



Mid Sussex District Council

District Plan 2021-2039

Major Development in the High Weald AONB

(Regulation 19)

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Introduction

1. The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate that the national planning policy on major development in designated landscape areas has been fully considered in the preparation of the District Plan 2021-2039.
2. This paper sets out an approach to assessing if the proposed site allocations included in the District Plan 2021-2039 and within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) could be regarded as major development. It then also indicates the next steps if the proposed site allocation is determined to be major development. Each proposed site allocation is assessed as a matter of planning judgement taking into account the factors set out and described in national policy.
3. This paper follows on from the *Assessment of the Impact of the SHELAA Sites on the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty* (November 2023) and should be read in conjunction with it. As an extension to the *Assessment of the Impact of the SHELAA Sites on the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty* paper, this paper has not repeated all the landscape details and assessment information for each site, however, these continue to still apply in this paper.
4. As part of the site selection process set out in the *Site Selection Conclusions Paper* (October 2023), the impact on the High Weald AONB has been taken into account. Sites within the High Weald AONB were assessed as having high, moderate or low impact based on the advice provided by a variety of sources. Those sites assessed as having a high impact on the High Weald AONB were not considered further in the site selection process. Therefore, at this stage of the plan-making process, the High Weald AONB has already been considered in the site selection process and sites with the highest impact filtered out from further consideration.
5. It is important to note that this paper is an assessment to determine if a proposed site allocation is major development. The process of determining whether a site is acceptable development and suitable for allocation in the District Plan is through the site selection process for the District Plan. The decision on which sites are allocated in the District Plan is a separate decision-making process.
6. The major development assessment will also help meet the statutory duty to seek to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the High Weald AONB as provided by section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (as amended).
7. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF; September 2023) provides the Government's policy for conserving and enhancing landscape beauty:

177 When considering applications for development within National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, permission should be refused for major development⁶⁰, other than in exceptional circumstances, and where it can be demonstrated that the development is in the public interest. 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 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.

⁶⁰ For the purposes of paragraphs 176 and 177, 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.

Definition of Major Development

8. The NPPF does not provide a definition for major development in AONBs, however, there are a number of sources that can be drawn upon to provide some guidelines for determining whether a proposed development is major development.
9. Footnote 60 of the NPPF is clear that major development is a matter for the decision maker and that the nature, scale and setting of the proposed development is taken into account, and whether it could have a significant adverse impact on the purposes for which the area has been designated or defined.
10. The South Downs National Park Authority has sought legal advice on the matter of major development and has published as part of the evidence for its Local Plan 2014-2033 what has become known as the 'Maurici opinions' – that is, legal advice provided in 2011 and 2014 by James Maurici KC, and then subsequent legal advice provided by Toby Fisher in 2017.
11. The Maurici opinions provide a useful analysis of major development and set out a series of principles (derived from caselaw, guidance and appeal decisions) to be applied by decision makers when determining whether a proposed development could be regarded as major development:
 - It is a matter of planning judgement to be decided by the decision maker.
 - Major development is to be given its ordinary meaning, and it would be wrong to apply the definition of major development contained within the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015. It would also be wrong to apply any set or rigid criteria for defining major development, and the definition should not be restricted to development proposals that raise issues of national significance.
 - The decision maker may consider whether the proposed development has the potential to cause a significant adverse impact on the purposes for which the area has been designated or defined, rather than whether there will indeed be a significant adverse impact from the proposed development.
 - The decision maker may consider the proposed development in its local context as a matter of planning judgement.
 - There may be other considerations but which may not determine whether a proposed development is major development. For example, if the proposed development is Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) development.
 - The ordinary sense of the word 'major' is important and the decision maker should take a common sense view as to whether the proposed development could be considered major development.
12. In Mr Fisher's 2017 legal opinion, he was of the view that:

‘ ... it would arguably amount to an error of law to fail to consider paragraph [177] at the site allocations stage of plan making for the National Park. The consequence of doing so would be to risk allocating land for major development that was undeliverable because it was incapable of meeting the major development test in the NPPF.’

