Wealden Heritage Strategy
Prepared for Wealden District Council
May 2026

Wealden
District Council



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0.0 Executive Summary

0.1 A Heritage Strategy for Wealden

1. Wealden's heritage is both a key element of its identity and a vital asset for the District's future. It shapes everyday quality of life, underpins pride in place and community cohesion, and supports jobs through construction, conservation, town-centre vitality and the visitor economy. National evidence shows that heritage makes a measurable contribution to local economies and to people's wellbeing – benefits that can be strengthened when they are planned for and invested in.
2. Few places in England can match the scale, complexity and level of preservation of Wealden's historic landscape character. As a medieval and early-modern agro-industrial system, the District's historic landscapes are both of immense national cultural heritage significance and national and international significance for their environmental value. The High and Low Weald is widely recognised as one of the best-preserved medieval landscapes in northern Europe, a living tapestry of small assart fields, ancient woodland, farmsteads and sunken lanes. The District contains one of the largest extents of ancient woodland in England, much of which is found in the High and Low Weald. To the southeast, the Pevensey Levels are an internationally important grazing marsh of Ramsar, Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Special Area of Conservation (SAC) status, as well as being of immense value as a rare surviving landscape of medieval land drainage for agriculture and industry. Many elements of the District's heritage interest descend from this underlying landscape character, such as surviving evidence of historic industries associated with it; the proliferation of farmsteads, moated manors and country houses; local cultural traditions and crafts; and the local vernacular architecture based on the abundantly available timber, sandstone and clay-based products.
3. This significance endures because of the commitment of landowners, community groups and public bodies who are already engaged extensively in activities to conserve, enhance and celebrate Wealden's heritage. Yet cumulative change, including but not confined to new housing and infrastructure, climate impacts on water levels and woodlands, skills shortages and funding pressures, risks eroding what makes the District distinctive. National planning policy is clear that places should set out a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment, recognising heritage's wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits.
4. Faced with these pressures, it is more important than ever that Wealden's heritage is fully understood and proactively managed, so that growth and change enhances rather than dilutes local character, supports nature recovery and strengthens community wellbeing. This Heritage Strategy provides that framework. It assembles the evidence about the character of Wealden's heritage, identifies where effort is most needed, and sets practical recommendations to conserve, enhance and celebrate Wealden's exceptional heritage while enabling sustainable, climate resilient places.



Fig 1 – Rotherfield High Street (Credit: Kim Paterson)



Fig 2 – Ashdown Forest (Credit: WDC)

0.2 Wealden's heritage vision

5. Through the preparation of this Heritage Strategy, a vision has been defined to explain how Wealden's heritage can be conserved, enhanced and celebrated over the coming years, for the benefit of residents, visitors, its economy and the natural environment. This vision, presented in Section 6.3 of this Heritage Strategy, is as follows:

   Wealden's heritage is a highly interconnected network of landscapes, buildings, archaeological sites, activities and habitats, which together represent one of England's most important and extensively surviving historic land management systems. The aim is that Wealden's heritage will be widely understood and deeply valued as a unique and irreplaceable asset by decision makers, residents, designers, those involved in promoting development and visitors. Together, these groups will harness Wealden's heritage to deliver sustainable economic growth, heritage-led placemaking, climate and environmental action, and community resilience and wellbeing.

0.3 Heritage themes

6. In the preparation of the Heritage Strategy, a series of heritage themes have been identified that encapsulate the significance of Wealden's heritage. The identified themes represent those aspects of Wealden's heritage that are particularly significant in defining the District's local distinctiveness and character. There are many other sources of heritage interest and local character within Wealden, and the absence of such features from this list does not represent a lack of significance in its own right, or as part of a group. The heritage themes are presented in Part 4 of this Heritage Strategy, but are summarised as follows:

- **Historic Landscape Character**. This theme explains how underlying geology and topography shaped Wealden's landscapes over millennia, showing the long, interlinked evolution of fields, routeways, settlements and habitats across the District.
- **High Weald**. This theme covers the sandstone ridges and clay ghylls of the High Weald, describing densely wooded hills, assarted small fields, historic droveways and scattered farmsteads that together create a distinctive, sparsely settled countryside.
- **Low Weald.** This theme describes the low-lying clay vale encircling the High Weald, with pastoral farmland, hedged fields and ponds, moated farmsteads, brick and tile traditions and historic routeways linking the South Downs, Weald and coast.
- **Pevensey Levels**. This theme outlines the open grazing marsh created by medieval drainage ("inning"), characterised by rectilinear ditches, raised trackways and "eyes," alongside historic coastal defences, Roman and Norman fortifications and later military infrastructure.
- **Woodland**. This theme explains the Weald's long relationship with woodland (including ancient copses, ghyll woodlands and managed coppice) which supported charcoal, shipbuilding and hops, and today provide continuous habitat networks, historic place-names and cultural inspiration.
- **Medieval land, field and road systems**. This theme sets out the interconnected fabric of assart fields, hedged shaws, ridge routes and sunken lanes across the Weald, and the medieval drainage grids and causeways that organise the Pevensey Levels.
- **Small historic settlements**. This theme describes a dispersed pattern of ridge-top villages and hamlets that often grew from farmsteads and markets, with medieval churches, streets and building groups embedded within strongly rural surroundings.
- **Local industries**. This theme summarises historic economic activity shaped by local resources, including Roman to Tudor ironworking, brick and tile manufacture, hop growing, ropemaking, milling and specialist crafts whose remains and buildings continue to shape the pattern of settlements and landscapes.
- **Local vernacular architecture**. This theme explains characteristic building forms and materials such as timber framed Wealden hall houses, clay tile roofs, weatherboarding and tile hanging, with geology driven variations like flint and cobbles in the south and sandstone in the north.
- **Agriculture and farmsteads**. This theme covers the District's agricultural legacy as

particularly represented by the density and variety of historic farmsteads, from loose and dispersed courtyard plans to barns, granaries and oasts, and the contrasting marsh-edge farmsteads and routes of the Pevensey Levels.

- **Moated manors**. This theme introduces the District's numerous medieval moated sites, especially in the Low Weald, explaining their relationships to status, water management and agriculture, and their later rebuilding in stone or brick.
- **Country estates**. This theme charts successive phases of estate development, from Norman and monastic origins to Georgian and Edwardian houses with designed parks, estate villages and distant views that have influenced settlement edges and approaches.
- **Late nineteenth and early twentieth-century towns**. This theme describes expansion driven by railways and early motoring, including civic buildings, commercial parades and suburbs that add a modern layer to older market centres and village cores.
- **Cultural traditions**. This theme highlights living customs and skills rooted in the landscape, such as Sussex bonfire events, stoolball, trug making, coppicing and charcoal burning, which foster participation, identity and year-round community activity.

0.4 Strategic objectives

7. Having established the nature and condition of the District's heritage, four strategic objectives have been identified to provide direction to efforts to deliver the vision. These strategic objectives are set out in Part 6 of this Heritage Strategy, along with key related strategies and guidance. The objectives are:

Strategic Objective 1: Conservation. Strengthen efforts to better understand, conserve and enhance the District's cultural and natural heritage assets.

Strategic Objective 2: Economic activity. Fully harness Wealden's heritage as a positive influence in securing sustainable development and economic growth.

Strategic Objective 3: Climate change and the environment. Ensure that heritage is both considered and harnessed in efforts to address environmental crises including climate change.

Strategic Objective 4: Access and engagement. Enhance public engagement with and access to heritage.

0.5 Recommendations

8. Part 7 offers 23 prioritised recommendations for the local authority to potentially take forward in conjunction with key local partners to deliver the strategic objectives, as capacity and resourcing allows. These recommendations are a guide for how Wealden's heritage could be better conserved, enhanced and celebrated in the coming years. It is recognised that delivering all 23 recommendations will require considerable resource from a wide range of stakeholders, over a timespan that will include Local Government Reorganisation. This may have implications for the ownership and delivery of these recommendations. If certain recommendations cannot be delivered during the lifespan of the Heritage Strategy, this should not be viewed as a 'failure' – Wealden's heritage is already appreciated and protected by many individuals, organisations and the planning system.
9. A pragmatic and flexible approach should be taken to the recommendations, to take account of opportunities and developments that may emerge over the lifetime of the Strategy. These may suggest implementation in a different manner, by different groups, or in a different order of priority to that described here, or indeed that the recommendation is not deliverable due to resource constraints or other factors. In this context, the recommendations are an initial guide at the start of the Heritage Strategy's implementation, not a rigid list of actions:

General Recommendations	
Recommendation 01	**Make this Heritage Strategy publicly accessible through Wealden District Council Website.**
Recommendation 02	**Establish the position of Heritage Champion for an elected member.**
Recommendation 03	**Review the Heritage Strategy every five years, amend as necessary and publish progress reports.**

Conservation Recommendations	
Recommendation 04	**Increase specialist heritage resources within the District Council.**
Recommendation 05	**Continue to work with Historic England and asset owners to secure the removal of heritage assets from the Heritage At Risk Register.**
Recommendation 06	**Establish a project to create and make publicly accessible a list of non-designated heritage assets within Wealden District.**
Recommendation 07	**Review and update the District Council's heritage-related guidance to strengthen protection of heritage assets and provide enhanced guidance about their appropriate maintenance.**
Recommendation 08	**Encourage heritage pre-application engagement at an early stage for developments affecting heritage assets.**
Recommendation 09	**Adopt Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plans and where appropriate Article 4 Directions for all conservation areas within the District.**

Recommendation 10	**Working with county partners, facilitate a detailed survey of archaeological sites within the District as part of a reassessment of Archaeological Notification Areas.**
Recommendation 11	**Working with national and county partners, undertake a project to record the distribution and extent of long-established woodland within Wealden District.**
Recommendation 12	**Continue to use the District's rich and varied heritage to promote tourism to the District through Explore Wealden.**
Recommendation 13	**Promote and support opportunities to enhance understanding of the District's heritage through the planning system.**
Recommendation 14	**Support a research programme to map agro-industrial historic landscape features across the District in partnership with a higher education institution.**

Climate Change and Environmental Recommendations	
Recommendation 15	**Incorporate policy regarding the role of Wealden's heritage in addressing climate change and other environmental crises into the Local Plan.**
Recommendation 16	**Working with partners, explore opportunities to reduce vehicular traffic in historic centres whilst enhancing public transport and active travel facilities.**
Recommendation 17	**Through the Wilder Wealden partnership, explore opportunities to restore elements of historic landscape character and strengthen traditional, low-impact forms of land management within the District.**
Recommendation 18	**Establish a traditional buildings module as part of a retrofit course in association with local college or training centre.**

Access and Engagement Recommendations	
Recommendation 19	**Create a public directory of local heritage groups on the WDC website to improve collaboration, volunteering and skills pathways, and to widen participation.**
Recommendation 20	**Establish a Heritage Forum.**
Recommendation 21	**Continue to support and encourage local events, activities and initiatives which promote or are implicitly part of Wealden's cultural identity and heritage.**

Recommendation 22	**Review access to heritage sites within the District and work with partners to enhance access where possible.**
Recommendation 23	**Explore opportunities to enhance and, where appropriate, coordinate on-site interpretation heritage sites within Wealden District, and to better promote or establish trails and routes between sites within the District.**

Part 1: Introduction

1.0 Introduction: purpose and methodology

1.1 What is the purpose of this document?

10. Heritage delivers wide-ranging economic, social and environmental benefits. It can stimulate the economic vitality of places by attracting investment, supporting tourism and encouraging the reuse of historic buildings in sustainable development. Heritage also strengthens social wellbeing by fostering local identity, community pride and meaningful engagement in placemaking. Environmentally, it promotes the environmental stewardship of historic landscapes, encourages conservation-led regeneration and supports lower-carbon development through the retention and adaptation of existing structures. Together, these benefits help create resilient, distinctive and sustainable places that align with national planning objectives and long-term community prosperity.
11. This Wealden Heritage Strategy will help Wealden District Council (WDC), its partners and successor authorities to secure these heritage related benefits. Heritage Strategies are policy documents produced by a local planning authority (such as WDC) setting out how a council will identify, manage, protect, conserve, enhance and promote its historic environment over a defined period. Although not a statutory requirement under national planning law, it is increasingly expected as part of plan-making and good practice within the UK planning system.
12. This Wealden Heritage Strategy forms part of the evidence base for the emerging Wealden Local Plan and has three key purposes:

- It identifies the heritage of the Wealden District (excluding the South Downs National Park – see Section 1.2.1 below) in the broadest sense, looking at the historic built environment, cultural values, traditions and continuities, and the District's natural landscapes and habitats.
- It describes the opportunities, issues and vulnerabilities pertaining to Wealden's heritage and how it can be improved, better managed and better understood.
- It provides direction to the District Council and all other partners involved in the management of heritage within the District through a prioritised set of recommendations.

13. The Heritage Strategy is based around an overarching vision for how Wealden's heritage will be safeguarded, promoted and play its part in shaping the District's future. This vision is set out in Part 6 of this Heritage Strategy and is defined as:

    Wealden's heritage is a highly interconnected network of landscapes, buildings, archaeological sites, activities and habitats, which together represent one of England's most important and extensively surviving historic land management systems. The aim is that Wealden's heritage will be widely understood and deeply valued as a unique and irreplaceable asset by decision makers, residents, designers, those involved in promoting development and visitors. Together, these groups will harness Wealden's heritage to deliver sustainable economic growth, heritage-led placemaking, climate and environmental action, and community resilience and wellbeing.

14. A series of strategic objectives (Part 6) have been formulated to provide direction to all stakeholders as to how this vision can be achieved.
15. The 23 recommendations contained in this document (Part 7) are tasks for the District Council, successor bodies following Local Government Reorganisation, and other stakeholders to undertake in order to deliver those strategic objectives.



Fig 3 - Map of Wealden District and its principal settlements (Credit: Alan Baxter Ltd)

1.2 What is the scope of this document?

1.2.1 Geographic scope

16. Wealden District covers a large, predominantly rural area of East Sussex, stretching from the High Weald to the South Coast, with two short coastlines lying west and east of Eastbourne (the western section of coastline falls under the remit of the South Downs National Park Authority). It borders the local authorities of Eastbourne Borough Council to the south; Rother District Council to the east; Tunbridge Wells Borough Council (Kent) to the north-east; Sevenoaks District Council (Kent) to the north; Tandridge District Council (Surrey) to the north-west; and Mid Sussex District Council (West Sussex) and Lewes District Council to the west. The principal towns within the District are Crowborough, Uckfield, Heathfield, Hailsham and Polegate (which is contiguous with urban footprint of Eastbourne to the south).
17. Natural features define several boundaries: the chalk cliffs around Birling Gap/Seven Sisters and Cuckmere Haven mark the western coastal extent (which are within the South Downs National Park), while the low-lying Pevensey Bay and Pevensey Levels frame the east, where sea defences protect extensive wetlands. Large swathes of the north and centre, representing over 53% of the District, lie within the High Weald National Landscape (formerly AONB), which includes Ashdown Forest.
18. The District also contains parts of the South Downs National Park along its southwestern edge, below the A27 trunk road. However, the National Park is excluded from the scope of this Strategy because it is covered by a separate local planning authority, the South Downs National Park Authority.

1.2.2 Heritage scope

19. In *Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance* (2008, p.71), Historic England (HE) defines ‘heritage’ as:

    All inherited resources which people value for reasons beyond mere utility.

20. It breaks down heritage into two categories: cultural heritage and natural heritage.
21. Cultural heritage is:

    Inherited assets which people identify and value as a reflection and expression of their evolving knowledge, beliefs and traditions, and of their understanding of the beliefs and traditions of others.

22. Natural heritage is:

    Inherited habitats, species, ecosystems, geology and landforms, including those in and under water, to which people attach value.

23. This Heritage Strategy addresses Wealden’s heritage as defined by these two categories in a broad sense to try to capture the extraordinary richness of the District’s cultural and natural character. Going further, the strategy examines the significance of heritage within Wealden. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, December 2024, Appendix 2: Glossary), defines significance as:

    The value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. The interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset’s physical presence, but also from its setting. For World Heritage Sites, the cultural value described within each site’s Statement of Outstanding Universal Value forms part of its significance.

24. Because of the size and complexity of Wealden District it would be impossible to describe every aspect of its historical development or every facet that can be considered part of its heritage. Consequently, the omission of any feature does not necessarily convey a lack of

significance in policy terms or in terms of its value to the District's residents and visitors.

1.3 Methodology – how has this document been prepared?

25. The methodology for preparing this Heritage Strategy is based on national best practice guidance for assessing, conserving and enhancing the historic environment, in particular Historic England guidance relating to the assessment of significance, historic landscape characterisation and historic area assessment. It is based on the principle of conserving, enhancing and celebrating all aspects of the District's heritage. The authors carried out desk-based research using secondary literature and historic mapping, site visits and stakeholder consultations to inform the findings and recommendations of the Strategy. In the context of this Strategy, 'heritage' is understood in broad terms as described in the definition set out above (Section 1.2.2).
26. The methodology is based on a sequential assessment of Wealden District's historic environment (including built, natural and cultural assets) to understand where its significance lies, what opportunities and issues exist in relation to this significance, and how these issues can be addressed and opportunities delivered to secure positive benefits for heritage in its own right, but also for the District more widely through heritage as a vital asset.
27. The significance of the District's heritage has been defined in terms of national and local designations for cultural heritage and natural heritage, as well as in terms of key heritage 'themes' which describe features and patterns that define the District's heritage in a broader sense and capture its place-specific qualities.
28. Having established the significance and condition of these heritage themes, a series of issues and opportunities relating to the District's heritage were identified based on review of local and regional strategies, stakeholder conversations and site visits. These issues and opportunities are intended to provide a focus for WDC and other stakeholders to direct their efforts in the coming years, and helping in the formulation of objectives and recommendations within the Heritage Strategy.
29. With Parts 2-5 of the Heritage Strategy having established the heritage 'baseline' for Wealden, a vision for Wealden's heritage was formulated drawing together key themes, issues and opportunities emerging during the preparation of this document, with strategic objectives provided to provide direction to the vision.
30. Following the formulation of a vision and strategic objectives, a series of recommendations were developed based on the heritage baseline of the District, existing and emerging WDC strategies and stakeholder conversations, to help to deliver the conservation, enhancement and celebration of heritage within Wealden.

