



## Landscape Proof of Evidence

### Part 1 of 3 Parts

Christopher McDermott BSc, BLD  
on behalf of the appellant

Pins ref: APP/R3650/W/23/3327643

LPA ref: WA/2022/01887

Date:  
December 2023

Hybrid application consisting of an Outline application (all matters reserved except access) for up to 110 residential dwellings accessed from the proposed access road (linking to Midhurst Road), associated landscaping, restricted access for emergency access, community growing space and associated infrastructure, including green infrastructure. Full application for the erection of 1 dwelling and associated works; a junction alteration from Midhurst Road, associated access road to serve the development (including the diversion of a public footpath), car park, associated landscaping and drainage; the erection of a scout facility/nursery (use class F) and an education facility (use class F); a Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG).



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## 1 WITNESS PARTICULARS AND BACKGROUND

- 1.1. I am Christopher Nigel McDermott, a director of my own consultancy, Sightline Landscape Ltd, based in Bath, Somerset. I have a Bachelor of Science in Botany (Bristol University) and a Bachelor of Landscape Design (Manchester University). I qualified as a Chartered Landscape Architect in 1989 and have been a member of the Landscape Institute until 2020. I have practiced continually throughout, previously working for a mix of large multi-disciplinary consultancies and smaller practices. I set up my own consultancy in 2013.
- 1.2. I have undertaken numerous landscape and visual impact assessments for local authorities and for commercial clients for a wide range of projects such as residential development, on shore wind farms, ground mounted solar, battery storage, power stations and telecommunication masts in sensitive landscapes such as National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Beauty. I have undertaken landscape and visual impact assessments for the Governments of St Lucia and Jordan in relation to the protection of World Heritage Sites.
- 1.3. I have been working for the Appellant as the landscape consultant for its Scotland Park site since 2017 and gave evidence on behalf of the Appellant at the Scotland Park Phase Inquiry. Subsequently I produced the Landscape and Visual chapter of the Environmental Statement for the Appeal Proposal and undertook the landscape design, including the detailed part of the application. As a result I am very familiar with the Appeal Site and the surrounding landscape.
- 1.4. This landscape proof of evidence is based on my own judgement and is presented in accordance with the guidance by the Landscape Institute (**Core Document 8.6**) and the methodology as set out in the ES (reproduced in **Appendix 1**) the content of which is true to the best of my knowledge and belief and is presented irrespective of by whom I am instructed. I am instructed on behalf of Redwood Southwest Ltd ('the Appellant') to present evidence relating to landscape and visual matters in respect of the Inquiry.
- 1.5. In presenting my evidence I explain why in landscape and visual terms the scheme is considered acceptable given the character and appearance of the site and its surrounding settlement context, recognising that the overall planning balance is for others to comment upon.

## 2 BASELINE CONDITIONS

- 2.1. It is necessary to understand the baseline conditions in order to assess the landscape and visual effects of the Appeal Proposal. The landscape and visual chapter within the Environmental Statement (**Core Document 2.29**) produced for the Appeal Proposal provides a detailed assessment of the baseline conditions and these are summarised in this section of my proof.

### DESIGNATIONS

- 2.2. The Site lies beyond the settlement boundary within Countryside and is entirely within the Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (SHAONB). While AONB have recently been rebranded as National Landscapes they are still referred to as AONB in planning policy and legislation for the time being and so I shall refer them AONB.

No part of the Site lies within the South Downs National Park (SDNP), the boundary which is defined by Bell Vale Lane which is coterminous with the southern boundary of the Site, but the Site forms part of its setting (the names and locations of the roads which surround the Appeal Site are identified on **Figure 3**). The Site does not lie within Green Belt and is not designated within the WBC Local Plan as an Area of Strategic Visual Importance or as a Protected Hillside. **Figure 1** illustrates how Green Belt and landscape designations limit the opportunities for residential development within the borough and **Figure 2** illustrates how designations limit opportunities for development around Haslemere. **Figure 2** also shows the proposed extensions to the AONB around Haslemere following the first consultation stage and technical review of the Surrey Hills Boundary Variation Project (<https://www.surrey-hills-aonb-boundary-review.org/welcome>). It indicates that the constraint of landscape designations is tightening around Haslemere.

### LAND USE

- 2.3. The Site comprises six fields, currently pasture, which are not part of an active agricultural enterprise and are not commercially productive. The only activity relates to management of the grassland and involves mechanical cutting and occasional grazing. The remainder of the Site comprises an area of mixed deciduous and evergreen woodland, known as Red Court Woods. The character of the woodland and fields is varied, and I describe this in more detail in my assessment of landscape character. **Figure 3** illustrates the character of the Appeal Site and its relationship with Haslemere.

#### *Land to the north*

- 2.4. The urban edge of Haslemere lies immediately to the north of the Site, Scotlands Close and Chiltern Close lie immediately adjacent to the Site and comprise late 20th Century detached dwellings. Scotland Lane runs up through a small valley to the north of these roads and is lined with residential properties. Residential properties extend north to the commercial centre of Haslemere which lies approximately 580m north of the lane.

#### *Land to the east*

- 2.5. The dwelling Red Court lies immediately to the east; the house is set within extensive grounds, the main house lies 56m back from the edge of the Site behind boundaries which support substantial screening tree cover, including evergreens, such as holly. Woodland and tree cover within the grounds provides further screening to the Site from the landscape further to the east. A small paddock lies to the east of Red Court, for which planning consent has recently been granted for allotments (Planning reference: WA/2023/00029, **Core Document 11.1**). East of the allotment land a line of large, detached properties extend along the southside of Scotland Lane, all set within extensive grounds with high tree cover.
- 2.6. A residential development of 50 dwellings, Scotland Park Phase 1 (Pins ref: APP/R3650/W/21/3280136, LPA ref: WA/2020/1213, **Core Document 9.1**, referred to going forward as Phase 1) is under construction within a triangular plot to the northeast of the Appeal Site, defined by Scotlands Close to the west, Scotland Lane to the north and Red Court to the south.



Figure 1: Landscape designation and Green Belt constraints within Waverley Borough

