

Wealden District Council

Landscape and Visual Appraisal – Appendix A.5

Potential Development Sites in the High Weald

AONB: LCA 5B - Heathfield

Final report

Prepared by LUC

August 2026



Wealden District Council

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Contents

Appendix A .5

Heathfield Assessment Unit

A-1

Settlement location, evolution and pattern	A-3	Land at Sunnyside, A267, Cross in Hand (941/1920)	A-82
Mapped information for the core character components of natural beauty of the High Weald AONB	A-4	Baseline Analysis	A-84
Landscape sensitivity context for the Heathfield assessment unit	A-7	Potential effects of developing the site, including on the core character components of natural beauty	A-87
Land adjacent to Street End Lane, Broad Oak (653/1630)	A-9	Summary and recommendations	A-90
Baseline Analysis	A-11	Land to rear of Brenton House (north), B2102, Cross in Hand (431/1920) and Field to the east of Burnetts Farm, Firgrove Road, Cross in Hand (017/1920)	A-91
Potential effects of developing the site, including on the core character components of natural beauty	A-14	Baseline Analysis	A-93
Summary and recommendations	A-18	Potential effects of developing the sites, including on the core character components of natural beauty	A-96
Former Broad Oak Primary School, Scotsford Road, Broad Oak (1266/1630)	A-19	Summary and recommendations	A-99
Baseline Analysis	A-21	Land at 5 Farthing Cottage, Back Lane, Cross in Hand (1238/1210)	A-101
Potential effects of developing the site, including on the core character components of natural beauty	A-24	Baseline Analysis	A-103
Summary and recommendations	A-27	Potential effects of developing the site, including on the core character components of natural beauty	A-106
Collins Field, Burwash Road (848/1210)	A-28	Summary and recommendations	A-109
Baseline Analysis	A-30	Cumulative effects of development sites proposed in the Heathfield assessment unit	A-110
Potential effects of developing the site, including on the core character components of natural beauty	A-33		
Summary and recommendations	A-36		
Land south of Burwash Road and east of Tower Street (260/1210)	A-37		
Baseline Analysis	A-39		
Potential effects of developing the site, including on the core character components of natural beauty	A-42		
Summary and recommendations	A-45		
Land at Parklands, Burwash Road (275/1210), 15 Tower Street (299/1210) and The Old Half Moon, Burwash Road (798/1210)	A-47		
Baseline Analysis	A-49		
Potential effects of developing the site, including on the core character components of natural beauty	A-54		
Summary and recommendations	A-59		
Land south-west of Ghyll Road, Tilsmore (149/1210)	A-61		
Baseline Analysis	A-63		
Potential effects of developing the site, including on the core character components of natural beauty	A-66		
Summary and recommendations	A-69		
Land to the rear of Rothershaw, High Street (525/1210) and Land at Tilsmore Nurseries, off Nursery Way (307/1210)	A-71		
Baseline Analysis	A-73		
Potential effects of developing the sites, including on the core character components of natural beauty	A-76		
Summary and recommendations	A-80		

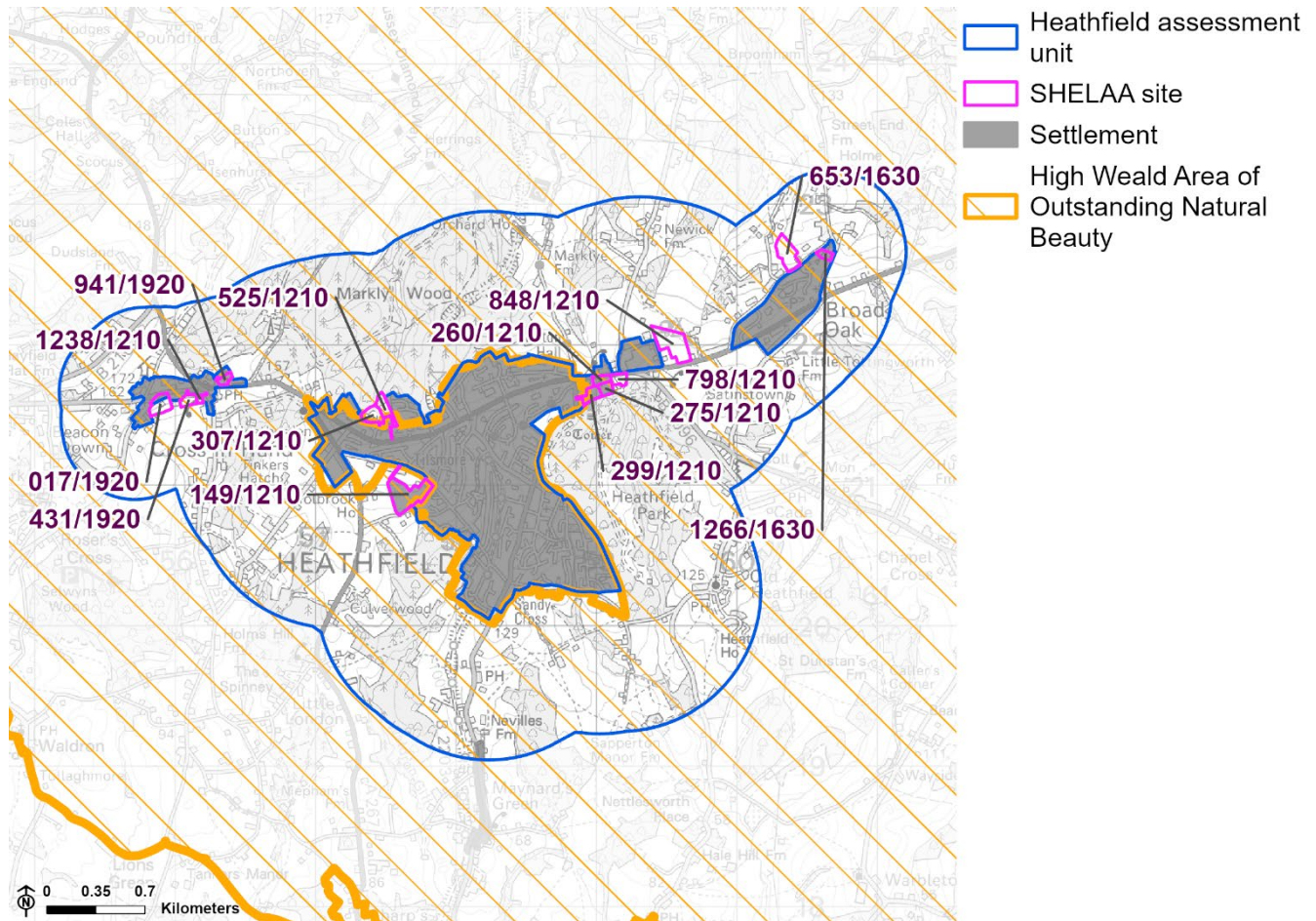
Appendix A.5

Heathfield Assessment Unit

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

- **Land adjacent to Street End Lane, Broad Oak (653/1630)**
- **Former Broad Oak Primary School, Scotsford Road, Broad Oak (1266/1630)**
- **Collins Field, Burwash Road (848/1210)**
- **Land south of Burwash Road and east of Tower Street (260/1210)**
- **Group comprising Land at Parklands, Burwash Road (275/1210), 15 Tower Street (299/1210) and The Old Half Moon, Burwash Road (798/1210)**
- **Land south-west of Ghyll Road, Tilsmore (149/1210)**
- **Group comprising Land to the rear of Rothershaw, High Street (525/1210) and Land at Tilsmore Nurseries, off Nursery Way (307/1210)**
- **Land at Sunnyside, A267, Cross in Hand (941/1920)**
- **Group comprising Land to rear of Brenton House (north), B2102, Cross in Hand (431/1920) and Field to the east of Burnetts Farm, Firgrove Road, Cross in Hand (017/1920)**
- **Land at 5 Farthing Cottage, Back Lane, Cross in Hand (1238/1210)**

Figure 1: Location of sites in relation to the settlement



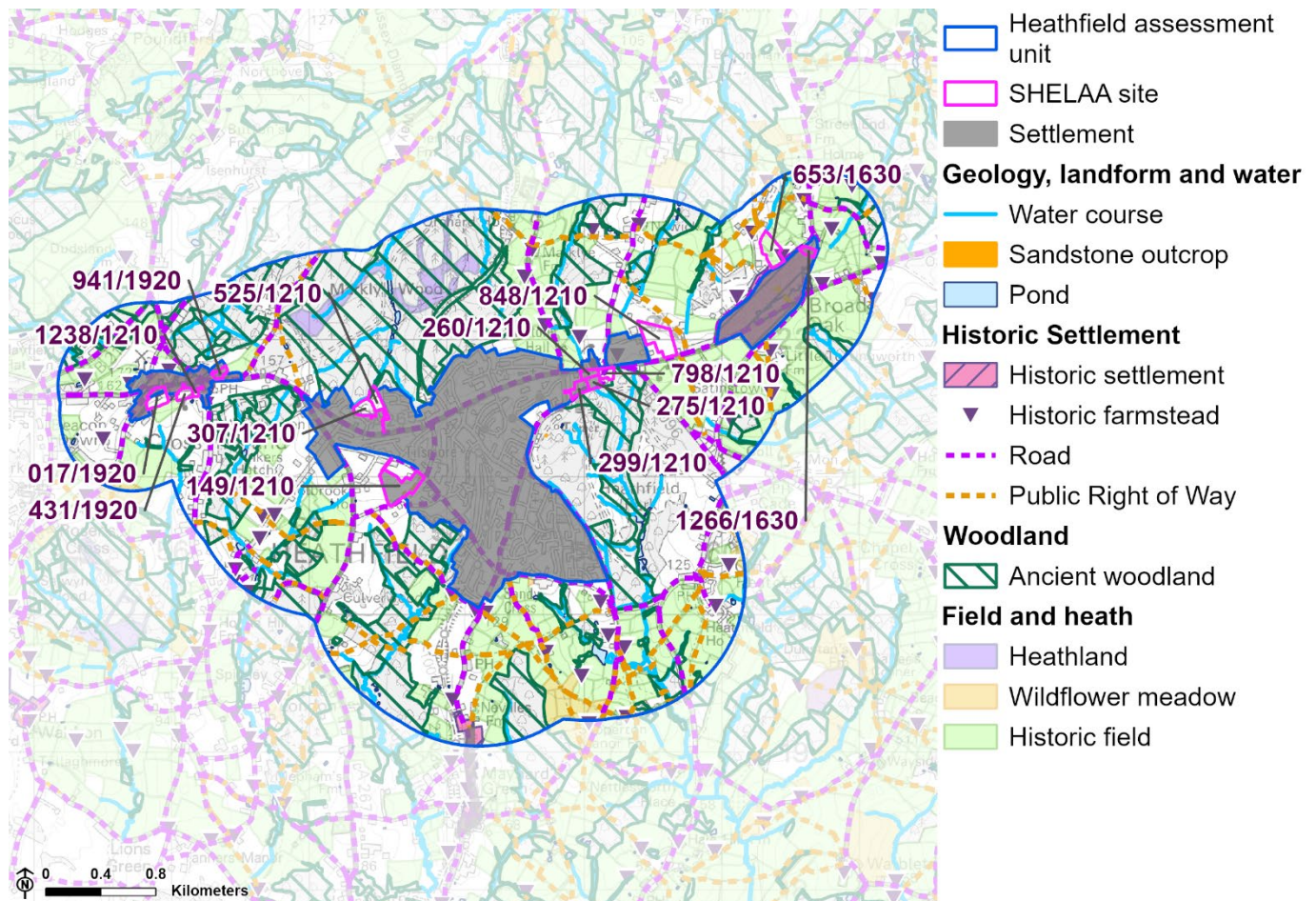
Settlement location, evolution and pattern

Settlement location and context	Heathfield is a nucleated town located in the central east of Wealden District. The settlement is located on one of the principal east-west ridges of the High Weald and is excluded from, but surrounded in all directions by, the High Weald AONB. The landscape to the south of the town is located within LCA 6E: High Weald – Cuckmere / Pevensy Catchment, and a small area to the north is located within LCA 6C: High Weald – Rother Catchment.
Settlement evolution	The historic core of Heathfield is centred along the A265 and B2203, and was originally formed by linear clusters of properties with some further dispersed properties located along elevated ridgeline roads. The town is located on a historic routeway which facilitated transhumance movement between the South Downs and the Weald. The town expanded as a result of the iron industry in the area in the 16th and 17th centuries, with further expansion resulting from the introduction of the railways in the 19th century (although these have since closed). Heathfield grew significantly in the late 20th century, with a number of housing estates expanding from the historic core. The medieval settlement of Old Heathfield is located to the south-east of the settlement and designated as a Conservation Area. Old Heathfield maintains its historic linear form, with Heathfield Park forming a boundary feature between Old Heathfield and the modern day town of Heathfield.
Settlement pattern and edge character	The settlement edge is relatively sprawling; however settlement is often fringed by woodland. Heathfield Park and Markly Wood form soft settlement boundaries to the east and north, respectively. The settlement comprises one and two storey detached and semi-detached properties, with some older two storey terraced properties located within the historic core of the settlement. The assessment unit also contains the smaller villages of Cross in Hand and Broad Oak, both located along the A265. Cross in Hand maintains a relatively linear pattern, with some separation between the village and Heathfield formed by woodland and pastoral fields. The settlement form of Broad Oak is less linear, with settlement extending north from the A265. There is some separation between Broad Oak and Heathfield formed by the pastoral landscape and relatively open views looking south from the A265.

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 Heathfield 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



Created by LUC - 16036_001_Project_3_AONB_Report/003_r5_CoreCharacterComponentsNatBeautyAONB_A5L 26/06/2026

Figure 3: Tranquillity

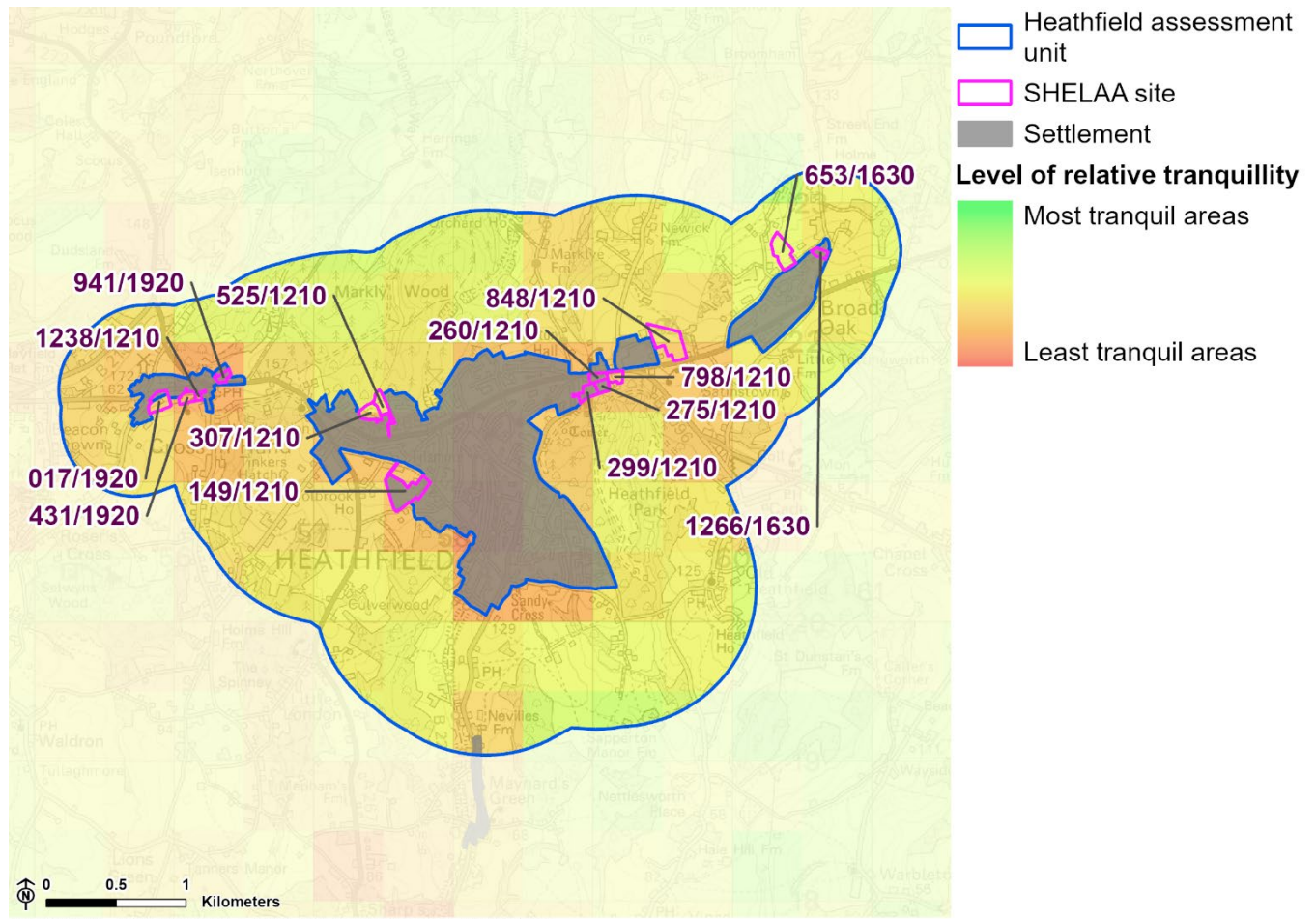
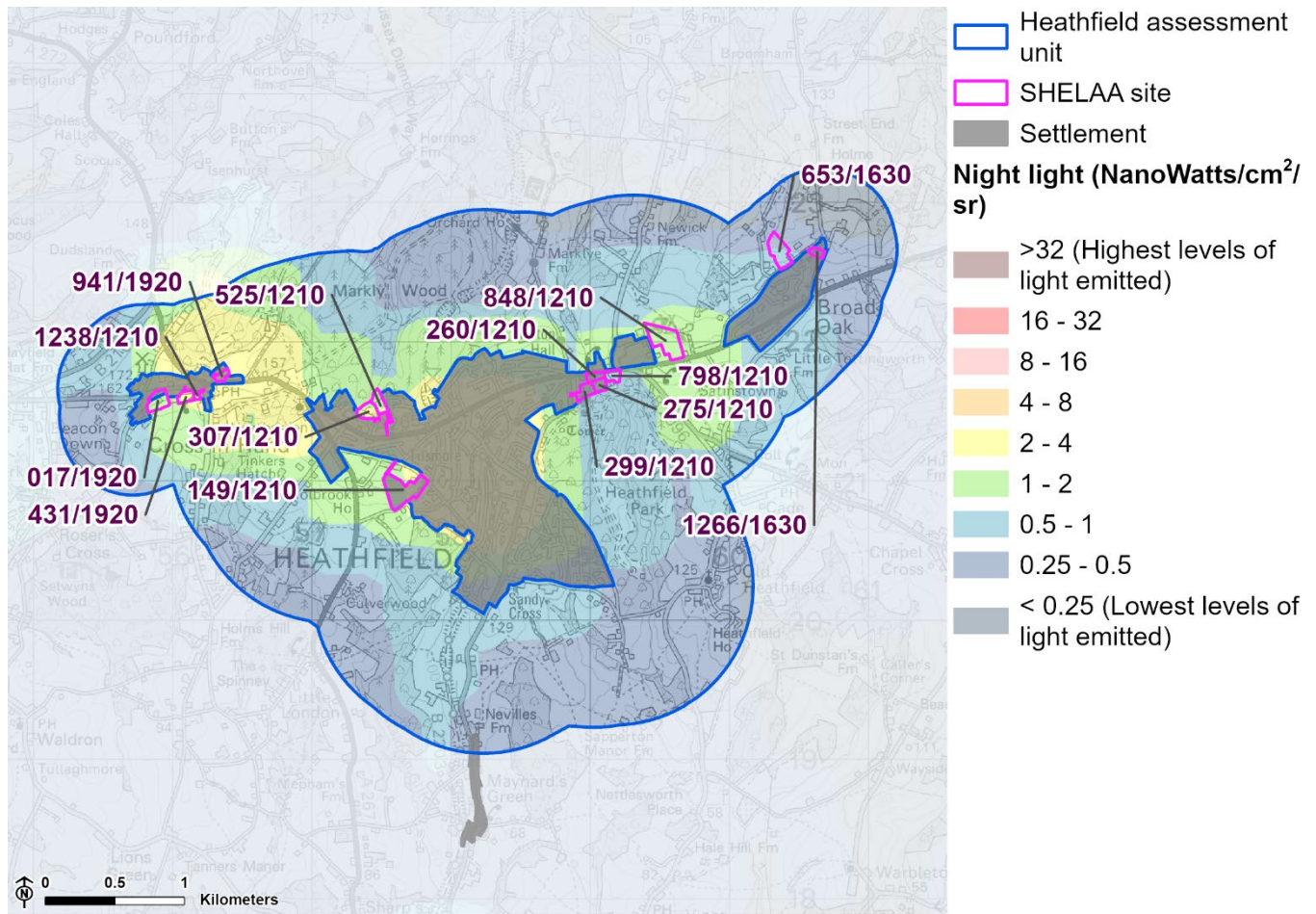


Figure 4: Dark skies



Created by LUC - 16036_001_Project_3_AONB_Report/005_r5_DarkSkies_A5L 26/06/2026

Landscape sensitivity context for the Heathfield assessment unit

The landscape sensitivity of the Heathfield assessment unit as 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 complex ridge and valley landform. ■ Mature deciduous woodlands (many of which are ancient in origin), particularly in the north and east of the assessment unit and the Heathfield Park SSSI. ■ Areas of lowland meadow, semi-improved grassland and heathland in the south and north of the assessment unit. ■ Intact historic field patterns, particularly medieval assarts in the north-east and south of the assessment unit with mature hedgerows and wooded field boundaries. ■ The historic character and value of Heathfield Park and the Old Heathfield Conservation Area. ■ The wooded backdrop to the northern and eastern settlement edge of Heathfield. ■ The network of public rights of way including the Cuckoo Trail. ■ The strong rural character with areas of remoteness and tranquillity, particularly within larger areas of woodland. ■ Location within and intervisibility with more distant areas of the High Weald AONB.		
Guidance	■ Consider views of development from the lower-lying landscapes to the north and south of the ridgeline, siting development where well enclosed by vegetation and relating it to the existing settlement pattern. ■ Avoid the incised stream valleys and heavily wooded valley slopes. ■ Avoid areas of habitat interest, notably ancient woodland (including the Heathfield Park SSSI), lowland meadow, semi-improved grassland and heathland. ■ Take up biodiversity opportunities listed in the Heathfield Habitat Link and Pevensey, Rother, Cuckmere Watershed BOAs, especially woodland and heathland management and restoration, where possible. ■ Retain broadleaved woodland. Avoid loss of, harm, or deterioration to the interconnecting ancient semi-natural woodlands in this area and allow an 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. ■ Retain roadside trees along the A267, including tree clumps, 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, 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 medieval assarts in the north-east and south. ■ Ensure development does not adversely affect the intact historic form, character and setting of the Old Heathfield Conservation Area.		

	■ Ensure development does not adversely affect the historic qualities of the parkland landscape at Heathfield Park. ■ Minimise the potential for further coalescence between settlements along the A265. ■ Consider views from public rights of way, including the Cuckoo Trail, when siting and designing 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, native species where possible. ■ Ensure opportunities to access and enjoy the landscape are preserved and enhanced. ■ Ensure new building reinforces and responds to local character in its scale, layout and design, reflecting the local vernacular in use of materials. Developments should draw on the principles contained within the High Weald AONB 'High Weald Housing Design Guide'¹, 'Guidance on the selection and use of colour in development'² and objectives of the High Weald AONB Management Plan³. ■ Ensure development does not affect the scenic rural character of the landscape, and areas of relative tranquillity, particularly the defining components of character relating to the High Weald AONB.
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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>

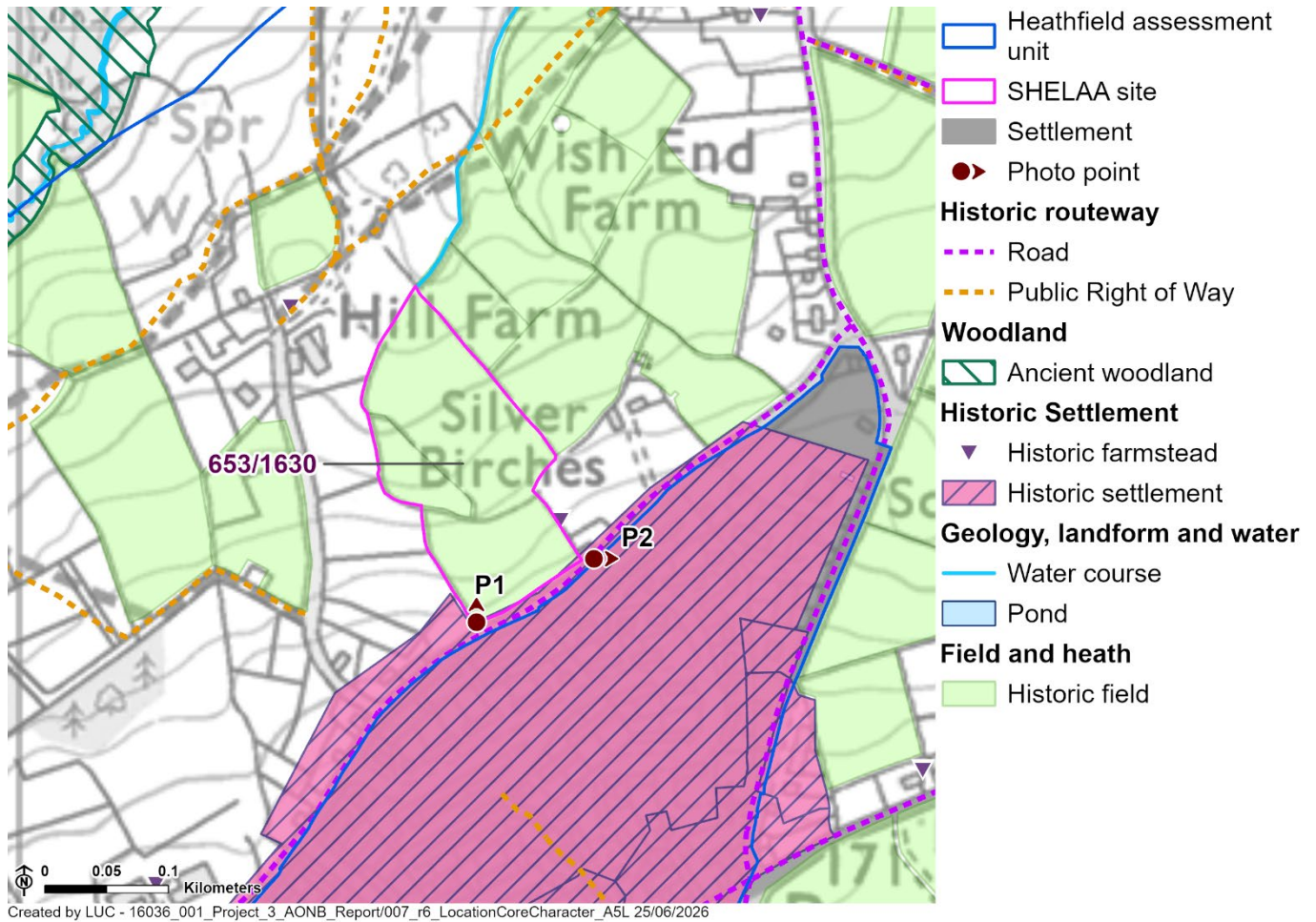
Land adjacent to Street End Lane, Broad Oak (653/1630)

Site Details	
Potential development	Residential development of 8 dwellings, proposed on the site as shown below. Site not Allocated or considered an Option. The south of the site has planning permission for 4 dwellings under planning reference WD/2022/1833/F which have been constructed.
Site location	This site lies to the north-east of Broad Oak, north of Street End Lane and east of Magreed Lane.

