

Appendix A – Identifying Green Gaps

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Introduction

- A1. One of Wadhurst's principal assets, set wholly within the AONB, is the high quality of its environment, both the built heritage and the natural landscape. The Parish has a dispersed and varied settlement pattern within different landscape areas, with several small settlement communities. Each settlement has its own unique characteristics and functions, depending on its location and historical influences.
- A2. The character of this High Weald landscape is distinctive through the dispersed historic settlement pattern of farmsteads, hamlets, and late medieval villages, sited on ridges or higher ground within the landscape. Settlements were linked by a network of intact ancient route ways (now often roads and rights of way) in the form of ridge top roads and a dense system of radiating drove ways. These are often narrow, deeply sunken and edged with trees, hedgerows, wildflower-rich verges, and boundary banks.
- A3. Preventing coalescence between the individual settlements of the Parish is important to local people. Each settlement has its own character and is distinct from the others. Preserving this distinction is critical to retain the rural village feel that residents so clearly value.

- A4. The purpose of green gaps is to preserve the physical and visual separation of settlements. They act as pastoral 'bookends', framing settlements within their rural setting and demarcating the transition from one rural settlement to another. They also protect the individual identities of settlements (although this is the result of rather than the aim of gaps). Green gaps therefore have a landscape function to prevent coalescence of settlements, rather than being related to landscape quality or being a policy to protect landscape character. For this reason, strategic gaps may have areas of poorer quality landscape or rural fringe uses.
- A5. The sense of separation provided between settlements relates to the character of the gap as well as its size. Small gaps can be effective in maintaining settlement separation if they have a rural character and provide a sense of separation, perhaps as a result of a distinct topography, presence of vegetation which limits inter-visibility between the settlements, or containing a distinct landscape feature. On the other hand, large gaps may not be effective if they have a suburban character, or lack vegetation and have clear inter-visibility between the settlements, and lack any other features that might provide a sense of separation such as a distinct topographical or landscape feature.

Policy context

National Planning Policy Framework

- A6. Protection of existing settlement pattern is not specifically mentioned in the National Planning Policy Framework, nor the associated planning guidance. However, the concept of settlement gaps is broadly consistent with the NPPF, in that: *"Strategic policies...should make sufficient provision for ...conservation and enhancement of the natural built and historic environment, including landscapes and green infrastructure"* (NPPF, paragraph 20) and *"Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by...protecting and enhancing valued landscape"* (NPPF paragraph 174).

Wealden Local Plan

- A7. Strategic Objective 13 of the Core Strategy encourage the development of high quality, safe and attractive living environments for communities in both towns and villages, while promoting local distinctiveness through good design in all new development. We want future built development to create spaces and places which are sustainable, distinctive and durable- places where people will want to live.
- A8. Policy EN2 of the Local Plan (1998) seeks to maintain the existing settlement pattern.
- A9. The adopted Local Plan for Wealden identifies specific green gaps in the district and suggests that there are other settlements where the open countryside separating them is also particularly vulnerable to development pressures that would tend to erode their separate identities and their rural settings.

- A10. Green Gaps are identified in the Wadhurst Neighbourhood Plan to protect against ribbon development and / or coalescence of the individual settlement communities.
- A11. These gaps are particularly sensitive, being visually exposed within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Previous planning policy has acknowledged the significance of these areas and it is considered that specific protection from development should continue to be expressed. The WNP defines these gaps at the Parish level.

Methodology

- A12. An essential element in reviewing areas for local Identification as a green gap is the adoption of a consistent and systematic and transparent process.
- A13. There is currently no prescribed method for assessing strategic gaps. Strategic gap policies have generally been found sound at Examination, when they are supported by robust and up-to-date evidence to justify the extent or purpose of the gaps identified and are focused on protecting specific areas between settlements (rather than all rural areas outside settlements).
- A14. To consider potential green gaps in Wadhurst, first a set of criteria was assembled, drawing on similar studies from elsewhere. This was followed by a desktop exercise to identify potential sites where green gaps might assist in maintaining the openness and separation between settlements within the Parish. Finally, each area was assessed against the criteria and the outputs presented to the community and others, including WDC and the AONB, for comment.

Step 1: Developing the criteria

A15. The following criteria have been used to consider each potential green gap:

Criteria	Explanation	Indicators of weak gap	Indicators of strong gap
Existing settlement identify and pattern	Assess the extent to which the settlements or neighbourhoods that lie adjacent to the gap have an individual townscape character and identify and how that contributes to existing settlement pattern.	The individual townscape character, origin, form and pattern of the settlements or neighbourhoods that lie adjacent to the gap are not distinct. Loss or partial loss of the gap would not adversely affect the existing settlement pattern.	The individual townscape character, origin, form and pattern of the settlement or neighbourhoods that lie adjacent to the gap are distinct. The presence of Conservation Areas, Listed Buildings are indicators of individual settlement character. The gap plays a role in settlement separation and pattern.
Landscape character	Assess the landscape character of the area between the settlements or neighbourhoods and any land use and landscape features within the gap that contribute to its character as open and undeveloped land.	There are significant man-made features or urban land uses that contribute to the developed character of the landscape. The area has a suburban character and residential areas outside defined settlement boundaries weaken the perception of the gap as 'countryside'. The area lacks landscape features that contribute positively to the undeveloped character of the gap.	Existing land uses contribute to the open and undeveloped character of the landscape e.g. agriculture, horticulture, forestry. There is a low density or absence of built development. The landscape has significant landscape features that contribute to its undeveloped character.

Criteria	Explanation	Indicators of weak gap	Indicators of strong gap
Visual character	Assess the visual character of the area between settlements. How do the views to or from settlements into the open countryside contribute positively to the visual character of the area.	Views to and from the settlement do not contribute positively to the visual character of the area.	Views to and from the settlement contribute positively to the visual character of the area (e.g.

A16. Each potential green gap was given a rating as set out below based on each criterion, with a commentary on whether it meets, does not meet or partially meets criteria for Identification as a green gap.

Key	
Fully meets	
Partially meets	
Does not meet	

A17. Each site was visited to check the boundaries. This field survey was undertaken from public rights of ways, roads and publicly accessible viewpoints.

A18. The indicators and findings work in combination; hence the green gap does not need to fulfil all criteria equally. The assessments are based on the judgement of the Steering Group, taking account of the interplay between criteria, as well as those which might be more important to a particular green gap.

Assessments

A19. Nine sites were identified by the Steering Group as candidates for green gap designation, for the following overarching reasons:

1. Foxhole Field – to protect against ribbon development into the AONB
2. Turners Green Field 1 - to protect against coalescence between Turners Green and Wood's Green
3. Balaclava Lane Field 1 – to protect against coalescence of Sparrows Green and Pell Green Conservation Area and into the AONB
4. Turners Green Field 4 – to protect against ribbon development into the AONB
5. Primmers Green Field – to protect against coalescence between Primmers Green and Wadhurst village-and into the AONB
6. Balaclava Pub Field – to protect against coalescence between Primmers Green and Pell Green Conservation Area and into the AONB
7. Hill House Field – to protect against coalescence between Wadhurst and Durgates and into the AONB
8. Wadhurst Castle Grounds – to protect against coalescence between Wadhurst village and Durgates and into the AONB
9. Balaclava Lane Field 2 – to protect against coalescence between Turners Green and Sparrows Green and Woods Green and into the AONB

A20. Figure A1 provides a map of the nine spaces.

A21. Individual assessments for each site are shown below the map for each site.

