

**PROPOSED NEW DEVELOPMENT OF 58 RESIDENTIAL DWELLINGS AND ASSOCIATED
INFRASTRUCTURE, AT LAND NORTH OF THE RISE, PARTRIDGE GREEN, WEST SUSSEX**

PROOF OF EVIDENCE OF

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on behalf of

Horsham District Council

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Qualifications and experience and methodology

1.1.1 I am Managing Director of Hankinson Duckett Associates (HDA), a landscape architectural, ecological and environmental planning practice. I have a BSc honours degree in Botany and a post graduate Diploma in Landscape Design. I am a chartered landscape architect, a member of the Landscape Institute and have been a landscape architect for over 25 years. HDA designs and implements landscape and masterplanning projects, carries out Environmental Impact Assessment and advises on environmental aspects of commercial, minerals, residential and recreational development for private and public bodies throughout Britain. HDA is a member of the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment.

1.1.2 HDA has considerable experience of working for public and private bodies and has carried out district-wide Landscape Character and Landscape Capacity Studies for district councils, advising on the appropriateness of sites for development across districts, including assessments of development within AONBs and sensitive landscapes. I have led the County-wide Landscape Character Assessment for Surrey County Council and Landscape Capacity Studies commissioned by, Chichester, Arun and Mid Sussex District Councils which form part of the evidence base for their Core Strategies. The latter studies reviewed the capacity of rural landscapes, including AONBs, across the district, to accommodate strategic levels of new residential development. Each study included a detailed assessment of landscape character as a basis for evaluating the capacity of the landscape to accommodate development.

1.1.3 I am familiar with the appeal site and its landscape setting; with the character of the local area; with the background of policy, guidance and consultation; and with the appeal proposals and their context.

1.1.4 The evidence which I have prepared and provide for this appeal, reference APP/Z3825/A/14/2219076/NWF, in this proof of evidence is true and has been prepared and is given in accordance with the guidance of my professional institution and I confirm that the opinions expressed are my true and professional opinions.

1.2 Background and scope of evidence

1.2.1 My company was retained by Horsham District Council in August 2014 on the instruction of Mr James Hutchison, interim Team Leader of Major Projects for the Council. My role has been to assess the landscape and visual impacts of the appeal proposals and consider Reason 1 of the Reasons for Refusal.

1.2.2 The application which is now the subject of this appeal was registered on 9th June 2014 and sought planning permission for 58 dwellings, with access off Littleworth Lane and included parking, garaging, informal open space and attenuation basins. The officer's report to committee (Development Management Committee South) 18th March 2014 recommended that permission be refused. Permission was refused and matters of adverse landscape impact were included in Reason for Refusal 1 which states that:

"The proposed development by reason of its illustrative/intended layout, siting, form, scale and height of the development, would have a harmful urbanising impact on the rural landscape and townscape character of the site surrounds and on the rural setting of Partridge Green, and is likely to result in poor design inappropriate to the landscape character of the area. The proposal would also result in perceived coalescence between Littleworth and Partridge Green. The development does not therefore meet the definition of sustainable development within the National Planning Policy Framework and the harm identified would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits of the proposal. The development would therefore be contrary to National Planning Policy Framework policies including Para 7 the environmental dimension, Para 17, and those requiring good design, in particular Para 64, as well as Horsham Local Development Framework (2007) Core Strategy (2007) policies CP1, and CP3 and policy DC2, DC3 and DC9 of the Horsham District Local Development Framework: General Development Control Policies (2007)."

1.2.3 The heritage aspects of the planning application were considered in detail at a later stage and a further report was submitted to committee. The following Reason for Refusal was approved:

"The proposed development, by reason of its close proximity, scale, elevated position and by bringing the settlement edge closer and thereby having an urbanising effect on the grade II listed farmstead buildings of Beauchamps, the Barn north of Beauchamps and Blanche's, would cause unacceptable harm to the heritage assets, and that this harm would not be outweighed by the public benefits resulting from the proposal, contrary to policy DC 13 the General Development Control Policies (2007), policies CP 1 and CP 3 of the Core Strategy (2007), and paragraph 134 of the National Planning Policy Framework."

1.2.4 Having reviewed the application and visited the site I believe that Reason for Refusal is valid and that there would be significant landscape and visual impacts arising from the appeal proposals.

1.2.5 The Council's case against this appeal is set out in the evidence of Mr James Hutchison of Horsham District Council and supported on matters of built heritage by Ms Eimear Murphy.

1.3 **Structure of evidence**

1.3.1 My evidence relates to the landscape and visual aspects of the appeal proposals. Specifically it addresses the likely impacts of the proposed development and associated landscape works on the appeal site, on the character and sensitivity of the rural setting to Partridge Green, and its impact on the gap between Littleworth and Partridge Green.

1.3.2 My evidence is structured to consider the issues as follows:

1. **Introduction;**
2. **Policy Context:** An appraisal of landscape aspects of planning policy against which the appeal proposals should be assessed.
3. **Landscape Context:** An appraisal of the existing the landscape character of the site and its immediate environs, site features and the context of the appeal site in relation to the setting of Partridge Green and settlement pattern of the village and the adjacent hamlet of Littleworth.
4. **Baseline Assessment:** An assessment of the landscape and visual sensitivity of the visual and landscape receptors likely to be affected by the appeal proposals.
5. **The proposed development:** A description of the relevant aspects of the appeal proposals.
6. **Landscape and visual assessment:** An assessment of the relevant aspects of the appeal proposals, in particular the impact of the proposed development on the setting to Partridge Green and Blanche's Farm and the potential impacts of the development on the gap between settlements.
7. **Review against policy:** A review the appeal proposals against landscape aspects of policy and guidance
8. **Conclusions:** A summary of my evidence.

2 LANDSCAPE POLICY CONTEXT

2.1 National Planning Policy Framework

2.1.1 In March 2012 the Government published the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which sets out its national planning policy for England, replacing many long standing Planning Policy Guidance Notes and Planning Policy Statements. Its overall thrust is to promote sustainable development. The NPPF is a material consideration in determining planning applications.

2.1.2 The NPPF states that there are three dimensions to sustainable development: *"economic, social and environmental"*. The environmental dimension is stated as *"contributing to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment: and, as part of this, helping to improve biodiversity, use natural resources prudently, minimise waste and pollution, and mitigate and adapt to climate change including moving to a low carbon economy"* (paragraph 7). Paragraph 8 makes it clear that *"these roles should not be undertaken in isolation, because they are mutually dependant"*.

2.1.3 Paragraph 14 of the NPPF states that there should be a general *"presumption in favour of sustainable development ... For decision-taking, this means*

- *approving development proposals that accord with the development plan without delay: and*
- *where the development plan is absent, silent or relevant policies are out-of-date, granting permission unless:*
- *any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole: or*
- *specific policies in this Framework [as explained in footnote 9] indicate development should be restricted"*.

2.1.4 The NPPF sets out the overarching roles that the planning system ought to play which are described in 12 principles that should underpin both plan-making and decision - taking (paragraph 17). Amongst these, the following are relevant to the landscape and visual assessment;

- *"always seek high quality design and a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings ...";*
- *"take account of the different roles and characters of different areas ... recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside"; and*
- *"contribute to conserving and enhancing the natural environment"*.