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: Glimpsed views north-east across the site with mature in-field trees and long views across a valley to the wider High Weald AONB (prior to the construction of the four dwellings within the south of the site – other views of the site not possible).



Photo 2: Falling topography with mature vegetation along boundaries and long views to the wider wooded High Weald AONB (prior to the construction of the four dwellings within the south of the site – other views of the site not possible).

Baseline Analysis

Baseline landscape character	
Key features and qualities of the sites in relation to the wider assessment unit	Landform ■ The site forms part of the rolling ridges of the High Weald Central LCA and a small part of the 'complex ridge and valley landform' of the wider assessment unit. ■ It comprises a relatively steep slope, which falls from 150m AOD in the south to 120m AOD in the north towards an incised stream valley. Natural character ■ The site is pastoral in character, bounded by mature hedgerows on all sides, (which is typical of the wider assessment unit). ■ Mature wooded tree belts line the eastern and western boundaries, and there is a clump of mature trees in the centre and north-west corner of the site (remaining from a small woodland). Landscape pattern and time depth ■ The south of the site is derived from a regular piecemeal enclosure field pattern, while the north is part of a cohesive assart field pattern (as classified in the Sussex HLC and typical of the wider assessment unit). Perceptual aspects ■ Although the site is influenced by proximity to the settlement edge of Broad Oak, it 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 bands of CPRE's Night Blight Mapping, Figure 4).
Settlement form and edge character and extent of built development	The site provides separation between the settlement edge of Broad Oak and the historic farmstead at Hill Farm. The adjacent settlement edge to the south of the site runs along the top of the ridge and consists of Street End Lane, beyond which are bungalows and two-storey houses, with large, detached houses in closes and cul-de-sacs. The mature hedgerow along Street End Lane provides a strong boundary feature between the site and settlement. However, four houses have recently been constructed in the south of the site along Street End Lane, which has altered this strong boundary feature.
Baseline visual character	
Potential visual receptors	Mature hedgerows and vegetation along Street End Lane limit some visibility for people travelling along the road, although there may be more glimpsed views through gaps in vegetation in the winter months (when not in leaf). Residential properties on Street End Lane are elevated above the road, and therefore have close, open views into the site, as do residents of the four recently constructed houses within the south of the site. Residents on roads further south within Broad Oak (e.g. Bracken Way and Gorse Hill) also have glimpsed views of the site through the gaps between properties. Views from Magreed Lane and the public right of way to the north are enclosed by mature hedgerows and vegetation, and the site's mature internal vegetation.
Extent of intervisibility within the High Weald AONB	Long glimpsed views from Street End Lane across the site to the wooded hills of the High Weald AONB are afforded although partly interrupted by the recently constructed houses within the south 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, contributing towards the <u>pattern of faults and folds</u> . There are no distinctive geological or water features within the site, although the northern tip of the site abuts the source of a stream.
Settlement – dispersed historic settlement including high densities of isolated farmsteads, hamlets and late-medieval villages founded on trade and non-agricultural rural industries.	Broad Oak is a village of <u>medieval origin</u> with its modern settlement edge along the southern boundary of the site. Hill Farm and Meadow Cottage contribute towards the <u>high density of historic farmsteads</u> ⁴ found within the AONB and while they are not within the site, they lie adjacent to it.
Routeways - a dense network of historic routeways (now roads, tracks and paths).	No historic routeways cross the site. However, Street End Lane along the southern boundary 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.	Mature trees, the clump of trees/ deciduous woodland in the centre and north-west corner, and hedgerows along the field boundaries contribute towards the <u>highly interconnected and structurally varied mosaic of many small woods...and outgrown hedges</u> , and part of an <u>irregularly shaped small woodland</u> remains in the north-west.
Field and heath - small, irregular and productive fields, bounded by hedgerows and woods, and typically used for livestock grazing; with distinctive zones of lowland heaths, and inned river valleys	<u>Generally irregular field pattern</u> , defined by hedgerows and mature vegetation, and used for <u>grazing livestock</u> . The small field in the north was created through assarting, contributing towards the dominant <u>medieval fieldscape character</u> of the AONB.
Dark night skies – intrinsically dark at night with our own galaxy (the Milky Way) visible.	The site is located within an <u>intrinsically dark landscape</u> , although the sense of naturalness is limited by proximity to the settlement of Broad Oak. Street End is an <u>unlit road</u> .
Aesthetic and perceptual qualities – arising from the interaction of people with the landscape, including the notion of a quintessential English pastoral landscape, intimacy of scale, a sense of history and timelessness; rurality and tranquillity; glimpsed long views; freedom to explore and make connections with the natural world, and a rich legacy of features and ideas left by writers, poets and gardeners inspired by the landscape.	The site contributes to the <u>scenic beauty</u> of the area, with some <u>glimpsed long views</u> to the north across the small stream valley, towards wooded hills of the wider High Weald AONB, although roadside hedgerows limit views. The historic Hill Farm and Meadow Cottage (adjacent to the site) and the assarted field in the north contribute to the <u>sense of history and timelessness</u> . The combination of grazing, the clump of trees/ deciduous woodland in the centre and north-west corner and surrounding woodland provides a <u>pastoral feel</u> and contributes to the <u>recognisable and unifying mosaic of open field and wooded habitats</u> . The sense of rurality and tranquillity is influenced by proximity to the village and the surrounding existing residential development. Long views of the site are limited by vegetation enclosing the site which contributes to the <u>sense of intimacy, enclosure and remoteness...</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.

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

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 Heathfield assessment unit to have a **moderate-high** sensitivity to small-scale residential development (2-2.5 storey housing). The sensitivity analysis indicates that the complex landform; strong natural character including areas of woodland, lowland meadows, grassland and heathland; areas of intact historic field pattern; historic features in the south-east; the rural setting provided to Heathfield and Old Heathfield; and the location within and visual relationship with the wider High Weald AONB increases sensitivity to built development. However, the presence of existing ribbon development, modern agricultural buildings and a caravan park, and enclosure by woodland decrease 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 is undulating, is in pasture use, and contains mature tree belts and a tree clump in the centre. The north of the site retains a cohesive assart field pattern, and the site as a whole has a rural and relatively tranquil character, with long views across the site to the wider High Weald AONB, although this diminishes at the southern boundary when adjacent to the settlement. The site, therefore, demonstrates a number of the characteristics that increase sensitivity to development across the assessment unit. Vegetation along Street End Lane provides a semi-enclosed character to the site and the recently constructed houses within the south of the site have weakened the settlement boundary, which are characteristics that decreases sensitivity across the wider assessment unit.

Variations in Sensitivity

There is no variation in sensitivity across the site.

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

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

- The landform forms part of the pattern of faults and folds;
- Hill Farm and Meadow Cottage (adjacent to the site) contribute towards the high density of historic farmsteads with the site contributing towards their setting;
- The site forms part of the rural context to the historic settlement of Broad oak (of medieval origin);
- The mature field boundaries and the irregularly-shaped woodland in the north-west contribute to the highly interconnected woodlands in the locality;
- The grazing of livestock contributes to the pastoral feel of the landscape, linking to the history of the land-based economy;
- The small irregular field pattern and the assart field pattern in the north contribute towards the dominant medieval character across the AONB;
- A sense of history and timelessness is provided by Hill Farm and Meadow Cottage, and the assarted field;
- There are glimpsed long views north to the wooded hills of the wider High Weald 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			
Changes to the relatively 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 relatively steep 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 of mature deciduous woodland, trees and hedgerows, affecting the screening they provide, the role they play in defining the settlement edge and the rural character.	Woodland	- Highly interconnected and structurally varied mosaic of many small woods...and outgrown hedges... - Many irregularly shaped small woodlands interlinked with shaws...forming an intimate part of the farmed landscape.	- Retain, protect and enhance all mature vegetation within and surrounding the site, especially mature trees and hedgerows along the outer boundaries and the clump of trees/ deciduous woodland in the centre/ north-west corner of the site (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).
Loss of grazed pastures and the assart field pattern (which contributes to the medieval character and time depth), as well as the loss/ deterioration of the small-scale field pattern with	Fieldscape and heath	- A generally irregular field pattern with individual fields relatively small... - Fields, mostly permanent pasture, used for grazing livestock...	Loss of pasture and the assart field pattern would be largely unavoidable with development of the site, as development would remove land from agricultural use. However, field boundaries within the site and along the outer boundaries should be retained and enhanced where possible to avoid complete loss of field pattern (in accordance with the AONB's Objective FH2).

largely intact hedgerow field boundaries.		■ <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>	
Modifications to Street End 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). ■ Consider utilising the access created for the recently constructed houses along the southern edge of the site.
Influence of lighting in the dark night skies resulting in night blight, including the potential introduction of streetlights along Street End Lane.	Dark night skies	■ <i>Intrinsically dark landscapes with a sense of naturalness.</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 guidance⁵ 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 within the southernmost field of the site, to relate better to the existing ridgetop settlement pattern and to avoid the perception of development extending onto lower-lying ground to the north (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).

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/>

Deterioration of the rural character of the site which contributes to the setting of Broad Oak.	Settlement	<i>Villages and towns mostly of medieval origin...</i>	■ Locate development to relate closely to the existing settlement edge to the south of the site to minimise encroachment into the wider countryside (in accordance with the AONB's Objective S1). ■ Maintain the existing settlement pattern and its character by following the scale, built form and streetscape of the recent development within the south of the site (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'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).
Reduction in the separation between the settlement of Broad Oak and the Hill Farm historic farmstead, and impingement on the setting of Hill Farm and Meadow Cottage.	Settlement	<i>High density of historic farmsteads...</i>	■ Locate development in the south of the site to relate better to the existing settlement pattern and to minimise encroachment towards the boundary of Hill Farm historic farmstead (in accordance with the AONB's Objective S3). Further assessment relating to the setting of heritage assets is advised.
	Aesthetic and perceptual qualities	<i>A sense of history and timelessness...</i>	
Visual amenity			
Visibility of development seen by: ■ pedestrians, motorists/cyclists and	Aesthetic and perceptual qualities	■ <i>A sense of history and timelessness arising from an ancient countryside with a human-scale agricultural</i>	■ Retain, protect and enhance all existing vegetation including the mature trees and hedgerows along the outer boundaries of the site (in accordance with the AONB's Objectives W1 and 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>

residents along Street End Lane to the south; - residents along Gorse Hill and Bracken Way to the south; - residents at Hill Farm and to the north-west - residents at Meadow Cottage to the south-east; and - recreational users along the footpath to the north.		<i>tapestry; veteran and ancient trees...historic buildings.</i> <i>The homely, pastoral feel to the whole landscape arising from its human-scale pattern and productivity.</i> <i>A recognisable and unifying mosaic of open field and wooded habitats.</i> <i>A sense of intimacy, enclosure and remoteness owing to the heavily treed landscape.</i> <i>Unexpected panoramic and long views, often uninterrupted, extending out along the valleys...</i>	- Position development within the site to retain the long views from Street End Lane across the site, over the stream valley to the wooded hills of the wider High Weald AONB (in accordance with the AONB's Objective PQ2). - Screen development from the historic farmstead at Hill Farm to the north-west and Meadow Cottage to the south-east (in accordance with the AONB's Objective 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).
Overall impact on the core character components of natural beauty of the High Weald AONB			
High impact	The baseline analysis identifies that the site (and its immediate surrounds) expresses several core character components of natural beauty, with a strong level of expression. This is due to the steeply sloping landform (affording long-distance views); the presence of mature wooded vegetation; grazed pastures; Hill Farm and Meadow Cottage historic farmsteads (adjacent to the site); forming part of an assart field pattern (contributing to the medieval character); and being part of a landscape with dark night skies. 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 site-specific recommendations for these sites are as follows:

- Limit the extent of development 'spilling' beyond the ridge crest onto the relatively steep valley side, to minimise alterations to the landform.
- Retain, protect and enhance mature trees and hedgerows along the outer boundaries and the clump of trees/ deciduous woodland in the centre/ north-west corner of the site.
- Consider utilising the access created for the recently constructed houses along the southern edge of the site.
- Focus development within the southernmost field of the site, to relate better to the existing ridgetop settlement pattern, to avoid the perception of development extending onto lower-lying ground to the north and to minimise encroachment towards the boundary of Hill Farm historic farmstead.
- 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.
- Maintain the existing settlement pattern and its character by following the scale, built form and streetscape of the recent development within the south of the site.
- Position development within the site to retain the long views from Street End Lane across the site, over the stream valley to the wooded hills of the wider High Weald AONB.
- Screen development from the historic farmstead at Hill Farm to the north-west and Meadow Cottage to the south-east.

Former Broad Oak Primary School, Scotsford Road, Broad Oak (1266/1630)

Site Details	
Potential development	Residential development of 8 or 9 dwellings, proposed on the site as shown below. Site not Allocated or considered an Option.
Site location	This site is located at the north-eastern end of Broad Oak, and situated south-east of Street End Lane, west of Scotsford Road and north of properties (off Scotsford Road).

Figure 7: Site location and constraints

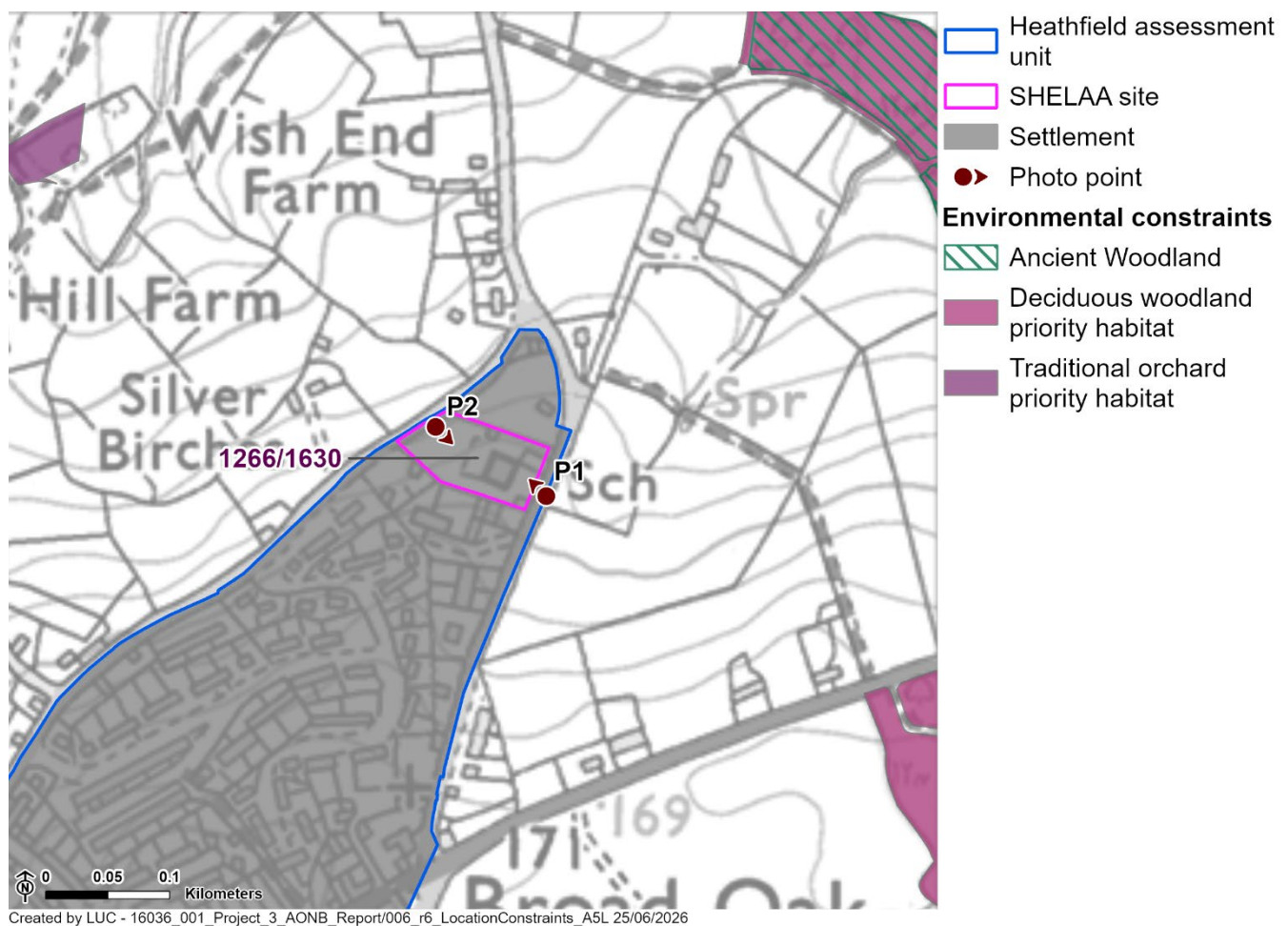
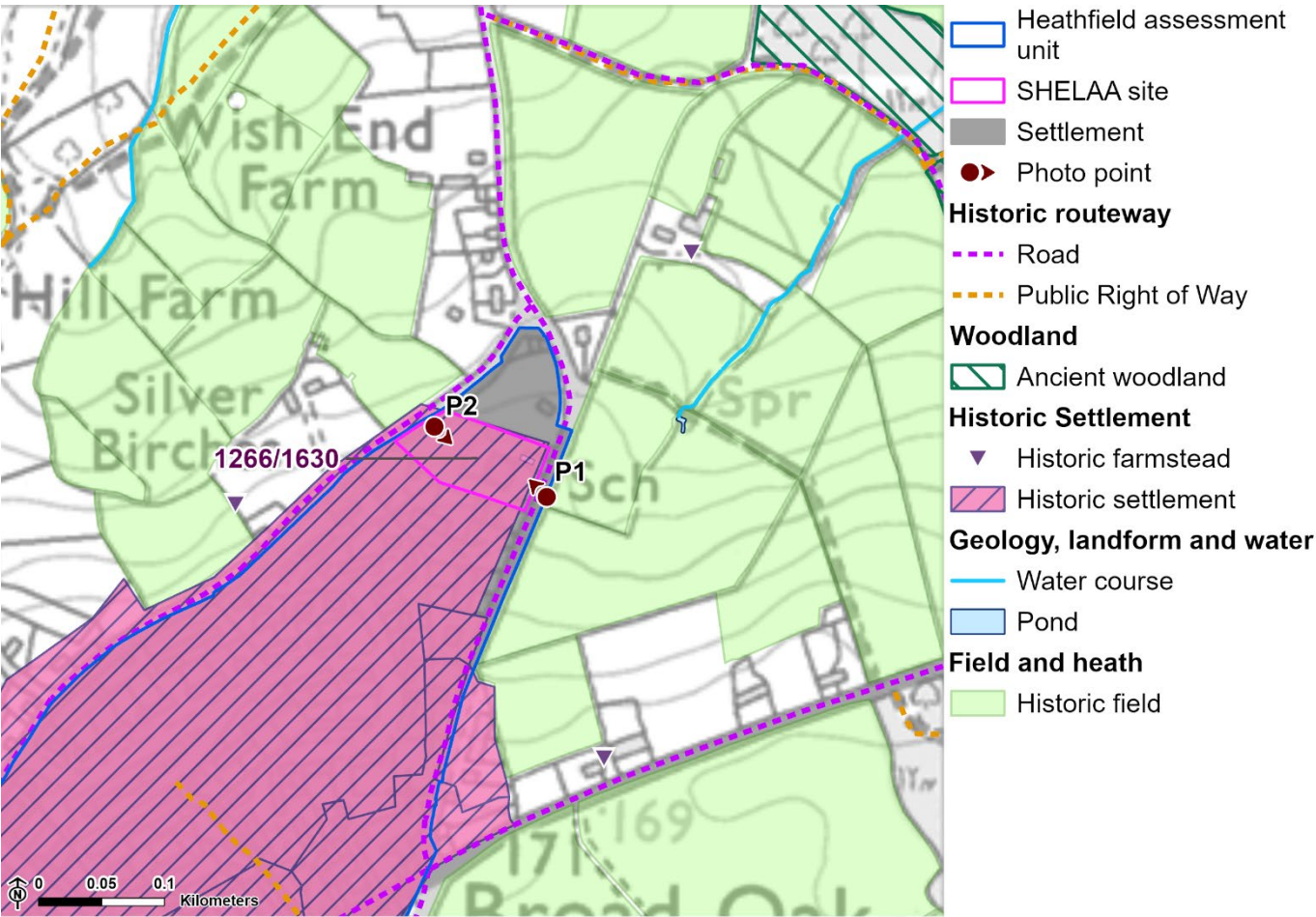


Figure 8: Site location and core character components of natural beauty of the High Weald AONB



Representative site photos



Photo 1: View west from along Scotsford Road with the former school building and school house visible above the foreground hedgerow



Photo 2: View east from within the school grounds of the sloping landform that falls to the north-west

Baseline Analysis

Baseline landscape character	
Key features and qualities of the site in relation to the wider assessment unit	Landform ■ The site forms part of the rolling ridges of the High Weald Central LCA and a small part of the 'complex ridge and valley landform' of the wider assessment unit. ■ It comprises sloping land that falls between 155m AOD in the south and 145m AOD in the north. Natural character ■ Wooded belts of mature trees enclose the western and southern boundaries of the site, which is typical of the wooded character of the wider assessment unit. A hedgerow lines Scotsford Road and defines the eastern boundary of the site, whilst a garden fence forms the northern boundary. ■ Additional trees within the site and scattered on the school grounds also provide enclosure. ■ The presence of the former Broad Oak Primary School building, with associated playground, car park and access road, and a school house building, exerts a man-made influence on the site. Landscape pattern and time depth ■ The site consists of the former Broad Oak Primary School, grounds and a school house building within an area of 'Settlement Expansion' (as classified in the Sussex HLC), which is atypical of the wider assessment unit. The site lacks time depth as it comprises buildings, hard surfacing and mown grass. Perceptual aspects ■ The site is influenced by being within the settlement boundary of Broad Oak and by adjacent properties, which reduces levels of tranquillity (which are recorded as relatively low in CPRE's Tranquillity Mapping, Figure 3). However, the site experiences some 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 site forms part of the north-eastern settlement edge of Broad Oak, containing the former Broad Oak Primary School building and a schoolhouse building, which are relatively well enclosed from adjacent properties by the vegetated boundaries of the site. The site forms part of a transition between the nucleated form of Broad Oak and the more dispersed pattern of linear development and historic field patterns to the north.
Baseline visual character	
Potential visual receptors	The surrounding mature wooded tree belts and hedgerows enclose the site and limit its visibility from the surrounding landscape, including from nearby residential properties along Street End Lane to the west and within wider areas of Broad Oak. However, views are afforded from along Scotsford Road, with the existing buildings visible above the hedgerow that lines the road and through its gaps. There are also filtered views from the upper storey of properties immediately to the north and south. A recreational ground lies to the east of the site, although views from it are heavily filtered by mature vegetation along Scotsford Road.

Extent of visibility within the High Weald AONB	Long views to the site are limited by landform, as the site sits lower than surrounding slopes, as well as by the wooded vegetation surrounding the site, making it less visible in the landscape.
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, contributing towards the <u>pattern of faults and folds</u> . 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.	Broad Oak is a village of <u>medieval origin</u> and the site lies within its boundary, although forms part of its modern settlement edge.
Routeways – a dense network of historic routeways (now roads, tracks and paths).	No historic routeways cross the site. However, Street End Lane and Scotsford Road, which form the western and eastern boundaries respectively, are recorded as a historic lane and drove, contributing to 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 presence of buildings and the adjacent properties along the settlement edge. The adjacent Street End Lane and Scotsford Road are <u>unlit roads</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 site is influenced by the existing buildings, playground, access road and settlement edge, which reduces any sense of remoteness and tranquillity. The strong boundary vegetation provides a <u>sense of...enclosure</u> .

