

Wealden District Council

Landscape and Visual Appraisal – Appendix A.14

Potential Development Sites in the High Weald AONB: LCA 6E - Horam

Final report

Prepared by LUC

August 2026



Wealden District Council

Landscape and Visual Appraisal – Appendix A.14

Potential Development Sites in the High Weald

AONB: LCA 6E - Horam

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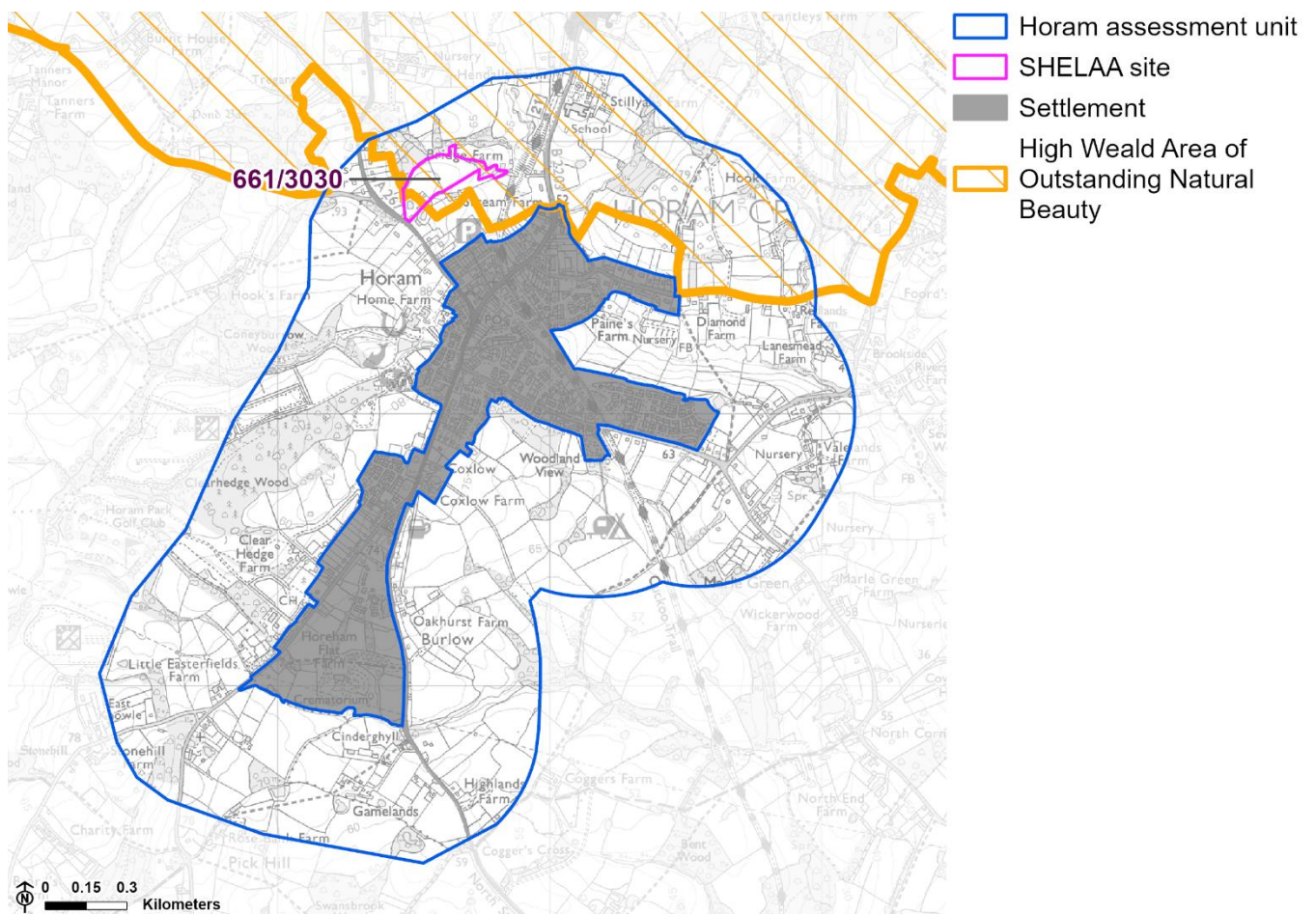
Appendix A.14

Horam Assessment Unit

There is one potential development site considered within the Horam assessment unit:

- Land at Linda House, Little London Road (661/3030)

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



Settlement location, evolution and pattern

Settlement location and context	Horam is the largest village within LCA 6E, and is located in the central eastern part of Wealden district. The boundary of the High Weald AONB is located directly north of the settlement.
Settlement evolution	Horam developed as a railway village with the arrival of the London, Brighton and South Coast railway line in 1880, which subsequently closed to passengers in 1965. The former line is now used as the Cuckoo Trail recreational path which forms a wooded linear feature passing through the village. The historic form of the settlement comprises relatively dispersed properties located along Heathfield Road. Further expansion and infill in the second half of the 20 th century has resulted in an expanded settlement, centred around the A267 and B2203 mostly to the east between Horebeech Lane and Vines Cross Road, with ribbon development along roads extending from the village.
Settlement pattern and edge character	Horam consists of one and two storey detached and semi-detached houses, with some three storey terraced houses in the centre of the village. The settlement edges are relatively well integrated into the surrounding landscape by hedgerows and trees, although ribbon development extends along the roads, including Little London Road, which results in an undefined settlement edge.

