

LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL APPRAISAL

**Robertsbridge Works - Additional plant (mill rock
bunker and conveyors)**

Prepared for: British Gypsum

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1.0 Introduction

SLR Consulting Ltd (SLR) has been instructed by British Gypsum to prepare an initial appraisal of the potential landscape and visual effects of the development of additional plant (mill rock bunker and conveyors) at the British Gypsum Works, Mountfield.

The main landscape and visual elements include site clearance, construction and then operation on a permanent basis, including vehicle movements.

These aforementioned elements have the potential to affect landscape character, elements and features within the site itself and also the character and visual amenity of offsite receptors in the immediate surrounding area.

A 2km study area has been adopted for this initial appraisal. Initial photography included in this appraisal was completed in June and July 2020.

This appraisal has been carried out in accordance with the Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment's Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (3rd Edition, 2013, also known as "GLVIA3"), however a full impact assessment (in terms of Environmental Impact Assessment) is not considered necessary due to the condition of the existing site and the nature of the works proposed.

Paragraph 5.1 of the GLVIA3 describes how landscape effects are concerned with *"how the proposal will affect the elements that make up the landscape, the aesthetic and perceptual aspects of the landscape and its distinctive character"*.

Paragraph 6.1 of the GLVIA3 describes how visual effects are concerned with *"assessing how the surroundings of individuals or groups of people may be specifically affected by changes in the content and character of views as a result of the change or loss of existing elements of the landscape and/or introduction of new elements"*.

Thus, our summary appraisal deals separately with each of these effects, although where relevant and appropriate, cross references are made to the same features or elements where they are relevant to both topics.

The operations would require some artificial lighting for health, safety and security requirements, although this would be in the context of the existing British Gypsum Works and this has not been considered any further at this stage.

2.0 Landscape Planning Context

National Planning Policy Framework (published in 2019) and internet-based Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) sets out land use policy and guidance in relation to development in England.

At the heart of the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development and there is reference to recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development. Planning decisions should aim to ensure that developments function well and add to the overall quality of the area, establish a strong sense of place, respond to character and history and reflect the identity of local surroundings and materials. Developments should also be visually attractive as a result of good architecture and appropriate landscaping.

NPPF also refers to protecting and enhancing valued landscapes. Paragraph 172 of NPPF states that “*Great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues.*” and that “*The scale and extent of development within these designated areas should be limited.*”

The East Sussex, South Downs and Brighton & Hove Waste and Minerals Local Plan (Adopted 19th February 2013) sets out strategic policy decisions for the area, with the following relating to the site:

- The site is part of the existing British Gypsum mine and processing plant, which has a specific Policy WMP 12 Provision of Gypsum, which aims to safeguard and maintain supplies to and from the works throughout the Plan period; and
- The site is also located within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). Policy SO4 aims to protect and enhance the environment by, *inter alia* minimising impacts on designated landscapes and areas which have landscape character and quality which is sensitive to development. Policy WMP27 aims to conserve and enhance the local character and environment of the Plan Area and states that “*permission will not be granted where the development would have a significant adverse impact*” on *inter alia*, the High Weald AONB.

Mining started at Mountfield Mine in 1876 with the sinking of a shaft in Limekiln Wood, the woodland block immediately to the north of the site. In the early 1950s a second, larger mine opened in Brightling, approximately 5km to the north-west. The final restoration for the Mountfield Mine site in the recent 2013 ROMP, shows a graded landform sloping to the south-east, with capping and filling of the former shafts (with the abandoned mine workings extending to approximately 2km around the site) and removal of cement stockpile, stores and substation. Separate planning permissions relate to the RMC restoration and DSG Storage area to the south-west and the conveyor connecting to Brightling to the west, as well as the Factory site, including the existing plant and buildings which extends to the east.