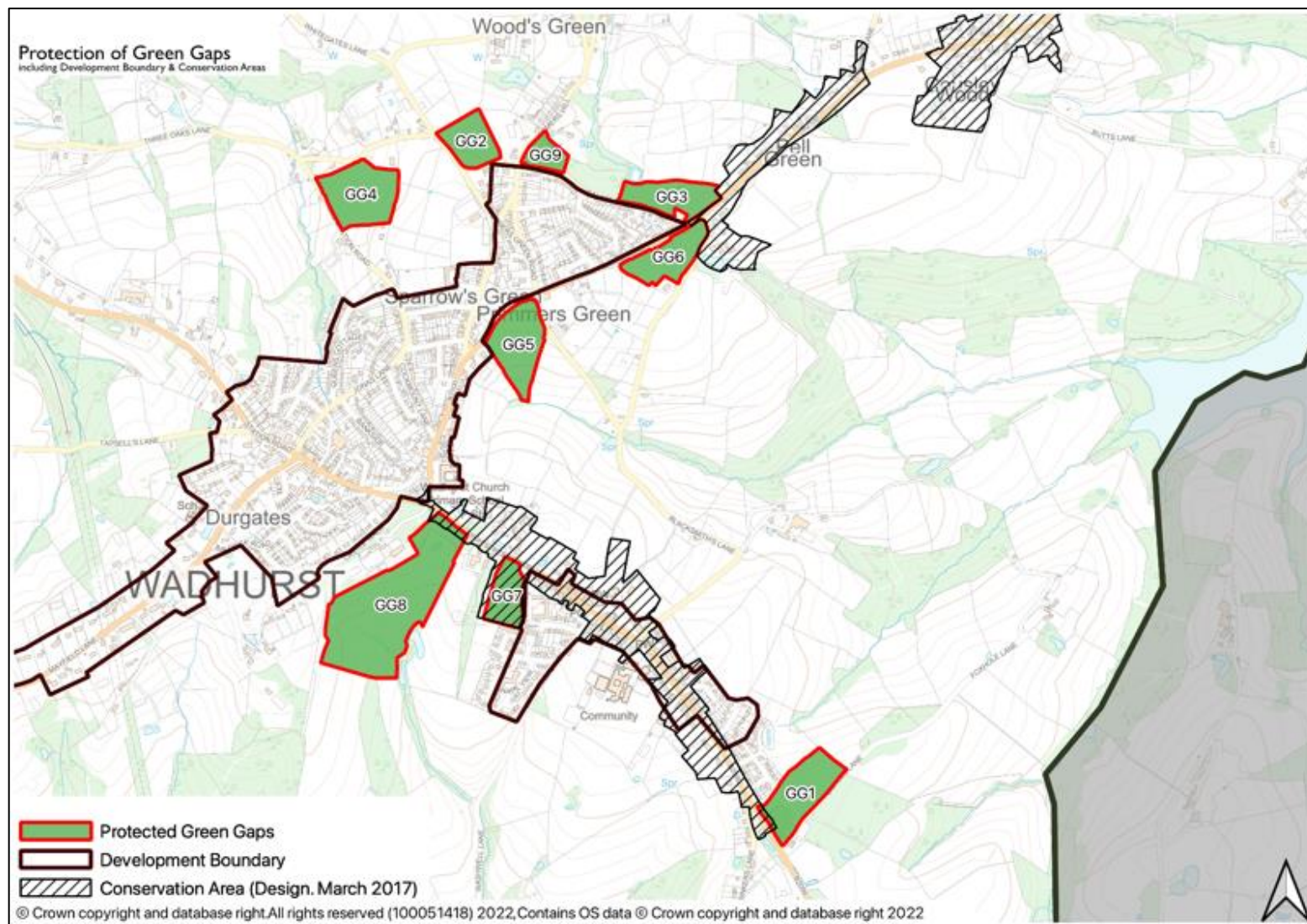


Figure A1: Map showing long list of nine potential green gap sites

GG1 Foxhole Field, Moseham Hill, Lower High Street, Wadhurst, TN5

	
Size	2.8 ha
Site description	Large grass field sometimes used for cattle / sheep grazing
Known allocations, protection status or designations?	Was a strategic allocated site in the failed Wealden Local Plan (2019) on this AONB land - it was designated for 40 homes. The proposed Development Boundary in the 2019 Plan was further extended to take in this field. However, this was controversial as there was no road access other than through the new Waters Reach estate – 35 homes (unknown to the residents who had just bought a house there) and then onto a very traffic congested Lower High Street.
Proposed Local Plan Allocation ?	None currently (but is on Wealden SHELAA – Call for Sites)
Planning history - any existing planning permissions?	None
How would green gap assist	Identification as a green gap will protect against further ribbon development into AONB (like the Waters Reach estate of 35 homes in 2016) and eventual coalescence into Wallcrouch. A well-used public footpath (Wadhurst 25) runs across this site which leads to the Bewl Reservoir footpath. Lovely countryside views, pond, ancient trees on this site. Tranquil. Borders Conservation Area.

Summary Information

Site Name	Foxhole Field, Moseham Hill, Lower High Street, Wadhurst, TN5
Location and extent of area	<p>The site is located beyond the development boundary in open countryside just off the B2099 to the south-east of Wadhurst village, which is a ridge-top settlement within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The site comprises a small field of grass enclosed by mature hedgerows and shaws situated on a ridge of higher ground. A public footpath (Wadhurst 25) crosses through the Site. The field is sometimes used for cattle / sheep grazing.</p> <p>2.8 ha.</p>
Landscape character context	<p>The key characteristics/features which provide the context to this Site are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medium Ancient Woodlands provide an intermittent sense of enclosure. • Open views northwards across the High Weald and to Bewl Water are available from a farm gate at the north of the field • Small/medium-scale irregular fields, bounded by thick hedges or shaws, many of which retain their historic patterns. • Network of historic paths and tracks, often running from ridgelines into valleys - public footpath to Whiligh estate and Bewl Water. • Larger fields are more frequent and typically under arable cultivation, particularly close to Bewl reservoir. Smaller fields are often grazed. • A private road borders the south east of the field - scattered settlement patterns of hamlets and historic farmsteads, closely associated with roads/lanes.

Assessment

Assessment criteria	Rating	Commentary
Existing settlement identity and pattern	Fully meets	<p>On the edge of Wadhurst village, this field represents the only public accessible / useable green space from the centre of the village 0.75 mile away.</p> <p>The field now borders the Rydon Homes Waters Reach estate of 35 homes (which includes an ecological area for estate resident use only) but which was built beyond the development boundary off Stone Cross Road.</p> <p>The original public footpath currently diagonally crossing the field is a major hiking route to Bewl Water via the Whiligh estate (although recently the official footpath has been moved to the edge of the field).</p>
Landscape character	Fully meets	<p>Large grass / wildflower field very occasionally used for cattle grazing and also has wildlife grazing from the ancient woodland. Oaks from the adjacent Whiligh Estate are famously fine specimens and were used, both to build the roof of the Hall of the Palace of Westminster in the</p>

		14th century and to rebuild it again after bombing raids during World War II.
Visual character	Fully meets	Mainly enclosed field bordered by hedges and ancient woodland but with views access across the High Weald AONB and to Bewl Water from the private north farm gate.

