

Wealden District Council

Landscape and Visual Appraisal – Appendix A.9

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

Final report

Prepared by LUC

August 2026



Wealden District Council

Landscape and Visual Appraisal – Appendix A.9

Potential Development Sites in the High Weald

AONB: Wider LCA 5B

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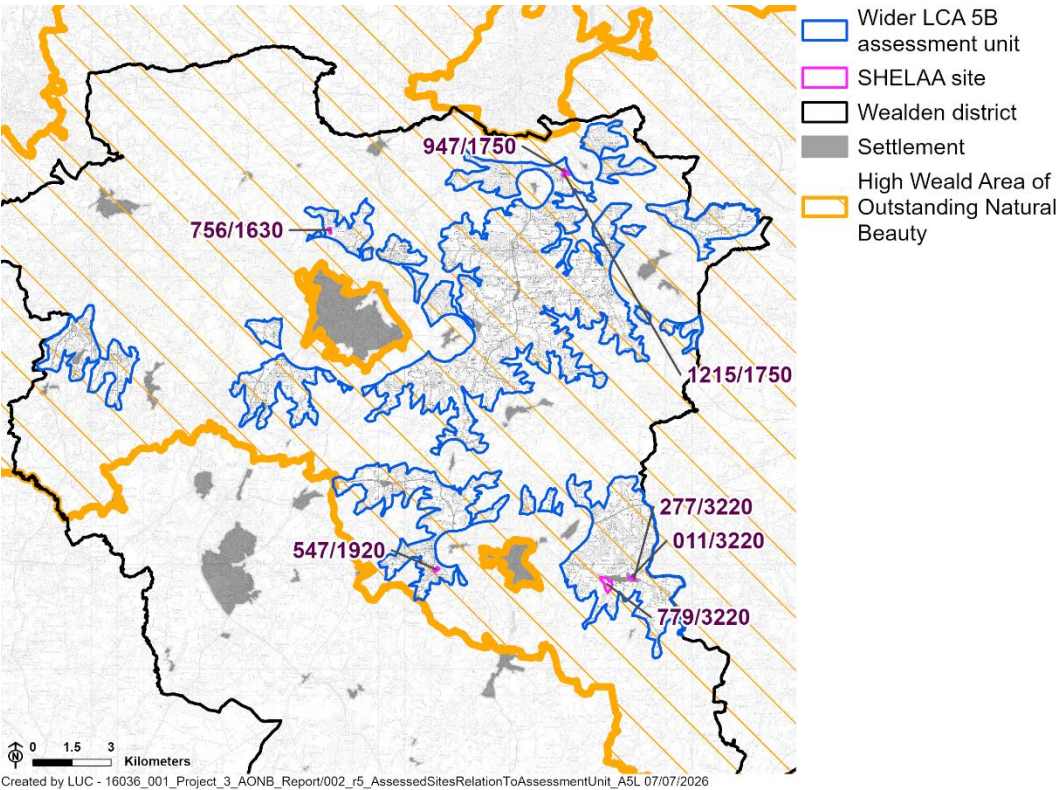
Appendix A.9

Wider LCA 5B Assessment Unit

The following potential development sites are considered within the Wider LCA 5B (High Weald – Central) assessment unit:

- Land at Royal Mires Nursery, London Road, Lye Green (756/1630)
- Land at Stubby Grove Business Park, Bells Yew Green Road (947/1750)
- Land adjacent to Reflex Buildings, Bells Yew Green Road, Bells Yew Green (1215/1750)
- Land to the north-west side of Fir Grove Road, Cross in Hand (547/1920)
- Land adjoining Owlsbury, Chapel Cross Lane, Chapel Cross (779/3220)
- Group comprising of Land adjacent to Land adjacent to Little Home Farm, Forest Lane, Punnetts Town (011/3120) and Scots Paddock, Forest Lane, Punnetts Town (277/3220)

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



Settlement pattern

Settlement pattern	The wider LCA 5B has a strongly dispersed rural settlement pattern of farmsteads and houses, which is a defining component of character of the High Weald AONB, with some occasional ribbon development and urban expansion near settlements. There are some occasional small settlements located on main roads. The existing pattern of development relates to the underlying ridged landform, with development predominantly located at higher elevation along the ridgelines, avoiding steep slopes and lower lying areas.
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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 wider LCA 5B assessment unit have been mapped in **Figures 2 to 5**. Tranquillity (which forms part of the 'aesthetic and perceptual qualities' character component) and dark skies are shown in **Figures 6 and 7** respectively.

Figure 2: Core character components of natural beauty of the High Weald AONB (north of LCA 5B)

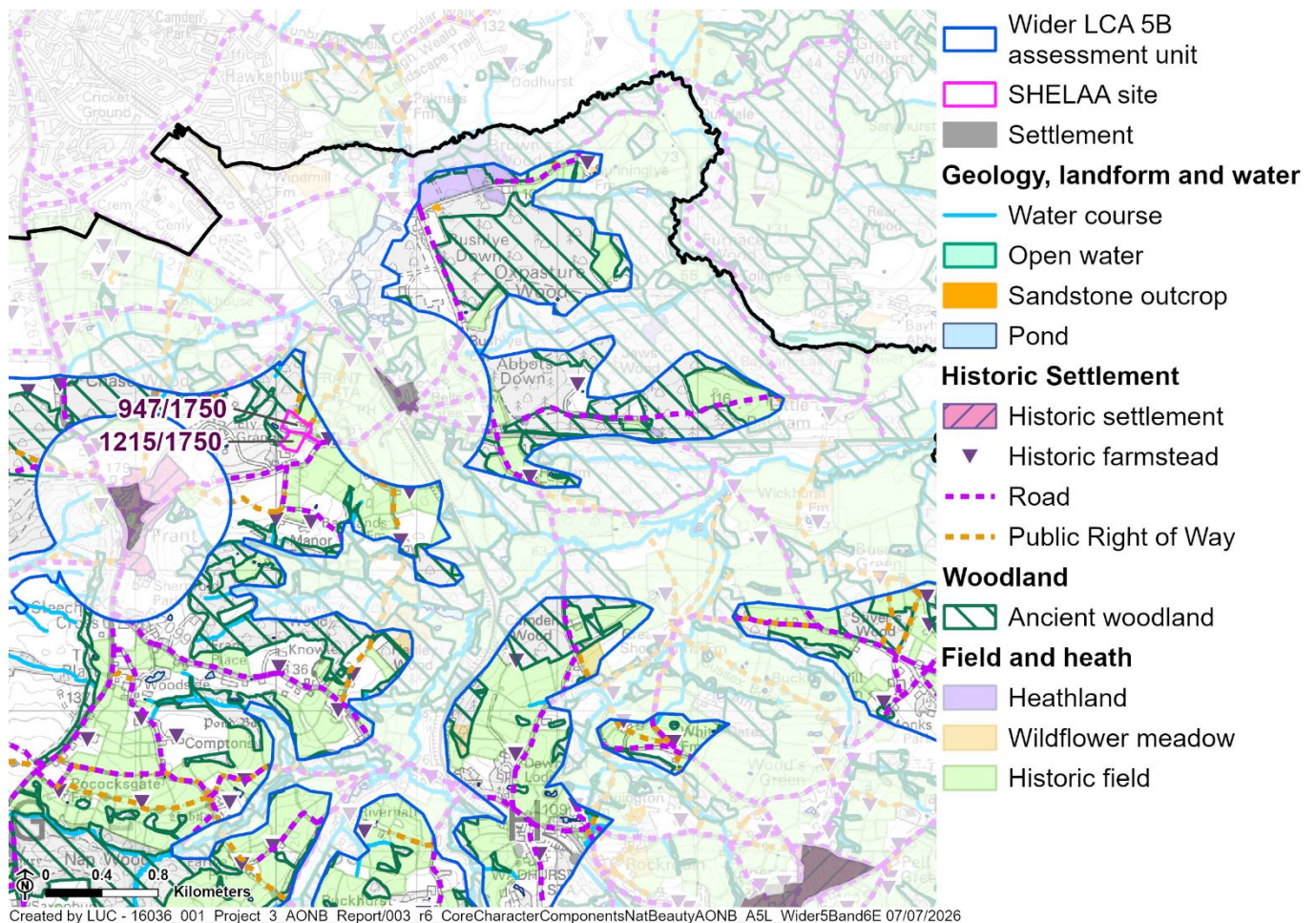


Figure 3: Core character components of natural beauty of the High Weald AONB (south of LCA 5B)

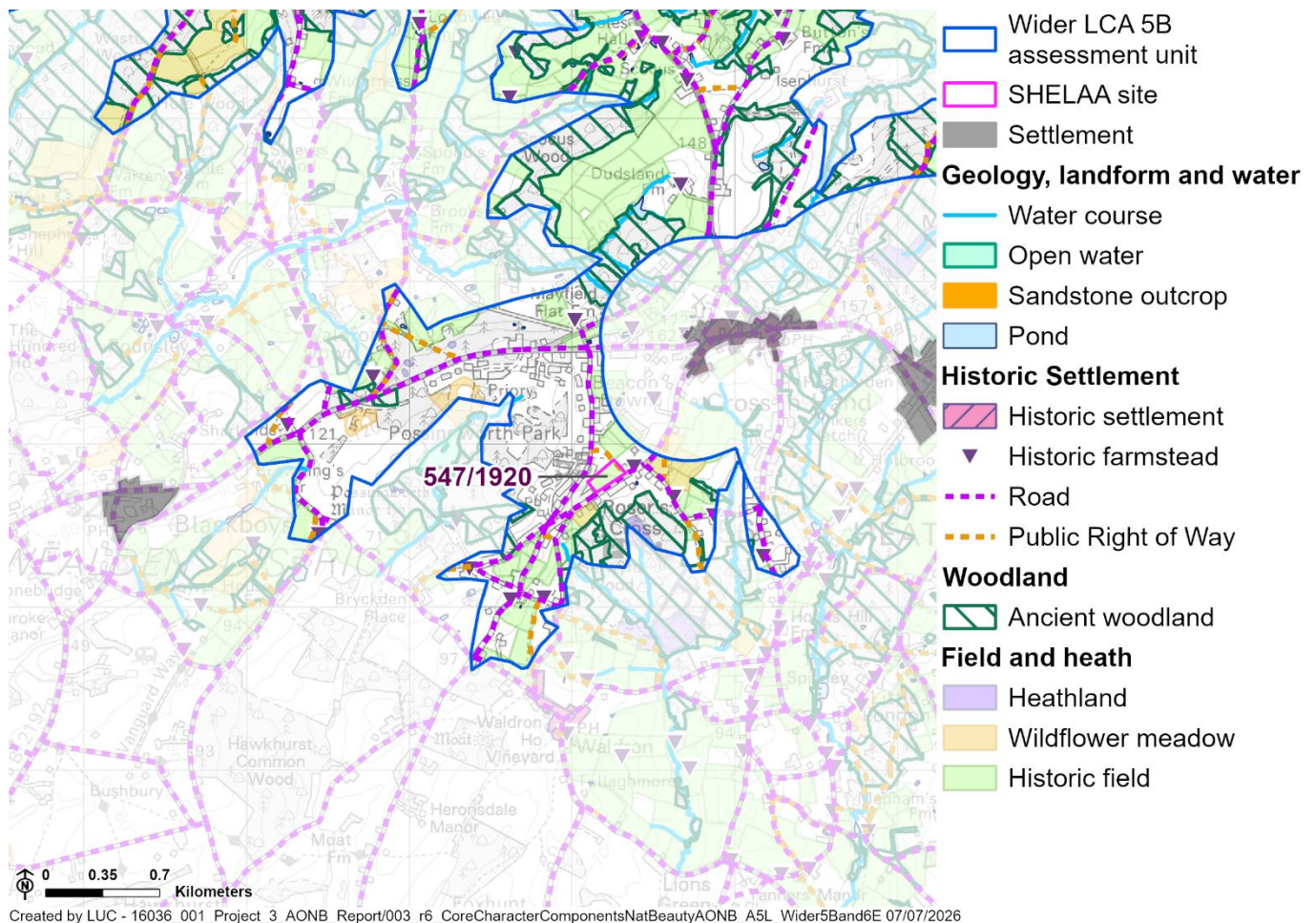


Figure 4: Core character components of natural beauty of the High Weald AONB (east of LCA 5B)

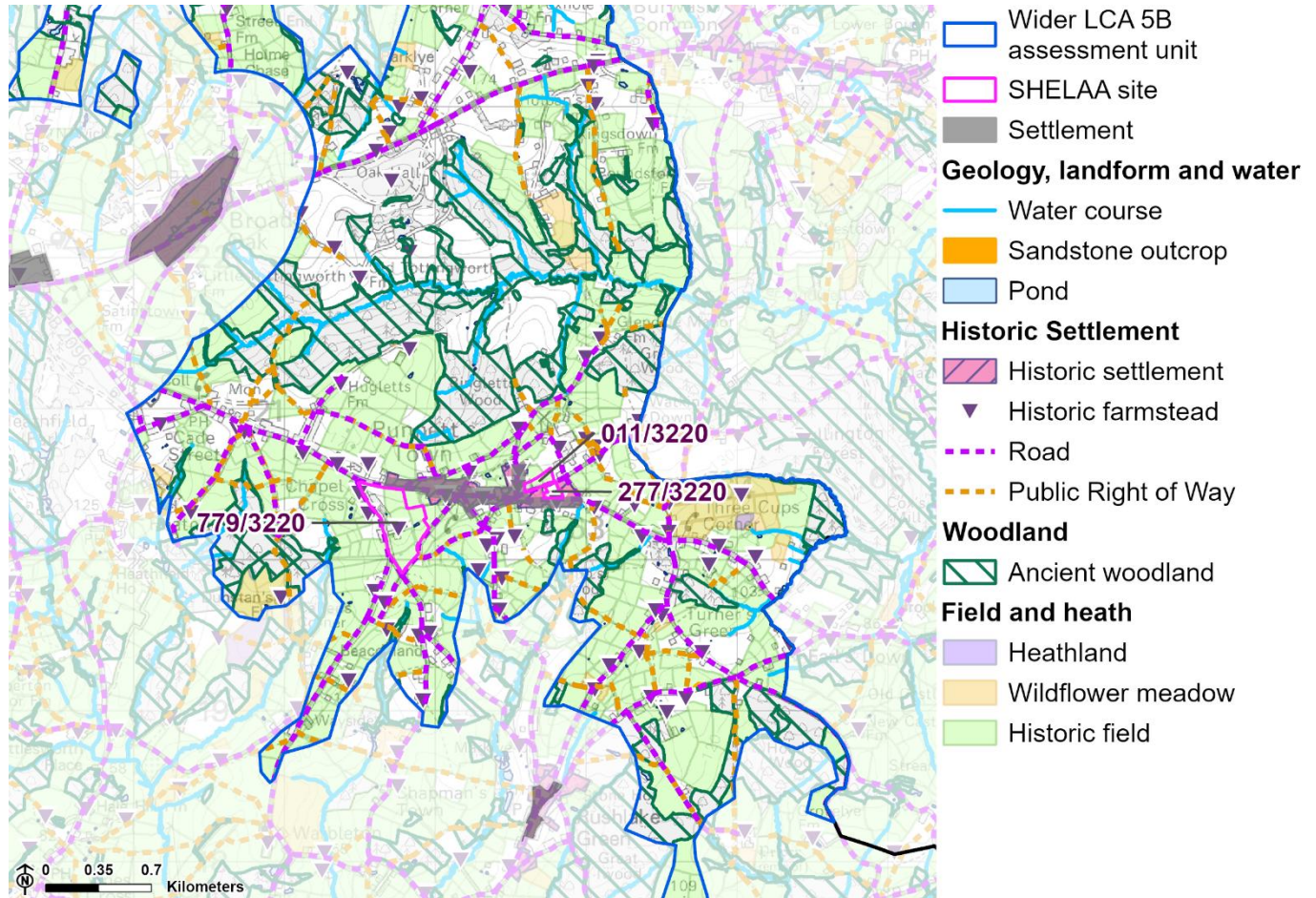


Figure 5: Core character components of natural beauty of the High Weald AONB (west of LCA 5B)

