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Capacity of Mid Sussex District to accommodate development

Executive Summary

Report for Mid Sussex District Council
Prepared by LUC
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1 Executive Summary

- 1.1 LUC was commissioned by Mid Sussex District Council (MSDC) in March 2014 to undertake a study to assess the capacity of the District to accommodate development. The study has an important role in providing an evidence base for the Mid Sussex District Plan and helping MSDC fulfil its Duty to Cooperate with neighbouring authorities regarding provision of housing across housing market areas. This is a summary of the full report, which summarises the findings of the study and draws conclusions regarding the capacity of the District to accommodate development and the most sustainable areas for development in the District. All figures referred to are included at the end of this summary.

Aim and objectives

- 1.2 The overall aim of the study was to provide a detailed and robust assessment of the constraints to development in Mid Sussex District, in order to understand the capacity of the District to accommodate development and identify the most sustainable areas for development.
- 1.3 The study was undertaken to form part of the evidence base for the District Plan in relation to the level of development that can be satisfactorily and sustainably accommodated within the district. The study looked at four areas that were considered to have an impact on the overall capacity of the District to accommodate development:
- Environment
 - Infrastructure
 - Landscape Capacity
 - Sustainability
- 1.4 The study objectives were to:
- a. Provide an analysis of the impact of local and national environmental designations, on the capacity for growth in Mid Sussex.
 - b. Provide an analysis of the impact of environmental issues (including water supply, flood risk, waste water and Air Quality Management Areas) on the capacity for development in Mid Sussex.
 - c. Provide an analysis of the sustainability of the District, in terms of access to services **(including schools and GP's) on the capacity for development** in Mid Sussex.
 - d. Draw conclusions regarding the capacity of the District to accommodate development.
 - e. Make recommendations on how issues that have potentially limiting impact on development could be overcome.
 - f. Make recommendations on the most sustainable areas for development, taking into account all the issues above.

Key Headlines

- 1.5 Mid Sussex District is heavily constrained by environmental designations and its attractive countryside and high quality landscape character in particular. This study has brought together information from a number of sources and mapped the various environmental constraints to development that exist in the District. **Figure 1** shows the numerous different national and local designations and environmental assets that cover almost all of Mid Sussex.

- 1.6 **Figure 8** highlights that almost two thirds of the District is covered by primary level constraints, i.e. areas that are afforded the highest protection under national policy. In the remaining parts of the District, very few areas (only 4% of the District) are not also covered by one or more secondary constraints (still sensitive but have less weight applied to them in national policy) or not already built upon. Only those areas in close proximity to the main settlements have more than three services within walking distance and are therefore likely to be more sustainable locations for new development (shown in purple hatching). However, as shown on **Figure 8**, most of the areas around the main settlements are also constrained by at least one secondary constraint
- 1.7 In the parts of the District not covered by primary constraints, development could be more challenging where there is more than one secondary constraint due to the added costs and challenges that would be required to adequately mitigate the potentially significant impacts on the environment in those areas (depending upon the nature of the constraint concerned). **Figure 4** highlights those areas in the District where there are more than one secondary constraint.
- 63.6% of the District is covered by primary constraints.
 - 63.9% of the District is covered by primary constraints or has at least four secondary constraints.
 - 66.6% of the District is covered by primary constraints or has at least three secondary constraints.
 - 77.2% of the District is covered by primary constraints or has at least two secondary constraints.
 - 92% of the District is covered by primary constraints or has at least one secondary constraint. The main reason for this step-change is the extent of the landscape of the District outside of the primary constraints that has been assessed as having low or low/medium capacity to accommodate development.
- 1.8 Built-up areas account for 4% of the District, leaving only 4% that is not covered by a primary or secondary constraint. Only 2.3% of the District is not constrained by primary and secondary constraints and also has a least 3 services in walking distance (see **Figure 7**).

Overall context

- 1.9 Mid Sussex is one of seven Districts within West Sussex County in the South East of England. The District is predominantly rural, with three towns - Burgess Hill, East Grinstead and Haywards Heath – and a good mix of large and smaller villages/hamlets each with their own distinctive heritage and characteristics. Around 140,000 people live in the District, with 62% living in the three main towns and the remaining 38% living in the villages.¹
- 1.10 The District is consistently ranked highly on quality of life measures (including housing, environment, health and education).² This may be in part due to the attractiveness of the **District's countryside, natural environment and heritage. Around 60% is under national landscape protection designations, with 50% in the High Weald AONB in the northern part of the District and 10% in the South Downs National Park covering the southern corner of the District.** The results of the 2007 Landscape Capacity Study identified that many of the landscape character areas outside of the AONB and National Park are also distinctive and valuable landscapes sensitive to potential development. There are no areas assessed as having high landscape capacity (i.e. likely to be able to accommodate significant allocations of housing development). There are only two areas with medium/high capacity i.e. generally lower landscape sensitivity and therefore more able to accommodate large-scale development: LCA 53 Fox Hill immediately south of Haywards Heath, and LCA 58 West Burgess Hill Low Weald, on the western edge of Burgess Hill. Consequently much of the study area is heavily constrained with regard to the potential impacts of development on the landscape character of the District.