- 2.1.5 In section 7 the NPPF deals with good design. Paragraph 58 notes that development should:
- *“function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development”;*
 - *“establish a strong sense of place, using streetscapes and buildings to create attractive and comfortable places to live, work and visit”;*
 - *“...create and sustain an appropriate mix of uses (including incorporation of green and other public space as part of developments) ...”;*
 - *“respond to local character and history, and reflect the identity of local surroundings and materials, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation”;* and
 - *“be visually attractive as a result of good architecture and appropriate landscaping.”*
- 2.1.6 Paragraph 60 notes that it is proper *“to seek to promote or reinforce local distinctiveness”*.
- 2.1.7 Paragraph 61 states that *“Although visual appearance and the architecture of individual buildings are very important factors, securing high quality and inclusive design goes beyond aesthetic considerations. Therefore, planning policies and decisions should address the connections between people and places and the integration of new development into the natural built and historic environment.”*
- 2.1.8 Paragraph 64 states that *“permission should be refused for development of poor design that fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions.”*
- 2.1.9 In section 11, the NPPF deals with conserving and enhancing the natural environment noting at paragraph 109 that the planning system should contribute to, and enhance, the natural and local environment by *“protecting and enhancing valued landscapes”*.
- 2.1.10 Paragraph 113 requires that *“distinctions should be made between the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites so that protection is commensurate with their status and gives appropriate weight to their importance and the contribution that they make ...”*.
- 2.1.11 Paragraph 134 states that *“Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be*

weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including securing its optimum viable use.”

- 2.1.12 Under Annex 1: Implementation, paragraph 215 of the NPPF requires *“due weight should be given to relevant policies in existing plans according to their consistency with this framework.”*

2.2 National Planning Practice Guidance

- 2.2.1 The National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) published by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) was launched as a web-based resource on 6th March 2014. NPPG supports and informs the NPPF and replaces a number of earlier planning practice guidance documents and government circulars. The following sections and paragraphs of NPPG are of relevance to the landscape and visual assessment:

- 2.2.2 Reference ID: 26-007-20140306, paragraph 007 states that *“Planning should promote local character (including landscape setting)”*. In achieving this, NPPG states here that: *“When thinking about new development the site’s land form should be taken into account. Natural features and local heritage resources can help give shape to a development and integrate it into the wider area, reinforce and sustain local distinctiveness, reduce its impact on nature and contribute to a sense of place. Views into and out of larger sites should also be carefully considered from the start of the design process”*; and

“The opportunity for high quality hard and soft landscape design that helps to successfully integrate development into the wider environment should be carefully considered from the outset, to ensure it complements the architecture of the proposals and improves the overall quality of townscape or landscape. Good landscape design can help the natural surveillance of an area, creatively help differentiate public and private space and, where appropriate, enhance security.”

- 2.2.3 Reference ID: 26-009-20140306, paragraph 009 states that *“Planning should promote a network of green spaces (including parks) and public spaces”*. In this regard it states that:

“Development should promote public spaces and routes that are attractive, accessible, safe, uncluttered and work effectively for all users – including families, disabled people and elderly people. A system of open and green spaces that respect natural features and are easily accessible can be a valuable local resource and helps create successful places. A high quality landscape, including trees and semi-natural habitats where appropriate, makes an important contribution to the quality of an area.”, and

“The benefit of green spaces will be enhanced if they are integrated into a wider green network of walkway, cycleway, open spaces and natural and river corridors”.

2.3 Local Development Framework (LDF)

2.3.1 The Core Strategy of the LDF was adopted in 2007, and remains the main local policy document until it is revised to reflect changes to national planning policy and is adopted within the Horsham District Planning Framework.

2.3.2 Policy CP1 of the adopted Core Strategy states that:

“The Landscape Character of the District, including the settlement pattern, together with the townscape character of settlements will be enhanced. Activities which may influence character should only take place where:

a. The landscape and townscape character is protected, conserved or enhanced taking into account key landscape and settlement characteristics, including maintaining settlement separation...”

2.3.3 Policy CP3 ‘Improving the Quality of New Development’ states that:

“High Quality and inclusive design for all development in the District will be required in order to raise standards and gain community support as a beneficial addition to the local environment... ..In particular, development will be expected to:

a. Provide an attractive, functional, accessible, safe and adaptable environment;

b. Complement the varying character and heritage of the district, particularly as defined in the Village or Parish Design Statements...;

c. Contribute a sense of place both in the buildings and the spaces themselves and in the way they integrate with their surroundings and the historic landscape in which they sit.

e. Help secure a framework of high quality open spaces which meets the identified needs of the community.

2.3.4 Under Policy CP5 ‘Built-Up Areas and Previously Developed Land’, Partridge Green is listed as a Category 2 Settlement, *“a village with a limited level of services which should accommodate only small-scale development or minor extensions that address specific local needs”.*

2.3.5 The appeal site lies outside but at the edge of the Built-Up Area Boundary (BUAB) of Partridge Green, in the open countryside.

2.3.6 Policy CP15 'Rural Strategy' refers to sustainable rural economic development and notes that *"Appropriate development within the smaller towns and villages will be considered positively where it can be shown to support their role in acting as a focus for meeting rural community needs"*.

2.3.7 The policy goes on to note that:
"In the countryside, development which maintains the quality and character of the area whilst sustaining its varied and productive social and economic activity will be supported in principle. Any development should be appropriate to the countryside location and should: ...
c. result in substantial environmental improvement and reduce the impact on the countryside particularly where, exceptionally, new or replacement buildings are involved."
"Any development in accordance with this strategy should not harm the rural character of the area by virtue of the nature and level of activity involved and the type and amount of traffic generated (or by other effects such as noise and pollution)"

2.4 Horsham District General Development Control Policies Development Plan Document (2007)

2.4.1 This document sets out the development control policies against which planning applications are assessed.

2.4.2 Policy DC1 'Countryside Protection and Enhancement' places certain restrictions upon development in the countryside and states that:
"Outside built-up area boundaries, development will not be permitted unless it is considered essential to its countryside location and in addition meets one of the following criteria:
a. supports the needs of agriculture or forestry;
b. enables the extraction of minerals or the disposal of waste;
c. provides for quiet informal recreational use; or,
d. ensures the sustainable development of rural areas.
Any development permitted must be of a scale appropriate to its countryside location and must not lead, either individually or cumulatively, to a significant increase in the overall level of activity in the countryside".

2.4.3 Policy DC2 'Landscape Character' states that *"development will be permitted where it protects and/or conserves and/or enhances the key characteristics of the landscape character area in which it is located, including:*

- a. the development pattern of the area, its historical and ecological qualities, tranquillity and sensitivity to change;*
- b. the pattern of woodlands, fields, hedgerows, trees, waterbodies and other features; and,*
- c. the topography of the area".*

2.4.4 Policy DC3: Settlement Coalescence, states that; *"development will be permitted if it individually, or cumulatively does not result in the actual or perceived coalescence of settlements ,including through:*

- a. visual intrusion which reduces the openness and break between settlements; and,*
- b. a significant increase in activity which has an urbanising effect on the area."*

2.4.5 Policy DC6 'Woodland and Trees, states that:
"Felling of protected trees will only be permitted in exceptional circumstances, and, where unavoidable, replacement planting with suitable species will be required"

2.4.6 Policy DC9 'Development Principles' states that planning permission will be granted for developments that meet a number of design criteria, including:

- "a. make efficient use of land whilst respecting any constraints that exist;*
- b. do not cause unacceptable harm to the amenity of occupiers/users of nearby property and land, for example through overlooking or noise, whilst having regard to the sensitivities of surrounding development;*
- c. ensure that the scale, massing and appearance of the development is of a high standard of design and layout and, where relevant, relates sympathetically with the built surroundings, open spaces and routes within and adjoining the site, including any impact on the skyline and important views;*
- d. are locally distinctive in character, respect the character of the surrounding area (including its overall setting, townscape features, views and green corridors) and, where available and applicable, take account of the recommendations / policies of the relevant Design Statements and Character Assessments;*
- e. use high standards of building materials, finishes and landscaping; and includes the provision of street furniture and public art where appropriate;*
- f. presume in favour of the retention of existing important landscaping and natural features, for example trees, hedges, banks and watercourses. Development must relate sympathetically to the local landscape and justify and mitigate against any losses that may occur through the development; and,*

g. ensure buildings and spaces are orientated to gain maximum benefit from sunlight and passive solar energy, unless this conflicts with the character of the surrounding townscape, landscape or topography where it is of good quality.”

