

LANDSCAPE-LED CASE STUDY I: LARGE RESIDENTIAL

Site Name: Former Syngenta Site, Fernhurst

Status: Planning Committee resolved to approve March 2020. Planning permission to be issued upon completion of the Section 106 agreement.

Description: Construction of up to 210 dwellings and 233sqm of café, retail and community use buildings, retention of existing Pagoda building and associated commercial use and landscaping and associated access and parking works, following demolition of the Highfield building and other buildings / structures.

South Downs Integrated Landscape Character Area: Low Weald – Milland Basin (OI)

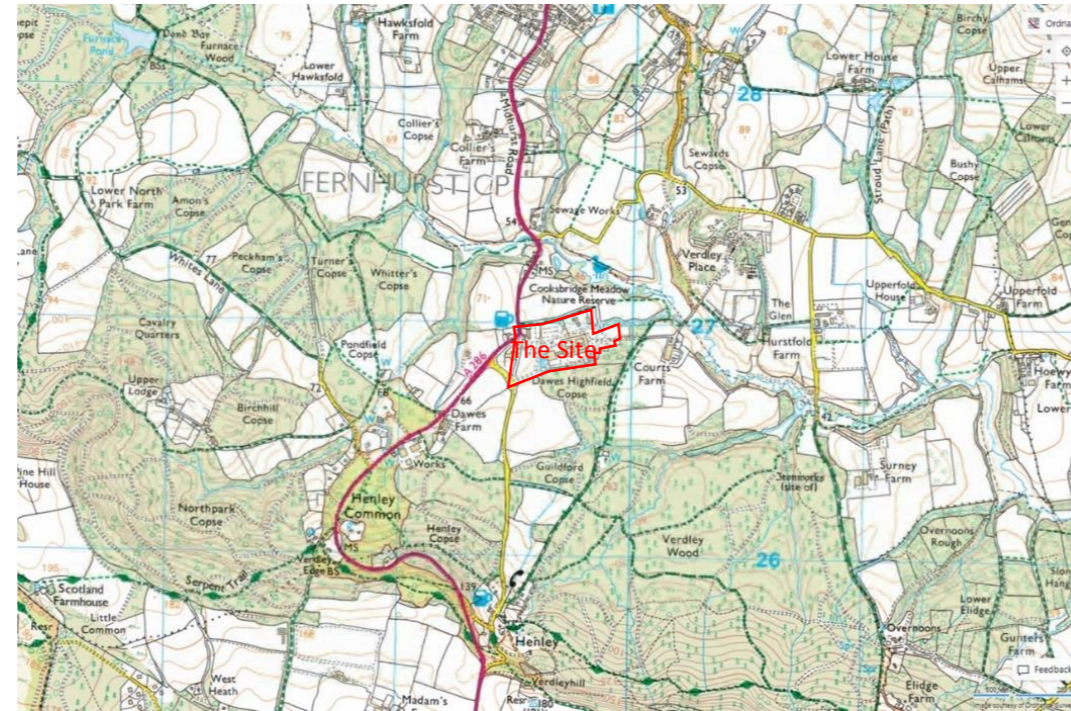
Summary

The key landscape characteristics that were identified for this site are listed opposite. The layout and design of this development have successfully responded to these characteristics. The woodland character has been respected and enhanced across the site and the historic route of the old road and the culverted stream have been restored and celebrated. The internal layout has worked well with the significant contour changes rather than follow the more traditional scattered settlement pattern. The density of the developable areas has been sensitively maximised to enable large areas of the site to remain undeveloped or as new green infrastructure.

The locally characteristic village green settlement form has been used as a focus for the development, as has the strong east/west mixed coppice green link. Locally characteristic building materials and gable forms have been used in modern ways and the result will be an attractive residential development which should be a good place to live.

The development of the site has taken an interpretation of landscape and its inherited character and used that in a way which works for this particular brownfield site. Its isolation and enclosure by topography and mature woodland has been used as an opportunity to create a 'new' place. It provides a way of living that is much more reliant on shared, functioning spaces and sustainability. The scheme design has been a real success. The development has used characteristic GI (in this case woodland) and maximised benefits from each intervention.

