

Landscape Proof of Evidence Appendices

In Respect of Outline Planning Application with all Matters Reserved Except for Access, for up to 80 Dwellings with Associated Landscaping, Open Space, Infrastructure and Vehicular and Pedestrian Accesses

At Land at Colwell Farm, Lewes Road, Haywards Heath, West Sussex

On behalf of Miller Homes Limited

Date: 19 June 2026 | Pegasus Ref: P25-2536

PINS Ref: 6005786 LPA Ref: DM/25/O445

Author: Andrew Cook BA (Hons) MLD CMLI MISEP Env



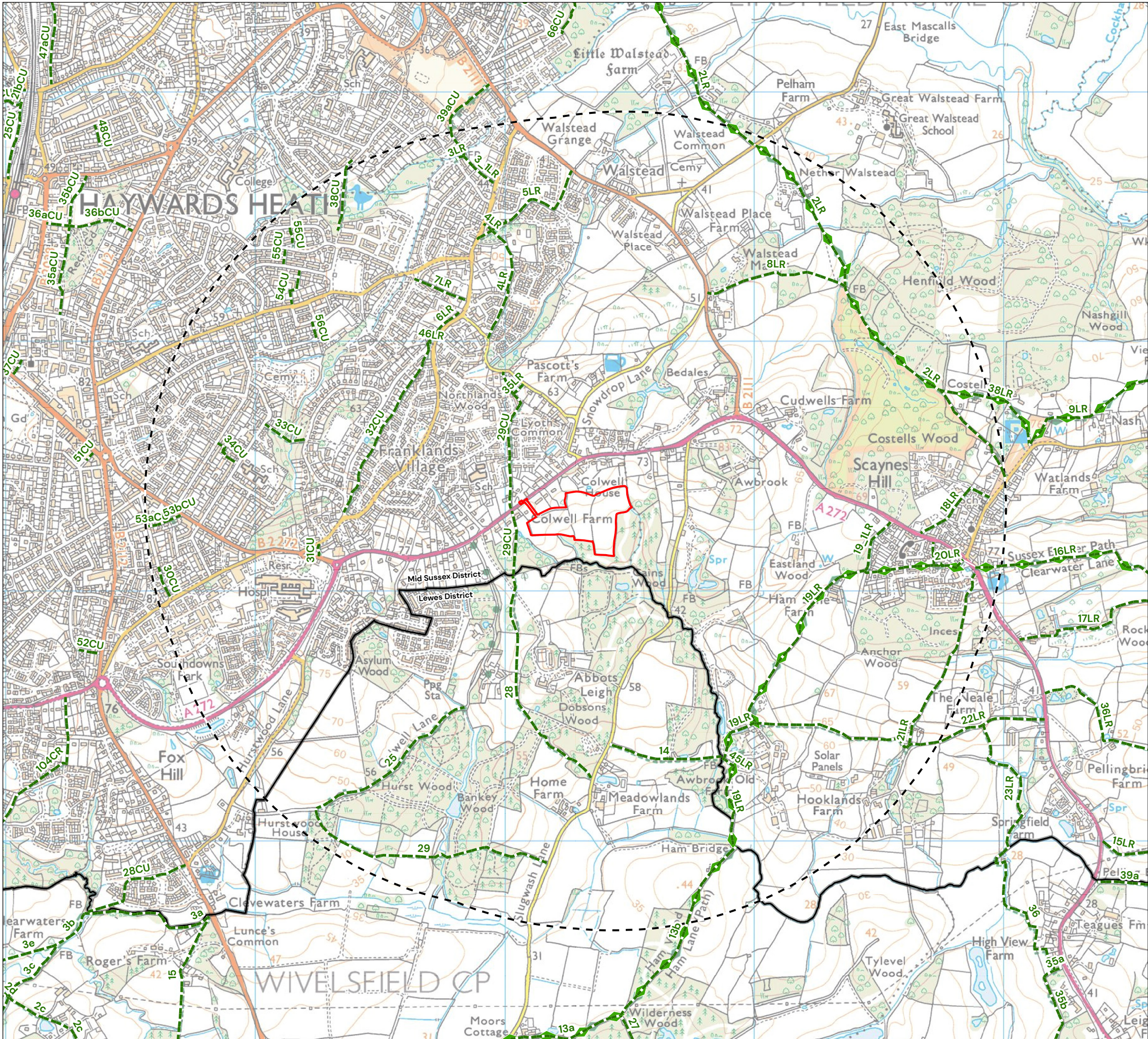
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APPENDIX 1: Site Location Plan with Public Right of Way References

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APPENDIX 2: Illustrative Landscape and Ecological Design Plan



Existing vegetation to be retained

- root protection area (RPA) indicated by pink dashed line

- canopy extent edged in solid thin white line

Ancient woodland buffer indicated by white dashed line

- refer to FLAC TSRRP 43-1039.04-C for detail

Existing vegetation to be removed

- refer to FLAC TSRRP 43-1039.04-C for detail

Lewes Road Conservation Area

Grade II listed building (Colwell House)

Public Right of Way (PRoW)

Proposed native feature trees (6 no.)

Proposed native trees (120 no.)

Proposed street trees (21 no.)

Indicative private garden trees

Proposed native hedgerow planting (571 lin. m, excluding hedgerow to private gardens)

Proposed native shrub planting (2465 sqm)

Indicative wildlife attractive shrub planting to plots

Proposed marginal planting to SuDS basin

Area of proposed species-rich grassland to public open space (0.36 ha)

- i.e. Emergent E4 Meadow Mixture for Clay Soils, or similar

Area of proposed amenity grassland / mown edge to road and path (0.28 ha) - i.e. Emergent E522 Strong Lawn Grass Mixture, or similar

Area of wet meadow to SuDS basin (0.21 ha)

- i.e. Emergent E48 Meadow Mixture for Wetlands, or similar

Area of proposed shade-tolerant grassland to existing hedgerow and woodland to increase ecological value (113 ha) - i.e. Emergent E11 Hedgerow Mixture, or similar

Indicative area of rear garden

Proposed hedges footprint

Proposed post and rail fencing to demarcate perimeter as shown (approx. 539.3 lin. m) - location confirmed with ecologist

Proposed stock-proof deer fencing to demarcate perimeter as shown (approx. 59.9 lin. m) - location confirmed with ecologist

Location for 10m wide dark corridor

Location for pumping station

Indicative location for reptile receptor

Indicative location for Local Equipped Area for Play (LEAP) - O.04 ha

Existing gaps in field boundary incorporated into layout

Existing gaps in field boundary to enable pedestrian route within public open space

Areas enclosed by proposed fencing are managed primarily for biodiversity enhancement and ecological mitigation and are not intended for public access

INDICATIVE PLANTING SCHEDULE

PROPOSED NATIVE FEATURE TREE PLANTING

Species	Girth (cm)	Height (cm)	Form	Root
Quercus robur	16-18	400-450	3x: Extra Heavy Standard; clear stem min. 175-200cm; 5 breaks	R8
Tilia cordata	16-18	400-450	3x: Extra Heavy Standard; clear stem min. 200cm	R8

PROPOSED NATIVE STREET TREE PLANTING

Species	Girth (cm)	Height (cm)	Form	Root
Acer campestre	12-14	350-425	Heavy Standard; clear stem min. 200cm; 5 breaks	45-80L
Betula pendula	12-14	350-425	Heavy Standard; clear stem min. 200cm; 5 breaks	45-80L
Carpinus betulus	12-14	350-425	Heavy Standard; clear stem min. 200cm; 5 breaks	45-80L
Prunus avium	12-14	350-425	Heavy Standard; clear stem min. 200cm; 5 breaks	45-80L

PROPOSED NATIVE TREE PLANTING

Species	Girth (cm)	Height (cm)	Form	Root
Alnus glutinosa	10-12	300-350	2x: Select Standard; clear stem min. 200cm; 4 breaks	R8
Alnus incana	10-12	300-350	2x: Select Standard; clear stem min. 200cm; 4 breaks	R8
Betula pendula (MS)	10-12	300-350	Multi-stem; bushy; min. 3 stems min.	35-45L
Betula pubescens	10-12	300-350	2x: Select Standard; clear stem min. 200cm; 4 breaks	R8
Corylus avellana (MS)	10-12	300-350	Multi-stem; bushy; min. 3 stems min.	35-45L
Fagus sylvatica	10-12	300-350	2x: Select Standard; clear stem min. 200cm; 4 breaks	R8
Malus sylvestris	10-12	300-350	2x: Select Standard; clear stem min. 200cm; 4 breaks	R8
Prunus padus	10-12	300-350	2x: Select Standard; clear stem min. 200cm; 4 breaks	R8
Prunus spinosa	10-12	300-350	2x: Select Standard; clear stem min. 200cm; 4 breaks	R8
Salix alba	10-12	300-350	2x: Select Standard; clear stem min. 200cm; 4 breaks	R8
Salix cinerea	10-12	300-350	2x: Select Standard; clear stem min. 200cm; 4 breaks	R8
Sorbus aria	10-12	300-350	2x: Select Standard; clear stem min. 200cm; 4 breaks	R8
Sorbus aucuparia	10-12	300-350	2x: Select Standard; clear stem min. 200cm; 4 breaks	R8
Sorbus torminalis	10-12	300-350	2x: Select Standard; clear stem min. 200cm; 4 breaks	R8

PROPOSED NATIVE HEDGEROW MIX

To be planted at 0.45 centres in double staggered rows (5 per linear metre)

Species	Mix %	Height (cm)	Form	Root
Cornus sanguinea	10	60-80	1-1/2 branched; 3 breaks	B
Corylus avellana	20	60-80	1-2 branched; 3 breaks	B
Crataegus monogyna	50	125-150	2x: Feathered; 3 breaks	B
Ilex aquifolium	5	60-80	Leader with laterals	5L
Sambucus nigra	5	80-100	1-1/2 branched; 3 breaks	B
Viburnum opulus	5	100-125	1-1/2 branched; 3 breaks	B
Rosa carina	5	60-80	1-1/2 branched; 3 breaks	B

PROPOSED SINGLE SPECIES NATIVE HEDGEROW

To be planted at 0.45 centres in double staggered rows (5 per linear metre)

Species	Height (cm)	Form	Root
Cornus sanguinea	80-100	Branched; 5 breaks	10L
Corylus avellana	80-100	Branched; 4 breaks	10L
Crataegus monogyna	80-100	Branched; 4 breaks	10L
Ilex aquifolium	80-100	Leader with laterals	10L
Prunus spinosa	80-100	Branched; 4 breaks	10L
Rosa carina	80-100	Branched; 4 breaks	10L

PROPOSED NATIVE SHRUB PLANTING MIX 1

To be planted at 3m²

Species	Mix %	Height (cm)	Form	Root
Crataegus monogyna	35	80-100	1-2/3 breaks	B
Corylus avellana	10	60-80	1-2 branched; 3 breaks	B
Ilex aquifolium	5	60-80	Leader with laterals	5L
Ligustrum vulgare	20	80-100	Q1/2 branched; 3 breaks	B
Rosa carina	5	60-80	1-1/2 branched; 3 breaks	B
Sambucus nigra	10	60-80	1-1/2 branched; 3 breaks	B
Viburnum opulus	15	80-100	1-2 branched; 3 breaks	B

PROPOSED NATIVE SHRUB PLANTING MIX 2

To be planted at 3m²

Species	Mix %	Height (cm)	Form	Root
Crataegus monogyna	35	80-100	1-2/3 breaks	B
Corylus avellana	10	60-80	1-2 branched; 3 breaks	B
Rosa carina	15	60-80	1-1/2 branched; 3 breaks	B
Salix alba	20	60-80	Q1/1 Cutting	B
Salix cinerea	20	60-80	Q1/1 Cutting	B
Sambucus nigra	10	60-80	1-1/2 branched; 3 breaks	B
Viburnum opulus	10	80-100	1-2 branched; 3 breaks	B

PROPOSED MARGINAL PLANTING MIX

To be planted at 3m²

Species	Mix %	Specification	Root
Carex acutiformis	20	Full Pot	IL
Carex ornithopus	20	Full Pot	0.5L
Filipendula ulmaria	20	Full Pot	IL
Glyceria maxime	20	Full Pot	IL
Lythrum salicaria	20	Full Pot	2L

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LAND NORTH OF COLWELL FARM – ILLUSTRATIVE LANDSCAPE & ECOLOGICAL DESIGN PLAN

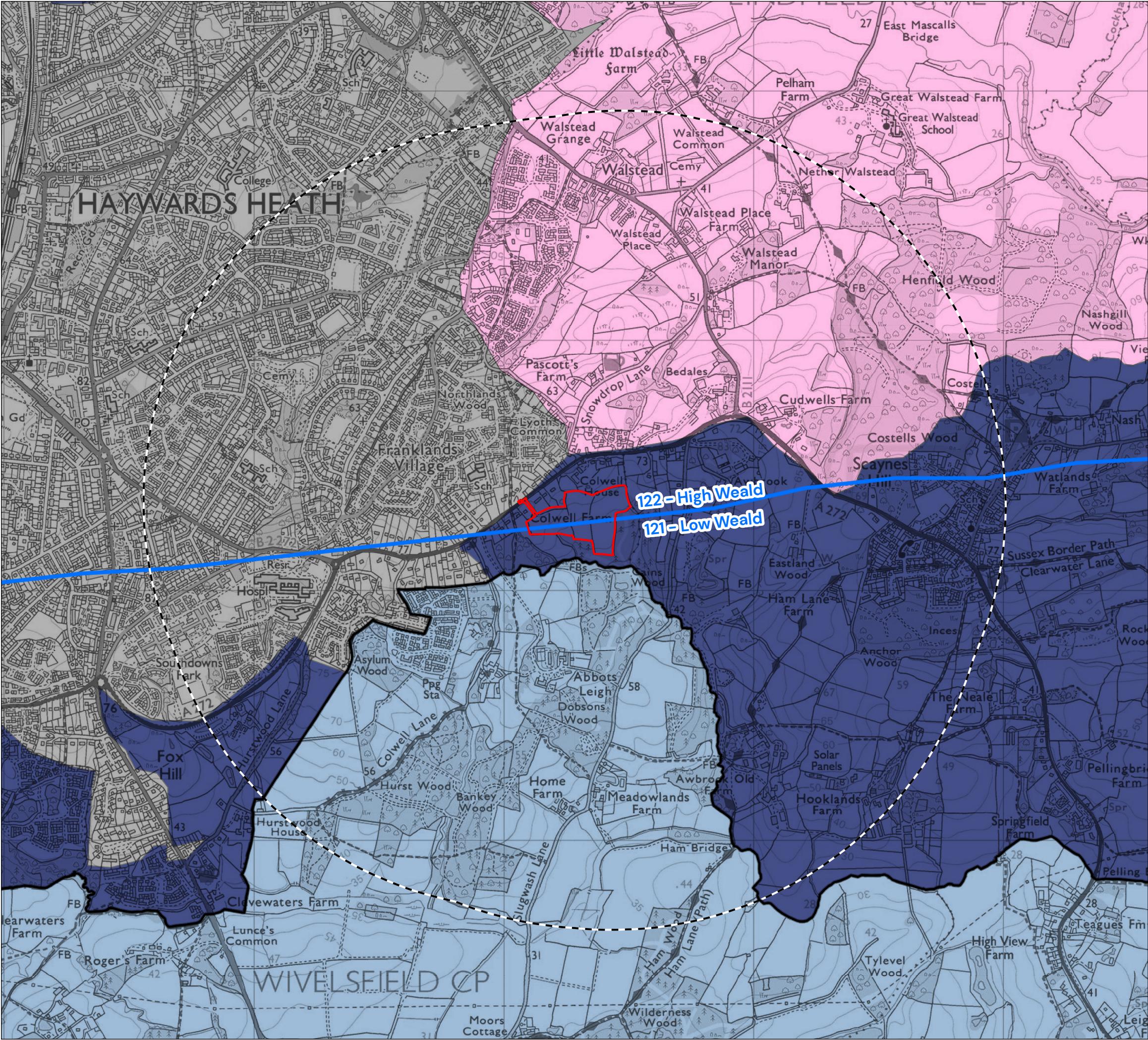
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APPENDIX 3: Landscape Character Plan

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KEY

Site Boundary

1.5km Study Area

District Boundary

National Landscape Character Areas

The East Sussex County Landscape Assessment (2016)

Local Landscape Character Areas

14: Western Low Weald

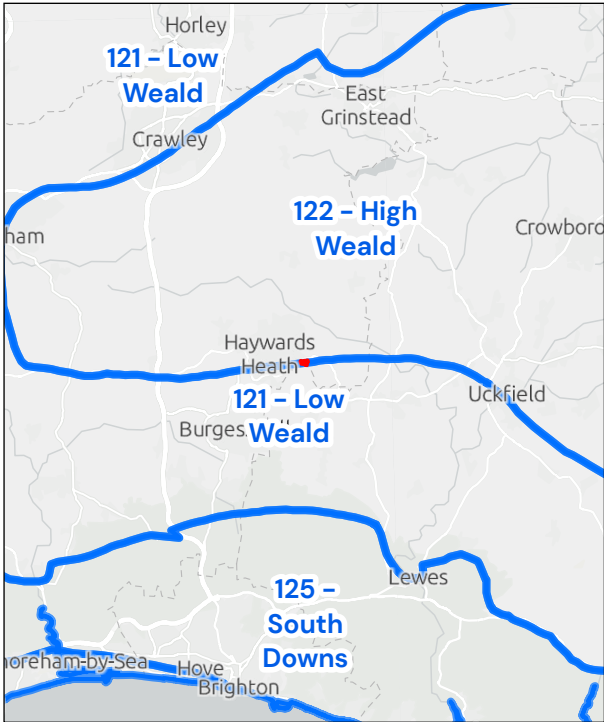
A Landscape Character Assessment for Mid Sussex (2005)

Landscape Character Areas

Haywards Heath

9 - Ouse Valley

10 - High Weald Fringes



REV	DATE	DESCRIPTION

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER PLAN

COLWELL FARM

MILLER HOMES

DATE	SCALE		DRAWN	APPROVED
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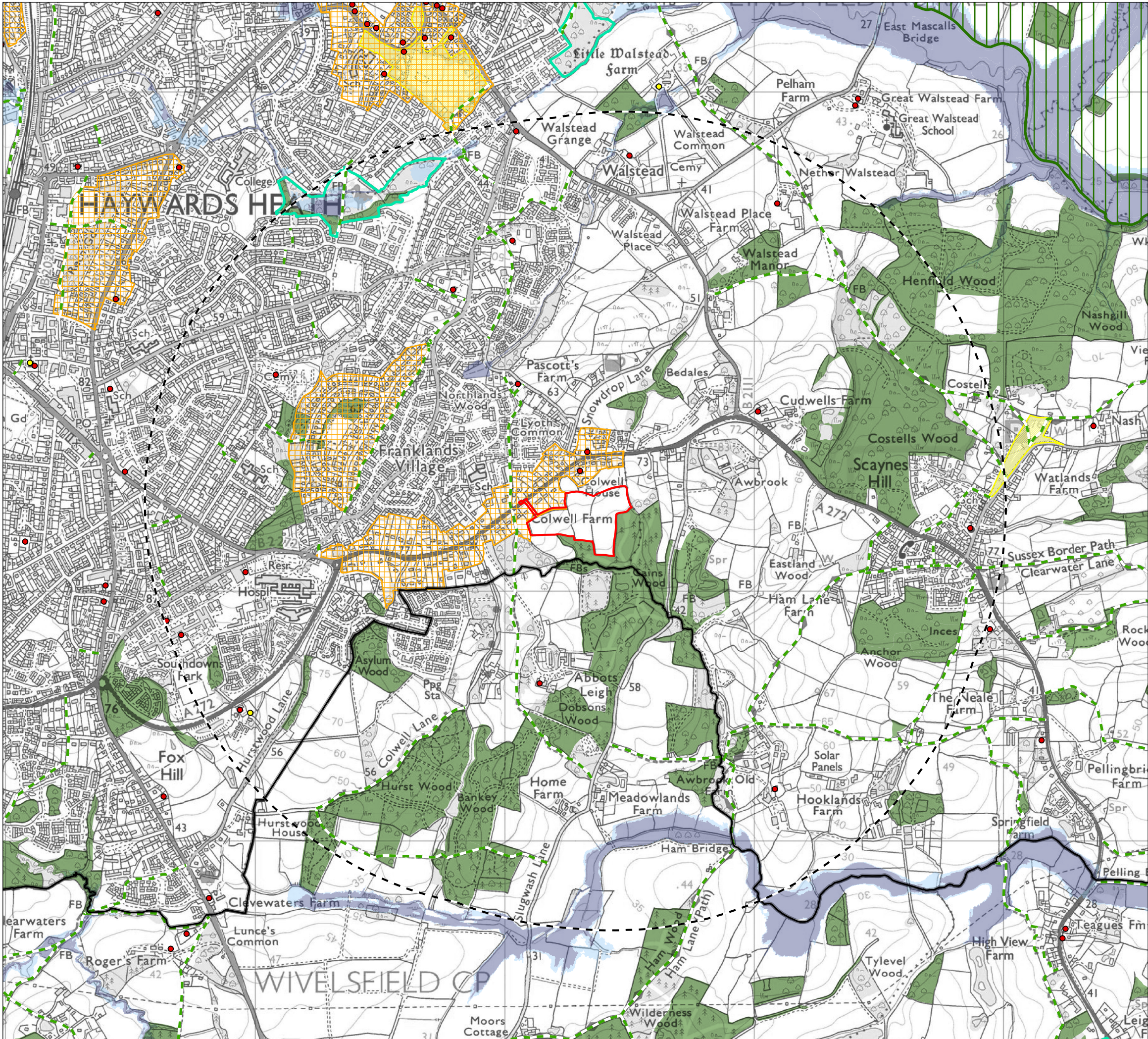
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APPENDIX 4: Environmental Designations Plan

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- KEY**
- Site Boundary
 - 1.5km Study Area
 - District Boundary
 - Grade II* Listed Building
 - Grade II Listed Building
 - Public Rights of Way
 - CROW Access Land
 - High Weald National Landscape
 - Conservation Area
 - Local Nature Reserves
 - Ancient Woodland
 - Flood Zone 2
 - Flood Zone 3

REV	DATE	DESCRIPTION
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ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGNATION PLAN

COLWELL FARM

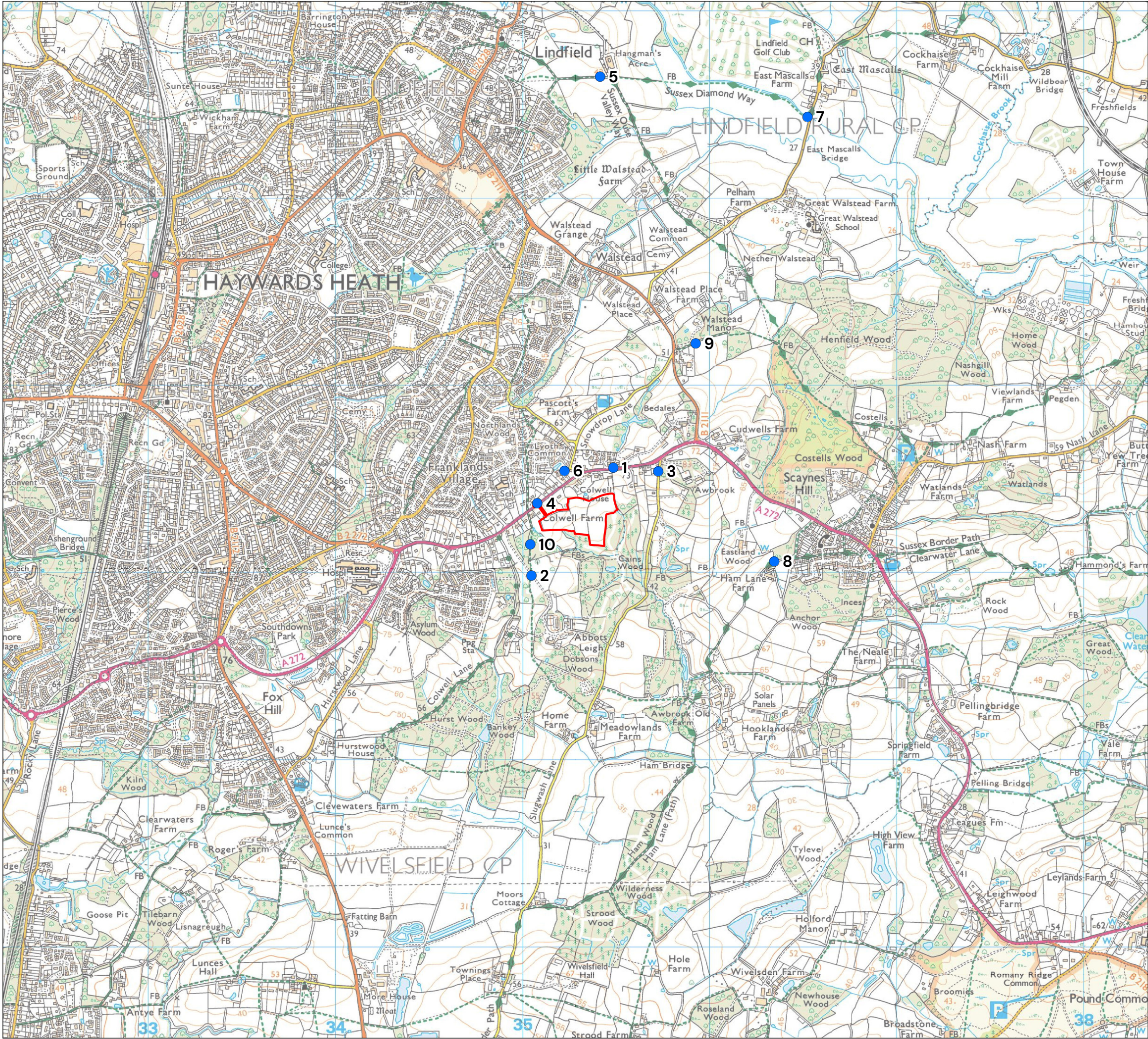
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APPENDIX 5: LVIA Viewpoint Location Plan



KEY

Site Boundary

Viewpoint Location

REV	DATE	DESCRIPTION
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LVIA VIEWPOINT LOCATION PLAN

COLWELL FARM

MILLER HOMES

DATE	SCALE	DRAWN	APPROVED
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APPENDIX 6: Landscape & Visual Impact Summary Schedule

Landscape and Visual Effects Schedule

All effects are adverse unless otherwise stated

Landscape Effects							
Receptor	Value	Susceptibility	Sensitivity	Magnitude – Year 1	Effect – Year 1	Magnitude – Year 15	Effect – Year 15
The site and its immediate visual environs	Medium	Medium	Medium	High	Major	High	Major
NCA 122 High Weald and NCA 121 Low Weald – beyond the site and its immediate visual environs	Medium	Medium	Medium	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible
HW4 High Weald Fringes LCA – beyond the site and its immediate visual environs	Medium	Medium	Medium	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible
HW3 Ouse Valley LCA – beyond the site and its immediate visual environs	Medium	Medium	Medium	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible
C3 Ditchling Common Western Low Weald LCA – beyond the site and its immediate visual environs	Medium	Medium	Medium	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible
Topography	Medium	Medium	Medium	Low	Minor	Low	Minor
Trees/Tree Cover	High	High	High	Low	Moderate	Low (beneficial)	Moderate (beneficial)
Hedgerows	High	High	High	Low	Moderate	Low (beneficial)	Moderate (beneficial)
Land Use/Land Cover	Medium	Medium	Medium	High	Major	High	Major
Public Rights of Way/Public Access *(as a recreational resource)	High	High	High	None	None	None	None
Water Features	High	High	High	Low	Moderate (beneficial)	Low	Moderate (beneficial)

Landscape and Visual Effects Schedule

All effects are adverse unless otherwise stated

Visual Effects							
Receptor	Value	Susceptibility	Sensitivity	Magnitude – Year 1	Effect – Year 1	Magnitude – Year 15	Effect – Year 15
Viewpoint 1 – road user	Medium	Medium	Medium	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible
Viewpoint 2 – PRoW user	Medium	High	High	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible
Viewpoint 3 – road user	Medium	Medium	Medium	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible
Viewpoint 4 – road user	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium	Moderate	Medium	Moderate
Viewpoint 5 – PRoW user	Medium	High	High	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible
Viewpoint 6 – residential	Medium	High	High	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible
Viewpoint 7 – PRoW user	High	High	High	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible
Viewpoint 8 – PRoW user Road user	Medium Medium	High Medium	High Medium	Negligible Negligible	Negligible Negligible	Negligible Negligible	Negligible Negligible
Viewpoint 9 – PRoW user	Medium	High	High	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible
Viewpoint 10 – PRoW user	Medium	High	High	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible



APPENDIX 7: National Character Area 121: Low Weald

Introduction & Summary

Description

Opportunities

Key facts
and data

Landscape
change

Analysis



www.naturalengland.org.uk

NATURAL
ENGLAND

Introduction

As part of Natural England's responsibilities as set out in the Natural Environment White Paper¹, Biodiversity 2020² and the European Landscape Convention³, we are revising profiles for England's 159 National Character Areas (NCAs). These are areas that share similar landscape characteristics, and which follow natural lines in the landscape rather than administrative boundaries, making them a good decision-making framework for the natural environment.

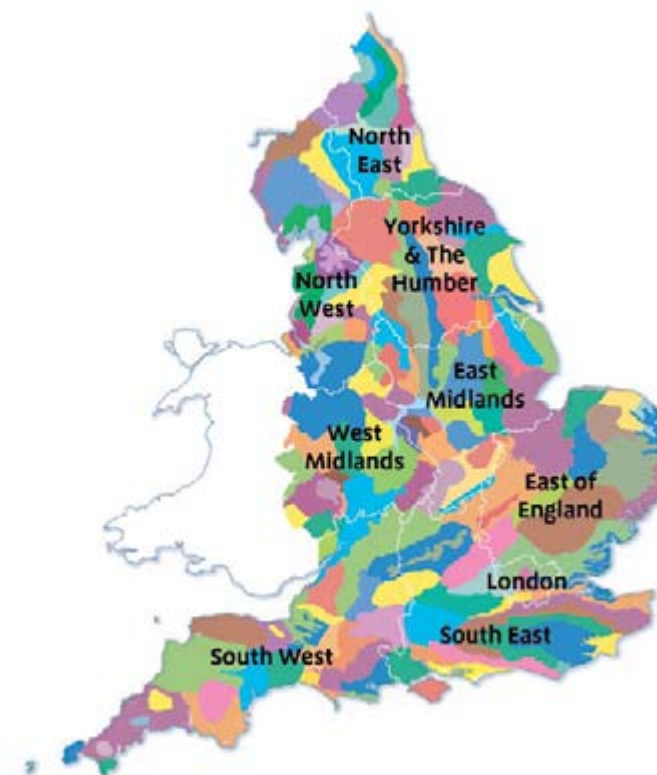
NCA profiles are guidance documents which can help communities to inform their decision-making about the places that they live in and care for. The information they contain will support the planning of conservation initiatives at a landscape scale, inform the delivery of Nature Improvement Areas and encourage broader partnership working through Local Nature Partnerships. The profiles will also help to inform choices about how land is managed and can change.

Each profile includes a description of the natural and cultural features that shape our landscapes, how the landscape has changed over time, the current key drivers for ongoing change, and a broad analysis of each area's characteristics and ecosystem services. Statements of Environmental Opportunity (SEOs) are suggested, which draw on this integrated information. The SEOs offer guidance on the critical issues, which could help to achieve sustainable growth and a more secure environmental future.

NCA profiles are working documents which draw on current evidence and knowledge. We will aim to refresh and update them periodically as new information becomes available to us.

We would like to hear how useful the NCA profiles are to you. You can contact the NCA team by emailing ncaprofiles@naturalengland.org.uk

National Character Areas map



¹ The Natural Choice: Securing the Value of Nature, Defra (2011; URL: www.official-documents.gov.uk/document/cm80/8082/8082.pdf)

² Biodiversity 2020: A Strategy for England's Wildlife and Ecosystem Services, Defra (2011; URL: www.defra.gov.uk/publications/files/pb13583-biodiversity-strategy-2020-111111.pdf)

³ European Landscape Convention, Council of Europe (2000; URL: <http://conventions.coe.int/Treaty/en/Treaties/Html/176.htm>)

Summary

The Low Weald National Character Area (NCA) is a broad, low-lying clay vale which largely wraps around the northern, western and southern edges of the High Weald. It is predominantly agricultural, supporting mainly pastoral farming owing to heavy clay soils, with horticulture and some arable on lighter soils in the east, and has many densely wooded areas with a high proportion of ancient woodland. Around 9 per cent of it falls within the adjacent designated landscapes of the Surrey Hills, Kent Downs and High Weald Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the South Downs National Park. Around 23 per cent of the area is identified as greenbelt land.

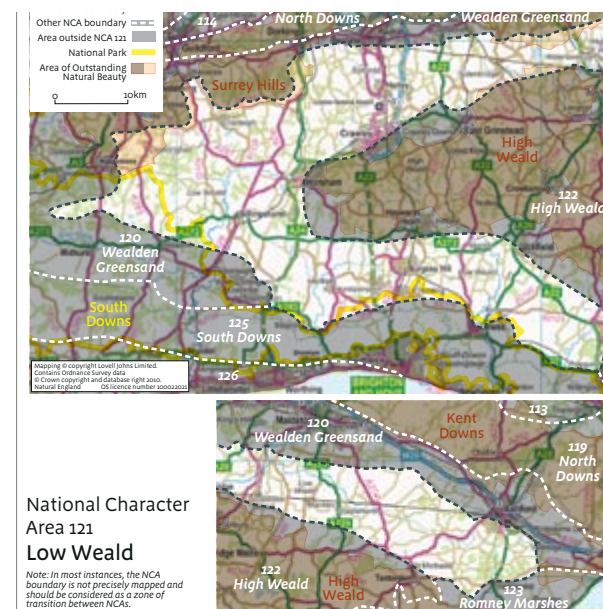
It is important for biodiversity, being rated among the most important NCAs for richness of bat species, bullfinch and lesser-spotted woodpecker, and several plants, including spiked rampion, plus a variety of rare lichens. It also supports rare invertebrates, notably woodland butterflies. Ebernoe Common and The Mens are Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and 5 ha of the Lewes Downs SAC also extend into the area. There are 44 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). Ebernoe Common is also a National Nature Reserve, along with Ham Street Woods. The NCA is identified as a potential Forest District⁴ so opportunities exist to achieve huge benefits by connecting existing woodlands.

The area has many sites that are critical for the understanding of complex Wealden geology, including 11 geological SSSI. There are also important historical sites, many associated with the Wealden iron industry, and nearly 900 ha of Registered Parks and Gardens, with many more, smaller designed landscapes.

⁴Preliminary Nature Conservation Objectives for Natural Areas – Woodland and Forestry, Reid, C.M. and Kirby, K.J., English Nature Research Report 239 (1997)

The area is generally wet and woody. It is dissected by flood plains and its impermeable clay soil and low-lying nature make many areas prone to localised flooding. Ponds are common, often a legacy of iron and brick-making industries. Gill woodland is a particular feature and a valuable habitat, scarce elsewhere in the south-east of England.

Despite its proximity to London and continuing pressure for development, the Low Weald remains essentially rural in character with small-scale villages nestled in woodland and many traditional farm buildings, including oast houses, which are typical in the east.



Click map to enlarge; click again to reduce.

Statements of Environmental Opportunity

SEO 1: Protect, manage and significantly enhance the area's intricate and characteristic mix of semi-natural ancient woodlands, gill woodland, shaws, small field copses, hedgerows and individual trees to reduce habitat fragmentation and benefit biodiversity, while seeking to improve and encourage access for health and wellbeing and reinforce sense of local identity.

SEO 2: Conserve and enhance the distinctive historical aspects of the Low Weald landscape, including its important geological features and sites of heritage interest, particularly those associated with Wealden iron industry, enabling access, continued research, interpretation, understanding and enjoyment of the extensive and nationally significant resources.

SEO 3: Work at a landscape scale to improve the quality, state and structure of all Wealden rivers, streams and standing waterbodies and their appropriate flood plains, taking account of water quality, water flow and hydraulic connection with the flood plain, while seeking to enhance biodiversity, historic features and recreation opportunities and reinforcing sense of place.

SEO 4: Maintain the sustainable but productive pastoral landscape of the Low Weald, while expanding and connecting semi-natural habitats to benefit biodiversity, regulating soil and water quality by promoting good agricultural practice, and maintaining the extent and quality of unimproved permanent grassland and meadows. Restore degraded neutral grasslands to buffer sites and encourage pollinators and predators for pest regulation.



Views of the South Downs from Low Weald.

Description

Physical and functional links to other National Character Areas

The High and Low Weald form an area known from Saxon times as the Weald; they remain inextricably linked. The Low Weald is a broad, low-lying clay vale which largely wraps around the northern, western and southern edges of the High Weald National Character Area (NCA) in a rough horseshoe shape. In the far east, its northern tip ends at a sandstone cliff which marks the boundary of Romney Marshes NCA while the southern tip adjoins Pevensey Levels NCA. It is bounded for much of its length by the Wealden Greensand NCA in the north, crossing the counties of Kent, East and West Sussex and Surrey, and the South Downs NCA in the south. In the north-west the NCA borders the Surrey Hills. Although the wooded landscape means that views to higher ground are limited, the Low Weald is overlooked from hills in adjacent NCAs.

Networks of roads, including the M23, largely cross the area north–south along with railway lines to the South Coast, London and Gatwick Airport which provide commuting opportunities for much of the Low Weald's population. National Cycle Network Route 21 links the Low Weald to Greenwich in the north and Eastbourne in the south.

The catchments of the rivers Beult, Eden, Medway and Mole all drain from the area into the Wealden Greensand NCA, while those of the Arun, Adur, Ouse and Cuckmere drain through the South Downs to the sea along the South Coast, and the area provides essential water supplies to large parts of adjacent NCAs.



Low Weald in West Sussex with views of South Downs in the distance.

The unique geology of The Weald is shared with parts of Boulonnais and Pays de Bray in France.

Key characteristics

- Broad, low-lying, gently undulating clay vales with outcrops of limestone or sandstone providing local variation.
- The underlying geology has provided materials for industries including iron working, brick and glass making, leaving pits, lime kilns and quarries. Many of the resulting exposures are critical to our understanding of the Wealden environment.
- A generally pastoral landscape with arable farming associated with lighter soils on higher ground and areas of fruit cultivation in Kent. Land use is predominantly agricultural but with urban influences, particularly around Gatwick, Horley and Crawley.
- Field boundaries of hedgerows and shaws (remnant strips of cleared woodland) enclosing small, irregular fields and linking into small and scattered linear settlements along roadsides or centred on greens or commons. Rural lanes and tracks with wide grass verges and ditches.
- Small towns and villages are scattered among areas of woodland, permanent grassland and hedgerows on the heavy clay soils where larger 20th-century villages have grown around major transport routes.
- Frequent north–south routeways and lanes, many originating as drove roads, along which livestock were moved to downland grazing or to forests to feed on acorns.
- Small areas of heathland particularly associated with commons such as Ditchling and Chailey. Also significant historic houses often in parkland or other designed landscapes.
- The Low Weald boasts an intricate mix of woodlands, much of it ancient, including extensive broadleaved oak over hazel and hornbeam coppice,

shaws, small field copses and tree groups, and lines of riparian trees along watercourses. Veteran trees are a feature of hedgerows and in fields.

- Many small rivers, streams and watercourses with associated watermeadows and wet woodland.
- Abundance of ponds, some from brick making and quarrying, and hammer and furnace ponds, legacies of the Wealden iron industry.
- Traditional rural vernacular of local brick, weatherboard and tile-hung buildings plus local use of distinctive Horsham slabs as a roofing material. Weatherboard barns are a feature. Oast houses occur in the east and use of flint is notable in the south towards the South Downs.



Bluebell wood, Low Weald.

Low Weald today

The Low Weald is the eroded outer edges of the High Weald, largely coinciding with the outcrop of Weald Clay but with narrow bands of Gault Clay and the Lower and Upper Greensands which outcrop close to the scarp face of the South Downs. Below the irregular escarpment of the greensand belt and the chalk lies a broad vale, rarely exceeding more than 40 m above sea level, with many areas as low as 15 m. The resulting landscape is gently undulating with occasional steep-sided stream valleys, ridges and plateaux, becoming hillier to the south as it reaches the South Downs.

Water is a dominant feature, owing to the topography and impervious clay, particularly ponds and many meandering streams with riparian willows and alders. The area includes major parts of the valleys and flood plains of several principal rivers of the region such as the Wey, Mole, Arun, Adur, Ouse, Eden, Medway, Teise and Beult and supplies water to surrounding NCAs, specifically via reservoirs.

Land use is still predominantly agricultural, and largely pastoral owing to the heavy clay soils with either grazed grassland or forage, including hay meadows. Most grassland has been agriculturally improved, but fragments of unimproved, floristically rich meadow and pasture are still present.

Fields are generally small and irregular, many formed by woodland clearance or 'assarting' in the medieval period and often bounded by shaws or formed from cleared land along woodland edges. Many of the especially species-rich hedgerows in this area may be remnants of larger woodland and often follow the pattern of medieval banks or ditches. Wherever there are lighter soils on slightly higher ground, more mixed farming is found, including arable and fruit



Kent orchard with shelterbed.

growing on the drift deposits of brickearths in Kent. Fields in these areas tend to be larger and more regular with fewer hedgerows.

Like the High Weald, the Low Weald is densely wooded, especially in its western arc through West Sussex and Surrey. Numerous and extensive blocks of ancient, semi-natural coppiced woodland and important wood pasture sites, such as Ebernoe Common, are striking features. Oak is the principal tree and, despite centuries of clearances for settlement, transport and agriculture, significant areas of ancient woodland survive.

Isolated farmsteads, often occupying ancient sites (some moated), form the predominant settlement pattern, intermixed with small villages, often with 'Street' or 'Green' names suggesting secondary settlement. These farmsteads are associated with a landscape of small and irregular fields, created by assarting from woodland in the medieval period, or medium-sized and more regular fields created between the 15th and 18th centuries by enclosure through agreement of former arable strips. The latter are more common in the eastern parts of the area. Many small towns and typical Wealden villages on the heavier clay soils in the western part are scattered among a patchwork quilt landscape of woodland, permanent grassland, hedgerows and wetlands. Traditional buildings are often made of brick, with local colour variations, and some flint towards the South Downs. Pre-18th-century buildings were predominantly timber framed and even later buildings are often weatherboarded. The rural character of most of the Low Weald now contrasts against modern, urban centres, most notably the area around Gatwick Airport in the centre of the NCA.



Roadside hedges with standard trees are characteristic of Low Weald and add to its wooded nature.

The landscape through time

The Weald is a geologically complex anticline; a dome of rocks folded after their deposition, with the oldest strata exposed at the centre in the High Weald as the top of the dome has been worn down by erosion. The folding was due to the effects of the Tertiary Alpine Orogeny (mountain-building episode). The area was not glaciated but was affected by periglacial erosion. The Low Weald is dominated by the Lower Cretaceous Weald Clay formation which largely forms an elongated horseshoe around the older rocks of the High Weald and is encircled by the Greensand Ridge. It is predominantly low lying, dominated by heavy clay soils, with thin bands of calcareous limestone (the fossil-rich Paludina beds), and beds of sandstone deposited by a river and estuary system flowing from the north, west and south. Weald clay consists of clays, silts and localised sands and limestones, marking increased marine dominance within the Weald with possible links to the North Sea Basin. Many sites such as clay pits excavated for the brick and tile industries yield well-preserved fossil insects, plants and reptiles and expose clear geological sections. The complex geology of the Weald gives rise to many habitats and land uses.

Human occupation dates from at least the Mesolithic, with heavy exploitation of the Low Weald by hunter-gatherer communities who constructed both semi-permanent and temporary camps, and there are important Mesolithic sites, including rock shelters. Evidence of woodland clearance has also been detected and by the Bronze Age farmer communities were making inroads into the Low Weald, clearing large areas. This increased during the Iron Age and Roman period with a network of Roman roads linking the area to London and the coast.



Oast house, Kent.

From at least Saxon times, livestock were driven to the Wealden forests to feast on acorns and beech masts or to the downland to graze on the higher pasture. Numerous north–south roads are a legacy of this traffic.

Introduction & Summary

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Analysis

By the medieval period much of the Low Weald was being managed as a patchwork of assart fields and woodlands with dispersed manorial farms and market settlements, many of which developed into modern-day villages and hamlets.

There is evidence of iron working in the Weald for over 2,000 years. For two main periods, during the Roman occupation and in the Tudor and early Stuart era, the Weald was the main iron-producing region in Britain. The geology of sands and clays yielded iron ore and the stone and brick to build furnaces. The woodland provided the necessary charcoal fuel for smelting and numerous small streams supplied water power for the bellows and hammers of the forges and furnaces. Many ponds were created in the impervious clay in order to store additional water to supplement natural watercourses. At its peak at the end of the 16th century, the Weald supported around 100 forges and furnaces and the iron industry impacted on every aspect of life and the landscape. Large numbers of people were employed in digging ore, cutting wood, charcoal making and transporting raw materials and products. The legacy is still evident in the landscape of surviving hammer and furnace ponds, grand houses built by wealthy foundry owners and the remains of the coppiced woodland which was managed for the production of charcoal. It also continued to inspire research and art long after its demise and Kipling's lines in Puck's Song evoke the largely accurate impression of a densely wooded, relatively sparsely populated medieval landscape concealing an extensive industry on which the prosperity and political ambitions of England depended: "Out of the Weald, the secret Weald, Men sent in ancient years, The horse-shoes red at Flodden Field, The arrows at Poitiers!"

The geography, rivers to the channel and abundance of wood, particularly oak, also made the area vital for ship-building and there were often conflicts.

In the late 16th century laws were passed preventing the setting up of any new ironworks in some parts and to preserve trees within 12 miles of the coast to protect the important Sussex ship-building industry. As coal replaced wood as fuel for furnaces during the Industrial Revolution, the iron industry moved north to the coalfields. The last furnace in the Weald closed in the early 19th century and ship-building also began a terminal decline as iron replaced wood. Much of the forest was left unmanaged or cut down for pasture or building. Agriculture again became the most lucrative industry. Livestock grazed the lush pasture, with cattle also used as draught animals on soils that were too heavy for horses. Today's red Sussex cattle descend from these hardy, manageable beasts. The lighter soils in the east supported major suppliers of fruit and hops. Hop growing was on an industrial scale by the 19th century with manure from cattle important for fertilising hop gardens. Oast houses remain characteristic of this landscape, most having been converted to residential use as hop growing all but died out commercially in the Low Weald in the late 20th century.

The same geology that supported iron also supplied raw materials for brick and tile making which still continues. Excavations often reveal important geological strata and fossils. An example is Lower Dicker, famous for its Dickerware pots and bricks until the early 20th century. Its disused quarry is now a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and a Geological Conservation Review site. Stone, including Bethersden 'Marble' and Horsham Stone, was also quarried and brick making was an important local industry. In addition to the ponds created to supply the iron industry these activities, together with the digging of marl to improve the heavier soils, have resulted in a landscape peppered with small ponds. Traditional buildings reflect the availability of local materials and are timber-framed or, from the late 18th century onwards, built with local bricks and tiles of varying hues of dark red to orange, often with weatherboarding. There is also use of flint towards the South Downs and sandstone locally.

The railway came to the Low Weald in the 1840s with the completion of the London to Brighton main line in 1841 and the Redhill to Tonbridge and Brighton to Hastings lines in 1846. However, the area was subject to less large-scale development during the 19th century than adjacent NCAs and it was not until the 1950s that the expansion of villages within the commuter belt really took off and urban centres, such as those around the Gatwick and Crawley area, began to form. Even today, the NCA retains much of its rural character with many small-scale villages surviving within a network of rural roads and densely wooded areas.



Ham Street Woods National Nature Reserve

Ecosystem Services

The Low Weald NCA provides a wide range of benefits to society. Each is derived from the attributes and processes (both natural and cultural features) within the area. These benefits are known collectively as 'ecosystem services'. The predominant services are summarised below. Further information on ecosystem services provided in the Low Weald NCA is contained in the 'Analysis' section of this document.

Provisioning services (food, fibre and water supply)

- **Food provision:** Livestock were traditionally reared on the pasture and continue to be a major land use. Dairy farming is in decline but survives, particularly in a small area around Edenbridge in the centre of the NCA. Arable and horticultural farming remain important, particularly in the east.
- **Timber provision:** Despite the wooded nature of the NCA and the long history of wood supply, the area does not supply a large amount of timber for the modern market.
- **Water availability:** The area contains Arlington Reservoir which can store up to 8,300 million litres of water and was created in 1971. It supplies water to the Eastbourne, Hailsham, Polegate and Heathfield areas, while Bough Beech Reservoir was constructed in the 1960s and supplies 15 per cent of the water for Sutton and East Surrey Water.
- **Genetic diversity:** Some old and traditional orchards and remnants of the hop-growing industry survive and contain important local varieties that are now rarely available, such as Sussex Forge apple, named because of its association with the iron-working area around Crawley and East Grinstead.



Sussex cattle

The Sussex cattle breed was refined largely in the Low Weald during the early 19th century and the Sussex Herd Book Society was formed following a public meeting in Horsham to promote the breed. Descendants of these original herds still graze parts of the NCA. The area was also important in the development of the Southdown sheep breed.

Regulating services (water purification, air quality maintenance and climate regulation)

- **Climate regulation:** Longstanding woodland is abundant in the Low Weald and is a good carbon store, as is the undisturbed soil beneath which has a higher carbon content. Similarly, its long ley and semi- and unimproved grasslands will tend to have higher soil carbon content than cultivated equivalents. Growing timber is good carbon sequestration, particularly in habitats such as wet woodland with rapid deposition.
- **Regulating water quality:** Water quality is particularly important in the reservoirs that provide water for the surrounding area. Buffering watercourses and reservoirs, thereby slowing the pathway of run-off, could have a significant impact, along with working with farmers and land managers both within the Low Weald and particularly on the higher ground and catchments in adjacent NCAs to promote good practice.
- **Regulating water flow:** Predominantly clayey flood plain soils with naturally high groundwater and the area's low-lying nature make many areas in the Low Weald susceptible to flooding.
- **Pest regulation:** The significant proportion of ancient woodland, particularly oak, makes this NCA especially vulnerable to introduced pests and diseases. Mature elm has been lost from most of the Low Weald with the exception of parts which fall within the Dutch Elm Disease Control Area in East Sussex.

Cultural services (inspiration, education and wellbeing)

- **Sense of place/inspiration:** Oast houses are a distinctive feature in the east, though almost all have been converted to other uses, usually residential.

Ditchling became a centre for artists and craftsmen with the foundation of the Guild of St Joseph and St Dominic by Eric Gill in the early 20th century.

- **Sense of history:** The Low Weald has a strong sense of being an anciently settled and farmed landscape, with farmsteads (often of medieval origin) set in landscapes also enclosed in the medieval period and successively reorganised. The landscape is influenced by remnants of the Wealden iron industry. There are many fine houses, many medieval in origin and often set within historic parkland, including Knepp Castle and Newick Park, as well as many smaller gardens and designed landscapes.
- **Tranquillity:** The Low Weald is a predominantly pastoral and wooded landscape that is still largely rural and relatively tranquil outside the main urban centres.
- **Recreation:** Recreation is supported by 3,974 km of public rights of way. Arlington Reservoir is an important resource for angling (as a trout fishery), birdwatching and walking. Bough Beech Reservoir also allows sailing at its southern end. The Wealdway runs through part of the NCA. The Cuckoo Trail follows 17 km of former railway line between Polegate and Heathfield. It is used by about 200,000 people a year and forms part of National Cycle Network Route 21. Commons such as Ditchling and Chailey are popular for recreational activities.
- **Biodiversity:** The 49-hectare site of Arlington Reservoir supports diverse habitats, with 173 recorded bird species and a wintering population of up to 10,000 wildfowl; it is also important for migrating osprey. Part of Bough Beech Reservoir is leased to Kent Wildlife Trust and forms a nature reserve.

The Low Weald is the most important area for spiked rampion in England and is among the top five NCAs for several other species such as chamomile and true fox-sedge.

The area is rated in the top ten NCAs for containing bullfinch and lesser-spotted woodpecker and its wooded character supports many rare species, including nightjar and notably woodland butterflies such as the wood white and moths such as the forester and scarce brown streak. It is also rated in the top twelve in terms of species richness by the Bat Conservation Trust and there are colonies of rare barbastelle and Bechstein's bats. The wet woodland also makes it important for fungi, mosses, liverworts and lichens.

- **Geodiversity:** The NCA is geologically important and contains 11 geological SSSI and 19 local sites. Geological features include Jurassic-Cretaceous stratigraphy sites notable for well-preserved fossils. For instance, Clock House Brick Works, Auclaye and Smokejack Clay Pit have all yielded well-preserved insects and Smokejack also yielded the dinosaurs iguanodon and baryonyx. Clay pits, such as those at Lower Dicker, excavated for the brick and tile industry often exposed clear geological sections illustrating varied lithologies, particularly sandstones and limestones, as well as fossil remains. Many of these sites are critical to our understanding of the complex Wealden geology.

