
Ford Neighbourhood Plan: Preliminary Landscape and Visual Appraisal

March 2016

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APPENDICES

Appendix A.1: Published Landscape Character Extracts

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Barton Willmore Landscape Planning and Design (BWLPD) were commissioned by Wates Development Ltd to undertake a Preliminary Landscape and Visual Appraisal of Ford Airfield and surrounding area within Ford Parish ('the Site') in Arun District, West Sussex, to assess its suitability for urban development.
- 1.2 The Landscape and Visual Appraisal has been undertaken in the context of supporting continued representations for the promotion of the Site for mixed-use development through the Ford Neighbourhood Plan (FNP).
- 1.3 The Site is located on and around the former RAF Airfield between the existing "built-up" area of Ford/Yapton to the west and HM Prison Ford to the east. It is 1.7 km to the south of the South Downs National Park Boundary and less than 2km to the north of the coast at Climping Beach. The Site is located approximately 580 metres to the north of the A259, the main coastal road which runs in an east to west direction, connecting the main settlements along the coast, including Littlehampton and Bognor Regis, to the south-west and south-east of the Site, respectively. Ford Railway Station, on the London to Chichester Mainline, is located approximately 725 meters to the north-east of the Site. **Figure 1: Site Context Plan** illustrates the extents of the Site within Ford Parish Boundary.
- 1.4 To the south west and south the boundary is formed by Yapton Road and Horsemere Green Lane which follow the Parish Boundary. On the eastern extent of the Site boundary meanders through the existing industrial area off Horsemere Green Lane and around HM Prison Ford on to Ford Road to the east. The northern extent of the Site continues up to Ford Lane and the north western extent runs south from Imperium House on Ford Lane to Footpath 363/1, and to the land currently under construction for new housing north of Burndell Road. The boundaries therefore generally comprise existing roads and existing built-up areas; with short sections of the north-western and eastern boundaries adjoining agricultural land.
- 1.5 The Landscape and Visual Appraisal has been undertaken to:
- Assess the existing landscape character and visual amenity of the Site, including a review of the relevant landscape policies, designations and character assessments;
 - Identify the opportunities and constraints of mixed-use development on the Site; and
 - Make an appraisal of the potential landscape and visual effects of the proposed masterplan for mixed-use development
 - Describe the approach required to absorb/assimilate development within the surrounding landscape and visual context.

1.6 Information is presented on the following plans:

- Figure 1: Site Context Plan(1:12,500 @A1)
- Figure 2: Topographical Features Plan (1:12,500 @A3)
- Figure 3: Landscape Character Plan (1:12,500 @A3)
- Figure 4: Site Appraisal Plan (1:5,000 @A2)
- Figure 5: Visual Appraisal Plan (1:12,500 @A1)

2.0 METHODOLOGY

Assessment of Landscape and Visual Characteristics

- 2.1 The Landscape and Visual Appraisal has been prepared in accordance with the current best practice guidelines, as set out in the Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment's 'Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment' Third Edition, 2013¹.
- 2.2 The purpose of LVAs is to identify the potential for, and assess the likely effects of change resulting from development. Landscape and visual assessments are separate, although linked, processes. A distinction is made between:
- landscape - landscape character and the elements and features that contribute to it (landscape receptors); and
 - visual - people who experience views within the landscape (visual receptors).
- 2.3 A baseline study is undertaken to record the existing landscape features, characteristics, the way the landscape is experienced and potential visual receptors.

Sensitivity of Landscape Receptors

- 2.4 The sensitivity of a landscape receptor is a combination of the **value** of the landscape receptor and the **susceptibility** of the landscape receptor to the type of change proposed. That is the capacity for the landscape receptor to accommodate, in this case, mixed-use development.
- 2.5 The assessment of **value** is based on a combination of the importance of landscape-related planning designations, and as appropriate such attributes as scenic quality, perceptual aspects, rarity, representativeness, recreation and association. The overall value for each landscape receptor is categorised as High, Medium, Low or Very Low.
- 2.6 Landscape **susceptibility** is categorised as High, Medium or Low. The following criteria are taken into consideration in the assessment of landscape susceptibility: landform, pattern/complexity, composition, land-cover and relationship to existing settlements or developments. However, not all criteria are equally applicable or important within a given landscape / type of development proposed.

¹ Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management Assessment (2013) Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Third Edition

- 2.7 Based on the combination of value and susceptibility, an assessment of landscape **sensitivity** with regards to accommodating urban development is reached, and categorised as High, Medium or Low.

Sensitivity of Visual Receptors

- 2.8 The sensitivity of a visual receptor is a consideration of the **value** of the view and the **susceptibility** of the visual receptor to the type of changed proposed, in this case mixed-use development.
- 2.9 The assessment of **value** is based upon the importance of the location of the view, its designations, cultural associations and the amount to which the view forms part of the experience in the location. The overall value for each visual receptor is categorised as High, Medium, Low or Very Low.
- 2.10 Visual **susceptibility** to the type of change proposed is based upon the activity or expectation of the viewer. It is categorised as high, medium or low where people in their homes or engaged in outdoor recreation focussed on the landscape may have a high susceptibility whilst it may be low for those engaged in work or travelling on major roads.
- 2.11 Based on the combination of value and susceptibility, an assessment of visual **sensitivity** with regards to accommodating mixed-use development is reached, and categorised as High, Medium or Low.
- 2.12 The assessment, based on the inter-visibility between the Site and surrounding area, vegetation patterns and landform, covers an area up to approximately 3.5km from the Site. A brief description of the existing land use of the area is provided, along with settlement patterns, roads, vegetation cover and local landscape designations with a more detailed landscape and visual appraisal of the Site. The field work was undertaken from within the Site and publically accessible locations including Public Rights of Way (PRoW) surrounding the Site.

3.0 SITE CONTEXT

3.1 The Site is located predominantly on the site of the former Ford Airfield, and covers a diverse landscape which includes the former airfield runways, associated infrastructure and industrial units, and 14 agricultural fields of varying sizes. The Site surrounds a waste water treatment works and an industrial area. The former runways, which are used as a site for an open air market, are surrounded by a by a circular roadway from former airfield use which are partially intact and used as public footpaths or vehicular access. As shown on the **Figure 1: Site Context Plan** the eastern part of the Site comprises agricultural fields, and industrial sites formerly part of the airfield, which border Ford Road on the east and HM Prison Ford on the south. The south western part comprises agricultural fields on former airfield land bounded by Rollaston Park on the west, Yapton Road to the south west and Horsemere Green Lane to the South. Residential development adjoins both the Rollaston Park and Horsemere Green Lane boundaries of the Site. The land to the south-east of the Site, beyond Yapton Road, includes an extension of the former air field, now Ford Rifle Ranges. The northern part of the Site comprises agricultural fields extending to Ford Lane, along which there are various industrial units, farms and houses, mainly on its northern side. The Site therefore is composed of and surrounded by diverse features of residential, institutional, industrial and agricultural character.

