

Proposed Blackwell Farm Access Road  
Landscape and Visual Appraisal

Land Management Services Ltd

January 2018



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## 1. Introduction

Land Management Services Ltd was commissioned by Artington, Compton, Wanborough and Worplesdon Parish Councils to prepare a Landscape and Visual Appraisal of the proposed alignment for the access road to the proposed Blackwell Farm development site from the A31 Hog's Back. The current site layout/masterplan for Blackwell Farm is shown on Figure 1 and an aerial photograph showing the 'Feasible Option' access road alignment is included as Figure 2.

As there is only limited information on the proposed access road (information is largely limited to a proposed alignment and there is little supporting information such as ecology or arboricultural surveys which would inform an assessment of impacts and effects), this report takes the form of a Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA). The report draws on our full LVIA methodology (set out in Appendix 1) in order to inform preliminary impact assessments and conclusions.

The 'Feasible Option' access road alignment runs north from the A31, crossing the A31/A3 eastbound slip road and then running north west parallel, and to the south of, the existing single track lane to the small settlement at Down Place. The proposed alignment then runs directly north to the east of the lane to Down Place to the proposed residential development site at Blackwell Farm. The route runs directly down the north escarpment to the Hog's Back. The upper sections of the route are located within the Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty AONB (see Figure 3, Section 5).

Land Management Services Ltd (LMS) was also commissioned in 2016 to prepare a Natural Beauty Evaluation of the Hog's Back for the area in the vicinity of Blackwell Farm, Down Place and Homestead Farm, which includes the location for the proposed access road. This earlier report (issued in May 2016) was prepared in response to the Natural Beauty Evaluation prepared by HDA on behalf of Surrey County Council, as part of the countywide Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and Area of Great Landscape Value (AGLV) boundary review (HDA October 2013). The conclusions of this earlier report are relevant to this LVA in that the LMS review concluded that land within the AGLV, recommended for inclusion within a revised AONB boundary (as described in the HDA report), should be extended to include land in the vicinity of Blackwell Farm, as it was argued this landscape strongly reflects many characteristics associated with the natural beauty and scenic qualities of the adjacent AONB. The findings of the report and the relevance to this LVA are discussed in more detail in Section 5 of this LVA.



Figure 1: Blackwell Farm Illustrative Site Layout

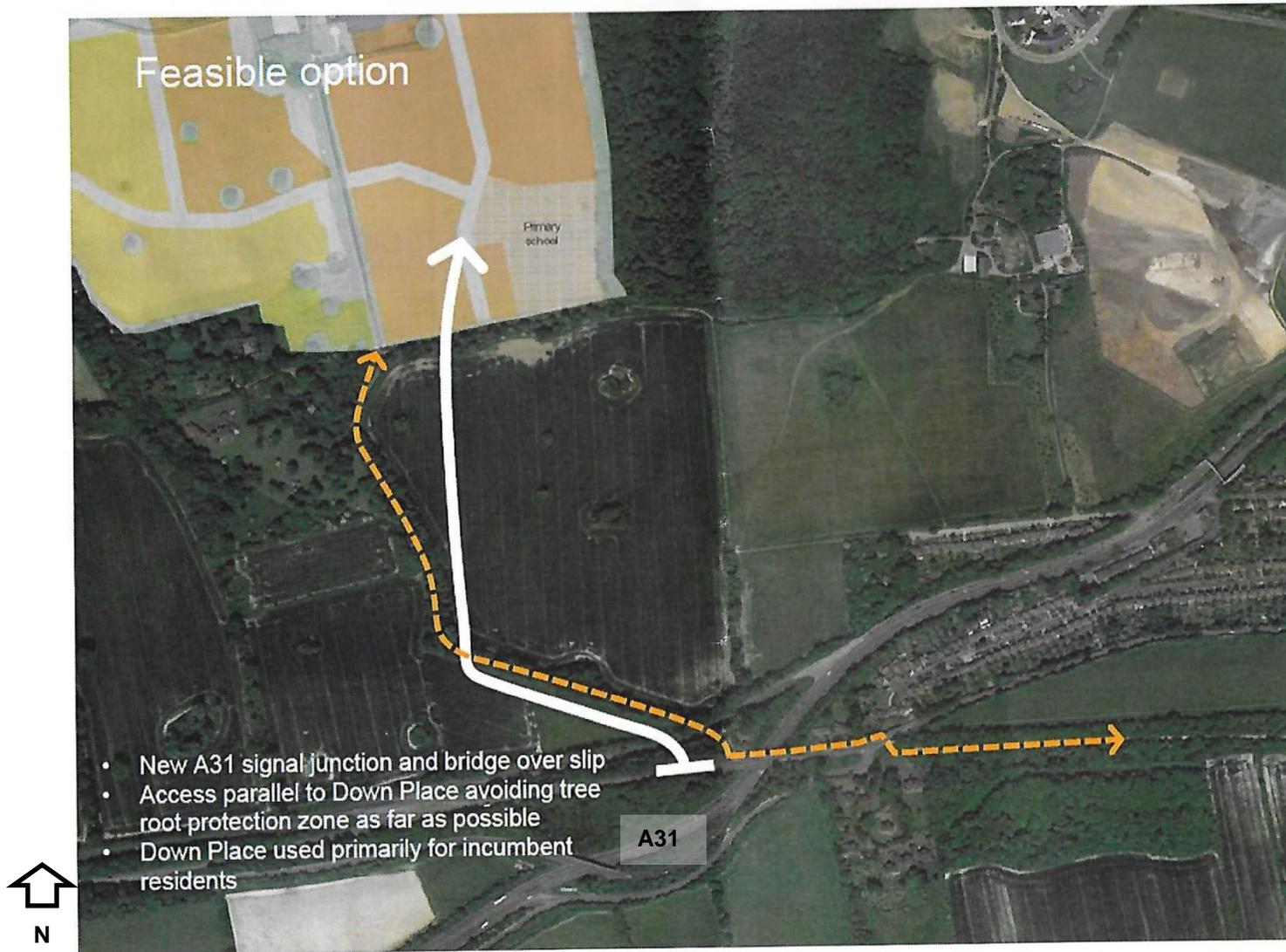


Figure 2: Proposed Access Road to Blackwell Farm: 'Feasible Option'

## 2. Baseline Landscape Character Assessment

The eastern section of the Hog's Back is covered in two published Landscape Character Assessments (LCAs). These are the 2007 Guildford and 2015 Surrey LCAs. The Guildford Assessment also includes an Evaluation and overall Landscape Strategy together with Landscape and Built Development Guidance. The recently published Surrey LCA largely adopts the same two principal landscape character areas as described in the Guildford LCA for the land covered by this assessment. These are:

- Hog's Back Chalk Ridge
- Wanborough Wooded Rolling Clayland(s)

The southern section of the road, including the junction with the A31 lies within the Hog's Back Chalk Ridge LCA. The lower slopes lie within the Wanborough Wooded Rolling Clayland(s) LCA. Guildford LCA also includes a Rural-Urban Fringe Assessment which describes two sub character areas on the western edge of Guildford:

- Hog's Back Rural-Urban Fringe
- Wanborough Wooded Clay Lowlands: Rydeshill-Fairlands Rural-Urban Fringe

### 2.1 Hog's Back Chalk Ridge

The description of key characteristics associated with the Hog's Back Chalk Ridge as described in the Surrey LCA (Guildford Borough) are set out below:

#### *CR1: HOG'S BACK CHALK RIDGE*

##### *Key Characteristics*

- *Open ridge of the North Downs based mainly on the chalk of the Seaford Chalk formation with a steeper south facing scarp slope and more gently rising dip slope to the north.*
- *A predominantly pastoral area with some sections of arable fields and parkland plus a few woodland blocks, belts and copses and small areas of chalk grassland. Ancient woodland is limited.*
- *Large-scale geometric fields dominate the northern facing slopes, while the southern scarp has medium to small scale fields. Fields are bounded by low and sometimes gappy hedgerows with some fences. There are occasional mature hedgerow trees sometimes left as field or fence line trees where the hedgerow has been lost.*

- *The Hog's Back is a distinctive feature in the landscape, forming a rural backdrop to the lower lying areas to north and south and to Guildford. There are panoramic and far ranging views to north and south from the elevated ridgeline.*
- *The major A31 trunk road runs along the ridgeline with the visibility of moving vehicles and associated noise.*
- *Sparse settlement includes the edges of villages which nestle at the base of the chalk slopes, scattered farmsteads and substantial houses such as Greyfriars. Buildings in varying styles and ages predominantly built of traditional red brick, stone, flint and clay tiles with the occasional timber frame and weatherboard farmstead.*
- *Public rights of way, including the Fox Way Recreational Path cross mainly north-south through the character area.*
- *There are two narrow areas of registered common land at the ridge top. There are a few small Sites of Nature Conservation Importance, including Monkshatch.*
- *The Hog's Back is an important feature in the landscape, for both views of it and from it. The rurality and sense of remoteness within the character area itself is reduced by the A31.*

Both the Guildford and Surrey LCAs identify the drama of the chalk ridge and the panoramic views, north and south as defining characteristics of the Hog's Back. Both documents also identify the significance of views to and from the ridge. The Guildford LCA also references the importance of the historic parkland, with remnant parkland trees associated with Down Place, Flexford House and Poyle Park. Both assessments identify the noise and visual impacts associated with the A31 as detracting features.