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 Horam 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

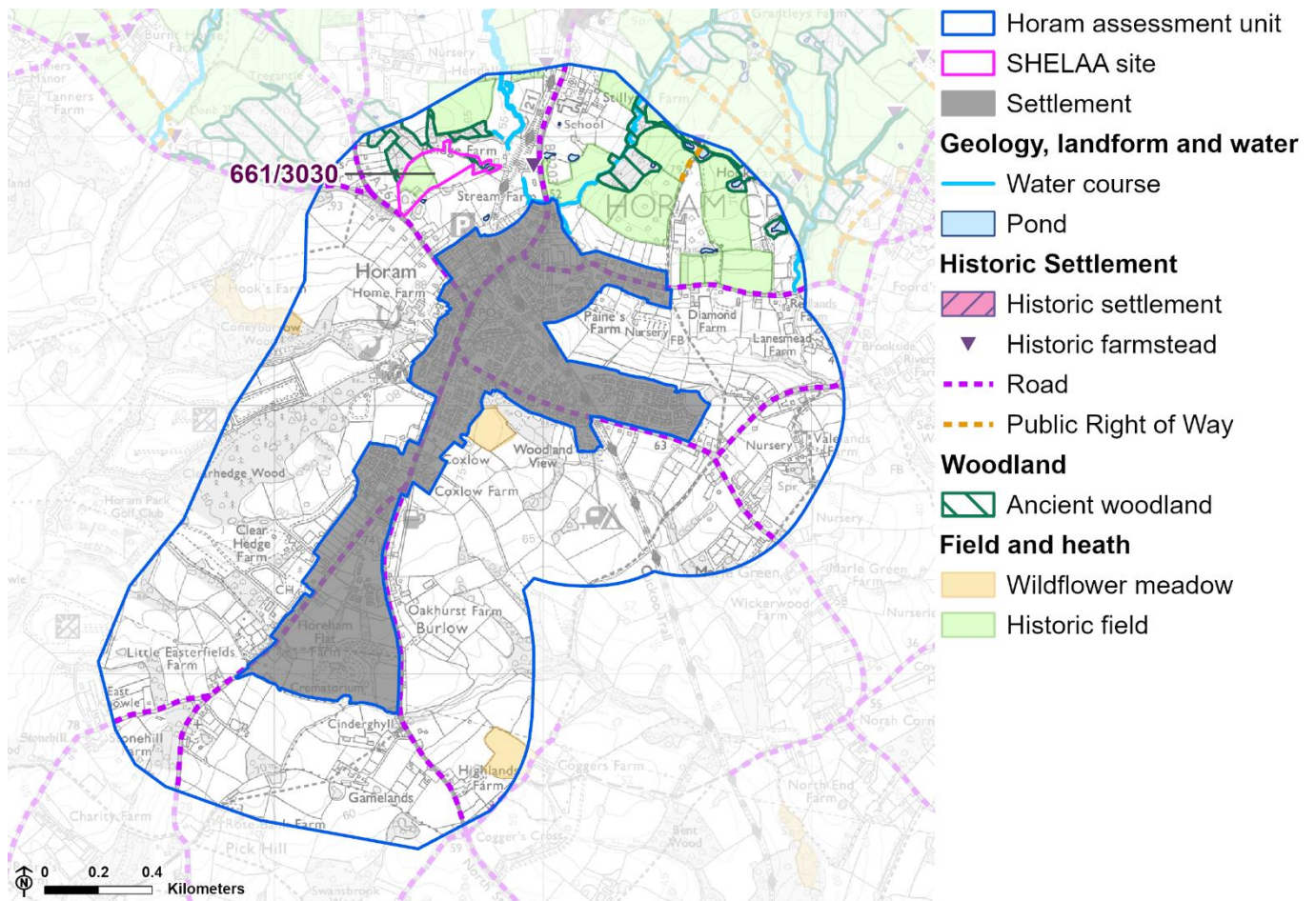


Figure 3: Tranquillity

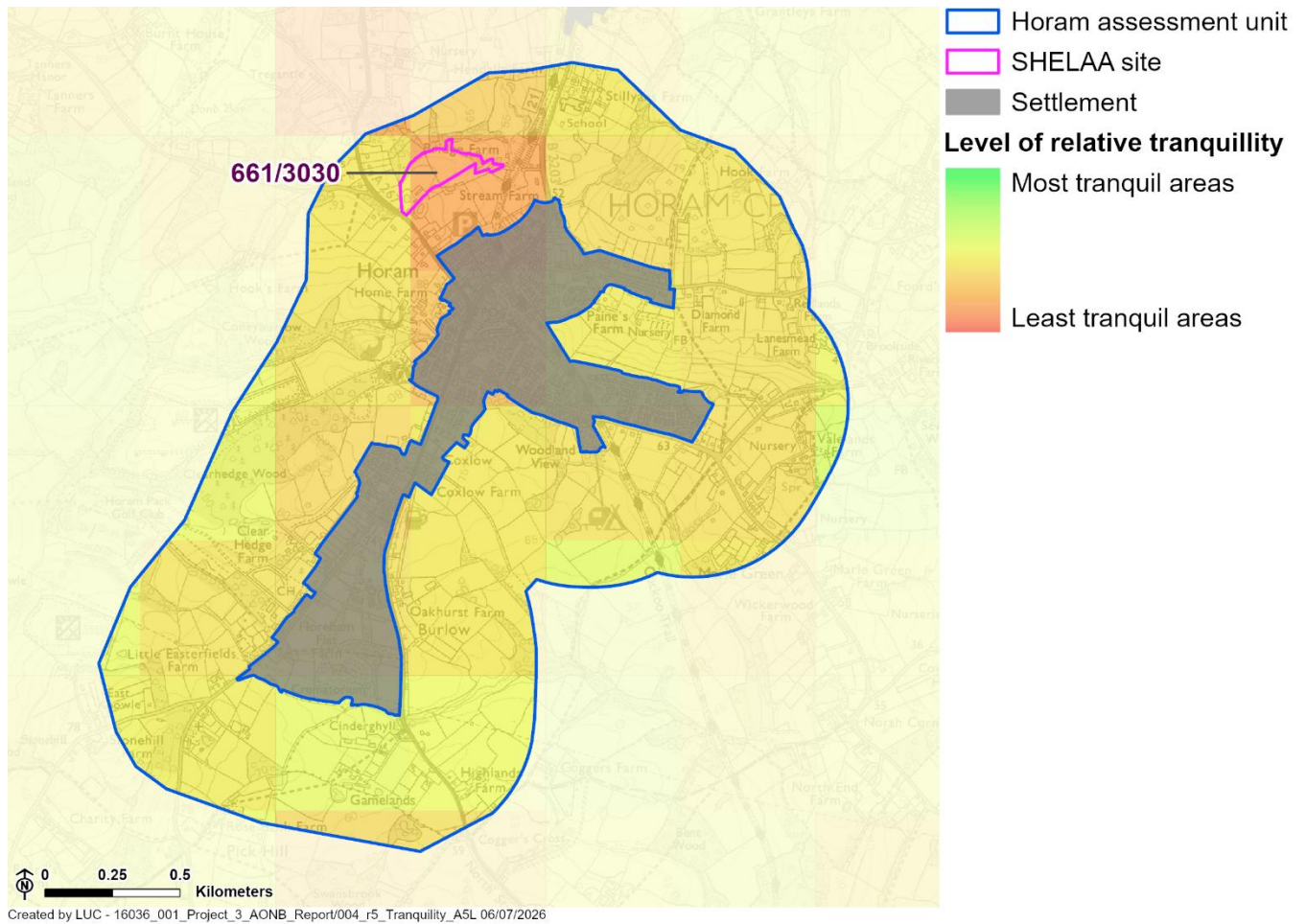
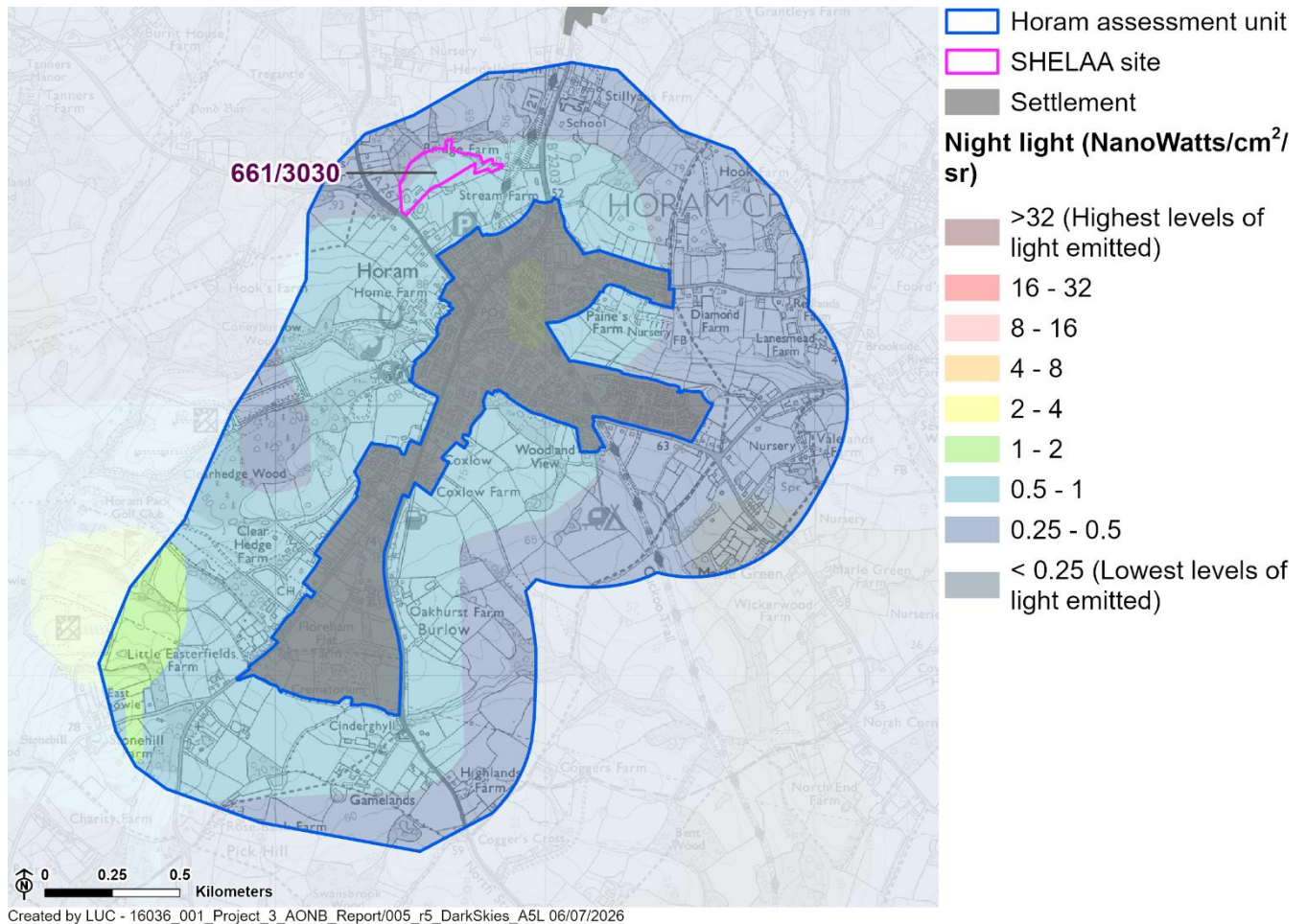