2.4.7 Policy DC13 ‘Listed Buildings’ is concerned with development affecting a Listed Building or its setting and states that:

“Development affecting a Listed Building or its setting will not be permitted unless the proposal:

- a. Has no adverse effect on the special architectural or historic character and appearance of the building or its setting;*
- b. Uses building materials, finishes and building techniques, including those for features such as walls, railings, gates and hard surfacing, that respect the Listed Building and its setting;*
- c. Incorporates landscaping, where appropriate, having regard to the character and appearance of the Listed Building;*
- d. Is of appropriate scale and design;*
- e. Results, where relevant, in the removal of unsympathetic features and the restoration or reinstatement of missing features; and*
- f. Would ensure the continued preservation and use of the building.”*

2.5 Facilitating Appropriate Development Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), May 2009

2.5.1 This SPD arose from *"the need to provide ‘flexibility’ to ensure that there is sufficient housing supply during the life of the existing adopted Core Strategy (2007)".* The SPD *"sets out the requirements against which those planning applications for development, put forward by landowners/ developers as a response to the evolving circumstances, on greenfield and brownfield sites which adjoin defined settlement boundaries in the District, will be considered".*

2.5.2 Chapter 3 of the SPD defines a number of criteria which have to be met in order for development on such sites to be considered acceptable, including;

- 1. The site boundary is contiguous (at least one boundary must physically adjoin in whole or part) with an identified Built-Up Area Boundary....*
- 6. The landscape and townscape character is protected, and conserved and/or enhanced.....*
- 9. The biodiversity of a site is protected, conserved and enhanced.....*
- 10. Existing natural features, such as woodland, trees and hedgerows, are retained wherever possible.....*

12....Sites where it is possible to walk to a wide range of facilities will be considered preferable to sites which are further away and make car journeys into town/ village centres more likely..... “

2.6 West Grinstead Neighbourhood Plan

2.6.1 West Grinstead Parish Council are preparing a Neighbourhood Plan which will include Partridge Green. The plan is currently at an early stage of its development.

3 LANDSCAPE CONTEXT

3.1 Introduction

3.1.1 The appeal site is situated on land adjacent to the northern edge of Partridge Green (HDA1). My assessment of the appeal proposals is based on the documents and plans submitted to Horsham District Council by the appellant and on my own landscape and visual assessment of the site and local landscape.

3.2 Desk Study

3.2.1 A preliminary desk-study was undertaken to establish the physical components of the local landscape. The desk-study utilized the baseline assessment work undertaken for the Landscape Character Assessment of Horsham (2003), the Horsham District Landscape Capacity Assessment (2014) and the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment SHLAA (2014). For more detailed assessment, Ordnance Survey (OS) maps were utilised to identify local features relating to topography, tree and hedgerow cover, existing settlement pattern, the rights of way network and any important extant historic features.

3.2.2 A desk-based topographical analysis was used to identify the extent to which the proposed development would be visible. The extent of likely visibility was identified, together with potential visual receptors (VRs), for verification by field survey. The VRs include places with public access within the visual envelope - public rights of way, key vantage points, roads, etc - together with residential properties and workplaces.

3.3 Field Survey

3.3.1 Survey and assessment of the appeal site and local area was carried out in August and September 2014 and involved walking the site and surrounding area in order to understand the appeal site and its immediate setting, including an assessment of the local topography, existing land uses and vegetation structure, settlement pattern and the setting to the villages of Partridge Green and Littleworth.

3.3.2 Intervisibility analysis (projective mapping) was used to verify and to evaluate the extent and nature of views from the key view points. The grounds of Blanche's and Beauchamps were visited but views from the buildings were not assessed as part of the study.

3.4 Local Landscape Context

3.4.1 An assessment of the wider area was used to verify the range and extent of landscape character areas and understand the wider context of the site and its relationship with the surrounding landscape and adjacent villages. The field survey also generated a photographic record.

Landscape Character

3.4.2 The National Countryside Character Initiative divides England into 159 'Character Areas'. The site at Partridge Green falls within the Low Weald National Character Area 121 with which its setting shares a number of characteristics. The Character Area description covers a large area, so the extent to which it is appropriate to this localised assessment is limited. The relevant 'key characteristics', and Statements of Environmental Opportunity for the character area, that are of particular relevance to the proposed scheme, are summarised at Appendix 1. More localised assessment has been carried out at the County level and guidelines for future development have been prepared.

3.4.3 The West Sussex Landscape Character Assessment 2003 (unpublished) and the West Sussex Land Management Guidelines which followed on from that assessment identified the appeal site as being within the Eastern Low Weald LW10 (Appendix 2).

3.4.4 The key landscape characteristics, issues and landscape and visual sensitivities of the Eastern Low Weald, as they relate to Partridge Green, Littleworth and the appeal site, are:

Character:

- Gently undulating low ridges and clay vales.
- Arable and pastoral rural landscape, a mosaic of small and larger fields, scattered woodlands, shaws and hedgerows with hedgerow trees.
- Quieter and more secluded, confined rural landscape to the west.
- Historic village of Cowfold and suburban village development of Partridge Green.
- Varied traditional rural buildings with diverse materials including timber framing, weather boarding and Horsham Stone roofing.
- Historic features include historic country houses and farmsteads.

Key Issues:

- Visual impact of new urban and rural development.
- Perceived increased traffic levels on small rural lanes with consequent demands for road improvements.

Landscape and Visual Sensitivities:

- High level of perceived naturalness and a rural quality in the quieter, rural landscape to the west.
- Woodland cover and the mosaic of shaws and hedgerows contribute strongly to the essence of the landscape.

3.4.5 Key landscape management guidelines, which are relevant to the appeal site and its context as an edge-of-settlement location are to:

- Maintain and restore the historic pattern and fabric of the agricultural landscape.
- Avoid skyline development and ensure that any new development has a minimum impact on views from the downs and is integrated within the landscape.
- Where appropriate, increase tree cover in and around villages, agricultural and other development.
- Protect the character of rural lanes.
- Minimise the effects of adverse incremental change by seeking new development of high quality that sits well within the landscape and reflects local distinctiveness.

3.4.6 The Horsham District Landscape Character Assessment (2003) identifies the appeal site as forming part of the Cowfold and Shermanbury Farmlands J3 (Appendix 3). The key characteristics set out echo the County-wide character assessment. The Planning and Land Management Guidelines which accompany the assessment for Area J3, which are relevant to the appeal site, are as follows:

- Conserve the rural undeveloped character. Any large scale housing and commercial development would be likely to damage character.
- Ensure any appropriate development responds to historic settlement patterns and local design and building materials.
- Secure landscape improvements to screen suburban edges of Partridge Green.
- Conserve and enhance the existing network of hedgerows and shaws.
- Maintain the pattern of small scale pastures.
- Encourage establishment of small woodlands.