3.0 Landscape Appraisal

3.1 Landscape Baseline

As indicated on Drawing RW / LA /2, the East Sussex Landscape Character Assessment (2016) identifies the site as located within the north-western part of “LCA 11: Brede Valley”, which extends for over 16km to the east and 10km to the south. The boundary with “LCA 9: Darwell Valley” is located along the northern edge of the British Gypsum Works at 0.3km away from the site, whilst the nearest part of “LCA 5: South Slopes of High Weald” is 1.3km to the west and “LCA 13: Lower Rother Valley” is 2.7km to the north-east.

The relevant key landscape characteristics and features of “LCA 11: Brede Valley”, are described as follows:

- *A sense of tranquillity away from the main settlements and roads;*
- *Few detracting elements;*
- *Well wooded sides slopes with scattered farmsteads and orchards;*
- *Extensive areas of Semi-Natural Ancient deciduous woodland around the valley head to the west of the area;*
- *Villages and their churches perched on the slopes overlooking the valley...;*
- *Much of the open valley is free of roads and traffic, but four A roads cross the valley A2100, A21, A28 and the A259;*
- *These are linked by the B roads which traverse the enclosing ridges and link the villages; and*
- *Winding and very narrow sunken country lanes with steep gradients.*

“The British Gypsum Factory on the edge of the area at Mountfield” is identified as one of several past / current forces for change impacting on the positive attributes of the “LCA 11: Brede Valley”.

Under Point 7 of the Vision and Strategy for “LCA 11: Brede Valley” there is also a requirement to “Ensure that the design and layout of new developments respect the character and form of the landscape and existing settlements”, and under Part D, Proposals need to have regard for the current High Weald Management Plan.

The High Weald AONB Management Plan 2019-2024 sets out long term objectives for conserving the landscape and the local authorities' ambitions for how the High Weald will be looked after for the next 5 years. It defines the five following components of character that have made the High Weald “a recognisably distinct and homogenous area for at least the last 700 years:

- *1. Geology, landform and water systems – a deeply incised, ridged and faulted landform of clays and sandstone with numerous gill streams.*
 - *2. Settlement – dispersed historic settlement including high densities of isolated farmsteads and late Medieval villages founded on trade and non-agricultural rural industries.*
 - *3. Routeways – a dense network of historic routeways (now roads, tracks and paths).*
 - *4. Woodland – abundance of ancient woodland, highly interconnected and in smallholdings.*
 - *5. Field and Heath – small, irregular and productive fields, bounded by hedgerows and woods, and typically used for livestock grazing; with distinctive zones of lowland heaths, and inned river valleys.”*
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The application site covers an area of around 850m² and is a small part of the larger 14ha British Gypsum Works, positioned almost 2km away from the site entrance onto Eatenden Lane.

As shown by Drawing RW / LA / 1, the application site lies at an elevation of approximately 75m AOD on relatively flat ground at the head of a valley and being enclosed to the north, west and south by steeper slopes (typically 1:4 to 1:8) rising by 50m to a distinctive ridge along the Netherfield Road between 132m AOD and 145m AOD at approximately 1km away. The ridge to the north extends in a north-easterly direction, falling initially and then rising to 83m AOD around Mountfield Court at 1.8km away, whilst the land to the east falls away to elevations of around 34m AOD over a distance of 2km.

The British Gypsum Works extends in a mostly north-easterly direction from the site along the gently sloping ground and comprises several plant, conveyors and buildings, hardstanding, roads and parking areas. There is a rail head which connects with the railway network at 1.3km to the east of the site (and imports gypsum mineral to the site from Spain). There is some complexity around the site associated with the existing rock handling activities, steep banks and stockpile mounds of varying scale and the Mountfield Mine land to the west and south-west. Mobile plant is utilised to move materials around the rock handling area to create stockpiles near to loading and processing points.