The shells of a particular variety of water snail were compressed into rock strata over around a million years to form fossilised limestone known as Bethersden Marble.



Sulphur tuft.

Statements of Environmental Opportunity

SEO 1: Protect, manage and significantly enhance the area's intricate and characteristic mix of semi-natural ancient woodlands, gill woodland, shaws, small field copses, hedgerows and individual trees to reduce habitat fragmentation and benefit biodiversity, while seeking to improve and encourage access for health and wellbeing and reinforce sense of local identity.

For example by:

- Working with partners and landowners to realise the Forest District potential.
- Re-introducing appropriate and traditional woodland management techniques, preserving both fallen and standing deadwood where appropriate for biodiversity value.
- Supporting initiatives such as the West Weald Landscape Project which focuses on Chiddingfold Forest and the internationally important ancient pasture woodlands of Ebernoe Common, promoting the integrated management of the landscape for biodiversity and people.
- Working with woodland owners, land managers and the silvicultural community to develop new markets and initiatives that realise the value and potential of high-quality hardwood and local wood fuel from new and existing woodlands.
- Identifying areas where the introduction of short rotation coppice could be used to link fragmented habitats and provide a source of fuel.
- Protecting the characteristic hedgerows with standard trees which give the area much of its intimate feel, considering replacement planting where needed.
- Further expanding broadleaved woodland on steeper slopes, especially within the catchments of the Arun, Adur, Beult and Medway, with species that reduce the risk and rate of soil erosion.
- Restoring and expanding characteristic woodland shaws, interlinking with hedgerows and copses by reinstating appropriate and traditional management, to enhance landscape, cultural heritage and biodiversity, especially where this reinforces ancient field patterns, improves habitat networks and/or helps to integrate new and existing development.
- Encouraging the targeted re-introduction and sustained implementation of traditional coppice management in woodlands that have been previously coppiced or newly planted for coppice where this is appropriate.
- Considering appropriate species for new plantings to maintain landscape structure, character and biodiversity in response to the impacts of climate change.
- Protecting ancient and veteran trees in parklands, hedgerows and fields.
- Monitoring and maintaining sustainable populations of potential problem species such as deer, squirrel and wild boar.
- Monitoring and responding to new and existing threats to woodland structure from pest and diseases such as Chalara and Phytophthora. Also monitoring and controlling non-native invasive species, particularly following periods of trauma such as loss of a key species through disease.

SEO 2: Conserve and enhance the distinctive historical aspects of the Low Weald landscape, including its important geological features and sites of heritage interest, particularly those associated with Wealden iron industry, enabling access, continued research, interpretation, understanding and enjoyment of the extensive and nationally significant resources.

For example by:

- Ensuring that earth science Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Local Geological Sites are included in the planning process and that geological conservation is integral to the development process.
- Clarifying site management needs to agreed standards for Local Geological Sites using management standards similar to those for SSSI.
- Maintaining the network of important earth science sites through supporting local geo-conservation groups.
- Engaging in the planning process to maintain views of rock exposures and natural landforms that illustrate the geological context of the area and, where appropriate, improving access to cuttings, quarries and other geological features to improve understanding and enjoyment of geodiversity.
- Encouraging the wider appreciation (among the public, minerals industry, scientific community, local authorities and conservation bodies) of the importance of Low Wealden geology and its link between scenery and habitat, through education and interpretation.
- Promoting responsible fossil collecting.
- Clearing bracken and other invasive growth to prevent damage to archaeological and geological sites.
- Working with local authorities, landowners, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and interest groups to promote the unique historical assets of the Low Weald for the benefit of local communities and to boost tourism.
- Conserving and enhancing, through sustainable and sensitive new uses, the area's distinctive traditional farmsteads, including the dispersed plans which are highly characteristic of the Weald and its oasts, barns and other buildings.
- Using an understanding of the area's distinctive traditional architecture to inspire new development, including encouragement where appropriate of the use of traditional building materials, including local red brick, flint, clay tile and weatherboarding in new development and restorative work.
- Identifying and realising opportunities to enhance the setting and interpretation of heritage assets such as historic buildings and archaeological sites. Also working with local societies and interest groups to promote the appreciation and understanding of the area's historic sites and nationally important industrial heritage.
- Increasing the amount of surviving historic parkland that is protected by measures such as agri-environment schemes and historic parkland grants, and identifying smaller historic designed landscapes and seeking to preserve and enhance them where appropriate.

SEO 3: Work at a landscape scale to improve the quality, state and structure of all Wealden rivers, streams and standing waterbodies and their appropriate flood plains, taking account of water quality, water flow and hydraulic connection with the flood plain, while seeking to enhance biodiversity, historic features and recreation opportunities and reinforcing sense of place.

For example by:

- Working in partnership across sectors and National Character Area (NCA) boundaries to tackle the challenges associated with flood risk, pollution and low flows to safeguard surface water resources, especially those failing to meet Water Framework Directive objectives for good ecological status.
- Maintaining and restoring wetland landscapes associated with the streams and rivers, particularly the main rivers – the Arun, Adur, Beult and Medway – including maintenance and restoration of waterside pollards, lines of riparian trees, wet pasture and wet woodland.
- Identifying the requirement for research that improves our understanding of how to respond to and plan for climate change impacts and future consumer demands, and the interrelationships between supply and demand in adjoining NCAs, including the impacts of water availability on key biodiversity sites.
- Maintaining and restoring historic hammer and furnace ponds that are characteristic of the area for the benefit of wildlife and water management and inspiring sense of place. Also improving access and interpretation to increase understanding and enjoyment of these features.
- Buffering watercourses and reservoirs and restoring natural river geomorphology to improve water quality and reduce flood risk in settlements by regulating water flow.
- Drawing on best practice principles such as those established under catchment sensitive farming and building on and supporting existing stakeholder groups to help to deliver a good water environment across the Low Weald, benefiting biodiversity and local communities.
- Encouraging sustainable water use by homes and businesses supplied from catchments and promoting sustainable urban drainage systems.
- Controlling invasive non-native species, particularly along river banks, to reduce soil exposure and erosion of the bank.

SEO 4: Maintain the sustainable but productive pastoral landscape of the Low Weald, while expanding and connecting semi-natural habitats to benefit biodiversity, regulating soil and water quality by promoting good agricultural practice, and maintaining the extent and quality of unimproved permanent grassland and meadows. Restore degraded neutral grasslands to buffer sites and encourage pollinators and predators for pest regulation.

For example by:

- Supporting environmentally based agricultural grant systems; for example, whole farm plans, environmental and pollution controls, habitat creation and habitat management.
- Securing the protection of all remaining unimproved grassland as part of a working pastoral system and seeking to extend buffer zones around prime areas.
- Re-linking the fragmented landscape by restoring hedgerows and shaws and creating corridors using field margins, road verges and rivers to improve habitat connectivity, particularly where this can assist in regulating soil erosion and buffering of watercourses.
- Protecting traditional practices, including the longstanding associations of the fruit belt in Kent, maintaining a strong sense of place, for example maintaining and managing traditional orchards for heritage value, genetic diversity and local distinctiveness, including their poplar and alder shelterbelts.
- Using mechanisms such as agri-environment schemes to encourage the use of field margins, beetle banks and headlands in arable land, particularly in close proximity to food crops requiring pollination.
- Building on work to preserve surviving pockets of unimproved hay meadows through continuing to support measures such as agri-environment schemes and the Weald Meadows Initiative.⁵



Low Weald landscape with oast houses.

⁵ www.highweald.org/look-after/our-projects/weald-meadows-initiative.html;
www.highwealdlandscapetrust.org/weald-meadows-initiative.html

Additional opportunity:

1. Plan for the creation of high-quality blue and green space and green corridors to provide a framework for new and existing development in urban areas and along major transport routes for the enjoyment and wellbeing of communities and to enhance biodiversity.

For example by:

- Working to identify and maintain important views to elevated landforms outside the NCA such as the Wealden Greensand, the North and South Downs and the High Weald.
- Creating or safeguarding extensive areas of multifunctional green space within and surrounding towns and identified new development areas, including attractive new wetlands forming part of sustainable urban drainage systems and linking into the heart of urban areas as part of green infrastructure planning.
- Creating community allotments and potentially developing community orchards on the edges of urban areas.
- Managing and enhancing the provision and promotion of access across the area including supporting plans to extend cycle networks.
- Encouraging measures such as restoration and expansion of networks of hedgerows and shaws to minimise the effects of development and its associated infrastructure (including light, noise and air pollution) intruding on the rural character and the special qualities of adjacent protected landscapes.
- Ensuring that high-quality green infrastructure provision is integral to all development planning and encouraging improvement of the public transport network to reduce damage to rural roads and lanes.
- Promoting sustainable tourism and recreational activities to minimise impact on the environment, while helping to generate income and employment.
- Seeking to conserve areas with high levels of tranquillity and the settlement pattern of small, scattered villages and hamlets of this predominantly rural area.
- Encouraging detailed landscape assessment in advance of all significant development to identify ways of minimising impact on the rural character, the local community and the environment.

Supporting document 1: Key facts and data

Total area: 182,420 ha

1. Landscape and nature conservation designations

Three Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty fall partially within the NCA boundary: Surrey Hills (6,264 ha), Kent Downs (2,273 ha) and High Weald (1,025 ha). 13,321 ha of the South Downs National Park also falls within the NCA.

More information about the protected landscape can be found at:

www.surreyhills.org/
www.kentdowns.org.uk/
www.highweald.org/
www.southdowns.gov.uk/

Source: Natural England (2011)

1.1 Designated nature conservation sites

The NCA includes the following statutory nature conservation designations:

Tier	Designation	Name	Area (ha)	% of NCA
International	n/a	n/a	0	0
European	Special Protection Area (SPA)	n/a	0	0
	Special Area of Conservation (SAC)	Ebernoe Common SAC, The Mens SAC, Lewes Downs SAC	435	<1
National	National Nature Reserve (NNR)	Ham Street Woods NNR, Ebernoe Common NNR	170	<1
National	Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)	A total of 44 sites wholly or partly within the NCA	2,657	1

Source: Natural England (2011)

Please note: (i) Designated areas may overlap, designations that span coastal areas/views below this line will not be included.

There are 381 Local sites in the Low Weald NCA covering 8,627 ha which is 5 per cent of the NCA.

Source: Natural England (2011)

- Details of individual Sites of Special Scientific Interest can be searched at: <http://www.sssi.naturalengland.org.uk/Special/sssi/search.cfm>
- Details of Local Nature Reserves (LNR) can be searched: http://www.lnr.naturalengland.org.uk/Special/Lnr/Lnr_search.asp
- Maps showing locations of Statutory sites can be found at: <http://magic.defra.gov.uk/website/magic/> – select 'Rural Designations Statutory'.

1.1.1 Condition of designated sites

A breakdown of SSSI condition as of March 2011 is as follows:

SSSI condition category	Area (ha)	% of SSSI land in category condition
Unfavourable declining	67	3
Favourable	1,077	41
Unfavourable no change	29	1
Unfavourable recovering	1,483	56

Source: Natural England (March 2011)

Details of SSSI condition can be searched at:

<http://www.sssi.naturalengland.org.uk/Special/sssi/reportIndex.cfm>

2. Landform, geology and soils

2.1 Elevation

The outcrop of Weald Clay gives rise to a broad vale that is typically low lying, rarely exceeding more than 30- 40 m Above Ordnance Datum, with many areas as low as 15 m.

Source: Low Weald Countryside Character Area description

2.2 Landform and process

The Low Weald co-insides with the outcrop of Weald clay which forms a elongated horseshoe around the High Weald. It gives rise to a broad vale that is typically undulating. Localised deposits of limestone and sandstone form gentle ridges and high points throughout the area. The area is heavily dissected by river floodplains and many small, narrow and commonly sunken streams cut into the heavy clays forming flat low lying areas.

Source: Low Weald and Pevensey Natural Area Profile,
Low Weald Countryside Character Area description

2.3 Bedrock geology

The Weald is a geologically complex anticline, a folded dome where the oldest rocks are exposed at the centre in the High Weald as the top has been worn down by erosion. The folding was due to the effects of the Alpine Orogeny (mountain-building episode) during the Tertiary. Here in the Low Weald, younger rocks, Cretaceous clays laid down in brackish lagoons and deltas are exposed. The strata here are notable for well-preserved fossils.

Source: British Geological Survey maps

2.4 Superficial deposits

Some alluvium and river terrace deposits along watercourses.

Source: British Geological Survey maps

2.5 Designated geological sites

Designation	Number of Sites
Geological Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)	11
Mixed interest SSSI	0

There are 19 Local Geological Sites within the NCA.

Source: Natural England (2011)

- Details of individual Sites of Special Scientific Interest can be searched at:
<http://www.sssi.naturalengland.org.uk/Special/sssi/search.cfm>

2.6 Soils and Agricultural Land Classification

The area is dominated by heavy clay soils but with areas of lighter soils on the slightly higher ground. Slowly permeable, seasonally wet slightly acid but base-rich loamy and clayey soils cover 74 per cent of the NCA, with lesser amounts of loamy soils with naturally high groundwater, slightly acid loamy and clayey soils with impeded drainage, freely draining slightly acid loamy soils and loamy and clayey floodplain soils with naturally high groundwater.

Source: Low Weald Countryside Character Description,
Low Weald and Pevensey Natural Area Profile, Natural England (2011).

The main grades of agricultural land in the NCA are broken down as follows (as a proportion of total land area):

Agricultural Land Classification	Area (ha)	% of NCA
Grade 1	<1	<1
Grade 2	6,792	4
Grade 3	126,415	69
Grade 4	38,451	21
Grade 5	0	0
Non-agricultural	5,994	3
Urban	4,767	3

Source: Natural England (2010)

Maps showing locations of Statutory sites can be found at:

<http://magic.defra.gov.uk/website/magic/> – select 'Landscape' (shows ALC classification and 27 types of soils)

3. Key water bodies and catchments

3.1 Major rivers/canals

The following major rivers/canals (by length) have been identified in this NCA.

River name	Length (km)
Adur	42
Beult	38
Arun	32
Mole	24
Ouse	21
Medway	18
Cuckmere	16

River name	Length (km)
Eden	13
East Stour	6

Source: Natural England (2010)

Please note: other significant rivers (by volume) may also occur. These are not listed where the length within the NCA is short.

There are three main reservoirs within the area, Arlington, Bough Beech and Barcombe reservoirs.

Source: Natural England (2010)

3.2 Water quality

The total area of Nitrate Vulnerable Zone is 109,452 ha, 60% of NCA.

Source: Natural England (2010)

3.3 Protected areas

To be completed in consultation with the Environment Agency (full document only).

3.4 Water Framework Directive

Maps are available from the Environment Agency showing current and projected future status of water bodies

http://maps.environment-agency.gov.uk/wiyby/wiybyController?ep=maptopics&lang=_e

4. Trees and woodlands

4.1 Total Woodland Cover

The NCA contains 29,118 ha of woodland (16% of the total area), of which 14,193 ha (49%) is ancient woodland.

Source: Natural England (2010)

4.2 Distribution and size of woodland and trees in the landscape

The Low Weald is well-wooded. Broadleaved woodland is common and significant areas of semi-natural ancient woodland occur, particularly below the Wealden Greensand. The ancient character of many woods is reflected by their large coppice stools, banks and ditches. Oak is a prominent tree of the Low Weald and the woodland often has oak standards over hazel coppice. Areas of base rich soil on limestone outcrops support ash with field maple and hazel. In addition to these woodland types there are pockets of older coppice. Coppiced woodland varies between chestnut, hornbeam or hazel. Small tree groups frequently occur within the fields and as part of the hedgerow pattern, numerous mature standard trees can be seen dotted along the hedgerow. Often where hedgerows have vanished, lines of single mature trees remain.

Source: Low Weald Countryside Character Area description, Draft Historic Profile

4.3 Woodland types

A statistical breakdown of the area and type of woodland found across the NCA is detailed opposite.

Area and proportion of different woodland types in the NCA (over 2 ha)

Woodland type	Area (ha)	% of NCA
Broadleaved	24,184	13
Coniferous	3,726	2
Mixed	435	<1
Other	773	<1

Source: Forestry Commission (2011)

Area and proportion of Ancient Woodland and Planted Ancient Woodland within the NCA.

Woodland type	Area (ha)	% of NCA
Ancient semi-natural woodland	9,934	5
Ancient re-planted woodland (PAWS)	4,237	2

Source: Natural England (2004)

5. Boundary features and patterns

5.1 Boundary features

Hedgerows, single mature trees and shaws are prominent boundary features. The Kentish low weald is traversed by numerous narrow lanes with broad verges and ditches, these are continuous with the drove roads of the North Downs.

Source: Low Weald Countryside Character Area description;
Countryside Quality Counts (2003)

5.2 Field patterns

Fields are generally small and irregular, divided by a dense network of hedges and shaws that create a small-scale landscape, except where hedges have been removed.

Source: Low Weald Countryside Character Area description;
Countryside Quality Counts (2003)

6. Agriculture

The following data has been taken from the Agricultural Census linked to this NCA.

6.1 Farm type

In 2009 grazing livestock farms accounted for 29 per cent of the total area. Cereals accounted for 14 per cent, horticulture 6 per cent, mixed 5 per cent, dairy 4 per cent, specialist poultry 2 per cent and pigs 1 per cent of farms. Farm types classed as 'other' accounted for 36 per cent. All types of farm show a decline in number between 2000 and 2009 apart from those registered as "other" (which increased by 88 to 771) and pig farms which remained stable.

Source: Agricultural Census, Defra (2010)

6.2 Farm size

Smaller farms (those up to 20 ha) show the sharpest decline in numbers between 2000 and 2009 with 140 being lost compared to 39 over 20 ha.

Source: Agricultural Census, Defra (2010)

6.3 Farm ownership

2009: Total farm area = 118,897 ha; owned land = 83,074 ha

2000: Total farm area = 121,207 ha; owned land = 90,064 ha

Source: Agricultural Census, Defra (2010)

6.4 Land use

Grass and uncropped land is by far the greatest use at 71,603 ha in 2009 (having increased by around 5,000 ha since 2000) compared to a total of 34,317 ha for all crops and 1,581 ha for fruit.

Source: Agricultural Census, Defra (2010)

6.5 Livestock numbers

In 2009 there were 57,800 cattle (71,100 in 2000), 143,800 sheep (210,300 in 2000) and 12,900 pigs (14,100 in 2000).

Source: Agricultural Census, Defra (2010)

6.6 Farm labour

There has been a small decrease in principal farmers from 2,957 in 2000 to 2,646 in 2009. This has gone in hand with a reduction in the number of full time farmers, part time workers, casual workers but an increase in salaried managers.

Source: Agricultural Census, Defra (2010)

Please note: (i) Some of the Census data is estimated by Defra so will not be accurate for every holding (ii) Data refers to Commercial Holdings only (iii) Data includes land outside of the NCA belonging to holdings whose centre point is within the NCA listed.

7. Key habitats and species

7.1 Habitat distribution/coverage

Woodland, including significant areas of semi natural ancient woodland, hedgerows, shaws and ancient trees are prominent across the NCA. Wood pasture sites such as Ebernoe Common are also notable along with fragments of unimproved grassland. Small streams, and rivers occur throughout with major rivers, notably the Arun, Adur, Beult and Medway crossing the area with their associated wetland habitats of wet grassland, wet woodland and marshes. The Adur in particular has extensive wetland habitats. Ponds frequently occur on the edges of fields and woodlands.

Source: Low Weald and Pevensey Natural Area Profile

7.2 UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) priority habitats

The Government's new strategy for biodiversity in England, Biodiversity 2020, replaces the previous Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) led approach. Priority habitats and species are identified in Biodiversity 2020, but references to BAP priority habitats and species, and previous national targets have been removed. Biodiversity Action Plans remain a useful source of guidance and

information. More information about Biodiversity 2020 can be found at: www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/conservation/biodiversity/protectandmanage/englandsbiodiversitystrategy2011.aspx.

The NCA contains the following areas of mapped priority habitats (as mapped by National Inventories). Footnotes denote local/expert interpretation. This will be used to inform future national inventory updates.

UK BAP priority habitat	Area (ha)	% of NCA
Broadleaved mixed & yew woodland (Broad habitat)	15,728	9
Coastal & floodplain grazing marsh	1,141	1
Lowland heathland	155	<1
Lowland meadows	95	<1
Fens	36	<1
Lowland dry acid grassland	27	<1
Fens	15	<1
Lowland calcareous grassland	13	<1
Reedbeds	2	<1

Source: Natural England (2011)

7.3 Key species and assemblages of species

- Maps showing locations of UK BAP Priority Habitats are available at: <http://magic.defra.gov.uk/website/magic/> – select ‘Habitat Inventories’
- Maps showing locations of S41 species are available at: <http://data.nbn.org.uk/>

8. Settlement and development patterns

8.1 Settlement pattern

Small hamlets and dispersed, ancient farmsteads and farmstead clusters form the predominant element of the settlement pattern. There are some small villages and many are centred on greens or commons. Crawley is the major town of the area. There is urban and airport related development sprawl in the flat plain around Gatwick, and in the Horley- Crawley commuter settlements.

Source: Low Weald Countryside Character Area description; Countryside Quality Counts (2003)

8.2 Main settlements

The main settlements within the low weald are: Crawley; Horsham; Tonbridge; Haselmere; Burgess Hill and Hassocks. The total estimated population for this NCA (derived from ONS 2001 census data) is: 479,688.

Source: Low Weald Countryside Character Area description; Countryside Quality Counts (2003)

8.3 Local vernacular and building materials

The majority of rural buildings are traditional in character with the common use of local brick, weatherboarding and tile-hung buildings. Older houses are half-timbered. Black weather-boarded barns with half-hipped roofs are also common features. Bricks were widely used from the 17th century for houses and later for farm buildings. Thatch would have been widespread but it has almost wholly been replaced by plain clay tiles. In places the sandstone is capable of being split into slates – Horsham slates help create a sense of local distinctiveness. Oast houses are a characteristic building type. Relatively few oast houses survive unaltered, the majority having been converted to domestic use.

Source: Draft Historic Profile, Low Weald Countryside Character Area description; Countryside Quality Counts (2003)

9. Key historic sites and features

9.1 Origin of historic features

There is evidence of occupation of the Low Weald since the Mesolithic period with settlement sites located across the Low Weald. Late Neolithic and bronze-age woodland clearance has also been detected. The area is crossed by a number of Roman roads with a few known villa sites. There is evidence for the Low Weald's industrial history of charcoal burning for iron and glass production. Stone, including Bethersden 'marble' was quarried and brick – making was an important local industry, along with digging for marl. Consequently ponds are a feature of the landscape. Oast houses provide evidence of past associations with the hop industry and are characteristic of the area. There is a high concentration of pre-1750 farmstead buildings and in the north part of the character area a major concentration of pre 1550 barns.

Source: Draft Historic Profile, Countryside Quality Counts (2003),
Low Weald Countryside Character Area description

9.2 Designated historic assets

This NCA has the following historic designations:

- 21 Registered Parks and Gardens covering 892 ha
- 0 Registered Battlefield/s covering 0 ha
- 85 Scheduled Monuments
- 6,066 Listed Buildings

Source: Natural England (2010)

More information is available at the following address:

<http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/caring/heritage-at-risk/>

<http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/professional/protection/process/national-heritage-list-for-england/>

10. Recreation and access

10.1 Public access

- 3 per cent of the NCA 5,801 ha is classified as being publically accessible.
- There are 3,974 km of Public Rights of Way at a density of 2.2 km per km2.
- There are 0 National Trails

Sources: Natural England (2010)

The table below shows the breakdown of land which is publically accessible in perpetuity:

Access designation	Area (ha)	% of NCA
National Trust (Accessible all year)	653	<1
Common land	2,182	1
Country parks	200	<1
CROW Access Land (Section 4 and 16)	2,990	1
CROW Section 15	1,770	1
Village greens	58	<1
Doorstep greens	1	<1
Forestry Commission Walkers Welcome grants	1,728	1
Local Nature Reserves (LNR)	606	<1
Millennium greens	9	<1
Accessible National Nature Reserves (NNR)	171	<1
Agri-environment Scheme access	174	<1
Woods for People	3,045	17

Sources: Natural England (2011)

Please note: Common Land refers to land included in the 1965 commons register; CROW = Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000; OC and RCL = Open Country and Registered Common Land.

11. Experiential qualities

11.1 Tranquillity

Based on the CPRE map of Tranquillity (2006) The highest scores for tranquillity are away from the main transport corridors (namely the M23 and numerous A roads) and the major settlements (including Crawley, Horsham and Tonbridge) and tend to be associated with the more remote intimate small-scale landscape of woodlands, fields and hedgerows.

A breakdown of tranquillity values for this NCA are detailed in the table below:

Tranquillity	Tranquillity Score
Highest value within NCA	48
Lowest value within NCA	-109
Mean value within NCA	-7

Sources: CPRE (2006)

More information is available at the following address:

<http://www.cpre.org.uk/what-we-do/countryside/tranquil-places/in-depth/item/1688-how-we-mapped-tranquillity>

11.2 Intrusion

The 2007 Intrusion Map (CPRE) shows the extent to which rural landscapes are 'intruded on' from urban development, noise (primarily traffic noise), and other sources of visual and auditory intrusion. This shows that disturbance tends to be concentrated around major roads, particularly the M23 and A24 and the Gatwick/Crawley area. A breakdown of intrusion values for this NCA are detailed in the table over.

Intrusion category	1960s (%)	1990s (%)	2007 (%)	Percentage change (1960s-2007)
Disturbed	18	49	52	34
Undisturbed	80	50	43	37
Urban	2	3	5	3

Sources: CPRE (2007)

Notable trends from the 1960s to 2007 are an increase by 40 per cent in the area classed as disturbed, up to nearly 60 per cent in 2007, and a decrease of 40 per cent, down to 40 per cent, of the undisturbed area.

More information is available at the following address:

<http://www.cpre.org.uk/resources/countryside/tranquil-places>

12 Data sources

- British Geological Survey (2006)
- Natural Area Profiles, Natural England (published by English Nature 1993-1998)
- Countryside Character Descriptions, Natural England (regional volumes published by Countryside Commission/Countryside Agency 1998/1999)
- Joint Character Area GIS boundaries, Natural England (data created 2001)
- National Parks and AONBs GIS boundaries, Natural England (2006)
- Heritage Coast Boundaries, Natural England (2006)
- Agricultural Census June Survey, Defra (2000,2009)
- National Inventory of Woodland & Trees, Forestry Commission (2003)
- Countryside Quality Counts Draft Historic Profiles, English Heritage (2004)*
- Ancient Woodland Inventory, Natural England (2003)
- BAP Priority Habitats GIS data, Natural England (March 2011)
- Special Areas of Conservation data, Natural England (data accessed in March 2011)
- Special Protection Areas data, Natural England (data accessed in March 2011)

- Ramsar sites data, Natural England (data accessed in March 2011)
- Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Natural England (data accessed in March 2011)
- Detailed River Network, Environment Agency (2008)
- Source protection zones, Environment Agency (2005)
- Registered Common Land GIS data, Natural England (2004)
- Open Country GIS data, Natural England (2004)
- Public Rights of Way Density, Defra (2011)
- National Trails, Natural England (2006)
- National Tranquillity Mapping data, CPRE (2007)
- Intrusion map data, CPRE (2007)
- Registered Battlefields, English Heritage (2005)
- Record of Scheduled Monuments, English Heritage (2006)
- Registered Parks and Gardens, English Heritage (2006)
- World Heritage Sites, English Heritage (2006)
- Incorporates Historic Landscape Characterisation and work for preliminary Historic Farmstead Character Statements (English Heritage/Countryside Agency 2006) Detailed River Network, Environment Agency (2008)

Please note all figures contained within the report have been rounded to the nearest unit. For this reason proportion figures will not (in all) cases add up to 100%. The convention <1 has been used to denote values less than a whole unit.



Low Weald, West Sussex.

Supporting document 2: Landscape change

Recent changes and trends

Trees and woodlands

- The Countryside Quality Counts data reveals that the overall character of the area was maintained during the second assessment period (1998 to 2003), with a significant increase in the area of woodland covered by Woodland Grant Scheme agreements up from 19 per cent in 1999 to 23 per cent in 2003, alongside a significant increase in management agreements covering existing woodlands.
- Although native woodland has been mostly maintained, elm has been virtually lost due to disease beyond the parts which fall within the Dutch Elm Disease Control Area in East Sussex.
- Field trees, usually oak, are particularly characteristic in the western part of the NCA, but are now declining in both number and condition.

Boundary features

- There has been loss and decline of hedgerows and hedgerow trees, and consequential fragmentation of landscape structure, due to lack of management and farm diversification.
- There are nearly 1,500,000 m of boundary features in stewardship agreements and the majority (over 1,170,000) of this is for hedgerows with a further 162,000 for woodland.

Agriculture

- Countryside Quality Counts data reveal that the agricultural landscape was being maintained between 1998 and 2003, given that the reduction in grassland areas had slowed since the first assessment period.
- There is continuing creeping fragmentation of farmland, particularly around houses with conversion to gardens or pony paddocks, sometimes with conifer hedges.
- There has also been loss of traditional hop gardens, orchards and associated wind-break features. Newer orchards tend to be planted with dwarf trees.
- Overall, agriculture declined between 2000 and 2009. Worst hit was dairy, with a loss of 55 out of 139 farms, though cattle numbers only fell by 19 per cent, compared to 32 per cent fewer sheep. Land used for fruit production fell by 15 per cent during the same period.

Settlement and development

- While the Low Weald may be subject to a lower level of development pressure than some NCAs in south-east England, it is nevertheless within an area where demand for new building land is constant, particularly as most of it lies outside the adjacent protected landscapes and within commuting distance of London. Development pressure is focused mainly on the towns and the area on the boundary with the High Weald. New roads and road improvement schemes are also important issues which affect all habitats. There is a recognised need to maintain Gatwick Airport's importance as an international hub.

Semi-natural habitat

- Recent efforts to restore unimproved hay meadow, declining since the 1950s, include bringing some surviving pockets into Environmental Stewardship, including Marden Meadow SSSI.
- There are pressures on ancient woodland arising from past conversion to conifer plantations, damage through neglect, and/or damage through old consents for the working of clay pits.
- Riparian landscapes are under pressure from decline and neglect, including loss of farm ponds, as agricultural practices have changed and intensified. However, the area still ranks second, nationally in terms of pond density. There have been significant uptake of stewardship agreements for creating and restoration of ponds (especially large ponds) since 1999.
- Butterfly Conservation acquired Rowland Wood, an 80 ha wood next to its SSSI reserve at Park Corner Heath in 2010 and are replacing conifer plantations with broadleaf coppice and restoring heathland.

Historic features

- The area has a high rate of barn conversions on a unit area basis. About 51 per cent of listed historic farm buildings remain unconverted. About 90 per cent are intact structurally.
- Bracken and scrub are unchecked in many areas and are causing damage to geological exposures, prehistoric earthworks and other archaeological sites.
- Rural lanes have been damaged through inappropriate use by heavy vehicles.

- By 1995 it is estimated that 56 per cent of the area's extensive historic parkland (5 per cent of the NCA in 1918) had been lost. About 13 per cent of the remaining parkland is covered by a Historic Parkland Grant, and about 21 per cent is included within an agri-environmental scheme.
- Small grants have been made available to keep traditional buildings sound and useable making a vital contribution to both land management and landscape character.

Coast and rivers

- Legacy from past agricultural intensification within the NCA and upstream continues to contribute to diffuse pollution across the Low Weald causing unfavourable water conditions in some rivers, for example the River Beult.
- Increased abstraction for domestic and industrial use often leads to low flows in many of the area's rivers.
- The catchments of the rivers Arun and Western Rother, Medway and Eden and Beult are Priority Catchments falling significantly within the NCA under the Catchment Sensitive Farming Scheme (the East Rother and Walland Marsh and the Stour are Priority Catchment areas that fringe the eastern edge of the NCA).
- Many areas are covered by stewardship agreements to manage riverside habitats.
- Water vole have declined by around 90 per cent in the last 20 years, while otter, more or less extinct in the area since the 1970s, have recently started to return.

Minerals

- An extensive brick and tile industry developed in the clay vale during the 19th century and despite rationalisation it remains economically important today. Building sand is extracted from the narrow Lower Greensand outcrop close to the West Sussex boundary and Streat, near Plumpton in East Sussex.

Drivers of change

Climate change

- Oak is the principle tree of the Low Weald and veteran beech is also an important feature. Both could become threatened by increased prevalence of pests and disease, including Acute Oak Decline, as well as drought stress resulting from reduced water levels within clay soils. Increased storminess and drought could lead to important mature/veteran trees being more susceptible to wind throw and drought-stress. Chalara fraxinea has been identified in the area (particularly the east) and threatens ash populations.
- Changes in temperature resulting in warmer winters could alter the species composition of existing species-rich woodlands, shaws and hedgerows, which are currently composed of oak, ash, field maple and holly, favouring species with lower water demand such as hazel, field maple and hawthorn.
- Changes in precipitation cycles resulting in dryer summers and wetter winters could alter the flow regimes of the area's rivers. This could increase the 'flashiness' of flows with potential for more frequent winter flooding and summer drought.
- Hotter summers and increases in temperatures could result in increased demands for irrigation and domestic uses. Pastures will be vulnerable to summer

drought and therefore it is possible that set-aside will be seen more frequently in the landscape as a means of allowing pasture to recover from dry summers.

- Climate change may make some crops unviable and allow others, such as vines which already exist in the region, to be grown.
- Low Weald, in common with other NCAs in south east England is particularly susceptible to colonisation by currently non-native migratory species, especially flying invertebrates. Thermal stress will also impact on native species.

Other key drivers

- Crawley and Reigate are identified as regional hubs and centres of significant change, with around 15,000 new homes planned by 2026. There is also a recognised need to maintain the importance of Gatwick Airport as an international gateway, along with links to London and the South Coast. Around 13,000 new homes are planned in Horsham and 9,000 within Tonbridge and Malling and significant growth is also planned in areas just outside the NCA such as Ashford and Guildford and the area is also under increasing pressure as a location for renewable energy schemes.
- Based on an analysis carried out in 1995 this NCA was identified as an 'outstanding' priority for woodland conservation, particularly in relation to coppice restoration and is also identified as a potential 'Forest District'.⁶
- Increased abstraction to meet industrial and domestic demands, has decreased the amount of water in rivers as well as ground water reserves. This has had adverse effects on the river habitat itself as well as on damp grassland and woodlands in the flood plains.

Supporting document 3: Analysis supporting Statements of Environmental Opportunity

The following analysis section focuses on a selection of the key provisioning, regulating and cultural ecosystem goods and services for this NCA. These are underpinned by supporting services such as photosynthesis, nutrient cycling, soil formation and evapo-transpiration. Supporting services perform an essential role in ensuring the availability of all ecosystem services.

Biodiversity and geodiversity are crucial in supporting the full range of ecosystem services provided by this landscape. Wildlife and geologically-rich landscapes are also of cultural value and are included in this section of the analysis. This analysis shows the projected impact of Statements of Environmental Opportunity on the value of nominated ecosystem services within this landscape.



Hornbeam, Low Weald.

	Ecosystem service															
	Food provision	Timber provision	Water availability	Genetic diversity	Biomass provision	Climate regulation	Regulating water quality	Regulating water flow	Regulating soil quality	Regulating soil erosion	Pollination	Pest regulation	Regulating coastal erosion	Sense of place / Inspiration	Sense of history	Tranquillity
Statement of Environmental Opportunity																
SEO 1: Protect, manage and significantly enhance the area's intricate and characteristic mix of semi-natural ancient woodlands, gill woodland, shaws, small field copses, hedgerows and individual trees to reduce habitat fragmentation and benefit biodiversity, while seeking to improve and encourage access for health and wellbeing and reinforce sense of local identity.	↔ ***	↑ **	↔ **	↗ **	↑ **	↑ **	↑ **	↑ **	↑ *	↑ ***	↑ ***	↗ *	***	↑ ***	↑ ***	↗ **
SEO 2: Conserve and enhance the distinctive historical aspects of the Low Weald landscape, including its important geological features and sites of heritage interest, particularly those associated with Wealden iron industry, enabling access, continued research, interpretation, understanding and enjoyment of the extensive and nationally significant resources.	↔ ***	↔ ***	↔ ***	↔ ***	↔ ***	↔ ***	↔ ***	↔ ***	↔ ***	↔ ***	↔ ***	↔ ***	***	↑ ***	↑ ***	↔ ***
SEO 3: Work at a landscape scale to improve the quality, state and structure of all Wealden rivers, streams and standing waterbodies and their appropriate flood plains, taking account of water quality, water flow and hydraulic connection with the flood plain, while seeking to enhance biodiversity, historic features and recreation opportunities and reinforcing sense of place.	↔ **	↔ *	↗ ***	↗ *	↗ ***	↑ ***	↑ **	↑ **	↑ **	↑ **	↔ **	↗ *	***	↑ ***	↑ ***	↑ ***
SEO 4: Maintain the sustainable but productive pastoral landscape of the Low Weald, while expanding and connecting semi-natural habitats to benefit biodiversity, regulating soil and water quality by promoting good agricultural practice, and maintaining the extent and quality of unimproved permanent grassland and meadows. Restore degraded neutral grasslands to buffer sites and encourage pollinators and predators for pest regulation.	↗ *	↔ ***	↔ **	↑ ***	↔ ***	↗ **	↑ **	↑ ***	↑ ***	↑ ***	↑ ***	↑ ***	***	↑ ***	↑ ***	↗ **

Note: Arrows shown in the table above indicate anticipated impact on service delivery ↑=Increase "↗=Slight Increase "↔=No change "↘=Slight Decrease "↓=Decrease. Asterisks denote confidence in projection (*low **medium ***high) "°=symbol denotes where insufficient information on the likely impact is available.

Dark plum =National Importance; Mid plum =Regional Importance; Light plum =Local Importance

Landscape attributes

Landscape attribute	Justification for selection
An intricate mix of woodlands including extensive broadleaved oak over hazel or hornbeam cop-pice, shaws, small field copses and tree groups, and lines of riparian trees along watercourses.	■ The Low Weald's woodlands, shaws and hedgerows with standard trees combine to create a densely wooded feel, giving the area its character and linking it with neighbouring High Weald. ■ It is an important habitat for numerous species, including rare bats. Dead wood is essential for many of the NCA's key species such as the lesser-spotted woodpecker and a range of invertebrates. ■ Gill woodland creates a rare damp microclimate essential for rare species such as mosses and liverworts. ■ Its ancient woodland is rich in rarities such as spiked rampion, coralroot, small-leaved lime and wild service tree along with more familiar bluebell, primrose and ransoms. ■ The area contains historic sites associated with the Wealden iron industry, many of which go unnoticed in dense woodland.
An abundance of ponds and small stream valleys.	■ Many surviving ponds left by Wealden iron industry. ■ Clay soil means that ponds formed easily but many have disappeared or are in poor state after abandonment with demise of the iron industry and provision of piped water for livestock. ■ St Leonards Park Ponds, Shillinglee Lake and Vann Lake are examples of ecologically valuable large waterbodies, but smaller ponds are ubiquitous in the Low Weald. ■ Many villages also have well-maintained village ponds. ■ A network of small, narrow and commonly sunken streams cut into the heavy clays, often lined with vegetation, adds to the wet and woody character.
Broad low-lying gently undulating clay vales with outcrops of limestone or sandstone providing local variation with many clay and sand pits.	■ Geological exposures revealing characteristic features and many important palaeontological finds. ■ Localised deposits of limestone and sandstone form gentle ridges and high points throughout the Low Weald. ■ Arable farming on the lighter soils of higher ground, particularly in Kent, has led to a sparser hedge pattern with fewer trees in contrast to the characteristic well-wooded pastoral appearance of most of the Low Weald.

Landscape attribute	Justification for selection
High density of pre-1700 farmsteads and other buildings plus historic designed landscapes and parkland.	■ A sense of past affluence is expressed in the remaining historic parks and gardens and the many fine buildings that often accompany them. ■ Some of the parkland is in positive management through grant funding and agri-environment payments. ■ Oast houses are a characteristic element of the landscape to the east of the area. Most have been converted to other uses although their form remains distinctive. ■ The use of locally sourced building materials in farmsteads, principally weather-boarding on barns (black-stained since the early twentieth century), tile hung first floors and red-orange locally derived bricks, reinforce the relationship between the underlying geology and the historical occupation settlement and agricultural uses of the area. ■ A high density of historic farmsteads retaining 80 per cent of their original character and nearly two-thirds retaining at least 50 per cent of their original form.
A largely pastoral landscape with generally small and irregular fields divided by a dense network of hedgerows and shaws, often remnants of ancient woodland with slightly larger and more regular fields on higher ground and areas of lighter soils.	■ The dense network of species-rich hedgerows and shaws (wider field boundaries or linear woods) throughout the Low Weald create an intimate, small-scale enclosed landscape important for ecological connectivity. ■ The small-scale, irregular pastoral fields create a 'patchwork quilt' effect. There is a more typically productive, arable landscape with larger, more regular fields on the lighter soils, particularly on higher ground in the east. ■ Hedges often follow the line of medieval bank and ditch boundaries. An area of co-axial field systems to the south-west of Horsham is believed to be of Roman origin. ■ In some cases, hedgerows and shaws provide a link or 'wildlife corridor' between fragmented areas of semi-natural habitat within the agricultural landscape. ■ Hedgerows are often tall and standard trees, typically oak, are a particular feature, adding to the intimate, wooded feel of the NCA. The drier, mainly arable land on higher ground contrasts with the lush, wetter pasture which dominates most of the NCA.

Landscape attribute	Justification for selection
Gill woodlands are a particular feature of Low Weald.	■ Gill woodlands have their own associated group of plant species more typical of woodlands found to the west of the British Isles, and the moss, liverwort and lichen communities in particular are likely to be of international importance. ■ This habitat is extremely rare in south-east England. ■ Gill woodlands often appear as tranquil, 'wild' places with a strong sense of antiquity.
Areas of remnant heathland and common land.	■ Surviving areas of heath and common land often provide open public access to the countryside. ■ Areas of scarce lowland heath, notably at Ditchling and Chailey are important breeding sites for birds such as nightjar and stonechat and large variety of butterflies including rare species such as pearl-bordered fritillary. ■ There has been much loss of heathland on the wooded plateau associated with conifer plantations.
Distinctive pattern of north-south orientated routeways and lanes.	■ Traditionally believed to be droveways along which stock was moved between villages and grazing on higher ground or forests. ■ Verged, ditched and hedged rural lanes are characteristic and provide valuable networks for linking habitat sites.
Rivers and water bodies.	■ Most of the major rivers south of London meander through the lush pasture and woodland of Low Weald for part of their course. ■ Rivers and streams are often overhung by willows and alder and vibrant with damselflies and dragonflies in summer. ■ The Wey and Arun Canal also falls partly within the NCA and is currently being restored. ■ Many catchments are under stewardship to buffer banks and restore rivers to their natural geomorphology, creating a more harmonious landscape. ■ The NCA offers significant potential for restoration and creation of wetlands. ■ A once common sight, water voles have declined by around 90 per cent per cent in the last 20 years.

Landscape opportunities

- Plan new landscapes within and around predicted growth areas across the region, especially around Ashford, Crawley, Horsham and Tonbridge, by encouraging the incorporation of high quality green infrastructure and buffering of zones drawing on the existing strong landscape pattern for example, the incorporation, creation and restoration of traditional shaws and meadows within new development
- This NCA is a potential 'Forest District' as a result of the identified opportunities to create an area of woodland over 5,000 ha covering at least 30 per cent of the area through 'connecting' existing woodlands.⁷
- Numerous different river catchments make up Low Weald, with localised flood risks associated with most. The respective catchment flood management plans predominantly identify the storage of flood waters as a key measure to both alleviate flooding so opportunities exist to reinforce the riparian character of the NCA by restoring natural river geomorphology and re-linking watercourses to their floodplains by extending areas such as wet meadow and woodland.
- As the nationally significant earth science and industrial archaeological resources are currently under-utilised there are opportunities to promote both by encouraging research and appreciation by enhancing access and interpretation, highlighting the link between the huge impact of the geology and industry and how it has formed the landscape we see today.

⁷ Preliminary Nature Conservation Objectives for Natural Areas – Woodland and Forestry, Reid, C.M. and Kirby, K.J., English Nature Research Report 239 (1997)



Ham Street Woods National Nature Reserve.

Ecosystem service analysis

The following section shows the analysis used to determine key Ecosystem Service opportunities within the area. These opportunities have been combined with the analysis of landscape opportunities to create Statements of Environmental Opportunity.

Please note that the following analysis is based upon available data and current understanding of ecosystem services. It does not represent a comprehensive local assessment. Quality and quantity of data for each service is variable locally and many of the services listed are not yet fully researched or understood. Therefore analysis and opportunities may change upon publication of further evidence and better understanding of the inter-relationship between services at a local level.

Service	Assets/ attributes: main contributors to service	State	Main beneficiary	Analysis	Opportunities	Principal services offered by opportunities
Food provision	Mixed farming Heavy clay soils Orchards Rivers Vineyards	Largely pastoral owing to heavy clay soils; more than two-thirds of the area classified as Grade 3 agricultural land. Lighter soils on higher ground allow more mixed farming, characterised by lowland cattle and sheep, dairy and the production of cereals. More arable and horticulture to the east. The rivers provide important spawning grounds for sea trout.	Regional	Dairy farming has declined markedly but livestock numbers have not fallen proportionally as land is grazed by beef cattle and sheep. In the east, hop growing has all but died out. Fruit growing continues but has been scaled-back. New orchards tend to be planted with dwarf trees. In some areas new crops such as vines are flourishing due to effects of climate change.	There are opportunities to use measures such as agri-environment schemes to manage the agricultural landscape to retain its distinctive character and productivity, while improving its contribution to biodiversity and protection of vulnerable soils and historical evidence, for example by restoring boundaries such as shaws and hedgerows, returning arable land to pasture where appropriate and creating field margins to buffer fields and improve connectivity.	Food provision Biodiversity Genetic diversity Regulating soil quality Sense of place/ inspiration Sense of history Regulating water quality

Service	Assets/ attributes: main contributors to service	State	Main beneficiary	Analysis	Opportunities	Principal services offered by opportunities
Timber provision	Woodland Conifer plantations	Densely wooded with around 29,000 ha of woodland covering 16 per cent of the NCA, over half of which is ancient. Mostly broadleaved, often remnant coppice. Oaks, often veteran, are significant species in woods, hedgerows and fields. Some conifer plantations.	Regional	Not much commercial timber production considering wooded nature but there is increasing interest in locally-sourced hardwood for both high-end timber and woodfuel supplies. Care needs to be taken to assess traffic impact and balance timber production potential with protection of rural roads and lanes. Dead wood also needs preserving in some areas for biodiversity value and its role in the nutrient cycle and soil formation.	Low Weald has been identified as an 'outstanding' priority for woodland conservation, particularly in relation to coppice restoration. Positive and sensitive management of existing woodlands to increase the commercial production of quality hardwood timber could benefit biodiversity, woodland structure and the local economy. Extending the area of broadleaved woodland would create new and sustainable sources of timber on sites less sensitive than many existing woodland areas, further supporting the market for quality hardwood timber. Felling of conifer plantations on former ancient woodland sites would provide a one-off source of timber and replanting with appropriate native broadleaved species.	Timber provision Climate change Biodiversity Sense of place/inspiration Sense of history

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Water availability	Reservoirs Rivers	There are no significant aquifers in Low Weald, though it is next to the Brighton chalk aquifer. Arlington and Bough Beech reservoirs supply around 350,000 households (water company websites). There is 'no water available' from the Ouse catchment in the south, while there is 'water available' from the Arun and the Adur catchments.⁸ The Medway is 'over licensed'⁹ while the Beult, has 'no water available'.	Regional	A lot of water in the east is used for agriculture and farmers have overcome summer water shortages through the construction of winter storage reservoirs. Water abstracted from the Adur catchment is mainly used for public water supply and relies on surface waters. Summer flows are unable to support high levels of abstraction so flows are supported by augmentation releases from Ardingly reservoir (outside of the NCA). Water is pumped from a downstream point into the Bough Beech Reservoir located in the upper parts of the catchment to supply Sevenoaks - around 100,000 people.¹⁰ Arlington Reservoir is filled by the River Cuckmere and supplies around 250,000 people in Eastbourne, Polegate, Hailsham and Heathfield areas.¹¹ Pressure from new development and rising household demand is increasing the need for water, with resources finely balanced between meeting the demands of existing abstractions and the need to protect river flows.	Encourage promotion of sustainable water use by homes and businesses supplied from the catchments. Measures to find additional storage for seasonal flood waters in Low Weald may present opportunities for increasing water provision. Ensure that future development addresses water resource planning and encompasses the highest standards for water efficiency and that sustainable urban drainage systems are incorporated.	Water availability Biodiversity Recreation Regulating water quality Regulating water flow

⁸ The Adur and Ouse Catchment Abstraction Management Strategy, Environment Agency (2013; URL: <http://publications.environment-agency.gov.uk/pdf/GESO0305BVIG-E-E.pdf>)

⁹ The Medway Catchment Abstraction Management Strategy, Environment Agency (2013; URL: <http://publications.environment-agency.gov.uk/pdf/GESO0405BNZJ-E-E.pdf>)

¹⁰ Sutton and East Surrey Water website (www.waterplc.com/index.asp)

¹¹ South East Water website (www.southeastwater.co.uk/)

Service	Assets/ attributes: main contributors to service	State	Main beneficiary	Analysis	Opportunities	Principal services offered by opportunities
Genetic diversity	Orchards	There are traditional orchards surviving.	National	Historically the area was important for growing hops with the Golding variety (still popular and source of many varieties across the world) was developed in Low Weald. Very little, if any, commercial hop growing exists now but the surviving plants provide an essential gene pool of local varieties. Low Weald was a major producer of fruit. Many apple varieties bear names reflecting their association with the area such as the "Crawley Beauty" which was identified in a garden effectively now under Gatwick Airport and "Forge" which, as its name suggests, was popular with those employed in the iron industry, being a particularly versatile cottage garden variety favoured for cider-making. Fruit production has declined but remains an important industry, particularly on the lighter soils in the east. The Sussex cattle breed was refined in Low Weald, notably by the Child family around Arlington in the 18th and early 19th centuries. The Sussex Herd Book Society was formed after a public meeting in Horsham in 1878. These cattle were used as much for ploughing and pulling carts as beef until the early 20th century as they could cope with heavy clay soils better than horses. Today the breed is valued for its docility and hardiness, making it popular for conservation grazing. Continued over...	Support brewers and growers to exploit the resurgence in interest in traditional ales, local produce and current research into new hop varieties to revive the hop industry. Initiatives to promote local, historical varieties of fruit should be encouraged. Promote creation or restoration of community orchards as part of quality green infrastructure and recreation provision in new development. Encourage use of Sussex cattle for conservation grazing locally and commercial beef production, supporting local marketing initiatives which promote its local and heritage qualities.	Genetic diversity Food production Pollination Sense of place/inspiration Sense of history Recreation
	Remnant hop gardens	Some remnants of the hop growing industry in Kent exist.				
	Sussex cattle	Red Sussex cattle are still reared on farms in Low Weald.				
	Southdown sheep	Southdown sheep are still bred in Low Weald.				

