

# 5. Green Buffer Landscape Strategy

## 5.1. Introduction

This chapter presents landscape analysis and strategic principles for the potential future development on the Local Plan allocated land of Horsmonden. Local Plan policy requires a buffer, and these options enable the Parish Council to define its character.

### Objectives

To safeguard the sensitive or characteristic landscapes within or surrounding Horsmonden.

objectives to mitigate against undesirable changes upon sensitive or characteristic landscapes:

- to check the sprawl of built-up areas;
- to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
- to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and
- to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

Within this context, the options below show the mitigation strategies between the sustainable urban extension can and their settings can:

- Maintain the existing character of Horsmonden as a settlement within a rural landscape.

- Protect the rural and sensitive landscape settings surrounding Horsmonden and future development;
- Respect existing rights of way and bridleways that run through the area; and
- Increase leisure, recreation and further development opportunities for the village.

The following pages present an analysis of the landscape today, before introducing strategic plans for the potential development sites the that are based on the current situation and the opportunities that the new development present.

#### POLICY EN22

Proposals for development affecting Areas of Landscape Importance, as defined on the Proposals Map, will only be permitted where no significant harm would be caused to the appearance or landscape character of the designated area and the development would not materially detract from the contribution which that area makes to the locality.









5.2. Analysis

Figure 82 shows existing green infrastructure across the site. The plan highlights areas of woodland and existing landscape corridors which will be important in the creation of wildlife connections with the planted or open spaces of the potential developments of Horsmonden. Future development in the area should protect and enhance existing corridors and create new habitats to strengthen biodiversity across the area.

The analysis diagram also demonstrates the context of the surrounding green spaces and woodland, and the importance of providing landscape corridors between these spaces.

Topography

The area has a gently undulating topography. The developed area of Horsmonden is in a slight depression at between 50m and 60m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD) with hills to the north east of the village gently rising to 78m AOD and a gradual slope to the south of the village to the agricultural land reaching 107m AOD. The steepest natural slopes surround the watercourse on the edge of the developed area of the village to the south east. The village is exposed to the north west of the developed area where the land descends to Furnace Pond at 40m AOD before raising to 97m AOD at Brenchley.

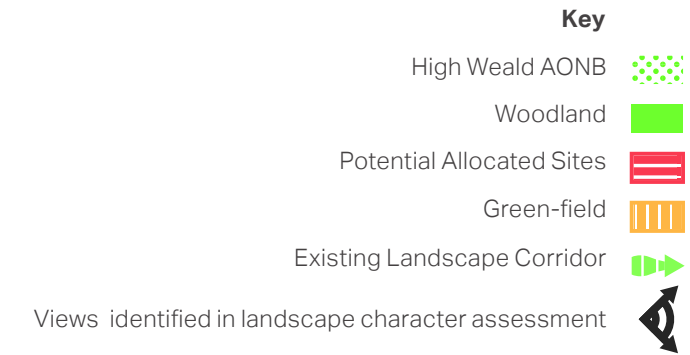


Figure 82: Green infrastructure analysis diagram



## Local character Assessment

LCA2 - Horsmonden Fruit Belt - (Tunbridge Wells Borough Landscape Character Assessment)

### Key characteristics

**Horsmonden has a rural character of a village within an agricultural setting of largely gently undulating agricultural fields typically orchards or hops which are typical for the area with boundaries formed from hedgerows.**

Occasional long views out over the patchwork farmland of the Low Weald to the wooded ridge of the North Downs.

- From the higher ground, such as at Hayman's Hill, there are extensive views out over the patchwork Low Weald farmland, terminating at the wooded ridge of the North Downs in the distance.
- There are glimpsed views to the south, east and west towards the wooded ridges of the High Weald which also form a wooded backdrop to the elevated village of Horsmonden. Some views valued by the local community include the view from Horsmonden to Brenchley church. The overall effect is of being on the edge of an upland area.

