

Wealden District Council

Landscape and Visual Appraisal - Appendix A.13

Potential Development Sites in the High Weald AONB: LCA 6E – Herstmonceux and Windmill Hill

Final report

Prepared by LUC

August 2026



Wealden District Council

Landscape and Visual Appraisal - Appendix A.13

Potential Development Sites in the High Weald

AONB: LCA 6E – Herstmonceux and Windmill Hill

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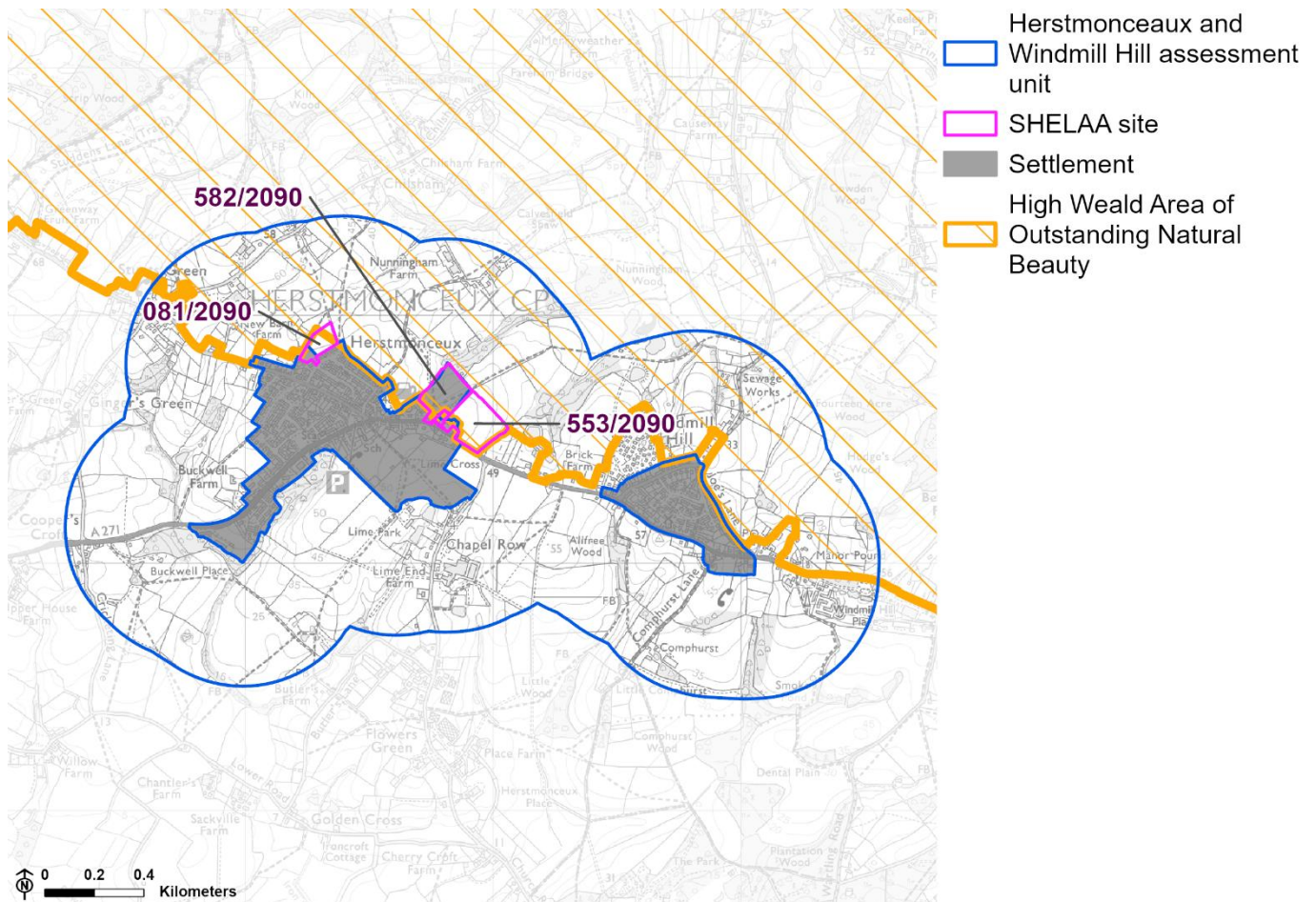
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Herstmonceux and Windmill Hill Assessment Unit

Three potential development sites are considered within the Herstmonceux and Windmill Hill assessment unit:

- Land to north of James Avenue (081/2090)
- Higham Farm, Gardner Street (553/2090)
- Land at Gardner Street (582/2090)

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



Settlement location, evolution and pattern

Settlement location and context	The villages of Herstmonceux and Windmill Hill are located in the south-east of the district and lie outside of the AONB, immediately south of its boundary. They are located along a linear ridge top with valleys to the north and south, and located within the Wooded Slopes of the High Weald (LCT 6).
Settlement evolution	Herstmonceux comes from the Anglo-Saxon word for 'wooded hill' combined with the name of the Monceux family who were lords of the manor in the 12th century, and is mentioned in the Domesday book as Herste. The parish is best known for Herstmonceux Castle, a Scheduled Monument, Grade I listed building and Registered Park and Garden, which lies to the south of the settlement. The village was historically known as Gardner Street, and was a linear ridge top settlement. Post-war housing estates extended the historic core at the junction of West End and Gardner Street, creating a more nucleated settlement form. Recent development has extended the village along Hailsham Road to the south, and between Gardner Street and Chapel Row. Windmill Hill took its name from the windmill, now a Grade II* listed building. The village expanded from a linear ridge top form on Gardner Street and Victoria Road to a more nucleated settlement following development in the 1960s. A caravan park to the north-west of Victoria Road has further extended the settlement to the north.
Settlement pattern and edge character	The settlement form of Herstmonceux is largely undefined, although woodland provides a boundary feature to the south-east and south. The northern edge is often defined by garden fencing and some vegetation. Development to the north of the West End/ Gardner Street has altered the linear pattern and generally consists of 20th century two storey detached and semi-detached properties as well as some bungalows. The linear pattern is more retained further to the east along Gardner Street where detached properties exist, including several that are listed. Windmill Hill is largely separated from Herstmonceux by agricultural fields and woodland, although Lime Cross Nursery is located centrally between the two settlements, along Gardener Street.

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 Herstmonceux and Windmill Hill 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

