

Wealden District Council

Landscape and Visual Appraisal – Appendix A.4

Potential Development Sites in the High Weald AONB: LCA 5B - Frant

Final report

Prepared by LUC

August 2026



Wealden District Council

Landscape and Visual Appraisal – Appendix A.4 Potential Development Sites in the High Weald AONB: LCA 5B - Frant

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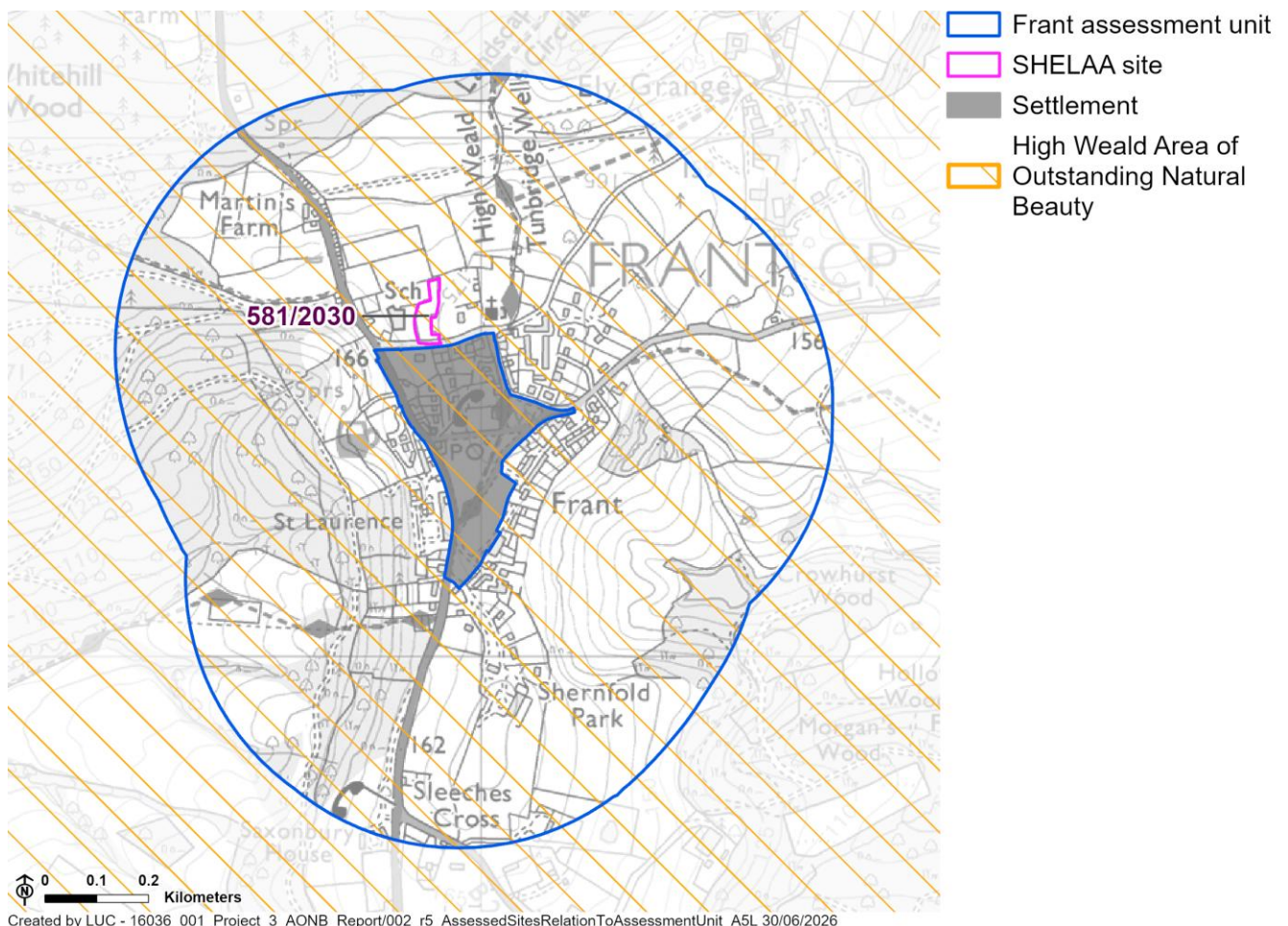
Appendix A.4

Frant Assessment Unit

One potential development site is considered within the Frant assessment unit:

- The Glebe Land, Church Lane (581/2030)