Landscape Policy

National Planning Policy Framework

3.2 Paragraph 7 states that there are three dimensions to sustainable development, which are economic, social and environmental. With regard to the environmental role of the planning system, the NPPF states that the planning system should contribute to the protection and enhancement of the natural, built and historic environment, helping to improve biodiversity, minimise waste and adapt to climate change.

3.3 Twelve core planning principles set out in paragraph 17 underpin decision-making. Relevant principles state that planning should:

- ***"...always seek to secure high quality design and a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings;***
- ***take account of the different roles and character of different areas, promoting the vitality of our main urban areas, protecting the Green Belts around them, recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and supporting thriving rural communities within it...;***
- ***contribute to conserving and enhancing the natural environment and reducing pollution. Allocations of land for***

development should prefer land of lesser environmental value, where consistent with other policies in this Framework...;

- ***promote mixed-use developments, and encourage multiple benefits from the use of land in urban and rural areas, recognising that some open land can perform many functions (such as wildlife, recreation, flood risk mitigation, carbon storage, or food production)."***

3.4 The NPPF identifies and describes thirteen aspects contributing to the delivery of sustainable development which should be considered in developing local plans and reviewing planning applications. Those of relevance to the landscape and visual considerations of the Site and Development include Section 7: Requiring good design. Paragraph 58 states that planning policies and decisions should aim to ensure that developments, amongst other things:

- ***"...Establish a strong sense of place,***
- ***..."***
- ***respond to local character and history, and reflect the identity of local surroundings***
- ***..."***
- ***are visually attractive as a result of good architecture and appropriate landscaping."***

3.5 With regard to the natural environment, Paragraphs 109-125 of Section 11 focus on conserving and enhancing the local and natural environment. The framework states that the planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by, amongst other things, "protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, geological conservation interests and soils".

3.6 Paragraph 114 requires planning authorities to plan positively for the creation, protection, enhancement and management of networks of biodiversity and green infrastructure.

3.7 The NPPF makes clear at paragraph 115 that great weight should be given to conserving the landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs), which have the highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty.

Arun District Council Local Plan 2003

3.8 The Development Plan for the Arun district includes the 'saved policies' of the Local Plan 2003 which is available from the Arun District Council web site². The new local plan is in the process

² <http://www.arunlocalplan.net/HTML/Statement/statementframeset.html>

of being progressed by Arun District Council, for the plan period 2011 -2013. The most current draft is the Arun Local Plan 2011 - 2013, Publication Version, October 2014.

3.9 Saved Policy GEN7 Form of New Development:

"Development will be permitted provided it:

(ii) demonstrates that it responds positively to the identified characteristics and resources of the site and the area to create attractive places and spaces with the needs of people in mind and respects and enhances local distinctiveness;

(iv) does not have an unacceptable adverse impact on adjoining occupiers, land, uses or property

(vi) retains significant open or wooded areas which, in their own right, make a material contribution to the local environment"

3.10 Saved Policy GEN 20 Provision of Public Open Space within new development:

"Residential development will be required to provide public open space to the minimum standard of 2.4 hectares per 1,000 people and play equipment to meet the needs of the development. The Council will require the application of this standard and provision of play equipment as detailed in supplementary planning guidance."

3.11 Saved Policy GEN 28 Trees and Woodland:

"Development will not be permitted if it would damage or destroy one or more trees protected by a tree preservation order, identified as ancient woodland or in a conservation area unless: the removal of one or more trees would be in the interests of good arboricultural practice; or the benefits of the proposed development outweigh the amenity value of the protected trees."

3.12 Saved Policy GEN 29 Nature Conservation Across the District:

"Development will only be permitted on sites which contain semi-natural habitats, features of nature conservation interest, or within wildlife corridors, where these can be largely retained and sympathetically incorporated into the scheme. Legal agreements may be used to offset the loss of, or impact on, any nature conservation resource present on the site prior to development."

3.13 Saved Policy AREA 3 The Setting of Arundel

"No development will be permitted, particularly within the area shown on the Proposals Map, which would adversely affect views of Arundel or its special setting"

3.14 Saved Policy AREA 9 Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty refers to the former South Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which subsequent to 2011 has been designated at National Park:

"Development outside but near to the AONB will not be permitted where it would be unduly prominent in, or detract from, views into or out of the AONB."

3.15 The following studies, which support the Arun Local Plan, have been considered, however they did not contain findings pertinent to the Site:

- Arun Green Infrastructure Study June 2012³
- Arun District Council Green Infrastructure Network⁴

Designations

3.16 There are no planning designations within the Site. A Strategic Gap between Littlehampton and Bognor Regis and Arundel is identified in the Local Plan 2003 to the west and south of the Site which is 500m from the Site at its closest point. The setting of Arundel is also protected and this is approximately 500m to the east of the Site. The South Downs National Park is located at a distance of 1.7km to the north of the Site.

3.17 There are two Conservation Areas in Yapton, the closest being Church Road Conservation Area at St Mary's Church, approximately 600m to the west of the Site. Arundel Conservation Area is 3.5 kilometres to the north-east of the Site and Walberton Village Conservation Area is approximately 2 kilometres to the north-west.

3.18 The Site does not contain any Listed Buildings or Scheduled Ancient Monuments. There are a cluster of listed buildings and ancient earthworks protected as Scheduled Ancient Monuments (SAMs) at the junction of Ford Road and Horsemere Green Road around St Mary's of Clymping Church. To the north east of the Site a number of listed buildings are located around the ancient village of Ford at St Andrews-by-the-Ford and the junction of Ford Road and Ford Lane. Within the historic core of Yapton to the west of the Site there are also a number of listed buildings.

3.19 There is no ancient woodland within the Site, and none of the vegetation is covered by tree preservation orders. There are two tree preservation order groups to the south-west of the Site as illustrated on **Figure 4 Site Appraisal Plan**.

³ Land Use Consultants, Arun Green Infrastructure Study, June 2012

⁴ Arun District Council Green Infrastructure Network Maps: Ford Parish, November 2012 <http://www.arun.gov.uk/planning-policy-landscape-environment>

South Downs National Park

3.20 The Site is located 1.7 km to the south of the South Downs National Park at its closest point. The following documents make reference to the setting of the South Downs National Park, including reference to the coastal plain to the south of the National Park, within which the Site is located:

- South Downs National Park Partnership Management Plan 2014-2019 (2013)
- Access Network and Accessible Natural Greenspace Study (2014)
- South Downs National Park Green Infrastructure Framework Consultation Draft (January 2016)

South Downs National Park Partnership Management Plan 2014-2019 (2013)⁵

3.21 The seven "Special qualities of the South Downs National Park" as listed in Chapter 1, page 13, are its:

- ***Diverse, inspirational landscapes and breath-taking views;***
- ***Distinctive towns and villages, and communities with real pride in their area;***
- ***Well-conserved historical features and a rich cultural heritage;***
- ***Great opportunities for recreational activities and learning experiences;***
- ***Tranquil and unspoilt places;***
- ***A rich variety of wildlife habitats including rare and internationally important species; and***
- ***An environment shaped by centuries of farming and embracing new enterprise.***