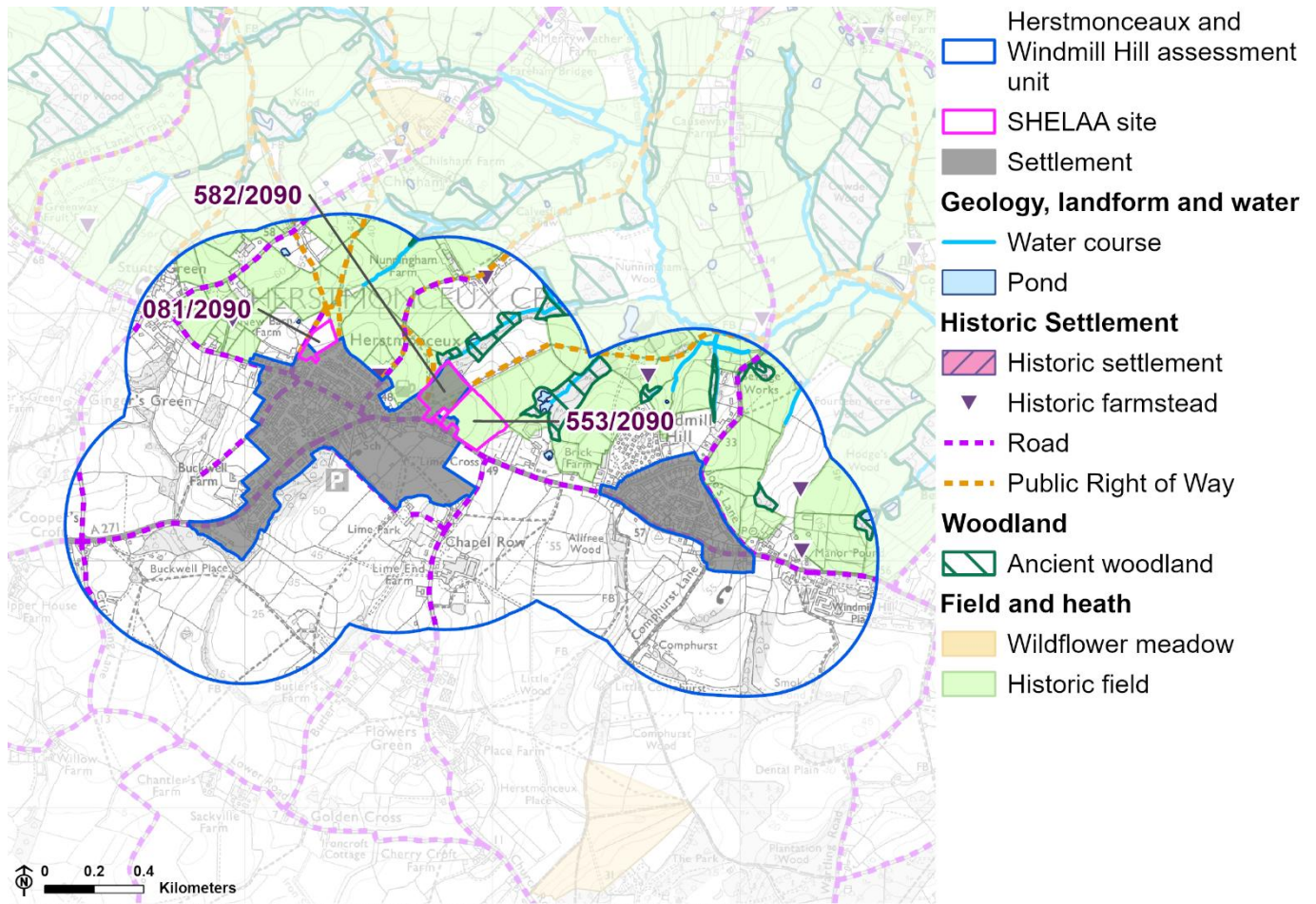


Figure 3: Tranquillity

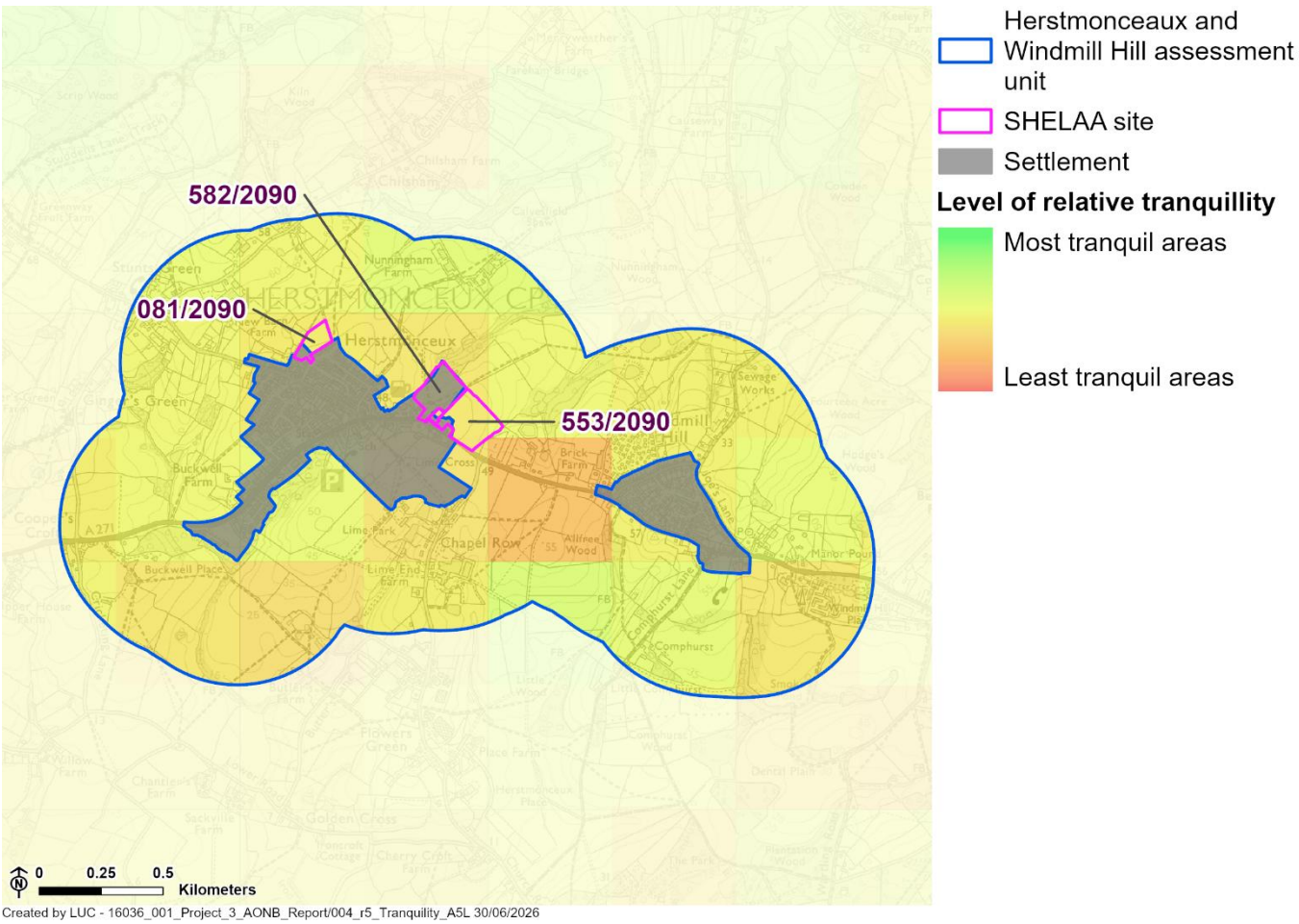
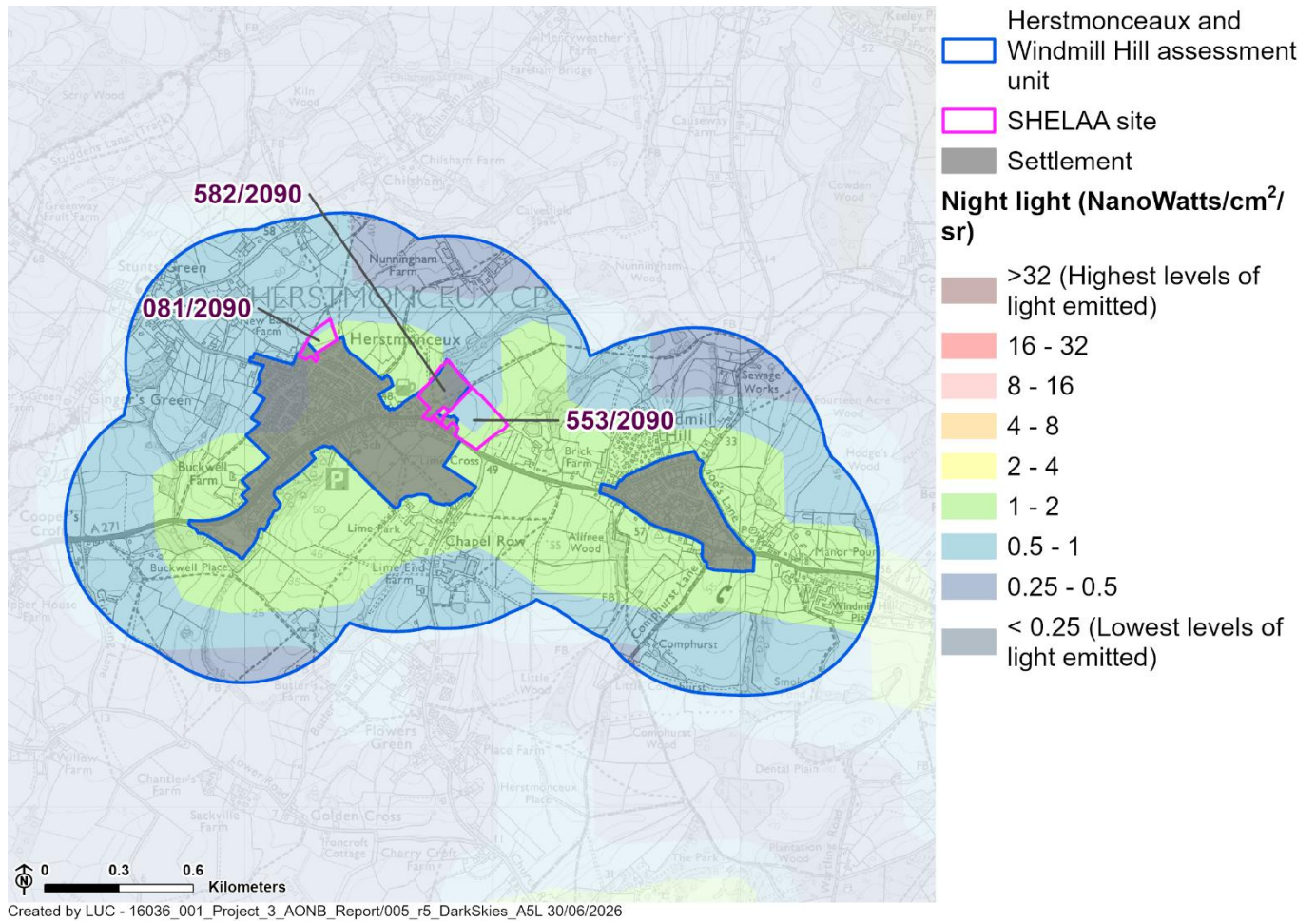


Figure 4: Dark skies



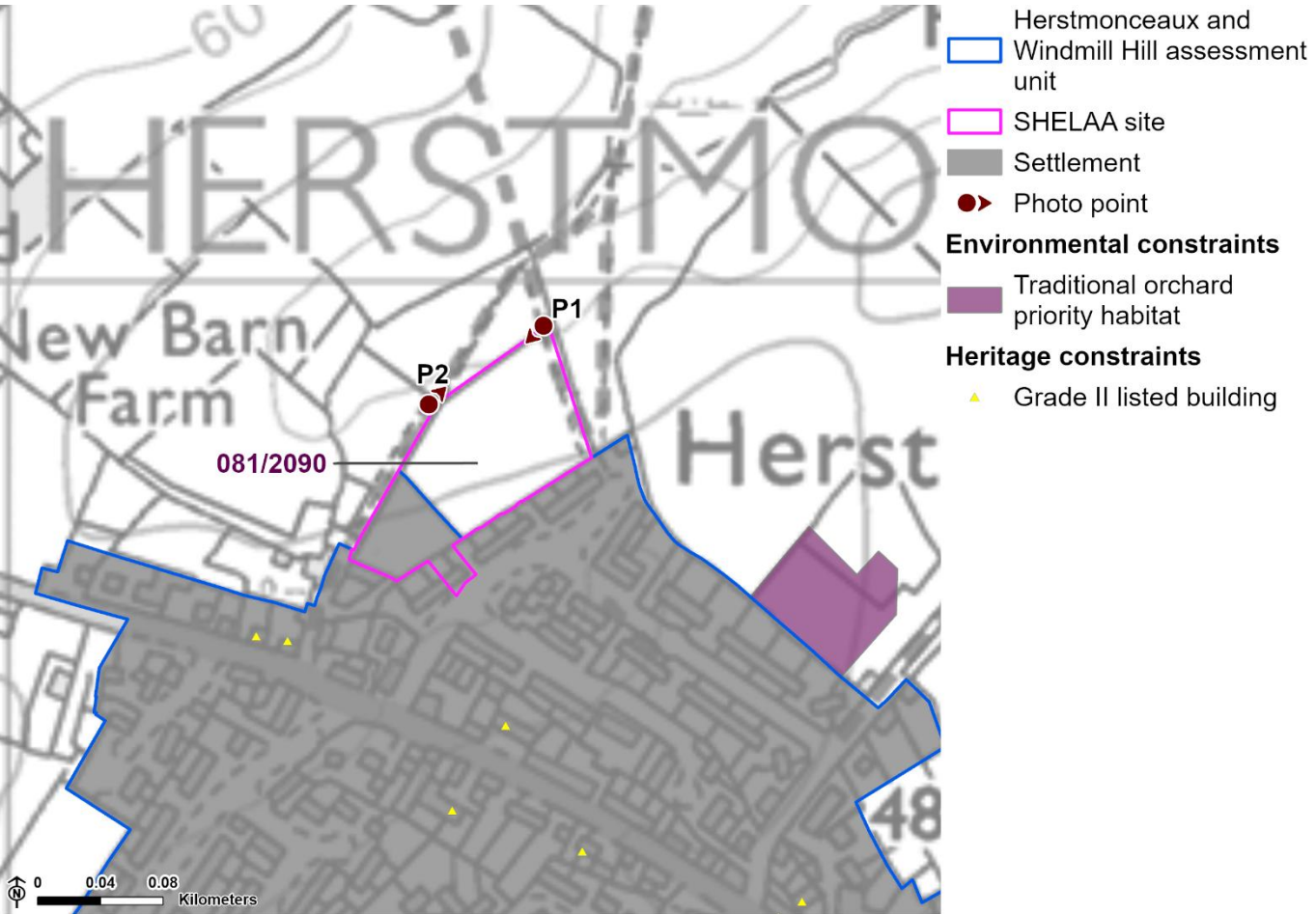
Landscape sensitivity context for the Herstmonceux and Windmill Hill assessment unit

