

Wealden District Council

Landscape and Visual Appraisal – Appendix A.7

Potential Development Sites in the High Weald AONB: LCA 5B - Tunbridge Wells South-East

Final report

Prepared by LUC

August 2026



Wealden District Council

Landscape and Visual Appraisal – Appendix A.7

Potential Development Sites in the High Weald

AONB: LCA 5B - Tunbridge Wells South-East

Version	Status	Prepared	Checked	Approved	Date
1.	Draft Report	AK / AP	EW	KD	07.11.2022
2.	Draft Report	AK / AP	EW	KD	22.12.2022
3.	Draft Report - updated as part of 2025 commission	EW	EW	KD	23.04.2026
4.	Final Draft Report	EW	EW	KD	24.07.2026
5.	Final Report	EW	EW	KD	18.08.2026

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OHS627041



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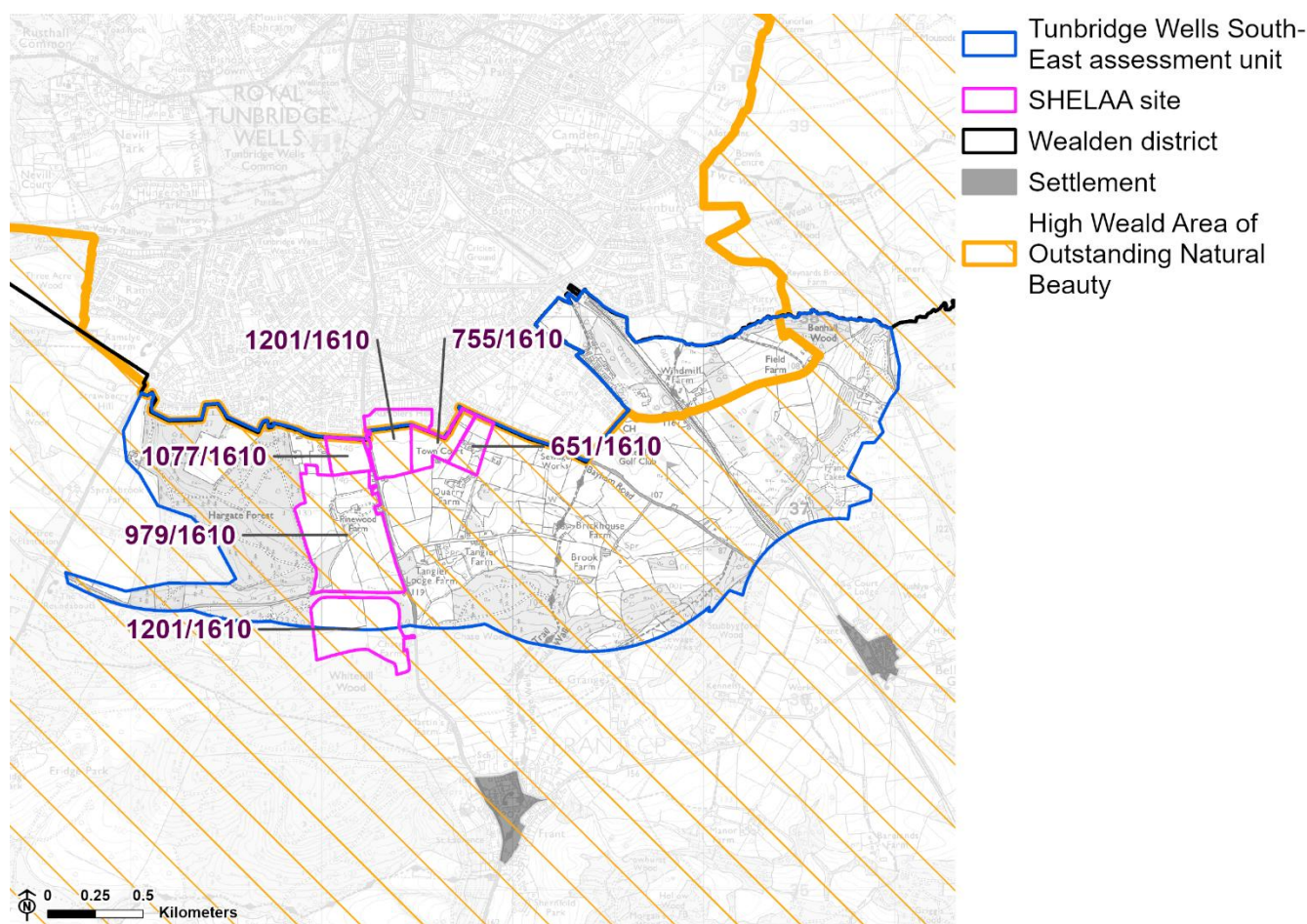
Appendix A.7

Tunbridge Wells South-East Assessment Unit

The following potential development sites are considered within the Tunbridge Wells South-East assessment unit:

- Group comprising **Land off Bayham Road (755/1610)** and **Land at Bayham Road (651/1610)**
- Group comprising **Land lying to the west side of Frant Road (1077/1610)** and **Pinewood Farm, Frant Road (979/1610)**
- **Land at Tunbridge Wells Rugby Club and Chase Farm, Frant Road (1201/1610)**

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



Settlement location, evolution and pattern

Settlement location and context	Royal Tunbridge Wells is a large town located within Tunbridge Wells Borough, just to the north of Wealden and outside the local authority's boundary. The settlement 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 6A: High Weald – Medway Catchment and LCA 5B: High Weald – Central.
Settlement evolution	The origins of the town date to the 17 th century when Tunbridge Wells was established as a spa retreat due to the presence of a chalybeate spring. Rising popularity of the town's healing springs led to further expansion in the 18 th century. The historic core of the settlement is located along the Pantiles promenade, which extends south-west from the wells. Railway services were introduced in the 19 th century and, given its proximity to London, the town grew steadily throughout the 19 th and 20 th centuries. As the town expanded from the valley-floor Pantiles, development was originally focussed along the ridge lines that carry the major roads. However, more recently development has also expanded from this down on to the slopes. Despite this later expansion of development, the settlement edge is often enclosed by woodland or contained by roads.
Settlement pattern and edge character	The south-eastern edge of Tunbridge Wells consists mostly of two and two-and-a-half storey detached and semi-detached houses, and some urban fringe elements including sewage works, a crematorium and cemetery, and a golf club located along the south-eastern settlement edge near the B2169. Part of the southern settlement edge is defined by woodland at Hargate Forest.

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 Tunbridge Wells South-East assessment unit have been mapped in **Figure 2**. Tranquillity (which forms part of the 'aesthetic and perceptual qualities' character component) and dark skies are shown in **Figures 3 and 4** respectively.