The final success of the scheme will be subject to conditions and to good quality construction.



OS 1:25,000 Location and Context Plan

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Aerial Photo of the site

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Key Landscape Characteristics of existing site and context

- ① **Woodland 1:** Sinuous narrow, connected woodlands follow watercourses. Larger woodlands on slopes and ridges are often plantations.
- ② **Woodland 2:** Ancient woodland is common in this largely medieval landscape. Ancient woodland borders the site (east).
- ③ **Landform, Soil & Water 1:** Pattern of gently undulating lowland vale.
- ④ **Landform, Soil & Water 2:** Streams are often small, narrow and flashy – a direct response to the geology.
- ⑤ **Field Patterns:** Historic small, irregular assart fields survive from the medieval period. Bounded by thick hedgerows and wooded thickets ('thaws'). Mostly grassland, the fieldscape has a pastoral character.
- ⑥ **Settlements & Buildings 1:** Local Materials are red brick, clay roof tiles, some slate, and timber.
- ⑦ **Settlements & Buildings 2:** Settlement pattern is small-scale dispersed settlements.
- ⑧ **Settlements & Buildings 3:** Form of buildings in the area, including frequent use of gables facing street.
- ⑨ **Settlements & Buildings 3:** Historic form of settlements characteristically evolved around a green
- ⑩ **Roads, Tracks & Paths 1:** Routes inherited from previous land use remain.
- ⑪ **Roads, Tracks & Paths 2:** The historic routeway, the Old Turnpike Road, runs north-south through the site.
- ⑫ **Perceptual Qualities 1:** Tranquillity, is strong in this deeply rural landscape and is particularly evident at the eastern end of the site.
- ⑬ **Perceptual Qualities 2:** Dark Night Skies – reserve status and valuable perceptual quality
- ⑭ **Views & Visibility:** Views of settlements dispersed throughout the landscape dominated by trees and woodland.

Summary of Landscape-led Design Proposals

Woodland

- ① Characteristic woodland planting across the site including new E/W coppiced woodland green link
- ② Development set back from ancient woodland and wooded field boundaries

Landform, Soil & Water

- ③ Used existing landform and site levels which dictated layout of green infrastructure and routes/streets.
- ④ Restoration of Natural Water Course

Field Patterns

- ⑤ Reinstated North/South green links

Settlement & Buildings

- ⑥ Use of locally characteristic building materials.
- ⑦ Settlement pattern, not locally characteristic but appropriate to site.
- ⑧ Locally characteristic gables fronting street used extensively in new buildings, albeit in contemporary way.
- ⑨ Village green part of layout, reflecting local characteristic.



Roads, Tracks & Paths

- ⑩ Layout does not reflect locally characteristic form of routes but is appropriate to site, links well with wider movement network and will deliver new pedestrian footpath to Fernhurst.
- ⑪ Layout retains old Turnpike Road route as footpath.

Perceptual Qualities

- ⑫ Retained most tranquil areas, particularly in eastern end of site.
- ⑬ External lighting kept to a minimum

Views & Visibility

- ⑭ The building heights and retention of mature trees and selection of large tree varieties will lead to characteristic buildings set in mature woodland and trees.

Landscape-led Proposals

Woodland

① Characteristic wooded field boundaries, creates connected habitats (especially bat and butterfly corridors) and route for people. East-West link managed coppice (fig 1), which can support wildlife and provide local fuel. Woodland provides benefits such as; natural climate control and sustainable surface water management for main streets. New woodland to be planted using species and proportions characteristic of the local landscape.



Fig 1

② Retaining historic character of woods and field boundaries is critical to experiencing the Low Weald's character. Conservation of historic 'shaws' important as harbour many ancient woodland species and provide connectivity and resilience for people and wildlife. Fig 2 shows main GI routes and ancient woodland setbacks



Fig 2

Fig 3

Landform, Soil & Water

③ Landform was altered to support former use of site, therefore the starting point was not characteristic of the site's landscape context. Restoration of inherited landform was not a viable option. Careful exploitation of significant level changes enabled good integration of car-parking underground (fig 3), on a large scale, helping to avoid immediate site character being devalued by

parked cars and enabling more generous green infrastructure.