The landscape sensitivity of the Herstmonceux and Windmill Hill assessment unit, described in the Wealden Landscape Sensitivity Assessment to Residential and Employment Development (2023)			
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
	MH	H	H
Key sensitivities The key landscape sensitivities to development identified for the assessment unit	■ The distinctive landform of ridges and valleys. ■ Ecologically valued woodlands, including ancient woodland. ■ Intact historic field pattern, including assarts. ■ Pasture fields bound by strong hedgerows, shaws and hedgerow trees. ■ The rural setting provided to Herstmonceux and Windmill Hill. ■ Separation the centre of the assessment unit provides between Herstmonceux and Windmill Hill. ■ Good access on public rights of way through the landscape. ■ Scenic rural character with limited modern intrusions. ■ Occasional views to the High Weald AONB (in the north of the assessment unit) and long views to the South Downs National Park, and Pevensey Levels.		
Guidance	■ Avoid loss of, harm, or deterioration to ancient semi-natural woodlands, and allow an appropriate buffer around them (to protect from root damage). ■ Retain broadleaved woodland. Replace any unavoidable losses with native species where possible, ensuring an appropriate maintenance schedule is prepared and implemented for remedial planting. ■ Retain and where possible enhance hedgerows and take opportunities to strengthen the local habitat network. Where there is unavoidable loss of, or damage to, hedgerows, mitigation / compensation in the form of suitable hedgerow replacement should be sought, using native species where possible. ■ Preserve historic field patterns, including medieval assarts, locating development away from intricate small-scale historic field patterns. ■ Integrate any development carefully into the landscape, utilising existing woodland, or using native species that are in character with the wider landscape. ■ Ensure the separate identities of Herstmonceux and Windmill Hill are retained and maintain the ridge top form of these historic villages. ■ Ensure opportunities to access and enjoy the landscape are preserved and enhanced. ■ Consider views from popular public rights of way, when considering the siting and design of development in the landscape. ■ Consider views from the wider landscape including the Pevensey Levels, High Weald AONB and South Downs National Park, when siting development on higher slopes. ■ Ensure development does not affect the rural character, dark night skies or tranquillity of the landscape.		

Land to north of James Avenue (081/2090)

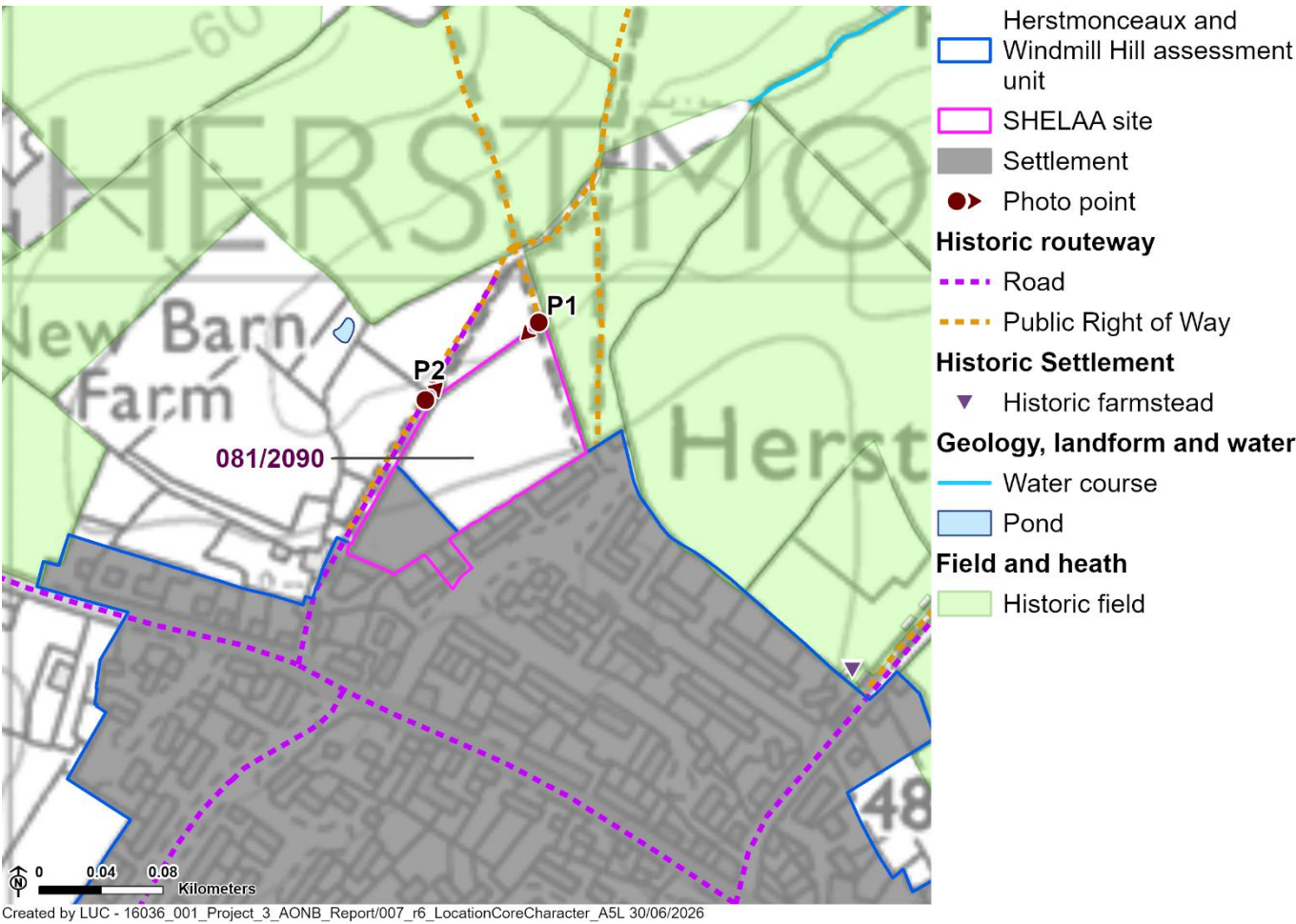
Site Details	
Potential development	Residential development of 36 dwellings, proposed on the site as shown below. Site not Allocated or considered an Option.
Site location	This site is located to the north of the settlement and situated north of James Avenue, east of the historic farmstead at New Barn Farm, and south-west of Nunningham Farm. Most of the site lies outside but adjacent to the boundary of the AONB (apart from the northern extent of the site which falls within it).

Figure 5: Site location and constraints



Created by LUC - 16036_001_Project_3_AONB_Report/006_r6_LocationConstraints_A5L 30/06/2026

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



Representative site photos



Photo 1: View from the north-eastern corner across the site towards residential properties on James Avenue along the eastern boundary.



Photo 2: View north-east from the public right of way along the western boundary of the site.

Baseline Analysis

Baseline landscape character	
Key features and qualities of the site in relation to the wider assessment unit	Landform - The site is relatively flat, comprising a gentle slope rising between 45m AOD in the north to 50m AOD in the south, which is not typical of the wider assessment unit. However, the site forms part of an elevated ridgeline which is typical of the 'undulating ridge and incised valley landscape' of the wider assessment unit. Natural character - The site comprises a single pastoral field, though currently used for horse grazing. - It is bounded by a mature hedgerow along its north-eastern boundary with hedgerow trees which is typical of the wider assessment unit. However, garden fences and an agricultural fence also form boundaries (along the eastern and western edges respectively). Landscape pattern and time depth - The site comprises a small irregular pasture grazed field, which contributes to a regular piecemeal enclosure field pattern (as classified in the Sussex HLC) although field boundaries have been altered with the introduction of fencing for horse paddocks. This is atypical of the historic field pattern types found across the wider assessment unit, although does reflect the medieval origins. Perceptual aspects - The site is influenced by its proximity to the settlement edge of Herstmonceux, which reduces levels of tranquillity (which are recorded as relatively low in CPRE's Tranquillity Mapping, Figure 3) and the experience of dark skies (light level are recorded in the middle bands of CPRE's Night Blight Mapping, Figure 4).
Settlement form and edge character and extent of built development	The site does not play a role in the separation of settlements. The site forms part of the pastoral context to Herstmonceux; particularly the 20th century settlement expansion to the north of the historic settlement core along West End which sits along the top of the ridge and does not extend beyond it. The adjacent settlement edge to the south-east of the site consists of gardens associated with two storey semi-detached and terraced housing along James Avenue, with their property boundaries in the form of a garden fence. The adjacent settlement edge to the south of the site comprises the frontages associated with two bungalows along West Terrace which face onto the site.
Baseline visual character	
Potential visual receptors	There are views into the site from the upper storeys of residential properties along James Avenue to the south-east, and from the front of the bungalows along West Terrace which face onto the site, as well as from the upper storeys of properties further south of the bungalows. The site is partially filtered in views from the west by linear belts of mature trees that define adjacent field boundaries, although glimpsed views are afforded from New Barn Farm given its elevation above the site. Users of the public rights of way running along the north-western and north-eastern boundaries of the site experience clear open views into the site, with filtered views from the public right of way running between Herstmonceux and Chilsham. Visibility from the wider public right of way network is varied, with views from Bagham Lane to the north-west largely obscured by hedgerow vegetation. Views from Chilsham Lane to the north are restricted by the undulating landform and hedgerows.

