

Planning and Transportation Policy Working Group	
Meeting Date	9 th June 2026
Report Title	Landscape Sensitivity Assessment – non strategic sites 2026
EMT Lead	Emma Wiggins, Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods
SMT Lead	Joanne Johnson, Head of Place
Lead Officer	Stuart Watson, Project Manager, Planning Policy
Classification	Open
Recommendations	To note the Landscape Sensitivity Assessment – non strategic sites 2026 and to provide any comments members have on the document and its findings.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to set out the approach to and summary findings of the Landscape Sensitivity Assessment – non strategic sites 2026 (Appendix I). The assessment is in draft and is being presented to members for their information and for the opportunity to provide comments early in the process¹.
- 1.2 The findings of this assessment will go on to inform landscape policy criteria for non strategic site allocations where it has been deemed there are likely impacts on the wider landscape.

2. Background

- 2.1 The aim of the assessment is to ascertain the generic suitability of selected sites in landscape and visual terms to accommodate development in principal, and to determine any site-specific constraints and opportunities for mitigation and enhancement. The assessment does not propose specific landscape enhancements in relation to development proposals.
- 2.2 The assessment draws on both existing studies carried out by the consultants on behalf of the Council and the Natural England guidance on Landscape Sensitivity.² The assessment usefully sets out that the Natural England guidance describes landscape sensitivity, within the context of spatial planning and land management, as:

¹ The document is a 1st draft and may contain minor typos and matters for completion.

² An approach to landscape sensitivity assessment – to inform spatial planning and land management’ (Natural England, 2019)

“a measure of the resilience, or robustness, of a landscape to withstand specified change... without undue negative effects on the landscape and visual baseline and their value”.

- 2.3 The assessment focuses on 21 sites that have been considered by officers to have landscape impacts from those selected for allocation in the Local Plan by Full Council on 1 April 2026. Details of the sites and their overall typical sensitivities from the assessment can be found at table 1 after paragraph 2.8 of this report. One site Amethyst Horticulture, Land at Newington Nurseries, London Road, Newington, ME9 7NY has been assessed for both housing and employment on its southern parcel with housing only for its northern parcel, this addresses the physical constraints of the site layout. Land East of Faversham expansion has been assessed both for housing, employment and mixed uses so that all considerations for the site have been assessed with the employment assessment specific for the site’s proposed allocation within the Local Plan.
- 2.3 To assess the sensitivity of potential development of the 21 sites, generic forms of development that will likely come forward within the borough have been produced in the assessment. However, it should be considered that in practice each development application will be considered on its own merit. Details on the approach to typologies are set out in detail in chapter 1 of the assessment. The typologies are:
- Residential development and associated infrastructure;
 - Employment development and associated infrastructure; and,
 - Mixed-use development and associated infrastructure.
- 2.4 Chapter 1 goes on to set out that the assessment uses a range of sensitivity indicators as a basis for a qualitative assessment of landscape sensitivity for each site. The sensitivity indicators in the assessment are drawn from the Natural England guidance and the consultants’ experience of landscape sensitivity and the precedent of previous sensitivity studies undertaken in Swale. The indicators are:
- Physical character (including landform, scale and field pattern)
 - Natural character
 - Historic landscape character and time depth
 - Character of the settlement and its relationship with the landscape (including coalescence)
 - Visual prominence, skyline and views
 - Perceptual and scenic qualities (including access and recreation)
- 2.5 For each of the 21 sites assessed the result are presented with the following information provided:

- A brief description of the site location and existing landscape / land cover.
 - A map of the site and surrounds (on an aerial base) showing the location.
 - A map of the site and surrounds (on a 1:25,000 OS base) showing the designations used in the study.
 - A description of the key characteristics of the relevant Landscape Character Area, taken from the Landscape Character Assessment.
 - Two representative photos.
 - An analysis of landscape and visual sensitivity under subheadings for each of the indicators listed above. A judgement on the level of sensitivity on a 5-point scale for each indicator.
 - A summary of overall sensitivity, with any identified clear and sizable variations in sensitivity.
 - A summary of the potential effects the development typology could have on the site.
 - A summary of the potential for mitigation and enhancement.
 - An illustrated map of the site and surrounds indicating key constraints and opportunities, summarising the information within the assessment³.
- 2.5 Chapter 3 of the assessment then provides development guidance principles for landscape matters and the detailed assessments of the 21 sites are set out within Appendix A of the assessment. For ease of reference the sites summary table from chapter 2 of the assessment is set out below after paragraph 2.8.
- 2.7 There are limitations to the assessment. Landscape sensitivity of the sites has been set out using typologies of likely development whilst the exact location, layout, design or mitigation proposed is not known as these will be matters for planning applications. Therefore, the findings of the assessment should not be interpreted as definitive but provide a steer for site allocation policy criteria in the Regulation 19 Local Plan and that further work maybe required as part of a planning application.
- 2.8 From table 1 below it can be determined that of the 21 sites officers had landscape concerns about only Land at Long Field, Chaffes Lane and Land East of Faversham expansion for employment have a moderate to high sensitivity. Through drafting of the Local Plan and consideration of the potential mitigation and enhancement criteria set out in the assessment most landscape and visual effects can be avoided or minimised.