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 Heathfield assessment unit to have a **moderate-high** sensitivity to small-scale residential development (2-2.5 storey housing). The sensitivity analysis indicates that the complex landform; strong natural character including areas of woodland, lowland meadows, grassland and heathland; areas of intact historic field pattern; historic features in the south-east; the rural setting provided to Heathfield and Old Heathfield; and the location within and visual relationship with the wider High Weald AONB increases sensitivity to built development. However, the presence of existing ribbon development, modern agricultural buildings and a caravan park, and enclosure by woodland decrease 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 **low-moderate** sensitivity to small scale residential development (2-2.5 storey housing). The site contains existing buildings, a playground, access road and mown grass which exerts a man-made influence and is not characteristic of the wider area or the High Weald AONB as a whole. However, the sloping landform and the boundary wooded tree belts and hedges slightly increase 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 few of the core character components of natural beauty of the High Weald AONB. In summary:

- Its sloping landform contributes to the pattern of faults and folds;
- The trees and hedgerows along the boundaries of the site contribute to the highly interconnected habitats and sense of enclosure;
- The site is located within a historic settlement boundary; and
- The site forms part of a landscape with dark skies, although the sense of naturalness is limited by the presence of buildings and the adjacent 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 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 relatively 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 relatively steep 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 of mature tree belts and hedgerows, affecting the role they play in defining and partially screening the settlement edge, and contributions to the interconnectivity of habitats.	Woodland	<i>Highly interconnected and structurally varied mosaic of many small woodlands....and outgrown hedges, and isolated trees.</i>	- Retain, protect and enhance all mature vegetation within and surrounding the site where possible, especially the mature trees and hedgerows along the outer boundaries and the internal scattered trees (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).
	Aesthetic and perceptual qualities	<i>A sense of...enclosure...owing to the heavily treed landscape.</i>	
Modifications to Scotsford Road (recorded as a historic drove) 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, by utilising the existing access into the site, and protecting the hedgerows along it (in accordance with the AONB's Objectives R1 and R2).

Influence of lighting in the dark night skies resulting in night blight, including the potential introduction of streetlights along Scotsford Road if used for access.	Dark night skies	■ <i>Intrinsically dark landscapes...</i> ■ <i>Numerous unlit roads...</i>	■ Minimise the influence of lighting associated with new development and only install outdoor lighting where necessary (in accordance with the AONB's Objective DS1). ■ Follow the Institute of Lighting Professionals guidance ⁹ and use dark sky-friendly lighting (in accordance with the AONB's Objectives DS1 and DS2).
Settlement form edge and setting			
Change of development type within the site from a former school to a residential development.	N/A	N/A	■ 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 ¹⁰ <i>Look After Planning Design Guide</i>, 'Guidance on the ¹¹ and use of colour in development' ¹² and ¹² of the High Weald AONB Management Plan (in accordance with the AONB's Objective S2).
Visual amenity			
Visibility of development seen by: ■ residents of adjacent properties along Scotsford Road, immediately to the north and south; ■ motorists/cyclists travelling along Street End Lane and Scotsford Road;	Aesthetic and perceptual qualities	■ <i>A sense of...enclosure...owing to the heavily treed landscape.</i>	■ Retain, protect and enhance all existing vegetation including the thick hedgerow boundaries that enclose the site to the south and west (in accordance with the AONB's Objectives W1 and PQ2). ■ Screen new development with additional planting along the northern and eastern boundaries, 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

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/>

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>

■ users of the recreational ground to the east;			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 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:

- Limit the extent of development 'spilling' beyond the ridge crest onto the relatively steep valley side, to minimise alterations to the landform.
- Retain, protect and enhance the mature trees and hedgerows along the outer boundaries and the internal scattered trees.
- Utilise the existing access into the site off Scotsford Road.
- Screen new development with additional planting along the northern and eastern boundaries.

Collins Field, Burwash Road (848/1210)

Site Details	
Potential development	Employment development with floorspace of 2,866m ² proposed on the site as shown below. Site not Allocated or considered an Option.
Site location	This site lies between Heathfield and Broad Oak, north of the A265 Burwash Road, adjacent to the Burwash Road Business Area.

Figure 9: Site location and constraints

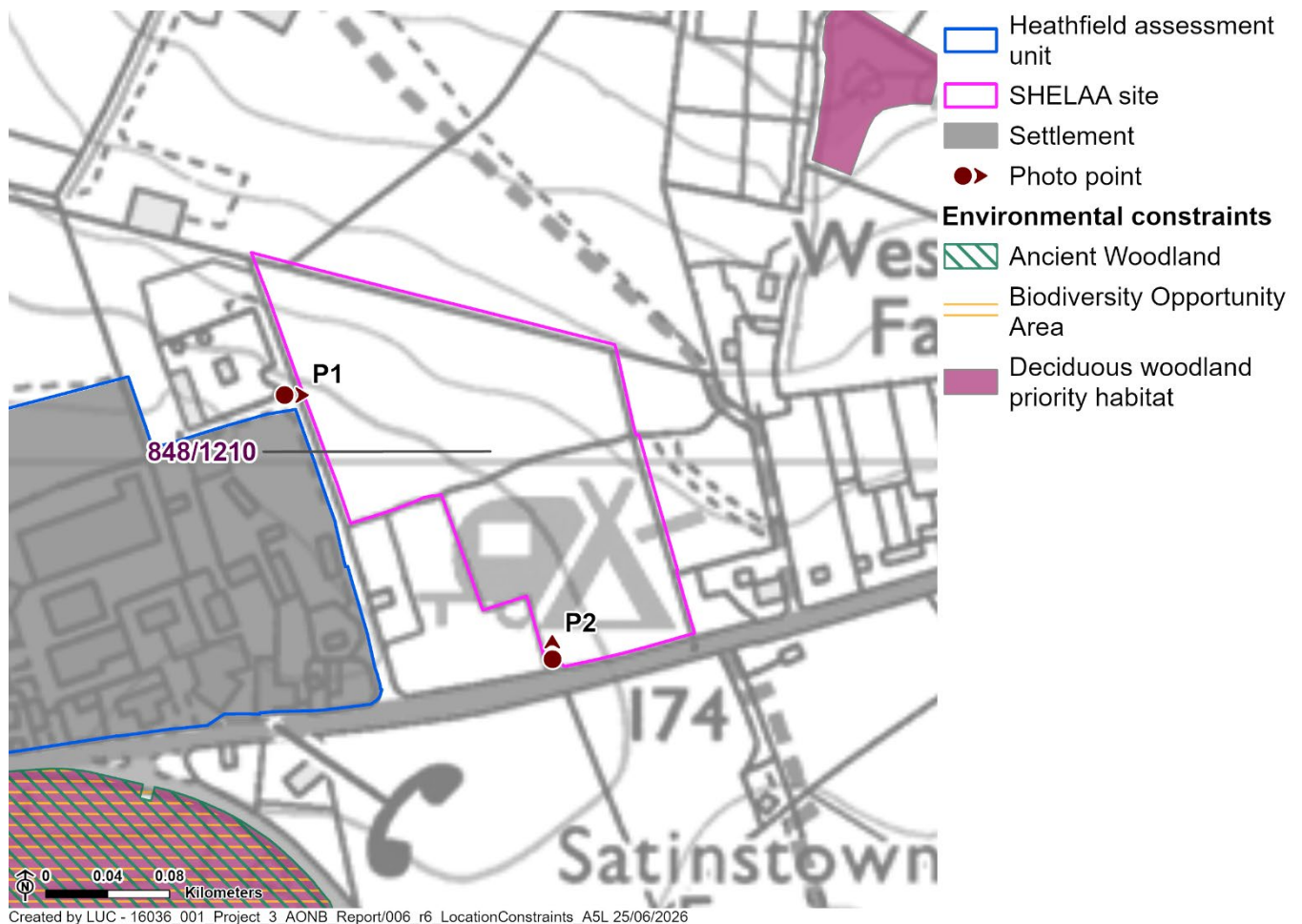
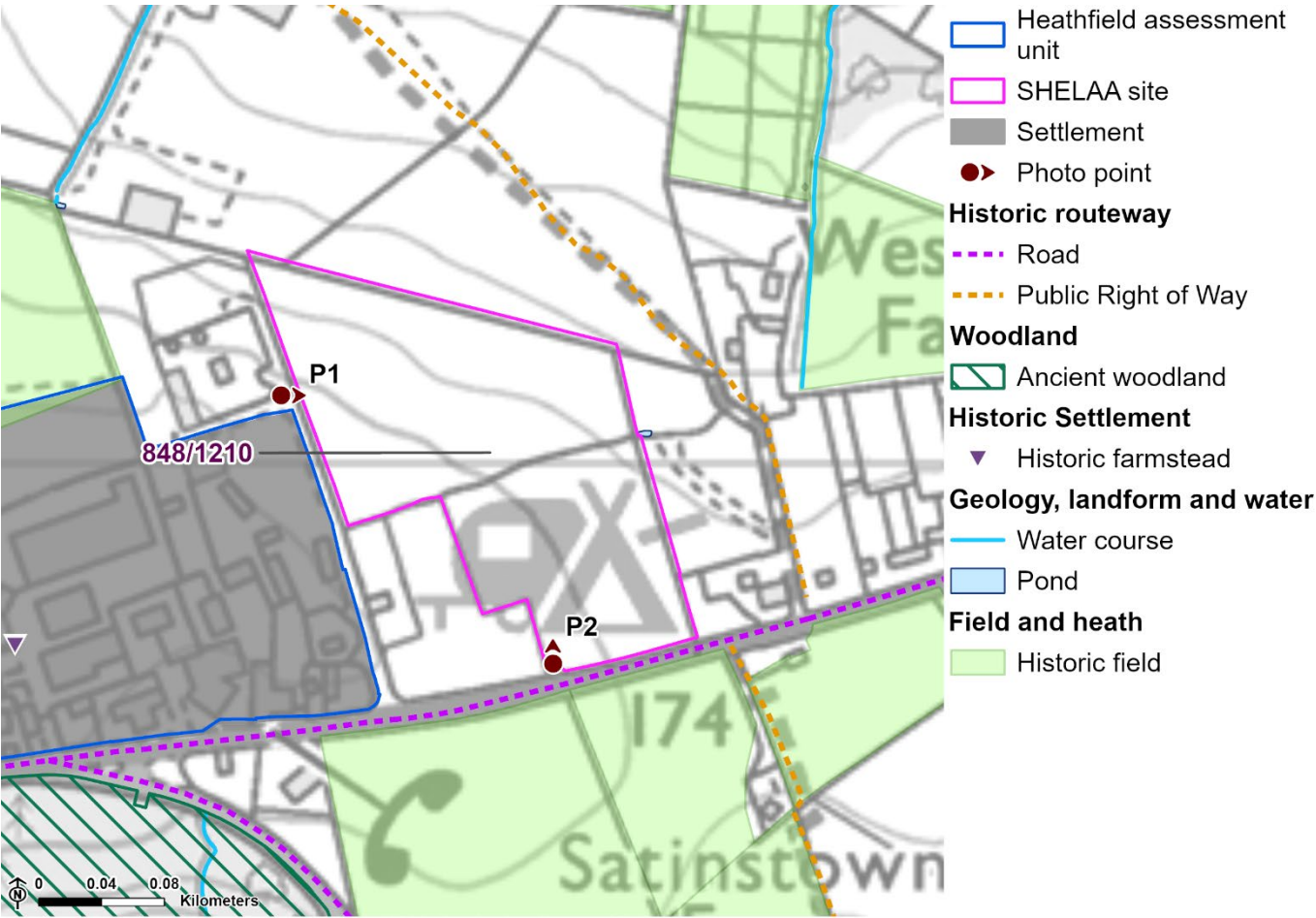


Figure 10: Site location and core character components of natural beauty of the High Weald AONB



Representative site photos



Photo 1: Site in use for cow grazing, with long views east to the wider High Weald AONB through mature hedgerows and vegetation on the site boundaries



Photo 2: Grassland field with mature hedgerow trees along internal boundaries.

Baseline Analysis

Baseline landscape character	
Key features and qualities of the site in relation to the wider assessment unit	Landform ■ The site forms part of the rolling ridges of the High Weald Central LCA, and a small part of the 'complex ridge and valley landform' of the wider assessment unit. ■ It gently slopes from 180m AOD in the south to 170m AOD in the north. Natural character ■ The site is in grazing use, with mature hedgerow trees marking the internal field boundaries, which is typical of the wider assessment unit. ■ There are some in-field trees in the south of the site. Mature vegetation and hedgerows line the A265 Burwash Road and on the western site boundary. Landscape pattern and time depth ■ The south of the site is derived from a regular piecemeal enclosure field pattern, while the north is part of a planned private enclosure field pattern (as classified in the Sussex HLC and typical of the wider assessment unit). Perceptual aspects ■ The south of the site is influenced by proximity to the A265 Burwash Road and Burwash Road Business Area, with relatively low levels of tranquillity recorded in CPRE's Tranquillity Mapping (Figure 3), whereas the north of the site has relatively high levels of tranquillity. The proximity to the existing business area and settlement disrupt 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 380m east of Heathfield and 280m west of Broad Oak. The edges of Heathfield and Broad Oak are not well-defined due to considerable ribbon development along the A265 Burwash Road. This includes the Burwash Road Business Area of low-lying large commercial units, household recycling centre, a 3.5 storey residential apartment block, caravan park and detached two storey houses. The western edge of the site is adjacent to the business centre, with hedgerows separating the site from the commercial area.
Baseline visual character	
Potential visual receptors	Mature hedgerows and trees along the A265 Burwash Road limit visibility for people travelling along Burwash Road. Residential properties on Burwash Road are at an oblique angle to the site and would have limited views. Users of the informal carpark to the west of the site have clear views into the site. Views into the site from the road leading to the household recycling centre are partially screened by hedgerows. Users of the public right of way to the north-east experience some views into the site, although these are limited by the mature field boundaries around the site.
Extent of intervisibility within the High Weald AONB	Long glimpsed views of the wooded hills of the wider High Weald AONB to the north-east and south across the A265 Burwash Road. There are few views from the AONB looking back to 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, contributing towards the <u>pattern of faults and folds</u> . 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 adjacent to the site.
Routeways - a dense network of historic routeways (now roads, tracks and paths)	No historic routeways cross the site. However, the A265 Burwash Road along the southern boundary is recorded as a ridgeway, which contributes towards the <u>dense radiating network</u> of historic routeways, 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.	The mature trees along the internal field boundary are <u>trees used for boundary markers</u> and contribute towards the <u>highly interconnected and structurally varied mosaic of many small woods...and outgrown hedges</u> . The in-field trees in the south <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 fits into a wider, generally <u>irregular field pattern</u> , defined by hedgerows and mature vegetation. The site is used for <u>grazing livestock</u> .
Dark night skies – intrinsically dark at night with our own galaxy (the Milky Way) visible.	The adjacent A265 Burwash Road is an <u>unlit road</u> but dark skies are limited by the adjacent existing business area and settlement.
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 grazing and the internal trees provides a <u>pastoral feel</u> and contributes to the <u>recognisable and unifying mosaic of open field and wooded habitats</u> . The sense of rurality and tranquillity is limited by the adjacent road and business area, although the north of the site is more tranquil than the south. The higher elevation of the site in the south provides glimpsed <u>long views</u> to the north-east and south towards wooded hills of the wider High Weald AONB.
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 Heathfield assessment unit to have a **high** sensitivity to commercial/ industrial development. The sensitivity analysis indicates that the complex landform; strong natural character including areas of woodland, lowland meadows, grassland and heathland; areas of intact historic field pattern; historic features in the south-east; the rural setting provided to Heathfield and Old Heathfield; and the location within and visual relationship with the wider High Weald AONB increases sensitivity to built development. However, the presence of existing ribbon development, modern agricultural buildings and a caravan park, and enclosure by woodland decrease 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-high** sensitivity to commercial/industrial development. The site has a gently undulating topography, is in pasture use and contains mature hedgerow trees. It retains its historic field pattern, contributes to the separation of development along the A265 and has high levels of tranquillity in the north, with glimpsed views to the wider AONB. The site therefore demonstrates some of the characteristics that increase sensitivity to development across the assessment unit. However, the site has a semi-enclosed character and is adjacent to existing ribbon and commercial development, which are some of the characteristics that contribute to a lower degree of sensitivity across the wider assessment unit.

Variations in Sensitivity

The south of the site is slightly more sensitive along Burwash Road as it has an important role in the perception of separation of Heathfield and Broad Oak, although not to the extent that there would be a change to the moderate-high sensitivity rating considered above.

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

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

- The sloping landform contributes towards the pattern of faults and folds;
- The mature trees and hedgerows contribute to the highly interconnected woodland habitats;
- The grazing of livestock and internal trees contribute to the pastoral feel of the landscape, with links to the history of the land-based economy; and
- The small irregular fields contribute towards the historic field pattern; and
- There are glimpsed long distance views to the wooded hills of the wider High Weald AONB to the north-east and south.

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			
Changes to the 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 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 of mature trees and hedgerows, affecting the role they play in screening the site and contributions to the interconnectivity of habitats.	Woodland	<i>Highly interconnected and structurally varied mosaic of many small woodlands....and outgrown hedges, and isolated trees.</i> <i>Trees used for boundary markers.</i>	- Retain, protect and enhance all mature vegetation within and surrounding the site, especially mature trees, hedgerows and the mature hedgerow trees along the internal field boundary in the centre 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).
Loss of the grazed pastures, in-field trees and irregular field pattern.	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</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, the internal and outer field boundaries should be retained and enhanced where

		<i>wider landscape, as well as shelter and food source to a wide range of species.</i>	possible to avoid complete loss of field pattern (in accordance with the AONB's Objective FH2).
	Fieldscape and heath	■ <i>Fields, mostly permanent pasture, used for grazing livestock...</i> ■ <i>A generally irregular field pattern with individual fields relatively small...</i>	■ Retain the in-field trees in the southern part of the site and improve connectivity with other habitats through new tree planting (in accordance with the AONB's Objective W2).
Modifications to the A265 Burwash Road (recorded as a historic ridgeway) 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).
Settlement form edge and setting			
Extension of development along the A265 Burwash Road, reducing the separation between Heathfield and Broad Oak. Deterioration of the rural character of the site which contributes to the setting of Heathfield and Broad Oak.	Settlement	<i>Separation between settlements formed by fields associated with...historic field systems.</i>	■ Provide some set back to any development in the south of the site along the A265 Burwash Road to retain the perception of separation between Heathfield and Broad Oak (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 'Guidance on the selection and use of colour in development'¹³ and objectives of the High Weald AONB Management Plan¹⁴ (in accordance with the AONB's Objective S2).
Visual amenity			

¹³ <https://www.highweald.org/look-after/planning/colour-study.html>

¹⁴ <https://www.highweald.org/high-weald-aonb-management-plan.html>

Visibility of development seen by: - pedestrians, motorists/cyclists and residents along the A265 Burwash Road to the south; - users of the Burwash Road Business Area including the recycling centre; - users of the informal car park to the west of the site; and - users of the footpath to the north-east.	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>Unexpected panoramic and long views, often uninterrupted, extending out along the valleys...</i>	- Retain, enhance and protect all existing vegetation including the hedgerow boundaries that enclose the site to the north and east (in accordance with the AONB's Objectives W1 and PQ2). - Screen new development with additional planting, using native local species, where possible / suitable, to maintain the rural character of the wider area (in accordance with the AONB's Objective PQ2). - Set back any development in the south of the site from the A265 Burwash Road to reduce the impact on views from road users and the informal car park to the west of the site. This will also avoid the perception of continual commercial development from Newick Lane in the west to Iden's Lane in the east (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). - Consider views of development from the footpath to the north-east, retaining and enhancing trees/woodland to screen views into the site (in accordance with the AONB's Objective PQ2).
Overall impact on the core character components of natural beauty of the High Weald AONB			
Moderate impact	The baseline analysis identifies that the site (and immediate surrounds) expresses some of the core character components of natural beauty, with a moderate level of expression. This is due to the presence of sloping landform (affording long-distance views); mature trees and hedgerows; infield trees, irregular field pattern and grazed pastures. Development of the site is judged to have a moderate impact on the landscape and visual qualities/features that define the AONB, therefore somewhat affecting / impacting the ability of the Council to fulfil its statutory duty to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the AONB. If the potential mitigation and enhancement opportunities set out above are applied, potential impacts as a result of the development on the site could potentially be reduced. However, there would still be inevitable adverse impacts on the grazed pastures which would be lost. <u>Variation to overall impact</u> There is no variation to the overall impact considered above.		

Summary and recommendations

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

- Limit the extent of development 'spilling' beyond the ridge crest onto the valley side to minimise alterations to the landform.
- Retain, protect and enhance mature trees, hedgerows and the mature hedgerow trees along the internal field boundary in the centre of the site.
- Retain the in-field trees in the southern part of the site and improve connectivity with other habitats through new tree planting.
- Set back any development in the south of the site from the A265 Burwash Road to retain the perception of separation between Heathfield and Broad Oak, and to reduce the impact on views from road users and the informal car park to the west of the site.
- Consider views of development from the footpath to the north-east, retaining and enhancing trees/woodland to screen views into the site.

Land south of Burwash Road and east of Tower Street (260/1210)

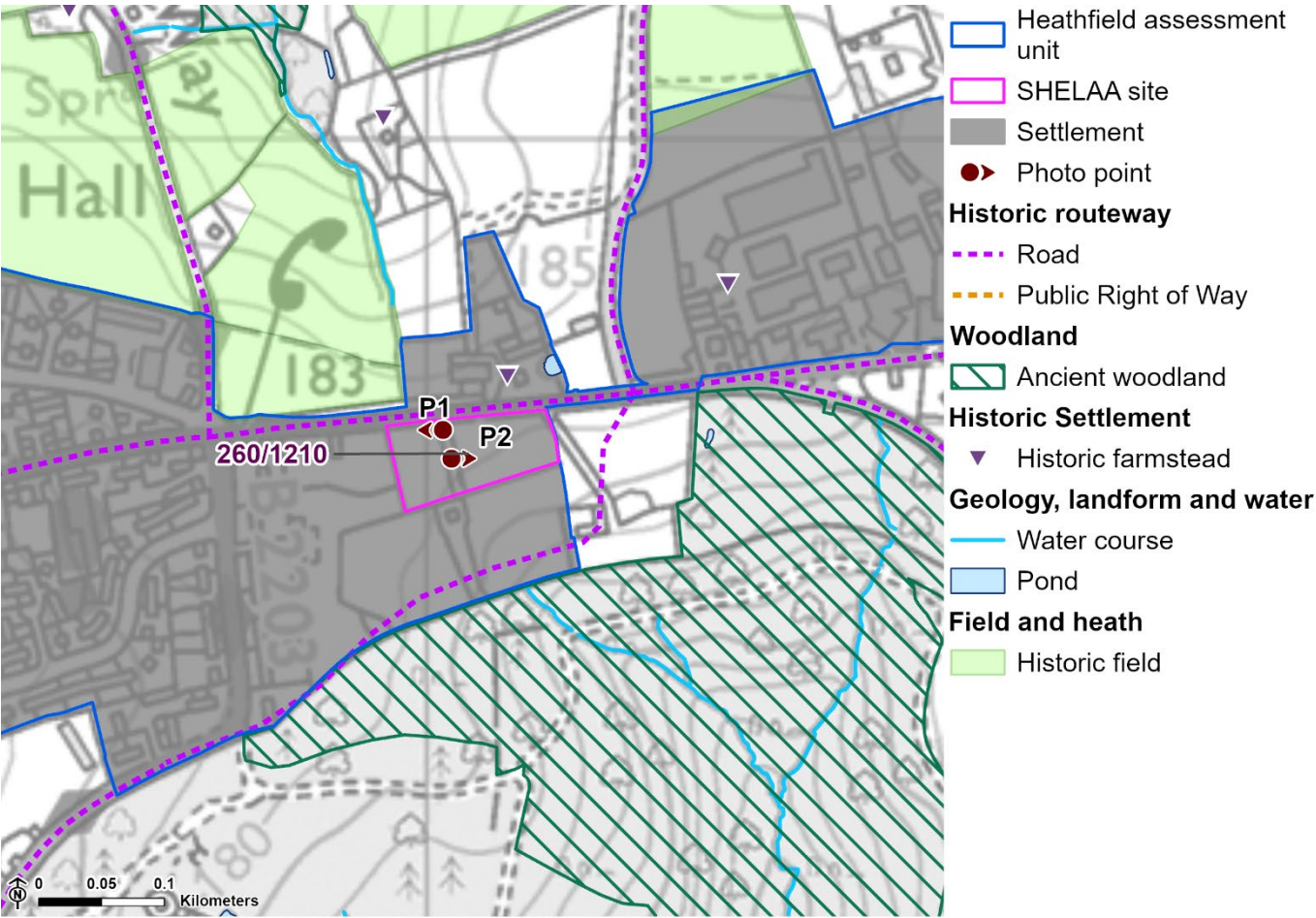
Site Details	
Potential development	Residential development proposed on entirety of site mapped below, and entirety of the site is proposed as Draft Allocation HEA3 (identified for 20 dwellings) in the Focused Wealden Local Plan (2026).
Site location	This site lies north-east of Heathfield, to the south of the A265 Burwash Road and east of recent development at Blackberry Mews.

Figure 11: Site location and constraints



Created by LUC - 16036_001_Project_3_AONB_Report/006_r6_LocationConstraints_A5L 25/06/2026

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



Representative site photos



Photo 1: View into the western part of the site with scrubby grassland, and views to development in Blackberry Mews to the west.



Photo 2: View into the eastern part of the site with a meadow character and mature in-field tree.