The Guildford LCA Hog's Back Rural Urban Fringe assessment references the importance of the land in providing '*the setting to and views from Guildford*' and the desire to maintain the '*essentially undeveloped rural character*' of the land. The assessment notes that:

*The setting of Guildford and the AONB are both highly sensitive to any small scale incremental change.*

The Evaluation and Guidance section of the Chalk Ridge chapter includes the following:

#### *Positive Attributes*

- *Iconic chalk spine through the county, with panoramic views from the ridgeline*
- *Rural, often wooded and unsettled, backdrop to views from surrounding rural landscape and settlement.*
- *Along the Hog's Back to the west, a balance of linear tree belts on ridge top providing screening of the A31 with the provision of views out from the road.*

### *Future potential forces for change*

- *Possible pressures for the urbanising and further road development along the M25, and A31 and connecting major roads, including further lighting and development such as services. Road safety screens along the A31 which are highly visible along the ridge line and affect the availability of viewpoints along the A31. Noise and views of the M25 affects the tranquillity of the eastern section.*

### *Landscape Strategy Guidance*

- *The chalk ridge contains the Hog's Back landscape to the west, and the open nature should be conserved, in particular where it forms the setting to Guildford.*

### *Built Development*

- *Resist the spread of settlement up the slopes from the foot of the ridge.*
- *Aim to utilise existing masts in preference to the erection of new tall structures.*
- *Consider the impact of development in adjacent areas in views from the ridgeline. Maintain the rural setting and containment of villages at the foot of the ridge.*
- *Protect landscape character and quality from further negative impact of transport networks including the introduction of signs, gantries and lighting columns that impact on local distinctiveness, and work to foster local distinctiveness where standard design criteria creates a lack of variation and 'urbanisation' of rural roads.*
- *Conserve the rural roads minimising small-scale incremental change such as signage, fencing or improvements, which would change their character.*
- *Ensure that road lighting schemes are assessed for visual impact and encourage conservation of the existing 'dark skies' on the ridge slopes and skyline.*

## **2.2 Wanborough Wooded Rolling Clayland(s)**

### *Key Characteristics*

- *Gently undulating lowland, based mainly on the London Clay Formation Clay, Silt and Sand solid geology.*
- *A predominantly pastoral area of cattle and some horse grazing with some arable farmland, plus copses and woods particularly to the west.*

- *Varied field patterns with large, medium and small scale fields bounded by hedgerows and fences, along with small streams and drainage channels with ponds and springs.*
- *Mature hedgerow trees and occasional field trees.*
- *Woodlands provide more enclosure to the west of the area and include ancient woodland of high biodiversity value, typically oak and ash with hazel coppice.*
- *Commons lie to the west of the area; these are either heathlands or regenerated woodland and form a recreational resource as Open Access Land.*
- *Site of Guildford Royal Deer Park to the east of the area.*
- *Open areas allow views to the unsettled slopes of the Hog's Back to the south.*
- *The A323 skirts the north of the character area, but elsewhere there are few busy roads. The Ascot to Guildford railway line passes broadly east-west through the middle of the character area, with Wanborough railway station located towards the centre.*
- *A fairly sparse pattern of scattered farmsteads, manors and historic villages is overlaid by more recent dense clusters of mainly 20th century settlement centred on the railway line and spreading along roads. Buildings predominantly of red brick and render with clay tile roofs, sometime combined with flint in the south of the area.*
- *The character area includes some areas of registered common land, including Broadstreet, and Rydes Hill commons. There are scheduled monuments west of Long Common and at Manor Farm, and Wanborough and Wood Street Conservation Areas.*
- *A peaceful rural landscape fragmented in some areas by large scale recent settlements.*

The Evaluation and Guidance section of the Clay Lowlands chapter includes the following:

#### *Positive Attributes*

- *Views to the unsettled rural backdrop of the chalk ridge to the south.*

#### *Future potential forces for change*

- *Continued infill and expansion of residential development.*
- *Pressure for additional residential development through edge of town and infilling development.*
- *Upgrading of rural roads through additional kerbing and signage to accommodate increasing traffic volume, and pressure for further road infrastructure along 'A' roads and motorway.*

### *Built Development*

- *Resist further urbanisation of roads through encouraging appropriate surfacing of existing pavements, enhancing the immediate landscape setting and ensuring minimum clutter.*
- *Enhance the character of the settled roads through taking opportunities for rural planting of hedgerows and oak and ash trees.*
- *Ensure that lighting schemes are assessed for visual impact and encourage conservation of the existing 'dark skies' in the more rural unsettled sections of the area particularly to the south.*

## 3. Landscape Policy Context

Paragraph 115 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states:

*Great weight should be given to conserving landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which have the highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty.*

This principle is taken forward in planning policy at a local level in the Guildford Local Development Framework and Local Plan. The Guildford Planning documents also reference the relative importance and weight to be attached to land within the AGLV, subject to the AONB boundary review.

Policy RE5 of the current 2003 Guildford Local Plan states that the Surrey Hills AONB *'is of national importance and will be subject to the most rigorous protection. Development inconsistent with the primary aim of conserving the existing landscape character will not be permitted.* The policy also identifies the need to *conserve the natural beauty of the landscape. Important views to and from the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty should be retained.*

The current (2017) Submission Draft of the updated Local Plan includes Policy P1 relating to the AONB which states:

*The Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), as designated on the Policies Map, will be conserved and enhanced to maximise its special landscape qualities and scenic beauty.*

*In accordance with national planning policy, there will be a presumption against major development in the AONB except in exceptional circumstances and where it can be demonstrated to be in the public interest.*

*High priority will be given to the conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty of the AONB and development proposals must have regard to protecting its setting.*

*Development proposals will also be assessed against the provisions of the current Surrey Hills AONB Management Plan.*

#### 4. Surrey Hills AONB

The Surrey Hills AONB is described in the AONB Management Plan (2014-2019) as ‘*an intriguingly diverse landscape characterised by hills and valleys, traditional mixed farming, a patchwork of chalk grassland and heathland, sunken lanes, picturesque villages and market towns*’. The AONB encompasses both the North Downs and Greensand Hills with intervening lowlands and valleys. It is a landscape with a diverse underlying geology and as, a consequence, enormous diversity in the features which define and characterise the AONB. The AONB Management Plan includes a number of policies to guide management of the AONB. These include:

***Aim: New development enhances local character and the environmental quality of its nationally important setting. Land Use Planning Management Policies:***

*LU1 In balancing different considerations associated with determining planning applications and development plan land allocations, great weight will be attached to any adverse impact that a development proposal would have on the amenity, landscape and scenic beauty of the AONB.*

*LU2 Development will respect the special landscape character of the locality, giving particular attention to potential impacts on ridgelines, public views, tranquillity and light pollution...*

*LU5 Development that would spoil the setting of the AONB, by harming public views into or from the AONB, will be resisted.*

***Aim: Transport measures reinforce the rural character of the area and provide for a range of safe and sustainable travel alternatives. Traffic and Transport Management Policies:***

*TT4 Major transport schemes will have due regard to the national AONB designation and measures will be taken to reduce any impact on the Surrey Hills landscape.*

The definition of Natural Beauty as referenced in the AONB Management Plan also recognises the influence of human intervention and management on the beauty of the AONB:

*'Natural Beauty is not just the look of the landscape but includes landform and geology, plants and animals, landscape features and the rich history of human settlement over the centuries'*

Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty: A Guide for AONB Partnership Members, Countryside Agency, 2001 (CA 24)

## 5. Hog's Back Natural Beauty Evaluation

The 2013 HDA Natural Beauty Evaluation recommended inclusion of land to the north of the Hog's Back within a revised AONB boundary. The area in the vicinity of Down Place and Blackwell Farm was referred to as Area 12-1. The LMS report prepared in May 2016 recommended that this area be extended to include the land around Blackwell Farm and extending east towards the western edge of Guildford. The current AONB boundary, Area 12-1 and the LMS recommended extension are shown on Figure 3 (overleaf). The conclusions to the LMS Evaluation and the basis for the recommendation that this area be included within a revised AONB boundary are set out below:

*This evaluation does, however, conclude that land to the south and east of Wildfield Copse, in the vicinity of Down Place and Blackwell Farm, is of a landscape and scenic quality, character and condition which should merit inclusion within a revised AONB boundary. The landscape represents many of the defining characteristics of landscapes within the Surrey Hills AONB. These two sub character areas include land on the upper slopes of the Hog's Back ridge which is representative of classic chalk downland and areas on the lower slopes typical of former parkland estates, with field patterns and mature trees and large blocks of ancient woodland providing strong evidence of the landscape and cultural heritage of the local area. This landscape is therefore considered integral to the AONB and critical to the conservation of rural views to the north of equal if not greater importance to land to the west of Down Place included in Area 12-1).*

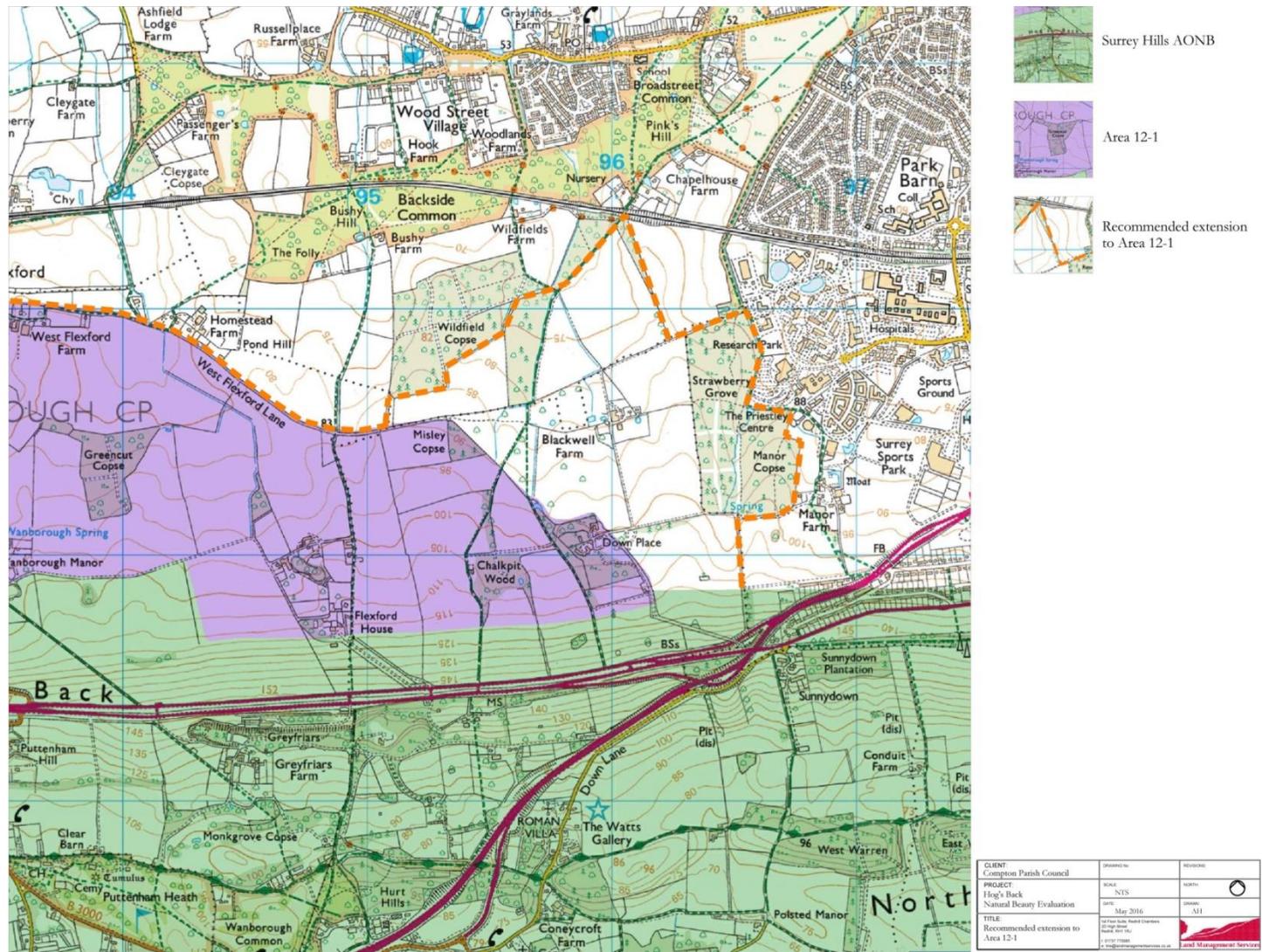


Figure 3: Current boundary and recommended extensions to the AONB Boundary showing Area 12-1 as recommended in the 2013 LDA Evaluation (purple) and the additional recommended extension from the 2016 LMS Evaluation (orange dashed line) (source LMS Natural Beauty Evaluation May 2016)

