Landscape Sensitivity Assessment

Renewable Energy Development

Wealden District Council

Final report

Prepared by LUC

February 2024



Version	Status	Prepared	Checked	Approved	Date
1	Draft	A Knight, A Palenske, K Davies	K Davies	K Davies	05/06/2023
2	Final report	A Knight, A Palenske	K Davies	K Davies	02/02/2024

EMS566057 FS566056 OHS627041

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Registered in England. Registered number 2549296. Registered office: 250 Waterloo Road, London SE1 8RD. Printed on 100% recycled paper

Contents

Chapter 1 5
Introduction

Background to this study 5
Policy context 6

Chapter 2 15
Methodology

Scope of the assessment 15
Spatial framework for the assessment 15
Characteristics of solar PV and wind energy development types and their potential landscape impacts 16
Type and scale of solar PV 17
Type and scale of wind energy developments 19
Cumulative effects 20
Evaluating landscape sensitivity 20
Assessment criteria 21

Chapter 3 37
Landscape Sensitivity Assessment Results and Guidance

Generic guidance for accommodating solar and wind energy development in Wealden 39

Appendix A 48
Landscape Sensitivity Profiles

References 110

Chapter 1
Introduction

Background to this study

1.1 Wealden's rural landscapes have a distinctive character and are a valuable resource for the district. A large proportion of the district is located within nationally protected landscapes, including the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) to the north and the South Downs National Park to the south. South Downs National Park is the Planning Authority for those areas of Wealden District that lie within the National Park and so sit outside the scope of this assessment.

1.2 On 24 July 2019 Wealden District Council (WDC) declared a Climate Emergency. The Council committed to work towards achieving net-zero carbon emissions by 2050 or sooner for both the Council's own operations, and the wider Wealden area. As part of the development of the new climate change strategy for the district, the Council will be exploring a road map and decarbonisation pathways to reach net zero, and the likely time frames to achieve this.

1.3 WDC commissioned LUC to undertake a landscape sensitivity assessment for solar photovoltaic (PV) and wind energy development. This report provides judgements on the landscape sensitivity of different parts of Wealden to these forms of renewable energy development. The findings of this study will allow the Council to identify broad areas for renewable energy development, and establish a local policy framework for such development, in line with the National Planning Policy Framework (paragraph 151) **[See reference** 1**]**.

1.4 The method used is described in **Chapter 2** and broad results and guidance presented in **Chapter 3.** In depth landscape sensitivity assessments are provided in **Appendix A.**

Policy context

European Landscape Convention

1.5 The European Landscape Convention (ELC) came into force in the UK in March 2007. It established the need to recognise landscape in law; and develop landscape policies dedicated to the protection, management, and planning of landscapes; and to establish procedures for the participation of the general public and other stakeholders in the creation and implementation of landscape policies. The ELC remains relevant despite the UK's departure from the EU.

1.6 The ELC definition of 'landscape' recognises that all landscapes matter, be they ordinary, degraded, or outstanding:

> "Landscape means an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors."

1.7 Signing up to the ELC means that the UK is committed to protect, manage, and plan our landscapes for the future. The Convention also advocates work to raise landscape awareness, involvement and enjoyment amongst local and visiting communities. Landscape character is defined by the ELC as *"a distinct, recognisable and consistent pattern of elements in the landscape that makes one landscape different from another, rather than better or worse".* Again, this reinforces the underlying message that all landscapes matter.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

1.8 The UK Government published an updated and revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in December 2023, which sets out the environmental, social and economic planning policies for England. Central to NPPF policies is a

presumption in favour of sustainable development; that development should be planned for positively and individual proposals should be approved wherever possible.

1.9 One of the overarching objectives that underpins the NPPF is set out in Paragraph 8: “an environmental objective – to contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment … and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.”

1.10 Paragraph 180 states that “planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by protecting and enhancing valued landscapes” and “recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside”.

1.11 The NPPF also makes explicit reference to the need for defined strategic policies that make sufficient provision for climate change mitigation and adaptation, landscape and green infrastructure (section 14).

1.12 Paragraph 160 states that "to help increase the use and supply of renewable and low carbon energy and heat, plans should:

- provide a positive strategy for energy from these sources, that maximises the potential for suitable development, and their future re-powering and life extension, while ensuring that adverse impacts are addressed satisfactorily (including cumulative landscape and visual impacts);
- consider identifying suitable areas for renewable and low carbon energy sources, and supporting infrastructure, where this would help secure their development…"

Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)

1.13 Further guidance is provided in the PPG on renewable and low carbon energy on how local planning authorities can develop policies for renewable and low carbon energy **[See reference** 2**]**

1.14 . Paragraph 005 provides guidance on how to identify suitable areas for renewable energy states that:

> "…when considering impacts, assessments can use tools to identify where impacts are likely to be acceptable. For example, landscape character areas could form the basis for considering which technologies at which scale may be appropriate in different types of location... "

1.15 Paragraph 013 sets out planning considerations that relate to large-scale ground-mounted solar photovoltaic farms. This states that:

> “The deployment of large-scale solar farms can have a negative impact on the rural environment, particularly in undulating landscapes. However, the visual impact of a well-planned and well-screened solar farm can be properly addressed within the landscape if planned sensitively.”
>
> “In the case of ground-mounted solar panels it should be noted that with effective screening and appropriate land topography the area of a zone of visual influence could be zero”.

1.16 Planning considerations that relate to onshore wind turbines are more numerous. Paragraphs 022 and 023 set out how cumulative landscape and visual impacts from wind turbines should be assessed and what information is required. Paragraph 023 states:

> "Some landscape may be more sensitive to certain types of change than others, and it should not be assumed that a landscape character area deemed sensitive to one type of change cannot accommodate another type of change".

National Landscapes

1.17 Land within the South Downs National Park is outside the scope of this assessment, as the South Downs National Park Authority is its own planning authority. However, a significant proportion of the Low Weald and Pevensey Levels landscape can be viewed from the top of the Downs, and conversely, parts of the Low Weald benefit from views of the South Downs. As a result, views to and from the National Park are considered as part of this study.

1.18 The north of Wealden district lies within the High Weald AONB. A nationally protected landscape, the High Weald is valued as a medieval landscape of wooded, rolling hills studded with sandstone outcrops, small, irregular-shaped fields, scattered farmsteads and ancient routeways. In November 2023, all AONBs were rebranded as 'National Landscapes'. However, the legislative framework still refers to AONBs, rather than National Landscapes. It is therefore referred to as the High Weald AONB within this report.

1.19 The High Weald AONB Management Plan 2019-2024 **[See reference 3]** establishes the following objective:

> Objective G3: To help secure climatic conditions and rates of change which support continued conservation and enhancement of the High Weald's valued landscape and habitats.

1.20 An *"Indicator of Success"* for this objective is to "*Increase in proportion of total energy demand met by renewable energy generated in the High Weald (HWJAC: compiled, kWh)*". A further *"Proposed Action"* for this objective is to encourage all new habitable buildings to integrate "*landscape-sensitive on-site renewable energy generation where appropriate*".

1.21 The AONB Management Plan sets out five 'defining components of character' and 'other qualities' of the AONB, which may be affected by commercial scale solar and wind energy development within the AONB. The five defining components of character are:

1. Geology, landform and water systems – a deeply incised, ridged and faulted landform of clays and sandstone with numerous gill streams.

2. Settlement – dispersed historic settlement including high densities of isolated farmsteads and late Medieval villages founded on trade and non-agricultural rural industries.

3. Routeways – a dense network of historic routeways (now roads, tracks and paths).

4. Woodland – abundance of ancient woodland, highly interconnected and in smallholdings.

5. Field and Heath – small, irregular and productive fields, bounded by hedgerows and woods, and typically used for livestock grazing; with distinctive zones of lowland heaths, and inned river valleys."

1.22 The 'other qualities' are defined as:

> [Those] that are connected to the interaction between the landscape and people and which enrich character components. Such qualities and features enhance health and wellbeing, and foster enjoyment and appreciation of the beauty of nature. These include locally distinctive features which enrich the character components such as historic parks and gardens, orchards, hop gardens, veteran trees, along with their rich and varied biodiversity, and a wide range of appealing and locally distinctive historic buildings including oast houses, farm buildings, Wealden Hall houses and their associated features such as clay-tile catslide roofs. People value the wonderful views and scenic beauty of the High Weald with its relative tranquillity. They appreciate the area's ancientness and sense of history, its intrinsically dark landscape with the opportunity to see our own galaxy – the Milky Way – and the ability to get close to nature through the myriad public rights of way.

1.23 A New Management Plan for 2024-2029 is due to be published in spring 2024. The draft version, published in autumn 2023 **[See reference 4]**, set out eight components of character, which are very similar to the current components of character and 'other qualities'. These are:

- Natural systems (geology, soils, water and climate);
- Settlement;
- Routeways;
- Woodland;
- Fieldscapes and heath;
- Dark night skies;
- Aesthetic and perceptual qualities and cultural associations; and
- Land-based economy and rural living.

1.24 The draft Management Plan also has a section on the climate crisis, and states:

> Renewable energy systems in the High Weald can be best accommodated into this small-scale landscape through smaller scale and domestic projects, for example prioritising solar panels on roofs of existing development, (particularly on the larger roofscapes of modern commercial buildings, and avoiding external roofslopes of historic and listed buildings), in gardens and on brownfield land (depending on visibility in the landscape), before considering solar fields.

1.25 A study was commissioned by the High Weald Joint Advisory Committee (Wind Energy Regional Assessment for the High Weald AONB, May 2009) **[See reference 5]** to understand the resource of wind energy within the AONB alongside technical and environmental constraints.

1.26 Map 2a of the Wind Energy Regional Assessment indicates areas of wind resource exceeding 6.5mps, typically located along the main elevated ridgelines within the AONB. This includes elevated areas extending between the Ashdown Forest, Crowborough and Wadhurst and near Heathfield.

1.27 The study assessed the potential impact of the various constraints on the possible wind energy development, including:

- Effects on existing wind energy sites, for which 'low' impacts were identified (given the absence of commercial wind energy development within the AONB);
- Interference with TV Transmission, for which 'moderate' impacts were identified;
- Danger to aircraft movements and interference with radar, for which 'high' impacts were identified;

- Protected Areas (statutory protected / locally important habitats, species, landscape features including Sites of Nature Conservation Importance (SNCI), Local Wildlife Sites (LWS), Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), Special Protection Areas (SPA) and Local Nature Reserves (LNR)), for which 'high' impacts were identified;
- Public rights of way (in terms of required separation distances of operational turbines from public rights of way), for which 'high' impacts were identified;
- Proximity to powerlines and access to grid connection points, for which 'low' impacts were identified;
- Woodlands, for which 'moderate' impacts were identified;
- Roads (in terms of access and required separation distances of operational turbines from roads), for which 'high' impacts were identified; and
- Built Environment (in terms of recommended separation distances from residential dwellings for shadow flicker, noise, house price reduction and restrictions on development within green belt), for which 'very high' impacts were identified.

1.28 However, consideration of potential effects of wind energy on landscape character or visual amenity were not considered within the scope of the study.

1.29 The report concludes that the area of the AONB is "*unlikely to be a suitable area for large scale wind energy projects*" and that "*the area is considered more suitable for single turbines or small clusters of up to 3 turbines*".

1.30 A further study was commissioned by the AONB (Energy Use & Generation Audit, 2011) **[See reference** 6**]** to understand energy generation and consumption within the AONB against the national targets set by the Climate Change Act 2008. The report focuses on the amount of potential energy resource that is "*theoretically available"*, and is not representative of "*what could be practically achieved and delivered"*. The study notes that further

work would need to be undertaken "*to refine the results i.e. considering deployment, supply chain and planning constraints and opportunities*".

1.31 This study states that there is "*significant potential for the generation of renewable energy*" within the AONB. It is noted that this "*can be achieved by using a range of technologies appropriate to the characteristics of the landscape and buildings within the area, although it is appreciated that in practice some may be more challenging to implement at scale than others*".

1.32 The study also notes that "*high deployment of small scale wind turbines can in theory provide a significant contribution to total electricity demand, large wind turbines have greater potential energy output however opportunities for deployment are likely to be more limited*."

1.33 Potential for large scale solar PV farms is noted, however this technology was not specifically assessed in the report.

Chapter 2
Methodology

Scope of the assessment

2.1 The Landscape Sensitivity Assessment (LSA) for Renewable Energy focuses on the landscape considerations associated with ground-mounted solar photovoltaic (PV) and wind energy developments at a strategic level.

2.2 The study comprises a criteria-based assessment, in line with the Natural England guidance on Landscape Sensitivity Assessment **[See reference 7]**. This methodology highlights the specific landscape and visual characteristics that are most likely to be affected by renewable energy development (wind turbines and solar PV).

2.3 The LSA provides an indication of landscape sensitivity across Wealden District, so that potential landscape opportunities and constraints can be considered in addition to the technical opportunities/constraints for these types of developments.

Spatial framework for the assessment

2.4 The assessment uses the spatial framework of Landscape Character Types (LCTs) and component Landscape Character Areas (LCAs) identified by the existing Wealden Landscape Character Assessment (2022). LCTs form the basis for the assessment of wind and solar PV development, however LCAs that do not conform with the overall assessment for their respective host LCT are also identified.

Characteristics of solar PV and wind energy development types and their potential landscape impacts

Solar PV developments

2.5 Solar PV developments, although not prominent in terms of height, can occupy substantial areas of ground which may be visible, particularly if located on slopes. Landscape effects may include the following:

- Solar PV developments may be particularly visible in open landscapes or on upper slopes of hillsides or where overlooked.
- On a sunny day they can appear blue, while on a cloudy day they can appear a dark grey, both of which contrast with surrounding green areas.
- The presence of Solar PV panels and associated infrastructure may increase the perceived human influence on the landscape and erode intrinsically rural character.
- Solar PV development will change the land use and appearance of a field or fields, affecting land cover patterns.
- The regular edges of solar PV developments may be conspicuous in more irregular landscapes (particularly where field boundaries are irregular)
- The height of racks (up to 3m) may overtop typical hedgerow field boundaries.
- Screen planting around solar PV developments may change the sense of enclosure of a landscape.
- Construction of solar PV development may result in damage to landscape features such as hedgerow field boundaries and alter the landscape scale.

- Structures (including ancillary structures such as fencing, substations, access tracks, etc) may appear out of place, particularly in undeveloped landscapes which are valued for their qualities of remoteness.

Wind energy developments

2.6 All turbines considered in this study are large-scale vertical structures that may be highly visible within the landscape. Wind energy developments may affect the landscape in the following ways:

- Construction of turbines and related infrastructure (including access arrangements for getting turbines to site) may result in the direct loss of landscape features e.g. trees and hedgerows.
- The movement of the blades is a unique feature of wind energy development, setting them apart from other stationary tall structures in the landscape, and may affect characteristics of stillness and remoteness.
- The presence of turbines and substations may increase the influence of built development on the landscape.
- Turbines may be perceived as out of scale in relation to human scale features in the landscape e.g. farmsteads, rural lanes, walls and hedgerows.
- Turbines on skylines may compete with existing skyline features (e.g. church towers) for prominence, where prominent undeveloped skylines or landmark features are characteristic of the landscape.
- Access tracks or upgrades on access routes may be highly visible, particularly in open upland landscapes or undeveloped landscapes.

Type and scale of solar PV

2.7 The assessment considers the sensitivity of the landscape within Wealden District to ground-mounted solar PV developments. Such developments consist

of 'arrays' of solar PV panels, usually around three metres in height and mounted on aluminium / stainless steel frames. Associated infrastructure includes inverters, on-site powerhouse, security fencing and CCTV. Solar PV developments in domestic gardens or roof mounted panels are outside the scope of this study.

2.8 The assessment judges the landscape sensitivity of the LCTs to different scales of solar PV developments, based on bandings that reflect those that are most likely to be put forward by developers. The sizes used for the assessment are set out below:

Table 2.1: Solar development sizes/scales

Solar PV size	Approx. Megawatt generation capacity	Solar PV scale bandings
Up to 1 hectares	0.5 Megawatts	Very small solar PV installation
1 to 5 hectares	Up to 2.5 Megawatts	Small solar PV installation
5 to 20 hectares	2.5 to 10 Megawatts	Medium solar PV installation
20 to 50 hectares	10 to 25 Megawatts	Large solar PV installation
50 to 120 hectares	25 to 60 Megawatts	Very large solar PV installation

2.9 Based on the application of the indicative 2 hectare per Megawatt (ha/MW) development density, the sensitivity assessment therefore encompasses development capacities up to a (generous) 50 Megawatt. This is considered a reasonable maximum for the present purposes, bearing in mind the geographical characteristics of the District and the fact that any development in excess of 50 Megawatt would be considered under the national consenting framework. Landscape sensitivity to these very large schemes would be

categorised as “high" sensitivity regardless of location, requiring developers to pay particular attention to this issue in their specific applications.

Type and scale of wind energy developments

2.10 Turbine scales do not fall intrinsically into clear and unchanging size categories and the amount of energy generated depends primarily on wind speed but will also be limited by the maximum output of the individual turbine. At the larger scale, turbine dimensions and capacities are evolving rapidly, with larger turbine models particularly in demand from developers following the reduction in financial support from Government. The majority of operational and planned turbines in the UK range between 80 metres and 200 metres, with the majority at the larger end of the scale. A lack of financial incentives is currently restricting developer interest in onshore wind development in England. The National Planning Policy Framework also requires that wind energy development may only be permitted within areas identified suitable for wind energy developments within Local Plans and where the development has the backing of the local community. Turbines of this size typically have a capacity of between 2.5 Megawatts – 4 Megawatts.

2.11 Currently, there is one wind farm in Wealden, of three 115 metre turbines at Shepham Lane, north of Polegate. The site was fully commissioned in November 2016. A single turbine on the Victoria Pleasure Ground in Uckfield is 63 metres in height, which was given planning permission in 2011.