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



Settlement location, evolution and pattern

Settlement location and context	Frant is a nucleated village located in the north-east of the district. The village is located on one of the principal ridges of the High Weald, within the High Weald AONB. The historic core of the village is centred around the Church of St Alban and emerged as a market town, which served dispersed rural farmsteads in the late 13th century.
Settlement evolution	The village grew as a result of iron works in the locality from the 16th century. Agriculture, particularly the growing of hops, was a key contributor to the growth of the village between the 17 th to early 20 th centuries. Proximity to Tunbridge Wells, and its popular spas, also influenced the growth of the village in the 18 th and 19 th centuries.
Settlement pattern and edge character	The village has largely retained its historic nucleated form, with some modest 20th and 21st century development located along the settlement fringes. Development consists of bungalows and two storey detached and semi-detached houses, with some occasional terraced properties. Development is typically well integrated into the surrounding rural landscape of rolling fields, with woodland (within the Frant Court and Eridge Park Registered Park and Gardens) forming a soft settlement edge feature to the west. Given the elevated position of the village, significant views across the High Weald AONB are afforded, particularly looking south and south-east from the village green and glimpsed views north from the Church of St Alban.

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 Frant 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

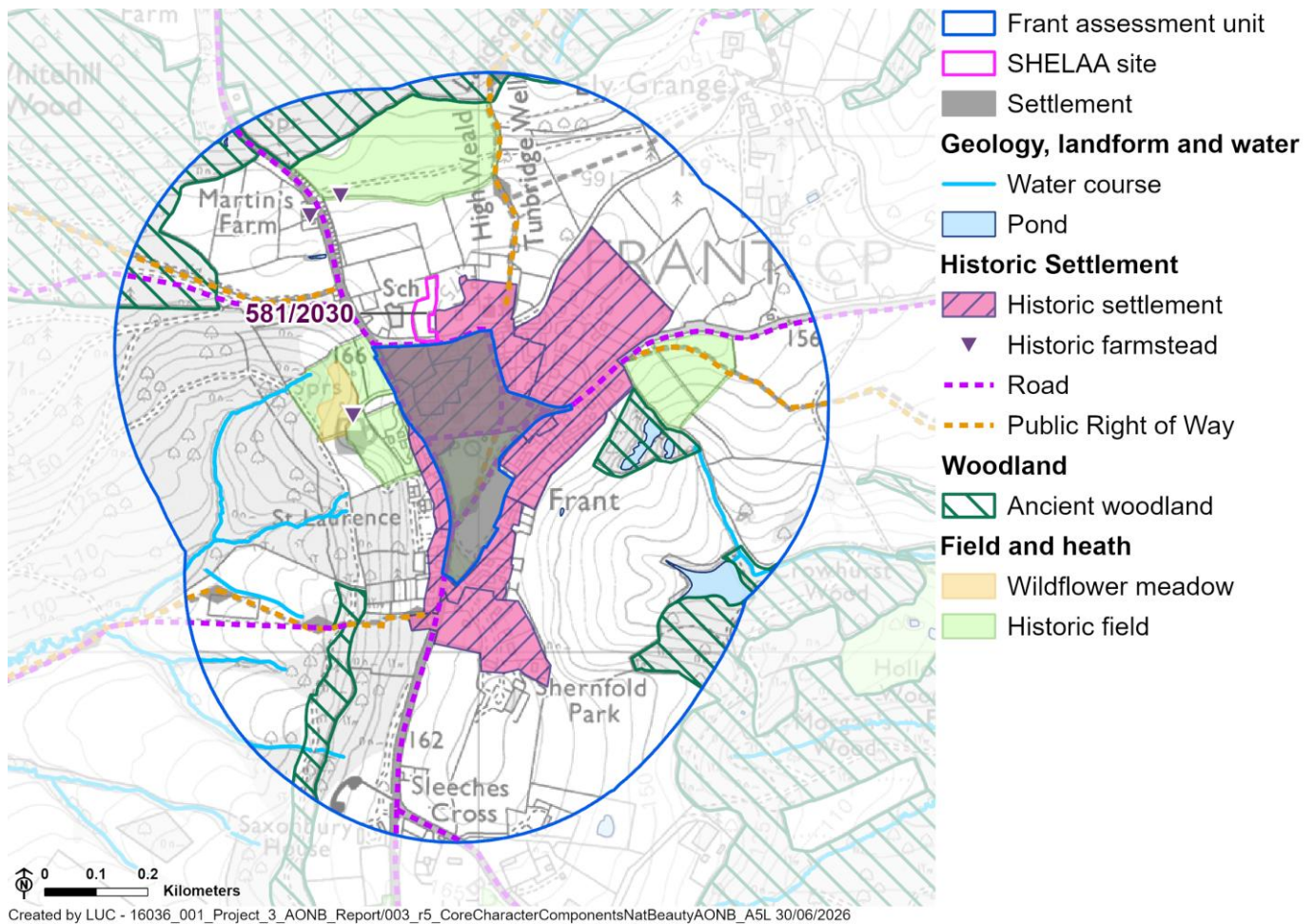


Figure 3: Tranquillity

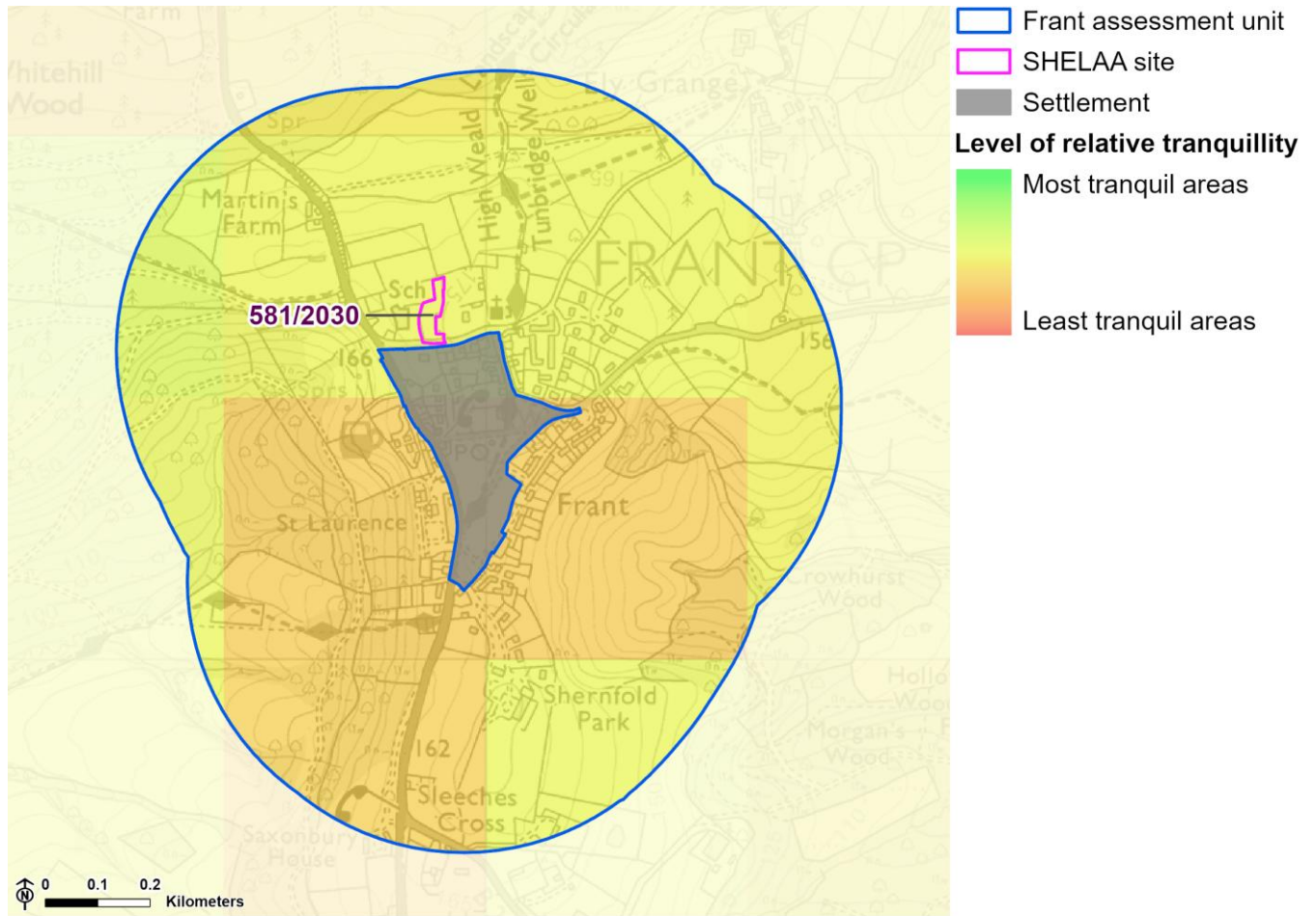
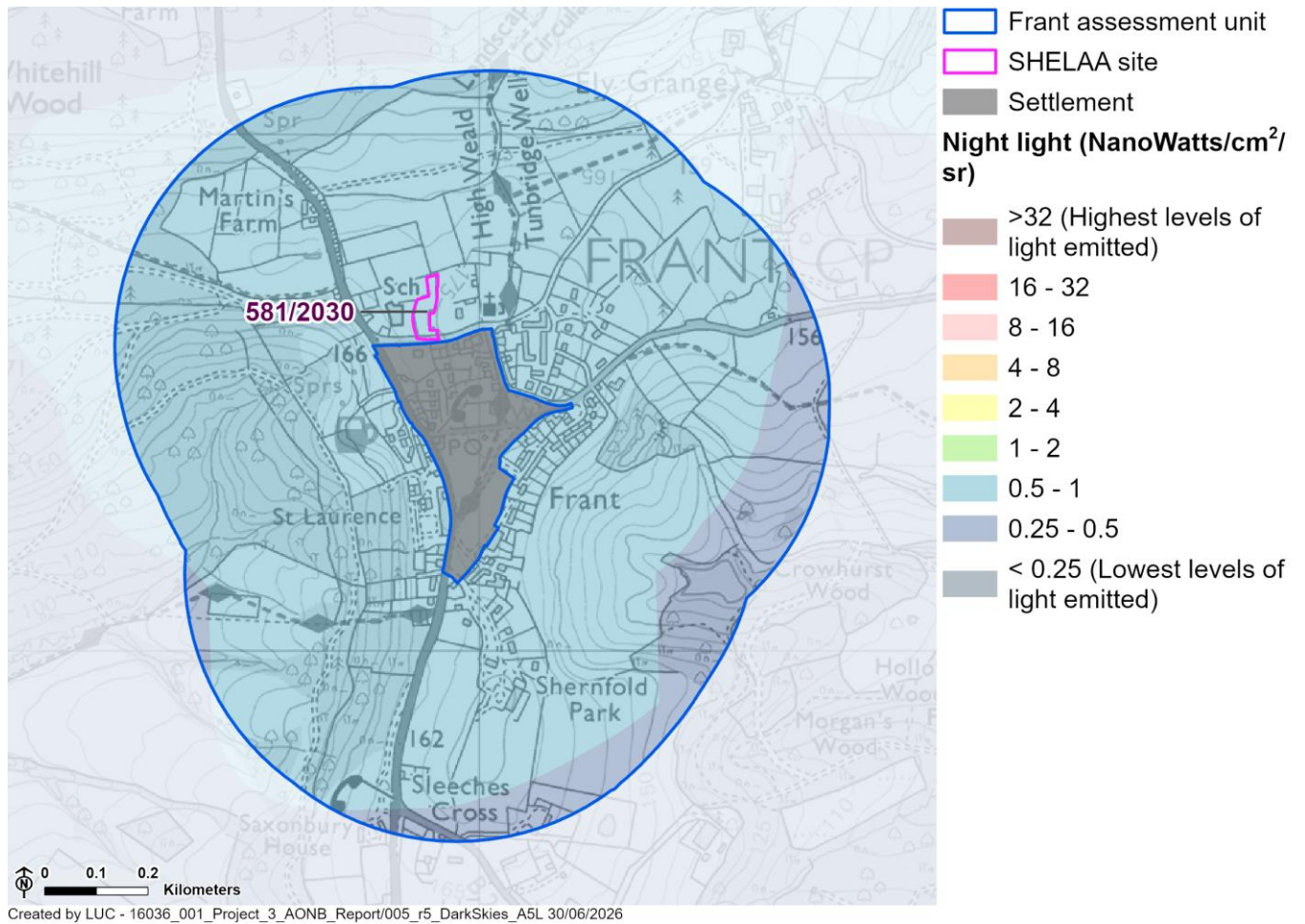


