

Land West and North of Southbourne
Southbourne-Hermitage Settlement Gap
Assessment

Church Commissioners for England
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tor
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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This document has been prepared by tor&co on behalf of The Church Commissioners for England to undertake a Landscape Gap assessment of a parcel of land that lies to the north and west of Southbourne and north east of Hermitage, as indicated in the Chichester District Landscape Gap Assessment, May 2019.
- 1.2 Following a planning application submitted by Hallam Land Ref: 25/03010/OUTEIA) for land to the south of the Chichester to Portsmouth main railway line and publication of the emerging Local Plan, and particularly the assessment of site options through the Regulation 19 process at Southbourne, West Sussex, a full review of the Development Plan Document (DPD) and update of the Landscape Gap Assessment has been undertaken. The study is intended to provide a full and comprehensive assessment of the gap in its current condition and function and provides some conclusions on how future development will alter or potentially impact on its integrity.
- 1.3 The key documents reviewed as part of this Note include:
- Southbourne Allocation Development Plan Document 2021- 2039, Assessment Framework, April 2026.
 - Southbourne Allocation Development Plan Document Regulation 19 Submission, June 2026. (the DPD)
 - Application documents associated with the Hallam Land application (January 2025)
 - Chichester District Landscape Gap Assessment, May 2019
 - Landscape Gap Assessment Update for Southbourne Allocation Development Plan Document, September 2025

The Site

- 1.4 The Site sits on the western and northern edges of Southbourne, enclosed by the A27 to the north and the Chichester to Portsmouth main railway line to south (figure 4). Southbourne village is one of a series of interconnected settlements consisting of Prinsted, Hermitage, Inlands, Nutbourne, Slipper and Lumley. These communities, whilst distinct, together form a ribbon of development along the main transport corridors. Separating these settlements are a series of open landscapes of varying widths. The Site lies within and on the northern edge of the Hermitage – Southbourne Landscape Gap identified in the 2019 assessment (figure 5).
- 1.5 Southbourne is the largest of the villages, east of Emsworth and south of the A27, with excellent access to services and transport connections, and acts as a service centre for the neighbouring '*Bournes*'. The Chichester Local Plan 2014-2029 sought a level of growth within the village with the proportional growth of community facilities and services to support the village and the neighbouring community.

Scope of the assessment

- 1.6 Chichester District Council's Landscape Guidelines state that '*Any proposed development should not visually, perceptually or physically lead to coalescence of settlements.*'
- 1.7 This appraisal seeks to assess the Site in terms of its potential capacity for a residential led urban extension without undermining the function of the Hermitage-Southbourne Landscape Gap.
- 1.8 The Site and surrounding area were visited in August 2025 to obtain familiarity with the landscape. This has allowed a preliminary evaluation of the baseline conditions of the Site and study area, including existing landscape character, landscape resources and visual amenity.
- 1.9 The primary purpose of the Landscape Gap is to protect the individual identity and setting of each settlement. This report does not therefore seek to diminish the importance or significance of the Landscape Gap; rather, it aims to critique the objectives of the Landscape Gap policy and evaluate the function and character of the Landscape Gap between Hermitage and Southbourne.
- 1.10 Furthermore, if development proposals within the Landscape Gap are to be put forward, they must satisfy the planning authority that the development will not conflict with or detract from the Landscape Gap's functions and objectives and should consider additional public access, linkages or enhancements.

Structure of report

- 1.11 Section 2 of the appraisal provides an overview of national and local policy on Landscape Gap and a summary of the Chichester District Landscape Gap Assessment, 2019.
- 1.12 Section 3 details the approach to the assessment and the methodology adopted.
- 1.13 Section 4 describes the Site, promoted development framework.
- 1.14 Section 5 provides an assessment of the existing Gap, the contribution of the Site and the potential impact of the masterplan framework on the function of the Hermitage-Southbourne Landscape Gap.
- 1.15 Section 6 provides a summary of the assessments' conclusions including a summary landscape strategy outlining appropriate mitigation measures which will protect the function of the Landscape Gap.
- 1.16 Constraints mapping and a series of supporting figures and photographs have been appended to this report and are referred to, where relevant, throughout.