Practical Considerations

Considerations	Commentary
Gap extent	2.8 ha field bordered to the south east by a private road, to the north west by the Rydon Homes Waters Reach estate, to the south by the B2099 (although significantly set back due to the ancient woodland, a pond and therefore narrow access).
Boundary defensibility	B2099 - East Sussex Highways suggest access from the field to the B2099 is too dangerous due to the blind Moseham Hill. Therefore, the suggested Wealden SHELAA suggestion of 40 homes is not viable (unless access is granted through the Rydon Homes Waters Reach estate).
Potential for enhancement	<p>There are opportunities for enhancement to the landscape and visual character and Green Infrastructure within this Green Gap:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Preserve and where possible enhance views, particularly to the north to Bewl Water, from the settlements to contribute to the amenity of the area and strengthen the sense of visual separation. ■ Enhance public access to the countryside, particularly in the north east of the gap, by further publicising Bewl Water hiking routes. ■ Consider opportunities for further woodland creation to enhance landscape character and provide screening of existing buildings. ■ Increase the extent of native deciduous woodland using locally occurring native species (including oak and sweet chestnut). <p>Promote management of hedgerows. Consider reinstatement of hedges, particularly where they have been lost from highly visible locations e.g. along private road to the south.</p>

Summary and recommendations

The analysis above indicates that this site meets the criteria adequately to be considered within the WNP as a Green Gap.

Designation will protect against further ribbon development into High Weald (like the Waters Reach estate of 35 homes in 2016) and eventual coalescence into Shovers Green and

Wallcrouch (in Rother). A well-used public footpath (Wadhurst 25) runs across this site which leads to the around Bewl Reservoir' footpath. Lovely countryside views, pond, ancient trees on this site. tranquil. Borders Conservation Area.

GG2 Turner's Green Field 1, Turner's Green Road

	
Size	1.6 ha
Site description	Sheep grazing field.
Known allocations, protection status or designations?	None
Proposed Local Plan Allocation?	None
Planning history - any existing planning permissions?	None (but on the Wealden SHELAA 2021 - Call for Sites)
How would green gap assist	<p>Identification as a green gap will protect against coalescence of Turners Green into Wood's Green and development beyond the Development Boundary into HWAONB. Very narrow, inferior quality local roads. Long distance country views. Tranquil, Wildlife (Badgers, Bats, Dormice, Owls, Great Crested Newts).</p>

Summary Information

Site Name	Turner's Green Field 1, Turner's Green Road
Location and extent of area	Physically, the site lies on a high ridge of the Weald – a range of wooded hills running across Sussex and Kent between the North Downs and the South Downs. The area of the site is approx. 1.6 ha.
Landscape character context	<p>LCA as defined within the Wealden Landscape Character Assessment, May 2022, as 5B High Weald Central.</p> <p>It is perched on the ridge of the High Weald AONB, so is highly visible. The key characteristics/features which provide the context to this Site are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Open views northwards across the High Weald AONB towards Bayham Abbey

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The field slopes towards the north-east side towards Osmer's Hill. • The field is bordered on two sides by a narrow lane (Turners Green Road) and an ancient medieval droveway (Balaclava Lane).
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Assessment

Assessment criteria	Rating	Commentary
Existing settlement identity and pattern	Fully meets	<p>The site lies between the settlements of Turners Green and Woods Green. It is located beyond the development boundary in open countryside to the north of Wadhurst village. It is situated on top of a ridge within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).</p> <p>The Victorian era saw Wadhurst expand towards the new railway station, about 1.5 miles (2.4 km) north of the town. The station was opened in 1851 by the South Eastern Railway. The resulting expansion brought the settlements of Sparrow's Green, Turners Green and Best Beech Hill into the town.</p> <p>The settlements of Turners Green and Sparrows Green have already coalesced and Sparrows Green verges into Turners Green. This means that Turners Green / Sparrows Green have many residential properties and there are shops, a supermarket, a garage and a primary school further along in Sparrows Green Road. There are a variety of residential homes clustered around Sparrows Green Road and connecting roads. Turners Green consists of a handful of small cottages lining Turners Green Road and additional properties which have been built in the vicinity around Turners Green Lane.</p> <p>The Gap plays an important role in separating Turners Green from Woods Green. Woods Green retains a small, hamlet-like, character without a church or any shops. The settlement consists of old farm cottages situated around a green, with further residences along Woods Green road. The farm cottages add to the distinctive character of the hamlet.</p> <p>This Green Gap separates the settlement at Turners Green from the small hamlet at Woods Green. This gap will play an important role in separation, and maintaining the very distinct individual identities, between these two settlements.</p>
Landscape character	Fully meets	<p>The Green Gap is a large, open, largely flat agricultural field with an area of approx. 1.6 ha. It is defined by hedgerows with some trees and it gently slopes north east towards Osmer's Hill. It is bordered by the current development boundary, which goes through Balaclava Lane.</p> <p>The Green Gap is bordered by ancient, medieval droveways and rural fields and therefore retains a rural character. Its use as a sheep-grazing field, and for making hay, contributes to the rural character of the Green Gap as an open and undeveloped land and there is a general absence of built development in this area.</p>

		<p>The landscape is therefore rural in character, the nearest dwellings being on the south side of Balaclava Lane.</p> <p>Existing land uses and features contribute to the character of this Green Gap as open and undeveloped land and there is a general absence of built development.</p>
Visual character	Fully meets	<p>The site is a predominantly flat, agricultural field with a gentle slope on the north eastern side. It is visually open with views towards Bayham Abbey to the north and towards Frant to the north west. These views contribute to the character of an open, undeveloped landscape and provide a perception of visual separation.</p> <p>The site comprises a medium-sized field of grass enclosed by mature hedgerows and shaws situated on a ridge of higher ground. The field is sometimes used for sheep grazing.</p> <p>The rural landscape of the Green Gap contributes to the sense of visual separation between Woods Green and Turners Green.</p>

Practical Considerations

Considerations	Commentary
Gap extent	<p>The physical distance as the crow flies between Turners Green and Woods Green ranges from approx. 350m to the north and 300m from the western end.</p> <p>The routes between the two settlements are along Turners Green Road and right into Woods Green. Moving from Turners Green into Woods Green, there is a clear sense of leaving one settlement at Turners Green and moving through the gap via the narrow driveway before approaching the small hamlet of Woods Green.</p> <p>Overall the GG maintains a clear, physical separation between Woods Green and Turners and prevents coalescence.</p>
Boundary defensibility	<p>The site is bordered by Balaclava Lane to the southern part of the field, by Turners Green Road to the west. The other two sides are bordered by agricultural fields to the north and privately-owned fields to the east towards Osmer's Hill. These are robust and defensible boundary features.</p> <p>This field was put forward as a Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (SHELAA) site to the Council prior to 15th November 2021.</p>
Potential for enhancement	<p>There are no national or local designations, ecological heritage or priority habitats located within this site. The nearest would be a historic site at Turners Green.</p> <p>Public access is limited, as the gate is locked. The nearest recreational resources are the Sparrows Green Recreation Ground, which provides tennis courts, a children's play area, football pitches and the pavilion.</p>

	<p>There is also public footpath, Wadhurst 46, which runs from the junction of Balaclava Lane and Turners Green Road (opposite the site) through to Three Oaks Lane.</p> <p>Opportunities for enhancement to the landscape and visual character could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Preserve and enhance views from the settlements at Woods Green and Turners Green to contribute to the amenity of the area and strengthen the sense of visual separation. ▪ Promote the management of existing ancient hedgerows. Promote management of hedgerows; consider reinstatement of hedges, particularly where they have been lost from highly visible locations e.g. along private road to the south.
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Summary and recommendations

The analysis above indicates that this site meets the criteria adequately to be considered within the WNP as a Green Gap.

