4.13 Landscape Setting of Crowborough

Settlement Profile

4.13.1 Crowborough is situated six miles to the south of Tunbridge Wells and approximately nine miles to the northwest of Uckfield, in the north of Wealden District. The town occupies a prominent position on the northern forest ridge of the High Weald, approximately six miles to the east of the Ashdown Forest.

4.13.2 Crowborough is a large nucleated town which is dissected by the A26 main road corridor. The western edge of the town is served by a mainline railway which connects the town of Uckfield in the south, with the London mainline to the northeast. The majority of business activity within the town is contained on the Millbrook, Farningham Road and Lexden Lodge Business Areas and in the Park Road Area of the town centre, which also houses a variety of offices and other businesses. Elsewhere in the town, there are smaller areas of industrial and commercial activity at Park Road, Connors Yard and on the former railway goods yard off Western Road.

4.13.3 The town centre provides the commercial core of the settlement with a variety of shops and offices which have developed in linear form from London Road, north of The Cross, along the High Street, Broadway and Croft Road to the south, and in an east-west direction either side of The Cross.

4.13.4 Crowborough also contains a large amount of residential development ranging from Victorian terraces, through post-war to modern housing estates. These housing areas or estates are set out along a network of roads and closes leading east-west off the main A26 road corridor. Crowborough has experienced significant growth over the last decade with the highest rate of new housing development among the Wealden Towns. On the western side of the town, Crowborough Warren has a distinctive character of detached properties set within extensive gardens, where tree cover, hedgerows and landscaping are the dominant visual elements that result in an idyllic quality. There are several small pockets of woodland and open space scattered within the urban fabric, in addition to Wolfe Recreation Ground to the east of the town, providing one of the largest areas.

Landscape Character

4.13.5 The landscape surrounding the settlement falls within the following County Landscape Character Area(s):

- Central High Weald (4) – see Section 4.3 for details
- Ashdown Forest (2) - see Section 4.3 for details

4.13.6 At the more local scale, as a result of its elevated position, Crowborough affords extensive views over its undulating landscape setting of woodland, farmland, ridges and ghylls within the High Weald AONB, which surrounds the settlement and abuts the settlement boundary in places. Distant southerly views to the South Downs also contribute to a recognisable sense of place. There is extensive woodland coverage within the landscape setting of the town, particularly to the north, northeast, west and southwest.

4.13.7 The key features and characteristics of the landscape around Crowborough are illustrated on Figure 4.8 and summarised below:

- **Remnant Historic Landscapes:** A patchwork of small-scale historic fields surrounds the settlement, often abutting the settlement edge. These are interspersed with large areas of Ancient Woodland, particularly to the north and west of the town. To both the north and south of the town, the historic field pattern between woodlands is predominantly comprised of cohesive and aggregate assarts, and regular piecemeal enclosure.
- **Large areas of woodland dominate the northern, western and eastern landscape setting of the town, providing a strong sense of enclosure.**
- **Culturally Important Landmarks:** Rotherfield Hall, a culturally important historic landmark is situated to the southeast of the Jarvis Brook area of Crowborough.
- **Landscape Detractors:** Several landscape detractors, including buildings at Crowborough Training Camp to the south of Crowborough Warren; buildings associated with the campsite and pumping station at the northern edge of the settlement, close to Luxford Farm; and industrial and commercial buildings at Jarvis Brook industrial estate to the southeast of the town.
- **Urban Edges:** The town is predominantly lined by treed, sensitive soft edges and woodland, with a few pockets of exposed or prominent urban edges along the A26 corridor in the north and at the southern edge of Alderbrook housing area in the south of the town.
- **Watercourses/Waterbodies:** Several small watercourses and ponds permeate the landscape setting of the town.
- **Significant Views/Key Ridgelines:** There is a significant view of Crowborough in its elevated position, set within its landscape setting, looking westwards from the Rotherfield road.
- **Footpaths/Bridleways:** A network of footpaths and bridleways connects Crowborough to its landscape setting. Crowborough is situated in an elevated position and there are therefore numerous key ridgelines within the setting of the settlement.
4.13.8 Areas of distinctive landscape that have been identified around the settlement are shown on Figure 4.8 as ‘Landscape Setting Areas’. The distinctive characteristics that define each Landscape Setting Area are highlighted within the table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Landscape Setting Area</th>
<th>Distinctive Characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1                      | • Large areas of Ancient Woodland, interspersed with small-scale, predominantly pastoral fields;  
                          • The caravan park at Luxford Farm is considered to be a landscape detractor, in close proximity to the settlement edge;  
                          • Strong landscape structure of mature hedgerows and trees. |
| 2                      | • Dense Ancient Woodlands dominate the eastern part of the area, providing a strong sense of enclosure;  
                          • Numerous stream corridors are a key feature;  
                          • Open views to the settlement edge in the west. |
| 3                      | • Strong sense of openness from parts of this area, particularly looking west along Rotherfield road, where a key view of Crowborough settlement edge can be gained;  
                          • A gently undulating landscape with a strong landscape structure. |
| 4                      | • Small-scale landscape pattern of ancient fields, lined with mature hedgerows and hedgerow trees;  
                          • Narrow, tree-lined road corridors;  
                          • An interconnected network of footpaths, connecting Crowborough to its landscape setting. |
| 5                      | • An undulating patchwork of small-scale, ancient fields and medium-scale Ancient Woodlands, which provide an intermittent sense of enclosure;  
                          • An interconnected network of rural, tree lined lanes and mature hedgerows. |
| 6                      | • Large areas of woodland contribute to an enclosed feel within much of the area;  
                          • Human influence on the landscape is apparent at Crowborough Training Camp in the west;  
                          • A mixture of historic and ancient, predominantly pastoral fields. |