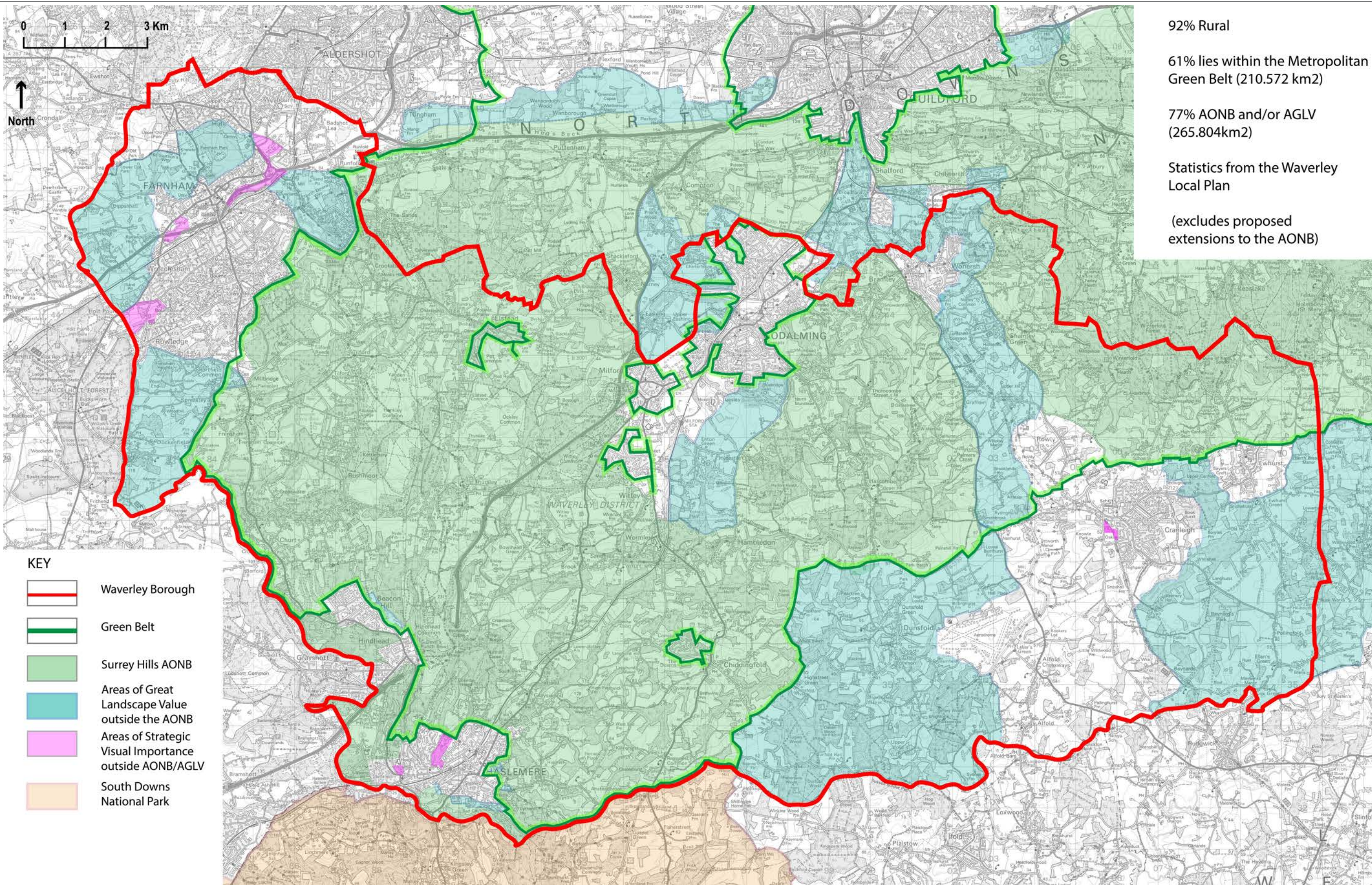




Figure 2: Landscape designation and Green Belt constraints around Haslemere

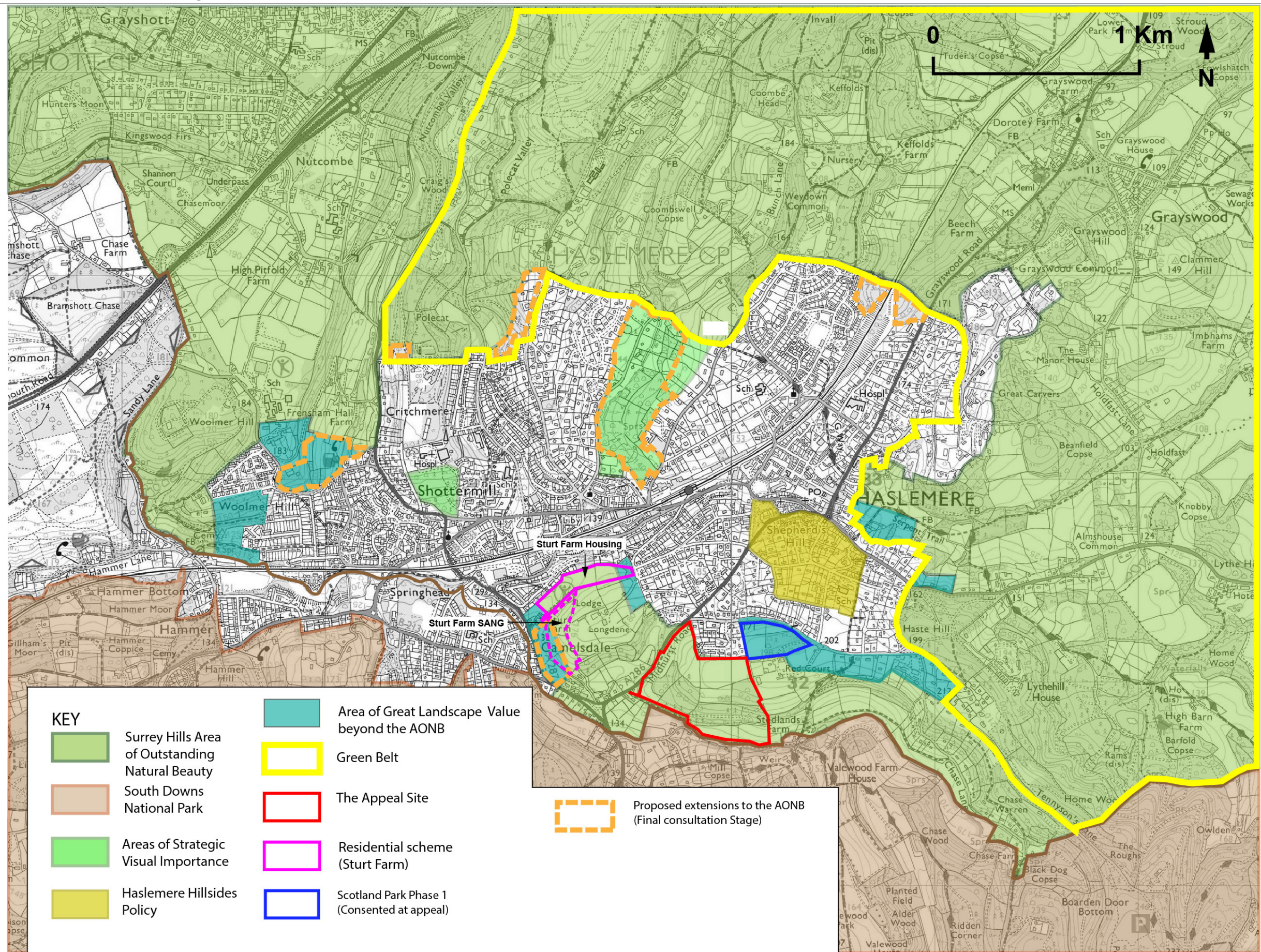
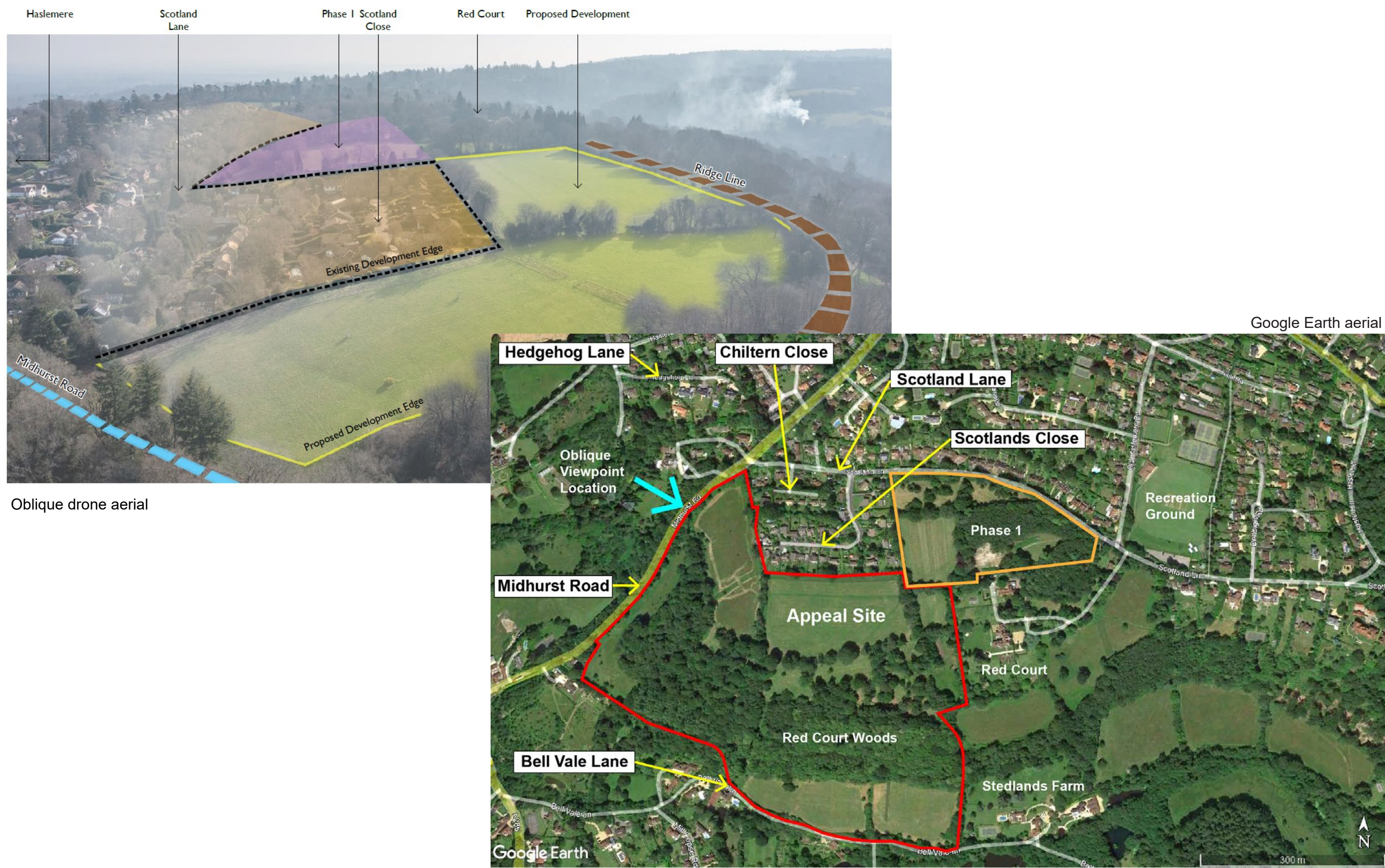




Figure 3: Aerial views illustrating the character and context of the Appeal Site





- 2.7. The Haslemere War Memorial Recreation Ground lies on the northside of Scotland Lane, 300m to the northeast of the Site. It provides sporting facilities to the local community including cricket, football and rugby pitches, floodlit tennis courts, a bowling green, a multi-use games area and children's play equipment.

#### ***Land to the south***

- 2.8. The southern edge of the Site is defined by Bell Vale Lane which is a single-track no through road which serves several large, detached properties set within extensive grounds. Most properties occupy the lower slopes of the north facing slope with the higher ground being dominated by broadleaved woodland. A watercourse flows through a series of connecting ponds, flowing west through the base of the valley.
- 2.9. Valewood Park lies 420m southeast of the Site, an area of Open Access Land owned by the National Trust. It is one of the few areas of open grassland landscape to the south.

#### ***Land to the west***

- 2.10. The Midhurst Road (A286) defines the western boundary of the Site. It is a main route between Haslemere and Fernhurst and routes further south. It is fringed by trees and has a strong rural character although views are restricted by banks and tree cover. Traffic adversely affects the tranquillity of this part of the Site and AONB.
- 2.11. The land west of the Midhurst Road comprises a series of paddocks with high tree cover, similar to Scotland Park. There are a few dwellings on the Midhurst Road, just beyond the southwest corner of the Site and a timber merchant at the junction with the A286. There is also a group of detached dwellings on the west side of the Midhurst Road opposite the northwest corner of the Site, set among tree cover and not visible from the road.

### **TOPOGRAPHY**

- 2.12. The topography of the Site and surrounding countryside, comprises a mosaic of hills, ridges and heaths incised by small steep valleys, known as the Greensand Hills. The Site is on the western end of a ridge which descends gradually from higher ground in the east (cresting at around 240m AOD). The ridge broadens out to form a hill on the south side of Haslemere, with a high point in the Site of around 196m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD). The west side of the Site is the termination of the ridge from where the land slopes down to the Midhurst Road with the proposed point of access being the lowest point at (148m AOD), which is level with that part of the Midhurst Road. The north slope of the ridge drops down to a small valley through which Scotland Lane runs, climbing up from the Midhurst Road to the top of the ridge on Tennyson Road. The land quickly rises again on the north side of Scotland Lane to around 185m AOD. This rising ground, which is largely residential, screens the majority of the Appeal Site from the main residential areas of Haslemere. Haslemere occupies a broader valley which cuts through the hills on a west-east alignment.
- 2.13. Further west the land rises again in the vicinity of Longdene and Marley Common and supports high tree cover, further limiting the visibility of the Site to the northwest to a few properties in the vicinity of Hedgehog Lane.