Identification as a green gap will protect against coalescence of Turners Green into Wood's Green and development beyond the Development Boundary into the High Weald AONB. Very narrow, inferior quality local roads. Long distance country views. Tranquil, Wildlife with species of principle importance (Badgers, Bats, Deer, Dormice, Owls, Great Crested Newts).

GG3 Balaclava Lane Field 1, Sparrow's Green, Field

	
Size	1.2 ha
Site description	Currently a sheep grazing field with an informal footpath running across the field. The lane is a narrow quiet road on the fringes of Sparrows Green.
Known allocations, protection status or designations?	None
Proposed Local Plan Allocation or Designation?	None
Planning history - any existing planning permissions?	None
How would green gap assist	Identifying as a green gap will protect against coalescence development between Sparrow's Green and the settlement of Pell Green.

Summary information

Site name	Balaclava Lane Field 1, Sparrow's Green, Field
Location and extent of area	The area of the site is approx. 1.2 ha. And it is located beyond the development boundary in open countryside to the north west of Wadhurst.
Landscape character context	LCA as defined within the Wealden Landscape Character Assessment, May 2022, as 5B High Weald Central. It is located on high ground in the High Weald AONB.

Assessment

Assessment criteria	Rating	Commentary
Existing settlement identity and pattern	Fully meets	<p>The site is currently a sheep grazing field with an informal footpath running across the field. It is bordered by Balaclava Lane to the south, a narrow quiet road on the fringes of Sparrows Green. It is also bordered by the Cousley Wood Road (B2100), a busy main road.</p> <p>The Green Gap separates the Turners Green end of Sparrows Green and the settlement of Pell Green. Sparrows Green area has expanded in recent years, with a combination of old cottages plus more modern housing, intermingled with shops, including a supermarket, a solicitor. A Chinese takeaway, a barber, a garage and a primary school. The settlement has expanded along the Sparrows Green Road (the B2100), towards Cousley Wood.</p> <p>The settlement of Pell Green extends from the bottom of Monks Lane along to Balaclava Lane Field 1. Pell Green is residential and boasts a variety of grade 2 listed residential properties: at Great Pell Farmhouse, Oasthouses and granary to the north-east of Great Pell Farmhouse, Days Cottage, Pell House, Barcaldine, Pell Green Cottage, Rehoboth Chapel, Chapel Cottage and Copstone Cottage.</p> <p>Wealden District Council reviewed the conservation area at Cousley Wood, which was previously designated in 1995, and decided to designate a new part of the Conservation Area at Pell Green to the southwest. The review determined that the area around Pell Green to the southwest is an area of special architectural or historic interest and that it is desirable to preserve or enhance its character or appearance. The review concluded that a conservation area should be designated to include Pell Green, with amendments to the previously designated area, to show additional areas included. The new conservation area, known as the Pell Green and Cousley Wood Conservation Area, was designated on 22 March 2017.</p> <p>The existing gap will play an important role in settlement separation and ensuring that Sparrows Green will not merge with Pell Green.</p>
Landscape character	Fully meets	<p>The field is predominantly flat, which means that the landscape within this Green Gap is for the most part open. This is one of a series of fields used for sheep grazing with fields and paddocks around in the area. Fields are generally rectilinear and defined by low, gappy, hedgerows with occasional hedgerow trees.</p> <p>The B2100 is a busy road with high volumes of traffic as it connects Wadhurst village to Lamberhurst. Generally, the landscape of this Green Gap retains a rural character, despite the presence of the B2100. The existing land uses and features – grazing and agriculture – contribute to the rural character as open and undeveloped land and there is a general absence of built development.</p>

Visual character	Fully meets	<p>The field is predominantly flat, which means that the landscape within this Green Gap is for the most part open. On the northern side, there are extensive views of arable land, which contributes positively to the visual character of the area and provides a key characteristic of the boundary of the Sparrows Green settlement. In contrast, on the eastern side, lies the B2100, a busy road with high volumes of traffic. This breaks up the rural character of the landscape. The southern side of the site is bordered by Balaclava Lane, which is an ancient medieval droveway, with its high hedges, which limit the views. The presence of the ancient droveway adds to the ancient and rural feel of this Green Gap. Whilst the land is more visually open to the north, there is sufficient distance and hedgerows between the two settlements to provide a strong sense of separation.</p> <p>Overall, the views across this Gap on the northern side contribute to the character of an open, undeveloped landscape and provide a perception of visual separation.</p>
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Practical Considerations

Considerations	Commentary
Gap extent	<p>The physical distance between the junction of Balaclava Lane and the southwestern end of the settlement of Pell Green is approx. 110m. The area of the field is approx. 1.2 ha, and it provides a visual separation between the two settlements. The main direct route between Sparrows Green on the edge of Wadhurst and Lamberhurst is the B2100. Balaclava Lane provides a clear threshold between the two settlements. Thus, the Green Gap maintains a clear physical separation between the two settlements and prevents coalescence.</p>
Boundary defensibility	<p>The site is defined by Balaclava Lane to the south and west. It is bordered by Cousley Wood Road (B2100) to the north and east. North of the site is bordered by rural agricultural fields. These are considered to be robust and defensible boundary features.</p> <p>There have been no recent planning applications on this site.</p>
Potential for enhancement	<p>There are opportunities for enhancement to the landscape and visual character and Green Infrastructure within this Green Gap:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Preserve and enhance views from the settlements at Sparrows Green and strengthen the sense of visual separation. ■ Promote the management of existing ancient hedgerows. Promote management of hedgerows; consider reinstatement of hedges, particularly where they have been lost from highly visible locations e.g. along private road to the south.

Summary and recommendations

The analysis above indicates that this site meets the criteria adequately to be considered within the WNP as a Green Gap.

Identification as a green gap will protect against coalescence development between Sparrow's Green and the settlement of Pell Green.

GG4 Turner's Green Field 4, Three Oaks Lane/Old Station Road, Turner's Green, TN5 6PX

	
Size	3.0 ha
Site description	Is in HWAONB, is tranquil with dark skies and hence abundant wildlife. It is on a slope and has lovely country views.
Known allocations, protection status or designations?	None
Proposed Local Plan Allocation?	None (but adjoining 3 fields which are on the SHELAA 2021 – Call for Sites)
Planning history - any existing planning permissions?	None
How would a green gap assist	Identification as a green gap will protect against ribbon development into the HWAONB. Wildlife (Bats, Dormice, Owls, Great Crested Newts) can be seen. There are long distance views, dark skies and tranquility. On edge of Turner's Green countryside – threat to very narrow single-track Old Station Road traffic.

Summary Information

Site Name	Turner's Green Field 4, Three Oaks Lane/Old Station Road, Turner's Green, TN5 6PX.
Location and extent of area	The site is located beyond the development boundary in open countryside to the north of Wadhurst village. It is in the High Weald AONB. The site comprises a medium-sized field of grass enclosed by mature hedgerows and trees, which slopes down towards the junction of Old Station Road with Three Oaks Lane. The field is sometimes used for sheep grazing and is used as a hay field. The area of the site is approx. 3.0 ha.
Landscape character context	LCA as defined within the Wealden Landscape Character Assessment, May 2022, as 5B High Weald Central.