Service	Assets/ attributes: main contributors to service	State	Main beneficiary	Analysis	Opportunities	Principal services offered by opportunities
Genetic diversity continued				...continued from previous. Although Southdown sheep are synonymous with grazing the South Downs, Low Weald farms were important for the development of the breed during the 19th century and the area still has several pedigree flocks.		
Biomass energy	Woodland Wet woodland	Woodland covers 16 per cent of the NCA and provides a source of local woodfuel. Willow grows well. Plantings of miscanthus and short rotation coppice are currently rare within the NCA.	Regional	Overall the potential yield for short rotation coppice is identified as medium and that for miscanthus as high. Low undulating topography will help to assimilate biomass crops into the landscape while the characteristic pattern of small fields with dense boundaries will visually enclose them. Care should be taken to avoid planting on higher ground and in areas where semi-natural habitat or heritage assets may be damaged. There are a number of initiatives promoting sustainable local woodfuel.	The existing pattern of mixed types of woodland, including coppice, has potential to accommodate some short rotation coppice. Care should be taken to maintain the balance between woodland and other land uses and avoid over-planting which could adversely affect character. Low Weald is identified as an 'outstanding' priority for woodland conservation, particularly in relation to coppice restoration. There are opportunities for increasing provision of woodfuel by Increasing the area of native woodland, improving management of existing woodlands and supporting initiatives to explore and promote local markets for sustainable woodfuel. Continued over...	Biomass energy Biodiversity Sense of place/ inspiration

Service	Assets/ attributes: main contributors to service	State	Main beneficiary	Analysis	Opportunities	Principal services offered by opportunities
Biomass energy continued					...continued from previous. Low Weald is identified as a potential "Forest District" so there is enthusiasm for creation of woodland and this presents opportunities for increased provision of woodfuel, including reinstating traditional coppice management to produce wood fuel in appropriate locations for local use. Some dead wood needs to be retained in situ for biodiversity value.	
Climate regulation	Woodland Hedgerows and shaws Wet woodland Semi-natural wetland habitats Gill woodland	Nearly all of the soil in the NCA has low carbon content at 0 to 5 per cent. Some of the loamy and clayey flood plain soils with naturally high groundwater may be peaty at depth or include small areas of peaty topsoil, providing a small store of carbon. The high coverage of woodland throughout the NCA contributes to the sequestration and storage of carbon both in the organic-rich woodland soils and in the growing and standing timber.	Regional	Maintaining areas of permanent pasture in flood plains is likely to help preserve carbon-rich soils. Regular and repeated cultivation will result in a loss of carbon from all soils. Maintaining areas of ancient semi-natural woodland with minimal intervention will help protect carbon-rich woodland soils and the stored carbon in standing and fallen trees. Expanding and extending the area of woodland will increase carbon sequestration rates and long-term carbon storage across the area.	Significant potential for the restoration and creation of wetlands within the NCA is identified by the Wetland Vision.¹² Carbon sequestration can be increased by increasing soil organic matter on cultivated soil and by reducing the frequency or area of cultivation.	Climate regulation Biodiversity Recreation Tranquillity Regulating water flow Regulating water quality

¹² www.wetlandvision.org.uk/

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Regulating water quality	Rivers Soils Reservoirs Woodland Wet meadows and riverside vegetation	60 per cent of the area is within a nitrate vulnerable zone. Many rivers are failing to meet Water Framework Directive targets. The River Mole is classed as having 'poor' ecological status, while the Medway and Beult are classed as having stretches of both 'moderate' and 'poor' ecological potential. In the south, the Cuckmere, the Ouse, the Adur and the Arun are all classed as having predominantly either a 'moderate' or 'poor' ecological status and potential. Where assessed, most rivers have "good" chemical status, except for a small stretch of the Ouse and a slightly longer stretch of the Arun, which are classed as 'failing to achieve good chemical status'.	Regional	The Arun and Western Rother, Stour, Medway and Eden and the Beult are priority catchments under the catchment sensitive farming scheme.¹³ Legacy from past agricultural intensification within the NCA and upstream continues to contribute to diffuse pollution. Fewer livestock and more responsible use of pesticides and fertilizer in the last 20 years has reduced pollution, though run-off from silage and slurry stores and soil wash from cattle poaching, particularly around gateways and watercourses, can be a problem in some areas. Sediment, pesticide and nitrate pollution often originates in adjacent, higher land outside the NCA. Water quality is particularly important in the reservoirs that provide water for the surrounding areas. Poor water quality issues exacerbated by increased abstraction, particularly during periods of low flow are likely to worsen with climate change and rises in population in Low Weald and adjacent NCAs due to proposed new development. Non-native invasive species are present in most watercourses.	Work with farmers both in Low Weald and in adjacent NCAs to manage farmland under the principles established under the England Catchment Sensitive Farming Delivery Initiative, such as improved drainage, hard bases for livestock feeders and gateways, roofing of manure stores, better pesticide treatment and providing alternative drinking sources to keep livestock away from watercourses. Work with land managers to buffer watercourses and reservoirs by building up vegetation, including woodland on banks to slow the pathway of run-off to improve water quality, regulate soil erosion and reduce subsequent sedimentation. Opportunities include landscape-scale improvements in soil management and an expansion of permanent grassland and wetland habitats adjacent to watercourses and in flood plains, such as through stewardship schemes which have already been introduced around many watercourses. Continued over...	Regulating water quality Regulating water flow Regulating soil erosion Regulating soil quality Biodiversity

¹³ Defra catchment priorities identified under the England Catchment Sensitive Farming Delivery initiative (www.defra.gov.uk/foodfarm/landmanage/water/csf/documents/catchment-priorities.pdf)

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Regulating water quality continued					...continued from previous. Promote responsible use of water by domestic and business users and ensure new development includes sustainable urban drainage systems. Work to eradicate non-native invasive species, particularly along riverbanks and encourage the establishment of native vegetation to reduce soil exposure. Promote awareness of the importance of biosecurity, particularly in areas of heavy public usage, to prevent spread.	

Service	Assets/ attributes: main contributors to service	State	Main beneficiary	Analysis	Opportunities	Principal services offered by opportunities
Regulating water flow	Rivers Extensive grazing on meadows and permanent grassland in flood plains Wet woodland Artificial flood water storage structure and flood defences	Drainage is poor throughout the NCA due to the underlying impermeable Wealden clay and low-lying nature. Flooding occurs in many areas and is a particular problem in well-populated areas such as around Hailsham, Lewes and Tonbridge.¹⁴ Surface water flooding is often occurs as a result of under capacity in the local drainage system and/or blockages within culverts or drains. There is significant flood risk in Lewes associated with the River Ouse as a result of surface water, urban drainage and groundwater flooding. There is currently a relatively low risk of river flooding from the Adur, although a combination of surface water flooding, urban drainage problems and under capacity of local streams causes localised areas of combined fluvial and urban flooding. There is low to moderate flooding along the River Mole. The confluence of the Medway and the Beult has a high flood risk affecting local villages, while there is also significant risk of flooding in Tonbridge. The River Beult catchment has a relatively low gradient and has fluvial flood risk from typically frequent but less severe flood events around Smarden and Staplehurst. During high flow, major attenuation of flood waters occurs at the Leigh flood storage reservoir and upstream of Tonbridge on the Medway flood plain (outside of the NCA) which helps prevent flooding in this section of the NCA.¹⁵	Regional	Strategies to address flooding risk around Hailsham include the development of a Surface Water Management Plan (SWMP), while in the wider Cuckmere catchment the Catchment Flood Management Plan identifies the potential to develop strategies for river channel restoration and naturalisation. The Ouse Catchment Flood Management Plan¹⁶ identifies opportunities to store water or manage run-off to reduce flood risk, including use of agri-environment and woodland schemes to encourage change in land use. The River Mole Catchment Flood Management plans seek to maintain and improve the capacity of the flood plain to store water. The Crawley area in the Upper Mole catchment is identified as an area of opportunity to store water to reduce flood risk.¹⁷ The area's permanent, particularly rough grassland helps reduce cross-land flows of water and has greater water infiltration properties, as do its shaws, hedgerows and woodlands.	Work with farmers and land managers to identify where there is scope for mitigating existing flood risk through a combination of measures including expanding and managing areas of semi-natural habitats that help to reduce cross-land water flows and have increased water infiltration properties. Some localised flood risks may be reduced by promotion of sustainable urban drainage systems, particularly where hard surface water run-off is the major problem, for example at Horsham. Avoid inappropriate development in flood risk areas and minimise runoff from new development by integrating water storage features in the form of semi-natural habitats into new developments. Work with farmers and land managers to explore potential within the Adur and Arun catchments for the storage of flood waters to reduce flood risk downstream,¹⁸ with a Land Management Plan to identify possible changes in land use and land management practices throughout the Arun catchment. This would aim to reduce run-off from surrounding countryside, to reduce soil erosion and achieve local flood risk benefits.	Regulating water flow Regulating soil erosion Biodiversity Regulating water quality

¹⁴ Cuckmere and Sussex Havens Catchment Flood Management Plan, Environment Agency (2009; URL: <http://publications.environment-agency.gov.uk/pdf/GESO1008BOWH-e-e.pdf>)

¹⁵ River Medway Catchment Flood Management Plan, Environment Agency (2009; URL: <http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/research/planning/127387.aspx>)

¹⁶ River Ouse Catchment Flood Management Plan <http://publications.environment-agency.gov.uk/pdf/GESO1008BOWG-e-e.pdf>

¹⁷ Thames, Arun and Western Streams, Adur, Ouse, Cuckmere and Sussex Havens, Medway, & Stour Catchment Flood Management Plans, December 2009 (Environment Agency)

¹⁸ River Adur Catchment Flood Management Plan and Arun & Western Streams Catchment Flood Management Plan, Environment Agency (2009; URL: <http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/research/planning/127387.aspx>)

Service	Assets/ attributes: main contributors to service	State	Main beneficiary	Analysis	Opportunities	Principal services offered by opportunities
Regulating soil quality	Soils Permanent grassland Rivers Woodland	There are 5 main soilscape types in this NCA; slowly permeable seasonally wet slightly acid but base-rich loamy and clayey soils, covering 74 per cent of the NCA; loamy soils with naturally high groundwater 8 per cent; slightly acid loamy and clayey soils with impeded drainage 8 per cent; freely draining slightly acid loamy soils 4 per cent; and loamy and clayey flood plain soils with naturally high groundwater 3 per cent.	Local	The majority of soils within the area and particularly the slowly permeable seasonally wet slightly acid but base-rich loamy and clayey soils may suffer compaction and/or capping as they are easily damaged when wet, which in turn may lead to increasingly poor water infiltration and diffuse pollution as a result of surface water run-off.	Encourage extensive grazing and best practice in soil management, particularly in areas prone to flooding, to reduce compaction and capping and increase water infiltration rates. Opportunities to increase the efficacy of this service include landscape-scale improvements in soil management and more informed nutrient management including the application of Nitrate Vulnerable Zone guidelines. Encourage agricultural practices that retain permanent cover and build up organic matter on cultivated land, especially on free draining loamy soils in the east.	Regulating soil quality Regulating soil erosion Regulating water quality

Service	Assets/ attributes: main contributors to service	State	Main beneficiary	Analysis	Opportunities	Principal services offered by opportunities
Regulating soil erosion	Woodland, hedgerows and shaws Farmland Clay soils	The vast majority of the area's soils, the seasonally wet base-rich soils and the flood plain soils, covering 77 per cent of the NCA, have a low risk of soil erosion. The loamy soils with naturally high groundwater are also generally at low risk of soil erosion except where coarser textured variants occur on sloping or uneven ground. Erosion is a problem on the more undulating ground around Edenbridge where sandstone meets clay.	Local	Many of the slightly acid loamy and clayey soils with impeded drainage (covering 8 per cent) are prone to compaction and capping/slaking, leading to an increased risk of erosion by surface water run-off, especially on steeper slopes. The freely draining slightly acid loamy soils (covering 4 per cent) have enhanced risk of soil erosion on moderately or steeply sloping land where cultivated or bare soil is exposed, exacerbated where organic matter levels are low after continuous arable cultivation or where soils are compacted. There is also the potential for wind erosion on some coarse textured cultivated variants. Maize growing for fodder is widespread and can result in increased risk of soil erosion where not properly managed.	Opportunities exist to restore hedgerows, shaws and buffer farmland to control velocity of cross-land water flows to reduce erosion risks. Improvement of agricultural practices in some areas can also reduce problems of compaction. Stewardship has been introduced around many watercourses and this can be extended to reduce erosion risks. Increase organic matter content to improve structure and cohesion. Reduce cultivation where appropriate. Extensive grazing regimes to minimise localised compaction.	Regulating soil erosion Biodiversity Regulating soil quality Regulating water quality Regulating water flow

Service	Assets/ attributes: main contributors to service	State	Main beneficiary	Analysis	Opportunities	Principal services offered by opportunities
Pollination	Grassland Meadows Orchards Gardens Parkland Heathland	Fruit-growing is particularly important in the east of the NCA and relies heavily on supply of pollinators. There are some areas of heathland, mainly on commons. Connectivity of semi-natural habitats, particularly the network of woodlands, shaws and hedgerows and the multiple watercourses, contribute to the movement of pollinators around the area.	Local	In the productive eastern area, orchards and soft fruit pollinators are critical for the future of insect dependent crops and increases in this service may be required in order to provide greater options for future cropping. Fragmentation of the landscape due to land use change and development could lead to isolation of habitats.	There are opportunities to enhance the network and connectivity of suitable habitats in the agricultural landscape by creating conservation headlands, arable field margins and meadows. This could have a beneficial effect on biodiversity generally by linking and creating a network of habitats and provide foraging, resting and breeding sites for pollinators. Encourage nectar rich planting in gardens and public spaces.	Pollination Biodiversity Food production

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Pest regulation	Woodland	The spread of semi-natural habitats throughout the agricultural landscape of this NCA, including field margins, shaws, hedgerows and ponds will support species that will aid pest regulation.	Local	Fragmentation and disturbance of semi-natural habitats will decrease the ability of predatory species to move within the farmed landscape.	Work with land owners, farmers and the local community to re-link the fragmented landscape by restoring hedgerows and shaws and creating corridors using field margins, road verges and rivers to allow predator species to move around.	Pest regulation
	Farmland					Biodiversity
	Hedgerows and verges	Oak is characteristic of the area a tree species noted for supporting a large number of invertebrates, a number of which are predatory. The notable bat populations within the area also contribute to pest regulation.		Increasing diversity in species and structure of field margins will increase the ability for these areas to support populations of pest regulating species such as invertebrates, birds and mammals.		Food production
	Parkland				Work in partnership to maintain and expand the area of semi-natural habitats, including the restoration of ponds, throughout the NCA to provide a range of niches to support pest regulating species including invertebrates, birds and mammals.	Regulating water quality
	Orchards	Mature elm has been lost from most of the Low Weald with the exception of parts which fall within the Dutch Elm Disease Control Area in east Sussex.		There is scope to improve the condition and extent of semi-natural habitat across the area. Linking semi-natural habitat to provide a sustainable functional network can help support sustainable populations of pest regulating species and enable them to move around.		
	Heathland and commons					
	Rivers					
	Ponds				Maximise the effectiveness of mechanisms such as agri-environment schemes, by encourage the use of field margins, beetle banks and headlands in arable land, to encourage pest regulating species in close proximity to food crops requiring pollination.	

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Sense of place / inspiration	Woodland Wood pasture Gill woodland Hedgerows Orchards Hop fields Traditional buildings Geology	Traditional villages, often formed from buildings in a distinct local vernacular architecture, surrounded by woodland are a feature of the landscape, as are the characteristic gill woodlands and views to the high ground of adjacent NCAs. The historical land uses of wood pasture, orchards and hop yards, although declining in number and area, remain a distinctive and characteristic element of the landscape. There are many geological sites of national importance. Nearly 10,000 ha of parts of adjacent AONBs (High Weald, Kent Downs and Surrey Hills), along with over 13,000 ha of the South Downs National Park fall within the NCA.	Local	The abundance of ancient woodland, shaws and hedgerows and the wildlife they support give the area an intimate, rural character, despite a growing population, numerous major transport routes and the large urban complex around Gatwick Airport and Crawley. Charles Darwin was inspired by the geological strata of the Weald and used it in his original estimates for Origin of Species. Ditchling became a centre for exponents of the Arts and Crafts Movement with the foundation of the Guild of St Joseph and St Dominic by Eric Gill in the early 20th century. The Guild folded in 1989. The protected landscapes within Low Weald contribute significantly to the sense of place and reflect the high quality of the surrounding landscape. It can make areas outside these boundaries a focus for development pressures which would be considered inappropriate within protected landscapes.	Restoring and creating where appropriate hedgerows, shaws and areas of woodland within existing and new developments can help maintain boundaries and protect the characteristic wooded feel of the area. Traditional landscape elements formed by orchards and hop gardens, their characteristic tall shelter hedges should be preserved to maintain the distinctive character of the eastern part of the NCA. Support the protection of heritage assets such as traditional farmsteads and historic oast houses from inappropriate conversion where they make significant positive contribution to the landscape. Ensure that new development does not intrude upon the essential character of the surrounding protected landscapes.	Sense of place/ inspiration Sense of history Recreation Geodiversity Biodiversity Tranquillity

Service	Assets/ attributes: main contributors to service	State	Main beneficiary	Analysis	Opportunities	Principal services offered by opportunities
Sense of history	Twenty-one registered historic parks and gardens, 85 scheduled monuments and 6,066 listed buildings Historic field patterns and boundaries. Ancient woodland Traditional villages Oast houses and other traditional farm buildings Industrial heritage sites Ancient woodland and veteran trees Gardens and other designed landscapes	There are manor houses, often medieval in origin and smaller historic designed landscapes in the grounds of country houses. The area is rich in industrial archaeological sites, particularly relating to the Wealden iron industry. The landscape is essentially medieval in structure with generally small fields, hedgerow boundaries, woodland peppered with farmsteads, small hamlets and villages. Much of the woodland is ancient and veteran trees are a feature of parklands, villages and isolated in fields.	National	Twenty-one registered parks and gardens fall within the NCA. Though many of these are centred in adjacent NCAs, Low Weald contains large parts of important estates which are a legacy of the wealth created during the iron boom in the Tudor period, for example Hever Castle. Archaeological sites and heritage assets often lie under woodland and many are still to be discovered, therefore any management or development needs to take account of the possibility of concealed sites. Bracken and scrub are unchecked in many areas, causing damage to prehistoric earthworks and other archaeological sites. The area's historic sites, particularly the association with the Wealden Iron Industry, are perhaps less well appreciated than in neighbouring High Weald. Strong sense of being an anciently settled and farmed landscape, with farmsteads (often of medieval origin) set in landscapes also enclosed in the medieval period and successively reorganised. The historical pattern of field enclosure and assarting from woodland remains mostly intact. Continued over...	Opportunities to enhance the setting and interpretation of heritage assets should be identified and realised. Also work with local societies and interest groups to promote the appreciation and understanding of the area's historic sites and nationally important industrial heritage. Encourage preservation of historic buildings and the use of traditional building materials such as locally produced bricks and tiles and stone from local quarries in their conservation. Unconverted oast houses, with surviving hop industry equipment, are extremely rare and efforts to protect them intact should be supported. Encourage protection of characteristic field patterns and boundary features.	Sense of history Sense of place/inspiration Geodiversity Recreation

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Sense of history continued				...continued from previous. Although hop growing has now all but died out as a commercial enterprise, its mark on the landscape remains evident, most obviously in the oast houses of Kent and Sussex which have mostly been converted to other uses. Low Weald has the highest survival rate of listed, traditional farm buildings in the south east and a high density of pre-1700 timber-framed buildings. Examples of vernacular buildings using local materials such as local brick and tile, flint in areas near the South Downs and Horsham stone are common across the area. Bayleaf Farm was removed during the construction of Bough Beech reservoir and reconstructed at the Weald and Downland Museum in Singleton and is a fine example of a medieval Wealden farmhouse.		

Service	Assets/ attributes: main contributors to service	State	Main beneficiary	Analysis	Opportunities	Principal services offered by opportunities
Tranquillity	Woodland Villages Parkland	The area is densely wooded. Five per cent of the area is classed as urban and 52 per cent 'disturbed' according to CPRE tranquillity mapping. ¹⁹	Local	Development pressure has increased the spread of noise and light pollution from roads, notably the M23 and A24, and urban areas, particularly around Gatwick Airport. The area retains much of its rural and tranquil nature in increasingly isolated pockets with small villages nestled amongst woodland and the farmed landscape.	There are opportunities to retain the remaining sense of tranquillity on woodland and agricultural land by protecting them from inappropriate development and protecting small villages from light and noise pollution by buffering through the use of woodland and shaws. Ensure that adequate green infrastructure provision is integral to all development planning and encourage improvement of the public transport network to reduce disturbance on rural roads and lanes.	Tranquillity Biodiversity Sense of place/ inspiration

¹⁹ CPRE Intrusion Map, (2007)

Service	Assets/ attributes: main contributors to service	State	Main beneficiary	Analysis	Opportunities	Principal services offered by opportunities
Recreation	Rights of way Open access land Reservoirs 2 NNRs Rivers Cycle trails Canal Country park	Recreation is supported by the area's 3,974 km rights of way network with links to the North and South Downs National Trails. The Wealdway, a long-distance (80 miles) footpath between Gravesend and Eastbourne, crosses Low Weald in the north and south. Open access land totals just over 1,930 ha (around 1 per cent of the NCA). National Cycle Network Route 21 runs through the NCA. Arlington and Bough Beech reservoirs are important recreational resources within the NCA supporting activities such as birdwatching and angling. Ditchling Common is a country park, popular for recreational activities such as walking and picnicking.	Regional	The area is essentially rural in nature but contains areas of dense urban settlement, notably around Gatwick and Crawley. It is also within easy reach for large centres of urban population such as Medway, Brighton and Hove and South London.	Ensure access balances recreational enjoyment, with the protection of geological and historical features as well as biodiversity. Promote sustainable tourism and recreational activities to minimise impact on the environment, while helping to generate income and employment. Work with partners such as local authorities and health boards make the most of opportunities for improving wellbeing of local communities through promoting use of the rights of way network, connecting green spaces, commons, parkland and accessible woodland. The need to increase wetland areas for flood management may create opportunities for recreation. Likewise restoration projects such as that on the Wey and Arun Canal will present additional recreational facilities. Rights of way and open access throughout the area should be enhanced in line with the local Rights of Way Improvement Plan, particularly where improving links to the Wealdway and North and South Downs National Trails. Plans to extend cycle networks should be encouraged and supported.	Recreation Sense of history Sense of place/ inspiration Biodiversity Geodiversity

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Service	Assets/ attributes: main contributors to service	State	Main beneficiary	Analysis	Opportunities	Principal services offered by opportunities
Biodiversity	3 SAC 2,700ha is designated as SSSI 2 NNRs BAP priority habitats cover 9 per cent of the NCA Rated in top 10 NCAs for several species Woodland, wood pasture and parkland Ponds, rivers and reservoirs	The Mens and Ebernoe Common are designated SACs for their broadleaved woodland (specifically beech) on acid soil, a favoured habitat for barbastelle bats. Ebernoe is also important for Bechstein's bats. Just under 5 ha of the orchid-rich chalk grassland of Lewes Downs SAC falls within the NCA Ebernoe Common is also a NNR. It is a large wooded common with over 400 species of fungi and 375 species of plant and a breeding site for birds such as hawfinch and nightingale. Ham Street Woods is also a NNR. This is typical of the ancient woodland that once covered the Weald and is broadleaved woodland supporting outstanding bird and invertebrate communities. More than half the priority habitat is wet woodland. Low Weald is densely wooded and a high proportion of this is ancient. The area is rated second nationally for density of ponds. Most of the main rivers south of the Thames flow through Low Weald for part of their course. Knepp Castle embarked on its rewilding project in 2001²⁰	National	Low Weald is densely wooded and supports a wide range of priority species, notably bullfinch and lesser-spotted woodpecker bats and invertebrates such as pearl-bordered fritillary and wood white butterflies and several rare moths. It is the top NCA for spiked rampion and in the top five for five other vascular plant species. It also contains important sites for rare lichens, bryophytes and fungi. As the area is important for species such as lesser spotted woodpecker and many invertebrates that rely on dead wood, any woodland management programme needs to ensure that this is preserved in key areas. It is identified as a potential "Forest District" so huge benefits can be achieved by linking existing woodland to create 30 per cent woodland cover over an area of 5,000 ha. Much woodland is ancient and its characteristic gill woodland is a rare habitat in SE England. Woodland ponds are often legacies of the iron industry. Many are in poor condition through lack of management and siltation due to low flows or over-abstraction. There has been significant uptake of stewardship agreements for restoration and creation of ponds since 1999. Continued over...	Enhance or reinstate woodland management, including restoration of rides and glades where appropriate, and restore plantations on ancient woodland sites to native woodland. Ensure planned development includes high quality green and blue infrastructure that benefits well-being and access to nature of local communities as well as enhancing biodiversity. Protect the area's historic parkland and wood pasture sites, for example by supporting initiatives such as the Western Weald Project. Support creation and restoration of ponds, particularly those with high biodiversity or historical interest. Restore meadows and create margins to fields and roads to buffer farmland and rivers watercourses and continuing to support projects such as the Weald Meadows Initiative. Work with partners and land managers to identify, monitor and control non-native invasive species and diseases.	Biodiversity Sense of place/ inspiration Tranquillity Biomass energy Recreation Regulating soil quality Regulating water quality Regulating water flow

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Service	Assets/ attributes: main contributors to service	State	Main beneficiary	Analysis	Opportunities	Principal services offered by opportunities
Biodiversity continued				...continued from previous. Several rivers are within Priority Catchment s with legacy pollution from past intensive farming, sediment and nitrates, fouling from slurry and damage to riverbanks by livestock particular areas of concern, both within the NCA and upstream. The rivers provide important spawning grounds for sea trout. Unimproved hay meadows have been declining since the 1950s due to development and changes in farming practices and development. Some surviving pockets have been brought into environmental stewardship in recent years. Low Weald, in common with other NCAs in south east England is particularly susceptible to colonisation by currently non-native migratory species, especially flying invertebrates. Thermal stress will also impact on native species.		

Service	Assets/ attributes: main contributors to service	State	Main beneficiary	Analysis	Opportunities	Principal services offered by opportunities
Geodiversity	Clay Sandstone outcrops Quarries and brickworks Locally sourced building materials 11 geological SSSI 19 local geological sites	Claypits excavated for the brick and tile industry often exposed clear geological sections as well as fossil remains. Numerous quarry sites display clear geological sections of Weald Clay and Upper Cretaceous Chalk with notable fossil remains. Some of the geological SSSI are in unfavourable declining condition.	National	Low Weald geological sites lie within the Weald Clay Groups and provide detailed coverage of the varied lithologies, particularly sandstone and limestone, in this unit. Low Weald has a complex geology and has many sites of national significance including 11 geological SSSI and 19 local geological sites. Geological features include Jurassic-Cretaceous stratigraphy sites notable for well preserved fossils including insects, plants, fish and reptiles. The SSSI of Auclaye, Clock House Brickworks and Smokejack Clay Pit have yielded well-preserved insect fossils. Smokejack Clay Pit also yielded dinosaurs Iguanodon and Baryonyx. Many sites, including notable SSSI, are threatened by encroachment of scrub and bracken and have poor access. There have also been problems with irresponsible fossil-hunting.	Promote use of locally sourced building materials as an expression of local geodiversity Maintain and enhance earth science features by seeking to enhance existing exposures and agreeing conservation sections in active and disused quarries. Improve access to and promote use of geological sites to improve understanding and appreciation of this important educational resource. Encourage on-site interpretation such as sign boarding, trail guides and leaflets. Encouraging assessment of the educational and research value of new sites. Ensure that the importance and sensitivity of earth science SSSI and local geological sites are recognised in the planning process and that geological conservation is integral to the development process. Clarify site management needs to agreed standards for local geological sites using standards similar to those for SSSI. Promote responsible fossil collecting.	Geodiversity Recreation Sense of place/inspiration Sense of history

Service	Assets/ attributes: main contributors to service	State	Main beneficiary	Analysis	Opportunities	Principal services offered by opportunities
Geodiversity	Very diverse geology Soils and geo-morphology SSSI Local Geological Sites Local building stones Local industrial mining/quarrying heritage	35 geological SSSI 9 mixed SSSI 159 Local Geological Sites Very diverse geology with rocks from six geological periods each characterised by different rock types, which in turn determine the shape, vegetation and economic use of the landscapes. Geology has been a key influence on industry and settlement patterns. The wide variety of building stones and clay products influence local character. This is a classic area associated with early scientific work which continues today.	National	Geological sites including SSSI and Regionally Important Geological and Geomorphological Sites (RIGS) will sometimes need active management to maintain their value, such as controlling vegetation and tree growth. Sites which are well used for education and study may need active monitoring and liaison to ensure that damage, either deliberate or accidental, does not occur. Ensuring a supply of local stone is available to reinforce sense of place and history could have a negative impact on the landscape character if not managed sensitively.	Seek to improve the condition of geological sites and raise public awareness of geology, soils and geomorphology and its influences on landscape and human activity. Encourage the continued use of local stone in buildings to build on the sense of place and history. Use micro quarries to provide small amounts of local distinctive building stone for conservation and even facing new builds in order to keep the character of a particular village/settlement. Encourage the public awareness of the past industrial heritage of the mining/quarrying.	Geodiversity Sense of place / inspiration Sense of history Recreation Water availability

Photo credits

Front cover: Sussex cattle graze the Low Weald in West Sussex. The South Downs forming the backdrop in the distance © Natural England/Catherine Tonge

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Natural England is here to secure a healthy natural environment for people to enjoy, where wildlife is protected and England's traditional landscapes are safeguarded for future generations.

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APPENDIX 8: National Character Area 122: High Weald

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Introduction

As part of Natural England's responsibilities as set out in the Natural Environment White Paper¹, Biodiversity 2020² and the European Landscape Convention³, we are revising profiles for England's 159 National Character Areas (NCAs). These are areas that share similar landscape characteristics, and which follow natural lines in the landscape rather than administrative boundaries, making them a good decision-making framework for the natural environment.

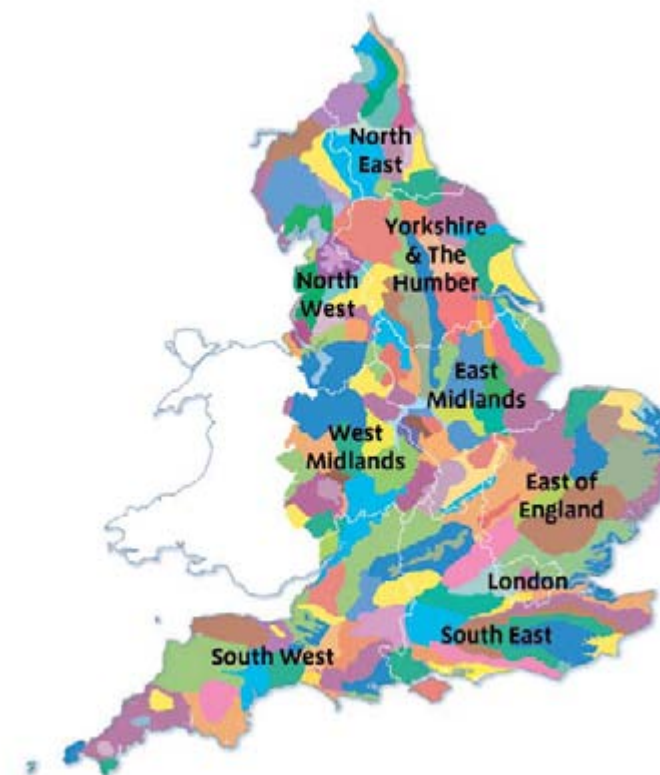
NCA profiles are guidance documents which can help communities to inform their decision-making about the places that they live in and care for. The information they contain will support the planning of conservation initiatives at a landscape scale, inform the delivery of Nature Improvement Areas and encourage broader partnership working through Local Nature Partnerships. The profiles will also help to inform choices about how land is managed and can change.

Each profile includes a description of the natural and cultural features that shape our landscapes, how the landscape has changed over time, the current key drivers for ongoing change, and a broad analysis of each area's characteristics and ecosystem services. Statements of Environmental Opportunity (SEOs) are suggested, which draw on this integrated information. The SEOs offer guidance on the critical issues, which could help to achieve sustainable growth and a more secure environmental future.

NCA profiles are working documents which draw on current evidence and knowledge. We will aim to refresh and update them periodically as new information becomes available to us.

We would like to hear how useful the NCA profiles are to you. You can contact the NCA team by emailing ncaprofiles@naturalengland.org.uk

National Character Areas map



¹ The Natural Choice: Securing the Value of Nature, Defra (2011; URL: www.official-documents.gov.uk/document/cm80/8082/8082.pdf)

² Biodiversity 2020: A Strategy for England's Wildlife and Ecosystem Services, Defra (2011; URL: www.defra.gov.uk/publications/files/pb13583-biodiversity-strategy-2020-111111.pdf)

³ European Landscape Convention, Council of Europe (2000; URL: <http://conventions.coe.int/Treaty/en/Treaties/Html/176.htm>)

Summary

The High Weald National Character Area (NCA) encompasses the ridged and faulted sandstone core of the Kent and Sussex Weald. It is an area of ancient countryside and one of the best surviving medieval landscapes in northern Europe. The High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) covers 78 per cent of the NCA. The High Weald consists of a mixture of fields, small woodlands and farmsteads connected by historic routeways, tracks and paths. Wild flower meadows are now rare but prominent medieval patterns of small pasture fields enclosed by thick hedgerows and shaws (narrow woodlands) remain fundamental to the character of the landscape.

Some 26 per cent of the NCA is covered by woodland, comprising wooded shaws, pits and gills, farm woods and larger woods; of this 26 per cent, 17 per cent is ancient semi-natural woodland and 5 per cent is ancient replanted woodland. The majority of the woodland cover is ancient, managed in the past as coppice with standards surrounded with native woodland flora such as bluebells and wood anemones in the Spring. Evidence of the area's industrial past is prominent, from the large iron-master houses to iron industry charcoal hearths, pits and hammer ponds found throughout the ancient woodlands.

The small scale and historical patterning of the landscape, interwoven woodland, wetland and open habitats, with many hedgerows and historic routeways supporting semi-natural vegetation, provide a flourishing, accessible landscape for wildlife. Exposed sandstone outcrops along the wooded gills provide nationally rare habitat and support an array of ferns, bryophytes and lichens. The Weald meets the sea at Hastings Cliffs which are a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and an area of undeveloped coastline consisting of actively

eroding soft cliffs of sands and clays. A small section (35 ha) of the Pevensey Levels Ramsar site also falls within the NCA. The numerous gill streams of the High Weald give rise to the headwaters and upper reaches of rivers which were previously important trade routes for timber, iron and wool out to the coastal ports around Walland Marsh.

Today the High Weald, and particularly Ashdown Forest, is internationally known as the home of the character Winnie-the-Pooh. Ashdown Forest is both a Special Protection Area (SPA) due to its populations of Dartford warbler and nightjar and an SAC as it is one of the largest single continuous blocks of lowland heath in England. The forest also inspired William Robinson who pioneered the English natural garden movement and writers such as Rudyard Kipling. The NCA is also home to 56 historic parks and gardens covering 4,599 ha. The High Weald provides an example of one of the best preserved medieval landscapes in north-west Europe and



Click map to enlarge; click again to reduce.

has a strong sense of history. This is enhanced by many features such as Battle Abbey, numerous churches and chapels and an abundance of locally distinctive traditional buildings. The eroding sea cliffs at Hastings provide one of the finest exposures of Lower Cretaceous, Wealden sediments in Britain, containing a range of internationally important fossil plant material and non-marine animal fossils.

The High Weald provides many services to communities living within the area's towns and villages and adjacent urban populations through the supply of drinking water, flood mitigation and carbon storage and a range of open-air recreational activities based around its distinctive character, from walking its ancient routeways to off-road cycling in Bedgebury Forest, water sports at Bewl Water and soft rock climbing at Harrison's Rocks. Future challenges include continuing high demands for housing in south-east England, and rural areas in particular, resulting in strong pressure for development within the NCA, and pressure to bring forward land for housing in and around larger villages, threatening the dispersed settlement character of the landscape and the sustainable development of smaller settlements.



Ashdown Forest consists of open rolling heathland and birch woodland on the sandstone ridge of the High Weald. The forest forms the literary landscape of the children's classic, 'Winnie the Pooh'.

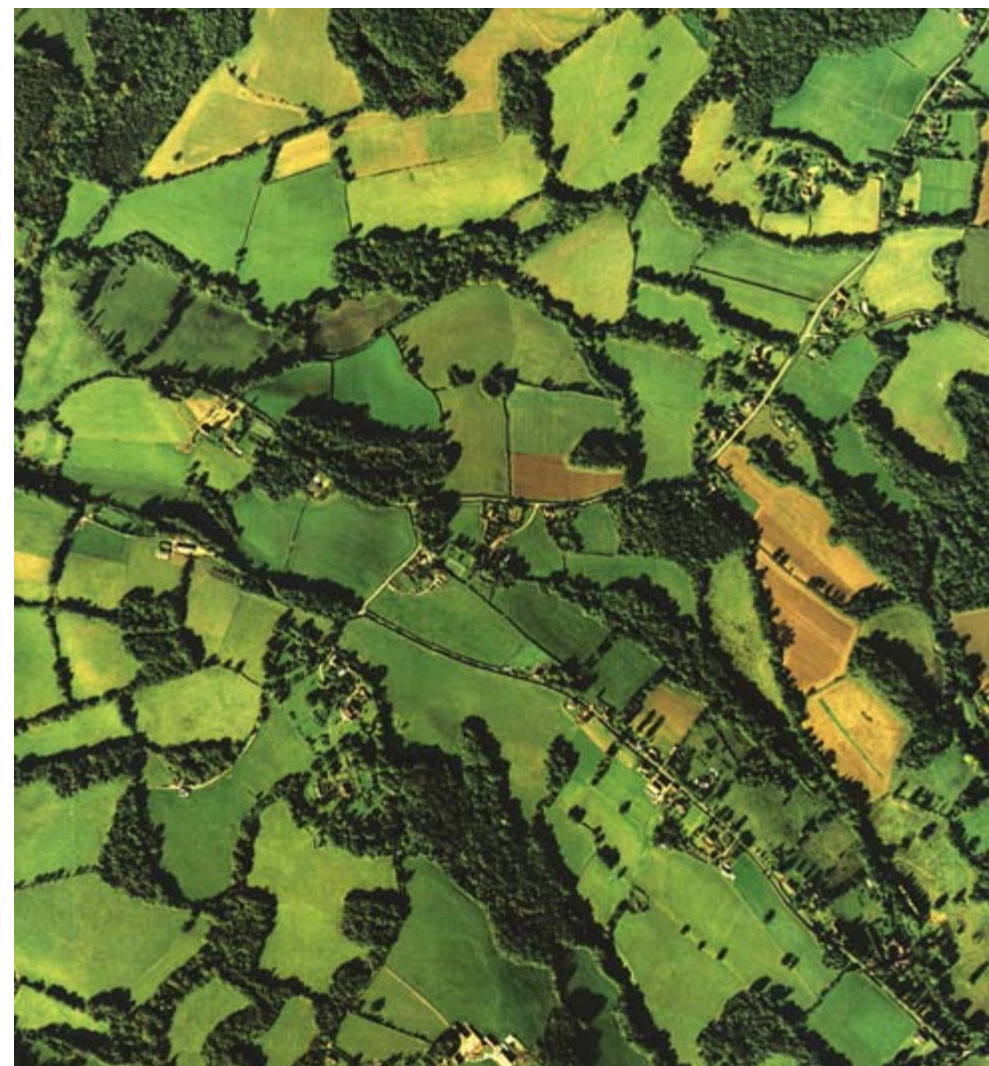
Statements of Environmental Opportunity

SEO 1: Maintain and enhance the existing woodland and pasture components of the landscape, including the historic field pattern bounded by shaws, hedgerows and farm woods, to improve ecological function at a landscape scale for the benefit of biodiversity, soils and water, sense of place and climate regulation, safeguard ancient woodlands and encourage sustainably produced timber to support local markets and contribute to biomass production.

SEO 2: Maintain and restore the natural function of river catchments at a landscape scale, promoting benefits for water quality and water flow within all Wealden rivers, streams and flood plains by encouraging sustainable land management and best agricultural practices to maintain good soil quality, reduce soil erosion, increase biodiversity and enhance sense of place. Maintain and enhance the geodiversity and especially the exposed sandrock.

SEO 3: Maintain and enhance the distinctive dispersed settlement pattern, parkland and historic pattern and features of the routeways of the High Weald, encouraging the use of locally characteristic materials and Wealden practices to ensure that any development recognises and retains the distinctiveness, biodiversity, geodiversity and heritage assets present, reaffirm sense of place and enhance the ecological function of routeways to improve the connectivity of habitats and provide wildlife corridors.

SEO 4: Manage and enhance recreational opportunities, public understanding and enjoyment integrated with the conservation and enhancement of the natural and historic environment, a productive landscape and tranquillity, in accordance with the purpose of the High Weald AONB designation.



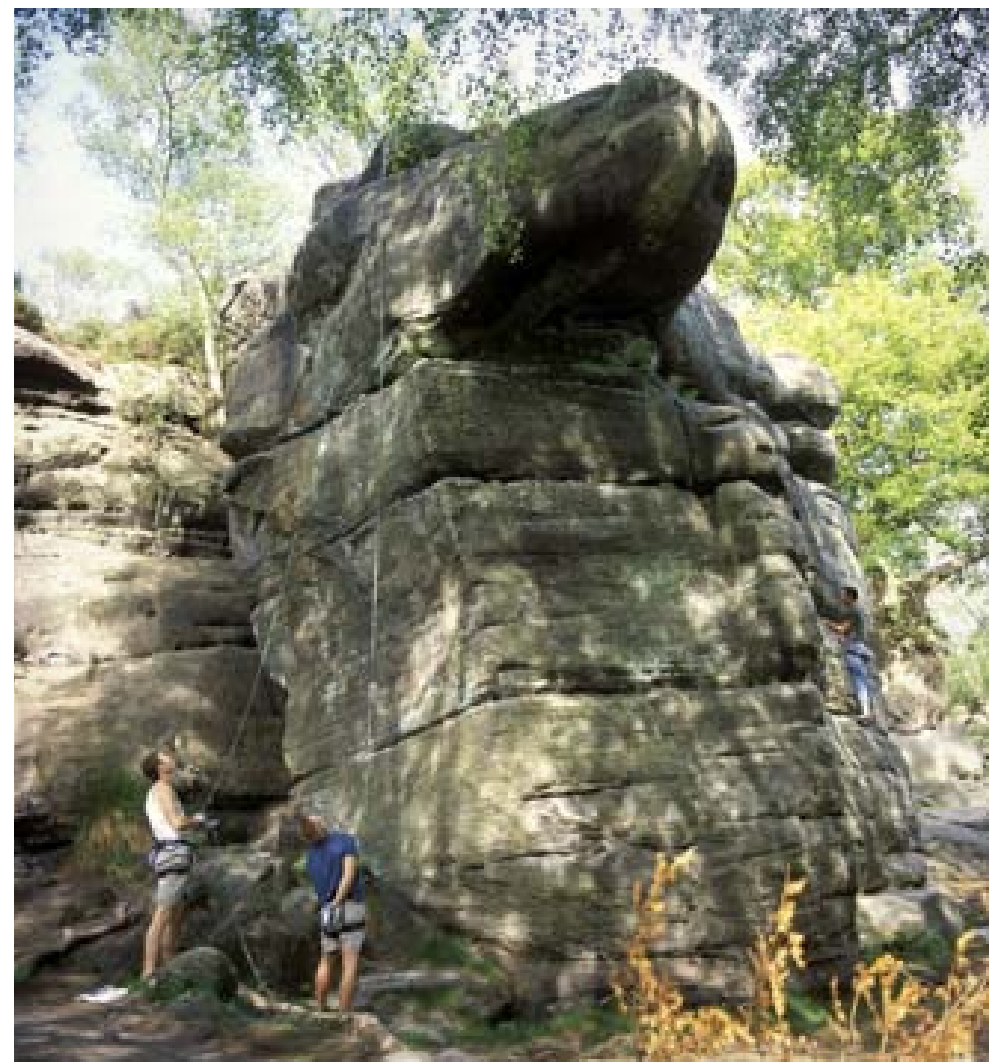
Small and medium-sized irregularly shaped fields enclosed by a network of hedgerows and wooded shaws, predominantly of medieval origin.

Description

Physical and functional links to other National Character Areas

The High and Low Weald National Character Areas (NCAs) together form an area known from Saxon times as the Weald whose landscape is the product of transhumance (the seasonal movement of people and animals between the settlements on the borders of the Weald and its interior) and a traditional system of integrated farming and forestry. Early in its history the Weald was linked economically and socially with its more habitable fringes where farming was easier. A dense network of droveways connects the Downs and the Weald, a visible legacy of the seasonal movement of people and animals into the woodland to take advantage of acorns and mast (fruit of forest trees). Today these routes can still be travelled as roads and public rights of way. The wooded nature of these linear routes together with the wooded gills provides a high degree of interconnectivity to ancient woodland habitats across the High and Low Weald.

From vantage points in the surrounding North and South Downs NCAs sweeping views extend across the densely wooded countryside of the Weald, an area of heavy soils and the natural habitat of the oak. Views from vantage points within the High Weald extend along the low-lying clay vale of the Low Weald NCA which largely wraps around the northern, western and southern edges of the High Weald NCA in a rough horseshoe shape. To the south-west pocket of the NCA, there are views towards the low-lying wetlands of the Pevensey Levels, and to the south-east corner there are long ranging views across the flat topography of the Romney Marshes NCA.



Rock climbing at Harrison's Rocks is managed carefully to protect the friable sandstone rocks from erosion.

The sandrock geology of the High Weald, notably on the ridge top settlements, is shared with only the northern part of the Isle of Wight NCA and parts of Boulonnais and Pays de Bray in France. It comprises fissured sandrock and ridges running east–west, deeply incised and intersected with numerous gill streams which give rise to the headwaters and upper reaches of rivers, with those to the east of the area also providing historical trade routes for timber, iron and wool out to the coastal ports on Romney Marsh.

In the High Weald, where the rivers Rother, Brede and Tillingham originate, the impermeable clay and silt layers of the Hastings Beds give rise to rapid run-off and quickly responding watercourses following heavy rainfall. Maintaining flows in the Rother catchment is important due to the dependency of the Walland Marsh on water transferred into the Royal Military Canal from the Rother, and hence the High Weald and Romney Marsh are inextricably linked in terms of water resources.

The catchments of the rivers Cuckmere, Ouse, Adur and Arun drain south through deep valleys in the eastern chalk ridge from the High Weald via the Low Weald NCA, and the later via the Wealden Greensand NCA, into the sea along the south coast, passing through major coastal settlements.

The High Weald provides many services to adjacent populations, not only through the supply of drinking water, flood mitigation and carbon storage but also through extensive opportunities for a range of open-air recreational activities based around its distinctive character. Activities including walking the ancient routeways, off-road cycling in Bedgebury Forest and soft rock climbing at Harrison's Rocks provide benefits to the various towns that straddle the border between the High and Low Wealds, namely Crawley, East Grinstead, Horsham, Haywards Heath and Uckfield.



The High Weald has a wealth of ancient woodland.

Key characteristics

- A faulted landform of clays, sand and soft sandstones with outcrops of fissured sandrock and ridges running east-west, deeply incised and intersected with numerous gill streams forming the headwaters of a number of the major rivers – the Rother, Brede, Ouse and Medway – which flow in broad valleys.
- High density of extraction pits, quarries and ponds, in part a consequence of diverse geology and highly variable soils over short distances.
- A dispersed settlement pattern of hamlets and scattered farmsteads and medieval ridgetop villages founded on trade and non-agricultural rural industries, with a dominance of timber-framed buildings with steep roofs often hipped or half-hipped, and an extremely high survival rate of farm buildings dating from the 17th century or earlier.
- Ancient routeways in the form of ridgetop roads and a dense system of radiating droveways, often narrow, deeply sunken and edged with trees and wild flower-rich verges and boundary banks. Church towers and spires on the ridges are an important local landmark. There is a dense network of small, narrow and winding lanes, often sunken and enclosed by high hedgerows or woodland strips. The area includes several large towns such as Tunbridge Wells, Crowborough, Battle and Heathfield and is closely bordered by others such as Crawley, East Grinstead, Hastings and Horsham.
- An intimate, hidden and small-scale landscape with glimpses of far-reaching views, giving a sense of remoteness and tranquillity yet concealing the highest density of timber-framed buildings anywhere in Europe amidst lanes and paths.
- Strong feeling of remoteness due to very rural, wooded character. A great extent of interconnected ancient woods, steep-sided gill woodlands, wooded heaths and shaws in generally small holdings with extensive archaeology and evidence of long-term management.
- Extensive broadleaved woodland cover with a very high proportion of ancient woodland with high forest, small woods and shaws, plus steep valleys with gill woodland.
- Small and medium-sized irregularly shaped fields enclosed by a network of hedgerows and wooded shaws, predominantly of medieval origin and managed historically as a mosaic of small agricultural holdings typically used for livestock grazing.
- A predominantly grassland agricultural landscape grazed mainly with sheep and some cattle.
- There is a strong influence of the Wealden iron industry which started in Roman times, until coke fuel replaced wood and charcoal. There are features such as a notably high number of small hammer ponds surviving today.
- Ashdown Forest, in contrast to the more intimate green woods and pastures elsewhere, is a high, rolling and open heathland lying on the sandstone ridges to the west of the area.
- An essentially medieval landscape reflected in the patterns of settlement, fields and woodland.
- High-quality vernacular architecture with distinct local variation using local materials. Horsham Slate is used on mainly timber structures and timber-framed barns are a particularly notable Wealden characteristic feature of the High Weald.

The High Weald today

The High Weald is an area of ancient countryside and one of the best surviving medieval landscapes in northern Europe. The High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty covers 78 per cent of the NCA, reflecting the outstanding natural and scenic beauty of the landscape.

From a distance the appearance of the High Weald is one of a densely wooded landscape, although closer inspection reveals a patchwork of irregularly shaped fields and woods forming both open and enclosed landscapes along rolling ridges and within valleys. Along the ridgetop roads briefly glimpsed extensive views open up, stretching away over rolling ridges, punctuated by church spires far into the horizon, providing a contrast to the intimacy of the lush green valleys. Everything in the High Weald landscape is of human scale and its rich detail is best explored on foot, cycle or horseback along the myriad interconnecting paths and tracks.

Along the English Channel coast the High Weald gives way to eroded sandstone and clay sea cliffs around Fairlight and disappears under the urban areas of Bexhill and Hastings to the south-east. The eastern end of the High Weald is characterised by a series of broad, often flat-bottomed river valleys opening out towards the coastal levels of Romney Marsh between Tenterden and Fairlight.

Sandstone exposed as outcrops or along the wooded gills provides a nationally rare habitat and supports a rich community of ferns, bryophytes and lichens. The moist microclimate in these sites is vulnerable to climate change. Potential physical damage comes from the popularity of rock climbing although this is mitigated by guidance and support from the climbing community.



Traditional farmsteads are often glimpsed through a densely-wooded landscape.

The drained landscape of the eastern High Weald river valleys is the result of a thousand years of modifications and exhibits few of the features associated with healthy natural river valleys. It is grazed by high numbers of sheep. Upriver the gill streams and upper reaches function better but remain vulnerable to pollution from agriculture and domestic waste treatment.

The ancient routeway network in the High Weald is substantially intact but the archaeology associated with it, such as multiple ditches and banks, is vulnerable to physical damage and the ancient, laid coppice stools edging many sunken routeways present a challenge for highway maintenance.

Flower-rich grassland persists along road verges and what was common land represents a substantial refuge for populations of rare species, but both are vulnerable to insensitive management.

Loosely arranged traditional farm buildings are extremely prominent in the NCA with their distinctive steep, clay-tiled hipped roofs. The numerous footpaths, as they have done for centuries, take walkers straight through the middle of historic farmsteads with the characteristic timber-framed and weatherboard buildings either side.



Ancient woodland gill with carpets of bluebells and wood anemones in Spring.

The distinctive pattern of dispersed historic settlement survives although the character of farmsteads has changed with the widespread conversion of traditional farm buildings to dwellings and the associated disappearance of agriculture and industry from farmsteads. The changing character of the farmsteads and surrounding landscape through gentrification ultimately also leads to a changing character of wildlife in terms of the assemblage of species present.

Typically, towns such as Tunbridge Wells and villages such as Goudhurst are sited on the ridges, with a dispersed pattern of historic farmsteads and hamlets covering the wooded valleys and field systems. Vernacular buildings have a strong local character influenced by a variation in locally available building materials, resulting in an abundance of weatherboard, brick, tile, and stone or rendered buildings. Local distinctiveness is marked by traditional vernacular building enhanced by stone church towers and spires located on ridges standing as major local landmarks. Within the forested ridges and ancient countryside, remnant hammer ponds constitute significant local features. These reservoirs have a distinctive branching or winding character as a result of their creation from small Wealden river valleys.

Woodland is extensive, covering 26 per cent of the area in a wide range of small wooded pits, linear gill woodland, farm woods and much larger wooded estates. Most of the woodland is ancient with carpets of bluebells and wood anemone in spring. Many of the woods were managed in the past as coppice with standard trees. The drier sandy soils were found suitable for pine plantations which persist within a patchwork of lowland heath and birch woodland. Wild flower meadows are now rare but the medieval pattern of small fields with sinuous edges surrounded by thick hedgerows and shaws (the narrow remains of woodlands cleared to form fields) survives and many fields

retain some permanent or semi-improved grassland, which in turn supports common invertebrates and small mammals. Local initiatives have increased the area of restored and created species-rich grassland but the decline of grazing threatens their long-term management. Buzzards and sparrow hawks are sighted frequently, but the loss of field barns and conversion of farmstead buildings have led to a decline in once-common barn owls.

The mosaic of small hedged fields and sunken lanes, together with the wooded relief and comparative inaccessibility, provides a sense of remoteness which is rare within lowland English landscapes. Despite it being relatively tranquil today, indications of the area's busy industrial past are everywhere, from the abundant timber-framed traditional buildings to the wharfs and harbours along the now-straightened rivers, and the charcoal hearths, pits and ponds of the iron industry are still visible in almost every ancient woodland. The High Weald is well known internationally as the location of the Winnie-the-Pooh stories set in Ashdown Forest, but many other artists and writers have been inspired by the landscape, including Rudyard Kipling and the Cranbrook Colony of painters. Visitors come from across the country and from abroad to experience the Battle of Hastings site, visit beautiful historic houses and gardens, and experience a unique mix of local cultural celebrations ranging from Sussex bonfire processions to Kent apple fairs.