The site is positioned between two distinctive industrial buildings at the British Gypsum Works:

- Bunker A, (where stone from the mine destined for cement manufacture is stored prior to discharge into road lorries), with a weathered terracotta cladding on the upper parts of the structure and grey cladding on the lower parts and with some exposed struts and legs, 10m x 5m and approximately 15m high; and
- the Homogeniser (a large circular structure immediately west of the factory building), grey cladding, measuring just under 5,000m² and approximately 15m high.

The larger Mill Building is further to the east and is 21m high and with two stacks of 27.4m high and a third (waste reclaim) stack at 25m high.

As shown on Drawing RW / LA / 2, the aerial photographs from 2018 show the distinctive built up and disturbed footprint of the British Gypsum Works, set amongst a mixture of well-wooded areas (such as Millham Wood, Crowhurst Wood, Great Wood Snep's Wood) and small fields and hedgerows in the surrounding area.

The site is positioned within a predominately rural area and well separated by both vegetation and topography from the nearest residential areas and dwellings, as follows:

- Netherfield village 0.7km to the south;
- Mountfield village at 1.3km to the north and east; and
- Other isolated farmsteads and properties such as Crowhurst Farm at 0.8km to the south, Darwell Beech at 1km to the west, Banks Farm at 0.7km to the north, Castle Farm at 1.1km to the north-east and Millham at 1.1km to the east.

The woodland and hedgerows (both along the roadside and as field boundaries) further reduces the potential dominance of built development within views, offered by the undulating hills, ridges and valleys topography.

Darwell Wood SSSI is located 1km to the north-west of the site and consists of 8.76ha area of broadleaved, mixed and yew woodland with open space provided by the British Gypsum Works conveyor belt (linking Brightling Mine to Mountfield Mine).

The River Line SSSI is located c0.3km to the south-west of the site and extended for over 2.1ha as a narrow band, designated for its occasional exposures of earth heritage interest along the banks of the stream.

There are several Grade II Listed Buildings in the villages and farmsteads in the study area including:

- Church of St John, Netherfield Primary School and the School Masters House and The Old Rectory along Eatenden Lane at 1km to the south;
- Crowhurst Farmhouse and Crowhurst Farm Cottage at 0.8km to the south-east;
- Stonywood Cottage on Netherfield Road at over 1km to the south-west;
- Riverhall House The Bakery at Solomon's Lane, 2km east of the site and 0.3km north of the British Gypsum Works access;
- Castle Farmhouse, Keepers Cottage and Parish Church of All Saints on Church Road at 1.2km to the north-east of the site; and
- Mountfield Court at 1.8km to the north-east of the site.

The A2100 London Road follows a straight north-south orientated route, at 2.3km east of the site, with local minor roads providing most of the highway network within the study area:

- Eatenden Lane extends over a south-west to north-east alignment at 1km south-east of the site at its nearest point;
- Eatenden Lane becomes Hoath Hill (at 2km to the north-east of the site) and Solomon's Lane spurs to the north-east, joining with A2100;
- New Cut extends from a junction with Hoath Hill (at 2.2km away from the site) to join with the A2100;
- Church Road extends westwards from a junction with Hoath Hill (at 2.2km away from the site) and then becomes Rock Cottages as it crosses the railway line and extends northwards at 1.3km to the north of the site; and
- Netherfield Road extends over a west-east alignment at 1km south of the site at its nearest point and connects to B2096 Darwell Hill at 1.3km to the south-west.

As a result of the operation of the existing British Gypsum Works, frequent HGV and other traffic is characteristic on local routes northwards onto Eatenden Lane and to the A2100 London Road.

There are several public rights of way in the local area, with the nearest being a connection between Eatenden Lane and Church Lane at c0.7km to the south-east of the site and includes a crossing over the British Gypsum Works access road and railway line, near to a car parking area and security cabin, connecting to Mountfield village to the north and Riverhill Bridge to the east. A further route also connects Church Road with Darwell Wood at over 1km to the north and separated from the site by the enclosing slopes and ridge.