Figure 4: Dark skies



Landscape sensitivity context for the Horam assessment unit

The landscape sensitivity of the Bells Yew Green assessment unit, described in the Wealden Landscape Sensitivity Assessment to Residential and Employment Development (2023)			
Landscape sensitivity The rating that applies to the relevant 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
	M	MH	H
Key sensitivities The key landscape sensitivities to development identified for the assessment unit	- The complex ridge and valley landform, particularly in the north. - Interconnecting mature deciduous woodlands (many of which are ancient in origin). - The strong network of thick hedgerows with hedgerow trees. - Intact historic field patterns, particularly assarts most strongly expressed in the south-east of the area, which provide a strong rural setting to the settlement. - The rural character of the landscape with areas of remoteness, tranquillity and dark skies, particularly in the north and east, away from busy roads, the settlement edge and electricity infrastructure. - Occasional intervisibility with the High Weald AONB.		
Guidance	- Locate development on low lying flat fields, or lower slopes in close proximity to the western settlement edge, well enclosed by landform and vegetation where development would be less visible and have less influence on landscape character. - Avoid development in the incised stream valleys and heavily wooded valley slopes to the north of the assessment unit. - Retain broadleaved woodland, including linear riparian woodland along watercourses. Avoid loss of, harm, or deterioration to the interconnecting 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. - Avoid, where possible, development on sites in areas of habitat interest, notably deciduous woodlands, grassland habitats and riparian habitats along the Waldron Gill and other tributaries of the of the River Cuckmere. - Retain or replace hedgerow or roadside trees along the road network, protecting mature specimen trees from the impacts of development. Any new planting should be in character with the locality, using native species where possible. 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 hedgerows, mitigation / compensation in the form of suitable hedgerow replacement should be sought, using native species where possible. - Preserve historic field patterns, locating development away from intricate small-scale historic field patterns, particularly medieval assarts which are concentrated in the south-east of this assessment unit. - Ensure development does not adversely affect the historic qualities or appreciation of historic features, such as the listed farmhouse buildings on the edge of the settlement.		

