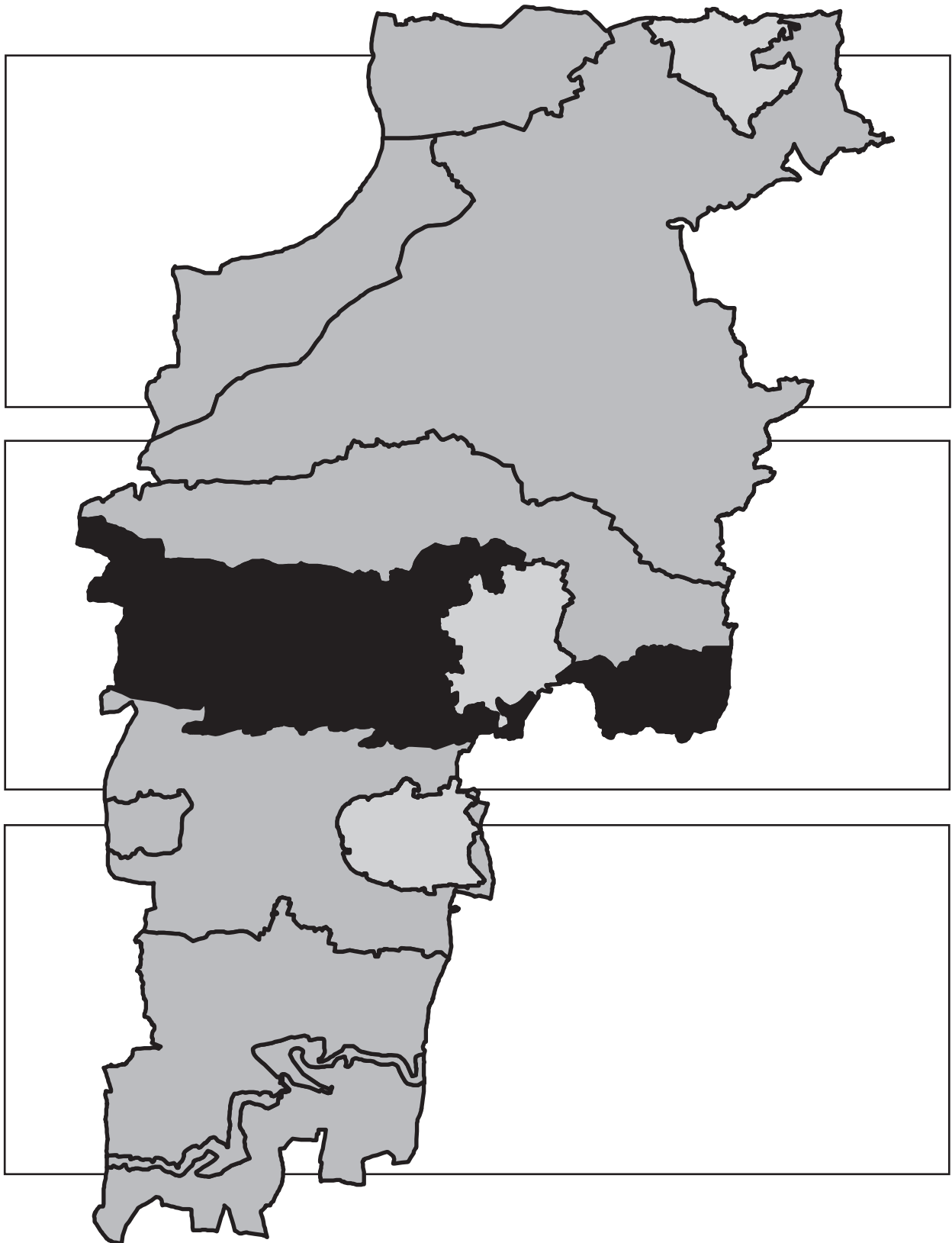


Landscape Character Area 10
High Weald Fringes



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 (SNCI). 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 *Marshalls*.

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 Sandrock 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.

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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, droeways, 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).*