River Brede flood plain.

The landscape through time

The High Weald forms the central part of a unique geological landform of sedimentary rocks, the Wealden anticline, which underpins the Greensand, Chalk and Wealden Clay to the north, south and west which surround the sandstones and clays which underlie the forested ridges of the High Weald. The Purbeck Beds which lie along the Battle Ridge form the oldest sediments, laid down in shallow lagoons at the end of the Jurassic Period (142 million years ago). Iron-rich clays and sandstones followed as the landscape changed to one of flood plains and rivers. The area gradually sank below the sea and around 75 million years ago the great uplift began, followed by compression which folded and faulted the strata. Subsequent weathering has cut through the strata, exposing the layers as sandstone ridges and clay valleys. The array of soils arising has shaped the Weald's social and economic history.

The central sandstone core is strongly dissected by many major rivers, the headwaters of which have cut numerous steep-sided valleys or gills, several of which are heavily wooded. The High Weald is underlain by the Hastings Beds which comprise interbedded sands, soft sandstones and clays which give rise to the high, broken ground. Although not exceeding 240 m above ordnance datum, the High Weald is a hilly country of ridges and valleys. Numerous major ridges run mainly east to west, for example the Ashdown Forest Ridge and the Battle Ridge. North-west of Battle, Jurassic Purbeck Limestone contains gypsum beds which continue to be mined.

With the rise in temperatures at the beginning of the post-glacial period, arboreal species expanded their range across the continuous land link to Europe, with birch and Scots pine being followed by oak, elm, alder, ash and lime.



Outflow from a hammer pond originating from the iron-age industry.

By the Anglo-Saxon period the natural woodland which had developed in the warmer post-glacial period had already been modified by the hunter-gatherers of the Mesolithic people. Some woodland clearance was under way in the Neolithic Period with bronze-age barrows indicating active communities in Ashdown Forest and the Roman interest in iron smelting which is suggested led to woodland clearance, which regenerated after their departure. However, it was the medieval practice of transhumance, coupled with the exploitation of the valuable resources of the forest, which substantially transformed the largely uninhabited Weald into the settled landscape seen today.

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Clearance of the Wealden forest on a significant scale did not begin until the 9th century, reaching a peak in the 13th and 14th centuries. From the mid-14th century until the First World War, the High Weald was relatively unchanged and even today many of the traditional field patterns and woodlands associated with the essentially medieval landscape still remain.

The High Weald lies within one of the largest tracts of woodland in early medieval England. Linked place names such as -den, -fold and -ing as; distinctive curved boundaries aligned in a similar direction to roads and tracks; and the relationship between manors and their Wealden outliers provide us with tantalising clues to the process of early settlement in the area. By the 15th century the High Weald's characteristic dispersed settlement pattern based on small-scale family holdings was well established. Few farmsteads worked the land from villages, which mostly developed later as service centres founded on trade and craft.

Medieval farmers shaped the present-day landscape of small fields and scattered farmsteads, with woodland and shaws left among them. Gill woodlands on steep valleys were left unfelled due to the difficulty in extracting timber gill woodland, which made them more ecologically significant as a result. The river valleys and the higher, drier ridgetops were important lines of communication on which early settlements were located. The medieval pattern of dispersed farms, small hamlets and villages is associated with the practice of cultivating small parcels of land known as 'assarting' – which gave rise to the pattern of ad hoc rural settlement. These early, isolated agricultural settlements later evolved into the characteristic High Weald ridgetop villages such as Mayfield, Wadhurst and Hawkhurst.

The Weald was the premier iron-producing district during the Roman occupation and again in the 16th century, based on the blast furnace to make castings

of cannon and facilitated by the expertise of immigrant French workers. Interconnecting chains of leats, dams and hammer ponds were constructed to provide a sufficient head of water for the forges. These consisted of a stairway of ponds created by damming a gill and produced a head of water which worked the bellows for smelting and the forges' tilt hammers.

From the 15th to the 17th century, the High Weald was the foundry of England. Extensive woodland management in the form of coppicing (for charcoal for the forges) accompanied the industry and little clearance was undertaken. The wealth generated by the iron industry funded grand houses and parklands, many of which still stand today, such as Gravetye and Great Shoesmiths.

Heathland was historically more widespread in the High Weald than it is today. Cessation of grazing together with new conifer planting has led to the loss of open heathland, the only sizeable heathland remaining in the High Weald being Ashdown Forest, a former Royal Hunting Forest. Open heathland was at least partly the result of unsustainable management, effectively where poorer populations in society would make use of a range of heathland products. This included using the heathland turf as fuel due to more expensive woodland being used by the iron industry. Since then the heaths and woods have been relatively fluid on those acid soils.

The small size of Wealden holdings, the importance of crafts to supplement the income from agriculture on poor soils, and the high economic value of timber for boats and buildings and in the iron, glass and cloth industries explain the continuing survival of more woodland in the High Weald than anywhere else in the country. Woods were enclosed and managed as coppice with standards producing wood fuel and construction timber. Large, widely spaced trees in hedgerows and parklands produced the curved and crooked boughs required for ship-building.

In the 17th and 18th centuries hop growing expanded, as did the extent of chestnut coppice for hop poles. For 500 years the rivers of the eastern High Weald were an important link for trade and war between the wooded interior and the seaports of Winchelsea and Rye. Wooden barges were still moving timber and goods from the interior of the High Weald until the end of the 19th century when the last barge, Primrose, was built.

As early as 1825 William Cobbett commented on the artificial landscapes of the new gentry spreading out of London, and the arrival of the railways in the mid-19th century brought further building and the growth of country houses and estates. The railways also made a significant impact on agriculture, opening up the London market for hops, fruit and poultry.

Until the 1950s the Weald was one of the slowest-changing regions in Britain. For 700 years prior to this time agriculture, the field shapes and sizes and the pattern of surrounding woodland and hedgerows hardly changed. Since then farming and forestry, always difficult on the poor soils, have been pushed further to the economic margins by soaring land values with significant areas of land now devoid of productive agriculture. The majority of farmsteads are now residential hamlets and the decline in grazing animals and the industry associated with them is a major threat to the long-term management of species-rich grassland and heathland. Commercial coppicing has declined drastically although the Weald's woodmanship has been kept alive and may enjoy a period of revival with the increasing demand for wood fuel and renewable timber supplies.



View of traditional oast houses in Roberts Bridge.

Ecosystem services

The High Weald NCA provides a wide range of benefits to society. Each is derived from the attributes and processes (both natural and cultural features) within the area. These benefits are known collectively as 'ecosystem services'. The predominant services are summarised below. Further information on ecosystem services provided in the High Weald NCA is contained in the 'Analysis' section of this document.

Provisioning services (food, fibre and water supply)

- **Food provision:** This NCA produces some cereals, vegetables, soft fruit, lamb, game and some beef for local consumption. Despite growing interest in specialist and local breeds, numbers of livestock continue to decline.
- **Timber provision:** Despite the High Weald's long history of woodmanship, most timber is considered to be of low quality and only 15 per cent of the area of woodland is actively managed. . The area continues to provide oak for local construction, chestnut for fencing and other species such as ash and hornbeam for wood fuel.
- **Water availability:** The largest reservoir in south-east England, Bewl Water, is situated in this NCA, providing drinking water to Maidstone and the Medway Towns. Local villages and Hastings are supplied from Darwell Reservoir. Water is also supplied from aquifers in the Ashdown Beds.

Regulating services (water purification, air quality maintenance and climate regulation)

- **Climate regulation:** The high level of woodland cover and large extent of undisturbed soils under ancient woodlands and permanent grassland mean that the High Weald NCA has a significant role to play in carbon storage and

sequestration and subsequently climate regulation, which could be further enhanced by using more timber than other materials in construction.

- **Regulating soil erosion:** More than two-thirds of the NCA is susceptible to some form of soil erosion. The main soil type (loamy/clayey soils with impeded drainage, covering 62 per cent of the NCA) is prone to compaction and capping and slaking, leading to increased risk of soil erosion by surface water run-off, especially on steeper slopes. The freely draining, slightly acid loamy soils (4 per cent of the area) are at enhanced risk of soil erosion on moderately or steeply sloping ground exacerbated where organic matter levels are low and where soils are compacted.



Cattle grazing on parkland.

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- **Regulating soil quality:** Soils of the High Weald are highly variable over short distances, making it easy to locally overdose with inorganic fertiliser and leading to damage through poaching or using heavy machinery at inappropriate times.
- **Regulating water flow:** There is a risk of fluvial flooding along the lower reaches of the rivers, but important for the High Weald NCA is appropriate management of the numerous gill streams and upper and middle reaches of rivers to mitigate flooding further downstream in adjacent NCAs. There are further opportunities in the valley bottoms to look at pushing flood flows out of eroded water courses onto grassland and woodland to help slow flood flows.

Cultural services (inspiration, education and wellbeing)

- **Sense of place/inspiration:** The harmonious mosaic of small mixed farms and woodland that makes up the High Weald is now considered to be a quintessentially English landscape, yet for many years, until the advent of turnpikes, it was better known for the poor state of its roads and less advanced agriculture. Its mix of wilder elements, reminiscent of the former forest, surviving amid a beautiful, small-scale landscape shaped by man has inspired many people such as the architect Norman Shaw, the artist William Hunt, William Robinson, who pioneered the English natural garden style, and writers such as Rudyard Kipling and AA Milne.
- **Sense of history:** As one of the best preserved medieval landscapes in north-west Europe, the High Weald has a strong sense of history, and this is enhanced by the many individual features such as Battle Abbey, numerous churches and chapels, an abundance of traditional buildings and the remains of the former iron industry. The High Weald is extraordinarily well documented through old maps but these and the great extent of undisturbed ancient

woodland which has preserved features from many different time periods still remain relatively unstudied.

- **Tranquillity:** Buildings, tracks and the remains of industrial activities concealed by the High Weald's extensive woodland cover and overgrown hedgerows make the experience of this landscape today feel relatively tranquil, especially due to the close proximity of London and the busy coastal towns.
- **Recreation:** There is a dense network of public rights of way supplemented by many areas of accessible natural greenspace, mostly provided by the Forestry Commission and bodies such as the National Trust and the Woodland Trust. Ashdown Forest provides an extensive area of open access at the heart of the High Weald. Outdoor sports are well catered for with off-road cycling at Bedgebury Forest, watersports at Bewl Water and soft rock climbing around Tunbridge Wells.
- **Biodiversity:** The human scale of the High Weald's landscape allows everyone to experience a variety of habitats and wildlife at first hand. The sheer quantity of semi-natural habitat such as ancient woodland is not adequately represented in the extent of Sites of Special Scientific Interest. Although the High Weald's cold soils may not support the biodiversity hotspots found on the nearby Downs, its ancient countryside and small, mixed farms continue to be home to resilient populations and a high biomass of typical lowland species.
- **Geodiversity:** The High Weald's sandrock outcrops are important geological features and support nationally rare ferns, mosses, liverworts and lichens, a living legacy from the climate most of Britain experienced around 4000 bc. The 6-kilometre section of eroding sea cliffs at Hastings provides one of the finest exposures of Lower Cretaceous, Wealden sediments in Britain. Their fossil plant material and non-marine animal fossils are some of the best examples of their type worldwide.

Statements of Environmental Opportunity

SEO1: Maintain and enhance the existing woodland and pasture components of the landscape, including the historic field pattern bounded by shaws, hedgerows and farm woods, to improve ecological function at a landscape scale for the benefit of biodiversity, soils and water, sense of place and climate regulation, safeguard ancient woodlands and encourage sustainably produced timber to support local markets and contribute to biomass production.

For example by:

- Encouraging the sustainable management of woodland by developing local markets for wood products and the skills to deliver these sustainably.
- Ensuring that any increased woodland cover is informed by the historical nature of the area, and promoting small-scale woodland creation to buffer existing woods, enhance landscape connectivity and manage flood flows.
- Increasing the viability of woodland habitats for wildlife by determining the area of appropriately managed woodland necessary to link and enhance isolated habitats and species to provide better connectivity between woodlands and encourage species' resilience to climate change.
- Promoting sustainable woodland management techniques (such as coppicing, pollarding and wood fuel production) to increase carbon substitutions and sequestration and the resilience of tree species to climate change and disease.
- Establishing a long-term ecological monitoring and research programme to assess the management status of woodlands and the impacts of diseases such as ash dieback, climate change and pressure from deer.
- Working with the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) to continue support for the restoration of planted ancient woodland sites.
- Adopting a suitable distance (approximately 15 m) as a minimum buffer around ancient woodlands to protect them from damaging development or land management operations.
- Promoting and raising awareness of the archaeology and historic assets of woodland.
- Working with the High Weald AONB to promote the use of local wood products such as chestnut fencing and timber in housing developments and the use of locally sourced wood fuel.
- Promoting the High Weald AONB design guidance to contribute to improved design quality within the area.
- Extending woodland around settlements and infrastructure developments to filter light pollution and reduce sound pollution and the visual impacts of further urbanisation.
- Maintaining and restoring links between woodland and other woodland habitats (such as hedgerows, traditional orchards and parkland) and species-rich grasslands and heathland outside the main woodland. This will create a robust network of wooded and open semi-natural habitats that will benefit the internationally important populations of bats, as well as other species.
- Maintaining good pastoral land use and agriculturally productive fields, and using field margins and well-managed hedgerows to maintain ecological links across arable patches, reducing water flow and resultant soil erosion and providing benefits to water quality.
- Encouraging and supporting the appropriate management of lowland meadows by owners, including through local owners' groups, providing benefits for the local community, biodiversity, the landscape and soil quality.

SEO1 continued

- Maintaining woodland cover – which provides integrated benefits for soil quality, water flow, soil erosion, water quality and management of steep gill woodland – for example through coppicing, to reduce land slippage and tree fall entering watercourses.
- Work with Forestry Commission to explore the potential to bring two thirds of woodland back into active management with the potential for increasing 25,000m³ per year of conifer sawlogs, 10,000m³ per year of broadleaved sawlogs and a further 110,000m³ of lower quality wood which could be used as woodfuel with an energy value of around 230,000 MWh.

SEO 2: Maintain and restore the natural function of river catchments at a landscape scale, promoting benefits for water quality and water flow within all Wealden rivers, streams and flood plains by encouraging sustainable land management and best agricultural practices to maintain good soil quality, reduce soil erosion, increase biodiversity and enhance sense of place. Maintain and enhance the geodiversity and especially the exposed sandrock.

For example by:

- Working in partnership across sectors and National Character Area (NCA) boundaries to tackle the challenges associated with flood risk, pollution and low flows in order to safeguard surface water resources, especially those failing to meet Water Framework Directive objectives for good ecological status.
- Ensuring that sustainable water and land management strategies for Wealden river catchments are adhered to in accordance with the Water Framework Directive.
- Improving understanding of how to respond to and plan for climate change impacts and future consumer demands, and the interrelationships between supply and demand in adjoining NCAs, including the impacts of reduced water availability on important biodiversity sites.
- Buffering watercourses and reservoirs and restoring natural river geomorphology to improve water quality and reduce flood risk in settlements and valuable agricultural land by regulating water flow.
- Drawing on best practice principles such as those developed by the Forestry Commission and Environment Agency on the Pickering Brook in Yorkshire and established under catchment sensitive farming initiatives. As well as building on and supporting existing stakeholder groups to help to deliver a good water environment across the High Weald, benefiting biodiversity and local communities.
- Encouraging sustainable water use by homes and businesses supplied from catchments and promoting sustainable drainage systems.
- Controlling invasive non-native species, particularly along river banks, to reduce soil exposure and erosion.
- Encouraging integration of environmentally sensitive water policy objectives through land management practices such as agri-environment schemes and water resource and land use planning to ensure that an appropriate balance is maintained between water supply and demand.
- Exploring opportunities for landowners to work together across catchments to restore more natural river systems including wet woodland creation to deliver biodiversity, amenity, resource protection and flood control benefits.
- Working with the High Weald AONB to identify the potential of naturally functioning rivers and flood plains to regulate flooding, improve water quality, restore flood plain woodland and protect and enhance wildlife and fisheries.

SEO 3: Maintain and enhance the distinctive dispersed settlement pattern, parkland and historic pattern and features of the routeways of the High Weald, encouraging the use of locally characteristic materials and Wealden practices to ensure that any development recognises and retains the distinctiveness, biodiversity, geodiversity and heritage assets present, reaffirm sense of place and enhance the ecological function of routeways to improve the connectivity of habitats and provide wildlife corridors.

For example by:

- Ensuring that the repair, restoration or conversion of vernacular buildings is carried out with due regard to their historical interest, using local materials and appropriate styles and techniques to maintain local distinctiveness, construction techniques and traditions.
- Encouraging new developments to follow the vernacular of the area, using locally sourced materials and adhering to the principles of the High Weald AONB design guidance.
- Working with local communities to encourage the continuation of traditional land management practices and land uses that are necessary to retain the landscape character and the sense of place in this area.
- Improving sustainable public access through the rights of way network, provision of visitor facilities, and access to and interpretation of important sites for geodiversity, biodiversity and heritage in order to increase the understanding, enjoyment and appreciation of the landscape, and of the history of use that has shaped the area.
- Ensuring that the repair, restoration or conversion of buildings provides additional opportunities for bird boxes and bat roosts.
- Supporting community growing schemes, social forestry enterprises and partnerships with local land businesses to encourage local markets and seasonal outlets, supplying local food and wood fuel and promotion of rural skills training.
- Conserving the cultural heritage of local authors and artists by maintaining the traditions that create the distinctive landscape and local sense of place.
- Promoting information about the historical development of towns, villages, hamlets and farmsteads and their hinterlands including historical maps and accessible online information.
- Ensuring that the duty of regard is adhered to in relation to core components of natural beauty in the planning and development for towns and villages in and adjacent to the AONB.
- Exploring community initiatives to extend baseline mapping of the ancient routeway network to include public rights of ways, tracks and abandoned paths and to ensure community engagement in conserving and protecting ancient routeways.
- Undertaking archaeological research to better understand ancient routeways and their features in order to inform appropriate management.
- Working in partnership with highways authorities and communities to develop a design code for rural lanes promoting the use of characteristic boundaries and minimising the impacts of engineering and signage.
- Working in partnership with highways authorities and others to review and develop approaches to the management of roadside trees and coppice.
- Exploring initiatives that promote the contribution that ancient routeways make to a well-functioning ecological network.

SEO 4: Manage and enhance recreational opportunities, public understanding and enjoyment integrated with the conservation and enhancement of the natural and historic environment, a productive landscape and tranquillity, in accordance with the purpose of the High Weald AONB designation.

For example by:

- Maintaining and enhancing the extensive rights of way network and open access land throughout the area, improving links to the Sussex Border Path, High Weald Landscape Trail and Weald Way and creating additional links to relieve pressure on sensitive areas through a network of greenspace and linear access.
- Increasing understanding and enjoyment through education and interpretation materials especially where this helps to promote the sensitive features of designated sites, ensuring that access balances recreational enjoyment with the protection of biodiversity, geodiversity and historic features.
- Integrating the management of resources for informal open-air recreation to facilitate 'green' use by residents and visitors and meet the need of less able-bodied visitors.
- Identifying and promoting viewpoints that enable appreciation and experience of the tranquillity and outstanding natural beauty of the High Weald landscape by people of all abilities.
- Supporting community initiatives that promote small-scale land management improvements and identify and conserve local features.
- Promoting sustainable tourism initiatives that target a broad range of visitors and, where practical, reduce car dependency, accommodating high visitor numbers while conserving the landscape, its biodiversity and tranquillity.
- Exploring partnership initiatives to disseminate clear environmental education messages to encourage integration of recreation and public enjoyment opportunities with conservation of the natural and historic environment, using key sites and areas as examples of best practice.
- Promoting sustainable transport, green tourism and natural health initiatives such as themed High Weald AONB short breaks.
- Supporting projects that contribute to the conservation and management of special qualities and locally valued features such as tranquillity and dark skies and historic features such as abbeys and hop gardens.

Additional opportunity

1: Protect and maintain the sandstone outcrops and other geological features of the High Weald to promote greater understanding of geodiversity and the contributions that they make to the cultural heritage of the area.

For example by:

- Maintaining nationally important geological features to ensure no loss to sandstone outcrops and promoting further understanding and appreciation of sandrock exposures, reducing threats and/or inappropriate use and management.
- Maintaining views of geological features and exposures and, where appropriate, improving access to cuttings, quarries and other exposures of geological features to enable improved understanding and enjoyment of geodiversity and sense of history.
- Maintaining the nationally important sandrock exposures to conserve the fern, moss and liverwort communities that they support and to protect their value as some of the most significant sites of prehistoric archaeology in the AONB.
- Maintaining and enhancing all existing rock exposures and natural landforms that are important for understanding the origin and geological development of the High Weald.
- Helping to secure geological conservation as an integral part of the development process.
- Providing scrub control on exposed rock faces and outcrops of geological importance.



Sunken lane bank, with sandstone rocky outcrop at Brede.

Supporting document 1: Key facts and data

Total area: 174,885 ha

1. Landscape and nature conservation designations

The High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty covers an area of 135,863 ha, 78 per cent of the NCA.

Management Plans for the protected landscape can be found at:

■ <http://www.highweald.org/>

Source: Natural England (2011)

1.1 Designated nature conservation sites

The NCA includes the following statutory nature conservation designations:

Tier	Designation	Name	Area (ha)	% of NCA
International	Ramsar	Pevensey Levels	35	<1
European	Special Protection Area (SPA)	Ashdown Forest SPA	3,198	2
	Special Area of Conservation (SAC)	Ashdown Forest SAC, Hasting Cliffs SAC	2,868	2
National	National Nature Reserve (NNR)	n/a	0	0
National	Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)	A total of 59 sites wholly or partly within the NCA	5,416	3

Source: Natural England (2011)

Please note: (i) Designated areas may overlap (ii) all figures are cut to Mean High Water Line, designations that span coastal areas/views below this line will not be included.

There are 268 local sites in the High Weald NCA covering 11,260 ha which is 6.5 per cent of the NCA.

Source: Natural England (2011)

- Details of individual Sites of Special Scientific Interest can be searched at: <http://www.sssi.naturalengland.org.uk/Special/sssi/search.cfm>
- Details of Local Nature Reserves (LNR) can be searched: http://www.lnr.naturalengland.org.uk/Special/lnr/lnr_search.asp
- Maps showing locations of Statutory sites can be found at: <http://magic.defra.gov.uk/website/magic/> – select 'Rural Designations Statutory'.

1.1.1 Condition of designated sites

SSSI condition category	Area (ha)	% of SSSI land in category condition
Unfavourable declining	33	<1
Favourable	1,264	23
Unfavourable no change	28	<1
Unfavourable recovering	4,092	76

Source: Natural England (March 2011)

Details of SSSI condition can be searched at:

<http://www.sssi.naturalengland.org.uk/Special/sssi/reportIndex.cfm>

2. Landform, geology and soils

2.1 Elevation

The NCA reaches a maximum height of 241 m at Crowborough Beacon in East Sussex. The lowest point is sea level.

Source: Natural England (2010)

2.2 Landform and process

Although not exceeding 241 m the High Weald is a hilly country of ridges and valleys. Numerous major ridges run mainly east to west. These major ridges are deeply dissected by many tributaries of rivers which rise in the High Weald producing a network of small, steep-sided ridges and valleys (gills).

Source: High Weald Countryside Character Area description

2.3 Bedrock geology

The Weald is a geologically complex anticline, a folded dome where the oldest rocks are exposed at the centre as the top has been worn down by erosion. These oldest rocks, the Upper Jurassic Purbeck Beds, are only exposed at the surface in the Crowhurst area. Overlying these are Lower Cretaceous sands, soft sandstones and clays out to the edge of the High Weald.

Source: High Weald Natural Area Profile, High Weald Countryside Character Area description, British Geological Survey maps

2.4 Superficial deposits

Superficial deposits cover only a small percentage (7 per cent) of the NCA. Of these, the majority are clays, silt and sands which follow river courses.

Source: High Weald Natural Area Profile, High Weald Countryside Character Area description, British Geological Survey maps

2.5 Designated geological sites

Designation	Number of sites
Geological Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)	17
Mixed interest SSSI	3

There are 38 Local Geological Sites within the NCA.

Source: Natural England (2011)

- Details of individual Sites of Special Scientific Interest can be searched at: <http://www.sssi.naturalengland.org.uk/Special/sssi/search.cfm>

2.6 Soils and Agricultural Land Classification

The area is dominated by both sandy and heavy clay soils. Slightly acid loamy and clayey soils with impeded drainage cover the majority of the NCA.

Source: High Weald Natural Area Profile

The main grades of agricultural land in the NCA are broken down as follows (as a proportion of total land area):

Agricultural Land Classification	Area (ha)	% of NCA
Grade 1	145	<1
Grade 2	1,293	<1
Grade 3	109,701	63
Grade 4	38,047	22
Grade 5	n/a	n/a
Non-agricultural	17,925	10
Urban	7,771	4

Source: Natural England (2010)

Maps showing locations of Statutory sites can be found at:

<http://magic.defra.gov.uk/website/magic/> – select 'Landscape' (shows ALC classification and 27 types of soils)

3. Key water bodies and catchments

3.1 Major rivers/canals

The following major rivers/canals (by length) have been identified in this NCA.

Name	Length (km)
Medway	30
Rother	28
Ouse	18
Tillingham	16
Dudwell	13
Brede	10
Cuckmere	7
Arun	6
Eden	5

Source: Natural England (2010)

Please note: other significant rivers (by volume) may also occur. These are not listed where the length within the NCA is short.

The High Weald is the source of a number of major rivers in the South East and has a dendritic drainage pattern with numerous small streams forming the headwaters of the main rivers. The area also contains several reservoirs including Weir Wood, Ardingly, Bewl Water and Darwell.

3.2 Water quality

The total area of Nitrate Vulnerable Zone is 100,205 ha or 57 per cent of the High Weald NCA.

Source: Natural England (2010)

3.3 Water Framework Directive

Maps are available from the Environment Agency showing current and projected future status of water bodies

http://maps.environment-agency.gov.uk/wiyby/wiybyController?ep=maptopics&lang=_e

4. Trees and woodlands

4.1 Total woodland cover

The NCA contains 46,158 ha of woodland (26 per cent of the total area), of which 30,234 is ancient woodland.

Source: Natural England (2010), Forestry Commission (2011)

4.2 Distribution and size of woodland and trees in the landscape

The High Weald has the greatest amount of ancient woodland in any AONB, representing 7 per cent of all ancient woodland in England. The character of the woodland within the High Weald is dominated by numerous small woods and sinuous gills, interconnected by narrow shaws.

Source: The Cultural Heritage of Woodlands in the South East (2007)

4.3 Woodland types

A statistical breakdown of the area and type of woodland found across the NCA is detailed below.

Area and proportion of different woodland types in the NCA (over 2 ha)

Woodland type	Area (ha)	% of NCA
Broadleaved	36,573	21
Coniferous	7,685	4
Mixed	693	<1
Other	1,207	1

Source: Forestry Commission (2011)

Area and proportion of Ancient Woodland and Planted Ancient Woodland within the NCA.

Woodland type	Area (ha)	% of NCA
Ancient semi-natural woodland	20,663	12
Ancient re-planted woodland (PAWS)	8,719	5

Source: Natural England (2004)

5. Boundary features and patterns

5.1 Boundary features

Fields are bounded by shaws (narrow bands of ancient woodland), woodlands and hedgerows.

Source: High Weald Countryside Character Area description

5.2 Field patterns

Small, irregular, organic shaped fields. The landscape is essentially medieval with field patterns derived from post-Saxon/early-medieval cultivation of small parcels of land from more extensive areas of woodland; commonly referred to as 'assarting'. The resultant character of the area is one of fields within woodland, with associated dispersed and isolated settlement.

Source: High Weald Countryside Character Area description

6. Agriculture

The following data has been taken from the Agricultural Census linked to this NCA.

6.1 Farm type

The pastoral character of the area is supported by the figure for grazing livestock farms (697 in 2009) in comparison with cereals (210 in 2009) and horticulture (201 in 2009). Those classed as 'other' accounted for 763 holdings.

Source: Agricultural Census, Defra (2010)

6.2 Farm size

In 2009, farms between 5 and 20 ha represented 36 per cent of holdings, followed by 25 per cent between 20 and 50 ha, 14 per cent between 50 and 100 ha and 12 per cent for less than 5 ha in size. Those greater than 100 ha also accounted for 12 per cent.

Source: Agricultural Census, Defra (2010)

6.3 Farm ownership

2009: Total farm area = 105,626 ha; owned land = 78,719 ha

2000: Total farm area = 97,466 ha; owned land = 75,676 ha

Source: Agricultural Census, Defra (2010)

6.4 Land use

In 2009, 62 per cent of the total farmed area was grass and uncropped land (65,090 ha). Cereals covered 12 per cent of the farmed area (12,876 ha) - the second most common land use. Oil seeds accounted for 4 per cent of farmed area. Other arable crops also accounted for 4 per cent, with 2 per cent represented by fruit.

Source: Agricultural Census, Defra (2010)

6.5 Livestock numbers

In 2009 there were 43,200 cattle (55,100 in 2000), 180,700 sheep (251,000 in 2000) and 8,800 pigs (12,900 in 2000).

Source: Agricultural Census, Defra (2010)

6.6 Farm labour

Principal farmers make up 56 per cent of farm labour (2,623 in 2009). Numbers have remained relatively stable between 2000 and 2009 with the only significant change being a drop in the number of full-time workers (down 9 per cent to 630) and casual/gang workers (down 21 per cent to 601).

Source: Agricultural Census, Defra (2010)

Please note: (i) Some of the Census data is estimated by Defra so will not be accurate for every holding (ii) Data refers to Commercial Holdings only (iii) Data includes land outside of the NCA belonging to holdings whose centre point is within the NCA listed.

7. Key habitats and species

7.1 Habitat distribution/coverage

Woodlands including gill woodlands, shaws and hedgerows are found across the High Weald with ancient woodland a distinctive feature (see woodland section). Pockets of unimproved and semi-improved grassland (both acid and neutral) are notable. There are significant areas of heathland including Ashdown Forest, one of the most extensive areas of heathland in south-east England. Wetland habitats associated with the river valleys are also important. The High Weald has more than 10,000 ponds concentrated on the clay providing valuable habitats for a range of wildlife. Parklands contain relict ancient habitats such as veteran trees. The sand rock exposures are an important habitat for bryophyte assemblages.

Source: High Weald AONB Management Plan 2004, High Weald Natural Area Profile

7.2 Priority habitats

The Government's new strategy for biodiversity in England, Biodiversity 2020, replaces the previous Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) led approach. Priority habitats and species are identified in Biodiversity 2020, but references to BAP priority habitats and species, and previous national targets have been removed. Biodiversity Action Plans remain a useful source of guidance and information. More information about Biodiversity 2020 can be found at; www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/conservation/biodiversity/protectandmanage/englandsbiodiversitystrategy2011.aspx.

The NCA contains the following areas of mapped priority habitats (as mapped by National Inventories). Footnotes denote local/expert interpretation. This will be used to inform future national inventory updates.

Priority habitat	Area (ha)	% of NCA
Broadleaved mixed and yew woodland (broad habitat)	26,538	15
Lowland heath	1,767 ¹	1
Coastal and flood plain grazing marsh	565	<1
Lowland meadows	233 ²	<1
Maritime cliff and slope	167	<1
Lowland dry acid grassland	142 ²	<1
Fens	51	<1
Reedbeds	18	<1
Purple moor-grass and rush pasture	1	<1
Coastal vegetated shingle	<1	<1

Source: Natural England (2011)

Footnotes: (1) High Weald AONB Management Plan 2nd edition (2009) states 1,931 ha of heathland within the AONB boundary. (2) High Weald AONB Management Plan 2nd edition (2009) states 655 ha of species-rich unimproved lowland meadows and dry acidic grassland within the AONB boundary

- Maps showing locations of Priority Habitats are available at: <http://magic.defra.gov.uk/website/magic/> – select 'Habitat Inventories'

7.3 Key species and assemblages of species

- Maps showing locations of Priority Habitats are available at: <http://magic.defra.gov.uk/website/magic/> – select 'Habitat Inventories'
- Maps showing locations of S41 species are available at: <http://data.nbn.org.uk/>

8. Settlement and development patterns

8.1 Settlement pattern

The area is characterised by dispersed historic settlements of farmsteads and hamlets. The relatively few nucleated villages and small towns are usually sited alongside the main routes through the Weald. Many of these settlements developed as trading centres and associated with non-rural industries and in several examples it is clear that the market was the original feature, later accompanied by a church.

Source: High Weald Countryside Character Area description; Countryside Quality Counts (2003)

8.2 Main settlements

The main settlements within the High Weald are; Hastings, Tunbridge Wells, Crawley, Bexhill, and Haywards Heath.

Source: High Weald Countryside Character Area description; Countryside Quality Counts (2003)

8.3 Local vernacular and building materials

Distinctive red tile, brick, local sandstone and timber building materials, often including hung tiles and white weatherboarding, are characteristic of the historic settlements, farms and cottages. Oast houses and timber framed barns are a particularly notable and characteristic element of the High Weald landscape.

Source: High Weald Countryside Character Area description; Countryside Quality Counts (2003)

9. Key historic sites and features

9.1 Origin of historic features

The High Weald has been occupied since at least the Mesolithic period but few pre-Roman sites exist. Iron was the major industry, first developed in the Iron Age and Roman periods but predominantly in the 15th to

17th centuries when the Weald was the foundry of England and the influence dominates the present landscape in the form of hammer ponds, furnace sites and evidence of charcoal-burning. The wealth generated by this industry also led to the abundance of large estates, grand houses and parklands. The NCA includes the site of the Battle of Hastings and substantial evidence of the Norman development of the area in the form of castles, churches and medieval buildings. Agriculture has also been important, including hop production with oast houses notable and a large number of pre-1750 farm buildings survive.

The High Weald is characterised by ancient routeways (now roads and rights of way) in the form of ridge-top roads and a dense system of radiating droveways. Along with the prehistoric ridge-top ways, the droves were one of the most distinctive characteristics of the High Weald in the 14th century and remain so.

Source: Draft Historic Profile, Countryside Quality Counts, High Weald Countryside Character Area description; Making of the High Weald, Roland B Harris (2003)

9.2 Designated historic assets

This NCA has the following historic designations:

- 56 Registered Parks and Garden covering 4,599 ha
- 1 Registered Battlefield covering 77 ha
- 91 Scheduled Monuments
- 7,370 Listed Buildings

Source: Natural England (2010)

More information is available at the following address:

- <http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/caring/heritage-at-risk/>
- <http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/professional/protection/process/national-heritage-list-for-england/>

10. Recreation and access

10.1 Public access

- Six per cent of the NCA or 10,926 ha, is classified as being publically accessible.
- There are 3,043 km of public rights of way at a density of 1.7 km per km².
- There are no National Trails within the High Weald NCA.

Sources: Natural England (2010)

The table below shows the breakdown of land which is publically accessible in perpetuity:

Access designation	Area (ha)	% of NCA
National Trust (Accessible all year)	154	<1
Common Land	2,790	2
Country Parks	412	<1
CROW Access Land (Section 4 and 16)	4,373	3
CROW Section 15	2,734	2
Village Greens	255	<1
Doorstep Greens	1	<1
Forestry Commission Walkers Welcome Grants	3,599	2
Local Nature Reserves (LNR)	750	<1
Millennium Greens	9	<1
Accessible National Nature Reserves (NNR)	n/a	n/a
Agri-environment Scheme Access	132	<1
Woods for People	7,043	4

Sources: Natural England (2011)

Please note: Common Land refers to land included in the 1965 commons register; CROW = Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000; OC and RCL = Open Country and Registered Common Land.

11. Experiential qualities

11.1 Tranquillity

Based on the CPRE map of tranquillity (2006) the areas of greatest tranquillity are away from the main transport corridors and major settlements. The pastoral, heavily wooded and intimate character of the landscape has a strong sense of tranquillity.

A breakdown of tranquillity values for this NCA is detailed in the table below:

Tranquillity	Tranquillity Score
Highest value within NCA	42
Lowest value within NCA	-108
Mean value within NCA	-8

Sources: CPRE (2006)

More information is available at the following address:

<http://www.cpre.org.uk/what-we-do/countryside/tranquil-places/in-depth/item/1688-how-we-mapped-tranquillity>

11.2 Intrusion

The 2007 Intrusion Map (CPRE) shows the extent to which rural landscapes are 'intruded on' from urban development, noise (primarily traffic noise), and other sources of visual and auditory intrusion. This shows that there are patches of undisturbed land throughout the NCA. Disturbance is localised and centred on main roads, notably the A21, A26 and M23, and urban centres, particularly Hastings in the east and the Crawley/Gatwick area in the west. A breakdown of intrusion values for this NCA is detailed in the table over.

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Intrusion category	1960s (%)	1990s (%)	2007 (%)	Percentage change (1960s-2007)
Disturbed	20	42	50	30
Undisturbed	76	54	44	-32
Urban	4	4	6	2

Sources: CPRE (2007)

Notable trends from the 1960s to 2007 are that the amount of land being described as disturbed has more than doubled with less than a half of the NCA being undisturbed in 2007 compared to more than three quarters in 1960. The amount of urban land has increased but less so than in some other areas and remains a small proportion, just less than 6 per cent of the NCA.

More information is available at the following address:

<http://www.cpre.org.uk/resources/countryside/tranquil-places>

12 Data sources

- British Geological Survey (2006)
- Natural Area Profiles, Natural England (published by English Nature 1993-1998)
- Countryside Character Descriptions, Natural England (regional volumes published by Countryside Commission/Countryside Agency 1998/1999)
- Joint Character Area GIS boundaries, Natural England (data created 2001)
- National Parks and AONBs GIS boundaries, Natural England (2006)
- Heritage Coast Boundaries, Natural England (2006)
- Agricultural Census June Survey, Defra (2000, 2009)
- National Inventory of Woodland & Trees, Forestry Commission (2003)

- Countryside Quality Counts Draft Historic Profiles, English Heritage (2004)*
- Ancient Woodland Inventory, Natural England (2003)
- Priority Habitats GIS data, Natural England (March 2011)
- Special Areas of Conservation data, Natural England (data accessed in March 2011)
- Special Protection Areas data, Natural England (data accessed in March 2011)
- Ramsar sites data, Natural England (data accessed in March 2011)
- Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Natural England (data accessed in March 2011)
- Detailed River Network, Environment Agency (2008)
- Source protection zones, Environment Agency (2005)
- Registered Common Land GIS data, Natural England (2004)
- Open Country GIS data, Natural England (2004)
- Public Rights of Way Density, Defra (2011)
- National Trails, Natural England (2006)
- National Tranquillity Mapping data, CPRE (2007)
- Intrusion map data, CPRE (2007)
- Registered Battlefields, English Heritage (2005)
- Record of Scheduled Monuments, English Heritage (2006)
- Registered Parks and Gardens, English Heritage (2006)
- World Heritage Sites, English Heritage (2006)
- Incorporates Historic Landscape Characterisation and work for preliminary Historic Farmstead Character Statements (English Heritage/Countryside Agency 2006) Detailed River Network, Environment Agency (2008)

Please note all figures contained within the report have been rounded to the nearest unit. For this reason proportion figures will not (in all) cases add up to 100%. The convention <1 has been used to denote values less than a whole unit.

Supporting document 2: Landscape change

Recent changes and trends

Trees and woodlands

- Countryside Quality Counts data reveals that in 1999 about 11 per cent of the established eligible National Inventory of Woodland and Trees woodland stock was covered by a Woodland Grant Scheme management agreement.
- In 2003 the proportion of established, eligible National Inventory of Woodland and Trees woodland stock was about 18 per cent. About 65 per cent of the woodland cover is on an ancient woodland site. The proportion of these sites covered by Woodland Grant Scheme agreements has changed since 1999 from 12 per cent to 23 per cent.
- Loss of traditional orchards and hop gardens and associated wind-break features has occurred in all areas except Ashdown Forest.
- The threat of browsing damage to young trees from increasing deer numbers and bark stripping by squirrels remains a disincentive to active coppice management and the growing of higher quality hardwood timber trees.
- Woodfuel, both wood chip and log wood, has grown in popularity but a shift from small teams with hand held machinery to larger scale forestry poses a threat to woodland archaeology and soil health. There is a need to use appropriate machinery which is suited to the character and constraints of the landscape.

- Some ancient woodland continues to suffer incremental damage from trampling and disturbance by livestock, machinery and recreational use.
- There is pressure on ancient woodland in all areas from lack of management and clay extraction.

Boundary features

- Towards the end of the 20th century there was a decline in the extent and condition of boundary features. Countryside Stewardship agreements have brought about a positive change in hedgerow management including fencing of hedgerows and hedgebank management and general restoration. 748, 904 km of hedgerow, 51, 413 km of ditch, and 113 km of earth bank are now managed under Environmental Stewardship.
- Ongoing pressure for larger fields, highway improvements and lack of recognition of the historical depth and extensive archaeology associated with the intricate mosaic of High Weald boundary features continues to pose a threat to their character and condition.

Agriculture

- Generally the agricultural profile of the area has remained stable and predominantly pastoral with 77 per cent of the area under grass or un-cropped land. The number of dairy farms has decreased, but yields from the area probably remain consistent.
- There has been a slight increase in 'niche' agricultural activity; specialist pig and poultry rearing, small holdings and horticulture.

- A decline in grass-based livestock production as the basis of management of the High Weald's fieldscape resulting in numbers of cattle and sheep dropping by nearly a third in 10 years from already low levels in 2000.

Settlement and development

- Countryside Quality Counts data revealed in 1999 that there had been a decline in use of vernacular building materials in new developments and introduction of urban features such as lighting and alarms. The northern (Kentish) High Weald has been particularly affected. This trend would appear to be continuing.
- An increase in road traffic on the characteristically small roads, winding lanes and historic routeways has been an issue, leading to conflicts between motorised traffic, pedestrians, horse-riders and cyclists and insensitive highway 'improvements'.
- Development around built-up areas throughout south-east England has impacted on rural character. New land uses such as pony paddocks and associated domestic features such as tennis courts, street lighting and golf courses have impacted on character, particularly in Ashdown Forest and the northern (Kentish) High Weald, although the area does have lower number of housing units built per 1000 households than protected landscapes generally between 1985 and 2004.⁴
- A high rate of barn conversion resulting in more than half of listed historic farm property in residential use (2007) and only 40 per cent in agriculture or agriculture related uses. Agricultural activity associated with historic farmsteads is concentrated in the south and east of the NCA.



Settlements were traditionally sited on the drier ridge tops while the slopes and valley bottoms form a mosaic of pasture, arable and woodland linked by hedgerows and shaws.

Semi-natural habitat

- A landscape with existing high levels of ecological connectivity and porosity for many species associated with lowland pastoral landscapes but a decline in agriculture and woodland management together with management for amenity is reducing habitat quality.

⁴ <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20101219012433/http://countryside-quality-counts.org.uk/jca/Consultation/Theme.aspx?CqcJcalD=119&CqcThemeID=5>

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- Most Countryside Stewardship agreements in 2003 were for lowland pastures on neutral/acid soils (3,431 ha) and regeneration of grassland/semi-natural vegetation (2,360 ha).
- Uptake of Environmental Stewardship is less than the national average with less than half of the agricultural area under Stewardship.
- Species-rich grassland creation and restoration using locally sourced seed has been prominent in the NCA but unimproved meadow sites remain at risk from neglect, tree planting or intensification and increase in pony paddocks.
- The uneconomic nature of heathland management remains a threat especially to smaller heathland fragments.
- There has been a loss of heathland due to cessation of grazing and subsequent scrub invasion notably in Ashdown Forest and St. Leonard's Forest.
- The over-shading effect of rhododendron combined with its dense, acidic leaf litter and other plants continues to pose a threat to ancient woodland particularly in gill woodlands which retain rich assemblages of vulnerable 'Atlantic' bryophyte species (mosses and liverworts), ferns and lichens. Rhododendron is also vulnerable to *Phytophthora ramorum* on which very high numbers of spores develop, which can then spread to trees and heathland plants.
- Increased shading in woodland resulting from the decline of coppice management continues to restrict the viability and spread of plants and butterflies adapted to sunny rides and temporary clearings.

- The impact of nitrogen deposition from traffic in the vicinity has particularly increasingly impacted on the Ashdown Forest SAC.

Historic features

- The area has a high rate of barn conversions on a unit area basis. About 44 per cent of listed historic farm buildings remain unconverted. About 92 per cent are intact structurally. These data suggest that important aspects of the historic landscape remain neglected in 2010 and that the redundancy of farmsteads has led to the deterioration of historic farm buildings or pressure for their conversion, often to residential use.⁵
- Parklands are an important historic element of this landscape. In 1918 about 8 per cent of the NCA was historic parkland. By 1995 it is estimated that 44 per cent had been lost. About 23 per cent of the remaining parkland is covered by a Historic Parkland Grant, and about 15 per cent is included within an agri-environment scheme.
- In 2003 Countryside Stewardship agreements included mechanical bracken control – area payment (144 ha) and scrub management under 25 per cent cover (130 ha). These were developed to assist plantations and unchecked bracken and scrub growth which were an issue on some prehistoric earthworks and other archaeological sites.
- Further survey and recording is needed to assess the extent and condition of features such as pre-1750 timber-framed farm buildings, woodland archaeology, ancient routeways and medieval field systems.

⁵ Countryside Quality Counts data

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- Four Scheduled Monuments have been identified on the Heritage at Risk register along with one registered park and garden.

Coast and rivers

- The biological water quality in 1995 was predominantly excellent and it has been maintained. The chemical water quality in 1995 was predominantly very good and it has been maintained.
- In 2003 Countryside Stewardship agreements included managing reedbed (18 ha), restoration/conservation of fen/reedbed/carr (7 ha) to assist in managing the pressures on the riparian landscapes which line the numerous small streams and rivers. This was particularly significant in the areas in northern areas of the High Weald around Kent, in relation to the loss of riparian trees, damp pastures and flood meadows.

Minerals

- Continued small-scale demand for traditional local stone, clay and brick production for local use.

Drivers of change

Climate change

Climate change is likely to result in:

- Increasingly unpredictable weather patterns with hotter drier summers, more intense rainfall and longer dry periods resulting in the need for agriculture and forestry industries to adapt to grow different crops and develop more flexible and responsive land management practices.

- Increasing incidences of pathogens such as fungi and insect-borne disease disrupting timber crops and changing the species mix of woodlands.

- Higher temperatures and prolonged drought, putting heathland and wooded heath areas under stress and increasing the risk of wildfires.

- The need to adapt to a reduction in water available to domestic, business and agricultural users.

- Increased incidence of flooding and pressure for restoring the natural function of river valleys which may conflict with the conservation of heritage assets, some existing biodiversity features and food production. Potential degradation and loss of oceanic communities of ferns, mosses, liverworts and lichens found on Sandrock and dependant on a mild and moist microclimate.

Other key drivers

- Continuing high demand for housing in south-east England and rural areas in particular resulting in strong pressure for development on the edge of or adjacent to the High Weald AONB boundary and pressure to bring forward land for housing in and around larger villages threatening the dispersed settlement character of the landscape and the sustainable development of smaller settlements.
- The opportunity for green technology and skills development to maximise use of the High Weald's extensive timber resource in construction, locking up carbon, supporting the local economy and improving design quality.
- The opportunity to harness enthusiasm for community growing and forest gardening (outside of ancient woodland) to meet food security concerns.

- The need for grassland and woodland management to be both profitable and sustainable and to support a broad range of new land-based and tourism businesses.
- Development pressures resulting from planning for an aging population, changes to working practices, improved communications technology and energy supply.
- Opportunities for landowners to work together across catchments to restore more natural river systems and their associated habitats, including wet woodland creation, to deliver biodiversity, amenity, resource protection and flood control benefits.
- Climate change adaptation, increased demand for locally produced food and niche markets, market economies and increased visitor activity may provide opportunities for further farm business diversification.
- Recreational use and access, both day visits and longer term tourism, are both increasing and changing in nature with emphasis on activity-based recreation, such as off-road cycling.



Early purple orchid on a roadside bank.

Supporting document 3: Analysis supporting Statements of Environmental Opportunity

The following analysis section focuses on a selection of the key provisioning, regulating and cultural ecosystem goods and services for this NCA. These are underpinned by supporting services such as photosynthesis, nutrient cycling, soil formation and evapo-transpiration. Supporting services perform an essential role in ensuring the availability of all ecosystem services.

Biodiversity and geodiversity are crucial in supporting the full range of ecosystem services provided by this landscape. Wildlife and geologically-rich landscapes are also of cultural value and are included in this section of the analysis. This analysis shows the projected impact of Statements of Environmental Opportunity on the value of nominated ecosystem services within this landscape.



Mayfield High Street.

Ecosystem service

Statement of Environmental Opportunity

SEO 1: Maintain and enhance the existing woodland and pasture components of the landscape, including the historic field pattern bounded by shaws, hedgerows and farm woods, to improve ecological function at a landscape scale for the benefit of biodiversity, soils and water, sense of place and climate regulation, safeguard ancient woodlands and encourage sustainably produced timber to support local markets and contribute to biomass production.

SEO 2: Maintain and restore the natural function of river catchments at a landscape scale, promoting benefits for water quality and water flow within all Wealden rivers, streams and flood plains by encouraging sustainable land management and best agricultural practices to maintain good soil quality, reduce soil erosion, increase biodiversity and enhance sense of place. Maintain and enhance the geodiversity and especially the exposed sandrock.

SEO 3: Maintain and enhance the distinctive dispersed settlement pattern, parkland and historic pattern and features of the routeways of the High Weald, encouraging the use of locally characteristic materials and Wealden practices to ensure that any development recognises and retains the distinctiveness, biodiversity, geodiversity and heritage assets present, reaffirm sense of place and enhance the ecological function of routeways to improve the connectivity of habitats and provide wildlife corridors.

SEO 4: Manage and enhance recreational opportunities, public understanding and enjoyment integrated with the conservation and enhancement of the natural and historic environment, a productive landscape and tranquillity, in accordance with the purpose of the High Weald AONB designation.

Food provision	Timber provision	Water availability	Genetic diversity	Biomass provision	Climate regulation	Regulating water quality	Regulating water flow	Regulating soil quality	Regulating soil erosion	Pollination	Pest regulation	Regulating coastal erosion	Sense of place / Inspiration	Sense of history	Tranquillity	Recreation	Biodiversity	Geodiversity
↔ **	↑ **	↔ **	↔ **	↑ ***	↑ ***	↔ **	↔ **	↗ **	↗ **	↗ **	↔ **	↔ ***	↑ **	↗ **	↗ **	↗ **	↑ ***	↔ **
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Note: Arrows shown in the table above indicate anticipated impact on service delivery ↑=Increase ↗=Slight Increase ↔=No change ↘=Slight Decrease ↓=Decrease. Asterisks denote confidence in projection (*low **medium***high) ○=symbol denotes where insufficient information on the likely impact is available.

Dark plum =National Importance; Mid plum =Regional Importance; Light plum =Local Importance

Landscape attributes

Landscape attribute	Justification for selection
Heathland, notably Ashdown Forest Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protection Area (SPA).	■ An extensive mosaic of elevated heathland and woodland with far reaching views. Used for hunting in the middle ages it is a formally registered common. ■ Ashdown Forest is considered one of the most important and extensive areas of heathland in south-east England and supports several uncommon plants, has rich invertebrate fauna and important populations of heath and woodland birds. It is internationally important and designated as an SAC for wet and dry heath and an SPA for breeding populations of Dartford warbler and nightjar. ■ Areas of heathland are also found in St Leonard's Forest and smaller patches elsewhere although much has been lost, increasing the significance of these remaining blocks. ■ Ashdown Forest is the largest free public access space in south-east England, lying at the heart of the High Weald AONB and is a particularly popular and important recreational asset. ■ Ashdown Forest is characterised by the presence of plants such as heather, dwarf gorses and cross-leaved heath, some areas of scattered trees and scrub, areas of bare ground, gorse, wet heaths, bogs and open water.
Coastline of geological, biodiversity and recreational value.	■ Hastings Cliffs – an area of underdeveloped coastline consisting of actively eroding soft cliffs of sands and clays and associated varied habitats and a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) for vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts. ■ The cliffs are important for their bryophyte interest and maritime species and are geologically important, representing the most southerly exposures of the Lower Hastings Beds. ■ The cliffs are golden and tower over 100 m above sea level. ■ Hastings and Bexhill are seaside resort towns on the south coast offering recreational opportunities.
High density of extraction pits, quarries and ponds.	■ The High Weald has more than 10,000 ponds concentrated on the clay, with some on silty sandstone⁶ including 'hammer ponds' originating from the Wealden iron industry. ■ Iron stone exploitation, quarrying of stone from the Hastings Beds for building and extraction of sand for brick making has left a number of quarries and extraction pits.