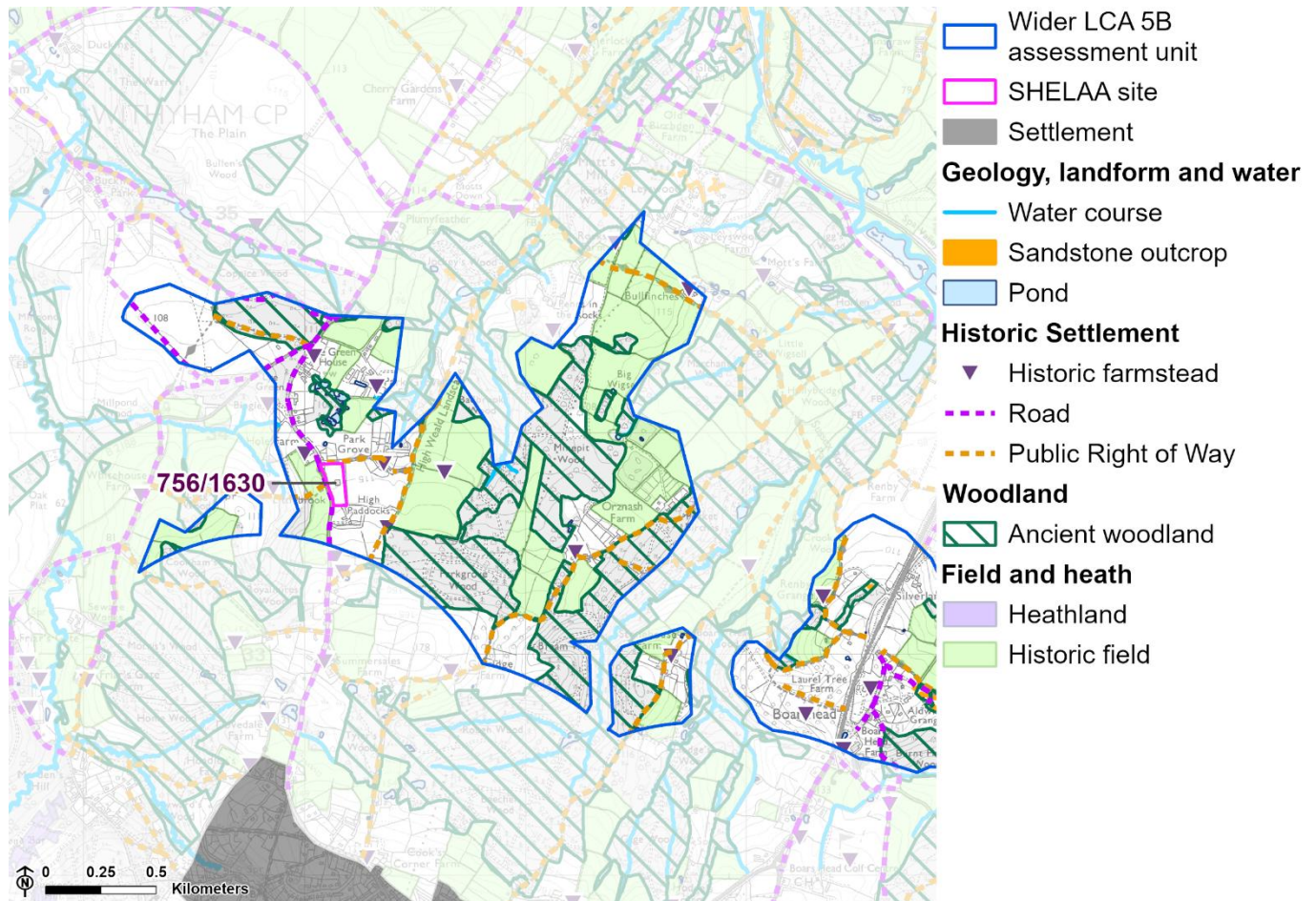


Figure 6: Tranquillity

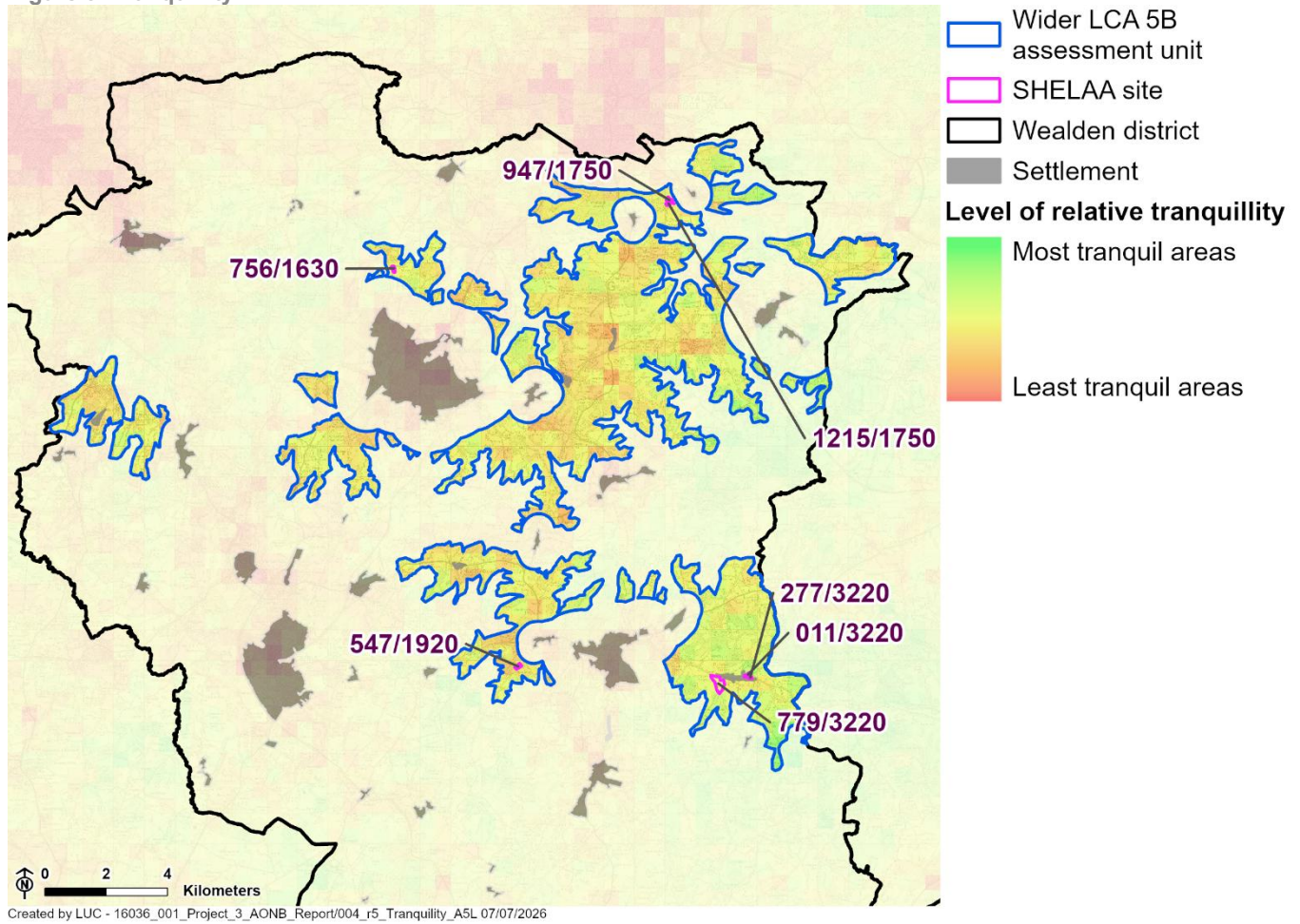
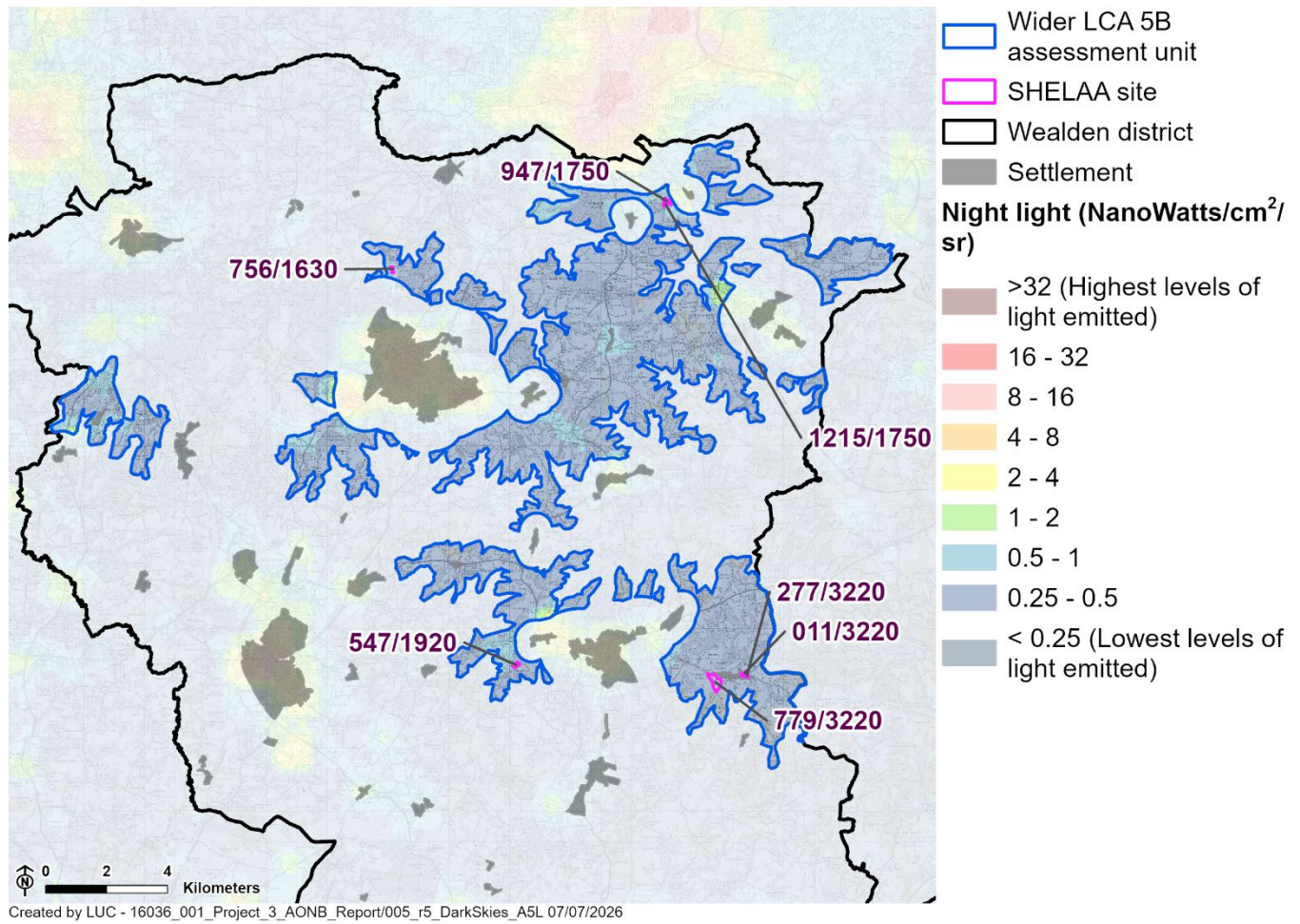


Figure 7: Dark skies



Landscape sensitivity context for the Wider LCA 5B assessment unit

The landscape sensitivity of the Wider LCA 5B assessment unit, described in the <i>Wealden Landscape Sensitivity Assessment to Residential and Employment Development (2023)</i>			
Landscape sensitivity The rating that applies to the assessment unit	Small scale residential 2-2.5 storey housing	Medium scale residential 3-4 storey flats/ care homes	Commercial/ industrial e.g. industrial units or hotels
	H	H	H
Key sensitivities The key landscape sensitivities to development identified for the assessment unit	■ The complex ridge and valley landform. ■ Mature deciduous woodlands (many of which are ancient in origin). ■ Areas of priority habitat heathland, lowland meadows, and good quality semi-improved grassland. ■ Intact historic field patterns, particularly small to medium scale assarts and piecemeal enclosure. ■ The historic value of the Cousley Wood and Old Heathfield and Cade Street Conservation Areas, Eridge Park Registered Park and Garden and Saxonbury Hill Scheduled Monument. ■ The strongly dispersed settlement pattern. ■ The wooded and rural backdrop formed by the assessment unit to the surrounding settlements. ■ The strong network of public rights of way including long-distance walking trails. ■ The strong rural character with areas of tranquillity and dark skies. ■ Its location within the High Weald AONB and intervisibility with more distant areas of the nationally designated landscape, contrasting with the semi-enclosed character.		
Guidance	■ Avoid development on prominent ridgelines. Should development come forward in this assessment unit, it should be located where well enclosed by vegetation to be less visible from lower-lying landscapes and have less influence on landscape character. ■ Avoid development in areas of habitat interest, notably ancient woodland and priority habitat heathland, lowland meadows, good quality semi-improved grassland. ■ Retain broadleaved woodland. Undertake opportunities for woodland management and restoration, in line with the aims of the multiple BOAs which cover the assessment unit. ■ Avoid loss of, harm, or deterioration to the interconnecting ancient semi-natural woodlands in this area and allow a buffer zone around them (to avoid root damage). Replace any unavoidable losses, with native species where possible, ensuring an appropriate maintenance schedule is prepared and implemented for remedial planting. ■ Retain and where possible enhance hedgerows and take opportunities to strengthen the local habitat network in line with the aims of the BOAs located within the unit. Where there is unavoidable loss of hedgerows, mitigation / compensation in the form of suitable hedgerow replacement should be sought. ■ Preserve historic field patterns, locating development away from intricate small-scale historic field patterns. ■ Ensure development does not adversely affect the historic qualities and setting of the Cousley Wood and Old Heathfield and Cade Street Conservation Areas, Eridge Park Registered Park and Garden and Saxonbury Hill Scheduled Monument.		

- Consider key views to the surrounding countryside experienced from the Cousley Wood and Old Heathfield and Cade Street Conservation Areas.
- Consider views from public rights of way when considering the siting and design of development in the landscape.
- Preserve and enhance opportunities to access and enjoy the landscape.
- Any development should be carefully integrated into the landscape, utilising existing woodland, or using native species that are in character with the wider landscape.
- Consider views from the wider landscape of the High Weald AONB, particularly where long-distance outward views are afforded from elevated ridgetop settlements and views from lower-lying settlements towards the prominent ridgelines of the assessment unit.
- Ensure new building reinforces and responds to local character in its scale, layout and design, reflecting the local vernacular in use of materials. Developments should draw on the principles contained within the High Weald AONB 'High Weald Housing Design Guide'¹, 'Guidance on the selection and use of colour in development'² and objectives of the High Weald AONB Management Plan³.
- Ensure development does not affect the scenic rural character of the landscape, and areas of relative tranquillity, where the defining components of character relating to the High Weald AONB are most strongly expressed.

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 at Royal Mires Nursery, London Road, Lye Green (756/1630)

Site Details	
Potential development	Residential development of 5 dwellings, proposed on the site as shown below. Site not Allocated or considered an Option in the draft Focused Local Plan 2026.
Site location	This site is located to the east of London Road, approximately 1.2km to the north of the settlement of Crowborough.

