



Mid Sussex District Plan

Major Development in the High Weald National Landscape

July 2026



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Major Development Assessment Conclusions

- i. The table below shows the major development assessment conclusion for each of the additional sites within the High Weald National Landscape that were subject to in-combination testing. This section has been included to provide a quick reference for the major development assessment conclusion. Further information on the methodology and the full assessment can be found on the following pages of this document.

SHELAA ID	Site Address	Conclusions
1175	Land at Brambletye School, Lewes Road, Ashurst Wood	<u>Stage 1</u> NOT MAJOR DEVELOPMENT
28	Area south of Redbridge Lane at junction with London Road, Balcombe	<u>Stage 1</u> NOT MAJOR DEVELOPMENT
165	Land south of Oldlands Avenue (Vintens Nursery), Balcombe	<u>Stage 1</u> NOT MAJOR DEVELOPMENT
1024	Land at Brook House Farm, Turners Hill Road, East Grinstead	<u>Stage 1</u> NOT MAJOR DEVELOPMENT
1181	Land east of West Hoathly Road, East Grinstead	<u>Stage 1</u> NOT MAJOR DEVELOPMENT
181	Land west of Truggers, Handcross	<u>Stage 1</u> MAJOR DEVELOPMENT <u>Stage 2</u> EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES AND THE PUBLIC INTEREST TEST ARE CAPABLE OF BEING DEMONSTRATED AT THE PLANNING APPLICATION STAGE
603	Land to the west of Woodhurst Farm, Old Brighton Road South, Pease Pottage	<u>Stage 1</u> MAJOR DEVELOPMENT <u>Stage 2</u> EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES AND THE PUBLIC INTEREST TEST ARE CAPABLE OF BEING DEMONSTRATED AT THE PLANNING APPLICATION STAGE
818	Land north of the Former Golf House, Horsham Road, Pease Pottage	<u>Stage 1</u> NOT MAJOR DEVELOPMENT
1188	Land at Pease Field, Pease Pottage	<u>Stage 1</u> MAJOR DEVELOPMENT <u>Stage 2</u> EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES AND THE PUBLIC INTEREST TEST ARE CAPABLE OF BEING DEMONSTRATED AT THE PLANNING APPLICATION STAGE

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate that the legislation, statutory duties and the national planning policy on major development in National Landscapes have been fully considered in the preparation of the Mid Sussex District Plan.
- 1.2 National planning policy is clear that great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Landscapes which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues (paragraph 189 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), December 2024). The Council also has a statutory duty to ‘seek to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area of outstanding natural beauty’ (section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (as amended)).
- 1.3 This paper is for the additional sites that were subject to in-combination testing following the Examination Hearings for the Mid Sussex District Plan and with a view to assessing their appropriateness for allocation in order to meet the Inspector’s request to increase the housing requirement to meet a proportion of the unmet needs of other local authorities, principally at Crawley but also having regard to the south coast.¹
- 1.4 Nine of the additional 35 sites are within the High Weald National Landscape (the legal designation is Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty; AONB). To ensure that the nine sites within the High Weald National Landscape have been fully considered in relation to the legal and policy framework for National Landscapes, a major development assessment has been undertaken. This considers the national planning policy requirements for major development and whether the nine sites could be regarded as major development at the planning application stage (paragraph 190 of the NPPF).
- 1.5 This paper sets out an approach to assess major development and it also provides recommendations for any future development of the site to ensure that the statutory purpose of the landscape designation is met – to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the High Weald National Landscape. Each site is assessed as a matter of planning judgement taking into account the factors set out and described in national policy.
- 1.6 As part of the preparation and background evidence for the Mid Sussex District Plan, sites put forward to the Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (SHELAA) were assessed to consider their potential impact on the High Weald National Landscape and if the site allocation policies could be regarded as major development. This paper follows on from and updates, where relevant, previous papers and should be read in conjunction with them.
- [\[ENV6\]](#) Assessment of the Impact of the SHELAA Sites on the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (Submission) (July 2024) and [Appendix: AONB Impact Assessment Tables](#)
 - [\[ENV7\]](#) Major Development in the High Weald AONB (Submission) (July 2024)

¹ Note that the conclusion of the in-combination testing has confirmed that all the additional sites are proposed to be site allocations and will be proposed as Main Modifications to the District Plan [\[MS-TP5\]](#).

- 1.7 It is important to note that this paper is an assessment to determine if development of a site is major development. The process of determining whether a site is appropriate for allocation in the emerging District Plan is through the site selection process as documented in the Site Selection Papers.

2. High Weald National Landscape

- 2.1 This section provides an overview of the High Weald National Landscape for context.
- 2.2 From November 2023, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) are to be known as National Landscapes. The High Weald National Landscape remains designated an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and its statutory purpose remains unchanged.
- 2.3 An Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty is an area of land protected by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 for its outstanding natural beauty and landscape character. The statutory purpose of the landscape designation is to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the area, and National Landscapes have the highest status of protection nationally in relation to landscape and scenic beauty. There are 34 National Landscapes in England covering 15% of the land².
- 2.4 Under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000³, Natural England can make orders to designate AONBs or vary the boundaries of existing ones within England. There is a prescribed process to designate or vary AONBs which includes deciding if a proposal meets the natural beauty criterion and if it is desirable to designate the land for the purpose of conserving and enhancing its natural beauty. Natural England must also define a detailed boundary for the AONB.
- 2.5 The natural beauty criterion could be a combination of factors such as⁴:
- Landscape quality, where natural or man-made landscape is good quality
 - Scenic quality, such as striking coastal landforms
 - Relative wildness, such as distance from housing or having few roads
 - Relative tranquillity, where natural sounds, such as streams or birdsong are predominant
 - Natural heritage features, such as distinctive geology or species and habitat
 - Cultural heritage, which can include the built environment that makes the area unique, such as archaeological remains or historic parkland.
- 2.6 The High Weald National Landscape was designated an AONB in 1983. It has an area of 1,461 sq km and covers four counties and 11 districts. Nearly 50% of Mid Sussex District is within the High Weald National Landscape; there are 163.6 sq km of National Landscape (AONB) land within Mid Sussex District which is approximately 11% of the High Weald National Landscape.
- 2.7 The High Weald National Landscape is a historic landscape characterised by a deeply incised, ridged and faulted landform of clays and sandstone, with numerous gill streams and woodlands. Small irregularly-shaped and productive fields typically used for livestock grazing are often bounded by hedgerows and woodland. Dispersed historic settlements of farmsteads and late mediaeval villages are characteristics as are historic routeways.

² <https://national-landscapes.org.uk/nations/england>

³ Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, sections 82-84.

⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/areas-of-outstanding-natural-beauty-aonbs-designation-and-management>

- 2.8 The natural beauty of the High Weald National Landscape arises from a long history of human interaction with the natural environment. It is a cultural landscape and it is considered one of the best surviving coherent mediaeval landscapes in north-west Europe. Both natural and cultural influences have combined to produce the landscape that is so highly valued today.
- 2.9 The High Weald AONB Management Plan⁵ is the policy for looking after the High Weald National Landscape in order to achieve the statutory purpose of conserving and enhancing the High Weald National Landscape. The Management Plan covers a range of local authority functions, and in particular, it can be used to guide environmental land management and climate change strategies. The Management Plan is a material consideration in the planning process, including plan-making, site allocations and assessing the impact of development proposals or other changes on the High Weald National Landscape.
- 2.10 Within the Management Plan, the High Weald AONB Statement of Significance articulates natural beauty through eight core character components which are rooted in the historic characterisation of the High Weald landscape as a whole, and the Management Plan sets out specific objectives and actions for each character component. The objectives for each character component of the natural beauty of the High Weald National Landscape as set out in the High Weald AONB Management Plan 2024-2029 are shown in Figure 1 below.
- 2.11 Each core component of natural beauty is of equal and stand-alone importance in its own right (i.e. they cannot be ranked) and any policy or action may be considered harmful to the National Landscape if it results in the loss of, or material harm to, any of these components of character. The whole of the National Landscape is designated for its outstanding natural beauty, and all the National Landscape is important; any areas perceived as ‘degraded’ landscape characters should be seen as opportunities for the enhancement of natural beauty contributing positively to the purpose of designation and objectives of the Management Plan.

Figure 1 - The objectives for each character component of the natural beauty of the High Weald National Landscape

Character Component	Objective
Natural Systems (Geology, Soils, Water and Climate	Objective G1 To restore the natural function of rivers, watercourses and waterbodies.
	Objective G2 To protect landform and geological features including sandstone outcrops.
	Objective G3 To pursue net zero across the High Weald without compromising its characteristic landscape beauty.
	Objective G4 To restore soil health across the High Weald.

⁵ <https://highweald.org/aonb-management-plan/>

Character Component	Objective
Settlement	Objective S1 To protect the historic pattern and character of settlements. Objective S2 To enhance the architectural quality of the High Weald and ensure new development reflects the character of the High Weald in its siting, scale, layout and design. Objective S3 To conserve the distinct built heritage of the High Weald.
Routeways	Objective R1 To maintain the historic pattern, morphology and features of routeways. Objective R2 To protect and enhance the ecological function of routeways.
Woodland	Objective W1 To maintain and restore the existing extent and pattern of woodland cover and particularly ancient woodland. Objective W2 To protect and restore the ecological quality and functioning of woodland at a landscape scale. Objective W3 To protect the archaeology and historic assets of AONB woodlands. Objective W4 To increase the output of sustainably produced high-quality timber and underwood for local markets.
Fieldscape and Heath	Objective FH1 To secure agriculturally productive use for the fields of the High Weald, especially for local markets, as part of sustainable land management. Objective FH2 To maintain the pattern of small irregularly shaped fields bounded by hedgerows and woodlands. Objective FH3 To protect and enhance the ecological function of field and heath as part of the complex mosaic of High Weald habitats. Objective FH4

Character Component	Objective
	To protect individual archaeological features as well as historic assets and pattern of fields and heath.
Dark Skies	Objective DS1 To preserve the dark skies of the High Weald AONB by minimising light pollution, obtrusive external lighting and internal light spill from domestic, commercial and public premises in both existing and new developments within the High Weald, and from highways lighting. Objective DS2 To protect wildlife and habitats from light pollution across the High Weald.
Aesthetic and Perceptual Qualities	Objective PQ1 To increase opportunities for learning about and celebrating the High Weald's character and aesthetic qualities, and to promote and facilitate contributions by communities and individuals to the conservation and enhancement of the High Weald. Objective PQ2 To protect the unspoilt rural landscape with its intrinsic sense of naturalness, valued views, and the extent of green space which foster experiences of rurality and tranquillity. Objective PQ3 To foster and promote equitable access and informal enjoyment of the High Weald landscape and the integrated management of its resources for the enjoyment of natural beauty by all.
Land-based Economy and Rural Living	Objective LBE1 To improve returns from, and thereby increase entry and retention in, farming, forestry, horticulture and other land management activities that conserve and enhance natural beauty. Objective LBE2 To improve agricultural and forestry infrastructure (including the provision of appropriate affordable housing and workspaces for land-based workers), along with skills development for rural communities and related sectors that contribute positively to conserving and enhancing natural beauty. Objective LBE3 To reconnect settlements and residents with the surrounding countryside, and maintain and improve rural amenities and services that support communities within the context of the rural settlement pattern.

2.12 The overarching landscape details and characteristics for the High Weald National Landscape are provided in Figure 2 below. These landscape details and characteristics provide the context for the

assessment and are applicable to the SHELAA sites within the High Weald National Landscape in Mid Sussex District.

Figure 2 - The High Weald National Landscape - landscape details and characteristics

High Weald National Landscape – Landscape Details and Characteristics	
National Character Area⁶	High Weald National Character Area (NCA 122)
Mid Sussex Landscape Character Area⁷	High Weald Landscape Character Area / Worth Forest Landscape Character Area / High Weald Fringes Landscape Character Area / Ouse Valley Landscape Character Area / High Weald Plateau Landscape Character Area
West Sussex Landscape Character Assessment⁸	Land Management Guidelines HW1: High Weald / HW2: High Weald Forests / HW3: Ouse Valley / HW4: High Weald Fringes Character Guidelines Local Distinctiveness: The High Weald Character Area
High Weald National Landscape	An AONB is a nationally valued landscape with a high status of protection (NPPF paragraphs 182 and 183). AONBs are recognised internationally by the IUCN as ‘Category V – Protected Landscapes’, important as cultural landscapes.
	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.
	The High Weald AONB Management Plan ⁹ is the strategy for looking after the High Weald AONB in order to achieve the statutory purpose of conserving and enhancing the High Weald AONB. The Management Plan can be used to guide environmental land management and assess the impact of development or other changes on the High Weald AONB.
	Some sites may be situated on the Weald Forest Ridge, which is the highest ridge of the High Weald AONB (328km ² in the north and west of the AONB). The landscape character of the Weald Forest Ridge is defined by the remnants of four mediaeval hunting forests.
	According to Roberts and Wrathmell's <i>An Atlas of Rural Settlement in England</i> , the High Weald AONB is classified as South-Eastern Province: Weald Sub-province (Western Weald). It has a medium to high density of settlement dispersion mainly formed of historic farmsteads and hamlets with later villages. ¹⁰

⁶ <https://nationalcharacterareas.co.uk/high-weald/>

⁷ <https://www.midsussex.gov.uk/planning-building/background-studies/>

⁸ <https://www.westsussex.gov.uk/land-waste-and-housing/landscape-and-environment/landscape-character-assessment-of-west-sussex/>

⁹ <https://highweald.org/aonb-management-plan/>

¹⁰ <https://historicengland.org.uk/research/current/heritage-science/Atlas-of-Rural-Settlement-in-England/>

	The High Weald National Landscape contributes to ecosystem services. It provides Regulating Services (the benefits obtained from the regulation of ecosystem services), for example, in the form of carbon storage by woodland. The High Weald National Landscape has Provisioning Services (the products obtained from ecosystems) including timber and food production. Supporting Services (the services that are necessary for the production of all other ecosystem services) are present such as soil formation, nutrient cycling and water cycling. The landscape also provides Cultural Services (the non-material benefits people obtain from ecosystems) in the form of cultural heritage, recreation and tourism opportunities and aesthetic experience. Together these ecosystem services are an important part of the landscape character of the High Weald National Landscape and its natural beauty.
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3. Legislation and Policy Context

- 3.1 This section provides an overview of the legislation and policy framework for National Landscapes for ease of reference.
- 3.2 The legal framework for AONBs is set out in the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (as amended). Section 82 provides for the purposes of AONBs:

82(1) Where it appears to Natural England that an area which is in England but not in a National Park is of such outstanding natural beauty that it is desirable that the provisions of this Part relating to areas designated under this section should apply to it, Natural England may, for the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area, by order designate the area for the purposes of this Part as an area of outstanding natural beauty.

- 3.3 Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (as amended) places a statutory duty on all relevant authorities, which includes Mid Sussex District Council:

In exercising or performing any functions in relation to, or so as to affect, land in an area of outstanding natural beauty in England, a relevant authority other than a devolved Welsh authority must seek to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area of outstanding natural beauty.

- 3.4 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF; December 2024) provides the Government's policy for conserving and enhancing landscape beauty:

189. Great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and National Landscapes 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 Broads⁶⁶. The scale and extent of development within all these designated areas should be limited, while development within their setting should be sensitively located and designed to avoid or minimise adverse impacts on the designated areas.

⁶⁶ *English National Parks and the Broads: UK Government Vision and Circular 2010* provides further guidance and information about their statutory purposes, management and other matters.

190. When considering applications for development within National Parks, the Broads and National Landscapes, permission should be refused for major development⁶⁷, 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 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.

⁶⁷ For the purposes of paragraphs 190 and 191, 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.

3.5 There is further advice contained in Planning Practice Guidance¹¹:

How can planning policies conserve and enhance landscapes?

The National Planning Policy Framework is clear that plans should recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and that strategic policies should provide for the conservation and enhancement of landscapes. This can include nationally and locally designated landscapes but also the wider countryside.

Where landscapes have a particular local value, it is important for policies to identify their special characteristics and be supported by proportionate evidence. Policies may set out criteria against which proposals for development affecting these areas will be assessed. Plans can also include policies to avoid adverse impacts on landscapes and to set out necessary mitigation measures, such as appropriate design principles and visual screening, where necessary. The cumulative impacts of development on the landscape need to be considered carefully.

Paragraph: 036 Reference ID: 8-036-20190721

Do planning policies and decisions need to take account of management plans for National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty?

Management plans for National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty do not form part of the statutory development plan, but they help to set out the strategic context for development. They provide evidence of the value and special qualities of these areas, provide a basis for cross-organisational work to support the purposes of their designation and show how management activities contribute to their protection, enhancement and enjoyment. They may contain information which is relevant when preparing plan policies, or which is a material consideration when assessing planning applications.

Paragraph 040: Reference ID: 8-040-20190721

How should development within National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty be approached?

The National Planning Policy Framework makes clear that the scale and extent of development in these areas should be limited, in view of the importance of conserving and enhancing their landscapes and scenic beauty. Its policies for protecting these areas may mean that it is not possible to meet objectively assessed needs for development in full through the plan-making process, and they are unlikely to be suitable areas for accommodating unmet needs from adjoining (non-designated) areas. Effective joint working between planning authorities covering designated and adjoining areas, through the preparation and maintenance of statements of common ground, is

¹¹ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/natural-environment#landscape>

particularly important in helping to identify how housing and other needs can best be accommodated.

All development in National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Beauty will need to be located and designed in a way that reflects their status as landscapes of the highest quality. Where applications for major development come forward, paragraph [190] of the Framework sets out a number of particular considerations that should apply when deciding whether permission should be granted.

Paragraph: 041 Reference ID: 8-041-20190721

- 3.6 The emerging Mid Sussex District Plan includes a policy on the High Weald National Landscape (AONB) (Figure 3).

Figure 3 - The draft District Plan policy for the High Weald National Landscape.

DPC4: High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

The scale and extent of development within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) should be limited. Major development will not be supported and will not be permitted other than in exceptional circumstances and where it can be demonstrated that the development is in the public interest.

Development within the High Weald AONB, as shown on the Policies Maps, will only be permitted where it conserves and enhances landscape and scenic beauty of the area, with reference to the components of natural beauty set out in the High Weald AONB Management Plan, and has regard to the High Weald AONB Management Plan, in particular:

- The identified components of natural beauty, as set out in the High Weald AONB Management Plan, and to their setting.
- The traditional interaction of people with the landscape and nature, and appropriate land management.
- The historic landscape, character and local distinctiveness, landscape features, historic settlement pattern, sense of place and setting of the AONB.
- The conservation of wildlife and cultural heritage.

Development proposals should demonstrate a positive contribution to the objectives of the High Weald AONB Management Plan.

New housing development within or affecting the setting of the AONB should take account of the High Weald Housing Design Guide and High Weald Colour Study including applying a landscape-led design approach that reflects High Weald character; responding to the historic pattern and character of settlements in the form, layout, grain and massing of development; and using high quality architecture.

Proposals which support the land-based economy and social wellbeing of local communities within the AONB that are compatible with the conservation and enhancement of natural beauty will be supported.

Setting of the High Weald AONB

Development within land that contributes to the setting of the AONB will only be permitted where it does not adversely affect the identified components of natural beauty of the AONB.

Development proposals in the setting of the AONB should be sensitively located and designed, be consistent with AONB purposes, and should not adversely affect transitional landscape character in the setting of the AONB, including dark skies, tranquillity and wildlife habitat, and views, outlook and aspect, into and out of the AONB by virtue of its location, scale, form or design.

Assessment of such development proposals will have regard to the High Weald AONB Management Plan and other adopted planning documents and strategies such as the High Weald Housing Design Guide and High Weald Colour Study.

- 3.7 To summarise, the statutory duty to seek to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of National Landscapes should be considered in tandem with the National Planning Policy Framework which requires great weight to be given to these designated landscapes and gives them the highest status of protection. The NPPF is clear that in relation to applications for development, permission should be refused for major development other than in exceptional circumstances, and where it can be demonstrated that the development is in the public interest. In terms of a local policy position, development proposals should demonstrate a positive contribution to the objectives of the High Weald AONB Management Plan.

4. Definition of Major Development

- 4.1 For ease of reference, this section recaps how major development can be defined.
- 4.2 The NPPF does not provide a definition of what constitutes major development in National Landscapes, 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.
- 4.3 Footnote 67 of the NPPF is clear that major development is a matter for the decision maker, taking into account the nature, scale and setting of the proposed development, and whether it could have a significant adverse impact on the purposes for which the area has been designated or defined.
- 4.4 The South Downs National Park Authority sought legal advice on the matter of major development and has published as part of the evidence for its Local Plan 2014-2033 (adopted July 2019) 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.
- 4.5 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.
- 4.6 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 [190] 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.’

- 4.7 It is clear then that there needs to be an assessment to consider whether the additional sites (and potential proposed site allocations) in the High Weald National Landscape could be major development. The assessment will be carried out at the plan-making stage (District Plan) 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.

5. Methodology

- 5.1 Taking into account how paragraph 190 of the NPPF is to be applied and how major development can be defined, an approach was developed for the Site Allocations DPD to assess the proposed sites in the Site Allocations DPD¹². This approach provides 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.
- 5.2 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, 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 for the District Plan albeit since the Site Allocations DPD, the methodology has been updated slightly to refine the assessment notes. There are also some further minor refinements to the methodology and template used in this paper from what was used for the Submission District Plan site allocations [ENV7]; this is mainly to provide clarity and to reference additional sources of information. Therefore, the same overall approach has been used to assess the Submission District Plan site allocations and now these additional sites put forward for in-combination testing.
- 5.3 The methodology has been developed and refined in discussion with the High Weald National Landscape Partnership team, Natural England, and other partners across the High Weald National Landscape and other Protected Landscapes.
- 5.4 There are two stages to the assessment:
- Stage 1 – Determining major development
 - Stage 2 – Consideration of major development

Stage 1 – Determining major development

- 5.5 An assessment based on the factors set out in footnote 67 of the NPPF has been used to inform the decision as to whether a proposed site allocation could be regarded as major development (Figure 4).