1.4 Stakeholder engagement – who has been consulted?

31. A range of stakeholders were engaged with in the preparation of this Heritage Strategy. This includes officers from Wealden District Council's heritage, climate change, planning policy, arboriculture, biodiversity, economic development and culture teams; officers from East Sussex County Council's infrastructure planning & place teams, and environment team (regarding archaeology); and advisors from Historic England who have worked extensively within Wealden District and East Sussex more widely. These stakeholder conversations have closely informed the findings and recommendations presented in this Heritage Strategy, particularly in relation to the heritage themes, issues and opportunities, strategic objectives and recommendations.

1.5 Legislative and policy context – how does this document relate to other local strategies and policies?

1.5.1 Historic environment – legislation and national policy

32. Statutory protection for the historic environment is principally set out in the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. This Act requires decision makers to give special regard to the desirability of preserving listed buildings, their settings and any features of special architectural or historic interest which they possess (section 66), and to pay

special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of conservation areas (section 72). These statutory duties are central to all planning decision making affecting the historic environment.

33. Archaeological remains and scheduled monuments are protected under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979. This legislation reflects the national importance of such assets and requires most works to scheduled monuments to be authorised through the Scheduled Monument Consent regime rather than the planning system.
34. Recent legislation has introduced a stronger focus on regeneration, place-making and local empowerment. The Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023 (LURA) makes a number of changes to the plan-making and decision-taking framework which may have implications for the historic environment. These include reforms to the local plan system, a stronger emphasis on design quality and local character, enhanced neighbourhood planning arrangements, and new powers around conservation, regeneration and compulsory purchase. In combination, these changes present opportunities to more clearly embed heritage considerations into spatial planning, regeneration initiatives and long-term place strategies.
35. National planning policy for the historic environment is set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The current NPPF (December 2024) recognises heritage assets as an irreplaceable resource and sets out policies for their conservation and enhancement, requiring decisions to be informed by an understanding of significance and for the impact of development on that significance to be clearly assessed. The NPPF requires great weight to be given to the conservation of designated heritage assets and establishes a balanced judgement between harm and public benefits.
36. Alongside primary heritage legislation, the NPPF treats several further designations as designated heritage assets for planning purposes. These include registered parks and gardens, registered battlefields and protected wreck sites. Registered parks and gardens are included on the Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest in England, maintained by Historic England under powers originating in the National Heritage Act 1983, with protection afforded through national planning policy rather than a separate consent regime. Registered battlefields are included on Historic England's Register of Historic Battlefields (established in 1995) and are recognised by the NPPF as designated heritage assets. Protected wreck sites are designated under the Protection of Wrecks Act 1973 and are also treated as designated heritage assets in planning decisions. There are currently no protected wreck sites or registered battlefields within Wealden District.
37. The NPPF also makes explicit provision for non-designated heritage assets. These are heritage assets identified by the local planning authority as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions but which do not meet the criteria for national designation. The NPPF requires the effect of an application on the significance of any non-designated heritage asset to be taken into account, with a balanced judgement having regard to the scale of any harm and the significance of the asset. Where a non-designated heritage asset (of principally archaeological interest) is demonstrably of equivalent significance to a scheduled monument, the NPPF states that it should be considered subject to the policies for designated heritage assets. Identification of non-designated heritage assets may draw on local evidence sources such as local lists, conservation area appraisals, historic environment records and site-specific assessment.
38. In December 2025, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government published a new draft of the NPPF for consultation. It contains a number of significant changes to national planning policy, including relating to the historic environment. It is important for this Heritage Strategy to take account of any changes to national planning policy if and when the consultation draft NPPF is formally adopted.

1.5.2 Natural environment – legislation and national policy

39. Protection of the natural environment is underpinned by a parallel body of legislation and national policy. The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 provides the principal statutory framework for Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), setting out duties on owners, occupiers and public bodies to conserve notified features. Natural England has

responsibilities for consenting, monitoring and enforcement in relation to SSSIs.

40. Internationally important habitats and species are protected through the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as retained in UK law following EU exit). These Regulations require competent authorities to undertake Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) for plans and projects that may have a likely significant effect on Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) or Special Protection Areas (SPAs), either alone or in combination.
41. National Landscapes (formerly Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty) are designated to conserve and enhance natural beauty under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, within a framework that originates in the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949.
42. The Environment Act 2021 introduced a number of significant reforms, including mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain (generally a minimum of 10%) for most development, delivered through Schedule 7A to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. Associated regulations and guidance now embed biodiversity enhancement as a core consideration in the planning process and have important implications for both natural and heritage assets, particularly where landscapes, historic parks and designed landscapes are affected.
43. National planning policy for the natural environment is also set out in the NPPF, which includes policies on conserving and enhancing landscapes, biodiversity, geodiversity and the wider natural environment. These policies emphasise the need to protect designated sites, minimise impacts on biodiversity, secure net gains for nature and integrate green infrastructure and landscape considerations into development proposals.

1.5.3 Local development plan and the historic environment

44. At the local level, the statutory development plan is the starting point for all planning decisions. At present (2026) this consists of the adopted Wealden District Core Strategy Local Plan (February 2013), the ‘saved’ policies of the adopted Wealden Local Plan (1998), the Affordable Housing Delivery Local Plan (May 2016) and any made Neighbourhood Development Plans (NDPs) (of which there are seven within Wealden District). It also includes several documents adopted by ESCC, including the Waste and Minerals Plan (February 2013), Waste and Minerals Sites Plan (February 2017) and Waste and Minerals Local Plan Review, Revised Policies (October 2024). Local plan policies play a critical role in translating national policy and statutory duties into locally specific requirements for the conservation, management and positive use of heritage assets and historic landscapes.
45. Neighbourhood plans, once made, form part of the statutory development plan and can include locally specific heritage policies, site allocations and design principles informed by local character and historic significance. Emerging local plan documents, including draft or replacement local plans, provide an opportunity to reassess evidence, update policy approaches and ensure alignment with current national policy, legislation and local priorities.
46. Wealden District Council is currently preparing a new Local Plan, which will be the key planning document for Wealden District, excluding the area covered by the South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA). Once adopted, the Local Plan will form part of the Development Plan for the District, replacing all existing local plan policies and will be used to assess and make decisions on planning applications.

1.5.4 Guidance and supporting documents

47. A range of non-statutory guidance documents support the effective implementation of legislation and policy. The Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) supports the NPPF by providing more detailed advice on policy implementation. In relation to the historic environment, it covers the identification and assessment of heritage assets, the treatment of setting, the handling of harm and public benefits, archaeological evaluation, and the use of planning conditions and obligations. For the natural environment, the PPG elaborates on matters such as biodiversity, designated sites, landscape character and Biodiversity Net Gain.
48. Historic England publishes national guidance on topics such as significance, setting, conservation-led regeneration, historic landscapes, archaeology and climate change adaptation for heritage assets. These documents are material considerations in planning decisions and provide best practice advice for applicants and decision makers.

49. Locally produced guidance, including the Wealden Design Guide (2008, with an updated draft in production at time of writing) and the Sussex Historic Landscape Characterisation (2010), also plays an important role in shaping development outcomes. Such documents help ensure that new development responds positively to local distinctiveness, reinforces sense of place and respects the significance of heritage assets and their settings.

1.5.5 The role of local planning authorities

50. Local planning authorities (in this case Wealden District Council) are responsible for determining planning applications in accordance with the development plan and national policy, while applying the statutory duties set out in heritage and environmental legislation. In relation to listed buildings and conservation areas, LPAs must demonstrably have special regard to preservation duties under the 1990 Act. As section 28G authorities under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, they must take reasonable steps to conserve and enhance SSSIs and consult Natural England where their functions may affect notified features.
51. LPAs also have a broader biodiversity duty under section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 (as amended), which now requires public authorities not only to conserve but to actively enhance biodiversity and to report on progress.

1.5.6 The place of Heritage Strategies in the legislative and policy context

52. The NPPF requires plan-making to include a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment (paragraph 203), integrated with sustainable development and place-making. A Heritage Strategy is how an LPA evidences and operationalises that positive strategy: it assembles the local evidence base, identifies issues and opportunities (including Heritage at Risk), and sets priorities, policies and delivery mechanisms that then flow into the Local Plan and any supplementary guidance produced. In practice, a Heritage Strategy guides how the authority will assess significance, manage change, align funding and partnerships, and promote reuse and regeneration, while interfacing with natural environment duties (HRA, SSSIs) and BNG so that cultural and natural heritage are considered together.
53. This Heritage Strategy forms part of the evidence base for the emerging Wealden Local Plan, which will be the District's key planning document that will provide a long-term spatial strategy for sustainable growth through to 2042. At the time of writing, the new Local Plan is in preparation, and this Heritage Strategy is supporting development of the Local Plan's policies relating to heritage specifically.
54. Beyond its role in informing local planning policy, this Heritage Strategy also provides WDC, its partners and the successor authorities following LGR, with a roadmap for safeguarding, enhancing and celebrating the District's heritage during the lifetime of the new Local Plan.
55. The preparation and final content of this Heritage Strategy aligns with the District Council's wider responsibilities, commitments and aspirations, as outlined in the Council Strategy 2023-2027, the Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan (2025), the Economic Development Strategy 2023-2033, and other WDC documents listed in Part 9 (Supporting Information).

1.6 How is this document structured?

56. This Heritage Strategy is structured as follows:

Executive Summary

57. This part includes a summary of the District's vision, key heritage themes, strategic objectives and recommendations to implement the Strategy.

Part 1: Introduction

58. This part provides information regarding the purpose of the Heritage Strategy, its relationship to planning policy and other council documents, and a list of useful sources.

Part 2: Historical Development of Wealden District

59. This part outlines how Wealden District has developed over time to arrive at the network of cultural and natural heritage features that now define its character.

Part 3: Designations

60. This part sets out the local, national and international cultural and natural heritage designations applying to sites within Wealden District.

Part 4: Heritage Themes

61. Building on the designations identified in Part 3, this part outlines a series of themes that define the place-specific qualities of Wealden's heritage.

Part 5: Issues and Opportunities

62. This part identifies the key issues and opportunities relating to the conservation, enhancement and celebration of heritage in Wealden.

Part 6: Heritage Vision and Strategic Objectives

63. This part sets out an overarching strategy for conserving, enhancing and celebrating Wealden's heritage, offering a vision for the District's heritage and how this can be delivered through four strategic objectives.

Part 7: Recommendations

64. This part provides a prioritised list of 23 recommendations for the District Council, its partners and successor authorities to deliver against the strategic objectives.

Part 8: Conclusion and next steps

65. This section summarises the key outcomes of the Strategy and offers some next steps for those responsible for publishing and managing the Strategy.

Part 9: Supporting Information

66. This part contains a bibliography and a glossary of terms.

Appendix A: A timeline of historic settlement and activity in Wealden

67. This provides an extended account of the historical development of Wealden District.

Part 2:
Historical Development of Wealden District

2.0 Historical Development of Wealden District

2.1 Introduction

68. Part 2: Historical Development of Wealden District offers an account of the District's historical development, providing evidence of how the characteristics of Wealden District evolved over time into what today we consider its 'heritage'.
69. This section provides a summary account of human settlement and activity within Wealden District over time. There are many useful sources offering more detailed history of Wealden District, some of which are listed in Part 8 (Supporting Information) of this document. The reader is also directed to Appendix A: A timeline of historic settlement and activity in Wealden, which provides an extended account of the District's history.

2.2 Geology and topography of the District

70. Wealden sits within the eroded core of the Weald anticline (the Weald–Artois Dome), where layered Cretaceous sandstones, clays and chalk have been differentially weathered into contrasting landforms. From a distinct ridge of high ground (of a particularly high elevation for South East England) in the north of the District around Crowborough and Ashdown Forest, the land gradually falls away to the south, with much of the south of the District (excluding the South Downs) being barely above sea level.
71. As a result of these broader patterns, the District can be divided into four interlocking landscape areas rather than a single dominant type: the High Weald, Low Weald, Pevensey Levels and South Downs. This geological and topographical variety has profoundly influenced human settlement and activity in the District for thousands of years, and forms the core of the District's heritage interest.
72. The elevated, densely wooded countryside associated with the High Weald arises where hard sandstones of the Hastings Beds stand proud of intervening layers of softer clays. Fast-flowing streams incise steep, fern-rich valleys (known as ghylls) and expose sandrock outcrops. The same ridge-and-valley grain continues across East and West Sussex, Kent and Surrey, because the geology is regional in scale, not confined by administrative boundaries. The High Weald is the most extensive geological and topographical landscape within the District, covering the larger part of the north, centre and south-east of the District. Encircling this core, the Low Weald occupies a broad vale of predominantly Weald Clay. Heavy, poorly draining soils and meandering streams produce a gently undulating topography with numerous ponds and wet meadows. Within the District, the Low Weald broadly follows a northwest-southeast pattern from Hailsham and Polegate in the south to Uckfield and Fletching in the north.
73. To the south-east, the Pevensey Levels are a flat, low-lying marsh and floodplain where marine and alluvial silts and clays lie over the Wealden bedrock. The open horizons, rectilinear drainage dykes and seasonal surface water define an extensive coastal wetland system of national and international importance (see Part 3). Along Wealden's southern margin, the South Downs introduce a different character altogether, where a thick chalk formation running from Hampshire in the west forms a prominent north-facing scarp with a gentler gradient to the south.

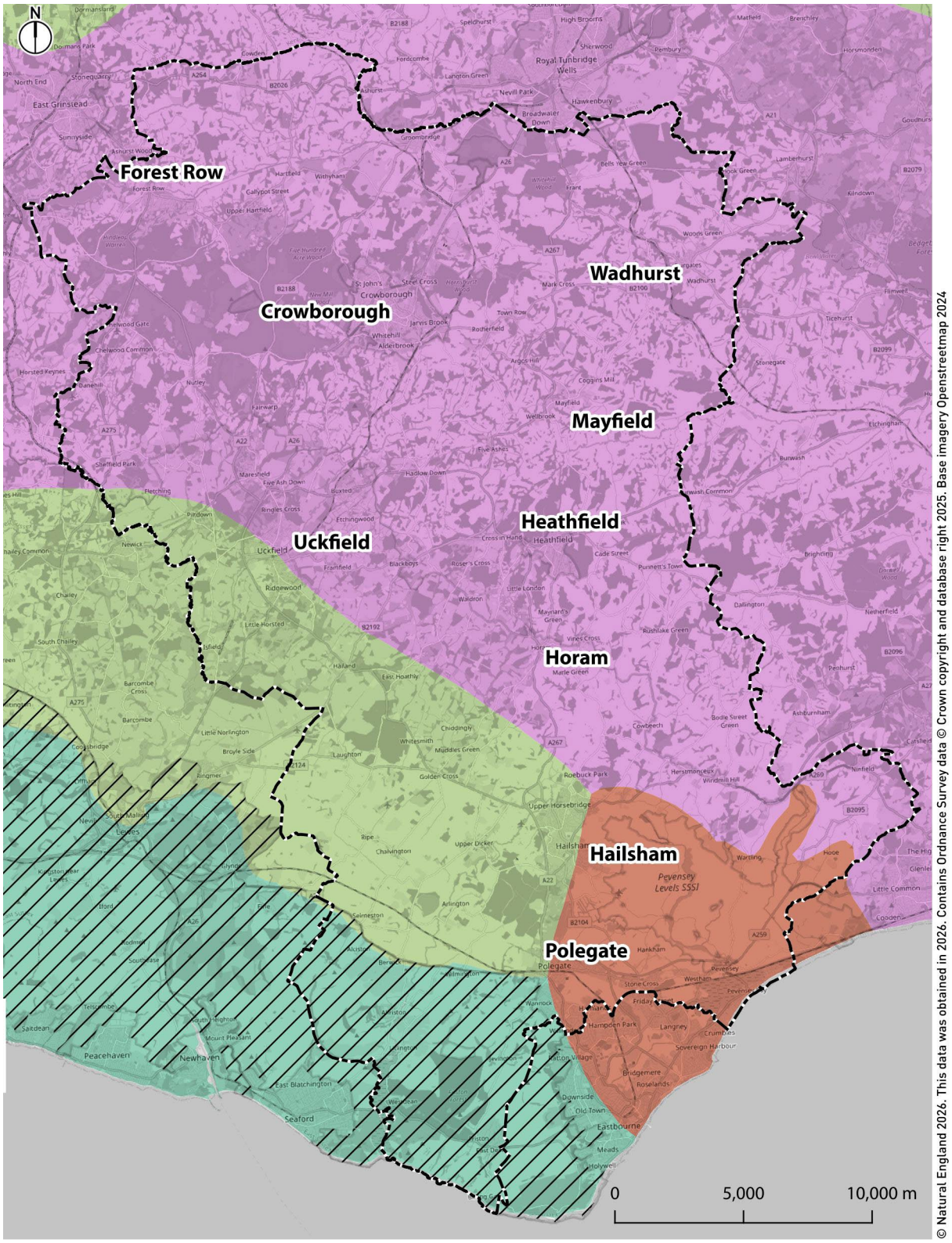


Fig 4 – Map of Landscape Character Areas within Wealden District, identified by Natural England (accurate at April 2026) (Credit: Alan Baxter Ltd)

