

Wealden District Council

Landscape and Visual Appraisal – Appendix A.11

Potential Development Sites in the High Weald AONB: LCA 6A - Hartfield

Final report

Prepared by LUC

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Wealden District Council

Landscape and Visual Appraisal – Appendix A.11

Potential Development Sites in the High Weald

AONB: LCA 6A - Hartfield

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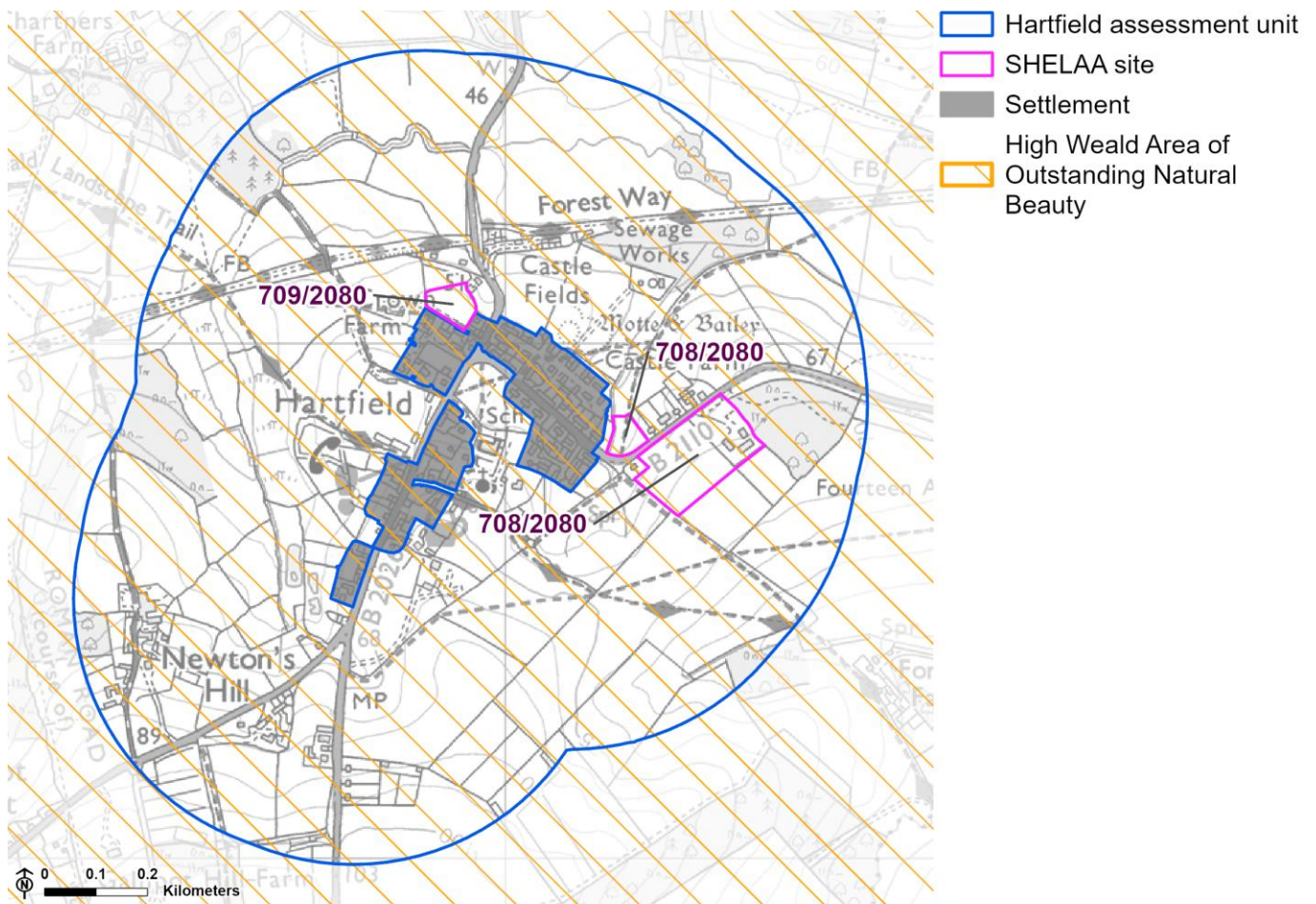
Appendix A.11

Hartfield Assessment Unit

The following potential development sites are considered within the Hartfield assessment unit:

- Land at Castle Farm, Withyham Road (708/2080)
- Land at Old Crown Farm, Edenbridge Road (709/2080)

Figure 1: Location of assessed sites in relation to the assessment unit



Created by LUC - 16036_001_Project_3_AONB_Report/002_r5_AssessedSitesRelationToAssessmentUnit_A5L 30/06/2026

Settlement location, evolution and pattern

Settlement location and context	Hartfield is a village located in the north-west of Wealden district and within the High Weald AONB. The village occupies a slight spur above the River Medway. The settlement lies within the Wooded Slopes of the High Weald (LCT 6).
Settlement evolution	The historic core of the village is relatively linear and centred around the High Street and Church Street. The town has medieval origins, with significant growth from the 15th century onwards resulting from the iron industry in the locality. Further growth in the 19th century can be attributed to agriculture and the introduction of the railways (which subsequently closed to passengers in 1967). However, most significant growth from the historic core occurred in the late 20th century.
Settlement pattern and edge character	Development consists predominantly of one and two-storey detached and semi-detached properties, with some older terraced properties located in the historic settlement core. There are also some 20th and 21st century two storey terraced properties along the northern settlement edge. The village has retained much of its historic form, with some modest urban expansion to the east along Castlefield and the B2110, and south along the B2026. The Forest Way Country Park and River Medway form soft boundary features to the north of the settlement, and a wooded stream forms a stronger boundary to the east. Settlement is fringed by woodland and mature field boundaries.

Mapped information for the core character components of natural beauty of the High Weald AONB

The High Weald AONB's defining components of character that are found within the Hartfield assessment unit have been mapped in **Figure 2**. Tranquillity (which forms part of the 'aesthetic and perceptual qualities' character component) and dark skies are shown in **Figures 3 and 4** respectively.