13. It is clear then that there needs to be an assessment to consider whether the proposed site allocations in the High Weald AONB could be major development. The assessment will be carried out at the plan-making stage (District Plan 2021-2039) in order to reduce the risk of the site allocation later being found undeliverable as a result of its assessment at the planning application stage. Such an assessment is a matter of planning judgement to be decided by the decision maker and needs to take into account the common sense meaning of the word ‘major’ and the local context.

Methodology

14. Taking into account how paragraph 177 of the NPPF is to be applied and how major development is (or is not) defined, an approach was developed for the Site Allocations DPD to assess the proposed sites in the Site Allocations DPD¹. This approach intends to be a clear framework to assess each proposed site allocation in a consistent way and to provide the basis for forming a decision on major development. This is in the context that the determination of whether a proposed development is major development is a matter of planning judgement for the decision maker.
15. It is important to note that whilst the Inspector in his report for the Site Allocations DPD came to a different view for one of the proposed site allocations and whether it could be regarded as major development (a major development assessment is a matter of planning judgement to be decided by the decision maker), he did not discuss nor disagree with the methodology and approach taken. As such it is considered appropriate to continue with the same methodology and approach albeit it has been updated slightly to refine the assessment notes.
16. The methodology has been developed and refined in discussion with the High Weald AONB Unit, Natural England, and other partners across the High Weald AONB and other protected landscapes.
17. There are two stages to the assessment:
 - Stage 1 – Determining major development
 - Stage 2 – Consideration of major development

Stage 1 – Determining major development

18. An assessment based on the factors set out in footnote 60 of the NPPF has been used to inform the decision as to whether a proposed site allocation could be regarded as major development (Figure 1). It is an assessment to determine if a proposed site allocation is major development, rather than whether it is a site suitable for allocation in the District Plan. The process of

¹ <https://www.midsussex.gov.uk/media/6051/tp1-major-development-in-the-high-weald-aonb-topic-paper-v2.pdf>

determining whether it is acceptable development is through the site selection process for the District Plan².

Factor (NPPF footnote 60)	Assessment Notes	Potential source(s) of information
Nature of development	<p>An assessment of the type of proposed development is considered, e.g. housing, employment, mixed use. Consideration is also given to the likely form of the proposed allocation such as the dwelling mix or employment use.</p> <p>Consideration of the characteristics and perceptual qualities of the High Weald AONB will also be taken into account, e.g. scale of landscape, views, tranquillity and dark skies.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SHELAA • Draft District Plan 2021-2039 • High Weald AONB Management Plan
Scale of development	<p>An assessment of the proposed allocation in terms of its own size, e.g. number of dwellings, employment land area, and in relation to the existing settlement, e.g. the increase in the size of the settlement through either land area and/ or number of households.</p> <p>It is not considered appropriate to identify thresholds for when the scale of development may be regarded as major, rather each proposed allocation should be qualitatively assessed taking into account the other assessment factors such as the settlement form and type, the proposed density of development, as</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MSDC GIS • High Weald AONB Management Plan

² The decision on which sites are allocated in the District Plan is a separate decision-making process (see the Site Selection Conclusion Paper: <https://www.midsussex.gov.uk/planning-building/mid-sussex-district-plan/district-plan-review/>).

Factor (NPPF footnote 60)	Assessment Notes	Potential source(s) of information
	<p>well as the characteristics of the High Weald AONB.</p> <p>The scale of the wider landscape around the proposed allocation will also be considered – if the proposed allocation is in an open landscape with long distance views or if it has a smaller-scale enclosed form.</p> <p>The scale of the proposed allocation will be assessed to see if it is in keeping with the scale of the surrounding landscape.</p>	
Setting of development	<p>An assessment of the spatial relationship of the proposed allocation in the context of settlement form taking into account the local context, e.g. infilling, extension to existing settlement, farmstead development, land use, topography, heritage assets.</p> <p>The spatial context of the proposed allocation is also an important consideration. This includes looking at the historic settlement pattern in the wider area. For example, if the settlements in the wider area are distinct small villages or have more of a linear form.</p> <p>It should be remembered that an AONB is a nationally-valued landscape with a high status of protection.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mid Sussex Design Guide • High Weald Housing Design Guide • High Weald AONB Management Plan • High Weald AONB research reports on settlements • Conservation Area Appraisals • Historical maps • Atlas of Rural Settlement GIS³ • Historic England: Medieval Settlements⁴ • Historic Farmstead Character⁵ • Neighbourhood plans • Site visit • Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA)
The potential for significant adverse impact on AONB purposes (to conserve and	An assessment of the proposed allocation against	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The High Weald AONB Unit has provided a series of GIS layers to the District Council that map

