Introduction

A Strategy for Sustainable Management of Change.

Landscape Character Assessment is a way of describing and recording what makes a place distinctive or different, what is special about it. This is concerned primarily with landscape character, rather than with quality or value. These factors are nevertheless relevant when a landscape character assessment is used to inform decisions. It is vital that we understand the character of our landscape in order to manage change. Landscape character is an aid to decision making and not a process designed to resist change. We need to understand what the landscape is like today to ensure that change and development do not undermine local distinctiveness and sense of place. Character assessment is also used to determine what measures can be taken to enhance the landscape.

The National Landscape Character Assessment

This 2016 update is to bring the County Landscape Assessment in line with updates to the National Landscape Character Assessment.

NCAs in south east England and London

National Character Areas (NCAs) divide England into 159 distinct natural areas. Character area boundaries at national and county level follow natural lines in the landscape rather than administrative boundaries, making them a good decision making framework for the natural environment.

East Sussex County incorporates all or parts of five of the NCAs:

The High Weald

The Low Weald

The South Downs

The Pevensey Levels

Romney Marsh

The National Ecosystem Assessment

A key feature of this update is the inclusion of the benefits and services that the landscape can provide as identified in the *National Ecosystem Assessment*.

National Ecosystem Assessment

The National Ecosystem Assessment has identified and evaluated the key services which the natural environment provides and these are broadly categorised as follows:

- Provisioning services (food, fibre and water supply)
- Regulating services (water purification, air quality maintenance and climate regulation)
- Cultural services (inspiration, education and wellbeing)

The European Landscape Convention

The European Landscape Convention (ELC) is an international agreement which has been endorsed by 38 out of 47 Council of Europe Members including Britain in 2007. The ELC gives strength to recognition of landscapes in law and to integrate into all relevant policies. *"Landscape means an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors."* (Council of Europe 2000)

A key message in the convention is that *'All Landscapes Matter'*.

Using Landscape Character Assessment to inform local policymaking and development management decisions is an established method of putting the principles set out in the ELC into practice. This approach encourages community engagement and should be used to inform Local and Neighbourhood plans.

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Introduction

Objectives of the East Sussex Landscape Character Assessment (LCA)

- To identify the unique combination of landscape, biodiversity, geological, cultural and economic activity that defines each county landscape character area.
- To provide a county-wide consistent landscape character assessment framework as a background for more detailed assessments.
- To identify problems and pressures for each character area, formulate a vision and provide landscape action priorities

Aims of 2016 review

The aim is to review each landscape character area in the county in the context of the social and economic benefits (ecosystem services) that the landscape provides. The strategy also identifies specific pressures for development and change for each area. The key ecosystem services are described 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.

Note: The East Sussex landscape character areas which fall within the South Downs National Park Authority boundary have not been updated in this review. This is to avoid duplication with the South Downs Integrated Landscape Assessment. The East Sussex LCA character area descriptions for the downs are retained as these are still relevant.

South Downs Integrated Landscape Character Assessment

Guidelines for Managing Landscape Change

These guidelines set out how the vision and strategy for each character area could be achieved. The section outlines which of the areas' key positive attributes would need to be taken into account in planning for new development. The guidelines provide a link back to the landscape character assessment and are intended to inform development planning decisions.

The concluding table 'Landscape Management Guidelines' summarises the management guidelines for each landscape character area taking into account the key attributes. Alongside this the multiple benefits (ecosystem services) that each character area can offer are set out. Opportunities to enhance these through changes to landscape management are outlined.

Where relevant cross reference is made to other landscape management plans. Where areas overlap with the boundaries for the South Downs National Park or the High Weald AONB cross reference is made to the statutory management plans for these designated landscapes.

HWAONB: http://www.highweald.org/downloads/publications/high-weald-aonb-management-plan-documents/1475-high-weald-management-plan-3rd-edition-2014-2019/file.html

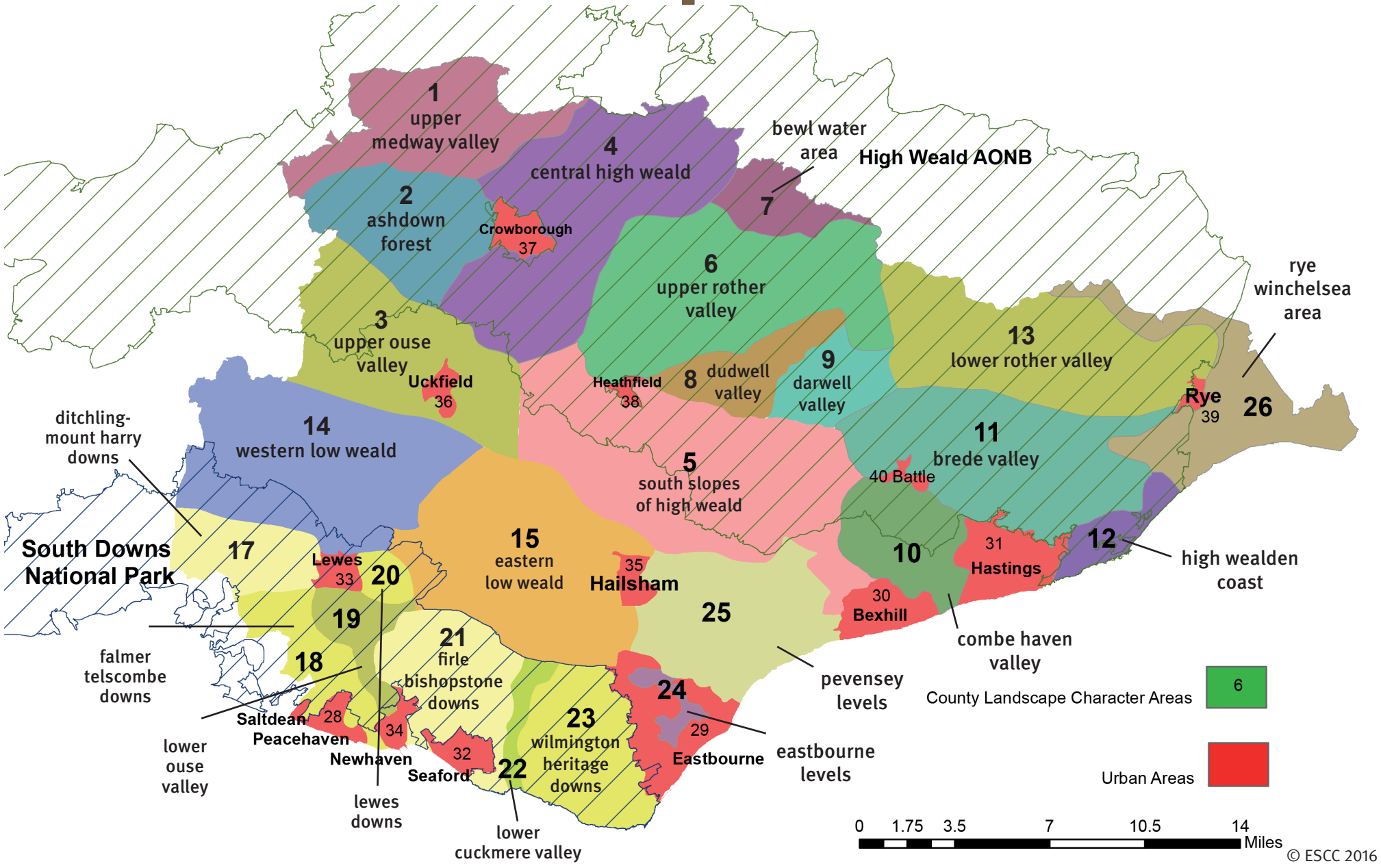
SDNP: Partnership Management Plan

The Woodland Trust manages some woodland in the County and can provide advice, guidance and grants for planting new woodlands and managing existing woods at woodlandtrust.org.uk. The Woodland Trust also has an initiative for the creation of hedges with trees.

The Forestry Commission manages areas of woodland and can provide grants for woodland planting, improvement and management at www.forestry.gov.uk/

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The Local Landscape Character Areas



The High Weald

The High Weald is a distinctive and diverse landscape with a broken and dissected landform of ridges, ghylls and streams and east – west valleys. This is draped in an intricate fabric of small, irregular fields, abundant woods, hedges, ridge top villages, scattered settlements and sunken lanes. The High Weald is a classic patchwork countryside which has remained essentially the same since medieval times.

Location

The High Weald rises to the north of the Low Weald, occupying the northern half of the county. Most but not all of the region is included within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

Landform

The High Weald is characterised by two bold sandstone ridges running east-west. The northern ridge runs from Ashdown Forest, to Wadhurst, with Crowborough Beacon being the highest point of the High Weald at 225m AOD. The southern ridge runs from Battle to Fairlight. The river Rother flows between these two ridges. The eastern part of the county is dominated by the broad flat-floored valleys of the lower reaches of the Brede, Rother and Tillingham rivers that meet the sea at Rye harbour.

These main ridges are deeply dissected by secondary streams giving a close network of steep sided valleys known as ghylls. The sandstone creates a number of rock outcrops and the High Weald coast is a striking landform of crumbling sandstone and clay cliffs at Fairlight.

Historical impact of man.

The landscape character of the High Weald as we see it today represents a snapshot view of an historical landscape. The area is distinct from other parts of England in that clearance and established settlement began relatively late. The present settlement pattern began to be established in Roman times and the large scale clearance of woodland began only in the late thirteenth century. Prior to this, woodland was retained and managed to provide fuel for an extensive iron industry.

The present day patchwork landscape of small fields and woods was established by the fourteenth century and so the High Weald can be described as an essentially medieval landscape, remaining intrinsically the same through the last five centuries.

Woodland

Woodland accentuates the distinctive landform of the High Weald. The area was once almost completely covered by a vast expanse of untamed woodland known to the Saxons as *Andredsweald* – the forest of Pevensey. This is still one of the most densely wooded areas in Britain, with abundant semi-natural ancient woodlands. Many woodlands are small in size being restricted to shaws and woodland belts. They are often narrow and sinuous. The steep sides of the ghylls were never suitable for grazing or cultivation so woodland has survived particularly well in these areas.

Agriculture

The sandy and heavy clay soils of the High Weald do not provide good growing conditions for crops and the area is essentially a pastoral landscape of small fields and hedgerows, mostly supporting sheep and declining numbers of cattle and pigs. Hop gardens and orchards, once abundant in eastern areas, have now all but disappeared to be replaced on south facing slopes by occasional vineyards.

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The High Weald

Other habitats and features

Heathland once extended across much of the sandstone areas of the High Weald, but it is now mainly restricted to Ashdown Forest – a former royal hunting forest. A few unimproved meadows still survive in the High Weald. These are characterised by a diverse range of plant and associated animal species. Large reservoirs are significant features in the High Weald Landscape.

Settlement Pattern and routeways

The High Weald has a distinctive settlement pattern – typically small towns, villages and farms occupy the tops of ridges. A view of a distant village on top of a hill, crowned with a church spire is typical of the High Weald. The settlement pattern is dispersed with nearly 40% of the population living in the countryside in individual dwellings or small hamlets.

The main roads also occupy the ridgeways – these are complimented by a system of radiating roads following ancient droveways. They are often deeply sunken and narrow.

Grand Houses, Gardens and Parkland

The wealth of the iron industry created many grand houses and estates. Many of these have important designed landscapes. Repton was responsible for designs at Bayham Abbey and Heathfield Park and Capability Brown at Ashburnham. There is also a fine parkland at Eridge. The Norman castle of Bodiam dominates the lower valley of the Rother.

Other details

Local sandstone brick, tile and weatherboarding help to create local diversity as do the very distinctive oast houses of the more eastern parts of the area.

Remoteness

The intricate topography of ridges and valleys with an abundance of tree cover helps offset the profusion of lanes, settlements and scattered dwellings. The High Weald often feels very secretive and it is possible to experience a remoteness which is increasingly rare within the south east. The main area of remote countryside is to be found in the east of the area, where scattered development, aircraft noise, gentrification and suburbanisation are less in evidence.

Problems, Pressure and change in the High Weald

Agriculture:

- Decline in the profitability of farming.
- Land falling out of productive use into amenity and residential use with consequent gentrification and neglect.
- Increased reliance on non land based diversification. Loss of skilled labour.
- Increased agricultural intensification in other areas has led to landscape change which sometimes results in degradation.

Woodland:

Woodlands have been affected by:

- Increased coniferisation
- Fragmentation of woodland habitat
- Collapsed timber market
- Decline and neglect of small coppice woodlands and ghyll woodland.
- Rhododendron invasion and deer damage.

Other Landscape features:

- Loss of characteristic features such as meadows and parkland due to inappropriate management
- Loss of heathland due to lack of grazing, particularly in Ashdown Forest

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The High Weald

- Decline of hop gardens and orchards.
- Erosion of sandstone outcrops by climbers and visitors.
- Decline and disappearance of village and farm ponds.

Roads: Increase in road traffic adversely affecting tranquillity, and pressure for new roads and road improvements

Urban influence/ urban fringe problems:

- Suburbanisation, gentrification, poor design and inappropriate use of building materials.
- Increase in street lighting.

Development:

- Inappropriate new development especially around built up areas and particularly related to the location of railway stations.
- Gentrification of old vernacular buildings.
- Increase in inappropriate rural recreation.

Loss of rural function:

- Villages and hamlets have increasingly become dormitories for commuters.
- Habitat loss and fragmentation with resulting loss of species diversity.
- Golf course development.
- Increase in horsiculture.

Recreation: Because of its proximity to the capital (40 miles) the High Weald is subject to recreational pressure. Some honeypot areas are at capacity, Bodiam exemplifies this. With appropriate planning control the High Weald may have the ability to absorb more informal green recreation and tourism. This is becoming increasingly important to the local economy.

Water resources: Over engineering of water courses compromising natural systems. Loss and degradation of ponds and depletion of ground aquifers

Landscape Action priorities for the High Weald

Manage farmland to arrest the decline of the agricultural landscape through agri-environment grants and payments.

Manage woodlands sustainably to prevent further decline in the woodland resource with particular emphasis on ancient woodland, coppice woodland shaws and ghyll woodland.

The creation of new native woodlands should be considered, particularly through natural regeneration.

Control rhododendron invasion and deer and squirrel damage in woodland.

Manage, conserve and restore parkland, hop gardens, orchards, ponds, sandstone outcrops, and iron industry relics where appropriate.

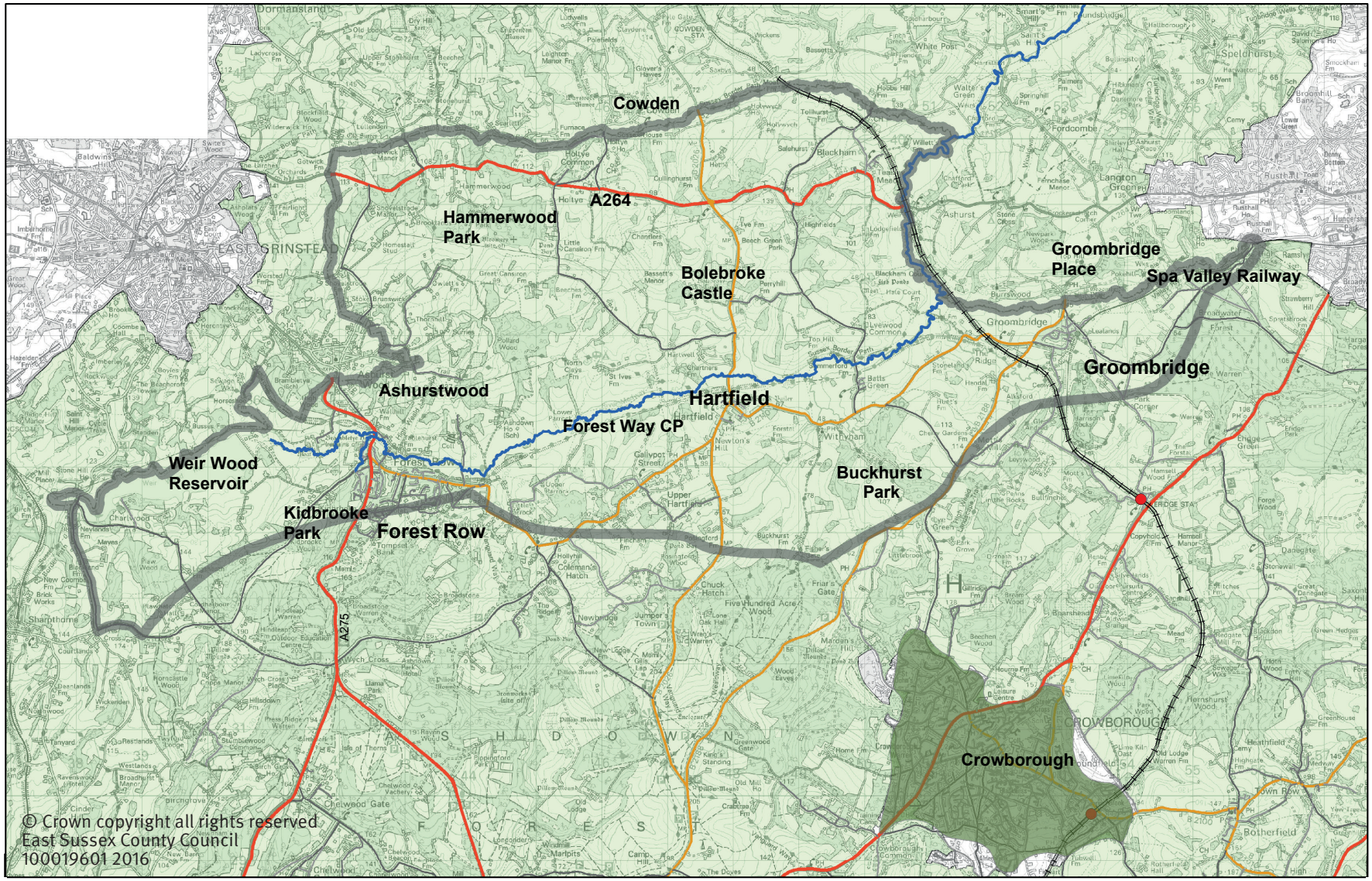
Manage heathland with particular emphasis on the restoration of grazing and the control of invasive species. Limit fire damage. Create larger blocks of heathland where possible.

Maintain and enhance the historic built environment and settlement pattern. Vernacular styles and building materials should be an important aspect of new development. Inappropriate suburban features should be discouraged.

Discourage changes that will have a negative influence on remoteness and tranquility.

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Upper Medway Valley



1 Upper Medway Valley Landscape Character Area

High Weald AONB

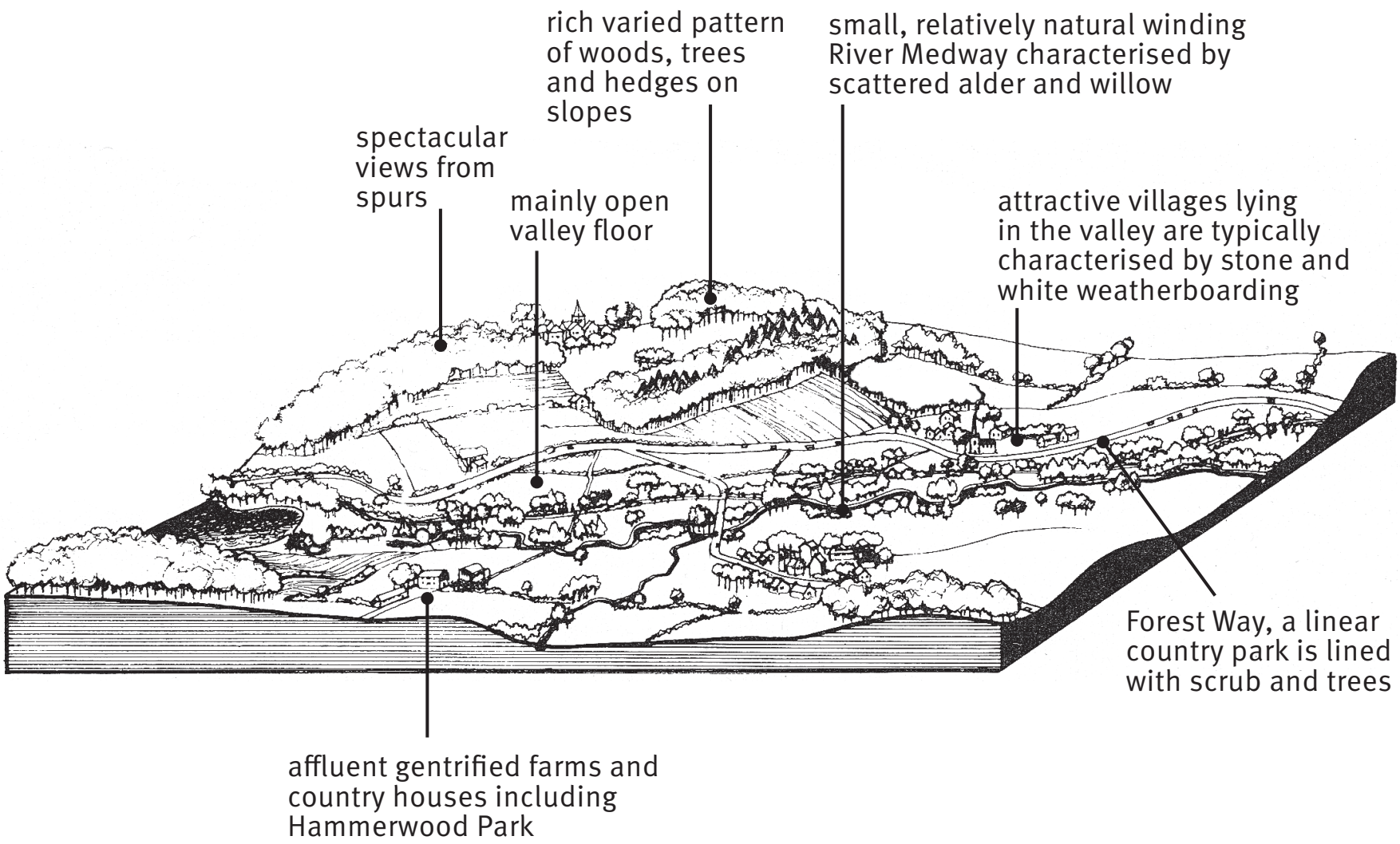
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The East Sussex County Landscape Assessment

1 The High Weald

Upper Medway Valley



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Upper Medway Valley

1

The High Weald

Contents

A. Landscape Description
B. Landscape Evaluation
C. Vision and Strategy
D. Guidelines for Managing Change

A Landscape Description

Key Landscape characteristics

- This covers the river Medway Valley from Weir Wood Reservoir in the west to Groombridge in the east. Ashdown Forest lies to the south and the border with Kent to the north.
- A broad flat river valley overlooked by gentle spurs which afford spectacular views across the valley.
- Relatively natural winding river channel fringed with alders, willows and poplars.
- Weir Wood Reservoir, a large body of open water lies on the county boundary.
- Unusually for the High Weald the settlements tend to be in the valley rather than on higher ground.
- Scattered and individually distinctive villages often centred on a church.
- The picturesque village of Hartfield with its Winnie the Pooh associations.
- Distinctive country houses and estates, notably Hammerwood Park, Bolebroke Castle, Brambletye, Buckhurst Park, Kidbrooke Park and Groombridge Place on the Kent border.
- Hammerwood, Buckhurst, Kidbrooke and Groombridge Place have Registered parks and gardens
- Scattered and often isolated large farmsteads.
- Orchards and hop fields.
- Rich varied pattern of woods and deciduous shaws.
- Intensive farming has reduced former shaws to narrow hedges interspersed with mature trees.
- Characteristic tree species are coppiced chestnut with oak standards.
- Other characteristic species are beech, wild cherry, lime and Scots pine.
- 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.
- A close network of winding, sunken lanes with scattered settlements and individual dwellings often strung out along them.
- Traditional building materials for the area are red brick, often laid as Flemish bond with blued brick ends, red tiled roofs and tile hung upper stories are typical. Sandstone corners, or quoins, are also found on some properties.
- White weather boarding is a particular characteristic of the area, notably in Hartfield.
- The Uckfield to London main line railway runs across the eastern part.
- The Spa Valley historic steam railway runs from Eridge to Tunbridge Wells via Groombridge.
- The Forest Way linear country park crosses the area from Forest Row to Groombridge following the disused railway line.
- Much of the central part of the area is free of main roads and traffic, but the A264 cuts across the northern edge and the A275 cross the west side.

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Upper Medway Valley

Cultural Interests

Hammerwood Park is a country house designed by architect Henry Latrobe in 1792 and situated in the north west corner of the area, near the Kent, Surrey and Sussex border. It is a Grade I listed building and one of the first houses in England to be built in the Greek Revival architectural style. The designed parkland is thought to have been influenced by Repton as a collaborator with Latrobe. There is evidence that Capability Brown may have also had an influence on the parkland's evolution. The more formal gardens near the house were created in the 19th and 20th centuries.

Buckhurst Park was landscaped in 1830–1835 by Humphry Repton, whose landscape plans for the park were embodied in one of his "Red Books". In the early decades of the 20th century, the estate was leased for over 25 years to Robert Henry Benson (1850–1929), a merchant banker and art collector, who continued to make improvements to the house. Finding the house and grounds very much as Repton had left them, in 1902 he called upon architect Edwin Lutyens to add an extensive wing. Lutyens later credited his decades-long appointment as architect of New Delhi, the grand central area of which is still known as Lutyens' Delhi, to a chance meeting at a country-house party at Buckhurst during Benson's tenure.

Grade II* Listed Bolebroke Castle is a 15th Century hunting lodge and one of the earliest brick built buildings in Sussex. It was used by Henry VIII as a base for hunting in Ashdown Forest and for courting Anne Boleyn. The film *The Other Boleyn Girl* was filmed at the castle.

Cotchford Farm in Hartfield was the home of A.A. Milne (1882-1956) and the surrounding countryside, especially Ashdown Forest inspired his Winnie the Pooh stories. The farm was later owned by Brian Jones (1942-1969) the founder of the original Rolling Stones who tragically drowned in the swimming pool.

The Brambletye Inn in Forest Row was frequented by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (1859 -1930) and features in some of the Sherlock Holmes stories.

Other notable residents of Forest Row have included writers Owen Barfield (1898-1997), Violet Needham (1876-1967) and Ben Elton (1959- present)

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Upper Medway Valley

Table 1 Key positive Landscape Attributes

- A broad flat river valley overlooked by gentle spurs which afford spectacular views across the valley.
- Relatively natural winding river channel fringed with alders, willows and poplars.
- Weir Wood Reservoir, a large body of open water lies on the county boundary.
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- The picturesque village of Hartfield with its Winnie the Pooh associations.
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- Orchards and hop fields.
- Rich varied pattern of woods and deciduous shaws.
- Characteristic tree species are coppiced chestnut with oak standards.
- Other characteristic species are beech, wild cherry, lime and Scots pine.
- 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.
- A close network of winding, sunken lanes with scattered settlements and individual dwellings often strung out along them.
- Traditional building materials for the area are red brick, often laid as Flemish bond with blued brick ends, red tiled roofs and tile hung upper stories are typical.
- White weather boarding is a particular characteristic of the area, notably in Hartfield.
- The Spa Valley historic steam railway runs from Eridge to Tunbridge Wells via Groombridge.
- The Forest Way linear country park crosses the area from Forest Row to Groombridge following the disused railway line.

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Upper Medway Valley

B Landscape Evaluation

Table 2 Current Condition

This is a largely unspoilt and tranquil rural landscape with few intrusive features. The landscape is in generally good condition and well managed as farmland with a strong historic structure. Agricultural change and diversification has led to some gentrification of the rural landscape and farm steads. Some areas of more intensive agriculture have larger fields due to shaw and hedgerow removal. Creeping suburbanisation and urban fringe pressures are evident around the towns and larger villages detracting from local distinctiveness. As with most of the High Weald landscape the historic field patterns of small fields and significant hedgerows remain intact. Many woodlands have been affected by lack of management, rhododendron invasion and coniferisation.

Forces for Change impacting on positive attributes

Past / Current forces for change

- The positive land management initiatives associated with the High Weald AONB.
- Creeping suburbanisation and cumulative changes in the rural landscape, roads and villages which are not in sympathy with local distinctiveness or vernacular architecture.
- Urban fringe pressures, particularly around the nearest towns, East Grinstead and Royal Tunbridge Wells.
- Engineered flood defences and other features which detract from the natural river valley.
- Loss of riverside trees.
- Aircraft noise associated with Gatwick planes taking off and landing over the area.
- Development pressures in the villages.
- Agricultural diversification to hobby farms and horsiculture.
- Recreational pressures and in particular golf course development.
- Changes in the types and frequency of grazing animals in the countryside impacts on character as they are a characteristic feature. Lack of grazing can give an unmanaged appearance to the landscape and reduce the biodiversity value.
- The wider land management initiatives associated with the High Weald AONB.
- Farm Environment Plans, much of the farm land is under Entry Level Stewardship Agreements, notably around Hartfield and south of Hammerwood and organic stewardship at Ashurstwood.
- Intrusive modern farm buildings.
- Loss of traditional coppicing in woodlands and increase in game shooting.
- Woodland Grant schemes are scattered across the area, notably at Hammerwood.
- Increasing traffic on the A roads which cross the area and the main roads along the ridges and rat running on rural lanes.

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Upper Medway Valley

Future Forces for Change

- The need to provide local housing in the villages, especially the larger service centres of Forest Row and Hartfield.
- The associated infrastructure required for new development such as waste water treatment works.
- Demands for traffic calming and road improvements which could introduce increasing urban clutter to rural roads, villages and lanes.
- Continued agricultural change due to changing markets, economic pressures and response to climate change.
- The spread of small agricultural holdings, hobby farming, paddocks farm shops and allotments for local food production.
- Pressure for locating renewable energy facilities for solar, wind and bio energy.
- Pests and diseases of trees which could impact significantly on the mature tree stock. E.g. phytophora of alder and Ash dieback.
- Failure to control invasive species of plants and animals in water courses, such as New Zealand Pigmy Weed (*Crassula helmsii*), Parrots Feather (*Myryophyllum aquaticum*), Mink and European Marsh Frog (Pelophylax ridibundus). All of these impact on the native flora and fauna which are characteristic of the area.
- Water quality in the River Medway catchment.

Table 3 Potential Impacts of Climate Change

- Potential changes in woodland / tree species composition and accelerated growth of species such as birch,
- Changes in ground flora which produce distinctive seasonal displays and other native vegetation.
- Increased prevalence of pests and diseases due to warmer weather e.g. Phytophera of Alder.
- Changes in precipitation and temperatures will change the types of crops that farmers grow.
- Potential impact on the viability of grazing sheep, dairy and beef.
- Increased temperatures and a decline in precipitation levels may dry out wetland habitats and ponds and alter stream flows.
- Changes in water levels in ditches, ponds and streams

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Upper Medway Valley

C Vision and Strategy

Table 4 Vision

An accessible peaceful valley set in a rich varied tapestry of hedges and fields with abundant woods and parklands creating scope to enjoy remoteness and seclusion. A vibrant working landscape with thriving land based activities which conserve the characteristic features and wildlife of the area. Traditional villages with a conserved and enhanced local vernacular and sense of place.

As noted in the current Landscape Character Guidance – A Landscape Strategy identifies *"what change if any is desirable for any landscape character area as a whole?"*

Landscape change and adaptation to meet the strategy requires:

1. Planning for the enhancement of the northern part of the Western Ouse Streams and Ashdown Forest Biodiversity Opportunity Area and the Weir Wood SSSI.
2. Protect and manage existing woodland habitats and in particular the characteristic ghyll woodlands.
3. Protect and manage existing wetland habitats and plan for restoration of ditches and riverside vegetation to restore habitat linkages and continuity.
4. Plan for the creation of multifunctional green infrastructure to maximise the opportunities for biodiversity and recreation offered by the rural lanes, rights of way network, river valley and extensive woodland.
5. Consider the potential to plan for recreational access in this character area identifying areas where public access can be encouraged whilst protecting other areas where wildlife conservation is the priority.
6. Integrate proposed and existing development into the landscape through planting of tree features and woodland to define the village boundaries with the countryside.
7. Ensure that the design and layout of new developments respect the character and form of the landscape and existing settlements.
8. Control the spread of suburbanisation by minimising clutter of signage and other urban features in lanes and villages.
9. Conserve the setting of historic buildings and landscape features and notably the Registered parklands of Hammerwood Park, Buckhurst Park, Kidbrooke Park and Groombridge Place.
10. Consider appropriate species for new plantings to maintain landscape character and biodiversity but also adaptation to climate change influences.

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D Guidelines for Managing Change

Development considerations for housing and other development

Proposals within the High Weald AONB need to have regard for the current High Weald Management Plan:
http://www.highweald.org/downloads/publications/high-weald-aonb-management-plan-documents/1475-high-weald-management-plan-3rd-edition-2014-2019/file.html

The main pressures for development in this character area will be to accommodate housing for the populations in the rural settlements of Forest Row, Hartfield and Groombridge. There will inevitably be a demand for local housing in the smaller villages.

Tourism is an important source of income to this area and there is likely to be increasing demand for accommodation in hotels, bed and breakfast, caravan and camp sites. The modern trend for luxury and exotic camping (glamping) is already appearing in the guise of teepees, tree houses and the like. There will be demand for new facilities and to improve or expand existing, some of these putting pressure on ancient woodland. Any new development should respect the key positive attributes in the landscape outlined in Table 1 above.

Proposed development should consider opportunities for proactively meeting the Landscape Change Strategy aims for this Landscape Character Area as set out in 1-10 above.

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Table 5

Current issues offering opportunities for protection and enhancement	Landscape Management Guidelines	Benefits delivered by Ecosystem Services for each area of interest
Countryside and Farmland Farm environment plans relating to much of the farm land including organic farming. Pressure for farm diversification and development of hobby farms, solar arrays, wind farms, waste recycling operations etc. Expansion of camping and caravan sites as well as other holiday related development such as 'Glamping'. Land falling out of positive management and dereliction of farm buildings. Loss of hedgerows and other traditional field boundaries. Loss of traditional orchards, pasture and species rich meadows. Low water levels and poor water quality in some drains and streams. Deterioration of by ways and lanes due to erosion of un-surfaced routes by horses, bikes and 4 wheel drives. Damage to verges on narrow country lanes caused by increasing size of farm vehicles and passing traffic. Overstocking and arable production on some soils can result in soil erosion and reduce soil quality.	**Countryside and Farmland** Encourage establishment of more farm conservation schemes to conserve the landscape structure of hedges, shaws, ponds and streams. Conserve hedges, trees and ghyll woods. Maintain the mixed farmed character of the area. Protect and manage historic field patterns and conserve boundary features. Maintain water levels in drains and ditches. Conserve and enhance byways and rural lanes. Use tree and woodland planting to screen intrusive farm buildings and caravan sites. Plan for and manage changes which may occur in the landscape due to changes in farm management brought about by economic influences and climate change. Address existing flooding issues of farmland and properties through flood management and by identifying areas which can provide flood alleviation. Enhance the biodiversity value of wet meadows, drainage and stream channels. Reduce the risk and incidence of soil erosion by encouraging the restoration of arable land to pasture. Apply best land management practices to prevent soil and fertiliser run off, thereby protecting surface and ground water.	**Provisioning services** Water availability Food production **Regulating services** (water purification, air quality maintenance and climate regulation) Water quality and protected aquifers. Regulating water flow and preventing flooding Soil conservation and erosion control Habitat and species resilience to climate change Carbon sequestration. Areas of peat in the river valleys, hedges, trees, reed beds and grassland regulate air quality by absorbing and retaining CO_2. **Cultural Services** Sense of Place and local distinctiveness. Source of Inspiration Sense of History Tranquillity Biodiversity

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Upper Medway Valley

Current issues offering opportunities for protection and enhancement	Landscape Management Guidelines	Benefits delivered by Ecosystem Services for each area of interest
Trees and Woodland Ancient woodland and tree belts are not in positive management. Ghyll woodlands are not in positive management and are difficult to manage due to the steep and inaccessible nature of these woods. Traditional management has stopped as it is not commercially viable e.g. pollarding of stream side willows. Tree diseases. Ancient parkland trees dying off and not being replaced. Extensive areas of woodland are already in woodland grant schemes. Pressure for glamping sites in woodland. Invasive species competing with native flora and fauna e.g. Spanish Bluebell, Himalayan balsam, Japanese knotweed.	**Trees and Woodland** Actively manage trees and woodland through coppicing, pollarding of willows and replanting to create a diverse age structure. Plant new small woods, wet woodland and tree belts to strengthen the landscape character and where this is appropriate habitat creation. Consider the need to adapt to changes enforced by climate change, such as specific tree diseases and possible adaptation in species selection. Plant trees and woodland to contain existing and new built development. Encourage planting of trees along streams and ditches where appropriate for the habitat. Replant parkland and individual hedgerow trees.	**Provisioning** Fuel (wood fuel for local communities from woodland management) **Regulating** Carbon sequestration, woodland absorbs and holds CO_2. Habitat and species resilience to climate change **Cultural** Tranquillity Sense of Place and local distinctiveness Cultural heritage (traditional woodland management) Biodiversity

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Upper Medway Valley

Current issues offering opportunities for protection and enhancement	Landscape Management Guidelines	Benefits delivered by Ecosystem Services for each area of interest
Other Key Habitats Deterioration and loss of habitats : **Water** Loss of river and streamside vegetation. Deterioration of water quality in streams, ditches and ponds Invasive species of plants and animals which compete with native flora and fauna. **Wet Meadows** Financial and viable farming constraints affecting the continued management of wet meadows reducing the biodiversity value. Improvements to Grassland and meadows reducing species richness. Loss of wetland meadows to arable farming.	**Other Key Habitats** Encourage management of river and stream channels, especially conservation of riverside trees and vegetation. Conservation and re-creation of wet meadow/ pasture habitats. Agri-environment schemes to maximise biodiversity and encourage the retention of grazing. Opportunities to maximise reed bed creation. Encourage measures to improve water quality. Continue schemes to encourage farmers to minimise the use of chemicals and fertilizers.	**Provisioning** Nature's larder of free berries and herbs. Conservation of insect pollinators for pollination of crops. **Regulating** Habitat and species resilience to climate change **Cultural** Appreciation of nature Educational value Biodiversity

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Upper Medway Valley

Current issues offering opportunities for protection and enhancement	Landscape Management Guidelines	Benefits delivered by Ecosystem Services for each area of interest
Recreation, Green Infrastructure (GI) and ANGS Recreation, Green Infrastructure (GI) and ANGS Pressure on bridleways and byways as multi use, including cycling and 4 wheel drives increasing erosion. Lack of funding to manage and enhance GI for improved access. Need for better recreational linkages and improved sustainable transport corridors. Extensive footpath and bridleway network. Need for improved access to natural green space for all users both close to homes and in the wider countryside. Gentrification Loss of tranquillity due to more cars and access.	**Recreation, Green Infrastructure and ANGS** Where appropriate develop Green Infrastructure Strategies based on a county wide GI mapping. Plan for and manage recreational pressure on the countryside which could be affected by the increase in population in nearby towns and villages as well as the seasonal holiday makers. Maximise opportunities for access away from sensitive habitats. Consider opportunities to create new green corridors and improve existing as safe ideally motorised traffic free recreational routes. Maximise opportunities for and manage water based recreational activities.	**Provisioning** Protected farmland. **Regulating** Habitat and species resilience to climate change Water quality and protected aquifers. Regulating water flow and preventing flooding Carbon sequestration **Cultural** Recreation Heritage assets and cultural heritage Inspirational Tranquility Biodiversity

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Upper Medway Valley

Current issues offering opportunities for protection and enhancement	Landscape Management Guidelines	Benefits delivered by Ecosystem Services for each area of interest
Horse Keeping ('horsiculture') and small holdings Deterioration of the character and quality of the landscape and loss of local distinctiveness. Can detract from historic field pattern where fences replace hedges. Can cause soil erosion.	**Horse Keeping ('horsiculture') and small holdings** Enhance the condition of areas of horsiculture and small holdings through the restoration of an intact, well managed hedgerow or ditch network and retaining a diverse grass sward by preventing overgrazing. Encourage local food production and allotment provision in areas where this will not detract from local landscape character.	**Provisioning** Grazing Food production **Regulating** Habitat and species resilience to climate change **Cultural** Recreation Heritage assets Sense of Place and local distinctiveness Biodiversity

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Upper Medway Valley

Current issues offering opportunities for protection and enhancement	Landscape Management Guidelines	Benefits delivered by Ecosystem Services for each area of interest
The character of the villages Gentrification Urbanisation Development pressures Gradual loss and deterioration of heritage features. Fast traffic on rural lanes Visitor pressure and cars detracting from local character and distinctiveness of the area in general.	**Protect and Enhance the character of the villages** Encourage the production of Neighbourhood Plans which incorporate village design guides. Plan for new development in the villages to ensure it is designed to a high standard to reflect local character and sense of place. Establish defined development edges to villages with new tree planting. Prepare village design guides and tree conservation plans. Consider traffic management on rural lanes	**Provisioning** Local amenities and facilities. **Regulating** Use of sustainable materials Habitat and species resilience to climate change Water quality and protected aquifers. Regulating water flow and preventing flooding **Cultural** Sense of Place and local distinctiveness Heritage assets Biodiversity

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Upper Medway Valley

Current issues offering opportunities for protection and enhancement	Landscape Management Guidelines	Benefits delivered by Ecosystem Services for each area of interest
Flood management and SUDS schemes? Flash floods and run off. Flooding of properties in low lying areas by river and ground water.	**Flood management and SUDS schemes?** Plan for flood management by conserving and enhancing the flood plains and managing water levels in ditches and drains. Encourage the design of sensitive flood defence schemes which conserve and enhance the landscape and habitats Conserve and enhance existing man made and natural drainage features. Maximise opportunities for the creation of SUDs schemes which contribute to local amenity and habitat creation.	**Provisioning** Water conservation **Regulating** Flood control Protection of aquifers **Cultural** Heritage assets Sense of Place and local distinctiveness Tranquillity Amenity and recreation Biodiversity

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Upper Medway Valley

Glossary

(also refer to the full version in the County Landscape Assessment).

ANGS: Accessible Natural Green Space Natural England – Accessible Natural Greenspace Standard (ANGSt)

Assart: Field created from the clearance of woodland

Clunch Barn: constructed of a building material composed of hardened clay or chalk marl.

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Enclosure: The separation of land from the common by fence or private use.

GI or Green Infrastructure: Multifunctional green areas which provide areas for recreation, wildlife, water supply catchment, flood relief, food or timber production.

Glamping: New types of camp sites with permanent tent features in yurts, teepees, vintage caravans, timber pods etc. Woodlands are popular locations for these.

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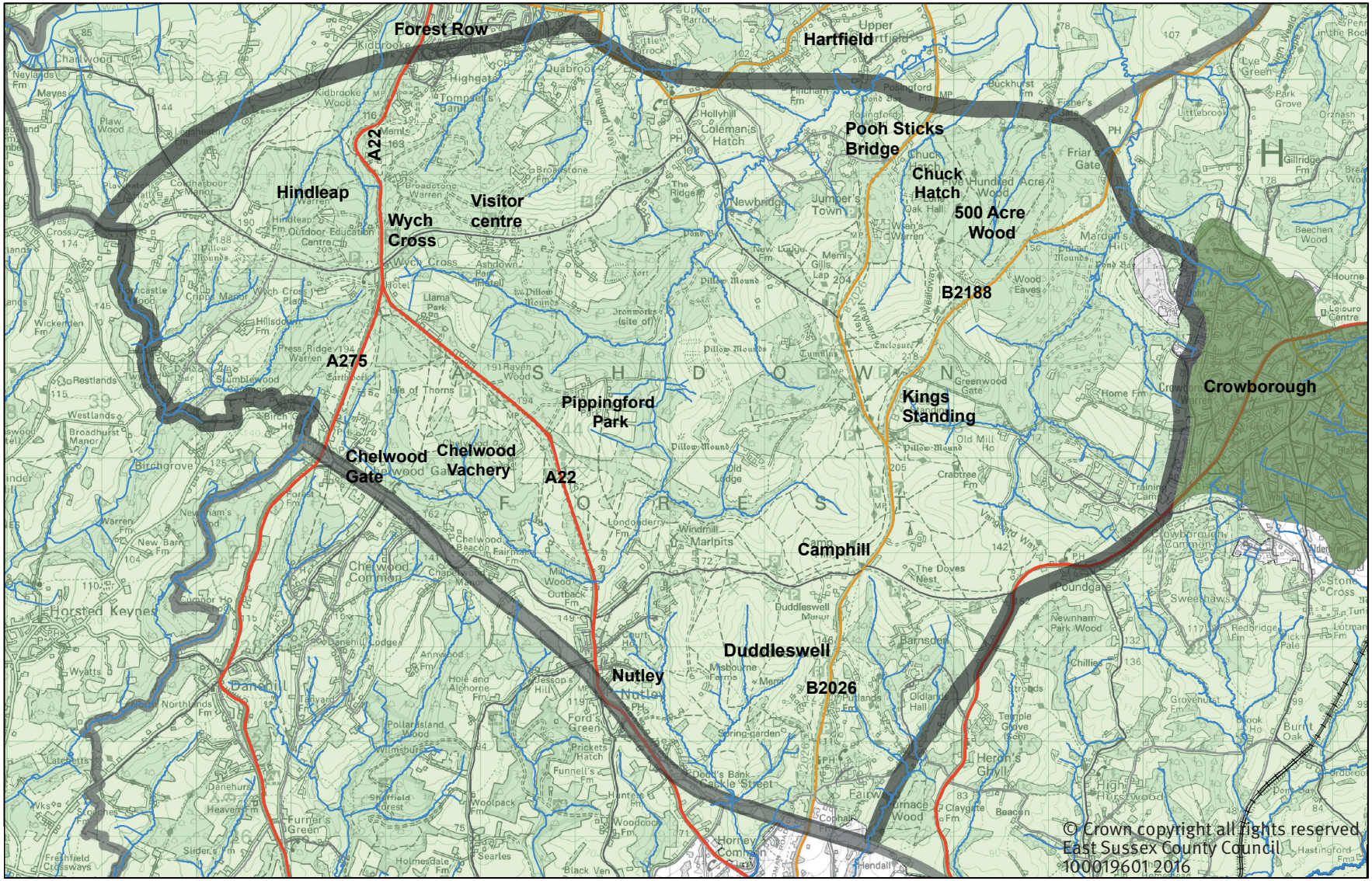
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SNCI or Local Site: a Site of Nature Conservation Importance.

SSSI: A national designation for Site of Special Scientific Interest, these may be of biodiversity or geological significance or both.

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2 Ashdown Forest Landscape Character Area

High Weald AONB

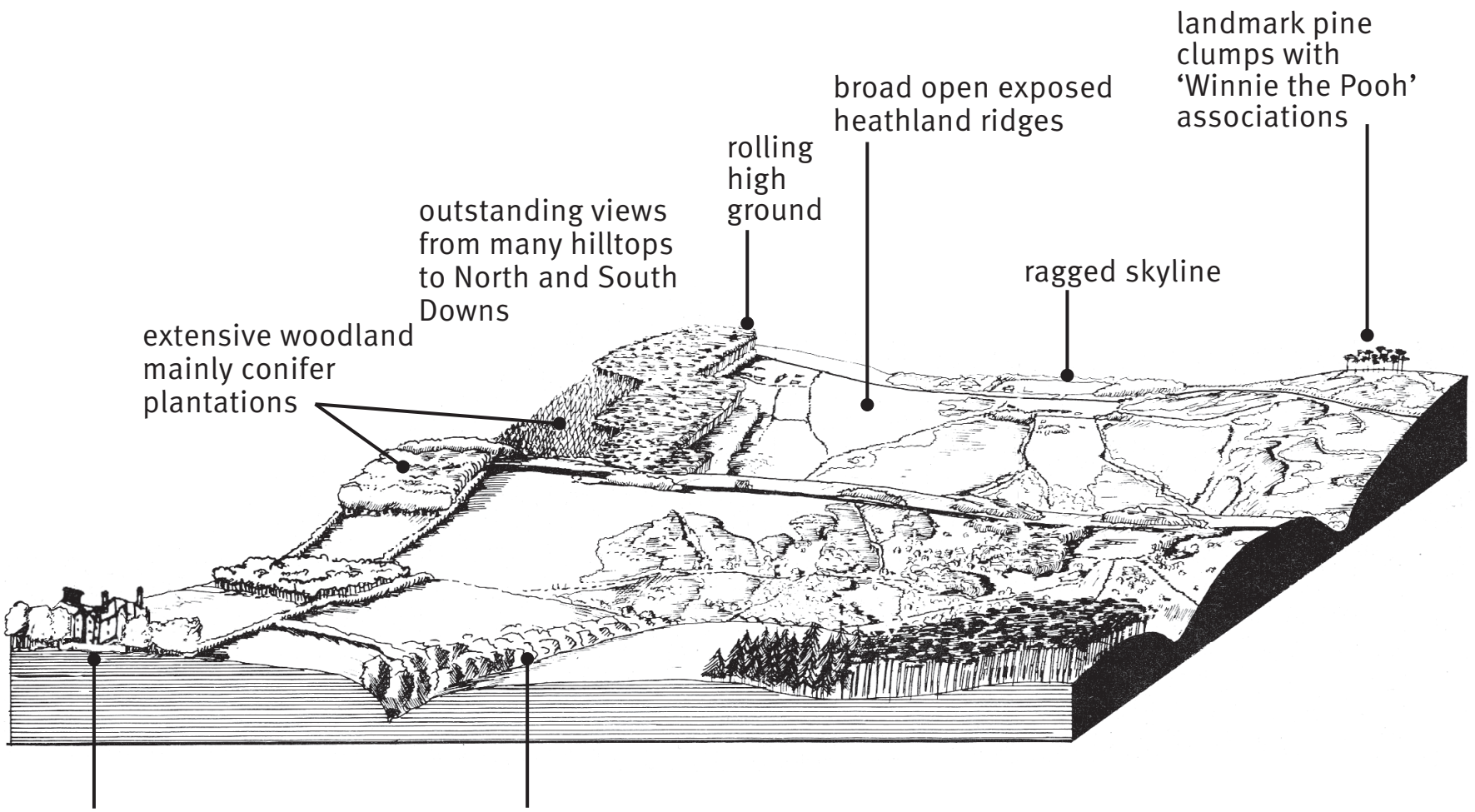
0 0.5 1 2 3 4 Kilometers

The East Sussex County Landscape Assessment

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2 The High Weald

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2

The High Weald

Contents

A. Landscape Description
B. Landscape Evaluation
C. Vision and Strategy
D. Guidelines for Managing Change

A Landscape Description

Key Landscape Characteristics

Ashdown forest is a heart shaped area lying between Crowborough, Forest Row and Maresfield on the more northern of the two major ridges in the AONB.

- Ashdown forest is the largest area of lowland heath in the SE and therefore is of significant nature conservation and scenic value.
- The forest is the largest free public access open space in the south east.
- The great open sweeps of brown and purple heathland stand out in stark contrast to the surrounding green luxuriance of the rest of the High Weald.
- Broad, exposed open heathland ridges.
- Ashdown Forest lies on the highest point of the High Weald. It is visually prominent and affords outstanding views in and out of the area.
- A unique sense of place and local distinctiveness which has evolved as a result of the history of the area.
- Landmark pine clumps with 'Winnie the Pooh' association. Other amenity plantings of lime, beech and horse chestnut.
- Extensive woodland (42.5% wooded); predominantly oak-birch woodland, but also oak over ash and hazel, chestnut coppice with fine oak and beech woodland on the fringes.
- Shady, secluded ghyll streams with hammer ponds.
- Large country houses, some associated with significant designed landscapes and parkland.
- Indications of many centuries of human activity of significant archaeological importance.
- A sense of tranquillity and relative remoteness away from the main settlements and roads.
- Traditional building materials for the area are red brick, often laid as Flemish bond with blue brick ends, red tiled roofs and tile hung upper stories are typical. Oak timber framed and sandstone houses reflect the abundance of locally sourced timber and quarried stone.
- The A22 meets the A275 on the west side of the area and the B2026 and B2188 cross the east side of the area.

Cultural Interests

The forest was originally part of the extensive Andreswald, a densely vegetated and inaccessible wilderness populated by wolves and other wild animals.

Iron working activities date back to Saxon times with evidence of this discovered at Millbrook Hill until 1717 when iron working largely ceased in the Weald.

The forest was a Norman deer hunting area and this was a distinctive land use for the area since Mesolithic times. This established the commoners' rights which have helped to conserve

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the unique landscape which was freely grazed and cleared of trees thus retaining the heathland. These uses also prevented the cultivation of the land. A park pale was established around the forest as early as 1275. This was a ditch and bank with a wooden fence on the top designed to keep the deer in the forest. The place names hatch and chuck indicate where there were the gates in the pale for example Chelwood Gate and Chuck Hatch.

In the 17th century the forest was considered by many to be a wild and intimidating place.

William Cobbett, on one of his Rural Rides in 1822, visited the Forest and declared it "verily the most villainously ugly spot I ever saw in England", possibly the most famous quote about Ashdown Forest!

The forest passed into the hands of Elizabeth, Countess De La Warr in 1825 and it was she who planted the distinctive pine clumps as landscape features.

In 1830 George Sackville-West, fifth Earl of De La Warr, drew up plans for better forest management and formed a committee of Commoners.

By the early years of the 20th century Crowborough hotels were extolling the area as "Scotland in Sussex", the invention of the motor-engine brought day-trippers and picnickers and with them fires, litter and illegal parking. AA Milne, having moved to nearby Hartfield, put the Forest on the international map with Winnie-the-Pooh.

The Forest had a long tradition of military usage, from the Militia musters of the Napoleonic era through to the First World War. In 1793 as a response to the activities of Napoleon a Great muster of troops was established at Camp Hill and evidence of horse lines and field kitchens are still visible. It was WWII that really impacted on how the Forest looks today. The Forest was heavily used for military exercises throughout the War – with an emergency air strip, slit trenches and scars from tank manoeuvres.

The Ashdown Forest Act 1949 formalised and regulated the use of the Forest for post war army training. The Society of Friends of Ashdown Forest was formed in 1961.

Table 1 Key positive Landscape Attributes

- Ashdown Forest is the largest area of lowland heath in the SE and therefore is of significant nature conservation and scenic value.
- The forest is the largest free public access open space in the south east.
- The forest lies on the highest point of the High Weald. It is visually prominent and affords outstanding views in and out of the area.
- A unique sense of place and local distinctiveness which has evolved as a result of the history of the area.
- Broad, exposed open heathland ridges.
- Landmark pine clumps with ‘Winnie the Pooh’ association.
- Extensive woodland.
- Shady, secluded ghyll streams with hammer ponds.
- Large country houses, some associated with significant designed landscapes and parkland.
- Indications of human activity of significant archaeological importance.
- A sense of tranquillity and relative remoteness away from the main settlements and roads.

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B Landscape Evaluation

Table 2 Current Condition

Ashdown Forest is a fragile landscape vulnerable to continuous change in management and recreational disturbance. The special duty of the Conservators to regulate and manage the forest as an amenity and place of resort helps protect the forest from encroachments and to conserve it as a quiet and natural area of outstanding beauty. The Conservators help to protect the historic rights of common and therefore the continuation of the historic management of the area which has contributed to the unique sense of place. The board works with Natural England and in 2006 was given a 10 year contract to bring the heathland into 'favourable condition'.

Forces for Change impacting on positive attributes

Past / Current forces for change

- In the early 1980s the Board of Conservators established the forest centre in the heart of the forest.
- The forest was designated a Special Protection Area (SPA), a designation under the European Union Directive on the Conservation of Wild Birds in 1996 and a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) in 2001. SACs complement Special Protection Areas and together form a network of protected sites across the European Union called Natura 2000.
- Between 1996 and 98 phased fencing and the reintroduction of grazing to 1300 acres on the south and west chases.
- Farm Environment Plans and in particular Higher Level Stewardship Agreements to improve the heathland.
- Many small woodland grant schemes across the area for woodland creation, regeneration and management.
- Intrusive modern farm buildings.
- Changes in the types and frequency of grazing animals in the countryside impacting on character as they are a characteristic feature.
- Lack of grazing on the heath allowing pine, birch, gorse and other scrub to invade and shade out the heath species. Conflict of grazing animals with dogs on the open common land.
- Fast traffic on highly visible ridgetop roads crossing the forest. Traffic also conflicts with the need for open grazing.
- Informal Car Parking on verges which damages the ground and creates clutter.
- Military training area activity during and since WW2.
- Listening station masts at Camp Hill.
- Large areas under private ownership due to historic enclosure and ownership rights.
- Recreational pressures and in particular on the main footpath and bridleway routes eroding the heathland vegetation.
- Uncontrolled fires often devastating large areas of forest and heath.
- Creeping suburbanisation and cumulative changes in the rural landscape, roads and villages which are not in sympathy with local distinctiveness or vernacular architecture.
- Urban fringe pressures, particularly around Crowborough and development pressures in the villages.
- Agricultural diversification to hobby farms and horsiculture.

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Future Forces for Change

- New housing development and economic growth in surrounding towns and villages placing increasing pressure on the forest area for recreation.
- A continuing increase of traffic crossing the forest due to this growth having a detrimental effect on tranquillity, air quality and mortality of grazing animals.
- Demands for traffic calming and road improvements which could introduce increasing urban clutter to rural roads, villages and lanes.
- Continued agricultural change due to changing markets, economic pressures and response to climate change.
- The spread of small agricultural holdings, hobby farming, paddocks farm shops and allotments for local food production.
- Pressure for locating renewable energy facilities for solar, wind and bio energy.
- Pests and diseases of trees which could impact significantly on the mature tree stock. E.g. phytophora of alder and Ash dieback.
- Failure to control invasive species of plants and animals in water courses, such as New Zealand Pigmy Weed (*Crassula helmsii*), Parrots Feather (*Myryophyllum aquaticum*), Mink and European Marsh Frog (*Pelophylax ridibundus*). All of these impact on the native flora and fauna which are characteristic of the area.

Table 3 Potential Impacts of Climate Change

- Potential changes in woodland / tree species composition and accelerated growth of species such as birch and pine.
- Changes and loss of heather species and other ground flora such as bluebells which produce distinctive seasonal displays.
- Extended periods of drought and high temperatures increasing the risk and severity of heath fires.
- Increased prevalence of pests and diseases due to warmer weather e.g. Ash die-back and Phytophera of Alder.
- Changes in precipitation and temperatures will change the types of crops that farmers grow.
- Potential impact on the viability of grazing sheep, dairy and beef.
- Increased temperatures and a decline in precipitation levels may dry out wetland habitats and ponds and alter stream flows.
- Changes in water levels in ditches, ponds and streams.

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C Vision and Strategy

Table 4 Vision

An un-fragmented heathland with a remote wildness retained in much of the area. Areas of ancient woodland and parkland retained and managed. The historic character and commoner's rights conserved and protected. Traffic and associated air pollution reduced and controlled. Recreation managed to optimise public enjoyment and maximise the potential benefits to the local economy.

As noted in the current Landscape Character Guidance – A Landscape Strategy identifies *"what change if any is desirable for any landscape character area as a whole?"*

Landscape change and adaptation to meet the strategy requires:

1. Planning for the enhancement of the western Ouse streams and Ashdown Forest Biodiversity Opportunity Area which covers most of this character area.
2. Protect and manage existing heath, woodland and stream habitats and in particular the characteristic ghyll woodland.
3. Plan for the creation of multifunctional green infrastructure to maximise the opportunities for biodiversity and recreation offered by the rural lanes, rights of way network and extensive heath and woodland.
4. Consider the potential to plan for recreational access in this character area identifying areas where public access can be encouraged whilst protecting other areas where wildlife conservation is the priority.
5. Integrate proposed and existing development into the landscape through planting of tree features and woodland to define the village boundaries with the countryside.
6. Ensure that the design and layout of new developments respect the character and form of the landscape and existing settlements.
7. Control the spread of suburbanisation by minimising clutter of signage and other urban features in lanes and villages.
8. Conserve the setting of historic buildings and landscape features and notably the historic designed landscapes of Chelwood Vachery and Pippingford Park.
9. Conserve and replant as necessary the distinctive pine plantations on the high spots of the forest.
10. Consider appropriate species for new plantings to maintain landscape character and biodiversity but also adaptation to climate change influences.

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D Guidelines for Managing Change

Development considerations for housing and other development

Proposals need to have regard for the current High Weald Management Plan:

http://www.highweald.org/downloads/publications/high-weald-aonb-management-plan-documents/1141-high-weald-management-plan-3rd-edition-2014-2019.html.

The main pressures for development in this character area will be to accommodate housing for the populations in the settlements around the edges of the forest at Nutley, Forest Row and Hartfield.

There will inevitably be a demand for local housing in the smaller settlements within the forest such as Chelwood gate and Fairwarp. Pressures for expansion of Crowborough may impact on the part of the character area which borders the town. Tourism is an important source of income to this area and there is likely to be increasing demand for accommodation in hotels, bed and breakfast, caravan and camp sites. The modern trend for luxury and exotic camping (glamping) is already appearing in the guise of teepees, tree houses and the like. There will be demand for new facilities and to improve or expand existing, some of these putting pressure on ancient woodland. Any new development should respect the key positive attributes in the landscape outlined in Table 1 above.

Proposed development should consider opportunities for proactively meeting the Landscape Change Strategy aims for this Landscape Character Area as set out in 1-10 above.

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Table 5

Current issues offering opportunities for protection and enhancement	Landscape Management Guidelines	Benefits delivered by Ecosystem Services for each area of interest
Countryside and Farmland Higher level stewardship relating to much of the heathland. Pressure for farm diversification and development of hobby farms, solar arrays, wind farms, waste recycling operations etc. Erosion of heathland on the key access paths and bridleways by heavy recreational use. Expansion of camping and caravan sites as well as other holiday related development such as 'Glamping'. Land falling out of positive management and dereliction of farm buildings. Low water levels and poor water quality in some drains and streams. Deterioration of by ways and lanes due to erosion of un-surfaced routes by horses, bikes and 4 wheel drives. Damage to verges on country lanes caused by increasing size of farm vehicles and passing traffic. Damage to verges caused by visitor parking. Overstocking and arable production on some soils can result in soil erosion and reduce soil quality.	**Countryside and Farmland** Encourage establishment of more farm conservation schemes to conserve the landscape structure of hedges, shaws, ponds and streams. Conserve hedges, trees and ghyll woods. Maintain the mixed farmed character of the area. Protect and manage historic field patterns and conserve boundary features, notably the park pale. Conserve and enhance byways and rural lanes. Use tree and woodland planting to screen intrusive farm buildings and caravan sites. Enhance the biodiversity value of heathland, drainage and stream channels. Plan for and manage changes which may occur in the landscape due to changes in farm management brought about by economic influences and climate change. Reduce the risk and incidence of soil erosion by encouraging the restoration of arable land to pasture or heath. Apply best land management practices to prevent soil and fertiliser run off, thereby protecting surface and ground water.	**Provisioning services** Water availability Food production **Regulating services** (water purification, air quality maintenance and climate regulation) Water quality and protected aquifers. Regulating water flow and preventing flooding Soil conservation and erosion control Habitat and species resilience to climate change Carbon sequestration. Areas of peat in the river valleys, hedges, trees, reed beds and grassland regulate air quality by absorbing and retaining CO_2. **Cultural Services** Sense of Place and local distinctiveness. Source of Inspiration Sense of History Tranquillity Biodiversity

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Current issues offering opportunities for protection and enhancement	Landscape Management Guidelines	Benefits delivered by Ecosystem Services for each area of interest
Trees and Woodland Ancient woodland, tree groups and parkland trees are not in positive management. Ghyll woodlands not in positive management and are difficult to manage due to the steep and inaccessible nature of these woods. Traditional management has stopped as it is not commercially viable e.g. pollarding of stream side willows. Tree diseases. Ancient parkland trees dying off and not being replaced. Extensive areas of woodland are already in woodland grant schemes. Pressure for glamping sites in woodland. Invasive species competing with native flora and fauna e.g. Spanish Bluebell, Himalayan balsam, Japanese knotweed.	**Trees and Woodland** Actively manage trees and woodland through coppicing, pollarding of willows and replanting to create a diverse age structure. Replant feature tree groups and parkland trees as these deteriorate with old age. Consider the need to adapt to changes enforced by climate change, such as specific tree diseases and possible adaptation in species selection. Plant trees and woodland to contain existing and new built development. Encourage planting of trees along streams and ditches where appropriate for the habitat.	**Provisioning** Fuel (woodfuel for local communities from woodland management) Wood for building and furniture. **Regulating** Carbon sequestration, woodland absorbs and holds CO_2. Habitat and species resilience to climate change **Cultural** Tranquillity Sense of Place and local distinctiveness Cultural heritage (traditional woodland management). Use of local timber in building and furniture. Biodiversity

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Current issues offering opportunities for protection and enhancement	Landscape Management Guidelines	Benefits delivered by Ecosystem Services for each area of interest
Other Key Habitats Deterioration and loss of habitats : **Water** Loss of river and streamside vegetation. Deterioration of water quality in streams, ditches and ponds Invasive species of plants and animals which compete with native flora and fauna. **Wet Meadows** Financial and viable farming constraints affecting the continued management of wet meadows reducing the biodiversity value. Improvements to Grassland and meadows reducing species richness. Loss of wetland meadows to arable farming.	**Other Key Habitats** Encourage management of river and stream channels, especially conservation of riverside trees and vegetation. Conservation and re-creation of wet meadow/ pasture habitats. Agri-environment schemes to maximise biodiversity and encourage the retention of grazing. Encourage measures to improve water quality. Continue schemes to encourage farmers to minimise the use of chemicals and fertilizers.	**Provisioning** Nature's larder of free berries and herbs. Conservation of insect pollinators for pollination of crops. **Regulating** Habitat and species resilience to climate change **Cultural** Appreciation of nature Educational value Biodiversity

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Current issues offering opportunities for protection and enhancement	Landscape Management Guidelines	Benefits delivered by Ecosystem Services for each area of interest
Recreation, Green Infrastructure (GI) and ANGS Pressure on bridleways and byways as multi use, including cycling and 4 wheel drives increasing erosion. Lack of funding to manage and enhance GI for improved access. Need for better recreational linkages and improved sustainable transport corridors. Extensive footpath and bridleway network across the forest. Need for improved access to natural green space for all users both close to homes and in the wider countryside. Gentrification Loss of tranquillity due to more cars and access.	**Recreation, Green Infrastructure and ANGS** Where appropriate develop Green Infrastructure Strategies based on a county wide GI mapping. Plan for and manage recreational pressure on the countryside which could be affected by the increase in population in Crowborough and Uckfield as well as the seasonal holiday makers. Maximise opportunities for access away from sensitive habitats. Consider opportunities to create new green corridors and improve existing as safe ideally motorised traffic free recreational routes.	**Provisioning** Protected farmland. **Regulating** Habitat and species resilience to climate change Water quality and protected aquifers. Regulating water flow and preventing flooding Carbon sequestration **Cultural** Recreation Heritage assets and cultural heritage Inspirational Tranquility Biodiversity

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Ashdown Forest

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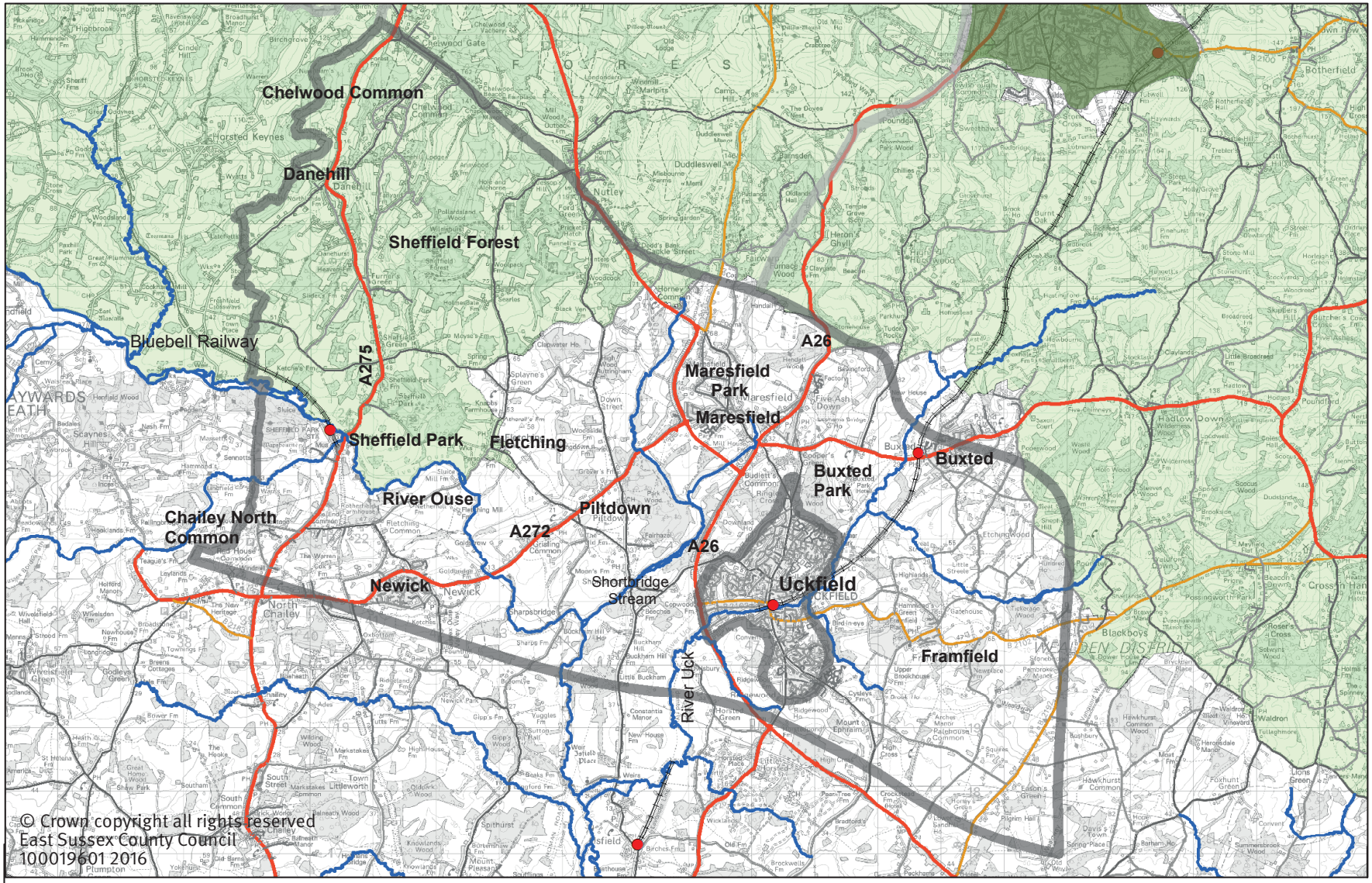
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Upper Ouse Valley



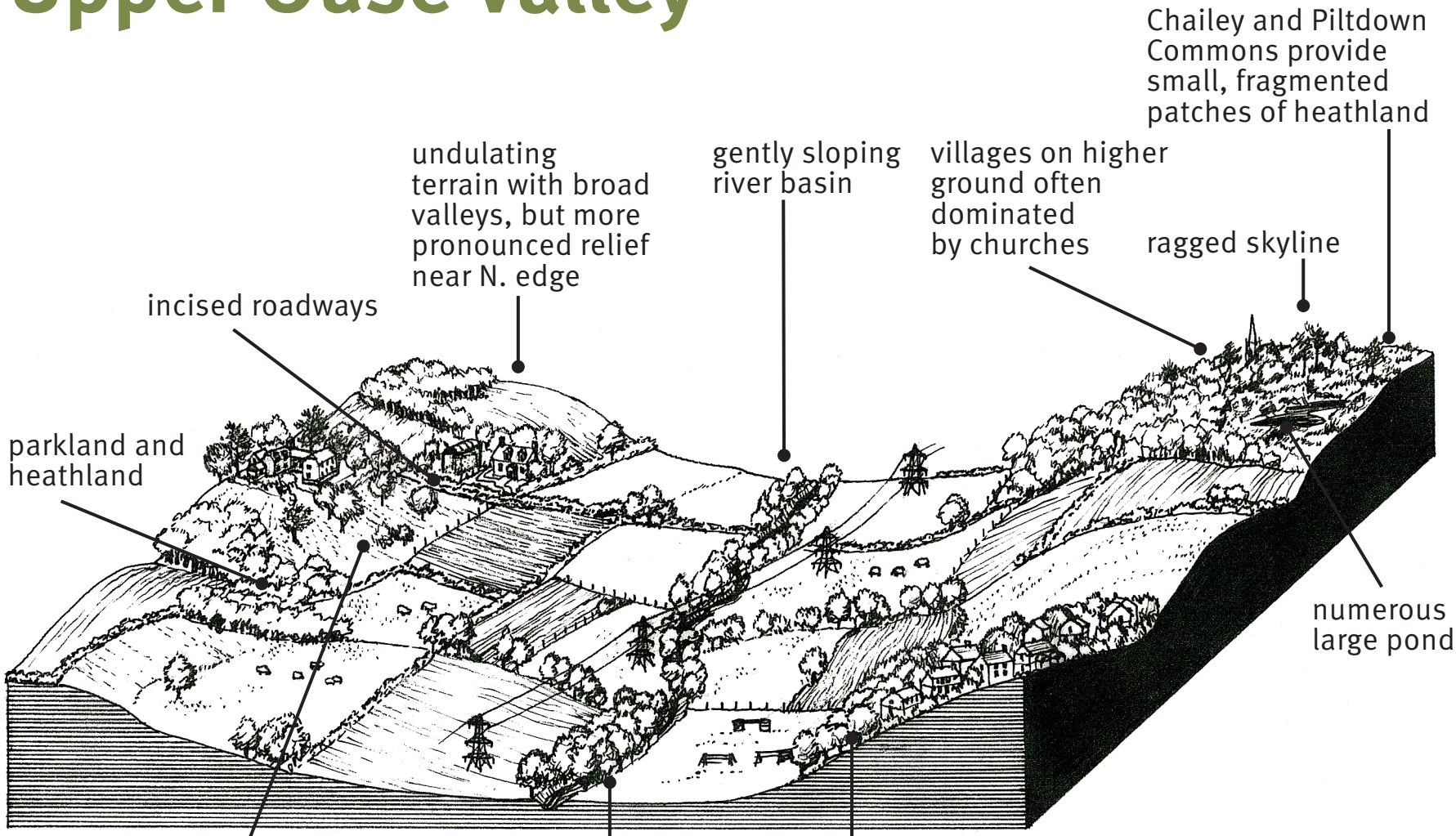
3 Upper Ouse Valley Landscape Character Area

High Weald AONB

0 0.75 1.5 3 4.5 6 Kilometers

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Upper Ouse Valley



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Upper Ouse Valley

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The High Weald

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A Landscape Description

Key Landscape characteristics

- Countryside of low ridges and wider valleys covered by an intricate pattern of streams and woods.
- The catchment of the upper reaches of the River Ouse which includes Shortbridge Stream and the River Uck.
- Winding, alder-lined rivers and streams.
- Gently undulating terrain with broad valleys, but more pronounced relief near the northern edge where the low weald landscape rises to that of the high weald.
- A heavily wooded landscape which provides areas of relative remoteness especially in the valleys and larger woods.
- Significant designed landscaped parkland at Sheffield and Buxted Parks.
- Small village settlements with distinctive churches.
- Rock outcrops and incised roadways.
- Historic farmhouses and large farmsteads.
- Chailey North and Piltdown Common provide small, fragmented but significant patches of heathland.
- Abundant tree cover, with 17.5% woodland and a strong structure of woods, trees, hedges and shaws.
- The extensive area of woodland including Sheffield Forest, Pollardsland and Maskett woods.
- Many of the woods are ancient semi-natural woodland with extensive areas replanted with chestnut coppice mixed with conifers.
- Characteristic tree species are of coppiced chestnut on the sandy soils with oak in the south east on the Wadhurst clays.
- Birch predominates in younger woodland and on the heaths, with some pine.
- Other characteristic species are beech, wild cherry and yew with alder and willow in the river and stream valleys.
- Many scattered farm ponds and large 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.
- A close network of winding, sunken lanes with scattered settlements and individual dwellings often strung out along them.
- Traditional building materials for the area are red brick, often laid as Flemish bond with blued brick ends, red tiled roofs and tile hung upper stories are typical.
- Oak timber framed and sandstone houses reflect the abundance of locally sourced timber and quarried stone.
- Flint was used in building in the south of the area which is closer to the downs where it was sourced.
- Several main roads cross the area, the A275 across the west of the area, the A272 across the middle and the A26 across the east as the Uckfield bypass.