2.12 This study examines the landscape sensitivity of LCTs to commercial turbines between 100 metres and 150 metres (to blade tip), recognising that the development of wind turbines of this size will result in an inevitable change in landscape character.

Cumulative effects

2.13 As larger numbers of renewable energy developments are built, it is increasingly necessary to consider their cumulative effects. Cumulative effects of multiple schemes are a significant issue for planning authorities, particularly for free standing solar PV developments, which tend to cluster around grid connection points.

2.14 The most significant cumulative effects are those that result in changes in the character of a landscape of such an extent as to transform it into a different landscape type. It should be recognised that if numerous developments are built, then at some point another development could tip the balance through its additional effects.

2.15 Key considerations are how different developments relate to each other, their frequency as one moves through the landscape, and their visual separation. However, these are most appropriately considered at the individual site level, including through the process of Cumulative Landscape and Visual Impact Assessments (LVIAs).

Evaluating landscape sensitivity

2.16 The landscape sensitivity assessment is informed by Natural England's 'An approach to landscape sensitivity assessment – to inform spatial planning and land management', June 2019 **[See reference** 8**]**.

2.17 The study uses the following definition of landscape sensitivity:

> "Landscape sensitivity may be regarded as a measure of the resilience, or robustness, of a landscape to withstand specified change arising from

development types or land management practices, without undue negative effects on the landscape and visual baseline and their value."

2.18 It is a term applied to landscape character and the associated visual resource, combining judgements of their susceptibility to the specific development type / development scenario or other change being considered, together with the value(s) related to that landscape and visual resource.

Assessment criteria

2.19 Landscape sensitivity assessment requires judgements on both landscape susceptibility (how vulnerable the landscape is to change from the type of development being assessed, in this case solar PV and wind energy developments) and landscape value (consensus about importance, which can be recognised through designation as well as through descriptions within the Wealden Landscape Character Assessment (2022)) **[See reference** 9**]**.

2.20 The selection of landscape sensitivity indicators ('criteria') for this study is informed by the attributes of landscape that could be affected by solar and wind energy development. These consider the 'landscape', 'visual' and 'perceptual' aspects of sensitivity. Their selection is also based on current best practice and experience of LUC in undertaking similar studies elsewhere in the UK.

2.21 The following five criteria headings are used for this study:

- Landform and scale (including sense of openness / enclosure);
- Landcover (including field and settlement patterns);
- Historic landscape character;
- Visual character (including skylines); and
- Perceptual and scenic qualities.

2.22 The following text provides guidance and examples of higher and lower sensitivity features/attributes for applying the criteria in Wealden, for solar PV and wind energy, respectively. The assessments present a commentary against each criterion to inform the judgements on levels of sensitivity. It is important to note that the relative importance of each criterion varies between landscapes (due to differences in landscape character). The initial stage of the assessment involved a thorough desk-based study drawing on sources of spatial and descriptive information regarding the landscape. This was supplemented by field survey work undertaken by a team of landscape professionals to verify the findings.

Solar PV assessment criteria and guidance

Landform and scale (including sense of openness/enclosure)

2.23 A flat or gently undulating lowland landscape or extensive plateau is likely to be less sensitive to solar development than a landscape with prominent landforms and visible slopes, including hills and knolls. This is because arrays of solar panels will be less easily perceived in a flat landscape than on a slope (including hills and knolls), especially higher slopes.

2.24 A landscape with a strong sense of enclosure (e.g. provided by land cover such as woodland, tree cover or high hedges) is likely to be less sensitive to solar PV development than an open and unenclosed landscape because these features will be able to provide screening.

- **Low sensitivity:** An extensive lowland flat landscape or plateau, often a larger scale landform. A very well-enclosed landscape e.g. with fields bounded by high hedges and dense tree/woodland cover.
- **Low-moderate sensitivity:** A simple gently rolling landscape, likely to be a medium-large scale landform. Some enclosure provided by hedges and tree/woodland cover.

- **Moderate sensitivity:** An undulating landscape, perhaps also incised by valleys, likely to be a medium scale landform, with hidden areas as well as some visible slopes. Some areas lacking screening by field boundaries or tree cover, whilst others might have a greater sense of enclosure owing to a denser occurrence of these features.
- **Moderate-high sensitivity:** A landscape with distinct landform features, and/or irregular in topographic appearance (which may be large in scale), or a smaller scale landform. The landscape may contain prominent, visible slopes with little sense of enclosure (low, few or no hedges or trees/areas of woodland).
- **High sensitivity:** A landscape with a rugged landform or dramatic landform features (which may be large in scale), or a small-scale or intimate landform. The landform may be very steep with exposed, visible slopes and no field boundaries or tree cover to provide screening.

Land cover pattern (including field and settlement pattern)

2.25 Since solar PV panels introduce a new land cover (of built structures), landscapes containing existing hard surfacing or built elements (e.g. urban areas, brownfield sites or large-scale horticulture) are likely to be less sensitive to field-scale solar PV development than highly rural or naturalistic landscapes.

2.26 Landscapes with small-scale, more irregular field patterns are likely to be more sensitive to the introduction of solar PV development than landscapes with large, regular scale field patterns because of the risk of diluting or masking the characteristic landscape patterns. This would be particularly apparent if development takes place across a number of adjacent fields where the field pattern is small and intricate (bearing in mind that the height of panels could exceed that of a hedge). Landscapes with a distinctive or historic settlement pattern would be particularly sensitive to the introduction of solar PV.

- **Low sensitivity:** A landscape with large-scale, regular fields of mainly modern origin. An urban or ‘brownfield’ landscape.

- **Low-moderate sensitivity:** A landscape which is mainly defined by large, modern fields or those sub-divided for non-traditional uses, e.g. horse keeping. An area of large-scale horticulture or some urban or brownfield influences.
- **Moderate sensitivity:** A landscape with a mixture of large-scale, modern fields and some smaller, more historic enclosure. A rural landscape, perhaps with some brownfield sites or urban influences.
- **Moderate-high sensitivity:** A landscape with irregular or small-scale field patterns, with a few isolated areas of modern enclosure. A rural landscape with some areas of semi-natural land cover. A rural landscape that is lightly settled and/or retains a historic settlement pattern.
- **High sensitivity:** A landscape dominated by small-scale, ancient field patterns and/ or by semi-natural land cover. A rural landscape with a sparse settlement pattern and/or has retained a strong historic settlement pattern.

Historic landscape character

2.27 Landscapes which contain important archaeological or historic features or associations important to landscape character are likely to have a higher level of sensitivity to solar PV development. Historical features may be in the form of historic land cover types and field systems, areas of buried archaeology, historic designed landscapes such as a Registered Park and Garden, or buildings/structures designated for their historical significance.

2.28 Areas which make a significant contribution to the setting of a historical feature or landscapes may also have higher sensitivity to solar PV development. Landscapes that are primarily of modern influence and origin will have a lower sensitivity to solar PV development.

- **Low sensitivity:** A landscape with relatively few historic features important to the character of the area and little time depth (i.e. large intensively farmed fields).

- **Low-moderate sensitivity:** A landscape with a small number of historic features important to the character of the area and some time-depth.
- **Moderate sensitivity:** A landscape with some visible historic features of importance to landscape character, and a variety of time depths.
- **Moderate-high sensitivity:** A landscape with many historic features important to the character of the area and a strong sense of time depth.
- **High sensitivity:** A landscape with a high density of historic features important to the character of the area and great time depth.

Visual character (including skylines)

2.29 The relative visibility of a landscape may influence its sensitivity to solar PV development. An elevated landscape such as a hill range or plateau, which is viewed from other landscapes, may be more sensitive than an enclosed landscape, since any solar panels will be more widely seen. Landscapes which have important visual relationships with other areas, for example where one area provides a backdrop to a neighbouring area (which may be a designated landscape such as the High Weald AONB/South Downs National Park), are considered more sensitive than those with few visual relationships. The extent of inter-visibility may be modified by the importance of these views to appreciation of the landscape, and whether adjacent landscapes provide a setting for one another.

2.30 Prominent and distinctive and/or undeveloped skylines, or skylines with important landmark features, are likely to be more sensitive to solar PV development. This is because panels may detract from these skylines as features in the landscape, or draw attention away from existing landform or landmark features on skylines if not sited appropriately. Important landmark features on the skyline might include historic features or monuments as well as landforms. Where skylines are affected by development, e.g. through the presence of electricity pylons, the addition of solar panels may lead to visual confusion due to differences in scale. Therefore, developed skylines might not necessarily indicate lower sensitivity.

- **Low sensitivity:** An enclosed, self-contained landscape, or one with weak connections to neighbouring areas. A landscape in which skylines are not prominent, and there are no important landmark features on the skyline.
- **Low-moderate sensitivity:** A landscape with limited connections to neighbouring areas, and/or where adjacent landscapes are not visually related. A landscape in which skylines are simple, flat or gently convex and/or there are very few landmark features – other skylines in adjacent LCTs may be more prominent.
- **Moderate sensitivity:** A landscape which has some inter-visibility with neighbouring areas. A landscape with some prominent skylines, but these are not particularly distinctive – there may be some landmark features on the skyline.
- **Moderate-high sensitivity:** A landscape which is intervisible with several areas, and/or where adjacent areas are strongly interrelated. A landscape with prominent skylines that may form an important backdrop to views from settlements or important viewpoints, and/or with important landmark features.
- **High sensitivity:** A landscape which has important visual relationships with one or more neighbouring areas. It or the landscape(s) it is visible from is designated as AONB/National Park. A landscape with prominent or distinctive undeveloped skylines, or with important landmark features on skylines.

Perceptual and scenic qualities

2.31 Landscapes that are relatively remote or tranquil tend to be more sensitive to solar PV development, since solar panels may be perceived as intrusive. Landscapes which are relatively free from overt human activity and disturbance, and which have a perceived naturalness or a strong feel of traditional rurality, will therefore be more sensitive. Qualities such as tranquillity can be found even in settled areas, where the influence of overtly modern development is reduced. Solar PV development will generally be less intrusive in landscapes which are

strongly influenced by modern development, including settlement, industrial and commercial development and infrastructure.

2.32 Landscapes that have a high scenic quality (including those within the High Weald AONB) will be more sensitive. Scenic qualities can include contrasts and combinations of landform and landcover. Scenic qualities are recorded in the Landscape Character Assessment, AONB Management Plan and noted from fieldwork.

2.33 This criterion also considers the presence of features and facilities which enable enjoyment of the landscape, and the importance of these. This may include Public Rights of Way, open access land, country parks and outdoor tourist/ visitor attractions with facilities where enjoyment of the landscape is important to the experience. Importance of features may be indicated by designation such as long-distance footpaths or recreation routes, national cycle routes, country parks and outdoor tourist attractions often marked on Ordinance Survey maps.

- **Low sensitivity:** A landscape without attractive character, with no pleasing combinations of features, visual contrasts and/or dramatic elements, such as industrial areas or derelict land, that is publicly inaccessible or has limited provision of access routes.
- **Low-moderate sensitivity:** A landscape with much human activity and modern development, such as industrial areas. A landscape of limited attractive character, with few pleasing combinations of features, visual contrasts and/or dramatic elements. Recreational value limited to facilities where enjoyment of the landscape is not integral to the activity, or with limited provision of access routes.
- **Moderate sensitivity:** A rural or semi-rural landscape with much human activity and dispersed modern development, such as settlement fringes. A landscape of intermittently attractive character, with occasional pleasing combinations of features, visual contrasts and/or dramatic elements. Some may be within AONB. Landscapes with green spaces or recreation areas valued in the local context. Includes some Public Rights of Way.

- **Moderate-high sensitivity:** A rural landscape with some modern development and human activity, such as intensive farmland. A landscape of attractive character, with some pleasing combinations of features, visual contrasts and/or dramatic elements. Most or all may be designated as AONB. Landscapes with green spaces or recreation areas valued in the local context. Includes some interconnected Public Rights of Way and promoted walking routes.
- **High sensitivity:** A more naturalistic landscape and/or one with little modern human influence and development. A landscape of consistently attractive character, with pleasing combinations of features, visual contrasts and/or dramatic elements. All or the vast majority is designated for its scenic qualities. A tranquil landscape with little or no overt sign of modern human activity and development. Landscapes important for access and enjoyment of the landscape, with a high density of well-connected public rights of way, promoted walking routes and outdoor tourist attractions where enjoyment of the landscape is integral to the activity.

Wind energy developments assessment criteria and guidance

Landform and scale

2.34 A flat or gently sloping landform is likely to be less sensitive to wind energy development than a landscape with a dramatic rugged landform, distinct landform features (including prominent hills and valleys) or pronounced undulations. Larger scale landforms are likely to be less sensitive than smaller scale landforms - because turbines may appear out of scale, detract from visually important landforms or appear visually confusing (due to turbines being at varying heights) in the latter types of landscapes. Landscapes with frequent human scale features, such as settlements, farmsteads, small farm woodlands, trees and hedges may be particularly sensitive to larger turbines. This is

because large features such as wind turbines may dominate smaller scale features within the landscape.

- **Low sensitivity:** An extensive lowland flat landscape or plateau with few/no human-scale features; often a larger scale landform.
- **Low-moderate sensitivity:** A simple gently rolling landscape with occasional human-scale features such as trees and domestic buildings; likely to be a medium-large scale landform.
- **Moderate sensitivity:** An undulating landscape, perhaps also incised by valleys, likely to be a medium scale landform, with hidden areas as well as some visible slopes.
- **Moderate-high sensitivity:** A landscape with distinct landform features, and/or irregular in topographic appearance (which may be large in scale), or a smaller scale landform. The landscape may contain prominent, visible slopes and frequent human-scale features.
- **High sensitivity:** A landscape with a rugged landform or dramatic landform features (which may be large in scale), or a small scale or intimate landform often with a dense distribution of human-scale features, such as woodland. The landform may be very steep with exposed, visible slopes.

Land cover pattern (including field and settlement pattern)

2.35 Simple, regular landscapes with extensive areas of consistent land cover are likely to be less sensitive to wind energy development than landscapes with more complex or irregular land cover patterns, smaller and / or irregular field sizes.

- **Low sensitivity:** An open, continuous landscape with uniform land cover, or an urban or ‘brownfield’ landscape.

- **Low-moderate sensitivity:** A landscape of large open fields of modern enclosure, with little variety inland cover. A landscape which contains areas of brownfield sites or urban influences.
- **Moderate sensitivity:** A landscape with medium sized fields (or a mix of modern and historic enclosure) and some variations in land cover. A rural landscape which may contain some brownfield sites or urban influences.
- **Moderate-high sensitivity:** A landscape with irregular or small-scale fields and a variety in land cover. A rural landscape, perhaps with some areas of semi-natural land cover. A rural landscape that is lightly settled and/or retains a historic settlement pattern.
- **High sensitivity:** A landscape dominated by complex field patterns and / or semi-natural land cover. The field pattern may be characterised by small-scale, irregular ancient fields. A rural landscape with a sparse settlement pattern and/or has retained a strong historic settlement pattern.

Historic landscape character

2.36 Landscapes which contain important archaeological or historic features or historic associations important to landscape character are likely to have a higher level of sensitivity to wind energy development. Historical features may be in the form of historic land cover types and field systems, areas of buried archaeology, historic designed landscapes such as a Registered Park and Garden, or buildings/structures designated for their historical significance.

2.37 Areas which make a significant contribution to the setting of a historical feature or landscapes may also have higher sensitivity to wind energy development. Landscapes that are primarily of modern influence and origin will have a lower sensitivity to wind energy development.

- **Low sensitivity:** A landscape with relatively few historic features important to the character of the area and little time depth (i.e. large intensively farmed fields).

- **Low-moderate sensitivity:** A landscape with a small number of historic features important to the character of the area and some time-depth.
- **Moderate sensitivity:** A landscape with some visible historic features of importance to landscape character, and a variety of time depths.
- **Moderate-high sensitivity:** A landscape with many historic features important to the character of the area and a strong sense of time depth.
- **High sensitivity:** A landscape with a high density of historic features important to the character of the area and great time depth (i.e. piecemeal enclosure with irregular boundaries, ridge and furrow).

Visual character (including skylines)

2.38 The relative visibility of a landscape may influence its sensitivity to wind development. An elevated landscape such as a hill range or plateau, which is viewed from other landscapes, may be more sensitive than a landscape with limited visibility. Landscapes which have important visual relationships with other areas, for example where one area provides a backdrop to a neighbouring area (which may be a designated landscape such as an AONB/National Park), are considered more sensitive than those with few visual relationships. The extent of inter-visibility may be modified by the importance of these views to appreciation of the landscape, and whether adjacent landscapes provide a setting for one another.

2.39 Prominent and distinctive and/or undeveloped skylines, or skylines with important landmark features, are likely to be more sensitive to wind energy development because turbines may detract from these skylines as features in the landscape, or draw attention away from existing landform or landmark features on skylines. Important landmark features on the skyline might include historic features or monuments as well as landforms. Where skylines are affected by development, e.g. through the presence of electricity pylons or existing turbines, the addition of turbines of a different scale may lead to visual confusion. Therefore, the presence of existing development cannot always assume a lower sensitivity to new development.

- **Low sensitivity:** An enclosed, self-contained landscape, or one with weak connections to neighbouring areas. A landscape in which skylines are not prominent, and there are no important landmark features on the skyline.
- **Low-moderate sensitivity:** A landscape with limited connections to neighbouring areas, and/or where adjacent landscapes are not visually related. A landscape in which skylines are simple, flat or gently convex and/or there are very few landmark features – other skylines in adjacent LCTs may be more prominent.
- **Moderate sensitivity:** A landscape which has some inter-visibility with neighbouring areas. A landscape with some prominent skylines, but these are not particularly distinctive – there may be some landmark features on the skyline.
- **Moderate-high sensitivity:** A landscape which is intervisible with several areas, and/or where adjacent areas are strongly interrelated. A landscape with prominent skylines that may form an important backdrop to views from settlements or important viewpoints, and/or with important landmark features.
- **High sensitivity:** A landscape which has important visual relationships with one or more neighbouring areas. It or the landscape(s) it is visible from is designated as AONB/National Park. A landscape with prominent or distinctive undeveloped skylines, or with important landmark features on skylines.