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

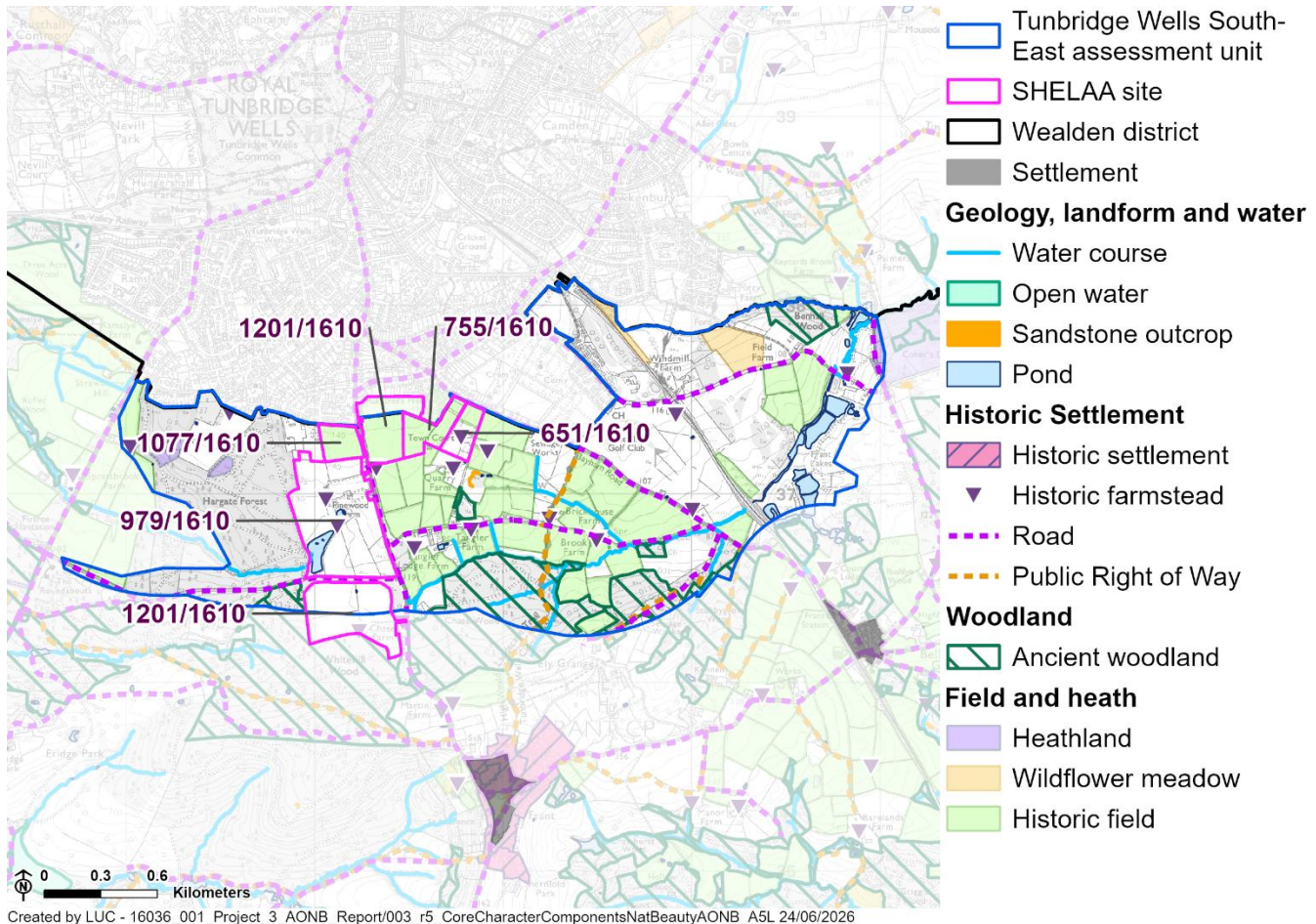
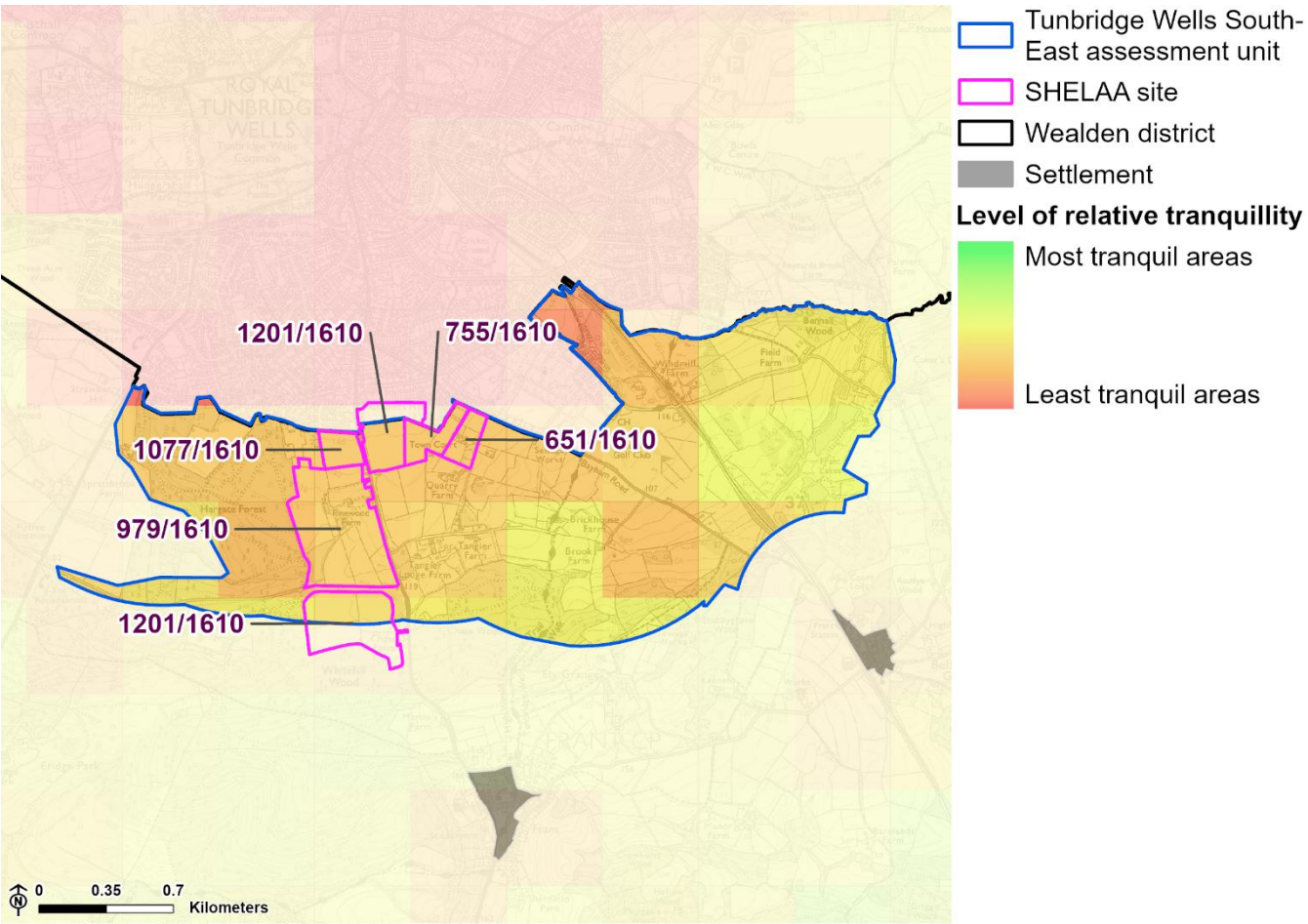


Figure.3: Tranquillity



Created by LUC - 16036_001_Project_3_AONB_Report/004_r5_Tranquillity_A5L 24/06/2026

0 0.35 0.7 Kilometers

Created by LUC - 16036_001_Project_3_AONB_Report/005_r5_DarkSkies_A5L 24/06/2026

Landscape sensitivity context for the Tunbridge Wells South-East assessment unit

The landscape sensitivity of the Tunbridge Wells South-East assessment unit described in the <i>Wealden Landscape Sensitivity Assessment to Residential and Employment Development (2023)</i>			
Landscape sensitivity The rating that applies to the assessment unit	Small scale residential 2-2.5 storey housing	Medium scale residential 3-4 storey flats/ care homes	Commercial/ industrial e.g. industrial units or hotels
	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 (some of which are ancient in origin), particularly in the west and south of the unit. - The role the area plays in separation between the larger settlement of Tunbridge Wells and smaller settlements located further south within the High Weald AONB and Wealden District, including Frant and Bells Yew Green. - The wooded backdrop, formed by woodland in the west of the unit, to the settlement edge of Tunbridge Wells. - The network of public rights of way including the promoted High Weald Landscape Trail and Tunbridge Wells Circular Walk and open access land at Hargate Forest. - The rural character of the landscape with areas of remoteness, tranquillity and dark skies away from busy roads and the settlement edge. - Location within and intervisibility with more distant areas of the High Weald AONB.		
Guidance	- Relate development to the existing pattern of settlement, which is focused along ridgelines and avoids valley sides and incised stream valleys (LCA 6B). - Avoid development on sites in areas of habitat interest, notably deciduous woodland, lowland heath and riparian habitats along stream valleys. - Retain broadleaved woodland and heathland. Avoid loss of, harm, or deterioration to the interconnecting ancient semi-natural woodlands 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. - Take up biodiversity opportunities listed in the Eridge and Broadwater Watershed BOA, especially woodland and heathland management and restoration, where possible. - Retain in-field and roadside trees along the A267 and B2169, 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 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 south. - Minimise the potential for coalescence with small settlements located to the south, and the sequential experience of settlement as experienced when travelling south on roads from Tunbridge Wells into the interior of the High Weald AONB.		

- | | |
|--|--|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Consider views from public rights of way, particularly from the High Weald Landscape Trail and Tunbridge Wells Circular Walk, and glimpsed outward views from open access woodland at Hargate Forest when siting and designing development in the landscape.■ Any development should be carefully integrated into the landscape, utilising existing woodland, and / or using species that are in character with the wider landscape, preferably native.■ Ensure opportunities to access and enjoy the landscape are preserved and enhanced.■ Ensure new building reinforces and responds to local character in its scale, layout and design, reflecting the local vernacular in use of materials. Developments should draw on the principles contained within the High Weald AONB 'High Weald Housing Design Guide'¹, 'Guidance on the selection and use of colour in development'² and objectives of the High Weald AONB Management Plan³.■ Ensure development does not affect the scenic rural character of the landscape, and areas of relative tranquillity, particularly the defining components of character relating to the High Weald AONB. |
|--|--|

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

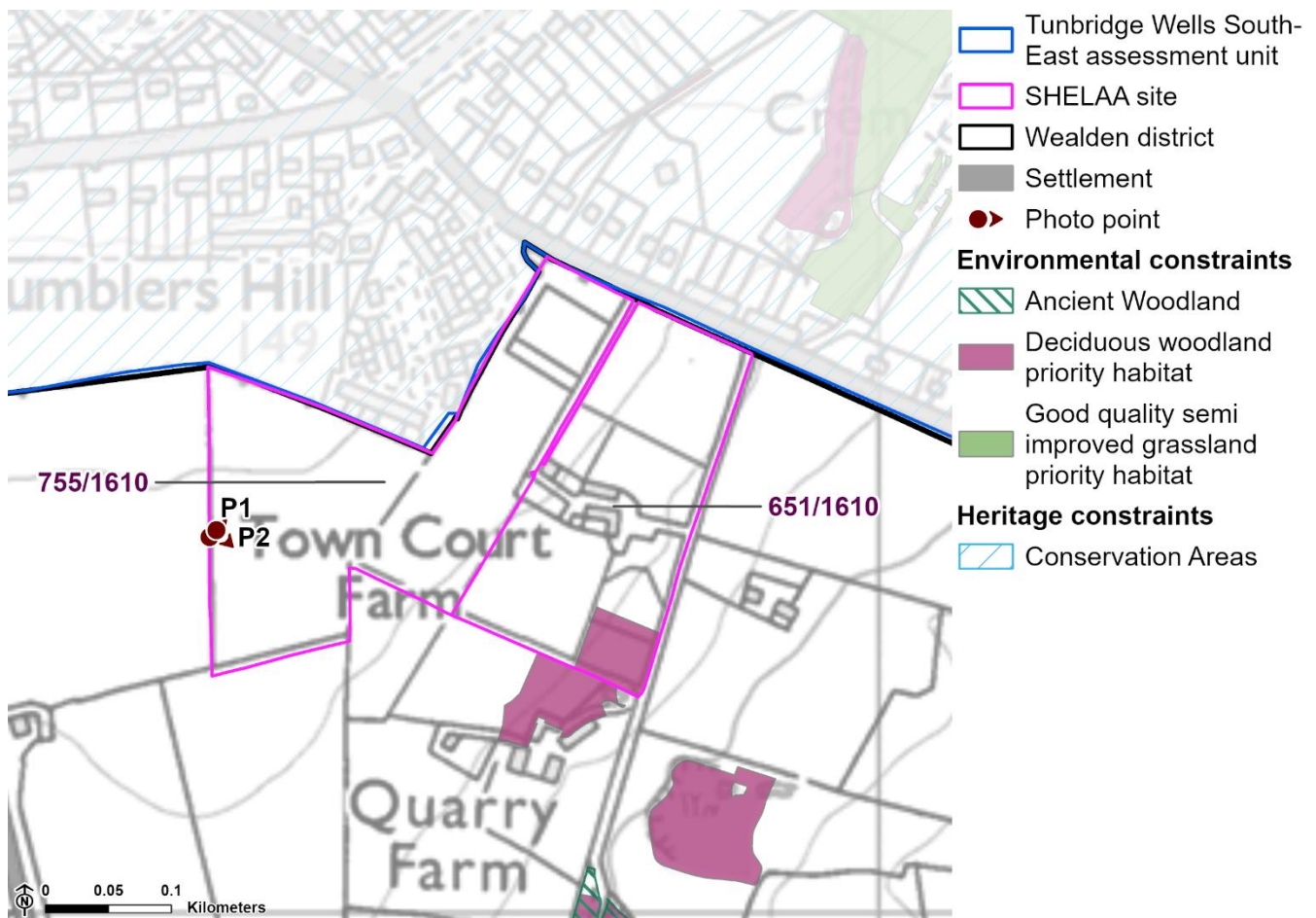
² <https://www.highweald.org/look-after/planning/colour-study.html>