3.22 The discussion of General Policies in Section 2.2 notes that "***The landscape setting and its biodiversity can also be affected by developments and other pressures beyond the boundary***" of the National Park, and that "***One of the key attractions is the unspoilt view out to sea and along the coast from much of the area.***" (Page 34)

3.23 General Policy 1 is to:

"Conserve and enhance the natural beauty and special qualities of the landscape and its setting, in ways that allow it to continue to evolve and become more resilient to the impacts of climate change and other pressures"

⁵ South Downs National Park (2013) *Partnership Management Plan: Shaping the future of your South Downs National Park 2014-2019*

3.24 The Management Plan makes reference to housing development outside the South Downs National Park boundaries in the Glossary, defining "Environmentally Appropriate" as follows: ***"In relation to housing provision, environmentally appropriate refers to the need for housing to not detrimentally affect the landscape setting of the National Park...."***

3.25 Landscape Character Areas are identified in the South Downs Integrated Landscape Character Assessment⁶, a technical report supporting the Management Plan. These do not extend beyond the boundaries of the National Park.

Access Network and Accessible Natural Greenspace Study (2014)⁷

3.26 This study supports both the South Downs Management Plan and emerging Local Plan by analysing the access network and elements of the green infrastructure (GI) network within a Study Area comprising the South Downs National Park plus the local authority areas of Adur and Worthing, Arun, Brighton and Hove, Chichester, Eastbourne, East Hampshire, Horsham, Lewes, Mid Sussex and Winchester.

3.27 The main report analyses "Accessible Natural Green Space" (ANG) within the Study Area (Page 46) noting that:

"It is difficult to 'retro-fit' ANG into existing urban areas. This means that it is particularly important for ANG to be incorporated into new housing developments and growth areas. The provision of additional ANG sites in new development can, however, be regarded as an additional burden to the amenity greenspace already required. It is therefore important to integrate the naturalness component into other greenspace requirements."

"In areas where there is a low level of accessible greenspace other areas take on a greater significance for providing access opportunities. The public rights of way network and other linear routes, for example, become increasingly important both for an access resource in themselves and for improving connectivity, '."

3.28 The discussion section on Page 73 notes that:

"Given existing shortfalls in ANG provision, new, larger scale developments need to incorporate greenspace within the site, or make provision for new greenspace in the near vicinity if the population at large is not to have access to greenspace further depleted. Opportunities to include more natural elements within the greenspace design should be realised wherever possible. This

⁶ Land Use Consultants for South Downs Joint Committee (2005) *South Downs Integrated Landscape Character Assessment*.

⁷ South Downs National Park Authority (July 2014) *Access Network and Accessible Natural Greenspace Study Part 1: Main Report and Part 2: Supporting Information*

is particularly important in areas with a deficit in ANG and in close proximity to the National Park."

- 3.29 Arun District is considered in detail in the Supporting Information (Part 2) which states ***"that most residents of Arun District have a very limited choice of ANG sites"***. (Page 33)
- 3.30 It is also noted that ***"There is a moderate level of rights of way provision in the north of Arun District within the South Downs National Park, but in the coastal areas there is low provision, particularly in the south west of the district around Bognor Regis"***. (Page 38)
- 3.31 With regards to Accessible Woodland it is noted that: ***"There is a very marked difference between woodland coverage in the South Downs National Park in the north of the district and outside the National Park along the coast. There is virtually no woodland on the coastal plain, with only around 15 small woodland sites, two of which are accessible."*** (Page 38)
- 3.32 The summary and opportunities section on Page 41 states that:

"Access improvements are needed in the coastal plain area, outside of the National Park. Both local ANG sites and PROW are lacking in this area. In the National Park the promoted cycling network could be improved to provide better connections into the coastal area and to railway stations."

South Downs National Park Green Infrastructure Framework Consultation Draft (January 2016)⁸

- 3.33 This study identifies Strategic Green Infrastructure Investment Areas (GIAs) within a study area including the South Downs National Park and its surroundings. A Coastal Plain GIA has been identified which stretches from Chichester in the west to the River Arun in the east; from the South Downs National Park in the north to the coastline to the south. This area includes the Site. The River Arun Blue-Green Corridor GIA is identified to the east of the Coastal Plain.
- 3.34 The opportunities identified for the Coastal Plain GIA include:
- - ***Access improvements and circular walks will benefit both the economy and local residents;***
 - ***A need for recreation to be developed without increasing pressure on recreation sensitive biodiversity sites;***
 -
 - ***Potential to link habitat improvement and flood mitigation;***

⁸ South Downs National Park Authority and Partners (Jan 2016) *South Downs Green Infrastructure Framework Technical Working Group Consultation Draft*

- ***Pollination Services – High demand along urban edge due to agricultural needs. Capacity to improve this service with improvements in green infrastructure especially in any future urban edge greenspace.***

3.35 The opportunities identified for the Arun Blue Green Corridor include:

- ***"cross-boundary and cross-sector approach, viewing the river corridor as an asset for biodiversity, water resources, flooding and sea level rise management, heritage interest, recreation and tourism;***
-
- ***Link routes to Ford Station - local access and tourism potential;"***
-

Summary issues in relation to the South Downs National Park

3.36 One of the "special qualities" of the South Downs National Park is its "*diverse, inspirational landscapes and breath-taking views*" and the first general policy of the National Park Management Plan is to conserve and enhance the "*natural beauty and special quality of the landscape and its setting*". To promote Green Infrastructure the National Park Authority has considered a Study Area including the South Downs and surrounding local authority areas. The availability of Accessible Natural Greenspace (ANG) has been assessed in the "Access Network and Accessible Natural Greenspace Study" and found that there is low provision for ANG and public rights of way in the coastal areas of Arun District, and "*virtually no woodland*". The study recommends that "*larger scale development needs to incorporate greenspace within the site*" and "*opportunities to include more natural elements within the greenspace should be realised wherever possible*". The recently published "Green Infrastructure Framework Consultation Draft" identifies opportunities for the Coastal Plain including access improvements and circular walks, habitat improvement and links from the River Arun to Ford Railway Station.

Landscape Setting

Landform and Hydrology

3.37 The Site is located within a flat coastal plain at approximately 5-10m AOD. The coastal plain rises dramatically up to the South Downs, up to elevations of up to 240m AOD, to the north of the Site, as illustrated on **Figure 2: Topographical Features**. Arundel Castle is a prominent landmark in the flat landscape set on a spur at an elevation of 50m AOD, approximately 3km to the north-east of the Site.

3.38 The flat coastal plain is drained by numerous ditches or "Rifes" as they are known locally, eg Ryebank Rife to the south of the Site. These drain to the River Arun which is a broad river which meanders through the coastal plain, to the east of the Site, to the sea at Littlehampton.