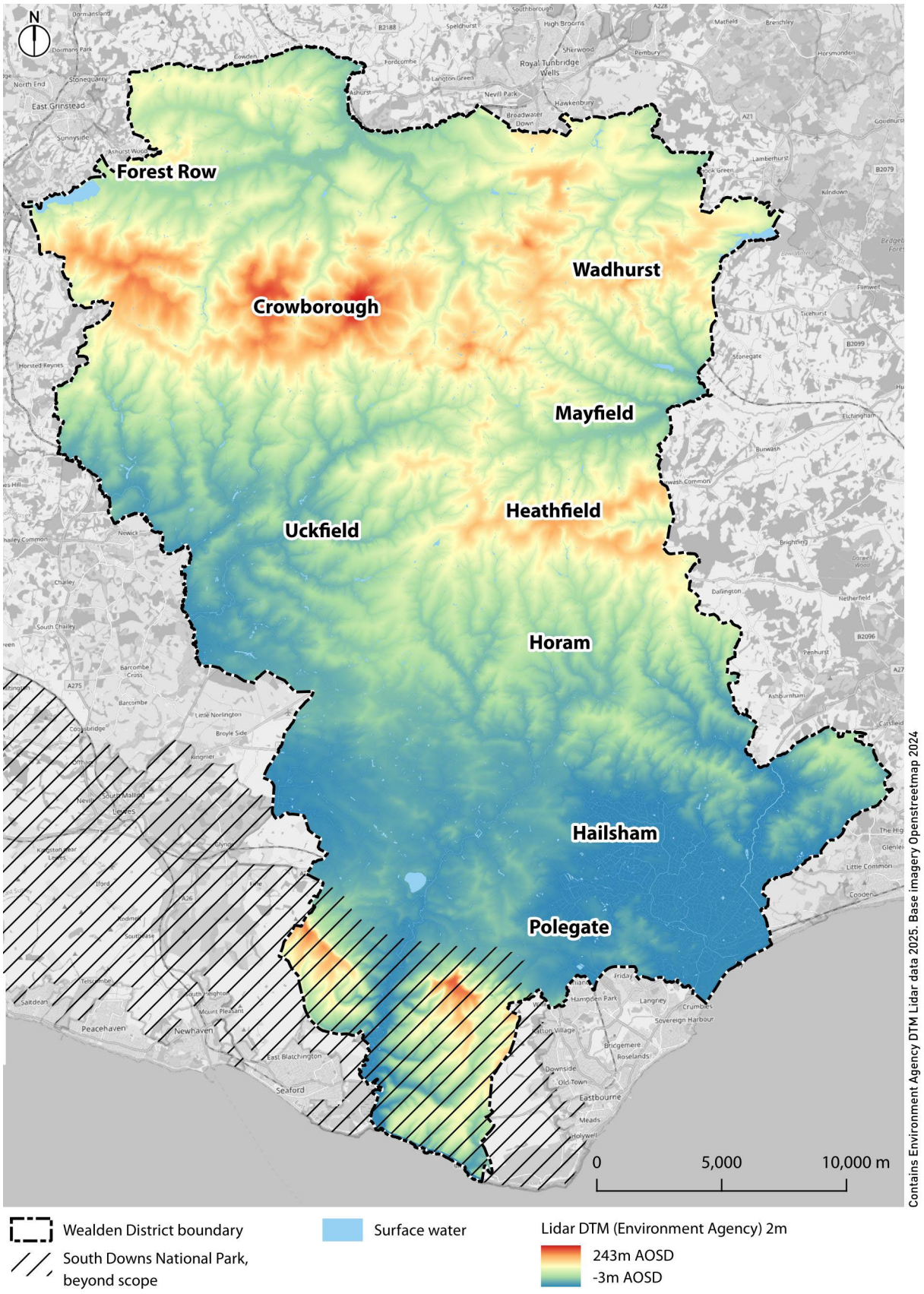


Fig 5 – Topography map of Wealden District (Credit: Alan Baxter Ltd)

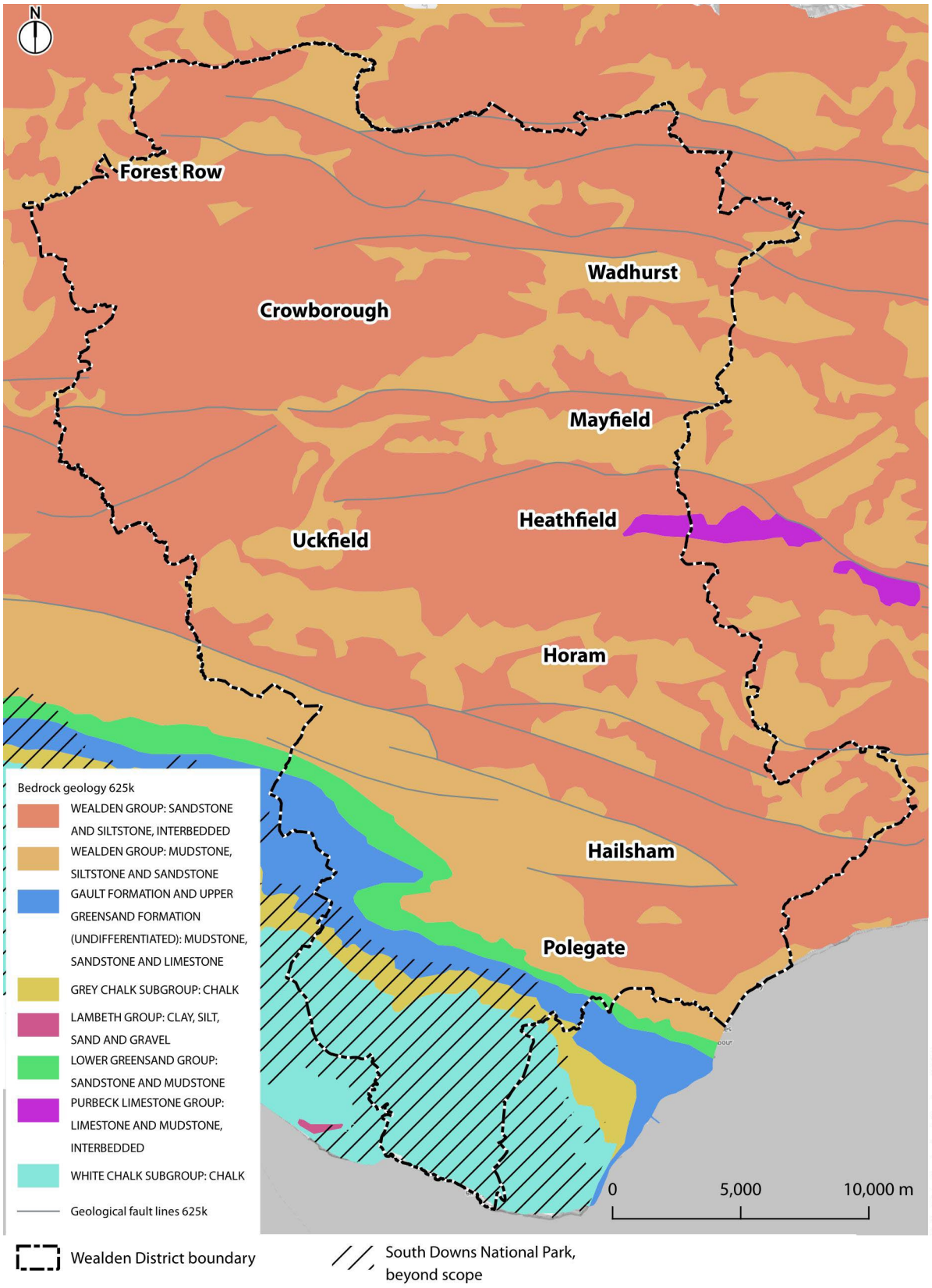


Fig 6 – Geology map of Wealden District (Credit: Alan Baxter Ltd)

2.3 Prehistory and early settlement

74. The origins of human settlement and activity within what is today Wealden District stems from the end of the last Ice Age (around 11,000 years ago), when access into the area was opened up in the form of river corridors such as the Ouse and Cuckmere. Early ridgeway routes, some over 10,000 years old, allowed movement between the sea, marshland, river terrace and wooded high ground within the High Weald. Some of these routes largely survive today, not just as archaeology, but as well-used routes through the District, including the Newenden–Wadhurst ridgeway (now the B2087) and the Oldham–Cross in Hand trackway that broadly follows parts of today's A267.
75. Further evidence of early settlement is preserved in rare and highly significant sites such as the rock shelters at Eridge in the High Weald and several marsh-edge camp locations south-east of Hailsham. On the Pevensey Levels, buried peat and alluvium preserve earlier land surfaces, and archaeological investigations in recent decades have revealed some organic remains such as timber trackways and platforms. Rising sea levels after the last glaciation produced the extensive wetland in which these deposits were sealed, creating one of the District's most significant reservoirs of prehistoric archaeology.
76. During the Neolithic period (c.4000-c.2500 years ago), the contiguous woodland that historically covered the District was cleared in places and farming began. Several sites within Wealden, including the long barrows near Long Burgh, flint mines at Windover Hill and later the nationally significant late Neolithic/early Bronze Age settlement at Belle Tout illustrate the transition to more settled communities. Increasing evidence, much of it discovered during modern development at Maresfield, Uckfield and Hailsham, shows that cultivation extended further inland than once assumed, with emerging patterns of fields, pits and domestic activity on both Low and High Weald geology.



Fig 7 – Eridge Rocks (Credit: Jo Kibble via wikicommons CC BY-SA2.0)

77. Further Bronze Age field systems and barrows are recorded across the southern parishes and increasingly in the Low and High Weald, with Ashdown Forest preserving barrows and enclosures; this pattern signals a farmed mosaic beyond the Downs. Recent Light Detection and Ranging (LiDAR) survey of Ashdown Forest has also identified track-like features which may represent later prehistoric or early medieval use, expanding the picture of how people accessed upland heath and wooded margins over millennia.
78. From about 3000 years ago, the first evidence appears of communities exploiting ironstone deposits which exist within the Wealden sandstones. This activity coincided with the wider transition to the Iron Age in Britain (c.3000 years ago to c.2000 years ago). Defensible high-ground sites and hillforts, as seen at High Rocks and Saxonbury, are understood to be linked to the protection of ore and processing areas and to the new wealth of miners and smelters. The District also contains industrial scatters at Mark Cross near Frant, and a Late Iron Age occupation site at Eridge Park. Shifts from South Downs hillforts to High Weald strongholds reflect a reorientation of settlements toward iron-producing landscapes.



Fig 8 – The Iron Age hill fort at Saxonbury, within which a folly was constructed by the 2nd Earl of Abergavenny in 1828 (Credit: Kim Paterson).

2.4 Roman occupation

79. The Romans began their conquest of Britain in 43CE and were soon drawn to Wealden for many of the same reasons as earlier communities, including iron ore deposits, timber and fertile land for agriculture. The new settlers formalised some prehistoric trackways into roads from Pevensey (known as Anderitum) westwards along Greensand ridges, and into the High Weald and on to London, linking coastal settlements to inland ironworking districts such as existed at Blacklands in Forest Row. Iron production expanded significantly under Roman control and is preserved in the District's archaeology, adding to the extensive survival of iron industry built and buried heritage assets within the District. Over 80 Roman ironworking sites have been identified in the wider Wealden region, with many lying beneath later woodland or dispersed medieval farmsteads.
80. The District possesses a number of particularly significant and nationally rare Roman sites, such as the field boundaries around Ripe and Chalvington which form a distinctive centuriation-like grid, suggesting villa estates laid out along a Roman surveying scheme. Perhaps the best known and most significant evidence of Roman settlement within Wealden is the Saxon Shore fort at Pevensey, constructed in the late 3rd century (c.250-300CE). The fort stood on a sand and clay spur projecting into a tidal lagoon, with sea access on three sides so vessels could berth close to the walls. The fort's curtain wall still underpins the medieval outer bailey and reused local Roman brick. Pevensey's strategic setting, as a peninsula projecting into a large estuary stretching inland to near modern Hailsham, made it a key coastal defence and maritime provisioning centre for the south-east.



Fig 9 – The well-preserved third-century AD curtain wall at Pevensey Castle (Credit: Alan Baxter Ltd)

2.5 Early medieval (Saxon) and Norman transition

81. The Weald is recorded in early medieval (c.400CE-c.1000CE) sources as being part of *Andredesweald*, (or 'forest of Anderida'), a dense, largely impassable oak forest stretching across much of Kent, Sussex and Surrey. This dense woodland remained a major attraction, continuing to draw groups to the area after Roman control over Britain ended in 410CE. Communities living on the fringes of the Weald used it seasonally for transhumance (seasonal movement of livestock from higher ground in the summer to lowland in the winter), and placenames with *feld* and *leah* mark early clearings on ridges that later became widely dispersed settlements such as Mayfield and Uckfield.
82. Manorial estates that were established during the Saxon period (c.450CE-1066CE) often held land across the South Downs, Low Weald and High Weald to exploit contrasting soils, grazing and timber supplies. South Malling, for example, stretched from Lewes towards Lamberhurst before later subdivision. These cross-Weald estates structured both seasonal movement and long-term settlement, with satellite farms feeding major estate centres on better soils nearer the Downs. Ironworking continued to be an important feature. The earliest site of medieval ironworking in the Weald is the Middle Saxon bloomery site at Millbrook in Ashdown Forest, and is the only smelting site known from the period.
83. In October 1066, William the Conqueror's forces landed at Pevensey in the south-east of the District and reused the Roman fort there as a base for their conquest of England. St Mary's at Westham, close to Pevensey Castle, is claimed as one of the earliest Norman churches in England, and the port town grew outside the gates using established Roman routeways for overland access. Following the conquest, the Normans subdivided Sussex into five new administrative areas known as Rapes. The Rape of Pevensey, with its administrative centre, broadly established the geography of today's Wealden District. William the Conqueror granted control of the Rape of Pevensey to his half-brother, Robert de Mortain, who had fought alongside him at the Battle of Hastings, perhaps a sign of the area's resource wealth and importance. The land under Robert's control comprised a patchwork of manorial centres, hunting parks (including the enclosure of Ashdown Forest by a pale (ditch and fence) 23 miles long), and early nucleated villages beginning to emerge on cleared ridges, with the High Weald remaining densely wooded.



Fig 10 – Pevensey Bay, the area associated with landing of William the Conqueror's invasion fleet in 1066 (although the coastline has changed significantly since that time) (Credit: Alan Baxter Ltd)

2.6 The high and later medieval landscape

84. In the 500 years following the Norman Conquest (1066), the District's landscape became more structured, with settlement, farming and trade patterns becoming increasingly established across its contrasting terrains.
85. In the High Weald, settlements continued to take the form of a dispersed pattern of small farmsteads and hamlets positioned along the ridges. These were linked by long-used sunken lanes (also known as hollow-ways, formed by centuries of traffic erosion) and ridge-top routeways. Many of these hollow-ways survive as deep, wooded trackways. The surrounding fields are typically small and irregular, the result of assarting (piecemeal medieval clearance of woodland), and together they create a landscape often described as one of the best-preserved medieval field systems in northern Europe. These early settlement "islands", surrounded by former woodland, later evolved into the nuclei of medieval parishes.
86. By contrast, the Low Weald was (and to some degree remains) characterised by widely spaced, often medieval farmsteads, some built on moated platforms such as at East Hoathly and Waldron, that may indicate higher-status farms or small manorial centres. Enclosed fields, numerous ponds and surviving woodland blocks reflect historic charcoal production and ironworking, both of which remained highly important industries within the District, generating considerable wealth for the Rape of Pevensey. The area's distinctive Wealden houses - timber-framed buildings with jettied upper floors either side of a central recessed section containing a double-height hall – are illustrative of this wealth, as well as the importance of wood as the dominant local building material.



Fig 11 – Hollow way in the High Weald (Credit: Alan Baxter Ltd)

87. Across the Pevensey Levels, progressive land reclamation, especially by monastic houses, created a long-lasting pattern of drainage ditches and early sea defences. This produced a low-density pastoral landscape in which farmsteads sit on slightly raised “island” landforms, known as ‘eyes’, from where the placenames such as Horse Eye, Manxey and Rickney are derived. Much of the medieval drainage network survives, making the Levels one of the finest preserved examples of a medieval lowland grazing system in England. Pevensey itself was a significant harbour and port during this period, being made a limb of the Hastings Cinque Port and receiving a market charter in 1207.
88. New market centres developed at key junctions in the route network. From the thirteenth century (1200-1300CE), royal charters granted to places such as Hailsham (1252), Wadhurst and Mayfield (both 1253) and Uckfield (1220) formalised these trading roles. Many medieval markets originally occupied broad street spaces or areas beside churchyards—patterns still visible in the layout of several modern high streets. Some of the District’s long-standing cultural traditions date from this period of growth and affluence, such as the Heffle Cuckoo fair, which was first held at Heathfield in 1315.
89. The iron industry remained prominent in the District during this period. 36 medieval ironworking sites have been identified in the Weald through archaeological investigations.



Fig 12 – Hailsham Parish Church (1425-1450) was one of a number of village churches that were reconstructed between the twelfth and sixteenth centuries (Credit: Alan Baxter Ltd)

2.7 Post-medieval change (16th–17th centuries)

90. During the early-modern period, Wealden District saw major changes as industry, farming and settlement patterns adjusted to new technologies and growing economic pressures.
91. The Wealden iron industry reached its peak between the 15th and 17th centuries, driven by local iron-rich sandstones, extensive woodland for producing charcoal, and reliable water power in steep valleys. Newbridge in Ashdown Forest hosted England's first water-powered blast furnace (built in 1496), and the surrounding landscape still preserves hammer ponds, furnace platforms and slag heaps from this intense industrial activity. At its height the industry supported many furnaces and forges, influencing the layout of routeways, the hydrology and water features within the District, directing woodland management, and encouraging small clusters of settlement near working sites.
92. The wealth generated by ironworking is visible today in the substantial houses built for ironmasters, the development of estate landscapes, and distinctive iron grave slabs—Wadhurst Church alone retains 31 examples dating from 1617 to 1799. Old field names and early maps around furnace sites also indicate brickmaking associated with the industry, particularly the production of bricks used to line furnace stacks. Areas around Rotherfield, Mayfield and Hartfield preserve a mix of industrial remains and former workers' cottages, showing how closely industry and settlements were linked.
93. At the same time, farming continued to expand within the long-established pattern of assarts. Scattered farmsteads remained typical across both the High and Low Weald, where farmers practised mixed agriculture suited to heavy clay soils and the area's rolling, ridged terrain. Many farms added large timber barns or new cattle housing, responding to shifts in markets and the gradual clearance or reorganisation of surrounding woodland.