Landscape Sensitivity

4.13.9 The inherent Landscape Sensitivity of each Landscape Setting Area, evaluated in line with the methodology set out within Section 2.4, is shown in the table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Landscape Setting Area</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strength of Place</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distinctiveness</td>
<td>Distinct</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuity</td>
<td>Ancient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visibility</td>
<td>Strong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Landscape Sensitivity</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Landscape Value

4.13.10 The inherent Landscape Value of each Landscape Setting Area, evaluated in line with the methodology set out within Section 2.4, is shown in the table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Landscape Setting Area</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Landscape Value</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Landscape Capacity

4.13.11 The indicative Landscape Capacity of each Landscape Setting Area to accommodate development, evaluated in line with the methodology set out within Section 2.4, is shown in the table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Landscape Setting Area</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Landscape Sensitivity</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Landscape Value</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Landscape Capacity</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.13.12 Landscape Setting Area 1 is considered to have Low Landscape Capacity as a result of its High Landscape Sensitivity and High Landscape Value. This area is predominantly within the High Weald AONB and contains large areas of Ancient Woodland and is therefore considered to have High Landscape Value. The strong, mature landscape structure of Ancient Woodland and mature hedgerows contribute to High Landscape Sensitivity.

4.13.13 Landscape Setting Area 2 is considered to have Low Landscape Capacity as a result of its High Landscape Sensitivity and High Landscape Value. Apart from a small tract of landscape, immediately adjacent to the settlement edge, this area is within the High Weald AONB and has a strong landscape structure of dense Ancient Woodlands in the eastern part of the area, resulting in High Landscape Value. There is a strongly recognisable pattern of Ancient Woodlands and stream corridors within this predominantly ancient landscape, resulting in a strong strength of place and High Landscape Sensitivity.

4.13.14 Landscape Setting Area 3 is considered to have Low Landscape Capacity as a result of its High Landscape Sensitivity and High Landscape Value. Apart from a small tract of landscape, immediately adjacent to the settlement edge, this area is within the High Weald AONB, resulting in High Landscape Value. There is an intermittent sense of enclosure, resulting from the undulating landform and presence of mature hedgerows and trees, however, strength of place is strong, a result of open views towards Crowborough and adjacent treed skylines. In addition to this, the strong landscape structure contributes to High Landscape Sensitivity.

4.13.15 Landscape Setting Area 4 is considered to have Low Landscape Capacity as a result of its Very High Landscape Sensitivity and High Landscape Value. Apart from a small tract of landscape, immediately adjacent to the settlement edge in the north, this area is within the High Weald AONB and as a result is considered to have High Landscape Value. This small-scale, intricate landscape has a strong pattern and landscape structure, comprising a patchwork of fields, which are lined with mature hedgerows. There is a strong sense of enclosure throughout much of the landscape within this area. These factors result in High Landscape Sensitivity.

4.13.16 Landscape Setting Area 5 is considered to have Low Landscape Capacity as a result of its High Landscape Sensitivity and High Landscape Value. Apart from a small tract of landscape, immediately adjacent to the settlement edge in the north, this area is within the High Weald AONB, resulting in High Landscape Value. The undulating patchwork of small-scale, ancient fields and medium-scale Ancient Woodlands, alongside the strong landscape structure of mature hedgerows, result in High Landscape Sensitivity.

4.13.17 Landscape Setting Area 6 is considered to have Moderate Landscape Capacity as a result of its Moderate Landscape Sensitivity and High Landscape Value. The area is within the High Weald AONB and is therefore considered to have High Landscape Value. Historic continuity is weaker than within adjacent Landscape Setting Areas, with fewer ancient or historic fields. Human influences are also apparent within this landscape, resulting in a moderate, rather than strong overall strength of place and Moderate Landscape Sensitivity.