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

Land off Bayham Road (755/1610) and Land at Bayham Road (651/1610)

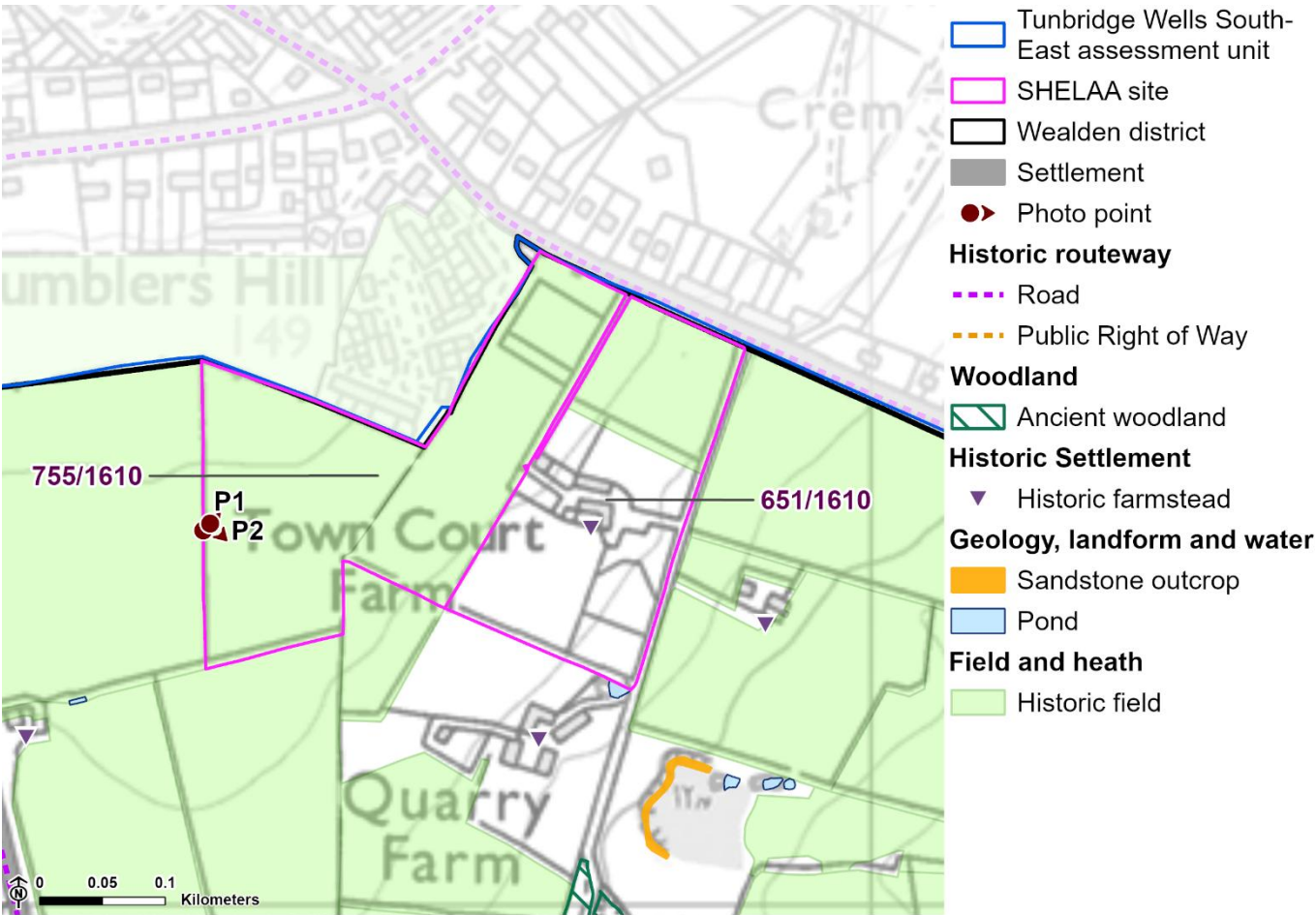
Site Details	
Potential development	Site 755/1610 - Residential development proposed on entirety of site mapped below, and entirety of site is proposed as Draft Allocation FR2 (identified for 100 dwellings) in the Focused Wealden Local Plan (2026). Site 651/1610 - Residential development proposed on entirety of site mapped below, and entirety of site is proposed as Draft Allocation FR3 (identified for 60 dwellings) in the Focused Wealden Local Plan (2026). Total: 160 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 south of the settlement and situated to the south-west of the B2169.

Figure 5: Site location and constraints



Created by LUC - 16036_001_Project_3_AONB_Report/006_r6_LocationConstraints_A5L 24/06/2026

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



Representative site photos



Photo 1: View north-east across site 755/1610 looking towards properties along Dukes Drive



Photo 2: Views south-east across site 755/1610, glimpsed in between a break in the containing field boundary

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 ridged landform, which is typical of the wider assessment unit, sloping gently from 130m AOD in the south-east to 145m AOD in the north at the settlement edge of Tunbridge Wells. - The sites are located on the crest of the ridgeline, with landform gently descending to the south of the site towards an incised stream corridor. Natural character - Site 755/1610 is predominantly arable, with an influence of modern agricultural development (a plant nursery with polytunnels) in the north-east of the site, which is atypical of the wider assessment unit. Site 651/1610 contains a farmstead (comprising a farmhouse and agricultural buildings) set within pastoral fields. - Interconnected and partially wooded field boundaries, which are typical of the wider assessment unit, are located along the boundaries of both sites. An area of priority habitat deciduous woodland extends into the south-eastern corner of site 651/1610. Landscape pattern and time depth - The underlying field pattern of the sites comprises small to medium scale fields derived from planned private enclosure as classified in the Sussex HLC, with relatively linear field boundaries, which are typical of the wider assessment unit. Perceptual aspects - The sites and wider assessment unit are influenced by the proximity to Tunbridge Wells, which affect levels of tranquillity (which are recorded as relatively low in CPRE's Tranquillity Mapping, Figure 3) and disrupts 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 part of a wider pattern of fields which provide a rural context to the southern edge of Tunbridge Wells. The sites lie to the south of the settlement edge of Tunbridge Wells along the B2169 Bayham Road. Linear development extends along the northern side of the B2169 Bayham Road to the north-east and east of the sites. Mature field boundaries along Bayham Road (including along the north-eastern edges of sites 755/1610 and 651/1610) form a robust settlement boundary and an enclosed setting to the settlement edge. The edge of the modern housing development along Dukes Drive (and along the north-western boundary of site 755/1610) is also partly defined by vegetation, although this is less mature and gappy in places, resulting in the settlement edge to be less defined. Development near the sites consists of large detached houses on Forest Road and the B2169 Bayham Road, and more recent 21st century semi-detached properties located on cul-de-sacs at Copperfields and Dukes Drive to the north of the sites.
Baseline visual character	
Potential visual receptors	The surrounding woodland, trees and hedgerows enclose the sites and limit their visibility from the surrounding landscape including from the nearby residential properties along the settlement edge, particularly for the north-east of site 755/1610 and site 651/1610. There are glimpsed views into the west of site 755/1610 from the cricket club and sports pitches to the west of the site. There are very limited glimpsed views into the sites in between gaps in vegetation and at field gates from the B2169 Bayham Road.

Extent of visibility within the High Weald AONB	Long views to and from the sites are limited by their enclosed nature, including mature and wooded field boundaries along all site boundaries and woodland to the south of the sites. However, longer-distance glimpsed views south towards the elevated wooded ridges of the High Weald AONB are afforded from more elevated areas in the north-west of site 755/1610 .
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Expression of the 'core character components of natural beauty' of the High Weald AONB on the site	
Natural systems (geology, soils, water and climate) – a deeply incised, ridged and faulted landform of clays and sandstone with highly variable, relatively undisturbed soils and numerous headwaters (gill streams) functioning under an oceanic climate.	The sites form part of the rolling ridges of the High Weald AONB, located on the transitional slopes descending from the <u>principal ridge (Forest Ridge)</u> of the High Weald, 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.	Town Court Farm within the centre of site 651/1610 is recorded as a <u>historic farmstead</u> but is of 'partial loss' ⁴ and industrial in character, with modern sheds and storage areas intermixed with some historic buildings.
Routeways – a dense network of historic routeways (now roads, tracks and paths).	No historic routeways cross the sites. However, the B2169 Bayham Road along the north-eastern boundary of the sites is recorded as a historic lane, which contributes towards the <u>dense radiating network</u> of historic routeways, although its expression is altered by its use as the B2169 with associated modern road markings.
Woodland – an abundance of ancient woodland mostly in small holdings, highly interconnected with hedges and shaws.	The mature and wooded field boundaries, including the block of woodland in the south-eastern corner of site 651/1610 , contribute to the <u>highly interconnected and structurally varied mosaic of many small woods...and outgrown hedges</u> of the AONB.
Fieldsapes and heath – small, irregular and productive fields, bound by hedgerows and woods, and typically used for livestock grazing; with distinctive zones of lowland heaths and inned river valleys (reclaimed marshland).	Whilst the fields located within the sites are small in scale and defined by <u>mixed woody boundaries and...thick hedges</u> , the field pattern is relatively linear and regular. The small fields within site 651/1610 are used for <u>grazing livestock</u> .
Dark night skies – intrinsically dark at night with our own galaxy (the Milky Way) visible.	Dark skies are generally limited by proximity to the settlement edge of Tunbridge Wells and Bayham Road.
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	The historic farmstead at Town Court Farm partly contributes to the <u>sense of history and timelessness</u> , although its expression is slightly masked by its industrial character. The combination of grazing within site 651/1610 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 limited by the adjacent roads and settlement edge. There are some glimpsed <u>long views</u> south towards the wooded ridges of the wider AONB; however, vegetation enclosing the sites generally limit long views out elsewhere and contribute to the <u>sense of intimacy, enclosure and remoteness...</u>

⁴ As identified in the High Weald AONB character components dataset (see Figure 9).

world, and a rich legacy of features and ideas left by writers, poets and 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.	The current use of site 651/1610 relates to the <u><i>predominantly pastoral mixed farming with an absence of industrial scale farming</i></u> key characteristic.