2.0 Planning policy and relevant assessments and guidance

- 2.1 The council voted to formally adopt the new Local Plan on 19 August 2025 following a comprehensive examination by two independent inspectors. This plan outlines the strategy for managing development in the district until 2039.
- 2.2 The Reg 19 consultation period on the Southbourne Allocation Development Plan Document (DPD) was launched on the 5th June to run for 6 weeks, until 17 July. As part of this process, the Council published the consultation documents and evidence base including a Landscape Gap Assessment Update for Southbourne Allocation Development Plan Document. The purpose of the update was:

‘to undertake a review of the landscape gaps around Southbourne. It will provide a clear evidence base on the potential location for gaps that would aid in providing a sense of separation between settlements, and guarding against coalescence.’

- 2.3 And to:

‘understand whether the conclusions from the 2019 Landscape Gap Assessment are still up-to-date for the purposes of the Southbourne Allocation DPD.’

- 2.4 Policy A13 Southbourne Broad Location for Development identifies Southbourne as a suitable location for strategic development of a mixed-use development including approximately 800 dwellings to be masterplanned as a whole and allocated through the emerging Southbourne Allocation DPD. The Council are considering the Site’s merit for allocation in the DPD.

- 2.5 The Adopted Chichester District Local Plan introduces new planning policies relating to Landscape Gaps, and *Policy NE3: Landscape Gaps between settlements* sets out its policy objectives:

‘In order to prevent coalescence of built-up areas, maintain the individual identity of settlements, actual or perceived, and ensure the integrity of predominantly open and undeveloped land between settlements is not undermined, the generally open and undeveloped nature of landscape gaps between settlements will be protected. Including by taking account of the landscape character, the precise boundaries of landscape gaps will be defined in either a Site Allocations DPD or through neighbourhood plans. Development will only be permitted within landscape gaps, where these have been defined as set out above, provided: a) It would not diminish the physical, visual and/or perceived openness of the gap; and b) Individually or cumulatively, it would not result in the actual or perceived coalescence of settlements’

- 2.6 The following documents were reviewed and appraised for the purpose of writing this report:

- National Planning Policy Framework, December 2024
- Chichester District Local Plan (Adopted), Key policies 2021-2039
- Chichester District Landscape Gap Assessment, 2019
- Chichester local plan review 2035, Landscape capacity study (March 2019)

- South Downs Integrated Landscape Character Assessment, 2011
- South Downs Landscape Character Assessment, 2020
- West Sussex Landscape Character Assessment for Chichester District Council May 2019