Fig 13 – Iron gravestone at Wadhurst Church (Credit: Alan Baxter Ltd)

2.8 18th–19th centuries: agriculture, industry and estates

94. The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries saw the Wealden landscape continue to evolve as farming practices diversified, industries expanded, and landed estates reshaped the countryside. This period saw increasing enclosure of land and encroachment of estates onto commons especially in the north of the District around Ashdown Forest. Estates varied greatly in size from large aristocratic landholdings like Sheffield Park, to more modest holdings centred on an enlarged farmhouse.
95. Hop growing became a major crop, especially in the nineteenth century, thriving on the area's sandy slopes and small, enclosed fields. Its most visible legacy is the oast house, the barn-like building with one or more round or square kilns topped by white cowls (used for drying hops). Many oasts were added onto older farm groups and some still retain important internal drying floors and fittings. The seasonal nature of hop picking brought in large groups of migrant workers, many from London, which drove the growth of towns and villages across the District and increased demand for better transport links such as turnpike roads and later railways.
96. Brick and tile production also grew, using the Weald Clay and local loams. Although Herstmonceux Castle in the 1440s had been an early landmark building constructed entirely of brick, it was the advent of mechanised production and the arrival of the railways in the nineteenth century that made brick widespread across the District. Red brick terraces, tile-hung walls and brick garden boundaries became common features in towns such as Hailsham and Uckfield, supported by numerous small brickworks that developed along clay belts and near new railway lines.
97. Timber continued to be managed for a variety of uses, with production of structural timber taking a more prominent role during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries as demand for shipbuilding timber from the Royal Navy increased. Traditional forms of forest management were maintained, with coppicing and charcoal production remaining features of the Wealden landscape.



Fig 14 – Unconverted oast house at Strawberry Hall (Credit: WDC)

98. The High and Low Weald retain a very high density of historic farmsteads, many with buildings dating from before 1750. Many have a loose or dispersed courtyard plan, with three to five-bay timber barns, granaries or cart sheds, cattle yards and often oast houses. By contrast, the Pevensey Levels hold fewer historic farmsteads, most of which reflect 19th- and early 20th-century pastoral farming. This period also saw the emergence of model farms such as at Sheffield Park and more formally designed estate steadings, particularly on large landholdings where owners invested in modernised layouts and improved efficiency.
99. Another characteristic of the District – its high number of country estates – was solidified during this period, as newly wealthy groups drawn to the area for its landscape beauty established estates in the area, alongside the network of earlier medieval estates. Large, designed estate landscapes, including Heathfield Park, Eridge Park and Sheffield Park, were reshaped by leading landscape designers such as Lancelot “Capability” Brown, Humphry Repton, and later Edwin Lutyens with Gertrude Jekyll. These designers used the area’s striking natural topography to create views, water features and sheltered planting. Decorative estate features, such as the Gibraltar Tower at Heathfield, still mark the landscape today, alongside specialised buildings associated with the estates such as stable blocks.
100. Estate villages were often rebuilt or remodelled during this period, showing distinctive architectural styles and the philanthropic influence of major landowners. Important examples are found at Eridge Green and Fletching. Although distinctive, these estate cottages formed only a subset of the wider expansion of more modest workers’ cottages constructed or reconstructed across the District as the population increased. These more modest dwellings used local materials and long-standing architectural forms, as well as materials and styles from further afield such as slate roof tiles, made possible by improved transportation networks across the South East.



Fig 15 – Sheffield Park (Credit: Peter Trimming via wikicommons CC BY-SA2.0)



Fig 16 – Eridge Estate cottages (Credit: WDC)

2.9 Transport and settlement growth in the 19th century

101. Rising demand for improved transport from industries, seasonal workers and landowners began to reshape Wealden's settlements, local industries and daily movement patterns. Before modern transport, travel and goods movement relied on historic drove roads and ridgeways, with certain stretches of the Cuckmere River and waterways on the Pevensey Levels used to carry timber, corn and ironwork to coastal outlets. Placenames such as Puddledock near Boreham Street preserve the memory of former wharves, where goods were loaded and unloaded. Navigable waterways remained important into the early post-medieval period including the River Ouse, allowing bulky items such as iron bars, grain and timber to be transported more easily than by road. Earlier road improvements included turnpikes, and tollhouses and coaching inns survive in many villages on their routes.
102. The arrival of the railways in the mid-19th century transformed settlement patterns, not just in towns but also within estate villages, many of which benefited from a station of their own. The Cuckoo Line (Polegate–Hailsham, opened 1849; extended to Eridge in 1880) and the Uckfield–London line (opened 1868) opened up the district to new building, travel and trade. Heathfield grew rapidly from a small ridge-top hamlet, while Uckfield expanded with its "New Town", and Crowborough developed into a notable spa destination, marketed as 'Scotland in Sussex'. Rail-related industries also emerged, including poultry fattening and specialist corn and seed merchants, which benefited from easy distribution by train.
103. The railways also widened markets for locally produced bricks and tiles, helping to spread characteristic Wealden building materials far beyond their immediate source. Railway infrastructure such as bridges and cuttings remain a visible part of many settlement edges, while disused lines have become valued green corridors and recreational trails such as the Cuckoo Trail and the Forest Way. Surviving stations at Mayfield, Buxted, Eridge, Frant and Isfield – some of which remain in use as operational train stations – retain distinctive architectural detailing that reflects the character of each railway company and the period in which they were built.



Fig 17 – Frant Station, constructed in 1851 (Credit: Mike Quinn via wikicommons CC BY-SA2.0)

2.10 Twentieth century changes

104. The twentieth century saw substantial changes to the District in the wake of the decline of traditional industries, wartime mobilisation and major post-war expansion of several towns.
105. The decline of traditional Wealden industries was well underway by 1900. Ironmaking had already faded by the late 18th century, and many brick and tile works closed during the mid-20th century, leaving former clay pits, ponds and yard sites. County industrial histories and gazetteers record the rise, mechanisation and later contraction of Sussex brickmaking, including major firms such as the Sussex Brick and Estates Co. at Warnham (Horsham District) and a large number of small brickyards on the Weald Clay belt. As hop growing waned, oast houses were frequently converted to new uses, especially as general ancillary stores and houses.
106. The twentieth century also saw the expansion of civic buildings and buildings for entertainment in the growing towns such as police stations, churches, libraries and cinemas, their enriched architecture emblematic of a growing civic pride and sense of local distinctiveness. Many of these buildings survive and are often unlisted, but nevertheless important features of the historic townscape of the District's principal centres.
107. The influence of the First and Second World Wars is found in sites throughout the District. Along Wealden's coast, Martello Towers (Napoleonic coast forts) remained part of the defensive network, with some adapted in the Second World War; Tower No. 61 in Pevensey Bay is now listed and retains a Second World War gun emplacement. Inland, Wealden lay on stretches of the GHQ Stop Line, a national anti-invasion system of pillboxes, anti-tank ditches and obstacles designed in 1940 to slow armour and channel an attacker for counter-attack ("stop-line" defence). Within the Pevensey Levels, RAF Pevensey is an important wartime survivor, a Chain Home early-warning radar station (built 1939–40) with 350-ft steel transmitter towers and 240-ft timber receiver towers. The site was bombed during the Battle of Britain but repaired within hours, and substantial earth-mounded blocks, aerial bases and buried reserves survive.



Fig 18 – Martello Tower 61 at Pevensey Bay, constructed in 1805-6 and altered in c.1941 to incorporate a superstructure containing range finding equipment for a gun battery on the shingle below (Credit: WDC)

108. Wealden also hosted large military assembly and training areas in both World Wars. At Maresfield, a vast army camp (opened in 1914) trained Kitchener's recruits, later housed Royal Signals units and then became the Intelligence Corps depot after 1948 before decommissioning and redevelopment. Camps for Canadian units were established at Sheffield Park from 1942, with Nissen hut platforms and services still traceable. The air war also impacted Wealden. Fighter planes operating from the advanced landing ground at RAF Deanland (constructed in 1943) provided air cover to the ground forces on D Day (6 June 1944) and played a significant role in countering the V1 flying bombs in 1944 and 1945. It survives today as a private airstrip. The District also suffered from bombing through being within the 'Bomb Alley', with German bombers unloading their payload on the way back from London, as well as V1s and V2s falling short of their targets within London and the South East.
109. Railway closures in the 1960s affected Wealden acutely, severing lines such as Lewes–Uckfield (closed in 1969), while services north of Uckfield remained open to London. Two former railways became much-used green corridors: the Cuckoo Trail (on the Polegate–Heathfield line, opened as a shared path from 1990) and the Forest Way Country Park (East Grinstead–Groombridge, designated 1974, upgraded 2002). These trails, and surviving station and bridge fabric, keep the transport story legible in today's landscape.
110. From the later twentieth century, the District's settlements expanded further, shaped by road and rail access to London and the coast and by the enduring draw of the Wealden countryside. The present District itself was created on 1 April 1974 under the Local Government Act 1972, uniting the former Hailsham and Uckfield Rural Districts, with Hailsham as the administrative centre. Late twentieth-century growth was most evident in market towns such as Crowborough, Uckfield and Hailsham, where improved road connectivity along the A22/A26 corridors and continued services on the Oxted–Uckfield rail line supported commuting and access to coastal employment.
111. Landscape policy tightened in parallel. The High Weald was designated an AONB in 1983 (now styled a National Landscape), and the statutory High Weald Management Plan 2024–29, adopted by the local authorities, guides decisions as a material consideration in the determination of planning applications. To the south, the Sussex Downs AONB (1966) provided an additional planning context at the District's edge and foreshadowed the later creation of the South Downs National Park in 2010, reinforcing sensitivities around settlement form and views. Protection of Ashdown Forest was also strengthened by the Ashdown Forest Act 1974 and subsequent byelaws, shaping recreation and constraining development near the Forest. By the end of the century these forces underpinned sustained population growth – Wealden recorded 140,023 residents at the 2001 Census – while embedding conservation as a core planning principle.



Fig 19 – Forest Way Country Park, established by East Sussex County Council in 1974, just seven years after the closure of the railway line (Public Domain)

2.11 Wealden in the twenty-first century

112. Wealden in the twenty first century has been reshaped by the steady growth of towns and infrastructure. Expansion has been most visible around Hailsham, Uckfield and Crowborough, supported by A22 junction upgrades and proposals that tie new homes to active travel links including disused railway lines. New neighbourhoods and infill have accompanied a rise in households across the 2010s, with stronger design guidance emerging in the form of the High Weald Management Plan, High Weald Housing Design Guide and the expansion of Neighbourhood Plans across many of the District's settlements.
113. The District's economy has remained anchored in agriculture and landscape management, small businesses and services, as well as tourism which is focussed on accessible countryside and historic towns and villages. Road and rail links from the District to the south coast and London have made it an increasingly popular location for commuters. County and District transport studies prioritised the South Wealden and Eastbourne corridor, aiming to ease movement between market towns, the A27 and Eastbourne's jobs and services, while weaving in cycling and walking improvements. The Cuckoo Trail matured as a green spine for commuting and leisure, linking Heathfield, Horam, Hailsham and Polegate and supporting town centre and village vitality.
114. Wealden marked its fiftieth year in 2024 with public events that underlined a strong local identity forged since 1974. Population continued to grow across the century's first decades, from 140,000 in 2001 to 148,915 in 2011 and 160,100 by the 2021 Census, with mid 2024 estimates around 166,900. This growth has reinforced demand for housing, transport and community facilities.

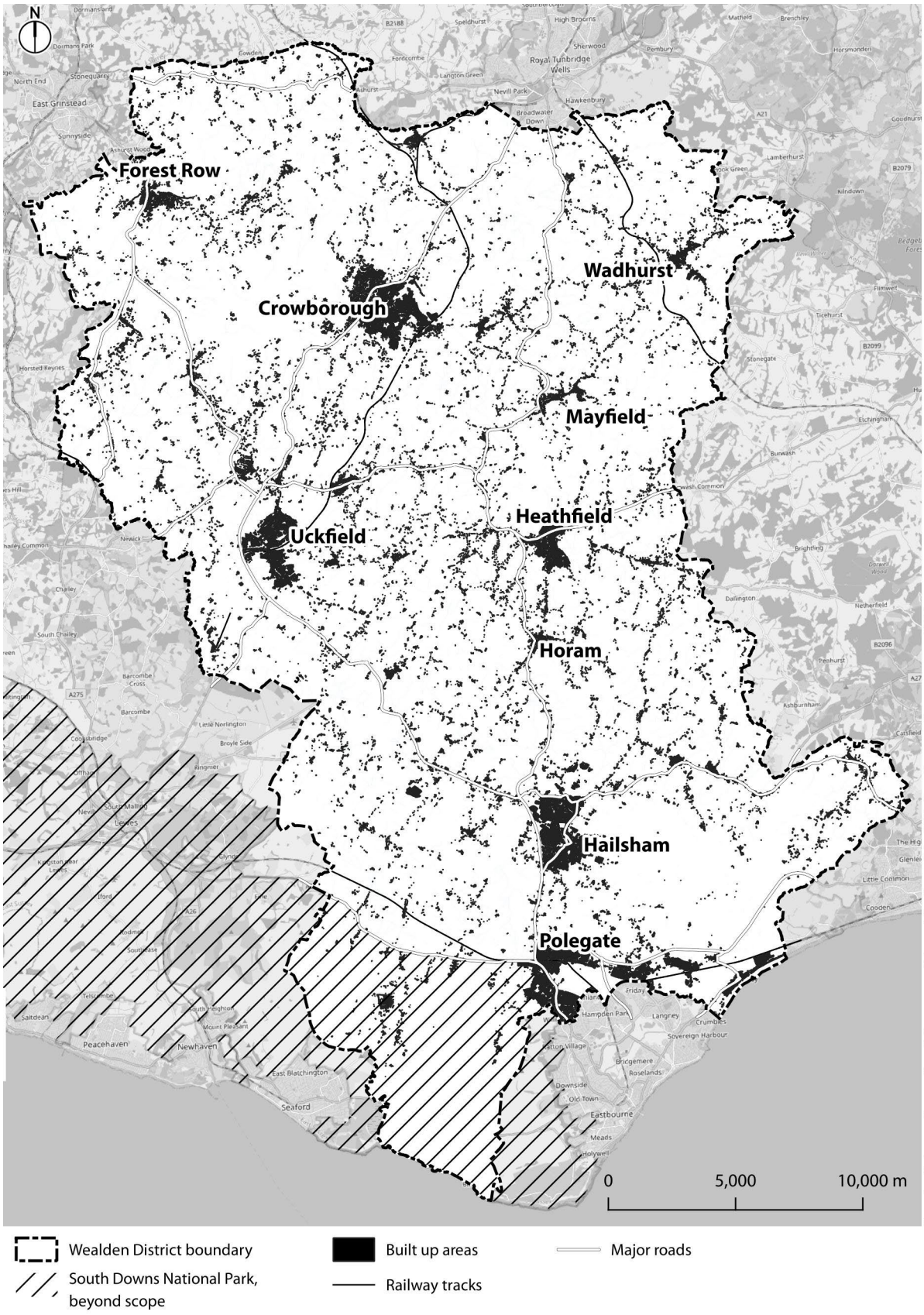


Fig 20 – Map illustrating the extent of built up areas within the District in 2026, clearly illustrating the District's rural character with large tracts of sparsely populated land punctuated by a few larger settlements, and a fairly limited network of larger road and rail links. (Credit: Alan Baxter Ltd)

Part 3: Designations

3.0 Designations in Wealden District

3.1 Introduction

115. One way in which assets or areas are recognised for their heritage value is through formal designation based on legislation and planning policy. There are many different forms of designation, some relating more closely to a site's or asset's cultural heritage value and others relating more closely to its natural heritage value. Wealden District contains thousands of sites that have been recognised in this way, and the sites that are designated are illustrative of the breadth and depth of heritage within the District.
116. The District has many more sites that possess cultural or natural heritage value but have not been formally recognised as such. To some degree, this reflects a wider issue (as explored in Sections 5.4 and 5.8) of comparatively poor coverage of the National Heritage List for England within Sussex, but also reflects the fact that the District possesses many built and natural heritage assets that are of local interest and contribute to the broader character of the District's heritage. The absence of such assets from this and subsequent sections does not signify a lack of significance, and there is considerable room for enhancing understanding and protection of such undesignated assets.

3.2 Cultural heritage designations

117. Statutory designation formally identifies the significance of a building, structure or site, and once formally recognised, is referred to in planning policy as a 'designated heritage asset'. There are six types of designated heritage asset:

- Listed buildings
- Conservation Areas
- Scheduled Monuments
- Registered Parks and Gardens
- Registered battlefield
- Protected wrecks

118. Wealden District contains four of these types of designation, with no registered battlefields or protected wrecks.
119. Many local authorities also identify buildings, monuments, sites, places, areas or landscapes that have a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions but which are not formally designated heritage assets. In policy terms, these are known as 'non-designated heritage assets'. In some areas, local authorities identify some non-designated heritage assets as 'locally listed'.
120. Wealden District Council does not currently keep a local list, although they do identify non-designated heritage assets internally, for example when identified during the course of assessing a planning application. Where these are recorded, they generally form part of conservation areas or places covered by neighbourhood plans (neighbourhood planning groups are also able to identify non-designated heritage assets). East Sussex County Council manages below ground archaeology through the identification of Archaeological Notification Areas.

3.2.1 Listed buildings

121. A listed building is a structure of special architectural or historic interest requiring consent for changes, officially designated by the Secretary of State under the *Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990* and recorded on the National Heritage List for England. As of March 2026, there are 2261 listed buildings in Wealden District (this figure includes buildings within the South Downs National Park, which are outside of the scope of this report), with 53 listed at Grade I, 110 at Grade II* and 2098 at Grade II. It is important to note that this figure of 2261 does not equate to the total number of listed buildings in the District, but rather the number of listed building entries on the National Heritage List – many

buildings are included on the List under a single entry, such as terraces of housing or farmsteads with outbuildings. Therefore the total number of listed buildings in the District is likely to be considerably higher than 2261.

