

# Landscape Proof of Evidence

Of

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**Land North West of Goring  
Station,  
Goring by Sea**

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On behalf of:  
Persimmon Homes, Thames Valley

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<b>CONTENTS</b>	<b>Page</b>
<b>1.0 Summary</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2.0 Qualifications and Experience</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>3.0 Background and Methodology</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>4.0 Site Description, Context and Visibility</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>5.0 Ability of the Site to Accommodate Development and Anticipated Landscape and Visual Effects</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>6.0 Response to Landscape Matters in the updated Reason for Refusal</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>7.0 Conclusion</b>	<b>36</b>

#### **Appendices (As a separate document)**

Appendix A: Site Location Plan

Appendix B: Aerial Photograph

Appendix C: Photosheets

Appendix D: Summary of Landscape and Visual Effects

Appendix E: Landscape Strategy

Appendix F: Extract from South Downs National Park:

View Characterisation and Analysis (2015)

Appendix G: Photomontages

## 1.0 SUMMARY

- 1.1 This appeal is in respect of an outline planning application for a mixed use development of up to 475 dwellings along with associated access, internal roads and footpaths, car parking, public open space, landscaping, local centre with associated car parking, car parking for the adjacent railway station, undergrounding of overhead HV cables and other supporting infrastructure and utilities.
- 1.2 The planning application was refused planning permission on the 11<sup>th</sup> March 2021 and subsequently went to appeal. Inspector Cridland allowed the appeal in February 2022.
- 1.3 The Inspector's decision was subsequently challenged in the High Court by WBC and the decision was quashed. The Appellant then took the case to the Court of Appeal where the High Court decision was upheld. The Inspectorate subsequently advised that the case would be redetermined.
- 1.4 On the understanding that the appeal was to be redetermined, Worthing Borough Council's Planning Committee reconsidered the application in August 2023 and provided updated reasons for refusal.
- 1.5 At the time of the original application, the Worthing Borough Local Plan was at the draft stage and in the intervening time it has been adopted. The updated reason for refusal now refers to the adopted policies in the Local Plan.
- 1.6 My evidence is primarily concerned with the impact of the proposed development on the setting of the South Downs National Park; the impact on the character of the Site; and the function of the Site as a Green Gap between Ferring and Goring.
- 1.7 My evidence is now summarised under the following headings.

### **Appeal Scheme**

- 1.8 The findings of the ecological assessment and those of the LVIA, along with other studies, have been pivotal in shaping the masterplan. As a result of those studies, the Appeal Scheme has been brought forward in a manner that addresses the Site's landscape/townscape setting in an appropriate manner.
- 1.9 The Appeal Scheme will have a strong relationship to Goring and Ferring and will deliver a development with a distinct sense of place that is compatible with the scale and density of neighbouring development.

## **Landscape Character**

- 1.10 The Appeal Site lies outside of the Built Up Area of Goring and Ferring and as such lies within the countryside in planning policy terms. It comprises a single field of arable farmland.
- 1.11 There is no vegetation within the body of the Site to constrain development. Ferring Rife has intermittent vegetation along its boundaries and is an important landscape and ecological feature which is to be retained and enhanced in any event.
- 1.12 The Site itself is not covered by any statutory or non statutory designations for landscape character or quality. Similarly, it is not covered by any heritage designation. The South Downs National Park lies to the north of Littlehampton Road.
- 1.13 There is no public access onto the Site itself, but there is a public footpath running alongside the southern boundary and partway along the western boundary. These footpaths will be retained and new recreational footpaths will be provided within the development.
- 1.14 The Appeal Site lies on the urban fringe of Goring and Ferring and is of relatively limited landscape value. It also has detracting features, such as the overhead powerlines. It is in active agricultural use and has no public access, except for the two footpaths which border it.

## **Landscape Impact**

- 1.15 The release of a greenfield site for development will inevitably give rise to a certain level of landscape harm but for the reasons I have already given, the Appeal Scheme has been landscape led and has been carefully crafted to respond to both its landscape and townscape setting in a sensitive manner. As such, it creates a more appropriate and softer boundary to the urban area than presently exists. It will also deliver BNG and recreational benefits.
- 1.16 The South Downs National Park Authority did not object to the planning application but identified a series of matters that needed to be taken into account if development was to come forward on the Site.
- 1.17 Criterion f of Policy SS4 requires the setting of the South Downs National Park and the Designated International Dark Skies Reserve to be respected. The policy mirrors the requirement of Para 182 of the NPPF in that it requires '*any development within the setting of the National Park should be sensitively located and designed to avoid or minimise adverse impacts on the designated areas*'.

- 1.18 There will be some opportunities for elevated views of the Appeal Scheme from the National Park. On the lower slopes such views will be partially filtered by existing and proposed tree cover. In more elevated views the development will be seen against the backdrop, and within the context of, existing development in the coastal plain and it will not obstruct sea views.
- 1.19 There will similarly be some opportunities for views from the public footpaths within the Site towards the South Downs. These views will change with the development in place but view corridors will be created through the development and a new footpath will be provided alongside the Rife to allow public views from the northern edge of the Site.
- 1.20 Given that the Appeal Scheme will not introduce a form of development that is at odds with the prevailing character of the coastal plain and that it will not block views to the sea, it will not materially impact on the setting of the South Downs National Park. The previous Inspector reached a similar conclusion.

### **Goring Ferring Gap**

- 1.21 Goring and Ferring coalesced a number of years ago and as such the Site and land to the north of the Rife is an indentation, or a localised break, in the settlement edge.
- 1.22 With development in place on the Appeal Site, the depth of the gap will reduce but the width of the gap will be maintained as the land to the north of Ferring Rife will remain in agricultural use. There will also be a broad swathe of open land to the south of the Rife which will largely be informal open space. By adopting such an approach, the Appeal Scheme will be separated from the National Park and an indentation, or localised break, in the settlement boundary will be preserved.
- 1.23 As the proposed landscaping along the northern edge of the Site matures, a robust and attractive edge to the settlement will be created. This approach is consistent with the management objectives for development that falls within the setting of the National Park.

### **Conclusion**

- 1.24 Paragraph 57 of the Inspector Cridland's decision concluded that:

*Drawing the above threads together, I do not consider the proposed development would materially affect the setting of the SDNP, the wider landscape or undermine the existing physical or visual separation between the settlements of Goring-by-Sea and Ferring. However, I acknowledge the appeal site is valued by the local community and that its loss would result in some harm in this respect. I have also found that the proposal would adversely impact on*

*a number of visual receptors which would result in some further harm. I consider these further as part of the overall planning balance below.*

- 1.25 I similarly believe that the Appeal Scheme would not materially harm the setting of the SDNP nor undermine the physical and visual separation of Ferring and Goring.



## **2.0 QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE**

- 2.1 I am Clive Self and I am a Chartered Landscape Architect and an Urban Designer. I hold a Diploma in Landscape Architecture and a Master's Degree in Urban Design. I have over 30 years' experience in landscape and townscape design and assessment.
- 2.2 I am the Managing Director of CSA, a multi-disciplinary environmental planning practice which I established in 1999. The practice acts for the public and private sector and has an in-house team of urban designers, ecologists, heritage consultants and landscape architects. We operate throughout the UK.
- 2.3 Prior to forming CSA I was responsible for landscape architecture and masterplanning at PRC Fewster Architects and before that I was employed in a similar role at Sargent and Portiriadis Architects. I have worked throughout the UK, Middle East and the United States on a broad range of landscape projects, townscape appraisals and environmental planning work.
- 2.4 My company is currently involved in projects that range from the masterplanning of new garden villages to the redevelopment of inner city brownfield sites. We work throughout the UK, in both the rural and urban environments and act for both the public and private sectors.
- 2.5 I have given landscape and urban design advice on numerous schemes. I have also given landscape and urban design evidence at Local Plan/LDF Inquiries, Section 77 and 78 Inquiries, and CPO Inquiries.
- 2.6 The evidence that I have prepared and provide for this appeal is given in accordance with the guidance of my professional institute. I confirm that the opinions expressed are my true and professional opinions.