3.0 Methodology

- 3.1 Chichester District Council *‘considers that designating areas between settlements as countryside gaps to be kept free of urbanising development may be an appropriate way of seeking to prevent further loss of local identity.’* (Chichester District Landscape Gap Assessment, 2019)
- 3.2 The local designation of strategic or ‘Landscape Gaps’ is viewed as a potentially robust planning device to protect the separate identities and amenity of the districts’ settlements, particularly where the open landscape is under development pressure. The ‘Landscape Gaps’ identified for review in the council’s 2019 assessment are broad intervening landscapes between settlements. It is understood that the aim of the council’s assessment is to inform broader strategic planning, through the local plan process, but also to inform the precise Landscape Gap boundaries which will be defined through Site Allocations Development Plan Documents, to follow on from the Local Plan Review, or through Neighbourhood Plans.
- 3.3 This study is not intended to critique the council’s assessment. It is instead intended to provide additional analysis of the gap and specifically how proposed development to the north and north of Southbourne could be delivered while still preserving the open character of the Gap (and therefore the separate identity of Hermitage and Southbourne) and also inform the precise Landscape Gap boundaries.
- 3.4 The 2025 Landscape Gap Assessment update takes account of a recent outline permission (ref. 23/00024/OUT) to the north of Hermitage and considers its impact on the integrity of the gap. It states that:
- ‘The area encompassed by the planning application does intrude into the gap, however, the part of the site which is in the gap is identified within the planning application as mainly being given over to open space, and hence isn’t likely to have any significant impact upon the gap as previously identified. Ultimately, the central, core part of the gap is unaffected by the recent housing developments and planning applications.’*
- 3.5 The updated study does not, however, take account of the potential impact of development proposed by Hallam Land (ref. 25/03010/OUTEIA) on the Landscape Gap, should it be permitted.
- 3.6 This assessment considers the approved scheme to the north of Hermitage as part of the future baseline for the site. The potential impact of development on the submitted application to the immediate south of the railway line and east of Hermitage is considered further in the conclusions, section 6.
- 3.7 There is currently no prescribed national or local methodology for assessing landscape or settlement gaps. The robustness of a landscape gap is predicated on several factors which are outlined below. For each criterion, we consider the existing baseline condition, and the resultant change which would result should development on the Site come forward. This assessment is based on the current submitted concept masterplan as previously shared with the Council to accompany representations to the Chichester Local Plan in 2023 and 2025 and the Southbourne Allocation DPD in 2024.

Landscape character

- 3.8 This study evaluates the degree to which the landscape surrounding a settlement contributes to its setting and therefore its identity and sense of place. The nature, pattern, landscape structure and condition of a landscape gap can alter how a settlement is perceived such that a distinctly rural, small scale and high value landscape with a robust landscape structure can make a strong contribution to the separation and identity of a settlement. Conversely, a gap comprising a relatively commonplace landscape which is in moderate or poor condition with strong urbanising features and limited landscape structure will make a weak contribution to a settlement's identity.

Openness

- 3.9 The openness of the landscape between settlements or, conversely, the extent or influence of urbanising features within it determines, respectively, its cohesiveness or degree of fragmentation. Landscape Gaps which are more intact, consisting of few urbanising features and a strong degree of openness will make a greater contribution to the sense of separation.
- 3.10 In so doing, this study takes into consideration the likely impact of allocated and permitted developments (but not unallocated and unapproved proposals) and notes any designations which may represent a constraint to development.

Visual amenity

- 3.11 The study assesses the visual amenity of the area between settlements. The key question is; how do the views to or from settlements into the open countryside contribute to that character and provide a perception of separation between settlements or neighbourhoods?
- 3.12 Views from public rights of way (refer to 3), the settlement edges and key routes between settlements are considered.

Settlement Pattern

- 3.13 The study assesses the extent to which the settlements or neighbourhoods that lie adjacent to the Gap have a distinct townscape character and identity and how that contributes to existing settlement pattern. The settlement edges of Hermitage and Southbourne, adjacent to the Gap, are then described focusing on the following characteristics and issues:
- Type of development along the settlement edge (i.e. industrial, residential, commercial, mixed etc);
 - Frontage continuity or fragmentation and general abruptness or softness of the settlement edge
 - Tightly nucleated settlement or linear settlement development pattern
 - Transport infrastructure;
 - Landmarks along the edge which contribute to the settlements character;

Physical separation – extent and boundaries

- 3.14 The study evaluates simply the physical distance between the settlements of Hermitage and Southbourne across the Gap, considering both its nearest and furthest

separation points. The study documents both the existing baseline position and the resultant difference should the development come forward.

Physical separation – key approaches

- 3.15 The physical and visual separation of a gap is considered to be perceived when travelling between settlements. This is a perceptual characteristic of the Site and determined by the features outlined above. Ultimately, the interplay between these characteristics shapes the sequential journey between one settlement and another.
- 3.16 For the purposes of this assessment and in this context, The A259, Main Road is the key movement corridor between the eastern edge of Hermitage and Western edge of Southbourne.