3.4.7 The Horsham District Landscape Character Assessment also provides guidelines for the urban areas at both the general and local level. General Development and Land Use Change Guidelines (set out on Page 29). These state:

- *“Ensure that buildings and infrastructure are located to avoid loss of important on-site views, and off site views towards features such as church towers, fine buildings or wider landscapes, as well as avoiding intrusion on sensitive ridgelines, visually prominent slopes, and damage to settlement settings.*

- *Ensure the design of new developments reflects local distinctiveness and characteristics, for example in terms of settlement form, height, scale, plot shape and size, elevations, roofline and pitch, overall colour and texture and boundary treatment (walls, fences, hedges, gates).*
- *Ensure that development in rural areas retains a sense of identity and separateness between settlements”.*

Landscape Capacity

3.4.8 The Horsham District Landscape Capacity Study (April 2014, Appendix 4) was based on an assessment of the landscape character and visual sensitivity to development and landscape value. The study identified the resulting landscape capacity of parcels of land around Category 1 and 2 settlements.

3.4.9 The Study notes in its introduction that the assessment considers landscape capacity only and that the overall suitability of a site for development will depend on a range of other considerations including infrastructure and other environmental matters such as heritage and flood risk. The study also notes that the levels of landscape and visual sensitivity and capacity attributed are of necessity generalised statements across each area and provide a pointer to more detailed landscape and visual assessment to be addressed at a later stage.

3.4.10 The Study identified four character areas around Partridge Green, the appeal site falls within Area PG1 which includes all the fields adjacent to the settlement to the north and east of the village, between Church Road and the B2116. The specific commentary in relation to Area PG1, is as follows:

3.4.11 Landscape Character Sensitivity

- Gentle undulating landform;
- Small – medium scale irregular and regular field pattern;
- Existing settlement edge largely softened by tree belts hedgerows and copses;
- Attractive approach into the village along Littleworth Lane;
- Rural character with landscape in good condition due to intact hedgerow pattern.
- Assessment: **Moderate.**

3.4.12 Visual Sensitivity

- Enclosing tree belts and hedgerows;
- Visual sensitivity increases further north as the land rises and as considered from Littleworth Lane;

- Assessment: **Moderate**.

3.4.13 Landscape Value

- Some ecological interest of woodland species, hedgerows and watercourses;
- Moderate tranquillity due to lack of road noise except close to the B2116;
- Limited amenity value from one public footpath over the area.
- Assessment: **Low-Moderate**.

3.4.14 Landscape Capacity

- The area has some landscape features and qualities that are sensitive to housing development.
- Assessment: **Moderate** - for small scale housing development. (see Table 5 capacity matrix assessment of capacity).

3.4.15 The Study notes that: it would be very important to minimise any hedgerow loss, to avoid the impression of urban sprawl into the area and to relate any development closely to the existing settlement edge.

3.4.16 As to the extent of development within an area identified as having Moderate capacity the Study includes the following informative:

“the identification of an area as having a moderate or greater capacity should not be taken to mean that the whole area has the potential for development” (para 1.8).

The definition of Moderate Capacity (see Table 6)

“considers the area has an ability to accommodate development in some parts without unacceptable adverse landscape and visual impacts or compromising the values attached to it, taking into account any appropriate mitigation”.

Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) July 2014

3.4.17 The SHLAA, whilst not a landscape assessment, identifies opportunities for housing development which are considered deliverable, developable and available. The assessment of sites is, in part, based on a number of background documents, one of which is the Landscape Capacity Study. The appeal site sits within SHLAA site: SA274, Land north of the Rise, and forms a sub set of Area PG1 as identified in the Horsham Landscape Capacity Study.

3.4.18 The SHLAA site includes two fields (see appendix 5), the appeal site and the adjacent field to the east. It is identified as green field, with a site area of 4.2ha. The capacity of the site overall is assessed as 55 units.

3.4.19 The published assessments are a fair summary of the wider landscape context of the appeal site. In particular they identify the quiet rural character of the area and the high level of perceived naturalness, features which are recognised as being sensitive to the adverse effects of incremental development. Where land is identified as having capacity for development the assessments advise care in the location, scale and height of proposed development so as to ensure that the sense of identity and separateness of rural settlements is maintained and the setting to settlements is not adversely affected. My assessment of the local landscape in relation to the appeal site, its relationship with the settlement pattern of Partridge Green and Littleworth and the site specific characteristics are set out below.

Local topography and drainage

3.4.20 The appeal site lies to the north of Partridge Green within the gently undulating landscape of the Low Weald, levels vary locally between 10-30m AOD. The site is situated on the north facing slope of a shallow valley feature which crosses the site, falling from east to west across the northern edge of Partridge Green, towards the River Adur valley further west. The stream joins the River Adur south of Lloyds Farm, south-west of Partridge Green.

Landscape features, land uses and settlement pattern

3.4.21 The landscape local to the appeal site is characterised by small to medium-sized fields of mixed farmland, predominately fields in pasture, where field boundaries are defined by a well-developed network of hedgerows, with mature hedgerow trees, occasional copses and small woodlands. In the wider landscape, to the north of the appeal site, the undulating Wealdon landscape continues uninterrupted to Cowfold. To the south of the appeal site the River Adur valley becomes more clearly defined with the confluence of the two arms of the river to the south of Partridge Green. Fields to the east, adjacent to the village, are used as horse paddocks. West of Littleworth Lane the hedgerow network is more open with fewer mature hedgerow trees. There are mature woods and copses north of Staples Hill and around Jolesfield House.

3.4.22 Littleworth Lane defines the western boundary to the appeal site and is a narrow rural lane running north from Partridge Green to Littleworth. It is a single carriageway road with a footway to the north-bound carriageway. The lane is fronted by residential

properties and the primary school within the settlement of Partridge Green whereas to the north of the village there is more general containment provided by mature trees and hedgerows. The leafy containment of the lane, noticeable in summer, gives way to a more open aspect during the winter months with adjacent fields more open to view. The road is generally more open and less treed around Blanche's Farm and within Littleworth to the north.

3.4.23 The settlement pattern of Partridge Green is compact and centred on a low density historic core along the High Street (HDA2). However, the village is in large part dominated by more recent suburban development dating from the mid 1970's. Housing is comprised of a number of small estates, generally two storey, of detached and semi-detached properties. The exception to this general settlement pattern of is the bungalow development adjacent to the appeal site along The Rise, Middle Street and the northern half of Blanches Road. Densities of the housing across the village varies within a range of 15-24 dw/ha (see HDA3). The village has a population of approximately 2000.

3.4.24 North of Partridge Green and the appeal site there are a number of listed properties, (Beauchamps and The Barn are 17th Century and Blanche's 16th Century) which together with outhouses and associated cottages and more recent residential properties form Blanche's Farm (views 10 and 11). Blanche's Farm sits on the southern edge of Littleworth, a dispersed hamlet which follows Littleworth Lane and Mill Lane. The hamlet includes a number of listed buildings, Victorian semi-detached properties and a public house, together with more recent residential development set within large garden plots. It has a population of approximately 2-300.