## 3.0 BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY

### Background

- 3.1 This appeal is in respect of an outline planning application for a mixed use development of up to 475 dwellings along with associated access, internal roads and footpaths, car parking, public open space, landscaping, local centre with associated car parking, car parking for the adjacent railway station, undergrounding of overhead HV cables and supporting infrastructure and utilities ('the Appeal Scheme').
- 3.2 The Site lies within the administrative area of Worthing Borough Council ('WBC').
- 3.3 The planning application was originally submitted on the 10<sup>th</sup> August 2020 and refused planning permission on the 11<sup>th</sup> March 2021. The application subsequently went to appeal and the Inspector allowed the appeal in February 2022.
- 3.4 The Inspector's decision was subsequently challenged in the High Court by WBC and the decision was quashed. The Appellant then took the case to the Court of Appeal where the High Court decision was upheld. The Inspectorate subsequently advised that the case be redetermined.
- 3.5 On the understanding that the appeal was to be redetermined, Worthing Borough Council's Planning Committee reconsidered the application in August 2023 and updated reasons for refusal were provided.
- 3.6 The first two updated reasons for refusal are set out below, with my evidence addressing the landscape aspects of the reasons for refusal and the function of the Site in providing a gap between Goring and Ferring.

**Reason 1.** *The proposed development is outside of the built-up area as defined by the Worthing Local Plan (2023) and does not comprise development essential to the countryside nor does it comprise development of entry level exception sites. The proposed development also would have an adverse impact on the setting of the adjacent South Downs National Park and therefore is contrary to paragraph 176 of the National Planning Policy Framework and policies SS1 and SS4 of the Worthing Local Plan.*

**Reasons 2.** *The proposed development comprises development in a designated Local Green Gap which would undermine the physical and visual separation of Goring and Ferring therefore compromising the integrity of the gap. Further, the proposed development by virtue of its scale would fail to conserve and enhance the benefits and services derived from the area's Natural Capital nor maintain the site as part of a cohesive green infrastructure*

*network. The proposal therefore fails to comply with policies SS1 and SS5 of the Worthing Local Plan (2023).*

### **CSA's Involvement**

- 3.7 CSA has been involved with the Site for many years and prepared the LVIA that accompanied the planning application. I similarly have been involved with the Site for many years and gave evidence at the original Public Inquiry.
- 3.8 Following the Inspectorate's decision to have the appeal redetermined, I have revisited the Site on several occasions, both during summer and winter months. I have also visited the Site at night.
- 3.9 From my recent Site visits, it is apparent that the character of the Site and that of the neighbouring countryside/townscape has not changed since the previous appeal and the time at which the LVIA was prepared. The description of the Site, its context, and the anticipated effects of the Appeal Scheme, that are provided in this evidence, are therefore similar to those in my previous evidence. The evidence has however been updated to address the Council's most recent reasons for refusal and the policies in the adopted Local Plan. It also takes account of the December update to the NPPF. Where appropriate, reference has also been made to the previous Inspector's Decision Letter. ( e.g. 'DL para x').

### **Methodology**

- 3.10 The LVIA that accompanied the planning application was prepared in accordance with the guidance set out in the third edition of the Landscape Institute's Guidance for Landscape and Visual Effects (GLVIA). The LVIA draws the distinction between landscape effects (i.e. effects on the character or quality of the landscape irrespective of whether there are any views of the landscape, or viewers to see them) and visual effects (i.e. effects on people's views of the landscape from public vantage points, including public rights of way and other areas with public access, as well as effects from residential properties).
- 3.11 Extracts from the LVIA, that accompanied the planning application, are contained in the appendices to this evidence. As neither the Site nor the neighbouring area have changed in the intervening time, it has not been necessary to update the photographs and mapping contained in the LVIA. This approach is agreed in the Landscape Statement of Common Ground ('SoCG').
- 3.12 It is also agreed between the principal parties that the LVIA is fit for purpose and follows the Landscape Institute Guidance. There are however some disagreements between the parties on a number of judgements that are made on the baseline position and the anticipated effects.

3.13 The effects table in **Appendix D** summarises the appellants observations on the anticipated landscape and visual effects from the receptors that are considered most relevant to this appeal.

## 4.0 SITE DESCRIPTION, CONTEXT AND VISIBILITY

4.1 In the following section I provide only a brief description of the Site and surrounding area as a detailed description is contained in the submitted LVIA. A summary of the anticipated landscape and visual effects is also contained in the tables in **Appendix D**.

4.2 The LVIA also provides a summary of the main national and local landscape policies and other relevant government guidance. As we now have an updated landscape reason for refusal, I only refer to the relevant policies cited in the LPA's reasons for refusal rather than replicate the information set out in the LVIA.

### Context

4.3 The Site is an irregular shaped arable field that lies immediately to the north west of Goring by Sea Station and south of Ferring Rife. To the north of the Rife is another arable field and beyond that Littlehampton Road (A259), which is a relatively busy trunk road. Beyond Littlehampton Road is the South Downs National Park with the land gently rising to Highdown Hill, which lies further to the northwest.

4.4 On the lower slopes of the South Downs National Park, are Highdown Football Pitches and to the east of these a series of large arable fields. The heavily vegetated grounds of Highdown Garden, a Registered Park and Garden and Conservation Area, occupy the rising ground to the north of the playing fields. On the eastern edge of Highdown Garden is High Down Tea Room and Hotel, with a relatively large car park further to the east.

4.5 To east of the Site is the urban area of Goring with the urban area of Ferring to the west. The coastal railway line runs alongside the southern boundary of the Site. Beyond the railway the settlements of Goring and Ferring have already merged into one another with St Oscar Romero Catholic School immediately to the south east of the Site.

4.6 The neighbouring development which borders the Site is mainly from the post-war era and comprises a mix of bungalows, 2 storey houses and 3 and 4 storey flatted development. It is typically medium density with areas of higher density apartments close to the railway station and on the eastern side of Goring Street.

4.7 The location of the Site and its immediate context are illustrated on the Site Location Plan and Aerial Photograph in **Appendices A** and **B**.

## Landscape Character

- 4.8 The Site falls within South Coast Plain (Area 126) National Character Area (CD G3). This area covers the swathe of land that lies between the chalk dip slope of the South Downs and the English Channel. It is an extensive area of land that lies between Brighton and Southampton. The National Character Areas set the context for the local character assessments, the most relevant of which are set out below.
- 4.9 The Landscape Character Assessment of West Sussex (CD G4), which was prepared by the County Council in 2003, identifies the Site as falling within the South Coast Plain Regional Character Area ('RCA'). This regional character area is subdivided into 12 smaller Landscape Character Areas ('LCA').
- 4.10 The Site falls within Parcels SC11 and 13, the Littlehampton and Worthing Fringes/Worthing and Adur Fringes. The overall character of these areas is described as:

*'The urban fringes associated with sprawling coastal resorts are particularly obvious to the east of the County with sporadic urban development in many areas. Rows of large light reflective glass houses, equestrian facilities, horse paddocks and industrial buildings are strong suburban elements. Littlehampton and Worthing Fringes and Worthing and Adur Fringes form two groups to the east and west of Worthing, separating the coastal resorts of Littlehampton, Worthing, Lancing and Shoreham'.*

- 4.11 The key characteristics that are identified within the report which are most relevant to the setting of the Site are:
- *'Low lying flat open landscape;*
  - *Dominant urban fringe with major conurbations of Littlehampton and Worthing. Settlement edges often sharply contrast with adjacent open countryside;*
  - *Frequent urban fringe influences of horse paddocks, light industry, airport, and recreational open space;*
  - *Narrow gaps of open land at Kingston, Ferring, Sompting, and Lancing provide views to the sea and separation between the urban areas;*
  - *Medium scale arable farming and market gardening, with clusters of greenhouses;*
  - *Meandering rifees and straight drainage ditches;*
  - *A low density of native hedgerows and hedgerow trees, interspersed with shelterbelts, single species hedges or individual*

*standards planted using tall trees such as Poplar, Monterey Pine and Tulip trees;*

- *Clusters of windblown trees;*
- *Long views to the South Downs;*
- *Busy minor and major roads;*
- *Industry in the countryside; and*
- *South Coast railway line links the areas.'*

4.12 The document also identifies a series of key landscape and visual sensitivities which could affect the LCA. These are:

- *'Urban development pressures, especially in the gaps between settlements;*
- *Closing of open views between settlements;*
- *Major existing road improvements and the possibility of new ones;*
- *Loss of tree and hedgerow cover due to wind, salt desiccation and drought; and*
- *Planting of hedge and tree boundaries with unsympathetic exotic species.'*

#### **South Downs National Park: View Characterisation and Analysis (2015)** (CD G6)

4.13 The South Downs National Park Authority commissioned LUC to undertake an analysis and mapping exercise of views to, from, and within the National Park. That study is intended to provide a foundation for evidence on view types within the Park and its setting to support development management.