Function and recreational value

- 3.17 The study considers the existing function and recreational value of the Gap. Where a landscape is exclusively private and so engenders little proprietary interest on the part of residents will contribute less to the identity and sense of place of a settlement.

Potential for enhancement

- 3.18 The assessment considers all aspects of the Gap outlined above and its potential for enhancement where such improvements could improve its gap function, integrity and contribution to the setting and therefore identity of the settlements of Hermitage and Southbourne. The study considers the framework masterplan, described in section 4, the principles and enhancement measures outlined within and any heightened value of the Gap that results.
- 3.19 Enhancements to existing open space, natural habitats, cultural heritage, access to the countryside (via PRoW etc), landscape structure and recreation value are all considered.
- 3.20 The assessment provides a balanced assessment considering all criteria and characteristics outlined above. It does not seek to categorise or provide an aggregated score but instead relies on qualitative descriptions to appraise the Hermitage – Southbourne Landscape Gap.

4.0 The site

- 4.1 The Site lies within the Hermitage Southbourne Coastal Plain character area and comprises an area of agricultural land on the western and northern edge of Southbourne village within Chichester district.
- 4.2 The Site lies in the countryside beyond the existing settlement policy boundary. It is, in part, located within the broad Hermitage – Southbourne Landscape Gap as identified and assessed in the *Landscape Gap Assessment for Chichester District Council, May 2019*.
- 4.3 The Site is approximately 69.3 hectares of land, located to the west and north of Southbourne village in the county of West Sussex, as illustrated in *figure 1*. The Site is bound to the north by the A27 and the Chichester to Portsmouth main railway line to the south. The Site is intercepted by Stein Road that separates the site into the western and eastern parcels. The Site contains four large fields currently in arable use.
- 4.4 The Site lies within the ‘SC5 –Southbourne Coastal Plain’ character area. The Site lies in an area of agricultural land on the western edge of Southbourne and to the north of Hermitage, within Chichester district. The Site is currently in arable use and consists of four geometric fields over two separate parcels.
- 4.5 The larger western parcel is located to the west of Stein Road and the smaller eastern parcel to the east. The main West Coastway railway line runs along the southern boundary of the western parcel. The Bourne Community College borders part of the eastern boundary of the western parcel. The northern boundary runs along a band of dense vegetation which separates the Site from the A27 Trunk Road.
- 4.6 The Site lies on a generally flat plain and has a very gentle southerly aspect, falling towards Chichester Harbour though there are generally no noticeable changes in ground level. The levels subtly rise from approx. 8.5m (AOD) in the southeastern corner to slightly higher ridges towards the northeastern corner of the Site.
- 4.7 Within the Site there is one public right of way which connects the A295, north to a wider network of public rights of way north of the A27. There are a few public rights of way that border the boundary of the western parcel and none that pass through or pertain to the eastern parcel.
- 4.8 The Site does not lie within any nationally or locally designated landscapes and is located approximately 0.85km south of the South Downs National Park at its nearest point and is immediately north of the Chichester Harbour National Landscape. There is a small cluster of trees subject to a Tree Preservation Order (TPO) located in the northeast of the western parcel.
- 4.9 There are a number of urban elements which affect the character of the Site. In particular Southbourne’s western development edge is a prominent feature and as such the Site is perceived as rural-urban fringe.
- 4.10 Although not clearly visible within the Site, the railway line and vehicles using the A27 and can be glimpsed through vegetation and heard clearly, which has a negative impact on the perceptual aspects of the Site including tranquillity and remoteness.

- 4.11 A preliminary Landscape and Visual appraisal has been undertaken which assesses the potential effects of the promoted development (including associated off Site infrastructure improvements). The LVA has been submitted together with this study and has informed the baseline description of the Site and surrounding area and so should be read in conjunction.

