Town and Country Planning Act 1990

Section 78 Appeal

LVIA Appendix C

Landscape Characterisation Extracts

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on behalf of Mid-Sussex District Council.

April 2021

Appellant: Hartmires Investment Ltd

Appeal Site: Land north of Turners Hill Road, Turners Hill

LPA Reference: DM20/2877 and AP/21/0009

PINS Reference: APP/D3830/W/21/3266563

Extracts from the following landscape characterisation documents have been compiled and form LVIA Appendix C

Appendix Ref	Source Document for Extract
LVIA Appendix C1	NCA 122 – High Weald by Natural England – December 2013
LVIA Appendix C2	A Strategy for the West Sussex Landscape by West Sussex County Council – October 2005.
LVIA Appendix C3	A Landscape Character Assessment for Mid Sussex by MSDC – November 2005.
LVIA Appendix C4	Capacity of Mid Sussex District to Accommodate Development Study – July 2007.
LVIA Appendix C5	Mid-Sussex Capacity Study – by LUC on behalf of MSDC – June 2014
LVIA Appendix C6	High Weald AONB Landscape Character Assessment by High Weald JAC – November 1994
LVIA Appendix C7	High Weald AONB Management Plan 2019-24 by High Weald JAC – 2019

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National Character Area profile:

122: High Weald

Supporting documents

NATURAL ENGLAND

www.naturalengland.org.uk

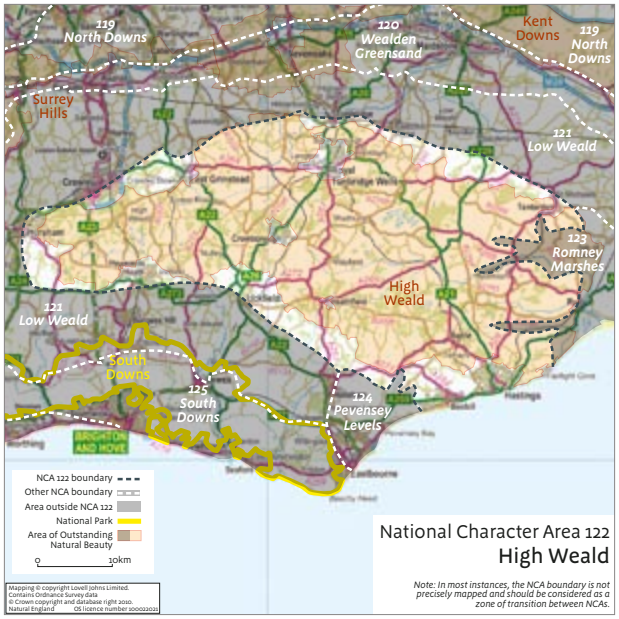
Summary

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.

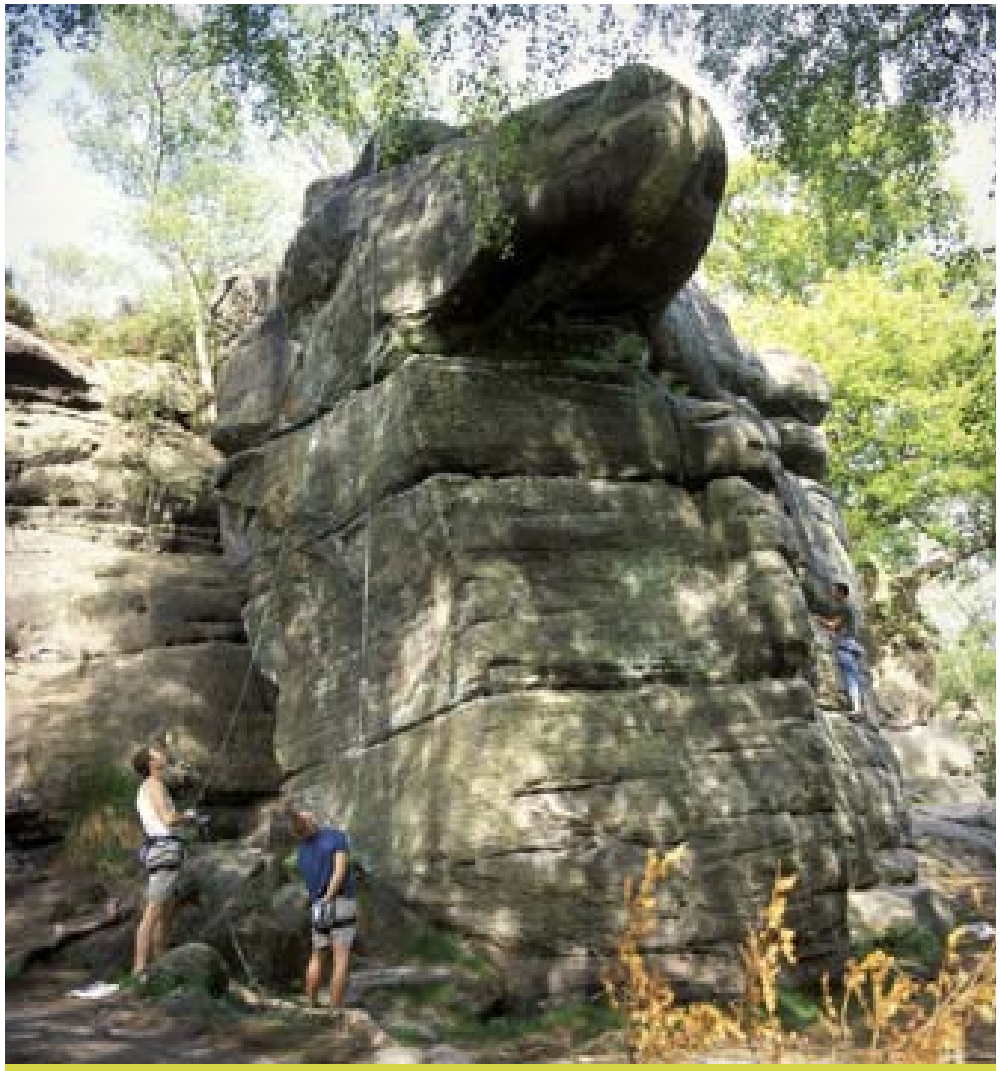
Small and medium-sized irregularly shaped fields enclosed by a network of hedgerows and wooded shaws, predominantly of medieval origin.

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.

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.

- **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 know 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 for bring two thirds of woodland back into active management with the potential for increasing 25,000m3 per year of confer 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.

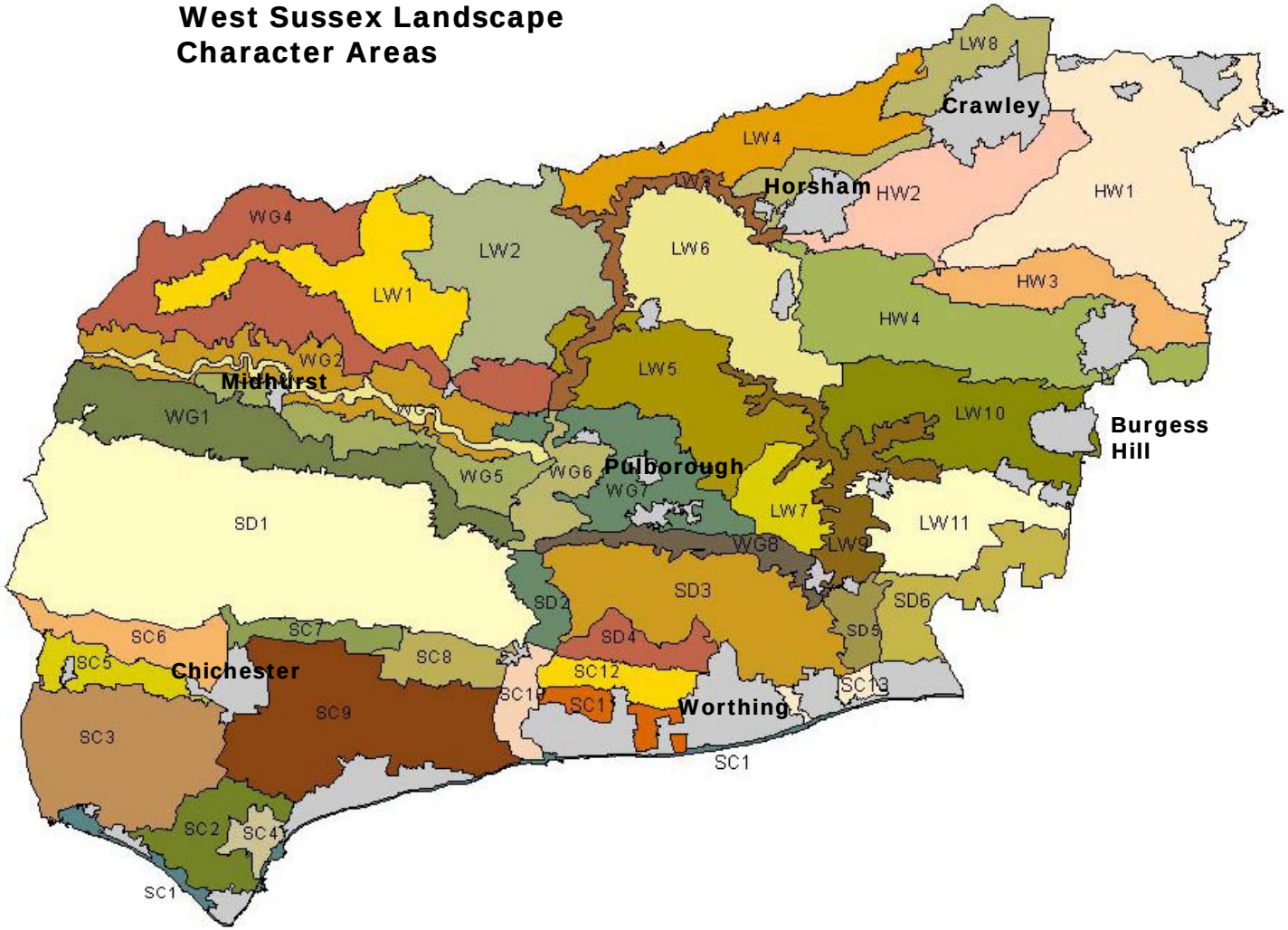
For example by:

- 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.

Appendix Ref	Source Document for Extract
LVIA Appendix C1	NCA 122 – High Weald by Natural England – December 2013
LVIA Appendix C2	**A Strategy for the West Sussex Landscape by West Sussex County Council – October 2005.**
LVIA Appendix C3	A Landscape Character Assessment for Mid Sussex by MSDC – November 2005.
LVIA Appendix C4	Capacity of Mid Sussex District to Accommodate Development Study – July 2007.
LVIA Appendix C5	Mid-Sussex Capacity Study – by LUC on behalf of MSDC – June 2014
LVIA Appendix C6	High Weald AONB Landscape Character Assessment by High Weald JAC – November 1994
LVIA Appendix C7	High Weald AONB Management Plan 2019-24 by High Weald JAC – 2019

West Sussex Landscape Character Areas



SD4	Angmering Park
SC12	Angmering Upper Coastal Plain
WG6	Arun Wildbrooks
SC6	Ashlings Upper Coastal Plain
	Built Up Areas
SD3	Central Downs
LW6	Central Low Weald
WG8	Central Scarp Footslopes
SC3	Chichester Harbour
SC9	Chichester to Yapton Coastal Plain
SD5	Downland Adur Valley
SD2	Downland Arun Valley
SD6	Eastern Downs
LW10	Eastern Low Weald
LW11	Eastern Scarp Footslopes
SC8	Fontwell Upper Coastal Plain
SC7	Halnaker Upper Coastal Plain
HW1	High Weald
HW2	High Weald Forests
HW4	High Weald Fringes
SC11	Littlehampton & Worthing Fringes
LW4	Low Weald Hills
SC10	Lower Arun Valley
SC2	Manhood Peninsula
LW2	North Western Low Weald
LW1	North Western Ridges
WG4	North Western Valleys
LW8	Northern Vales
HW3	Ouse Valley
SC4	Pagham Harbour
WG2	Rother Farmlands
WG3	Rother Valley
WG5	Rother Woods and Heaths
SC1	South Coast Shoreline
SC5	Southbourne Coastal Plain
LW5	Southern Low Weald
WG7	Storrington Woods & Heaths
LW9	Upper Adur Valley
LW3	Upper Arun Valley
SD1	Western Downs
WG1	Western Scarp Footslopes
LW7	Wiston Low Weald
SC13	Worthing & Adur Fringes

West Sussex
County Council

A Strategy for the West Sussex Landscape

October 2005

west sussex county council

Background

1.1 The Landscape Character Assessment upon which the Strategy is based was carried out for West Sussex County Council by Chris Blandford Associates (CBA), being a revision of the *Landscape Assessment of West Sussex* (1995). The Landscape Character Assessment and *Land Management Guidelines* for individual Landscape Character Areas will be published separately. The County Council also recognises the importance of working jointly with partners to produce new, localised landscape character assessments for the Borough, District and AONB areas. In participating in such work, the County Council is spearheading a consistent approach at strategic and local levels.

1.2 The Landscape Strategy is part of the work of the *Character of West Sussex Partnership Programme* being carried out by the County Council and its partners. The five-year programme (2003-08) aims for higher quality development and land management practices which respect the character and environment of the County. Implementing the Landscape Strategy is one of a number of tools to help achieve this.

1.3 The information collected in the programme will be used to produce guidance for planners, developers, landowners and communities. It will help to build character into the heart of development and land management decisions. It will also be used to raise awareness of the value of the diverse landscapes of the County and assist communities to relate to a sense of place.

Purpose of the Strategy

1.4 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.

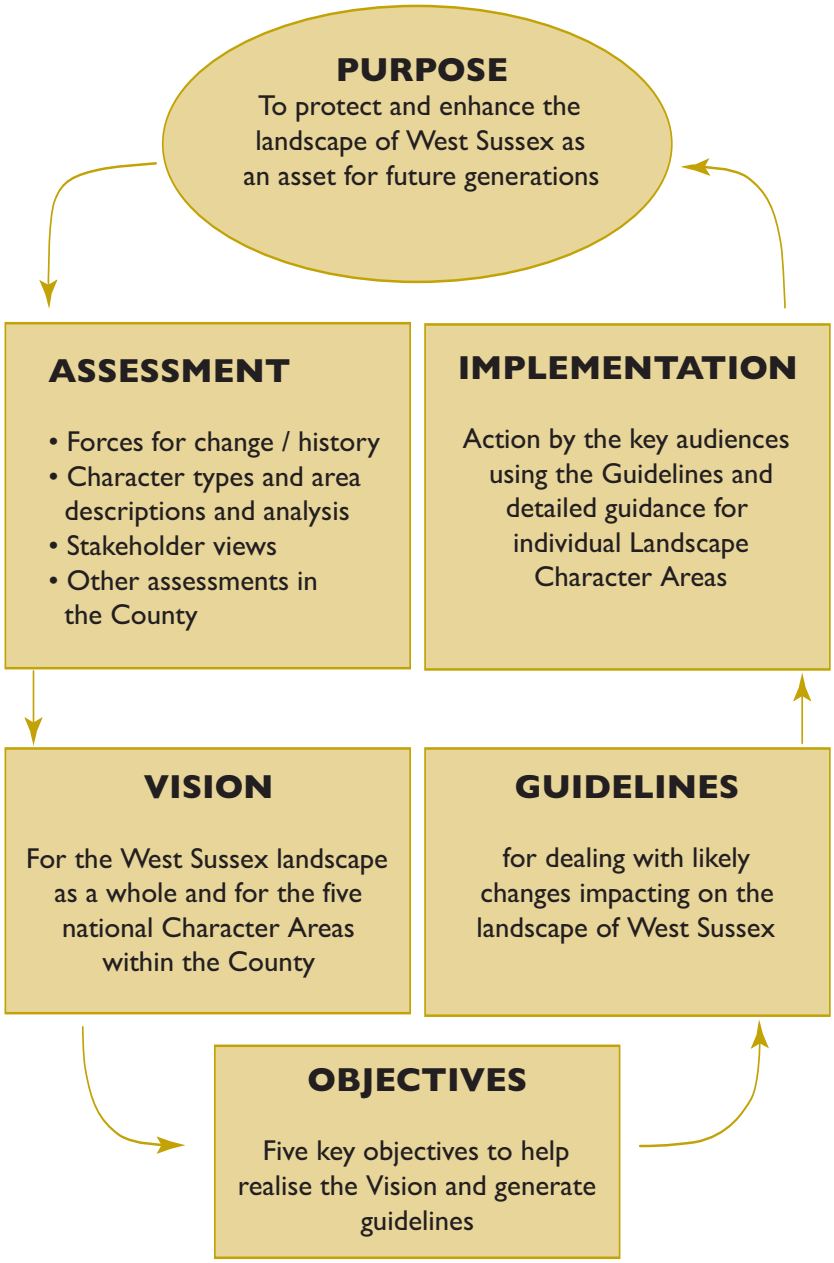
1.5 If the landscape were unchanging, we would not need a Strategy to protect it. Today, we imbue the landscape with a history and an emotional and cultural significance which reaches back to the turn of the nineteenth century when landscape became established as an object of wonder and a source of inspiration. 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 purpose of the Strategy is therefore to protect and enhance the landscape of West Sussex as an asset for future generations.

How the Strategy works

1.6 *Figure 1.1* illustrates the purpose of the Strategy, what it consists of, and how will it be put into practice. Based on the Landscape Character Assessment, the Strategy begins with a fifty-year vision for the County as a whole, supported by more detailed visions for the five national Character Areas within West Sussex. Five key Strategy objectives follow which, if achieved, will realise the visions. In turn, the objectives will be achieved through the implementation of County-wide guidance for planning and land management purposes to be used by key audiences.

***Figure 1.1* HOW THE STRATEGY WORKS**



Appendices

1.7 The Appendices contain background information. *Appendix 1* contains national and regional policy background and refers to the relevant policies of the County Council. *Appendix 2* describes the process of developing the Strategy. *Appendix 3* describes the national Character Areas defined by the Countryside Agency and English Nature and used in the Strategy. *Appendix 4* describes forces for change in the landscape, all of which will have implications for policy and action. *Appendix 5* contains details of partnerships and action whilst *Appendix 6* lists the partners and stakeholders involved in carrying out the Assessment and formulating the Strategy. Finally, *Appendix 7* lists the background documents used in the compilation of the Strategy.

A VISION FOR THE LANDSCAPE OF THE HIGH WEALD

The *characteristic mixture* of highly distinctive and extensive woodlands, many of them ancient, including shaws and steep valley woodlands in the deep ghylls, is managed as a woodland resource and as wildlife habitats, with new plantings linking up once-isolated woodland features.

***Distinctive characteristics* such as sandstone outcrops, the pattern of small, irregular fields bounded by shaws, historic routeways and rural lanes, old iron working sites and hammer ponds, are protected and conserved.**

The *characteristic pattern of small fields* is well-managed and is being maintained.

***New development* of high quality fits with the characteristic settlement pattern of scattered villages, hamlets and dispersed farmsteads.**

The *local distinctiveness* of villages and their settings is evident, with a return to the greater availability and use of traditional local materials.

Parkland and farmland in the High Weald

New roadside planting at Tillington

Farm Buildings in the Low Weald

STRATEGY OBJECTIVES

This section describes the five strategic objectives underpinning the Strategy. If the visions for the five national Character Areas – and therefore for the County as a whole – are to be realised, then the objectives must be reached.

The objectives focus on ensuring high quality development, the conservation of historic character, supporting the maintenance and renewal of the agricultural landscape, maintaining and enhancing biodiversity, and promoting the celebration of the value and variety of the landscape.

Objective 1: ensure high quality new development which contributes to and reinforces landscape character

3.1 The siting, scale and design of much new development is tending to reduce or even destroy variety and distinctiveness in the landscape. Much modern development, including new housing estates and areas for business and industry, tend to be built to standardised designs. They have a weak "sense of place" prompting the speculation that we could be "anywhere" when we are in them. The Strategy is based on the principle espoused by the Countryside Agency of development *good enough to approve*. The design and setting of new development must recognise, reflect and reinforce existing landscape features and the key characteristics which make each Landscape Character Area unique and distinctive.

Objective 2: conserve and enhance historic landscape character

3.2 West Sussex is particularly rich in historic landscapes and features, including historic parklands and gardens. No part has been unaffected by past human activity. In many of the Landscape Character Areas, historic landscapes and features make a vital contribution to distinctiveness and character, imparting a strong sense of place. However, as a result of changes in agricultural practice, lack of management, loss from development, and damage to the settings of ancient monuments and other features, this rich historic character is being eroded. Appropriate conservation and management measures based on sustainable farming practice and appropriate development standards are therefore essential.

Objective 3: ensure the maintenance and renewal of the agricultural landscape

3.3 Farmland makes up well over half of the West Sussex landscape embodying the landscape character of the County. However, it is essential that farmland be used and managed sustainably if the desired environmental outcomes are to be achieved and if the character of the landscape is not to change drastically. The spread of intensive arable farming methods and the abandonment of pasture since the Second World War have eroded local character and distinctiveness in many areas.

Arable farmland on the downs near Amberley

3.4 Environmental Stewardship and the new types of Agri-Environment Scheme present significant landscape enhancement opportunities. The Government's report *Strategy for Sustainable Farming and Food* published in 2003 encourages farming practices which favour efforts to conserve, enhance and extend local distinctiveness and biodiversity, including re-creating diminishing habitats such as unimproved grassland.

Objective 4: conserve and enhance semi-natural habitats including securing the future of woodlands, hedgerows and trees as distinctive landscape features

3.5 Semi-natural habitats such as wetlands, heaths and chalk downlands are vital features of the West Sussex landscape including highly characteristic woodlands, hedges, and trees. The conservation and enhancement of these habitats and features, including creating new ones, is fundamental to the Strategy. Many habitats are protected for their nature conservation importance through international, national and local designations. However, management of these often vulnerable habitats is essential if they are to continue to retain their nature conservation value and contribute to landscape character. Major habitat creation schemes will complement these efforts.

Heathland at Ambersham Common

Objective 5: promote and celebrate the value and variety of the West Sussex landscape

3.6 As well as celebrating the variety and beauty of the landscape and the history it embodies, such countryside also has other riches to offer related to health, education and quality of life. The importance of the countryside for access and recreation is part and parcel of healthy living including the appreciation of landscape and what it has to offer.

3.7 This Strategy objective recognises the importance of raising public awareness of the idea and purpose of character, to help communities and individuals manage land, property and their surroundings in ways which reinforce locally distinctive landscapes. Apart from the local authorities themselves, many agencies are involved including statutory bodies, farmers, landowners, conservation and amenity organisations, and numerous community groups. Collectively, these interests implement programmes which benefit character – or could do so. Making information available to them and encouraging and co-ordinating beneficial actions are clear priorities for the Strategy. This Strategy objective is considered in more detail in Section Five dealing with Implementation.

The South Downs Way, Cocking

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Objective 4: conserve and enhance semi-natural habitats including securing the future of woodlands, hedgerows and trees as distinctive landscape features

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Heathland at Ambersham Common

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The South Downs Way, Cocking

New tree planting on pasture at Frog Farm, Petworth

COUNTY-WIDE LANDSCAPE GUIDELINES

This section translates the five key Strategy objectives into a series of County-wide Landscape Guidelines for dealing with the likely changes impacting on the landscape of West Sussex.

These will be used by the partners to instigate actions which, in turn, will realise the vision. The County Landscape Character Assessment, to be published separately, describes individual Landscape Character Areas and contains complementary *Land Management Guidelines* for each of them.

Landscape Guidelines for general development and land use change

4.1 The first Strategy objective aims to secure high quality new development which contributes to and reinforces landscape character. These Guidelines will be used to influence and inform development planning policy and the development control process:

- encourage and promote the preparation and adoption by the local authorities of Countryside Design Summaries and Village Design Statements as a way of providing detailed design principles for new development and its setting and resisting the suburbanisation of the environment, for instance, standard treatments of highways and other public areas, and inappropriate designs and materials.
- locate and design development to retain a sense of the identity of settlements and ensure their separateness.
- protect the setting of areas valued for their natural beauty.
- minimise the visual prominence of outdoor storage and parking areas.
- encourage the planting of mainly native tree and shrub species in association with new development. Use native plant species of local provenance specific to the national Character Areas.
- ensure where possible that both landscape and planting schemes are carried out in advance of development.
- minimise the impact of lighting in the landscape.
- protect areas of tranquil character from visually intrusive or noisy development.
- incorporate where possible existing biodiversity, heritage and landscape features into new development schemes.
- secure where appropriate landscape and habitat enhancement both on and off site (informal open space, tree planting, habitat creation including grassland, heath and wetland features etc) as a requirement of new development.
- encourage the use of available locally distinctive building materials in new development.

Modern housing development

Landscape Guidelines for commercial and industrial development including rural diversification

4.4 Supporting and maintaining the social health and economy of the County is a prime policy aim. Under the first Strategy objective, it will be important to ensure that, as with new housing, the location, design and setting of new commercial and industrial buildings are handled sensitively to complement and strengthen landscape character. Guidelines for commercial and industrial development including rural diversification include:

Commercial greenhouses on the South Coast Plain

- ensure new land uses and development associated with rural diversification projects relate well to and retain key existing landscape features and minimise modification to existing landforms and vegetation cover.
- ensure that new development makes the most of opportunities for conservation, restoration and enhancement of existing buildings in keeping with local historic and architectural character.
- locate buildings and associated infrastructure to avoid loss of views on and off the site, intrusion on to sensitive ridgelines or prominent slopes and other highly visible locations, and to minimise damage to the settings of settlements.
- retain key landscape features on new development sites such as woodland, watercourses and hedgerows, to aid the new landscape structure and setting of the site.
- ensure that the design of buildings and structures is of high quality with clean, elegant lines. Consider massing, form, height, colour, ensure that the design, layout and ground modelling of new development takes account of the "grain" of the adjoining landscape, and avoid visual clutter including signage on all elevations.
- orientate and position buildings to minimise the landscape impact of servicing them.
- co-ordinate building colour to secure a complementary effect between buildings and the surrounding landscape (for example, matt neutral colours minimising reflectivity).
- secure the use of mainly native tree, woodland and hedge planting to screen developments sufficiently and integrate them with the wider landscape. This may include substantial advance woodland planting on and off-site, in wide belts, on land secured specifically for this purpose.
- ensure site entrances are designed to fit within the landscape and use discreet signage.
- minimise the impact of lighting used in development in the landscape.
- secure where appropriate habitat creation and enhancement both on and off site as a requirement of new development.
- incorporate where possible intact historic landscape and visible archaeological features within landscaping schemes.

Landscape Guidelines for agricultural buildings and farm access development

4.5 Under the first Strategy objective, the location, layout, design and finish of agricultural buildings must also be handled with particular care, to ensure that landscape character is not needlessly damaged. Guidelines for agricultural buildings and farm access development include:

- avoid siting new farm buildings on sensitive ridgelines and visible slopes or where they could have an adverse visual impact on historic farmsteads.
- reflect where possible traditional building layout in new development.
- retain where possible on new development sites key landscape features such as woodland, shelterbelts, orchards, single trees, watercourses and hedgerows, as a basis for the new landscape structure and setting of the site.
- minimise the visual prominence of outdoor storage and parking areas.
- minimise the visual domination of large expanses of wall and roof using changes of materials or colour, and varied pitches and shapes for roofs.
- incorporate available local building materials into new development favouring neutral matt colours, for example, olive green or grey.
- secure the use of mainly native tree, woodland and hedge planting to screen and integrate developments into the wider landscape. Fast-growing conifers such as cypresses should be avoided.
- retain original farm entrances and site new ones to minimise tree and hedgerow loss, replacing any planting unavoidably lost.
- avoid the use of chain-link, weld-mesh, close-board and other forms of fencing and gates normally associated with urban commercial and industrial locations.

Modern farm development in the landscape

Landscape Guidelines for telecommunications developments

4.6 Only a few years ago, telecommunications masts were few and far between, often confined to larger masts on prominent sites, for instance, at Bexley Hill near Midhurst and, on a lesser scale, at Truleigh Hill on the South Downs. In the past, larger-scale telecommunications mast development was successfully opposed at The Trundle, a prominent landmark topped by an Iron Age hill fort (a Scheduled Ancient Monument or SAM) at Goodwood. The mast at Tolmare Farm, Longfurlong was recently taken down because of its unacceptable impact on the setting of two SAMs (the adverse impact of development on the setting of a SAM is referred to in the *Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act, 1979)*.

4.7 Today, smaller telecommunications masts have proliferated. Moreover, the process of achieving full telephonic coverage is by no means complete and is likely to evolve further as new generations of telecommunications are developed. Under the first Strategy objective, the location, appearance and finish of telecommunications masts and equipment must be handled with particular care, to ensure that landscape character is not needlessly damaged. Guidelines for telecommunications development include:

Disguised telecommunication masts near Cuckfield

- in siting telecommunications masts and other development, avoid prominent skylines, sites highly visible from settlements, roads, rights of way, important heritage sites, and sites within important views.
- locate new masts and associated development where the impact can be mitigated by strong landscape features such as woodland.
- seek masts of a simple, elegant design finished in neutral matt colours to blend with the dominant colours of the background.
- seek a minimum of associated buildings and fencing, and screen any necessary development that is required using native tree and shrub species local to the area.
- use existing roads and tracks where possible to gain access to installations.
- where unavoidable, avoid prominent locations (such as open hillside) for new access routes and hard standings, following field boundaries, surfaced as trackways with crushed stone and grass verges.

Landscape Guidelines for new roads, major road improvements and maintenance

4.8 All parts of the County are highly accessible to those who have cars. This has led to a sea change in the social and economic composition of rural areas, where urban-based dwellers have progressively replaced dwindling populations occupied in agriculture and rural servicing.

4.9 Given the substantial increase in traffic over the last few decades, many new roads have been built to cope with the flows. Large roads present particular landscape challenges and can be a threat to tranquillity. Dealing with these challenges is an important part of the first Strategy objective. Much can be done to mitigate the impact of highways development, improvement and maintenance on the landscape, whilst meeting road safety requirements. Guidelines for new roads, major road improvements and maintenance include:

- ensure that routes for new roads and bypasses are aligned and designed to respond to the pattern and character of the landscape, minimising their impact on existing landscape and historic landscape features and allowing sufficient space for embankments and cuttings to be shaped to reflect the surrounding landform.
- secure mitigation measures including new planting, earthworks and hardworks reflecting the pattern and character of the local landscape, and where possible ensure that these measures are partly or wholly undertaken in advance of construction.
- secure bridges and other engineering structures of elegant design with clean lines, reflecting where possible traditional local design, and using locally distinctive building materials where appropriate and available.
- ensure, where appropriate, habitat creation and enhancement within the road curtilage and seek such measures off-site, on land secured specifically for this purpose.
- encourage reappraisal of the visual impact of existing major roads and develop landscape enhancement schemes to help to integrate them more effectively into the landscape.
- limit the extent and intensity of lighting to the levels required for road safety.

The A27 Trunk Road crossing of the River Adur near Lancing College, Shoreham-by-Sea

Landscape Guidelines for protecting the character of rural roads and lanes

4.10 Many rural roads and lanes bear the brunt of heavier traffic and improvements to them (together with road maintenance works) for the purposes of easing traffic flow and road safety may adversely affect landscape character. As with major transport routes, meeting this challenge is an important part of the first Strategy objective. Much can be done to mitigate the impact of highways development, improvement and maintenance affecting the character of rural roads and lanes, whilst meeting road safety requirements. Guidelines for protecting the character of rural roads and lanes include:

- respect the historic character of rural roads and lanes, notably those with sunken profiles or verges and, where possible, use designs and materials that are locally distinctive, and road surface-dressings which complement local building materials.
- minimise alteration to rural roads and, where alterations are unavoidable, generally avoid the use of kerbs, make restrained use of coloured surfacing and road markings, and keep tree and hedgerow loss to a minimum, replacing any planting unavoidably lost.
- retain and manage ecologically important road verges.
- conserve where possible traditional features such as fords and stone and brick bridges.
- minimise street lighting between and within settlements.
- keep the number of signs to a minimum, combining them, replacing redundant ones, and minimising the visual intrusion of signs.
- manage hedgerows with appropriate trimming methods, including the laying of hedges, the conservation of hedgerow trees, and new planting where appropriate.

Roadside oaks at Elsted Marsh

Landscape Guidelines for conserving and enhancing existing woodlands

4.18 The fourth Strategy objective concerns the conservation and enhancement of semi-natural habitats including securing the future of woodlands, hedgerows and trees as distinctive landscape features.

4.19 West Sussex is the second most wooded county in England. In large parts of it woodland is the essence of the landscape, including a high rate of survival of ancient woodland (woodland established on the same site for at least 1000 years) compared with almost any other county. Formerly managed as a major rural resource – for timber, fuel for the iron industry, charcoal, wood products, grazing areas and the like – much of the woodland today is unmanaged, as traditional woodland practices such as coppicing have greatly reduced. The Strategy therefore places great importance on the conservation and enhancement of the woodland we have inherited (for instance, the *UK Biodiversity Action Plan* includes targets to restore back to native woodland by 2020 substantial areas of Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS)). Guidelines for conserving and enhancing existing woodlands include:

Woodland management at The Haven, near Billingshurst

- conserve and enhance woodlands as a major contribution to protecting the unique landscape character of West Sussex as well as for their environmental, wildlife, historic, economic, and cultural importance.
- prioritise the restoration of neglected coppice, and the conservation of high forest, wood pasture, and ghyll and sandrock woodlands.
- promote traditional woodland industries and crafts as a sustainable use of woodlands, especially for coppice and restoration.
- encourage woodland management planning.