Assessment

Assessment criteria	Rating	Commentary
Existing settlement identity and pattern	Fully meets	<p>The field lies on the edge of Turner's Green countryside bordering Three Oaks Lane and Old Station Road, both very narrow single-track roads. This Green Gap separates Sparrows Green to the south, from a small farm settlement in Three Oaks Lane.</p> <p>The Sparrows Green settlement has already merged with Durgates and consists of small cottages intermingled with more modern larger properties, with limited land attached giving Sparrows Green a more urban feel. It also consists of several shops, including a supermarket, vet, garage and a primary school.</p> <p>This is very different from the small, rural, settlement in Three Oaks Lane, which consist of a few older farm houses, farm cottages and residential homes, which are self-contained. They are all connected to farming and retain an agricultural farm character. Each site occupies a significant garden or paddock area.</p> <p>This existing gap therefore plays a role in settlement separation.</p>
Landscape character	Fully meets	<p>The field is used for agricultural purposes, including sheep grazing and for making hay. Existing land use contributes to the rural character.</p> <p>There is a low density and an absence of built development. The landscape therefore retains a rural character as open and undeveloped land.</p>
Visual character	Fully meets	<p>A mainly enclosed field bordered by hedges and ancient woodland but with views which can be accessed from the footpath that runs along the northern border of the site. These views are across towards Frant.</p> <p>Three Oaks Lane is a very quiet, single-track lane and ancient droveway, bordered by high banks and hedgerows. This medieval field landscape contributes to a sense of visual separation between the more built-up Sparrows Green settlement and the small collection of farm houses and cottages bordering Three Oaks Lane.</p> <p>Overall, the views towards Frant contribute to the character of an open and undeveloped landscape and provide a perception of visual separation.</p>

Practical Considerations

Considerations	Commentary
Gap extent	<p>The area of this Green Gap is 3.0 ha. The linear distance between the northern edge of Sparrows Green and Three Oaks Lane is approximately 400m. There is a distinct sense of one settlement being very separate to the other and a distinct sense of leaving Sparrows Green and travelling through the gap before arriving at the small farm settlement in Three Oaks Lane.</p> <p>Overall, the gap maintains a clear physical separation between these two settlements and prevents coalescence.</p>
Boundary defensibility	<p>This site is defined on the northern side by Three Oaks Lane and on the western side by Old Station Road. These are two distinctive ancient droveways. The site is bordered to the south by residential properties on the edge of Sparrows Green. These are considered to be robust and defensible boundary features.</p> <p>There have been no recent planning applications on this site.</p>
Potential for enhancement	<p>The nearest recreational resource is the Sparrows Green recreation club, with its tennis courts, football pitches, children's playground and pavilion. There is also a network of footpaths that come off Three Oaks Lane, adjacent to Yeoman's Farm and an ancient footpath, Wadhurst 46, which runs along the northern borders of this Green Gap.</p> <p>There are opportunities for enhancement to the landscape and visual character and Green Infrastructure within this Green Gap:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Preserve and enhance views from the settlements at Sparrows Green and strengthen the sense of visual separation. ■ Promote the management of existing ancient hedgerows. Promote management of hedgerows; consider reinstatement of hedges, particularly where they have been lost from highly visible locations e.g. along private road to the south.

Summary and recommendations

The analysis above indicates that this site meets the criteria adequately to be considered within the WNP as a Green Gap. The Gap provides an open setting between the two settlements of Sparrows Green and Three Oaks Lane and provides physical and visual separation between the two, preventing their coalescence. It is thus particularly important in protecting the rural character of Three Oaks Lane. Identification as a green gap will protect against ribbon development into the HWAONB. Wildlife (Bats, Dormice, Owls, Great Crested Newts) can be seen. There are long distance views, dark skies and tranquility. On edge of Turner's Green countryside – threat to very narrow single-track Old Station Road traffic.

GG5 Primmers Field, Cousley Wood Road, Primmers Green (near junction of Primmers Green Lane)

 <p>Protection of Green Gaps - GG5</p> <p>Protected Green Gaps</p> <p>© Crown copyright and database right. All rights reserved. 1000574166. 2022. Contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right 2022.</p>	
Size	1.2 ha
Site description	Currently a sheep field with an extensively used informal footpath running across the field.
Known allocations, protection status or designations?	None
Proposed Local Plan Allocation?	None
Planning history - any existing planning permissions?	None (but on the Wealden SHELAA 2021 - Call for Sites)
How will a green gap assist	Identification will protect against coalescence development between Primmers Green and Wadhurst. This is the last green gap between Primmers Green Lane and Wadhurst with views of the steeple of St Peter and St Paul Church (Grade 2 listed). The major green field on entry to Wadhurst village from Lamberhurst.

Summary Information

Site Name	Primmers Field, Cousley Wood Road, Primmers Green (near jct of Primmers Green Lane)
Location and extent of area	The site is located beyond the development boundary in open countryside to the north of Wadhurst village. It is in the High Weald AONB. The site comprises a medium-sized field of grass enclosed by mature hedgerows and trees, which slopes down. The field is used for sheep grazing. The area of the site is approx. 1.2 ha.
Landscape character context	LCA as defined within the Wealden Landscape Character Assessment, May 2022, as 5B High Weald Central.

Assessment

Assessment criteria	Rating	Commentary
Existing settlement identity and pattern	Fully meets	<p>The site lies on the edge of countryside bordering Cousley Wood Road (B2100) and Primmers Green. This gap separates the settlements of Primmers Green and Wadhurst village.</p> <p>The Primmers Green settlement is a small hamlet, which consists of mainly period cottages and detached properties aligning the Primmers Green lane.</p> <p>This is very different from the more densely clustered settlement on the northern side of Cousley Wood Road and which forms part of Turners Green. Turners Green has a line of cottages but it also has some larger residences displayed along Turners Green Road and Turners Green Lane, making it a larger settlement, which eventually merges into Sparrows Green, and into Durgates.</p> <p>Wadhurst village boasts a variety of residential properties, and shops and services. Close to the site lie several grade 2 listed buildings: at Manor Cottage and Gloucester Place Cottages, while Pell Bridge lies to the bottom of the hill at Primmers Green.</p> <p>This existing gap, therefore, plays a role in settlement separation. There is a clear possibility of ribbon development along Cousley Wood Road, which would inevitably lead to 'back fill' and eventual coalescence between Primmers Green and Wadhurst village.</p>
Landscape character	Fully meets	<p>The site is an early post-medieval field bordered by two historic routeways – Cousley Wood Road and Primmers Green. Wealden District Council's 2019 Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment determined that this site is not suitable for development for the following reasons:</p> <p><i>"The site is located....in the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The site comprises part of a medium-sized field of</i></p>

		<p><i>grassland enclosed by hedgerows. The Site boundary does not follow field boundaries; therefore the Site remains open to the remainder of the field on its south-eastern side. There are extensive views to open countryside to the south of the site. The site is within the High Weald AONB and has been classified as being in a very highly sensitive location within the 2014 landscape Character Assessment and development would have an unjustified impact on the character and appearance of the landscape."</i></p> <p>The site lies within the landscape setting area (LSA) 2 as identified in the Wealden Landscape & Settlement Character Assessment Supplementary Report (2016). This assessment evaluated LSA 2 as having a very low landscape capacity for accommodating development because; <i>"this area is situated within the High Weald AONB which contributes to its Very High Landscape Value. The wooded ghylls and stream corridors are highly sensitive landscape features and there is strong strength of place throughout, resulting in Very High Landscape Sensitivity."</i></p>
Visual character	Fully meets	<p>The sloping landform and predominance of large-scale arable fields used largely for sheep-grazing means that the landscape for this Green Gap is for the most part visually open.</p> <p>There are views into the site from five key visual receptors, and a broad zone of visual influence. There are extensive views, and also glimpsed long views, and both types of view are worthy of protection in the HWAONB because the HWAONB is renowned for both.</p> <p>Views of the 12th century spire of the Grade 1 Listed St Peter and St Paul church, a culturally important landmark, are clear from within this site, and beyond the site from Cousley Wood Road and Primmers Green. The site is exposed in views from the south and south-east.</p> <p>Overall, the views across this Green Gap generally contribute to the character of an open and undeveloped landscape and provide a perception of visual separation.</p>