Extent of visibility within the High Weald AONB	Due to the site's location on top of the ridgeline, there are medium to long-distance views towards the north-east, although extensive intervisibility is limited by intervening woodland and hedgerows. Long views to the north and north-west are limited by landform, as the site sits below the northern ridgelines.
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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.	The site is located at the top of a ridge, contributing towards the <u>pattern of faults and folds</u> . However, there are no distinctive geological 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.	There is no historic settlement (including historic farmsteads) within or immediately adjacent to the site. New Barn Farm contributes to the <u>high density of historic farmsteads</u> found within the AONB, but is located over 300m to the west of the site.
Routeways – a dense network of historic routeways (now roads, tracks and paths).	Historic routeways (public rights of way) run along the north-western and north-eastern boundaries of the site and contribute towards the <u>dense, radiating network</u> of routeways.
Woodland – an abundance of ancient woodland mostly in small holdings, highly interconnected with hedges and shaws.	The mature hedgerow and hedgerow trees along the north-eastern boundary of the site contributes to the <u>highly interconnected and structurally varied mosaic of many small woods... and outgrown hedges</u> characteristic of High Weald AONB.
Fieldscapes 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 site comprises a small pastoral field used for <u>grazing livestock</u> , forming part of an <u>irregular field pattern</u> .
Dark night skies – intrinsically dark at night with our own galaxy (the Milky Way) visible.	Whilst West End Road to the south is largely an <u>unlit road</u> , the residential streets that have extended north from it are lined with street lamps including along James Avenue which limit the experience of <u>dark skies</u> , along with lights from properties the settlement edge.
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 combination of horse grazing and the surrounding wooded field boundaries contribute to the <u>recognisable and unifying mosaic of open field and wooded habitats</u>. However, the sense of rurality and tranquillity is influenced by the horse paddock (and associated fencing) and the proximity to the village and surrounding existing residential development. The public rights of way that run along the north-western and north-eastern boundaries of the site contribute to the <u>sense of freedom arising from access to a dense network of public rights of way...suitable for walking...</u>

Land-based economy and rural living – with roots extending deep into history, and which has visibly and culturally shaped the landscape.

This character component of natural beauty is not expressed within the site.

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 Herstmonceux and Windmill Hill assessment unit to have a **moderate-high** sensitivity to small-scale residential development (2-2.5 storey housing). The sensitivity analysis indicates that the distinctive landform; frequent ecologically valued woodlands; historic field patterns with strong hedgerows; rural character; role the assessment unit plays providing a rural backdrop to Herstmonceux and Windmill Hill; views to and location within the High Weald AONB (in the north of the assessment unit), and separation the landscape provides between Herstmonceux and Windmill Hill increases sensitivity to built development. However, the enclosed character along roads and where hedgerows and woodland reduce views, and undefined settlement edges of Herstmonceux reduces sensitivity.

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** sensitivity to small scale residential development (2-2.5 storey housing). The site demonstrates few characteristics which increase sensitivity for the wider assessment unit. The site is relatively flat, is bounded by wooden fencing for horse paddocks, and is influenced by the proximity of the settlement edge (defined by garden fences) which decrease the site's sensitivity to development. However, the mature hedgerow and hedgerow trees along the north-eastern boundary increase sensitivity. It is also overlooked and seen clearly in views from adjacent properties and by users of the public rights of way which run along the north-western and north-eastern boundaries of the site. The site lies beyond the existing settlement boundary of Herstmonceux and extends slightly beyond the ridge crest towards the lower-lying valley landscape to the north-east, which also increases the site's sensitivity.

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:

- Its location on top of a ridge contributes towards the pattern of faults and folds;
- The public rights of way along the north-eastern and north-western site boundaries contribute to the radiating network of historic routeways and the sense of freedom for walkers; and
- The highly interconnected woodland habitats are partially expressed by the mature hedgerow and hedgerow trees that define the north-eastern boundary.

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 or deterioration of the mature deciduous hedgerow and hedgerow trees along the north-eastern boundary of the site, affecting its contribution 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 the mature hedgerow and hedgerow trees along the north-eastern boundary of the site (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 (in accordance with the AONB's Objective W2).
Deterioration of the historic routeways and public rights of way along the north-eastern and north-western site boundaries, which provide a connection to other historic routeways.	Routeways	<i>A dense radiating network with a variety of origins...</i>	■ Retain, protect and enhance the public rights of way which run along the north-eastern and north-western site boundaries and the rural character of the historic routes (in accordance with the AONB's Objectives R1 and PQ3).
Influence of further lighting in the dark night skies resulting in night blight, including the potential introduction of streetlights along West Terrace if used for access.	Dark night skies	<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 guidance¹ and use dark sky-friendly lighting (in accordance with the AONB's Objectives DS1 and DS2).
Settlement form edge and setting			
Extension of development beyond the ridge crest is not in keeping with the existing pattern of settlement.	N/A	N/A	- Focus development in the south of the site, so as to better relate to the existing adjacent settlement edge and to avoid the perception of development extending onto lower-lying ground to the north-east (in accordance with the AONB's Objective S1). - Given the location of the site on the edge of the ridge crest, the height and massing of any development should be carefully considered in relation to the scale of existing development and underlying topography in the area (in accordance with the AONB's Objective S2).
Deterioration of the rural character of the site which contributes to the setting of Herstmonceux.	N/A	N/A	- Design 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'², 'Guidance on the selection and use of colour in development'³ and objectives of the High Weald AONB Management Plan⁴ (in accordance with the AONB's Objective S2).
Visual amenity			
Visibility of development seen by: residents of properties along James Avenue and West Terrace;	Aesthetic and perceptual qualities	<i>A recognisable and unifying mosaic of open field and wooded habitats.</i>	Retain, protect and enhance all existing vegetation, including the mature hedgerow and hedgerow trees along the north-eastern boundary of the site, taking opportunities for new planting to soften the settlement edge along James Avenue and West Terrace to the south (in accordance with the AONB's Objectives W1 and PQ2).

¹ 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/>

² <https://www.highweald.org/look-after/planning/design-guide.html>

³ <https://www.highweald.org/look-after/planning/colour-study.html>

⁴ <https://www.highweald.org/high-weald-aonb-management-plan.html>

■ walkers on the public footpaths along the north-eastern and north-western site boundaries; and ■ walkers on the public right of way running between Herstmonceux and Chilsham.			■ Screen new development with additional planting, particularly in views from the residential properties along James Avenue and West Terrace, using local native species where possible to maintain the rural character of the wider area (in accordance with the AONB's Objective PQ2). ■ 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). ■ Enhance public access and provide opportunities to experience the surrounding landscape via the existing public right of way network (in accordance with the AONB's Objective PQ3).
Overall impact on the core character components of natural beauty of the High Weald AONB			
Moderate impact	The baseline analysis identifies that the site expresses some of the core character components of natural beauty, with a moderate level of expression. This is due to the presence of mature hedgerow and hedgerow trees along the north-eastern site boundary; and historic routeways running along the north-eastern and north-western boundaries of the site. 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. <u>Variation to overall impact</u> There is no variation to the overall impact considered above.		

Summary and recommendations

The following map illustrates a summary of the constraints and opportunities of development on the site.

The site-specific recommendations for these sites are as follows:

- Retain, protect and enhance the mature hedgerow and hedgerow trees along the north-eastern boundary of the site, taking opportunities for new planting to soften the settlement edge along James Avenue and West Terrace to the south, and to screen new development in views from the adjacent residential properties.
- Retain, protect and enhance the public rights of way which run along the north-eastern and north-western site boundaries and the rural character of the historic routes.
- Focus development in the south of the site, so as to better relate to the existing adjacent settlement edge and to avoid the perception of development extending onto lower-lying ground to the north-east, and keeping development outside of the AONB.
- Given the location of the site on the edge of the ridge crest, the height and massing of any development should be carefully considered in relation to the scale of existing development and underlying topography in the area.
- Enhance public access and provide opportunities to experience the surrounding landscape via the existing public right of way network.

Figure 7: Summary map of constraints and opportunities



Higham Farm, Gardner Street (553/2090)

Site Details	
Potential development	Residential development of 49 dwellings, proposed on the site as shown below. Site not Allocated or considered an Option.
Site location	This site is located to the east of Herstmonceux and situated north of Gardner Street (A271), east of the properties along the settlement edge, south of Nunningham Wood and west of Lime Cross Nursery.