## 6. The Proposed Access Road Alignment

The proposed 'Feasible Option' alignment for the access road is shown on Figure 1 (reduced copy included overleaf for reference). The upper sections of the road would cut through the mature woodland to the west of the lane to Down Place and bordering the A31/A3 eastbound sliproad (see Viewpoints 8 and 9 in Section 8 below). A sketch 'Initial Junction Arrangement' with the A31 is shown on Figure 4. On the upper slopes the proposed access road would run to the south of the lane to Down Place (see Viewpoints 7, 10 and 11). The alignment would run along the edge of the arable field and adjacent to the wooded avenue bordering the lane to Down Place. Measures would be needed to ensure protection of trees between the road and the lane to Down Place. This assessment assumes all trees will be retained up until the crossing point at the bend in the lane, roughly halfway down the escarpment.

The proposed Access Road would cut across the lane to Down Place at a bend in the lane. There are a number of mature trees at the proposed crossing point (mainly beech and horse chestnut), but at least two of these trees appear to be in very poor condition (see Viewpoints 4, 5 and 11).

Further north, the proposed Access Road would run through the arable field alongside, and to the east of, the wooded avenue to the lane to Down Place (see Viewpoints 6 and 12).

The route would cut across the fragmented tree belt and permissive path to the east of Down Place (see Viewpoint 12). The existing lane to Down Place appears to be retained as a pedestrian and cycle route, if the access road were to be constructed (see 'Feasible Option' in Figure 2). Arrangements for crossing the access road to Blackwell Farm would need to be installed.

No information has been provided on whether the route would be lit. This LVA, therefore, includes an assessment of the potential effects of lighting.

# Initial Junction Arrangement

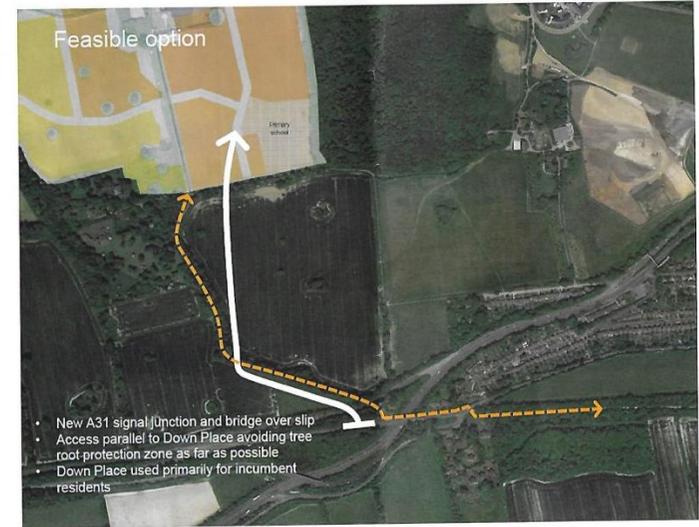
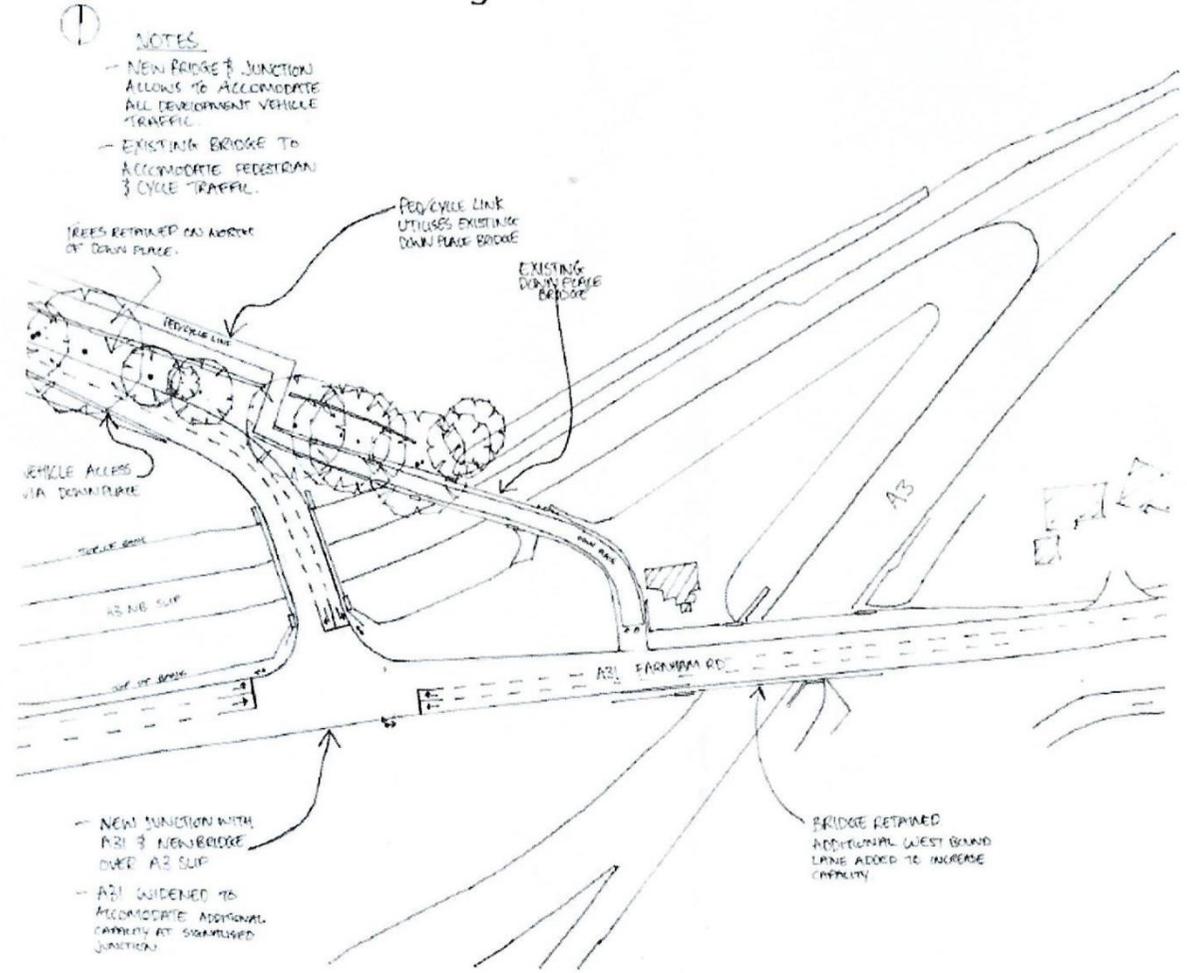


Figure 4: Sketch Junction Arrangement to A31

## 7. Site Baseline Landscape Character Assessment

The whole of the proposed access road route lies on the north facing slopes to the chalk escarpment of the Hog's Back. The land falls steeply from the crest of the ridge at close to +150 metres AOD to approximately 100 metres AOD at the edge of the proposed Blackwell Farm development. This description of landscape character and the baseline visual assessment are supported by a series of photographs included in the visual assessment (Section 8) of this LVA. The proposed access road alignment is shown on Figure 2.

The junction with the A31 at the southern end of the route is located on the crest of the Hog's Back ridge. The A31 runs through a mature wooded setting (see Viewpoint 9 in Section 8) with beech the principal canopy tree. There is sporadic residential development to the east, principally located on the lane to Down Place. Immediately north of the A31, the A31/A3 eastbound slip road is located within a steep sided cutting (see Viewpoint 8). The slopes to the cutting are vegetated with a mix of semi mature trees (mainly beech and ash) together with a typical chalk scrub understorey.

North of the A31, the land falls, forming the north facing slope to the chalk escarpment. The majority of the north facing slopes are farmed, mostly under arable cultivation set within large fields, bordered by woodland blocks, fragmented hedges and farm tracks.

The lane to Down Place benefits from a mature wooded setting (see Viewpoints 3, 4 and 5). This was originally planted as an avenue, as illustrated in the adjacent historic image, and whilst this has now developed more of a wooded character with a dense understorey, the route retains much of the historic avenue character.

The original house at Down Place has now been demolished. Down Place today is a group of larger, mainly older properties set within a mature wooded setting. The lane splits on the edge of Down Place with the western branch servicing the properties at Down Place and the eastern branch continuing on to Blackwell Farm.



Down Place c. 1875

There is a network of rights of way combined with permissive paths between Down Place and the eastern edges of Guildford. There are a number of footpaths and bridleways which run north to south up the face of the Hog's Back. Footpath 480 is the closest to the proposed access road, located approximately 250 metres to the west of the lane to Down Place. There are a limited number of public rights of way to the north and east, although there are many permissive paths and a large area of open access land in the vicinity of Manor Copse.