- promote the protection, conservation and enhancement of ancient woodlands, individual mature and ancient trees of historic importance and other distinctive tree types including pollarded trees.
- protect trees and woodland where appropriate using Tree Preservation Orders and designations.
- preserve ancient features of relict woodland management, such as woodland and woodland pasture boundary banks, and the numerous relict features of ancient Wealden ironworking, for instance, groups of minepits (iron ore extraction pits), earth- and tree-covered slag mounds, remains of artificial watercourses and earthwork pond bays (former dams to streams, now breached).
- preserve ancient land boundary banks surviving within present-day woodland, such as former park boundaries and parish boundary banks.
- encourage natural regeneration of woodland where this is considered desirable from wildlife and landscape viewpoints.
- continue to encourage an integrated approach to the restoration and re-stocking of storm-damaged woodlands.
- promote the use of native plant species of local provenance typical of each national Character Area.
- encourage the restructuring of conifer woodland to incorporate a broadleaved element, especially on ancient woodland sites, around the fringes of woodlands, and along ridges and streams.
- where appropriate, restore heathland as part of the fabric of woodland areas.
- encourage the appropriate management of shelterbelts by expanding the range of tree and shrub species and removing over-mature conifers where necessary.

Chestnut coppice on the Cowdray Estate, Midhurst

Landscape Guidelines for establishing new woodlands

4.20 In line with the Forestry Commission Regional Forestry Framework *Seeing the Wood for the Trees* published in March 2004, the fourth Strategy objective encourages new broadleaved woodland planting to strengthen and complement existing landscapes. Guidelines for establishing new woodlands include:

- encourage the creation of new, multi-purpose broadleaved woodlands that complement the shape and scale of the surrounding landscape whilst conserving unimproved meadows, heathlands, and historic field patterns or other archaeological features.
- encourage the extension of existing woodland and re-connect fragmented or isolated woods.

Landscape Guidelines for the conservation of trees

4.21 Despite the past ravages of Dutch Elm Disease which all but removed the English Elm and other elm species as specimen trees from the countryside of southern Britain, individual trees and tree groups continue to be important and widespread feature of the West Sussex landscape. Conservation of them is therefore a vital part of the fourth Strategy objective. Field and hedgerow trees are characteristic of many parts of the County, as are trees and tree groups on skylines and specimen trees of great character or age, some of them with historic associations. However, owing to disease and old age, many of these trees are dying. They require to be replaced if the characteristic landscape is to continue. Guidelines for conserving trees include:

- promote programmes for the planting of new specimen trees on farmland.
- protect trees from loss and damage (including, where appropriate, the use of Tree Preservation Orders) and conserve existing field and hedgerow trees.
- encourage the retention of stag-headed oaks and other dying trees for wildlife purposes and plant new trees to succeed them, to ensure a varied age class within the tree population.
- promote the conservation of prominent trees on skylines, along roadsides and in villages.
- promote the protection, conservation and enhancement of individual mature and ancient trees of historic importance and other distinctive tree types including pollarded trees, and those in parkland avenues and in churchyards.

Woodland coppice management: cutting fenceposts

Landscape Guidelines for conserving and increasing hedgerows and shaws

4.22 Hedgerows and shaws (broad woodland belts left behind when fields were cut out of woodland) are a strong, defining characteristic of much of the County. The County Council's thirty-year record of land use and habitat change shows the persistence of dense, intricate networks of hedgerows and shaws throughout much of the Low Weald (except where significant Parliamentary enclosure and twentieth century hedgerow removal occurred) and within the non-wooded parts of the High Weald and some areas of the Greensand ridges. However, strong hedgerow patterns are not characteristic either of the South Downs or of much of the South Coast Plain although in both areas there are exceptions that prove the rule, in the lower downland valleys and slopes and on parts of the Manhood peninsula.

4.23 The conservation (and increase in the length) of hedgerows and shaws in many areas of the County is therefore an important part of the fourth Strategy objective. Guidelines include:

- conserve, enhance or restore the hedgerow and shaw network to reinforce existing field patterns and enhance the character and unity of the landscape.
- conserve hedges that may not fulfil the criteria of the Hedgerows Regulations including prominent hedges and those along roadsides.
- manage hedges to ensure they are stockproof, visually interesting and valuable for wildlife by using traditional management methods including hedge-laying, coppicing and trimming, rather than repeated, severe cutting back.
- encourage an increase in new hedgerow trees by retaining self-sown saplings and planting new trees.
- establish new hedgerows and fill gaps in fragmented ones, ensuring mixes of numerous native shrub and tree species typical of each national Character Area, good width and density, with associated banks and ditches appropriate to local character.

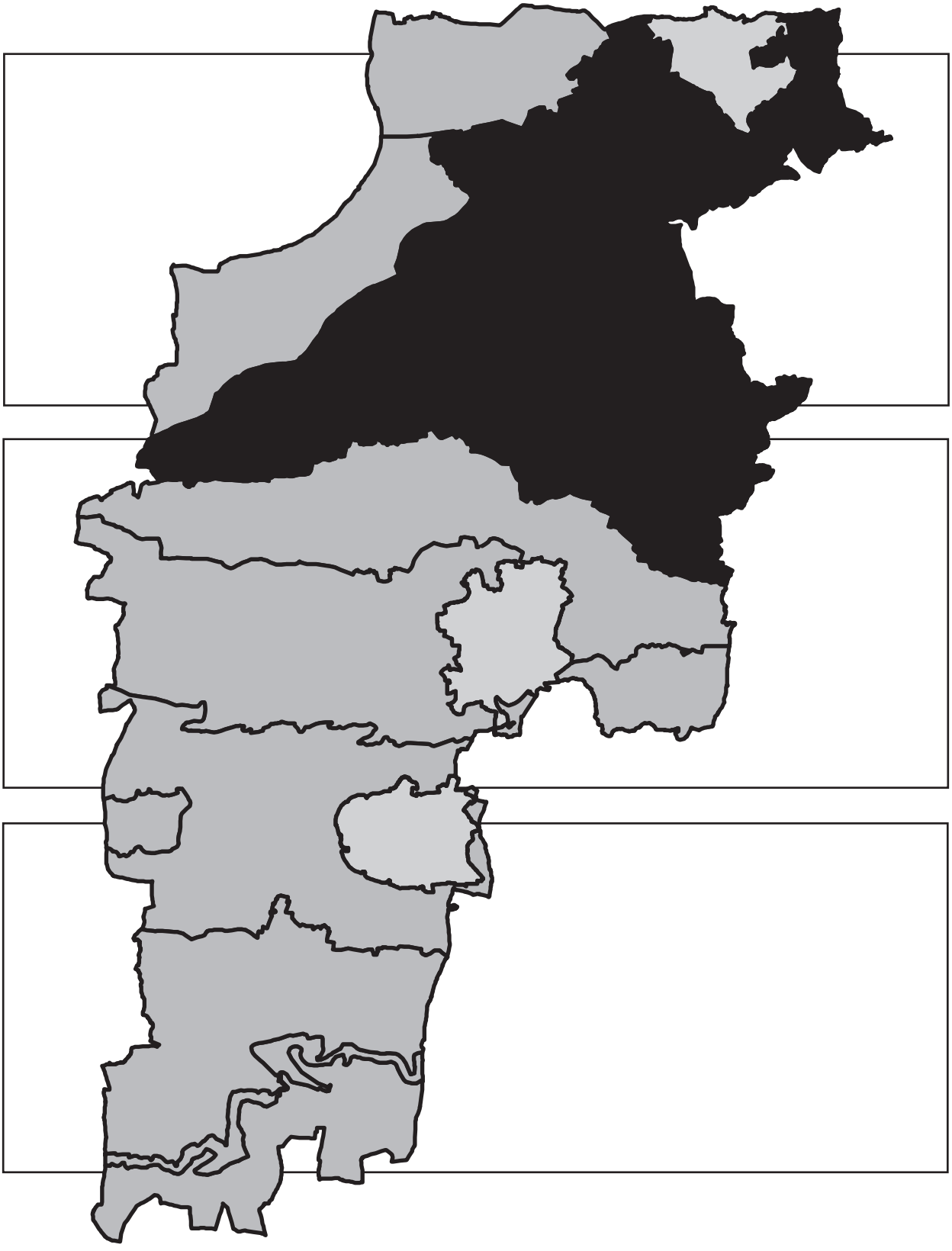
Newly-laid hedge

- attempt to link hedgerows wherever possible to create wildlife corridors.
- ensure that resources are available for the care and maintenance of all new planting.
- support the objectives and targets of the *Sussex Hedgerow Habitat Action Plan*.
- retain existing ancient field and droveway bank and ditch boundaries.

Appendix Ref	Source Document for Extract
LVIA Appendix C1	NCA 122 – High Weald by Natural England – December 2013
LVIA Appendix C2	A Strategy for the West Sussex Landscape by West Sussex County Council – October 2005.
LVIA Appendix C3	**A Landscape Character Assessment for Mid Sussex by MSDC – November 2005.**
LVIA Appendix C4	Capacity of Mid Sussex District to Accommodate Development Study – July 2007.
LVIA Appendix C5	Mid-Sussex Capacity Study – by LUC on behalf of MSDC – June 2014
LVIA Appendix C6	High Weald AONB Landscape Character Assessment by High Weald JAC – November 1994
LVIA Appendix C7	High Weald AONB Management Plan 2019-24 by High Weald JAC – 2019

Landscape Character Area 6

High Weald



Landscape Character Area 6

High Weald

CHARACTERISATION

Summary and key characteristics

The High Weald Forest Ridge. Numerous gill streams have carved out a landscape of twisting ridges and secluded valleys. The ancient, densely-wooded landscape of the High Weald is seen to perfection in the area. Includes the township of East Grinstead.

- Wooded, confined rural landscape of intimacy and complexity, perceived as attractive, locally secluded and tranquil.
- Complex sandstone and clay hilly landscape of ridges and secluded valleys centred on the western end of Forest Ridge of the High Weald plateau deeply cut by numerous gill streams and with sandrock crags.
- Headwater drainage of the River Medway originates here, the southern part of the area drained by the deep, sinuous gill streams running to the River Ouse.
- Long views over the Low Weald to the downs, particularly from the high Forest Ridge.
- Includes major reservoir at Ardingly and adjoins Weir Wood Reservoir.
- Significant woodland cover, a substantial portion of it ancient, including some larger woods and a dense network of hedgerows and shaws, creates a sense of enclosure, the valleys damp, deep and secluded.
- Pattern of small, irregular-shaped assart fields, some larger fields and small pockets of remnant heathland.
- Pockets of rich biodiversity concentrated in the valleys, heathland, and woodland.
- Dense network of twisting, deep lanes, droveways, tracks and footpaths.
- Dispersed historic settlement pattern on high ridges, hilltops and high ground, the principal settlements East Grinstead and some expanded and smaller villages.
- Some busy lanes and roads including along the Crawley–East Grinstead corridor.
- London to Brighton Railway Line crosses the area.
- Mill sites, hammer ponds and numerous fish and ornamental lakes and ponds.
- Varied traditional rural buildings built with diverse materials including timber framing, Wealden stone and varieties of local brick and tile hanging.
- Designed landscapes and exotic treescapes associated with large country houses.
- Visitor attractions include Wakehurst Place, Nymans Gardens, the South of England Showground and the Bluebell Line Steam Railway.

Description and experience of the landscape

9.1 This, the largest Landscape Character Area in Mid Sussex, contains the highest ground in the High Weald within West Sussex and lies wholly within the District and the *High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty* (AONB). It borders on Surrey to the north at East Grinstead and East Sussex to the east. To the north-west lie the

afforested ridges and plateaux of the Worth forests. The area is bounded strongly to the south by the broad, west-east trending line of the Ouse Valley.

9.2 The geology of the area is complex and locally very variable. It is based on an alternating pattern of heavily faulted, slightly inclined thin sandstone and clay beds which are exposed successively in the deeper valleys. In a few places, local outcrops of sandrock form low, dramatic crags, with many continuous rock exposures edging the valley sides and in the deeper lanes. The underlying rocks contain the entire geological sequence of the High Weald Hastings Beds. 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 on higher ground to the south and west and Ardingly Sandstone within the valley systems and to the south and east of Turners Hill.

9.3 Containing ironstone, the Wadhurst Clay underlying these deposits outcrops in the easterly valley bottoms, making the going on trackways very difficult in places, for the clay can be thick, wet and clinging. The Wadhurst Clay comprises isolated, faulted out portions south of Turners Hill and forms a thick belt running south from Sharpthorne nearly to Horsted Keynes. To the east of this belt lie the sandy Ashdown Beds, so-called because of their dominance as an infertile, heathy rock within the Forest. Finally, there are some scattered deposits of head.

9.4 The backbone of the High Weald is known as the Forest Ridge, a crest of uniformly high ground running roughly east to west, from Cranbrook in Kent to Horsham, its highest point at Crowborough Beacon in East Sussex (nearly 250 metres above sea level). The Forest Ridge in Mid Sussex runs north westwards from along a high if indistinct ridge line (in places over 170 metres above sea level) through West Hoathly and Selsfield Common to Turners Hill.

9.5 From this central ridge spring numerous gill (ghyll) streams. These incised streams are the defining landform, dissecting the landscape deeply, carving it into an interlocking array of twisting ridges and secluded, steep-sided narrow valleys. Whilst the pattern of drainage is complex, there are some main pointers to follow. To the north of the Forest Ridge, centred on the boundary with East Sussex, a group of short streams falls to the Medway and Weir Wood Reservoir. To the north lies East Grinstead, the numerous streams draining the southern flanks of the town also emptying into the Medway and the reservoir. The southern slopes of the Forest Ridge are much longer, stretching over a few miles to the River Ouse, which drains them. The biggest, deepest streams include Cockhaise Brook and its tributary streams including the Chiddingly valley; the two valleys flanking Horsted Keynes; the deep valley system below Balcombe containing Ardingly Reservoir; and the western streams draining the southern flanks of the High Weald forests. Many of the streams contain hammer, ornamental or fishponds, the last notably in the valleys flanking Birchgrove north east of Horsted Keynes.

9.6 A densely wooded landscape clothes this intricate terrain. The woodlands are predominantly deciduous but contain much mixed woodland and coniferous planting (as well as exotic tree species associated with designed landscapes). There is a high incidence of ancient woodland, the core of the historic High Weald landscape. Many woods are small to medium-sized and dominate the deep gills, notably in the Ardingly, Chiddingly and Birchgrove valleys. There is a particular concentration of valley woodlands centred on Gravetye Manor and a network of woods throughout the gills flanking East Grinstead. To the west, the pattern shifts towards large woodlands and plantations more akin to the Worth forests, draped over ridge and valley, for instance at Paddockhurst Park. Between Balcombe and Handcross is a large network of woodlands based on the upper Ouse streams.

9.7 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.

9.8 Regular fields extend north into the High Weald but become far more intermixed with a landscape of small, irregular-shaped fields predominantly used for livestock grazing. These are the characteristic groups of historic assart pastures, often associated with pockets of ancient semi-natural woodland. Between Crawley Down and East Grinstead and in some places elsewhere there has been extensive boundary removal and field reorganisation due to agricultural intensification.

9.8 Other than at Handcross and around East Grinstead, there are no major roads in the area although the B roads and some of the lanes are busy with traffic. The area contains a dense network of twisting lanes, droveways and tracks following the sinuous terrain. The lanes are generally narrow, deep in places, some in substantial cuttings with exposed rock faces where centuries of use have progressively cut down into the soft clays and sandstones. The *High Weald Landscape Trail* in Mid Sussex follows many of these routes.

9.9 On the northern border of the County, the area encompasses the large township of East Grinstead and a portion of the A22 Trunk Road with associated ribbon development. As in the Copthorme and Crawley Down area to the east, the perceived naturalness of the rural landscape is coming under increasing pressure from development and traffic movement along the Crawley–East Grinstead corridor. Elsewhere in the area, there has been significant suburban development at Balcombe and Ashurst Wood and continuing pressures for development in the countryside.

9.10 The area is crossed north to south in the extreme west by the A23 Trunk Road and by the London to Brighton Railway Line. In the east, the Bluebell Line Steam Railway crosses the area north to south, from Kingscote to Sheffield Park in East Sussex. Part of the former Culver Junction (Lewes) to East Grinstead Railway Line given Royal Approval in 1877, the railway was known originally as the 'Sheffield Park Line'. References to it as 'The Bluebell Line' first appeared in 1958 when the railway preservation group was being formed, doubtless a reference to the bluebell woods along the route.

9.11 Parkscapes associated with large houses are characteristic. The area contains two large reservoirs, at Ardingly and Weir Wood, popular for sailing, angling and wildlife. The permanent South of England Show Ground is located at Ardingly, which includes a large area of fenced paddock grassland.

Biodiversity

9.12 Based on the alternation of sandy and clay soils and the particular conditions in the deep gills, the natural history of the area is diverse. The richer sites (albeit restricted in extent) are centred on the strong pattern of gills and woodlands, a few unimproved pastures and freshwater marshes, the reservoirs, and numerous valley ponds including field ponds and their margins.

9.13 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 is due to the cessation of grazing management, subsequent scrub and woodland invasion and woodland re-planting.

9.14 The area contains eight Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), well over half those in the District. These include important geological deposits, water areas,

sandrock crags, and wet woodlands and sandrock communities in the wooded gills. These last are particularly important, containing a warm, moist micro-climate which allows plants to flourish (notably ferns, mosses and liverworts)which are more typically restricted to the west of the country, as well as supporting a diverse breeding community of breeding birds.

9.15 The area also contains over 20 Sites of Nature Conservation Importance - by far the largest number for any Landscape Character Area in the District. These illustrate the great variety of habitats in the area, ranging from woodland and reservoir sites to smaller areas centred on mill and fish ponds (marginal plants, and birds), sandrock crags, freshwater marsh and unimproved meadows. The District Council manages the SNCI at *Ashplats Wood* (East Grinstead) as a nature reserve.

Historic character

9.16 The Forest Ridge in the area forms part of the route of an ancient, pre-Roman ridgeway. It follows the high point of the ridge westwards from Ashdown Forest, through West Hoathly to Turners Hill and then via Peas Pottage to Horsham. Associated with the routeways, the ancient sites in the Low and High Weald are far fewer than on the downs, although the Iron Age hillfort at Philpots Camp near West Hoathly is an important example of a Wealden hillfort. There is limited evidence of Roman settlement in the area, although the line of the London to Brighton Roman Road crosses the area from north to south, just to the east of Ardingly.

9.17 The colonizing of the High Weald through transhumance (the seasonal movement of stock between woodland and downland) and later, assarting, created a pattern of small-scale holdings, with an absence of communal farming of large open fields. The generally low fertility of the Hastings Beds and the poverty of its soils contributed to this pattern. In addition, the intractable nature of the steep gills for any other use than woodland meant that woodland persisted as a resource through succeeding economies. Within the woodlands, although sweet chestnut appears to have expanded later with the hop industry, the dominance of oak with hornbeam, other species such as ash, and understorey tree species (species below the main woodland canopy) such as hazel, were established through ironworking and pannage (the right of pasturing pigs and other stock in woodlands).

9.18 Given that the area was enclosed before the post-medieval period of enclosure, we have therefore inherited a quantity, holding size and structure of woodlands in characteristic locations derived essentially from the medieval woodland pattern of the early 14th Century. Elements of the post-medieval landscape have survived also, centred on formal enclosures of woodlands, commons and possibly the re-organisation of assart fields.

9.19 The dense pattern of narrow lanes and tracks in the area is also typical of the High Weald, representing a visible survival of ancient routes (*droves* or droveways) used for transhumance. Together with the prehistoric ridge-top routes, the droves were one of the most characteristic features of the High Weald in the 14th Century and remain so to this day. The landscape also reveals a legacy of slag heaps, hammer and furnace ponds, some furnace remains and roads associated with the Wealden iron industry as well as the numerous mills which were once common throughout the country.

Historic parks and gardens

9.20 Seven of the nine Registered Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest in the District lie within the area including a further 22 non-registered mainly post-medieval parkscapes identified by the local authorities.

9.21 *Brockhurst* lies to the east of East Grinstead. By 1875, Ashurst Lodge was situated within substantial pleasure grounds, the name of the house changing to Brockhurst by 1899. The garden comprises a rock garden, gardens and pleasure grounds laid out by Frederick J. Hanbury between 1908 and 1935 and for which the site was famous. The gardens sit in the remnants of a park developed between 1875 and 1899 incorporating the easternmost of the string of four ponds to the west of the house.

9.22 *Gravetye Manor* to the north of West Hoathly comprises fine formal and informal gardens, set within a landscape of woodlands and lakes, which were laid out between 1885 and 1935 by the horticultural writer and gardener William Robinson and which survive largely intact. The manor house at Gravetye was built in 1598 by a local iron-master, Richard Infield (see *para 9.34* below). William Robinson purchased it in 1884, restoring the house and laying out the present gardens. Today, the woodland is held in trust and managed on behalf of the Forestry Commission. The house and grounds are run as a country house hotel.

9.23 *High Beeches* near Handcross on the edge of the Worth forests originated as an early 19th Century villa when, in 1849, the estate was purchased by Sir Robert Loder. He enlarged the house and laid out extensive formal gardens immediately around it. The present 20th Century plantsman's and collector's garden was designed and planted by Colonel James Loder between 1906 and 1966 (the mansion was destroyed by fire in 1942). The gardens are open to the public.

9.24 *Nymans* adjoins the south-eastern edge of Handcross. It probably took its name from the family of Robert le Nynweman or Nyman in the early 14th Century. It is today a splendid garden with associated striking parkland, the downland views magnificent. Moreover, it is centred on a remarkably romantic modern ruin (see para 9.32 below). Owned by the National Trust, Nymans is a principal visitor attraction in the District.

9.25 *Stonehurst*, a 'new' country house and gardens near West Hoathly and directly east of Wakehurst Place, was laid out on the site of an earlier farmhouse, Stone Farm. Part of this earlier estate included two mills, Corn Mill and Stone Mill which were retained, together with the Mill Cottages set next to the mill ponds. Built around 1910, the brick and weather-tiled house is substantial. Stonehurst sits on the edge of the deep Cob Brook valley, the pleasure grounds (including ornamental ponds, pools and waterfalls) and estate extending over 80 hectares of farmland and deep gill woodland centred on Chiddinglye Woods. The valleys contain extensive sandrock crags including the famous 'Great-on-Little' Stone remarked on by Cobbett (1835) (see *para A5.11* in ***Appendix 5***). Much of the valley is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (see *para 9.14* above).

9.25 *Wakehurst Place* today is an eminent National Trust property comprising gardens, extensive grounds and a substantial visitor centre. It is the home of Kew Gardens in Sussex and houses the Millennium Seed Bank. The manor of Wakehurst probably dates from the mid-13th Century, when its connection with the Wakehurst family was established. It passed by marriage to the Culpepers in 1454 with whom it remained for 200 years, Sir Edward Culpeper building the present house in 1590 (see *para 9.34* below). In 1903 the eastate was sold to Gerald Loder, younger brother of Sir Edmund Loder of Leonardslee and later created first Lord Wakehurst, who established many of the plant collections, particularly those from eastern Asia and the southern continents. The estate was eventually bequeathed to the National Trust. In 1984, management passed to the Board of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew which, in conjunction with the Trust, manages the gardens and estate.

9.26 The house lies on the eastern edge of the deep Ardingly Brook gill woodland valleys and sandrock crags, above a long, narrow reach of Ardingly Reservoir. It comprises 40 hectares of ornamental gardens, parkland, and mixed native and

ornamental woodland with adjacent fenced farmland. The parkland lies east of the mansion and gardens. It is open in character with an intermittent scatter of trees of varying ages surviving from the pattern of clumps shown on the Ordnance Survey maps of 1874 and 1909.

Settlement form and local distinctiveness

9.27 Settlement in the High Weald is typically dispersed, based on an historic pattern of numerous farmsteads within discrete or enclosed small-scale holdings, often set on high ridges, hilltops and high ground. By the 14th century, nucleated villages had emerged, their dominance as settlements progressively emerging in the modern era. Sometimes, development has resulted from local industries such as clay winning and quarrying. The principal villages are Ardingly, Ashurst Wood, Balcombe, Handcross, Horsted Keynes, Sharpthorne, Turners Hill, and West Hoathly. Slaugham and Staplefield lie on the edge of the Ouse Valley. Since the turn of the century, and particularly after the Second World War, all of the villages have been expanded to some degree by suburban development, notably at Balcombe and Ashurst Wood.

9.28 Settlement in the area was therefore unobtrusive and scanty until the 19th Century, when the High Weald became a favourite area for the extension in the Victorian and Edwardian eras of 'London into Sussex', characterised by widespread, often lavish, house development, the hilly woodland settings highly prized. The new parkscapes developed as a setting for these houses have bequeathed a legacy of exotic trees and shrubs which are today locally dominant in the landscape. Indeed, the spread of exotic species originally introduced into these parkscapes, particularly rhododendron, have invaded many woodlands, where the 'new' species have supplanted the old. High, clipped roadside rhododendron 'hedgerows' are locally characteristic in parts of the area, for instance, on the road between Turners Hill and Handcross.

9.29 The style of rural historic building in the area is diverse. There are good examples of timber-framed buildings including "Wealden" houses (variants of the medieval hall house), many formerly owned by ironmasters, most examples of which lie in East Sussex and Kent (it will be remembered that the area of Mid Sussex District was included in East Sussex before 1975). However, whilst timber-framed properties are highly characteristic of the High Weald, they are not visible enough in the area to constitute a dominant visual style, especially as so many of the original frames have been covered by later facades.

9.30 The so-called Wealden stone from the Ardingly Sandstone and Cuckfield Stone members of the Hastings Beds is an important and substantial fine-grained building stone, especially the deposits won in the East Grinstead area. The stone is very variable in colour depending on its origin, weathering and lichen cover. The stone is markedly grey in some buildings, biscuit-coloured or fawn in others, sometimes iron-caked or rust-stained from iron deposits. However, although locally very distinctive, the use of the stone is not dominant in the area. It tends to be used as ashlar (cut and dressed stone) for more substantial and expensive buildings, rarely used as rough or random stone. Notable concentrations of the use of this stone include at Horsted Keynes and, in delightful profusion, at Slaugham, the various buildings in the village illustrating well the subtlety and variability of colour and texture of the weathered stone. The stone is rarely quarried now.

9.31 The other local stone used occasionally in the area is Horsham Stone, a flaggy, fine-grained sandstone from the Weald Clay, so-called because the beds occur principally around Horsham. The massive sandstone slabs, often marked with wave formations, are used mainly for roofing and sometimes for paving, and attract a rich patina of mosses and lichens. Apart from some timber-framed houses, more characteristic of the area is the predominance of locally diverse reddish brick and

patterned, hung tiles, and some weather boarding typical of the more easterly parts of the High Weald, notably in East Sussex and Kent.

9.32 The development of numerous large houses and grounds in the area is a testament to the discovery of the High Weald as a dramatic setting for fine properties. Of the many modern houses, perhaps the finest is *Standen* (National Trust) south of East Grinstead, one of Philip Webb's best houses, built 1891-94. The most remarkable must be the ruined *Nymans*, a convincing evocation of an ancient major manor house, although actually built 1925-30 in Somerset stone in the Cotswold Manor House style. Much of the house was destroyed by fire in 1947. A fine example of an earlier 19th century house, *Saint Hill*, lies close to Standen. The High Weald (as with many other areas in West Sussex) was also a popular location for schools. A notable example in the area is *Ardingly College*, a large independent school building in brick, founded in 1858 by Nathaniel Woodward, who also established Lancing and Hurstpierpoint Colleges. *Ditton Place* – a large house of 1904 with stone and brick dressings – is also a school.

9.33 *Worth Priory of our Lady Help of Christians* lies in a fine position in the Worth forests, on the Forest ridge, looking down on Paddockhurst Park. The principal building is *Paddockhurst*, a vast imitation Tudor mansion of 1869-72 designed by the architect Salvin. Other houses of interest from the Victorian era include the stone-built *Chiddinglye* (1866) and the Tudor-style *Stonelands* (1887).

9.34 Important historic houses and grounds include *Wakehurst Place* at Ardingly, originally an ironmaster's house, with original parts dating from 1590. *Gravetye Manor* is a late Elizabethan iron-master's house near West Hoathly and *Gullege*, a fine Jacobean house, lies in open country close to the western edge of East Grinstead.

9.35 Other houses of interest include *Selsfield House* with an early Georgian stone front and *Battens* at Highbrook, a house with two medieval wings, the earliest parts dating from the late 13th Century or early 14th Century. Near Horsted Keynes, *Treemans* has much Tudor brickwork and some timber framing, with later additions in Wealden stone. The village streetscape of West Hoathly is small and compact with varied materials including Wealden stone, brick, ruddy tile hanging and weatherboarding. The stone front of the *Manor House* faces the church and to the south lies *Priest's House*, timber-framed, of the 15th Century.

9.36 The eight older churches in the area are generally typical of the High Weald including four with shingled spires and four with towers:

- *St Peter* at Ardingly, outside the village-, low tower, in Wealden stone with a 14th Century doorway.
- *St Mary* at Balcombe, much added to in 1847-50, with a shingled spire.
- *All Saints* (1884) at Highbrook, at the end of a long ridge, quite large with a shingled spire.
- *St Giles* at Horsted Keynes, mainly Norman, again, with a shingled spire.
- *St Mary* at Slaugham, Norman, 13th Century and later with a pyramidal-roofed tower, in Wealden stone.
- *St Mark* (1847) at Staplefield with a bellcote (belfry).
- *St Leonard* (1895-7) at Turners Hill with a tower, in Wealden stone.
- *St Margaret* at West Hoathly in the centre of the village, Norman, 13th Century and later with the usual shingled spire, in Wealden stone.

East Grinstead

9.37 Within the area lies East Grinstead, a town with a population of 23,942. It lies on high, ridge-like ground on the County boundary, the northern flanks of the town falling to Dormans Park in Surrey. To the east, the town embraces the Ashplats Wood valley, older ribbon development flanking the A22 which connects the town with suburban development at Ashurst Wood. To the west, the town adjoins more gentle, open farmland and some woodland stretching towards Crawley Down. To the south, the slopes within and below the town are dissected by a series of streams flowing to the infant Medway, complex ridges in between.

9.38 East Grinstead is an attractive market town of medieval origin which has been greatly expanded in the 20th century. In the 19th Century, four railway lines converged on the town (the first railway station in the town was opened in 1855), and by 1900 the town had significantly increased in size. Edwardian development was of a piecemeal nature, often in isolated blocks along the roads entering the town, notably at Sunnyside and along the main road to North End. Interwar development was more significant, comprising ribbon development at Felbridge, North End and along the Holtye Road and a number of estates (Sackfield Gardens, Halsford Green and Brooklands Park).

9.39 It was in the post-war period that development was greatly expanded and the urban pattern of the town consolidated. Before 1970, large housing developments were built to the west and a number of consolidating developments on most of the land north of the town centred on Blackwell. Substantial expansion and consolidation of the urban area also occurred at Sunnyside to the south, with new building in Ashurst Wood. Since 1970, there have been smaller, consolidating developments on the edges of various parts of the town. However, the largest development in this period was to the south of the Ashplats Wood, straddling the A22, representing a major eastward extension of the town. These changes have resulted in a compact town form, integrated well with the existing landscape, with relatively few problems associated with the rural urban fringe.

9.40 The historic town centre of East Grinstead is intimate in scale, revealing its medieval origins, the High Street punctuated by an island, the large 18th Century parish church of *St Swithun* with its tower lying behind it, built by James Wyatt using variably coloured Wealden sandstone. The High Street contains may fine buildings, some timber-framed, others elegant examples from the 18th Century. *Sackville College* is the pre-eminent building, founded in 1617, a long, stone built façade. Other houses of note include *Clarendon House*, late 16th Century, timber-framed, of three stories with much adornment, and the gabled *Stone House* of about 1600. Further out, *St Mary's Convent* on Moat Road is an ambitious range of buildings, begun1865. The chapel was built in 1879-83, very tall with a high tower.

9.41 The *West Sussex Structure Plan 2001-2016* allocates land to the west and south west of East Grinstead for a strategic mixed-use development of 2,500 homes with an associated relief road. The District Council is preparing an Action Area Plan for Strategic Development at East Grinstead. It will provide detailed guidance on the form of development and the alignment of the relief road.

Strategic gaps

9.42 The County Council, Mid Sussex District Council and Crawley Borough Council have long recognised pressures for development on the open land between Crawley, East Grinstead and Ashurst Wood and have designated this land as strategic gaps.