Baseline Analysis

Baseline landscape character	
Key features and qualities of the site in relation to the wider assessment unit	Landform ■ The site is generally flat, and lies around 180m AOD, which is atypical of the wider assessment unit. Natural character ■ The eastern part of the site comprises grassland, which is typical of the wider assessment unit. The western part of the site is scrubby grassland with piles of stones and waste and does not appear to be in use. ■ Mature hedgerows with occasional trees line the A265 Burwash Road (along the northern boundary of the site), and there are some mature in-field trees in the east of the site. The site is within the Heathfield Habitat Link BOA, which is common within the wider assessment unit. ■ The site lies 75m north of ancient woodland at Heathfield Park and 130m north of the Heathfield Park SSSI. Landscape pattern and time depth ■ The site is derived from a regular piecemeal enclosure field pattern (as classified in the Sussex HLC and typical of the wider assessment unit). However, the in-field trees, grassland and surrounding woodland lead to a parkland character. ■ A Grade II listed building lies 60m south-east of the site, and the Heathfield Park Registered Park and Garden is 80m to the south. Perceptual aspects ■ The site is influenced by its proximity to the A265 Burwash Road and settlement edge of Heathfield, as shown in the relatively low levels of tranquillity recorded in CPRE's Tranquillity Mapping (Figure 3). These also disrupt 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 forms a small part of the settlement separation between Heathfield and Broad Oak, although is physically contained between the existing settlement edge to the west and woodland to the east. The eastern settlement edge of Heathfield is relatively dispersed; however, Heathfield Park forms a soft settlement boundary. The settlement edge along Tower Street consists of bungalows and two-storey 20th century detached houses. A recent development of four houses in a cul-de-sac at Blackberry Mews off the A265 Burwash Road has extended the settlement edge further east, and this marks the western boundary of the site. Another recent development (Cart Barn Place) of seven houses and eight flats is located opposite the northern edge of the site.
Baseline visual character	
Potential visual receptors	Mature hedgerows and trees along the A265 Burwash Road restrict visibility for people travelling along the road. Views from Blackberry Mews to the west are limited by mature vegetation and fencing, although some views are possible. A single house, Parklands, lies to the south of the site, and there is visibility of the site. There will be some views into the site from the entrance of the Cart Barn Place development to the north of the A265 Burwash Road.

Extent of intervisibility within the High Weald AONB	Mature vegetation and hedgerows result in very limited intervisibility with the wider High Weald AONB, although there are some glimpsed long-distance views to the south.
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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.	There are no distinctive geological, landform or water features within the site.
Settlement – dispersed historic settlement including high densities of isolated farmsteads, hamlets and late-medieval villages founded on trade and non-agricultural rural industries.	The Cart Barn Place development to the north of the site is a farmstead redevelopment based on the existing historic farmstead of North Down¹⁵. However, its contribution to the <i>high density of historic farmsteads</i> found within the AONB is not strongly expressed due to the introduction of the seven houses and eight flats and car parking, and it is recorded as being of 'partial loss'. The site also forms a small part of the <i>separation between settlements</i> (Heathfield and Broad Oak) <i>formed by fields</i> (historically) <i>associated with individual historic farmsteads...</i>
Routeways - a dense network of historic routeways (now roads, tracks and paths)	No historic routeways cross the site. The A265 Burwash Road along the northern boundary is recorded as a ridgeway, which contributes towards the <i>dense radiating network</i> of historic routeways, 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.	The mature hedgerows and occasional trees along the A265 Burwash Road contribute towards the <i>highly interconnected and structurally varied mosaic of many small woods...and outgrown hedges</i> . The mature in-field trees in the east of the site <i>provide additional connectivity to the wider landscape</i> .
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 in-field trees and grassland contribute to a <i>wood-pasture and parkland</i> character in the east. <i>Generally irregular field pattern</i>, defined by hedgerows and mature vegetation. The fields are 'hanging' from (at right angles to) a ridge-top road and is an example of the <i>strong influence exerted by topography</i>.
Dark night skies – intrinsically dark at night with our own galaxy (the Milky Way) visible.	Dark skies are limited by the adjacent road and 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	The grassland and vegetation within the site contributes to the <i>recognisable and unifying mosaic of open field and wooded habitats</i> . The sense of rurality and tranquillity is limited by the adjacent properties and roads. Long views of the site are limited by vegetation enclosing the site which contributes to the <i>sense of intimacy, enclosure and remoteness...</i>

¹⁵ As identified in the High Weald AONB character components dataset (see Figure 12).

gardeners inspired by the landscape.	
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 Heathfield assessment unit to have a **moderate-high** sensitivity to small-scale residential development (2-2.5 storey housing). The sensitivity analysis indicates that the complex landform; strong natural character including areas of woodland, lowland meadows, grassland and heathland; areas of intact historic field pattern; historic features in the south-east; the rural setting provided to Heathfield and Old Heathfield; and the location within and visual relationship with the wider High Weald AONB increases sensitivity to built development. However, the presence of existing ribbon development, modern agricultural buildings and a caravan park, and enclosure by woodland decrease sensitivity.

The Site

Overall, it is considered that the site has a lower sensitivity than the assessment unit, and has a **moderate** sensitivity to small-scale residential development (2-2.5 storey housing). The site contains a small area of grassland in the east, mature hedgerows and in-field trees, retains its historic field pattern, and has some glimpsed long-distance views of the wider AONB, all of which are features that increase sensitivity to development in the wider assessment unit. However, the site is relatively flat, located adjacent to existing ribbon development (including some modern housing development to the west and north), is next to the busy A265 Burwash Road which reduces tranquillity and is largely enclosed from view. These are features that decrease sensitivity to development across the assessment unit.

Variations in Sensitivity

The west of the site is less sensitive than the east due to its relationship with the existing settlement edge of Heathfield. The eastern part of the site is more rural in character with grassland and infield trees.

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

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

- The mature trees and hedgerows contribute to the highly interconnected woodland habitats and enclosure;
- The mature in-field trees in the east of the site provide additional connectivity to the wider landscape;
- The grassland and vegetation within the site contributes to the mosaic of open field and wooded habitats as well as the wood-pasture and parkland character; and
- The small irregular fields contribute towards the historic field pattern.

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

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

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

Potential effects as a result of development on the site	Core character component of natural beauty potentially affected	Relevant key characteristics of the core character component potentially affected	Potential mitigation and enhancement opportunities
Landscape character and features			
Removal of mature deciduous trees and hedgerows, affecting the role they play in defining and screening the settlement edge and contributions to the interconnectivity of habitats.	Woodland	<i>Highly interconnected and structurally varied mosaic of many small woodlands....and outgrown hedges.</i>	■ Retain, protect and enhance all mature vegetation within and surrounding the site, especially the mature hedgerows with occasional trees along the northern boundary of the site and that line the A265 Burwash Road (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). ■ Take up biodiversity opportunities listed for the Heathfield Habitat Link BOA, where possible (in accordance with the AONB's Objective W2).
Loss of grassland, in-field trees and irregular field pattern.	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 grassland would be unavoidable with development of the site, with limited opportunities to retain areas due to the small scale of the site. However, the field boundaries along the northern and eastern 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).

	Fieldscape and heath	■ <i>A generally irregular field pattern with individual fields relatively small...</i> ■ <i>Strong influence exerted by topography with many field systems aligned to or 'hanging' from (at right angles to) linear features such as...ridge-top roads.</i>	■ Retain the in-field trees in the eastern part of the site and improve connectivity with other habitats through new tree planting (in accordance with the AONB's Objective W2).
Modifications to the A265 Burwash Road (recorded as a historic routeway) 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).
Settlement form edge and setting			
Deterioration of the rural character of the site which contributes to the setting of Heathfield.	Settlement	<i>Separation between settlements formed by fields associated with individual historic farmsteads...</i>	■ Maintain the existing settlement pattern and its character by following the scale, built form and streetscape of the recent development along Blackberry Mews (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'¹⁶, 'Guidance on the selection and use of colour in development'¹⁷ and objectives of the High Weald AONB Management Plan¹⁸ (in accordance with the AONB's Objective S2).
Visual amenity			

¹⁶ <https://www.highweald.org/look-after/planning/design-guide.html>

¹⁷ <https://www.highweald.org/look-after/planning/colour-study.html>

¹⁸ <https://www.highweald.org/high-weald-aonb-management-plan.html>

Visibility of development seen by: ■ pedestrians, motorists and cyclists, and residents along the A265 Burwash Road (including the Cart Barn Place development); ■ residents of Parklands, to the south of the site; and ■ residents at Blackberry Mews to the west.		■ <i>A recognisable and unifying mosaic of open field and wooded habitats.</i> ■ <i>A sense of intimacy, enclosure and remoteness owing to the heavily treed landscape.</i>	■ Retain, protect and enhance all existing vegetation including the mature hedgerow along the northern boundary (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 assessment unit and landscape (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). ■ Consider views of development from Parklands to the south, retaining and enhancing trees/ hedgerows to screen views into the site (in accordance with the AONB's Objective PQ2).
Overall impact on the core character components of natural beauty of the High Weald AONB			
Moderate impact	The baseline analysis identifies that the site (and immediate surrounds) expresses some of the core character components of natural beauty, with a moderate level of expression. This is due to the presence of mature trees and hedgerows; infield trees, irregular field pattern and grassland. Development of the site is judged to have a moderate impact on the landscape and visual qualities/features that define the AONB, therefore somewhat affecting / impacting the ability of the Council to fulfil its statutory duty to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the AONB. If the potential mitigation and enhancement opportunities set out above are applied, potential impacts as a result of the development on the site could potentially be reduced. However, there would still be inevitable adverse impacts on the grassland which would be lost. <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 hedgerows with occasional trees along the northern boundary of the site and that line the A265 Burwash Road.
- Take up biodiversity opportunities listed for the Heathfield Habitat Link BOA, where possible.
- Retain the in-field trees in the eastern part of the site and improve connectivity with other habitats through new tree planting.
- Maintain the existing settlement pattern and its character by following the scale, built form and streetscape of the recent development along Blackberry Mews.
- Consider views of development from Parklands to the south, retaining and enhancing trees/ hedgerows to screen views into the site.

Figure 13: Summary map of constraints and opportunities



Land at Parklands, Burwash Road (275/1210), 15 Tower Street (299/1210) and The Old Half Moon, Burwash Road (798/1210)

Site Details	
Potential development	Site 275/1210 - Residential development proposed on entirety of site mapped below, and entirety of the site is proposed as draft allocation HEA10 (identified for 10 dwellings) in the Focused Wealden Local Plan (2026). Site 275/1210 - Residential development proposed on entirety of site mapped below, and entirety of the site is proposed as draft allocation HEA4 (identified for 10 dwellings) in the Focused Wealden Local Plan (2026). Site 275/1210 - Residential development proposed on entirety of site mapped below, and entirety of the site is proposed as draft allocation HEA11 (identified for 10 dwellings) in the Focused Wealden Local Plan (2026). Total: 30 residential dwellings For the purpose of this landscape and visual appraisal the above SHELAA sites have been considered together.
Site location	These sites are located to the north-east of Heathfield and situated to the north of Heathfield Park and to the south of the A265 Burwash Road.

Figure 14: Site location and constraints

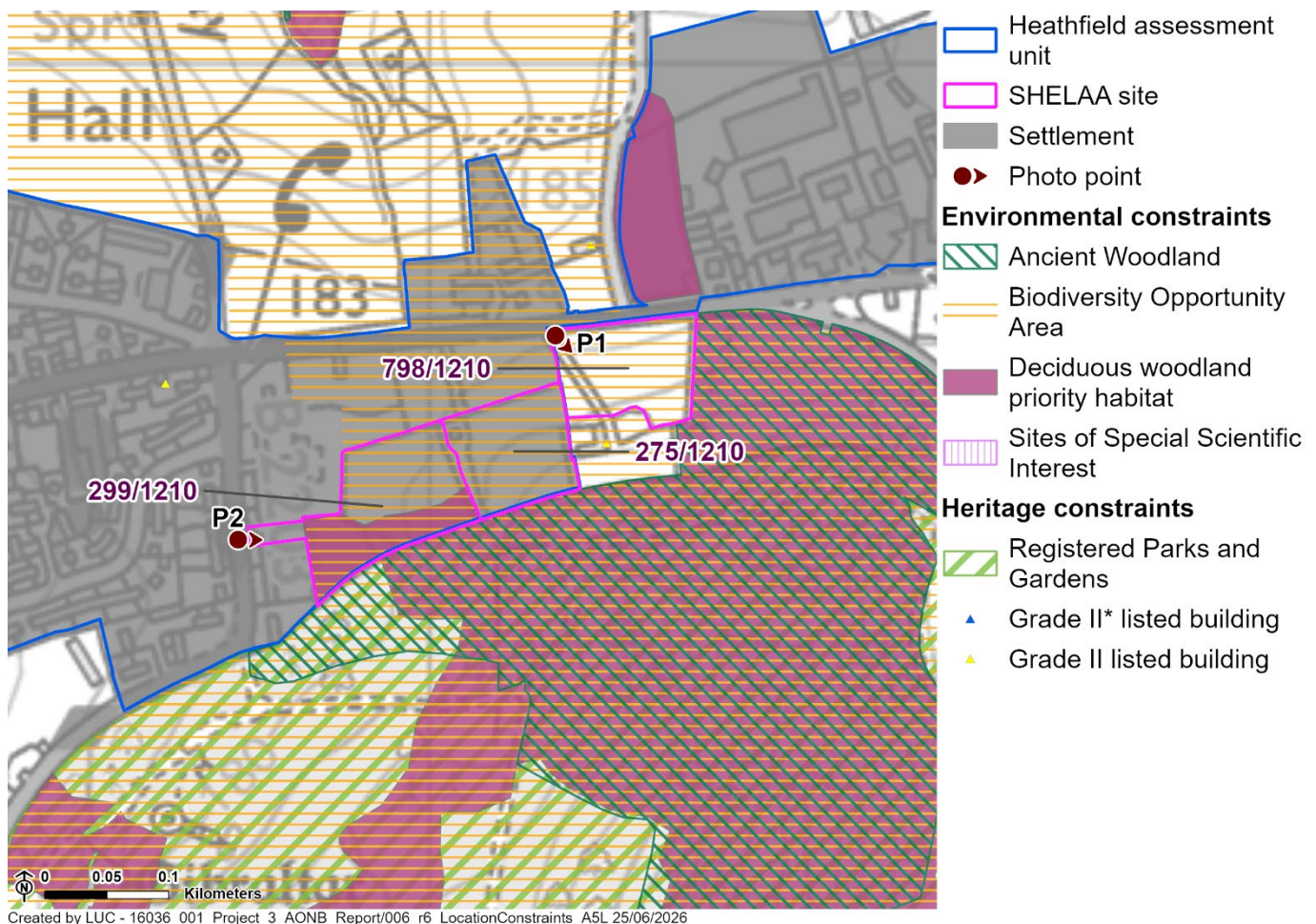
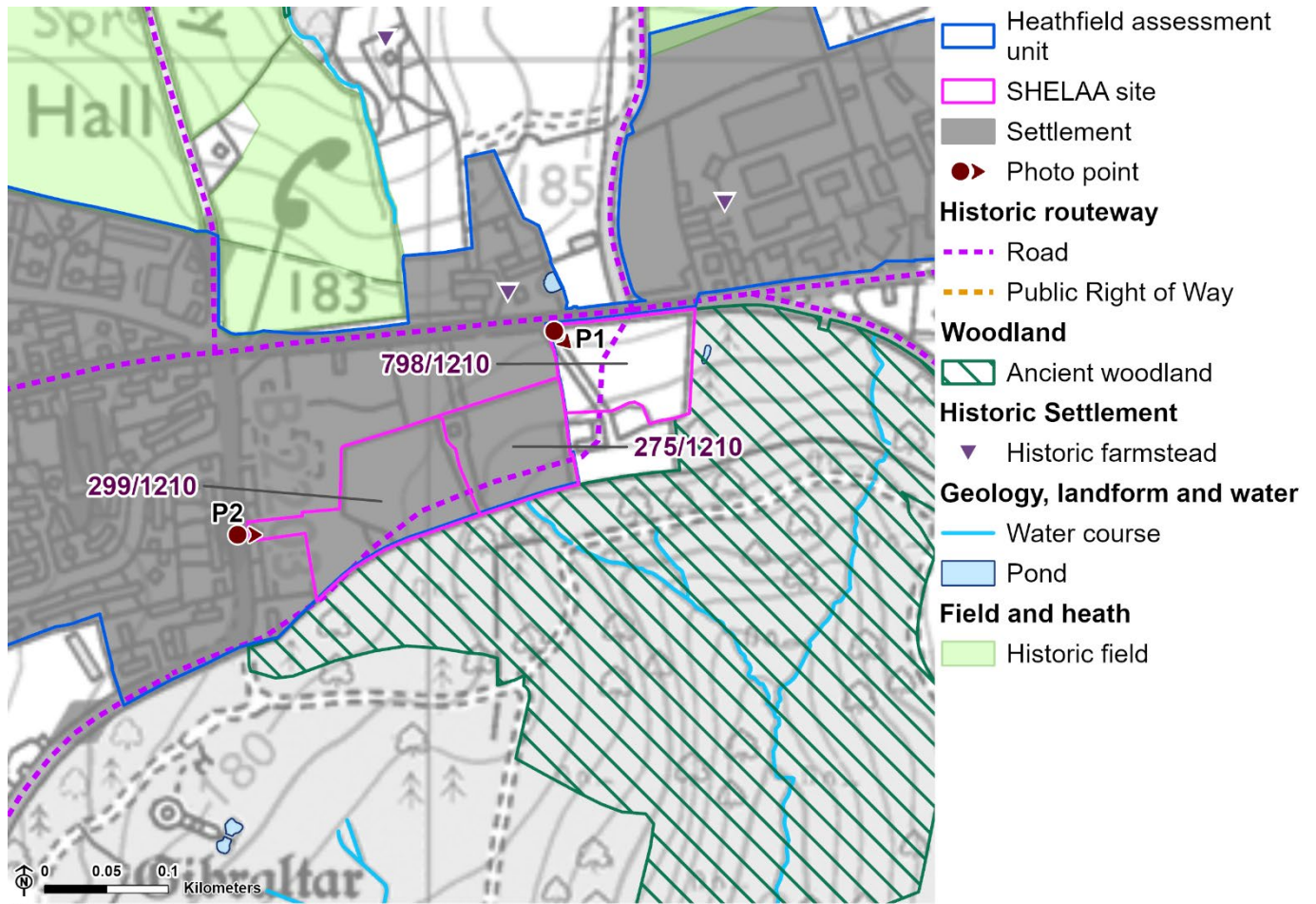


Figure 15: Site location and core character components of natural beauty of the High Weald AONB



Representative site photos



Photo 1: View from the north-western corner of site 798/1210 looking across its grassland field.



Photo 2: Views into site 299/1210 from the settlement edge along Tower Street are curtailed by dense woodland.

Baseline Analysis

Baseline landscape character	
Key features and qualities of the site in relation to the wider assessment unit	Landform ■ The sites form part of the transitional slope descending from the ridge crest to the north and north-west of the site towards the stream corridor of Wealden Gill to the south. The sites' topography features undulating upper slopes that fall southward toward the Pevensey Levels, which is typical of the 'undulating ridge and incised valley landscape' of the wider assessment unit. ■ Landform slopes from the north of sites 275/1210 and 798/1210, from around 180m AOD to the south, dropping to below 170m AOD for site 275/1210. ■ The western side of site 299/1210 is flatter, lying around 180m AOD and gently sloping towards the south-east. Natural character ■ Ancient woodland within Heathfield Park (which is partly covered by a SSSI and is also priority habitat deciduous woodland) lies immediately adjacent to the southern boundaries of sites 299/1210 and 275/1210, and forms the primary eastern boundary of site 798/1210. The vegetation cover within site 299/1210 forms an extension of this habitat (the southern extent also being priority habitat deciduous woodland), contributing to the densely wooded landscape that is a defining characteristic of the wider assessment unit. ■ Sites 798/1210 and 275/1210 comprise mostly of grassland, which is typical of the wider assessment unit. ■ Across the sites, a well-developed hedgerow network with frequent mature trees (including oak, beech and hornbeam) forms a key structural component of the landscape, reinforcing enclosure and ecological connectivity. ■ The sites are within the Heathfield Habitat Link BOA, which is common within the wider assessment unit. Landscape pattern and time depth ■ The sites are derived from a regular piecemeal enclosure field pattern (as classified in the Sussex HLC and typical of the wider assessment unit). However, the in-field trees, grassland and surrounding woodland lead to a parkland character. ■ The intact hedgerow network, with mature trees and remnant boundary features such as earth banks, reinforces the historic field pattern typical of the High Weald and contributes to landscape continuity. ■ The Old Half Moon, a Grade II listed building, lies directly adjacent to the boundaries of sites 798/1210 and 275/1210, and the Heathfield Park Registered Park and Garden abuts the southern boundaries of sites 299/1210 and 275/1210, contributing to time depth. Perceptual aspects ■ The sites are influenced by their proximity to the settlement edge of Heathfield and the A265 Burwash Road, as shown in the relatively low levels of tranquillity recorded in CPRE's Tranquillity Mapping (Figure 3). These also disrupt 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 sites form a small part of the settlement separation between Heathfield and Broad Oak, although are physically contained between the existing settlement edge to the west and woodland to the east. The settlement edge along Tower Street consists of bungalows and two-storey 20th century detached houses. A recent development of four houses in a cul-de-sac at Blackberry Mews off the A265 Burwash Road has extended the settlement edge further east, and this abuts the northern boundary of site 299/1210. Another recent development (Cart Barn Place) of seven houses and eight flats is located adjacent to the north-western corner of site 798/1210 (on the opposite side of the A265 Burwash Road). The eastern settlement edge of Heathfield is relatively dispersed; however, the woodland within site 299/1210 as well as Heathfield Park, form a soft settlement boundary.
Baseline visual character	
Potential visual receptors	A single house, Parklands, lies within the north-western corner of site 275/1210 and so has views within this part of the site, although are contained to the west by woodland. Residents of the Old Half Moon (located adjacent to sites 798/1210 and 275/1210) are also afforded with glimpsed views seen through gaps in surrounding vegetation. Views from Blackberry Mews to the north of site 299/1210 are contained by the woodland within this site to the south. Mature hedgerows and trees along the A265 restrict visibility for people travelling along the road. To the west, views from residential properties along Tower Street are curtailed by the dense woodland within site 299/1210. Heathfield Park provides a dense natural boundary to the south, preventing outward views, while views from the lower Wealden Gill to the south are blocked by tree cover and steep topography.
Extent of visibility within the High Weald AONB	Mature vegetation and hedgerows result in very limited intervisibility with the wider High Weald AONB, although there are some glimpsed long-distance views to the south.

Expression of the 'core character components of natural beauty' of the High Weald AONB on the sites	
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 sites are located on a transitional ridge top descending into the narrow, steep-sided valleys, contributing to the distinct <u>pattern of faults and folds</u> of the AONB. The stream adjacent to the southern boundary of site 299/1210 contributes to the <u>numerous small streams</u>. It originates from a spring at the site boundary, contributing to the <u>high concentration of springs associated with faultlines</u> and descends south in a <u>narrow steep-sided valley (gill)</u>.
Settlement – dispersed historic settlement including high densities of isolated farmsteads, hamlets and late-medieval villages founded on trade and non-agricultural rural industries.	The Old Half Moon lies directly south of site 798/1210, and east of site 275/1210 and contributes towards the characteristic <u>pre-1750 timber-framed farm buildings with typologies representing locally distinctive historic agricultural practices...</u> The Cart Barn Place development to the north-west of site 798/1210 is a farmstead redevelopment based on the existing historic farmstead of North Down¹⁹. However, its contribution to the <u>high density of historic farmsteads</u> found within the AONB is not strongly expressed due to the introduction of the seven houses and eight flats and car parking, and it is recorded as being of 'partial loss'. The sites also form a small part of the <u>separation between settlements</u> (Heathfield and Broad Oak) <u>formed by fields</u> (historically) <u>associated with individual historic farmsteads...</u>
Routeways – a dense network of historic routeways (now roads, tracks and paths).	The A265 Burwash Road, which contains the sites to the north, is recorded as a historic ridgeway, and contributes towards the <u>dense radiating network</u> of historic routeways, although its expression is masked by its use as a A-road with associated modern road markings. A historic track is recorded as crossing through sites 275/1210 and 798/1210. While no longer an active public right of way, this path represents a <u>lost, stopped, or diverted routeway</u>.
Woodland – an abundance of ancient woodland mostly in small holdings, highly interconnected with hedges and shaws.	Ancient woodland within Heathfield Park encloses the sites to the south and east and contributes towards the <u>high proportion of ancient woodland</u>. Together with the dense deciduous cover of site 299/1210 and the mature trees and hedgerow boundaries across all three parcels, these features form a <u>highly interconnected and structurally varied mosaic</u> of small woods, and outgrown hedges characteristic of the High Weald.
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 mature woodland, trees and grassland contribute to a <u>wood-pasture and parkland</u> character. <u>Generally irregular field pattern</u>, defined by mature trees and hedgerows. The fields are 'hanging' from (at right angles to) a ridge-top road and is an example of the <u>strong influence exerted by topography</u>. The proximity to the ancient woodland means these fields are part of a system where unmanaged areas quickly <u>succeed back towards woodland</u>, maintaining the verdant historic hedgerows character of the settlement edge.
Dark night skies – intrinsically dark at night with our own galaxy (the Milky Way) visible.	Dark skies are limited by the adjacent road and settlement edge.
Aesthetic and perceptual qualities – arising from the interaction of people with the landscape, including the notion of a	The proximity to Heathfield Park (including ancient woodland), the Grade II listed Old Half Moon, and the historic routeway crossing the sites contribute to a strong <u>sense of history and timelessness</u>. The combination of open grassland areas and dense enclosing woodland contribute to the <u>recognisable and unifying mosaic of open field</u>

¹⁹ As identified in the High Weald AONB character components dataset (see Figure 15).

