

Land north of Brede Lane, Sedlescombe

Landscape and Visual Appraisal
July 2024

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This document has been prepared and checked in accordance with ISO 9001:2015.

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Purpose of Report

This document sets out the preliminary findings and recommendations of the Landscape and Visual Appraisal ('LVA'), which has been undertaken for the promotion of a sustainable settlement extension to Sedlescombe (the 'Site').

The purpose of this document is to consider the ability of the Site and its context to accommodate the proposed residential uses; identify the potential landscape and visual effects arising from the Proposed Development; highlight opportunities to mitigate and avoid potential adverse effects; and bring forward local landscape enhancements where possible. The LVA will form the basis of subsequent Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment ('LVIA'), which will be submitted as part of any future planning applications.

This appraisal has been undertaken by LDA Design, appointed as landscape architects for Catesby Estates, who is promoting the Site on behalf of the landowners.

Supporting figures are included at the end of this report.

1.2 Site Location and Extent

1.2.1 Site Location and Boundaries

Figure 1 places the Site in its local context. The Site is located to the east of the village of Sedlescombe, along Brede Lane and adjacent to the built-up residential area of East View Terrace.

The Site's full extents are within the administrative area of Rother District of East Sussex.

The Site comprises the southern portion of a single arable field parcel encompassing approximately circa 2.8 hectares ('ha') which is generally well-defined by existing hedgerows and other vegetation. The Site boundaries are delineated as follows:

- The northern Site boundary is undefined, with the Site forming part of a larger field parcel that extends northwards and is contained by surrounding hedgerows and woodland.
- The eastern Site boundary is formed by an area of woodland (Park Shaw) and tributary of the River Brede.
- The southern Site boundary is defined by Brede Lane, beyond which lies the East View Terrace residential area.
- The western Site boundary is formed by an area of woodland.

1.2.2 Topography and Woodland

In general, the topography of the Site and its local surroundings is characterised by an undulating landform with a series of river valleys.

The Site is situated on land sloping broadly east-west, falling between the woodland to the west (at around 35m AOD) and tributary along the eastern Site boundary (at around 20m AOD).

The built-up residential area of East View Terrace (to the south) has a similar topography.

The local area is very well wooded, comprising a large proportion of Ancient Woodland. This includes Brede High Woods to the north-east of the Site – one of the Woodland Trust's largest sites.

1.2.3. Environmental Designations

Figure 1 shows key environmental designations. The Site – and the entire village of Sedlescombe – falls within the High Weald National Landscape.

Park Shaw woodland to the east of the Site is classified as Ancient Woodland.

A historic core of Sedlescombe – to the west of the Site – is designated as a Conservation Area (not shown on Figure 1) and contains a number of Listed Buildings.

There are no other known landscape, ecological or historic designations that are of relevance to the Site and its immediate context.

1.2.4. Access and Recreation

Figure 1 shows Public Rights of Way (PRoW). The Site itself is not publicly accessible.

Several PRoW lie within close proximity to the Site. PRoW SED/4/1 and PRoW SED/7/3 run to the north-west, between Sedlescombe and Hurst Lane; PRoW SED 2/3 runs to the immediate south of the East View Terrace residential area; and PRoW SED/31/1 runs further south, beyond the built-up residential area of East View Terrace.

The majority of the surrounding woodlands are publicly accessible, including Brede High Woods.

A review of local greenspace indicates there are numerous open spaces around Sedlescombe, including a 'village green' (within the core of the village) and village hall with associated grounds (to the north of the village).

The Site is well connected with the village core, with a pavement running along the length of Brede Lane between the village green and East View Terrace.

To west of the Site, along Brede Lane, is located the primary school, doctors' surgery, public house and convenience store – all with a circa 10 minute walk.

2.0 Landscape and Settlement Character

2.1.1. National Character Areas

At the national level, the Site falls within National Character Area (NCA) 122: High Weald. This is described as “... a mixture of fields, small woodlands and farmsteads connected by historic routeways, tracks and paths. Wildflower meadows are now rare but prominent medieval patterns of small pasture fields enclosed by thick hedgerows and shaws (narrow woodlands) remain fundamental to the character of the landscape.”