Figure 4 - Stage 1 assessment - Determining major development

Factor (NPPF footnote 67)	Assessment notes	Potential source(s) of information
Nature of development	An assessment of the type of proposed development is considered, e.g. housing, employment, mixed use.	• SHELAA • Information submitted by site promoters such as illustrative masterplans and

¹² Site Allocations DPD Evidence Library | Major Development in the High Weald AONB Topic Paper (December 2020): [tp1-major-development-in-the-high-weald-aonb-topic-paper-v2.pdf](#)

Factor (NPPF footnote 67)	Assessment notes	Potential source(s) of information
	Consideration is also given to the likely form of the proposed allocation such as the dwelling mix or employment use. Consideration of the characteristics and perceptual qualities of the High Weald National Landscape will also be taken into account, e.g. scale of landscape, views, tranquillity and dark skies.	supporting technical evidence • Emerging District Plan • High Weald AONB Management Plan
Scale of development	An assessment of the proposed allocation in terms of its own size, e.g. number of dwellings or 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. 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 well as the characteristics of the High Weald National Landscape. 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	• MSDC GIS • Policies Maps • High Weald AONB Management Plan

Factor (NPPF footnote 67)	Assessment notes	Potential source(s) of information
	enclosed form. The scale of the proposed allocation will be assessed to see if it is in keeping with the scale of the surrounding landscape.	
Setting of development	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. 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. It should be remembered that a National Landscape is a nationally-valued landscape with a high status of protection.	• Mid Sussex Design Guide • High Weald Housing Design Guide • High Weald AONB Management Plan • High Weald National Landscape research reports on settlements • Conservation Area Appraisals • Historical maps • Atlas of Rural Settlement GIS¹³ • Historic England: Medieval Settlements¹⁴ • Neighbourhood plans • Site visit • Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) • Landscape character assessments
The potential for significant adverse impact on AONB purposes (to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the High Weald AONB)	An assessment of the proposed allocation against the High Weald AONB Statement of Significance and the core components of natural beauty: 1) Natural systems (geology, soils, water and climate) 2) Settlement 3) Routeways 4) Woodland 5) Fieldscapes and heath	• The High Weald National Landscape Partnership team has provided a series of GIS layers to the District Council that map the core character components and these will be used to inform the assessment. • High Weald AONB Management Plan • Site visit to consider the perceptual qualities of the

¹³ <https://historicengland.org.uk/research/current/heritage-science/Atlas-of-Rural-Settlement-in-England/>

¹⁴ <https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/iha-medieval-settlements/>

Factor (NPPF footnote 67)	Assessment notes	Potential source(s) of information
	6) Dark night skies 7) Aesthetic and perceptual qualities 8) Land-based economy and rural living An assessment of the proposed allocation against the High Weald AONB Management Plan objectives. The Statement of Significance defines the natural beauty of the High Weald AONB as articulated through the eight core character components and the Management Plan objectives advise how to conserve and enhance the High Weald AONB. 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 National Landscape. Links to biodiversity net gain should also be made.	High Weald AONB, e.g. tranquillity. • Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) • Landscape character assessments • Natural England ALC007 Map – Agricultural Land Classification London and the South East • Public rights of way network
Conservation and enhancement of the High Weald AONB	An assessment of whether the proposed allocation conserves and enhances the High Weald AONB. 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). The High Weald AONB Statement of Significance as set out in the High Weald AONB Management Plan is clear that	• High Weald AONB Management Plan • Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) • Landscape character assessments

Factor (NPPF footnote 67)	Assessment notes	Potential source(s) of information
	the whole of the AONB is designated for its outstanding natural beauty, and all the AONB is important; any areas perceived as ‘degraded’ should be seen as opportunities for the enhancement of natural beauty, contributing positively to the purpose of designation and objectives of the Management Plan. Could the proposed development have a significant adverse impact on the purposes of the High Weald AONB? What is the landscape and visual impact of the proposed development?	
The ordinary meaning of the word ‘major’	Can the proposed allocation be described as ‘major’ in the ordinary meaning of the word? This may take into account the context and character of the High Weald National Landscape. The further from an existing settlement and built development and the more rural the setting, the more likely that development will be considered ‘major’. 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.	High Weald AONB Management Plan

Factor (NPPF footnote 67)	Assessment notes	Potential source(s) of information
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.	- Development plan (Mid Sussex District Plan 2014-2031) - Emerging District Plan
Cumulative impacts	An assessment of whether the proposed allocation may lead to cumulative impacts when considered alongside other proposed allocations or existing commitments. This part of the assessment 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.	- Emerging District Plan - Sustainability Appraisal - SHELAA - Site Selection Papers - Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) - Landscape character assessments
Conclusion	Taking all the above factors into account, is the proposed allocation considered to be major development? 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. If the proposed allocation is deemed to be major development, then proceed to Stage 2 – Consideration of major development.	N/A

5.6 Whilst each proposed site allocation is assessed individually to determine if it is major development, the cumulative impact of the proposed site allocations on the High Weald National Landscape is also considered particularly those proposed site allocations in the same settlement because together the proposed site allocations may contribute to additional impacts on the High Weald National Landscapes.

- 5.7 The final judgement on whether a proposed development is determined to be major development is at the planning application stage to be in accordance with paragraph 190 of the NPPF, and this will be dependent on the form and details of the scheme brought forward.

Stage 2 – Consideration of major development

- 5.8 If, at the Stage 1 assessment, a proposed site allocation is determined to be major development, then it proceeds to the Stage 2 assessment which is the consideration of major development.
- 5.9 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 National Landscape 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.
- 5.10 The Stage 2 assessment (Figure 5) is based on paragraph 190 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

Figure 5 - Stage 2 assessment - Consideration of major development

Factor (NPPF paragraph 190)	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.	• NPPF • Development plan (Mid Sussex District Plan 2014-2031) • Emerging District Plan • Sustainability Appraisal • Site Selection Papers • Examination Hearings and Inspector's documents
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.	• Development plan (Mid Sussex District Plan 2014-2031) • Emerging District Plan • SHELAA

Factor (NPPF paragraph 190)	Assessment notes	Potential source(s) of information
	Compliance with the development plan is also a consideration. Any potential cumulative impacts may be taken into account.	- Information submitted by site promoters such as illustrative masterplans and supporting technical evidence - 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.	- Development plan (Mid Sussex District Plan 2014-2031) - High Weald AONB Management Plan - Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) - Landscape character assessments - Draft District Plan policy wording - Information submitted by site promoters such as illustrative masterplans and supporting technical evidence - Public rights of way network
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. Compliance with the development plan could also be regarded as being within the public interest¹⁵.	- Development plan (Mid Sussex District Plan 2014-2031) - Emerging District Plan - High Weald AONB Management Plan - Public rights of way network - Current land use

¹⁵ Appeal decisions APP/D3830/W/19/3231996 and APP/D3830/W/19/3231997 | Land off London Road, Bolney | Decision date: 16th December 2019

Factor (NPPF paragraph 190)	Assessment notes	Potential source(s) of information
Are there any other exceptional circumstances?	This would include any other relevant material considerations, however, exceptional should mean 'rarity' ¹⁶ .	

- 5.11 The Stage 2 assessment approach set out above indicates what matters are considered during the assessment and the potential sources of information to inform that assessment. The assessment considers that if despite giving great weight to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty of the High Weald National Landscape, exceptional circumstances are capable of being met and that the proposed site allocation is in the public interest¹⁴.
- 5.12 The major development assessment for each additional site subject to in-combination testing is contained in the appendix to this paper.

¹⁶ *R (Mevagissey Parish Council) v Cornwall Council* [2013] EWHC 3684 (Admin)

6. Appendix

SHELAA 1175 – Land at Brambletye School, Lewes Road, Ashurst Wood

Mid Sussex District Plan: Major Development in the High Weald National Landscape

Settlement

Ashurst Wood

SHELAA ID

1175

Land at Brambletye School, Lewes Road, Ashurst Wood

Site Details

Number of units

25

Site area (ha)

1.57

Stage 1 – Determining major development (NPPF footnote 67)

Nature of development

The site is at a Category 3 – Medium Village settlement. The site lies outside of the defined built-up area boundary and development of the site would represent an extension of the settlement to the west although there is low density built form adjacent and in proximity to the site.

The site is proposed for housing development (25 units). The site promoter has provided an illustrative masterplan which shows a potential layout.

Development of the site would result in a land use change from a school playing field to housing.

Future development of the site would to some extent follow the development trajectory of the settlement, filling in a gap between development either side of the A22 Lewes Road. The south-western side of the thoroughfare retains a more wooded, rural character than the more developed north-eastern side, although this sense of rurality is offset by the busy A-road to a degree.

Scale of development

Using the current adopted built-up area boundary to assess the size of the settlement, the site as a whole represents an increase of 5.87% in the built-up area of Ashurst Wood and an increase of 4.65% in the number of dwellings.

The High Weald National Landscape is a small-scale landscape of small, irregular fields and pasture, small woodlands, hedgerows, dark skies and dispersed historic settlements including hamlets and farmsteads. The landscape has perceptual qualities including tranquillity and an intrinsic sense of naturalness.

It is considered that the scale of the site and its development for housing (25 units) could be in keeping with the landscape character of the High Weald, nearby surrounding development and due to its proximity with the existing settlement of Ashurst Wood.

Setting of development

The site is outside of the defined built-up area boundary. The main settlement and defined built-up area of Ashurst Wood lies to the east of the site across the A22 Lewes Road. This is also identified as the historic settlement pattern although this extends to the west of the



A22 Lewes Road to the immediate east of the site. There is low density housing fronting the A22 Lewes Road to the north and south. To the south of the site is an independent prep school centred on a country house with associated facilities in its own grounds and to the north and east of the site is low density housing development fronting the A22 Lewes Road. The landscape becomes more rural (small fields) to the west and further south of the site.

Almost adjacent to the site to the south-east is the proposed District Plan allocation DPA13: The Paddocks, Lewes Road for 8-12 dwellings.

There are trees and woodland close to the site including ancient woodland and priority habitat (deciduous woodland).

A public right of way (footpath) runs east-west to the north of the site but crossing the proposed site access.

The proposed site access would connect to the A22 Lewes Road to the north of the site utilising an existing road.

Close to the built-up area for Ashurst Wood and 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 street lighting.

The potential for significant adverse impact on AONB purposes for which the area has been designated (as set out in the High Weald Statement of Significance)

**Core Character Component:
Natural systems (geology, soils,
water and climate)**

Objective G1

There does not appear to be any rivers, watercourses and water bodies close to the site. The site should be designed to protect river catchments and groundwater in accordance with planning policies and best practice.

Objective G2

There are nearby sandstone outcrops to the site in all directions, including Mills Rocks SSSI to the north-east of the site on the eastern side of the A22 Lewes Road, but it is not expected that development will impact on these features. There is underlying sandstone geology.

Objective G3

The site should seek to achieve sustainable construction and contribute to climate change mitigation and adaption through its design and in accordance with planning policies and best practice. The site should encourage sustainable transport.

Objective G4

Development of the site is likely to disturb the soil and best practice should be complied with to protect soils during construction from disturbance, compaction, pollution and erosion. Undisturbed soils should be protected and measures should be taken to minimise sterilisation of soils by permanent impermeable surfaces.

**Core Character Component:
Settlement**

Objective S1

The site is to the west of the historic settlement pattern, however, there is existing development fronting the A22 Lewes Road. Given the extent of other (generally low density) development outside of the historic settlement pattern, development of the site for housing is not considered to significantly impact on the current settlement pattern.

Objective S2

The site should be designed according to the principles set out in the supporting documents to the High Weald AONB Management Plan and these documents are a material consideration in the planning process:

- High Weald Housing Design Guide (2019)
- Planning Technical Advice Note: Dark Skies in the High Weald (2024)
- Planning Technical Advice Note: Soft Landscaping & Planting Plans in Development Proposals (2025)

The High Weald Colour Study (2017) is also relevant. Appropriate use of colour for the buildings may help to reduce the visual impact of the site.

Objective S3

There are no listed buildings, conservation areas, registered parks and gardens or archaeological notification areas near to the site.

**Core Character Component:
Routeways**

Objective R1

The A22 Lewes Road is a historic routeway and there is a public right of way (footpath) running east-west to the north of the site which is also a historic routeway. Development of the site is not expected to impact these historic routeways.

Objective R2

As the public right of way crosses the proposed site access track, there may be opportunities to enhance the ecological function and condition of the routeway.

**Core Character Component:
Woodland**

Objective W1

There are woodland parcels close to the site including ancient woodland and priority habitat (deciduous woodland) and appropriate buffers should be included as part of the development layout and design.

Objective W2

Existing trees should be retained in accordance with planning policies and there may be opportunities to enhance the connectivity of the nearby woodland through additional appropriate planting.

Objective W3

	Any archaeology found during construction should be investigated in line with standard requirements and best practice. Objective W4 Development of the site is unlikely to be able to contribute to the production of local timber, however, there may be opportunities to use local wood in its construction, and for any fencing and gates.
Core Character Component: Fieldsapes and heath	Objective FH1 The site is not currently in agricultural use. Objective FH2 The site is currently in use as a school playing field and development of the site is not expected to change the shape and pattern of the field. Opportunities should be taken to retain hedges, ditches and other historic boundary features. Objective FH3 The site is currently in use as a school playing field. Opportunities should be taken to enhance existing habitats including through biodiversity net gain. Objective FH4 The site is not currently identified as a historic field. Any archaeology found during construction should be investigated in line with standard requirements and best practice.
Core Character Component: Dark night skies	Objective DS1 Objective DS2 The site is not likely to experience very dark skies due to nearby development and street lighting. Development of the site should take into account the principles in Planning Technical Advice Note: Dark Skies in the High Weald (2024).
Core Character Component: Aesthetic and perceptual qualities	Objective PQ1 There may be opportunities to support the High Weald National Landscape through promotion of activities and events. Objective PQ2 Development of the site should incorporate green infrastructure in accordance with planning policies and take into account the principles in: • High Weald Housing Design Guide (2019) • Planning Technical Advice Note: Soft Landscaping & Planting Plans in Development Proposals (2025) Objective PQ3 There may be opportunities to upgrade and enhance the local public rights of way network.
Core Character Component:	Objective LBE1

Land-based economy and rural living

There may be opportunities for the site to contribute towards land management activities, for example, through the construction phase by using local forestry and timber supplies.

Objective LBE2

The site should seek opportunities to contribute to local communities and community services. The site may help support rural services and amenities such as bus services, village shops and the post office through the additional people that the housing will bring.

Objective LBE3

There may be opportunities to provide suitable housing for land-based workers.

Conservation and enhancement of the High Weald AONB

Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (as amended by the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023) places a statutory duty on all relevant authorities, including a local planning authority such as Mid Sussex District Council, that in 'exercising or performing any functions in relation to, or so as to affect, land in an AONB, they must seek to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the AONB'.

The High Weald AONB Statement of Significance as set out in the High Weald AONB Management Plan is clear that the whole of the AONB is designated for its outstanding natural beauty, and all the AONB is important; any areas perceived as 'degraded' should be seen as opportunities for the enhancement of natural beauty, contributing positively to the purpose of designation and objectives of the Management Plan.

The District Plan seeks to protect the High Weald National Landscape in both its spatial strategy and policy requirements.

At a local scale, built development would lead to changes in the landscape and potential changes to its character. It is considered that development of the site would result in a limited adverse impact due to its nature, scale and setting. Whilst any potential harm to the natural beauty of the High Weald National Landscape should be avoided, there are measures that could be taken to minimise any potential harm. In particular, the site should be designed according to the principles set out in the High Weald AONB Management Plan and its supporting documents:

- High Weald Housing Design Guide (2019)
- Planning Technical Advice Note: Dark Skies in the High Weald (2024)
- Planning Technical Advice Note: Soft Landscaping & Planting Plans in Development Proposals (2025)

The High Weald Colour Study (2017) is also relevant. Appropriate use of colour for the buildings may help to reduce the visual impact of the site.

	Particular attention should be paid to the nearby woodland and trees, both the ancient woodland and the priority habitat (deciduous woodland), and the public right of way as a historic routeway. Opportunities should be taken to conserve and enhance the High Weald National Landscape. Potential opportunities for mitigation of impacts and landscape enhancement are: 1. Ensure that new development is designed to respond positively to the character, scale and morphology of Ashurst Wood. 2. Ensure that new development responds positively to the scale, morphology and features of the historic public right of way and lane running through and aligning with the site, including the sensitive integration of access. 3. Adopt an appropriate spatial buffer between proposed buildings and adjacent woodland, particularly Blunds Wood, and establish an appropriate interface with new development with complementary arrangement to protect the woodland's extent, pattern, setting and ecological function by maintaining the existing relationships between woodlands and open fields that contributes to the character of the landscape. Natural England standing advice for buffers is a minimum of 15m. Promote the woodland as a visual backdrop and characteristic feature of future development, maintaining visual and physical public access across the site. 4. Protect views and glimpses from the site of the open countryside to the south and the settlement of Ashurst Wood to the east, particularly long-range views, through thoughtful design that responds to topography in order to maintain human connections to rural features.
Can the proposed allocation be described as 'major' in the ordinary meaning of the word?	No. The nature, scale and setting of the site does not suggest a 'major' development in the ordinary meaning of the word. It should be remembered that opinions will vary between individuals as a result of, inter alia, their experiences, views towards development and the location where they live.
Draft District Plan Policy DPC4: High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty	To meet the draft Policy DPC4 requirements, the design and layout of the site will need to be landscape-led reflecting High Weald character and responding to the historic pattern and character of settlements in the form, layout, grain and massing of development; and using high quality architecture. It is recommended that development of the site takes into account the objectives of the High Weald AONB Management Plan and its supporting documents including the High Weald Housing Design Guide. This will provide opportunities to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the High Weald National Landscape. This will be assessed further at the time of a planning application and prior to its determination.

Cumulative impacts	Cumulative impacts may be local at a settlement level or more widely at a district level, but there is also likely to be development across the High Weald National Landscape in other districts and boroughs and cumulatively at a landscape scale this may lead to further erosion of the natural beauty of the High Weald National Landscape. At a settlement level, there is one other proposed housing allocation at Ashurst Wood in the District Plan – DPA13: The Paddocks, Lewes Road for 8-12 dwellings. As at the 1st April 2026, there are 69 units as commitments in Ashurst Wood. The site selection process for the District Plan sets out how the proposed housing allocations have been identified, tested and found to be the most suitable for delivering housing growth to meet the local housing need in the District and the housing requirement set out in the District Plan. The additional sites are being assessed as part of the in-combination work to test the ability to meet the Inspector’s request to increase the housing requirement to meet a proportion of the unmet needs of other local authorities, principally at Crawley. Taking this into account and the nature, scale and setting of the site, it is considered there would be limited cumulative impacts from development of the site.
Conclusion	NOT MAJOR DEVELOPMENT Assessment of the site including its nature, scale and setting does not suggest a major development in the context of paragraph 190 of the NPPF. There may be localised impacts on the natural beauty of the High Weald National Landscape, however, these could be reduced through appropriate and careful design of the site. This includes both the built form and green infrastructure, including boundary treatments. There should be consideration of any direct and indirect impacts on the nearby woodland, including ancient woodland, and the development should seek to retain any existing trees in accordance with policy requirements. Although the site is unlikely to be in the most tranquil and rural part of the High Weald National Landscape, opportunities to protect tranquillity and dark skies should be taken. The site should take into account the requirements set out in draft District Plan Policy DPC4: High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and other material considerations including the High Weald AONB Management Plan and its supporting documents such as the High Weald Housing Design Guide and the Planning Technical Advice Notes for dark skies and soft landscaping.



The recommendations are:

- A. Ensure development responds to topography and is sensitive to the surrounding scale and morphology of existing development, including the consideration of views from Ashurst Wood.
- B. Retain a positive relationship between woodland and new development such as through the sensitive siting of buildings, appropriate spatial buffers and the use of transitional woodland edge planting.
- C. Retain the mature trees lining the historic route within the site.

SHELAA 28 – Area south of Redbridge Lane at junction with London Road, Balcombe

Mid Sussex District Plan: Major Development in the High Weald National Landscape

Settlement

Balcombe

SHELAA ID

28

Area south of Redbridge Lane at junction with London Road, Balcombe

Site Details

Number of units

15

Site area (ha)

1.55

Stage 1 – Determining major development (NPPF footnote 67)

Nature of development

The site is at a Category 3 – Medium Village settlement. The site lies outside of the defined built-up area boundary and development of the site would represent an extension of the settlement to the north although there are a few single dwellings in proximity to the site.

The site is proposed for housing development (15 units). The site promoter has not provided any information with regards to potential layout, housing mix or design.

Development of the site would result in a land use change from grassland pasture to housing. The existing allotment use would remain.

Scale of development

Using the current adopted built-up area boundary to assess the size of the settlement, the site as a whole represents an increase of 3.61% in the built-up area of Balcombe and an increase of 2.18% in the number of dwellings.

The High Weald National Landscape is a small-scale landscape of small, irregular fields and pasture, small woodlands, hedgerows, dark skies and dispersed historic settlements including hamlets and farmsteads. The landscape has perceptual qualities including tranquillity and an intrinsic sense of naturalness.

It is considered that the scale of the site and its development for housing (15 units) could be in keeping with the landscape character of the High Weald due to its proximity with the existing settlement of Balcombe.