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 Tunbridge Wells South-East 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, areas of woodland, the wooded and scenic rural qualities of the unit which contribute to the setting of Tunbridge Wells, and the location within and visual relationship with the wider High Weald AONB increase sensitivity to built development. However, the presence of modern farm buildings and some areas of field amalgamation, enclosure by woodland, relatively few known historic features and proximity to Tunbridge Wells reduce sensitivity.

The Sites

Overall, it is considered that the sites are of **moderate-high** sensitivity to small scale residential development (2-2.5 storey housing), in line with the wider assessment unit. The sites are part of the rolling ridges of the High Weald AONB with the field boundaries of both sites forming part of the wooded and rural backdrop to the settlement edge of Tunbridge Wells, particularly in views from properties along Bayham Road and Dukes Drive. Site **651/1610** comprises pastoral fields and contains a block of priority habitat deciduous woodland within its south-eastern corner. The western extents of site **755/1610** are more open and elevated resulting in intervisibility with the wider High Weald AONB. All these factors demonstrate some of the characteristics that increase sensitivity across the assessment unit. However, site **755/1610** is predominantly arable, and the sites are relatively enclosed in character by mature boundary vegetation and trees as well as being influenced by the proximity of the settlement edge in terms of tranquillity / dark skies, which slightly decrease sensitivity.

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

- The sites form part of the principal ridge of the High Weald and contribute to the pattern of faults and folds;
- Site vegetation including the block of deciduous woodland in site **651/1610** contribute to the highly interconnected woodland habitats, as well as providing a sense of intimacy, enclosure and remoteness;
- Town Court Farm somewhat contributes to the high density of historic farmsteads within the AONB and the sense of history and timelessness, although its expression is slightly masked by its industrial character; and
- The grazing of livestock within site **651/1610** contributes to the pastoral feel of the landscape, linking to the history of land-based economy.

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

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

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

Potential effects as a result of development on the site	Core character component of natural beauty potentially affected	Relevant key characteristics of the core character component potentially affected	Potential mitigation and enhancement opportunities
Landscape character and features			
Removal of mature deciduous woodland, trees and hedgerows, affecting the role they play in defining and screening the settlement edge, and contributions to the interconnectivity of habitats.	Woodland	<i>Highly interconnected and structurally varied mosaic of many small wood....and outgrown hedges.</i>	- Retain, protect and enhance all mature vegetation within and surrounding the sites, especially mature woodlands (including the priority habitat deciduous woodland in the south-east corner of site 651/1610), trees, and hedgerows along internal and outer boundaries of the sites (in accordance with the AONB's Objectives W1 and PQ2). - Improve the connectivity of woodlands and hedgerows 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 grazed pastures within site 651/1610 and loss/ deterioration of the small-scale field pattern with largely intact field boundaries.	Fieldsapes and heath	<i>Fields, mostly permanent pasture, used for grazing livestock...</i> <i>Medieval fieldscape character dominant...</i>	- Loss of pasture and the historic small-scale field pattern would be largely unavoidable with development of the site, as development would remove land from agricultural use. - Field boundaries should be retained and enhanced where possible to avoid the complete loss of the historic field pattern (in accordance with the AONB's Objective FH2).
	Land-based economy and rural living	<i>Predominantly pastoral mixed farming with an absence of industrial scale farming.</i>	

Modifications to Bayham Road (B2169) (recorded as a historic lane) to facilitate site access (e.g. road widening, creation of junction)	Routeways	A dense, radiating network with a variety of origins.	■ 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 sites which contribute to the setting of Tunbridge Wells. Extension of development beyond the roadside vegetation along Bayham Road and modern settlement edge of Dukes Drive, which, provides a wooded and enclosed boundary to the settlement edge.	N/A	N/A	■ Maintain the existing settlement pattern and its character by following the scale, built form and streetscape of the recent development along Dukes Drive (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'⁵, 'Guidance on the selection and use of colour in development'⁶ and objectives of the High Weald AONB Management Plan⁷ (in accordance with the AONB's Objective S2).
Reduction in the separation between the settlement of Tunbridge Wells and Town Court Farm (recorded as a historic farmstead of 'partial loss'), or the potential complete loss of the farmstead.	Settlement	High density of historic farmsteads...	■ Loss of the farmstead (which is now industrial in character) would be largely unavoidable if development was to occur across the full extent of site 651/1610. The infield trees that surround it should be retained to avoid the complete loss of pattern in this part of the site.
	Aesthetic and perceptual qualities	A sense of history and timelessness...	
Visual amenity			

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

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

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

Visibility of development seen by: ■ visitors to the cricket club and sports pitches to the west of site 755/1610; and ■ residents along the settlement edge, including on the B2169 Bayham Road and Dukes Drive, and motorists/cyclists on these roads.	Aesthetic and perceptual qualities	■ <i>A sense of history and timelessness arising from an ancient countryside with a human-scale agricultural tapestry; veteran and ancient trees...historic buildings.</i> ■ <i>The homely, pastoral feel to the whole landscape arising from its human-scale pattern and productivity.</i> ■ <i>A recognisable and unifying mosaic of open field and wooded habitats.</i> ■ <i>Unexpected panoramic and long views, often uninterrupted, extending out along the valleys beyond the High Weald with natural skylines and forested ridges...</i>	■ Retain, protect and enhance all existing vegetation including the wooded boundaries that enclose the sites, particularly in views from the B2169 Bayham Road, Dukes Drive and sports pitches to the west of the sites (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). ■ Intersperse green open space and tree planting within development to help soften and break up the perceived mass of built forms, strengthen green infrastructure, and enhance the integration of built forms within the landscape (in accordance with the AONB's Objective PQ2). ■ Retain glimpsed long views south across the wider AONB, avoiding development in the more elevated extents of the west of site 755/1610, where longer outward views are available, and from the lower-lying extents in the south of site 755/1610, which forms the rural foreground of these views (in accordance with the AONB's Objective PQ2). ■ Enhance public access and provide opportunities to experience the wider countryside (in accordance with the AONB's Objective PQ3).
Overall impact on the core character components of natural beauty of the High Weald AONB			
Moderate impact	The baseline analysis identifies that the sites (and immediate surrounds) express some of the core character components of natural beauty, with a moderate level of expression. This is due to the site forming part of the principal ridge landform, the presence of mature woodland, trees and hedgerows; grazed pastures; and a historic farmstead. Development of the sites 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 following map illustrates a summary of the constraints and opportunities of development on the site.

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

- Retain, protect and enhance mature woodlands (including the priority habitat deciduous woodland in the south-east corner of site **651/1610**), trees, and hedgerows along internal and outer boundaries of the sites.
- Locate development in the north of the sites to relate better to the existing settlement pattern.
- Maintain the existing settlement pattern and its character by following the scale, built form and streetscape of the recent development along Dukes Drive.
- Retain glimpsed long views south across the wider AONB, avoiding development in the more elevated extents of the west of site **755/1610**, where longer outward views are available, and from the lower-lying extents in the south of site **755/1610**, which forms the rural foreground of these views.
- Enhance public access and provide opportunities to experience the wider countryside.

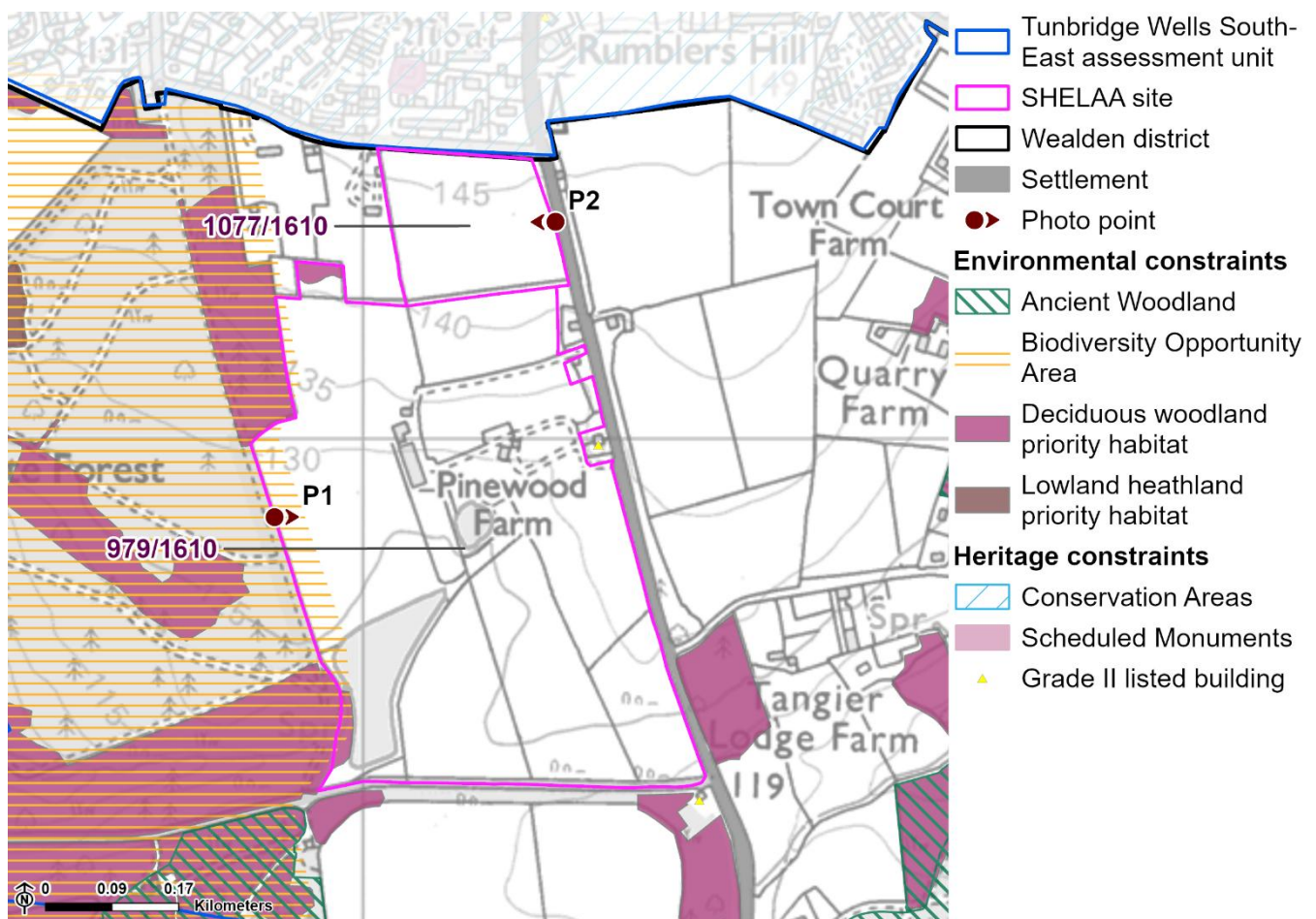
Figure 7: Summary map of constraints and opportunities