Figure 4: Dark skies



Landscape sensitivity context for the Frant assessment unit

The landscape sensitivity of the Frant assessment unit, described in the <i>Wealden Landscape Sensitivity Assessment to Residential and Employment Development (2023)</i>			
Landscape sensitivity The rating that applies to the assessment unit	Small scale residential 2-2.5 storey housing	Medium scale residential 3-4 storey flats/ care homes	Commercial/ industrial e.g. industrial units or hotels
	H	H	H
Key sensitivities The key landscape sensitivities to development identified for the assessment unit	■ The complex ridge and valley landform. ■ Mature interconnected deciduous woodlands, particularly in the west (including at Eridge Park SSSI), and some of which is ancient along the edges of the assessment unit. ■ Priority habitat semi-improved grassland in the west. ■ Historic qualities, distinctive settlement form and architectural vernacular of the Frant Conservation Area. ■ Historic qualities of the Frant Court and Eridge Park Registered Park and Gardens, and the contribution of these areas to the wooded landscape context in the west. ■ Strong relationship of settlement form to the underlying topography. ■ Strong rural character with areas of tranquillity and dark night skies. ■ Location within and intervisibility with more distant areas of the High Weald AONB.		
Guidance	■ Be located where well enclosed by vegetation, where development would be less visible from lower-lying landscapes and have less influence on landscape character, avoiding prominent ridgelines. ■ Avoid the incised stream valleys and steep heavily wooded valley slopes. ■ Avoid areas of habitat interest, notably ancient woodland and the Eridge Park SSSI. ■ Retain broadleaved woodland. Avoid loss of, harm, or deterioration to the interconnecting ancient semi-natural woodlands in this area and allow a suitable and appropriate 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. ■ Take up biodiversity opportunities listed in the Eridge and Broadwater BOA, especially woodland management and restoration, where possible. ■ Retain or replace hedgerow or roadside trees along the A267, protecting mature specimen trees from the impacts of development. Any new planting should be in character with the locality, using native species where possible. ■ Retain and where possible enhance hedgerows and take opportunities to strengthen the local habitat network. 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, locating development away from intricate small-scale historic field patterns, particularly in the north of the assessment unit. ■ Ensure development does not adversely affect the intact historic form, character and key outward views from the Frant Conservation Area. Particular attention should be paid to the historic settlement edges of Conservation Area, particularly where development would influence the relatively small-scale nucleated form of the settlement.		

