

Horam Neighbourhood Plan Background Paper Landscape Character



Horam Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group, September 2023

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Introduction and Summary

1. This paper provides information about the landscape character of Horam Parish, and its implications for a “landscape-led” policy approach to future development. It supports the submission (Regulation 15) version of the Horam Neighbourhood Plan. It takes account of comments received at the Regulation 14 consultation stage and, as such, supersedes the earlier, May 2023 paper.
2. The first part of the report provides an overview of the main landscape influences - geology, terrain, hydrology and historical evolution.
3. The second part of the report summarises the most salient landscape attributes of the Parish, as highlighted in published national, county and local landscape character assessments.
4. Key themes from the first two parts are then drawn together in the final, third part of the report to identify the key landscape principles and features which, when taken together, provide a basis for setting out a landscape-led design approach for guiding future development and change in the Parish.
5. This final part incorporates some of the recommendations by consultants, AECOM, as set out in their ‘Report and Recommendations on Design Guidelines and Codes, October 2022, as subsequently updated in September 2023, as published on the Horam Parish Council website (www.horam.com).
6. An overarching policy is proposed aimed at ensuring that the small-scale, “enclosed” landscape character of the Parish, and its pattern of settlement, fields and woodlands, is maintained, with particular regard to conserving and enhancing the landscape and scenic beauty of the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and, more generally, the tranquillity of rural areas.
7. This landscape-led policy approach also provides a context for putting forward more focused policies in relation to:
 - (i) maintaining woodlands, trees and hedgerows
 - (ii) conserving the undeveloped valley of the Waldron Ghyll as a distinctive landscape feature and important green corridor,
 - (iii) ensuring that the individual identities of settlements is maintained, and
 - (iv) retaining important views.
8. Proposed policies are developed within this paper on the first two above topics, while separate background papers give further consideration to local settlement gaps and important views.
9. It is noted that other recommendations in the AECOM Design Guidelines - such as those relating to the form and layout of settlements, vistas and landmarks, housing mix and design, building lines, heights, rooflines, building materials, detailing, boundary treatments, and landscaping - inform and elaborate on the Design’ policy in the Neighbourhood Plan.

Landscape influences

Geology and terrain

10. Horam Parish is underlain by a bedrock of Lower Cretaceous sediments (Wealden Group comprising Ashdown Formation, Wadhurst Clay Formation and Tunbridge Wells Sand Formation) and lies on the southern limb of the Wealden Anticlinorium. The sediments dip southerly at 3 to 4 degrees and therefore, generally, there are older rocks at the surface in the north of the Parish with younger in the south, albeit interrupted by a number of east-northeast – west-southwest faults.
11. The predominant soil type in Horam parish is clay, as both the Ashdown and Wadhurst Clay Formations are predominantly clay; while the lower part of the Tunbridge Wells Sand Formation (present in Horam) is formed of interbedded thin sands within a clay matrix. The clay soil influences the type of farming which can be carried on in the Parish today, and has been locally exploited for brick manufacture, such as at Marle Green.
12. The Ashdown Formation, Wadhurst Clay Formation and Tunbridge Wells Sand Formation were deposited 144 to 135 million years ago when the Sussex and Kent Weald was a delta dominated by lakes (often large lakes) and distributary rivers. This is the ideal environment for the deposition of ironstones and there are many places in Horam Parish where, historically, clay ironstone nodules were dug for smelting. Many of these places can be recognised today by the presence of hammer ponds and in road names e.g. Furnace Lane.

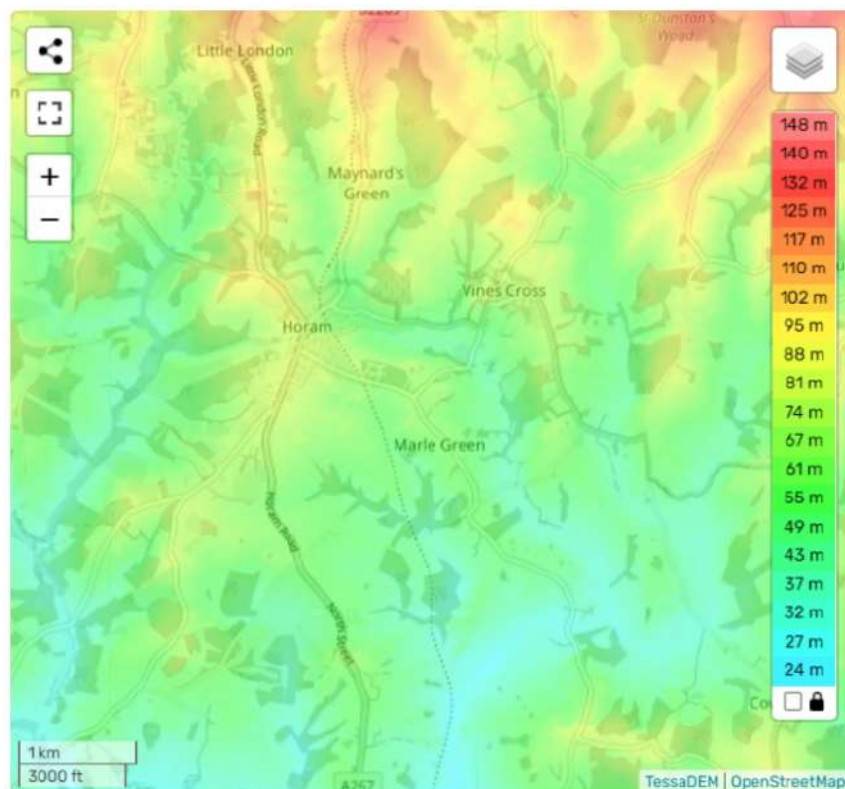


Figure 1 Topographical map of the Horam Parish and locality

13. The present-day valley bottoms contain narrow, sinuous ribbons of superficial deposits such as alluvium, river terraces or peri & post-glacial solifluction deposits. The Tunbridge Wells Sand Formation is a little more resistive to erosion than the clays of the Ashdown and Wadhurst Clay Formations, giving rise to three distinct areas of high ground: north of Vines Cross, just north of Hidden Springs Vineyard and between Horam Manor and Sharp's Corner.
14. The land in Horam rises from about 29 metres above sea level (where the Waldron Ghyll exits the parish to the south – MR 60301525) to about 97 metres in two places, one on a public path north of Vines Cross, the other to the north-west of Horam village on the main road.
15. From the high land, there are good views southwards to the distant South Downs (the hills some 8.7 miles/14 kilometres as measured on OS mapping towards the English Channel).
16. The Terrain Height map below shows the landscape carved by the river courses, feeder streams and tributaries, the former railway line and the main A267 which tends to travel along the ridge. It also shows the presence of settlement, wooded areas, field boundaries, ponds and green networks.
17. The colour contrasts, with lower lying land and valley bottoms in blue/pale green, while darker greens relate to higher grounds, reveal the gentler contours to the southern parts in contrast to the northern swathe which lies within the High Weald AONB. The valley of the Waldron Ghyll, as highlighted on the map, is a clear feature. Also, when overlaid onto historic mapping, there is evidence of historic field patterns and boundaries that have remained to the present day.

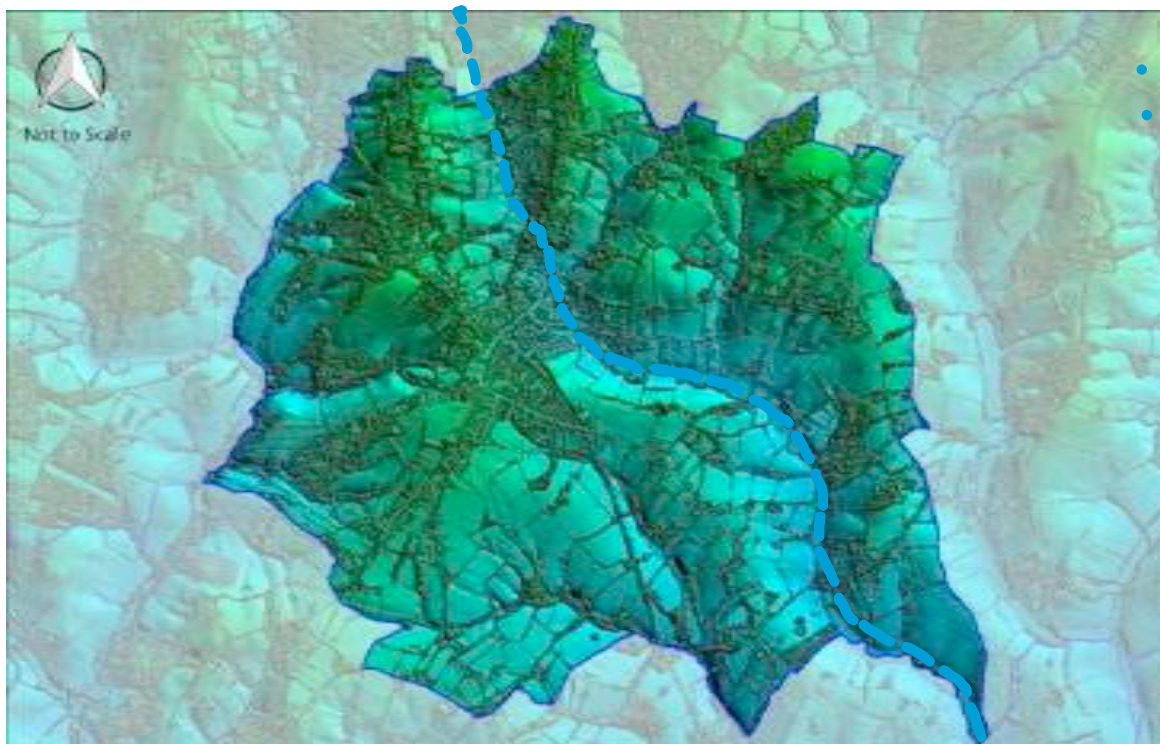


Figure 2 Terrain Height map of Horam Parish, highlighting the Waldron Ghyll

Hydrology

18. The presence of watercourses and the topographical variations have had an influence over the development of the area. Although most of the settlement is on higher ground, over time, development has extended to lower levels, which can be affected by fluvial flooding as well as surface water flooding.
19. The extent of fluvial flooding from main watercourses, as shown on Environment Agency flood maps of Flood Zones 2 and 3, is indicated below.