Land lying to the west side of Frant Road (1077/1610) and Pinewood Farm, Frant Road (979/1610)

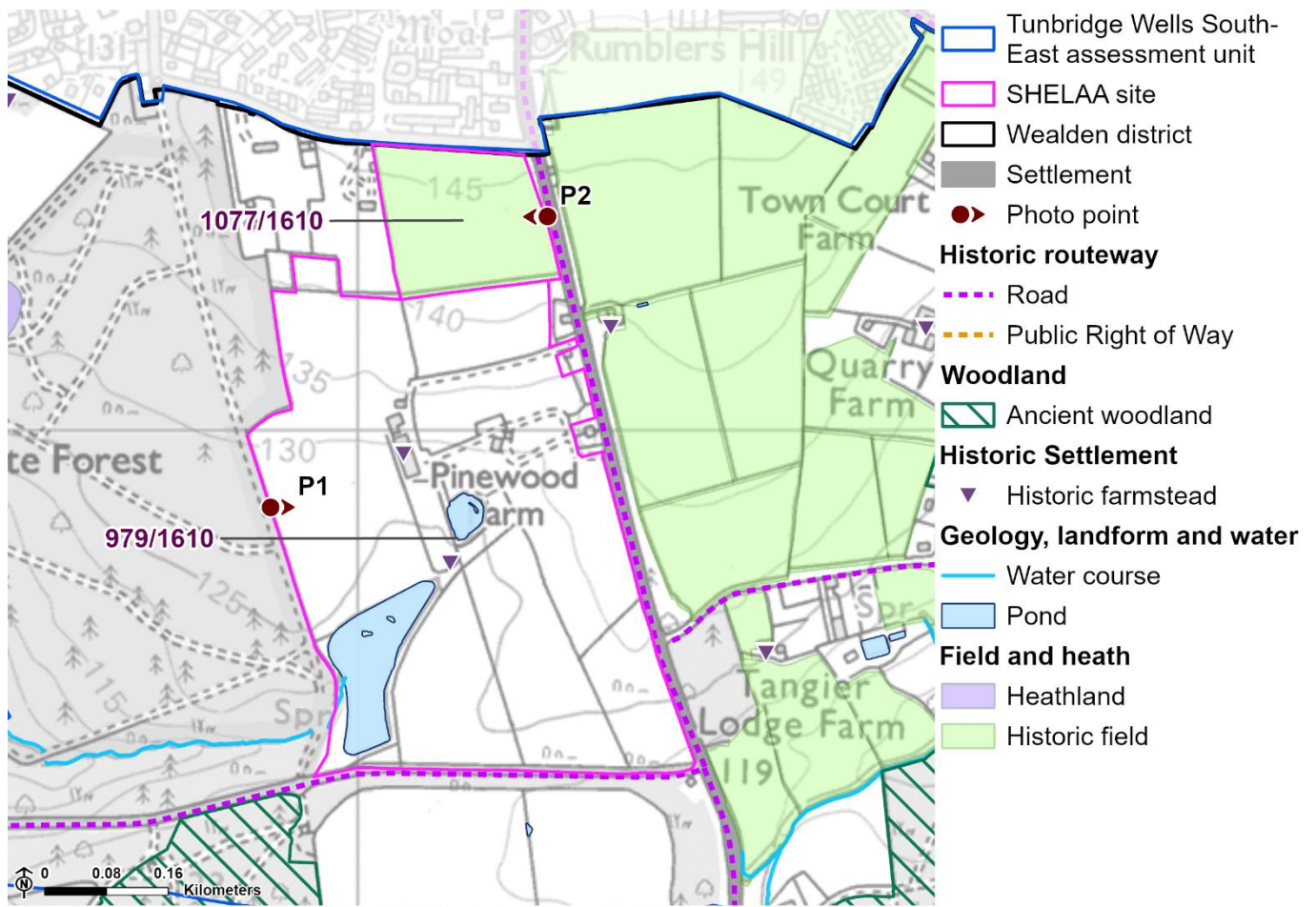
Site Details	
Potential development	Site 1077/1610 - Residential development proposed on entirety of site mapped below, and entirety of the site is proposed as Draft Allocation FR7 (identified for 90 dwellings) in the Focused Wealden Local Plan (2026). Site 979/1610 - Residential development proposed on entirety of site mapped below, but only the northern and western parts of the site is proposed as Draft Allocation FR6 (identified for 170 dwellings) in the Focused Wealden Local Plan (2026). Total: 260 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 south of the settlement and north of Whitehill Wood, and situated between the A267 and Hargate Forest.

Figure 8: Site location and constraints



Created by LUC - 16036_001_Project_3_AONB_Report/006_r6_LocationConstraints_A5L 24/06/2026

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



Representative site photos



Photo 1: Looking into site 979/1610 from Hargate Forest, with buildings associated with Pinewood Farm visible.



Photo 2: View west into site 1077/1610 from A267 Frant Road, with a wooded backdrop.

Baseline Analysis

Baseline landscape character	
Key features and qualities of the sites in relation to the wider assessment unit	Landform ■ The sites form part of the rolling ridges of the High Weald Central LCA, typical of the wider assessment unit. ■ They slope gently from 125m AOD in the south to 145m AOD in the north-east at the settlement edge of Tunbridge Wells. Natural character ■ Priority habitat deciduous woodland extends into site 979/1610 from Hargate Forest to the west, and north-west which is representative of the numerous woodlands found across the wider assessment unit. ■ Whitehill Wood ancient woodland lies approximately 40m to the south-west of site 979/1610 which is typical of the wider assessment unit. ■ Mature trees line a large pond (a feature of the assessment unit) within the south-western part of Pinewood Farm (site 979/1610), linked to a spring that runs west through Hargate Forest. Mature trees line the southern boundaries of the sites which is representative of the wider assessment unit. Landscape pattern and time depth ■ Site 1077/1610 and the north, west and south-east of site 979/1610 have a planned private enclosure field pattern, and the centre and south of site 979/1610 have a regular piecemeal enclosure field pattern (as classified in the Sussex HLC and typical of the wider assessment unit). Yew Tree Cottages Grade II listed building lies adjacent to the east of site 979/1610 and Frant Bottom Lodge (another Grade II listed building) is located approximately 20m to the south-east of site 979/1610 (these are the only listed buildings throughout the assessment unit). ■ A Scheduled Monument at Moat Farm and the Royal Tunbridge Wells Conservation Area lie approximately 60m north of site 1077/1610, however intervening modern residential development limits intervisibility between the site and the Scheduled Monument. Few other historic features are found in the wider assessment unit. Perceptual aspects ■ The sites are influenced by their proximity to the A267 Frant Road (which runs along the eastern boundary of the sites), and the settlement edge of Tunbridge Wells along St Mark's Road which affect levels of tranquillity, which are recorded as relatively low in CPRE's Tranquillity Mapping, Figure 3. Light levels are recorded in the middle bands of CPRE's Night Blight Mapping for site 1077/1610 and the northern half of site 979/1610, while the southern half is more towards the lower/darker end (see Figure 4).
Settlement form and edge character and extent of built development	The sites lie to the south of the settlement edge of Tunbridge Wells along St Mark's Road. The settlement edge is relatively well-defined to the north of St Mark's Road, with the settlement pattern becoming noticeably more dispersed to the south of the road. Hargate Forest, to the west of the sites, acts as a soft boundary feature to part of the settlement edge. Roadside vegetation along St Mark's Road provides an enclosed, rural setting to the town. Development along St Mark's Road consists of large detached houses, semi-detached houses and small closes and cul-de-sacs. A plant nursery and individual cottages line Frant Road, outside the site boundaries.

	Pinewood Farm within site 979/1610 contains a farmhouse and a number of large modern agricultural barns. The sites form part of a wider pattern of fields which provide separation between the settlement edges of Tunbridge Wells to the north and Frant to the south.
Baseline visual character	
Potential visual receptors	Mature roadside vegetation along St Mark's Road creates an enclosed character in the north, and limits visibility into site 1077/1610 from nearby residential properties along St Mark's Road. Gaps in roadside vegetation along the A267 Frant Road allow for some close views into the sites from the east for people travelling along the road, and residents at properties along the road. Hargate Forest to the west is open access land, and there may be glimpsed views into the sites from walkers in the wood.
Extent of visibility within the High Weald AONB	Long views to and from the sites are limited by the largely enclosed nature of the sites.