	■ Ensure development does not adversely affect the historic qualities and wooded character of the Frant Court and Eridge Park Registered Parks and Gardens. ■ Consider views from public rights of way when considering the siting and design of development in the landscape. ■ Be carefully integrated into the landscape, utilising existing woodland, and / or using species that are in character with the wider landscape, preferably native. ■ Ensure opportunities to access and enjoy the landscape are preserved and enhanced. ■ Consider views from the wider landscape of the High Weald AONB, particularly lower-lying landscapes to the south, towards the prominent ridgelines of the assessment unit. ■ Ensure new building reinforces and responds to local character in its scale, layout and design, reflecting the local vernacular in use of materials. Developments should draw on the principles contained within the High Weald AONB 'High Weald Housing Design Guide'¹, 'Guidance on the selection and use of colour in development'² and objectives of the High Weald AONB Management Plan³. ■ Ensure development does not affect the scenic rural character of the landscape, and areas of relative tranquillity, where the defining components of character relating to the High Weald AONB are most strongly expressed.
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¹ <https://www.highweald.org/look-after/planning/design-guide.html>

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

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

The Glebe Land, Church Lane (581/2030)

Site Details	
Potential development	Residential development proposed on entirety of site mapped below, and entirety of the site is proposed as draft allocation FR10 (identified for 5 dwellings) in the Focused Wealden Local Plan (2026).
Site location	This site is located to the north-west of the settlement and situated between Frant C of E Primary School and Frant Grange.