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.	<u>and wooded habitats</u> . The sense of rurality and tranquillity is partially limited by the adjacent A265 and the settlement edge of Heathfield, although the soft settlement boundary enhances the <u>sense of intimacy, enclosure, and remoteness</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 sites.

Baseline Summary

How the sites relate to the sensitivity of the wider assessment unit

The Assessment Unit

The *Wealden Landscape Sensitivity Assessment to Residential and Employment Development* assesses the Heathfield assessment unit to have a **moderate-high** sensitivity to small scale residential development (2-2.5 storey housing). The sensitivity analysis indicates that complex landform; strong natural character including areas of woodland, lowland meadows, grassland and heathland; areas of intact historic field pattern; historic features in the south-east; the rural setting provided to Heathfield and Old Heathfield; and the location within and visual relationship with the wider High Weald AONB increase sensitivity to development. However, the presence of existing ribbon development, modern agricultural buildings, a caravan park, and enclosure by woodland decrease sensitivity.

The Site

Overall, it is considered that the sites have the same sensitivity as the assessment unit as a whole and is considered to be of **moderate-high** sensitivity to small scale residential development (2-2.5 storey housing). The complex landform descending into Heathfield Park, the presence of priority habitat deciduous woodland within site **299/1210**, the parkland character of the sites, the historic influence of the adjacent ancient woodland, Registered Park and Garden and Grade II listed Old Half Moon and the connectivity provided by the mature hedgerow network are characteristics that increase sensitivity across the assessment unit. However, the sites are visually enclosed and influenced by proximity to the busy A265 Burwash Road which reduces tranquillity, which are typical factors that decrease sensitivity within this assessment unit.

Variations in Sensitivity

There is no variation in sensitivity across the sites.

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

The sites express 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 at the southern boundary;
- Heathfield Park (adjacent to the site) and site vegetation contribute to the high proportion of ancient woodland and the highly interconnected mosaic of many small woods and outgrown hedges, as well as providing a sense of intimacy and enclosure;
- The grassland, woodland and trees contribute to the mosaic of open field and wooded habitats as well as the wood-pasture and parkland character;
- The small irregular fields contribute towards the historic field pattern;
- A sense of history and timelessness is provided by the adjacent ancient woodland, Registered Park and Garden and historic buildings the presence of the Grade II listed Old Half Moon (which also contributes towards the characteristic pre-1750 timber-framed farm buildings); and

- The lost historic track crossing the site contributes to the dense, radiating network of historic routeways;
- 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 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 within sites 275/1210 and southern half of 798/1210 to minimise alterations to the landform and retain its contribution to the pattern of faults and folds and as aligned fields to the ridge-top road (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...ridge-top roads...</i>	
Removal of mature deciduous woodland, trees and hedgerows, affecting the role they play in defining and screening the settlement edge, and	Woodland	<i>Highly interconnected and structurally varied mosaic of many small woodlands....and outgrown hedges, and isolated trees.</i>	■ Retain, protect and enhance all mature vegetation within and surrounding the sites especially the mature woodland within site 299/1210 and the wooded outer boundaries to sites 275/1210 and 798/1210 (in accordance with the AONB's Objectives W1 and PQ2).

contributions to the interconnectivity of habitats.	Aesthetic and perceptual qualities	<i>A sense of intimacy, enclosure and remoteness owing to the heavily treed landscape.</i>	■ Improve the connectivity of woodlands and hedgerows around the sites 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). ■ Take up biodiversity opportunities listed for the Heathfield Habitat Link BOA, where possible (in accordance with the AONB's Objective W2).
Deterioration of and/or encroachment on the ancient woodland at Heathfield Park which adjoins the southern and eastern edges of the sites.	Woodland	<i>High proportion of woodland is categorised as 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> ■ <i>A sense of intimacy, enclosure and remoteness owing to the heavily treed landscape.</i>	
Loss or deterioration of features contributing towards the parkland character of the sites, particularly the grassland, woodland and mature trees.	Fieldsapes and heath	<i>A generally irregular field pattern with individual fields relatively small...</i>	■ Loss of grassland would be unavoidable with development of sites 275/1210 and 798/1210, with limited opportunities to retain areas due to the small scale of the sites. However, field boundaries along the edges of these sites should be retained and enhanced where possible to avoid complete loss of field pattern (in accordance with the AONB's Objective FH2). ■ Retain the mature trees within the sites and improve connectivity with other habitats through new tree planting (in accordance with the AONB's Objective W2).
	Woodland	<i>Wood-pasture and parkland,</i>	
Deterioration of and/or encroachment on the small watercourses and streams south of site 275/1210 .	Natural systems	■ <i>A high concentration of springs associated with fault lines.</i> ■ <i>Numerous small streams descending the main ridges in narrow steep-sided valleys (gills)...</i>	■ Set development back from the small watercourses (in accordance with the AONB's Objective G1).

Potential encroachment to the Old Half Moon Grade II listed building which lies directly south of site 798/1210 , and east of site 275/1210 .		■ <i>High numbers of pre-1750 timber-framed farm buildings with typologies representing locally-distinctive historic agricultural practices...</i> ■ <i>High concentrations of historic buildings...</i>	■ Set development back from Old Half Moon to create a buffer zone if required (in accordance with the AONB's Objective S3). Further assessment relating to the setting of heritage asset is advised. The buffer zone could incorporate new planting and semi-natural habitat.
Modifications to the A265 Burwash Road (recorded as a historic routeway) 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).
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	■ Locate development in the north to relate better to the existing settlement pattern, and to avoid the perception of development extending onto lower-lying ground to the south (in accordance with the AONB's Objective S1). ■ Given the location of the sites 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 contribute to the setting of the settlement edge.	Settlement	<i>Separation between settlements formed by fields associated with...historic field systems.</i>	■ Maintain the existing settlement pattern and its character by following the scale, built form and streetscape of the recent nearby development along Blackberry Mews (located north of site 299/1210) (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'²⁰, 'Guidance on the selection and use of colour in development'²¹ and objectives of the High Weald AONB Management Plan²² (in accordance with the AONB's Objective S2).
Visual amenity			
Visibility of development seen by: ■ pedestrians, motorists and cyclists, and residents along the A265 Burwash Road; ■ residents of Parklands (within the site) and Old Half Moon (adjacent to the site); ■ residents of Blackberry Mews to the north-west; and ■ and residents of the properties along Tower Street to the west.	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>A recognisable and unifying mosaic of open field and wooded habitats.</i> ■ <i>A sense of intimacy, enclosure and remoteness owing to the heavily treed landscape.</i>	■ Retain, protect and enhance all existing vegetation including the mature hedgerow along the northern boundary of site 798/1210 that encloses the site in views from the A265 (in accordance with the AONB's Objectives W1 and PQ2). ■ Screen new development with additional planting along the northern boundary of site 275/1210, 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). ■ Consider views of development from Parklands and Old Half Moon, retaining and enhancing trees/ woodland to screen views into the site (in accordance with the AONB's Objective PQ2). ■ Enhance public access and provide opportunities to experience the surrounding woodland of Heathfield Park (in accordance with the AONB's Objective PQ3).
Overall impact on the core character components of natural beauty of the High Weald AONB			

²⁰ <https://www.highweald.org/look-after/planning/design-guide.html>

²¹ <https://www.highweald.org/look-after/planning/colour-study.html>

²² <https://www.highweald.org/high-weald-aonb-management-plan.html>

High impact

The baseline analysis identifies that the sites (and immediate surrounds) express several of the core character components of natural beauty, with a strong level of expression. This is due to the complex landform; the presence of mature woodland (including priority habitat deciduous woodland), trees and hedgerows; historic routeways and the historic influence from adjacent ancient woodland, listed building and Registered Park and Garden. Development of the sites 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.

Variation to overall impact

The greatest impacts on the core character components would likely arise if development occurred within site **299/1210** (due to the presence of mature woodland across this site) and on the southern half of site **275/1210** (as the valley landform contributes strongly to the pattern of faults and folds, and its proximity to the Registered Park and Garden and ancient woodland). The potential impacts would be slightly less within the northern part of site **798/1210** given its proximity to the road and settlement edge and the visual enclosure provided by the mature vegetation along all of its boundaries; although not to the extent that there would be a change to the high 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 within sites **275/1210** and southern half of **798/1210** to minimise alterations to the landform.
- Retain, protect and enhance the mature woodland within site **299/1210** and the wooded outer boundaries to sites **275/1210** and **798/1210**.
- Set development back from the edge of the ancient woodland to the required minimum buffer zone and from the small watercourses (south of site **275/1210**).
- Locate development in the north to relate better to the existing settlement pattern, and to avoid the perception of development extending onto lower-lying ground to the south.
- Given the location of the sites 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.
- Maintain the existing settlement pattern and its character by following the scale, built form and streetscape of the recent nearby development along Blackberry Mews (located north of site **299/1210**).
- Screen new development with additional planting along the northern boundary of **site 275/1210**, using local native species where possible / suitable to maintain the rural character of the wider area
- Consider views of development from Parklands and Old Half Moon, retaining and enhancing trees/ woodland to screen views into the site.
- Enhance public access and provide opportunities to experience the surrounding woodland of Heathfield Park.

Figure 16: Summary map of constraints and opportunities



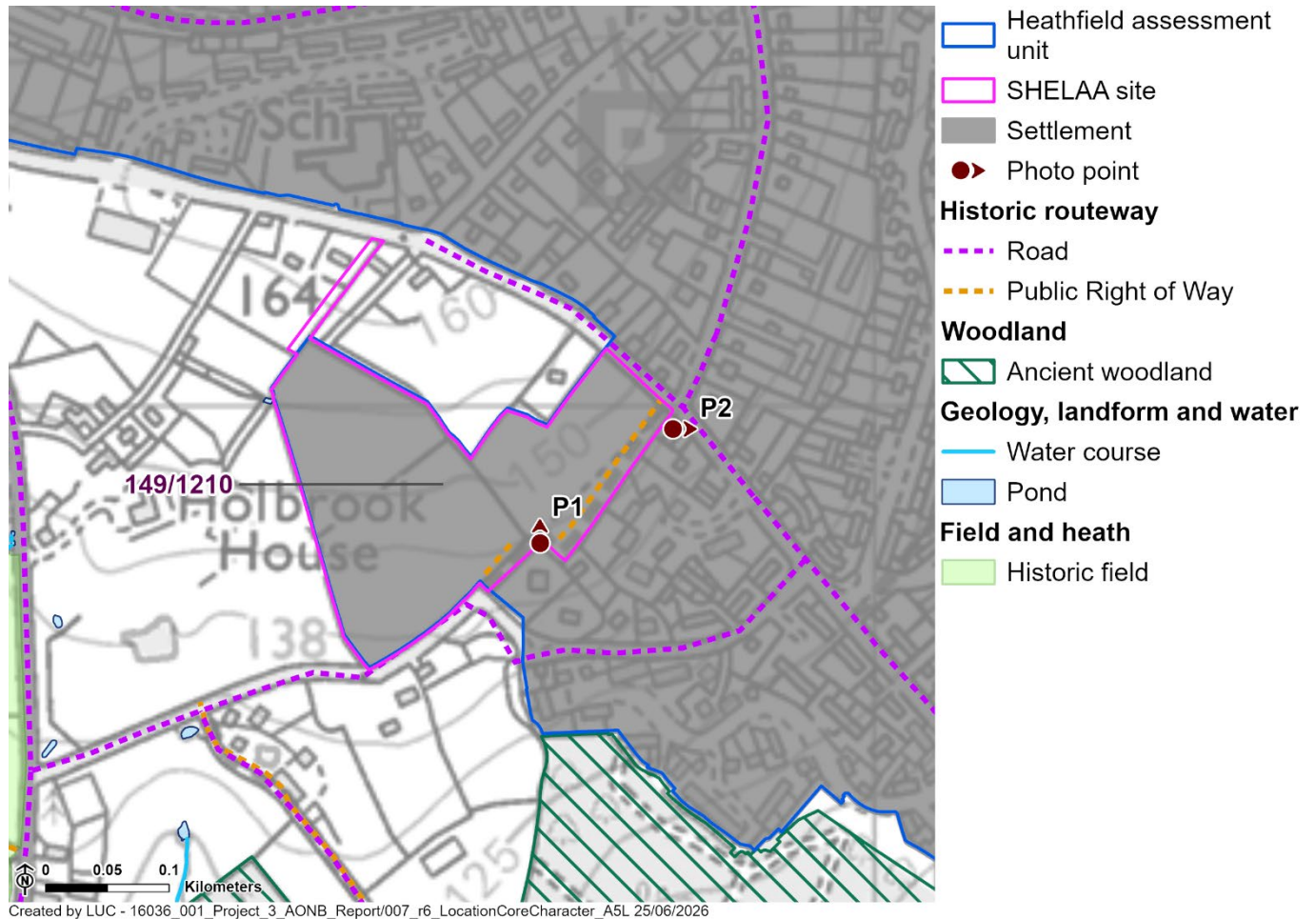
Land south-west of Ghyll Road, Tilsmore (149/1210)

Site Details	
Potential development	Residential development proposed on entirety of site mapped below, but only the eastern/front part of the site is proposed as draft allocation HEA2 (identified for 35 dwellings) in the Focused Wealden Local Plan (2026).
Site location	This site lies west of Heathfield, to the west of Jubilee Park and north of Pook Reed Lane.

Figure 17: Site location and constraints



Figure 18: Site location and core character components of natural beauty of the High Weald AONB



Representative site photos



Photo 1: Eastern part of site in use for grazing, with small barns along the northern boundary and mature internal field boundaries

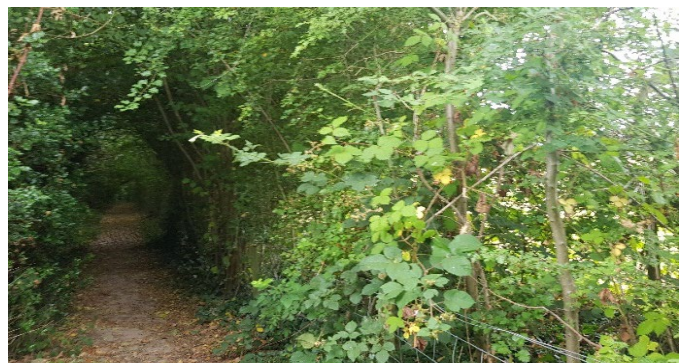


Photo 2: Mature vegetation along the public right of way along the south-eastern boundary restricts views into the site.

Baseline Analysis

Baseline landscape character	
Key features and qualities of the site in relation to the wider assessment unit	Landform ■ The site forms part of the rolling ridges of the High Weald Central LCA, and a small part of the 'complex ridge and valley landform' of the wider assessment unit. ■ It comprises a gentle slope falling from 155m AOD in the north-west to 140m AOD in the south-west. Natural character ■ The site is in use for grazing, and bounded by mature hedgerows on the southern and eastern boundaries, which is typical of the wider assessment unit. ■ Trees and a young woodland in the south-west are valued semi-natural habitats (typical of the wider assessment unit). Landscape pattern and time depth ■ The whole site is derived from a regular piecemeal enclosure field pattern, as classified in the Sussex HLC and typical of the wider assessment unit. However, the infield trees and grazing lead to a parkland character in the west. Perceptual aspects ■ The site is influenced by its proximity to the settlement edge of Heathfield, with low levels of tranquillity (as recorded in CPRE's Tranquillity Mapping) (Figure 3) and limited experience of dark skies (light levels are recorded in the middle bands of CPRE's Night Blight Mapping) (Figure 4). ■ The west of the site has a more rural character.
Settlement form and edge character and extent of built development	The western settlement edge of Heathfield was originally contained by Ghyll Road; however development at Wayside Walk and Geers Wood in the 20th century has crossed this boundary to the south-east of the site. The settlement edge along Ghyll Road along the eastern site boundary, and Wayside Walk to the south-east consists of bungalows and two-storey 20th century detached and semi-detached houses. Jubilee Park provides a recreational edge to development east of Ghyll Road. The settlement pattern along Pook Reed Lane to the south-west is more dispersed, with individual large detached houses, often with long driveways are set back from the road. The hedgerows and mature trees along Ghyll Road and Pook Reed Lane provide strong boundary features between the site and settlement.
Baseline visual character	
Potential visual receptors	Mature hedgerows and trees along Ghyll Road and Pook Reed Lane limit visibility for people travelling along the south-eastern and south-western boundaries, and for residents on these roads. Jubilee Park is next to the east of the site, and there are some limited views from the park. Views from the park are generally screened by mature vegetation and hedgerows. A public right of way runs along the south-eastern site boundary, with occasional views into the site at gated entrances.
Extent of intervisibility within the High Weald AONB	Mature vegetation and hedgerows result in limited intervisibility with the wider High Weald AONB.

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, contributing to the <u>pattern of faults and folds</u> , falling to a <u>small stream</u> to the south.
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 adjacent to the site.
Routeways - a dense network of historic routeways (now roads, tracks and paths).	No historic routeways cross the site. However, the public right of way and Pook Reed Lane which run along the south-eastern boundary of the site are recorded as a historic track, contributing towards the <u>dense radiating network</u> of historic routeways. Ghyll Road, which runs along part of the northern boundary, is also recorded as a hitroic lane, although its expression is altered by modern road markings and signage.
Woodland – an abundance of ancient woodland mostly in small holdings, highly interconnected with hedges and shaws.	Mature in-field trees, young woodland and grazing contribute to a <u>wood-pasture and parkland</u> character in the west. <u>Trees used for boundary markers</u> are apparent in hedgerows and contribute towards the <u>highly interconnected and structurally varied mosaic of many small woods...and outgrown hedges</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 consists generally of <u>irregular field pattern</u> , defined by hedgerows and mature vegetation. The site is used for <u>grazing livestock</u> .
Dark night skies – intrinsically dark at night with our own galaxy (the Milky Way) visible.	Dark skies are limited by the adjacent 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 grazing and mature in-field trees provides a <u>pastoral feel</u> and contributes to the <u>recognisable and unifying mosaic of open field and wooded habitats</u>. The site is largely enclosed by vegetation, with a <u>sense of intimacy, enclosure and remoteness...</u>, although there are glimpsed <u>long views</u> across the site from Jubilee Park. The site is surrounded by residential development to the south-east and east, which reduces tranquillity, although there is a more rural character in the west of the site, away from the existing settlement edge. The public right of way that runs along the south-eastern boundary of the site contributes to the <u>sense of freedom arising from access to a dense network of public rights of way...suitable for walking...</u>
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 Heathfield assessment unit to have a **moderate-high sensitivity** to small-scale residential development (2-2.5 storey housing). The sensitivity analysis indicates that the complex landform; strong natural character including areas of woodland, lowland meadows, grassland and heathland; areas of intact historic field pattern; historic features in the south-east; the rural setting provided to Heathfield and Old Heathfield; and the location within and visual relationship with the wider High Weald AONB increases sensitivity to built development. However, the presence of existing ribbon development, modern agricultural buildings and a caravan park, and enclosure by woodland decrease sensitivity.

The Site

Overall, it is considered that the site is also of **moderate-high** sensitivity to small-scale residential development (2-2.5 storey housing), in line with the wider assessment unit. The site is undulating, is in use for grazing and contains mature hedgerows with an intact historic field pattern, and therefore demonstrates some of the characteristics that increase sensitivity to development across the assessment unit. The east of the site is near residential development along Ghyll Road, Wayside Walk and Pook Reed Lane, and is largely contained by woodland, all of which contribute to a decrease in sensitivity to development across the assessment unit.

Variations in Sensitivity

The trees and young woodland in the west of the site are of a higher sensitivity than the field in the east.

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 sloping landform of the site forms part of the pattern of faults and folds;
- The field boundaries and in-field trees contribute to the highly interconnected woodland habitats and define the irregular field pattern;
- The grazing of livestock, in-field trees and young woodland in the west contribute to the pastoral feel of the landscape, wood-pasture and parkland character, with links to the history of the land-based economy; and
- There are glimpsed long views across the site to the wider High Weald AONB.

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 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 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 of mature deciduous trees and hedgerows, affecting the role they play in defining and screening the settlement edge and contributions to the interconnectivity of habitats.	Woodland	<i>Highly interconnected and structurally varied mosaic of many small woodlands....and outgrown hedges, and isolated trees.</i> <i>Trees used for boundary markers.</i>	- Retain, protect and enhance all mature vegetation within and surrounding the site, especially the trees and young woodland in the west of the site and the mature hedgerows along the outer boundaries to the south and east (in accordance with the AONB's Objectives W1 and PQ2). - Improve the connectivity of woodlands and hedgerows, particularly in the west, 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 or deterioration of features contributing towards the parkland character of the site, particularly the in-field trees and young	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</i>	- Retain, protect and set back development from, the in-field trees and young woodland in the west (in accordance with the AONB's Objective W1). - Loss of pasture would be unavoidable with development of the site, as any development would remove land from agricultural use, with limited

woodland in the west and the grazed pastures.		<i>and food source to a wide range of species.</i> ■ <i>Wood-pasture and parkland...</i>	opportunities to retain areas due to the scale of the site. However, field boundaries around the edge of the eastern field should be retained and enhanced where possible to avoid complete loss of field pattern (in accordance with the AONB's Objective FH2).
	Fieldsapes and heath	<i>Fields, mostly permanent pasture, used for grazing livestock...</i>	
Loss of the historic routeway and public right of way that runs along the south-eastern boundary of the site, which provides a connection to other historic routeways.	Routeways	<i>A dense radiating network with a variety of origins...</i>	■ Retain, protect and enhance existing recreational access via the public right of way which runs along the edge of the site and the rural character of the historic route, and retain the semi-rural character of the footpath by setting development back from it (in accordance with the AONB's Objectives R1 and PQ3).
Modifications to Ghyll Road (recorded as a historic lane) to facilitate site access (e.g. road widening, creation of junction)			■ Reduce the impact of access works required to the road, where possible, protecting the hedgerows along it (in accordance with the AONB's Objectives R1 and R2).
Settlement form edge and setting			
Deterioration of the rural character of the site which contributes to the setting of Heathfield. Extension of development beyond the robust boundary provided by the hedgerow and mature trees between the site and properties on the edge of the settlement.	N/A	N/A	■ Locate development along Ghyll Road in the east of the site, so it relates to the existing settlement edge (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' ²³ , 'Guidance on the selection and use of colour in development' ²⁴ and objectives of the High Weald AONB Management Plan ²⁵ (in accordance with the AONB's Objective S2).

²³ <https://www.highweald.org/look-after/planning/design-guide.html>²⁴ <https://www.highweald.org/look-after/planning/colour-study.html>²⁵ <https://www.highweald.org/high-weald-aonb-management-plan.html>

Visual amenity			
Visibility of development seen by: - pedestrians, road users, and residents along Ghyll Road to the south-east; - pedestrians, road users and residents along Pook Reed Lane to the south; - recreational users of Jubilee Park to the east; and - users of the footpath along the south-eastern boundary.	Aesthetic and perceptual qualities	<i>A sense of intimacy, enclosure and remoteness owing to the heavily treed landscape.</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> <i>Unexpected panoramic and long views, often uninterrupted, extending out along the valleys...</i> <i>Sense of freedom arising from access to a dense network of public rights of way...suitable for walking...</i>	- Retain, protect and enhance all existing vegetation including the mature hedgerow boundaries that enclose the site to the south and east (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). - Enhance public access including linking development on the site with Wayside Walk and Pook Reed Lane, and the recreational opportunities at Jubilee Park (in accordance with the AONB's Objective PQ3). - Position development within the site to retain the glimpsed long views from Jubilee Park across the site to the wider High Weald AONB (in accordance with the AONB's Objective PQ2).
Overall impact on the core character components of natural beauty of the High Weald AONB			
High impact	The baseline analysis identifies that the site (and immediate surrounds) expresses several core character components of natural beauty, with a strong level of expression. This is due to the sloping landform; presence of mature trees (including in-field trees), young woodland and hedgerows; grazed pastures; and glimpsed long views. Development of the site is judged to have a high impact on the landscape and visual qualities/features that define the AONB, therefore affecting / impacting the ability of the Council to fulfil its statutory duty to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the AONB. <u>Variation to overall impact</u> Development within the western half of the site is considered to have a greater impact on the core character components than the eastern half, primarily due to the presence of trees and young woodland across this part of the site. If the potential mitigation and enhancement opportunities set out above are applied, which includes locating development within the east and along Ghyll Road, then potential impacts as a result of the development on the sites would likely be reduced. However, there would still be inevitable adverse impacts on the grazed pastures which would be lost.		

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 valley side to minimise alterations to the landform and retain its contribution to the pattern of faults and folds.
- Retain, protect and enhance the trees and young woodland in the west of the site and the mature hedgerows along the outer boundaries to the south and east.
- Retain, protect and set back development from, the in-field trees and young woodland in the west.
- Retain, protect and enhance existing recreational access via the public right of way which runs along the edge of the site and the rural character of the historic route, and retain the semi-rural character of the footpath by setting development back from it.
- Locate development along Ghyll Road in the east of the site, so it relates to the existing settlement edge.
- Enhance public access including linking development on the site with Wayside Walk and Pook Reed Lane, and the recreational opportunities at Jubilee Park.
- Position development within the site to retain the glimpsed long views from Jubilee Park across the site to the wider High Weald AONB.

Figure 19: Summary map of constraints and opportunities



Land to the rear of Rothershaw, High Street (525/1210) and Land at Tilsmore Nurseries, off Nursery Way (307/1210)

Site Details	
Potential development	Site 525/1210 - Residential development proposed on entirety of site mapped below, and entirety of the site is proposed as draft allocation HEA5 (identified for 22 dwellings) in the Focused Wealden Local Plan (2026). Site 307/1210 - Residential development of 15 dwellings, proposed on the site as shown below. Site not Allocated or considered an Option. Total: 37 residential dwellings. For the purpose of this landscape and visual appraisal the above SHELAA sites have been considered together.
Site location	These sites are adjacent to the northern boundary of Heathfield, to the south of Tilsmore and Markly Woods (ancient woodlands). The sites are located between recent development at Millennium Way and Centenary Drive to the east and Fallow Drive to the west.