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, located on the transitional slopes descending from the <u>principal ridge (Forest Ridge)</u> of the High Weald, contributing towards the <u>pattern of faults and folds</u> . Site 979/1610 also contributes towards the <u>high density of ponds</u> with two ponds that lie south and south-west of Pinewood Farm. There are no distinctive geological features.
Settlement – dispersed historic settlement including high densities of isolated farmsteads, hamlets and late-medieval villages founded on trade and non-agricultural rural industries.	Pinewood Farm (within site 979/1610) contributes towards the <u>high density of historic farmsteads</u> ⁸ found within the AONB and the fields associated with this individual historic farmstead contribute towards the <u>separation between settlements</u> at Tunbridge Wells and Frant. The Yew Tree Cottages Grade II listed building adjacent to the eastern boundary of site 979/1610 contributes towards the <u>high concentration of historic buildings</u> .
Routeways – a dense network of historic routeways (now roads, tracks and paths).	No historic routeways cross the sites. However, the A267 Frant Road along the eastern boundary of the sites is recorded as a ridgeway on high ground, while Bunny Lane to the south of site 979/1610 is recorded as a historic lane. Both contribute towards the <u>dense radiating network</u> of historic routeways, although their expression is masked by their use as main roads with associated modern road markings.
Woodland – an abundance of ancient woodland mostly in small holdings, highly interconnected with hedges and shaws.	Whitehill Wood lies adjacent to the south-west of site 979/1610 and contributes towards the <u>high proportion of ancient woodland</u> and the <u>highly interconnected and structurally varied mosaic of many small woods...and outgrown hedges</u> of the AONB. Other trees/woodlands adjoin the sites (including Hargate Forest to the west) and exist within internal field boundaries, forming an interconnected habitat network.
Fieldsapes and heath – small, irregular and productive fields, bound by hedgerows and woods, and typically used for livestock grazing; with distinctive zones of lowland heaths and inned river valleys (reclaimed marshland).	The small fields within the sites contribute towards the <u>generally irregular field pattern</u> . Site 1077/1610 partially retains its historic field boundaries, contributing towards the <u>medieval fieldscape character</u> . The sites are mostly used for <u>grazing livestock</u> and enclosed by woody and thick hedgerow boundaries (including frequent hedgerow trees).
Dark night skies – intrinsically dark at night with our own galaxy (the Milky Way) visible.	Dark skies are generally limited by proximity to the adjacent A267 and settlement edge of Tunbridge Wells. However, the southern half of site 979/1610 is within an <u>intrinsically dark landscape</u> . The adjacent A267 Frant Road and Bunny Lane 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 ancient woodland at Whitehill Wood, the historic farmstead at Pinewood Farm and the listed building at Yew Tree Cottages contribute to the <u>sense of history and timelessness</u> . The combination of grazing and surrounding woodland provides a <u>pastoral feel</u> and contributes to the <u>recognisable and unifying mosaic of open field and wooded habitats</u> . The sense of rurality and tranquillity is limited by the adjacent roads and settlement edge. Long views of the site are limited by vegetation enclosing the site which contributes to the <u>sense of intimacy, enclosure and remoteness...</u>

⁸ As identified in the High Weald AONB character components dataset (see Figure 9).

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 sites relate to the <u><i>predominantly pastoral mixed farming with an absence of industrial scale farming</i></u> key characteristic.
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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 Tunbridge Wells South-East 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, areas of woodland, the wooded and scenic rural qualities of the assessment unit which contribute to the setting of Tunbridge Wells, and the location within and visual relationship with the wider High Weald AONB increases the sensitivity of the assessment unit. The presence of modern farm buildings and some areas of field amalgamation, the enclosure by woodland, relatively few known historic features and proximity to Tunbridge Wells reduces sensitivity of the assessment unit.

The Sites

Overall, it is considered that the sites are of **moderate-high** sensitivity to small scale residential development (2-2.5 storey housing), in line with the wider assessment unit. The sites are part of the rolling ridges of the High Weald AONB, and comprise pastoral fields enclosed by ancient and priority habitat woodland, with small areas of priority habitat deciduous woodland contained within site **979/1610**. The mature trees along the boundaries of the sites, and a large pond within site **979/1610**, the historic field pattern, and the darker night skies in the south of site **979/1610** demonstrate some of the characteristics that increase sensitivity across the assessment unit. However, the sites do not contain any heritage features, although there are listed buildings adjacent to site **979/1610**, and have a less tranquil character than the wider assessment unit.

Variations in Sensitivity

Site **979/1610** (particularly its southern half) is considered to be more sensitive than site **1077/1610** as it demonstrates more of the characteristics that increase sensitivity across the assessment unit, with the latter comprising a relatively flat field enclosed by mature vegetation. The moderate-high sensitivity rating above reflects an overall balance across both of the sites.

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

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

- The sites form part of the principal ridge of the High Weald and contribute to the pattern of faults and folds;
- Whitehill Wood and site vegetation contribute to the high proportion of ancient woodland and the highly interconnected woodland habitats, as well as providing a sense of intimacy, enclosure and remoteness;
- There is a high density of ponds within the southern part of site **979/1610**;
- Pinewood Farm contributes to the high density of historic farmsteads within the AONB and listed buildings next to the sites contribute to the high concentration of historic buildings;
- The sites contribute to the separation of settlements and have an irregular historic field pattern in parts;
- The grazing of livestock contributes to the pastoral feel of the landscape, linking to the history of land-based economy;
- A sense of history and timelessness is provided by the ancient woodland and historic farmstead; and
- The southern half of site **979/1610** is within a landscape with dark skies.

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

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

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

Potential effects as a result of development on the site	Core character component of natural beauty potentially affected	Relevant key characteristics of the core character component potentially affected	Potential mitigation and enhancement opportunities
Landscape character and features			
Removal of mature deciduous woodland, trees and hedgerows, affecting the role they play in defining and screening the settlement edge along St Mark's Road and contributions to the interconnectivity of habitats.	Woodland	<i>Highly interconnected and structurally varied mosaic of many small wood....and outgrown hedges.</i>	■ Retain, protect and enhance all mature vegetation within and surrounding the sites, especially mature woodlands (including priority habitat deciduous woodland along the boundaries of site 979/1610), trees, and hedgerows along internal and outer boundaries of the sites (in accordance with the AONB's Objectives W1 and PQ2). ■ Improve the connectivity of woodlands and hedgerows through new tree planting and hedgerow corridors that are in character with the locality, using native species where possible / suitable (in accordance with the AONB's Objective W2).
	Aesthetic and perceptual qualities	<i>A sense of intimacy, enclosure and remoteness owing to the heavily treed landscape.</i>	
Loss or deterioration of two small ponds in the south-west of site 979/1610 .	Natural systems	<i>A high density of ponds.</i>	■ Retain, and set back development from, the ponds in the south-west of site 979/1610 to create a buffer zone. The buffer zone should incorporate new semi-natural wetland and woodland relating to the ponds (in accordance with the AONB's Objective G1).

Loss of grazed pastures and loss/deterioration of the small-scale field pattern with largely intact field boundaries.	Fieldsapes and heath	■ <i>Fields, mostly permanent pasture, used for grazing livestock...</i> ■ <i>Medieval fieldscape character dominant...</i> ■ <i>A generally irregular field pattern...</i>	■ Loss of pasture and the historic small-scale field pattern would be largely unavoidable with development of the site, as development would remove land from agricultural use. ■ Field boundaries should be retained and enhanced where possible to avoid the complete loss of the historic field pattern, particularly around site 1077/1610 and the northern part of site 979/1610 (in accordance with the AONB's Objective FH2).
	Land-based economy and rural living	■ <i>Predominantly pastoral mixed farming with an absence of industrial scale farming.</i>	
Encroachment to the Yew tree Cottages Grade II listed building which lies adjacent to the east of site 979/1610 .	Settlement	<i>High concentration of historic buildings...</i>	■ Set development back from Yew Tree Cottages to create a buffer zone (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 seminatural habitat.
Modifications to the A267 Frant Road and Bunny Lane (recorded as historic routeways) 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, protecting the hedgerows along them (in accordance with the AONB's Objectives R1 and R2).
Influence of lighting in the dark night skies (for the southern half of site 979/1610) resulting in night blight, including the potential introduction of streetlights along A267 Frant Road and Bunny 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 guidance⁹ and use dark sky-friendly lighting (in accordance with the AONB's Objectives DS1 and DS2).

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/>

Settlement form edge and setting			
Deterioration of the rural character of the sites which contribute to the rural setting of Tunbridge Wells. Extension of development beyond the roadside vegetation along St Mark's Road, which, in combination with Hargate Forest, provides a wooded and enclosed boundary to the settlement edge.	N/A	N/A	■ Design new buildings to respond appropriately to the character and appearance of the surroundings by using high quality materials in keeping with the local vernacular (in accordance with the AONB's Objective S2). ■ Development to draw on the principles contained within the High Weald AONB 'High Weald Housing Design Guide'¹⁰, 'Guidance on the selection and use of colour in development'¹¹ and objectives of the High Weald AONB Management Plan¹² (in accordance with the AONB's Objective S2).
Reduction in the separation between the settlement of Tunbridge Wells and the historic farmstead at Pinewood Farm, and impingement on the setting of Pinewood Farm.	Settlement	High density of historic farmsteads...	■ Locate development in site 1077/1610 and the north of 979/1610 to relate better to the existing settlement pattern and to minimise encroachment towards the boundary of Pinewood 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: ■ residents, pedestrians, motorists and cyclists along the A267 Frant Road to the east; ■ recreational users in the open access land of Hargrave Forest 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>The homely, pastoral feel to the whole landscape arising from its</i>	■ Retain, protect and enhance all existing vegetation including the mature vegetation that encloses the site, particularly along the A267 Frant Road (in accordance with the AONB's Objectives W1 and PQ2). ■ Screen new development with additional planting, using local species where possible / suitable to maintain the rural character of the wider area (in accordance with the AONB's Objective PQ2). ■ Intersperse green open space and tree planting within development to help soften and break up the perceived mass of built forms, strengthen green

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>

■ residents at Pinewood Farm; and ■ motorists/cyclists along A267 Frant Road (which is recorded as a ridgeway on high ground).		<i>human-scale pattern and productivity.</i> ■ <i>A recognisable and unifying mosaic of open field and wooded habitats.</i>	infrastructure, and enhance the integration of built forms within the landscape (in accordance with the AONB's Objective PQ2). ■ Enhance public access and provide opportunities to link to the open access land at Hargrave Forest (in accordance with the AONB's Objective PQ3). ■ Retain the long views south towards 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			
High impact	The baseline analysis identifies that the sites (and immediate surrounds) express several core character components of natural beauty, with a strong level of expression. This is due to the site forming part of the principal ridge landform, the presence of mature woodland, trees and hedgerows; ponds; grazed pastures; irregular field pattern in parts; historic farmstead; the historic influence from adjacent ancient woodland and listed building; and some dark skies. 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. <u>Variation to overall impact</u> Development on the southern half of site 979/1610 is considered to have a greater impact on the core character components than the northern half, and on site 1077/1610. If the potential mitigation and enhancement opportunities set out above are applied, which includes locating development within site 1077/1610 and the north of 979/1610, 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:

- Retain, protect and enhance the mature woodlands (including priority habitat deciduous woodland along the boundaries of site **979/1610**), trees, and hedgerows along internal and outer boundaries of the sites.
- Retain, and set back development from, the ponds in the south-west of site **979/1610** to create a buffer zone.
- Set development back from Yew Tree Cottages to create a buffer zone.
- Locate development in site **1077/1610** and the north of **979/1610** to relate better to the existing settlement pattern and to minimise encroachment towards the boundary of Pinewood Farm historic farmstead.
- Enhance public access and provide opportunities to link to the open access land at Hargrave Forest.
- Retain the long views south towards wooded skylines of the wider High Weald AONB.