EVALUATION

Change – key issues

- Decline in traditional woodland management techniques such as coppicing.
- Continuing extensive planting of conifers, particularly to the west on the fringes of Worth Forest.
- 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 hedgerow loss and the ageing and loss of hedgerow and field trees.
- Visual impact of new urban and rural development including village expansion, modern farm buildings, horse riding centres and paddocks.
- Proposals for new development and a relief road on the edge of East Grinstead.
- Introduction of telecommunications masts on ridges.
- Expansion of Crawley and East Grinstead and influence of the M23 corridor.
- Increasing pervasiveness of traffic movement and noise in parts of the area, especially along the Crawley–East Grinstead corridor.
- 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.
- Dense network of twisting, deep lanes, droveways, tracks and footpaths provides a rich terrain for horse-riding, cycling and walking and for the appreciation of nature.
- Long views along valleys and ridges 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.
- Legacy of designed landscapes and treescapes.

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 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.
- Avoid skyline development and ensure that any new development has a minimum impact on long and other views and is integrated within the landscape, 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.
- Reduce the impact of forestry where possible by encouraging sensitive forestry practice including small-scale felling rotation, and incorporating mixed species.
- Plant trees in drifts and avoid straight lines running across the grain of the land.
- Increase tree cover in and around villages, agricultural and other development and on the rural urban fringe, along the approach roads to settlements, and along busy urban routes including within the Crawley–East Grinstead corridor.
- Conserve and replant single oaks in hedgerows to maintain succession, and replant parkland trees.
- Conserve, strengthen and manage existing hedgerows and hedgerow trees and re-plant hedgerows where they have been lost.
- Conserve the landscape of the gills including wet woodland and sandrock crags, and protect the nationally-rare sandrock plant and other communities associated with them.
- 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.
- Seek to protect the tranquil and historic character of rural lanes and manage road verges to enhance their nature conservation value.
- Continue to maintain the natural setting of the Worth Way.
- 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 area lies wholly within Mid Sussex District. See ***Planning and Land Management Guidelines* Sheet HW1 *(High Weald)*** in Part Three. The area covered by the Sheet includes:

The *High Weald (Area 6)* and *High Weald Plateau (Area 7)* Landscape Character Areas in Mid Sussex District.

Appendix Ref	Source Document for Extract
LVIA Appendix C1	NCA 122 – High Weald by Natural England – December 2013
LVIA Appendix C2	A Strategy for the West Sussex Landscape by West Sussex County Council – October 2005.
LVIA Appendix C3	A Landscape Character Assessment for Mid Sussex by MSDC – November 2005.
LVIA Appendix C4	**Capacity of Mid Sussex District to Accommodate Development Study – July 2007.**
LVIA Appendix C5	Mid-Sussex Capacity Study – by LUC on behalf of MSDC – June 2014
LVIA Appendix C6	High Weald AONB Landscape Character Assessment by High Weald JAC – November 1994
LVIA Appendix C7	High Weald AONB Management Plan 2019-24 by High Weald JAC – 2019

Mid Sussex
Landscape Capacity Study



July 2007

Prepared for Mid Sussex District Council by

Hankinson Duckett Associates

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No	Landscape Character Area	Inherent Landscape Qualities (intactness[9] and condition) low high	Contribution to distinctive settlement setting	Inconsistency with existing settlement form / pattern	Contribution to rurality of surrounding landscape	Contribution to separation between settlements	Sensitivity 1-5 Negligible 6-10 Slight 11-15 Moderate 16-20 Substantial 21-25 Major 5 10 15 20 25	Final Assessment Landscape Sensitivity
05	Major's Hill High Weald	Reasonably intact hedgerow structure and some boundary loss. Significant areas of woodland.	Mostly distant from settlement.	On steep, generally north facing, sloping topography separate from settlement.	Rural, limited settlement, good enclosure.	Part of wider separation between Crawley and Turners Hill.		SUBSTANTIAL
06	Selsfield High Weald	Low boundary loss but little boundary vegetation.	Contribution to setting of Turners Hill	Mainly on south and west facing ridge slopes.	Unsettled and fairly remote.	Contributes to separation between Turners Hill and Selsfield Common.		SUBSTANTIAL
07	Turners Hill High Weald	Moderate woodland and hedgerow structure in this context.	Fairly high contribution due to topography.	Centre of Tuners Hill is on high point of ridge – majority of ridge sides inconsistent with settlement.	Contains Turners Hill but provides a degree of rurality.	Separation between Turners Hill and Crawley Down		SUBSTANTIAL
08	Felbridge High Weald	Significant boundary loss some hedgerow structure.	Some contribution to edge of East Grinstead.	On topography generally sloping away from East Grinstead.	Majority of CA rural moderately remote.	Partly separates East Grinstead from Crawley Down.		MODERATE
09	Tilkhurst High Weald	Reasonably intact hedgerow structure.	Distant from settlement. Does not significantly contribute to the setting to settlement.	On high west and south facing topography separate from settlement.	Significantly rural with little settlement and urban influence.	Part of wider separation between East Grinstead and Crawley Heath		SUBSTANTIAL

[9] " from visual, functional and ecological perspectives" p53 The Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage 'Landscape Character Assessment Guidance for England and Scotland, 2002

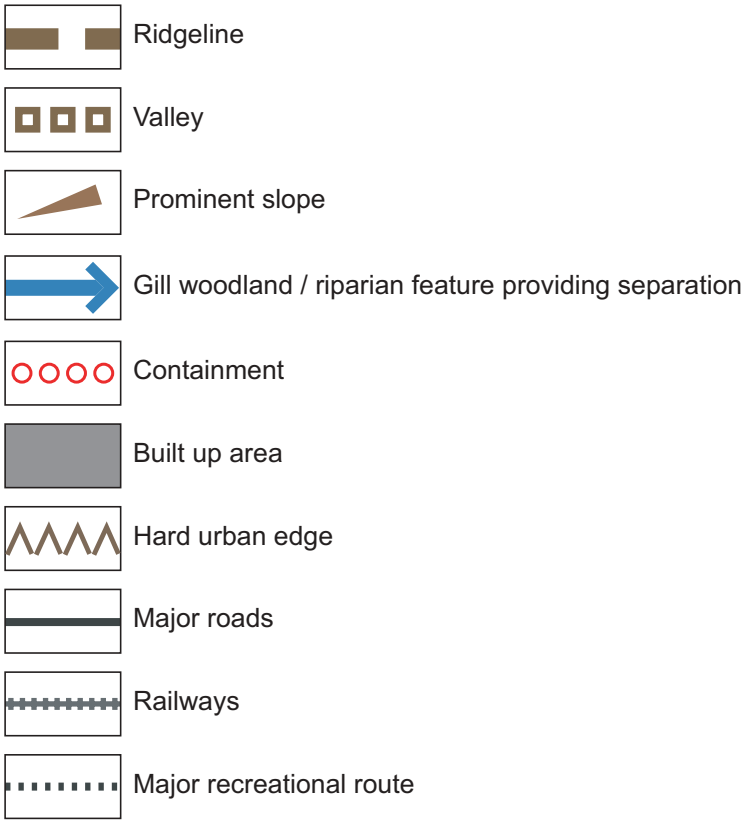
Table 3 Landscape Capacity

Combining Landscape Sensitivity and Landscape Value to give Landscape Capacity

		Landscape Value				
		Major	**Substantial**	**Moderate**	**Slight**	**Negligible**
Landscape Sensitivity	**Major**	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible / low	Low	Low / medium
	Substantial	Negligible	Negligible / low	Low	Low / Medium	Medium
	Moderate	Negligible / Low	Low	Medium	Medium / high	High / medium
	Slight	Low	Low / medium	Medium /high	High	High / Very high/
	Negligible	Low / medium	Medium	High / medium	High / Very high/	Very high

No	Landscape Character Area	Landscape Sensitivity	Landscape Value	Landscape Capacity
01	East Crawley - Copthorne Settled Woodland Matrix	Substantial	Moderate	Low
02	Rowfant High Weald	Moderate	Substantial	Low
03	Crawley Down Northern Fringe	Substantial	Slight	Low / Medium
04	Crawley Down Southern Fringe	Moderate	Moderate	Medium
05	Major's Hill High Weald	Substantial	Substantial	Negligible / Low
06	Selsfield High Weald	Substantial	Moderate	Low
07	Turners Hill High Weald	Substantial	Substantial	Negligible / Low
08	Felbridge High Weald	Moderate	Slight	Medium / High
09	Tilkhurst High Weald	Substantial	Moderate	Low
10	Hill Place High Weald	Slight	Moderate	Medium / High
11	Rockwood High Weald	Moderate	Moderate	Medium
12	Sunnyside High Weald	Moderate	Substantial	Low
13	Brambletye High Weald	Substantial	Substantial	Negligible / Low
14	Kidbrook High Weald	Slight	Substantial	Low / Medium
15	Luxford High Weald	Substantial	Substantial	Negligible / Low
16	East Grinstead Eastern High Weald	Substantial	Substantial	Negligible / Low
17	Stonequarry High Weald	Moderate	Substantial	Low
18	East Grinstead Green Wedge	Substantial	Moderate	Low
19	Pease Pottage – Handcross High Weald	Substantial	Moderate	Low

KEY



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CLIENT:
Mid Sussex District Council
PROJECT:
Mid Sussex Landscape Study
TITLE:
Landscape Structural Analysis Key
SCALE: -
DATE: July 2007

Copthorne
East Grinstead
Crawley Down
Turners Hill
Ashurst Wood
Pease Pottage
West Hoathley
Sharpthorne
Balcombe
Handcross
Handcross
Ardingly
Horsted Keynes
Zone 1
Zone 2
Zone 3
Zone 7
Cuckfield
Haywards Heath & Lindfield
Bolney
Ansty
Scaynes Hill
Zone 6
Zone 4
Zone 8
Burgess Hill
Sayers Common
Albourne
Hurstpierpoint
Hassocks
Zone 5
Pyecombe
Pyecombe
Zone 9
Poynings
Poynings

KEY

- Study area
- District boundary
- AONB
- Gap Policy Areas
- Built up areas

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CLIENT:
Mid Sussex District Council

PROJECT:
Mid Sussex Landscape Study

TITLE:
Study Area and Zones Key

SCALE:
1:35,000 at A1

DATE:
July 2007

223.2 / 01

HDA 1

Landscape Character Types:

- L1a Weald enclosed, large-scale arable
  F1a Downland Scarp Footslopes enclosed, large-scale arable
- L1b Weald open, large-scale arable
  F1b Downland Scrap Footslopes open, large-scale arable
- L1c Weald semi-open, large-scale arable
  F1c Downland Scarp Footslopes semi-open, large-scale arable
- L2 Weald medium/small-scale arable
  F2 Downland Scarp Footslopes medium/small-scale arable
- L3 Weald enclosed pasture
  F3 Downland Scarp Footslopes enclosed pasture
- L5 Gill woodland
- L6 Deciduous woodland
- L7 Mixed plantation/woodland
- L8 Coniferous plantation/woodland
- L9 Coppice
- L10 Orchard
- L14 Weald paddock
  F14 Downland Scarp Footslopes paddock
- L15 Apparently unmanaged land
- H1 Horticulture
- P1 Parkland and estate farmland

- D1a Enclosed Downland with strong structure
- D1b Open Downland
- D2a Wooded downland scarp
- D2b Open downland scarp

- V1 Enclosed valley floor
- V2 Enclosed valley side
- V3 Open valley side
- V4 Narrow, pronounced valley

- B1 Churchyard / cemetery
- M1 Mobile home / caravan park
- Q1 Claypit and brickworks
- T1 Amenity / recreation
- W1 Significant waterbody
- U1 Utilities

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CLIENT:
Mid Sussex District Council

PROJECT:
Mid Sussex Landscape Study

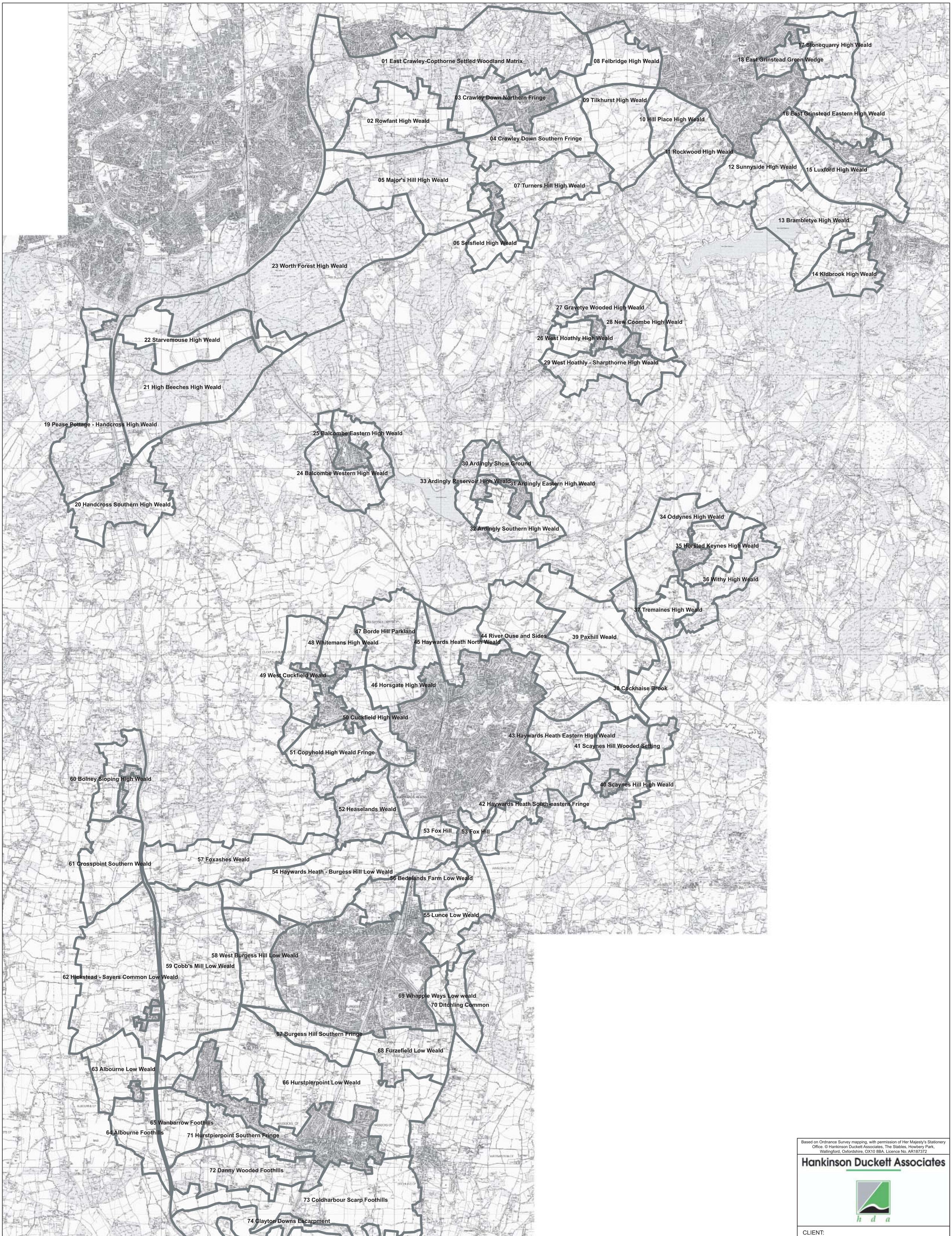
TITLE:
Landscape Character Types

SCALE:
1:35,000 at A1

DATE:
June 2007

223.2 / 02

HDA 2



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CLIENT:
Mid Sussex District Council

PROJECT:
Mid Sussex Landscape Study

TITLE:
Landscape Character Areas

SCALE:
1:35,000 at A1

DATE:
July 2007

223.2 / 03

HDA 3


Copthorne
Lowfield Heath
Langley Green
Manor Royal
Industrial Estate
CRAWLEY DISTRICT
Pound Hill
Northgate
Three Bridges
West Green
CRAWLEY
Gossops Green
Southgate
Furnace Green
Maidenbower
Tilgate
Broadfield
Bewbush
Ifield
College
Worth Forest
MAJOR SEPARATION
M23
Tilgate Forest
Buchan Hill Forest
Pease Pottage
COLGATE CP
Balcombe
Handcross
Zone 1 Landscape Structure HDA 4

01 East Crawley-Copthorne Settled Woodland Matrix
Low

02 Rowfant High Weald
Low

03 Crawley Down Northern Fringe
Low / Medium

04 Crawley Down Southern Fringe
Medium

05 Major's Hill High Weald
Negligible / Low

06 Selsfield High Weald
Low

07 Turners Hill High Weald
Negligible / Low

08 Felbridge High Weald
Medium / High

09 Tilkhurst High Weald
Low

10 Hill Place High Weald
Medium / High

11 Rockwood High Weald
Medium

12 Sunnyside HIgh Weald
Negligible / Low

13 Brambletye High Weald
Negligible / Low

14 Kidbrook High Weald
Low / Medium

15 Luxford High Weald
Negligible / Low

16 East Grinstead Eastern High Weald
Negligible / Low

17 Stonequarry High Weald
Low

18 East Grinstead Green Wedge
Low

19 Pease Pottage - Handcross High Weald
Low

20 Handcross Southern High Weald
Low

21 High Beeches High Weald
Negligible / Low

22 Starvemouse High Weald
Low

23 Worth Forest High Weald
Negligible

24 Balcombe Western High Weald
Low

25 Balcombe Eastern High Weald
Low

26 West Hoathly High Weald
Medium

27 Gravetye Wooded High Weald
Negligible / Low

28 New Coombe High Weald
Low

29 West Hoathly - Sharpthorne High Weald
Low

30 Ardingly Show Ground
Medium

31 Ardingly Eastern High Weald
Low

32 Ardingly Southern High Weald
Low

33 Ardingly Reservoir High Weald
Low

34 Oddynes High Weald
Negligible / Low

35 Horsted Keynes High Weald
Low

36 Withy High Weald
Negligible / Low

37 Tremaines High Weald
Low

38 Cockhaise Brook
Negligible / Low

39 Paxhill Weald
Low

40 Scaynes Hill High Weald
Low / Medium

41 Scaynes Hill Wooded Setting
Low

42 Haywards Heath South-eastern Fringe
Low

43 Haywards Heath Eastern High Weald
Medium

44 River Ouse and Sides
Negligible / Low

45 Haywards Heath North Weald
Medium / High

46 Horsgate High Weald
Low

47 Borde Hill Parkland
Negligible / Low

48 Whitemans High Weald
Low

49 West Cuckfield Weald
Low

50 Cuckfield High Weald
Low

51 Copyhold High Weald Fringe
Low

52 Heaselands Weald
Low

53 Fox Hill
High

53 Fox Hill
High

54 Haywards Heath - Burgess Hill Low Weald
Low

55 Lunce Low Weald
Low

56 Bedelands Farm Low Weald
Negligible / Low

57 Foxashes Weald
Low

58 West Burgess Hill Low Weald
High

59 Cobb's Mill Low Weald
Low

60 Bolney Sloping High Weald
Low

61 Crosspoint Southern Weald
Low / Medium

62 Hickstead - Sayers Common Low Weald
Low / Medium

63 Albourne Low Weald
Low

64 Albourne Foothills
Low

65 Wanbarrow Foothills
Low

66 Hurstpierpoint Low Weald
Negligible / Low

67 Burgess Hill Southern Fringe
Low

68 Furzefield Low Weald
Medium

69 Whapple Ways Low weald
Low

70 Ditchling Common
Low

71 Hurstpierpoint Southern Fringe
Negligible / Low

72 Danny Wooded Foothills
Negligible / Low

73 Coldharbour Scarp Foothills
Negligible

74 Clayton Downs Escarpment
Negligible

75 Pyecombe Downs
Negligible

KEY

- Negligible landscape capacity
- Negligible / low landscape capacity
- Low landscape capacity
- Low / medium landscape capacity
- Medium landscape capacity
- Medium / high landscape capacity
- High landscape capacity

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CLIENT:
Mid Sussex District Council

PROJECT:
Mid Sussex Landscape Study

TITLE:
Landscape Capacity

SCALE:
1:35,000 at A1

DATE:
July 2007

223.2 / 04

HDA 13

Appendix Ref	Source Document for Extract
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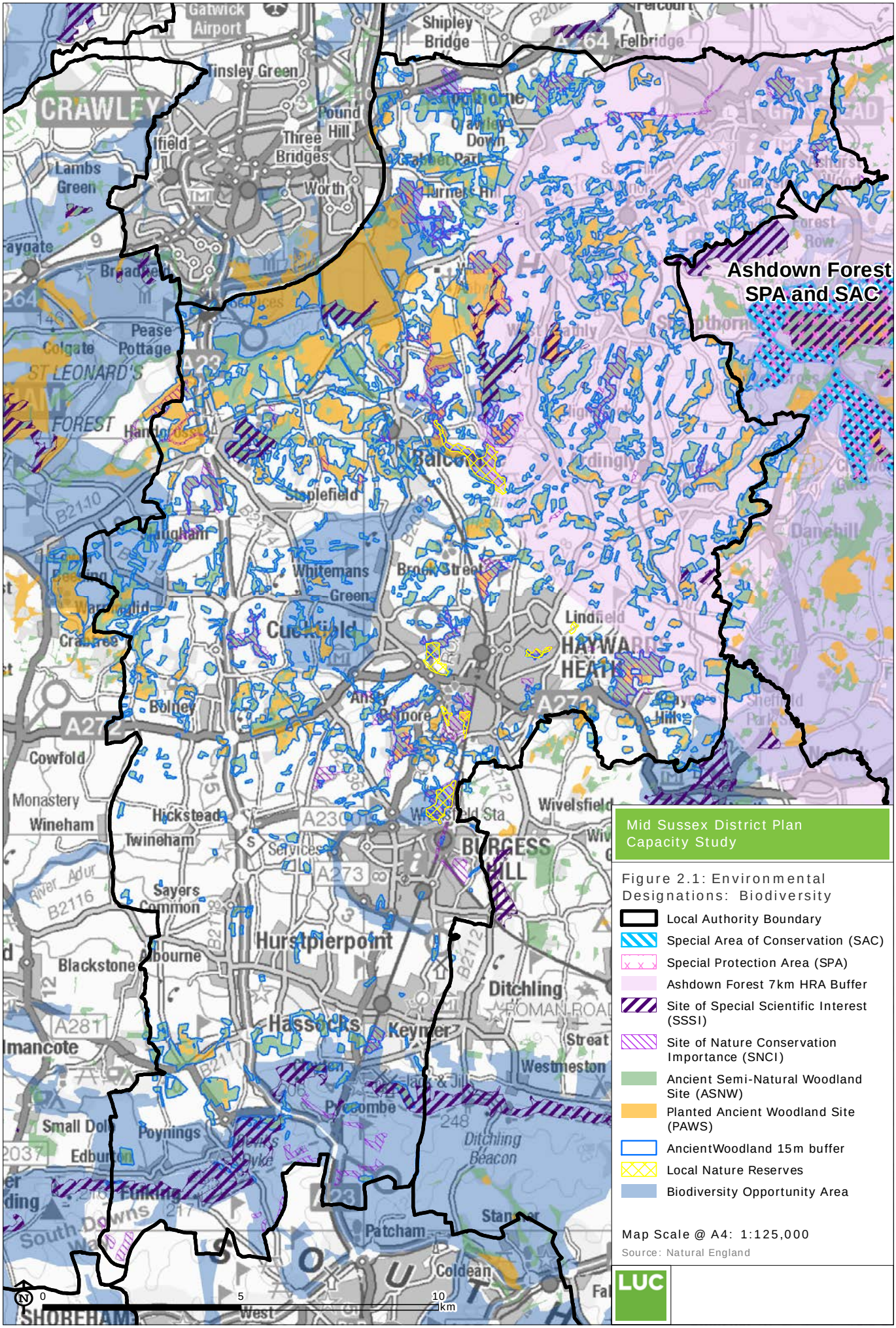
www.landuse.co.uk

Capacity of Mid Sussex District to accommodate development

Report for Mid Sussex District Council
Prepared by LUC
June 2014



Mid Sussex District Plan
Capacity Study

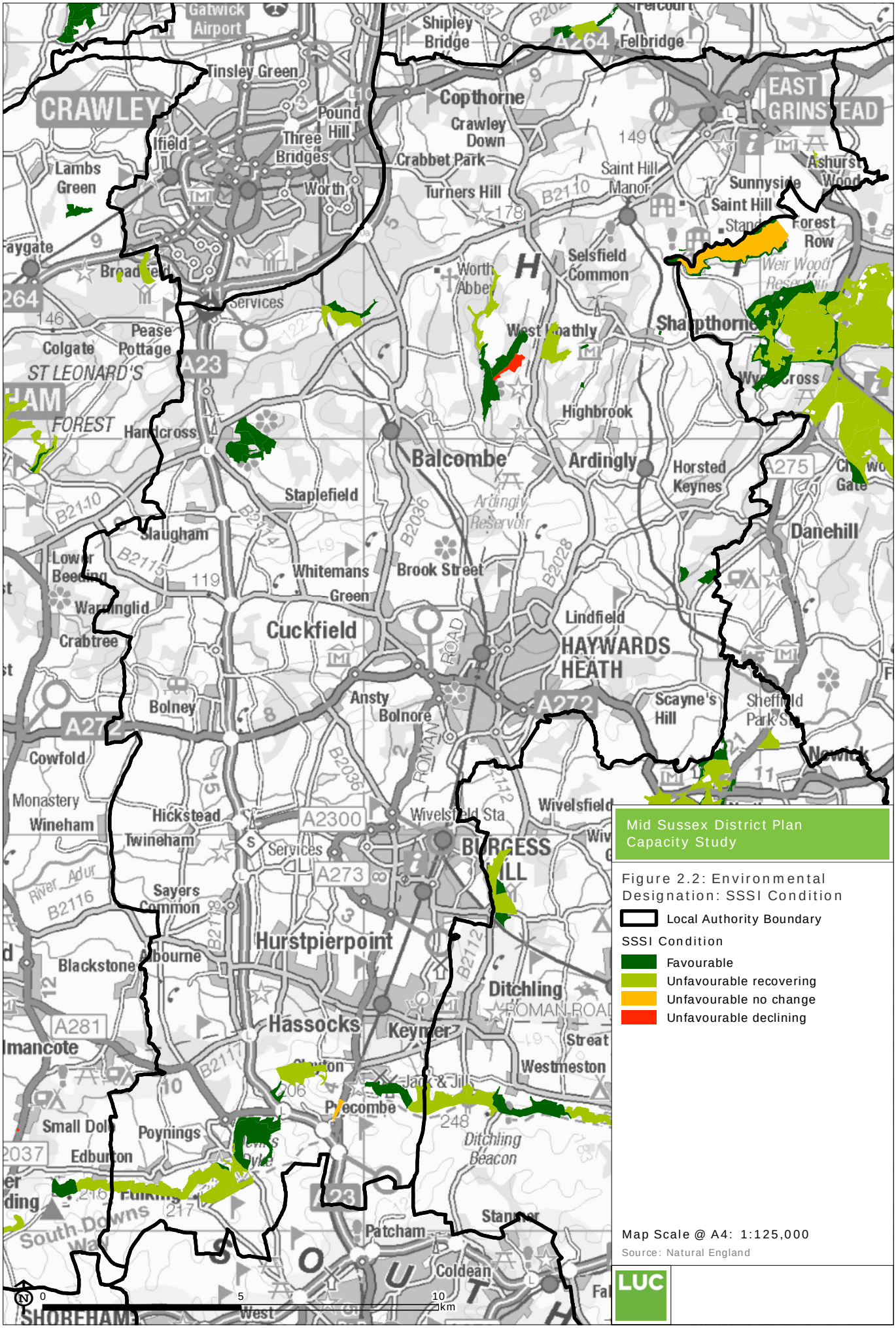
Figure 2.1: Environmental Designations: Biodiversity

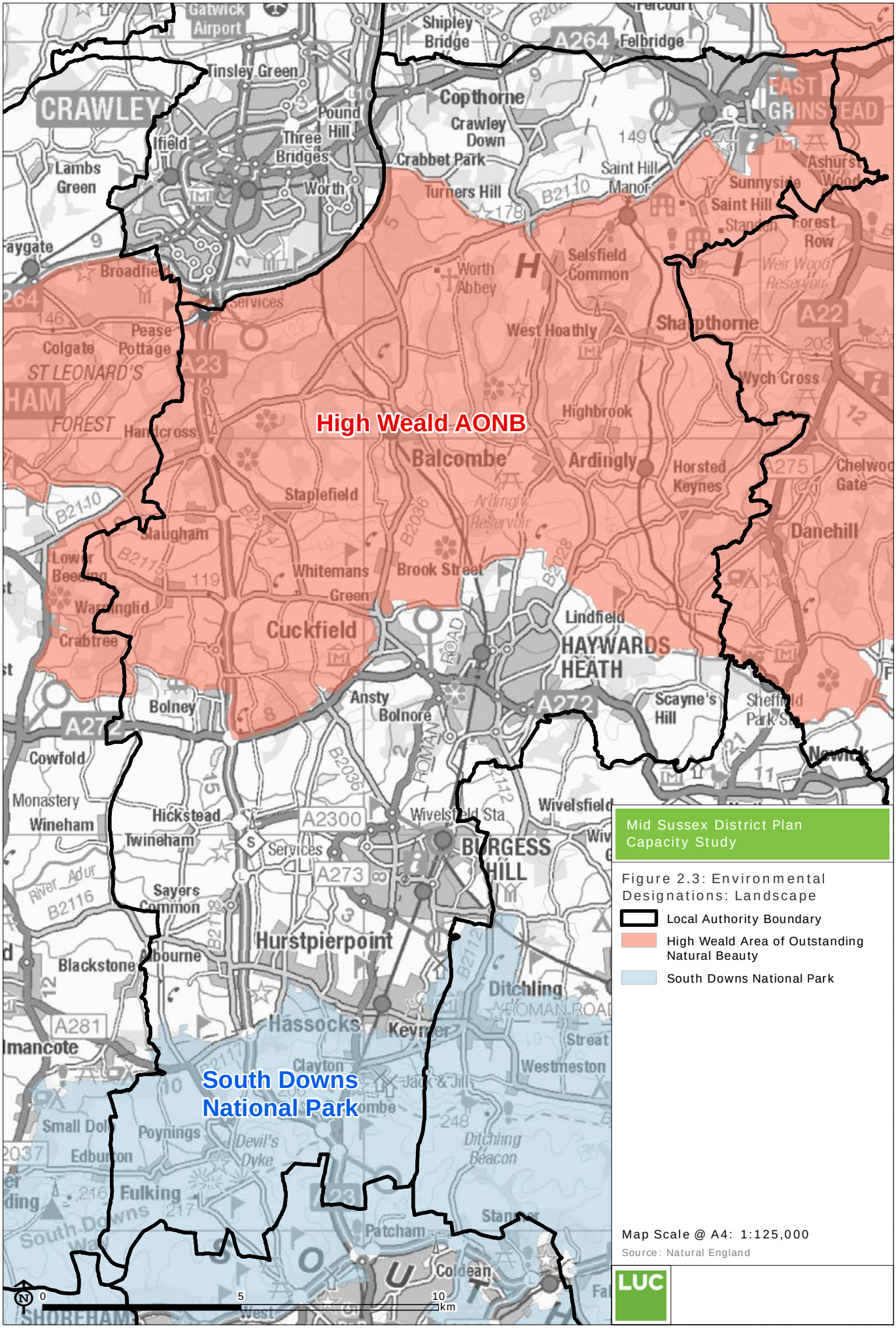
- Local Authority Boundary
- Special Area of Conservation (SAC)
- Special Protection Area (SPA)
- Ashdown Forest 7km HRA Buffer
- Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)
- Site of Nature Conservation Importance (SNCI)
- Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland Site (ASNW)
- Planted Ancient Woodland Site (PAWS)
- AncientWoodland 15m buffer
- Local Nature Reserves
- Biodiversity Opportunity Area