122. The Grade I listed buildings include many of the District's medieval churches, as well as a number of eighteenth-century country houses, such as Sheffield Park House and Hammerwood Park, medieval vernacular buildings, including the Middle House Hotel in Mayfield and the C15th Horselunges Manor near Hellingly, described in its List entry as one of the finest timber-framed buildings in the County. There is also a rare example of a Grade I listed late-twentieth-century building: John Outram's The New House, built between 1979 and 1981. Grade II* listed examples include Nutley Windmill, Maresfield (an open trestle post mill with early nineteenth century origins, listed on 18 April 1973), Buxted Park (a Georgian country house begun circa 1722, altered in 1810 and rebuilt after the 1940 fire in 1940 to 1947), Old Maypole Farmhouse, High Hurstwood (a fifteenth century timber framed farmhouse), and Herstmonceux Science Centre, Herstmonceux (the equatorial telescope group constructed 1953 to 1958 and listed as Grade II* on 26 March 2003).
123. The two maps below illustrate the distribution of listed buildings across the District. The first (Figure 22 on page 44) represents each listed building as a point on the map. The second (Figure 23 on page 45) presents this information as a 'heat map', providing an insightful illustration of where listed buildings are concentrated within Wealden. The emerging picture is a general distribution of listed buildings within ridgetop settlements and historic routes between them, with a more dispersed spread of listed assets between these centres within the rural areas of the district. There are comparatively fewer listed buildings around Ashdown Forest and the Pevensey Levels reflecting the lower density of development in these areas, although these areas hold other national and international designations, particularly relating to their natural heritage.



Fig 21 – Horselunges Manor, Hellingly (Grade I listed) (Credit: WDC)

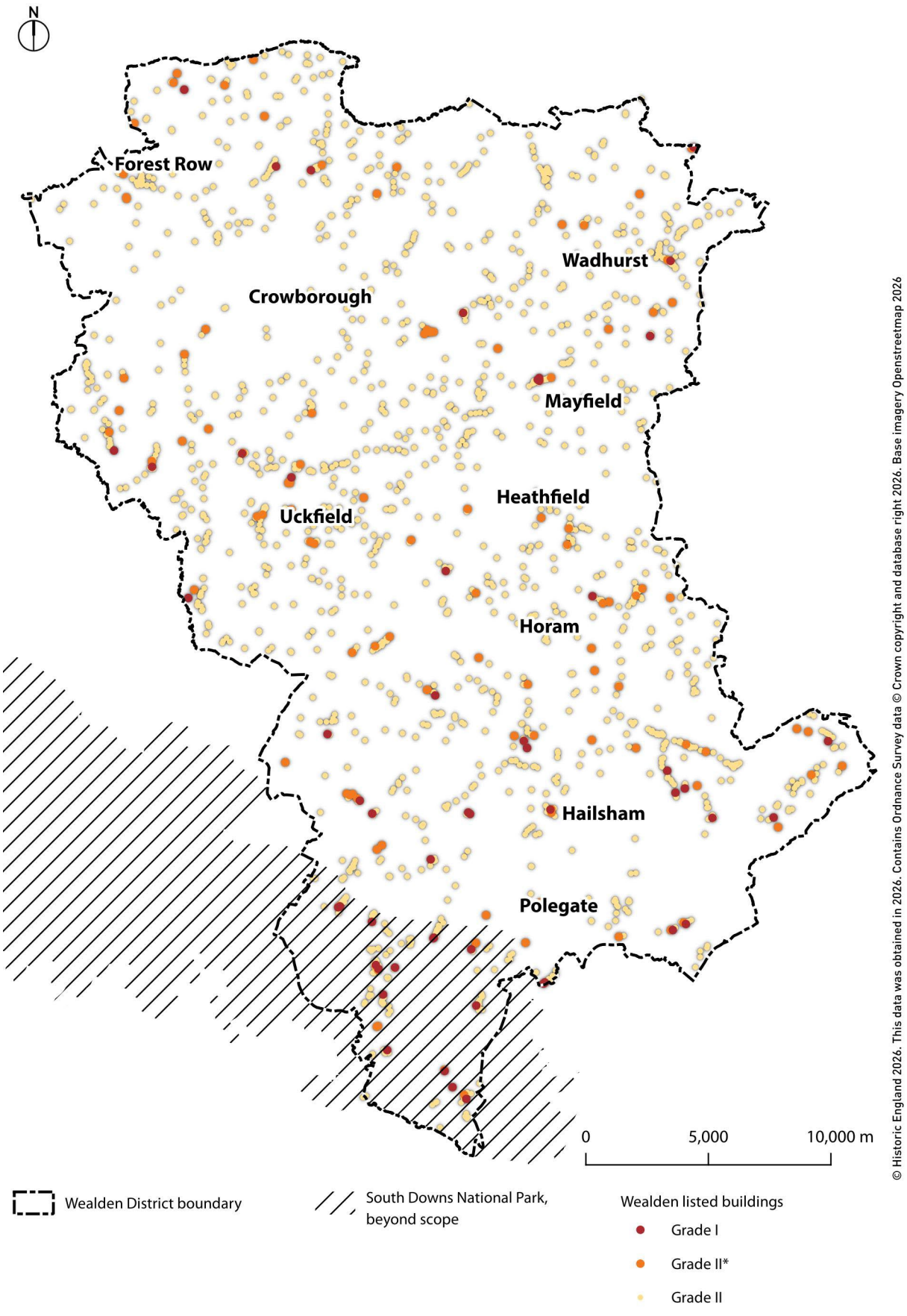


Fig 22 – Listed buildings within Wealden District (data obtained March 2026) (Credit: Alan Baxter Ltd)

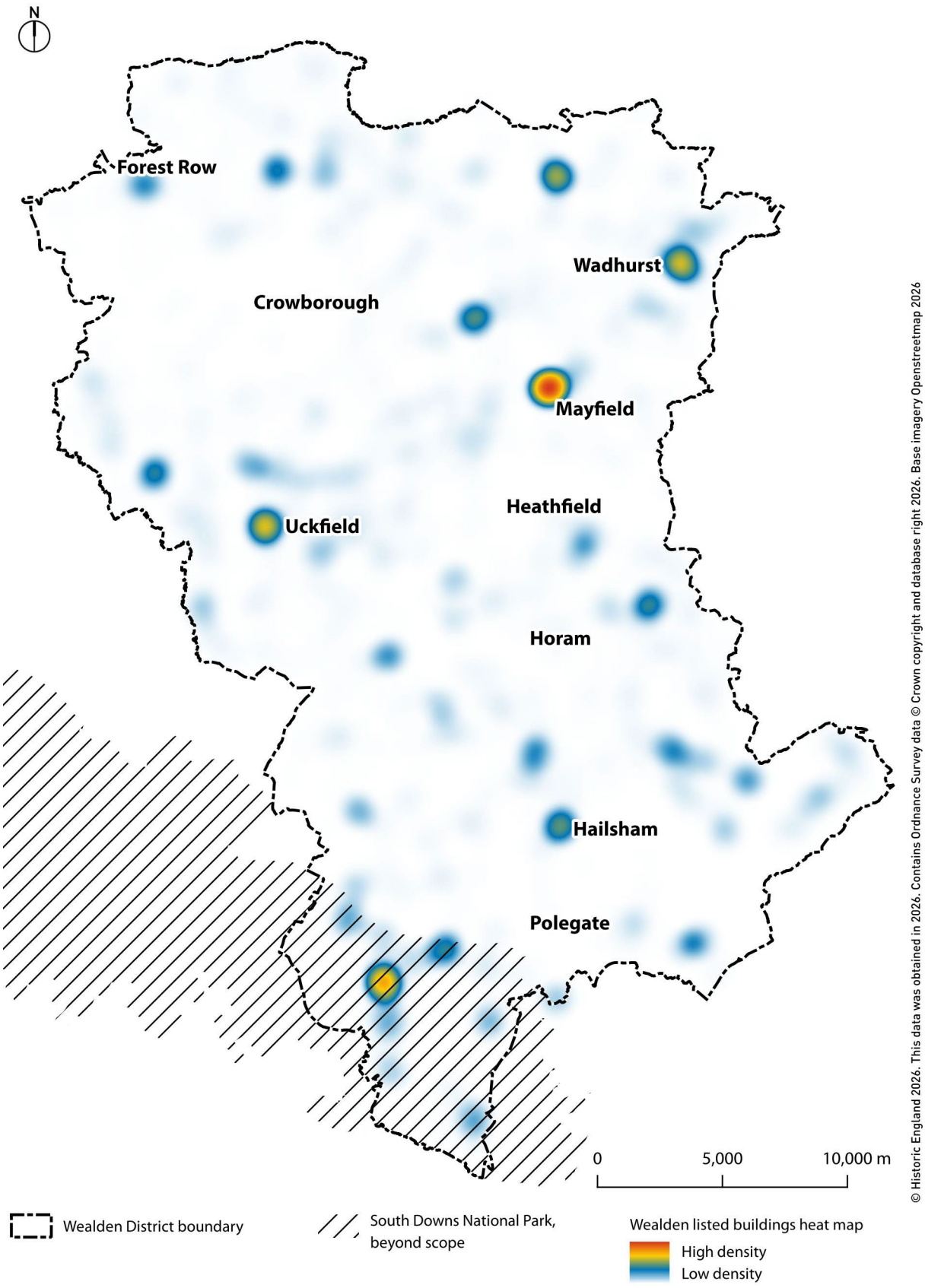


Fig 23 – Heat map of listed buildings within Wealden District (data obtained March 2026) (Credit: Alan Baxter Ltd)

3.2.2 Scheduled Monuments

124. A Scheduled Monument is a nationally important archaeological site or historic structure protected under the *Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979*. The Secretary of State designates and maintains the national Schedule, with entries recorded on the National Heritage List for England, and any works require Scheduled Monument Consent. There are 105 scheduled monuments in the District, some of which are also listed. This figure includes assets within the South Downs National Park Authority and therefore under the remit of a different planning authority. The scheduled monuments include several iron furnace sites, medieval settlements, moated sites, as well as popular tourist destinations such as Pevensey Castle and Bayham Abbey.

3.2.3 Registered Parks and Gardens

125. A Registered Park or Garden is a designed historic landscape recognised for special significance and recorded on the National Heritage List for England, under a register established by the *National Heritage Act 1983*. Designated by Historic England, the conservation of the character of these sites is given great weight in planning. There are 20 Registered Parks and Gardens in the area (including assets within the South Downs National Park Authority and therefore under the remit of a different planning authority), that are mostly the curated gardens of country houses, some of which were designed by notable landscape architects, such as Humphry Repton at Heathfield Park and Capability Brown (along with Repton) at Sheffield Park.

3.2.4 Conservation Areas

126. Wealden District contains 41 conservation areas, of which 33 are managed by Wealden District Council and eight fall within the South Downs National Park boundary, where they are managed by the South Downs National Park Authority. These areas span a wide geographical range, from northern settlements such as Forest Row and Rotherfield to central villages like Fletching, Mayfield and East Hoathly, and southern/coastal locations including Pevensey and Westham.
127. They protect a diverse mix of historic environments, including medieval village cores, traditional rural hamlets, market-town centres, estate villages, historic farmsteads, and coastal or marsh-edge settlements. Many areas contain distinctive features such as vernacular Wealden hall houses, timber-framed buildings, historic high streets, medieval churches, farm complexes, and landscapes shaped by long-standing agricultural use. Collectively, they illustrate the district's architectural evolution, from medieval origins to later Georgian and Victorian expansions, as well as its relationship with surrounding countryside, forests and river valleys.

3.2.5 Non-designated heritage assets

128. Non-designated heritage assets (NDHAs) are buildings, monuments, sites, places, areas or landscapes identified as having heritage significance that merits consideration in planning decisions, but which do not meet the criteria for national or statutory designation. In England, plan-making bodies can identify NDHAs through local heritage lists, local or neighbourhood plans, conservation area appraisals, or through the development management process, using transparent selection criteria so that significance can be understood and applied consistently. In Wealden District, the Council may identify NDHAs as part of the planning application process and applicants should be encouraged to establish at an early stage whether a site meets the NPPF definition of a heritage asset. However, there is currently no adopted Local List. The majority of heritage assets within Wealden are not designated and are, therefore, non-designated heritage assets.
129. Some NDHAs in Wealden are being identified via neighbourhood planning and supporting evidence, such as Ninfield background paper on local heritage assets, which apply recognised criteria to nominate and assess locally significant sites. This has been done on a case-by-case basis and there is currently no unified set of criteria or list of non-designated heritage assets for the district as a whole. Nevertheless, Neighbourhood Plans and the

District's draft conservation area appraisals can be consulted to understand if and where NDHAs have been identified at a local level. Prospective applicants can also take advantage of pre-application advice, and can review the planning history of a site, to see if NDHAs are present on the site.

3.2.6 Archaeological Notification Areas

130. Archaeological Notification Areas are areas identified by East Sussex County Council that highlight areas of significant known archaeological interest or potential for new discoveries. They are treated as non-designated heritage assets in planning policy. These areas, managed through the Historic Environment Records (HERs), are used to protect heritage assets during planning. Currently (2026) there are 349 in or partially within Wealden District Council, albeit this includes some within the South Downs National Park Authority and therefore under the remit of a different planning authority.

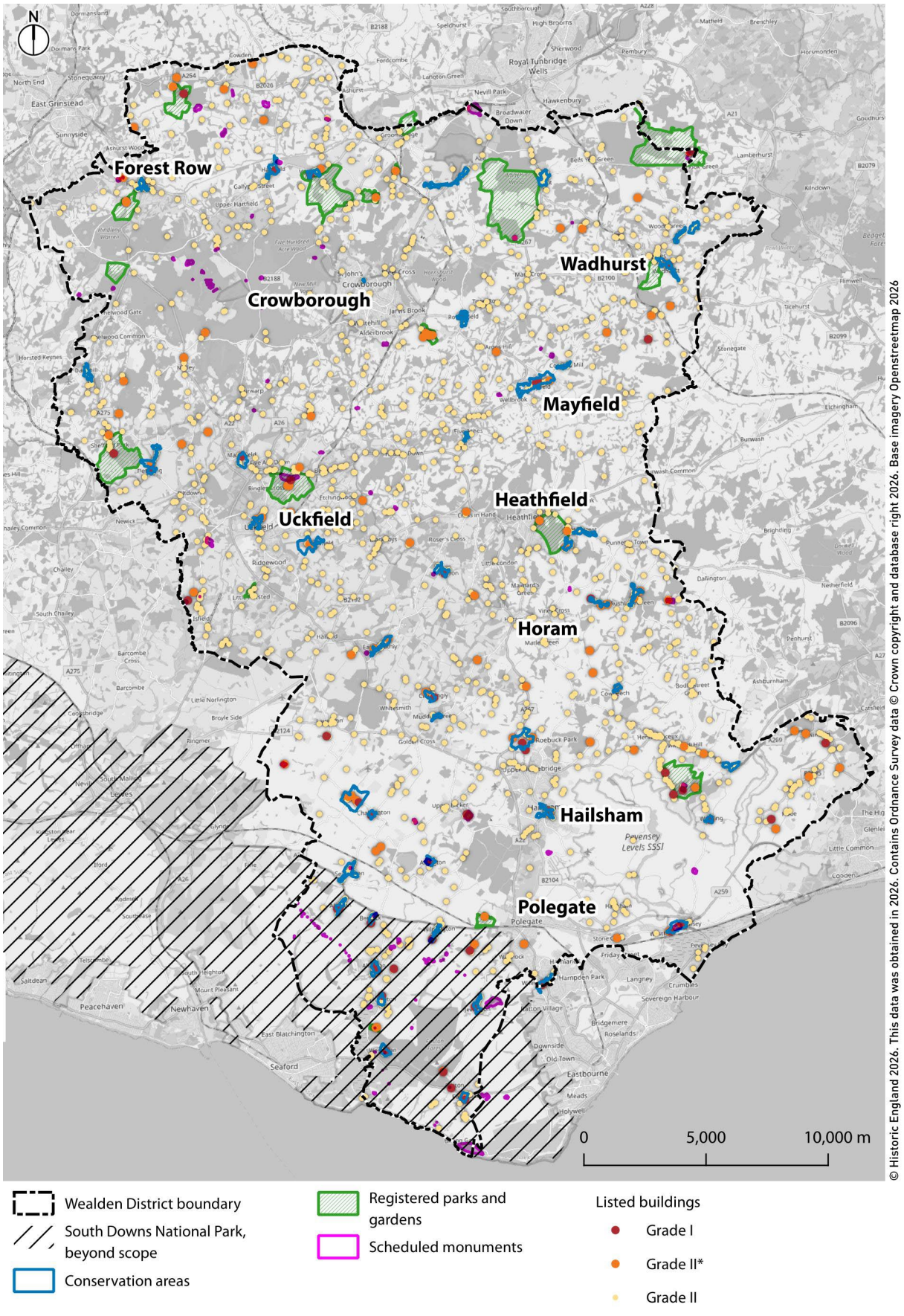


Fig 24 – Map illustrating the location of all designated heritage assets within Wealden District (data obtained March 2026) (Credit: Alan Baxter Ltd)