The proposed development

- 4.12 The masterplan framework which has been promoted through the Chichester District Local Plan process makes provision of up to 1,200 new homes on the north eastern edge of Southbourne and to the east and north of Hermitage and accessed from both Stein Road, in the north, and Main Road, in the South (see para. 1.13-1.14 below for further information). The framework makes provision for 31ha of open space, principally distributed around the Site's perimeter and the Site's most south western edge. Figure 7 provides a framework masterplan which has formed the basis of this assessment.
- 4.13 In 2016 planning permission was granted for the 125 homes on the Land to the West of Garson Road (15/02505/OUT and 17/01599/ REM). This application identified land safeguarded for potential delivery of a strategic road, located to the west of the housing development, from Main Road. The S106 defines the safeguarded land as *'the land adjacent to the western boundary of Alfrey Close edged purple on Plan 3 which shall be safeguarded in accordance with paragraph 6 Schedule 1.'*
- 4.14 Planning permission was also granted for Parham Place via planning application ref. 15/02120/ FUL. There is provision within the S106 Agreement for Parham Place to accommodate a larger access junction than currently provided, and a link through to land to the north via a safeguarded strip of land running between Parham Place up to and over the railway line to the north and the Site. Once delivered, this will provide vehicular access to the promoted development from the south and so its delivery and impact on the Landscape Gap has also been assessed.

5.0 Assessment of the Landscape Gap

- 5.1 The following section provides a summary of the existing Hermitage – Southbourne Landscape Gaps characteristics and condition but also how it would change following development of the Site.

5.2 Landscape character

Existing baseline

- 5.3 The Gap is predominantly agricultural land with the exception of Tuppenny Barn community gardens and ancillary buildings which sit adjacent to the A259, Main Road. While there are few urban features within the Gap, built infrastructure including the Westcountry railway line which intersects from east to west, the A27 to the immediate north and A259 to the south all have an urban influence.
- 5.4 Broadly, however, the landscape is semi-rural in nature with a clear and relatively abrupt and clearly defined boundary between urban and rural land uses. The settlement edges are generally exposed exerting an urbanising influence which results in a landscape with some association with the neighbouring settlements.
- 5.5 Within the Gap, the area to the south of the railway line and east of Tuppenny Lane has the strongest association with the settlements of Hermitage and Southbourne and contributes most strongly to their setting. Permitted development immediately to the north of Hermitage will see an expansion of the settlement and an increase in urbanisation to the south of the railway line and a loss of agricultural land, further increasing the association with the existing settlement.
- 5.6 This association decreases to the north of the railway and to the northern boundary of the Site where the A27 exerts the greatest aural influence on the landscape (figure 6).
- 5.7 The landscape is intensively managed, with few positive landscape features and a generally weak landscape structure consisting of clipped hedgerows only. The landscape is generally commonplace, indistinct and of moderate landscape value predicated on its open nature and agricultural use. The contribution of the Landscape Gap to the setting and identity of Hermitage and Southbourne is limited to its semi-rural and agricultural land use.

Post development

- 5.8 Development of the Site will result in the expansion of Southbourne to the north and west, introducing built development to the north of the railway line and in an area of the Gap most dissociated from the settlement of Hermitage and in an area where the urbanising influence of the A27 and railway line is strongest. The development form therefore preserves the open landscape to the south of the railway line which is most closely associated with Hermitage and makes the greatest contribution to its semi-rural setting.