Figure 2: Core character components of natural beauty of the High Weald AONB

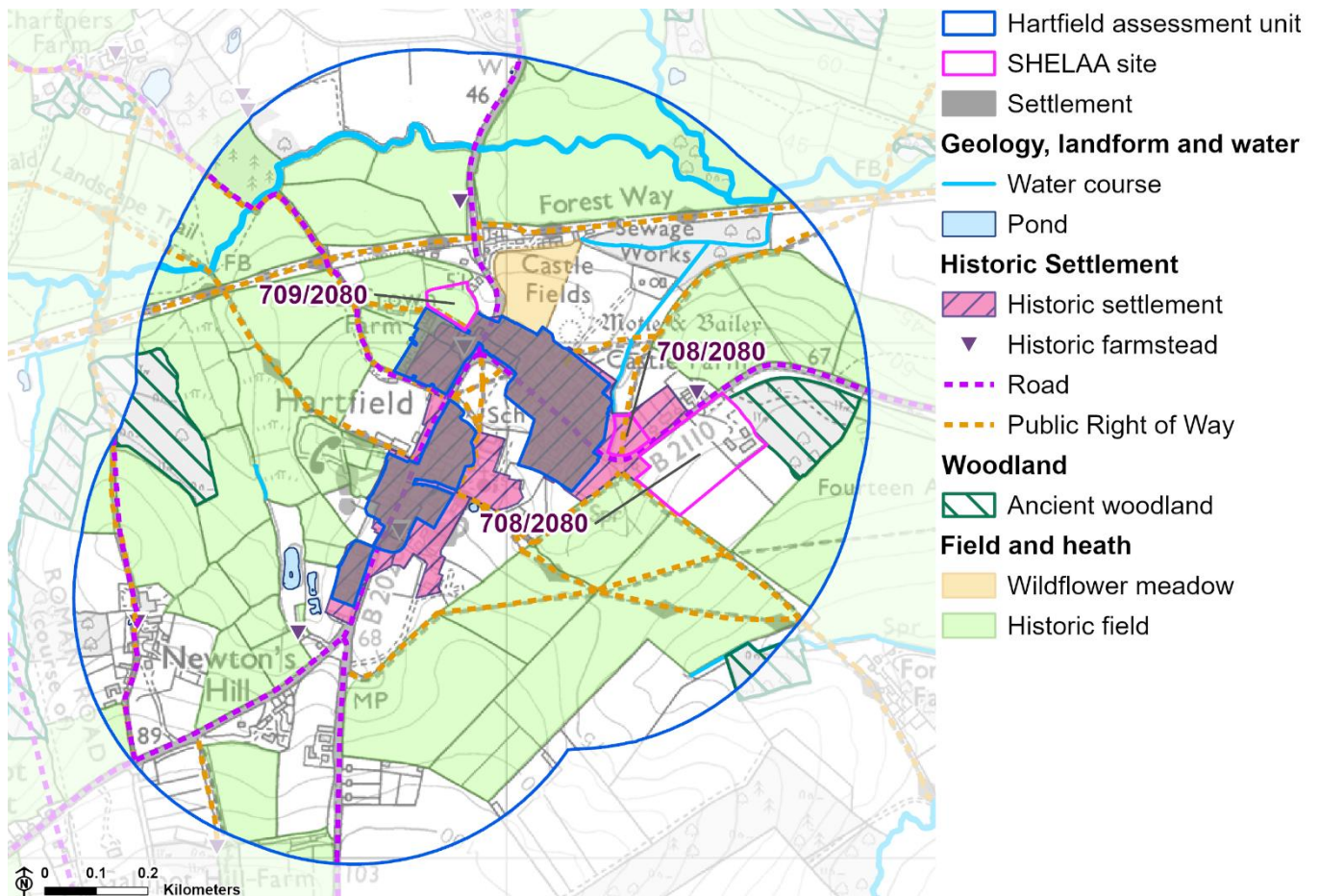


Figure 3: Tranquillity

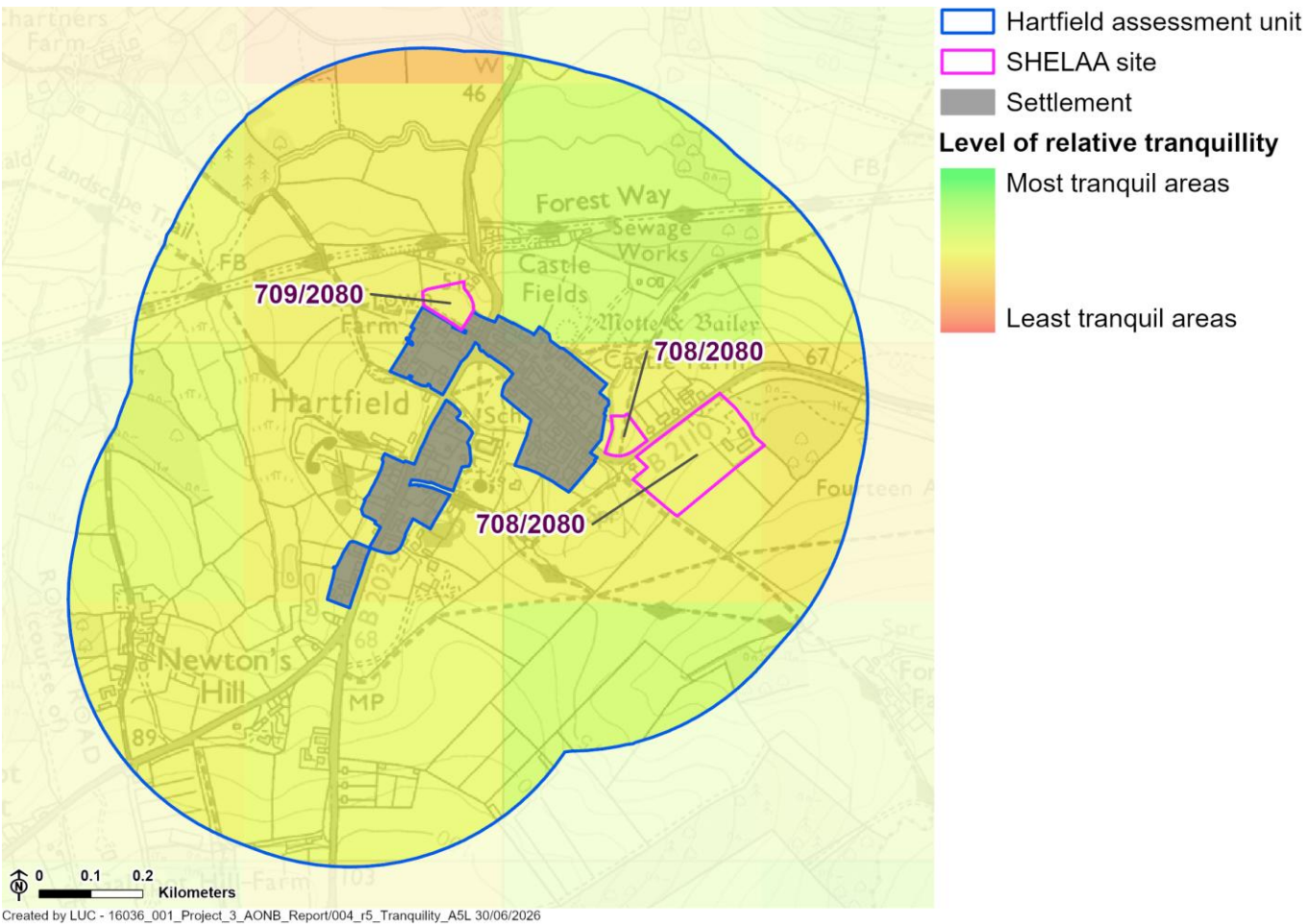
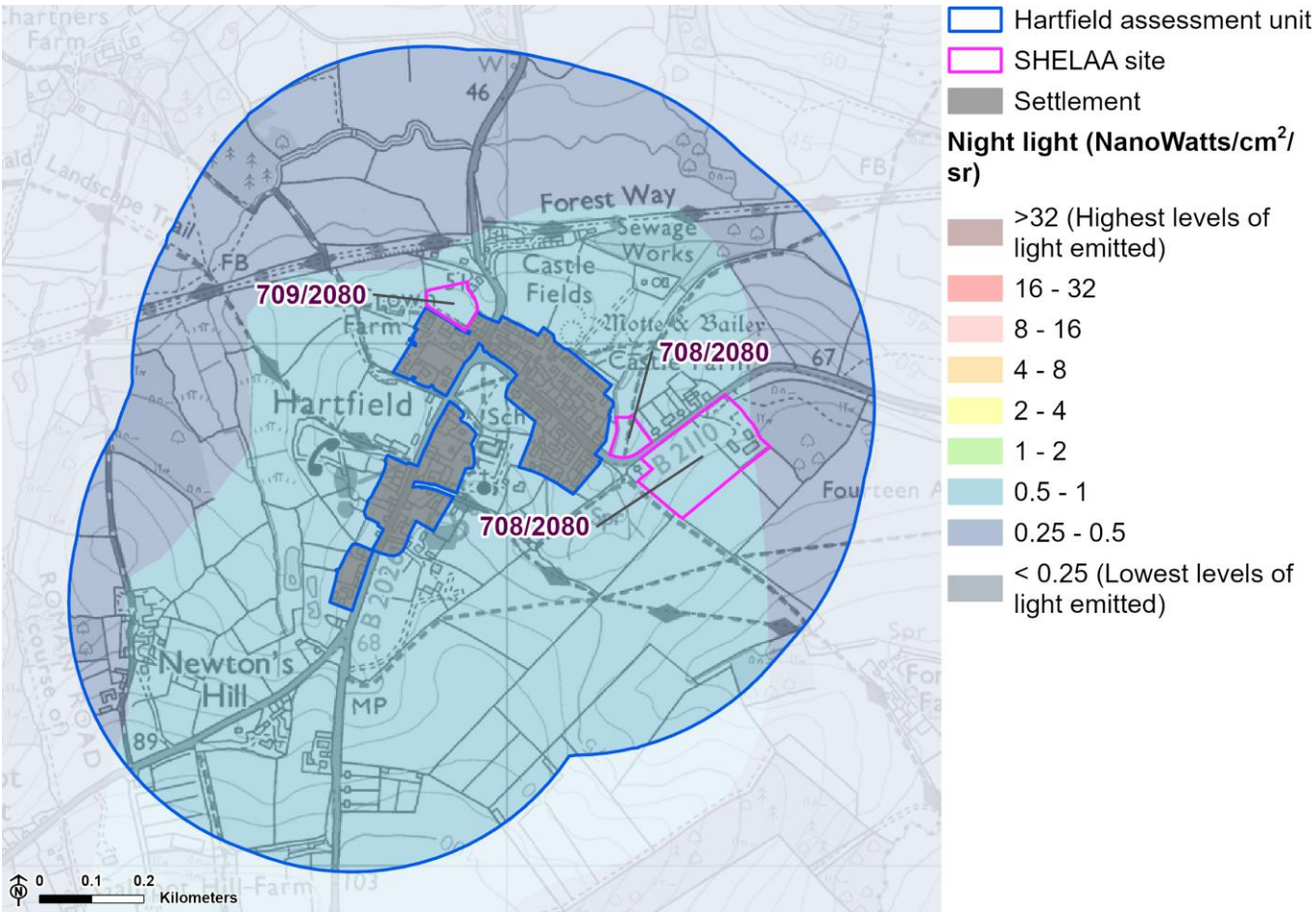


Figure 4: Dark skies



Created by LUC - 16036_001_Project_3_AONB_Report/005_r5_DarkSkies_A5L 30/06/2026

Landscape sensitivity context for the Hartfield assessment unit

<i>The landscape sensitivity of the Hartfield assessment unit, described in the Wealden Landscape Sensitivity Assessment to Residential and Employment Development (2023)</i>			
Landscape sensitivity The rating that applies to the assessment unit	Small scale residential 2-2.5 storey housing	Medium scale residential 3-4 storey flats/ care homes	Commercial/ industrial e.g. industrial units or hotels
	H	H	H
Key sensitivities The key landscape sensitivities to development identified for the assessment unit	■ The complex ridge and valley landform. ■ Small areas of mature deciduous woodlands (many of which are ancient in origin), particularly in the west and east. ■ Intact historic field patterns, particularly medieval assarts in the west of the assessment unit. ■ The Hartfield Conservation Area and Castle Mound Scheduled Monument. ■ Strongly expressed historic settlement edge with a strong relationship to the surrounding pastoral landscape. ■ The strong rural character with areas of remoteness and tranquillity, which forms the context for outward views from the Hartfield Conservation Area. ■ Location within and intervisibility with more distant areas of the High Weald AONB.		
Guidance	■ Consider views from the River Medway valley towards the prominent wooded slopes of the High Weald AONB to the south. ■ Retain broadleaved woodland, including linear woodland in the Forest Way Country Park. Avoid loss of, harm, or deterioration to ancient semi-natural woodlands and allow a buffer zone around them (to avoid root damage). Replace any unavoidable losses, with native species where possible, ensuring an appropriate maintenance schedule is prepared and implemented for remedial planting. ■ Retain or replace hedgerow trees, protecting mature specimen trees from the impacts of development. Any new planting should be in character with the locality, using native species where possible. ■ Retain and where possible enhance hedgerows, and take opportunities to strengthen the local habitat network in line with the aims of the Western Ouse Streams and Ashdown Forest Biodiversity Opportunity Area. Where there is unavoidable loss of hedgerows, mitigation / compensation in the form of suitable hedgerow replacement should be sought. ■ Preserve historic field patterns, locating development away from intricate small-scale historic field patterns, particularly medieval assarts in the west. ■ Ensure development does not adversely affect the intact historic form, character and key outward views from the Hartfield Conservation Area. Particular attention should be given to the historic settlement edges of Conservation Area, where development would influence the relatively small-scale form of the settlement. ■ Minimise influence of development in significant views afforded from the Hartfield Conservation Area, looking towards the wooded ridges of the High Weald AONB and across the River Medway Valley. ■ Consider views of development from popular public rights of way, including the Forest Row Country Park and High Weald Landscape Trail. ■ Ensure opportunities to access and enjoy the landscape are preserved and enhanced.		