Perceptual and scenic qualities

2.40 Landscapes that are relatively remote or tranquil (and with dark skies) tend to be more sensitive to wind energy, since turbines may be perceived as intrusive. Landscapes which are relatively free from overt human activity and disturbance, and which have a perceived naturalness or a strong feel of traditional rurality, will therefore be more sensitive. Wind energy development will generally be less intrusive in landscapes which are strongly influenced by modern development, including settlement, industrial and commercial development and infrastructure.

2.41 Landscapes that have a high scenic quality (including those within the High Weald AONB) will be more sensitive to wind energy development. Scenic qualities can include contrasts and combinations of landform and landcover. Scenic qualities are recorded in the Landscape Character Assessment, AONB Management Plan and noted from fieldwork.

2.42 This criterion also considers the presence of features and facilities which enable enjoyment of the landscape, and the importance of these. This may include Public Rights of Way, open access land, country parks and outdoor tourist/ visitor attractions with facilities where enjoyment of the landscape is important to the experience. Importance of features may be indicated by designation such as long-distance footpaths or recreation routes, national cycle routes, country parks and outdoor tourist attractions often marked on Ordinance Survey maps.

- **Low sensitivity:** A landscape without attractive character, with no pleasing combinations of features, visual contrasts and/or dramatic elements, such as industrial areas or derelict land. A landscape with much human activity and modern development, such as industrial areas, that is publicly inaccessible or has limited provision of access routes.
- **Low-moderate sensitivity:** A landscape of limited attractive character, with few pleasing combinations of features, visual contrasts and/or dramatic elements. A rural or semi-rural landscape with much human activity and dispersed modern development, such as settlement fringes. Recreational value limited to facilities where enjoyment of the landscape is not integral to the activity, or with limited provision of access routes.
- **Moderate sensitivity:** A landscape of intermittently attractive character, with occasional pleasing combinations of features, visual contrasts and/or dramatic elements. Some may be within AONB. A rural landscape with some modern development and human activity, such as intensive farmland. Landscapes with green spaces or recreation areas valued in the local context. Includes some Public Rights of Way.
- **Moderate-high sensitivity:** A landscape of attractive character, with some pleasing combinations of features, visual contrasts and/or dramatic elements. Most or all may be designated as AONB. A more naturalistic

landscape and/or one with little modern human influence and development. Landscapes with green spaces or recreation areas valued in the local context. Includes some interconnected Public Rights of Way and promoted walking routes.

- **High sensitivity:** A landscape of consistently attractive character, with pleasing combinations of features, visual contrasts and/or dramatic elements. All or the vast majority is designated for its scenic qualities. A tranquil landscape with little or no overt sign of modern human activity and development. Landscapes important for access and enjoyment of the landscape, with a high density of well-connected public rights of way, promoted walking routes and outdoor tourist attractions where enjoyment of the landscape is integral to the activity.

Making overall judgements on landscape sensitivity

2.43 As with all assessments based upon data and information which is to a greater or lesser extent subjective, some caution is required in its interpretation. This is to avoid the suggestion that certain landscape features or qualities can automatically be associated with certain sensitivities – the reality is that an assessment of a landscape's sensitivity to development is the result of a complex interplay of often unequally weighted variables (or 'criteria').

2.44 There may be one criterion that has a strong influence on landscape sensitivity in a particular LCT (or LCA) which increases the overall landscape sensitivity score (for example for solar PV this might be a landscape with a prominent/highly visible ridgeline or significant coverage of semi-natural habitats). There may also be criteria that produce conflicting scores. For example, a small-scale landscape with historic field patterns may also afford greater screening of panels from topography and a dense network of hedgerows. A conflicting example for wind energy development could be in the context of a settled landscape. While the landscape would have greater human influence (indicating a lower sensitivity to new development), it would also contain more human-scale features that could be affected by large-scale wind

turbines (indicating a higher sensitivity). Conversely, a more remote landscape is likely to lack human-scale features but is likely to present a higher sensitivity from a perceptual point of view. In these situations, a professional judgement is made on overall landscape sensitivity, taking all criteria into account in the context of their importance to the landscape character and quality of the individual LCT/LCA.

2.45 Landscape sensitivity is expressed on five-level scale from low sensitivity to high sensitivity. A landscape of higher sensitivity is likely to experience a greater impact on landscape character as a result of a given development type/scale, and a landscape of lower sensitivity is likely to experience a lesser impact on landscape character.

Presentation of results

2.46 The full landscape sensitivity assessments for each of the LCTs are presented in separate assessment profiles. These are structured as follows:

- A map of the LCT, with component LCAs and representative photographs.
- An evaluation of the LCT against each of the assessment criteria
- A landscape sensitivity assessment rating for both development types against each criteria.
- Landscape sensitivity scores for solar PV and wind energy development within each of the different development scenarios, using the five-level scale from low to high sensitivity.
- A summary of the landscape sensitivity of the LCT to solar PV and wind energy developments, referencing particular features, attributes or locations which may be more or less sensitive.
- Discussion of any variations to the overall LCT scores at the LCA level.
- A table showing landscape sensitivity of the LCT to different scales of solar PV development and to commercial scale wind energy development.

Summary and guidance

2.47 A comparative summary of overall landscape sensitivity within the District including sensitivity maps for wind turbine and solar PV development is provided in **Chapter 3**, along with high level siting and design guidance.

Chapter 3

Landscape Sensitivity Assessment Results and Guidance

3.1 The LCTs within Wealden District contain areas of higher and lower sensitivity that vary from the overall scores. It is therefore important to take note of the content of the individual assessment profiles, including any commentary which highlights areas which could be more sensitive to solar PV and/or wind energy developments.

3.2 The overall results of the landscape sensitivity assessment are set out in **Tables 3.1** and **3.2**.

Table 3.1: Overall landscape sensitivity to solar PV development

LCT	Very small solar PV (Up to 1 hectare)	Small solar PV (1 to 5 hectares)	Medium solar PV (5 to 20 hectares)	Large solar PV (20 to 50 hectares)	Very large solar PV (50 to 120 hectares)
1: Alluvial levels	Low-moderate	Moderate	Moderate-high	High	High
2: Open clay vale (Low Weald)	Low	Low-moderate	Moderate	Moderate	High
3: Wooded clay vale (Low Weald)	Low	Low-moderate	Low-moderate	Moderate	High

LCT	Very small solar PV (Up to 1 hectare)	Small solar PV (1 to 5 hectares)	Medium solar PV (5 to 20 hectares)	Large solar PV (20 to 50 hectares)	Very large solar PV (50 to 120 hectares)
4: River floodplains (Low Weald)	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate-high	High	High
5: Wooded ridges (High Weald)	Moderate	Moderate-high	Moderate-high	High	High
6: Wooded slopes (High Weald)	Moderate	Moderate-high	Moderate-high	High	High

Table 3.2: Overall landscape sensitivity to new wind energy development

LCT	Landscape sensitivity to wind energy development (100-150 metre blade tip)
1: Alluvial levels	Moderate-high
2: Open clay vale (Low Weald)	Moderate-high
3: Wooded clay vale (Low Weald)	Moderate
4: River floodplains (Low Weald)	Moderate-high
5: Wooded ridges (High Weald)	High

LCT	Landscape sensitivity to wind energy development (100-150 metre blade tip)
6: Wooded slopes (High Weald)	High

Generic guidance for accommodating solar and wind energy development in Wealden

3.3 The following section provides some generic guidance on siting renewable energy development in Wealden, focussing on minimising landscape and visual effects and making developments an accepted feature of the environment. While it is recognised that schemes need to be sited and designed to ensure operational efficiency, this is a matter for developers, and needs to be balanced with adequate mitigation of adverse impacts. The siting and design of schemes is a key aspect of such mitigation.

3.4 In all cases the strategy for the relevant LCT within Wealden's Landscape Character Assessment should be considered when choosing potential sites for development.

3.5 All renewable energy development should aim to be sensitively sited.

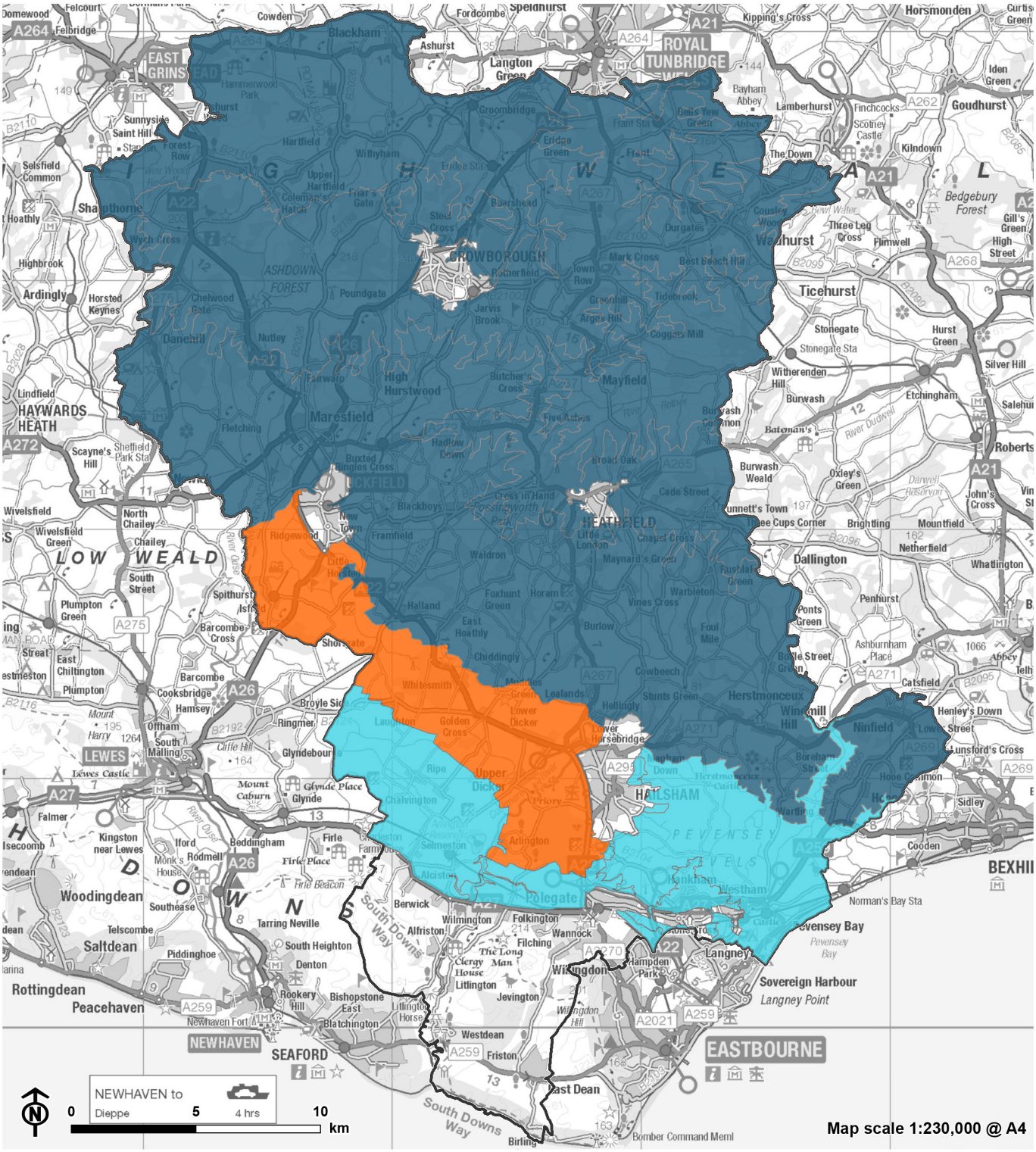
- Site renewable energy development away from dramatic rugged landforms or valued landform features. The most suitable sites are likely to be on large scale smooth, convex or flat landforms. For example, site solar PV development on lower slopes/undulating lowlands, rather than upper slopes where they are more visually prominent.
- Select sites in simple, regular landscapes with extensive areas of consistent ground cover over landscapes with more complex or irregular land cover patterns, smaller field sizes and landscapes with frequent human scale features (subject to satisfying other sensitivities).

- Seek to avoid areas with a concentration of semi-natural habitats.
- Seek to avoid siting renewable energy development where it could detract from undeveloped areas free from human influence and perceived 'naturalness' (e.g. Ashdown Forest).
- Consider locations in association with hard surfacing or built elements (e.g. larger business parks and reclaimed, industrial and man-made landscapes) where other landscape sensitivities are not compromised.
- Avoid siting renewable energy development on landscapes with intrinsic historic landscape character significance or potential for preserved archaeological evidence (e.g. fields with a medieval historic character).
- Protect the character of conservation areas (including views integral to their character), the setting to listed buildings (where the character of the landscape is an important part of a listed building's setting), and registered/ local historic parks and gardens and battlefields (including views to and from the heritage landscape, particularly designed views).
- Ensure siting of renewable energy development does not adversely affect the distinctive characteristics and special qualities of National Landscapes or their settings(including the South Downs National Park and the Wealden AONB) as set out in Management Plans.
- Ensure the siting of renewable energy development does not damage the special qualities of the landscape as recorded in the Wealden Landscape Character Assessment descriptions and is designed with reference to landscape guidance.
- Significant effects on views from important viewpoints, popular tourist and scenic routes and settlements should be avoided where possible or minimised through careful siting.
- Avoid selecting sites on important undeveloped or distinctive skylines, or skylines with important cultural or historic landmark features.
- Consider the landscape effects of transmission infrastructure when siting development, aiming for sites that will minimise the need for above ground transmission infrastructure, particularly through National Landscapes. Undergrounding cables may mitigate effects in sensitive locations.

- Consider sites where areas of existing vegetation, such as woodland or high hedgerows could screen ground-level features of renewable energy developments (such as fencing, tracks and transformers) and solar PV panels rather than open and unenclosed landscapes. Since commercial scale wind turbines cannot be hidden, careful site selection as well as choice of turbine type and layout is the most effective way of minimising landscape and visual effects.
- Consider potential effects of transporting turbines and solar PV panels to site, and the possible limitations presented by winding narrow lanes bounded by hedgerows.
- Seek to keep developments within one LCT (particularly as perceived in sensitive views) so that the development does not span across marked changes in character on the ground, such as changes in topography. For example, set turbines back from breaks of slope, avoiding the effect of turbines 'spilling' into adjacent valleys or lowlands, or keep solar PV panels set back from the edges of a plateau landscape to minimise effects on the surrounding area.

Landscape Enhancement

- Continue the existing land use underneath the turbines or solar PV panels so that the landscape flows underneath and around these features, or link land use to adjoining land uses especially if this can create more robust semi natural habitats and reduce habitat fragmentation.
- Provide enhanced management of landscape features, habitats and historic assets as part of a development, including contributing to wider landscape scale targets in the Wealden Landscape Character Assessment or other relevant documents.
- Screening development of solar PV panels is important, however letting hedgerows grow higher should only be employed where it fits with the local landscape character. Native tree or shrub species should be used for any screening.