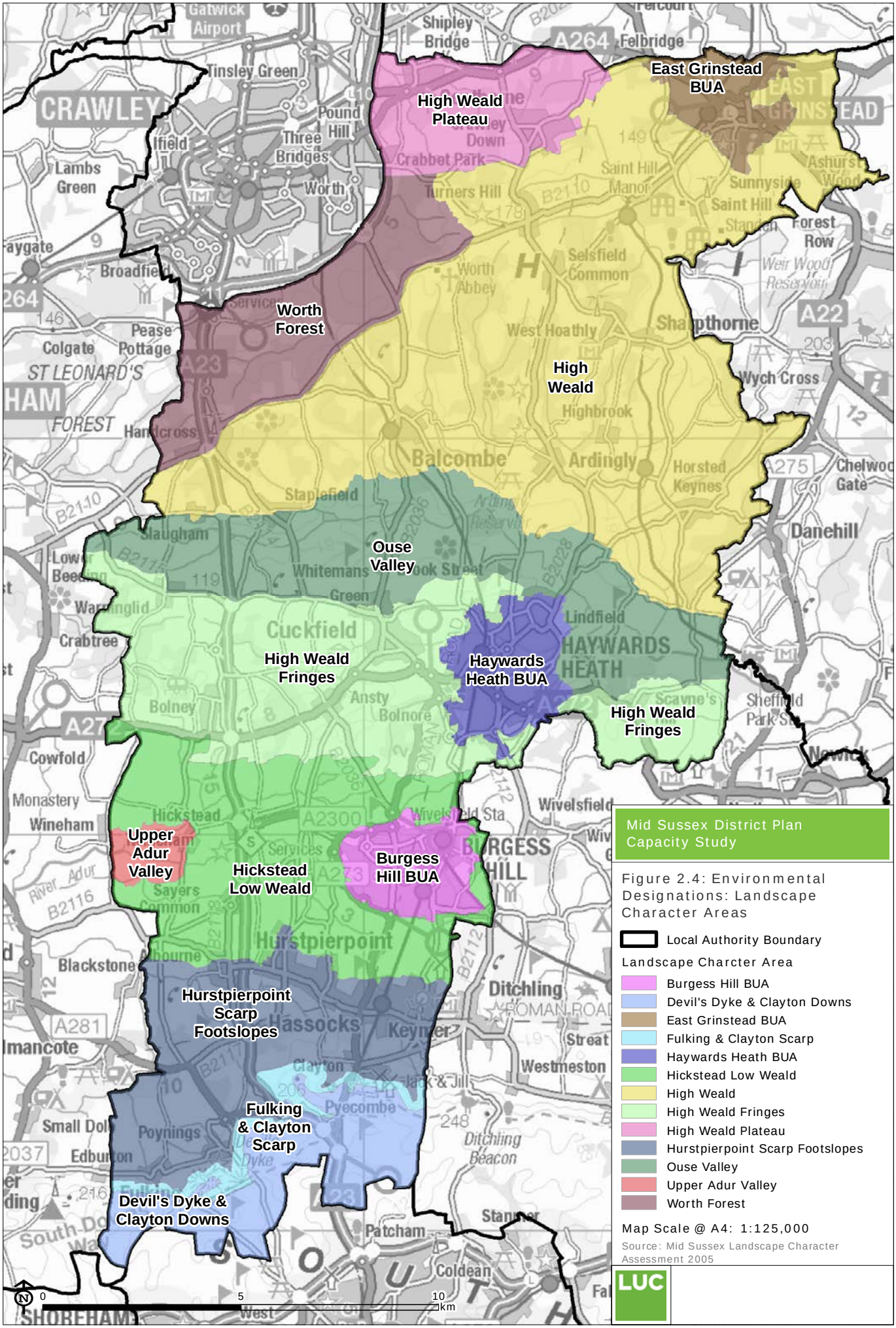
Map Scale @ A4: 1:125,000

Source: Natural England

LUC







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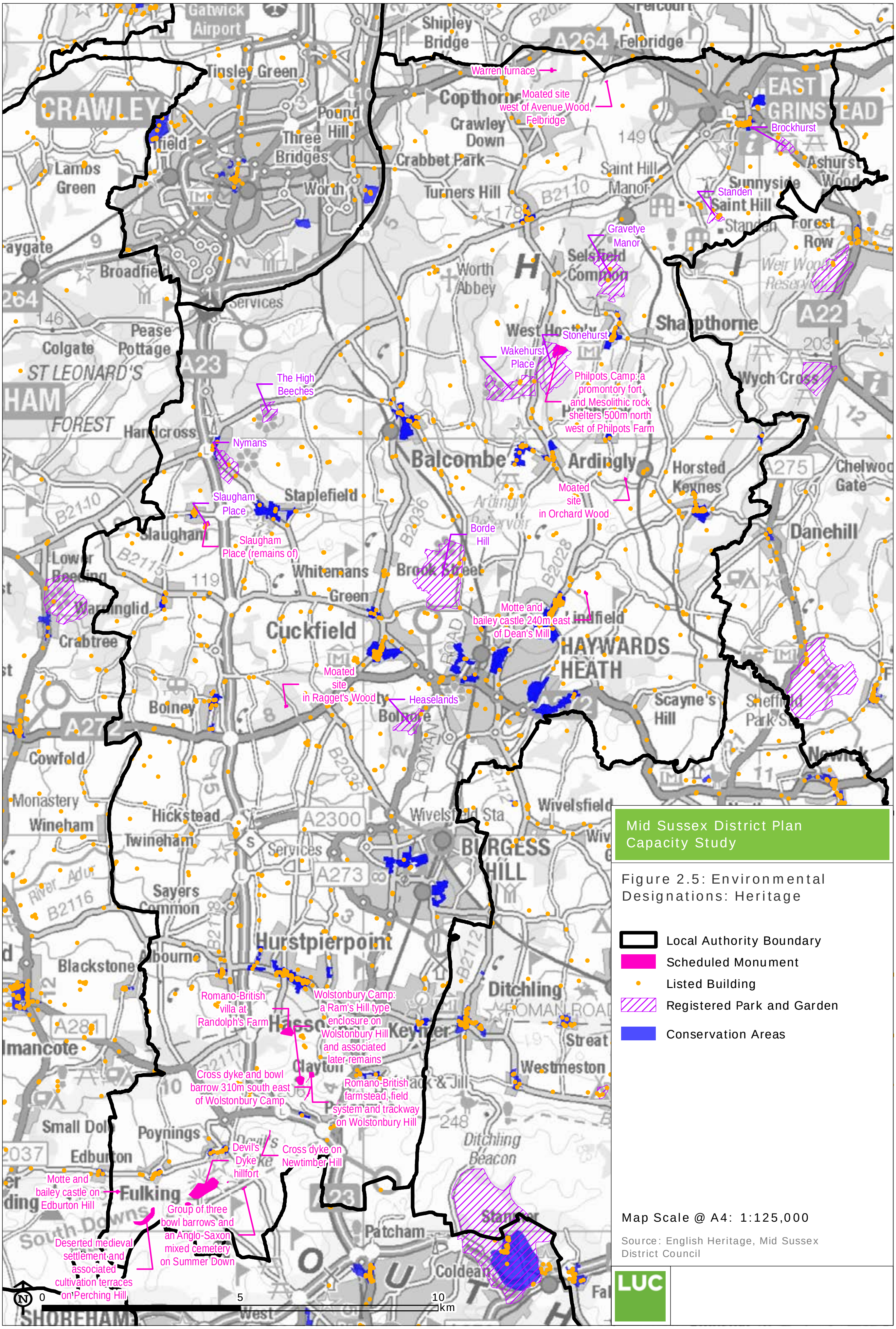
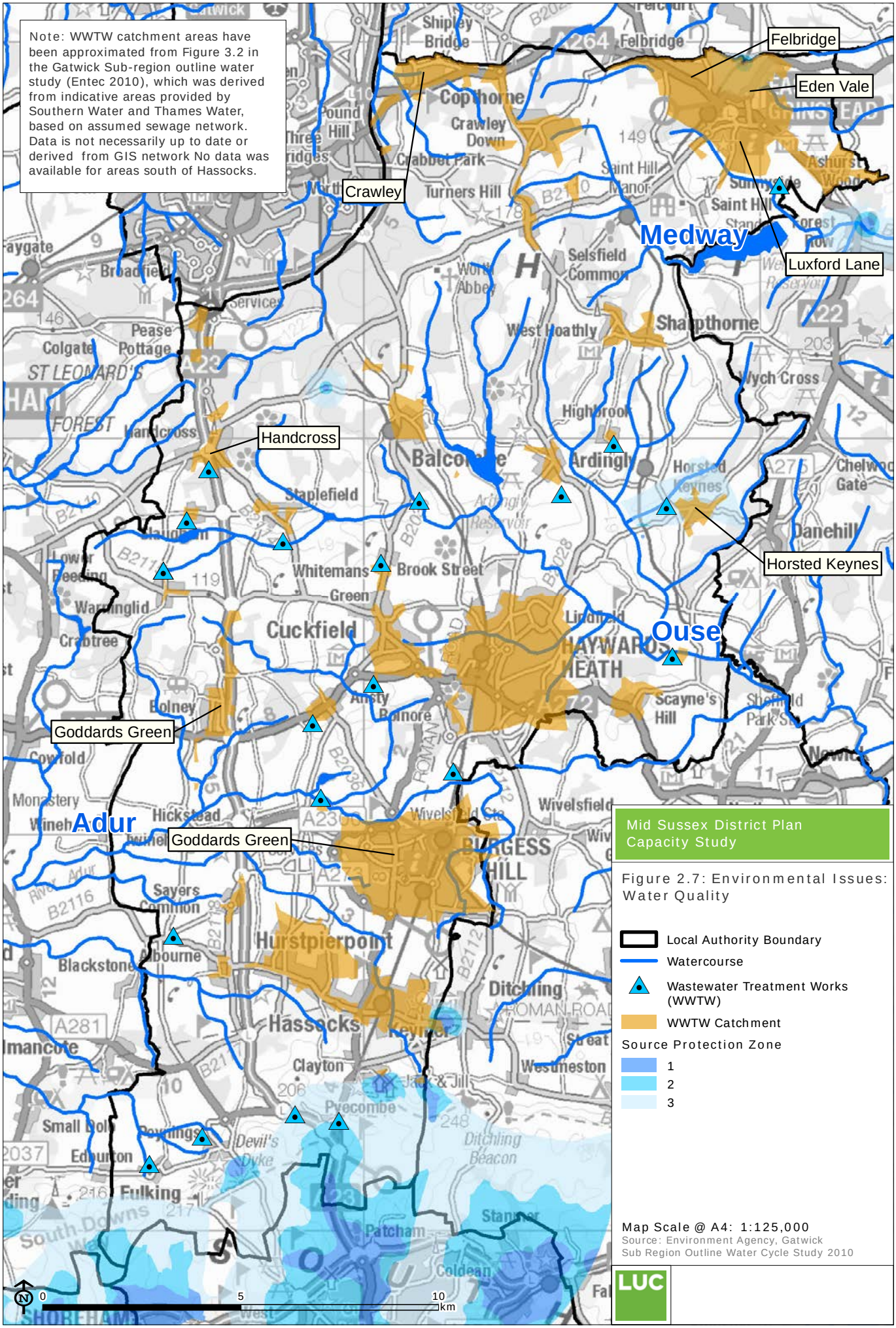
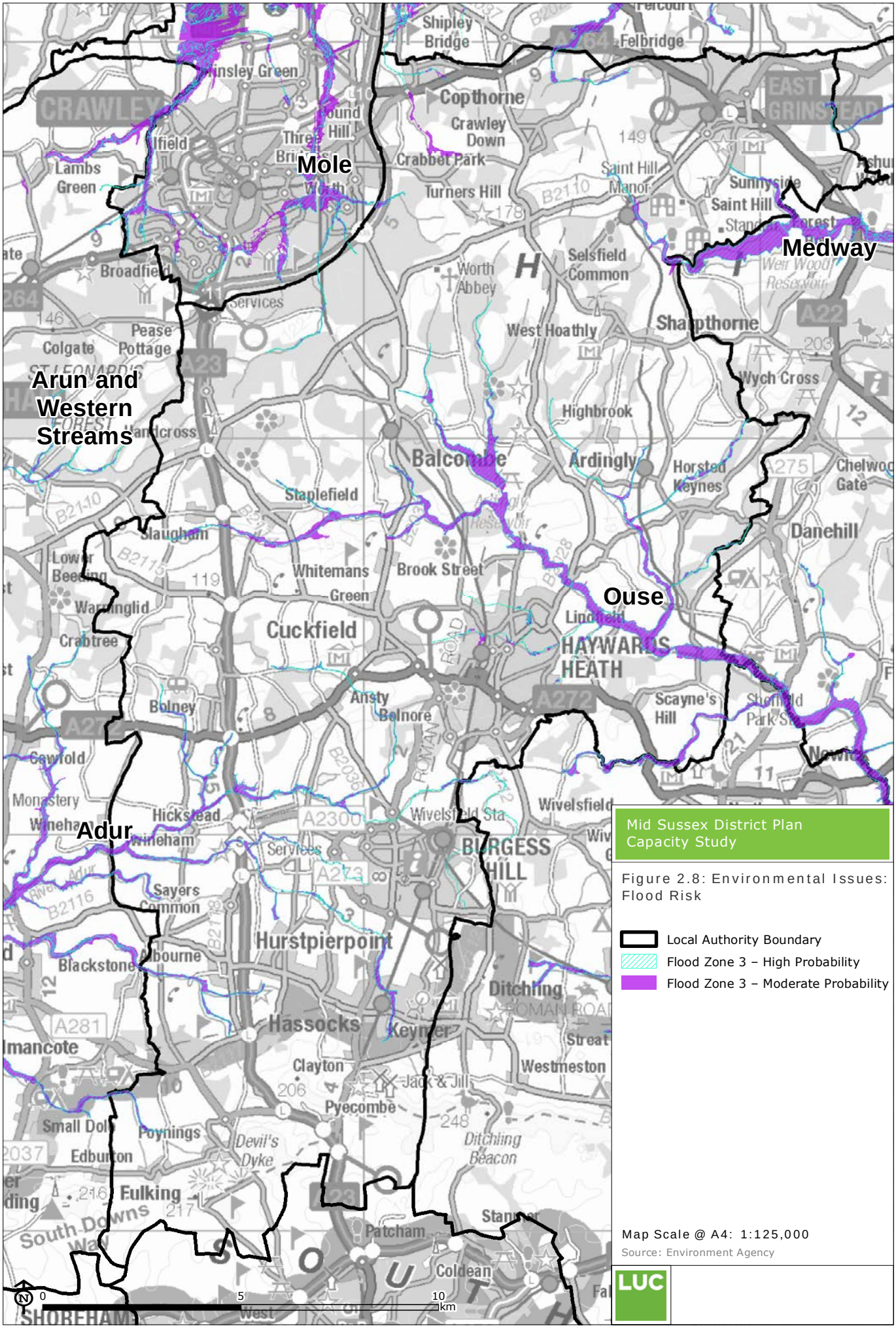
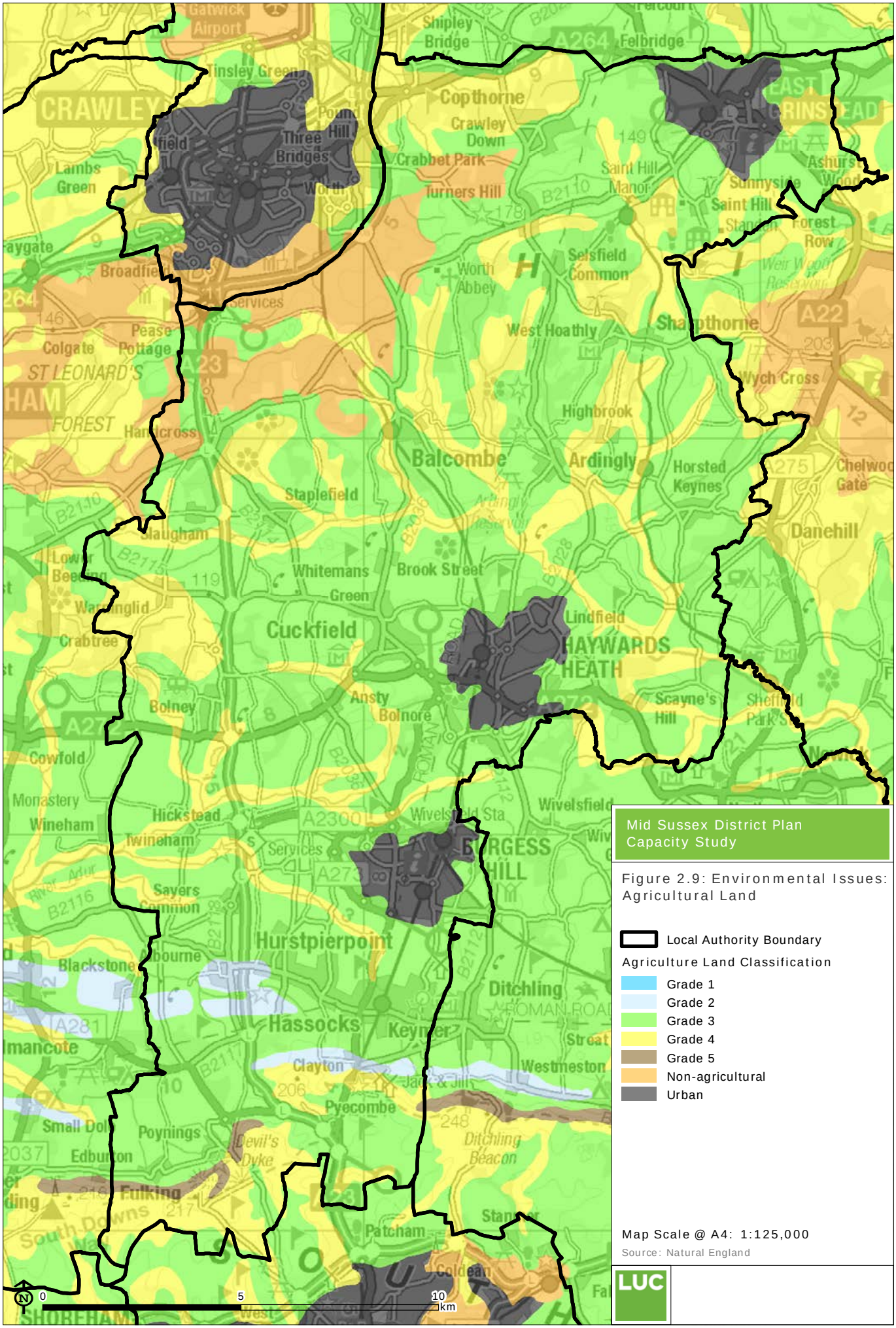


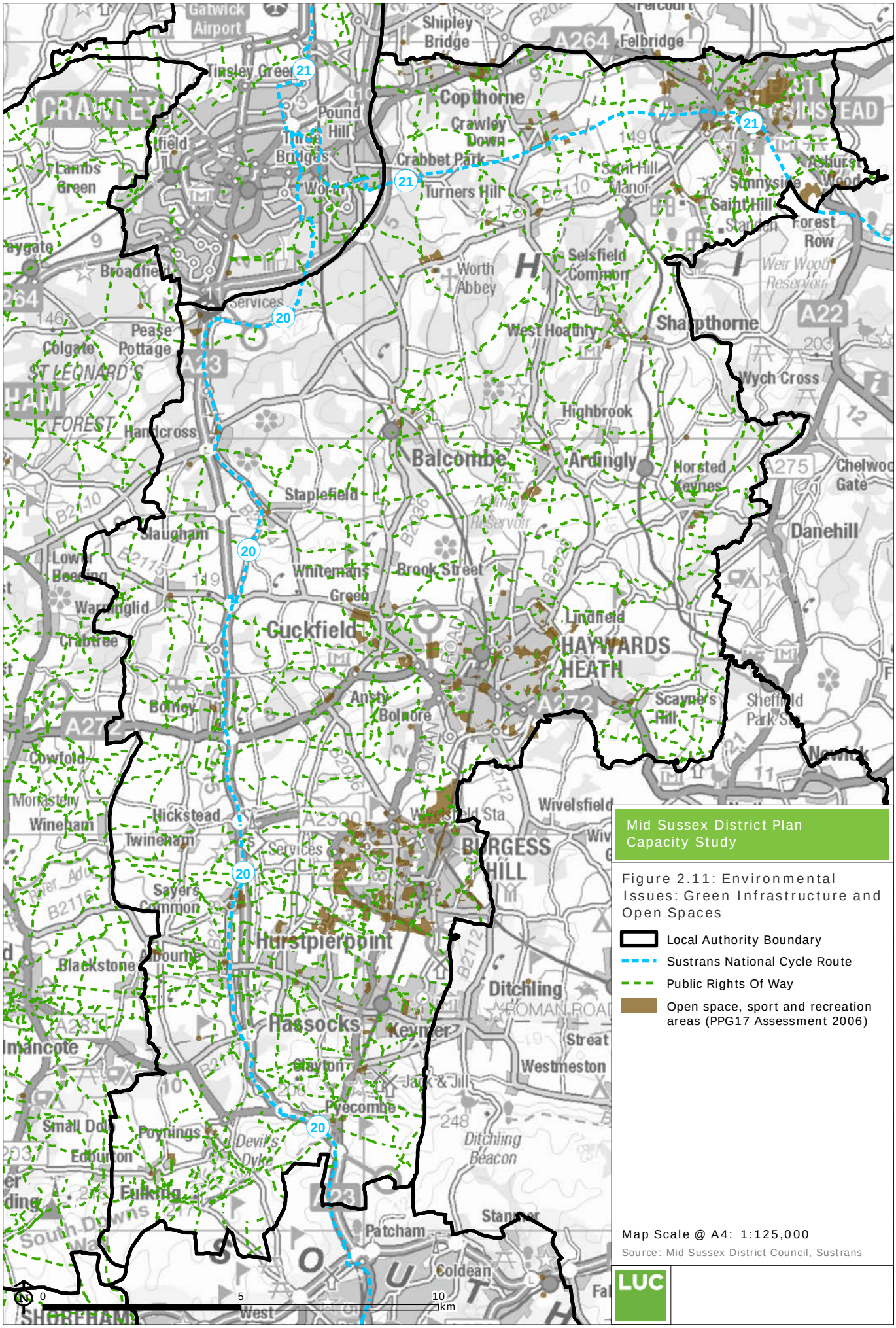
Figure 2.5: Environmental Designations: Heritage

CB: EB:nunn_j LUCGLA FIG02-05_6035_016_r0_Heritage_A4P 27/05/2014









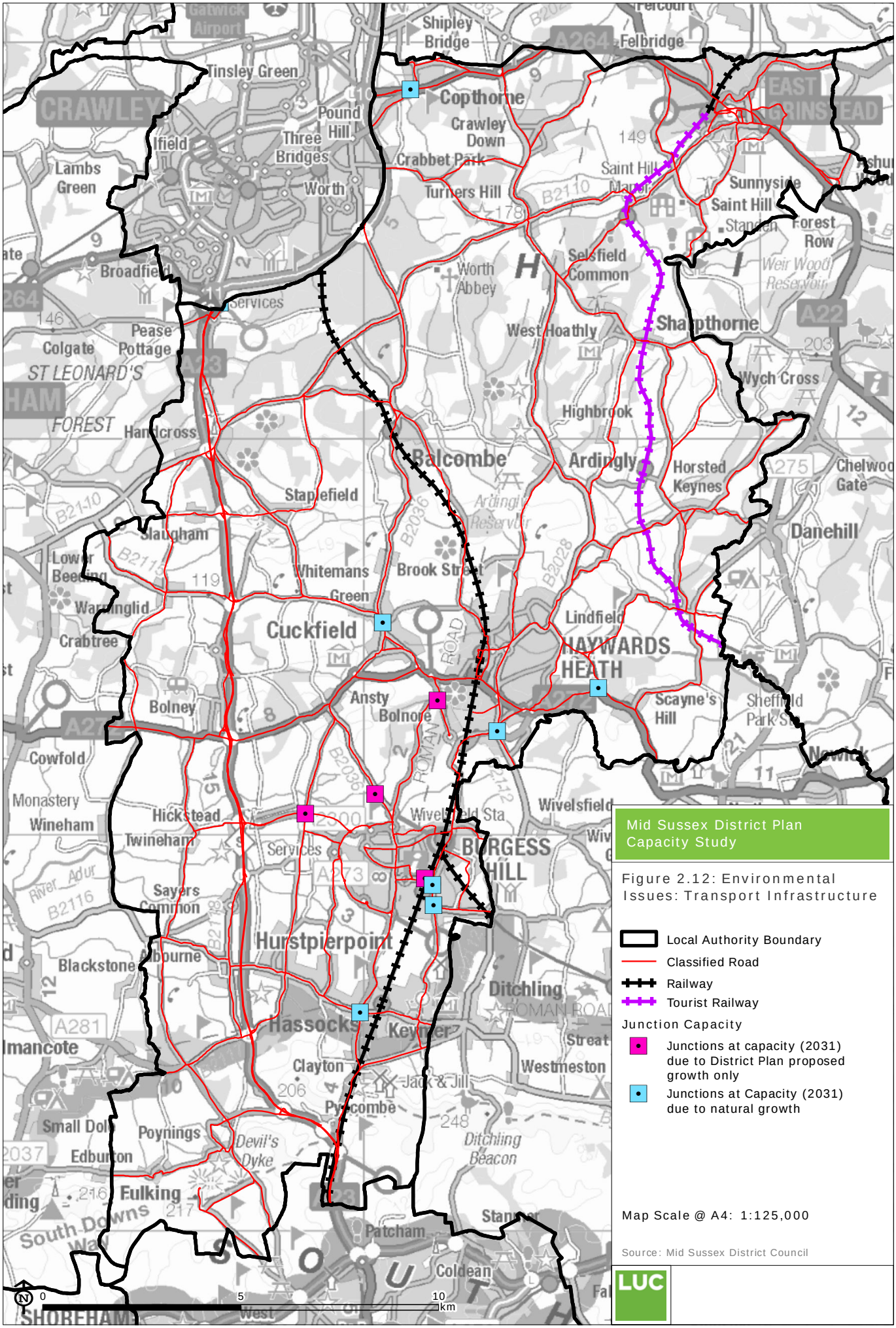

Mid Sussex District Plan
Capacity Study
Figure 2.12: Environmental Issues: Transport Infrastructure
Local Authority Boundary
Classified Road
Railway
Tourist Railway
Junction Capacity
Junctions at capacity (2031) due to District Plan proposed growth only
Junctions at Capacity (2031) due to natural growth
Map Scale @ A4: 1:125,000
Source: Mid Sussex District Council
LUC
0
5
10
km
Shipley Bridge
Felbridge
Tinsley Green
CRAWLEY
Copthorne
Crawley Down
Pound Hill
Three Bridges
Worth
Crabbet Park
Turners Hill
Lambs Green
Saint Hill
Sunnyside
Saint Hill
Forest Row
Selsfield Common
Worth Abbey
West Hoathly
Sharpthorne
Wych Cross
Highbrook
Pease Pottage
Colgate
ST LEONARD'S FOREST
Handcross
Balcombe
Ardingly
Horsted Keynes
Danehill
Staplefield
Slaugham
Whitemans Green
Brook Street
Cuckfield
Lindfield
HAYWARDS HEATH
Crabtree
Bolney
Ansty
Bolnore
Scayne's Hill
Cowfold
Monastery
Wineham
Hickstead
Twineham
Wivelsfield
BURGESS HILL
Sayers Common
Hurstpierpoint
Blackstone
Ditchling
Hassocks
Keymer
Clayton
Westmeston
Pyecombe
Small Dole
Poynings
Edburton
Devil's Dyke
Ditchling Beacon
Fulking
South Downs Way
Patcham
Coldean
SHOREHAM
Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right 2014
CB: EB:nunn_j LUCGLA FIG02-12_6035_027_r0_Transport_A4P 19/06/2014

Table 3.3: LUC's five point scale for landscape capacity judgements

Landscape sensitivity	Landscape value: High	Moderate/High	Moderate	Low/ Moderate	Low
High	LOW	LOW	LOW	LOW/ MEDIUM	LOW/ MEDIUM
Moderate /High	LOW	LOW	LOW/ MEDIUM	MEDIUM	MEDIUM
Moderate	LOW	LOW/ MEDIUM	MEDIUM	MEDIUM	MEDIUM/ HIGH
Low/ Moderate	LOW/ MEDIUM	MEDIUM	MEDIUM	MEDIUM/ HIGH	HIGH
Low	LOW/ MEDIUM	MEDIUM	MEDIUM/ HIGH	HIGH	HIGH

3.16 The definitions of landscape capacity for LUC's revised five point scale are very similar to those used in the 2007 Study because the 2007 Study grouped its lowest three and highest three capacity ratings together, as shown in **Table 3.4**. For this reason, the recommendations from the 2007 Study for areas with Medium and Medium/High capacity still apply.

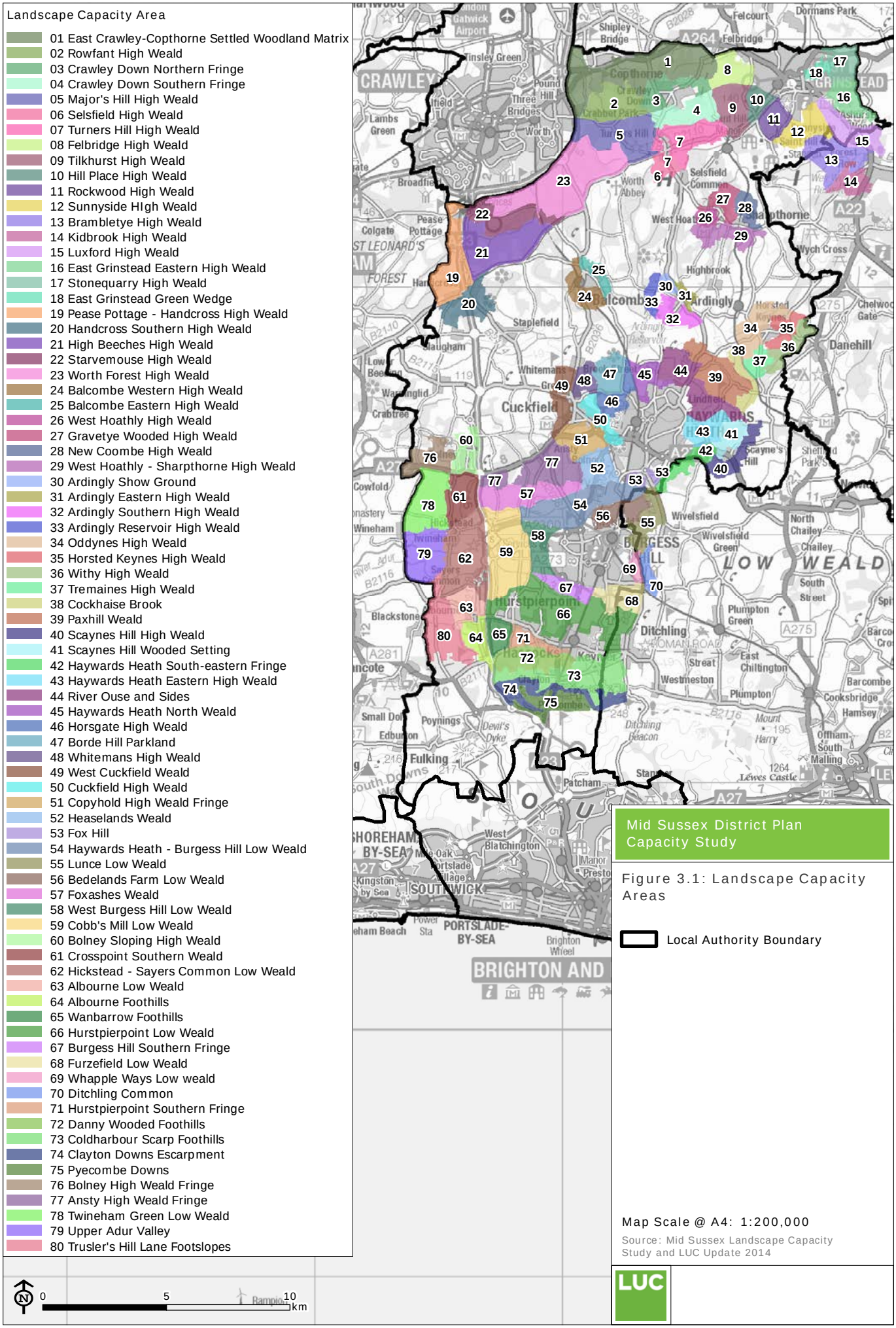
Table 3.4: Definition of each landscape capacity rating

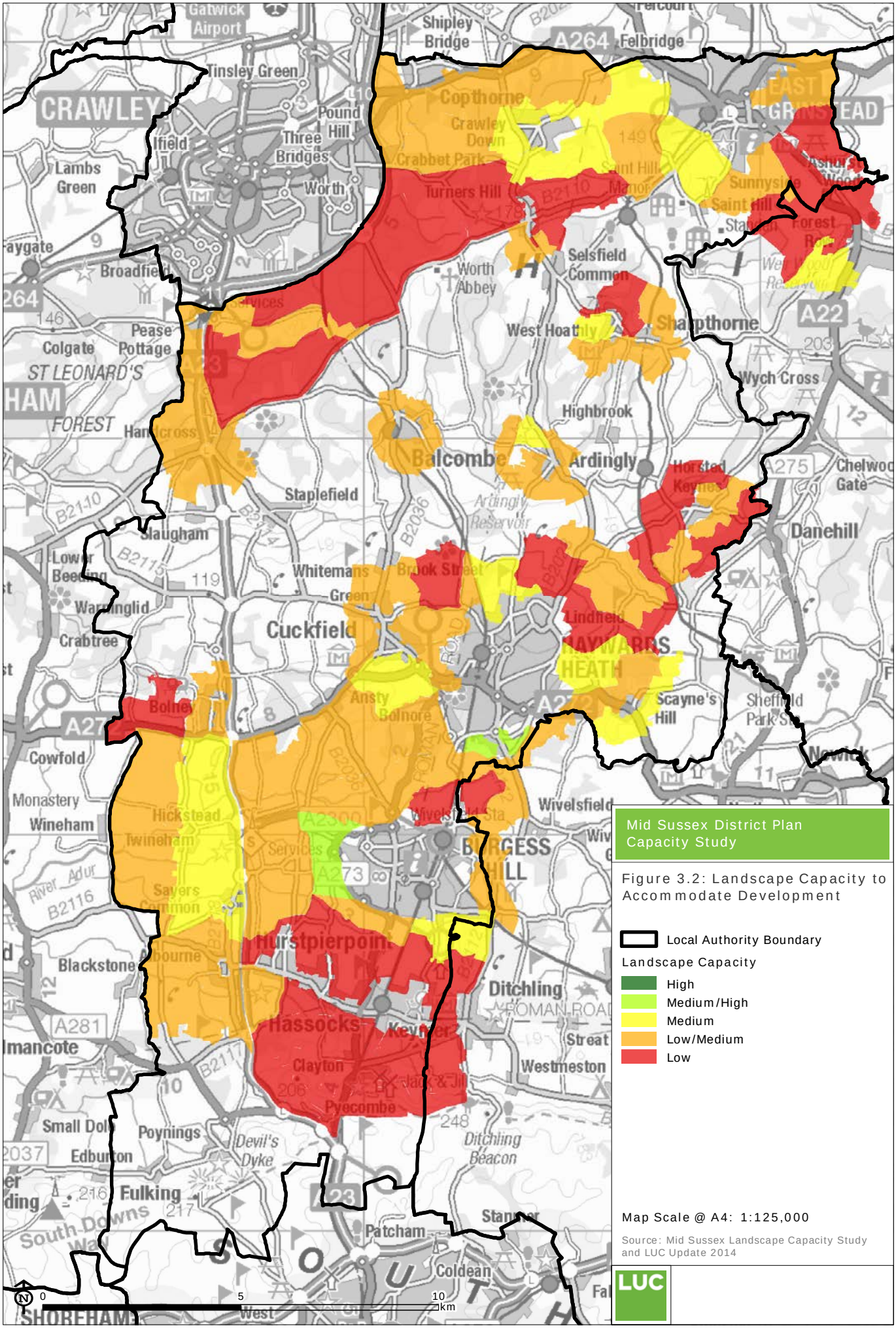
Landscape capacity rating	Description in 2007 Study[132]	Description in current study
Low	A Low or Negligible rating for landscape capacity indicates that development would have a significant and detrimental effect on the character of the landscape as a whole, and, or, on the setting to existing settlement or outstanding assets in the District. Development in these character areas should only be small scale and proposals would need to demonstrate no adverse impacts on the setting to settlement or wider landscape. *Note that no separate description was provided for the Negligible/Low capacity rating in the 2007 Study. It is therefore assumed that it was considered in the same way as the description above for*	A Low rating for landscape capacity indicates that development is likely to have a significant and adverse effect on the character of the landscape area as a whole and is thus unsuitable for strategic scale development.