4.14 The study identifies a selection of views which represent the various types of view found across the Park. Representative view 31 (See **Appendix F**) illustrates the view from Highdown Hill, which the parties agree, is the viewpoint most relevant to the Site. The reason for the selection of this view is stated as:

*'The site of a hillfort, Highdown Hill is owned by the National Trust and a good vantage point from which to view the landscape. Views to the east and south include the densely populated coastal towns of Worthing, Ferring and East Preston, which reduces the remote qualities associated with other elevated viewpoints within the park. Extensive sea views are however the main focus and therefore this view is representative of sea views from the National Park' (my emphasis).*

4.15 The study groups the identified views into view types for further analysis. Representative view 31, is grouped with other view points on the High Downs which looks southwards out to sea. The analysis identifies the special qualities of these views as follows:

*'The elevated position of these viewpoints on the Downs above the coastal plain means this view type represents the 'breathtaking views' that are noted in the first of the Park's special qualities. It also reveals a rich variety of wildlife and habitats including some of the iconic habitats of the South Downs such as the downland and yew woodland (at Kingley Vale), the tranquillity of the Downs compared to the settled coastal plain, the way that farming has shaped the landscape in the form of distinctive field patterns, and the rich cultural heritage as a result of heritage assets in the view.'*

4.16 Threats to the views identified in the report include intrusive new development within the view that affect the sense of tranquillity within the National Park. However, it notes that many of these views are across the developed coast and that development forms an existing part of these views.

4.17 The study provides guidance on the aims and management of these views. It states that the aim is to ensure that opportunities to access and appreciate these panoramic views are maintained, and their special qualities retained. In particular it notes the following qualities of relevance to this evidence:

- *'Maintain the undeveloped character of the downs within the National Park which contrasts with the developed coastal plain, and ensure that development outside the National Park does not block, or adversely affect the quality of, views towards the sea.'*
- *Ensure that any built development outside the park is integrated into its context in terms of scale, form and materials – consider using native vegetation to enhance existing views that contain development, and minimise visibility of new development from the Park.'*

4.18 The common theme of the View Characterisation and Analysis assessments is that the coastal plain is heavily settled and as such contrasts with the largely undeveloped nature of the South Downs, from where there are elevated views to the sea as well as of the coastal plain, which is frequently described as urban fringe.

4.19 The study recognises that further development may take place outside of the National Park and advises that its scale and form should reflect its context and that native vegetation should be used to minimise the impact.



## **Site Description**

- 4.20 The Site is an undistinguished field of arable farmland, that is crossed by high voltage overhead electricity cables that are supported on lattice pylons.
- 4.21 There are no landscape features within the body of the Site to constrain development. A field hedgerow separates the Site from a small field to the south west. The remainder of the western boundary is bordered by the rear gardens of the dwellings served off Ferring Lane.
- 4.22 Ferring Rife is a relatively narrow watercourse that flows along the northern boundary of the Site. The corridor that accommodates the Rife is approximately 25 metres wide and mostly comprises untended grassland with intermittent tree cover. Beyond the Rife corridor the land is intensively farmed.

## **Public Rights of Way**

- 4.23 Unmade Footpath 2121 follows the southern boundary of the Site and leads from Goring-by-Sea Station to Ferring Lane. A second path, Footpath 2121\_1, follows a north-south alignment alongside the south western Site boundary, leading from Ferring Lane to the footpath that runs alongside the southern boundary. Further north there are a number of footpaths which cross the higher ground around Highdown Hill in the South Downs National Park.

## **Topography**

- 4.24 The Site forms part of the wider developed coastal plain and is approximately 5m Above Ordnance Datum ('AOD'). Immediately to the north of Littlehampton Road, the land rises to the summit of Highdown Hill, which is approximately 1km to the north of the Site, at an elevation of approximately 81m AOD.
- 4.25 The topography of the South Downs contrasts markedly with that of the coastal plain in that it has an undulating character, is mainly actively farmed, and also contains significant areas of woodland.

## **Landscape Quality, Value and Sensitivity**

- 4.26 The Site does not carry any statutory or non-statutory designations for landscape character or quality. It comprises a large arable field which lies outside of the National Park and has a number of detracting features such as the neighbouring apartments and lattice pylons that cross it. There is also activity on the neighbouring roads and railway. Overall, the Site is considered to be at the lower end of medium landscape quality. The parties agree that it is not a Valued Landscape for the purpose of paragraph 180a of the NPPF.

4.27 Landscape sensitivity is judged according to the type and scale of development proposed, and the ability of the landscape as a resource to accommodate the development. Taking account of the Site's local setting, and that of the National Park, the Site is assessed as being of medium landscape sensitivity to the Appeal Scheme. That judgement is based upon the fact that the density and height of the development is compatible with neighbouring development; that there are no landscape features within the body of the Site to constrain development; and that the Appeal Scheme would not be discordant with the character of the area. The potential for mitigating planting within the Site is also taken into account.

### **Visibility**

4.28 The LVIA provides a thorough assessment of the key views of the Site from public vantage points. At the previous inquiry, the parties agreed a walking route for the Inspector which identified the views that were considered the most relevant for the Inspector to visit. That walking route is contained in the SoCG with a brief narrative of the main viewpoints below. A more detailed assessment of the baseline conditions and anticipated effects are contained in the assessment tables in **Appendix D**.

4.29 As the reason for refusal is predominantly concerned with longer distance views to and from the Site and the impact on the setting of the National Park, I have only briefly described the extent of other views.

### **Near Distance Views**

4.30 The main near distance views are from the neighbouring roads, the public footpaths which cross the Site, passengers on the railway and elevated views from the neighbouring flats.

4.31 In broad terms, near distance views in a southerly, westerly and easterly direction are contained by existing development, which is mainly residential and ranges in height from 1 to 4 storeys. Views in a northerly direction are largely of the South Downs although Littlehampton Road and the development to the east of Titmore Lane, which lies immediately to the east of the South Downs, is visible.

### **Middle and Long Distance Views**

4.32 There are some views of the Site from Highdown Rise, which lies within Highdown Registered Park and Garden and Conservation Area, and leads to the car park adjacent to Highdown Gardens (Photograph 20). Views from the remainder of the Highdown Conservation Area and the Registered Park and Gardens are limited due to the density of vegetation within the grounds of the gardens. Views from the public car park are generally prevented by

intervening vegetation, although there are some views towards the Site, where breaks occur (Photograph 19).

- 4.33 There are panoramic views southwards across the coastal plain from the higher ground at Highdown Hill (Photograph 21). In views towards the coast from elevated vantage points, the broad expanse of development in the coastal plain is clearly visible, with the Site visible in the middle distance, beyond Littlehampton Road. Due to the elevation of these viewpoints, the English Channel is seen in all of these views over the coastal plain. As noted in the South Downs National Park View Characterisation and Analysis (2015), these sea views are the main focus of views south and east from the edge of the National Park.
- 4.34 As set out in the LVIA, there are also some other opportunities to view the Site and coastal plain from elsewhere in the National Park.