³ <https://historicengland.org.uk/research/current/heritage-science/atlas-of-rural-settlement-in-england/>

⁴ <https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/iha-medieval-settlements/>

⁵ <https://www.highweald.org/about-the-high-weald-unit/aonb-team/420-home/research-reports/475-historic-farmstead-character.html>

Factor (NPPF footnote 60)	Assessment Notes	Potential source(s) of information
enhance the natural beauty of the High Weald AONB)	<p>the High Weald AONB Statement of Significance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Five components of character <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Geology, landform and water systems 2. Settlement 3. Routeways 4. Woodland 5. Field and Heath • Land-based economy and related rural life • Other qualities <p>An assessment of the proposed allocation against the High Weald AONB Management Plan objectives.</p> <p>The Statement of Significance defines the natural beauty of the High Weald AONB and the Management Plan objectives advise how to conserve and enhance the High Weald AONB.</p> <p>Other factors to consider include the time-depth of a site, taking account of its history and heritage, and also how the site supports ecosystem services as this supports the key components of the High Weald AONB. Links to biodiversity net gain should also be made.</p>	<p>the components of character and these will be used to inform the assessment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High Weald AONB Management Plan • Site visit to consider the perceptual qualities of the High Weald AONB, e.g. tranquillity. • Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) • Natural England ALC007 Map – Agricultural Land Classification London and the South East
Conservation and enhancement of the High Weald AONB	<p>An assessment of whether the proposed allocation conserves and enhances the High Weald AONB.</p> <p>This part of the major development assessment reflects the statutory duty set out in section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (as amended).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High Weald AONB Management Plan • Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA)

Factor (NPPF footnote 60)	Assessment Notes	Potential source(s) of information
	<p>Could the proposed development have a significant adverse impact on the purposes of the High Weald AONB?</p> <p>What is the landscape and visual impact of the proposed development?</p>	
The ordinary meaning of the word ‘major’	<p>Can the proposed allocation be described as ‘major’ in the ordinary meaning of the word?</p> <p>This may take into account the context of the High Weald AONB.</p> <p>The further from an existing settlement and built development and the more rural the setting, the more likely that development will be considered ‘major’.</p> <p>It should be remembered that opinions will vary between individuals as a result of, <i>inter alia</i>, their experiences, views towards development and the location where they live.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N/A
Draft District Plan Policy DPC4: High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty	An assessment of the proposed allocation against the requirements set out in the draft District Plan policy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development plan (Mid Sussex District Plan 2014-2031) • Draft District Plan 2021-2039
Cumulative impacts	<p>An assessment of whether the proposed allocation may lead to cumulative impacts when considered alongside other proposed allocations.</p> <p>This will be used to inform the site selection process for the District Plan as this is the process for determining if a site is acceptable development and suitable for allocation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft District Plan 2021-2039 • Sustainability Appraisal • Site Selection Papers • Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA)

Factor (NPPF footnote 60)	Assessment Notes	Potential source(s) of information
Conclusion	<p>Taking all the above factors into account, is the proposed allocation considered to be major development?</p> <p>The proposed allocation could be regarded as major development as a result of just one factor or it may be a combination of factors that leads to a conclusion of major development.</p> <p>If the proposed allocation is considered to be major development, then proceed to Stage 2 – Consideration of major development.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N/A

Figure 1 - Stage 1 assessment - Determining major development

19. Whilst each proposed site allocation should be assessed individually to determine if it is major development, the cumulative impact of the proposed site allocations on the High Weald AONB should also be considered particularly those proposed site allocations in the same settlement (if there are any such cases) because together the proposed site allocations may contribute to additional impacts on the High Weald AONB.