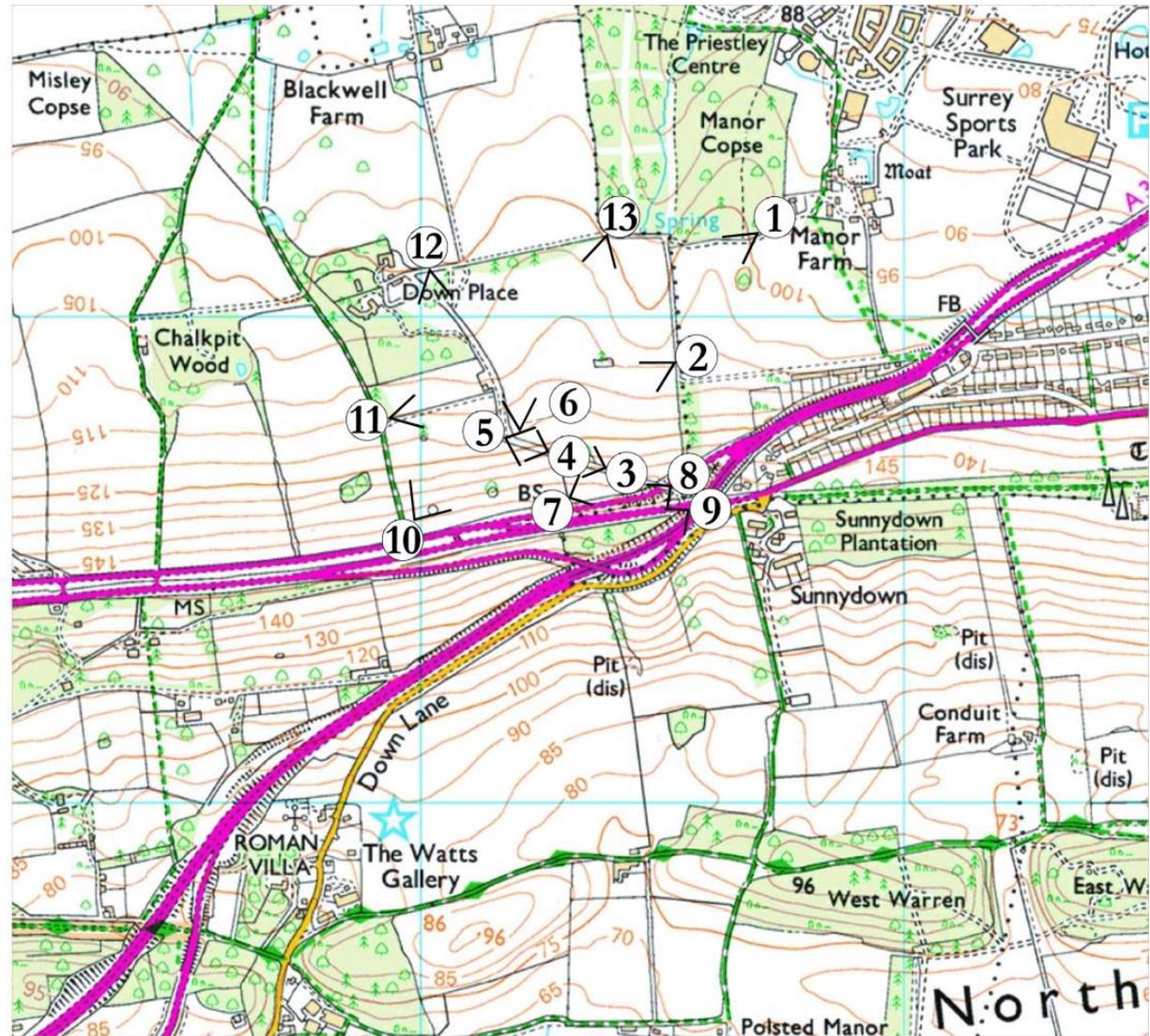
There is a stronger sense of tranquillity in terms of reduced background traffic noise in the more northerly parts of the study area. Much of this land is thought to have formed part of the former 18<sup>th</sup> Century parkland associated with Down Place. The landscape is typical of less steep chalk escarpments throughout the AONB, combining arable farmland and grazing in larger fields with blocks of woodland, hedges and farm tracks.

## 8. Baseline Visual Assessment

The table overleaf provides a description of the character, appearance and quality of a series of representative views in the vicinity of the proposed Blackwell Farm access road. Viewpoints are shown on Figure 4 below. The majority are taken from publically accessible viewpoints, including permissive paths. A limited number are taken from locations on field margins and adjacent to the A31 fencing, in order to illustrate the character and appearance of the existing landscape and support a description of the proposed Access Road alignment and this impact assessment. Where this is the case this is stated in the sensitivity assessment and viewpoint description below.



Location plan.



CLIENT: Compton Parish Council	DRAWING No. NTS	REVISIONS: NORTH
PROJECT: Hog's Back Natural Beauty Evaluation	DATE: January 2018	DRAWN: AH
TITLE: Viewpoints		

Figure 5: Viewpoint Plan

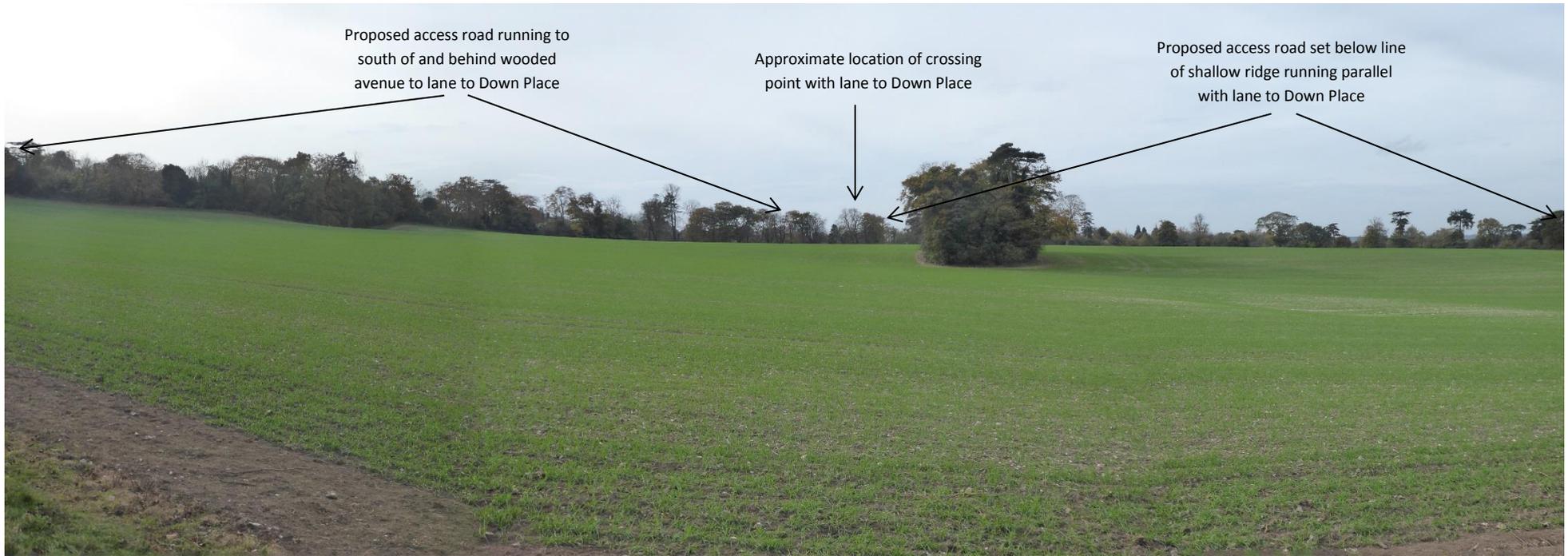
Viewpoint	Location	Sensitivity	Baseline Assessment: Description
1	View south west from Permissive Right of Way on Open Access Land north of Manor Copse.	Moderate: Viewpoint is located outside the AONB but view is towards the AONB and from a location important to the setting to the AONB.	The proposed access road alignment would run just below the crest of the shallow ridge in the middle distance.
2	View west from Permissive Right of Way running south from Manor Copse.	Moderate: Viewpoint is located outside the AONB but view is towards the AONB and from a location important to the setting to the AONB.	The crossing point on the lane to Down Place is visible in the middle distance. The Blackwell Farm access would then run just below the shallow ridge but in front of the trees on the lane to Down Place on the horizon.
3	View north west along the lane to Down Place towards the Blackwell Farm access road crossing point.	High: Viewpoint located within the Surrey Hills AONB	The lane to Down Place is a single track wooded avenue, with beech and horse chestnut the predominant canopy trees.
4	View north west along the lane to Down Place immediately east of the proposed Blackwell Farm access crossing point.	High: Viewpoint located within the Surrey Hills AONB	Similar in character to Viewpoint 3, the view demonstrates the strong sense of enclosure on the lane and the wooded avenue character of the lane on the approaches to the bend which would form the crossing point with the proposed Blackwell Farm Access Road.
5	View south east along the lane to Down Place immediately west of the proposed Blackwell Farm access crossing point.	High: Viewpoint located within the Surrey Hills AONB	View of the proposed crossing point for the new access road. The Horse chestnut in the foreground and the beech on the south side of the road appear to be in poor condition. Other trees are in good condition. Much of the understorey comprises self sown trees and scrub
6	View south along the proposed Blackwell Farm access route to the east of the tree lined lane to Down Place.	High: Viewpoint located within the Surrey Hills AONB	Open expansive view from the edge of the lane to Down Place. The line of trees in the central part of the view lies on the alignment of a permissive path (Viewpoint 11). The proposed Blackwell Farm access road would run parallel and to the east of the trees on the lane. The proposed Blackwell Farm development would be located to the north of the line of trees in the central part of the view.

Viewpoint	Location	Sensitivity	Baseline Assessment: Description
7	View of the southern edge of the lane to Down Place, immediately north of the A31 Hog's Back.	Moderate: Viewpoint located within the Surrey Hills AONB, but not from an area of open public access.	The proposed access would cut through the boundary vegetation on the embankment to the A31 (right section of view) and then run in front of the trees bordering the lane to Down Place (left section of view).
8	Proposed crossing point over the A31 eastbound slip road to the A3. Viewed from the lane to Down Place overbridge.	Moderate: Viewpoint located within the Surrey Hills AONB but adjacent to busy A road.	The A31/A3 eastbound sliproad is set in a steep cutting at this point. The cutting slopes are vegetated with a mix of (probably) planted and self sown native trees and shrubs, with beech the predominant tree. According to the Initial Junction Arrangement (Figure 5 Section 6) the proposed access road would bridge this cutting.
9	View west showing the proposed location for the Junction with the A31.	Moderate: Viewpoint located within the Surrey Hills AONB but adjacent to busy A road.	The mature woodland is an important feature as the Hog's Back, like many parts of Surrey, was badly hit during the 1987 storm. The proposed Blackwell Farm access road would cut through the area of mature beech woodland to the right in this viewpoint.
10	View north east from the edge of Footpath 480 close to the A31.	High: Viewpoint located within the Surrey Hills AONB	This is an open expansive view, typical of views from the Hog's Back. The arable farmland with clumps of trees and fields bordered by mature hedges and woodland is typical of the northern escarpment to the Hog's Back. This view is representative of views from the A31. The proposed Blackwell Farm access road would run in front of the belt of trees which line the lane to Down Place running through the central part of this image.
11	View west from Footpath 480 on the lower slopes of the Hog's Back.	High: Viewpoint is located just outside the AONB but view is towards the AONB and from a location important to the setting to the AONB.	View towards the crest of the Hog's Back ridge. The arable farmland with clumps of trees and fields bordered by mature hedges and woodland is typical of the northern escarpment to the Hog's Back. Although audible, traffic on the A31 on the crest of the ridge is not prominent in this view. The proposed Blackwell Farm access road would run alongside (south) of the wooded setting to the lane to Down Place, before cutting through the trees at the bend in the road in the centre of this view.
12	View south from the Permissive Path east of Down Place.	Moderate: Viewpoint is located outside the AONB but view is towards the AONB and from a location important to the setting to the AONB.	View south towards the crest of the Hog's Back ridge. The arable farmland with clumps of trees and fields bordered by mature hedges and woodland is typical of the northern escarpment to the Hog's Back. Although audible, traffic on the A31 on the crest of the ridge is not prominent in this view. The proposed Blackwell Farm access would run to the east of the wooded lane to Down Place to the right in this view. The viewpoint is located approximately on the Blackwell Farm access road alignment.