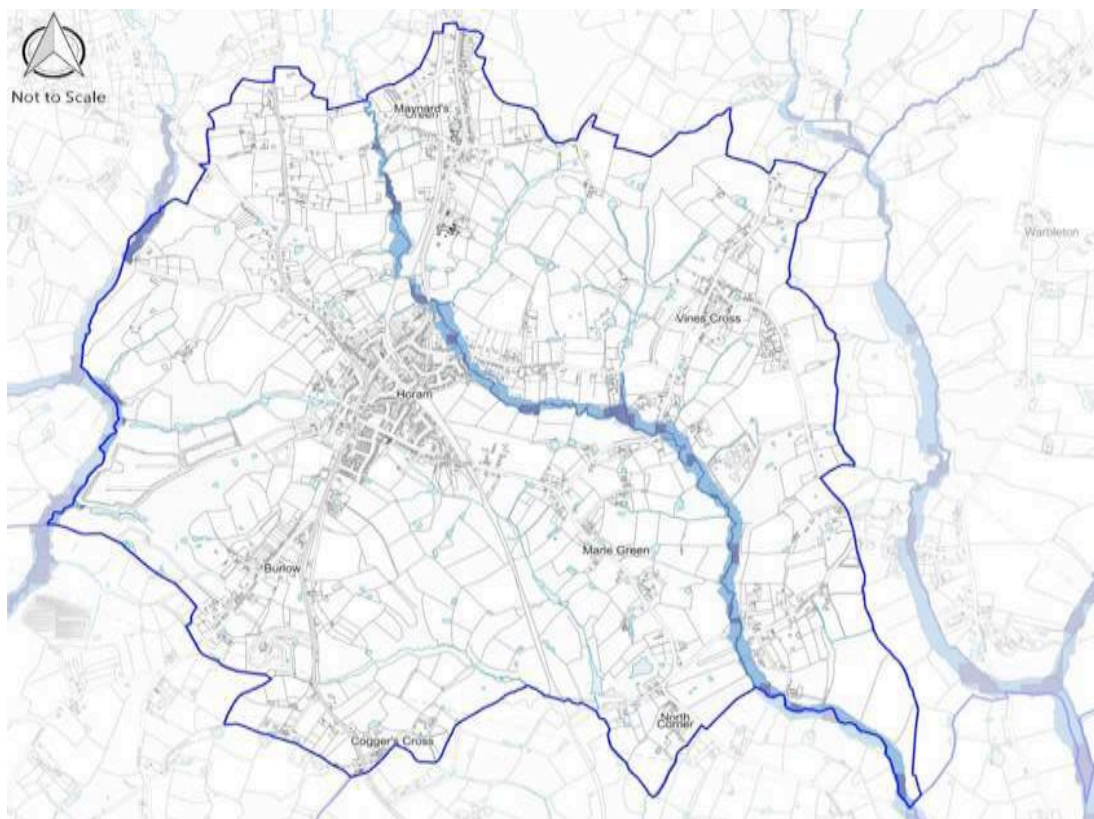


Figure 3 Extent of Flood Zones 2 and 3 (Source: Environment Agency)

20. In effect, the extent of river flooding and surface water flooding defines areas considered to fall within Flood Zones 2 and 3, which are generally wider than the actual watercourse. It can be seen that the areas of more serious and/or persistent flooding (darker blue shading) are almost all at, or immediately upstream of, where the watercourse is bridged by a road, a track or a footpath.
21. Further consideration is given to water management and flood risk in a separate background paper, with a view to manage and, if possible, reduce flood risk to both existing and new development.

Evolution of the landscape and historical development

22. The essential history of Horation Parish is clearly set out in a report by APD/Murphy Associates prepared for the Parish Council, from which the following summary is drawn.

23. Horam Parish comprises a number of dispersed settlements, hamlets and villages with a unifying rural, well-wooded setting. The extent of surviving Ancient Woodland, dated from before 1600, is reflective of the area being part of the ancient forest of *Andredeswald*.
24. The heavily forested nature of the Weald prevailed during the early medieval and medieval period, limiting settlement. None of the settlements in the current Horam Parish are mentioned directly in the Domesday Book of 1086.
25. The area is thought to have remained sparsely settled until 13th century. If there was any settlement in the area at the time, it would have taken the form of small-scale development. The nearest medieval settlements mentioned in the Domesday Book are Warbleton and Waldron.
26. With a plentiful supply of wood for charcoal, coupled with the area's geology of clay and sandstone (which provide iron stone/ore) and aided by the introduction of the blast furnace, the Weald became pre-eminent among the iron producing regions of England during the 16th and 17th centuries. Iron production had a significant impact on the economy of the area.
27. The settlement of Horham (or 'Horeham') originally developed around the Wealden iron industry. There was a manor in Horam as early as 1560. A number of ponds in the area were created as a result of the extraction of iron ore, including those within the Horeham Manor estate.
28. Other industries existed in the Weald during the Medieval and post-Medieval period including quarrying and charcoal production (associated with the iron industry), pottery, brick and glass production as well as mills for grinding corn.
29. During the post-medieval period, woodland clearance increased, with numerous small farms.
30. Horam Parish appears to have been formed from parts of former ancient parishes. According to mapping the Parishes of Hellingly, Chiddingly, Waldron and Heathfield existed before 1894. The arrival of the railway, in 1880, stimulated growth and other trades, and saw population growth.
31. The Second Edition OS Survey Map (1895) below shows the then recently built station on the south side of what is now the High Street, under which it runs, continuing west of Maynard's Green towards Heathfield. Maynard's Green, Vine's Cross and Marle Green are all identified.

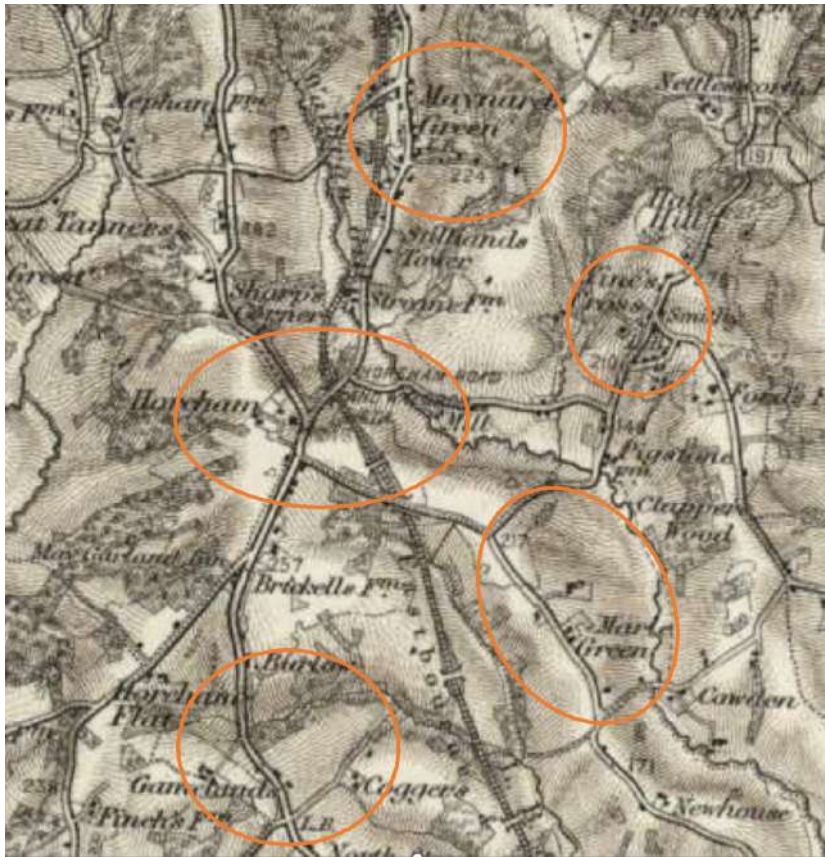


Figure 4 Second edition OS Survey Map (1895)

Landscape character assessments

32. A number of assessments of landscape character, at different scales, inform the identification of key landscape characteristics of the Parish. These are reviewed, in summary form, below. In addition, relevant extracts, including key landscape character components, as set out in the High Weald AONB Management Plan, are included at the end of this section.