Figure 8: Site location and constraints

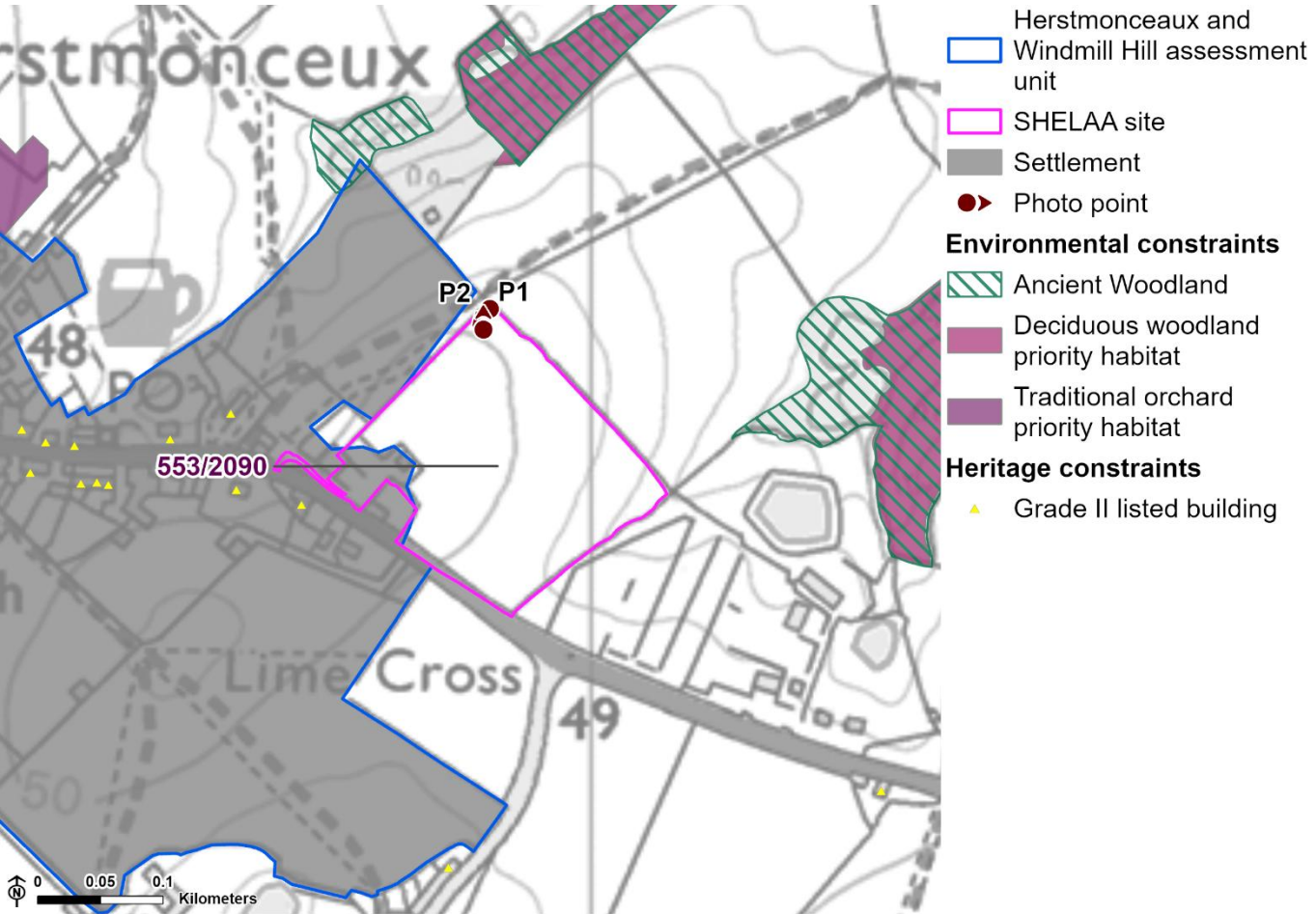
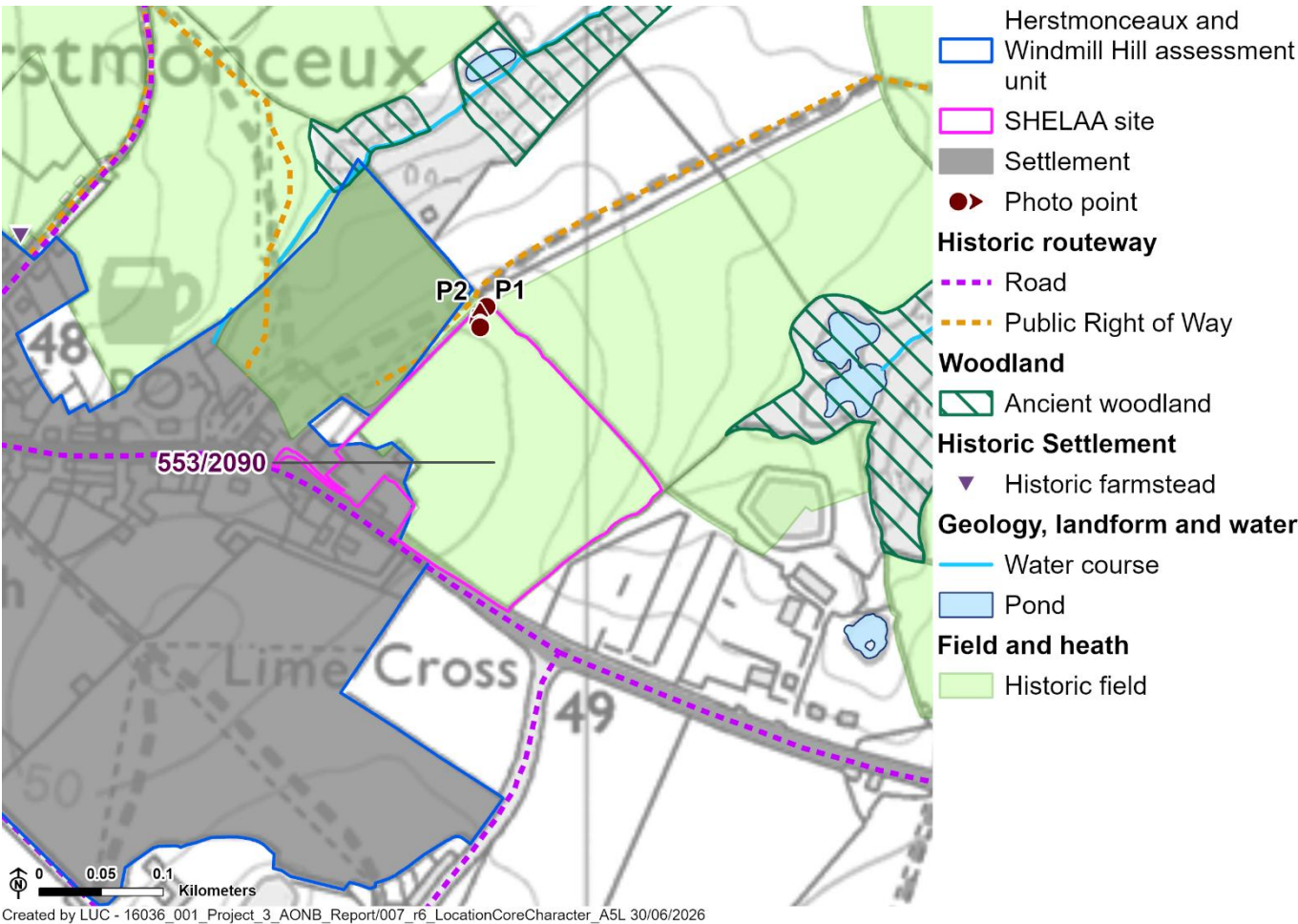


Figure 9: Site location and core character components of natural beauty of the High Weald AONB



Representative site photos



Photo 1: View from the northern corner of the site, looking up the elevated landform which largely obscures the residential properties along Gardner Street from view.



Photo 2: View from within the site looking north across adjacent woodland, with long-distance views into the wider High Weald AONB.

Baseline Analysis

Baseline landscape character	
Key features and qualities of the site in relation to the wider assessment unit	Landform ■ The site occupies elevated land and forms part of a distinctive ridge, gently sloping from approximately 50m AOD at the western boundary to around 40m AOD toward the east, which is typical of the 'undulating ridge and incised valley landscape' of the wider assessment unit. ■ The landform slopes toward the east where smaller streams descend within narrow valleys, contributing to the wider ridged and faulted landscape pattern typical of the High Weald. While the site itself does not contain a watercourse, it forms part of the upper slopes feeding into the gill system associated with Brick Farm. Natural character ■ The site comprises a single pastoral field, bounded by mature hedgerows to the north-west and north-east, with a belt of mature deciduous trees (shaw) along the south-eastern boundary, which is typical of the wider assessment unit. ■ While there is no ancient woodland within the site itself, the boundary vegetation interconnects with the wider local habitat network (including areas of ancient woodland), reflecting the characteristic shaws typical of the wider assessment unit. Landscape pattern and time depth ■ The site consists of a small-scale assarted field (as classified in the Sussex HLC) surrounded by woodland and shaws – a key feature of the wider assessment unit. Perceptual aspects ■ The site is influenced by its direct frontage onto Gardner Street and its proximity to the Herstmonceux settlement edge, which reduces levels of tranquillity (which are recorded as relatively low in CPRE's Tranquillity Mapping, Figure 3) and the experience of dark skies (light levels are recorded in the middle bands of CPRE's Night Blight Mapping, Figure 4).
Settlement form and edge character and extent of built development	The site lies on an east-facing slope at the edge of Herstmonceux and contributes to maintaining the physical and visual separation between the village and the nearby settlement of Windmill Hill, although the Lime Cross Nursery already lies between the two settlements. The south-western boundary adjoins a continuous line of two-storey residential properties along Gardner Street (A272), with the western corner of the site partly enclosed by properties set within gardens. While several of these are Grade II listed and retain elements of historic character, the settlement edge is relatively weak and permeable, with domestic fencing and garden vegetation. The southern boundary of the site abuts Gardner Street (A271), where traffic movement and activity introduce a degree of urbanising influence. The site's elevated position moderates the influence of the road, orientating views primarily to the north and east, where long distance views are available across the descending dip-slope towards the wider High Weald AONB.
Baseline visual character	
Potential visual receptors	There are clear views into the site from Gardner Street (A271) to the south, where the distinctive landform of the site is seen above low hedgerows along the road, allowing for open visibility across the field. Residential properties clustered around the western corner of site including two-storey dwellings, experience open or partially filtered views across the site toward the wider landscape. The site is partially screened in

	views from the west by linear belts of mature trees, although glimpsed longer views are available from higher ground near New Barn Farm. Users of the public rights of way near to the north-western boundary of the site experience open views towards the site, with additional filtered views from connecting routes between Herstmonceux and the surrounding countryside. Visibility from the wider PRow network is variable, with views from Bagham Lane to the north-west possible where landform permits, while views from Chilsham Lane to the north are more restricted by undulating topography and intervening hedgerows.
Extent of visibility within the High Weald AONB	Due to the site's elevated position on the dip-slope, the site has long views out towards the wider High Weald AONB landscape to the north and east.

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.	The site is located at the top of a ridge, contributing to the <u>pattern of faults and folds</u> . There is a system of <u>gill streams</u> present in proximity to the site, with landform sloping toward the east where small streams descend in narrow valleys.
Settlement – dispersed historic settlement including high densities of isolated farmsteads, hamlets and late-medieval villages founded on trade and non-agricultural rural industries.	There is no historic settlement (including historic farmsteads) within or immediately adjacent to the site. However, the site contributes to the <u>separation between settlements formed by fields associated with...historic field systems</u> .
Routeways – a dense network of historic routeways (now roads, tracks and paths).	A historic routeway (public right of way) runs near to the north-western boundary of the site. Gardner Street (A271) along the southern site boundary is recorded as a historic lane, although its expression is masked by its use as a A-road 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 trees, shaws and hedgerows along the boundaries of the site contribute to the <u>highly interconnected and structurally varied mosaic of many small woods...shaws...and outgrown hedges</u> of the AONB.
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 site comprises a small pastoral field used for <u>grazing livestock</u> . It was created through assarting, contributing towards the <u>dominant medieval fieldscape character</u> of the AONB, with <u>sinuous mixed woody boundaries and shaws, and thick hedges</u> .
Dark night skies – intrinsically dark at night with our own galaxy (the Milky Way) visible.	Whilst Gardner Street (A271) to the south is largely an <u>unlit road</u> , the settlement edge to the west limits the experience of <u>dark skies</u> .
Aesthetic and perceptual qualities – arising from the interaction of people with the landscape, including the notion of a quintessential English pastoral	The assarting of the field and the surrounding ancient woodlands contribute to the <u>sense of history and timelessness</u> . The combination of grazing and the surrounding wooded field boundaries contribute to the recognisable and unifying <u>mosaic of open field and wooded habitats</u> . The higher elevation of the site provides <u>unexpected</u>

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.	<u>panoramic and long views</u> across the descending gill landscape toward the east. However, the sense of rurality and tranquillity is influenced by the proximity to the village, surrounding existing residential development, Lime Cross Nursery and Gardner Street (A271). The public rights of way that run to the north-west of the site contribute to the sense of freedom arising from access to a <u>dense network of public rights of way...suitable for walking...</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 Herstmonceux and Windmill Hill assessment unit to have a **moderate-high** sensitivity to small-scale residential development (2-2.5 storey housing). The sensitivity analysis indicates that the distinctive landform; frequent ecologically valued woodlands; historic field patterns with strong hedgerows; rural character; role the assessment unit plays providing a rural backdrop to Herstmonceux and Windmill Hill; views to and location within the High Weald AONB (in the north of the assessment unit), and separation the landscape provides between Herstmonceux and Windmill Hill increases sensitivity to built development. However, the enclosed character along roads and where hedgerows and woodland reduce views, and undefined settlement edges of Herstmonceux reduces sensitivity.