A predominantly open landscape with only occasional small woodland copses creating an open, agricultural character, with a reduced sense of enclosure.

- The areas of fruit cultivation are highly visible in the landscape, as they are located on undulating slopes. Here, the intersecting regular lines created by the rows of fruit, with strips of grass in between and tall shelter hedges combine to create a visually interesting, busy patterned landscape. Mature trees, steep winding roads with grass verges and small areas of woodland add to this pattern.

Some enclosure provided by the alder and poplar shelter hedges around the fruit fields and hedgerow lines along roads, and around ponds.

- Field boundaries are varied and are determined by land use. An intensively cultivated landscape dominated by orchards but also occasional areas of hops and some soft fruit.
- The areas of fruit cultivation are visually dominant to a backdrop of other agricultural land uses, including large arable fields in the north of the area and smaller enclaves of pasture.

Many dispersed, scattered rural buildings with the principal settlement and focus of the area being the village of Horsmonden.

- Overall the dispersed settlement pattern, and the nucleated village of Horsmonden, creates a sense of balance and harmony. However, there are also a number of large farm complexes which include extensive farm buildings, barns and fruit packing sheds.



Views of Bassets Farm Allocation Site

Figure 86 shows views from the Bassets Farm allocated land looking south at the elevated land demonstrating that the site is visible from the surrounding countryside; however little of it is publicly accessible. One such view is a views toward the allocated site from public rights of way in elevated positions to the south show that the northern and highest part of the allocated site is visible and therefore more sensitive to unmitigated development.

Views from the public right of way which runs across the north site from the public right of way to the north of the boundary are largely screened by the surrounding hedgerows but a gap (show in Figure 85) reveals a panoramic view (show in Figure 83).

Screening

Figure 84 demonstrates where screening is required to screen future development from the elevated ProW from the south of the proposed site, and discourage visual and physical coalescence between existing and future developments. The depth and heigh of screening required relates to the elevation and sensitivity of views from the village and surrounding areas.