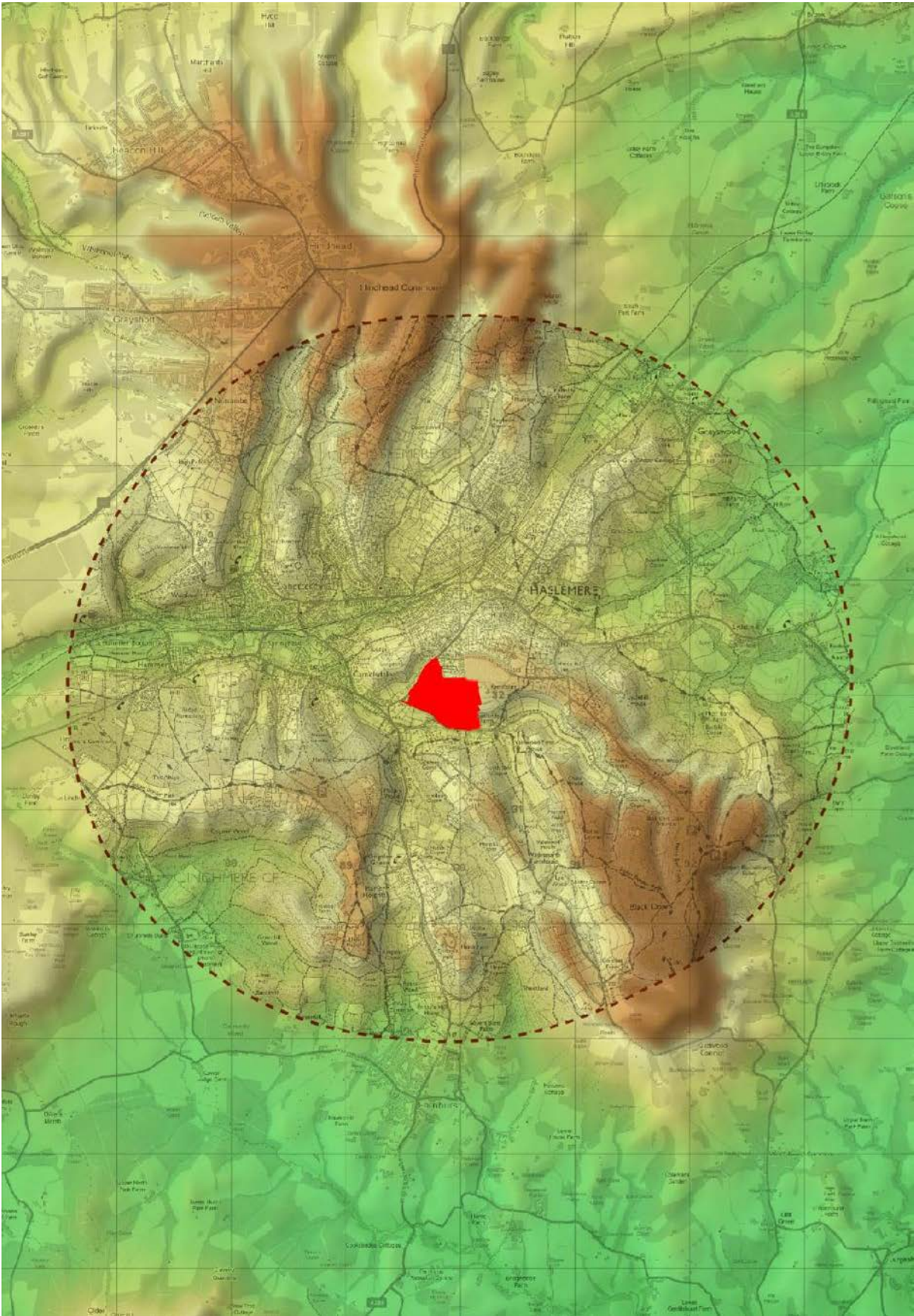
- 2.14. The fields where it is proposed to locate the majority of the housing occupy the top of the ridge, where the ground is fairly level (levels in the central field range from 188 to 194m AOD and in the west field 194 – 196m AOD). The land starts to fall away to the south within an area of parkland before falling more steeply down to Bell Vale Lane, which is typically at 140m AOD and then, further south, rises up to Fernden Hill, which crests at 196m AOD. This hill limits views of the Site from the landscape further to the south. The Blackdown Hills lie 2km to the southeast, with a high point of 280m AOD.
- 2.15. The shoulder of gently sloping land, where the parkland within the Site is located is significant in that it acts as a topographical buffer to the fields where it is proposed to locate the majority of the housing. The housing would be set back from the steeply sloping edge of the ridge which lies eighty-five metres south of the parkland.
- 2.16. Road corridors take advantage of the valleys to thread through the complex topography, and this is evident around the Appeal Site with the Midhurst Road taking advantage of the valley to the west, Scotland Lane the valley to the north and Bell Vale Lane the valley to the south.
- 2.17. The centre of Haslemere is around 149m AOD, from where the land starts to rise again to a high ridge in the vicinity of Hindhead and Gibbet Hill. This distant high ground is typically over 250m AOD and over 3.5km north of the Site. The Hindhead ridge is visible from the northern edge of the Site but high tree cover across the distant ridge means that there are no significant ground level views looking back at the Site.
- 2.18. The topography of the appeal site and landscape is illustrated within **Figure 4**.

### **LANDSCAPE FEATURES**

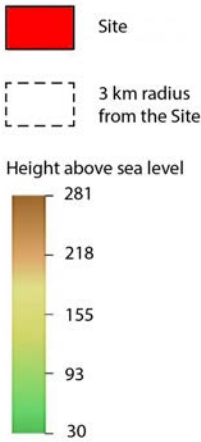
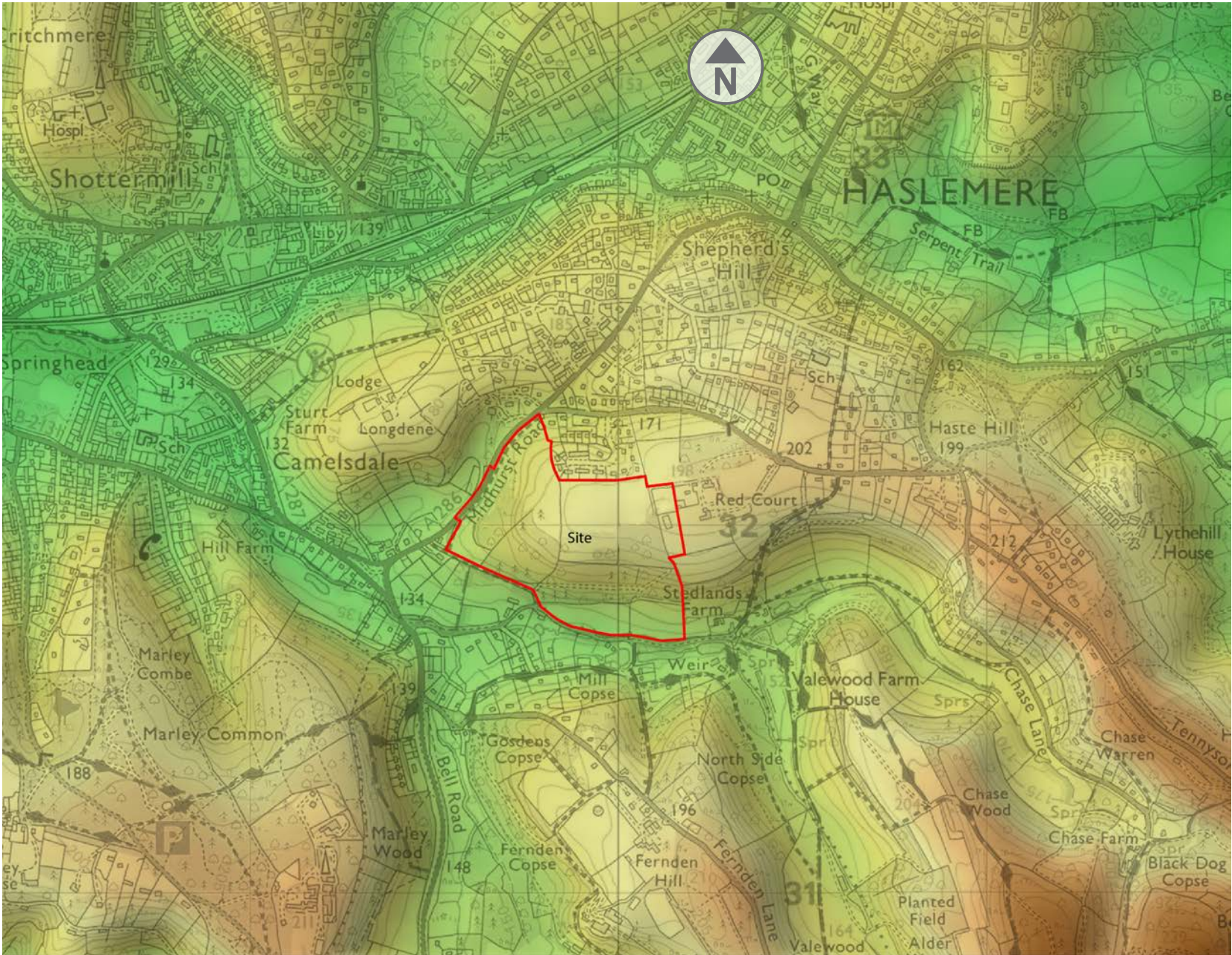
- 2.19. The field adjacent to the Midhurst Road is separated from it by a line of mature trees with an understorey of holly and hazel, growing partly in the public highway hedgebank and partly within the Site. Species are mainly beech, oak, Norway maple and sycamore and are B and C category trees. There is a single A Category Douglas Fir. Parts of the field are becoming colonised by birch, holly and oak. A small electricity substation has recently been built in the southwest corner of the field, housed in a grey GRP box. There is a field gateway onto the Midhurst Road in this corner. A World War II gun emplacement has been discovered within the Site, adjacent to the Midhurst Road.
- 2.20. The southern fields are also becoming colonised by birch, hazel and in areas adjacent to the woodland and hedgerows but remain predominately open grassland. A pole mounted 33Kv overhead electricity line runs along the northern boundary of the field adjacent to the woodland. A hedge has recently been planted to reinforce the division between the two southern fields and is currently protected by post and wire deer fencing.
- 2.21. The fields where it is proposed to locate the majority of the housing are open grassland although the pole mounted electricity line within the southern fields climbs up onto the ridge through Red Court Woods, crosses the fields and heads north down to a small substation which lies just beyond the northwest corner of the Site at the junction with Scotland Lane and the Midhurst Road.