2.1.2. East Sussex County Landscape Assessment

At the county level, the Site falls within Landscape Character Area (LCA) 11: Brede Valley. This landscape comprises “... the broad valley of the River Brede with a flat valley floor enclosed by relatively steep slopes”. A key characteristic are the “...scattered areas of semi-natural ancient woodland on the valley slopes, many of which are ghyll woodlands”.

The Brede Valley is described as being largely free of roads and traffic, but four A roads cross the valley (A2100, A21, A28 and the A259), linked by B roads which traverse the ridges and connect the villages. Winding and narrow sunken country lanes are also characteristics.

The ‘landscape condition’ is described as follows:

“This is a largely unspoilt and tranquil rural landscape with few intrusive features. The landscape is in generally good condition and well managed as farmland with a strong historic structure. Orchards have declined and many disappeared so that associated Oast houses have been converted to residential uses. Agricultural change has led to some gentrification of the rural landscape and villages. As with most of the High Weald landscape the historic field patterns of small fields and significant hedgerows remain intact”.

Pressure for housing in the settlement of Sedlescombe is identified as a key force for change, and landscape strategy guidance for managing change includes:

- Planning for the for the creation of multifunctional green infrastructure to maximise the opportunities for biodiversity and recreation.
- Integrating proposed and existing development into the landscape through planting of tree features and woodland.
- Ensuring that the design and layout of new developments respect the character and form of the landscape and existing settlements.

2.1.3. Sedlescombe Conservation Area Appraisal

While the Site falls outside of the Conservation Area, this guidance document provides some information on settlement character.

It records that the basic structure of the village has remained largely unaltered until the 20th century when five estates were all built along Brede Lane - Park Shaw and Orchard Way; Streetlands; Gorselands, Orchard Way; East View Terrace; along with the new primary school. All of these developments extended Sedlescombe to the east and occurred to both the north and south of Brede Lane.

The Conservation Area Appraisal states that “...although the form of the village was certainly compromised by new housing estates in the 1950 and 60’s, taking a line south of The Brickwall Hotel, the essential character of the village remains”. It concludes that this limited expansion has taken place where it has relatively less impact i.e. to the east of the village.

2.1.4. High Weald National Landscape Management Plan

The High Weald National Landscape describes the core components of the High Weald’s natural beauty. These include:

“Natural systems (geology, soils, water and climate) – a deeply incised, ridged and faulted landform of clays and sandstone with highly variable, relatively undisturbed soils and numerous headwaters (gill streams) functioning under an oceanic climate.

Settlement – dispersed historic settlement including high densities of isolated farmsteads, hamlets and late-medieval villages founded on trade and non-agricultural rural industries.

Routeways – a dense network of historic routeways (now roads, tracks and paths).

Woodland – an abundance of ancient woodland mostly in small holdings, highly interconnected with hedges and shaws.

Fieldsapes and heath – small, irregular and productive fields, bound by hedgerows and woods, and typically used for livestock grazing; with distinctive zones of lowland heaths and inned river valleys (reclaimed marshland).

Dark night skies – intrinsically dark at night with our own galaxy (the Milky Way) visible.

Aesthetic and perceptual qualities – arising from the interaction of people with the landscape, including the notion of a quintessential English pastoral landscape, intimacy of scale, a sense of history and timelessness; rurality and tranquillity; glimpsed long views; freedom to explore and make connections with the natural world, and a rich legacy of features and ideas left by writers, poets and gardeners inspired by the landscape.

Land-based economy and rural living – with roots extending deep into history, and which has visibly and culturally shaped the landscape”

Housing growth within the High Weald is recognised as a key pressure on the landscape, and recommendations for managing development include:

- Pursuing landscape-led approaches to settlement planning and housing delivery.
- Ensuring developments reflect the existing settlement character in terms of siting, scale, layout and design.
- Minimising the impact of development on ancient woodland through increased noise / disturbance and creation of appropriate buffer zones.
- Recognising the ecological and landscape value of non-designated woodland and trees, and ensure development retains existing woodlands, trees and hedgerows.
- Ensuring developments avoids substantive alterations to landform, minimises use of impermeable surfaces and improves natural flood capacity.
- Ensuring development protects and enhances existing field patterns, including hedges, ditches or other boundary features.