Stage 2 – Consideration of major development

20. If, at the Stage 1 assessment, a proposed site allocation is considered to be major development, then it proceeds to the Stage 2 assessment which is the consideration of major development.
21. There needs to be an exploration of exceptional circumstances at the plan-making stage. This is because there is the opportunity at plan-making stage to consider different options for a spatial strategy to meet the housing needs of the District, and this may seek to lessen any potential harm to the High Weald AONB such as selecting alternative locations for development. The principle of development is established through an allocation at the plan-making stage, so an assessment of exceptional circumstances at the plan-making stage should reduce the risk that an allocated site is undeliverable at the planning application stage because it cannot meet the major development test as set out in the NPPF. This assessment (Figure 2) is based on paragraph 177 of the NPPF and includes consideration of:
- Any exceptional circumstances
 - If the development is in the public interest
 - A justification of need
 - Any alternative ways of meeting that need
 - An assessment of harm

22. The exceptional circumstances for each site allocation that is taken forward should also be reviewed at the planning application stage. This is because there may be changes between the time of the site allocation at the plan-making stage and the planning application. It will also help to meet the requirements of paragraph 177 of the NPPF.

Factor (NPPF paragraph 177)	Assessment Notes	Potential source(s) of information
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	This may include reference to housing land supply and the provision of affordable homes for local people, plus any other relevant NPPF policies. It could also reference infrastructure improvements. Compliance with the development plan is also a consideration.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NPPF • Development plan (Mid Sussex District Plan 2014-2031) • Draft District Plan 2021-2039 • Sustainability Appraisal • Site Selection Papers
The cost of, and scope for, developing outside the designated area, or meeting the need for it in some other way	This may include reference to other known sites and reasonable alternatives, and the potential to deliver these sites. Compliance with the development plan is also a consideration. Any potential cumulative impacts may be taken into account.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development plan (Mid Sussex District Plan 2014-2031) • Draft District Plan 2021-2039 • SHELAA • Sustainability Appraisal • Site Selection Papers
Any detrimental effect on the environment, the landscape and recreational opportunities, and the extent to which that could be moderated	This may reference the High Weald AONB Statement of Significance and any mitigation measures.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development plan (Mid Sussex District Plan 2014-2031) • Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) • High Weald AONB Management Plan • Draft District Plan 2021-2039 policy wording
Can it be demonstrated the development is in the public interest?	The public interest test may include reference to the interaction between the landscape and people. This may include the opportunities to enhance health and well-being, and to foster the enjoyment and appreciation of nature.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development plan (Mid Sussex District Plan 2014-2031) • Draft District Plan 2021-2039 • High Weald AONB Management Plan • Public rights of way network • Current land use

Factor (NPPF paragraph 177)	Assessment Notes	Potential source(s) of information
	Compliance with the development plan could also be regarded as being within the public interest ⁶ .	
Are there any other exceptional circumstances?	This would include any other relevant material considerations, however, exceptional should mean 'rarity' ⁷ .	

Figure 2 - Stage 2 assessment - Consideration of major development

23. The approach indicates what matters could be considered during the assessment and the potential sources of information to inform that assessment. The assessment will consider that if despite giving great weight to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty of the High Weald AONB, there are exceptional circumstances and that the proposed site allocation is in the public interest⁷.
24. The major development assessment for each proposed site allocation is contained in the appendix to this paper.

⁶ Appeal decisions APP/D3830/W/19/3231996 and APP/D3830/W/19/3231997 | Land off London Road, Bolney | Decision date: 16th December 2019

⁷ *R (Mevagissey Parish Council) v Cornwall Council* [2013] EWHC 3684 (Admin)