Practical Considerations

Considerations	Commentary
Gap extent	<p>The site is a 1.2 ha field between the two settlements of Primmers Green and Turners Green. The key route to connect Primmers Green with Wadhurst is via the Cousley Wood Road (B2100), which becomes Sparrows Green Road, then turning left into the High Street. The distance from the junction of Primmers Green and Cousley Wood Road to Jempsons in the centre of Wadhurst village is estimated at 1.15 km.</p> <p>When leaving Wadhurst and moving through the gap via the B2100, there is a clear perception of moving away of leaving the village hub of Wadhurst and moving through the suburbs to a smaller, more tranquil hamlet of Primmers Green.</p>

Boundary defensibility	<p>The site bears a passing resemblance to a rhombus. The northern boundary consists the B2100, while the eastern side is bounded by Primmers Green. The other sides to the west and east are bordered by trees and hedgerows that separate from other fields.</p> <p>The site has been formally turned down in two previous SHELAA assessments by Wealden District Council in 2014 and 2019. The WDC reasons for refusal were as follows:</p> <p><i>‘The site is located opposite existing properties on the south-eastern side of Sparrow’s Green, to the north of Wadhurst within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The site comprises part of a medium-sized field of grassland enclosed by hedgerows. The Site boundary does not follow field boundaries; therefore the Site remains open to the remainder of the field on its south-eastern side. There are extensive views to open countryside to the south of the site. The site is within the High Weald AONB and has been classified as being in a very highly sensitive location within the 2014 Landscape Character Assessment and development would have an unjustified impact on the character and appearance of the landscape’.</i></p>
Potential for enhancement	<p>There are no national or local designations, ecological heritage or priority habitats located within this site. The nearest would be a historic site at Turners Green.</p> <p>Public access is limited, as gates with access to the site are locked. The nearest recreational resources are the Sparrows Green Recreation Ground, which provides tennis courts, a children’s play area, football pitches and the pavilion.</p> <p>The site is part of a 40-acre group of fields that run around the back of Wadhurst village. The 40-acre site has been used extensively for many years as a route to the village and back by residents. There are several clearly defined footpaths which are clearly visible on an image of the fields on Google Maps and there are also several exit and entry points visible around the extended site, including several stiles and gates. Residents have been walking these paths without permission, without force and without stealth for decades, and it is only very recently, not long before the 2021 application was submitted, that “keep out” signs have appeared all around the extended site. The legal position is that if a footpath has been walked consistently for 20 years without permission, without force and without stealth, then it becomes a legal right of way and walkers cannot be penalised for walking on them.</p>

Summary and recommendations

The analysis above indicates that this site meets the criteria adequately to be considered within the WNP as a Green Gap.

Identification as a green gap will protect against coalescence development between Primmers Green and Wadhurst. This is the last Green Gap between Primmers Green Lane and Wadhurst with views of the steeple of St Peter and St Paul Church (Grade 2 listed). The major green field on entry to Wadhurst village from Lamberhurst.

GG6 Balaclava Pub Field, Cousley Wood Road

 <p>Protection of Green Gaps - GG6</p> <p>Protected Green Gaps</p> <p>© Crown copyright and database right. All rights reserved (100051418). 2022. Contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right 2022.</p>	
Size	2.09 ha
Site description	Large northeast sloping east field. Currently used for horse pasture
Known allocations, protection status or designations?	None
Proposed Local Plan Allocation?	None
Planning history - any existing planning permissions?	None (but on the Wealden SHELAA 2021 - Call for Sites)
How would a green gap assist	Identification as a green gap will protect against coalescence development between Primmers Green and the Pell Green / Cousley Wood Conservation Areas.

Summary Information

Site Name	Balaclava Pub Field, Cousley Wood Road
Location and extent of area	<p>The site is located adjacent to and south of the development boundary in open countryside to the north of Wadhurst village. It is in the High Weald AONB. The site comprises an open medium-sized field of grass enclosed by trees. It is a north-east sloping field, and is used for horse grazing.</p> <p>The area of the site is approx. 2.1 ha.</p>
Landscape character context	LCA as defined within the Wealden Landscape Character Assessment, May 2022, as 5B High Weald Central.

Assessment

Assessment criteria	Rating	Commentary
Existing settlement identity and pattern	Fully meets	<p>The Green Gap separates the Primmers Green settlement from the Pell Green /Cousley Wood conservation areas.</p> <p>The Primmers settlement is a small hamlet, which consists of period cottages and detached properties aligning the Primmers Green lane.</p> <p>Pell Green is a residential area along the Cousley Wood Road, with small residential properties. It is a designated conservation area (see map above). Adjoining the site are two listed buildings: the grade 2 listed Great Pell Farmhouse and grade 2 listed oasthouses and granary to the north-east of Great Pell Farmhouse. Pell Green therefore retains an identity distinct from Primmers Green.</p> <p>This existing gap therefore plays a role in settlement separation between these two unique settlements.</p>
Landscape character	Fully meets	<p>The site is a field sloping north-east and it is part scrub and when used has been used for keeping horses. It is bordered by two historic routeways – Cousley Wood Road and Pell Green, which merges into Pell Hill. To the south the site is bordered by scattered lines of trees. To the north it is bordered by the conservation area of Pell Green and further north lies open pasture.</p> <p>The conservation area of Pell Green is a significant feature and is contributes to the undeveloped character of the landscape to the north. The site is bordered by the Cousley Wood Road (B2100). However, it still retains a rural character. Existing land use and features contribute to the character of the Green Gap as open and undeveloped land and there is a general absence of built development.</p>
Visual character	Fully meets	<p>The sloping landform of this pasture/scrub, which is largely used for horse grazing, means that the landscape of this Green Gap is for the most part visually open.</p> <p>There are open views across the field sloping down towards Pell Green to the north-east. Primmers Green lies to the south-west, while Bewl Water lies to the east.</p> <p>The presence of the B2100 and the flow of traffic may detract a little from the open, rural character of the landscape. However, overall, the views across this Green Gap generally contribute to the character of an open and undeveloped landscape and provide a perception of visual separation.</p>

Practical Considerations

Considerations	Commentary
Gap extent	<p>The site is 2.1 ha field bordered to the north by the Cousley Road (B2100) and to the south by Pell Green, which feeds into Pell Hill, ultimately leading into Blacksmiths Lane.</p> <p>The main direct route between the start of Pell Green conservation area and Primmers Green is via the B2100 (Cousley Wood Road), a distance of approx. 480m.</p> <p>Despite the presence of scattered built form along the Cousley Wood Road, there is a distinct sense of leaving one settlement and travelling through the physical separation before arriving at the other.</p> <p>Overall the Green Gap maintains a clear physical separation between the two settlements and prevents coalescence.</p>
Boundary defensibility	<p>The Green Gap boundaries follow physical features on the ground. It is defined to the north by the B2100 (Cousley Wood Road) and the Pell Green conservation area to the north east. To the south it is bordered by Pell Green / Pell Hill and to the west by distinct arable pasture.</p> <p>There have been no recent planning applications on the land. The site has been put forward as a SHELAA site prior to 15th November 2021.</p>
Potential for enhancement	<p>There are no national or local designations, ecological heritage or priority habitats located within this site. However, it should be noted that the site lies adjacent to a conservation area, which is a priority habitat located close to the potential Green Gap.</p> <p>Public access is limited. The nearest recreational resources are the Sparrows Green Recreation Ground, about 725m away, which provides tennis courts, a children's play area, football pitches and the pavilion.</p> <p>There are opportunities for enhancement to the landscape and visual character within this green gap. This could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Preserve a where possible enhance views from the settlements to contribute to the amenity of the area and strengthen the sense of visual separation. ■ Promote the management of hedgerows; consider reinstatement of hedges, particularly where they have been lost from highly visible locations, such as along roadsides.