There is a village hall and recreational ground at Netherfield at 1km to the south of the site and there is informal recreational use of the woodlands around the edge of the village. There is also a village hall at Mountfields, on Church Lane to the north and a children's play area and 'Bonfire Field' on Solomon's Lane on the east of the village (2.2km away from the site).

Overall, the application site and study area are consistent with the descriptions of "LCA 11: Brede Valley" in the published East Sussex Landscape Character Assessment. The application site can be classified at a local level as a small part of an established area of "Industrial Land / Gypsum Works", located within a wider envelope of "Wooded Farmland Ridges and Valleys".

Overall, the landscape of the study area is of national value due to the AONB designation, although at a local level the site itself has several physical, aesthetic and perceptual attributes that would typically reduce an area's value:

- the site is previously developed, with hardstandings and engineered topography/surface, forming part of the existing rock handling area at the British Gypsum Works. However, the broader study area is a largely unspoilt and tranquil rural landscape with few intrusive features and in a good condition with strong historic structure of small fields and woodlands;
- views are typically enclosed within the site due to cover provided by the variety of landform and vegetation. This is also the case for much of the wider study area, although occasional longer distance views are obtainable at certain elevated or more open locations. "*wonderful views and scenic beauty*" is identified as a key quality for the High Weald AONB;
- the previously developed land within the application site is not considered to be a rare feature, although the relatively unchanged landscape of High Weald (and as present in the wider study area) is a recognised aspect of the AONB;
- the site currently assimilates with the British Gypsum Works area, but contrasts with the character of the undeveloped, more rural parts of the study area and High Weald;
- sections of public right of way and other recreational activities are identified within the study area, although some distance away from the site;
- tranquillity is minimal within and immediately surrounding the application site, with disturbance from vehicles and plant at the existing British Gypsum Works during working hours. Such qualities are however more apparent in the open farmland and woodland further away from the site and road network and the relative tranquillity of the area is identified as a key quality for the High Weald AONB; and
- no evidence of artistic or literary associations with the application site or immediate study area has been noted as part of this appraisal.

3.2 Potential Landscape Effects

The physical disturbance of landscape elements and features at the application site as part of the initial construction and then during the operations, is considered to be limited and neutral in nature, due to the developed nature of the land (existing rock handling area), in an already industrial context (immediately adjacent to similar plant and buildings).

The flat, previously developed land, adjacent to visible and audible signs of similar types of human activity, built structures and mobile plant, has low susceptibility; the site can accommodate disturbance from the proposed development. This aspect, when considered in combination with the national value of the study area (as described above), restricts the overall sensitivity of the landscape.

The physical disturbance of the application site would result in the following changes to elements and features:

- the new mill rock bunker and small conveyor would occupy at the most 20m x 20m (c400m²) and would be adjacent to and no higher than the existing Bunker A at 15m. The roof part of the new bunker would be clad with terracotta and the lower walls would be clad with goosewing grey to match the style of the existing Bunker A;
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- the long transfer conveyor S08 would extend from the new bunkers to meet existing conveyor DB2 (that brings Spanish gypsum from the rail discharge point) and create a blending conveyor and would be 130m in length by 3m wide (c400m²). The conveyor top covers would be clad in goosewing grey;
- there would be continued use of the material storage stockpiles, site management facilities, roads and parking areas;
- there would be continuation of current practice of storage of materials within the existing Homogeniser prior to entering the works building;
- there would be a reduction in the number of trains coming into the site;
- there would be no change to the number vehicles or HGV movements accessing the site; and
- there would be no visually significant or mature landscape elements or features removed.

The aesthetic and perceptual aspects that would change within the application site and its immediate landscape setting are as follows:

- the development would introduce a small-scale building, onto a previously developed site, adjacent to other built development of a similar scale and complexity;
- the development would be enclosed by the topography of the site and its setting, being set down and visually contained within a wooded valley;
- the building and surfaces would introduce additional muted colours and materials onto a previously developed site, adjacent to other built development of a similar muted colours and materials; and
- vehicle and plant movements would continue the already busy activity on the British Gypsum Works site and road network, with a reduction in the number of trains visiting the site.