Setting of development

The site is outside of the defined built-up area boundary. The main settlement and defined built-up area of Balcombe lies to the south-east of the site on the B2036 London Road. The existing defined built-up area boundary for Balcombe almost exactly matches the historic settlement pattern. There are a few single dwellings to the north of the site fronting Redbridge Lane, including Little Coopers Corner Cottage, a Grade II listed building. St. Mary's Church, a Grade I listed building, lies to the east on the other side of the B2036 London Road. To the west of the site is open countryside with the main London to

	Brighton railway line approximately 270m to the west along Redbridge Lane. To the immediate south-east of the site is Balcombe Scout Hut then an open green gap of approximately 90m before reaching the defined built-up area of Balcombe. Beyond the immediate vicinity of the site, the landscape becomes more rural (small fields and woodland) to the north, west and east of the site. The site is an elevated field above the road with a hedgerow boundary and green bank and verge. The site is a gateway location to the village of Balcombe. There are trees and woodland close to the site including ancient woodland and priority habitat (deciduous woodland). There is ancient woodland to the immediate south-west of site although this does not abut the site boundary. A public right of way (footpath) runs east-west to the south of the site. The proposed site access would connect to the B2036 London Road to the east of the site. On the outskirts of Balcombe and close to the main B2036 London Road and the main London to Brighton railway line, but still in a rural area, the site experiences a degree of tranquillity and dark skies due to limited nearby development and street lighting.
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The potential for significant adverse impact on AONB purposes for which the area has been designated (as set out in the High Weald Statement of Significance)

Core Character Component: Natural systems (geology, soils, water and climate)	Objective G1 There is a watercourse to the south-west and south of the site. The site should be designed to protect river catchments and groundwater in accordance with planning policies and best practice. Objective G2 There is underlying sandstone geology in the northern part of the site. Objective G3 The site should seek to achieve sustainable construction and contribute to climate change mitigation and adaption through its design and in accordance with planning policies and best practice. The site should encourage sustainable transport. Objective G4 Development of the site is likely to disturb the soil and best practice should be complied with to protect soils during construction from disturbance, compaction, pollution and erosion. Undisturbed soils should be protected and measures should be taken to minimise sterilisation of soils by permanent impermeable surfaces.
Core Character Component:	Objective S1

Settlement

The site is to the north of the historic settlement pattern and would result in what is currently a compact historic pattern being extended to the north, although built form is to be located in the southern part of the site closest to the existing settlement. Given the northern boundary of the site is Redbridge Lane, the eastern boundary is the B0236 London Road and the main London to Brighton railway line is to the west, there are perhaps limited opportunities for further encroachment into the countryside which would further alter the historic settlement pattern.

Objective S2

The site should be designed according to the principles set out in the supporting documents to the High Weald AONB Management Plan and these documents are a material consideration in the planning process:

- High Weald Housing Design Guide (2019)
- Planning Technical Advice Note: Dark Skies in the High Weald (2024)
- Planning Technical Advice Note: Soft Landscaping & Planting Plans in Development Proposals (2025)

The High Weald Colour Study (2017) is also relevant. Appropriate use of colour for the buildings may help to reduce the visual impact of the site.

Objective S3

St. Mary's Church to the east of the site is a Grade I listed building and is also part of Balcombe Conservation Area which extends to the south to include the central part of Balcombe village. St. Mary's Church is also an archaeological notification area. There are no registered parks and gardens near to the site.

Core Character Component: Routeways

Objective R1

The B2036 London Road is a historic routeway (drove route) and Redbridge Lane is a historic routeway (lane). There is a public right of way (footpath) running east-west to the south of the site which is also a historic routeway. Development of the site is not expected to impact these historic routeways.

Objective R2

There may be opportunities to enhance the ecological function and condition of the historic routeways particularly through careful design of the site access.

Core Character Component: Woodland

Objective W1

There are woodland parcels close to the site including ancient woodland and priority habitat (deciduous woodland) and appropriate buffers should be included as part of the development layout and design particularly for the ancient woodland south of the site.

Objective W2

	Existing trees should be retained in accordance with planning policies and there may be opportunities to enhance the connectivity of the nearby woodland through additional appropriate planting. Objective W3 Any archaeology found during construction should be investigated in line with standard requirements and best practice. Objective W4 Development of the site is unlikely to be able to contribute to the production of local timber, however, there may be opportunities to use local wood in its construction, and for any fencing and gates.
Core Character Component: Fieldsapes and heath	Objective FH1 The site is currently in agricultural use (grassland potentially used as pasture land) and allotments. Objective FH2 The site is currently grassland (potentially used as pasture) and allotments and development of the site is not expected to change the shape and pattern of the field. Opportunities should be taken to retain hedges, ditches and other historic boundary features. Objective FH3 The site is currently grassland (potentially used as pasture) and allotments. Opportunities should be taken to enhance existing habitats including through biodiversity net gain. Objective FH4 The site is not currently identified as a historic field. Any archaeology found during construction should be investigated in line with standard requirements and best practice.
Core Character Component: Dark night skies	Objective DS1 Objective DS2 The site may experience dark skies due to limited nearby development and street lighting. Development of the site should take into account the principles in Planning Technical Advice Note: Dark Skies in the High Weald (2024).
Core Character Component: Aesthetic and perceptual qualities	Objective PQ1 There may be opportunities to support the High Weald National Landscape through promotion of activities and events. Objective PQ2 Development of the site should incorporate green infrastructure in accordance with planning policies and take into account the principles in: • High Weald Housing Design Guide (2019) • Planning Technical Advice Note: Soft Landscaping & Planting Plans in Development Proposals (2025)

	Objective PQ3 There may be opportunities to upgrade and enhance the local public rights of way network.
Core Character Component: Land-based economy and rural living	Objective LBE1 There may be opportunities for the site to contribute towards land management activities, for example, through the construction phase by using local forestry and timber supplies. Objective LBE2 The site should seek opportunities to contribute to local communities and community services. The site may help support rural services and amenities such as bus services, village shops and the post office through the additional people that the housing will bring. Objective LBE3 There may be opportunities to provide suitable housing for land-based workers.
Conservation and enhancement of the High Weald AONB	Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (as amended by the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023) places a statutory duty on all relevant authorities, including a local planning authority such as Mid Sussex District Council, that in ‘exercising or performing any functions in relation to, or so as to affect, land in an AONB, they must seek to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the AONB’. The High Weald AONB Statement of Significance as set out in the High Weald AONB Management Plan is clear that the whole of the AONB is designated for its outstanding natural beauty, and all the AONB is important; any areas perceived as ‘degraded’ should be seen as opportunities for the enhancement of natural beauty, contributing positively to the purpose of designation and objectives of the Management Plan. The District Plan seeks to protect the High Weald National Landscape in both its spatial strategy and policy requirements. At a local scale, built development would lead to changes in the landscape and potential changes to its character. It is considered that development of the site would result in a limited adverse impact due to its nature, scale and setting. Whilst any potential harm to the natural beauty of the High Weald National Landscape should be avoided, there are measures that could be taken to minimise any potential harm. In particular, the site should be designed according to the principles set out in the High Weald AONB Management Plan and its supporting documents: • High Weald Housing Design Guide (2019) • Planning Technical Advice Note: Dark Skies in the High Weald (2024)

	- Planning Technical Advice Note: Soft Landscaping & Planting Plans in Development Proposals (2025) The High Weald Colour Study (2017) is also relevant. Appropriate use of colour for the buildings may help to reduce the visual impact of the site. Particular attention should be paid to the nearby ancient woodland and trees, and the historic routeways (both the roads and the public right of way). Opportunities should be taken to conserve and enhance the High Weald National Landscape. Potential opportunities for mitigation of impacts and landscape enhancement are: 1. Ensure that new development is designed to respond positively to the character, scale and morphology of Balcombe, particularly in relation to the Grade I listed St. Mary's Church. 2. Ensure that new development responds positively to the scale, morphology and features of the historic routeways aligning the site, including the sensitive integration of access. 3. Adopt an appropriate spatial buffer between proposed buildings and the adjacent woodland and establish an appropriate interface with new development with complementary arrangement to protect the woodland's extent, pattern, setting and ecological function by maintaining the existing relationships between woodlands and open fields that contributes to the character of the landscape. Natural England standing advice for buffers is a minimum of 15m. Promote the woodland as a visual backdrop and characteristic feature of future development, maintaining visual and physical public access across the site. 4. Conserve any existing trees on site to maintain their contribution to landscape character. 5. Protect views and glimpses of the open countryside, particularly long-range views from within the site to the west, through thoughtful design that responds to topography in order to maintain human connections to rural features.
Can the proposed allocation be described as 'major' in the ordinary meaning of the word?	No. The nature, scale and setting of the site does not suggest a 'major' development in the ordinary meaning of the word. It should be remembered that opinions will vary between individuals as a result of, inter alia, their experiences, views towards development and the location where they live.
Draft District Plan Policy DPC4: High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty	To meet the draft Policy DPC4 requirements, the design and layout of the site will need to be landscape-led reflecting High Weald character and responding to the historic pattern and character of settlements in the form, layout, grain and massing of development; and using high quality architecture. It is recommended that

	development of the site takes into account the objectives of the High Weald AONB Management Plan and its supporting documents including the High Weald Housing Design Guide. This will provide opportunities to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the High Weald National Landscape. This will be assessed further at the time of a planning application and prior to its determination.
Cumulative impacts	Cumulative impacts may be local at a settlement level or more widely at a district level, but there is also likely to be development across the High Weald National Landscape in other districts and boroughs and cumulatively at a landscape scale this may lead to further erosion of the natural beauty of the High Weald National Landscape. At a settlement level, there are no proposed housing allocations in the Submission District Plan, although there is one other SHELAA site (ID: 165 for 20 dwellings) that is on the list of additional sites for testing. SHELAA site ID: 165 is to the south of Balcombe alongside the main London to Brighton railway line. As at the 1st April 2026, there are 32 units as commitments in Balcombe. The site selection process for the District Plan sets out how the proposed housing allocations have been identified, tested and found to be the most suitable for delivering housing growth to meet the local housing need in the District and the housing requirement set out in the District Plan. The additional sites are being assessed as part of the in-combination work to test the ability to meet the Inspector's request to increase the housing requirement to meet a proportion of the unmet needs of other local authorities, principally at Crawley. Taking this into account and the nature, scale and setting of the site, it is considered there would be limited cumulative impacts from development of the site.
Conclusion	NOT MAJOR DEVELOPMENT Assessment of the site including its nature, scale and setting does not suggest a major development in the context of paragraph 190 of the NPPF. There may be localised impacts on the natural beauty of the High Weald National Landscape, however, these could be reduced through appropriate and careful design of the site. This includes both the built form and green infrastructure, including boundary treatments and locating development to the south of the site. There should be consideration of any direct and indirect impacts on the nearby woodland, including ancient woodland, and the development should seek to retain any existing trees in accordance with policy requirements. The site should continue to take opportunities to protect tranquillity and dark skies.

The existing hedgerow, green bank and verge on the site boundary should be retained and enhanced. As the site is an elevated field, careful design and layout will be required to avoid development becoming a domineering built form with particular consideration to any impacts to the setting of the Grade I listed St. Mary's Church.

The site should take into account the requirements set out in draft District Plan Policy DPC4: High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and other material considerations including the High Weald AONB Management Plan and its supporting documents such as the High Weald Housing Design Guide and the Planning Technical Advice Notes for dark skies and soft landscaping.

The recommendations are:

- A. Preserve any long range views towards the site and beyond, including towards the Balcombe Conservation Area and St. Mary's Church, through the sensitive siting and scaling of buildings, maintaining the junction's character as a gateway into the village of Balcombe.
- B. Retain a positive relationship between woodland and new development such as through the sensitive siting of buildings, appropriate spatial buffers and the use of transitional woodland edge planting.

SHELAA 165 – Land south of Oldlands Avenue (Vintens Nursery), Balcombe

Mid Sussex District Plan: Major Development in the High Weald National Landscape

Settlement

Balcombe

SHELAA ID

165

Land south of Oldlands Avenue (Vintens Nursery),
Balcombe

Site Details

Number of units

20

Site area (ha)

6.2

Stage 1 – Determining major development (NPPF footnote 67)

Nature of development

The site is at a Category 3 – Medium Village settlement. The site lies outside of the defined built-up area boundary, but contiguous to it on its northern boundary, and development of the site would represent an extension of the settlement to the south into what is currently open countryside.

The site is proposed for housing development (20 units). The site promoter has not provided any information with regards to potential layout, housing mix or design.

Built development would be located in the north of the site where is it closest to Balcombe village with the southern part of the site to be retained as natural open space.

Development of the site would result in a land use change from agricultural use to housing.

Scale of development

Using the current adopted built-up area boundary to assess the size of the settlement, the site as a whole represents an increase of 14.46% in the built-up area of Balcombe and an increase of 2.90% in the number of dwellings.

The High Weald National Landscape is a small-scale landscape of small, irregular fields and pasture, small woodlands, hedgerows, dark skies and dispersed historic settlements including hamlets and farmsteads. The landscape has perceptual qualities including tranquillity and an intrinsic sense of naturalness.

It is considered that the scale of the site and its development for housing (20 units) could be in keeping with the landscape character of the High Weald due to its proximity with the existing settlement of Balcombe.

Setting of development

The site is outside of the defined built-up area boundary, however, the northern boundary of the site is contiguous to the defined built-up area boundary. The main settlement and defined built-up area of Balcombe lies to the north of the site. The existing defined built-up area boundary for Balcombe almost exactly matches the historic



settlement pattern. To the west of the site is the main London to Brighton railway line and Balcombe railway station is approximately a 220m walk from the site. To the east and south of the site is open countryside where the landscape becomes more rural (small fields and woodland).

The eastern half of the site is ancient woodland and priority habitat (deciduous woodland) and there are more parcels of ancient woodland and priority habitat (deciduous woodland) extending into the open countryside.

A public right of way (footpath) runs north-south through the middle of the site.

The proposed site access would connect to Oldlands Avenue to the north of the site.

On the outskirts of Balcombe and currently in the countryside, the site is likely to experience dark skies due to limited surrounding development and street lighting. The site is also likely to experience tranquillity although the main London to Brighton railway line may impact on this given its proximity to the site.

The potential for significant adverse impact on AONB purposes for which the area has been designated (as set out in the High Weald Statement of Significance)

**Core Character Component:
Natural systems (geology, soils,
water and climate)**

Objective G1

There is a pond in the centre of the site in the eastern half and it is within the ancient woodland. The site should be designed to protect river catchments and groundwater in accordance with planning policies and best practice.

Objective G2

There are sandstone outcrops in the vicinity of the site, but it is not expected that development will impact on these features. There is underlying sandstone geology in the southern and eastern parts of the site.

Objective G3

The site should seek to achieve sustainable construction and contribute to climate change mitigation and adaption through its design and in accordance with planning policies and best practice. The site should encourage sustainable transport.

Objective G4

Development of the site is likely to disturb the soil and best practice should be complied with to protect soils during construction from disturbance, compaction, pollution and erosion. Undisturbed soils should be protected and measures should be taken to minimise sterilisation of soils by permanent impermeable surfaces.

Core Character Component:

Objective S1

Settlement

The site is to the south of the historic settlement pattern and would result in what is currently a compact historic pattern being extended to the south along the railway line. Development of the site for housing will result in one of the remaining fields between Balcombe and the woodland to the south being lost (separating the village and the woodland), although this could be mitigated by retaining the southern part of the site as natural open space.

Objective S2

The site should be designed according to the principles set out in the supporting documents to the High Weald AONB Management Plan and these documents are a material consideration in the planning process:

- High Weald Housing Design Guide (2019)
- Planning Technical Advice Note: Dark Skies in the High Weald (2024)
- Planning Technical Advice Note: Soft Landscaping & Planting Plans in Development Proposals (2025)

The High Weald Colour Study (2017) is also relevant. Appropriate use of colour for the buildings may help to reduce the visual impact of the site.

Objective S3

Balcombe Conservation Area lies to the north-east of the site and there is a historic farmstead to the north on Oldlands Avenue. There are no listed buildings, registered parks and gardens or archaeological notification areas near to the site.

Core Character Component: Routeways

Objective R1

The public right of way (footpath) running north-south through the site is a historic routeway (track) and the public right of way (footpath) along Oldlands Avenue is a historic routeway. There will need to be careful consideration of the public right of way and historic routeway crossing the site such as maintaining its current alignment and consideration of the current rural experience.

Objective R2

There may be opportunities to enhance the ecological function and condition of the historic routeway crossing the site.

Core Character Component: Woodland

Objective W1

The eastern half of the site is ancient woodland and priority habitat (deciduous woodland). There is linear woodland along the railway line on the site's western boundary. Appropriate buffers should be included as part of the development layout and design.

Objective W2

Existing trees should be retained in accordance with planning policies and there may be opportunities to enhance the connectivity of the nearby woodland through additional appropriate planting.



Objective W3

Any archaeology found during construction should be investigated in line with standard requirements and best practice.

Objective W4

Development of the site is unlikely to be able to contribute to the production of local timber, however, there may be opportunities to use local wood in its construction, and for any fencing and gates.

**Core Character Component:
Fieldsapes and heath**

Objective FH1

The site is currently in agricultural use.

Objective FH2

The site is currently in agricultural use and development of the site is not expected to change the shape and pattern of the field.

Opportunities should be taken to retain hedges, ditches and other historic boundary features.

Objective FH3

The site is currently in agricultural use. Opportunities should be taken to enhance existing habitats including through biodiversity net gain.

Objective FH4

The western half of the site is currently identified as a historic field, however, development of the site is not expected to alter the original field boundaries. Any archaeology found during construction should be investigated in line with standard requirements and best practice.

**Core Character Component:
Dark night skies**

Objective DS1

Objective DS2

The site may experience dark skies due to development and limited street lighting only on its northern boundary. Development of the site should take into account the principles in Planning Technical Advice Note: Dark Skies in the High Weald (2024).

**Core Character Component:
Aesthetic and perceptual
qualities**

Objective PQ1

There may be opportunities to support the High Weald National Landscape through promotion of activities and events.

Objective PQ2

Development of the site should incorporate green infrastructure in accordance with planning policies and take into account the principles in:

- High Weald Housing Design Guide (2019)
- Planning Technical Advice Note: Soft Landscaping & Planting Plans in Development Proposals (2025)

There will need to be careful consideration of how the site might be developed given its current naturalness, views and experiences of the public right of way.

	Objective PQ3 There may be opportunities to upgrade and enhance the local public rights of way network. The current rural experience of the public right of way crossing the site should be maintained.
Core Character Component: Land-based economy and rural living	Objective LBE1 There may be opportunities for the site to contribute towards land management activities, for example, through the construction phase by using local forestry and timber supplies. Objective LBE2 The site should seek opportunities to contribute to local communities and community services. The site may help support rural services and amenities such as bus services, village shops and the post office through the additional people that the housing will bring. Objective LBE3 There may be opportunities to provide suitable housing for land-based workers.
Conservation and enhancement of the High Weald AONB	Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (as amended by the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023) places a statutory duty on all relevant authorities, including a local planning authority such as Mid Sussex District Council, that in ‘exercising or performing any functions in relation to, or so as to affect, land in an AONB, they must seek to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the AONB’. The High Weald AONB Statement of Significance as set out in the High Weald AONB Management Plan is clear that the whole of the AONB is designated for its outstanding natural beauty, and all the AONB is important; any areas perceived as ‘degraded’ should be seen as opportunities for the enhancement of natural beauty, contributing positively to the purpose of designation and objectives of the Management Plan. The District Plan seeks to protect the High Weald National Landscape in both its spatial strategy and policy requirements. At a local scale, built development would lead to changes in the landscape and potential changes to its character. It is considered that if built development is located to the north of the site with open space in the southern part, then it would result in a limited adverse impact. Whilst any potential harm to the natural beauty of the High Weald National Landscape should be avoided, there are measures that could be taken to minimise any potential harm. In particular, the site should be designed according to the principles set out in the High Weald AONB Management Plan and its supporting documents: • High Weald Housing Design Guide (2019)

- Planning Technical Advice Note: Dark Skies in the High Weald (2024)
- Planning Technical Advice Note: Soft Landscaping & Planting Plans in Development Proposals (2025)

The High Weald Colour Study (2017) is also relevant. Appropriate use of colour for the buildings may help to reduce the visual impact of the site.

Particular attention should be paid to the nearby ancient woodland and trees in the eastern half of the site. The historic routeway and public right of way crossing the site should be carefully considered in the design and layout of the site including maintaining its current alignment and consideration of the current rural experience.

Opportunities should be taken to conserve and enhance the High Weald National Landscape.