¹ 2011 Census data.

² Mid Sussex District Plan. Submission version (May 2013), p6

- 1.11 While there are no European-designated or Ramsar sites within the District there are thirteen Sites of Special Scientific Interest (all of which are within the AONB or National Park), and the Ashdown Forest SAC and SPA 7km zone of influence extends into the north eastern edge of the District (in this zone, planning applications proposing a net increase in residential dwellings will be required to mitigate their effects of increased recreational pressure). In addition, there are a number of local designations, including Sites of Nature Conservation Importance and Local Nature Reserves. Mid Sussex is also the tenth most wooded District in the South East, with two-thirds of woodland comprising Ancient Woodland. Together these provide a rich network of ecological assets, often linked by non-designated habitats that help to support the coherence of the overall resource for biodiversity, but are vulnerable to erosion and fragmentation by development, infrastructure and other human activity such as insensitive farming practices.
- 1.12 The historic environment in the District is also of high quality. There are over a thousand Listed Buildings located across the District, 25 Scheduled Monuments clustered mainly in the south of the District, some around the central area and two in the north near Felbridge and Copthorne, including moated sites, motte and bailey castles, a Romano-British villa and farmstead, hillfort and a deserted medieval settlement. The ten Registered Parks and Gardens are mostly within the northern half of the District. Mid Sussex District Council has also designated 36 Conservation areas since 1969, almost half of which are within and around the settlements of Haywards Heath, Burgess Hill, East Grinstead, Hurstpierpoint and Cuckfield.
- 1.13 Economically, the District is generally successful with high levels of employment and a very low level of unemployment. It has a relatively skilled and educated workforce and has access to higher educational establishments within the District (Central Sussex College) and two universities in Brighton (University of Brighton and University of Sussex). The District is well connected with good links by road and rail to London, Brighton and Gatwick and is within easy travelling distance of the Channel Tunnel, Southampton and Dover. Around 45% of workers commute out of the District. The nature of the local economy is therefore strongly influenced by the wider regional context in which it sits.³
- 1.14 Due to the high quality of the surroundings, accessibility to London and high quality of life in the District and along the south east coastal authorities, pressure for development, particularly housing and associated infrastructure, is high. However, the attractiveness of Mid Sussex District and its high quality landscapes, natural environment and heritage also represent significant constraints to development. In addition, capacity of infrastructure supporting towns and villages in the District is under pressure. These issues are summarised below along with the implications for capacity of Mid Sussex to accommodate development.

Environmental constraints to development

- 1.15 Not all constraints to development have equal weight. To assist with identifying what the constraints to development might be within the study area, the study identified the assets which **could be considered as 'primary constraints' due to their environmental sensitivity** and the policy safeguards that apply to them (i.e. where significant development is likely to be precluded) and **those which are 'secondary constraints' as they are still sensitive but have less weight applied to them in national policy** (i.e. where significant development may not be precluded, but where there is the risk of negative impacts, which could be significant, for example at the sub-national level). In some, but not necessarily all, instances it may be possible to avoid or reduce negative impacts on secondary constraints through mitigation. The primary and secondary constraints are identified in **Table 1**.

³ Mid Sussex District Plan. Submission version (May 2013), pp6-7

Table 1: Primary and secondary constraints to development in Mid Sussex

Theme	Primary Constraints	Secondary Constraints
Biodiversity	All designated sites (i.e. Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), Special Protection Areas (SPAs) Ramsar sites, Sites of Special Scientific Importance (SSSIs), Sites of Nature Conservation Importance (SNCIs), National Nature Reserves (NNRs) Local Nature Reserves (LNRs), Local Wildlife and Local Geological Sites (LWSs, LGSs)	Relevant buffer zones around designated sites: 7km from Ashdown Forest SPA Ancient Woodland including 15m buffer
Landscape	AONB, National Park	Buffer zone of 1km around AONB and National Park Areas with "Low" and "Low/Medium" landscape capacity
Historic Environment	All designated assets (World Heritage Sites, Scheduled Monuments, Listed Buildings, Registered Parks and Gardens, Registered Battlefields)	Conservation Areas
Air Quality	Not applicable	Current AQMA
Water Supply	Not applicable	Not applicable
Water Quality	Not applicable	Source Protection Zone 1
Flood Risk	Flood Zones 3a and 3b	Flood Zone 2
Soil Quality	Agricultural Land Grades 1 and 2	Not applicable
Energy Supply	Not applicable	Buffer zone of 100m either side of high voltage (400kV) electricity line
Open space, sport and recreation areas	Public Rights of Way	Sites identified as open space within PPG17 assessment Sustrans national cycle routes