[132] Mid Sussex Landscape Capacity Study, Hankinson Duckett Associates (2007) p49

Landscape capacity rating	Description in 2007 Study[132]	Description in current study
	Low or Negligible ratings.	
Low/medium	*Note that no description was provided for the Low/Medium capacity rating in the 2007 Study. It is therefore assumed that it was considered in the same way as the description above for Low or Negligible ratings.*	A Low/medium capacity rating indicates that development is likely to have an adverse effect on most of the character area and while smaller development may be possible in a very few locations within the character area, it will not be suitable for strategic scale development.
Medium	A rating of Medium identifies a landscape character area with the capacity for limited development in some parts of the character areas (e.g. infill sites or small urban extensions). The landscapes are general small scale, with a degree of enclosure and internal structure. New development would need to be closely related and having regard for the setting and form of existing settlement and the character and sensitivity of adjacent landscape character areas[133].	A Medium capacity rating indicates that there is the potential for limited smaller-scale development to be located in some parts of the character area, so long as there is regard for existing features and sensitivities within the landscape.
Medium/high	Medium/High capacity identifies a landscape character area that has a generally lower sensitivity which could accommodate significant allocations of development, but which has specific considerations such as sensitive adjacent character area (e.g. within the AONB), separation between settlements or setting to settlements.	Medium/high capacity landscapes generally have lower sensitivity to development, therefore may be able to accommodate larger-scale development, but may have special considerations that need to be taken into account, such as more valuable/sensitive areas close by.
High	High capacity identifies landscape character areas with the least constraints; they are of low sensitivity and low landscape value which, from a landscape perspective could accommodate significant allocations of development. Proposals should however have regard for setting to existing settlements and impacts on the wider landscape. *Note that no separate description was provided for the Very High and High/Very High capacity ratings in the 2007 Study. It is therefore assumed that it was considered in the same way as the description above for the High rating.*	Landscapes with a high capacity to accommodate development are the least constrained, and are likely to be able to accommodate significant allocations of development (proposals should still take care to minimise adverse impact on the wider landscape).

[133] Mid Sussex Landscape Capacity Study, Hankinson Duckett Associates (2007) pp49 and 54





Mid Sussex District Plan
Capacity Study

Figure 3.2: Landscape Capacity to Accommodate Development

Local Authority Boundary

Landscape Capacity

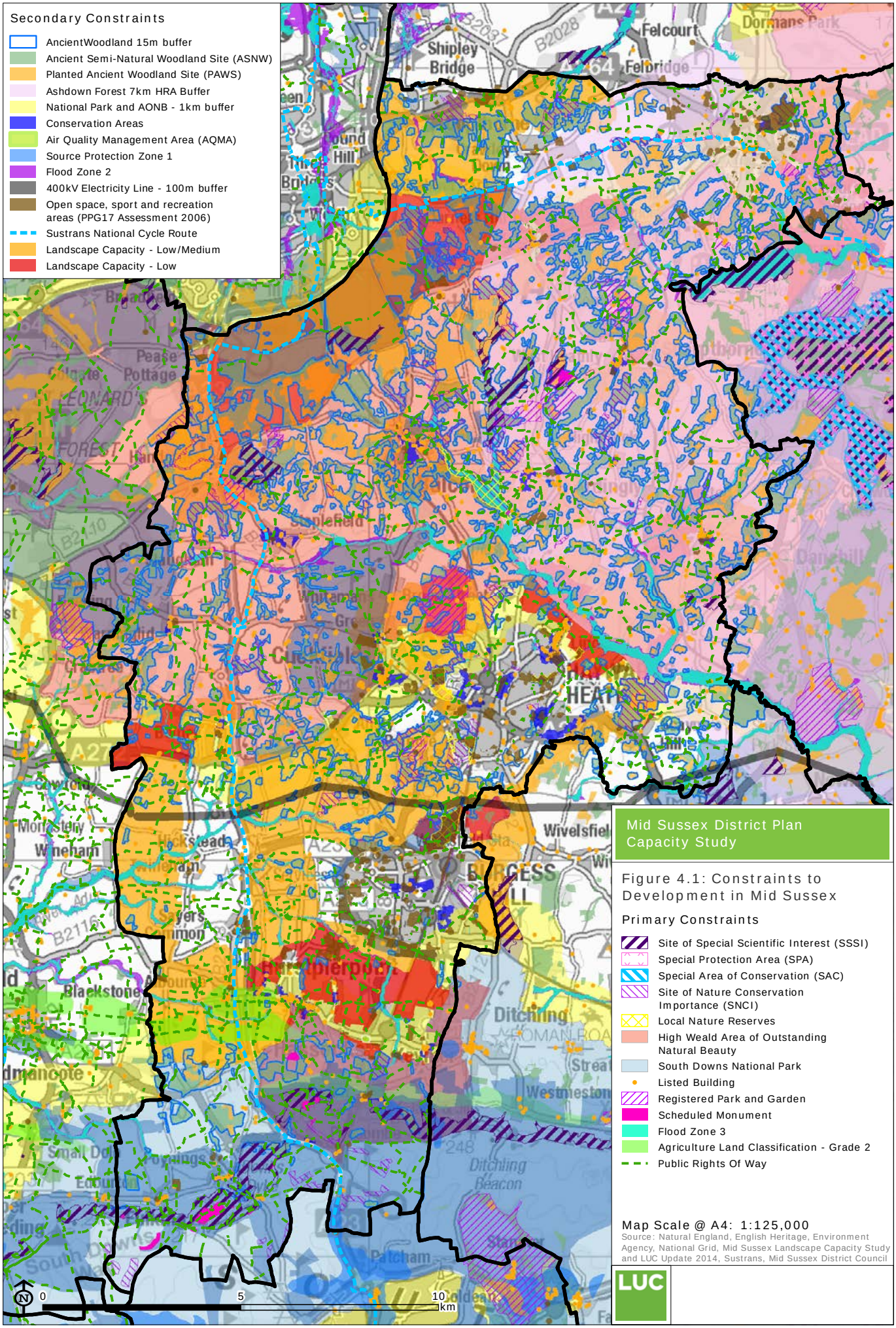
- High
- Medium/High
- Medium
- Low/Medium
- Low

Map Scale @ A4: 1:125,000

Source: Mid Sussex Landscape Capacity Study and LUC Update 2014

LUC

CB: EB:nunn_j LUCGLA FIG03-02_6035_015_r0_Landscape_Capacity_Grade_A4P 28/05/2014



Mid Sussex District Plan Capacity Study

Figure 4.1: Constraints to Development in Mid Sussex

Primary Constraints

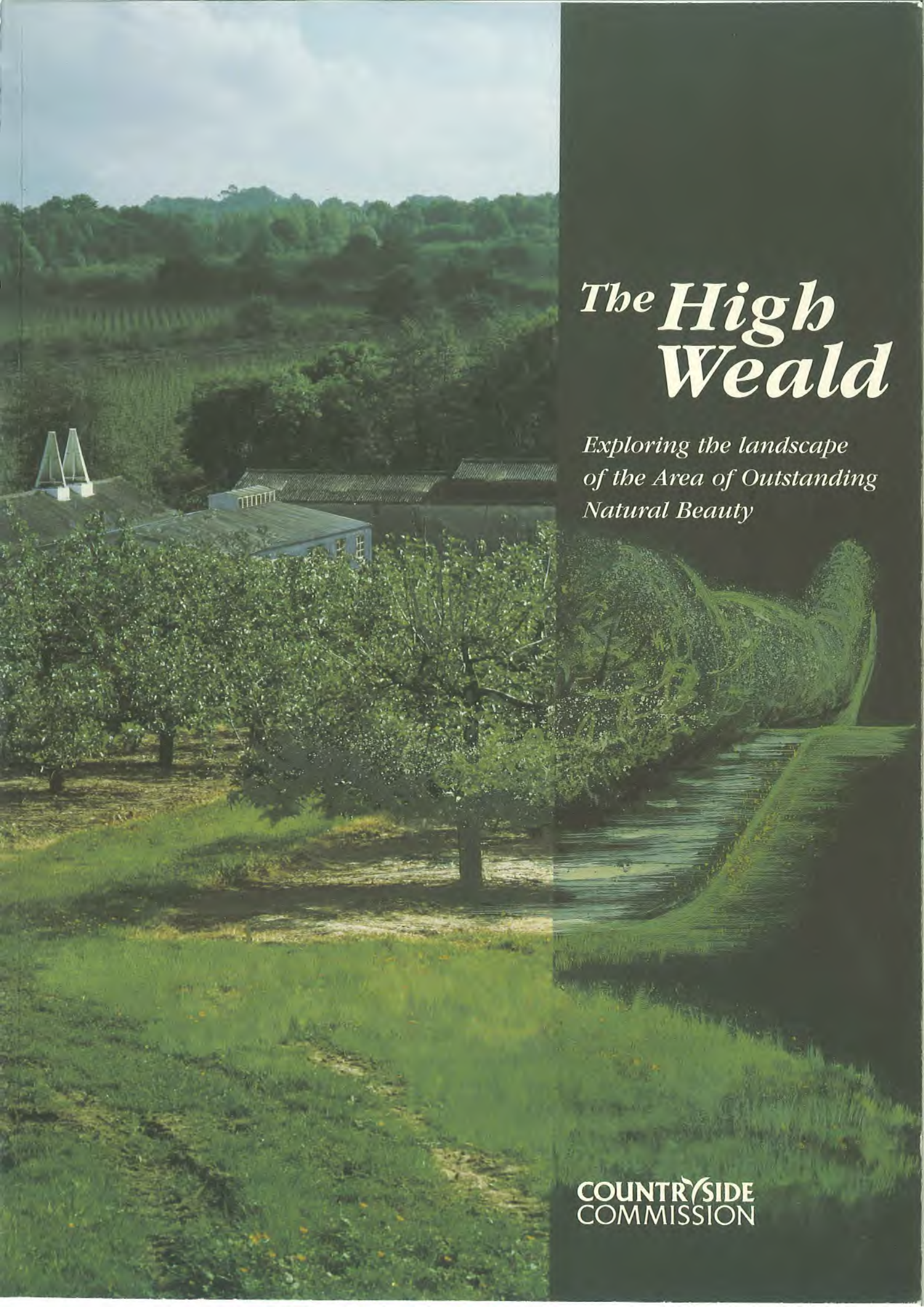
- Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)
- Special Protection Area (SPA)
- Special Area of Conservation (SAC)
- Site of Nature Conservation Importance (SNCI)
- Local Nature Reserves
- High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
- South Downs National Park
- Listed Building
- Registered Park and 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

LUC

Appendix Ref	Source Document for Extract
LVIA Appendix C1	NCA 122 – High Weald by Natural England – December 2013
LVIA Appendix C2	A Strategy for the West Sussex Landscape by West Sussex County Council – October 2005.
LVIA Appendix C3	A Landscape Character Assessment for Mid Sussex by MSDC – November 2005.
LVIA Appendix C4	Capacity of Mid Sussex District to Accommodate Development Study – July 2007.
LVIA Appendix C5	Mid-Sussex Capacity Study – by LUC on behalf of MSDC – June 2014
LVIA Appendix C6	**High Weald AONB Landscape Character Assessment by High Weald JAC – November 1994**
LVIA Appendix C7	High Weald AONB Management Plan 2019-24 by High Weald JAC – 2019



The High Weald

Exploring the landscape of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

COUNTRYSIDE COMMISSION

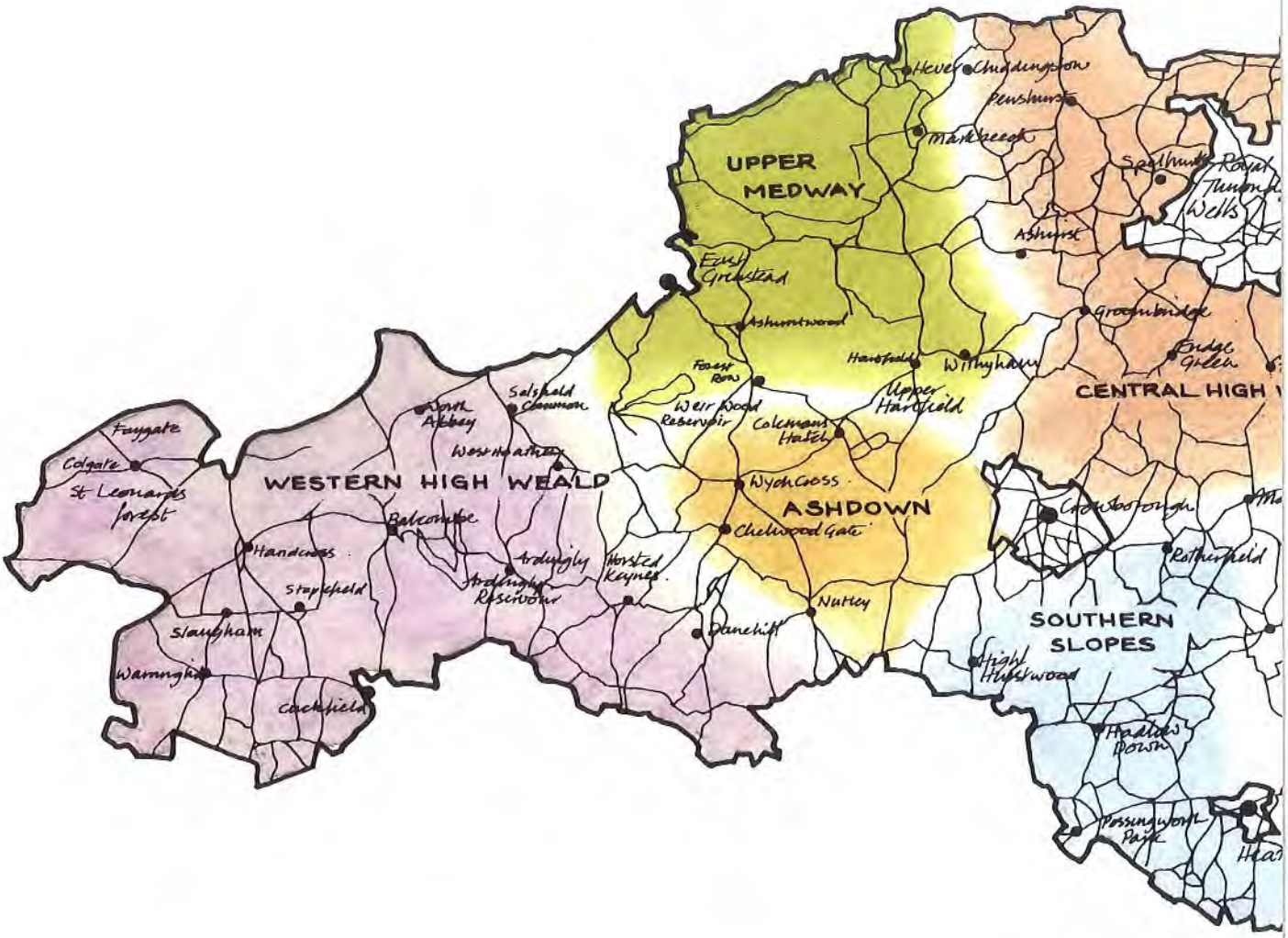
The High Weald

Exploring the landscape of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

A collaboration between
The Countryside Commission
East Sussex County Council
Kent County Council
Surrey County Council
West Sussex County Council

Contents

Character Areas



How to use this document

Landscape is not just a combination of the physical components of the countryside. It is a living, dynamic environment, created by its own history and above all by the people who live and work there, continuing the process of shaping and defining their locality.

In this document, the High Weald AONB divides into nine *character areas*. Each one describes an area of the AONB which has both a strong visual cohesiveness and a sense of place, produced not just by the similarity of the landscape but also by the social identity of the individual areas. *Character areas* do not have hard edges – there are no fixed lines in the landscape – but merge from one into another.

The AONB is in a constant state of development and evolution. Within the *character areas*, the most noticeable pressures and changes have been identified. Many of these also occur elsewhere, often across the entire AONB.

Within each *character area*, several *local character areas* have been identified, where features of local landscape significance or specific issues are dominant. These *local character areas* are illustrated in the last pages of each *character area* section.

Western High Weald

Landscape description

This is the western end of the AONB, extending from Horsham to Ashdown Forest. It includes St Leonards, Tilgate and Worth Forests in the north, the Upper Ouse valley in the south and the small ridges and valleys between Turners Hill and Haywards Heath.

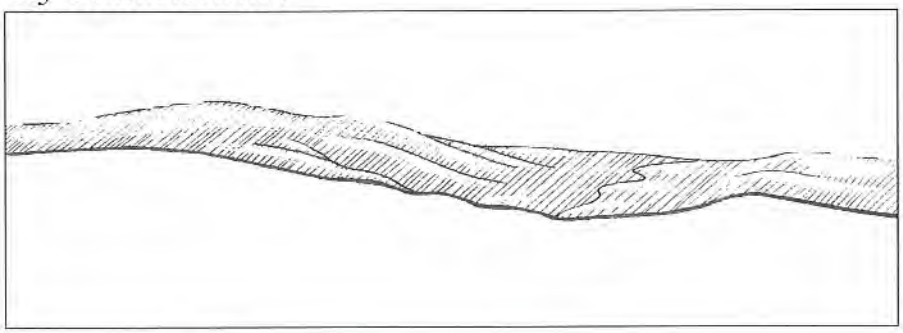
This is an area of contrasting landscapes. In the north, the sandstone Forest Ridge forms a thickly wooded spine, concealing this end of the AONB from the busy towns of Horsham, Crawley and Gatwick. There have been heathy forests on this ridge since mediaeval times.

Although large areas were gradually enclosed for farming, the exposure and poor quality of the badly-drained soils made them difficult to cultivate successfully, so that large tracts remained heathy scrub until after the Second World War. Much of this land was then acquired by the Forestry Commission in the 1950s and planted up with commercial conifers.

Historic ridgeway tracks and ancient drove-roads, running south from London or north from the coast to the forest swine-pastures, encouraged small settlements along their routes, thus producing the characteristic ridgetop villages, such as Turners Hill. The coming of the railway, via Balcombe, in the 1840s and the improvements in roads, put this end of the High Weald under increasing pressure for more housing, resulting in a great deal of nineteenth and twentieth century development scattered through the forests and along country lanes.

In contrast to the forest ridge, much of the rest of this area retains a strong network of shaws and pockets of ancient woodland. Gorse, pine and beech occur frequently along the roadsides on the more acid soils

Key characteristics



Landform

This area is dominated by the forest ridge in the north, which is itself broken up into a series of smaller ridges and valleys. On the northern and western fringes of this ridge, the land flattens out as the sandstones of the High Weald run into the clays of the Low Weald. Elsewhere there is a network of intimate ghylls and ridges, through which the smooth-sided valley of the River Ouse runs eastwards. ◀

Shaws with pines

Thick shaws, along roadsides and around field edges, are a common feature across most of the AONB, but in the Western High Weald these are distinguished by the abundance of Scot's pine and holly within them. This is particularly noticeable around Slaugham and Warninglid. ▶

Purple Rhododendron

The vigorous purple rhododendron, *Rhododendron ponticum*, first made its escape from local gardens into the Sussex countryside, in the nineteenth century.

It has become so well established that in places such as between Handcross and Turners Hill, it lines the roadsides, giving a formal, park-like feel and a vivid splash of purple blossom in early summer. ◀

near Ashdown Forest, and the predominantly timber-framed houses of the west become increasingly interspersed with houses built in the local golden sandstone. In the upper Ouse valley, the woodland is more fragmented and the fields are often larger than those in the east. In this more open landscape, hedgerow trees become a dominant visual feature, as they do across the flat fields around Lower Beeding. South of the Ouse, the sandstones of the High Weald end in a final flourish of tiny ridges and deep, wooded ghylls, concealing a network of small lanes, peppered with large houses and extensive gardens.

Hedgerow trees

Where the traditional pattern of thick shaws between fields does not exist, it is typical to find narrow hedgerows regularly punctuated by mature oak, or sometimes ash, trees.

In some areas the hedgerows themselves have been lost and these great, spreading trees may be all that remain to indicate the old field boundaries, isolated in a sweep of grass or corn. ◀

Sandstone outcrops

The soft nature of the underlying sandstone in this area has allowed considerable erosion to occur, especially where tracks or streams have worn deep into the ground over the centuries.

This has resulted in the frequent exposure of sandstone outcrops, varying in colour from pale yellow to dark brown and often netted over by a thick web of tree roots. ▶

Valerie Alford

Sally Marsh

Large tracts of dense woodland.

Most of the woodlands which dominate the northern sandstone ridge are commercial conifer plantations, interspersed with sweeps of birch or beech woodland. These woods form a dense, dark belt of trees, which confine views and displace farmland as the major land-use in the north. ◀

Special Features


Sally Marsh


Rebecca Warren


Rebecca Warren


Valerie Alford


Valerie Alford

Architecture

Houses in this area were traditionally timber-framed over which may be a skin of locally made tiles or brick, for protection against the weather. Timber-framed barns had a cheaper covering of black weatherboard less commonly used on houses.

On the Forest Ridge sandstone was often used, although frequently in combination with other materials, as it was more expensive. The most distinctive traditional roofing material of this area, unknown in the rest of the High Weald, is Horsham stone, a local grey sandstone. Lasting for up to 150 years before needing renovation, the great stone slabs quickly acquire a rich and beautiful patina of mosses and lichens. Nowadays, however, these roofs are not being replaced, as Horsham stone is no longer quarried.

Rebecca Warren

South of England Show.

The South of England Agricultural show takes place at Ardingly every June. The show offers a microcosm of Wealden employment and activity. Whilst rows of Friesian cattle and the latest technology in tractors emphasise the importance of commercial agriculture in the locality, there is also considerable enthusiasm for the 'rare breeds' of farm animals, where spotted Jacobs sheep compete for attention with Dorking chickens.

In the refreshment tents, local dairies offer fried Sussex goats cheese or sheeps-milk icecream, whilst local vineyards tempt passers-by with glasses of English wine. This range of farm enterprise is indicative of the recent diversification within the farming communities of the High Weald.

In the showrings, top-class horses and riders go through their paces, interspersed with the excited whoops of the local Pony Clubs. Horse ownership is widespread in the AONB, especially where farms are no longer agriculturally viable. Beyond the showrings, enormous tractors and combine harvestors remind visitors of the scale of modern agriculture, whilst nearby, traditional countryside craftsmen lay hedges, make wattle fences and carve elegant bowls out of local wood.

The show is one of the main opportunities for the rural communities of the High Weald to reach a wider audience and illustrates the range of activities going on in the High Weald, both by those whose livelihood is tied up in the land and by those who live there but work elsewhere.

Pressures and change

The strip of countryside next to the road is the most commonly seen part of the AONB, indeed for many people it is the only part they ever see, and yet it is also the most at risk from degradation.

Urban edge development

The western end of the High Weald is under extreme pressure from urban-edge developments, such as garden centres, golf-courses, sporadic housing estates. The damage to the AONB occurs in three ways:-

1. Through the 'urban' nature of the development itself;
2. Through the use of inappropriate materials;
3. Through insensitive signing.

It is the insidious, cumulative effect of such piecemeal development, which changes and urbanises the whole appearance of the countryside. ▶

Typical Urban Edge Developments

These include ...

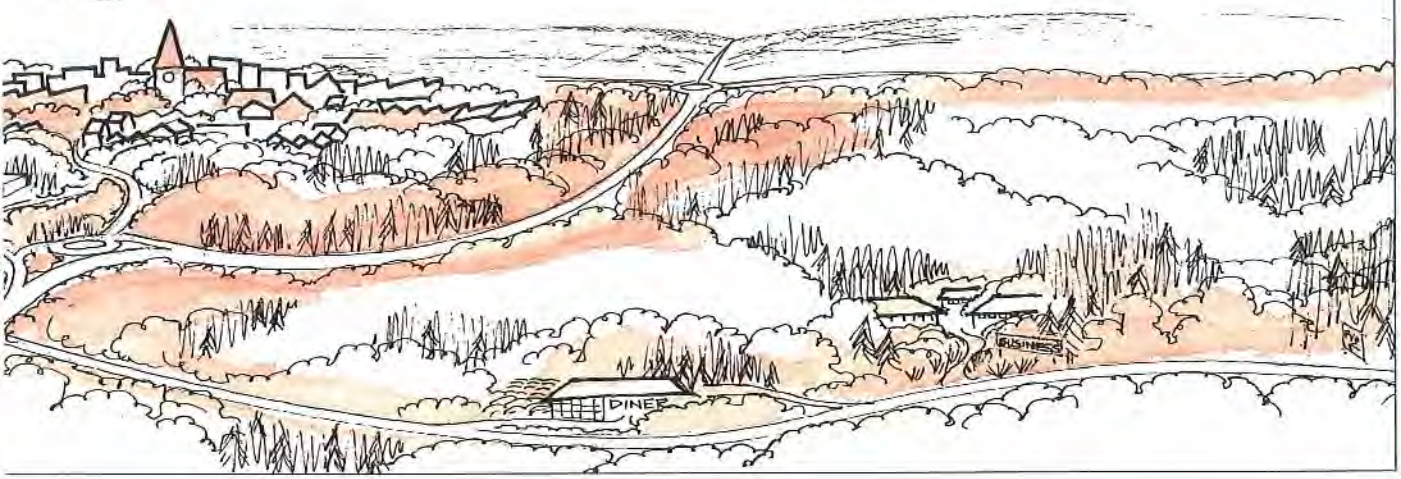
Ribbon development
Pick Your Own farms
Farm parks
Petrol stations
Golf courses
Builders yards
Garden centres
Cafes
Aquatics shops
Car sales
Farm shops
Tea rooms
Football grounds
Superstores

The populations of towns such as Horsham and Crawley impose pressure on the most easily accessible areas.

This can contribute to farming no longer being a viable land-use, leading to apparently neglected land, and pressure for other types of land-use.

Inappropriate land-uses and poor design, using alien materials, erodes local character and beauty.

Each new development, however small, changes the appearance, and hence people's perception, of the AONB.



Rebecca Warren

Development

Materials

Signing

Road Pressure

The high numbers of commuters living in this area leads to severe pressure on even the smallest roads, many of which are used as 'rat runs'. This pressure often results in 'road improvements', which range from complete re-routing, such as the A23 at Handcross, to small changes in appearance. Again, it is the cumulative effect which causes the damage. Each time a concrete kerb or white lines appear in a small lane, or a simple junction suddenly sprouts a mini-roundabout, the very quality of 'natural' beauty, for which we value the countryside, is pushed further away.

Where new roads are built, they often ignore local style and materials or employ standard designs for items such as fences, without considering the intrusion on their surroundings. The design of new roads and road improvements needs to take the character of the local area into account, and to reflect its individuality.

Rhododendron invasion

Invasion of both commercial and private woodlands in the High Weald by rhododendron and laurel is a continual problem. Originally planted for game cover or in gardens, these shrubs quickly established themselves in the wild, thriving on the well-drained, acid soils of the Forest Ridge and similar areas. Rhododendron tolerates shady woodland conditions, spreading extensively. It is too widely established to eradicate from the AONB, besides giving a particular quality to some areas, but needs to be contained to prevent it from choking and shading out native plants.

Other pressures

Suburbanisation (page 22)

Diversification

Rebecca Warren

Western High Weald

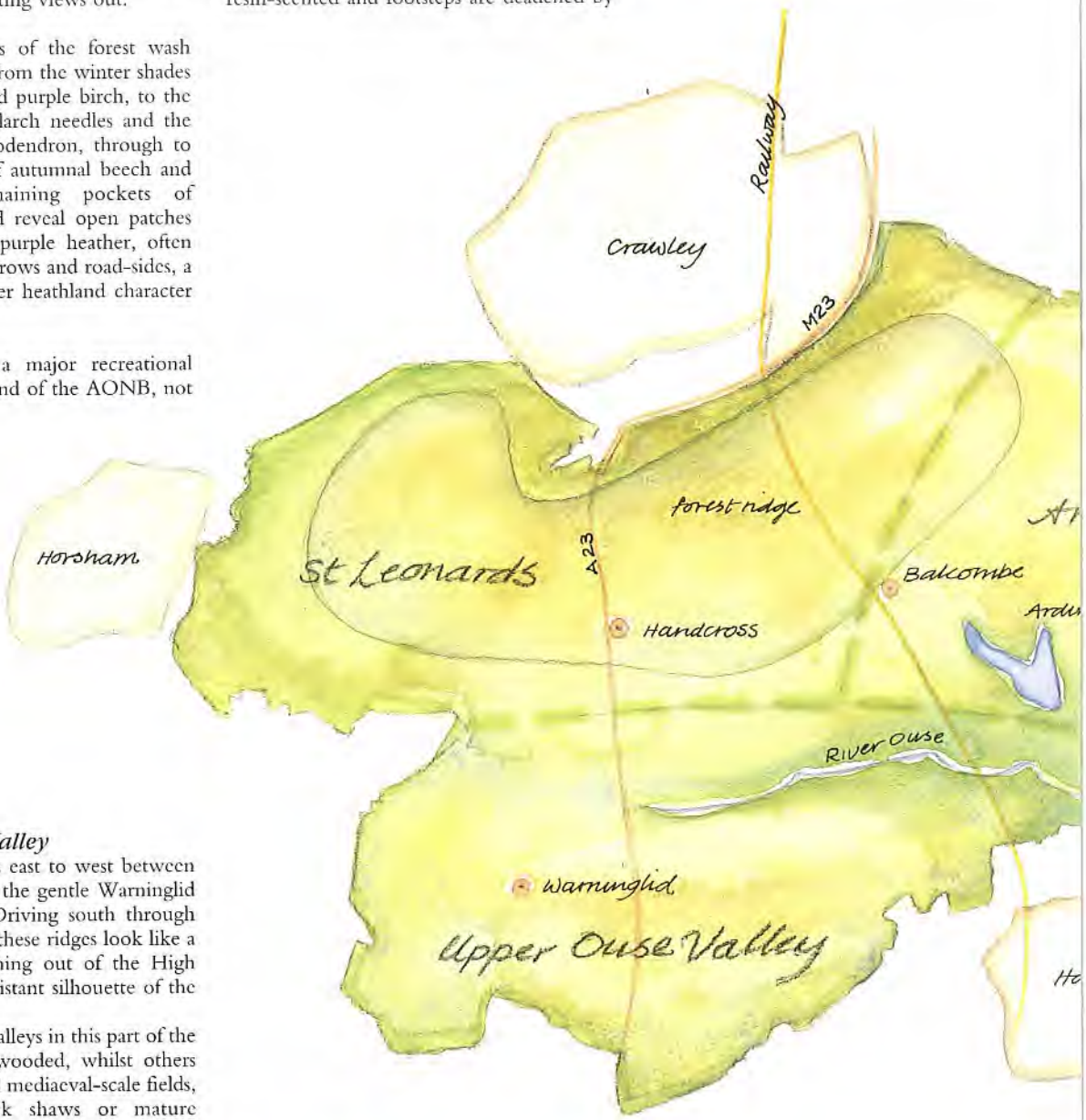
St Leonards

The extensive forests of this area give a special quality to this part of the AONB. It is one of those rare places in the South-east where it is still possible to lose oneself with comparative ease. The dense tracts of woodland impose a sense of isolation in the landscape and the roads and paths which cut through them are often bounded by tall stands of conifers, limiting views out.