Potential opportunities for mitigation of impacts and landscape enhancement are:

1. Conserve the pond located within the woodland, adopt an appropriate spatial buffer and establish an appropriate interface with new development with complementary arrangement to maintain its open setting and ecological health. Consider opportunities to enhance or restore its natural function and amenity value as setting to a development if appropriate.
2. Ensure that new development is designed to respond positively to the character, scale and morphology of Balcombe.
3. Ensure that new development responds positively to the scale, morphology and features of the historic routeways within and aligning the site, including the sensitive integration of access.
4. Conserve the existing woodland on site, adopt an appropriate spatial buffer between proposed buildings and the woodland and establish an appropriate interface with new development with complementary arrangement to protect the woodland's extent, pattern, setting and ecological function by maintaining the existing relationships between woodlands and open fields that contributes to the character of the landscape. Natural England standing advice for buffers is a minimum of 15m. Promote the woodland as a visual backdrop and characteristic feature of future development, maintaining visual and physical public access across the site.
5. Consider opportunities to reinforce the existing fieldscape, its pattern and characteristics within new development, including the integration and enhancement of existing field boundary vegetation and an associated planting strategy that complements species, typologies and patterns found within the locality.
6. Protect views and glimpses of the open countryside from the public right of way within and outside the site, particularly southwards, through thoughtful design that responds to

	topography in order to maintain human connections to rural features.
Can the proposed allocation be described as ‘major’ in the ordinary meaning of the word?	No. The nature, scale and setting of the site does not suggest a ‘major’ development in the ordinary meaning of the word. It should be remembered that opinions will vary between individuals as a result of, inter alia, their experiences, views towards development and the location where they live.
Draft District Plan Policy DPC4: High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty	To meet the draft Policy DPC4 requirements, the design and layout of the site will need to be landscape-led reflecting High Weald character and responding to the historic pattern and character of settlements in the form, layout, grain and massing of development; and using high quality architecture. It is recommended that development of the site takes into account the objectives of the High Weald AONB Management Plan and its supporting documents including the High Weald Housing Design Guide. This will provide opportunities to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the High Weald National Landscape. This will be assessed further at the time of a planning application and prior to its determination.
Cumulative impacts	Cumulative impacts may be local at a settlement level or more widely at a district level, but there is also likely to be development across the High Weald National Landscape in other districts and boroughs and cumulatively at a landscape scale this may lead to further erosion of the natural beauty of the High Weald National Landscape. At a settlement level, there are no proposed housing allocations in the Submission District Plan, although there is one other SHELAA site (ID: 28 for 15 dwellings) that is on the list of additional sites for testing. SHELAA site ID: 28 is to the north of Balcombe on the B2036 London Road. As at the 1st April 2026, there are 32 units as commitments in Balcombe. The site selection process for the District Plan sets out how the proposed housing allocations have been identified, tested and found to be the most suitable for delivering housing growth to meet the local housing need in the District and the housing requirement set out in the District Plan. The additional sites are being assessed as part of the in-combination work to test the ability to meet the Inspector’s request to increase the housing requirement to meet a proportion of the unmet needs of other local authorities, principally at Crawley. Taking this into account and the nature, scale and setting of the site, it is considered there would be limited cumulative impacts from development of the site.

Conclusion

NOT MAJOR DEVELOPMENT

Assessment of the site including its nature, scale and setting does not suggest a major development in the context of paragraph 190 of the NPPF.

There may be localised impacts on the natural beauty of the High Weald National Landscape, however, these could be reduced through appropriate and careful design of the site. This includes both the built form and green infrastructure, including boundary treatments. There should be consideration of any direct and indirect impacts on the nearby ancient woodland and the development should seek to retain any existing trees in accordance with policy requirements. The site should continue to take opportunities to protect tranquillity and dark skies, and the current rural experience of the public right of way crossing the site.

The eastern half of the site is ancient woodland and priority habitat (deciduous woodland) and this needs to be carefully considered.

The site should take into account the requirements set out in draft District Plan Policy DPC4: High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and other material considerations including the High Weald AONB Management Plan and its supporting documents such as the High Weald Housing Design Guide and the Planning Technical Advice Notes for dark skies and soft landscaping.

The recommendations are:

- A. Conserve existing woodland to the south of the site and retain a positive relationship between woodland and new development such as through the sensitive siting of buildings, appropriate spatial buffers and the use of transitional woodland edge planting.
- B. Ensure development responds to topography and is sensitive to the surrounding scale and morphology of existing development.
- C. Preserve and enhance the existing public right of way and integrate it within any new development. Maintain any long range views of the surrounding countryside from the pathway through the sensitive siting of buildings.

SHELAA 1024 – Land at Brook House Farm, Turners Hill Road, East Grinstead

Mid Sussex District Plan: Major Development in the High Weald National Landscape

Settlement

East Grinstead

SHELAA ID

1024

Land at Brook House Farm, Turners Hill Road, East Grinstead

Site Details

Number of units

45

Site area (ha)

2.24

Stage 1 – Determining major development (NPPF footnote 67)

Nature of development

The site is at a Category 1 – Town settlement. The site lies outside of the defined built-up area boundary and development of the site would represent an extension of the settlement to the south-west.

The site is proposed for housing development (45 units). The site promoter has not provided any information with regards to potential layout, housing mix or design.

The site comprises a single residential dwelling and agricultural land and buildings. Development of the site would result in a land use change from a mix of previously developed land and grassland to housing.

Scale of development

Using the current adopted built-up area boundary to assess the size of the settlement, the site as a whole represents an increase of 0.31% in the built-up area of East Grinstead and an increase of 0.33% in the number of dwellings.

The High Weald National Landscape is a small-scale landscape of small, irregular fields and pasture, small woodlands, hedgerows, dark skies and dispersed historic settlements including hamlets and farmsteads. The landscape has perceptual qualities including tranquillity and an intrinsic sense of naturalness.

It is considered that the scale of the site and its development for housing (45 units) could be in keeping with the landscape character of the High Weald due to its proximity with the existing settlement of East Grinstead and the recently completed development on the western side of the B2110 Turners Hill Road (although this is not in the High Weald National Landscape).

Setting of development

The site is just inside the boundary of the High Weald National Landscape. The B2110 Turners Hill Road marks the boundary of the High Weald National Landscape to the north-west and the watercourse to the rear of properties in Hurst Farm Road approximately marks the boundary of the High Weald National Landscape to the north-east.

	The site is outside of the defined built-up area boundary and the main settlement and defined built-up area of East Grinstead lies to the north, west and east of the site. To the south of the site lies open countryside with some scattered low density housing. The landscape becomes more rural (small fields and woodland). A public right of way (footpath) runs north-west to south-east to the north of the site and this is also a historic routeway. The proposed site access would connect to the B2110 Turners Hill Road to the west of the site. Close to the built-up area for East Grinstead and the B2110 Turners Hill Road, the site is unlikely to be very tranquil nor is it likely to experience very dark skies due to nearby development and street lighting.
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The potential for significant adverse impact on AONB purposes for which the area has been designated (as set out in the High Weald Statement of Significance)

Core Character Component: Natural systems (geology, soils, water and climate)	Objective G1 There are three ponds close to the site boundary and there is a watercourse to the north-west of the site. The site should be designed to protect river catchments and groundwater in accordance with planning policies and best practice. Objective G2 There is underlying sandstone geology to the west of the site. Objective G3 The site should seek to achieve sustainable construction and contribute to climate change mitigation and adaption through its design and in accordance with planning policies and best practice. The site should encourage sustainable transport. Objective G4 Development of the site is likely to disturb the soil and best practice should be complied with to protect soils during construction from disturbance, compaction, pollution and erosion. Undisturbed soils should be protected and measures should be taken to minimise sterilisation of soils by permanent impermeable surfaces.
Core Character Component: Settlement	Objective S1 The site is to the south-west of East Grinstead and would be an extension into the countryside. Objective S2 The site should be designed according to the principles set out in the supporting documents to the High Weald AONB Management Plan and these documents are a material consideration in the planning process: • High Weald Housing Design Guide (2019)



- Planning Technical Advice Note: Dark Skies in the High Weald (2024)
- Planning Technical Advice Note: Soft Landscaping & Planting Plans in Development Proposals (2025)

The High Weald Colour Study (2017) is also relevant. Appropriate use of colour for the buildings may help to reduce the visual impact of the site.

Objective S3

There are no listed buildings, conservation areas, registered parks and gardens or archaeological notification areas near to the site.

**Core Character Component:
Routeways**

Objective R1

A public right of way (footpath) runs north-west to south-east to the north of the site and this is also a historic routeway. The B2110 Turners Hill Road is a historic routeway (lane).

Objective R2

There may be opportunities to enhance the ecological function and condition of the historic routeways.

**Core Character Component:
Woodland**

Objective W1

There is woodland, both ancient woodland and priority habitat (deciduous woodland) in the vicinity of the site and the site itself has trees on its boundaries.

Objective W2

Existing trees should be retained in accordance with planning policies and there may be opportunities to enhance the connectivity of the nearby woodland through additional appropriate planting.

Objective W3

Any archaeology found during construction should be investigated in line with standard requirements and best practice.

Objective W4

Development of the site is unlikely to be able to contribute to the production of local timber, however, there may be opportunities to use local wood in its construction, and for any fencing and gates.

**Core Character Component:
Fieldsapes and heath**

Objective FH1

The site comprises a single residential dwelling and agricultural land and buildings.

Objective FH2

The site is currently in use as a residential land and agricultural land and development of the site may affect the shape and pattern of the field. Opportunities should be taken to retain hedges, ditches and other historic boundary features.

Objective FH3

	The site is currently in use as a residential dwelling and agricultural land. Opportunities should be taken to enhance existing habitats including through biodiversity net gain. Objective FH4 The site is not currently identified as a historic field. Any archaeology found during construction should be investigated in line with standard requirements and best practice.
Core Character Component: Dark night skies	Objective DS1 Objective DS2 The site is not likely to experience very dark skies due to nearby development and street lighting. Development of the site should take into account the principles in Planning Technical Advice Note: Dark Skies in the High Weald (2024).
Core Character Component: Aesthetic and perceptual qualities	Objective PQ1 There may be opportunities to support the High Weald National Landscape through promotion of activities and events. Objective PQ2 Development of the site should incorporate green infrastructure in accordance with planning policies and take into account the principles in: • High Weald Housing Design Guide (2019) • Planning Technical Advice Note: Soft Landscaping & Planting Plans in Development Proposals (2025) Objective PQ3 There may be opportunities to upgrade and enhance the local public rights of way network.
Core Character Component: Land-based economy and rural living	Objective LBE1 There may be opportunities for the site to contribute towards land management activities, for example, through the construction phase by using local forestry and timber supplies. Objective LBE2 The site should seek opportunities to contribute to local communities and community services. The site may help support rural services and amenities such as bus services, village shops and the post office through the additional people that the housing will bring. Objective LBE3 There may be opportunities to provide suitable housing for land-based workers.
Conservation and enhancement of the High Weald AONB	Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (as amended by the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023) places a statutory duty on all relevant authorities, including a local planning authority such as Mid Sussex District Council, that in ‘exercising or

performing any functions in relation to, or so as to affect, land in an AONB, they must seek to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the AONB’.

The High Weald AONB Statement of Significance as set out in the High Weald AONB Management Plan is clear that the whole of the AONB is designated for its outstanding natural beauty, and all the AONB is important; any areas perceived as ‘degraded’ should be seen as opportunities for the enhancement of natural beauty, contributing positively to the purpose of designation and objectives of the Management Plan.

The District Plan seeks to protect the High Weald National Landscape in both its spatial strategy and policy requirements.

At a local scale, built development would lead to changes in the landscape and potential changes to its character. It is considered that development of the site would result in a limited adverse impact due to its proximity to East Grinstead and its location on the edge of the High Weald National Landscape. Whilst any potential harm to the natural beauty of the High Weald National Landscape should be avoided, there are measures that could be taken to minimise any potential harm. In particular, the site should be designed according to the principles set out in the High Weald AONB Management Plan and its supporting documents:

- High Weald Housing Design Guide (2019)
- Planning Technical Advice Note: Dark Skies in the High Weald (2024)
- Planning Technical Advice Note: Soft Landscaping & Planting Plans in Development Proposals (2025)

The High Weald Colour Study (2017) is also relevant. Appropriate use of colour for the buildings may help to reduce the visual impact of the site.

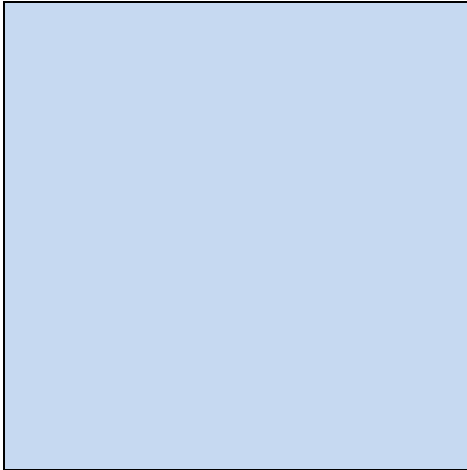
Particular attention should be paid to the proposed drainage of the site and whether there would be any adverse impact on the adjacent ponds and watercourse.

Opportunities should be taken to conserve and enhance the High Weald National Landscape.

Potential opportunities for mitigation of impacts and landscape enhancement are:

1. Adopt an appropriate spatial buffer to the adjacent pond and appropriate interface with new development with complementary arrangement to maintain or enhance its setting and ecological health.
2. Conserve any existing trees on site to maintain their contribution to landscape character.

	3. Ensure that new development responds positively to the scale, morphology and features of the historic lane aligning the site, including the sensitive integration of access. 4. Protect views and glimpses of the open countryside, particularly any long-range views towards the south, and consider the impact of views from the south of East Grinstead towards the site, through thoughtful design that responds to topography in order to maintain human connections to rural features. 5. Consider providing an attractive accessible route to the surrounding countryside through the site if appropriate to improve equitable access and connections to the countryside, while respecting its capacity for visitors.
Can the proposed allocation be described as ‘major’ in the ordinary meaning of the word?	No. The nature, scale and setting of the site does not suggest a ‘major’ development in the ordinary meaning of the word. It should be remembered that opinions will vary between individuals as a result of, inter alia, their experiences, views towards development and the location where they live.
Draft District Plan Policy DPC4: High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty	To meet the draft Policy DPC4 requirements, the design and layout of the site will need to be landscape-led reflecting High Weald character and responding to the historic pattern and character of settlements in the form, layout, grain and massing of development; and using high quality architecture. It is recommended that development of the site takes into account the objectives of the High Weald AONB Management Plan and its supporting documents including the High Weald Housing Design Guide. This will provide opportunities to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the High Weald National Landscape. This will be assessed further at the time of a planning application and prior to its determination.
Cumulative impacts	Cumulative impacts may be local at a settlement level or more widely at a district level, but there is also likely to be development across the High Weald National Landscape in other districts and boroughs and cumulatively at a landscape scale this may lead to further erosion of the natural beauty of the High Weald National Landscape. At a settlement level, there is one other proposed housing allocation at East Grinstead in the District Plan – DPA4: Land off West Hoathly Road, East Grinstead for up to 45 dwellings. There is also one other SHELAA site (ID: 1181 for 20 dwellings) that is on the list of additional sites for testing. SHELAA site ID: 1181 is to the south of East Grinstead and adjacent to DPA4. As at the 1st April 2026, there are 1,129 units as commitments in East Grinstead, although the majority of these are not within the High Weald National Landscape.



The site selection process for the District Plan sets out how the proposed housing allocations have been identified, tested and found to be the most suitable for delivering housing growth to meet the local housing need in the District and the housing requirement set out in the District Plan. The additional sites are being assessed as part of the in-combination work to test the ability to meet the Inspector's request to increase the housing requirement to meet a proportion of the unmet needs of other local authorities, principally at Crawley.

Taking this into account and the nature, scale and setting of the site, it is considered there would be limited cumulative impacts from development of the site.

Conclusion

NOT MAJOR DEVELOPMENT

Assessment of the site including its nature, scale and setting does not suggest a major development in the context of paragraph 190 of the NPPF.

There may be localised impacts on the natural beauty of the High Weald National Landscape, however, these could be reduced through appropriate and careful design of the site. This includes both the built form and green infrastructure, including boundary treatments. The development should seek to retain any existing trees in accordance with policy requirements. The site should continue to take opportunities to protect tranquillity and dark skies.

The site should take into account the requirements set out in draft District Plan Policy DPC4: High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and other material considerations including the High Weald AONB Management Plan and its supporting documents such as the High Weald Housing Design Guide and the Planning Technical Advice Notes for dark skies and soft landscaping.

The recommendations are:

- A. Ensure development responds to topography and is sensitive to the surrounding scale and morphology of existing development, including the consideration of views of the surrounding countryside from the south of East Grinstead.
- B. Retain existing mature trees on the site and provide them with an appropriate setting.

SHELAA 1181 – Land east of West Hoathly Road, East Grinstead

Mid Sussex District Plan: Major Development in the High Weald National Landscape

Settlement

East Grinstead

SHELAA ID

1181

Land east of West Hoathly Road, East Grinstead

Site Details

Number of units

20

Site area (ha)

1.09

Stage 1 – Determining major development (NPPF footnote 67)

Nature of development

The site is at a Category 1 – Town settlement. The site lies outside of the defined built-up area boundary and development of the site would represent an extension of the settlement along West Hoathly Road.

The site is proposed for housing development (20 units). The site promoter has provided a concept plan which shows a potential layout.

Development of the site would result in a land use change from grazing land to housing.

Scale of development

Using the current adopted built-up area boundary to assess the size of the settlement, the site as a whole represents an increase of 0.15% in the built-up area of East Grinstead and an increase of 0.15% in the number of dwellings.

The High Weald National Landscape is a small-scale landscape of small, irregular fields and pasture, small woodlands, hedgerows, dark skies and dispersed historic settlements including hamlets and farmsteads. The landscape has perceptual qualities including tranquillity and an intrinsic sense of naturalness.

It is considered that the scale of the site and its development for housing (20 units) could be in keeping with the landscape character of the High Weald due to its proximity with the existing settlement of East Grinstead and the proposed District Plan allocation – DPA4; Land off West Hoathly Road, East Grinstead for up to 45 dwellings.

Setting of development

The site is of the edge of the High Weald National Landscape. The watercourse to the rear of properties in Stockwell Road marks the boundary of the High Weald National Landscape to the north.

The site is outside of the defined built-up area boundary and the main settlement and defined built-up area of East Grinstead lies to the north of the site. To the south and east of the site lies open countryside and it becomes more rural (small fields and woodland). There is low density housing to the west of the site.

	The site is perceived as detached from the suburban edge of East Grinstead. Development across the road is rural and dispersed in character. Future development of the site would likely represent a substantial change in this location, however, the site is adjacent to the proposed District Plan allocation DPA4. There is ancient woodland and priority habitat (deciduous woodland) immediately to the east of the site. There are public rights of way (footpaths) to the north and west of the site and these are also historic routeways. The proposed site access would connect to West Hoathly Road to the west of the site. Close to the built-up area for East Grinstead, the site is unlikely to be very tranquil nor is it likely to experience very dark skies due to nearby development and street lighting.
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The potential for significant adverse impact on AONB purposes for which the area has been designated (as set out in the High Weald Statement of Significance)

Core Character Component: Natural systems (geology, soils, water and climate)	Objective G1 There is a watercourse within the ancient woodland on the site's eastern boundary. There are watercourses to the north and west of the site and ponds in the vicinity. The site should be designed to protect river catchments and groundwater in accordance with planning policies and best practice. Objective G2 There is underlying sandstone geology in the vicinity of the site. Objective G3 The site should seek to achieve sustainable construction and contribute to climate change mitigation and adaption through its design and in accordance with planning policies and best practice. The site should encourage sustainable transport. Objective G4 Development of the site is likely to disturb the soil and best practice should be complied with to protect soils during construction from disturbance, compaction, pollution and erosion. Undisturbed soils should be protected and measures should be taken to minimise sterilisation of soils by permanent impermeable surfaces.
Core Character Component: Settlement	Objective S1 The site is to the south of East Grinstead and would be an extension into the countryside. The site is perceived as detached from the suburban edge of East Grinstead. Development across the road is rural and dispersed in character. Future development of the site would likely represent a substantial change in this location.

	Objective S2 The site should be designed according to the principles set out in the supporting documents to the High Weald AONB Management Plan and these documents are a material consideration in the planning process: • High Weald Housing Design Guide (2019) • Planning Technical Advice Note: Dark Skies in the High Weald (2024) • Planning Technical Advice Note: Soft Landscaping & Planting Plans in Development Proposals (2025) The High Weald Colour Study (2017) is also relevant. Appropriate use of colour for the buildings may help to reduce the visual impact of the site. Objective S3 The Old Mill on Dunnings Road, a Grade II listed building, is to the north of the site and Standen Registered Park and Garden is to the south of the site; this is also an archaeological notification area. East Grinstead Conservation Area is just over 1km to the north of the site.
Core Character Component: Routeways	Objective R1 There are public rights of way (footpaths) to the north and west of the site and these are also historic routeways. West Hoathly Road is also a historic routeway (lane). Objective R2 There may be opportunities to enhance the ecological function and condition of the historic routeways.
Core Character Component: Woodland	Objective W1 There is woodland, both ancient woodland and priority habitat (deciduous woodland) immediately to the east of the site and in the wider area. The site also has trees on its boundaries. Objective W2 Existing trees should be retained in accordance with planning policies and there may be opportunities to enhance the connectivity of the nearby woodland through additional appropriate planting. Objective W3 Any archaeology found during construction should be investigated in line with standard requirements and best practice. Objective W4 Development of the site is unlikely to be able to contribute to the production of local timber, however, there may be opportunities to use local wood in its construction, and for any fencing and gates.
Core Character Component: Fieldsapes and heath	Objective FH1 The site is currently grazing land.

**Objective FH2**

The site is currently in use as grazing land and development of the site is not expected to change the shape and pattern of the field. Opportunities should be taken to retain hedges, ditches and other historic boundary features.

Objective FH3

The site is currently in use as grazing land. Opportunities should be taken to enhance existing habitats including through biodiversity net gain.

Objective FH4

The site is not currently identified as a historic field. Any archaeology found during construction should be investigated in line with standard requirements and best practice.

**Core Character Component:
Dark night skies****Objective DS1****Objective DS2**

The site may experience dark skies due to limited surrounding development and street lighting. Development of the site should take into account the principles in Planning Technical Advice Note: Dark Skies in the High Weald (2024).

**Core Character Component:
Aesthetic and perceptual
qualities****Objective PQ1**

There may be opportunities to support the High Weald National Landscape through promotion of activities and events.

Objective PQ2

Development of the site should incorporate green infrastructure in accordance with planning policies and take into account the principles in:

- High Weald Housing Design Guide (2019)
- Planning Technical Advice Note: Soft Landscaping & Planting Plans in Development Proposals (2025)

Objective PQ3

There may be opportunities to upgrade and enhance the local public rights of way network.