3.4.25 To the west of Littleworth Lane there is a substantial gap between the settlements of Partridge Green and Littleworth which consists of two fields, one, to the south, which is similar in size and proportions to the appeal site and a second, larger rectilinear field, to the north, which fronts onto Littleworth Lane and Blanche's Farm. To the east of the lane the gap is much less extensive.

3.4.26 In terms of the settlement pattern, the gap between Littleworth and Partridge Green, to the east of Littleworth Lane, is largely taken up by the Blanche's Farm assemblage of residential properties and associated buildings. It is clear from the historical map record that the original farm developed within an open rural setting. That setting has been eroded over time by incremental development along Littleworth Lane. More recent development north of Blanche's at Littleworth House has diminished the sense of separation between the farm and Littleworth to the extent that from Littleworth Lane there

is a sense of continuous development south along the lane as far as Beauchamps. The appeal site and a small field, some 50-60m square, form the undeveloped gap between Beauchamps and Partridge Green.

3.5 Site Landscape

- 3.5.1 The appeal site is located on north facing slopes of between 11.5m and 17m AOD. The appeal site drains into a stream which forms the northern boundary of the site and flows in a westerly direction. The appeal site is semi improved grassland and with the exception of the fencing to the stables in the north-west corner of the site is not subdivided by internal boundary features.
- 3.5.2 The site boundaries are formed by hedgerows with hedgerow trees, garden hedges, fences and trees. The western boundary, which abuts Littleworth Lane, consists of a largely continuous hedgerow of hawthorn, rose and bramble, with occasional ash and hazel. The hedgerow is between 2-4m in height and varies in density and thickness depending on the proximity of the canopy of over sailing mature oak trees. There is a 3m gap in the western boundary hedgerow towards the northern end of the site which provides the gated site entrance onto Littleworth Lane.
- 3.5.3 The southern boundary is a boundary in common with the rear garden boundary of properties on The Rise, defined by a combination of garden fences, extensive bramble and occasional hazel stools and mature oak standards. The boundary vegetation is sparse in places allowing open views between the appeal site and adjacent properties. Vegetation is more continuous and generally thicker in the corners of the appeal site (views 6 and 7).
- 3.5.4 The eastern boundary consists of blackthorn and hawthorn with bramble and elder to a height of 3-5m (view 5). The hedgerow is gappy and outgrown and includes a number of mature oak standards and occasional holly. A steel field gate in the north-east corner leads into the adjacent field. The northern boundary is vegetated on either side of the stream which forms the appeal site boundary (view 4). The hedgerow includes hawthorn, blackthorn and willow and a number of mature and semi-mature ash and oak standards. Gaps in the hedge line have been patched with sheets of corrugated iron on the adjacent land which lies within the curtilage of Blanche's.
- 3.5.5 Given the general condition and contribution the boundary hedgerows make to the landscape character of the area I have assessed their sensitivity to development as **High**.

3.5.6 There are no landscape features within the appeal site, however there are a number of stables and barn structures in various states of repair in the north-west corner of the appeal site. There is no public access to the appeal site, although properties on The Rise to the south of the appeal site are in close proximity to the site and have open views across the appeal site and land to the north.

4 ASSESSMENT OF BASELINE CONDITIONS

4.1 Visual Assessment

- 4.1.1 My baseline landscape assessment of the appeal site has identified that the local landscape is largely a small to medium scale landscape which has a well-developed hedgerow structure and a number of small copses and woodlands which contain long distance and extensive views across the landscape.
- 4.1.2 The visual envelope of the appeal site is largely defined by the hedgerow and hedgerow trees that bound the site. My assessment has been limited to the summer months although a limited number of winter photographs taken by the Case officer have been used to enable a limited assessment of winter conditions. The DHA visual assessment was carried out at the beginning of May 2013 with trees 'in early leaf'.
- 4.1.3 The appeal site is generally well contained by the mature boundary hedgerows and the wider hedgerow network. There are however a limited number of views of the appeal site from Littleworth Lane, residential properties on The Rise and the surrounding footpath network.
- 4.1.4 Views from Littleworth Lane, during the summer months are limited to views from the existing site entrance (view 8) and glimpses through the boundary vegetation (Views 2 and 3). Winter photos provided by the case officer and the commentary provided in the DHA assessment identify that there are more open views in which the appeal site can be clearly seen. There are also views across the appeal site from Littleworth Lane to the north of the primary school (view 15) and glimpses through the vegetation on the northern boundary adjacent to Beauchamps (view 10). The lane provides an attractive and rural entrance to the village for pedestrians and motorists (view1), I have assessed its visual sensitivity of the lane from a pedestrian and motorists viewpoint as **High** and **Medium** respectively.
- 4.1.5 Viewed from Reeds Lane, PRoW 1774 (views 12 and 16) there are partial and glimpsed views of the appeal site at a distance of approximately 130m. These include views of the mature oak trees and properties on the southern boundary of the site, the site itself and the northern boundary vegetation. The DHA assessment identifies filtered views, in winter, through the boundary vegetation which are likely to be more extensive. As a rural public footpath I have assessed the sensitivity of views from the footpath as **High**.

4.1.6 The DHA winter assessment also identifies further occasional glimpses of the site from PRoW 1761 and 1840 in which the roof line of The Rise can be seen. The public footpaths would have a **High** sensitivity.

4.1.7 There are open views of the appeal site from properties on the Rise, although the intervening garages screen views from the road itself. Views from the bungalows are from the gardens and rear elevations, at ground and from first floor dormers (view 6 reverse view). Views from Blanche's and Beauchamps and their curtilages are largely screened in the summer months. There is no winter assessment of the views from the listed buildings in the DHA visual assessment, however, the owners of the properties have indicated that there are views across the appeal site to the bungalows on the Rise in the winter months. Views from these listed buildings are assessed as having a **High** sensitivity to development.

4.2 LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT

Partridge Green to Littleworth Gap

4.2.1 The gap between settlements, in so far as it relates to the appeal site, extends north from the edge of Partridge Green, at The Rise, to Beauchamps and Blanche's, which form the southern extent of development south of Littleworth. There is no Built Up Area Boundary to Littleworth but as I identified in para 3.4.26 there is no clear and discernible break in the low density development south of Littleworth until Beauchamps. The gap between settlements, east of Littleworth Lane is therefore, in my opinion, limited to the appeal site and the small field between the site and Beauchamps. To the east of Beauchamps the gap as it relates to Blanche's is more limited, as the pond and grounds extend south to the appeal site boundary.

4.2.2 In my visual assessment, I have identified the relatively small visual envelope of the appeal site. The extent and character of the gap is experienced by house holders on The Rise, Beauchamps and Blanche's (in winter months) and by walkers using Littleworth Road and Reeds Lane. Drivers using Littleworth Lane will also experience the gap between settlements.

4.2.3 The extent of gap between the settlements in this area is currently no more than 180m and is a significantly narrower gap than exists to the west of Littleworth Lane which is of the order of 400m. In terms of the potential for the perceived coalescence of settlements, the gap to the east of the lane is highly susceptible to development pressures.