- Any development should be carefully integrated into the landscape, utilising existing woodland, or using species that are in character with the wider landscape, preferably native.
- Ensure new building reinforces and responds to local character in its scale, layout and design, reflecting the local vernacular in use of materials. Developments should draw on the principles contained within the High Weald AONB 'High Weald Housing Design Guide'¹, 'Guidance on the selection and use of colour in development'² and objectives of the High Weald AONB Management Plan³.
- Ensure development does not affect the scenic rural character of the landscape, and areas of relative tranquillity, particularly the defining components of character relating to the High Weald AONB.

¹ <https://www.highweald.org/look-after/planning/design-guide.html>

² <https://www.highweald.org/look-after/planning/colour-study.html>

³ <https://www.highweald.org/high-weald-aonb-management-plan.html>

Land at Castle Farm, Withyham Road (708/2080)

Site Details	
Potential development	Residential development proposed on entirety of site mapped below, but only the western section/parcel of the site is proposed as draft allocation HAR1 (identified for 5 dwellings) in the Focused Wealden Local Plan (2026).
Site location	The site is located to the north-east of the settlement and comprises two fields, located on either side of the B2110.

Figure 5: Site location and constraints

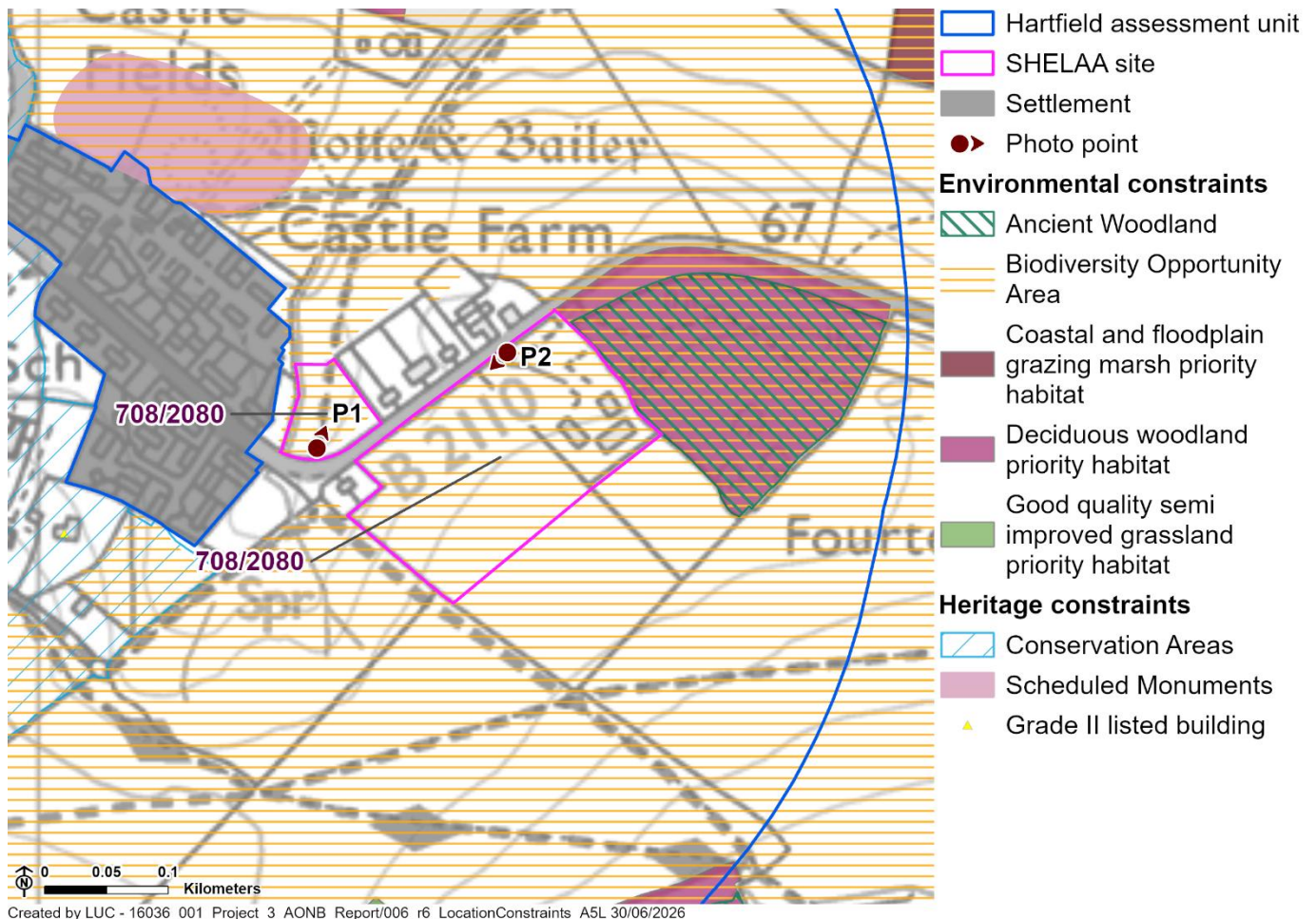
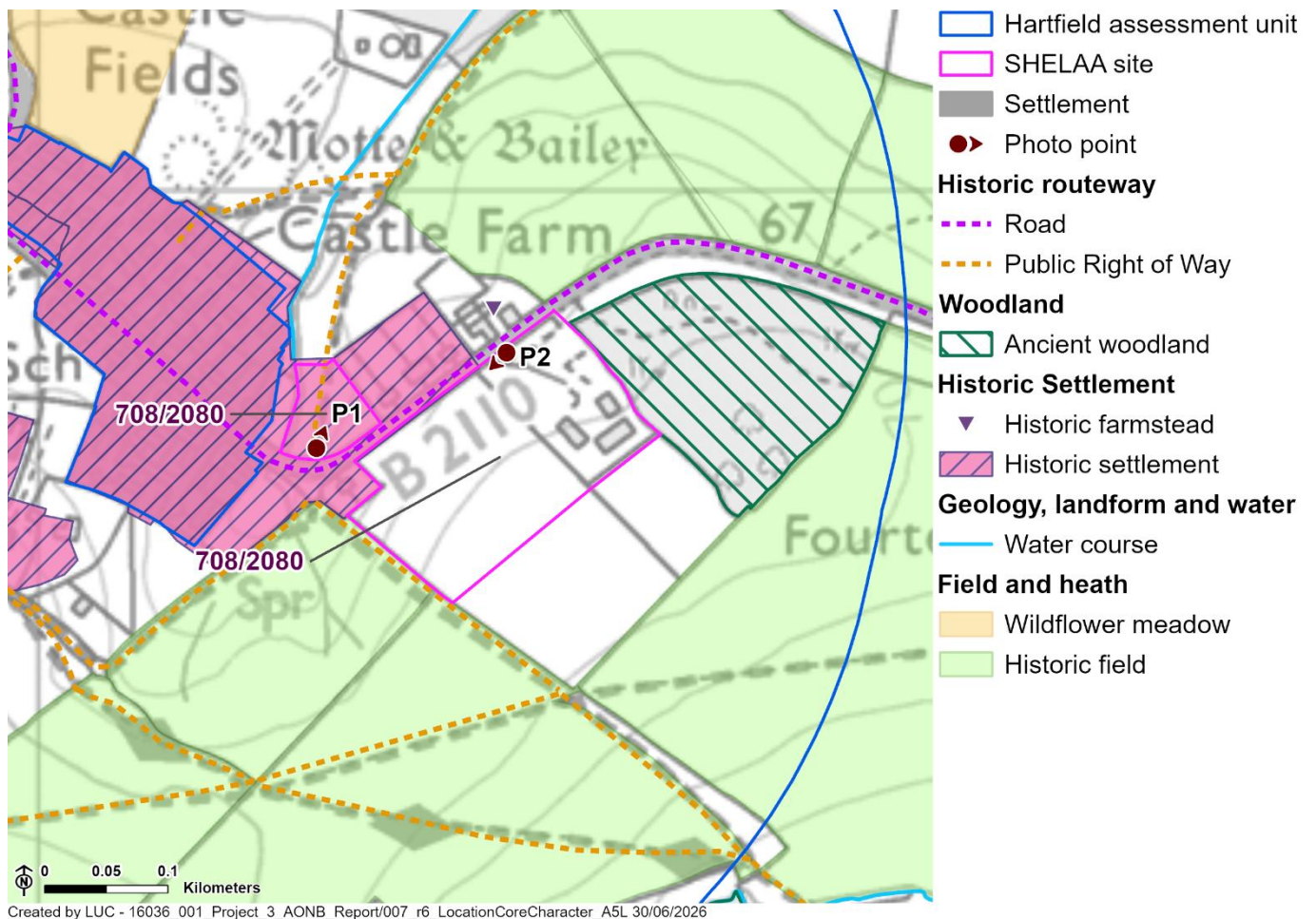