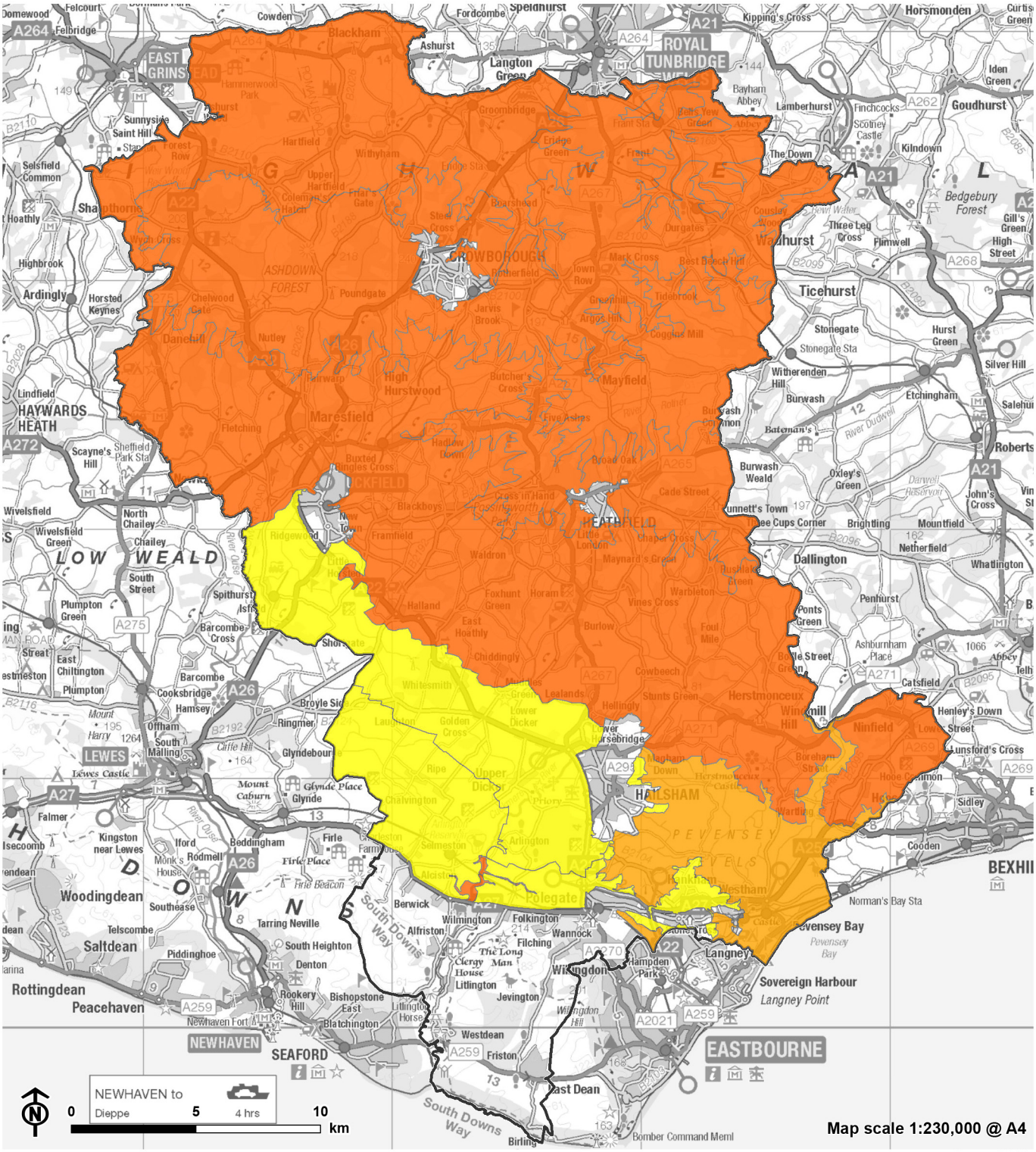
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Source: WBC

Figure 3.1: Landscape Sensitivity to Wind Development (turbines between 100-150m blade to tip)

Landscape sensitivty

- Low
- Low-Moderate
- Moderate
- Moderate-High
- High
- Wealden district



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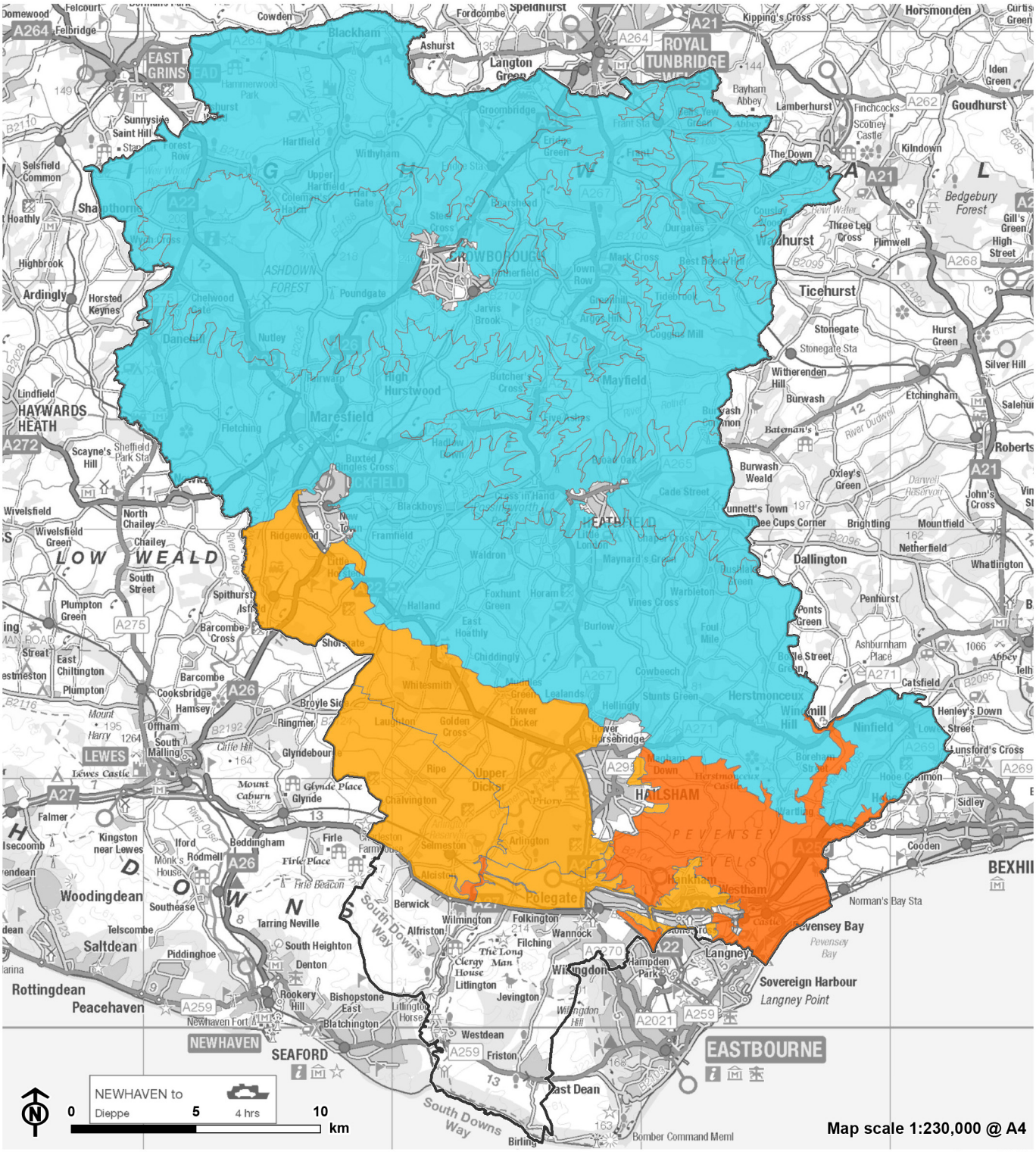
Source: WBC

Figure 3.2: Landscape Sensitivity to Very Small Solar Development (<1ha)

Landscape sensitivty

- Low
- Low-Moderate
- Moderate
- Moderate-High
- High

Wealden district



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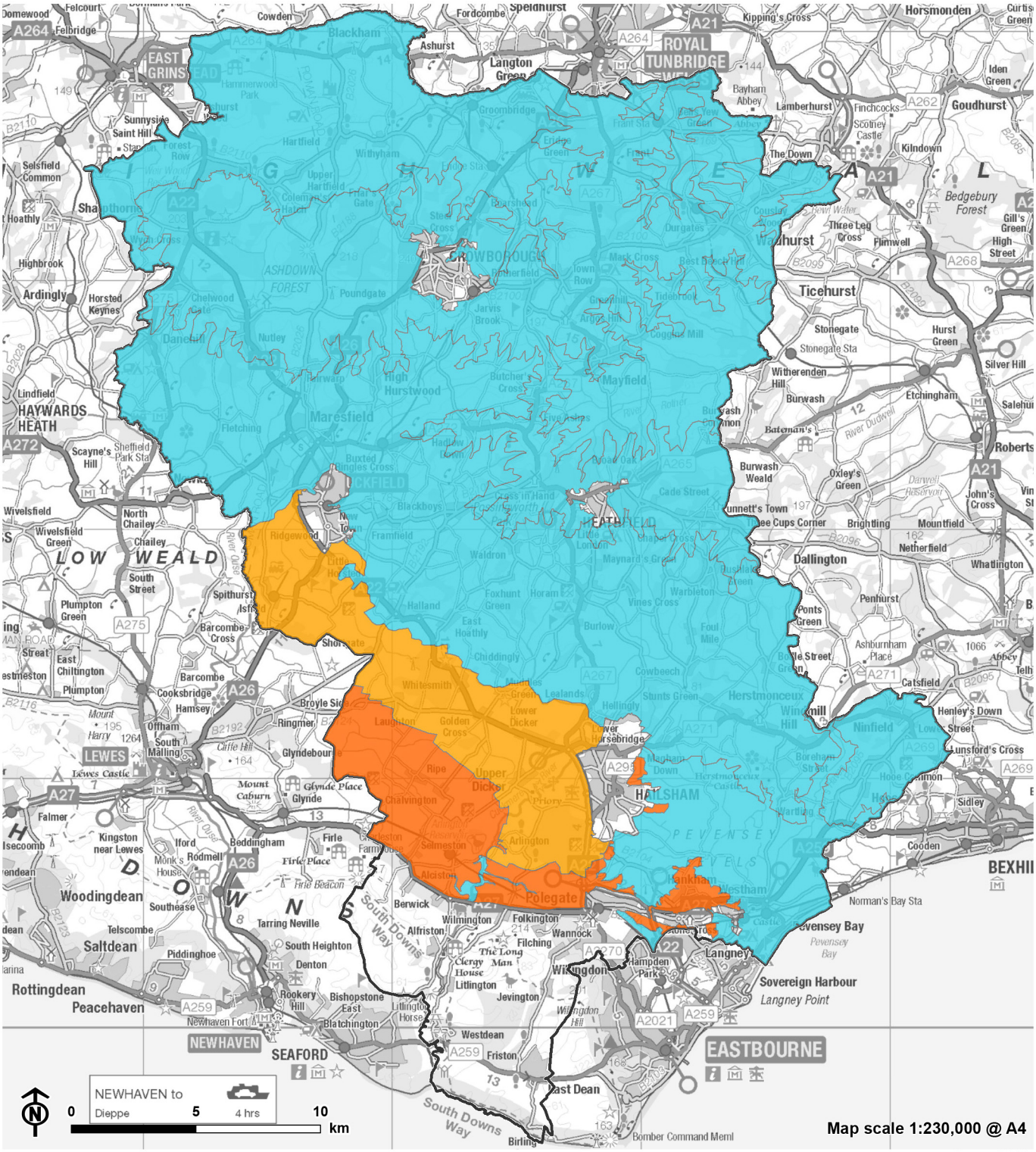
Source: WBC

Figure 3.3: Landscape Sensitivity to Small Solar Development (1-5ha)

Landscape sensitivty

- Low
- Low-Moderate
- Moderate
- Moderate-High
- High

Wealden district



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Source: WBC

Figure 3.4: Landscape Sensitivity to Medium Solar Development (5-20ha)

Landscape sensitivty

- Low
- Low-Moderate
- Moderate
- Moderate-High
- High

Wealden district

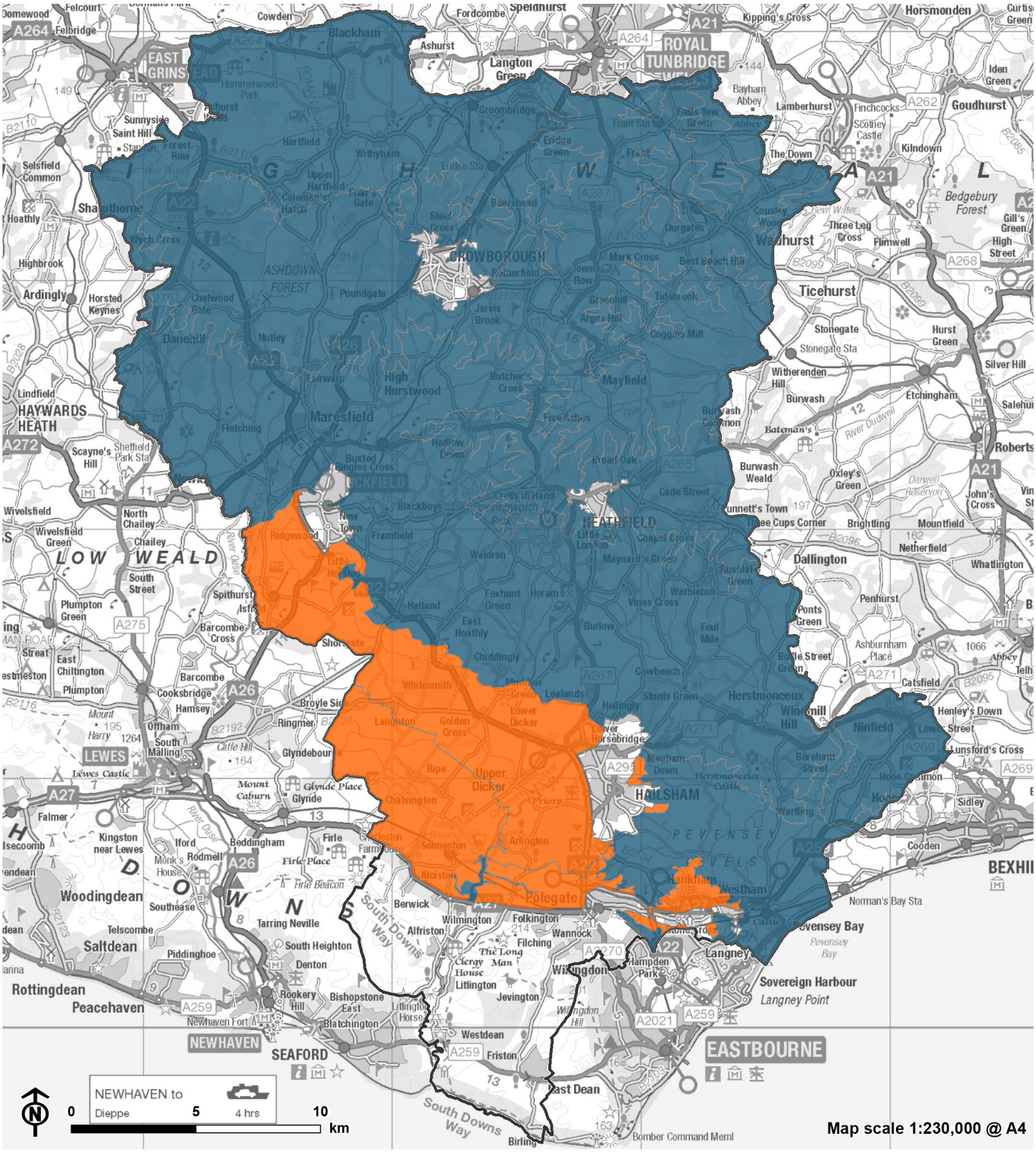
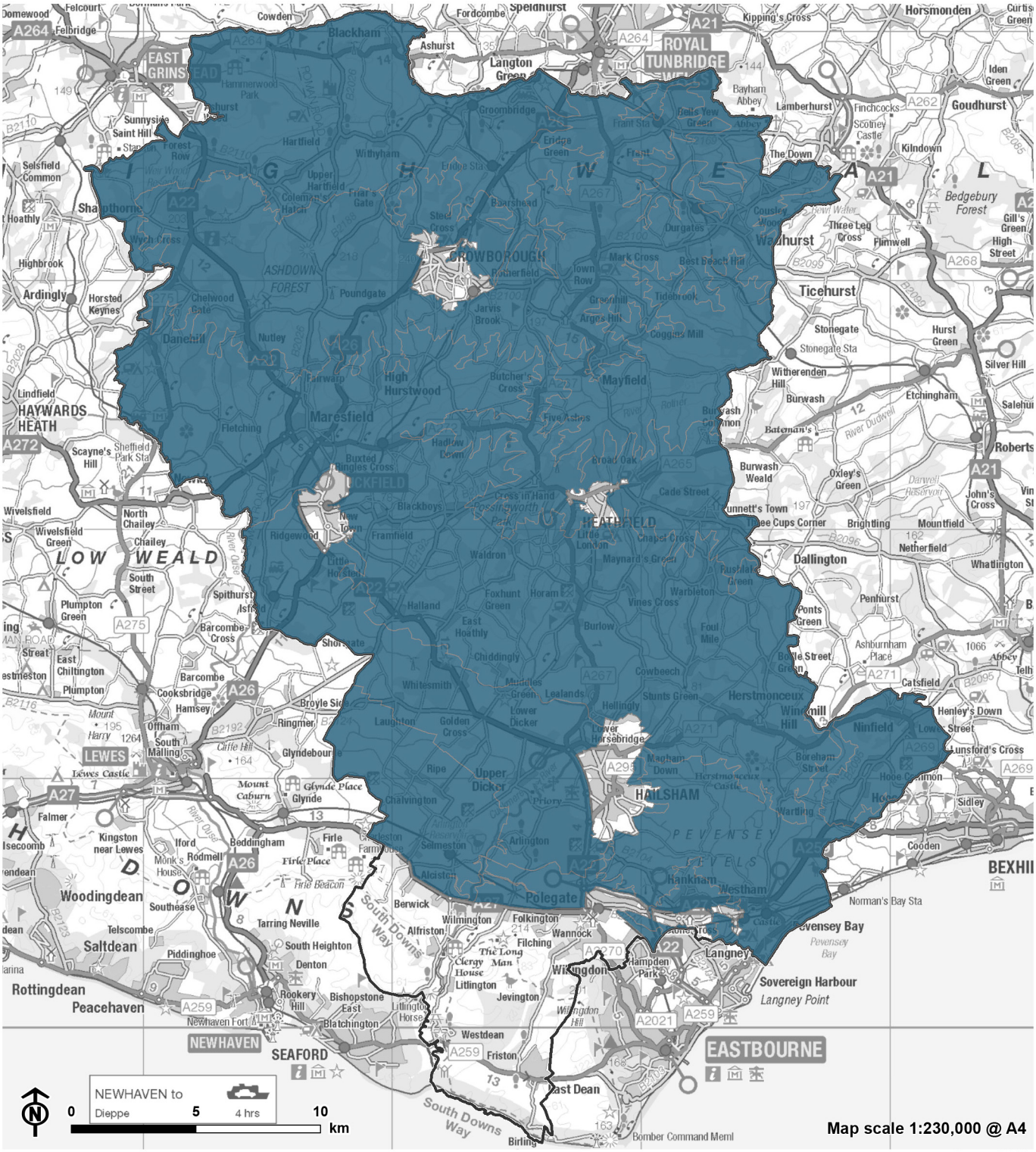


Figure 3.5: Landscape Sensitivity to Large Solar Development (20-50ha)

Landscape sensitivty

- Low
- Low-Moderate
- Moderate
- Moderate-High
- High
- Wealden district



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Source: WBC

Figure 3.6: Landscape Sensitivity to Very Large Solar Development (50-120ha)

Landscape sensitivty

- Low
- Low-Moderate
- Moderate
- Moderate-High
- High

Wealden district

Appendix A

Landscape Sensitivity Profiles

A.1 Landscape sensitivity assessment profiles for the six LCTs within Wealden District are set out below.