Figure 20: Site location and constraints

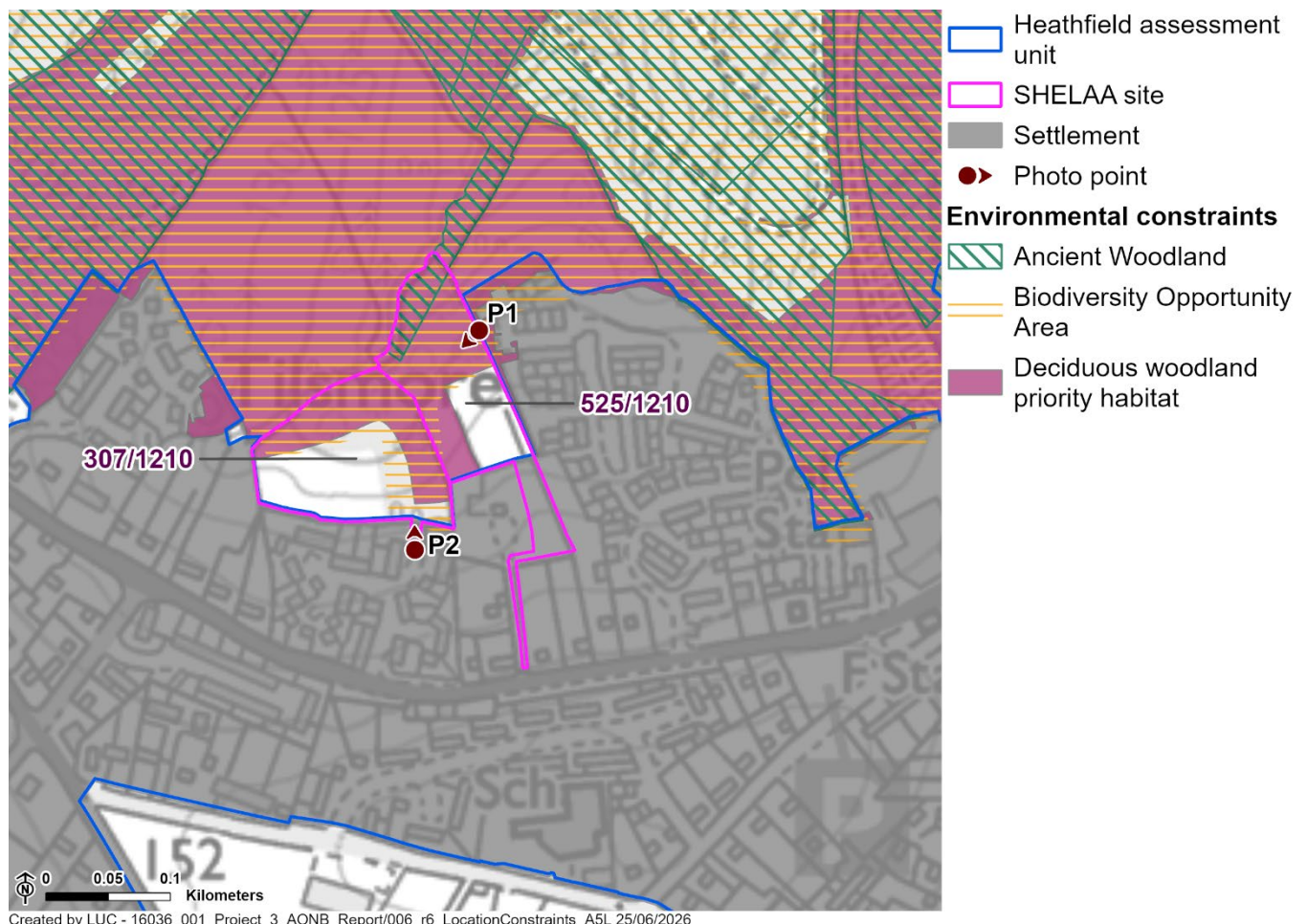
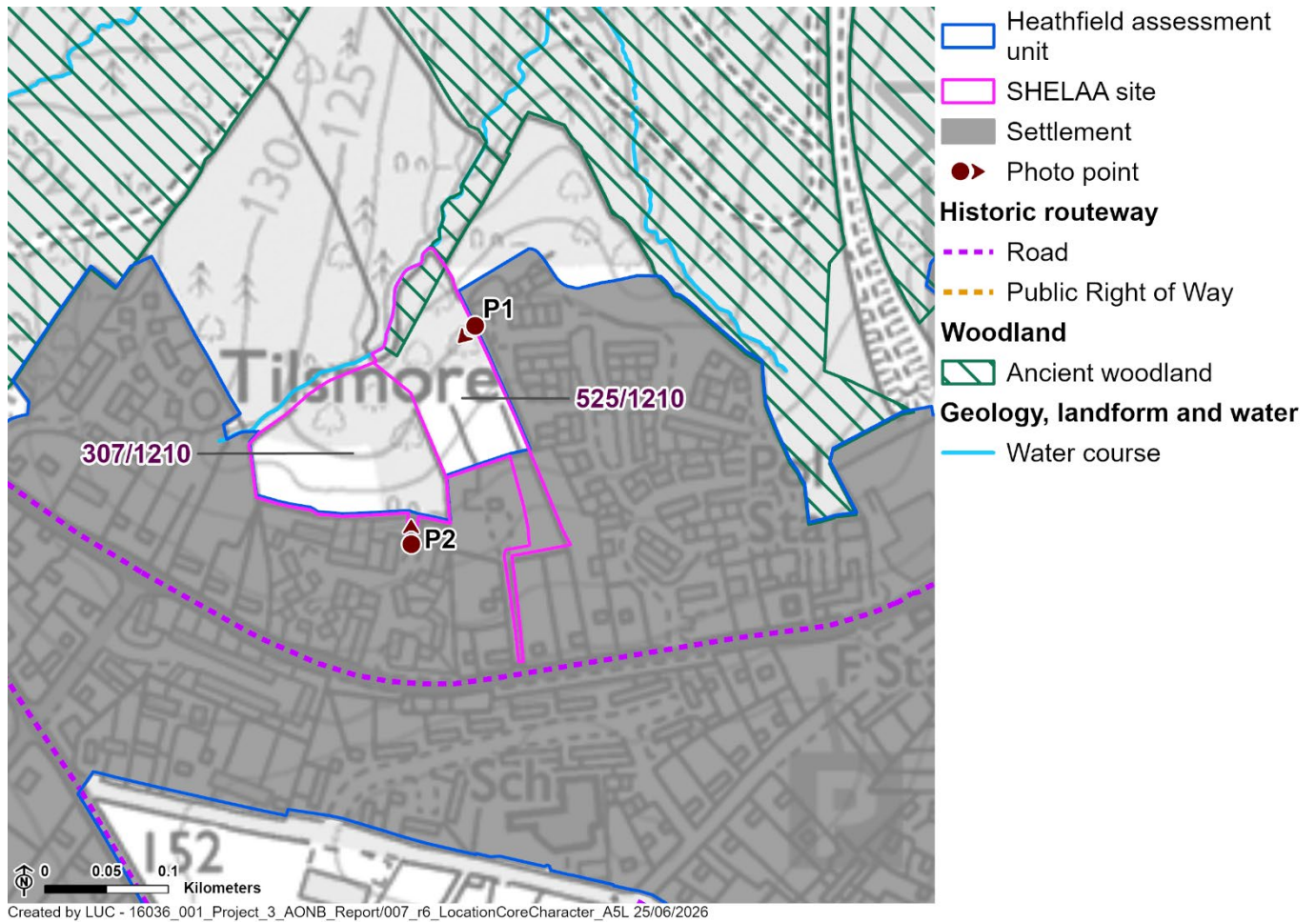


Figure 21: Site location and core character components of natural beauty of the High Weald AONB



Representative site photos



Photo 1: Woodland character of site 525/1210 seen from Centenary Drive.



Photo 2: Woodland and parkland character of site 307/1210 seen from Nursery Way.

Baseline Analysis

Baseline landscape character	
Key features and qualities of the site in relation to the wider assessment unit	Landform - The sites form part of the rolling ridges of the High Weald Central LCA, and a small part of the 'complex ridge and valley landform' of the wider assessment unit. - The sites slope from 150m AOD in the south to 125m AOD in the north. Natural character - Priority habitat deciduous woodland covers the majority of both the sites, with a small area of ancient woodland (at Markly Wood) within site 525/1210 (typical of the wider assessment unit). The wooded areas in both sites form part of the Heathfield Habitat Link BOA. - Outside the areas designated as priority habitat deciduous woodland, there are mature hedgerows and in-field trees. Landscape pattern and time depth - The southern parts of both the sites, outside the wooded areas, are derived from a planned private enclosure field pattern (as classified by the Sussex HLC), and typical of the wider assessment unit. However, the in-field trees, woodland and grassland lead to a parkland character, particularly within site 307/1210. Perceptual aspects - The sites are influenced by their proximity to the settlement edge of Heathfield, particularly the east of site 525/1210 and the south of site 307/1210, and the A265 High Street, with levels of tranquillity recorded in the middle bands of CPRE's Tranquillity Mapping (Figure 3), and the experience of dark skies in the middle bands of CPRE's Night Blight Mapping (Figure 4).
Settlement form and edge character and extent of built development	The sites are both north of the settlement edge of Heathfield which has recently expanded to the east and west of the sites at Millennium Way/Centenary Drive and Fallow Drive. These recent developments are formed of two and three storey detached and semi-detached houses. The properties are set in cul-de-sacs and closes and are separated from the site by wooded tree belts. Development along the A265 High Street to the south-east and south-west of the sites consists of 20th century one and two storey detached houses, set back from the road.
Baseline visual character	
Potential visual receptors	Existing development along the A265 High Street to the south limits views into the sites for pedestrians and people travelling along the road. Residents along the road may have views into the sites from the rear of their houses. Residential properties on Millennium Way, Nursery Way and Fallow Drive have views to the woodland character of the site. There are no public rights of way near to the sites.
Extent of intervisibility within the High Weald AONB	There are long views from the southern parts of both the sites across Tilsmore and Markly Woods to the wooded hills of the wider High Weald AONB.

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 sites form part of the rolling ridges of the High Weald AONB, contributing to the <u>pattern of faults and folds</u> . A stream runs along the north-west of site 525/1210 and contributes to the <u>numerous small streams</u> . It originates from a spring close to the western edge of site 307/1210 , contributing to the <u>high concentration of springs associated with faultlines</u> and descends north-east in a <u>narrow steep-sided valley (gill)</u> .
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 adjacent to either of the sites.
Routeways – a dense network of historic routeways (now roads, tracks and paths).	No historic routeways cross the sites.
Woodland – an abundance of ancient woodland mostly in small holdings, highly interconnected with hedges and shaws.	<u>Ancient woodland</u> in site 525/1210 , and priority habitat deciduous woodland in both sites are part of the <u>highly interconnected and structurally varied mosaic of many small woods...and 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).	The mature woodland, in-field trees and grassland contribute to a <u>wood-pasture and parkland</u> character, particularly within site 307/1210 . Generally <u>irregular field pattern</u> across both sites, defined by hedgerows and mature vegetation. The fields are aligned to the linear watercourse (running along the north-eastern 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.	Dark skies are limited by the adjacent settlement edge and nearby roads.
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 open grassland areas and dense enclosing woodland contribute to the <u>recognisable and unifying mosaic of open field and wooded habitats</u> . The sense of rurality and tranquillity is partially limited by the settlement edge, particularly in the east of site 525/1210 and south of site 307/1210 , although the soft settlement boundary enhances the <u>sense of intimacy, enclosure, and remoteness</u> . There are glimpsed <u>long views</u> from the southern parts of both the sites to the north across the small stream valley, towards wooded hills of the wider High Weald AONB.
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 sites relate to the sensitivity of the wider assessment unit

The Assessment Unit

The *Wealden Landscape Sensitivity Assessment to Residential and Employment Development* assesses the Heathfield assessment unit to have a **moderate-high sensitivity** to small-scale residential development (2-2.5 storey housing). The sensitivity analysis indicates that the complex landform; strong natural character including areas of woodland, lowland meadows, grassland and heathland; areas of intact historic field pattern; historic features in the south-east; the rural setting provided to Heathfield and Old Heathfield; and the location within and visual relationship with the wider High Weald AONB increases sensitivity to built development. However, the presence of existing ribbon development, modern agricultural buildings and a caravan park, and enclosure by woodland decrease sensitivity.

The Sites

Overall, it is considered that both the sites are also of **moderate-high sensitivity** to small-scale residential development (2-2.5 storey housing), in line with the wider assessment unit. The sites contribute to the wooded scenic backdrop to Heathfield as they both contain areas of priority habitat deciduous woodland, with site **525/120** containing ancient woodland. The sites retain their historic field pattern and have glimpsed long views to the wooded hills of the wider AONB. Therefore, both sites demonstrate some of the characteristics that increase sensitivity across the assessment unit to development (although they have no historic features within them). However, the semi-enclosed character of the sites, and their proximity to existing development in Heathfield are characteristics that reduce sensitivity to development in the wider assessment unit.

Variations in Sensitivity

There is no variation in sensitivity across the sites.

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

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

- The landform of the sites contribute to the pattern of faults and folds,
- A small stream runs along the north-west of site **525/1210** and descends into a steep-sided gill to the north-east;
- The woodland within both sites (including the ancient woodland in site **525/1210**), together with the outgrown hedges, forms part of the highly interconnected and structurally varied mosaic of many small woodlands in the locality, as well as providing a sense of intimacy and enclosure;
- The grassland, woodland and trees contribute to the mosaic of open field and wooded habitats as well as the wood-pasture and parkland character;
- The small irregular fields contribute towards the historic field pattern; and
- Glimpsed long views exist to the north towards the wider High Weald AONB.

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

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

The section below sets out the potential effects of developing the sites, 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 these sites 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 elevated landform 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 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>	
Removal of priority habitat deciduous woodland, trees and hedgerows, affecting the role they play in screening and defining the settlement edge and contributions to the interconnectivity of habitats.	Woodland	<i>Highly interconnected and structurally varied mosaic of many small woodlands....and outgrown hedges, and isolated trees.</i>	■ Retain, protect and enhance all mature vegetation within and surrounding the sites, especially the priority habitat deciduous woodland within both sites (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). ■ Take up biological opportunities listed in the Heathfield Habitat Link BOA, where possible (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>	

Deterioration of and/or encroachment on the ancient woodland at Markly Wood that extends into site 525/1210 .	Woodland	<i>High proportion of woodland is categorised as 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> ■ <i>A sense of intimacy, enclosure and remoteness owing to the heavily treed landscape.</i>	
Loss or deterioration of features contributing towards the parkland character of the sites (particularly the grassland, woodland and mature trees) and the small-scale field pattern with largely intact field boundaries.	Fieldscapes and heath	<i>A generally irregular field pattern with individual fields relatively small...</i>	■ Loss of grassland would be unavoidable with development of the sites, with limited opportunities to retain areas due to the small scale of the sites. However, the mature woodland trees within and along the edges of the sites should be retained and enhanced where possible to avoid complete loss of field pattern (in accordance with the AONB's Objective FH2). ■ Retain the mature trees within the sites and improve connectivity with other habitats through new tree planting (in accordance with the AONB's Objective W2).
	Woodland	<i>Wood-pasture and parkland...</i>	
Deterioration of and/or encroachment on the stream along the north-western boundary of the sites.	Natural systems	■ <i>A high concentration of springs associated with fault lines.</i> ■ <i>Numerous small streams descending the main ridges in narrow steep-sided valleys (gills)...</i>	■ Set development back from the small watercourse to the north of the sites (in accordance with the AONB's Objective G1).
Settlement form edge and setting			
Deterioration of the rural character of the site which contributes to the setting of Heathfield. Extension of development beyond the wooded tree belts between the site and properties on the edge of the settlement.	N/A	N/A	■ Locate development in the south-east of site 525/1210 to relate better to the existing settlement edge (in accordance with the AONB's Objective S1). ■ Maintain the existing settlement pattern and its character by following the scale and built form of the recent development along Millennium Way/Centenary Drive to the east of site 525/1210 and by interspersing new development within the existing woodland so that it appears as a seamless extension to the existing wooded settlement edge (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'²⁶, 'Guidance on the selection and use of colour in development'²⁷ and objectives of the High Weald AONB Management Plan²⁸ (in accordance with the AONB's Objective S2).
Visual amenity			
Visibility of development seen by: ■ residents on Millennium Way/Centenary Drive to the east; ■ residents on Nursery Way to the south; and ■ residents on Fallow Drive to the west.		■ <i>A sense of history and timelessness arising from an ancient countryside with a human-scale agricultural tapestry; veteran and ancient trees...</i> ■ <i>A recognisable and unifying mosaic of open field and wooded habitats.</i> ■ <i>A sense of intimacy, enclosure and remoteness owing to the heavily treed landscape.</i> ■ <i>Unexpected panoramic and long views, often uninterrupted, extending out along the valleys...</i>	■ Screen new development with additional planting, particularly in views from the residential properties to the south, east and west, using local species 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, ensuring new development does not appear to spill down the lower slopes toward the gill woodland (in accordance with the AONB's Objective PQ2). ■ Enhance public access, including pedestrian links between the sites and existing developments at Millennium Way, Nursery Way and Fallow Drive, whilst ensuring that recreational/ amenity use avoids disturbance to the priority habitat deciduous woodland and ancient woodland (in accordance with the AONB's Objective PQ3). ■ Consider the height of buildings in order to retain the long views to the north towards the wooded skylines of the wider High Weald AONB (in accordance with the AONB's Objective PQ2).
Overall impact on the core character components of natural beauty of the High Weald AONB			

²⁶ <https://www.highweald.org/look-after/planning/design-guide.html>²⁷ <https://www.highweald.org/look-after/planning/colour-study.html>²⁸ <https://www.highweald.org/high-weald-aonb-management-plan.html>

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; the small stream along the north-western boundary; the presence of priority habitat deciduous woodland (including ancient woodland) within the site and mature trees and hedgerows; and the glimpsed long views north. 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.

Variation to overall impact

The greatest impacts on the core character components would likely arise if development occurred within site **307/1210** as it expresses the parkland character slightly more strongly than site **525/1210**. The potential impacts would be slightly less within site **525/1210** which is well contained and visually enclosed by its wooded boundaries; although not to the extent that there would be a change to the high impact considered above. If the potential mitigation and enhancement opportunities set out above are applied, which includes locating development within the south-east of site **525/1210** and avoiding the loss of woodland, then potential impacts as a result of the development on the sites would likely be reduced. However, there would still be inevitable adverse impacts on the grassland and parkland character of this site, which would be lost.

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 and the lower-lying incised stream valley to minimise alterations to the landform.
- Retain, protect and enhance the priority habitat deciduous woodland within both sites.
- Take up biological opportunities listed in the Heathfield Habitat Link BOA, where possible.
- Set development back from the edge of the ancient woodland to the required minimum buffer zone.
- Retain the mature trees within the site and improve connectivity with other habitats through new tree planting.
- Set development back from the small watercourse to the north of the sites.
- Locate development in the south-east of site **525/1210** to relate better to the existing settlement edge.
- Maintain the existing settlement pattern and its character by following the scale and built form of the recent development along Millennium Way/Centenary Drive to the east of site **525/1210** and by interspersing new development within the existing woodland so that it appears as a seamless extension to the existing wooded settlement edge.
- Screen new development with additional planting, particularly in views from the residential properties to the south, east and west, using local species to maintain the rural character of the wider area.
- Enhance public access, including pedestrian links between the sites and existing developments at Millennium Way, Nursery Way and Fallow Drive, whilst ensuring that recreational/ amenity use avoids disturbance to the priority habitat deciduous woodland and ancient woodland.
- Consider the height of buildings in order to retain the long views to the north towards the wooded skylines of the wider High Weald AONB.

Figure 22: Summary map of constraints and opportunities



Land at Sunnyside, A267, Cross in Hand (941/1920)

Site Details	
Potential development	Residential development proposed on entirety of site mapped below, and entirety of the site is proposed as draft allocation HEA9 (identified for 9 dwellings) in the Focused Wealden Local Plan (2026).
Site location	This site lies to the north-east of Cross in Hand, north of the A267 Heathfield Road. The site is adjacent to a petrol station and the Isenhurst Country Club to the west and Cross in Hand village hall to the east.

Figure 23: Site location and constraints

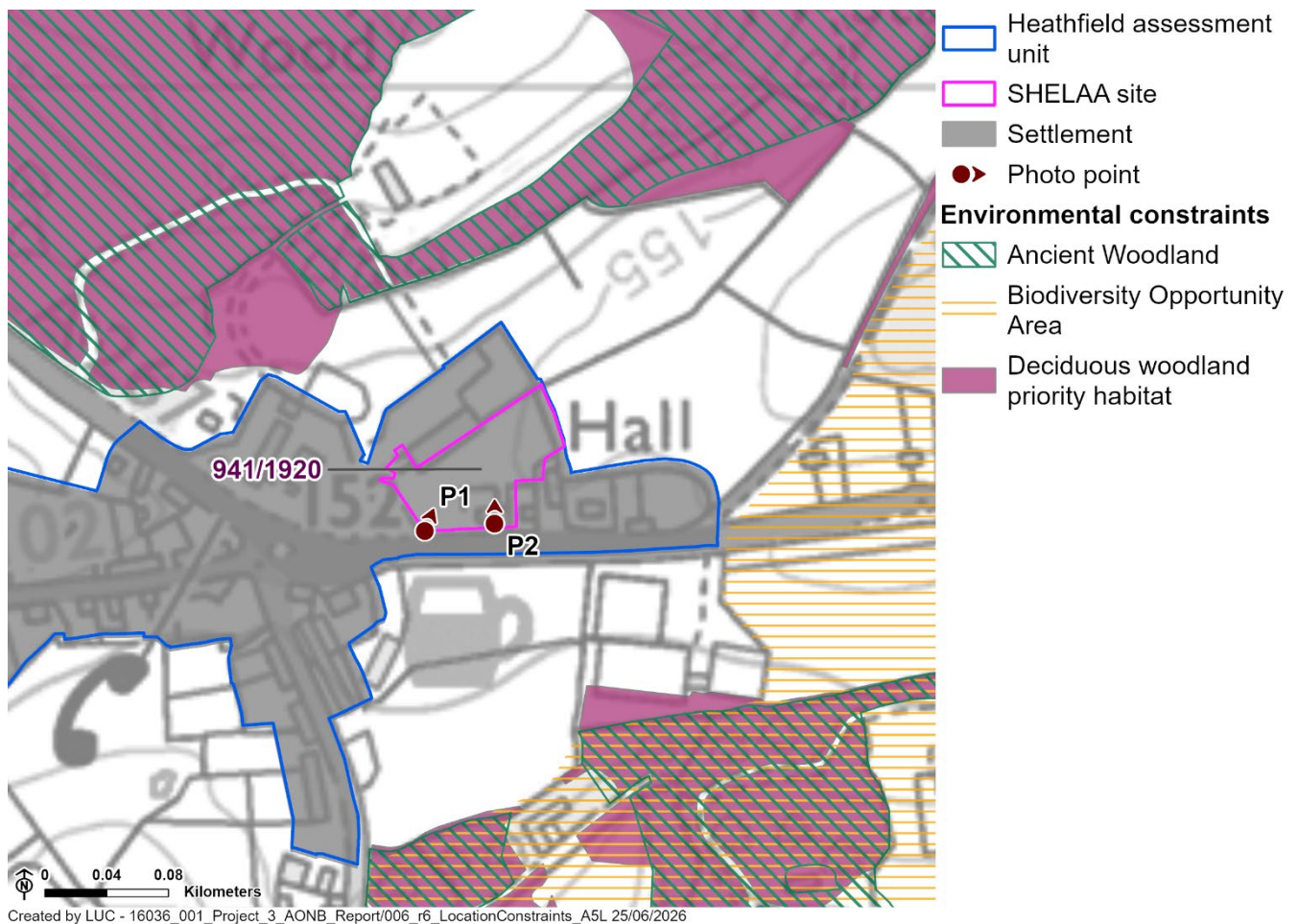
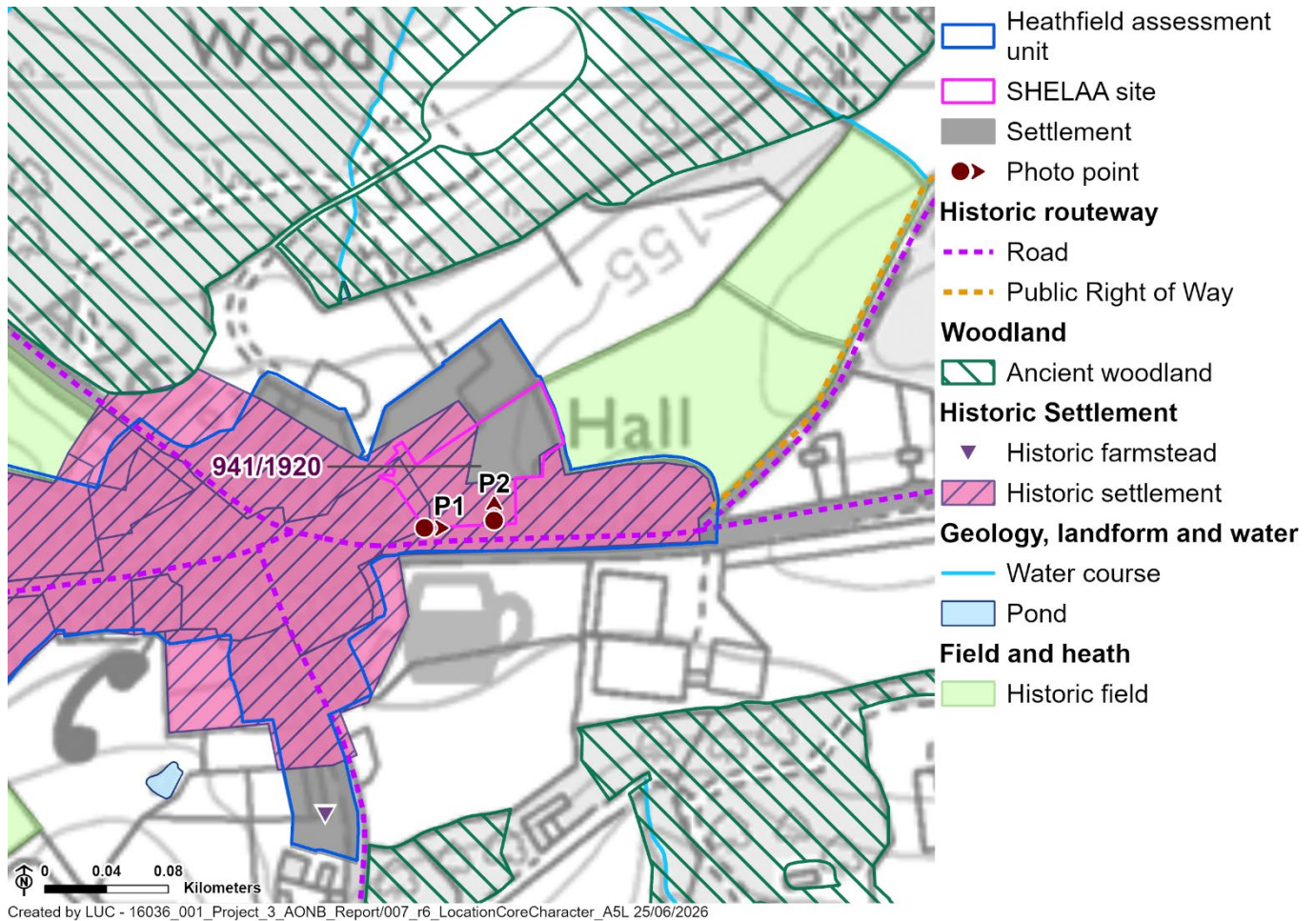


Figure 24: Site location and core character components of natural beauty of the High Weald AONB



Representative site photos



Photo 1: A hedge restricts views into the site from the A295.