Appendix A: Major Development Assessment for the Proposed Site Allocations

Policy Reference	DPH8	SHELAA ID	198
Site address	Land off West Hoathly Way, East Grinstead		
Units	45	Gross site area (Ha)	2.0
Stage 1 – Determining major development (NPPF footnote 60)			
Nature of development	This is a proposed housing allocation for 45 dwellings. The site is to the south of East Grinstead and outside of the built-up area boundary. The site is approximately 75m from the built-up area boundary at its closest point.		
Scale of development	Using the built-up area boundary to assess the size of the settlement, the site represents an increase of 0.28% in the built-up area of East Grinstead and an increase of 0.34% in the number of dwellings. The High Weald AONB is a small-scale landscape of small fields, small woodlands and dispersed historic farmsteads and hamlets. The landscape also has perceptual qualities such as tranquillity, dark skies, views and a sense of naturalness. It is considered that whilst the scale of the site is relatively small compared to the size of East Grinstead, it is located in an area of low density development and so the proposed yield of this site may be out of character with its immediate surroundings.		
Setting of development	The site is located between a historic routeway and ancient woodland and adjacent land uses include a recreation ground and grassland. West Hoathly Road has a rural character and there are distant views from the road and across the site to the east as well as views of East Grinstead to the north. Since the land rises to the south, this site may also be visible from East Grinstead. Development of the site would form an extension of East Grinstead but would also represent encroachment into the countryside.		
The potential for significant adverse impact on AONB purposes for which the area has been designated (as set out in the High Weald AONB Statement of Significance)			
Assessment contained in the <i>Assessment of the Impact of the SHELAA Sites on the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty</i> paper.			
Conservation and enhancement of the High Weald AONB	Whilst this site will lead to development in the High Weald AONB, there are also opportunities to conserve and enhance the AONB as described in the <i>Assessment of the Impact of the SHELAA Sites on the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty</i> paper when considering the High Weald AONB Management Plan objectives. At a local scale, built development would lead to changes in the landscape and potential changes to its character.		
Can the proposed allocation be described as 'major' in the ordinary meaning of the word?	No. It should be remembered that opinions will vary between individuals as a result of, <i>inter alia</i> , their experiences, views towards development and the location where they live.		

<p>Draft District Plan Policy DPC4: High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty</p>	<p>It is considered that the proposed site allocation is in accordance with draft Policy DPC4 at this stage of the plan-making process due to its nature, scale and setting. It is recommended that the design and layout of the site takes into account the objectives of the High Weald AONB Management Plan which have been considered in the <i>Assessment of the Impact of the SHELAA Sites on the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty</i> paper and the surrounding settlement pattern and character. This will provide opportunities to conserve and enhance the High Weald AONB. This will be assessed further at the time of the planning application and prior to its determination.</p>
<p>Cumulative impacts</p>	<p>One of the key principles of the spatial strategy set out in the District Plan 2021-2039 is to protect designated landscapes. In line with the settlement hierarchy, it is recognised that there will be an element of development in the High Weald AONB to meet the needs of those settlements within the AONB. There is also likely to be development across the High Weald AONB in other districts and boroughs. Since there are no other proposed site allocations near this site, it is considered unlikely there will be any cumulative impacts at a local scale. The Site Selection Papers detail the process by which the housing sites proposed for allocation in the District Plan 2021-2039 have been identified, tested and found to be the most suitable for delivering housing growth to meet the housing need of the District.</p>
<p>Conclusion</p>	<p>NOT MAJOR DEVELOPMENT</p> <p>The proposed site allocation is reasonably well-located to the settlement of East Grinstead and relatively small in scale. Whilst the site does not appear to directly impact on the AONB character components, there is likely to be loss of the Mediaeval field system and potential impact on the ghyll woodland. Development would represent encroachment into the countryside, however, careful design of its layout and materials along with an appropriate defensible boundary may help to mitigate the impact.</p> <p>Although the site is unlikely to be in the most tranquil and rural part of the High Weald AONB, opportunities to protect tranquillity and dark skies should be taken. The site needs to be developed as a landscape-led approach in accordance with draft District Plan Policy DPC4: High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The High Weald AONB Management Plan, High Weald Housing Design Guide and associated documents such as the High Weald AONB Colour Study also need to be taken into account when designing the site.</p>