LCT 1: Alluvial Levels

Figure A.1: Location map of LCT 1 Alluvial Levels

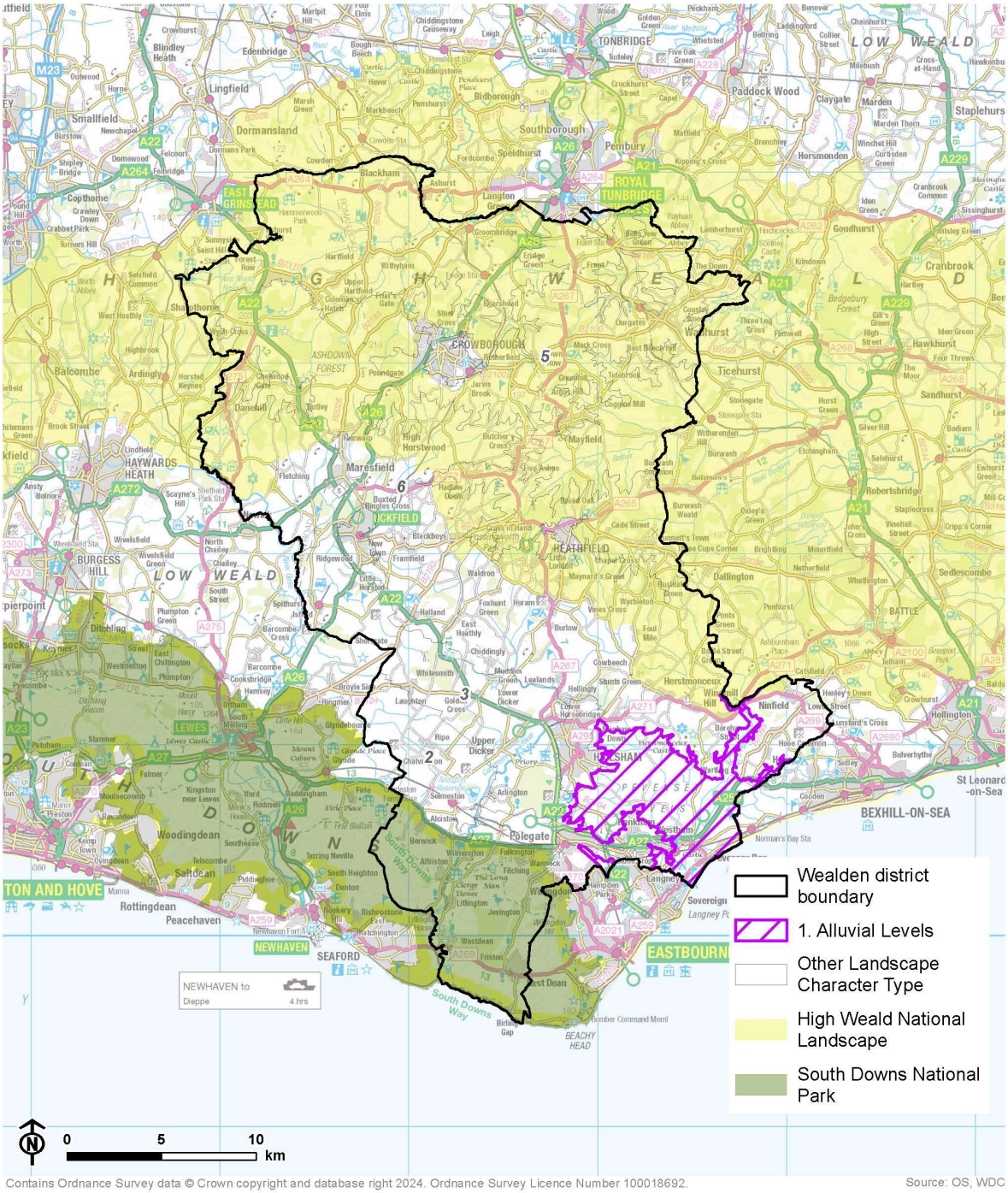


Figure A.2: Typical view of LCA 1A



Assessment of landscape sensitivity to renewable energy development

Landscape sensitivity assessment

Landform and scale (including sense of openness/enclosure)

- An open lowland landscape centred on the Pevensey Levels, generally under 5 metres above ordinance datum (AOD).

- Landform is level, with some small 'eyes' over 5 metres AOD which provide some limited topographical variety. Landform is large-scale and extensive.
- A predominately open and windswept landscape with big skies and long views. Very sparsely settled, and few trees or hedgerows to provide human-scale features.

The extensive lowland flat landform is of low sensitivity to development, however, the highly exposed character (with no field boundaries or tree cover to provide screening) are of high sensitivity, resulting in a **moderate sensitivity** to solar PV development.

The flat landform, and the large-scale landscape with very few human-scale features, the small-scale provided by streams and small farmsteads, result in a **low-moderate sensitivity** to wind energy development.

Land cover pattern (including field and settlement patterns)

- Predominately grazed wet meadows, with some arable fields. Fields are small-scale and bound and drained by streams, dykes and ditches, with occasional reinforcement by post and wire fencing and limited hedgerows.
- Field pattern is formed by the historic reclamation of the saltmarsh as informal and formal 'innings'.
- Pevensey Levels Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and Ramsar is one of the largest and least-fragmented lowland wet grassland systems in south-east England. Small areas of priority habitat lowland meadows are found south of Rickney and lowland fens north of Pevensey.
- Very sparse settlement within the marsh, limited to occasional historic farmsteads on the 'eyes'. Settlement is concentrated in historic Pevensey, and in the largely 20th century settlement at Pevensey Bay. Polegate and

Hailsham have expanded into the area in the south-west and west respectively, creating a rural-fringe character.

The small-scale, historic field pattern, nationally and internationally designated semi-natural land cover and sparse settlement pattern result in a **high sensitivity** to solar PV development.

The irregular historic field patterns, nationally and internationally designated semi-natural land cover and rural character with sparse settlement pattern results in a **high sensitivity** to wind energy development.

Historic landscape character

- Pevensey is designated as a Conservation Area, and contains weather-boarded tile hung upper houses.
- Historic defensive structures at Pevensey Castle (also a Scheduled Monument) and three Martello towers, now within Pevensey Bay, are listed buildings.
- Pevensey Levels began to be reclaimed in the Medieval period, by enclosing portions of saltmarsh within sea walls. This historic landscape character of the marshes is retained.

A landscape with some visible historic features which are important to the character including the reclaimed salt marsh, historic Pevensey village, Pevensey Castle and Martello Towers provide a variety of time depths, resulting in a **moderate-high sensitivity** to solar PV developments.

The visible historic features including Pevensey, Pevensey Castle, Martello Towers, and the reclaimed salt marsh provide a variety of time depths, resulting in a **moderate-high sensitivity** to wind energy development.

Visual character (including skylines)

- An open low-lying landscape with long views across the flat landform towards the adjacent South Downs National Park ridges and woodlands of the High Weald AONB.
- Extensive views across the Pevensey Levels from the High Weald AONB, with the undeveloped flat landscape and coastline visible across much of the AONB.
- In contrast, the A259 is largely enclosed by vegetation.
- Electricity pylons both within the Pevensey Levels and in the adjacent wooded slopes are highly visible in the landscape, and provide vertical features in an otherwise uninterrupted skyline.
- The Shepham Lane wind turbines within the south-west of the LCT are widely visible within the rest of the landscape.

This open landscape has important visual relationships with both the South Downs National Park and High Weald AONB, and has a largely undeveloped skyline (with the exception of the Shepham Lane wind turbines and pylons), which despite the low-lying landscape results in a **moderate-high sensitivity** to solar PV developments.

Despite existing infrastructure (the major transport corridors, Shepham Lane wind turbines and electricity pylons), the sensitivity of the landscape is increased due to open views to the South Downs National Park and High Weald AONB and largely undeveloped skyline result in a **moderate-high sensitivity** to wind energy developments.

Perceptual and scenic qualities

- High levels of relative tranquillity and experience of dark night skies, especially in the core.

- A windswept floodplain with a sense of remoteness and a strong sense of place.
- 20th century development at Pevensey Bay, and infrastructure including the A259 and railway line in the south-east, electricity pylons and the Shepham Lane turbines in the south-west are modern developments in an otherwise rural landscape.
- There is a strong public right of way network, including the promoted 1066 Country Walk.

The remote character of the landscape with little human activity and modern development including settlement edges, infrastructure and transport corridors, in combination with the visual connection to the South Downs and High Weald, and good access through the landscape on public rights of way, result in a **moderate-high sensitivity** to solar PV developments.

The combination of open views to the South Downs and High Weald, remote character and limited human influences, and views within the landscape and to the landscape from promoted public rights of way result in a **moderate-high sensitivity** to wind energy developments.

Table A.1: Sensitivity scores

Criterion	Sensitivity score: Solar	Sensitivity score: Wind
Landform and scale (including sense of openness/enclosure)	Moderate	Low-moderate
Landcover (including field and settlement patterns)	High	High
Historic landscape character	Moderate-high	Moderate-high

Criterion	Sensitivity score: Solar	Sensitivity score: Wind
Visual character (including skylines)	Moderate-high	Moderate-high
Perceptual and scenic qualities	Moderate-high	Moderate-high

Overall assessment of landscape sensitivity to solar PV developments

Existing solar PV developments in the LCT

- There are no existing solar farms in the LCT.

Summary of overall landscape sensitivity

A.2 The open character due to limited tree and hedgerow cover; small-scale historic field patterns; extensive semi-natural wetland habitats, which are internationally and nationally designated; historic features, with Pevensey designated as a Conservation Area; rural, tranquil and remote character and strong intervisibility with the South Downs National Park and High Weald AONB, all increase sensitivity to solar PV development.

A.3 The large-scale, flat low-lying topography, intrusive modern development (including electricity pylons, turbines, transport corridors, 20th century development at Pevensey Bay, and urban fringe development on the edge of Polegate and Hailsham) all decrease sensitivity to solar PV development.

Any variations in landscape sensitivity at the LCA level

A.4 There is only one LCA within the Alluvial Levels LCT. The landscapes which are directly adjacent to the settlement edges of Hailsham, Polegate, and

Pevensey Bay are less sensitive to small to medium scale solar development due to the urbanising influence of the modern settlement edge and their proximity to major transport corridors. There is more woodland (and therefore more enclosure) and modern development in the south-west near Glynleigh Level, and these areas have slightly lower sensitivity to solar PV development.

Table A.2: Landscape sensitivity of LCT 1 to different scales of solar PV development

Size	Rating
Very small solar PV (Up to 1 hectare)	Low-Moderate
Small solar PV (1 to 5 hectares)	Moderate
Medium solar PV (5 to 20 hectares)	Moderate-High
Large solar PV (20 to 50 hectares)	High
Very large solar PV (50 to 120 hectares)	High

Overall assessment of landscape sensitivity to wind energy developments

Existing wind energy developments in the LCT

- A wind farm of three turbines, of 115 meters, is located on Shepham Lane in the south of the LCT.

Summary of overall landscape sensitivity

A.5 The small-scale historic field pattern, extensive semi-natural habitats including internationally designated wetland habitats of Pevensey Levels SAC/Ramsar/SSSI, historic character of Pevensey village designated as a Conservation Area, rural, remote and tranquil character, and open character with strong intervisibility with the South Downs National Park and High Weald AONB increase sensitivity to wind energy developments.

A.6 The large-scale, flat lowland landscape, with modern development (including transport infrastructure routes, electricity pylons and existing turbines) and urban-fringe character at Pevensey Bay and adjacent to Hailsham in the west reduce sensitivity to wind energy development.

Any variations in landscape sensitivity at the LCA level

A.7 There is only one LCA within the Alluvial Levels LCT. Landscapes close to Pevensey Bay and Hailsham may be less sensitive, however they do contain more human-scale features that could be affected by large-scale wind turbines. There is more modern development in the south-west near Glynleigh Level, and these areas have slightly lower sensitivity to wind energy development.

Table A.3: Landscape sensitivity of LCT 1 to wind energy development

Size	Rating
Wind energy development (100-150 metres to blade tip)	Moderate-High

LCT 2: Open Clay Vales

Figure A.3: Location map of LCT 2 Open Clay Vale

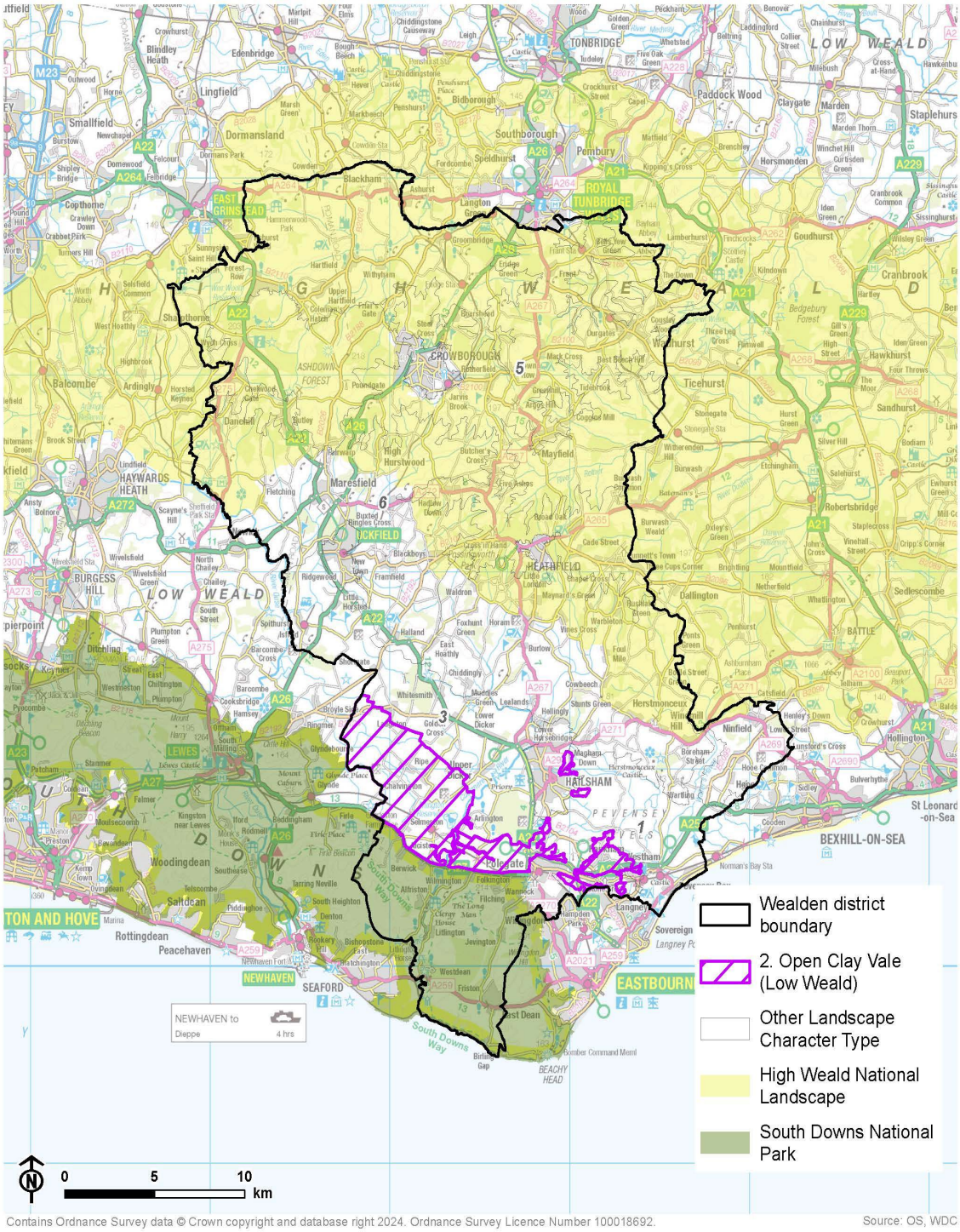


Figure A.4: Typical view of LCA 2A



Figure A.5: Typical view of LCA 2B



Assessment of landscape sensitivity to renewable energy development

Landscape sensitivity assessment

Landform and scale (including sense of openness/enclosure)

- A lowland landscape centred on the Laughton Levels (LCA 2A) and extending south of the Pevensey Levels (LCA 2B).
- Landform is level or very gently rises between 10 and 20 metres AOD. while small hills in the north-west of LCA 2B rise to 37 metres AOD.
- The relatively flat low-lying landscape has limited enclosure from hedgerows and woodlands, giving rise to a strong sense of openness.
- A medium-scale landscape, with regular human-scale features including hedgerows, small-scale settlements and minor rural roads.

The flat to gently rising landform indicates lower sensitivity; however a sense of openness indicates higher sensitivity, resulting overall in a **moderate sensitivity** to solar PV development.

The relatively simple, gently rising landform indicates lower sensitivity, while the regular human-scale features of hedgerows, roads and settlements and the medium-scale landform increase sensitivity, resulting in a **low-moderate sensitivity** to wind energy development.

Land cover pattern (including field and settlement patterns)

- Mixed agricultural land use, with pasture more common in LCA 2B, and arable in LCA 2A. Fields are bound by gappy hedgerows, with reinforcement by post and wire fencing.
- Field patterns vary across the LCT. Medium-large scale fields formed by planned enclosure are most common, with some modern field amalgamations. Pockets of smaller scale historic field patterns including cohesive assarts in the west of LCA 2B, with a concentration of co-axial fields around Chalvington and Ripe (LCA 2A).
- Pockets of semi-natural land cover including wetland habitats, small-scale irregular deciduous woodlands, some of ancient origin, and traditional orchards are concentrated in the west at the Laughton Levels and east at Arlington Reservoir. Arlington Reservoir is of national importance for wintering birds (SSSI).
- Small-scale dispersed historic settlement pattern of rural hamlets and villages, particularly in LCA 2A.