Figure 6: Site location and core character components of natural beauty of the High Weald AONB



Representative site photos



Photo 1: Relatively flat western extents of the site seen in views from the public right of way



Photo 2: Skyline formed by the elevated eastern extents of the site seen in views looking east from the B2110

Baseline Analysis

Baseline landscape character	
Key features and qualities of the site in relation to the wider assessment unit	Landform - The site forms part of the undulating river valley slopes, rising from a small stream at 55m AOD in the western parcel of the site (west of the B2110) to 70m AOD in the eastern parcel of the site where it ascends relatively steeply and forms a distinctive ridge. An undulating topography is typical of the wider assessment unit. Natural character - The site is predominantly pastoral in character with mature hedgerows, some of which are wooded, lining the boundaries of the site. Hedgerows along the B2110 are clipped. The pastoral character is typical of the wider assessment unit. - Priority habitat ancient and semi-natural deciduous woodland at Hartfield Grove encloses the site to the north-east. Areas of woodland are typical of the wider assessment unit. The site is within the Western Ouse Streams and Ashdown Forest BOA. - Modern agricultural buildings in the north of the eastern parcel of the site influences the natural character. Landscape pattern and time depth - The site comprises small to medium scale fields derived from piecemeal enclosure (as classified in the Sussex HLC), which are typical of the wider assessment unit, as well as some planned private enclosure. - No heritage features have been recorded within the site, which is atypical of the wider assessment unit. The site is located approximately 130m south-east of the Castle mound Scheduled Monument. However, intervening 20th century development influences the relationship between the site and this asset. - There is some intervisibility between the elevated eastern extents of the site and the Hartfield Conservation Area to the west, notably the village green. However, the western parcel of the site (west of the B2110) is relatively well-screened. Perceptual aspects - Despite being partly contained by woodland and mature hedgerows, the elevated nature of the eastern parcel of the site contributes to a sense of openness. - There is a sense of rural tranquillity, which is occasionally influenced by the proximity to the village and the B2110 (levels of tranquillity are recorded in the middle band of CPRE's Tranquillity Mapping, Figure 3) and dark night skies are experienced from the site and wider assessment unit (light levels are recorded in the lower/darker bands of CPRE's Night Blight Mapping, Figure 4), which is typical of the wider assessment unit.
Settlement form and edge character and extent of built development	The site lies to the north-east of the settlement edge of Hartfield, adjacent to 20th century settlement which extends along Castlefields and the B2110 from the historic settlement core. The open fields of the eastern parcel of the site play a slight role in the separation between Hartfield and the smaller village of Withyham to the east, although a few sporadic dwellings (originating as early 20th century farmworkers cottages) extend along the B2110 to the north of the site and exert an existing influence on the sense of separation between these villages. However, these dwellings are separated from the existing settlement edge by the western parcel of the site, which together with the eastern parcel provide a rural context to them. The

	western boundary of the western site parcel is defined by a small wooded stream that forms a legible boundary to the existing settlement edge. In addition to the two-storey sporadic dwellings along the B2110, development near the site also includes a one storey commercial use building to the north-west of the B2110 and scattered farm buildings to the south-east of the B2110. The elevated eastern part of the site forms a particularly prominent slope in outward views from the settlement, partially screened by intervening woodland.
Baseline visual character	
Potential visual receptors	Relatively open views into the site beyond low and clipped hedgerows are afforded from the B2110 and residential properties located along the road. Users of the public right of way which crosses the west of the site also experience open views across the site. Partially screened views of the site are available from the public rights of way which pass from the B2110 to the west and south of the site. More distant views are afforded from the eastern settlement edge from residential properties along Castlefields and Motte Field, although views are glimpsed in between gaps in intervening woodland and vegetation. The elevated eastern extents of the site form part of the rural skyline in views from the Hartfield Village Green, within the Conservation Area, and sections of Castlefields and the High Street. The St Mary church spire (within the Conservation Area) is seen in outward views from the elevated eastern extents of the site, beyond intervening woodland.
Extent of visibility within the High Weald AONB	Some long views to and from the site across the River Medway valley are afforded, particularly towards and from the elevated eastern extents of the site. Long views from the lower-lying western extents of the site are occasionally screened and filtered by woodland.
Expression of the core character components of natural beauty of the High Weald AONB on the site	
Natural systems (geology, soils, water and climate) – faulted landform of clays and sandstone with highly variable, relatively undisturbed soils and numerous headwaters (gill streams) functioning under an oceanic climate.	The elevated landform in the east of the site forms part of the <u>principal ridge (Forest Ridge)</u> with the site located on its edge and contributes to the <u>pattern of faults and folds</u>. The stream that passes along the western boundary of the site's western parcel contributes to the <u>numerous small streams</u>. It originates from a spring just south of the site, contributing to the <u>high concentration of springs associated with faultlines</u>, although is not considered to be a gill stream (which are narrow steep-sided valleys).
Settlement – dispersed historic settlement including high densities of isolated farmsteads, hamlets and late-medieval villages founded on trade and non-agricultural rural industries.	Castle Farm, located to the north-east of the site's eastern parcel, contributes towards the <u>high density of historic farmsteads surrounded by their own fields</u>⁴ found within the AONB. The fields associated with this individual historic farmstead (including those within the site) contribute slightly towards the <u>separation between settlements formed by fields associated with individual historic farmsteads</u>, particularly between Hartfield and the smaller village of Withyham. The few sporadic dwellings along the B2110 are associated with the <u>pockets of small wayside cottages (...later worker cottages) interspaced with fields</u> (including both parcels of the site). Although not located within or directly adjacent to the Conservation Area, the site is located within the historic settlement⁴ which is of <u>medieval origin</u>.
Routeways – a dense network of historic routeways (now roads, tracks and paths).	A historic routeway (public right of way) crosses through the western parcel of the site. It provides a connection to the B2110. This road is recorded as a historic lane, although its expression is masked by its use as a B-road with associated modern road markings. These routes contribute towards the <u>dense radiating network</u> of historic routeways.

⁴ As identified in the High Weald AONB character components dataset (see Figure 6).

Woodland – an abundance of ancient woodland, mostly in small holdings, highly interconnected with hedges and shaws.	Hartfield Grove encloses the site to the north-east and contributes towards the <u>high proportion of ancient woodland</u> in the AONB and the <u>highly interconnected and structurally varied mosaic of many small woods...and outgrown hedges</u> of the AONB. Mature and wooded field boundaries within the site also form an interconnected habitat network.
Fieldsapes and heath – small, irregular and productive fields, bound by hedgerows and woods, and typically used for livestock grazing; with distinctive zones of lowland heaths and inned river valleys (reclaimed marshland).	Both parts of the site are used for <u>grazing livestock</u> and enclosed by woody and thick hedged boundaries. The west of the site comprises a small <u>irregular field</u> .
Dark night skies – intrinsically dark at night with our own galaxy (the Milky Way) visible.	The site forms parts of an <u>intrinsically dark landscapes with a sense of naturalness</u> . It is located adjacent to the edge of Hartfield which is a <u>rural village with few street lamps</u> . The adjacent B2110 is an <u>unlit road</u> .
Aesthetic and perceptual qualities – arising from the interaction of people with the landscape, including the notion of a quintessential English pastoral landscape, intimacy of scale, a sense of history and timelessness; rurality and tranquillity; glimpsed long views; freedom to explore and make connections with the natural world, and a rich legacy of features and ideas left by writers, poets and gardeners inspired by the landscape.	The ancient woodland at Hartfield Grove and the historic Castle Farm (adjacent to the site) contribute to the <u>sense of history and timelessness</u>. The public right of way which crosses the site contributes to the <u>sense of freedom arising from access to a dense network of public rights of way...suitable for walking...</u> <u>Long views</u> across the rolling river valley are afforded, particularly from the elevated slopes in the east of the site (although not publicly accessible), which contribute to a <u>deep sense of rurality</u>. The sense of rurality and tranquillity is influenced by proximity to the village and the surrounding existing residential development. The combination of grazing and surrounding woodland provides a <u>pastoral feel</u> and contributes to the <u>recognisable and unifying mosaic of open field and wooded habitats</u>.
Land-based economy and rural living – with roots extending deep into history, and which has visibly and culturally shaped the landscape.	The current use of the site relates to the <u>predominantly pastoral mixed farming with an absence of industrial scale farming</u> key characteristic.

Baseline Summary

How the site relates to the sensitivity of the wider assessment unit

The Assessment Unit

The *Wealden Landscape Sensitivity Assessment to Residential and Employment Development* assesses the Hartfield assessment unit to have a **high** sensitivity to small scale residential development (2-2.5 storey housing). The sensitivity analysis indicates that areas of complex landform, historic features associated with the Hartfield Conservation Area and Castle Mound Scheduled Monument, retained historic settlement edge, low-rise residential character of the existing settlement edge, the strong rural and scenic character of the surrounding landscape, and the location within and visual relationship with the wider High Weald AONB increase sensitivity to built development. However, the occasional semi-enclosed character, the presence of modern development such as modern farm buildings and sewage works and relatively few known historic features throughout the wider assessment unit (outside of the Hartfield Conservation Area) reduce sensitivity for localised parts of the assessment unit.

The Site

Overall, it is considered that the eastern parcel of the site is of **high** sensitivity to small scale residential development (2-2.5 storey housing), in line with the wider assessment unit, as it demonstrates a number of characteristics that are in common with the assessment unit. It comprises pastoral fields with undulating topography and is highly visible within the

surrounding landscape, forming a prominent skyline in views from the B2110 and properties along the eastern settlement edge, with some intervisibility with the Hartfield Conservation Area.