Viewpoint	Location	Sensitivity	Baseline Assessment: Description
13	View south west from Permissive Route close to Manor Copse.	Moderate: Viewpoint is located outside the AONB but view is towards the AONB and from a location important to the setting to the AONB.	View towards the crest of the Hog's Back ridge. The arable farmland with clumps of trees and fields bordered by mature hedges and woodland is typical of the northern escarpment to the Hog's Back. Although audible, traffic on the A31 on the crest of the ridge is not prominent in this view. The crossing point with the lane to Down Place is visible in the central part of this image. The Blackwell Farm access road would be set behind the trees on the upper slopes to the Hog's Back and would run behind the ridge in the foreground of this view on the lower slopes.



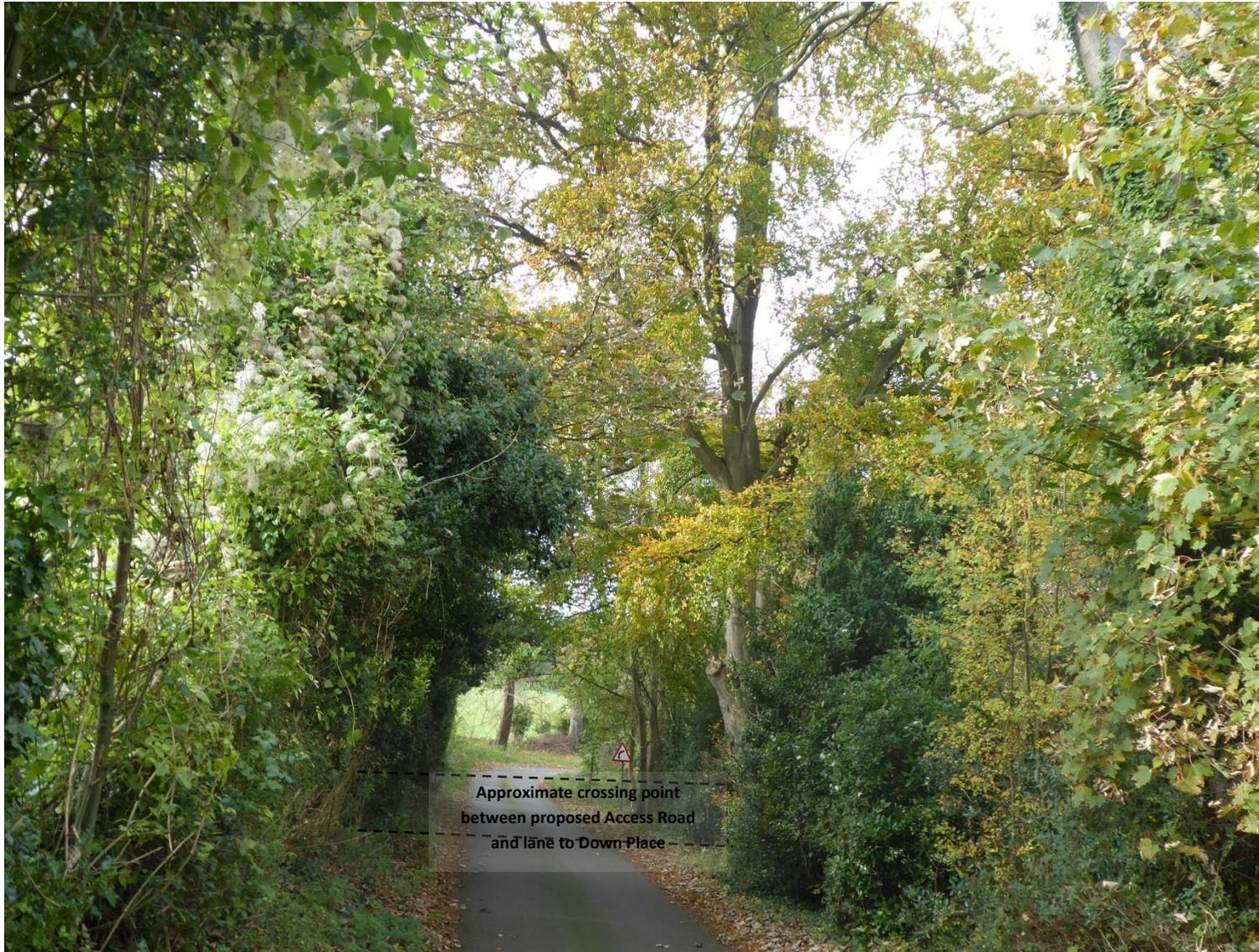
Viewpoint 1: View south west from Permissive Right of Way on Open Access Land north of Manor Copse. The proposed access road alignment would run just below the crest of the shallow ridge in the middle distance.



Viewpoint 2: View west from Permissive Right of Way running south from Manor Copse. The lane to Down Place crossing point is visible in the middle distance. The Blackwell Farm access would then run just below the shallow ridge but in front of the trees on the lane to Down Place on the horizon.



Viewpoint 3: View north west along the lane to Down Place towards the Blackwell Farm access road crossing point. The lane to Down Place is a single track wooded avenue, with beech the predominant canopy tree.



Viewpoint 4: View north west along the lane to Down Place immediately east of the proposed Blackwell Farm access crossing point.



Viewpoint 5: View south east along the lane to Down Place immediately west of the proposed Blackwell Farm access crossing point.



Viewpoint 6: View south along the proposed Blackwell Farm access route to the east of the wooded lane to Down Place.



Viewpoint 7: View of the southern edge of the lane to Down Place, immediately north of the A31 Hog's Back. The proposed access road would cut through the boundary vegetation on the embankment to the A31 (right section of view) and then run in front of the trees bordering the lane to Down Place (left section of view).



Viewpoint 8: Proposed crossing point over the A31 eastbound slip road to the A3. Viewed from the lane to Down Place overbridge.



Viewpoint 9: View west showing the proposed location for the Junction with the A31. The proposed Blackwell Farm access would cut through the area of mature beech woodland to the right in this viewpoint.



Viewpoint 10: View north east from the edge of Footpath 480 close to the A31. The proposed Blackwell Farm access road would run in front of the wooded setting to the lane to Down Place running through the central part of this image.



Viewpoint 11: View west from Footpath 480 on the lower slopes of the Hog's Back. The proposed Blackwell Farm access would run alongside (north) of the belt of trees before crossing the lane to Down Place at the bend in the road in the centre of this view.



Viewpoint 12: View south from the Permissive Path east of Down Place. The proposed Blackwell Farm access would run to the east of the lane to Down Place tree belt located to the right in this view. The viewpoint is located approximately on the Blackwell Farm access road alignment.



Viewpoint 13: View south west from Permissive Route close to Manor Copse. The crossing point with the lane to Down Place is visible in the central part of this image. The Blackwell Farm access road would be set behind the trees on the upper slopes to the Hog's Back and would run behind the ridge in the foreground of this view on the lower slopes.

## 9. Landscape Character Assessment of Effects

The landscape at the eastern end of the Hog's Back is typical of the northern escarpment associated with the chalk ridge. The land falls fairly steeply initially and then in a more gentle, undulating gradient. There is a shallow ridge running up the slope to the east of the proposed access road alignment on the lower slopes. The land is predominantly under arable farming, with clumps of mature trees giving an element of a parkland character to the landscape. The Hog's Back ridge has more of a wooded character at the eastern end, with areas of mature beech woodland between the A31 and A3 slip roads. The lane to Down Place is set within a mature wooded avenue, with a dense understorey. Although the AONB boundary runs across the slope, much of the land to the north of the boundary is characteristic of the wider AONB landscape and is clearly of significance to the setting of the AONB. As set out in Section 5, LMS has previously advised that, when the Surrey Hills AONB Boundary Review is carried out shortly, the evidence indicates that the AONB boundary should be moved eastwards and northwards at this point. It would then include the whole of the proposed access road (and much of the Blackwell Farm development itself too).

The landscape pattern is one of larger agricultural fields bordered by mature hedges, trees and woodlands, typical of the Hog's Back ridge. Although the lane to Down Place cuts across the landform, this appears as a mature wooded boundary to the existing field pattern.

This LVA does not include reference to historic landscape or ecological assessments. The landscape does form part of the setting to Down Place, although the degree to which features are linked to the historic estate and parkland would need to be subject to further investigation. Biodiversity interest is likely to be mainly confined to the woodlands and wooded field boundaries.

The existing A31 impacts on tranquillity and sense of place on the upper slopes of the ridge, where traffic is sporadically visible and background traffic noise is greater. On the lower slopes the sense of tranquillity is greater. Construction of the road would result in substantial harm to the sense of tranquillity, in particular on the lower slopes of the escarpment, with increased traffic noise and a consequent loss of the experience of 'natural' sounds, the creation of a substantially changed landform, the introduction of features out of character with the rural landscape and night time impacts associated with car lighting.

The proposed access road to Blackwell Farm would cut across the landscape on a parallel alignment to the lane to Down Place. Construction would retain the majority of the wooded setting to the lane, but would cut across the avenue to the lane at the bend halfway down the slope. This assessment has noted that whilst a number of the trees at the crossing point appear to be in poor condition (although this is not backed up by an arboricultural assessment), construction would inevitably result in the loss of a number of mature trees and create a break in the current woodland belt which would be visible in many viewpoints. There is also evidence that this is a historic planted avenue. Construction is also likely to involve the removal of important trees (mature beech woodland) at the junction with the A31 and on the A3/A31 slip road crossing. The impact on the physical landscape resource would be the loss of mature trees within the AONB, the creation of a break in the existing wooded

setting to the lane to Down Place and the loss of substantial areas of arable land. There is no information on the anticipated land take, but construction of a sufficiently wide two lane road would require a significant land take and associated cut and fill in order to create acceptable gradients. Construction of the bend in the route would also create substantial challenges. It is therefore anticipated that there would be a significant land take and requirement for earth modelling to create a route meeting necessary highway safety standards. The 'Feasible Option' (Figure 2) shows the proposed bend in the access road to Blackwell Farm is notably sharp. Advice should be taken on whether this would be safe in highways terms. Any safety problem might require resolution by realigning the road to provide a more gradual bend. That in turn would have implications for the alignment and gradient of the road in the vicinity of the bend, and in turn consequences for the land take and visual and landscape impacts of the road, especially on the higher ground south of the lane to Down Place. The magnitude of change in respect of landscape pattern, land form and land use is therefore, assessed as medium to high, with a consequent overall assessment of a major adverse effect.