Location and Settlement

- 3.39 Settlement within the Parish of Ford has a very disparate character with historic origins associated with three ancient Churches surrounding the Site; to the north east at "St Andrews by the Ford" where the Saxon village of Ffordes was found, to the southeast "St Mary's of Clymping" and to the west "St Mary's of Yapton". Until the early 20th Century settlements were clustered around these historic centres, and around isolated farms. The line of the former Arundel-Chichester canal, which functioned in the 19th century, runs through the northern part of the Site. Industrial areas have taken advantage of the former airfield infrastructure and HMP Ford has developed around the former military base on Ford Road. The aerodrome was built in 1917 and was operational until 1920. It was returned to use as an RAF base and Battle of Britain airfield in the Second World War. It remained in military or civilian use for flying until 1980. Residential development took place on a former factory site at Rollaston Park, along Horsemere Green Lane and on Ford Road in the 20th Century.
- 3.40 To the east, separated by the River Arun, is the Coastal Town of Littlehampton. The Village of Yapton adjoins the Site to the west. Middleton-on-Sea, a suburb of the Coastal Town of Bognor Regis, is 2km to the south west of the Site with the Small Historic Market Town of Arundel 2.5km to the north east.
- 3.41 The Parish of Ford contains 4 buildings listed within Arun District Council's Supplementary Planning Document - Buildings or Structures of Character (September 2005) which state that "These buildings, whilst not listed, are recognised as important contributors to the local distinctiveness and sense of place and form part of the areas rich heritage".

Access and Public Rights of Way (PRoW)

- 3.42 A number of Public Rights of Way cross the Site; FP363 from Yapton to Ford to the north and FP175 from Rollaston Park to Climping to the south. The surrounding countryside is crossed by a number of Public Rights of Way through agricultural fields including FP359 to the north west of the Site from Yapton to Ford Lane. A Sustrans cycle route, the South Coast Cycle Route, connects Littlehampton with Bognor Regis and passes through Ford along Horsemere Green Lane and Yapton Road. There are no National Trails within the locality of the Site.
- 3.43 The Site is bound by minor roads along the majority of its boundaries, which connect with a network of narrow lanes lined by drainage ditches, which traverses the coastal plain, and which in turn links with the A259, running east-west to the south of the Site, and connecting the towns on the South Coast. The London to Chichester Mainline Railway runs east-west to the north of the Site, with Ford Station located some 725 metres to the north of the Site.

Vegetation

- 3.44 The field pattern within and surrounding the Site is generally large scale arable farmland, divided by substantial tree belts, often single species, including poplar and cedar, for screening of industrial areas and as wind breaks, and these reduce the visual quality of the landscape. There are pockets of mature native woodland and mixed hedgerows with hedgerow trees following track and roads which are also characteristic.

Published Landscape Character Assessments

- 3.45 A desktop review of published landscape character assessments has been undertaken against which to appraise the Site. **Figure 3: Landscape Character**, identifies the Landscape Character Areas in the locality of the Site.

National

- 3.46 Natural England has divided England into 159 distinct National Character Areas (NCA), with each being defined by a unique combination of features. The Site is covered by NCA 126: South Coast Plain, NE525⁹ (published Feb 2014). The key characteristics considered relevant to the Site or the surrounding area are:

- ***"The underlying geology of flinty marine and valley gravels extends several miles inland to the dip slope of the South Downs and the South Hampshire Lowlands. This gives rise to deep and well-drained high quality soils.***
- ***There are stretches of farmed land between developed areas, often with large arable fields defined by low hedges or ditches.***
- ***The area has significant urban development, with settlements along the coastline dominated by the Portsmouth conurbation, suburban villages and seaside towns including Bognor Regis, Littlehampton and Worthing linked by major road and rail systems."***

- 3.47 The Statements of Environmental Opportunity (SEO) outlined for NCA 126: South Coast Plain considered relevant to the Site are:

"SEO 2: Plan for the creation of a strong landscape framework within and around major settlements and identified growth areas, while managing and enhancing existing greenspace and access, and balancing the needs of agriculture, communities and the natural environment. For example by:

⁹ Natural England, NE525: NCA Profile 126 South Coast Plain February 2014
<http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/4923911250640896?category=587130>

- ***Engaging early in the scoping of new developments to ensure that they maximise their contribution to sustainable development.***
- ***Promoting and enhancing the rights of way network throughout the area, especially along the coast and linking to the South Downs, while developing new permissive access that links towns and settlements to quality greenspace and other areas of interest as part of a cohesive network of inspiring access provision for all."***
- ***Ensuring that development and its associated infrastructure (including light, noise and air pollution) does not intrude on the special qualities of ... the South Downs National Park; and ensuring that the landscape character within these areas and their settings is conserved, restored, reinforced or created as appropriate to reflect the ambitions of their respective management plans.***
- ***Promoting and enhancing the rights of way network throughout the area, especially along the coast and linking to the South Downs, while developing new permissive access that links towns and settlements to quality greenspace and other areas of interest as part of a cohesive network of inspiring access provision for all.***

"SEO 4: Manage the rich archaeological and historic resource and geological exposures within the farmed, coastal and peri-urban landscape, including the longstanding associations of horticultural and maritime industries and the military, enhancing a strong sense of place. For example by:

- ***...engaging communities with their local history and strengthening the physical links with the important historic landscapes that surround them."***
-

County

3.48 West Sussex County Council have produced Landscape Character Guidelines on Local Distinctiveness¹⁰ of the "South Coast Plain" Character Area in West Sussex. This area aligns with the NCA126 as described above. The Key Landscape Characteristics highlighted by the Guidelines include:

"...arable land is defined by poplar shelter belts, low hedgerows and rife and ditch drainage systems. Although woodland is not a dominant feature in the landscape there is localised remnant semi-natural broadleaved woodland as well as windswept oak trees and scrub. "

- ***The tranquil and open character of the landscape***

¹⁰ West Sussex County Council: The West Sussex Landscape Character Guidelines Local Distinctiveness The South Coast Plan Character Area 2013

- ***Qualities of the fine long views from the slopes of the Downs to the coast and vice versa***
- ***Woodlands and copses***
- ***The hedgerow framework, restoring where necessary, and retaining oak standards and other hedgerow trees***
- ***Reedbeds, streams and deep drainage ditches (rifes)***
- ***The network and character of narrow winding lanes and minor roads***

3.49 In 2003 West Sussex carried out an assessment of the landscape character of the county and identified 42 unique areas. The Site is included in SC9: Chichester to Yapton Coastal Plain¹¹ which is based upon Character Area C1 identified in the 2003 CBA report.¹²