- 4.2.4 Gap, or the perception of gap, is not only a matter of intervisibility between settlements, but of impression and sensitivity. The appeal site clearly contributes to the pastoral landscape character of the area, both to the setting to Partridge Green and as part of the rural landscape.
- 4.2.5 In terms of the sensitivity of the landscape between the settlements and the perception of the gap, the sensitivity analysis in the Landscape Capacity Assessment identified a Moderate level of landscape sensitivity for land parcel PG1 (which equates to the full extent of land north of Partridge Green). In considering this wider area, the Study identified the need to avoid the impression of urban sprawl and to relate any development closely to the existing settlement edge. For the majority of Area PG1 separation between settlements is not a major consideration, however for the appeal site which sits within a gap of no more than 180m the issue of separation is significant and increases the sensitivity of that parcel of land.
- 4.2.6 I assess the sensitivity of the gap between settlements which includes the appeal site and the adjacent section of Littleworth Lane to be **High**. My assessment is based on the limited extent of undeveloped land between Partridge Green and Littleworth and the rural character of the landscape which forms part of a characteristic pattern of landscape north of the village and the setting to Blanche's Farm.

Setting to Partridge Green

- 4.2.7 The views from Littleworth Lane and footpaths 1774, Reeds Lane and 1840, illustrate the generally contained nature of the landscape north of Partridge Green and the substantially rural character of the fields (including the appeal site) that lie immediately adjacent to the village. The urban edge is for the most part defined and contained by woodland, tree lines and hedgerows. The influence of built development on the setting to village from the north, in summer, is very limited, with the possible exception of the housing on Staples Hill, which is more open to view from footpath 1840. The eastern boundary of Staples Hill has a more open aspect where housing is seen through the new planting. Littleworth Lane is an attractive and leafy approach to the village, unaffected by residential development and cited in the Horsham Capacity Study as a notable landscape characteristic of the area.
- 4.2.8 The character to the northern edge of the village and the approach along Littleworth Lane is less contained in the winter months, with few evergreen shrub or tree species within the road side hedges. As a consequence the pastoral fields which slope up to the current edge of the village are more open to view and form a more significant part of the

approach to, and setting of, the village. I consider the setting to Partridge Green, as viewed from Littleworth Lane, to have a **High** sensitivity to development.

- 4.2.9 The setting to Littleworth, given its dispersed and open settlement pattern, is less distinct. However, the properties which abut the appeal site are listed buildings and both Beauchamps and Blanche's currently enjoy a rural setting that is in part provided for by the appeal site. From a landscape and visual perspective the contribution that the appeal site makes to that setting is to some extent seasonal and dependant on the extent of screening offered by the boundary vegetation in the winter months. Development in close proximity to the appeal site boundary is likely to be seen from the properties in winter months and would have an effect on the rurality of the wider setting to the buildings. I consider the sensitivity of the landscape setting of the listed buildings to be **Medium**. The setting to the listed buildings, from an historical and heritage perspective, are considered in the evidence of Ms E Murphy.

Perceptual/Experiential Landscape

- 4.2.10 The appeal site forms part of the small to medium scale agricultural landscape of the Low Weald north of Partridge Green. Travelling south along Littleworth Lane the appeal site landscape forms part of the setting to Partridge Green and the site together with the rural character of Littleworth Lane form an attractive and rural entrance to Partridge Green. The site is bounded by a generally intact hedgerow framework and mature trees which is typical of the wider landscape. In this context I assess the landscape value of the appeal site and its landscape features as **Medium to High**.

5 THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

5.1 Description of the proposals

5.1.1 The illustrative proposals are set out in the Design and Access Statement and the Site Layout drawing 10475-OA-03B which has been subsequently submitted as part of the post application discussions. The plan was modified to demonstrate how the site could accommodate 58 dwellings. The proposed development would provide residential units comprising a mix of 2 to 5 bedroom properties, a new vehicular access from the Littleworth Lane, and landscape and drainage works. Private rear gardens and front gardens would be provided for the houses, with shared amenity and play space within the development.

5.1.2 The landscape proposals set out on the DAS Landscape Strategy are illustrative, however the Landscape and Visual Statement accompanying the application bases its recommendations upon the layout and landscape strategy.

6 LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL APPRAISAL OF THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

6.1 Introduction

6.1.1 The methodology for assessing landscape and visual impacts is set out in my Appendix 6. I have based my assessment on the landscape proposals drawing and the Design and Access Statement and I refer to the DHA Landscape and Visual Statement although there is no impact assessment included within the statement on the effects of the proposed development.

6.2 Landscape Character Appraisal of the appeal proposals at occupation Partridge Green to Littleworth Gap

6.2.1 My assessment of the sensitivity of the landscape within the Gap to future development was **High**. That assessment was based on (i) the limited extent of undeveloped land, east of Littleworth Lane between Partridge Green and Littleworth, and (ii) the rural character of the landscape which forms part of a characteristic pattern of landscape north of the village. With regard to point (i), Plan HDA 4 illustrates the proposed development and its relationship with Partridge Green and Littleworth. The plan clearly illustrates the substantial reduction in the gap and the perceived coalescence of the settlements.

6.2.2 In considering the potential impacts on the gap, in relation to point (ii), I have noted the conclusions of the Horsham District landscape capacity study. The Study identified the need to relate any development closely to the existing settlement edge and to avoid the impression of urban sprawl. The proposed development would be visible from the site entrance and through the hedge on Littleworth Lane, particularly in winter months. The proposals do not indicate any substantial planting along the western boundary to enhance the hedgerow and I would anticipate that there would continue to be views of the housing through sections of the hedge and site entrance. There would be a sense of urban sprawl and loss of the openness between Blanche's Farm and Partridge Green, with a loss of separate identity for Littleworth.

6.2.3 In terms of the landscape character and the perception of the gap, the appeal site currently contributes significantly to the rural and undeveloped character of the area, both in respect of the immediate setting to Partridge Green and the rural setting to Blanche's Farm. There is throughout the year a clear and distinct boundary between the urban landscapes of The Rise and Partridge Green and the rural landscape of the gap between Partridge Green and Littleworth. The urban influence of existing residential development on the gap is minimal.

6.2.4 The appeal proposals would materially impact on the rurality of the gap. New development would be extensive, leaving a single small field and the site boundary trees and hedgerow between Beauchamps and the proposed new edge to Partridge Green. The remaining field would be inadequate in terms of providing a meaningful gap between settlements. There would be perceived coalescence with a sense of continuous development that would extend from Partridge Green through Blanche's Farm to Littleworth. The proposed development whilst adjacent to the northern edge of Partridge Green would extend too far to the north such that there would be a substantial loss of rural character.

6.2.5 For the impact of the appeal proposals on the gap, I have assessed that the magnitude of change would be **High** and the significance of effect would be **Substantial Adverse**.

Setting to Partridge Green

6.2.6 Currently, the influence of built development on the approaches to Partridge Green from the north is minimal. Residential development on the Rise is low density and generally integrated with, and well screened by, trees and hedgerows along Littleworth Lane.

6.2.7 The appeal proposals would extend development north towards Littleworth to the extent that there would be little undeveloped land between Beauchamps and the new urban edge of Partridge Green. Whilst the boundary hedgerow to Littleworth Lane would in large part be retained there would still be sufficient visibility of the proposals for pedestrians and car users to be aware of built development to the east of the lane. The largely rural and undeveloped character and appearance of the landscape to the east of the lane would be significantly eroded and the rural character of the setting to the village diminished. I assess the magnitude of effect **Medium** and a significance of effect of **Moderate Adverse**.