- 1.16 **Figure 1** shows the environmental and infrastructure related primary and secondary constraints identified in the District, and highlights how constrained Mid Sussex is. There are only very small pockets of the District that are not already developed and have no significant environmental or infrastructure constraints, and even some of these may still be constrained (e.g. Grade 3 agricultural land has not been included in the primary and secondary constraints, nor has landscape with medium capacity for development).
- 1.17 Primary constraints have been identified where it is unlikely that there would be capacity for any significant development, because of both their high environmental sensitivity and the strong policy safeguards that apply to them. Primary constraints cover approximately 63% of the District, as shown in **Figure 2**. These largely comprise the nationally designated landscapes of the High Weald AONB and the South Downs National Park, as well as smaller areas in the District covered by national nature conservation and heritage designations, public rights of way, areas of

highest flood risk (zone 3) and high agricultural land quality (Grades 1 and 2, although there is no Grade 1 agricultural land in the District).

- 1.18 Outside the primary constraints, a further 29% of the District is covered by at least one secondary constraint. This means that, including the urban areas, 92% of the District is covered by one **form of 'mappable' constraint or another**. After urban areas are removed (4%) this leaves only 4% of the District without a primary or secondary constraint.
- 1.19 The secondary constraints mostly comprise the 7km buffer zone around Ashdown Forest SPA, which extends into the north east of Mid Sussex, the 1km buffer zones around the edges of the AONB and National Park, ancient woodland sites including a 15m buffer, open space, sports and **recreation areas and areas assessed as having "Low" and "Low/Medium" landscape capacity to accommodate development** (i.e. very sensitive landscapes where development would have a significant impact on landscape character – see **Figure 3**). Although these secondary constraints do not necessarily represent areas that cannot be developed, some are afforded protection under national policy, and often they represent areas where significant environmental impacts could occur, and where mitigation measures are likely to be required to avoid or reduce the significance of the impacts.

Infrastructure constraints to development

- 1.20 In addition to the environmental constraints, the capacity of existing transport, waste water and water supply infrastructure to support development in Mid Sussex is also under pressure.
- 1.21 While there are good rail connections within the District, there are high levels of car ownership, and much of the road network in the District comprises narrow, winding rural roads. There are congestion issues in the main towns and at major junctions, and East Grinstead in particular has acknowledged congestion problems along the A22/A264.⁴
- 1.22 Mid Sussex and other local authorities in the south east of England are in an area classified by the **Environment Agency as 'water-stressed'**. **There is currently insufficient water available to meet demand forecast in the South East Water area, without implementation of a number of demand management and water efficiency measures, along with numerous new water resource options, which are set out in South East Water's Water Resources Management Plan 2014.**
- 1.23 South East Water sets out in the Water Resources Management Plan 2014 a number of demand management and water efficiency measures that will be implemented, along with numerous new water resource options to ensure that forecast demand for water will be met to 2040. None of the new water resource options (e.g. groundwater sources, water transfer schemes, new reservoirs etc.) are located within Mid Sussex.
- 1.24 In terms of sewage treatment, while some of the WWTWs in the District may not currently have sufficient capacity currently to accommodate growth, investment funded by Southern Water and scheduled for delivery by 2015 will provide headroom at Goddards Green for approximately 3,000 dwellings. In addition, the water companies have advised that where need is identified through the local plan process, further expansion of the wastewater treatment works would be planned, **funded and delivered through the water industry's price review process**, subject to Environment Agency approval.

Access to services

- 1.25 In sustainability terms, it would be better to locate new housing developments in areas that are accessible to an existing range of services including public transport routes, as this would encourage more journeys by public transport, walking and cycling and reduce car journeys. This has associated benefits of reducing CO₂ emissions, noise and air pollution.