3.50 The key characteristics of the Chichester to Yapton Coastal Plain identified include:

- ***Low lying flat open landscape***
- ***Meandering rifes and straight drainage ditch systems, with associated unimproved grassland and edged by reed beds***
- ***A low density of hedgerows and hedgerow trees with occasional shelterbelts.***
- ***Large-scale arable farming and market gardening. Extensive farms with both traditional and modern farm buildings and silos***
- ***Clusters of glasshouses***
- ***Scattered, historically nucleated villages with mixed building materials of flint, brick, half timber and stone.***
- ***Large farmsteads along roads, and on dead-end tracks.***
- ***Long views to Arundel, the Downs and to the distinctive spire of Chichester Cathedral***
- ***The relatively open character of much of the area allows long views so that village church towers are important landmarks in views.***
- ***Frequent urban fringe influences of horse paddocks, light industry and disused airfields, with busy minor and major roads.***
- ***The urban fringes associated with Bognor are particularly obvious, with sporadic urban development in suburban settlements of Tangmere, Barnham, Yapton, and Westergate.***
- ***Few trees or hedgerows, partly as a result of Dutch Elm Disease, from the 1970s and the Great Storm of 1987 and overall high quality agricultural land, although, where they do exist, they form prominent features.***
- ***Light industry in the countryside at Ford and Tangmere.***

3.51 The Land Management Guidelines note in the Overall Character description that:

¹¹ The West Sussex Landscape Land Management Guidelines Sheet SC9 Chichester to Yapton Coastal Plain

¹² West Sussex County Council "A Strategy for the West Sussex Landscape" Consultants Technical Report November 2003 Chris Blandford Associates

"Rows of large light reflecting glasshouses, equestrian facilities, horse paddocks and industrial buildings, for instance in the Ford and Tangmere areas, are strong suburban elements. Where these occur, they create visual confusion and poor definition between town and countryside, and erode distinctive landscape character."

3.52 Land Management Guidelines include the following recommendations:

- ***"Encourage landscape enhancements around villages and on their approaches"***
- ***Establish new vegetation features by the planting of hedgerows and tree clumps in field corners and along roadsides, especially those approaching settlements"***
- ***Encourage the planting of shelter belts around horse paddocks, using native species, to give visual and wildlife benefits."***
- ***Encourage bold tree planting associated with large agricultural buildings, glasshouses and industrial buildings to attempt to assimilate them into the landscape more satisfactorily."***

District

3.53 Arun District Council (ADC) commissioned Hankinson Duckett Associates (HDA) to prepare a Landscape Study, published in 2006¹³ which identified Landscape Character Areas and Types "to inform decision making on where major development might be accommodated within the district without an unacceptable impact on landscape character in general" (Paragraph 1.1). The Site is located within Character Area 29: North of Yapton Coastal Plain, which is described as:

"Rural arable landscape falling towards Withy Rife and Arun Valley. Some heritage interest, provides separation between Ford, Ford Aerodrome and Yapton/Burndell and Climping."

3.54 In their overall assessment of landscape sensitivity HDA conclude that Character Area 29 has "Substantial" sensitivity (20 on a scale of 0-25), as set out in the assessment at **Table 1: Landscape Sensitivity**, because of the "contribution it makes to the separation between settlements" and "contribution to rurality of surrounding landscape".

3.55 HDA conclude that the Landscape Value of the Character Area is "Slight", as set out in **Table 2: Landscape Value**, because of being partially in the flood zone, moderate scenic beauty and proximity to the Arun valley as a contribution to the setting of "outstanding assets".

¹³ "Arun Landscape Study" Produced for Arun District Council by Hankinson Duckett Associates, August 2006

3.56 **Table 3: Landscape Capacity** illustrates how an assessment of "Low/Medium" capacity to accommodate development is arrived at by combining "substantial" sensitivity with "slight" landscape value.

3.57 In addition to the landscape characterisation of the Arun District a structural analysis of the main settlements was undertaken for ADC to "identify the main elements which contribute to the structure, character and setting of the settlements, the Strategic and Local Gaps, and the AONB". This, "in conjunction with the local character assessment, forms a basis for then identifying appropriate directions for settlement growth, in landscape terms". The report states that:

"If development is consistent with the setting and structure of the local settlement pattern and its landscape context, then the essential character of those settlements and the surrounding area will be retained. If future development is not consistent with that structure, then the relationship between the town or village and its setting will be damaged, and the landscape character of the District adversely affected".

3.58 In discussion of the "Five Villages" in Zone 2, it is noted that "**Yapton and the smaller villages of Climping and Ford and Ford aerodrome are distinct from the villages on the upper coastal plain being situated within a generally more open and flat arable landscape. Large industrial buildings on the disused aerodrome together with Ford prison have an urbanising impact on the adjacent arable landscape. However, there remains a rural, agricultural setting to Yapton and Climping.**" (Para 4.3.5)

3.59 Figure 5 illustrates Zone 2 Landscape Structural Analysis. This includes a separation arrow running north and south between the settlements of Ford and Yapton through the western part of the Site. It is noted that the railway line provides containment to the north of the "Coastal Plateau" within which the Site is located.

3.60 In discussion of Zone 3 Arundel and the Arun Valley the assessment notes that "**There are long views along the Arun Valley floor with intervisibility between Littlehampton and Arundel to the east. Similarly there are views of Ford from the elevated areas of Arundel around the Cathedral. Woodland belts east of Ford prison limit the intervisibility between Ford and Littlehampton.**" (Para 4.4.3)

Summary of published Landscape Character Assessments

3.61 The landscape of the South Coast Plain, NE525, is described as containing stretches of farmed land between developed areas, and as including significant urban development. The study encourages promotion of a strong rights of way network linking the coastal area to the South Downs. It also seeks to protect the special qualities of the South Downs National Park to

ensure that its landscape character and its setting are conserved or created as per its management plan. The rich historical resource of the landscape is valued and engagement of the local community with local history is promoted.

- 3.62 The key characteristics of the "Chichester to Yapton Coastal Plain", as identified in the West Sussex Landscape Land Management Guidelines, include its "*flat open landscape*" with large scale arable fields and market gardening structures including clusters of greenhouses. Long views to Arundel and the South Downs are noted as are the frequent urban fringe influences including disused airfields and light industry in the countryside at Ford. The hangars and industrial units, sporadically dispersed through the countryside are characteristic of the landscape with resultant poor definition between town and countryside. Few trees and hedgerows are also noted to be characteristic. The guidelines comment that suburban elements (in the Ford area) "*create visual confusion and poor definition between town and countryside, and erode distinctive landscape character*". The guidelines encourage establishment of new vegetation features and bold tree planting along with landscape enhancement around villages.
- 3.63 A local Landscape Character Area "North of Yapton Coastal Plain" is identified by the Arun Landscape Study. This notes that "*large industrial buildings on the disused aerodrome together with Ford prison have an urbanising impact on the adjacent arable landscape*".
- 3.64 The key characteristics and guidelines for the study area can be summarised as follows:
- Flat open landscape with few trees and hedgerows;
 - Stretches of farmed land between significant areas of development;
 - Poplar shelter belts;
 - Rifes/ drainage ditches;
 - Frequent urban fringe influences create visual confusion;
 - Fine long views from the slopes of the South Downs and Arundel to the coast and vice versa;
 - Setting of South Downs National Park to be protected;
 - Rich historical resources to be promoted through local community engagement;
 - Establishment of new planting to be encouraged; and
 - Promotion of a strong rights of way network and improved links to the South Downs.