## **5.0 ABILITY OF THE SITE TO ACCOMMODATE DEVELOPMENT AND ANTICIPATED LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL EFFECTS**

5.1 The following section provides a brief description of the Appeal Scheme and assesses the ability of the Site to accommodate the proposed development and associated infrastructure. A summary of the potential impact on landscape character and visual amenity is also provided.

### **Appeal Scheme**

5.2 The findings of the ecological assessment and those of the LVIA, along with other studies, were pivotal in shaping the masterplan. As a result of those studies, the Appeal Scheme has been brought forward in a manner that respects the Site's landscape setting and its ecological value, amongst other things. By adopting such an approach, the key landscape and ecological assets of the Site will be retained and enhanced and its relationship to the South Downs National Park addressed in an appropriate manner.

5.3 The Appeal Scheme will have a strong relationship with Goring and Ferring and will deliver a development with a distinct sense of place that is compatible with the scale and density of neighbouring development.

5.4 The illustrative masterplan shows that the Appeal Scheme provides generous areas of open space alongside Ferring Rife and along the western Site boundary. The open spaces will provide formal and informal recreational opportunities as well as wildlife corridors.

5.5 The illustrative masterplan shows that housing will face onto the open spaces to provide passive surveillance and to create an appropriate interface with the open land beyond. Two north/south aligned views corridors will also be created within the development to allow framed views to the South Downs.

5.6 Vehicular access into the Site will be from Goring Street, via a new roundabout. In the southeast corner of the Site there will commercial development and a public car park which will also serve Goring by Sea Station.

5.7 I now consider the anticipated effects of the Appeal Scheme against a series of criteria. Some of the topics, such as the function of the Site in creating a gap between Goring and Ferring are expanded upon in Section 6 of this Evidence.

### **Relationship of the Site to the neighbouring area**

5.8 The Site is closely related to existing development on three sides and has good access to local facilities, including Goring-by-Sea railway station; retail outlets; and Oscar St Romero Catholic School. It also has the benefit of being in close

proximity to Highdown Playing Fields and the recreational resources within the National Park.

- 5.9 Neighbouring development is predominantly residential and ranges from bungalows to 4 storey apartments. The density of development is similarly varied.
- 5.10 The DAS that accompanied the planning application shows the scale and density of the Appeal Scheme. This shows that the northern part of the proposed development, that fronts onto Ferring Rife, will have a maximum height of 2 storeys with the taller buildings largely confined to the Site entrance and the south east corner of the Site.
- 5.11 Development within the Appeal Site will be set back from Ferring Rife behind a broad swathe of open space. The proposed development will be further from the National Park than the existing housing on Goring Street, which lies immediately to the east of the Site and that of Northbrook College and the neighbouring housing which borders the eastern edge of the National Park.

### **Landscape Features**

- 5.12 There are no landscape features within the body of the Site that present a constraint to development. Ferring Rife runs alongside the northern Site boundary and is addressed in an appropriate manner, with the new housing set back behind a broad swathe of open space. The Landscape Strategy also shows that there are opportunities to enhance the landscape and ecological value of the areas of open space as the land is currently intensively farmed. The Appeal Scheme will also deliver BNG.

### **Public Rights of Way**

- 5.13 The existing public footpaths within the Site are to be retained and a series of recreational footpaths provided within the areas of open space and alongside Ferring Rife. This will significantly increase public access onto the Site and provide new walking routes.

### **Visibility**

- 5.14 The visual appraisal in the LVIA identifies that there are some opportunities for views from neighbouring dwellings, public rights of way and the railway. Middle and long distance views from the south, east and west are prevented by intervening development. There are also opportunities for views from the rising ground within the South Downs National Park to the north.
- 5.15 A number of illustrative Photomontages (see **Appendix G**) have been prepared from the viewpoints at Highdown Hill (Viewpoint 21), from Highdown Rise leading to Highdown Gardens (Viewpoint 20), and from Littlehampton Road

(Viewpoint 12). These show the content of the existing view and likely changes. The photomontages are based on the parameters shown on the Concept Masterplan / Landscape Strategy, and described in the Design and Access Statement. Photomontages have been prepared at Year 1, when the proposed landscaping is undertaken, and at Year 15, when any landscape mitigation has established. An assumption has been made that new broadleaf planting will have grown on average 5 metres in 15 years. The following section makes reference to the photomontages where relevant.

### **Near Distance Views**

- 5.16 The photomontage from Viewpoint 12 shows the view from the western approach along Littlehampton Road. The baseline photograph shows that the Site and land to the north of the Rife is open farmland but that there are no views to the sea from Littlehampton Road on account of the housing and apartments to the south of the railway and the low lying nature of the land.
- 5.17 With development in place, the proposed housing will be drawn closer to Littlehampton Road than is the existing case, but a swathe of open land will be retained to the north of the Rife which will provide an indentation or a localised break in the settlement boundary, albeit reduced in depth from the current position.
- 5.18 The visual impact of the Appeal Scheme will be reduced by limiting housing to a maximum of 2 storeys on the northern side of the Site and through the introduction of new native planting within the open space that runs alongside Ferring Rife. Benefits will also arise as a result of undergrounding the prominent HV lattice pylons that cross the Site.
- 5.19 The new planting will provide an attractive setting for the new homes and create a more empathetic interface between the development and the neighbouring countryside than the existing flats to the south of the railway provide at present.

### **Middle and Long Distance Views**

- 5.20 The Site is visible in views to the sea across the coastal plain from the higher ground at the edge of the National Park, predominately from vantage points on Highdown Hill. The photomontage from Viewpoint 21, illustrates the change to the existing view as a result of development. Photomontage 20 is taken from Highdown Rise, at a lower elevation than photomontage 21, and shows that the Appeal Scheme will not block sea views and that the land to the north of the Rife continues to provide a swathe of undeveloped farmland.

## Representative views from Highdown Hill

- 5.21 The viewpoint at Highdown Hill is identified and described in the South Downs National Park View Characterisation and Analysis study. That report identifies this view as representative of viewpoints on the High Downs looking south out to sea. The hill fort at Highdown Hill is also identified as a landmark within the National Park. The study identifies the special qualities of these view types, and also provides guidance on the aims and management of these views. The following section considers the impact of the proposed development on the special qualities of the identified views to the sea.
- 5.22 As previously noted, the view characterisation study identifies that views from Highdown Hill include the densely populated coastal towns of Worthing and Ferring, which contrast with the remote qualities associated with other elevated view points in the National Park. It goes on to say that extensive sea views are the main focus of this view. In terms of special qualities, the study states that the view type represents 'breath-taking views' which, amongst other things, reveal the tranquillity of the South Downs compared to the settled coastal plain. Amongst the threats to the view, it notes intrusive new development that affects the sense of tranquillity within the National Park, although it acknowledges that development is an existing component of these views. Urban settlement is the key characteristic of the coastal plain and, as noted above, it is this quality which contrasts with the tranquil nature of the National Park. Photographs 2 and 21 clearly shows that this is an accurate description of the coastal plain.
- 5.23 The Appeal Scheme will be consistent with the established character of the coastal plain and will allow a localised gap to be maintained in this part of the (already) merged settlements of Worthing and Ferring. It will also be set back from the National Park, whereas the housing to the east of the Appeal Site, is in closer proximity to the National Park.
- 5.24 Enhancements to the Site will also be delivered through new planting and undergrounding of the overhead power lines and removal of the lattice pylons. In addition, the proposed development maintains a buffer of farmland and semi-natural open space to the north, which provides an appropriate transition between the urban area and the lower slopes of Highdown Hill, albeit one that is truncated by the route of the A259 Littlehampton Road. This road is heavily used at all times of the day.
- 5.25 The photograph and photomontage in **Appendix G** (photograph 21) is from Highdown Hill and shows the baseline position and then the anticipated effects at year 1 and at year 15. It is apparent from this photomontage that the Appeal Scheme will be visible but it will not appear out of scale or out of character with neighbouring development; it will not block any views of the sea; and that a localised gap in the urban area will be maintained, albeit reduced in depth.

Overall the visual impact was considered to be moderate adverse at completion of the development and slight adverse at year 15.