[NB All underlining in this section is added by the report's authors to highlight key points.]

National Character Areas – Natural England

33. Horam Parish straddles the southern edge of the High Weald AONB, although the whole of the Parish is identified as being within the High Weald National Character Area, as defined by Natural England – see NCA Profile 122.¹
34. Distinguishing characteristics of this area are the mixture of small pasture fields, enclosed by thick hedgerows, shaws and small woodlands, with farmsteads connected by historic routeways, tracks and paths.
35. Although generally in small blocks, woodland cover in High Weald is notably high, with the majority of it classed as 'ancient woodland'. The area was the centre for iron-making from the 15th to the 17th century and evidence of the area's industrial past remains, including in the many coppiced (for charcoal) woodlands.
36. The railways also made a significant impact on settlement and agriculture in the High Weald, opening up the London market for hops, fruit and poultry and, locally, on creating a new role for Horam.
37. The following '*Environmental Opportunities*' set out in the NCA Profile are relevant to Horam:
- *SEO 1: Maintain and enhance the existing woodland and pasture components of the landscape, including the historic field pattern bounded by shaws, hedgerows and farm woods, to improve ecological function at a landscape scale for the benefit of biodiversity, soils and water, sense of place and climate regulation, safeguard ancient woodlands and encourage sustainably produced timber to support local markets.*
 - *SEO 2: Maintain and restore the natural function of river catchments at a landscape scale.*
 - *SEO 3: Ensure that any development recognises and retains the distinctiveness, biodiversity, geodiversity and heritage assets present, reaffirm sense of place and enhance the ecological function of routeways to improve the connectivity of habitats and provide wildlife corridors.*

¹ <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/file/5851972632576000>

- *SEO 4: Manage and enhance recreational opportunities, integrated with the conservation and enhancement of the natural and historic environment, a productive landscape and tranquillity.*

East Sussex County Landscape Character Assessment²

38. This identifies 15 landscape character areas (LCAs) in the county, with a description of the key ecosystem services for each character area and an evaluation of the current condition of the landscape and ecosystems. Suggestions for how these key services can be enhanced are outlined for each character area. This in turn informs the Landscape Management Guidance and suggestions for Managing Change into the future. Horam lies centrally in the Southern Slopes of the High Weald LCA – see below.

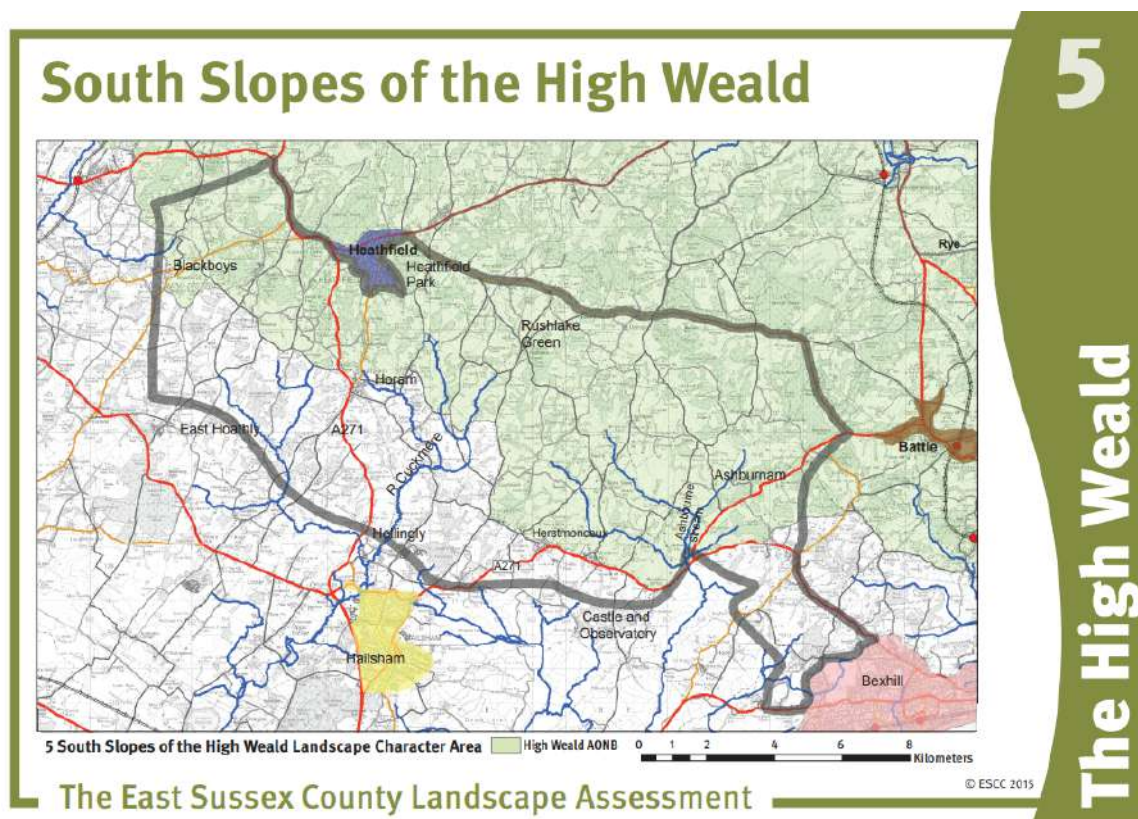


Figure 5 Extract of the East Sussex County Landscape Character Assessment showing the Southern Slopes of the High Weald Landscape Character Area (LCA)

39. *Key positive attributes* of this area include:
- An intricate small-scale landscape with a strong pattern of hedgerows
 - Wide views to the Downs
 - The River Cuckmere

² <https://www.eastsussex.gov.uk/ru/environment/landscape/landscape>

- Many scattered small farm ponds and hammer ponds, as relics of the iron industry which thrived in this area
 - A sense of tranquillity and relative remoteness away from the main settlements and roads
 - Frequent scattered small woods and shaws, many of which are Semi-Natural Ancient deciduous woodland, with an abundance of hornbeam ('horebeech') and characteristic Ghyll woodlands
40. The *Landscape Management Guidelines* more relevant to Horam (and neighbourhood planning) relate to:
- Conserve hedges, trees and ghyll woods
 - Protect and manage historic field patterns and conserve boundary features
 - Conserve and enhance byways and rural lanes
 - Enhance the biodiversity value of wet meadows, drainage and streams
 - Address existing flooding issues of farmland and properties through flood management and by identifying areas which can provide flood alleviation.
 - Plant new small woods, wet woodland and tree belts to strengthen the landscape character and where this is appropriate habitat creation
 - Actively manage trees and woodland, plant trees and woodland to contain existing and new built development
 - Encourage management of river and stream channels, especially conservation of riverside trees and vegetation, and planting of trees along streams and ditches where appropriate for the habitat
 - Conservation and re-creation of wet meadow/ pasture habitats
 - Develop Green Infrastructure Strategies
 - Encourage Neighbourhood Plans which incorporate village design guides
 - Ensure that new development in the villages is designed to a high standard to reflect local character and sense of place
 - Consider traffic management on rural lanes
 - Conserve and enhance flood plains, and maximise opportunities for the creation of SUDs schemes which contribute to local amenity and habitat creation

Wealden Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment – 2014³

41. Wealden District Council commissioned a more fine-grained '*Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment*' from Chris Blandford Associates in 2014.

³ <https://www.wealden.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning-policy/planning-policy-evidence-base/landscape/>

42. Within the context of the East Sussex LCAs, this Assessment identifies Local Landscape Character Area (LLCA) **A6: Horam**, within the broader 'Local Landscape Character Type A: Ridges and Valleys'. This can be seen from Figure 3.2 of the Assessment, reproduced below:

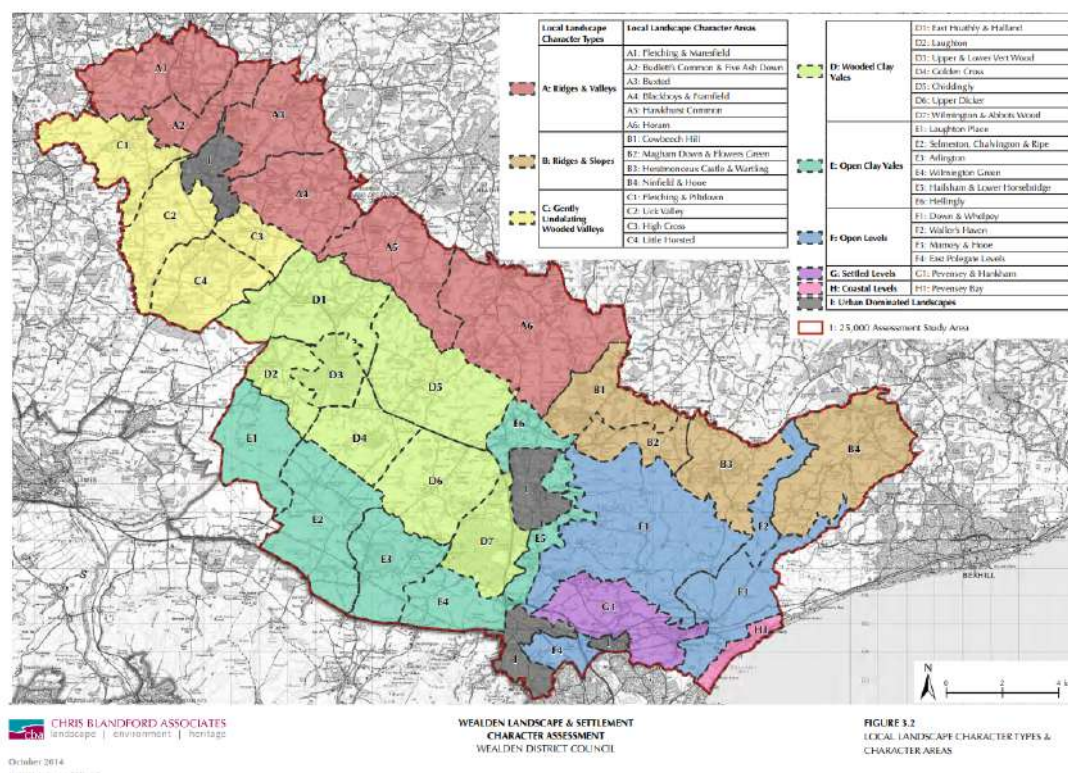


Figure 6 Figure 3.2 of the Wealden Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment, 2014

43. It states, at paragraph 4.4.12:

A6: Horam (underlining added, to highlight key attributes)

This LLCA encompasses an intricate patchwork of woodlands and stream corridors, which are also lined in places by woodland. The undulating landform, coupled with the intermittent woodland patches, results in a strong sense of enclosure within much of the landscape. The network of rural lanes is lined with mature trees and hedgerows and there is a relatively strong sense of tranquillity throughout much of the area. In the north of the area, views to the small nucleated village of Horam contribute to recognisable sense of place. To the south of Horam, the settlement pattern comprises a series of farmsteads, which tend to be located alongside the rural road corridors. The field pattern is small scale, and many of the fields are ancient. The upper course of the Cuckmere River valley runs through the eastern part of this area, with a patchwork of small-scale fields lining the river corridor.

44. In addition, within the report, Section '4.27 Landscape Setting of Horam'⁴ presents a landscape character assessment specific to the village. It identifies the key features and characteristics of the landscape around Horam as being:
- **Remnant Historic Landscapes:** *Pockets of Ancient Woodland of varying size (with the largest to the north and west) are scattered around the settlement within a patchwork of a predominantly ancient field pattern. The principal field types present are cohesive and aggregate assarts, with areas of regular piecemeal enclosure.*
 - **Urban Edges:** *The settlement edges surrounding the village are all considered to be sensitive (lined with trees or hedgerows) and none prominent.*
 - **Watercourses/Waterbodies:** *The landscape is bisected by a stream, the Waldron Ghyll, which flows past several farmsteads to later join the valley of the Cuckmere River. This is a key landscape feature within the setting of the village. Several ponds have formed along the course of the stream.*
 - **Footpaths/Bridleways:** *The Cuckoo Trail, a major route for recreation, follows the former Eastbourne to Tunbridge Wells railway and passes through the middle of this settlement contributing to its tourism. A number of other footpaths connect with the Cuckoo Trail and also connect the village to its landscape setting.*
45. These characteristics are illustrated on Figure 4.22, which is reproduced below:

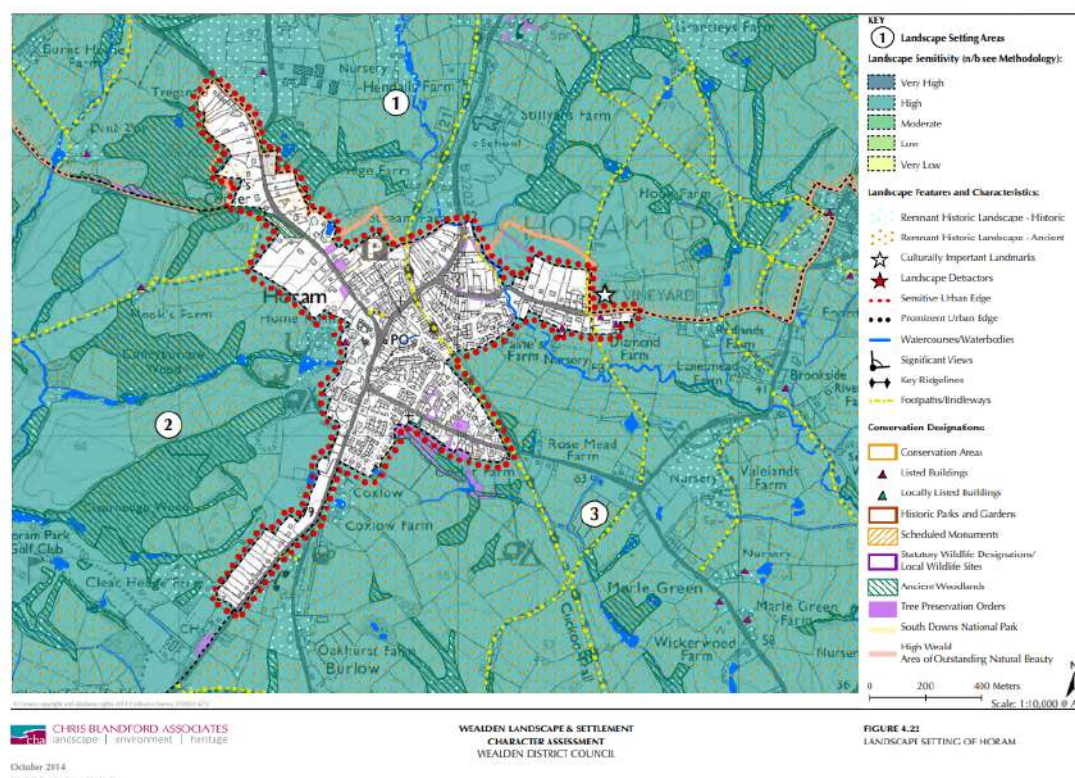


Figure 7 Figure 4.22 of the Wealden Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment, 2014

⁴ https://www.wealden.gov.uk/UploadedFiles/LandscapeStudy2014_Horam.pdf

46. This plan also identifies three distinctive ‘Landscape Setting Areas’ around the village:

- Area 1 is characterised by north-south orientated stream corridors, often lined with mature trees and belts of Ancient Woodland;
- Area 2 has east-west stream corridors within this undulating landscape, while large areas of Ancient Woodland provide an intermittent sense of enclosure;
- Area 3 has a small to medium-scale patchwork of ancient pastoral fields and east-west running stream corridors, a network of predominantly rural lanes and numerous farmsteads, while the vineyard to the east of the village is a key landscape feature.

47. Its conclusions in terms of landscape value, sensitivity and capacity are:

Landscape Setting Area 1 is considered to have Low Landscape Capacity as a result of its High Landscape Sensitivity and High Landscape Value. The area has a strongly distinctive sense of place, encompassing Ancient Woodland, mature native field trees and stream corridors; coupled with high overall landscape value. This area is also situated within the High Weald AONB. There is a relatively strong sense of tranquillity within this Landscape Setting Area and Oast houses are culturally significant features.

Landscape Setting Area 2 is considered to have Low Landscape Capacity as a result of its High Landscape Sensitivity and High Landscape Value. The area has a strongly distinctive sense of place, encompassing Ancient Woodland, mature native field trees and stream corridors; coupled with high overall landscape value. There is a relatively strong sense of tranquillity within this Landscape Setting Area.

Landscape Setting Area 3 is considered to have moderate overall landscape capacity overall. Whilst Landscape Sensitivity within this area is still considered to be high, as a result of the small to medium-scale patchwork of ancient pastoral fields and east-west running stream corridors, there are fewer valuable landscape features than within adjacent Landscape Setting Areas.

Wealden Local Plan Sites – Landscape and Ecological Assessment Study – July 2017

48. This study relates to specific sites previously put forward to Wealden District Council for consideration for development. It contains ecological and landscape information to inform the process of identifying suitable sites for future development, including ones within Horam.⁵

5

https://www.wealden.gov.uk/UploadedFiles/WLP_Evidence_Base_WLP_L&E_Study_2017_Part_1_Horam.pdf

49. As this is a site-specific study – and as the Horam Neighbourhood Plan is not considering site allocations - it is included here largely for information, although the extent to which it highlights key landscape features is noted.