Figure 86: View from public right of way north of Bassett Farm



Figure 83: View from public right of way south of Bassett Farm



Figure 85: View from public right of way north of Bassett Farm

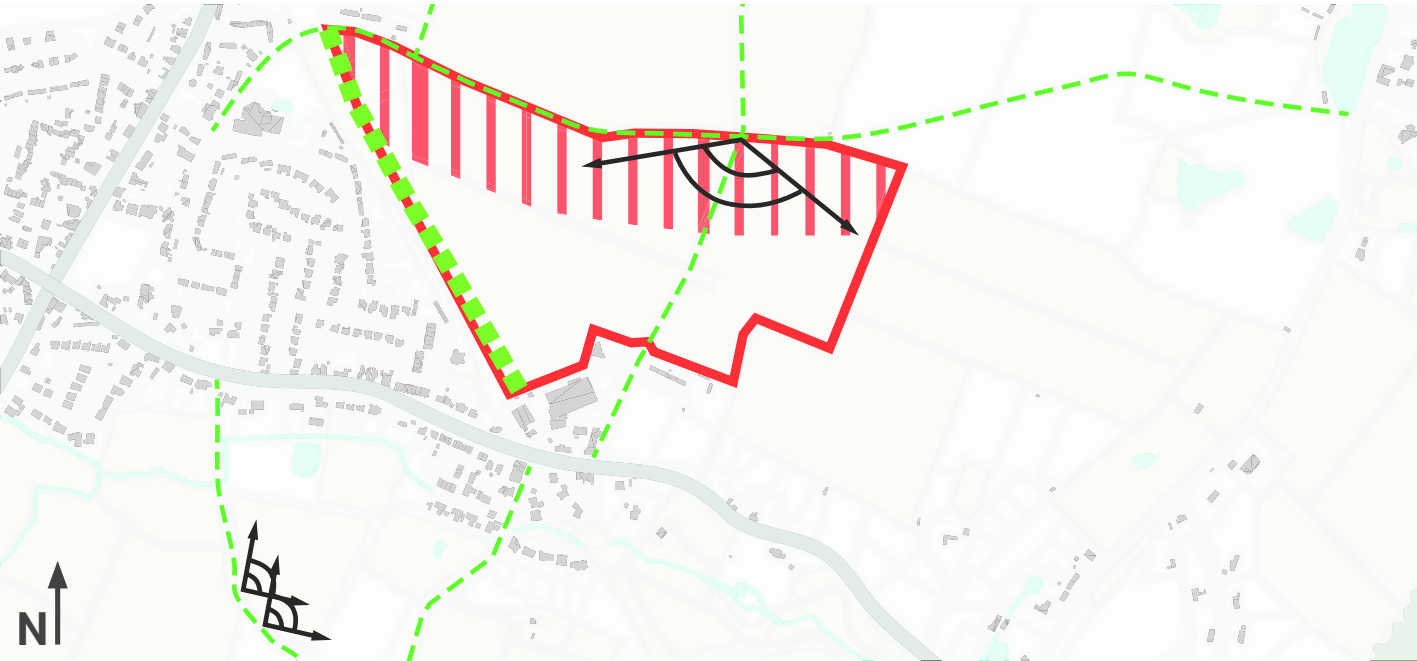
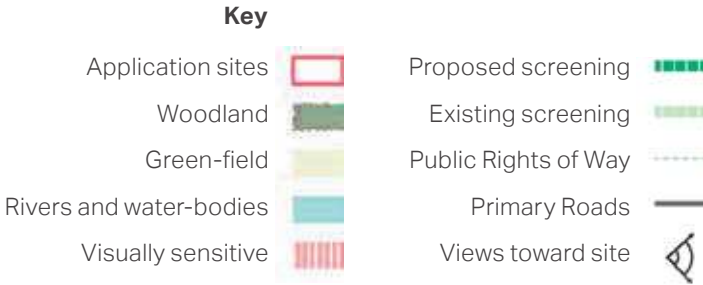


Figure 84: Landscape screening diagram





## Landscape Opportunities

- Establish further ecological connections toward Horsmonden centre;
- Provide spaces targeted to tackle play and open space deficiencies;
- Create open spaces in the visually sensitive areas with views out over the agricultural surroundings;
- Safeguard and provide information on the Hop Pickers Line; and
- Utilize and encourage use of PRoW.

## Landscape Constraints

- Loss of characteristic agricultural landscape;
- Land ownership and access issues;
- PRoW passing through and past the site;
- Undulating topography increasing the visibility of development of the site;
- Existing hedgerows and vegetation which would either be lost or would limit access;
- Number of access points and connection with the existing road network; and
- The Hop Pickers Line causes a line of severance which making connections to the existing village centre difficult.



Views

Views of the allocated site along Brenchley Road along the site's northern boundary are largely screened by an existing and well established hedgerow positioned immediately adjacent to the road (show in Figure 89). A single gateway in the hedge in the north western corner allow views across the site (show in Figure 90) which reveal an open and slightly undulating field; however typically this view would be glimpsed by fast moving traffic at an oblique angle.

Views of the allocated site from the neighbouring residential street Fromandez Drive are very limited by the single storey built form with gaps between dwellings filled with garages, shown in Figure X. However views from the private spaces of the properties would be more exposed to development on the site.

Screening

Figure 88 demonstrates where screening is required to screen future development in the allocated site south of Brenchley Road. The most effective locations for screening being located along the eastern boundary protecting the neighbouring residential street and a bolstering of the existing hedgerow along the northern boundary. The depth of screening required relates to the sensitivity of views from the village.