**Core Character Component:
Land-based economy and rural
living****Objective LBE1**

There may be opportunities for the site to contribute towards land management activities, for example, through the construction phase by using local forestry and timber supplies.

Objective LBE2

The site should seek opportunities to contribute to local communities and community services. The site may help support rural services and amenities such as bus services, village shops and the post office through the additional people that the housing will bring.



Objective LBE3

There may be opportunities to provide suitable housing for land-based workers.

Conservation and enhancement of the High Weald AONB

Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (as amended by the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023) places a statutory duty on all relevant authorities, including a local planning authority such as Mid Sussex District Council, that in ‘exercising or performing any functions in relation to, or so as to affect, land in an AONB, they must seek to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the AONB’.

The High Weald AONB Statement of Significance as set out in the High Weald AONB Management Plan is clear that the whole of the AONB is designated for its outstanding natural beauty, and all the AONB is important; any areas perceived as ‘degraded’ should be seen as opportunities for the enhancement of natural beauty, contributing positively to the purpose of designation and objectives of the Management Plan.

The District Plan seeks to protect the High Weald National Landscape in both its spatial strategy and policy requirements.

At a local scale, built development would lead to changes in the landscape and potential changes to its character. It is considered that development of the site would result in a limited adverse impact when considered in the context of the adjacent proposed District Plan allocation DPA4. Whilst any potential harm to the natural beauty of the High Weald National Landscape should be avoided, there are measures that could be taken to minimise any potential harm. In particular, the site should be designed according to the principles set out in the High Weald AONB Management Plan and its supporting documents:

- High Weald Housing Design Guide (2019)
- Planning Technical Advice Note: Dark Skies in the High Weald (2024)
- Planning Technical Advice Note: Soft Landscaping & Planting Plans in Development Proposals (2025)

The High Weald Colour Study (2017) is also relevant. Appropriate use of colour for the buildings may help to reduce the visual impact of the site.

Particular attention should be paid to ancient woodland, priority habitat (deciduous woodland) and watercourse on the site’s eastern boundary.

Opportunities should be taken to conserve and enhance the High Weald National Landscape.

Potential opportunities for mitigation of impacts and landscape enhancement are:

	1. Adopt an appropriate spatial buffer to the nearby watercourse and appropriate interface with new development with complementary arrangement to maintain its open setting and ecological health, and promote its amenity value as part of a development. 2. Ensure that new development responds positively to the scale, morphology and features of the historic lane aligning the site, including the sensitive integration of access and maintains filtered views into the site. 3. Adopt an appropriate spatial buffer between proposed buildings and Rockingshill Wood and establish an appropriate interface with new development with complementary arrangement to protect the woodland's extent, pattern, setting and ecological function by maintaining the existing relationships between woodlands and open fields that contributes to the character of the landscape. Natural England standing advice for buffers is a minimum of 15m. Promote the woodland as a visual backdrop and characteristic feature of future development, maintaining visual and physical public access across the site. 4. Consider providing an attractive accessible route to the surrounding countryside through the site if appropriate to improve equitable access and connections to the countryside, while respecting its capacity for visitors.
Can the proposed allocation be described as 'major' in the ordinary meaning of the word?	No. The nature, scale and setting of the site does not suggest a 'major' development in the ordinary meaning of the word. It should be remembered that opinions will vary between individuals as a result of, inter alia, their experiences, views towards development and the location where they live.
Draft District Plan Policy DPC4: High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty	To meet the draft Policy DPC4 requirements, the design and layout of the site will need to be landscape-led reflecting High Weald character and responding to the historic pattern and character of settlements in the form, layout, grain and massing of development; and using high quality architecture. It is recommended that development of the site takes into account the objectives of the High Weald AONB Management Plan and its supporting documents including the High Weald Housing Design Guide. This will provide opportunities to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the High Weald National Landscape. This will be assessed further at the time of a planning application and prior to its determination.
Cumulative impacts	Cumulative impacts may be local at a settlement level or more widely at a district level, but there is also likely to be development across the High Weald National Landscape in other districts and boroughs and cumulatively at a landscape scale this may lead to further erosion of the natural beauty of the High Weald National Landscape.

	At a settlement level, there is one other proposed housing allocation at East Grinstead in the District Plan – DPA4: Land off West Hoathly Road, East Grinstead for up to 45 dwellings. This proposed allocation is adjacent to the site on its northern boundary. There is also one other SHELAA site (ID: 1024 for 45 dwellings) that is on the list of additional sites for testing. SHELAA site ID: 1024 is to the south-west of East Grinstead. As at the 1st April 2026, there are 1,129 units as commitments in East Grinstead, although the majority of these are not within the High Weald National Landscape. The site selection process for the District Plan sets out how the proposed housing allocations have been identified, tested and found to be the most suitable for delivering housing growth to meet the local housing need in the District and the housing requirement set out in the District Plan. The additional sites are being assessed as part of the in-combination work to test the ability to meet the Inspector’s request to increase the housing requirement to meet a proportion of the unmet needs of other local authorities, principally at Crawley. Taking this into account and the nature, scale and setting of the site and the adjacent proposed District Plan allocation DPA4, it is considered there would be some cumulative impacts from development of the site.
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Conclusion	NOT MAJOR DEVELOPMENT Assessment of the site including its nature, scale and setting does not suggest a major development in the context of paragraph 190 of the NPPF. There may be localised impacts on the natural beauty of the High Weald National Landscape, however, these could be reduced through appropriate and careful design of the site. This includes both the built form and green infrastructure, including boundary treatments. The development should seek to retain any existing trees in accordance with policy requirements. The site should continue to take opportunities to protect tranquillity and dark skies. The site should take into account the requirements set out in draft District Plan Policy DPC4: High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and other material considerations including the High Weald AONB Management Plan and its supporting documents such as the High Weald Housing Design Guide and the Planning Technical Advice Notes for dark skies and soft landscaping. The recommendations are: A. Retain a positive relationship between woodland and new development such as through the sensitive siting of buildings,
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appropriate spatial buffers and the use of transitional woodland edge planting.

B. Conserve the mature trees lining the historic route of West Hoathly Road.

SHELAA 181 – Land west of Truggers, Handcross

Mid Sussex District Plan: Major Development in the High Weald National Landscape

Settlement

Handcross

SHELAA ID

181

Land west of Truggers, Handcross

Site Details

Number of units

105

Site area (ha)

6.64

Stage 1 – Determining major development (NPPF footnote 67)

Nature of development

The site is at a Category 3 – Medium Village settlement. The site lies outside of the defined built-up area boundary but contiguous to it on its south-eastern boundary. Development of the site would represent an extension of the settlement to the rear to existing built form.

The site comprises three fields in a rough 'W' or zig-zag shape. The hedgerow and wooded boundaries create a sense of rurality and enclosure to the historic pastoral fieldscape of the site.

The site is proposed for housing development (105 units) and community uses including a community building, bowling green and allotments. The site promoter has provided a vision document for the site which shows a potential layout.

Development of the site would result in a land use change from pasture to housing.

Scale of development

Using the current adopted built-up area boundary to assess the size of the settlement, the site as a whole represents an increase of 21.01% in the built-up area of Handcross and an increase of 17.27% in the number of dwellings.

The High Weald National Landscape is a small-scale landscape of small, irregular fields and pasture, small woodlands, hedgerows, dark skies and dispersed historic settlements including hamlets and farmsteads. The landscape has perceptual qualities including tranquillity and an intrinsic sense of naturalness.

It is considered that the scale of the site and its development for housing (105 units) is a significant extension to the settlement of Handcross but its impact could be reduced due to its proximity with the existing settlement.

Setting of development

The site is outside of the defined built-up area boundary and the main settlement and defined built-up area of Handcross lies to the south and east of the site. The A23 divides the settlement of Handcross which is joined by a bridge over the road – the site is to the west of the A23.

	To the north of the site lies ancient woodland and priority habitat (deciduous woodland) and this land is part of The Hyde Estate. To the east of the site lies built form and the A23. To the south of the site is a residential area and open countryside beyond. To the west of the site is open countryside. Beyond the immediate surroundings of the site, the landscape becomes more rural (small fields and woodland). There is a public right of way (footpath) to the south of the site. The B2110 Horsham Road is a historic routeway (lane) and a historic routeway (track) runs along the site's western boundary. The proposed site access would connect to the B2110 Horsham Road to the south of the site. The site is part of a rural village and so may benefit from tranquillity and dark skies, however, this is likely to be reduced due to the proximity of the A23, nearby development and street lighting.
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The potential for significant adverse impact on AONB purposes for which the area has been designated (as set out in the High Weald Statement of Significance)

Core Character Component: Natural systems (geology, soils, water and climate)	Objective G1 There is a pond along the southern boundary of the central field and a watercourse runs through the ancient woodland to the north of the site, although there are other watercourses present in the vicinity of the site. The site should be designed to protect river catchments and groundwater in accordance with planning policies and best practice. Objective G2 There is underlying sandstone geology for the site and surrounding area. Objective G3 The site should seek to achieve sustainable construction and contribute to climate change mitigation and adaption through its design and in accordance with planning policies and best practice. The site should encourage sustainable transport. Objective G4 Development of the site is likely to disturb the soil and best practice should be complied with to protect soils during construction from disturbance, compaction, pollution and erosion. Undisturbed soils should be protected and measures should be taken to minimise sterilisation of soils by permanent impermeable surfaces.
Core Character Component: Settlement	Objective S1 The site is to the north-west of Handcross and adjoins the historic settlement pattern. Development of the site would widen the historic settlement pattern into what is currently open fields between the existing built form and the woodland, but it would not elongate the settlement further along the B2110 Horsham Road to the west.



Objective S2

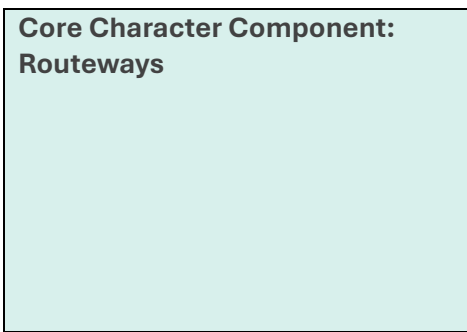
The site should be designed according to the principles set out in the supporting documents to the High Weald AONB Management Plan and these documents are a material consideration in the planning process:

- High Weald Housing Design Guide (2019)
- Planning Technical Advice Note: Dark Skies in the High Weald (2024)
- Planning Technical Advice Note: Soft Landscaping & Planting Plans in Development Proposals (2025)

The High Weald Colour Study (2017) is also relevant. Appropriate use of colour for the buildings may help to reduce the visual impact of the site.

Objective S3

There is a Grade II listed building on the southern boundary of the site (The Royal Oak Public House) and Handcross Conservation Area is to the east across the A23. Nymans Registered Park and Garden is to the east of the site across the A23; Nymans is also an archaeological notification area.



**Core Character Component:
Routeways**

Objective R1

There is a public right of way (footpath) to the south of the site. The B2110 Horsham Road is a historic routeway (lane) and a historic routeway (track) runs along the site’s western boundary.

Objective R2

There may be opportunities to enhance the ecological function and condition of the historic routeways, particularly the track on the western boundary.



**Core Character Component:
Woodland**

Objective W1

There is woodland, both ancient woodland and priority habitat (deciduous woodland) immediately to the north of the site and in the wider area. The site also has trees on its boundaries. Appropriate buffers should be included as part of the development layout and design.

Objective W2

Existing trees should be retained in accordance with planning policies and there may be opportunities to enhance the connectivity of the nearby woodland through additional appropriate planting.

Objective W3

Any archaeology found during construction should be investigated in line with standard requirements and best practice.

Objective W4

	Development of the site is unlikely to be able to contribute to the production of local timber, however, there may be opportunities to use local wood in its construction, and for any fencing and gates.
Core Character Component: Fieldsapes and heath	Objective FH1 The site is currently pasture land. Objective FH2 The site is currently pasture and development of the site could alter the existing characteristic of three fields. Opportunities should be taken to retain hedges, ditches and other historic boundary features. Objective FH3 The site is currently pasture. Opportunities should be taken to enhance existing habitats including through biodiversity net gain. Objective FH4 The eastern and central fields are identified as historic fields. The field pattern should be retained in the design and layout of the site. Any archaeology found during construction should be investigated in line with standard requirements and best practice.
Core Character Component: Dark night skies	Objective DS1 Objective DS2 The site may experience partial dark skies due to its edge of settlement location, however, there may be light spill from the A23. Development of the site should take into account the principles in Planning Technical Advice Note: Dark Skies in the High Weald (2024).
Core Character Component: Aesthetic and perceptual qualities	Objective PQ1 There may be opportunities to support the High Weald National Landscape through promotion of activities and events. Objective PQ2 Development of the site should incorporate green infrastructure in accordance with planning policies and take into account the principles in: • High Weald Housing Design Guide (2019) • Planning Technical Advice Note: Soft Landscaping & Planting Plans in Development Proposals (2025) Objective PQ3 There may be opportunities to upgrade and enhance the local public rights of way network or any permissive paths.
Core Character Component: Land-based economy and rural living	Objective LBE1 There may be opportunities for the site to contribute towards land management activities, for example, through the construction phase by using local forestry and timber supplies. Objective LBE2



The site should seek opportunities to contribute to local communities and community services. The site may help support rural services and amenities such as bus services, village shops and the post office through the additional people that the housing will bring. The site also intends to deliver a new community building/ village hall, bowling green and allotments.

Objective LBE3

There may be opportunities to provide suitable housing for land-based workers.

Conservation and enhancement of the High Weald AONB

Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (as amended by the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023) places a statutory duty on all relevant authorities, including a local planning authority such as Mid Sussex District Council, that in ‘exercising or performing any functions in relation to, or so as to affect, land in an AONB, they must seek to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the AONB’.

The High Weald AONB Statement of Significance as set out in the High Weald AONB Management Plan is clear that the whole of the AONB is designated for its outstanding natural beauty, and all the AONB is important; any areas perceived as ‘degraded’ should be seen as opportunities for the enhancement of natural beauty, contributing positively to the purpose of designation and objectives of the Management Plan.

The District Plan seeks to protect the High Weald National Landscape in both its spatial strategy and policy requirements.

At a local scale, built development would lead to changes in the landscape and potential changes to its character. It is considered that development of the site would result in an adverse impact but this could be limited in extent due to its setting between existing built form and the woodland. Whilst any potential harm to the natural beauty of the High Weald National Landscape should be avoided, there are measures that could be taken to minimise any potential harm. In particular, the site should be designed according to the principles set out in the High Weald AONB Management Plan and its supporting documents:

- High Weald Housing Design Guide (2019)
- Planning Technical Advice Note: Dark Skies in the High Weald (2024)
- Planning Technical Advice Note: Soft Landscaping & Planting Plans in Development Proposals (2025)

The High Weald Colour Study (2017) is also relevant. Appropriate use of colour for the buildings may help to reduce the visual impact of the site.

	Particular attention should be paid to the ancient woodland and priority habitat (deciduous woodland) on the site's north-western boundary and the pond along the southern boundary. Opportunities should be taken to conserve and enhance the High Weald National Landscape. Potential opportunities for mitigation of impacts and landscape enhancement are: 1. Adopt an appropriate spatial buffer to the adjacent water course and appropriate interface with new development with complementary arrangement to maintain its open setting and ecological health, and promote its amenity value as part of a development. Consider opportunities to enhance or restore its natural function. 2. Integrate the existing pond into new development and adopt an appropriate spatial buffer with complementary arrangement to maintain its open setting and ecological health, and promote its amenity value as part of a development. 3. Ensure that new development is designed to respond positively to the character, scale and morphology of Handcross. 4. Ensure that new development responds positively to the scale, morphology and features of the historic routeways aligning the site, including the sensitive integration of access. 5. Adopt an appropriate spatial buffer between proposed buildings and the existing Hoadlands ancient woodland and establish an appropriate interface with new development to protect the woodland's extent, pattern, setting and ecological function by maintaining the transitional woodland edge habitat that contributes to the character of the landscape. Natural England standing advice for buffers is a minimum of 15m. Promote the woodland as a visual backdrop and characteristic feature of future development, maintaining visual and physical public access across the site. 6. Consider opportunities to reinforce the existing fieldscape, its pattern and characteristics within new development, including the integration and enhancement of existing field boundary vegetation and an associated planting strategy that complements species, typologies and patterns found within the locality. 7. Protect views and glimpses of the open countryside, particularly long-range views towards the west, through thoughtful design that responds to topography, in order to maintain human connections to rural features.
Can the proposed allocation be described as 'major' in the ordinary meaning of the word?	Yes. The nature, scale and setting of the site suggests a 'major' development in the ordinary meaning of the word. In particular, the scale of the development (105 dwellings) in a settlement of this size is considered to be a major development. This is supported by an appeal decision (May 2014) that concluded that the schemes for 75 or 90 dwellings subject to appeal to the north of Handcross east of

	the A23 would be major development and would fall into the normal interpretation of the word ‘major’¹⁷. It should be remembered that opinions will vary between individuals as a result of, inter alia, their experiences, views towards development and the location where they live.
Draft District Plan Policy DPC4: High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty	To meet the draft Policy DPC4 requirements, the design and layout of the site will need to be landscape-led reflecting High Weald character and responding to the historic pattern and character of settlements in the form, layout, grain and massing of development; and using high quality architecture. It is recommended that development of the site takes into account the objectives of the High Weald AONB Management Plan and its supporting documents including the High Weald Housing Design Guide. This will provide opportunities to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the High Weald National Landscape. This will be assessed further at the time of a planning application and prior to its determination.
Cumulative impacts	Cumulative impacts may be local at a settlement level or more widely at a district level, but there is also likely to be development across the High Weald National Landscape in other districts and boroughs and cumulatively at a landscape scale this may lead to further erosion of the natural beauty of the High Weald National Landscape. At a settlement level, there is one other proposed housing allocation at Handcross in the District Plan – DPA19: Land at Hyde Lodge, Handcross for older persons’ accommodation. This proposed allocation is to the east of the site across the A23 and to the north of Handcross. As at the 1st April 2026, there are 71 units as commitments in Handcross. The site selection process for the District Plan sets out how the proposed housing allocations have been identified, tested and found to be the most suitable for delivering housing growth to meet the local housing need in the District and the housing requirement set out in the District Plan. The additional sites are being assessed as part of the in-combination work to test the ability to meet the Inspector’s request to increase the housing requirement to meet a proportion of the unmet needs of other local authorities, principally at Crawley. Taking this into account and the nature, scale and setting of the site, it is considered there would be some cumulative impacts from development of the site.

¹⁷ APP/D3830/A/13/2198213 and 2198214 (12/04033/OUT and 12/04032/OUT) – Land at Handcross, West Sussex (1 May 2014). See paragraph 87.

Conclusion

MAJOR DEVELOPMENT

Assessment of the site including its nature, scale and setting suggests a major development in the context of paragraph 190 of the NPPF. In particular, the scale of the development (105 dwellings) in a settlement of this size is considered to be a major development and this is supported by an appeal decision (May 2014) that concluded that the schemes for 75 or 90 dwellings subject to appeal to the north of Handcross east of the A23 would be major development and would fall into the normal interpretation of the word 'major'¹⁸.

There may be localised impacts on the natural beauty of the High Weald National Landscape, however, these could be reduced through appropriate and careful design of the site. This includes both the built form and green infrastructure, including boundary treatments. The development should seek to retain any existing trees in accordance with policy requirements. The site should continue to take opportunities to protect tranquillity and dark skies.

The site should take into account the requirements set out in draft District Plan Policy DPC4: High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and other material considerations including the High Weald AONB Management Plan and its supporting documents such as the High Weald Housing Design Guide and the Planning Technical Advice Notes for dark skies and soft landscaping.

The recommendations are:

- A. Retain a positive relationship between woodland and new development such as through the sensitive siting of buildings, appropriate spatial buffers and the use of transitional woodland edge planting.
- B. Conserve the existing trees on the site and, if possible, the pond within any new development and provide them with an appropriate setting.
- C. Ensure development responds to topography and is sensitive to the surrounding scale and morphology of existing development.
- D. Ensure that development to the south-west of the site fronts onto Horsham Road to continue the linear pattern of development, responding to the existing scale and character of the adjacent buildings. Seek opportunities to incorporate the existing hedge as a historic feature and transitional element.
- E. Ensure that new development contributes to enhancing the watercourse (gill stream) and its natural function to the north of the site through landscape enhancements.

As the site is determined to be major development at the Stage 1 assessment, it needs to proceed to the Stage 2 assessment which is the consideration of major development. This will include whether there are any exceptional circumstances and if the development is in the public interest.

¹⁸ APP/D3830/A/13/2198213 and 2198214 (12/04033/OUT and 12/04032/OUT) – Land at Handcross, West Sussex (1 May 2014). See paragraph 87.

Stage 2 – Consideration of major development (NPPF paragraph 190)

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

The Mid Sussex District Plan is currently at Examination. Following Hearings held in February and March 2026, the Inspector has asked the Council to test a higher housing requirement range of between 1,200 – 1,300 dpa. This increase in the housing requirement is to meet a proportion of neighbouring authorities unmet needs – principally at Crawley but also having regard to the south coast [IDJB-012].

In summary, as set out in the Housing: Post Hearings Update [MS-TP4], the Mid Sussex Local Housing Need is 19,243 dwellings for the plan period 2021-2040. At the Hearings, it was agreed that Mid Sussex would test a contribution to meet half (3,753 dwellings) of Crawley's unmet need. The Council also proposes accommodating 1,075 dwellings to meet the unmet needs of Brighton & Hove.