Figure 10: Summary map of constraints and opportunities



Created by LUC - 16036 001 Project 3 AONB Report/008 r2 AerialOppsCons A5L 22/06/2026

Land at Tunbridge Wells Rugby Club and Chase Farm, Frant Road (1201/1610)

Site Details	
Potential development	Residential development proposed on northern parcel of site mapped below, and proposed as Draft Allocation FR9 (identified for 50 dwellings) in the Focused Wealden Local Plan (2026).
Site location	This site comprises two distinct parcels. The northern parcel is located on the southern edge of Tunbridge Wells and on the site of the Tunbridge Wells Rugby Football Club, between Frant Road to the west and modern housing along Dukes Drive to the east. The southern parcel is located further south, approximately 600m from the northern parcel, and comprises fields surrounded by Whitehill Wood. As part of the potential development, the southern parcel would be for the reprovision of the rugby pitch and associated facilities from the northern parcel and so would not have any residential dwellings on it. Therefore, this assessment focusses on the northern parcel.

Figure 11: Site location and constraints

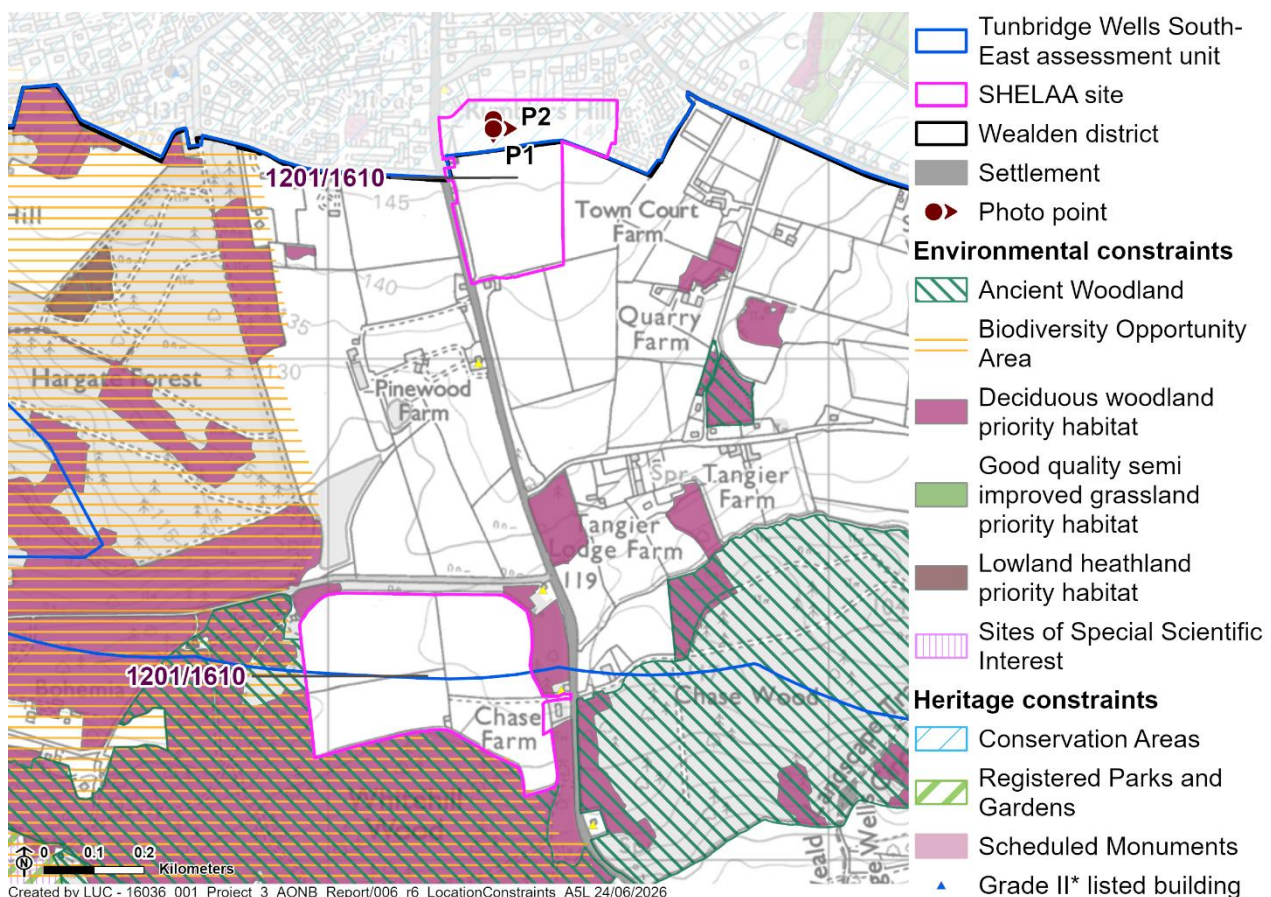
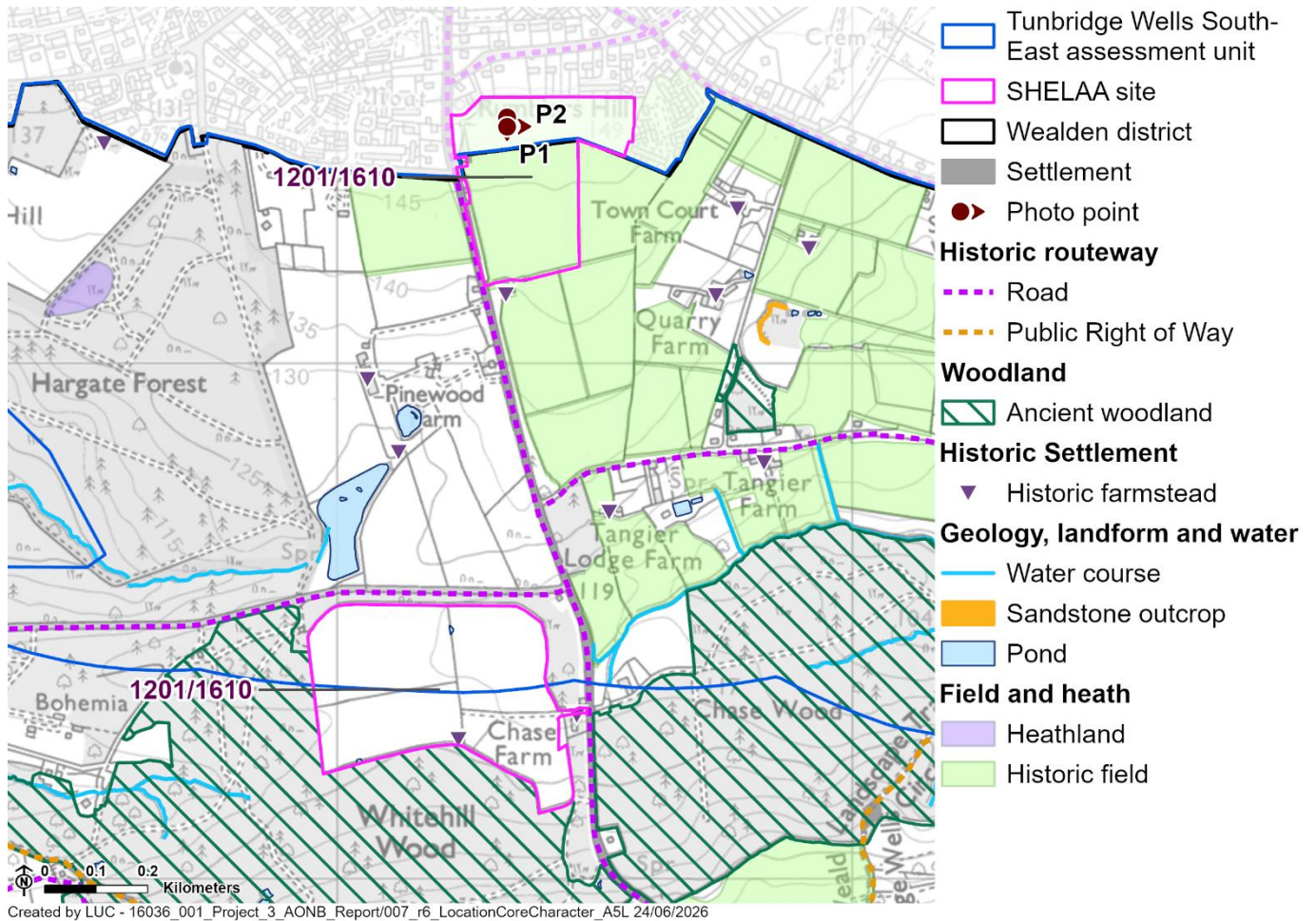


Figure 12: Site location and core character components of natural beauty of the High Weald AONB



Representative site photos



Photo 1: View looking south towards the elevated wooded ridges of the High Weald AONB



Photo 2: View looking east towards the settlement edge along Dukes Drive

Baseline Analysis

Baseline landscape character	
Key features and qualities of the site in relation to the wider assessment unit	Landform ■ The northern parcel of the site forms part of the rolling ridged landform, which is typical of the wider assessment unit, sloping gently from 140m AOD in the south to 150m AOD in the north at the settlement edge of Tunbridge Wells. ■ The northern parcel of the site is located on the crest of the ridgeline, with landform gently descending to the south of the site towards an incised stream corridor. Natural character ■ The northern parcel of the site is influenced by its current use as the Tunbridge Wells Rugby Football Club containing a large playing field and a smaller playing field in the north-east, a clubhouse building and car park, which is atypical of the wider assessment unit. ■ Interconnected and partially wooded field boundaries, which are typical of the wider assessment unit, are located along the boundaries of the northern parcel. Landscape pattern and time depth ■ The southern half of the northern parcel is located within an area of medium scale fields derived from planned private enclosure (as classified in the Sussex HLC), with relatively linear fields, which is typical of the wider assessment unit. ■ The northern half of the northern parcel is located within the settlement boundary of Tunbridge Wells. ■ There are no recorded historic features within the northern parcel, which is typical of the wider assessment unit. However, the north-western corner is located adjacent to the Tunbridge Wells Conservation Area boundary. Mature vegetation to the north-west of the northern parcel screens and filters views from the Conservation Area. Perceptual aspects ■ The northern parcel and wider assessment unit are influenced by the proximity to Tunbridge Wells, which affects levels of tranquillity (which are recorded as relatively low in CPRE's Tranquillity Mapping, Figure 3) and disrupts the experience of dark skies (light levels are recorded in the middle bands of CPRE's Night Blight Mapping, Figure 4). ■ The northern parcel's current use as playing fields and the associated clubhouse and car parking, exert a human influence on the landscape, and a mast along the western boundary of the northern parcel forms a relatively prominent vertical feature.
Settlement form and edge character and extent of built development	The northern parcel of the site provides an area of open green space along the southern settlement edge of Tunbridge Wells and includes an existing clubhouse building within it. Linear development extends sporadically south along both the eastern and western sides of the A267 Frant Road to the west of the site's northern parcel. Mature field boundaries provide an enclosed setting to the majority of the settlement edge, particularly in views from properties along Forest Road and Dukes Drive. Development near the northern parcel consists of large detached houses on Forest Road and more recent 21st century semi-detached properties located on cul-de-sacs at Copperfields and Dukes Drive to the north and east.
Baseline visual character	