⁶High Weald AONB Management Plan, 2014–2019, High Weald AONB Unit

Landscape attribute	Justification for selection
Dispersed historic settlement pattern, farmsteads and hamlets with late medieval villages. Strong vernacular architecture characterises the NCA.	■ Dominance of traditional timber framed buildings with steep roofs often hipped or half-hipped and an extraordinarily high survival rate of farm buildings dating from 17th century or earlier. ■ Timber, tile, brick, Kentish ragstone and sandstone are traditional building materials. ■ The High Weald has one of the highest concentrations of surviving early farmsteads anywhere in Europe.⁷ ■ The rich and varied colours of locally derived building materials reflect the diversity of geology underpinning the area and add significant interest to the landscape generally.
Ancient routeways in the form of ridge-top roads and a dense system of radiating droveways often narrow, deeply sunken and edged with trees and wildflower-rich verges and boundary banks.	■ Ancient routeways form part of the habitat mosaic of the High Weald, many still used today, the routes are features which have been used for centuries and form an important part of the landscape, ecology and history of the High Weald. ■ The routeways provide an extensive network of roads and paths allowing access to some of the most intimate and tranquil parts of the area.
Small irregularly shaped fields bounded by hedgerows, shaws and woodlands.	■ These form part of the landscape and habitat mosaic and an essential component of what is a rare, surviving essentially medieval landscape. ■ Hedgerows and shaws are important to landscape character and ecological connectivity, often giving the area a feel of a small-scale landscape and a 'patchwork quilt' effect. ■ Ecologically they represent a reservoir of native trees, shrubs and wildflowers and are important sources of food and shelter for invertebrates, small mammals and birds. Hedgerows and shaws are also important for linking fragmented areas of semi-natural habitat within the agricultural landscape. ■ Many hedgerows run along historic boundaries. ■ The soft, sinuous forms of the field boundaries add texture and variety to the landscape and make a significant contribution to the overall arboreal character of the landscape.

⁷High Weald AONB, www.highweald.org/look-after/property-management/historic-farmsteads.html

Landscape attribute	Justification for selection
Grasslands including species-rich unimproved meadows and dry acidic grassland.	■ Unimproved meadows are an important part of the heritage of the NCA. ■ Within the High Weald AONB boundary there are 655 ha of species-rich unimproved lowland meadows and dry acidic grassland. ■ Remaining meadows are often small, fragmented and hard to access and as a result securing appropriate management can be difficult. ■ Many unimproved grasslands include a diverse range of plant and animal species including rare indicator species such as dyers greenweed, pepper saxifrage and green winged orchid. ■ Unimproved grasslands have undergone significant decline in the 20th century and protection and maintenance of remaining habitat is a priority.
Reservoirs.	■ Four reservoirs within the NCA; Bewl Water, Darwell, Ardingley and Weir Wood reservoirs ■ The largest is Bewl Water (the largest reservoir in south-east England, supplying 2 million customers⁸) which supplies water to the Medway towns, local villages, North Maidstone and also Darwell Reservoir. It is also important for tourism and recreation, as are Darwell and Ardingley. ■ Weir Wood Reservoir supports a rich community of breeding birds and is designated as a SSSI ■ The reservoirs comprise large sheets of water with sinuous edges and meandering inlets reflecting their origin as gill valleys, reflective surfaces, particularly in autumn when the surrounding wooded landscape is bright with autumn colours.
Water catchments and associated wetland habitats.	■ The NCA covers major water catchment areas - Rother, Ouse, Medway, Arun and Adur, Cuckmere and Romney marsh. ■ The High Weald is a source of a number of major rivers in south-east England and has dendritic drainage pattern with numerous small streams forming the headwaters of the main rivers. ■ Threats to the extent and connectivity of associated wetland habitats of these rivers. ■ Surface water is important for abstraction all be it in lesser quantities than from groundwater.

⁸High Weald NCA Interim Objectives, Natural England (2010)

Landscape attribute	Justification for selection
Geological features.	■ The High Weald lies at the core of the Wealden anticline and is geologically complex, dominated by a corrugated dome of sandstones and clays belonging to the Lower Cretaceous Hastings Beds – forming the ridges and valleys. ■ Scattered outcrops of sandstone outcrops which support sandrock bryophytes communities. ■ Numerous stream valleys and steep ravines. ■ Geological interest of the coast and most southerly exposures of the Hastings Beds.
Woodlands – ancient woods, gill woodlands, and shaws.	■ The area remains one of the most densely wooded areas in England with abundant semi- natural ancient woodland as well as chestnut coppices and conifer plantations. ■ Decline in active woodland management particularly coppicing has led to a corresponding decline in species associated with coppice, including woodland butterflies such as fritillaries. ■ Gill woodlands are characterised as lying over steeply incised valleys where a stream has eroded the underlying rock. These provide a micro-climate and support rare species such as the ivy leaved bell flower and hay scented buckler fern. ■ Map evidence shows that there are more than 1,000 gills in the Weald. ■ Many of the gill woodlands support a number of 'Atlantic' plants uncommon in south-east England and many only found in the Weald and the west of Britain.
Parklands.	■ The total area of Registered Parks and Gardens is over 4,500 ha with 56 sites. ■ The wealth of parkland is representative of park and garden styles ranging from the 16th to the 20th century. ■ Many have trees which are century's old and important habitats for various species. Once lost these habitats are irreplaceable within a short timescale. ■ Historic parklands are an important part of the cultural landscape. ■ Eridge Park SSSI is considered to have one of the richest parkland lichen floras in Britain.

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Landscape attribute	Justification for selection
A landscape rich in heritage assets and historic environment features and elements.	■ There is a legacy of sites associated with the iron industry – in the first two centuries of the Roman occupation and during Tudor and early Stuart periods the Weald was the main iron producing region in Britain. ■ The Battle of Hastings Registered Battlefield is the site of one of turning points in English history. ■ A large number of listed buildings (7,370) many representing the agricultural and industrial vernacular and the gentry buildings resulting from the wealth generated from these activities. ■ 91 Scheduled Ancient Monuments. ■ Many upstanding, earthwork and buried heritage assets including hill forts, medieval settlement sites, Mesolithic remains, earthworks, abbeys, castles, iron bloomeries, furnaces and working sites, Roman sites, Roman roads, parklands, medieval moated sites and underground archaeology.
Rights of way, open access land and other recreational opportunities.	■ Recreation is supported by the area's 3,043 km rights of way network, including the Sussex Border Path, High Weald Landscape Trail and Weald Way, as well as a significant area of open access land. ■ Further significant recreational opportunities are provided by the area's reservoirs, with watersports and angling provided by the Ardingly, Weir Wood and Bewl Water reservoirs and recreational opportunities offered by the coast.
Tranquillity.	■ Tranquillity levels have declined notably in recent years, with the area recorded as 'undisturbed' having decreased from 76 per cent in the 1960s to 44 per cent in 2007. ■ The largest areas of tranquillity lie away from the main transport corridors and major settlements. Nevertheless, the pastoral, heavily wooded, medieval character of the landscape has a strong sense of tranquillity, further accentuated by the traditional character of villages, sunken lanes, the wooded ghyll (gill)s and intimate views, which together also create a strong sense of timelessness.

Landscape opportunities

- Maintain the existing extent of woodland and particularly ancient woodland, maintaining and enhancing the landscape character, ecological functioning and connectivity of woodland at a landscape scale, protecting the historic environment and historic assets of the woodlands, increasing output of sustainably produced high quality timber and underwood for local markets and contributing to renewable energy sources.
- Maintain existing quantity of gill woodlands and enhance their quality for features of interest.
- Protect the geological resources and exposures of the Purbeck Group and Hastings Beds of the Wealden series including the sandstone outcrops, maintaining nationally important geological exposures, to conserve the fern, moss and liverwort communities they support and to protect their value as some of the most significant sites of prehistoric archaeology in addition to the inland geological features exposed in active and disused quarries, road cuttings and natural exposures.
- Maintain and enhance the complex mosaic and pattern of High Weald habitats and the distinctive pastoral fields and areas of heath. Improve the condition and connectivity of fields and heaths and their associated and interrelated habitats, including hedgerows, woodlands, ditches, and ponds and plan for the extension and or linking of existing habitats in order to strengthen landscape character and increase climate change resilience.
- Manage and enhance the character, condition and quality of rivers, standing water habitats and areas of flood meadow, fen, wet woodland and grazing



Walking and enjoying the views are popular activities in the High Weald.

marsh that provide some of the fine- grain components of the landscape. This will also help to create a more extensive ecological network of wetland and riverine habitats, increasing adaptation to climate change, as well as helping to improve water quality and help alleviate flooding through water storage.

- Maintain and enhance the distinctive pattern of dispersed settlement of historic farmsteads, hamlets and villages, to promote sustainable development in rural locations and meet local needs for affordable and where possible land based workers, and enhance the design and quality of new development in the landscape meeting local distinctiveness and design guidance.

- Protect from damage and appropriately manage the area's rich and distinctive historic environment including parks and wood pastures, ancient routeways, archaeology, settlement patterns and field systems, and significant industrial heritage linked to the iron industry. Identify educational, access and research opportunities to further the understanding of these assets and link communities with their local heritage, while securing appropriate management of important sites.



A view from Pett Beach to Hastings Cliffs, an area of underdeveloped coastline consisting of actively eroding soft cliffs of sands and clays.

- Manage existing and future developments to ensure that sense of place is maintained by making reference to local vernacular building styles and materials, and settlement patterns and distributions. Ensure that proposed growth is sustainable and protects and enhances the character of the area with new building sympathetic to local styles. Where development is permitted, ensure good green infrastructure is included to bring about multiple benefits for people and the environment.
- Work to manage and maintain the existing public rights of way network which not only delineate patterns of occupation and provide excellent access but also provide an essential network of ecological connections across the wider countryside. Increase the number of connecting permanent and permissive routes to link promoted routes, high profile greenspaces and tourist attractions where appropriate, helping to improve peoples' physical and mental health through contact with inspirational landscapes and access to the countryside, while ensuring recreational pressures are balanced against the needs of landscape and nature conservation.
- Conserve the coastal strip, including the geological, geomorphological and biodiversity assets, allowing for continuance of natural processes on the unprotected cliffs of international biological and geological importance.
- Facilitate and promote the use of the sustainable transport throughout the area and to major settlements beyond, to reduce car dependency and further help maintain the levels of tranquillity of the landscape and particularly within the AONB.

Ecosystem service analysis

The following section shows the analysis used to determine key Ecosystem Service opportunities within the area. These opportunities have been combined with the analysis of landscape opportunities to create Statements of Environmental Opportunity.

Please note that the following analysis is based upon available data and current understanding of ecosystem services. It does not represent a comprehensive local assessment. Quality and quantity of data for each service is variable locally and many of the services listed are not yet fully researched or understood. Therefore analysis and opportunities may change upon publication of further evidence and better understanding of the inter-relationship between services at a local level.

Service	Assets/ attributes: main contributors to service	State	Main beneficiary	Analysis	Opportunities	Principal services offered by opportunities
Food provision	Agricultural land - majority Grade 3 and 4 supporting a pastoral landscape Livestock Horticulture Permanent grassland	Mixed pastoral landscape supporting predominantly sheep with fewer numbers of cattle and pigs (over 180,000 sheep, 43,000 cattle and over 8,000 pigs). There is also some horticulture although recent agricultural statistics suggest the area under horticulture has declined between 2000 and 2009. Many part time farmers, specialist producers and agricultural contractors, working within often small average farm size. Traditional breeds of cattle including Sussex cattle, South Downs sheep and Romney Marsh sheep.	Regional	Sheep- and to a lesser extent cattle-grazed pastures remain the mainstay of agricultural activity in the NCA these are closely linked to the cultural aspects of the area; the sense of place, biodiversity, sense of history and heritage assets. Given the grassland traditions in the area, further local branding may be beneficial and add value. There has been an increase in non-farming, non-food producing land ownership and a shift from productive land to underused leisure land. There is a corresponding decline in working farm yards and lack of flexible workspace for small-scale production and processing threatening the farming futures of the Weald. Horticulture has declined but there is potential to support appropriate expansion.	Continue to work with the farming community to support the profitability of farming businesses. Support expansion of small-scale horticulture. Encourage flexible, adaptable and multifunctional production systems particularly on underused improved pasture. Increase awareness and enthusiasm for local food and the benefits of short supply chains, improving understanding of the links between a farmed landscape and biodiversity benefits.	Food provision Regulating water quality Sense of place / inspiration

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Service	Assets/ attributes: main contributors to service	State	Main beneficiary	Analysis	Opportunities	Principal services offered by opportunities
Timber provision	Woodland covering 26 per cent of NCA Surviving coppice industry and traditional skills Demand for oak for renovation and ancillary buildings Strong local networks and exchanges	Current use of timber stands at 32,000 cubic m/ annum which is 15 per cent of estimated potential annual production. ⁹	Regional	There is significant potential to increase use of timber by focusing on local markets; small-scale and flexible harvesting and processing; modern techniques for using small dimension coppice material and improved forest management to favour timber quality. The small size and comparative inaccessibility of woodlands presents constraints to timber provision as does the high proportion of sensitive ancient woodland (approximately 50 per cent of the woodland area with a further 25 per cent being plantation on an ancient woodland site), an aging workforce and consequent loss of specialist skills, low incomes for woodland workers and small businesses lacking capital to invest, low grade timber with squirrel and deer problems further limiting future growth of quality timber, lack of markets and lack of affordable housing for woodland workers. Lack of management, deer and pest problems, non-native invasive species and fragmentation also present significant challenges to potential timber provision.	Support small-scale operations with hand held machinery and requiring specialist skills in the most sensitive locations. Support and encourage the use of locally sourced timber in housing development and building restoration projects. Support design, innovation and use of new technologies in the timber industry that address the constraints identified. Support sustainable woodland industry with new markets and products developed for locally sourced timber and underwood.	Timber provision Biodiversity

⁹High Weald Woodlands: Carbon report, a report to the High Weald JAC by Sandy Greig, Independent Forestry Consultant (July 2010)

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Service	Assets/ attributes: main contributors to service	State	Main beneficiary	Analysis	Opportunities	Principal services offered by opportunities
Water availability	Geology – sands, silts and clay ridges, give rise to many small springs and streams	The major rivers draining the High Weald are the Ouse and the Cuckmere, which flow south to the coast, the eastern Rother, the Brede and the Tillingham which flow west to east into the Rye estuary, and the Medway which flows north into the Greater Thames Estuary.	Regional	This NCA has an important role in water provision; captured in reservoirs the area provides water for major conurbations both within and outside the NCA. Increased development, population pressures and climate change are likely to increase the demands for water and decrease the availability of water in the future. The availability of water is critical to the condition of main watercourses in the area and the biodiversity they support. There needs to be a balance to meet the demands of existing and future abstractions and the need to protect river flows to meet environmental requirements.	Seek, where possible, to increase water retention and reduce run-off to increase percolation of water and thereby increase availability in periods of low rainfall. Work across sectors and in a co-ordinated and strategic way within and outside the boundaries of the NCA to protect water resources including through the promotion of efficient and sustainable use of water resources. Ensure good green and blue infrastructure measures in new developments to help safeguard water resource, harvest and store water and promote water efficiency. Encourage adoption of integrated water and land management strategies for the High Weald river catchments in accordance with the Water Framework Directive. Encourage the integration of environmentally sensitive water policy objectives through land management practices such as agri-environment schemes, water resource and land use planning to ensure an appropriate balance is maintained between water supply and demand.	Water availability Regulating water flow Regulating soil erosion Regulating soil quality Climate regulation Sense of place/inspiration Sense of history
	Reservoirs – four major reservoirs including the largest reservoir in the south-east of England Minor sandstone aquifer	The Ashdown Beds and Tunbridge Wells Sands are minor aquifers that provide important local groundwater sources for abstractions (mainly for public water supply, and to a lesser extent for industry and agriculture). They also help to support base flow to the tributary streams of the rivers Ouse and Cuckmere, although flows of the former are naturally low during the summer and abstraction can be unreliable.¹⁰ The Medway springs in the High Weald receive spring flow from water stored within the Hastings Beds aquifer. Abstractions are mostly used for public water supply and are from both the surface and groundwater, although more from the latter. There are four reservoirs – Weir Wood, Ardingly, Bewl Water and Darwell and a large volume of water abstracted is primarily used to fill these reservoirs. Bewl Water supplies the Medway towns (Chatham, Rochester and Gillingham) located outside the NCA and local villages. Weir Wood is an on-line reservoir, capturing excess run-off from the upper Medway catchment, supplying Crawley and North Sussex.¹¹ Continued over...				

¹⁰Adur and Ouse & Cuckmere and Pevensy Levels Catchment Abstraction Management Strategies, Environment Agency (URL: www.environment-agency.gov.uk/business/topics/water/119927.aspx)

¹¹Medway Catchment Abstraction Management Strategy, Environment Agency (URL: www.environment-agency.gov.uk/business/topics/water/119927.aspx)

Continued over...

Service	Assets/ attributes: main contributors to service	State	Main beneficiary	Analysis	Opportunities	Principal services offered by opportunities
Water availability continued		...continued from previous. The major river valleys of the Rother and Brede provide water to fill Darwell Reservoir which supplies the Hastings area, while the Ardingly Reservoir supports the Barcombe abstraction outside of the NCA. The Hastings Beds as a groundwater provider have a predominant status of 'no water available'. The rivers of the NCA are predominantly classed as over licensed or having no water available.¹²			...continued from previous. Promote the use of winter water storage reservoirs on farms and restore and expand the network of ponds. Protect the water resources of the NCA by promoting good agricultural and land management practices. Further, promote sustainable use of water resources, protecting the aquifer, reservoirs and surface waters from over abstraction and safeguarding water supply. Further, promote the sustainable recreational use of the reservoirs.	

¹²Rother Catchment Abstraction Management Strategy, Environment Agency (URL: www.environment-agency.gov.uk/business/topics/water/119927.aspx)

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Service	Assets/ attributes: main contributors to service	State	Main beneficiary	Analysis	Opportunities	Principal services offered by opportunities
Genetic diversity	Sussex cattle including South Downs and Romney Marsh sheep Fruit varieties in traditional orchards	Livestock farming remains the main agricultural activity in the area and retains and supports significant numbers of Sussex cattle. Orchards can be found throughout the High Weald but are concentrated in Kent and the Kent/Sussex border, with over 1,430 ha of orchards present in the Kentish High Weald.¹³	Local	Sussex cattle are good for grazing tussocky grasslands. The breed is ancient in origin and of genetic heritage value. Grazing with rare breeds in the NCA benefits biodiversity, heritage and food provision. The more biodiversity-rich traditional orchards have declined by 90per cent since the 1950s and are few and far between – the remaining fragments largely being located around Brenchley and Matfield.¹⁴ Traditional orchards support a far greater variety of wildlife such as lichens, invertebrates, owls and woodpeckers than commercial orchards but cost much more to maintain and harvest. Bees thrive in orchards – the blossom of fruit trees is an important source of pollen for bee colonies enabling them to build up the population and in good years produce surplus honey. Traditional orchards are threatened by a lack of management; public demand for products from the remaining small specialist growers is essential. A non-commercial interest in restoring neglected orchards and planting new ones with locally grown varieties will help to maintain this important habitat. Modern orchards, although less wildlife-rich than traditional orchards, can still be a valuable wildlife habitat and their maintenance requires a continued demand for local rather than imported fruit. Genetic diversity afforded by traditional varieties of fruit is also important for maintaining future food provision and resilience to disease and climate change.	Retain the genetic resource of traditional cattle that provide breed options suitable for quality meat. Encourage the use of traditional breeds on High Weald grasslands to contribute to the sustainable management of soils and benefits for biodiversity. Work with local communities and landowners to rebuild populations of traditional varieties of top fruit where appropriate, maintaining genetic diversity, biodiversity, pollination and sense of place and sense of history.	Genetic diversity Sense of place/inspiration Sense of history Biodiversity Regulating soil quality Regulating soil erosion Pollination Climate Regulation

¹³Kent Habitats Survey 2003, in Kent High Weald Land Managers Pack (URL: www.grasslandtrust.org)

¹⁴Kent High Weald Land Managers Pack (URL: www.grasslandtrust.org)

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Service	Assets/ attributes: main contributors to service	State	Main beneficiary	Analysis	Opportunities	Principal services offered by opportunities
Biomass provision	Existing woodlands	The existing woodland cover (26 per cent of the area) offers significant potential for the provision of biomass, both through bringing unmanaged woodland under management or as a by-product of commercial timber production. The potential yield of short rotation coppice is medium throughout the NCA apart from small areas of low potential yield around Crawley, Crowborough and along the coast between Hastings and Bexhill. Miscanthus potential yield is high throughout the NCA, apart from small areas to the south and north-east of East Grinstead that have medium potential. For information on the potential landscape impacts of biomass plantings within the NCA, refer to the tables on the Natural England website http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/farming/funding/ecs/sitings/areas/default.aspx.	Local	It may be possible to increase biomass production by supporting coppice management of deciduous woodland. However, this is challenging and a lack of markets for low grade broadleaved timber, particularly coppice has led to declines in rotational woodland management. This has had knock-on effects for the biodiversity of woodland habitats. While opportunities for a high potential yield of miscanthus have been identified, identifying suitable locations that do not compromise other interests may be difficult.	Bring local woodlands under traditional coppice management, at the same time improving the woodland habitat for wildlife, by extending the area of appropriately managed woodland to enhance habitats and species populations. Support sustainable woodland industry with wood fuel and wood use marketing to connect local woodland owners with local demand. Promote sustainable woodland management techniques (such as coppicing, pollarding and wood fuel production) to increase carbon sequestration and the resilience of tree species to climate change and disease.	Biomass provision Biodiversity Climate regulation

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Service	Assets/ attributes: main contributors to service	State	Main beneficiary	Analysis	Opportunities	Principal services offered by opportunities
Climate regulation	Soils Ancient semi-natural woodland Wetlands and grazing marsh Permanent grassland	The soils are predominantly mineral soils and most of the area has a low soil carbon content of between 0 and 5 per cent. However, the naturally wet very acid sandy and loamy soils (3 per cent) have mostly organic topsoils which are a store of carbon, while some of the flood plain soils (2 per cent) are peaty at depth or include small areas of peaty soils. There are areas of soils with a carbon content of between 10 and 50 per cent over Ashdown Forest and just south of Royal Tunbridge Wells reflecting areas of extensive heathland and woodland cover where soil organic levels are likely to be high. The woodland cover also creates soils that have higher carbon levels. The trees of the woods and forests of the area (26 per cent) store and sequester significant amounts of carbon.	Local	It has been recognised that UK woodlands and trees have the potential to play an important role in reducing greenhouse gas emissions.¹⁵ Sustainable management of the NCAs woodlands with sustainably produced wood fuel and wood products could help fulfil this potential. This would also provide other services for example by restoring some of the local traditional woodland management techniques which have existed for centuries, benefiting sense of place and biodiversity. Favourably managed wetland, heathland and grassland habitats and maintaining or extending their extent will also be of benefit for carbon sequestration and storage, particularly carbon stored in undisturbed soils, with potential for multiple benefits such as water regulation (flooding) and biodiversity gains.	Promote appropriate land management practices in places that reduce greenhouse gas emissions and store carbon. Maintain, and where appropriate expand the area of woodland, ensuring the maintenance of the key components of the cultural landscape and to maintain continued contributions to carbon storage and sequestration. Undertake further research to understand the role of trees and woodlands in a changing climate and impact of climate change on the woods themselves. Maintain and where appropriate extend areas of permanent pasture to prevent loss of carbon dioxide and increase the potential for further carbon storage.	Climate regulation Regulating water quality Regulating water flow Biodiversity Regulating soil quality Timber provision

¹⁵ *Combating climate change – A role for UK Forests: Main report. An assessment of the potential of the UK's trees and woodlands to mitigate and adapt to climate change*, National Assessment of UK Forestry and Climate Change Steering Group (2009)

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Service	Assets/ attributes: main contributors to service	State	Main beneficiary	Analysis	Opportunities	Principal services offered by opportunities
Regulating water quality	Woodland	The water quality of the area's rivers is mixed. The Tillingham is of 'good' ecological quality,¹⁶ the rivers Rother and the Brede are both 'moderate' (both classified as poor for phosphates). The ecological quality of the Ouse and its tributaries range from 'poor' to 'good' and one section just north of Uckfield on its tributary, the Uck, is of 'bad' quality for overall biological quality, while further west, the headwaters of the River Arun are classed as 'moderate'. The estuarine waters along the coast are generally of 'moderate' ecological quality. The River Rother forms part of a Defra Priority Catchment and is of moderate status. Pevensey Priority catchment meanwhile falls within the southern part of the NCA, where pollution from sediment, nitrates and phosphates draining off arable land is the main issue.¹⁷ Groundwater in the northern half of the NCA is classed as having 'poor' chemical status, while in the southern half it is classed as 'good'.¹⁸ Current quantitative quality is good.	Regional	Water quality is important to this area in support of much of the biodiversity resource to be found associated with rivers, watercourses and wetlands. Careful management of grasslands and livestock, particularly minimising inputs, controlling access to watercourses and waste management is essential to maintaining good water quality of both underlying aquifers and surface waters. A good quality water environment can also have benefits for the economic and social amenity value of developments and improve the quality of urban areas.¹⁹	Maintain areas of permanent pasture with extensive grazing and low fertiliser inputs. Work with landowners, the private and public sector, and in partnership with water companies across rural and urban areas to work at the catchment scale to reduce surface and groundwater pollution, while simultaneously improving aquifer recharge, sharing best practice and adopting a collaborative approach to sustainable water management. Produce an NCA-wide assessment to identify the potential of naturally functioning rivers and flood plains to regulate water quality, reduce flood risk and enhance wildlife and fisheries. Promote the sustainable water principles of the Environment Agency's River Basin Management Plans, Catchment Flood Management Plans and Water Company's Water Resource Management. Explore opportunities to buffer watercourses and reservoirs and restore natural river geomorphology to improve water quality and reduce flood risk in settlements by regulating water flow.	Regulating water quality Regulating soil erosion Regulating water flow Biodiversity
	Shaws					
	Permanent pasture					

¹⁶For more information on Water Framework statuses in this NCA please see the relevant River Basin Management Plans (www.environment-agency.gov.uk/)

¹⁷Defra catchment priorities identified under the England Catchment Sensitive Farming Delivery initiative.

¹⁸Water for life and livelihoods, Environment Agency (www.environment-agency.gov.uk/research/planning/33106.aspx)

¹⁹River Basin Management Plan, Thames River Basin District, Environment Agency (2009)

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Service	Assets/ attributes: main contributors to service	State	Main beneficiary	Analysis	Opportunities	Principal services offered by opportunities
Regulating water quality continued					...continued from previous. Work with land owners, farmers and domestic property owners with private waste water systems to address issues arising from point source pollution such as improving farm infrastructure and finding innovative solutions to the treatment of domestic waste water.	
Regulating water flow	Fast flowing rivers and streams Wooded valleys Wetlands Permanent pasture Ponds	The NCA comprises an elevated area that naturally sheds water into its fringe and neighbouring areas. The underlying clay of the area means that there is often inadequate drainage; impermeable alluvial soils become waterlogged for much of the year and can prevent floodwaters from dispersing quickly. On flat lands. On slopes, once the soil is waterlogged the water has no option than to run over the surface causing flooding at the bottom of the slope. Flooding has recently affected most of the area's major towns, including Uckfield, Haywards Heath, East Grinstead, Crawley and Tunbridge Wells (as well as significantly in Tonbridge lying just to the north of the NCA). Due to the significant risk of flooding throughout and in adjoining NCAs, relevant catchment flood management plans identify a number of measures including increasing flood storage and management of run-off in locations that provide overall flood risk reduction or environmental benefits. Flood risk occurs near the coast due, predominantly, to poor surface water drainage and occasional blockages within culverts or drains, exacerbated by high tides and high groundwater levels, affecting Hastings and Bexhill. In some locations natural flood plains have been modified by farming and urban development with the result of increasing run-off to the lower parts of catchments.	Regional	Management of river catchments is critical to the regulation of flooding in major settlements within and outside of the NCA. Flood events are expected to increase with climate change and many of the rivers have a naturally flashy character and can be prone to winter flooding – for example that experienced in Uckfield in 2000.²⁰ Naturalising flood plains and creating wetland habitats will reduce flood risk and make a significant contribution to mitigating flood risk while also having positive impacts on biodiversity. Appropriate management of permanent pasture, shaws and hedgerows will also contribute to reducing the velocity of cross-land flows. Increasing urban development may also exacerbate the situation and it will be important to reduce run-off from new and existing development including through the implementation of sustainable urban drainage systems and good green infrastructure planning. There needs to be appropriate management within catchments to store water or manage run-off to help reduce and mitigate flood events.	Opportunity to increase understanding of the benefits of adopting river restoration policies that can make use of natural processes to reduce flooding, improve aquatic systems, increase amenity value, provide ecosystem services and reduce costs of maintaining current systems. Seek opportunities for integrated water and land management strategies for river catchments to reduce flood risk and increase water retention within catchments, learning from best practice examples. Maximise opportunities for natural processes to take place by restoring and expanding the functional flood plains along the rivers to bring about a reduction in flooding and increases in biodiversity, water quality and amenity value. Explore opportunities in the valley bottoms to look at pushing flood flows out of eroded water courses onto grassland and woodland to slow down flood flows.	Regulating water flow Regulating water quality Regulating soil erosion Biodiversity

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Service	Assets/ attributes: main contributors to service	State	Main beneficiary	Analysis	Opportunities	Principal services offered by opportunities
Regulating soil quality	Permanent habitats – grassland, woodland Heath	Slightly acid loamy and clayey soils with impeded drainage, covering 62 per cent of NCA. There are five main soilscape types in this NCA; ■ Slightly acid loamy and clayey soils with impeded drainage, covering 62 per cent. ■ Slowly permeable seasonally wet slightly acid but base-rich loamy and clayey soils (28 per cent). ■ Freely draining slightly acid loamy soils (4 per cent). ■ Naturally wet very acid sandy and loamy soils with high carbon content of up to 50 per cent which are found on the heaths 3 per cent) ■ Loamy and clayey flood plain soils with naturally high groundwater (2 per cent).	Local	The greatest risk to soil quality in this NCA is related to the predominance of permanent pasture and the impacts of inappropriate stocking or inappropriate use of machinery leading to soil compaction during periods of wet weather. The permanent habitats of grassland woodland and heath support soils of higher quality less prone to degradation. The slightly acid loamy and clayey soils with impeded drainage (62 per cent) are easily poached by livestock and compacted by machinery when the soil is wet, with weak topsoil structures easily damaged. Careful timing of activities is required to reduce the likelihood of soil compaction. The slowly permeable seasonally wet slightly acid but base-rich loamy and clayey soils (28 per cent) may similarly suffer compaction and/or capping as they are easily damaged when wet, which in turn may lead to increasingly poor water infiltration and diffuse pollution as a result of surface water run-off. There are areas of soils with a carbon content of between 10 and 50 per cent over Ashdown Forest and just south of Royal Tunbridge Wells reflecting areas of extensive heathland and woodland cover where soil organic levels are likely to be high.	Retain and where appropriate extend the area of permanent grassland, woodland and heath to protect soils, particularly in areas where a reduction in condition would result in erosion and subsequent impacts on productivity and watercourses. Identify and apply grazing regimes that increase sward diversity and increase the deposition and overall levels of organic matter. Manage with extensive grazing regimes to reduce stocking densities and avoid soil compaction. Also avoid compaction through unnecessary machinery use particularly during protracted periods of wet weather.	Regulating soil quality Climate regulation Regulating soil erosion Regulating water flow

Service	Assets/ attributes: main contributors to service	State	Main beneficiary	Analysis	Opportunities	Principal services offered by opportunities
Regulating soil erosion	Permanent semi-natural habitats permanent grassland Woodland and heath Hedgerows and shaws Arable margins	Just more than two-thirds of the NCA is susceptible to some form of soil erosion. The main soil type (loamy/clayey soils with impeded drainage, covering 62 per cent of the NCA) is prone to compaction and capping and slaking, leading to increased risk of soil erosion by surface water run-off, especially on steeper slopes. The freely draining slightly acid loamy soils (4 per cent) have enhanced risk of soil erosion on moderately or steeply sloping land exacerbated where organic matter levels are low where soils are compacted. Some of these latter soils are also easily eroded if heavily trafficked after heavy rain. The Eastern Rother and the Pevensey Levels Defra Priority Catchments both fall to a significant degree within the eastern half of the NCA, due in part to sedimentation of watercourses as a product of soil wash from agricultural land.²¹	Regional	Loamy clayey soils with impeded drainage support the predominantly arboreal character of the area and the permanent pasture in much of the area reduces the risk of soil erosion. Desiccation of heathland soils in drought can increase the risk of soil erosion.	Maintain areas of permanent pasture and be alert to the risks of soil erosion associated with any changes in land use, maintaining pasture in areas particularly prone to soil erosion or adjacent to rivers and streams. Plan for the creation of cross-land breaks, hedgerows and shaws, arable margins. Cultivation timings and alignments (cross-slope rather than with the slope). Explore best practice stocking ratios and appropriate movement of feeding stations.	Regulating soil erosion Regulating soil quality Regulating water flow Climate regulation

²¹Defra catchment priorities identified under the England Catchment Sensitive Farming Delivery initiative (URL: www.defra.gov.uk/foodfarm/landmanage/water/csf/documents/catchment-priorities.pdf)

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Service	Assets/ attributes: main contributors to service	State	Main beneficiary	Analysis	Opportunities	Principal services offered by opportunities
Pollination	Species-rich grassland	With over 3,000 ha of heathland and just less than 1,000 ha of grassland, this NCA contains an important source of nectar for pollinating insects.	Local	Unimproved meadows and extensive heathland provide important nectar-rich areas supporting an array of pollinating invertebrates. Lowland meadows are at risk due to changes in land management, for example from intensification or changes in land use. Further loss of this habitat would reduce the amount of nectar-rich flowers.	Increase the area of semi-natural habitat with emphasis on extending and connecting unimproved meadows and heathland.	Pollination
	Unimproved meadows	Managed in traditional ways through hay-making and grazing rather than the intensive farming methods of today, unimproved pastures contain a wonderful diversity of native wildflowers, grasses and the threatened green winged orchids vital for supporting bumblebees and other pollinating insects that feed on them.				
	Heathland	Oxeye daisy, bird's-foot trefoil, betony, yellow rattle, self-heal and red clover mix with meadow grasses such as the crested dog's-tail and sweet vernal grass providing an important source of nectar for pollinators and sweet hay for winter feed for grazing animals		Sympathetic management of road verges can be beneficial and are aesthetically pleasing, maintaining sense of place and on ancient routeways a sense of history, reinforcing the local identity and character of the area.	Work across sectors to create multifunctional green spaces incorporating sympathetic land management.	Food provision
	Network of hedgerows and shaws					
	Roadside verges				Maintain and enhance the floristic diversity of hedgebanks, where possible to increase the range of flowering plants and increase the area, range and connectivity of habitat mosaics making connections between existing sites attractive to pollinators.	Sense of place/ inspiration
Pest regulation	Existing semi-natural habitat	There are large areas of semi-natural habitat which will support species that will aid pest regulation.	Regional	Although there is a reasonable spread of rich semi-natural habitat and pastoral landscape across the NCA there is scope to improve the condition of this habitat through appropriate management and to extend it where possible.	Maintain and expand the area of semi-natural habitats, throughout the NCA to provide a range of niches to support pest regulating species including invertebrates, birds and mammals.	Pest regulation
	Species-rich hedgerows					
	Woodland			The proximity of the area to continental Europe may make it more susceptible to new pest arriving into the country.	Through mechanisms such as agri-environment schemes, encourage the use of field margins, beetle banks and headlands in arable land, to encourage pest regulating species in close proximity to food crops.	Biodiversity
	Mixed farming					
						Food provision

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Service	Assets/ attributes: main contributors to service	State	Main beneficiary	Analysis	Opportunities	Principal services offered by opportunities
Regulating coastal erosion and flooding	Hastings cliffs	This section of coast covers from Fairlight Cove in the north to the south-western edge of Bexhill, bordering the Pevensy Levels shoreline further east. This area of coastline is built up with the towns of Bexhill and Hastings but also includes the Hastings Cliff to Pett Beach SSSI which is a coastal site of geological and biological importance. A number of habitats are represented including woodland, scrub, maritime grassland and vegetated shingle beach. Hastings Cliffs are actively eroding soft cliffs on the south coast of England; the clay cliff slopes are eroding and support a range of habitats from bare ground and flushes to maritime grassland and scrub reflecting the successional development of vegetation following cliff falls.	Regional	The policy along the urban frontage of Bexhill and Hasting is to 'hold the line', which will result in significant narrowing of the foreshore due to predicted sea level rise, and could impact upon the tourist economy of the town and compound the phenomenon of 'beach squeeze'. The clifftop village of Fairlight in the north is fronted by a mixture of active landsliding cliffs, simple vertical cliffs and a cliff toe defence structure to limit erosion – the proposed policies are a combination of 'hold the line', 'no active intervention' and 'managed realignment', aiming to maintain natural processes that preserve and enhance geological and landscape interest while protecting cliff-top properties where feasible. The long term policy between Fairlight and Hastings, an area of unprotected cliffs of international environmental and geological importance, is to allow natural cliff retreat under 'no active intervention', preserving their interest while also supplying sediment to the area's shoreline and the shoreline further east. In the long term there will also be a need to re-route sections of the Saxon Shore Way coastal footpath.²²	Maintain active and uninterrupted erosion to allow natural processes to prevail were possible, especially where this supports and enhances natural flood defence mechanisms and allows for the exposure and interpretation of nationally important geological formations and coastal geomorphological processes.	Regulating coastal erosion and flooding Sense of place/ inspiration Biodiversity Geodiversity

²²South Foreland to Beachy Head Shoreline Management Plan
(URL: www.se-coastalgroup.org.uk/assets/smpr/docs/html/frameset.htm)

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Service	Assets/ attributes: main contributors to service	State	Main beneficiary	Analysis	Opportunities	Principal services offered by opportunities
Sense of place/ Inspiration	Pastoral landscape Steep-sided densely wooded valleys with meandering streams and rivers Unimproved meadows Distinctive and dynamic coast Vernacular architecture	Sense of place is provided by a highly distinctive and strongly medieval landscape. The NCA rises above the Low Weald as a central core of faulted clays and sandstones, with deeply incised ridges tending east-west from which rise numerous gill streams that form the headwaters of many of the main rivers of south-east England. Ashdown Forest is one of the most extensive areas of heathland in south-east England. Fields are typically used for grazing and small-holdings, many containing unimproved, species-rich meadows, also with a tradition of orchards and hop gardens, particularly to the east. Reflecting the medieval character of this landscape (considered to be one of the best surviving coherent medieval landscapes in northern Europe) there is a dispersed historic settlement pattern of farmsteads, hamlets and late medieval villages linked by ancient routeways (now roads and rights of way) in the form of ridgetop roads and a dense system of radiating droveways, often narrow, deeply sunken and edged with trees and hedgerows and wildflower-rich verges and boundary banks. Vernacular buildings have a strong local character influenced by a variation in locally available, building materials resulting in an abundance of weatherboard, brick, tile, stone or rendered buildings. Oast houses, stone church towers and spires add to the local distinctiveness. Continued over...	National	The High Weald has a very strong character defined by its underlying geology. It has a clear sense of identity with the majority of the NCA being designated as an AONB. Today the High Weald, and particularly Ashdown Forest, is well-known internationally as the home of the character of Winnie the Pooh. The forest also inspired William Robinson who pioneered the English natural garden movement and writers such as Rudyard Kipling.	Identifying, protecting and reinforcing the distinctive elements and features of the landscape are essential to maintaining the distinctive and inspirational character of the area. Ensure that new development respects local settlement patterns and building materials to avoid the loss of historic evidence through insensitive development or management. Maintain the dispersed settlement pattern by managing the setting of villages together with the integrity of their vernacular styling. Maintain the historic division of field patterns. Ensure that the repair, restoration or conversion of vernacular buildings is carried out with due regard to their historic environment, using local materials and techniques to maintain local distinctiveness, construction techniques and traditions. Work with local communities to encourage the continuation of traditional land management practices and land uses that are intrinsic to the High Weald landscape and sense of place. Continued over...	Sense of place/ inspiration Sense of history Biodiversity

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Service	Assets/ attributes: main contributors to service	State	Main beneficiary	Analysis	Opportunities	Principal services offered by opportunities
Sense of place/ Inspiration continued		...continued from previous. Small hammer ponds, large reservoirs and a considerable number of country houses with their associated parklands are other significant features within the High Weald landscape, adding interest and variety.			...continued from previous. Explore opportunities to conserve the cultural heritage of local authors and artists by maintaining the traditions that create the High Weald's distinctive landscape and local sense of place. Due regard should be given to the core components of natural beauty in relation to planning of development for towns and villages within and adjacent to the AONB.	
Sense of history	Historic Parks and Gardens Historic building such as farmsteads Maritime history such as shipbuilding Settlements Battle Abbey	The history of the landscape is most evident in the medieval pattern of fields, Wealden iron industry, wealth of historic parks and gardens, historic buildings including farmsteads, connections with maritime history such as shipbuilding and woodland and settlement linked to the practice of cultivating small parcels of land for rent or "assarting". Settlement pattern of villages, hamlets and scattered farmsteads is dispersed and largely sited on ridges linked by a dense network of sunken, winding roads. Buildings are traditionally constructed in white weatherboard, red brick and hung tiles of varying local styles, with many of the larger towns such as Tunbridge Wells, Crowborough, East Grinstead, Bexhill, Hastings and Horsham having good examples of high quality vernacular architecture. Oast houses linked to the past growing of hops, particularly to the east, timber framed barns and stone churches, the latter forming key landmarks on ridges, are also distinctive features. Continued over...	International	Damage to historic buildings, historic routeways, boundaries and archaeological monuments through lack of awareness, plough damage, poor maintenance or management. Much below ground heritage may be undiscovered, particularly in woodlands and care should be taken not to damage or disturb buried heritage assets. Plough and cultivation damage in a predominantly pastoral landscape, may be less of an issue than poach and animal damage. Woodland archaeology is susceptible to damage from forestry operations or wind-thrown trees in unmanaged woods. Woodland archaeology is susceptible to damage from forestry operations and wind thrown trees in unmanaged woods. Good management practices need to be maintained to ensure that historic parks and gardens continue to be key representative features of the High Weald landscape. Emphasis should be placed on the need to protect and interpret the wealth of heritage present.	Increase protection of above and below ground archaeology and designed parkland. Recreational opportunities such as circular walks linked to the positive management and conservation of historic features to aid understanding, enjoyment and sense of wellbeing. Increase protection for and awareness of the best preserved examples of networks of historic routeways. Increase identification, recording, management, promotion and understanding of the historic assets, improved management and understanding of the historic environment. Opportunities to enhance the setting, interpretation and legibility of heritage assets should be identified and realised. Continued over...	Sense of history Biodiversity Geodiversity Sense of place/ inspiration Recreation

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Service	Assets/ attributes: main contributors to service	State	Main beneficiary	Analysis	Opportunities	Principal services offered by opportunities
Sense of history continued		...continued from previous The area was known as the 'Foundry of England', with the Wealden iron industry (15th–17th century) based on sandstone, iron ore, water and coppice timber and associated industries, leaving a legacy of extensive coppice woodlands with charcoal used for the forges and characteristic 'hammer ponds' which provided power and forge sites. Wealth generated by the iron industry and latterly London merchants resulted in large estates, grand houses and parklands including Eridge Park, one of the oldest deer parks in the area, Ashburnham Place, Grattons Park and Sissinghurst, as well as the designed landscapes of Repton's Bayham Abbey and Penshurst Place. Aspects of history likely to be most evident to the general public include Ashdown Forest, a former Royal Hunting Forest which forms the literary landscape much loved by readers of Winnie-the-Pooh books, as well as the area's parklands and grand country houses and traditional oast houses and other historic buildings and towns.			...continued from previous Promote the widespread use of local timber in construction with support for good design and specification and merging traditional skills with new management practices. Promote information on the historical development of towns, villages, hamlets, farmsteads and their hinterlands and historic parks and gardens including historic maps and accessible online information. Promote improved design quality supported by the adoption of High Weald AONB specific design guidance on built form, architectural detail, composition and layout of space and local materials.	
Tranquillity	Ashdown Forest Woodlands Network of small fields	Tranquillity levels have declined significantly in recent years, with undisturbed areas having decreased from just more than 76 per cent in the 1960s to 44 per cent in 2007. The largest areas of tranquillity lie away from the main transport corridors (namely the M23 and main A roads) and the major settlements including Royal Tunbridge Wells, Hastings, Bexhill, Heathfield, Crowborough, Uckfield, East Grinstead, Crawley, Horsham and Haywards Heath. The pastoral, heavily wooded, medieval character of the landscape has a strong sense of tranquillity, accentuated by the traditional dispersed character of villages, sunken lanes, the wooded gills and intimate views, which together create a strong sense of timelessness.	Regional	The population surrounding the NCA is high (873,000 people live in wards wholly, or partly within 5 km of AONB and adjacent to areas of economic success (Crawley/Gatwick). Pressure for growth in south-east England generally in terms of housing and infrastructure also have an impact on the tranquillity of the area, although the AONB designation does help to alleviate this pressure in certain areas of the NCA. This context highlights the pressures on the NCA and the importance of the need for tranquil places to visit.	Maintain the tranquillity of the area and limit the visual impacts of large infrastructure through careful design and planning. Support for projects that contribute to the conservation and management of special qualities and locally valued features such as tranquillity and dark skies historic features such as abbeys and hop gardens.	Tranquillity Sense of place/inspiration Sense of history Biodiversity

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Service	Assets/ attributes: main contributors to service	State	Main beneficiary	Analysis	Opportunities	Principal services offered by opportunities
Recreation	Public rights of way Access land Common land Coast	Recreation is supported by the area's 3,043 km rights of way network (with a density of 1.74km per km²), including the Sussex Border Path, High Weald Landscape Trail and Weald Way, as well as a significant area of open access land totalling 1,938 ha (1.1 per cent of the NCA). Ashdown Forest is the largest free public access space in south-east England, lying at the heart of the High Weald AONB and a particularly popular and important recreational asset. Further significant recreational opportunities are provided by the area's reservoirs, with watersports and angling provided by the Ardingly, Weir Wood and Bewl Water reservoirs; the latter is the largest lake in south-east England. Hastings and Bexhill are popular seaside resort towns on the south coast.	National	Opportunities for access throughout the area in rural, coastal and urban green spaces is valuable for health and wellbeing, particularly mental health and provision is currently available through a network of green spaces and rights of way network. There is a need to increase the range and extent of access opportunities to better meet the needs and diversity of leisure users. Quality rights of way networks need to be prioritised in areas close to towns, villages, visitor attractions and within AONB rural tourism hubs and honey pot sites such as Ashdown Forest. Recreational activities within the NCA span a wide and sometimes conflicting range. From activities such as bird watching, walking, enjoying the views to more active ones such as mountain –biking, and rock climbing.	Maintain the current access network and create additional links, particularly those that relieve pressure on sensitive sites through a network of greenspaces and linear access. Explore opportunities to increase quality rights of way (ROW) networks in heavily utilised areas within the High Weald. Increase understanding and enjoyment through education and interpretation materials especially where this helps highlight the sensitive features of designated sites, ensuring that access balances recreational enjoyment with the protection of biodiversity, geodiversity and historic features. Develop and improve the quality of greenspace and rights of way to meet the demands and needs of locals and visitors alike Integrated management of the resources for informal open air recreation to facilitate 'green' use by residents and visitors. Promote sustainable tourism initiatives that target a broad range of visitors and where practical reduce car dependency and contribute to conserving and enhancing the landscape's biodiversity and tranquillity.	Recreation Sense of place/ inspiration Sense of history Tranquillity

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Service	Assets/ attributes: main contributors to service	State	Main beneficiary	Analysis	Opportunities	Principal services offered by opportunities
Biodiversity	Pevensey Levels Ramsar site Ashdown Forest Special Protection Area (SPA) and Special Area of Conservation (SAC) SSSI	This NCA has more than 33,400 ha of priority habitats, covering 19 per cent of the area. This includes 8,000 ha of woodland (wet woodland, lowland mixed deciduous woodland and lowland beech and yew woodland), 3,200 ha of lowland heathland, 850 ha of undetermined grassland and 570 ha of coastal and flood plain grazing marsh. The NCA contains 2 SACs, 1 SPA and 1 Ramsar site and 3 per cent of the area is designated as SSSI (5,400 ha). Ashdown Forest SPA and SAC is one of the largest single continuous blocks of lowland heath in south-east England including both dry and wet heath. Ashdown Forest is an SPA because it supports bird populations of European importance. Hastings Cliff is designated an SAC for vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts types.	International	The majority of the designated habitats are in favourable condition. With a landscape of rolling hills, woodlands and field systems that date back to Anglo-Saxon times, the High Weald is home to several kinds of grassland butterflies including the common blue, dingy skipper, and small copper. Bumblebees, moths, and hoverflies are among important pollinators feeding here and the barn owl, green woodpecker and skylark are often seen. Bats, voles Dartford warbler, nightjar, lapwing and hedgehogs are among the wide variety of species contributing to this area of high biodiversity. The NCA has existing high levels of ecological connectivity and porosity for many species associated with lowland pastoral landscapes. However, a decline in agriculture and woodland management together with access and recreation management could impact on habitat quality. Species-rich grassland creation and restoration using locally sourced seed has been prominent in the NCA but unimproved meadow sites remain at risk from neglect, lack of grazing, tree planting and ploughing. The over-shading effect of rhododendron combined with its dense, acidic leaf litter can pose a threat to ancient woodland particularly in gill woodlands which retain rich assemblages of vulnerable 'Atlantic' bryophyte species (mosses and liverworts), ferns and lichens. Continued over...	Enhance ecological networks, including the condition and connectivity of habitats along routeways for wildlife. Maintain extent and prevent further loss or degradation of unimproved grassland and heathland, increasing the favourability of designated sites but appropriately managing all sites and expanding, linking and buffering. Establish ecological habitat networks to assist vulnerable species such as heathland birds and lichens and bryophytes in parkland and on rocky outcrops adapt to climate change including connectivity beyond the AONB. Enhance, buffer and connect the High Weald habitats. Ensure that ecological networks also contribute positively to landscape character. Continued over...	Biodiversity Climate regulation Pollination Sense of place/inspiration Tranquillity Recreation

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Service	Assets/ attributes: main contributors to service	State	Main beneficiary	Analysis	Opportunities	Principal services offered by opportunities
Biodiversity continued				...continued from previous. There is a need to maintain the routeway boundaries that form part of the habitat mosaic of the High Weald, to maintain this key component of what is a rare UK survival of an essentially medieval landscape, the network of existing hedgerows and hedgebanks make an important contribution to the connectivity of habitats and should be managed to maintain their structure and condition. Degradation of unimproved grassland and heathland can have lead to further habitat loss and have a wide range of implications on wildlife. Dispersed settlement patterns provide benefits to species such as birds and bats through the repair restoration and conversion of buildings. Improved ecological habitat networks could provide better conditions for vulnerable species such as heathland birds. Parklands and rocky outcrops could provide better habitats for lichens and bryophytes.	...continued from previous. Explore opportunities for working with landowners to ensure sympathetic management of semi-natural grasslands such as mowing for hay, low intensity grazing by livestock, or a combination of both management techniques as appropriate. Encourage opportunities that provide wildlife benefits such as for bird boxes and bat roosts through the repair, restoration and conversion of buildings. Control invasive non-native species to prevent or reduce damage to native species populations and habitats.	