The housing requirement for the plan period of the Mid Sussex District Plan 2021-2040 is as follows:

Mid Sussex Local Housing Need	19,243
Unmet Need – Crawley	3,753
Unmet Need – Brighton & Hove	1,075
Total	24,071

The total housing requirement of 24,071 dwellings will be tested during the in-combination testing phase and, subject to the results of this, will be reflected in a Main Modification to DPH1: Housing.

The Council has reviewed the SHELAA sites according to its Site Selection Methodology and published a list of 35 additional sites for testing, 9 of which are within the High Weald National Landscape.

Along with other sites, accommodating homes on this site would help to enable the housing needs (including affordable housing) of the North West Sussex Housing Market Area to be met in full (alongside the contribution from Horsham District).

Development of the site for housing will contribute to housing land supply and the provision of homes for local people, including affordable housing. The site will also deliver community benefits in the form of a new community building/ village hall, bowling green and allotments.

The cost of, and scope for, developing outside the designated area, or meeting the need for it in some way

The Council considers that the most sustainable way to accommodate the unmet needs of Crawley is to seek to locate development as close as possible to the location where the need is arising.

Whilst it would theoretically be possible to locate the development elsewhere in the district and outside of the High Weald National

	Landscape given there are other sites in the SHELAA, or as a series of smaller sites within the High Weald National Landscape, this will not result in the same level of community benefits a larger site can bring. Such community benefits would only arise alongside the development. The Site Selection Papers set out why other sites, both within and outside the High Weald National Landscape, have been discounted from further assessment in the site selection process.
Any detrimental effect on the environment, the landscape and recreational opportunities, and the extent to which that could be moderated	A development of 105 dwellings on what is currently open pasture will lead to an adverse impact on the High Weald National Landscape. In particular, there could be harm to the ancient woodland and the historic settlement pattern. To help mitigate this potential harm, it will be important for the design and layout of the site to include an appropriate buffer for the ancient woodland. Whilst the site can be seen from publicly accessible viewpoints, there are no public rights of way crossing the site or on the site's boundary. Furthermore, the location of the site between the existing built form of Handcross and the ancient woodland means that there is limited scope for the site to expand further into the countryside. The site allocation policy can include relevant policy requirements to ensure there is a suitable framework in place that will avoid or minimise any detrimental effects. The policy requirements would include that the scheme must be designed to meet the principles in the High Weald AONB Management Plan and its supporting documents, which the Council has adopted as its policy of managing land in the High Weald National Landscape.
Can it be demonstrated the development is in the public interest?	In developing the site for housing, the site will provide affordable housing and will also deliver community benefits in the form of a new community building/ village hall, bowling green and allotments. Along with other sites, accommodating homes on this site would help to enable the housing needs of the North West Sussex Housing Market Area to be met in full (alongside the contribution from Horsham District).
Are there any other exceptional circumstances?	No. It is not considered that there are any other exceptional circumstances.
Conclusion	EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES AND THE PUBLIC INTEREST TEST ARE CAPABLE OF BEING DEMONSTRATED AT THE PLANNING APPLICATION STAGE

Paragraph 189 of the NPPF requires that great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Landscapes and that the scale and extent of development within the designated area should be limited.

The District Plan seeks to protect the High Weald National Landscape in both its spatial strategy and policy requirements.

The High Weald AONB Statement of Significance as set out in the High Weald AONB Management Plan is clear that the whole of the AONB is designated for its outstanding natural beauty, and all the AONB is important; any areas perceived as ‘degraded’ should be seen as opportunities for the enhancement of natural beauty, contributing positively to the purpose of designation and objectives of the Management Plan.

Whilst the Planning Practice Guidance sets out that NPPF policies may mean it is not possible to meet objectively assessed needs and that National Landscapes are unlikely to be suitable for accommodating unmet needs due to the great weight afforded to them, it does not rule out the possibility. The Inspector for the District Plan has asked the Council to test whether it can meet 50% of the unmet needs of Crawley and there are reasons that if that particular unmet need is to be met then it would mean that sites in the National Landscape would be required. This includes locating development close to where the need is arising.

It is considered that at this stage of plan-making, exceptional circumstances are capable of being demonstrated at the planning application stage when the proposed scheme will need to be reviewed again as more detail will be available from the application documents. This is because the exceptional circumstances include the housing requirement set out in the District Plan and the Inspector’s request to meet the some of the unmet needs of Crawley.

It is also considered that at this stage of plan-making, the public interest test is capable of being demonstrated at the planning application stage when the proposed scheme will need to be reviewed again as more detail will be available from the application documents. This is because development of the site will deliver affordable housing and community benefits.

It is also considered that the location of the site between the existing built form of Handcross and the ancient woodland means that there is limited scope for the site to expand further into the countryside. This means that the harm that will arise from developing on what is currently pasture for housing and other community uses will be limited and localised.

Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (as amended by the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023) places a statutory duty on all relevant authorities, including a local planning

authority such as Mid Sussex District Council, that in ‘exercising or performing any functions in relation to, or so as to affect, land in an AONB, they must seek to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the AONB’.

To help meet this duty, if the site is proposed as a housing allocation in the Mid Sussex District Plan, there should be robust policy requirements that require the site to conserve and enhance the High Weald AONB and to avoid harm to the natural beauty of the High Weald AONB. There should also be a requirement that the site be designed according to the principles set out in the High Weald AONB Management Plan and its supporting documents, including the:

- High Weald Housing Design Guide (2019)
- Planning Technical Advice Note: Dark Skies in the High Weald (2024)
- Planning Technical Advice Note: Soft Landscaping & Planting Plans in Development Proposals (2025)

In conclusion, whilst development of the site is likely to result in harm to the natural beauty of the High Weald National Landscape, this harm is likely to be limited and localised if the site is designed appropriately according to the High Weald AONB Management Plan and its supporting documents, all of which are material considerations in the planning process. Development of the site for 105 dwellings would comprise major development, however, at this stage of plan-making, it is considered that exceptional circumstances and the public interest test are capable of being met.

SHELAA 603 – Land to the west of Woodhouse Farm, Old Brighton Road South, Pease Pottage

Mid Sussex District Plan: Major Development in the High Weald National Landscape

Settlement

Pease Pottage

SHELAA ID

603

Land to the west of Woodhouse Farm, Old Brighton Road South, Pease Pottage

Site Details

Number of units

700

Site area (ha)

38.93

Stage 1 – Determining major development (NPPF footnote 67)

Nature of development

The site is at a Category 3 – Medium Village settlement. The site lies outside of the defined built-up area boundary. Development of the site would represent a significant extension of the settlement to the south into open countryside.

The site is proposed for housing development (700 units) and outdoor sports pitches. The site promoter has provided supporting information which includes a concept masterplan.

Development of the site would result in a land use change from pasture and arable land to housing and sports pitches.

Scale of development

Using the current adopted built-up area boundary to assess the size of the settlement, the site as a whole represents an increase of 197.71% in the built-up area of Pease Pottage and an increase of 139.44% in the number of dwellings. However, it should be noted that there is a recent development of 600 dwellings at Pease Pottage to the east of the A23/M23, but this development is outside of the current adopted built-up area boundary.

The High Weald National Landscape is a small-scale landscape of small, irregular fields and pasture, small woodlands, hedgerows, dark skies and dispersed historic settlements including hamlets and farmsteads. The landscape has perceptual qualities including tranquillity and an intrinsic sense of naturalness.

It is considered that the scale of the site and its development for housing (700 units) is a significant extension to the settlement of Pease Pottage.

Setting of development

The site is outside of the defined built-up area boundary and the main settlement and defined built-up area of Pease Pottage lies to the north of the site. The A23/M23 runs alongside Pease Pottage to the east and Crawley is to the north. There is also linear development to the east along the B2114 Brighton Road on the eastern side of the A23. There is a recent development of 600 dwellings to the east of the A23/M23 and this is within the High Weald National Landscape. Pease Pottage now comprises two areas either side of the A23/M23 –

	the older settlement to the west and the recent development to the east. To the north of the site is Finches Field recreation ground and Pease Pottage. To the east of the site is the A23 with open countryside beyond. To the south and west of the site is open countryside and the landscape becomes more rural (small fields and woodland). There is ancient woodland and priority habitat (deciduous woodland) within the site in the north-west, north-east and south-west corners. There is also ancient woodland on the western boundary of the site. There is a pond within the site on the western boundary and a watercourse in the same location that flows from the site to the west. A public right of way (bridleway) crosses the centre of the site on an east-west alignment and this is also a historic routeway. The proposed site access would connect to Old Brighton Road South to the east of the site. The site is in open countryside and so may benefit from tranquillity and dark skies, however, this is likely to be reduced due to the proximity of the A23/M23, nearby development and street lighting.
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The potential for significant adverse impact on AONB purposes for which the area has been designated (as set out in the High Weald Statement of Significance)

Core Character Component: Natural systems (geology, soils, water and climate)	Objective G1 There is a pond within the site on the western boundary and a watercourse in the same location that flows from the site to the west. There are other watercourses and ponds in the vicinity of the site. The site should be designed to protect river catchments and groundwater in accordance with planning policies and best practice. Objective G2 There is underlying sandstone geology for the majority of the site. Objective G3 The site should seek to achieve sustainable construction and contribute to climate change mitigation and adaption through its design and in accordance with planning policies and best practice. The site should encourage sustainable transport. Objective G4 Development of the site is likely to disturb the soil and best practice should be complied with to protect soils during construction from disturbance, compaction, pollution and erosion. Undisturbed soils should be protected and measures should be taken to minimise sterilisation of soils by permanent impermeable surfaces.
Core Character Component: Settlement	Objective S1

	The site is to the south of Pease Pottage in open countryside. Development of the site would significantly extend the settlement to the south introducing built form into open countryside and it would represent a substantial extension of Pease Pottage, breaking away from the settlement pattern and linear growth. Objective S2 The site should be designed according to the principles set out in the supporting documents to the High Weald AONB Management Plan and these documents are a material consideration in the planning process: • High Weald Housing Design Guide (2019) • Planning Technical Advice Note: Dark Skies in the High Weald (2024) • Planning Technical Advice Note: Soft Landscaping & Planting Plans in Development Proposals (2025) The High Weald Colour Study (2017) is also relevant. Appropriate use of colour for the buildings may help to reduce the visual impact of the site. Objective S3 There are no listed buildings, conservation areas, registered parks and gardens or archaeological notification areas near to the site.
Core Character Component: Routeways	Objective R1 A public right of way (bridleway) crosses the centre of the site on an east-west alignment and this is also a historic routeway. Horsham Road to the north of the site is a historic routeway (ridgeway). Objective R2 There may be opportunities to enhance the ecological function and condition of the historic routeways.
Core Character Component: Woodland	Objective W1 There is ancient woodland and priority habitat (deciduous woodland) within the site in the north-west, north-east and south-west corners. There is also ancient woodland on the western boundary of the site. There are also trees and hedgerows within the site, including veteran trees. Appropriate buffers should be included as part of the development layout and design. Objective W2 Existing trees should be retained in accordance with planning policies and there may be opportunities to enhance the connectivity of the nearby woodland through additional appropriate planting. Objective W3 Any archaeology found during construction should be investigated in line with standard requirements and best practice.

	Objective W4 Development of the site is unlikely to be able to contribute to the production of local timber, however, there may be opportunities to use local wood in its construction, and for any fencing and gates.
Core Character Component: Fieldscapes and heath	Objective FH1 The site is currently in agricultural use – pasture and arable land. Development of the site would mean the loss of several fields of agricultural land. Objective FH2 The site is currently in agricultural use and development of the site could change the existing shape and pattern of the site. Opportunities should be taken to retain hedges, ditches and other historic boundary features. Objective FH3 The site is currently in agricultural use. Opportunities should be taken to enhance existing habitats including through biodiversity net gain. Objective FH4 Three fields within the site are identified as historic fields. The field pattern should be retained in the design and layout of the site. Any archaeology found during construction should be investigated in line with standard requirements and best practice.
Core Character Component: Dark night skies	Objective DS1 Objective DS2 The site may experience partial dark skies due to limited surrounding development, however, there is likely to be light spill from the street lighting on the A23. Development of the site should take into account the principles in Planning Technical Advice Note: Dark Skies in the High Weald (2024).
Core Character Component: Aesthetic and perceptual qualities	Objective PQ1 There may be opportunities to support the High Weald National Landscape through promotion of activities and events. Objective PQ2 Development of the site should incorporate green infrastructure in accordance with planning policies and take into account the principles in: • High Weald Housing Design Guide (2019) • Planning Technical Advice Note: Soft Landscaping & Planting Plans in Development Proposals (2025) Objective PQ3 There may be opportunities to upgrade and enhance the local public rights of way network.
Core Character Component:	Objective LBE1

Land-based economy and rural living

There may be opportunities for the site to contribute towards land management activities, for example, through the construction phase by using local forestry and timber supplies.

Objective LBE2

The site should seek opportunities to contribute to local communities and community services. The site may help support rural services and amenities such as bus services, village shops and the post office through the additional people that the housing will bring. The site will provide sports pitches.

Objective LBE3

There may be opportunities to provide suitable housing for land-based workers.

Conservation and enhancement of the High Weald AONB

Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (as amended by the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023) places a statutory duty on all relevant authorities, including a local planning authority such as Mid Sussex District Council, that in 'exercising or performing any functions in relation to, or so as to affect, land in an AONB, they must seek to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the AONB'.

The High Weald AONB Statement of Significance as set out in the High Weald AONB Management Plan is clear that the whole of the AONB is designated for its outstanding natural beauty, and all the AONB is important; any areas perceived as 'degraded' should be seen as opportunities for the enhancement of natural beauty, contributing positively to the purpose of designation and objectives of the Management Plan.

The District Plan seeks to protect the High Weald National Landscape in both its spatial strategy and policy requirements.

At a local scale, built development would lead to significant changes in the landscape and potential changes to its character. It is considered that development of the site would result in a substantial adverse impact due to its size and setting. Whilst any potential harm to the natural beauty of the High Weald National Landscape should be avoided, there are measures that could be taken to minimise any potential harm. In particular, the site should be designed according to the principles set out in the High Weald AONB Management Plan and its supporting documents:

- High Weald Housing Design Guide (2019)
- Planning Technical Advice Note: Dark Skies in the High Weald (2024)
- Planning Technical Advice Note: Soft Landscaping & Planting Plans in Development Proposals (2025)

The High Weald Colour Study (2017) is also relevant. Appropriate use of colour for the buildings may help to reduce the visual impact of the site.

Particular attention should be paid to the ancient woodland and priority habitat (deciduous woodland) within and adjoining the site. The historic routeway and public right of way crossing the site should be carefully considered in the design and layout of the site including maintaining its current alignment and consideration of the current rural experience.

Opportunities should be taken to conserve and enhance the High Weald National Landscape.

Potential opportunities for mitigation of impacts and landscape enhancement are:

1. Integrate the existing pond into new development and establish an appropriate interface with new development with complementary arrangement to maintain its open setting and ecological health, and promote its amenity value as part of a development.
2. Adopt an appropriate spatial buffer to the watercourse and establish an appropriate interface with new development to maintain or enhance its setting and ecological health. Consider opportunities to enhance or restore its natural function and amenity value as setting to a development.
3. Ensure that new development responds positively to the scale, morphology and features of the historic public right of way within the site to maintain its character and offer a positive transition to the countryside, including the sensitive integration of access.
4. Conserve the existing blocks of woodland, adopt an appropriate spatial buffer between proposed buildings and the woodlands and establish an appropriate interface with new development with complementary arrangement to protect the woodland's extent, pattern, setting and ecological function by maintaining its existing relationship between woodlands and open fields that contribute to the character of the landscape. Natural England standing advice for buffers is a minimum of 15m. Promote the woodland as a visual backdrop and characteristic feature of future development, maintaining visual and physical public access across the site.
5. Consider opportunities to reinforce the existing fieldscape, its pattern and characteristics within new development, including the integration and enhancement of existing field boundary vegetation and an associated planting strategy that complements species, typologies and patterns found within the locality.
6. Consider maintaining the function and enhancing the quality of Finches Field to maintain access and connection to green open space.
7. Protect views and glimpses of the open countryside, particularly any long-range views towards the west and from the public right of way running both through the site and towards the site, through thoughtful design that responds to topography in order to maintain human connections to rural features.

Can the proposed allocation be described as ‘major’ in the ordinary meaning of the word?

Yes.

The nature, scale and setting of the site suggests a ‘major’ development in the ordinary meaning of the word. In particular, the scale of the development (700 dwellings) especially in a settlement of this size is considered to be a major development.

It should be remembered that opinions will vary between individuals as a result of, inter alia, their experiences, views towards development and the location where they live.

Draft District Plan Policy DPC4: High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

To meet the draft Policy DPC4 requirements, the design and layout of the site will need to be landscape-led reflecting High Weald character and responding to the historic pattern and character of settlements in the form, layout, grain and massing of development; and using high quality architecture. It is recommended that development of the site takes into account the objectives of the High Weald AONB Management Plan and its supporting documents including the High Weald Housing Design Guide. This will provide opportunities to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the High Weald National Landscape. This will be assessed further at the time of a planning application and prior to its determination.

Cumulative impacts

Cumulative impacts may be local at a settlement level or more widely at a district level, but there is also likely to be development across the High Weald National Landscape in other districts and boroughs and cumulatively at a landscape scale this may lead to further erosion of the natural beauty of the High Weald National Landscape.

At a settlement level, there are no proposed housing allocations in the Submission District Plan, although there are two other SHELAA sites (ID: 818 for 43 dwellings and ID: 1188 for 196 dwellings) that are on the list of additional sites for testing. SHELAA site ID: 818 and SHELAA site ID: 1188 are adjoining sites to the north of the site and to the north of the existing settlement of Pease Pottage.

As at the 1st April 2026, there are 0 units as commitments in Pease Pottage.

The site selection process for the District Plan sets out how the proposed housing allocations have been identified, tested and found to be the most suitable for delivering housing growth to meet the local housing need in the District and the housing requirement set out in the District Plan. The additional sites are being assessed as part of the in-combination work to test the ability to meet the Inspector’s request to increase the housing requirement to meet a proportion of the unmet needs of other local authorities, principally at Crawley.

Taking this into account and the nature, scale and setting of the site as well as the existing size of Pease Pottage, it is considered there



would be significant cumulative impacts from development of the site given the total area and yield of the three additional sites in Pease Pottage.

Conclusion

MAJOR DEVELOPMENT

Assessment of the site including its nature, scale and setting suggests a major development in the context of paragraph 190 of the NPPF. In particular, the scale of the development (700 dwellings) particularly in a settlement of this size is considered to be a major development. There are also significant cumulative impacts on Pease Pottage when the site is considered alongside the two other SHELAA sites on the list of additional sites for testing (ID: 818 and ID: 1188).

There will be impacts on the natural beauty of the High Weald National Landscape, however, these could be reduced through appropriate and careful design of the site. This includes both the built form and green infrastructure, including boundary treatments. The development should seek to retain any existing trees in accordance with policy requirements. The site should continue to take opportunities to protect tranquillity and dark skies.

To protect the ancient woodland and priority habitat (deciduous woodland), appropriate buffers should be included as part of the development layout and design.

The site should take into account the requirements set out in draft District Plan Policy DPC4: High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and other material considerations including the High Weald AONB Management Plan and its supporting documents such as the High Weald Housing Design Guide and the Planning Technical Advice Notes for dark skies and soft landscaping.

The recommendations are:

- A. Conserve existing woodland on the edges and across the site and retain a positive relationship between woodland and new development such as through the sensitive siting of buildings, appropriate spatial buffers and the use of transitional woodland edge planting.
- B. Seek opportunities to enhance ecological connections across the site through the introduction of new vegetation.
- C. Preserve and enhance the existing public right of way and integrate it within any new development.
- D. Enhance north-south connections across the site and maintain and enhance function of Finches Field, seeking to improve its quality through landscape enhancements.
- E. Conserve the existing watercourse on the site and seek opportunities to enhance its natural function and setting.

As the site is determined to be major development at the Stage 1 assessment, it needs to proceed to the Stage 2 assessment which is the consideration of major development. This will include whether

there are any exceptional circumstances and if the development is in the public interest.

Stage 2 – Consideration of major development (NPPF paragraph 190)

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

The Mid Sussex District Plan is currently at Examination. Following Hearings held in February and March 2026, the Inspector has asked the Council to test a higher housing requirement range of between 1,200 – 1,300 dpa. This increase in the housing requirement is to meet a proportion of neighbouring authorities unmet needs – principally at Crawley but also having regard to the south coast [IDJB-012].

In summary, as set out in the Housing: Post Hearings Update [MS-TP4], the Mid Sussex Local Housing Need is 19,243 dwellings for the plan period 2021-2040. At the Hearings, it was agreed that Mid Sussex would test a contribution to meet half (3,753 dwellings) of Crawley's unmet need. The Council also proposes accommodating 1,075 dwellings to meet the unmet needs of Brighton & Hove.

The housing requirement for the plan period of the Mid Sussex District Plan 2021-2040 is as follows:

Mid Sussex Local Housing Need	19,243
Unmet Need – Crawley	3,753
Unmet Need – Brighton & Hove	1,075
Total	24,071

The total housing requirement of 24,071 dwellings will be tested during the in-combination testing phase and, subject to the results of this, will be reflected in a Main Modification to DPH1: Housing.

The Council has reviewed the SHELAA sites according to its Site Selection Methodology and published a list of 35 additional sites for testing, 9 of which are within the High Weald National Landscape.

Along with other sites, accommodating homes on this site would help to enable the housing needs (including affordable housing) of the North West Sussex Housing Market Area to be met in full (alongside the contribution from Horsham District).

Development of the site for housing will contribute to housing land supply and the provision of homes for local people, including affordable housing. The site will also deliver community benefits in the form of outdoor sports provision (enclosed 4G pitch, 2 covered padel courts and a new cricket square) and upgrades to MacNaughton Hall to incorporate a small café/ community shop.