⁴ Mid Sussex District Plan. Submission version (May 2013), pp7-8

- 1.26 However, if development is over a certain scale (e.g. 500-1,000 dwellings⁵) then it may be necessary to invest in provision of new services and facilities to serve the development. Conversely, unless proposed development includes 500 or more dwellings, then it is likely to have to rely on existing services (and potentially invest in those services). Therefore, the most sustainable locations in the District to accommodate new development are likely to be those areas that are least constrained, and are in walking distance of a range of services, as shown in **Figure 5**.
- 1.27 The more sustainable locations in the District are likely to be around the edges of the main urban settlements of East Grinstead, Haywards Heath and Burgess Hill, as well as Hurstpierpoint, Hassocks, Keymer, Bolney, Crawley Down and Copthorne, although these areas still have up to three secondary constraints that would need to be considered when assessing their suitability to accommodate development (see **Figure 6**).
- 1.28 Only 2.3% of the District is not constrained by primary and secondary constraints and also has at least three services in walking distance (see **Figure 7**). There is nowhere around East Grinstead, and Burgess Hill has only an area to the west. There are more opportunities at Haywards Heath than the other two main settlements (to the west, south and east of Haywards Heath). Finally, a small area west of Hurstpierpoint and the A23, and areas to the north and west of Crawley Down have no primary/secondary constraints and access to at least three services.
- 1.29 However, even the areas shown on **Figure 7** may not be completely 'unconstrained'. Although they do not fall within the categories of primary and secondary constraints identified in this study (see **Table 1**), there may be other potential constraints to development to take into account, such as Grade 3a best and most versatile agricultural land or medium sensitivity landscapes, as well as access, and infrastructure issues at the local level which may make delivery of new housing more of a challenge than **Figure 7** suggests. In addition, there are other factors not included in this study such as site ownership and availability that will also need to be taken into consideration in the plan-making process, and may mean that areas outside of primary and secondary constraints are unsuitable for development.

Conclusions

- 1.30 Mid Sussex District is heavily constrained by environmental designations and its attractive countryside and high quality landscape character in particular. This study has brought together information from a number of sources and mapped the various environmental constraints to development that exist in the District. **Figure 1** showed the numerous different national and local designations and environmental assets that cover almost all of Mid Sussex.
- 1.31 **Figure 8** highlights that almost two thirds of the District is covered by primary level constraints, i.e. areas that are afforded the highest protection under national policy. In the remaining parts of the District, very few areas (only 4% of the District) are not also covered by one or more secondary constraints (still sensitive but have less weight applied to them in national policy) or not already built upon. Only those areas in close proximity to the main settlements have more than three services within walking distance and are therefore likely to be more sustainable locations for new development (shown in purple hatching). However, as shown on **Figure 8**, most of the areas around the main settlements are also constrained by at least one secondary constraint.
- 1.32 For development to occur in areas around the main settlements which still have secondary constraints, a number of mitigation measures are likely to be needed, including for example:
- Contributions to mitigation and provision of SANGs would be needed for development within the 7km Zone of Influence for the Ashdown Forest SPA/SAC (i.e. around East Grinstead and Haywards Heath).

⁵ Sustainable urban neighbourhoods. Building communities that last. Joseph Rowntree Foundation (February 2012) p12 – notes that in order to count as a 'sustainable urban neighbourhood' new settlements should have a wide choice of housing and facilities, and that a neighbourhood with some common facilities requires a minimum of between 500 and 1,000 units.

- A detailed ecological assessment would be required to determine the existing biodiversity within potential development locations, its status and condition, and its potential in order to **inform what mitigation measures would be required to safeguard and enhance the District's biodiversity interest** (such as areas of ancient woodland).
- Development would need to be designed to maintain or where possible enhance the quality of the rural and landscape character of the District.
- A detailed assessment would need to be undertaken to determine the potential for significant effects on designated historic assets and the likelihood of historic assets being present.
- Discussions with the Environment Agency and water companies may be needed to determine the extent and feasibility of investment in waste water treatment works to accommodate additional development without breaching water quality targets.
- Development in the south of the District around Hurstpierpoint would need to take account of the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land in that area and seek to use areas of poorer quality agricultural land in preference to that of higher quality.
- Development in the areas around some of the main settlements may need to avoid small areas of flood risk zone 2 and 3, and incorporate SuDS into new development to ensure that run-off is managed so that the risk of flooding is not exacerbated elsewhere.
- Development would need to protect and incorporate the National Cycle Routes and PROWs, as well as existing open space, sport and recreation areas.
- Development would need to ensure that the surrounding transport infrastructure has sufficient capacity to accommodate the needs of new residents, or can be upgraded to serve higher volumes of traffic.