Figure 4: Topography



Plan showing the Site in relation to the wider topography of the area



Plan showing the topography of the Site and the immediate locality



- 2.22. Mature hedges divide the fields and are typically over six metres high and support some mature trees. Holly content is high. Tree planting (protected by deer fencing) has been undertaken along the northern boundaries to provide visual separation between the Site and the residential properties on the edge of Haslemere. Advanced planting has also been undertaken along the boundary with the Midhurst Road to ensure that any development within the fields will be screened to those using the Midhurst Road.
- 2.23. Red Court Woods are a prominent local feature in views from the landscape to the south, forming a setting to the SDNP. From a distance they appear highly characteristic of woodland in the area and make a positive contribution to the landscape. The woods have, however, not been managed for decades and quality is very mixed ranging from high quality areas with extensive native flora, including stands of bluebells, to poor quality coniferous plantation and areas colonised by Himalayan Balsam, bamboo and rhododendron. Certain areas would benefit from coppicing and the amount of fallen timber and deadwood could be reduced to maximise biodiversity. Photographs in **Figure 5** illustrate some of issues that require positive management to enhance the quality and character of the woodland.
- 2.24. A series of hedgebanks run through the wood, such as on the southern edge of the parkland. These support a high level of holly which provides an internal evergreen screen within the wood. Tree planting has also been undertaken within the parkland area to ensure a future legacy of trees. The hedges, trees and Red Court Woods are notable features which contribute visually to the wider landscape and its character.
- 2.25. **Figure 6** summarises the key attributes of the Site within a Landscape Analysis Plan.

## LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

*Surrey County Council Landscape Character Area GW5 - Hindhead Wooded Greensand Hills*

- 2.26. The Site lies within the Landscape Character Area GW5 - Hindhead Wooded Greensand Hills as defined by the Surrey Landscape Character Assessment: Waverley Borough, April 2015 (**Core Document 7.10**). The extent of the area is plotted on **Figure 7**.
- 2.27. The Hindhead Wooded Greensand Hills is a broad area which wraps around Haslemere, Grayshott and Hindhead and Beacon Hill, at the south-western edge of the County. The area is defined by the settlement edges to the south and west, the extent of underlying Greensand to the east and the transition to lower open Greensand Hills to the north. It is a complex topography, forming steep ridges and valleys, including the Devil's Punch Bowl. The character area is heavily wooded with large, continuous blocks of woodland, including oak and birch, and extensive areas of coniferous plantations. There are some significant areas of Ancient Woodland. Within the woodland there are pockets of heathland and small scale, mainly pastoral, fields bounded by intact hedgerows. There are watercourses along valleys. Woodland encloses the majority of the character area, however, gaps in woodland cover allow long distance views, particularly from higher ground, over the wider landscape to the north and east, such as from the edge of the Devil's Punch Bowl and Gibbet Hill. The A3 passes through the area, partially within a tunnel. There are some minor lanes within the character area, mainly within the south-west corner, but elsewhere access

through the woodland is limited to informal tracks and a comprehensive network of public rights of way.

- 2.28. Landscape character of the South Downs National Park immediately south of the Site – the Greensand Hills Blackdown to Petworth (and within the SDNP Landscape Character Assessment referred to as Type O: Greensand Hills).
- 2.29. The area immediately south of the Site is also part of the South Downs National Park. This landscape has many sensitive natural, cultural and aesthetic/perceptual features that are vulnerable to change. Key landscape sensitivities include:
- High level of perceived naturalness and lack of visible overt human impact.
  - The sense of remoteness arising from the low density of settlement with associated dark skies and low noise levels.
  - Remnant areas of heathland which are important in providing a sense of time depth, a high perceived naturalness, opportunities for countryside access, and a rich biodiversity.
  - Ancient deciduous woodland which provides a sense of enclosure and mystery, a high perceived naturalness, woodland walks, and rich biodiversity. Patterns of early enclosures which provide a sense of time depth and contribute to the intimate scale of the landscape.
  - A dispersed settlement pattern which is important in maintaining a rural and tranquil character.
  - Significant woodland cover comprising an interlocking mosaic of different woodland types and structures - oak-birch woodland, beechwoods, mixed woodland and coniferous plantations on former common land.
  - Woodland clearings support heathy unenclosed commons including ecologically rich habitats - open heather heath, acid grassland, bracken, gorse, woody scrub, and oak-birch woodland.
  - The irregular pattern of fields within clearings and woodland edges support rough grazing.
  - Characterised by a sense of enclosure and remoteness.
- 2.30. For the purposes of the remainder of this assessment the two LCA's are referred to as the Greensand Hills LCAs. The wider LCA areas are also plotted on **Figure 7**.
- 2.31. To summarise, the Greensand Hills comprise a complex topography of small hills intricately divided by small valleys. The tops of the hills comprise scrubby heathland and mixed deciduous and coniferous forest while the valleys are extensively wooded. Most of the valleys are settled, but outside the town the majority of properties are detached, set within large grounds with substantial enclosure provided by trees, shrubs and hedges. As a result, it is a very enclosed landscape with few areas offering open long distant views. Although extensively settled dwellings and roads tend to be hidden within the tree cover and the overall impression is of a densely wooded landscape of considerable aesthetic value.
- 2.32. The Site is entirely characteristic of this landscape character area with the woodland, trees and hedges making the greatest contribution. A detailed analysis of the local building vernacular has been undertaken by Adam Architecture to inform the design



Figure 5: Management issues within Red Court Woods (LCA 4)



Areas within Red Court Wood are becoming infested with pernicious non-native plants such as bamboo. Management of the woodland will seek to eradicate it to restore the native character and biodiversity of the woodland. The overgrown coppice would benefit from thinning.



Cononisation by rhododendron is also smothering the native groundflora and preventing natural regeneration.



While some deadwood is desirable, excessive deadwood from years of no management is a problem.



It would be beneficial to fell an area of conifers planted as a timber crop and replant with broadleaved native trees(LCA 6).



Figure 6: Constraints and opportunities (extract from the Landscape and visual ES chapter)





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of the layout and buildings and is presented in the Design and Access Statement (**Core Document 2.14**).

#### **Landscape character areas within the Site**

2.33. To understand how the Appeal Proposal has been designed to have minimum effect and maximum benefit it is important to assess the landscape character and its quality at a site-specific scale. These more detailed character areas are identified on **Figure 8** and are described below. Photographs illustrating the character of the LCA are presented in **Figure 9**. The characterisation of the Appeal Site into LCA's 1 – 8 is a matter of agreement within the Landscape Statement of Common Ground (**Core Document 5.2, Para. 2.1**).

#### ***Area 1: Fields adjacent to the Midhurst Road***

2.34. Area 1 comprises the two fields which have a western boundary with the Midhurst Road. The key characteristics are:

- mainly open grassland which slopes down from the ridge to the Midhurst Road;
- a strong tree line along the Midhurst Road which provides enclosure to the fields, visual separation to the Midhurst Road and contributes to the setting of the Midhurst Road;
- no productive agricultural use;
- some loss of tranquillity due to the proximity to the Midhurst Road;
- Red Court Woods are an attractive enclosing feature, and
- elevated areas, views out over the surrounding landscape (which is mainly woodland), and
- Visual intrusion associated with pole mounted electricity lines and a small substation within the southwest corner of the southern field.

2.35. The landscape quality of Area 1 is considered to be Medium for the northern field and Medium to High for the southern field.

#### ***Area 2: The two northern fields on top of the ridge***

2.36. The key characteristics are:

- fairly level grassland with no internal landscape features;
- No productive agricultural use;
- strong visual enclosure to the south formed by hedgerows and Red Court Woods;
- character influenced by the housing on the edge of Haslemere (at Scotlands Close and by the housing within Phase 1 when complete);
- some views of the distant wooded ridge in the vicinity of Hindhead and Gibbet Hill but filtered by the housing at Scotlands Close and the tree cover within the gardens, and
- very similar in character to the field to the northeast which the Inspector for the Public Inquiry for Phase 1 did not consider to be a Valued Landscape.

2.37. The landscape quality of the field where it is proposed to build the houses is considered to be Medium.

#### ***Area 3: The Parkland***

2.38. This is an area of open woodland which lies immediately south of Area 2. It occupies a shoulder of land which slopes gently to the south. It was until a few years ago an unmanaged area of the woodland that was suffering from neglect. The understorey of undesirable species such as rhododendron has been removed, and it has been replanted to provide a long-term succession of trees. The key characteristics are:

- gently sloping compared to the main woodland area where slopes are steep;
- semi-open parkland structure with strong visual enclosure provided by the wood and boundary features, and
- tranquil.

2.39. The landscape quality of the parkland is considered to be High.

#### ***Area 4: Red Court Wood***

2.40. The woods occupy approximately a quarter of the landholding, the key characteristics are:

- mature, mainly deciduous woodland occupying steeply sloping land;
- some evergreens such as Scots Pine and Thuya punctuate the deciduous canopy, becoming more prominent features when the deciduous vegetation is out of leaf;
- permeated by a network of tracks;
- areas of relatively undisturbed natural ground flora, mainly on the southern edge;
- areas being colonised by bamboo and rhododendron;
- evidence of lack of management such as excessive deadwood and uncleared fallen timber, and
- tranquil.

2.41. The landscape quality of Red Court Woods is considered to be High with some areas of Medium quality due to the presence of alien invasive species.

#### ***Area 5: Southern Pasture***

2.42. These fields lie immediately south of Red Court Woods and slope gently down to Bell Vale Lane. The key characteristics are:

- open, generally species poor grassland but some pockets of species rich historic meadow;
- some colonisation of birch, hazel, oak and woodland flora from the boundary features;
- tranquil;
- warm south facing aspect;
- views across the valley to the wooded slopes within the SDNP giving a sense of openness but also a feeling of enclosure by the woodland on the valley sides, and
- marred by the pole mounted electricity line which runs along the northern boundary.