Summary and recommendations

The analysis above indicates that this site meets the criteria adequately to be considered within the WNP as a Green Gap. Identification as a green gap will protect against coalescence development between Primmers Green and the Pell Green / Cousley Wood Conservation Areas.

GG7 Hill House Field, High Street, Wadhurst

	
Size	1.4 ha
Site description	Large field south of Wadhurst High Street. Owned by historic Hill House.
Known allocations, protection status or designations?	HWAONB, edge of High Street Conservation Area
Proposed Local Plan Allocation?	None
Planning history - any existing planning permissions?	None
How will a green gap assist	Identification as a green gap will protect against coalescence development between Wadhurst and Durgates. Wealden's Wadhurst Conservation Area Character Assessment Consultation Draft 2020, para. 5.4.4 notes this field "maintains a physical and visual separation between Wadhurst High Street and Wadhurst Castle grounds and Durgates"

Summary Information

Site Name	Hill House Field, High Street, Wadhurst
Location and extent of area	The site is located at the southern edge of Wadhurst village in a conservation area. The site comprises a medium-sized field of trees and grass enclosed by trees. The area of the site is approx. 1.4 ha.
Landscape character context	LCA as defined within the Wealden Landscape Character Assessment, May 2022, as 5B High Weald Central.

Assessment

Assessment criteria	Rating	Commentary
Existing settlement identity and pattern	Fully meets	<p>On the edge of Wadhurst village, this field lies between the two settlements of Wadhurst Village and Durgates.</p> <p>Wadhurst is a historic market town, granted a royal charter in 1253 and within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The landscape retains its mediaeval character of small irregular-shaped fields and scattered farmsteads, often grazed by sheep or Sussex cattle. Oak and sweet chestnut dominate the wooded rolling hills and streams run red from iron ore in the local rock. Close by, Bewl Water, the largest body of fresh water in the south east, is an active water sports and trout fishing centre. Wadhurst was also the location of the Last Great Prize Fight on 10th December 1863, when Englishman, Tom King, beat the American, John Heenan.</p> <p>The townscape of Wadhurst comprises a mix of medieval cottages, farmsteads, listed properties and more modern 20th century residences. The listed buildings include Hill House (a grade 2 listed property), Hill House Cottages (grade 2), Hill View with the Garage and workshop adjoining to the North-West Pump Cottage (grade 2), and the Hill side cottages (also grade 2). The presence of listed properties adds to the individual character of Wadhurst village.</p> <p>In contrast, Durgates is more modern than Wadhurst Village. It dates from the 1930s, and developed as a suburb of Wadhurst Village. It comprises an industrial estate, situated to the north of the High Street (B2099) close to its junction with Mayfield Lane (B2100). The estate is now sub-divided in to a number of business units, approached by a narrow entrance off Station Street. There is also a petrol station on Station Road.</p> <p>Wadhurst, therefore, retains an old village character with its cottages and listed buildings, which is very distinct from the more modern settlement of Durgates, with its industrial estate.</p> <p>The Green Gap site lies wholly in a conservation area and is surrounded by listed buildings.</p>
Landscape character	Fully meets	<p>The Green Gap is an agricultural field sloping southward. There are fields adjacent to the site edges. The field is defined by low, gappy, hedgerows and trees. Part of the landscape to the east has a more built-up character, as it borders the Styles Lane housing estate.</p> <p>The Green Gap lies entirely within a conservation area. Therefore, the site has ample examples of flora and fauna (hedgehogs, foxes, badgers, lizards, bats, mice, shrews, frogs, woodpeckers, toads, and grass snakes) and other species of principle importance.</p> <p>The landscape within the Green Gap therefore retains a very rural character. Existing land uses and conservation features contribute to the character of the Green Gap as open and undeveloped land within a protected conservation area.</p>

Visual character	Fully meets	<p>The gently sloping landform of this site in a conservation area means that the landscape within the Green Gap is visually open. There are significant views of the open countryside to the south of the site towards Scragg Oak, Wadhurst Park and Burwash.</p> <p>To the west, views are restricted and the site is screened by a shelter belt of trees along the border with the listed park, gardens and buildings of Wadhurst Castle.</p> <p>To the east, the site abuts some built form on the edge of the village.</p> <p>Overall, the views across the Green Gap generally contribute to the character of an open landscape and provide a perception of visual separation.</p>
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Practical Considerations

Considerations	Commentary
Gap extent	<p>The site is a 1.4 ha field. The distance between the two settlements of Wadhurst Village and Durgates is approx. 250m. The main route connecting the two settlements is the High Street (B2099) which becomes Station Road. There is a clear sense of leaving Wadhurst Village before arriving in the settlement of Durgates.</p> <p>Wealden's Wadhurst Conservation Area Character Assessment Consultation Draft 2020, para. 5.4.4 notes this field "<i>maintains a physical and visual separation between Wadhurst High Street and Wadhurst Castle grounds and Durgates.</i>"</p>
Boundary defensibility	<p>The boundaries of the Green Gap follow physical features on the ground. It is defined by the High Street to the north, built form to the east (the Styles Lane estate) and partly to the south, while the western boundary is the tree shelter belt on the boundary with Wadhurst Castle. These are considered to be robust and defensible boundary features.</p> <p>The site is currently affected by a planning application on land to the south of this Green Gap, with a proposal for an access road alongside the western perimeter of the site.</p>
Potential for enhancement	<p>The site lies wholly within a conservation area, which is a priority habitat for species of principle importance.</p> <p>Public access is restricted. The nearest recreational resources are at Uplands School Sports Centre (approx. 480 m away along the High Street). To the north west, the Sparrows Green Recreation Ground is about 950m away, which provides tennis courts, a children's play area, football pitches and the pavilion.</p> <p>There are opportunities for enhancement to the landscape and visual character within the Green Gap. This could include:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preserve and where possible enhance views from the settlements to contribute to the amenity of the area and strengthen the sense of visual separation. • Enhance the built form landscape of the eastern side by promoting positive landscape management: maybe consider opportunity for woodland create to enhance landscape character and provide screening form existing built form. • Increase the extent of native deciduous woodland, using locally native species. • Promote management of hedgerows: consider reinstatement of gaps in hedges to screen the adjacent built form.
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Summary and recommendations

The analysis above indicates that this site meets the criteria adequately to be considered within the WNP as a Green Gap.