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Upper Ouse Valley

- The Uckfield to London railway runs across the eastern corner.
- The historic Bluebell Railway has its very popular visitor centre at Sheffield Park Station and runs west to continue to East Grinstead.

Cultural Interests

In the 16th century there were many iron furnaces in the area and William Levett of Buxted was a prime mover in the Wealden iron industry as well as being a vicar. The Levett family supplied armaments to Henry VIII.

Sheffield Park Gardens was a 16 century deer park where the 3rd Duke of Norfolk entertained Henry VIII. When the house was remodelled to a Gothic style by James Wyatt in the late 1700s the grounds were remodelled by Capability Brown and later by Repton. Later owners developed the garden's horticultural collection of trees and shrubs and it is especially notable for rhododendron and camellia collections and autumn colour. In 1884 the cricket pitch hosted the first ever England versus Australia cricket match. During WW2 the estate was the headquarters for a Canadian armoured division.

Maresfield Park and house were owned by Alexander Munster of Hanover until 1914 when the estate was confiscated and sold off in 1924. The park was used as a military camp and soldiers' married quarters were developed at Queens Drive and south of Parklands. Buxted Park was purchased in the early 1830s by the then Prime Minister, The Earl of Liverpool. He increased the size of the parkland by relocating the entire village apart from the church. Most of Buxted village has been built on its current site since this time.

The village of Piltdown was the centre of one of the most renowned paleoanthropological hoaxes of all time. A skull was discovered in 1912 in a local gravel pit which appeared to be the missing link between humans and apes but turned out to be a fake. Although never proven this was probably instigated by Charles Dawson who was later exposed as a serial archaeological hoaxer.

The prime meridian crosses the western part of the area through Danehill.

Notable residents of the area include Vivien Leigh who lived near Framfield at Tickerage Mill, the actor Jimmy Edwards lived in Fletching and Bee Gee Maurice Gibb also lived in Fletching.

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Upper Ouse Valley

Table 1 Key positive Landscape Attributes

- Countryside of low ridges and wider valleys covered by an intricate pattern of streams and woods.
- The River Ouse catchment of winding, alder-lined rivers and streams.
- Gently undulating terrain with broad valleys.
- A heavily wooded landscape which provides areas of relative remoteness.
- Significant designed landscaped parkland at Sheffield and Buxted Parks.
- Small village settlements with distinctive churches.
- Rock outcrops and incised roadways.
- Historic farmhouses and large farmsteads.
- Chailey North and Piltdown Common are significant patches of heathland.
- Coppiced chestnut woods with oak.
- Other characteristic species are beech, wild cherry and yew with alder and willow in the river and stream valleys.
- Many scattered farm ponds and large 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.
- Traditional building materials for the area are red brick, often laid as Flemish bond, red tiled roofs and tile hung upper stories are typical.
- Oak timber framed and sandstone houses reflect the abundance of locally sourced timber and quarried stone.
- The historic Bluebell Railway has its very popular visitor centre at Sheffield Park Station and runs west to continue to East Grinstead.

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B Landscape Evaluation

Table 2 Current Condition

This is a largely unspoilt and tranquil rural landscape with few intrusive features. The landscape is in generally good condition and well managed as farmland with a strong historic structure. Agricultural change and diversification has led to some gentrification of the rural landscape and farm steads.

Creeping suburbansation and urban fringe pressures are evident around the towns and larger villages detracting from local distinctiveness. As with most of the Wealden landscape the historic field patterns of small fields and significant hedgerows remain intact. Many woodlands have been affected by lack of management, rhododendron invasion and coniferisation.

Forces for Change impacting on positive attributes

Past / Current forces for change

- A 400Kv power line traverses the area, passing close to Chailey Common.
- Several areas of large scale intensive arable farming with loss of hedge structure, especially between Newick and Fletching.
- Coniferisation of larger woods.
- Loss of riverside trees due to river flood management.
- The Trees on the River Uck (TrUck) project a new and innovative project that hopes to decrease the impacts of flooding in Uckfield town, by restoring natural river features such as floodplain woodlands.
- Numerous large modern farm groups, including battery units.
- Urban fringe pressures around Newick and Uckfield.
- Some open built-up edges to the countryside around Uckfield.
- Creeping suburbanisation and cumulative changes in the rural landscape, roads and villages which are not in sympathy with local distinctiveness or vernacular architecture.
- Urban fringe pressures, particularly around Uckfield.
- Development pressures in the villages.

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- Agricultural diversification to hobby farms and horsiculture.
- Changes in the types and frequency of grazing animals in the countryside impacts on character as they are a characteristic feature. Lack of grazing can give an unmanaged appearance to the landscape and reduce the biodiversity value.
- The wider land management initiatives associated with the High Weald AONB.
- Farm Environment Plans many farms are under Higher Level Stewardship Agreements including Piltdown Golf course, Sutton Hall Farms to the west of Uckfield and some farms are farmed organically.
- Intrusive modern farm buildings.
- Loss of traditional coppicing in woodlands and increase in game shooting.
- Woodland Grant schemes are scattered across the area, notably at Views Wood, Furnace Bank, Lake, Kiln and Beechen Woods to the west of Uckfield, woods around Framfield and Sheffield Forest, reversing the trend of poor woodland management.
- Increasing traffic on the A roads which cross the area and the main roads along the ridges and rat running on rural lanes.

Future Forces for Change

- The need to provide local housing in the villages, especially the larger service centres.
- The associated infrastructure required for new development such as waste water treatment works.
- Demands for traffic calming and road improvements which could introduce increasing urban clutter to rural roads, villages and lanes.
- Continued agricultural change due to changing markets, economic pressures and response to climate change.
- The spread of small agricultural holdings, hobby farming, paddocks, farm shops and allotments for local food production.
- Pressure for locating renewable energy facilities for solar, wind and bio energy.
- Pests and diseases of trees which could impact significantly on the mature tree stock. E.g. phytophora of alder and Ash dieback.
- Failure to control invasive species of plants and animals in water courses, such as New Zealand Pigmy Weed (*Crassula helmsii*), Parrots Feather (*Myryophyllum aquaticum*), Mink and European Marsh Frog (*Pelophylax ridibundus*). All of these impact on the native flora and fauna which are characteristic of the area.
- Water quality in the Ouse and Uck catchments.

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Table 3 Potential Impacts of Climate Change

- Potential changes in woodland / tree species composition and accelerated growth of species such as birch,
- Changes in ground flora which produce distinctive seasonal displays and other native vegetation.
- Increased prevalence of pests and diseases due to warmer weather e.g. Phytophera of Alder.
- Changes in precipitation and temperatures will change the types of crops that farmers grow.
- Potential impact on the viability of grazing sheep, dairy and beef.
- Increased temperatures and a decline in precipitation levels may dry out wetland habitats and ponds and alter stream flows.
- Changes in water levels in ditches, ponds and streams.

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C Vision and Strategy

Table 4 Vision

A tranquil and predominately rural landscape of rolling typical wealden countryside. Remote, secluded valleys with winding natural river channels. A landscape with a scattered settlement pattern of historic farmsteads and a strong pattern of woods, fieldscapes, trees and hedges. The character of existing settlements retained and urban development controlled with good design and spatial planning.

As noted in the current Landscape Character Guidance – A Landscape Strategy identifies *"what change if any is desirable for any landscape character area as a whole?"*

Landscape change and adaptation to meet the strategy requires:

1. Planning for the enhancement of the following Biodiversity Opportunity Areas (BOA); The River Uck and its headwaters BOA, this lies to the north east of Uckfield and The Western Ouse Streams and Ashdown Forest BOA which covers most of the character area to the west of Uckfield.
2. Protection and management of existing wetland habitats and plan for restoration of ditches, riverside vegetation and tree cover to restore habitat linkages and continuity.
3. Protection and enhancement of the remote qualities of the river valleys.
4. Plan for the creation of multifunctional green infrastructure to maximise the opportunities for biodiversity and recreation offered by the rural lanes, rights of way network and extensive woodland.
5. Consider the potential to plan for recreational access in this character area identifying areas where public access can be encouraged whilst protecting other areas where wildlife conservation is the priority.
6. Integrate proposed and existing development into the landscape through planting of tree features and woodland to define the town and village boundaries with the countryside and in particular soften the edges of Uckfield with tree planting.
7. Ensure that the design and layout of new developments respect the character and form of the landscape and existing settlements.
8. Control the spread of suburbanisation by minimising clutter of signage and other urban features in lanes and villages.
9. Conserve the setting of historic buildings and landscape features and notably the registered parkland and gardens of Sheffield Park.
10. Protect and enhance historic designed landscapes and features of archaeological significance.
11. Consider appropriate species for new plantings to maintain landscape character and biodiversity having regard to adaptation to climate change influences.
12. Restore and strengthen tree and woodland structure, encouraging woodland grant and farm conservation schemes and positive woodland management.
13. Encourage screening of farm groups as a component of these schemes.
14. In the long term, seek undergrounding of 400Kv line, particularly near Chailey Common.

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D Guidelines for Managing Change

Development considerations for housing and other development

Proposals within the High Weald AONB need to have regard for the current High Weald Management Plan: http://www.highweald.org/downloads/publications/high-weald-aonb-management-plan-documents/1141-high-weald-management-plan-3rd-edition-2014-2019.html.

The main pressures for development in this character area will be to accommodate housing for the populations in the rural settlements of Maresfield, Newick, Danehill and Framfield. There will inevitably be a demand for local housing in the smaller villages. Pressures for expansion of Uckfield may impact on the parts of the character area which border the town.

Tourism is an important source of income to this area and there is likely to be increasing demand for accommodation in hotels, bed and breakfast, caravan and camp sites. The modern trend for luxury and exotic camping (glamping) is already appearing in the guise of teepees, tree houses and the like. There will be demand for new facilities and to improve or expand existing, some of these putting pressure on ancient woodland. Any new development should respect the key positive attributes in the landscape outlined in Table 1 above.

Proposed development should consider opportunities for proactively meeting the Landscape Change Strategy aims for this Landscape Character Area as set out in 1-14 above.

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Table 5

Current issues offering opportunities for protection and enhancement	Landscape Management Guidelines	Benefits delivered by Ecosystem Services for each area of interest
Countryside and Farmland Farm environment plans relating to much of the farm land including organic farming. Pressure for farm diversification and development of hobby farms, solar arrays, wind farms, waste recycling operations etc. Expansion of camping and caravan sites as well as other holiday related development such as 'Glamping'. Land falling out of positive management and dereliction of farm buildings. Loss of hedgerows and other traditional field boundaries. Loss of traditional orchards, pasture and species rich meadows. Localised flooding of farmland in the river valleys and floodplains. Low water levels and poor water quality in some rivers and streams. Deterioration of by ways and lanes due to erosion of un-surfaced routes by horses, bikes and 4 wheel drives.	**Countryside and Farmland** Encourage establishment of more farm conservation schemes to conserve the landscape structure of hedges, shaws, ponds and streams. Conserve hedges, trees and ghyll woods. Maintain the mixed farmed character of the area. Protect and manage historic field patterns and conserve boundary features. Use tree and woodland planting to screen intrusive farm buildings and caravan sites. Plan for and manage changes which may occur in the landscape due to changes in farm management brought about by economic influences and climate change. Address existing flooding issues of farmland and properties through flood management and by identifying areas which can provide flood alleviation. Enhance the biodiversity value of wet meadows, drainage and stream channels. Conserve and enhance byways and rural lanes.	**Provisioning services** Water availability Food production **Regulating services** (water purification, air quality maintenance and climate regulation) Water quality and protected aquifers. Regulating water flow and preventing flooding Soil conservation and erosion control Habitat and species resilience to climate change Carbon sequestration. Areas of peat in the river valleys, hedges, trees, reed beds and grassland regulate air quality by absorbing and retaining CO_2. **Cultural Services** Sense of Place and local distinctiveness. Source of Inspiration Sense of History Tranquillity Biodiversity

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Current issues offering opportunities for protection and enhancement	Landscape Management Guidelines	Benefits delivered by Ecosystem Services for each area of interest
Countryside and Farmland Damage to verges on narrow country lanes caused by increasing size of farm vehicles and passing traffic. Overstocking and arable production on some soils can result in soil erosion and reduce soil quality.	**Countryside and Farmland** Reduce the risk and incidence of soil erosion by encouraging the restoration of arable land to pasture. Apply best land management practices to prevent soil and fertiliser run off, thereby protecting surface and ground water.	

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Current issues offering opportunities for protection and enhancement	Landscape Management Guidelines	Benefits delivered by Ecosystem Services for each area of interest
Trees and Woodland Ancient woodland and tree belts are not in positive management. Ghyll woodlands are not in positive management and are difficult to manage due to the steep and inaccessible nature of these woods. Traditional management has stopped as it is not commercially viable e.g. pollarding of stream side willows. Tree diseases. Ancient parkland trees dying off and not being replaced. Extensive areas of woodland are already in woodland grant schemes. Pressure for glamping sites in woodland. Invasive species competing with native flora and fauna e.g. Spanish Bluebell, Himalayan balsam, Japanese knotweed.	**Trees and Woodland** Actively manage trees and woodland through coppicing, pollarding of willows and replanting to create a diverse age structure. Plant new small woods, wet woodland and tree belts to strengthen the landscape character and where this is appropriate habitat creation. Consider the need to adapt to changes enforced by climate change, such as specific tree diseases and possible adaptation in species selection. Plant trees and woodland to contain existing and new built development. Encourage planting of trees along streams and ditches where appropriate for the habitat.	**Provisioning** Fuel (woodfuel for local communities from woodland management) **Regulating** Carbon sequestration, woodland absorbs and holds CO_2. Habitat and species resilience to climate change **Cultural** Tranquillity Sense of Place and local distinctiveness Cultural heritage (traditional woodland management) Biodiversity

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Current issues offering opportunities for protection and enhancement	Landscape Management Guidelines	Benefits delivered by Ecosystem Services for each area of interest
Other Key Habitats Deterioration and loss of habitats: **Water** Loss of river and streamside vegetation. Deterioration of water quality in streams, ditches and ponds Invasive species of plants and animals which compete with native flora and fauna. **Wet Meadows** Financial and viable farming constraints affecting the continued management of wet meadows reducing the biodiversity value. Agricultural improvement to Grassland and meadows reducing species richness. Loss of wetland meadows to arable farming.	**Other Key Habitats** Encourage management of river and stream channels, especially conservation of riverside trees and vegetation. Conservation and re-creation of wet meadow/ pasture habitats. Agri-environment schemes to maximise biodiversity and encourage the retention of grazing. Opportunities to maximise reed bed creation. Encourage measures to improve water quality. Continue schemes to encourage farmers to minimise the use of chemicals and fertilizers.	**Provisioning** Nature's larder of free berries and herbs. Conservation of insect pollinators for pollination of crops. **Regulating** Habitat and species resilience to climate change **Cultural** Appreciation of nature Educational value Biodiversity

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Current issues offering opportunities for protection and enhancement	Landscape Management Guidelines	Benefits delivered by Ecosystem Services for each area of interest
Recreation, Green Infrastructure (GI) and ANGS Pressure on bridleways and byways as multi use, including cycling and 4 wheel drives increasing erosion. Lack of funding to manage and enhance GI for improved access. Need for better recreational linkages and improved sustainable transport corridors. Extensive footpath and bridleway network Need for improved access to natural green space for all users both close to homes and in the wider countryside. Gentrification Loss of tranquillity due to more cars and access.	**Recreation, Green Infrastructure and ANGS** Where appropriate develop Green Infrastructure Strategies based on a county wide GI mapping. Plan for and manage recreational pressure on the countryside which could be affected by the increase in population in Uckfield as well as the seasonal holiday makers. Maximise opportunities for access away from sensitive habitats. Consider opportunities to create new green corridors and improve existing as safe ideally motorised traffic free recreational routes. Maximise opportunities for and manage water based recreational activities.	**Provisioning** Protected farmland. **Regulating** Habitat and species resilience to climate change Water quality and protected aquifers. Regulating water flow and preventing flooding Carbon sequestration **Cultural** Recreation Heritage assets and cultural heritage Inspirational Tranquility Biodiversity

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Current issues offering opportunities for protection and enhancement	Landscape Management Guidelines	Benefits delivered by Ecosystem Services for each area of interest
Horse Keeping ('horsiculture') and small holdings Deterioration of the character and quality of the landscape and loss of local distinctiveness. Can detract from historic field pattern where fences replace hedges. Can cause soil erosion.	**Horse Keeping ('horsiculture') and small holdings** Enhance the condition of areas of horsiculture and small holdings through the restoration of an intact, well managed hedgerow or ditch network and retaining a diverse grass sward by preventing overgrazing. Encourage local food production and allotment provision in areas where this will not detract from local landscape character.	**Provisioning** Grazing Food production **Regulating** Habitat and species resilience to climate change **Cultural** Recreation Heritage assets Sense of Place and local distinctiveness Biodiversity

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Current issues offering opportunities for protection and enhancement	Landscape Management Guidelines	Benefits delivered by Ecosystem Services for each area of interest
The character of the villages Gentrification Urbanisation Development pressures Gradual loss and deterioration of heritage features. Fast traffic on rural lanes Visitor pressure and cars detracting from local character and distinctiveness of the area in general.	**Protect and Enhance the character of the villages** Encourage the production of Neighbourhood Plans which incorporate village design guides. Plan for new development in the villages to ensure it is designed to a high standard to reflect local character and sense of place. Establish defined development edges to villages with new tree planting. Prepare village design guides and tree conservation plans. Consider traffic management on rural lanes.	**Provisioning** Local amenities and facilities. **Regulating** Use of sustainable materials Habitat and species resilience to climate change Water quality and protected aquifers. Regulating water flow and preventing flooding **Cultural** Sense of Place and local distinctiveness Heritage assets Biodiversity

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Current issues offering opportunities for protection and enhancement	Landscape Management Guidelines	Benefits delivered by Ecosystem Services for each area of interest
Flood management and SUDS schemes? Flash floods and run off. Flooding of properties in low lying areas by river and ground water.	**Flood management and SUDS schemes?** Plan for flood management by conserving and enhancing the flood plains and managing water levels in ditches and drains. Encourage the design of sensitive flood defence schemes which conserve and enhance the landscape and habitats including river channel restoration schemes Conserve and enhance existing man made and natural drainage features. Maximise opportunities for the creation of SUDs schemes which contribute to local amenity and habitat creation.	**Provisioning** Water conservation **Regulating** Flood control Protection of aquifers **Cultural** Heritage assets Sense of Place and local distinctiveness Tranquillity Amenity and recreation Biodiversity

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Glossary

(also refer to the full version in the County Landscape Assessment).

ANGS: Accessible Natural Green Space Natural England – Accessible Natural Greenspace Standard (ANGSt)

Assart: Field created from the clearance of woodland

Clunch Barn: constructed of a building material composed of hardened clay or chalk marl.

Ecosystem Services: The services provided by nature which support living systems and can be evaluated.

Enclosure: The separation of land from the common by fence or private use.

GI or Green Infrastructure: Multifunctional green areas which provide areas for recreation, wildlife, water supply catchment, flood relief, food or timber production.

Glamping: New types of camp sites with permanent tent features in yurts, teepees, vintage caravans, timber pods etc. Woodlands are popular locations for these.

Local Nature Reserve: Local Nature Reserve (or LNR) is a statutory designation made under Section 21 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949, and amended by Schedule 11 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006, by principal local authorities.

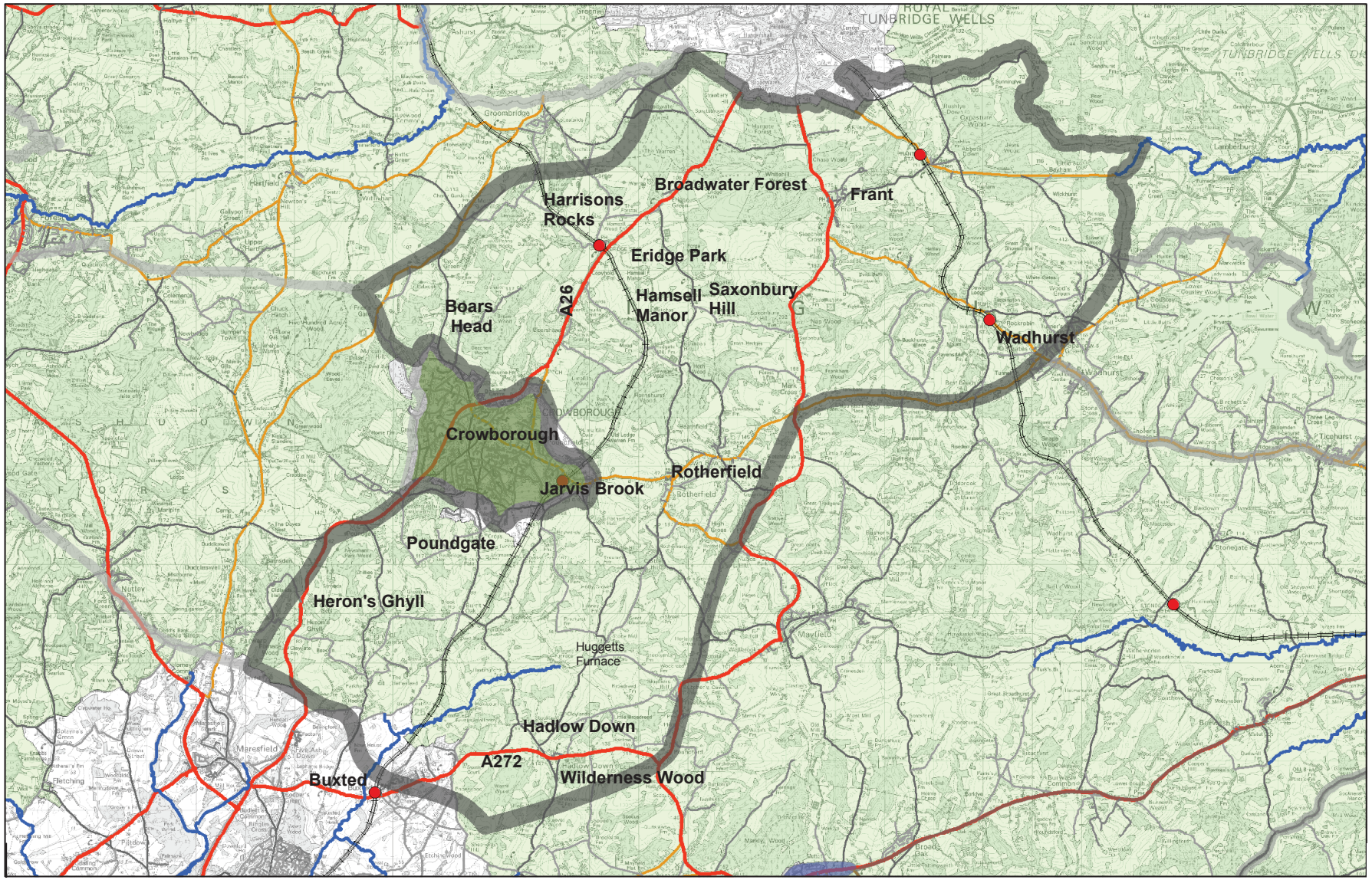
Ramsar sites are wetlands of international importance for biodiversity designated under the Ramsar Convention.

SNCI or Local Site: a Site of Nature Conservation Importance.

SSSI: A national designation for Site of Special Scientific Interest, these may be of biodiversity or geological significance or both.

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Central High Weald



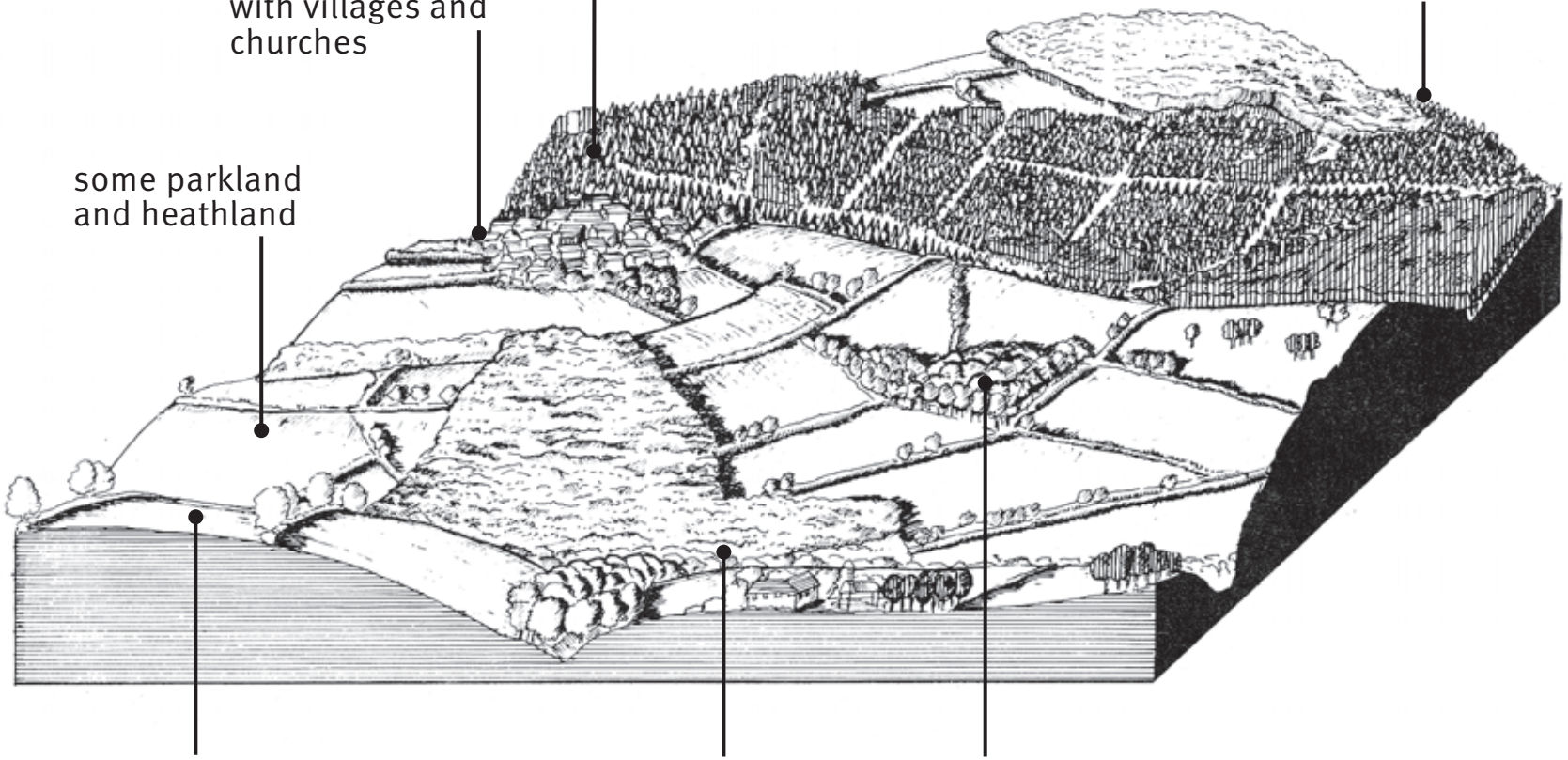
4 Central High Weald Landscape Character Area

High Weald AONB

0 1 2 4 6 8 Kilometers

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Central High Weald



4

The High Weald

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Central High Weald

4

The High Weald

Contents

A. Landscape Description
B. Landscape Evaluation
C. Vision and Strategy
D. Guidelines for Managing Change

A Landscape Description

Key Landscape Characteristics

- This area lies to the south of Tunbridge Wells and to the east of Crowborough and these urban areas do exert an influence over this part of the High Weald.
- Topographically higher than much of the rest of the High Weald and the Low Weald to the south with outstanding views across the High Weald to the Downs.
- Bold, broad ridges often crowned by villages and churches.
- Many scattered small historic villages and hamlets centred around a church or a pub.
- The Iron Age camp at Saxonbury Hill with a folly tower.
- Scattered and often isolated large farmsteads.
- Narrow deep often wooded ghyll valleys with some sandstone outcrops, key characteristics of the High Weald.
- A rolling and heavily wooded landscape which provide areas of relative remoteness especially in the valleys and larger woods.
- Extensive woodland blocks with chestnut coppice and substantial coniferous plantations. Much of this is ancient semi-natural woodland.
- Characteristic tree species are of coppiced chestnut with oak standards and extensive coniferous plantations. Birch predominates in younger woodland and on the heaths as well as pine. Other characteristic species are beech, wild cherry and yew.
- Wilderness Wood in Hadlow Down is in positive management as a centre for woodland skills and education.
- Significant sandstone outcrops, some of which attract climbers and are of national geological significance, notably Harrisons and Eridge Rocks.
- Many scattered small farm ponds and hammer ponds as relics of the iron industry which thrived in this area.
- The source of the rivers Rother and Uck south of Rotherfield.
- A sense of tranquillity and relative remoteness away from the main settlements and roads.
- A close network of winding, sunken lanes with scattered settlements and individual dwellings often strung out along them.
- The Eridge Estate supports an historic deer park and the historic designed landscape with lakes.
- Other Historic England Registered gardens at Rotherfield Hall and Frant Court.

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Central High Weald

- Many of the local buildings and cottages bear the coat of arms of the Abergavenny estate.
- Traditional building materials for the area are red brick, often laid as Flemish bond with blued brick ends, red tiled roofs and tile hung upper stories are typical. Oak timber framed and sandstone houses reflect the abundance of locally sourced timber and quarried stone. Flint is found in the south of the area, closer to the downs where it was sourced. Houses built of non-local materials are found close to the railway.
- Much of the central part of the area is free of main roads and traffic, but the A272 cuts across the southern edge The A26 and A267 cross the west and east side of the area respectively taking traffic through the area to Tunbridge Wells .
- The Uckfield to London railway runs across the western part and the Hastings to London line cuts across the eastern corner.

Cultural Associations

The Eridge estate was settled by the Neville family at the time of William the Conqueror. The family built the village at Eridge Green to house the estate workers. They also invested heavily in Eridge Forge where cannons were once made. Another local forge was located at Hamsell Furnace.

The Abergavenny family succeeded the Nevilles and the family monogram of a bull, Tudor rose and portcullis is seen on many local buildings in surrounding villages. Their influence extended as far as Wales and the town of Abergavenny. The family built the round tower folly on Saxonbury Hill which at that time would have been much less wooded and the tower visible from a wide area.

Notable past residents of Rotherfield include Richard Jefferies, the writer (1848-1912), who lived briefly in Jarvis Brook and Sophia Jex-Blake (1840-1912) who was one of the first women doctors and lived at Mark Cross, she is buried in Rotherfield graveyard. A more recent resident is singer/songwriter and only daughter of Elvis Presley who moved to Coe's Hall near Rotherfield in 2010.

The village of Frant was known for smuggling activities in the 17th and 18th centuries. Royal Engineer Col. John By who led the construction of the Canadian Riddeau Canal Project (1826-32) lived and is buried in Frant.

The New Inn at Hadlow Down is Grade 2 Listed for its original Victorian interior. Hadlow Down was also a center for the iron industry and particularly for charcoal making. The first canon in Sussex was caste here by iron master Rolfe Hoggett of Huggetts Furnace.

Tinkers Park is the home of the Claude Jessett collection of steam and traction engines.

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Central High Weald

Table 1 Key positive Landscape Attributes

- Topographically higher than much of the rest of the High Weald and the Low Weald to the south with outstanding views across the High Weald to the Downs.
- Bold, broad ridges often crowned by villages and churches.
- Many scattered small historic villages and hamlets centred around a church or a pub.
- The Iron Age camp at Saxonbury Hill with folly tower.
- Scattered and often isolated large farmsteads.
- Narrow deep often wooded ghyll valleys with some sandstone outcrops, key characteristics of the High Weald.
- A rolling and heavily wooded landscape which provide areas of relative remoteness especially in the valleys and larger woods.
- Extensive woodland blocks with chestnut coppice and substantial coniferous plantations. Much of this is ancient semi-natural woodland.
- Significant sandstone outcrops, some of which attract climbers and are of national geological significance, notably Harrisons and Eridge Rocks.
- 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.
- A close network of winding, sunken lanes with scattered settlements and individual dwellings often strung out along them.
- The Eridge Estate supports an historic deer park and the historic designed landscape with lakes.
- Many of the local buildings and cottages bear the coat of arms of the Abergavenny estate.
- Other Historic England Registered gardens at Rotherfield Hall and Frant Court.

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Central High Weald

B Landscape Evaluation

Table 2 Current Condition

This is a largely unspoilt and tranquil rural landscape with few intrusive features. The landscape is in generally good condition and well managed as farmland with a strong historic structure. Agricultural change and diversification has led to some gentrification of the rural landscape and farm steads. Creeping suburbansation and urban fringe pressures are evident around the towns and larger villages detracting from local distinctiveness. As with most of the High Weald landscape the historic field patterns of small fields and significant hedgerows remain intact. Many woodland have been affected by lack of management, rhododendron invasion and coniferisation.

Forces for Change impacting on positive attributes

Past / Current forces for change

- Creeping suburbanisation and cumulative changes in the rural landscape, roads and villages which are not in sympathy with local distinctiveness or vernacular architecture.
- Urban fringe pressures, particularly around Crowborough, Rotherfield, Wadhurst and Royal Tunbridge Wells.
- Development pressures in the villages.
- Agricultural diversification to hobby farms and horsiculture.
- Recreational pressures and in particular golf course development.
- Recreational rock climbing leading to severe erosion of outcrops especially At Harrisons Rocks. Inappropriate concrete repairs and tree removal from rock faces.
- Changes in the types and frequency of grazing animals in the countryside impacts on character as they are a characteristic feature. Lack of grazing can give an unmanaged appearance to the landscape and reduce the biodiversity value. The High Weald project for restocking areas of under grazed pasture is addressing this issue. Restocking the High Weald
- The wider land management initiatives associated with the High Weald AONB.
- Farm Environment Plans, much of the farm land is under Higher Level Stewardship Agreements and several farms are farmed organically.
- Intrusive modern farm buildings.

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Central High Weald

- Loss of traditional coppicing in woodlands and increase in game shooting.
- Woodland Grant schemes are scattered across the area, notably at Wilderness Wood and the RSPB Reserve at Broadwater Warren, reversing the trend of poor woodland management.
- Increasing traffic on the A roads which cross the area and the main roads along the ridges and rat running on rural lanes.
- Loss of traditional coppicing in woodlands and increase in game shooting.
- Woodland Grant schemes are scattered across the area, notably at Wilderness Wood and the RSPB Reserve at Braodwater Warren, reversing the trend of poor woodland management.
- Increasing traffic on the A roads which cross the area and the main roads along the ridges and rat running on rural lanes.

Future Forces for Change

- The need to provide local housing in the villages, especially the larger service centres.
- The associated infrastructure required for new development such as waste water treatment works.
- Demands for traffic calming and road improvements which could introduce increasing urban clutter to rural roads, villages and lanes.
- Continued agricultural change due to changing markets, economic pressures and response to climate change.
- The spread of small agricultural holdings, hobby farming, paddocks farm shops and allotments for local food production.
- Pressure for locating renewable energy facilities for solar, wind and bio energy.
- Pests and diseases of trees which could impact significantly on the mature tree stock. E.g. phytophora of alder and Ash dieback.
- Failure to control invasive species of plants and animals in water courses, such as New Zealand Pigmy Weed (*Crassula helmsii*), Parrots Feather (*Myryophyllum aquaticum*), Mink and European Marsh Frog (*Pelophylax ridibundus*). All of these impact on the native flora and fauna which are characteristic of the area.
- Water quality in the Rother and Uck catchments.

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Central High Weald

Table 3 Potential Impacts of Climate Change

- Potential changes in woodland / tree species composition and accelerated growth of species such as birch,
- Changes in ground flora which produce distinctive seasonal displays and other native vegetation.
- Increased prevalence of pests and diseases due to warmer weather e.g. Phytophera of Alder.
- Changes in precipitation and temperatures will change the types of crops that farmers grow.
- Potential impact on the viability of grazing sheep, dairy and beef.
- Increased temperatures and a decline in precipitation levels may dry out wetland habitats and ponds and alter stream flows.
- Changes in water levels in ditches, ponds and streams.

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Central High Weald

C Vision and Strategy

Table 4 Vision

A distinctive rolling landscape with abundant woods and parklands creating scope to enjoy remoteness and seclusion. A vibrant working landscape with thriving land based activities which conserve the characteristic features and wildlife of the area. Traditional thriving villages with a conserved and enhanced local vernacular and sense of place.

As noted in the current Landscape Character Guidance – A Landscape Strategy identifies *"what change if any is desirable for any landscape character area as a whole?"*

Landscape change and adaptation to meet the strategy requires:

1. Planning for the enhancement of the following Biodiversity Opportunity Areas, which collectively cover most of the character area:
    a. Medway, Ouse and Rother Watershed
    b. the Eridge and Broadwater
    c. the River Uck and its headwaters.
2. Protect and manage existing woodland habitats and in particular the characteristic ghyll woodlands.
3. Protect and manage existing wetland habitats and plan for restoration of ditches and riverside vegetation to restore habitat linkages and continuity.
4. Plan for the creation of multifunctional green infrastructure to maximise the opportunities for biodiversity and recreation offered by the rural lanes, rights of way network and extensive woodland.
5. Consider the potential to plan for recreational access in this character area identifying areas where public access can be encouraged whilst protecting other areas where wildlife conservation is the priority.
6. Integrate proposed and existing development into the landscape through planting of tree features and woodland to define the village boundaries with the countryside.
7. Ensure that the design and layout of new developments respect the character and form of the landscape and existing settlements.
8. Control the spread of suburbanisation by minimising clutter of signage and other urban features in lanes and villages.
9. Conserve the setting of historic buildings and landscape features and notably the registered parklands of Eridge Park.
10. Consider appropriate species for new plantings to maintain landscape character and biodiversity but also adaptation to climate change influences.

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D Guidelines for Managing Change

Development considerations for housing and other development

Proposals need to have regard for the current High Weald Management Plan:

http://www.highweald.org/downloads/publications/high-weald-aonb-management-plan-documents/1141-high-weald-management-plan-3rd-edition-2014-2019.html

The main pressures for development in this character area will be to accommodate housing for the populations in the rural settlements of Buxted, Rotherfield, Wadhurst and Frant. There will inevitably be a demand for local housing in the smaller villages. Pressures for expansion of Crowborough may impact on the part of the character area which borders the town. Tourism is an important source of income to this area and there is likely to be increasing demand for accommodation in hotels, bed and breakfast, caravan and camp sites. The modern trend for luxury and exotic camping (glamping) is already appearing in the guise of teepees, tree houses and the like. There will be demand for new facilities and to improve or expand existing, some of these putting pressure on ancient woodland. Any new development should respect the key positive attributes in the landscape outlined in Table 1 above.

Proposed development should consider opportunities for proactively meeting the Landscape Change Strategy aims for this Landscape Character Area as set out in 1-10 above.

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Table 5

Current issues offering opportunities for protection and enhancement	Landscape Management Guidelines	Benefits delivered by Ecosystem Services for each area of interest
Countryside and Farmland Farm environment plans relating to much of the farm lands including organic farming. Pressure for farm diversification and development of hobby farms, solar arrays, wind farms, waste recycling operations etc. Expansion of camping and caravan sites as well as other holiday related development such as 'Glamping'. Land falling out of positive management and dereliction of farm buildings. Loss of hedgerows and other traditional field boundaries. Loss of traditional orchards, pasture and species rich meadows. Low water levels and poor water quality in some drains and streams. Deterioration of by ways and lanes due to erosion of un-surfaced routes by horses, bikes and 4 wheel drives.	**Countryside and Farmland** Encourage establishment of more farm conservation schemes to conserve the landscape structure of hedges, shaws, ponds and streams. Conserve hedges, trees and ghyll woods. Maintain the mixed farmed character of the area. Protect and manage historic field patterns and conserve boundary features. Maintain water levels in drains and ditches. Conserve and enhance byways and rural lanes. Use tree and woodland planting to screen intrusive farm buildings and caravan sites. Enhance the biodiversity value of wet meadows, drainage and stream channels. Plan for and manage changes which may occur in the landscape due to changes in farm management brought about by economic influences and climate change. Address existing flooding issues of farmland and properties through flood management and by identifying areas which can provide flood alleviation.	**Provisioning services** Water availability Food production **Regulating services** **(**water purification, air quality maintenance and climate regulation) Water quality and protected aquifers. Regulating water flow and preventing flooding Soil conservation and erosion control Habitat and species resilience to climate change Carbon sequestration. Areas of peat in the river valleys, hedges, trees, reed beds and grassland regulate air quality by absorbing and retaining CO_2.

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Current issues offering opportunities for protection and enhancement	Landscape Management Guidelines	Benefits delivered by Ecosystem Services for each area of interest
Damage to verges on narrow country lanes caused by increasing size of farm vehicles and passing traffic. Overstocking and arable production on some soils can result in soil erosion and reduce soil quality.	Reduce the risk and incidence of soil erosion by encouraging the restoration of arable land to pasture. Apply best land management practices to prevent soil and fertiliser run off, thereby protecting surface and ground water.	**Cultural Services** Sense of Place and local distinctiveness. Source of Inspiration Sense of History Tranquillity Biodiversity
Trees and Woodland Ancient woodland and tree belts are not in positive management. Ghyll woodlands not in positive management and are difficult to manage due to the steep and inaccessible nature of these woods. Traditional management has stopped as it is not commercially viable e.g. pollarding of stream side willows. Tree diseases. Ancient parkland trees dying off and not being replaced. Extensive areas of woodland are already in woodland grant schemes. Pressure for glamping sites in woodland. Invasive species competing with native flora and fauna e.g. Spanish Bluebell, Himalayan balsam, Japanese knotweed.	**Trees and Woodland** Actively manage trees and woodland through coppicing, pollarding of willows and replanting to create a diverse age structure. Plant new small woods, wet woodland and tree belts to strengthen the landscape character and where this is appropriate habitat creation. Consider the need to adapt to changes enforced by climate change, such as specific tree diseases and possible adaptation in species selection. Plant trees and woodland to contain existing and new built development. Encourage planting of trees along streams and ditches where appropriate for the habitat.	**Provisioning** Fuel (woodfuel for local communities from woodland management) **Regulating** Carbon sequestration, woodland absorbs and holds CO_2. Habitat and species resilience to climate change **Cultural** Tranquillity Sense of Place and local distinctiveness Cultural heritage (traditional woodland management) Biodiversity

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Current issues offering opportunities for protection and enhancement	Landscape Management Guidelines	Benefits delivered by Ecosystem Services for each area of interest
Other Key Habitats Deterioration and loss of habitats : **Water** Loss of river and streamside vegetation. Deterioration of water quality in streams, ditches and ponds Invasive species of plants and animals which compete with native flora and fauna. **Wet Meadows** Financial and viable farming constraints affecting the continued management of wet meadows reducing the biodiversity value. Improvements to Grassland and meadows reducing species richness. Loss of wetland meadows to arable farming.	**Other key Habitats** Encourage management of river and stream channels, especially conservation of riverside trees and vegetation. Conservation and re-creation of wet meadow/ pasture habitats. Agri -environment schemes to maximise biodiversity and encourage the retention of grazing. Opportunities to maximise reed bed creation. Encourage measures to improve water quality. Continue schemes to encourage farmers to minimise the use of chemicals and fertilizers.	**Provisioning** Nature's larder of free berries and herbs. Conservation of insect pollinators for pollination of crops. **Regulating** Habitat and species resilience to climate change **Cultural** Appreciation of nature Educational value Biodiversity

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Current issues offering opportunities for protection and enhancement	Landscape Management Guidelines	Benefits delivered by Ecosystem Services for each area of interest
Recreation, Green Infrastructure (GI) and ANGS (glossary) Pressure on bridleways and byways as multi use, including cycling and 4 wheel drives increasing erosion. Lack of funding to manage and enhance GI for improved access. Need for better recreational linkages and improved sustainable transport corridors. Extensive footpath and bridleway network Need for improved access to natural green space for all users both close to homes and in the wider countryside. Gentrification Loss of tranquillity due to more cars and access.	**Recreation, Green Infrastructure and ANGS** Where appropriate develop Green Infrastructure Strategies based on a county wide GI mapping. Plan for and manage recreational pressure on the countryside which could be affected by the increase in population in Crowborough and Uckfield as well as the seasonal holiday makers. Maximise opportunities for access away from sensitive habitats. Consider opportunities to create new green corridors and improve existing as safe ideally motorised traffic free recreational routes. Maximise opportunities for and manage water based recreational activities.	**Provisioning** Protected farmland **Regulating** Habitat and species resilience to climate change Water quality and protected aquifers. Regulating water flow and preventing flooding Carbon sequestration **Cultural** Recreation Heritage assets and cultural heritage Inspirational Tranquility Biodiversity

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Current issues offering opportunities for protection and enhancement	Landscape Management Guidelines	Benefits delivered by Ecosystem Services for each area of interest
Horse Keeping ('horsiculture') and small holdings Deterioration of the character and quality of the landscape and loss of local distinctiveness. Can detract from historic field pattern where fences replace hedges. Can cause soil erosion.	**Horse Keeping ('horsiculture') and small holdings** Enhance the condition of areas of horsiculture and small holdings through the restoration of an intact, well managed hedgerow or ditch network and retaining a diverse grass sward by preventing overgrazing. Encourage local food production and allotment provision in areas where this will not detract from local landscape character.	**Provisioning** Grazing Food production **Regulating** Habitat and species resilience to climate change **Cultural** Recreation Heritage assets Sense of Place and local distinctiveness Biodiversity
The character of the villages Gentrification Urbanisation Development pressures Gradual loss and deterioration of Heritage features. Fast traffic on rural lanes Visitor pressure and cars detracting from local character and distinctiveness of the area in general.	**Protect and Enhance the character of the villages** Encourage the production of Neighbourhood Plans which incorporate village design guides. Plan for new development in the villages to ensure it is designed to a high standard to reflect local character and sense of place. Establish defined development edges to villages with new tree planting. Prepare village design guides and tree conservation plans. Consider traffic management on rural lanes.	**Provisioning** Local amenities and facilities. **Regulating** Use of sustainable materials Habitat and species resilience to climate change Water quality and protected aquifers. Regulating water flow and preventing flooding **Cultural** Sense of Place and local distinctiveness Heritage assets Biodiversity

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Current issues offering opportunities for protection and enhancement	Landscape Management Guidelines	Benefits delivered by Ecosystem Services for each area of interest
Flood management and SUDS schemes? Flash floods and run off. Flooding of properties in low lying areas by river and ground water.	**Flood management and SUDS schemes?** Plan for flood management by conserving and enhancing the flood plains and managing water levels in ditches and drains. Encourage the design of sensitive flood defence schemes which conserve and enhance the landscape and habitats Conserve and enhance existing man made and natural drainage features. Maximise opportunities for the creation of SUDs schemes which contribute to local amenity and habitat creation.	**Provisioning** Water conservation **Regulating** Flood control Protection of aquifers **Cultural** Heritage assets Sense of Place and local distinctiveness Tranquillity Amenity and recreation Biodiversity

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Glossary

(also refer to the full version in the County Landscape Assessment).

ANGS: Accessible Natural Green Space Natural England - Accessible Natural Greenspace Standard (ANGSt)

Assart: Field created from the clearance of woodland

Clunch Barn: constructed of a building material composed of hardened clay or chalk marl.

Ecosystem Services: The services provided by nature which support living systems and can be evaluated.

Enclosure: The separation of land from the common by fence or private use.

GI or Green Infrastructure: Multifunctional green areas which provide areas for recreation, wildlife, water supply catchment, flood relief, food or timber production.

Glamping: New types of camp sites with permanent tent features in yurts, teepees, vintage caravans, timber pods etc. Woodlands are popular locations for these.

Local Nature Reserve: Local Nature Reserve (or LNR) is a statutory designation made under Section 21 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949, and amended by Schedule 11 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006, by principal local authorities.

Ramsar sites are wetlands of international importance for biodiversity, designated under the Ramsar Convention.

SNCI or Local Site: a Site of Nature Conservation Importance.

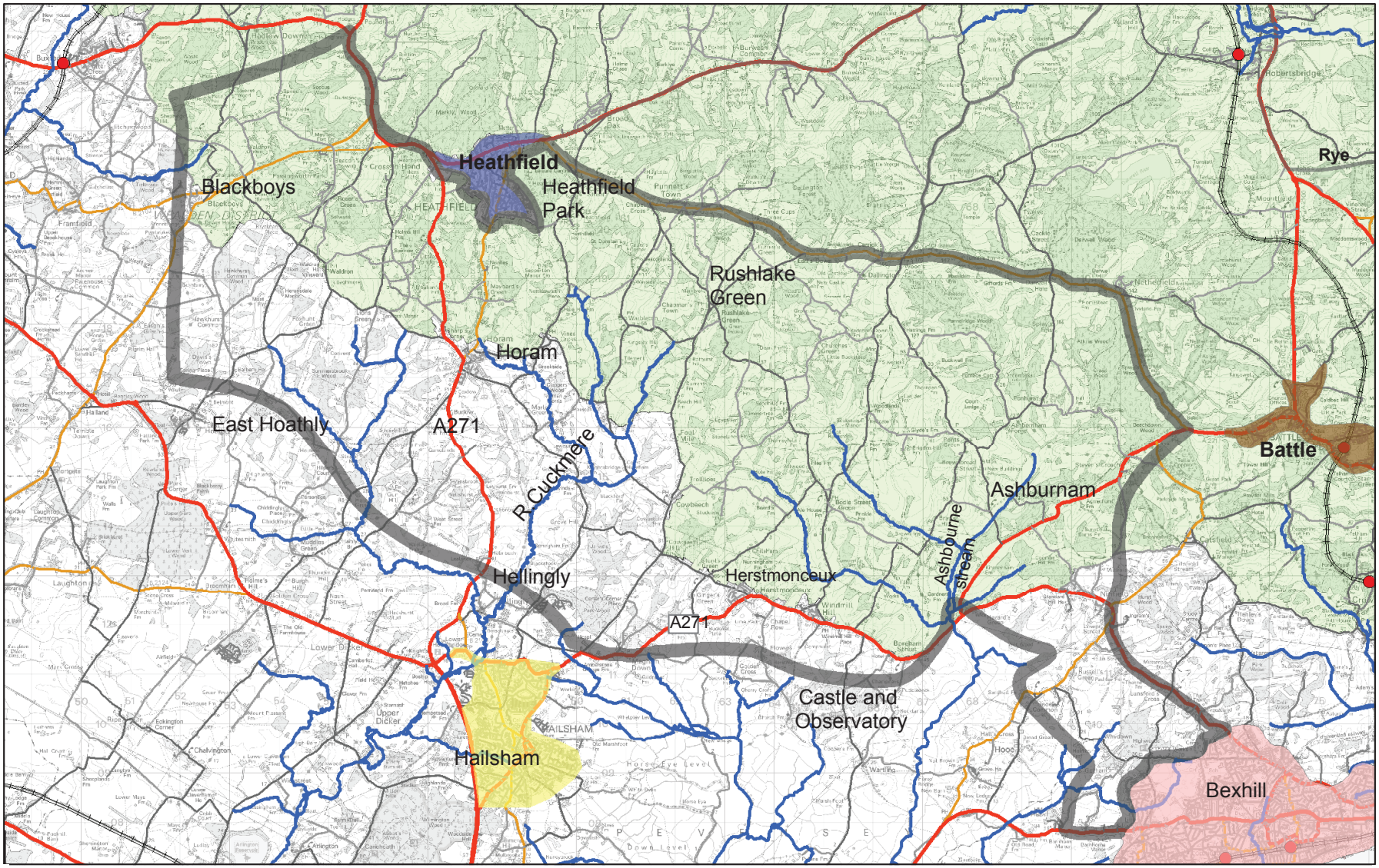
SSSI: A national designation for Site of Special Scientific Interest, these may be of biodiversity or geological significance or both.

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South Slopes of the High Weald

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The High Weald



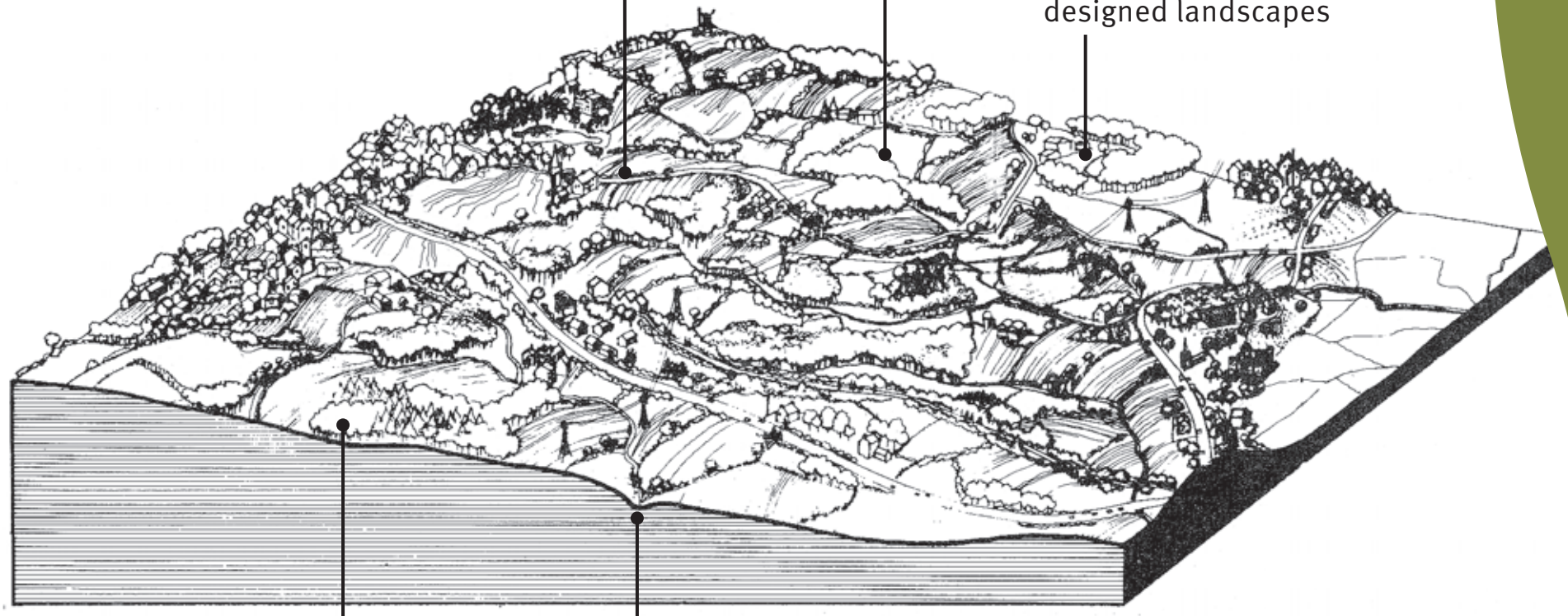
5 South Slopes of the High Weald Landscape Character Area | High Weald AONB | 0 1 2 4 6 8 Kilometers

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The High Weald



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The High Weald

Contents

A. Landscape Description
B. Landscape Evaluation
C. Vision and Strategy
D. Guidelines for Managing Change

A Landscape Description

Key Landscape Characteristics

- An intricate small scale landscape with a strong pattern of hedgerows.
- The area falls gently southwards from the Heathfield Battle ridge to the Low Weald and Pevensey Levels.
- Wide views to the Downs from many areas.
- An area deeply dissected into innumerable north-south ridges, valleys and ghylls.
- The source of the River Cuckmere into which most streams in the western part of the area drain and the Ashbourne stream catchment in the east.
- 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.
- Ghyll woodlands in the many steep sided valleys which are a key characteristic of the High Weald.
- Larger areas of continuous woodland in the Great Wood complex to the east of Rushlake Green and the largest woodland block in the area to the east of Penhurst at Creep Wood.
- There is an abundance of hornbeam or 'horbeech' which is a clue to the local place names such as Cowbeech and Horam. Other indigenous characteristic tree species are Oak, ash and wild cherry. Sweet chestnut is a feature tree in villages and as notable ancient trees and avenues in the parklands of Ashburnum and Herstmonceux Castle. Beech and pine also feature locally and other exotic specimens are found in gardens and villages.
- Many scattered small historic villages and hamlets centred around a church or a pub.
- Scattered and often isolated large farmsteads.
- A close network of winding lanes with scattered settlements and individual dwellings often strung out along them, particularly on the ridges.
- The extensive park and woodland estate at Ashburnum with lakes and vistas designed by Capability Brown.
- Heathfield Park in Old Heathfield, a Repton designed landscape.
- The significant historic moated manor house of Herstmonceux Castle with the associated museum of the old National Observatory which has distinctive domes visible from a wide area to the south.

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South Slopes of the High Weald

- Traditional building materials for the area are red brick, often laid as Flemish bond with blued brick ends, red tiled roofs and tile hung upper stories are typical. Oak timber framed and sandstone houses reflect the abundance of locally sourced timber and quarried stone. Flint is found in the south of the area, closer to the downs where it was sourced. Houses built of non-local materials are found close to the railway.
- Much of the area is free of main roads and traffic; the A271 forms the southern boundary of much of the area before it turns north to Old Heathfield.

Cultural Associations

The area was the centre of a thriving Wealden iron industry due to the locally mined ore, abundance of wood and streams to form ponds. Ashburnum Forge was the last furnace to close in Sussex.

As London night skies became too brightly lit for star gazing in 1957 the Royal Greenwich Observatory was moved to a rural site at Herstmonceux Castle. Several of the telescopes remain but the largest telescope, the 100 inch (254 cm) aperture Isaac Newton Telescope was moved to La Palma, Canary Islands in the 1970s. The estate provides housing to the Equatorial Telescope Buildings, which have been converted to an interactive science centre for schoolchildren. The empty dome for the Newton Telescope remains on this site and is a landmark being visible from afar.

Herstmonceux and the surrounding area were the home of traditional Sussex trug making and there are still some businesses in the area continuing the tradition. Trugs are baskets made from willow boards and oak or ash frames.

The actor Harry H.Corbett is buried in Penhurst Churchyard.

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Table 1 Key positive Landscape Attributes

- An intricate small scale landscape with a strong pattern of hedgerows.
- Wide views to the Downs from many areas.
- The source of the River Cuckmere into which most streams in the western part of the area drain.
- 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.
- Ghyll woodlands in the many steep sided valleys which are a key characteristic of the High Weald.
- Larger areas of continuous woodland in the Great Wood complex to the east of Rushlake Green and the largest woodland block in the area to the east of Penhurst at Creep Wood.
- Many scattered small historic villages, hamlets and large farmsteads centred around a church or a pub.
- The extensive park and woodland estate at Ashburnum with lakes and vistas designed by Capability Brown.
- Heathfield Park in Old Heathfield, a Repton designed landscape.
- The significant historic moated manor house of Herstmonceux Castle with the associated museum of the old National Observatory which has distinctive domes visible from a wide area to the south.

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B Landscape Evaluation

Table 2 Current Condition

This is a largely unspoilt and tranquil rural landscape with few intrusive features. The landscape is in generally good condition and well managed as farmland with a strong historic structure. Agricultural change has led to some gentrification of the rural landscape and loss of landscape features. Ribbon development and roadside clutter has added to suburbanisation on the edges of villages. As with most of the High Weald landscape the historic field patterns of small fields and significant hedgerows remain intact.

Forces for Change impacting on positive attributes

Past / Current forces for change

- Creeping suburbanisation and cumulative changes in the rural landscape. Increasing roadside clutter and village developments which are not in sympathy with local distinctiveness or vernacular architecture.
- Urban fringe influences around Heathfield and Bexhill and widespread encroachment of 'horsiculture'.
- Extensive golf course development which are not in character with the rural landscape, especially around Horam.
- Clay extraction for bricks leaving unrestored quarries.
- Intrusive utility developments in the form of power lines, National Grid complexes and the Southern Water Complex near Ninfield.
- The spread of arable prairie areas causing the loss of historic field boundaries and landscape structure, especially around Ashburnum.
- Changes in the types and frequency of grazing animals in the countryside impacts on character as they are a characteristic feature. Lack of grazing can give an unmanaged appearance to the landscape and reduce the biodiversity value.
- Farm Environment Plans, much of the land is under Higher Level Stewardship Agreements and several farms in the valley are farmed organically.
- Intrusive modern farm buildings which are especially prominent on the ridges.

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South Slopes of the High Weald

- Loss of traditional coppicing in woodlands and increase in game shooting.
- Woodland Grant schemes are scattered across the area, notably at Ashburnum, Ponts Green, Tickerage Wood and Summertree Farm, reversing the trend of poor woodland management.
- Increasing traffic on the A roads which cross the area and the main roads along the ridges and rat running on rural lanes.

Future Forces for Change

- The need to provide local housing in the villages, especially the larger service centres.
- The associated infrastructure required for new development such as waste water treatment works.
- Demands for traffic calming and road improvements which could introduce increasing urban clutter to rural roads, villages and lanes.
- Continued agricultural change due to changing markets, economic pressures and response to climate change.
- The spread of small agricultural holdings, hobby farming, paddocks, farm shops and allotments for local food production.
- Pressure for locating renewable energy facilities for solar, wind and bio energy.
- Pests and diseases of trees which could impact significantly on the mature tree stock. E.g. phytophora of alder and Ash dieback.
- Failure to control invasive species of plants and animals in water courses, such as New Zealand Pigmy Weed (*Crassula helmsii*), Parrots Feather (*Myryophyllum aquaticum*), Mink and European Marsh Frog (*Pelophylax ridibundus*). All of these impact on the native flora and fauna which are characteristic of the area.
- Water quality in the Cuckmere and Ashbourne catchments.

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Table 3 Potential Impacts of Climate Change

- Potential changes in woodland / tree species composition and accelerated growth of species such as birch,
- Changes in ground flora which produce distinctive seasonal displays and other native vegetation.
- Increased prevalence of pests and diseases due to warmer weather e.g. Phytophera of Alder.
- Changes in precipitation and temperatures will change the types of crops that farmers grow.
- Potential impact on the viability of grazing sheep, dairy and beef.
- Increased temperatures and a decline in precipitation levels may dry out wetland habitats and ponds and alter stream flows.
- Changes in water levels in ditches, ponds and streams.

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C Vision and Strategy

Table 4 Vision

A tranquil landscape retaining the strong rural High Wealden historic character. The secluded ghyll valleys and associated woodland conserved and enhanced. The unspoilt character of settlements and farmsteads retained and the distinct sense of place protected. The characteristic medieval field pattern with associated shaws and hedges conserved. Areas of semi-natural ancient woodland brought into positive management to ensure long term health and security.

As noted in the current Landscape Character Guidance – A Landscape Strategy identifies *"what change if any is desirable for any landscape character area as a whole?"*

Landscape change and adaptation to meet the strategy requires:

1. Planning for the enhancement of the Rother, Brede and Tillingham Woods and the Pevensey, Rother and Cuckmere Watershed Biodiversity Opportunity Areas, which extend into the area.
2. Protect and manage existing woodland habitats and in particular the characteristic ghyll woodlands.
3. Protect and manage existing wetland habitats and plan for restoration of ditches and riverside vegetation to restore habitat linkages and continuity.
4. Plan for the creation of multifunctional green infrastructure to maximise the opportunities for biodiversity and recreation offered by the rural lanes, rights of way network and extensive woodland.
5. Consider the potential to plan for recreational access in this character area identifying areas where public access can be encouraged whilst protecting other areas where wildlife conservation is the priority.
6. Integrate proposed and existing development into the landscape through planting of tree features and woodland to define the village boundaries with the countryside.
7. Ensure that the design and layout of new developments respect the character and form of the landscape and existing settlements.
8. Control the spread of suburbanisation by minimising clutter of signage and other urban features in lanes and villages.
9. Conserve the setting of historic buildings and landscape features and notably the registered parklands of Ashburnum, Herstmonceux and Heathfield Park.
10. Consider appropriate species for new plantings to maintain landscape character and biodiversity but also adaptation to climate change influences.

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D Guidelines for Managing Change

Development considerations for housing and other development

Proposals need to have regard for the current High Weald Management Plan:

http://www.highweald.org/downloads/publications/high-weald-aonb-management-plan-documents/1475-high-weald-management-plan-3rd-edition-2014-2019/file.html

The main pressures for development in this character area will be to accommodate housing for the rural populations in the rural settlements of Herstmonceux, Rushlake Green and East Hoathly.

There will also be a demand for local housing in the smaller villages. Pressures for expansion of Heathfield may impact on the part of the character area which borders the town. Tourism is an important source of income to this area and there is likely to be increasing demand for accommodation in hotels, bed and breakfast, caravan and camp sites. The modern trend for luxury and exotic camping (glamping) is already appearing in the guise of teepees, tree houses and the like. There will be demand for new facilities and to improve or expand existing, some of these putting pressure on ancient woodland. Any new development should respect the key positive attributes in the landscape outlined in Table 1 above.

Proposed development should consider opportunities for proactively meeting the Landscape Change Strategy aims for this Landscape Character Area as set out in 1-10 above.

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Current issues offering opportunities for protection and enhancement	Landscape Management Guidelines	Benefits delivered by Ecosystem Services for each area of interest
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Trees and Woodland Ancient woodland and tree belts are not in positive management. Ghyll woodland not in positive management and are difficult to manage due to the steep and inaccessible nature of these woods. Traditional management has stopped as it is not commercially viable e.g. pollarding of stream side willows. Tree diseases. Ancient parkland trees dying off and not being replaced. Extensive areas of woodland are already in woodland grant schemes. Pressure for glamping sites in woodland. Invasive species competing with native flora and fauna e.g. Spanish Bluebell, Himalayan balsam, Japanese knotweed.	**Trees and Woodland** Actively manage trees and woodland through coppicing, pollarding of willows and replanting to create a diverse age structure. Plant new small woods, wet woodland and tree belts to strengthen the landscape character and where this is appropriate habitat creation. Consider the need to adapt to changes enforced by climate change, such as specific tree diseases and possible adaptation in species selection. Plant trees and woodland to contain existing and new built development. Encourage planting of trees along streams and ditches where appropriate for the habitat.	**Provisioning** Fuel (woodfuel for local communities from woodland management) **Regulating** Carbon sequestration, woodland absorbs and holds CO_2. Habitat and species resilience to climate change **Cultural** Tranquillity Sense of Place and local distinctiveness Cultural heritage (traditional woodland management) Biodiversity

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South Slopes of the High Weald

Current issues offering opportunities for protection and enhancement	Landscape Management Guidelines	Benefits delivered by Ecosystem Services for each area of interest
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Current issues offering opportunities for protection and enhancement	Landscape Management Guidelines	Benefits delivered by Ecosystem Services for each area of interest
Recreation, Green Infrastructure (GI) and ANGS (glossary) Pressure on bridleways and byways as multi use, including cycling and 4 wheel drives increasing erosion. Pressure on sensitive wetland habitats. Lack of funding to manage and enhance GI for improved access. Need for better recreational linkages and improved sustainable transport corridors. Extensive footpath and bridleway network Need for improved access to natural green space for all users both close to homes and in the wider countryside. Gentrification Loss of tranquillity due to more cars and access.	**Recreation, Green Infrastructure and ANGS** Where appropriate develop Green Infrastructure Strategies based on a county wide GI mapping. Plan for and manage recreational pressure on the countryside which could be affected by the increase in population in Hailsham as well as the seasonal holiday makers. Maximise opportunities for access away from sensitive habitats. Maximise opportunities provided by the coast for access and recreation. Consider opportunities to create new green corridors and improve existing as safe ideally motorised traffic free recreational routes. Maximise opportunities for and manage water based recreational activities.	**Provisioning** Protected farmland **Regulating** Habitat and species resilience to climate change Water quality and protected aquifers. Regulating water flow and preventing flooding Carbon sequestration **Cultural** Recreation Heritage assets and cultural heritage Inspirational Tranquility Biodiversity

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South Slopes of the High Weald

Current issues offering opportunities for protection and enhancement	Landscape Management Guidelines	Benefits delivered by Ecosystem Services for each area of interest
Horse Keeping ('horsiculture') and small holdings Deterioration of the character and quality of the landscape and loss of local distinctiveness. Can detract from historic field pattern where fences replace hedges. Can cause soil erosion.	**Horse Keeping ('horsiculture') and small holdings** Enhance the condition of areas of horsiculture and small holdings through the restoration of an intact, well managed hedgerow or ditch network and retaining a diverse grass sward by preventing overgrazing. Encourage local food production and allotment provision in areas where this will not detract from local landscape character.	**Provisioning** Grazing Food production **Regulating** Habitat and species resilience to climate change **Cultural** Recreation Heritage assets Sense of Place and local distinctiveness Biodiversity
The character of the villages Gentrification Urbanisation Development pressures Gradual loss and deterioration of Heritage features. Fast traffic on rural lanes Visitor pressure and cars detracting from local character and distinctiveness of the area in general.	**Protect and Enhance the character of the villages** Encourage the production of Neighbourhood Plans which incorporate village design guides. Plan for new development in the villages to ensure it is designed to a high standard to reflect local character and sense of place. Establish defined development edges to villages with new tree planting. Prepare village design guides and tree conservation plans. Consider traffic management on rural lanes.	**Provisioning** Local amenities and facilities. **Regulating** Use of sustainable materials Habitat and species resilience to climate change Water quality and protected aquifers. Regulating water flow and preventing flooding **Cultural** Sense of Place and local distinctiveness Heritage assets Biodiversity

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South Slopes of the High Weald

Current issues offering opportunities for protection and enhancement	Landscape Management Guidelines	Benefits delivered by Ecosystem Services for each area of interest
Flood management and SUDS schemes? Flash floods and run off. Flooding of properties in low lying areas by river and ground water.	**Flood management and SUDS schemes?** Plan for flood management by conserving and enhancing the flood plains and managing water levels in ditches and drains. Encourage the design of sensitive flood defence schemes which conserve and enhance the landscape and habitats Conserve and enhance existing man made and natural drainage features. Maximise opportunities for the creation of SUDs schemes which contribute to local amenity and habitat creation.	**Provisioning** Water conservation **Regulating** Flood control Protection of aquifers **Cultural** Heritage assets Sense of Place and local distinctiveness Tranquillity Amenity and recreation Biodiversity

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South Slopes of the High Weald

Glossary

(also refer to the full version in the County Landscape Assessment).

ANGS: Accessible Natural Green Space Natural England – Accessible Natural Greenspace Standard (ANGSt)

Assart: Field created from the clearance of woodland

Clunch Barn: constructed of a building material composed of hardened clay or chalk marl.

Ecosystem Services: The services provided by nature which support living systems and can be evaluated.

Enclosure: The separation of land from the common by fence or private use.

GI or Green Infrastructure: Multifunctional green areas which provide areas for recreation, wildlife, water supply catchment, flood relief, food or timber production.

Glamping: New types of camp sites with permanent tent features in yurts, teepees, vintage caravans, timber pods etc. Woodlands are popular locations for these.

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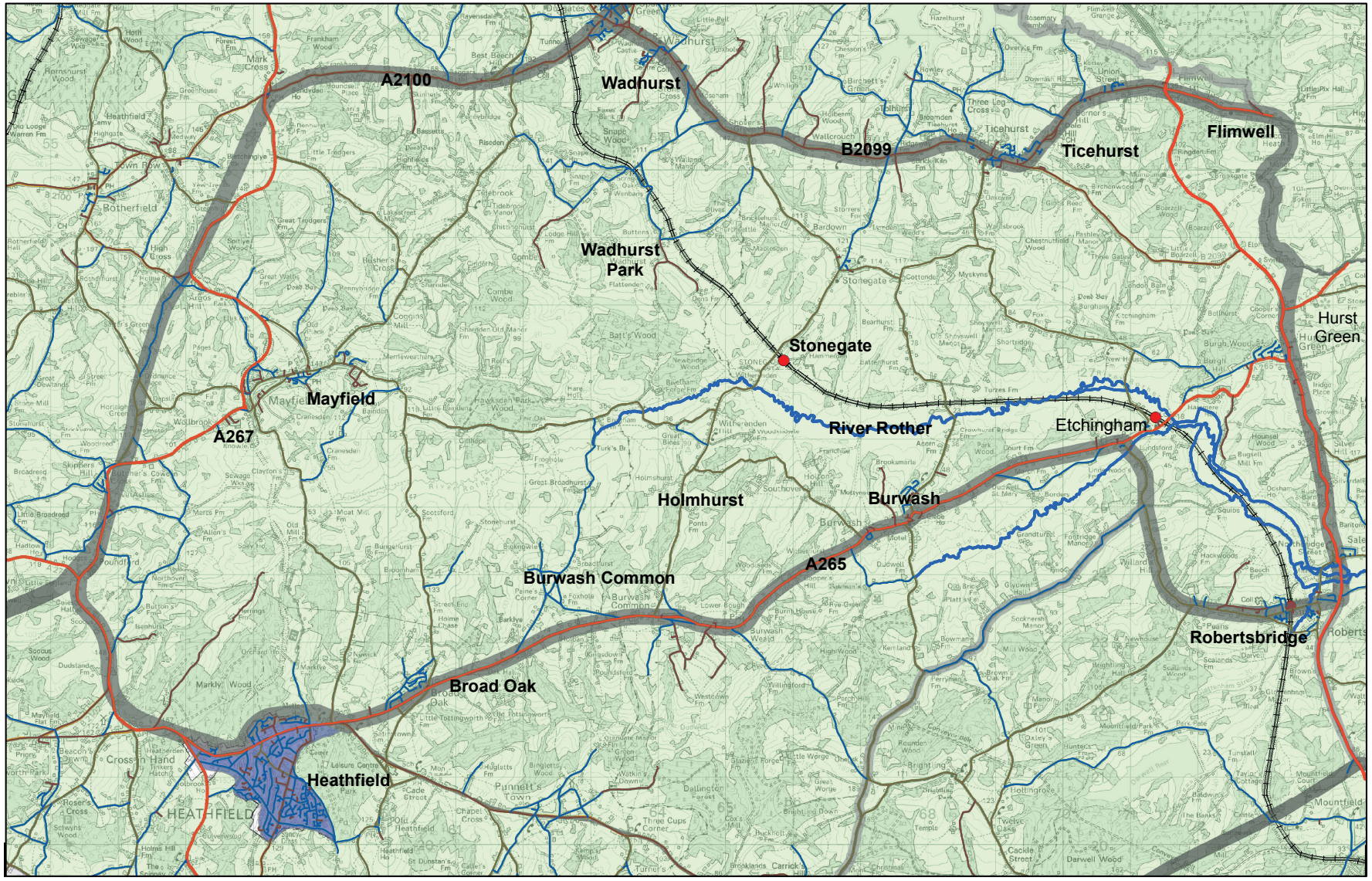
Ramsar sites are wetlands of international importance for biodiversity designated under the Ramsar Convention.

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SSSI: A national designation for Site of Special Scientific Interest, these may be of biodiversity or geological significance or both.