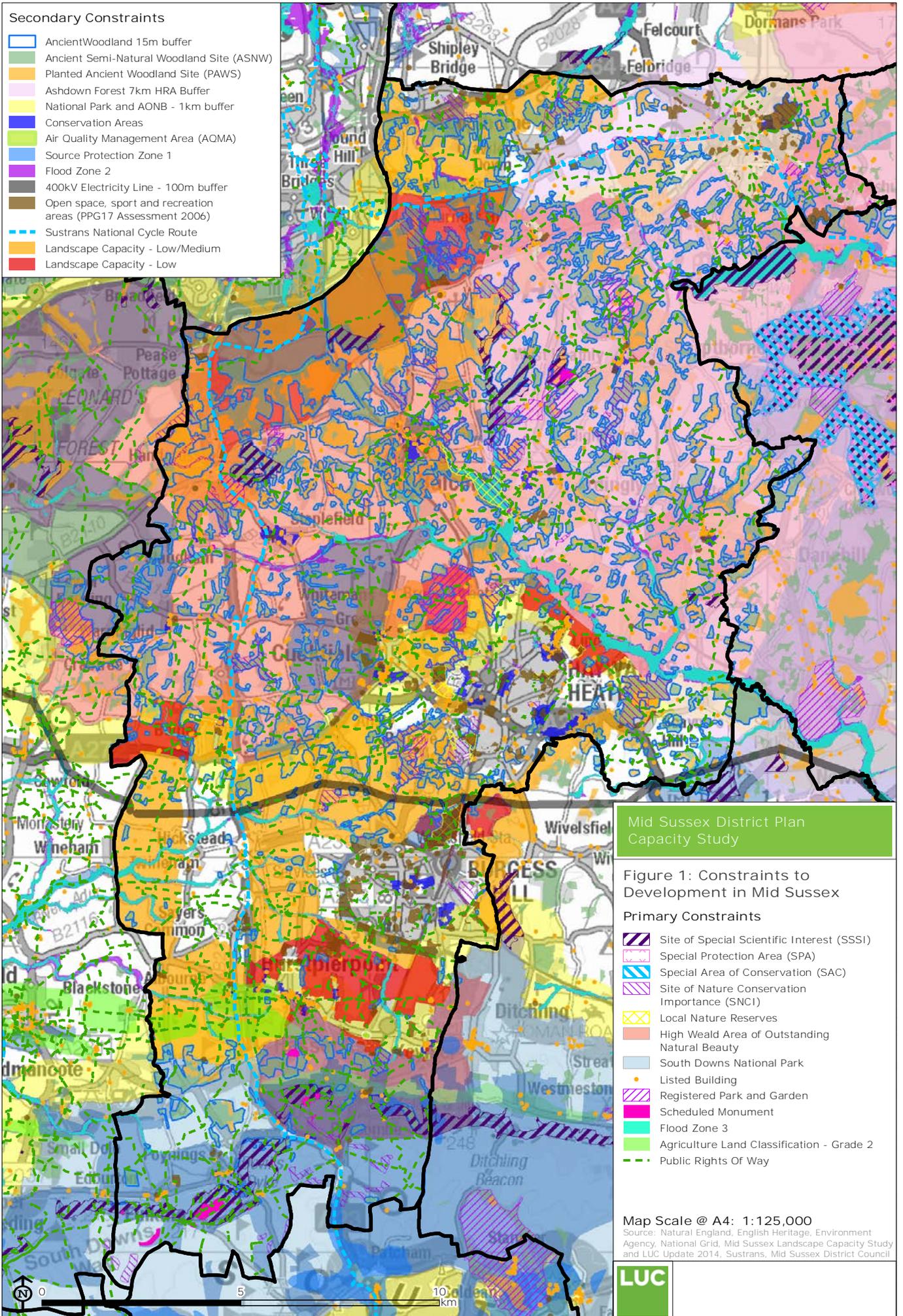
1.33 **Figure 8** also shows that there is a relatively unconstrained area of the District to the west of the A23 south of Bolney which is only slightly constrained by some small areas of flood risk zone 3 and PROWs. However, this area does not have access to more than three services, indeed **Figure 5** showed there to be only a school, open space and a bus service along the A23, within walking distance of this area. This area is categorised as having only medium landscape capacity (see **Figure 3**), therefore, development in this location could have a significant effect on landscape character. In addition, the location close to the A23 might encourage commuting by unsustainable modes of transport, which suggests that it may not be the most sustainable option for accommodating further growth.

1.34 In conclusion, if there is a development need identified for the District that cannot be accommodated within the areas identified as not being covered by primary and secondary constraints and/or within walking distance of a range of services and facilities, then decisions will come down to **levels of 'acceptability', which in turn may be influenced by mitigation measures** proposed and how well they can be implemented.