Figure 8: Site location and constraints

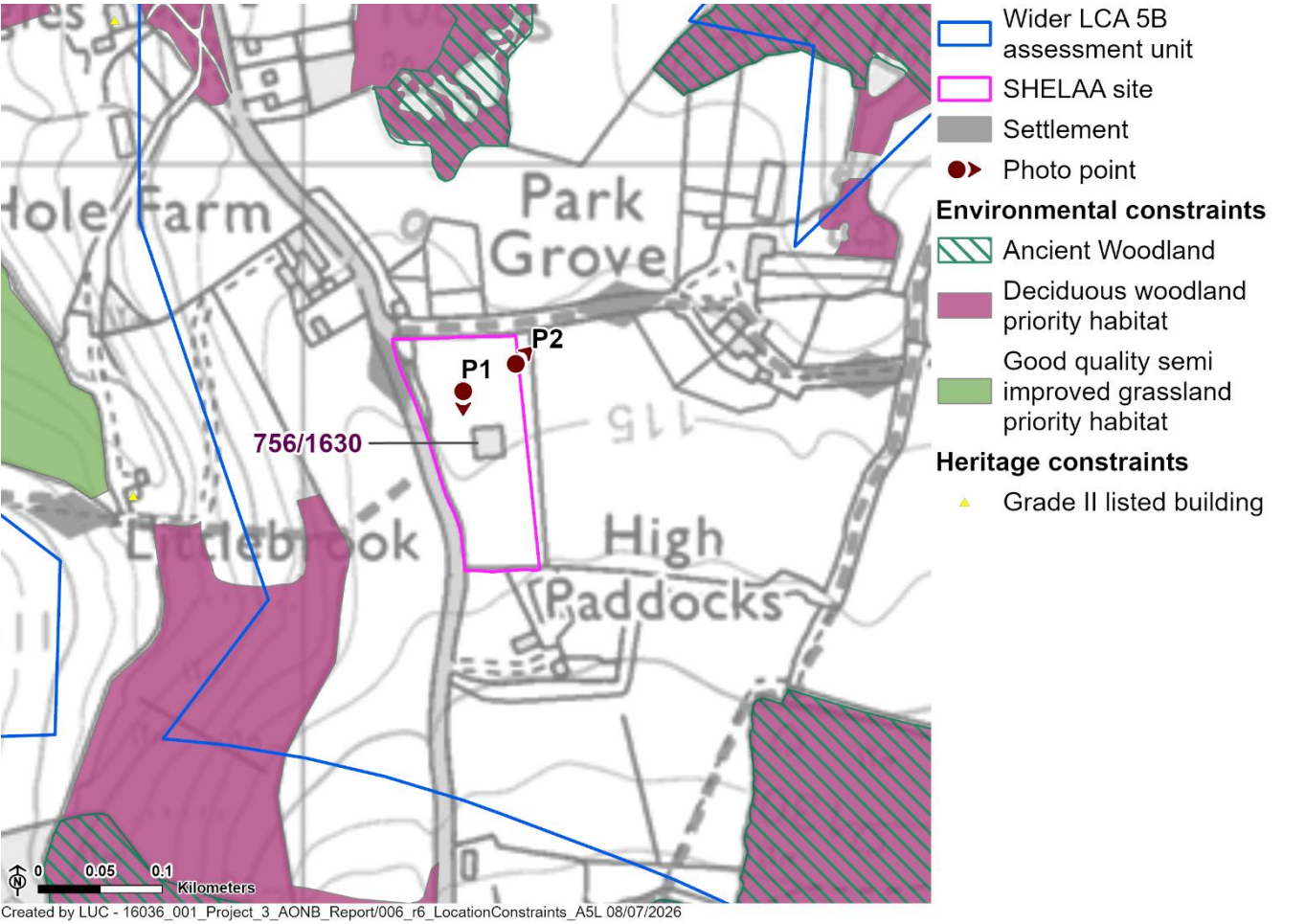
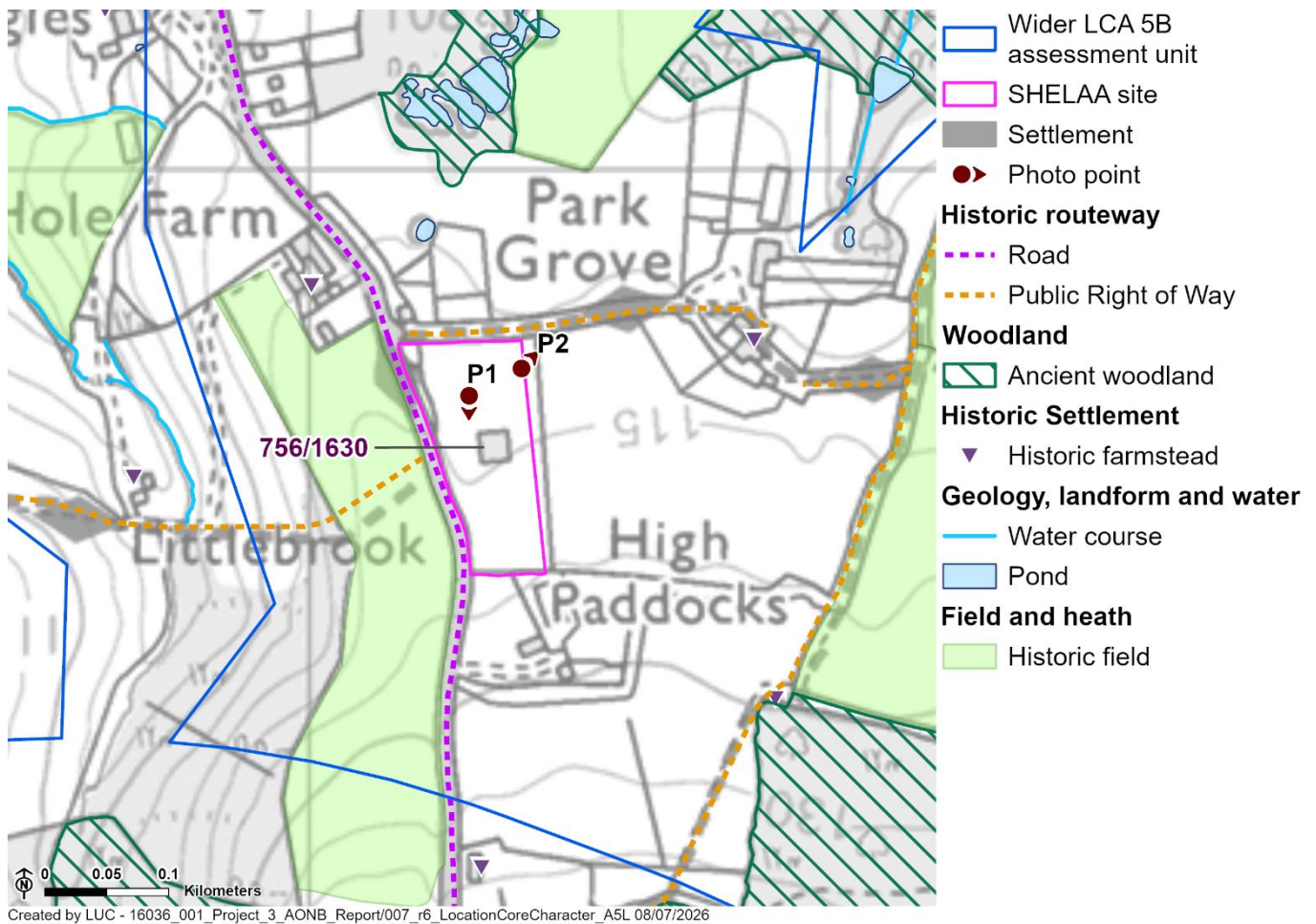


Figure 9: Site location and core character components of natural beauty of the High Weald AONB



Representative site photos



Photo 1: Existing use of the site as a plant nursery influences the natural character.



Photo 2: Wooded site boundaries result in an enclosed character.

Baseline Analysis

Baseline landscape character	
Key features and qualities of the site in relation to the wider assessment unit	Landform ■ The site forms a small part of the middle valley slopes of the High Weald: Central LCA, and part of the 'complex ridge and valley landform' of the wider assessment unit. ■ It comprises a gentle slope rising between 115m AOD in the north-west to 120m AOD in the south-east. Natural character ■ The site is influenced by existing commercial agricultural (nursery) development which is atypical of the wider assessment unit. ■ Mature hedgerows, trees and woodland extend along the boundaries of the site, which are typical of the wider assessment unit. ■ Wooded hedgerows along the western site boundary (along London Road) are partially deteriorated and reinforced by palisade fencing, which is atypical of the wider assessment unit. Landscape pattern and time depth ■ The underlying field pattern of the site is derived from piecemeal enclosure, as classified in the Sussex HLC and typical of the wider assessment unit. ■ While external mature field boundaries have largely been retained along the northern, eastern and southern site boundaries, the existing use of the site as a commercial nursery limits time depth. Perceptual aspects ■ Although the site is influenced by the human activity that occurs across it and London Road, it experiences some sense of tranquillity (which is recorded in the middle bands in CPRE's Tranquillity Mapping, Figure 6) and dark skies (light levels are recorded in the lower/darker bands of CPRE's Night Blight Mapping, Figure 7).
Settlement form and edge character and extent of built development	The site forms part of the wider wooded pastoral landscape of LCA 5B. Settlement near the site consists of dispersed clusters of farmsteads, some of which are gentrified, and cottages situated along London Road. A gentrified farmstead exists to the south of the site at High Paddocks, and a small cluster comprising two detached residential properties and two single storey commercial buildings lie to the north-west of the site. The wooded character of the area limits the influence and intervisibility of existing settlement in the area.
Baseline visual character	
Potential visual receptors	The surrounding woodland, trees and hedgerows enclose the site and limit its visibility from the surrounding landscape including from nearby residential properties, the High Weald Landscape Trail (which runs along the northern site boundary) and London Road, although glimpsed views are afforded in winter months when vegetation is not in leaf. There are close views east into the site in between gaps in vegetation from the nearest section of London Road.
Extent of visibility within the High Weald AONB	Long views to and from the site are limited by the enclosed nature 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 is located on a spur of the <u>principal ridge (Forest Ridge)</u> of the High Weald, contributing to the <u>pattern of faults and folds</u> . 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 existing commercial use of the site as a plant nursery does not contribute to the dispersed historic settlement pattern of the wider area.
Routeways – a dense network of historic routeways (now roads, tracks and paths).	There are no historic routeways which cross the site. However, London Road (along the western boundary of the site) is recorded as a historic lane. The High Weald Landscape Trail (along the northern site boundary) is also a historic routeway. These routes contribute towards the <u>dense radiating network</u> of historic routeways, although the expression of London Road is altered by its use 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 wider <u>highly interconnected and structurally varied mosaic of many small woodlands ... 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 underlying field pattern is derived from piecemeal enclosure with relatively linear field boundaries. The existing commercial use of the site as a plant nursery exerts influence on the field pattern internally. However, field boundaries are defined by <u>mixed woody boundaries...and thick hedges</u> .
Dark night skies – intrinsically dark at night with our own galaxy (the Milky Way) visible.	The site is located within a relatively <u>intrinsically dark landscape</u> , although the sense of naturalness is limited by its existing commercial use. The adjacent London Road is an <u>unlit road</u> .
Aesthetic and perceptual qualities – arising from the interaction of people with the landscape, including the notion of a quintessential English pastoral landscape, intimacy of scale, a sense of history and timelessness; 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 treed boundaries contribute to the <u>sense of...enclosure...owing to the heavily treed landscape</u> . Otherwise, the site's man made influences limit its contributions to tranquillity.
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 wider LCA 5B assessment unit to have a **high** sensitivity to small scale residential development (2-2.5 storey housing). The sensitivity analysis indicates the complex landform, priority habitat woodland (including ancient woodland), heathland, lowland meadows and good quality semi-improved grassland, the intact historic field pattern, historic features throughout the assessment unit, the strongly dispersed settlement pattern, the rural setting provided to ridgetop settlements, the strong network of public rights of way, the rural character with areas of tranquillity and dark night skies, and its location within and visual relationship with the wider High Weald AONB increase sensitivity to built development. The semi-enclosed character, areas of modern field amalgamation and urban fringe development, particularly near larger settlements including Heathfield and Tunbridge Wells located adjacent to the assessment unit, and proximity to main roads reduces sensitivity.

The Site

Overall, it is considered that the site has a lower sensitivity than the assessment unit as a whole and is considered to be of **moderate** sensitivity to development. Given the existing commercial use of the site as a plant nursery, the site demonstrates few characteristics which increase the sensitivity for the wider assessment unit. The site is relatively flat and influenced by existing development. However, the presence of mature and wooded field boundaries increase sensitivity; but their role in enclosing the site decreases its 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 core character components of the High Weald AONB. In summary:

- It is located on a spur of the principal Forest Ridge and forms part of the pattern of faults and folds;
- The field boundaries contribute to the highly interconnected woodland habitats, as well as providing a sense of enclosure; and
- The site forms part of a landscape with dark skies, although the sense of naturalness is limited by commercial use of the site.

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 deciduous woodland, trees and hedgerows, affecting the role they play in enclosing the site .	Woodland	<i>Highly interconnected and structurally varied mosaic of many small woodlands....and outgrown hedges...</i>	■ Retain, protect and enhance the mature woodland, trees, and hedgerows along the boundaries 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), particularly where existing field boundaries are deteriorated along London Road (in accordance with the AONB's Objective W2).
	Aesthetic and perceptual qualities	<i>A sense of...enclosure ... owing to the heavily treed landscape.</i>	
Further modifications to London Road (recorded as a historic lane) to facilitate site access (e.g. road widening, creation of junction).	Routeways	<i>A dense radiating network with a variety of origins...</i>	■ Reduce the impact of access works required to the road, where possible, protecting the hedgerows along it where possible (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 London Road.	Dark night skies	<i>Numerous unlit roads...</i>	■ Minimise the influence of lighting associated with new development and only install outdoor lighting where necessary (in accordance with the AONB's Objective DS1). ■ Follow the Institute of Lighting Professionals guidance⁴ and use dark sky-friendly lighting (in accordance with the AONB's Objectives DS1 and DS2).
Settlement form edge and setting			
The wooded setting and dispersed settlement pattern of the wider rural area of LCA 5B.	N/A	N/A	■ An increase in the density of residential development along London Road would be unavoidable with development of the site. Minimise visibility of development by enhancing and retaining mature and wooded field boundaries, which would screen new development (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'⁵, 'Guidance on the selection and use of colour in development'⁶ and objectives of the High Weald AONB Management Plan⁷ (in accordance with the AONB's Objective S2).
Visual amenity			
Visibility of development seen by: ■ residents located at properties near the site along London Road,	Aesthetic and perceptual qualities	■ <i>Sense of freedom arising from access to a dense network of public rights of way...suitable for walking...</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 wooded boundaries that enclose the site (in accordance with the AONB's Objectives W1 and PQ2). ■ Screen new development with additional planting, particularly in views from London Road to the west of the site and the High Weald Landscape Trail to the

⁴ See the Institute of Lighting Professionals guidance for further information: <https://theilp.org.uk/publication/guidance-note-1-for-the-reduction-of-obtrusive-light-2021/>

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>

■ motorists/cyclists along London Road; and ■ users of the High Weald Landscape Trail and further public rights of way to the south and west of the site.			north of the site, using local species to maintain the rural character of the wider area (in accordance with the AONB's Objective PQ2). ■ Reduce the density of buildings 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, providing connectivity to the High Weald Landscape Trail and further opportunities to experience the surrounding countryside (in accordance with the AONB's Objective PQ3).
Overall impact on the core character components of natural beauty of the High Weald AONB			
Low impact	The baseline analysis identifies that the site (and immediate surrounds) expresses few core character components of natural beauty, with a weak level of expression. Development of the site is judged to have a low impact on the landscape and visual qualities/features that define the AONB, and is therefore unlikely to affect / impact the ability of the Council to fulfil its statutory duty to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the AONB. If the potential mitigation and enhancement opportunities set out above are applied, potential impacts as a result of the development on the site could potentially be reduced further. <u>Variation to overall impact</u> There is no variation to the overall impact considered above.		

Summary and recommendations

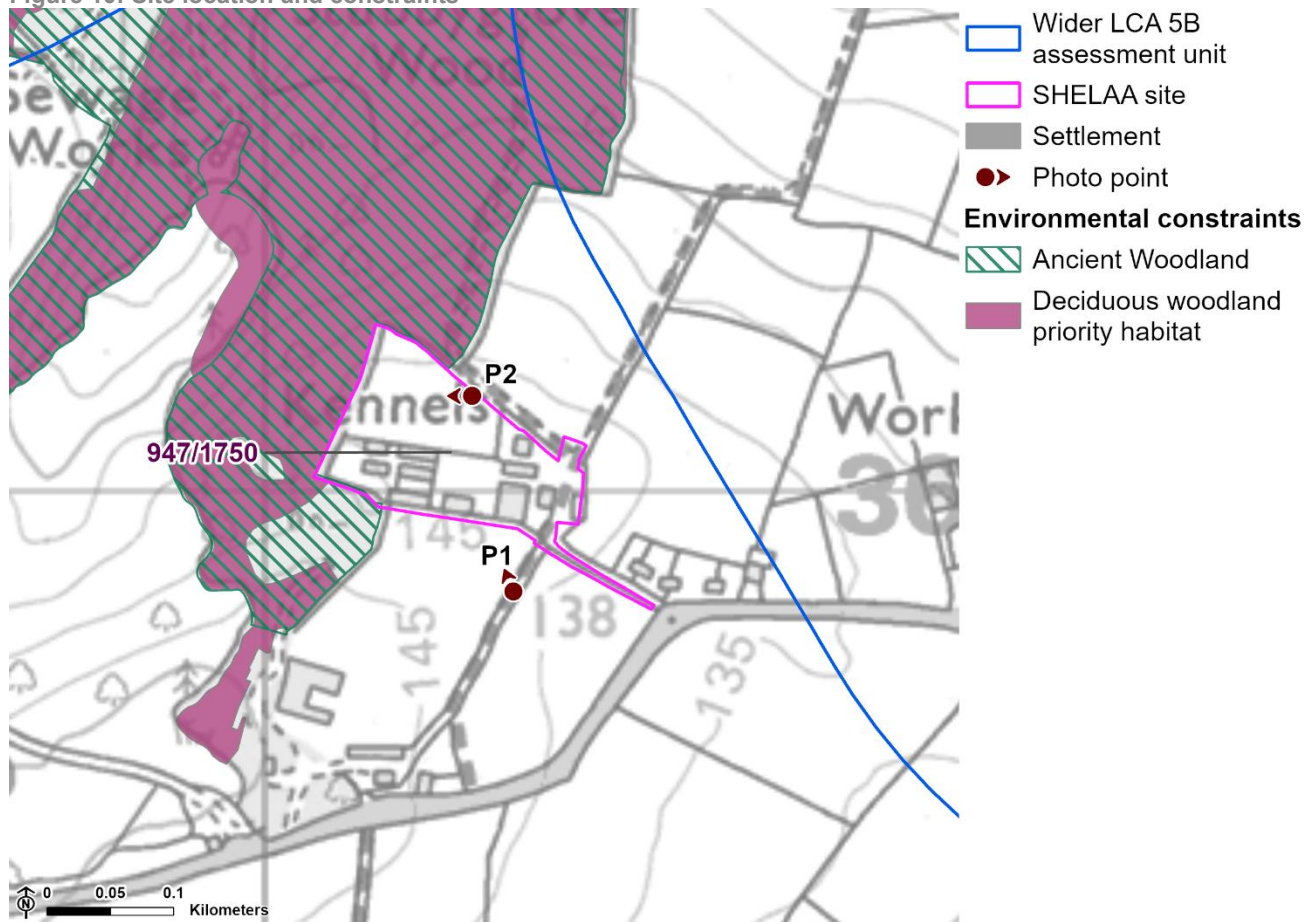
The site-specific recommendations for this site are as follows:

- Retain, protect and enhance the mature woodland, trees, and hedgerows along the boundaries of the site.
- Screen new development with additional planting, particularly in views from London Road to the west of the site and the High Weald Landscape Trail to the north of the site.
- Enhance public access, providing connectivity to the High Weald Landscape Trail and further opportunities to experience the surrounding countryside.

