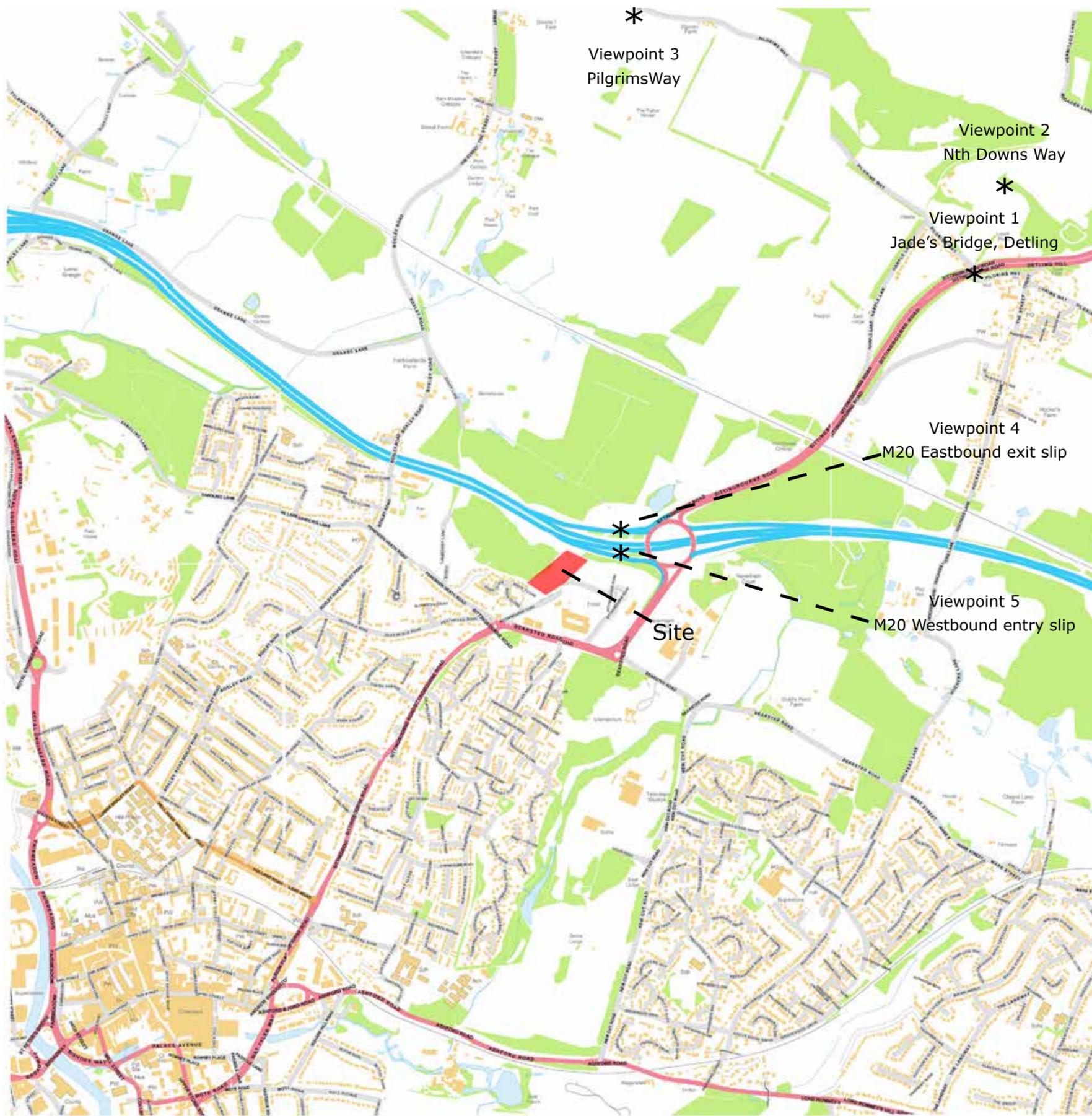


**Preliminary Visual Impact Assessment
in relation to the Kent Downs AONB**

Proposed Residential Development
on land at
Penenden Heath, Maidstone, Kent

8th September 2016



Penenden Heath, Maidstone

Preliminary Visual Impact Assessment

relative to the adjacent AONB

Introduction

This report is intended to assess the projected visual impact of residential development on the site off Sittingbourne Road, Penenden Heath Maidstone on the Kent Downs AONB. The report also includes a landscape strategy for mitigating those impacts by woodland planting within the site.