Figure 89: View from gateway on Brenchley Road



Figure 90: View from Brenchley Road



Figure 91: View from existing residential street

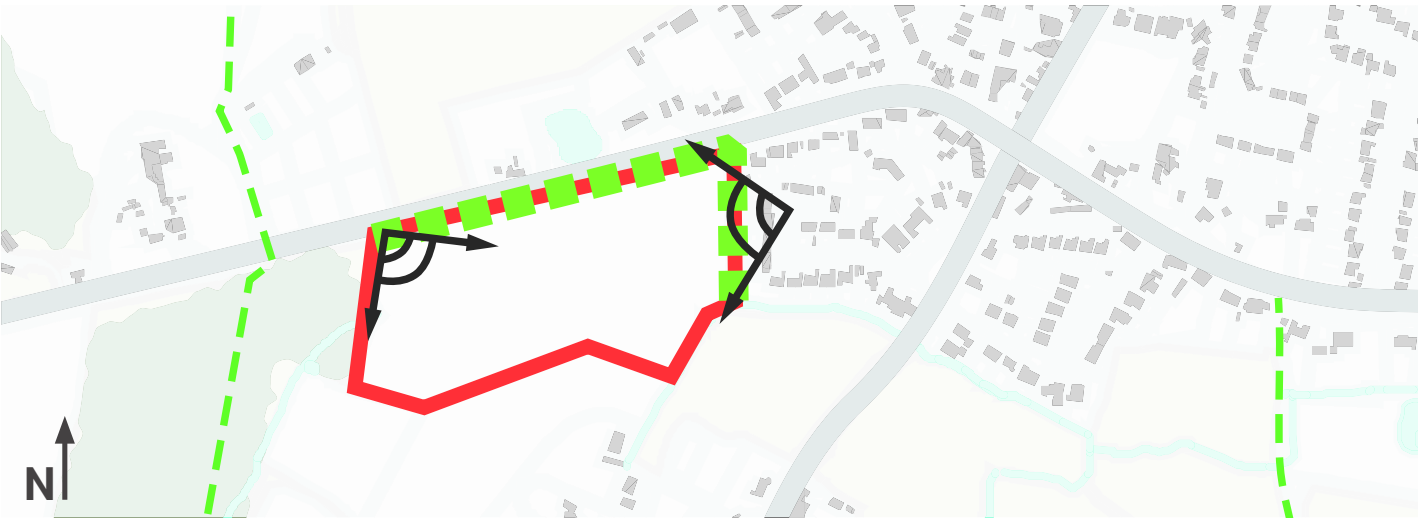
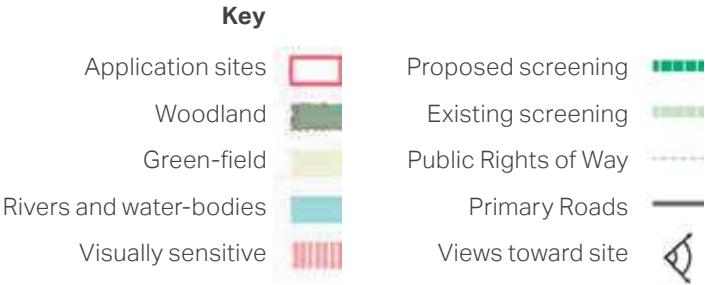


Figure 88: Landscape screening diagram



## Landscape Opportunities

- Establish further ecological connections with Sprivers and the village;
- Protect and enhance the established hedges
- Provide spaces targeted to tackle play and open space deficiencies;
- Utilize and encourage use of PRoW.

## Landscape Constraints

- Loss of characteristic agricultural landscape;
- Difficult connection to village centre;
- Undulating landscape will create areas of higher visibility;
- Existing hedgerows and vegetation which will limit access and footpaths along Brenchley Road; and
- Development may be visible from existing residential areas of Horsmonden.



Figure 92: View from the edge of Spivers



Views

Views from Gibbets Lane are typically very enclosed by the hedgerows further emphasised by the profile of the sunken lane shown in Figure 95.

Views from the intersection of Furnace Land and Gibbets Lane from the incidental green space give views over the hedgerow to the field and with Brenchley village in the background.

Views from the allocated site toward Brenchley show that part of the settlement is visible including the All Saints Brenchley church); however from the church views toward the site are obscured by the built form and vegetation in Brenchley.