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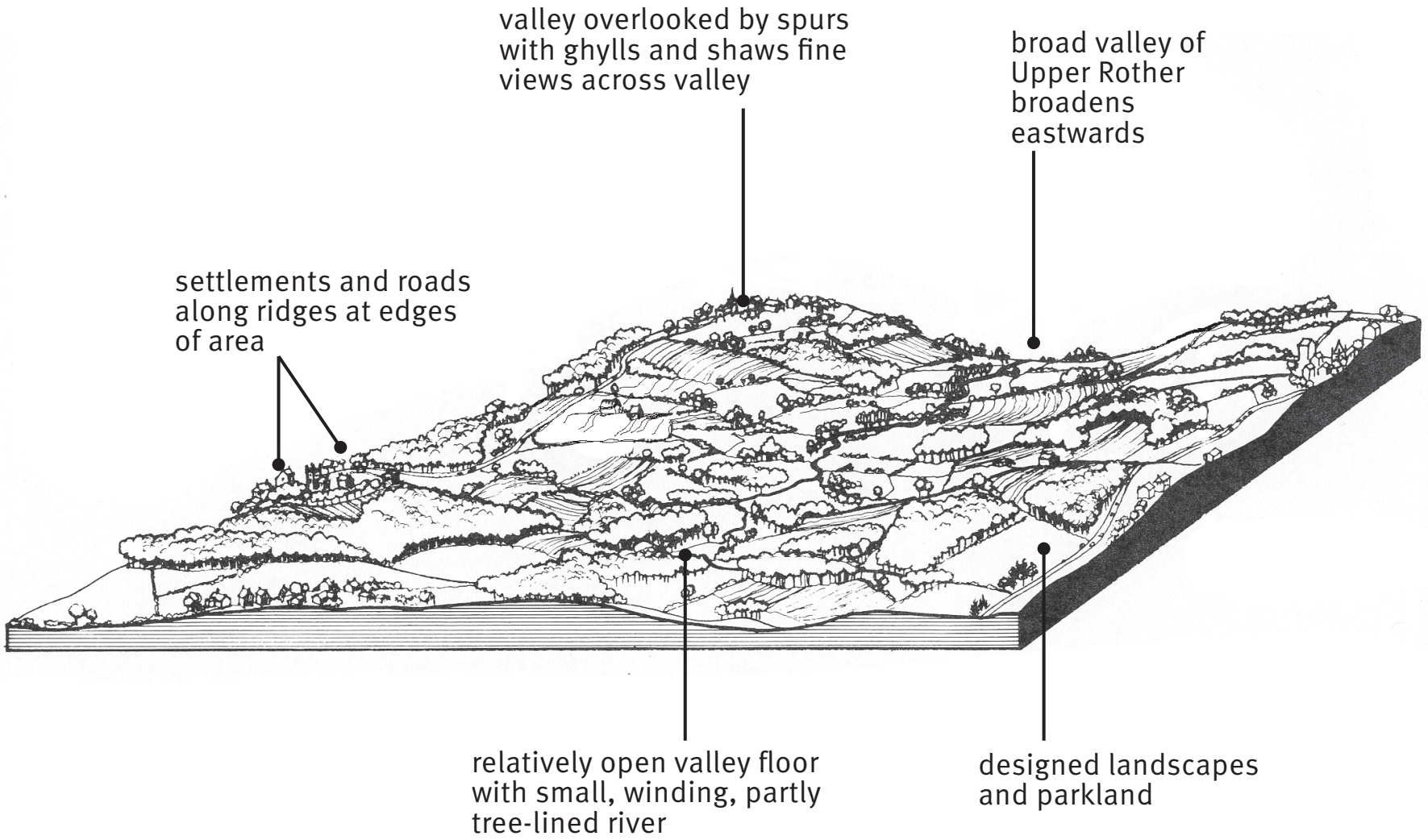
6 Upper Rother Valley Landscape Character Area

High Weald AONB

0 0.5 1 2 3 4 Kilometers

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Upper Rother Valley

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A. Landscape Description
B. Landscape Evaluation
C. Vision and Strategy
D. Guidelines for Managing Change

A Landscape Description

Key Landscape characteristics

- The larger settlements on high ground of Mayfield in the west, Wadhurst and Ticehurst in the north, Hurst Green in the east and Burwash to the south.
- Mayfield, Robertsbridge and Wadhurst are nucleated villages which have grown around a historic core.
- Other settlements have grown as ribbon developments strung along the main roads which follow the ridges on the boundaries of the area.
- The village of Robertsbridge on lower ground adjacent to the river was vulnerable to flooding until recent major flood protection measures were constructed.
- The broad valley of the River Rother dominates the landscape and is overlooked by bold ridges and spurs.
- Stunning views across the valley from the enclosing ridges, some of the finest views in the High Weald.
- The upper half of the largest valley system in the High Weald and the catchment and source of the western river Rother.
- Rolling, richly wooded landscape centred on the flat main valley which broadens in the east.
- Relatively open valley floor with small, winding, partly tree-lined river.
- Large intensively grazed or cropped fields on the lower valley slopes and patterns of smaller medieval fields on the steeper slopes.
- The Rother regularly floods turning the whole valley bottom into a huge sheet of water.
- A strong pattern of linear ghyll woods as well as many larger woods on the valley slopes.
- Extensive areas of remote countryside and exceptional remoteness especially in the valleys and larger woods.
- The villages have great character and variety often with landmark churches and other historic buildings.
- ‘Picturesque’ farms and cottages and scattered historic farmsteads which are a key characteristic of the High Weald.
- Many of the woods are ancient semi-natural woodland with extensive areas replanted with chestnut coppice mixed with conifers.
- Characteristic tree species are of chestnut, larches and pines on the sandy soils of the Ashdown beds.
- Oak, hornbeam and ash predominate in the larger woodlands with hazel understorey.
- Ancient coppice stools of chestnut and hornbeam which have not been managed for many years.
- Other characteristic species are field maple, wild cherry and alder and willow in the river and stream valleys.
- Many scattered farm ponds and larger hammer ponds as relics of the iron industry which thrived in this area e.g. Wadhurst Park Lake and Lakedown trout lake at Holmhurst Manor.

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- A close network of winding, sunken lanes with scattered settlements and individual dwellings often strung out along them.
- Traditional building materials for the area are red brick, often laid as Flemish bond with blued brick ends, red tiled roofs and tile hung upper stories are typical.
- Oak timber framed and sandstone houses reflect the abundance of locally sourced timber and quarried stone.
- There are no main roads crossing the area but the A265 forms the southern boundary and the A267 and A21 cross the west and east edges respectively.
- The Hastings to Tunbridge Wells railway follows the valley from Robertsbridge to Wadhurst.

Cultural Interests

The area was the centre of the Wealden iron industry which thrived due to the abundance of available timber and water and good transport routes to the sea.

This is reflected in local place names and the many forges and mills. Many of the fine houses and large estates in the area also grew from the wealth generated by the industry. The fine houses which line the streets of the larger villages date from the time of the iron industry boom.

In the 18th century the area was known for smuggling of wool, silk and brandy particularly around the village of Mayfield. this was facilitated by good road access to the coastal ports of Hastings and Rye. The remote and wooded character of the area provided hiding places for smugglers and their contraband.

The main toll road from Heathfield to Burwash, now the A265 was a notorious haunt for highwaymen.

Before the Beeching cuts Mayfield was served by the railway from Eastbourne to London, the track was used as the line for the village by pass which was constructed in the early 1990s.

There are many historic buildings scattered across the area and some of the more notable ones are Abbots House (1250) which is the only remaining part of Robertsbridge Abbey. Haremere Hall at Etchingham dates to the early 1600s.

The area has attracted many famous and wealthy residents probably due to the relative remoteness and beauty of the area and ease of access to London. Wadhurst Park is home to the Tetra Pac businessman Hans Rausing and his large collections of rare deer. Holmhurst Manor has been home to Roger Daltry of the Who since the 1970s. Robert Smith, lead singer of the Cure, lives in Burwash and Jeff Beck the guitarist lives in Wadhurst.

Other notable residents were the cricketer Albert Relf (1874-1937) who was born in Burwash. Andrew Young the writer and poet was vicar of Stonegate from 1941-1959.

Robertsbridge is known for the production of cricket bats founded by Gray-Nicholls in 1876 and using locally sourced willow wood.

HMS Etchingham was named after the village as all of the 93 minesweepers built between 1954 and '59 of the *ham* class which were designed for the shallow waters around our coasts were named after places ending in *ham*.

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Table 1 Key positive Landscape Attributes

- The broad valley of the River Rother dominates the landscape and is overlooked by bold ridges and spurs.
- Stunning views across the valley from the enclosing ridges, some of the finest views in the High Weald.
- The upper half of the largest valley system in the High Weald and the catchment and source of the western river Rother.
- Relatively open valley floor with small, winding, partly tree-lined river.
- Extensive areas of remote countryside and exceptional remoteness especially in the valleys and larger woods.
- The villages have great character and variety often with landmark churches and other historic buildings.
- 'Picturesque' farms and cottages and scattered historic farmsteads which are a key characteristic of the High Weald.
- A strong pattern of linear ghyll woods as well as many larger woods on the valley slopes.
- Many of the woods are ancient semi-natural woodland with ancient coppice stools of chestnut and hornbeam.
- Many scattered farm ponds and larger hammer ponds as relics of the iron industry which thrived in this area e.g. Wadhurst Park Lake and Lakedown trout lake at Holmhurst Manor.
- A close network of winding, sunken lanes with scattered settlements and individual dwellings often strung out along them.
- Traditional building materials for the area are red brick, often laid as Flemish bond with blued brick ends, red tiled roofs and tile hung upper stories are typical.
- Oak timber framed and sandstone houses reflect the abundance of locally sourced timber and quarried stone.

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B Landscape Evaluation

Table 2 Current Condition

This is a largely unspoilt and tranquil rural landscape with few intrusive features. The landscape is in generally good condition and well managed as farmland with a strong historic structure. The lack of main roads and large settlements in the heart of the area means that it retains a relative remoteness. Agricultural change and diversification has led to some fragmentation of farm steads. There is evidence of creeping suburbanisation around the villages and on country estates which detracts from local distinctiveness. As with most of the wealden landscape the historic field patterns of small fields and significant hedgerows remain intact, apart from in the wider more fertile river valleys where farming is more intensive. Woodlands have been affected by lack of traditional coppice management, rhododendron invasion and coniferisation.

Forces for Change impacting on positive attributes

Past / Current forces for change

- Ribbon development and modern housing developments on the Heathfield to Burwash ridge.
- Creeping suburbanisation and cumulative changes in the rural landscape, roads and villages which are not in sympathy with local distinctiveness or vernacular architecture.
- Development pressures in the larger villages.
- Erosion of public rights of way where users avoid the muddy areas making tracks increasingly wider.
- Agricultural diversification to hobby farms and horsiculture.
- Changes in the types and frequency of grazing animals in the countryside impacts on character as they are a characteristic feature. Lack of grazing can give an unmanaged appearance to the landscape and reduce the biodiversity value.
- Loss of unimproved species rich pastures and hay meadows.
- The positive land management initiatives associated with the High Weald AONB.
- Areas of large scale intensive arable farming with loss of hedge structure, especially on the wider valley floors.

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- Farm Environment Plans, many farms are under Entry Level Stewardship including extensive areas in the Rother Valley to the east of Mayfield and south of Wadhurst including Wadhurst Park and Holmhurst Farm. Some farms are farmed organically, notably Clayton Farm south of Mayfield.
- Intrusive modern farm buildings.
- Loss of riverside trees due to agriculture and flood management engineering works.
- Coniferisation of larger woods.
- Loss of traditional coppicing in woodlands and increase in game shooting.
- Woodland Grant schemes are scattered across the area, notably Hawksden Park and Newbridge woods, reversing the trend of poor woodland management.
- Increasing traffic on the main roads which cross the north and south of the area and rat running on rural lanes.

Future Forces for Change

- The need to provide local housing in the villages, especially the larger service centres.
- The associated infrastructure required for new development such as waste water treatment works.
- Traffic and rat running on narrow rural roads. Erosion of the edges of sunken lanes by increasingly larger agricultural and other vehicles.
- Demands for traffic calming and road improvements which could introduce increasing urban clutter to rural roads, villages and lanes.
- Continued agricultural change due to changing markets, economic pressures and response to climate change.
- The spread of small agricultural holdings, hobby farming, paddocks, farm shops and allotments for local food production.
- Pressure for locating renewable energy facilities for solar, wind and bio energy.
- Pests and diseases of trees which could impact significantly on the mature tree stock. E.g. phytophora of alder and Ash dieback.
- Failure to control invasive species of plants and animals in water courses, such as New Zealand Pigmy Weed (Crassula helmsii), Parrots Feather (Myryophyllum aquaticum), Mink and European Marsh Frog (Pelophylax ridibundus). All of these impact on the native flora and fauna which are characteristic of the area.
- Water quality in the River Rother catchment.

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Table 3 Potential Impacts of Climate Change

- Potential changes in woodland / tree species composition and accelerated growth of species such as birch and rhododendron.
- Changes in ground flora which produce distinctive seasonal displays.
- Increased prevalence of pests and diseases due to warmer weather e.g. Phytophera of Alder.
- Changes in precipitation and temperatures will change the types of crops that farmers grow.
- More frequent and serious flood events in the valley bottoms.
- Potential impact on the viability of grazing sheep, dairy and beef.
- Increased temperatures and a decline in precipitation levels may dry out wetland habitats and ponds and alter stream flows.
- Changes in water levels in ditches, ponds and streams

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C Vision and Strategy

Table 4 Vision

A remote, tranquil and predominately rural landscape of rolling typical high wealden countryside. Secluded valleys with ghyll woodlands and winding natural river channels. A landscape with a scattered settlement pattern of historic farmsteads and a strong pattern of woods, trees and hedges. The character of existing settlements retained and new development controlled with the highest quality vernacular design and spatial planning.

As noted in the current Landscape Character Guidance – A Landscape Strategy identifies *"what change if any is desirable for any landscape character area as a whole?"*

Landscape change and adaptation to meet the strategy requires:

1. Planning for the enhancement of the Rother, Brede and Tillingham Woods Biodiversity Opportunity Area (BOA). This aims to restore wetlands in the River Rother floodzone. The focus in the upper tributary valleys is woodland management through the Rother Woods Project.
2. Protection and management of existing wetland habitats and planning for restoration of ditches, riverside vegetation and tree cover to restore habitat linkages and continuity.
3. Protection and enhancement of the remote qualities of the river valleys.
4. Planning for the creation of multifunctional green infrastructure to maximise the opportunities for biodiversity and recreation offered by the rural lanes, rights of way network and extensive woodland.
5. Consider the potential to plan for recreational access in this character area identifying areas where public access can be encouraged whilst protecting other areas where wildlife conservation is the priority.
6. Integrate proposed and existing development into the landscape through planting of tree features and woodland to define the town and village boundaries with the countryside.
7. Ensure that the design and layout of new developments respect the character and form of the landscape and existing settlements.
8. Control the spread of suburbanisation by minimising clutter of signage and other urban features in lanes and villages.
9. Conserve the setting of historic buildings and landscape features.
10. Protect and enhance historic designed landscapes and features of archaeological significance.
11. Consider appropriate species for new plantings to maintain landscape character and biodiversity having regard to adaptation to climate change influences.
12. Restore and strengthen tree and woodland structure, encouraging woodland grant and farm conservation schemes and positive woodland management.
13. Encourage screening of farm groups as a component of these schemes.

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D Guidelines for Managing Change

Development considerations for housing and other development

Proposals within the High Weald AONB need to have regard for the current High Weald Management Plan: http://www.highweald.org/downloads/publications/high-weald-aonb-management-plan-documents/1141-high-weald-management-plan-3rd-edition-2014-2019.html.

The main pressures for development in this character area will be to accommodate housing for the populations in the rural settlements of Mayfield, Wadhurst and Burwash. There will inevitably be a demand for local housing in the smaller villages.

Tourism is an important source of income to this area and there is likely to be increasing demand for accommodation in hotels, bed and breakfast, caravan and camp sites. The modern trend for luxury and exotic camping (glamping) is already appearing in the guise of teepees, tree houses and the like. There will be demand for new facilities and to improve or expand existing, some of these putting pressure on ancient woodland. Any new development should respect the key positive attributes in the landscape outlined in Table 1 above.

Proposed development should consider opportunities for proactively meeting the Landscape Change Strategy aims for this Landscape Character Area as set out in 1-13 above.

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Table 5

Current issues offering opportunities for protection and enhancement	Landscape Management Guidelines	Benefits delivered by Ecosystem Services for each area of interest
Countryside and Farmland Farm environment plans relating to much of the farm land including organic farming. Pressure for farm diversification and development of hobby farms, solar arrays, wind farms, waste recycling operations etc. Expansion of camping and caravan sites as well as other holiday related development such as 'Glamping'. Land falling out of positive management and dereliction of farm buildings. Loss of hedgerows and other traditional field boundaries. Loss of traditional orchards, pasture and species rich meadows. Localised flooding of farmland in the river valleys and floodplains. Low water levels and poor water quality in some rivers and streams. Deterioration of by ways and lanes due to erosion of un-surfaced routes by horses, bikes and 4 wheel drives. Damage to verges on narrow country lanes caused by increasing size of farm vehicles and passing traffic. Overstocking and arable production on some soils can result in soil erosion and reduce soil quality.	**Countryside and Farmland** Encourage establishment of more farm conservation schemes to conserve the landscape structure of hedges, shaws, ponds and streams. Conserve hedges, trees and ghyll woods. Maintain the mixed farmed character of the area. Protect and manage historic field patterns and conserve boundary features. Use tree and woodland planting to screen intrusive farm buildings and caravan sites. Plan for and manage changes which may occur in the landscape due to changes in farm management brought about by economic influences and climate change. Address existing flooding issues of farmland and properties through flood management and by identifying areas which can provide flood alleviation. Enhance the biodiversity value of wet meadows, drainage and stream channels. Conserve and enhance byways and rural lanes. Reduce the risk and incidence of soil erosion by encouraging the restoration of arable land to pasture. Apply best land management practices to prevent soil and fertiliser run off, thereby protecting surface and ground water.	**Provisioning services** Water availability Food production **Regulating services** (water purification, air quality maintenance and climate regulation) Water quality and protected aquifers. Regulating water flow and preventing flooding Soil conservation and erosion control Habitat and species resilience to climate change Carbon sequestration. Areas of peat in the river valleys, hedges, trees, reed beds and grassland regulate air quality by absorbing and retaining CO_2. **Cultural Services** Sense of Place and local distinctiveness. Source of Inspiration Sense of History Tranquillity Biodiversity

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Upper Rother Valley

Current issues offering opportunities for protection and enhancement	Landscape Management Guidelines	Benefits delivered by Ecosystem Services for each area of interest
Trees and Woodland Ancient woodland and tree belts are not in positive management. Ghyll woodlands are not in positive management and are difficult to manage due to the steep and inaccessible nature of these woods. Traditional management has stopped as it is not commercially viable e.g. pollarding of stream side willows. Tree diseases. Ancient parkland trees dying off and not being replaced. Extensive areas of woodland are already in woodland grant schemes. Pressure for glamping sites in woodland. Invasive species competing with native flora and fauna e.g. Spanish Bluebell, Himalayan balsam, Japanese knotweed, rhododenrdron.	**Trees and Woodland** Actively manage trees and woodland through coppicing, pollarding of willows and replanting to create a diverse age structure. Plant new small woods, wet woodland and tree belts to strengthen the landscape character and where this is appropriate habitat creation. Consider the need to adapt to changes enforced by climate change, such as specific tree diseases and possible adaptation in species selection. Replant parkland and individual hedgerow trees. Plant trees and woodland to contain existing and new built development. Encourage planting of trees along streams and ditches where appropriate for the habitat.	**Provisioning** **F**uel (woodfuel for local communities from woodland management) **Regulating** Carbon sequestration, woodland absorbs and holds CO_2. Habitat and species resilience to climate change **Cultural** Tranquillity Sense of Place and local distinctiveness Cultural heritage (traditional woodland management) Biodiversity

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Upper Rother Valley

Current issues offering opportunities for protection and enhancement	Landscape Management Guidelines	Benefits delivered by Ecosystem Services for each area of interest
Other Key Habitats Deterioration and loss of habitats : **Water** Loss of river and streamside vegetation. Deterioration of water quality in streams, ditches and ponds Invasive species of plants and animals which compete with native flora and fauna. **Wet Meadows** Financial and viable farming constraints affecting the continued management of wet meadows reducing the biodiversity value. Agricultural improvement to Grassland and meadows reducing species richness. Loss of wetland meadows to arable farming.	**Other Key Habitats** Encourage management of river and stream channels, especially conservation of riverside trees and vegetation. Conservation and re-creation of wet meadow/ pasture habitats. Agri-environment schemes to maximise biodiversity and encourage the retention of grazing. Opportunities to maximise reed bed creation. Encourage measures to improve water quality. Continue schemes to encourage farmers to minimise the use of chemicals and fertilizers.	**Provisioning** Nature's larder of free berries and herbs. Conservation of insect pollinators for pollination of crops. **Regulating** Habitat and species resilience to climate change **Cultural** Appreciation of nature Educational value Biodiversity

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Current issues offering opportunities for protection and enhancement	Landscape Management Guidelines	Benefits delivered by Ecosystem Services for each area of interest
Recreation, Green Infrastructure (GI) and ANGS Pressure on bridleways and byways as multi use, including cycling and 4 wheel drives increasing erosion. Lack of funding to manage and enhance GI for improved access. Need for better recreational linkages and improved sustainable transport corridors. Extensive footpath and bridleway network Need for improved access to natural green space for all users both close to homes and in the wider countryside. Gentrification Loss of tranquillity due to more cars and access.	**Recreation, Green Infrastructure and ANGS** Where appropriate develop Green Infrastructure Strategies based on a county wide GI mapping. Plan for and manage recreational pressure on the countryside which could be affected by the increase in population as well as the seasonal holiday makers. Maximise opportunities for access away from sensitive habitats. Consider opportunities to create new green corridors and improve existing as safe ideally motorised traffic free recreational routes. Maximise opportunities for and manage water based recreational activities. Consider sensitive traffic management on rural lanes.	**Provisioning** Protected farmland. **Regulating** Habitat and species resilience to climate change Water quality and protected aquifers. Regulating water flow and preventing flooding Carbon sequestration **Cultural** Recreation Heritage assets and cultural heritage Inspirational Tranquility Biodiversity

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Current issues offering opportunities for protection and enhancement	Landscape Management Guidelines	Benefits delivered by Ecosystem Services for each area of interest
Horse Keeping ('horsiculture') and small holdings Deterioration of the character and quality of the landscape and loss of local distinctiveness. Loss of historic field pattern where fences replace hedges. Intensive grazing can cause soil erosion.	**Horse Keeping ('horsiculture') and small holdings** Enhance the condition of areas of horsiculture and small holdings through the restoration of an intact, well managed hedgerow or ditch network and retaining a diverse grass sward by preventing overgrazing. Encourage local food production and allotment provision in areas where this will not detract from local landscape character.	**Provisioning** Grazing Food production **Regulating** Habitat and species resilience to climate change **Cultural** Recreation Heritage assets Sense of Place and local distinctiveness Biodiversity

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The character of the villages Gentrification Urbanisation Development pressures Gradual loss and deterioration of heritage features. Fast traffic on rural lanes Visitor pressure and cars detracting from local character and distinctiveness of the area in general.	**Protect and Enhance the character of the villages** Encourage the production of Neighbourhood Plans which incorporate village design guides. Plan for new development in the villages to ensure it is designed to a high standard to reflect local character and sense of place. Establish defined development edges to villages with new tree planting. Prepare village design guides and tree conservation plans. Consider traffic management on rural lanes.	**Provisioning** Local amenities and facilities. **Regulating** Use of sustainable materials Habitat and species resilience to climate change Water quality and protected aquifers. Regulating water flow and preventing flooding **Cultural** Sense of Place and local distinctiveness Heritage assets Biodiversity

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Upper Rother Valley

Current issues offering opportunities for protection and enhancement	Landscape Management Guidelines	Benefits delivered by Ecosystem Services for each area of interest
Flood management and SUDS schemes? Flash floods and run off. Flooding of properties in low lying areas by river and ground water.	**Flood management and SUDS schemes?** Plan for flood management by conserving and enhancing the flood plains and managing water levels in ditches and drains. Encourage the design of sensitive flood defence schemes which conserve and enhance the landscape and habitats including river channel restoration schemes Conserve and enhance existing man made and natural drainage features. Maximise opportunities for the creation of SUDs schemes which contribute to local amenity and habitat creation.	**Provisioning** Water conservation **Regulating** Flood control Protection of aquifers **Cultural** Heritage assets Sense of Place and local distinctiveness Tranquillity Amenity and recreation Biodiversity

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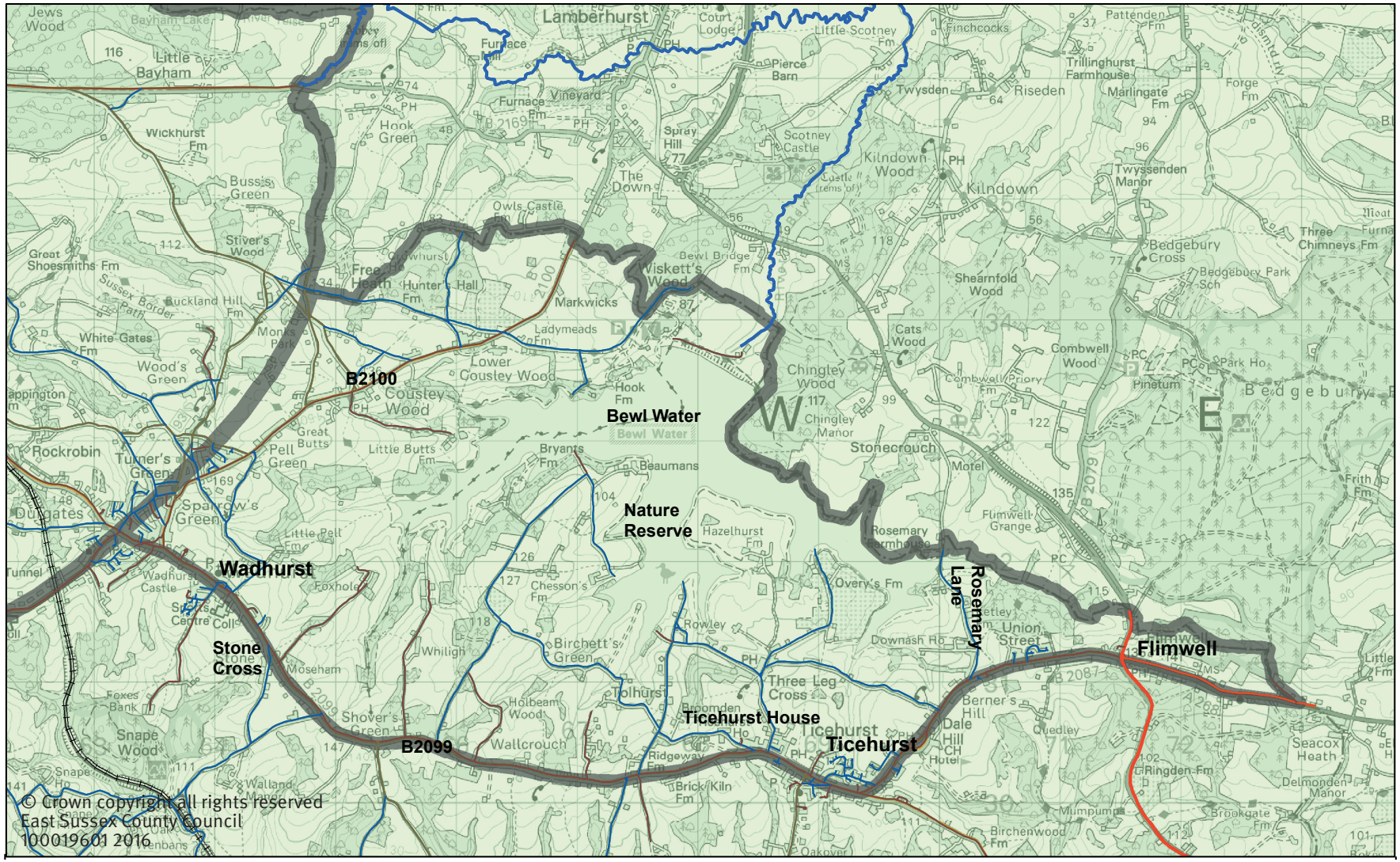
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Bewl Water



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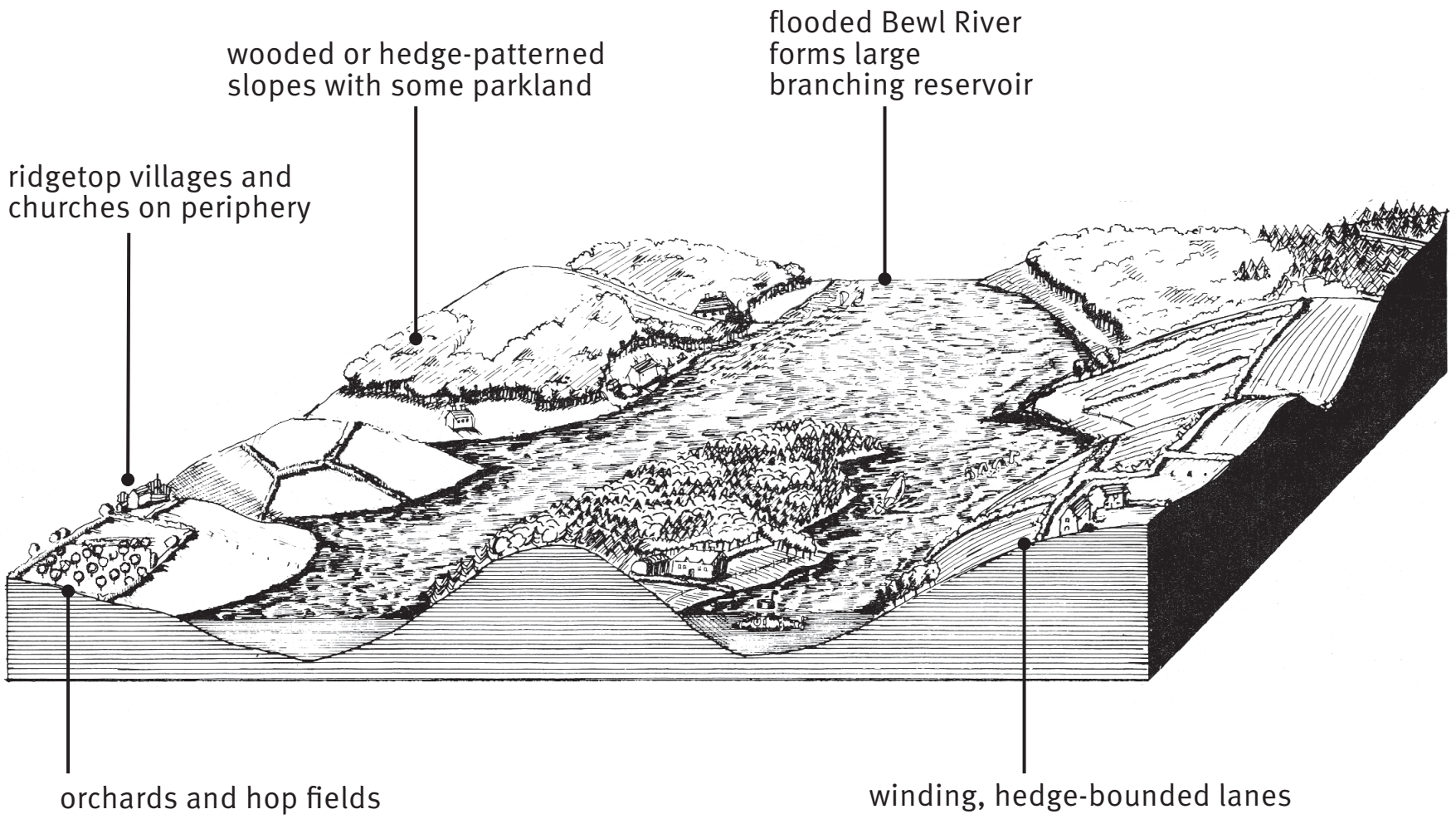
7 Bewl Water Landscape Character Area

High Weald AONB

0 0.4 0.8 1.6 2.4 3.2 Kilometers

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Bewl Water



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Bewl Water

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A Landscape Description

Key Landscape characteristics

- An area bounded to the north by the Kent/ Sussex border with Wadhurst on the western boundary and Flimwell to the east.
- The ridge which separates the Bewl Valley from the Rother Valley forms the southern boundary to the area.
- A large branching reservoir formed from the upper tributaries of the Bewl River which were dammed in 1975 to form the largest artificial area of water in the south east.
- Active water based recreation centred on the visitor centre and car park on the northern banks.
- The tranquil southern banks and nature reserve which provide quiet informal access.
- A series of north south gentle spurs and valleys with streams feeding the Bewl Water reservoir.
- Slopes between the spurs of the reservoir which support a typical high weald patchwork of small fields divided by hedges and small woodlands.
- The steep wooded ghylls so characteristic of the High Weald have become narrow bays and inlets.
- Orchards and hop fields and large arable fields on more fertile soils where the hedges have been removed.
- A settlement pattern of ridgetop villages with distinctive churches and smaller hamlets around the periphery of the reservoir.
- The Registered parkland of Ticehurst House, significant as a historic psychiatric hospital with grounds designed specifically for rehabilitation.
- 'Picturesque' farms and cottages and scattered historic farmsteads, which are a key characteristic of the High Weald.
- Areas of remote countryside particularly on the undeveloped spurs around the reservoir.
- Many of the woods are ancient semi-natural woodland and steep inaccessible ghyll woods.
- Oak, hornbeam and ash predominate in the larger woodlands.
- Ancient coppice stools of chestnut and hornbeam many of which have not been managed for many years.
- Other characteristic species are field maple, wild cherry with waterside willows and alders.
- A close network of winding, sunken lanes with scattered settlements and individual dwellings often strung out along them.
- Traditional building materials for the area are red brick, often laid as Flemish bond with blued brick ends, red tiled roofs and tile hung upper stories are typical.
- Oak timber framed and sandstone houses reflect the abundance of locally sourced timber and quarried stone.
- White painted windows and white weatherboarding.
- The area is bounded by ridge top main road, the B2099 in the south and the B2100 to the north east.

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Bewl Water

Cultural Interests

The area was in the centre of the Wealden iron industry which thrived due to the abundance of available timber and water and good transport routes to the sea. This is reflected in local place names and the many forges and mills. Many of the fine houses and large estates in the area grew from the wealth generated by the industry. The fine houses which line the streets of the larger villages date from the time of the iron industry boom. In the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries Wadhurst, as did many towns and villages in the Weald, had a thriving iron industry. Two of the large Georgian buildings in the High Street, Hill House and The Old Vicarage, were both ironmasters' houses, along with a number of other large houses on the outskirts of Wadhurst. In the church of St Peter and St. Paul there are several iron ledger-stone memorials of ironmasters, which are unique to this area.

Ticehurst House was opened in 1792 by Samuel Newington as a hospital specializing in the care and treatment of psychiatric patients.

During World War I, Wadhurst lost 149 men, out of a total village population of 3,500. The worst losses were during the Battle of Aubers Ridge, when 25 men from Wadhurst were killed in one day.

Jeff Beck, guitarist, has lived in Wadhurst since summer 1975 and his large stone country house dates to 1591.

William Bidlake, (1861-1938), architect, moved to Wadhurst in 1924 and practiced there until his death.

Irfan Orga (1908–1970), exiled Turkish writer, lived at Spike Island, Wadhurst, 1961–70.

Scottish singer Bert Jansch lived and recorded his album Rosemary Lane at his home near Ticehurst.

The first wife of Evelyn Waugh, Evelyn Nightingale, lived in Ticehurst and her son, journalist Benedict Nightingale, was married in St Mary's church.

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Table 1 Key positive Landscape Attributes

- The large branching reservoir formed from the upper tributaries of the Bewl River is the largest artificial area of water in the south east.
- The tranquil southern banks and nature reserve which provide quiet informal access.
- A series of north south gentle spurs and valleys with streams feeding the Bewl Water reservoir.
- Wooded and hedge patterned slopes between the spurs of the reservoir.
- The steep wooded ghylls so characteristic of the High Weald have become narrow bays and inlets.
- A settlement pattern of ridgetop villages with distinctive churches and smaller hamlets around the periphery of the reservoir.
- The Registered parkland of Ticehurst House significant as a former hospital with grounds designed specifically for rehabilitation.
- Orchards and hop fields.
- 'Picturesque' farms and cottages and scattered historic farmsteads which are a key characteristic of the High Weald.
- Areas of remote countryside on the undeveloped spurs around the reservoir.

- Many of the woods are ancient semi-natural woodland and steep inaccessible ghyll woods.
- Oak, hornbeam and ash predominate in the larger woodlands.
- Ancient coppice stools of chestnut and hornbeam.
- Other characteristic species are field maple, wild cherry with waterside willows and alders.
- A close network of winding, sunken lanes with scattered settlements and individual dwellings often strung out along them.
- Traditional building materials for the area are red brick, often laid as Flemish bond with blued brick ends, red tiled roofs and tile hung upper stories are typical.
- Oak timber framed and sandstone houses reflect the abundance of locally sourced timber and quarried stone.

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Bewl Water

B Landscape Evaluation

Table 2 Current Condition

This is a largely unspoilt and tranquil rural landscape with few intrusive features. The reservoir has become an established natural and recreational feature. The landscape is in generally good condition and well managed as farmland with a strong historic structure. The lack of main roads and large settlements in the area means that it retains a relative remoteness. Agricultural change and diversification has led to some fragmentation of farm steads. There is evidence of creeping suburbanisation around the villages and on country estates which detracts from local distinctiveness. As with most of the wealden landscape the historic field patterns of small fields and significant hedgerows remain intact. Woodlands have been affected by lack of traditional coppice management, rhododendron invasion and coniferisation. Historic designed landscapes contribute to the character of the area.

Forces for Change impacting on positive attributes

Past / Current forces for change

- Pressure to continue to develop Bewl Reservoir and in particular pipelines across the countryside to link to other water resources in the region.
- Creeping suburbanisation and cumulative changes in the rural landscape, roads and villages which are not in sympathy with local distinctiveness or vernacular architecture.
- Erosion of public rights of way where users avoid the muddy areas making tracks increasingly wider.
- Poor conservation and management of historic designed parkland.
- Agricultural diversification to hobby farms and horsiculture.
- Some large modern farm buildings on the valley slopes.
- Changes in the types and frequency of grazing animals in the countryside impacts on character as they are a characteristic feature. Lack of grazing can give an unmanaged appearance to the landscape and reduce the biodiversity value.
- Loss of unimproved species rich pastures and hay meadows.
- The positive land management initiatives associated with the High Weald AONB.
- Farm Environment Plans including entry level stewardship to the south of the reservoir.
- Loss of riverside trees due to agriculture and flood management engineering works.
- Coniferisation of larger woods.
- Loss of traditional coppicing in woodlands and increase in game shooting.
- Woodland Grant schemes are scattered across the area reversing the trend of poor woodland management.
- Increasing traffic on the roads which cross the area and rat running on rural lanes.

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Bewl Water

Future Forces for Change

- The need to provide local affordable housing in the villages.
- The associated infrastructure required for new development such as waste water treatment works.
- Future pressure for the expansion of Bewl Water reservoir and associated infrastructure.
- Traffic and rat running on narrow rural roads.
- Erosion of the edges of sunken lanes by increasingly larger agricultural and other vehicles.
- Demands for traffic calming and road improvements which could introduce increasing urban clutter in villages and rural lanes.
- Continued agricultural change due to changing markets, economic pressures and response to climate change.
- The spread of small agricultural holdings, hobby farming, paddocks, farm shops and allotments for local food production.
- Pressure for locating renewable energy facilities for solar, wind and bio energy.
- Pests and diseases of trees which could impact significantly on the mature tree stock. E.g. phytophora of alder and Ash dieback.
- Failure to control invasive species of plants and animals in water courses, such as New Zealand Pigmy Weed (*Crassula helmsii*), Parrots Feather (*Myryophyllum aquaticum*), Mink and European Marsh Frog (*Pelophylax ridibundus*). All of these impact on the native flora and fauna which are characteristic of the area.
- Water quality in the River Bewl catchment.

Table 3 Potential Impacts of Climate Change

- Potential changes in woodland / tree species composition and accelerated growth of invasive species such as birch and rhododendron.
- Changes in ground flora such as bluebells, which produce distinctive seasonal displays.
- Increased prevalence of pests and diseases due to warmer weather e.g. Phytophera of Alder.
- Changes in precipitation and temperatures will change the types of crops that farmers grow.
- More frequent and serious flood events in the valley bottoms.
- Potential impact on the viability of grazing sheep, dairy and beef.
- Increased temperatures and a decline in precipitation levels may dry out wetland habitats and ponds and alter stream flows.
- Changes in water levels in ditches, ponds and streams

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C Vision and Strategy

Table 4 Vision

An attractive large water feature as a tourist facility offering active recreation as well as tranquil enjoyment. A tranquil and remote area of the High Weald and in conjunction with the neighbouring areas a mysterious 'wilderness' with the extensive woodlands and Bewl Water as the core. Secluded valleys with ghyll woodlands and winding natural river channels. A landscape with a scattered settlement pattern of historic farmsteads and a strong pattern of woods, trees and hedges. The character of existing settlements and parklands retained and new development controlled with the highest quality vernacular design and spatial planning. The informal recreation value of the area maximised without detracting from the remoteness of the area.

As noted in the current Landscape Character Guidance – A Landscape Strategy identifies *"what change if any is desirable for any landscape character area as a whole?"*

Landscape change and adaptation to meet the strategy requires:

1. Planning for the enhancement of the Bewl Water Biodiversity Opportunity Area (BOA).
2. Protection and management of existing wetland habitats and planning for restoration of ditches, riverside vegetation and tree cover to restore habitat linkages and continuity.
3. Protection and enhancement of the remote qualities of the Bewl Water estate and woodlands.
4. Planning for the creation of multifunctional green infrastructure to maximise the opportunities for biodiversity and recreation offered by the rural lanes, rights of way network and extensive woodland.
5. Consider the potential to plan for recreational access in this character area identifying areas where public access can be encouraged whilst protecting other areas where wildlife conservation is the priority, particularly in relation to the reservoir.
6. Integrate proposed and existing development into the landscape through planting of tree features and woodland to define the village boundaries with the countryside.
7. Ensure that the design and layout of new developments respect the character and form of the landscape and existing settlements.
8. Control the spread of suburbanisation by minimising clutter of signage and other urban features in lanes and villages.
9. Conserve the setting of historic buildings and their landscape setting.
10. Replant parkland trees to ensure that they remain a feature of the landscape as veteran trees die off.
11. Protect and enhance historic designed landscapes and features of archaeological significance.
12. Consider appropriate species for new plantings to maintain landscape character and biodiversity having regard to adaptation to climate change influences.

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13. Restore and strengthen tree and woodland structure, encouraging woodland grant and farm conservation schemes and positive woodland management.
14. Encourage screening of farm groups as a component of these schemes.
15. Encourage restoration of traditional orchards.

D Guidelines for Managing Change

Development considerations for housing and other development

Proposals within the High Weald AONB need to have regard for the current High Weald Management Plan: http://www.highweald.org/downloads/publications/high-weald-aonb-management-plan-documents/1475-high-weald-management-plan-3rd-edition-2014-2019/file.html

A potential pressure for development in this character area would be for intensification or expansion of the water supply facilities associated with the Bewl Water reservoir. There will inevitably be a demand for local housing in the smaller villages.

Tourism is an important source of income to this area and there is likely to be increasing demand for accommodation in hotels, bed and breakfast and caravan or camp sites. The modern trend for luxury and exotic camping (glamping) is already appearing in the guise of tepees, tree houses and the like. There will be demand for new facilities and to improve or expand existing, some of these putting pressure on ancient woodland. Any new development should respect the key positive attributes in the landscape outlined in Table 1 above.

Proposed development should consider opportunities for proactively meeting the Landscape Change Strategy aims for this Landscape Character Area as set out in 1-15 above.

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Table 5

Current issues offering opportunities for protection and enhancement	Landscape Management Guidelines	Benefits delivered by Ecosystem Services for each area of interest
Countryside and Farmland Farm environment plans relating to much of the farm land including organic farming. Pressure for farm diversification and development of hobby farms, solar arrays, wind farms, waste recycling operations etc. Expansion of camping and caravan sites as well as other holiday related development such as 'Glamping'. Land falling out of positive management and dereliction of farm buildings. Loss of hedgerows and other traditional field boundaries. Loss of traditional orchards, pasture and species rich meadows. Localised flooding of farmland in the river valleys and floodplains. Low water levels and poor water quality in some rivers and streams. Deterioration of by ways and lanes due to erosion of un-surfaced routes by horses, bikes and 4 wheel drives. Damage to verges on narrow country lanes caused by increasing size of farm vehicles and passing traffic. Overstocking and arable production on some soils can result in soil erosion and reduce soil quality.	**Countryside and Farmland** Encourage establishment of more farm conservation schemes to conserve the landscape structure of hedges, shaws, ponds and streams. Conserve hedges, trees and ghyll woods. Maintain the mixed farmed character of the area. Protect and manage historic field patterns and conserve boundary features. Use tree and woodland planting to screen intrusive farm buildings and caravan sites. Plan for and manage changes which may occur in the landscape due to changes in farm management brought about by economic influences and climate change. Address existing flooding issues of farmland and properties through flood management and by identifying areas which can provide flood alleviation. Enhance the biodiversity value of wet meadows, drainage and stream channels. Conserve and enhance byways and rural lanes. Reduce the risk and incidence of soil erosion by encouraging the restoration of arable land to pasture. Apply best land management practices to prevent soil and fertiliser run off, thereby protecting surface and ground water.	**Provisioning services** Water availability Food production **Regulating services** (water purification, air quality maintenance and climate regulation) Water quality and protected aquifers. Regulating water flow and preventing flooding Soil conservation and erosion control Habitat and species resilience to climate change Carbon sequestration. Areas of peat in the river valleys, hedges, trees, reed beds and grassland regulate air quality by absorbing and retaining CO_2. **Cultural Services** Sense of Place and local distinctiveness. Source of Inspiration Sense of History Tranquillity Biodiversity

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Current issues offering opportunities for protection and enhancement	Landscape Management Guidelines	Benefits delivered by Ecosystem Services for each area of interest
Trees and Woodland Ancient woodland and tree belts are not in positive management. Ghyll woodlands are not in positive management and are difficult to manage due to the steep and inaccessible nature of these woods. Traditional management has stopped as it is not commercially viable e.g. pollarding of stream side willows. Tree diseases. Ancient parkland trees dying off and not being replaced. Extensive areas of woodland are already in woodland grant schemes. Pressure for glamping sites in woodland. Invasive species competing with native flora and fauna e.g. Spanish Bluebell, Himalayan balsam, Japanese knotweed, rhododenrdron.	**Trees and Woodland** Actively manage trees and woodland through coppicing, pollarding of willows and replanting to create a diverse age structure. Plant new small woods, wet woodland and tree belts to strengthen the landscape character and where this is appropriate habitat creation. Consider the need to adapt to changes enforced by climate change, such as specific tree diseases and possible adaptation in species selection. Replant parkland and individual hedgerow trees. Plant trees and woodland to contain existing and new built development. Encourage planting of trees along streams and ditches where appropriate for the habitat.	**Provisioning** Fuel (wood fuel for local communities from woodland management) **Regulating** Carbon sequestration, woodland absorbs and holds CO_2. Habitat and species resilience to climate change **Cultural** Tranquillity Sense of Place and local distinctiveness Cultural heritage (traditional woodland management) Biodiversity

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Current issues offering opportunities for protection and enhancement	Landscape Management Guidelines	Benefits delivered by Ecosystem Services for each area of interest
Other Key Habitats Deterioration and loss of habitats : **Water** Loss of river and streamside vegetation. Deterioration of water quality in streams, ditches and ponds Invasive species of plants and animals which compete with native flora and fauna. **Wet Meadows** Financial and viable farming constraints affecting the continued management of wet meadows reducing the biodiversity value. Agricultural improvement to Grassland and meadows reducing species richness. Loss of wetland meadows to arable farming.	**Other Key Habitats** Encourage management of river and stream channels, especially conservation of riverside trees and vegetation. Conservation and re-creation of wet meadow/ pasture habitats. Agri-environment schemes to maximise biodiversity and encourage the retention of grazing. Opportunities to maximise reed bed creation. Encourage measures to improve water quality. Continuation of schemes to encourage farmers to minimise the use of chemicals and fertilizers.	**Provisioning** Nature's larder of free berries and herbs. Conservation of insect pollinators for pollination of crops. **Regulating** Habitat and species resilience to climate change **Cultural** Appreciation of nature Educational value Biodiversity

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Bewl Water

Current issues offering opportunities for protection and enhancement	Landscape Management Guidelines	Benefits delivered by Ecosystem Services for each area of interest
Recreation, Green Infrastructure (GI) and ANGS The reservoir offers little recreational value as it is not accessible from public rights of way. Part of the reservoir is used by an angling club. Pressure on bridleways and byways as multi use, including cycling and 4 wheel drives increasing erosion. Lack of funding to manage and enhance GI for improved access. Need for better recreational linkages and improved sustainable transport corridors. Extensive footpath and bridleway network Need for improved access to natural green space for all users both close to homes and in the wider countryside. Gentrification Loss of tranquillity due to more cars and access.	**Recreation, Green Infrastructure and ANGS** Where appropriate develop Green Infrastructure Strategies based on a county wide GI mapping. Plan for and manage recreational pressure on the countryside which could be affected by the increase in population as well as the seasonal holiday makers. Maximise opportunities for access away from sensitive habitats. Consider opportunities to create new green corridors and improve existing as safe ideally motorised traffic free recreational routes. Consider enhanced pedestrian access to the reservoir. Maximise opportunities for and manage water based recreational activities where these would not conflict with wildlife. Consider sensitive traffic management on rural lanes.	**Provisioning** Protected farmland. **Regulating** Habitat and species resilience to climate change Water quality and protected aquifers. Regulating water flow and preventing flooding Carbon sequestration **Cultural** Recreation Heritage assets and cultural heritage Inspirational Tranquility Biodiversity

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Current issues offering opportunities for protection and enhancement	Landscape Management Guidelines	Benefits delivered by Ecosystem Services for each area of interest
Horse Keeping ('horsiculture') and small holdings Deterioration of the character and quality of the landscape and loss of local distinctiveness. Loss of historic field pattern where fences replace hedges. Intensive grazing can cause soil erosion.	**Horse Keeping ('horsiculture') and small holdings** Enhance the condition of areas of horsiculture and small holdings through the restoration of an intact, well managed hedgerow or ditch network and retaining a diverse grass sward by preventing overgrazing. Encourage local food production and allotment provision in areas where this will not detract from local landscape character.	**Provisioning** Grazing Food production **Regulating** Habitat and species resilience to climate change **Cultural** Recreation Heritage assets Sense of Place and local distinctiveness Biodiversity
The character of the villages Gentrification Urbanisation Development pressures Gradual loss and deterioration of heritage features. Fast traffic on rural lanes Visitor pressure and cars detracting from local character and distinctiveness of the area in general.	**Protect and Enhance the character of the villages** Encourage the production of Neighbourhood Plans which incorporate village design guides. Plan for new development in the villages to ensure it is designed to a high standard to reflect local character and sense of place. Establish defined development edges to villages with new tree planting. Prepare village design guides and tree conservation plans. Consider traffic management on rural lanes.	**Provisioning** Local amenities and facilities. **Regulating** Use of sustainable materials Habitat and species resilience to climate change Water quality and protected aquifers. Regulating water flow and preventing flooding **Cultural** Sense of Place and local distinctiveness Heritage assets Biodiversity

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Current issues offering opportunities for protection and enhancement	Landscape Management Guidelines	Benefits delivered by Ecosystem Services for each area of interest
Flood management and SUDS schemes? Flash floods and run off. Flooding of properties in low lying areas by river and ground water.	**Flood management and SUDS schemes?** Plan for flood management by conserving and enhancing the flood plains and managing water levels in ditches and drains. Encourage the design of sensitive flood defence schemes which conserve and enhance the landscape and habitats including river channel restoration schemes Conserve and enhance existing man made and natural drainage features. Maximise opportunities for the creation of SUDs schemes which contribute to local amenity and habitat creation.	**Provisioning** Water conservation **Regulating** Flood control Protection of aquifers **Cultural** Heritage assets Sense of Place and local distinctiveness Tranquillity Amenity and recreation Biodiversity

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Glossary

(also refer to the full version in the County Landscape Assessment).

ANGS: Accessible Natural Green Space Natural England – Accessible Natural Greenspace Standard (ANGSt)

Assart: Field created from the clearance of woodland

Clunch Barn: constructed of a building material composed of hardened clay or chalk marl.

Ecosystem Services: The services provided by nature which support living systems and can be evaluated.

Enclosure: The separation of land from the common by fence or private use.

GI or Green Infrastructure: Multifunctional green areas which provide areas for recreation, wildlife, water supply catchment, flood relief, food or timber production.

Glamping: New types of camp sites with permanent tent features in yurts, teepees, vintage caravans, timber pods etc. Woodlands are popular locations for these.

Local Nature Reserve: Local Nature Reserve (or LNR) is a statutory designation made under Section 21 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949, and amended by Schedule 11 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006, by principal local authorities.

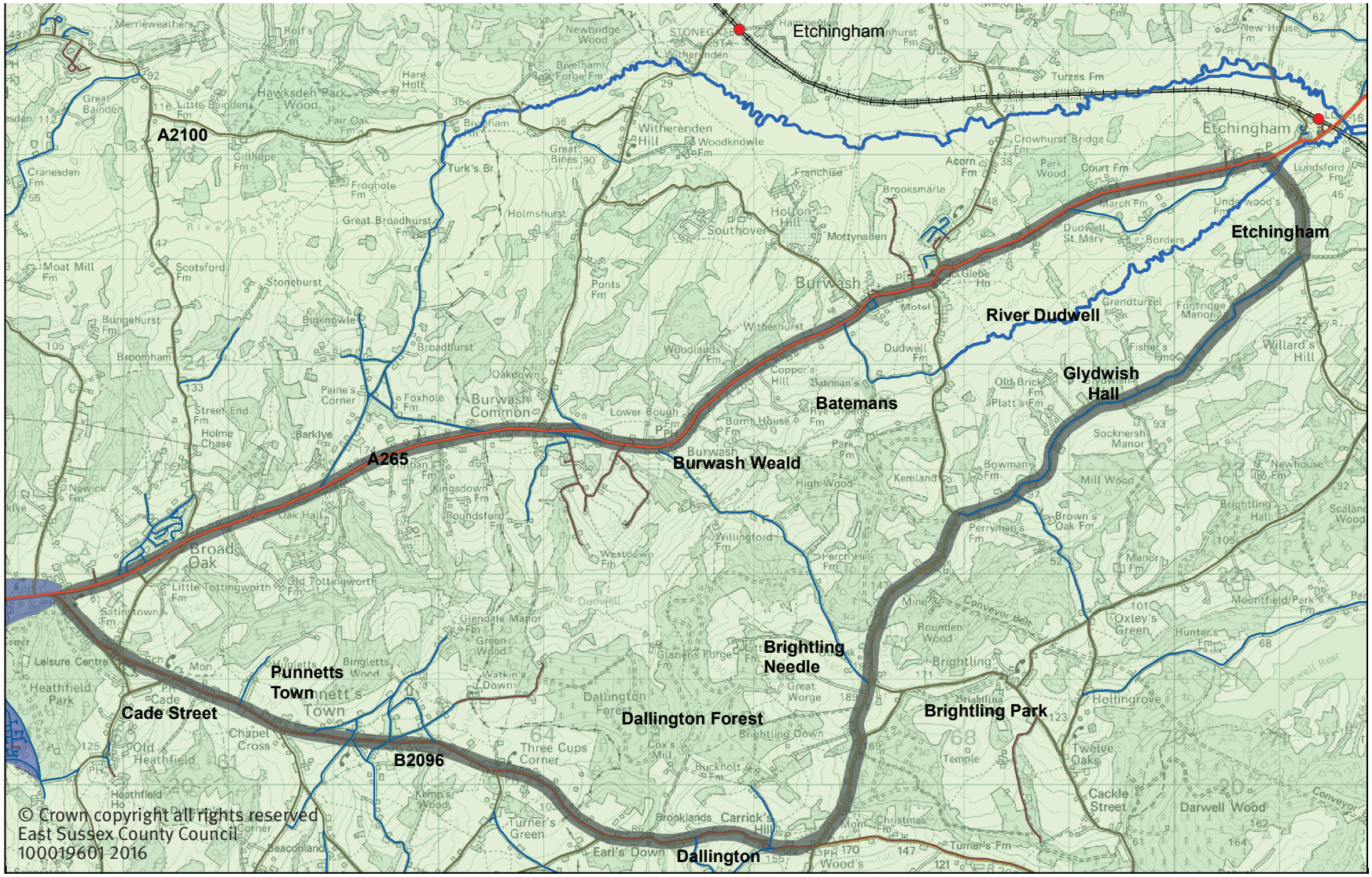
Ramsar sites are wetlands of international importance for biodiversity designated under the Ramsar Convention.

SNCI or Local Site: a Site of Nature Conservation Importance.

SSSI: A national designation for Site of Special Scientific Interest, these may be of biodiversity or geological significance or both.

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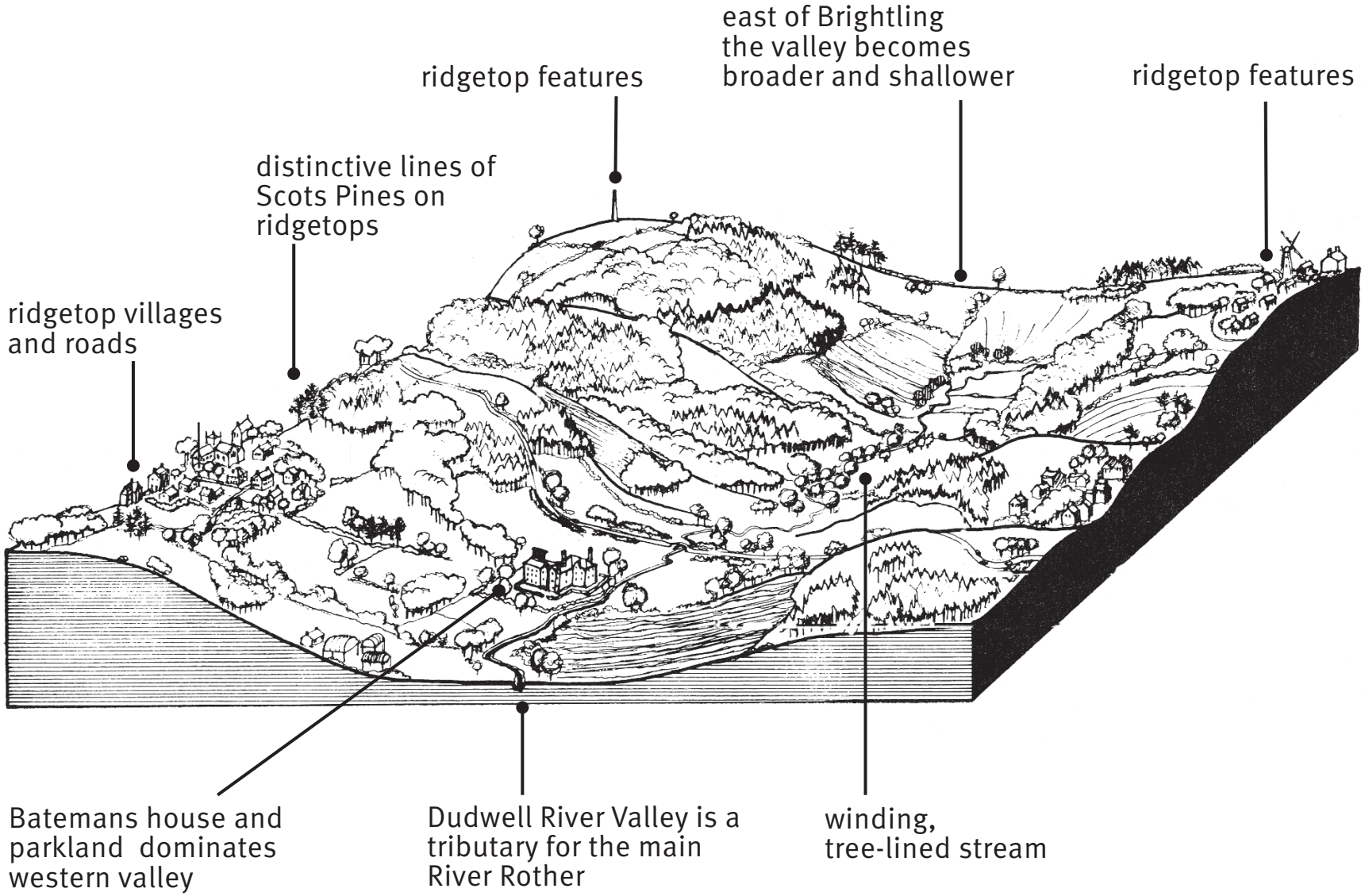
8 Dudwell Valley Landscape Character Area

High Weald AONB

0 0.45 0.9 1.8 2.7 3.6 Kilometers

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Dudwell Valley

Contents

A. Landscape Description
B. Landscape Evaluation
C. Vision and Strategy
D. Guidelines for Managing Change

A Landscape Description

Key Landscape characteristics

- A narrow deep valley bounded in the north by the ridge top A265 and the Burwash string of villages and the Dallington ridge to the south.
- One of the prettiest valleys in the upper Rother catchment overlooked by bold ridges and spurs which afford fine views across the valley.
- The Dudwell River flows north west across the area into the river Rother at Etchingham.
- A narrow winding and tree lined stream valley with a network of streams arising from springs on higher ground on both sides of the valley and flowing into the Dudwell River.
- A narrow deep valley in the west interrupted by spurs patterned with woods and remnant medieval small field patterns.
- A broader and shallower valley to the east which is dominated by the village of Burwash.
- The valley slopes below Burwash have a strong pattern of large rectangular fields many with dominant rows of alder, willow and polar, especially along the river banks.
- A settlement pattern of small villages and hamlets and significant historic manor houses.
- Rudyard Kipling's 17th century former home, Batemans, lies adjacent to the river with its attractive gardens and watermill.
- Mad Jack Fuller's obelisk, Brightling Needle on a high point on the south side of the valley.
- Punnets Town windmill is prominent on the ridge on the south side of the valley and Burwash church on the north side.
- 'Picturesque' farms and cottages and scattered historic farmsteads which are a key characteristic of the High Weald.
- Areas of remote countryside and exceptional remoteness, especially in the valleys and larger woods.
- This is one of the few areas of the High Weald where commercial forestry is active and provides employment.
- Many of the woods are ancient semi-natural woodland with extensive areas replanted with conifers, particularly along the ridge tops.
- Oak, hornbeam and ash predominate in the larger woodlands with hazel understorey.
- Ancient coppice stools of chestnut and hornbeam which have not been managed for many years.

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Dudwell Valley

- Other characteristic species are field maple, wild cherry and poplar, alder and willow in the river and stream valleys.
- A close network of winding, sunken lanes with scattered settlements and individual dwellings often strung out along them.
- Traditional building materials for the area are red brick, often laid as Flemish bond with blued brick ends, red tiled roofs and tile hung upper stories are typical.
- Oak timber framed and sandstone houses reflect the abundance of locally sourced timber and quarried stone.
- The area is bounded by ridge top main roads, the B2096 in the south and the A265 in the north.

Cultural Interests

The area was in the centre of the Wealden iron industry which thrived due to the abundance of available timber and water and good transport routes to the sea. This is reflected in local place names and the many forges and mills. Many of the fine houses and large estates in the area also grew from the wealth generated by the industry. The fine houses which line the streets of the larger villages date from the time of the iron industry boom.

There are many historic buildings scattered across the area and the most notable one being the former home of Rudyard Kipling, the 17th century Jacobean house of Batemans.

The main toll road from Heathfield to Burwash, now the A265 was a notorious haunt for highwaymen.

Mad Jack Fuller (1757-1834) was the eccentric MP for Sussex who owned Brightling Park, which lies in the neighbouring Darwell Valley character area. Fuller was a philanthropist and he supported the arts and entertained Turner who painted on his estate. Brightling Needle, an obelisk over 65 feet (20m) high, was built on the second highest point in East Sussex and was erected around 1810. The reason for its construction is not clear but it is said that it was to commemorate Nelson's victory at Trafalgar in 1805 or Wellington's victory over Napoleon in 1815.

Other notable residents were the cricketer Albert Relf (1874-1937) who was born in Burwash.

HMS Etchingham was named after the village as all of the 93 minesweepers built between 1954 and '59 of the *ham* class which were designed for the shallow waters around our coasts were named after places ending in *ham*.

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Dudwell Valley

Table 1 Key positive Landscape Attributes

- One of the prettiest valleys in the upper Rother catchment overlooked by bold ridges and spurs which afford fine views across the valley.
- The Dudwell River flows north west across the area.
- A narrow winding and tree lined stream valley with a network of streams arising from springs flowing into the Dudwell River.
- A narrow deep valley in the west interrupted by spurs patterned with woods and remnant medieval small field patterns.
- A broader and shallower valley to the east which is dominated by the village of Burwash.
- The valley slopes below Burwash have a strong pattern of large rectangular fields many with dominant rows of alder, willow and polar, especially along the river banks.
- A settlement pattern of small villages and hamlets and significant historic manor houses.
- Rudyard Kipling's 17th century former home, Batemans, lies adjacent to the river with its attractive gardens and watermill.
- Mad Jack Fuller's obelisk, Brightling Needle on a high point on the south side of the valley.
- Punnets Town windmill is prominent on the ridge on the south side of the valley and Burwash church on the north side.

- 'Picturesque' farms and cottages and scattered historic farmsteads which are a key characteristic of the High Weald.
- Areas of remote countryside and exceptional remoteness, especially in the valleys and larger woods.
- Many of the woods are ancient semi-natural woodland with extensive areas replanted with conifers, particularly along the ridge tops.
- Oak, hornbeam and ash predominate in the larger woodlands with hazel understorey.
- A close network of winding, sunken lanes with scattered settlements and individual dwellings often strung out along them.
- Traditional building materials for the area are red brick, often laid as Flemish bond with blued brick ends, red tiled roofs and tile hung upper stories are typical.
- Oak timber framed and sandstone houses reflect the abundance of locally sourced timber and quarried stone.

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Dudwell Valley

B Landscape Evaluation

Table 2 Current Condition

This is a largely unspoilt and tranquil rural landscape with few intrusive features. The landscape is in generally good condition and well managed as farmland with a strong historic structure. The lack of main roads and large settlements in the area means that it retains a relative remoteness. Agricultural change and diversification has led to some fragmentation of farm steads. There is evidence of creeping suburbanisation around the villages and on country estates which detracts from local distinctiveness. As with most of the wealden landscape the historic field patterns of small fields and significant hedgerows remain intact. Woodlands have been affected by lack of traditional coppice management, rhododendron invasion and coniferisation. The historic designed landscape contributes to the character of the area.

Forces for Change impacting on positive attributes

Past / Current forces for change

- Significant loss of agricultural land, hedged fieldscapes and broad leaved woodland to conifer plantations.
- Poor conservation and management of historic designed parkland.
- Pressure to continue to develop Darwell Reservoir and in particular pipelines across the countryside to link to other water resources in the region.
- Creeping suburbanisation and cumulative changes in the rural landscape, roads and villages which are not in sympathy with local distinctiveness or vernacular architecture.
- Erosion of public rights of way where users avoid the muddy areas making tracks increasingly wider.
- Agricultural diversification to hobby farms and horsiculture.
- Some large modern farm buildings on the valley slopes.
- Changes in the types and frequency of grazing animals in the countryside impacts on character as they are a characteristic feature. Lack of grazing can give an unmanaged appearance to the landscape and reduce the biodiversity value.
- Loss of unimproved species rich pastures and hay meadows.
- The positive land management initiatives associated with the High Weald AONB.
- Farm Environment Plans including organic farming south of Etchingham and entry level stewardship in the river valley.
- Loss of riverside trees due to agriculture and flood management engineering works.

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Dudwell Valley

- Coniferisation of larger woods, particularly Dallington forest.
- Loss of traditional coppicing in woodlands and increase in game shooting.
- Woodland Grant schemes are scattered across the area reversing the trend of poor woodland management, including a positive woodland management plans for some woodlands notably at Blackbrooks, the Brickhouse estate and Mill Wood.
- Increasing traffic on the roads which cross the area and rat running on rural lanes.

Future Forces for Change

- The need to provide local affordable housing in the villages.
- The associated infrastructure required for new development such as waste water treatment works.
- Future pressure for the expansion of Darwell reservoir and associated infrastructure.
- Traffic and rat running on narrow rural roads. Erosion of the edges of sunken lanes by increasingly larger agricultural and other vehicles.
- Demands for traffic calming and road improvements which could introduce increasing urban clutter in villages and rural lanes.
- Continued agricultural change due to changing markets, economic pressures and response to climate change.
- The spread of small agricultural holdings, hobby farming, paddocks, farm shops and allotments for local food production.
- Pressure for locating renewable energy facilities for solar, wind and bio energy.
- Pests and diseases of trees which could impact significantly on the mature tree stock. E.g. phytophora of alder and Ash dieback.
- Failure to control invasive species of plants and animals in water courses, such as New Zealand Pigmy Weed (Crassula helmsii), Parrots Feather (Myryophyllum aquaticum), Mink and European Marsh Frog (Pelophylax ridibundus). All of these impact on the native flora and fauna which are characteristic of the area.
- Water quality in the River Rother and Dudwell catchments.

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Dudwell Valley

Table 3 Potential Impacts of Climate Change

- Potential changes in woodland / tree species composition and accelerated growth of invasive species such as birch and rhododendron.
- Changes in ground flora such as bluebells, which produce distinctive seasonal displays.
- Increased prevalence of pests and diseases due to warmer weather e.g. Phytophera of Alder.
- Changes in precipitation and temperatures will change the types of crops that farmers grow.
- More frequent and serious flood events in the valley bottoms.
- Potential impact on the viability of grazing sheep, dairy and beef.
- Increased temperatures and a decline in precipitation levels may dry out wetland habitats and ponds and alter stream flows.
- Changes in water levels in ditches, ponds and streams

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C Vision and Strategy

Table 4 Vision

A tranquil and remote area of the High Weald and in conjunction with the neighbouring areas a mysterious 'wilderness' with the extensive woodlands as the core. Secluded valleys with ghyll woodlands and winding natural river channels. A landscape with a scattered settlement pattern of historic farmsteads and a strong pattern of woods, trees and hedges. The character of existing settlements and parklands retained and new development controlled with the highest quality vernacular design and spatial planning. The informal recreation value of the area maximised without detracting from the remoteness of the area.

As noted in the current Landscape Character Guidance – A Landscape Strategy identifies *"what change if any is desirable for any landscape character area as a whole?"*

Landscape change and adaptation to meet the strategy requires:

1. Planning for the enhancement of the Rother, Brede and Tillingham Woods Biodiversity Opportunity Area (BOA). The focus in the upper tributary valleys is woodland management through the Rother Woods Project.
2. Protection and management of existing wetland habitats and planning for restoration of ditches, riverside vegetation and tree cover to restore habitat linkages and continuity.
3. Protection and enhancement of the remote qualities of the river valleys and woodlands.
4. Planning for the creation of multifunctional green infrastructure to maximise the opportunities for biodiversity and recreation offered by the rural lanes, rights of way network and extensive woodland.
5. Consider the potential to plan for recreational access in this character area identifying areas where public access can be encouraged whilst protecting other areas where wildlife conservation is the priority.
6. Integrate proposed and existing development into the landscape through planting of tree features and woodland to define the village boundaries with the countryside.
7. Ensure that the design and layout of new developments respect the character and form of the landscape and existing settlements.
8. Control the spread of suburbanisation by minimising clutter of signage and other urban features in lanes and villages.
9. Conserve the setting of historic buildings and their landscape setting.
10. Replant parkland trees to ensure that they remain a feature of the landscape as veteran trees die off.
11. Protect and enhance historic designed landscapes and features of archaeological significance.
12. Consider appropriate species for new plantings to maintain landscape character and biodiversity having regard to adaptation to climate change influences.
13. Restore and strengthen tree and woodland structure, encouraging woodland grant and farm conservation schemes and positive woodland management.
14. Encourage screening of farm groups as a component of these schemes.

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D Guidelines for Managing Change

Development considerations for housing and other development

Proposals within the High Weald AONB need to have regard for the current High Weald Management Plan:
http://www.highweald.org/downloads/publications/high-weald-aonb-management-plan-documents/1475-high-weald-management-plan-3rd-edition-2014-2019/file.html

A potential pressure for development in this character area would be for intensification or expansion of the water supply facilities associated with the nearby Darwell reservoir. There will inevitably be a demand for local housing in the smaller villages.

Tourism is an important source of income to this area and there is likely to be increasing demand for accommodation in hotels, bed and breakfast, caravan and camp sites. The modern trend for luxury and exotic camping (glamping) is already appearing in the guise of teepees, tree houses and the like. There will be demand for new facilities and to improve or expand existing, some of these putting pressure on ancient woodland. Any new development should respect the key positive attributes in the landscape outlined in Table 1 above.

Proposed development should consider opportunities for proactively meeting the Landscape Change Strategy aims for this Landscape Character Area as set out in 1-14 above.

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Table 5

Current issues offering opportunities for protection and enhancement	Landscape Management Guidelines	Benefits delivered by Ecosystem Services for each area of interest
Countryside and Farmland Farm environment plans relating to much of the farm land including organic farming. Pressure for farm diversification and development of hobby farms, solar arrays, wind farms, waste recycling operations etc. Expansion of camping and caravan sites as well as other holiday related development such as 'Glamping'. Land falling out of positive management and dereliction of farm buildings. Loss of hedgerows and other traditional field boundaries. Loss of traditional orchards, pasture and species rich meadows. Localised flooding of farmland in the river valleys and floodplains. Low water levels and poor water quality in some rivers and streams. Deterioration of by ways and lanes due to erosion of un-surfaced routes by horses, bikes and 4 wheel drives. Damage to verges on narrow country lanes caused by increasing size of farm vehicles and passing traffic. Overstocking and arable production on some soils can result in soil erosion and reduce soil quality.	**Countryside and Farmland** Encourage establishment of more farm conservation schemes to conserve the landscape structure of hedges, shaws, ponds and streams. Conserve hedges, trees and ghyll woods. Maintain the mixed farmed character of the area. Protect and manage historic field patterns and conserve boundary features. Use tree and woodland planting to screen intrusive farm buildings and caravan sites. Plan for and manage changes which may occur in the landscape due to changes in farm management brought about by economic influences and climate change. Address existing flooding issues of farmland and properties through flood management and by identifying areas which can provide flood alleviation. Enhance the biodiversity value of wet meadows, drainage and stream channels. Conserve and enhance byways and rural lanes. Reduce the risk and incidence of soil erosion by encouraging the restoration of arable land to pasture. Apply best land management practices to prevent soil and fertiliser run off, thereby protecting surface and ground water.	**Provisioning services** Water availability Food production **Regulating services** (water purification, air quality maintenance and climate regulation) Water quality and protected aquifers. Regulating water flow and preventing flooding Soil conservation and erosion control Habitat and species resilience to climate change Carbon sequestration. Areas of peat in the river valleys, hedges, trees, reed beds and grassland regulate air quality by absorbing and retaining CO_2. **Cultural Services** Sense of Place and local distinctiveness. Source of Inspiration Sense of History Tranquillity Biodiversity

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Current issues offering opportunities for protection and enhancement	Landscape Management Guidelines	Benefits delivered by Ecosystem Services for each area of interest
Trees and Woodland Ancient woodland and tree belts are not in positive management. Ghyll woodlands are not in positive management and are difficult to manage due to the steep and inaccessible nature of these woods. Traditional management has stopped as it is not commercially viable e.g. pollarding of stream side willows. Tree diseases. Ancient parkland trees dying off and not being replaced. Extensive areas of woodland are already in woodland grant schemes. Pressure for glamping sites in woodland. Invasive species competing with native flora and fauna e.g. Spanish Bluebell, Himalayan balsam, Japanese knotweed, rhododenrdron.	**Trees and Woodland** Actively manage trees and woodland through coppicing, pollarding of willows and replanting to create a diverse age structure. Plant new small woods, wet woodland and tree belts to strengthen the landscape character and where this is appropriate habitat creation. Consider the need to adapt to changes enforced by climate change, such as specific tree diseases and possible adaptation in species selection. Replant parkland and individual hedgerow trees. Plant trees and woodland to contain existing and new built development. Encourage planting of trees along streams and ditches where appropriate for the habitat.	**Provisioning** Fuel (woodfuel for local communities from woodland management) **Regulating** Carbon sequestration, woodland absorbs and holds CO_2. Habitat and species resilience to climate change **Cultural Services** Tranquillity Sense of Place and local distinctiveness Cultural heritage (traditional woodland management) Biodiversity

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Current issues offering opportunities for protection and enhancement	Landscape Management Guidelines	Benefits delivered by Ecosystem Services for each area of interest
Other Key Habitats Deterioration and loss of habitats : **Water** Loss of river and streamside vegetation. Deterioration of water quality in streams, ditches and ponds Invasive species of plants and animals which compete with native flora and fauna. **Wet Meadows** Financial and viable farming constraints affecting the continued management of wet meadows reducing the biodiversity value. Agricultural improvement to Grassland and meadows reducing species richness. Loss of wetland meadows to arable farming.	**Other Key Habitats** Encourage management of river and stream channels, especially conservation of riverside trees and vegetation. Conservation and re-creation of wet meadow/pasture habitats. Agri-environment schemes to maximise biodiversity and encourage the retention of grazing. Opportunities to maximise reed bed creation. Encourage measures to improve water quality. Continuation of schemes to encourage farmers to minimise the use of chemicals and fertilizers.	**Provisioning** Nature's larder of free berries and herbs. Conservation of insect pollinators for pollination of crops. **Regulating** Habitat and species resilience to climate change **Cultural Services** Appreciation of nature Educational value Biodiversity

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Dudwell Valley

Current issues offering opportunities for protection and enhancement	Landscape Management Guidelines	Benefits delivered by Ecosystem Services for each area of interest
Recreation, Green Infrastructure (GI) and ANGS The reservoir offers little recreational value as it is not accessible from public rights of way. Part of the reservoir is used by an angling club. Pressure on bridleways and byways as multi use, including cycling and 4 wheel drives increasing erosion. Lack of funding to manage and enhance GI for improved access. Need for better recreational linkages and improved sustainable transport corridors. Extensive footpath and bridleway network Need for improved access to natural green space for all users both close to homes and in the wider countryside. Gentrification Loss of tranquillity due to more cars and access.	**Recreation, Green Infrastructure and ANGS** Where appropriate develop Green Infrastructure Strategies based on a county wide GI mapping. Plan for and manage recreational pressure on the countryside which could be affected by the increase in population as well as the seasonal holiday makers. Maximise opportunities for access away from sensitive habitats. Consider opportunities to create new green corridors and improve existing as safe ideally motorised traffic free recreational routes. Consider enhanced pedestrian access to the reservoir. Maximise opportunities for and manage water based recreational activities where these would not conflict with wildlife. Consider sensitive traffic management on rural lanes.	**Provisioning** Protected farmland. **Regulating** Habitat and species resilience to climate change Water quality and protected aquifers. Regulating water flow and preventing flooding Carbon sequestration **Cultural Services** Recreation Heritage assets and cultural heritage Inspirational Tranquility Biodiversity

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Current issues offering opportunities for protection and enhancement	Landscape Management Guidelines	Benefits delivered by Ecosystem Services for each area of interest
Horse Keeping ('horsiculture') and small holdings Deterioration of the character and quality of the landscape and loss of local distinctiveness. Loss of historic field pattern where fences replace hedges. Intensive grazing can cause soil erosion.	**Horse Keeping ('horsiculture') and small holdings** Enhance the condition of areas of horsiculture and small holdings through the restoration of an intact, well managed hedgerow or ditch network and retaining a diverse grass sward by preventing overgrazing. Encourage local food production and allotment provision in areas where this will not detract from local landscape character.	**Provisioning** Grazing Food production **Regulating** Habitat and species resilience to climate change **Cultural Services** Recreation Heritage assets Sense of Place and local distinctiveness Biodiversity

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Current issues offering opportunities for protection and enhancement	Landscape Management Guidelines	Benefits delivered by Ecosystem Services for each area of interest
The character of the villages Gentrification Urbanisation Development pressures Gradual loss and deterioration of heritage features. Fast traffic on rural lanes Visitor pressure and cars detracting from local character and distinctiveness of the area in general.	**Protect and Enhance the character of the villages** Encourage the production of Neighbourhood Plans which incorporate village design guides. Plan for new development in the villages to ensure it is designed to a high standard to reflect local character and sense of place. Establish defined development edges to villages with new tree planting. Prepare village design guides and tree conservation plans. Consider traffic management on rural lanes.	**Provisioning** Local amenities and facilities. **Regulating** Use of sustainable materials Habitat and species resilience to climate change Water quality and protected aquifers. Regulating water flow and preventing flooding **Cultural Services** Sense of Place and local distinctiveness Heritage assets Biodiversity

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Current issues offering opportunities for protection and enhancement	Landscape Management Guidelines	Benefits delivered by Ecosystem Services for each area of interest
Flood management and SUDS schemes? Flash floods and run off. Flooding of properties in low lying areas by river and ground water.	**Flood management and SUDS schemes?** Plan for flood management by conserving and enhancing the flood plains and managing water levels in ditches and drains. Encourage the design of sensitive flood defence schemes which conserve and enhance the landscape and habitats including river channel restoration schemes Conserve and enhance existing man made and natural drainage features. Maximise opportunities for the creation of SUDs schemes which contribute to local amenity and habitat creation.	**Provisioning** Water conservation **Regulating** Flood control Protection of aquifers **Cultural Services** Heritage assets Sense of Place and local distinctiveness Tranquillity Amenity and recreation Biodiversity

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Glossary

(also refer to the full version in the County Landscape Assessment).