Landscape Character Assessment for Wealden District, May 2022

50. This is a strategic, district-scale landscape evidence base document to help inform the production of the Local Plan and provide a framework for more detailed landscape studies and sensitivity assessments as well as informing policy development and development management, and guiding development so that it is appropriate to local character and the qualities of the landscape.
51. The LCA states that: *“Understanding the character of place and evaluating an area’s defining characteristics is a key component in managing growth sustainably and ensuring that the inherent character and qualities of Wealden’s landscape can continue to be appreciated. An understanding of character can be used to ensure that any change or development does not undermine whatever is valued or characteristic in a particular landscape, and help guide positive change that conserves, enhances, restores, or creates local character.”*
52. The LCA is stated to have drawn on the National Character Area profiles for the High Weald (which wholly covers the Parish), the East Sussex Landscape Character Assessment (2016), High Weald AONB Management Plan 2019-2024 (2019), as well as the Wealden Green Infrastructure Study (2017).
53. The whole of Horam parish lies within ‘LCA 6E: High Weald - Cuckmere / Pevensy Catchments’.

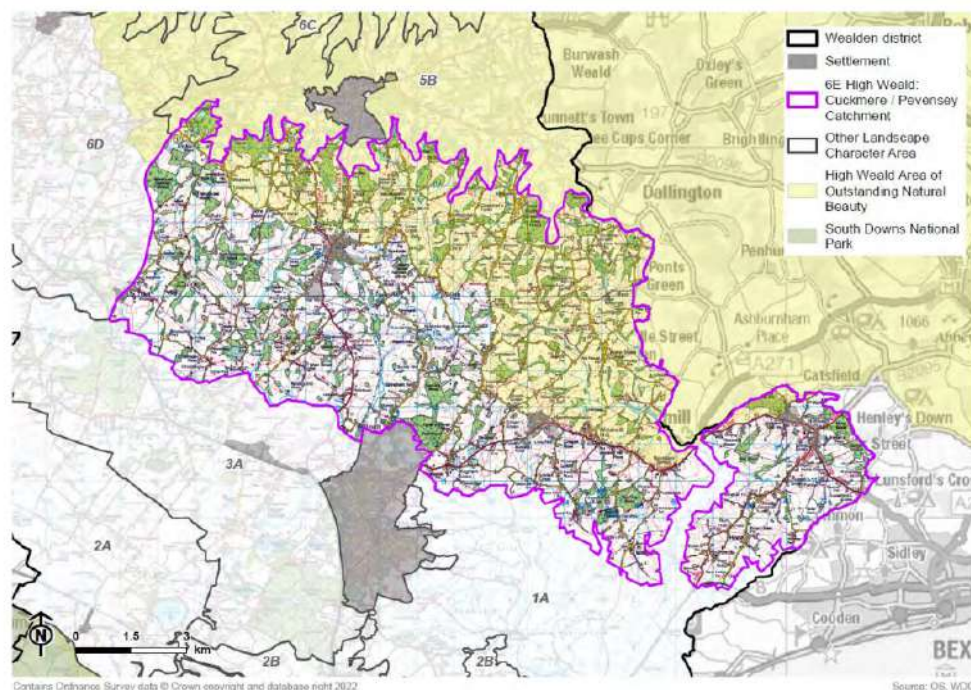


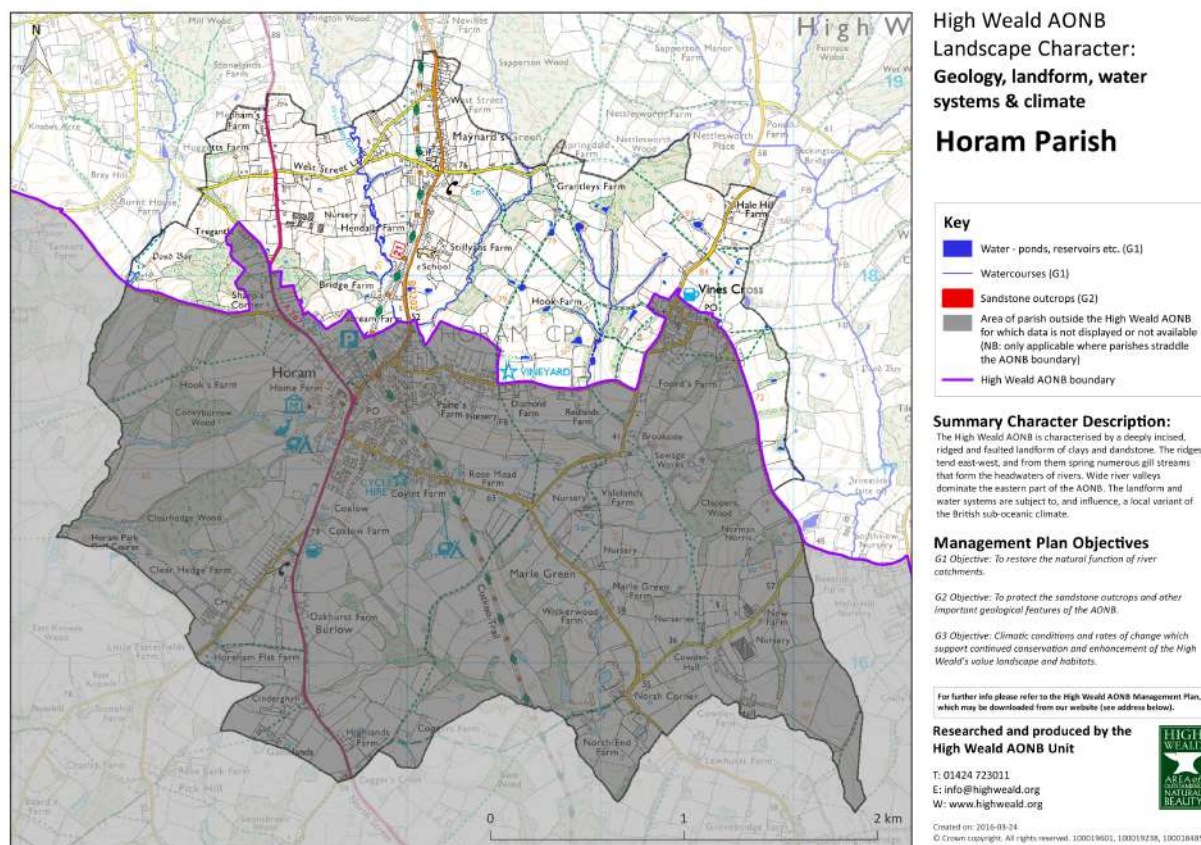
Figure 8 LCA 6E: High Weald - Cuckmere / Pevensy Catchments, taken from the Landscape Character Assessment for Wealden District, May 2022

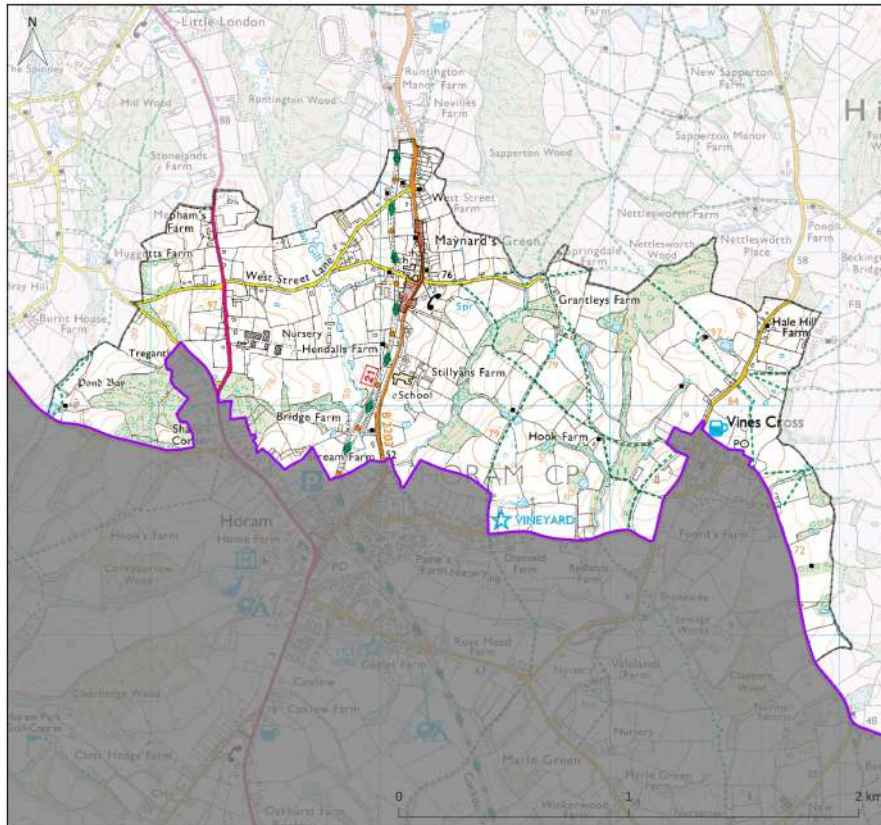
54. The '*Landscape qualities*' of notable value in a Horam parish context include:
- ☐ The landform of ridges and valleys associated with the River Cuckmere and Waller's Haven provide topographical interest to the landscape, creating a sense of place.
 - ☐ Hammer ponds and gill streams, support wetland habitats, increasing biodiversity.
 - ☐ The woodland, riparian vegetation and wetland habitat of the Cuckmere catchment provides nutrient and sediment filtration that enhances water quality, help to regulate water flow and assist in reducing flooding during heavy rainfall.
 - ☐ The numerous woodlands (with a high proportion of ancient woodlands), trees and mature hedgerows, provide a sense of place as well as habitat connectivity to support biodiversity, carbon sequestration and the regulation of temperatures.
 - ☐ Coppicing of woodland offers opportunities for timber provision and a potential source of local fuel and building materials.
 - ☐ Semi-natural habitats including deciduous woodland, grassland and wet meadows, support a range of important flora, insects and breeding birds. They allow soil stabilisation/retention, have a higher soil carbon content than cultivated habitats and provide nutrient filtration, enhancing water quality.
 - ☐ The small-scale medieval field patterns, with sinuous hedgerow boundaries provide a sense of place and history.
 - ☐ Hammer ponds, coppiced woodlands and historic forges provide a link to the Wealden iron industry and a sense of time depth.
 - ☐ The vernacular of red brick, oak timber, sandstone and flint which reflects the locally available materials, provides a sense of place and accords with a distinctive architectural colour palette.
 - ☐ The extensive network of public rights of way contributes to people's physical health and mental well-being.
 - ☐ Contrasts between the enclosed character around woodlands and sunken lanes, and open views to the South Downs provides visual interest and a sense of place.
 - ☐ The low density of settlement provides a sense of rural tranquillity and experience of dark skies.
55. Accordingly, particularly relevant *Landscape Guidelines* relate to:
- ☐ Restore buffer strips along watercourses and field ponds to minimise run off
 - ☐ Encourage active and appropriate management of woodland
 - ☐ As climatic conditions change, plant suitable species or encourage natural regeneration