The mixed agricultural land use, and variety of scales of field patterns with some areas of semi-natural land cover and small-scale historic settlement pattern result in a **moderate sensitivity** to solar PV development.

The mixture of field sizes, mixed agricultural land use and areas of semi-natural land cover result in a **moderate sensitivity** to wind energy development.

Historic landscape character

- Historic features important to the character of the landscape include Wootton Manor (Registered Park and Garden), and remains of Medieval moated sites and settlements (Scheduled Monuments)

- Ripe, Chalvington and Selmeston are designated as Conservation Areas. Historic manors, farmsteads and barns are scattered throughout the landscape.
- Straight minor rural roads are remnants of historic transhumance (seasonal movement of people and animals between grazing areas in the South Downs and Wealden forests).

A landscape with some visible historic features which are important to the character including the rural road network, historic villages and a Registered Park and Garden provide a variety of time depths, resulting in a **moderate sensitivity** to solar PV developments.

The visible historic features including the rural road network, historic villages and Registered Park and Garden provide a variety of time depths, resulting in a **moderate sensitivity** to wind energy development.

Visual character (including skylines)

- Striking open views of the adjacent South Downs ridges and north to the woodlands of the High Weald, with strong intervisibility with these designated landscapes. Some views are available from LCA 2B across the flat, open Pevensey Levels.
- Pylon routes through the centre of LCA 2A and the east of LCA 2B, and catenary associated with the railway line through both LCAs are vertical features which interrupt the otherwise open skyline.
- A localised sense of enclosure is provided along rural lanes lined by hedgerows.
- There are views from both LCAs to the Shepham Lane wind turbines.

The landscape has important visual relationships with both the South Downs National Park and High Weald AONB which indicates high sensitivity, however the low-lying landscape and skyline impacted by some development indicate lower sensitivity, resulting in a **moderate-high sensitivity** to solar PV developments.

Despite some development on the skyline from pylons, railway catenary and the Shepham Lane turbines, the open views to and intervisibility with the South Downs National Park and High Weald AONB result in a **moderate-high sensitivity** to wind energy developments.

Perceptual and scenic qualities

- A rural landscape with a greater sense of tranquillity with dark night skies in the centre of LCA 2A and west of LCA 2B.
- 20th century expansion on the edge of large settlements (Hailsham, Polegate, Stone Cross, Westham and Eastbourne) create a more urbanised character in the south and north of LCA 2B.
- Transport corridors, including the A27, A22 and railway line, proximity to large settlements, electricity pylons, existing solar farms and the Polegate service station in LCA 2B erode tranquillity and reduce the rural character.
- There is a strong public right of way network, and the Arlington Reservoir in LCA 2A is a popular recreation spot.

The rural landscape with some modern development and human activity (including modern settlement edges and transport corridors results in a **moderate sensitivity** to solar PV developments.

A rural character with some modern development and human activity (including modern settlement edges and transport corridors) results in a **moderate sensitivity** to wind energy developments.

Table A.4: Sensitivity scores

Criterion	Sensitivity score: Solar	Sensitivity score: Wind
Landform and scale (including sense of openness/enclosure)	Moderate	Low-moderate
Landcover (including field and settlement patterns)	Moderate	Moderate
Historic landscape character	Moderate	Moderate
Visual character (including skylines)	Moderate-high	Moderate-high
Perceptual and scenic qualities	Moderate	Moderate

Overall assessment of landscape sensitivity to solar PV developments

Existing solar PV developments in the LCT

- There are two existing solar farms in LCA 2A at Wick Street, Berwick, and Kitty Hawk aerodrome.
- In LCA 2A an application for 5 Megawatts solar PV development at Lower Mays Farm was approved in July 2021, while an application for solar PV development of up to 49.9 Megawatts east of Chalvington was refused in March 2023.
- There are no existing solar farms in LCA 2B.

Summary of overall landscape sensitivity

A.8 The open character due to limited tree cover, remnant historic field patterns in some areas, presence of some semi-natural habitats including wetland (particularly at Arlington Reservoir SSSI), and occasional woodland habitats, historic settlement pattern with villages designated as Conservation Areas, rural, tranquil character and strong intervisibility with the South Downs National Park and High Weald AONB, all increase sensitivity to solar PV development.

A.9 The simple landform, and areas characterised by modern field patterns or modern development, including electricity pylons and on the fringes of major transport corridors and large urban areas are less sensitive to solar PV development.

Any variations in landscape sensitivity at the LCA level

A.10 The landscapes of LCA 2B which are directly adjacent to the settlement edges of Hailsham (north-east), Polegate (south-east and east), Stone Cross (south-east) and Westham (south-east) are less sensitive to small to medium scale solar development due to the urbanising influence of the modern settlement edge and their proximity to major transport corridors. The landscape around the Polegate service station has less sensitivity to small to medium scale solar development due to the strong influence of modern development and commercial infrastructure. However, cumulative effects of any further solar farm development should be considered.

Table A.5: Landscape sensitivity of LCT 2 to different scales of solar PV development

Size	Rating
Very small solar PV	Low

(Up to 1 hectares)	
Small solar PV (1 to 5 hectares)	Low-Moderate
Medium solar PV (5 to 20 hectares)	Moderate
Large solar PV (20 to 50 hectares)	Moderate
Very large solar PV (50 to 120 hectares)	High

Overall assessment of landscape sensitivity to wind energy developments

Existing wind developments in the LCT

- There are no existing solar farms in LCA 2A or 2B.

Summary of overall landscape sensitivity

A.11 The presence of occasional small-scale historic field patterns, semi-natural habitats including wetland habitats and woodlands, historic villages and rural road pattern, rural tranquil character and strong intervisibility with the South Downs National Park and High Weald AONB increase sensitivity to wind energy developments.

A.12 The flat lowland landscape, areas of larger-scale modern field patterns, proximity to modern development including large settlements, transport infrastructure and presence of electricity pylons, indicate lower landscape sensitivity to wind energy development.

Any variations in landscape sensitivity at the LCA level

A.13 There are no significant differences in sensitivity between the component LCAs within this LCT.

Table A.6: Landscape sensitivity of LCT 2 to wind energy development

Size	Rating
Wind energy development (100-150 metres to blade tip)	Moderate-High

LCT 3: Wooded Clay Vales (Low Weald)

Figure A.6: Location map of LCT3 Wooded Clay Vales (Low Weald)

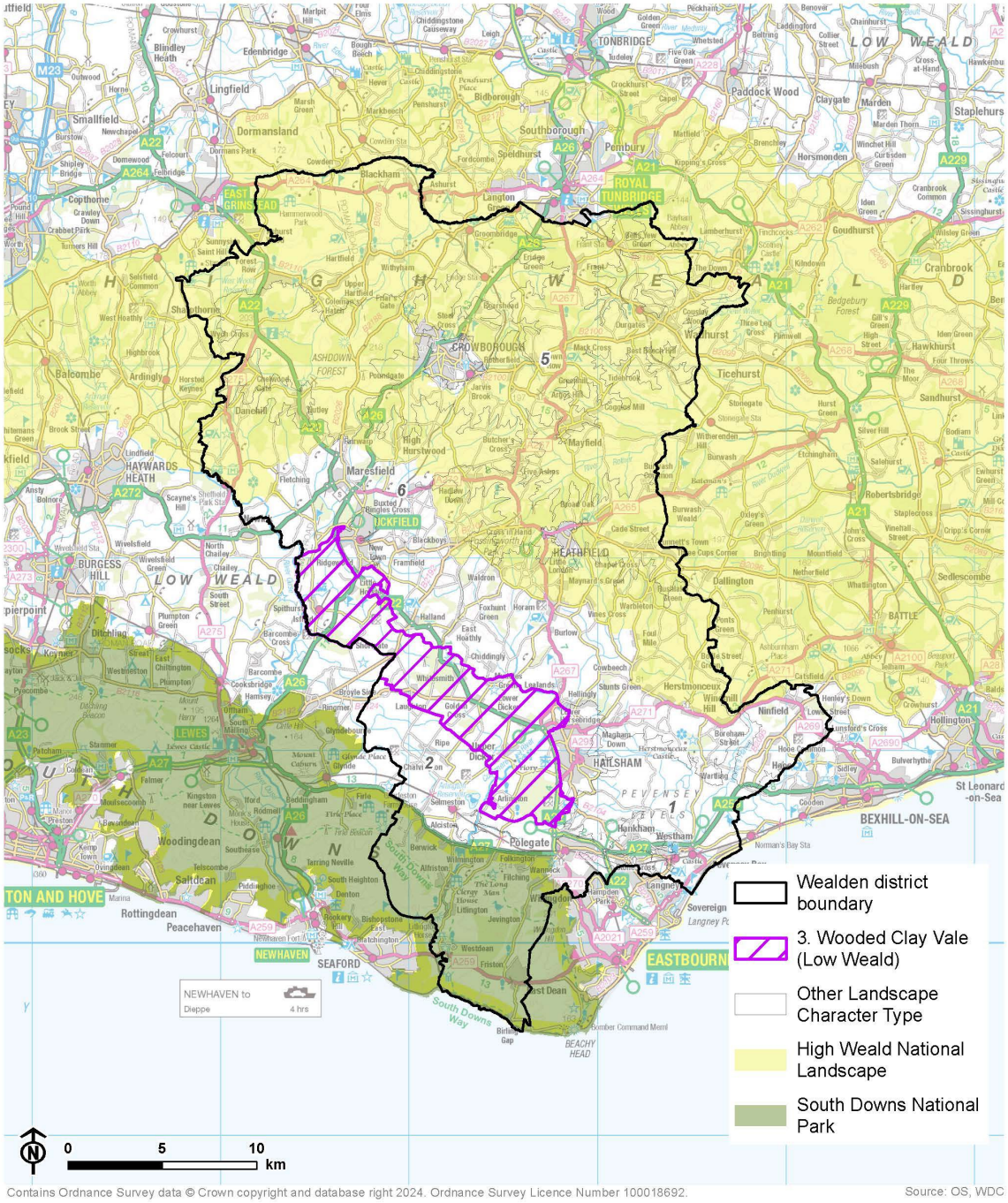


Figure A.7: Typical view of LCA 3A



Assessment of landscape sensitivity to renewable energy development

Landscape sensitivity assessment

Landform and scale (including sense of openness/enclosure)

- A gently rolling, lowland landscape, between 25 metres and 40 metres AOD. Vert Wood reaches elevations of 50 metres AOD.

- The narrow river valleys of the Uck, Ouse and Cuckmere dissect the topography.
- The presence of extensive woodland, trees and hedgerows create an enclosed landscape, and are human-scale features.

The rolling landform, incised by valleys and well enclosed by extensive woodland and trees results in a **low-moderate sensitivity** to solar PV development.

The relatively simple, rolling landscape, incised by valleys, has many human-scale features which results in **moderate sensitivity** to wind energy development.

Land cover pattern (including field and settlement patterns)

- Mixed agricultural land use with grazing and arable cultivation. Fields are bound by hedgerows, with mature hedgerow trees common.
- Well wooded landscape with small broadleaved woodland blocks and copses, and mixed plantations at Abbot's Wood and Vert Wood. Considerable coverage of ancient woodland, including at Plashett Park Wood Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). Scattered pockets of semi-natural grasslands are found outside the woodlands, including at Park Corner Heath SSSI.
- Varied field size, ranging from small-scale sinuous Medieval assarts on the edge of existing woodlands, to medium-scale fields around the Dickers. Some larger modern fields west of Horsted Green.
- Small-scale pattern of historic rural hamlets and villages. Small country houses with parklands create an estate character at Plashett Park, Bentley Farm and Horsted Place.
- Some suburban land uses on the edge of Hailsham and Uckfield, and along the A26 around Golden Cross.

The mixed agricultural land use, and variety of scales of field patterns with some extensive areas of semi-natural land cover (particularly woodland) and small-scale historic settlement pattern increase sensitivity, while occasional industrial/suburban land uses reduce sensitivity, resulting in a **moderate sensitivity** to solar PV development.

The mixture of field sizes, which are mostly small to medium-scale, mixed agricultural land use, significant areas of semi-natural woodland cover, with occasional industrial/suburban land uses result in a **moderate sensitivity** to wind energy development.

Historic landscape character

- Historic hamlets and villages, with village ponds common. Muddles Green is the only village covered by a Conservation Area. Small medieval farmsteads are found at Buckham Hill (Scheduled Monument) and Horselunges Manor (Grade I listed).
- Other historic features important to the character of the area include Horsted Place (Registered Park and Garden), and the 13th century moated Michelham Priory (Scheduled Monument).
- Rural roads and public rights of way are remnants of historic transhumance (seasonal movement of people and animals between grazing areas in the South Downs and Wealden forests).

A landscape with some visible historic features which are important to the character including the rural road network, historic villages, small parkland estates and Scheduled Monuments provide a variety of time depths, resulting in a **moderate sensitivity** to solar PV developments.

The visible historic features including the rural road network, historic village, Scheduled Monument and Registered Park and Garden provide a variety of time depths, resulting in a **moderate sensitivity** to wind energy development.

Visual character (including skylines)

- A generally enclosed landscape with views terminated by woodlands. However, the distinctive ridges of the South Downs National Park to the south and south-west, and the wooded backdrop of the High Weald AONB to the north result in some intervisibility with these designated landscapes.
- The low-lying landscape has few important landmark features on the skyline, although the woodlands are visible from surrounding landscapes.
- Electricity pylon routes which run north of Arlington and across the Uck valley are vertical features on the skyline.

A landscape which despite being largely enclosed and having fairly simple skylines, which lowers sensitivity, has some intervisibility with the South Downs National Park and High Weald AONB, which increases sensitivity and results overall in a **moderate sensitivity** to solar PV developments.

A landscape with some visual connections with neighbouring areas, including with the South Downs National Park and High Weald AONB, and a wooded skyline that provides a backdrop to views which increases sensitivity. However, prominent electricity pylons lower sensitivity, resulting in **moderate sensitivity** overall to wind energy developments.

Perceptual and scenic qualities

- Areas of tranquillity and relative remoteness within the larger woodlands at Abbots Wood and Vert Wood, and in the west of the LCT.
- A largely rural landscape, with pleasing combinations of woodland, arable and grazing land.
- The A22, A26 and proximity to Hailsham and Uckfield, existing solar farms and electricity pylons erode tranquillity and dark skies, and there are some areas with a suburban character between Lower Dicker and Golden Cross, and at Deanland Wood Park caravan park. Views to the adjacent settlement edges of Hailsham and Uckfield are largely screened by vegetation.
- There is a strong public right of way network, including two promoted routes and open access land across Vert Wood and Abbot's Wood.

A largely rural landscape with pleasing combinations of features and areas of higher tranquillity which increases sensitivity. However, some modern development and human activity including electricity pylons, adjacent settlement edges of Hailsham and Uckfield and industrial areas along the A22/A26 lowers sensitivity. This results in a **moderate sensitivity** to solar PV developments.

A tranquil rural landscape with some pleasing combinations of woodland, grazing and arable farmland, however with some modern development along the A22/A26, which results in a **moderate sensitivity** to wind energy developments.

Table A.7: Sensitivity scores

Criterion	Sensitivity score: Solar	Sensitivity score: Wind
Landform and scale (including sense of openness/enclosure)	Low-moderate	Moderate
Landcover (including field and settlement patterns)	Moderate	Moderate
Historic landscape character	Moderate	Moderate
Visual character (including skylines)	Moderate	Moderate
Perceptual and scenic qualities	Moderate	Moderate

Overall assessment of landscape sensitivity to solar PV developments

Existing solar PV developments in the LCT

- Existing solar farms are at Wilbees Farm, adjacent to Arlington reservoir, which covers 9 hectares and produces up to 5 Megawatts of electricity; at Natewood Farm west of Polegate Road, Hailsham 8.8 Megawatts of electricity is generated on 16 hectares of land; and at Bentley Estate where 4.7 Megawatts of electricity is generated on 24 hectares.
- In March 2021 approval was granted for solar PV development west of the A22 Uckfield bypass, to generate 5.5 Megawatts of electricity on 9.4 hectares.

Summary of overall landscape sensitivity

A.14 The rural, generally small-scale character, extensive semi-natural habitats including ancient woodland at Plashett Park Wood SSSI and grassland at Park

Corner Heath SSSI, historic features, tranquil character and some intervisibility with the South Downs National Park and High Weald AONB all increase sensitivity to solar PV development.

A.15 The relatively simple landform, largely enclosed character, areas of the LCT characterised by modern field patterns, electricity pylons, industrial areas along the A22/A26, and proximity to the urban settlement edges of Hailsham and Uckfield lower sensitivity to solar PV development.

Any variations in landscape sensitivity at the LCA level

A.16 There is only one LCA within this LCT. However, landscapes adjacent to the A22 where there is more industrial development at Lower Dicker and Golden Cross, and around modern developments such as caravan parks are less sensitive to small to medium scale solar development due to the urbanising influence of the modern developments and their proximity to major transport corridors. However, cumulative effects of any further solar farm development should be considered.

Table A.8: Landscape sensitivity of LCT 3 to different scales of solar PV development

Size	Rating
Very small solar PV (Up to 1 hectares)	Low
Small solar PV (1 to 5 hectares)	Low-Moderate
Medium solar PV	Low-Moderate

(5 to 20 hectares)	
Large solar PV (20 to 50 hectares)	Moderate
Very large solar PV (50 to 120 hectares)	High

Overall assessment of landscape sensitivity to wind energy developments

Existing wind energy developments in the LCT

- There are no existing wind farms in LCT 3.