ANGS: Accessible Natural Green Space Natural England – Accessible Natural Greenspace Standard (ANGSt)

Assart: Field created from the clearance of woodland

Clunch Barn: constructed of a building material composed of hardened clay or chalk marl.

Ecosystem Services: The services provided by nature which support living systems and can be evaluated.

Enclosure: The separation of land from the common by fence or private use.

GI or Green Infrastructure: Multifunctional green areas which provide areas for recreation, wildlife, water supply catchment, flood relief, food or timber production.

Glamping: New types of camp sites with permanent tent features in yurts, teepees, vintage caravans, timber pods etc. Woodlands are popular locations for these.

Local Nature Reserve: Local Nature Reserve (or LNR) is a statutory designation made under Section 21 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949, and amended by Schedule 11 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006, by principal local authorities.

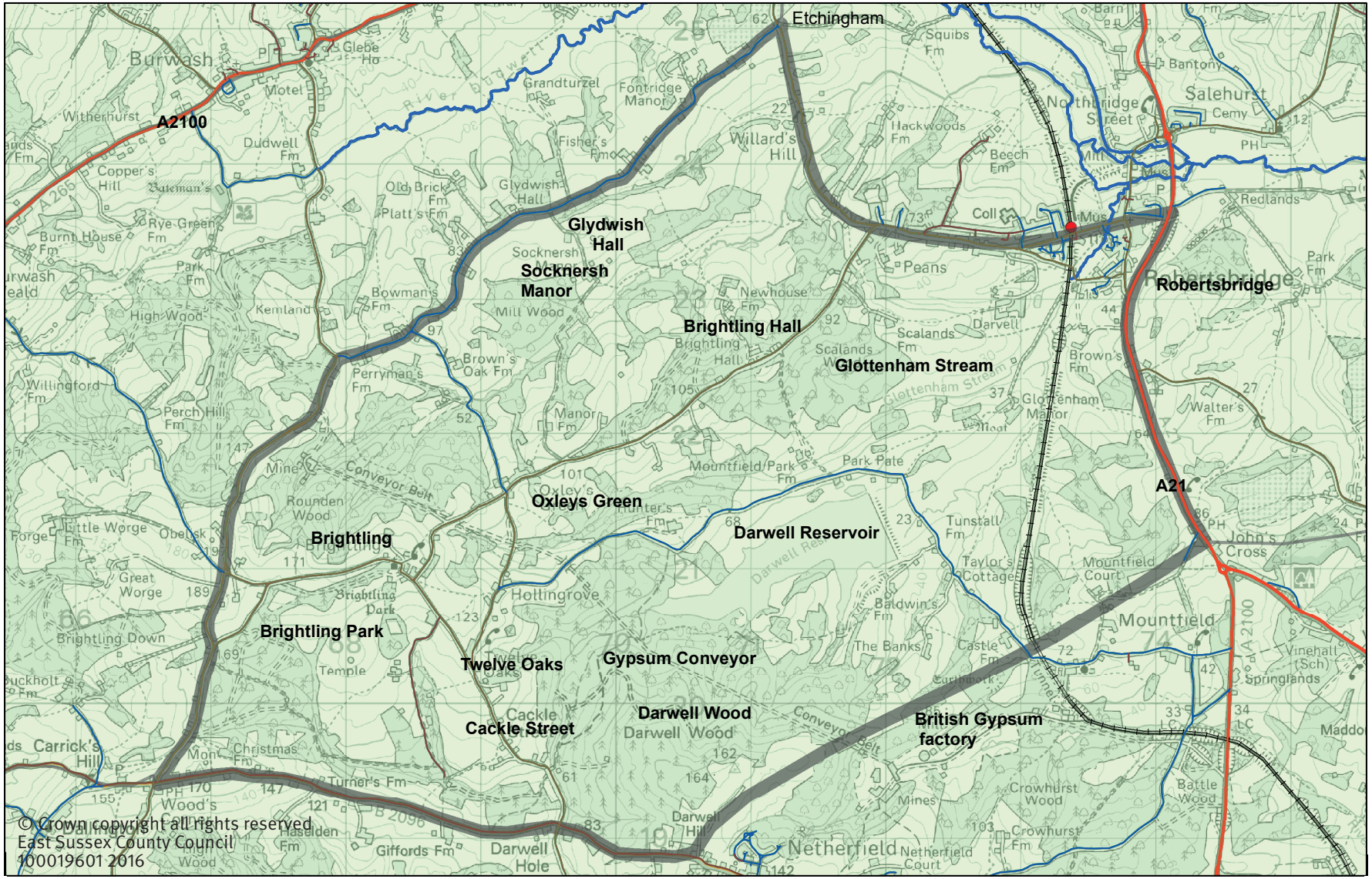
Ramsar sites are wetlands of international importance for biodiversity designated under the Ramsar Convention.

SNCI or Local Site: a Site of Nature Conservation Importance.

SSSI: A national designation for Site of Special Scientific Interest, these may be of biodiversity or geological significance or both.

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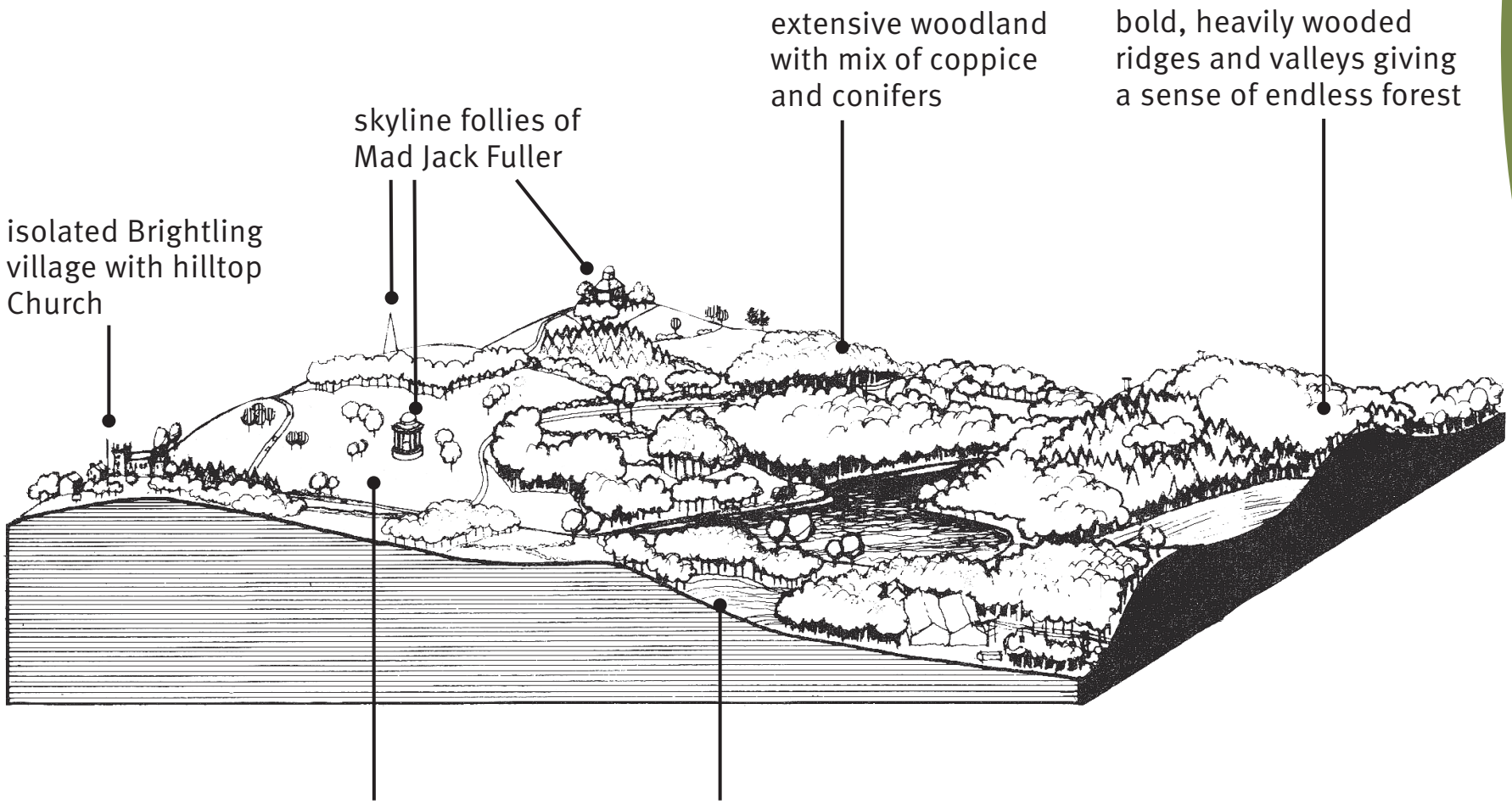
9 Darwell Valley Landscape Character Area

High Weald AONB

0 0.35 0.7 1.4 2.1 2.8 Kilometers

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Contents

A. Landscape Description
B. Landscape Evaluation
C. Vision and Strategy
D. Guidelines for Managing Change

A Landscape Description

Key Landscape characteristics

- A landscape bounded by the Brightling ridge to the north and the Netherfield ridge to the south.
- A landscape of bold heavily wooded ridges and secluded valleys.
- One of the most densely wooded areas of the high Weald giving a sense of endless forest.
- A settlement pattern of small villages and hamlets and significant historic manor houses.
- 'Picturesque' farms and cottages and scattered historic farmsteads which are a key characteristic of the High Weald.
- A network of streams arising from springs in the south of the area and flowing northeast to the River Rother.
- Part of the Darwell valley is flooded to form the Darwell reservoir a smaller reservoir than Bewl water which lies to the north west.
- Extensive areas of remote countryside and exceptional remoteness especially in the valleys and larger woods.
- The village of Brightling has a picturesque church with the pyramidal mausoleum of Mad Jack Fuller in its church yard.
- Brightling Park with other Mad Jack follies, the Sugar Loaf, the Temple, the Needle and the Observatory located on key vantage points in the landscape.
- The gypsum mines which extend between Brightling and Mount field where there is a large plaster works nestled in a secluded valley of the River Line.
- A large conveyor tunnel snaking through the woods which links the mines to the works.
- Many of the woods are ancient semi-natural woodland with extensive areas replanted with chestnut coppice mixed with some extensive areas of conifers.
- This is one of the few areas of the High Weald where commercial forestry is active and provides employment.
- Oak, hornbeam and ash predominate in the larger woodlands with hazel understorey.
- Ancient coppice stools of chestnut and hornbeam which have not been managed for many years.
- Other characteristic species are field maple, wild cherry and alder and willow in the river and stream valleys.
- A close network of winding, sunken lanes with scattered settlements and individual dwellings often strung out along them.
- Traditional building materials for the area are red brick, often laid as Flemish bond with blued brick ends, red tiled roofs and tile hung upper stories are typical.
- Oak timber framed and sandstone houses reflect the abundance of locally sourced timber and quarried stone.
- There are no main roads crossing the area and this reinforces the remote character.
- The Hastings to Tunbridge Wells railway crosses the eastern edge and has a single track link into the gypsum mines.

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Cultural Interests

The area was in the centre of the Wealden iron industry which thrived due to the abundance of available timber and water and good transport routes to the sea.

Many of the fine houses and large estates in the area also grew from the wealth generated by the industry.

There are many historic buildings scattered across the area and some of the more notable ones are Mountfield Court, Brightling Hall, Glydwish Hall and Socknersh Manor.

Mad Jack Fuller (1757-1834) was the eccentric MP for Sussex who owned Brightling Park. Fuller was a philanthropist and he supported the arts and entertained Turner who painted on his estate. Brightling Needle, an obelisk over 65 feet (20m) high was built on the second highest point in East Sussex and was erected around 1810. The reason for its construction is not clear but it is said that it was to commemorate Nelson's victory at Trafalgar in 1805 or Wellington's victory over Napoleon in 1815.

The Sugar Loaf, which is sometimes known as Fuller's Point, is in a meadow and stands 35 feet (10.7m). The name comes from the conical shaped loaf that sugar was sold in at that time. It was apparently built to win a bet that Mad Jack made whilst in London. He claimed he could see Dallington Church (a nearby village) from his house in Brightling. When he returned he discovered that he couldn't as a hill blocked his view, so the Sugar Loaf was hastily erected to mimic the church steeple and win the bet.

The Tower or Watch Tower built by Fuller in the middle of a field, stands 35 feet (10.6m) high and 12 feet (3.7m) in diameter. There are several stories attached to it and it was built in the late 1820s.

The Temple or Rotunda was built in the grounds of Brightling Park perhaps to add a classical element to the gardens. This was erected around 1810.

The Observatory, now a private residence, was completed in 1810. It was equipped with all the equipment of the time including a Camera Obscura. It is thought that Turner may have used this on his visits to Fuller's house Rose Hill.

Barbara Bodichon (1827-1891), 19th century artist and feminist activist was buried in Brightling.

John Donald a pioneering jewellery designer in the 1960s and 70s lived in Brightling.

Florence Yeldham (1877-1945) a teacher and literary historian of arithmetic was born in Brightling.

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Table 1 Key positive Landscape Attributes

- A landscape of bold heavily wooded ridges and secluded valleys.
- One of the most densely wooded areas of the High Weald giving a sense of endless forest.
- A settlement pattern of small villages and hamlets and significant manor houses.
- 'Picturesque' farms and cottages and scattered historic farmsteads which are a key characteristic of the High Weald.
- A network of streams arising from springs in the south of the area and flowing northeast to the River Rother.
- Part of the Darwell valley is flooded to form the Darwell reservoir a smaller reservoir than Bewl which lies to the north west.
- Extensive areas of remote countryside and exceptional remoteness especially in the valleys and larger woods.
- The village of Brightling has a picturesque church with the pyramidal mausoleum of Mad Jack Fuller in its church yard.
- Brightling Park with other Mad Jack follies, the Sugar Loaf, the Temple, the Needle and the Observatory located at key vantage points in the landscape.
- Many of the woods are ancient semi-natural woodland with extensive areas replanted with chestnut coppice mixed with some extensive areas of conifers.
- One of the few areas of the High Weald where commercial forestry is active and provides employment.
- Oak, hornbeam and ash predominate in the larger woodlands with hazel understorey.
- Ancient coppice stools of chestnut and hornbeam which have not been managed for many years.
- A close network of winding, sunken lanes with scattered settlements and individual dwellings often strung out along them.
- Traditional building materials for the area are red brick, often laid as Flemish bond with blued brick ends, red tiled roofs and tile hung upper stories are typical.
- Oak timber framed and sandstone houses reflect the abundance of locally sourced timber and quarried stone.
- There are no main roads crossing the area and this reinforces the remote character.

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B Landscape Evaluation

Table 2 Current Condition

This is a largely unspoilt and tranquil rural landscape with few intrusive features. The landscape is in generally good condition and well managed as farmland with a strong historic structure. The lack of main roads and large settlements in the area means that it retains a relative remoteness. Agricultural change and diversification has led to some fragmentation of farm steads. There is evidence of creeping suburbanisation around the villages and on country estates which detracts from local distinctiveness. As with most of the wealden landscape the historic field patterns of small fields and significant hedgerows remain intact. Woodlands have been affected by lack of traditional coppice management, rhododendron invasion and coniferisation. The historic designed landscape contributes to the character of the area.

Forces for Change impacting on positive attributes

Past / Current forces for change

- Significant loss of agricultural land, hedged fieldscapes and broad leaved woodland to conifer plantations.
- Poor conservation and management of historic designed parkland.
- Pressure to continue to develop Darwell Reservoir and in particular pipelines across the countryside to link to other water resources in the region.
- Pressure for development at the Mountfield British Gypsum works due to changing technology and market demands.
- The need to preserve the gypsum resource and the integrity of the mines.
- Creeping suburbanisation and cumulative changes in the rural landscape, roads and villages which are not in sympathy with local distinctiveness or vernacular architecture.
- Erosion of public rights of way where users avoid the muddy areas making tracks increasingly wider.
- Agricultural diversification to hobby farms and horsiculture.
- Changes in the types and frequency of grazing animals in the countryside impacts on character as they are a characteristic feature. Lack of grazing can give an unmanaged appearance to the landscape and reduce the biodiversity value.
- Loss of unimproved species rich pastures and hay meadows.
- The positive land management initiatives associated with the High Weald AONB.

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- Farm Environment Plans including several organic farms and entry level stewardship.
- Intrusive modern farm buildings.
- Loss of riverside trees due to agriculture and flood management engineering works.
- Coniferisation of larger woods.
- Loss of traditional coppicing in woodlands and increase in game shooting.
- Woodland Grant schemes are scattered across the area reversing the trend of poor woodland management, including a positive woodland management plan for the extensive woodlands of the British Gypsum estate and Darwell woods.
- Increasing traffic on the roads which cross the area and rat running on rural lanes.

Future Forces for Change

- The need to provide local affordable housing in the villages.
- The associated infrastructure required for new development such as waste water treatment works.
- Future pressure for the expansion of Darwell reservoir and associated infrastructure.
- Traffic and rat running on narrow rural roads. Erosion of the edges of sunken lanes by increasingly larger agricultural and other vehicles.
- Demands for traffic calming and road improvements which could introduce increasing urban clutter in villages and rural lanes.
- Continued agricultural change due to changing markets, economic pressures and response to climate change.
- The spread of small agricultural holdings, hobby farming, paddocks, farm shops and allotments for local food production.
- Pressure for locating renewable energy facilities for solar, wind and bio energy.
- Pests and diseases of trees which could impact significantly on the mature tree stock. E.g. phytophora of alder and Ash dieback.
- Failure to control invasive species of plants and animals in water courses, such as New Zealand Pigmy Weed (Crassula helmsii), Parrots Feather (Myryophyllum aquaticum), Mink and European Marsh Frog (Pelophylax ridibundus). All of these impact on the native flora and fauna which are characteristic of the area.
- Water quality in the River Rother and Darwell catchments.

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Table 3 Potential Impacts of Climate Change

- Potential changes in woodland / tree species composition and accelerated growth of invasive species such as birch and rhododendron.
- Changes in ground flora such as bluebells, which produce distinctive seasonal displays.
- Increased prevalence of pests and diseases due to warmer weather e.g. Phytophera of Alder.
- Changes in precipitation and temperatures will change the types of crops that farmers grow.
- More frequent and serious flood events in the valley bottoms.
- Potential impact on the viability of grazing sheep, dairy and beef.
- Increased temperatures and a decline in precipitation levels may dry out wetland habitats and ponds and alter stream flows.
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C Vision and Strategy

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Landscape change and adaptation to meet the strategy requires:

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5. Consider the potential to plan for recreational access in this character area identifying areas where public access can be encouraged whilst protecting other areas where wildlife conservation is the priority.
6. Integrate proposed and existing development into the landscape through planting of tree features and woodland to define the village boundaries with the countryside.
7. Ensure that any expansion of Darwell reservoir is appropriate to its location and consider enhanced informal recreational use with sensitive design, treatment and screening of the existing and proposed installations.
8. Ensure that the design and layout of new developments respect the character and form of the landscape and existing settlements.
9. Control the spread of suburbanisation by minimising clutter of signage and other urban features in lanes and villages.
10. Conserve the setting of historic buildings and landscape features in particular the Brightling follies and their landscape setting.
11. Replant parkland trees to ensure that they remain a feature of the landscape as veteran trees die off.

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12. Protect and enhance historic designed landscapes and features of archaeological significance.
13. Consider appropriate species for new plantings to maintain landscape character and biodiversity having regard to adaptation to climate change influences.
14. Restore and strengthen tree and woodland structure, encouraging woodland grant and farm conservation schemes and positive woodland management.
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D Guidelines for Managing Change

Development considerations for housing and other development

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The main pressure for development in this character area would be for intensification or expansion of the water supply facilities associated with the reservoir. There will inevitably be a demand for local housing in the smaller villages.

Tourism is an important source of income to this area and there is likely to be increasing demand for accommodation in hotels, bed and breakfast, caravan and camp sites. The modern trend for luxury and exotic camping (glamping) is already appearing in the guise of teepees, tree houses and the like. There will be demand for new facilities and to improve or expand existing, some of these putting pressure on ancient woodland. Any new development should respect the key positive attributes in the landscape outlined in Table 1 above.

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Darwell Valley

Current issues offering opportunities for protection and enhancement	Landscape Management Guidelines	Benefits delivered by Ecosystem Services for each area of interest
Trees and Woodland Ancient woodland and tree belts are not in positive management. Ghyll woodlands are not in positive management and are difficult to manage due to the steep and inaccessible nature of these woods. Traditional management has stopped as it is not commercially viable e.g. pollarding of stream side willows. Tree diseases. Ancient parkland trees dying off and not being replaced. Extensive areas of woodland are already in woodland grant schemes. Pressure for glamping sites in woodland. Invasive species competing with native flora and fauna e.g. Spanish Bluebell, Himalayan balsam, Japanese knotweed, rhododenrdron.	**Trees and Woodland** Actively manage trees and woodland through coppicing, pollarding of willows and replanting to create a diverse age structure. Plant new small woods, wet woodland and tree belts to strengthen the landscape character and where this is appropriate habitat creation. Consider the need to adapt to changes enforced by climate change, such as specific tree diseases and possible adaptation in species selection. Replant parkland and individual hedgerow trees. Plant trees and woodland to contain existing and new built development. Encourage planting of trees along streams and ditches where appropriate for the habitat.	**Provisioning** Fuel (woodfuel for local communities from woodland management) **Regulating** Carbon sequestration, woodland absorbs and holds CO_2. Habitat and species resilience to climate change **Cultural** Tranquillity Sense of Place and local distinctiveness Cultural heritage (traditional woodland management) Biodiversity

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Current issues offering opportunities for protection and enhancement	Landscape Management Guidelines	Benefits delivered by Ecosystem Services for each area of interest
Other Key Habitats Deterioration and loss of habitats : **Water** Loss of river and streamside vegetation. Deterioration of water quality in streams, ditches and ponds Invasive species of plants and animals which compete with native flora and fauna. **Wet Meadows** Financial and viable farming constraints affecting the continued management of wet meadows reducing the biodiversity value. Agricultural improvement to Grassland and meadows reducing species richness. Loss of wetland meadows to arable farming.	**Other Key Habitats** Encourage management of river and stream channels, especially conservation of riverside trees and vegetation. Conservation and re-creation of wet meadow/ pasture habitats. Agri-environment schemes to maximise biodiversity and encourage the retention of grazing. Opportunities to maximise reed bed creation. Encourage measures to improve water quality. Continuation of schemes to encourage farmers to minimise the use of chemicals and fertilizers.	**Provisioning** Nature's larder of free berries and herbs. Conservation of insect pollinators for pollination of crops. **Regulating** Habitat and species resilience to climate change **Cultural** Appreciation of nature Educational value Biodiversity

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Current issues offering opportunities for protection and enhancement	Landscape Management Guidelines	Benefits delivered by Ecosystem Services for each area of interest
Recreation, Green Infrastructure (GI) and ANGS The reservoir offers little recreational value as it is not accessible from public rights of way. Part of the reservoir is used by an angling club. Pressure on bridleways and byways as multi use, including cycling and 4 wheel drives increasing erosion. Lack of funding to manage and enhance GI for improved access. Need for better recreational linkages and improved sustainable transport corridors. Extensive footpath and bridleway network Need for improved access to natural green space for all users both close to homes and in the wider countryside. Gentrification Loss of tranquillity due to more cars and access.	**Recreation, Green Infrastructure and ANGS** Where appropriate develop Green Infrastructure Strategies based on a county wide GI mapping. Plan for and manage recreational pressure on the countryside which could be affected by the increase in population as well as the seasonal holiday makers. Maximise opportunities for access away from sensitive habitats. Consider opportunities to create new green corridors and improve existing as safe ideally motorised traffic free recreational routes. Consider enhanced pedestrian access to the reservoir. Maximise opportunities for and manage water based recreational activities where these would not conflict with wildlife. Consider sensitive traffic management on rural lanes.	**Provisioning** Protected farmland. **Regulating** Habitat and species resilience to climate change Water quality and protected aquifers. Regulating water flow and preventing flooding Carbon sequestration **Cultural** Recreation Heritage assets and cultural heritage Inspirational Tranquility Biodiversity

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Current issues offering opportunities for protection and enhancement	Landscape Management Guidelines	Benefits delivered by Ecosystem Services for each area of interest
Horse Keeping ('horsiculture') and small holdings Deterioration of the character and quality of the landscape and loss of local distinctiveness. Loss of historic field pattern where fences replace hedges. Intensive grazing can cause soil erosion.	**Horse Keeping ('horsiculture') and small holdings** Enhance the condition of areas of horsiculture and small holdings through the restoration of an intact, well managed hedgerow or ditch network and retaining a diverse grass sward by preventing overgrazing. Encourage local food production and allotment provision in areas where this will not detract from local landscape character.	**Provisioning** Grazing Food production **Regulating** Habitat and species resilience to climate change **Cultural** Recreation Heritage assets Sense of Place and local distinctiveness Biodiversity

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Current issues offering opportunities for protection and enhancement	Landscape Management Guidelines	Benefits delivered by Ecosystem Services for each area of interest
The character of the villages Gentrification Urbanisation Development pressures Gradual loss and deterioration of heritage features. Fast traffic on rural lanes Visitor pressure and cars detracting from local character and distinctiveness of the area in general.	**Protect and Enhance the character of the villages** Encourage the production of Neighbourhood Plans which incorporate village design guides. Plan for new development in the villages to ensure it is designed to a high standard to reflect local character and sense of place. Establish defined development edges to villages with new tree planting. Prepare village design guides and tree conservation plans. Consider traffic management on rural lanes.	**Provisioning** Local amenities and facilities. **Regulating** Use of sustainable materials Habitat and species resilience to climate change Water quality and protected aquifers. Regulating water flow and preventing flooding **Cultural** Sense of Place and local distinctiveness Heritage assets Biodiversity

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Current issues offering opportunities for protection and enhancement	Landscape Management Guidelines	Benefits delivered by Ecosystem Services for each area of interest
Flood management and SUDS schemes? Flash floods and run off. Flooding of properties in low lying areas by river and ground water.	**Flood management and SUDS schemes?** Plan for flood management by conserving and enhancing the flood plains and managing water levels in ditches and drains. Encourage the design of sensitive flood defence schemes which conserve and enhance the landscape and habitats including river channel restoration schemes Conserve and enhance existing man made and natural drainage features. Maximise opportunities for the creation of SUDs schemes which contribute to local amenity and habitat creation.	**Provisioning** Water conservation **Regulating** Flood control Protection of aquifers **Cultural** Heritage assets Sense of Place and local distinctiveness Tranquillity Amenity and recreation Biodiversity

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Glossary

(also refer to the full version in the County Landscape Assessment).

ANGS: Accessible Natural Green Space Natural England – Accessible Natural Greenspace Standard (ANGSt)

Assart: Field created from the clearance of woodland

Clunch Barn: constructed of a building material composed of hardened clay or chalk marl.

Ecosystem Services: The services provided by nature which support living systems and can be evaluated.

Enclosure: The separation of land from the common by fence or private use.

GI or Green Infrastructure: Multifunctional green areas which provide areas for recreation, wildlife, water supply catchment, flood relief, food or timber production.

Glamping: New types of camp sites with permanent tent features in yurts, teepees, vintage caravans, timber pods etc. Woodlands are popular locations for these.

Local Nature Reserve: Local Nature Reserve (or LNR) is a statutory designation made under Section 21 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949, and amended by Schedule 11 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006, by principal local authorities.

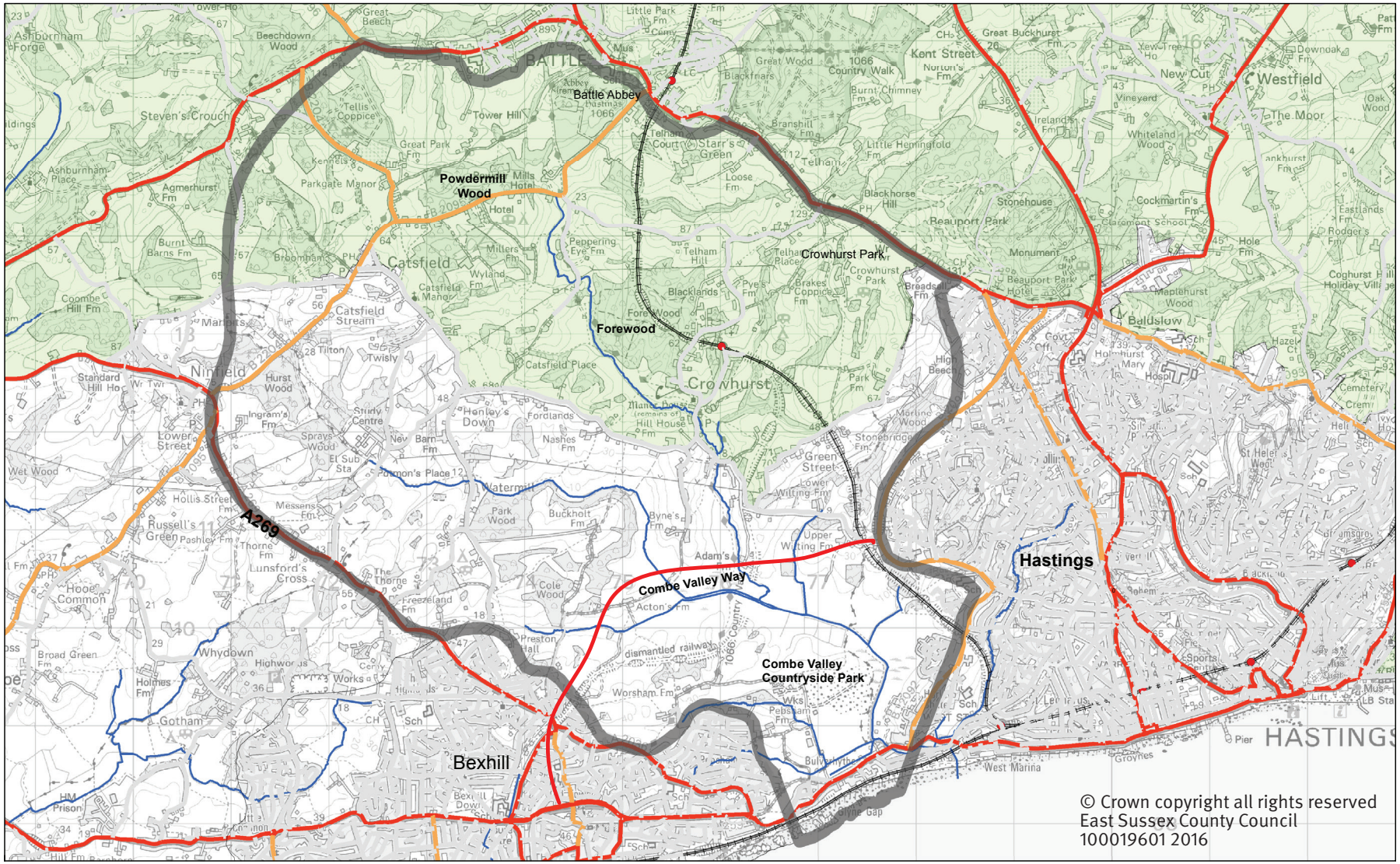
Ramsar sites are wetlands of international importance for biodiversity designated under the Ramsar Convention.

SNCI or Local Site: a Site of Nature Conservation Importance.

SSSI: A national designation for Site of Special Scientific Interest, these may be of biodiversity or geological significance or both.

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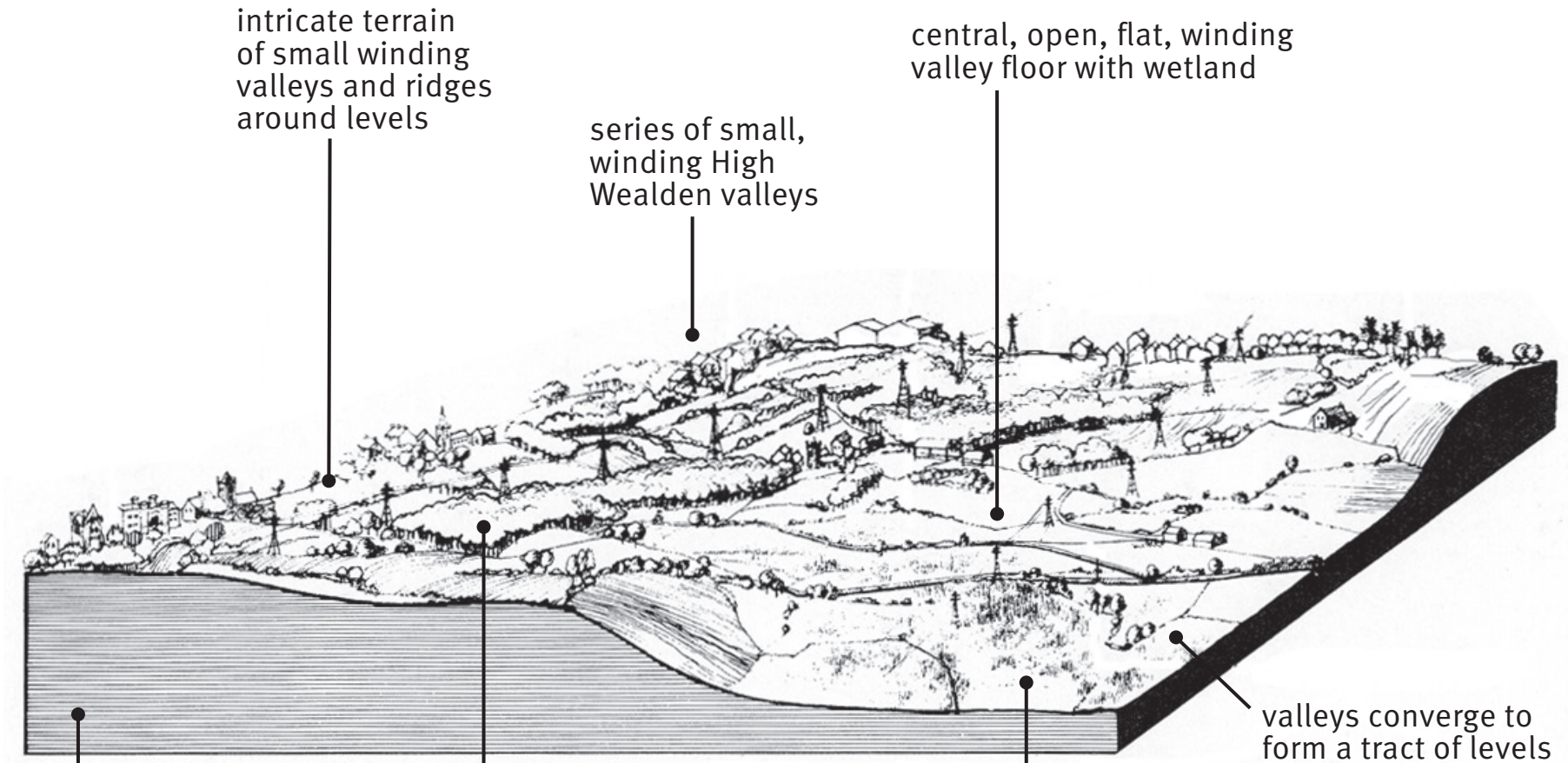
10 Combe Haven Valley Landscape Character Area

High Weald AONB

0 0.5 1 2 3 4 Kilometers

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Contents

A. Landscape Description
B. Landscape Evaluation
C. Vision and Strategy
D. Guidelines for Managing Change

A Landscape Description

Key Landscape Characteristics

- A series of small winding High Wealden stream valleys which converge on a tract of levels to join the Combe Haven basin.
- Rolling well wooded countryside with typical High Wealden character of rolling landscape and historic field patterns.
- Ghyll woodlands on the steeper slopes.
- The area is enclosed by the Battle ridge to the north.
- Focal open, flat, winding valley floor and wetland in the Combe Haven Basin.
- Intricate terrain of small, winding valleys and ridges around levels, with abundant woods and gills.
- Extensive areas of ancient woodland.
- Filsham reed beds at the eastern end of the Combe Haven Valley are one of the largest areas of reedbeds in East Sussex.
- The Heritage England Registered 1066 battlefield and parkland on the northern edge.
- A sense of tranquillity away from the main settlements and roads.
- Indigenous characteristic tree species are oak, ash and field maple, with wild cherry and sweet chestnut coppice in woodland on the drier slopes. Scattered scrub and large white willow on the levels.
- Wetland birds are a feature in the wetland landscape.
- Some remnant historic parkland associated with historic manors at Crowhurst Park, Catsfield Place and Parkgate Manor.
- Scattered historic farmsteads typical of the High Weald.
- Caravan and chalet developments which reflect the attractiveness of the area for holiday makers.
- A large electricity sub station near Catsfield with associated pylons extending across the area in several directions.
- Urban fringe intrusions around the edges of Bexhill and Hastings.
- The Hastings to London railway line cuts across the eastern part of the area.
- Remnants of the disused Bexhill to Crowhurst rail link cross the Combe Haven.
- The main A269 crosses the area from Bexhill to Battle forming the western boundary to the area.
- The B2029 runs along the eastern boundary from Glyne Gap to Baldslow.

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- The Combe Haven and Glyne Gap area perform an important function, maintaining a physical and visual gap between St Leonards and Bexhill.
- At Bulverhythe, Glyne Gap and Filsham, open edges of housing estates face onto the exposed levels of Glyne Gap and Filsham – emphasised by the rising ground and Combe Haven Caravan Park.

Cultural Associations

Crowhurst has a ruined medieval manor house adjacent to St Georges Church. There is a well-documented ancient yew tree in the church grounds.

Catsfield Hunt Kennels is the home of the East Sussex and Romney Marsh Hunt. The East Sussex Hunt was founded in 1853 and the Romney Marsh Hunt in 1858. The East Sussex Hunt relocated to the Kennels at Catsfield in 1882 when new purpose built kennels were constructed. They have remained there ever since becoming the combined kennels for the merged hunt in 1966.

Table 1 Key positive Landscape Attributes

- A series of small winding High Wealden stream valleys which converge on a tract of levels to join the Combe Haven basin.
- Rolling well wooded countryside with typical High Wealden character of rolling landscape and historic field patterns.
- Ghyll woodlands on the steeper slopes.
- Focal open, flat, winding valley floor and wetland in the Combe Haven Basin.
- Intricate terrain of small, winding valleys and ridges around levels, with abundant woods and gills.
- Extensive areas of ancient woodland.
- Filsham reed beds at the eastern end of the Combe Haven Valley are one of the largest areas of reedbeds in East Sussex.
- The Heritage England Registered 1066 battlefield and parkland on the northern edge.
- A sense of tranquillity away from the main settlements and roads.
- Indigenous characteristic tree species are oak, ash and field maple, with wild cherry and sweet chestnut coppice in woodland on the drier slopes. Scattered scrub and large white willow on the levels.
- Wetland birds are a feature in the wetland landscape.
- Some remnant historic parkland associated with historic manors at Crowhurst Park, Catsfield Place and Parkgate Manor.
- Scattered historic farmsteads typical of the High Weald.

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B Landscape Evaluation

Table 2 Current Condition

This is a largely unspoilt and tranquil rural landscape with few intrusive features. The landscape is in generally good condition and well managed as farmland with some surviving historic structure. Agricultural change has led to some gentrification of the rural landscape and villages. As with most of the High Weald landscape the historic field patterns of small fields and significant hedgerows remain intact in the northern part of the area. The Combe Haven Valley is a farmed landscape and generally in positive management.

Woodlands have been affected by lack of traditional coppice management, rhododendron invasion and coniferisation.

Forces for Change impacting on positive attributes

Past / Current forces for change

- The northern part of the area is in the High Weald AONB and has been more protected from intrusive development than the area between the urban areas and the AONB boundary.
- Urban edges of Hastings and Bexhill have expanded into the edges of the area and will do so more with the expansion of North Bexhill.
- The establishment of Combe Valley Countryside Park should ensure that this area is safeguarded from further development and managed as multifunctional green infrastructure into the future.
- A large and very visible caravan park on slopes at Filsham and a holiday mobile home and chalet park at Crowhurst Park. Smaller more contained caravan sites at Crowhurst and Watemill.
- The Pebsham Landfill site, which will soon be restored and landscaped but will still have indicators of its former use for some years.
- The waste water treatment plant at Pebsham.
- The large electricity sub-station at Catsfield and pylons extending out from this.
- Ribbon development to the south east of the Battle ridge.
- The Combe Valley Way new road which crosses the Combe Haven Valley to the south of the area.
- Widespread horsiculture especially on the urban fringes of Bexhill and pressure for new development associated with this such as sand schools.

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- The positive land management initiative associated with the High Weald AONB.
- Changes in the types and frequency of grazing animals in the countryside impacts on character as they are a characteristic feature. Lack of grazing can give an unmanaged appearance to the landscape and reduce the biodiversity value.
- The reducing viability of farming and in particular on the less productive soils of the High Weald.
- Creeping suburbanisation and cumulative changes in the rural landscape, roads and villages which are not in sympathy with local distinctiveness or vernacular architecture.
- Water quality in the channels and ditches.
- Loss of vegetation along rivers and dykes due to maintenance regimes, agricultural intensification and drainage works.
- Farm Environment Plans, much of the farmland in the Combe Haven Valley is under Countryside Stewardship Agreements and Buckholt Farm is farmed organically.
- Invasive species of plants and animals in water courses, such as New Zealand Pigmy Weed (*Crassula helmsii*), Parrots Feather (*Myryophyllum aquaticum*), Mink and European Marsh Frog (*Pelophylax ridibundus*). All of these impact on the native flora and fauna which are characteristic of the area.
- Intrusive modern farm buildings.
- Loss of traditional coppicing in woodlands and increase in game shooting.
- RSPB acquisition and management of Forewood Nature Reserve reversing this trend for this significant woodland in the area.
- Woodland Grant schemes to ensure positive management of Forewood and Powdermill wood.
- Increasing traffic on the main roads which cross the area and rat running on rural lanes.

Future Forces for Change

- The need to provide local housing in the villages, especially the larger service centres.
- Demands for traffic calming and road improvements which could introduce increasing urban clutter to rural roads, villages and lanes.
- Continued agricultural change due to changing markets, economic pressures and response to climate change.
- The spread of small agricultural holdings, hobby farming, paddocks, farm shops and allotments for local food production.
- Pressure for locating renewable energy facilities for solar, wind and bio energy.
- Pests and diseases of trees which could impact significantly on the mature tree stock. E.g. phytophora of alder and Ash dieback.
- Failure to control invasive species of plants and animals in water courses, such as New Zealand Pigmy Weed (*Crassula helmsii*), Parrots Feather (*Myryophyllum aquaticum*), Mink and European Marsh Frog (*Pelophylax ridibundus*). All of these impact on the native flora and fauna which are characteristic of the area.
- Water quality in the Brede catchment.

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Table 3 Potential Impacts of Climate Change

- Potential changes in woodland / tree species composition and accelerated growth of species such as birch.
- Changes in ground flora which produce distinctive seasonal displays and other native vegetation.
- Increased prevalence of pests and diseases due to warmer weather e.g. Phytophera of Alder.
- Changes in precipitation and temperatures will change the types of crops that farmers grow.
- Potential impact on the viability of grazing sheep, dairy and beef.
- Increased temperatures and a decline in precipitation levels may dry out wetland habitats and ponds and alter stream flows.
- Changes in water levels in ditches, ponds and streams.
- The Combe Haven valley and tributary valleys are flooded for longer periods of the year.

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C Vision and Strategy

Table 4 Vision

A tranquil landscape with some areas of relative remoteness, particularly in the north of the area. The Combe Haven Valley and its tributary valleys contained by well wooded slopes. The Combe Valley Countryside Park in close proximity to urban areas providing great potential for unique recreational opportunities. Well managed and enhanced wildlife habitats and increased biodiversity. The distinctive historic character of this wealden landscape conserved and enhanced.

As noted in the current Landscape Character Guidance – A Landscape Strategy identifies *"what change if any is desirable for any landscape character area as a whole?"*

Landscape change and adaptation to meet the strategy requires:

1. Planning for the enhancement of the Bexhill Fringe and the Combe Haven and Marline Biodiversity Opportunity Areas improving habitat continuity.
2. Protect and manage existing habitats and plan for restoration of ditches and riverside vegetation to restore habitat linkages and continuity.
3. Plan for the creation of multifunctional green infrastructure to maximise the opportunities for biodiversity and recreation offered by the river corridor and extensive woodland.
4. Consider the potential to plan for recreational access in this character area identifying areas where public access can be encouraged whilst protecting other areas where wildlife conservation is the priority.
5. Maximise opportunities for water based activities where this does not conflict with wild life interests, water quality or tranquillity.
6. Integrate proposed and existing development into the landscape through planting of tree features and woodland to define the village boundaries with the countryside.
7. Ensure that the design and layout of new developments respect the character and form of the landscape and existing settlements.
8. Control the spread of suburbanisation by minimising clutter of signage and other urban features in lanes and villages.
9. Conserve the setting of historic buildings and landscape features.
10. Consider appropriate species for new plantings to maintain landscape character and biodiversity but also adaptation to climate change influences.

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D Guidelines for Managing Change

Development considerations for housing and other development

Proposals need to have regard for the current High Weald Management Plan:

http://www.highweald.org/downloads/publications/high-weald-aonb-management-plan-documents/1475-high-weald-management-plan-3rd-edition-2014-2019/file.html

The main pressures for development in this character area are the construction of the Combe Valley Way and the associated development this will release. Expanding business development to the west of Queensway is filling the green gaps between this road and the protected woodland areas. There will be some need to accommodate housing for the rural populations in the rural settlements of Catsfield and Crowhurst. A priority should be to identify opportunities to enhance the degraded and poorly managed parts of the character area on the Hastings urban fringes.

Tourism is an important source of income to this area and there is likely to be increasing demand for accommodation in hotels, bed and breakfast, caravan and camp sites. The modern trend for luxury and exotic camping (glamping) may put pressure on woodland and parkland areas. There will be demand for new facilities and to improve or expand existing, some of these putting pressure on ancient woodland. Any new development should respect the key positive attributes in the landscape outlined in Table 1 above.

Proposed development should consider opportunities for proactively meeting the Landscape Change Strategy aims for this Landscape Character Area as set out in 1-10 above.

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Table 5

Current issues offering opportunities for protection and enhancement	Landscape Management Guidelines	Benefits delivered by Ecosystem Services for each area of interest
Countryside and Farmland Farm environment plans relating to much of the farm land, including organic farming. Pressure for farm diversification and development of hobby farms, solar arrays, wind farms, waste recycling operations etc. Expansion of camping and caravan sites as well as other holiday related development such as 'Glamping'. Land falling out of positive management and dereliction of farm buildings. Loss of traditional orchards, pasture and wetland meadows. Clearance of natural vegetation from drainage channels and ditches. Low water levels and poor water quality in some drains and streams. Deterioration of by ways and lanes due to erosion of un-surfaced routes by horses, bikes and 4 wheel drives. Damage to verges on narrow country lanes caused by increasing size of farm vehicles and passing traffic.	**Countryside and Farmland** Encourage establishment of more farm conservation schemes to conserve the landscape structure of wetland, ditches and streams on the levels. Conserve hedges, trees and small woods on the higher ground. Maintain the mixed farmed character of the area. Protect and manage historic field patterns and conserve boundary features. Maintain water levels in drains and ditches. Conserve and enhance byways and rural lanes. Use tree and woodland planting to screen intrusive farm buildings and caravan sites. Enhance the biodiversity value of wet meadows, drainage and stream channels. Plan for and manage changes which may occur in the landscape due to changes in farm management brought about by economic influences and climate change. Address existing flooding issues of farmland and properties through flood management and by identifying areas which can provide flood alleviation.	**Provisioning services** Water availability Food production **Regulating services** (water purification, air quality maintenance and climate regulation) Water quality and protected aquifers. Regulating water flow and preventing flooding Soil conservation and erosion control Habitat and species resilience to climate change Carbon sequestration. Areas of peat in the river valleys, hedges, trees, reed beds and grassland regulate air quality by absorbing and retaining CO_2. **Cultural Services** Sense of Place and local distinctiveness. Source of Inspiration Sense of History Tranquillity Biodiversity

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Current issues offering opportunities for protection and enhancement	Landscape Management Guidelines	Benefits delivered by Ecosystem Services for each area of interest
Flooding of farmland and properties affecting the viability of farms. Overstocking and arable production on some soils can result in soil erosion and reduce soil quality.	Reduce the risk and incidence of soil erosion by encouraging the restoration of arable land to pasture. Apply best land management practices to prevent soil and fertiliser run off, thereby protecting surface and ground water.	
Trees and Woodland Woods and tree belts are not in positive management. Traditional management has stopped as it is not commercially viable e.g. pollarding of stream side willows. Tree diseases Invasive species competing with native flora and fauna e.g. Spanish Bluebell, Himalayan balsam, Japanese knotweed. Some areas of woodland are already in woodland grant schemes. Pressure for glamping sites in woodland.	**Trees and Woodland** Actively manage trees and woodland through coppicing, pollarding of willows and replanting to create a diverse age structure. Plant new small woods, wet woodland and tree belts to strengthen the landscape character and where this is appropriate habitat creation. Consider the need to adapt to changes enforced by climate change, such as specific tree diseases and possible adaptation in species selection. Plant trees and woodland to contain existing and new built development. Encourage planting of trees along streams and ditches where appropriate to habitat. Replant parkland and individual hedgerow trees.	**Provisioning** Fuel (wood fuel for local communities from woodland management) **Regulating** Carbon sequestration, woodland absorbs and holds CO_2. Habitat and species resilience to climate change **Cultural** Tranquillity Sense of Place and local distinctiveness Cultural heritage (traditional woodland management) Biodiversity

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Combe Haven Valley

Current issues offering opportunities for protection and enhancement	Landscape Management Guidelines	Benefits delivered by Ecosystem Services for each area of interest
Other Key Habitats Deterioration and loss of habitats : **Water** Loss of river and streamside vegetation. Deterioration of water quality in streams, ditches and ponds Invasive species of plants and animals which compete with native flora and fauna. A Nitrate Vulnerable Zone designated across most of the area. **Wet Meadows** Financial and viable farming constraints affecting the continued management of wet meadows reducing the biodiversity value. Improvements to Grassland and meadows reducing species richness. Loss of wetland meadows to arable farming.	**Other key Habitats** Encourage management of river and stream channels, especially conservation of riverside trees and vegetation. Conservation and re-creation of wet meadow/ pasture habitats. Agri-environment schemes to maximise biodiversity and encourage the retention of grazing. Opportunities to maximise reed bed creation. Encourage measures to improve water quality. Continue schemes to encourage farmers to minimise the use of chemicals and fertilizers.	**Provisioning** Nature's larder of free berries and herbs. Conservation of insect pollinators for pollination of crops. **Regulating** Habitat and species resilience to climate change **Cultural** Appreciation of nature Educational value Biodiversity

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Current issues offering opportunities for protection and enhancement	Landscape Management Guidelines	Benefits delivered by Ecosystem Services for each area of interest
Recreation, Green Infrastructure (GI) and ANGS (glossary) Pressure on bridleways and byways as multi use, including cycling and 4 wheel drives increasing erosion. The Combe Valley Countryside Park Pressure on sensitive wetland habitats. Lack of funding to manage and enhance GI for improved access. Need for better recreational linkages and improved sustainable transport corridors. Extensive footpath network including the 1066 Country Walk Need for improved access to natural green space for all users both close to homes and in the wider countryside. Existing access to extensive areas of woodland at Marline Woods and Foreland Wood. Gentrification Loss of tranquillity due to more cars and access.	**Recreation, Green Infrastructure and ANGS** Where appropriate develop Green Infrastructure Strategies based on a county wide GI mapping. Plan for and manage recreational pressure on the countryside which could be affected by the increase in population in surrounding towns of Bexhill and Hastings as well as the seasonal holiday makers. Maximise opportunities for access away from sensitive habitats. Maximise opportunities provided by the coast for access and recreation. Consider opportunities to create new green corridors and improve existing as safe ideally motorised traffic free recreational routes. Maximise opportunities for and manage water based recreational activities.	**Provisioning** Protected farmland **Regulating** Habitat and species resilience to climate change Water quality and protected aquifers. Regulating water flow and preventing flooding Carbon sequestration **Cultural** Recreation Heritage assets and cultural heritage Inspirational Tranquility Biodiversity

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Current issues offering opportunities for protection and enhancement	Landscape Management Guidelines	Benefits delivered by Ecosystem Services for each area of interest
Horse Keeping ('horsiculture') and small holdings This tends to be an issue around the villages. There are a lack of bridleways in this countrywide forcing horse riders to use country lanes. Deterioration of the character and quality of the landscape and loss of local distinctiveness. Can detract from historic field pattern where fences replace hedges. Can cause soil erosion.	**Horse Keeping ('horsiculture') and small holdings** Enhance the condition of areas of horsiculture and small holdings through the restoration of an intact, well managed hedgerow or ditch network and retaining a diverse grass sward by preventing overgrazing. Create new safe accessible bridleways, especially to link the urban areas with the countryside. Encourage local food production and allotment provision in areas where this will not detract from local landscape character.	**Provisioning** Grazing Food production **Regulating** Habitat and species resilience to climate change **Cultural** Recreation Heritage assets Sense of Place and local distinctiveness Biodiversity
The character of the villages Gentrification Urbanisation Development pressures Gradual loss and deterioration of Heritage features. Fast traffic on rural lanes Visitor pressure and cars detracting from local character and distinctiveness of the area in general.	**Protect and Enhance the character of the villages** Encourage the production of Neighbourhood Plans which incorporate village design guides. Plan for new development in the villages to ensure it is designed to a high standard to reflect local character and sense of place. Establish defined development edges to villages with new tree planting. Prepare village design guides and tree conservation plans. Consider traffic management on rural lanes	**Provisioning** Local amenities and facilities. **Regulating** Use of sustainable materials Habitat and species resilience to climate change Water quality and protected aquifers. Regulating water flow and preventing flooding **Cultural** Sense of Place and local distinctiveness Heritage assets Biodiversity

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Current issues offering opportunities for protection and enhancement	Landscape Management Guidelines	Benefits delivered by Ecosystem Services for each area of interest
Flood management and SUDS schemes? Flash floods and run off. Flooding of properties in low lying areas by river and ground water.	**Flood management and SUDS schemes?** Plan for flood management by conserving and enhancing the flood plains and managing water levels in ditches and drains. Encourage the design of sensitive flood defence schemes which conserve and enhance the landscape and habitats Conserve and enhance existing man made and natural drainage features. Maximise opportunities for the creation of SUDs schemes which contribute to local amenity and habitat creation.	**Provisioning** Water conservation **Regulating** Flood control Protection of aquifers **Cultural** Heritage assets Sense of Place and local distinctiveness Tranquillity Amenity and recreation Biodiversity

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Glossary

(also refer to the full version in the County Landscape Assessment).

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Assart: Field created from the clearance of woodland

Clunch Barn: constructed of a building material composed of hardened clay or chalk marl.

Ecosystem Services: The services provided by nature which support living systems and can be evaluated.

Enclosure: The separation of land from the common by fence or private use.

GI or Green Infrastructure: Multifunctional green areas which provide areas for recreation, wildlife, water supply catchment, flood relief, food or timber production.

Glamping: New types of camp sites with permanent tent features in yurts, teepees, vintage caravans, timber pods etc. Woodlands are popular locations for these.

Local Nature Reserve: Local Nature Reserve (or LNR) is a statutory designation made under Section 21 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949, and amended by Schedule 11 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006, by principal local authorities.

Ramsar sites are wetlands of international importance for biodiversity designated under the Ramsar Convention.

RSPB Royal Society for the Protection of Birds.

SNCI or Local Site: a Site of Nature Conservation Importance.

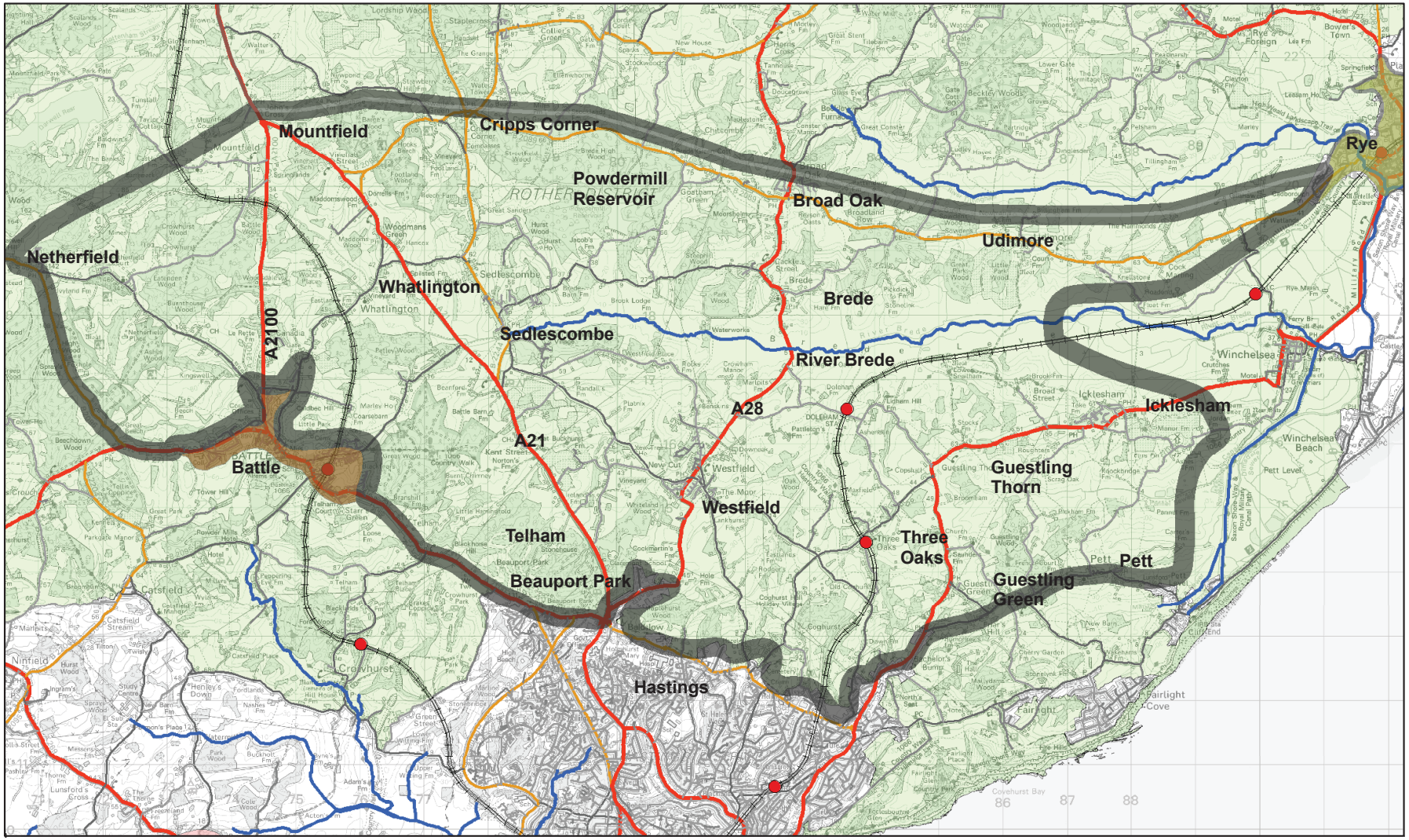
SSSI: A national designation for Site of Special Scientific Interest, these may be of biodiversity or geological significance or both.

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Brede Valley

11

The High Weald



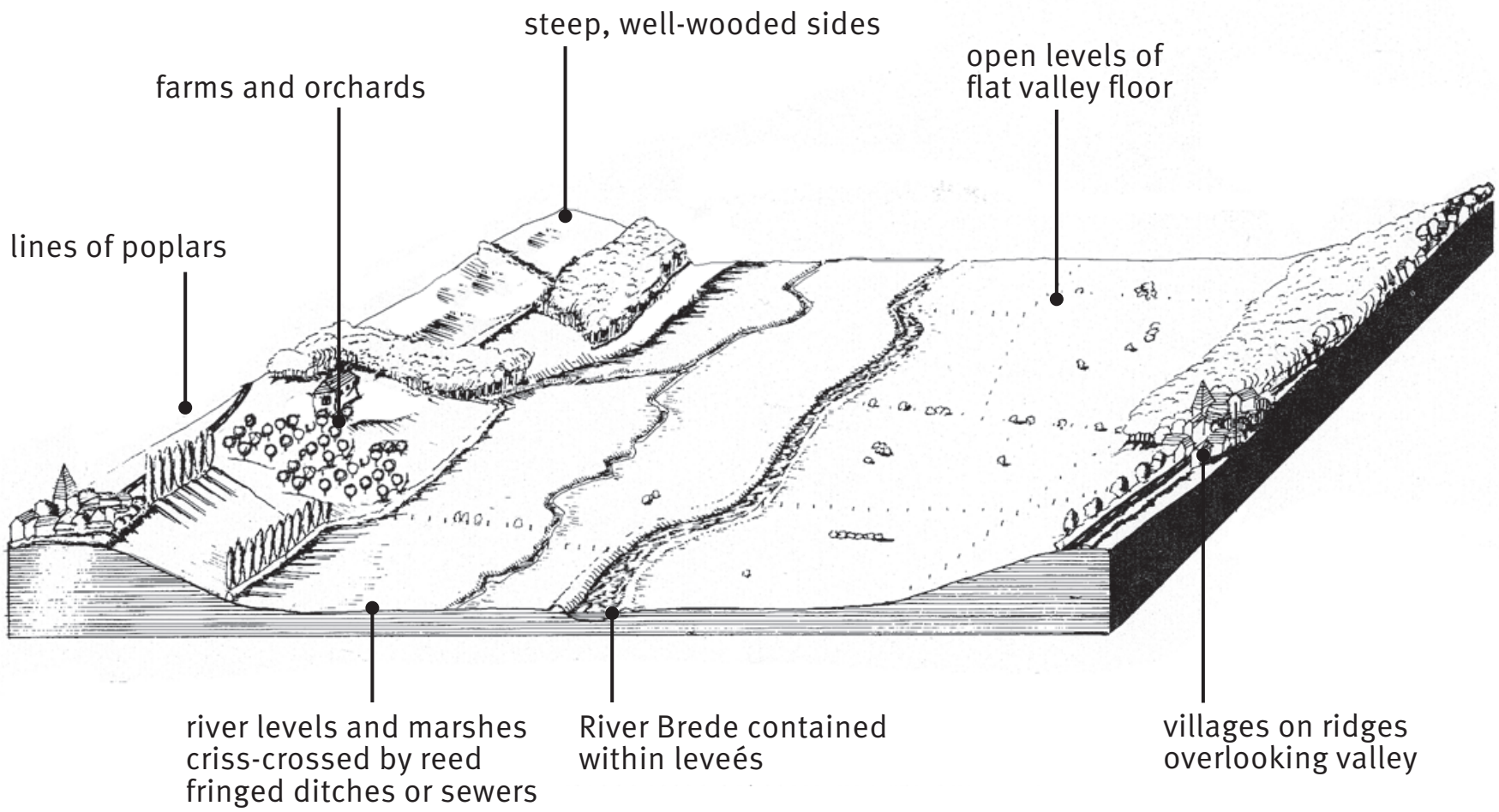
11 Brede Valley Landscape Character Area

High Weald AONB

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The High Weald

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C. Vision and Strategy
D. Guidelines for Managing Change

A Landscape Description

Key Landscape Characteristics

- The broad valley of the River Brede with a flat valley floor enclosed by relatively steep slopes.
- A sense of tranquillity away from the main settlements and roads.
- Wide vistas from the enclosing ridges across the river valley floodplain.
- Few detracting elements.
- Well wooded sides slopes with scattered farmsteads and orchards.
- River levels and marshes criss-crossed by reed fringed ditches or ‘sewers’.
- Extensive areas of Semi-Natural Ancient deciduous woodland around the valley head to the west of the area.
- Scattered areas of Semi natural ancient woodland on the valley slopes, many of which are ghyll woodlands, a key characteristic of the High Weald.
- To the south west of the main valley a belt of undulating countryside extends to the Battle to Hastings ridge.
- Lines of Italian poplars planted as wind breaks are an introduced and characteristic feature.
- Indigenous characteristic tree species are Oak and ash with sweet chestnut on drier slopes. Beech and pine also feature locally and other exotic specimens are found in gardens and villages.
- Villages and their churches perched on the slopes overlooking the valley, notably Brede, Udimore and Icklesham.
- Oast houses are characteristic and scattered on the slopes of the valley, many now converted into houses.
- Powdermill Reservoir to the north of the valley is largely concealed by woodland.
- Significant historic moated manor houses at Snailham and Court Lodge at Udimore, Crowham in Westfield and Brede Place in Brede.
- The historic designed landscape and important archaeological site of Beauport Park lies to the south of the area.
- Historic parkland at Brede Place and Pestalozzi children’s centre in Sedlescombe.
- Swans, herons and other wetland birds are very much features in the landscape.
- Caravan and chalet developments which reflect the attractiveness of the area for holiday makers.

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- Flood defence works and engineering structures which detract from the naturalness of the river valley.
- Urban fringe intrusions around the edges of Battle and Hastings including pylons, industrial units, housing and horticultural developments.
- Much of the open valley is free of roads and traffic, but four A roads cross the valley A2100, A21, A28 and the A259.
- These are linked by the B roads which traverse the enclosing ridges and link the villages.
- Winding and very narrow sunken country lanes with steep gradients.
- The south coast railway cuts across the south east part of the valley.

Cultural Associations

The old windmill on Hogs Hill near Icklesham was used as a recording studio by Sir Paul McCartney. Spike Milligan lived in Udimore until his death in 2002 and children's novelist Monica Edwards lived here from 1933-36.

The history of the area is one of a thriving agricultural landscape. From the 12th century onward the marshy valley floor was reclaimed for farming. Severe storms in the late 13th century breached the sea defence and flooded much of the valley floor farmland. This opened up a river channel as far inland as Brede Bridge so that timber and iron products and later coal could be transported downstream to Winchelsea and Rye. This easy access to the valley led to the siting of great houses on either side.

Sussex cattle and Romney Marsh sheep are characteristic historic breeds.

The many oast houses on the valley sides indicate how widespread hop growing once was. The only remnants of this are hops growing in hedgerows which bounded the former hop gardens.

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Table 1 Key positive Landscape Attributes

- The broad valley of the River Brede with a flat valley floor enclosed by relatively steep slopes.
- A sense of tranquillity away from the main settlements and roads.
- Wide vistas across the unspoilt river valley floodplain from the enclosing ridges.
- Well wooded sides slopes with scattered farmsteads and orchards.
- River levels and marshes criss-crossed by reed fringed ditches or 'sewers'.
- Extensive areas of Semi-Natural Ancient deciduous woodland around the valley head to the west of the area.
- Scattered areas of Semi-Natural Ancient Woodland on the valley slopes, many of which are ghyll woodlands, a key characteristic of the High Weald.
- To the south west of the main valley a belt of undulating countryside extends to the Battle ridge.
- Villages and their churches perched on the slopes overlooking the valley, notably Brede, Udimore and Icklesham.
- Oast houses are characteristic and scattered on the slopes of the valley, many now converted into houses.
- Powdermill Reservoir to the north of the valley is largely concealed by woodland.

- The historic designed landscape and important archaeological site of Beauport Park lies to the south of the area.
- Historic parkland at Brede Place and Pestalozzi Children's Centre.
- Swans, herons and other wetland birds are very much features in the landscape.

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B Landscape Evaluation

Table 2 Current Condition

This is a largely unspoilt and tranquil rural landscape with few intrusive features. The landscape is in generally good condition and well managed as farmland with a strong historic structure. Orchards have declined and many disappeared so that associated Oast houses have been converted to residential uses. Agricultural change has led to some gentrification of the rural landscape and villages. As with most of the High Weald landscape the historic field patterns of small fields and significant hedgerows remain intact.

Forces for Change impacting on positive attributes

Past / Current forces for change

- Loss of vegetation along rivers and dykes due to maintenance regimes, agricultural intensification and engineering works.
- Creeping suburbanisation and cumulative changes in the rural landscape, roads and villages which are not in sympathy with local distinctiveness or vernacular architecture.
- Expansion of caravan and mobile home parks larger ones being Beauport Park and Coghurst Hall to the north of Hastings.
- Water quality in the channels and ditches.
- A Nitrate Vulnerable Zone covers much of the area and a Catchment Sensitive Farming Initiative extends across East Rother and Walland Marsh.
- Loss of vegetation along rivers and dykes due to maintenance regimes, agricultural intensification and drainage works.
- The introduction of pump drainage in the 1970s which bought arable crops such as oil seed rape and wheat in the lower east part of the valley.
- Changes in the types and frequency of grazing animals in the countryside impacts on character as they are a characteristic feature. Lack of grazing can give an unmanaged appearance to the landscape and reduce the biodiversity value.
- Farm Environment Plans, much of the land is under Higher Level Stewardship Agreements and several farms in the valley are farmed organically.

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- Invasive species of plants and animals in water courses, such as New Zealand Pigmy Weed (*Crassula helmsii*), Parrots Feather (*Myryophyllum aquaticum*), Mink and European Marsh Frog (*Pelophylax ridibundus*). All of these impact on the native flora and fauna which are characteristic of the area.
- Intrusive modern farm buildings.
- Loss of traditional coppicing in woodlands and increase in game shooting.
- Woodland Trust acquisition and management of Brede High Woods reversing this trend over a significant area.
- Woodland Grant schemes in Brede High Wood, Great Park Wood and many smaller woods across the area.
- Light industrial developments in the countryside including materials and metal recycling sites in rural areas at Westfield and Three Oaks.
- Development to enhance and expand the educational facility in the parkland at the internationally important Pestalozzi Children's Centre.
- The British Gypsum Factory on the edge of the area at Mountfield.
- Increasing traffic on the A roads which cross the area and the main roads along the ridges and rat running on rural lanes.
- Power lines crossing the open landscape.

Future Forces for Change

- The need to provide local housing in the villages, especially the larger service centres.
- Demands for traffic calming and road improvements which could introduce increasing urban clutter to rural roads, villages and lanes.
- Continued agricultural change due to changing markets, economic pressures and response to climate change.
- The spread of small agricultural holdings, hobby farming, paddocks farm shops and allotments for local food production.
- Pressure for locating renewable energy facilities for solar, wind and bio energy.
- Pests and diseases of trees which could impact significantly on the mature tree stock. E.g. phytophora of alder and Ash dieback.
- Failure to control invasive species of plants and animals in water courses, such as New Zealand Pigmy Weed (*Crassula helmsii*), Parrots Feather (*Myryophyllum aquaticum*), Mink and European Marsh Frog (*Pelophylax ridibundus*). All of these impact on the native flora and fauna which are characteristic of the area.
- Water quality in the Brede catchment.

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Table 3 Potential Impacts of Climate Change

- Potential changes in woodland / tree species composition and accelerated growth of species such as birch.
- Changes in ground flora which produce distinctive seasonal displays and other native vegetation.
- Increased prevalence of pests and diseases due to warmer weather e.g. Phytophera of Alder.
- Changes in precipitation and temperatures will change the types of crops that farmers grow.
- Potential impact on the viability of grazing sheep, dairy and beef.
- Increased temperatures and a decline in precipitation levels may dry out wetland habitats and ponds and alter stream flows.
- Changes in water levels in ditches, ponds and streams.

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C Vision and Strategy

Table 4 Vision

A tranquil landscape centred on the unspoilt river valley. Long open views from the surrounding ridges across the valley. The river winding through remote levels and set within a rolling and spacious countryside of extensive woodlands, farms and traditional orchards. The distinctive historic character of this High Wealden landscape conserved and enhanced

As noted in the current Landscape Character Guidance – A Landscape Strategy identifies *"what change if any is desirable for any landscape character area as a whole?"*

Landscape change and adaptation to meet the strategy requires:

1. Planning for the enhancement of the Romney Marsh Area Biodiversity Opportunity Area, which encompasses the Brede Valley, improving habitat continuity.
2. Protect and manage existing habitats and plan for restoration of ditches and riverside vegetation to restore habitat linkages and continuity.
3. Plan for the creation of multifunctional green infrastructure to maximise the opportunities for biodiversity and recreation offered by the river corridor and extensive woodland.
4. Consider the potential to plan for recreational access in this character area identifying areas where public access can be encouraged whilst protecting other areas where wildlife conservation is the priority.
5. Maximise opportunities for water based activities where this does not conflict with wild life interests, water quality or tranquillity.
6. Integrate proposed and existing development into the landscape through planting of tree features and woodland to define the village boundaries with the countryside.
7. Ensure that the design and layout of new developments respect the character and form of the landscape and existing settlements.
8. Control the spread of suburbanisation by minimising clutter of signage and other urban features in lanes and villages.
9. Conserve the setting of historic buildings and landscape features.
10. Consider appropriate species for new plantings to maintain landscape character and biodiversity but also adaptation to climate change influences.