Land at Stubby Grove Business Park, Bells Yew Green Road (947/1750)

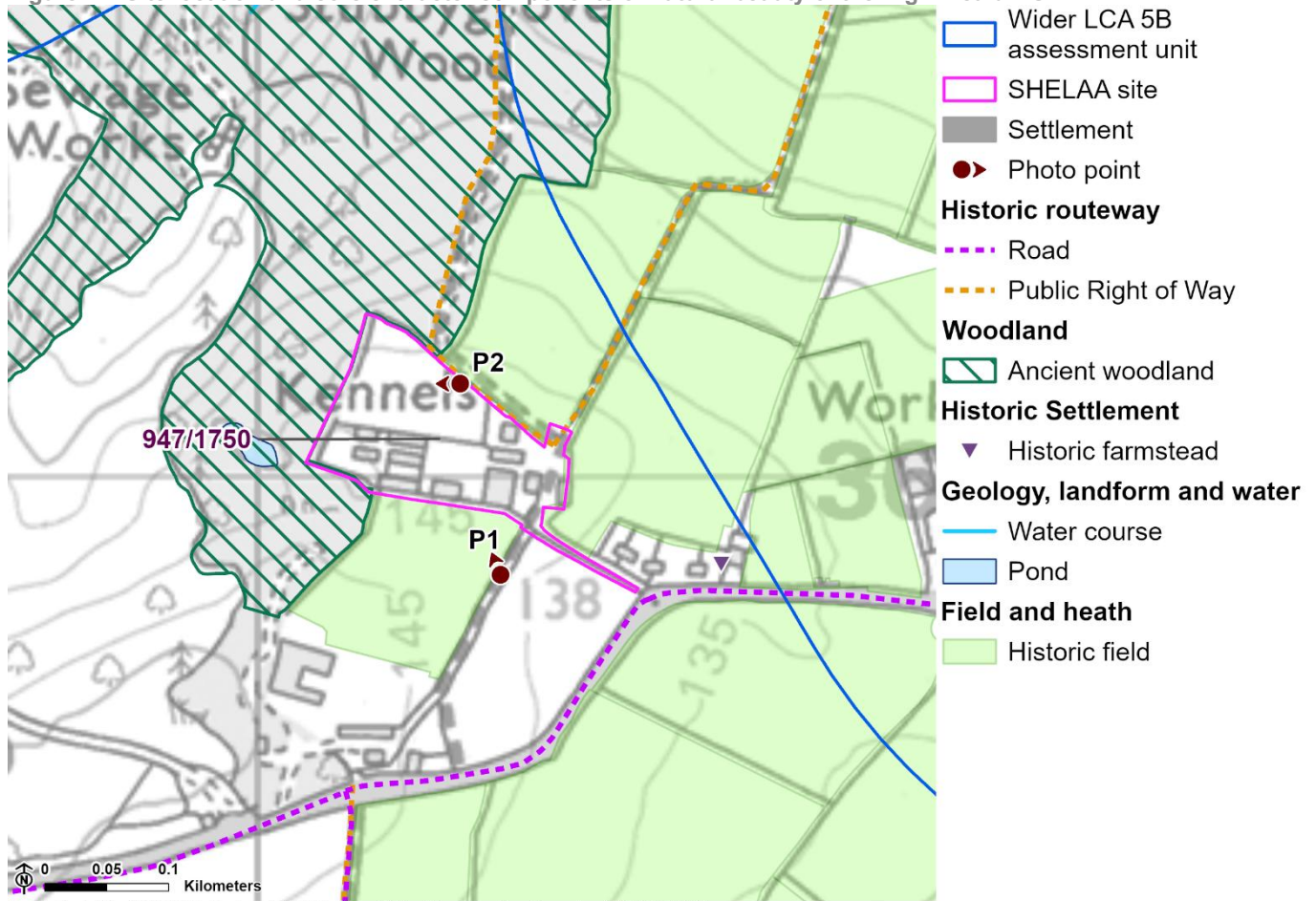
Site Details	
Potential development	Employment development with floorspace of 3,600m ² proposed on the site as shown below. Site not Allocated or considered an Option in the draft Focused Local Plan 2026.
Site location	This site is located approximately 0.6km to the west of Bells Yew Green and 0.8km to the east of Frant, situated adjacent to the south-eastern edge of Stubbygrove Wood and north of Bells Yew Green Road.

Figure 10: Site location and constraints



Created by LUC - 16036_001_Project_3_AONB_Report/006_r6_LocationConstraints_A5L 08/07/2026

Figure 11: Site location and core character components of natural beauty of the High Weald AONB



Representative site photos



Photo 1: View north from public footpath south of the site, looking towards the existing industrial units along the southern edge of the site



Photo 2: View south-west from the public footpath that runs along the northern site boundary, looking into the assart in the north

Baseline Analysis

Baseline landscape character	
Key features and qualities of the site in relation to the wider assessment unit	Landform ■ The site forms a small part of the middle valley slopes of the High Weald: Central LCA, and part of the 'complex ridge and valley landform' of the wider assessment unit. ■ It comprises a gentle slope rising between 138m AOD in the north-west to 145m AOD in the south-west. Natural character ■ Priority habitat deciduous woodland, recorded as ancient, at Stubbygrove Wood encloses the site to the west which is representative of the numerous woodlands found across the wider assessment unit. ■ Shaws extend from the woodland in the west and abut the northern boundary of the site as well as forming a field boundary that crosses through the centre of the site. ■ The southern and eastern boundaries are defined by fencing. Landscape pattern and time depth ■ Most of the site contains an existing industrial estate with sheds, storage containers and hard surfacing limiting time depth. ■ A small assart in the north, as classified in the Sussex HLC, is surrounded by woodland and shaws – a key feature of the wider assessment unit. Perceptual aspects ■ Although the site is influenced by the human activity that occurs across it, other industrial units and houses along Bells Yew Green Road to the south and east, and by the road itself, it experiences some sense of tranquillity (which is recorded in the middle bands in CPRE's Tranquillity Mapping, Figure 6) and dark skies (light levels are recorded in the lower bands of CPRE's Night Blight Mapping, Figure 7).
Settlement form and edge character and extent of built development	The site forms part of the wider wooded pastoral landscape of LCA 5B. Settlement near the site is limited and consists of relatively dispersed farmsteads, some of which are gentrified. There is a row of cottages to the south-east of the site and a former oast house, which has been converted for residential use. There are also commercial buildings to the south-west and east of the site. The wooded character of the area limits the influence and intervisibility of existing settlement in the area.
Baseline visual character	
Potential visual receptors	The surrounding woodland, trees and hedgerows enclose the site and limit its visibility from the surrounding landscape to the north and west; however, there are open views from the nearest cottage where sheds within the eastern part of the site are clearly visible. Views into the site are also afforded from the public footpaths that run along the northern boundary of the site into Stubbygrove Wood and cross its eastern part (extending between Bayham Road and Bells Yew Green Road).
Extent of visibility within the High Weald AONB	Long views to and from the site are mainly limited by landform, trees, hedgerows and buildings around the site, although some long views north are afforded from open areas of the existing industrial estate in the north-east 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.	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 existing commercial use of the site does not contribute to the dispersed historic settlement pattern of the wider area.
Routeways – a dense network of historic routeways (now roads, tracks and paths).	A historic routeway (recorded as a historic PRow) runs along the northern boundary of the site (with a small part located within the north-eastern corner), contributing 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.	Stubbygrove Wood encloses the site to the west and contributes towards the <u>high proportion of ancient woodland</u> , the <u>highly interconnected and structurally varied mosaic of many small woods, larger forests...shaws...and outgrown hedges</u> and the <u>very large woods</u> of the AONB.
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 small field in the north was <u>created by assarting</u> , contributing towards the dominant <u>medieval fieldscape character</u> of the AONB and is used for <u>grazing livestock</u> .
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 its existing industrial use.
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 small field in the north and surrounding woodland contributes to the <u>recognisable and unifying mosaic of open field and wooded habitats</u>, and <u>a sense of history and timelessness arising from an ancient countryside with a human-scale agricultural tapestry; veteran and ancient trees...</u> There are <u>long views</u> to the north from the north-eastern part of the site. Public access through the site provides <u>a sense of freedom arising from access to a dense network of public rights of way and quiet roads 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 small field in the north relates to the <u>predominantly pastoral mixed farming with an absence of industrial scale farming</u> key characteristic.

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

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 Wider LCA 5B assessment unit to have a **high** sensitivity to commercial/ industrial development. The sensitivity analysis indicates the complex landform, priority habitat woodland (including ancient woodland), heathland, lowland meadows and good quality semi-improved grassland, the intact historic field pattern, historic features throughout the assessment unit, the strongly dispersed settlement pattern, the rural setting provided to ridgetop settlements, the strong network of public rights of way, the rural character with areas of tranquillity and dark night skies, and its location within and visual relationship with the wider High Weald AONB increase sensitivity to built development. The semi-enclosed character, areas of modern field amalgamation and urban fringe development, and proximity to main roads reduces sensitivity.

The Site

Overall, it is considered that the site has a lower sensitivity than the wider assessment unit, and is judged to have a **moderate-high** sensitivity to development. The site contains a pastoral field enclosed by shaws, ancient and priority habitat deciduous woodland that forms part of a historic field pattern (assart), with a public right of way along its northern boundary. The site demonstrates some of the characteristics that increase sensitivity across the assessment unit. However, the site mainly comprises existing industrial/ commercial development, which affects the rural character, remoteness and tranquillity of the area.

Variations in Sensitivity

The moderate-high sensitivity score applies predominantly to the small field in the north and the surrounding woodland and shaws to the north and west. Sensitivity is lower for the area of the site containing the existing industrial/ commercial development.

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

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

- Stubbygrove Wood contributes to the high proportion of ancient woodland and the highly interconnected woodlands and structurally varied mosaic of many small woods and shaws;
- The northern field forms part of an assart field pattern, which contributes to the medieval character of the AONB;
- The grazing of livestock in the northern field contributes to the pastoral feel of the landscape, with links to the history of the land-based economy;
- A sense of history and timelessness is provided by the assarting of the field in the north and ancient woodland;
- The PRoW that runs along the northern boundary of the site and partly crosses through the north-eastern corner contributes to the radiating network of historic routeways and the sense of freedom for walkers;
- There are long views to the north from the north-eastern part of the site; and
- The site forms part of a landscape with dark skies, although the sense of naturalness is limited by the existing industrial/ commercial use of the site.

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, shaws, trees and hedgerows, affecting the role they play in partly screening the site and contributions to the interconnectivity of habitats.	Woodland	<i>Highly interconnected and structurally varied mosaic of small woods, larger forests...shaws...and outgrown hedges.</i>	■ Retain, protect and enhance all mature vegetation within and surrounding the site where possible, especially the shaws that extend from woodland in the west (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 (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 Stubbygrove Wood which abuts the western edge of the site.	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>	

Loss of the grazed pastures and assart in the north, which contributes to the medieval character and time depth.	Fieldscape and heath	■ <i>Fields, mostly permanent pasture, used for grazing livestock...</i> ■ <i>Medieval fieldscape character dominant, with a high proportion of field systems created by assarting (woodland clearance) with sinuous mixed woody boundaries and shaws, and thick hedges common.</i>	■ Loss of pasture and assart would be unavoidable with development of the site, as development would remove land from agricultural use with limited opportunities to retain areas due to the small scale of the site. However where possible, field boundaries should be retained and enhanced to avoid complete loss of 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>	
Loss of the historic routeway and public right of way that runs along the northern boundary of the site.	Routeways	<i>A dense radiating network with a variety of origins...</i>	■ Retain, protect and enhance existing recreational access via this public right of way and the rural character of the historic route (in accordance with the AONB's Objectives R1 and PQ3).
Influence of lighting in the dark night skies resulting in night blight.	Dark night skies	<i>Intrinsically dark landscapes with a sense of remoteness and tranquillity.</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 guidance⁸ and use dark sky-friendly lighting (in accordance with the AONB's Objectives DS1 and DS2).
Visual amenity			
Limited visibility of development seen by:	Aesthetic and perceptual qualities	■ <i>A sense of history and timelessness arising from an ancient countryside</i>	■ Retain, protect and enhance all existing vegetation including the shaws, trees and hedgerows that enclose the site (in accordance with the AONB's Objectives W1 and PQ2).

⁸ 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/>

■ residents at the nearest cottage (to the south-east); and ■ public footpaths along the northern boundary of the site into Stubbygrove Wood and which cross its eastern part (extending between Bayham Road and Bells Yew Green Road).		<i>with a human-scale agricultural tapestry; veteran and ancient trees...</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...</i> ■ <i>A sense of freedom arising from access to a dense network of public rights of way.</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). ■ The height and massing of any development should be carefully considered in relation to the scale of existing commercial / employment development to the south of the site along Bells Yew Green Road and underlying topography in the area (in accordance with the AONB's Objective 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 'Guidance on the selection and use of colour in development'⁹ and objectives of the High Weald AONB Management Plan¹⁰ (in accordance with the AONB's Objective S2). ■ Consider views of development from the nearest cottage to the south-east of the site, enhancing the boundary of the site with new planting to screen views into it (in accordance with the AONB's Objective PQ2). ■ Retain long views from the site looking north (in accordance with the AONB's Objective PQ2). ■ Retain public access and enhance the opportunities to experience the surrounding woodland (in accordance with the AONB's Objective PQ3).
Overall impact on the core character components of natural beauty of the High Weald AONB			
Moderate impact	The baseline analysis identifies that the site (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 woodland (of ancient origin) and shaws; a historic routeway; medieval character from the assart; grazed pastures; long views; and forming part of a landscape with dark skies. Development of the site is judged to have a moderate		

⁹ <https://www.highweald.org/look-after/planning/colour-study.html>

¹⁰ <https://www.highweald.org/high-weald-aonb-management-plan.html>

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 assart and grazed pastures in the north which would be lost.

Variation to overall impact

There would be a greater impact on the field in the north than the area containing the existing industrial development in the south, which is reflected by the overall moderate impact.

Summary and recommendations

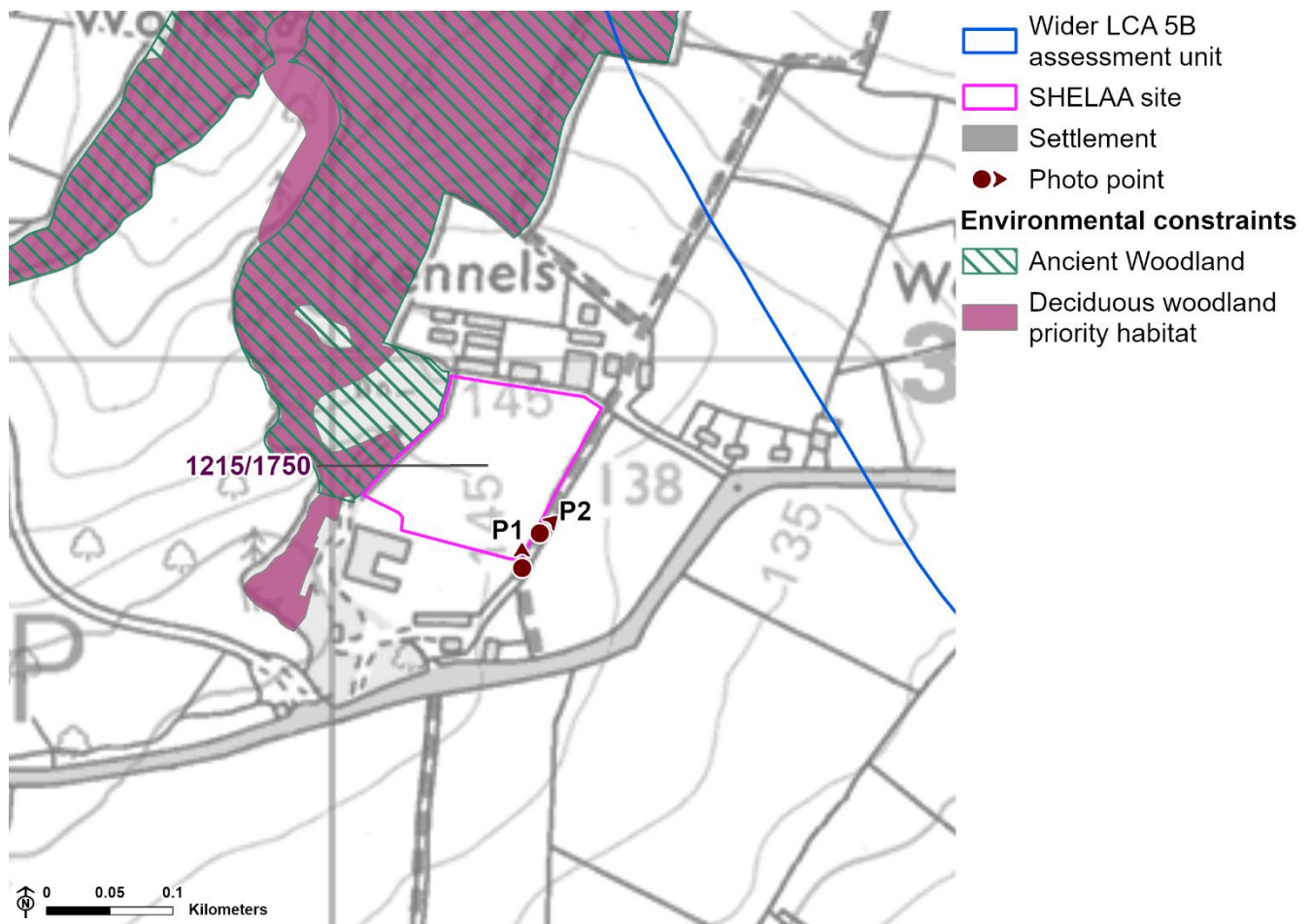
The site-specific recommendations for this site are as follows:

- Retain, protect and enhance the shaws that extend from woodland in the west.
- Apply suitable offsets to the ancient woodland at Stubbygrove Wood.
- The height and massing of any development should be carefully considered in relation to the scale of existing commercial / employment development to the south of the site along Bells Yew Green Road and underlying topography in the area.
- Consider views of development from the nearest cottage to the south-east of the site, enhancing the boundary of the site with new planting to screen views into it.
- Retain long views from the site looking north.
- Retain public access and enhance the opportunities to experience the surrounding woodland.