The changing colours of the forest wash across this landscape, from the winter shades of dark green pine and purple birch, to the spring green of new larch needles and the vivid mauve of rhododendron, through to the golden splashes of autumnal beech and chestnut. The remaining pockets of broadleaved woodland reveal open patches of yellow gorse and purple heather, often straggling along hedgerows and road-sides, a reminder of the former heathland character of this landscape.

These woods form a major recreational resource at the west end of the AONB, not just for the opportunity to relax away from traffic and housing, but also for the stimulation of different sights, sounds and smells. A walk in these woodlands can pass through mature beech and oak forest, around hidden stretches of water where swans glide, and along streams cutting through layers of exposed sandstone, into dark plantations of pine, where the air is resin-scented and footsteps are deadened by a thick covering of pine-needles on the paths.

The mediaeval iron industry flourished in this area, where there were good supplies of iron ore and abundant timber to fuel the smelting. Many of the local streams were



The Upper Ouse Valley

The River Ouse runs east to west between the Forest Ridge and the gentle Warninglid to Cuckfield ridge. Driving south through this area on the A23, these ridges look like a series of waves, washing out of the High Weald, towards the distant silhouette of the South Downs.

Many of the steeper valleys in this part of the AONB are densely wooded, whilst others retain pockets of small mediaeval-scale fields, surrounded by thick shaws or mature hedgerow trees and interspersed with parkland and gentrified farmhouses. Laurel and beech hedges creep along many of the lanes here, halted only by ornamental gates, but there are numerous areas of new hedgerow trees or deciduous plantations.

North of Warninglid, the River Ouse follows a gentle, winding valley, where in the past, the better drained soils were more easily cultivated than on the Forest Ridge. The resulting intensity of use left little room for woodland. The hedgerow trees which remain here, therefore, have a particular value for the character of the area.

Balcombe Viaduct ▶

dammed, to provide a controlled flow of water to power the bellows or 'hammers' of the forges. Although the industry is long dead, the old hammer ponds, fringed now by dense woodlands, still lie hidden in their small valleys, the most visible remains of this once vibrant industry. In St Leonards Forest the long, sinuous lakes of Hawkins Pond and Hammer Pond are typical examples. Today they are an important recreational resource, valued especially by birdwatchers, fishermen and generations of pond-dipping school children.

The fields which jostle around the edges of the forests, are often large and open, their sparse hedges dotted with spreading oak trees. The agricultural nature of this landscape, however, is threatened by urban-edge developments, such as business parks and 'executive housing', springing up along the roadsides.

Former hammer pond ▶

◀ *Slaugham*

Ardingly

The streams which drain off the sandstone ridge between Horsham and Ashdown Forest, have formed a maze of narrow ridges and thickly-wooded ghylls. Deceptively hidden amongst these intimate valleys, are the remains of a once prosperous, industrial landscape. Magnificent chains of hammer ponds stretch through the woodlands around Horsted Keynes and substantial timber-framed and sandstone farms nestle amongst the trees.

Although many of the roads run along ridges, the strong network of thick hedges, woodlands and shaws which clothe the slopes, often confines views to tantalising glimpses through field gates. Individual trees in the hedges are a prominent feature.

This area is particularly rich in ghyll woodlands, which fill almost every valley bottom. Most of these woods support a wide variety of flowers, insects and lichens and some are of national importance to nature conservation.

The combination of intimate landform and dense tree-cover, however, also conceals the major tourist attractions of Wakehurst Gardens, the South of England showground, the Bluebell Railway and Ardingly Reservoir. This increases the pressure on the small network of tiny lanes crossing the area, which are already heavily used by the large number of residents who commute out of the area to work.

Parks and Gardens

The hills and vales of the AONB conceal a wealth of beautiful parks and gardens, set deep amongst lush fields and woodlands. Although land-owners had been developing their estates since mediaeval times, it was not until the late nineteenth century that the majority of the gardens open today were created. The coming of the turnpike roads, followed by the railways, opened up the High Weald to an influx of wealthy potential land-owners. These 'new gentry' were attracted by the underdeveloped countryside, lying within easy reach of London and its commerce. This influx co-incided with the discovery and importation of new, exotic plants from the expanding British Empire which resulted in the rise in popularity of gardening.

This outburst of horticultural enthusiasm a century ago has provided the High Weald with a range of important parks and gardens. Considerable modifications to existing grounds took place at this time, including the re-creation of the mediaeval gardens at Penshurst Place and Hever Castle and the alterations to Capability Brown's landscape at Sheffield Park. In addition, however, many new gardens were created, such as those at Gravetye Manor, developed by the champion of 'informal planting', William Robinson, whilst Edwin Lutyens designed what is now Christopher Lloyd's garden at Great Dixter. Other gardens, such as Nymans and Leonardslea, however, are best known for their important collections of rhododendrons, azaleas, camellias and other acid-tolerant plants, which fill the landscape with the vivid colours of their native Far East. Perhaps the most well-known, Wakehurst Place was taken over in the 1960s as an extension of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew.

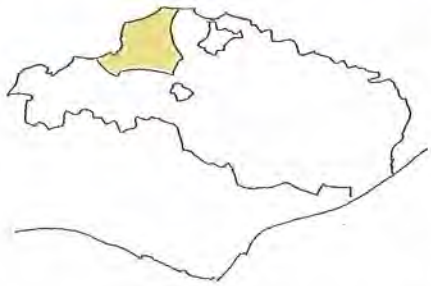
The Great Storm of 1987 brought considerable destruction to many of the gardens and parks in the High Weald, especially those, such as Sheffield Park and Wakehurst, with valuable collections of old trees. This disaster, however, has enabled a new cycle of planting and design to revitalise the rich heritage of ornamental landscapes for future generations to enjoy.

▲ *Scotney Castle, owned by the National Trust*

◀ *Nymans Garden, owned by the National Trust*

Upper Medway

Landscape description



This area covers the gentle folds of the Upper Medway valley, from Weir Wood Reservoir in the west along the northern edge of Ashdown Forest to Chiddingstone and Groombridge in the east.

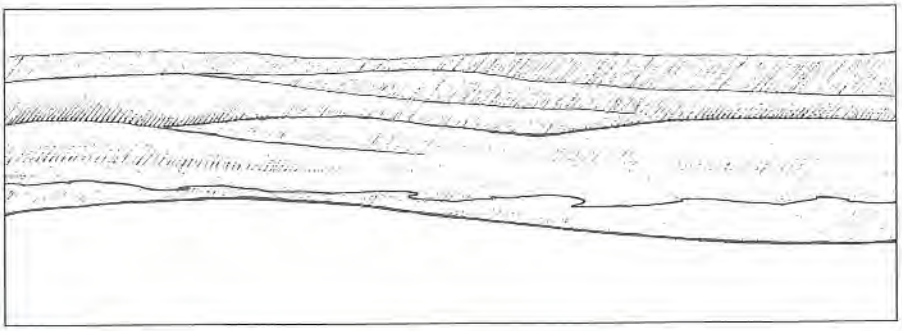
The gentle topography of these valleys and the flatter, rolling land to the north around Markbeech, made this area easier to farm than the steep sandstone ridges and valleys, which characterise other parts of the High Weald. This has resulted in a landscape of relatively little woodland, dominated by mixed agriculture, where the fields are frequently bounded by narrow hedges or post and wire fence and dotted with hedgerow trees. Only in the west, around Ashurst Wood and Forest Row, does the typical High Weald landscape of deep ghyll and ridge reassert itself, where small, less intensively grazed fields are hidden between larger woodlands.

This part of the AONB bears considerable evidence of the long history of man in the High Weald. West of Dormansland, the ancient hill-fort of Dry Hill offers magnificent views of the surrounding countryside, whilst the Roman highway from London to Lewes passes between Marsh Green and Holtye. The iron industry which flourished here can be traced from the redundant hammer ponds and substantial mediaeval houses built with the ensuing wealth, such as Gravetye Manor.

Key Characteristics

Landform

This area comprises a series of parallel ridges and valleys running east to west, whose watercourses combine to form the upper reaches of the River Medway. This river has a narrow floodplain, extending as far as Upper Hartfield. In the north, the gently rolling landscape gradually flattens out towards Hever Castle and the River Eden. ▶



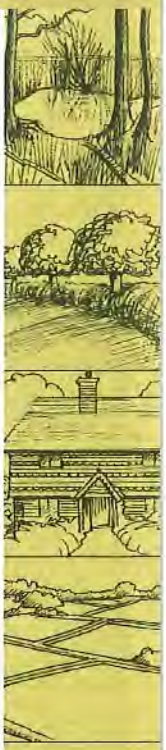
Hedgerow trees

Intensive farming has reduced many former shaws to narrow hedges, interspersed with mature trees. Along the upper valley slopes and on the flatter land in the north, most of these trees are oak or ash, but on the valley floors occasional groups of willows stand out, their bare, orange twigs seeming to burst into flame as they catch shafts of winter sunlight. ▶

Roadside Coppice

Many of the fields are surrounded by dense deciduous shaws, almost all of which have been coppiced in the past. Today the thickets of thin poles support a lush canopy of leaves, shading out the sunlight from the woodland floor and stippling the roads with gently swaying shadows and pools of light. ◀

Extensive cultivation of hops and fruit until the early part of this century, has left a legacy of occasional orchards and a variety of oast-houses. The proximity of East Grinstead and its railway station have encouraged people to move out into the neighbouring countryside, causing many farms to be split up and the outbuildings to be gentrified into houses. This has increased commuter traffic on the roads, whilst urban-edge land-uses, such as golf courses, steal out to the very edge of the AONB.



Ponds

This area is dotted with ponds. Between Cowden and Chiddingstone almost every field has a small, usually stagnant, pool lurking in the undergrowth around its margins. Many of these were dug to extract the underlying iron ore, whilst others yielded *marl* - a clay spread on the fields as a soil improver. Other ponds exist as strings of hammer ponds, such as those at Ladycross Farm near Dormansland, concealed in small, wooded valleys. ▶

Sally Marsh

Red-brick and tile houses.

Many of the buildings, from cottage to castle, are of local brick, often hung with red tiles. The warm orange bricks are frequently interspersed with blue-grey bricks, sometimes creating elaborate patterns. These different colours result from different positions in the kiln during the firing process, not from different types of brick. ▶

Strong, regular field pattern

The gentle topography of this area reveals a landscape with a strong patchwork of similar-sized fields and blocks of woodland. There are fewer shaws here than in many other parts of the High Weald and many of the arable fields, especially those in the north around Hever, are fringed only by trimmed hedges and hedgerow trees, allowing the strong field pattern to be seen. ▶

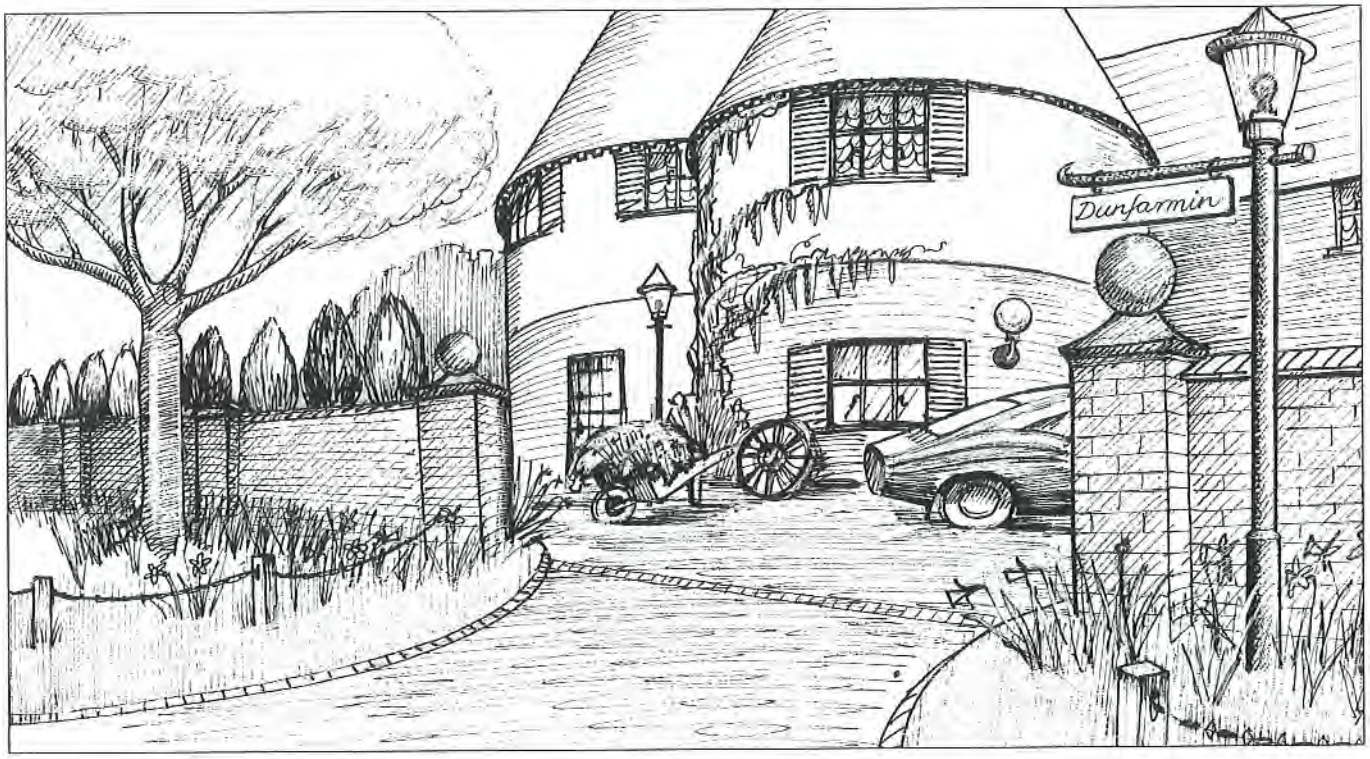
Pressures and change

Decline in landscape structure

Ponds

Ponds are a widespread feature in the AONB, although very few are of natural origin. Most once yielded stone, clay, iron ore or marl, whilst many others are old dams, or hammer-ponds or were dug to provide water for animals. With the exception of a few of these stock-ponds, these pools are now redundant industrial relics, no longer required for their original purposes. Nevertheless, they are a characteristic feature of the landscape and have acquired new values as wildlife habitats and for recreation, such as fishing and bird-watching.

Nowadays, unfortunately, many are overgrown with trees and brambles, which shade out the light and choke the water with rotting leaves. In these conditions, ponds quickly become stagnant and little wildlife is able to survive. Removal of the trees around the south side of the pond can significantly reduce the shading and leaf litter, turning a dank pool into a vibrant, wetland habitat. ▶



Suburbanisation ▲

Suburbanisation occurs when certain elements of property design or ornamentation, which are particularly identified with towns and the urban environment, are imported into the countryside. These imports show little regard for local character or style and can have a visually damaging effect on the unforced, understated quality of the landscape, from which the High Weald draws its beauty. Such elements may include mown verges protected by chains and bollards along country lanes; ornamental conifer hedges, especially those using alternate green and gold conifers; fancy brick walls, inset with concrete fretwork or olde worlde cart-wheels.....

Psuedo-Victorian street-lamps, modern globe-lamps or carriage lamps and out-door security lights, which illuminate the surrounding countryside.....

Sugar-pink Japanese cherry trees, ornamental wheel-barrows and liver-pink tarmac drives speckled with white chippings.....

All of these examples give the typical British suburb a particular style and quality but they are rarely appropriate in the countryside of the High Weald.

Valerie Alford

◀ *Coppice poles in winter*

Coppice woodland

Almost all the deciduous woods in the High Weald have been coppiced at some time in the past. Coppiced wood not only provided charcoal which fuelled the iron industry, but was also used extensively in building and agriculture. It was thus an immensely important part of the rural economy and every available tree was coppiced where possible, even those on steep banks or in hedges. Amongst the coppice stools, oak standards were often grown, not to be felled until big enough to provide large timber.

This process has been going on, almost continuously, since the High Weald was first settled. It is only since the beginning of this century that coppicing has declined, due to a fall in demand for coppice products and the fall in numbers of agricultural labourers. Although the High Weald still has more working coppice than anywhere else in Britain, most former coppices have been unmanaged since the Second World War. Many land-owners, therefore, now find themselves in a previously unknown situation, where old coppice stools now support several mature trunks, rather than a crop of thin poles. As these trunks grow, they gradually fall outwards and over, sometimes damaging the original stool as they do so.

Regular coppice management allows periodic floods of light onto the woodland floor, providing ideal conditions for a wide diversity of woodland plants and animals. This form of management encourages the hazy sheets of bluebells which are such a familiar sight in the High Weald. If coppice woodlands are left unmanaged, however, the variety of wildlife will decline as a result of the constant shade and the trees will gradually collapse on to each other.

Coppicing requires regular management, however, which can be labour intensive and produces a large number of thin poles. Although there is considerable interest in grant-aid for traditional woodland management, the best incentive for the necessary time and expense involved during a period of dwindling farm incomes, would be an accessible market for the timber.

Sally Marsh

▲ *Hedge in decline*

◀ *Typical rich hedge*

Hedges

Hedges are a fundamental part of the High Weald. From a distance they impose a strong structure on the agricultural landscape, producing the chequer-board pattern so associated with the 'traditional' English countryside. At close quarters they are often a rich, intertwined mixture of shrubs and flowers, frequently towering above sunken roads, many of them remnant strips of ancient woodland.

Traditionally these hedges were layed or coppiced, providing a thicket of dense stems to prevent stock from escaping. Many of today's hedges, however, only have their tops trimmed. This encourages them to develop a bushy top, supported by occasional thick trunks, which cease to be stock-proof, eventually decaying and falling over. Such hedges are then replaced by wire fencing and the characteristic field pattern is lost.

Other pressures

Traffic pressure (pages 15 & 39)

Upper Medway

Kent Water

The gentle valley of the Kent Water meets the river Medway between Blackham and Fordcombe. To the north of this valley, the landscape is dominated by Dry Hill, which rises to 172m, topped by the ancient ramparts of an iron age hill fort. Dry Hill lies in the centre of a remarkably secluded pocket of the High Weald, where public access is by foot only, and many of the farmsteads lie far off the roads. The lower slopes of the hill are fissured with little ghylls, which drain either south into the Kent Water or north into the river Eden.

Many of these ghylls support strips of once coppiced woodland, where starry clusters of white wild garlic flowers smother the stream banks in early May, filling the air with the pungent scent of onions.

Elsewhere, large irregular blocks of woodland clothe the hill-sides. Some of these woods are abandoned coppice, whilst others are a tangle of conifer plantations and naturalised rhododendron. In winter the footpaths through these woods are a quagmire of thick, black leaf-mould and slippery clay, picking their way through shallow pits that are so frequent as to suggest that these woods were once war-torn mine-fields. In fact they were originally surface pits for iron extraction. The iron industry was a major presence in this area, with big forges at Scarletts Farm and Cowden.

Tucked away between these woods on the upper slopes of Dry Hill, is an area of orchards and soft fruit, protected from the wind by distinctive rows of Lombardy poplars. This was once an area of considerable hop and fruit production and occasional oast-houses still dot the landscape. The warm red local brick has long been used here, and there are a considerable number of

Weir Wood

Weir Wood reservoir lies at the head of the river Medway, in the small pocket of land between East Grinstead, West Hoathly and Forest Row, where the bracken-filled scrub woodland of Ashdown Forest runs into the small fields and copses of the Western High Weald.

From the most westerly ridge in this area, between Sharpthorne and Turners Hill, the valley falls steeply away towards Forest Row, the shimmering reservoir almost concealed by the dense trees of Great Wildgoose and Giffards Woods. This is an area of mixed agriculture, where small, damp pastures along the edge of the reservoir are mottled with clumps of dark green rushes whilst mounds of brambles twist through the hedges. Elsewhere larger arable fields are trimmed with narrow hedges and sporadic hedgerow trees. In the south and west many of the roadside trees are beech, which were once planted and laid for hedging and thrive on the well drained sandstones.

There are a number of beautiful and substantial country houses here, hidden between the woodlands and the valley slopes. Many were built with the wealth accumulated from the iron industry, whilst others, such as Standen, were a result of the gradual opening up of the Weald to the non-farming gentry. Designed by Philip Webb, Standen remains one of the least altered of the early twentieth century Arts and Crafts houses. To the west, William Robinson, the Victorian plantsman who pioneered 'naturalistic' planting in opposition to formal bedding, lived at Gravetye Manor.

The focus of this valley, however, remains the reservoir, a vista of steel grey water, fringed with rushes and adorned by the angular silhouettes of cormorants, perched unmovingly on overhanging branches. Despite the popularity of the footpaths around the reservoir and of the rock outcrops at the western end, this valley retains a well-wooded, secluded feel, which belies the nearby presence of East Grinstead.

Weir Wood reservoir ▶

half timbered, half brick-built houses constructed during the urban expansion which occurred with the coming of the railways, in the nineteenth century.

North-east of Mark Beech the land begins to flatten out. Substantial coniferous and deciduous woodlands occur in a sweep from Chiddingstone Hoath to Hever, interspersed with large arable fields, which stretch between trimmed hedges or narrow shaws, as if hinting at the approaching boundary with the Low Weald and the flat Eden valley.

Dry Hill ▶

Hartfield

From Gills Lap, on the top of Ashdown Forest, the north-west corner of the High Weald looks like a series of gentle creases in the landscape. The Medway runs west to east, from Forest Row to Groombridge, paralleled by the Kent Water to the north. The narrow ridges between these rivers have a strongly defined pattern of hedges and shaws across their slopes and the valleys have an enclosed, tranquil feel. A narrow floodplain extends up the Medway valley as far as Hartfield, criss-crossed by tidy hedges and small groups of hedgerow trees. In the south, gorse and bracken, which flourish on Ashdown Forest, haunt the hedges and roadsides.

Sandstone, from Ashdown Forest and the smaller ridges, is widely used on farms and in villages, such as Forest Row and Hartfield, and a considerable amount of white painted weatherboarding occurs throughout this area. The former presence of the bygone iron industry is evident here from the many overgrown and ruined hammer ponds through which the Medway's tributaries now flow unhindered. Some larger ponds still remain, however, such as those at Bolebrook Castle and Hammerwood Park, hidden from general view by dense woodlands and thick fieldside shaws.

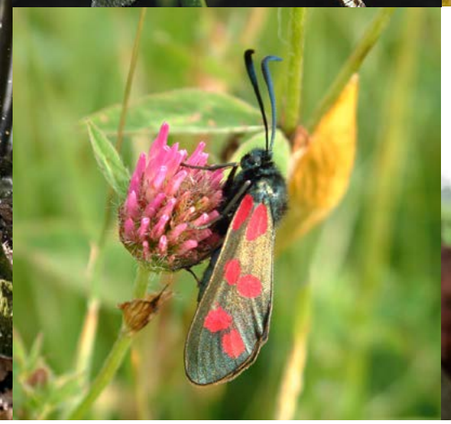
This area has a well-settled feel. A glance along the Medway valley from the B2110 reveals an orderly agricultural landscape predominantly of pasture and small blocks of deciduous woodland. Set deep within this peaceful countryside, the red-roofed farmsteads seem to have grown out of the valley sides at almost regular intervals. Indeed, it is the very tranquillity of these valleys which attracts people to the area and many of the old farm-buildings and occasional oasthouses have been converted into residences.

◀ *Medway Valley*

Appendix Ref	Source Document for Extract
LVIA Appendix C1	NCA 122 – High Weald by Natural England – December 2013
LVIA Appendix C2	A Strategy for the West Sussex Landscape by West Sussex County Council – October 2005.
LVIA Appendix C3	A Landscape Character Assessment for Mid Sussex by MSDC – November 2005.
LVIA Appendix C4	Capacity of Mid Sussex District to Accommodate Development Study – July 2007.
LVIA Appendix C5	Mid-Sussex Capacity Study – by LUC on behalf of MSDC – June 2014
LVIA Appendix C6	High Weald AONB Landscape Character Assessment by High Weald JAC – November 1994
LVIA Appendix C7	**High Weald AONB Management Plan 2019-24 by High Weald JAC – 2019**

The High Weald AONB

An outstandingly beautiful Medieval landscape



Management Plan 2019–2024

A statutory plan setting out local authority policies for the management of the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)

The High Weald

AONB Management Plan 2019–2024

Published by the High Weald Joint Advisory Committee under the Countryside and Rights of Way (CRoW) Act 2000, on behalf of:

- East Sussex County Council
- Kent County Council
- Surrey County Council
- West Sussex County Council
- Ashford Borough Council
- Crawley Borough Council
- Hastings Borough Council
- Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council
- Tunbridge Wells Borough Council
- Horsham District Council
- Mid Sussex District Council
- Rother District Council
- Sevenoaks District Council
- Tandridge District Council
- Wealden District Council

This edition published 2019

Third edition published 2014 · **Second edition** published 2009 · **First edition** published 2004

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PEFC PEFC/00-00-0000 Promoting Sustainable Forest Management www.pefc.co.uk

Contents

The High Weald's
facts and figures

The High Weald AONB was designated in 1983

One of 46 AONBs in England, Wales and Northern Ireland

One of 34 AONBs in England covering 15% of the land

Land cover – 1,461km2 (4th largest AONB)

127,000 people live in the AONB (density 87 people per sq. km.)

70,000 live in towns excluded from the designation but wholly surrounded by it

Over 1 million people live within 5km of the AONB boundary

The AONB covers 4 counties, 11 districts and 11 parliamentary constituencies

100 parishes wholly or partly in the AONB

The JAC partnership has represented the interests of the High Weald since 1989

3500 historic farmsteads

17 market towns and larger villages

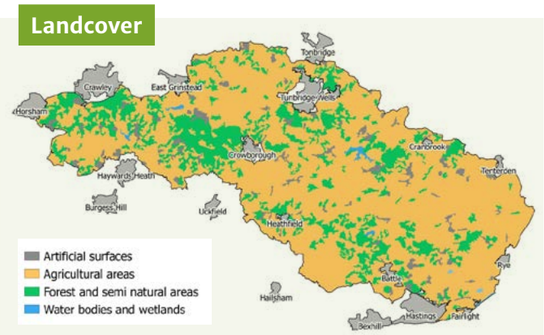
Local authority	% of AONB in local authority	% of local authority in AONB
East Sussex	60.19	50.99
Hastings	0.37	17.63
Rother	29.29	82.60
Wealden	30.53	53.36
West Sussex	13.68	9.87
Crawley	0.03	1.05
Horsham	2.46	6.77
Mid Sussex	11.19	48.96
Kent	25.41	10.21
Ashford	5.69	14.34
Sevenoaks	4.05	16.00
Tonbridge & Malling	0.07	0.39
Tunbridge Wells	15.61	68.88
Surrey	0.70	0.61
Tandridge	0.70	4.11

AONB boundaries were drawn so as to include land of outstanding scientific value to ensure:

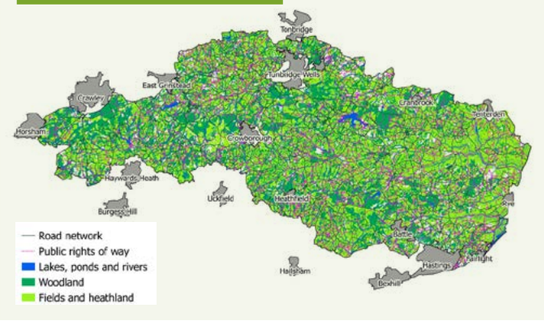
'the preservation of large tracts of country too large for strict preservation as National Nature Reserves, but yet of great value either physiographically or geologically or as containing complex communities of plant and animal life'

The Report of the National Parks Committee 1947

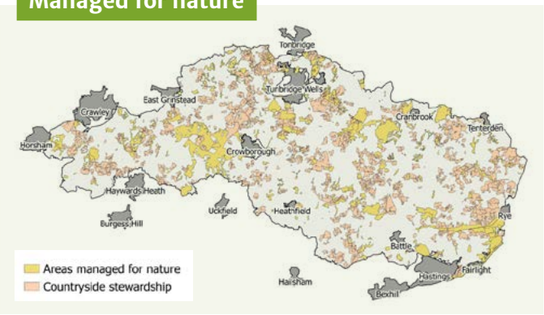
Landcover

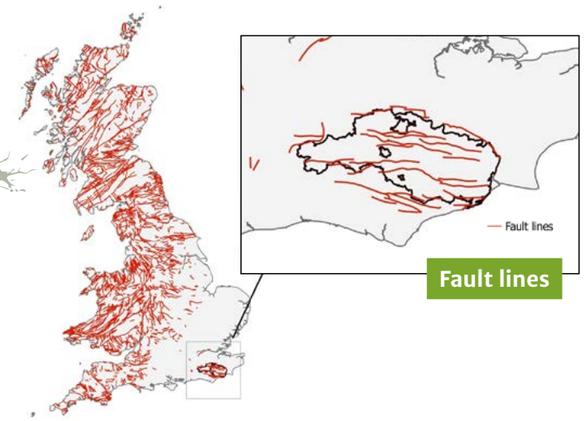


Highly interconnected



Managed for nature





Fault lines

The High Weald's *landscape*[1]

The High Weald occupies the ridged and faulted sandstone core of an area known from Saxon times as the Weald. It is an area of ancient countryside and one of the best surviving Medieval landscapes in Northern Europe.

The mosaic of small mixed farms and woodlands is now considered to represent a quintessentially English landscape, yet for many years, until the advent of turnpikes, it was better known for the terrible state of its roads.

At first glance the High Weald appears to be a densely wooded landscape but closer examination reveals a detailed agricultural tapestry of fields, small woodlands and farmsteads. Everything in the High Weald landscape is human scale. Wildflower meadows, alive with bees and grasshoppers, are now a rare delight, but the Medieval pattern of small fields with sinuous edges surrounded by thick wooded hedges, remain. Extensive views punctuated by church spires can be glimpsed along the ridge-top roads. Around almost every corner a harmonious group of traditional farm buildings comes into view with their distinctive steep, clay tile and hipped roofs.

The High Weald is crossed by one of the most famous routeways in English history, the one that took King Harold's army from victory at Stamford Bridge to defeat at Hasting

in 1066. Today, its rich detail is still best explored through the myriad of interconnecting paths and tracks. Here you can walk in the footsteps of our Medieval and Anglo-Saxon ancestors who used this dense network of routeways to move between the wooded Weald and settlements on its fringes where farming was easier. These tracks remain a visible legacy of the value communities placed on the resources of the forest.

Woodland still covers nearly a third of the area in an intricate network of farm woods, wooded shaws, pits and gills, and larger wooded estates. Medieval forests and deer parks were extensive, with significant remnants surviving in Ashdown Forest, Waterdown (Broadwater) Forest and St Leonard's Forest. Most of the woodland is ancient, managed in the past as coppice and swept with magnificent carpets of bluebells and wood anemones in the spring. Of the mature oaks for which the Weald was once famous, few remain. The drier sandy soils favour pine and birch within a patchwork of lowland heath.

More ancient woodland survives in the High Weald than anywhere else in the country due to 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 ships, buildings and to fuel the iron, glass and cloth industries. Woods were enclosed and managed as coppice with standards, producing underwood and construction timber. Large, widely – spaced trees in hedgerows and parklands produced the crooked boughs required for shipbuilding. In the 17th and 18th centuries when hop growing expanded so did the extent of chestnut coppice for hop poles.

97% of people find the High Weald's scenery, tranquillity and proximity to nature appealing

High Weald Public Survey, 2018

Indications of the area's busy industrial past are everywhere, from the large houses built by wealthy ironmasters and clothmakers, to the charcoal hearths, pits and ponds of the iron industry scattered through ancient woodlands.

The small scale and historical patterning of the landscape, intermingling woodland, wetland and open habitats, with many interconnected linear features supporting semi-natural vegetation makes for a rich and accessible landscape for wildlife. Sandstone exposed as outcrops or along the wooded gills is a nationally-rare habitat and supports a rich community of ferns, bryophytes and lichens. The High Weald meets the sea at Hastings cliffs, an area of undeveloped coastline consisting of actively eroding soft cliffs of sands and clays. The numerous gill streams of the High Weald give rise to the headwaters and upper reaches of rivers, with those to the east important in the past as trade routes for timber, iron and wool out to the coastal ports on Romney Marsh.

The High Weald is well known nationally for its wealth of historic houses and gardens including Sheffield Park and Ashburnham Place, both of whose landscaped gardens were designed by Lancelot 'Capability' Brown; the ruined 13th century Bayham Abbey, with grounds landscaped by Repton; the follies at Brightling created by 18th century eccentric 'Mad Jack' Fuller; Bodiam Castle, moated and dating from the 14th century; Standen, the Arts & Crafts house designed by Philip Webb; the Jacobean house Batemans, home to Rudyard Kipling; Great Dixter, restored by Lutyens with an internationally-renowned garden created by Christopher Lloyd; and Great Maytham, home to Frances Hodgson Burnett, whose walled garden provided the inspiration for her classic children's book The Secret Garden. Such accents stand out against a backdrop of a rich tapestry of vernacular architecture composed of materials distinct to the High Weald and which contribute to the unique sense of place, cultural identity and local distinctiveness of both the area as a whole, and its individual settlements.