- ❑ Safeguard ancient woodland and protect and enhance vulnerable woodland habitats including gill woodlands and wet woodlands
- ❑ Support a sustainable woodland industry
- ❑ Protect and manage the existing hedgerow network, and plan for the restoration of, and linkages between, hedgerows, to maintain habitat corridors and to retain the medieval field pattern typical of the High Weald
- ❑ Maintain and restore links between the numerous woodlands in the area, other woodland habitats (such as hedgerows and parkland) and species-rich habitats such as wet meadows and unimproved grasslands
- ❑ Restore species-rich grassland through appropriate management.
- ❑ Maintain the mixed farmed character of the area, while increasing areas of permanent pasture
- ❑ Encourage sympathetic integration of horse paddocks through the maintenance of hedgerow field boundaries, conservation of existing scale of field parcels, avoiding overgrazing of pastures or the proliferation of field shelters and other hard infrastructure.
- ❑ Protect the remaining features related to the Wealden Iron industry, such as hammer ponds, increasing interpretation and opportunities for heritage trails and walks where appropriate to link communities with their local heritage.
- ❑ Limit the amount and scale development in rural areas, protecting the existing settlement pattern of dispersed rural villages, hamlets and scattered farmsteads, and the separation of these different settlement types.
- ❑ Ensure new building reinforces and responds to local character in its scale, layout and design, reflecting the local vernacular in use of materials.
- ❑ Extend woodland around existing settlement edges to filter light pollution and reduce the visual impact of further urbanisation.
- ❑ Maintain the historic network of routeways, ensuring new roads or 'upgrades' take account of their rural context and avoid over-engineered features and/or the introduction of lighting into dark areas. Maintain the trees and species-rich grasslands on road verges.
- ❑ Restore and establish new hedgerows and shaws to create habitat connectivity and restore historic landscape character.
- ❑ Retain the characteristic contrast between areas of enclosed character and long open views to the South Downs and landmark church towers.
- ❑ Maintain the strong scenic qualities of the landscape and its sense of remoteness, tranquillity and experience of dark skies.

High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Management Plan

56. The High Weald AONB covers the northern part of the Parish, extending up the fringes of Horam and Vines Cross, and including Maynards Green within it. Furthermore, as established by the above Landscape Character Assessments, those parts of the Parish beyond the designated AONB can be seen as sharing similar landscape characteristics, and within its setting.
57. The Management Plan highlights the AONB's natural and cultural assets. Key characteristics for each component of natural beauty identify what is special about the High Weald's landscape and beauty. It identifies five defining components of character. These are:
1. *Geology, landform and water systems – a deeply incised, ridged and faulted landform of clays and sandstone with numerous gill streams.*
 2. *Settlement – dispersed historic settlement including high densities of isolated farmsteads and late Medieval villages founded on trade and non-agricultural rural industries.*
 3. *Routeways – a dense network of historic routeways (now roads, tracks and paths).*
 4. *Woodland – abundance of ancient woodland, highly interconnected and in smallholdings.*
 5. *Field and Heath – small, irregular and productive fields, bounded by hedgerows and woods, and typically used for livestock grazing; with distinctive zones of lowland heaths, and inned river valleys.*
58. All of these can be seen to be relevant to Horam parish. The following maps have been provided by the High Weald AONB Unit, albeit most information is only provided for land within the AONB designation:





High Weald AONB Landscape Character: Historic settlement Horam Parish

Key

- Historic farmsteads (S2)
- Historic settlement extent c.1860 (S2)
(NB: This data is not available for every parish)
- Area of parish outside the High Weald AONB
for which data is not displayed or not available
(NB: only applicable where parishes straddle
the AONB boundary)
- High Weald AONB boundary

Summary Character Description:

The High Weald AONB is characterised by dispersed historic settlements of farmsteads and hamlets, and late medieval villages founded on trade and non-agricultural rural industries.

Management Plan Objectives

S1 Objective: To reconnect settlements, residents and their supporting economic activity with the surrounding countryside.

S2 Objective: To protect the historic pattern of settlement.

S3 Objective: To enhance the architectural quality of the High Weald.

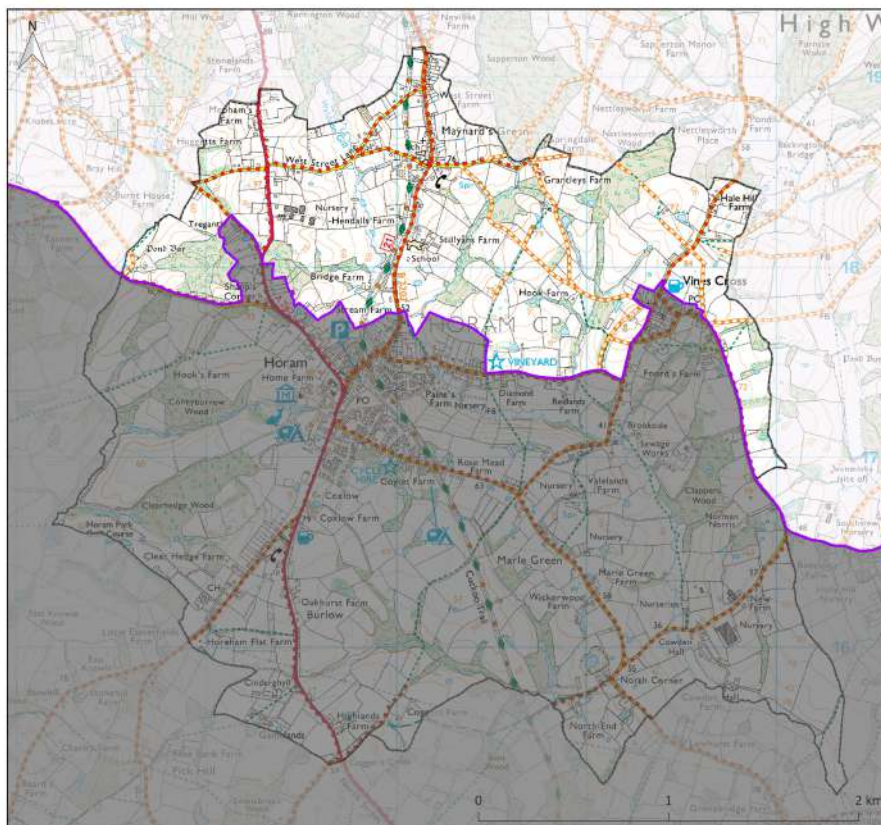
For further info please refer to the High Weald AONB Management Plan, which may be downloaded from our website (see address below).

Researched and produced by the
High Weald AONB Unit

T: 01424 723011
E: info@highweald.org
W: www.highweald.org



Created on: 2017-05-11
© Crown copyright. All rights reserved. 100019601, 100019236, 100018485, 100019613 (2016).



High Weald AONB Landscape Character: Historic routeways Horam Parish

Key

- *** Historic routeways - roads (R1)
- Historic routeways - PROW (R1)
- Area of parish outside the High Weald AONB
for which data is not displayed or not available
(NB: only applicable where parishes straddle
the AONB boundary)
- High Weald AONB boundary

Summary Character Description:

The High Weald AONB is characterised by ancient routeways (now roads, tracks and paths) in the form of ridge-top roads and a dense system of radiating droveways. Ancient routeways are often narrow, deeply sunken, and edged with trees, hedges, wildflower-rich verges and boundary banks.

Management Plan Objectives

R1 Objective: To maintain the historic pattern and features of routeways.

R2 Objective: To enhance the ecological function of routeways.