Land adjacent to Reflex Buildings, Bells Yew Green Road, Bells Yew Green (1215/1750)

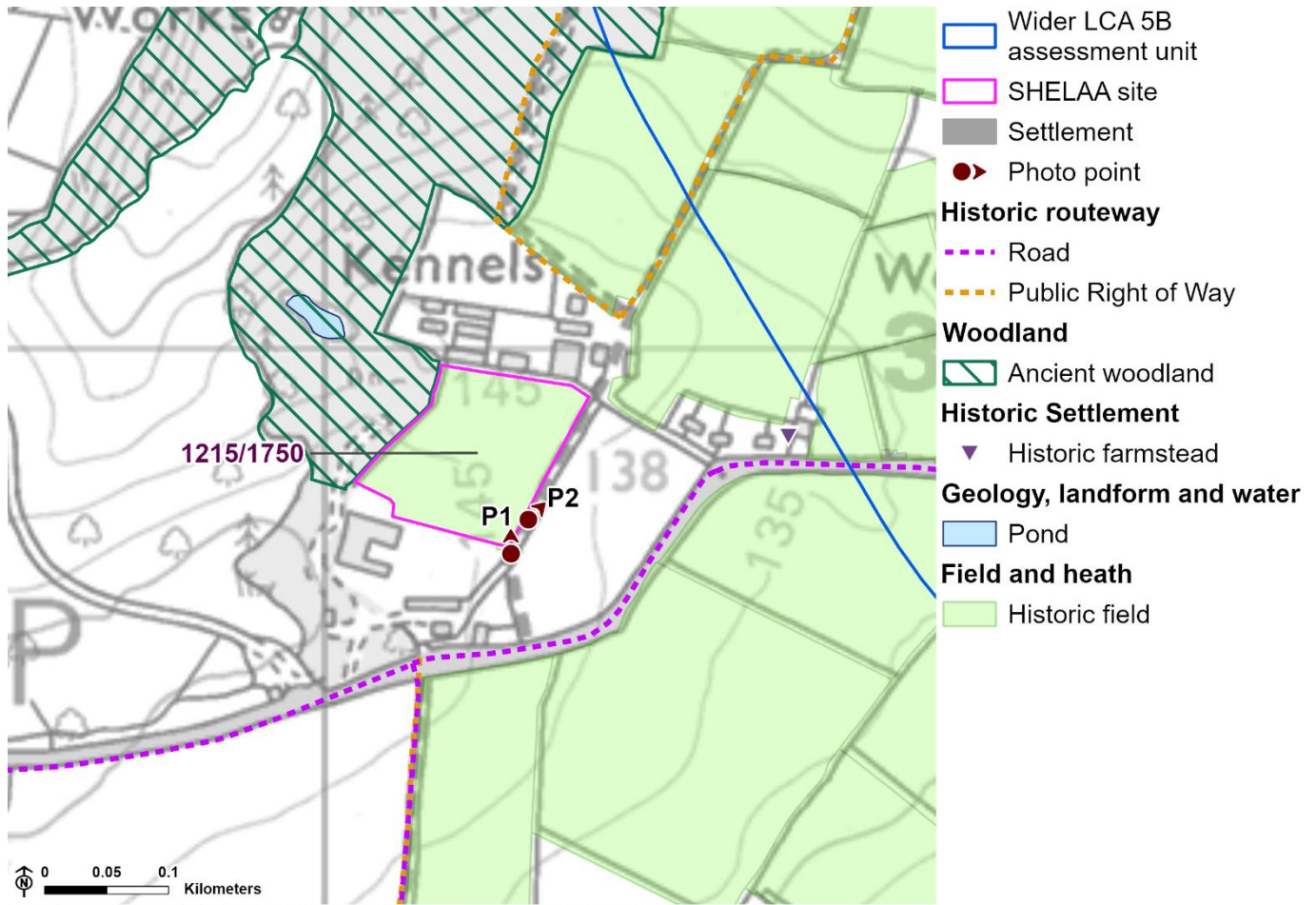
Site Details	
Potential development	Employment development with floorspace of 3,000m ² proposed on the site as shown below. Site not allocated or considered an Option in the draft Focused Local Plan 2026.
Site location	This site is located approximately 0.7km to the west of Bells Yew Green and 0.8km to the east of Frant, situated adjacent to the south-eastern edge of Stubbygrove Wood and north of Bells Yew Green Road.

Figure 12: Site location and constraints



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Figure 13: Site location and core character components of natural beauty of the High Weald AONB



Representative site photos



Photo 1: Views north across the site from the south-eastern boundary.



Photo 2: View along eastern boundary footpath with tall conifer tree line forming the sites eastern edge (left of photo).

Baseline Analysis

Baseline landscape character	
Key features and qualities of the site in relation to the wider assessment unit	Landform ■ The site forms a small part of the middle valley slopes of the High Weald: Central LCA, and part of the 'complex ridge and valley landform' of the wider assessment unit. ■ It comprises a small field on a gentle south-east facing slope rising from approximately 140m AOD in the east to 145m AOD in the west. Natural character ■ A mature wooded belt of trees lines the southern boundary of the site with the eastern boundary formed by a row of conifer trees, contributing to the strong vegetated structure typical of the assessment unit. ■ The western boundary is formed by the ancient woodland of Stubbygrove Wood (with a small area of priority habitat deciduous woodland abutting the site boundary), which extends north from the site. ■ The northern boundary is defined by fencing and edge of Stubby Grove Business Park. 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. ■ The site consists of a small pasture-grazed field bounded by tall, well-treed hedgerows. The site's outer boundary follows the historic field pattern, with the western boundary formed by ancient woodland of Stubby Grove Wood. This pattern is typical of the wider assessment unit. However, existing commercial/ industrial development is located to the north and south of the site which affects time depth. Perceptual aspects ■ Although the site is influenced by the adjacent existing industrial/ commercial units, houses along Bells Yew Green Road to the south and east, and by the road itself, it experiences some sense of tranquillity (which is recorded in the middle bands in CPRE's Tranquillity Mapping, Figure 6) and dark skies (light levels are recorded in the lower bands of CPRE's Night Blight Mapping, Figure 7).
Settlement form and edge character and extent of built development	The site forms part of the wider wooded pastoral landscape of LCA 5B. Settlement near the site is limited and consists of relatively dispersed farmsteads, some of which are gentrified. There is a row of cottages to the east of the site and a former oast house, which has been converted for residential use. There are adjacent industrial/ commercial buildings to the north and south of the site. The wooded character of the area limits the influence and intervisibility of existing settlement in the area.
Baseline visual character	
Potential visual receptors	The surrounding woodland, trees and hedgerows enclose the site and limit its visibility from the surrounding landscape. Views into the site are limited from the public footpath that runs along the eastern boundary of the site due to the coniferous vegetation that lines the route, although the site is visible where there are gaps. There are also glimpsed views from the nearest cottage to the east of the site.
Extent of visibility within the High Weald AONB	Long views to and from the site are limited by mature hedgerows and treed field boundaries both on the site and the surrounding 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.	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. Bells Yew Green Road to the south and east of the site is recorded as a historic lane and contributes towards the <u>dense radiating network of historic routeways</u> .
Woodland – an abundance of ancient woodland mostly in small holdings, highly interconnected with hedges and shaws.	The site's western boundary is formed by the ancient woodland of Stubbygrove Wood, contributing to the <u>high proportion of ancient woodland</u> , the <u>highly interconnected and structurally varied mosaic of many small woods, larger forests...shaws...and outgrown hedges</u> and the <u>very large woods</u> of the AONB. High hedgerows along the southern and eastern boundaries further reinforce this connectivity.
Fieldsapes and heath – small, irregular and productive fields, bound by hedgerows and woods, and typically used for livestock grazing; with distinctive zones of lowland heaths and inned river valleys (reclaimed marshland).	The site comprises a small field used for <u>grazing livestock</u> with tall mature vegetated boundaries. The site's outer boundaries largely follow the historic field pattern.
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 the adjacent existing industrial/ commercial buildings. Bells Yew Green Road is an <u>unlit road...</u>
Aesthetic and perceptual qualities – arising from the interaction of people with the landscape, including the notion of a quintessential English pastoral landscape, intimacy of scale, a sense of history and timelessness; 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 field and surrounding woodland contributes to the <u>recognisable and unifying mosaic of open field and wooded habitats</u>, and <u>a sense of history and timelessness arising from an ancient countryside with a human-scale agricultural tapestry; veteran and ancient trees...</u> The sense of rurality and tranquillity is lightly affected by the adjacent industrial/commercial areas to the north and south. Long views of the site are limited by vegetation enclosing the site which contributes to the <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.	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 Wider LCA 5B assessment unit to have a **high** sensitivity to commercial/ industrial development. The sensitivity analysis indicates the complex landform, priority habitat woodland (including ancient woodland), heathland, lowland meadows and good quality semi-improved grassland, the intact historic field pattern, historic features throughout the assessment unit, the strongly dispersed settlement pattern, the rural setting provided to ridgetop settlements, the strong network of public rights of way, the rural character with areas of tranquillity and dark night skies, and its location within and visual relationship with the wider High Weald AONB increase sensitivity to built development. The semi-enclosed character, areas of modern field amalgamation and urban fringe development, and proximity to main roads reduces sensitivity.

The Site

Overall, it is considered that the site has a lower sensitivity than the assessment unit as a whole and is judged to have a **moderate** sensitivity to development. The site is a pastoral field enclosed by mature vegetation (including ancient and priority habitat deciduous woodland) with a public right of way along its eastern boundary. The site demonstrates some of the characteristics that increase sensitivity across the assessment unit. However, the site is well enclosed and influenced by the adjacent existing industrial/ commercial development, which affects the rural character, remoteness and tranquillity of the area.

Variations in Sensitivity

There is no variation in sensitivity across the site.

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

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

- Stubbygrove Wood contributes to the high proportion of ancient woodland, and along with the mature vegetation along the other boundaries of the site, contributes towards the highly interconnected woodland habitats and provides a sense of enclosure;
- The grazing of livestock and surrounding vegetation contributes to the pastoral feel of the landscape, with links to the history of the land-based economy;
- A sense of history and timelessness is provided by the ancient woodland;
- The site forms part of a landscape with dark skies, although the sense of naturalness is limited by the existing adjacent industrial/ commercial use of the site.

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 partly screening the site and contributions to the interconnectivity of habitats	Woodland	<i>Highly interconnected and structurally varied mosaic of many small woodlands, larger forests...shaws....and outgrown hedges.</i>	■ Retain, protect and enhance all mature vegetation within and surrounding the site where possible, especially the mature trees along the eastern and southern boundaries (in accordance with the AONB's Objectives W1 and PQ2). ■ Improve the connectivity of woodlands and hedgerows around the site through new tree planting and hedgerow corridors that are in character with the locality, using native species where possible / suitable (in accordance with the AONB's Objective W2).
	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 Stubbygrove Wood which abuts the western edge of the site.	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).
Loss or deterioration of features contributing towards the pastoral	Fieldsapes and heath	<i>Fields, mostly permanent pasture, used for grazing livestock...</i>	■ Loss of pasture would be unavoidable with development of the site, as development would remove land from agricultural use with limited opportunities

character of the site, particularly the tall boundaries and the grazed pastures.	Land-based economy and rural living	<i>Predominantly pastoral mixed farming with an absence of industrial scale farming.</i>	to retain areas due to the small scale of the site. However, field boundaries should be retained and enhanced where possible to avoid complete loss of field pattern (in accordance with the AONB's Objective FH2).
Modifications to Bells Yew Green 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, retaining the character of the historic lane and protecting the hedgerows along it (in accordance with the AONB's Objectives R1 and R2).
Influence of lighting in the dark night skies resulting in night blight, including the potential introduction of streetlights along Bells Yew Green Road if used for access.	Dark night skies	<i>Intrinsically dark landscapes with a sense of remoteness and tranquillity.</i> <i>Numerous unlit roads...</i>	- Minimise the influence of lighting associated with new development and only install outdoor lighting where necessary (in accordance with the AONB's Objective DS1). - Follow the Institute of Lighting Professionals guidance ¹¹ and use dark sky-friendly lighting (in accordance with the AONB's Objectives DS1 and DS2).
Visual amenity			
Limited visibility of development seen by: - users of the PRoW along the eastern boundary of the site; and - residents at the nearest cottage (to the east).	Aesthetic and perceptual qualities	<i>A sense of intimacy, enclosure and remoteness owing to the heavily treed landscape.</i> <i>A sense of history and timelessness arising from an ancient countryside with a human-scale agricultural tapestry; veteran and ancient trees...</i> <i>The homely, pastoral feel to the whole landscape arising from its human-scale pattern and productivity.</i>	- Retain, protect and enhance all existing vegetation including the mature woodland and trees that enclose the site (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). - The height and massing of any development should be carefully considered in relation to the scale of existing industrial/ commercial development to the north and south of the site and underlying topography in the area (in accordance with the AONB's Objective S2).

¹¹ 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/>

		■ <i>A recognisable and unifying mosaic of open field and wooded habitats.</i> ■ <i>A sense of freedom arising from access to a dense network of public rights of way.</i>	■ 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 'Guidance on the selection and use of colour in development'¹² and objectives of the High Weald AONB Management Plan¹³ (in accordance with the AONB's Objective S2). ■ Consider views of development from the PRoW along the eastern edge of the site and the nearest cottage to the 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 mature woodland (of ancient origin) and trees; grazed pastures; and forming part of a landscape with dark skies. Development of the site will 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.		

¹² <https://www.highweald.org/look-after/planning/colour-study.html>

¹³ <https://www.highweald.org/high-weald-aonb-management-plan.html>

Summary and recommendations

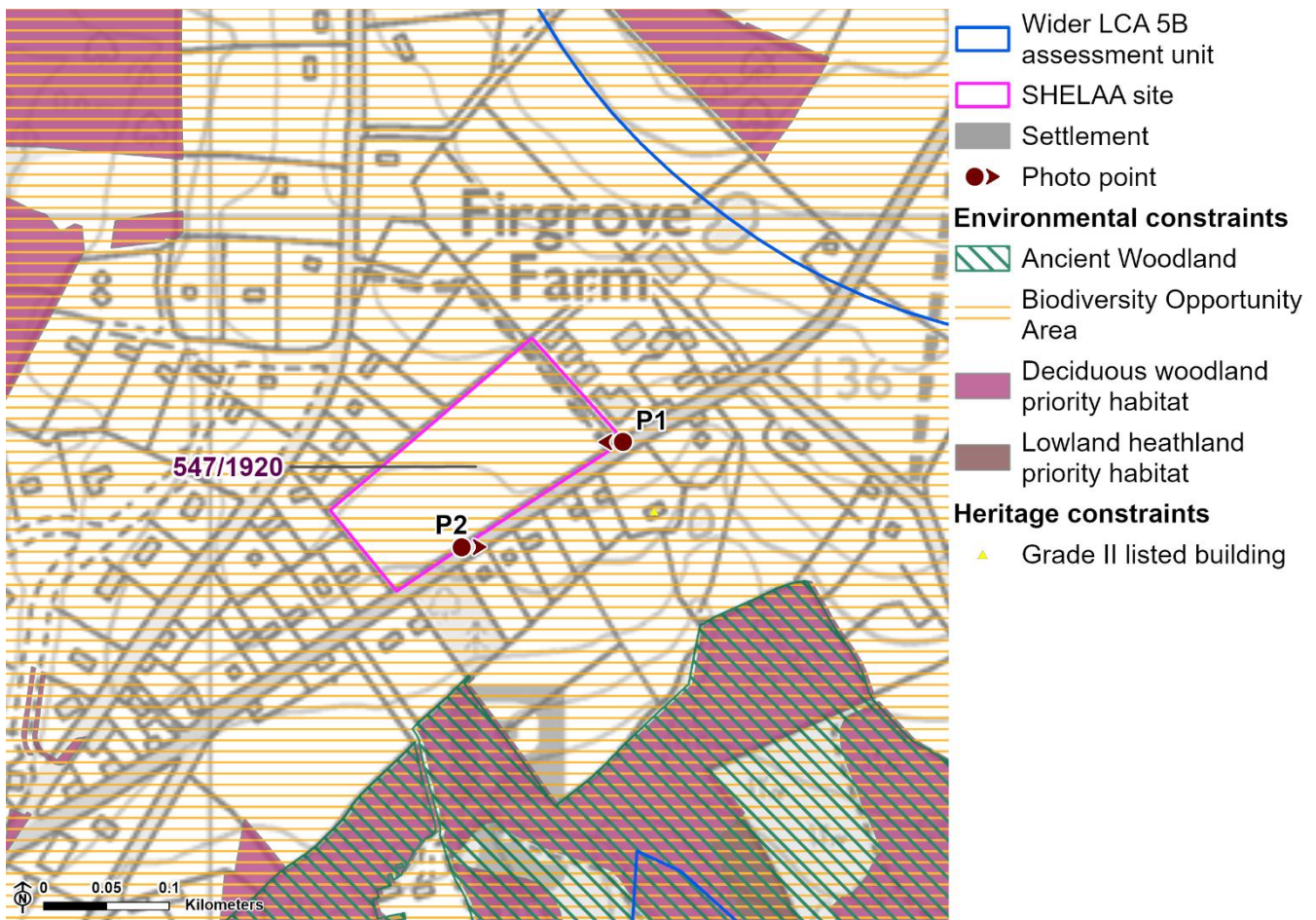
The site-specific recommendations for this site are as follows:

- Retain, protect and enhance the mature trees and hedgerows along the boundaries of the site.
- Apply suitable offsets to the ancient woodland at Stubbygrove Wood.
- The height and massing of any development should be carefully considered in relation to the scale of existing commercial / employment development to the north and south of the site and underlying topography in the area.
- Consider views of development from the PRoW along the eastern boundary of the site and the nearest cottage to the east, enhancing the boundary of the site with new planting to screen views into it.