The Site

Overall, it is considered that the site is of **moderate-high** sensitivity to small scale residential development (2-2.5 storey housing), in line with the wider assessment unit. The site comprises a single pastoral field and is an assart, forming part of an incised stream valley and an elevated ridge. Its elevated position allows some intervisibility with the wider High Weald AONB landscape, increasing sensitivity and contributing to the expression of the characteristic ridge and valley landform. It is contained by mature boundary vegetation including shaws and forms part of the physical and visual gap between the settlements of Herstmonceux and Windmill Hill, and so the site demonstrates a number of the characteristics that increase sensitivity across the assessment unit. It lies adjacent to the modern settlement edge to the west, while Gardner Street (A271) to the south and the presence of Lime Cross Nursery to the east influence tranquillity, slightly decreasing sensitivity.

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

- Its location on top of a ridge contributes towards the pattern of faults and folds;
- The site forms part of a wider assart field pattern, which contributes to the medieval character of the AONB and the separation between settlements formed by historic field systems;
- The mature trees, shaws and hedgerows contribute to the highly interconnected woodland habitats, linking areas of ancient woodland;
- The grazing of livestock contributes to the pastoral feel of the landscape, linking to the history of land-based economy;
- A sense of history and timelessness is provided by the assarted field and surrounding ancient woodland; and
- There are scenic long-distance views across the gill landscape to the east.

Overall, it is considered that there is a **strong 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			
Changes to the distinctive elevated landform in the west as a result of interventions/ earthworks upon the landform.	Natural systems	<i>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...</i>	Limit the extent of development extending down onto the valley side to minimise alterations to the landform and retain its contribution to the pattern of faults and folds (in accordance with the AONB's Objective G2).
Removal or deterioration of the mature deciduous trees, shaws and hedgerows, affecting their contribution to the interconnectivity of habitats.	Woodland	<i>Highly interconnected and structurally varied mosaic of many small woods....shaws...and outgrown hedges...</i> <i>Many irregularly shaped small woodlands interlinked with shaws...forming an intimate part of the farmed landscape.</i>	- Retain, protect and enhance the mature vegetation surrounding the site, especially hedgerows to the north-west and north-east, and the belt of mature deciduous trees (shaw) along the south-eastern boundary (in accordance with the AONB's Objectives W1 and PQ2). - Improve the connectivity of woodlands, shaws and hedgerows surrounding the site (including the nearby ancient woodland) through new tree planting and hedgerow corridors that are in character with the locality, using native species where possible / suitable (in accordance with the AONB's Objective W2).

Loss of the grazed pastures and the assart which contributes to the medieval character and time depth.	Fieldscape and heath	■ <i>Fields, mostly permanent pasture, used for grazing livestock...</i> ■ <i>Medieval fieldscape character dominant, with a high proportion of field systems created by assarting (woodland clearance) with sinuous mixed woody boundaries and shaws, and thick hedges common.</i>	■ Loss of pasture and assart 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).
Modifications to the A271 (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>	■ 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).
Influence of further lighting in the dark night skies resulting in night blight, including the potential introduction of streetlights along Gardner Street.	Dark night skies	<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 ⁵ and use dark sky-friendly lighting (in accordance with the AONB's Objectives DS1 and DS2).
Settlement form edge and setting			
Extension of development beyond the ridge crest is not in keeping with the existing pattern of settlement.	N/A	N/A	■ Focus development in the west of the site, to relate better to the existing adjacent settlement pattern and to avoid the perception of development extending onto lower-lying ground to the east (in accordance with the AONB's Objective S1). ■ Given the location of the site on the edge of the ridge crest, the height and massing of any development should be carefully considered in relation to the

⁵ 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/>

			scale of existing development and underlying topography in the area (in accordance with the AONB's Objective S2).
Deterioration of the rural character of the site which contribute to the setting of Herstmonceux and reducing the separation between Herstmonceux and Windmill Hill.	Settlement	<i>Separation between settlements formed by fields associated with...historic field systems.</i>	■ Locate development to relate closely to the existing settlement edge to minimise encroachment into the wider countryside (in accordance with the AONB's Objective S1). ■ Design 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'⁶, 'Guidance on the selection and use of colour in development'⁷ and objectives of the High Weald AONB Management Plan⁸ (in accordance with the AONB's Objective S2).
Visual amenity			
Visibility of development seen by: ■ residents of the properties to the west/ south-west, along Gardner Street; ■ walkers on the public footpaths near to the north-western boundary of the site; ■ motorists/ cyclists along Gardner Street (A271); and ■ motorists, cyclists and walkers along Bagham Lane.	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> ■ <i>A sense of history and timelessness arising from an ancient countryside with a human-scale agricultural tapestry; veteran and ancient trees...historic buildings.</i>	■ Screen new development with additional native planting to soften the settlement edge, particularly in views from Gardner Street (A271) and the residential properties to the west, using local species to maintain the rural character (in accordance with the AONB's Objective PQ2). ■ Position development within the site to retain the long views to the north and east to the wider High Weald AONB (in accordance with the AONB's Objective PQ2). ■ 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).

⁶ <https://www.highweald.org/look-after/planning/design-guide.html>

⁷ <https://www.highweald.org/look-after/planning/colour-study.html>

⁸ <https://www.highweald.org/high-weald-aonb-management-plan.html>

		■ <i>Unexpected panoramic and long views, often uninterrupted, extending out along the valleys...</i>	■ Enhance public access and provide opportunities to experience the surrounding landscape via the existing PRow network (in accordance with the AONB's Objective PQ3).
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 immediate surrounds) expresses several of the core character components of natural beauty, with a strong level of expression. This is due the elevated landform (affording scenic long-distance views); the presence of mature boundary vegetation including trees and shaws; grazed pastures; and forming part of an assart field pattern (contributing to the medieval character) with the historic field system providing separation between settlements. 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> There is no variation to the overall impact considered above.		

Summary and recommendations

The following map illustrates a summary of the constraints and opportunities of development on the site.

The site-specific recommendations for these sites are as follows:

- Limit the extent of development extending down onto the valley side to minimise alterations to the landform.
- Retain, protect and enhance the hedgerows to the north-west and north-east, and the belt of mature deciduous trees (shaw) along the south-eastern boundary.
- Focus development in the west of the site, to relate better to the existing adjacent settlement pattern and to avoid the perception of development extending onto lower-lying ground to the east.
- Given the location of the site on the edge of the ridge crest, the height and massing of any development should be carefully considered in relation to the scale of existing development and underlying topography in the area.
- Screen new development with additional native planting to soften the settlement edge, particularly in views from Gardner Street (A271) and the residential properties to the west, using local species to maintain the rural character.
- Position development within the site to retain the long views to the north and east to the wider High Weald AONB.
- Enhance public access and provide opportunities to experience the surrounding landscape via the existing PRoW network.

Figure 10: Summary map of constraints and opportunities

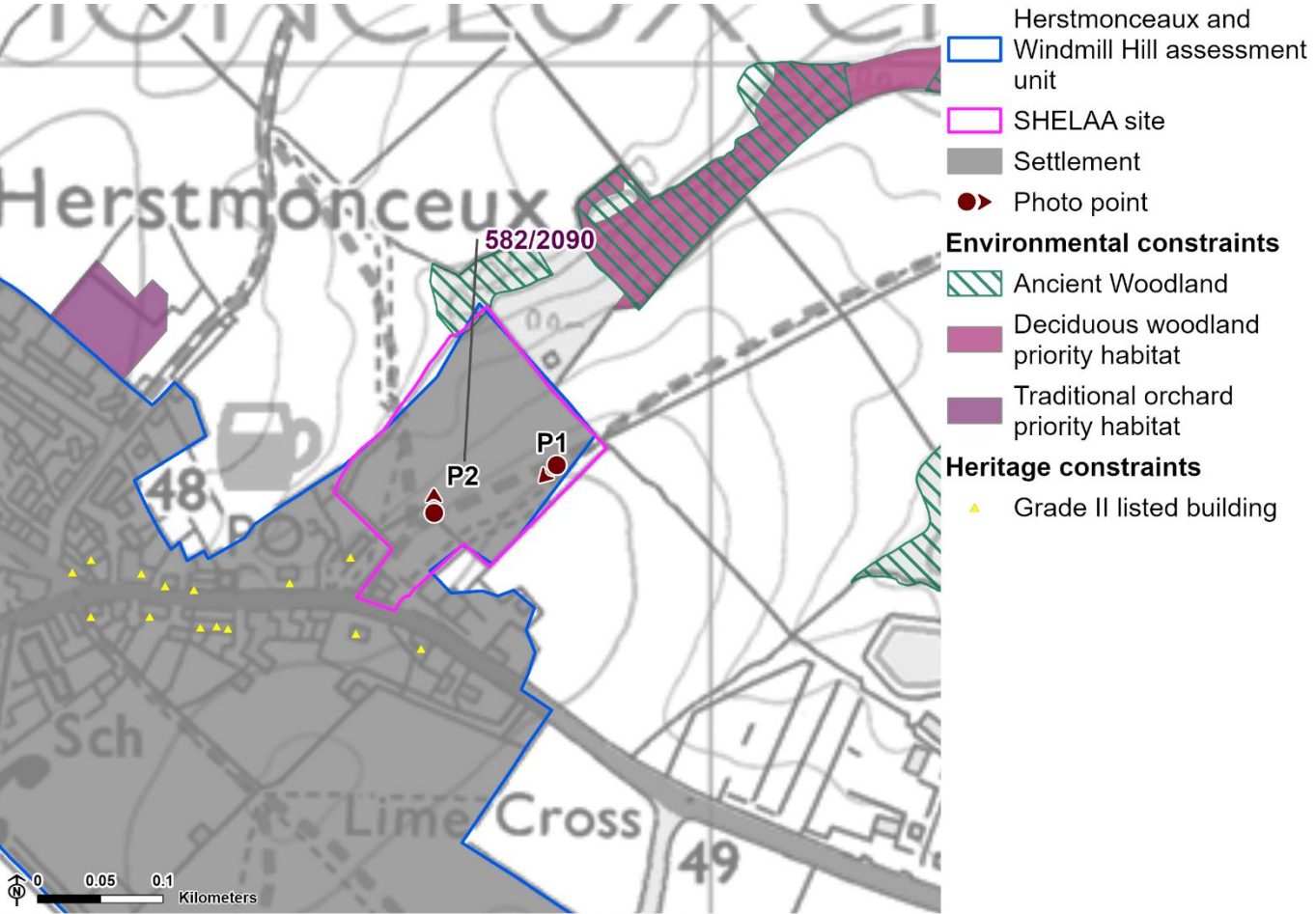


Created by LUC - 16036_001_Project_3_AONB_Report/008_r2_AerialOppsCons_A5L 15/05/2026