Wilder elements reminiscent of the former forest survive amid this beautiful small-scale landscape, shaped by man, inspiring many notable people. These include the architect Norman Shaw, painter William Holman Hunt and William Robinson, who pioneered the creation of the English natural garden, as well as writers Rudyard Kipling and A.A. Milne, who set his much-loved stories about Winnie the Pooh on Ashdown Forest.

The High Weald forms the central core of a geological landform of sedimentary rocks, the Wealden anticline, which underpins the South East. The unique geology of the Weald is shared with only three places in Europe – the northern part of the Isle of Wight and parts of the Boulonnais and Pays de Bray in France. The Purbeck beds, which lie along the Battle ridge, form the oldest sediments, having been 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 amazing variability of soils produced has shaped the Weald's economic and therefore social history.

With rising temperatures at the beginning of the post-glacial period, and the continuing land link to Europe, arboreal species were able to expand with birch, hazel and pine being followed by oak, elm, alder, ash and lime. There is some evidence for small-scale, sporadic and temporary clearance by Mesolithic hunter-gatherers. From c6000 BC, when Britain became separated from Europe, people had already begun to change the landscape,, This is evidenced by the scatter of flints used for hunting and the use of fire to make clearings to entice prey. Periodic woodland clearance continued with Bronze Age barrows and Iron Age hill forts indicating active communities in Ashdown Forest, but it was the Medieval practice of transhumance – the seasonal movement of people and animals between the settlements on the borders of the Weald and its interior – coupled with exploitation of the valuable resources of the forest, that transformed the Weald into the settled landscape we see today.

1. Edited and adapted from The Kent and Sussex Weald, Peter Brandon, 2003.

A brief history *of the High Weald*[2]

The High Weald lies within one of the largest tracts of woodland remaining in early Medieval England.

Termed Anderida silva by the Romans, it was referred to as Andredesleah ('leah' suggesting wood pasture)[3] in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, and later as Andredesweald (the high forest of Andred) shortened to Weald in Saxon charters (sometimes associated with weald-bera or den-bera – a right to feed swine in the forest)[4]. The Weald is one of the longest lasting regional names in Britain.

Prehistory

It is possible that the system of moving livestock into seasonal grazing areas in the Weald from the surrounding downs and vales originated in the Neolithic period, or even earlier. Mesolithic and Paleolithic flint scatters are concentrated close to springs and on the drier ridgetops. There is significant evidence for communities using and clearing woodland, cultivating land and for the formation of heathland by the Bronze Age.

Iron Age ironworks are concentrated around the northern and eastern fringes of the High Weald, enabling the export of iron via tributaries of the River Thames and the Brede and Rother. The location of routeways close to Iron Age forts and camps suggest a degree of control and supervision over trade in livestock and also the export of iron and other products out of the Weald.

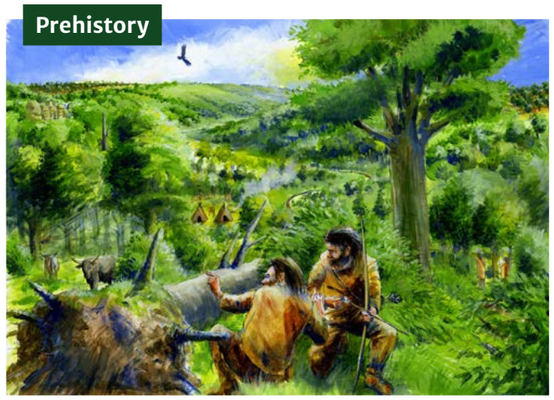
The Roman period (AD 43-420)

The High Weald was the premier iron producing district in Britannia during the Roman occupation, with up to 2,000 bloomeries scattered across the area and nine industrial scale sites. Iron production, which peaked in the 2nd and first half of the 3rd centuries AD, was located within 3.5km of known Roman roads and concentrated to the east, where it was managed as an Imperial estate by the Roman Fleet (the Classis Britannica). Here it had good access to the navigable waterways of the Brede and Rother, and to major highways linking to both the London market and the wealthy villas and cornlands of the South Downs.

The Roman roads that intersect the High Weald, and which enabled the movement of military force and the extraction of iron, broadly correspond in their alignment with earlier routeways and in some cases intersect them. Unlike most routeways which avoid boggy ground, Roman roads drove across the landscape and required paved fording points where they crossed rivers and streams. Recorded Roman villas are very rare in the High Weald because the control of the Roman Fleet inhibited the development of private estates.

The Saxon period (420-1066)

Routeways provided the framework for territorial units – called 'lathes' in Kent and Surrey, and 'rapes' in Sussex – that developed after the Roman period and up to the adoption of counties and then the parish system from the 8th and 9th centuries. These routeways connected parent manors in surrounding arable landscapes to the woodland resources and rich pastures of the Weald, often at distances of 20 or 30 miles apart. These included the temporary swine pastures or 'dens' (concentrated in Kent)



where pigs and sometimes cattle and sheep were herded to feed on acorns and beech mast in the autumn.

The surveyors for Domesday Book (1086-7) used pigs as a way of calculating the value and extent of woodland. The right of tenants to graze pigs in wood pasture areas (called 'pannage') developed from the 9th century and continued into the 14th and 15th centuries. Other areas along routeways were used as seasonal pastures or stopping-off points, including 'folds' and areas which became greens and forstals within farming settlements.

The Medieval period (1066-1540)

The practice of temporary grazing from outlying manors had declined by the 11th century, probably due to the gradual break-up of the large estates by the Saxon kings through granting of lands to secular and ecclesiastical holders. Between the 9th and 12th centuries, seasonal pastures had developed into individual and clustered groups of farmsteads as more land was enclosed for growing crops and pasturing cattle. By the 14th century the High Weald's characteristic dispersed settlement pattern was well established, with the land mostly worked from individual family farms set in anciently-enclosed fields for managing crops and pasturing animals carved out of woodland and wood pasture.

The numbers of permanent farmsteads increased until the 14th century, requiring an increasingly dense network of routeways to link them and provide access to fields and common land. A number of new farms were created out of the woodland from the 11th century. By the late 13th century the Wealden landscape comprised a scattering of gentry properties intermingled with a mass of small peasant holdings, many of which developed – as a result of amalgamation – in the 14th and 15th centuries into larger freehold properties. Yards in farmsteads were used to manage pigs, which continued as an important part of the local farming economy, and cattle, which continued to be driven out of the area on the hoof for finishing. Cattle became an increasingly important export between the 14th and 18th centuries, and most locally-produced corn was produced as animal feed and for home consumption rather than as an export crop.

> *'Unless a man understands the Weald, he cannot write about the beginnings of England...'*
>
> **Hilaire Belloc**

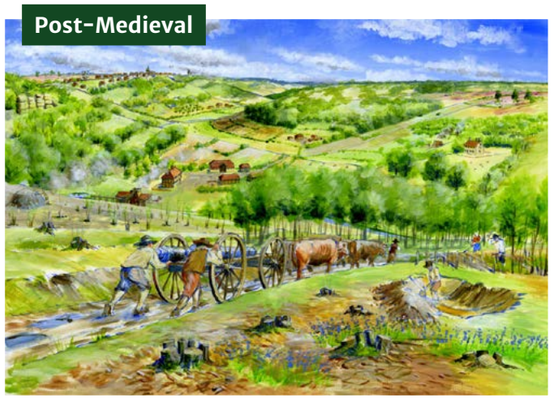
Villages, such as Goudhurst, Burwash (planned along a ridgeway), Wadhurst and Ticehurst, with market places for trading local products (iron, livestock, cattle hides and woodland products) developed in the 13th century along and at the meeting point of routeways. Fine Medieval houses attest to their relative wealth and their occupants often combined farming with trade.

For five hundred years the rivers of the Eastern High Weald were an important link for trade and war between the wooded interior and the sea ports of Winchelsea and Rye, which after the storms of 1285 and in the early 14th century gradually silted. Many routeways connected the Weald to navigable rivers and ports. Timber and firewood, mostly bound for France and Flanders, were the major exports from Kent and Sussex ports through to the 16th century, and the relative ease of export stimulated the woodland industry in this part of the Weald. Up to the late 15th century the River Rother was navigable to Reading Street, Smallhythe and Newenden, with Henry V's 1000-ton ship, The Jesus, built at Smallhythe in 1414. The last Royal Commission at Smallhythe was Henry VIII's great ship, the 300-ton Great Gallyon, ordered in 1546. Silt and the great storm of 1636 saw the end of the shipbuilding industry but 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.

The post-Medieval period (1540-1750)

Some colonisation of the woodland continued up to the 17th century, by which time there was a considerable growth in population linked to the growth of industries such as broadcloth manufacture and iron founding. More houses were built along routeways, enclosing areas of common land along them. In some

2. Edited and adapted from Harris, R.B. (2004). Making of the High Weald, & Lake, J. (2018). Routeways of the High Weald. High Weald Joint Advisory Committee.
3. Della Hooke, 'The Woodland Landscape of Medieval England' in N.J Higham and Martin J Ryan, Place-Names, Language and the Anglo-Saxon Landscape, 2011, p.150.
4. Robert Furley (1871). A History of the Weald of Kent, p.88.



areas as many as a quarter of families were housed in areas enclosed from wayside common.

The Weald again became a centre of British iron making from the early 16th century, following the successful import of blast furnace technology from the Low Countries in the 1490s, concentrated in the eastern and central Weald but with significant expansion to the north and west. Interconnecting chains of leats, dams and hammer ponds were constructed to provide sufficient head of water for the forges, and wealthy ironmasters built notable mansions such as Gravetye and Great Shoesmiths. The industry declined in the late 17th and 18th centuries as a result of cheaper imports, the rising price of fuel, the successful development of the use of coke, and the loss of naval contracts to provide cannon.

Most of the wool for dyeing was imported from Romney Marsh into the main cloth manufacturing areas around Cranbrook and Tenterden. Cloth was then transported overland by packhorse and more rarely wheeled transport to dealers in London. Smaller items including ironwork such as horseshoes and glass were also exported in this way. By the end of the 17th century many clothiers and ironmasters were moving into cattle rearing in response to increasing demand for beef. The hop industry developed on an industrial scale from this period, supplying maltings and breweries and stimulating the management of woodlands and shaws for fuel, and the growing of chestnut for hop poles.

The Industrial Revolution (1750–1914)

Over this period the Weald shifted from a diverse industrial and farming economy to one that was more linked to the development of capital in London and the coastal resorts, and the enjoyment of its landscape by new residents and visitors. Social commentators Arthur Young, William Cobbet and others noted the ornamental landscapes of the new gentry and admired the area's wayside cottages with their gardens. As droving of livestock continued to decline there was further enclosure of roadside commons and greens for new houses (called 'purpesture' settlement), mostly driven by the large numbers of smallholders who were bereft of employment on account of the decline in the cloth and iron industries.

Most turnpikes in the High Weald were built on pre-existing highways between the 1730s and 1770s. They were of particular importance in easing the export of timber and corn, and in supplying goods and services for the burgeoning south coast resorts such as Brighton and Hastings. Although many turnpike trusts had closed down by the 1880s they stimulated property transactions and enabled significant amounts of residential development. These were concentrated in the areas south of Tunbridge Wells and around the Brighton–London road to the west. From the 18th century, a trend in 'pleasure farms' saw some farmsteads converted into residential use with routeways diverted and made into private drives, which approached through new ornamental landscapes.

Farmland was reorganised with enlarged fields, existing or straightened hedgerows dotted with trees. Farmsteads were also reorganised often around courtyards to help produce more manure for fields yielding more corn for export.

The railway network intensified these developments, often increasing the demand for improved roads to connect new housing to railway stations. Additional cattle yards were built around railway stations (for example at Hawkhurst and Paddock Wood) and rail was increasingly used for exporting livestock, hops and milk. Railways, and at the end of this period motor cars and buses, also enabled tourism accompanied by guides and books such as Arthur Beckett's The Wonderful Weald (1911).

The last hundred years, 1914 to the present

The increased appreciation of the High Weald's historic landscape and heritage has been accompanied by the decline of traditional agriculture, cattle droving (cattle were still being driven to markets in the 1930s) and woodland management. Car ownership increased dramatically, leading to the further decoupling of settlement from land use. The building of bungalows and renovation of historic houses became common, and the areas around the Weald experienced a substantial and disproportionate increase in housing compared to the rest of England in the inter-war period.

Until the 1950s the Weald changed at a slower pace than most other regions in Britain. For 700 years prior to this, agriculture and the pattern of fields, hedges and surrounding woodland remained relatively unaltered. Since then, farming and forestry, always difficult on the poor soils, have been pushed further to the economic margins. This decline in mixed farming and woodland management is a major threat to the long term survival of the High Weald's distinctive landscape character.

Industrial Revolution

Last Hundred Years

About the Plan

What is an AONB?

An Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) is an area of countryside designated by the Government to protect the outstanding beauty of its landscape for people now and in the future, and for the wildlife that depends on its distinctive character. A large proportion of the land in an AONB is privately owned and the actions of all land owners, land managers and land users are critical to AONB conservation.

Who prepares the AONB Management Plan and what is its status?

AONB Management Plans are statutory documents. **The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 requires local authorities with land in an AONB to prepare and publish an up-to-date plan which 'formulates their policy for the management of the area and for the carrying out of their functions in relation to it'[5].** Where AONBs cross administrative boundaries, local authorities are required to act jointly to prepare the plan[6]. In the High Weald this requirement is delivered through the High Weald Joint Advisory Committee (JAC), a partnership which includes all 15 local authorities covering the area together with community, environment and land-based sector representatives. Following a formal consultation process, the High Weald JAC recommends the joint Plan to individual local authorities who each adopt the Plan. The Plan is reviewed every five years.

5. Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, S89 (2).
6. Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, S89 (11)(b).

High Weald AONB counties, districts and boroughs

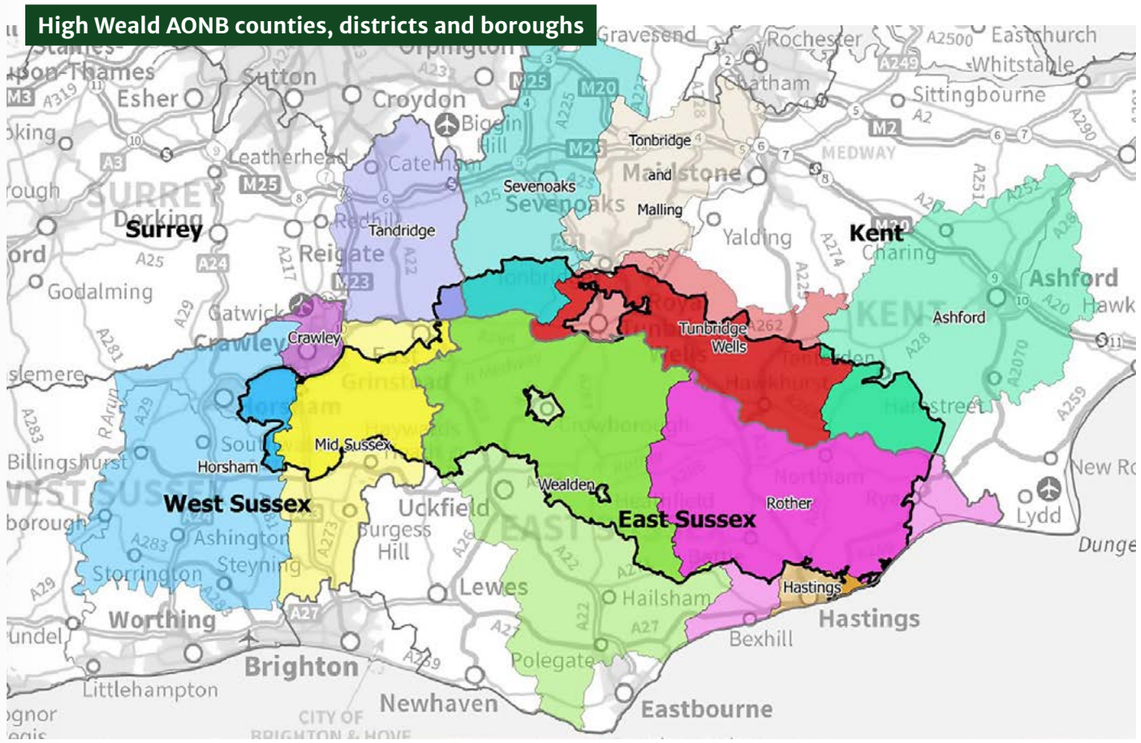


Fig 1. Fifteen local authorities have adopted the Plan as their policy for the AONB

What is the purpose of the Plan?

AONB Management Plans are locally-owned and democratically-accountable strategies, based on evidence, for looking after these beautiful places in the interests of both people and nature. They are formulated to coordinate policy, investment and action in these nationally-important landscapes in order to achieve the legal purpose of '**conserving and enhancing natural beauty**'[7] for the benefit of current and future generations.

Who is the Plan for and when should it be used?

The Plan is relevant to many organisations and individuals. As a local authority policy document it guides local authority plan-making and decision-taking, but it also has a wider role. Where people engage with local authority services, the Plan can help them tailor their actions to comply with local authority policy, and support the care and conservation of the High Weald landscape. Use of the Plan also offers a transparent means by which **Government, statutory undertakers and any public body (such as NHS England) or person holding public office** can ensure they are fulfilling their **Section 85 duty to 'have regard to the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty' of the High Weald AONB**[8].

The Plan may be applied to the designated area and its 'setting' especially where the setting falls within the High Weald National Character Area[9].

Which local authority functions are covered by the AONB Management Plan?

Any local authority function that may have an influence upon the natural beauty of the AONB. These include:

- Planning and housing, including neighbourhood planning
- Monuments, listed buildings and conservation areas
- Building regulations and energy efficiency
- Waste, environment protection, pesticides and pollution
- Libraries and museums
- Wild animals, biodiversity, flooding and marine areas
- Rights of way and coastal access
- Food and food safety
- Public health, mental health, social care and young people
- Highways, traffic management, public transport and parking
- Education

A full list of local authority functions can be found at https://data.gov.uk/dataset/statutory-duties-placed-on-local-government

What is included, and not included, in the Plan?

The Plan is designed to be concise and usable. It is tightly focused on the purpose of AONB designation and the requirements of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. While aware of the wider realities – such as pressure for development – it does not attempt to balance the purposes of designation against non AONB concerns. Judging the merit of competing interests for land is the responsibility of Government, its agencies and planning authorities in conversation with others. The Management Plan provides such bodies with an objective, evidence-based tool articulating what matters in terms of AONB purpose and the fulfilment of their statutory duties.

The Plan includes:

- A Statement of Significance defining the natural beauty of the High Weald.
- Character statements, including a list of key characteristics, describing the components of natural beauty that policy and actions should aim to conserve and enhance.
- Data and information about the High Weald's natural and cultural assets.
- A set of management policies ('Objectives') for the conservation and enhancement of the AONB together with a monitoring framework for judging success.
- Proposed Actions which indicate the ambitions of partners for themselves, and for others, and which guide resources and effort to where they are most needed.
- References to evidence and supporting information.

Research reports, data sets and maps for each component of natural beauty and for selected aspects of the area's natural and cultural capital, are held by the High Weald JAC and available to support Plan delivery.

How was the Plan prepared?

This Plan is the fourth edition of the AONB Management Plan first published in 2004. Local authorities are required to review the AONB Management Plan every five years, make any amendments they consider appropriate, and publish a report on the review[10]. The review follows national guidance[11].

It is a formal process requiring preparation of a Strategic Environmental Assessment and other appropriate assessments to comply with English and European Union law. It reflects consideration of current and forthcoming policy changes, new data and analysis, and draws on local opinion gathered through participative engagement events and public consultation.

A full list of documents prepared in support of this Plan can be found on page 16.

How to use the Plan

The Plan can be used to guide environmental land management and assess the impact of development or other changes on the AONB. Where the ambition is to achieve environmental net gain, or assess potential harm, the Plan provides a framework for identifying actions that may enhance or damage the AONB's natural and cultural assets. Key characteristics for each component of natural beauty identify what is special about the High Weald's landscape and beauty that should be afforded 'great weight' in planning decisions. Data held by the High Weald Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) for many of these characteristics indicates their geographical extent and can assist decision-making. The Plan, and the objectives for each component in particular, acts as a checklist or set of criteria against which policy and actions can be assessed for compliance with Section 85 of the CROW Act 2000.

7. Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, S82 (1).
8. Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, S85 (1) and (2).
9. NCA Profile: 122 High Weald (2013), Natural England (NE508).
10. Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, S 89 (9)and (10).
11. Guidance for the Review of AONB Management Plans, Countryside Agency CA221 2006 http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20140605121642/http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/40023, & Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plans: A Guide, Countryside Agency, CA 23 2001 http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20140605121241/http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/40024

High Weald AONB parishes

Fig 2. The High Weald AONB covers 100 parishes, each of whom have a duty of regard under Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 towards its conservation and enhancement.

An AONB is '[Countryside of] distinctive character whose nature and value depend partly on the physical structure of the rocks of which it is composed and the sculpturing of hill and valley, partly on local climate, partly on the natural and semi-natural vegetation that may be present and partly on the crops that are grown and the agricultural regimes. All these elements blend into a whole which possess both singular beauty and high scientific interest, and the defacement or disappearance of the distinctive characters of such an [area] involves an irreparable loss which it is hard to overestimate.'

Wild Life Conservation Special Committee describing proposed AONBs, 1947

Proposed Actions for each Plan objective are ordered in two categories – 'Public bodies' and 'Others'. Public bodies include all bodies subject to the statutory duty 'to have regard to' conservation and enhancement of the AONB – county, borough, district, parish and town councils; government departments and their arm's length bodies, such as NHS England; statutory undertakers; highway authorities, and statutory committees. 'Others' include any other organisation or individual whose actions impact on the High Weald, and who can help conserve and enhance it.

Monitoring and evaluation

Monitoring of Plan progress and of the condition of the AONB will be carried out by the High Weald Joint Advisory Committee. Headline indicators will not be used due to the absence of relevant, consistent and repeatable AONB-wide data; rather condition and threat level will be assessed using available data, expert knowledge and informed judgement. Data sources will include data gathered for each 'Indicator of Success' together with Natural England environmental monitoring information and any other relevant data sets.

The Plan sets out the key characteristics of this nationally-important landscape and the 'public goods' it provides in order to help new environmental land management schemes achieve the ambitions of the Governments 25 year environment plan.

Implementation

Where the Plan is used to guide policy or action on the ground the following principles should be applied:

Landscape-scale targeting – using the best available evidence to identify urgent challenges and achieve multiple objectives; with local knowledge used to match these areas with willing partners on the ground.

Landscape-scale collaboration – working with a range of partners (public, private and community), connected through geography or interest, to support strong joint initiatives (such as Farm Clusters or community land trusts).

Tailored to local circumstances – cognisant of local character and recognising the different aspirations, motivations, knowledge and capacity of land managers, businesses and communities.

Trusted advisors – recognising the value of technical experts and of experienced practitioners; bringing together specialists across landscape disciplines (such as species and habitat specialists, landscape archaeologists, rural economists) to develop integrated solutions.

Long term commitment – investing in partnerships, projects and activities that deliver lasting benefits.

Knowledge transfer – valuing long-held practical knowledge and experience of the areas' rural heritage and seeking opportunities to share this with others.

Payment for public benefit – recognising the wide range of health and wellbeing benefits provided by accessible countryside, but also the importance of a biodiverse and well-functioning ecosystem, and the contribution made by local healthy food production and forestry.

Natural systems – using natural processes where possible to restore naturally functioning habitat mosaics within which all characteristic wildlife can thrive.

Empowering people – engaging people with nature; building skills and capacity, supporting volunteering and providing support to enable everyone to contribute positively to conserving the High Weald.

Measureable biodiversity net gain – positive action to improve diversity and biomass of characteristic AONB species supported by base line evidence and monitoring.

Documents prepared in support of this Plan

All documents prepared in support of this Plan can be found at **www.highweald.org/public-consultation-2018**

- AONB Management Plan Review 2019: Engagement and Consultation Report, High Weald Joint Advisory Committee
- AONB Management Plan Review 2019: Strategic Environmental Assessment, Joint Advisory Committee
- AONB Management Plan Review 2019: Habitats Regulations Assessment, Joint Advisory Committee
- AONB Management Plan Review 2019: Equality Impact Assessment Screening Report, Joint Advisory Committee
- AONB Management Plan Review 2019: Health Impact Assessment Screening Report, Joint Advisory Committee
- Monitoring the Condition of the AONB and the Performance of the AONB Management Plan 2014 – 2019, High Weald Joint Advisory Committee, August 2017
- AONB Management Plan Review 2019: Context and Issues, High Weald Joint Advisory Committee, March 2017.

AONB Policy *and Legal Framework*

There are 34 Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) in England, a further four AONBs wholly in Wales and eight in Northern Ireland. The 46 AONBs in England, Wales and Northern Ireland cover approximately 18 per cent of the land surface. Together with National Parks, AONBs represent our finest landscapes; unique and irreplaceable national assets, each with such distinctive character, biodiversity and natural beauty that they are recognised internationally as part of the global family of protected areas to be managed in the interest of everyone.

The distinctive character and natural beauty of AONBs make them some of the most special and loved places in the UK. AONBs are living, working landscapes that contribute some £16bn every year to the national economy. England's AONBs are home to a million people and more than two thirds of England's population live within half an hour's drive of an AONB. Around 150 million visits to English AONBs take place every year, resulting in spending of more than £2bn.[12]

Purpose of designation

The primary purpose of AONB designation is to **conserve and enhance natural beauty** but the architects of the 1949 Act recognised other underlying principles which were important aspects of the designations' success. These included the need to maintain a 'thriving community life' with particular emphasis on farming and forestry, and the need to promote understanding and enjoyment of the area's special qualities.

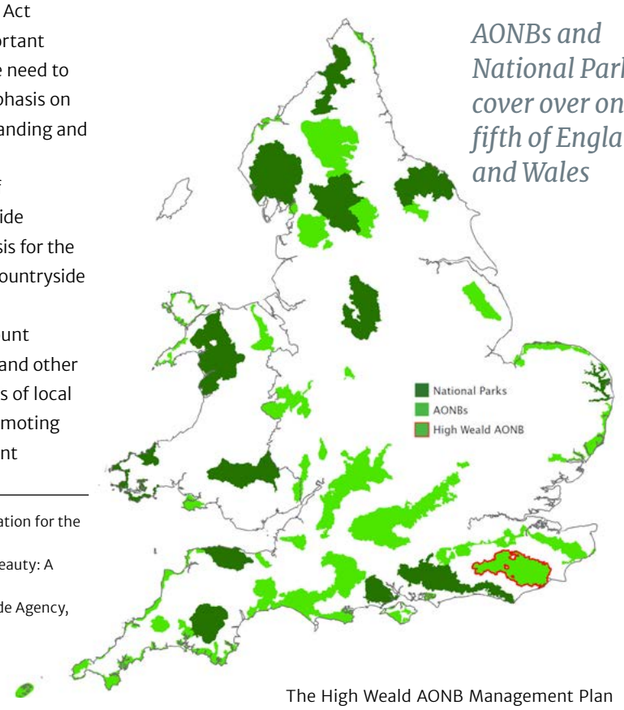
These subsidiary purposes – in effect, qualifications of the primary purpose – are those defined in the Countryside Commission statement 1991[13], restated in 2006[14] (the basis for the wording of the subsidiary purposes can be found in the Countryside Act 1968, section 37):

- In pursuing the primary purpose of designation, account should be taken of the needs of agriculture, forestry and other rural industries, and of the economic and social needs of local communities. Particular regard should be paid to promoting sustainable forms of social and economic development that in themselves conserve and enhance the environment.
- Recreation is not an objective of designation, but the demand for recreation should be met so far as this is consistent with the conservation of natural beauty and the needs of agriculture, forestry and other uses.

Responsibility for conservation and enhancement of AONBs

The formal legal responsibility for both development control and for management of AONBs (including the duty to prepare an AONB Management Plan) lies with the local authorities in whose area(s) the AONB exists, except in two instances (the Chilterns and the Cotswolds AONB) where this is the responsibility of a statutory Conservation Board.

In addition, local authorities and all public bodies have a statutory duty under CROW Act 2000, Section 85, to '…have regard to the purpose of conserving and enhancing natural beauty…'. To 'conserve and enhance' is a single duty, therefore exercising the duty requires that both elements be addressed. This duty places an obligation on a wide range of organisations



AONBs and National Parks cover over one-fifth of England and Wales

12. NAAONB (2018). Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty: A designation for the 21st Century. www.landscapesforlife.org.uk
13. Countryside Commission (1991). Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty: A Policy Statement (CCP 356).
14. Guidance for the review of AONB Management Plans (Countryside Agency, CA 221, 2006, p.6).

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A schematic envisaging the future of London as a green global region intimately interconnected to AONBs, National Parks, and other green areas

The National Parks Commission set up by the 1949 Act warmed to the designation of AONBs, observing that they were important because of their proximity to populated areas in the lowlands.

not just to consider any detrimental impacts on AONBs of their policies and activities (both outside as well as within the boundary), but positively to consider how they might enhance the AONBs' natural beauty. Ministers of the Crown, statutory undertakers, Government agencies and any public body or person holding public office, including Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) through their accountable body (local authority) are subject to the Section 85 duty.

The duty requires public bodies to have regard for AONBs at all stages of their decision making and Defra expects that they should be able to 'demonstrate that they have fulfilled' the duty and 'clearly show' how they have considered the AONB purpose in their decision making[15].

Preparation of AONB Management Plans is mostly delegated by the local authority to a representative committee on which a variety of AONB 'stakeholders' are represented. Where an AONB overlaps several different local authority areas this is usually termed a 'Joint Advisory Committee' or JAC. The High Weald Joint Advisory Committee was formally established in 1996 with its predecessor, the High Weald Forum, operating since 1989.

At a national level, a collective voice for the UK's 46 Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty is provided by the National Association for AONBs (NAAONB)[16]. First formed in 1998, the NAAONB is a charity whose objectives are to promote the conservation and enhancement of AONBs; advance understanding and appreciation by the public, and promote effective partnerships for their management.

History of AONB designation and policy

AONBs emerged from the mood of civic renewal which characterised the decades following the end of the Second World War. The 1949 National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act was one of many – including health, education, agriculture and development planning – which established the basis for a 'new Britain'.

Legal framework

AONBs exist within a legal framework which has been progressively strengthened since the first AONBs came into existence after the Second World War.

- The **1949 National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act** made provision for the designation of AONBs and National Parks. It provided AONBs with protection, under planning law, against inappropriate development and gave local authorities permissive powers to take action for '***preserving and enhancing natural beauty***'.
- The **Countryside Act 1968** (Section 37) placed a responsibility on local authorities, statutory conservation bodies, and civil servants, in exercising their functions under the 1949 Act (as amended by subsequent legislation) to '***have due regard to the needs of agriculture and forestry and to the economic and social interests of rural areas***.' Within AONBs this means a responsibility to acknowledge and, where appropriate, to promote farming, forestry and the rural economic and social context wherever this can be done without compromising the primary purpose of conserving natural beauty.
- The **Environment Act 1995** confirmed replacement of 'preserve and enhance' with 'conserve and enhance' in relation to the purpose of National Parks and duties of public bodies towards them.
- The **Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000** (CROW) subsumed and strengthened the AONB provisions of the 1949 Act. It brought the primary purpose in line with that of National Parks, clarified the procedure for their designation, and created a firm legislative basis for their protection and management. In particular:
  - **Section 82** reaffirms the primary purpose of AONBs: to conserve and enhance natural beauty.
  - **Section 83** establishes the procedure for designating or revising the boundaries of an AONB, including Natural England's duty to consult with local authorities and to facilitate public engagement.
  - **Section 84** confirms the powers of a local authorities to take 'all such action as appears to them expedient' to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of an AONB, and sets consultation and advice on development planning and on public access on the same basis as National Parks in the 1949 Act.
  - **Section 85** places a statutory duty on all relevant authorities '***...in exercising or performing any functions in relation to, or so as to affect land [in an AONB] to have regard to the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty...***'. 'Relevant authorities' include all public bodies (county, borough, district, parish and community councils, joint planning boards and other statutory committees); statutory undertakers (such as energy and water utilities, licensed telecommunications companies, nationalised companies such as Network Rail and other bodies established under statute responsible for railways, roads and canals); government ministers and civil servants. Activities and developments outside the boundaries of AONBs that have an impact within the designated area are also covered by the 'duty of regard'.
  - **Sections 86 to 88** allow for the establishment in an AONB of a Conservation Board to which the AONB functions of the local authority (including development planning) can be transferred. Conservation boards have the additional but secondary function of seeking to increase public understanding and enjoyment of the AONB's special qualities. They also have an obligation to '***seek to foster the economic and social well-being of local communities***' in co-operation with local authorities and other public bodies.
  - **Sections 89 and 90** create a statutory duty on all AONB partnerships (local authorities and Conservation Boards) to prepare a management plan '***which formulates their policy for the management of their area of outstanding natural beauty and for the carrying out of their functions in relation to it,***' and thereafter to review adopted and published Plans at intervals of not more than five years. Where an AONB involves more than one local authority they are required to do this '***acting jointly***'.
  - **Section 92** makes clear that the conservation of natural beauty includes the conservation of 'flora, fauna and geological and physiographical features.'
- The **Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006** (NERC):
  - **Section 99** formally clarifies in law that the fact that an area consists of or includes land used for agriculture or woodlands, or as a park, or '***any other area whose flora, fauna or physiographical features are partly the product of human intervention in the landscape***' does not prevent it from being treated, for legal purposes, '***as being an area of natural beauty (or of outstanding natural beauty***).'
  - **Schedule 7** asserts that an AONB joint committee of two or more local authorities, or a conservation board, can constitute a 'designated body' for the performance of functions allocated to Defra.