- 5.26 As I explain in the following section, which addresses the impact of development on the setting of the South Downs, a moderate adverse visual impact (that will incrementally dissipate to a slight adverse at year 15) does not necessarily equate to a moderate adverse impact on its setting.
- 5.27 In considering the impact from Highdown Hill, on what the parties agree is the key view from the South Downs National Park, it is highly relevant to note that the South Downs National Park Authority did not object to the Appeal Scheme. Paragraph 45 of Inspector Cridland's decision also acknowledged this. It stated:
- 5.28 *'The SDNP Authority has not raised any specific concerns in relation to views from within the SDNP or with the impact of the proposed development on the setting of the National Park. Nevertheless, the Council consider that the overall effect of the proposal on views from Highdown Hill would be substantial adverse'*.
- 5.29 Paragraph 46 of the Inspector's decision then addressed the fact that WBC had assessed the impact of the Appeal Scheme on the view from Highdown Hill as substantial adverse. It stated:
- 5.30 *'I do not agree. While I note that views are breath-taking from this vantage point, I observed that the appeal site itself is not prominent in those views and the focus is clearly on the sea. This accords with the Viewpoint Characterisation and Analysis Study (2015) which identifies Highdown Hill as a good vantage point from which to view the surrounding landscape and recognises that, notwithstanding the densely populated areas of Worthing and Ferring, extensive sea views are the main focus. Even though the proposed development would be visible in the mid-ground view, it would nevertheless be seen in the context of existing development - much of which already extends further north and in closer proximity to the SDNP than would the proposed development'*.
- 5.31 The impact of the development on the setting of the wider National Park is addressed in Section 6 of this evidence.

### **Highdown Conservation Area and Registered Park and Garden**

- 5.32 In certain instances the Appeal Scheme will be visible from Highdown Rise and from within the Highdown Conservation Area and Registered Park and Garden. The photomontage from Viewpoint 20 illustrates the anticipated change in the view from Highdown Rise. In views from the driveway, the proposed development would be seen in the middle ground and within the context of



existing development. The farmland which lies to the north of Ferring Rife will be visible and will continue to provide an undeveloped area of farmland alongside Littlehampton Road. Landscaping within the open space in the northern part of the Site, and within the Green Corridors between the development parcels will soften views of the new homes, and provide an appropriate landscaped edge between the built up area and the adjacent farmland.

- 5.33 Views from within the grounds of the Registered Park and Garden of Highdown Rise are limited by the existing vegetation within the grounds which contains a significant proportion of evergreen planting. These views are mainly inward looking in any event.

### **Landscape Character and Quality**

- 5.34 Development on the Appeal Site would be entirely consistent with the pattern of development in the local area. Environmental improvements within the open space to the north and the adjacent farmland would also be consistent with the land management guidelines set out in the Landscape Character Assessment of West Sussex in the following ways:

- *Opportunity to restore former field boundary structure strengthening the existing landscape framework to the north of the built part of the Site;*
- *New woodland, tree and shrub planting to filter views to the urban edge;*
- *Landscape and ecological enhancements to Ferring Rife; and*
- *Species-rich grassland creation.*

- 5.35 The more significant landscape effects would be experienced within the Site and from within the farmland to the immediate north. However, this would be the case with any development of greenfield land at the edge of a settlement.

### **Setting of SDNP**

- 5.36 As far as I am aware there is no specific definition of what constitutes landscape setting, as this will inevitably vary on a case by case basis. Annex 2 of the NPPF does however define the setting of heritage assets as:

- 5.37 *'The surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral'.*

- 5.38 The definition of the setting of a heritage asset is not directly applicable to landscape setting but it does overlap to a certain degree in that the extent of the setting is not fixed, that it may evolve over time, and that there can be negative features that fall within the setting.
- 5.39 Paragraph 042 of the NPPG provides guidance on how development within the setting of National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty should be dealt with. It states:
- 5.40 *'Land within the setting of these areas often makes an important contribution to maintaining their natural beauty, and where poorly located or designed development can do significant harm. This is especially the case where long views from or to the designated landscape are identified as important, or where the landscape character of land within and adjoining the designated area is complementary. Development within the settings of these areas will therefore need sensitive handling that takes these potential impacts into account.'*
- 5.41 The guidance in the NPPG mirrors that of para 182 of the NPPF and Policy SS4 of WBC's Local Plan, both of which acknowledge that development can occur within the setting of a National Park but it needs to be sensitivity located and designed to avoid or minimise adverse impacts on the designated landscape.

### **Context**

- 5.42 The parties agree that the Appeal Site falls within the setting of the South Downs National Park.
- 5.43 The LVIA that accompanied the planning application identified a series of viewpoints from within and outside of the South Downs National and it is agreed between the parties that these viewpoints are the most relevant to this appeal.
- 5.44 The fact that in many instances the LVIA quite rightly recognised that the changes to the identified viewpoints would result in an adverse visual effect, that was because the character of the Appeal Site would change from a greenfield site to a medium density residential development. Such a change would inevitably give rise to a certain level of harm, even if a highly attractive scheme came forward.
- 5.45 The level of visual harm that was identified was based upon the sensitivity of the receptor and the change to the view in question. The level of visual harm identified does not necessarily equate to the same level of harm to the landscape setting of the National Park, as a number of other factors need to be taken into account in reaching the judgement on the level of harm to the setting.

5.46 It is also important to read the narrative that supports the judgements in the LVIA as these describe the baseline position and the change that will occur. For example, in assessing the visual impact of the view from Highdown Hill the LVIA states:

5.47 *'The proposed development would occupy the middle ground, and the new housing would form an extension to the built up area of Goring. Development would clearly relate to existing settlement on the coastal plain. Given the surrounding built up context, the development would not impact on perceptual qualities such as remoteness and tranquillity which are associated with views from the South Downs. The development would also not impact on the visual link between Highdown Hill and the coast. New landscaping within the open spaces will provide a robust landscape framework for the new homes and a soft edge to the Site adjacent to the National Park. The retained farmland and the route of the A259 separate the Site from the National Park to the north. Whilst new development and open space will be evident in the view, it will not significantly alter the overall character of the existing view, which largely comprises urban development on the coastal plain, which contrasts with the undeveloped character of the National Park'.*

5.48 The reason why the impact is described as moderate adverse, at completion of the development, is because it accords with the methodology in table VE3 which states:

*The proposals would impact on a view from a medium sensitive receptor, or less harm (or improvement) to a view from a more sensitive receptor, and would be a readily discernible element in the view. (my emphasis).*

5.49 As the South Downs is a highly sensitive receptor then the level of visual harm is considered to be moderate but that does not equate to a moderate level of harm to the setting of the National Park and the context needs to also be taken into account in assessing the impact on the setting.

5.50 In considering the visual impact of most developments, the impact is likely to be greatest at completion. With developments such as the Appeal Scheme, where a significant part of the Site is given over to open space and structural planting, then there will also be opportunities for advanced planting. On the Appeal Site, this could occur in the broad swathe of open space on the northern side of the Site which will largely be free of development and there is therefore no reason why the structural planting in that area could not be undertaken at the early stage of development rather than at completion of the development.

5.51 As I have already noted, there is no specific methodology that I'm aware of for defining the extent of the setting of a nationally designated landscape or the matters which should be taken into account when considering the

components of landscape setting. I have however set out the main factors which I consider are relevant in assessing the landscape setting and set these out below with my observations on the relationship of the Appeal Site to the National Park.