1.35 There is also a need to recognise that development will need to take place to meet requirements beyond a local plan period. Depending on the rate of development in the short term, there may be less flexibility to deliver development in the future without compromising the environmental capacity of the District.

Secondary Constraints

-  Ancient Woodland 15m buffer
-  Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland Site (ASNW)
-  Planted Ancient Woodland Site (PAWS)
-  Ashdown Forest 7km HRA Buffer
-  National Park and AONB - 1km buffer
-  Conservation Areas
-  Air Quality Management Area (AQMA)
-  Source Protection Zone 1
-  Flood Zone 2
-  400kV Electricity Line - 100m buffer
-  Open space, sport and recreation areas (PPG17 Assessment 2006)
-  Sustrans National Cycle Route
-  Landscape Capacity - Low/Medium
-  Landscape Capacity - Low



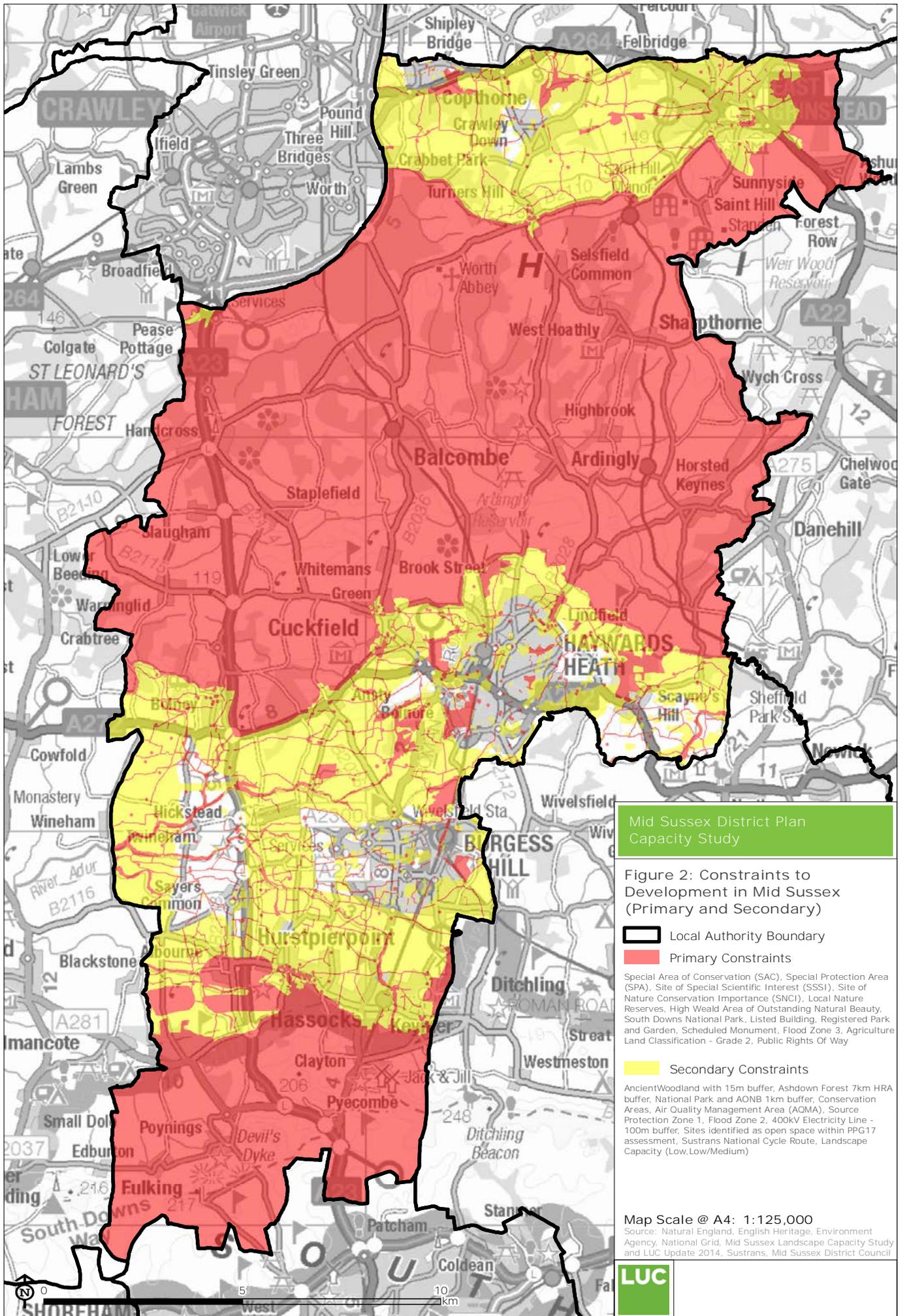
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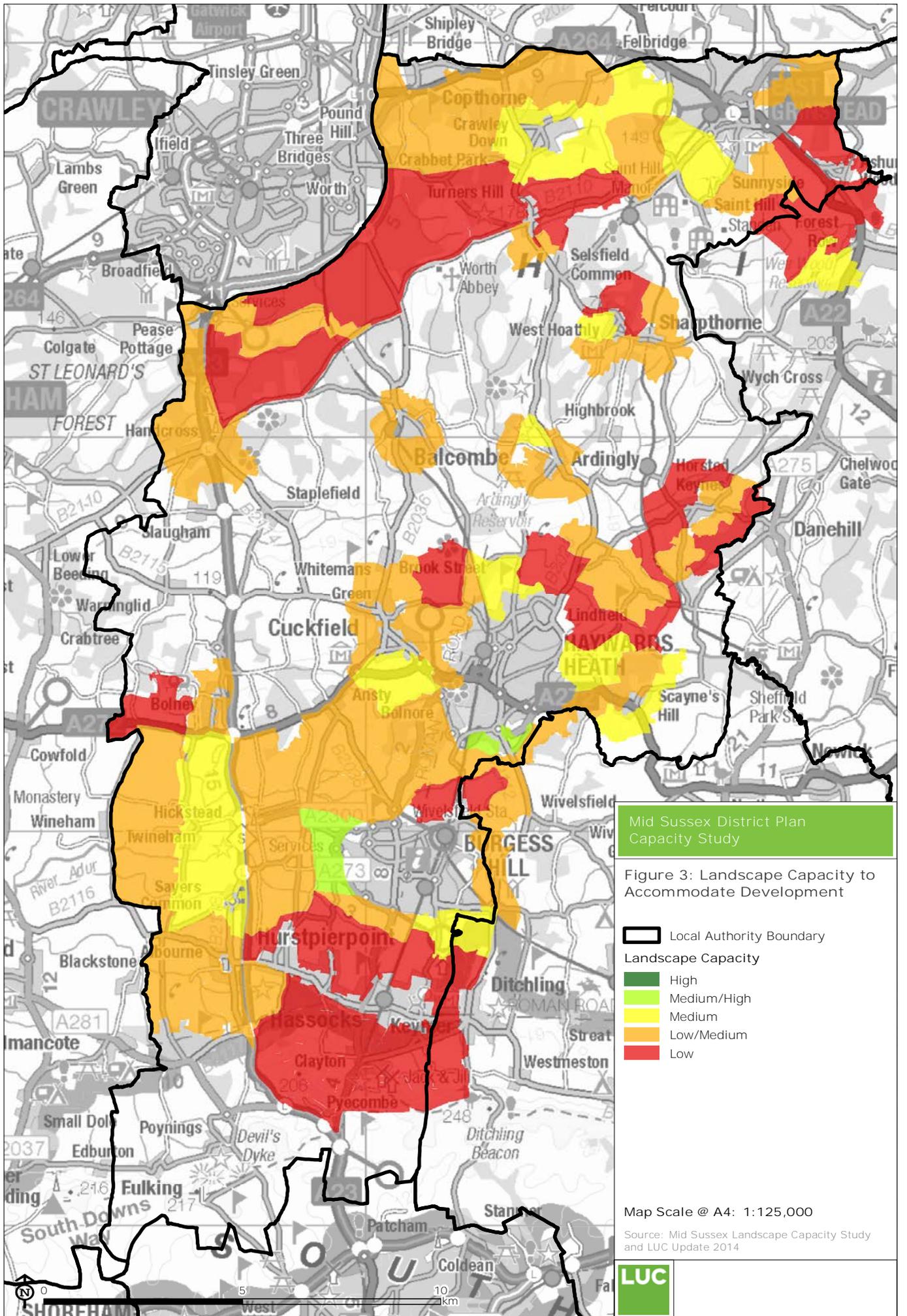
Figure 1: Constraints to Development in Mid Sussex