Land to the north-west side of Fir Grove Road, Cross in Hand (547/1920)

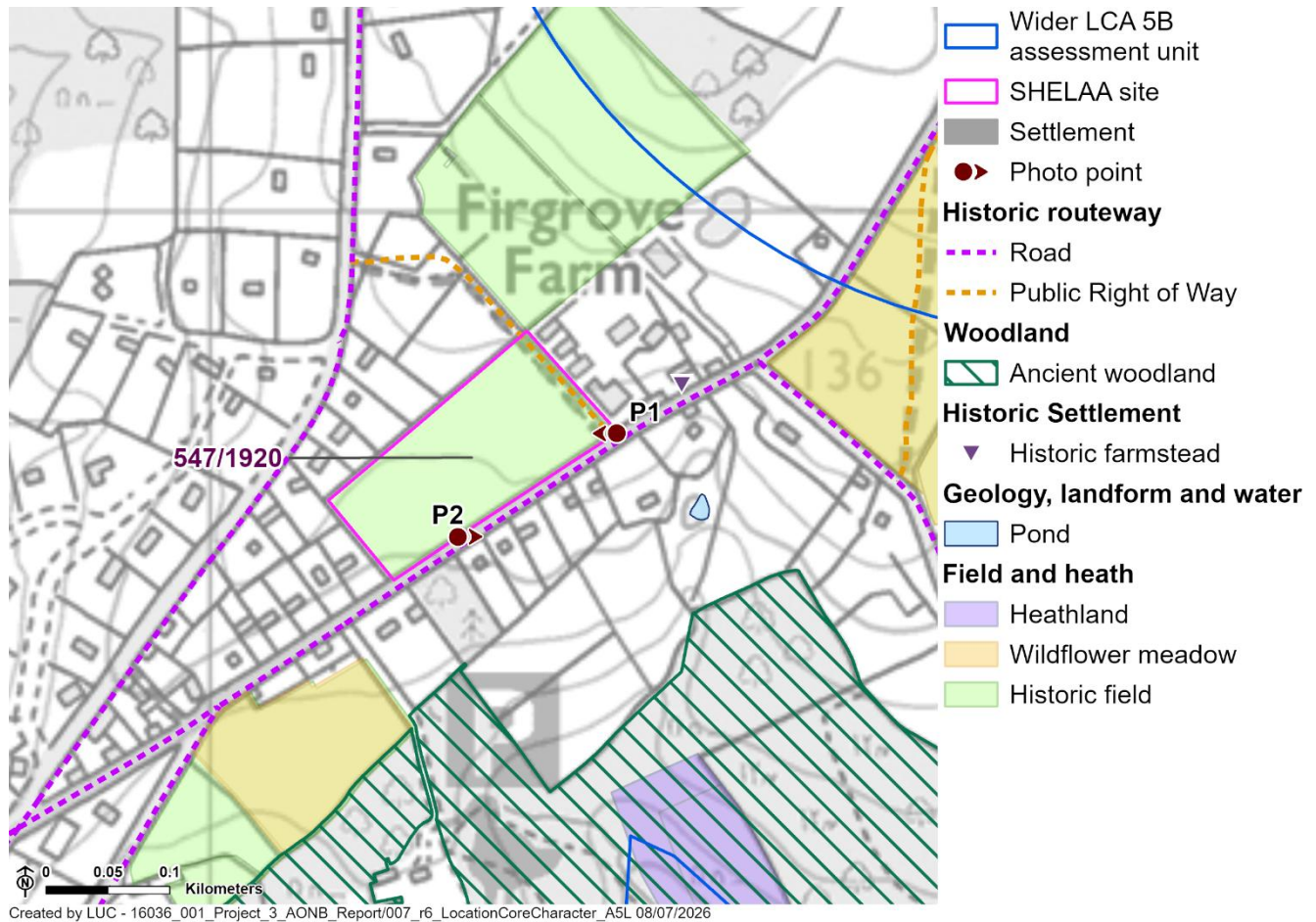
Site Details	
Potential development	Employment development with floorspace of 5,000m ² proposed on the site as shown below. Site not Allocated or considered an Option in the draft Focused Local Plan 2026.
Site location	This site lies between Roser's Cross and Firgrove Farm, adjacent to the Firgrove Business Centre.

Figure 14: Site location and constraints



Created by LUC - 16036_001_Project_3_AONB_Report/006_r6_LocationConstraints_A5L 08/07/2026

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



Representative site photos



Photo 1: Grassland field with woodland along northern edge, and some views from properties on the edge of Roser's Cross.



Photo 2: Mature vegetation along Fir Grove Road 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 rises gently from 125m AOD in the south-west to 135m AOD in the north-east. Natural character ■ The site is grassland, bounded by mature trees on the northern and eastern boundaries and hedgerows on the western and southern boundaries, typical of the wider assessment unit. ■ The site lies within the River Uck and its Headwaters BOA. It is 45m to the north-east of the Selwyns Wood Sussex Wildlife Trust Reserve. Landscape pattern and time depth ■ The site is derived from a planned private enclosure field pattern (as classified in the Sussex HLC but not identified as a feature of the assessment unit), and historic field boundaries have been retained. Perceptual aspects ■ The site is influenced by proximity to the settlement edge of Roser's Cross, however the levels of tranquillity recorded in CPRE's Tranquillity Mapping are relatively high (Figure 6), and the experience of dark skies are towards the lower/darker end of CPRE's Night Blight Mapping (Figure 7).
Settlement form and edge character and extent of built development	The site lies to the east of Roser's Cross, a small linear hamlet set along Fir Grove Road and Warren Lane. The linear settlement form has been altered by closes off Warren Lane, at Forest Place and Warren Close. The hedgerow on the site's western boundary provides a vegetated edge to the hamlet. Development on Fir Grove Road consists of large detached two storey houses set back from the road, often with one-storey outbuildings. Firgrove Business Park to the east of the site consists of a number of low one-storey brick and timber sheds. The site separates the settlement edge of Roser's Cross from the business park.
Baseline visual character	
Potential visual receptors	Mature hedgerows along Fir Grove Road limits some visibility for people travelling along the road. Residential properties to the south of the site are set back from the road, but have some views of the vegetation along Fir Grove Road, with views into the site from upper storeys. Residents to the west on Fir Grove Road and Warren Lane have limited views into the site due to screening by mature trees and hedgerows. A public right of way runs along the eastern site boundary, and there are clear views into the site from along it. Selwyn's Wood Meadow Local Wildlife Site is 80m south-west of the site, however there is no intervisibility due to roadside vegetation on Fir Grove Road.
Extent of intervisibility within the High Weald AONB	Mature vegetation along the boundaries of the site prevents long distance views across 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, and contributes to 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.	Firgrove Business Park to the east is recorded as a <u>historic farmstead</u> , although with some loss of features due to its modern commercial use.
Routeways – a dense network of historic routeways (now roads, tracks and paths).	The existing public right of way is recorded as a historic routeway, and Fir Grove Road on the southern boundary as a historic track, lined by <u>ditches</u> . These 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.	Mature trees along the field boundaries 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).	<u>Relatively small</u> field pattern, defined by hedgerows and mature vegetation, with retained historic field boundaries. 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 site forms parts of an <u>intrinsically dark landscapes with a sense of naturalness</u> . It is located adjacent to the edge of Roser's Cross which is a rural hamlet <u>with few street lamps</u> . The adjacent Fir Grove Road is an <u>unlit road</u> .
Aesthetic and perceptual qualities – arising from the interaction of people with the landscape, including the notion of a quintessential English pastoral landscape, intimacy of scale, a sense of history and timelessness; 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 public right of way which crosses the eastern edge 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> The sense of rurality and tranquillity is influenced by proximity to the hamlet of Roser's Cross and the surrounding existing residential development. 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> .
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 Wider LCA 5B assessment unit to have a **high** sensitivity to commercial/ industrial development. The sensitivity analysis indicates the complex landform, priority habitat woodland (including ancient woodland), heathland, lowland meadows and good quality semi-improved grassland, the intact historic field pattern, historic features throughout the assessment unit, the strongly dispersed settlement pattern, the rural setting provided to ridgetop settlements, the strong network of public rights of way, the rural character with areas of tranquillity and dark night skies, and its location within and visual relationship with the wider High Weald AONB increase sensitivity to built development. The semi-enclosed character, areas of modern field amalgamation and urban fringe development, and proximity to main roads reduces sensitivity.

The Site

Overall, it is considered that the site has a lower sensitivity than the assessment unit as a whole, and is judged to be of **moderate-high** sensitivity to development. The site is part of the undulating landform, is in pasture use, retains its historic field pattern, and has a rural character with high relative remoteness, therefore demonstrating some of the characteristics that increase sensitivity across the assessment unit. Balanced against this, the site has a semi-enclosed character and is in proximity to residential and commercial development on Fir Grove Road, which are two of the characteristics that decrease sensitivity across the 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 some of the core character components of natural beauty of the High Weald AONB. In summary:

- The site forms part of the pattern of faults and folds;
- The field boundaries contribute to the highly interconnected woodland habitats and define the small historic field;
- The grazing of livestock contributes to the pastoral feel of the landscape, linking to the history of the land-based economy;
- Firgrove Business Park to the east is a historic farmstead, although its expression is affected by its commercial use
- The public right of way along the eastern edge of the site contributes to the radiating network of historic routeways and the sense of freedom for walkers; and
- The site forms part of a landscape with dark skies.

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 trees and hedgerows, affecting the rural character and settlement edge of Roser's Cross, and contributions to the interconnectivity of habitats.	Woodland	<i>Highly interconnected and structurally varied mosaic of small woods...and outgrown hedges.</i>	■ Retain, protect and enhance all mature vegetation within and surrounding the site, especially mature trees and hedgerows along the boundaries 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 (in accordance with the AONB's Objective W2). ■ Take up opportunities listed in the River Uck and its Headwaters 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>	
Loss of the grazed pastures and deterioration of the small-scale field pattern.	Fieldsapes and heath	■ <i>A generally irregular field pattern with individual fields relatively small.</i> ■ <i>Fields, mostly permanent pasture, used for grazing livestock...</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, where possible, field boundaries should be retained and enhanced to avoid complete loss of 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>	

Loss of the historic routeway and public right of way that crosses along the eastern edge 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 crosses the eastern edge of the site and the rural character of the historic route (in accordance with the AONB's Objectives R1 and PQ3).
Modifications to Fir Grove Road (recorded as a historic track) to facilitate site access (e.g. road widening, creation of junction).	Routeways	<i>A dense radiating network with a variety of origins...</i> <i>...ditches typically indicating the former width of the routeway or to separate users from farmland or woodland.</i>	Reduce the impact of access works required to the road, where possible, retaining the character of the historic track and protecting the hedgerows and ditches 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 Fir Grove Road if used for access.	Dark night skies	<i>Intrinsically dark landscapes with a sense of remoteness and tranquillity</i> <i>Many rural villages with few street lamps or no street lighting.</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 guidance¹⁴ 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 site which contributes to the setting of Roser's Cross.	Settlement	<i>High density of historic farmsteads...</i>	- Locate development in the east of the site to relate to the existing employment development at Firgrove Business Park (in accordance with the AONB's Objective S1). - The height and massing of any development should be carefully considered in relation to the scale of existing commercial / employment development to the east of the site at Firgrove Business Park and underlying topography in the area (in accordance with the AONB's Objective S2).
Loss of separation between the residential edge of Roser's Cross and employment development at Firgrove Business Park.	Aesthetic and perceptual qualities	<i>A sense of history and timelessness...</i>	

¹⁴ 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/>

			■ 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'¹⁵ and objectives of the High Weald AONB Management Plan¹⁶ (in accordance with the AONB's Objective S2).
Visual amenity			
Visibility of development seen by: ■ pedestrians, motorists, cyclists and residents along Fir Grove Road to the south; ■ employees and visitors to Firgrove Business Park to the east; ■ residents along Warren Lane to the north; and ■ users of the footpath in the east of the site.	Aesthetic and perceptual qualities	■ <i>The homely, pastoral feel to the whole landscape arising from its human-scale pattern and productivity.</i> ■ <i>A recognisable and unifying mosaic of open field and wooded habitats.</i> ■ <i>A sense of freedom arising from access to a dense network of public rights of way.</i>	■ Retain, protect and enhance all existing vegetation, especially the mature trees and hedgerows to the north, west and south (in accordance with the AONB's Objectives W1 and PQ2). ■ Set development back from Fir Grove Road, to fit with the existing pattern and limit views for users of the road and local residents (in accordance with the AONB's Objective PQ2). ■ Screen new development with additional planting, particularly in views from along the existing footpath in the east of the site, using local species to maintain the rural character of the wider area (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; grazed pastures; a historic routeway (PRoW) crossing the site; a small-scale field pattern with largely intact historic field boundaries; and being part of a landscape with dark night skies. 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.		

¹⁵ <https://www.highweald.org/look-after/planning/colour-study.html>

¹⁶ <https://www.highweald.org/high-weald-aonb-management-plan.html>

	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.
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Variation to overall impact

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 and hedgerows along the boundaries of the site.
- Take up opportunities listed in the River Uck and its Headwaters BOA, where possible.
- Retain, protect and enhance existing recreational access via the public right of way which crosses the eastern edge of the site and the rural character of the historic route.
- Reduce the impact of access works required to the road, retaining the character of the historic track and protecting the hedgerows and ditches along it where possible.
- Locate development in the east of the site to relate to the existing employment development at Firgrove Business Park.
- The height and massing of any development should be carefully considered in relation to the scale of existing commercial / employment development to the east of the site at Firgrove Business Park and underlying topography in the area.
- Set development back from Fir Grove Road, to fit with the existing pattern and limit views for users of the road and local residents.

Land adjoining Owlsbury, Chapel Cross Lane, Chapel Cross (779/3220)

Site Details	
Potential development	Residential development of 10 dwellings, proposed on the site as shown below. Site not Allocated or considered an Option in the draft Focused Local Plan 2026..
Site location	This site lies to the south-west of Punnett's Town, south of the B2096 Battle Road, east of Marklye Lane and west of Barley Mow Lane.