5.9 Openness

Existing baseline

- 5.10 The Gap consists of very limited built form and so, in volumetric terms, is almost entirely open. The Gap is however, fragmented to some degree by built infrastructure that intersects it from east to west.
- 5.11 The A259 and loose linear development along its route including Tuppenny Barn Lane and residential development on Parham Drive does, however, fragment the southern and northern areas of the Landscape Gap.
- 5.12 Furthermore, the railway line and associated structural planting visually and physically severs to some degree the land to the north and south. While this doesn't significantly affect the integrity of the Gap, it serves to form a visual boundary to the land which is currently perceived as the physical gap (south of railway line) and the wider landscape setting (north of the railway line). This is relevant to the future perception of the Gap, post development (see physical separation).
- 5.13 Permitted development immediately north of Hermitage will retain some open land which will be utilised as multi-functional open space, introducing further landscape structure planting. Overall, the development will further decrease the sense of openness, narrowing the open corridor to the south of the railway line and between Hermitage and Southbourne.

Post development

- 5.14 The masterplan concentrates the growth of Southbourne to the north of the Gap and the Westcountry railway line and so will reduce its overall extent placing greater importance on the preservation of the open landscape to the south of the railway line and A259. Importantly, and although the development will reduce the extent of the Gap, it will not result in fragmentation of the remaining area so the integrity and openness of this land will be preserved.

5.15 Visual amenity

Existing baseline

- 5.16 Several public rights of way intersect or follow the boundaries of the Gap including PROW 240, 241, 3591, 243/1 and 204. Due to the open nature of the Gap, limited landscape structure and level landform, permit open views across the landscape to the settlement edges of Hermitage and Southbourne. From PROW 240 and 241 both settlement edges can be perceived sequentially, which, when read in the context of the open intervening landscape between, strengthens the perception of the two settlements as distinct.
- 5.17 From these locations on PROW 240 and 241, the South Downs National Park ridgeline forms a distant backdrop to the north, contributing to some degree to the sense of place
- 5.18 There is a distinct difference, however, between how this gap is perceived to the south and north of the railway line. To the south, the landscape is read as a direct physical open separation between the two settlements. To the north, however, the landscape is perceived as the wider open setting and so plays a reduced role in preventing coalescence.

Post development

- 5.19 The development would result in the reduction in possible views from PRow 240, 241, 3591 (refer to figures 10-12) in particular from which both settlement edges of Hermitage and Southbourne are perceived in the context of the open landscape between. However, such views are not lost entirely but reduced to locations to the south of the railway line. From these locations the direct and physical open separation of the two settlements can be perceived both sequentially and in combination.

5.20 Settlement Pattern

Existing baseline

- 5.21 Emsworth, Hermitage, Southbourne, Nutbourne, Broadbridge and Fishbourne form a linear string of small, loosely nucleated settlements distributed along the A259 between Havant and Chichester. Scattered post war development has resulted in sporadic, linear expansion of this settlement cluster which has blurred their boundaries and, while this has not resulted in complete coalescence, neighbouring settlements are closely associated and so to some degree have a shared identity. This by no means diminishes the importance of the gaps that remain but dictates an understanding of the relative contributions of the smaller spaces in between where no substantial separation exists.
- 5.22 The majority of the settlement edges of both Hermitage and Southbourne are relatively irregular and intertwined with smaller pastoral fields. These small pastoral fields are distinctly more rural, small scale and have a strong sense of enclosure. They make a significant contribution to the setting and identity of the villages and are a key defining characteristic of both settlements.
- 5.23 Between Hermitage and Southbourne, the settlement's interface with the Gap is more abrupt with strongly defined edges facing larger arable fields. The recent development at Parham Place and Tuppenny Barn on the A259 has effectively 'joined' the two settlements albeit with sparse, linear development. This dispersed and fragmented settlement edge will be further augmented by the permitted development immediately to the north of Hermitage, emphasising the importance of the open corridor between Tuppenny Lane and Collett Crescent.

Post development

- 5.24 The development will largely preserve the nucleated form of Southbourne, resulting in a logical expansion of the village and creation of a new edge which is entirely congruous with the existing. Design measures will need to be incorporated into the masterplan to ensure that the new settlement edge maintains a soft and loose transition with the open landscape.