Landscape Setting to Littleworth and the Listed Buildings

6.2.8 The Blanche's Farm group of listed buildings was as illustrated on the historic records map located in a rural setting between Littleworth and Partridge Green; to the south of Beauchamp's and Blanche's that rural setting remains. The appeal proposals lie adjacent to the grounds of Blanches and 50-60m south of Beauchamps. New development is proposed within 10-18m of the site boundary with no significant additional boundary planting proposed. Two storey development in close proximity to Blanche's Farm would have a detrimental effect on the setting to the listed buildings with the loss, or substantial reduction of, the rural setting with the likelihood of intervisibility with the development in the winter months. I have assessed the magnitude of effect as **Medium** in winter and

Low in summer and with a significance of impact of **Moderate/Minor** and **Minor Adverse** respectively.

6.3 Landscape Features/Resources

6.3.1 The scheme, as illustrated in the DAS, would require a visibility splay at the proposed site entrance of 94m x 2.4m. This would necessitate the removal of the hedgerow along the appeal site frontage to Littleworth Lane Road, of approximately 18m. The magnitude of effect would be **Low** and the significance of the effect **Minor Adverse**.

6.3.2 The proposals would also require the removal of 9 C class trees. The magnitude of effect on the tree stock would be **Low** and the significance of the landscape effect **Minor Adverse**. However the extent of removal of self-seeded ash, undergrowth and peripheral trees in the north-western corner of the site, some north of the stream, would indicate that there would be a more open aspect to Beauchamps and Littleworth Lane. A substantial ash tree circa. 20m high (T48) recommended for removal or heavy reduction appears to have been missed from the tree removal plan and its loss would add to the reduction in screening of the proposed development (see extract of tree protection plan Appendix 7).

6.3.3 The proposals would lead to the permanent loss of 2.0ha of agricultural land which would be an effect of **Moderate Adverse** significance.

6.4 Visual appraisal of the appeal proposals at occupation

6.4.1 I have identified in section 4 above the extent of views into the site. There are views of the appeal site from the Littleworth Lane, from overlooking properties and from the Reeds Lane.

Views from the west

6.4.2 Viewed from the west, the appeal proposals would be most apparent from the Littleworth Lane. At construction views of the appeal site from the road would include views from the new site entrance and the existing field gate. Photomontage 1 illustrates the extent of views of the development in summer from the new entrance. It would be expected that the extent of view would be greater in winter months with more of the development being viewed as partial views or glimpses through the boundary hedgerow. The undeveloped and essentially rural character of the existing view to the east of Littleworth Lane would be replaced with views into a new housing estate.

6.4.3 The magnitude of effects on views from Littleworth Lane for pedestrians and car users would be **Medium** and the significance of effect **Moderate/Moderate-Minor Adverse**.

Views from the south

- 6.4.4 12 properties on the north side of The Rise have rear gardens facing the appeal site and various types of boundary vegetation filter ground-floor views into the site. There are more open views across the appeal site from first floor windows. Construction work and the completed scheme would be visible from a number of principal rooms and first-floor windows. Building work would be within 25-35m of the rear elevations of these properties. The magnitude of effects on views from The Rise would be **Medium** and the significance of effect **Moderate Adverse**.

Views from the north

- 6.4.5 There are partial views and glimpses of the appeal site from Reeds Lane. The construction work and final development would be visible from the footpath/bridleway. Residential development on The Rise currently forms a minor part of the view and has little impact on the rurality of that view. The proposed development would form a more dominant feature in these views (see photomontage 2) changing the character and appearance of the appeal site and bringing built development much closer to Littleworth and Blanche's Farm. The extent of the views of development would be greater in the winter months. At completion, the magnitude of effects on views from Reeds Lane would be **Medium Adverse** in winter reducing to **Low** in summer and the significance of effect **Moderate to Minor Adverse** respectively.

- 6.4.6 The listed buildings south of the appeal site are in close proximity to the site, the illustrative layout indicates a standoff of approximately 86m from the southern elevation of Beauchamps to the nearest new property and 125m from Blanche's. The curtilage of the properties is 62m and 15m respectively from the nearest proposed property. In the summer months there may be glimpses from the garden of Beauchamps, given the level of vegetation clearance proposed, and partial views from Blanche's. Winter views are likely to be more extensive. At completion, the magnitude of effects is likely to be **Low** for Beauchamps and Blanche's, in summer, increasing to **Medium** in winter. The significance of effect would therefore be **Minor Adverse** in summer and **Moderate Adverse** in winter.

- 6.4.7 My assessment of the visual impacts of the appeal proposals on the visual receptors around the site identifies that there are a number of moderately significant visual impacts during construction and at occupation of the scheme in the winter months. The development would adversely affect the character and appearance of the appeal site from a number of public and private viewpoints, more especially in the winter months.

6.5 Edge of Settlement and design response

- 6.5.1 The Local Authority has identified through the Landscape Capacity Study and more recently through the SHLAA that the land north of the Rise can accommodate some small scale development. The SHLAA identified a site of two fields, which includes the appeal site, which together could accommodate up to 55 dwellings.
- 6.5.2 My assessment of the appeal proposals has identified a number of areas of concern where the extent of development has, in my opinion (and that of MS Murphy) compromised the wider rural setting to the listed buildings and failed to maintain the essential gap and setting to Partridge Green and Littleworth. Whilst the scheme is in outline and the masterplan illustrative the landscape strategy relies in large part on the existing boundary vegetation for its landscape structure and the screening of views of the development. The disposition of housing across the appeal site, as illustrated on the layout plan, leaves no meaningful gap between Partridge Green and Littleworth and little space for a landscape buffer to the listed buildings or Littleworth Lane.
- 6.5.3 Given the need to respond to local rural character and the setting and separate identity of settlements, as expressed in the NPPF, the Local Plan Policy and the landscape management guidelines, a more generous and considered landscape treatment to the northern and western edges of the development should have been proposed. Such an approach, for more substantial landscape proposals, would not be possible without significantly increasing the density of the scheme. The current appeal proposal has a density of 28 dw/ha which is in excess of the general density of housing in Partridge Green (see plan HDA3). A further increase in density would be out of character for the village and inappropriate on the edge of the settlement.
- 6.5.4 The SHLAA capacity assessment envisaged the development of part of the two fields identified as suitable for housing. Development of the SHLAA site, as a whole, would allow for the space to properly address the constraints of the site and provide a scheme which fully addresses the gap and village edge location with appropriate mitigation.
- 6.5.5 Without addressing the above issues, the appeal proposals do not form an appropriate extension to the village and would have an adverse impact on the setting to the village and listed buildings and the gap between settlements.

7 LANDSCAPE POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

7.1 National Planning Policy Framework

7.1.1 The NPPF sets out the overarching roles that the planning system ought to play which are described in 12 principles that should underpin decision - taking (paragraph 17). Amongst these, the following are relevant to the landscape and visual assessment;

- *“always seek high quality design and a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings ...”*;
- *“take account of the different roles and characters of different areas ... recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside”*; and
- *“contribute to conserving and enhancing the natural environment”*.

7.1.2 I do not consider that the appeal proposals adequately address the different roles and character of the landscape between Littleworth and Partridge Green. In particular, the role of separation between settlements and setting to settlement and listed buildings has not been addressed in the general arrangement of the housing proposal.

7.1.3 It will be recalled that paragraph 61 of the NPPF requires planning policies and decisions to;

“address the connections between people and places and the integration of new development into the natural, built and historic environment”.

I do not consider that the appeal proposals adequately address the local landscape setting to Partridge Green and they do not properly integrate the proposals with the village edge or address the rural setting to the listed buildings. As a result I have identified Moderate and Substantial adverse impacts on both landscape character and visual amenity.