Figure 16: Site location and constraints

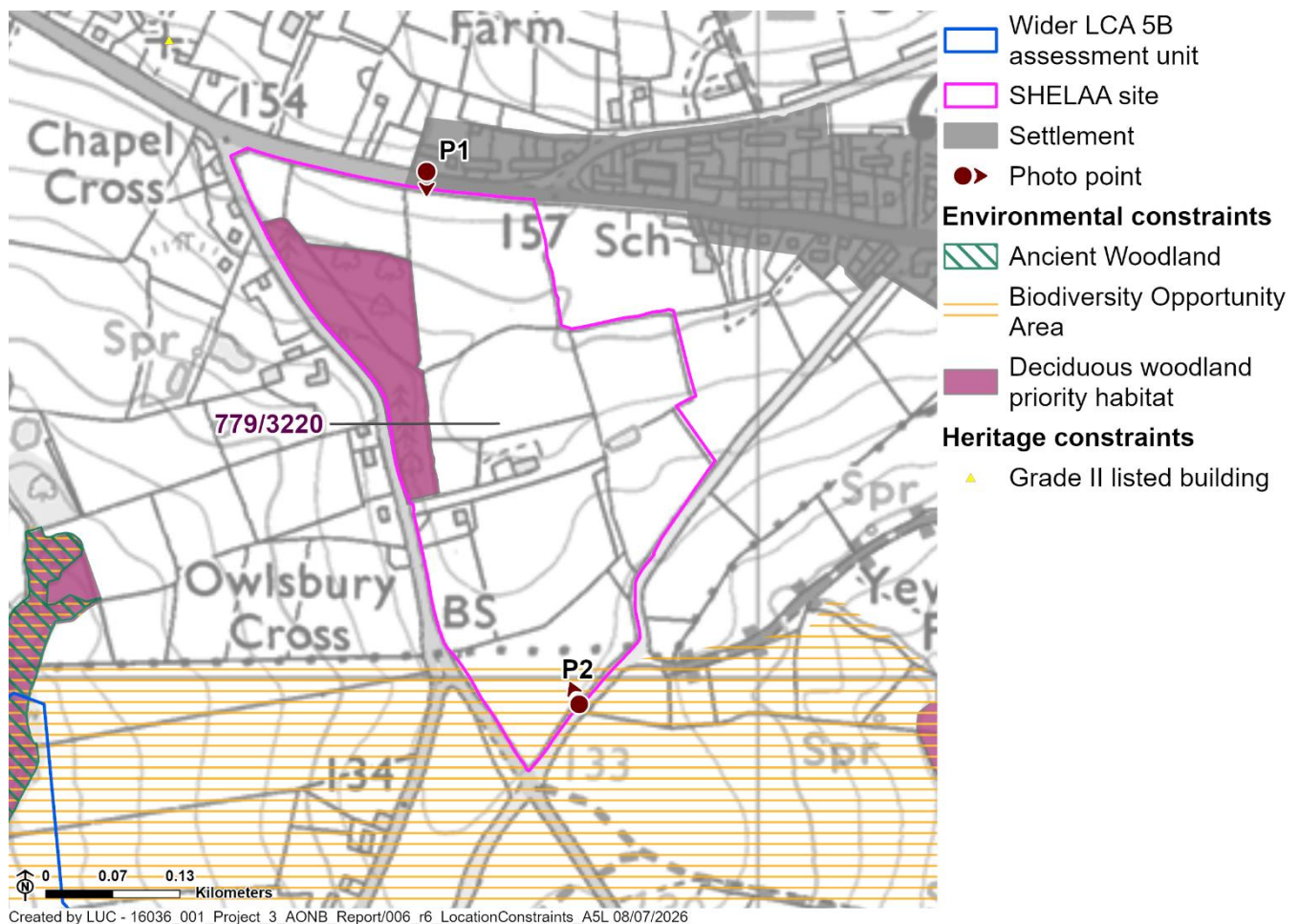
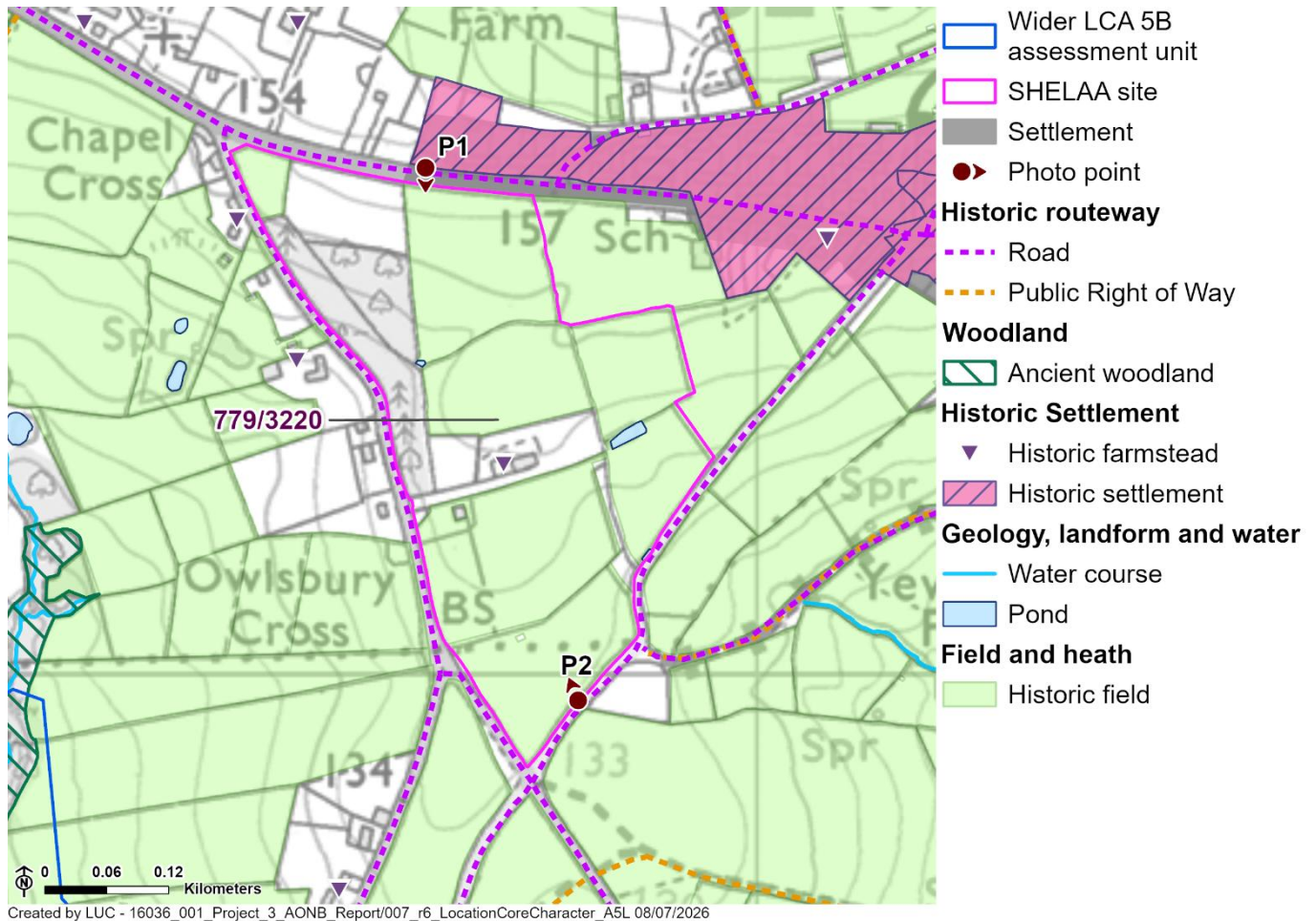


Figure 17: Site location and core character components of natural beauty of the High Weald AONB



Representative site photos



Photo 1: Mature vegetation along B2096 restricts views into the site.



Photo 2: Mature hedgerow trees and hedgerows on banks limit views from Barley Mow Lane.

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. ■ The site rises from 135m AOD in the south to 155m AOD in the north. Natural character ■ The site is in pasture use, bound by hedgerows and mature hedgerow trees along Barley Mow Lane in the south-east, and with strong internal field boundaries in the east. The northern boundary is bound by a hedge running along the B2096 Battle Road. Priority habitat deciduous woodland in the west is part of a mixed woodland, and typical of the wider assessment unit. ■ The south of the site is within the Pevensey, Rother, Cuckmere Watershed BOA. Landscape pattern and time depth ■ The majority of the site is derived from a regular piecemeal enclosure field pattern, as classified in the Sussex HLC and typical of the wider assessment unit. Field patterns in the west are derived from plantation woodland and a large landscaped garden. Perceptual aspects ■ The north of the site is influenced by proximity to the B2096 Battle Road. However, the site has relatively high levels of tranquillity recorded in CPRE's Tranquillity Mapping (Figure 6), and experiences dark skies – light levels are recorded in the lower/ darker bands of CPRE's Night Blight Mapping (Figure 7).
Settlement form and edge character and extent of built development	The site lies to the south-west of Punnetts Town. Punnetts Town is a historic linear ridgetop settlement, based along the junction of North Street and B2096 Battle Road. The edges of Punnetts Town are not well defined. Housing within Punnetts Town is generally two storey semi-detached houses, with some bungalows, often set back from the road. Owlsbury, a large house set within its own grounds, lies within the site.
Baseline visual character	
Potential visual receptors	Mature hedgerows and vegetation limit views into the site from Barley Mow Lane and Marklye Lane, although there are some views through gaps in hedgerows. Views from the B2096 Battle Road on the northern boundary are partially obscured by a low hedgerow. The mature trees and woodland in the west of the site are visible from Battle Road. A byway runs from the south-east corner of the site, and users are afforded views into the site at the junction with Barley Mow Lane. A recreation ground lies to the north-east of the site, although there is minimal visibility of the site from it due to intervening mature hedgerow boundaries.
Extent of intervisibility within the High Weald AONB	The site is largely enclosed from intervisibility with the wider AONB, although there are some glimpsed long distance views from the south-west of the site.

Expression of the 'defining components of character' 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, and its location at the top of a ridge contributes to the <u>pattern of faults and folds</u> . Two small ponds in the north and east of the site contribute to the <u>high density of ponds</u> across the AONB. There are no distinctive geological features.
Settlement – dispersed historic settlement including high densities of isolated farmsteads, hamlets and late-medieval villages founded on trade and non-agricultural rural industries.	Owlsbury Park is recorded as a <u>historic farmstead</u> in the centre of the site. Punnetts Town to the north and east is recorded as a historic settlement, and is a <u>hamlet occurring around the junction of routeways</u> .
Routeways - a dense network of historic routeways (now roads, tracks and paths)	No historic routeways cross the site. However, the three roads bounding the site (Barley Mow Lane, Marklye Lane and the B2096 Battle Road) are recorded as a historic lane/ drove/ ridgeway, which contribute towards the <u>dense radiating network</u> of historic routeways, although the expression of Battle Road is masked by its use as the B2096 with associated modern road markings.
Woodland – an abundance of ancient woodland mostly in small holdings, highly interconnected with hedges and shaws.	Woodland in the west and the mature hedgerows and boundary vegetation are part of the <u>highly interconnected and structurally varied mosaic of many small woods...and outgrown hedges</u> . Infield trees/ tree clumps within the centre of the site <u>provide additional connectivity to the wider landscape</u> and contribute towards the <u>wood-pasture and parkland</u> character.
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).	<u>Irregular field pattern</u> , defined by hedgerows and mature vegetation, with original boundaries generally intact. The site is used for both arable and <u>grazing livestock</u> .
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 with a sense of naturalness</u> . It is located adjacent to the edge of Punnett's Town which is a hamlet <u>with few street lamps</u> . The adjacent B2096 Battle Road, Barley Mow Lane and Marklye 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 combination of grazing, the central clump of trees/ infied trees 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 historic Owlsbury Park contribute to the <u>sense of history and timelessness</u> . Glimpsed <u>long views</u> from the south-west of the site to the south across the wider AONB and towards the South Downs National Park.
Land-based economy and rural living – with roots extending deep into history, and which has visibly	The current use of the site relates to the <u>predominantly pastoral mixed farming with an absence of industrial scale farming</u> key characteristic.

and culturally shaped the landscape.

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

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 Wider LCA 5B assessment unit to have a **high** sensitivity to small-scale residential development (2-2.5 storey housing). The sensitivity analysis indicates that the complex landform, priority habitat woodland (including ancient woodland), heathland, lowland meadows and good quality semi-improved grassland, the intact historic field pattern, historic features throughout the assessment unit, the strongly dispersed settlement pattern, the rural setting provided to ridgetop settlements, the strong network of public rights of way, the rural character with areas of tranquillity and dark night skies, and its location within and visual relationship with the wider High Weald AONB increase sensitivity to built development. The semi-enclosed character, areas of modern field amalgamation and urban fringe development, and proximity to main roads reduces sensitivity.

The Site

It is considered that the site is of **high** sensitivity to development, in line with the judgement for the wider assessment unit. The site demonstrates many of the key features that increase sensitivity across the assessment unit. It is part of the undulating topography of the AONB landscape and contains priority habitat deciduous woodland in the west, with strong internal field boundaries and a historic field enclosure pattern. The site has a tranquil, rural character with a good experience of dark night skies and glimpsed long distance views across the wider AONB. The semi-enclosed character, and proximity to the B2096 in the north are characteristics that slightly decrease sensitivity.

Variations in Sensitivity

There is slightly lower sensitivity in the north along the edge of the B2096 Battle Road due to the influence of the existing settlement edge.

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

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

- Its location on top of a ridge contributes towards the pattern of faults and folds;
- The ponds within the site contribute to the high density of ponds found within the AONB;
- Owlsbury Park in the centre of the site contributes to the high density of historic farmsteads;
- The woodland in the west and field boundaries forms part of the highly interconnected woodland habitats and define the irregular field pattern;
- The grazing of livestock and surrounding woodland contributes to the pastoral feel of the landscape, linking to the history of the land-based economy, whilst the central clump of trees/ infield trees provide wood-pasture and a parkland character;
- The site forms part of the rural context to the historic settlement of Punnett's Town (which is a hamlet occurring around the junction of routeways);
- There are glimpsed long views to the south-west across the wider 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 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 slope from the ridgeway in the north 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 role they play in providing a semi-enclosed character and 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, especially the woodland in the west, and the mature trees and hedgerows that form the outer and internal field boundaries (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 opportunities listed in the Pevensy, Rother, Cuckmere Watershed 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>	
Loss or deterioration of the small ponds within the site.	Natural systems	<i>A high density of ponds...</i>	Retain and set back development from the ponds within the site to create an appropriate buffer zone. The buffer zone should incorporate new semi-natural habitat relating to the ponds (in accordance with the AONB's Objective G1).

Loss or deterioration of the grazed pastures and the small-scale field pattern with largely intact hedgerow field boundaries.	Fieldsapes and heath	■ <i>A generally irregular field pattern with individual fields relatively small</i> ■ <i>Fields mostly used for grazing livestock.</i>	■ Loss of pasture would be unavoidable with development of the site, as proposed development would remove land from agricultural use. However, field boundaries should be retained and enhanced where possible to avoid complete loss of 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>	
Loss or deterioration of features contributing towards the parkland character within the centre of the site, particularly the infield trees/ tree clumps.	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> ■ <i>Wood-pasture and parkland...</i>	■ Retain, and set back development from the infield trees/ tree clumps within the centre of the site (in accordance with the AONB's Objective W1).
Modifications to the B2096 Battle 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). ■ Access is considered less suitable via Barley Mow Lane and Marklye Lane due to their narrow width and treed character.
Influence of lighting in the dark night skies resulting in night blight, including the potential introduction of streetlights along B2096 Battle Road if used for access.	<i>Dark night skies</i>	■ <i>Intrinsically dark landscapes with a sense of naturalness.</i> ■ <i>Many rural villages with few street lamps or no street lighting.</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 guidance¹⁷ and use dark sky-friendly lighting (in accordance with the AONB's Objectives DS1 and DS2).

¹⁷ 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			
Extension of Punnetts Town down the slopes, which is not in keeping with the ridgetop linear settlement form, and impingement on the setting of Owlsbury Park.	Settlement	■ <i>Hamlet occurring around the junction of routeways.</i> ■ <i>High density of historic farmsteads...</i>	■ Locate development in the north along the B2096 Battle Road and the ridgeline to limit the extent of development ‘spilling’ beyond the ridge crest, to relate to the existing linear ridgeline settlement pattern and to minimise encroachment towards the boundary of Owlsbury Park (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 existing properties along the B2096 Battle Road (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’¹⁸, ‘Guidance on the selection and use of colour in development’¹⁹ and objectives of the High Weald AONB Management Plan²⁰ in accordance with the AONB’s Objective S2).
	Aesthetic and perceptual qualities	<i>A sense of history and timelessness...</i>	
Visual amenity			
Visibility of development seen by: ■ pedestrians, motorists, cyclists and residents along the B2096 Battle Road; ■ pedestrians and motorists along Barley Mow Lane and Marklye Lane;	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>	■ Retain, protect and enhance all existing vegetation including the woodland in the west, and mature hedgerows along Marklye Lane and Barley Mow Lane. Where there are gaps in hedgerows plant new hedgerow trees, where possible / suitable (in accordance with the AONB’s Objectives W1 and PQ2). ■ Consider views of development from the Owlsbury Park historic farmstead within the centre of the site and from the byway to the south-east, retaining and enhancing trees/ woodland to screen views into the site (in accordance with the AONB’s Objective PQ2).

¹⁸ <https://www.highweald.org/look-after/planning/design-guide.html>

¹⁹ <https://www.highweald.org/look-after/planning/colour-study.html>

²⁰ <https://www.highweald.org/high-weald-aonb-management-plan.html>

■ residents at Owlsbury Park farm (a historic farmstead); and ■ users of public right of way/ byway to the south-east of the site.		■ <i>A recognisable and unifying mosaic of open field and wooded habitats.</i>	■ Screen new development with additional planting, 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			
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 elevated landform (affording glimpsed long-distance views); presence of mature woodland (including priority habitat deciduous woodland), trees and hedgerows; ponds; grazed pastures; intact historic field pattern; the historic farmstead at Owlsbury Park; proximity to the historic ridgetop settlement of Punnetts Town; 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 this site are as follows:

- Limit the extent of development extending down slope from the ridgeway in the north to minimise alterations to the landform and retain its contribution to the pattern of faults and folds.
- Retain, protect and enhance the woodland in the west, and the mature trees and hedgerows that form the outer and internal field boundaries.
- Take up opportunities listed in the Pevensey, Rother, Cuckmere Watershed BOA, where possible.
- Retain and set back development from the ponds within the site to create an appropriate buffer zone.
- Retain, and set back development from the infield trees/ tree clumps within the centre of the site.
- Locate development in the north along the B2096 Battle Road along the ridgeline to limit the extent of development 'spilling' beyond the ridge crest, to relate to the existing linear ridgeline settlement pattern and to minimise encroachment towards the boundary of Owlsbury Park.
- Maintain the existing settlement pattern and its character by following the scale and built form of the existing properties along the B2096 Battle Road.
- Consider views of development from the Owlsbury Park historic farmstead within the centre of the site and from the byway to the south-east, retaining and enhancing trees/ woodland to screen views into the site.