'The Government is engaged on a Health Campaign. ...But it is no less essential, for any national health scheme, to preserve for the national walking grounds and regions where young and old can enjoy the sight of unspoilt nature. And it is not a question of physical exercise only, it is a question of spiritual exercise and enjoyment'

The Standing Committee on National Parks, 1938

The need to designate special areas of the countryside against inappropriate development, protect wildlife, celebrate and conserve their distinctive features, encourage sustainable agriculture and foster local economic well-being was recognised well before the Dower (1945) and Hobhouse (1947) reports which led to the establishment of AONBs and National Parks.

Since the 1949 Act there has been continuous development in the policy and legislative context of AONBs, shaped by a number of key policy documents including:

- Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty – A Policy Statement (Countryside Commission & Countryside Council for Wales, CCP356, 1991)
- Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty – A Guide for Members of Joint Advisory Committees (Countryside Commission & Countryside Council for Wales, CCP461, 1994)
- Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty: Providing for the future (Countryside Commission, CCWP 08, 1998)
- Protecting our finest countryside: Advice to Government (Countryside Commission, CCP352, 1998)
- Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plans: A Guide (Countryside Agency, CA23, 2001)
- Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. A Guide for AONB partnership members (Countryside Agency, CA24, 2001)
- Guidance for the Review of AONB Management Plans (Countryside Agency, CA221, 2006)
- Guidance for assessing landscapes for designation as National Park or Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in England (Natural England, 2011)

Seventy years after the 1949 Act and in a rapidly changing modern world, the production and implementation of revised AONB Management Plans help ensure that AONB partnerships are leaders in delivering the intentions of the 1949 Act, alongside the aspirations of the Government's 25 year Environment Plan[17].

The designation process[18]

Natural England can make orders to designate AONBs or vary the boundaries of existing ones within England. AONBs are designated in law[19] following a prescribed process which includes an appraisal of landscape quality, in particular the technical criteria of sufficient natural beauty, and a wide consultation with

15. Defra (2005), Duties on Relevant Authorities to have regard to the purposes of National Parks, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) and the Norfolk and Suffolk Broads. London: Defra publications. Available from: http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20130402204840/http://archive.defra.gov.uk/rural/documents/protected/npaonb-duties-guide.pdf
16. www.landscapesforlife.org.uk
17. Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. (2018). A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment. London: HM Government.
18. Guidance for assessing landscapes for designation as National Park or Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in England. Natural England 2011 pp. 11-14.

local authorities, landowners, residents and businesses.

It is the AONB as a whole that must satisfy the technical criteria of natural beauty. The weight and importance of factors indicating natural beauty may vary across the designation. The presence of incongruous features or degraded landscapes does not, in itself, detract from the value of the area as an AONB. The emphasis in these cases is on the second part of the designation purpose, that of enhancement of natural beauty. Government has confirmed that the landscape quality of AONBs and National Parks are equivalent[20].

High Weald designation history[21]

The report of the first National Park Committee, set up in 1929, mentioned the wooded hill country of the High Weald, essentially Ashdown Forest, as an area requiring measures to protect its bird interest. A subsequent report in 1945, the Dower Report, included the 'Forest Ridges (Horsham to Battle)' in its list of 'Other Amenity Areas not suggested as National Parks'. Dower had recognised that some areas might not be suitable for National Park status because of their size or lack of 'wildness' but they nonetheless required safeguarding for their 'characteristic landscape beauty'. A follow-up report, the Hobhouse Report, in 1947 included the Forest Ridges in a list of 52 Conservation Areas (largely based on Dower's 'Other Amenity Areas…') which, it proposed, should be designated for their high landscape quality, scientific interest and recreational value.

The first AONB to be designated was the Gower Peninsular in 1956. It wasn't until 1969, following coordinated landscape surveys by county and district councils, that the wider High Weald was put forward to the Countryside Commission for consideration as an AONB. Detailed work on the boundaries was then carried out and designation of the High Weald was confirmed in 1983.

Planning and AONBs

Responsibility for planning in AONBs lies with the relevant local authority. The AONB Management Plan does not form part of the statutory development plan but local planning authorities and neighbourhood planning bodies should take the AONB Management Plan into account when preparing local and neighbourhood plans[22]. AONB Management Plans may also be material considerations for making decisions on planning applications within AONBs and their setting.

The planning system provides Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, alongside National Parks, with high levels of protection from development. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), Paragraph 172, requires that:

- 'Great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues. The conservation and enhancement of wildlife and cultural heritage are also important considerations in these areas, and should be given great weight in National Parks and the Broads. The scale and extent of development within these designated areas should be limited. Planning permission should be refused for major development55 other than in exceptional circumstances, and where it can be demonstrated that the development is in the public interest (reflecting the long-established 'Silkin test' for development in National Parks and AONBs[23]). Consideration of such applications should include an assessment of:
  - **a.** the need for the development, including in terms of any national considerations, and the impact of permitting it, or refusing it, upon the local economy;
  - **b.** the cost of, and scope for, developing outside the designated area, or meeting the need for it in some other way; and
  - **c.** any detrimental effect on the environment, the landscape and recreational opportunities, and the extent to which that could be moderated.'

Footnote 55 says:

'***For the purposes of paragraphs 172 and 173, whether a proposal is 'major development' is a matter for the decision maker, taking into account its nature, scale and setting, and whether it could have a significant adverse impact on the purposes for which the area has been designated or defined***'.

NPPF paragraph 11 states that:

'***Plans and decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development***.'

For plan-making this means that:

- **a.** Plans should positively seek opportunities to meet the development needs of their area and be sufficiently flexible to adapt to rapid change;
- **b.** Strategic policies should, as a minimum, provide for objectively assessed needs for housing and other uses, as well as any needs that cannot be met within neighbouring areas5, unless:
  - **i.** The application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a strong reason for restricting the overall scale, type or distribution of development in the plan area6; or
  - **ii.** Any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole.

For decision-taking this means:

- **a.** Approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay; or
- **b.** Where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date7, granting permission unless:
  - **i.** the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed6; or
  - **ii.** any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole.

Footnote 6 says:

'***The policies referred to are those in this Framework (rather than those in development plans) relating to: habitats sites (and those sites listed in paragraph 176) and/or designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest; land designated as Green Belt, Local Green Space, an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, a National Park (or within the Broads Authority) or defined as Heritage Coast; irreplaceable habitats; designated heritage assets (and other heritage assets of archaeological interest referred to in footnote 63); and areas at risk of flooding or coastal change***'.

In 1947, the Wild Life Conservation Special Committee recognised that AONBs were both 'ancient monuments and living museums'

AONB 'setting'

The term 'setting' is used to refer to areas outside the AONB where development and other activities may affect land within an AONB. Its extent will vary depending upon the issues considered but some can be mapped, for example, the impact of development on views into and out of the AONB. Section 85 of the CROW Act 2000 requires public bodies to consider whether any activities outside the AONB may affect land in an AONB, and Planning Practice Guidance (Natural Environment: 003) emphasises that this duty is relevant in considering development proposals that are situated outside the AONB boundary. Not all activities will be detrimental; conservation practices and economic ties outside the AONB can support AONB purpose.

90%
of people agree that beautiful countryside should be protected by law
High Weald Public Survey 2018

The international context

English AONBs are part of the international family of protected areas. As cultural landscapes, produced through the interaction of humans with nature over time, they have a special significance (together with UK National Parks) as being recognised by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) as ***'Category V – Protected Landscapes'***. These offer a unique contribution to the conservation of biological diversity, particularly where conservation objectives need to be met over a large area with a range of ownership patterns and governance. They can act as models of sustainability, promoting traditional systems of management that support particular species.

Category V protected landscapes are defined by IUCN as:

'***A protected area where the interaction of people and nature over time has produced an area of distinct character with significant ecological, biological, cultural and scenic value: and where safeguarding the integrity of this interaction is vital to protecting and sustaining the area and its associated nature conservation and other values***.'

IUCN emphasises their importance as cultural landscapes – as distinct from Category I (Strict Nature Reserves and Wilderness Areas) and Category II National Parks (which for IUCN are large natural or near-natural areas, unlike UK national parks). Until recently, the AONB designation (together with that of UK national parks) was regarded as an anomaly in the international protected area system which prioritised 'naturalness' as a criterion of value. In the last quarter-century, however, they have come to be recognised as leaders in the move towards area-based sustainable development.

The new multidisciplinary, multifunctional concept of landscape is encapsulated in the European Landscape Convention (ELC), adopted by the Council of Europe in 2000 and ratified by the UK government in 2006 (it is not an EU directive and will remain unaffected by Brexit).

The ELC promotes a definition of landscape which usefully underpins the rationale for AONBs:

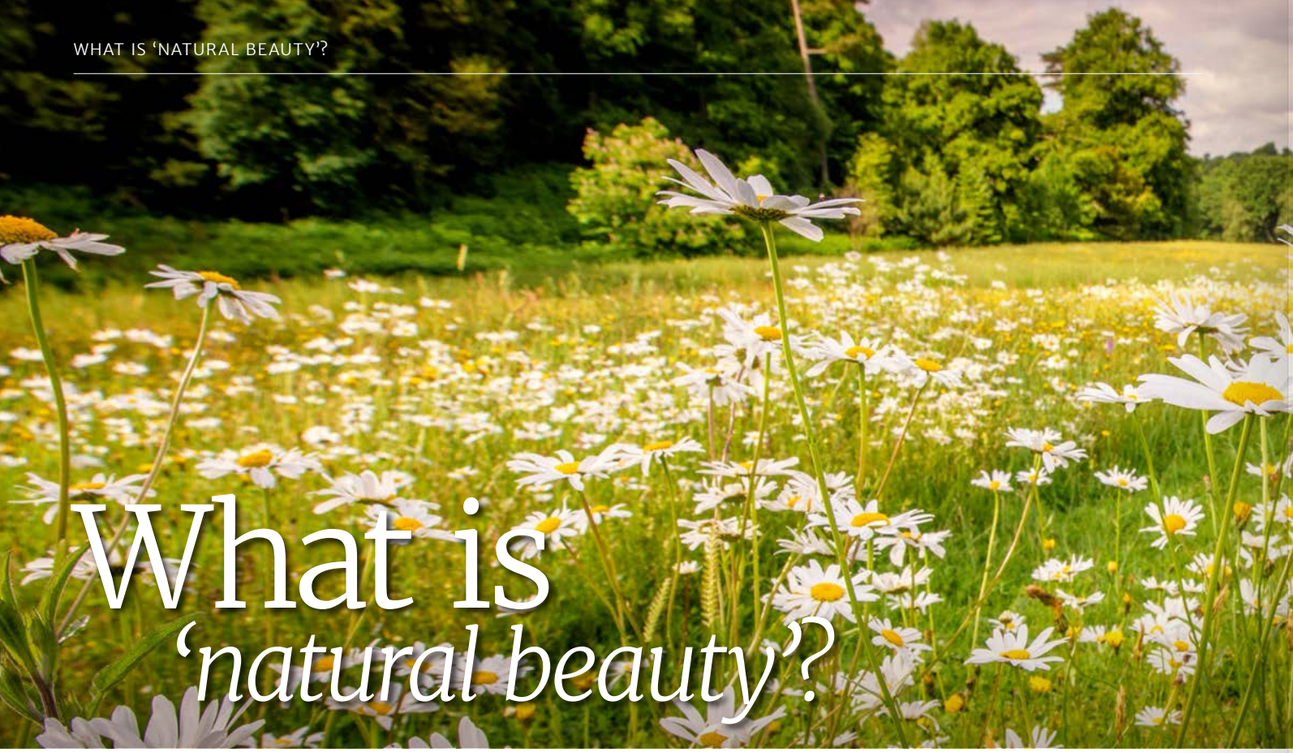
'An area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors.'

This is a rich concept that encompasses, but goes beyond, sectoral (geomorphological, ecological, archaeological, historical or aesthetic) approaches. ELC makes it clear that people are at the heart of all landscapes (the commonplace and 'degraded' as well as the eminent), each of which has its own distinctive character and meaning to those who inhabit or visit it.

The ELC places obligations on signatory states to recognise landscape '***as an essential component of people's surroundings, an expression of the diversity of their shared cultural and natural heritage, and a foundation of their identity'***. Obligations include a requirement to identify the diversity and range of landscapes, implement landscape policies aimed at landscape protection, and to engage with local communities, private bodies and public authorities in their planning and management. This includes raising awareness and understanding of the character, value and functions of landscape and the way these are changing. AONBs and their managing organisations are a significant contributor to delivering on the UK's obligations under ELC.

The AONB Management Plan in its characterisation of the landscape at an AONB scale is supported by a wealth of local landscape character assessments carried out by county, district and parish councils that provide more fine grained information about the local landscape. In addition, Natural England's High Weald National Character Area profile provides a description of the area's environmental character.

19. Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, S82-84.
20. Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government(2018). National Planning Policy Framework, Paragraph 172 and English National Parks and the Broads Circular, 2010, Paragraph 20.
21. Woolmore, R. (2013). Designation History Series: High Weald. High Weald Joint Advisory Committee.
22. Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2016). Planning Practice Guidance: Natural Environment, Paragraph 004.
23. Hansard, HC Deb 31 March 1949, vol. 463.



What is *'natural beauty'?*

AONBs are designated for the purpose of conserving and enhancing natural beauty.

The term 'natural beauty' first gained currency in a legislative context in the 1907 Act which gave legal status to the National Trust ('for Places of Historic Interest and Natural Beauty'). It has been the basis for the designation of both AONBs and National Parks since the 1949 National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act, but has never been exhaustively defined in legislation[24].

Over the years, qualification and amendment to the legislation has made it clear that natural beauty includes considerations such as wildlife, geological features and cultural heritage but is not restricted by them[25]. Government guidance relating to AONBs provides a useful non-technical definition: '"Natural Beauty" is not just the look of the landscape, but includes landform and geology, plants and animals, landscape features and the rich history of human settlement over the centuries'[26]. The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 clarified that land used for agriculture, woodlands, parkland or with physiographical features partly the product of human intervention in the landscape, is not prevented from being treated as an area of 'natural beauty'.

In the 1949 Act 'natural beauty' replaced other phrases such as 'landscape beauty' and 'characteristic landscape beauty'[27]. These provide a clue to the importance of landscape character and beauty as an aesthetic experience bringing people a sense of pleasure, wellbeing and connectedness with nature. Character is interpreted in different ways with the Landscape Institute focusing on the pattern of landscape elements[28], landscape archaeologists seeing the human process of a landscape 'coming into being'and ecologists also considering the quality of the natural processes and ecological systems which underpin patterns of vegetation. Natural beauty encompasses all of these views.

Our perceptions of the landscape and the value we place on its qualities rely on our senses and emotions, and are shaped by many factors including taste, background, culture and understanding. These values may change over time even if the intrinsic character of the landscape does not.

For AONBs it is not enough just to possess natural beauty; their natural beauty should have the potential to be 'outstanding'both in terms of the quality of the components of character (including their biodiversity) and the human aesthetic experience of the landscape.

For the purposes of this Plan, natural beauty is defined by the Statement of Significance.

24. Guidance for assessing landscapes for designation as National Park or Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in England, Natural England 2011.
25. A draft statement on natural beauty, The University of Sheffield, January 2006.
26. Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty: A guide for AONB Partnership members, Countryside Commission, CA24, November 2001, p.6.
27. Holdaway, E. (2007). Origins and Intentions of the 1949 Act Natural Beauty. Report to Countryside Council for Wales.
28. Landscape Institute and IEEM (2013). Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment.

John Dower, one of the main architects of the 1949 Act recognised the overlap between natural and man-made elements in the landscape.

'Most natural features have some man-made or man-controlled tincture, and man-made features derive an integral part of their beauty and interest from their natural surroundings.'

Report on National Parks, 1945

High Weald AONB *Statement of Significance*

The High Weald is one of the best preserved Medieval landscapes in North West Europe.

Despite its large size (1,500km sq.) and proximity to London, its landscape has remained relatively unchanged since the 14th century, surviving major historical events and social and technological changes. Its outstanding beauty stems from its essentially rural and human scale character, with a high proportion of natural surfaces and the story of its past visible throughout.

The extensive survival of woodland and traditional mixed farming supports an exceptionally well-connected green and blue infrastructure with a high proportion of semi-natural habitat in a structurally diverse, permeable and complex mosaic supporting a rich diversity of wildlife.

The natural beauty of the High Weald comprises

- **Five defining components of character** that have made the High Weald a recognisably distinct and homogenous area for at least the last 700 years.
  1. **Geology, landform and water systems** – a deeply incised, ridged and faulted landform of clays and sandstone with numerous gill streams.
  2. **Settlement** – dispersed historic settlement including high densities of isolated farmsteads and late Medieval villages founded on trade and non-agricultural rural industries.
  3. **Routeways** – a dense network of historic routeways (now roads, tracks and paths).
  4. **Woodland** – abundance of ancient woodland, highly interconnected and in smallholdings.
  5. **Field and Heath** – small, irregular and productive fields, bounded by hedgerows and woods, and typically used for livestock grazing; with distinctive zones of lowland heaths, and inned river valleys.
- **Land-based economy and related rural life** bound up with, and underpinning, the observable character of the landscape with roots extending deep into history. An increasingly broad-based economy but with a significant land-based sector and related community life focused on mixed farming (particularly family farms and smallholdings), woodland management and rural crafts.
- **Other qualities** and features that are connected to the interaction between the landscape and people and which enrich character components. Such qualities and features enhance health and wellbeing, and foster enjoyment and appreciation of the beauty of nature. These include locally distinctive features which enrich the character components such as historic parks and gardens, orchards, hop gardens, veteran trees, along with their rich and varied biodiversity, and a wide range of appealing and locally distinctive historic buildings including oast houses, farm buildings, Wealden Hall houses and their associated features such as clay-tile catslide roofs.
  People value the wonderful views and scenic beauty of the High Weald with its relative tranquillity. They appreciate the area's ancientness and sense of history, its intrinsically dark landscape with the opportunity to see our own galaxy – the Milky Way – and the ability to get close to nature through the myriad public rights of way.

Natural Beauty

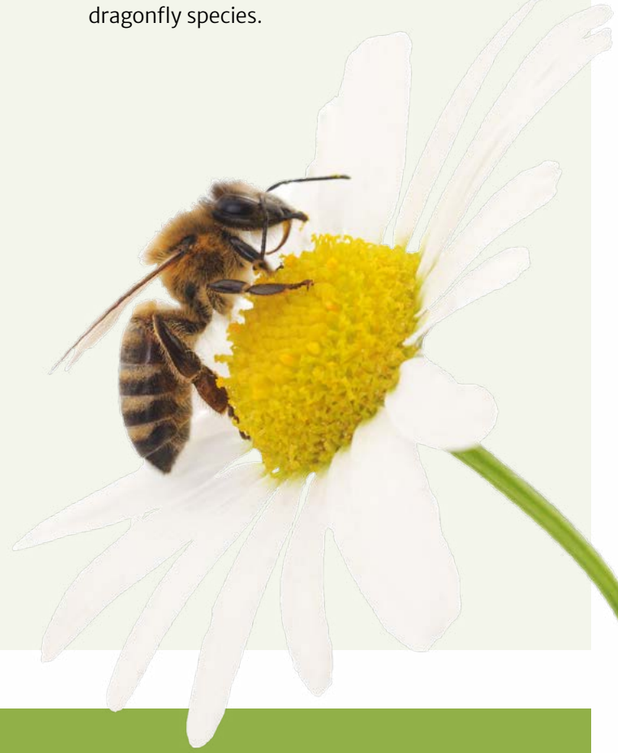
Field and heath

The High Weald AONB is characterised by small, irregularly-shaped and productive fields often bounded by (and forming a mosaic with) hedgerows and small woodlands, and typically used for livestock grazing; smallholdings; and a non-dominant agriculture; within which can be found distinctive zones of lowland heath and inned river valleys.




Key characteristics

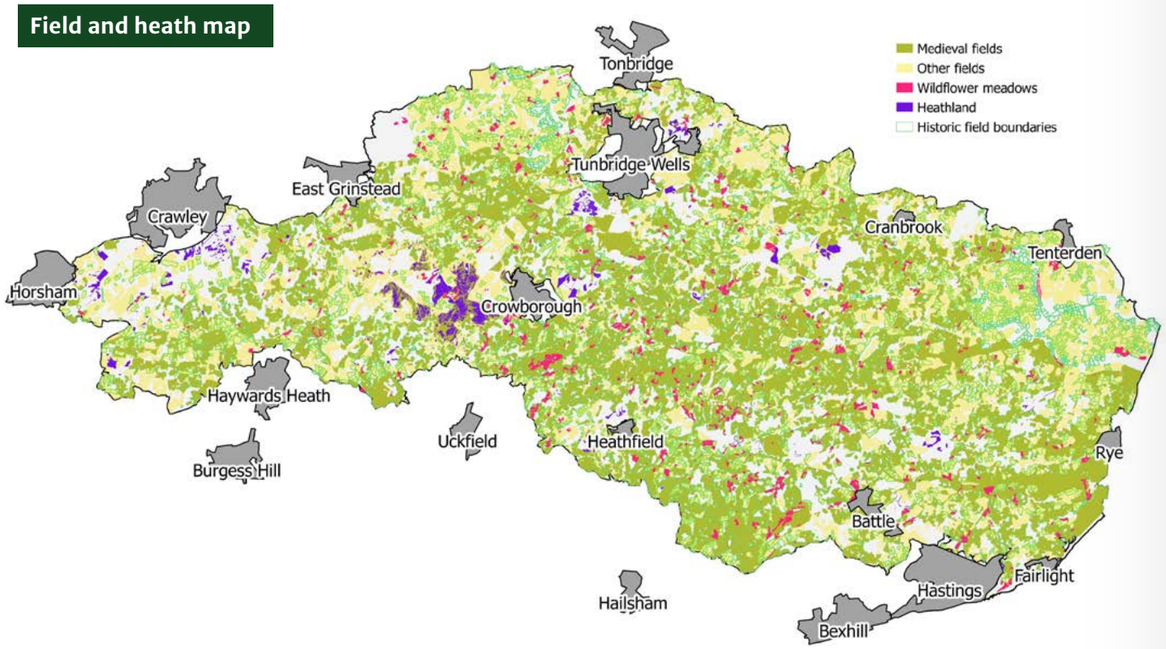
- **A generally irregular field pattern** with individual fields relatively small (<3 hectares).
- **Fieldscape dominated by historic farmsteads** surrounded by their own fields resulting from Medieval farming in severalty i.e. land held by individuals rather than in common.
- **Strong influence exerted by topography** with many field systems aligned to or 'hanging' from (at right angles to) linear features such as watercourses or ridge-top roads.
- **Predominantly pastoral mixed farming** with an absence of industrial scale livestock farming.
- **Fields mostly used for grazing** livestock with some small-scale horticulture and cropping.
- **Medieval character dominant** with a high proportion of field systems created by assarting (woodland clearance) with sinuous mixed woody boundaries and thick hedges common.
- **Boundary ditch and bank features** typical, along woodland edges or topped with hedges and veteran trees.
- **Nationally important fragments of unimproved neutral grassland** (habitat type MG5 and variants), often small and isolated, supporting an incredibly rich variety of plants, animals, waxcaps and other fungi.
- **High proportion of good quality flowery grassland** acting as a buffer for, and link to, fragments of unimproved grassland.
- **Traditional orchards** scattered across the landscape providing dead and decaying wood for invertebrates, and a mosaic of other habitats.
- **Ashdown Forest** (an extensive area of common land and one of the largest continuous blocks of lowland heath, semi-natural woodland and valley bog in the South East) supporting internationally important populations of nightjar and Dartford warbler.
- **Distinctive areas of wooded heath** and Lowland heath scattered along the sandy ridges supporting a complex mosaic of plant communities, rare species such as marsh clubmoss, and more than half of UK's dragonfly species.



Vision

A landscape in which the distinctive and historic pattern of fields is managed to maximise its full landscape, historic and wildlife value, and in which nature recovery networks have enhanced the special qualities of grassland and lowland heath habitats which are maintained where necessary by skilled land managers. Agricultural land is productive managed through restorative agriculture, small-scale agro-forestry and the growing of vegetables, fruit and salad crops, with some wilded areas to serve as refuges; all delivering public benefits including responsible access and enjoyment by the public.

Field and heath map



Top five issues

1. Fragmentation of farm holdings due to an increase in non-farming land ownership.
2. Loss of agricultural skills and knowledge, and reduction in livestock grazing leading to loss of farm infrastructure and degradation of pasture and soils.
3. Increasing costs of managing associated habitats such as hedgerows, exacerbated by reduction in agri-environmental funding for some operations.
4. Loss of green fields to development and infrastructure, or conversion to other land uses such as planting of new woodlands.
5. Difficulties of access to small, isolated sites and lack of grazing infrastructure including fencing and livestock.

Natural and cultural capital – facts and figures

>1,500 farm holdings (2nd highest number of holdings in an AONB) with >750 livestock holdings.

65% land is registered with the Rural Payments Agency with 17,000 parcels of land <1.5ha.

Average farm size is less than half the national average.

70% remain unaffected by reorganisation in the late 20th century.

>12,500km of hedgerows and field boundaries providing homes for pollinating insects and a source of wild food.

220km² land owned by conservation organisations or designated under international or UK law to protect wildlife including 64km² internationally important sites and 51 SSSI's covering 55km².

<3% land cover known wildflower meadows with estimated <40% fields semi-improved grassland with potential for enhancement.

Nearly 50% of AONB supported by government-funded schemes to encourage (NE, 2013) environmentally sensitive land management.

85% land is Grade 3 and 4 with no Grade 1 and 2.5% Grade 2.

<5% agricultural holders under 35 years old.

Steep decline in livestock numbers with sheep and cattle numbers down by one-third since 2000.

Objective FH1

To secure agriculturally productive use for the fields of the High Weald, especially for local markets, as part of sustainable land management.

Rationale

To contribute to sustainable domestic food and non-food agricultural production, to support a working countryside, and to reduce the dependency of the UK on non-sustainably managed agricultural land and the need for long-distance transport that produces air pollutants, causing harm to health and the environment.

Indicators of success

i. Maintenance of land registered for grazing animals (RPA: area extent)

Objective FH2

To maintain the pattern of small irregularly shaped fields bounded by hedgerows and woodlands.

Rationale

To maintain fields and field boundaries that form a part of the habitat mosaic of the High Weald; and to maintain this key component of what is a rare UK survival of an essentially Medieval landscape.

Indicators of Success

i. Increase in hedges restored and new hedges planted (HWJAC: total hedgerow extent in sample areas)

ii. No loss of Medieval field systems (HWJAC: area of intact field systems in sample areas)

'The existence of a flourishing and progressive agriculture is fundamental to... the preservation and enhancement of the characteristic landscape.'

Report of the National Parks Committee, Sir Arthur Hobhouse 1947

Objective FH3

To enhance the ecological function of field and heath as part of the complex mosaic of High Weald habitats.

Rationale

To improve the condition, landscape permeability and connectivity of fields and heaths and their associated and interrelated habitats (such as hedges, woodlands, ditches, ponds and water systems) for wildlife.

Indicators of Success

i. No loss of species rich grassland (HWJAC & Biological Records Centres: Inventory and priority habitat data)

ii. No loss of lowland heath (HWJAC & Biological Records Centres: Inventory and priority habitat data)

iii. Increase in connectivity of species-rich grassland (HWJAC & Biological Records Centres: connectivity measure in sample areas)

Objective FH4

To protect the archaeology and historic assets of field and heath.

Rationale

To protect the historic environment of the AONB other than the pattern of fields: i.e. the individual archaeological features.

Indicators of Success

i. Increase in Historic Environment Records for non-wooded habitats (HWJAC & Historic Environment Record Centres: Number of HER records)

Evidence and further reading

- Dolphin Ecological services (2013). *Grassland SNCI Review*. High Weald Joint Advisory Committee.
- Fields in the High Weald: *An Overview of Their Social, Ecological and Economic Value* (2017). High Weald Joint Advisory Committee.
- Field systems in the High Weald: *A landscape Approach to Assessment* (2017). High Weald Joint Advisory Committee.
- *Field systems in the High Weald: Character Statement* (2017). High Weald Joint Advisory Committee.
- *Field systems in the High Weald: Research History* (2017). High Weald Joint Advisory Committee.
- *High Weald AONB: Biodiversity Statement* (2013). High Weald Joint Advisory Committee.
- *High Weald Management Plan 2019 Consultation Workshop Report: Field and Heath* (2017). High Weald Joint Advisory Committee.
- Jones, P.J. et al. (2009). *Potential of the High Weald to Supply the Food Needs of its Population under Conventional and Organic Agriculture*. High Weald Joint Advisory Committee.
- Vorley, B. (2014) *Restocking the Weald*. High Weald Joint Advisory Committee.

Objective FH1

To secure agriculturally productive use for the fields of the High Weald, especially for local markets, as part of sustainable land management.

Proposed Actions	Public bodies	Others
Support existing agricultural infrastructure, food processing facilities and local farmers' markets	x	x
Develop tailored support for pasture-fed livestock farming utilising soil conservation management techniques	x	
Choose local food and support local food growers through procurement policies	x	x
Foster sensitive small-scale growing of vegetables, salad crops and fruit	x	x
Incorporate local food and growing programmes in schools	x	
Focus dedicated support on new entrants to farming	x	
Facilitate and encourage collaborative farming, food processing and marketing enterprises	x	x
Support organic farming and other production methods that conserve soil	x	x
Support advisors providing High Weald specific advice	x	
Support traditional livestock breeds	x	x
Recognise the high cost of maintaining a small-scale landscape with abundant hedges in support schemes	x	
Jointly prepare a best practice code for sustainable land management which fosters activities that enhance the distinctive character of the High Weald and do not damage characteristic habitats and species	x	

Objective FH2

To maintain the pattern of small irregularly shaped fields bounded by hedgerows and woodlands.

Proposed Actions	Public bodies	Others
Give great weight to medieval field systems in planning decisions especially where there is a high degree of intactness and strong presence or relationship with other notable landscape and heritage features	x	
Require development masterplans to protect and enhance existing field patterns including hedges, ditches or other boundary features, and where possible to restore them when lost, particularly within retained public spaces	x	
Provide specialist advice to support the management of boundary features including hedgerows, coppice, and veteran trees	x	x
Encourage the restoration of derelict hedges, and restoration of lost hedges	x	x
Promote an inventory of Weald hedges	x	x
Support initiatives to generate an economic return from hedge management and hedgerow products	x	x
Protect and manage hedgerows	x	x
Use historic maps to help reinstate lost hedgerows	x	x

Objective FH3

To enhance the ecological function of field and heath as part of the complex mosaic of High Weald habitats.

Proposed Actions	Public bodies	Others
Avoid large-scale new tree planting and avoid planting trees on species-rich grassland or heathland and promote natural regeneration for small woodland expansion/creation schemes	x	x
Proactively encourage management and monitoring of local wildlife sites and review the designation of new sites	x	
Identify, designate and appropriately manage species-rich grassland road verges	x	
Deliver workshops aimed at site managers, local landowners and farmers to raise awareness of species-rich neutral grassland habitats and to support best practice management	x	x
Support and facilitate scientific research in collaboration with academic institutes to further knowledge and understanding of species-rich neutral grassland	x	x
Develop a nature recovery network for species-rich grassland, compiling an inventory of core sites, identifying where opportunities exist to restore and enhance degraded species-rich grasslands, and working collaboratively under Weald Meadows Group to co-ordinate conservation action	x	x
Strategies implemented to reduce nutrient input via air pollution to vulnerable habitats such as heathland	x	x
Deliver Countryside Stewardship Facilitation support to cluster groups through targeted advisory visits	x	
Provide support to farmers entering agri-environment schemes and integrate landowner advice on offer from multiple organisations	x	x
Initiate a collaborative campaign to discourage 'tidy' edges and manage fields for structural complexity and species diversity	x	x
Prepare landscape management design guides to steer agri-environment support to ensure environmental net gain	x	x
Choose to sow crops in spring rather than autumn		x
Seek opportunities to deliver community-led projects restoring and enhancing species-rich road verges	x	x
Collaboratively develop improved mechanisms for communicating with and supporting owners and managers of Local Wildlife Sites	x	x
Encourage fire safety awareness on heathland	x	x

Objective FH4

To protect the archaeology and historic assets of field and heath.

Proposed Actions	Public bodies	Others
Require a desk-based assessment for all development affecting fields or field boundaries supported, where appropriate, by field assessment	x	
Promote field archaeology awareness and recognise the importance of historic small quarries, pits and ponds	x	x
Improve Historic Environment Records for fields	x	x
Identify field archaeology and avoid damage to banks and earthworks	x	x