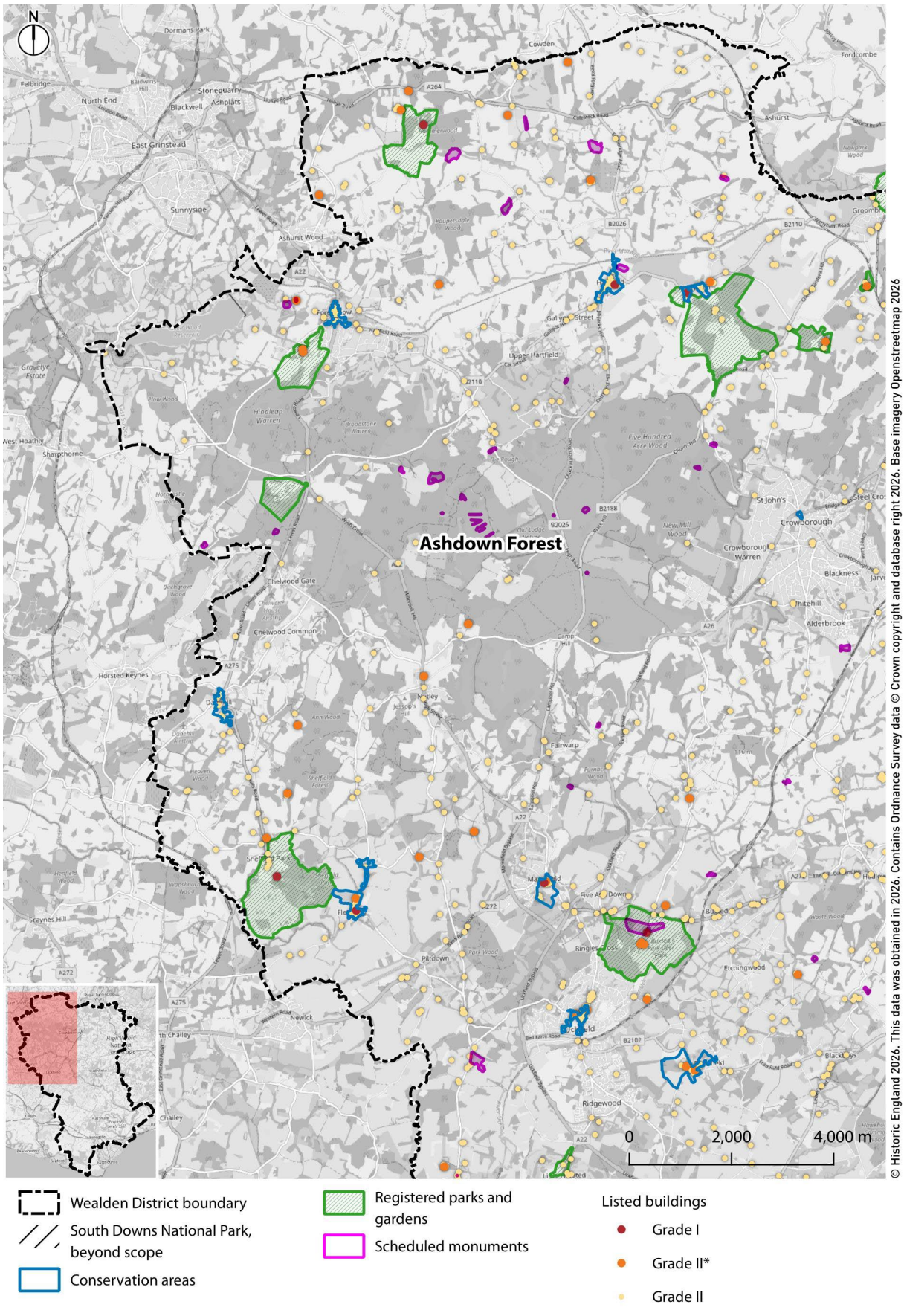


Fig 25 – Map illustrating the location of all designated heritage assets in the north-west of Wealden District (data obtained March 2026) (Credit: Alan Baxter Ltd)

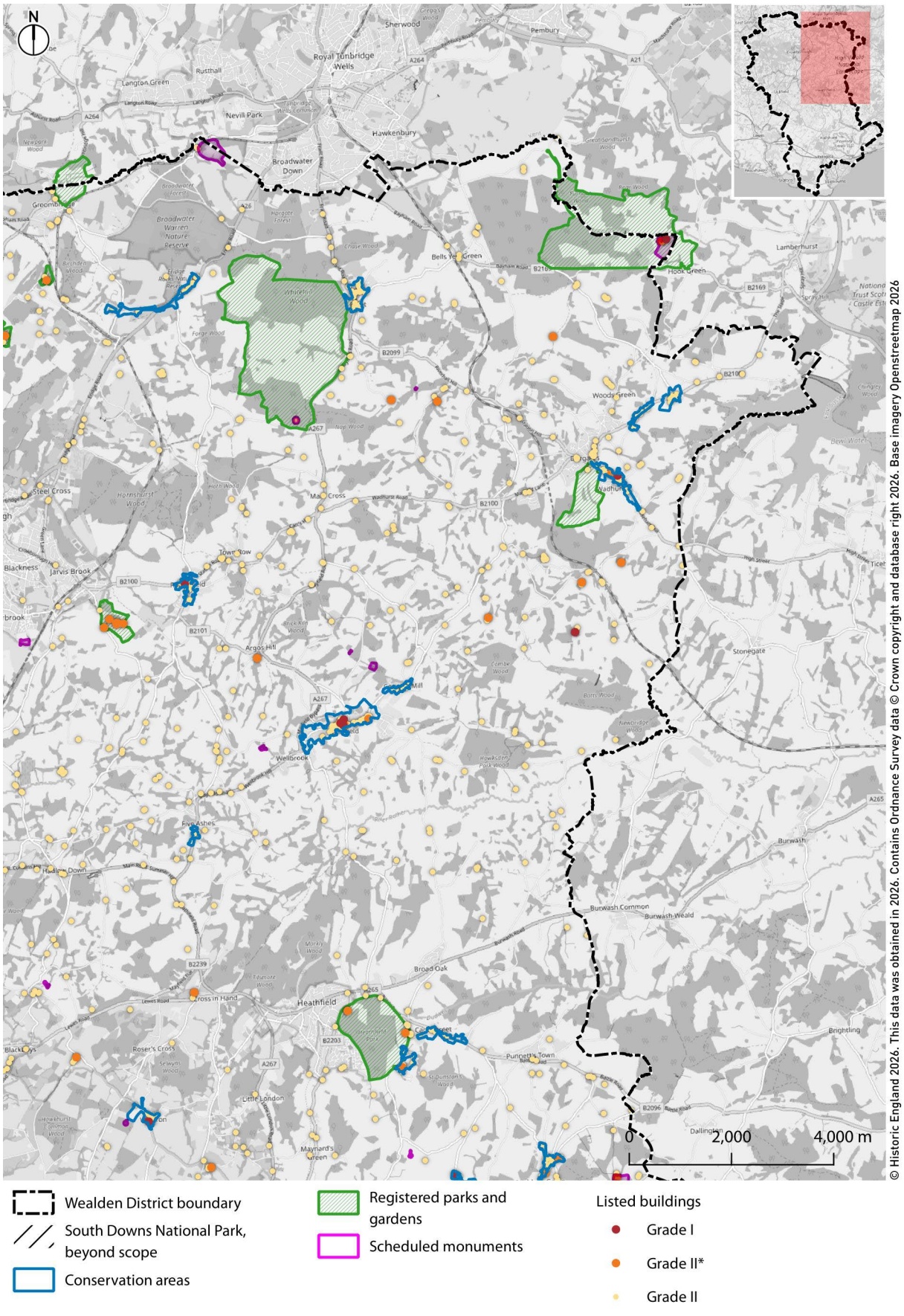


Fig 26 – Map illustrating the location of all designated heritage assets in the north-east of Wealden District (data obtained March 2026) (Credit: Alan Baxter Ltd)

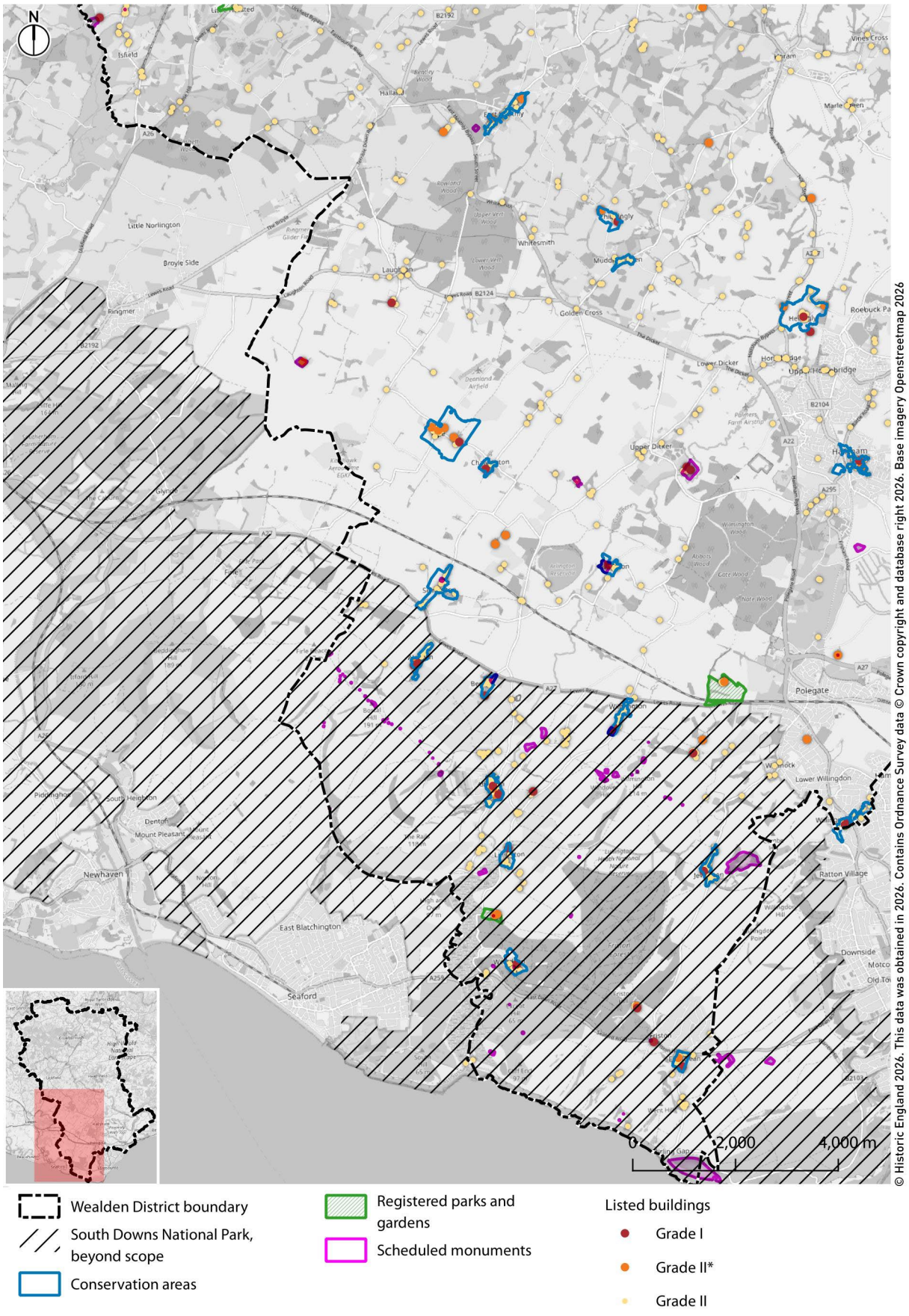


Fig 27 – Map illustrating the location of all designated heritage assets in the south-west of Wealden District (data obtained March 2026) (Credit: Alan Baxter Ltd)

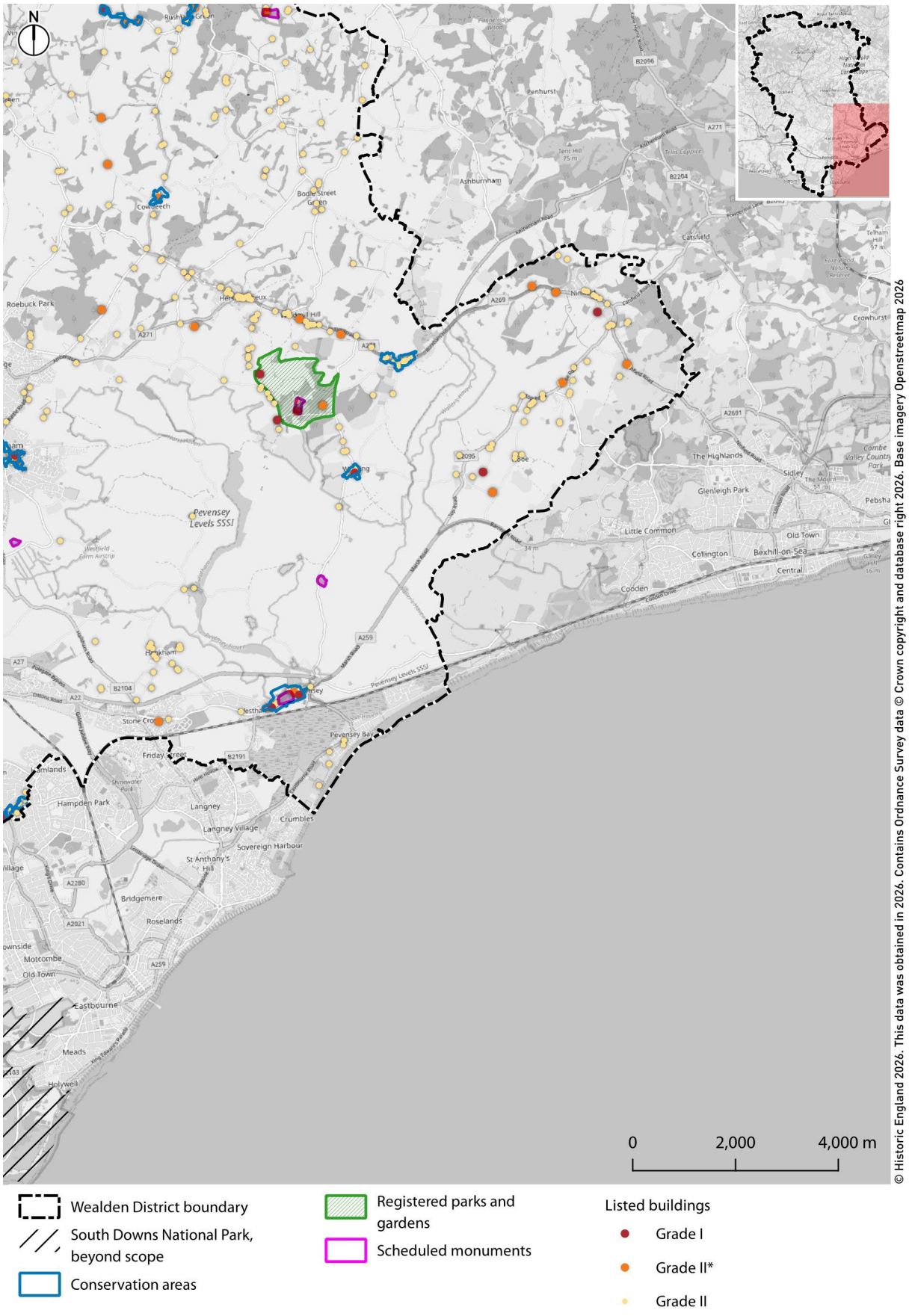


Fig 28 – Map illustrating the location of all designated heritage assets in the south-east of Wealden District (data obtained March 2026) (Credit: Alan Baxter Ltd)

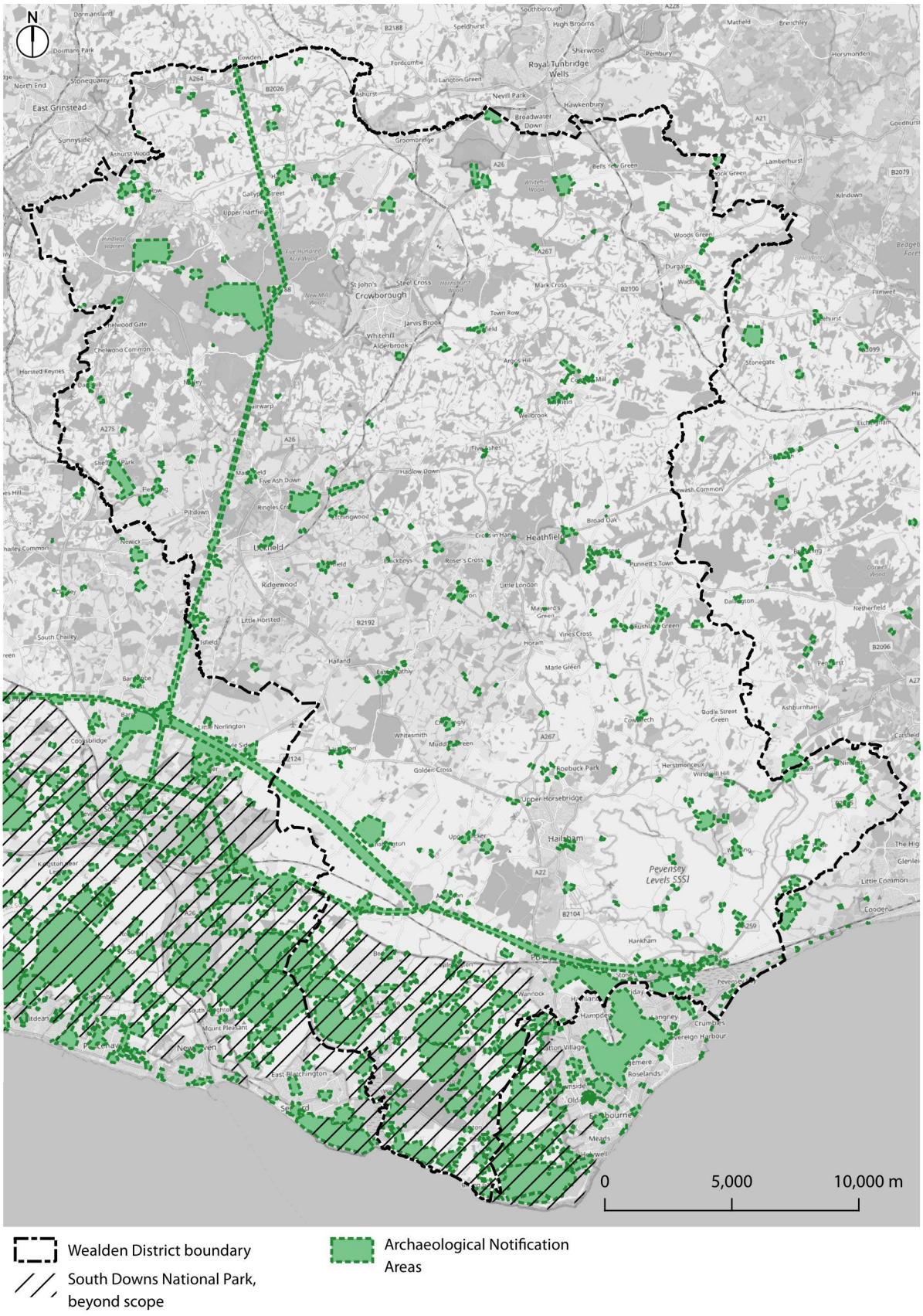


Fig 29 – Map illustrating the location of Archaeological Notification Areas within Wealden District (data obtained March 2026) (Credit: Alan Baxter Ltd)

3.3 Natural environment designations

131. Natural heritage is recognised in policy through local, national and international designations. These seek to protect natural sites for their ecological, geological or scientific importance, their role in supporting wildlife, their natural beauty, or many of those things combined. There are seven types of nature heritage designation and two types of landscape heritage designation.
132. Many types of local, national and international natural environment designation are found within Wealden District. This includes the following.