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D Guidelines for Managing Change

Development considerations for housing and other development

Proposals need to have regard for the current High Weald Management Plan:

http://www.highweald.org/downloads/publications/high-weald-aonb-management-plan-documents/1475-high-weald-management-plan-3rd-edition-2014-2019/file.html

The main pressures for development in this character area will be to accommodate housing for the rural populations in the rural settlements of Westfield and Sedlescombe. There will also be a demand for local housing in the smaller villages. Pressures for expansion of Battle and Hastings may impact on the parts of the character area which border the towns. A priority should be to identify opportunities to enhance the degraded and poorly managed parts of the character area on the Hastings urban fringes.

Tourism is an important source of income to this area and there is likely to be increasing demand for accommodation in hotels, bed and breakfast, caravan and camp sites. The modern trend for luxury and exotic camping (glamping) is already appearing in the guise of teepees, tree houses and the like. There will be demand for new facilities and to improve or expand existing, some of these putting pressure on ancient woodland. Any new development should respect the key positive attributes in the landscape outlined in Table 1 above.

Proposed development should consider opportunities for proactively meeting the Landscape Change Strategy aims for this Landscape Character Area as set out in 1-10 above.

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Table 5

Current issues offering opportunities for protection and enhancement	Landscape Management Guidelines	Benefits delivered by Ecosystem Services for each area of interest
Countryside and Farmland Farm environment plans relating to much of the farm lands including organic farming. Pressure for farm diversification and development of hobby farms, solar arrays, wind farms, waste recycling operations etc. Expansion of camping and caravan sites as well as other holiday related development such as 'Glamping'. Land falling out of positive management and dereliction of farm buildings. Loss of traditional orchards, pasture and wetland meadows. Clearance of natural vegetation from drainage channels and ditches. Low water levels and poor water quality in some drains and streams. A Nitrate Vulnerable Zone designated across most of the area. Deterioration of by ways and lanes due to erosion of un-surfaced routes by horses, bikes and 4 wheel drives.	**Countryside and Farmland** Encourage establishment of more farm conservation schemes to conserve the landscape structure of wetland, ditches and streams on the levels. Conserve hedges, trees and small woods on the higher ground. Maintain the mixed farmed character of the area. Protect and manage historic field patterns and conserve boundary features. Maintain water levels in drains and ditches. Conserve and enhance byways and rural lanes. Use tree and woodland planting to screen intrusive farm buildings and caravan sites. Enhance the biodiversity value of wet meadows, drainage and stream channels. Plan for and manage changes which may occur in the landscape due to changes in farm management brought about by economic influences and climate change. Address existing flooding issues of farmland and properties through flood management and by identifying areas which can provide flood alleviation.	**Provisioning services** Water availability Food production **Regulating services** (water purification, air quality maintenance and climate regulation) Water quality and protected aquifers. Regulating water flow and preventing flooding Soil conservation and erosion control Habitat and species resilience to climate change Carbon sequestration. Areas of peat in the river valleys, hedges, trees, reed beds and grassland regulate air quality by absorbing and retaining CO_2. **Cultural Services** Sense of Place and local distinctiveness. Source of Inspiration Sense of History Tranquillity Biodiversity

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Current issues offering opportunities for protection and enhancement	Landscape Management Guidelines	Benefits delivered by Ecosystem Services for each area of interest
Damage to verges on narrow country lanes caused by increasing size of farm vehicles and passing traffic. Flooding of farmland and properties affecting the viability of farms. Overstocking and arable production on some soils can result in soil erosion and reduce soil quality.	Reduce the risk and incidence of soil erosion by encouraging the restoration of arable land to pasture. Apply best land management practices to prevent soil and fertiliser run off, thereby protecting surface and ground water.	
Trees and Woodland Woods and tree belts are not in positive management. Traditional management has stopped as it is not commercially viable e.g. pollarding of stream side willows. Tree diseases Invasive species competing with native flora and fauna e.g. Spanish Bluebell, Himalayan balsam, Japanese knotweed. Extensive areas of woodland are already in woodland grant schemes. Pressure for glamping sites in woodland.	**Trees and Woodland** Actively manage trees and woodland through coppicing, pollarding of willows and replanting to create a diverse age structure. Plant new small woods, wet woodland and tree belts to strengthen the landscape character and where this is appropriate habitat creation. Consider the need to adapt to changes enforced by climate change, such as specific tree diseases and possible adaptation in species selection. Plant trees and woodland to contain existing and new built development. Encourage planting of trees along streams and ditches where appropriate to habitat.	**Provisioning** Fuel (woodfuel for local communities from woodland management) **Regulating** Carbon sequestration, woodland absorbs and holds CO_2. Habitat and species resilience to climate change **Cultural** Tranquillity Sense of Place and local distinctiveness Cultural heritage (traditional woodland management) Biodiversity

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Current issues offering opportunities for protection and enhancement	Landscape Management Guidelines	Benefits delivered by Ecosystem Services for each area of interest
Other Key Habitats Deterioration and loss of habitats: **Water** Loss of river and streamside vegetation. Deterioration of water quality in streams, ditches and ponds Invasive species of plants and animals which compete with native flora and fauna. A Nitrate Vulnerable Zone designated across most of the area. **Wet Meadows** Financial and viable farming constraints affecting the continued management of wet meadows reducing the biodiversity value. Improvements to Grassland and meadows reducing species richness. Loss of wetland meadows to arable farming.	**Other key Habitats** Encourage management of river and stream channels, especially conservation of riverside trees and vegetation. Conservation and re-creation of wet meadow/ pasture habitats. Agri-environment schemes to maximise biodiversity and encourage the retention of grazing. Opportunities to maximise reed bed creation. Encourage measures to improve water quality. Continue schemes to encourage farmers to minimise the use of chemicals and fertilizers.	**Provisioning** Nature's larder of free berries and herbs. Conservation of insect pollinators for pollination of crops. **Regulating** Habitat and species resilience to climate change. **Cultural** Appreciation of nature Educational value Biodiversity

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Current issues offering opportunities for protection and enhancement	Landscape Management Guidelines	Benefits delivered by Ecosystem Services for each area of interest
Recreation, Green Infrastructure (GI) and ANGS (glossary) Pressure on bridleways and byways as multi use, including cycling and 4 wheel drives increasing erosion. Pressure on sensitive wetland habitats. Lack of funding to manage and enhance GI for improved access. Need for better recreational linkages and improved sustainable transport corridors. Extensive footpath network including the 1066 Country Walk Need for improved access to natural green space for all users both close to homes and in the wider countryside. Existing access to extensive areas of woodland at Brede High Woods as in Woodland Trust ownership. Gentrification Loss of tranquillity due to more cars and access.	**Recreation, Green Infrastructure and ANGS** Where appropriate develop Green Infrastructure Strategies based on a county wide GI mapping. Plan for and manage recreational pressure on the countryside which could be affected by the increase in population in surrounding towns of Rye and Hastings as well as the seasonal holiday makers. Maximise opportunities for access away from sensitive habitats. Maximise opportunities provided by the coast for access and recreation. Consider opportunities to create new green corridors and improve existing as safe ideally motorised traffic free recreational routes. Maximise opportunities for and manage water based recreational activities.	**Provisioning** Protected farmland **Regulating** Habitat and species resilience to climate change Water quality and protected aquifers. Regulating water flow and preventing flooding Carbon sequestration **Cultural** Recreation Heritage assets and cultural heritage Inspirational Tranquility Biodiversity

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Current issues offering opportunities for protection and enhancement	Landscape Management Guidelines	Benefits delivered by Ecosystem Services for each area of interest
Horse Keeping ('horsiculture') and small holdings This tends to be an issue around the villages rather than on the open valley. Deterioration of the character and quality of the landscape and loss of local distinctiveness. Can detract from historic field pattern where fences replace hedges. Can cause soil erosion.	**Horse Keeping ('horsiculture') and small holdings** Enhance the condition of areas of horsiculture and small holdings through the restoration of an intact, well managed hedgerow or ditch network and retaining a diverse grass sward by preventing overgrazing. Encourage local food production and allotment provision in areas where this will not detract from local landscape character.	**Provisioning** Grazing Food production **Regulating** Habitat and species resilience to climate change **Cultural** Recreation Heritage assets Sense of Place and local distinctiveness Biodiversity
The character of the villages Gentrification Urbanisation Development pressures Gradual loss and deterioration of Heritage features. Fast traffic on rural lanes Visitor pressure and cars detracting from local character and distinctiveness of the area in general.	**Protect and Enhance the character of the villages** Encourage the production of Neighbourhood Plans which incorporate village design guides. Plan for new development in the villages to ensure it is designed to a high standard to reflect local character and sense of place. Establish defined development edges to villages with new tree planting. Prepare village design guides and tree conservation plans. Consider traffic management on rural lanes.	**Provisioning** Local amenities and facilities. **Regulating** Use of sustainable materials Habitat and species resilience to climate change Water quality and protected aquifers. Regulating water flow and preventing flooding **Cultural** Sense of Place and local distinctiveness Heritage assets Biodiversity

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Current issues offering opportunities for protection and enhancement	Landscape Management Guidelines	Benefits delivered by Ecosystem Services for each area of interest
Flood management and SUDS schemes? Flash floods and run off. Flooding of properties in low lying areas by river and ground water.	**Flood management and SUDS schemes?** Plan for flood management by conserving and enhancing the flood plains and managing water levels in ditches and drains. Encourage the design of sensitive flood defence schemes which conserve and enhance the landscape and habitats Conserve and enhance existing man made and natural drainage features. Maximise opportunities for the creation of SUDs schemes which contribute to local amenity and habitat creation.	**Provisioning** Water conservation **Regulating** Flood control Protection of aquifers **Cultural** Heritage assets Sense of Place and local distinctiveness Tranquillity Amenity and recreation Biodiversity

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Glossary

(also refer to the full version in the County Landscape Assessment).

ANGS: Accessible Natural Green Space Natural England – Accessible Natural Greenspace Standard (ANGSt)

Assart: Field created from the clearance of woodland

Clunch Barn: constructed of a building material composed of hardened clay or chalk marl.

Ecosystem Services: The services provided by nature which support living systems and can be evaluated.

Enclosure: The separation of land from the common by fence or private use.

GI or Green Infrastructure: Multifunctional green areas which provide areas for recreation, wildlife, water supply catchment, flood relief, food or timber production.

Glamping: New types of camp sites with permanent tent features in yurts, teepees, vintage caravans, timber pods etc. Woodlands are popular locations for these.

Local Nature Reserve: Local Nature Reserve (or LNR) is a statutory designation made under Section 21 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949, and amended by Schedule 11 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006, by principal local authorities.

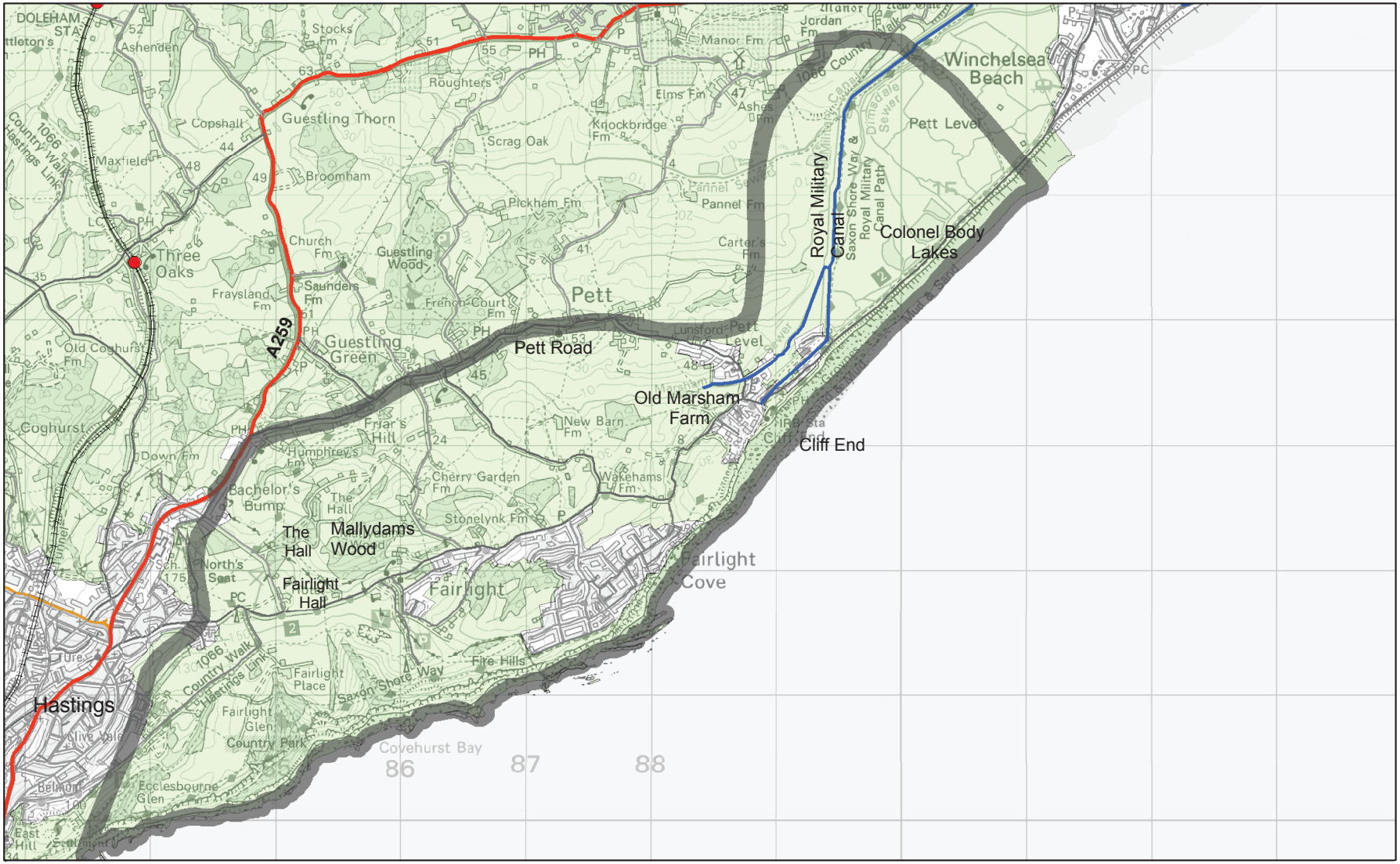
Ramsar sites are wetlands of international importance for biodiversity designated under the Ramsar Convention.

SNCI or Local Site: a Site of Nature Conservation Importance.

SSSI: A national designation for Site of Special Scientific Interest, these may be of biodiversity or geological significance or both.

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High Wealden Coast



12 High Wealden Coast Landscape Character Area

High Weald AONB

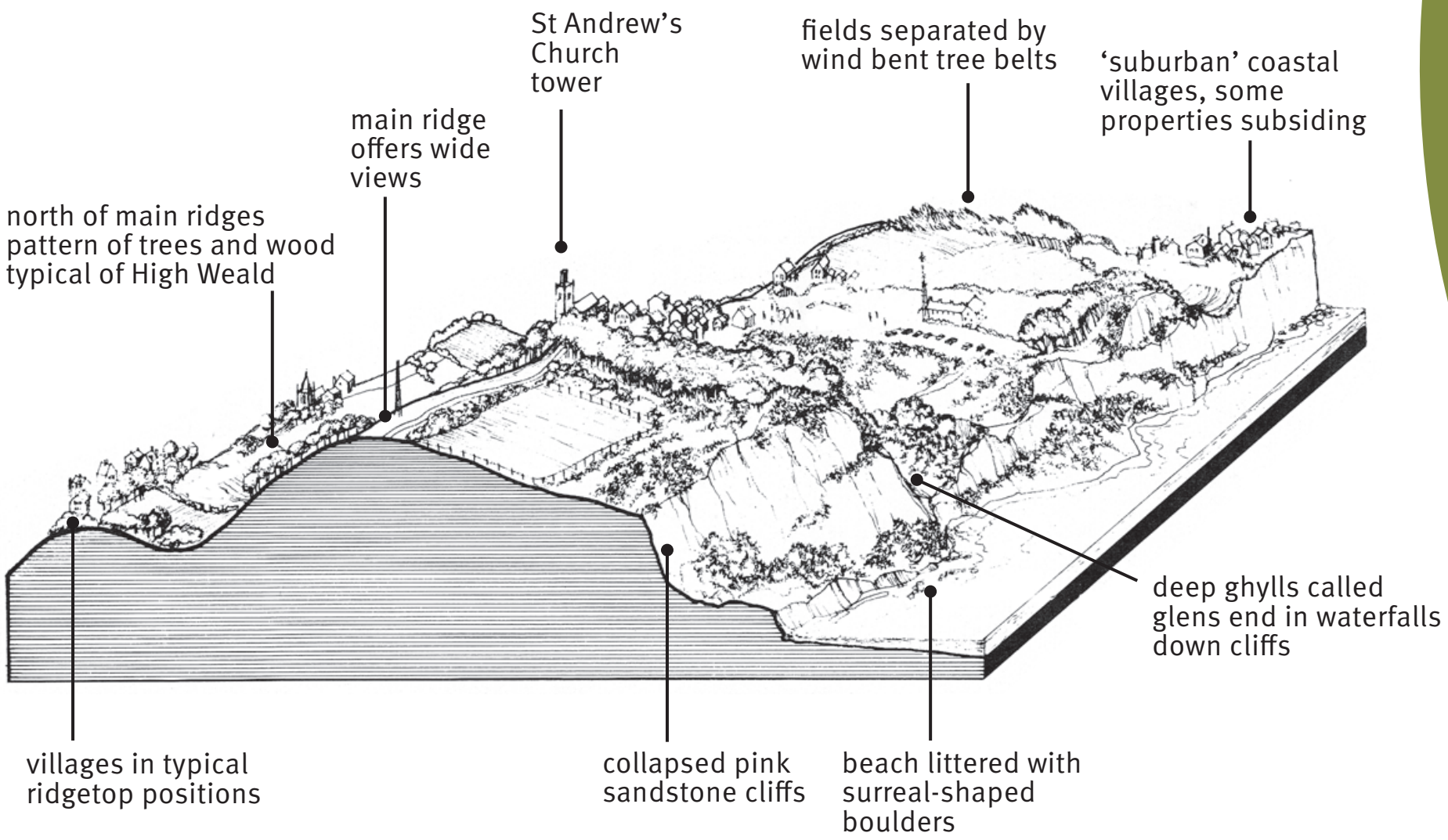
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The High Weald



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A Landscape Description

Key Landscape Characteristics

- The Hastings to Battle Ridge reaches the sea to form a distinctly unique coastline.
- Terraced, crumbling cliffs of soft pink sandstone where the geology of the High Weald meets the sea. Varying ages of cliff falls, some of which are still bare earth and others with established woodland.
- Hastings Country Park with internationally important wildlife designations.
- Deep ghylls, locally known as 'glens', which fall steeply to the sea and where the associated streams and springs form frequent muddy waterfalls.
- Scrubby heathland and wind sculpted trees growing on the coastal terraces of slumped cliffs.
- Two distinct glens in the cliffs:
  - Fairlight Glen is deep and sheltered and supports woodland with oak trees up to 30 metres tall
  - Ecclesbourne Glen has more scrubby vegetation and trees stunted by the prevailing wind.
- Wind swept cliff top fields bounded by wind sculpted hedges and tree belts.
- On the sheltered north side of the main ridge the patchwork of fields and woods is typical of the High Weald landscape.
- The urban fringes of Hastings, including the dominating masts at North Seat, form the western boundary to the area.
- The main ridge running inland between Batchelor's Bump and Cliff End offers long views across the Brede Valley to the north and Winchelsea, Rye, Dungeness, and on a clear day the coast of France.
- The A259 between Hastings and Rye follows the ridge and forms the boundary on the North West side of the area. Pett Road follows the continuation of the ridge to Cliff End.
- The windy and often narrow Fairlight Road crosses the area on the central ridge.
- Winding and very narrow sunken country lanes with steep gradients run between the ridge top roads.
- Virtually continuous ribbon development along Pett Road from Hastings to Cliff End.
- The Royal Military Canal and associated Pett Levels.
- Colonel Body Memorial Lakes popular with wildfowl and bird watchers.
- The historic ridge top villages of Pett and Fairlight, the latter with a prominent church tower.
- The relatively modern suburban settlement at Fairlight Cove where properties close to the cliff edge have subsided into the sea.

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High Wealden Coast

- The beach at the base of the cliffs which is difficult and hazardous to access due to continuing subsidence.
- Scattered historic farmsteads and interesting older country house estates at Fairlight Hall and The Hall.
- Scattered areas of semi-natural ancient woodland, the largest being Mallydams Wood.
- Traditional building materials are, as for most of the High Weald, red brick and tiles and, in this area, sandstone in conjunction with brick. White weatherboarding is also characteristic of the eastern High Weald and oak timber frames.
- The main amenity tree species in the area are oak, sweet chestnut, ash and sycamore. Coastal influences restrict species variety with much sycamore in coastal woods and some oak woods with sweet chestnut coppice inland.

Cultural Interests

The cliff exposures are of international significance as the best place to examine the geology of the Weald.

Hastings Country Park is a Local Nature Reserve, Special Area of Conservation and Site of Special Scientific Interest. Access to the Country Park from Hastings is via East Hill, the site of an historic vanished settlement.

The RSPCA rescue centre at Mallydams Wood is a well-known rescue and training centre for wildlife and in particular sea birds and seals.

Smuggling originated in the area due to taxes and restrictions on the export of wool and other goods. The Sussex coast was ideally placed as drop off point for contraband and the Fairlight coast was known for this. Smugglers met at 'The Whippings', the high cliff near Ecclesbourne and 'The Marrow-bone Gap' near Fairlight and Dripping Well in Fairlight. Hastings Museum and Art Gallery hold a variety of prints illustrating these meeting places.

Fairlight Hall is a Victorian Gothic mansion designed by the architect of Hyde Park Gardens, John Crake. The mansion was once owned by wealthy philanthropic mill owner James Roberts and was the location for the 1949 film Fall of the House of Usher directed by George Ivan Barnett.

St Andrew's Church (built 1845) has a tall tower and beacon turret, and can be seen for some distance around. The church is one of three in the United Benefice of Fairlight, Guestling and Pett. Richard D'Oyly Carte, founder of the Savoy Theatre, Savoy Hotel, and D'Oyly Carte Opera Company, which produced the Gilbert and Sullivan light operas, is buried in the churchyard. So also are Sir James Roberts of Saltaire and his wife.

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High Wealden Coast

Table 1 Key positive Landscape Attributes

- The Hastings to Battle Ridge reaches the sea to form a distinctly unique coastline.
- Terraced, crumbling cliffs of soft pink sandstone where the geology of the High Weald meets the sea.
- Deep ghylls, locally known as 'glens', which fall steeply to the sea where the associated streams and springs form frequent muddy waterfalls.
- Two distinct glens in the cliffs:
  - Fairlight Glen is deep and sheltered and supports woodland with oak trees up to 30 metres tall
  - Ecclesbourne Glen has more scrubby vegetation and trees stunted by the prevailing wind.
- Wind swept cliff top fields bounded by wind sculpted hedges and tree belts.
- On the sheltered north side of the main ridge the patchwork of fields and woods is typical of the High Weald landscape.
- The main ridge running inland between Batchelor's Bump and Cliff End offers long views across the Brede Valley to the north and Winchelsea, Rye, Dungeness, and the coast of France on a clear day.
- Winding and very narrow sunken country lanes with steep gradients run between the ridge top roads.
- The historic ridge top villages of Pett and Fairlight, the latter with a prominent church tower.

- Scattered historic farmsteads and interesting older country house estates at Fairlight Hall and The Hall.
- Scattered areas of semi-natural ancient woodland, the largest being Mallydams Wood.
- The Royal Military Canal and associated Pett Levels.
- Colonel Body Memorial Lakes popular with wildfowl and bird watchers.

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High Wealden Coast

B Landscape Evaluation

Table 2 Current Condition

This is a largely unspoilt and tranquil rural landscape with few intrusive features. The landscape is in generally good condition and well managed as farmland with a strong historic structure. As with most of the High Weald landscape the historic field patterns of small fields and significant hedgerows remain intact. There has been some fragmentation of this by removal and decay of hedges around the urban fringes of Hastings and Fairlight Cove. The coastal areas are subject to natural change due to marine erosion.

Forces for Change impacting on positive attributes

Past / Current forces for change

- Recreational pressure at Hastings Country Park is causing erosion of footpaths.
- Creeping suburbanisation and cumulative changes in the rural landscape which are not in sympathy with local distinctiveness or vernacular architecture.
- Ribbon development creeping along the country lanes and expanding into larger developments around the village of Pett and at Cliff End.
- Erosion at Fairlight Cove causing the dereliction of built features down the cliff terraces which cannot be recovered and create eyesores when viewed from the beach.
- Expansion of the settlement at Fairlight Cove onto green field sites.
- Expansion of caravan and mobile home parks in Hastings Country Park at Ecclesbourne Glen and Rocklands Lane.
- A Nitrate Vulnerable Zone covers much of the area and a Catchment Sensitive Farming Initiative extends across the eastern part of the area.
- Some loss of hedgerows to more intensive arable farming in parts of the area, particularly to the south of Pett Road.
- Changes in the types and frequency of grazing animals in the countryside impacts on character as they are a characteristic feature. Lack of grazing can give an unmanaged appearance to the landscape and reduce the biodiversity value.

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High Wealden Coast

- Loss of traditional woodland management and cessation of coppicing.
- About 70% of the area is covered by Agricultural Environment Schemes including the Country Park, National Trust owned land at Old Marsham/Fairlight Farms and farmland to the south of Pett village.
- Woodland grant schemes cover the ghyll woodlands in the country park and woodland at Old Marsham Farm.
- Intrusive modern farm buildings.
- Increasing traffic on the B roads which cross the area and rat running on rural lanes.

Future Forces for Change

- The need to provide local housing in the villages, especially around Fairlight Cove.
- Demands for traffic calming and road improvements which could introduce increasing urban clutter to rural roads, villages and lanes.
- Continued agricultural change due to changing markets, economic pressures and response to climate change.
- Redevelopment pressures for existing farmsteads for residential or business uses and particularly tourism.
- The spread of small agricultural holdings, hobby farming, paddocks, farm shops and allotments for local food production.
- Pressure for locating renewable energy facilities for solar, wind and bio energy, including off shore wind facilities.
- Pests and diseases of trees which could impact significantly on the mature tree stock. E.g. phytophora of alder and Ash dieback.
- Pressure for the expansion of existing and provision of new caravan and camping facilities.
- Continuing coastal erosion damaging recreational facilities, houses and coastal access.

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Table 3 Potential Impacts of Climate Change

- Potential changes in woodland / tree species composition and accelerated growth of species such as birch.
- Changes in native ground flora and other native vegetation which produce distinctive seasonal displays.
- Increased prevalence of pests and diseases due to warmer weather e.g. Ash Dieback and Oak Processionary Moth.
- Changes in precipitation and temperatures will change the types of crops that farmers grow.
- Potential impact on the viability of grazing sheep, dairy and beef.
- Increased temperatures and a decline in precipitation levels may dry out wetland habitats and ponds and alter stream flows.
- Accelerated coastal erosion due to high rainfall and storm events.

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C Vision and Strategy

Table 4 Vision

A dramatic and varied coastline with a hinterland of rich and intricate unspoilt High Wealden Countryside. Locally remote and tranquil areas combined with high quality visitor and recreational opportunities. A thriving rural economy which maximises the opportunities offered by the unique surrounding landscape.

As noted in the current Landscape Character Guidance – A Landscape Strategy identifies *"what change if any is desirable for any landscape character area as a whole?"*

Landscape change and adaptation to meet the strategy requires:

1. Planning for the enhancement of the Romney Marsh Area Biodiversity Opportunity Area, which encompasses Wealden Coast, improving habitat continuity.
2. Protect and manage existing habitats and in particular the woodland, heath and grassland of the glens and Country Park, to restore habitat linkages and continuity.
3. Encourage positive management through coppicing of the ancient woodlands.
4. Conserve and strengthen the pattern of hedges, copses and shaws in the inland areas.
5. Plan for the creation of multifunctional green infrastructure to maximise the opportunities for biodiversity and recreation offered by the cliffs, coast, hedges and woodland.
6. Consider the potential to plan for recreational access in this character area identifying areas where public access can be encouraged whilst protecting other areas where wildlife conservation is the priority.
7. Integrate proposed and existing development into the landscape through planting of tree features and woodland to define the boundaries with the countryside. With particular emphasis on edges of development in Fairlight Cove, the Hastings fringes and mobile home parks.
8. Ensure that the design and layout of new development respects the character and form of the landscape and existing settlements.
9. Control the spread of suburbanisation by minimising clutter of signage and other urban features in lanes and villages.
10. Consider traffic management measures on the lanes, together with off road recreational routes to reduce the conflict with walkers, cyclists and horses.
11. Conserve the setting of historic buildings and landscape features.
12. Consider appropriate species for new plantings to maintain landscape character and biodiversity but also adaptation to climate change influences.

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D Guidelines for Managing Change

Development considerations for housing and other development

Proposals need to have regard for the current High Weald Management Plan:

http://www.highweald.org/downloads/publications/high-weald-aonb-management-plan-documents/1475-high-weald-management-plan-3rd-edition-2014-2019/file.html

The main pressures for development in this character area will be to accommodate housing for the rural populations in the rural settlements of Pett and Fairlight. Pressures for the expansion of Hastings may impact on the part of the character area which borders the town. The priority will be to identify opportunities to enhance the degraded and poorly managed parts of the character area on the Hastings urban fringes.

Tourism is an important source of income to this area and there is likely to be increasing demand for accommodation in bed and breakfast, caravan and camp sites. The modern trend for luxury and exotic camping (glamping) could put pressure on the woodlands. There will be demand for new facilities and to improve or expand existing, some of these putting pressure on the local landscape. Any new development should respect the key positive attributes in the landscape outlined in Table 1 above.

Proposed development should consider opportunities for proactively meeting the Landscape Change Strategy aims for this Landscape Character Area as set out in 1-12 above.

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Table 5

Current issues offering opportunities for protection and enhancement	Landscape Management Guidelines	Benefits delivered by Ecosystem Services for each area of interest
Countryside and Farmland Farm environment plans relating to much of the farm lands including organic farming. Pressure for farm diversification and development of hobby farms, solar arrays, wind farms, waste recycling operations etc. Recreational activities in Hastings Country Park and on the coastal footpath routes conflicting with agricultural land management. Expansion of camping and caravan sites as well as other holiday related development such as 'Glamping'. Land falling out of positive management and dereliction of farm buildings. Loss of traditional pasture and heathland. A Nitrate Vulnerable Zone designated across most of the area. Deterioration of by ways and lanes due to erosion of un-surfaced routes by horses, bikes and 4 wheel drives. Damage to verges on narrow country lanes caused by increasing size of farm vehicles and passing traffic.	**Countryside and Farmland** Encourage establishment of more farm conservation schemes to conserve the landscape structure of hedges, shaws and woodland. Conserve hedges, trees and small woods. Maintain the mixed farmed character of the area. Protect and manage historic field patterns and conserve boundary features. Conserve and enhance byways and rural lanes. Use tree and woodland planting to screen intrusive farm buildings and caravan sites. Enhance the biodiversity value of pasture and arable field edges. Plan for and manage changes which may occur in the landscape due to changes in farm management brought about by economic influences and climate change. Reduce the risk and incidence of soil erosion by encouraging the restoration of arable land to pasture. Apply best land management practices to prevent soil and fertiliser run off, thereby protecting surface and ground water.	**Provisioning services** Water availability Food production **Regulating services** (water purification, air quality maintenance and climate regulation) Water quality and protected aquifers. Regulating water flow and preventing flooding Soil conservation and erosion control Habitat and species resilience to climate change Carbon sequestration. Areas of peat in the stream valleys, hedges, trees and grassland regulate air quality by absorbing and retaining CO_2. **Cultural Services** Sense of Place and local distinctiveness. Source of Inspiration Sense of History Tranquillity Biodiversity

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Current issues offering opportunities for protection and enhancement	Landscape Management Guidelines	Benefits delivered by Ecosystem Services for each area of interest
Overstocking and arable production on some soils can result in soil erosion and reduce soil quality. Loss of farmed land due to continuing coastal erosion.	Reduce the risk and incidence of soil erosion by encouraging the restoration of arable land to pasture. Apply best land management practices to prevent soil and fertiliser run off, thereby protecting surface and ground water.	
Trees and Woodland Woods and tree belts are not in positive management. Traditional management has stopped as it is not commercially viable e.g. coppicing of sweet chestnut in oak woodlands. Tree diseases Invasive species competing with native flora and fauna e.g. Spanish Bluebell, Rhododendron, Japanese knotweed. Extensive areas of woodland are already in woodland grant schemes. Pressure for inappropriate recreational use in woodland such as 'glamping' and trials bikes.	**Trees and Woodland** Actively manage trees and woodland through coppicing of sweet chestnut and replanting to create a diverse age structure. Plant new small woods and tree belts to screen urban edges and caravan sites and where this is appropriate habitat creation. Consider the need to adapt to changes enforced by climate change, such as specific tree diseases and possible adaptation in species selection. Plant trees and woodland to contain existing and new built development.	**Provisioning** Fuel (woodfuel for local communities from woodland management) **Regulating** Carbon sequestration, woodland absorbs and holds CO_2. Habitat and species resilience to climate change **Cultural** Tranquillity Sense of Place and local distinctiveness Cultural heritage (traditional woodland management) Biodiversity

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Current issues offering opportunities for protection and enhancement	Landscape Management Guidelines	Benefits delivered by Ecosystem Services for each area of interest
Other Key Habitats Deterioration and loss of habitats : **Water and wet meadows** Loss of streamside vegetation. Deterioration of water quality in streams, ditches and ponds. Invasive species of plants and animals which compete with native flora and fauna. A Nitrate Vulnerable Zone designated across most of the area. **Meadows** Financial and viable farming constraints affecting the continued management of meadows reducing the biodiversity value. Improvements to Grassland and meadows reducing species richness. Loss of meadows to arable farming. **Glens and ghylls** The unique and fragile habitats in these areas are particularly vulnerable to climate change and accelerated coastal/cliff erosion. Recreational access can exacerbate erosion and habitat damage.	**Other key Habitats** Encourage management of river and stream channels. Conservation and re-creation of meadow/pasture habitats. Agri-environment schemes to maximise biodiversity and encourage the retention of grazing. Encourage measures to improve water quality. Continue schemes to encourage farmers to minimise the use of chemicals and fertilizers. Monitoring and managment of these habitats to facilitate adaptation to coastal change through managed retreat. Continued education and management of public access to protect sensitive areas and habitats.	**Provisioning** Nature's larder of free berries and herbs. Conservation of insect pollinators for pollination of crops. **Regulating** Habitat and species resilience to climate change. Water quality and protected aquifers. **Cultural** Appreciation of nature Educational value Biodiversity

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Current issues offering opportunities for protection and enhancement	Landscape Management Guidelines	Benefits delivered by Ecosystem Services for each area of interest
Recreation, Green Infrastructure (GI) and ANGS (glossary) Pressure on bridleways and byways as multi use, including cycling and 4 wheel drives increasing erosion. Pressure on sensitive ghyll woodland habitats. Lack of funding to manage and enhance GI for improved access. Need for better recreational linkages and improved sustainable transport corridors. Extensive footpath network including the Country Park and Coastal Access route. Need for improved access to natural green space for all users both close to homes and in the wider countryside. Existing access to extensive areas of woodland, notably Mallydams. Gentrification Loss of tranquillity due to more cars and access.	**Recreation, Green Infrastructure and ANGS** Where appropriate develop Green Infrastructure Strategies based on the county wide GI mapping. Plan for and manage recreational pressure on the countryside which could be affected by the increase in population in surrounding town of Hastings as well as the seasonal holiday makers. Maximise opportunities for access away from sensitive habitats. Maximise opportunities provided by the coast for access and recreation. Consider opportunities to create new green corridors and improve existing as safe ideally motorised traffic free recreational routes. Consider the opportunities and constraints for recreational use of the beaches due to cliff erosion and poor access.	**Provisioning** Protected farmland **Regulating** Habitat and species resilience to climate change Water quality and protected aquifers. Regulating water flow and preventing flooding Carbon sequestration **Cultural** Recreation Heritage assets and cultural heritage Inspirational Tranquility Biodiversity

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Current issues offering opportunities for protection and enhancement	Landscape Management Guidelines	Benefits delivered by Ecosystem Services for each area of interest
Horse Keeping ('horsiculture') and small holdings This tends to be an issue around the villages and urban fringe. Deterioration of the character and quality of the landscape and loss of local distinctiveness. Can detract from historic field pattern where fences replace hedges. Can cause soil erosion.	**Horse Keeping ('horsiculture') and small holdings** Enhance the condition of areas of horsiculture and small holdings through the restoration of an intact, well managed hedgerow or ditch network and retaining a diverse grass sward by preventing overgrazing. Encourage local food production and allotment provision in areas where this will not detract from local landscape character.	**Provisioning** Grazing Food production **Regulating** Habitat and species resilience to climate change **Cultural** Recreation Heritage assets Sense of Place and local distinctiveness Biodiversity
The character of the villages Gentrification Urbanisation Development pressures Gradual loss and deterioration of Heritage features. Fast traffic on rural lanes Visitor pressure and cars detracting from local character and distinctiveness of the area in general.	**Protect and Enhance the character of the villages** Encourage the production of Neighbourhood Plans which incorporate village design guides. Plan for new development in the villages to ensure it is designed to a high standard to reflect local character and sense of place. Establish defined development edges to villages with new tree planting. Prepare village design guides and tree conservation plans. Consider traffic management on rural lanes.	**Provisioning** Local amenities and facilities. **Regulating** Use of sustainable materials Habitat and species resilience to climate change Water quality and protected aquifers. Regulating water flow and preventing flooding **Cultural** Sense of Place and local distinctiveness Heritage assets Biodiversity

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Current issues offering opportunities for protection and enhancement	Landscape Management Guidelines	Benefits delivered by Ecosystem Services for each area of interest
Flood management and SUDS schemes? Flash floods and run off. Flooding of properties in low lying areas by river and ground water.	**Flood management and SUDS schemes?** Plan for flood management by conserving and enhancing the flood plains and managing water levels in ditches and drains. Encourage the design of sensitive flood defence schemes which conserve and enhance the landscape and habitats Conserve and enhance existing man made and natural drainage features. Maximise opportunities for the creation of SUDs schemes which contribute to local amenity and habitat creation.	**Provisioning** Water conservation **Regulating** Flood control Protection of aquifers **Cultural** Heritage assets Sense of Place and local distinctiveness Tranquillity Amenity and recreation Biodiversity

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Glossary

(also refer to the full version in the County Landscape Assessment).

ANGS: Accessible Natural Green Space **Natural England – Accessible Natural Greenspace Standard (ANGSt)**

Assart: Field created from the clearance of woodland

Enclosure: The separation of land from the common by fence or private use.

GI or Green Infrastructure: Multifunctional green areas which provide areas for recreation, wildlife, water supply catchment, flood relief, food or timber production.

Glamping: New types of camp sites with permanent tent features in yurts, teepees, vintage caravans, timber pods etc. Woodlands are popular locations for these.

Local Nature Reserve: Local Nature Reserve (or LNR) is a statutory designation made under Section 21 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949, and amended by Schedule 11 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006, by principal local authorities.

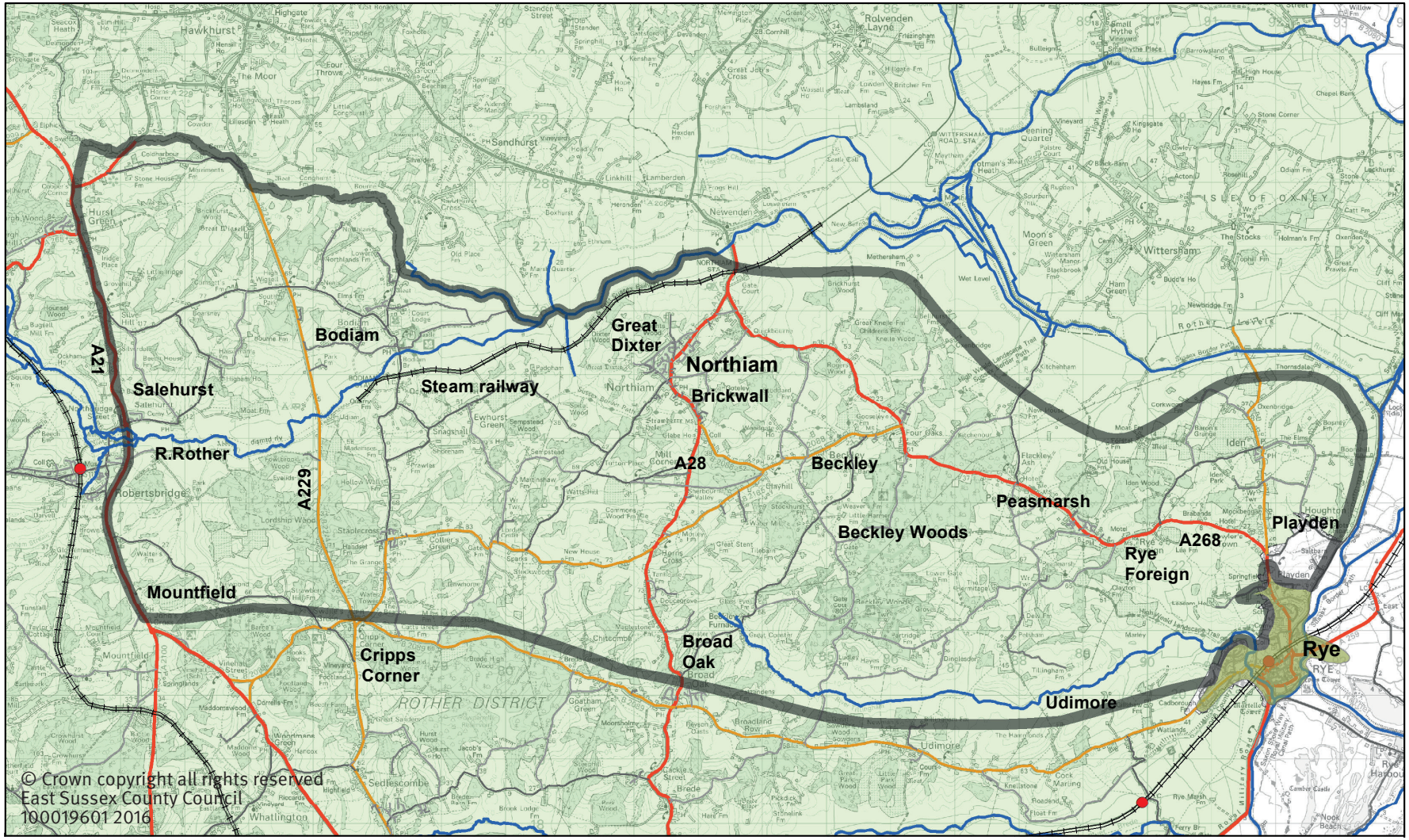
Ramsar sites are wetlands of international importance for biodiversity designated under the Ramsar Convention.

SNCI or Local Site: a Site of Nature Conservation Importance.

SSSI: A national designation for Site of Special Scientific Interest, these may be of biodiversity or geological significance or both.

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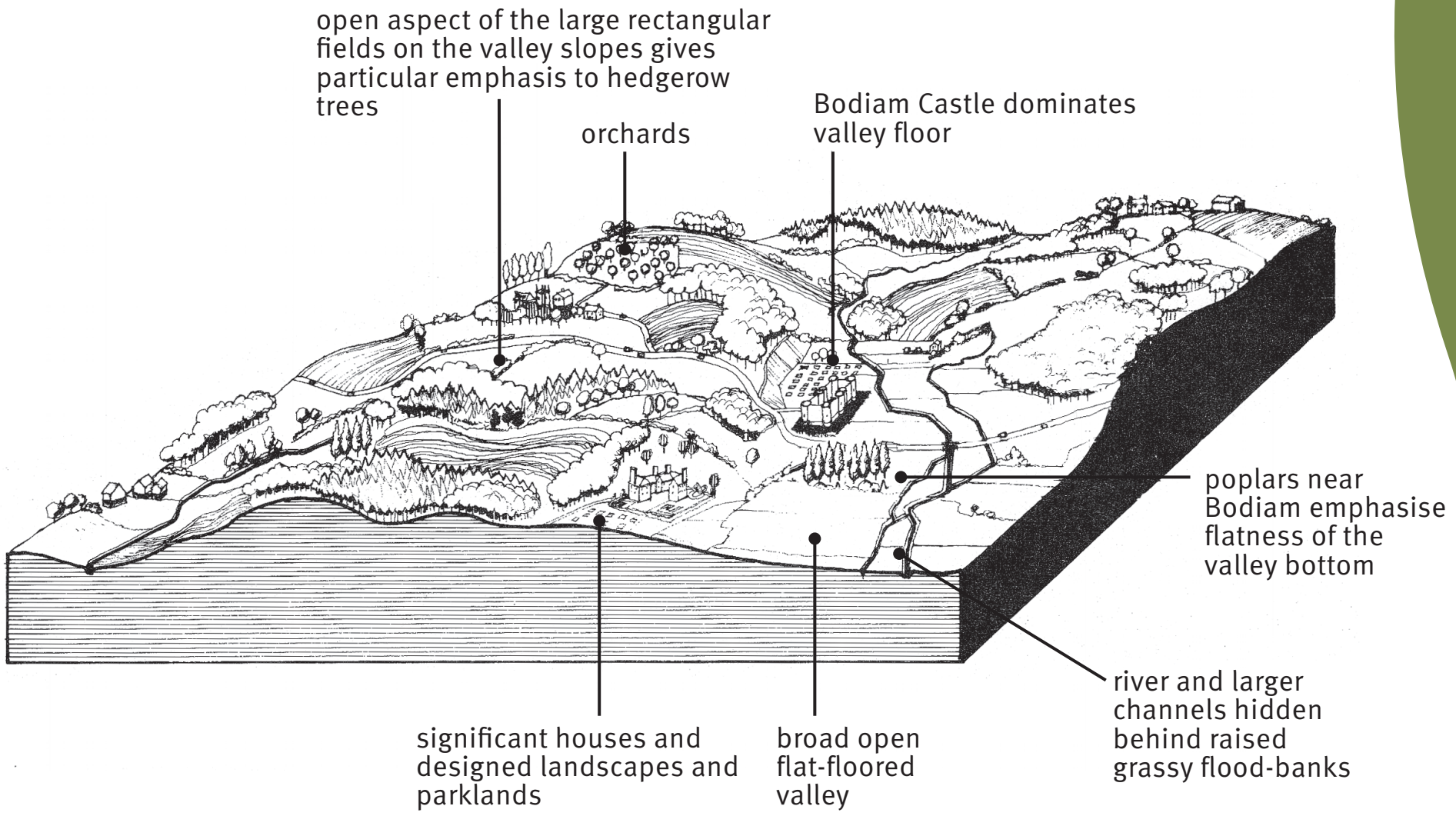
13 Lower Rother Valley Landscape Character Area

High Weald AONB

0 0.5 1 2 3 4 Kilometers

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The High Weald

Contents

A. Landscape Description
B. Landscape Evaluation
C. Vision and Strategy
D. Guidelines for Managing Change

A Landscape Description

Key Landscape characteristics

- The area from Salehurst in the west to Rye in the east, the boundary with Kent in the north and the ridgetop B2089 to the south.
- The broad valley of the lower reaches of the River Rother.
- The Tillingham Valley with a flat open floor and steep well wooded sides.
- Long dramatic views across both valleys from the enclosing ridges and spurs.
- Engineered raised grass flood banks along the main river and straightened rivers channels which detract from the naturalness of the river valley.
- The ancient inland sea cliffs at Rye and Playden.
- An intricate pattern of rectangular fields bounded by reed fringed ditches in the flood plains.
- A few remaining extensive areas of orchards and some remnants of hop growing.
- Lines of Italian poplars planted as wind breaks are an introduced and characteristic feature, notably at Bodiam.
- Extensive loss of hedgerow on the lower valley slopes with trimmed and remnant hedgerows resulting in a stark intensively farmed landscape.
- Exceptionally remote unspoilt areas away from the main roads and villages.
- The larger settlements are on the ridge tops with typical ribbon development extending along the main roads.
- Typical High Weald scattered development of farmsteads, hamlets and large country house estates.
- Significant houses and designed landscapes at Brickwall, Great Dixter and Peasmarsh Place.
- Bodiam Castle dominates the Rother Valley landscape.
- Oast houses are characteristic and found on most farmsteads, many now converted into houses.
- Typical High Weald white weatherboarding and some villages have more subtle weatherboarding of pastel shades giving a sea side feel.
- Scattered woodland across the valley slopes and higher ground, much of this is ancient woodland. About half of the latter has been planted and some with extensive areas of conifers.
- The central area is heavily wooded with the Beckley, and Flatropers woodland areas, much of which is publically accessible.
- Indigenous characteristic tree species are oak and ash with sweet chestnut coppice on drier slopes.
- Beech, lime and pine feature locally and other exotic specimens are found in gardens and villages.
- Swans, herons and other wetland birds are very much features in the landscape.
- Three main roads cross the area the A21, A229, A28 and the A268, the B2089 forms the southern boundary.
- Winding and very narrow sunken country lanes with steep gradients where they drop down into the valleys.
- The Kent and East Sussex Steam Railway runs from Bodiam to Tenterden in Kent.

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Cultural Interests

Beckley was part of the Wealden iron industry. An iron furnace was built in 1578, at the small settlement still called Beckley Furnace. A watermill powered the bellows. Production ceased in 1770.

The 1830s saw a mass emigration of Beckley residents to New South Wales. At the time, the developing colony of New South Wales was in need of skilled agricultural labourers, whilst the English labourers were suffering hard times. Various schemes were introduced to provide finance for workers to emigrate. 165 Beckley residents took up the offer and emigrated. Amongst those residents were Thomas and Maria Ann Smith (née Sherwood), the cultivator of the Granny Smith apple. Another of those residents who emigrated at this time was Henry Charles Packham, whose son Charles was the cultivator of the Packham pear.

On 12 May 1944, four prime ministers visited the troops in a field at Northiam before D-Day in Normandy. The village field gates were erected to commemorate the visit. The four Prime ministers were:

- Rt. Hon. Winston S. Churchill P.C., O.M., C.H., F.R.S. – Great Britain
- Rt. Hon. Mackenzie King P.C., C.M.G. – Canada
- Rt. Hon. Field Marshal Jan Christian Smuts P.C., O.M., C.H., K.G., F.R.S. – South Africa
- Hon. Sir Godfrey M. Huggins C.H., K.C.M.G., F.R.C.S. – Southern Rhodesia

Joanna Lumley, actor, went to Northiam primary school.

The garden writer and columnist Christopher Lloyd lived at Great Dixter and developed the gardens which are now open to the public.

John Malcolm Andrews is an English antiques author and Managing Editor of Antique Collecting magazine.

Bodiam was the birthplace in 1881 of Miss A. E. Levett, a leading medieval scholar and vice-principal of St. Hilda's College, Oxford.

Sir Paul McCartney, MBE and former member of the Beatles owns a house in Peasmarsh.

Spike Milligan lived in Udimore until his death in 2002 and children's novelist Monica Edwards live here from 1933-36.

Sussex cattle and Romney Marsh sheep are characteristic historic breeds.

The many oast houses on the valley sides indicate how wide spread hop growing once was. The only remnants of this are hops growing in hedgerows which bounded the former hop gardens.

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Lower Rother Valley

Table 1 Key positive Landscape Attributes

- The broad valley of the lower reaches of the River Rother.
- The Tillingham Valley with a flat open floor and steep well wooded sides.
- Long dramatic views across both valleys from the enclosing ridges and spurs.
- The ancient inland sea cliffs at Rye and Playden.
- An intricate pattern of rectangular fields bounded by reed fringed ditches in the flood plains.
- A few remaining extensive areas of orchards and some remnants of hop growing.
- Exceptionally remote unspoilt areas away from the main roads and villages.
- The larger settlements are on the ridge tops with typical ribbon development extending along the main roads.
- Typical High Weald scattered development of farmsteads, hamlets and large country house estates.
- Significant houses and designed landscapes at Brickwall, Great Dixter and Peasmarsh Place.
- Bodiam Castle dominates the Rother Valley landscape.
- Oast houses are characteristic and found on most farmsteads, many now converted into houses.
- Typical High Weald white weatherboarding and some villages have more subtle weatherboarding of pastel shades giving a sea side feel.
- Scattered woodland across the valley slopes and higher ground, much of this is ancient woodland.
- The central area is heavily wooded with the Beckley, and Flatropers woodland areas, much of which is publically accessible.
- Indigenous characteristic tree species are oak and ash with sweet chestnut coppice on drier slopes.
- Beech, lime and pine feature locally and other exotic specimens are found in gardens and villages.
- Swans, herons and other wetland birds are very much features in the landscape.
- Winding and very narrow sunken country lanes with steep gradients where they drop down into the valleys.
- The Kent and East Sussex Steam Railway runs from Bodiam to Tenterden in Kent.

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B Landscape Evaluation

Table 2 Current Condition

This is a largely unspoilt and tranquil rural landscape with few intrusive features. The landscape is in generally good condition and well managed as farmland with a strong historic structure. Loss of hedgerows to intensive agriculture in the fertile valleys has led to loss of landscape structure. Orchards have declined and many disappeared so that many associated oast houses have been converted to residential uses. Agricultural change has led to some gentrification of the rural landscape and villages. As with most of the High Weald landscape the historic field patterns of small fields and significant hedgerows remain intact.

Forces for Change impacting on positive attributes

Past / Current forces for change

- Loss of vegetation, landscape and habitat value along rivers and dykes due to maintenance regimes, agricultural intensification and engineering works.
- The positive land management initiatives associated with the High Weald AONB.
- Creeping suburbanisation and cumulative changes in the rural landscape, roads and villages which are not in sympathy with local distinctiveness or vernacular architecture.
- The A21 bypass around Robertsbridge and pressure for further enhancement of sections of this road.
- Tourist pressure around Bodiam Castle with the added attractions of the steam railway, boat trips, pubs and tea shops.
- Water quality in the channels and ditches.
- A Nitrate Vulnerable Zone covers much of the area and a Catchment Sensitive Farming Initiative extends across East Rother and Walland Marsh.
- The introduction of pump drainage in the 1970s which bought arable crops such as oil seed rape and wheat.
- The loss of major areas of hop growing has led to substantial increases in field sizes.
- The decline of associated shelter belt hedges and resulting loss of landscape structure and intricate field patterns.

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Lower Rother Valley

- Changes in the types and frequency of grazing animals in the countryside impacts on character as they are a characteristic feature. Lack of grazing can give an unmanaged appearance to the landscape and reduce the biodiversity value.
- Farm Environment Plans, much of the land is under Higher Level Stewardship Agreements with organic farms at Vinehall Street, Four Oaks, Rye and Rye Foreign.
- Intrusive modern farm buildings.
- Invasive species of plants and animals in water courses, such as New Zealand Pigmy Weed (*Crassula helmsii*), Parrots Feather (*Myryophyllum aquaticum*), Mink and European Marsh Frog (*Pelophylax ridibundus*). All of these impact on the native flora and fauna which are characteristic of the area.
- Loss of traditional coppicing in woodlands, substantial areas of coniferisation and increase in game shooting.
- Forestry Commission acquisition and management of Beckley Woods reversing this trend over a significant area.
- Woodland Grant schemes in Beckley Woods and many smaller woods at Broad Oak, Ewhurst, Northiam and Staplecross.
- Increasing traffic on the A roads which cross the area and the main roads along the ridges and rat running on rural lanes.
- Power lines crossing the open landscape.

Future Forces for Change

- The need to provide local housing in the villages, especially the larger service centres.
- Demands for traffic calming and road improvements which could introduce increasing urban clutter to rural roads, villages and lanes.
- Continued agricultural change due to changing markets, economic pressures and response to climate change.
- The spread of small agricultural holdings, hobby farming, paddocks farm shops and allotments for local food production.
- Pressure for locating renewable energy facilities for solar, wind and bio energy.
- Pests and diseases of trees which could impact significantly on the mature tree stock. E.g. phytophora of alder and Ash dieback.
- Failure to control invasive species of plants and animals in water courses, such as New Zealand Pigmy Weed (*Crassula helmsii*), Parrots Feather (*Myryophyllum aquaticum*), Mink and European Marsh Frog (*Pelophylax ridibundus*). All of these impact on the native flora and fauna which are characteristic of the area.
- Water quality in the Brede catchment.

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Table 3 Potential Impacts of Climate Change

- Potential changes in woodland / tree species composition and accelerated growth of species such as birch,
- Changes in ground flora which produce distinctive seasonal displays and other native vegetation.
- Increased prevalence of pests and diseases due to warmer weather e.g. Phytophera of Alder.
- Changes in precipitation and temperatures will change the types of crops that farmers grow.
- Potential impact on the viability of grazing sheep, dairy and beef.
- Increased temperatures and a decline in precipitation levels may dry out wetland habitats and ponds and alter stream flows.
- Changes in water levels in ditches, ponds and streams

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C Vision and Strategy

Table 4 Vision

A tranquil and remote area. Rivers enriched and diversified by areas of restored natural channels and wetland with seasonal flooding. The area set in a rich tapestry of hedges, fields, orchards, managed woodland and restored parkland. A vibrant working landscape with thriving land based recreational and economic activities which conserve the characteristic features and wildlife of the area. Traditional villages with a conserved and enhanced local vernacular and sense of place. The distinctive historic character of this High Wealden landscape conserved and enhanced

As noted in the current Landscape Character Guidance – A Landscape Strategy identifies *"what change if any is desirable for any landscape character area as a whole?"*

Landscape change and adaptation to meet the strategy requires:

1. Planning for the enhancement of the Rother, Breed and Tillingham Woods biodiversity opportunity Area as well as the Romney Marsh Area Biodiversity Opportunity Area thus improving habitat continuity.
2. Planning and implementation of river restoration projects to restore natural channels, meanders and seasonal flooding.
3. Protect and manage existing habitats and plan for restoration of ditches and riverside vegetation to restore habitat linkages and continuity.
4. Plan for the creation of multifunctional green infrastructure to maximise the opportunities for biodiversity and recreation offered by the river corridor and extensive woodland.
5. Consider the potential to plan for recreational access in this character area identifying areas where public access can be encouraged whilst protecting other areas where wildlife conservation is the priority.
6. Maximise opportunities for water based activities where this does not conflict with wild life interests, water quality or tranquillity.
7. Integrate proposed and existing development into the landscape through planting of tree features and woodland to define the village boundaries with the countryside.
8. Ensure that the design and layout of new developments respect the character and form of the landscape and existing settlements.
9. Control the spread of suburbanisation by minimising clutter of signage and other urban features in lanes and villages.
10. Conserve the setting of historic buildings and landscape features.
11. Consider appropriate species for new plantings to maintain landscape character and biodiversity but also adaptation to climate change influences.

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D Guidelines for Managing Change

Development considerations for housing and other development

Proposals within the High Weald AONB need to have regard for the current High Weald Management Plan:
http://www.highweald.org/downloads/publications/high-weald-aonb-management-plan-documents/1475-high-weald-management-plan-3rd-edition-2014-2019/file.html

The main pressures for development in this character area will be to accommodate housing for the rural populations in the rural settlements of Northiam and Peasmarsh. There will also be a demand for local housing in the smaller villages. Pressures for expansion of Rye may impact on the parts of the character area which border the towns.

Tourism is an important source of income to this area and there is likely to be increasing demand for accommodation in hotels, bed and breakfast, caravan and camp sites. The modern trend for luxury and exotic camping (glamping) is already appearing in the guise of teepees, tree houses and the like. There will be demand for new facilities and to improve or expand existing, some of these putting pressure on ancient woodland. Any new development should respect the key positive attributes in the landscape outlined in Table 1 above.

Proposed development should consider opportunities for proactively meeting the Landscape Change Strategy aims for this Landscape Character Area as set out in 1-11 above.

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Table 5

Current issues offering opportunities for protection and enhancement	Landscape Management Guidelines	Benefits delivered by Ecosystem Services for each area of interest
Countryside and Farmland Farm environment plans relating to much of the farm land including organic farming. Pressure for farm diversification and development of hobby farms, solar arrays, wind farms, waste recycling operations etc. Expansion of camping and caravan sites as well as other holiday related development such as 'Glamping'. Land falling out of positive management and dereliction of farm buildings. Loss of traditional orchards, pasture and wetland meadows. Clearance of natural vegetation from drainage channels and ditches. Low water levels and poor water quality in some drains and streams. A Nitrate Vulnerable Zone designated across most of the area. Deterioration of by ways and lanes due to erosion of un-surfaced routes by horses, bikes and 4 wheel drives. Damage to verges on narrow country lanes caused by increasing size of farm vehicles and passing traffic. Flooding of farmland and properties affecting the viability of farms. Overstocking and arable production on some soils can result in soil erosion and reduce soil quality.	**Countryside and Farmland** Encourage establishment of more farm conservation schemes to conserve the landscape structure of wetland, ditches and streams on the levels. Conserve hedges, trees and small woods on the higher ground. Maintain the mixed farmed character of the area. Protect and manage historic field patterns and conserve boundary features. Restore traditional orchards. Maintain water levels in drains and ditches. Conserve and enhance byways and rural lanes. Use tree and woodland planting to screen intrusive farm buildings and caravan sites. Enhance the biodiversity value of wet meadows, drainage and stream channels. Plan for and manage changes which may occur in the landscape due to changes in farm management brought about by economic influences and climate change. Address existing flooding issues of farmland and properties through flood management and by identifying areas which can provide flood alleviation. Reduce the risk and incidence of soil erosion by encouraging the restoration of arable land to pasture. Apply best land management practices to prevent soil and fertiliser run off, thereby protecting surface and ground water.	**Provisioning services** Water availability Food production **Regulating services** (water purification, air quality maintenance and climate regulation) Water quality and protected aquifers. Regulating water flow and preventing flooding Soil conservation and erosion control Habitat and species resilience to climate change Carbon sequestration. Areas of peat in the river valleys, hedges, trees, reed beds and grassland regulate air quality by absorbing and retaining CO_2. **Cultural Services** Sense of Place and local distinctiveness. Source of Inspiration Sense of History Tranquillity Biodiversity

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Lower Rother Valley

Current issues offering opportunities for protection and enhancement	Landscape Management Guidelines	Benefits delivered by Ecosystem Services for each area of interest
Trees and Woodland Woods and tree belts are not in positive management. Traditional management has stopped as it is not commercially viable e.g. pollarding of stream side willows. Tree diseases Invasive species competing with native flora and fauna e.g. Spanish Bluebell, Himalayan balsam, Japanese knotweed. Extensive areas of woodland are already in woodland grant schemes. Pressure for glamping sites in woodland.	**Trees and Woodland** Actively manage trees and woodland through coppicing, pollarding of willows and replanting to create a diverse age structure. Plant new small woods, wet woodland and tree belts to strengthen the landscape character and where this is appropriate habitat creation. Replant parkland and individual hedgerow trees. Consider the need to adapt to changes enforced by climate change, such as specific tree diseases and possible adaptation in species selection. Plant trees and woodland to contain existing and new built development. Encourage planting of trees along streams and ditches where appropriate to habitat.	**Provisioning** Fuel (wood fuel for local communities from woodland management) **Regulating** Carbon sequestration, woodland absorbs and holds CO_2. Habitat and species resilience to climate change **Cultural** Tranquillity Sense of Place and local distinctiveness Cultural heritage (traditional woodland management) Biodiversity

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Lower Rother Valley

Current issues offering opportunities for protection and enhancement	Landscape Management Guidelines	Benefits delivered by Ecosystem Services for each area of interest
Other Key Habitats Deterioration and loss of habitats : **Water** Loss of river and streamside vegetation. Deterioration of water quality in streams, ditches and ponds Invasive species of plants and animals which compete with native flora and fauna. A Nitrate Vulnerable Zone designated across most of the area. **Wet Meadows** Financial and viable farming constraints affecting the continued management of wet meadows reducing the biodiversity value. Improvements to Grassland and meadows reducing species richness. Loss of wetland meadows to arable farming.	**Other Key Habitats** Encourage management of river and stream channels, especially conservation of riverside trees and vegetation. Conservation and re-creation of wet meadow/ pasture habitats. Agri-environment schemes to maximise biodiversity and encourage the retention of grazing. Opportunities to maximise reed bed creation. Encourage measures to improve water quality. Continue schemes to encourage farmers to minimise the use of chemicals and fertilizers.	**Provisioning** Nature's larder of free berries and herbs. Conservation of insect pollinators for pollination of crops. **Regulating** Habitat and species resilience to climate change **Cultural** Appreciation of nature Educational value Biodiversity

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Lower Rother Valley

Current issues offering opportunities for protection and enhancement	Landscape Management Guidelines	Benefits delivered by Ecosystem Services for each area of interest
Recreation, Green Infrastructure (GI) and ANGS Pressure on bridleways and byways as multi use, including cycling and 4 wheel drives increasing erosion. Pressure on sensitive wetland habitats. Lack of funding to manage and enhance GI for improved access. Need for better recreational linkages and improved sustainable transport corridors. Extensive footpath network including the 1066 Country Walk Need for improved access to natural green space for all users both close to homes and in the wider countryside. Existing access to extensive areas of woodland at Beckley and Bixley Woods as in Woodland Trust ownership. Gentrification Loss of tranquillity due to more cars and access.	**Recreation, Green Infrastructure and ANGS** Where appropriate develop Green Infrastructure Strategies based on a county wide GI mapping. Plan for and manage recreational pressure on the countryside which could be affected by the increase in population in s Rye as well as the seasonal holiday makers. Maximise opportunities for access away from sensitive habitats. Maximise opportunities provided by the coast for access and recreation. Consider opportunities to create new green corridors and improve existing as safe ideally motorised traffic free recreational routes. Maximise opportunities for and manage water based recreational activities.	**Provisioning** Protected farmland. **Regulating** Habitat and species resilience to climate change Water quality and protected aquifers. Regulating water flow and preventing flooding Carbon sequestration **Cultural** Recreation Heritage assets and cultural heritage Inspirational Tranquility Biodiversity

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Lower Rother Valley

Current issues offering opportunities for protection and enhancement	Landscape Management Guidelines	Benefits delivered by Ecosystem Services for each area of interest
Horse Keeping ('horsiculture') and small holdings This tends to be an issue around the villages rather than on the open valley landscapes. Deterioration of the character and quality of the landscape and loss of local distinctiveness. Can detract from historic field pattern where fences replace hedges. Can cause soil erosion.	**Horse Keeping ('horsiculture') and small holdings** Enhance the condition of areas of horsiculture and small holdings through the restoration of an intact, well managed hedgerow or ditch network and retaining a diverse grass sward by preventing overgrazing. Encourage local food production and allotment provision in areas where this will not detract from local landscape character.	**Provisioning** Grazing Food production **Regulating** Habitat and species resilience to climate change **Cultural** Recreation Heritage assets Sense of Place and local distinctiveness Biodiversity

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Lower Rother Valley

Current issues offering opportunities for protection and enhancement	Landscape Management Guidelines	Benefits delivered by Ecosystem Services for each area of interest
The character of the villages Gentrification Urbanisation Development pressures Gradual loss and deterioration of Heritage features. Fast traffic on rural lanes Visitor pressure and cars detracting from local character and distinctiveness of the area in general.	**Protect and Enhance the character of the villages** Encourage the production of Neighbourhood Plans which incorporate village design guides. Plan for new development in the villages to ensure it is designed to a high standard to reflect local character and sense of place. Establish defined development edges to villages with new tree planting. Prepare village design guides and tree conservation plans. Consider traffic management on rural lanes.	**Provisioning** Local amenities and facilities. **Regulating** Use of sustainable materials Habitat and species resilience to climate change Water quality and protected aquifers. Regulating water flow and preventing flooding **Cultural** Sense of Place and local distinctiveness Heritage assets Biodiversity

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Lower Rother Valley

Current issues offering opportunities for protection and enhancement	Landscape Management Guidelines	Benefits delivered by Ecosystem Services for each area of interest
Flood management and SUDS schemes? Flash floods and run off. Flooding of properties in low lying areas by river and ground water.	**Flood management and SUDS schemes?** Plan for flood management by conserving and enhancing the flood plains and managing water levels in ditches and drains. Encourage the design of sensitive flood defence schemes which conserve and enhance the landscape and habitats Conserve and enhance existing man made and natural drainage features. Maximise opportunities for the creation of SUDs schemes which contribute to local amenity and habitat creation.	**Provisioning** Water conservation **Regulating** Flood control Protection of aquifers **Cultural** Heritage assets Sense of Place and local distinctiveness Tranquillity Amenity and recreation Biodiversity

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Glossary

(also refer to the full version in the County Landscape Assessment).

ANGS: Accessible Natural Green Space Natural England – Accessible Natural Greenspace Standard (ANGSt)

Assart: Field created from the clearance of woodland

Clunch Barn: constructed of a building material composed of hardened clay or chalk marl.

Ecosystem Services: The services provided by nature which support living systems and can be evaluated.

Enclosure: The separation of land from the common by fence or private use.

GI or Green Infrastructure: Multifunctional green areas which provide areas for recreation, wildlife, water supply catchment, flood relief, food or timber production.

Glamping: New types of camp sites with permanent tent features in yurts, teepees, vintage caravans, timber pods etc. Woodlands are popular locations for these.

Local Nature Reserve: Local Nature Reserve (or LNR) is a statutory designation made under Section 21 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949, and amended by Schedule 11 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006, by principal local authorities.

Ramsar sites are wetlands of international importance for biodiversity designated under the Ramsar Convention.

SNCI or Local Site: a Site of Nature Conservation Importance.

SSSI: A national designation for Site of Special Scientific Interest, these may be of biodiversity or geological significance or both.

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The Low Weald

This broad low lying, gently undulating clay vale underlies a small-scale intimate landscape with an intricate mix of copses and shaws, a patchwork of fields and hedgerows. In the east this gives way to a more open and sometimes prairie- like landscape.

Location
The Low Weald lies between the High Weald and the Downs. It is on average 9 kilometres north to south, extending from Ditchling in the west, to Polegate and Hellingly in the east.

Landform
Broad, low lying, gently sloping clay vales with small greensand ridges underpin the landscape of the Low Weald. This gently undulating countryside, flattens out towards the rivers. In comparison to the High Weald the slopes are very gentle. The land rarely exceeds 40m AOD with many areas below 15m AOD.

The Low Weald is typically dissected by river floodplains. The Ouse and Cuckmere flow southward following winding courses in wide, very shallow valleys. Small, narrow and commonly sunken streams cut into the heavy clays locally forming flat low-lying areas that are often subject to flooding.

Historical Impact of Man
The history of the Low Weald is similar to that of the High Weald but because of the relatively gentle landform and light soils, it readily supports arable agriculture, but has been subject to far greater modern day change.

The Low Weald supports a prosperous brick and tile making industry which continues to the present day. Clay and sand pits are a characteristic of the landscape, some being significant features.

Woodland and Hedgerows
The Low Weald is much less wooded than the High Weald; considerable areas in the east have almost no woodland cover. Exceptions to this are Plashett Wood, Vert Woods and Abbotts Wood, the latter being one of the largest woods in East Sussex. Most of the rest of the woodland is small and restricted to shaws and tree belts. Much of the woodland is coppice with standards, usually Hornbeam with Oak and spectacular carpets of bluebells in spring.

Scattered trees, especially oak, are an important part of the landscape. Many trees are in closely spaced rows along the lines of old hedgerows, disused railway lines, bridleways, green lanes and watercourses. Riparian trees, commonly Alder, are also characteristic of the area. Hedgerows are tall with many mature trees but in the east these have been largely removed to make way for arable agriculture. This has in places given rise to an open prairie character.

Agriculture
The area is generally mixed farming, with the lighter soils on greensand being arable.

Other habitats and features
Wet grazing land and riparian habitats are widespread, particularly in the Ouse Valley.

Settlement Pattern and Routeways
The historic settlement pattern of the Low Weald was one of a preference for the higher and drier sandstone outcrops. The settlement pattern is relatively dispersed; settlements tend to be small, nucleated or linear, following roads. An intricate network of lanes link farms settlements. Many of these are orientated north-south and are considered to be Drove Roads along which farmers moved their animals to access

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The Low Weald

the Downs. Typically they meet the steep Bostals which climb the scarp slope of the Downs.

Grand houses, Gardens and Parkland
The area has a wealth of significant stately homes often with historic designed landscapes. Areas of ancient deer park, which are rich in archaeological and wildlife interest, are a feature of this landscape. Moated gardens and monastic grounds such as Claverham House and Michelham Priory are also significant.

Other details
Older houses are usually built of brick and timber with tiles made from the local weald clays. Timber framed buildings are more common in the east. Nearer the Downs, flint buildings and walls are a feature as flint was quarried from the chalk hills. Wealden sandstone was used extensively, especially where the Greensand outcrops occur locally. Heavy Horsham stone tiles appear on larger buildings and especially churches.

Remoteness
The topography of the Low Weald is gentle,and a good cover of hedges, trees and small woods help to afford a significant degree of remoteness in many areas.

Problems pressure and change in the Low Weald

Agriculture: Agricultural intensification has led to significant removal of hedgerows creating some prairie-like landscapes. Modern farm buildings and associated clutter are highly visible, especially from the Downs

Woodland and hedgerows: Woodland quality has declined due to lack of traditional management, particularly coppicing. Replacement of the native deciduous woodland with extensive conifer plantations has detracted from landscape quality and character. There has been a loss and decline of hedgerows and trees and consequent fragmentation of landscape structure. This is due to lack of management and changes in farming practices.

Roads: Traffic is a major influence on tranquility. Recent bypasses of towns, such as Uckfield and Polegate, have had an impact on the countryside. Rural lanes are affected by increasing traffic.

Urban influence/ urban fringe problems:
The creeping intrusion of urban land use and suburban living is spreading from the main settlements. This is manifested in modern ribbon development and small holdings along roads. Pony paddocks and wire fencing have replaced traditional field patterns and hedges.
Uncharacteristic planting detracts from the traditional and historic sense of place.
The general clutter of urban land use, such as business and road signs, road markings, bollards and lighting detract from rural character.

Development: The Low Weald of East Sussex is under increasing development pressure. Gentrification of vernacular buildings and landscapes erodes the local character of towns and villages.

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The Low Weald

Recreation: There are some popular local attractions: Arlington Reservoir, Abbots Wood, Michelham Priory, Ditchling Common Country Park and Barcombe Mills. The area is well served by rural lanes and Rights of Way and has great potential for informal recreation and access.

Water Resources: The Ouse and Cuckmere rivers and their catchments are significant features of the area. There has been a loss of characteristic wetland features such as wet meadows, riparian woodlands and reedbeds.

Landscape Action Priorities for the Low Weald

Encourage the uptake of farm environment plans to conserve the essential landscape structure of hedges, trees and small woods. Improve the screening and integration of farm buildings and associated clutter with bold tree planting.

Manage woodland sustainably to prevent further decline of the woodland resource with particular emphasis on ancient woodland, coppice, shaws, hedgerows and riparian woodlands. Encourage the conversion of conifer woodland to broadleaved.

Establish boundaries for development on the edges of towns and villages with new screen tree planting. Tree planting on a large scale to improve landscape character and counter climate change.