The site lies on the south side of the M20 and is visually contained by topography and by woodland which screens the north-western quadrant. The site is not visually prominent in close-up views from the M20 or its slip-roads and is screened by boundary trees and shrubs in views from the south and east.

Views from the north both within and without the AONB are assessed in this report. Viewpoints were identified in various locations where the site, or at least its approximate location, could be identified. The more distant viewpoints (as shown on the adjacent map) are at specific elevated locations and are not representative of the site's general visibility from the north which is negligible due to either;

- 1) The relatively flat wooded landscape northwards to Detling.
- 2) The distance from the site of the high chalk downs above Detling in which the site is a small element in a much wider view of Maidstone.

600m2 New woodland screen planting

Planting selected in a range of ages and sizes to recreate the natural variety in a woodland.

- Major Trees
 - Sweet Chestnut
 - Beech
 - Oak
- Secondary Trees
 - Hornbeam
 - Rowan
 - Whitebeam
 - Wild Cherry
- Shrub Layer
 - Blackthorn
 - Alder Buckthorn
 - Purging Buckthorn
 - Dogwood
 - Gelder Rose
 - Hawthorn
 - Hazel
 - Wild Privet
 - Spindle
 - Sallow
 - Wayfaring Tree
 - Juniper
 - Osier
 - Yew

- 250m2 Native Shrub Layer
- Blackthorn
 - Purging B'horn
 - Gelder Rose
 - Hazel
 - Spindle
 - Wayfaring Tree
 - Osier
 - Alder Buckthorn
 - Dogwood
 - Hawthorn
 - Wild Privet
 - Sallow
 - Juniper
 - Yew

M20 embankment vegetation.

4m high acoustic screen erected along the northern site boundary will become lost in the vegetation as it develops on either side of the boundary.

Easement underneath high voltage power lines

M20 embankment vegetation.



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Small groups and individual trees i.e. Oak, Sweet Chestnut and Beech planted as outliers of the main woodland creating a parkland character and enhancing biodiversity.

Woodland edge allowed to naturally regenerate with Elm suckers and seedlings from the woodland trees.

Existing woodland screens the north-western quadrant



Left - Natural regeneration at the woodland edge.



Above - Young Field Maple



Above - Young Hawthorn



Above - Young Hazel

Above - New mixed species woodland in its 3rd season after planting.

Penenden Heath, Maidstone Woodland Screen & POS Planting

Existing woodland screens
the north-western quadrant

Area for new woodland
screen planting

Easement underneath high
voltage power lines

Wooded embankment
above M20

Area for new woodland
screen planting



Penenden Heath, Maidstone
Aerial Image - Site Context

Penenden Heath, Maidstone
 Preliminary Visual Impact Assessment
 relative to the adjacent AONB