- | | |
|--|---|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Any development should be carefully integrated into the landscape, utilising existing woodland, or using species that are in character with the wider landscape.■ Consider views from public rights of way, such as the Cuckoo Trail, when siting and designing development in the landscape.■ Ensure opportunities to access and enjoy the landscape are preserved and enhanced.■ Minimise the influence of development on the strong rural character of the landscape, areas of relative tranquillity and the experience of dark night skies and the defining components of character relating to the High Weald AONB, applying suitable mitigation. |
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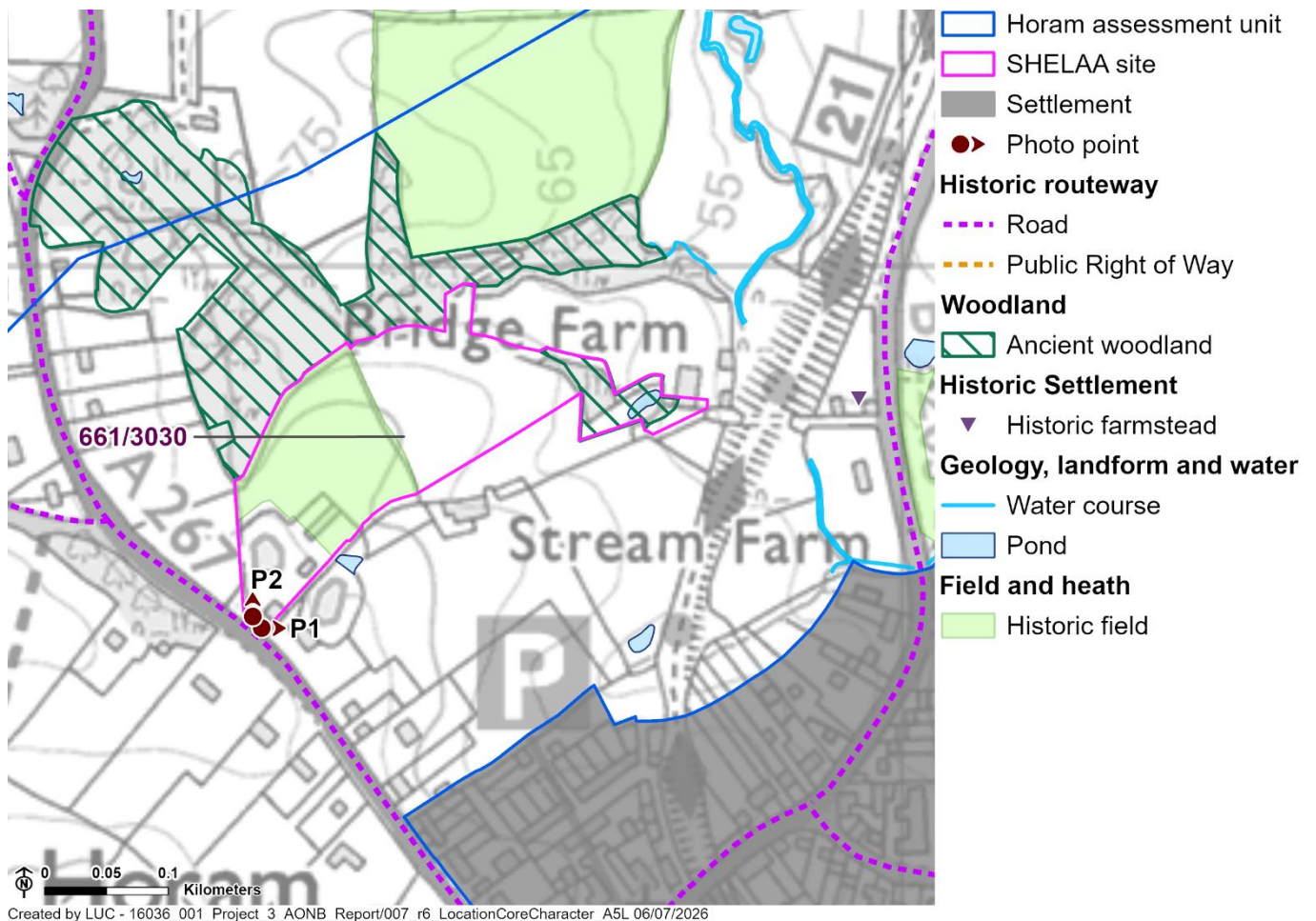
Land at Linda House, Little London Road (661/3030)

Site Details	
Potential development	Residential development of 25 dwellings, proposed on the site as shown below. Site not Allocated or considered an Option in the draft Focused Local Plan 2026.
Site location	This site lies to the north-west of Horam, to the east of Little London Road, bound by Bridge Farm Shaw to the north and Bridge Farm to the east.

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: The existing property on the site is visible from Little London Road, while the wider site is hidden behind the house.



Photo 2: There are glimpsed views to the wider High Weald AONB across the current garden of Linda's House.