Thus, there would be limited alterations to landscape elements/features, aesthetic or perceptual aspects or characteristics, which results in a negligible degree of change to the overall character of the baseline conditions (the change is barely discernible but the underlying landscape character, during construction and once operational would be similar to the baseline conditions). The design of the building is sympathetic to the character and appearance of the existing plant and buildings on site.

At a local level, the proposed development would not alter the local character of the application site and it would remain classified as a small part of an established area of “Industrial Land / Gypsum Works”, located within the wider envelope of “Wooded Farmland Ridges and Valleys”.

This would be positioned within and would not alter the published key characteristics of the East Sussex Landscape Character Assessments’ “LCA 11: Brede Valley”.

The High Weald AONB extends over approximately 1,500 sq. km, with the proposed development occupying and influencing a very small part of the existing British Gypsum Works. The addition of the new mill rock bunker and conveyors to the established industrial structures and activities would not constitute any further noticeable detracting from the five key components of character identified in the AONB Management Plan. The High Weald AONB would continue as “*one of the best preserved Medieval landscapes in North West Europe*” and its essentially rural and human scale character, with woodland and traditional mixed farming would not be noticeably affected as a result of the proposals.

4.0 Visual Appraisal

4.1 Visual Baseline

A combination of desk-based analysis (of OS mapping, topography and aerial photography) and fieldwork has reviewed the nature of views towards the application site and the degree of screening provided by vegetation and/or built up areas and buildings. Generally, this indicated that the undulating ridge and valley topography, in combination with the landcover of woodland, hedgerows and trees, reduces the potential visibility of the proposed development.

Enclosure is typically greatest around the lower-lying / flatter areas, along the narrow and winding roadsides and also from within built up areas, becoming more open where land is slightly elevated and/or begins to slope away, or where hedgerows have been clipped short or removed, or from gateways and road junctions.

Potential visual receptors include the following:

- inhabitants of Netherfield village to the south (and properties along Netherfield Road), Mountfield village to the north (and properties along Eatenden Lane, Hoath Hill and Church Lane) and other isolated farmsteads or residential properties in the surrounding area (such as Crowhurst Farm, Castle Farm, Mountfield Court and New House Farm, Banks Farm, Millham and Darwell Beech);
- users of public highways, such as Eatenden Lane, Church Lane and Netherfield Road;
- users of public rights of way or other paths and recreational facilities in the local area; and
- visitors to the British Gypsum Works (workers).

The representative viewpoints used for the initial appraisal have taken account of the following range of factors:

- accessibility to the public;
- potential number and sensitivity of viewers who may be affected;
- viewing direction, distance and elevation;
- nature of the viewing experience (for example static views, views from settlements and views from sequential points along routes);
- view type (for example panoramas, vistas and glimpses); and
- potential for cumulative views of the proposed development in conjunction with other developments.

The following viewpoints have been selected as part of this appraisal (with locations shown Drawing RW / LA / 3 and initial photographs shown Drawing RW / LA / 4):

- Viewpoint A – View from Netherfield Hall and Recreation Ground;
 - Viewpoints B1, B2 and B3 – View from Netherfield Road, the churchyard and rear of The Lodge property;
 - Viewpoint C – View from Eatenden Lane;
 - Viewpoint D – View from public right of way near Crowhurst Farm;
 - Viewpoint E – View from access road near public right of way; and
 - Viewpoint F – View from site entrance on Eatenden Lane.
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4.2 Potential Visual Effects