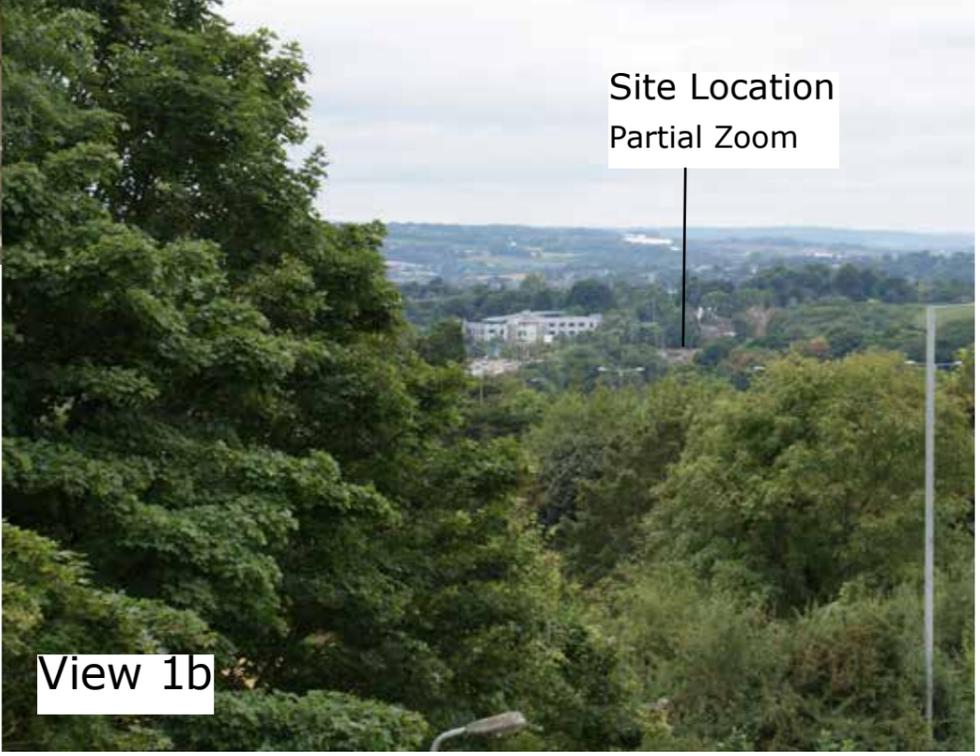
View 1a/b/c Jade's Bridge, Detling

The southern boundary of the Kent Downs AONB follows the northern side of the M20 corridor. Although the ground rises north of the M20, views of the site are obscured by intervening tree cover.

Jade's Bridge over the A249 at Detling offers a vantage point from which the site location can be identified by reference to the silver coloured office buildings off Sittingbourne Road.

The scale of the office buildings makes them visually significant in this view whereas the projected visual impact of the proposed development would be more akin to that of the existing residential scale buildings on Shaw Close which tend to nestle amongst the trees in these views.

The proposed site layout offers the opportunity to screen the development with long term sustainable woodland vegetation which would positively contribute to the setting of the urban edge.



View 1a/b/c
 Looking south-west from Jade's Bridge over the A249 at Detling.



View 2a



View 2b

Penenden Heath, Maidstone

Preliminary Visual Impact Assessment
relative to the adjacent AONB

View 2a/b/c North Downs Way, above Detling

Views of Maidstone are available from the southern edge of the Downs. The site is a small and insignificant element in a much wider view which encompasses the whole town.

The site location is indicated on the two images but is difficult to locate in unassisted vision. The electricity pylon on the M20 embankment can be made out in the enlarged view and it can be seen how wedges of new woodland screen planting either side of this would enclose the urban edge and soften the built form thereby continuing the theme of small scale buildings in trees.

View 2a/b

Looking south from the North Downs Way above Detling.



Penenden Heath, Maidstone

Preliminary Visual Impact Assessment
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View 3 Pilgrims Way, west of Detling

The position of the site can be approximated in this view by reference to the silver roofs of the office buildings forming part of Eclipse Park.

The proposed buildings of the development would not be visible at all from this location due to their lesser domestic scale and the extensive intervening woodland and trees.

It should be noted that none of the existing residential areas in Penenden Heath or The Hilton Hotel are visible from this direction.

View 3 Pilgrims Way, west of Detling looking south-east towards the site.



View 4

Penenden Heath, Maidstone

Preliminary Visual Impact Assessment
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View 4 - M20 East bound exit slip road

The site is visible from this location although visual receptors could be described as having low sensitivity to visual intrusion in this transitory environment.

The wedges of new planting will be located either side of the electricity pylon and will serve to continue the woodland screen across the northern edge of the site to better contain the urban edge and form a coherent belt of greenery eastwards from the existing woodland towards the junction.



View 5

View 5 - M20 West bound entry slip road

The site is not visible from this location and future residential scale buildings will be sufficiently set back from the boundary so as to be similarly concealed.

The wedge of new native woodland planting in the north east corner of the site will screen the view of the site from this point.