

**LAND NORTH WEST OF GORING STATION, GORING-BY-SEA, WORTHING  
(REDETERMINATION)**

**Summary Landscape and Visual Proof of Evidence of**

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**of**

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**for**

**Worthing Borough Council**

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## **1 SUMMARY OF LANDSCAPE PROOF OF EVIDENCE**

1. I am Christine Marsh, an associate landscape architect at Hankinson Duckett Associates (HDA), a landscape architectural and ecological practice. I have been a chartered member of the Landscape Institute for over 30 years. WBC approached HDA in October 2023 to present updated landscape evidence for the redetermination of this appeal, which had been presented previously by Mr Duckett of HDA.
2. My evidence addresses the potential landscape and visual effects of the appeal proposals which are for 475 dwellings and a local centre on 20ha of land between the settlements of Goring-by-Sea and Ferring. Although the site is not located within the nationally designated landscape of the South Downs National Park, it is within its setting (there is only 95m between the site boundary and the boundary of the SDNP, which lies along the northern edge of the A259 Littlehampton Road).
3. The site also lies within a Local Green Gap (as defined by Policy SS5 of the Worthing Local Plan - WLP 2023), which is locally recognised for maintaining the physical and visual separation of Goring-by-Sea and Ferring, thus preserving their separate characters and identities. The field beyond the south-west corner of the site, within Arun District, is also designated a gap in the Arun District Local Plan 2018.
4. There are no ecology or heritage designations within or adjacent to the site. The site is publicly accessible, with public footpaths along its southern (Footpath 2121) and western (Footpath 2121\_1) boundaries, as well as other informal paths to either side of the watercourse of Ferring Rife (forming the northern boundary) and footways along the A259 at Goring Street (forming the eastern site boundary), and at Littlehampton Road, which provide walkers with open views of the site and of the elevated landform of the SDNP.
5. The site lies outside the Built Up Area Boundary (as defined by Policy SS1 of the WLP 2023) and thus is within 'countryside' (as defined by Policy SS4 of the WLP 2023). The site comprises a single, arable field, that slopes indiscernibly to its north (towards Ferring Rife at 4m AOD), with marginally higher ground across the southern part of the site (to 7m AOD). The site is visually contained to its west, south and east by existing settlement (with some 3 and 4-storey buildings to the north-east and south-east) but is open to its north towards the SDNP.
6. In terms of published landscape character assessments for the area, the site lies on the South Coast Plain (at the national scale – NCA126), within the 'Littlehampton and Worthing Fringes' (at the county level – West Sussex LCA SC11) and on the 'Goring Coastal Plain' (at the borough level). The site possesses some of the key characteristics listed in these assessments (but is most notable as a narrow gap of open land which provides views to the sea and separation between the urban areas, as described for LCA SC11). Despite the site's proximity to the heavily

trafficked A259 (to the north and east), and its intervisibility with adjacent suburban housing, these do not have a substantive influence on the perceptual aspects of the site. Urban influences are diluted by the overall size of the gap, comprising the site in combination with open fields to its north and west (minimum dimensions of 460m north to south and 630m west to east). Although the site and wider landscape possess some features which detract from their quality (overhead power lines), the influence of the rising ground within the SDNP elevates the overall quality of the area.

7. The site does not lie within the designated landscape of the SDNP, however is heavily influence by it, therefore I agreed with the Council's/Mr Duckett's previous assessment of landscape sensitivity for the site and the field to its north of High/Medium. I also agree with the landscape sensitivity assessment for the land to the north of the A259 (thus within the SDNP, though within LCA SC11), at High, and the more elevated land within LCA SC12 at Very High (the latter was also agreed by the appellant). I concur with the two previous assessments on the landscape sensitivity of the adjacent townscape at Medium to the type of development proposed. It is common ground between the parties that the site is not a 'valued landscape' for the purposes of Paragraph 180a) of the Framework.
8. In visual terms, the site has a limited visual envelope, except to its north. Views from within the adjacent settlements are restricted by intervening houses on the settlement edge, particularly along the A259 to the east. The paucity of boundary vegetation allows open views into the site, particularly from within the SDNP. The elevated viewpoint of Highdown Hill (a very popular visitor attraction, the hill fort being a Scheduled Monument, under the management of the National Trust) lies 960m from the site boundary, and allows open, panoramic views across a prominent part of the appeal site in the mid ground, and beyond to the sea. That part of the gap occupied by the appeal site forms a noticeable break in the settlement pattern of the coastal plain to the north of the railway line from this viewpoint. The open character of the view continues, in part, to the south of the railway, into the school playing fields.
9. The significance of effect from the viewpoint of Highdown Hill was previously assessed by Mr Duckett as Substantial Adverse, with which I agree. I do not agree with the previous Inspector's conclusion that *"the level of harm (to the SDNP) would be moderate adverse and not significant"* (CD L1, paragraph 47). I note that the High Court judgement found that the Inspector *"failed to give any weight to the moderate adverse effects he found, which was in breach of the policy requirement in paragraph 176 of the Framework to give them 'great weight'"* (CD L2, paragraph 155).
10. The potential effects associated with the proposed development would primarily be localised (except for effects on SDNP), though permanent. Whilst the loss of key landscape features would be limited to the removal of about 175m length of perimeter vegetation to create the new site

access onto Goring Street, it is loss of the open arable field of the site that would be the biggest change (given the large scale of loss). The appellant suggests that the loss of a featureless field and its replacement with a (high-quality) residential development interspersed with public open space and green infrastructure would be in keeping with adjacent urban areas. But the value of the site is elevated by the fact that such open spaces between settlements are exceptionally rare in this part of the coastal plain and the respite they provide from the almost continuous urban form would be permanently lost affecting the separate identities of settlements. There is no doubt that there could be an overall increase in features that are characteristic of the higher quality landscapes to the north of the site with the implementation of the proposed development, and an uplift in biodiversity, but this would be at the expense of a greenfield site that performs a valuable function in preventing the further coalescence of settlements.

11. It is assessed that the proposed development would result in substantial adverse landscape and visual harm, and whilst this harm would be localised, the openness of the site means it would be easily perceived, not only from perimeter footpaths and roadways through adjacent urban development, but also from the elevated landscape to the north within the SDNP, within the setting of which the site lies. The residual landscape effects would remain, as the loss of the gap would be permanent.