### **Visibility**

- 5.52 Designated landscapes are identified for their intrinsic qualities and for their special landscape qualities or natural beauty. They frequently contrast with the neighbouring landscapes or townscapes and in many ways that is what makes them special or unique.
- 5.53 The visibility to and from the designated landscapes is clearly an important component of their setting and when considering visual effects it is important to also consider the existing content of the view and experience of the viewer.
- 5.54 The Appeal Scheme will be visible from a number of public vantage points both within and outside of the SDNP. Where such views occur, the Appeal Scheme will typically be seen within the context of neighbouring development and will not be discordant with its character or scale. Mitigation measures will also be provided, such as significant areas of new planting.
- 5.55 Whilst I acknowledge that some visual harm will occur as a result of development, that is an inevitable consequence of developing greenfield land. However, the level of visual harm does not necessarily equate to the same level of harm to setting. For example, as I have already noted, a moderate adverse visual effect, which reduces over time, will not necessarily equate to a moderate adverse effect on the setting of a designated landscape as a series of other factors need to be taken into consideration, such as context, duration, mitigation etc.
- 5.56 I now consider the impact of the Appeal Scheme on the SDNP against a series of factors that can be seen to define its setting.

### **Complementary Landscape**

- 5.57 In the case of the relationship of the South Downs National Park to the Appeal Site and the wider coastal plain, which it falls within, there is a stark contrast between the relatively flat, intensively developed, coastal plain and the rising ground of the Downs which is mainly in agricultural use and only has limited development and infrastructure within it.
- 5.58 The Appeal Site, and the land to the north of Ferring Rife, is currently in agricultural use with Littlehampton Road providing a clear divide between it and the South Downs. Whilst the Appeal Site is currently open land, a conscious decision was made by the SDNP Authority not to include it within the SDNP because it did not have the special qualities that would elevate it to that status.

This is entirely understandable as the land to the south of Littlehampton Road has development on three of its four boundaries and is of ordinary character and quality. Given these factors I do not consider that the Appeal Site makes any meaningful contribution to the setting of the SDNP in respect of the openness of the Site itself and its relationship to the SDNP as the two areas have markedly different characters. My judgement is also based on the fact that the land to the north of the Rife will be retained as open, as will a broad swathe of land to the south of the Rife which falls within the Appeal Site. This land will provide a transition to the SDNP.

### **Topographic relationship**

- 5.59 The rising ground of the South Downs not only provides a contrast to the coastal plain but also allows opportunities for far reaching views from within it.
- 5.60 In broad terms, views in a southerly direction, from the land that rises to Highdown Hill are far reaching views to the sea with the densely populated coastal plain and Appeal Site in the middle distance. Views in a northerly direction, provide a sharp contrast in that the landform is undulating, there are extensive areas of woodland and the land is predominantly actively farmed with only limited development and supporting infrastructure.

### **Tranquillity**

- 5.61 In respect of landscape tranquillity, the two most commonly identified components are areas that are relatively quiet and those that are free of intrusive urban development and infrastructure.
- 5.62 In respect of the land within the SDNP that lies to the north of Littlehampton Road, that part of the Downs is less tranquil than the land further to the north. A major component in the reduction of the tranquillity in the southern part of the Downs is that views in a southerly direction are of the heavily populated coastal plain. There is also noise, and at night, light pollution generated by traffic movement on Littlehampton Road. Once one has crossed the ridge of the rising ground within the SDNP which lies to the north of Littlehampton Road, the noise from traffic on the road is no longer audible and views northwards are largely free of development.
- 5.63 Given the extent of existing development and infrastructure that lies to the south of Littlehampton Road and that which lies to the east of Tilnore Lane, then I do not consider that the tranquillity of the South Downs will be harmed in any meaningful way if the Appeal Scheme is brought forward.

### **Conclusion on setting**

- 5.64 There will be no material impact on the setting of the SDNP as the Appeal Scheme has been sensitively designed; is of an appropriate scale; and that

landscape mitigation measures are also proposed. At the reserved matters stage a recessive palette of materials can be also used for the buildings if that is considered appropriate. The proposed development will also be set back from the SDNP with the intervening land retained as open land.

### **Separation between Goring-by-Sea and Ferring**

- 5.65 The function of the Site in providing a gap between Goring and Ferring is addressed in Section 6 of this Evidence.

### **Inspector's Conclusion**

- 5.66 The Inspector's decision letter in part agreed with a number of judgements that I had made in my assessment of the Appeal Scheme and similarly formed a different view on other judgements, such as the impact on views from within the Site. Inspector Cridland's overall conclusion was similar to mine in that we agreed that the proposed development would not have a material impact on the setting of the South Downs National Park and would not undermine the physical or visual separation of Goring by Sea and Ferring.

- 5.67 There has been no material change to the character of the Site or the neighbouring area since the original Inquiry and I remain of the view that the Appeal Scheme will not have a material impact on the setting of the National Park nor undermine the function of the localised gap between Ferring and Goring.

- 5.68 I do however recognise that the Local Plan is now adopted and that Chatsmore Farm is now a designated Local Green Gap. At the time of preparing my previous evidence, the Local Green Gap was a draft policy although the relationship of Goring to Ferring was considered in any event.

- 5.69 Paragraph 57 of the Inspector's DL concluded that:

*Drawing the above threads together, I do not consider the proposed development would materially affect the setting of the SDNP, the wider landscape or undermine the existing physical or visual separation between the settlements of Goring-by-Sea and Ferring. However, I acknowledge the appeal site is valued by the local community and that its loss would result in some harm in this respect. I have also found that the proposal would adversely impact on a number of visual receptors which would result in some further harm. I consider these further as part of the overall planning balance below.*

- 5.70 I similarly concluded that the Appeal Scheme would not materially harm the setting of the SDNP nor undermine the physical and visual separation of Ferring and Goring and remain of that opinion.

## **6.0 RESPONSE TO LANDSCAPE MATTERS RAISED IN THE PUTATIVE REASON FOR REFUSAL**

6.1 The first putative reason for refusal states the proposed development is outside of the built-up area as defined by the Worthing Local Plan (2023) and does not comprise development essential to the countryside nor does it comprise development of entry level exception sites. The proposed development also would have an adverse impact on the setting of the adjacent South Downs National Park and therefore is contrary to paragraph 176 of the National Planning Policy Framework and policies SS1 and SS4 of the Worthing Local Plan.

6.2 In the following section I address the specific landscape related aspects of the reasons for refusal and where appropriate I also refer to the findings of the original planning Inspector. For ease of reference, these are in italics and include the relevant paragraph reference. E.g. '*DL para 34* '

6.3 Assessing the landscape and visual effects of any development is largely a matter of judgment and different people frequently have different views. In this Instance, the Inspector will form her own judgments based upon visiting the Site and the neighbouring area and by reviewing the documents that supported the planning application along with those prepared by WBC.

### **Development within the Countryside SS1 Spatial Strategy**

6.4 Policy SS1 is principally about spatial planning and this matter is addressed in the Planning Proof of Evidence of Mr Hutchison.

6.5 Criterion d iii of Policy SS1 refers to Open Spaces and Countryside/Gaps as valued open space which should be protected. This includes important gaps between settlements, the undeveloped coastline and the features which provide connectivity between these areas.

6.6 I deal with that specific aspect of the policy under the following 2 policies.

### **SS4 Countryside and Undeveloped Coast**

6.7 The Appeal Site currently lies outside of the Built up Boundary of Ferring and Goring and as such falls within the countryside in planning policy terms, albeit on the ground the site is surrounded by development on three sides.

6.8 The parties agree that the Appeal Scheme does not fall within the criteria of development that may be permitted in the countryside albeit Mr Hutchison explains that the policy is out of date for reasons that are beyond the scope of my evidence.

6.9 In any event I consider the loss of the arable farmland, that currently occupies the Site, will result in a moderate adverse effect. I say that because the Site itself

is an area of ordinary quality farmland that has no distinguishing features, other than the Rife which runs along the northern boundary of the Site. The Rife will in any event be retained and enhanced.

- 6.10 The Site is not covered by any statutory or non-statutory designations for landscape character or quality and has a number of detracting features, such as the lattice pylons that cross it, movement of traffic on the neighbouring roads and the visual impact of neighbouring development, amongst other things.
- 6.11 The Appeal Scheme will also result in a number of beneficial effects, such as enhancing the value of the Ferring Rife corridor and creating a permanent heavily vegetated boundary between the settlement and the wider countryside. BNG will also be delivered and the overhead powerlines will be placed underground.
- 6.12 The adverse effect that developing the Site will give rise to is an inevitable consequence of developing any greenfield site. The Planning Proof of Evidence addresses the weight that should be accorded to this policy in the planning balance section of that proof.