Summary of overall landscape sensitivity

A.17 The rural landscape, with its combination of attractive, semi-natural woodlands and mixed agricultural land uses, some intervisibility with the South Downs National Park and High Weald AONB, wooded skylines which are prominent in neighbouring landscapes, historic village and estate parklands, and generally small to medium-scale field pattern increase sensitivity to wind energy developments.

A.18 The gently rolling landform, areas with larger-scale modern field patterns west of Horsted Green, areas in proximity to modern development including the edges of Uckfield and Hailsham, transport infrastructure, industrial areas along the A22 around Lower Dicker and Golden Cross, and presence of electricity pylons, indicate lower landscape sensitivity.

Any variations in landscape sensitivity at the LCA level

A.19 There is only one LCA within this LCT, and no variation in landscape sensitivity within the LCA.

Table A.9: Landscape sensitivity of LCT 2 to wind energy development

Size	Rating
Wind energy development (100-150 metres to blade tip)	Moderate

LCT 4: River Floodplains (Low Weald)

Figure A.8: Location map of LCT 4 River Floodplains

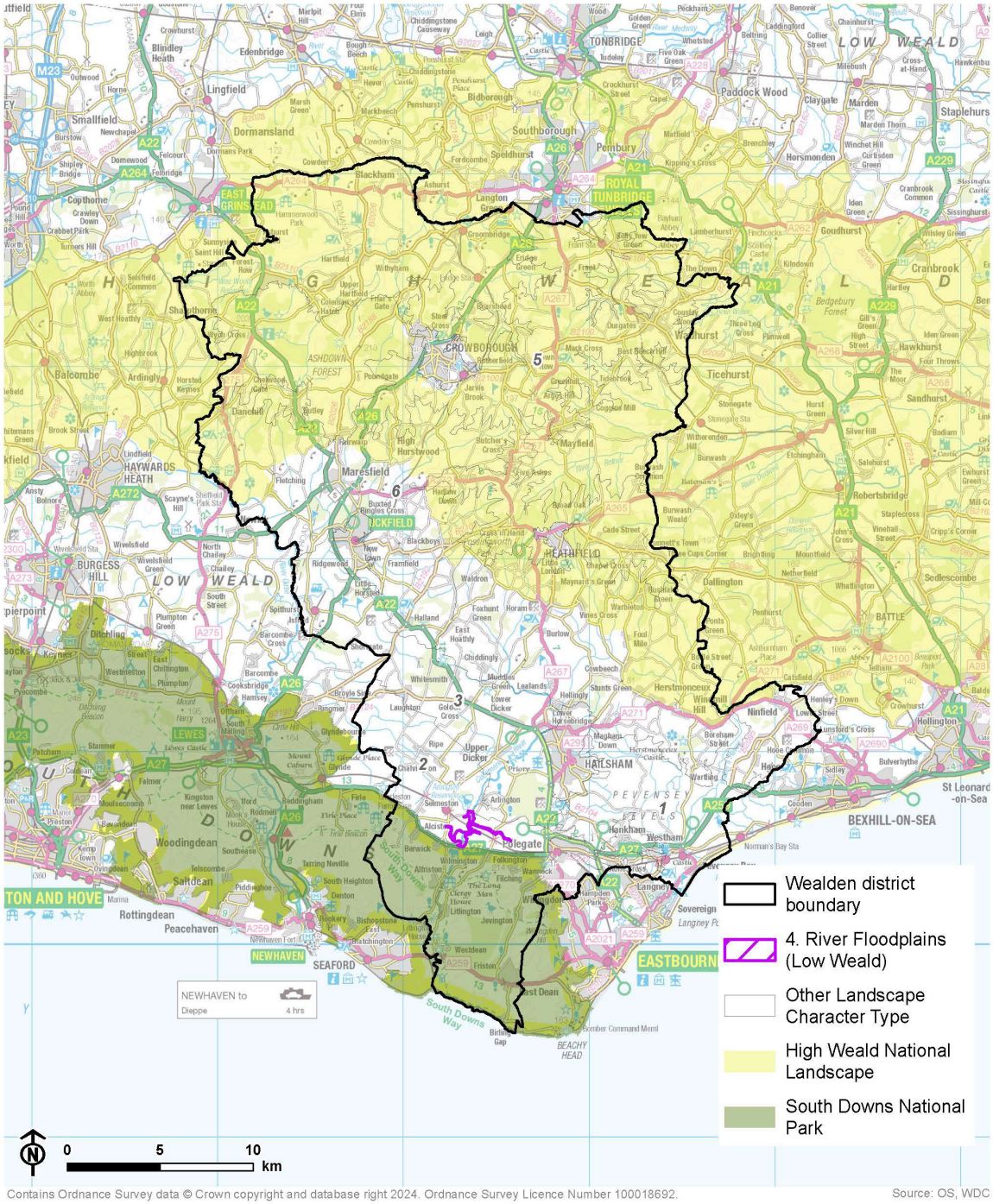


Figure A.9: Typical view of LCA 4A



Assessment of landscape sensitivity to renewable energy development

Landscape sensitivity assessment

Landform and scale (including sense of openness/enclosure)

- A low-lying flat landscape, which lies between 5 metres and 10 metres AOD, along the upper Cuckmere River and its tributary streams.

- Small-scale landform, with riverside vegetation creating human-scale features.
- The narrow valley floor and vegetation screening the river from view create a strong sense of enclosure.

The low-lying, flat landform, largely enclosed character reduce sensitivity; however the small scale of the floodplain landform increases sensitivity, resulting in a **low-moderate sensitivity** to solar PV development.

The simple, low-lying and flat landscape reduces sensitivity, however the small scale of the floodplain landform and human-scale features along the riverside increase sensitivity resulting in a **moderate sensitivity** to wind energy development.

Land cover pattern (including field and settlement patterns)

- Connected semi-natural land cover along the watercourse, including important wetland habitats within the floodplain including grazing marsh, lowland fens and semi-improved grassland, with Milton Gate Marsh designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).
- Small to medium-scale riverside fields support arable cropping and occasional pasture. Strong historic field pattern in the riverside meadows and assarts east of Monken Pyn. There are some modern amalgamated fields in the south-west.
- A rural landscape with an absence of settlement and limited access along minor roads and public rights of way.

The small- to medium-scale field pattern with historic meadows and assarts, rural landscape with areas of semi-natural wetland land cover, and an absence of development result in a **moderate-high sensitivity** to solar PV development.

The small- to medium-scale fields, with some important historic enclosure patterns, variations in land cover between agricultural land use and semi-natural habitats, highly rural character with no development result in a **moderate-high sensitivity** to wind energy development.

Historic landscape character

- The Sussex Historic Landscape Characterisation indicates that the field pattern adjacent to the river channel are historic brook innings, and late medieval or Tudor field patterns in the east and south-east. The north-east has a planned 18th or 19th century enclosure pattern.
- An area of modern field amalgamation in the south-west.
- Historic route of the River Cuckmere, with pasture fields lining the river channel echoes the historic land use of this landscape.
- Historically there would have been no development in the floodplain, and there has been limited landscape change.

A landscape with many areas of historic field pattern, and a continuation of the historic undeveloped floodplain land uses which are important to character resulting in a **moderate-high sensitivity** to solar PV and wind energy developments.

Visual character (including skylines)

- Limited access and riverside vegetation result in an isolated and hidden landscape, with considerable screening of views from within and outside the LCT.
- A landscape with undeveloped skylines.
- The distinctive ridges of the South Downs National Park form a prominent backdrop to the low-lying landscape.

The enclosed landscape which is largely self-contained; however the South Downs National Park forms an important landmark feature on the skyline, resulting in a **moderate sensitivity** to solar PV developments.

The landscape has limited intervisibility with neighbouring landscapes due to its flat topography and screening provided by riverside vegetation . The South Downs National Park forms a distinctive and prominent skyline in views from the LCT, resulting in a **moderate sensitivity** to wind energy developments.

Perceptual and scenic qualities

- A landscape with an isolated and hidden character. An attractive combination of arable, pasture, wetland habitats, and riverside vegetation fringing the river channel.
- A high sense of tranquillity, dark skies and remoteness, although these are impacted by the A27 to the south and the railway line which crosses the landscape.
- Limited access by public right of way, although the Wealdway promoted route crosses the floodplain three times.

The tranquil rural landscape with human activity limited to narrow transport corridors, and with an attractive combination of agricultural land uses and riparian vegetation result in a **moderate-high sensitivity** to solar PV developments.

The attractive combination of agricultural land uses and riparian vegetation, tranquil rural character with little sign of modern human activity or development results in a **moderate-high sensitivity** to wind energy developments.

Table A.10: Sensitivity scores

Criterion	Sensitivity score: Solar	Sensitivity score: Wind
Landform and scale (including sense of openness/enclosure)	Low-moderate	Moderate
Landcover (including field and settlement patterns)	Moderate-high	Moderate-high
Historic landscape character	Moderate-high	Moderate-high
Visual character (including skylines)	Moderate	Moderate
Perceptual and scenic qualities	Moderate-high	Moderate-high

Overall assessment of landscape sensitivity to solar PV developments

Existing solar PV developments in the LCT

- There are no existing solar farms in LCT 4.

Summary of overall landscape sensitivity

A.20 The presence of semi-natural habitats including Milton Gate Marsh SSSI, historic small- to medium-scale field pattern, lack of settlement, and rural, tranquil character all increase sensitivity to solar PV development.

A.21 The low-lying, enclosed character with localised areas of human influence from the transport corridors of the A26 and railway line, and limited historic features reduce sensitivity to solar PV development.

Any variations in landscape sensitivity at the LCA level

A.22 There is only one small LCA within this LCT. There are no variations in the landscape sensitivity.

Table A.11: Landscape sensitivity of LCT 4 to different scales of solar PV development

Size	Rating
Very small solar PV (Up to 1 hectares)	Moderate
Small solar PV (1 to 5 hectares)	Moderate
Medium solar PV (5 to 20 hectares)	Moderate-High
Large solar PV (20 to 50 hectares)	Moderate-High
Very large solar PV (50 to 120 hectares)	High

Overall assessment of landscape sensitivity to wind energy developments

Existing wind energy developments in the LCT

- There are no existing wind farms in LCT 4.

Summary of overall landscape sensitivity

A.23 The presence of semi-natural habitats including Milton Gate Marsh SSSI, historic small- to medium-scale field pattern, lack of settlement, proximity to the South Downs National Park, and rural, tranquil character all increase sensitivity to wind energy development.

A.24 The low-lying, flat landform with localised areas of human influence from the transport corridors of the A26 and railway line, and limited historic features reduce sensitivity to wind energy development.

Any variations in landscape sensitivity at the LCA level

A.25 There is only one small LCA within this LCT. There are no variations in the landscape sensitivity.

Table A.12: Landscape sensitivity of LCT 4 to wind energy development

Size	Rating
Wind energy development	Moderate-High

Size	Rating
(100-150 metres to blade tip)	

LCT 5: Wooded Ridges (High Weald)

Figure A.10: Location map of LCT 5 Wooded Ridges

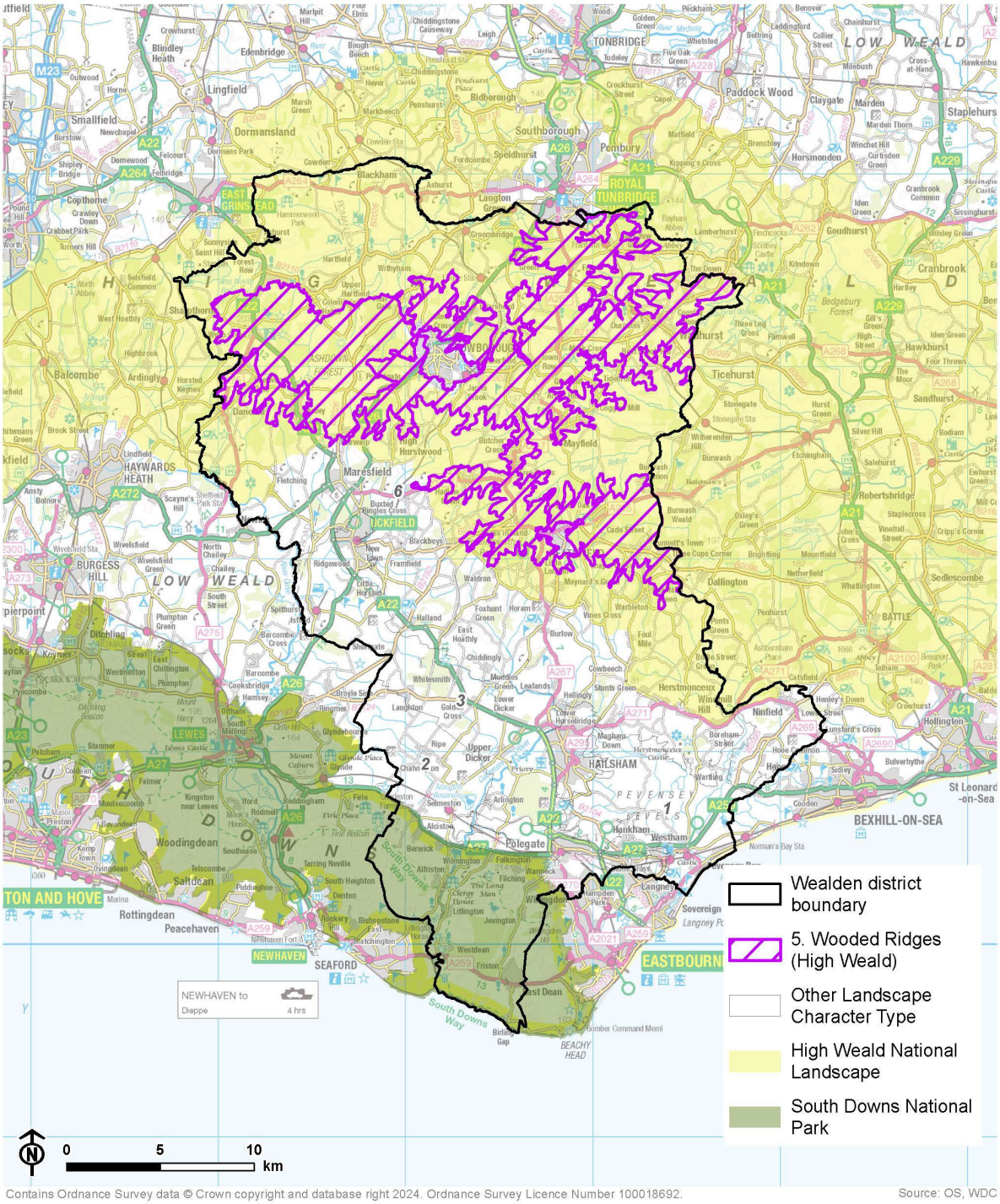


Figure A.11: Typical view of LCA 5A



Figure A.12: Typical view of LCA 5B



Assessment of landscape sensitivity to renewable energy development

Landscape sensitivity assessment

Landform and scale (including sense of openness/enclosure)

- An elevated landscape, generally located at above 100 metres AOD, extending across prominent ridgelines of the High Weald AONB.
- Relatively complex landform comprising elevated rolling ridges (ranging between approximately 150 metres to 220 metres AOD) with incised narrow stream valleys.
- The presence of extensive heathland within the centre of LCA 5A results in a relatively open character, although a sense of enclosure is experienced in areas of woodland along the LCA boundaries. LCA 5B has a stronger sense of enclosure given the presence of extensive areas of woodland and mature hedgerows.

The prominent and distinctive ridgelines, relatively complex topography increases sensitivity, however the partially open/unenclosed character (within LCA 5A) lowers sensitivity, resulting in a **moderate-high sensitivity** to solar PV development.

The prominent and distinctive ridgelines, relatively complex topography and human scale features such as woodland, trees and hedges result in a **high sensitivity** to wind energy development.

Land cover pattern (including field and settlement patterns)

- Predominantly pastoral land use with fields bound by mature hedgerows, shaws and woods. Strong historic small-scale assart field pattern within LCA 5B.
- Extensive coverage of semi-natural habitats, including lowland heathland, lowland dry acid grassland, valley bog and large areas of mixed and deciduous woodland, much of ancient origin.
- Ashdown Forest Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Special Protection Area (SPA) and Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) is one of the largest continuous areas of lowland heathland, semi-natural woodland and valley bog in south-east England.
- Eridge Park, Heathfield Park and Binglett's Wood SSSIs are of national importance for supporting significant lichen flora, bryophytes, and invertebrate and bird populations.
- Historic ridgetop villages are characteristic of LCA 5B. Settlement within LCA 5A predominantly comprises dispersed historic farmsteads and small linear villages.

The strong, small-scale historic field pattern, semi-natural land cover and small-scale historic settlement pattern result in a **high sensitivity** to solar PV development.

The irregular, small-scale historic field pattern, semi-natural land cover and small-scale historic settlement pattern result in a **high sensitivity** to wind energy development.

Historic landscape character

- A landscape with a high density of historic villages, including Frant, Cousley Wood, Pell Green, Wadhurst, Mayfield, Rotherfield, Five Ashes

and Old Heathfield, which are designated as Conservation Areas. Historic manors and farmsteads are scattered throughout the landscape.

- The historic use of Ashdown Forest as a Royal Hunting Forest and as a grazing commons is an evident influence on the character of the landscape.
- Many historic features relating to the Wealden iron industry are located throughout the landscape, including furnaces at Crowborough Warren and Newbridge (Scheduled Monuments).
- Historic designed landscapes are important to the character of LCA 5B, including Registered Parks and Gardens at Eridge Park, a historic deer park, Rotherfield Hall, Wadhurst Castle, Heathfield Park and Frant Court.

A landscape with many historic features which are important to the character of the area including the historic villages, the underlying historic landscape pattern of Ashdown Forest, relics of the Wealden iron industry and historic designed landscapes, which provide a variety of time depths, resulting in a **high sensitivity** to solar PV and wind energy developments.