5.25 Physical separation – extent and boundaries

Existing baseline

- 5.26 The distance between the eastern boundary of Hermitage and western edge of Southbourne (excluding development on the A259) is approximately 300m at its narrowest point.
- 5.27 The fields to the south of the railway line play a key physical role in the separation of the two settlements. To the north, the fields make a lesser

contribution to separation and instead are part of the wider setting which, due to their openness, permit views to the South Downs ridgeline in the distance.

- 5.28 The strong straight boundaries along Tuppenny Lane and the new settlement edge running northwards from Tara Perry Road to the railway line enhance the separation which will be further emphasised by the abrupt eastern edge of the permitted built development to the immediate north of Hermitage. To the north, the A27 forms a strong boundary and visual barrier to the open land to the north although the South Downs ridgeline does form a more distant backdrop.
- 5.29 To the south, the Gaps boundaries are softer, with more fragmented mixed commercial and residential development forming the settlement's edges although the strength of the landscape structure provides additional enclosure and increases the sense of separation.

Post development

- 5.30 The development would not see the reduction in the minimum distance between Southbourne and Hermitage.
- 5.31 Significant new planting belts along the length of the railway line will augment the existing landscape structure of the Gap to such an extent that it will form a strong, defensible northern boundary to the Landscape Gap which will protect the remaining Landscape Gap from future development pressure (figure 8).

5.32 Physical separation – key approaches

Existing baseline

- 5.33 The key road linking Hermitage and Southbourne is the A259, Main Road. Open land to the south of the A259 does contribute to some sense of separation but, currently, this short section of road and the loose linear development that exists along its length results in a weak sense of leaving or entering the settlements (figure 6).
- 5.34 This is further accentuated by the presence of signage gateway feature indicating the edge of Southbourne adjacent to Penny Lane which would otherwise naturally be perceived as the outer edge of Hermitage.
- 5.35 This is very much characteristic of the ribbon of settlements along the A259 where, although not entirely coalesced, each is affectively connected to the next by loose linear development.

Post development

- 5.36 The development will not result in any change to the A259 and its function as a key approach to either settlement.

5.37 Function and recreational value

- 5.38 The Gap does not lie within any nationally or locally designated landscapes, nor within any strategic viewing corridors protected by policy. The Site itself lies to the north of existing settlement, which itself lies north of the Chichester Harbour Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) (the northern boundary of the AONB is formed by the A259 Main Road) and to the south of the South Downs National Park (SDNP).

- 5.39 The Landscape Gap has limited recreational value with the exception of public rights of way which intersect or follow the boundary of the Gap including PROW 240,241, 243/1 and 204.
- 5.40 It does not, therefore provide a recreational function or a green lung into either settlement. Its function as a Landscape Gap is therefore predicated on 'its primary role is to prevent the merging of Hermitage and Southbourne and to protect the setting of these settlements.'
- 5.41 Development of the Site would not therefore negatively affect the recreational value of the green wedge.
- 5.42 **Potential for enhancement**
- 5.43 The development will improve and diversify the open spaces to the north of the railway line, improving the recreational offer of the wider landscape surrounding the settlements. However, it is assumed that, should development come forward, that any protected gap would be limited to the open land to the south of the railway line.
- 5.44 In these terms, the development can provide significant new planting belts along the length of the railway line, augmenting the existing landscape structure of the gap and providing a strong, defensible boundary to the Landscape Gap in the north. This will serve to protect the gap from future development pressure and so is a key enhancement to the Hermitage – Southbourne Landscape Gap.