#### **SS4 f Setting of the South Downs National Park**

- 6.13 Criterion f of Policy SS4 requires the setting of the South Downs National Park and the Designated International Dark Skies Reserve to be respected. The policy mirrors the requirement of Para 182 of the NPPF that indicates '*any development within the setting of the National Park should be sensitively located and designed to avoid or minimise adverse impacts on the designated areas*'.
- 6.14 Paragraph: 042 of the PPG similarly recognises that land within the setting of National Parks makes an important contribution to maintaining their natural beauty and that poorly located or designed development can do significant harm.
- 6.15 The PPG states that significant harm can arise where long views from or to the designated landscape are identified as important, or where the landscape character of land within and adjoining the designated area is complementary. Development within the settings of these areas will therefore need sensitive handling that takes these potential impacts into account.
- 6.16 Policy SS4 and other relevant government guidance clearly does not preclude development within the setting of National Parks but requires it to be undertaken in such a way as to minimise adverse impacts.
- 6.17 For the reason I have already given, the extent of development on the Site, its scale, and the landscape mitigation measures proposed, show that the



Appeal Scheme meets the requirements of Policy SS4f. The Site is also set back from the National Park boundary by an intervening area of farmland and Littlehampton Road.

- 6.18 The response to the planning application from the SDNP Authority on the 21<sup>st</sup> October 2020 (CD B17) also acknowledged that built development would be set back from the National Park boundary by some degree. Their response stated:

*'The development is proposed to be sited to the south of the A259, approximately 80m from the boundary of the National Park at its closest point. However, the indicative masterplan shows the built form situated approximately 255m from the boundary of the South Downs National Park.....'*

- 6.19 In Section 4 of this Evidence, I have referred to the various character assessments and noted that the main theme is that the coastal plain is heavily urbanised and that sea views are the main focus of the elevated views from the National Park. Threats to the elevated views are identified as forms of development that would be intrusive and affect the sense of tranquillity within the National Park. For the reasons I have already set out, the Appeal Scheme will not be out of character with the neighbouring area, would not be intrusive and will not block sea views. It has not been suggested that there would be any impact upon the sense of tranquillity within the National Park.

- 6.20 It is also relevant to note that, in their consultation response to the planning application on the 21<sup>st</sup> October 2020, the National Park Authority did not formally object to the application. Their response quite rightly recognised that the Appeal Scheme had the potential to detrimentally impact on the setting of the National Park, but they then went on to say that:

*'the SDNPA makes no comment on the principle of development, however would recommend that consideration be given to the design of the development. The development should be designed to minimise its visual presence and impact, and where impacts are identified these should be mitigated or minimised through appropriate design interventions. The ultimate design of the proposals should be appropriate to its sensitive, edge of settlement location in terms of the developments height, scale and density. Consideration should also be given to the impact of the development upon the Highdown Conservation Area'.*

- 6.21 The consultation response also referred to the need for a Conservation Area Appraisal to be considered as part of the determination of the application. Reference was also made for the need to make reference to the View Characterisation Study, to which I have already referred and which was contained in the LVIA.

- 6.22 The consultation response referred to the status of the National Park as a designated International Dark Sky Reserve and went on to say that the SDNPA would encourage a sensitive approach to lighting, which conforms with the Institute of Lighting Professionals for lighting in environmental zones, and tries to achieve zero upwards light spill in all respects. Any lighting should also take into account the biodiversity sensitivities of the site and not disturb or harm wildlife. The Council's biodiversity officer should be able to advise further on this.
- 6.23 The matters that the SDNPA raised for consideration have been addressed in the way that the Appeal Scheme has been shaped, and other matters such as light spill can be addressed at the detailed design stage.
- 6.24 In respect of views towards the National Park from within the Site, these are not identified in the Local Plan, or any other documents that I'm aware of, as being 'Important Views'. They have nevertheless been assessed in the LVIA and are summarised in this evidence.
- 6.25 There will inevitably be an impact on some localised views, most notably from the footpath and railway alongside the southern boundary of the Site. From these vantage points a series of view corridors have been created through the development to allow framed views towards the South Downs. A new footpath has also been provided alongside the Rife to allow more open views of the South Downs from what will become an attractive wildlife corridor. As with views from the South Downs towards the Site, it is important to consider the existing content of these views, with the heavily trafficked Littlehampton Road in the middle distance and urban development to the east and west.
- 6.26 The release of a greenfield site for development will inevitably give rise to a certain level of landscape harm but for the reasons I have already given, the Appeal Scheme has been landscape led and has been carefully crafted to respond to both its landscape and townscape setting in a sensitive manner. As such, it creates a more appropriate and softer boundary to the urban area than presently exists. It will also deliver ecological and recreational benefits. It will not introduce a form of development that is at odds with the prevailing character of the coastal plain and as such will not materially impact on the setting of the South Downs National Park.
- 6.27 Paragraph: 042 of the PPG similarly recognises that development within the setting of National Parks needs to be carried out in a sensitive manner. It states that:

*Land within the setting of these areas often makes an important contribution to maintaining their natural beauty, and where poorly located or designed development can do significant harm. This is especially the case where long views from or to the designated landscape are identified as important, or where the landscape character of land within and adjoining the designated*

*area is complementary. Development within the settings of these areas will therefore need sensitive handling that takes these potential impacts into account.*

- 6.28 In terms of views from the National Park, where such views exist of the Appeal Scheme, it will always be seen within the context of existing urban development within the coastal plain and it will not obstruct coastal views.
- 6.29 In several instances I have identified that the impact on the views from the National Park will be moderate adverse at year 1 and incrementally reduce to slight adverse at year 15.
- 6.30 As I have already noted, in considering the impact on views it is relevant to note that each description of effects is not definitive as there is an overlap between judgements that are made e.g. a moderate adverse visual effect overlaps with substantial and equally with slight. It is for this reason that the tables in **Appendix D** have a narrative alongside them to describe the content and change to the view.
- 6.31 The parties agree that the key view from the National Park is from High Down Hill.

#### **Policy SS5 Local Green Gaps**

- 6.32 Policy SS5 in the Local Plan designates four Local Green Gaps which occur between the settlements of Worthing & Ferring and Worthing & Sompting/Lancing. The Appeal Site forms part of the wider Chatsmore Farm Green Gap.
- 6.33 The introductory sentence to Policy SS5 (para 3.50) states that '*the designation and protection of 'Local Green Gaps' helps to avoid coalescence and preserve the separate characters and identities of different settlements by providing physical and visual breaks..*
- 6.34 The Policy does not preclude all forms of development within the Gaps. It states:
- Outside of those areas designated as Local Green Space, all applications for development (including entry level exception sites) within Local Green Gaps must demonstrate that individually or cumulatively:*
- (i) it would not undermine the physical and/or visual separation of settlements;*
  - (II) it would not compromise the integrity of the gap;*
  - (ii) it conserves and enhances the benefits and services derived from the area's Natural Capital; and*

(iv) it conserves and enhances the area as part of a cohesive green infrastructure network.

6.35 I now consider the function of the Appeal Site against these four criteria and then assess the impact of the Appeal Scheme on the separate identities of Ferring and Goring.

### **Physical and Visual separation of Ferring and Goring**

6.36 The starting point is that the settlements of Ferring and Goring have already long been merged. This is apparent from reviewing the Aerial Photograph in **Appendix B** which shows that existing development to the south of the coastal railway has coalesced. The character of the settlements is not dissimilar in any event and this is apparent from visiting the area.

6.37 The Appeal Scheme will therefore not result in the coalescence of Goring with Ferring because the two settlements have already merged. The Site and land immediately to the north of Ferring Rife, which also falls within the gap, does not create a physical divide between the two settlements. Rather, it is an indentation or localised break in the boundary of the coalesced settlements.