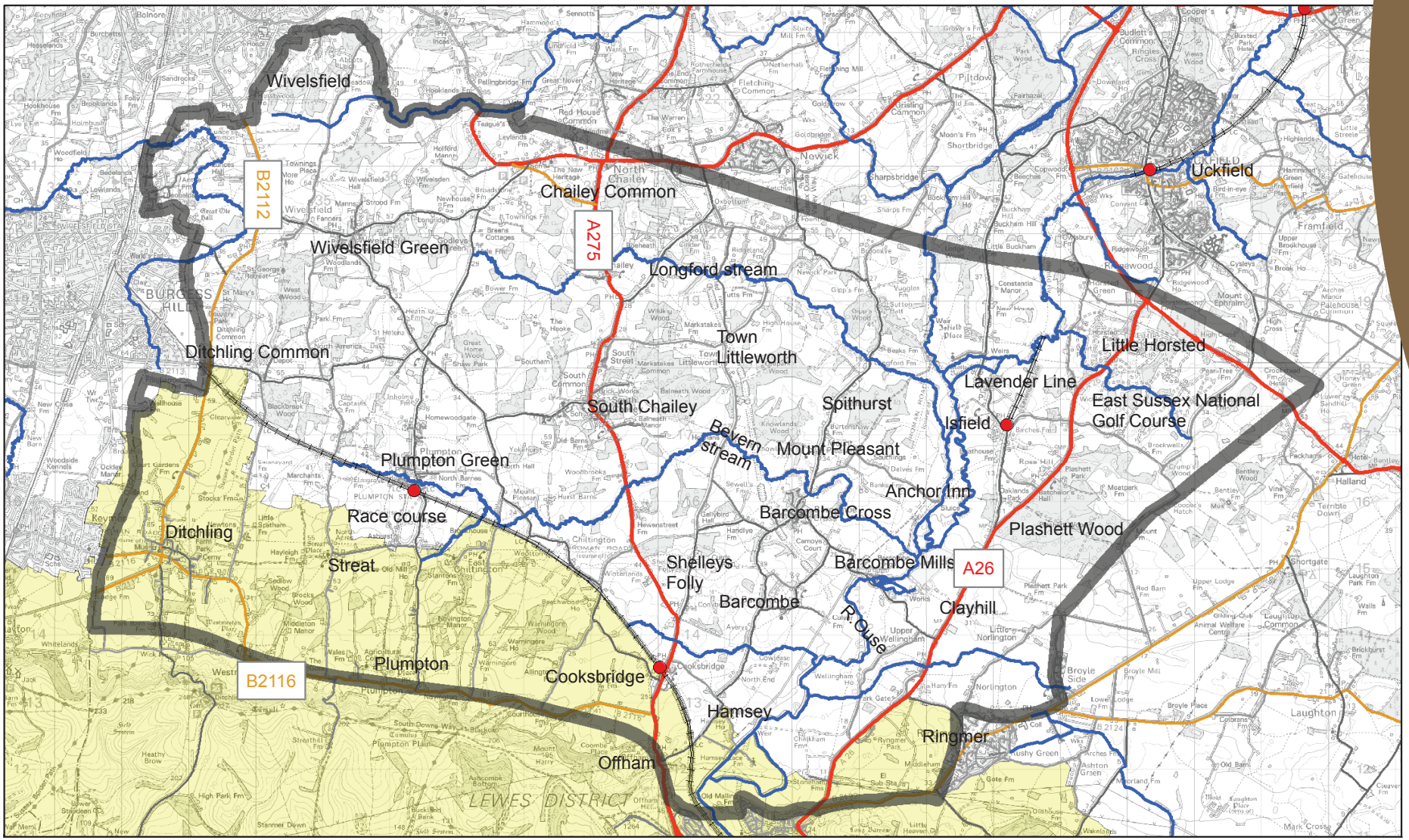
Conserve and enhance the historic built environment and settlement pattern. New development should be carefully located and designed to compliment and sit comfortably with local landscape character. Use of vernacular styles and building materials should be considered where appropriate. The design of new development should include buildings and their setting down to the detail of hard landscape layout. Proposed planting schemes should also reflect local character.

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Western Low Weald

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The Low Weald

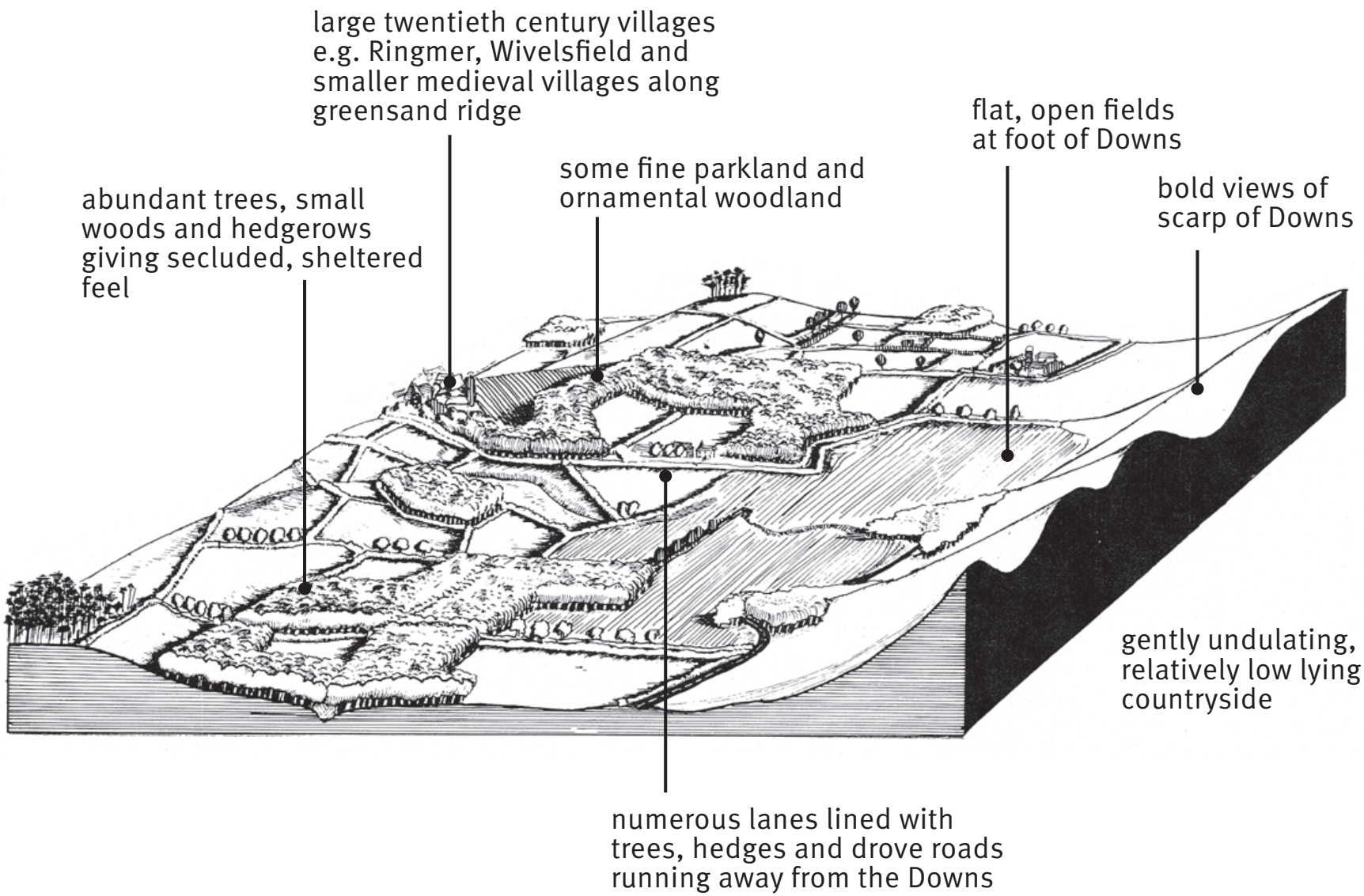


14 Western Low Weald Landscape Character Area | **South Downs National Park**

0 0.5 1 2 3 4 Kilometers

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Western Low Weald

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The Low Weald

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A. Landscape Description
B. Landscape Evaluation
C. Vision and Strategy
D. Guidelines for Managing Change

A Landscape Description

Key Landscape Characteristics

- A gently undulating and low lying topography with highest points on the green sand ridges and lowest in the river and stream valleys.
- Unspoilt and distinctive rural character with few intrusive features and no large urban areas.
- Fields are generally small and irregular; many formed from woodland clearance and often bounded by remnant woodland strips known as shaws.
- A largely pastoral landscape, especially on the heavy clay soils. Red Sussex cattle and Southdown sheep are local breeds which have been present for many centuries.
- More mixed and arable farming on the higher ground and lighter soils.
- Scattered tree features including distinctive mature oaks, tree belts, woods, parkland and hedgerow trees give an impression that the area is well wooded.
- A few scattered larger woods which are usually ancient in origin notably Plashett, which is an SSSI, and Warningore woods.
- Seasonal impact of carpets of celandine, wood anemone and bluebells in woodland
- Generally across the area there is a strong historic landscape structure with a patchwork of medieval assart fields and hedgerow boundaries.
- Some areas of intensive arable agriculture and large fields where trees and hedges have been lost especially in the Ouse Valley, around Ringmer and at the foot of the Downs around Plumpton.
- Some smaller historic designed landscapes in the grounds of fine country houses and scattered parkland, e.g. Plashett Park and Offham House.
- Manor houses often with medieval origins such as Middleton Manor, Plumpton Place, Streat Place, Isfield Place and Ryngmer Park.
- Evidence of Roman occupation and roads across the area, for example between Hassocks and Barcombe.
- The area has sites which are important to understanding the complex Wealden geology.
- There are clay pits and brick manufacturing at Chailey and Hamsey and a sandpit at Plumpton.
- Oak and ash as predominant mature tree species in woods and hedges with field maple, wild cherry and hornbeam (coppice) also frequent, there are a few remnant mature elm trees. Alder and willow are common in the river valleys. Lime trees and horse chestnut are frequent in designed landscapes and along roadsides.
- Areas of remnant heathland and common land which are valued for public access and as remnant and scarce lowland heath, notably at Ditchling and Chailey Common. Both of which are SSSIs and the latter is also a LNR.
- The flat and sometimes wide expanse of the River Ouse Valley.

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Western Low Weald

- Gently winding often tree lined minor river and stream valleys, most as tributaries to the Ouse.
- Scattered settlement of frequently picturesque villages and farmsteads, particularly on the Greensand ridge running parallel with the Downs.
- Small vernacular churches in hamlets and villages.
- Distinctive vernacular buildings associated with farmsteads including many ancient farm house barns such as the clunch barn at Hamsey.
- The vernacular building material for the area is timber frame and principally oak.
- Typical building materials since the late 18 century include local brick, white weatherboarding, clay tiles and Horsham slabs on the roofs of larger buildings and churches.
- Well managed village and farm ponds as focal points.
- Larger 20th century villages which have grown on the main road and rail routes at Plumpton Green, Wivelsfield Green and Ringmer.
- Frequent wide views of the bold scarp of the Downs to the south and 'big skies'.
- Areas of tranquillity away from the main centres of settlement and roads.
- Distinctive pattern of north south orientated route ways and lanes which are considered to be drove roads along which farmers traditionally took their stock to the Downs. Typically these link with the steep bostals which climb the scarp slopes.
- The Ouse Valley long distance path and boating attraction at The Anchor Inn, Barcombe.
- Mineral workings at South Chailey and Streat.
- Chailey windmill is in the heart of the area and is seen in wide views form the South Downs.
- Few main roads cross the area with the exception of the two north south A26 and A275 roads. The B2112 to the west of the area is a busy commuter route which puts pressure on the historic village of Ditchling. The B2116 running along the southern edge of the area under the north scarp of the South Downs is also a busy route. Rat running and fast traffic on minor roads which link these busy routes is intrusive.
- The mainline London to Lewes railway crosses the area.
- Part of the disused Lewes to Uckfield railway line supports the Lavender Line steam railway at Isfield.
- The heritage Bluebell Railway restores and runs steam trains from Sheffield Park via Horsted Keynes to East Grinstead.

Cultural Associations

The village of Ditchling and surrounding areas have a long history of arts and crafts where Eric Gill founded The Guild of St Joseph and St Dominic on Ditchling Common.

More recent resident artists have included John Skelton (sculptor) who had a workshop which is still run by his daughter in Streat, Raymond Briggs (illustrator) lives in Westmeston and painter John Dunn.

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Western Low Weald

Table 1 Key positive Landscape Attributes

- Unspoilt and distinctive rural character with few intrusive features and no large urban areas.
- Fields are generally small and irregular; many formed from woodland clearance and often bounded by remnant woodland strips known as shaws.
- A largely pastoral landscape especially on the heavy clay soils. Red Sussex cattle and Southdown sheep are local breeds which have been present for many centuries.
- Scattered tree features: mature oaks, veteran trees, tree belts, woods, parkland and hedgerow trees give an impression that the area is well wooded.
- A few scattered larger woods which are usually ancient in origin notably Plashett and Warningore.
- Generally across the area there is a strong historic landscape structure with a patchwork of medieval assart fields and hedgerow boundaries.
- Some smaller historic designed landscapes in the grounds of fine country houses and scattered parkland, e.g. Plashett Park, Offham House and Mount Harry.
- Manor houses often with medieval origins such as Middleton Manor, Plumpton Place, Streat Place, Isfield Place and Ryngmer Park.
- The flat and sometimes wide expanse of the River Ouse Valley.
- Gently winding often tree lined minor river and stream valleys, many as tributaries to the Ouse.
- Small vernacular churches in hamlets and villages.
- Chailey windmill.
- Distinctive vernacular buildings associated with farmsteads including many ancient farm houses barns such as the clunch barn at Hamsey.
- Well managed village and farm ponds as focal points.
- Frequent wide views of the bold scarp of the Downs to the south and ‘big skies’.
- Areas of tranquillity away from the main centres of settlement and roads
- Distinctive pattern of north south orientated route ways and lanes which are considered to be drove roads along which farmers traditionally took their stock to the Downs. Typically these link with the steep bostals which climb the scarp slopes.
- Areas of remnant heathland and common land which are valued for public access and scarce habitat.

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B Landscape Evaluation

Table 2 Current Condition

This is a largely unspoilt and pleasant rural landscape with few intrusive features. The landscape is in generally good condition and well managed as farmland with a strong historic structure. This is reflected in the southern part of the area which is in the South Downs National Park and is the setting for the downland scarp. The larger villages have some modern urban edges which intrude into the rural countryside. In areas with more intensive arable agriculture the hedgerows and hedgerow trees have been removed which detracts from the distinctive pattern and character of the landscape. In areas around settlements and on large estates the replacement of hedges with wire fencing for horse paddocks dilutes field patterns. Loss of trees along the rivers and especially in the southern part of the Ouse Valley and creation of engineered flood defences and channels has detracted from the landscape. Some farms have intrusive modern buildings and associated clutter. Lack of traditional woodland management has led to a decline in the condition of the Wealden woodland with the significant exception of Plashett Wood. The Low Weald is identified in the NCA as of outstanding priority for woodland conservation.

Forces for Change impacting on positive Landscape Attributes

Past / Current forces for change

- Expansion of larger villages
- Expansion of Plumpton Agricultural College to accommodate new buildings, a wider variety of activities and intensified agricultural uses.
- A significant increase in viticulture across the area with some significant wine producing estates being established.
- Loss of mature trees due to natural ageing and lack of replacement and disease, notably elms and more recently a potential risk to ash trees.
- Loss and decline of unimproved traditional hay meadow.
- Loss and decline of ancient woodland due to coniferisation and incursion of clay pits.
- Loss and decline of hedges and hedgerow trees and consequential fragmentation of the landscape due to farm diversification and reducing management.
- Creeping fragmentation of farmland by hobby farming, pony paddocks and garden expansion.
- Loss of trees along rivers due to maintenance regimes, agricultural intensification and engineering works.
- Expanding waterworks and engineered reservoir at Barcombe Mills.
- Golf course developments at Horsted Park and Ditchling.
- Loss of historic parkland, however this is being addressed by agri-environment schemes.

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- Development of Plumpton Racecourse.
- Creeping suburbanisation and cumulative changes in the rural landscape, roads and villages which are not in sympathy with local distinctiveness or vernacular architecture, including barn conversions.
- Water quality in the Ouse catchment and Nitrite Vulnerable Zones.
- Changes in the types and frequency of grazing animals in the countryside impacts on character as they are a characteristic feature. Lack of grazing can give an unmanaged appearance to the landscape and reduce the biodiversity value.
- Farm Environment Plans including organic farms at Plumpton and Streat and stewardship schemes notably in the Ouse Valley.
- Woodland grant schemes have been taken up across the area including planting of new woods.
- Regenerating birch and pine on heathland due to lack of grazing
- Mineral extraction from various the clay pits and sand extraction at Novington pit.
- Decline and neglect of Riparian landscapes and farm ponds, which is being addressed by Stewardship agreements
- Butterfly conservation measures notably to conserve the Pearl Bordered fritillary in woodland areas.
- Increased water abstraction reducing water in stream and rivers.
- Climate change affecting species composition and increasing the risk of drought / flood events.

Future Forces for Change

- Settlement growth around the larger villages of Plumpton Green, Wivelsfield Green and Wivelsfield.
- The impact of traffic on rural roads and increasing recreational visitors due to expansion of towns on the edges of the character area, notably Burgess Hill, Haywards Heath and Uckfield.
- Continued expansion of Plumpton College.
- Increasing traffic on rural lanes and in villages impacting on tranquillity and on the rural character where passing and large vehicles cause erosion to banks and verges.
- Demands for traffic calming and road improvements which could introduce increasing urban clutter to rural roads, villages and lanes.
- Continued agricultural change due to changing markets, economic pressures and response to climate change.
- The spread of small agricultural holdings, to hobby farming, paddocks and allotments for local food production.
- Pressure for locating renewable energy facilities for solar, wind and bio energy.
- Pressure for more local waste recycling facilities down to the domestic level.
- Changes to heathland management regimes and increased visitor pressure.
- Continuing decline in heathland management leading to further loss of open heath due to incursion by scrub and trees.
- Pests and diseases of trees which could impact significantly on the mature tree stock. E.g. Ash dieback.
- Water quality in the Ouse catchment and in the Nitrate Vulnerable Zone which extends into the North West corner of the area.

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Table 3 Potential Impacts of Climate Change

- Potential changes in woodland / tree species composition and accelerated growth of species such as birch,
- Changes in ground flora which produce very distinctive seasonal displays e.g. bluebells may disappear.
- Increased magnitude of storm events could make woodland edges and trees features vulnerable, especially over mature and champion trees
- Increased prevalence of pests and diseases due to warmer weather, wetter conditions could have devastating effect as DED did in the 1970s e.g. Phytophera on Oak and Alder and the recent spread of horse chestnut disease.
- Changes in precipitation and temperatures will change the types of crops that farmers grow.
- Potential impact on the viability of grazing sheep, dairy and beef.
- Increased temperatures and a decline in precipitation levels may dry out wetland habitats and ponds and alter stream flows.
- A change in the vegetation composition of heathland and other species rich habitats. Rising temperatures and increases in CO_2 / nitrogen can favour grasses over heath and wild flowers.
- Drought conditions could increase the susceptibility of heath lands to fire.

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Western Low Weald

C Vision and Strategy

Table 4 Vision
(as an update of the County Landscape Assessment 2009)

A high quality distinctive lowland Wealden landscape providing a variety of experiences. An abundance of trees, woods and hedges which reinforces local experiences of remoteness and tranquillity. A strong sense of the historic landscape with intricate field patterns and ancient hedgerows. Conservation and enhancement of the open nature of the Ouse River Valley. A scattered settlement pattern centred on the established and often historic service villages. A strong sense of place provided by local vernacular design and architecture. Wide uninterrupted views of the Downs and 'big' skies. A strong landscape structure which can accommodate pressure for change and development without detracting from the historic character. Enhanced and protected natural habitats and a rich wildlife resource. Well managed recreational opportunities on the extensive rights of way and lanes network. The area recognised as a gateway area to the South Downs National Park.

As noted in the current Landscape Character Guidance – A Landscape Strategy identifies *"what change if any is desirable for any landscape character area as a whole?"*

Landscape change and adaptation to meet the strategy requires:

1. Planning for the enhancement of the Biodiversity Opportunity Areas in the mid Ouse flood zone and the western Ouse streams.
2. Protect and manage existing habitats and plan for restoration of hedges and riverside vegetation to restore habitat linkages and continuity.
3. Manage the habitat enhancement of Ditchling and Chailey Commons and other heathland.
4. Consider the potential to plan for multifunctional Green Infrastructure (GI) in this character area particularly in response to a growing population and new development.
5. Build on the existing GI assets of the Ouse Valley, the network of country lanes, public rights of way and woodland to maximise recreational opportunities.
6. As part of planning for GI consider opportunities to address the Natural England requirement to mitigate any additional pressure on air quality in Ashdown Forest.
7. Plan for enhancements to Ditchling Common to serve the planned GI network around Burgess Hill and complete the Green Circle. www.bh-green-circle.org.uk/sites/the-burgess-hill-green-circle-network.
8. Through planning controls integrate proposed and existing development into the landscape through planting of tree features and woodland to define the village boundaries with the countryside. For example, Plumpton Green and Wivelsfield Green.
9. Ensure that the design and layout of new developments respect the character and from of the landscape and existing settlements.
10. Control the spread of suburbanisation by minimising clutter of signage and other urban features in lanes and villages.
11. Encourage the production and implementation of a comprehensive landscape strategy to integrate the recent and future developments and change at Plumpton College.
12. Consider appropriate species for new plantings to maintain landscape character and biodiversity but also adaptation to climate change influences.

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D Guidelines for Managing Change

Development considerations for housing and other development

Proposals in or adjacent to the South Downs National Park need to have regard to the SDNP: Partnership Management Plan

The main pressures for development in this character area will be to **accommodate housing for the rural populations. The pressure will mainly be** concentrated on the larger village service centres. There will be pressure to find opportunities for affordable housing in the smaller villages and hamlets. The important educational resource at Plumpton College is a specific development pressure in the area. Any new development should respect the key positive attributes in the landscape outlined in Table 1 above.

Proposed development should consider opportunities for proactively meeting the Landscape Change Strategy aims for this Landscape Character Area as set out in 1-12 above.

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Table 5

Current issues offering opportunities for protection and enhancement	Landscape Management Guidelines	Benefits delivered by Ecosystem Services for each area of interest
Countryside and Farmland Pressure for farm diversification and development of hobby farms, solar arrays, wind farms, waste recycling operations etc. Decline of dairy farming Land falling out of positive management and dereliction of farm buildings. Loss of historic field patterns and other boundary features. Deterioration of by ways and lanes due to erosion of un-surfaced routes by horses, bikes and 4 wheel drives. Damage to verges on narrow country lanes caused by increasing size of farm vehicles and passing traffic. Flooding of farmland and properties affecting the viability of farms. Overstocking and arable production on some soils can result in soil erosion and reduce soil quality.	**Countryside and Farmland** Encourage farm conservation schemes to conserve the essential landscape structure of hedges, trees and small woods. Maintain the mixed farmed character of the area. Protect and manage historic field patterns and conserve boundary features. Conserve and enhance drove routes, byways and rural lanes. Restore the structure of the historic landscape by strengthening hedgerow networks and field patterns through re-planting of lost sections and re-stocking with hedgerow trees. Use tree and woodland planting to screen intrusive farm buildings and other agricultural development. Enhance the biodiversity value of old pasture, drainage and river channels. Plan for and manage changes which may occur in the landscape due to changes in farm management brought about by economic influences and climate change. Address existing flooding issues of farmland and properties through flood management and by identifying areas which can provide flood alleviation. Reduce the risk and incidence of soil erosion by encouraging the restoration of arable land to pasture.	**Provisioning services** Water availability Food production **Regulating services** **(**water purification, air quality maintenance and climate regulation) Water quality and protected aquifers. Regulating water flow and preventing flooding Soil conservation and erosion control Habitat and species resilience to climate change Carbon sequestration. Areas of peat in the river valleys, hedges, trees and grassland regulate air quality by absorbing and retaining CO_2.

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Current issues offering opportunities for protection and enhancement	Landscape Management Guidelines	Benefits delivered by Ecosystem Services for each area of interest
Poor water quality in some ponds, ditches and streams. Loss of farm ponds Pressure on existing crops and native species due to climate change.	Apply best land management practices to prevent soil and fertiliser run off, thereby protecting surface and ground water. Restore farm ponds.	**Cultural Services** Sense of Place and local distinctiveness. Source of Inspiration Sense of History Tranquillity Biodiversity Informal recreational opportunities
Woodland Many woods are not in positive management. Some woodland grant schemes are addressing this notably at Plashett Wood SSSI (condition: unfavourable, but recovering, NE). Traditional management has stopped as it is not commercially viable e.g. coppicing. Coniferisation and lack of management of plantations due to poor access and low demand for timber. Tree diseases Invasive species competing with natives e.g. Spanish Bluebell, Himalayan balsam, Japanese knotweed, rhododendron	**Woodland** Actively manage woodland through coppicing to create a diverse age structure. Replace conifers with mixed broadleaved woodland. Create new woodlands to help to integrate new and existing development using locally indigenous species. Consider the need to adapt to changes enforced by climate change, such as specific tree diseases and possible adaptation in species selection. Consider appropriate species to maintain landscape structure, character and biodiversity. Plant new woodland to absorb development and as a sustainable source of timber. Conserve and interpret important woodland archaeology	**Provisioning** Fuel (woodfuel for local communities from woodland management) **Regulating** Carbon sequestration, woodland absorbs and holds CO_2. Habitat and species resilience to climate change **Cultural** Tranquillity Sense of Place and local distinctiveness Cultural heritage (traditional woodland management) Biodiversity Informal recreation

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Current issues offering opportunities for protection and enhancement	Landscape Management Guidelines	Benefits delivered by Ecosystem Services for each area of interest
Other key Habitats Deterioration and loss of habitats : Loss of river and streamside vegetation in the Ouse catchment. Deterioration of water quality in streams, ditches and ponds Financial and viable farming constraints affecting the continued management of heathland at Ditchling and Chailey Commons SSSIs (condition: generally unfavourable but recovering NE) reducing the biodiversity value. Loss of ancient hedges and hedgerow trees. Agricultural improvements to Grassland and meadows which reduces species richness. Ploughing up of old meadows.	**Other key Habitats** Encourage management of river and stream channels, especially conservation of riverside trees and vegetation. Conservation and re-creation of meadow and pasture habitats including wet meadows. Encourage the restoration of species rich meadows. Proactive management of lowland heathland. Continued grazing on heathland where practicable. Farm stewardship schemes to maximise biodiversity. Opportunities to maximise reed bed creation in the Ouse catchment. Encourage measures to improve water quality including organic farming.	**Provisioning** Nature's larder of free berries and herbs. Conservation of insect pollinators for pollination of crops. **Regulating** Habitat and species resilience to climate change **Cultural** Appreciation of nature Educational value Biodiversity Recreation

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Current issues offering opportunities for protection and enhancement	Landscape Management Guidelines	Benefits delivered by Ecosystem Services for each area of interest
Recreation, Green Infrastructure (GI) and ANGS (glossary) Pressure on bridleways and byways as multi use, including cycling and 4 wheel drives increasing erosion. Reducing funding to maintain the comprehensive existing rights of way network and long distance paths. Erosion on well used footpaths Lack of funding to manage and enhance GI. Need for better recreational linkages and improved sustainable transport corridors. Need for more ANGS and multifunctional GI including sustainable transport links and accessibility. Gentrification Loss of tranquillity due to more cars and access. Reducing public funds for the management of Ditchling and Chailey Commons heath land and conflicts with vehicles and dogs for grazing animals.	**Recreation, Green Infrastructure and ANGS** Where appropriate develop Green Infrastructure Strategies based on a county wide GI mapping. Plan for and manage recreational pressure on the countryside which could be affected by the increase in population in surrounding towns (Burgess Hill, Haywards Heath and Brighton) and the larger villages. Manage the Common land at Ditchling and Chailey as key recreational areas but also conserve as important lowland heath habitats. Consider opportunities to create new green corridors and improve existing as safe ideally motorised traffic free recreational routes. Ensure future management of the heathlands to maximise public access and biodiversity value.	**Provisioning** Protected farmland Accessible farmland and grazing pasture. Water quality **Regulating** Habitat and species resilience to climate change Water quality and protected aquifers. Regulating water flow and preventing flooding Carbon sequestration **Cultural** Sense of place Heritage assets and cultural heritage Inspirational Tranquility Biodiversity

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Current issues offering opportunities for protection and enhancement	Landscape Management Guidelines	Benefits delivered by Ecosystem Services for each area of interest
Horse Keeping ('horsiculture') and small holdings Deterioration of the character and quality of the landscape and loss of local distinctiveness. Can detract from historic field pattern where fences replace hedges. Can cause soil erosion.	**Horse Keeping ('horsiculture') and small holdings** Enhance the condition of areas of horsiculture and small holdings through the restoration of an intact, well managed hedgerow network and retaining a diverse grass sward by preventing overgrazing. Encourage local food production and allotment provision in areas where this will not detract from local landscape character.	**Provisioning** Grazing **Regulating** Habitat and species resilience to climate change **Cultural** Recreation Heritage assets Sense of Place and local distinctiveness Biodiversity
The character of the villages Gentrification Urbanisation Development pressures Gradual loss and deterioration of Heritage features. Increasing traffic on rural lanes and rat running to avoid congestion on A roads, notably the A27 around Brighton.	**Protect and Enhance the character of the villages** Encourage the production of Neighbourhood Plans which incorporate village design guides. Plan for new development in the villages to ensure it is designed to a high standard to reflect local character and sense of place. Establish defined development edges to villages with new tree planting. Prepare village design guides and tree conservation plans. Encourage local improvements to gardens and amenity areas through neighbourhood planning, amenity associations and 'Britain in Bloom' type initiatives. Consider initiatives to slow traffic on lanes and through villages.	**Provisioning** Local amenities and facilities. **Regulating** Use of sustainable materials Habitat and species resilience to climate change Water quality and protected aquifers. Regulating water flow and preventing flooding **Cultural** Sense of Place and local distinctiveness Heritage assets Recreation Biodiversity

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Current issues offering opportunities for protection and enhancement	Landscape Management Guidelines	Benefits delivered by Ecosystem Services for each area of interest
Catchments, Flood management and SUDS schemes? Flooding in the Ouse Valley Flash floods and run off. Flooding of properties in low lying areas by river and ground water. Deterioration in water quality in the Ouse catchment due to pressure form agricultural intensification and diffuse pollution.	**Flood management and SUDS schemes?** Plan for flood management by reinforcing the riparian character by restoring natural river geomorphology and re-linking watercourses to their floodplains by extending areas such as wet meadow and woodland. Conserve and enhance existing man made and natural drainage features. Maximise opportunities for the creation of SUDs schemes which contribute to local amenity and habitat creation.	**Provisioning** Water conservation Water supply **Regulating** Flood control Protection of aquifers Water quality Soil conservation **Cultural** Sense of Place and local distinctiveness Amenity and recreation Biodiversity

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Glossary

(also refer to the full version in the County Landscape Assessment).

ANGS: Accessible Natural Green Space Natural England - Accessible Natural Greenspace Standard (ANGSt)

Assart: Field created from the clearance of woodland

Clunch Barn: constructed of a building material composed of hardened clay or chalk marl.

Ecosystem Services: The services provided by nature which support living systems and can be evaluated.

Enclosure: The separation of land from the common by fence or private use.

GI or Green Infrastructure: Multifunctional green areas which provide areas for recreation, wildlife, water supply catchment, flood relief, food or timber production.

Local Nature Reserve: Local Nature Reserve (or LNR) is a statutory designation made under Section 21 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949, and amended by Schedule 11 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006, by principal local authorities.

Ramsar sites are wetlands of international importance for biodiversity, designated under the Ramsar Convention.

SNCI or Local Site: a Site of Nature Conservation Importance.

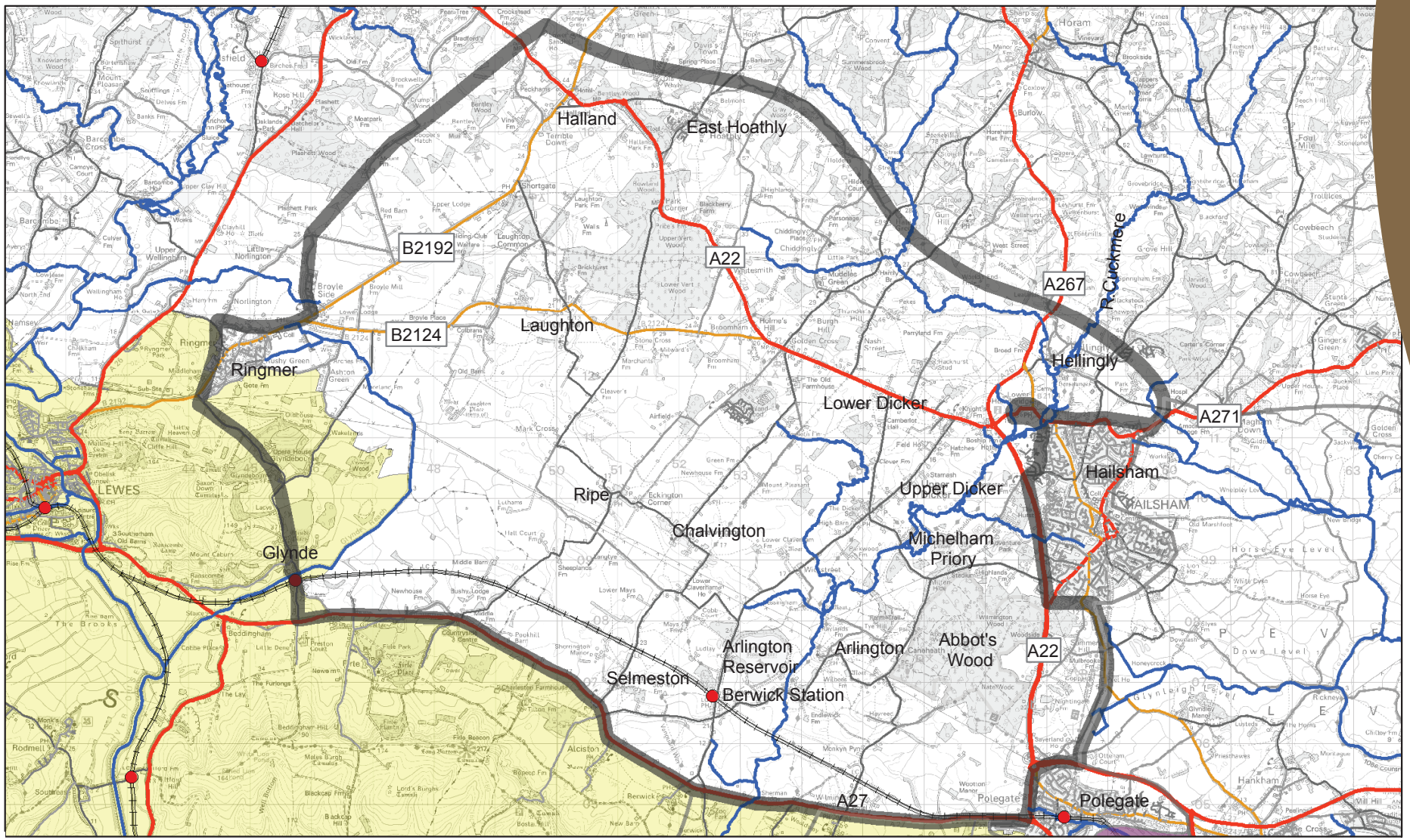
SSSI: A national designation for Site of Special Scientific Interest, these may be of biodiversity or geological significance or both.

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The Low Weald

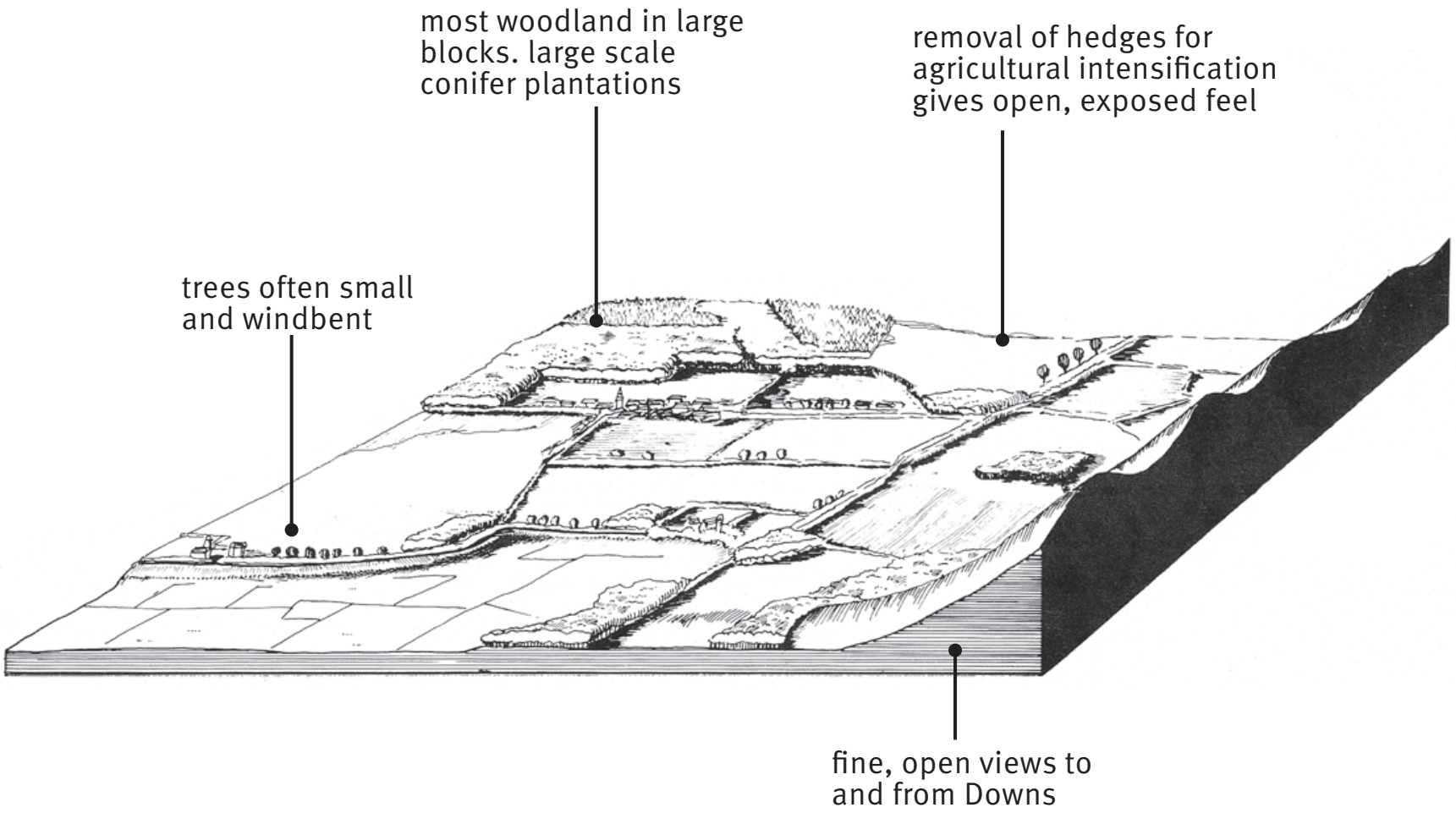


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South Downs National Park

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The Low Weald

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A. Landscape Description
B. Landscape Evaluation
C. Vision and Strategy
D. Guidelines for Managing Change

A Landscape Description

Key Landscape Characteristics

- A low lying topography with few high points and extensive areas of flat, treeless and windswept landscape.
- Generally more open and exposed than the Western Low Weald with areas of tranquillity and remoteness away from the main roads.
- A largely pastoral landscape especially on the heavy clay soils, Red Sussex cattle and Southdown sheep are local breeds which have been present for many centuries.
- More mixed and arable farming on the higher ground and lighter soils.
- Some large woodland areas which are ancient in origin, but have been extensively replanted with coniferous trees, notably Abbots and Vert Woods.
- Many of the woods are classified as Semi-Natural Ancient Woodland by Natural England and are local nature sites, notably Abbots Wood.
- Many scattered areas of woodland with Ancient woodland species providing seasonal impact of carpets of celandine, wood anemone and bluebells.
- Hedges and hedgerow trees are less abundant than the Western Low Weald and trees often wind sculpted.
- Oak and ash as predominant mature tree species in woods and hedges with field maple, wild cherry, aspen and hornbeam (coppice) also frequent, there are a few remnant mature elm trees. Alder and willow and grey poplar are common in the river valleys. Lime trees and horse chestnut are frequent in designed landscapes and along roadsides.
- Small airfields at Ringmer and Ripe
- A distinctive patchwork of angular fields enclosed by low hedges.
- Some areas of intensive arable agriculture and large fields where trees and hedges have been lost especially between the A27 and A22.
- Some smaller historic designed landscapes in the grounds of modest country houses for example at Wooton Manor.
- Evidence of former manor houses, often with medieval origins and remnant moats, such as Laughton Place, Claverham, Halland Park Farm and Horselunges Manor.
- The medieval moated priory at Michelham which is open to the public.
- The area has sites which are important to understanding the complex Wealden geology.
- There is a disused clay pit at Glynde and a quarry famous for Dickerware pots which is a geological SSSI.
- The winding channel of the upper Cuckmere River and its tributaries.
- Glynde Reach and many artificial straightened drains and channels.

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- Arlington Reservoir LNR, an important wildlife habitat and visitor attraction.
- There are SSSI designations at Arlington reservoir and Milton Gate Marsh, the former is also a Local Nature Reserve.
- Small vernacular churches in hamlets and villages.
- Distinctive vernacular buildings associated with farmsteads including ancient farm houses and barns.
- The vernacular for the area is timber framed buildings and weather boarding with local brick and clay hanging or roof tiles appearing in the late 18 century.
- Scattered farm ponds and larger ancient fish ponds, for example at Chalvington village and Sherrington Manor.
- Scattered remote focal villages and hamlets with characteristic ribbon development along the roads and lanes.
- Wide open views of the north slope of the Downs to the south and 'big skies'.
- Large rectilinear fields in the central area as evidence of previous formal enclosure.
- A geometric pattern of north south orientated route ways and lanes which are considered to be drove roads along which farmers traditionally took their stock to the Downs. These tend to be straighter than those of the Western Low Weald creating a distinctive rectilinear pattern around the edges of large fields.
- The busy main A27 forms the southern boundary of the area and gives access to the many lanes which cross the area. The A22 cuts across the northern part of the area. Other busy local routes are the B2192 and B2124 which connect the A roads. Some of the minor roads suffer fast rat run traffic, notably though Berwick and Upper Dicker, but otherwise the rural lanes are quiet backwaters.
- The south coast railway crosses the southern edge of the area.
- Part of the National Cycle Network route 21 uses the disused Eastbourne to Heathfield railway as an important recreational route.
- Electricity pylons crossing the area and large modern farm buildings are prominent in this open landscape.
- The scattered business and retail development along the A22 detracts for this part of the area but otherwise there is little urban influence.

Cultural Associations

Serge Chermayeff, architect of the De La Warr Pavilion in Bexhill designed and built for himself one of the most influential Modernist houses of the time at Bentley Wood near Halland, the original gardens were designed by Christopher Tunnard.

Farley Farm House at Chiddingly was the home of Surrealists Lee Miller and Roland Penrose and from 1949 became a gathering place for many famous artists. The house and gardens are now a gallery and sculpture garden offering guided tours.

Former Prime minister James Callaghan lived at Upper Clayhill Farm in Ringmer from 1979.

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Table 1 Key Positive Landscape Attributes

- Generally more open and exposed than the Western Low Weald with areas of tranquillity and remoteness away from the main roads.
- A largely pastoral landscape especially on the heavy clay soils, Red Sussex cattle and Southdown sheep are local breeds which have been present for many centuries.
- Some large woodland areas which are ancient in origin, but have been extensively replanted with coniferous trees, notably Abbots and Vert Woods.
- Evidence of former manor houses, often with medieval origins and remnant moats, such as Laughton Place, Claverham, Halland Park Farm and Horselunges Manor.
- The medieval moated priory at Michelham which is open to the public.
- The winding channel of the upper Cuckmere River and its tributaries.
- Small vernacular churches in hamlets and villages.
- Distinctive vernacular buildings associated with farmsteads including ancient farm houses and barns.
- Scattered farm ponds and larger ancient fish ponds, for example at Chalvington village and Sherrington Manor.
- Scattered remote focal villages and hamlets with characteristic ribbon development along the roads and lanes.
- Wide open views of the north slope of the Downs to the south and ‘big skies’.
- A geometric pattern of north south orientated route ways and lanes and large rectilinear fields.
- Arlington Reservoir

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B Landscape Evaluation

Table 2 Current Condition

A largely unspoilt tract of countryside with much of the historic rural character intact. The distinctive pattern of rural lanes and scattered unspoilt villages reinforces the historic character. Agricultural intensification has caused the removal of some hedgerows and hedgerow trees which has detracted from the historic landscape character in some areas. Farm diversification on small holdings and estates has led to the replacement of hedges with wire fencing for horse paddocks which dilutes field patterns. Lack of management and under exploited productivity of some farm land. The Cuckmere River channel follows a meandering route across the area. The river and drainage channel management has in places removed water side trees and vegetation. Some farms have intrusive modern buildings and associated clutter. There is a programme of woodland management for Abbotts Wood to fell and replant conifer plantations with native deciduous species. Other smaller woods remain largely unmanaged. The few detracting features are related to scattered modern development spreading along the main road corridors. The Low Weald is identified in the NCA as of outstanding priority for woodland conservation.

Forces for Change impacting on positive Landscape Attributes

Past / Current forces for change

- Pressure for agricultural diversification which involves new built development and changes to land management.
- Loss and decline of hedges and hedgerow trees and consequential fragmentation of the landscape due to farm diversification and reducing management.
- Creeping fragmentation of farmland by hobby farming, pony paddocks and garden expansion.
- Increasing levels of traffic throughout the area.
- Development pressures for housing and commerce.
- Loss of mature trees due to natural ageing and lack of replacement and disease, notably elms and more recently a potential risk to ash trees.
- Loss of trees along river, streams and ditches due to maintenance regimes, agricultural intensification and engineering works.
- Loss and decline of unimproved traditional hay meadow.
- Loss and decline of ancient woodland due to coniferisation.
- Creeping suburbanisation and cumulative changes in the rural landscape, roads and villages which are not in sympathy with local distinctiveness or vernacular architecture.
- Water quality in the Cuckmere catchment and a small area of Nitrite Vulnerable Zone in the south east corner of the area.

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- Changes in the types and frequency of grazing animals in the countryside impacts on character as they are a characteristic feature. Lack of grazing can give an unmanaged appearance to the landscape and reduce the biodiversity value.
- Farm Environment Plans including organic farming on the Glynde Estate and at Wilmington Green. Much of the area is covered by Higher Level Stewardship agreements.
- Woodland Grant Schemes are scattered across the area, the largest covering Abbots Wood near Hailsham.
- Mineral extraction form clay pits notably Glynde and The Dicker.
- Decline and neglect of Riparian landscapes and farm ponds, which is being addressed by Stewardship agreements
- Butterfly conservation measures notably to conserve the Pearl Bordered fritillary in woodland areas.
- Increased water abstraction reducing water in stream and rivers.
- Increased water abstraction reducing water in stream and rivers.
- Climate change affecting species composition and increasing the risk of drought / flood events.

Future Forces for Change

- Settlement growth around the larger villages and adjacent towns, particularly Hailsham, Polegate, Lewes and Ringmer.
- The impact of traffic on rural roads and increasing recreational visitors due to expansion of towns on the edges of the character area, notably Lewes, Hailsham and Polegate.
- Increasing traffic on rural lanes and in villages impacting on tranquillity and on the rural character where passing vehicles cause erosion to banks and verges.
- Pests and diseases of trees which could impact significantly on the mature tree stock. E.g. Ash dieback.
- Demands for traffic calming and road improvements which could introduce increasing urban clutter to rural roads, villages and lanes.
- Continued agricultural change due to changing markets, economic pressures and response to climate change, for example bio crops.
- The spread of small agricultural holdings, to hobby farming, paddocks and allotments for local food production.
- Pressure for locating renewable energy facilities for solar, wind and bio energy.
- Pressure for more local waste recycling facilities down to the domestic level.
- Water quality in the Cuckmere catchment and in Nitrate Vulnerable Zone which extends into the south east corner of the area.
- The potential extension of Arlington Reservoir to increase capacity.

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Table 3 Potential Impacts of Climate Change

- Potential changes in woodland / tree species composition and accelerated growth of species such as birch.
- Changes in ground flora which produce very distinctive seasonal displays e.g. bluebells may disappear.
- Increased magnitude of storm events could make woodland edges and trees features vulnerable, especially over mature and champion trees
- Increased prevalence of pests and diseases due to warmer weather, wetter conditions could have devastating effect as DED did in the 1970s e.g. Phytophera on Oak and Alder and the recent spread of horse chestnut diseases.
- Changes in precipitation and temperatures will change the types of crops that farmers grow.
- Potential impact on the viability of grazing sheep, dairy and beef.
- Increased temperatures and a decline in precipitation levels may dry out wetland habitats and ponds and alter stream flows.

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C Vision and Strategy

Table 4 Vision
(as an update of the County Landscape Assessment 2009)

A high quality distinctive and unspoilt lowland Wealden landscape.

An open landscape with big skies and wide uninterrupted views of the Downs. A sense of remoteness strengthened by improved tree, woodland and hedgerow structure, particularly near built up edges and around large modern farm complexes. A strong sense of the historic landscape reflected in the distinctive geometric layout of fields and lanes. A strong landscape structure which can accommodate pressure for change and development without detracting from the historic character. A scattered settlement pattern centred on the established and historic service villages. A strong sense of place provided by local vernacular design and architecture. Enhanced and protected natural habitats and a rich wildlife resource. Well managed recreational opportunities on the extensive rights of way and lanes network. The area recognised as a gateway area to the South Downs National Park.

As noted in the current Landscape Character Guidance – A Landscape Strategy identifies *"what change if any is desirable for any landscape character area as a whole?"*

Landscape change and adaptation to meet the strategy requires:

1. Planning for the enhancement of the Biodiversity Opportunity Areas of the Cuckmere Ouse watershed, the Pevensey Cuckmere Valley Link, the Wilmington Woodlands and watershed, the Wooton Manor Grasslands Link and the extension of the Ouse catchment around Glynde and Laughton.
2. Protect and manage existing habitats and plan for restoration of hedges and riverside vegetation to restore habitat linkages and continuity.
3. Consider the potential to plan for multifunctional Green Infrastructure (GI) in this character area particularly in response to a growing population and new development in the towns and larger villages.
4. Build on the existing GI assets of woodland, river catchments, extensive rural lane network and Arlington Reservoir to maximise recreational opportunities.
5. Through planning controls integrate proposed and existing development into the landscape where appropriate using planting of tree features and woodland to define the village boundaries with the countryside.
6. Ensure that the design and layout of new developments respect the character and from of the landscape and existing settlements.
7. Control the spread of suburbanisation by minimising clutter of signage and other urban features in lanes and villages.
8. Encourage the production and implementation of a comprehensive landscape strategy to integrate the recent and future developments along the A22 from Golden Cross to Polegate.
9. Consider appropriate species for new plantings to maintain landscape character and biodiversity but also adaptation to climate change influences.

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D Guidelines for Managing Change

Development considerations for housing and other development

Proposals in or adjacent to the South Downs National Park need to have regard to the SDNP: Partnership Management Plan

The main pressures for development in this character area will be to accommodate housing for the rural populations. The pressure will be concentrated on the larger village service centres of which there are few in this area. There will be pressure to find opportunities for affordable housing in the smaller villages and hamlets. Any new development should respect the key positive attributes in the landscape outlined in Table 1 above.

There is an ongoing requirement for farm diversification driven by a changing agricultural economy and practices.

Proposed development should consider opportunities for proactively meeting the Landscape Change Strategy aims for this Landscape Character Area as outlined in 1-9 above

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Table 5 – Review and adapt

Opportunities for protection and enhancement	Landscape Management Guidelines	Benefits delivered by Ecosystem Services for each area of interest
Countryside and Farmland Pressure for farm diversification and development of hobby farms, solar arrays, wind farms waste operations etc. Decline of dairy farming. Land falling out of positive management and dereliction of farm buildings. Loss of historic field patterns and other boundary features. Deterioration of by ways and lanes due to erosion of un-surfaced routes by horses, bikes and 4 wheel drives. Damage to verges on narrow country lanes caused by increasing size of farm vehicles and passing traffic. Flooding of farmland and properties affecting the viability of farms. Overstocking and arable production on some soils can result in soil erosion and reduce soil quality. Poor water quality in some ponds, ditches and streams.	**Countryside and Farmland** Encourage farm conservation schemes to conserve the essential landscape structure of fields, hedges, trees and woods. Maintain the mixed farmed character of the area. Protect and manage historic field patterns and rural lanes. Restore the structure and historic character of the landscape by strengthening hedgerow networks and field patterns through re-planting of lost sections and re-stocking with hedgerow trees. Conserve and enhance historic farm buildings and farmsteads. Use tree and woodland planting to screen intrusive farm buildings and other agricultural development. Enhance the biodiversity value of old pasture, wet meadows, and river and stream channels. Restore farm ponds. Plan for and manage changes which may occur in the landscape due to changes in farm management brought about by economic influences and climate change. Address existing flooding issues of farmland and properties. Use flood relief and SuDs as an opportunity for enhanced biodiversity and amenity.	**Provisioning services** Water availability Food production **Regulating services** (water purification, air quality maintenance and climate regulation) Water quality and protected aquifers. Regulating water flow and preventing flooding Soil conservation and erosion control Habitat and species resilience to climate change Carbon sequestration. Areas of peat in the river valleys, hedges, trees and grassland regulate air quality by absorbing and retaining CO_2.

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Opportunities for protection and enhancement	Landscape Management Guidelines	Benefits delivered by Ecosystem Services for each area of interest
	Reduce the risk and incidence of soil erosion by restoring arable land to pasture. Encourage the restoration of species rich meadows. Encourage measures to improve water quality in the Cuckmere catchment. Apply best land management practices to prevent soil and fertiliser run off, thereby protecting surface and ground water	**Cultural Services** Sense of Place and local distinctiveness. Source of Inspiration Sense of History Tranquillity Biodiversity Informal Recreation
Woodland Many woods are not in positive management. The most extensive area of woodland at Abbots Wood is in positive management but many smaller woods are not and some e.g. Vert's Wood has been replanted with conifers. Traditional management has stopped as it is not commercially viable e.g. coppicing. Coniferisation and lack of management of plantations due to poor access and low demand for timber. Tree diseases Invasive species competing with natives e.g. Spanish Bluebell, Himalayan balsam, Japanese knotweed, rhododendron	**Woodland** Actively manage woodland through coppicing to create a diverse age structure. Replace conifers with mixed broadleaved woodland. Create new woodlands to help to integrate new and existing development using locally indigenous species. Consider the need to adapt to changes enforced by climate change, such as specific tree diseases and possible adaptation in species selection. Consider appropriate species to maintain landscape structure, character and biodiversity. Conserve and interpret important woodland archaeology Plant new woodland to absorb development and as a sustainable source of timber.	**Provisioning** Fuel (woodfuel for local communities from woodland management) **Regulating** Carbon sequestration, woodland absorbs and holds CO_2. Habitat and species resilience to climate change **Cultural** Tranquillity Sense of Place and local distinctiveness Cultural heritage (traditional woodland management) Biodiversity Informal recreation

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Opportunities for protection and enhancement	Landscape Management Guidelines	Benefits delivered by Ecosystem Services for each area of interest
Other key Habitats Arlington Reservoir SSSI is in favourable condition (NE). Deterioration and loss of habitats Loss of river and stream side vegetation in the Cuckmere catchment. Poor water quality in streams and ditches Deterioration and drying out of wetlands Loss of Hedgerows Agricultural improvements to Grassland/meadows which reduces species richness. In particular Milton Gate Marsh SSSI (condition unfavourable and declining) and Burgh Hill Farm Meadow (condition unfavourable but improving) SSSIs. Park Corner Heath SSSI (condition favourable) Ploughing up of old meadows.	**Other key Habitats** Maintain favourable condition of Arlington Reservoir. Encourage management of river and stream channels, especially conservation of riverside trees and vegetation. Encourage good agricultural practice to minimise pollution and improve water quality, including organic farming. Reed bed enhancement and creation in channels and ditches. Conservation and re-creation of wet meadow/ pasture habitats. Management of water levels in streams and ditches. Conservation of hedges and ancient field boundaries. Farm stewardship schemes to maximise biodiversity and prevent further loss of species rich meadows.	**Provisioning** Nature's larder of free berries and herbs. Conservation of insect pollinators for pollination of crops. Water quality and protected aquifers. **Regulating** Habitat and species resilience to climate change. **Cultural** Appreciation of nature Educational value Biodiversity

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Eastern Low Weald

Opportunities for protection and enhancement	Landscape Management Guidelines	Benefits delivered by Ecosystem Services for each area of interest
Recreation, Green Infrastructure (GI) and ANGS (glossary) Pressure on bridleways and byways as multi use including cycling and 4 wheel drive vehicles increasing erosion. Reducing funding to maintain the comprehensive existing rights of way network and long distance paths. Erosion on well used routes e.g. Robin Post Lane Lack of funding to manage and enhance GI. Need for better sustainable transport linkages. Need for more ANGS and multifunctional GI including safe sustainable transport links and accessibility. Loss of tranquillity due to pressure from growing population in Hailsham and Polegate. Arlington Reservoir provides opportunities for fishing, bird watching and walking. Abbots Wood has areas which are readily accessible.	**Recreation, Green Infrastructure and ANGS** Where appropriate develop Green Infrastructure Strategies based on a county wide GI mapping. Plan for and manage recreational pressure on the countryside particularly the well used bridleways and byways which provide multi-use access. Identify green infrastructure needs and opportunities to address the future needs and growth in the populations of Polegate and Hailsham. Ensure that the comprehensive public rights of way network is well managed and sign posted. Discourage fast traffic and improvements to the network of rural lanes to maximise their value as recreational routes. Consider opportunities to create new green corridors and improve existing as safe ideally motorised traffic free recreational routes. Maximise recreational opportunities offered by Arlington Reservoir and Abbotts Wood.	**Provisioning** Protected farmland Accessible farmland and grazing pasture **Regulating** Habitat and species resilience to climate change Water quality and protected aquifers. Regulating water flow and preventing flooding Carbon sequestration **Cultural** Recreation Heritage assets and cultural heritage Inspirational Tranquility Biodiversity Recreation

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Eastern Low Weald

Opportunities for protection and enhancement	Landscape Management Guidelines	Benefits delivered by Ecosystem Services for each area of interest
Horse Keeping ('horsiculture') and small holdings Deterioration of the character and quality of the landscape and loss of local distinctiveness. Can detract form historic field pattern where fences replace hedges. Can cause soil erosion.	**Horse Keeping ('horsiculture') and small holdings** Enhance the condition of areas of horsiculture and small holdings through the restoration of an intact, well managed hedgerow network and retaining a diverse grass sward by preventing overgrazing. Encourage local food production and allotment provision in areas where this will not detract from local landscape character.	**Provisioning** Grazing **Regulating** Habitat and species resilience to climate change **Cultural** Recreation Heritage assets Sense of Place and local distinctiveness Biodiversity
Protect and Enhance the character and heritage of the villages and countryside Development pressures in this area are small scale and the risk is more of creeping urbanisation and gentrification than major development. Small scale incremental change is more likely to affect the local character and distinctiveness. Gradual loss and deterioration of Heritage features. Increasing traffic on rural lanes and rat running to avoid the congested A27	**Protect and Enhance the character and heritage of the villages and countryside** Encourage the production of Neighbourhood Plans which incorporate village design guidance. Plan for new development in the villages to ensure it is designed to a high standard to reflect local character and sense of place. Establish defined development edges to villages with new tree planting. Prepare village design guides and tree conservation plans. Encourage local improvements to gardens and amenity areas through neighbourhood planning, amenity associations and 'Britain in Bloom' type initiatives. Consider traffic calming measures and improvements to the A27.	**Provisioning** Local amenities and facilities. **Regulating** Use of sustainable materials Habitat and species resilience to climate change Water quality and protected aquifers. Regulating water flow and preventing flooding **Cultural** Sense of Place and local distinctiveness Heritage assets Recreation Biodiversity

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Eastern Low Weald

Opportunities for protection and enhancement	Landscape Management Guidelines	Benefits delivered by Ecosystem Services for each area of interest
Catchments, Flood management and SUDS schemes? Flooding in the Ouse Valley Flash floods and run off. Flooding of properties in low lying areas by river and ground water. Deterioration in water quality in the Ouse catchment due to pressure form agricultural intensification and diffuse pollution.	**Flood management and SUDS schemes?** Plan for flood management by reinforcing the riparian character by restoring natural river geomorphology and re-linking watercourses to their floodplains by extending areas such as wet meadow and woodland. Conserve and enhance existing man made and natural drainage features. Maximise opportunities for the creation of SUDs schemes which contribute to local amenity and habitat creation.	**Provisioning** Water conservation Water supply **Regulating** Flood control Protection of aquifers Water quality Soil conservation **Cultural** Sense of Place and local distinctiveness Amenity and recreation Biodiversity

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Eastern Low Weald

Glossary

(also refer to the full version in the County Landscape Assessment).

ANGS: Accessible Natural Green Space Natural England - Accessible Natural Greenspace Standard (ANGSt)

Assart: Field created from the clearance of woodland

Clunch Barn: constructed of a building material composed of hardened clay or chalk marl.

Ecosystem Services: The services provided by nature which support living systems and can be evaluated.

Enclosure: The separation of land from the common by fence or private use.

GI or Green Infrastructure: Multifunctional green areas which provide areas for recreation, wildlife, water supply catchment, flood relief, food or timber production.

Local Nature Reserve: Local Nature Reserve (or LNR) is a statutory designation made under Section 21 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949, and amended by Schedule 11 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006, by principal local authorities.

Ramsar sites are wetlands of international importance for biodiversity, designated under the Ramsar Convention.

SNCI or Local Site: a Site of Nature Conservation Importance.

SSSI: A national designation for Site of Special Scientific Interest, these may be of biodiversity or geological significance or both.

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The Levels

This is an open, expansive landscape of grazed wet meadows, criss-crossed by reed filled ditches. This windswept landscape of wide skies with few trees and hedges is framed at Pevensey and Eastbourne against the dramatic and distinctive backdrop of the South Downs and at Rye and Winchelsea the High Weald. It inspires some of the most intense feelings of remoteness in south east England.

Location

This landscape area is not continuous but occurs in three separate units: the Eastbourne and the Pevensey Levels, and the Rye –Winchelsea area. All three areas are low-lying and are bounded on the south side by the sea.

The Pevensey Levels are surrounded by Eastbourne, Polegate, Hailsham and Bexhill. The Rye-Winchelsea area includes the Pett and Rye Harbour Levels and the most western part of the East Guldeford Level east of Rye.

Pevensey Levels is the largest wetland tract in East Sussex. This area and Rye Harbour are of international importance for wildlife and have several designations in recognition of this.

The Eastbourne Levels are the smallest area and are surrounded by the built up area of the town.

Landform

The Levels are a dynamic landscape which is very young in geological terms. Their formation is dominated by the changing relationship between land and sea. The Levels are very low-lying with local landscape diversity added by 'eyes' – islands of high ground. Both the Eastbourne- Pevensey Levels and Pett and Rye Harbour areas were tidal inlets and in Roman times all land below 4m AOD was submerged at high tide. In the Middle Ages the eastward drift of coastal shingle cut them off from the sea and salt marsh developed. From then onwards human influence on the drainage regime was the dominant force in the creation of the landscape of the Levels.

Camber Sands lie west of Rye Harbour and are the only sand dune system in East Sussex. This relatively narrow band of dunes is slowly accreting and is formed predominantly from sand brought down by the River Rother, the mouth of which lies to the west.

Historical impact of man

The landscape character is also young in historical terms. At the time of the Norman invasion in 1066 at Pevensey, much of the area was still a tidal inlet which was used for salt production. During the Middle Ages land began to be reclaimed to take advantage of the relatively fertile soils. Thus began a continuing effort to exploit the marsh.

Numerous drainage ditches were dug, creating a checkerboard of irregular fields fringed with reeds. For centuries a pattern of summer grazing and winter flooding was maintained, the drainage ditches acting as green fences. This continued until the 1960s when pump drainage was carried out and arable farming became more feasible.

Aggregate extraction at Rye Harbour and Pett has created a series of lagoons which are of international importance as Rye Harbour Nature Reserve.

Woodland

The open windswept feel of The Levels is enhanced by the lack of trees and hedges. The few trees are mainly Willow and Hawthorn, these are often dramatically windsculpted.

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The Levels

Agriculture
The Levels are a large open landscape of predominantly pasture with some arable in drier areas. Cattle dominate to the west of Rye Harbour with sheep in the east.

Other habitats and features.
In addition to grazing marsh The Levels have a number of open waterways and reed filled waterways. Rye Harbour and Pett have lagoons and also substantial areas of vegetated shingle. The dune system at Camber is another special coastal habitat.

Settlement pattern and routeways
The pattern of scattered settlements and open roads reflects the history of land reclamation from wetland. Isolated farmsteads are on higher ground or “eyes” this can be seen in placenames with the suffix ’ey’ such as Manxey in Pevensey. Roads tend to be slightly raised above the surrounding land forming visual striations in the landscape.

Historic features
Military fortifications are scattered across the area. Pevensey and Camber castles were the sites of Roman military bases. Pevensey was expanded by the Normans, and Camber by Henry VIII. Martello Towers from the Napoleonic period are also evident.

Other details
Brick and flint buildings,weatherboarding and tiles are characteristic.

Remoteness
These flat low lying landscapes have very little tree cover, so the effects of disturbance are much more apparent. Fortunately much of the Levels are well away from sources of disturbance. This quiet simple landscape, with wide skies, the cries of wetland birds and the sighing of the wind in the reeds can provide some of the most intense feelings of remoteness in south east England.

Problems, pressure and change in the Levels

Agriculture: The change to pump drainage and arable agriculture has had a very detrimental effect on the natural ecology of the area. Modern agricultural buildings are particularly obvious in this open landscape.

Urban Influence Urban fringe problems: Urban edges are highly visible in this open landscape.

Development: Pressure for expansion of surrounding towns is a particular issue.

Recreation: Caravan sites, especially those at Camber Sands, are prominent in such open landscape. The coast in general is subject to intense visitor pressure with the dunes at Camber, a vulnerable habitat, receiving 20,000 visitors a day at the height of the season.

Water resources: Abstraction, pumped drainage as opposed to gravity drainage and pollution has had a marked effect on wetland and riparian habitats. There has been a large decrease in winter flooding resulting in habitat decline for wetland birds. It has also meant that the seasonal refertilisation with alluvium has not occurred so arable production is maintained by artificial fertilizers. Nitrogen run–off and spray drift from arable areas is increasing. Physical changes to watercourses, to increase discharge speed, mean that features such as meanders and shingle banks have been removed, thus further degrading riparian habitats.

Landscape Action Priorities for the Levels

The distinctive network of ditches should be maintained and enhanced. Channels should be less frequently and less intensively dredged. Water levels need to be maintained and pollution should be controlled.

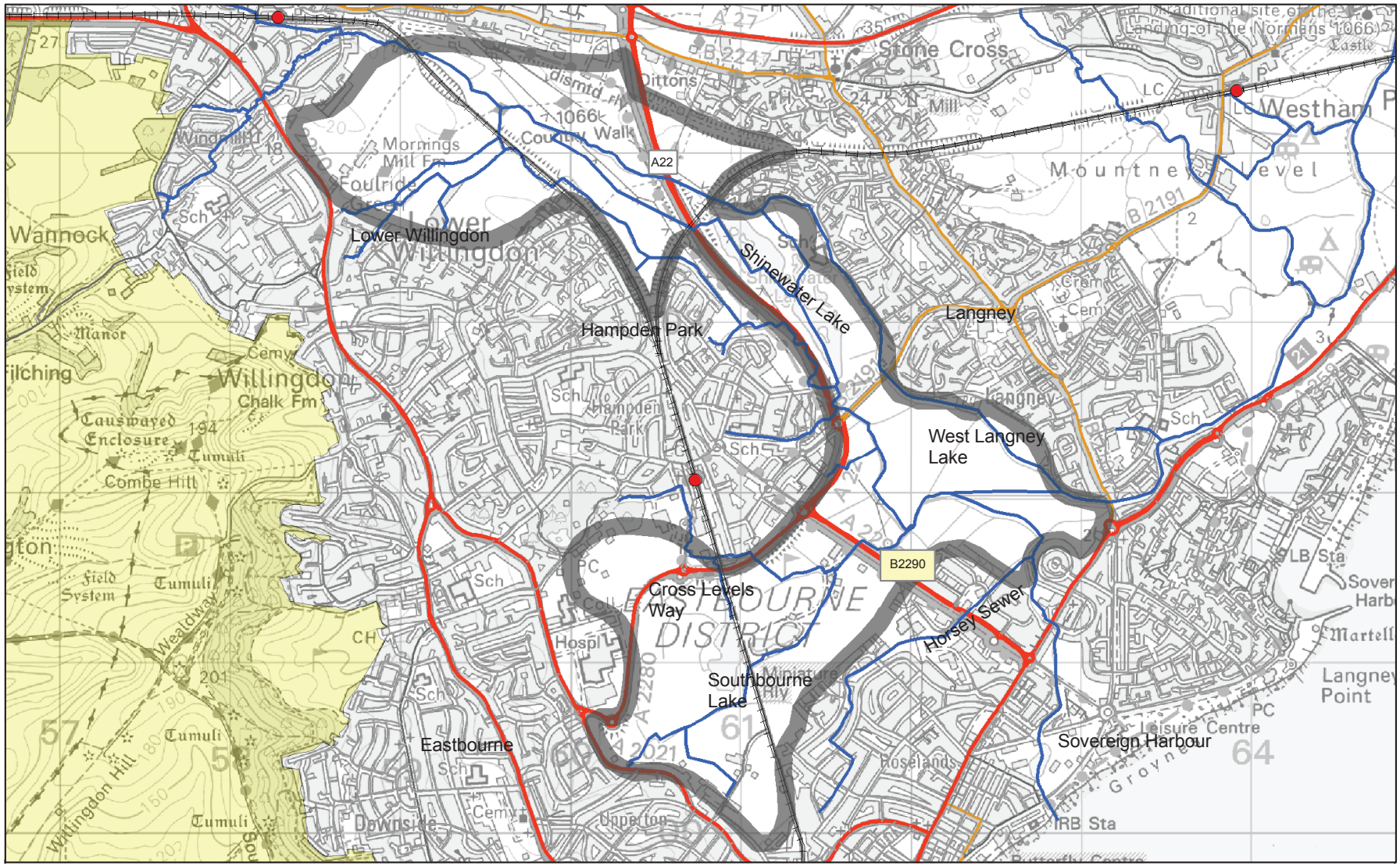
Encourage seasonal wetland flooding to create areas of damp pasture. Create new reedbeds on land with low nature conservation interest.

Tree planting around farm buildings, settlements and caravan sites would help minimise their effect on the open landscape.

Manage visitor pressure, diverting visitors away from vulnerable habitats.

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Eastbourne Levels



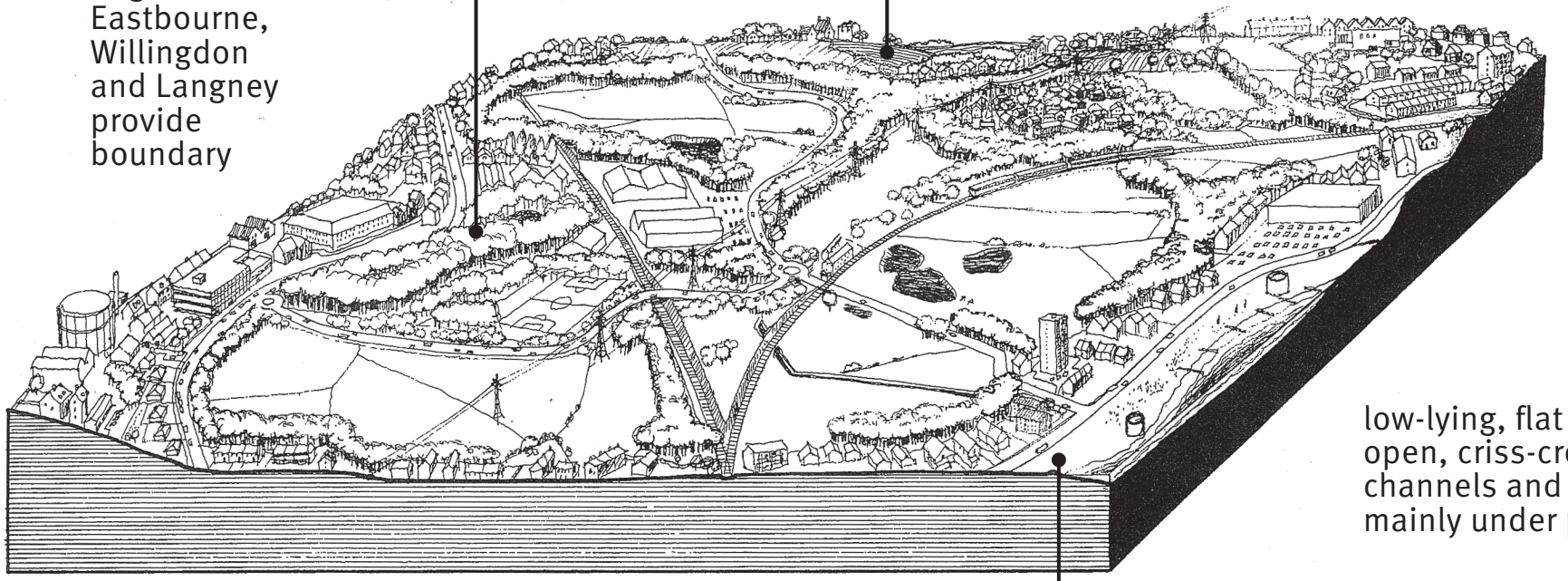
24 Eastbourne Levels Landscape Character Area

South Downs National Park

0 0.3 0.6 1.2 1.8 2.4 **Kilometers**

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Eastbourne Levels



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Eastbourne Levels

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A. Landscape Description
B. Landscape Evaluation
C. Vision and Strategy
D. Guidelines for Managing Change

A Landscape Description

Key Landscape Characteristics

- Small tract of flat open levels separated form the Pevensey Levels by the low Polegate - Stone Cross ridge.
- Some sense of tranquillity in the heart of the area with big skies and cries of wetland birds.
- Evidence of many centuries of human intervention to reclaim the lowland marsh as grazing land.
- An intricate pattern of manmade ditches as historic field enclosures and drainage systems.
- The hard urban edges of Willingdon, Langney, Sovereign Harbour and Eastbourne surround the area.
- The hard urban edges are softened in places by trees notably at Hampden Park.
- Eastbourne Park: A Green Infrastructure of multifunctional green spaces and lakes including Shinewater, Southbourne and West Langney created to provide flood compensation for the A22 New Route or Golden Jubilee Way and new schools and housing development in the town.
- Internationally significant archaeological discovery of an important Bronze Age settlement and causeway designated as a Scheduled Ancient Monument.
- Few trees and hedges but typically wind sculpted scattered willow and thorn scrub,
- The principle tree species are willows, field maple, alder, ash, poplar and oak.
- The main A22 new route crosses the area, as does the A2290 and mainline railway.

Table 1 Key positive Landscape Attributes

- Small tract of flat open levels separated form the Pevensey Levels by the low Polegate Stone Cross ridge.
- Some sense of tranquillity in the heart of the area with big skies and cries of wetland birds.
- Evidence of many centuries of human intervention to reclaim the lowland marsh as grazing land.
- An intricate pattern of manmade ditches as historic field enclosures and drainage systems.
- Eastbourne Park: A Green Infrastructure of multifunctional green spaces and lakes including Shinewater, Southbourne and West Langney created to provide flood compensation for the A22 New Route or Golden Jubilee Way and new schools and housing development in the town.
- Internationally significant archaeological discovery of an important Bronze Age settlement and causeway.

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Eastbourne Levels

B Landscape Evaluation

Table 2 Current Condition

- The areas of green infrastructure are managed as public open space.
- The rest of the levels are grazed and generally in good management.
- Typical urban edge problems encroach on the area with horseyculture, small holdings, intrusive ad hoc development and fly tipping.
- The hard urban edges are intrusive with most views terminating in views of factories and houses.
- Traffic on the main roads intrudes into the tranquillity.
- Two power lines cross the area and are dominating in the flat landscape.

Forces for Change impacting on positive Landscape Attributes

Past / Current forces for change

- Loss of vegetation along rivers and dykes due to maintenance regimes, agricultural intensification and engineering works.
- Creeping suburbanisation and cumulative changes in the landscape which are not in detract from local distinctiveness.
- Water quality in the channels and ditches.
- Changes in the types and frequency of grazing animals in the countryside impacts on character as they are a characteristic feature. Lack of grazing can give an unmanaged appearance to the landscape and reduce the biodiversity value.
- Farm Environment Plans including Entry Level Stewardship at Southbourne and West Langley and organic farming at Friday Street.
- Power lines crossing the open landscape.
- Creation of lakes and Green Infrastructure as flood alleviation for new development.