Variations in Sensitivity

The western parcel of the site is considered to be of slightly lower sensitivity (**moderate-high**) to development than the eastern parcel, given the presence of residential development to the east and west of this parcel and the lower-lying topography, which makes it slightly less visible in the wider landscape. However, it provides a gap between the settlement edge and sporadic dwellings along the B2110 (forming the rural context for these properties) and its western boundary is defined by a wooded stream that forms a legible boundary to the existing settlement edge.

How strongly the core components of character are expressed on the site

The site expresses several core character components of natural beauty of the High Weald AONB. In summary:

- The elevated landform in the east forms part of the principal Forest Ridge;
- The small stream along the western boundary of the site's western parcel, contributes to the density of streams within the AONB;
- Castle Farm (which extends into the site's eastern parcel) is part of the high density of historic farmsteads within the AONB and its surrounding fields contribute slightly to the separation of Hartfield and Withyham;
- The field boundaries contribute to the highly interconnected woodland habitats, linking to the ancient woodland on the north-eastern edge of the site, and define the irregular western parcel of the site;
- The grazing of livestock contributes to the pastoral feel of the landscape, linking to the history of the land-based economy;
- The site forms part of the rural context to the historic settlement of Hartfield (of medieval origin) and to the few sporadic dwellings along the B2110 (which originated as worker cottages);
- The public right of way through the site contributes to the radiating network of historic routeways and the sense of freedom for walkers;
- A sense of history and timelessness is provided by the ancient woodland and Castle Farm;
- There are scenic long-distance views across the rolling river valley; and
- The site forms part of a landscape with dark skies.

Overall, it is considered that there is a **strong expression** of the core components of character, particularly for the eastern parcel of the site.

Potential effects of developing the site, including on the core character components of natural beauty

The following section sets out the potential effects of developing the site, particularly on the core character components of natural beauty, and the potential mitigation and enhancement opportunities that should be considered to minimise impacts upon the landscape and visual baseline should this site be considered suitable for development.

Potential effects as a result of development on the site	Core character component of natural beauty potentially affected	Relevant key characteristics of the core character component potentially affected	Potential mitigation and enhancement opportunities
Landscape character and features			
Changes to the distinctive elevated landform in the east as a result of interventions/ earthworks upon the landform.	Natural systems	■ A principal ridge (Forest Ridge) running east – west from Horsham to Cranbrook... ■ A pattern of faults and folds that distinguishes the High Weald from the rest of the south and east of England, with a high concentration of springs associated with fault lines...	■ Limit the extent of development extending up the slope onto the valley side to minimise alterations to the landform and retain its expression as part of the principal Forest Ridge and its contribution to the pattern of faults and folds (in accordance with the AONB's Objective G2).
Deterioration of and/or encroachment on the small stream that runs along the western boundary of the site.	Natural systems	Numerous small streams...	■ Set development back from the small watercourse and enhance the stream by increasing biodiversity and improving the water quality (in accordance with the AONB's Objective G1).
Removal of mature deciduous woodland, trees and hedgerows, affecting the role they play in defining and screening the settlement edge and	Woodland	Highly interconnected and structurally varied mosaic of many small woodlands....and outgrown hedges.	■ Retain, protect and enhance all mature vegetation within and surrounding the site, especially the mature hedgerows along the outer boundaries (in accordance with the AONB's Objectives W1 and PQ2). ■ Improve the connectivity of woodlands and hedgerows around the site through new tree planting and hedgerow corridors that are in character with the locality, using

Potential effects as a result of development on the site	Core character component of natural beauty potentially affected	Relevant key characteristics of the core character component potentially affected	Potential mitigation and enhancement opportunities
contributions to the interconnectivity of habitats.			native species where possible / suitable (in accordance with the AONB's Objective W2). ■ Take up biodiversity opportunities listed for the Western Ouse Streams and Ashdown Forest BOA, where possible (in accordance with the AONB's Objective W2).
Loss of the grazed pastures.	Fieldsapes and heath	<i>Fields, mostly permanent pasture, used for grazing livestock...</i>	■ Loss of pasture would be unavoidable with development of the site, as development would remove land from agricultural use with limited opportunities to retain areas due to the small scale of the site. However, field boundaries should be retained and enhanced where possible to avoid complete loss of field pattern (in accordance with the AONB's Objective FH2).
Deterioration of and/or encroachment on the ancient woodland at Hartfield Grove which abuts the north-eastern edge of the site.	Woodland	<i>High proportion of ancient woodland.</i>	■ Set development back from the edge of the ancient woodland to the required minimum buffer zone (in accordance with the AONB's Objective W1). ■ The buffer zone could provide a valuable habitat for woodland wildlife and should consist of semi-natural habitat e.g. a mix of woodland edge and semi-improved grassland to provide structural complexity and species diversity (in accordance with the AONB's Objective W2).
	Aesthetic and perceptual qualities	<i>A sense of history and timelessness...</i>	
Loss of the historic routeway and public right of way that crosses through the site, which provides a connection to other historic routeways.	Routeways	<i>A dense, radiating network with a variety of origins</i>	■ Retain, protect and enhance existing recreational access via the public right of way which crosses the western site parcel and the rural character of the historic route (in accordance with the AONB's Objectives R1 and PQ3).
Modifications to the B2110 (recorded as a historic lane) to facilitate site access (e.g. road widening, creation of junction)			■ Reduce the impact of access works required to the road, where possible, protecting the hedgerows along it (in accordance with the AONB's Objectives R1 and R2).

Potential effects as a result of development on the site	Core character component of natural beauty potentially affected	Relevant key characteristics of the core character component potentially affected	Potential mitigation and enhancement opportunities
Influence of lighting in the dark night skies resulting in night blight.	Dark skies	■ <i>Intrinsically dark landscapes with a sense of naturalness.</i> ■ <i>Many rural villages with few street lamps or no street lighting.</i> ■ <i>Numerous unlit roads...</i>	■ Minimise the influence of lighting associated with new development and only install outdoor lighting where necessary (in accordance with the AONB's Objective DS1). ■ Follow the Institute of Lighting Professionals guidance and use dark sky-friendly lighting (in accordance with the AONB's Objectives DS1 and DS2).
Settlement form edge and setting			
Deterioration of the rural character of the sites which contribute to the setting of Hartfield, particularly the elevated eastern extents of the site where the landform provides containment to the settlement edge and forms part of the rural skyline in views from the settlement (including within the Conservation Area).	Settlement	<i>Villages and towns mostly of medieval origin...</i>	■ Minimise visibility of development and maintain the wooded character of views from within Hartfield, including the eastern settlement edge and the village green (in accordance with the AONB's Objective S1). ■ Avoid development on the elevated prominent slope within the eastern parcel of the site, which forms a prominent skyline in outward views from the settlement edge and is visible from the village green (in accordance with the AONB's Objective PQ2). ■ Design of new buildings to respond appropriately to the character and appearance of the surroundings by using high quality materials in keeping with the local vernacular (in accordance with the AONB's Objective S2). ■ Development to draw on the principles contained within the High Weald AONB 'High Weald Housing Design Guide'⁵, 'Guidance on the selection and use of colour in development'⁶ and objectives of the High Weald AONB Management Plan⁷ (in accordance with the AONB's Objective S2).

⁵ <https://www.highweald.org/look-after/planning/design-guide.html>

⁶ <https://www.highweald.org/look-after/planning/colour-study.html>

⁷ <https://www.highweald.org/high-weald-aonb-management-plan.html>

Potential effects as a result of development on the site	Core character component of natural beauty potentially affected	Relevant key characteristics of the core character component potentially affected	Potential mitigation and enhancement opportunities
Encroachment into the fields associated with the historic farmstead at Castle Farm (to the north-east of the site's eastern parcel), and reducing the separation between Hartfield and the smaller village of Withyham.	Settlement	■ <i>High density of historic farmsteads surrounded by their own fields...</i> ■ <i>Separation between settlements formed by fields associated with individual historic farmsteads.</i>	■ Minimise encroachment towards Castle Farm historic farmstead (in accordance with the AONB's Objective S3). Further assessment relating to the setting of heritage assets is advised.
	Aesthetic and perceptual qualities	<i>A sense of history and timelessness...</i>	
Infilling the gap between the existing settlement edge and the few sporadic dwellings along the B2110, resulting in coalescence and affecting the rural context of these originally early 20th century farmworkers cottages.	Settlement	<i>Pockets of small wayside cottages (... later worker cottages) interspaced with fields.</i>	■ Within the western parcel of the site, maintain the existing settlement pattern and character of the cottages to the east by following the scale and built form of this existing development along the B2110, supporting the pattern of single row dwellings along the edge of the road. Minimise altering the perception of the settlement gap by restricting development along the road edge (in accordance with the AONB's Objectives S1 and S2). Any development within the eastern parcel of the site would alter the distinctive settlement pattern.
Visual amenity			
Visibility of development seen by: ■ users of the public right of way which crosses the west of the site and further	Aesthetic and perceptual qualities	■ <i>A sense of history and timelessness arising from an ancient countryside with a human-scale agricultural</i>	■ Retain, protect and enhance all existing vegetation including the wooded boundaries that enclose the western parcel of the site (in accordance with the AONB's Objectives W1 and PQ2).