The cost of, and scope for, developing outside the designated area, or meeting the need for it in some way

The Council considers that the most sustainable way to accommodate the unmet needs of Crawley is to seek to locate development as close as possible to the location where the need is arising.

	Whilst it would theoretically be possible to locate the development elsewhere in the district and outside of the High Weald National Landscape given there are other sites in the SHELAA, or as a series of smaller sites within the High Weald National Landscape, this will not result in the same level of community benefits a larger site can bring. Such community benefits would only arise alongside the development. The Site Selection Papers set out why other sites, both within and outside the High Weald National Landscape, have been discounted from further assessment in the site selection process.
Any detrimental effect on the environment, the landscape and recreational opportunities, and the extent to which that could be moderated	A development of 700 dwellings on what is currently mainly greenfield and agricultural land will lead to a substantial adverse impact on the High Weald National Landscape. In particular, there could be harm to the ancient woodland, historic settlement pattern, historic field pattern and historic routeways. There is also the potential for the development to extend further south and west into open countryside. However, the site is adjacent to the A23 to the east with its associated noise and urbanising influences. To help mitigate this potential harm, it will be important for the design and layout of the site to include an appropriate buffer for the ancient woodland. The public right of way crossing the site should be carefully considered in the design and layout of the site including maintaining its current alignment and consideration of the current rural experience, as well as seeking opportunities to enhance it. The site allocation policy can include relevant policy requirements to ensure there is a suitable framework in place that will avoid or minimise any detrimental effects. The policy requirements would include that the scheme must be designed to meet the principles in the High Weald AONB Management Plan and its supporting documents, which the Council has adopted as its policy of managing land in the High Weald National Landscape.
Can it be demonstrated the development is in the public interest?	In developing the site for housing, the site will provide affordable housing and will also deliver community benefits in the form of outdoor sports provision. Along with other sites, accommodating homes on this site would help to enable the housing needs of the North West Sussex Housing Market Area to be met in full (alongside the contribution from Horsham District).
Are there any other exceptional circumstances?	No. It is not considered that there are any other exceptional circumstances.

Conclusion

EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES AND THE PUBLIC INTEREST TEST ARE CAPABLE OF BEING DEMONSTRATED AT THE PLANNING APPLICATION STAGE

Paragraph 189 of the NPPF requires that great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Landscapes and that the scale and extent of development within the designated area should be limited.

The District Plan seeks to protect the High Weald National Landscape in both its spatial strategy and policy requirements.

The High Weald AONB Statement of Significance as set out in the High Weald AONB Management Plan is clear that the whole of the AONB is designated for its outstanding natural beauty, and all the AONB is important; any areas perceived as 'degraded' should be seen as opportunities for the enhancement of natural beauty, contributing positively to the purpose of designation and objectives of the Management Plan.

Whilst the Planning Practice Guidance sets out that NPPF policies may mean it is not possible to meet objectively assessed needs and that National Landscapes are unlikely to be suitable for accommodating unmet needs due to the great weight afforded to them, it does not rule out the possibility. The Inspector for the District Plan has asked the Council to test whether it can meet 50% of the unmet needs of Crawley and there are reasons that if that particular unmet need is to be met then it would mean that sites in the National Landscape would be required. This includes locating development close to where the need is arising.

It is considered that at this stage of plan-making, exceptional circumstances are capable of being demonstrated at the planning application stage when the proposed scheme will need to be reviewed again as more detail will be available from the application documents. This is because the exceptional circumstances include the housing requirement set out in the District Plan and the Inspector's request to meet some of the unmet needs of Crawley.

It is also considered that at this stage of plan-making, the public interest test is capable of being demonstrated at the planning application stage when the proposed scheme will need to be reviewed again as more detail will be available from the application documents. This is because development of the site will deliver affordable housing and other community benefits.

Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (as amended by the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023) places a statutory duty on all relevant authorities, including a local planning authority such as Mid Sussex District Council, that in 'exercising or performing any functions in relation to, or so as to affect, land in an AONB, they must seek to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the AONB'.

To help meet this duty, if the site is proposed as a housing allocation in the Mid Sussex District Plan, there should be robust policy requirements that require the site to conserve and enhance the High Weald AONB and to avoid harm to the natural beauty of the High Weald AONB. There should also be a requirement that the site be designed according to the principles set out in the High Weald AONB Management Plan and its supporting documents, including the:

- High Weald Housing Design Guide (2019)
- Planning Technical Advice Note: Dark Skies in the High Weald (2024)
- Planning Technical Advice Note: Soft Landscaping & Planting Plans in Development Proposals (2025)

In conclusion, whilst development of the site is likely to result in harm to the natural beauty of the High Weald National Landscape, this harm may potentially be reduced if the site is designed appropriately according to the High Weald AONB Management Plan and its supporting documents, all of which are material considerations in the planning process. Development of the site for 700 dwellings would comprise major development, however, at this stage of plan-making, it is considered that exceptional circumstances and the public interest test are capable of being met, specifically with regards to responding to the Inspector's request to accommodate some of the unmet needs of Crawley.

SHELAA 818 – Land north of the Former Golf House, Horsham Road, Pease Pottage

Mid Sussex District Plan: Major Development in the High Weald National Landscape

Settlement

Pease Pottage

SHELAA ID

818

Land north of the Former Golf House, Horsham Road, Pease Pottage

Site Details

Number of units

43

Site area (ha)

1.7

Stage 1 – Determining major development (NPPF footnote 67)

Nature of development

The site is at a Category 3 – Medium Village settlement. The site lies outside of the defined built-up area boundary but contiguous to it on its south-eastern boundary. Development of the site would represent an extension of the settlement to the rear of existing built form.

The site is proposed for housing development (43 units) and employment use. The site promoter has not provided any information with regards to potential layout, housing mix or design.

Development of the site would result in a land use change from employment use with surrounding open space to mixed housing and employment.

Scale of development

Using the current adopted built-up area boundary to assess the size of the settlement, the site as a whole represents an increase of 8.63% in the built-up area of Pease Pottage and an increase of 8.57% in the number of dwellings.

The High Weald National Landscape is a small-scale landscape of small, irregular fields and pasture, small woodlands, hedgerows, dark skies and dispersed historic settlements including hamlets and farmsteads. The landscape has perceptual qualities including tranquillity and an intrinsic sense of naturalness.

It is considered that the scale of the site and its development for housing (43 units) on its own could be in keeping with the landscape character of the High Weald due to its current use and proximity with the existing settlement.

Setting of development

The site is outside of the defined built-up area boundary and the main settlement and defined built-up area of Pease Pottage lies to the east of the site. The A23/M23 runs alongside Pease Pottage to the east and Crawley is to the north. There is also linear development to the south along the B2114 Brighton Road on the eastern side of the A23. There is a recent development of 600 dwellings to the east of the A23/M23 and this is within the High Weald National Landscape. Pease Pottage now comprises two areas either side of the A23/M23 –

	the older settlement to the west and the recent development to the east. To the north of the site lies a previous golf course with open land and Crawley beyond. To the west and south of the site is open countryside and the landscape becomes more rural (small fields and woodland). There is ancient woodland and priority habitat (deciduous woodland) within the site on its northern and western boundaries. There is also a pond within the woodland in the north-west corner of the site. There are public rights of way in the vicinity of the site. The proposed site access would connect to Horsham Road to the south of the site. The western part of the site and the proposed site access is in Horsham District. The site is part of a rural village and so may benefit from tranquillity and dark skies, however, this is likely to be reduced due to the proximity of the A23/M23, nearby development and street lighting.
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The potential for significant adverse impact on AONB purposes for which the area has been designated (as set out in the High Weald Statement of Significance)

Core Character Component: Natural systems (geology, soils, water and climate)	Objective G1 There is a pond in the north-west corner of the site. There are watercourses and other ponds in the vicinity of the site. The site should be designed to protect river catchments and groundwater in accordance with planning policies and best practice. Objective G2 There is underlying sandstone geology in the southern part of the site and the surrounding area. Objective G3 The site should seek to achieve sustainable construction and contribute to climate change mitigation and adaption through its design and in accordance with planning policies and best practice. The site should encourage sustainable transport. Objective G4 Development of the site is likely to disturb the soil and best practice should be complied with to protect soils during construction from disturbance, compaction, pollution and erosion. Undisturbed soils should be protected and measures should be taken to minimise sterilisation of soils by permanent impermeable surfaces.
Core Character Component: Settlement	Objective S1

	The site is to the west of Pease Pottage and is contiguous to the defined built-up area boundary. Development of the site would extend the settlement to the north to the rear of existing built form. Objective S2 The site should be designed according to the principles set out in the supporting documents to the High Weald AONB Management Plan and these documents are a material consideration in the planning process: • High Weald Housing Design Guide (2019) • Planning Technical Advice Note: Dark Skies in the High Weald (2024) • Planning Technical Advice Note: Soft Landscaping & Planting Plans in Development Proposals (2025) The High Weald Colour Study (2017) is also relevant. Appropriate use of colour for the buildings may help to reduce the visual impact of the site. Objective S3 There are no listed buildings, conservation areas, registered parks and gardens or archaeological notification areas near to the site.
Core Character Component: Routeways	Objective R1 There is a public right of way (bridleway) to the west of the site and Horsham Road is a historic routeway (ridgeway). Objective R2 There may be opportunities to enhance the ecological function and condition of the historic routeways.
Core Character Component: Woodland	Objective W1 There is woodland, both ancient woodland and priority habitat (deciduous woodland) within the site on its northern and western boundaries. There are also trees within the site. Appropriate buffers should be included as part of the development layout and design. Objective W2 Existing trees should be retained in accordance with planning policies and there may be opportunities to enhance the connectivity of the nearby woodland through additional appropriate planting. Objective W3 Any archaeology found during construction should be investigated in line with standard requirements and best practice. Objective W4 Development of the site is unlikely to be able to contribute to the production of local timber, however, there may be opportunities to use local wood in its construction, and for any fencing and gates.

**Core Character Component:
Fieldsapes and heath**

Objective FH1

The site is not currently in agricultural use.

Objective FH2

The site is currently in employment use with surrounding open space and development of the site is not expected to change the existing shape and pattern of the site. Opportunities should be taken to retain hedges, ditches and other historic boundary features.

Objective FH3

The site is currently in employment use with surrounding open space. Opportunities should be taken to enhance existing habitats including through biodiversity net gain.

Objective FH4

The site is not currently identified as a historic field. The field pattern should be retained in the design and layout of the site. Any archaeology found during construction should be investigated in line with standard requirements and best practice.

**Core Character Component:
Dark night skies**

Objective DS1

Objective DS2

The site may experience partial dark skies due to limited surrounding development, however, there may be light spill from nearby street lighting and the A23/M23. Development of the site should take into account the principles in Planning Technical Advice Note: Dark Skies in the High Weald (2024).

**Core Character Component:
Aesthetic and perceptual
qualities**

Objective PQ1

There may be opportunities to support the High Weald National Landscape through promotion of activities and events.

Objective PQ2

Development of the site should incorporate green infrastructure in accordance with planning policies and take into account the principles in:

- High Weald Housing Design Guide (2019)
- Planning Technical Advice Note: Soft Landscaping & Planting Plans in Development Proposals (2025)

Objective PQ3

There may be opportunities to upgrade and enhance the local public rights of way network.

**Core Character Component:
Land-based economy and rural
living**

Objective LBE1

There may be opportunities for the site to contribute towards land management activities, for example, through the construction phase by using local forestry and timber supplies.

Objective LBE2

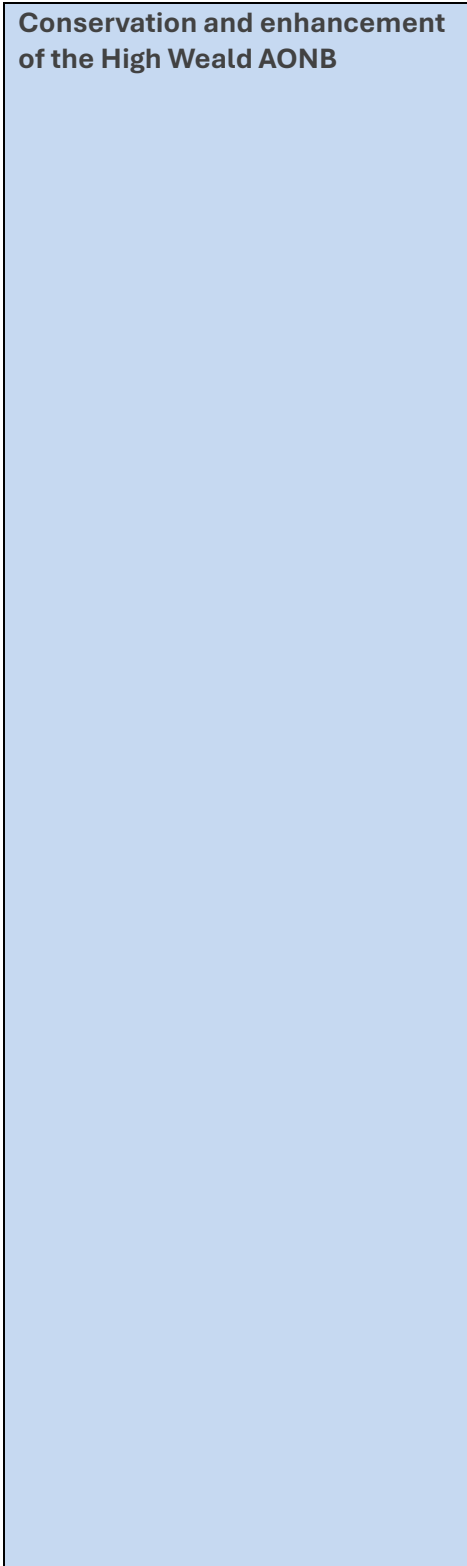
The site should seek opportunities to contribute to local communities and community services. The site may help support



rural services and amenities such as bus services, village shops and the post office through the additional people that the housing will bring.

Objective LBE3

There may be opportunities to provide suitable housing for land-based workers.



Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (as amended by the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023) places a statutory duty on all relevant authorities, including a local planning authority such as Mid Sussex District Council, that in ‘exercising or performing any functions in relation to, or so as to affect, land in an AONB, they must seek to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the AONB’.

The High Weald AONB Statement of Significance as set out in the High Weald AONB Management Plan is clear that the whole of the AONB is designated for its outstanding natural beauty, and all the AONB is important; any areas perceived as ‘degraded’ should be seen as opportunities for the enhancement of natural beauty, contributing positively to the purpose of designation and objectives of the Management Plan.

The District Plan seeks to protect the High Weald National Landscape in both its spatial strategy and policy requirements.

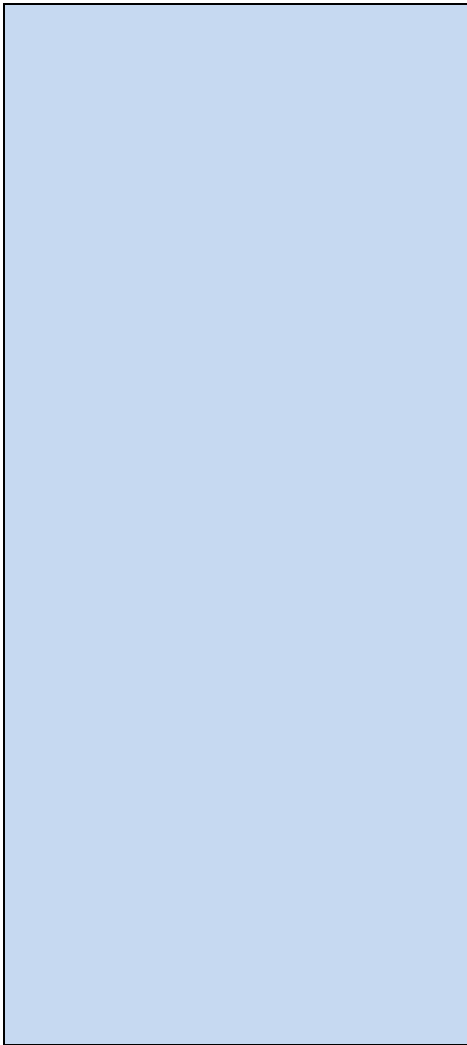
At a local scale, built development would lead to changes in the landscape and potential changes to its character. It is considered that development of the site (on its own) would result in a limited adverse impact due to its current land use. Whilst any potential harm to the natural beauty of the High Weald National Landscape should be avoided, there are measures that could be taken to minimise any potential harm. In particular, the site should be designed according to the principles set out in the High Weald AONB Management Plan and its supporting documents:

- High Weald Housing Design Guide (2019)
- Planning Technical Advice Note: Dark Skies in the High Weald (2024)
- Planning Technical Advice Note: Soft Landscaping & Planting Plans in Development Proposals (2025)

The High Weald Colour Study (2017) is also relevant. Appropriate use of colour for the buildings may help to reduce the visual impact of the site.

Particular attention should be paid to the ancient woodland and priority habitat (deciduous woodland) on the site’s northern and western boundaries and the pond in the north-west corner of the site.

	Opportunities should be taken to conserve and enhance the High Weald National Landscape. Potential opportunities for mitigation of impacts and landscape enhancement are: 1. Conserve the existing pond found within the woodland and establish an appropriate interface with new development to maintain or enhance its setting and ecological health. Consider opportunities to enhance or restore its natural function and amenity value as setting to a development if appropriate. 2. Ensure that new development responds positively to the scale, morphology and features of the historic routeway aligning the site, including the sensitive integration of access. 3. Conserve the Horsham Corner woodland on site, adopt an appropriate spatial buffer between proposed buildings and the woodland and establish an appropriate interface with new development with complementary arrangement to protect the woodland's extent, pattern, setting and ecological function by maintaining the existing relationships between woodlands and open fields that contribute to the character of the landscape. Natural England standing advice for buffers is a minimum of 15m. Promote the woodland as a visual backdrop and characteristic feature of future development, maintaining visual and physical public access across the site. 4. Consider providing an attractive accessible route to the ancient woodland through the site to improve equitable access and connections to the countryside, while respecting its capacity for visitors.
Can the proposed allocation be described as 'major' in the ordinary meaning of the word?	No. The nature, scale and setting of the site does not suggest a 'major' development in the ordinary meaning of the word. It should be remembered that opinions will vary between individuals as a result of, inter alia, their experiences, views towards development and the location where they live.
Draft District Plan Policy DPC4: High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty	To meet the draft Policy DPC4 requirements, the design and layout of the site will need to be landscape-led reflecting High Weald character and responding to the historic pattern and character of settlements in the form, layout, grain and massing of development; and using high quality architecture. It is recommended that development of the site takes into account the objectives of the High Weald AONB Management Plan and its supporting documents including the High Weald Housing Design Guide. This will provide opportunities to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the High Weald National Landscape. This will be assessed further at the time of a planning application and prior to its determination.
Cumulative impacts	Cumulative impacts may be local at a settlement level or more widely at a district level, but there is also likely to be development across the High Weald National Landscape in other districts and



boroughs and cumulatively at a landscape scale this may lead to further erosion of the natural beauty of the High Weald National Landscape.

At a settlement level, there are no proposed housing allocations in the Submission District Plan, although there are two other SHELAA sites (ID: 603 for 700 dwellings and ID: 1188 for 196 dwellings) that are on the list of additional sites for testing. SHELAA site ID: 603 is to the south of the site and SHELAA site ID: 1188 adjoins the site to the north.

As at the 1st April 2026, there are 0 units as commitments in Pease Pottage.

The site selection process for the District Plan sets out how the proposed housing allocations have been identified, tested and found to be the most suitable for delivering housing growth to meet the local housing need in the District and the housing requirement set out in the District Plan. The additional sites are being assessed as part of the in-combination work to test the ability to meet the Inspector's request to increase the housing requirement to meet a proportion of the unmet needs of other local authorities, principally at Crawley.

Taking this into account and the nature, scale and setting of the site as well as the existing size of Pease Pottage, it is considered there would be significant cumulative impacts from development of the site given the total area and yield of the three additional sites in Pease Pottage.

Conclusion

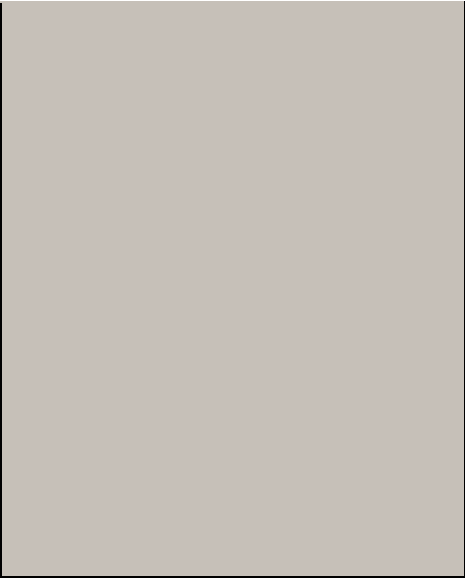
NOT MAJOR DEVELOPMENT

Assessment of the site of its own including its nature, scale and setting does not suggest a major development in the context of paragraph 190 of the NPPF. However, there is the potential for significant cumulative impacts on Pease Pottage when the site is considered alongside the two other SHELAA sites on the list of additional sites for testing (ID: 603 and ID: 1188).

There may be localised impacts on the natural beauty of the High Weald National Landscape, however, these could be reduced through appropriate and careful design of the site. This includes both the built form and green infrastructure, including boundary treatments. The development should seek to retain any existing trees in accordance with policy requirements. The site should continue to take opportunities to protect tranquillity and dark skies.

To protect the ancient woodland and priority habitat (deciduous woodland), appropriate buffers should be included as part of the development layout and design.