Baseline Analysis

Baseline landscape character	
Key features and qualities of the sites in relation to the wider assessment unit	Landform ■ The site is part of the complex landform of ridges and valleys, typical of the wider assessment unit. ■ It rises from the Waldron Gill to the east, from 55m AOD to 80m AOD in the west. Natural character ■ Bridge Farm Shaw ancient woodland extends into the east of the site, and also bounds the site to the north (where it is also designated as priority habitat deciduous woodland), typical of the wider assessment unit. ■ A small pond lies within Bridge Farm Shaw in the east of the site, typical of the wider assessment unit within the AONB. ■ A mature shaw field boundary in the centre of the site is a valued semi-natural habitat, typical of the wider assessment unit. Landscape pattern and time depth ■ The site is derived from an aggregate assart field pattern, as set out in the Sussex HLC, and typical of the wider assessment unit. ■ Ancient woodland at Bridge Farm Shaw also provides time-depth within the landscape. Perceptual aspects ■ The site is rural, with the existing property on the site and Little London Road the only human influences. It experiences relatively high tranquillity (recorded in the higher bands of CPRE's Tranquillity Mapping, Figure 3) and dark night skies (light levels are recorded in the lower/ darker bands of CPRE's Night Blight Mapping, Figure 4), despite proximity to the busy Little London Road.
Settlement form and edge character and extent of built development	The site lies to the north-west of Horam, and the settlement edge is contained by woodland. Open fields and woodland separate the site from the settlement edge. The west of the site meets Little London Road, which has large detached houses set in large plots as ribbon development out from the settlement edge. A small industrial unit and car park lies adjacent to the east of the site, also contained by woodland and the Waldron Gill.
Baseline visual character	
Potential visual receptors	A lack of public access to the site, mature vegetation along Little London Road and woodland between the settlement edge of Horam and the site limit views into the site. Glimpsed views of the site are possible from gaps between houses on Manor Road to the south of the site, although these are partially screened by vegetation.
Extent of visibility within the High Weald AONB	There are limited glimpsed views across the site to the wider High Weald AONB to the east.

Expression of the 'core character components of natural beauty' of the High Weald AONB on the site	
Natural systems (Ggeology, soils, landform and water and climate system)s – 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.a deeply incised, ridged and faulted landform of clays and sandstone with numerous gill streams	The site forms part of the rolling ridges of the High Weald AONB contributing towards the <u>pattern of faults and folds</u> . A small pond in the east contributes towards the <u>high density of ponds</u> . There are no distinctive geological 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.dispersed historic settlement including high densities of isolated farmsteads and late Medieval villages founded on trade and non-agricultural rural industries	The site contains existing properties but does not contribute to the dispersed historic settlement pattern of the wider area.
Routeways - a dense network of historic routeways (now roads, tracks and paths)	No historic routeways cross the site. Little London Road on the south-western boundary is recorded as a historic lane, which contributes towards the <u>dense radiating network</u> of historic routeways, although its expression is masked by its use as the A267.
Woodland – an abundance of ancient woodland mostly in small holdings, highly interconnected and in smallholdingswith hedges and shaws.	Bridge Farm Shaw ancient woodland lies within the east and to the north of the site and contributes towards the <u>high proportion of ancient woodland</u> and <u>high density of gill woodlands</u> of the AONB. Woodland along the southern boundary and an internal shaw field boundary contribute to the <u>highly interconnected and structurally varied mosaic of many small woods...shaws...outgrown hedges</u> .
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).small, irregular and productive fields, bounded by hedgerows and woods, and typically used for livestock grazing; with distinctive zones of lowland heaths, and inned river valleys	The small fields within the site contribute towards the <u>generally irregular field pattern</u> . The assart field pattern contributes to the <u>medieval fieldscape character</u> . The site is mostly used for <u>grazing livestock</u> and enclosed by mature shaw field boundaries and vegetation.
Dark night skies – intrinsically dark at night with our own galaxy (the Milky Way) visible.	The site is part of an <u>intrinsically dark landscape with a sense of naturalness</u> . Little London Road 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;	The combination of open fields and surrounding woodland provides a <u>pastoral feel</u> and contributes to the <u>recognisable and unifying mosaic of open fields and wooded habitats</u>. The site is enclosed by vegetation which provide a <u>sense of intimacy, enclosure and remoteness owing to the heavily treed landscape</u>. The ancient woodland contributes to the <u>sense of history and timelessness</u>.

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 site has a good experience of <i>quietude and tranquillity</i> due to its distance from the settlement edge of Horam and main roads.
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 <i>predominantly pastoral mixed farming with an absence of industrial scale farming</i> key characteristic.

Baseline Summary

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

The Assessment Unit

The *Wealden Strategic Landscape Sensitivity Assessment* assesses the Horam assessment unit to have **moderate** sensitivity to small-scale residential development (2-2.5 storey housing). The sensitivity analysis indicates that the undulating landform in the north, with areas of dense woodland and mature hedgerows and areas of intact historic field pattern of this assessment unit, increase sensitivity. However, the presence of urban edge development; including electricity infrastructure; areas of simpler landform to the south; limited historic features and the contained nature of views decrease sensitivity.

The Site

Overall, it is considered that the site is of higher sensitivity than the wider assessment unit and is considered to be of **moderate-high** sensitivity to small-scale residential development (2-2.5 storey housing). This increase in sensitivity is because the site contains many of the characteristics of the assessment unit and components of character of the High Weald AONB, as well as being detached from the existing settlement edge of Horam. The site is an assart on an incised stream valley, containing, and enclosed by, ancient and priority habitat woodland and shaws. However, the site is adjacent to ribbon development along Little London Road extending from the undefined settlement edge, reducing its sensitivity somewhat. Although the south of the site, closest to Little London Road, is outside of the High Weald AONB, development in the south of the site would have an impact on the adjacent AONB.