Policy Reference	DPH17	SHELAA ID	984
Site address	The Paddocks, Lewes Road, Ashurst Wood		
Units	8-12	Gross site area (Ha)	0.8
Stage 1 – Determining major development (NPPF footnote 60)			
Nature of development	This is a proposed housing allocation for 8-12 dwellings. The site is previously developed with an existing dwelling in a large plot and a couple of paddocks.		
Scale of development	Using the built-up area boundary to assess the size of the settlement, the site represents an increase of 3% in the built-up area of Ashurst Wood and an increase of 1.8% in the number of dwellings. The High Weald AONB is a small-scale landscape of small fields, small woodlands and dispersed historic farmsteads and hamlets. The landscape also has perceptual qualities such as tranquillity, dark skies, views and a sense of naturalness. It is considered that the scale of the site would be in keeping with the landscape characteristics because it is previously developed and due to its size in relation to the existing settlement of Ashurst Wood.		
Setting of development	The site is to the rear of existing residential development along Lewes Road. The existing residential development forms part of the historic settlement pattern of Ashurst Wood. There are mature trees on the site boundaries with woodland to the south and west and ancient woodland in close proximity to the site. Close to the built-up area for Ashurst Wood and with access on to the A22 Lewes Road, the site is unlikely to be very tranquil nor is it likely to experience very dark skies due to nearby development and streetlights.		
The potential for significant adverse impact on AONB purposes for which the area has been designated (as set out in the High Weald AONB Statement of Significance)			
Assessment contained in the <i>Assessment of the Impact of the SHELAA Sites on the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty</i> paper.			
Conservation and enhancement of the High Weald AONB	Whilst this site will lead to development in the High Weald AONB, there are also opportunities to conserve and enhance the AONB as described in the <i>Assessment of the Impact of the SHELAA Sites on the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty</i> paper when considering the High Weald AONB Management Plan objectives. At a local scale, built development would lead to changes in the landscape and potential changes to its character.		
Can the proposed allocation be described as 'major' in the ordinary meaning of the word?	No. It should be remembered that opinions will vary between individuals as a result of, <i>inter alia</i> , their experiences, views towards development and the location where they live.		

<p>Draft District Plan Policy DPC4: High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty</p>	<p>It is considered that the proposed site allocation is in accordance with draft Policy DPC4 at this stage of the plan-making process due to its nature, scale and setting. It is recommended that the design and layout of the site takes into account the objectives of the High Weald AONB Management Plan which have been considered in the <i>Assessment of the Impact of the SHELAA Sites on the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty</i> paper and the surrounding settlement pattern and character. This will provide opportunities to conserve and enhance the High Weald AONB. This will be assessed further at the time of the planning application and prior to its determination.</p>
<p>Cumulative impacts</p>	<p>One of the key principles of the spatial strategy set out in the District Plan 2021-2039 is to protect designated landscapes. In line with the settlement hierarchy, it is recognised that there will be an element of development in the High Weald AONB to meet the needs of those settlements within the AONB. There is also likely to be development across the High Weald AONB in other districts and boroughs. Since there are no other proposed site allocations near this site, it is considered unlikely there will be any cumulative impacts at a local scale. The Site Selection Papers detail the process by which the housing sites proposed for allocation in the District Plan 2021-2039 have been identified, tested and found to be the most suitable for delivering housing growth to meet the housing need of the District.</p>
<p>Conclusion</p>	<p>NOT MAJOR DEVELOPMENT</p> <p>The site may directly impact on the AONB woodland character component, however, with the retention and continued protection of the mature trees on the site boundaries and consideration given to the design and layout, it is considered a low impact as it would represent a small-scale development on previously developed land.</p> <p>Although the site is unlikely to be in the most tranquil and rural part of the High Weald AONB, opportunities to protect tranquillity and dark skies should be taken. The site needs to be developed as a landscape-led approach in accordance with draft District Plan Policy DPC4: High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The High Weald AONB Management Plan, High Weald Housing Design Guide and associated documents such as the High Weald AONB Colour Study also need to be taken into account when designing the site.</p>