Figure 5: Site location and constraints

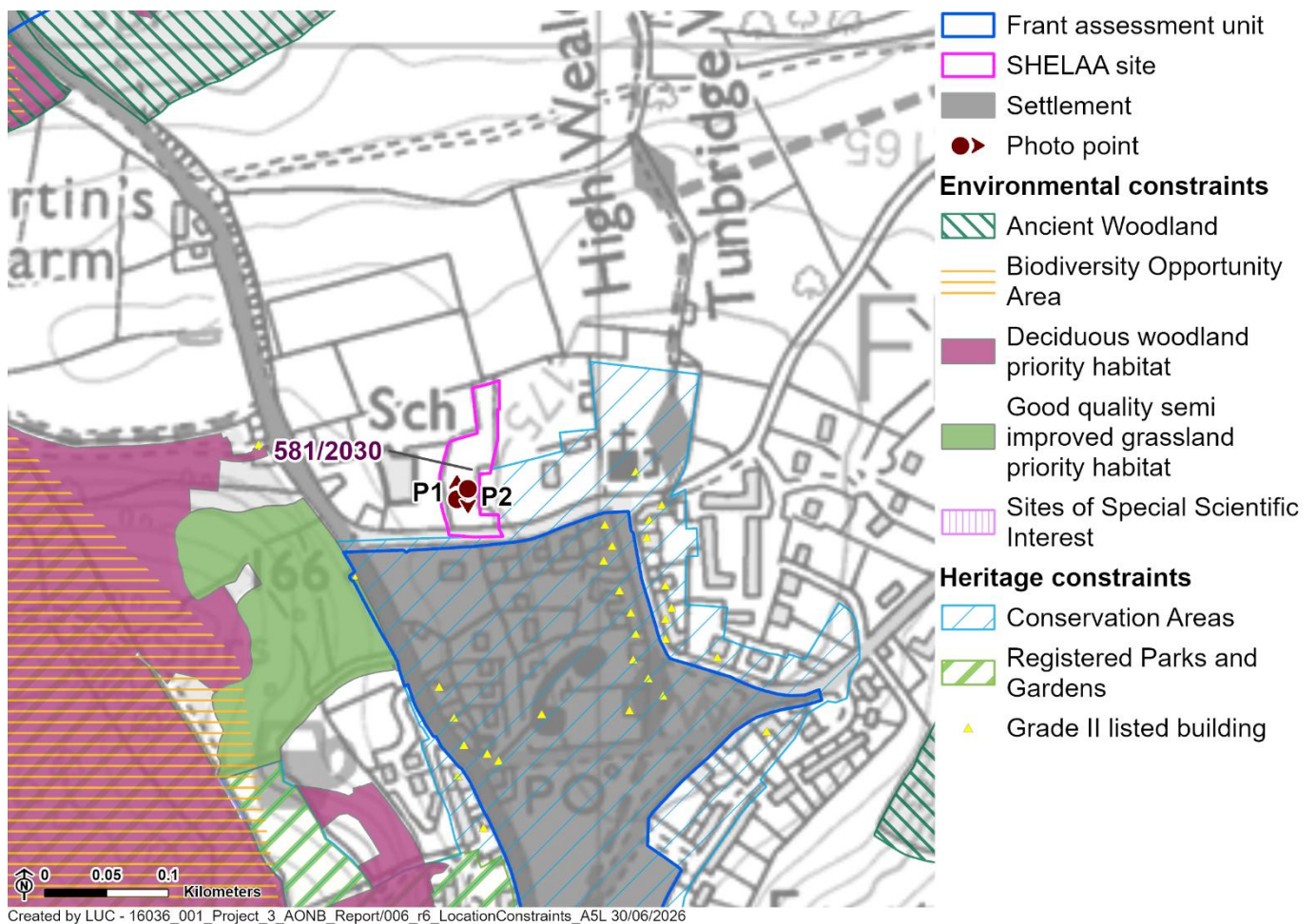
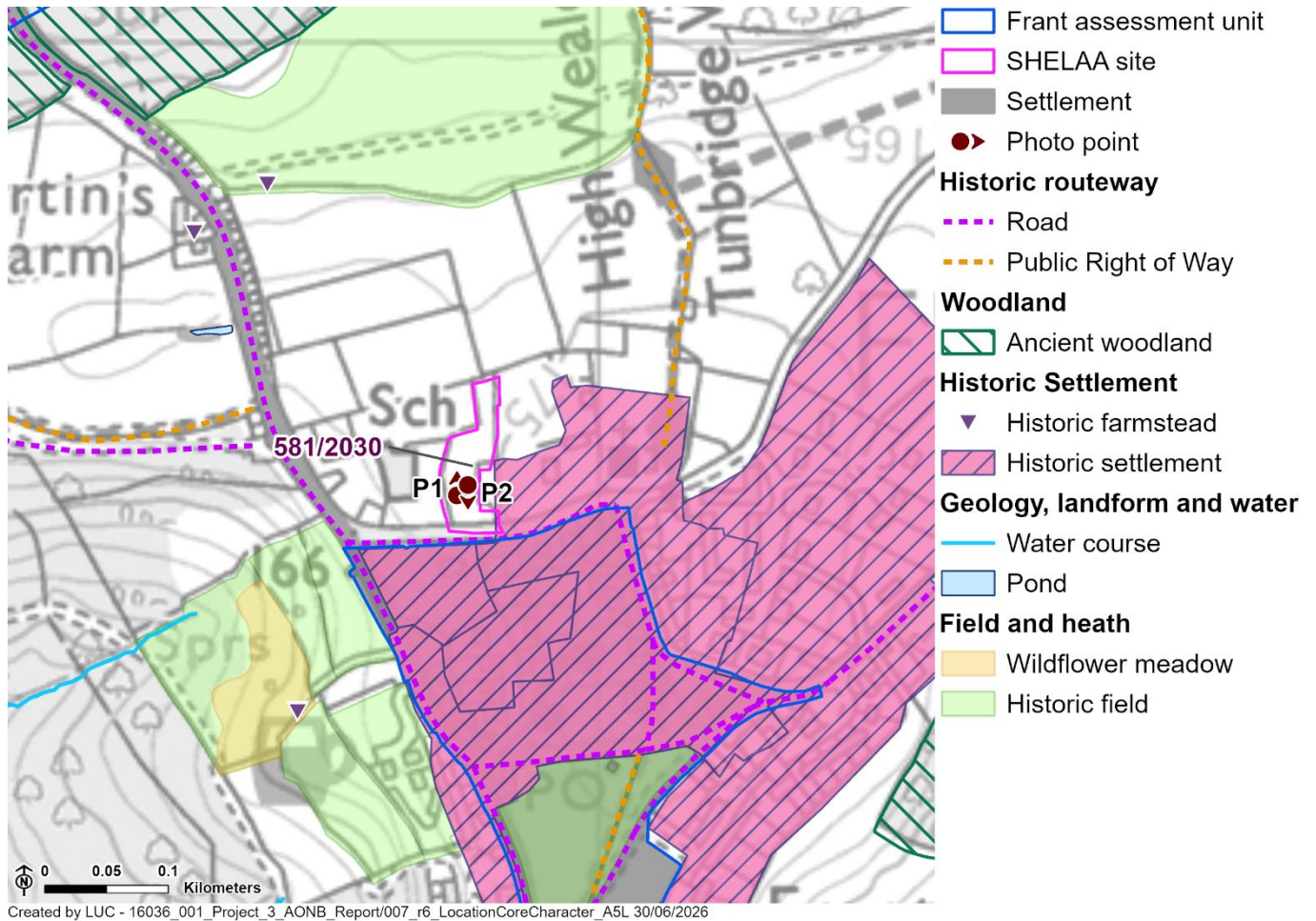