Identification as a green gap will protect against coalescence development between Wadhurst and Durgates. Wealden's Wadhurst Conservation Area Character Assessment Consultation Draft 2020, para. 5.4.4 notes this field *"maintains a physical and visual separation between Wadhurst High Street and Wadhurst Castle grounds and Durgates."*

GG8 Wadhurst Castle Grounds, Upper High Street Wadhurst

 <p>Protection of Green Gaps - GG8</p> <p>Wadhurst Church of England Primary School</p> <p>Castle Way</p> <p>Upper High Street</p> <p>Protected Green Gaps</p> <p>© Crown copyright and database right. All rights reserved (100051418) 2022. Contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right 2022.</p>	
Size	1.4 ha
Site description	Large field northwest of Wadhurst High Street. Part of historic Wadhurst Castle
Known allocations, protection status or designations?	HWAONB
Proposed Local Plan Allocation?	None
Planning history - any existing planning permissions?	None
How will a green gap assist	Identification as a green gap will protect against coalescence development between Wadhurst village and Durgates.

Summary Information

Site Name	Wadhurst Castle Grounds, Upper High Street Wadhurst
Location and extent of area	The site is located off upper High Street (B2099) to the south, beyond the development boundary in open countryside. The centre of Wadhurst village, which is a ridge-top settlement within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) is within 0.5 mile. The site comprises parkland enclosed by mature hedgerows and shaws situated on a ridge of higher ground. 1.4ha.
Landscape character context	<p>The key characteristics/features which provide the context to this Site are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medium ancient woodlands to the north (bordering the B2099) provide an intermittent sense of enclosure. • Open views southwards across the High Weald AONB are available from the private access road that leads to the Castle. • Large irregular field, bounded by thick hedges or shaws, which retain historic patterns.

Assessment

Assessment criteria	Rating	Commentary
Existing settlement identify and pattern	Fully meets	On the edge of Wadhurst village, this parkland is mainly used for sheep grazing and is part of the Wadhurst Castle estate (a heritage asset).
Landscape character	Fully meets	Parkland.
Visual character	Fully meets	Open field bordered by hedges and ancient woodland but with views access across the High Weald AONB from the private Castle access road.

Practical Considerations

Considerations	Commentary
Gap extent	1.4 ha field bordered to the north by the Castle access private road, ancient woodland and B2099, to the south by further High Weald AONB fields, to the east by ancient woodland / small Castle owned industrial estate and to the west by the Castle.
Boundary defensibility	These are private grounds protected by Heritage England.
Potential for enhancement	<p>There are opportunities for enhancement to the landscape and visual character and Green Infrastructure within this Green Gap:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance access to the site by further publicising the Castle. • Consider opportunities for further woodland creation to enhance landscape character and provide screening of Industrial estate buildings. • Increase the extent of native deciduous woodland using locally occurring native species (including oak and sweet chestnut). <p>Promote management of hedgerows; consider reinstatement of hedges, particularly where they have been lost from highly visible locations e.g. along the small Industrial estate to the east.</p>

Summary and recommendations

The analysis above indicates that this site meets the criteria adequately to be considered within the WNP as a Green Gap.

Identification as a green gap will protect against ribbon development into the High Weald AONB and eventual coalescence of Wadhurst village with Durgates.

GG9 Balaclava Lane Field 2, Balaclava Lane, Wadhurst

	
Size	1.4 ha
Site description	Currently a sheep grazing field. Balaclava Lane is a narrow road on the fringes of Sparrow's Green.
Known allocations, protection status or designations?	HWAONB
Proposed Local Plan Allocation?	None
Planning history - any existing planning permissions?	None (but on the Wealden SHELAA 2020 - Call for Sites)
How will a green gap assist	Identification as a green gap will protect against coalescence development between Turners Green and Sparrows Green and Osmer's Hill and HWAONB development beyond the Development Boundary.

Summary Information

Site Name	Balaclava Lane Field 2, Balaclava Lane, Wadhurst
Location and extent of area	<p>The site is located beyond the development boundary in open countryside to the north of Wadhurst village. It is a sloping field within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The site comprises a medium-sized field of grass enclosed by mature hedgerows and trees. The field is sometimes used for sheep grazing.</p> <p>The area of the site is approx. 1.4 ha.</p>
Landscape character context	<p>LCA as defined within the Wealden Landscape Character Assessment, May 2022, as 5B High Weald Central.</p> <p>The key characteristics/features which provide the context to this Site are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open views northwards across the High Weald towards Bayham Abbey • Field slopes northwards, towards the border with Horsegrove, Osmer's Hill.

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Assessment

Assessment criteria	Rating	Commentary
Existing settlement identity and pattern	Fully meets	<p>The Green Gap separates Turners Green and Osmer's Hill.</p> <p>Turners Green is an extension of the more built-up Sparrows Green, with its residential houses and cottages, shops, supermarket, vet, garage and primary school.</p> <p>In contrast, Osmer's Hill is an exclusive hamlet of mainly detached houses with gardens which line Osmer's Hill. This settlement also includes Horsegrove, a grade 2 listed residential property set in extensive gardens. The presence of this listed house contributes to the individual character of this settlement.</p> <p>Osmer's Hill retains a hamlet character, which is distinct from Turners Green. The gap therefore plays a role in settlement separation.</p>
Landscape character	Fully meets	<p>This Green Gap is made up of gently sloping agricultural land. It is bordered on two sides by narrow single-track, ancient droveways and on the other two sides by trees and hedgerows.</p> <p>Therefore, the landscape within this Green Gap retains a rural character, despite the residential properties lining the southern end of Balaclava Lane. Existing land uses and features contribute to the character as open and undeveloped land.</p>
Visual character	Fully meets	<p>The field is visually enclosed due to the presence of ancient hedgerows and bordering trees as described above. There is sufficient distance and intervening hedgerows contained within this Green Gap, between the two settlements, to provide a strong sense of separation.</p>

Practical Considerations

Considerations	Commentary
Gap extent	<p>1.4 ha field bordered to the south by Balaclava Lane, a narrow road, and to the north west by Osmer's Hill, a steep and narrow lane heading down towards Woods Green. The key routes between the two settlements are by Balaclava Lane and Osmer's Hill.</p> <p>The linear distance between the edge of Turners Green and Osmer's Hill is approx. 100m.</p> <p>Overall, the Green Gap maintains a clear physical separation between the two settlements and prevent coalescence.</p>

Boundary defensibility	<p>The boundaries of the Green Gaps follow physical features on the ground. It is defined by Balaclava Lane to the south and by Osmers Hill to the west. The other boundaries of the site are with other fields (connecting to the Horsegrove estate) and to ancient woodland to the east.</p> <p>There have been no planning applications on land in the Green Gap.</p>
Potential for enhancement	<p>There are no national or local designations (ecological or cultural heritage) or priority habitats located within the Green Gap. Public access is restricted, with the only recreational resource being the Sparrows Green recreation ground approx. 200m away as the crow flies.</p> <p>There are opportunities for enhancement to the landscape and visual character and Green Infrastructure within this Green Gap:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Preserve and where possible enhance views from the settlements to contribute to the amenity of the area and strengthen the sense of visual separation. ■ Promote management of hedgerows; consider reinstatement of hedges, particularly where they have been lost from highly visible locations e.g. along private road to the south.

Summary and recommendations

The analysis above indicates that this site meets the criteria adequately to be considered within the WNP as a Green Gap.

Identification as a green gap will protect against coalescence development between Turners Green and Sparrows Green and Osmers Hill and HWAONB development beyond the Development Boundary.