Potential visual receptors	The mature wooded boundaries of the northern parcel partly enclose it and limit its visibility from the surrounding landscape, including from the nearby residential properties along the settlement edge. However, the northern boundary of the north-eastern field is defined by garden fencing and adjoining properties along Forest Road have clear views into the site particularly from upper storeys. There are very limited glimpsed views into the northern parcel in between gaps in vegetation and at field gates from the A267 Frant Road.
Extent of visibility within the High Weald AONB	Long views to and from the northern parcel are limited by its enclosed nature, including mature and wooded field boundaries along its boundaries. However, longer-distance views south towards the elevated wooded ridges of the High Weald AONB are afforded from more elevated areas in the north.

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 northern parcel is located on the <i>principal ridge (Forest Ridge)</i> , contributing towards the <i>pattern of faults and folds</i> . There are no distinctive geological or water features within the northern parcel.
Settlement – dispersed historic settlement including high densities of isolated farmsteads, hamlets and late-medieval villages founded on trade and non-agricultural rural industries.	Outfarm (adjacent to the south-western corner of the northern parcel) is identified as a historic farmstead in the High Weald AONB character components dataset (see Figure 6). However, the historic farm building no longer exists and a bungalow now is located on its site.
Routeways – a dense network of historic routeways (now roads, tracks and paths).	No historic routeways cross the sites. However, the A267 Frant Road along the western boundary of the northern parcel is recorded as a historic lane, 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 and wooded field boundaries contribute to the <i>highly interconnected and structurally varied mosaic of many small woods...and outgrown hedges</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).	Historic field boundaries have largely been retained around the edge of the northern parcel; however, internally the field pattern has been eroded by its use as sports pitches.
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 streetlights along the A267 Frant Road.
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	The northern parcel provides <i>a sense of freedom arising from ...opportunities to discover many accessible green spaces...</i> The sense of rurality and tranquillity is limited by the adjacent settlement and the northern parcel's use as sports pitches. There are some <i>long views</i> south towards the wooded ridges of the wider AONB; however, vegetation enclosing the northern parcel generally limit long views out elsewhere.

make connections with the natural world, and a rich legacy of features and ideas left by writers, poets and 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.	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 Tunbridge Wells South-East 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, areas of woodland, the wooded and scenic rural qualities of the unit which contribute to the setting of Tunbridge Wells, and the location within and visual relationship with the wider High Weald AONB increase sensitivity to built development. However, the presence of modern farm buildings and some areas of field amalgamation, enclosure by woodland, relatively few known historic features and proximity to Tunbridge Wells reduce sensitivity.

The Site

Overall, it is considered that the northern parcel of 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) due to its use as sports pitches and associated human activity, which is not characteristic of the wider area or the High Weald AONB as a whole. However, the mature wooded field boundaries are more sensitive than the fields are themselves as they partially provide visual enclosure as well as contributing to the interconnected nature of the site with the wider landscape.

Variations in Sensitivity

There is no variation in sensitivity across the northern parcel of the site.

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

The northern parcel of the site expresses some of the defining components of character of the High Weald AONB. In summary:

- The sloping nature of the site forms part of the principal Forest Ridge;
- The mature wooded boundaries around the edge of the northern parcel contribute to the highly interconnected habitats; and
- There are long-distance views south towards the wooded ridges of the wider AONB.

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 where possible, especially the mature wooded boundaries along the edge of the northern parcel (in accordance with the AONB's Objectives W1 and PQ2). ■ Improve the connectivity of woodlands and hedgerows 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).
Modifications to Frant Road (recorded as a historic lane) to facilitate site access (e.g. road widening, creation of junction)	Routeways	<i>A dense radiating network with a variety of origins...</i>	■ Reduce the impact of access works required to 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 mature wooded vegetation along the settlement boundary.	N/A	N/A	■ Locate development in the north of the site to relate better to the existing settlement pattern (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 along Dukes Drive (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'¹³, 'Guidance on the selection and use of colour in development'¹⁴ and objectives of the High Weald AONB Management Plan¹⁵ (in accordance with the AONB's Objective S2).
Visual amenity			
Visibility of development seen by: ■ residents along Forest Road, Dukes Drive and Copperfields; and ■ residents and motorists/ cyclists along A267 Frant Road.	Aesthetic and perceptual qualities	■ <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 beyond the High Weald with natural skylines and forested ridges...</i>	■ Retain, protect and enhance all existing vegetation including the thick wooded boundaries that enclose the northern parcel (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). ■ Intersperse green open space and tree planting within development to help soften and break up the perceived mass of built forms, strengthen green infrastructure, and enhance the integration of built forms within the landscape (in accordance with the AONB's Objective PQ2). ■ Position development within the site to retain the long views to the south towards 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			
Moderate impact	The baseline analysis identifies that the northern parcel of 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 site forming part of the principal ridge landform, the presence of mature wooded boundaries; and long-distance views south towards the wider AONB. Development of the northern parcel of the site is judged to have a		

¹³ <https://www.highweald.org/look-after/planning/design-guide.html>

¹⁴ <https://www.highweald.org/look-after/planning/colour-study.html>

¹⁵ <https://www.highweald.org/high-weald-aonb-management-plan.html>

	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 northern parcel of the site could potentially be reduced further. <u>Variation to overall impact</u> There is no variation to the overall impact considered above.
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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 wooded boundaries along the edge of the northern parcel.
- Locate development in the north of the site to relate better to the existing settlement pattern.
- Maintain the existing settlement pattern and its character by following the scale, built form and streetscape of the recent development along Dukes Drive.
- Position development within the site to retain the long views to the south towards the wider High Weald AONB.

Figure 13: Summary map of constraints and opportunities



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

Cumulative effects of development sites proposed in the Tunbridge Wells South-East assessment unit

Five sites have been assessed within the Tunbridge Wells South-East 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
Group comprising Land off Bayham Road (755/1610) and Land at Bayham Road (651/1610)	Moderate impact	No variation
Group comprising Land lying to the west side of Frant Road (1077/1610) and Pinewood Farm, Frant Road (979/1610)	High impact	Development on the southern half of site 979/1610 is considered to have a greater impact on the core character components than the northern half, and on site 1077/1610 . If the potential mitigation and enhancement opportunities set out are applied, which includes locating development within site 1077/1610 and the north of 979/1610 , 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.
Land at Tunbridge Wells Rugby Club and Chase Farm, Frant Road (1201/1610)	Moderate impact	No variation

If all five sites along the south-eastern edge of Tunbridge Wells were brought forward for development to the extent as assessed, it would result in a potential of up to 470 dwellings being built. It is understood that all five sites have been identified as allocations in the Focused Wealden Local Plan (2026). The five sites adjoin one another, covering land between Bayham Road in the east and Hargate Forest in the west. The development of these sites would considerably expand the south-east of Tunbridge Wells and would likely lead to the perception of the settlement edge extending into the countryside. There would likely be cumulative impacts on some of the components of character of the High Weald AONB, with development extending down the gentle slope from the existing settlement edge, impacting on the pattern of faults and folds; encroachment to historic farmsteads (although Town Court Farm within site **651/1610** is of industrial character and does not express the historic character strongly); as well as the interconnected woodland habitats and grazing pastures being affected. It would result in the loss of open countryside and would result in greater cumulative landscape effects than if just one of the groups of sites were brought forward. However, mature vegetation on the A267 Frant Road, reduces intervisibility between the sites and would limit cumulative visual effects.

Two sites within the Tunbridge Wells South-West assessment unit are located approximately 1-1.5km to the west of site **979/1610** (separated by Hargate Forest), and so the cumulative impact with the addition of these sites has also been considered. These sites have been assessed as one group and the site appraisal is contained in **Appendix A.12**. It has 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
Group comprising Land at Ramslye Farm (Spratsbrook Farm) (729/1610) and Strawberry Hill Farm, Eridge Road (443/1610)	Moderate impact	The greatest impacts on the core character components would likely arise if development occurred on the northern parcel of site 729/1610 (as its elevated landform contributes strongly to the expression of the principle ridge, its proximity to a Scheduled Monument and forming part of a historic assart field pattern), and within the south of site 443/1610 (given its rural pastoral character from the grazed pastures and surrounding woodland, its role in providing separation between the settlement edge and Spratsbrook historic farmstead and the long views afforded south across the wider AONB). The potential impacts would be less within the northern parts of the main parcel of site 729/1610 and site 443/1610 given their proximity to the settlement edge and the visual enclosure provided by wooded field boundaries.

Development on these two sites (to the extent as assessed in **Appendix A.12**), would result in a potential of up to an additional 350 dwellings being built. This would lead to a greater cumulative impact on the pattern of faults and folds, particularly as the two sites along the south-western edge of Tunbridge Wells strongly express being part of the principal ridge as the landform is steeper and more undulating than along the south-eastern edge of Tunbridge Wells, and on the long views south towards the wider AONB. There would also be potential additional cumulative impacts on ponds and pattern of historic farmsteads as these features are also found within the sites along the south-western edge of Tunbridge Wells as well as within sites along the south-eastern edge.

Overall, it is considered that the cumulative impact of developing the five potential sites along the south-eastern edge of Tunbridge Wells and two potential sites along the south-western edge on the core character components of natural beauty of the High Weald AONB could potentially be greater than the sum of their individual impacts. This is due to the collective length of potential development extending across the southern edge of Tunbridge Wells as many of the sites adjoin one another.