Land at Gardner Street (582/2090)

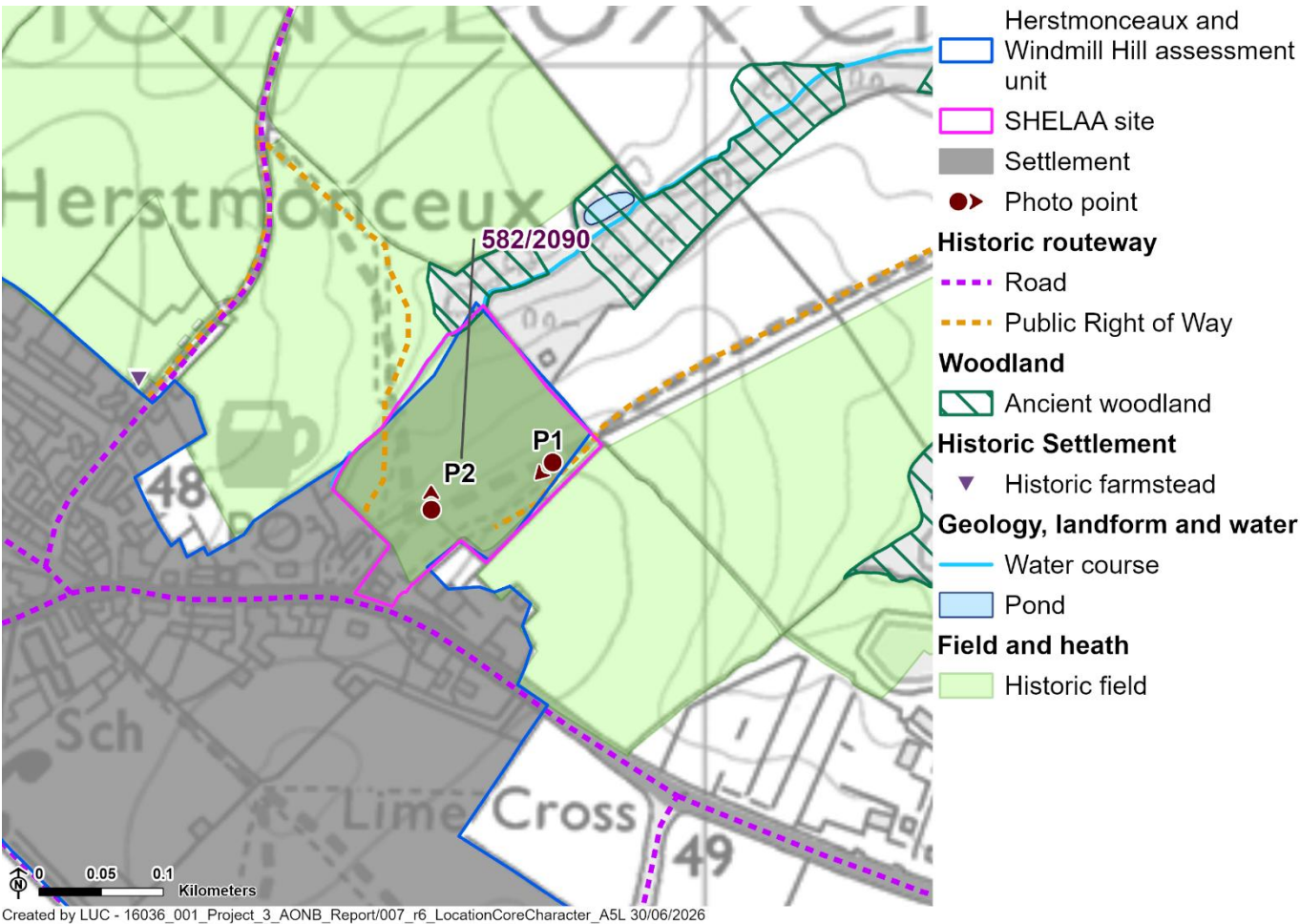
Site Details	
Potential development	Residential development of 30 dwellings, proposed on the site as shown below. Site not Allocated or considered an Option.
Site location	This site is located to the east of Herstmonceux and situated north of Gardner Street (A271), east of the properties along the settlement edge, and south of Nunningham Wood.

Figure 11: Site location and constraints



Created by LUC - 16036_001_Project_3_AONB_Report/006_r6_LocationConstraints_A5L 30/06/2026

Figure 12: Site location and core character components of natural beauty of the High Weald AONB



Representative site photos



Photo 1: View towards the south-west corner of the site and the eastern boundary, with the residential properties along Gardner Street visible.



Photo 2: View from within the site looking north, with long-distance views across the wider High Weald AONB.

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 an incised stream valley of the High Weald: Cuckmere / Pevensey Catchment LCA and forms a small part of the 'complex undulating ridged landform' of the wider assessment unit. ■ It comprises a relatively steep slope rising between 30m AOD in the north to 50m AOD in the south-east, where it forms part of a ridge that extends south-west to Lime Cross. ■ A stream (Waller's Haven) runs along the north-western boundary of the site. Natural character ■ Apart from a small area of paddocks in the south, the site mostly comprises a pastoral field. It is bounded to the north by the south-western edge of the Nunningham Wood (an area of ancient woodland) which is representative of the numerous woodlands found across the assessment unit. ■ A shaw along the Waller's Haven stream corridor defines the north-western boundary and a hedgerow runs along the south-eastern boundary, which are typical of the wider assessment unit. ■ An infield tree is located in the north-western part of the site, a feature not identified as being typical of the wider assessment unit. Landscape pattern and time depth ■ The Sussex HLC suggests that the site forms a part of a modern field pattern having undergone field amalgamation, which is identified as being typical of the wider assessment unit in the east. However, historic mapping indicates that elements of the existing field boundaries correspond with earlier field divisions, suggesting some partial retainment of the historic enclosure. ■ Subdivision of the field in the south by fencing for horse paddocks has influenced the internal pattern of the site, which is atypical of the wider assessment unit. ■ A Grade II listed building (Elm Tree House) lies adjacent to the south-western boundary of the site, which is typical of the wider assessment unit. The ancient semi-natural woodland abutting the northern edge of the site, also contributes to time depth. Perceptual aspects ■ The site is influenced by its proximity to Gardner Street and the Herstmonceux settlement edge, which reduces levels of tranquillity (which are recorded as relatively low in CPRE's Tranquillity Mapping, Figure 3) and the experience of dark skies (light levels are recorded in the middle bands of CPRE's Night Blight Mapping, Figure 4).
Settlement form and edge character and extent of built development	The site lies on a north-facing slope at the eastern edge of Herstmonceux, and contributes to maintaining the physical and visual separation between the village and the nearby settlement of Windmill Hill. The settlement edge to the south-west of the site is defined by 20th century residential properties along Gardner Street (A272), with the southern edge of the site partly enclosed by properties set within gardens. While several of these are Grade II listed and retain elements of historic character, the settlement edge is relatively weak and permeable, with domestic fencing and garden vegetation. Small areas of paddocks adjoin properties and cover a small part of the

	site in the south. Due to the elevated position of the site's eastern part, long distance views are provided into the surrounding High Weald landscape, strengthening visual connections with the broader AONB.
Baseline visual character	
Potential visual receptors	There are views into the site from residential properties along the southern boundary, which look across the valley landform towards Nunningham Wood and the opposing valley slopes. However, the settlement edge to the south screens the site from Gardner Street. Users of the public rights of way crossing the site also experience clear views. The site is also visible from sections of the local road network to the north-west, particularly from Bagham Lane where views look over low hedgerows towards the steep distinctive slope of the site. There are also glimpsed longer views available from higher ground near New Barn Farm to the north-west. Visibility from the wider PRoW network is influenced by the undulating landform and mature hedgerows, which limit longer-distance views in some directions while permitting occasional glimpsed views toward the surrounding High Weald landscape.
Extent of visibility within the High Weald AONB	Due to the site's elevated position on the dip-slope, there are long views towards the wider High Weald AONB landscape to the north and west. However, visibility is moderated by intervening woodland and hedgerows.

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.	The site contributes strongly to the <u>pattern of faults and folds</u> through its steep valley landform. The north-western boundary of the site contributes to the <u>numerous small streams</u> found across the AONB. There are no distinctive geological features.
Settlement – dispersed historic settlement including high densities of isolated farmsteads, hamlets and late-medieval villages founded on trade and non-agricultural rural industries.	The Elm Tree House Grade II listed building adjacent to the south-western boundary of the site contributes towards the <u>high concentration of historic buildings</u> .
Routeways – a dense network of historic routeways (now roads, tracks and paths).	Two historic routeways (public rights of way) cross the site and contribute towards the <u>dense radiating network</u> of historic routeways. Gardner Street (A271) which runs parallel to the southern site boundary is recorded as a historic lane, although its expression is masked by its use as a A-road with associated modern road markings.
Woodland – an abundance of ancient woodland mostly in small holdings, highly interconnected with hedges and shaws.	Nuningham Wood to the north of the site contributes towards the <u>high proportion of ancient woodland</u> and the <u>high density of gill woodlands</u> , and along with shaws, trees and hedgerows that contain the site, also contributes towards the <u>highly interconnected and structurally varied mosaic of many small woods...and numerous linear gill woodlands, shaws...and outgrown hedges...</u> The infield tree in the north-west <u>provide additional connectivity to the wider landscape</u> .
Landscapes 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 site comprises a small pastoral field used for <u>grazing livestock</u> , with mixed woody boundaries including shaws and hedgerows. The field is aligned to the linear watercourse (running along its north-western boundary) and is an example of the <u>strong influence exerted by topography</u> .