Figure 8: Landscape character areas within the Site (extract from the Landscape and Visual ES chapter)

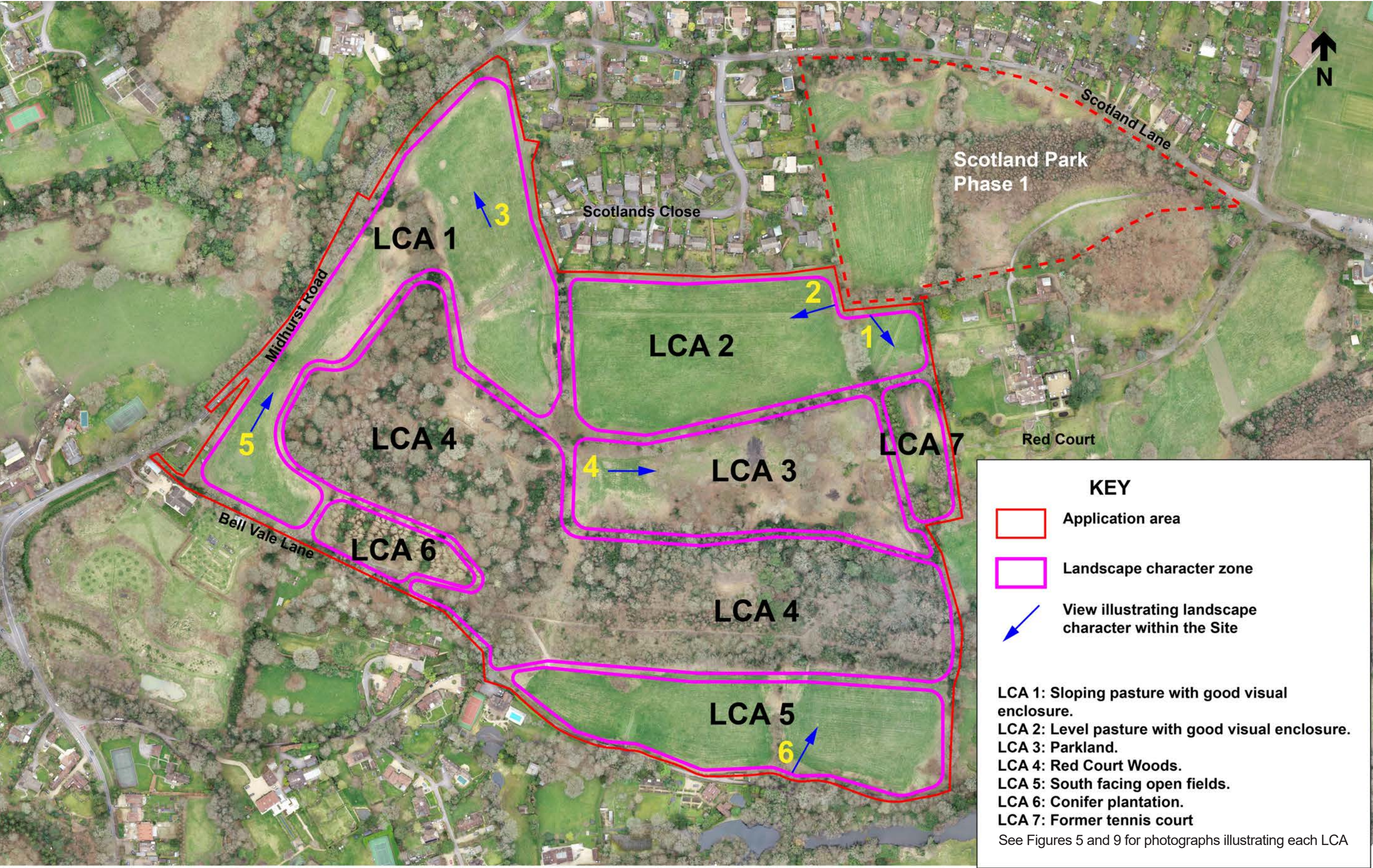




Figure 9: Photographic illustrations of landscape character areas within the Appeal Site



View 1: the small field adjacent to Red Court where it is proposed to build self build plots up to 1.5 storeys (within LCA 2, see Figure 8 for location).



View 4: the parkland, proposed as a public green space, LCA 3.



View 2: the main field where the majority of the proposed urban area will be located within LCA 2, see Figure 8 for location)..



View 5: The southwest field where it is proposed to accommodate the access road, lodge and SANG, LCA 1.



View 3: the western field where is is proposed to locate dwellings, LCA 1.



View 6: The southern fields adjacent to Bell Vale Lane which will become SANG LCA 5.



2.43. The landscape quality of the southern fields is considered to be Medium to High (reduced from High due to the detracting influence of the overhead electricity line).

#### Area 6: Coniferous Plantation

2.44. This is the only unnatural stand of trees within the wood planted as a timber crop. It comprises unnatural rows of larch alternating with Douglas Fir. The key characteristics are:

- trees in unnatural straight rows and unnatural alternation of species;
- trees tall and straight with limited side growth, some collapsing as they near the end of their productive growth;
- the stand appears incongruous in views that take in the context and character of the wider woodland;
- no native shrub understorey or good native herb layer, and

2.45. The landscape quality of the conifer plantation is considered to be Low – Medium.

#### Area 7: Former Tennis Court

2.46. This area was previously a tennis court associated with Red Court. The key characteristics of which are:

- enclosed between non-native conifers which were planted to form the hedge to the courts but have now grown to be very tall, forming a dominant feature within the Site;
- tarmac surface of the derelict court visible;
- ground levels artificial due to the creation of a flat platform to accommodate the courts;
- strong sense of enclosure to the north, east and west, and
- slightly more open, level lawn area which sets the courts back from the steeper wooded slopes further to the south.

2.47. The landscape quality of the former court is considered to be Low.

#### Landscape Value

2.48. In terms of policy the Appeal Site is clearly a valued landscape, being situated within an AONB, however, for practical reasons AONB cover a block of land and do not exclude smaller areas of landscape within the blocks which might not meet the criteria. If, however, there is pressure to develop within an AONB landscape for non-landscape reasons, such as acute housing need, then it is preferable to develop areas within an AONB that meet fewer landscape value criteria and so are less valued than other areas. This is reflected to some extent in para.177 of the NPPF which says that in considering whether there are exceptional circumstances to justify major development regard must be had to, inter alia, “*any detrimental effect on the environment, the landscape ... and the extent to which that could be moderated*”. The relevance of Paragraph 177 is covered more fully in Mr Collins Proof of Evidence. The Natural England boundary review criteria also help in the identification of where value can be increased. The criteria are set out in Table 1.

**Table 1: Determining Landscape Value**

Factor definition	Examples of indicators	Evidence within the Site	Value
<b>Natural heritage</b>  (Landscape with clear evidence of ecological, geological, geomorphological or physiographic interest which contribute positively to the landscape)	Presence of wildlife and habitats of ecological interest that contribute to sense of place.  Extent and survival of semi-natural habitat that is characteristic of the landscape type.  Presence of distinctive geological, geomorphological or pedological features  Landscape which contains valued natural capital assets that contribute to ecosystem services, for example distinctive ecological communities and habitats that form the basis of ecological networks.  Landscape which makes an identified contribution to a nature recovery/ green infrastructure network	Historic woodland but with some alien interventions such as bamboo, rhododendron, coniferous plantation and lack of management. Some species rich grassland but generally poor.	<b>Medium</b> for Red Court Woods and the southern and western fields, Low for the central northern and eastern fields.
<b>Cultural heritage</b>  (Landscape with clear evidence of archaeological, historical or cultural interest which contribute positively to the landscape)	Presence of historic landmark structures or designed landscape elements (e.g. follies, monuments, avenues, tree roundels).  Presence of historic parks and gardens, and designed landscapes Landscape which contributes to the significance of heritage assets, for example forming the setting of heritage assets (especially if identified in specialist studies).  Landscape which offers a dimension of time depth. This includes natural time depth, e.g. presence of features such as glaciers and peat bogs and cultural time depth e.g. presence of relic farmsteads, ruins, historic field patterns, historic rights of way (e.g. drove roads, salt ways, tracks associated with past industrial activity).	A weak relationship with Red Court with some estate fencing near the site of the former tennis court which was once part of Red Court but a late 20 <sup>th</sup> Century feature.  WWII gun emplacement adjacent to the Midhurst Road.  Some hedgebanks within Red Court Wood.	<b>Low</b>



Factor and definition	Examples of indicators	Evidence within the Site	Value
<b>Landscape Condition</b>  (Landscape which is in a good physical state both with regard to individual elements and overall landscape structure)	<p>Good physical condition/ intactness of individual landscape elements (e.g., walls, parkland, trees).</p> <p>Good health of elements such as good water quality, good soil health Strong landscape structure (e.g. intact historic field patterns).</p> <p>Absence of detracting/ incongruous features (or features are present but have little influence).</p>	<p>Generally good but the woodland would benefit if brought into positive management. Tennis court area and coniferous plantation poor.</p> <p>Few detracting features apart from the overhead electricity line.</p>	<b>Medium</b>
<b>Associations</b>  (Landscape which is connected with notable people, events and the arts)	<p>Associations with well-known literature, poetry, art, TV/film and music that contribute to perceptions of the landscape.</p> <p>Associations with science or other technical achievements Links to a notable historical event Associations with a famous person or people.</p>	<p>No known cultural associations.</p>	<b>Low</b>
<b>Distinctiveness</b>  (Landscape that has a strong sense of identity)	<p>Landscape character that has a strong sense of place (showing strength of expression of landscape characteristics).</p> <p>Presence of distinctive features which are identified as being characteristic of a particular place Presence of rare or unusual features, especially those that help to confer a strong sense of place or identity.</p> <p>Landscape which makes an important contribution to the character or identity of a settlement.</p> <p>Gateways/approaches which provides a clear sense of arrival and contribute to the character of the settlement (may be ancient/historic).</p>	<p>Topography, woodland and enclosed fields are characteristic of the Greensand Hills LCA but northern fields influenced by the urban edge of Haslemere and are typical of many fields on the edges of settlements.</p>	<p><b>Medium</b> for Red Court Woods and the southern and western fields,</p> <p><b>Low</b> for the central northern and eastern fields.</p>
<b>Recreation</b>	Presence of open access land, common land and public rights of way (particularly	Currently not accessible to the	<b>Low/ Medium</b>