Potential effects as a result of development on the site	Core character component of natural beauty potentially affected	Relevant key characteristics of the core character component potentially affected	Potential mitigation and enhancement opportunities
public rights of way to the south and west of the site; ■ users of the Hartfield Village Green; ■ residents along the settlement edge, including along B2110 Castlefields and High Street; and ■ motorists, cyclists and pedestrians along the B2110 (recorded as a historic lane).		<i>tapestry; veteran and ancient trees...historic buildings.</i> ■ <i>The homely, pastoral feel to the whole landscape arising from its human-scale pattern and productivity</i> ■ <i>A recognisable and unifying mosaic of open field and wooded habitats.</i>	■ Reduce the density to encompass more space between/around buildings, interspersed with soft landscaping and tree planting, to soften visual impact and enhance integration of built form within the landscape(in accordance with the AONB's Objective PQ2). ■ Avoid development on the elevated prominent slope within the eastern parcel of the site, which forms a prominent skyline in outward views from the settlement edge and is visible from the village green (in accordance with the AONB's Objective PQ2).
Overall impact on the core character components of natural beauty of the High Weald AONB			
High impact	The baseline analysis identifies that the site (and its immediate surrounds) expresses several core character components of natural beauty, with a strong level of expression. This is particularly the case within the eastern parcel of the site due to the elevated landform; the presence of mature woodland (including ancient woodland), trees and hedgerows; grazed pastures; Castle Farm historic farmstead (adjacent to the site); and being part of a landscape with dark night skies. The western parcel of the site contributes to the core character components through the small stream along its western boundary; the historic routeway (PRoW) crossing the site; and the irregular shaped field in the west which provides a rural and pastoral context to the worker cottages along the B2110. Overall, development of the site is judged to have a high impact on the landscape and visual qualities/features that define the AONB, therefore affecting / impacting the ability of the Council to fulfil its statutory duty to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the AONB. <u>Variation to overall impact</u> Development on the eastern parcel of the site is considered to have a greater impact on the core character components than the western parcel; although not to the extent that there would be a full reduction to a moderate level of impact due to the potential alteration of settlement pattern and gap if development was to occur on the western parcel.		

Summary and recommendations

The site-specific recommendations for this site are as follows:

- Avoid development on the elevated prominent slope within the eastern parcel of the site, which forms a prominent skyline in outward views from the settlement edge and is visible from the village green.
- Limit the extent of development extending up the slope onto the valley side to minimise alterations to the landform.
- Set development back from the small watercourse along the western boundary of the western site parcel, and enhance the stream by increasing biodiversity and improving the water quality.
- Retain, protect and enhance the mature hedgerows along the outer boundaries of the site.
- Take up biodiversity opportunities listed for the Western Ouse Streams and Ashdown Forest BOA, where possible.
- Set development back from the edge of the ancient woodland to the required minimum buffer zone.
- Retain, protect and enhance existing recreational access via the public right of way which crosses the western site parcel and the rural character of the historic route.
- Minimise visibility of development and maintain the wooded character of views from within Hartfield, including the eastern settlement edge and the village green.
- Minimise encroachment towards Castle Farm historic farmstead.
- Within the western parcel of the site, maintain the existing settlement pattern and character of the cottages to the east by following the scale and built form of this existing development along the B2110, supporting the pattern of single row dwellings along the edge of the road. Minimise altering the perception of the settlement gap by restricting development along the road edge. Any development within the eastern parcel of the site would alter the distinctive settlement pattern.

Land at Old Crown Farm, Edenbridge Road (709/2080)

Site Details	
Potential development	Residential development proposed on entirety of site mapped below, and the entirety of the site is proposed as draft allocation HAR2 (identified for 6 dwellings) in the Focused Wealden Local Plan (2026).
Site location	The site is located to the north of the settlement, north-west of the junction of the B2026 and B2110.

Figure 7: Site location and constraints

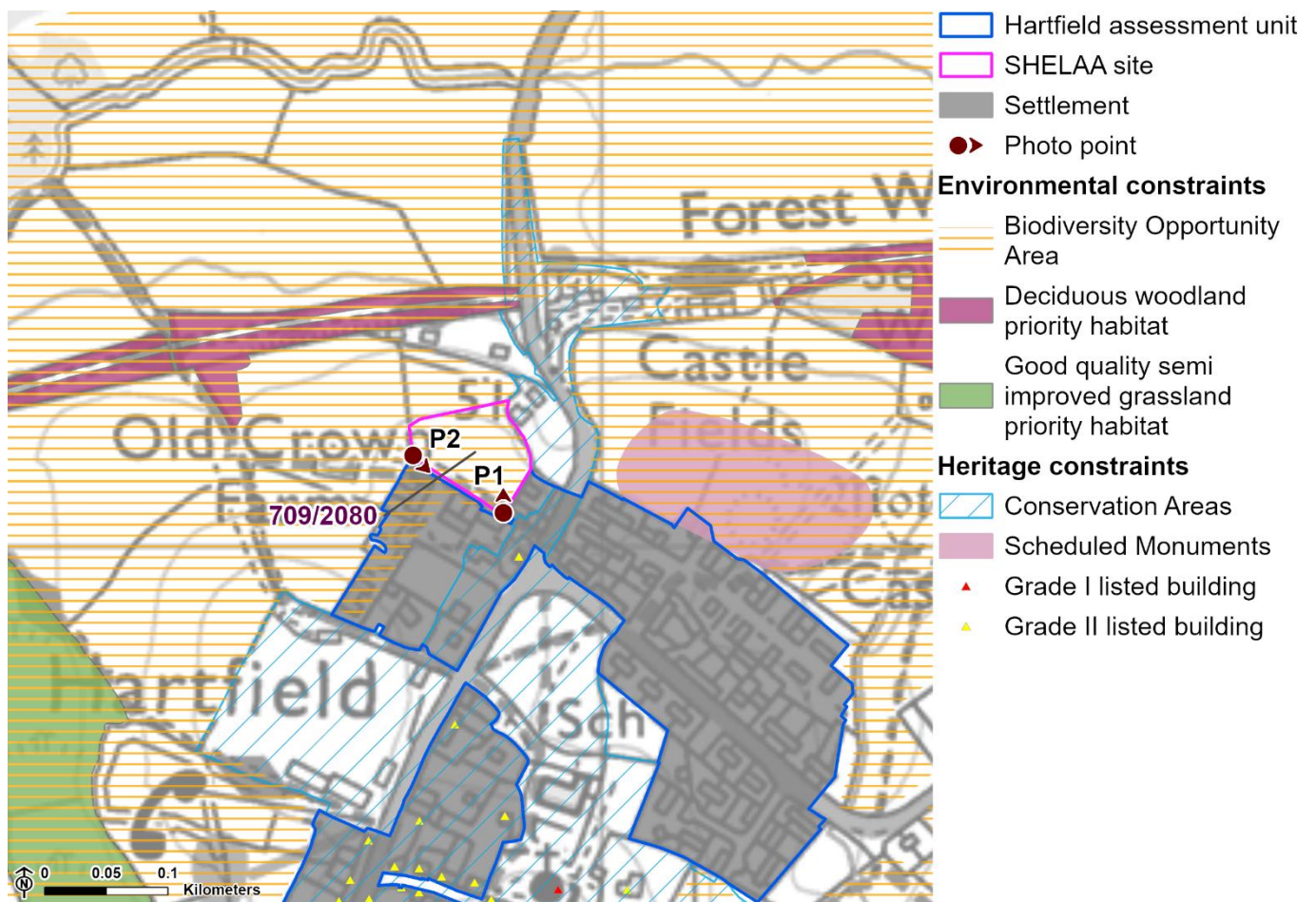
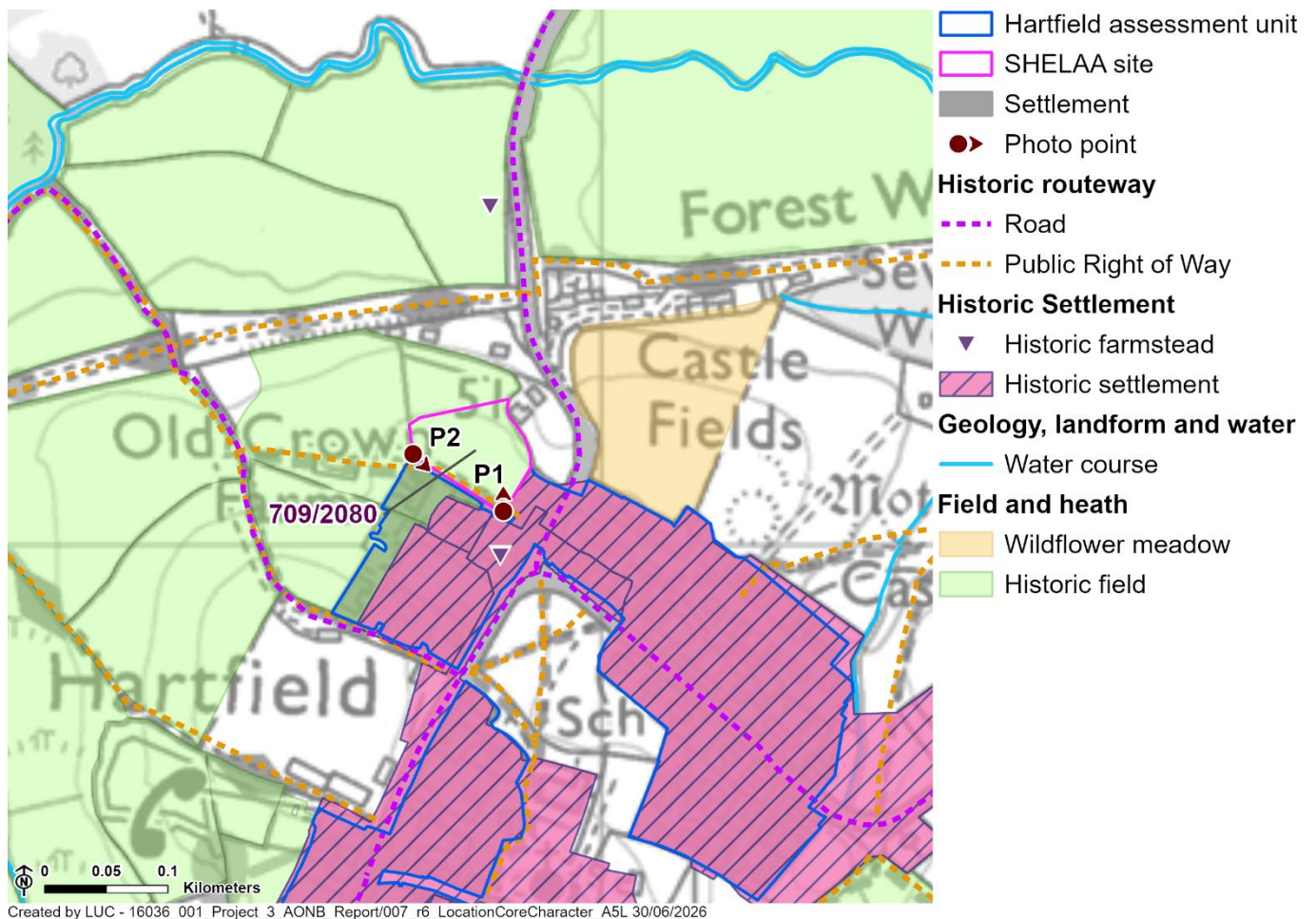