For the inhabitants of Netherfield village to the south (and properties along Netherfield Road), which extends along the higher ground on a distinctive ridge at approximately 1km away from the site, the elevated and potentially long-distance views are often enclosed or filtered, either by other buildings or vegetation around the properties. Where open views are available, the woodland blocks (such as Snep's Wood and Great Wood) obscure views of the existing British Gypsum Works (and the proposed development) which is set down in the valley (around 50m below). For example, Viewpoint A from the rear of Netherfield Village Hall and Recreational Ground, although offering elevated long-distance views, has no views of the site due to the intervening woodland. At Viewpoint B1 from Netherfield Road, the roadside vegetation provides a much higher level of immediate enclosure, albeit with glimpsed longer-distance views of woodland cover and a small part of the mill building stack/plume. Similarly, Viewpoint B3 from the Lodge has extensive long-distance views, with glimpsed views of part of the mill building stack, set amongst woodland and with the proposed development being hidden. At Viewpoint B2 from the churchyard, the Robertsbridge works are completely hidden and the view is wide and long distance over wooded ridges.

For the inhabitants of Mountfield village to the north (and properties along Eatenden Lane, Hoath Hill and Church Lane), which extends along the lower-lying ground at approximately 1.3km away from the site, the views would be typically enclosed or filtered, either by other buildings or vegetation around the properties or within the woodland blocks (such as Millham Wood and Lower Hucksteep Wood). For example, Viewpoint F is taken at the site entrance on Eatenden Lane and where the roadside tree blocks obscure views of the existing British Gypsum Works and proposed development.

The orientation of the dwellings themselves will also affect the degree of visibility for individual residential receptors, for example whether the views would be direct or indirect (or oblique).

At Crowhurst Farm, there are several properties arranged along a north-south aligned farm access road with east-west facing properties, whilst the site is located to the north-west (and 1km away). The properties are also set down at 90-95m AOD and east of a slight ridge which is 5-10m higher. This landform offers enclosure in the direction of the site and in conjunction with the vegetation to the rear of the properties and the woodland blocks will obscure the development (also refer to Viewpoint D from the nearby public right of way).

At Castle Farm, there are several properties arranged along a north-south section of Rock Cottages (public highway) with east-west facing properties, whilst the site is located to the south-west (1.2km away). The properties are also set down at 50-55m AOD and north of a ridge which is 20m higher. This landform offers enclosure in the direction of the site and in conjunction with the vegetation to the rear of the properties and the woodland blocks (Colliers Croft Wood and Castle Wood) will obscure the development.

At Mountfield Court, there are several properties arranged along a north-south aligned farm access road leading up to the main house (including New House Farm), with properties also facing north-south, whilst the site is located to the south-west (2km away). The properties are on rising ground with the main house elevated at 83m AOD and offering longer distance views from certain locations. However, the ridge to the north of the site also reaches 85m AOD and this landform in conjunction with the woodland blocks (Castle Wood and Limekiln Wood) offers additional enclosure in the direction of the site, restricting views of the development. Vegetation around each of the properties also restricts views, to varying degrees.

At Banks Farm, there are several properties arranged along a north-south aligned farm access road leading up to the main house, with properties also facing north-south, whilst the site is located to the south-west (and 0.8km away). The properties are on lower-lying ground at 55m AOD and there is a distinctive ridge which lies to the south and reaches 90m AOD. This ridge provides enclosure and in conjunction with the woodland blocks (Castle

Wood and Limekiln Wood) completely obscures the development. Mature vegetation, which is also present around each of the properties, offers further enclosure.

At Darwell Beech the main property is orientated south-east to north-west, whilst the site is located to the east (and 1.1km away). The property is on elevated ground at 155m AOD and offering longer distance views from certain locations. However, the crest of the ridge extends gently over 300m to the east before sloping more steeply down to the site at over 70m below and this landform in conjunction with the woodland blocks (Snepe's Wood and Limekiln Wood) offers additional enclosure in the direction of the site. Vegetation around the property also offers further enclosure.

At Millham there are several properties arranged along the east-west aligned access road leading up to the British Gypsum Works, with properties facing north-south, whilst the site is located to the west (at 1.3km away). The properties are on lower-lying ground at 50m AOD and amongst dense woodland (Millham Wood) which encloses and in conjunction with the main factory building, obscures the development.