3.3.1 International designations

Special Protection Areas

133. A Special Protection Area (SPA) is a protected site classified under the *Birds Directive* (EU legislation implemented in the UK by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981) to safeguard rare, vulnerable and migratory bird species. Designated under the Habitats Regulations by the UK administrations, SPAs form part of the national site network and require assessments to prevent harm to their conservation objectives. Ashdown Forest is the only SPA within Wealden District, covering an area of 3,207 hectares. Together with other nearby SPAs, the Ashdown Forest SPA forms part of a complex of heathlands that support breeding bird populations of European importance, in particular the nightjar and Dartford warbler.

Special Areas of Conservation

134. A Special Area of Conservation (SAC) is a protected site designated under the Habitats Regulations to conserve internationally important habitats and species listed in the Habitats Directive. Selected by UK statutory authorities and forming part of the national site network, SACs protect Annex I habitats and Annex II species considered most in need of conservation at a European level (excluding birds). There are two SACs within the District, namely Ashdown Forest and the Pevensey Levels.

Ramsar sites

135. A Ramsar site is a wetland of international importance designated under the Ramsar Convention, selected for its ecological value, especially for waterbirds and rare or representative wetland types. In the UK, sites are identified by statutory nature conservation bodies, coordinated nationally by the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC), and typically overlap with SSSIs or European sites. Pevensey Levels is the only Ramsar site in the District.

3.3.2 National designations

Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)

136. A Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) is a protected area designated by Natural England under the *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981* for its nationally important wildlife, habitats, geology or landforms. Designation requires formal notification, and any operations affecting the site's condition need consent to safeguard its scientific value. There are 25 within the District excluding those within the South Downs National Park, covering its woods, meadows and forests, as well as the whole of the Pevensey Levels. In some instances, these SSSIs overlap with the international designations above.

National Nature Reserves

137. A National Nature Reserve (NNR) is a UK designation for sites recognised as outstanding examples of nationally important habitats, species or geology, established under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 (as amended). These reserves are declared by statutory conservation bodies—such as Natural England—and are managed

primarily for nature conservation, long-term environmental protection, scientific study and opportunities for people to engage with nature. There are two within the District. One of these covers parts of the Pevensey Levels. The other, Lullington Heath, lies within the South Downs National Park, and so is excluded from this study.

Marine Protected Areas

138. A Marine Protected Area (MPA) is a clearly defined part of the UK's marine environment designated to conserve important habitats, species and ecological processes. MPAs are established under various laws and include SACs, SPAs, Marine Conservation Zones and Highly Protected Marine Areas, collectively forming an ecologically coherent conservation network. The whole coast of the District is covered by a Marine Conservation Zone.

National Parks

139. A National Park is a nationally protected landscape designated under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 to conserve natural beauty and promote public enjoyment. Each Park is overseen by a dedicated National Park Authority with planning powers to safeguard its special qualities. The South Downs National Park covers an area in the south-western section of the District and is overseen by the South Downs National Park Authority, who are the local planning authority for that part of Wealden District.

National Landscapes

140. A National Landscape is the new name for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs), rebranded in 2023 to better reflect their national importance for nature recovery, climate resilience and public wellbeing. Although the name has changed, the designation itself remains the same in law, and these areas continue to be designated by government as nationally important protected landscapes. The High Weald National Landscape covers the northern half of the District.

3.3.3 Local designations

Local Nature Reserves

141. A Local Nature Reserve (LNR) is a statutory designation made by a local authority under Section 21 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 for land of local special interest, whether for wildlife, geology, education or public enjoyment. To declare an LNR, the authority must have a legal interest in the land—owning, leasing or securing it through agreement—and is responsible for managing it as a nature reserve and protecting it from inappropriate use or development. LNRs typically provide public access and support community engagement, education and local conservation priorities. There are seven Local Nature Reserves in Wealden District (none lying within the South Downs National Park), including Crowborough Country Park and Arlington Reservoir.

Neighbourhood plan designations

142. Several Neighbourhood Plans within the District, including Hellingly, Ninfield and Horam, have identified areas of valued landscape and the majority of Neighbourhood Plan groups have identified local green spaces within their Neighbourhood Plan. The relevant Neighbourhood Plan should be consulted to understand local nature and landscape designations for a particular area.

Ancient woodland

143. Wealden District is heavily wooded, with 24% of the area having woodland cover, compared with the average in England being 10%. A large amount of this is ancient woodland, which although is not an official natural heritage designation, is considered an 'irreplaceable habitat' in national planning policy and guidance and therefore a material planning consideration for local authorities. It should be noted however that much of the District's

ancient woodland is covered by other natural heritage designations, such as Ashdown Forest, which is a SSSI, an SPA, a SAC, and an integral part of the High Weald National Landscape. The extent of ancient woodland within the District is shown on the map on page 75 of this Heritage Strategy.



Fig 30 – Pevensey Levels, a highly protected landscape (Credit: WDC)



Fig 31 – Weirwood Reservoir, a section of which is a Local Nature Reserve (Credit: Alan Baxter Ltd)

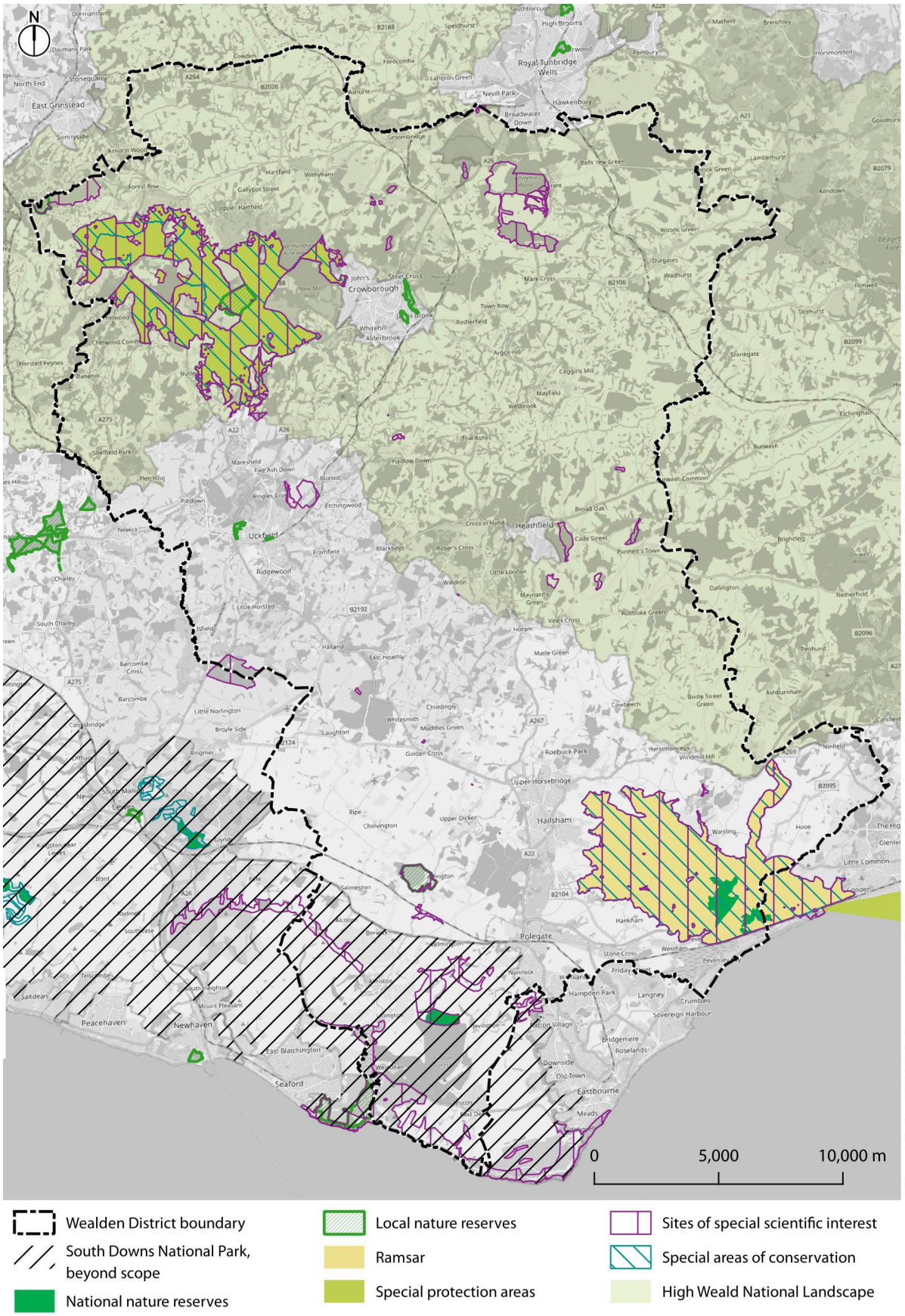


Fig 32 – Map illustrating the location of designated natural heritage sites within Wealden District (data obtained March 2026) (Credit: Alan Baxter Ltd)

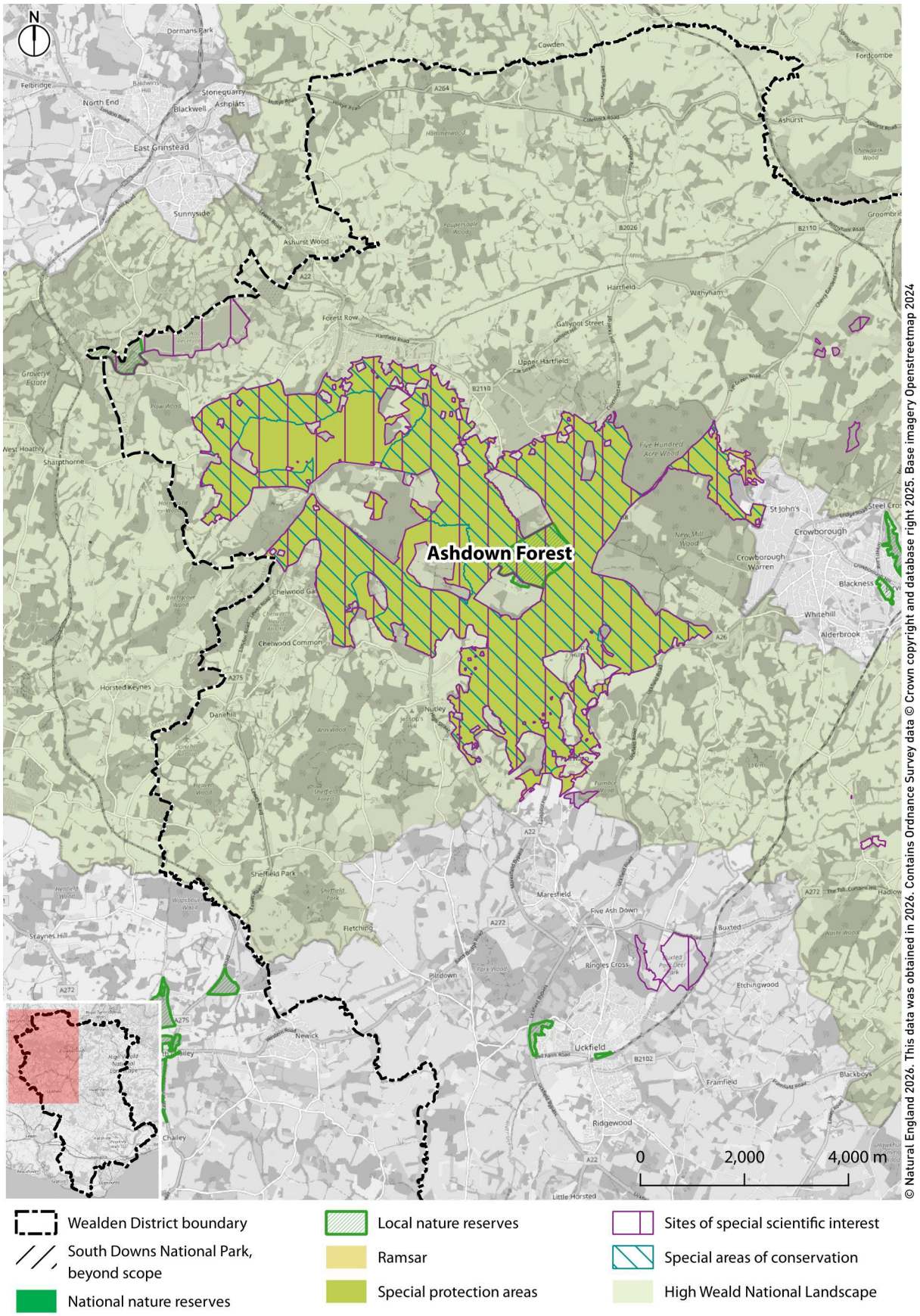


Fig 33 – Map illustrating the location of designated natural heritage sites in the north-west of Wealden District (data obtained March 2026) (Credit: Alan Baxter Ltd)

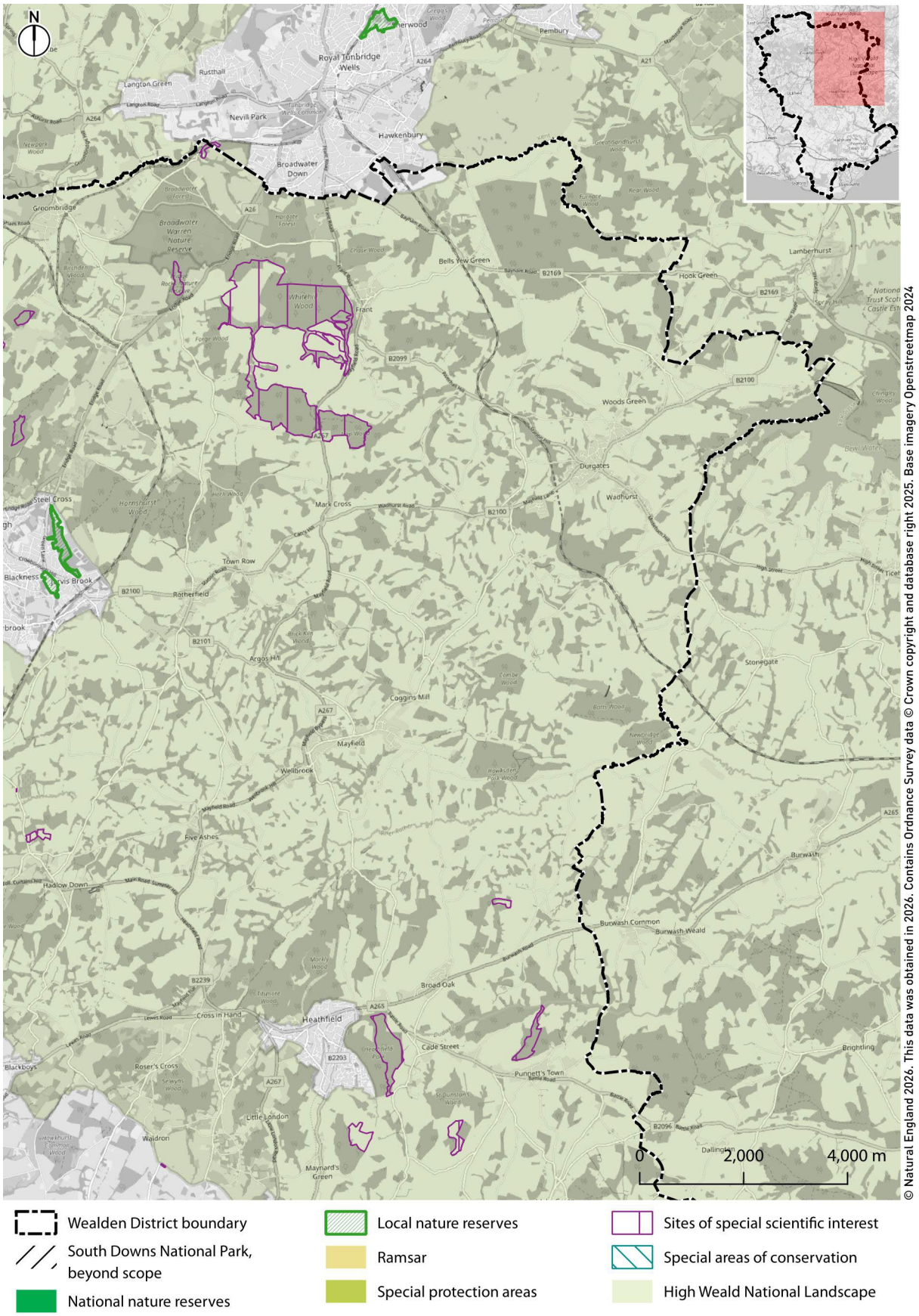


Fig 34 – Map illustrating the location of designated natural heritage sites in the north-east of Wealden District (data obtained March 2026) (Credit: Alan Baxter Ltd)