Factor and definition	Examples of indicators	Evidence within the Site	Value
(Landscape offering recreational opportunities where experience of landscape is important)	<p>National Trails, long distance trails, Coastal Paths and Core Paths) where appreciation of landscape is a feature.</p> <p>Areas with good accessibility that provide opportunities for outdoor recreation and spiritual experience/ inspiration.</p> <p>Presence of town and village greens.</p> <p>Other physical evidence of recreational use where experience of landscape is important.</p> <p>Landscape that forms part of a view that is important to the enjoyment of a recreational activity.</p>	<p>public apart from the PRoW which runs along the boundary with the Midhurst Road. A Permissive Footpath will be provided as part of Phase 1 allowing foot traffic through the estate between Scotland Lane and Bell Vale Lane.</p>	
<b>Perceptual Scenic</b>  (Landscape that appeals to the senses, primarily the visual sense)	<p>Distinctive features, or distinctive combinations of features, such as dramatic or striking landform or harmonious combinations of land cover.</p> <p>Strong aesthetic qualities such as scale, form, colour and texture Presence of natural lines in the landscape (e.g. natural ridgelines, woodland edges, river corridors, coastal edges).</p> <p>Visual diversity or contrasts which contributes to the appreciation of the landscape.</p> <p>Memorable/ distinctive views and landmarks, or landscape which contributes to distinctive views and landmarks.</p>	<p>The part of the Site away from the influence of the urban edge of Haslemere. The Site has good perceptual scenic qualities.</p>	<p><b>High</b> for Red Court Woods and the southern fields, <b>Low</b> for the northern and western fields.</p>
<b>Perceptual Wilderness and Tranquillity</b>  (Landscape with a strong perceptual value notably wildness, tranquillity and/or dark skies)	<p>High levels of tranquillity or perceptions of tranquillity, including perceived links to nature, dark skies, presence of wildlife/ birdsong and relative peace and quiet.</p> <p>Presence of wild land and perceptions of relative wildness (resulting from a high degree of perceived naturalness, rugged or otherwise challenging terrain, remoteness from public mechanised access and lack of modern artefacts).</p>	<p>The southern part of the Site has good perceptual wilderness and tranquillity qualities. It borders the SDNP and its dark skies zone.</p>	<p><b>Low to Medium</b> for the northern and western fields, <b>High</b> for Red Court Woods and the southern fields.</p>



Factor definition and	Examples of indicators	Evidence within the Site	Value
	Sense of particular remoteness, seclusion or openness.  Dark night skies.		
<b>Functional</b>  (Landscape which performs a clearly identifiable and valuable function, particularly in the healthy functioning of the landscape)	Landscapes and landscape elements that contribute to the healthy functioning of the landscape, e.g. natural hydrological systems/ floodplains, areas of undisturbed and healthy soils, areas that form carbon sinks such as peat bogs, woodlands and oceans, areas of diverse landcover (benefits pest regulation), pollinator-rich habitats such as wildflower meadows.  Areas that form an important part of a multifunctional Green Infrastructure network.  Landscapes and landscape elements that have strong physical or functional links with an adjacent national landscape designation, or are important to the appreciation of the designated landscape and its special qualities.	Some beneficial ecosystem function but fields of limited agricultural or wildlife value, substantial opportunities for enhanced function.	<b>High</b> for Red Court Woods and Medium for the southern, western and northern fields.

### Landscape Susceptibility

2.49. Landscape susceptibility may be regarded as a measure of the resilience, or robustness, of a landscape to withstand specified change arising from development types or land management practices, without undue negative effects on the landscape and visual baseline and their value – such as changes to valued attributes of baseline landscape character and the visual resource. Landscape sensitivity assessment is a process that assesses the resilience / robustness of landscape character and the visual resource – and what we value - to a defined change, or changes. The criteria for determining Susceptibility have been set out in **Appendix 1**.

2.50. Aspects of the Site that make it potentially susceptible to change through development are:

- ridge top location open to the north;
- high levels of tree cover (Red Court Woods) limiting areas that could be developed without excessive tree loss;
- areas of steeply sloping ground, and
- pasture conferring rural character.

2.51. Aspects of the Site that allow it to absorb development include:

- the northern fields have strong visual enclosure from tree cover to the east, south and west;

- fairly level ridge top with no landscape features of value within the northern fields;
- majority of grassland is improved but is not agriculturally productive;
- northern fields visually influenced by existing housing on the edge of the town, and
- no significant views from the elevated ground to the north, south, east and west due to high tree cover within the surrounding landscape.

2.52. It is concluded that Red Court Woods (LCA 4) and the southern fields (LCA 5) have a High susceptibility to urban development and can only absorb a small amount of low key development of appropriate built form without significant adverse landscape effects, but of the northern fields LCA 1 and LCA 2 have a Medium susceptibility where an urban extension to Haslemere could be accommodated without significant adverse effects to the wider landscape.

### Landscape Sensitivity

2.53. Landscape sensitivity is determined by combining landscape quality with susceptibility as set out in the methodology, within **Appendix 1**. The landscape quality of Red Court Woods (LCA 4) and the southern fields (LCA 5) is High and their susceptibility to residential development is High, leading to a High Landscape Sensitivity. In contrast, the landscape quality of the northern fields (LCA 1 and LCA2) is Medium and their susceptibility to development is Medium, resulting in a Medium Landscape Sensitivity. The landscape quality of the southern field in LCA 1 is High and the susceptibility Medium resulting in a Medium/High sensitivity.

### Identification of potential visual receptors

2.54. Potential visual receptors are few and this is agreed within the Statement of Common Ground (**Core Document 5.3**) which states:

*“Although the appeal site is set on higher ground, views are largely screened from the wider landscape due to a combination of topography and high tree cover. Existing visual receptors include:*

*Existing views towards the site from housing within Scotland Close, future views from the housing under construction (Scotland Park Phase I), from properties along Midhurst Road and Bell Lane, and from Red Court.*

#### *Existing Views from Roads*

*There are views towards the site from traffic passing along Midhurst Road and Bell Vale Lane.*

#### *Existing Views from Public Rights of Way (PROW)*

*There are views into the site from users of the public footpath running alongside Midhurst Road”.*



- 2.55. I assess the visual effect of the Appeal Proposal on these receptors in this Proof of Evidence.

### 3 LANDSCAPE REASONS FOR REFUSAL

#### INTRODUCTION

- 3.1. This section is a response to Reason 1 for Refusal as stated in the Decision Notice (**Core Documents 4.1 and 4.2**), that:

*“The proposal would fail to preserve and enhance the landscape and scenic beauty of the AONB and the setting of the South Downs National Park and would result in major development that would harm the landscape character, without exceptional circumstances. The quantum of development would also harm the intrinsic character and beauty of the Countryside. The proposal would be contrary to Policies SP2, RE1 and RE3 of the Local Plan Part 1 (2018), Policies DM11 and DM15 of the Local Plan Part 2 (2023), Policy H9 of the Haslemere Neighbourhood Plan and paragraphs 176, 177 and 180 of the NPPF”.*

- 3.2. Since there are many elements to this, I have broken it down and respond to each of the elements in turn.

- 3.3. First, I look at “*the quantum of development*” since this is an opportunity to describe the design rationale for locating the residential elements where they are shown on the Land Use Plan (Adam Architecture Drawing 6046 / PL 04A, **Figure 9**) and the Illustrative Masterplan (Adam architecture Drawing 6046 / PL 03, **Figure 10**).

- 3.4. Secondly, I respond to the issue that it “*would result in major development which would also harm the intrinsic character, without exceptional circumstances.*” It is the Appellants case that exceptional circumstances do apply for a variety of reasons as set out in the evidence of Mr Collins. Paragraph 177 is therefore engaged which acknowledges that there can be harms if certain criteria are met. Para 177 states:

*“Consideration of such applications should include an assessment of.... c) any detrimental effect on the environment, the landscape and recreational opportunities, and the extent to which that could be moderated”.*

- 3.5. I therefore identify the harms.

- 3.6. Thirdly, I describe how the harms can be moderated and fourthly set out the landscape and visual benefits to allow the Inspector to make the overall planning balance which will include non-landscape benefits.

- 3.7. Fifthly, I respond to more specific points made in the WBC Statement of Case (**Core Document 5.2**) and specific points raised by the SHAONB Adviser, the SDNP and the Haslemere South Residents Association and provide a detailed response to the policies where not previously covered.

- 3.8. Finally, my proof presents an overview of the landscape and visual issues associated with potential alternative development sites within the borough, both within the AONB

and outside it, that might also contribute to meeting housing need. This exercise has been undertaken to contribute to satisfying section b) of para 177 which requires:

*“the cost of, and scope for, developing outside the designated area, or meeting the need for it in some other way”* to be considered.

#### 1: THE QUANTUM OF DEVELOPMENT

- 3.9. The landscape and visual analysis informed the choice of areas within which to locate the proposed dwellings. The key constraints and opportunities are summarised on **Figure 6**. The Developed Area will lie immediately alongside the current southern limit of the urban area of Haslemere. The proposed dwellings to the north and west will lie adjacent to detached dwellings within Scotlands Close and to the east and northeast by residential properties and buildings in the Red Court Estate and Phase 1. The proposed dwellings will replace three small fields which are not part of a wider, active, productive, agricultural unit. The remaining Wider Land Holding will be retained as publicly accessible green space and with an access road connecting to the Midhurst Road. The extent and relationship of the Developed Area and Wider Land Holding are defined within the Land Use Plan, **Figure 10** and the Illustrative Block Plan (**Figure 11**).

- 3.10. It is standard practice to undertake computer analysis to identify the likely extent of visibility of a proposed development within the wider landscape, typically known as the Theoretical Zone of Visual Influence. This is based on an analysis of the height of the Appeal Proposal with existing and proposed topography. In areas where tree cover is high, tree cover is often added to the model. In this instance the tree cover in the surrounding landscape is so extensive that it is not possible to accurately model it since only basic assumptions can be made about tree heights without surveying the whole district. Red Court Wood affords a substantial and effective screen to the fields when viewed from the south, including land within the SDNP.

- 3.11. For this reason, an alternative approach was used to determine the Zone of Visual Influence of the Appeal Proposal. Photographs were taken from three high points within the main residential areas, the small field to the east adjacent to Red Court, the main central field and the field to the east. Within each field an elevated platform was positioned at the high point (in terms of ground level and proposed maximum building parameter height within the field, see Adam Architecture Building Height Parameters Plan 6046\_PL06, **Figure 12**). For the main central area this was 10.5m above ground level, for the east field 9m and the west field 9.5m (although the maximum building height in the east field has now been lowered to 5m above ground level). A series of photographic pans were taken at these heights to ascertain the extent of visibility within the surrounding landscape and identify sensitive receptors. The camera was set at a 50mm, panning, portrait mode. The photographs were taken on the 18<sup>th</sup> March 2022, a time when the deciduous vegetation was out of leaf, a time of greatest visibility across the landscape. When the deciduous trees are in leaf the screening effect is far more substantial.

- 3.12. This exercise is a more accurate way of ascertaining potential visibility compared with wire frame photomontages because the high level of tree cover obscures the existing topography and there are no key markers in the landscape to survey, making accurate location of a wire frame model onto a viewpoint photograph open to errors.