6.0 Conclusions

6.1 The study has assessed the current condition and features of the Hermitage-Southbourne Landscape Gap to identify the relative contribution of its component parts to the physical or perceptual separation of the two settlements. The study has also analysed how development of the Site to the west of Southbourne, as set out on the framework masterplan (figure 7) will alter the function and integrity of the Gap. The following conclusions have been made:

- The landscape of the gap is relatively indistinct and its contribution to the setting and identity of Hermitage and Southbourne is limited to its semi-rural and agricultural land use.
- The area to the south of the railway line and east of Tuppenny Lane has the strongest association with the settlements of Hermitage and Southbourne and contributes most strongly to their setting. This association decreases to the north of the railway and to the northern boundary of the Site where the A27 exerts the greatest aural influence on the landscape. This will be further reinforced by the permitted built development to the immediate north of Hermitage.
- There is a distinct difference, however, between how this gap is perceived to the south and north of the railway line. To the south, the landscape is read as a direct physical open separation between the two settlements. To the north, however, the landscape is perceived as the wider open setting and so plays a reduced role in separation/preventing coalescence.
- The railway line and associated structural planting visually and physically severs to some degree the land to the north and south.
- A linear string of small, loosely nucleated settlements including Hermitage and Southbourne is distributed along the A259 between Havant and Chichester. Scattered post war development has resulted in sporadic, linear expansion of this settlement cluster which has resulted in these settlements being 'joined'.
- These settlements have a shared identity due to their close associations.
- The distance between the eastern boundary of Hermitage and western edge of Southbourne (excluding development on the A259) is approximately 300m at its narrowest point.
- The fields to the south of the railway line play a key physical role in the separation of the two settlements. To the north, the fields make a lesser contribution to separation and instead are part of the wider setting.
- Currently, the short section of the A259 and the loose linear development that exists along its length results in a weak sense of leaving or entering the settlements.
- The Landscape Gap has limited recreational value.

6.2 In its current state, therefore, the Site makes a small contribution to maintaining both physical and visual separation between Hermitage and Southbourne. The Site therefore is a peripheral open arable field that contributes to the wider setting only.

6.3 The distance between the eastern boundary of Hermitage and western edge of Southbourne (excluding development on the A259) is approximately 300m at its narrowest point. This would not be reduced by the promoted development. The

remaining area of the Landscape Gap to the south of the railway line would maintain sufficient spatial and visually open separation between Hermitage and Southbourne to preserve their distinctive identities.

- 6.4 Should the proposed Hallam Land development be permitted, this would lead to partial erosion of this open separation, compromising to some degree the functionality and integrity of the Landscape Gap. This would not alter or increase the functionality of the land to the north of the railway line in separation terms but rather would result in two partially coalesced settlements which are separated by a loose, fragmented pattern of built form and small interspersed open spaces.
- 6.5 The following landscape mitigation measures and key design objectives would be necessary to ensure any proposals are sensitively developed in the context of the Landscape Gap criteria appraised in the previous section.
- 6.6 Any development will need to:
- Retain and protect important landscape resources, which positively contribute to the character and setting of the Site, and which are visually significant.
 - Be seen as an extension of Southbourne and give careful consideration to the development's form, scale, height, massing and character in relation to the settlement edge character and landscape setting.
 - Strengthen field boundary vegetation in particular along the Site's southern boundary by creating appropriate landscape buffers. These buffers should be planted with infill tree planting to create a continuous tree canopy along the railway corridor and provide new enhancement planting such as hedgerows and scrub planting to create improved habitat corridors and to assist in assimilating the development into the immediate landscape and settlement setting.
 - Include measures to minimise night-time effects by careful design and location of lighting.
- 6.7 The area within the Site, with appropriate mitigation, has been identified as having considerable capacity for built / commercial development, factoring landscape character, visual amenity, connectivity and settlement pattern.
- 6.8 The mitigation strategy outlined above would serve to ensure the development assimilates with its settlement edge context, creating a gradual transition and soft interface between built townscape and open landscape. Importantly, the development would appear to be contiguous with the existing edge of Southbourne and so will preserve the integrity and function of the Hermitage – Southbourne Landscape Gap. Appropriate sustainable development of the site could be delivered without compromising the robustness or function of the gap, and so would not result in, or risk impact to the separate identities of Southbourne and Hermitage,

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