2.1.5. Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment

The Rother District Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment (HELAA) considers the suitability of the Site for development. This concluded that the Site was unsuitable for development due to the harmful impact on landscape character and the rural setting of the village.

Furthermore, access and accessibility were considered to be constraints, the Site being some distance from services within the village and accessed via a narrow part of Brede Lane.

2.1.6. Potential Effects on Landscape and Settlement Character

It is acknowledged that, as a result of the Proposed Development, the existing land use and character of the Site would change from an open field to a new area of built development. However, it is anticipated that any large-scale effects on landscape character would be largely contained to the Site and its immediate surroundings.

Beyond the Site and its immediate context, the Proposed Development would be perceived as part of the existing settlement area, occupying a similar location, extent and topography as the East View Terrace residential area, and not extending any further eastwards or northwards than the existing settlement area. As described in relation to the Conservation Area Appraisal, the east of the village is judged to be an area where development has historically been incorporated where it has relatively less impact.

The existing surrounding woodland provides a definitive outer edge to the east of the village, containing development and limiting the sense of sprawl and encroachment into the wider countryside. There would also be no discernible change to the key characteristics of the wider landscape, with a distinctive pattern of isolated settlement, surrounded by mosaic of small fields, woodland and watercourses.

The proposed landscape strategy should seek to retain and enhance the existing field structure and hedgerows, trees and woodland surrounding the Site. This will ensure that characteristic features are preserved; the scheme is well-integrated into the wider landscape; and an attractive environment for new development is created.

The design of the development should also ensure that the Proposed Development has a positive relationship with the East View Terrace residential area, integrating with the existing settlement pattern and benefitting from connectivity along Brede Lane. However, care should be taken to retain the more informal character of Brede Lane and avoid any features that would overly urbanise this entrance to the village.

3.0 Views and Visual Context

3.1.1. Visual Context

A Preliminary Zone of Theoretical Visibility ('ZTV') study, based on potential emerging development parcels, has been undertaken to define the extent of theoretical visibility arising as a result of the Proposed Development.

Figure 2 presents the ZTV study and indicates the likely visibility ('Zone of Visual Influence / ZVI') of the Site / Proposed Development based on fieldwork undertaken in June 2024. This is summarised as follows:

- To the north / north-west, views of the Site / Proposed Development would be possible from within the larger field parcel, and short sections of PRoW SED/4/1 and PRoW SED/7/3.
- To the east, views of the Site / Proposed Development would be largely screened by Park Shaw woodland.
- To the south, there would be short range, open views of the Proposed Development from along Brede Lane to the south of the Site and in and around East View Terrace.
- Further south, from along footpath SED 2/3, views would be largely screened by intervening built form in and around East View Terrace.
- Further south, beyond footpath SED 2/3, views from along a short section of PRoW SED/31/1 would be possible but heavily filtered by intervening vegetation and built form.
- To the east, views of the Site / Proposed Development would be largely screened by woodland.

Overall, the visual envelope is very limited in extent and largely contained by surrounding woodland and buildings.

Key views are illustrated by the photos below (with the location of these viewpoints shown on **Figure 2**).



Viewpoint 1a: View of the Site from Brede Lane, close to the south-east corner of the Site



Viewpoint 1b: View of East View Terrace from Brede Lane, close to the south-east corner of the Site



Viewpoint 2: Views towards Site from PRow SED/4/1 to the north of the Site



Viewpoint 3: Views towards Site from PRow SED/31/1 to the south of the Site

3.1.2. Potential Effects on Views

Where views of the Proposed Development are possible from within the Sites immediate context, views would fundamentally change from open fields to a new area of development. However, based on the emerging layout, proposed landscape strategy, and visual containment provided by existing woodland and other vegetation, it is anticipated that any large-scale effects on views would be largely contained to the Site and its immediate surroundings, and effects would decrease with distance from the Site.

The scheme would be most visible from Brede Lane to the south and will be a new feature in view. However, it will be seen in the context of the existing settlement area of East View Terrace. There will also be no change to longer distance views, with views beyond the Site contained by woodland to the north, east and west.