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Eastbourne Levels

Future Forces for Change

- The expanding development around the edges of the area.
- Future development of the area as multifunctional Green infrastructure to mitigate the expansion of Eastbourne. (refer to Eastbourne Park Draft Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), *EBC Nov 2011 and subsequent updates*.
- Continued agricultural change due to changing markets, economic pressures and response to climate change.
- Reduction in grazing reducing effective grassland management.
- The spread of small agricultural holdings, hobby farming, paddocks and allotments for local food production.
- Pressure for locating renewable energy facilities for solar, wind and bio energy.(Note: Eastbourne Park Draft SPD (Nov.2011) does not support wind turbines in this area)
- Pests and diseases of trees which could impact significantly on the mature tree stock. E.g. phytophora of alder and Ash dieback.
- Vital flood storage areas which mitigate the effects of flooding in the surrounding built up area.
- Extension of existing and creation of new lakes to increase flood capacity.

Table 3 Potential Impacts of Climate Change

- Potential changes in woodland / tree species composition and accelerated growth of species such as birch
- Increased prevalence of pests and diseases due to warmer weather e.g. Phytophera of Alder.
- Changes in precipitation and temperatures will change the types of crops that farmers grow.
- Potential impact on the viability of grazing sheep, dairy and beef.
- Increased temperatures and a decline in precipitation levels may dry out wetland habitats and ponds and alter stream flows.

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Eastbourne Levels

C Vision and Strategy

Table 4 Vision
(as an update of the County Landscape Assessment 2009)

A valued and well managed area of multifunctional Green Infrastructure which provides for recreation, flood relief and biodiversity. Areas which provide tranquillity and escape from the surrounding urban area. Conserved and enhanced reed beds, channels and ditches supporting rich flora and fauna.

As noted in the current Landscape Character Guidance –
A Landscape Strategy identifies *"what change if any is desirable for any landscape character area as a whole?"*

Landscape change and adaptation to meet the strategy requires:

1. Planning for the enhancement of the Biodiversity Opportunity Area of the Eastbourne Marshes.
2. Protect and manage existing habitats and plan for restoration of ditches and stream side vegetation to restore habitat linkages and continuity.
3. Provide enhanced access on a network of paths and cycleways
4. Maximise the recreational value of the area, outside the designated wildlife areas, thus conserving the natural assets and biodiversity.
5. Integrate proposed and existing development into the landscape through planting of tree features and woodland to define the urban boundaries with the countryside.
6. Consider appropriate species for new plantings to maintain landscape character and biodiversity but also adaptation to climate change influences.
7. Continue to plan for and create multifunctional green infrastructure whilst providing necessary flood relief.
8. Ensure that the design and layout of new developments respect the character and form of the landscape.
9. Control the spread of suburbanisation by minimising clutter of signage and other urban features.
10. Close to residential areas plan for and create facilities such as allotments, play areas, outdoor sports facilities and amenity spaces.
11. New flood storage measures designed to provide enhancement to the existing biodiversity ad avoiding impact on archaeological interests.
12. Creation of a local nature reserve.
13. Maximise the interpretation and protection of the significance archaeological interests.

D Guidelines for Managing Change

Development considerations for housing and other development

The pressures for development will be for further housing and business expansion in the surrounding urban areas of Eastbourne. Proposed development should consider opportunities for proactively meeting the Landscape Change Strategy aims for this landscape Character Area as set out in 1-13 above.

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Eastbourne Levels

Table 5

Current issues offering opportunities for protection and enhancement	Landscape Management Guidelines	Benefits delivered by Ecosystem Services for each area of interest
Countryside and Farmland Pressure for farm diversification and development of hobby farms, solar arrays, wind farms, waste recycling operations etc. Land falling out of positive management. Loss of traditional pasture and wetland meadows. Clearance of natural vegetation from drainage channels and ditches. Low water levels and poor water quality in some drains and streams. Flooding of farmland and properties affecting the viability of farms. Overstocking and arable production on some soils can result in soil erosion and reduce soil quality.	**Countryside and Farmland** Encourage farm conservation schemes to conserve the landscape structure of wetland, ditches and streams on the levels. Protect and manage historic drainage patterns and conserve boundary features. Positively manage the area as flood storage land and increase the capacity as necessary. Manage the lakes for their recreational and wildlife potential. This may require segregation of activities to ensure all functions are catered for. Enhance the biodiversity value of wet meadows, drainage and stream channels. Plan for and manage changes which may occur in the landscape due to changes in farm management brought about by economic influences and climate change. Address existing flooding issues of farmland and properties through flood management and by identifying areas which can provide flood alleviation and enhance existing. Reduce the risk and incidence of soil erosion by encouraging the restoration of arable land to pasture. Apply best land management practices to prevent soil and fertiliser run off, thereby protecting surface and ground water.	**Provisioning services** Water availability Food production **Regulating services** (water purification, air quality maintenance and climate regulation) Water quality and protected aquifers. Regulating water flow and preventing flooding Soil conservation and erosion control Habitat and species resilience to climate change Carbon sequestration. Areas of peat in the river valleys, hedges, trees, reed beds and grassland regulate air quality by absorbing and retaining CO_2. **Cultural Services** Sense of Place and local distinctiveness. Source of Inspiration Sense of History Tranquillity Biodiversity Recreation

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Eastbourne Levels

Current issues offering opportunities for protection and enhancement	Landscape Management Guidelines	Benefits delivered by Ecosystem Services for each area of interest
Countryside and Farmland continued	**Countryside and Farmland continued** Secure creation of a management forum for Eastbourne Park to bring together key landowners	
Trees and Woodland Woods and tree belts are not in positive management. Traditional management has stopped as it is not commercially viable e.g. pollarding of stream side willows. Tree diseases Invasive species competing with natives e.g. Spanish Bluebell, Himalayan balsam, Japanese knotweed.	**Trees and Woodland** Actively manage trees and woodland through coppicing, pollarding of willows and replanting to create a diverse age structure. Plant new small woods, wet woodland and tree belts to strengthen the landscape character and where this is appropriate habitat creation. Plant new woodland around the edges of the area to reduce intrusion of urban areas Encourage planting of trees along streams and ditches, where suitable to habitat. Consider the need to adapt to changes enforced by climate change, such as specific tree diseases and possible adaptation in species selection.	**Provisioning** Fuel (woodfuel for local communities from woodland management) **Regulating** Carbon sequestration, woodland absorbs and holds CO_2. Habitat and species resilience to climate change **Cultural** Tranquillity Sense of Place and local distinctiveness Cultural heritage (traditional woodland management) Bioidversity Recreation

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Eastbourne Levels

Current issues offering opportunities for protection and enhancement	Landscape Management Guidelines	Benefits delivered by Ecosystem Services for each area of interest
Grazing Marshes Deterioration and loss of habitats : Deterioration of water quality in streams, ditches and ponds Financial and viable farming constraints affecting the continued management of wet meadows reducing the biodiversity value. Improvements to Grassland and meadows reducing species richness. Loss of wetland meadows to arable farming.	**Other key Habitats** Encourage management of river and stream channels Conservation and re-creation of wet meadow/ pasture habitats. Farm stewardship schemes to maximise biodiversity. Opportunities to maximise reed bed creation. Encourage measures to improve water quality. Extend lakes and create new ones to maximise habitat potential.	**Provisioning** Nature's larder of free berries and herbs. Conservation of insect pollinators for pollination of crops. **Regulating** Habitat and species resilience to climate change **Cultural** Appreciation of nature Educational value Biodiversity

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Eastbourne Levels

Current issues offering opportunities for protection and enhancement	Landscape Management Guidelines	Benefits delivered by Ecosystem Services for each area of interest
Recreation, Green Infrastructure (GI) and ANGS (glossary) Pressure on sensitive wetland habitats Lack of funding to manage and enhance GI. Need for better recreational linkages and improved sustainable transport corridors. Need to complete the development of Eastbourne Park Consider opportunities to celebrate and interpret the Shinewater Bronze Age settlement.	**Recreation, Green Infrastructure and ANGS** Where appropriate develop Green Infrastructure Strategies based on a county wide GI mapping. Plan for and manage recreational pressure on the countryside which could be affected by the increase in population in surrounding built up area. Identify opportunities for non-motorised water activities. Consider opportunities to create new green corridors and improve existing as safe, motor traffic free recreational routes.	**Provisioning** Protected farmland. **Regulating** Habitat and species resilience to climate change Water quality and protected aquifers. Regulating water flow and preventing flooding Carbon sequestration **Cultural** Recreation Heritage assets and cultural heritage Inspirational Tranquility Biodiversity
Horse Keeping ('horsiculture') and small holdings Deterioration of the character and quality of the landscape and loss of local distinctiveness. Can detract from historic field pattern where fences replace hedges. Can cause soil erosion. Legitimate demand for more allotments and management of existing	**Horse Keeping ('horsiculture') and small holdings** Enhance the condition of areas of horsiculture though the restoration of an intact, well managed hedgerow network and retaining a diverse grass sward by preventing overgrazing. Provide well designed and managed allotments close to residential areas. Considered selection of sites for allotments and amenity facilities.	**Provisioning** Grazing **Regulating** Habitat and species resilience to climate change **Cultural** Recreation Heritage assets Sense of Place and local distinctiveness Biodiversity

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Eastbourne Levels

Current issues offering opportunities for protection and enhancement	Landscape Management Guidelines	Benefits delivered by Ecosystem Services for each area of interest
Flood management and SUDS schemes? Flash floods and run off.	**Flood management and SUDS schemes?** Plan for flood management by conserving and enhancing the flood plains and managing water levels in ditches and drains. Create new and extend existing lakes. Encourage the design of sensitive flood defence schemes which conserve and enhance the landscape and habitats Conserve and enhance existing man made and natural drainage features. Maximise opportunities for the creation of SUDs schemes which contribute to local amenity and habitat creation.	**Provisioning** Water conservation **Regulating** Flood control Protection of aquifers **Cultural** Sense of Place and local distinctiveness Amenity and recreation Biodiversity

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Eastbourne Levels

Glossary

(also refer to the full version in the County Landscape Assessment).

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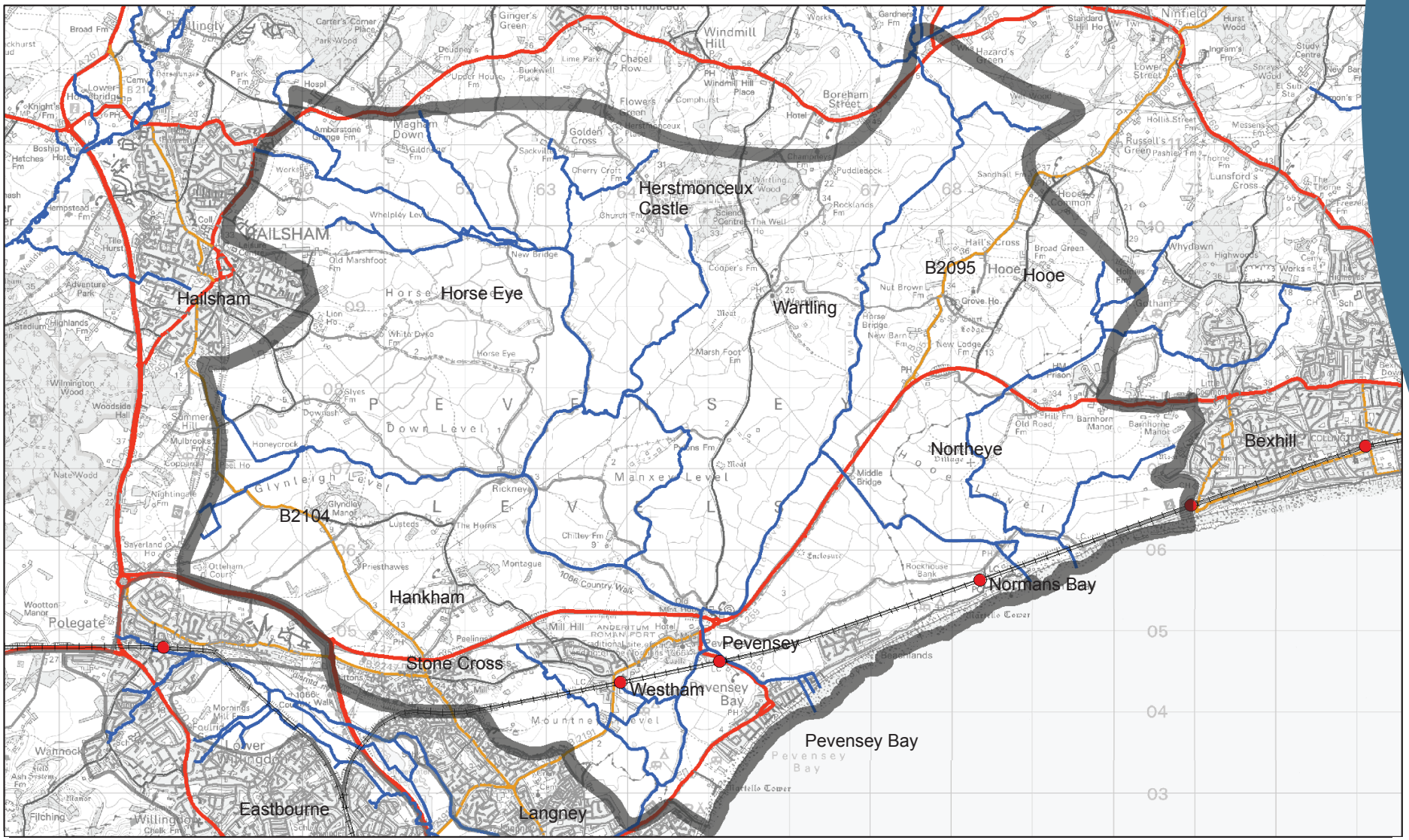
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Pevensey Levels

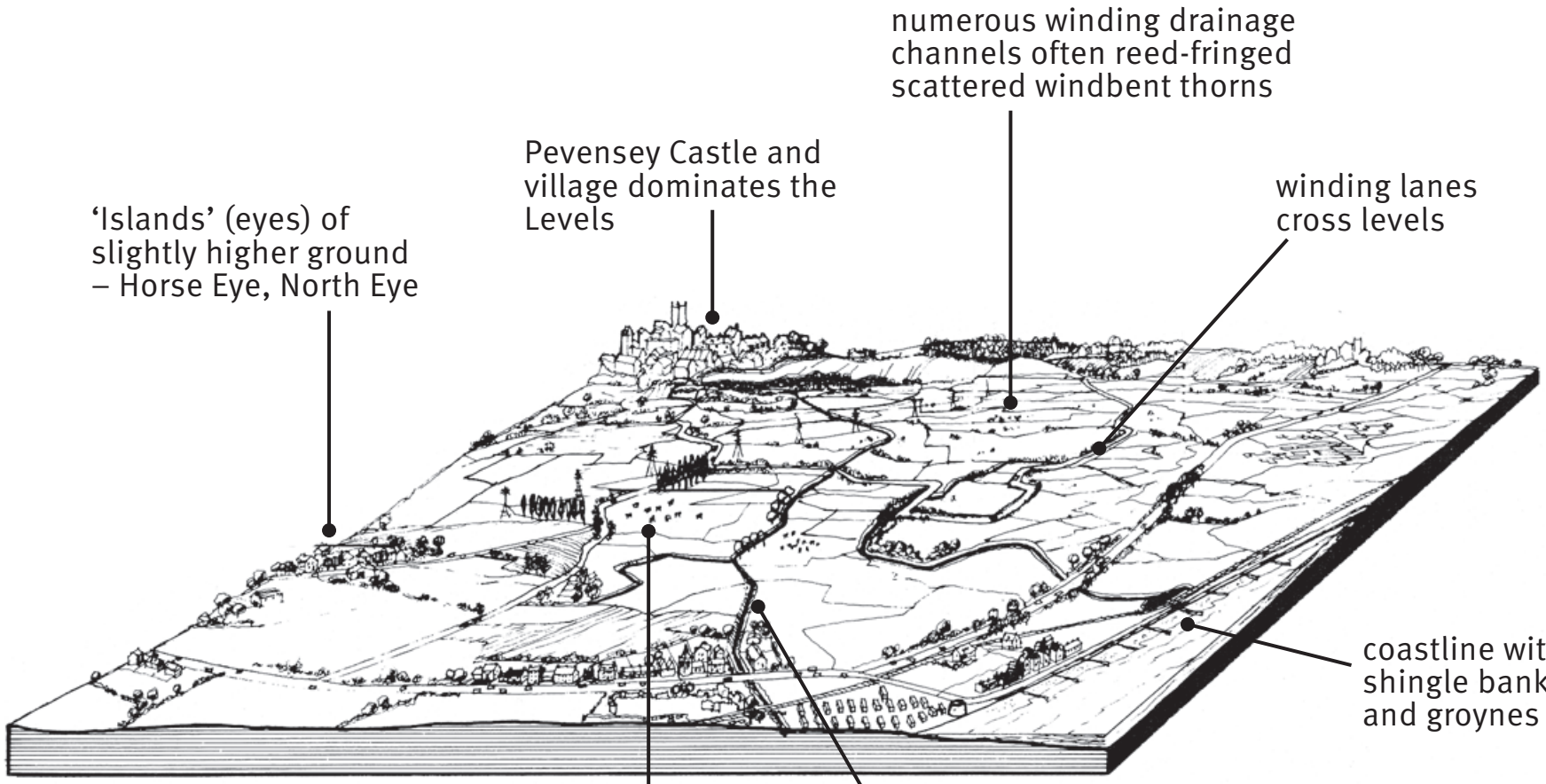
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25 Pevensey Levels Landscape Character Area

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Pevensey Levels



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Pevensey Levels

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A Landscape Description

Key Landscape Characteristics

- Extensive flat open grazing marsh as one of the largest continuous wet grazing systems (3500ha) in south east England.
- Unspoilt and distinctive rural character with no large urban intrusions.
- A sense of remoteness and tranquillity in the heart of the area with big skies and cries of wetland birds.
- Islands or 'eyes' of slightly higher ground e.g. Northeye and Horse Eye.
- Scattered farms and cottages generally associated with eyes or on the gentle spurs of higher ground which extend into the levels.
- Reed fringed winding river channels in open wetland pasture.
- Many of the main river channels have been straightened and are managed with engineered structures.
- Evidence of many centuries of human intervention to reclaim an area which was once salt marsh.
- An intricate pattern of manmade ditches as historic field enclosures and drainage systems.
- Few roads cross the area and windy lanes connect the scattered settlements.
- East to west byways connect the grazing marshes to the historic market town of Hailsham.
- Few trees and hedges but scattered willow and thorn scrub, typically wind sculpted nearer the coast.
- More tree cover on the higher ground which is important for containing development, typical species: ash, sycamore, beech and some large conifers.
- The importance of the area as a habitat is reflected in the designations of SSSI and Ramsar site across much of the area and 182ha are a National Nature Reserve.
- The historic settlement of Pevensey and the impressive medieval castle dominate the landscape to the south.
- Herstmonceux castle and church sit on a spur overlooking the north of the area.
- The Registered parkland and gardens at Herstmonceux Castle.
- Wartling village and church on a prominent spur overlooking the levels.
- An extensive shingle beach and coastline vulnerable to erosion and subject to intervention such as redistribution of the shingle and sea defence groynes.
- Some distinctive historic manor and farm houses e.g. Ottenham Court, Glyndley Manor, Hankham Hall, Preisthawes and Marshfoot.
- Seaside settlement of variable quality, but with distinctive character, which has developed from holiday homes and caravans along the coast from Pevensey to Normans Bay.

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Pevensey Levels

- War time artefacts and in particular pill boxes and tank traps are scattered across the area.
- The busy A259 trunk road crosses the southern part of the area separating the coastal marshes from the inland levels. Other B roads link the A259 with settlements to the north.
- The south coast railway runs across the southern part of the area.

Cultural Associations

Longleys organic farm was featured in the internationally renowned film The Moo Man.

The area was also renowned for smugglers as the remote coast and hinterland allowed them to come ashore unnoticed.

Pevensey and the surrounding area have featured in or been the inspiration for novels by Rudyard Kipling, Salman Rushdie, George Gissing, Peter Cheney and C.S. Lewis.

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Pevensey Levels

Table 1 Key positive Landscape Attributes

- Extensive flat open grazing marsh as one of the largest wet grazing systems (3500ha) in south east England.
- A sense of remoteness and tranquillity in the heart of the area with big skies and cries of wetland birds.
- Islands or 'eyes' of slightly higher ground e.g. Northeye and Horse Eye.
- Historic farms and cottages generally associated with eyes or on the gentle spurs of higher ground which extend into the levels.
- Reed fringed winding river channels in open wetland pasture.
- An intricate pattern of manmade ditches as historic field enclosures and drainage systems.
- Few roads cross the area and windy lanes connect the scattered settlements.
- East to west byways connect the grazing marshes to the historic market town of Hailsham.
- The historic settlement of Pevensey and the impressive medieval castle dominate the landscape to the south.
- Herstmonceux Castle and church sit on a spur overlooking the north of the area.
- The Registered parkland and gardens at Herstmonceux Castle
- Wartling village and church sit on a prominent spur overlooking the levels.
- An extensive shingle beach and coastline vulnerable to erosion and subject to intervention such as redistribution of the shingle and sea defence groynes.
- War time artefacts and in particular pill boxes and tank traps are scattered across the area with Napoleonic Martello towers on the coast.

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Pevensey Levels

B Landscape Evaluation

Table 2 Current Condition

This is largely unspoilt and pleasant rural landscape with few intrusive features and areas of relative remoteness. The Pevensey Levels area is generally a well managed pastoral landscape. The landscape is largely intact with many historic features which provide a sense of place and local distinctiveness. The nationally important wildlife designations over much of the area have improved the management of the levels and water bodies. The scattered hamlets and villages have a strong sense of place and there are few intrusive suburbanising elements to detract from this. The coastal areas have a scatter of typical holiday development but these areas are generally well managed and have a seaside character of their own.

The A259 is the busiest road in the area but does not detract from the more remote parts of the levels or the coast. The rural lanes serving the coast can be congested and busy at the height of summer. The coastal habitats on the shingle are in good condition where not disturbed by coastal defence works.

Forces for Change impacting on positive Landscape Attributes

Past / Current forces for change

- Expansion of the surrounding urban areas of Hailsham and Stone Cross.
- Creeping suburbanisation and cumulative changes in the rural landscape, roads and villages which are not in sympathy with local distinctiveness or vernacular architecture.
- The spread of plot land and holiday chalet development along the coast.
- Expansion of caravan and mobile home parks, especially on the coast.
- Water quality in the channels and ditches and Nitrite Vulnerable Zone in the west of the area.
- Loss of vegetation along rivers and dykes due to maintenance regimes, agricultural intensification and drainage works.
- Changes in the types and frequency of grazing animals in the countryside impacts on character as they are a characteristic feature. Lack of grazing can give an unmanaged appearance to the landscape and reduce the biodiversity value.
- Farm Environment Plans, much of the land is under Higher Level Stewardship Agreements and is farmed organically.
- A Nitrate Vulnerable Zone covers much of the area and a Catchment Sensitive Farming Initiative extends across the area.
- Intrusive modern farm buildings.

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Pevensey Levels

- Positive management of habitats and water quality and levels in ditches due to the internationally important wildlife interests.
- Increasing traffic on the A259 and rat running on rural lanes.
- Power lines crossing the open landscape.
- The continuing reinforcement of man made coastal defences to protect property along the coast.
- Invasive species of plants and animals in water courses, such as New Zealand Pigmy Weed (Crassula helmsii), Parrots Feather (Myryophyllum aquaticum), Mink and European Marsh Frog (Pelophylax ridibundus). All of these impact on the native flora and fauna which are characteristic of the area.

Future Forces for Change

- Expansion of Polegate, Stone Cross and Hailsham encroaching into the edges of the character area, urban edges are highly visible from the open landscapes.
- Increasing traffic on rural lanes and in villages impacting on tranquillity and on the rural character where passing vehicles cause erosion to banks and verges.
- Demands for traffic calming and road improvements which could introduce increasing urban clutter to rural roads, villages and lanes.
- Continued agricultural change due to changing markets, economic pressures and response to climate change.
- The spread of small agricultural holdings, hobby farming, paddocks and allotments for local food production.
- Pressure for locating renewable energy facilities for solar, wind and bio energy.
- Pests and diseases of trees which could impact significantly on the mature tree stock. E.g. phytophora of alder and Ash dieback.
- Improving water quality in the Waller's Haven catchment and in the Nitrate Vulnerable Zone which extends into the North West corner of the area.
- Rising sea levels increasing the demand to build defences to protect coastal properties.

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Table 3 Potential Impacts of Climate Change

- Potential changes in woodland / tree species composition and accelerated growth of species such as birch,
- Changes in ground flora which produce distinctive seasonal displays.
- Increased magnitude of storm events changing the character of the coastal areas.
- Increased prevalence of pests and diseases due to warmer weather e.g. Phytophera of Alder.
- Changes in precipitation and temperatures will change the types of crops that farmers grow.
- Potential impact on the viability of grazing sheep, dairy and beef.
- Increased temperatures and a decline in precipitation levels may dry out wetland habitats and ponds and alter stream flows.

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C Vision and Strategy

Table 4 Vision
(as an update of the County Landscape Assessment 2009)

A tranquil landscape of predominantly green meadow pasture. A sense of wildness and remoteness in the more isolated areas. An open landscape with wide uninterrupted views. The setting of local landscape features conserved and enhanced including historic buildings and their settings. Historic designed landscapes conserved. Conserved and enhanced reed beds, channels and ditches supporting rich flora and fauna.

As noted in the current Landscape Character Guidance – A Landscape Strategy identifies *"what change if any is desirable for any landscape character area as a whole?"*

Landscape change and adaptation to meet the strategy requires:

1. Planning for the enhancement of the Biodiversity Opportunity Area in the Pevensey Levels and improving habitat continuity.
2. Protect and manage existing habitats and plan for restoration of ditches and riverside vegetation to restore habitat linkages and continuity.
3. Plan for the creation of multifunctional green infrastructure (GI) on the eastern fringes of Hailsham and Stone Cross as a buffer to the open levels from the expanding built up areas.
4. Consider the potential to plan for recreational access in this character area identifying areas where public access can be encouraged whilst protecting other areas where wildlife conservation is the priority.
5. Ensure that the expansion of settlements of Hailsham, Polegate and Stone Cross does not encroach on the visual quality or character of the levels.
6. Integrate proposed and existing development into the landscape through planting of tree features and woodland to define the village boundaries with the countryside.
7. Ensure that the design and layout of new developments respect the character and form of the landscape and existing settlements.
8. Control the spread of suburbanisation by minimising clutter of signage and other urban features in lanes and villages.
9. Conserve the setting of historic buildings and landscape features.
10. Consider appropriate species for new plantings to maintain landscape character and biodiversity but also adaptation to climate change influences.

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D Guidelines for Managing Change

Development considerations for housing and other development

The main pressures for development in this character area will be the expansion of the surrounding settlements of Hailsham, Polegate and Stone Cross. There will be some demand to accommodate housing for the rural populations in the smaller rural settlements. The coastal areas are vulnerable to rising sea levels and coastal flooding leading to demands for intrusive coastal defence developments. The area is under pressure as a potential area for sustainable energy schemes such as wind farm and solar array developments. Any new development should respect the key positive attributes in the landscape outlined in Table 1 above. Proposed development should consider opportunities for proactively meeting the Landscape Change Strategy aims for this Landscape Character Area as set out in 1-10 above.

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Table 5

Current issues offering opportunities for protection and enhancement	Landscape Management Guidelines	Benefits delivered by Ecosystem Services for each area of interest
Countryside and Farmland Pressure for farm diversification and development of hobby farms, solar arrays, wind farms, waste recycling operations etc. Expansion of caravan sites on the coast and elsewhere. Land falling out of positive management and dereliction of farm buildings. Loss of traditional pasture and wetland meadows. Clearance of natural vegetation from drainage channels and ditches. Low water levels and poor water quality in some drains and streams. Deterioration of by ways and lanes due to erosion of un-surfaced routes by horses, bikes and 4 wheel drives. Damage to verges on narrow country lanes caused by increasing size of farm vehicles and passing traffic. Flooding of farmland and properties affecting the viability of farms. Overstocking and arable production on some soils can result in soil erosion and reduce soil quality.	**Countryside and Farmland** Encourage farm conservation schemes to conserve the landscape structure of wetland, ditches and streams on the levels. Conserve hedges, trees and small woods on the higher ground. Maintain the mixed farmed character of the area. Protect and manage historic field patterns and conserve boundary features. Maintain water levels in drains and ditches. Conserve and enhance byways and rural lanes. Use tree and woodland planting to screen intrusive farm buildings and caravan sites. Enhance the biodiversity value of wet meadows, drainage and stream channels. Extend organic and catchment sensitive farming initiatives. Plan for and manage changes which may occur in the landscape due to changes in farm management brought about by economic influences and climate change. Address existing flooding issues of farmland and properties through flood management and by identifying areas which can provide flood alleviation. Reduce the risk and incidence of soil erosion by encouraging the restoration of arable land to pasture.	**Provisioning services** Water availability Food production **Regulating services** (water purification, air quality maintenance and climate regulation) Water quality and protected aquifers. Regulating water flow and preventing flooding Soil conservation and erosion control Habitat and species resilience to climate change Carbon sequestration. Areas of peat in the river valleys, hedges, trees, reed beds and grassland regulate air quality by absorbing and retaining CO_2.

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Pevensey Levels

Current issues offering opportunities for protection and enhancement	Landscape Management Guidelines	Benefits delivered by Ecosystem Services for each area of interest
	Apply best land management practices to prevent soil and fertiliser run off, thereby protecting surface and ground water.	**Cultural Services** Sense of Place and local distinctiveness. Source of Inspiration Sense of History Tranquillity Biodiversity
Trees and Woodland Woods and tree belts are not in positive management. Traditional management has stopped as it is not commercially viable e.g. pollarding of stream side willows. Tree diseases A Trees and Woodland Grant Scheme covers Wartling Wood Invasive species competing with natives e.g. Spanish Bluebell, Himalayan balsam, Japanese knotweed.	**Woodland** Actively manage trees and woodland through coppicing, pollarding of willows and replanting to create a diverse age structure. Plant new small woods, wet woodland and tree belts to strengthen the landscape character and where this is appropriate habitat creation. Consider the need to adapt to changes enforced by climate change, such as specific tree diseases and possible adaptation in species selection. Plant trees and woodland to contain existing and new built development. Encourage planting of trees along streams and ditches where appropriate to habitat.	**Provisioning** Fuel (woodfuel for local communities from woodland management) **Regulating** Carbon sequestration, woodland absorbs and holds CO_2. Habitat and species resilience to climate change **Cultural** Tranquillity Sense of Place and local distinctiveness Cultural heritage (traditional woodland management) Biodioversity

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Pevensey Levels

Current issues offering opportunities for protection and enhancement	Landscape Management Guidelines	Benefits delivered by Ecosystem Services for each area of interest
Pevensey Levels Deterioration and loss of habitats Loss of river and streamside vegetation. Deterioration of water quality in streams, ditches and ponds Financial and viable farming constraints affecting the continued management of wet meadows reducing the biodiversity value. Improvements to Grassland and meadows reducing species richness. Loss of wetland meadows to arable farming. Invasive species of plants and animals which compete with native flora and fauna.	**Other key Habitats** Encourage management of river and stream channels, especially conservation of riverside trees and vegetation. Extend organic and catchment sensitive farming initiatives. Conservation and re-creation of wet meadow/ pasture habitats. Farm stewardship schemes to maximise biodiversity. Opportunities to maximise reed bed creation. Encourage measures to improve water quality. Continue to control the spread and prevent introduction of invasive species of animals and plants.	**Provisioning** Nature's larder of free berries and herbs. Conservation of insect pollinators for pollination of crops. **Regulating** Habitat and species resilience to climate change **Cultural** Appreciation of nature Educational value Biodioversity

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Pevensey Levels

Current issues offering opportunities for protection and enhancement	Landscape Management Guidelines	Benefits delivered by Ecosystem Services for each area of interest
Other Key Habitats Herstmonceux Parkland SSSI Coastal vegetated shingle. Loss and deterioration of species rich shingle habitats due to coastal erosion works and recreational pressure.	Encourage land management practices through the existing stewardship agreements to maximise biodiversity. Protect the remaining shingle habitats and seek opportunities to create new ones.	**Provisioning** Nature's larder of free berries and herbs. Conservation of insect pollinators for pollination of crops. **Regulating** Habitat and species resilience to climate change **Cultural** Appreciation of nature Educational value Biodioversity

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Pevensey Levels

Current issues offering opportunities for protection and enhancement	Landscape Management Guidelines	Benefits delivered by Ecosystem Services for each area of interest
Recreation, Green Infrastructure (GI) and ANGS (glossary) Pressure on bridleways and byways as multi use, including cycling and 4 wheel drives increasing erosion. Pressure on sensitive wetland habitats Lack of funding to manage and enhance GI. Need for better recreational linkages and improved sustainable transport corridors. Need for improved access to natural green space for all users both close to homes and in the wider countryside. Gentrification Loss of tranquillity due to more cars and access.	**Recreation, Green Infrastructure and ANGS** Where appropriate develop Green Infrastructure Strategies based on a county wide GI mapping. Plan for and manage recreational pressure on the countryside which could be affected by the increase in population in surrounding towns (Hailsham, Polegate and Stone Cross). Maximise opportunities for access away from sensitive habitats. Maximise opportunities provided by the coast for access and recreation. Consider opportunities to create new green corridors and improve existing as safe ideally motorised traffic free recreational routes.	**Provisioning** Protected farmland. **Regulating** Habitat and species resilience to climate change Water quality and protected aquifers. Regulating water flow and preventing flooding Carbon sequestration **Cultural** Recreation Heritage assets and cultural heritage Inspirational Tranquility Biodioversity
Horse Keeping ('horsiculture') and small holdings Deterioration of the character and quality of the landscape and loss of local distinctiveness. Can detract from historic field pattern where fences replace hedges. Can cause soil erosion.	**Horse Keeping ('horsiculture') and small holdings** Enhance the condition of areas of horsiculture and small holdings through the restoration of an intact, well managed hedgerow and ditch network and retaining a diverse grass sward by preventing overgrazing. Encourage local food production as part of multifunctional GI network.	**Provisioning** Grazing **Regulating** Habitat and species resilience to climate change **Cultural** Recreation Heritage assets Sense of Place and local distinctiveness

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Pevensey Levels

Current issues offering opportunities for protection and enhancement	Landscape Management Guidelines	Benefits delivered by Ecosystem Services for each area of interest
The character of the villages Gentrification Urbanisation Development pressures Gradual loss and deterioration of Heritage features. Fast traffic on rural lanes	Protect and Enhance the character of the villages Encourage the production of Neighbourhood plans which incorporate village design guides. Plan for new development in the villages to ensure it is designed to a high standard to reflect local character and sense of place. Establish defined development edges to villages with new tree planting. Prepare village design guides and tree conservation plans. Consider traffic management on rural lanes.	**Provisioning** Local amenities and facilities. **Regulating** Use of sustainable materials Habitat and species resilience to climate change Water quality and protected aquifers. Regulating water flow and preventing flooding **Cultural** Sense of Place and local distinctiveness Heritage assets
Flood management and SUDS schemes? Coastal flooding. Flash floods and run off. Flooding of properties in low lying areas by river and ground water.	Flood management and SUDS schemes? Plan for flood management by conserving and enhancing the flood plains and managing water levels in ditches and drains. Resist further development in areas at risk of coastal flooding. Encourage the design of sensitive flood defence schemes which conserve and enhance the landscape and habitats Conserve and enhance existing man made and natural drainage features. Maximise opportunities for the creation of SUDs schemes which contribute to local amenity and habitat creation.	**Provisioning** Water conservation **Regulating** Flood control Protection of aquifers **Cultural** Sense of Place and local distinctiveness Amenity and recreation Biodioversity

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Pevensey Levels

Glossary

(also refer to the full version in the County Landscape Assessment).

ANGS: Accessible Natural Green Space Natural England - Accessible Natural Greenspace Standard (ANGSt)

Assart: Field created from the clearance of woodland

Clunch Barn: constructed of a building material composed of hardened clay or chalk marl.
Ecosystem Services: The services provided by nature which support living systems and can be evaluated.

Enclosure: The separation of land from the common by fence or private use.

GI or Green Infrastructure: Multifunctional green areas which provide areas for recreation, wildlife, water supply catchment, flood relief, food or timber production.

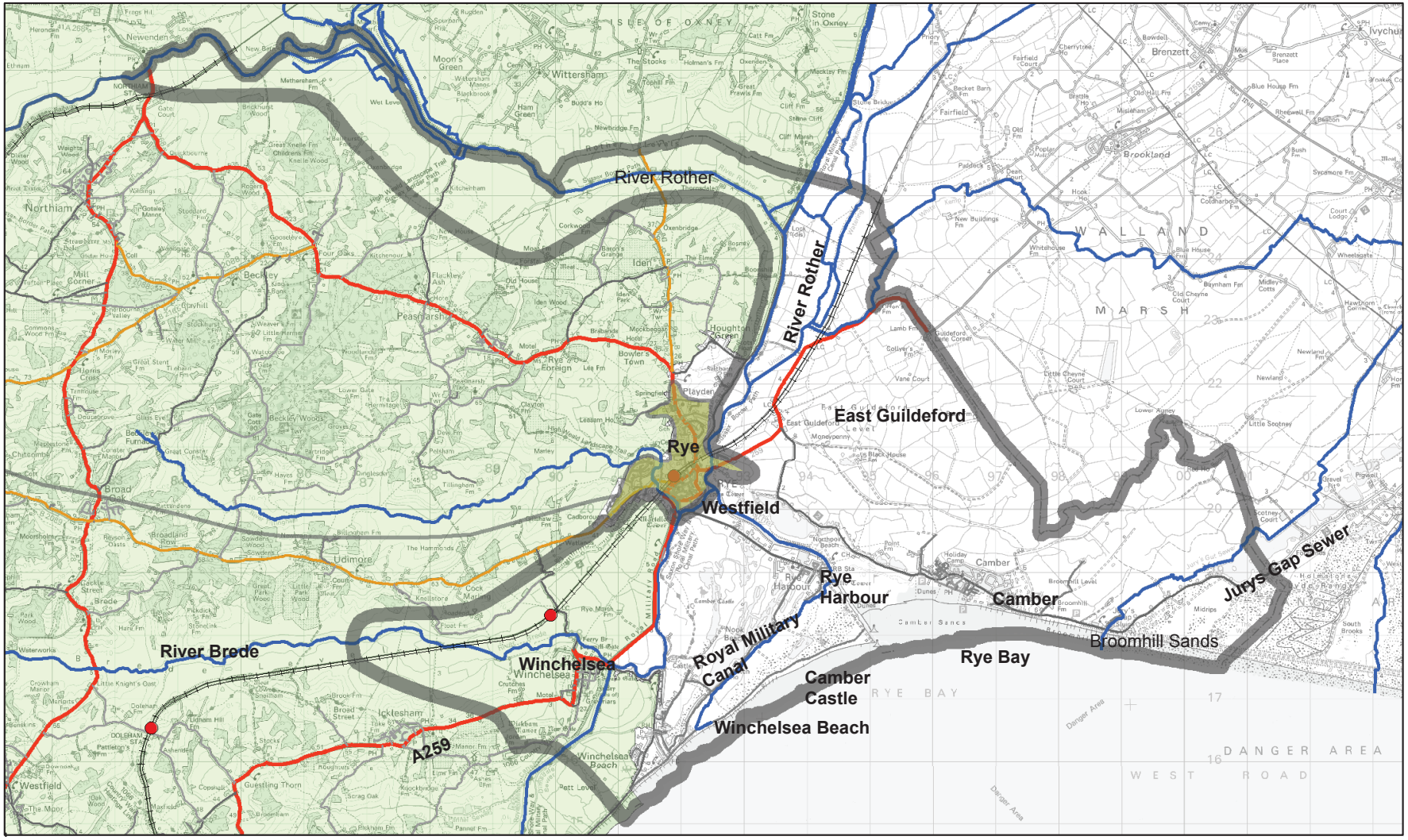
Local Nature Reserve: Local Nature Reserve (or LNR) is a statutory designation made under Section 21 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949, and amended by Schedule 11 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006, by principal local authorities.

Ramsar sites are wetlands of international importance for biodiversity designated under the Ramsar Convention.
SNCI or Local Site: a Site of Nature Conservation Importance.

SSSI: A national designation for Site of Special Scientific Interest, these may be of biodiversity or geological significance or both.

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Rye-Winchelsea Area



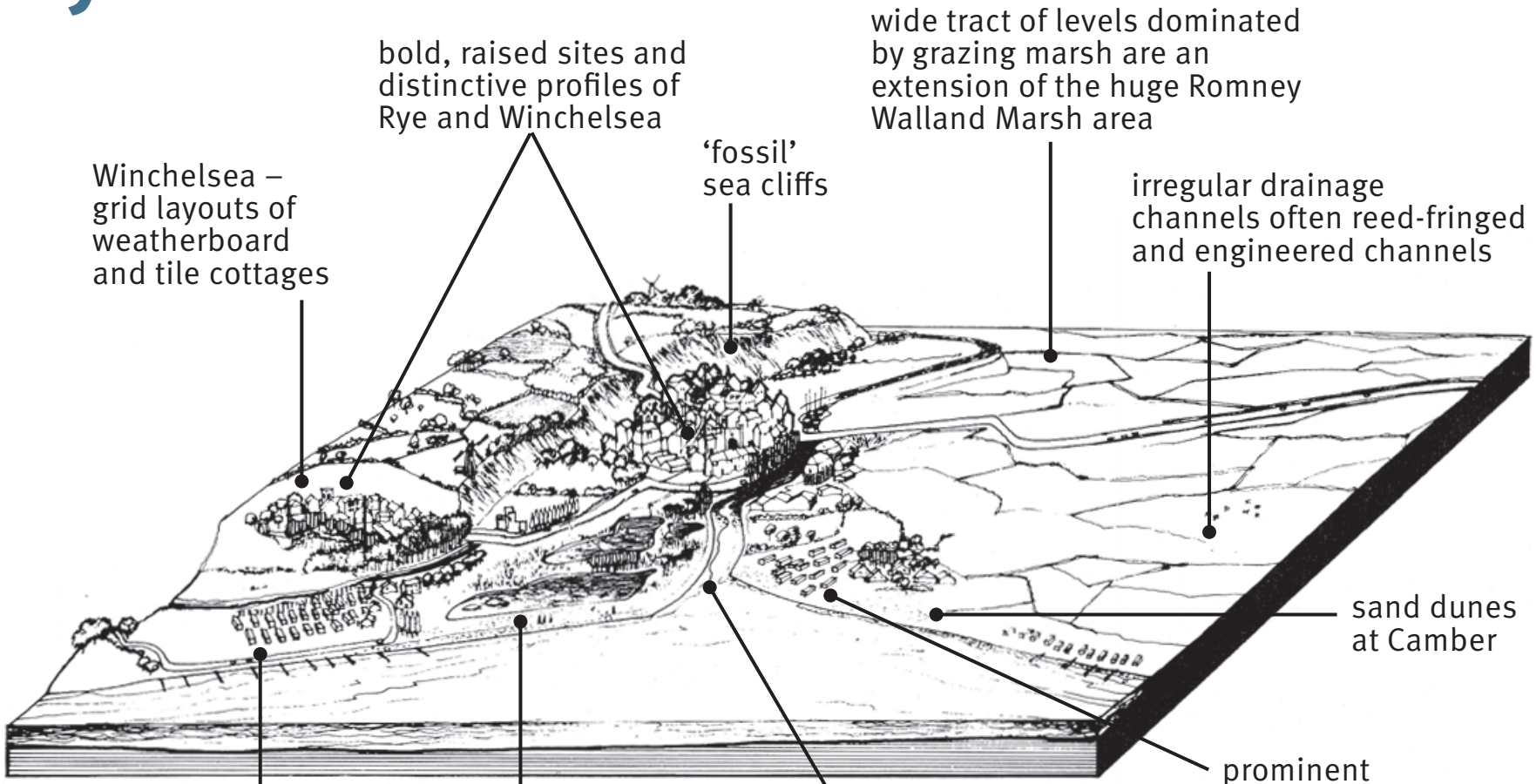
26 Rye Winchelsea Area Landscape Character Area

High Weald AONB

3 1.5 0 3 Kilometers

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Rye-Winchelsea Area



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Rye-Winchelsea Area

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A. Landscape Description
B. Landscape Evaluation
C. Vision and Strategy
D. Guidelines for Managing Change

A Landscape Description

Key Landscape Characteristics

- A wide tract of coastal levels, dominated by grazing marsh as the western area of the Romney marshes and overlooked by bold spurs, steep inland cliffs and 'islands' of higher ground.
- Valley and floodplain of the lower reaches of the River Rother.
- The Royal Military Canal crosses the area from Winchelsea Beach to its confluence with the Rother.
- The twin citadels of historic Rye and Winchelsea dominate the area from their raised sites.
- Open coastal and valley levels with straightened or engineered drainage channels.
- Shingle areas extending inland from Rye Harbour around to Camber with lakes resulting from gravel working.
- Rye Harbour Local Nature Reserve an area of lakes and reed beds formed from old gravel workings.
- An extensive area of Dunes and sandy beach at Camber, unique in East Sussex.
- Coastal flood banks, shingle beaches and groynes.
- Pasture and sheep a feature, notably the indigenous Romney Marsh breed.
- Extensive areas of arable farming
- Contrast between woods, farms and fields of higher ground and the flat, open levels with their sense of space and wide open skies.
- Tree cover concentrated on the higher slopes and the towns of Winchelsea and Rye. Where ash, beech, sycamore, horse chestnut lime and oak are typical species.
- A strong sense of remoteness in the areas further from built development.
- Views towards Dungeness power station and the wind farm at Little Cheney Court Farm.
- The Medieval gated village of Winchelsea with its' historic grid layout of weatherboard and tile cottages.
- Steep wooded bluffs formed from the characteristic raised beach and "sea cliffs" which have become isolated from the sea.
- The distinctive Camber Castle standing above the Levels in a remote setting.
- Martello towers.
- The A259 crosses the area adjacent to the south coast railway.
- There are off road sections of the National Cycle Network to the west of Rye and from Rye to Camber.

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Rye-Winchelsea Area

Cultural Associations

Camber Sands, with its wide bay and large dune system, has been used in a variety of creative media. The area has featured in many films and television programs. The area is mentioned in songs and pictured on album covers. It is a popular place for artists to live and has been used for art installations.

Winchelsea Town holds an annual street game ritual on Boxing Day.

Table 1 Key positive Landscape Attributes

- A wide tract of coastal levels, dominated by grazing marsh as the western area of the Romney marshes and overlooked by bold spurs, steep inland cliffs and 'islands' of higher ground.
- Valley and floodplain of the lower reaches of the River Rother.
- The Royal Military Canal crosses the area from Winchelsea Beach to its confluence with the Rother.
- The twin citadels of historic Rye and Winchelsea dominate the area from their raised sites.
- Shingle areas extending inland from Rye Harbour around to Camber with lakes resulting from gravel working.
- An extensive area of Dunes and sandy beach at Camber.
- Extensive pastures supporting sheep, notably the indigenous Romney Marsh breed.
- The open levels with their sense of space and wide open skies.
- A strong sense of remoteness in the areas further from built development.
- The Medieval gated village of Winchelsea with its' historic grid layout of weatherboard and tile cottages.
- Steep wooded bluffs formed from the characteristic raised beach and "sea cliffs" which have become isolated from the sea.
- The distinctive Camber Castle standing above the Levels
- Rye Harbour Nature Reserve, an extensive area of lakes and reed beds in old gravel workings
- Camber Castle in its remote setting and scattered Martello towers.

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Rye-Winchelsea Area

B Landscape Evaluation

Table 2 Current Condition

The landscape is generally well managed agricultural land with few intrusive features. The villages and hamlets remain largely unspoilt. The beaches and sea are some of the best in Sussex for clean sea and attractive surroundings. Important historic features are well preserved in Winchelsea town and surrounding areas.

Forces for Change impacting on positive Landscape Attributes

Past / Current forces for change

- Loss of vegetation along rivers and dykes due to maintenance regimes, agricultural intensification and engineering works.
- Creeping suburbanisation and cumulative changes in the rural landscape, roads and villages which are not in sympathy with local distinctiveness or vernacular architecture.
- The spread of plot land, caravan and holiday chalet development along the coast.
- Changes in the types and frequency of grazing animals in the countryside impacts on character as they are a characteristic feature. Lack of grazing can give an unmanaged appearance to the landscape and reduce the biodiversity value.
- Farm Environment Plans across the majority of the farmed levels, with organic farming at East Guildeford and Higher Level Stewardship in Rye Harbour Nature Reserve.
- The East Rother and Walland Marsh Catchment Sensitive Farming Delivery Initiative across much of the area and Nitrate Vulnerable Zone to the west of Rye to protect water resources.
- Dungeness, Romney Marsh and Rye Bay SSSI , now designated as a RAMSAR site and Special Protection Area for birds which incorporates:
  - Rye Harbour Nature Reserve.
  - Camber sand dunes.
  - Walland Marsh, the open flat levels to the east of Rye.
  - The Rye marshes north of Rye.

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Rye-Winchelsea Area

- Positive management of habitats at Rye Harbour Nature Reserve due to the internationally important wildlife interests.
- Increasing traffic on the A259 and rat running on rural lanes.
- Power lines crossing the open landscape.
- The continuing reinforcement of man made coastal defences to protect property along the coast.
- The popularity of Camber Sands brings huge influxes of people and cars on hot weekends causing significant local traffic problems.
- Pressure on the sand dunes as a landscape and habitat due to large numbers of visitors and natural drifting.
- Unsightly coastal development, static caravan parks and clutter at Camber and Winchelsea Beach
- Industrial development at Rye Harbour detracting from views from Rye and the setting of the town
- Loss of pasture to arable farming creating expanses of featureless landscape.
- Canalisation of drainage channels and hard engineered features along the River Rother.
- Major electricity transmission lines.

Future Forces for Change

- The need for some expansion to provide local housing in the town of Rye and village of Camber.
- Future industrial expansion along Rye Harbour Road.
- Pressure for the expansion of holiday developments in coastal areas.
- Increasing traffic on rural lanes and in villages impacting on tranquillity and on the rural character.
- Demands for traffic calming and road improvements which could introduce increasing urban clutter to rural roads, villages and lanes.
- Continued agricultural change due to changing markets, economic pressures and response to climate change.
- The spread of small agricultural holdings, hobby farming, paddocks farm shops and allotments for local food production.
- Pressure for locating renewable energy facilities for solar, wind and bio energy.
- Pests and diseases of trees which could impact significantly on the mature tree stock. E.g. phytophora of alder and Ash dieback.
- Rising sea levels increasing the demand to build defences to protect coastal properties.
- Water quality in the Rother catchment, the Royal Military Canal and in Nitrate Vulnerable Zone to the west of the area.

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Rye-Winchelsea Area

Table 3 Potential Impacts of Climate Change

- Potential changes in woodland / tree species composition and accelerated growth of species such as birch,
- Changes in ground flora which produce distinctive seasonal displays and other native vegetation.
- Increased magnitude of storm events changing the character of the coastal areas.
- Increased prevalence of pests and diseases due to warmer weather e.g. Phytophera of Alder.
- Changes in precipitation and temperatures will change the types of crops that farmers grow.
- Potential impact on the viability of grazing sheep, dairy and beef.
- Increased temperatures and a decline in precipitation levels may dry out wetland habitats and ponds and alter stream flows.
- Changes in water levels in Rye Harbour Local Nature Reserves lakes and reed beds.

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Rye-Winchelsea Area

C Vision and Strategy

Table 4 Vision

A tranquil landscape of predominantly green meadow pasture. A sense of wildness and remoteness in the more isolated areas. An open landscape with wide uninterrupted views. The setting of local landscape features conserved and enhanced including historic buildings and their settings. Historic designed landscapes conserved. Conserved and enhanced reed beds, channels and ditches supporting rich flora and fauna.

As noted in the current Landscape Character Guidance – A Landscape Strategy identifies *"what change if any is desirable for any landscape character area as a whole?"*

Landscape change and adaptation to meet the strategy requires:

1. Planning for the enhancement of the Romney Marsh Area Biodiversity Opportunity Area improving habitat continuity.
2. Continued conservation and enhancement of Rye Harbour Nature Reserve and Camber dunes.
3. Protect and manage existing habitats and plan for restoration of ditches and riverside vegetation to restore habitat linkages and continuity.
4. Plan for the creation of multifunctional green infrastructure to maximise the opportunities for biodiversity and recreation offered by the river corridor, the levels and the coast.
5. Consider the potential to plan for recreational access in this character area identifying areas where public access can be encouraged whilst protecting other areas where wildlife conservation is the priority.
6. Maximise opportunities for water based activities where this does not conflict with wild life interests, for example sailing on the disused gravel pits and kite surfing, which is already established at Camber.
7. Ensure that the expansion of settlement of Rye and Rye Harbour does not encroach on the visual quality or character of the levels.
8. Integrate proposed and existing development into the landscape through planting of tree features and woodland to define the village boundaries with the countryside.
9. Ensure that the design and layout of new developments respect the character and form of the landscape and existing settlements.
10. Control the spread of suburbanisation by minimising clutter of signage and other urban features in lanes and villages.
11. Conserve the setting of historic buildings and landscape features.
12. Consider appropriate species for new plantings to maintain landscape character and biodiversity but also adaptation to climate change influences.

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Rye-Winchelsea Area

D Guidelines for Managing Change

Development considerations for housing and other development

Proposals need to have regard for the current High Weald Management Plan:
http://www.highweald.org/downloads/publications/high-weald-aonb-management-plan-documents/1141-high-weald-management-plan-3rd-edition-2014-2019.html

The main pressures for development in this character area will be the expansion of Rye and Rye Harbour.

There may be some demand to accommodate housing for the rural populations in the rural settlements of Winchelsea Beach and Camber. Tourism and seaside holidays are an important source of income to this area and there is constant demand for accommodation in hotels, bed and breakfast, caravan and camp sites. There will be demand for new facilities and to improve or expand existing. The coastal areas are vulnerable to rising sea levels and coastal flooding leading to demands for intrusive coastal defence developments. The area is under pressure as a potential area for sustainable energy schemes such as wind farm and solar array developments. Any new development should respect the key positive attributes in the landscape outlined in Table 1 above.

Proposed development should consider opportunities for proactively meeting the Landscape Change Strategy aims for this Landscape Character Area as set out in 1-12 above.

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Rye-Winchelsea Area

Table 5

Current issues offering opportunities for protection and enhancement	Landscape Management Guidelines	Benefits delivered by Ecosystem Services for each area of interest
Countryside and Farmland Pressure for farm diversification and development of hobby farms, solar arrays, wind farms, waste recycling operations etc. The majority of the farmed landscape is in stewardship or other agri-environment schemes. Expansion of caravan sites and other holiday related development on the coast and elsewhere. Land falling out of positive management and dereliction of farm buildings. Loss of traditional pasture and wetland meadows. Clearance of natural vegetation from drainage channels and ditches. Low water levels and poor water quality in some drains and streams. Deterioration of by ways and lanes due to erosion of un-surfaced routes by horses, bikes and 4 wheel drives.	**Countryside and Farmland** Encourage establishment of more farm conservation schemes to conserve the landscape structure of wetland, ditches and streams on the levels. Conserve hedges, trees and small woods on the higher ground. Maintain the mixed farmed character of the area. Protect and manage historic field patterns and conserve boundary features. Maintain water levels in drains and ditches. Conserve and enhance byways and rural lanes. Use tree and woodland planting to screen intrusive farm buildings and caravan sites. Enhance the biodiversity value of wet meadows, drainage and stream channels. Plan for and manage changes which may occur in the landscape due to changes in farm management brought about by economic influences and climate change. Address existing flooding issues of farmland and properties through flood management and by identifying areas which can provide flood alleviation. Reduce the risk and incidence of soil erosion by encouraging the restoration of arable land to pasture.	**Provisioning services** Water availability Food production **Regulating services** (water purification, air quality maintenance and climate regulation) Water quality and protected aquifers. Regulating water flow and preventing flooding Soil conservation and erosion control Habitat and species resilience to climate change Carbon sequestration. Areas of peat in the river valleys, hedges, trees, reed beds and grassland regulate air quality by absorbing and retaining CO_2. **Cultural Services** Sense of Place and local distinctiveness. Source of Inspiration Sense of History Tranquillity Biodiversity

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Rye-Winchelsea Area

Current issues offering opportunities for protection and enhancement	Landscape Management Guidelines	Benefits delivered by Ecosystem Services for each area of interest
Damage to verges on narrow country lanes caused by increasing size of farm vehicles and passing traffic. Flooding of farmland and properties affecting the viability of farms. Overstocking and arable production on some soils can result in soil erosion and reduce soil quality.	Apply best land management practices to prevent soil and fertiliser run off, thereby protecting surface and ground water.	
Trees and Woodland Woods and tree belts are not in positive management. Traditional management has stopped as it is not commercially viable e.g. pollarding of stream side willows. Tree diseases Invasive species competing with natives e.g. Spanish Bluebell, Himalayan balsam, Japanese knotweed. Some woodlands around Winchelsea benefit from woodland grant schemes	**Woodland** Actively manage trees and woodland through coppicing, pollarding of willows and replanting to create a diverse age structure. Plant new small woods, wet woodland and tree belts to strengthen the landscape character and where this is appropriate habitat creation. Consider the need to adapt to changes enforced by climate change, such as specific tree diseases and possible adaptation in species selection. Plant trees and woodland to contain existing and new built development. Encourage planting of trees along streams and ditches where appropriate to habitat.	**Provisioning** Fuel (woodfuel for local communities from woodland management) **Regulating** Carbon sequestration, woodland absorbs and holds CO_2. Habitat and species resilience to climate change **Cultural** Tranquillity Sense of Place and local distinctiveness Cultural heritage (traditional woodland management) Biodiversity

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Rye-Winchelsea Area

Current issues offering opportunities for protection and enhancement	Landscape Management Guidelines	Benefits delivered by Ecosystem Services for each area of interest
Dungeness, Romney Marsh and Rye Bay SSSI Key Habitats Deterioration and loss of habitats : **Water** Loss of river and streamside vegetation. Deterioration of water quality in streams, ditches and ponds. Nitrate Vulnerable Zone to the west of Rye Invasive species of plants and animals which compete with native species of flora and fauna. **Wet Meadows** Financial and viable farming constraints affecting the continued management of wet meadows reducing the biodiversity value. Improvements to Grassland and meadows reducing species richness. Loss of wetland meadows to arable farming. **Vegetated Shingle** Loss of species rich shingle habitats due to coastal erosion works and recreational pressure. **Sand Dunes** Erosion of dune habitat by recreational users and natural forces. Invasive Sea Buckthorn	**Dungeness, Romney Marsh and Rye Bay SSSI Key Habitats** Encourage management of river and stream channels, especially conservation of riverside trees and vegetation. Conservation and re-creation of wet meadow/ pasture habitats. Farm stewardship schemes to maximise biodiversity. Opportunities to maximise reed bed creation. Encourage measures to improve water quality. Continue schemes to encourage farmers to minimise the use of chemicals and fertilizers. Agri-Environment schemes to encourage retention of grazing Protect the remaining shingle habitats and seek opportunities to create new ones. Continue positive management to control access, stabilise dunes and remove sea buckthorn	**Provisioning** Nature's larder of free berries and herbs. Conservation of insect pollinators for pollination of crops. **Regulating** Habitat and species resilience to climate change **Cultural** Appreciation of nature Educational value Biodiversity

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Rye-Winchelsea Area

Current issues offering opportunities for protection and enhancement	Landscape Management Guidelines	Benefits delivered by Ecosystem Services for each area of interest
Recreation, Green Infrastructure (GI) and ANGS (glossary) Pressure on bridleways and byways as multi use, including cycling and 4 wheel drives increasing erosion. Lack of Maintenance to the off-road sections of the National Cycle Network. Pressure on sensitive wetland habitats Lack of funding to manage and enhance GI for improved access. Need for better recreational linkages and improved sustainable transport corridors. Need multifunctional GI including areas of ANGS. Gentrification Loss of tranquillity due to more cars and access.	**Recreation, Green Infrastructure and ANGS** Where appropriate develop Green Infrastructure Strategies based on a county wide GI mapping. Plan for and manage recreational pressure on the countryside which could be affected by the increase in population in surrounding towns of Rye and Hastings as well as the seasonal holiday makers. Maximise opportunities for access away from sensitive habitats. Maximise opportunities provided by the coast for access and recreation. Consider opportunities to create new green corridors and improve existing as safe ideally motorised traffic free recreational routes. Maximise opportunities for and manage water based recreational activities.	**Provisioning** Protected farmland **Regulating** Habitat and species resilience to climate change Water quality and protected aquifers. Regulating water flow and preventing flooding Carbon sequestration **Cultural** Recreation Heritage assets and cultural heritage Inspirational Tranquility Biodiversity

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Rye-Winchelsea Area

Current issues offering opportunities for protection and enhancement	Landscape Management Guidelines	Benefits delivered by Ecosystem Services for each area of interest
Horse Keeping ('horsiculture') and small holdings Deterioration of the character and quality of the landscape and loss of local distinctiveness. Can detract from historic field pattern where fences replace hedges. Can cause soil erosion.	**Horse Keeping ('horsiculture') and small holdings** Enhance the condition of areas of horsiculture and small holdings through the restoration of an intact, well managed hedgerow or ditch network and retaining a diverse grass sward by preventing overgrazing. Encourage local food production and allotment provision in areas where this will not detract from local landscape character.	**Provisioning** Grazing Food production **Regulating** Habitat and species resilience to climate change **Cultural** Recreation Heritage assets Sense of Place and local distinctiveness Biodiversity
The character of the villages Gentrification Urbanisation Development pressures Gradual loss and deterioration of Heritage features. Fast traffic on rural lanes. Visitor pressure and cars detracting from local character and distinctiveness in Camber and Winchelsea.	**Protect and Enhance the character of the villages** Encourage the production of Neighbourhood plans which incorporate village design guides. Plan for new development in the villages to ensure it is designed to a high standard to reflect local character and sense of place. Establish defined development edges to villages with new tree planting. Prepare village design guides and tree conservation plans. Consider traffic management on rural lanes. Manage visitor pressure and parking in Camber and other seaside locations so that it does not detract from local character.	**Provisioning** Local amenities and facilities. **Regulating** Use of sustainable materials Habitat and species resilience to climate change Water quality and protected aquifers. Regulating water flow and preventing flooding **Cultural** Sense of Place and local distinctiveness Heritage assets Biodiversity

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Rye-Winchelsea Area

Current issues offering opportunities for protection and enhancement	Landscape Management Guidelines	Benefits delivered by Ecosystem Services for each area of interest
Flood management and SUDS schemes? Coastal flooding. Flash floods and run off. Flooding of properties in low lying areas by river and ground water.	**Flood management and SUDS schemes?** Plan for flood management by conserving and enhancing the flood plains and managing water levels in ditches and drains. Resist further development in areas at risk of coastal flooding. Encourage the design of sensitive flood defence schemes which conserve and enhance the landscape and habitats Conserve and enhance existing man made and natural drainage features. Maximise opportunities for the creation of SUDs schemes which contribute to local amenity and habitat creation.	**Provisioning** Water conservation **Regulating** Flood control Protection of aquifers **Cultural** Heritage assets Sense of Place and local distinctiveness Tranquillity Amenity and recreation Biodiversity

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Rye-Winchelsea Area

Glossary

(also refer to the full version in the County Landscape Assessment).

ANGS: Accessible Natural Green Space Natural England - Accessible Natural Greenspace Standard (ANGSt)

Assart: Field created from the clearance of woodland

Clunch Barn: constructed of a building material composed of hardened clay or chalk marl.

Ecosystem Services: The services provided by nature which support living systems and can be evaluated.

Enclosure: The separation of land from the common by fence or private use.

GI or Green Infrastructure: Multifunctional green areas which provide areas for recreation, wildlife, water supply catchment, flood relief, food or timber production.

Local Nature Reserve: Local Nature Reserve (or LNR) is a statutory designation made under Section 21 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949, and amended by Schedule 11 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006, by principal local authorities.

Ramsar sites are wetlands of international importance for biodiversity, designated under the Ramsar Convention.

SNCI or Local Site: a Site of Nature Conservation Importance.

SSSI: A national designation for Site of Special Scientific Interest, these may be of biodiversity or geological significance or both.

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Saltdean - Peacehaven

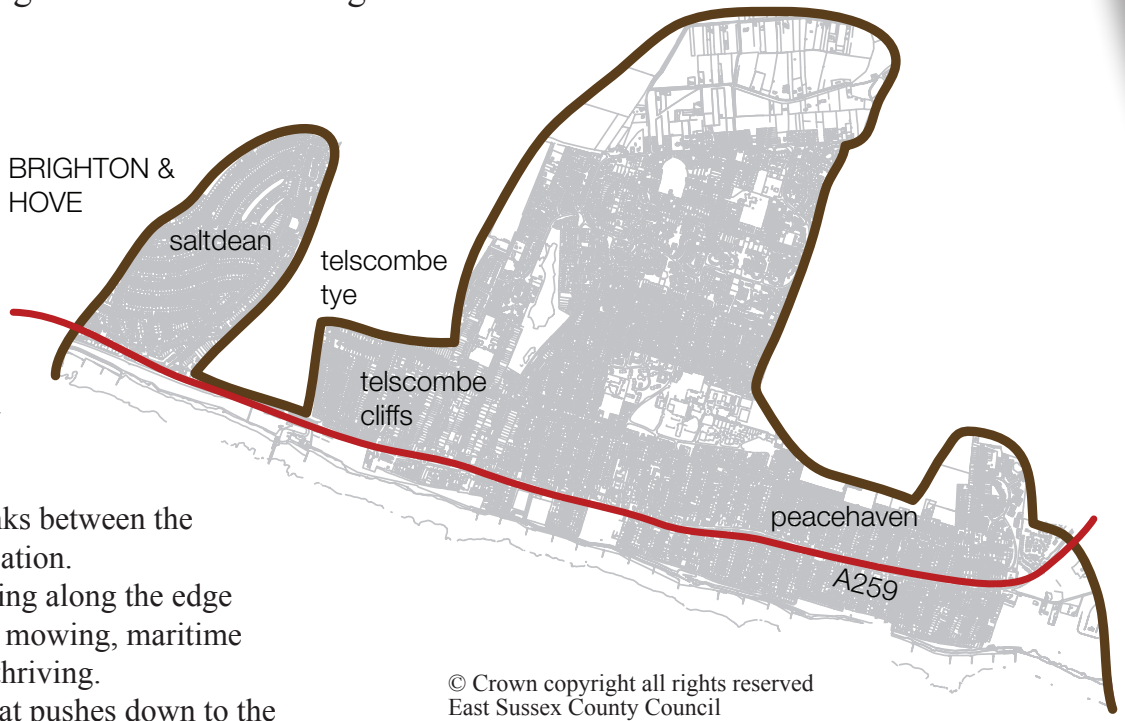


Both Telscombe Cliffs and Peacehaven were pioneer settlements in the early twentieth century. Peacehaven was built in the 1920s by an entrepreneur named Charles William Neville, who tailored its home designs to suit the means of the people who bought the plots.

A settlement has existed at Telscombe village since Roman times, but late in the 19th century the land along the coast, was gradually developed and called Telscombe Cliffs. In the first decade of the early 1900s a number of houses were built, but it was to be the development at Peacehaven that brought life to the new village of Telscombe Cliffs.

Characteristics

- The gently undulating cliff-top setting for this town and village, together with the scarcity of large trees give an open, exposed character to the area.
- These planned settlements retain their loose knit, low density urban form today.
- Peacehaven is mainly bungalows, semi-detached and terraced houses.
- There still exists a pioneer feel to the area.
- Green spaces, such as the Dell give important links between the town and the coast, and places for informal recreation.
- There is a fine cliff top walk, and where the fencing along the edge of the cliff protects the grass from trampling and mowing, maritime flowers such as thrift, sea campion, sea kale are thriving.
- Telscombe Tye is a wedge of Chalk downland that pushes down to the cliff edge, giving the townspeople a valuable recreational resource.



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Saltdean - Peacehaven

Special features

- Peacehaven straddles the zero degree longitude, or Meridian, line and a monument on the promenade marks the spot where the line leaves England.
- The structure was built in 1936 to commemorate the reign of King George V and is one of only two in the country.
- To the north, plotlands still exists, where the pioneer settlers bought their 100 ft deep plots. It has a unique character.

Problems, pressures, detracting features

- Generally exposed, bleak, suburban structure.
- Lacking in coastal character or significant tree cover.
- The straight, featureless main high street of Peacehaven.
- Traffic on the coast road, which severs residential areas and village centres from the coast.
- Suburban development lacking open space and tree cover.

Vision

A stimulating coastal-urban environment, with a sense of place and focal town centres, strengthened neighbourhood character and enhanced relationship of the whole area to its coastline.

Landscape action priorities

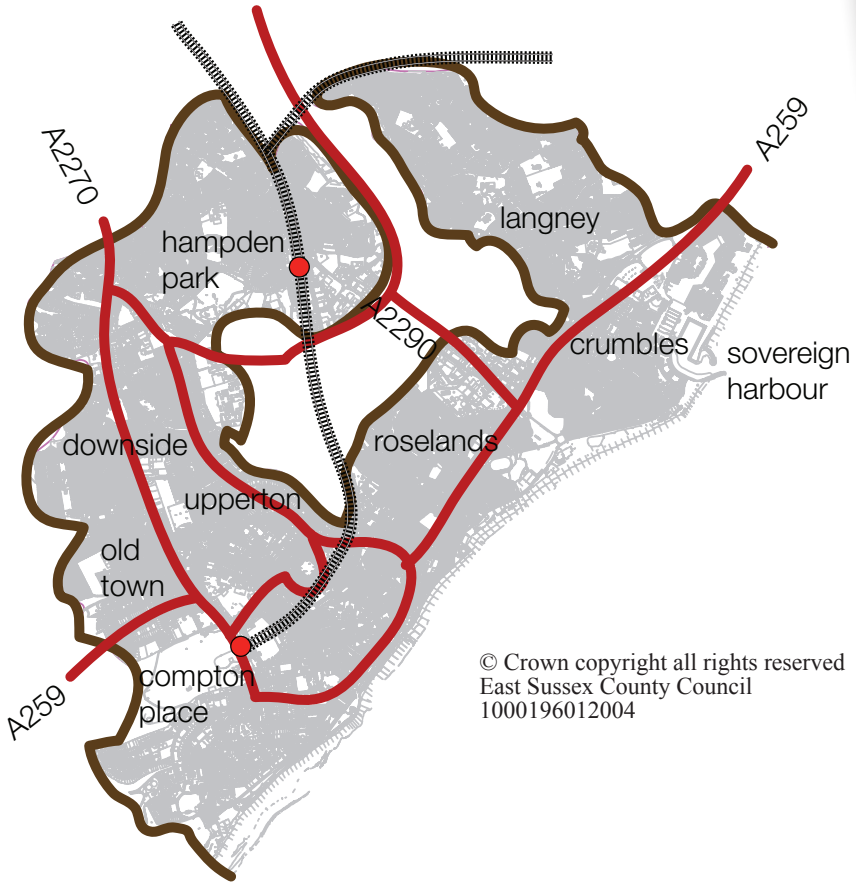
- Major environmental improvements to South Coast Road area, including building facelifts, co-ordinated signage and street furniture, and traffic calming.
- Strengthened visual and pedestrian links to the parallel cliff top area.
- Within the limits imposed by the coastal location, prepare and implement a tree strategy for the whole area, including street trees and treebelts, to create enclosure.
- Develop distinctive signs, colour schemes, street furniture etc to strengthen individual town and local character generally.
- Define and strengthen the urban edge against the Downs, particularly with bold tree planting in strategic positions.

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Eastbourne



Eastbourne sits on the coast, where the downland is cut by the sea into the huge cliffs at Beachy Head. Sitting with its back against the easternmost end of the Downs, the town overlooks the sea, and the Levels to the east. It has retained its elegant Victorian character, seen in the pier, seafront parades and tree-lined avenues. The Old Town is bedded into the foot of the Downs, and has a superb wooded urban fringe. Lying at the heart of the town, the Eastbourne Levels almost bisect it. The Langney suburbs extend eastwards across the Levels towards Pevensey.



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Characteristics

- This elegant seaside town, nestling between the Downland, the sea and the Levels has impressive views to the downland to the west.
- Planned in the 1850s by William Cavendish and John Davies Gilbert, the central part of the town is coherent and spacious.
- The Meads area, and the villages of Old Town, Ratton and Willingdon have a leafy 19th Century character.
- The quiet, unified seafront is the main character focus, with its pier, lawns, winter gardens and grand facades of white buildings.

Special features

- The Sovereign Harbour.
- The parks and designed landscapes of Hampden Park, Devonshire Park, Princes Park, Manor Park, and the Compton Estate.
- Prince William Avenue, with the retained original shingle landscape known as the Crumbles.

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Eastbourne

Problems, pressures, detracting features

- The twentieth century terraces and housing estates to the east lack local distinctiveness.
- There are harsh unscreened urban edges and industrial estates bordering the Levels.
- The multi-story shopping centre lacks local character, contrasting with the rest of the town centre.
- Tall 1960s blocks of flats are discordant with the rest of the Victorian and Edwardian seafront.
- Traffic pressure erodes the peaceful character of the town.
- The important street trees are threatened by underground cabling development and Dutch Elm Disease.

Vision

An elegant seaside town with a fine setting, spacious, unspoiled seafront, intact Victorian - Edwardian layout and architecture, with a light, leafy character, enhanced and unified by the new focus of Eastbourne Park on its eastern side.

Landscape action priorities

- Continue development of Eastbourne Park.
- Enhance environment of the eastern part of the town, linked with Eastbourne Park, including more tree cover within, and on the edges of, the built-up area and in the industrial estates.
- Protect and replace street and existing parkland trees.
- Develop or strengthen local and neighbourhood character in modern residential areas, including Polegate.
- Protect and enhance parks and open spaces.
- Ensure that future planned urban expansion is of the highest quality design with a strong sense of place.

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Bexhill



Bexhill on Sea arose as a medieval trading port, built on gently sloping ground. It was transformed in the 19th century by the seventh Earl De La Warr into an exclusive seaside resort. By the mid 20th century, the resort began to lose its appeal, and became more residential in nature, while retaining much of its quiet Edwardian character.

The town is now comprised of several merged villages. It is marginally separated from Hastings by Glyne Gap and Coombe Haven valley, an important green gap between the built up areas. At the eastern end of the town the railway severs the town from the Seafront.

Characteristics

- A quiet, residential seaside town with small-scale but ornate early Victorian and Edwardian seafront facades, facing spacious seafront lawns.
- Strong 1930's Modern influence, centred on the De La Warr pavilion on the seafront, constructed under the instruction of the ninth Earl De La Warr in 1935.

Special features

- Seafront properties have ornate 'Colonial' wooden verandas and Mogul influences.
- Located in Bexhill-on-Sea's picturesque Old Town are many fine examples of Georgian architecture.
- Egerton Park
- 'The Down' is a unique and well treed open space in the centre of the urban area.
- Marine archaeology.



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Bexhill

Problems, pressures, detracting features

- Clutter and lack of unity marring seafront lawns as a recreational space.
- Extensive suburban areas lacking features and focal points.
- Absence of any strong pedestrian and cycle linkage between seafront/town centre and Old Town.
- Signage clutter and lack of spatial focus in the town centre.

Vision

A coastal town of relatively quiet, leafy character, centred on three strengthened and more strongly related foci: an integrated seafront/ De la Warr pavilion space, enhanced town centre and Old Town.

Environmental enhancements in the town centre and Old Town achieved through cohesive design and traffic management.

Landscape action priorities

- A tree strategy for the whole town to strengthen its character and create local/neighbourhood distinctiveness, including suburban areas.
- A green network study of open space and recreational corridors
- A comprehensive re-design/landscape strategy for the seafront lawns area to create a stronger character focus and setting for De la Warr Pavilion.
- Consider a new focal space/ feature in town centre, perhaps combined with traffic management and continuing enhancement of streetscape. Recent initiatives have made a significant difference, i.e. improvements to building facades and the environmental improvements in Devonshire Square.
- A landscape improvement plan for Egerton Park, including an improved tree structure.
- In the longer term, consider the creation of a major new park in the Broadoak area.
- Create an 'amenity route'- visual and functional link - between the seafront, town centre and Old Town.
- Improved pedestrian and cycle access.
- Development of Pebsham Countryside Park in conjunction with other regeneration initiatives.
- Reduce and control traffic on the main roads through the town.

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Hastings



Hastings grew from a small fishing port, in the medieval period. With the advent of the railway and the development of seaside tourism, elegant Georgian and Victorian terraces and crescents were built beside the well preserved Tudor old town.

The town is situated to the west of a series of sandstone headlands.