Figure 8: Site location and core character components of natural beauty of the High Weald AONB



Representative site photos



Photo 1: View north-east across the relatively flat landform of the site from the public right of way



Photo 2: 21st century development along Sackville Lane, adjacent to the site boundary

Baseline Analysis

Baseline landscape character	
Key features and qualities of the site in relation to the wider assessment unit	Landform - The site forms a small and relatively flat area, which is atypical of the wider assessment unit, laying at approximately 60m AOD, gently sloping to the lower-lying extents of the river valley to the north and north-east. Natural character - The site is predominantly pastoral in character, with some mature field boundaries and woodland along the north-eastern and western site boundary. The pastoral character is typical of the wider assessment unit. The site lies within the Western Ouse Streams and Ashdown Forest BOA. - Existing residential development to the north-east, east and south of the site influences the natural character, including domestic scale solar arrays to the north-east of the site. Landscape pattern and time depth - The site is located within an area of medium scale fields derived from piecemeal enclosure (as classified in the Sussex HLC) with a slightly irregular field pattern, which is typical of the wider assessment unit. - There are no recorded historic features within the site, which is typical of the wider assessment unit. However, the site is located adjacent to the Hartfield Conservation Area boundary and forms part of the pastoral context to the historic settlement. Trees and embankment to the north-east of the site screens and filters views from the Conservation Area. - The site is located approximately 80m to the west of the Castle Mound Scheduled Monument. However intervening vegetation and existing residential development limits intervisibility. Perceptual aspects - There is a sense of rural tranquillity, which is occasionally influenced by the proximity to the village (levels of tranquillity are recorded in the middle band of CPRE's Tranquillity Mapping, Figure 3) and dark night skies are experienced from the site and wider assessment unit (light levels are recorded in the lower/darker bands of CPRE's Night Blight Mapping, Figure 4). - Buildings and vegetation partially enclose the western, north-eastern, eastern and southern site boundary, however the site is relatively open in character to the north towards the River Medway valley. More distant views north are partially screened and filtered by woodland along the Forest Way. Glimpsed views across the River Medway valley, on balance with a semi-enclosed character, are typical of the wider assessment unit.
Settlement form and edge character and extent of built development	The site does not play a role in settlement separation. The site forms part of the rural context to the north of the village and Conservation Area. Development adjacent to the site comprises two storey terraced dwellings to the south and one storey small scale commercial buildings along Sackville Lane, which are relatively exposed. To the north-east of the site, two storey detached properties along the B2026 Edenbridge Road (within the Conservation Area) are located at a lower elevation than the site, with trees and embankment to the east of the site forming part of a soft boundary to the historic settlement edge.

Baseline visual character	
Potential visual receptors	Relatively open views into the site are afforded from residential and commercial properties along Sackville Lane, partially screened and filtered by fencing and vegetation. Partially screened views are also available from residential properties located along the B2026 Edenbridge Road, and oblique partially screened views of the site are experienced from the road, which passes at a lower elevation towards the river floodplain. Views across the site are experienced by users of the public right of way which crosses the site. Views from other public rights of way to the north and west of the site, including the Forest Way, are screened by intervening woodland. Distant, partially screened views of the site are afforded from elevated properties along Butcherfield Lane near Hartwell, to the north of the River Medway. The site is seen in the context of the Hartfield settlement edge in these views.
Extent of visibility within the High Weald AONB	Long views to and from the site are limited by the enclosed nature of the site. However, there are some distant views towards the wooded ridges to the north and west.
Expression of the core character components of natural beauty of the High Weald AONB on the site	
Natural systems (geology, soils, water and climate) – – a deeply incised, ridged and faulted landform of clays and sandstone with highly variable, relatively undisturbed soils and numerous headwaters (gill streams) functioning under an oceanic climate.	There are no distinctive geological, landform or water features within the site.
Settlement – dispersed historic settlement including high densities of isolated farmsteads, hamlets and late-medieval villages founded on trade and non-agricultural rural industries.	Old Crown Farm, located to the south of the site, contributes towards the <u>high density of historic farmsteads</u>⁸ found within the AONB. However, intervening 21st century development limits the intervisibility between the historic farmstead and the site. The site is located adjacent to the historic core of Hartfield, which is of <u>medieval origin</u> and designated as a Conservation Area.
Routeways – a dense network of historic routeways (now roads, tracks and paths).	A historic routeway (public right of way) crosses through the south of the site. It provides a connection between a farm track to the west of the site (which is recorded as a historic track) and Edenbridge Road near to the eastern boundary of the site. This road is recorded as a historic lane and is lined by <u>earth banks</u>, although its expression is masked by its use as the B2026 with associated modern road markings. These routes contribute towards the <u>dense radiating network</u> of historic routeways.
Woodland – an abundance of ancient woodland mostly in small holdings, highly interconnected with hedges and shaws.	The mature and wooded field boundaries contribute to the wider <u>highly interconnected</u> habitat network.
Fieldsapes and heath – small, irregular and productive fields, bound by hedgerows and woods, and typically used for livestock grazing; with distinctive zones of lowland heaths and inned river valleys (reclaimed marshland)	The small <u>irregular field</u> is used for <u>grazing livestock</u> and enclosed by woody and thick hedged boundaries.
Dark night skies – intrinsically dark at night with our own galaxy (the Milky Way) visible.	The site forms parts of an <u>intrinsically dark landscapes with a sense of naturalness</u>. It is located adjacent to the edge of Hartfield which is a <u>rural village with few street lamps</u>. The adjacent Edenbridge Road is an <u>unlit road</u>.

⁸ As identified in the High Weald AONB character components dataset (see Figure 8).

Aesthetic and perceptual qualities – arising from the interaction of people with the landscape, including the notion of a quintessential English pastoral landscape, intimacy of scale, a sense of history and timelessness; rurality and tranquillity; glimpsed long views; freedom to explore and make connections with the natural world, and a rich legacy of features and ideas left by writers, poets and gardeners inspired by the landscape.	The public right of way which crosses the site contributes to the <u>sense of freedom arising from access to a dense network of public rights of way...suitable for walking...</u> <u>Long views</u> towards distant wooded ridges are afforded in views north from the site. The sense of rurality and tranquillity is influenced by proximity to the village and the surrounding existing residential development. The combination of grazing and surrounding woodland provides a <u>pastoral feel</u> and contributes to the <u>recognisable and unifying mosaic of open field and wooded habitats</u>.
Land-based economy and rural living – with roots extending deep into history, and which has visibly and culturally shaped the landscape.	The current use of the site relates to the <u>predominantly pastoral mixed farming with an absence of industrial scale farming</u> key characteristic.

Baseline Summary

How the site relates to the sensitivity of the wider assessment unit

The Assessment Unit

The *Wealden Landscape Sensitivity Assessment to Residential and Employment Development* assesses the Hartfield assessment unit to have a **high** sensitivity to small scale residential development (2-2.5 storey housing). The sensitivity analysis indicates that areas of complex landform, historic features associated with the Hartfield Conservation Area and Castle Mound Scheduled Monument, retained historic settlement edge, low-rise residential character of existing settlement edge, the strong rural and scenic character of the surrounding landscape, and the location within and visual relationship with the wider High Weald AONB increase sensitivity to built development. However, the occasional semi-enclosed character, the presence of modern development such as modern farm buildings and sewage works and relatively few known historic features throughout the wider assessment unit (outside of the Hartfield Conservation Area) reduce sensitivity for localised parts of the assessment unit.

The Site

Overall, it is considered that the site has a lower sensitivity than the assessment unit as a whole and is considered to be of **moderate-high** sensitivity to small scale residential development (2-2.5 storey housing). The site is a pastoral field with wooded boundaries and is slightly irregular in shape. It is located adjacent to the Hartfield Conservation Area, and is crossed by a public right of way, and therefore demonstrates a number of the characteristics that increase sensitivity across the assessment unit. However, the topography of the site is relatively flat, with a partially enclosed character, which limits visibility into the site from the Conservation Area and is influenced by adjacent modern residential development, decreasing its sensitivity (compared to the wider assessment unit).

Variations in Sensitivity

There is no variation in sensitivity across the site.

How strongly the core components of character are expressed on the site

The site expresses some of the core character components of natural beauty of the High Weald AONB. In summary:

- The public right of way through the site contributes to the radiating network of historic routeways and the sense of freedom for walkers;
- The field boundaries contribute to the highly interconnected woodland habitats and define the irregular field;
- The grazing of livestock contributes to the pastoral feel of the landscape, linking to the history of the land-based economy;
- The site forms part of the rural context to the historic settlement of Hartfield (of medieval origin);

- There are scenic and glimpsed long views overlooking the River Medway valley and towards wooded ridges to the north; and
- The site forms part of a landscape with dark skies.