There are no roads of a similar specification to the proposed access road running north or south from the A31 Hog's Back. The closest would be the B3000 to Godalming (to the west) but this is set in deep cutting. The proposed access road would be a modern two lane road and would not benefit from the mature wooded setting associated with existing roads. The road would cut across the landscape and would be particularly prominent on the lower slopes of the ridge. The existing landscape retains a strong rural character, associated with the AONB. The A31 has a limited impact on the overall character of the escarpment. The proposed road would appear as an alien and intrusive feature cutting across the landscape. There would also be significant harm to rural character at night. Car lights would become a constant element in the night time landscape. Street lighting (if used) would introduce substantial structures and permanent night time lighting.

Although the A31 does exert some influence on the tranquillity and sense of place associated with the Hog's Back, the lower slopes to the escarpment retain a strong sense of tranquillity. The creation of the access road (coupled with the proposed development) would impact significantly on the sense of tranquillity in the vicinity of Down Place and along the foot of the escarpment. The magnitude of change in respect of tranquillity is assessed as medium to high with a consequent moderate to major adverse effect.

This assessment concludes that there would be significant harm to characteristic features both within the AONB and on land forming the setting to the AONB.

## 10. Visual Assessment of Effects

The table below provides an assessment of the visual effects of the proposed Access Road alignment from the representative viewpoints described in Section 6 and shown on Figure 4.

Viewpoint	Location	Sensitivity	Assessment of Visual Effects
1	View south west from Permissive Right of Way on Open Access Land north of Manor Copse.	Medium: Viewpoint is located outside the AONB but view is towards the AONB and from a location important to the setting to the AONB.	<p>The northern part of the proposed access road would remain largely screened, even in winter, assuming that the existing vegetation on the lane to Down Place is to be retained. The crossing point may be partially visible in the central part of the view, but for the most part would be set below the ridgeline. Car lights would introduce night time effects on levels of darkness. Overall magnitude of change Low: Assessment of effects: Minor adverse</p> <p>If lighting were to be used the lighting columns on the lower slopes would be visible in this view. This would have a more significant magnitude of change during night hours (Moderate). Assessment of effects: Moderate adverse</p>
2	View west from Permissive Right of Way running south from Manor Copse.	Medium: Viewpoint is located outside the AONB but view is towards the AONB and from a location important to the setting to the AONB.	<p>Similar in many respects to Viewpoint 1, although the crossing point with the lane to Down Place would be more prominent and sections of the access road below the crossing point would be visible. The crossing point would be prominent and would the creation of a break in the existing tree line. Car lights would also be directly visible in night hours at the crossing point. Overall magnitude of change Medium: Assessment of effects: Moderate adverse</p> <p>If lighting were to be used the lighting columns on the lower slopes would be visible in this view. This would have a more significant magnitude of change during night hours (Moderate). Assessment of effects: Moderate adverse</p>

Viewpoint	Location	Sensitivity	Assessment of Visual Effects
3	View north west along the lane to Down Place towards the Blackwell Farm access road crossing point.	High: Viewpoint located within the Surrey Hills AONB	<p>The proposed access road would run to the south of the lane. It is assumed all vegetation on the lane would be retained and there would be opportunities to strengthen screening between the access road and the lane. The crossing point would be visible in the distance. Car lights would be visible at this point.</p> <p>Overall magnitude of change Low: Assessment of effects: Moderate adverse</p> <p>If lighting were to be used the lighting columns would not be visible but the glow of lighting and car lights would impact on the levels of darkness currently experienced on this unlit road. Magnitude of change during night hours (low). Assessment of effects: Minor adverse</p>
4	View north west along the lane to Down Place immediately east of the proposed Blackwell Farm access crossing point.	High: Viewpoint located within the Surrey Hills AONB	<p>A similar view to Viewpoint 3, although the crossing point to the lane would be more prominent and vegetation removal associated with the access road would be clearly visible. Road infrastructure and vehicles would dominate this view.</p> <p>Overall magnitude of change Medium: Assessment of effects: Major adverse</p> <p>If lighting were to be used the lighting columns would be prominent in this view having a significant effect on darkness levels. This would have a more significant magnitude of change during night hours (Moderate). Assessment of effects: Major adverse</p>
5	View south east along the lane to Down Place immediately west of the proposed Blackwell Farm access crossing point.	High: Viewpoint located within the Surrey Hills AONB	<p>Located on the crossing point the new access road would dominate this view. There would be substantial amounts of tree and shrub removal to facilitate the proposed road. Road infrastructure and vehicles would dominate this view.</p> <p>Overall magnitude of change: High Assessment of effects: Major adverse</p> <p>If lighting were to be used the lighting columns would be prominent in this view having a significant effect on darkness levels. This would have a more significant magnitude of change during night hours (High). Assessment of effects: Major adverse</p>

Viewpoint	Location	Sensitivity	Assessment of Visual Effects
6	View south along the proposed Blackwell Farm access route to the east of the tree lined lane to Down Place.	High: Viewpoint located within the Surrey Hills AONB	<p>The proposed access road would dominate this view running along the eastern side of the tree line. Although not addressed in this assessment it should be noted that the proposed development at Blackwell Farm would also be visible beyond the tree line in the central part of the view. This is an expansive view from a location within the AONB. During night hours car lights would be directly visible. The character and appearance of this view would be transformed to one dominated by the proposed access road.</p> <p>Overall magnitude of change High: Assessment of effects: Major adverse</p> <p>If lighting were to be used the lighting columns would be prominent in this view having a significant effect on darkness levels. This would have a more significant magnitude of change during night hours (High). Assessment of effects: Major adverse</p>
7	View of the southern edge of the lane to Down Place, immediately north of the A31 Hog's Back.	Medium: Viewpoint located within the Surrey Hills AONB, but not from an area of open public access.	<p>This is not a publically accessible viewpoint. A reduced sensitivity of Medium is therefore attributed to this viewpoint as it lies within the AONB. The proposed access road would run along the wooded edge to the lane to Down Place and would dominate and transform the character and appearance of this view. It is assumed that planting would be introduced to the southern side of the access road, which would provide mitigation as it matures.</p> <p>Overall magnitude of change Medium: Assessment of effects: Moderate adverse</p> <p>If lighting were to be used the lighting columns would be prominent in this view having a significant effect on darkness levels. This would have a more significant magnitude of change during night hours (High). Assessment of effects: Major adverse</p>

Viewpoint	Location	Sensitivity	Assessment of Visual Effects
8	Proposed crossing point over the A31 eastbound slip road to the A3. Viewed from the lane to Down Place overbridge.	Medium: Viewpoint located within the Surrey Hills AONB but adjacent to busy A road.	<p>This shows the proposed bridging point to the A3/A31 sliproad. The existing road and traffic are already dominant features in this view. The bridge would introduce a substantial structure to the view and would involve tree and shrub removal on the cutting slopes. The viewpoint is located within the AONB but in a location already strongly influenced by the existing roads.</p> <p>Overall magnitude of change Low: Assessment of effects: Minor adverse</p> <p>The existing road is not currently lit. If lighting were to be used the lighting columns would be prominent in this view having a significant effect on darkness levels. This would have a more significant magnitude of change during night hours (Medium). Assessment of effects: Moderate adverse</p>
9	View west showing the proposed location for the Junction with the A31.	Medium: Viewpoint located within the Surrey Hills AONB but adjacent to busy A road.	<p>The mature woodland is an important feature as the Hog's Back. The existing road and traffic are already dominant features in this view. Creation of the junction would involve the removal of mature trees for both the road itself and the visibility splays, especially to the west. The proposed Blackwell Farm access would cut through the area of mature beech woodland to the right in this viewpoint and the junction would increase the amount of highway infrastructure visible in this view.</p> <p>Overall magnitude of change Medium: Assessment of effects: Moderate adverse</p> <p>The existing road is not currently lit. If lighting were to be used the lighting columns would be prominent in this view having a significant effect on darkness levels. This would have a more similar magnitude of change to the daytime view (Medium). Assessment of effects: Moderate adverse</p>

Viewpoint	Location	Sensitivity	Assessment of Visual Effects
10	View north east from the edge of Footpath 480 close to the A31.	High: Viewpoint located within the Surrey Hills AONB	<p>This is an expansive view typical of the crest to the Hog's Back Ridge. The A31 and traffic are an element of this view and associated noise impacts on perceptions of what is essentially a rural view. The southern section of the access road would be a prominent feature in this view to the north of the tree line to the lane. This would transform the character and appearance of this view providing a dominant feature which would detract significantly from the character of this expansive rural view.</p> <p>Overall magnitude of change Medium: Assessment of effects: Major adverse</p> <p>Car lights on the A31 would impact on lighting levels at night. The access road would introduce lighting (either in the form of car lights and/or lighting columns) at areas which are not currently lit. This would have a more similar magnitude of change to the daytime view (Medium). Assessment of effects: Major adverse</p>
11	View west from Footpath 480 on the lower slopes of the Hog's Back.	High: Viewpoint is located just outside the AONB but view is towards the AONB and from a location important to the setting to the AONB.	<p>This is a characteristic rural view from the base of the Hog's Back. The existing traffic on the A31 does not strongly influence the character and appearance of this view. The proposed access road would be prominent and central to this view and would transform character and appearance. Car lights would shine directly towards this viewpoint. It is anticipated that substantial earthworks would be required to facilitate the bend in the road in order to provide appropriate levels and gradients, which would result in a change to the existing landform. It is anticipated that mitigation would also be provided.</p> <p>Overall magnitude of change High: Assessment of effects: Major adverse</p> <p>Car lights would be directly visible in this view. If lighting were to be introduced this would increase the lighting impacts during night hours. This would have a more similar magnitude of change to the daytime view (High). Assessment of effects: Major adverse.</p>