Policy Reference	DPH28	SHELAA ID	1106
Site address	Land at Hyde Lodge, London Road, Handcross		
Units	C2	Gross site area (Ha)	3.0
Stage 1 – Determining major development (NPPF footnote 60)			
Nature of development	This is a proposed allocation for C2 use, however, the nature of the C2 use has yet to be determined.		
Scale of development	<p>Using the built-up area boundary to assess the size of the settlement, the site represents an increase of 9.49% in the built-up area of Handcross.</p> <p>The High Weald AONB is a small-scale landscape of small fields, small woodlands and dispersed historic farmsteads and hamlets. The landscape also has perceptual qualities such as tranquillity, dark skies, views and a sense of naturalness. It is considered at this stage of the plan-making process that the scale of the site would be in keeping with the landscape characteristics due to its size in relation to the existing settlement of Handcross.</p>		
Setting of development	<p>The site is to the north of Handcross and does not adjoin the main village and historic settlement. However, recent development has extended Handross northwards so that the site now abuts the built-up area boundary. The recreation ground is outside the built-up area boundary so there is still a sense of separation between the main village and the northern part of the built-up area. The site boundaries have mature trees and there are large areas of ancient woodland to the east and west of the site. The A23 lies to the west of the site so the site is unlikely to be in the most tranquil part of the AONB. The nearby main roads also have streetlighting which may impact on dark skies.</p>		
The potential for significant adverse impact on AONB purposes for which the area has been designated (as set out in the High Weald AONB Statement of Significance)			
Assessment contained in the <i>Assessment of the Impact of the SHELAA Sites on the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty</i> paper.			
Conservation and enhancement of the High Weald AONB	<p>Whilst this site will lead to development in the High Weald AONB, there are also opportunities to conserve and enhance the AONB as described in the <i>Assessment of the Impact of the SHELAA Sites on the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty</i> paper when considering the High Weald AONB Management Plan objectives. At a local scale, built development would lead to changes in the landscape and potential changes to its character.</p>		
Can the proposed allocation be described as 'major' in the ordinary meaning of the word?	<p>No.</p> <p>It should be remembered that opinions will vary between individuals as a result of, <i>inter alia</i>, their experiences, views towards development and the location where they live.</p>		

<p>Draft District Plan Policy DPC4: High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty</p>	<p>It is considered that the proposed site allocation is in accordance with draft Policy DPC4 at this stage of the plan-making process due to its nature, scale and setting. It is recommended that the design and layout of the site takes into account the objectives of the High Weald AONB Management Plan which have been considered in the <i>Assessment of the Impact of the SHELAA Sites on the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty</i> paper and the surrounding settlement pattern and character. This will provide opportunities to conserve and enhance the High Weald AONB. This will be assessed further at the time of the planning application and prior to its determination.</p>
<p>Cumulative impacts</p>	<p>One of the key principles of the spatial strategy set out in the District Plan 2021-2039 is to protect designated landscapes. In line with the settlement hierarchy, it is recognised that there will be an element of development in the High Weald AONB to meet the needs of those settlements within the AONB. There is also likely to be development across the High Weald AONB in other districts and boroughs. Since there are no other proposed site allocations near this site, it is considered unlikely there will be any cumulative impacts at a local scale. The Site Selection Papers detail the process by which the housing sites proposed for allocation in the District Plan 2021-2039 have been identified, tested and found to be the most suitable for delivering housing growth to meet the housing need of the District.</p>
<p>Conclusion</p>	<p>NOT MAJOR DEVELOPMENT</p> <p>Whilst the site does not appear to directly impact on the AONB character components, it would extend development to the north of Handcross away from the main village and historic settlement. It is, however, reasonably well-located to the settlement of Handcross and is on the B2114 London Road. It is also likely to be fairly small-scale given the size of the site.</p> <p>Although the site is unlikely to be in the most tranquil and rural part of the High Weald AONB, opportunities to protect tranquillity and dark skies should be taken. The site needs to be developed as a landscape-led approach in accordance with draft District Plan Policy DPC4: High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The High Weald AONB Management Plan, High Weald Housing Design Guide and associated documents such as the High Weald AONB Colour Study also need to be taken into account when designing the site.</p>