7.1.4 Para 64: “Permission should be refused for development of poor design that fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions. The appeal proposals fail to address the existing character and outlook of the approach to Partridge Green and the function of the appeal site as part of the gap between settlements. In terms of the spacial layout of the appeal proposals there is little reinforcement of the existing landscape structure and a lack of a landscape buffer to the listed buildings or Littleworth Lane. The function of separation of settlements has not been addressed.

7.2 Local Plan Policy

7.2.1 Policy CP1 of the adopted Core Strategy states that:

“The Landscape Character of the District, including the settlement pattern, together with the townscape character of settlements will be enhanced. Activities which may influence character should only take place where:

a. The landscape and townscape character is protected, conserved or enhanced taking into account key landscape and settlement characteristics, including maintaining settlement separation...”

7.2.2 I have assessed the setting and settlement pattern of Partridge Green and Littleworth and have identified a high degree of sensitivity of the rural gap between the two settlements. The appeal proposals would result in a substantial adverse landscape impact on that rural gap and a moderate adverse impact on the setting to the Partridge Green. The appeal proposals do not therefore comply with Policy CP1.

7.2.3 Policy CP3 ‘Improving the Quality of New Development’ states that:

“High Quality and inclusive design for all development in the District will be required in order to raise standards and gain community support as a beneficial addition to the local environment... ..In particular, development will be expected to:

c. Contribute a sense of place both in the buildings and the spaces themselves and in the way they integrate with their surroundings and the historic landscape in which they sit.”

7.2.4 My assessment of the potential impact on the landscape setting to the listed buildings at Blanche’s Farm has identified a number of visual and landscape adverse impacts of moderate significance. These impacts relate to the rural setting and visual amenity of the properties and the curtilage of the listed buildings. The appeal proposals do not contribute to the sense of place with regard to Beauchamps or Blanche’s and are not beneficial to their setting. As such the proposals do not accord with Policy CP3.

7.2.5 Horsham District General Development Control Policies. Development control policies, with regard to matters of landscape and visual amenity, against which planning applications are assessed are as follows;

7.2.6 Policy DC2 ‘Landscape Character’ states that *“development will be permitted where it protects and/or conserves and/or enhances the key characteristics of the landscape character area in which it is located, including:*

- a. the development pattern of the area, its historical and ecological qualities, tranquillity and sensitivity to change;*
- b. the pattern of woodlands, fields, hedgerows, trees, waterbodies and other features; and,*
- c. the topography of the area".*

7.2.7 I do not consider the appeal proposals meet this policy for the reasons set out on para 8.2.4 above.

7.2.8 Policy DC3: Settlement Coalescence, states that; *"development will be permitted if it individually, or cumulatively does not result in the actual or perceived coalescence of settlements, including through:*

- a. visual intrusion which reduces the openness and break between settlements; and,*
- b. a significant increase in activity which has an urbanising effect on the area.*

7.2.9 My assessment of the gap between Littleworth and Partridge Green is set out at paras 4.2.1- 4.2.6 and identifies Significant Adverse effects on the landscape. There would be visual intrusion, most notably in winter, in the break between settlements which would reduce the sense of openness between settlements. Additionally the extent of the development and the attendant activity would have an urbanising effect on the area. In both respects the appeal proposals do not comply with policy.

7.2.10 Policy DC9 'Development Principles' states that planning permission will be granted for developments that meet a number of design criteria, including:

- "a. make efficient use of land whilst respecting any constraints that exist;*
- c. ensure that the scale, massing and appearance of the development is of a high standard of design and layout and, where relevant, relates sympathetically with the built surroundings, open spaces and routes within and adjoining the site, including any impact on the skyline and important views;*
- d. are locally distinctive in character, respect the character of the surrounding area (including its overall setting, townscape features, views and green corridors) and, where available and applicable, take account of the recommendations / policies of the relevant Design Statements and Character Assessments;*
- e. use high standards of building materials, finishes and landscaping; and includes the provision of street furniture and public art where appropriate;*
- f. presume in favour of the retention of existing important landscaping and natural features, for example trees, hedges, banks and watercourses. Development must relate*

sympathetically to the local landscape and justify and mitigate against any losses that may occur through the development;

- 7.2.11 My assessment of the appeal proposals identifies that the proposals fail to take account of the setting to, and separation of the two settlements with the result that the proposed development would have significant adverse impacts on the local landscape.

8 CONCLUSIONS

- 8.1 The appeal site forms part of the small to medium scale mixed farmland, predominantly fields in pasture on the Lower Weald, north of Partridge Green. It forms a narrow gap of land which provides the well-defined and rural separation between Partridge Green and Littleworth. The appeal site landscape forms part of the setting to Partridge Green and the site together with the rural character of Littleworth Lane form an attractive approach to the village.
- 8.2 The sense of openness and separation between Partridge Green and Littleworth, is with the exception of a small field adjacent to Beauchamps, provided exclusively by the appeal site. The extent of gap between the settlements in this area is currently no more than 180m. I assess the sensitivity of the gap between settlements, to the east of Littleworth Lane, which includes the appeal site to be **High**. My assessment is based on the limited extent of undeveloped land between Partridge Green and Littleworth and the rural character of the landscape which forms part of a characteristic pattern of landscape north of the village and the setting to Blanche's Farm.
- 8.3 In terms of the landscape character and the perception of the gap, the field within which the appeal site lies contributes to the rural and undeveloped character of the area. There is currently a clear and distinct boundary to Partridge Green and the rural landscape of the gap between the village and Littleworth.
- 8.4 The appeal proposals would substantially impact on the sense of gap and the clear distinction between the two settlements. The loss of gap would result in a sense of urban sprawl and the separate identity of Littleworth would be diminished. The much reduced gap would be inadequate in terms of separating the settlements. For the impact of the appeal proposals on the gap, I have assessed that the magnitude of change would be **High** and the significance of effect would be **Substantial Adverse**.
- 8.5 The appeal proposals would clearly have an impact on the views and character of the on views as one approaches the Partridge Green from Littleworth. The current setting to Partridge Green, and the character of the landscape as one approaches and leaves the village, would change with construction of new housing close to the lane. For the appeal site and its immediate surroundings, I have assessed that the magnitude of change would be Medium and the significance of effect would be **Moderate Adverse**.
- 8.6 My assessment of the visual impacts of the appeal proposals on the visual receptors around the site concludes that there would be adverse visual impacts during construction

and at occupation of the scheme. The hedgerow boundaries to the appeal site would be for the most part retained, although the new access would provide open views into the site. At completion the development would be open to view and the loss of the rural setting to the east of the lane would be evident. I have assessed the significance of effect as **Moderate Adverse**.

8.7 My assessment of the appeal proposals has identified a number of areas of concern where the extent of development has, in my opinion, compromised the setting to Partridge Green and Littleworth and failed to maintain the essential gap. Whilst the scheme is in outline and the masterplan illustrative the disposition of housing across the appeal site, as illustrated on the layout plan, leaves no meaningful gap between Partridge Green and Littleworth and little space for a landscape buffer to the listed buildings or Littleworth Lane. The appeal proposals fail to demonstrate that the site can accommodate 58 dwellings and properly address the landscape constraints that apply to the site.

8.8 On the basis of my assessment of the likely impacts of the appeal proposals on the landscape character, the setting to Partridge Green and the separation of the settlements of Partridge Green and Littleworth I respectfully request the Inspector to dismiss this appeal.