The Proposed Development will also be visible from within the landscape to the north of the Site, and the proposed layout and associated landscape strategy should ensure that boundary planting is introduced to provide containment and screening.

Where views of the Proposed Development are possible within the wider landscape, it would be viewed in the context of the existing settlement of Sedlescombe; would be generally well-contained within the landscape by intervening vegetation; and would not be a highly visible or prominent feature in views.

4.0 Design Recommendations and Mitigation

Based on the findings of the LVA, the following mitigation measures / design principles should be incorporated into the scheme:

- Ensure the Proposed Development has a positive relationship with East View Terrace / Park Farm View with appropriate frontage and connections.
- Avoid any unnecessary changes or features along Brede Lane – such as lighting, signage etc – that would suburbanise this route.
- Careful consideration of building heights to ensure the Proposed Development is not a prominent feature in the landscape and generally sits below the height of the woodland to the west of the Site.
- Roads and buildings to follow the contours of the Site in order to minimise disruption to landform / soils, and broadly follow the arrangement and pattern of development at East View Terrace.
- Retain and enhance existing hedgerows and woodland boundaries to maintain field structure and integrate development into the landscape.
- Create new hedgerow and tree planting along northern Site boundary to define the edge of development and provide screening / containment.
- Provide appropriate buffers to the surrounding woodland to minimise disturbance and maintain their integrity.
- Explore opportunities to enhance connectivity along Brede Lane, further improving access to the village centre and associated services.
- Explore opportunities to create a northern link to the existing footpath network, further improving access to the countryside.
- Explore opportunities for any off-site enhancements or contributions that could benefit the biodiversity and accessibility value of nearby woodlands.





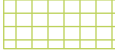





5.0 Conclusion

Overall, it is considered that the Proposed Development can be successfully accommodated within the landscape, and that appropriate mitigation and enhancement measures can be incorporated into the design of the scheme to address potential landscape and visual effects.

While it is acknowledged there would be a change to the landscape character of the Site itself and a change in views of the Proposed Development within the Sites local context, it is considered that the Proposed Development – assuming the above design recommendations are generally adhered to – would relate well to the existing settlement pattern; would be well-integrated into the landscape and existing built-up area of Sedlescombe through careful consideration of site layout, building heights and green infrastructure; and would not be a prominent feature in views.



LEGEND

-  Site Boundary
 -  Study Area (1km)
 -  National Landscape
 -  Woodland
 -  Ancient Woodland
- Listed Buildings - Grade:
-  I
 -  II*
 -  II
- Public Rights of Way (PRoW)
-  Footpath
 -  Bridleway