Viewpoint	Location	Sensitivity	Assessment of Visual Effects
12	View south from the Permissive Path east of Down Place.	Medium: Viewpoint is located outside the AONB but view is towards the AONB and from a location important to the setting to the AONB.	<p>As in Viewpoint 11 this is a characteristic rural view from the base of the Hog's Back. The existing traffic on the A31 does not strongly influence the character and appearance of this view. The proposed access road would be prominent and central to this view and would transform character and appearance. Car lights would shine directly towards this viewpoint. It is anticipated that mitigation would also be provided, but this would have a limited effect on this view south along the proposed alignment</p> <p>Overall magnitude of change High: Assessment of effects: Major adverse</p> <p>Car lights would be directly visible in this view. If lighting were to be introduced this would increase the lighting impacts during night hours. This would have a more similar magnitude of change to the daytime view (High). Assessment of effects: Major adverse.</p>
13	View south west from Permissive Route close to Manor Copse.	Medium: Viewpoint is located outside the AONB but view is towards the AONB and from a location important to the setting to the AONB.	<p>Similar in many respects to Viewpoint 2. The crossing point with the lane to Down Place would be visible and limited sections of the access road below the crossing point would be visible. The crossing point would be prominent and would create a break in the existing tree line. Car lights would also be directly visible in night hours at the crossing point.</p> <p>Overall magnitude of change Medium: Assessment of effects: Moderate adverse</p> <p>If lighting were to be used the lighting columns on the lower slopes would be visible in this view. This would have a more significant magnitude of change during night hours (Moderate). Assessment of effects: Moderate adverse,</p>

The access road to Blackwell Farm would be a prominent and permanent visual detractor in views both from and to the AONB, experienced by users of local rights of way, permissive paths and road users. For non-road users, the access road would be particularly prominent in views from the west, principally from Footpath 480 and from publically accessible viewpoints to the north and east. All of these views are typical and characteristic of views to and from the AONB, with few visual detractors. They are representative of the natural beauty and scenic qualities associated with the AONB. The proposed access road would cut across this landscape and would detract significantly from the character and quality of these views. There would be a number of locations from which views directly up or along the road would be gained (Viewpoints 6, 11

and 12). In other locations the road would be perceived cutting across the landscape, with traffic and other road structures and furniture a permanent feature.

For road users on the A31 all views would have the proposed access road as the foreground, detracting from the experience of the AONB. Northbound road users from the A31 junction would initially experience very attractive views to the north-west (above the crossing of the lane to Down Place); further north the access road itself would dominate the view, with the urban development of Blackwell Farm beyond: all this would be inappropriate development in the immediate setting of the AONB (or, especially inappropriate if the AONB boundary is moved northwards at this point). Southbound travellers from Blackwell Farm would at all times see the new access road as the main feature ahead of them rising up into the otherwise unsullied AONB up the north side of the Hog's Back. The new road would therefore give an uncharacteristic experience of the AONB for its users in most segments/directions, with the road itself causing much of that damage.

## 11. Conclusions and Recommendations

The proposed access road to Blackwell Farm would cut across a characteristic and typical section of the Hog's Back chalk escarpment. The mixed (predominantly arable) farmland set within larger fields, with clumps of trees and hedges and woodland is typical of the north facing slopes to the Hog's Back Chalk Ridge LCA, as described in the Surrey and Guildford LCAs. Policy within the Guildford Local Plan, the Surrey Hills AONB Management Plan and guidance set out within the LCAs is consistent with national policy in that the priority should be to protect, conserve and enhance the character, scenic quality and natural beauty of the AONB. Reference is made in these documents of the importance of views to and from the AONB and the setting to the AONB.

This LVA considers the impacts and effects of the proposed access road to the proposed Blackwell Farm development. It does not assess the development itself, but this is a consideration as the access road would not be required if the development is not taken forward.

The proposed road alignment runs parallel to the existing lane to Down Place. A decision was taken not to set the access road on the existing lane alignment as this would have involved removal of the woodland/avenue which currently borders the lane. The proposed access road alignment appears, therefore, to be based purely on the desire to retain the vegetation on the lane to Down Place. No highways assessments have been provided to support the proposals, and there is a risk that the road could not be built as indicated. In any event, there is no information that the proposed alignment is supported by a landscape/visual assessment or other highway assessments.

This LVA concludes that there would be significant impacts and effects on both landscape character and visual amenity. The road would be prominent in views to and from the Hog's Back from public rights of way, permissive paths and the A31. Car lights would impact significantly at night introducing lighting to the currently unlit slopes to the AONB. This LVA concludes that if permanent street lighting were to be introduced this would have a major adverse effect on character and tranquillity. Creation of the route would involve vegetation removal, principally in the vicinity of the A31 junction and at the crossing point with the lane to Down Place. A significantly larger land take than that shown on the feasible option would be required in order to create a safe and viable highway. It is anticipated that extensive cut and fill works would be required to create suitable gradients. The land take and consequent impact on landscape character and visual amenity would, therefore, be substantially greater than suggested by the feasible option alignment. There would be harm to landscape pattern, land use, land cover and the loss of mature trees and woodland and historic avenue trees on the lane to Down Place. The access road would have a significant adverse effect on tranquillity and the sense of place associated with this part of the Hog's Back. The LMS Natural Beauty Evaluation (May 2016, see Section 5) concluded that the landscape beyond the AONB was representative of many of the defining characteristics associated with the AONB, including tranquillity. Construction of the road would inevitably result in substantial harm to the sense of tranquillity with increased traffic noise and a consequent loss of the experience of 'natural' sounds, the creation of a substantially changed landform, the introduction of features out of character with the rural landscape and night time impacts associated with car lighting.

The proposed access road would conflict with policy at a national, regional, local and AONB level. The access road would fail to conserve and enhance the landscape qualities and scenic beauty associated with the nationally protected Surrey Hills AONB, as required by Paragraph 115 of the NPPF and policies in both the current and emerging Guildford Borough Local Plans. The proposal would conflict with Land Use and Transport policies in the AONB Management Plan which seeks to protect and enhance and minimise impacts on the landscape of both the AONB itself and the setting to the AONB.

This assessment considers the 'feasible option' alignment. Far more information would be required in order to prepare a comprehensive Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA). Any consideration of route options should be accompanied by a full LVIA for all options. This LVA identifies substantial landscape and visual issues and constraints associated with construction of an access road from the A31 running north from the Hog's Back to the proposed Blackwell Farm development. Significant, permanent impacts and effects are identified which would cause irreversible harm to the character, appearance, scenic beauty and sense of tranquillity associated with this part of the Hog's Back and the Surrey Hills AONB. Harm to both the AONB and the setting to the AONB is identified. This is contrary to existing national and local policy and guidance in the AONB Management Plan to protect, conserve and enhance nationally protected landscapes.

## Appendix A Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Methodology

### Assessment Methodology

#### ***Introduction***

This LVIA Methodology used is based on revised guidance set out in 'Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment' published by the Landscape Institute and Institute for Environmental Assessment (2013). Additional guidance in relation to the assessment of landscape character is provided in 'An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment' (October 2014) and supporting Topic Papers prepared by Natural England together with Landscape Character Assessment Guidance for England and Scotland published by The Countryside Agency (2002).

This Methodology Statement sets out the approach which has been followed in the preparation of the LVIA.

For the purpose of this assessment the definition of the distinction between 'impact' and 'effect', is taken from 'Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment' published by the Landscape Institute and Institute for Environmental Assessment (2013). This guidance defines '*impact*' as '*the action being taken*' and '*effect*' as the '*change resulting from that action*'.

#### ***Methodology for Determining Baseline Conditions and Sensitive Receptors***

The first stage of the assessment involves establishing the landscape and visual baseline of the Site and the surrounding area through desktop studies and field surveys. The desktop study includes the following:

- Identification of landscape and other environmental designations relevant to the Site and surrounding area;
- Collation and review of national, regional and local landscape character assessments and other surveys or assessments relevant to the land such as tree surveys and historic landscape character assessments; and
- Identification of the anticipated Zone of Visual Influence or Zone of Theoretical Visibility associated with the Proposed Development.

This information informs the identification of sensitive landscape and visual receptors, i.e. those landscape elements and features and visual receptors that are likely to be directly or indirectly affected by the Proposed Development on the Site.

The next stage of the baseline assessment is based on field survey and involves the following:

- Evaluation of the condition, quality and value of the existing Site and the principal elements or components of the Site itself and the surrounding area; and
- Visits to all public rights of way and other accessible land, including transport routes within the identified zone of theoretical visibility, in order to confirm the extent of the actual visual envelope and to identify representative viewpoints to be taken forward as part of the assessment.

The assessment of landscape character involves identifying the key landscape elements or components which define the Site and immediate surrounding area. These elements or components and the overall Site character are described with reference to:

- Pattern: the relationship between topography, elevation, the degree of visual enclosure and the physical scale of landscape features;
- Tranquillity: remoteness and sense of isolation;
- Cultural and historical associations/features and their settings; and
- Land cover, land use and management.

This stage of the assessment also takes into account the influence of local geology, soils and topography on the character, condition and quality of the landscape. The area of study in relation to landscape character is determined principally by the scale of the landscape typology, element or feature to be assessed. For instance assessment of the Proposed Development in the context of regional or local Landscape Character Assessments considers the Site in the context of the area covered by the assessment. Assessment of individual landscape features or elements such as landscape pattern or tree cover focuses on the significance of the feature or element in the context of the Site itself, and may take into context adjoining areas, where the influence of the feature extends beyond the site boundary.

The assessment and mapping of tranquillity has been the subject of a number of studies, primarily undertaken by the CPRE<sup>1</sup>. In surveys CPRE have identified the following positive and negative factors contributing to the perception of tranquillity:

Positive Factors:

- Seeing a natural landscape;
- Hearing birdsong;
- Hearing peace and quiet;
- Seeing natural looking woodland;
- Seeing the stars at night;
- Seeing streams;
- Seeing the sea;
- Hearing natural sounds;
- Hearing wildlife; and

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<sup>1</sup> [www.cpre.org.uk/resources/countryside/item/download/369](http://www.cpre.org.uk/resources/countryside/item/download/369)

- Hearing running water.

Negative Factors:

- Hearing constant noise from cars, lorries and/or motorbikes;
- Seeing lots of people;
- Seeing urban development;
- Seeing overhead light pollution;
- Hearing lots of people;
- Seeing low flying aircraft;
- Hearing low flying aircraft;
- Seeing power lines;
- Seeing towns and cities and roads.

Accessibility will also influence how the landscape is valued and used by local communities. This stage of the assessment also identifies public rights of way and other areas of accessible land such as Common Land, Parks and Open Spaces and Access Land as well as more functional locations such as transport corridors, places of work and retail centres.