Screening

Figure 94 demonstrates where screening is required to screen future development north of, and discourage visual and physical coalescence between existing and future developments. The depth of screening required relates to the sensitivity of views from the village and other settlements.



Figure 95: View along Gibbet Lane

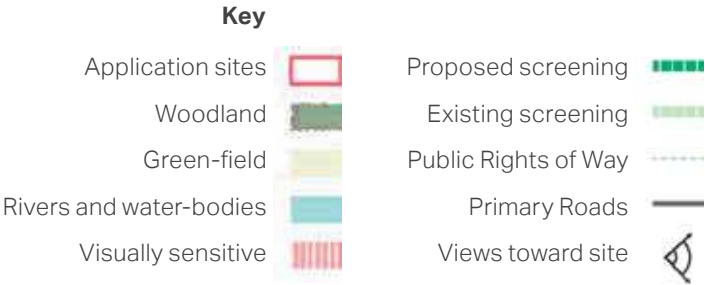


Figure 93: Landscape screening diagram



Figure 94: Landscape screening diagram

### Landscape Opportunities

- Establish further ecological connections toward village core
- Provide spaces targeted to tackle play and open space deficiencies; and
- Utilize and encourage use of PRow close to site in Sprivers.

### Landscape Constraints

- Loss of characteristic landscape;
- Existing hedgerows and vegetation which would either be lost or would limit access - namely in order to establish pedestrian access toward village centre; and
- The Hop Pickers Line causes a line of severance which making connections to the existing village centre difficult.







**Delivery**

**06**









## 6. Delivery

The recommended next steps for how to use the outcomes of this design options study are to:

- Embed the guidelines in the Neighbourhood Plan; and
- Engage with the local planning authority to develop policies supporting the local guidelines.

### 6.1. Embed the guidelines in the Draft Neighbourhood Plan

The objective of this report is to develop a series of design guidelines for development in Horsmonden and options for the landscape buffer towards the sustainable urban extension.

The report can be used as evidence to support the forthcoming neighbourhood plan (and its draft policies) where the analysis highlights relevant issues and opportunities that can be influenced by land use planning interventions.

The focus of the first part of this report has primarily been on important local character assets and urban design guidelines to be considered in future development proposals. These suggestions should be considered alongside other non-design interventions, such as exploring opportunities for supporting or restricting certain types of development/land uses and allocating the key sites identified for development. Any policies put forward must be capable of meeting the basic conditions (e.g. having regard to national policies and general conformity with the strategic policies contained in the development plan).

### 6.2. Engage with the Council to develop policies supporting the proposals

The inputs from the Council's policy and development management specialists would be invaluable in advance of formal consultation and submission. The steering group should consider how our recommendations can be transposed into policy through discussions with Kent Council and use the best practice guidance from Locality to prepare draft policies for consultation. Locality's 'Writing Planning Policies' guidance sets out how different planning policies are designed to achieve different things. The guide describes the three most common as:

**Generic** – a simple policy which applies universally to development across the entire neighbourhood plan area;

**Criteria based** – a policy with a series of requirements that should be met by development proposals. These can be set out as separate bullet points; and

**Site specific** – this is where a policy applies to particular areas of land. One of the most powerful tools for a neighbourhood plan is to allocate land for a particular type of development. As well as allocating land you can use your plan to set out the principles which need to be followed in developing a particular site. This might include specifying what needs to be covered in a design brief to accompany any planning application. If you have site specific policies then you need to include a clear map showing the location and boundaries.

Site specific allocations are the hardest to do well. They would normally include associated policy related to land uses, quantum of development, configuration and design.

The steering group should check with the Local Planning Authority that their emerging preferred options are planning matters (i.e. suitable for inclusion as land use planning policy). Those that are not can be considered as community projects or neighbourhood infrastructure to be included within a delivery and implementation section of the Neighbourhood Plan.



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