Figure 10:  
Land Use Plan

Note: for this POE I have drawn on the boundaries of the Scout Land and Forest School Land in orange and annotated the Developed Area and the Wider Land Holding for clarity.



Rev	Date	Description	Initials
A	01/2023	Park lodge removed along entrance approach Addition of cycleway along entrance approach Central hedged retained, units removed Reduction in development area and increase in open space.	AJ/ATM /CT/BPV

PROJECT	Scotland Park
TITLE:	Land Use
SCALE:	1:1250 @ A1, 1:2500 @ A3
DATE:	June 2022
DRAWING No:	6046 / PL 04A
DRAWN BY:	ATM/LL/HM/AA

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Figure 11:  
Illustrative  
Block Plan



A	01/2023	Park lodge removed along entrance approach Refined Gate lodge building along Midhurst Road Addition of Rambler's Pavilion, reduced retaining wall height Central hedged retained, units removed Revised Landscape & Drainage design in West and South Areas	AJ/ATM/CT
Rev	Date	Description	Initials

PROJECT Scotland Park

TITLE: Illustrative Block (Site) Plan

SCALE: 1:1250 @ A1

DATE: June 2022

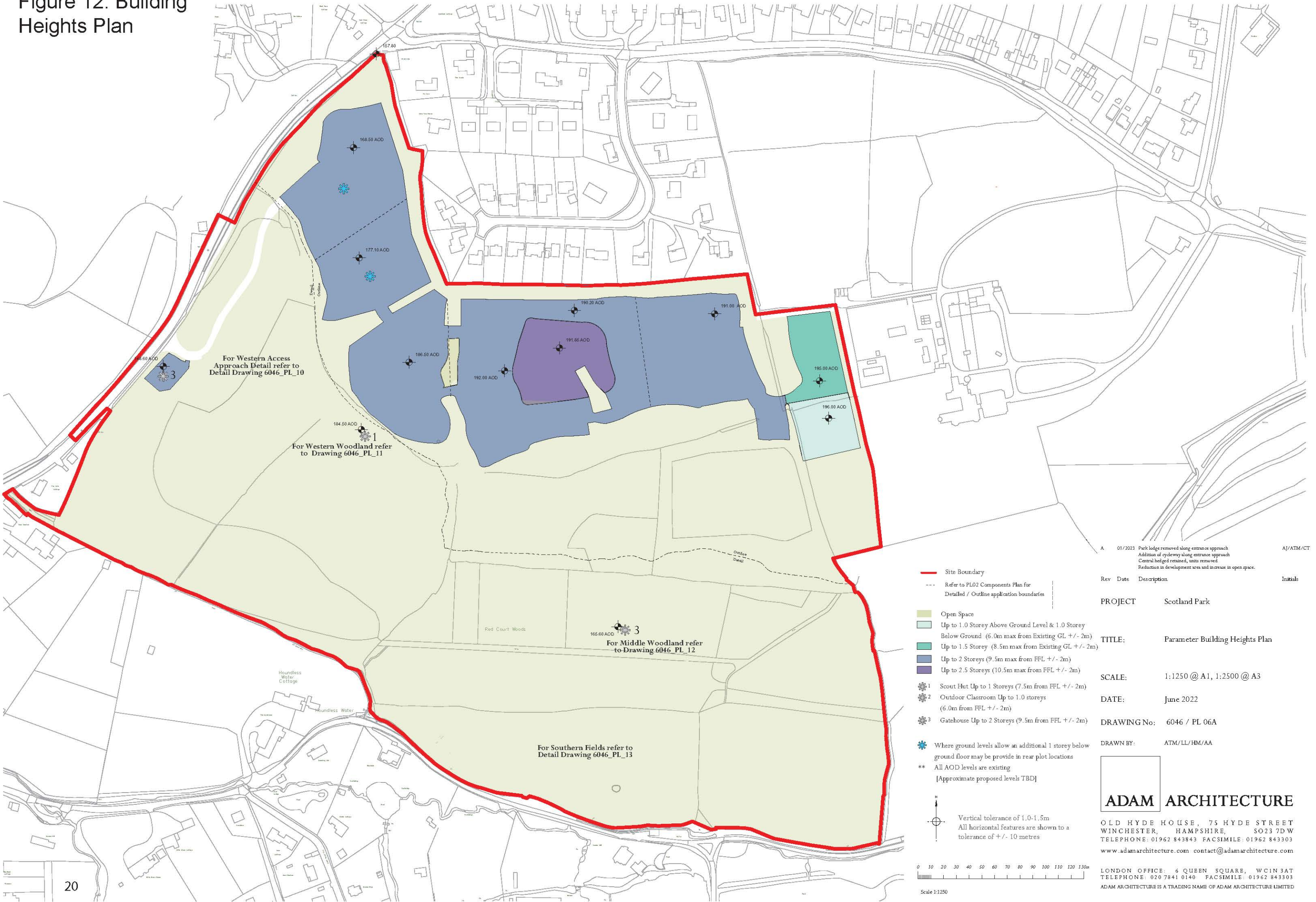
DRAWING No: 6046 / PL 03A

DRAWN BY: ATM/LL/HM/AA

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Figure 12: Building Heights Plan





- 3.13. The design team wanted to be certain that the Appeal Proposal would not be visible from the landscape to the south, west and east of the Site. While there are potentially far-reaching views to the north, the high level of tree cover on the distant high ground to the north means that there are very few views from publicly accessible areas to the north have been identified. Part of the Appeal Proposal will be visible from several private properties to the north and the effect of these on residents is assessed.
- 3.14. The locations of where the elevated platforms were positioned are shown on **Figure 13.1** The series of panoramic photographs taken from the top of the platform are presented in **Figures 13.2-13.9**.
- 3.15. Potential views of the proposed main residential area are largely confined to a few residents within properties which overlook the Site, mainly those within Scotlands Close and further afield a few properties within St Andrews Close, Hedgehog Lane and Scotland Drive. The only significant views into the Site from the surrounding highway network is along a short stretch of the Midhurst Road. The only significant views from Public Rights of Way are from Haslemere CP 597 which runs alongside the Midhurst Road.
- 3.16. Significant adverse effects on visual amenity have not been cited as a reason for refusal aside from references to:
- Views afforded by a few residents to the southside of Scotlands Close.
  - More distant and glimpsed views afforded by a few residents within properties on St Andrews Close, Hedgehog Lane and Scotland Drive.
  - Users of Public Rights of Way Haslemere CP 597 which runs alongside the Midhurst Road.
  - Views afforded to travellers as they pass the proposed site access along the Midhurst Road.
- 3.17. The last two receptors are primarily affected by the proposed road access which I will comment on later.
- 3.18. Footpath CP 21a which heads north up to Gibbet Hill. At the time of the application views were obscured by trees, but trees have recently been felled to open up views from a very localised viewpoint. As a result, there are now glimpsed views towards the Site from the bench. Views from this area have been highlighted by the Haslemere South Residents Association. The view presented in the objection by the HSRA objection document (**Core Document 3.2**). The image used has been either taken with a telephoto lens or has been enlarged, and is not representative of the view with the naked human eye, since the viewing distance is distance of approx. 3.5km.
- 3.19. Residential development is not proposed within the more sensitive parts of the Site, including the fields to the south, which lie immediately north of Bell Vale Lane and in the field through which it is proposed to access the Site (apart from a proposed lodge). Residential development is not proposed within Red Court Woods or in the parkland (aside from a single lodge) due to landscape, visual constraints.
- 3.20. The quantum of development has been informed by landscape and visual analysis to minimise any adverse landscape and visual impacts within the Site and to the surrounding area, including the wider AONB and adjacent SDNP, while making efficient use of the land. This is why the majority of the Site will remain as countryside, the quality and character of which will be enhanced to the benefit of the AONB and those who enjoy it.
- 3.21. The Appeal scheme has been updated during the course of the determination process to respond to statutory consultee and officer comments, including those of the Design Officer (**Core Document 3.22**). The changes are summarised on page 12 of the Design Report Addendum to the Design & Access Statement & Response to Case Officer Comments, Adam Architecture (**Figure 14** and **Core Document 2.15**).
- 3.22. This has led to increased wildlife corridors and a slightly reduced number of units to 111. If development is to proceed within land designated as AONB, then it is important that the land is used most efficiently in terms of housing numbers delivered while minimising adverse effects on the AONB. Now that design changes suggested by WBC have been incorporated into the scheme, in my opinion, the correct balance has been struck in terms of the quantum of development as defined by the areas chosen for development and the proposed density and height parameters while minimising adverse landscape and visual effects on the AONB. I assume following the completion of this process that WBC has no design-based reason for refusal.
- 3.23. In summary, Reason 1 of the refusal indicates that it is the quantum of development that would *“also harm the intrinsic character and beauty of the Countryside”*, implying that some development would be acceptable. In my opinion the capacity of the Appeal Site to absorb urban development has been carefully assessed and an appropriate quantum of development proposed. In terms of housing provision, the Appeal Proposal will make best use of the land with the least landscape and visual harms.
- ## 2: HARMS TO THE SHAONB AND COUNTRYSIDE
- 3.24. It is the Appellants case that exceptional circumstances do apply for a variety of reasons as set out in the Proof of Evidence of Mr Collins. Paragraph 177 is therefore engaged which acknowledges that there can be harms if certain criteria are met. Para 177 states:
- “Consideration of such applications should include an assessment of.... c) any detrimental effect on the environment, the landscape and recreational opportunities, and the extent to which that could be moderated”.*
- 3.25. It implies that some harms may be acceptable as long as certain criteria are met and assessed in the planning balance. It is agreed in the Landscape Statement of Common Ground (**Core Document 5.3, Para 2.1**) that the two main areas of adverse landscape and visual effects will be confined to LCA 1 and LCA 2 prior to mitigation. In my opinion they are:
- 1) A change in the character of three grass fields to a residential area, perceived by some as contrary to the character of the AONB, with adverse visual effects to a few residents on the south and west side of Scotlands Close.
  - 2) A change in landscape character and visual effects associated with the proposed Midhurst Road access.