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:

- The landform of the sites contributes to the pattern of faults and folds, and descends into a steep-sided gill close to the northern boundary;
- The site contains a pond that contributes to the high density of ponds across the AONB;
- Bridge Farm Shaw and site vegetation contribute to the high proportion of ancient woodland and the highly interconnected mosaic of many small woods, shaw and outgrown hedges, as well as providing a sense of intimacy and enclosure;
- The grazing of livestock and hedgerows contribute to the pastoral feel of the landscape, with links to the history of the land-based economy; and
- The irregular assart field pattern contributes to the medieval character of the AONB; 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.

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 vegetation, shaw field boundaries and hedgerows.	Woodland	<i>Highly interconnected and structurally varied mosaic of many small woodlands....and outgrown hedges, and isolated trees.</i>	■ Retain, protect and enhance mature vegetation within and surrounding the site, especially mature woodlands (including the priority habitat deciduous woodland along the northern boundary) and shaw that forms an internal field boundary (in accordance with the AONB's Objectives W1 and PQ2). ■ Improve the connectivity of woodlands and hedgerows within and 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).
	Aesthetic and perceptual qualities	<i>A sense of intimacy, enclosure and remoteness owing to the heavily treed landscape.</i>	
Loss or deterioration of the small pond in the east.	Natural systems	<i>A high density of ponds.</i>	■ Retain and set back development from the pond in the east to create a buffer zone. The buffer zone should incorporate new semi-natural habitat relating to the ponds (in accordance with the AONB's Objective G2).
Loss of the grazed pastures and assart which contributes to the medieval character and time depth.	Fieldsapes 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</i>	■ Loss of pasture and assart would be largely 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, strengthening the enclosure pattern and

		<i>mixed woody boundaries and shaws, and thick hedges common.</i> ■ <i>A generally irregular field pattern.</i>	maintaining landscape structure (in accordance with the AONB's Objective FH2).
	Land-based economy and rural living	<i>Predominantly pastoral mixed farming with an absence of industrial scale farming.</i>	
Deterioration of and/or encroachment on the ancient woodland at Bridge Farm Shaw in the east of the site and which abuts the northern boundary.	Woodland	■ <i>High proportion of woodland is categorised as ancient woodland...</i> ■ <i>High density of gill woodlands.</i>	■ Set development back from the edge of the ancient woodland to the required minimum buffer zone¹ (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 Objectives W2).).
	Aesthetic and perceptual qualities	■ <i>A sense of history and timelessness...</i> ■ <i>A sense of intimacy, enclosure and remoteness owing to the heavily treed landscape.</i>	
Modifications to Little London 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>	■ Reduce the impact of access works required to Little London Road, where possible, protecting the hedgerows along it (in accordance with the AONB's Objectives R1 and R2).
Influence of lighting on the dark night skies resulting in night blight.	Dark night skies	■ <i>Intrinsically dark landscapes with a sense of remoteness and tranquillity.</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 guidance² and use dark sky-friendly lighting (in accordance with the AONB's Objectives DS1 and DS2).
Settlement form edge and setting			

¹ See Natural England and Forestry Commission guidance for further information: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/ancient-woodland-ancient-trees-and-veteran-trees-advice-for-making-planning-decisions>

² 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/>

Extent of development is not related to the existing settlement edge of Horam or linear development concentrated along the A267. Extension of Horam beyond the wooded boundary.	N/A	N/A	■ Maintain the existing settlement pattern and its character by following the scale and built form of the existing development along the edge of the settlement and by interspersing new development with new tree planting that over time will form an extension to the existing wooded settlement edge (in accordance with the AONB's Objectives S1 and S2). ■ 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'³, 'Guidance on the selection and use of colour in development'⁴ and objectives of the High Weald AONB Management Plan⁵ (in accordance with the AONB's Objective S2).
Visual amenity			
Visibility of development seen by: ■ residents, pedestrians, motorists and cyclists along Little London Road to the west; and ■ visitors to Bridge Farm to the east.	Aesthetic and perceptual qualities	■ <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>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 mature vegetation that encloses the site, and mature trees in the west of the site, close to Little London Road (in accordance with the AONB's Objectives W1 and PQ2). ■ Screen new development with additional planting, using local native species where possible /suitable, 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).

³ <https://www.highweald.org/look-after/planning/design-guide.html>

⁴ <https://www.highweald.org/look-after/planning/colour-study.html>

⁵ <https://www.highweald.org/high-weald-aonb-management-plan.html>

			■ Enhance public access and provide opportunities to access Bridge Farm Shaw (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 core character components of natural beauty of the High Weald AONB, with a strong level of expression. This is due to the sloping landform; the presence of a pond; the inclusion of and enclosure by Bridge Farm Shaw ancient woodland; the internal shaw field boundary; grazed pastures; the irregular assart field pattern; and forming part of a landscape with dark skies. Development of the site is judged to have a high impact on the landscape and visual qualities/features that define the AONB, therefore impacting the 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.		