Figure 6: Site location and core character components of natural beauty of the High Weald AONB



Representative site photos



Photo 1: View north from the southern end of the track within the site



Photo 2: View south from within the site looking towards properties along Church Lane, large trees and hedgerow along the road

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 (at 170m AOD) and forms a small part of a T-shaped ridge in the north of the High Weald: Central LCA that is primarily occupied by the village of Frant, extending east to west between Ely Grange and Whitehill Wood, and south to Sleeches Cross. Natural character - Tree groups and hedgerow associated with the adjacent properties at Frant Grange and The Rectory St Albans about the eastern boundary of the site, which is typical of the wider assessment unit. - Thick hedgerows with trees along the edge of the school grounds and along Church Lane enclose the western and southern boundaries of the site - which is typical of the wider assessment unit. Landscape pattern and time depth - The site consists of a small field of regular piecemeal enclosure (as classified in the Sussex HLC and a feature of the wider assessment unit). However, it lacks time depth as it comprises a track providing access between Church Lane and the school playing fields, and mown grass. Perceptual aspects - The site is bordered by development within Frant including residential settlement south of Church Lane, and the school to the west. Despite this proximity, the site experiences some sense of tranquillity (which is recorded in the middle bands in CPRE's Tranquillity Mapping, Figure 3) and dark skies (light levels are recorded in the lower/darker bands of CPRE's Night Blight Mapping, Figure 4).
Settlement form and edge character and extent of built development	The adjacent settlement edge to the south of the site consists of a thick hedgerow containing very tall trees which provides a relatively strong boundary feature, beyond which are 2-storey semi-detached and detached houses fronting onto Church Lane. However, the settlement edge is fragmented as development extends to the north of Church Lane with the modern school buildings, church and Frant Grange. The settlement edge to the east of the site consists of thick hedgerow and trees along the boundary with Frant Grange which also provides a robust boundary.
Baseline visual character	
Potential visual receptors	The surrounding trees, hedgerows and buildings partially enclose the site and limit its visibility from the surrounding landscape including from the school to the west and Frant Grange to the east. The residential properties along the settlement edge to the south (Church Lane) partly overlook the site with views afforded from upper storeys.
Extent of visibility within the High Weald AONB	Long views to and from the site are mainly limited by landform, trees, hedgerows and buildings around the site, although there is a framed long view north from the northern part of the site.

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 forms part of the rolling ridges of the High Weald AONB, located along the <u>principal ridge (Forest Ridge)</u> , although it is relatively flat and its contribution towards the <u>pattern of faults and folds</u> is not strongly expressed. 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.	Frant is a village of <u>medieval origin</u> with its settlement edge along the southern and eastern boundaries of the site, although mature hedgerows and trees along these boundaries prevent intervisibility between the site and the conservation area.
Routeways – a dense network of historic routeways (now roads, tracks and paths).	There are no historic routeways which cross the site. However, Church Lane along the southern boundary of the site is recorded as a historic lane and contributes 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.	There are no distinctive woodland features, although the trees and hedgerows along the boundaries of the site contribute towards the <u>highly interconnected and structurally varied mosaic of... 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).	There are no distinctive field and heath features.
Dark night skies – intrinsically dark at night with our own galaxy (the Milky Way) visible.	The site forms part of the <u>intrinsically dark landscapes</u> of the AONB, although the sense of naturalness is limited by the adjacent school and settlement edge. It is located adjacent to the edge of Frant which is a <u>rural village with few street lamps</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 south of the site is influenced by the adjacent school and settlement edge, which reduces any sense of remoteness and tranquillity, although the north of the site has a more rural character. The boundary vegetation provides <u>a sense of...enclosure</u> , with the exception along the northern edge of the site where a framed <u>long view</u> north is afforded.
Land-based economy and rural living – with roots extending deep into history, and which has visibly and culturally shaped the landscape.	There are no distinctive features that relate to the land-based economy and rural living.

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 Frant assessment unit to have a **high** sensitivity to small scale residential development (2-2.5 storey housing). The sensitivity analysis indicates that the complex landform, priority habitat woodland (including ancient woodland) and grassland, historic features in the Frant Conservation Area and the rural setting provided to it all increase sensitivity to built development. Further factors which increase sensitivity to built development are the historic features in the Frant Court and Eridge Park Registered Park and Gardens, strongly expressed historic settlement edge, the visual prominence of the assessment unit and its location within, and visual relationship with, the wider High Weald AONB. Detractors within the assessment unit, which are not enough to reduce the overall sensitivity, are, the occasional influence of modern development and busy A267, areas of eroded historic field boundaries and partially contained nature of views.

