way on the Site, although a footpath runs to the east of the Site along the edge of the village and emerges onto Five Oak Green Road at the south east corner of the Site.</p>

	As such the attributes of the Site and its contribution to landscape are at the lower end of the low-moderate scale, as identified by the various attributes in the sensitivity assessment.
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<b>Landscape Qualities</b> (selections highlighted in bold to form the appraisal of each category)	
Representativeness/ consistency with wider character judgement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Highly Consistent</li> <li>- Mostly consistent</li> <li>- <b>Mixed with some characteristics present</b></li> <li>- Not representative of wider character</li> </ul> <p>The Site does not contain woodland or orchards/fruit belts, or extensive, panoramic views or scarp slopes (it is flat); however, the Site does adjoin suburban development, lies alongside a railway line and has overhead pylons/wires crossing, and the field parcels are framed by established hedgerows.</p>
Landscape character attractiveness judgement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Highly attractive</li> <li>- Attractive</li> <li>- Pleasant</li> <li>- <b>Unremarkable</b></li> <li>- Not Attractive</li> </ul> <p>The Site is a well contained parcel of agricultural land that is bound by local road and rail infrastructure and built development to the north, south, east and west and a limited relationship with the qualities associated with wider landscape features (AONB, Medway Valley) due to containment. It does not display the same attractive rural character and long or open views associated with the wider landscape.</p>
Remoteness and tranquillity judgement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Remote</li> <li>- Peaceful</li> <li>- Some interruption</li> <li>- <b>Not tranquil</b></li> </ul> <p>The Site is well related to and strongly influenced by settlement and infrastructure, being the associated noise and domestic activity, road and rail. To this extent, the Site is not remote or tranquil and has a strong association with the settlement.</p>
Landscape qualities general description	<p>The Site is formed of agricultural land, bordered by settlement to the east, south and southwest in spatial terms, as well as a railway line in the north and the B2017 in the south and is thus heavily influenced by the neighbouring residential development, giving an urban edge character, which contrasts with the wider rural landscape.</p> <p>The Site faces towards the settlement providing containment, whilst to the north of the Site the landscape is distinctly more rural in character,</p>

	quality, and condition, with numerous characteristics that fit the LCA. Therefore, there is a strong contrast and distinction between the landscape quality and urban fringe character of the Site compared with the wider landscape.
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<b>Visual Qualities</b> (selections highlighted in bold to form the appraisal of each category)	
Visual Prominence judgement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- High</li> <li>- Moderate high</li> <li>- Moderate low</li> <li>- <b>Low</b></li> </ul> <p>The Site is flat and contained by development to the east and south, with elevated and well vegetated railway infrastructure on the northern edge, and strong field boundaries to the west, providing containment from the wider landscape, resulting in very limited visual prominence in the landscape.</p>
Nature of the urban edge judgement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- No visible urban edge</li> <li>- Soft well vegetated urban edge limited views of principally rooflines</li> <li>- Partially visible urban edge</li> <li>- <b>Hard urban edge with limited screening</b></li> </ul> <p>The strong built edge is part of the character and feature of the village's urban form, which is defined by its suburban and busy context with boundaries adjoining the settlement on two sides.</p>
Settlement setting and views of settlement judgement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Attractive features or views</li> <li>- Some attractive features of views</li> <li>- <b>Few attractive features of views</b></li> <li>- No attractive features or views</li> </ul> <p>The settlement and Site forms a strongly contained component in localised views, and the setting of the village is not particularly well integrated into the landscape at the urban edge.</p>
Public accessibility within and immediately surrounding the potential development site judgement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Many public views</li> <li>- <b>Some public views</b></li> <li>- Limited public views</li> <li>- No public views</li> </ul> <p>A Public Right of Way passes along the eastern edge of the Site, along with an open road frontage/ boundary along the B2017 Five Oak Green Road.</p>

<b>Scope for mitigation</b>	
<b>Scope for and Approach to mitigation?</b>	Yes, there is scope for mitigation. A sensitive design approach would help soften the already developed edge of Five Oak Green, whilst helping to establish a new edge to the settlement. There is scope for