④ Restoration of natural water course (shown in blue in fig 4) provides the following benefits:

- Restored landscape character
- Reduced flood-risk
- Ecological enhancements/GI
- Well-being and connection with natural environment.

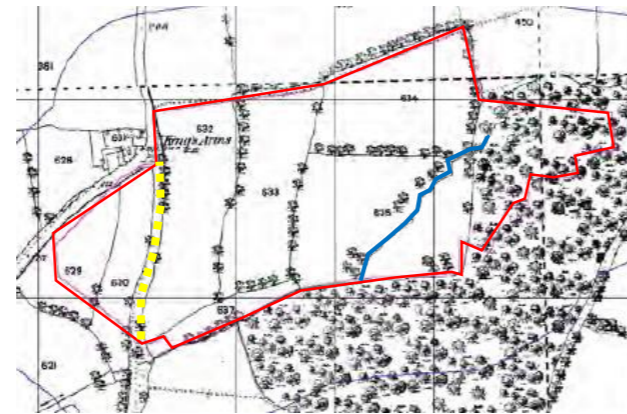


Fig 4

Field Patterns

⑤ No longer present on site, the north/south green infrastructure interventions reference the historic land parcels that are evident in 1874. (fig 4).

Settlement & Buildings

⑥ Materials rooted in previously identified local landscape character evidence are used in a contemporary way (fig 5). Provision of bespoke, contemporary architecture. Creative house types designed to fit the spaces within the site, with interior courtyards, roof terraces and balconies. Provision of green roofs supports part of a sustainable drainage strategy. Zero carbon homes for regulated energy.



Fig 5

⑦ The site's scale is large for its settlement context although it successfully sets its own scale, due to its enclosed nature (by mature trees, woodland and topography) and its distance from Fernhurst. Efforts were made to ensure inspiration came from local settlements, notably development around a village green.

⑧ Locally characteristic gables fronting street used extensively in new buildings, albeit in contemporary way (fig 6).



Fig 6

⑨ Village green layout locally characteristic (fig 6). Benefits of open space as a focus for development, a place for community interaction and for informal play and recreation. Buildings front onto the village green to provide passive surveillance, and positive place-making.

Roads, Tracks & Paths

⑩ •Movement network designed to minimise crossing the new East-West woodland through the site, maximising connectivity via closed canopies. Pattern of routes, much more geometric than is characteristic in landscape which responds well to the site, its levels and constraints, but not so well to the wider landscape context. Pedestrian movement prioritised over cars so latter does not dominate. Provision of a footpath to Fernhurst on A 286 will be a positive intervention for access and sustainable travel and further good links to PROW network.

⑪ Layout retains old Turnpike Road route (yellow dashed line in fig 4) as footpath and this links to public right of way.

Perceptual Qualities

⑫ Retained most tranquil areas, particularly in eastern end of site (fig 7). Provision of quiet spaces within the site supports people's health and well-

being. Areas of reduced disturbance will be of value for sensitive habitats such as Ancient Woodland and wildlife.

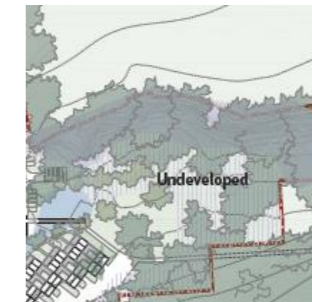


Fig 7



Fig 8

⑬ Site lies within the Core of the Dark Night Skies Reserve. Retaining Dark Night Skies, supports key species and improves well-being. Dark areas retained within woodland which serves and wildlife connectivity for bats (fig 8). Bollard lighting proposed along key routes and to fronts and rear of properties

Views & Visibility

⑭ The building heights and retention of mature trees and selection of large tree varieties will lead to characteristic buildings set in mature woodland and trees (see CGI in fig 9).



Fig 9