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Service	Assets/ attributes: main contributors to service	State	Main beneficiary	Analysis	Opportunities	Principal services offered by opportunities
Geodiversity	Rock exposures Sea cliffs Wealden anticline	There are 17 geological Site of Special Scientific Interest and 3 mixed interest SSSI. There are 38 Local Geological Sites within the NCA. A complex sandstone and heavy clay landscape, with a combination of ridges and steep sided valleys. Hastings Cliffs are nationally important for geology and geomorphology, making it important to maintain and observe natural processes. The coastal geomorphological processes are also of considerable importance and demonstrate a naturally functioning coastline.	National	The geological sites provide important access to geodiversity, enabling the interpretation, understanding and continued research into the geodiversity of the NCA. Exposure of these features also makes a positive contribution towards sense of place and sense of history. There is a need to manage the geological features appropriately to avoid the potential degradation and loss of oceanic communities of ferns, mosses, liverworts and lichens found on Sandrock and which are dependent on a mild and moist microclimate.	Maintain views of and access to geological features and exposures and where appropriate, improve access to cuttings, quarries and other exposures of geological features to enable improved understanding and enjoyment of geodiversity and sense of history. Further understanding and appreciation of sandrock exposures to help reduce threats and or inappropriate use and management. Maintain the nationally important sandrock exposures to conserve the fern, moss and liverwort communities they support and to protect their value as some of the most significant sites of prehistoric archaeology in the area. Maintain natural geomorphological processes, particularly along rivers and the coast that contribute to the regulation of coastal flooding. Maintain and enhance all existing rock exposures and natural land forms that are important for understanding the origin and geological development of the High Weald. Work to secure geological conservation as an integral part of the development process.	Geodiversity Sense of place/inspiration Sense of history Biodiversity Water availability Regulating water flow

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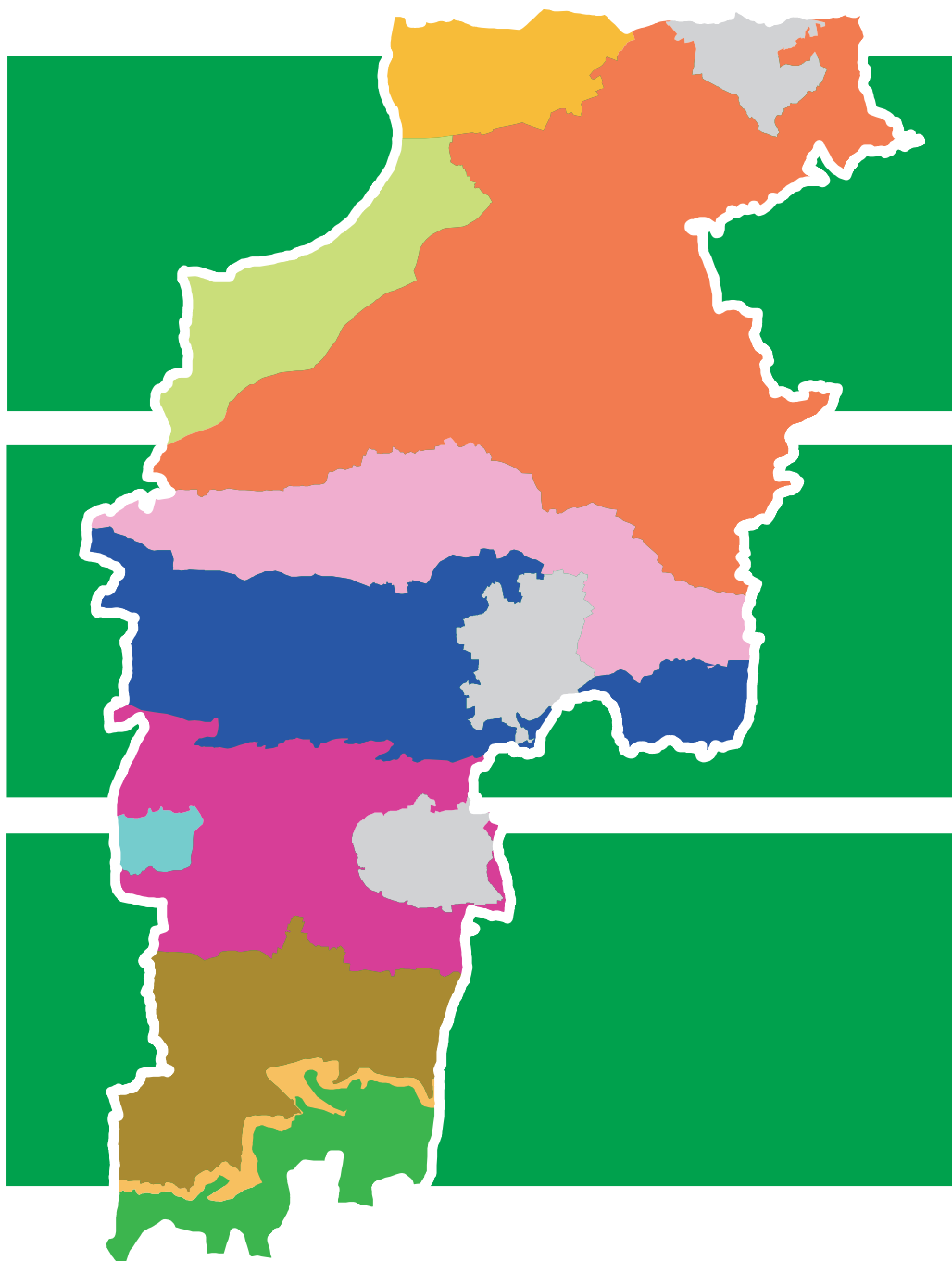
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APPENDIX 9: Landscape Character Assessment for Mid Sussex

A LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT FOR MID SUSSEX



November 2005

A LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT FOR MID SUSSEX

Mid Sussex District Council

November 2005

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Foreword

The quality and diversity of the Mid Sussex landscape is one of the District's greatest assets. In preparing this Landscape Character Assessment, the District Council recognises this. The enhancement and protection of character and sense of place is an important element in current District Council policies and programmes concerning planning, land management and the environment. It will continue to be the subject of appropriate policies and actions arising from the forthcoming District Local Development Framework.

The landscape in Mid Sussex is going through a period of considerable change due to climatic, economic and other pressures. It is therefore vitally important that the District Council has a clear vision to guide effort designed to protect, conserve and enhance the landscape. Working with other agencies with similar aims will be essential. The District Council therefore commends the Assessment as a framework for guiding co-ordinated action in Mid Sussex for the years to come.

The Assessment was developed in consultation with stakeholder interests. We would like to take this opportunity to thank those who contributed, including local authority and AONB partners.

Gordon Marples

Cabinet Member for Environmental Services

A GUIDE TO USING THIS ASSESSMENT

The Assessment document is laid out in sections as follows:

PART ONE: INTRODUCTION

This Part introduces the Assessment, focusing on the importance of landscape character; the planning context; the purpose of the Assessment; and its relationship with other, similar studies. It describes the technical approach and methodology followed.

PART TWO: THE MID SUSSEX LANDSCAPE

Containing map illustrations, this Part describes the physical landscape of the District (geology, landform, soils and ecology). It contains a section on the historic landscape including how it has changed over time. It considers Forces for Change in the landscape and concludes with a brief section on monitoring, indicators and targets and avenues for further research.

PART THREE: LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS

This part describes the ten Landscape Character Areas defined in the District. The descriptions are followed by an evaluation based on key issues for change and landscape and visual sensitivities. The evaluation concludes with a management objective and land management guidelines for each area.

PART FOUR: LAND MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES

This part contains eight *Land Management Guidelines* sheets covering the locally distinctive landscapes within the District. The sheets have been prepared by West Sussex County Council in association with the District Council.

APPENDICES

The Assessment concludes with seven appendices containing background information:

Planning and land management policy background.

Relevant policies in the *Mid Sussex Local Plan* (2004).

The means of implementing landscape restoration and biodiversity work.

Details of the Stakeholder Workshop held to discuss the draft Assessment.

Cultural perceptions of the South Downs and High Weald landscapes.

Indicative Tree Planting Guide for different areas of the District.

Background Documents used in compiling the Assessment.

Part One

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

INTRODUCTION

Background

1.1 This Landscape Character Assessment of Mid Sussex has been prepared to help protect and enhance the distinctive character of the District and to manage change. It has been drafted in accordance with the *West Sussex Structure Plan 2001 – 2016* and the *Mid Sussex Local Plan* adopted in 2004 and will contribute to work on the forthcoming District Local Development Framework. It will provide the basis for guidance on landscape matters for planners, developers, landowners and communities. The Assessment also aims to raise awareness of the value of the diverse landscapes of the District and to assist communities to relate to a sense of place.

The importance of landscape character

1.2 *Character* is defined as a distinct, recognisable and consistent pattern of elements that makes each landscape or townscape different. Character is influenced by particular combinations and patterns of visual, ecological, historic and cultural elements in the landscape and the pattern of settlement. It includes intangible aspects such as tranquillity and sense of place. The distinctive character of our surroundings has a fundamental impact on our quality of life. Identifying, protecting and enhancing the natural, historic and cultural elements that contribute to character are key activities contributing to sustainability. Part of sustainable planning and land management is concerned with protecting and enhancing landscapes. This includes accommodating change in ways that are responsive to the opportunities, constraints and conditions posed by the characteristics of places.

1.3 If the landscape were unchanging, we would not need policies and plans to protect, conserve and enhance it. Today, we imbue the landscape with a history and an emotional and cultural significance which reaches back to the turn of the 19th Century when landscape became established as an object of wonder and a source of inspiration. We may like to think that the nature and qualities of the landscape are fixed and that the scenery we have long been used to will somehow persist. However, the landscape has always changed, far more perhaps than we realise, and today at an increasing rate and pace. The management of change in the landscape therefore generates the need for an Assessment such as this.

Planning, land management and community context

1.4 Government planning guidance urges the protection and enhancement of the environment, urban and countryside character, the historic environment and local distinctiveness. The Government also sees good quality design as critical to fostering local distinctiveness and sense of place. The new planning system recently introduced calls for greater soundness in preparing plans through the development of a strong evidence base. The Assessment contributes to that evidence base by providing a greater understanding of the nature, value and vulnerabilities of the Mid Sussex landscape.

1.5 Land management decisions by landowners, farmers, statutory bodies and the local authorities themselves have a fundamental impact on the landscape. It is therefore vitally important to influence the multiplicity of landowners involved in managing land in ways that benefit landscape character. A major function of the Assessment will be to exert that influence.

1.6 Communities in the District have close ties to their localities and can provide a genuine local perspective on what the character means to them. In recent years, The District Local Development Framework has also brought increased opportunities for local land use and parish planning, through the ability to include additional advice in Supplementary Planning Documents and Area Action Plans. The Assessment will provide a broad context and information base for community planning initiatives.

1.7 Also of great importance is raising awareness of the local distinctiveness of healthy landscapes as a prime environmental asset in the District and assisting local communities to understand how these can be protected and enhanced. The Assessment will provide a graphic basis for doing this.

1.8 **Appendix 1** summarises briefly the policy background at national, regional, county and local levels including the approach of the District Council. **Appendix 3** refers to land management, community planning and awareness-raising aspects in the context of action by the District Council and its partners.

Purpose of the Assessment

1.9 The purpose of the Assessment is to provide a comprehensive account of the landscape character of Mid Sussex, fostering a greater understanding of its value as an asset for future generations. It complements the Landscape and Biodiversity Strategy *Our Green Heritage* (2001) and the *Landscape and Biodiversity: Supplementary Planning Guidance* (2003) prepared by the District Council. It will support District Council policies and programmes that seek to:

- Attain high quality new development that contributes to and reinforces landscape character.
- Protect and enhance landscape character including the historic landscape.
- Maintain and renew the agricultural landscape.
- Conserve and enhance semi-natural habitats including securing the future of woodlands, hedgerows and trees as distinctive landscape features.
- Promote and celebrate the value and variety of the Mid Sussex landscape.

The Assessment also contains *Land Management Guidelines* for locally distinctive landscapes within the District.

Relationship with other studies

National Character Areas

1.10 In 1996 the Countryside Commission (today the Countryside Agency) and English Nature in association with English Heritage produced a map entitled *The Character of England – Landscape, Wildlife and Natural Features*. The map combines Natural Areas (English Nature) and Countryside Character Areas (Countryside Commission) into a single set of *Character Areas* depicting the natural and cultural dimensions of the landscape in England. A set of regional volumes describing nearly 200 unique landscape and coastal character areas accompanies the Map. In the Introduction to the Map the Commission wrote:

The relationship between ecological and landscape character provides an opportunity to integrate these elements of our natural heritage in a new and exciting way. It is now possible to consider the issues affecting landscape and nature conservation in a single framework.

The Map has given impetus nationally to the carrying out of landscape character assessments and the preparation of associated planning and land management policy and guidance. The Character Areas also provide an ideal framework for monitoring countryside quality.

1.11 The relevant areas in Mid Sussex are referred to in the Assessment as *national Character Areas*. Following the lead given by the District Council in its publications concerning landscape and biodiversity, these areas (South Downs, Low Weald and High Weald) have been used as the framework for presenting information on character at a more local level. The national Character Areas in West Sussex and the Landscape Character Areas within them in Mid Sussex are shown on Map 1.1.

Other studies

1.12 The Assessment has been prepared within the context of:

- Existing strategic and planning guidance concerning landscape and biodiversity published by the District Council.
- The unpublished *Landscape Character Assessment of West Sussex* (2003) updating the previous County landscape assessment published in 1995.
- A *Strategy for the West Sussex Landscape* (October 2005) recently published by West Sussex County Council containing general *Landscape Guidelines* that will support District Council policies and programmes seeking to conserve and enhance landscape character.

1.13 The Assessment has also drawn on:

- The regional volume on *Countryside Character in the South East* (1999) accompanying the national *Character of England Map* and published by the Countryside Agency.
- Descriptions of the Areas of the High Weald (1994) and South Downs (1996) Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty published by the Countryside Commission.
- Current Management Plans for the Sussex Downs and High Weald Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.
- *Sussex Biodiversity Action Plans* prepared by the Sussex Biodiversity Partnership.
- The background study to the preparation of the High Weald AONB Management Plan *The Making of the High Weald* by Roland Harris (2003).

A new *Integrated Landscape Character Assessment of the South Downs* (forthcoming, 2006) is currently being prepared by the Sussex Downs Joint Committee. The Mid Sussex Assessment has been drafted alongside this new piece of work, and shares Landscape Character Area boundaries with it.

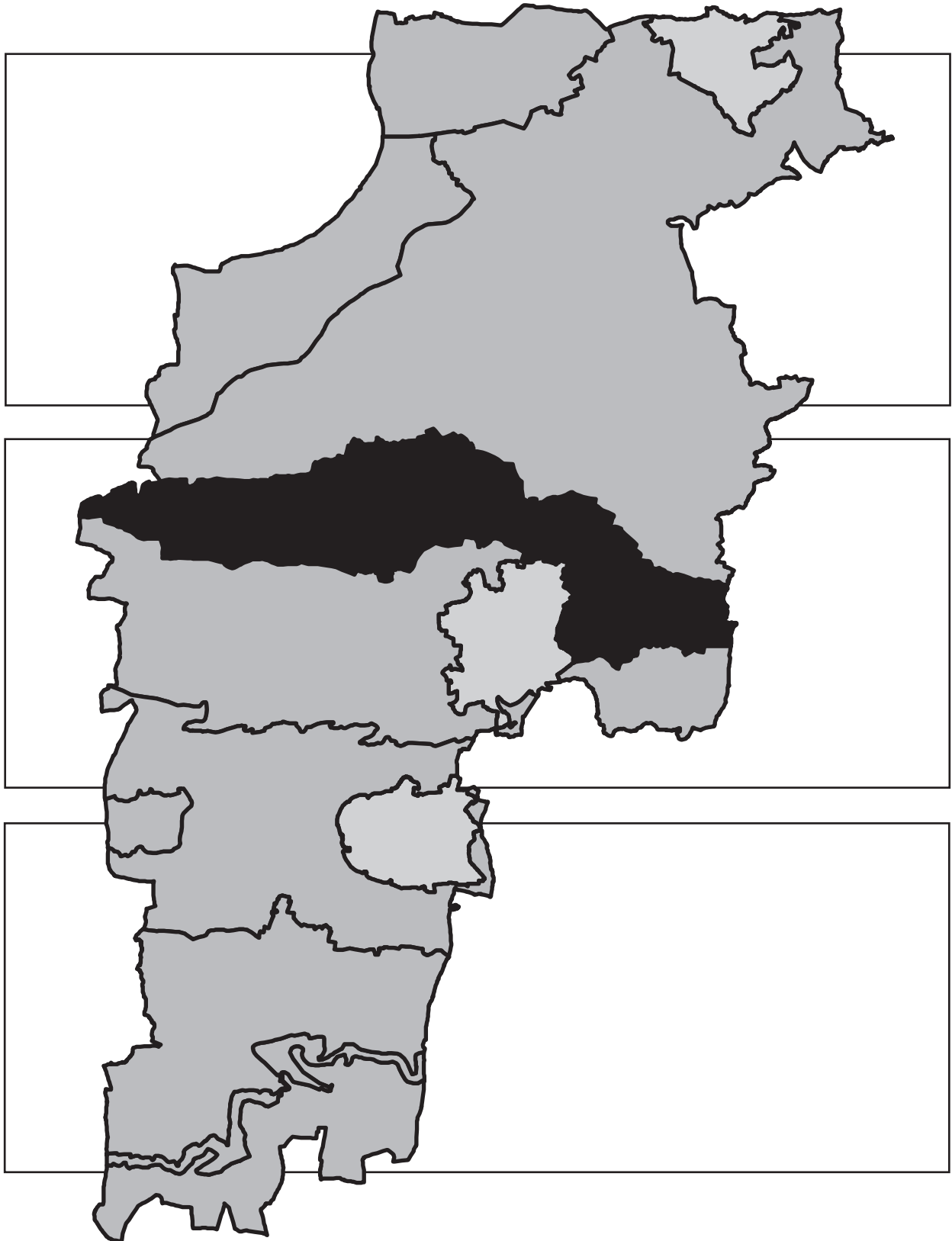
1.14 A variety of books concerning the landscape, economy and social history of the Weald, West Sussex and Mid Sussex District has also been used in the compilation of the Assessment. These range from historical accounts to modern landscape and cultural studies. The documents and sources used to compile the Assessment are listed in **Appendix 7**.

Approach and methodology

1.15 The Assessment is based on the approach described in *Landscape Character Assessment Guidance for England and Scotland* (April 2002) published by the Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage. The key stages in the process included:

- Desk research.

Landscape Character Area 9
Ouse Valley



Ouse Valley

CHARACTERISATION

Summary and key characteristics

Strongly linear valley adjoining Haywards Heath, its boundaries defined clearly by a marked break of slope. In the west, the river is a small, tree-lined stream amidst parallel streams and ridges, the valley broader to the east, the river meandering through water meadows. The signature of the valley is the high, long brick-built Ouse Valley (Balcombe) Viaduct on the London to Brighton Railway Line.

- Shallow but well-defined attractive rural valley landscape of intimacy and unusual complexity with a single, unifying character based on strongly-defined valley edges.
- Parts of the valley are perceived as secluded and locally tranquil.
- A markedly convex v-shaped valley form developed along a heavily faulted rock sequence giving rise to a series of confined parallel tree-lined streams and ridges within and below the valley edges to the west.
- Eastern part of the valley contains a broader, meandering river with water meadows along the as yet narrow but gradually widening, flat valley floor.
- Relatively few panoramic or long views across or down the valley.
- Woodland cover less extensive than that of the High Weald fringes, despite an impression in places of a strong woodland presence strengthened by shaws, hedgerows and hedgerow trees.
- Pattern of mixed arable and pastoral medium to large-sized fields is in places uncharacteristic of the High Weald.
- Numerous crossing and flanking roads and lanes including the A23 Trunk Road, many of which are busy.
- London to Brighton Railway Line crosses the valley, spectacularly so at the Ouse Valley (Balcombe) Viaduct, and the valley includes a small stretch of the Bluebell Steam Railway Line.
- Pockets of rich biodiversity including ancient woodlands.
- No settlements in the valley other than dispersed farmsteads although the townships of Haywards Heath, Lindfield and Cuckfield lie on the valley edges.
- Varied traditional rural buildings built with diverse materials including timber-framing, Horsham Stone roofing, Wealden stone and varieties of local brick and tile-hanging.
- Old mills, weirs and bridges.
- Extensive designed landscape at Borde Hill.

Description and experience of the landscape

12.1 Perhaps unusually so for a Wealden river, the valley of the Upper Ouse is strongly linear, its boundaries defined clearly by a marked break of slope. The valley lies wholly within Mid Sussex District and mostly within the *High Weald Area of*

Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). It is the most northerly of the six Landscape Character Areas which cross the District in strong west-east bands.

12.2 The *High Weald (Area 6)* and *High Weald Fringes (Area 10)* Landscape Character Areas respectively bound the valley to the north and south. At the Horsham District boundary, the area adjoins the Landscape Character Area known as the *Mannings Heath Farmlands (Area N1)* in the *Horsham District Landscape Character Assessment* (October 2003). The character of this fairly small area is more open in character than is usual in the High Weald, comprising a plateau patterned with medium to large-sized fields of arable and pasture, a fragmented hedgerow pattern, and generally fewer woodlands. This character continues across the District boundary into the western headwaters of the Ouse Valley. However, the area concerned within Mid Sussex District is very small indeed, comprising a few flatter, fairly open fields above the valley slopes at Tulleys Rough and Warringlid Lane. The area has therefore been included in the valley Landscape Character Area.

12.3 The upper parts of the valley, in Mid Sussex, comprise an area of secluded and complex drainage, the river generally taken to rise at the head of the hammerpond stream beyond Slaugham Manor. From source to mouth, the valley is some 30 miles long of which 12 miles are within West Sussex and Mid Sussex District. Outside the County, in East Sussex, the river continues in a south-easterly direction then turning south at Fletching and running on to Lewes (the River Uck joins it on the way). In the manner of the southerly-flowing Wealden rivers, it cuts through the chalk of the South Downs, flanked by *innings* (water meadows) and reaching the sea at Newhaven.

12.4 Geologically, the valley is on the rock, sand and clay of the Hastings Beds which underlie the High Weald, but is not entirely of them. The line of the valley lies along a heavily faulted rock syncline (strata downward-dipping in a bowl effect). Within this structure, the Hastings Beds (mainly Upper Tunbridge Wells Sandstone) have dropped downward in a series of faults to preserve above them an isolated long, thin member of Weald Clay (an *inlier*). The clay runs from below Lower Beeding in Horsham District to a point just south of Ardingly Reservoir. It contains sandstone beds of Horsham Stone and is covered in places by head. However, the main river does not pick out this line of softer rock as might be expected, but runs above it, across the sandstones of the Hastings Beds. Nevertheless, the presence of this Weald Clay has had an effect on the topography of the valley, as revealed below.

12.5 Where the valley crosses the County boundary at Freshfield Mill in the east, its character has already begun to change from the quiet, tree-fringed stream in a markedly convex v-shaped valley to the west. It is now a more substantial, meandering (and partly artificially straightened) river with water meadows along the as yet narrow but gradually widening, flat valley floor. This change begins to take place east of College Road running across the valley south of Ardingly. Although the character of the valley topography shifts in this way (and this is to be expected), the area as a whole nevertheless appears to have a single, unifying character. This is embodied in the consistent break of slope which strongly defines the valley edge throughout, even though the higher, convex v-slopes gradually flatten and lengthen in the lower reaches. The valley edge is sometimes seemingly high and quite steep, as at Haywards Heath, or very straight, as at Whitmans Green westward. Only on the north side, between Ardingly and Freshfield Mill, is the integrity of the valley edge compromised by big streams flowing in from the north, principally the outfall stream from Ardingly Reservoir and Cockhaise Brook draining a substantial portion of the High Weald slopes to the north-east. Accordingly, for the purposes of this Assessment, the two 'parts' of the valley are treated as a single Landscape Character Area.

The western reaches

12.6 As noted above, the higher, western reaches of the valley lie west of College Lane. This part of the valley has a well-defined edge, on the south, running westwards from the Borde Hill Estate along steep slopes to Cuckfield Hospital and Whitemans Green. Between here and the boundary with Horsham District, the B2115 road to Warninglid defines the valley edge. Beyond Warninglid, the boundary follows a narrow ridgeline from The Grange to Eastland Farm, thin watershed between the Ouse streams and the deep gill system draining the woods and gardens of Leonardslee. Indeed, this southern boundary follows throughout the marked ridge separating the Ouse and Adur river catchments.

12.7 Just a little north, at the Furnace Pond at Lower Ashfold, the northern boundary of the valley runs straight, east along the minor road from Ashfold Crossways to Staplefield. From Brantridge Lane, it crosses to the White House and Pilstye Wood at Rowhill Lane. Hereabouts, the valley edge has climbed higher, over generous, convex slopes. The boundary then crosses the B2036 in a valley and takes in the high ground at Balcombe Place and Stone Hall, both houses sited with magnificent valley viewpoints in mind. In this area, the River Ouse runs close to the Ardingly Reservoir dam as it skirts the bluff at Rivers Wood. The boundary here runs close to the dam and just south of Ardingly College, picking up the east-trending ridge line at Avins Farm, at the point where the character of the lower reaches of the valley begins to develop.

12.8 As noted above, the main river runs above the Weald Clay member. Nevertheless, the presence of this Weald Clay has had a significant effect on the topography of the upper portion of the valley. The valley in this area is much broader than might be expected, since numerous roughly parallel streams run within it, over the Weald Clay, creating a complex topography of long, little ridges, bluffs and tiny, secluded valleys, the slope pattern generally long, convex and gentle. Notable internal ridges include those at Mallion Farm, Biggs Copse and Sydnie Farm (although this last is developed over the sandstone of the Hastings Beds). The hill at River's Wood forms a shallow bluff-like ridge round which the river diverts. All of these ridges are lower than the valley sides, so that the prospect is of a slightly sunken landscape of interlocking spurs and hidden corners, creating a most attractive, scenic effect.

The eastern reaches

12.9 East of College Lane, the lower portion of the valley comes into its own, defined to the north by the ridge topped by Hillhouse Farm. East of the farm, the boundary follows naturally along a network of old lanes – including Stonecross Lane and Plummerden Lane – to Wildboar Bridge where Cockhaise Brook enters the valley. The boundary runs on to Freshfield Crossways and to Kettle's Lane at the County boundary. To the south, the valley side and edge at the County boundary is defined sharply by the steep-sided slopes at Waspbourne Wood. Following this steep valley edge north of Scaynes Hill, the boundary encloses the bowl of streams centred on Walstead, draining the eastern edge of Haywards Heath and Lindfield. The boundary then arcs west around the northern edge of Haywards Heath, across High Beech Lane, picking up the high, wooded ground above Copyhold Lane and the open estate pastures of Borde Hill, thus completing the round.

12.10 Wholly on the sandstone of the Hastings Beds with some head deposits south of Ardingly, the more mature lower part of the valley is more expansive (a particular feature are the tree and hedge-fringed water meadows). However, despite this broadness of the valley floor, the valley edges are still the defining feature, ultimately creating an impression of enclosure rather than openness. The northern slopes are generally flatter and gentler than in the upper portion of the valley, especially where the side streams have had a flattening effect on the ridgelines. However, to the

south, the valley sides are more sinuous and generally quite steep, the land just beyond the valley edge defining a narrow watershed with the Adur streams to the south. It is upon this valley-edge watershed ridge that Haywards Heath sits. The medieval market town of Lindfield, now joined to Haywards Heath by modern development, sits just under the highest point of the valley edge, on a shallow spur which reaches almost to the river.

Other aspects of the valley

12.11 The valley has more affinity with the less densely wooded character and lower terrain of the High Weald fringes than with the densely wooded landscape of the High Weald. However, the woodland cover in the valley is generally markedly less extensive even than that of the fringes, although its pattern of narrow ridge and valley plantings and occasionally heavily wooded valley sides creates an impression of woodland cover with mass and density. Substantial woodlands are more characteristic of the bluffs and valley sides of the lower portion of the valley, notably at River's Wood, Wickham Woods and at Henfield and Waspbourne Woods near Scaynes Hill. The woodlands are predominantly deciduous in appearance but contain much mixed woodland and coniferous planting.

12.12 Although the valley contains significant ancient woodlands, the upper portion in particular represents a significant break in ancient woodland cover between the High Weald and its fringes to the south. Only at the eastern portion of the valley is ancient woodland cover significant. The general absence of ancient woodland in the western portion corresponds with the Weald Clay member, the relatively fertile soils of which may have encouraged clearance. However, the sandstone portion is denuded too, suggesting that the explanation of the absent woodland may be less than simple, since the analysis of the historic landscape does not suggest an overwhelming loss of landscapes of medieval origin in the valley. The area does not contain any heathland characteristic of other parts of the High Weald.

12.13 Regular fields extend north into the High Weald although, in the fringes of the High Weald and beyond, become far more intermixed with the assart landscape. Again breaking away from the High Weald pattern, the overwhelming impression of the area is one of a rich, predominantly pastoral valley landscape composed of a pattern of medium to large-sized fields with some significant tracts of arable farmland, serviced by a network of larger farms. The developing pattern of larger fields has doubtless been fuelled by modern field amalgamation, although not all of this change is of recent origin.

12.14 Although no roads run along the valley (it was always unsuited as a line for communications) it is crossed or flanked by numerous routes. Almost all running from north to south, these roads link the settlements which fringe the valley. Seven minor roads cross the valley as well as three B roads and the A23 Trunk Road to the west. The B2115 runs along the southern edge of the valley from Warninglid to Whitemans Green and the A272 runs along part of the valley boundary at Scaynes Hill. The valley is also crossed by the London to Brighton Railway Line, spectacularly so at the Ouse Valley (Balcombe) Viaduct. At Freshfield, the Bluebell Steam Railway Line crosses the lower slopes of the valley south east from Freshfield Halt. A disused railway line crosses the valley obliquely from the cutting on the London-Brighton line at Copyhold Bridge (Borde Hill) to Horsted Keynes Station on the Bluebell Line. The Sussex Ouse Valley Way, founded by Terry Owens, runs through the Valley on its way to the sea.

12.15 There are no settlements in the valley other than dispersed farmsteads although the small villages of Slaugham, Staplefield and Warninglid and the townships of Haywards Heath, Lindfield and Cuckfield lie on its edges. Farther off are Handcross, Ardingly and Horsted Keynes. The consequence of this degree of settlement close by is that most of the main roads and B roads and not a few of the minor lanes are busy with traffic. Despite the presence of the A23 Trunk Road, this

effect is far less marked in the western portion, where a more secluded, rural quality is uppermost.

12.16 Parkscapes centred on large houses down the centuries are as characteristic in or near the valley as in the rest of the High Weald, although the landscapes associated with them are generally more open in character.

Biodiversity

12.17 The valley has a remnant range of semi-natural woodland types, many formerly managed as 'coppice-with-standards'. Many of these woodlands and associated trees encompass and fringe the numerous small streams and damp hollows of the valley as well as the river itself in its upper reaches. Dominant forms include oak-ash and hornbeam woodlands with understorey species such as hazel, as well as stands of beech, sweet chestnut coppices and broadleaved, mixed and coniferous plantation. There is a modest spread of field and farm ponds throughout the valley, the only significant water body the mill pond at Slaugham Manor. There are no hammer ponds. The lower reaches of the river are a good example of small grazing marsh meadows. Wet marshy grassland and marginal habitats provide nutrient rich nesting sites for breeding birds, rich with insects.

12.18 Although the valley contains no Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), there are six Sites of Nature Conservation Importance (SNCIs). These vary between large ancient woodlands at Wickham Woods, Haywards Heath and Henfield Wood (with good ground flor and wet or damp areas) and smaller sites at Slaugham, Balcombe and Walstead valuable for meadow, marshland and water edge plants.

Historic character

12.19 Notwithstanding more recent changes to the landscape of the valley, its general historic development is broadly similar to that for the High Weald and its fringes. The background on historic character in the *High Weald Landscape Character Area* (Area 6) therefore applies.

Historic parks and gardens

12.20 Two of the nine Registered Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest in the District lie within or on the edge of the valley, including *Slaugham Place*, a small garden enclosure centred on the ruins of the former manor house. The valley contains a further three non-registered, mainly post-medieval parkscapes.

12.21 The park, house and garden of *Borde Hill* lie partly in the valley and partly in the *High Weald Fringes Landscape Character Area* (Area 10). For convenience, the site will be described here, since the parkland makes a significant contribution to the valley landscape. Borde Hill is a late 19th to mid 20th Century plantsman's and collector's garden, laid out by Colonel Stephenson Clarke and set within an early 20th Century park with mid 19th Century origins. Today it is a principal visitor attraction in the District. The registered site comprises 155 hectares of ornamental gardens set within wooded parkland, much of it sweeping gently down the southern slopes of the valley. The house stands on the crest of the valley ridge, towards the centre of the park, and commands extensive views north and south over the park and further northwards to the Balcombe Viaduct and the High Weald. It has a west front of 1598, much of the rest early 20th Century.

12.22 The North Park, laid to grass and permanent pasture, is extensively planted with clumps and individual trees including many exotic species and varieties of oak, the present pattern established by 1909. Other parts of the park contain a pinetum and woodland with exotic tree and shrub species. West of the gardens and on the

slopes to the south towards Lullings Gill, the parkland is more open in character. The eastern end of Lullings Gill contains a chain of new ponds and a lake. The South Park is also less extensively planted with parkland trees. It contains several smaller woods and copses, some with exotic tree species including cedars.

Settlement form and local distinctiveness

12.23 The evolution of the historic settlement pattern of the valley and the nature of its local distinctiveness today is essentially similar to that for the High Weald and its fringes. The background on settlement pattern in the *High Weald Landscape Character Area* section therefore applies. The valley has virtually no development within it, the pattern being one of a series of farmsteads at the centre of relatively large land holdings.

12.24 The valley contains various houses of historic interest including *Slaugham Place* on gentle valley slopes alongside the River Ouse, the ruin of an Elizabethan house. The house was replaced by *Slaugham Manor* in 1901, in a red-brick Tudor style. On the Balcombe Estate lies *Stone Hall*, described by Nairn and Pevsner (1965) as 'a quietly perfect brick house of the late 17th Century' (to the north is *Balcombe Place*, the house of the estate, a Tudor-style mansion of 1856). *Pilstye* is dated 1647, stone with mullioned windows. In the eastern part of the valley, on the broad northerly slopes, lie *Paxhill House* (redeveloped 1865) and *East Mascalls*, a 16th Century house enlarged about 1896 with a form of reticulated decoration not common in Sussex.

12.25 The *Ouse Valley (Balcombe) Viaduct* (1839-41) is one of the most impressive viaducts in England, 1,475 feet long with 37 brick arches, each pier arched at top and bottom, a classical balustrade along the entire length.

Strategic gap

12.26 The County and District Councils have long recognised pressures for development on the open land between Haywards Heath and Scaynes Hill and have designated this land as a strategic gap.

[continues]

EVALUATION

Change – key issues

- Importance of retaining the unique identity of the valley and as an important landscape and wildlife corridor.
- Pressures for change in the drainage pattern including drainage of water meadows, straightening of channels and loss of river margins.
- Decline in traditional woodland management techniques such as coppicing.
- Continuing field amalgamation into a pattern of medium and large-sized fields with hedgerow loss and the ageing and loss of hedgerow and field trees.
- Increasing pervasiveness of traffic movement and noise on the network of roads crossing the valley.
- Perceived increased traffic levels on small rural lanes with consequent demands for road improvements.
- Visual impact of new urban and rural development including modern farm buildings, horse riding centres and paddocks.
- Pressures for built development in the urban areas fringing the valley.
- Increasing recreational use of the area, including golf course development.
- Gradual loss of locally distinctive building styles and materials.
- Gradual suburbanisation of the landscape including the widespread use of exotic tree and shrub species.

Landscape and visual sensitivities

- High level of perceived naturalness in the landscape and drainage pattern and a rural quality with a general absence of development in western reaches of the valley.
- Pattern of medium to large-sized fields and watermeadows intermixed with woodlands and hedges imparts a scenic quality to the landscape.
- Legacy of designed landscapes and treescapes.
- Scarce pockets of rich woodland biodiversity are vulnerable to loss and change.
- Valley-edge settlements include Haywards Heath, Lindfield and Cuckfield, the impact on the valley reduced by their woodland setting.
- Settlement pattern currently sits well within the rural landscape although there is a danger of the cumulative visual impact of buildings and other structures.
- High sensitivity to visual intrusion from pylons and telecommunications masts.

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MANAGEMENT

Management Objective

Conserve the rural quality of the valley including the pattern of the agricultural landscape, the mosaic of woodland and other habitats, and the intimate and unobtrusive settlement farmstead pattern.

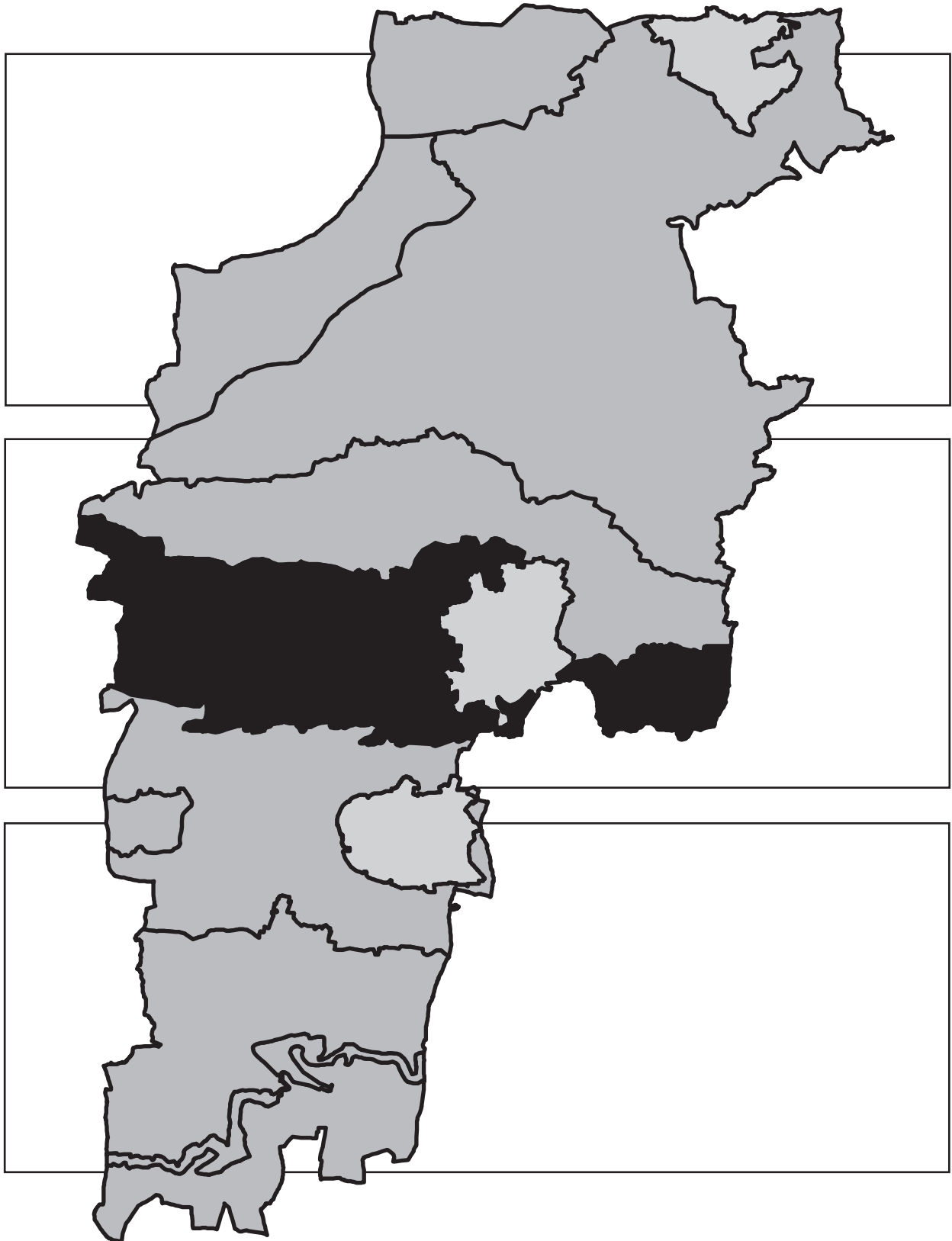
Planning and Land Management Guidelines

- Conserve and enhance the undeveloped character, drainage pattern and pastoral qualities of the valley.
- Protect existing views from ridge tops and avoid skyline development, paying particular attention to the siting of telecommunications masts.
- Conserve and enhance the presence of the river and its wildlife by streamside planting and creation of new wetland areas.
- Extend existing woodland areas rather than creating new woodland features, reinforcing existing, distinctive landscape patterns.
- Plan for long-term woodland regeneration, the planting of new small broad-leaved farm woodlands, and appropriate management of existing woodlands.
- Promote the creation of arable field margins including alongside the sides of streams.
- Increase tree cover in and around villages, agricultural and other development and on the rural urban fringe, including along the approach roads to settlements and along busy urban routes.
- Conserve and plant parkland trees and tree groups and replant single oaks in hedgerows to maintain succession.
- Conserve, strengthen and manage existing hedgerows and hedgerow trees and re-plant hedgerows where they have been lost.
- Maintain and manage all lakes and ponds and their margins for their landscape diversity and nature conservation value.
- Conserve species-rich meadows and road verges.
- Protect the character of rural lanes and manage road verges to enhance their nature conservation value.
- Reduce the visual impact of golf courses, and stabling and grazing for horses.
- Minimise the effects of adverse incremental change by seeking new development of high quality that sits well within the landscape and reflects local distinctiveness.

The area lies wholly within Mid Sussex District. See ***Planning and Land Management Guidelines Sheet HW3 (Ouse Valley)*** in Part Three. The area covered by the Sheet includes:

The Ouse Valley (Area 9) Landscape Character Area in Mid Sussex District.

Landscape Character Area 10
High Weald Fringes



High Weald Fringes

CHARACTERISATION

Summary and key characteristics

Densely-wooded southern flanks of the High Weald Forest Ridge, dissected gentle gill streams draining west to the River Adur and east to the River Ouse. Includes the settlements of Cuckfield, Haywards Heath and Lindfield.

- Wooded, often confined rural landscape of intimacy and complexity partly within the *High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty* (AONB).
- South and east-draining gills and broad ridges sweeping gently down to the Low Weald.
- Western part drained by the headwaters of the River Arun, eastern part around Scaynes Hill by the River Ouse.
- Long views over the Low Weald to the downs.
- Significant woodland cover, a substantial portion of it ancient, and a dense network of shaws, hedgerows and hedgerow trees.
- Pattern of small, irregular-shaped assart fields and larger fields, and small pockets of remnant heathland.
- Orchards and horticulture on lower slopes, particularly to the west.
- Biodiversity concentrated in the valleys, heathland, and woodland.
- Network of lanes, droveways, tracks and footpaths.
- Dispersed historic settlement pattern, close to Horsham, the principal settlements Cuckfield, Haywards Heath and Lindfield and a few villages and hamlets.
- Some busy lanes and roads including A and B roads bounding the area to the west, and other roads crossing north to south, including the A23 Trunk Road.
- London to Brighton Railway Line crosses the area at Haywards Heath.
- Mill sites, hammerponds and ornamental lakes and ponds.
- Varied traditional rural buildings built with diverse materials including timber-framing, Horsham Stone roofing, Wealden stone and varieties of local brick and tile-hanging.
- Designed landscapes and exotic treescapes associated with large country houses.
- Major gill woodland garden and visitor attraction at Leonardslee.

Description and experience of the landscape

13.1 This long band of country running east to west comprises the densely-wooded southern flanks of the High Weald. It lies partly within the *High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty* (AONB). To the north, it is bounded strongly by the Ouse Valley and merges with the Low Weald to the south. It contains the township of Haywards Heath and the large medieval villages of Cuckfield and Lindfield.

13.2 The geology of the area is an extension of the Hastings Beds, lying south of the Weald Clay inlier along the Ouse Valley. The majority of the area comprises mainly

Upper and Lower Tunbridge Wells Sandstone and clays and Grinstead Clay in alternating sequences. More localised beds include Cuckfield Stone and Ardingly Sandstone. There are limited deposits of Wadhurst Clay at Cuckfield Park and small areas of inlaid Weald Clay and Horsham Stone south of Warninglid and north of Bolney. Between Bolney and Burgess Hill, the southern edge of the area also includes wooded areas of Weald Clay.

13.3 The landscape shares many of the characteristics of the High Weald proper, but is generally lower and gentler, the gill streams far less deeply incised, the woodland cover rather less dense. With the exception of the deep gills centred on Leonardslee Gardens on the edge of the area, partly in Horsham District, the streams form much shallower valleys than in the High Weald although many of them remain wooded. Between the valleys are rounded and rolling, broad spurs with shallow slopes. Many of the streams contain hammer, ornamental and fishponds.

13.4 To the west of Haywards Heath, the area is drained by the headwaters of the River Adur, to the east of the town by the River Ouse. The northern edge of the area west of Haywards Heath comprises a straight, narrow ridgeline, the northern slopes falling abruptly to the jumble of lower streams in the Ouse Valley, the southern slopes dropping far more gently towards the Low Weald. Now more wooded, the ridge follows the valley edge east from Whitemans Green, around Haywards Heath and Lindfield, to Scaynes Hill. In places, the ridge gives excellent views across the Low Weald to the downs.

13.5 The landscape is wooded throughout, densely in places. The woodlands are predominantly deciduous but contain much mixed woodland and coniferous planting. There is a moderate spread of ancient woodland with particular concentrations around Scaynes Hill, south west of Haywards Heath, between Ansty and Bolney, and centred on the Leonardslee Gardens gills, partly in Horsham District. Although there are numerous small woodlands, many woods are medium-sized or large, occurring in networks and blocks associated with gills and ancient woodland. There is a particular concentration of woodlands centred on Raggets Wood near Ansty and important woodland blocks flanking the slopes south of Haywards Heath. Orchards feature in the landscape west of Bolney.

13.6 Once closely associated with the woodland pattern, most of the formerly grazed heathland in the area has disappeared, much of it covered by scrub and new or naturally regenerating woodland. The small pockets of heathland that remain are a valuable wildlife and landscape resource.

13.7 The landscape of small, irregular-shaped fields characteristic of historic assart pastures are far less common here than in the High Weald proper, making this a transitional landscape between the High and Low Wealds. Regularly shaped medium-sized and large fields are common. In places, there has been extensive boundary removal and field reorganisation due to agricultural intensification.

13.8 The area is crossed or flanked by numerous routes. The B2115 runs along the northern edge of the area between Lower Beeding and Whitemans Green. The A272 crosses the southern edge of the area, swinging into it at Ansty, thereafter running east through Haywards Heath and along the edge of the Ouse Valley at Scaynes Hill. North-south routes include the A23 Trunk Road, the A273 from Hassocks to Haywards Heath, the B2112 from Ditchling to Haywards Heath and the B2036 from Burgess Hill to Ansty. The area is also crossed by the London to Brighton Railway Line between Burgess Hill and Haywards Heath. The area is close to large towns. The consequence of this degree of settlement within and near the area is that most of the main roads and B roads and not a few of the minor lanes are busy with traffic.

13.9 The area contains a network of lanes, droveways and tracks, rectilinear or sinuous depending on the terrain. The lanes are generally narrow, the deeper ones overcast with woodland vegetation, a characteristic of the Colwood area in the

vicinity of the Leonardslee and Bolney gills. Parkscapes associated with large houses are characteristic.

Biodiversity

13.10 Based on the alternation of sandy and clay soils and the particular conditions obtaining in the gills, the natural history of the area is diverse. The richer sites (albeit restricted in extent) are centred on plant and animal communities in gill woodlands and on unimproved pastures. There are numerous valley ponds including field ponds and their margins.

13.11 The character of the woodlands is varied and includes a range of semi-natural woodland types, many formerly managed as coppice with standards. Dominant forms include oak-ash and hornbeam woodlands with understorey species such as hazel, as well as stands of beech, sweet chestnut coppices and broadleaved, mixed and coniferous plantation. The reduction of acid heathland to a few pockets scattered through the area, for instance at Scaynes Hill, is due to the cessation of grazing management, subsequent scrub and woodland invasion and woodland re-planting.

13.12 The area contains one Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), a geological site of importance at Scaynes Hill. The area also contains numerous Sites of Nature Conservation Importance (SNCIs). These include gill woodlands, hornbeam coppice, species-rich meadowland and grassland. Two of the sites are within the built-up area of Haywards Heath and another site is on the edge of the town. The ancient woodland and meadowland centred on Catts Wood and Ashenground south west of Haywards Heath has recently been subject to new development, the intention being to preserve as much habitat as possible. The SNCI at Blunts Wood and Paige's Meadow on the edge of Haywards Heath and land at Eastern Road, Lindfield are managed as a nature reserves by the District Council. The District Council also manages the *Scrase Valley Local Nature Reserve* (LNR) within Haywards Heath. The valley is a particularly good survival of a mosaic of semi-natural habitats within the built-up area.

Historic character

13.13 The area retains elements of the historic medieval landscape found in the High Weald proper including significant ancient woodland remnants. However, as already noted, this is essentially a transitional landscape. The pattern of narrow lanes and tracks though less dense is also typical of the High Weald, representing a visible survival of ancient routes (droves or droveways) used for transhumance. The line of the London to Brighton Roman Road crosses the area from north to south. The landscape also reveals a legacy of hammer and furnace ponds, some furnace remains and roads associated with the Wealden iron industry as well as the numerous mills that were once common throughout the country.

Historic parks and gardens

13.14 The area contains no fewer than 25 historic parks and gardens including part of the large registered parkland at *Borde Hill* (for a description of the Borde Hill site see *paras 12.23-25* in the section on the *Ouse Valley Landscape Character Area (Area 9)*) and the much smaller registered park and garden at Heaselands, both near Haywards Heath. Other, non-registered mainly post-medieval parkscapes identified by the local authorities include the extensive Wykehurst Park near Bolney and Cuckfield Park.

13.15 *Heaselands* is a mid- to late 20th Century plantsman's garden with formal elements and extensive ornamental woodland, established by 1874. After 1898 the

Kleinwort family formed the present estate. The house was re-built after 1932 and between 1934 and the late 1970s the gardens were designed and laid out. A small area of parkland, the Park Field, extends south-westwards from the house on a gentle slope to the boundary woodland. It is dotted with a few isolated conifers of mixed ages planted since the turn of the century.

13.16 Amongst the non-registered sites, *Cuckfield Park* is of particular interest. It is important to note that the *medieval park* originated on a site quite separate from that which now surrounds the house of Henry Bowyer (see *para 13.21* below). Map evidence from 1595 shows two parks close to Cuckfield, the larger one to the south-east in the position of the medieval park. Initially the de Warennes had a hunting lodge and later a house in Cuckfield. In 1440 the early Cuckfield Park contained 104 hectares. This original park was dis-parked at the time that Bowyer built the present mansion of Cuckfield Park (then known as Cuckfield Place) in the 1570s, dismantling the medieval building near the church and using material from it to build his own mansion. The smaller park was positioned south-west of the village and corresponds roughly to the southern half of the present park surrounding the house.

Settlement form and local distinctiveness

13.17 The typically dispersed historic settlement pattern of the area reflects that of the High Weald proper. Apart from Cuckfield, Lindfield and the ridge line settlements, the villages are few and small: Ansty, Bolney, Scaynes Hill and Warninglid. Apart from the modest expansion of Scaynes Hill, suburban development in these villages has been limited. The numerous parkscapes in the area have bequeathed a legacy of exotic trees and shrubs which are locally dominant in the landscape. The style and materials of rural historic buildings are diverse, the latter including timber framing, Horsham Stone roofing, Wealden stone and varieties of local brick and tile hanging. Weatherboarding is scarce.

13.18 The area contains many fine timber-framed houses including hall houses, of varying dates, including the 14th Century *Homewood House* near Bolney (there are half a dozen important houses of antiquity in the Bolney area). Also near Bolney is *Wykehurst* (1872-74), a chateau-like mansion with turrets and a conical roof, set in extensive, wooded parkland. Other houses of interest, near Ansty, include *Legh Manor*, a 16th Century tile-hung gabled house and *Moonhill Place* (c.1898) in brick and pebbledash. Cuckfield and Lindfield have churches with shingled spires and there are church towers at Bolney, Haywards Heath and Scaynes Hill (the last with a pyramid roof). Both types are characteristic of the High Weald. The parish church of *St Mary Magdalene* at Bolney has a Norman nave and chancel.

Cuckfield

13.19 Cuckfield (population 3,266) is close to Haywards Heath, a large, pretty village with a hilly, dog-legged main street, once separate from Whitemans Green to the north, on the edge of the Ouse Valley, but now joined to it by suburban development. Both villages were enlarged by small Edwardian developments. A small estate to the west and an area of large houses to the south were added in the interwar period, together with considerable ribbon development along Copyhold Lane and the Haywards Heath Road. There was much consolidation of the two-village area up to 1970. Since 1970, development has been modest, comprising some infill and minor extensions of the village edges and a recent redevelopment of the Cuckfield Hospital grounds. The village is by-passed by the A272, the spire of the church seen to good advantage across the undeveloped land north of the road.

13.20 T A former medieval market town, Cuckfield has retained its character admirably, with a mixture of housing styles from many periods. These include timber-framing and Wealden stone, exemplified by parts of the 15th Century *Ockenden Manor* (now an hotel), and by the elegant Georgian ashlar stone front of *Marshall's*.

Examples of early Victorian architecture include the Tuscan porch on the front of the former *Kings Head*. The former *Cuckfield Hospital* (1843) north of the village has a long, classical frontage in brick, now the centrepiece of the new housing development in the hospital grounds.

13.21 T The 14th Century parish church of *Holy Trinity* lies on the south side of the village, close to open, rising ground, nearly on the crest of the ridge, a church of nobility and substance. Its shingled spire is a landmark and, as noted above, particularly on approaches along the A272 from the south. Ockenden Manor also looks south down the slope, to *Cuckfield Park*, the Elizabethan brick house (later rendered) of Henry Bowyer with a small but elaborate brick gatehouse, the whole set in post-medieval parkland with an avenue of old limes from the gatehouse to the mansion.