4.0 SITE APPRAISAL

- 4.1 An appraisal of the Site was undertaken in July 2015. The Site covers approximately 108 hectares within the Parish of Ford to the west of the River Arun, as illustrated on **Figure 1: Site Context Plan**.
- 4.2 **Figure 4: Site Appraisal Plan** illustrates the Site and its boundary on an aerial photograph and identifies the features of the Site including Tree Belts (TB), Hedgerows (H) and Fields (F) which are numbered for ease of reference, and the locations of **Site Appraisal Photographs** which illustrate the features and character of the Site. The Site is located on and around the former Ford Airfield between the existing "built-up" area of Ford/Yapton to the west and HM Prison Ford to the east. To the south west and south the Site boundary is formed by Yapton Road and Horsemere Green Lane which follow the Parish Boundary. On the eastern side the Site boundary meanders through the existing industrial area off Horsemere Green Lane and around HM Prison Ford on to Ford Road to the East. The northern part of the Site extends to Ford Lane and the north western boundary of the Site runs south from Imperium House on Ford Lane to Footpath 363/1, and to the land currently under construction for new housing north of Burndell Road. The boundaries therefore generally comprise existing roads and existing built-up areas; with short sections on the north-western and eastern edges adjoining agricultural land. Strong hedgerow or tree belts define the boundaries of the Site, with the exception of short lengths along PROW 200/3 south of Ford and on the western boundary of the Site.
- 4.3 The Site is comprised of the former runways of Ford Airfield, as shown in **Site Appraisal Photographs D and I**; small industrial areas; and 14 agricultural fields in arable use with a level, low lying and exposed to high winds, which are reduced by a number of tree belts sheltering the interspersed industrial and institutional land uses. The **Site Appraisal Photographs** illustrate the flat topography of the Site and the open nature of views across it with the result that landscape and built features surrounding the Site are visible from within it and influence its landscape character. Non-native tree belts such as **TB1**, contrast the native hedgerows in height and density.
- 4.4 **Figure 4: Visual Appraisal Plan**, shows the Site in its wider setting and the location of Site Context photographs, taken from surrounding publically accessible locations to be representative of typical views towards the Site. **Site Context Photographs 11 and 12** most clearly illustrate TB1.
- 4.5 The landscape of the Site and its surroundings exhibits features of the South Coast Plains landscape character area, forming part of the "*stretches of farmed land between developed areas, often with large arable fields defined by low hedges or ditches*" "*arable land is*

defined by poplar shelter belts, low hedgerows and rife and ditch drainage systems". A tree belt of Poplars, **TB7**, along Ford Road screens HM Prison Ford, as seen in **Site Context Photographs 6, 7 and 8**, and within the northern part of the Site tree belts **TB3** and **TB5**, can be seen in **Site Context Photographs L, M, N and O**. The **Site Context Photographs** illustrate the large arable fields and the long views as described for the Chichester - Yapton Coastal Plain LCA. The elevated landform of the South Downs are visible from many locations within the Site, forming a low distant horizon, seen beyond the intervening vegetation and built form within the intervening coastal plain, as illustrated in **Site Appraisal Photograph E**.

- 4.6 The characteristics of *"frequent urban fringe influences of horse paddocks, light industry and disused airfields, with busy minor and major roads"* is evident across the Site, as illustrated in all the **Site Appraisal and Context Photographs**. As noted in the Strategy for the West Sussex Landscape these industrial elements in the countryside are a strong suburban feature which create *"visual confusion and poor definition between town and countryside, and erode distinctive landscape character"*.

Landscape Value

- 4.7 The landscape of the Site is representative of the surrounding land usage, that is, predominantly agricultural with strongly urbanising elements within it. The Site is not covered by any landscape designations and due to the inter-visibility with surrounding industrial land uses exhibits a reduced sense of tranquillity and remoteness. The frequently used public rights of way (PRoW) within and to the west of the Site are a valuable resource for dog walkers. The airfield is a feature of strong cultural heritage and of value historically. The Site as a whole is assessed as exhibiting a **low to medium value** due the influence of urban components. The "Arun Landscape Study" considers the landscape value of the character area to be "slight".

Visual Context

- 4.8 The Site is contained by roads or tracks and built development on all its boundaries which has the effect of restricting all but close range external views, from the surrounding flat coastal plain. There are partial views of the Site through roadside vegetation from adjacent roads, as shown in **Site Context Photographs 1 - 7** and **9 - 10**. In **Site Context Photographs 1 - 5**, taken on the south western side of the Site, the boundary hedgerow planting is dense and high so views in to the Site are only possible through breaks for entrances to the airfield Site. Poplars and hedgerow planting along Ford Road similarly contain views as seen in **Site Context Photographs 6 - 8**. The most open close range views are of the northern boundary from Ford Lane at Wicks Farm, as illustrated by **Site Context Photographs 9 and 10**. These close range views from busy roads are considered to have a **low value** to receptors.

- 4.9 Medium range views from the PROWs to the west of the Site near Yapton, as illustrated by **Site Context Photographs 11 - 13**, and from St Andrews by the Ford, as illustrated by **Site Context Photograph 8**, illustrate how the existing tree belts and hedgerows (**TB1, H1, H2 and TB2**) screen the majority of the Site from these views. Views from PROWs on the eastern edge of Yapton as represented by Site Context **Photographs 15 and 16** illustrate how existing built development on Yapton Road, the Air Rifle Ranges and intervening vegetation curtail views of the Site from these locations. **Site Context Photograph 18** is taken from the west bank of the River Arun on the edge of the Setting of Arundel (Saved Policy AREA 3). This illustrates how tree belts on the eastern boundaries of the Site TB6, TB2 and development on Ford Road, including HM Prison restrict views of the Site. Medium distance views from PROWs to the north of the site are represented by **Site Context Photographs 14 and 19**. South of the railway line the landform together with the vegetation along Ford Lane filter views of the Site, tall built elements within the Site such as the disused hangars and Imperium House on its northern corner are visible. From the slightly more elevated location of **Site Context Photograph 19**, the large disused hangars surrounded by the Site form a component of the view, filtered by intervening vegetation. Medium range views from the south of the Site are contained by tree belts associated with the road network and built development on Horsemere Green Lane, this is illustrated by **Site Context Photograph 17**. These views from public footpaths have a **medium** value.
- 4.10 Views from the more elevated locations of the South Downs, Arundel or the setting of Arundel, would be considered to have a high value. Where open views across the coastal plain are available from these locations, the Site would be visible as part of a complex landscape including the urban areas of Littlehampton, Bognor Regis and the settlements which populate the plain. **Site Context Photographs 20 - 25** from PROWS within and on the edge of the South Downs National Park and Arundel illustrate how the land falls gradually across the coastal plain from the southern extent of the South Downs with vegetation and built structures largely obscuring views of the Site, albeit large built features within the Site can be discerned in a number of the views.
- 4.11 Views from within the Site are available from the PROWs and these are open clear views until curtailed by Tree Belts, Hedgerows and surrounding built form. As a result the whole Site is not visible in any one view. Views from PROW175 within the southern part of the Site, whilst influenced by the industrial, former airfield and urban fringe urban uses of the Site, are considered to have **medium** value because of the historic interest of the views of the airfield. The views in the northern part of the Site (PROW 363/200) have a more rural character and are also considered to have **medium** value.