Photo 2: Existing property within the site is barely visible above the hedge.

Baseline Analysis

Baseline landscape character	
Key features and qualities of the site in relation to the wider assessment unit	Landform - The site is largely flat, lying around 155m AOD, which is not typical of the wider assessment unit. Natural character - A high hedge with occasional mature trees lines the southern boundary, and there is a mature wooded shaw in the east, which are valued semi-natural habitats and typical of the wider assessment unit. - The site contains a bungalow and driveway, exerting a man-made influence. Landscape pattern and time depth - The site has a cohesive assart field pattern as classified in the Sussex HLC and typical of the wider assessment unit. Perceptual aspects - The site is influenced by proximity to the settlement edge of Cross in Hand and the A267. Tranquillity is recorded in the lower (relatively least tranquil) bands of CPRE's Tranquillity Mapping (Figure 3), and dark skies is recorded in the middle bands of CPRE's Night Blight Mapping (Figure 4).
Settlement form and edge character and extent of built development	The A267 previously provided a strong boundary to the north-east of Cross in Hand. This has partly been breached by development along the northern side of the A267, particularly to the east of the site. Dunly Wood provides a strong boundary to the north. There are existing bungalows and two storey development north of the A267 including a petrol station, country club and village hall. A small number of detached houses also sit north of the A267, including a bungalow within the site. However, development to the north of the A267 exerts a different built settlement morphology to that within the core of the village to the west and comprises a more dispersed pattern. The site has an open character with the bungalow set within large lawn areas and is flanked on the southern side of the A267 by the open character of playing fields.
Baseline visual character	
Potential visual receptors	A clipped hedge lines the A267 Heathfield Road, and combined with the occasional mature trees, this limits views of the site for pedestrians and road users. Residents in properties to the east of the site will have some oblique views to the site. Users of local businesses close to the site may also have views, including from the petrol station and Cross in Hand Inn to the south-west. Local recreational facilities at Isenhurst country club, Heathfield and Waldron RFC and Cross in Hand Lawn Tennis Club lie south of the A267, and there may be some views from these sports facilities. However, views are generally restricted by hedges along the A267.
Extent of intervisibility within the High Weald AONB	Mature vegetation and hedgerows result in limited intervisibility with the wider High Weald AONB.

Expression of the 'core character components of natural beauty' of the High Weald AONB on the site	
Natural systems (geology, soils, water and climate) – a deeply incised, ridged and faulted landform of clays and sandstone with highly variable, relatively undisturbed soils and numerous headwaters (gill streams) functioning under an oceanic climate.	There are no distinctive geological, landform or water features.
Settlement – dispersed historic settlement including high densities of isolated farmsteads, hamlets and late-medieval villages founded on trade and non-agricultural rural industries.	Cross in Hand is a village of <i>medieval origin</i> with the south and west of the site falling within the historic settlement boundary but comprising a more open character than the core of the village.
Routeways - a dense network of historic routeways (now roads, tracks and paths)	No historic routeways cross the site. The A267 along the southern boundary is recorded as a historic ridgeway, which contributes towards the <i>dense radiating network</i> of historic routeways, 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.	Trees in the east of the site are part of the <i>highly interconnected and structurally varied mosaic of many small woods...shaws...and outgrown hedges</i> .
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 field pattern was created through assarting, contributing to the <i>dominant medieval fieldscape character</i> of the AONB. The site has a generally <i>irregular field pattern</i> , defined by hedgerows.
Dark night skies – intrinsically dark at night with our own galaxy (the Milky Way) visible.	The A267 to the south is an <i>unlit road</i> but dark skies are limited by the adjacent settlement edge and flood lights from nearby sport pitches.
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 site is influenced by the existing bungalow, driveway and settlement edge, which reduces any sense of remoteness and tranquillity. The boundary vegetation provides a <i>sense of...enclosure</i> .
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 Heathfield assessment unit to have a **moderate-high sensitivity** to small-scale residential development (2-2.5 storey housing). The sensitivity analysis indicates that the complex landform; strong natural character including areas of woodland, lowland meadows, grassland and heathland; areas of intact historic field pattern; historic features in the south-east; the rural setting provided to Heathfield and Old Heathfield; and the location within and visual relationship with the wider High Weald AONB increases sensitivity to built development. However, the presence of existing ribbon development, modern agricultural buildings and a caravan park, and enclosure by woodland decrease 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 of the characteristics that contribute to the wider assessment unit's sensitivity rating of moderate-high, although it does contain a wooded shaw and areas of trees, as well as retaining its historic assart field pattern, which are characteristics that increase sensitivity in the wider assessment unit. It also has a more open character than the core of the village which contributes to the rural setting of Cross in Hand. However, the site contains a bungalow, is adjacent to existing ribbon development, and is enclosed by vegetation, which are characteristics that reduce sensitivity in the wider assessment unit.

Variations in Sensitivity

There is no variation in sensitivity across the sites.

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

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

- The trees in the east contributes to the highly interconnected and structurally varied mosaic of many small woodlands and outgrown hedges within the locality, as well as providing a sense of enclosure;
- The site forms part of a wider assart field pattern, which contributes to the medieval character of the AONB; and
- The site reflects an irregular field pattern, and lies within the historic settlement of Cross in Hand (although comprises a more open character than the built settlement morphology within the village).

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

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

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

Potential effects as a result of development on the site	Core character component of natural beauty potentially affected	Relevant key characteristics of the core character component potentially affected	Potential mitigation and enhancement opportunities
Landscape character and features			
Removal of the wooded shaw in the east, mature trees and hedge affecting the role they play in providing enclosure to the site and the wider wooded character of the area.	Woodland	<i>Highly interconnected and structurally varied mosaic of many small woodlands...shaws...and outgrown hedges...</i>	■ Retain, protect and enhance all mature vegetation within and surrounding the site, especially the wooded shaw in the east (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).
	Aesthetic and perceptual qualities	<i>A sense of... enclosure...</i>	
Loss or deterioration of the cohesive assart field pattern which contributes to the medieval character and time depth).	Fieldscape and heath	<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>	■ The assart field pattern has already been partly eroded by the existing development within the site. Field boundaries around the edges of the site should be retained and enhanced where possible to avoid complete loss of field pattern by potential development (in accordance with the AONB's Objective FH2).
Settlement form edge and setting			
Further expansion of Cross in Hand north of the A267 Heathfield Road and loss of open character of the site (in comparison to the	Settlement	<i>Villages and towns mostly of medieval origin...</i>	■ 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).

built settlement morphology of the village).			Development to draw on the principles contained within the High Weald AONB 'High Weald Housing Design Guide'²⁹, 'Guidance on the selection and use of colour in development'³⁰ and objectives of the High Weald AONB Management Plan³¹ (in accordance with the AONB's Objective S2).
Visual amenity			
Visibility of development seen by: - pedestrians, road users, business users and residents along the A265 Heathfield Road to the south, east and west; and - users of Heathfield and Waldron RFC and Cross in Hand Lawn Tennis Club to the south.	Aesthetic and perceptual qualities	<i>A sense of...enclosure...</i>	- Retain, protect and enhance existing vegetation especially the mature trees and hedgerow in the east (in accordance with the AONB's Objectives W1 and PQ2). - Screen new development with additional planting, especially along the A265 Heathfield Road, using local species 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).
Overall impact on the core character components of natural beauty of the High Weald AONB			
Moderate impact	The baseline analysis identifies that the site (and immediate surrounds) expresses a some of the core character components of natural beauty, with a moderate level of expression. This is primarily due to the site being located within the historic settlement of Cross in Hand but being more open in character than the core of the village, as well as the presence of a wooded shaw and forming part of an assart field pattern. Development of the site is judged to have a moderate impact on the landscape and visual qualities/features that define the AONB, therefore somewhat affecting / impacting the ability of the Council to fulfil its statutory duty to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the AONB. If the potential mitigation and enhancement opportunities set out above are applied, potential impacts as a result of the development on the site could potentially be reduced. However, there would still be inevitable adverse impacts on the open character of the site (in comparison to the built settlement morphology of the village). <u>Variation to overall impact</u>		

²⁹ <https://www.highweald.org/look-after/planning/design-guide.html>

³⁰ <https://www.highweald.org/look-after/planning/colour-study.html>

³¹ <https://www.highweald.org/high-weald-aonb-management-plan.html>

	There is no variation to the overall impact considered above.
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Summary and recommendations

Development of the site would further expand Cross in Hand north of the A267 Heathfield Road and result in the loss of the open character of the site (in comparison to the built settlement morphology of the village).

Should development come forward on the site, the key recommendations are to:

- Retain, protect and enhance the wooded shaw in the east.
- Screen new development with additional planting, especially along the A265 Heathfield Road, using local species to maintain the rural character of the wider area.

Land to rear of Brenton House (north), B2102, Cross in Hand (431/1920) and Field to the east of Burnetts Farm, Firgrove Road, Cross in Hand (017/1920)

Site Details	
Potential development	Site 431/1920 - Residential development proposed on entirety of site mapped below, and entirety of the site is proposed as draft allocation HEA6 (identified for 15 dwellings) in the Focused Wealden Local Plan (2026). Site 017/1920 - Residential development proposed on entirety of site mapped below, and entirety of the site is proposed as draft allocation HEA1 (identified for 10 dwellings) in the Focused Wealden Local Plan (2026). Total: 25 residential dwellings. For the purpose of this landscape and visual appraisal the above SHELAA sites have been considered together.
Site location	These sites lie to the south of Cross in Hand, south of High Street and between Fir Grove Road and Back Lane, behind existing properties.

Figure 25: Site location and constraints

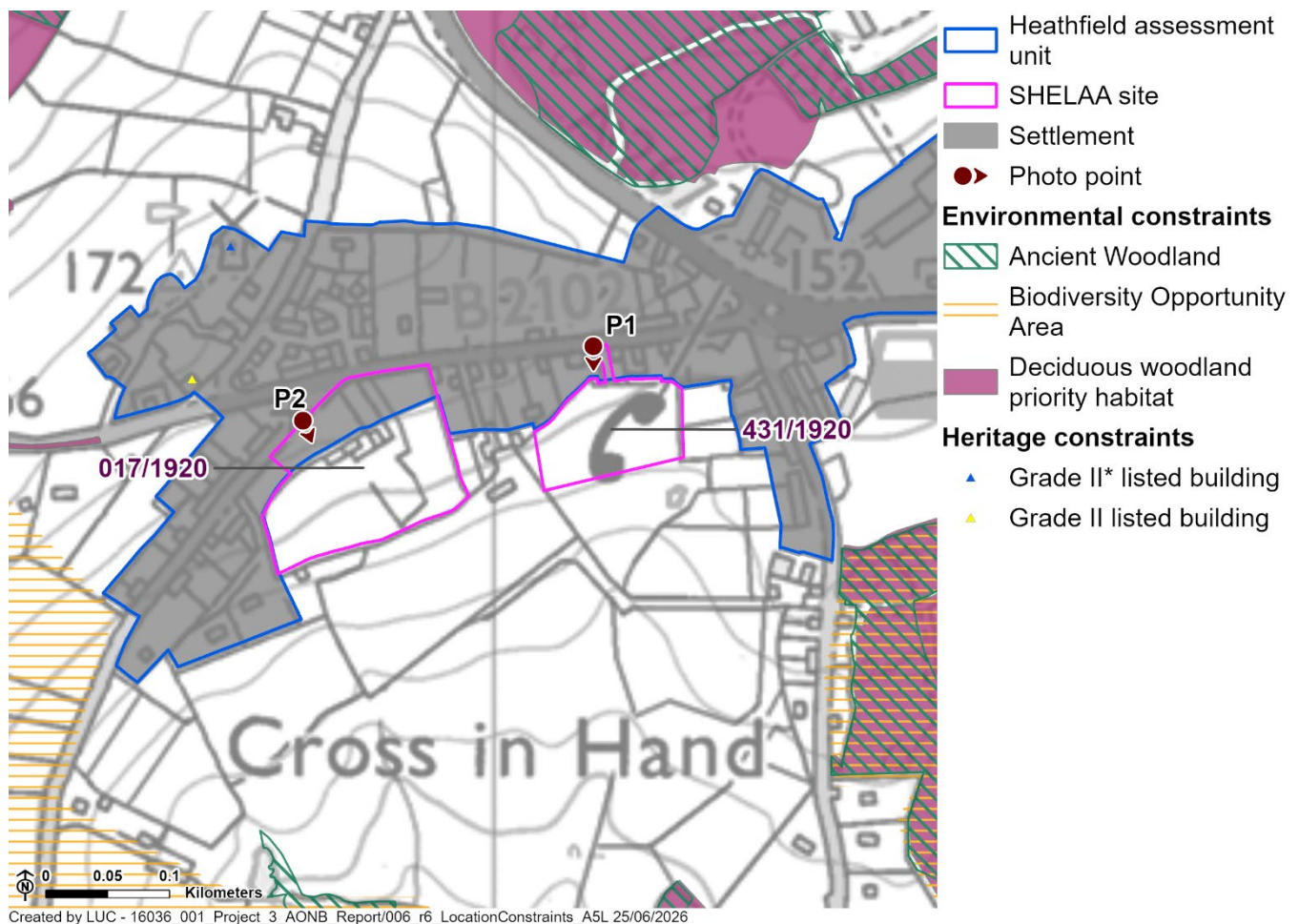
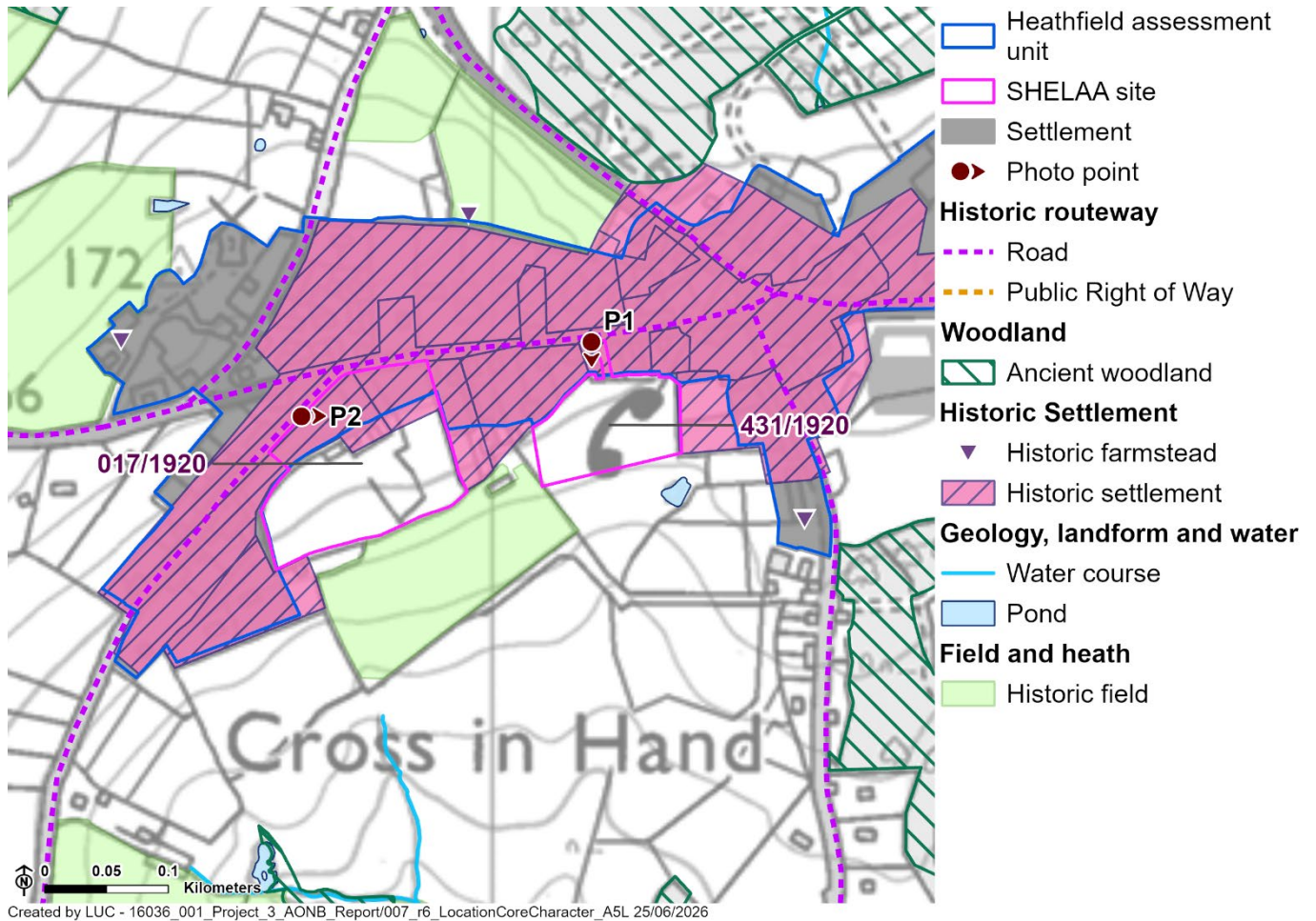


Figure 26: Site location and core character components of natural beauty of the High Weald AONB



Representative site photos



Photo 1: Long distance views south from site 431/1920 across the High Weald AONB to the South Downs National Park.



Photo 2: Mature vegetation on High Street and Fir Grove Road restrict views into site 017/1920.

Baseline Analysis

Baseline landscape character	
Key features and qualities of the site in relation to the wider assessment unit	Landform ■ The sites form part of the rolling ridges of the High Weald Central LCA, and a small part of the 'complex ridge and valley landform; of the wider assessment unit. ■ The sites fall from 155m AOD in the north to 145m AOD in the south-east. Natural character ■ Site 431/1920 is a grass field, while site 017/1920 consists of grass fields, a farmstead and large garden. Mature trees, hedgerows and vegetation surround the sites, and a small woodland lies within site 017/1920 which are valued semi-natural habitats (and typical of the wider assessment unit). Landscape pattern and time depth ■ Site 431/1920 and the east of site 017/1920 are derived from a regular piecemeal enclosure field pattern, as classified in the Sussex HLC, and typical of the wider assessment unit, although field boundaries have been altered. The HLC records the west of site 017/1920 as forming part of a large landscaped garden. Perceptual aspects ■ The sites are influenced by proximity to the settlement edge of Cross in Hand. Tranquillity is recorded in the middle bands of CPRE's Tranquillity Mapping (Figure 3). Darker skies are recorded for site 017/1920 in the west (light levels are recorded in the lower/darker bands of CPRE's Night Blight Mapping on Figure 4) while the east of the site and site 431/1920 are recorded in the middle bands. ■ Site 017/1920 has an enclosed character, while the open character of site 431/1920 affords long-distance views south over the wider High Weald AONB.
Settlement form and edge character and extent of built development	Cross in Hand is a largely linear historic and ridge-top settlement, set along the B2102, Fir Grove Road and Back Lane, with houses set in a single row along the roads. This distinctive pattern has been altered slightly in the north of the village with the recent development at Windmill Place between the B2102 and Dads Hill. Development in Cross in Hand consists of bungalows and two storey detached and semi-detached houses with long back gardens. Red brick and tile-hung upper stories are common. Burnett Farm lies within site 017/1920. The sites contribute to the rural setting of Cross in Hand, particularly the pastoral slopes of site 431/1920.
Baseline visual character	
Potential visual receptors	Mature hedgerows, vegetation and properties along the B2102 and Fir Grove Road limit views into the sites from along these streets, although there are glimpsed views in between the linear development that characterises the B2102 that look across the site with the landscape falling away into the distance. Residents on the south side of B2102 and east of Fir Grove Road will have clear views into the sites from the rear of their properties.
Extent of intervisibility within the High Weald AONB	From site 431/1920 there are long views south to the rolling hills of the wider High Weald AONB and the South Downs National Park beyond.

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 sites form part of the rolling ridges of the High Weald AONB, contributing towards the <u>pattern of faults and folds</u> .
Settlement – dispersed historic settlement including high densities of isolated farmsteads, hamlets and late-medieval villages founded on trade and non-agricultural rural industries.	Cross in Hand is a village of <u>medieval origin</u> and the north of site 017/1920 falls within the historic settlement boundary.
Routeways - a dense network of historic routeways (now roads, tracks and paths)	No routeways cross the sites. The B2102 to the north of both sites is recorded as a ridgeway (although its expression is altered by its use as a B-road with associated modern road markings), and Fir Grove Road to the north-west of site 017/1920 is recorded as a historic track. Both 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.	An <u>irregularly shaped small woodland</u> in the north and west of site 017/1920 and the east of site 431/1920 forms part of the <u>highly interconnected and structurally varied mosaic of many small woods...and outgrown hedges</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).	Fields within the sites are used for <u>grazing livestock</u> and comprise a generally <u>irregular field pattern</u> , defined by hedgerows and mature vegetation.
Dark night skies – intrinsically dark at night with our own galaxy (the Milky Way) visible.	Site 017/1920 in the west is located within an <u>intrinsically dark landscape</u> , although the sense of naturalness is limited by proximity to the settlement of Cross in Hand. Both the B2102 and Fir Grove Road are <u>unlit roads</u> , and Cross in Hand is a <u>rural village with few street lamps or no street lighting</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 combination of grazing and woodland provides a <u>pastoral feel</u> and contributes to the <u>recognisable mosaic of open field and wooded habitats</u> typical of the High Weald. The sense of rurality and tranquillity is somewhat limited by the adjacent residential area, although the open character of site 431/1920 affords <u>unexpected panoramic and long views</u> south over the wider High Weald AONB and towards the South Downs National Park beyond. The woodland and vegetation within and surrounding site 017/1920 create <u>a sense of intimacy, enclosure...</u>
Land-based economy and rural living – with roots extending deep into history, and which has visibly	The current use of the sites relates to the <u>predominantly pastoral mixed farming with an absence of industrial scale farming</u> key characteristic.

and culturally shaped the landscape.	
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Baseline Summary

How the sites relate to the sensitivity of the wider assessment unit

The Assessment Unit

The *Wealden Landscape Sensitivity Assessment to Residential and Employment Development* assesses the Heathfield assessment unit to have a **moderate-high sensitivity** to small-scale residential development (2-2.5 storey housing). The sensitivity analysis indicates that the complex landform; strong natural character including areas of woodland, lowland meadows, grassland and heathland; areas of intact historic field pattern; historic features in the south-east; the rural setting provided to Heathfield and Old Heathfield; and the location within and visual relationship with the wider High Weald AONB increases sensitivity to built development. However, the presence of existing ribbon development, modern agricultural buildings and a caravan park, and enclosure by woodland decrease sensitivity.

The Site

Overall, it is considered that the sites are also of **moderate-high sensitivity** to small-scale residential development (2-2.5 storey housing), in line with the wider assessment unit. The sites form part of the undulating landform and provide a rural setting to Cross in Hand, with long-distance views south afforded from site **431/1920** over the wider AONB. Both the sites therefore demonstrate some of the characteristics that increase the sensitivity to development of the wider assessment unit.

Variations in Sensitivity

Site **017/1920** has an enclosed character and is less sensitive than site **431/1920** which is open and affords long-distance views south.

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

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

- The landform of the sites form part of the pattern of faults and folds;
- The small woodland and mature boundary vegetation form part of the highly interconnected woodlands in the locality and provide a sense of intimacy and enclosure;
- The sites reflect an irregular field pattern, and site **017/1920** partly lies within the historic settlement of Cross in Hand;
- The grazing of livestock and woodland contributes to the pastoral feel of the landscape, with links to the history of the land-based economy;
- There are long views south from within site **431/1920** towards the wider High Weald AONB and South Downs National Park beyond; and
- Site **017/1920** forms part of a landscape with dark skies.