Haywards Heath

13.22 Haywards Heath is a pleasant Victorian suburban town and quite leafy, the residential developments of varying ages deriving amenity from the built quality of many of the residential estates and from the remnant oaks and pines at home on the heathy land upon which the town was built. The topography of the town is complex, the main portion lying on high ground fringed by the Ouse Valley and, in the east, tilted into it at the broad embayment of the valley at Walstead. All but the western side of the town rises to higher ground. On the whole, the wooded setting screens the town well, particularly along the edges of the Ouse Valley. Only to the south are new housing and the hospitals on the high ridge at Rocky Lane and below Hurstwood Lane highly visible in the landscape, easily seen from the downs at Clayton. Haywards Heath was first joined to the medieval market town of Lindfield by inter-war suburban development, a link that is now solid and complete.

13.23 Like Burgess Hill, Haywards Heath originated as a railway town on the London to Brighton Railway, a now disused branch line linking through Horsted Keynes to East Grinstead. Today, the town is the third biggest in the District with a population of 22,800 (including Lindfield). By 1900 the present town centre was fully in being (although parts of it were redeveloped before the Great War) with isolated strings of ribbon development to the south east and west and along New England Road. This pattern was lightly consolidated by 1918 with Edwardian terraces all around the town centre, in the vicinity of Lindfield, and out-of-town at Snowdrop Lane.

13.24 Interwar development was extensive, not only consolidating development in the core areas of the town, but also pushing the town northwards and eastwards, linking with Lindfield. The Fox Hill suburb to the south and land to the north near Sunte House was developed in this period. The town was now set on a pattern of development largely to the east of the railway line, relatively little in the interwar period being built west of it apart from new ribbons of housing to the south of Penland Wood and to the east of Penland Farm.

13.25 Before 1970, there was the expected consolidation, the town pushing eastwards once again to the edge of the Ouse Valley, and into it at Lindfield and to the south of the Scrase Valley. Franklands Village was built to the south. The hitherto open land between Fox Hill and the town centre was developed and residential areas to the west of the railway pushed as far as Paige's and Penlands Woods and north of the hospital site on the Cuckfield Road (A272).

13.26 After 1970, smaller developments completed the process of consolidation throughout the urban area. A large new estate was built east of Franklands Village and smaller ones added to many parts of the urban edge, notably east of Hurstwood Lane and up to the edge of Blunts Wood. More recently, development has taken place on the southern edge of the town at Sandrook Lane and on the land south of the long and exposed ridge-top frontage of the former St Francis Hospital, now the Colwood and Royal Princess Hospitals. The old hospital and the development

surrounding it are visible from the South Downs. Most recently the town has begun again a westward expansion with a large new housing development incorporating a south-western relief road centred on the parkland at Bolnore (the new and well-designed Bolnore Village) including a portion of the extensive woodland at Catts Wood.

13.27 The parish church of *St Wilfrid* (1863-5) is in Wealden stone with a fine oblong central tower. Also of note is the Victorian *Holy Cross Convent* on Bolnore Road with a brick chapel of 1902-6. The *St Francis Hospital*, flamboyantly situated on the ridge-top, is vivid, in yellow brick with red-brick bands and round arches. Beneath it, within the new development, lies an old house of 1660 in brick with stone dressings. The town contains a range of suburban late Victorian, Edwardian and 20th Century properties of interest.

Lindfield

13.28 Nairn and Pevsner (1965) write of Linfield (population 5,394) as having entirely its own personality despite its closeness to Haywards Heath, a large, house-proud village with its half-mile long High Street upon which everything is concentrated – without any doubt the finest village street in the eastern part of Sussex. The High Street (wide common with cottages to the south) lies along a shallow ridge above the Ouse Valley, containing a rich concentration of some three dozen ancient buildings, about half of them of medieval origin. Many of the buildings are timber-framed, notably *Old Place*, a spectacular house of around 1590. The delightful 15th Century *Thatched Cottage* screens the entrance to the house from the street (thatch is a rare roofing type in the District).

13.29 The street alternates timber-framed and Georgian Houses with a profusion of styles and materials. These include various forms of timber framing, much of it of the Wealden type associated with hall houses (*Humphreys* is a well-preserved early hall house probably dating from the late 14th Century); red brick, tile hanging, mathematical tiles and render. The parish church of *St John the Baptist* is mainly from about 1300 and into the 14th Century with a shingled spire. The setting of the village is enhanced by adjacent open land in the Ouse Valley to the east, and in the shallow basin enclosing Walstead to the south.

Strategic gaps

13.30 The County and District Council have long recognised pressures for development on open land between Haywards Heath and Lindfield, Burgess Hill, Cuckfield and Scaynes Hill and have designated this land as strategic gaps.

[continues]

EVALUATION

Change – key issues

- Decline in traditional woodland management techniques such as coppicing.
- Continuing planting of conifers in some areas.
- Spread of invasive introduced species, particularly rhododendron and neglect of some parkland landscapes.
- Reduction of heathland to a few pockets due to cessation of grazing management and subsequent woodland invasion and woodland re-planting.
- Continuing amalgamation of small fields with orchard, hedgerow loss and the ageing and loss of hedgerow and field trees.
- Visual impact of new urban and rural development including modern farm buildings, horse riding centres and paddocks.
- New development on the southern edges of Haywards Heath.
- Introduction of telecommunications masts on ridges.
- Increasing pervasiveness of traffic movement throughout much of the area, especially in the vicinity of Haywards Heath.
- Increasing pressures for a wide variety of recreational activities.
- Perceived increased traffic levels on small rural lanes with consequent demands for road improvements.
- Gradual loss of locally distinctive building styles and materials.
- Gradual suburbanisation of the landscape including the widespread use of exotic tree and shrub species.

Landscape and visual sensitivities

- Woodland cover limits the visual sensitivity of the landscape and confers a sense of intimacy, seclusion and tranquillity.
- Unobtrusive settlement pattern in many parts.
- Older, small assart pastures contribute to the intimacy of the landscape.
- Important pockets of rich biodiversity are vulnerable to loss and change.
- Network of lanes, droveways, tracks and footpaths provides a rich terrain for horse-riding, cycling and walking and for the appreciation of nature.
- Long views from open ground have a high sensitivity to the impact of new urban development, modern farm buildings, masts and pylons and new roads.
- Settlement pattern currently sits well within the rural landscape although there is a danger of the visual impact of new development, particularly on the south side of Haywards Heath, unless appropriate steps are taken to integrate new development into the landscape.
- Legacy of designed landscapes and treescapes.

[continues]

MANAGEMENT

Management Objective

Conserve the rich mosaic of woodland and other habitats and the intimate nature of the agricultural landscape, the high level of perceived naturalness of the area including its rural, tranquil qualities, and the intimate and unobtrusive settlement pattern throughout much of the area.

Land Management Guidelines

- Maintain and restore the historic pattern and fabric of the woodland and agricultural landscape for scenic, nature conservation and recreational purposes.
- Protect existing views from the area and avoid skyline development, paying particular attention to the siting of telecommunications masts.
- Plan for long-term woodland regeneration, the planting of new small broad-leaved farm woodlands, and appropriate management of existing woodlands, and reduce rhododendron invasion and bracken cover in woodlands and on heathland.
- Extend existing woodland areas rather than creating new woodland features, reinforcing existing, distinctive landscape patterns.
- Conserve woodland biodiversity and the landscape of the gills, protecting rare and uncommon woodland plant communities associated with them.
- Reduce the impact of forestry where possible by encouraging sensitive forestry practice including small-scale felling rotation, and incorporating mixed species.
- Increase tree cover in and around villages, agricultural and other development including along the approach roads to settlements and along busy urban routes.
- Increase screening of prominent parts of new development on the southern fringes of Haywards Heath.
- Conserve and re-plant single oaks in hedgerows to maintain succession.
- Conserve, strengthen and manage existing hedgerows and hedgerow trees and re-plant hedgerows where they have been lost.
- Maintain and manage all lakes and ponds and their margins for their landscape diversity and nature conservation value.
- Conserve and manage remnant open heathland by preventing the encroachment of scrub and create new, interconnected heathlands.
- Conserve species-rich meadows and road verges.
- Protect the tranquil and historic character of rural lanes and manage road verges to enhance their nature conservation value.
- Reduce the visual impact of stabling and grazing for horses.
- Minimise the effects of adverse incremental change by seeking new development of high quality that sits well within the landscape and reflects local distinctiveness.

This area is part of High Weald Fringes in Mid Sussex and Horsham Districts. The Management Objective and Land Management Guidelines above have been incorporated into the **Planning and Land Management Guidelines Sheet HW4 (High Weald Fringes)** included in Part Three. As part of the set of County-wide Land Management Guidelines, the area covered by the Sheet is wider than the area of the High Weald Fringes in Mid Sussex and includes:

The High Weald Fringes (Area 10) Landscape Character Area in Mid Sussex District.

*The Crabtree and Nuthurst Ridge and Ghyll Farmlands (Area M1) and the Mannings Heath Farmlands (Area N1) Landscape Character Areas defined in the unpublished **Horsham District Landscape Character Assessment** (October 2003).*

Overall Character

Strongly linear valley adjoining Haywards Heath, its boundaries defined clearly by a marked break of slope. In the west, the river is a small, tree-lined stream amidst parallel streams and ridges, the valley broader to the east, the river meandering through water meadows. The signature of the valley is the high, long brick-built Ouse Valley (Balcombe) Viaduct on the London to Brighton Railway Line.

Key Characteristics

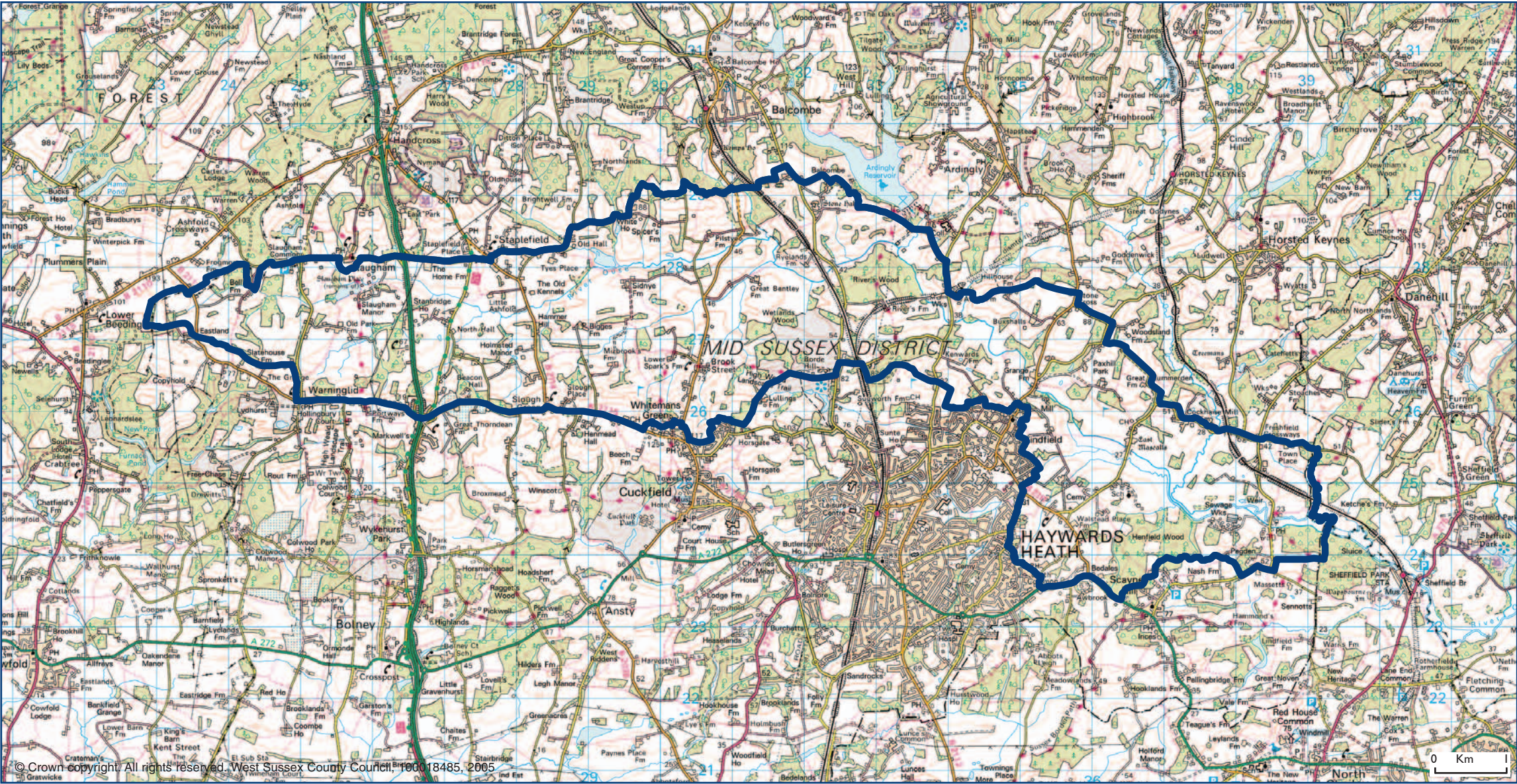
- Shallow but well-defined attractive rural valley landscape largely within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).
- Small, tree-lined stream in the western part amidst confined parallel streams and ridges.
- Broader valley and meandering river with water meadows in the eastern part.
- Relatively few panoramic or long views across or down the valley.
- Woodland cover less extensive than that of the High Weald fringes, despite an impression in places of a strong woodland presence strengthened by shaws, hedgerows and hedgerow trees.
- Pattern of mixed arable and pastoral medium to large-sized fields.
- Numerous crossing and flanking roads and lanes, including the A23 Trunk Road, many of which are busy.
- London to Brighton Railway Line crosses the valley, spectacularly so at the Ouse Valley (Balcombe) Viaduct.
- Pockets of rich biodiversity including ancient woodlands at Haywards Heath.
- No settlements in the valley other than dispersed farmsteads although towns and villages lie on the valley edges.
- Varied traditional rural buildings built with diverse materials including timber-framing, Horsham Stone roofing, Wealden stone and varieties of local brick and tile-hanging.
- Old mills, weirs and bridges.
- Extensive designed landscape at Borde Hill.

Ouse Valley

High Weald

The area covered by the Sheet includes:

The Ouse Valley (Area 9) Landscape Character Area in Mid Sussex District



Historic Features

- Line of Roman road.
- Ancient valley-edge routeways.
- Medieval house, moat and garden remains at Slaugham Place.
- Historic country houses, farmsteads and parkscapes.
- Historic mills, weirs and bridges.

Biodiversity

- Species-rich valley-side ancient and other semi-natural woodlands.
- Field ponds and marginal vegetation along river banks.
- Small meadowland and water meadow plant communities.

Change - Key Issues

- Importance of retaining the unique identity of the valley and as an important landscape and wildlife corridor.
- Pressures for change in the drainage pattern including drainage of water meadows, straightening of channels and loss of river margins.
- Decline in traditional woodland management techniques such as coppicing.
- Continuing field amalgamation into a pattern of medium and large-sized fields with hedgerow loss and the ageing and loss of hedgerow and field trees.
- Increasing pervasiveness of traffic movement and noise on the network of roads crossing the valley.
- Perceived increased traffic levels on small rural lanes with consequent demands for road improvements.
- Visual impact of new urban and rural development including modern farm buildings, horse riding centres and paddocks.
- Pressures for built development in the urban areas fringing the valley.
- Increasing recreational use of the area, including golf course development.
- Gradual loss of locally distinctive building styles and materials.
- Gradual suburbanisation of the landscape including the widespread use of exotic tree and shrub species.

Landscape and Visual Sensitivities

- High level of perceived naturalness in the landscape and drainage pattern and a rural quality with a general absence of development in western reaches of the valley.
- Pattern of medium to large-sized fields and watermeadows intermixed with woodlands and hedges imparts a scenic quality to the landscape.
- Legacy of designed landscapes and treescapes.
- Scarce pockets of rich woodland biodiversity are vulnerable to loss and change.
- Valley-edge settlements include Haywards Heath, Lindfield and Cuckfield, the impact on the valley reduced by their woodland setting.
- Settlement pattern currently sits well within the rural landscape although there is a danger of the cumulative visual impact of buildings and other structures.
- High sensitivity to visual intrusion from pylons and telecommunications masts.



Ouse Valley, Staplefield



Balcombe Viaduct

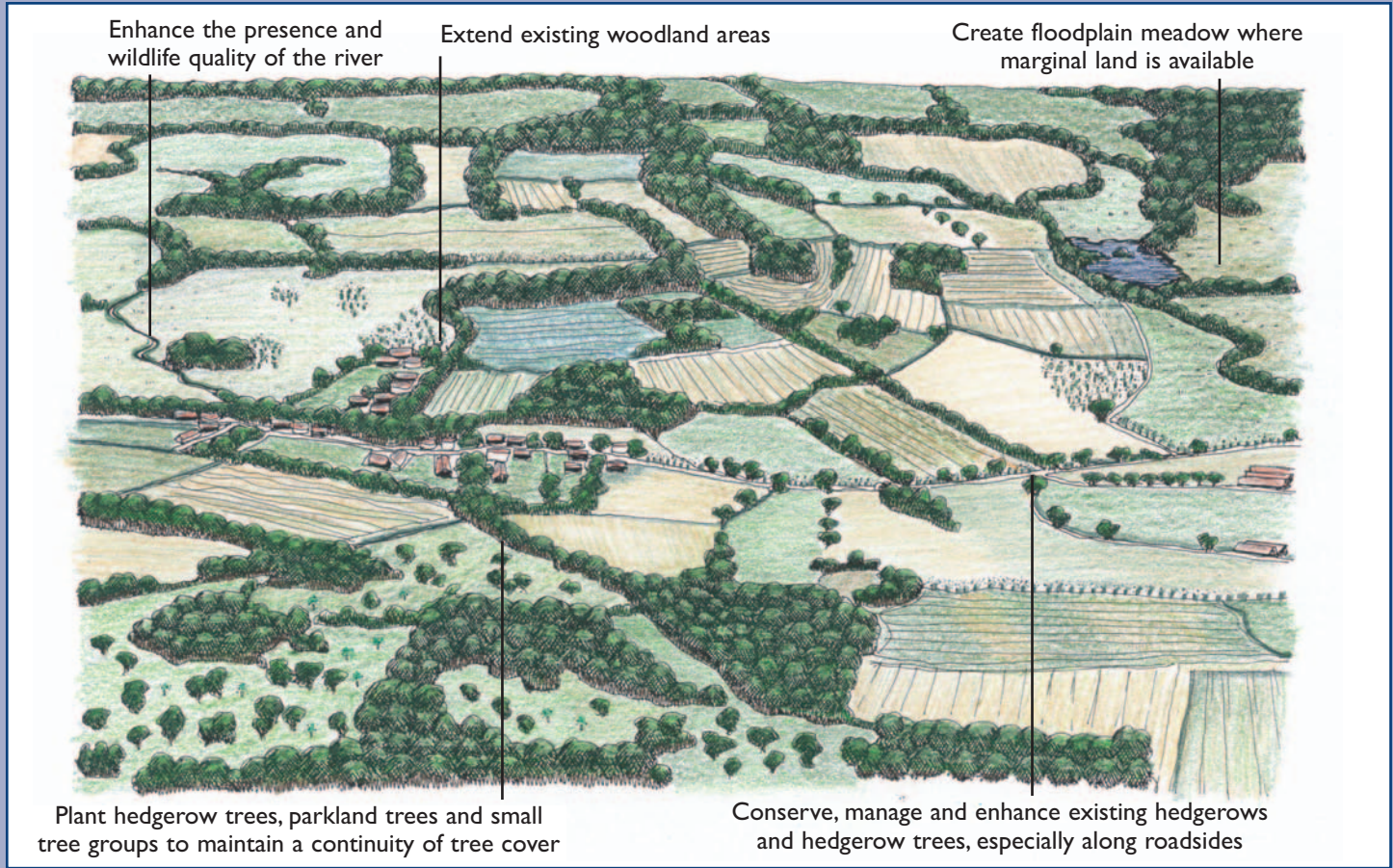


Ouse Valley



Ouse Valley from Slough Green

Land Management Guidelines



Conserve the rural quality of the valley including the pattern of the agricultural landscape, the mosaic of woodland and other habitats, and the intimate and unobtrusive settlement farmstead pattern.

- Conserve and enhance the undeveloped character, drainage pattern and pastoral qualities of the valley.
- Protect existing views from ridge tops and avoid skyline development, paying particular attention to the siting of telecommunications masts.
- Conserve and enhance the presence of the river and its wildlife by streamside planting and creation of new wetland areas.
- Extend existing woodland areas rather than creating new woodland features, reinforcing existing, distinctive landscape patterns.
- Plan for long-term woodland regeneration, the planting of new broad-leaved woodlands and appropriate management of existing woodlands.
- Promote the creation of arable field margins including alongside the sides of streams.
- Increase tree cover in and around villages, agricultural and other development and on the rural urban fringe, including along the approach roads to settlements and along busy urban routes.
- Conserve and plant parkland trees and tree groups and replant single oaks in hedgerows to maintain succession.
- Conserve, strengthen and manage existing hedgerows and hedgerow trees and replant hedgerows where they have been lost.
- Maintain and manage all lakes and ponds and their margins for their landscape diversity and nature conservation value.
- Conserve species-rich meadows and road verges.
- Protect the character of rural lanes and manage road verges to enhance their nature conservation value.
- Reduce the visual impact of golf courses, and stabling and grazing for horses.
- Minimise the effects of adverse incremental change by seeking new development of high quality that sits well within the landscape and reflects local distinctiveness.

The guidelines should be read in conjunction with:

- County-wide Landscape Guidelines set out in *A Strategy for the West Sussex Landscape* (November 2005) published by West Sussex County Council.
- Objectives and targets contained in *The High Weald AONB Management Plan 2004* (Adopted March 2004) published by the High Weald AONB Joint Management Committee.

Overall Character

The densely-wooded southern flanks of the High Weald Forest Ridge within West Sussex, dissected by gentle gill streams draining west to the River Adur and east to the River Ouse. Includes the settlements of Cuckfield, Haywards Heath and Lindfield.

Key Characteristics

- Wooded, often confined rural landscape of intimacy and complexity partly within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).
- South and east-draining gills and broad ridges sweeping gently down to the Low Weald.
- Western part drained by the headwaters of the River Arun, eastern part around Scaynes Hill by the River Ouse.
- Long views over the Low Weald to the downs.
- Significant woodland cover, a substantial portion of it ancient, and a dense network of shaws, hedgerows and hedgerow trees.
- Pattern of small, irregular-shaped assart fields and larger fields, and small pockets of remnant heathland.
- Orchards and horticulture on lower slopes, particularly to the west.
- Biodiversity concentrated in the valleys, heathland, and woodland.
- Network of lanes, droveways, tracks and footpaths.
- Dispersed historic settlement pattern, close to Horsham, the principal settlements Cuckfield, Haywards Heath and Lindfield and a few villages and hamlets.
- Some busy lanes and roads including A and B roads bounding the area to the west, and other roads crossing north to south, including the A23 Trunk Road.
- London to Brighton Railway Line crosses the area at Haywards Heath.
- Mill sites, hammerponds and ornamental lakes and ponds.
- Varied traditional rural buildings built with diverse materials including timber-framing, Horsham Stone roofing, Wealden stone and varieties of local brick and tile-hanging.
- Designed landscapes and exotic treescapings associated with large country houses.
- Major gill woodland garden and visitor attraction at Leonardslee.

High Weald Fringes

High Weald

The area covered by the Sheet includes:

The High Weald Fringes (Area 10) Landscape Character Area in Mid Sussex District.

The Crabtree and Nuthurst Ridges and Ghylls (Area M1) and the Mannings Heath Farmlands (Area N1) Landscape Character Areas defined in the unpublished **Horsham District Landscape Character Assessment** (October 2003).



Historic Features

- Much of landscape essentially medieval in origin.
- Persistence of ancient woodland.
- Line of Roman road.
- Ancient routeways and droves.
- Remains of Sedgewick Castle.
- Historic country houses, farmsteads and parkscapes.
- Wealden iron hammerponds and mill sites.
- Cuckfield Park.

Biodiversity

- Diverse natural history.
- Species-rich gill and semi-natural woodlands.
- Geologically important rock exposures.
- Remnant hornbeam coppice.
- Remnant and dormant wet and dry acid heathland.
- Species-rich meadows and hedgerows.
- Lakes, hammerponds, field and ornamental ponds.

Change - Key Issues

- Decline in traditional woodland management techniques such as coppicing.
- Continuing planting of conifers in some areas.
- Spread of invasive introduced species, particularly rhododendron and neglect of some parkland landscapes.
- Reduction of heathland to a few pockets due to cessation of grazing management and subsequent woodland invasion and woodland replanting.
- Continuing amalgamation of small fields with orchard, hedgerow loss and the ageing and loss of hedgerow and field trees.
- Visual impact of new urban and rural development including modern farm buildings, horse riding centres and paddocks.
- New development on the southern edges of Haywards Heath.
- Introduction of telecommunications masts on ridges.
- Increasing pervasiveness of traffic movement throughout much of the area, especially in the vicinity of Haywards Heath.
- Increasing pressures for a wide variety of recreational activities.
- Perceived increased traffic levels on small rural lanes with consequent demands for road improvements.
- Gradual loss of locally distinctive building styles and materials.
- Gradual suburbanisation of the landscape including the widespread use of exotic tree and shrub species.

Landscape and Visual Sensitivities

- Woodland cover limits the visual sensitivity of the landscape and confers a sense of intimacy, seclusion and tranquillity.
- Unobtrusive settlement pattern in many parts.
- Older, small assart pastures contribute to the intimacy of the landscape.
- Important pockets of rich biodiversity are vulnerable to loss and change.
- Network of lanes, droveways, tracks and footpaths provides a rich terrain for horse-riding, cycling and walking and for the appreciation of nature.
- Long views from open ground have a high sensitivity to the impact of new urban development, modern farm buildings, masts and pylons and new roads.
- Settlement pattern currently sits well within the rural landscape although there is a danger of the cumulative visual impact of buildings and other structures, particularly on the south side of Haywards Heath.
- Legacy of designed landscapes and treescapes.



Broxmead, Bolney



Wood pasture, Cowfold

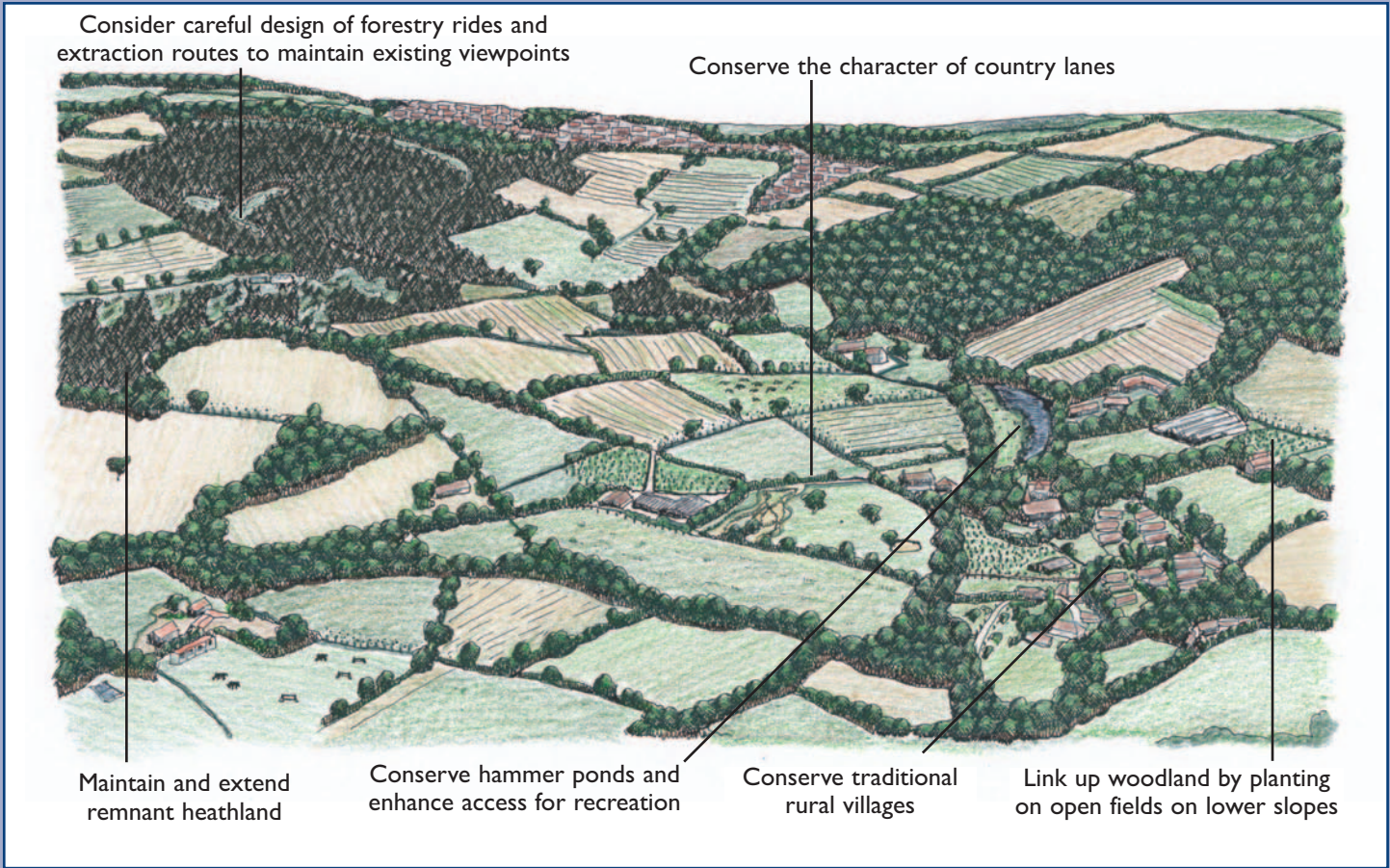


Millenium Wood, Borde Hill



Hedgerow trees, Wealden Fringe

Land Management Guidelines



Conserve the rich mosaic of woodland and other habitats and the intimate nature of the agricultural landscape, the high level of perceived naturalness of the area including its rural, tranquil qualities, and the intimate and unobtrusive settlement pattern throughout much of the area.

- Maintain and restore the historic pattern and fabric of the woodland and agricultural landscape for scenic, nature conservation and recreational purposes.
- Protect existing views from the area and avoid skyline development, paying particular attention to the siting of telecommunications masts.
- Plan for long-term woodland regeneration, the planting of new broad-leaved woodlands, appropriate management of existing woodlands, and reduce rhododendron invasion and bracken cover in woodlands and on heathland.
- Extend existing woodland areas rather than creating new woodland features, reinforcing existing, distinctive landscape patterns.
- Conserve woodland biodiversity and the landscape of the gills, including wet woodland, protecting rare and uncommon woodland plant communities associated with them.
- Reduce the impact of forestry where possible by encouraging sensitive forestry practice including small-scale felling rotation, and incorporating mixed species.
- Increase tree cover in and around villages, agricultural and other development including along the approach roads to settlements and along busy urban routes.
- Increase screening of prominent parts of new development on the southern fringes of Haywards Heath.
- Conserve and replant single oaks in hedgerows to maintain succession and replant parkland trees.
- Conserve, strengthen and manage existing hedgerows and hedgerow trees and replant hedgerows where they have been lost.
- Maintain and manage all lakes and ponds and their margins for their landscape diversity and nature conservation value.
- Conserve and manage remnant open heathland by preventing the encroachment of scrub and create new, interconnected heathlands.
- Conserve species-rich meadows and road verges.
- Seek to protect the tranquil and historic character of rural lanes and manage road verges to enhance their nature conservation value.
- Reduce the visual impact of stabling and grazing for horses.
- Minimise the effects of adverse incremental change by seeking new development of high quality that sits well within the landscape and reflects local distinctiveness.

The guidelines should be read in conjunction with:

- County-wide Landscape Guidelines set out in *A Strategy for the West Sussex Landscape* (November 2005) published by West Sussex County Council.
- Objectives and actions contained in the *High Weald AONB Management Plan 2004* (Adopted March 2004) published by the High Weald AONB Joint Management Committee.



APPENDIX 10: Landscape Character Assessment for Lewes

Lewes Landscape Character Assessment

Lewes District Council

Project number: 60676353

May 2023

Quality information

Prepared by	Checked by	Verified by	Approved by
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Revision History

Revision	Revision date	Details	Authorized	Name	Position
Draft for comment	4 th January 2023	Draft	Kathryn Whitmore	Charlotte Williams	Chartered Senior Landscape Architect
Final version	3 rd May 2023	Final	Kathryn Whitmore	Charlotte Williams	Chartered Senior Landscape Architect

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 In 2022, Lewes District Council commissioned AECOM Ltd to undertake a Landscape Character Assessment for the rural landscape within the district, outside of the South Downs National Park. The Landscape Character Assessment will form part of the evidence base for the new Lewes District Local Plan and will assist in guiding and informing spatial planning and development management decisions.

The Role of Landscape Character Assessment

- 1.2 Natural England¹ define Landscape Character Assessment as:

“the process of identifying and describing variation in the character of the landscape. It seeks to identify and explain the unique combination of elements and features (characteristics) that make landscapes distinctive.”

- 1.3 Landscape Character Assessment covers themes of the social, cultural, perceptual, aesthetic, and natural environment. It covers both rural and urban landscapes, recognising that all landscapes are important. Landscape Character Assessment also addresses in part the general and specific obligations for landscape protection, management and planning as set out in Articles 5 and 6 of the *European Landscape Convention*².
- 1.4 Landscape Character Assessment can be used as a tool to help understand what the landscape is like today, the influence of the past, and how the landscape may change in the future. Landscape Character Assessments provide a framework to help protect, manage, enhance, mitigate, and restore landscapes in the future and retain their distinctiveness, whilst guiding future development. The Landscape Character Assessment will provide a baseline of information that can be used by landowners, managers, developers, communities, and planning authorities when making decisions regarding spatial planning and future land use and management decisions in the district.
- 1.5 Landscape Character Assessment can be undertaken at a variety of scales and to differing levels of detail. This Landscape Character Assessment forms a district level of information alongside national and county published Landscape Character Assessments.
- 1.6 This Landscape Character Assessment should be read in conjunction with the current South Downs National Park Landscape Character Assessment. Together with this Landscape Character Assessment, the South Downs National Park Landscape Character Assessment provides a comprehensive coverage of Landscape Character Assessment information for the district.
- 1.7 This Landscape Character Assessment should also be read in conjunction High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Landscape Character Assessment, due to the proximity of the northern part of the district with the designation. This assessment should also be read in conjunction with the current South Downs National Park and High Weald AONB's respective management plans.
- 1.8 Natural England¹ define Landscape Character Types as:

“distinct types of landscape that are relatively homogeneous in character. They are generic in nature in that they may occur in different areas in different parts of the country, but whenever they occur they share broadly similar combinations of geology, topography, drainage patterns, vegetation, historical land use, and settlement pattern”.

¹ Natural England (2014) *An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment*. [online] Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/691184/landscape-character-assessment.pdf

² Council of Europe (2000) *Council of Europe Landscape Convention (ETS No. 176)*. [online] Available at: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/full-list?module=treaty-detail&treaty-num=176>

1.9 Natural England¹ define Landscape Character Areas as:

"These are single unique areas which are discrete geographical areas of a particular landscape type. Each will have its own individual character and identity, even though it shares the same generic characteristics with other areas of the same type".

- 1.10 This Landscape Character Assessment describes and maps the elements and features that make up distinctively different Landscape Character Types (LCTs) and Landscape Character Areas (LCAs) throughout the rural part of the district and based upon the above definitions. The Landscape Character Assessment study area is shown on **Figure 1: Location and Landscape Designations**.

Relationship With Other Studies

National Level

- 1.11 With reference to **Figure 2: National Character and Seascape Areas**, at a national level, England is divided into 159 National Character Areas (NCAs)³, as published by Natural England. The NCAs are a combination of landscape, biodiversity, geodiversity, history, and cultural and economic activity which makes each area unique in terms of its landscape character. NCAs are defined based on their landscape characteristics rather than following administrative boundaries.
- 1.12 Lewes District lies is covered by two NCAs, which are outlined below:
- NCA 121: Low Weald⁴. This is described by the published study as *“a broad, low-lying clay vale which largely wraps around the northern, western and southern edges of the High Weald. It is predominantly agricultural, supporting mainly pastoral farming owing to heavy clay soils, with horticulture and some arable on lighter soils in the east, and has many densely wooded areas with a high proportion of ancient woodland.”*
 - NCA 125: South Downs⁵. This is described by the published study as *“a ‘whale-backed’ spine of chalk stretching from the Hampshire Downs in the west to the coastal cliffs of Beachy Head in East Sussex. The majority of the area falls within the South Downs National Park. The South Downs NCA is an extremely diverse and complex landscape with considerable local variation representing physical, historical and economic influences; much of it has been formed and maintained by human activity, in particular in agriculture and forestry.”*
- 1.13 Lewes District also has a coastal border. At a national level, England is divided into 11 Marine Plan Areas (MPAs)⁶ to incorporate both onshore and offshore areas. MPAs are then grouped into six Marine Character Regions (MCRs). There are descriptive profiles available for MCRs setting out both the marine and seascape character, historic and cultural use, and an assessment of ecosystem services delivered.
- 1.14 Each MPA is further divided into Marine Character Areas (MCAs). The Marine Management Organisation⁷ has defined MCAs as follows:
- “Each MCA has its own individual character and identity, even though it can share the same generic characteristics as other areas. The use of MCAs provides a good framework within which to draw out patterns of local distinctiveness and those factors influencing sense of place. They can be used to develop more tailored policies or strategies, reflecting the things that make a particular area different, distinctive or special. Character areas may also be more recognisable and identifiable for non-specialists (than character types)”.*
- 1.15 The two MCAs covering Lewes District are:
- MCA 7: Selsey Bill to Seaford Head⁸. This is described by the published study as *“an extensive bay with boundaries formed in the west by the low lying headland of Selsey Bill and to the east by the distinctive chalk cliffs of Seaford Head, where the South Downs National Park boundary meets the coast. It includes the expansive urban development along the coastline.”*

³ Natural England (2013-15) *National Character Areas*. [online] Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-character-area-profiles-data-for-local-decision-making/national-character-area-profiles>

⁴ Natural England (2013) NCA Profile:121 Low Weald (NE450). [online] Available at:

<http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/12332031?category=587130>

⁵ Natural England (2013) NCA Profile:125: South Downs (NE432). [online] Available at:

<http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/7433354?category=587130>

⁶ Marine Management Organisation (2014) *Marine Plan Areas in England*. [online] Available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/marine-plan-areas-in-england>

⁷ Marine Management Organisation (2014) *Seascape assessment for the South Marine Plan Areas: technical report*. [online] Available at:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/488992/Seascape_assessment_for_the_South_inshore_and_offshore_marine_plans_MMO_1037_final_report.pdf

⁸ Marine Management Organisation (2013) *MCA 7: Selsey Bill to Seaford Head*. [online] Available at:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/321936/1037g.pdf

- MCA 8: South Downs Maritime⁹. This is described by the published study as a “*co-incident with the area of coastline defined as the Sussex Heritage Coast along the distinctive white cliffs of the Seven Sisters and Beachy Head between Seaford and Eastbourne. It is the maritime extent of the South Downs National Park*”.
- 1.16 This information has been reviewed as part of the process of this Landscape Character Assessment and informed the study where relevant. It is acknowledged that the study area of the national level assessments are at a considerably larger scale and published near to a decade prior.

County Level

- 1.17 With reference to **Figure 3: East Sussex Landscape Character Assessment, 2016**, at a county level, the East Sussex County Landscape Assessment¹⁰ was published in 2016 and identifies 26 Local Landscape Character Areas (LLCAs) and 13 urban areas. This published study has been reviewed as part of the process of this Landscape Character Assessment due to its geographic coverage including parts of the study area; however, it is acknowledged that the East Sussex County Landscape Assessment was intended to provide a larger scale county level assessment and is a broader review.
- 1.18 The LLCAs and urban areas covering the study area are:
- LLCA 3: Upper Ouse Valley. The current condition of which is described by the published study as “*a largely unspoilt and tranquil rural landscape with few intrusive features. The landscape is in generally good condition and well managed as farmland with a strong historic structure. Agricultural change and diversification has led to some gentrification of the rural landscape and farm steads.*”
 - LLCA 14: Western Low Weald. The current condition of which is described by the published study as “*a largely unspoilt and pleasant rural landscape with few intrusive features. The landscape is in generally good condition and well managed as farmland with a strong historic structure. This is reflected in the southern part of the area which is in the South Downs National Park and is the setting for the downland scarp. The larger villages have some modern urban edges which intrude into the rural countryside. In areas with more intensive arable agriculture the hedgerows and hedgerow trees have been removed which detracts from the distinctive pattern and character of the landscape.*”
 - LLCA 15: Eastern Low Weald. The current condition of which is described by the published study as “*a largely unspoilt tract of countryside with much of the historic rural character intact. The distinctive pattern of rural lanes and scattered unspoilt villages reinforces the historic character. Agricultural intensification has caused the removal of some hedgerows and hedgerow trees which has detracted from the historic landscape character in some areas. Farm diversification on small holdings and estates has led to the replacement of hedges with wire fencing for horse paddocks which dilutes field patterns. Lack of management and under exploited productivity of some farm land. The Cuckmere River channel follows a meandering route across the area.*”
 - LLCA 18: Falmer Telscombe Downs. This LLCA is referred to within the South Downs Landscape Character Assessment¹¹.
 - LLCA 19: Lower Ouse Valley. This LLCA is referred to within the South Downs Landscape Character Assessment¹¹.
 - LLCA 21: Firle Bishopstone Downs. This LLCA is referred to within the South Downs Landscape Character Assessment¹¹.
 - Urban Area 28: Saltdean – Peacehaven. The vision for which is described by the published study as “*a stimulating coastal-urban environment, with a sense of place and focal town centres, strengthened neighbourhood character and enhanced relationship of the whole area to its coastline*”.
 - Urban Area 32: Seaford. The vision for which is described by the published study as “*a town with a distinctive downland and coastal character, noted for its ‘old village’ core, flint pebble walls, mature elm*”.

⁹ Marine Management Organisation (2013) *MCA 8: South Downs Maritime*, [online] Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/321937/1037h.pdf

¹⁰ East Sussex County Council (2016) *East Sussex County Landscape Assessment*. [online] Available at: <https://www.eastsussex.gov.uk/environment/landscape/landscape>

¹¹ South Downs National Park Authority (2020) *South Downs National Park Landscape Character Assessment*. [online] Available at: <https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/landscape-design-conservation/south-downs-landscape-character-assessment/south-downs-landscape-character-assessment-2020/south-downs-landscape-character-assessment-2020-technical-papers/>

trees, Corsican pines and sycamores. An improved seafront with its fine backdrop and strengthened links with the 'old village'.

- Urban Area 34: Newhaven. The vision for which is described by the published study as “a small, robustly attractive port town providing a welcoming introduction to the county for visitors and making the most of its dramatic setting.”

The South Downs National Park

1.19 The South Downs National Park Landscape Character Assessment¹¹ was published in 2020 and identifies Landscape Character Types and Landscape Character Areas. The National Park level LCAs are shown on **Figure 4: South Downs National Park Landscape Character Assessment, 2020**. This study has been reviewed as part of the process of this Landscape Character Assessment and informed the study where relevant. It should be noted that the study areas of this Landscape Character Assessment and the South Downs National Park Landscape Character Assessment are different.

1.20 The LCAs adjacent to the study area are:

- LCAA1: Ouse to Eastbourne Open Downs. This is described by the published study as “*the Ouse to Eastbourne Open Downs occurs at the eastern end of the spine of chalk that forms the South Downs. The area extends from the deep U-shaped Ouse Valley in the west to Eastbourne/ Beachy Head in the east. The crest of the steep scarp defines the northern and eastern extent of the character area. To the south the boundary is defined by the coastline where high, chalk cliffs mark a sharp transition to the shore. The character area is divided into two parts by the Cuckmere Valley. This is the only character area that meets the sea, with associated strong maritime influences and extensive sea views*”.
- LCAA2: Adur to Ouse Open Downs. This is described by the published study as “*the Adur to Ouse Open Downs extend between the two river valleys and wrap around the northern and eastern edge of Brighton. To the east they abut the edge of Lewes, which has extended up onto the downland from the Ouse valley. The area is defined to the north by the crest of the north facing scarp, the Adur to Ouse Downs Scarp, and to the south largely by the National Park boundary approximately along the line of the A27 (T) and forming the urban edge of Peacehaven, Brighton, Hove, Southwick and Shoreham. To the south there is an abrupt boundary between the lower slopes of the downs and the urban area on the coastal plain and frequent views across development. This is a particularly dramatic part of the Open Downs with the prominent northern scarp reaching 248m at Ditchling Beacon*.”
- LCA F2: Ouse Floodplain. This is described by the published study as “*the Ouse Floodplain occupies the flat valley floor of the Ouse Valley, a particularly wide valley that cuts through the South Downs from Lewes to the coast of Newhaven. The eastern and western boundaries of the floodplain are clearly defined by the break of slope between the flat floodplain and rising valley sides. These boundaries also coincide with the extent of underlying river alluvium. The Ouse Floodplain continues beyond the boundary of the designated National Park northwards, into the Low Weald, and south east, to surround Newhaven*.”
- LCA G2: Ouse Valley Sides. This is described by the published study as “*the Ouse Valley Sides enclose the Ouse Floodplain, a particularly wide floodplain that cuts through the South Downs between Lewes in the north and Newhaven in the south. The bottom edge of each valley side is clearly defined by the junction with the flat floodplain - this also coincides with the extent of underlying river alluvium. The upper edge of the valley is defined by the crest of the slope and has been drawn along the apparent skyline of the valley as seen from the valley bottom. To the north the valley meets the scarp north of Lewes, and to the south the valley sides meet the National Park boundary which also coincides with the urban edge of Newhaven. There are views from the valley sides over the Ouse floodplain*.”
- LCA J1: Ouse to Eastbourne Scarp Footslopes. This is described by the published study as “*the Ouse to Eastbourne Scarp Footslopes forms a relatively narrow strip of land at the foot of the northern scarp of the Ouse to Eastbourne Downs Scarp, between Lewes and Eastbourne. The character area is divided in three by the River Cuckmere and Glynde Reach. There are also two small outliers which have been separated from the remainder of the area by built development on the edge of Eastbourne. The southern boundary of this character area is defined by the steep scarp of the Ouse to Eastbourne Downs Scarp and has been drawn along the southern edge of the arable fields that form part of the Scarp Footslopes. To the north the character area extends beyond the National Park boundary (marked by the A27) where it forms a gradual transition to the landscape of the Low Weald*.”

- LCA J2: Adur to Ouse Scarp Footslopes. This is described by the published study as *“the Adur to Ouse Scarp Footslopes form a wide band of lowland at the foot of the northern scarp of the Adur to Ouse Downs Scarp, between Upper Beeding and Lewes. The southern boundary of this character area is defined by the steep scarp of the Adur to Ouse Downs Scarp and has been drawn along the southern edge of the arable fields that form part of the Scarp Footslopes. To the north the character area forms a gradual transition to the landscape of the Low Weald.”*

Planning Policy Context

- 1.21 The *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF)¹² was updated in July 2021. This document sets out the Government’s planning policies within England and their application. The NPPF sets out in paragraph 174 that *“planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment”*. Landscape Character Assessment contributes to this statement as on the ways in which this can be undertaken is listed in the NPPF as follows:

“recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services”.

- 1.22 This Landscape Character Assessment forms a sound evidence base to support the landscape policy and other character policies within the new Local Plan for Lewes District. The way in which it will do this is set out in the Natural England guidance¹ as follows:

- *“Describe a landscape with reference to the characteristics that combine to make a place distinctive;*
- *Give spatial reference to baseline information / evidence via mapped landscape character areas / types;*
- *Inform understanding of key characteristics, sense of place, special qualities etc. that can then inform judgements – decision making - regarding, for example, development management and the siting, design, scale and massing of developments from housing developments and transport infrastructure to forests, woodlands, or renewable energy projects; and*
- *Assist with the monitoring of change.”*

¹² Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (2021) *National Planning Policy Framework*. [online] Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2>

2. Methodology

Approach

- 2.1 This Landscape Character Assessment has used best practice guidance as published by Natural England in 2014, *An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment*¹. As set out in chapter 1, the Landscape Character Assessment also involves a review of existing published Landscape Character studies covering Lewes District and within adjacent districts to ensure consistency of descriptions and cross boundary characterisation.

Study Area

- 2.2 With reference to **Figure 1: Location and Landscape Designations**, the Landscape Character Assessment study area covers the rural areas of Lewes District. This is considered to be the land beyond the defined settlement boundaries. The study area is denoted on Plate 1 below in a red line, with the settlement areas in an orange fill, the South Downs National Park in a green hatch and the High Weald AONB in a yellow fill.

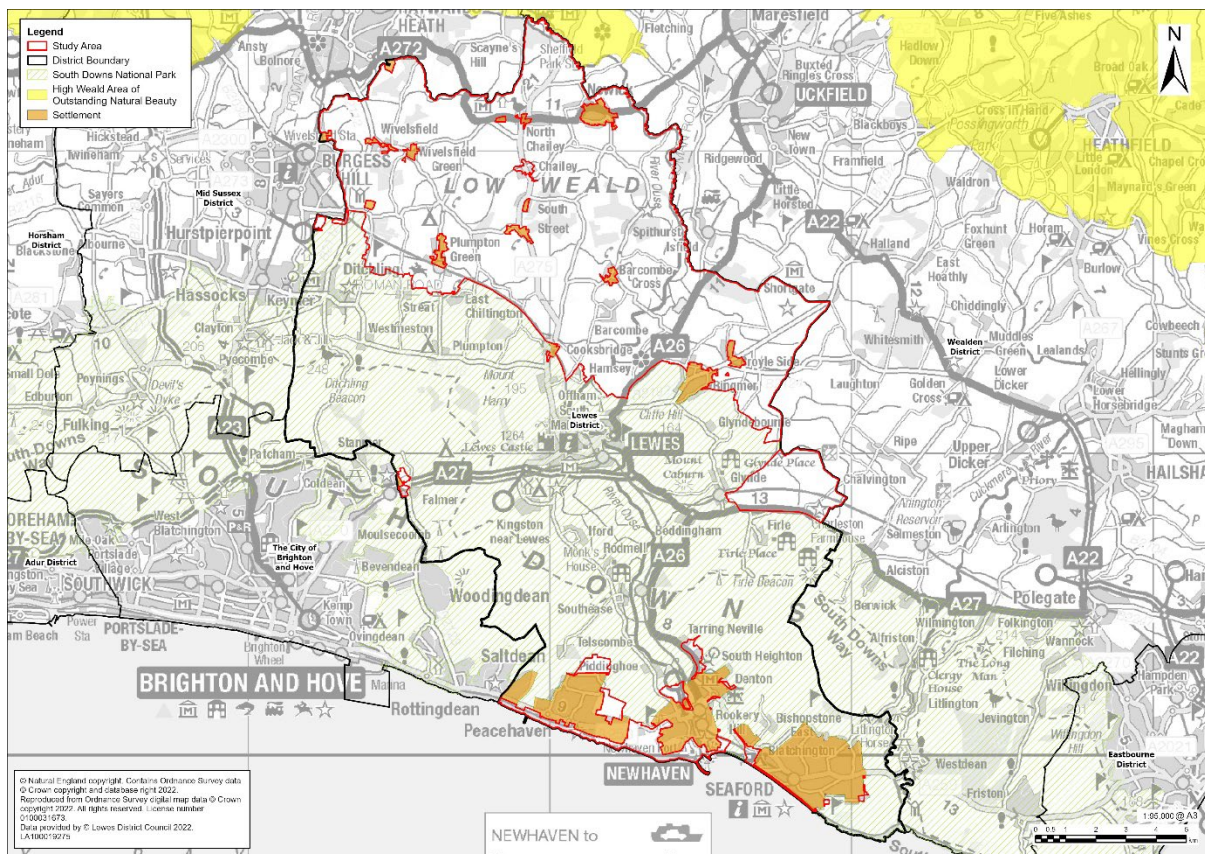


Plate 1: Extract of Figure 1 showing the study area, settlement areas, South Downs National Park and High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

- 2.3 Lewes District is located within East Sussex County Council and lies adjacent to the southern coast of England. Lewes District is bound by Mid Sussex District to the north-west, Brighton and Hove unitary authority to the south-west and Wealden District to the east. Further to the east lies Eastbourne District.
- 2.4 With reference to **Figure 1: Location and Landscape Designations**, the High Weald AONB covers land adjacent to the north of Lewes District and is therefore excluded from the study. The South Downs National Park lies within the central part of Lewes District is excluded from the study area as it is covered by its own published Landscape Character Assessment.
- 2.5 The study area has been broadly differentiated into three main geographical areas as follows:

- The northern part of the study area: this is the largest part of the study area and includes the rural landscape to the north of Lewes and east of the urban edge of Burgess Hill and Haywards Heath.
- The southern part of the study area: this includes the landscape edges adjacent to the settlements of Newhaven, Peacehaven, Seaford and part of Saltdean.
- The western part of the study area: this is a small geographical area situated between the edge of the settlement of Falmer in the South Downs National Park, and the urban fringe of the townscape of Brighton and Hove.