Dark night skies – intrinsically dark at night with our own galaxy (the Milky Way) visible.	Whilst Gardner Street (A271) to the south is largely an <u>unlit road</u> , the settlement edge to the south-west limit the experience of <u>dark skies</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 to the north and listed buildings to the south contribute to the <u>sense of history and timelessness</u>. The combination of grazing and the surrounding woodland provides a <u>pastoral feel</u> and contributes to the <u>recognisable and unifying mosaic of open field and wooded habitats</u>. The higher elevation of the site provides <u>unexpected panoramic and long views</u> across the descending gill landscape toward the north and west. However, the sense of rurality and tranquillity is influenced by the proximity to the village, surrounding existing residential development and Gardner Street (A271). The public rights of way that cross the site contribute to the <u>sense of freedom arising from access to a dense network of public rights of way...suitable for walking...</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 Herstmonceux and Windmill Hill assessment unit to have a **moderate-high** sensitivity to small-scale residential development (2-2.5 storey housing). The sensitivity analysis indicates that the distinctive landform; frequent ecologically valued woodlands; historic field patterns with strong hedgerows; rural character; role the assessment unit plays providing a rural backdrop to Herstmonceux and Windmill Hill; views to and location within the High Weald AONB (in the north of the assessment unit), and separation the landscape provides between Herstmonceux and Windmill Hill increases sensitivity to built development. However, the enclosed character along roads and where hedgerows and woodland reduce views, and undefined settlement edges of Herstmonceux reduces sensitivity.

The Site

Overall, it is considered that the site is of **moderate-high** sensitivity to small scale residential development (2-2.5 storey housing), in line with the wider assessment unit. The site comprises a mostly pastoral field (contained by ancient woodland, shaws and hedgerows) with steeply sloping landform that forms part of an incised stream valley. Its elevated position in the south-east allows some intervisibility with the wider High Weald AONB landscape, increasing sensitivity and contributing to the expression of the characteristic ridge and valley landform. It forms part of the physical and visual gap between the settlements of Herstmonceux and Windmill Hill and is crossed by public rights of way, and so the site demonstrates a number of the characteristics that increase sensitivity across the assessment unit. The historic field pattern has been eroded in the south by the amalgamation/subdivision of the fields by post and wire fencing for horse paddocks which slightly decreases sensitivity.

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:

- Its steeply sloping landform contributes towards the pattern of faults and folds;
- The north-western boundary contributes to the density of streams within the AONB;

- The ancient woodland (also a gill woodland) to the north and shaw to the north-west enclose the site and contribute to the highly interconnected woodlands in the locality;
- The hedgerows along other boundaries and the infield tree in the north-west contribute to the highly interconnected woodland habitats;
- A sense of history and timelessness is provided by the surrounding ancient woodland and historic buildings along the settlement edge;
- The public rights of way through the site contribute to the radiating network of historic routeways and the sense of freedom for walkers;
- The grazing of livestock contributes to the pastoral feel of the landscape, linking to the history of land-based economy; and
- There are scenic long-distance views across the gill landscape to the north and west.

Overall, it is considered that there is a **strong 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			
Changes to the steeply sloping valley side as a result of interventions/ earthworks upon the landform.	Natural systems	<i>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...</i>	Limit the extent of development 'spilling' beyond the ridge crest onto the steep valley side and the lower-lying incised stream valley to minimise alterations to the landform and retain its contribution to the pattern of faults and folds and as an aligned field to the watercourse (in accordance with the AONB's Objective G2).
	Fieldscape and heath	<i>Strong influence exerted by topography with many field systems aligned to or 'hanging' from (at right angles to) linear features such as watercourses...</i>	
Deterioration of and/or encroachment on the small stream that runs along the north-western boundary of the site.	Natural systems	<i>Numerous small streams...</i>	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 or deterioration of mature deciduous woodland, trees, shaws and hedgerows, affecting their contribution to the interconnectivity of habitats.	Woodland	■ <i>Highly interconnected and structurally varied mosaic of many small woodlands....shaws...and outgrown hedges...</i> ■ <i>Many irregularly shaped small woodlands interlinked with shaws...forming an intimate part of the farmed landscape.</i>	■ Retain, protect and enhance all boundary vegetation, especially the shaw along the north-western boundary and hedgerow along the south-eastern boundary (in accordance with the AONB's Objectives W1 and PQ2). ■ Improve the connectivity of woodlands, shaws 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 (in accordance with the AONB's Objective W2).
Deterioration of and/or encroachment on the ancient woodland at Nunningham Wood which abuts the north-western 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 grazed pastures and infield tree.	Woodland	<i>Large numbers of isolated trees (often remnants from lost woodlands or hedges), such as in-field trees that provide additional connectivity to the wider landscape, as well as shelter and food source to a wide range of species.</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 along 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). ■ Retain the infield tree in the north-western part of the site and improve connectivity with other habitats through new tree planting (in accordance with the AONB's Objective W2).
	Fieldscape and heath	<i>Fields, mostly permanent pasture, used for grazing livestock...</i>	

	Land-based economy and rural living	<i>Predominantly pastoral mixed farming with an absence of industrial scale farming.</i>	
Loss of the historic routeways and public rights of way that cross 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 rights of way which cross the site and the rural character of the historic routes (in accordance with the AONB's Objectives R1 and PQ3).
Modifications to the A271 (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>	■ 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).
Influence of further lighting in the dark night skies resulting in night blight, including the potential introduction of streetlights along Gardner Street.	Dark night skies	<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			
Extension of development beyond the ridge crest is not in keeping with the existing pattern of settlement.	N/A	N/A	■ Focus development in the south and south-west of the site, to relate better to the existing adjacent settlement pattern, and to avoid the perception of development extending onto lower-lying ground to the north and west (in accordance with the AONB's Objective S1). ■ Given the location of the site on the edge of the ridge crest, the height and massing of any development should be carefully considered in relation to the scale of existing development and underlying topography in the area (in accordance with the AONB's Objective S2).

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/>

Deterioration of the rural character of the site which contribute to the setting of Herstmonceux and reducing the separation between Herstmonceux and Windmill Hill.	Settlement	<i>Separation between settlements formed by fields associated with...historic field systems.</i>	■ Locate development to relate closely to the existing settlement edge to minimise encroachment into the wider countryside (in accordance with the AONB's Objective S1). ■ Design 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 of the properties to the south-west, along Gardner Street; ■ walkers on the public rights of way which cross the site; and ■ motorists, cyclists and walkers along Bagham Lane.	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> ■ <i>A sense of history and timelessness arising from an ancient countryside with a human-scale agricultural tapestry; veteran and ancient trees...historic buildings.</i> ■ <i>Unexpected panoramic and long views, often uninterrupted, extending out along the valleys...</i>	■ Screen new development with additional native planting to soften the settlement edge, particularly in views from the residential properties to the south-west, using local species to maintain the rural character (in accordance with the AONB's Objective PQ2). ■ Position development within the site to retain the long views to the north and west to the wider High Weald AONB (in accordance with the AONB's Objective PQ2). ■ 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). ■ Enhance public access and provide opportunities to experience the surrounding landscape via the existing PRow network (in accordance with the AONB's Objective PQ3).

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>

		■ <i>Sense of freedom arising from access to a dense network of public rights of way...suitable for walking...</i>	
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 immediate surrounds) expresses several of the core character components of natural beauty, with a strong level of expression. This is due to the steeply sloping landform (affording scenic long-distance views); the small stream along the north-western boundary; the presence of ancient/ gill woodland along the northern boundary of the site and mature shaws/hedgerows along other boundaries; the grazed pastures; and the historic routeways that cross the site. 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> There is no variation to the overall impact considered above.		

Summary and recommendations

The following map illustrates a summary of the constraints and opportunities of development on the site.

The site-specific recommendations for these sites are as follows:

- Limit the extent of development 'spilling' beyond the ridge crest onto the steep valley side and the lower-lying incised stream valley to minimise alterations to the landform.
- Set development back from the small watercourse that runs along the north-western boundary of the site, and enhance the stream by increasing biodiversity and improving the water quality.
- Retain, protect and enhance the shaw along the north-western boundary and the mature hedgerow along the south-eastern boundary.
- Set development back from the edge of the ancient woodland to the required minimum buffer zone.
- Retain the infield tree in the north-western part of the site and improve connectivity with other habitats through new tree planting.
- Retain, protect and enhance existing recreational access via the public rights of way which cross the site and the rural character of the historic routes.
- Focus development in the south and south-west of the site, to relate better to the existing adjacent settlement pattern, and to avoid the perception of development tending onto lower-lying ground to the north and west.
- Given the location of the site on the edge of the ridge crest, the height and massing of any development should be carefully considered in relation to the scale of existing development and underlying topography in the area.
- Screen new development with additional native planting to soften the settlement edge, particularly in views from the residential properties to the south-west, using local species to maintain the rural character.
- Position development within the site to retain the long views to the north and west to the wider High Weald AONB.
- Enhance public access and provide opportunities to experience the surrounding landscape via the existing PRoW network.

Figure 13: Summary map of constraints and opportunities



Cumulative effects of development sites proposed in the Herstmonceux and Windmill Hill assessment unit

Three sites have been assessed within the Herstmonceux and Windmill Hill 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 to north of James Avenue (081/2090)	Moderate impact	No variation.
Higham Farm, Gardner Street (553/2090)	High impact	No variation.
Land at Gardner Street (582/2090)	High impact	No variation.

If all three sites were brought forward for development to the extent as assessed, it would result in a potential of up to 115 dwellings being built. Sites **553/2090** and **582/2090** are located to the east of Herstmonceux and are adjacent to one another (totalling 79 potential dwellings combined), whereas site **081/2090** (36 potential dwellings) is located along the north-western edge of Herstmonceux, approximately 400m from site **582/2090**. The development of all three sites would likely lead to the perception of the settlement edge extending into the countryside, affecting the rural setting of the settlement. Given that sites **553/2090** and **582/2090** are adjacent to one another, there would be combined visibility, particularly from the settlement edge and the surrounding PRoW network including some relatively extensive visibility from the opposing valley sides to the north, north-east and west. Combined visibility with site **081/2090** is likely to be more limited given its distance from the other two sites, although there would likely be some from the PRoW that runs between Herstmonceux and Chilsham, and development of all sites may affect sequential key views experienced by people travelling along Bagham Lane (although views are likely to be fleeting and incidental).

Overall, it is considered that the cumulative impact of developing the three potential sites on the core character components of natural beauty of the High Weald AONB could potentially be greater than the sum of their individual impacts. This is because Herstmonceux has a distinctive settlement pattern along a linear ridge top, particularly in the east of the settlement. Sites **553/2090** and **582/2090** would undermine the incised and ridged landform pattern considerably (and therefore the expression of the faults and folds pattern), if development was to extend beyond the ridge crest or to spill down the valleys which should be avoided to minimise the potential for cumulative effects.