LDĀ DESIGN

PROJECT TITLE
LAND AT SEDLESCOMBE, EAST SUSSEX

DRAWING TITLE
Figure 1:
Site Location and Environmental Designations

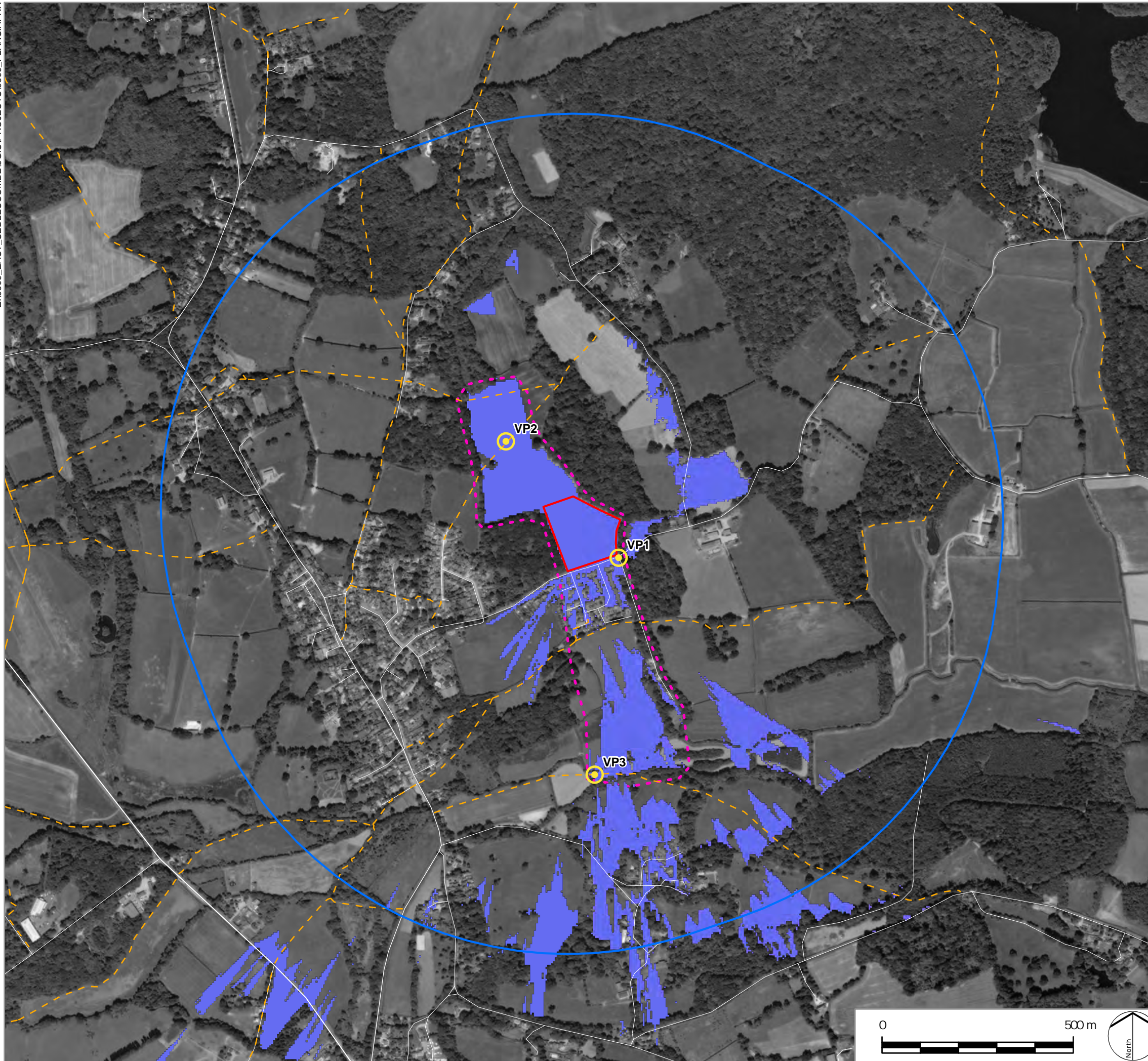
ISSUED BY	Oxford	T:	01865 887 050
DATE	Jul 2024	DRAWN	SMc
SCALE @A 3	1:10,000	CHECKED	PL
STATUS	Final	APPROVED	PL

DWG. NO. 9699_001

No dimensions are to be scaled from this drawing.
All dimensions are to be checked on site.
Area measurements for indicative purposes only.

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Sources: Ordnance Survey, Natural England, Historic England,
National Forest Inventory, DCLG



LEGEND

- Site Boundary
- Study Area (1km)
- Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) (computer generated) - based on building height of 2 storeys or 8.5m
- Zone of Visual Influence (ZVI)
- Photo Viewpoint Locations
- Public Rights of Way (PRoW)
- Footpath
- Bridleway

This drawing is based upon computer generated Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) studies produced using the viewshed routine in the ESRI ArcGIS Suite. The areas shown are the maximum theoretical visibility, taking into account topography, vegetation and buildings which have been included in the model with the heights obtained from a LiDAR digital surface model.

Due to its resolution, the surface model does not take into account every localised feature such as walls, small hedgerows or small trees and therefore only gives an impression of the extent of visibility.

The ZTV includes an adjustment that allows for Earth's curvature and light refraction. It is based on LiDAR terrain data with a 2m² resolution, resampled to 5m.

LDĀ DESIGN

PROJECT TITLE
LAND AT SEDLESCOMBE, EAST SUSSEX

DRAWING TITLE
Figure 2:
Preliminary Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) Study

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SCALE @A 3	1:10,000	CHECKED	PL
STATUS	Final	APPROVED	PL

DWG. NO. 9699_002

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Sources: Ordnance Survey, Environment Agency, East Sussex County Council