Methodology and Process

- 2.6 Landscape Character Assessment is the process of systematically characterising, describing and mapping the landscape. It does not seek to attach any landscape value to the types and areas that it defines. This Landscape Character Assessment has followed Natural England's¹ four iterative steps as outlined below:

1) Define purpose and scope

- 2.7 This Landscape Character Assessment maps the study area into Landscape Character Types and geographically unique Landscape Character Areas. Landscape Character Types are generic and can occur in several different locations and across various scales having the same characteristics and are recognisably the same as each other. Landscape Character Areas are unique with only one area with that particular name that demonstrates the particular characteristics found in that area.

2) Desk study

- 2.8 A preliminary desk-based study was used as a basis for further investigation from field surveys and stakeholder engagement. This includes draft Landscape Character Areas and Types. Desk study has included reference to numerous key documents, which are relevant at the time of writing. These documents, or their superseded versions, should be read in conjunction with this Landscape Character Assessment. These can be referred to at **Appendix A: Sources of Information**.

3) Field study

- 2.9 Field survey work was undertaken within October 2022. This was undertaken using ArcGIS Field Maps and ArcGIS Survey123 to assist in data collection. Refer to **Appendix B: Field Study Sheet**. Field survey work to ground truth the desk-based studies and to capture the aesthetic, perceptual, and experiential qualities of landscapes that are often only identifiable through field survey or stakeholder engagement. Use of an electronic field survey sheet developed using best practice guidance to record findings in-situ.
- 2.10 Limitations in the field survey work were due to access to parts of the study area often being limited to minor roads and private tracks. There are also some parts of the study area that are largely inaccessible to the public due to a lack of Public Rights of Way (PRoW) and private tracks most notably the area to the east of Glynde and north of Firle Park. However, this has not limited the assessment due to reviews of on-line mapping, aerial photography and analysis from train journeys, supplemented by desk-based study.

4) Classification and description of Landscape Character Types and Areas

- 2.11 Further desk-based study and analysis of field surveys and stakeholder engagement to refine, classify, map, and describe the proposed Landscape Character Types and Areas. The Landscape Character Assessment reflects the landscape at a particular moment in time and is reflective of the professional interpretation of the Chartered Landscape Architects carrying out the assessment to the criteria defined in best practice guidance¹.

Stakeholder input

- 2.12 As set out within the published guidance¹, stakeholder input can add value to Landscape Character Assessments. A range of stakeholders in the district were contacted to provide input into the perceptual and aesthetic elements of the landscape, including memories, associations and sight. In November 2022

Chailey Commons Society provided feedback which was discussed at a Committee Meeting of the Society. This information has been used directly in the assessment of the Chailey Common area.

- 2.13 In November 2022, a virtual meeting was held with officers of the South Downs National Park Authority and The High Weald AONB Partnership. This meeting discussed the outputs of the Landscape Character Assessment, with specific reference to the setting of the National Park and AONB. This included splitting the setting of the National Park and AONB into visual, landscape and perceptual types. It should be noted that some landscapes can contribute to these types of setting in all three ways and others only in one. Further detail is given as follows:

- Landscape setting: Similar characteristics to the National Park or AONB.
- Visual setting: Intervisibility with the National Park or AONB, including both views to and from the designated landscape.
- Perceptual setting: Totally different characteristics but similar perceptual qualities, such as dark skies.

Outputs

- 2.14 The outputs of the Landscape Character Assessment are:

- A high-level review of published information regarding the natural, cultural and social, perceptual and aesthetic information of the study area.
- Mapping of the boundaries of each Landscape Character Type and Landscape Character Area.
- Photographs to illustrate the key characteristics and typical appearance of each Landscape Character Area.
- Description of the distinctive elements within each Landscape Character Area; including information about the topography and hydrology, geology and soils, land use, vegetation cover, built form, field patterns, landscape elements, historical influences and perceptual elements such as tranquillity.
- Information about the forces for change which have shaped the current landscape character, and which could alter or influence the future landscape character.
- Guidelines to inform future land management and development, within each Landscape Character Area as appropriate.

Landscape Character Type C: Western Low Weald

4.29 With reference to **Figure 15: Lewes Landscape Character Types**, LCT C: Western Low Weald covers most of the northern part of the study area. The LCT consists of the following LCA:

- LCA C1: Wivelsfield, Newick and Chailey Western Low Weald
- LCA C2: Barcombe, Plumpton and Cooksbridge Western Low Weald
- LCA C3: Ditchling Common Western Low Weald

Landscape Character Area C1: Wivelsfield, Newick and Chailey Western Low Weald

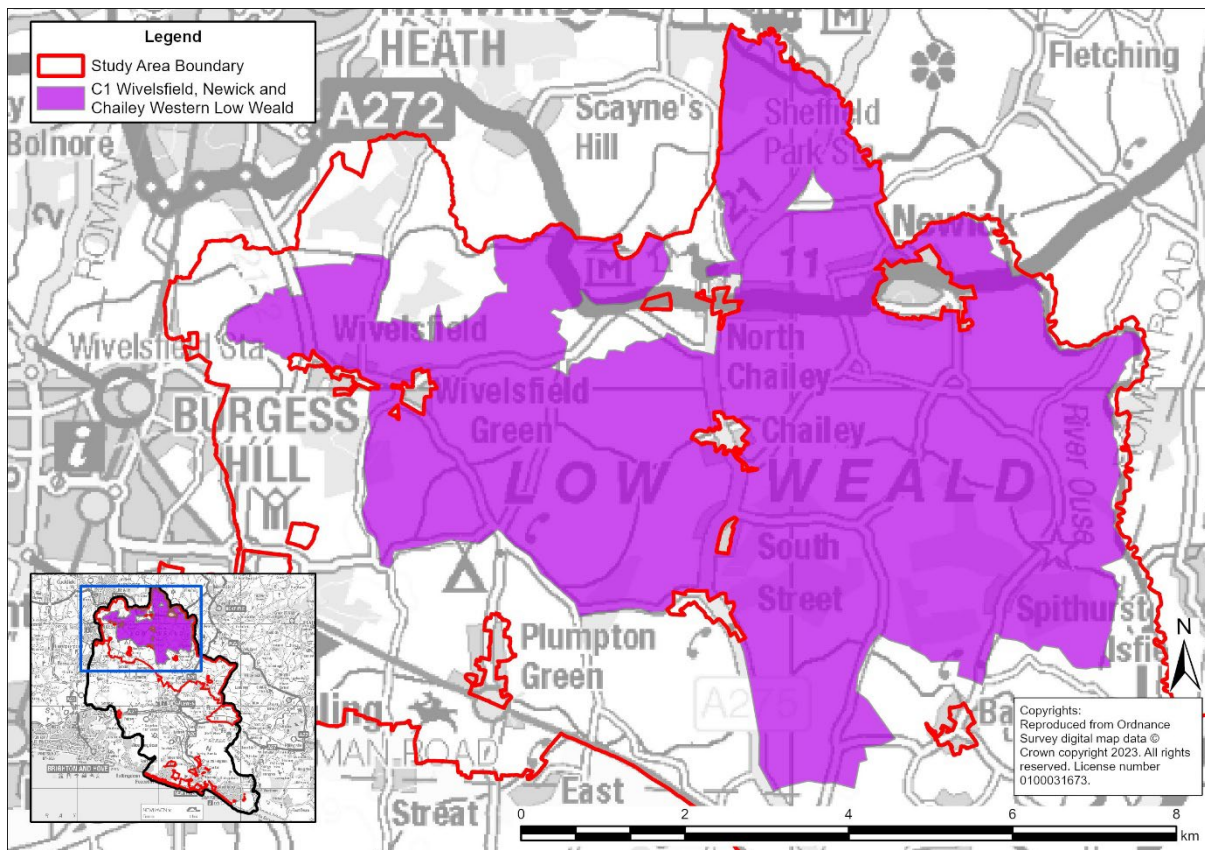


Plate 14: Extract of Figure 16 illustrating the extent of Landscape Character Area C1 in a fill



Plate 15: View of pond and mature tree vegetation in in Landscape Character Area C1



Plate 16: View of tree-lined field enclosure in Landscape Character Area C1



Plate 17: View of Grade II* listed St Peter's Church, Chailey in Landscape Character Area C1



Plate 18: View of woodland blocks and the South Downs National Park in the distance from elevated ground in Landscape Character Area C1

Location and Boundaries

- 4.30 With reference to **Figure 16: Lewes Landscape Character Areas**, Landscape Character Area C1 comprises an area of land within the northern part of the district. The Landscape Character Area lies to the south-west of the High Weald AONB.
- 4.31 The Landscape Character Area is bordered by the district boundary to the north as well as various other Landscape Character Areas, namely Ditchling Common Western Low Weald (C3), Lewes Ouse

Catchment (E2), Plumpton Scarp Foothills (F1), Barcombe, Plumpton and Cooksbridge Western Low Weald (C2), Chailey Common Heathland (G1) and Wivelsfield Ouse Catchment (E1).

Summary of Landscape Character

- 4.32 The bedrock geology consists of largely of sandstone, siltstone and mudstone. The soils in the northern part consist predominantly of slightly acid loamy, clayey soils with impeded drainage, as well as freely draining slightly acid loamy soils partially on the eastern edge. The soils in the southern part consist of slowly permeable, seasonally wet, slightly acidic but base-rich loamy and clayey soils.
- 4.33 The Landscape Character Area covers undulating landform situated between approximately +10m AOD to +65m AOD, with localised high points offering extensive views and lower landform typically associated with the River Ouse and its tributaries.
- 4.34 Vegetation cover includes typically medium to large scale woodland blocks, as well as tree-lined field enclosures, hedgerows and hedgerow trees. Land use is a mixture of pasture and arable agricultural use overall consisting of small to medium-scale, irregular fields. Overall, there is generally an enclosed character to the Landscape Character Area due to the density of the vegetation. There is less enclosed character across higher ground within the Landscape Character Area, in combination with less vegetation cover, offering views towards the High Weald AONB to the north and South Downs National Park to the south.
- 4.35 The settlement pattern is characterised by edges of settlement, small-scale linear and nucleated settlements, linear ribbon development along the winding road network, notably along the A275 north to south route, and farmsteads. Recreational access includes an extensive PRoW network, including the Sussex Border Path and Sussex Ouse Valley Way recreational routes, as well as CRoW Access Land.
- 4.36 Overall, beyond the settlements and road networks, the Landscape Character Area exhibits a highly rural and tranquil character due to the land use and the enclosure from mature vegetation, with localised references to villages via church towers.

Key Characteristics

- Undulating landform between approximately +10m AOD to +65m AOD. Localised high points including to the south-east of North Chailey, offering extensive views of the surrounding landscape and distinctive views towards Grade II* listed St Peter's Church in Chailey to the south. Falls in landform generally occur where tributaries from the River Ouse meander through the landscape, including the Pellingford Brook in the northern part, often denoted by mature vegetation including willow in a distinctive silver colour.
- The course of the River Ouse forms the north-eastern boundary of the Landscape Character Area, with flowing water audible from beyond the riverbanks when in proximity to the river, such that in combination with riparian vegetation including willow and alder, there is the perception of the river. Various other hydrological features across the Landscape Character Area, including small to medium sized ponds, weirs and springs off the Longford Stream at Newick Park.
- Vegetation cover consists of varied sizes of woodland blocks, typically medium to large-scale, which creates a sense of enclosure as long-distance views towards rising landform outside the study area are restricted or channelled. Waspbourne Wood is a notable for its extent across the Landscape Character Areas.
- Vegetation cover also includes tree-lined field enclosures, some hedgerows and hedgerow trees in varied condition. Ancient woodland scattered across the Landscape Character Area.
- Fields are generally small to medium-scale and irregular, notably small-scale surrounding pockets of development; many of which are formed from woodland clearance and often bounded by remnant woodland strips known as shaws creates a well-established green infrastructure network.
- Mixture of assart, enclosed agricultural land of ancient form, amalgamated, enclosed agricultural land of modern form and planned, enclosed agricultural land of pre-modern form.
- Land use includes a mixture of arable and pasture agricultural use.
- Residential development consists of the edge of settlement areas include Newick, Wivelsfield Green and South Chailey, as well as two-storey dwellings in a linear and ribbon pattern along the winding road network. Smaller settlement areas include Chailey and Spithurst, which are nucleated and linear settlement patterns respectively.

- Settlement areas and linear, ribbon development are typically located along the ancient drove road network, notably the A275 which continues into the High Weald AONB to the north, Spithurst Road and the A272.
- Residential dwellings typically built of brick, with some other materials including flint walling within Chailey.
- Farmsteads interspersed in the landscape, typically with large-scale buildings.
- Sheffield Park Station and associated railway line and business park in the northern part of the Landscape Character Area, create urbanising features in the local landscape due to some containment by mature vegetation.
- The southern part of the Chailey Common SSSI and LNR extends into the Landscape Character Area.
- Extensive recreational access provided by the PRoW network, including the Sussex Border Path and Sussex Ouse Valley Way recreational routes and including routes through and adjacent to farmsteads through the landscape. Various pockets of CRoW Access Land, including to the north of Newick and north-east of South Chailey.
- Chailey Link Walk promoted by local community which is a way-marked circular walk linking North and South Chailey.
- Heritage associations include Theobalds Bridleway which is an ancient route and a patchwork of medieval assart fields and hedgerow boundaries. Various listed buildings, including Grade II* St Peter and St John The Baptist Church to the north-west of Wivelsfield, and a scheduled monument at Waspbourne Farm in the northern part. Registered parks and gardens at Newick Park.
- Associations with designed landscapes surrounding large residential estates, including a conifer tree-lined avenue near to Lunces Hall in the western part of the Landscape Character Area.
- Electricity pylons and overhead lines result in a detracting feature in the northern part of the Landscape Character Area with a widespread urbanising influence.
- Located within the edge of the Ashdown Forest, designated as Special Protection Area (SPA) and Special Area of Conservation (SAC) protection zone in which new residential development would need to mitigate potential harm due to increased recreational pressure.
- Main transport routes are the A275 and A272, which create localised audible and visual detracting features.
- Beyond the detracting features, settlement areas, linear development and winding road network, there are areas exhibiting a highly rural and tranquil character due to containment from mature vegetation and woodland cover.
- Sounds associated with road and railway noise and tree movement in the wind.
- Intervisibility with the High Weald AONB to the north and the South Downs National Park to the south, from higher areas of the Landscape Character Area. The Landscape Character Area forms part of the visual, landscape and perceptual setting of the High Weald AONB.

Forces for Change

- Increased agricultural pressure, further degradation of hedgerows and run-off into watercourses.
- Expansion of settlement areas and further linear development along road networks, which would expand urbanising influences in the rural parts of the Landscape Character Area.
- Improvements to the PRoW network by local Sussex voluntary rights of way workers and increased recreational pressures from visitors.
- Climate change resulting in more extreme weather events, such as flooding due to rainfall patterns changing, heat stress relating to the landscape and pressure for increased renewable development.

Landscape Management Guidelines

- Retain and enhance the green and blue infrastructure network including as part of the wider ecosystem of the High Weald AONB, including maintain the well-established network of woodland and shaws.
- Retain and aim to restore historic pattern of field enclosures.
- Retain rural character away from development and roads.
- Retain pockets of views onto surrounding higher ground where available to retain the semi-enclosed character.

- Encourage local natural flood management initiatives in combination with ecological initiatives and requirements.
- Encourage improvements to vegetation including hedgerows in varying condition.
- Conserve and enhance recreational access, including locally valued routes and alongside hydrological features through landscape, including the Longford Stream and Pellingford Brook.
- Refer to relevant High Weald AONB management plan for any other relevant guidelines to preserve the setting of the High Weald AONB.

Development Guidelines

- Development should be avoided on higher ground and within the setting of the AONB. Development should be concentrated to existing settlement patterns.
- Protect and retain existing vegetation across the Landscape Character Area, including ancient woodland and on the edge of settlement areas.
- Avoid any adverse impact to the High Weald AONB's indicators of natural beauty, including the setting and intervisibility with the AONB, with reference to relevant guidance.
- The height, scale, massing and articulation of any new development to be of a similar character of the existing valued context via locally characteristic building forms, high quality detailing and sympathetic contemporary architecture.
- Any new development should be set within a robust landscape framework as part of a wider blue green infrastructure strategy and use of the existing woodland network for screening purposes where appropriate.
- Any new development should comply with relevant protection to Ashdown Forest.
- Ensure any development including lighting is assessed for its visual impact, including from the High Weald AONB.
- Avoid merging of existing settlement areas and consider the cumulative impact of additional development within the landscape.
- Retain and aim to restore historic pattern of field enclosures and settlement, particularly where they have been lost to amalgamation.

- Refer to relevant South Downs National Park Authority guidance for any other relevant guidelines to preserve the setting of the South Downs National Park.

Development Guidelines

- Development should be limited and designed to retain the rural character of the area, including avoiding development on higher, more visible areas of the Landscape Character Area.
- Protect and retain existing vegetation across the Landscape Character Area, including ancient woodland and on the edge of settlement areas.
- Avoid any adverse impact to the South Downs National Park's special qualities, including the setting and intervisibility with the National Park, with reference to relevant guidance and noting the importance of views from Mount Calburn, Firle Beacon and Blackcap.
- The height, scale, massing and articulation of any new development to be of a similar character of the existing valued context via locally characteristic building forms, high quality detailing and sympathetic contemporary architecture.
- Any new development should be set within a robust landscape framework as part of a wider blue green infrastructure strategy.
- Ensure any development including lighting is assessed for its visual impact, including from the South Downs National Park.
- Avoid merging of existing settlement areas and consider the cumulative impact of additional renewable schemes within the landscape.
- Reinstatement of historic field boundaries where they have been lost to amalgamation and retain the ancient field pattern within future development.

Landscape Character Area C3: Ditchling Common Western Low Weald

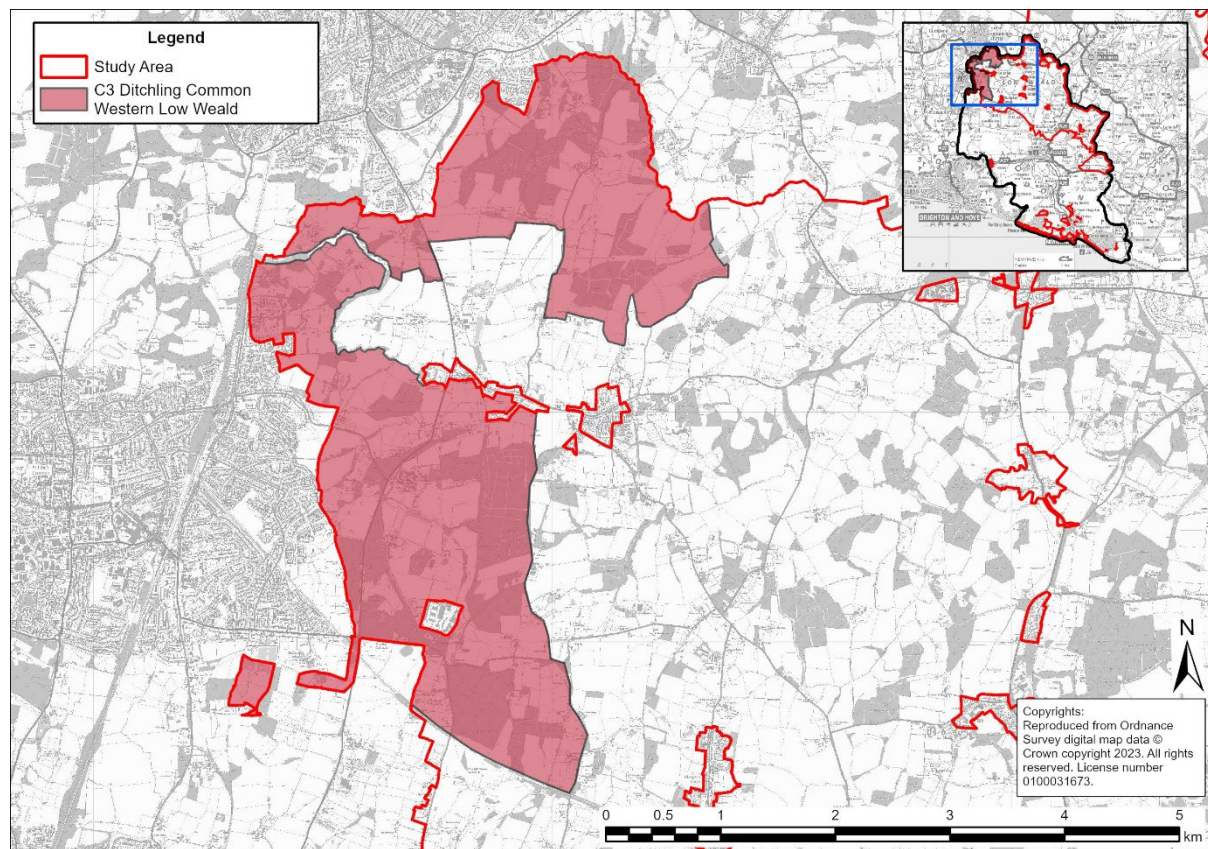


Plate 23: Extract of Figure 16 illustrating the extent of Landscape Character Area C3 in a fill



Plate 24: View of heathland and scrub with a mature wooded backdrop in Landscape Character Area C3



Plate 25: View of mature wooded backdrop and electricity pylons in Landscape Character Area C3



Plate 26: View of enclosed public right of way in Landscape Character Area C3

Location and Boundaries

- 4.45 With reference to **Figure 16: Lewes Landscape Character Areas**, Landscape Character Area C3 comprises two areas of land, both within the northern part of the district. The Landscape Character Area is split by the Wivelsfield Ouse Catchment. The Landscape Character Area extends to the north of the South Downs National Park and east and south of the district boundary.
- 4.46 The Landscape Character Area lies to the west of the Barcombe, Plumpton and Cooksbridge Western Low Weald (C2) and Wivelsfield, Newick and Chailey Western Low Weald (C1) and to the north of Plumpton Scarp Footslope (F1).

Summary of Landscape Character

- 4.47 The bedrock geology consists predominantly of sandstone, siltstone and mudstone. The soils consist predominantly of slowly permeable, seasonally wet, slightly acidic but base-rich loamy and clayey soils in the southern part of the Landscape Character Area and slightly acidic loamy and clayey soils with impeded drainage in the northern part.
- 4.48 The Landscape Character Area covers undulating landform between approximately +35m AOD to +75m AOD. There are localised falls in landform associated with streams and tributaries of the River Ouse.
- 4.49 The landscape is heavily characterised by the influence of large continuous and amalgamated blocks of woodland, creating high levels of enclosure. Ancient woodland scattered across the area, including larger areas within the southern part of the Landscape Character Area and a number of small to medium-sized areas in close proximity to one another in the northern part.

- 4.50 Development largely consisting of a dispersed pattern of scattered farmsteads and two storey residential dwellings, typically off ancient drove ways and contained by the mature vegetation network. There is area of denser development, including contemporary commercial built form, residential dwellings on the edge of Burgess Hill and a large-scale industrial park.
- 4.51 Recreational access comprises an extensive PRoW network, including the Sussex Border Way recreational route, and CRoW Access Land at Ditchling Common Country Park. Urbanising features include overhead lines, electricity pylons, route of the B2112, influence of Burgess Hill to the west and the railway line.
- 4.52 Overall, the Landscape Character Area comprises a rural character due to enclosure by mature vegetation and a typically dispersed built form pattern. However, there are several areas in the Landscape Character Area with prominent urbanising features, including in the western part adjacent to Burgess Hill.

Key Characteristics

- The landform is undulating between approximately +35m AOD to +75m AOD.
- Localised influence of streams and tributaries of the River Ouse, including the Pellingford Brook, as well as small to medium-scale ponds, typically denoted by mature vegetation, on lower landform and sometimes noise of flowing water.
- Generally medium-scale field enclosures with some smaller field enclosures in the more settled southern and western parts of the Landscape Character Area, many formed from woodland clearance and often bounded by remnant woodland strips known as shaws.
- Predominantly assarted, enclosed agricultural land of ancient form, as well as some amalgamated, enclosed agricultural land of modern form in the northern part of the Landscape Character Area and planned, enclosed agricultural land of pre-modern form in the central and southern parts.
- Mixture of arable and pasture land use, with hedgerow and hedgerow tree boundaries of varied condition.
- Ancient woodland scattered across the area, including larger areas within the southern part of the Landscape Character Area such as Blackbrook Wood and a number of small to medium-sized areas in close proximity to one another in the northern part, including Strood Wood and Wilderness Wood. Vegetation cover also includes areas of heathland and scrub.
- Landscape heavily characterised by the influence of large continuous and amalgamated blocks of woodland, creating high levels of enclosure, a wooded backdrop in views and limiting long-distance views including those towards the rising landform of the South Downs National Park to the south. The Landscape Character Area forms part of the visual and landscape setting of the South Downs National Park.
- Development largely consisting of a dispersed pattern of scattered farmsteads, some of which blend into the wooded backdrop due to darker colours, and predominately two-storey brick and rendered residential dwellings, typically off ancient drove ways, resulting in a landscape typically with little relationship to the built form due to mature woodland vegetation.
- Pockets of contemporary built form, including several small and medium-scale commercial buildings including residential care facilities and linear residential dwellings on the edge of Burgess Hill on the western edge of the Landscape Character Area, which are localised detracting features from the local PRoW and road network where visible due to general containment by mature woodland vegetation.
- Visibility of a large-scale industrial park and associated metal fencing, outside the study area, in the south-western part of the Landscape Character Area from the local PRoW network, creating a localised detracting feature.
- Heritage associations include ancient Theobalds Bridleway which is an ancient route.
- Ditchling Common SSSI in the south-western part of the Landscape Character Area, exhibiting a rich flora and fauna including several types of acidic heath grassland and uncommon butterfly species.
- Ancient, fairly straight, north to south drove ways include the B2112, Streat Lane, Hundred Acre Lane, Spatham Lane and the route of the Sussex Border Way recreational route which continues onto the road network north of Wivelsfield.
- Recreational access comprises an extensive PRoW network comprising a mixture of open routes and those enclosed by woodland, including the Sussex Border Way recreational route and including routes through

and adjacent to farmsteads through the landscape. CRow Access Land at Ditchling Common Country Park in the south-western part of the Landscape Character Area, with parking and access to the various tracks.

- Heritage associations of listed buildings, typically associated with historic farmsteads.
- Influence of densely urbanised edge of Burgess Hill on the western boundary of the Landscape Character Area.
- Tall pylons and overhead lines in the northern part of the Landscape Character Area are detracting features and often visible from PRow routes.
- Main transport routes include the B2112 in the western part of the Landscape Character Area and the railway line denoting the southern boundary, which create localised audible and visual detracting features and decrease tranquillity in comparison to the more rural areas.
- Often an audible perception of vehicles which increases in proximity to the B2112.

Forces for Change

- Increased agricultural pressure, further degradation of hedgerows and run-off into watercourses.
- Pressure for improvements to recreational access across the area, including along historic routes such as Theobalds Bridleway.
- Disease to trees, including the oak processionary moth.
- Climate change resulting in more extreme weather events, such as flooding due to rainfall patterns changing and heat stress relating to the landscape causing pressure on existing woodland cover.
- Further expansion of development in a landscape typically with little relationship to the built form due to mature woodland vegetation.
- Colour of new development in relation to the wooded backdrop.
- Improvements to the PRow network by local Sussex voluntary rights of way workers and increased recreational pressures from visitors.

Landscape Management Guidelines

- Retain and enhance the green and blue infrastructure network including as part of the wider ecosystem of the South Downs National Park.
- Encourage local natural flood management initiatives in combination with ecological initiatives and requirements.
- Encourage improvements to vegetation including hedgerows in varying condition.
- Refer to relevant South Downs National Park Authority guidance for any other relevant guidelines to preserve the setting of the South Downs National Park.
- Continue to preserve and enhance the local PRow network.
- Support the aims and objectives of relevant designations, including heathland and rare species conservation.

Development Guidelines

- Development should be limited and designed to retain the rural character of the majority of the area, noting that there are several areas with prominent urbanising features, including in the western part adjacent to Burgess Hill.
- Protect and retain existing vegetation across the Landscape Character Area, including ancient woodland and on the edge of settlement areas.
- Avoid any adverse impact to the South Downs National Park's special qualities, including the setting and intervisibility with the National Park, with reference to relevant guidance and noting the importance of views from Ditchling Beacon and Blackcap.
- The height, scale, massing and articulation of any new development to be of a similar character of the existing valued context via locally characteristic building forms, high quality detailing and sympathetic contemporary architecture.
- Any new development should be set within a robust landscape framework as part of a wider blue green infrastructure strategy.

- Any new development should include materials which are well integrated into the wooded backdrop within views through colour studies and references to published guidelines.
- Ensure any development including lighting is assessed for its visual impact, including from the South Downs National Park.
- Reinstatement of historic field boundaries where they have been lost to amalgamation and retain the ancient field pattern.



APPENDIX 11: Methodology

LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY



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1. Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Methodology

- 1.1. The Analysis is based on this methodology which has been undertaken with regards to best practice as outlined within the following publications:
- Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (3rd Edition, 2013) – Landscape Institute / Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment;
 - Notes and Clarifications on Aspects of Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Third Edition (GLVIA3) – Technical Guidance Note LITGN-2024-01 (2024);
 - Visual Representation of Development Proposals (2019) – Landscape Institute Technical Guidance Note 06/19;
 - An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment (2014) – Natural England;
 - An Approach to Landscape Sensitivity Assessment – To Inform Spatial Planning and Land Management (2019) – Natural England.
 - Reviewing Landscape Visual Impact Assessments (LVIA's and Landscape and Visual appraisals (LVAs) Technical Guidance Note 1/20 Landscape Institute.
 - Assessing Landscape Value Outside National Designations, Technical Guidance Note 02/21 – Landscape Institute (2021).
- 1.2. GLVIA3 states within paragraph 1.1 that “Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) is a tool used to identify and assess the significance of and the effects of change resulting from development on both the landscape as an environmental resource in its own right and on people’s views and visual amenity.”¹
- 1.3. GLVIA3 also states within paragraph 1.17 that when identifying landscape and visual effects there is a “need for an approach that is in proportion to the scale of the project that is being assessed and the nature of the likely effects. Judgement needs to be exercised at all stages in terms of the scale of investigation that is appropriate and proportional.”²
- 1.4. GLVIA3 recognises within paragraph 2.23 that “professional judgement is a very important part of LVIA. While there is some scope for quantitative measurement of some relatively objective matters much of the assessment must rely on qualitative judgements”³ undertaken by a landscape consultant or a Chartered Member of the Landscape Institute (CMLI).
- 1.5. GLVIA3 notes in paragraph 1.3 that “LVIA may be carried out either formally, as part of an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), or informally, as a contribution to the ‘appraisal’ of development proposals and planning applications”⁴ Although the proposed development is not subject to an EIA requiring an assessment of the likely significance of effects, this

¹ Para 1.1, Page 4, GLVIA, 3rd Edition

² Para 1.17, Page 9, GLVIA, 3rd Edition

³ Para 2.23, Page 21, GLVIA, 3rd Edition

⁴ Para 1.3, Page 4, GLVIA, 3rd Edition

assessment is also titled as an LVIA rather than an 'appraisal' in the interests of common understanding with other planning consultants.

- 1.6. The effects on cultural heritage and ecology are not considered within this LVIA.

Study Area

- 1.7. The study area for this LVIA covers a 3km radius from the site. However, the main focus of the assessment was taken as a radius of 1km from the site as it is considered that even with clear visibility the proposals would not be perceptible in the landscape beyond this distance.

Effects Assessed

- 1.8. Landscape and visual effects are assessed through professional judgements on the sensitivity of landscape elements, character and visual receptors combined with the predicted magnitude of change arising from the proposals. The landscape and visual effects have been assessed in the following sections:

- Effects on landscape elements;
- Effects on landscape character; and
- Effects on visual amenity.

- 1.9. Sensitivity is defined in GLVIA3 as "a term applied to specific receptors, combining judgments of susceptibility of the receptor to a specific type of change or development proposed and the value related to that receptor."⁵ Various factors in relation to the value and susceptibility of landscape elements, character, visual receptors or representative viewpoints are considered below and cross referenced to determine the overall sensitivity as shown in Table 1:

Table 1, Overall sensitivity of landscape and visual receptors

	VALUE			
SUSCEPTIBILITY		HIGH	MEDIUM	LOW
	HIGH	High	High	Medium
	MEDIUM	High	Medium	Medium
	LOW	Medium	Medium	Low

- 1.10. Magnitude of change is defined in GLVIA3 as "a term that combines judgements about the size and scale of the effect, the extent over which it occurs, whether it is reversible or irreversible and whether it is short or long term in duration."⁶ Various factors contribute to

⁵ Glossary, Page 158, GLVIA, 3rd Edition

⁶ Glossary, Page 158, GLVIA, 3rd Edition

the magnitude of change on landscape elements, character, visual receptors and representative viewpoints.

- 1.11. The sensitivity of the landscape and visual receptor and the magnitude of change arising from the proposals are cross referenced in Table 11 to determine the overall degree of landscape and visual effects.

2. Effects on Landscape Elements

- 2.1. The effects on landscape elements includes the direct physical change to the fabric of the land, such as the removal of woodland, hedgerows or grassland to allow for the proposals.

Sensitivity of Landscape Elements

- 2.2. Sensitivity is determined by a combination of the value that is attached to a landscape element and the susceptibility of the landscape element to changes that would arise as a result of the proposals – see pages 88–90 of GLVIA3. Both value and susceptibility are assessed on a scale of high, medium or low.
- 2.3. The criteria for assessing the value of landscape elements and landscape character is shown in Table 2:

Table 2, Criteria for assessing the value of landscape elements and landscape character

HIGH	Designated landscape including but not limited to World Heritage Sites, National Parks, National Landscapes (formerly Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty) considered to be an important component of the country's character or non-designated landscape of a similar character and quality. Landscape condition is good and components are generally maintained to a high standard. In terms of seclusion, enclosure by land use, traffic and movement, light pollution and absence of major built infrastructure, the landscape has an elevated level of tranquility. Rare or distinctive landscape elements and features are key components that contribute to the landscape character of the area.
MEDIUM	Undesignated landscape including urban fringe and rural countryside considered to be a distinctive component of the national or local landscape character. Landscape condition is fair and components are generally well maintained. In terms of seclusion, enclosure by land use, traffic and movement, light pollution and some major built infrastructure, the landscape has a moderate level of tranquility. Rare or distinctive landscape elements and features are notable components that contribute to the character of the area.
LOW	Undesignated landscape including urban fringe and rural countryside considered to be of unremarkable character. Landscape condition may be poor and components poorly maintained or damaged. In terms of seclusion, enclosure by land use, traffic and movement, light pollution and significant major built infrastructure, the landscape has limited levels of tranquility. Rare or distinctive elements and features are not notable components that contribute to the landscape character of the area.

- 2.4. The criteria for assessing the susceptibility of landscape elements and landscape character is shown in Table 3:

Table 3, Criteria for assessing landscape susceptibility

HIGH	Scale of enclosure – landscapes with a low capacity to accommodate the type of development being proposed owing to the interactions of topography, vegetation cover, built form, etc. Nature of land use – landscapes with no or little existing reference or context to the type of development being proposed. Nature of existing elements – landscapes with components that are not easily replaced or substituted (e.g. ancient woodland, mature trees, historic parkland, etc). Nature of existing features – landscapes where detracting features, major infrastructure or industry is not present or where present has a limited influence on landscape character.
MEDIUM	Scale of enclosure – landscapes with a medium capacity to accommodate the type of development being proposed owing to the interactions of topography, vegetation cover, built form, etc. Nature of land use – landscapes with some existing reference or context to the type of development being proposed. Nature of existing elements – landscapes with components that are easily replaced or substituted. Nature of existing features – landscapes where detracting features, major infrastructure or industry is present and has a noticeable influence on landscape character.
LOW	Scale of enclosure – landscapes with a high capacity to accommodate the type of development being proposed owing to the interactions of topography, vegetation cover, built form, etc. Nature of land use – landscapes with extensive existing reference or context to the type of development being proposed. Nature of existing features – landscapes where detracting features or major infrastructure is present and has a dominating influence on the landscape.

- 2.5. Various factors in relation to the value and susceptibility of landscape elements are assessed and cross referenced to determine the overall sensitivity as shown in Table 1.
- 2.6. Sensitivity is defined in GLVIA3 as “a term applied to specific receptors, combining judgments of susceptibility of the receptor to a specific type of change or development proposed and the value related to that receptor.”⁷ The definitions for high, medium, low landscape sensitivity are shown in Table 4:

⁷ Glossary, Page 158, GLVIA, 3rd Edition

Table 4, Criteria for assessing landscape sensitivity

HIGH	Landscape element or character area defined as being of high value combined with a high or medium susceptibility to change. Landscape element or character area defined as being of medium value combined with a high susceptibility to change.
MEDIUM	Landscape element or character area defined as being of high value combined with a low susceptibility to change. Landscape element or character area defined as being of medium value combined with a medium or low susceptibility to change. Landscape element or character area defined as being of low value combined with a high or medium susceptibility to change.
LOW	Landscape element or character area defined as being of low value combined with a low susceptibility to change.

Magnitude of Change on Landscape Elements

- 2.7. Professional judgement has been used to determine the magnitude of change on individual landscape elements within the site as shown in Table 5:

Table 5, Criteria for assessing magnitude of change for landscape elements

HIGH	Substantial loss/gain of a landscape element.
MEDIUM	Partial loss/gain or alteration to part of a landscape element.
LOW	Minor loss/gain or alteration to part of a landscape element.
NEGLIGIBLE	No loss/gain or very limited alteration to part of a landscape element.

3. Effects on Landscape Character

- 3.1. Landscape character is defined as the “distinct, recognisable and consistent pattern of elements in the landscape that makes one landscape different from another, rather than better or worse.”⁸
- 3.2. The assessment of effects on landscape character considers how the introduction of new landscape elements physically alters the landform, landcover, landscape pattern and perceptual attributes of the site or how visibility of the proposals changes the way in which the landscape character is perceived.

Sensitivity of Landscape Character

- 3.3. Sensitivity is determined by a combination of the value that is attached to a landscape and the susceptibility of the landscape to changes that would arise as a result of the proposals – see pages 88–90 of GLVIA3. Both value and susceptibility are assessed on a scale of high, medium or low.
- 3.4. The criteria for assessing the value of landscape character is shown in Table 2.
- 3.5. The criteria for assessing the susceptibility of landscape character is shown in Table 3.
- 3.6. The overall sensitivity is determined through cross referencing the value and susceptibility of landscape character as shown in Table 1.

Magnitude of Change on Landscape Character

- 3.7. Professional judgement has been used to determine the magnitude of change on landscape character as shown in Table 6:

Table 6, Criteria for assessing magnitude of change on landscape character

HIGH	Introduction of major new elements into the landscape or some major change to the scale, landform, landcover or pattern of the landscape.
MEDIUM	Introduction of some notable new elements into the landscape or some notable change to the scale, landform, landcover or pattern of the landscape.
LOW	Introduction of minor new elements into the landscape or some minor change to the scale, landform, landcover or pattern of the landscape.
NEGLIGIBLE	No notable or appreciable introduction of new elements into the landscape or change to the scale, landform, landcover or pattern of the landscape.

⁸ Glossary, Page 157, GLVIA, 3rd Edition

4. Effects on Visual Amenity

4.1. Visual amenity is defined within GLVIA3 as the “overall pleasantness of the views people enjoy of their surroundings, which provides an attractive visual setting or backdrop for the enjoyment of activities of the people living, working, recreating, visiting or travelling through an area.”⁹

4.2. The effects on visual amenity considers the changes in views arising from the proposals in relation to visual receptors including settlements, residential properties, transport routes, recreational facilities and attractions; and representative viewpoints or specific locations within the study area as agreed with the Local Planning Authority.

Sensitivity of Visual Receptors

4.3. Sensitivity is determined by a combination of the value that is attached to a view and the susceptibility of the visual receptor to changes in that view that would arise as a result of the proposals – see pages 113–114 of GLVIA3. Both value and susceptibility are assessed on a scale of high, medium or low.

4.4. The criteria for assessing the value of views are shown in Table 7:

Table 7, Criteria for assessing the value of views

HIGH	Views with high scenic value within designated landscapes including but not limited to World Heritage Sites, National Parks, National Landscape (formerly Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty), etc. Likely to include key viewpoints on OS maps or reference within guidebooks, provision of facilities, presence of interpretation boards, etc.
MEDIUM	Views with moderate scenic value within undesignated landscape including urban fringe and rural countryside.
LOW	Views with unremarkable scenic value within undesignated landscape with partly degraded visual quality and detractors.

4.5. The criteria for assessing the susceptibility of views are shown in Table 8:

Table 8, Criteria for assessing visual susceptibility

HIGH	Includes occupiers of residential properties and people engaged in recreational activities in the countryside using public rights of way (PROW).
MEDIUM	Includes people engaged in outdoor sporting activities and people travelling through the landscape on minor roads and trains.
LOW	Includes people at places of work e.g. industrial and commercial premises and people travelling through the landscape on major roads and motorways.

4.6. Sensitivity is defined in GLVIA3 as “a term applied to specific receptors, combining judgments of susceptibility of the receptor to a specific type of change or development

⁹ Page 158, Glossary, GLVIA3

proposed and the value related to that receptor.”¹⁰ The definitions for high, medium, low visual sensitivity are shown in Table 9:

Table 9, Criteria for assessing visual sensitivity

HIGH	Visual receptor defined as being of high value combined with a high or medium susceptibility to change. Visual receptor defined as being of medium value combined with a high susceptibility to change.
MEDIUM	Visual receptor defined as being of high value combined with a low susceptibility to change. Visual receptor defined as being of medium value combined with a medium or low susceptibility to change. Visual receptor defined as being of low value combined with a high or medium susceptibility to change.
LOW	Visual receptor defined as being of low value combined with a low susceptibility to change.

Magnitude of Change on Visual Receptors

- 4.7. Professional judgement has been used to determine the magnitude of change on visual receptors as shown in Table 10:

Table 10, Criteria for assessing magnitude of change for visual receptors

HIGH	Major change in the view that has a substantial influence on the overall view.
MEDIUM	Some change in the view that is clearly visible and forms an important but not defining element in the view.
LOW	Some change in the view that is appreciable with few visual receptors affected.
NEGLIGIBLE	No notable change in the view.

¹⁰ Glossary, Page 158, GLVIA, 3rd Edition

5. Significance of Landscape And Visual Effects

- 5.1. The likely significance of effects is dependent on all of the factors considered in the sensitivity and the magnitude of change upon the relevant landscape and visual receptors. These factors are assimilated to assess whether or not the proposed development will have a likely significant or not significant effect. The variables considered in the evaluation of the sensitivity and the magnitude of change is reviewed holistically to inform the professional judgement of significance.
- 5.2. Within Table 11 below, the major effects highlighted in grey are considered to be significant in terms of the EIA Regulations. It should be noted that whilst an individual effect may be significant, it does not necessarily follow that the proposed development would be unacceptable in the planning balance. The cross referencing of the sensitivity and magnitude of change on the landscape and visual receptor determines the significance of effect as shown in Table 11:

Table 11, Significance of landscape and visual effects

		Sensitivity		
		HIGH	MEDIUM	LOW
Magnitude of Change	HIGH	Major	Major	Moderate
	MEDIUM	Major	Moderate	Minor
	LOW	Moderate	Minor	Minor
	NEGLIGIBLE	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible

6. Typical Descriptors of Landscape Effects

6.1. The typical descriptors of the landscape effects are detailed within Table 12:

Table 12, Typical Descriptors of Landscape Effects

MAJOR BENEFICIAL	Substantially: - enhance the character (including value) of the landscape; - enhance the restoration of characteristic features and elements lost as a result of changes from inappropriate management or development; - enable a sense of place to be enhanced.
MODERATE BENEFICIAL	Moderately: - enhance the character (including value) of the landscape; - enable the restoration of characteristic features and elements partially lost or diminished as a result of changes from inappropriate management or development; - enable a sense of place to be restored.
MINOR BENEFICIAL	Slightly: - complement the character (including value) of the landscape; - maintain or enhance characteristic features or elements; - enable some sense of place to be restored.
NEGLIGIBLE	The proposed changes would (on balance) maintain the character (including value) of the landscape and would: - be in keeping with landscape character and blend in with characteristic features and elements; - Enable a sense of place to be maintained.
NO CHANGE	The proposed changes would not be visible and there would be no change to landscape character.
MINOR ADVERSE	Slightly: - not quite fit the character (including value) of the landscape; - be a variance with characteristic features and elements; - detract from the sense of place.
MODERATE ADVERSE	Moderately: - conflict with the character (including value) of the landscape; - have an adverse effect on characteristic features or elements; - diminish a sense of place.
MAJOR ADVERSE	Substantially: - be at variance with the character (including value) of the landscape; - degrade or diminish the integrity of a range of characteristic features and elements or cause them to be lost; - change a sense of place.

7. Typical Descriptors of Visual Effects

7.1. The typical descriptors of the visual effects are detailed within Table 13:

Table 13, Typical Descriptors of Visual Effects

MAJOR BENEFICIAL	Proposals would result in a major improvement in the view.
MODERATE BENEFICIAL	Proposals would result in a clear improvement in the view.
MINOR BENEFICIAL	Proposals would result in a slight improvement in the view.
NEGLIGIBLE	The proposed changes would be in keeping with, and would maintain, the existing view or where (on balance) the proposed changes would maintain the general appearance of the view (which may include adverse effects which are offset by beneficial effects for the same receptor) or due to distance from the receptor, the proposed change would be barely perceptible to the naked eye.
NO CHANGE	The proposed changes would not be visible and there would be no change to the view.
MINOR ADVERSE	Proposals would result in a slight deterioration in the view.
MODERATE ADVERSE	Proposals would result in a clear deterioration in the view.
MAJOR ADVERSE	Proposals would result in a major deterioration in the view.

8. Nature of Effects

- 8.1. GLVIA3 includes an entry that states *"effects can be described as positive or negative (or in some cases neutral) in their consequences for views and visual amenity."*¹¹ GLVIA3 does not, however, state how negative or positive effects should be assessed, and this therefore becomes a matter of professional judgement supported by site specific justification within the LVIA.

¹¹ Para 6.29, Page 113, GLVIA 3rd Edition

Town & Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended)
Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004

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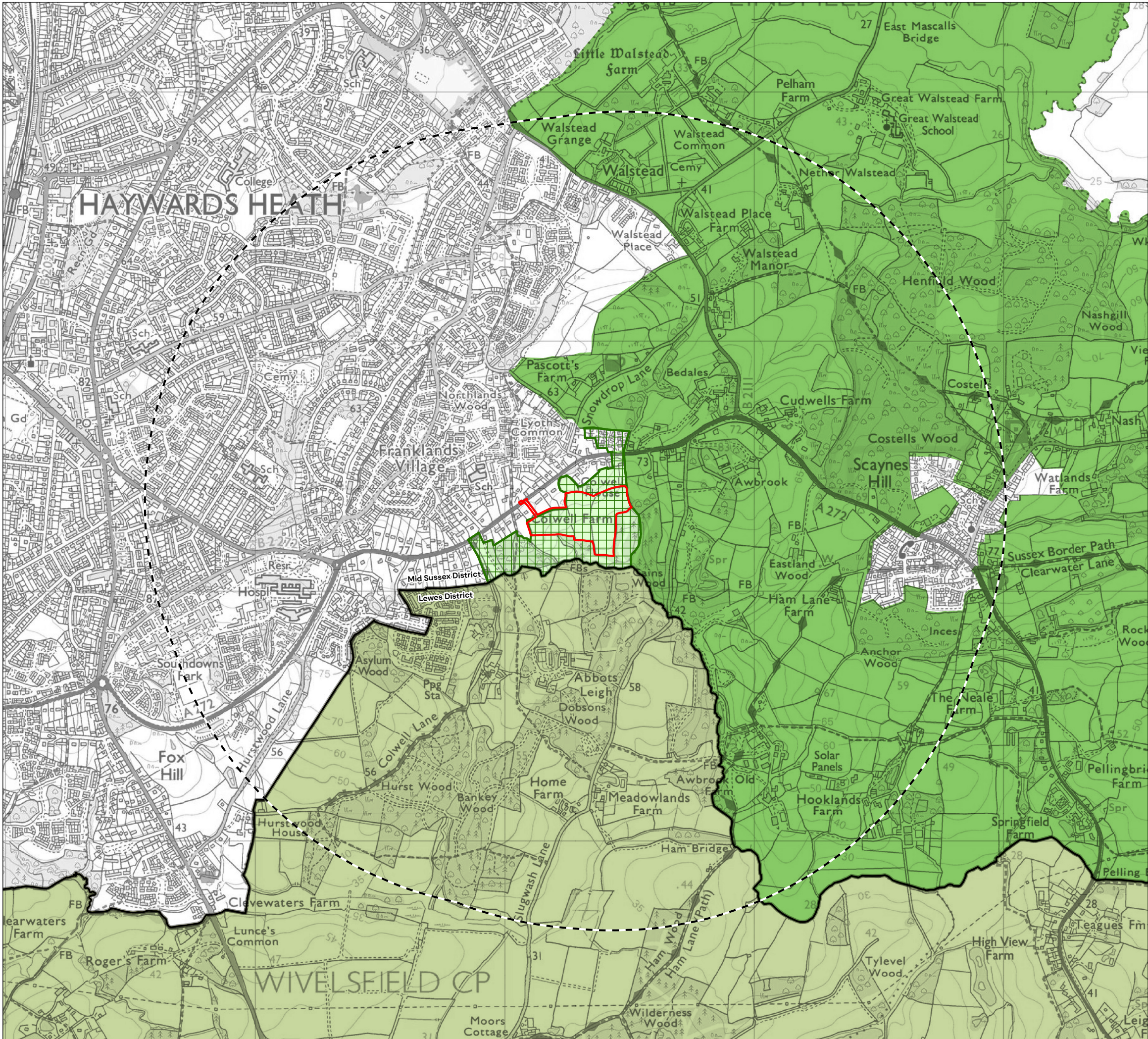
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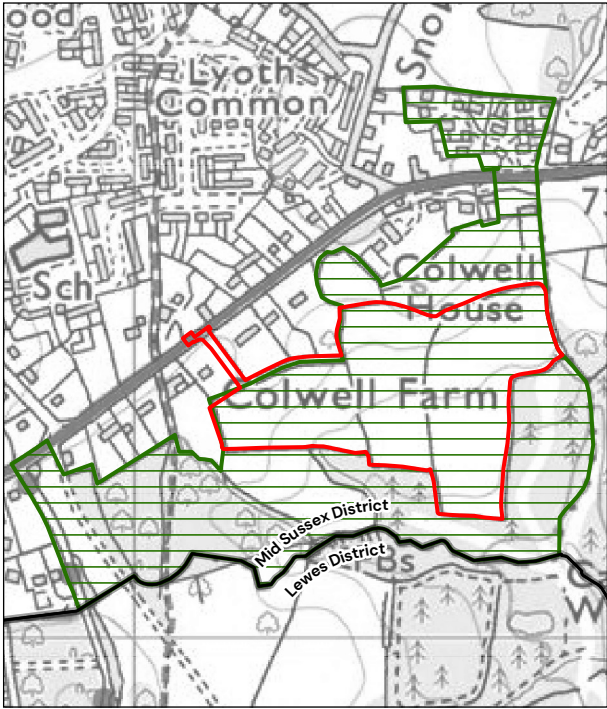
APPENDIX 12: Local Designations Plan

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- KEY**
- Site Boundary
 - 1.5km Study Area
 - District Boundary
 - Haywards Heath Town Council Neighbourhood Plan 2016 – Policy E5 local gap between Haywards Heath and neighbouring Town/Parishes
 - Mid Sussex District Plan 2014-2031 – Green Corridor
 - Mid Sussex District Plan 2014-2031 – Countryside Area of Development Restraint
 - Mid Sussex District Plan 2014-2031 – Protection and Enhancement of Countryside
 - Lewes District Local Plan 2020 – Countryside Policies (Policies DM2, DM3, DM4, DM5, DM6, DM7, DM9, DM10, DM11, DM12)

Inset showing Policy E5 local gap between Haywards Heath and neighbouring Town/Parishes



SCALE 1:9,000@A3 0 0.25 KM

REV	DATE	DESCRIPTION
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LOCAL DESIGNATIONS PLANS

COLWELL FARM

MILLER HOMES

DATE	SCALE	DRAWN	APPROVED
22/06/2026	1:15,000@A3	EN/AB	CR
SHEET	REV	N	0 0.25 KM
-	B	▲	

DRAWING NUMBER
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