The visibility from road and recreational routes would inevitably be influenced by the direction of travel and position of the proposed development relative to the viewer (for example whether perpendicular to the road alignment and difficult to see, or along the road corridor and in the field of view of the driver). Furthermore, the presence of other existing focal points within the road corridor would influence impacts, as well as adjacent buildings and roadside vegetation, walls and other boundary features. Overall views are restricted within and around the site and would be glimpsed, transitory views at worse.

Thus, for road users travelling along Eatenden Lane, over a south-west to north-east alignment at 1km south-east of the site at its nearest point, the site will be offset and away from the main road corridor and field of view. Furthermore, much of this route is narrow and slightly twisting and is enclosed by woodland (Upper Hucksteep Wood) or hedgerows. For example, Viewpoint C illustrates how a combination of the slightly sunken carriageway and roadside vegetation restricts all views towards the site.

For road users travelling along Church Road, which extends westwards from a junction with Hoath Hill (at 2.2km away from the site) and then becomes Rock Cottages as it crosses the railway line and extends northwards at 1.3km to the north, the site will be offset and away from the main road corridor and field of view. Furthermore, much of this route is narrow and slightly twisting and enclosed by hedgerows or properties, with woodland nearer to the site (Millham Wood and Limekiln Wood) providing additional enclosure and screening.

For road users travelling along Netherfield Road which extends over a west-east alignment at the 1km south of the site at its nearest point and connects to B2096 Darwell Hill at 1.3km to the south-west, the site will be offset and away from the main road corridor and field of view. Although on elevated ground, much of this route is narrow and slightly twisting, with enclosure from roadside hedgerows or properties. For example, Viewpoint B, illustrates how roadside vegetation restricts views, albeit with glimpsed longer-distance views of woodland cover and no views of the site.

For north-bound users of public rights or way to the south-east of the site although orientated towards the site, views of the development are not anticipated. The views will change from the enclosed roadside at Viewpoint C, to the elevated, more open views over small fields at Viewpoint D, to the more enclosed wooded areas as the path slopes down to Crowhurst Wood. As the route crosses the British Gypsum Works access road at Viewpoint E, the intervening trees and woodland screen the development. The section of the route between Mountfield village and Riverhill Bridge consists of small fields, sloping to the south and away from the direction of the site (which is beyond and obscured by woodland).

Users of the Netherfield recreation ground, although offering elevated long-distance views, will have no views of the development due to the intervening woodland (refer to Viewpoint A).

Users of the Mountfield village play area and 'Bonfire Field' will not obtain views of the development due to the intervening topography and vegetation.

Visitors to the British Gypsum Works (workers and members of the public) are unlikely to notice a difference to the existing facilities at the site and visual amenity would be unaltered as a result of the additional plant and conveyors.

Overall, there would be little to no effect on the views or visual amenity at the selected representative viewpoints and associated visual receptors, due to the nature of the proposal and its immediate landscape context, but also the level of screening and enclosure from the wooded farmland ridges and valley.

5.0 Conclusions

This appraisal of potential landscape and visual effects has concluded that the proposed development is unlikely to be detrimental to the overall character, qualities and appearance (in views) of the application site and its surrounding environment.

This is due to the topography of the site and its setting (being set down and visually contained within a wooded valley), the condition of the site (being an already disturbed area within the wider existing British Gypsum Works development) and the limited number and separation to potential visual receptors, such as local residents, users of public rights of way and other recreational facilities, or roads. Visitors to the British Gypsum Works (workers and members of the public) are unlikely to notice a difference to the existing facilities.

The design of the proposed silo responds positively to the scale, colours and materials of the existing Bunker A, whilst the conveyors are also limited in size and scale and similar in appearance to those already existing.

Although located within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), the development would have a minimal adverse effect on the character and quality of the designated landscape.

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