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 **low-moderate** sensitivity to small scale residential development (2-2.5 storey housing) due to it being flat and comprising of mown grass, which is not characteristic of the wider area or the High Weald AONB as a whole. However, the boundary hedges and trees are more sensitive than the field itself as they provide visual enclosure as well as contributing to the interconnected nature of the site with the wider landscape.

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 few defining components of character of the High Weald AONB. In summary:

- It forms part of the principal Forest Ridge, although the site itself is relatively flat and so its contribution the pattern of faults and folds is not strongly expressed;
- The trees and hedgerows along the boundaries of the south contribute to the highly interconnected habitats; and
- The site forms part of a landscape with dark skies, although the sense of naturalness is limited by the adjacent school and settlement edge.

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

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

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

Potential effects as a result of development on the site	Core character component of natural beauty potentially affected	Relevant key characteristics of the core character component potentially affected	Potential mitigation and enhancement opportunities
Landscape character and features			
Removal of mature tree groups and hedgerows, affecting the role they play in defining and partially screening the settlement edge, preventing intervisibility with the conservation area, and contributions to the interconnectivity of habitats.	Woodland	■ <i>Highly interconnected and structurally varied mosaic of... outgrown hedges...</i>	■ Retain, protect and enhance all mature vegetation within and surrounding the site where possible, especially the tree groups and hedgerow along the eastern boundary and the hedgerows and trees along the southern and western boundaries (in accordance with the AONB's Objectives W1 and PQ2). ■ Improve the connectivity of woodlands and hedgerows around the site through new tree planting and hedgerow corridors that are in character with the locality, using native species where possible / suitable (in accordance with the AONB's Objective W2).
	Settlement	■ <i>Villages and towns mostly of medieval origin...</i>	
	Aesthetic and perceptual qualities	■ <i>A sense of...enclosure...owing to the heavily treed landscape.</i>	
Modifications to Church Lane (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, retaining the character of the historic lane and 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, including the potential addition of streetlights along Church Lane if used for access.	Dark night skies	■ <i>Intrinsically dark landscapes...</i> ■ <i>Many rural villages with few street lamps or no street lighting.</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 guidance⁴ and use dark sky-friendly lighting (in accordance with the AONB's Objectives DS1 and DS2).

⁴ 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/>

Appendix A.4
Frant Assessment Unit

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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
		■ Numerous unlit roads...	
Settlement form edge and setting			
Extension of development beyond the robust boundary to the south and east, provided by trees and hedgerow between the site and properties on the edge of the settlement.	N/A	N/A	■ Locate development in the south of the site to relate better to the existing settlement pattern (in accordance with the Objective S1). ■ Maintain the existing settlement pattern and its character by following the scale, built form and streetscape of the existing development to the south of Church Lane (in accordance with the AONB's Objectives S1 and S2). ■ 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'⁵, 'Guidance on the selection and use of colour in development'⁶ and objectives of the High Weald AONB Management Plan⁷ (in accordance with the AONB's Objective S2).
Visual amenity			
Limited visibility of development seen by: ■ residents and motorists/ cyclists along Church Lane;	Aesthetic and perceptual qualities	■ A sense of...enclosure...owing to the heavily treed landscape.	■ Retain, protect and enhance all existing vegetation including the trees and hedgerows that enclose the site (in accordance with the AONB's Objectives W1 and PQ2).

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

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

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

Appendix A.4
Frant Assessment Unit

Landscape and Visual Appraisal
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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
■ residents at Frant Grange; and ■ users of Frant C of E Primary School.			■ Reduce the density to encompass more space between/around buildings, interspersed with soft landscaping and tree planting, to soften visual impact and enhance integration of built form within the landscape (in accordance with the AONB's Objective PQ2).
Overall impact on the core character components of natural beauty of the High Weald AONB			
Low impact	The baseline analysis identifies that the site (and immediate surrounds) expresses few core character components of natural beauty, with a weak level of expression. Development of the site is judged to have a low impact on the landscape and visual qualities/features that define the AONB, and is therefore unlikely to affect / impact 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 further. <u>Variation to overall impact</u> There is no variation to the overall impact considered above.		

Summary and recommendations

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

- Retain, protect and enhance the tree groups and hedgerow along the eastern boundary and the hedgerows and trees along the southern and western boundaries.
- Locate development in the south of the site to relate better to the existing settlement pattern.
- Maintain the existing settlement pattern and its character by following the scale, built form and streetscape of the existing development to the south of Church Lane.

Cumulative effects of development sites proposed in the Frant assessment unit

As there is only one site within the Frant assessment unit, cumulative effects have not been considered.