Having drawn together the baseline information from the desktop study and the field survey, this information is used to describe the landscape character and scenic beauty of the Site and the local area. Reference is made to existing baseline assessments and descriptions in defining terms such as 'scenic' or 'natural beauty'.

### ***Sensitive Receptors***

This LVIA identifies sensitive landscape and visual receptors, which inform the overall assessment of impacts and effects.

### ***Landscape Receptor Sensitivity***

The assessment of landscape sensitivity seeks to establish the degree to which the landscape can accommodate change without affecting the fundamental characteristics which contribute to aspects such as local distinctiveness, sense of place, appearance and landscape quality.

The criteria used in this assessment are closely linked to the attributes and features used to describe landscape character and quality (see Table 1).

#### **Table 1: Landscape Receptor Sensitivity**

Sensitivity	Criteria
High	Landscape which would not accommodate change without significant impact on character and scenic beauty. Key considerations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National Landscape Designation (AONB or National Park) Landscape with many characteristic features or attributes significant at national, regional and local character assessments</li> <li>• Strong cultural and historic associations of national importance</li> <li>• Features and attributes which could not easily be replaced</li> </ul>
Medium	Landscape which could accommodate some change without significant impact on character and scenic beauty. Key considerations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local Landscape Designation</li> <li>• Landscape with some characteristic features or attributes significant at regional and local character assessments</li> <li>• Strong cultural and historic associations of regional or local importance</li> <li>• Features and attributes which could be replaced within a reasonable timescale</li> </ul>
Low	Landscape which could accommodate a high degree of change without significant impact on character and scenic beauty. Key considerations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No specific Landscape Designation</li> <li>• Landscape with few characteristic features or attributes significant at regional and local character assessments</li> <li>• Limited cultural and historic associations</li> <li>• Features and attributes which could easily be replaced within a reasonable timescale</li> </ul>
Very Low/ Neutral	Landscape which is assessed as degraded or derelict. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No specific Landscape Designation</li> <li>• Landscape with no characteristic features or attributes significant at regional and local character assessments</li> <li>• No cultural and historic associations</li> <li>• No features and attributes considered worthy of retention or replacement</li> </ul>

The assessment of landscape receptor sensitivity is also informed by published Landscape Character Assessments (LCAs).

### ***Visual Receptor Sensitivity***

For the purpose of this assessment, visual receptors are defined as publically accessible locations within the defined zone of theoretical visibility (see Figure 2). The baseline assessment has identified a series of representative viewpoints. These are subdivided by distance:

- Near distance 0 to 0.5 kilometre (km) from visual receptor;
- Middle Distance 0.5 to 1 km from visual receptor; and
- Long Distance Greater than 1 km from visual receptor.

Landscape receptor sensitivity also informs the assessment of visual receptor sensitivity. The assessment of visual receptor sensitivity takes account of the landscape receptor sensitivity and also the viewer circumstances. In locations where viewers are likely to be static, such as recognised viewpoints or visitor sites, this will generally be afforded a high sensitivity. Viewpoints located on rights of way, where viewers are likely to be walking, cycling or equestrian users,

will generally be assessed as of medium sensitivity. Where viewers are transient and likely to be travelling at higher speeds, such as on road or rail, viewpoints will be assessed as of lower sensitivity. The criteria used in this LVIA to define visual receptor sensitivity are set out in Table 2 below:

**Table 2: Visual Receptor Sensitivity**

Sensitivity	Criteria
High	Receptor located on a public right of way or other publically accessible land within a nationally important landscape related asset or designation.
Medium	Receptor located on a public right of way or other publically accessible land located within a public open space or park or other locally designated landscape, including townscape designations, such as a Conservation Area.
Low	Receptor located within a rural or urban area with no landscape or townscape related designations; or Receptor located on a road or railway where viewer is likely to be transient; or Receptor located in a semi private facility such as a sports club or golf course, with restricted public access
Very Low/ Neutral	Receptor within a degraded or derelict landscape with restricted public access.

### ***Assessment of Magnitude***

The first stage of the assessment of magnitude involves a description of the Proposed Development and, where relevant, design and layout options to be considered and assessed. This includes lighting impacts. This may also include proposed landscape infrastructure, which is integral to the development proposals and also measures to protect existing features to be retained.

#### *Landscape Magnitude*

In assessing the magnitude of landscape impacts due regard is given to the scale, nature and duration of the impact. For example, a subtle change in the pattern of the landscape confined to a limited area for only a short period is likely to be considered low in magnitude.

The assessment of the magnitude of the identified landscape change takes into account the following:

- Sensitivity of the landscape receptor (Table 1);
- The age and condition of the feature or component;
- Rarity and ease of replacement; and
- Degree to which the feature contributes to, or is representative of, local landscape character.

These considerations inform the Landscape Impacts Magnitude Evaluation Criteria (Table 3 below).

**Table 3: Landscape Impacts Magnitude Evaluation Criteria**

Magnitude	Evaluation Criteria
High	Proposal results in major changes or alteration to key elements, features or characteristics which define local landscape character and scenic quality and natural beauty.
Medium	Proposal results in medium scale changes or partial loss or alteration to key elements, features or characteristics which contribute to local landscape character and scenic quality and natural beauty.
Low	Proposal results in limited changes or partial loss or alteration to elements, features or characteristics which are of limited importance to local landscape character and scenic quality and natural beauty.
Very Low	Proposals are in keeping with local landscape character and would result in negligible or minor changes to elements, features or characteristics which are of limited importance to local landscape character and scenic quality and natural beauty.
Neutral	There is no change to landscape elements, features or characteristics

### *Visual Magnitude*

Having identified all viewpoints the anticipated magnitude of visual impacts associated with the Proposed Development has been assessed from each viewpoint. The criteria used in this assessment are set out in Table 4 using five levels or categories ranging from high, through medium, low, very low to neutral where no change is anticipated. Table 4 does not distinguish between positive (beneficial) and negative (adverse), which will be informed by judgements as to the scale and nature of the change in the view and the integration of the Proposed Development within the view.

**Table 4: Visual Impacts Magnitude Evaluation Criteria**

Magnitude	Evaluation Criteria
High	<p>The scale of the change in the view is large with respect to the loss or change to features in view.</p> <p>The nature of the impacts is generally permanent.</p> <p>The number of affected views or visual receptors is high.</p> <p>The full extent of the view would be occupied by the Proposed Development.</p> <p>The introduction of new elements is considered to be in total contrast to the character of the existing landscape.</p>
Medium	<p>The scale of the change in the view is moderate with respect to the loss or change to features in view.</p> <p>The nature of the impacts is either permanent or temporary.</p> <p>A partial extent of the view would be occupied by the Proposed Development.</p> <p>The introduction of new elements is considered to be/not to be substantially in contrast to the character of the existing landscape.</p> <p>Affected viewers may be transient, i.e. from footpaths.</p>
Low	<p>The scale of the change in the view is low with respect to the loss or change to features in view.</p> <p>The nature of the impacts is either permanent or temporary.</p> <p>The number of affected views or visual receptors is low.</p> <p>A small or limited extent of the view would be occupied by the Proposed Development.</p> <p>The introduction of new elements may not be considered to be unduly in contrast to the existing landscape characteristics.</p> <p>Affected viewers may be transient, i.e. from a moving vehicle.</p>

Magnitude	Evaluation Criteria
Very Low	<p>The scale of the change in the view is very low with respect to the loss or change to features in view.</p> <p>The nature of the impacts is either temporary and short term</p> <p>The number of affected views or visual receptors is very low.</p> <p>A very small or limited extent of the view would be occupied by the Proposed Development.</p> <p>The introduction of new elements may not be considered to be unduly in contrast to the existing landscape characteristics.</p> <p>Affected viewers are transient, i.e. from a moving vehicle.</p>
Neutral	There is no change to the view.

### **Effects Significance Criteria**

Having assessed the baseline landscape and visual receptor sensitivity (Tables 1 and 2) and magnitude of the anticipated landscape (Table 3) and visual (Table 4) change or impacts, the significance of effect is assessed in accordance with the determinant thresholds set out in Table 5 below. For the purposes of this assessment a 5-point scale ranging from negligible through to major has been adopted in order to assess the significance of landscape and visual effects.

**Table 5 Determinants of Significance of Effect**

Landscape Receptor Sensitivity	Magnitude of Change / Impact				
	High	Medium	Low	Very Low	Neutral
High	Major	Major	Moderate	Minor	Neutral
Medium	Major	Moderate	Minor	Negligible	Neutral
Low	Moderate	Minor	Negligible	Negligible	Neutral
Very Low	Minor	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible	Neutral
Neutral	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral

A neutral significance of effect is assessed where there is no change or impact to the Landscape Receptor. The assessment of the significance of effects has due regard to the following:

- Extent and magnitude of the effect;
- Effect duration (whether temporary (short-term) or permanent (medium or long-term));
- Effect nature (whether direct or indirect, reversible or irreversible, beneficial or adverse);
- Whether the effect occurs in isolation, is cumulative or interactive;
- Performance against any relevant environmental quality standards;
- Sensitivity of the receptor; and
- Compatibility with environmental policies

Table 6 provides a definition of the significance of effects:

**Table 6: Significance of Effects**

Significance of Effect	Definition
Major	Major change to character and/or appearance of affecting landscape resource and/or visual amenity
Moderate	Moderate or partial change to character and/or appearance of affecting landscape resource and/or visual amenity
Minor	Minor change, possibly of short duration or indirect effect, to the landscape resource and/or visual amenity
Negligible	Very low or negligible change, possibly of short duration or indirect effect, to the landscape resource and/or visual amenity
Neutral	No change or effect

The definition of the range and significance of effects for both landscape and visual impact assessments is informed by the sensitivity of the receptor in the context of the criteria above. Impacts and consequent effects can be direct, indirect, cumulative, positive or negative and permanent or temporary. The identification of impacts and consequent effects also clearly distinguishes between those which affect the physical landscape resource (landscape character) and those associated with visual amenity and views across the Site. Impacts and effects are also considered in terms of their duration, i.e. whether they are permanent, and scale.

In order to inform the decision making process, the LVIA reports on those effects that are considered to be significant. The two principal criteria determining significance are the sensitivity of the landscape or visual receptor and the magnitude of the change or impact. This assessment therefore combines the sensitivity to change of the various receptors with the assessment of the magnitude of the effect in order to predict the significance of the landscape and visual effects of the Proposed Development.

Effects can be beneficial (positive) or adverse (negative) as well as neutral, where there is either no effect or where beneficial or adverse impacts balance. For the purpose of this assessment, effects that have been assessed as being either moderate or large adverse or beneficial or above are considered to be significant. Although minor adverse or beneficial and neutral effects are not considered significant, they remain worthy of consideration throughout the decision making process.