³ As an initial draft document an illustrated map is provided for Lion field the first site in the study. Once the matters for the illustrated maps is agreed alongside all feedback on this draft then maps will be produced for all the sites.

Table 1: Assessed sites summary (Table 3.1 Landscape Sensitivity Assessment – non strategic sites 2026 p.23)

Reference	Site location	Development typology	Sensitivity
SHELAA/393	Land at Lion Field	Housing	Moderate
SHELAA/381	Syndale Park, London Road, Faversham, Kent, ME13 0RH	Housing	Moderate
SHELAA/402	Hollybush Farm Caravan Park, Oak Lane, Minster-on- Sea, ME12 3QR	Housing	Moderate
SHELAA/408	Estuary View, Bell Farm Lane, Minster-on-Sea, ME12 4JA	Housing	Low-Moderate
SHELAA/412	Golden Leas Holiday Park, Bell Farm Lane, Minster-on-Sea, ME12 4JA	Housing	Low-Moderate
CFS2024/126 (south of railway line)	Amethyst Horticulture, Land at Newington Nurseries, London Road, Newington, ME9 7NY	Housing	Low-Moderate
CFS2024/126 (south of railway line)	Amethyst Horticulture, Land at Newington Nurseries, London Road, Newington, ME9 7NY	Employment	Low-Moderate
SHELAA/368 (north of railway line)	Amethyst Horticulture, Land at Newington Nurseries, London Road, Newington, ME9 7NY	Housing	Moderate
SHELAA/277	Barrow Green Farm, Barrow Green	Housing	Low-Moderate
SHELAA/206	Land at Norton Ash Garden Centre	Housing	Moderate
SHELAA/119	Land west of Lower Hartlip Road/Munn's Lane	Housing	Moderate
SHELAA/324	Home Farm, Breach Lane, Lower Halstow, ME9 7DB	Housing	Low-Moderate
SHELAA/310	Land adjacent to Oak Lane - Chaffes Lane (Site B)	Housing	Low-Moderate
SHELAA/306	Land at Forge Lane, Upchurch	Housing	Moderate

Reference	Site location	Development typology	Sensitivity
SHELAA/308	Land south of Forge Lane and Holywell Primary School and East of Chaffes Lane	Housing	Moderate
SHELAA/312	Land off Chaffes Lane	Housing	Moderate
SHELAA/319	Land at Long Field, Chaffes Lane	Housing	Moderate-High
CFS50	Land East of Faversham expansion	Housing	Moderate
CFS50	Land East of Faversham expansion	Employment	Moderate-High
CFS50	Land East of Faversham expansion	Mixed	Moderate
CFS2024/129	Smeed Dean Works, Eurolink Industrial Estate, Castle Road	Employment	Moderate
CFS2024/188	Land north of Keycol Hill (Yellow/Blue parcel)	Employment	Moderate
LPR247 0 (R15)	Lamberhurst Farm, Yorkletts - proposed southern expansion	Employment	Low-Moderate
CFS5 (R8)	Waterham Industrial Estate - expansion east	Employment	Low-Moderate

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 To note the Landscape Sensitivity Assessment – non strategic sites 2026 and to provide any comments members have on the document and its findings.

4. Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

- 4.1 The matters in this report concern informing members on the development of the Local Plan evidence base.
- 4.2 Members could choose not to note the Landscape Sensitivity Assessment – non strategic sites 2026. However, choosing this option should be rejected as the evidence will provide a robust and updated position for policy drafting and the Local Plan examination in public.

5. Consultation Undertaken or Proposed

- 5.1 No formal consultation has been undertaken on the Landscape Sensitivity Assessment – non strategic sites 2026 as it forms part of the evidence base of the Local Plan Review. The Regulation 19 Local Plan will be subject to a period of formal consultation at which point comments will be invited on the Plan, its policies and the supporting evidence base.

6. Implications

Issue	Implications
Corporate Plan	The proposals in the report align with the following Corporate Plan action: • A Local Plan with local needs and capacity at its heart.
Financial, Resource and Property	The Local Plan work program is fully funded across a combination of base budget, committed reserves and a contribution from the Government's Local Plans Delivery Fund.
Legal, Statutory and Procurement	No implications identified at this stage
Crime and Disorder	No implications identified at this stage.
Environment and Climate/Ecological Emergency	This evidence will help to minimise and mitigate impacts on landscapes from proposed allocations within the Local Plan.

Health and Wellbeing	No implications identified at this stage.
Safeguarding of Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults	No implications identified at this stage.
Risk Management and Health and Safety	No implications identified at this stage.
Equality and Diversity	No implications identified at this stage.
Privacy and Data Protection	No implications identified at this stage.
Local Government Reorganisation	The current Local Plan timetable expects the Local Plan to be submitted for its Examination in Public and to be adopted before local government reorganisation is expected to be complete.

7. Appendices

Appendix I: Landscape Sensitivity Assessment – non strategic sites 2026