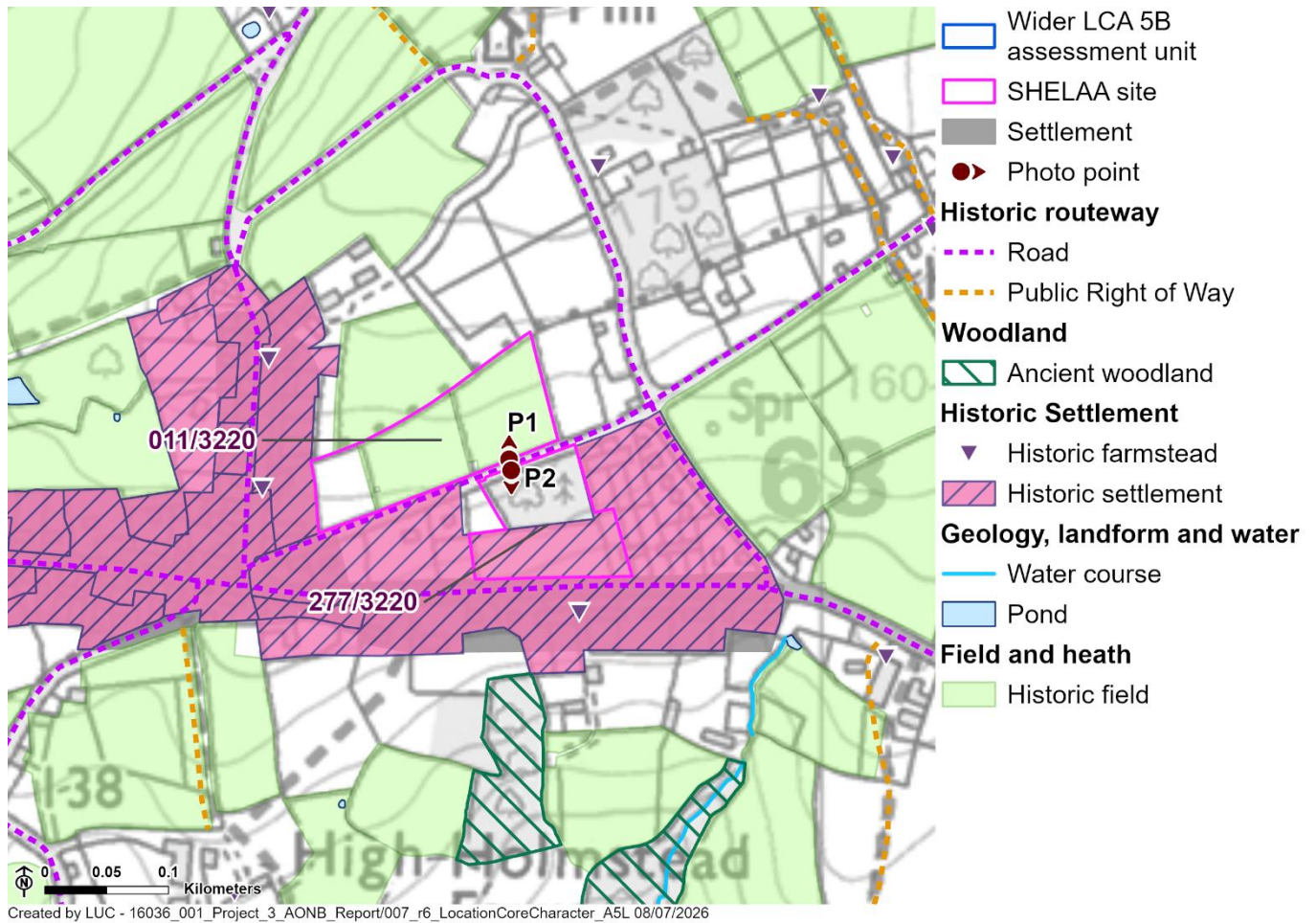
Land adjacent to Little Home Farm, Forest Lane, Punnetts Town (011/3120) and Scots Paddock, Forest Lane, Punnetts Town (277/3220)

Site Details	
Potential development	Site 011/3120 - Residential development of 5 dwellings, proposed on the site as shown below. Site not Allocated or considered an Option in the draft Focused Local Plan 2026. Site 277/3220 - Residential development of 10 dwellings, proposed on the site as shown below. Site not Allocated or considered an Option in the draft Focused Local Plan 2026. Total: 15 residential dwellings. For the purpose of this landscape and visual appraisal the above SHELAA sites have been considered together
Site location	These sites lie in the east of Punnetts Town, and to the north and south of Forest Lane.

Figure 18: Site location and constraints



Figure 19: Site location and core character components of natural beauty of the High Weald AONB



Representative site photos



Photo 1: Site 011/3120 with grazed grassland and mature internal shaw boundaries providing enclosure.



Photo 2: Site 277/3220 with grazed grassland, mature boundary vegetation and glimpsed views south to the South Downs.

Baseline Analysis

Baseline landscape character	
Key features and qualities of the site in relation to the wider assessment unit	Landform - The sites rise gently from the south-east from 150m AOD to 170m AOD in the north of site 011/3120. They 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. Natural character - The sites are pasture, typical of the wider assessment unit. - Site 227/3220 contains a mixed woodland in the north, and mature hedgerow trees along the southern boundary (B2096 Battle Road). The fields within the east of site 011/3120 are bound by mature shaws, mature hedgerows and trees along Forest Lane, which are all valued semi-natural habitats (although not priority habitats). Landscape pattern and time depth - Site 011/3120 and the south of site 227/3220 are derived from a planned private enclosure field pattern as classified in the Sussex HLC, but not identified as a feature of the assessment unit. The historic field boundaries have not been altered. The woodland in 227/3220 is recorded as plantation. Perceptual aspects - The sites are influenced by proximity to the settlement edge of Punnetts Town, and site 277/3220 by proximity to the B2096 Battle Road. However, CPRE's Tranquillity Mapping (Figure 6) records relatively high levels of tranquillity and dark skies are experienced (recorded in the lower/ darker bands of CPRE's Night Blight Mapping, Figure 7).
Settlement form and edge character and extent of built development	The sites lie to the east of Punnetts Town. Punnetts Town is a linear ridgetop settlement, based along the junction of North Street and B2096 Battle Road. The edges of Punnetts Town are not well defined. Existing development is generally two storey semi-detached houses, with some bungalows, set back from the road. In the east houses are set in a single row along the roads, and the linear settlement pattern based around the junction of North Street and B2096 Battle Road is retained. Further development along Blackdwon Lane to the east of the sites results in the sites being surrounded to the south, east and west by residential dwellings. A recently constructed detached dwelling is located within the western part of site 011/3220 and is well contained/ separated from the rest of the site by a mature field boundary hedgerow.
Baseline visual character	
Potential visual receptors	Mature hedgerows, trees and woodland generally screen views for people travelling along Forest Lane and the B2096 Battle Road, although there are some glimpsed views into both sites from Forest Lane and into site 277/3220 from the B2096 Battle Road. There are no public rights of way within or close to the sites. There are glimpsed views from the upper stories of houses along North Street into site 011/3120.
Extent of intervisibility within the High Weald AONB	Mature vegetation and hedgerows result in limited intervisibility with the wider High Weald AONB, although there are some glimpsed views from the east of

	site 011/3120 towards woodland in the High Weald to the south, and from site 277/3220 across the AONB towards the South Downs National Park.
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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, and their location at the top of a ridge contribute to the <u>pattern of faults and folds</u> . There are no distinctive geological or water features within the sites.
Settlement – dispersed historic settlement including high densities of isolated farmsteads, hamlets and late-medieval villages founded on trade and non-agricultural rural industries.	The south of site 277/3220 is recorded as part of Punnett's Town, a historic settlement, which is a <u>hamlet occurring around the junction of routeways</u> .
Routeways – a dense network of historic routeways (now roads, tracks and paths).	No historic routeways cross the sites. However, Forest Lane and the B0296 Battle Road are recorded as a lane and ridgeway respectively, which contribute towards the <u>dense radiating network</u> of historic routeways, although the expression of Battle Road is masked by its use as the B2096 with associated modern road markings.
Woodland – an abundance of ancient woodland mostly in small holdings, highly interconnected with hedges and shaws.	The hedgerows, trees and small wood in site 277/3220 are part of the <u>highly interconnected and structurally varied mosaic of many small woods...shaws...and outgrown hedges</u> .
Fields 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).	<u>Relatively small</u> field pattern, defined by hedgerows and shaws, with retained historic field boundaries. The sites are used for <u>grazing livestock</u> .
Dark night skies – intrinsically dark at night with our own galaxy (the Milky Way) visible.	The sites form part of an <u>intrinsically dark landscapes with a sense of naturalness</u> . They are located adjacent to the edge of Roser's Cross which is a rural hamlet <u>with few street lamps</u> . The adjacent B2096 Battle Road and Forest 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 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> . There are glimpsed <u>long views</u> from the east of site 011/3120 towards woodland in the High Weald to the south, and from site 277/3220 across the AONB towards the South Downs National Park. There is a <u>sense of intimacy, enclosure and remoteness owing to the heavily treed landscape</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 *predominantly pastoral mixed farming with an absence of industrial scale farming* 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 Wider LCA 5B assessment unit to have a **high** sensitivity to small-scale residential development (2-2.5 storey housing). The sensitivity analysis indicates that the complex landform, priority habitat woodland (including ancient woodland), heathland, lowland meadows and good quality semi-improved grassland, the intact historic field pattern, historic features throughout the assessment unit, the strongly dispersed settlement pattern, the rural setting provided to ridgetop settlements, the strong network of public rights of way, the rural character with areas of tranquillity and dark night skies, and its location within and visual relationship with the wider High Weald AONB increase sensitivity to built development. The semi-enclosed character, areas of modern field amalgamation and urban fringe development, and proximity to main roads reduces sensitivity.

The Sites

Overall, it is considered that the sites have a lower sensitivity than the assessment unit as a whole, and are judged to be of **moderate-high** sensitivity to development. The sites demonstrate some of the characteristics that increase sensitivity across the assessment unit. Site **227/3220** contains a mixed woodland in the north, and mature hedgerow trees, while site **011/3120** is bound by mature shaws and hedgerows. The sites are part of the undulating topography of the wider High Weald AONB, retain a historic field pattern, provide a scenic background to Punnett's Town, are in a relatively dark landscape, experience tranquillity and retain a rural character. The semi-enclosed character, proximity to the B2096 in the south and partial encirclement by existing residential dwellings are characteristics that slightly decrease sensitivity.

Variations in Sensitivity

There is slightly lower sensitivity in the south of site **277/3220** along the edge of the B2096 Battle Road due to the influence of the existing settlement edge, the enclosure provided by the woodland. The intact historic field pattern within site **011/3220** is a key sensitive feature.

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:

- Their location on top of a ridge contributes towards the pattern of faults and folds;
- Forest Lane which separates the two sites is a historic routeway;
- The small wood in site **277/3220** and the mature field boundaries, including shaws, form part of the highly interconnected woodland habitats and define the historic small field pattern (this is particularly expressed strongly within site **011/322**);
- The grazing of livestock and surrounding woodland contributes to the pastoral feel of the landscape, linking to the history of the land-based economy;
- The sites form part of the rural context to the historic settlement of Punnett's Town (which is a hamlet occurring around the junction of routeways);
- There are glimpsed long views to the south across the wider AONB; and
- The sites form 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 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 sites	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>	Minimise alterations to the landform so that its contribution to the pattern of faults and folds is retained (in accordance with the AONB's Objective G2).
Removal of mature deciduous tree, woodlands, shaws and hedgerows, affecting the role they play in providing a semi-enclosed character and interconnectivity of habitats.	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 sites, especially the small wood in the north of site 277/3220 and the mature shaws in site 011/3220 (in accordance with the AONB's Objectives W1 and PQ2).
	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 within and 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 or deterioration of the grazed pastures and the small-scale field pattern with largely intact hedgerow/ shaw field boundaries.	Fieldsapes and heath	<i>A generally irregular field pattern with individual fields relatively small.</i> <i>Fields mostly used for grazing livestock.</i>	Loss of pasture would be unavoidable with development of the site, as proposed development would remove land from agricultural use. However, field boundaries should be retained and enhanced where possible to avoid complete loss of 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 the B2096 Battle Road or Forest Lane (recorded as historic ridgeways) 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 where possible (in accordance with the AONB's Objectives R1 and R2). ■ Access is considered less suitable via Forest Lane due to its narrow width and treed character.
Influence of lighting in the dark night skies resulting in night blight, including the potential introduction of streetlights along B2096 Battle Road or Forest Lane if used for access.	Dark night skies	■ <i>Intrinsically dark landscapes with a sense of naturalness.</i> ■ <i>Many rural villages with few street lamps or no street lighting.</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 ²¹ 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 east from the existing edge of Punnetts Town, and infilling the fields with development that contribute to the rural character of the settlement.	Settlement	■ <i>Hamlet occurring around the junction of routeways.</i>	■ Locate development in the south-east of site 277/3220 along the B2096 Battle Road to relate to the existing linear ridgeline settlement pattern. Retain the existing pattern of single row houses set back from the road (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 existing properties along the B2096 Battle Road (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).

²¹ 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/>

			Development to draw on the principles contained within the High Weald AONB 'High Weald Housing Design Guide'²², 'Guidance on the selection and use of colour in development'²³ and objectives of the High Weald AONB Management Plan²⁴ (in accordance with the AONB's Objective S2).
Visual amenity			
Visibility of development seen by: - pedestrians, motorists, cyclists, and residents along Forest Lane to the south of site 011/3120; - residents along North Street to the west of site 011/3120; and - pedestrians, cyclists and motorists, and residents along the B2096 Battle Road to the south of site 277/3220.	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>	- Retain all existing vegetation including the shaw boundaries in site 011/3120 and the mature woodland in site 277/3220 (in accordance with the AONB's Objectives W1 and PQ2). - Position development within the site to retain views across the wider AONB (towards the South Downs National Park) from Forest Lane when looking south across site 277/3220 (in accordance with the AONB's Objective PQ2). - Screen new development with additional planting, 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			
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 elevated landform (affording glimpsed long-distance views); presence of mature woodland in site 277/3220, shaws and hedgerows; grazed pastures; historic routeway along Forest Lane; intact historic field pattern; proximity to the historic ridgetop settlement of Punnetts Town; and being part of a landscape with dark night 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>		

²² <https://www.highweald.org/look-after/planning/design-guide.html>

²³ <https://www.highweald.org/look-after/planning/colour-study.html>

²⁴ <https://www.highweald.org/high-weald-aonb-management-plan.html>

Development within site **011/3220** is considered to have a slightly greater impact on the core character components than on site **277/3220** given the strong intact historic field pattern (defined by mature shaws) and with access having to be form the Forest Lane (historic routeway).

Summary and recommendations

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

- Minimise alterations to the landform so that its contribution to the pattern of faults and folds is retained.
- Retain, protect and enhance the small wood in the north of site **277/3220** and the mature shaws in site **011/3220**.
- Locate development in the south-east of site **277/3220** along the B2096 Battle Road to relate to the existing linear ridgeline settlement pattern. Retain the existing pattern of single row houses set back from the road.
- Maintain the existing settlement pattern and its character by following the scale and built form of the existing properties along the B2096 Battle Road.
- Position development within the site to retain views across the wider AONB (towards the South Downs National Park) from Forest Lane when looking south across site **277/3220**.

Cumulative effects of development sites proposed in the Wider LCA 5B assessment unit

Seven sites have been assessed within the Wider LCA 5B 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 at Royal Mires Nursery, London Road, Lye Green (756/1630)	Low impact	No variation
Land at Stubby Grove Business Park, Bells Yew Green Road (947/1750)	Moderate impact	There would be a greater impact on the field in the north than the area containing the existing industrial development in the south, which is reflected by the overall moderate impact.
Land adjacent to Reflex Buildings, Bells Yew Green Road, Bells Yew Green (1215/1750)	Moderate impact	No variation
Land to the north-west side of Fir Grove Road Cross in Hand (547/1920)	Moderate impact	No variation
Land adjoining Owlsbury, Chapel Cross Lane, Chapel Cross (779/3220)	High impact	No variation
Group comprising Land adjacent to Little Home Farm, Forest Lane, Punnetts Town (011/3120) and Scots Paddock, Forest Lane, Punnetts Town (277/3220)	High impact	Development within site 011/3220 is considered to have a slightly greater impact on the core character components than on site 277/3220 given the strong intact historic field pattern (defined by mature shaws) and with access having to be form the Forest Lane (historic routeway).

If all seven sites were brought forward for development to the extent as assessed, it would result in a potential of up to 30 dwellings being built (sites **756/1630**, **779/3220**, **011/3120** and **277/3220**), and three areas of employment development (sites **947/1750**, **1215/1750** and **547/1920**). The assessment unit is large, and some of the sites are at a long distance from each other.

In the north-east of the assessment unit, sites **947/1750** and **1215/1750** adjoin one another. If both sites were brought forward for potential employment development, the cumulative effect would see the potential encroachment into ancient woodland at Stubbygrove Wood and the loss of undeveloped land and grazed pastures. However, rurality in this area is already affected by the existing industrial/ commercial development within site **947/1750** and to the south of site **1215/1750**. Whilst there may be some localised visual cumulative effects (i.e. from adjacent PROWs and a nearby residential property) there would be no visual cumulative effects with the potential residential development on sites within the nearby Frant and Bells Yew Green assessment units due to the small scale of the sites, the intervening distance between them, and the well-vegetated character surrounding them.

In the south-east of the assessment unit at the eastern edge of Punnett's Town, sites **011/3220** and **277/3220** adjoin one another along the settlement edge and have been assessed together above. The assessment considers that potential residential development would likely have an impact on several components of character of the High Weald AONB, with the sites located on the top of a ridge (with contributions to the pattern of faults and folds) and forming part of the rural context to the historic settlement of Punnett's Town, woodland/ shaws, historic field patterns, grazing pastures, historic routeway, long views

and dark skies all likely to be affected to some degree. If the addition of site **779/3220** was to come forwards for residential development at the south-western edge of Punnett's Town, it would result in a small increase in built development along the settlement edge and rural landscape, with further impacts on the components of character mentioned above. However, given the semi-enclosed character of the sites, visual interactions would be limited.

Sites **756/1630** and **547/1920** are located at distance from other potential development sites and so cumulative landscape and visual effects are considered unlikely.

Overall, it is considered that the cumulative impact of developing the seven 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.