5.0 DEVELOPMENT PRINCIPLES FOR URBAN DEVELOPMENT

Description of Development

- 5.1 Proposed development will be made up of 1,550 units of Residential dwellings, Employment and Community Use, including a primary school located at the end of the south-west runway. Employment uses will be located next to HMP Ford and the existing recycling centre. Residential areas will be located to the north, south west and east of the Site. Playing fields will be located close to the existing indoor football centre between the north western runway and the GRUNDON/Southern Water Sites. Allotments will be provided to the north of the GRUNDON site to integrate in character with the retained agricultural land in the north eastern section of the Site close to the historic centre of Ford. Areas of informal open space will be incorporated throughout the Site, focused along the line of a "green link" to follow Footpaths 363 and 200/3 between Yapton and Ford. Existing tree belts and hedgerows within the Site will be retained within the development. Low density clusters of housing will be set in a parkland setting on the southern part of the Site next to Yapton Road and Horsemere Green Lane.

Evaluation of Effects

- 5.2 The proposed housing in the northern part of the Site will be accessed via an existing track between Ford Lane and the northern extent of the north-west runway. This will form a tree lined access connecting the western development areas. The proposed housing area extends westwards of H2, the hedgerow line along the existing track, portions of which will be retained within open space along this boulevard. A new buffer of planting will be created on the western edge to replace the loss of H1, H2 and H3 and to connect with TB1, the locations of which are identified on **Figure 4: Site Appraisal Plan**. This will result in the loss of existing agricultural land and will create new development in views from PROWs 363 and 359 within and to the north west of the Site.
- 5.3 The community centre is located on the south-western runway within the Site, which will result in the loss of part of the runway.
- 5.4 Residential and employment areas in the west, south and east of the Site will result in the loss of 6 agricultural fields. Existing boundary vegetation will be retained.

Mitigation Measures

- 5.5 From the Site Appraisal, and with reference to the National, Regional and District Policy Context, and guidelines and recommendations of the relevant landscape character

assessments, the following design principles are recommended to ensure that potential development responds positively to the landscape and visual considerations:

- Retain the runways of the airfield as an element of public open space;
- Enhance open space and public footpaths through the Site to enhance the public linkages between Yapton and Ford;
- Maintain and protect existing healthy vegetation and existing containment to the Site, with development located away from existing key vegetation, field boundaries and individual trees, to accommodate the required root protection areas;
- Incorporate sustainable urban drainage incorporated where possible, including wild life enhancement features;
- Create a robust landscape framework across the Site within which to locate development should so as to provide defensible boundaries to the new built form and soften its appearance within identified views; and
- Incorporate new green infrastructure links to link the countryside through the Site.

5.6 These principles should encompass the National, South Downs National Park and Local Plan policies and the recommendations of the published Landscape Character Assessments, to include:

- Promoting and enhancing the rights of way network;
- Managing the rich archaeological and historic resource;
- Engaging communities with their local history and strengthen the physical links with the important historic landscapes that surround them;
- Restoring the hedgerow framework and retain oak standards and other hedgerow trees;
- Encouraging landscape enhancements around villages and on their approaches; and
- Establishing new vegetation features by the planting of hedgerows and tree clumps in field corners and along roadsides, especially those approaching settlements

5.7 The Site provides the following opportunities for mixed-use development:

- To draw upon the existing strong heritage of employment and industrial use on and around the Site and adding amenity value to existing residential areas on three of its boundaries;
- To create a cohesive urban and public realm structure within the local area, currently made up of isolated industrial units, fragmented residential areas and employment uses connected by busy roads lacking footpaths;
- To create attractive places and spaces with the needs of people in mind and to respect and enhance local distinctiveness;

- To locate new development within an existing structure of high hedgerows and shelter belts of trees. These provide considerable visual enclosure from views from the surrounding area towards the Site, and from within the Site; and
- To benefit from the limited extent of visibility within any long distance views of the Site.

5.8 In relation to the Arun Local Plan 2003 (GEN 7) development provides the opportunity to respond positively to the identified characteristics and resources of the Site and the area to create attractive places and spaces with the needs of people in mind and to respect and enhance local distinctiveness.

5.9 The constraints to development are:

- Respond to the cultural and historical asset of the former airfield, incorporating it as an integral part of the design of the masterplan, and utilising it as a central feature of open space within the development and key feature to link the various elements of the new areas of development;
- Maintain the separation of Littlehampton, Bognor Regis and Arundel by including a strong landscape framework surrounding Ford;
- Consider the amenity of properties on Horsemere Green Lane, by locating low density residential development and open space in the southern part of the Site and with the provision of new planting to create a robust boundary to the Site;
- Maintain and improve public rights of way by enhancing the footpath links across the Site and to the wider countryside; and enhancing the agricultural fields retained within the Site on the northern area of the Site adjoining the village of Ford; and
- Consider the setting of and views to and from the South Down National Park, through the siting and design of the proposed development to maintain views to the South Downs, and to consolidate the characteristic existing settlement pattern, set within a robust landscape framework, within the coastal plain.

Landscape Capacity to Accommodate Mixed-use Development (Susceptibility)

5.10 With the adoption of the above design principles, it is considered that mixed-use development set within a robust landscape framework, including Green Infrastructure, could be successfully accommodated within the Site, and the susceptibility of the landscape to a mixture of employment, urban centre and residential development is considered to be **low**.

Landscape Sensitivity

5.11 The landscape sensitivity of the Site is considered to be **low** due to the combination of its medium to low landscape value, its low susceptibility to mixed-use development and its

contained inter-visibility with the wider landscape. There are no natural features or unique characteristics contributing to the wider landscape character which cannot be retained as part of the development.

Visual Capacity to Accommodate Mixed-use Development (Susceptibility)

- 5.12 The susceptibility of viewers to the form of development, incorporating the design principles described, is considered to be **low**. Where open views of the Site are available, that is from within the Site, from PROWs to the west of the Site or from the existing entrances into the Site, these views are already heavily influenced by urban components. Visual containment provided by vegetation and existing built form restricts the susceptibility of views from the surrounding area towards the Site.

Visual Sensitivity

- 5.13 Visual sensitivity is considered to be **medium to low** from PROWs within and adjacent to the Site due to the medium value attached to those views and their low susceptibility to this form of development. In views from surrounding area towards the Site, that is close range views from surrounding roads, (with low value) the visual sensitivity is considered to be **low**.