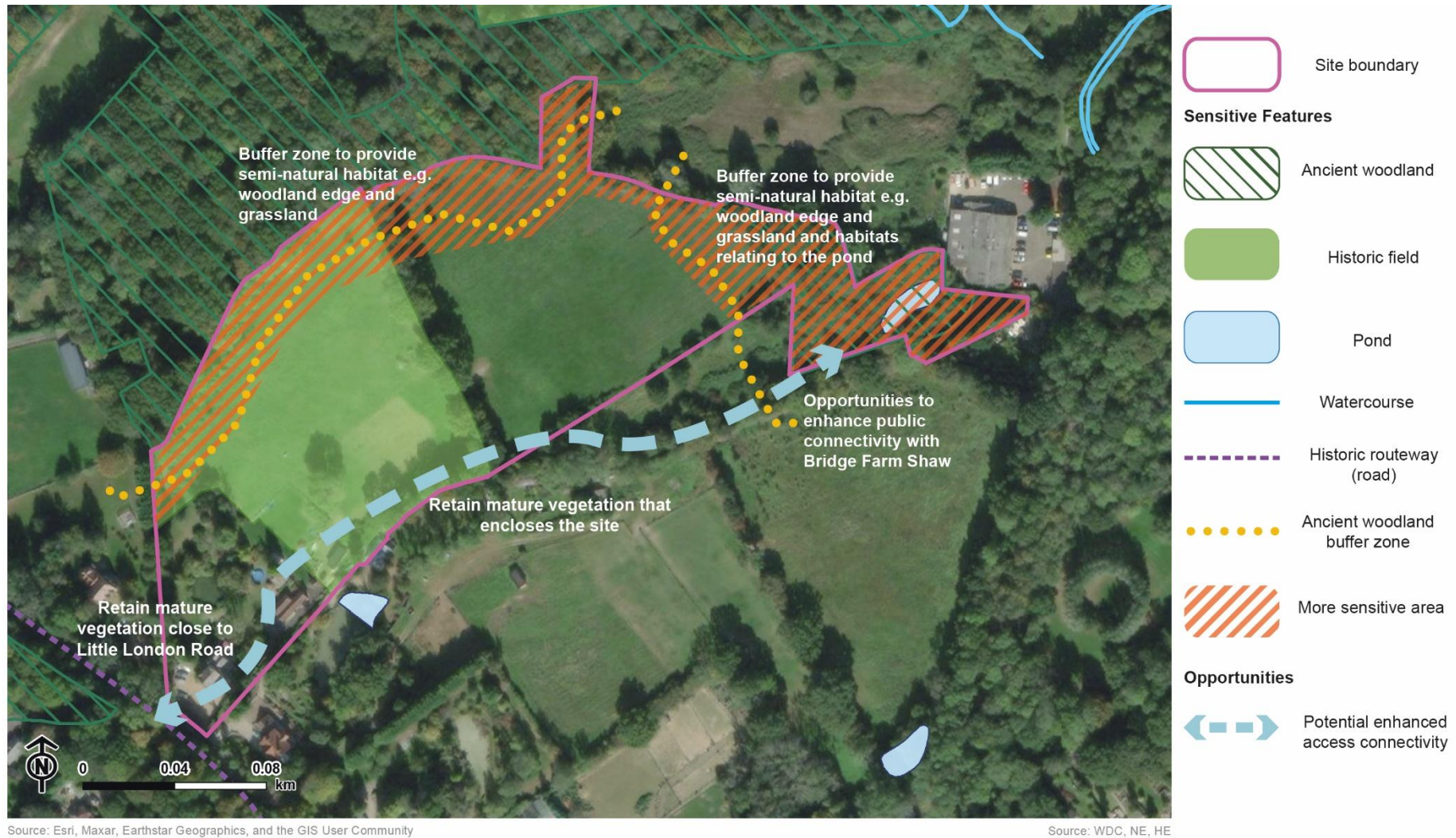
Summary and recommendations

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:

- Retain, protect and enhance mature woodlands (including the priority habitat deciduous woodland along the northern boundary) and shaw that forms an internal field boundary.
- Retain and set back development from the pond in the east to create a buffer zone.
- Apply suitable offsets to the ancient woodland at Bridge Farm Shaw.
- Maintain the existing settlement pattern and its character by following the scale and built form of the existing development along the edge of the settlement and by interspersing new development with new tree planting that over time will form an extension to the existing wooded settlement edge.
- Enhance public access and provide opportunities to access Bridge Farm Shaw.

Figure 7: Summary map of constraints and opportunities



Cumulative effects of development sites proposed in the Horam assessment unit

Only one site has been considered within the Horam assessment unit within this Landscape and Visual Appraisal of Potential Development sites in the High Weald AONB. The assessment of cumulative effects is therefore not required.