6.38 The Council's own evidence base recognises that the settlements have already coalesced. HDA's (Goring Gap Proposed Local Green Space Designations, June 2018 (CD G9)) acknowledges that the settlements have coalesced. Paragraph 3.2.5 of that document deals with settlement pattern and gap function and states that:

*'Prior to the 20th century, Goring-by-Sea and Ferring were small nucleated settlements some distance from the site. During the 1950s, Goring Way was lined with houses, establishing a linear link of settlement between Goring-by-Sea and Ferring, about 200m to the south of the site (my underlining). During the 1960s, much of the current housing to the east and west was in place, with housing in Ferring reaching level with the northern edge of the northern gap, and housing reaching north from Goring Way to the railway along the southern edge of the gap. The full extent of housing which borders the site to the east was reached during the 1980s, and multi-storey buildings have recently been constructed to the south-east of the northern gap on the opposite side of the railway. However, an open area remains adjacent to the south, beyond the railway as school playing fields.'*

6.39 I do nevertheless recognise that when one is travelling along Littlehampton Road the Site and the land to the north of the Rife reads as a localised break or an indentation in the urban morphology of the coalesced settlements of Goring and Ferring. With development in place on the Appeal Site, the depth of the gap will reduce but there will still be a sense of separation in this part of the settlements. As a result, as one travels along Littlehampton Road there will

continue to be a localised break with an area of open land occupy the land between the Rife and Littlehampton Road.

- 6.40 I agree with Inspector Cridland that the proposals would not undermine the physical and visual separation of settlements.

**It would not compromise the integrity of the gap**

- 6.41 As noted above, with the development in place on the Appeal Site, the depth of the gap will be reduced but the width will not. There will inevitably be a reduction in its size but it will remain as a localised break.

- 6.42 It is also worth noting that it is not just the open farmland to the north of the Rife that provides the gap but the swathe of informal open space that lies to the south of the Rife will also remain open. This is acknowledged in the SDNP Authorities response to the application which said that *'the indicative masterplan shows the built form situated approximately 255m from the boundary of the South Downs National Park'*.

- 6.43 Given that the physical and visual separation of settlements is not undermined, it follows that the integrity of the gap is not compromised.

**It conserves and enhances the benefits and services derived from the area's Natural Capital**

- 6.44 As far as I am aware there is no formal definition of what constitutes Natural Capital. The Department of Environment for Food and Rural Affairs has provided guidance on 'Enabling a Natural Capital Approach'. That document describes natural capital as:

*"Natural capital includes certain stocks of the elements of nature that have value to society, such as forests, fisheries, rivers, biodiversity, land and minerals. Natural capital includes both the living and non-living aspects of ecosystems.*

*Stocks of natural capital provide flows of environmental or 'ecosystem' services over time. These services, often in combination with other forms of capital (human, produced and social) produce a wide range of benefits.*

*These include use values that involve interaction with the resource and which can have a market value (minerals, timber, freshwater) or non-market value (such as outdoor recreation, landscape amenity).*

*They also include non-use values, such as the value people place on the existence of particular habitats or species."*

- 6.45 The guidance then goes on to consider natural capital and net gain and states:

*'As noted in section 1.7, biodiversity is a core component of natural capital on which a range of services typically depend'.*

*In a land use development context, the Biodiversity Metric enables measurement of biodiversity losses and gains from a development to support demonstration of biodiversity net gain.*

*Building on this approach, a natural capital net gain approach would measure a wider range of ecosystem service benefits in addition to biodiversity net gain'.*

6.46 I now consider the impact of the Appeal Scheme on the various aspects of the elements of natural capital which are set out above.

### **Forests**

6.47 The Appeal Site is in arable use and does not contain any forestry plantation. The Appeal Scheme will result in a net gain in tree cover but I acknowledge that this will be for landscape and biodiversity reasons as opposed to commercial forestry. It will nevertheless be a beneficial effect of the Appeal Scheme.

### **Fisheries and Rivers**

6.48 The section of Ferring Rife that passes through the Appeal Site, crosses private land, and is not available, nor suitable, for commercial or private fishing.

6.49 The Rife is an important component of the local landscape and has wildlife interest as well. Currently, the greater part of the land either side of the Rife is in active arable use.

6.50 With the Appeal Scheme in place, a broad swathe of informal open space will be provided alongside the Rife and this will enhance the value of the corridor of the Rife. A Landscape and Ecological Management Plan ('LEMP') will also be put in place to ensure that the corridor of the Rife is maintained in an appropriate manner in the long term. BNG will also be delivered as result of the Appeal Scheme.

### **Biodiversity**

6.51 As noted above, biodiversity is a core component of natural capital on which a range of services typically depend. The existing value of the land in question can be objectively measured using the Biodiversity Metric and similarly the predicted value can be evaluated in the metric. This exercise has been undertaken by the Appellant on the Appeal Site.

6.52 As a result of the findings of the BNG study It is agreed between the parties that the Appeal Scheme will deliver a net gain in biodiversity.

6.53 The planning proof of evidence of Mr Hutchison also explains that there is further potential for district wide net again at the Manor Farm site which is in the ownership of the applicant.

### **Land**

6.54 The site is currently actively farmed and that will no longer be the case with the Appeal Scheme in place. That is an inevitable consequence of developing greenfield sites but must be considered in the context of the BNG, landscaping, new public access etc as referenced above (and below).

### **It conserves and enhances the area as part of a cohesive green infrastructure network.**

6.55 The Site does not form part of a cohesive green infrastructure network. The land to the north of the Rife is separated from the open land within the South Downs by Littlehampton Road. To the south, east and west is predominantly urban development with no areas of open land linking to the Site. Goring Street and the south coast railway add a further layer of containment to the Site. It is also worth noting that the section of Ferring Rife that runs along the northern boundary of the Site is the only section of the Rife that passes through open land. To the west the Rife runs alongside the rear gardens of the properties that back onto it and to the east it skirts the edge of the urban area of Goring. With development on the Appeal Site in place an open wildlife corridor will be maintained and enhanced alongside the Rife and a Landscape and Ecology Management Plan will be put in place to ensure it is managed in an appropriate manner.

### **Identity of Settlements**

6.56 The character of residential development within the locality of the Site, in Goring and Ferring, is not dissimilar. It mainly comprises medium density housing from the postwar era which consists of a mix of bungalows and two storey houses which are configured in a suburban manner. There are also pockets of higher density apartments which are typically between three and four storeys high. The palette of building materials is similar in both settlements.

6.57 The Appeal Scheme will have vehicular access from Goring Street and this will not pass through the Site to link the two settlements in any event.

6.58 Given the above factors, I do not consider that the respective identities of the settlements of Goring and Ferring will be harmed with the Appeal Scheme in place.

## 7.0 CONCLUSION

- 7.1 The Site is not covered by any statutory or non-statutory landscape designations and is not considered to be a Valued Landscape for the purpose of Para 180a of the NPPF.
- 7.2 The Site is a single arable field that borders existing infrastructure and development on three of its four boundaries. The fourth boundary runs along the southern edge of Ferring Rife. There are overhead powerline crossing the Site and these are supported on lattice pylons. Collectively these features detract from the rural character of the Site. Ferring Rife is an important local feature and this will be retained in a more generous landscape corridor than exists at present.
- 7.3 Local Plan Policy SS4(f) mirrors para 182 of the NPPF in that it does not preclude development that falls within the setting of a National Park but requires it to be sensitively located and designed to avoid or minimise adverse impacts on the designated areas. For the reason set out in this evidence, the Appeal Scheme achieves this objective by bringing forward a development that responds to the Site and its wider landscape and townscape setting in an appropriate manner. The impact on the National Park will therefore be minimised.
- 7.4 In terms of the separation of Ferring and Goring, the two settlements coalesced some years ago and there is in any even no distinct difference in the character of the two settlements. The Appeal Site does however form a localised break, or an indentation, in the settlement boundaries. The break will not reduce in width but it will reduce in depth. When travelling from one settlement to the other on Littlehampton Road one will still experience a localised break or an indentation between Goring and Ferring. The separate identities of the two settlements will therefore not be compromised. The physical and visual separation of settlements will also not be undermined.







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