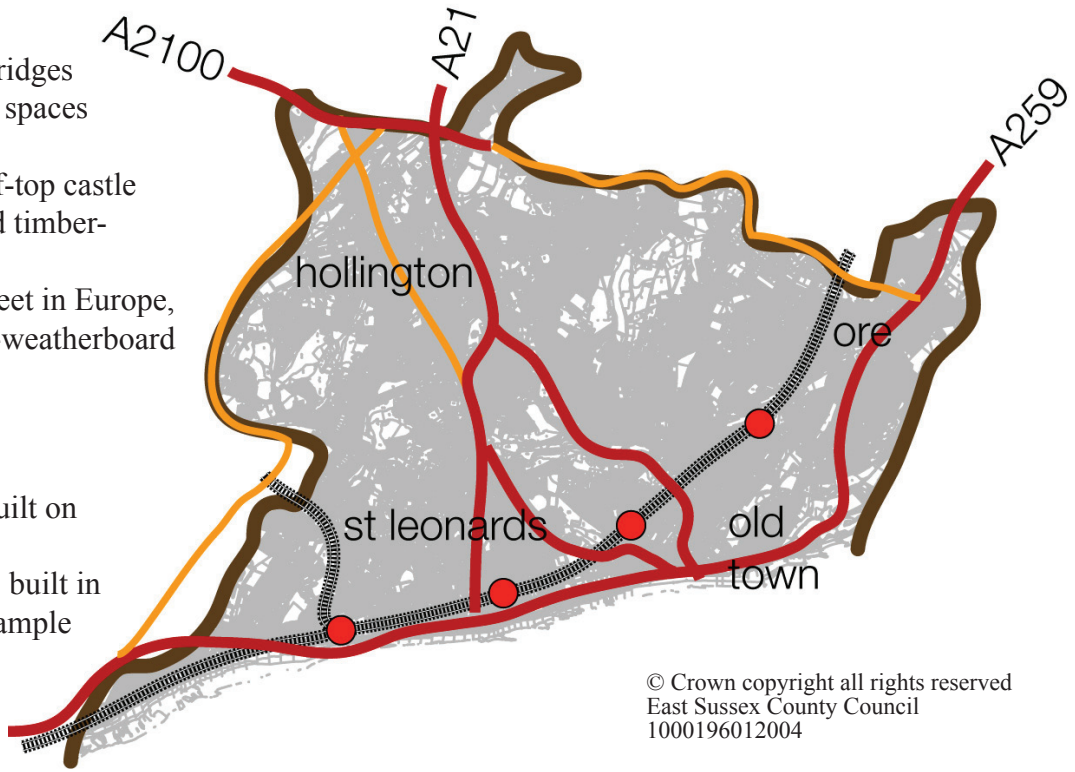
The seaside town's ability to expand has been determined by surrounding environmental designations, the coastline and poor transport infrastructure.

Characteristics

- The town sits on sandstone, which is eroded into ridges and wooded ghylls, giving a series of parks, open spaces and sheltered woodland within the town.
- The medieval Old Town is overlooked by the cliff-top castle ruins, and has narrow winding lanes, twittens, and timber-framed Tudor cottages.
- Hastings has the largest beach-launched fishing fleet in Europe, and the fishing boats, with the tall, ancient, black-weatherboard net huts give the Old Town its unique character.

Special features

- The large shopping centre, Priory Meadow was built on the site of the old cricket ground.
- Fine Regency buildings such as Pelham Crescent, built in the 1820s, and Burton's St Leonards, a unique example of a Regency new town with many buildings still standing from 1828.
- Views across historic roof tops to the sea.
- Marine archaeology.



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Hastings

Problems, pressures, detracting features

- The somewhat run-down appearance of some areas, such as parts of Bohemia, Bulverhythe and Ore.
- The western approach to the town via Glyne Gap and Bulverhythe lacks character and is dominated by traffic.
- Some rather bleak and treeless housing estates.
- Severance of the town from the beach by the busy coastal road.
- The derelict Hastings pier.

Vision

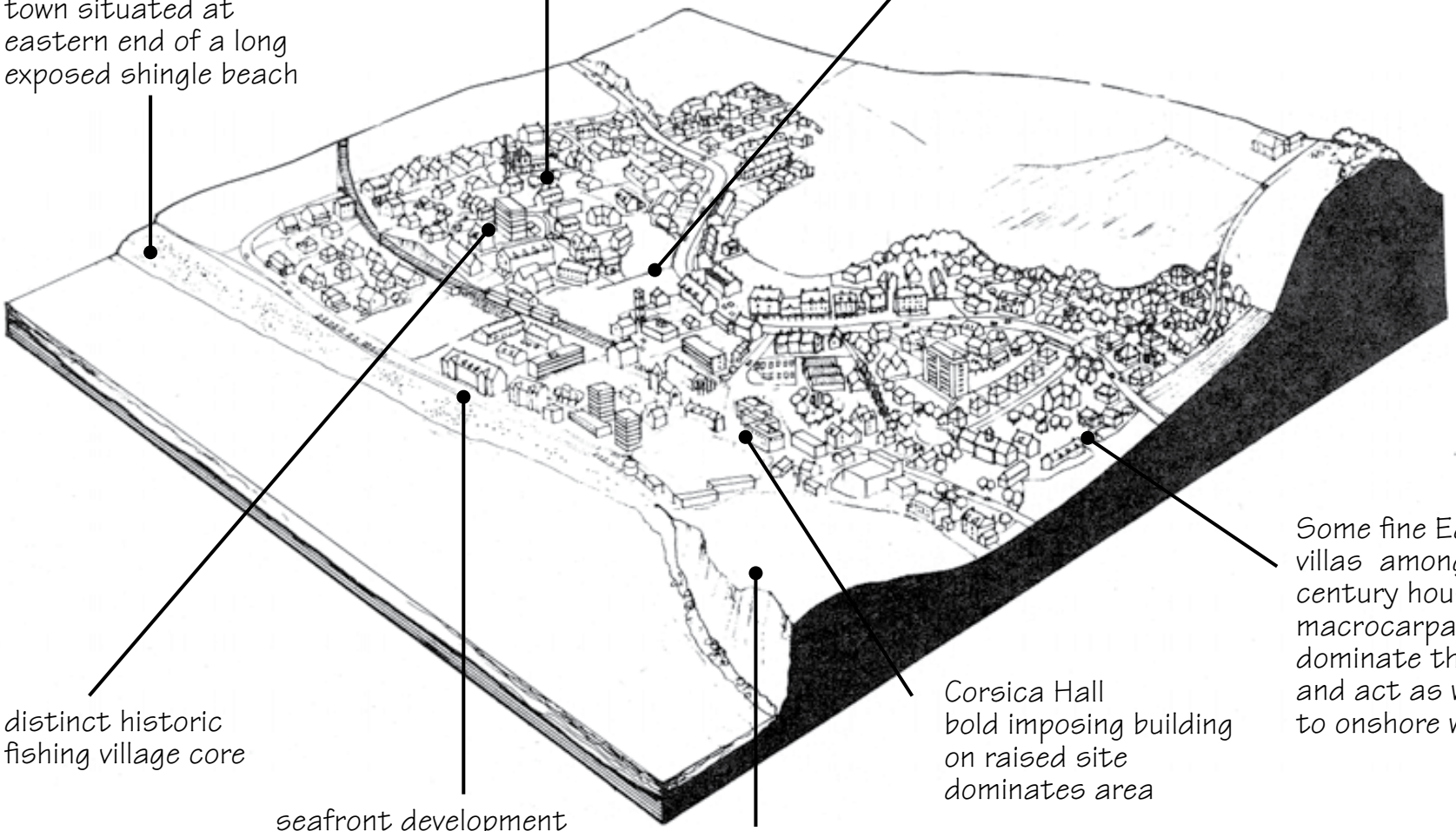
A town of strong, highly distinctive character with equally strong and distinctive local communities. A town with good links to the countryside via a network of ghylls, linear open spaces and well designed transport networks worthy of the town.

Landscape action priorities

- Produce an environmental design strategy for the town centre.
- A tree strategy, encouraging the use of trees to develop and strengthen local character.
- A green network strategy of open spaces and pedestrian links, connecting the town centre with other areas of the town, and with the countryside.
- Conserve and restore parks in their historical context as part of a green infrastructure strategy.
- Continue the regeneration and improvement programme to the seafront.
- Improve suburban housing estates, including distinctive tree planting, signs, street furniture and traffic calming measures.
- Improve connections to the seafront, beach and town.
- Resolve the restoration of the pier.

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Seaford



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Seaford



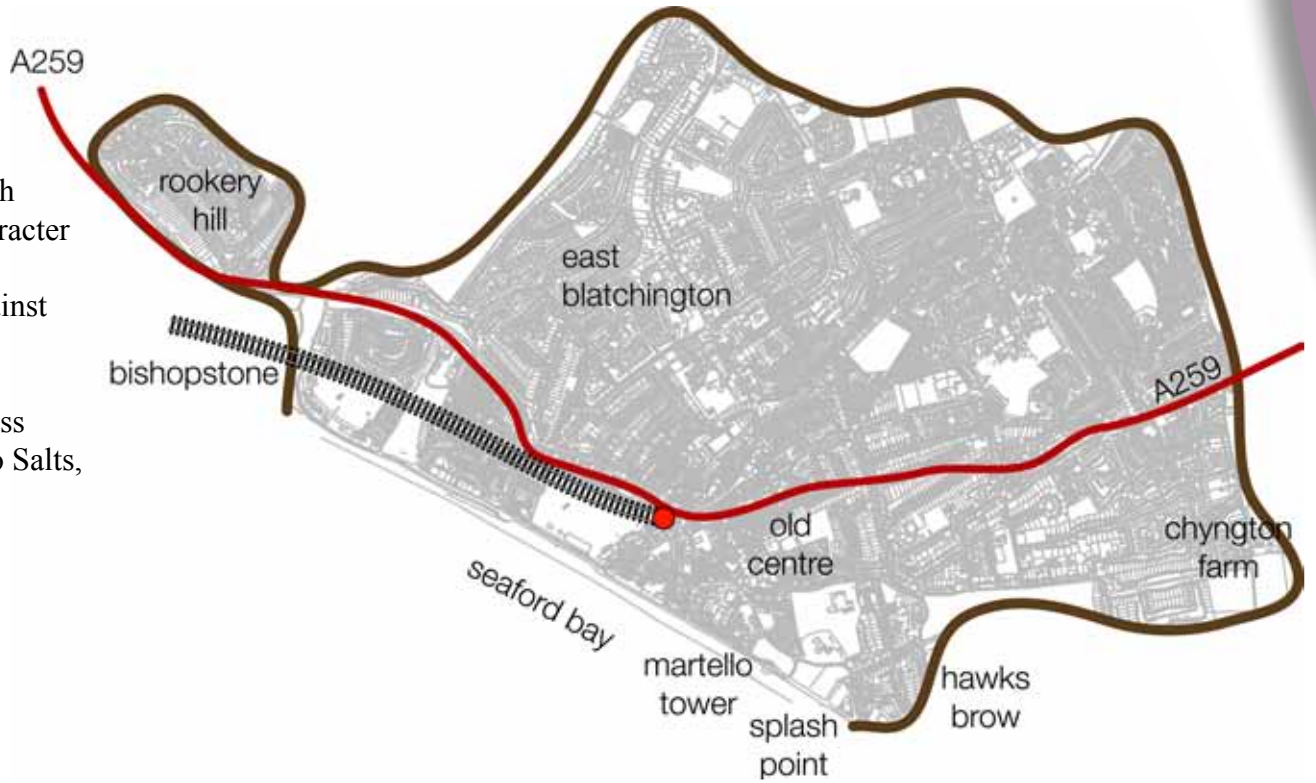
Built on a gentle downland dip slope, Seaford is at the eastern end of the long, exposed shingle beach of Seaford Bay. The town has a distinct core of an old fishing village, built away from the beach, with shops, flint-walled cottages and church. To the north and east of the town are fine villas on large gardens.

Characteristics

- Historic village core with flint walls, many of rounded, uncut flint.
- Later seafront development and 20th century villas, lacking the local character of the core.
- From the west, the town is seen against the chalk cliffs of Splash Point and Seaford Head.
- The town has many large and treeless open green spaces, such as Martello Salts, Hawks Brow, and the Salts.

Special features

- A Martello Tower, now housing the town museum.
- Corsica Hall, an imposing building, dominates the Martello salts area.
- The historic village centre.
- The cliffs at Splash Point.



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Seaford

Problems, pressures, detracting features

- The seafront lacks architectural distinctiveness.
- The undistinguished main approach to the town from the west, past the station.
- Post war suburban housing developments
- Open development edges onto the Downs, particularly at Bishopstone and near Seaford Head.

Vision

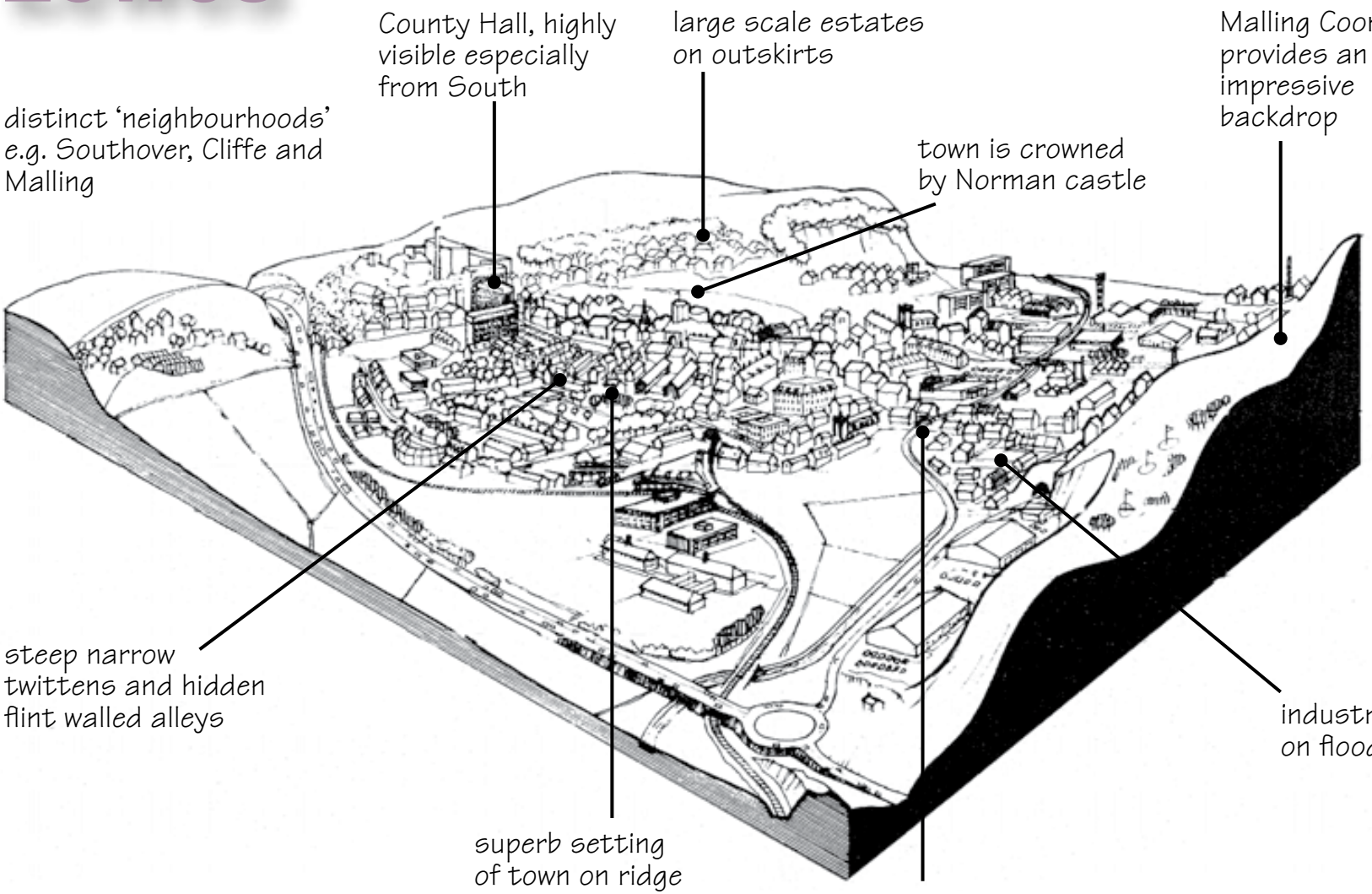
A town with a distinctive downland and coastal character, noted for its 'old village' core, flint pebble walls, mature elm trees, Corsican pines and sycamores. An improved seafront with its fine backdrop and strengthened links with the 'old village'.

Landscape action priorities

- Consider ways of enhancing the seafront, particularly by softening the built-up edges with appropriate planting.
- Create a stronger, more attractive pedestrian and visual link between the town centre/old village and seafront.
- Prepare a tree strategy for the town, to conserve and augment its distinctive tree cover, improve its edges against the Downs and strengthen neighbourhood identity.
- A conservation and replacement programme for mature street trees, notably the elms.
- Consider ways of integrating the old village and town centre so that the latter more closely mirrors the distinctive character of the former, using street design, traffic management and co-ordinated signage.
- Carry out an environmental improvement to the western approach, including tree planting in streets and open spaces and a possible gateway feature.

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Lewes



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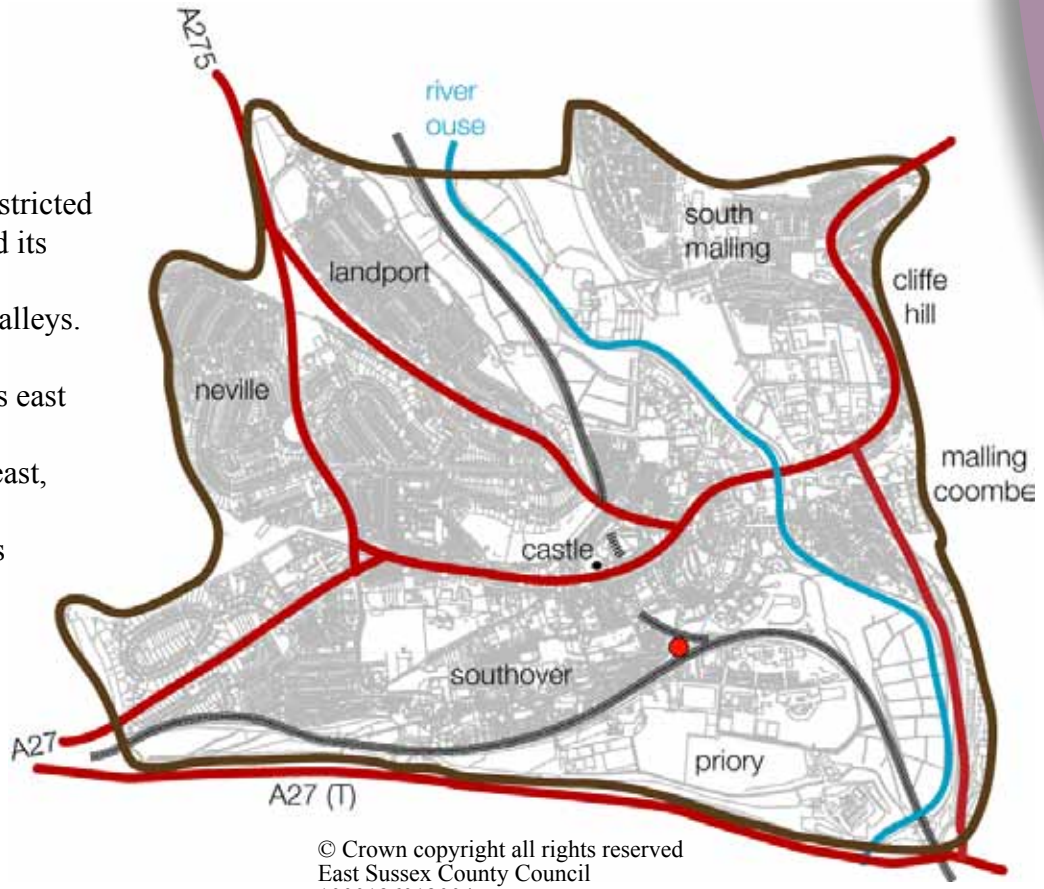
Lewes



The medieval County Town of East Sussex, Lewes lies at the navigable head of the River Ouse. It has a superb setting in a gap that the river has carved through the Downs. The chalk scarps of Cliff Hill and Malling Coombe provide impressive backdrops. The place is crowned by its Norman castle, sitting on a grassy mound above the rest of the town.

Characteristics

- The town's character owes much to the downland that surrounds it and the river that runs through its heart.
- The Downs and the river flood plain have historically restricted the growth of Lewes, and the centre of town has retained its intimate character and a tight urban grain.
- Lewes has long, narrow twittens and hidden flintwalled alleys.
- Views from the town to the Downs and the Castle.
- The ancient, steep High Street, built on School Hill, falls east to the river and has views to Malling Coombe
- The town has industrial estates in the flood plain to the east, and large housing estates on the outskirts.
- The town has a wonderful architectural heritage, in parts dating from the fifteenth century, of two and three-storey timber-framed, and flint, buildings.
- The original stone from the substantially destroyed great religious buildings in Lewes has been widely recycled in later historic periods.
- The town abounds in special building materials, such as mathematical tiling, tiles made to look like bricks, and dressed, square-cut flint.



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Lewes

Special features

- 'Villages' within the town, such as Southover, and Cliffe, have their own character and centres.
- The evocative ruined Priory and grounds lie to the south.
- The old but still productive Harveys Brewery sits against the river in the centre of the town

Problems, pressures, detracting features

- County Hall, Medwyn House and some other 1960's buildings challenge the Castle's skyline dominance.
- Intrusive industrial estates with little or no landscape mitigation.
- Housing estates on rising ground which have a hard urban edge to the downland.
- Traffic and parking in the narrow streets.

Vision

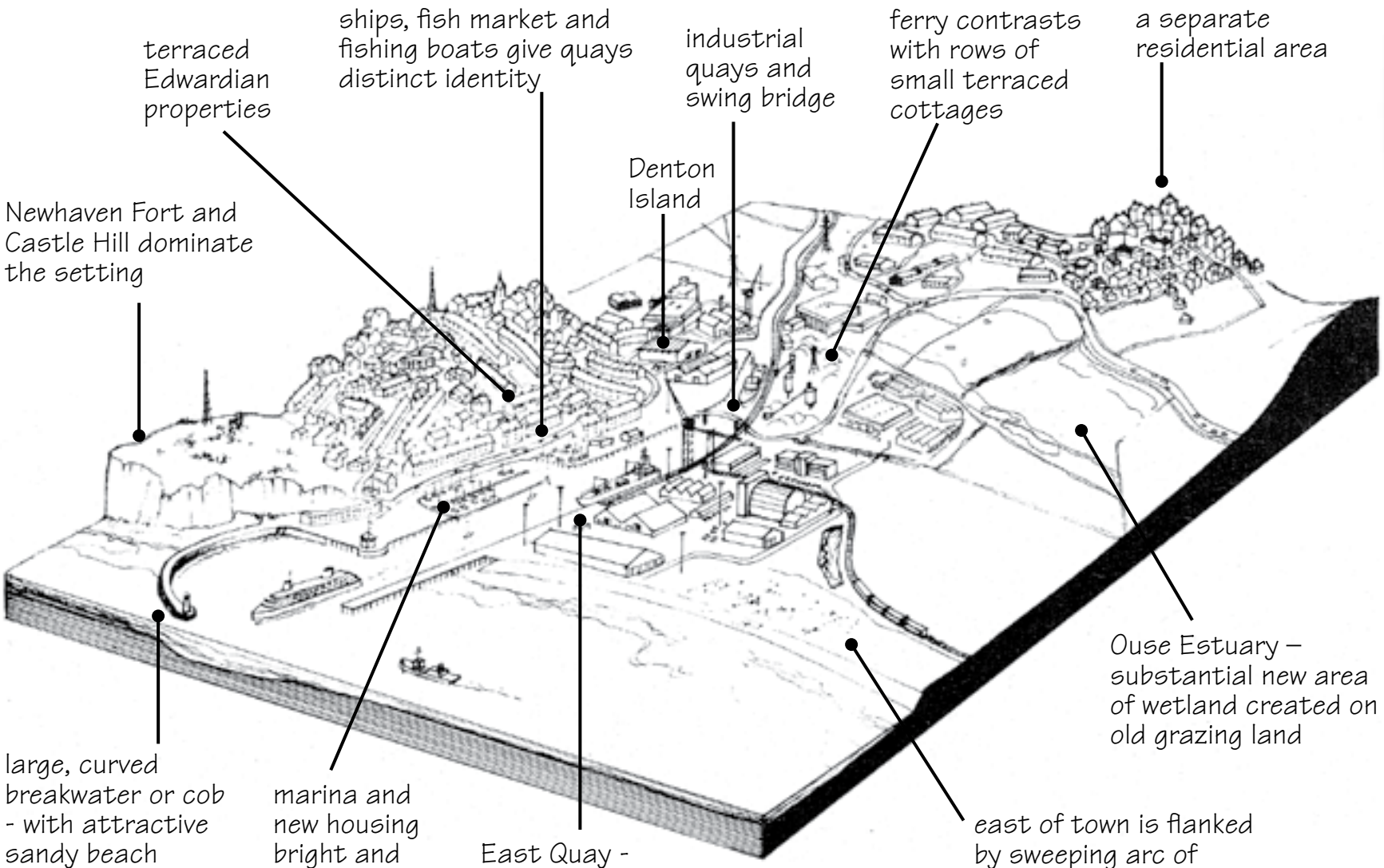
An unspoiled county town of pedestrian scale, with a strong sense of history and neighbourhood identity, a rich diversity of buildings and spaces, a pleasant riverside, and a unique downland setting which is readily accessible from the town.

Landscape action priorities

- Continue to enhance the riverside as a character focus for the lower part of the town, with continuous walkways on both sides.
- Continued efforts to manage and calm traffic.
- Undertake environmental improvement of housing and industrial estates to strengthen town and neighbourhood identity.
- Improve pedestrian and cycle access to the countryside, especially from the Malling area.

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Newhaven



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Newhaven



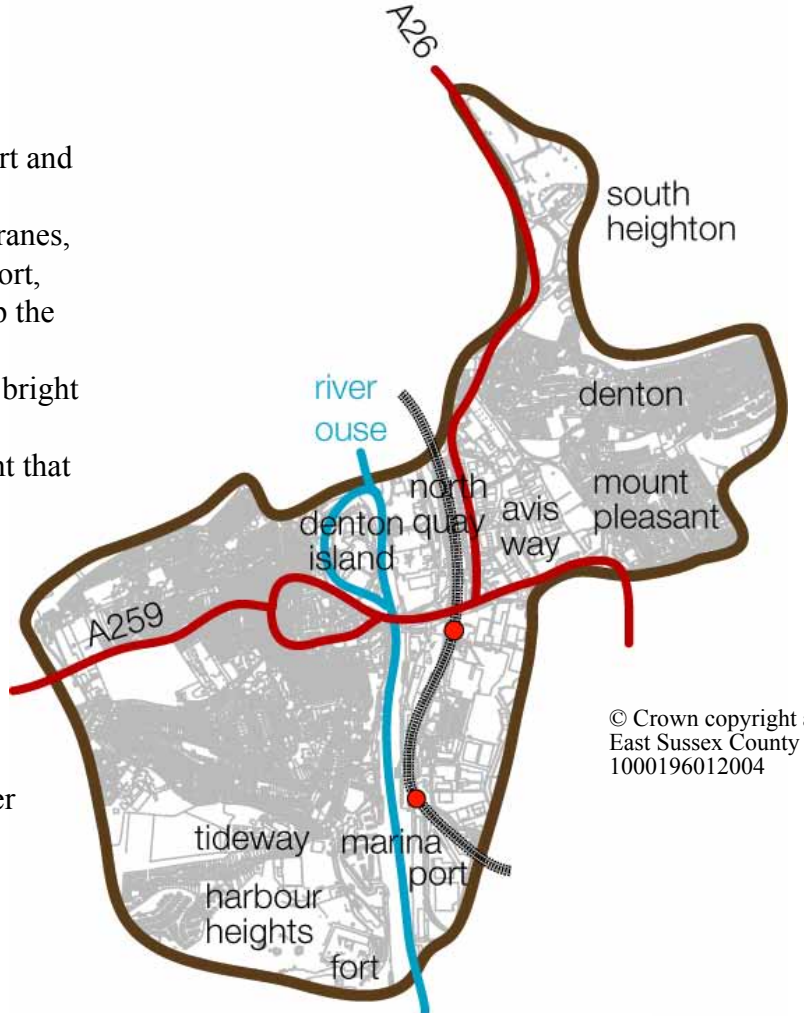
This historic port and fishing town was built on downland slopes, at the mouth of the River Ouse. The sea and the river give the town much of its character. Newhaven Fort on Castle Hill rises above a small beach and the large crescent of the Breakwater.

Characteristics

- The town has a salty, maritime flavour, as befits a working port and gateway to Europe.
- The scale of the heavy industry on the riverbanks, towering cranes, huge timbered wharfs and the size of the ferry, when it is in port, contrasts with the rows of small terraced cottages clustered up the hillsides
- The marina and new housing on the west side of the river are bright jaunty and colourful in character
- The boats, the fish market and the jumble of fishing equipment that litters the quaysides gives the quays a distinct identity.
- The town centre is circled by the main through-routes, cutting it off somewhat from the rest of the town.

Special features

- Newhaven Fort has a rich history and from its entrance there are dramatic views across the town.
- The swing bridge punctuates the flow of traffic across the river
- Features of the working port are retained, such as the fishing boats moored in the creek beside Denton Island, and the huge grey timbered quays intensify the character of the town.



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Newhaven

Problems, pressures, detracting features

- Industrial clutter at North Quay.
- Modern housing estates blanketing valley sides at Valley Road and Gibbon Road, also at Denton across the valley.
- Harsh, open edges to valley levels to east.
- Bleak horizontal white buildings on ridge crest on east side including Tideways School.
- Meeching Quarry.
- Dauntingly dreary underpasses below the ring road to access the centre of the town.
- The severance impact of the ring road

Vision

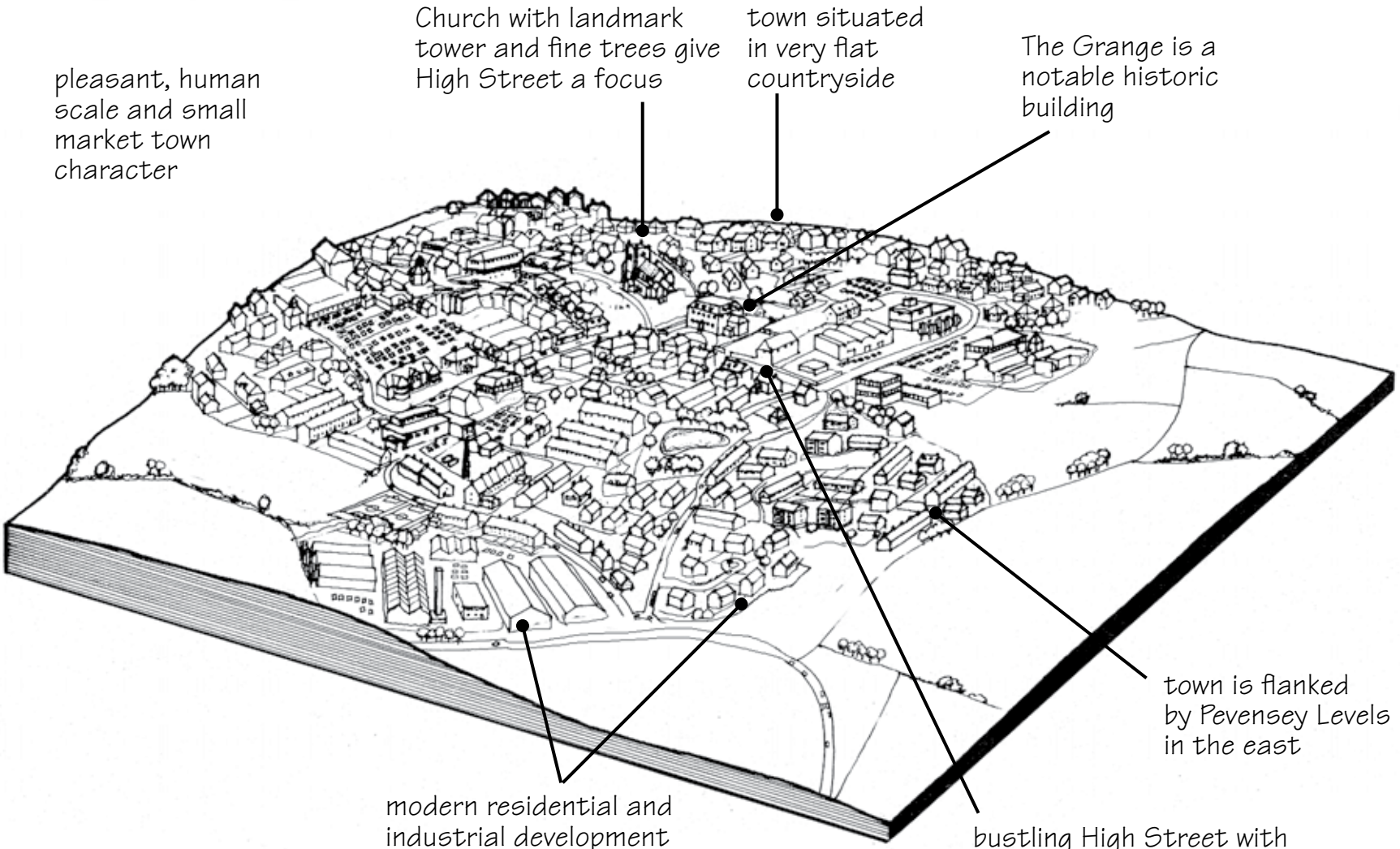
A small, robustly attractive port town providing a welcoming introduction to the county for visitors and making the most of its dramatic setting.

Landscape action priorities

- Produce an environmental design strategy for the town centre.
- Further environmental improvement of High Street/town centre area to give it more distinctive local character.
- Continued improvements to housing estates, including tree planting; perhaps as part of town Tree Strategy.
- Enhance Avis Way area with bold, massed planting and improved pedestrian routes.
- Environmental improvements to port/ferry approaches as gateway to Sussex.
- Continued environmental improvements and management plans for the beach - Fort - Castle Hill area.
- Strengthened pedestrian links between town centre, riverside and Fort/Castle Hill areas.
- Traffic management to reduce the severance effect of the ring road.

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Hailsham

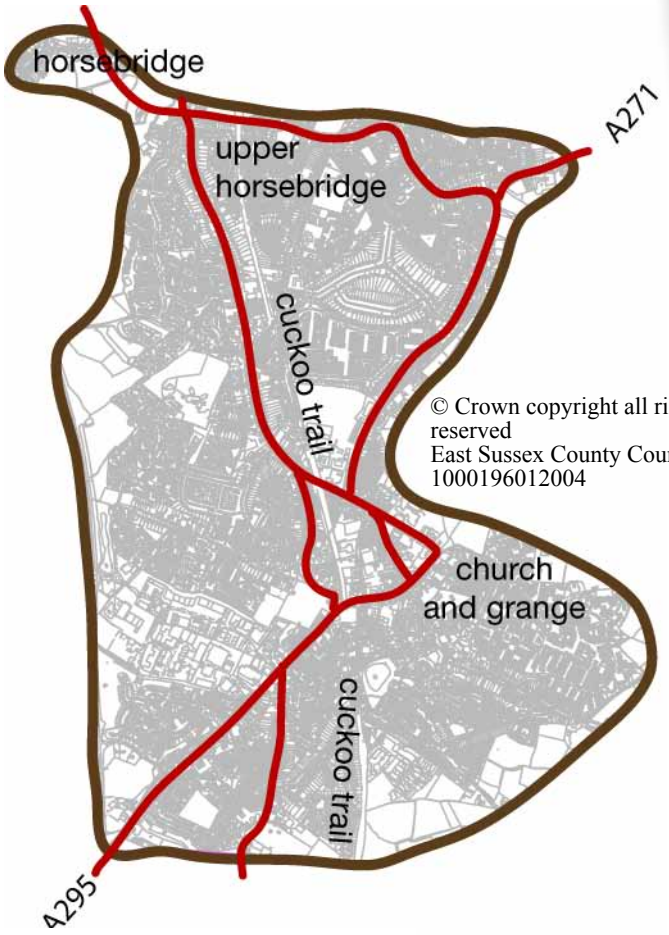


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Hailsham



Situated on the east end of the Low Weald, the market town of Hailsham dates back to medieval times. It sits on a slight rise in low flat landscape with extensive views to the High Weald and Downs. The town has expanded considerably in recent decades, and some of its edges are rather open and untidy. The town centre abuts onto attractive, undeveloped and hedge-patterned slopes descending east towards the Pevensey Levels.
The town sits in an almost flat landscape with light tree cover.
The eastern edge, descending to the open levels, is particularly sensitive to change.
Trees help to 'soften' the suburbs, but offer sparse cover to the modern housing estates.



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Characteristics

- There is a pleasant human scale and small market town character, and an abundance of small and traditional shops.
- A bustling high street, with an eighteenth century core and Victorian shops.
- The buildings are of very varied age and character, with the new precinct relating well in scale to the church and High Street. The twentieth century additions are sometimes in scale, like St Mary's Walk, but not all are so successful.
- There is a fine juxtaposition between the High Street and the church, which encloses the area. The quiet green church yard lies close by, with many fine trees.
- The dominant building material is brick, often whitewashed.

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Hailsham

Special features

- The Grange is a notable large historic building.
- The Cuckoo Trail, the old dismantled railway, runs north-south through the town.
- extensive woodland of Abbots Wood/ Wilmington Wood lies just to the south-west.
- The rope industry that has thrived for centuries.

Problems, pressures, detracting features

- Extensive, characterless housing and industrial estates impact on the countryside
- Loss of physical and visual contact between town centre & countryside with the exception of the views from the car parks at the east of the town.
- Large, featureless car parks around the town centre.
- Uninspiring modern infill development in & around the town centre, notably the drab 1960's shopping mall.
- Traffic and car parking.
- The threat to the town's small market town character and relationship to its surroundings posed by the likelihood of further substantial expansion.

Vision

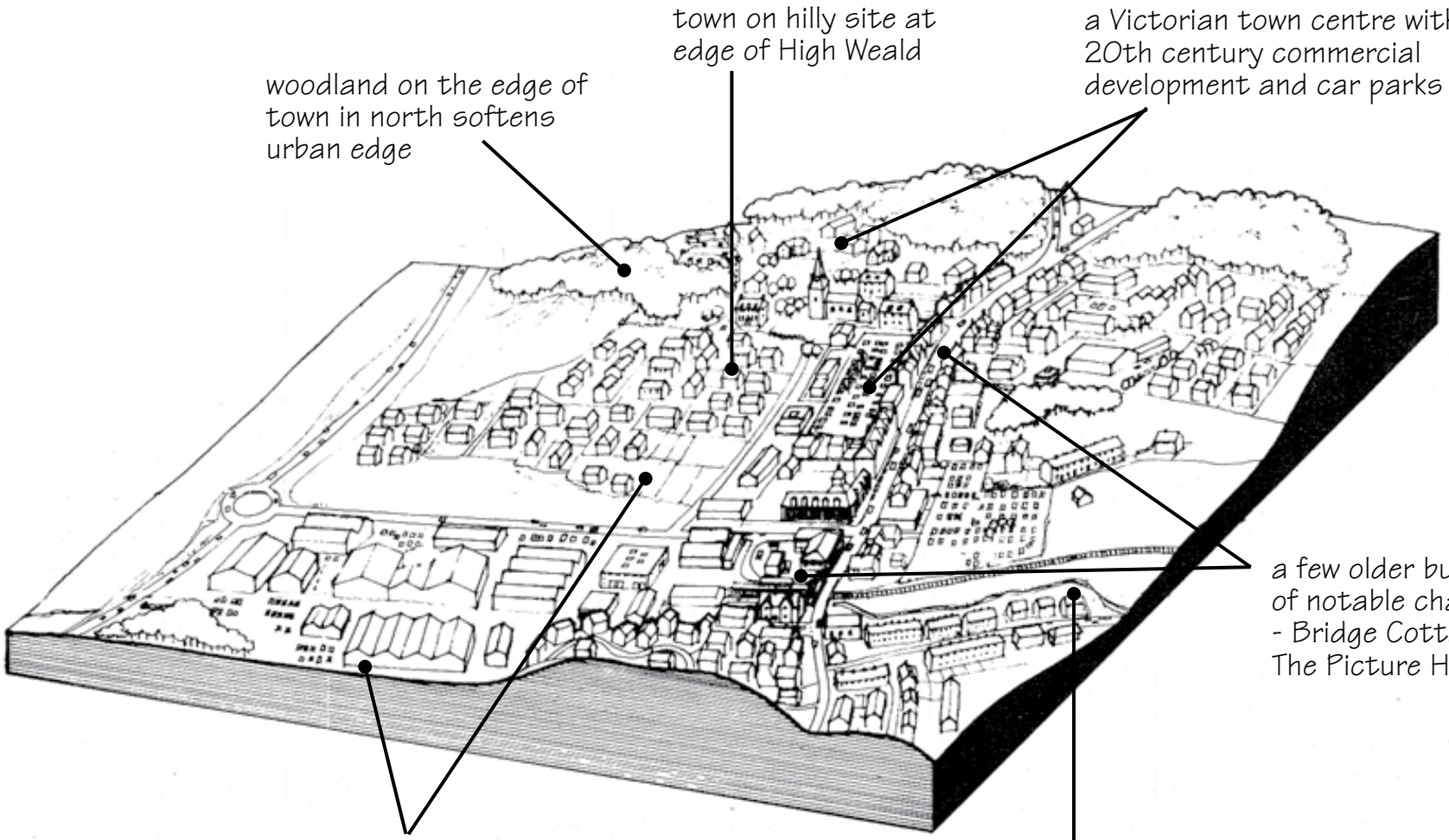
A Low Weald town which retains a small market town character. A strong tree structure, this should define distinctive neighbourhoods and grade out into the pattern of the surrounding countryside. The character and intensity of the centre protected and enhanced to ensure its future as a vibrant successful market town.

Landscape action priorities

- Produce an environmental design strategy for the town centre.
- Protect, and build upon, the local character, especially the churchyard and its trees.
- Conserve the older shops, buildings and character details in and around the town centre.
- Special character features elsewhere, should be reflected in new developments.
- Establish and strengthen a strong, final urban edge, protecting and enhancing the contact between the town centre and countryside in the east.
- Manage traffic and parking and undertake environmental improvements.
- A tree strategy for the town, to include:
  - ♦ Identification, conservation and replacement of important trees
  - ♦ A tree structure for the whole town, reflecting the Low Weald field-and-hedge pattern and scale and defining small ‘neighbourhoods’.
  - ♦ Plant trees in and around town centre car parks.
- Design and locate new development to prevent urban creep and create new satellite communities with green corridor links to the town.

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Uckfield



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Uckfield



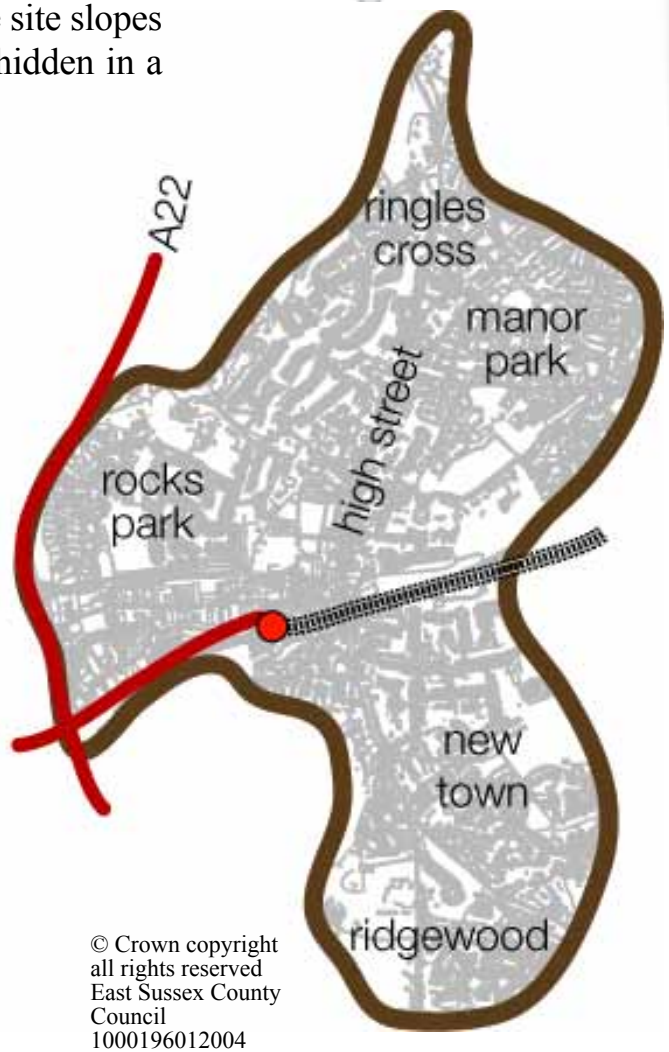
Uckfield has retained the character of a small market town, nestled into the gently rolling countryside of the Upper Ouse, a landscape character area that is a rich mosaic of woods, shaws, gills, small fields and hedges. Its hillside site slopes steeply south to the river Uck and the railway. The river is somewhat hidden in a narrow valley, now full of industrial buildings.

Characteristics

- A mainly Victorian and twentieth century town, with wide variety of styles, that are broadly harmonious due to the repeated use of red brick, the intricately divided facades and white sash windows
- There is a steep, busy high street on a main through-route, the old A22.
- The sandstone church and huge yew tree provide a focal point.
- At the top of the High Street, where the road is narrow, there is a compact, human scale to the buildings.
- Going south down the hill, the size increases to a variety of three and four storey Victorian facades, tightly abutting the road.
- At the foot of the hill, 1960s buildings detract from the historic character.
- There is large scale industrial and residential development that lacks local character
- The wooded character softens the impact of the expanding town on the surrounding countryside, but the relatively open, gently-sloping areas and larger fields reveal some exposed development edges.

Special features

- The pretty Picture House dates from 1916 and is a focal point.
- The Holy Cross is a sandstone church dating from the sixteenth century.
- Bridge Cottage is a wonderful example of a 16th century Wealden House.



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Uckfield

Problems, pressures, detracting features

- Lack of character and identity in modern residential and commercial development.
- The failure to utilise the river as an amenity.
- Pressure for continued expansion.
- High traffic levels and pressure of parking, dominance of cars in the High Street and surrounds.

Vision

A medium-sized Wealden town with a colourful, interesting and pedestrian-friendly High Street, focusing on a pleasant tree-lined river with a backdrop of wooded, easily-accessible Wealden countryside.

Landscape action priorities

- Enhance High Street to strengthen it as a character focus for the town.
- Produce an environmental design strategy for the town centre.
- Consider creation of a pedestrian square or precinct, removal of clutter, and traffic calming measures.
- Break up town centre car parks with tree planting.
- Consider a river restoration project for the Uck for recreation and wildlife, with a view to providing flood relief.
- Establish strong, final development limits to the town.
- Manage urban edge woodlands and parklands.

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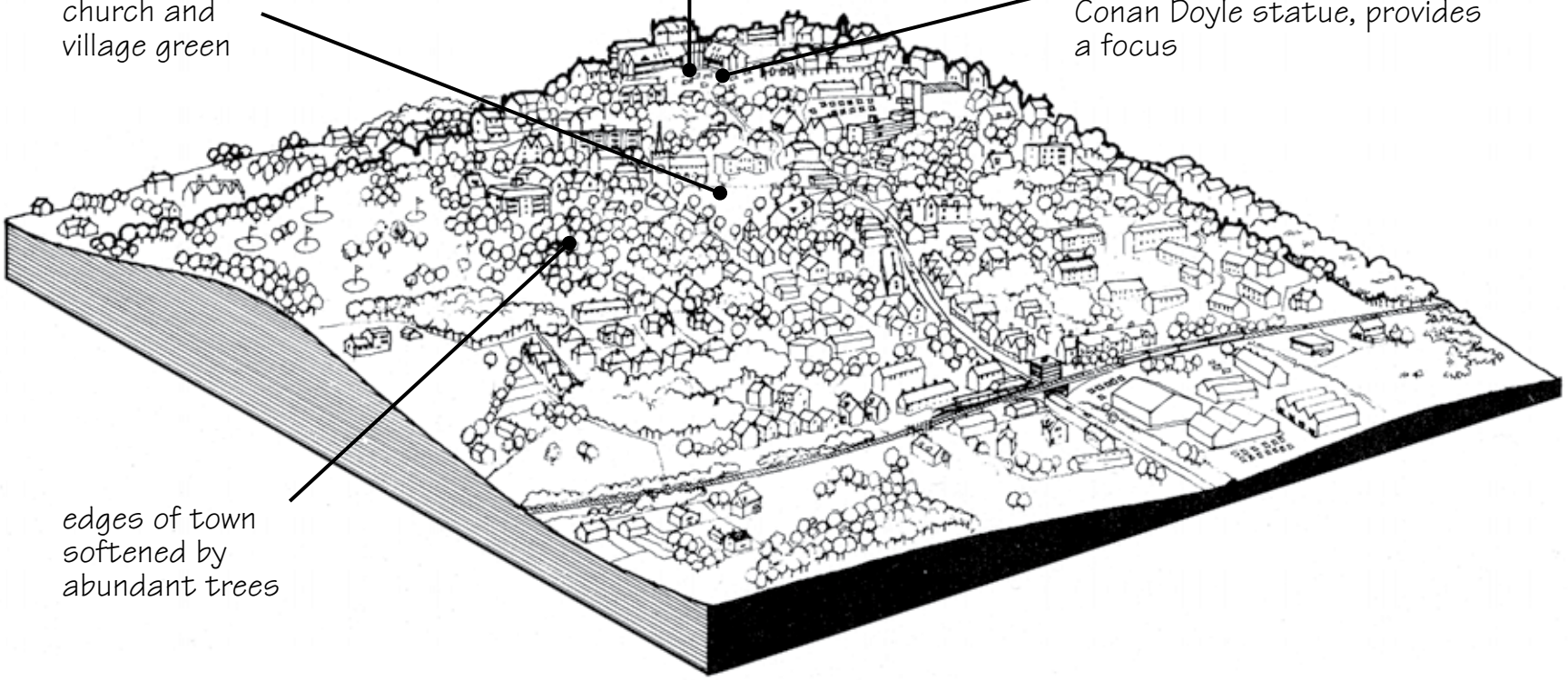
Crowborough

cohesive red brick Victorian and Edwardian centre, with continuous frontage to the road

Crowborough is the highest town in the county, blanketing the main Wealden Ridge east of Ashdown Forest - fine Wealden views

eighteenth century church and village green

Crowborough Cross, with the Conan Doyle statue, provides a focus



edges of town softened by abundant trees

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Crowborough



Crowborough blankets the crest of the main Wealden ridge east of Ashdown Forest. The town evolved at a cross-roads, where a coaching inn called The Cross was built. The railway came in 1868, which resulted in the growth of the village into a town. The core of Crowborough was built of red brick, at the turn of the twentieth century. In common with other towns close to the railway, the buildings have slate roofs. Crowborough has seen considerable expansion but has preserved its pleasant loose-knit, green, suburban character.

Characteristics

- Crowborough is a large ridgetop town – the highest in the county.
- There are satellite centres of focus away from the town centre.
- The town centre is largely inward-looking, with few views out to exploit the setting.
- In the centre there are good quality Victorian and Edwardian buildings with interesting detailing. There is some red clay tile hanging, and much evidence of sandstone
- The outskirts are of a less attractive late 20th century estate housing.
- The edges of the town are softened by abundant trees, but the suburban development on the eastern slopes is clearly visible from the Rotherfield area.

Special features

- Chapel Green beside the eighteenth century church.
- The Cross, with the Conan Doyle statue, provides a focus.



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Crowborough

Problems and pressures

- Lack of character and structure away from The Cross and Chapel Green.
- Disappointing lack of evidence that this is the highest point in the East Sussex weald.
- Heavy through traffic on the A26 undermines the character of the town.
- Lack of distinctive building and streetscape design in town centre weakens local identity.

Vision

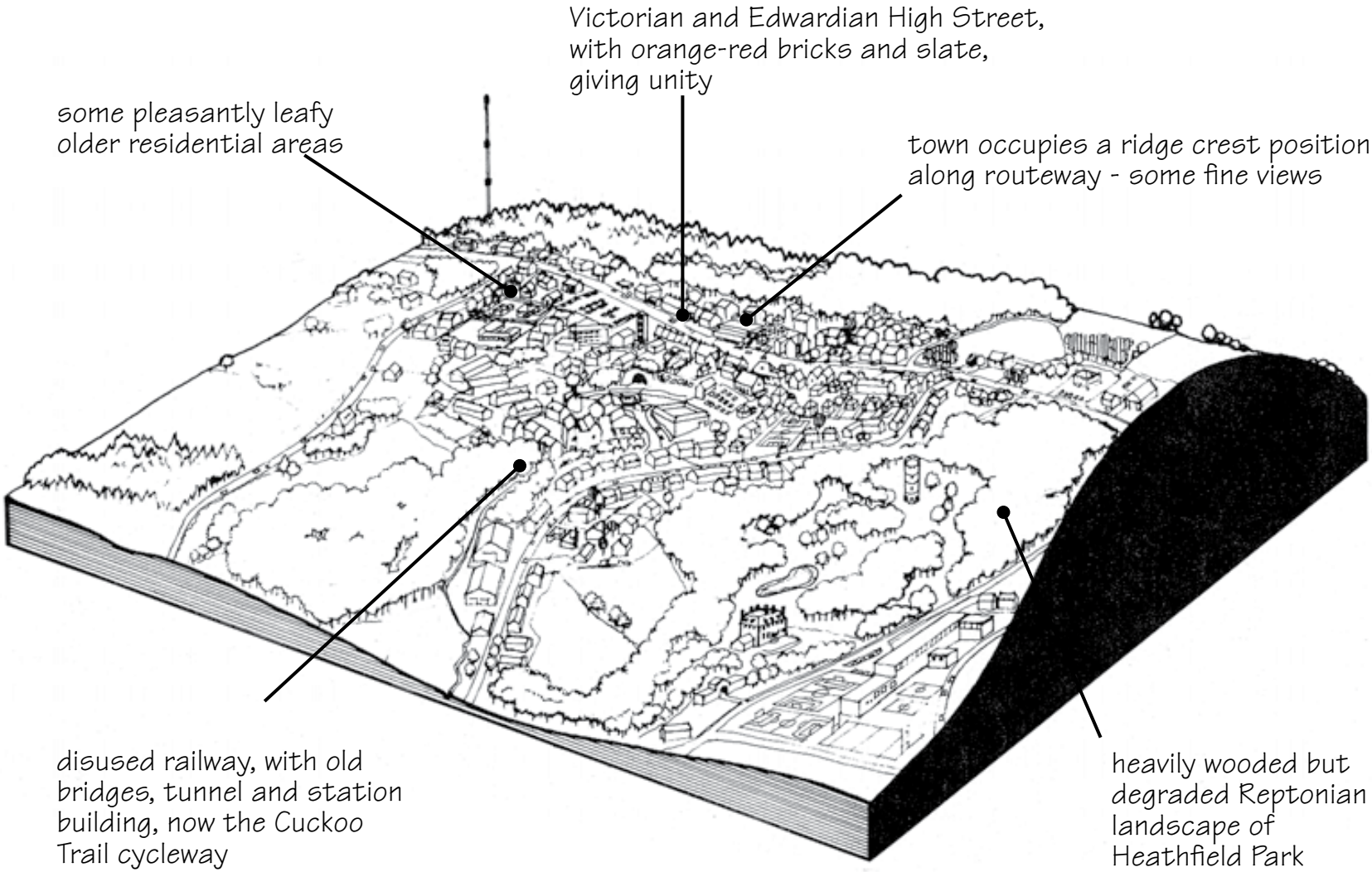
Attractive town on the crest of the High Weald, noted for its fine trees and views, Strong tourist and heritage links to Chapel Green and The Cross.

Landscape action priorities

- Produce an environmental design strategy for the town centre.
- A Tree Conservation Plan for the whole town, aimed at maintaining the present tree cover, protecting and strengthening tree cover on the town edges.
- A traffic management/environmental improvement scheme for the town centre, creating 'pedestrian friendly' spaces and new character features.
- Strengthen visual and pedestrian links between Chapel Green and The Cross/ town centre, with wider footways, distinctive signs, street furniture, and tree planting.
- Ensure that development pressure does not lead to higher density at the expense of tree cover, increasing the town's impact on the AONB landscape.

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Heathfield



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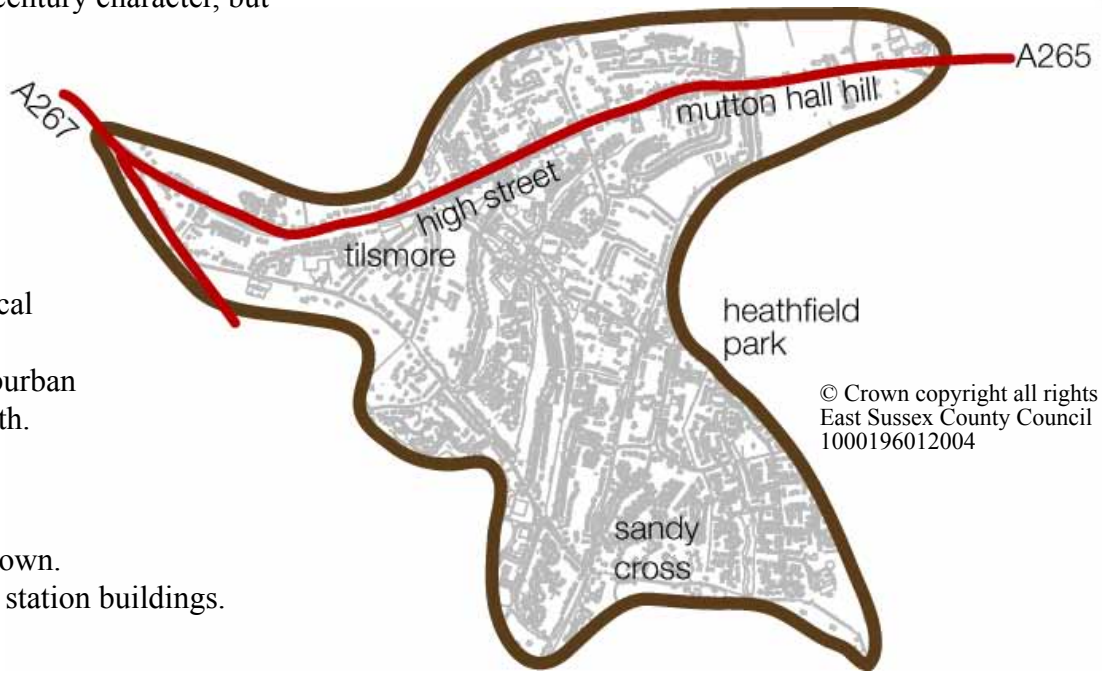
Heathfield



Heathfield occupies a hill crest position on a main High Wealden ridge. Nineteenth century in origin, expanding with the arrival of the railway, the scale and character of Heathfield remains largely intact. Travellers pass through on the main ridge-top road, which becomes Heathfield High Street.

Characteristics

- The town consists of mainly early 20th century buildings with late additions in the 1960's. The Victorian and Edwardian buildings, with their orange–red bricks and tiles, and tiled or slate roofs give unity.
- The town has a subtle, attractive early twentieth century character, but somewhat lacking in local identity.
- The high street is of two and three storeys, with good massing on the south side, but poor massing and discontinuous frontages on the north side
- It has a straight, wide, flat high street with little sense of focus, repose or enclosure.
- There is new housing to the south which lacks local identity.
- The settlement has fairly good tree cover, but suburban development is spreading down slopes to the south.



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Special features

- Heathfield Park contains the eastern edge of the town.
- Disused railway, with old bridges, the tunnel and station buildings.

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Heathfield

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Problems and pressures

- Traffic in the town centre.
- Some characterless and relatively treeless modern housing estates.
- The built environment generally does not reflect the quality of the surrounding High Weald countryside.
- Town centre lacks a focal point.

Vision

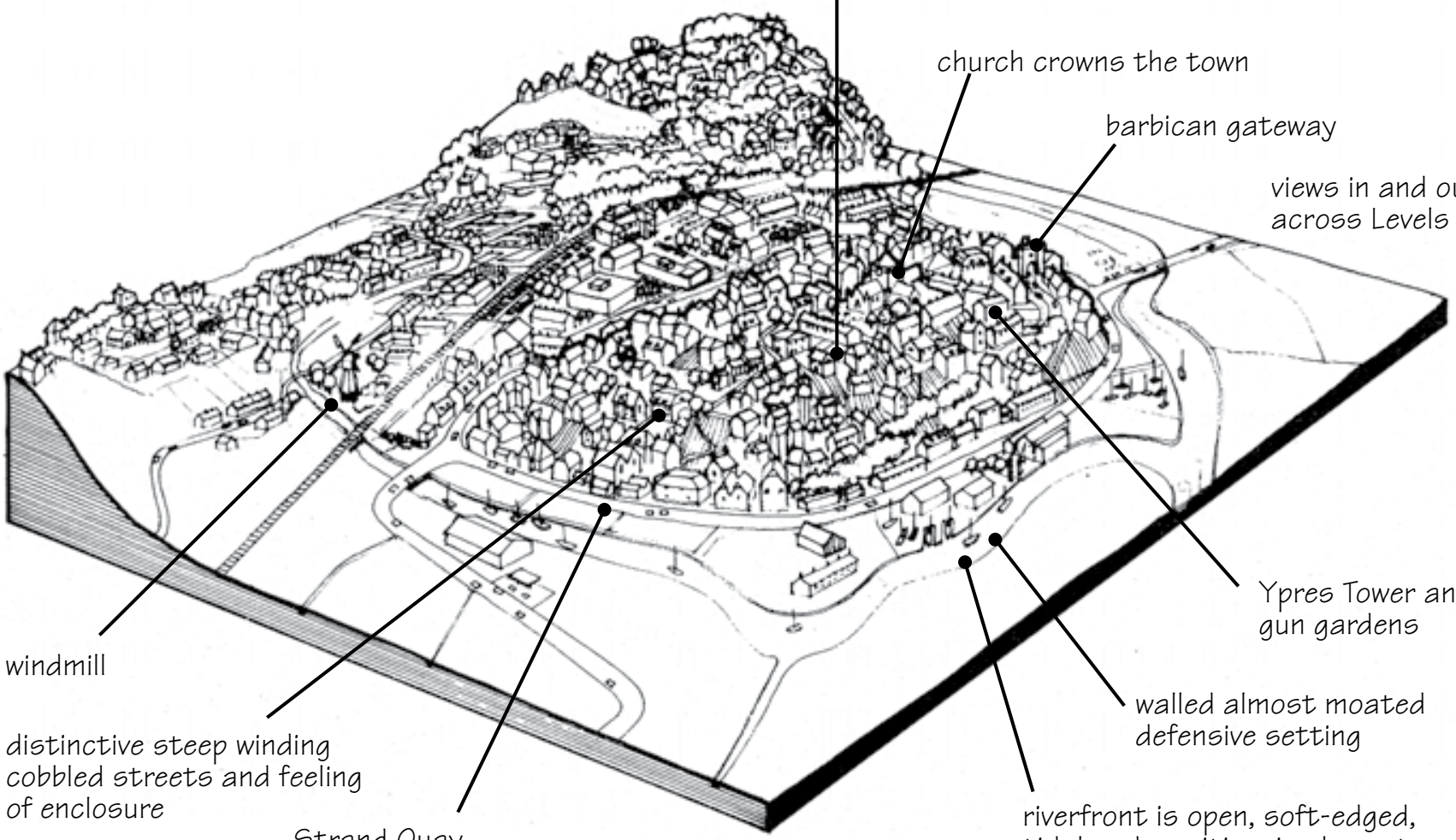
A town at the centre of the High Weald AONB and worthy of its setting, with a strengthened town centre as a new focus, a distinctive tree structure, and strong links with the surrounding countryside.

Landscape action priorities

- Ensure any new proposals in the town centre have regard to the Town Centre Environmental Design Strategy.
- Continue to strengthen the town centre as a character focus, with new spaces and features, town gateways, and possibly traffic calming measures.
- Design and implement a tree conservation strategy.
- Design and implement an open space and access to the countryside strategy.
- Conserve the older settlements and building groups within the town.
- Ensure future planned expansion does not detract from the character of the town.

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Rye



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Rye



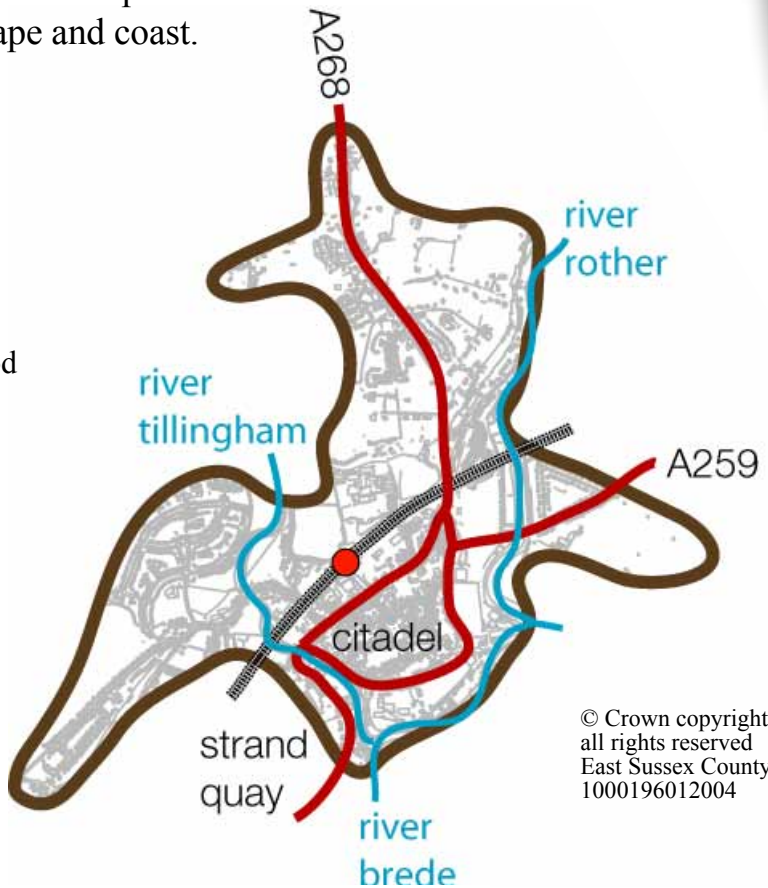
Rye is an ancient citadel town situated between the High Weald and the Levels. It sits on a sandstone hill above the surrounding open marshes, at the confluence of, and bounded by, three rivers. Its history as a walled, almost moated, defensive site and its unique geography have contributed to its compact intimate character. Rye's landscape setting provides a soft, flat, semi-natural contrast to the urban edge of the town, and enhances its maritime character; from viewpoints within the town it gives fine quality views out to the distant landscape and coast.

Characteristics

- The core is perched on a rock overlooking the flat, level surrounding marshland, giving it a Citadel quality.
- There is a sense of enclosure within the centre of the town, with an appealing contrast between the inward-looking town and long views out.
- The town centre has a high visual quality, which comes from the cohesion of the medieval architecture and the restricted palette of materials in a good state of repair: the warm sandstone of the town walls, soft red brick, and black and white timber-framing.
- The town has a human scale and distinctive narrow cobbled streets.
- the riverfront is an open, tidal waterside of a maritime character with good public access.

Special features

- The ancient town walls increase the separation of the town from the Levels.
- The Gun Garden has long views over the Romney Marshes.
- Ypres Tower, St Mary's Church and the windmill are notable landmarks.



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Rye

Problems and pressures

- Traffic congestion and parking, especially in the lower parts of the town.
- Some housing estates lack character.
- Urban edge to the countryside.
- The impact of the Rye Harbour industrial development on the Gun Garden and the town's setting generally.
- The huge number of tourists, including school parties, though welcome, create traffic and parking congestion.
- Large car parks in the market station area detract from local character.
- Development pressure on the town's landscape setting.

Vision

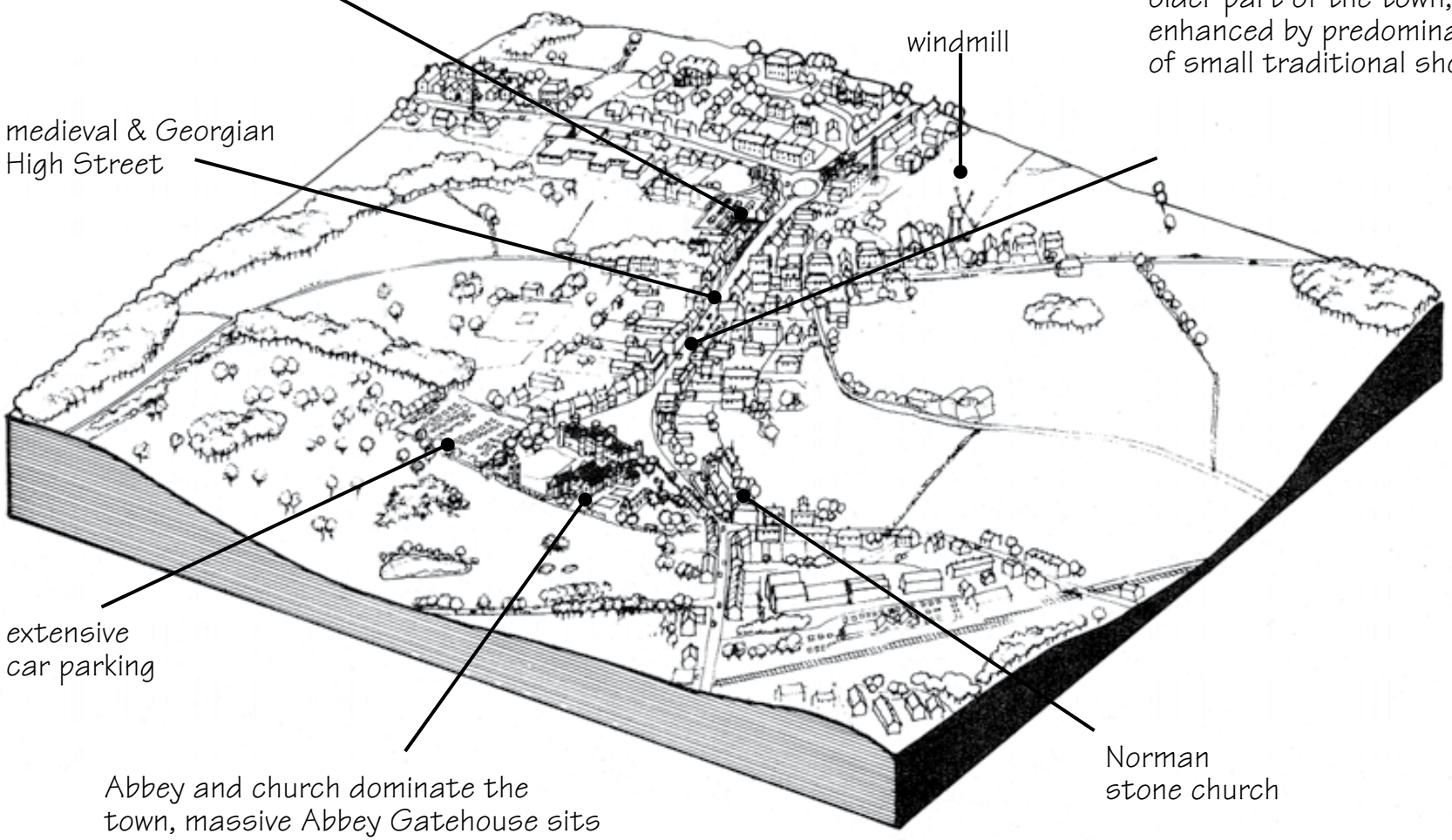
A 'citadel' with a strong, compact and colourful character and sense of history A rich and varied landscape experience enhanced by 'pedestrian-friendly' streets, its position on the boundary between the High Weald and Levels, and the fine views this offers.

Landscape action priorities

- Consider traffic management measures and improvements to parking areas within the town, but with street details and signs designed specifically for Rye and reflecting its character.
- Develop neighbourhood character and awareness in the newer parts of the town, with paving and street furniture reflecting the town's special character, but also distinctiveness at a more local scale.
- Carry out tree planting on open edges and in housing estates, with appropriate distinctive species mix to enhance local character.
- Ensure that traditional materials are used in street repairs.
- An environmental enhancement strategy for Rye Harbour industrial estate.

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Battle



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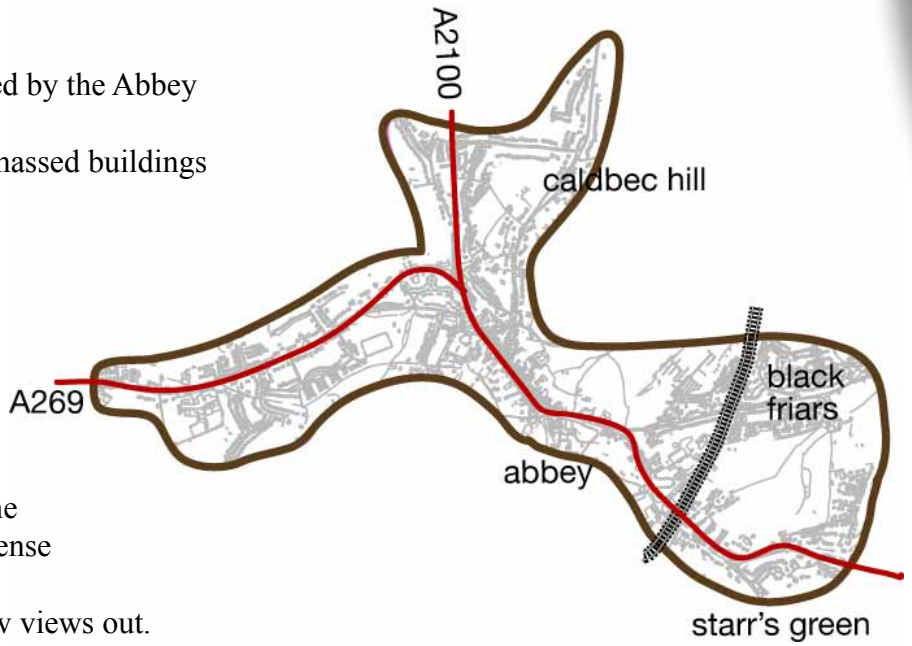
Battle



Battle sits in the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, at the eastern end of the southern sandstone ridge. It is a fine historic market town, with medieval and Georgian buildings. The growth of Battle has been restricted by its position in the High Weald AONB and other environmental and heritage designations, giving it a compact layout. Its special intimate character and urban grain have survived intact. Settled on Battle ridge the town sits in a heavily wooded landscape.

Characteristics

- This ridge-top town has a skyline of historic buildings, dominated by the Abbey and the church.
- The medieval and Georgian High Street has a small scale, well massed buildings with good continuity of facades.
- There are picturesque frontages of red tile, timber-frame, render, white weatherboard and the local sandstone.
- The character of the town is enhanced by the predominance of small and traditional shops.
- The original stone from the substantially destroyed great religious buildings in Battle has been widely recycled in later historic periods, which gives the town great cohesion
- The massive Battle Abbey Gatehouse sits at the eastern end of the High Street above its triangular court yard, giving a wonderful sense of enclosure and character.
- The old town has an enclosed inward-looking character, with few views out.
- Views over the High Weald countryside from outer parts of town.



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Special features

- Battle Abbey, with its grounds is a character focus but visually separate from the rest of the town.
- The Norman stone church

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Battle

Problems, pressures and detracting features

- Traffic in the town centre.
- Undistinguished ribbon development along the road towards Hastings, and on other approaches.
- Pressure for parking and poor landscape design of town car parks.

Vision

A ridge-top historic Wealden town with a central focal space and High Street dominated by pedestrians and events rather than traffic, with strong links to countryside and Wealden views.

Landscape action priorities

- Consider traffic management and improvements to street design in the High Street.
- Prepare a Tree Conservation Plan for the town, particularly to enhance the approaches and peripheral residential areas.
- Implement landscape improvements to the main town centre car park, particularly tree planting, to reduce its impact.
- Improve pedestrian links between the town centre, viewpoints and the countryside.
- Take forward initiatives in the Battle Conservation Area Appraisal, and the Local Transport Plan.

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