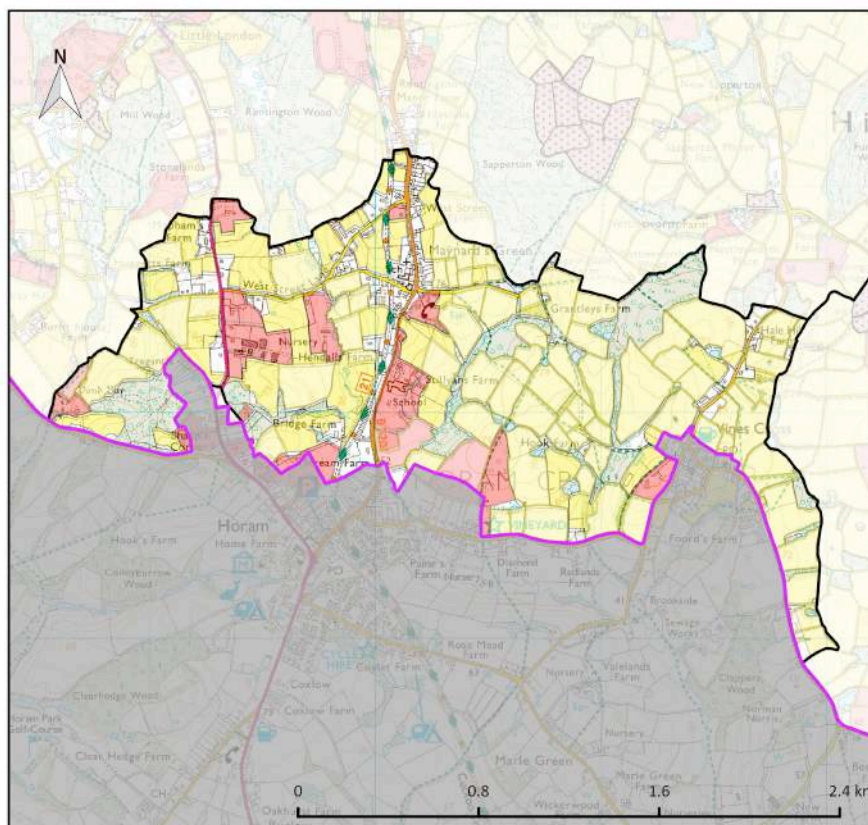
For further info please refer to the High Weald AONB Management Plan, which may be downloaded from our website (see address below).

Researched and produced by the
High Weald AONB Unit

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High Weald AONB Character Components Field & Heath

Horam Parish

Key	
	High Weald AONB Boundary
	Parish Boundaries
	Heathland
	Known Wildflower Meadows
	Historic Field Boundaries
	Medieval Field Systems
	Other Field Systems

Summary Character Description:
The High Weald AONB is characterised by small, irregularly shaped and productive fields often bounded by (and forming a mosaic with) hedgerows and small woodlands, and typically used for livestock grazing; small holdings; and a non-dominant agriculture; within which can be found distinctive zones of heaths and inned river valleys.

NB: Other field systems are likely to contain medieval and earlier features. All information is provisional. Data has been collected for strategic purposes and individual site based assessments are recommended.

Management Plan Objectives

FH1 Objective: To secure agriculturally productive use for the fields of the High Weald, especially for local markets, as part of sustainable land management.

FH2 Objective: To maintain the pattern of small irregularly shaped fields bounded by hedgerows and woodland.

FH3 Objective: To enhance the ecological function of field and heath as part of the complex mosaic of High Weald habitats.

FH4 Objective: To protect the archaeology and historic assets of field and heath.

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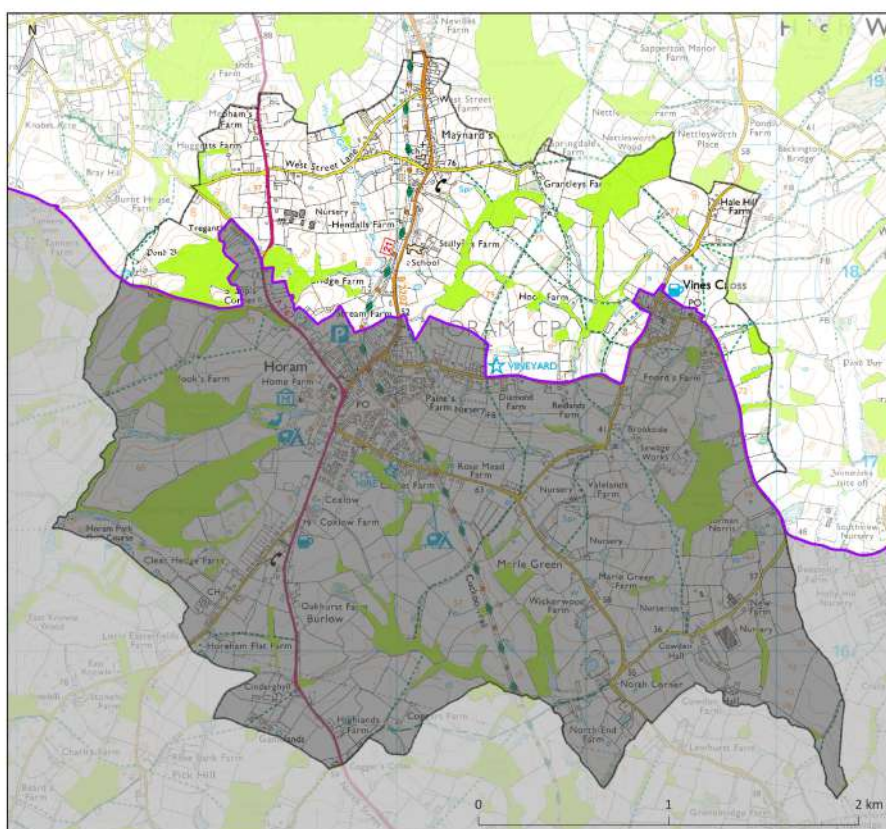
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High Weald AONB Landscape Character: Ancient woodland Horam Parish

Key	
	Ancient woodland (W1)
	Area of parish outside the High Weald AONB for which data is not displayed or not available (NB: only applicable where parishes straddle the AONB boundary)
	High Weald AONB boundary

Summary Character Description:
The High Weald AONB is characterised by the great extent of ancient woodland, gills, and shaws in small holdings, the value of which is inextricably linked to long-term management.

Management Plan Objectives

W1 Objective: To maintain existing extent of woodland and particularly ancient woodland.

W2 Objective: To enhance the ecological functioning of woodland at a landscape scale.

W3 Objective: To protect the archaeology and historic assets of AONB woodlands.

W4 Objective: To increase the output of sustainably produced high-quality timber and underwood for local markets.

For further info please refer to the High Weald AONB Management Plan, which may be downloaded from our website (see address below).

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Landscape principles

59. This section identifies the key landscape principles stemming from the above studies, also having regard to feedback from public consultations, to enable the Horam Neighbourhood Plan (HNP) to take a landscape-led approach to development and design. Of particular note are the recommendations of consultants, AECOM, whose report reviews the various landscape assessments, as well as drawing on its own character appraisals.

Design Vision

60. The draft 'Horam Parish Neighbourhood Plan: Report and Recommendations on Design Guidelines and Codes', October 2022 set out the above-mentioned landscape character studies as context for recommending an overarching 'Design Vision'. This is carried forward into its final Design Guidelines, September 2023, and provided a framework for its guidance.
61. The 'Design Vision' is expressed as a future state, namely that:
- A. The essentially rural character of Horam parish and its settlements, which as a primary attribute for local people, will have been retained;*
 - B. The parish's landscape character, that reflects its location in the 'Southern slopes of the High Weald' (the northern part of the parish being within the designated High Weald AONB), with high woodland and tree cover and hedgerows, enclosing generally smaller fields as well as settlement will have been retained and enhanced, including through a 'landscape-led' approach to development;*
 - C. The influence of the parish's topography on the pattern and form of settlements, on visual linkages with the surrounding countryside, and on the tendency for flash flooding of the Waldron Ghyll, will have been recognised and reflected in development proposals;*
 - D. The general 'greenness' of the parish, not only the fields and woodlands of its countryside but also in terms of its trees, hedges and green spaces within built-up areas, will have been retained and enhanced, including by identification of a 'green infrastructure' network that promotes biodiversity and reinforces connections with the surrounding countryside;*
 - E. Opportunities for walking, cycling and horse riding, provided notably by the Cuckoo Trail as well as the Public Rights of Way (PROW) network and highways, will have continued to be encouraged, including through new and improved links and routes, in ways that increase access to the countryside and to local shops and services;*
 - F. The distinct identities of individual settlements will not have been further eroded. In particular, it has been noted that the gap between Burlow and Horam has already been eroded by the recent development, while the remaining separation between Horam and Marle Green is now a bare minimum. The countryside gap between Horam and Maynard's Green is also in danger of being undermined;*
 - G. Horam will retain a core of businesses and community facilities that serve the surrounding area, which has been supported by a range of initiatives to encourage their use by both residents and visitors;*

- H. The nature and mix of development will have clearly helped meet local needs;*
 - I. The local vernacular of building forms and materials will have been effectively reflected in new buildings, whilst also contributing to the mitigation of and adaptation to climate change; and*
 - J. The heritage of the parish will have been respected, while references to Horam's historical ties with the railway and the wider parish's ties with iron making and brick making will have been recognised.*
62. It follows that policies in the Neighbourhood Plan should help achieve this Design Vision.