Figure 13.1: Determination of the Zone of Visual Influence (Location of photographs taken from an elevated platform, extract from the ES chapter)





Figure 13.2: C1 & C2: Zone of Visual Influence (Photographs)

Dwellings at Meadowlands Drive



View C1: Looking north illustrating the view across Haslemere to the high ground in the vicinity of Hindhead. The high level of tree cover in this area restricts views back to the Site. The Site is overlooked by properties along Scotlands Close and Meadowlands Drive. A few private properties will afford views of part of the Proposed Development but they are distant and any views from the north will look across to the urban area of Haslemere and the site would be seen in this context. The Proposed development would be seen set behind the houses in Scotlands Close. The landowner has planted a tree belt along the northern boundary and this will eventually screen the Proposed Development from Scotlands Close and potential views to the north.

Dwelling at Park Road



View C2: This is a continuation of the pan looking northeast. Consent has been granted for 50 dwellings in land immediately to the northeast and the field visible to the northeast is part of this development and will extend the urban edge of Haslemere up to the Site boundary. The field to the east is part of this Proposed Development. Red Court lies further to the east, screened by tree cover.



Figure 13.3: C3 & C4: Zone of Visual Influence (Photographs)



View C3: The view looking southeast, illustrating how the mainly layers of tree cover on the ridge will screen the Proposed Development from the southeast, although, like the landscape to the north, the high level of tree cover to the south means there is only one significant view from this area (View 16).

View C4: Looking southwest, again illustrating the screening afforded by the layers of tree cover on the ridge.





**Figure 13.4: C5 & E1: Zone of Visual Influence (Photographs)**



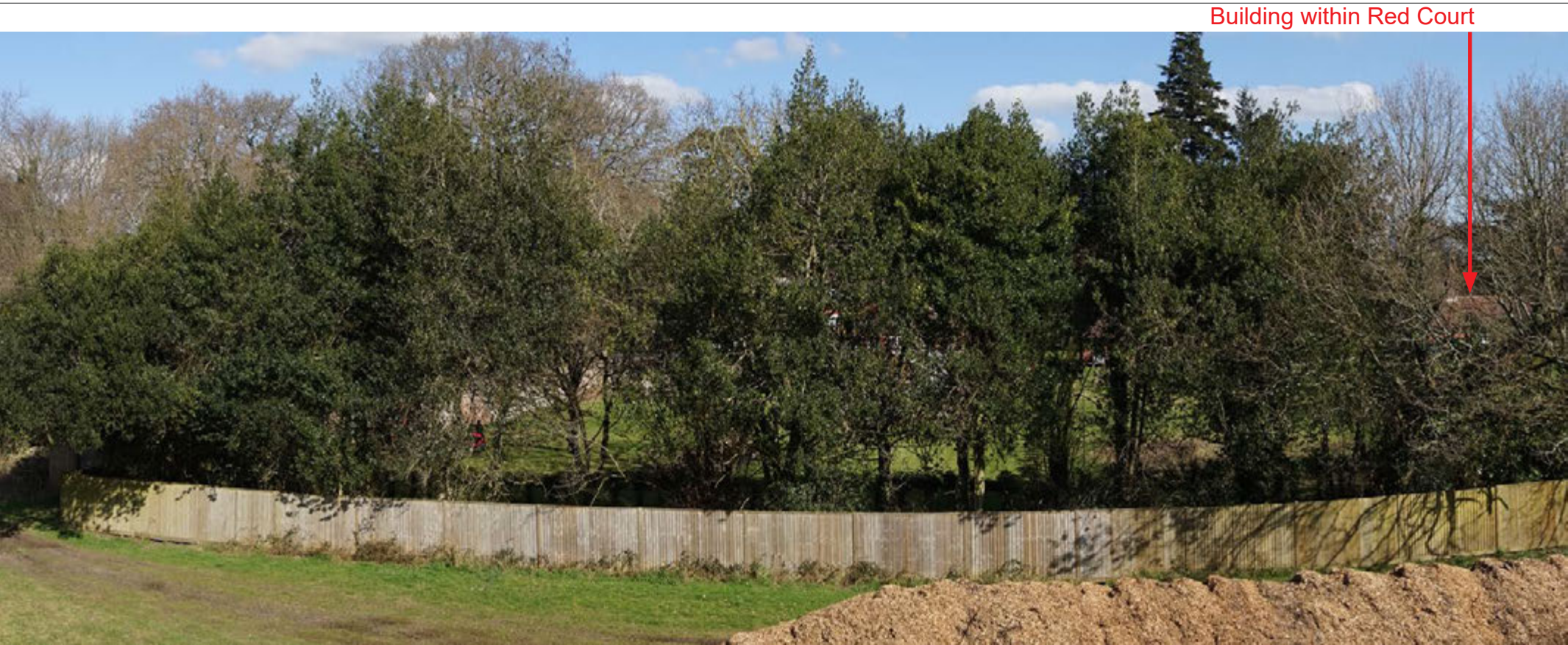
View C5: The view looking west. Some of the foreground hedge will be lost as a result of the Proposed Development but tree cover within Red Court Wood will still provide screening.

View E1: A view from the east field, which lies adjacent to Red Court, looking north. The field immediately to the north will become a residential area and will screen any development within this part of the Site. The intervening tall hedge will remain.





Figure 13.5: E2 & E3: Zone of Visual Influence (Photographs)



View E2: Looking east into the grounds of Red Court. Intervisibility will be limited due to the intervening line of holly trees. Evergreen screen planting has also been undertaken along this boundary, within the grounds of Red Court, including an yew hedge. This planting is protected by a covenant. Once established there will be very little inter-visibility between the two landholdings. It is proposed to plant a line of deciduous trees within the Site, adjacent to the fence, to ensure complete screening is achieved.

The camera height was set at 9m but the maximum building height in the parameter plan has subsequently been reduced to 5m.

E3: This is a view to the south east, illustrating the high level of tree cover between the Site, the grounds of Red Court and the wider countryside.

The camera height was set at 9m but the maximum building height in the parameter plan has subsequently been reduced to 5m.





**Figure 13.6: E4 & E5: Zone of Visual Influence (Photographs)**



View E4: The view to the southwest, illustrating the high level of screening tree cover on the boundary, which will be retained. Some of the evergreen conifers, behind the foreground tree cover, will be removed, but screening will be maintained by the trees within Red Court Wood.

View E5: Looking west into the central field of the main residential area of the Proposed Development. The foreground hedge will be retained.





Figure 13.7: W1 & W2: Zone of Visual Influence (Photographs)



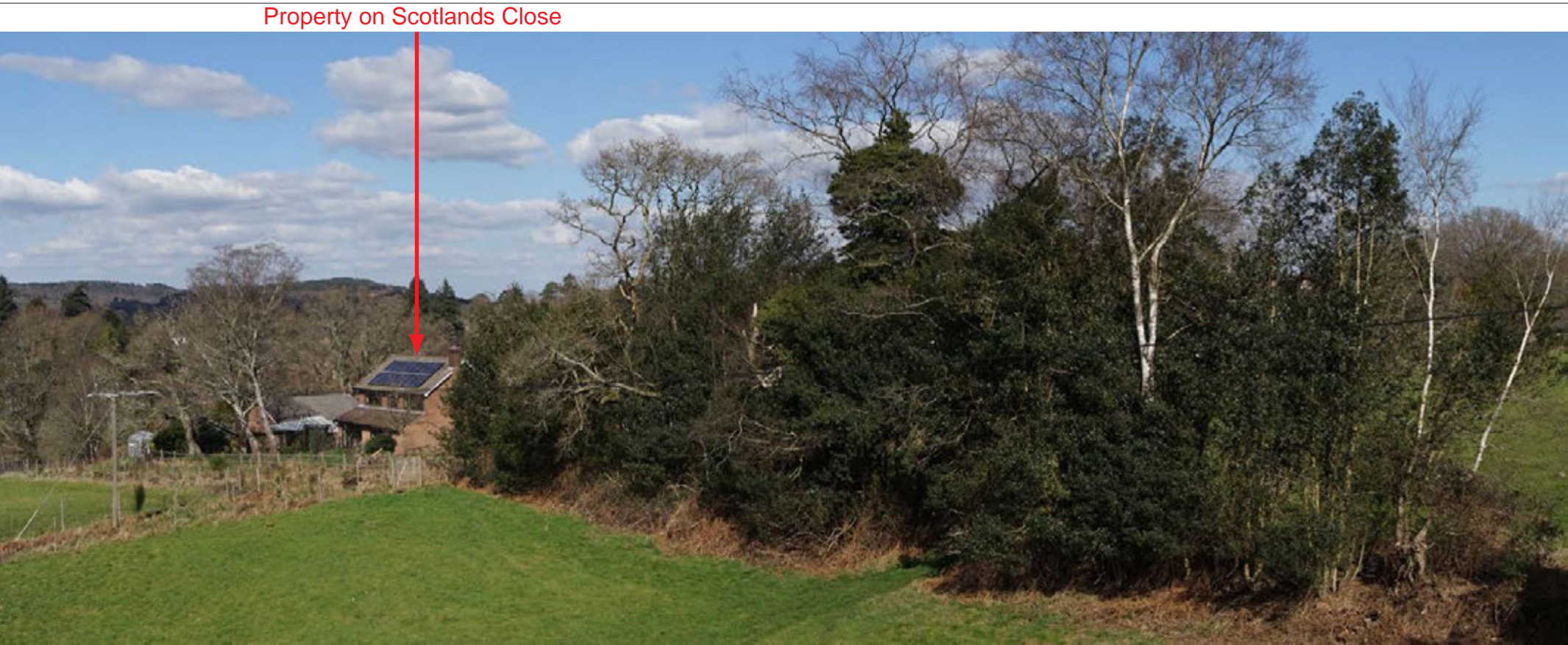
View W1: This is the start of the pan within a highpoint within the west field, looking west, illustrating the high level of screening tree cover. The foreground tree cover will be retained.

View 2: The view looking northeast, over the western field which drops down to the Midhurst Road. The screening effect of the perimeter trees becomes greater lower down the slope. While the extent of view is extensive there are no significant views from publicly accessible areas. Housing within the Proposed Development will be visible from a few properties within the vicinity of Hedgehog Lane.





Figure 13.8: W3 & W4: Zone of Visual Influence (Photographs)



View W3: Looking northeast illustrating the relationship with a property on Scotlands Close. A tree belt has been planted within the Site to reduce the inter-visibility between properties along this boundary.

View W4: Looking southeast into the central field within the Site.





**Figure 13.9: W5: Zone of Visual Influence (Photographs)**



View W5: Looking south east, illustrating the high level of screening provided by Red Court Wood.