Overall, it is considered that there is a **moderate expression** of the core components of character.

Potential effects of developing the site, including on the core character components of natural beauty

The section below sets out the potential effects of developing the site, particularly on the core character components of natural beauty, and the potential mitigation and enhancement opportunities that should be considered to minimise impacts upon the landscape and visual baseline should this site be considered suitable for development.

Potential effects as a result of development on the site	Core character component of natural beauty potentially affected	Relevant key characteristics of the core character component potentially affected	Potential mitigation and enhancement opportunities
Landscape character and features			
Removal of mature deciduous woodland, trees and hedgerows, affecting the role they play in defining and partly screening the site and contributions to the interconnectivity of habitats.	Woodland	<i>Highly interconnected and structurally varied mosaic of many small woodlands....and outgrown hedges...</i>	■ Retain, protect and enhance all mature vegetation within and surrounding the site, especially the mature field boundaries and woodland along the north-eastern and western site boundary (in accordance with the AONB's Objectives W1 and PQ2). ■ Improve the connectivity of woodlands and hedgerows around the site through new tree planting and hedgerow corridors that are in character with the locality, using native species where possible / suitable, particularly along the northern, western and southern site boundary (in accordance with the AONB's Objective W2). ■ Take up biodiversity opportunities listed for the Western Ouse Streams and Ashdown Forest BOA, where possible (in accordance with the AONB's Objective W2).
Loss of the grazed pastures.	Fieldsapes and heath	<i>Fields, mostly permanent pasture, used for grazing livestock...</i>	■ Loss of pasture would be unavoidable with development of the site, as development would remove land from agricultural use with limited opportunities to retain areas due to the small scale of the site. However, field boundaries around the edges of the site should be retained and enhanced where possible to avoid complete loss of field pattern (in accordance with the AONB's Objective FH2).
Loss of the historic routeway and public right of way that crosses through the site,	Routeways	■ <i>A dense radiating network with a variety of origins...</i>	■ Retain, protect and enhance existing recreational access via the public right of way which crosses the site and the rural character of the historic route (in accordance with the AONB's Objectives R1 and PQ3).

Potential effects as a result of development on the site	Core character component of natural beauty potentially affected	Relevant key characteristics of the core character component potentially affected	Potential mitigation and enhancement opportunities
which provides a connection to other historic routeways.			
Modifications to Edenbridge Road (recorded as a historic lane) to facilitate site access (e.g. road widening, creation of junction).	Routeways	■ <i>A dense radiating network with a variety of origins...</i> ■ <i>Earth banks...typically indicating the former width of the routeway or to separate users from farmland or woodland.</i>	■ Reduce the impact of access works required to the road, where possible, protecting the hedgerows and earth banks along it (in accordance with the AONB's Objectives R1 and R2).
Influence of lighting in the dark night skies resulting in night blight, including the potential introduction of streetlights along Edenbridge Road if used for access.	Dark night skies	■ <i>Intrinsically dark landscapes with a sense of naturalness.</i> ■ <i>Many rural villages with few street lamps or no street lighting.</i> ■ <i>Numerous unlit roads...</i>	■ Minimise the influence of lighting associated with new development and only install outdoor lighting where necessary (in accordance with the AONB's Objective DS1). ■ Follow the Institute of Lighting Professionals guidance⁹ and use dark sky-friendly lighting (in accordance with the AONB's Objectives DS1 and DS2).
Settlement form edge and setting			
Deterioration of the rural character of the site which contributes to the setting of	Settlement	<i>Villages and towns mostly of medieval origin...</i>	■ Minimise visibility of development and maintain the wooded character of views from the settlement edge (in accordance with the AONB's Objective S1). ■ Locate development in the south of the site, where it relates to existing 21st century development along Sackville Lane and is set back from the Conservation Area

⁹ See the Institute of Lighting Professionals guidance for further information: <https://theilp.org.uk/publication/guidance-note-1-for-the-reduction-of-obtrusive-light-2021/>

Potential effects as a result of development on the site	Core character component of natural beauty potentially affected	Relevant key characteristics of the core character component potentially affected	Potential mitigation and enhancement opportunities
Hartfield (including the Conservation Area).			boundary (in accordance with the AONB's Objectives S1 and S3). Further assessment relating to the setting of heritage assets is advised. ■ Design of new buildings to respond appropriately to the character and appearance of the surroundings by using high quality materials in keeping with the local vernacular (in accordance with the AONB's Objective S2). ■ Development to draw on the principles contained within the High Weald AONB 'High Weald Housing Design Guide'¹⁰, 'Guidance on the selection and use of colour in development'¹¹ and objectives of the High Weald AONB Management Plan¹² (in accordance with the AONB's Objective S2).
Visual amenity			
Visibility of development seen by: ■ residents at nearby residential properties on Sackville Lane and the B2026 (within the Conservation Area);	Aesthetic and perceptual qualities	■ <i>The homely, pastoral feel to the whole landscape arising from its human-scale pattern and productivity.</i> ■ <i>A recognisable and unifying mosaic of open field and wooded habitats.</i>	■ Retain, protect and enhance all existing vegetation including the wooded boundaries that enclose the site to the west and north-east, taking opportunities for new planting to soften the settlement edge along Sackville Lane to the south (in accordance with the AONB's Objectives W1 and PQ2). ■ Screen new development with additional planting, particularly in views from the Conservation Area to the north-east and from residential properties along Sackville Lane to the south, using local species to maintain the rural character of the wider area (in accordance with the AONB's Objective PQ2).

¹⁰ <https://www.highweald.org/look-after/planning/design-guide.html>

¹¹ <https://www.highweald.org/look-after/planning/colour-study.html>

¹² <https://www.highweald.org/high-weald-aonb-management-plan.html>

Potential effects as a result of development on the site	Core character component of natural beauty potentially affected	Relevant key characteristics of the core character component potentially affected	Potential mitigation and enhancement opportunities
■ users of the public right of way which crosses the site; ■ more distant residents along Butcherfield Lane at Hartfield; and ■ workers at the commercial properties on Sackville Lane.			■ Reduce the density to encompass more space between/around buildings, interspersed with soft landscaping and tree planting, to soften visual impact and enhance integration of built form within the landscape (in accordance with the AONB's Objective PQ2).
Overall impact on the core character components of natural beauty of the High Weald AONB			
Moderate impact	The baseline analysis identifies that the site (and immediate surrounds) expresses some of the core character components of natural beauty, with a moderate level of expression. This is due to the presence of mature woodland and hedgerows; grazed pastures; a historic routeway (PRoW) crossing the site; the Hartfield Conservation Area (adjacent to the site); and being part of a landscape with dark night skies. Development of the site is judged to have a moderate impact on the landscape and visual qualities/features that define the AONB, therefore somewhat affecting / impacting the ability of the Council to fulfil its statutory duty to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the AONB. If the potential mitigation and enhancement opportunities set out above are applied, potential impacts as a result of the development on the site could potentially be reduced. However, there would still be inevitable adverse impacts on the grazed pastures which would be lost. <u>Variation to overall impact</u> There is no variation to the overall impact considered above.		

Summary and recommendations

The site-specific recommendations for this site are as follows:

- Retain, protect and enhance the mature field boundaries and woodland along the north-eastern and western site boundary.
- Take up biodiversity opportunities listed for the Western Ouse Streams and Ashdown Forest BOA, where possible.
- Retain, protect and enhance existing recreational access via the public right of way which crosses the site and the rural character of the historic route.
- Minimise visibility of development and maintain the wooded character of views from the settlement edge.
- Locate development in the south of the site, where it relates to existing 21st century development along Sackville Lane and is set back from the Conservation Area boundary.
- Screen new development with additional planting, particularly in views from the Conservation Area to the north-east and from residential properties along Sackville Lane to the south, using local species to maintain the rural character of the wider area.

Cumulative effects of development sites proposed in the Hartfield assessment unit

Two sites have been assessed within the Hartfield assessment unit. The preceding site assessments have judged the overall impact on the core character components of natural beauty of the High Weald AONB to be:

Site	Overall impact on the core character components of natural beauty of the High Weald AONB	Variations
Land at Castle Farm, Withyham Road (708/2080)	High impact	Development on the eastern parcel of the site is considered to have a greater impact on the core character components than the western parcel; although not to the extent that there would be a full reduction to a moderate level of impact due to the potential alteration of settlement pattern and gap if development was to occur on the western parcel.
Land at Old Crown Farm, Edenbridge Road (709/2080)	Moderate impact	No variation.

If both sites were brought forward for development to the extent as assessed, it would result in a potential of up to 11 dwellings being built. The sites are located to the north-west and east of the settlement, within approximately 350m of each other. The development of both sites may lead to the perception of the settlement edge extending into the countryside, affecting the rural setting of the settlement. There would likely be cumulative impacts on a few components of character of the High Weald AONB with grazing pastures, historic routeways (PRoWs) and the rural context to the historic settlement of Hartfield potentially being affected. Combined intervisibility of both sites within the Hartfield Conservation Area is limited, however partially screened views of site **709/2080** are afforded from the B2026 and views of site **708/2080** are available from the Village Green, and development of both sites may affect sequential key views experienced by people travelling through the Conservation Area. Visibility of both sites is generally limited to close distance views. However, given the prominence of the elevated eastern extents of site **708/2080**, development within this part of the site should be avoided to minimise potential for cumulative effects.

Overall, it is considered that the cumulative impact of developing the two potential sites on the core character components of natural beauty of the High Weald AONB will be no greater than the sum of their individual impacts.