Overall, it is considered that there is a **strong expression** of the core components of character, particularly for site **431/1920** due to a combination of its landform, contribution to landscape setting of the settlement and long distance views towards the South Downs National Park.

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

The section below sets out the potential effects of developing the sites, 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 these sites 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 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 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 of woodland and mature vegetation in the north of site 017/1920 and along the site boundaries of both sites, affecting the role they play in defining and screening the settlement edge, and contribution to the interconnectivity of habitats.	Woodland	<i>Highly interconnected and structurally varied mosaic of many small woods...and outgrown hedges...</i> <i>Many irregularly shaped small woodlands interlinked with shaws...thick hedges...forming an intimate part of the farmed landscape.</i>	- Retain, protect and enhance all mature vegetation within and surrounding the sites, especially the area of woodland in the north of site 017/1920 (in accordance with the AONB's Objectives W1 and PQ2). - Improve the connectivity of woodlands and hedgerows around the sites 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 grazed pastures in site 431/1920 and within both sites the loss/ deterioration of the medium-	Fieldscape and heath	<i>A generally irregular field pattern with individual fields relatively small...</i>	Loss of pasture would be largely unavoidable with development of the sites, as proposed development would remove land from agricultural use. However, the internal field boundaries within site 017/1920 and outer boundaries of site

scale field pattern with largely intact field boundaries.		■ <i>Fields, mostly permanent pasture, used for grazing livestock...</i>	431/1920 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 B2102 and Fir Grove Road (recorded as a historic ridgeway and track respectively) 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 roads, where possible, protecting the hedgerows along them (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 to the B2102 and Fir Grove Road.	Dark night skies	■ <i>Intrinsically dark landscapes with a sense of naturalness.</i> ■ <i>Numerous unlit roads...</i> ■ <i>Rural village 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 guidance ³² and use dark sky-friendly lighting (in accordance with the AONB's Objectives DS1 and DS2).
Settlement form edge and setting			
Deterioration of the rural character of the sites which contribute to the setting of Cross in Hand. Expansion and change to the linear settlement form of Cross in Hand, with houses currently set in a single row along the roads. Potential demolition of existing property within site 017/1920.	Settlement	<i>Villages and towns mostly of medieval origin...</i>	■ For site 017/1920, maintain the existing settlement pattern and its character by following the scale and built form of the existing development along the B2102, supporting the pattern of single row dwellings by not extending too far south away from the B2102 (in accordance with the AONB's Objectives S1 and S2). Any development within site 431/1920 would alter the distinctive settlement pattern. ■ 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'³³, 'Guidance on the selection and

³² 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/>

³³ <https://www.highweald.org/look-after/planning/design-guide.html>

			use of colour in development ³⁴ and objectives of the High Weald AONB Management Plan ³⁵ (in accordance with the AONB's Objective S2).
Visual amenity			
Visibility of development seen by: pedestrians, road users, and residents along High Street and Firgrove Road.	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>Unexpected panoramic and long views, often uninterrupted, extending out along the valleys...</i>	- Consider the height and position of development within site 431/1920 to retain the long views south across the wider AONB and towards the South Downs National Park (in accordance with the AONB's Objective PQ2). - Retain, protect and enhance all existing vegetation including the mature vegetation to the north of site 017/1920 (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).
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, with a strong level of expression, particularly for site 431/1920. This is due to the sloping landform (affording long-distance views towards the South Downs National Park from site 431/1920); the presence of mature woodland, trees and hedgerows; irregular field pattern and grazed pastures; being within/ adjacent to the historic settlement of Cross in Hand; and partly within 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 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> Site 431/1920 contributes mostly to the overall high level of impact above. The potential impacts as a result of development on solely site 017/1920 are judged to have a moderate level of impact.		

³⁴ <https://www.highweald.org/look-after/planning/colour-study.html>

³⁵ <https://www.highweald.org/high-weald-aonb-management-plan.html>

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:

- Consider the height and position of development within site **431/1920** to retain the long views south across the wider AONB and towards the South Downs National Park.
- Limit the extent of development 'spilling' beyond the ridge crest onto the valley side, to minimise alterations to the landform.
- Retain, protect and enhance the area of woodland in the north of site **017/1920**.
- For site **017/1920**, maintain the existing settlement pattern and its character by following the scale and built form of the existing development along the B2102, supporting the pattern of single row dwellings by not extending too far south away from the B2102.

Figure 27: Summary map of constraints and opportunities



Land at 5 Farthing Cottage, Back Lane, Cross in Hand (1238/1210)

Site Details	
Potential development	Residential development proposed on entirety of site mapped below, and entirety of the site is proposed as draft allocation HEA12 (identified for 5 dwellings) in the Focused Wealden Local Plan (2026).
Site location	This site is located south of the Cross in Hand settlement and situated to the rear of properties along the B2102 to the north, and Back Lane to the east.

Figure 28: Site location and constraints

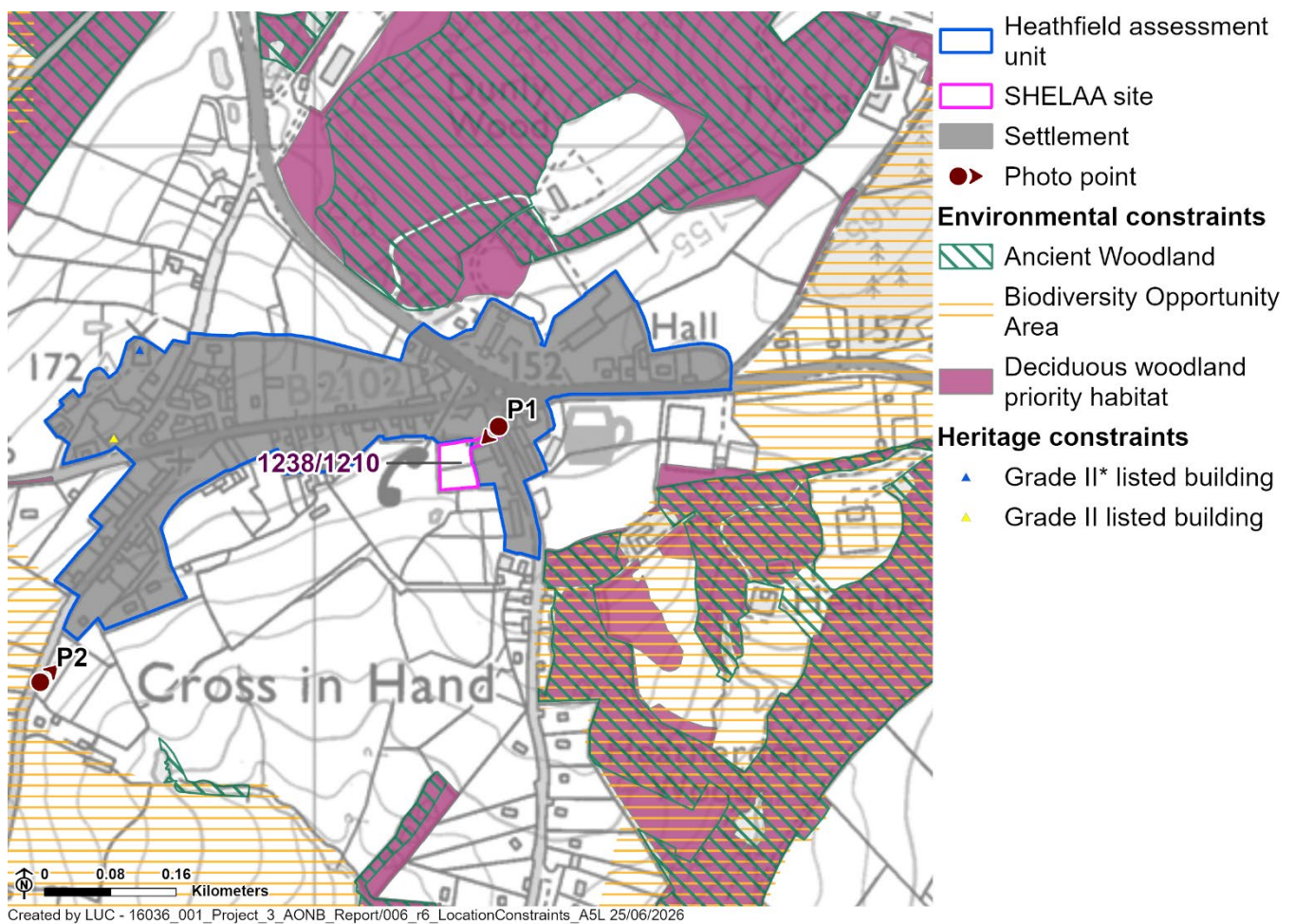
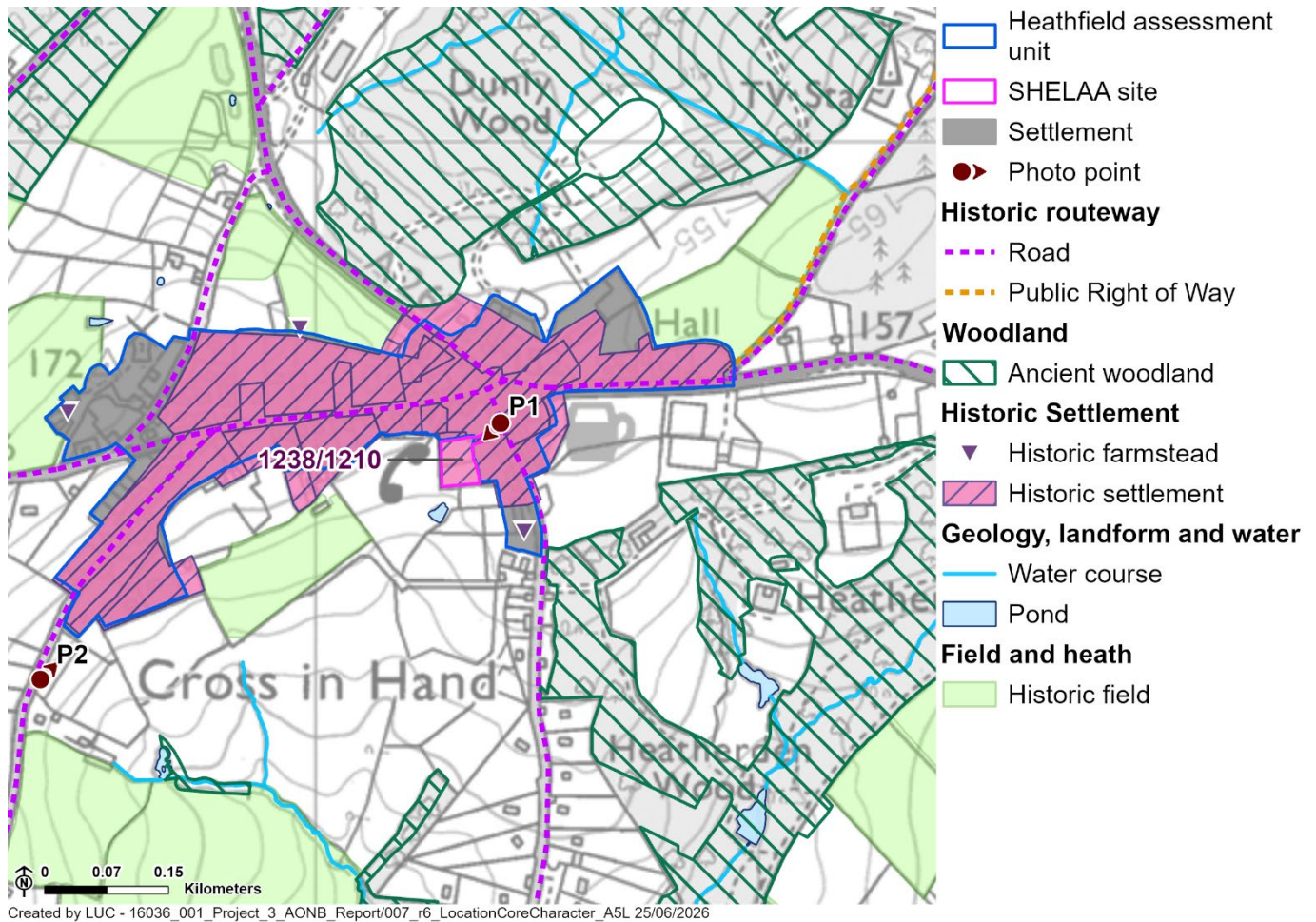


Figure 29: Site location and core character components of natural beauty of the High Weald AONB



Representative site photos



Photo 1: View from Back Lane looking west into the site.



Photo 2: View from the west along Firgrove Road, where views into the site are largely restricted by the mature deciduous trees along the site's western boundary.

Baseline Analysis

Baseline landscape character	
Key features and qualities of the site in relation to the wider assessment unit	Landform - The site comprises flat land at approximately 147m AOD, positioned at the base of rolling ridges of the High Weald that gently rise to the west. This relationship between lower, level ground and adjacent elevated ridges reflect the typical landform pattern of the wider assessment unit. Natural character - The site comprises a grass field in the south and what appears to be small paddocks in the north with sheds/ stables along the western edge. - Mature deciduous trees form the site's western boundary and provide connectivity with the wider habitat network, reflecting vegetation patterns typical of the wider assessment unit. To the north and east, the site is enclosed by domestic garden vegetation associated with adjacent residential properties. - There are some in-field trees in the north of the site (along the fencelines associated with the paddocks). Landscape pattern and time depth - The site is derived from a regular piecemeal enclosure field pattern (as classified in the Sussex HLC and typical of the wider assessment unit), although with some field division by fencing associated with the paddocks in the north. Perceptual aspects - The site is influenced by its proximity to the settlement edge of Cross in Hand, which reduces levels of tranquillity (which are recorded as 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 follows the linear settlement pattern of Cross in Hand, situated behind residential properties along the B2102 to the north and Back Lane to the east. Development in this area primarily comprises of 20th and 21st century housing, including bungalows and two-storey dwellings, with some three-storey properties to the north, reflecting the ribbon development characteristic of the wider assessment unit. The mature tree belt along the site's western boundary forms a robust boundary to the edges of domestic curtilages associated with properties along Back Lane.
Baseline visual character	
Potential visual receptors	Views into the site are limited to surrounding residential properties along the settlement edge, with residents being the primary visual receptors. Vegetation along the western boundary screens the site from the adjacent open fields, while hedgerow vegetation to the south further encloses the site and limits views from the surrounding landscape.
Extent of visibility within the High Weald AONB	Long-distance views to and from the site are limited, as mature vegetation along the western boundary and the surrounding built settlement edge restrict wider visibility within the High Weald AONB. Some mid-distance, filtered views may be experienced to the south, although these are largely influenced and contained by the ancient woodland at Heatherden Wood, which forms a strong landscape feature in the area.

Expression of the 'core character components of natural beauty' of the High Weald AONB on the site	
Natural systems (geology, soils, water and climate) – a deeply incised, ridged and faulted landform of clays and sandstone with highly variable, relatively undisturbed soils and numerous headwaters (gill streams) functioning under an oceanic climate.	There are no distinctive geological, landform or water features within the site.
Settlement – dispersed historic settlement including high densities of isolated farmsteads, hamlets and late-medieval villages founded on trade and non-agricultural rural industries.	Cross in Hand is a village of <u>medieval origin</u> . The site boundaries, located within the historic settlement edge, are characteristic of <u>historic field systems abutting and containing historic settlement</u> .
Routeways – a dense network of historic routeways (now roads, tracks and paths).	No historic routeways pass through the site itself. However, Back Lane to the east, is a recorded historic lane and forms part of the <u>dense, radiating network</u> of historic routes characteristic of the surrounding High Weald landscape.
Woodland – an abundance of ancient woodland mostly in small holdings, highly interconnected with hedges and shaws.	Vegetation along the site's western boundary contributes toward the <u>highly interconnected and structurally varied mosaic of many small woods...and outgrown hedges</u> of the AONB. The in-field trees in the north <u>provide additional connectivity to the wider landscape</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).	The western and southern boundaries align with the historic settlement edge, while the field reflects generally <u>irregular field pattern</u> , defined by hedgerows and grassland cover.
Dark night skies – intrinsically dark at night with our own galaxy (the Milky Way) visible.	Back Lane to the east is an <u>unlit road</u> and Cross in Hand is a <u>rural village with few street lamps or no street lighting</u> . However, dark skies are limited by the adjacent residential area and associated lighting.
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 adjacent open and irregular field with mature vegetation along boundaries contributes to the <u>recognisable mosaic of open field and wooded habitats</u> typical of the High Weald. The sense of rurality and tranquillity is somewhat limited by the adjacent residential area. Long views into the site are restricted by enclosing vegetation, which enhances the <u>sense of intimacy, enclosure...</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 Heathfield assessment unit to have a **moderate-high** sensitivity to small scale residential development (2-2.5 storey housing). The sensitivity analysis indicates that complex landform; strong natural character including areas of woodland, lowland meadows, grassland and heathland; areas of intact historic field pattern; historic features in the south-east; the rural setting provided to Heathfield and Old Heathfield; and the location within and visual relationship with the wider High Weald AONB increase sensitivity to development. However, the presence of existing ribbon development, modern agricultural buildings, a caravan park, and enclosure by woodland decrease 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 **low-moderate** sensitivity to small scale residential development (2-2.5 storey housing). The site comprises a grassland field, is partly enclosed by mature hedgerows, and lies within the historic extent of Cross in Hand, reflecting some of the characteristics that increase sensitivity within the wider assessment unit. However, the site is relatively flat and is visually enclosed by surrounding vegetation and buildings. Its proximity to the existing ribbon development further reduces sensitivity compared to the wider assessment unit.

Variations in Sensitivity

There is no variation in sensitivity across the site.

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

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

- The mature tree belt and hedgerow along the western and southern boundaries of the site respectively, and the in-field trees in the north form part of the highly interconnected woodlands in the locality and provide a sense of intimacy and enclosure; and
- The site reflects an irregular field pattern, and lies within the historic settlement of Cross in Hand.

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 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 trees and hedgerows, affecting the role they play in defining and screening the settlement edge, and contributions to the interconnectivity of habitats.	Woodland	<i>Highly interconnected and structurally varied mosaic of many small woodlands....and outgrown hedges, and isolated trees.</i>	■ Retain, protect and enhance all mature vegetation surrounding the site, especially the mature trees along the western boundary (in accordance with the AONB's Objectives W1 and PQ2). ■ Improve the connectivity of woodlands and hedgerows around the site through new tree planting and hedgerow corridors that are in character with the locality, using native species where possible/suitable (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 of grassland, in-field trees and irregular field pattern.	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 grassland would be unavoidable with development of the site, with limited opportunities to retain areas due to the small scale of the site. However, field boundaries around the edge 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 in-field trees in the northern 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>A generally irregular field pattern with individual fields relatively small...</i>	
Modifications to Back 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, 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 further lighting in the dark night skies resulting in increased night blight.	Dark night skies	■ <i>Numerous unlit roads...</i> ■ <i>Rural village 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 guidance³⁶ and use dark sky-friendly lighting (in accordance with the AONB's Objectives DS1 and DS2).
Settlement form edge and setting			
Extension of development further west beyond the existing linear settlement edge (currently formed by a single row of houses).	N/A	N/A	■ 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'³⁷, 'Guidance on the selection and use of colour in development'³⁸ and objectives of the High Weald AONB Management Plan³⁹ (in accordance with the AONB's Objective S2).
Visual amenity			
Visibility of development seen by residents at Back Lane and High Street (B2102).	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 thick hedgerow and treed boundaries that enclose the west of the site (in accordance with the AONB's Objectives W1 and PQ2).

³⁶ 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/>

³⁷ <https://www.highweald.org/look-after/planning/design-guide.html>

³⁸ <https://www.highweald.org/look-after/planning/colour-study.html>

³⁹ <https://www.highweald.org/high-weald-aonb-management-plan.html>

		■ <i>A sense of intimacy, enclosure and remoteness owing to the heavily treed landscape.</i>	■ 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).
Overall impact on the core character components of natural beauty of the High Weald AONB			
Low impact	The baseline analysis indicates 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 mature trees along the western boundary.
- Retain the in-field trees in the northern part of the site and improve connectivity with other habitats through new tree planting.

Cumulative effects of development sites proposed in the Heathfield assessment unit

14 sites have been assessed within the Heathfield 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 adjacent to Street End Lane, Broad Oak (653/1630)	High impact	No variation.
Former Broad Oak Primary School, Scotsford Road, Broad Oak (1266/1630)	Low impact	No variation.
Collins Field, Burwash Road (848/1210)	Moderate impact	No variation.
Land south of Burwash Road and east of Tower Street (260/1210)	Moderate impact	No variation.
Group comprising Land at Parklands, Burwash Road (275/1210), 15 Tower Street (299/1210) and The Old Half Moon, Burwash Road (798/1210)	High impact	The greatest impacts on the core character components would likely arise if development occurred within site 299/1210 (due to the presence of mature woodland across this site) and on the southern half of site 275/1210 (as the valley landform contributes strongly to the pattern of faults and folds, and its proximity to the Registered Park and Garden and ancient woodland). The potential impacts would be slightly less within the northern part of site 798/1210 given its proximity to the road and settlement edge and the visual enclosure provided by the mature vegetation along all of its boundaries; although not to the extent that there would be a change to the high impact.
Land south-west of Ghyll Road, Tilsmore (149/1210)	High impact	Development within the western half of the site is considered to have a greater impact on the core character components than the eastern half, primarily due to the presence of trees and young woodland across this part of the site. If the potential mitigation and enhancement opportunities set out are applied, which includes locating development within the east and along Ghyll Road, then potential impacts as a result of the development on the sites would likely be reduced. However, there would still be inevitable adverse impacts on the grazed pastures which would be lost.

Site	Overall impact on the core character components of natural beauty of the High Weald AONB	Variations
Group comprising Land to the rear of Rothershaw, High Street (525/1210) and Land at Tilsmore Nurseries, off Nursery Way (307/1210)	High impact	The greatest impacts on the core character components would likely arise if development occurred within site 307/1210 as it expresses the parkland character slightly more strongly than site 525/1210 . The potential impacts would be slightly less within site 525/1210 which is well contained and visually enclosed by its wooded boundaries; although not to the extent that there would be a change to the high impact. If the potential mitigation and enhancement opportunities set out are applied, which includes locating development within the south-east of site 525/1210 and avoiding the loss of woodland, then potential impacts as a result of the development on the sites would likely be reduced. However, there would still be inevitable adverse impacts on the grassland and parkland character of this site, which would be lost.
Land at Sunnyside, A267, Cross in Hand (941/1920)	Moderate impact	No variation.
Group comprising Land to rear of Brenton House (north), B2102, Cross in Hand (431/1920) and Field to the east of Burnetts Farm, Firgrove Road, Cross in Hand (017/1920)	High impact	Site 431/1920 contributes mostly to the overall high level of impact above. The potential impacts as a result of development on solely site 017/1920 are judged to have a moderate level of impact.
Land at 5 Farthing Cottage, Back Lane, Cross in Hand (1238/1210)	Low impact	No variation.

If all 14 sites were brought forward for development to the extent as assessed, it would result in a potential of up to 178 dwellings and one area of employment use being built. This could result in a large loss of fields, hedgerow boundaries and trees within the High Weald AONB. Substantial vegetation cover, existing development and the sloping topography reduces intervisibility between the sites, and due to their small scale, the cumulative interactions with each other would mostly be limited, with the exceptions detailed below.

Sites **260/1210**, **299/1210**, **275/1210** and **798/1210** are located to the north-east of Heathfield and are all adjacent to one another (totalling 50 potential dwellings combined). It is understood that all four sites have been identified as allocations in the Focused Wealden Local Plan (2026). The development of all four sites would likely lead to the perception of the settlement edge extending down from a prominent ridge-top into the countryside, affecting the rural setting of the settlement and the northern edge of Heathfield Park. There would likely be cumulative impacts on a few components of character of the High Weald AONB with development extending down the relatively steep slope from the existing settlement edge, impacting on the pattern of faults and folds, as well as impacts on the wood pasture and parkland character with the interconnected woodland habitats, infield trees and grazing pastures potentially being affected. Whilst visibility of the sites is limited, particularly from the south due to the dense vegetation within Heathfield Park screening views, development of all four sites would likely affect sequential views and the open rural character experienced by people travelling along the A265 when viewed on approach to Heathfield from the east.

Sites **525/1210** and **307/1210** (totalling 37 potential dwellings combined) on the north-western edge adjoin one another and have been assessed together above. If both sites were brought forwards for development, the cumulative effect would see the settlement edge of Heathfield in the north extended to meet Tilney / Markly Wood. This would reduce the gap between the settlement edge of Heathfield and the ancient woodlands of Tilney / Markly Wood, and would result in the loss of undeveloped land, thus reducing rurality in this area. The assessment considers that potential development would likely have an impact on the pattern of faults and folds, ancient woodland, wood pasture and parkland character, and glimpsed long views across the AONB. It is understood that only site **525/1210** has been identified as an allocation in the Focused Wealden Local Plan (2026).

Whilst potential development within the small sites of **017/1920**, **431/1920**, **1238/1210** and **941/1920** would have limited cumulative interactions visually, the linear settlement pattern of Cross in Hand could change from single row houses to a more nucleated pattern that extends into the countryside and so it is important that any design/ layout should take this into consideration, in order to preserve the historic settlement pattern (a key component of character). It is understood that all four sites have been identified as allocations in the Focused Wealden Local Plan (2026).

Overall, it is considered that the cumulative impact of developing the 14 potential sites on the core character components of natural beauty of the High Weald AONB will be no greater than the sum of their individual impacts.