	<p>significant new landscape features to be created, including woodland, orchards and meadow, creating new connecting green spaces and trees incorporated a softer edge and strengthening of the Site boundaries through new planting, incorporating a softer transition to the landscape. Mitigation will also help to soften the presence of the linear railway line infrastructure by creating a softer pattern of planting more in keeping with local character.</p>	
<p><b>How does the development of these Sites meet the Landscape Strategy Guidelines for the District:</b> Paddock Wood / Five Oak Green Low Weald Farmland</p>	<p><b>Landscape Guidance</b></p>	<p><b>How would allocation/development meet the strategy?</b></p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Respect the vulnerability of the slopes rising up to the south to new developments/land use change. New developments can be highly visible over a wide area on these slopes and detract from the essential countryside character.</i></li> </ul>	<p>The development will be located on flat ground adjoining the existing settlement, helping to maintain the settlement pattern. There would be no development on more sensitive slopes associated with the High Weald or AONB which lie to the south, or River Medway corridor which lies some distance to the north of the railway line. Therefore, development will not be highly visible and will be strongly contained by existing and proposed new green infrastructure features.</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Consider the vulnerability of this open lowland landscape to built development which is likely to be very visible in views. Pylons which cross east to west, at the foot of the High Weald slope, are a significant visual detractor within this flat, open landscape.</i></li> </ul>	<p>The open lowland landscapes vulnerability will be protected as the Site is already well contained by elevated rail infrastructure, existing settlement and roads. The built form on the Site will be in keeping with the settlement pattern, which it adjoins. There is potential for the landscape proposals to help soften and better integrate the existing infrastructure features, which are currently linear, through new planting – e.g. along the foot of the railway embankments and around pylon bases, to help reduce their impact. This will help to reinforce some landscape structure, away from those elements that have previously cut across the land and weakened its character.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Ensure that any urban/suburban edges are tied into the local landscape through planting (e.g. hedges, shelter belts, small woodland copses and orchards) as well as ensuring an appropriate graduation in scale of built development to create an appropriate setting and sympathetic transition from urban</i></li> </ul>	<p>Development would allow for the planting of new features such as woodland, orchards (part of the fruit belt) and meadow to reinforce and strengthen the fabric of the landscape. New planting will provide a new enhanced edge and softer transition to the settlement, as well as help to restore ecological interest within the Site and along its boundaries.</p>	

	<i>to rural.</i>	
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<b>Landscape Capacity</b>	
<b>Is there Capacity</b> within this landscape to absorb change?	<p>Yes. Given the nature and character of the immediate area, as well as visual qualities of the existing settlement influences, it is considered that the Site has capacity to accommodate change without harm to the character of the landscape; this is for residential development of up to 2-2.5 storeys in height, subject to a sympathetic design approach.</p> <p>The proposed Site is within an area of land that is influenced strongly by the existing adjacent settlement and as a consequence has a lower sensitivity to change (taking into account value and susceptibility), and an ability to absorb the changes proposed through allocation. With a lower sensitivity to change, the Site has a greater capacity to accommodate change in the form of residential development.</p>

### Recommendations if the Site is to be allocated and developed

- Buildings, structures and hard standing should avoid tree protection areas for existing trees and hedgerows, either on or off-site.
- Retain and enhance tree belts to boundaries and existing hedgerows, retaining and reinforcing a green backdrop.
- Attractive features such as the barn on the north east corner of the Site, should
- Softening views into the development from adjacent residential properties, gardens and Public Rights of Way.
- Consider views along Five Oak Green Road and views towards Capel Primary School, consider setting back development/ framing views.
- Consider the gateway approach to the settlement and how properties address the street frontage.
- Improve connectivity to the existing green infrastructure network including walking and/ or cycling or horse-riding routes and through biodiversity provision.
- Creation of areas of public open space for community use (play, recreation, orchard, allotments, could all be considered) and providing an appropriate, softer enhanced transitional setting to the edge Five Oak Green.
- Improvement of formal and informal walking routes across the Site, including the potential connection to designated Public Rights of Way and the village as a whole. There is potential to create a circular walk for the village at the western end that connects via the Site (and Primary School) to Church Lane and
- Reinstatement and or reinforce historic hedgerow(s), woodland features, fruit belt (orchard) where appropriate to reinforce the characteristics of the LCA.
- Properties should be offset from the existing boundaries of adjacent properties to respect amenity and privacy. Development should follow the prevailing settlement pattern and road frontage, in keeping with strategy and guidelines in the LCA.
- The internal street pattern should allow for the integration of planting, including street trees to help integrate the development and soften its appearance and provide visual amenity for residents.

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### Appendices:

**Appendix A: Figures 1 – 11**

**Appendix B: Landscape Character Assessment (extracts)**