Key landscape principles and policy

63. The above Vision, coupled with the distinctive landscape components identified in the respective Landscape Character Assessments (LCA), may be used to identify *key principles*, to provide criteria against which development proposals may be judged to ensure that they contribute to local landscape character.
64. While the landscape components of natural beauty within the designated High Weald AONB are already well set out in the AONB Management Plan and supporting documents, and are protected by both national and local plan documents, the best way to protect important landscape features and characteristics of the wider landscape (all of which lies within the same landscape character area, even though only part is within the designated AONB) is through a Neighbourhood Plan policy. This should be linked to the key characteristics and features set out in the LCAs identified above – while still recognising the national value of the High Weald AONB.
65. In essence, an overarching policy is proposed, which is modified in response to comments received, to read:
- 1. Development should conserve and enhance the landscape character, settlement pattern and features of Horam Parish, having regard to recognised attributes in published Landscape Character Assessments (as summarised in the Neighbourhood Plan Landscape Character and Settlement Pattern Background paper – See Appendix 4) and in the 'Horam Design Guidelines' (see Appendix 2).*
 - 2. In particular, the following principles should be adhered to:*
 - a) The existing settlement pattern, including the topographical setting of settlements, should be maintained;*
 - b) Development should be in keeping with the distinct character of the locality and compatible in scale with its setting and available services;*
 - c) Development both within the High Weald AONB and within its setting should conserve and enhance the landscape and scenic beauty of the High Weald AONB, having regard to the objectives in the High Weald AONB Management Plan;*

- d) *The small-scale and “enclosed” landscape character and historic pattern of settlement, fields and woodlands (with a high level of ancient woodlands and permanent grassland) is maintained;*
- e) *The tranquillity of rural areas is retained.*

Approaches to particular landscape components

66. A number of components, or characteristics, of the local landscape are regarded as warranting specific policy coverage. These are discussed below.

Woodland, Trees and Hedgerows

67. Given their current, as well as historic, contribution to landscape character, it is considered that the Neighbourhood Plan should have a specific policy to ensure that existing trees and woodland cover, as well as historic hedgerows, notably those enclosing rural lanes and fields, are retained and protected. The policy should also promote sensitive new tree planting, consistent with the landscape character of the area, including those parts within the High Weald AONB, as a high level of tree cover is not only typical of the landscape character, but also integral to the rurality of the settlements and their settings.

68. Drawing on the above LCAs and the High Weald Management Plan, as well as comments received at the regulation 18 consultation stage, it is proposed that some minor amendments be made, along the lines of:

Existing woodland, trees and hedgerows, especially veteran trees and Ancient Woodland as well as trees along stream courses, and roadside trees, should be retained and protected.

Development that incorporates, or is likely to impact on, existing trees, woodlands or hedges should provide for their retention and ongoing management.

New tree/woodland/hedgerow planting is promoted where it:

- a) is informed by the historical character of the area;*
- b) provides a buffer to existing ancient woodland;*
- c) enhances landscape and wildlife connectivity, notably between existing woodland habitats;*
- d) helps to slow surface water run-off, manage flood flows and other climate change effects;*
- e) reinforces, or provides, a treed backdrop to new development in keeping with local character;*
- f) helps maintain the continuity of tree cover or reinforces natural regeneration or colonisation.*

Waldron Ghyll valley

69. As noted above, the Waldron Ghyll and its valley setting makes a particular contribution to the landscape of parish. It is highlighted in both the county-wide and district LCAs, as noted above.

70. The Wealden LCA (2014) states in its section on Horam:
- “The landscape is bisected by a stream, the Waldron Ghyll, which flows past several farmsteads to later join the valley of the Cuckmere River. This is a key landscape feature within the setting of the village.”***
71. This is written in the context of Horam, but it is equally applicable to Maynards Green and Vines Cross, for which it provides their physical and visual setting. The landform associated with the Ghyll provides interest and helps create a sense of place. Indeed, the Waldron Ghyll Valley forms the most distinctive topographical setting of all the Parish’s settlements.
72. There are also many public views across and along the valley, notably from settlements themselves, the Cuckoo Trail and from public rights of way, as highlighted in the identification of ‘important local views’, reinforcing its defining role, and as a valuable amenity, for local people.
73. Indeed, the Ghyll and valley is integral to understanding the growth and evolution of the Parish, with settlements and roads historically being located on higher land. Also, the several ponds that have formed along the course of the Ghyll, combined with smaller scattered ponds across the area, are a link back to the once thriving iron industry, and thus a further link to the history of the Parish. This is further emphasised through the presence of historic farmsteads along the route of the Ghyll.
74. The principal value of the valley is in its distinctiveness as the main landscape feature within the Parish, but this is enhanced by its value in supporting wetland habitats and biodiversity. It carries the main river through the Parish, which is significant as a water body, but also in helping to transfer, and help regulate, water flow, and thereby assist in reducing flooding during heavy rainfall. It is suggested in the landscape character assessments that the landscape along watercourses and around associated ponds is restored to help minimise flood risk.
75. It is defined by its watershed beyond the main built-up areas(Figure 12).
76. The draft policy received overwhelming support in the Regulation 14 public consultation, reinforcing the view that this prominent ghyll river corridor should be highlighted and protected through a specific policy in the Horam Neighbourhood Plan (HNP) in order to conserve its landscape character and function.
77. Its important role in terms of biodiversity, providing continuity for wildlife movement, as well as a diverse range of habitats, water management and removing carbon from the atmosphere (known as sequestration) should also be recognised and had regard to. (Carbon sequestering can take place by being stored in the natural environment, in woodland, grassland, soils and wetland areas.) The potential of the ghyll corridor to be part of the solution in terms of mitigating flood risk is discussed in the separate background paper on ‘Water Management and Flood Risk’.

78. The extent of the valley to be covered by the proposed policy, running roughly north-south through the Parish is shown on the plan below.



Figure 9 Waldron Ghyll Valley, with built-up areas interpolated from Magic Maps

79. The landscape and amenity value of the Valley is appreciated from many public viewpoints. Examples are shown in the following montage of photographs.

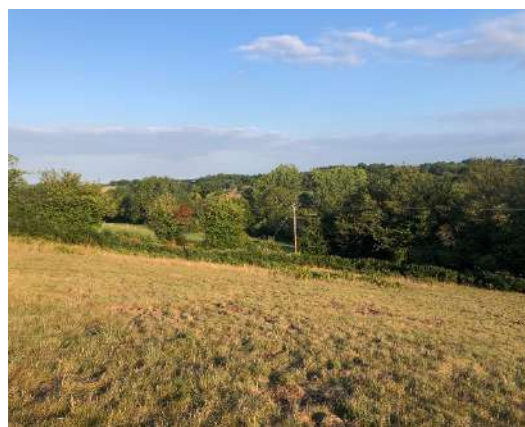




Figure 10 Montage of views across the Waldron Ghyll valley

80. An appropriate policy, which takes account of comments made at the regulation 14 consultation stage, is:

The Waldron Ghyll valley is a valued landscape. Proposals for development shall be sensitive to and not cause harm to the essentially open landscape character of the Waldron Ghyll Valley beyond the existing built-up areas (as defined on Figure 12).

Measures to mitigate flood risk and enhance its biodiversity and amenity value shall be supported (including opportunities that contribute towards biodiversity net gain and carbon sequestering through supporting natural regeneration of Ghyll woodland and restoration of wetland areas).

Maintaining the separate identity of settlements - settlement gaps

81. A fundamental principle identified in the respective Landscape Character Assessments is maintaining the distinct identity of the various settlements in the Parish (which also applies to settlements beyond the parish).
82. The AECOM Design Study concludes by recommending that:
- “In general, it is important that each settlement, village or hamlet, is perceived as a separate[d] entity with its own character and identity;”*
83. It also advises that development should avoid coalescence with neighbouring settlements.

84. Hence, it is envisaged that there should be a specific policy, distinct from the wider regard to landscape, that has a single focus to prevent coalescence and maintain the identity and sense of place of individual settlements.
85. This matter is considered further in a separate background paper, entitled '*Respecting and retaining the separate identities of settlements in Horam Parish*'.

Important views

86. The AECOM Design Study highlighted a number of views that exemplify the sense of place of Horam Parish and are integral to peoples' enjoyment and appreciation of the landscape of the Parish, and particularly of the relationship between built-up areas with their countryside setting.
87. Indeed, through local consultations, local people have put forward additional views (that are also agreed to be important), reinforcing their importance in helping to define local distinctiveness and in connecting people to their environment. They are clearly important for psychological and social well-being.
88. Of course, views are ubiquitous, but some views may be highlighted as being particularly important in the local psyche.
89. Further consideration is given to this matter, including responses to consultation comments in a separate background paper – *Important Local Views*.