Arun Landscape Study

The conclusion of the "Arun Landscape Study" considers that the landscape of the north of Yapton Coastal Plain has a "*Low/Medium*" capacity to accommodate development (medium/high susceptibility). This is based on a combination of the assessment of a "*Slight*" landscape value and a "*Substantial*" landscape sensitivity because of the contribution the area makes to the separation between settlements and contribution to rurality of surrounding landscape. However, whilst the rurality of the landscape is valued, the landscape within and surrounding the Site is influenced by substantial urbanising elements. It is considered that these existing urban elements, together with the enclosure provided by tree belts and hedgerows increase the capacity of the landscape of Site to accommodate mixed-use development.

6.0 CONCLUSION

- 6.1 A Preliminary Landscape and Visual Appraisal has been undertaken to establish the landscape and visual sensitivity of the Site and identify the suitability of the Site for mixed-use development. The appraisal has included a desktop review and site appraisals to assess the landscape characteristics of the Site, its function in the wider landscape and its visibility and role within views from the surrounding areas.
- 6.2 The Site is located within the coastal plain between the South Coast to the south and the pronounced elevated landform of the South Downs National Park to the north. The coastal settlements of Littlehampton and Bognor Regis are located to the south-east and south-west of the Site respectively. The A259 runs in an east-west direction, some 580 metres to the south of the Site, connecting the main coastal settlements, and the London to Chichester Mainline Railway runs in an east-west direction, with Ford Railway Station some 725 metres to the north of the Site. The historic settlement of Arundel is located to the north-east of the Site, on the River Arun on the lower slopes of the South Downs.
- 6.3 The Site is located between the settlements of Ford and Yapton, centred on the former RAF Ford Airfield of which the former runways are still largely intact. The Site covers a total of approximately 108 hectares.
- 6.4 The Site is made up of 14 arable fields divided by hedgerows of varying height and species, the former airfield runways, roadways and industrial/education/leisure buildings. The Site encircles a waste water treatment works and a derelict hangar Site. The fields are large in scale and open and long views to the elevated landform of the South Downs are visible from within the Site and the surrounding landscape, forming a low distant horizon, seen beyond the intervening vegetation and built form within the intervening coastal plain. The land is level, low lying and exposed to high winds, which are reduced by the shelterbelts of tree planting. The Site is contained by vegetation and development along all of its boundaries with the exception of short sections on the north western edge and along Ford Lane. Hangars and industrial units are characteristic of the landscape with resultant poor definition between town and countryside. As noted in West Sussex Landscape Management Guidelines (Sheet SC9 Chichester to Yapton Coastal Plain) these "*strong suburban elements... (lead to)...visual confusion and poor definition between town and countryside, and erode distinctive landscape character*". The value of the landscape of the Site is considered to range from **low** as a result of the degradation by urban and industrial influences through to **medium** because of its historical interest associated with the Site.
- 6.5 There are open views of most parts of the Site from public rights of way which cross the Site to the north and south. These views, whilst influenced by the industrial, former airfield and

urban fringe urban uses of the Site, are considered to be of **medium** value given the popularity of the paths with walkers and the historical interest of the airfield from the southern path and the rural character of the views on the northern path. Parts of the Site are visible from close range on the roads surrounding the Site where entrances to the airfield create gaps in the dense boundary hedgerows. These views are considered to be of **low** value. Medium range views from public rights of way surrounding the Site have been identified and are considered to have a **medium** value. In these views the boundaries, which are mostly defined by dense tree belts, together with surrounding built development and vegetation obscure most of the Site from view. Medium and long distance views are largely obscured by intervening vegetation and built features in the landscape, albeit large built features within the Site are discernible in a number of views. Where open views across the coastal plain are available from the South Downs, Arundel, or the setting of Arundel, the Site is visible as part of a complex landscape including the urban areas of Littlehampton, Bognor Regis and the surrounding settlements which populate the coastal plain.

- 6.6 It is considered that mixed-use development, set within a robust landscape framework, including Green Infrastructure, could be successfully accommodated on the main body of the Site with:
- the runways of the airfield retained as a framework of public open space; and
 - agricultural land on the northern part of the Site retained to safeguard the setting of the village of Ford.
- 6.7 The Site presents an opportunity for development as it already has a strong heritage of employment and industrial use. There is a lack of cohesive urban and public realm structure within the local area with isolated industrial units, fragmented residential areas and employment uses connected by busy roads lacking footpaths. High hedgerows and shelter belts of trees provide considerable visual enclosure from external views and the Site is not visible in any long distance views. In relation to the Arun Local Plan 2003 Policy GEN 7, development provides the opportunity to respond positively to the identified characteristics and resources of the Site and the area to create attractive places and spaces with the needs of people in mind and to respect and enhance local distinctiveness.
- 6.8 The development of the Site would also provide the opportunity to respond to the recommendations of the published Landscape Character Assessments by promoting and enhancing the rights of way network, engaging communities with their local history and strengthening the physical links with important historic landscapes and encouraging landscape enhancements around villages and on their approaches.

- 6.9 The landscape sensitivity of the Site is considered to be **low** due to the combination of its medium to low landscape value, its low susceptibility to mixed-use development and its contained inter-visibility with the wider landscape. There are no natural features or unique characteristics contributing to the wider landscape character which cannot be retained as part of the development.
- 6.10 Visual sensitivity is considered to be **medium to low** from public rights of way within and adjacent to the Site due to the medium value attached to those views and their low susceptibility to this form of development. In short range external views (with low value) the visual sensitivity is considered to be **low**.
- 6.11 One of the *"special qualities"* of the South Downs National Park is its *"diverse, inspirational landscapes and breath-taking views"* and General Policy 1 of the National Park Management Plan is to conserve and enhance the *"natural beauty and special quality of the landscape and its setting"*. The setting of, and views to and from, the South Down National Park would be respected through the siting and design of the proposed development to maintain views to the South Downs, and to consolidate the characteristic existing settlement pattern, set within a robust landscape framework, within the coastal plain.
- 6.12 The "Access Network and Accessible Natural Greenspace Study" recommends that "larger scale development needs to incorporate greenspace within the site" and "opportunities to include more natural elements within the greenspace should be realised wherever possible". The recently published Green Infrastructure Framework Consultation Draft identifies opportunities for the Coastal Plain including access improvements and circular walks, habitat improvement and to links from the River Arun to Ford Railway Station. Development of the Site would provide the opportunity to contribute to the delivery of these recommendations.
- 6.13 The cultural and historical asset of the former airfield would be incorporated as an integral part of the design of the masterplan, utilising it as a central feature of open space within the development and key feature to link the various elements of the new areas of development. A strong landscape framework to the north and south with development concentrated to the core area will consolidate the existing settlement pattern, and maintain the separation and distinct identities of Littlehampton, Bognor Regis and Arundel. The public rights of way would be maintained and improved to create enhanced links across the Site, and with the wider countryside and the South Downs.
- 6.14 The development of the Site, using the structure of the runways as a framework of open space and maintaining agricultural land in the northern area of the Site, has the potential to enhance the setting of Ford Village and the cultural heritage of the airfield, whilst respecting the setting of the South Downs National Park. It is considered that mixed-use development can be

successfully integrated within the Site without adversely affecting the landscape character and visual amenity of the immediate and wider landscape and visual context of the Site.