The site should take into account the requirements set out in draft District Plan Policy DPC4: High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural



Beauty and other material considerations including the High Weald AONB Management Plan and its supporting documents such as the High Weald Housing Design Guide and the Planning Technical Advice Notes for dark skies and soft landscaping.

The recommendations are:

- A. Conserve existing woodland round the northern edges of the site and retain a positive relationship between woodland and new development such as through the sensitive siting of buildings, appropriate spatial buffers and the use of transitional woodland edge planting.
- B. Conserve the existing pond within the woodland and seek opportunities to restore or enhance its historic function and its setting.
- C. Retain certain views and glimpses of woodland as a backdrop from development to the south-east of the site.

SHELAA 1188 – Land at Pease Field, Pease Pottage

Mid Sussex District Plan: Major Development in the High Weald National Landscape

Settlement

Pease Pottage

SHELAA ID

1188

Land at Pease Field, Pease Pottage

Site Details

Number of units

196

Site area (ha)

11.4

Stage 1 – Determining major development (NPPF footnote 67)

Nature of development

The site is at a Category 3 – Medium Village settlement. The site lies outside of the defined built-up area boundary but contiguous to it on its southern boundary. Development of the site would represent an extension of the settlement to the north-west to the rear of existing built form.

The site is proposed for housing development (196 units). The site promoter has provided a concept plan which shows an indicative layout.

Development of the site would result in a land use change from a former golf course to housing.

Scale of development

Using the current adopted built-up area boundary to assess the size of the settlement, the site as a whole represents an increase of 57.90% in the built-up area of Pease Pottage and an increase of 39.04% in the number of dwellings.

The High Weald National Landscape is a small-scale landscape of small, irregular fields and pasture, small woodlands, hedgerows, dark skies and dispersed historic settlements including hamlets and farmsteads. The landscape has perceptual qualities including tranquillity and an intrinsic sense of naturalness.

It is considered that the scale of the site and its development for housing (196 units) is a significant extension to the settlement of Pease Pottage but its impacts could be reduced due to its proximity with the existing settlement and its existing land use.

Setting of development

The site is outside of the defined built-up area boundary and the main settlement and defined built-up area of Pease Pottage lies to the south and east of the site. The A23/M23 runs alongside Pease Pottage to the east and Crawley is to the north. There is also linear development to the south along the B2114 Brighton Road on the eastern side of the A23. There is a recent development of 600 dwellings to the east of the A23/M23 and this is within the High Weald National Landscape. Pease Pottage now comprises two areas either side of the A23/M23 – the older settlement to the west and the recent development to the east.

	To the north of the site is open land and Crawley beyond. To the west of the site is a golf course and a country house boarding prep school. Beyond the immediate surroundings, the landscape becomes more rural (small fields and woodland) to the west and south of the site. There is ancient woodland and priority habitat (deciduous woodland) within the site on its south-west boundary. There is also ancient woodland and priority habitat (deciduous woodland) adjoining the eastern boundary and priority habitat (deciduous woodland) adjoining the north of the site. There is a watercourse crossing the eastern part of the site and running on a north-south alignment. There are public rights of way in the vicinity of the site. The proposed site access would connect to Horsham Road via Foresters Way to the south of the site. The site is part of a rural village and so may benefit from tranquillity and dark skies, however, this is likely to be reduced due to the proximity of the A23/M23, nearby development and street lighting.
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The potential for significant adverse impact on AONB purposes for which the area has been designated (as set out in the High Weald Statement of Significance)

Core Character Component: Natural systems (geology, soils, water and climate)	Objective G1 There is a pond adjacent to the north-west corner of the site and another pond adjacent to the south-west corner of the site. There is a watercourse crossing the eastern part of the site and running on a north-south alignment. There are other watercourses and ponds in the vicinity of the site. The site should be designed to protect river catchments and groundwater in accordance with planning policies and best practice. Objective G2 There is underlying sandstone geology for the majority of the site. Objective G3 The site should seek to achieve sustainable construction and contribute to climate change mitigation and adaption through its design and in accordance with planning policies and best practice. The site should encourage sustainable transport. Objective G4 Development of the site is likely to disturb the soil and best practice should be complied with to protect soils during construction from disturbance, compaction, pollution and erosion. Undisturbed soils should be protected and measures should be taken to minimise sterilisation of soils by permanent impermeable surfaces.
Core Character Component: Settlement	Objective S1

	The site is to the west of Pease Pottage and is contiguous to the defined built-up area boundary. Development of the site would extend the settlement to the north to the rear of existing built form. Objective S2 The site should be designed according to the principles set out in the supporting documents to the High Weald AONB Management Plan and these documents are a material consideration in the planning process: • High Weald Housing Design Guide (2019) • Planning Technical Advice Note: Dark Skies in the High Weald (2024) • Planning Technical Advice Note: Soft Landscaping & Planting Plans in Development Proposals (2025) The High Weald Colour Study (2017) is also relevant. Appropriate use of colour for the buildings may help to reduce the visual impact of the site. Objective S3 There are no listed buildings, conservation areas, registered parks and gardens or archaeological notification areas near to the site.
Core Character Component: Routeways	Objective R1 There is a public right of way (bridleway) to the west of the site and Horsham Road is a historic routeway (ridgeway). Objective R2 There may be opportunities to enhance the ecological function and condition of the historic routeways.
Core Character Component: Woodland	Objective W1 There is ancient woodland and priority habitat (deciduous woodland) within the site on its south-west boundary. There is also ancient woodland and priority habitat (deciduous woodland) adjoining the eastern boundary and priority habitat (deciduous woodland) adjoining the north of the site. There are also trees within the site. Appropriate buffers should be included as part of the development layout and design. Objective W2 Existing trees should be retained in accordance with planning policies and there may be opportunities to enhance the connectivity of the nearby woodland through additional appropriate planting. Objective W3 Any archaeology found during construction should be investigated in line with standard requirements and best practice. Objective W4

	Development of the site is unlikely to be able to contribute to the production of local timber, however, there may be opportunities to use local wood in its construction, and for any fencing and gates.
Core Character Component: Fieldsapes and heath	Objective FH1 The site is not currently in agricultural use. Objective FH2 The site is a former golf course and development of the site is not expected to significantly change the existing shape and pattern of the site. Opportunities should be taken to retain hedges, ditches and other historic boundary features. Objective FH3 The site is a former golf course. Opportunities should be taken to enhance existing habitats including through biodiversity net gain. Objective FH4 The north-eastern field parcel is identified as a historic field. The field pattern should be retained in the design and layout of the site. Any archaeology found during construction should be investigated in line with standard requirements and best practice.
Core Character Component: Dark night skies	Objective DS1 Objective DS2 The site may experience partial dark skies due to limited surrounding development, however, there may be light spill from nearby street lighting from the A23/M23. Development of the site should take into account the principles in Planning Technical Advice Note: Dark Skies in the High Weald (2024).
Core Character Component: Aesthetic and perceptual qualities	Objective PQ1 There may be opportunities to support the High Weald National Landscape through promotion of activities and events. Objective PQ2 Development of the site should incorporate green infrastructure in accordance with planning policies and take into account the principles in: • High Weald Housing Design Guide (2019) • Planning Technical Advice Note: Soft Landscaping & Planting Plans in Development Proposals (2025) Objective PQ3 There may be opportunities to upgrade and enhance the local public rights of way network.
Core Character Component: Land-based economy and rural living	Objective LBE1 There may be opportunities for the site to contribute towards land management activities, for example, through the construction phase by using local forestry and timber supplies.



Objective LBE2

The site should seek opportunities to contribute to local communities and community services. The site may help support rural services and amenities such as bus services, village shops and the post office through the additional people that the housing will bring.

Objective LBE3

There may be opportunities to provide suitable housing for land-based workers.

Conservation and enhancement of the High Weald AONB

Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (as amended by the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023) places a statutory duty on all relevant authorities, including a local planning authority such as Mid Sussex District Council, that in ‘exercising or performing any functions in relation to, or so as to affect, land in an AONB, they must seek to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the AONB’.

The High Weald AONB Statement of Significance as set out in the High Weald AONB Management Plan is clear that the whole of the AONB is designated for its outstanding natural beauty, and all the AONB is important; any areas perceived as ‘degraded’ should be seen as opportunities for the enhancement of natural beauty, contributing positively to the purpose of designation and objectives of the Management Plan.

The District Plan seeks to protect the High Weald National Landscape in both its spatial strategy and policy requirements.

At a local scale, built development would lead to changes in the landscape and potential changes to its character. It is considered that development of the site would result in an adverse impact but the impact is reduced due to its current land use. Whilst any potential harm to the natural beauty of the High Weald National Landscape should be avoided, there are measures that could be taken to minimise any potential harm. In particular, the site should be designed according to the principles set out in the High Weald AONB Management Plan and its supporting documents:

- High Weald Housing Design Guide (2019)
- Planning Technical Advice Note: Dark Skies in the High Weald (2024)
- Planning Technical Advice Note: Soft Landscaping & Planting Plans in Development Proposals (2025)

The High Weald Colour Study (2017) is also relevant. Appropriate use of colour for the buildings may help to reduce the visual impact of the site.

Particular attention should be paid to the ancient woodland and priority habitat (deciduous woodland) within the site on its south-west boundary, and the ancient woodland and priority habitat

	(deciduous woodland) adjoining the eastern boundary and priority habitat (deciduous woodland) adjoining the north of the site. Opportunities should be taken to conserve and enhance the High Weald National Landscape. Potential opportunities for mitigation of impacts and landscape enhancement are: 1. Consider conserving the mature trees and hedgerows on site to maintain their contribution to landscape character. Complement existing vegetation with new vegetation to strengthen ecological links across the site. 2. Adopt an appropriate spatial buffer to the watercourse and nearby ponds and establish an appropriate interface with new development with complementary arrangement to maintain its open setting and ecological health, and promote its amenity value as part of a development. Consider opportunities to enhance or restore their natural function if appropriate. 3. Ensure that new development responds positively to the scale, morphology and features of the historic ridgeway route aligning the site, including the sensitive integration of access. 4. Conserve the existing Pease Pottage and Horsham Corner ancient woodland blocks on site, adopt an appropriate spatial buffer between proposed buildings and the woodland blocks and establish an appropriate interface with new development with complementary arrangement to protect the woodland's extent, pattern, setting and ecological function by maintaining the existing relationships between woodlands and open fields that contribute to the character of the landscape. Natural England standing advice for buffers is a minimum of 15m. Promote the woodland as a visual backdrop and characteristic feature of future development, maintaining visual and physical public access across the site. 5. Consider opportunities to reinforce the existing fieldscape, its pattern and characteristics within new development, including the integration and enhancement of existing field boundary vegetation and an associated planting strategy that complements species, typologies and patterns found within the locality. 6. Consider providing an attractive accessible route through the site to improve equitable access and connections to the countryside, while respecting the capacity of surrounding woodland for visitors. 7. Protect views and glimpses of the open countryside, particularly any long-range views from within the site towards the west, through thoughtful design that responds to topography in order to maintain human connections to rural features.
Can the proposed allocation be described as 'major' in the ordinary meaning of the word?	Yes. The nature, scale and setting of the site suggests a 'major' development in the ordinary meaning of the word. In particular, the

	scale of the development (196 dwellings) in a settlement of this size is considered to be a major development. It should be remembered that opinions will vary between individuals as a result of, inter alia, their experiences, views towards development and the location where they live.
Draft District Plan Policy DPC4: High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty	To meet the draft Policy DPC4 requirements, the design and layout of the site will need to be landscape-led reflecting High Weald character and responding to the historic pattern and character of settlements in the form, layout, grain and massing of development; and using high quality architecture. It is recommended that development of the site takes into account the objectives of the High Weald AONB Management Plan and its supporting documents including the High Weald Housing Design Guide. This will provide opportunities to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the High Weald National Landscape. This will be assessed further at the time of a planning application and prior to its determination.
Cumulative impacts	Cumulative impacts may be local at a settlement level or more widely at a district level, but there is also likely to be development across the High Weald National Landscape in other districts and boroughs and cumulatively at a landscape scale this may lead to further erosion of the natural beauty of the High Weald National Landscape. At a settlement level, there are no proposed housing allocations in the Submission District Plan, although there are two other SHELAA sites (ID: 603 for 700 dwellings and ID: 818 for 43 dwellings) that are on the list of additional sites for testing. SHELAA site ID: 603 is to the south of the site and SHELAA site ID: 818 adjoins the site to the west. As at the 1st April 2026, there are 0 units as commitments in Pease Pottage. The site selection process for the District Plan sets out how the proposed housing allocations have been identified, tested and found to be the most suitable for delivering housing growth to meet the local housing need in the District and the housing requirement set out in the District Plan. The additional sites are being assessed as part of the in-combination work to test the ability to meet the Inspector's request to increase the housing requirement to meet a proportion of the unmet needs of other local authorities, principally at Crawley. Taking this into account and the nature, scale and setting of the site as well as the existing size of Pease Pottage, it is considered there would be significant cumulative impacts from development of the site given the total area and yield of the three additional sites in Pease Pottage.
Conclusion	MAJOR DEVELOPMENT

	Assessment of the site including its nature, scale and setting suggests a major development in the context of paragraph 190 of the NPPF. In particular, the scale of the development (196 dwellings) in a settlement of this size is considered to be a major development. There are also significant cumulative impacts on Pease Pottage when the site is considered alongside the two other SHELAA sites on the list of additional sites for testing (ID: 603 and ID: 818). There may be localised impacts on the natural beauty of the High Weald National Landscape, however, these could be reduced through appropriate and careful design of the site. This includes both the built form and green infrastructure, including boundary treatments. The development should seek to retain any existing trees in accordance with policy requirements. The site should continue to take opportunities to protect tranquillity and dark skies. To protect the ancient woodland and priority habitat (deciduous woodland), appropriate buffers should be included as part of the development layout and design. The site should take into account the requirements set out in draft District Plan Policy DPC4: High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and other material considerations including the High Weald AONB Management Plan and its supporting documents such as the High Weald Housing Design Guide and the Planning Technical Advice Notes for dark skies and soft landscaping. The recommendations are: A. Conserve existing woodland at the edges and throughout the site and retain a positive relationship between woodland and new development such as through the sensitive siting of buildings, appropriate spatial buffers and the use of transitional woodland edge planting. B. Seek opportunities to enhance ecological connections across the site through the introduction of new vegetation. C. Enhance north-south connections through the site. D. Maintain the existing watercourse on the site and contribute to enhancing its natural function and setting through landscape enhancements. Reference the aligning historic field boundary, such as through the introduction of appropriate vegetation. As the site is determined to be major development at the Stage 1 assessment, it needs to proceed to the Stage 2 assessment which is the consideration of major development. This will include whether there are any exceptional circumstances and if the development is in the public interest.
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Stage 2 – Consideration of major development (NPPF paragraph 190)

The need for the development, including in terms of any national considerations, and the

The Mid Sussex District Plan is currently at Examination. Following Hearings held in February and March 2026, the Inspector has asked the Council to test a higher housing requirement range of between

impact of permitting it, or refusing it, upon the local economy

1,200 – 1,300 dpa. This increase in the housing requirement is to meet a proportion of neighbouring authorities unmet needs – principally at Crawley but also having regard to the south coast [IDJB-012].

In summary, as set out in the Housing: Post Hearings Update [MS-TP4], the Mid Sussex Local Housing Need is 19,243 dwellings for the plan period 2021-2040. At the Hearings, it was agreed that Mid Sussex would test a contribution to meet half (3,753 dwellings) of Crawley's unmet need. The Council also proposes accommodating 1,075 dwellings to meet the unmet needs of Brighton & Hove.

The housing requirement for the plan period of the Mid Sussex District Plan 2021-2040 is as follows:

Mid Sussex Local Housing Need	19,243
Unmet Need – Crawley	3,753
Unmet Need – Brighton & Hove	1,075
Total	24,071

The total housing requirement of 24,071 dwellings will be tested during the in-combination testing phase and, subject to the results of this, will be reflected in a Main Modification to DPH1: Housing.

The Council has reviewed the SHELAA sites according to its Site Selection Methodology and published a list of 35 additional sites for testing, 9 of which are within the High Weald National Landscape.

Along with other sites, accommodating homes on this site would help to enable the housing needs (including affordable housing) of the North West Sussex Housing Market Area to be met in full (alongside the contribution from Horsham District).

Development of the site for housing will contribute to housing land supply and the provision of homes for local people, including affordable housing.

The cost of, and scope for, developing outside the designated area, or meeting the need for it in some way

The Council considers that the most sustainable way to accommodate the unmet needs of Crawley is to seek to locate development as close as possible to the location where the need is arising.

Whilst it would theoretically be possible to locate the development elsewhere in the district and outside of the High Weald National Landscape given there are other sites in the SHELAA, or as a series of smaller sites within the High Weald National Landscape, this will not result in the same level of community benefits a larger site can bring. Such community benefits would only arise alongside the development.

	The Site Selection Papers set out why other sites, both within and outside the High Weald National Landscape, have been discounted from further assessment in the site selection process.
Any detrimental effect on the environment, the landscape and recreational opportunities, and the extent to which that could be moderated	A development of 196 dwellings on what is currently a former golf course will lead to an adverse impact on the High Weald National Landscape. In particular, there could be harm to ancient woodland and to help mitigate this potential harm, it will be important for the design and layout of the site to include an appropriate buffer for the ancient woodland and priority habitat (deciduous woodland) The site has limited views from publicly accessible viewpoints and there are no public rights of way crossing the site or on the site's boundary. The site allocation policy can include relevant policy requirements to ensure there is a suitable framework in place that will avoid or minimise any detrimental effects. The policy requirements would include that the scheme must be designed to meet the principles in the High Weald AONB Management Plan and its supporting documents, which the Council has adopted as its policy of managing land in the High Weald National Landscape.
Can it be demonstrated the development is in the public interest?	In developing the site for housing, the site will provide affordable housing. Along with other sites, accommodating homes on this site would help to enable the housing needs of the North West Sussex Housing Market Area to be met in full (alongside the contribution from Horsham District).
Are there any other exceptional circumstances?	No. It is not considered that there are any other exceptional circumstances.
Conclusion	EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES AND THE PUBLIC INTEREST TEST ARE CAPABLE OF BEING DEMONSTRATED Paragraph 189 of the NPPF requires that great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Landscapes and that the scale and extent of development within the designated area should be limited. The District Plan seeks to protect the High Weald National Landscape in both its spatial strategy and policy requirements. The High Weald AONB Statement of Significance as set out in the High Weald AONB Management Plan is clear that the whole of the AONB is designated for its outstanding natural beauty, and all the AONB is important; any areas perceived as 'degraded' should be seen as opportunities for the enhancement of natural beauty, contributing positively to the purpose of designation and objectives of the Management Plan.

Whilst the Planning Practice Guidance sets out that NPPF policies may mean it is not possible to meet objectively assessed needs and that National Landscapes are unlikely to be suitable for accommodating unmet needs due to the great weight afforded to them, it does not rule out the possibility. The Inspector for the District Plan has asked the Council to test whether it can meet 50% of the unmet needs of Crawley and there are reasons that if that particular unmet need is to be met then it would mean that sites in the National Landscape would be required. This includes locating development close to where the need is arising.

It is considered that at this stage of plan-making, exceptional circumstances are capable of being demonstrated at the planning application stage when the proposed scheme will need to be reviewed again as more detail will be available from the application documents. This is because the exceptional circumstances include the housing requirement set out in the District Plan and the Inspector's request to meet some of the unmet needs of Crawley.

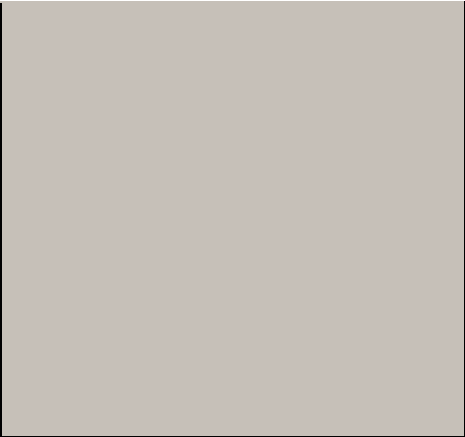
It is also considered that at this stage of plan-making, the public interest test is capable of being demonstrated at the planning application stage when the proposed scheme will need to be reviewed again as more detail will be available from the application documents. This is because development of the site will deliver affordable housing.

It is also considered that the location of the site between the existing built form of Pease Pottage and woodland and priority habitat (deciduous woodland) to the north means that there is likely to be limited scope for the site to expand further into the countryside. This means that the harm that will arise from developing what is currently a former golf course for housing will be limited and localised.

Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (as amended by the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023) places a statutory duty on all relevant authorities, including a local planning authority such as Mid Sussex District Council, that in 'exercising or performing any functions in relation to, or so as to affect, land in an AONB, they must seek to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the AONB'.

To help meet this duty, if the site is proposed as a housing allocation in the Mid Sussex District Plan, there should be robust policy requirements that require the site to conserve and enhance the High Weald AONB and to avoid harm to the natural beauty of the High Weald AONB. There should also be a requirement that the site be designed according to the principles set out in the High Weald AONB Management Plan and its supporting documents, including the:

- High Weald Housing Design Guide (2019)
- Planning Technical Advice Note: Dark Skies in the High Weald (2024)

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- Planning Technical Advice Note: Soft Landscaping & Planting Plans in Development Proposals (2025)

In conclusion, whilst development of the site is likely to result in harm to the natural beauty of the High Weald National Landscape, this harm is likely to be limited and localised if the site is designed appropriately according to the High Weald AONB Management Plan and its supporting documents, all of which are material considerations in the planning process. Development of the site for 196 dwellings would comprise major development, however, at this stage of plan-making, it is considered that exceptional circumstances and the public interest test are capable of being met.