Visual character (including skylines)

- The LCT forms part of the prominent wooded ridgelines of the High Weald AONB, which form distinctive and undeveloped skylines in views from lower-lying landscapes.
- Outstanding open views are afforded from Ashdown Forest (LCA 5A), with tree clumps forming distinctive skyline features.
- Mature hedgerows and woodland along the boundaries of LCA 5A and within LCA 5B results in a semi-enclosed character with some screening or filtering of views.

The landscape forms distinctive and prominent skylines within the High Weald AONB, however areas of woodland decrease inter-visibility, resulting in a **moderate-high sensitivity** to solar PV developments.

The landscape forms distinctive and prominent skylines within the High Weald AONB with some open views, resulting in a **high sensitivity** to wind energy developments.

Perceptual and scenic qualities

- A landscape of attractive character, indicated by its designation within the High Weald AONB.
- A sense of tranquillity with dark night skies is experienced within LCA 5A, particularly within the larger woodlands including Broadstone Warren, Raven Wood and Five Hundred Acre Wood, and within larger woods and sheltered valleys within LCA 5B.
- Proximity to larger settlements, such as Crowborough, Tunbridge Wells and Heathfield, and major roads such as the A267, A272, A22 and A275 and two railway lines, erode tranquillity and reduce the rural character locally.
- There is a strong public right of way network, including local and long-distance walking trails such as the High Weald Landscape Trail, Vanguard Way, Sussex Border Path and Weald Way. Ashdown Forest is the largest free public access space in south-east England and forms an important recreational area.

The location within the High Weald AONB and scenic rural character increases sensitivity, with some localised human influences including larger settlements and transport corridors which lowers sensitivity, resulting in a **moderate-high sensitivity** to solar PV and wind energy developments.

Table A.13: Sensitivity scores

Criterion	Sensitivity score: Solar	Sensitivity score: Wind
Landform and scale (including sense of openness/enclosure)	Moderate-high	High
Landcover (including field and settlement patterns)	High	High
Historic landscape character	High	High
Visual character (including skylines)	Moderate-high	High
Perceptual and scenic qualities	Moderate-high	Moderate-high

Overall assessment of landscape sensitivity to solar PV developments

Existing solar PV developments in the LCT

- There are no existing solar farms in LCT 5.

Summary of overall landscape sensitivity

A.26 The prominent and distinctive landform, partially open character, strong historic field patterns, presence of semi-natural habitats including Ashdown Forest SSSI/SPA/SAC and Eridge Park, Heathfield Park and Binglett's Wood SSSIs, historic settlement pattern with villages designated as Conservation Areas, rural, tranquil character and location within the High Weald AONB all increase sensitivity to solar PV development.

A.27 Areas with a partially enclosed character due to presence of woodland and localised areas with human influence near large settlements such as

Crowborough, Tunbridge Wells and Heathfield, and major roads such as the A267, A272, A22 and A275 and two railway lines, are slightly less sensitive to solar PV development.

Any variations in landscape sensitivity at the LCA level

A.28 The landscapes of LCA 5B which are directly adjacent to the settlement edges of Crowborough, Tunbridge Wells and Heathfield are slightly less sensitive to small to medium scale solar development due to the urbanising influence of the modern settlement edge with some containment of views resulting from woodland and mature hedgerows.

A.29 The Ashdown Forest SSSI/SPA/SAC is of higher sensitivity to all scales of solar development given the ecological value, open character, and strong inter-visibility of the landscape with lower-lying landscapes (particularly to the south).

Table 3.3: Landscape sensitivity of LCT 5 to different scales of solar PV development

Size	Rating
Very small solar PV (Up to 1 hectares)	Moderate
Small solar PV (1 to 5 hectares)	Moderate-High
Medium solar PV (5 to 20 hectares)	Moderate-High

Size	Rating
Large solar PV (20 to 50 hectares)	High
Very large solar PV (50 to 120 hectares)	High

Overall assessment of landscape sensitivity to wind energy developments

Existing wind energy developments in the LCT

- There are no existing wind farms in LCT 5.

Summary of overall landscape sensitivity

A.30 The prominent and distinctive landform, presence of human scale features, partially open character, small-scale historic field patterns, presence of semi-natural habitats including Ashdown Forest SSSI/SPA/SAC and Eridge Park, Heathfield Park and Binglett's Wood SSSIs, historic settlement pattern with villages designated as Conservation Areas, rural, tranquil character and location within the High Weald AONB all increase sensitivity to wind development.

Any variations in landscape sensitivity at the LCA level

A.31 The Ashdown Forest SSSI/SPA/SAC is of higher sensitivity to all scales of wind development given the ecological value, open character, and strong inter-visibility of the landscape with lower-lying landscapes (particularly to the south).

Table 3.4: Landscape sensitivity of LCT 5 to wind energy development

Size	Rating
Wind energy development (100 metres and 150 metres (to blade tip))	High

LCT 6: Wooded Slopes (High Weald)

Figure A.13: Location of LCT 6 Wooded Slopes

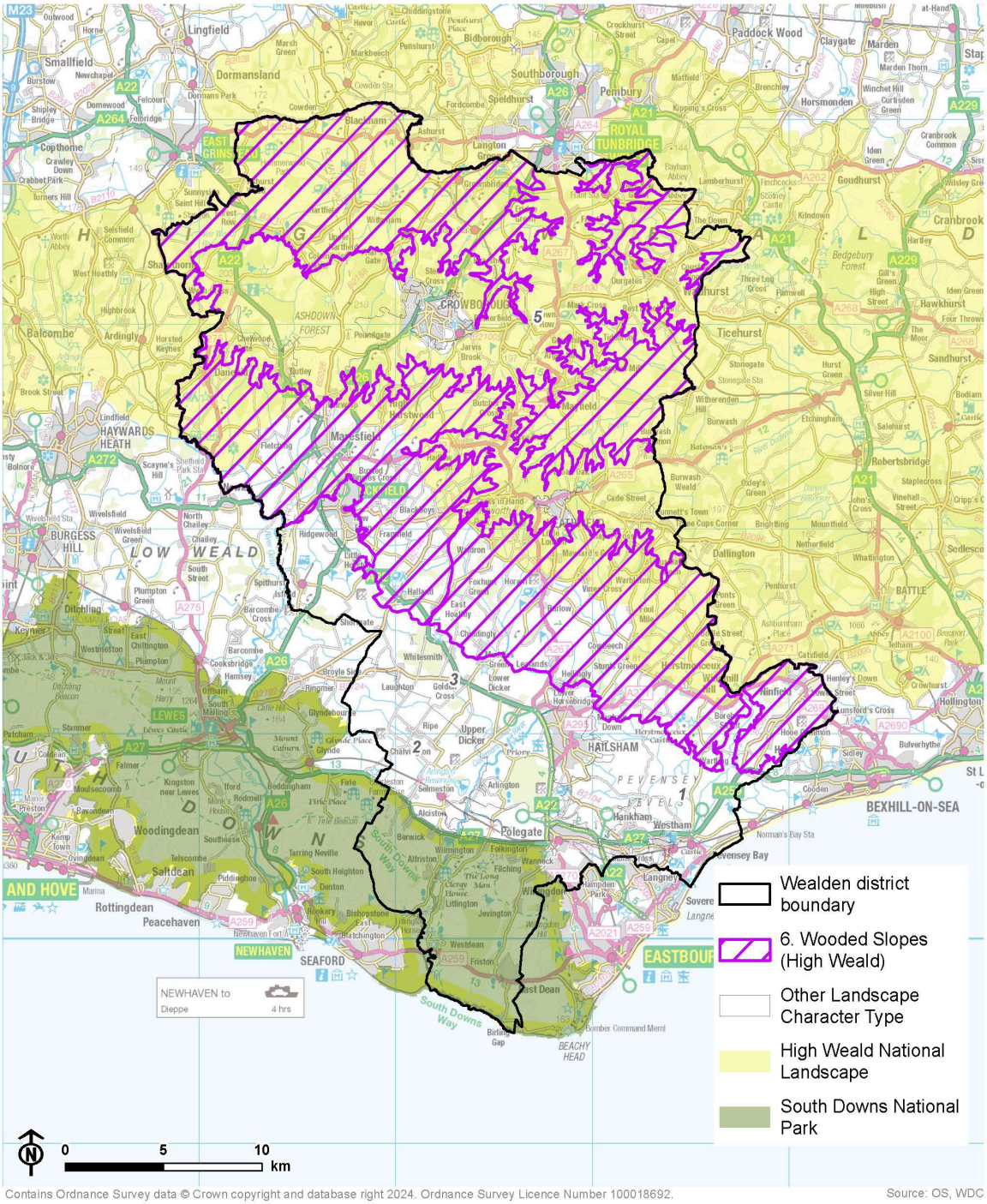


Figure A.14: Typical view of LCA 6A



Figure A.15: Typical view of LCA 6B



Figure A.16: Typical view of LCA 6C



Figure A.17: Typical view of LCA 6D



Figure A.18: Typical view of LCA 6E



Assessment of landscape sensitivity to renewable energy development

Landscape sensitivity assessment

Landform and scale (including sense of openness/enclosure)

- A rolling landscape of ridges and valleys that form the slopes to the most elevated ridgelines of the High Weald AONB.

- Landform is relatively complex, rising between 40 metres and 100 metres AOD.
- A well wooded landscape with mature hedgerows which results in a semi-enclosed character, with some localised areas of more open character.

The distinctive ridgelines, relatively complex topography increases sensitivity however, the semi-enclosed character lowers sensitivity resulting in a **moderate-high sensitivity** to solar PV development.

The distinctive ridgelines, relatively complex topography and human scale features such as woodland, trees and hedges result in a **high sensitivity** to wind energy development.

Land cover pattern (including field and settlement patterns)

- Mixed arable and pastoral agricultural land use, with pasture more common in LCA 6C, LCA 6D and LCA 6E. Fields are bound by mature hedgerows and shaws, although the boundaries of large arable fields are often reinforced by post and wire fencing.
- Field patterns vary across the LCT. Small to medium scale fields derived from assarting or piecemeal enclosure are most common and are located across the LCT, with some areas of planned private enclosure. Some areas of modern field amalgamation are located within lower-lying and wider valley floors throughout the LCT, though most notable within LCT 6D.
- Extensive areas of semi-improved grassland, lowland meadow, and broadleaved and mixed woodland, much of ancient origin, are ecologically important features of the LCT.
- Some woodland and wetland habitats are of national importance, including the Eridge Park, Weir Wood Reservoir, Paines Cross and Herstmonceux Park SSSIs.

- Some areas of meadow and grassland habitats within LCA 6D and LCA 6E are of national importance, including the Stockland Farm Meadows, Buxted Park, Sapperton Meadows and St Dunstan's Farm Meadows SSSIs.
- Distinctive sandstone outcrops in LCA 6A include the Eridge Green, Penn's Rocks and High Rocks SSSIs and are of national importance.
- Settlement pattern within the LCT varies, but retains its historic character. It predominantly comprises relatively dispersed farmsteads and cottages. Some larger villages are located within LCA 6A (Groomfield, Hartfield, Forest Row), LCA 6D (Maresfield, Buxted) and LCA 6E (Horam). Smaller historic villages are characteristic of LCA 6D (Danehill, Framfield) and LCA 6E (Cowbeech, Rushlake Green). Uckfield influences the southern edge of LCA 6D.

The mixed agricultural land use, and varying scales of field patterns with some areas of complex historic field pattern, semi-natural land cover and historic settlement pattern result in a **high sensitivity** to solar PV development and wind energy developments.

Historic landscape character

- The historic villages of Forest Row, Hartfield, Withyham, Eridge Green, Coggins Mills, Danehill, Fletching, Maresfield, Framfield, Cowbeech and Rushlake Green are designated as Conservation Areas. Historic manors and farmsteads are scattered throughout the landscape.
- Numerous designed landscapes are located throughout the landscape and contribute to time depth, including the Kidbrooke Park, Buckhurst Park, Hammerwood Park, Bayham Abbey, Sheffield Park, Buxted Park and Herstmonceux Castle Registered Parks and Gardens.
- Many historic features relating to the Wealden iron industry are located throughout the landscape, including the Mayfield, Woolbridge, Pounsley

and Heathfield furnaces and forges at Hendall, Oldlands Furnace, Buxted Wood and Buxted (Scheduled Monuments).

- Other historic features important to the character of the area include the High Rocks Scheduled Monument and a Roman Road Scheduled Monument in LCA 6A, and historic routes and lanes which are remnants of historic transhumance.

A landscape with many historic features which are important to the character, including the historic villages, relics of the Wealden iron industry and Registered Parks and Gardens provide a variety of time depths, resulting in a **high sensitivity** to solar PV and wind energy developments.

Visual character (including skylines)

- The wooded slopes of the LCT form the rural context and part of the backdrop in views from and towards the more elevated ridges within the High Weald AONB (within LCT 5).
- Woodland and mature hedgerows result in a semi-enclosed character with some screening or filtering of views.
- Extensive views open up from open ridgetop roads (LCA 6A), wider sections of valley floors (LCA 6A, LCA 6C) looking across the High Weald AONB. Occasional glimpsed views are available from LCA 6D looking towards the wooded Central High Weald and the distinctive ridge of the South Downs to the south, and in the east of LCA 6E looking across the Pevensey Levels and towards the distinctive ridge landforms of the South Downs.
- Electricity pylons are modern elements in the landscape and result in a developed skyline within localised parts of the LCT (within LCA 6D and LCA 6E).

The landscape has important visual relationships with both the South Downs National Park and High Weald AONB and forms the rural context to the distinctive wooded ridges of the AONB, however there are localised areas of the LCT with an influence of human development on the skyline (electricity pylons within LCA 6D and LCA 6E) and areas of woodland throughout the LCT decrease intervisibility, resulting in a **moderate-high sensitivity** to solar PV developments.

The landscape has important visual relationships with both the South Downs National Park and High Weald AONB and forms the rural context to the distinctive wooded ridges of the AONB, resulting in a **high sensitivity** to wind energy developments.

Perceptual and scenic qualities

- Much of the LCT is a landscape of attractive character, indicated by its designation within the High Weald AONB across LCA 6A, LCA 6B, LCA 6C and the northern extents of LCA 6D and 6E.
- A sense of tranquillity with dark night skies is experienced throughout much of the landscape, particularly within valleys and larger woods away from main villages or transport corridors.
- Busy trunk roads, including the A22, A26 and A264, and larger villages within or near the area including Forest Row, East Grinstead, Royal Tunbridge Wells, Hailsham, Horam and Uckfield influence rural tranquillity locally.
- There is a strong public right of way network, including local and long-distance walking trails such as the High Weald Landscape Trail, Sussex Border Path, Vanguard Way, Wealdway and the Sussex Diamond Way. The Forest Way Country Park and Bewl Water are a popular recreational areas.

The location of most of the LCT within the High Weald AONB, which is designated for its scenic qualities and tranquil rural character, increases sensitivity, however some localised human influences including larger settlements and transport corridors reduces sensitivity in some areas, resulting in a **moderate-high sensitivity** to solar PV and wind energy developments.

Table A.16: Sensitivity scores

Criterion	Sensitivity score: Solar	Sensitivity score: Wind
Landform and scale (including sense of openness/enclosure)	Moderate-high	High
Landcover (including field and settlement patterns)	High	High
Historic landscape character	High	High
Visual character (including skylines)	Moderate-high	High
Perceptual and scenic qualities	Moderate-high	Moderate-high

Overall assessment of landscape sensitivity to solar PV developments

Existing solar PV developments in the LCT

- There are three existing solar farms in LCA 6E, two located near Horam and one located near Pashley Farm south of Ninfield.

Summary of overall landscape sensitivity

A.32 The distinctive and complex landform, partially open character, strong historic field patterns, presence of semi-natural habitats including nationally designated sites, historic settlement pattern with villages designated as Conservation Areas, rural, tranquil character and location of most of the LCT within the High Weald AONB in recognition of its scenic qualities all increase sensitivity to solar PV development.

A.33 Areas with a partially enclosed character due to presence of woodland and localised areas within the LCT influenced by modern development and human activity including electricity pylons, large settlements within and adjacent to the LCT (such as Forest Row, East Grinstead, Royal Tunbridge Wells, Hailsham, Horam and Uckfield), and major roads (such as the A22, A26 and A264), are slightly less sensitive to solar PV development.

Any variations in landscape sensitivity at the LCA level

A.34 The landscapes in the south of LCA 6D and LCA 6E are less sensitive to small to medium scale solar development, given the location of these landscapes outside of the High Weald AONB, the existing presence of solar farm development and influence of the urbanised edge of larger settlements to the south of the LCT, such as Uckfield and Hailsham. However, cumulative effects of any further solar farm development should be considered.

Table A.17: Landscape sensitivity of LCT 6 to different scales of solar PV development

Size	Rating
Very small solar PV (Up to 1 hectares)	Moderate

Size	Rating
Small solar PV (1 to 5 hectares)	Moderate-High
Medium solar PV (5 to 20 hectares)	Moderate-High
Large solar PV (20 to 50 hectares)	High
Very large solar PV (50 to 120 hectares)	High

Overall assessment of landscape sensitivity to wind energy developments

Existing wind energy developments in the LCT

- There are no existing wind farms in LCT 6.

Summary of overall landscape sensitivity

A.35 The distinctive and complex landform, presence of human scale features, partially open character, small-scale historic field patterns, presence of semi-natural habitats including national designated sites , historic settlement pattern with villages designated as Conservation Areas, rural, tranquil character and location of most of the LCT within the High Weald AONB in recognition of its scenic qualities all increase sensitivity to wind development.

Any variations in landscape sensitivity at the LCA level

A.36 There are no significant differences in sensitivity between the component LCAs within this LCT.

Table A.18: Landscape sensitivity of LCT 6 to wind energy development

Size	Rating
Wind energy development (100-150 metres to blade tip)	High

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