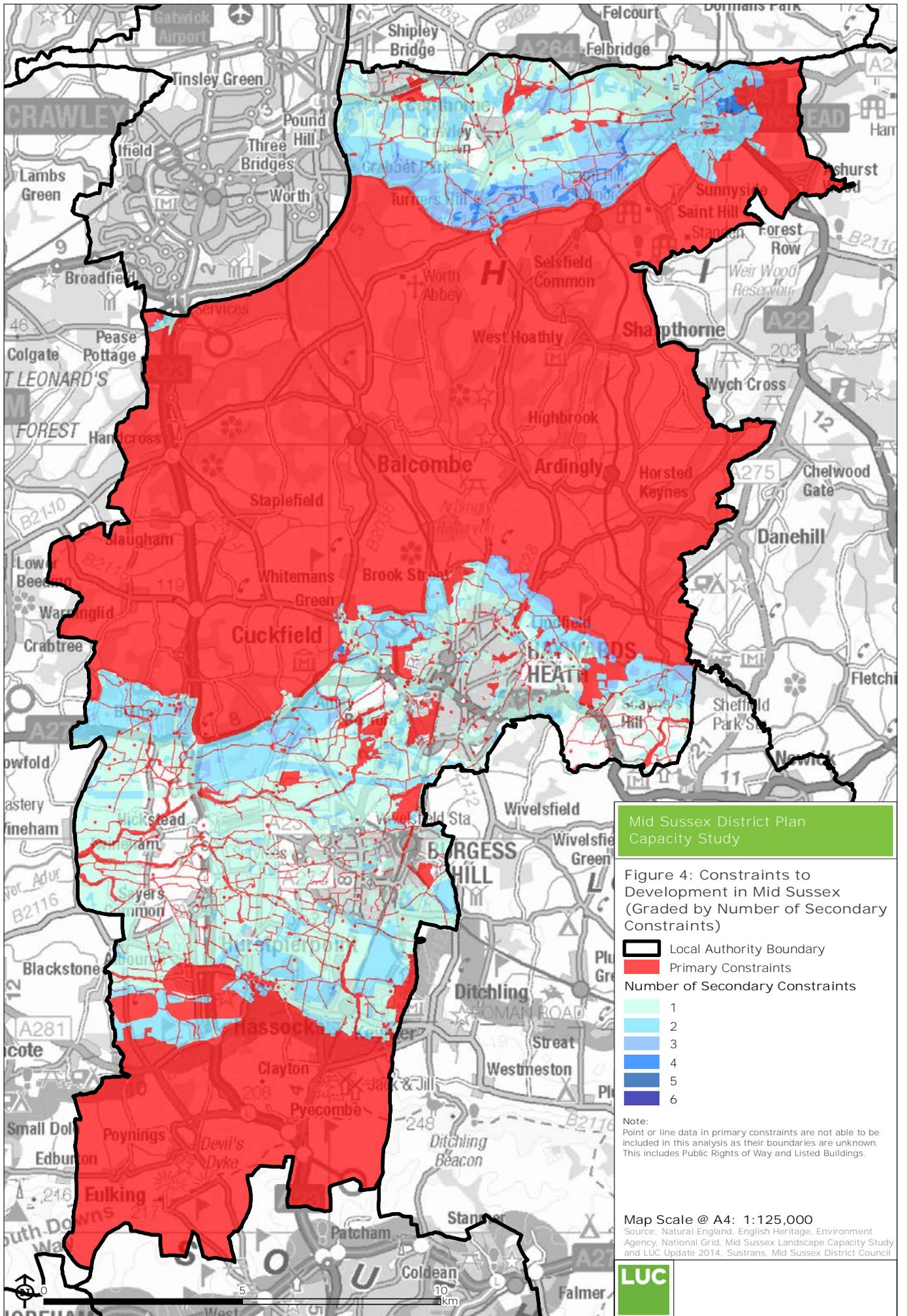
- Primary Constraints
-  Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)
 -  Special Protection Area (SPA)
 -  Special Area of Conservation (SAC)
 -  Site of Nature Conservation Importance (SNCI)
 -  Local Nature Reserves
 -  High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
 -  South Downs National Park
 -  Listed Building
 -  Registered Park and Garden
 -  Scheduled Monument
 -  Flood Zone 3
 -  Agriculture Land Classification - Grade 2
 -  Public Rights Of Way

Map Scale @ A4: 1:125,000
 Source: Natural England, English Heritage, Environment Agency, National Grid, Mid Sussex Landscape Capacity Study and LUC Update 2014, Sustrans, Mid Sussex District Council









Mid Sussex District Plan
Capacity Study

Figure 4: Constraints to Development in Mid Sussex (Graded by Number of Secondary Constraints)

- Local Authority Boundary
- Primary Constraints
- Number of Secondary Constraints
 - 1
 - 2
 - 3
 - 4
 - 5
 - 6

Note:
Point or line data in primary constraints are not able to be included in this analysis as their boundaries are unknown. This includes Public Rights of Way and Listed Buildings.

Map Scale @ A4: 1:125,000
Source: Natural England, English Heritage, Environment Agency, National Grid, Mid Sussex Landscape Capacity Study and LUC Update 2014, Sustrans, Mid Sussex District Council