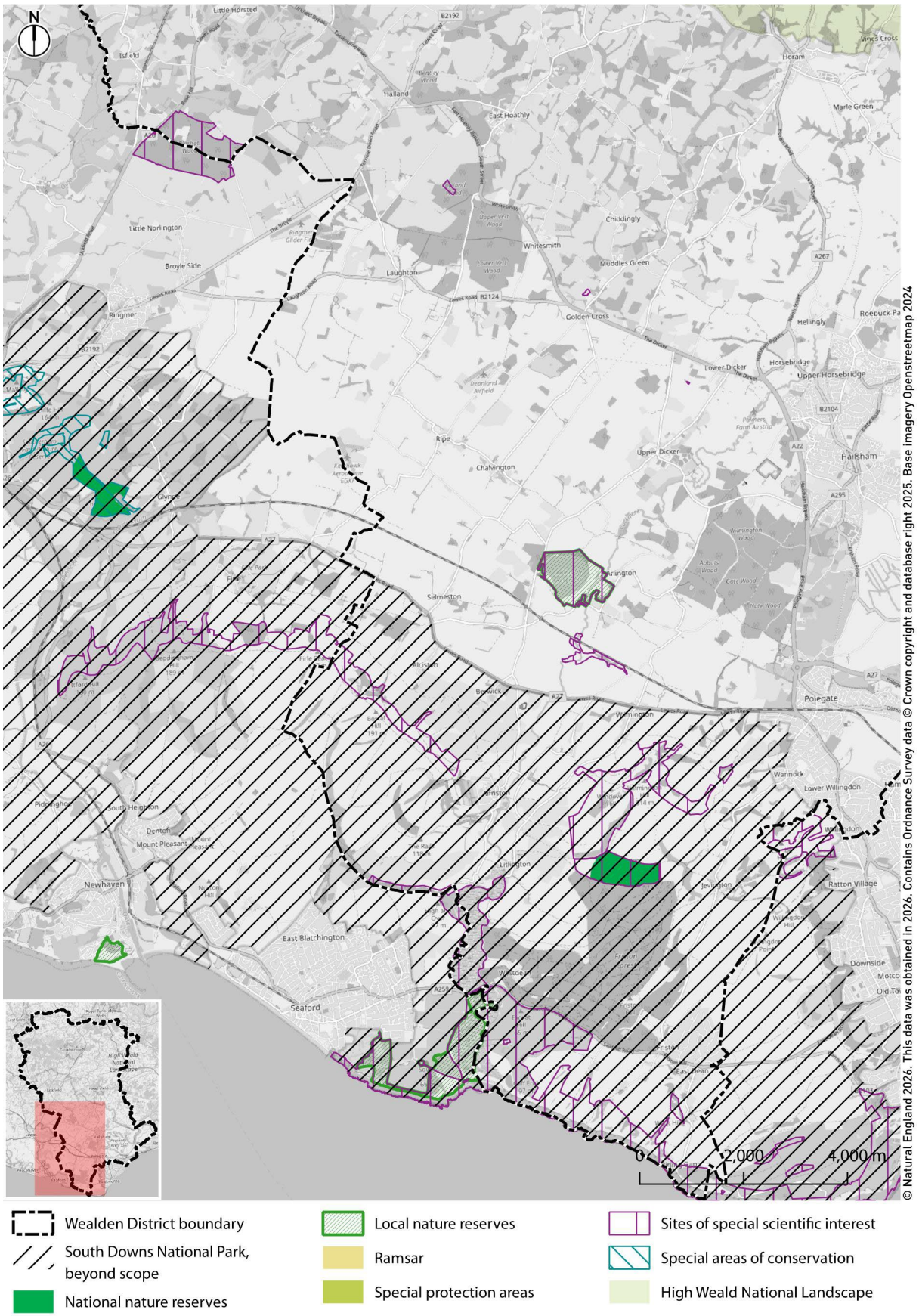


Fig 35 – Map illustrating the location of designated natural heritage sites in the south-west of Wealden District (data obtained March 2026) (Credit: Alan Baxter Ltd)

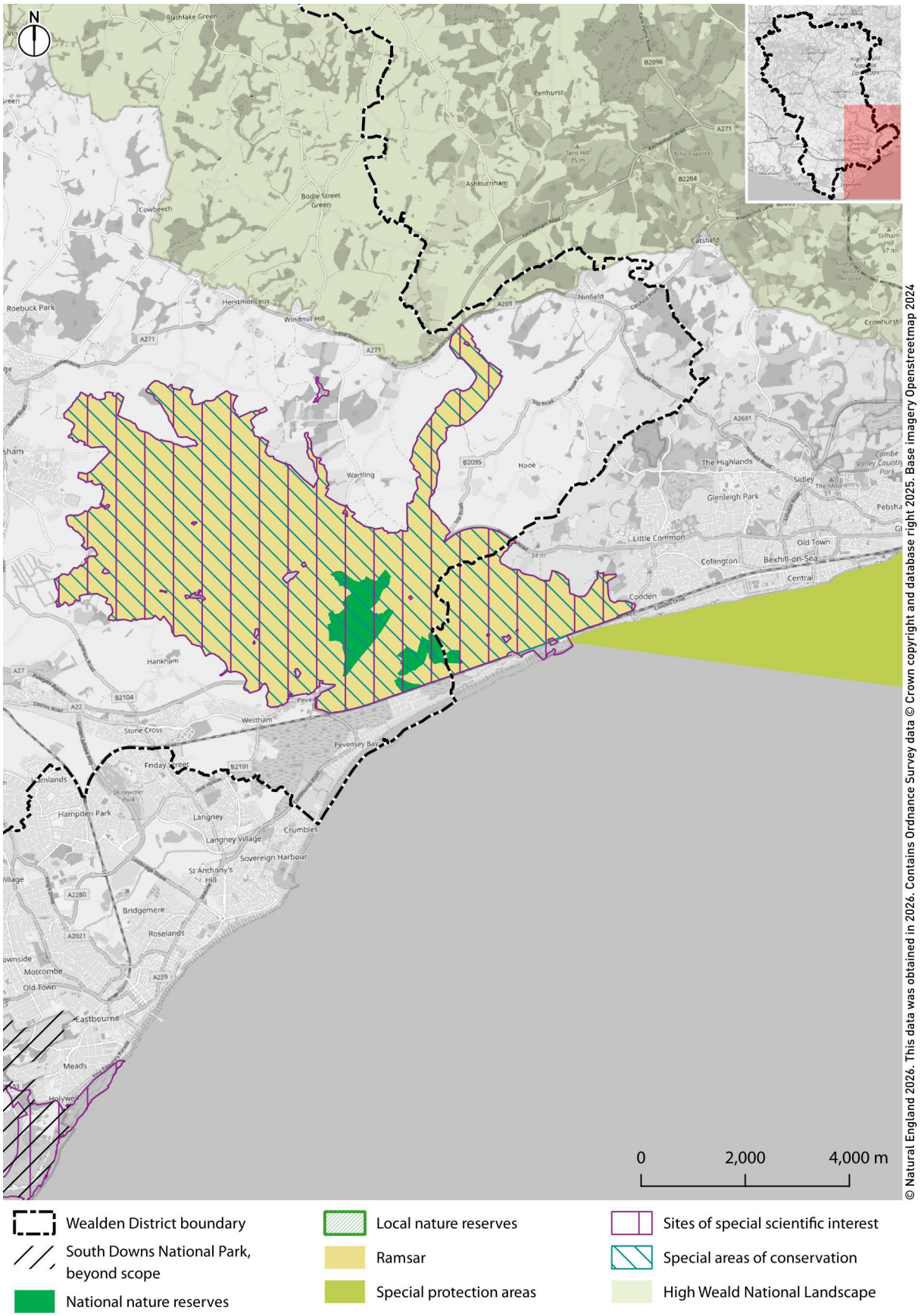


Fig 36 – Map illustrating the location of designated natural heritage sites in the south-east of Wealden District (data obtained March 2026) (Credit: Alan Baxter Ltd)

3.4 Potential for other heritage assets to be present within the District

144. The preceding sections illustrate the abundance of nationally and locally important sites within Wealden District that have been designated for their natural and/or cultural heritage value. However, this only captures a small proportion of the landscapes, buildings, structures, cultural traditions, habitats and archaeological remains that cumulatively define the District's heritage.
145. Overall, there is high potential for undesignated and unidentified heritage to be present within the District. This falls into four broad categories:

- Archaeology that is not yet known but sites that hold considerable potential for producing evidence of historical development within Wealden.
- Historic landscape features which illustrate historical agricultural and industrial practices and movement patterns e.g. drove routes, trackways, hammer ponds and managed woodland.
- Historic building typologies that are underrepresented on the National Heritage List for England, particularly farmsteads, modest workers' cottages and ancillary agricultural buildings. This problem is particularly acute due to the poor coverage and lack of recent updates to the List entries across East Sussex more generally.
- Habitats and landscapes whose value is not fully understood or categorised, or may have changed since last surveyed. This is particularly important given the particular vulnerability of the natural environment to climate change and other environmental crises such as biodiversity loss.

146. This high potential for additional undesignated heritage to be identified and better protected is illustrated by the quantity and diversity of heritage assets that have been identified in some of the Neighbourhood Plans adopted or in draft form within Wealden District. In future years, Neighbourhood Planning may be a useful tool, alongside Conservation Area Appraisals, for identifying non-designated heritage assets within the District, particularly in relation to historic buildings and landscape features.
147. Identifying previously un- or under-appreciated sites with archaeological potential could be done in tandem with East Sussex County Council's archaeology officers and local history societies, who often have a deep knowledge of their locality. Public bodies could similarly engage with local groups to better understand habitats and landscapes within Wealden, although certain techniques for identifying and classifying the natural environment require input from technical specialists.
148. The planning system also represents an opportunity for identifying non-designated heritage within the District, with cultural and natural heritage features associated with a development site and its surroundings being assessed and recorded as a requirement of the planning process.

Part 4:
Heritage Themes

4.0 Heritage Themes in Wealden

4.1 Introduction

149. Formal designation is an important way of recognising and protecting sites and areas that are of cultural and/or natural heritage significance. However, it is just one way of understanding an area's heritage and does not always illustrate broader themes and patterns within an area, due to their inevitable focus on individual sites or assets.
150. To provide greater context to the patchwork of historic and natural environment designations within Wealden, this Part of the Heritage Strategy identifies and describes a series of key themes which characterise the District's heritage significance more broadly.
151. A thematic approach allows us to bring together different types of heritage assets into a clear, coherent narrative that highlights their context and shared importance. It also clarifies how the many cultural and natural heritage assets contribute to the District's wider heritage significance. In addition, it helps to connect heritage sites and activities across the District, supporting more coordinated work, project development, and effective promotion.
152. The heritage themes described in this Heritage Strategy are:

- Historic Landscape Character, in particular the distinctive landscapes of:
  - The High Weald
  - The Low Weald
  - The Pevensey Levels
- Woodland
- Medieval land, field and road systems
- Small historic settlements
- Local industries
- Local vernacular
- Agriculture and farmsteads
- Moated manors
- Country estates
- Late nineteenth and twentieth-century towns
- Cultural traditions

153. These themes reflect aspects of heritage that are either unique to or especially prominent within Wealden District. Other types of heritage asset or patterns within the historic environment – such as transport heritage, military sites, and ecclesiastical architecture – exist within the District and contribute to its rich heritage, but may not necessarily display the same degree of place-specificity or local distinctiveness as the themes outlined herein. Their absence here does not imply lesser importance. Instead, the selected themes are those that most vividly express local distinctiveness and the character of Wealden's heritage.

4.2 Historic Landscape Character

154. Perhaps more than any other theme, the District's heritage is defined by the extensive and well-preserved survival of historic landscapes, which are deeply illustrative of how the District's underlying geology and topography, and the landscapes and habitats they create, have shaped settlement patterns and human activity across Wealden for thousands of years. The areas to the south – the Pevensey Levels and the South Downs – share much history with the Weald, although they have vastly different landscape characters. Three out of the four of these landscape character areas will be discussed below, with the exception of the South Downs which is out of scope of this Heritage Strategy, although it reflects on land usage and agricultural movements across the Low and High Wealds.
155. Taken together, the High Weald, Low Weald and Pevensey Levels form a complementary mosaic whose contrasts (wooded, dissected ridges; low-lying pastoral clays; and open, rectilinear grazing marsh) make time-depth unusually legible at the District scale. National Character Area profiles describe the High Weald as one of the best surviving medieval landscapes in northern Europe, the Low Weald as a broad clay vale with predominantly

pastoral land use and abundant ancient woodland, and the Pevensey Levels as an internationally important grazing marsh with an historic, engineered ditch network.

156. Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) mapping reinforces this picture, showing how assart fields, shaws and ancient routeways structure the High and Low Weald, while medieval inning (drainage and reclamation) and “eyes” (islands of higher ground) organise the Pevensey marsh. These mapped attributes explain the strong coherence between landform, land use and settlement pattern that remains visible on the ground today.
157. Long-established seasonal movements and access routes also underpin this character. Transhumance between Downs/Low Weald wintering and High Weald summer pastures created ridge roads, droveways and sunken lanes that still connect farmsteads, woods and markets across the District.
158. On the Levels, the legibility of medieval and later water management is central to landscape character and ongoing land use, including the dependence of grazing and biodiversity on carefully regulated water levels across an extensive ditch system. This interdependence of landform, hydrology and husbandry is a defining historic attribute as well as a practical management consideration.

Significance

159. A coherent medieval-origin landscape survives at scale: wooded High Weald, pastoral Low Weald, and drained Pevensey Levels together express how geology and water management shaped fields, routeways and settlement. Their complementarity and time-depth are nationally recognised in NCA profiles and international wetland designations.

Condition

160. Landscape patterns remain highly legible: small irregular fields with shaws, dense ancient woodland, and open marsh with ditch networks. However, boundary loss, suburban edges and hydrological pressures affect local condition in places.

Vulnerability

161. Key risks are incremental development, hedgerow/shaw loss, unmanaged woods, highway “improvements” to ancient lanes, and altered water regimes on grazing marsh under climate change. Coordinated water-level and landscape management are essential.

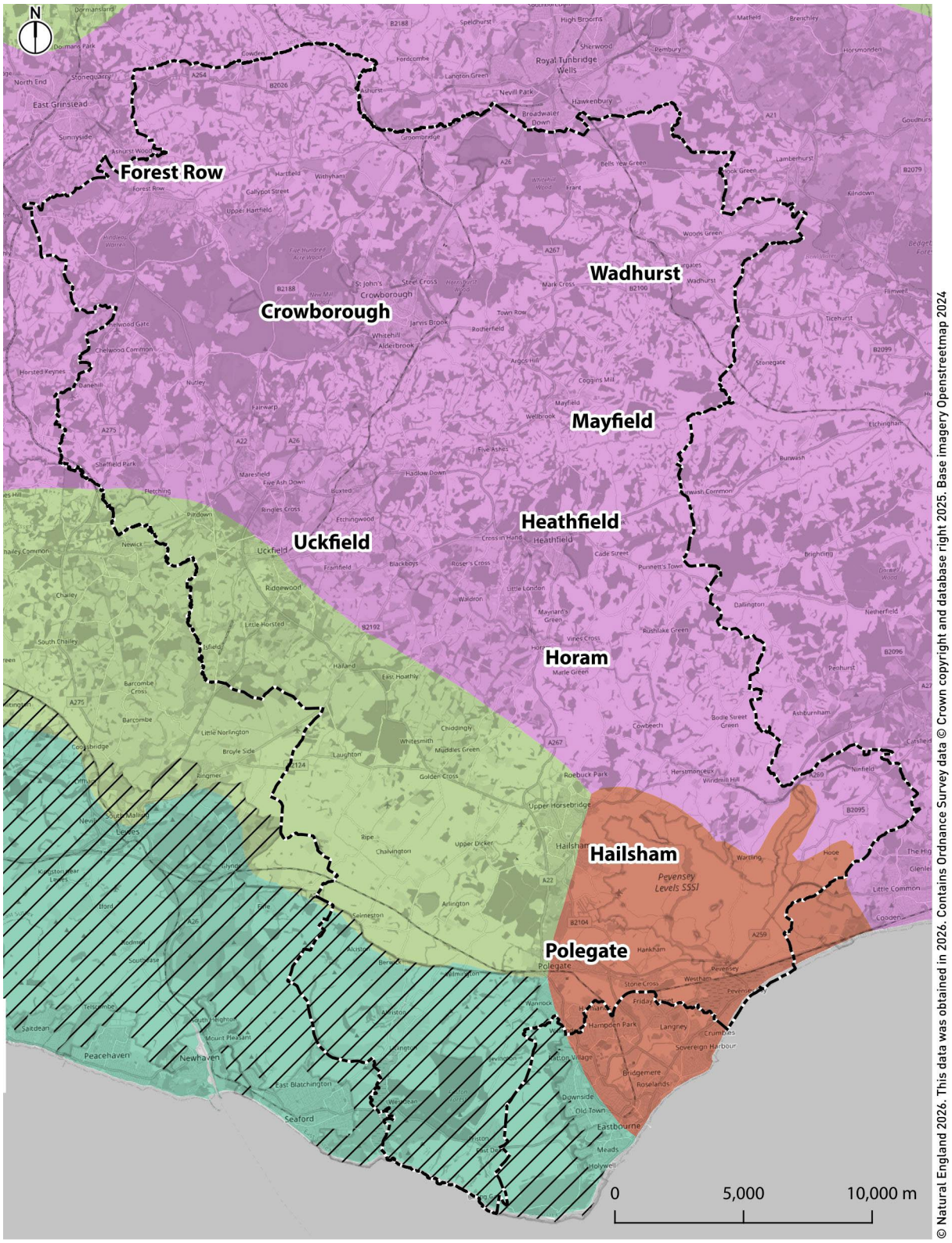


Fig 37 – Map of landscape character areas within Wealden District (data obtained March 2026) (Credit: Alan Baxter Ltd)

4.2.1 High Weald

162. The High Weald forms part of the Weald-Artois Anticline, a large geological structure that runs between Surrey and Artois (France). This broad fold formed around 20 million years ago and has since eroded, revealing the older rock strata (lower cretaceous) which forms the High Weald's sandstone east-west ridges.
163. The area's geological makeup has given the High Weald a character of densely wooded hills and clay valleys that support a habitat of broadleaved trees and heathland, supporting the area's wildlife and biodiversity. Its rich variability of soils has also shaped the Weald's economic and therefore social history.
164. From the medieval period onwards, the High Weald was used for summer grazing, with farmers moving their herds to the Low Weald during the winter months. These seasonal movement patterns, known as transhumance, created a network of droveways, many of which are still in use today as roads or public rights of way. These connected an array of small fields (often minor land holdings), dense – sometimes coppiced – woodland, and isolated farmsteads – some of which later became small villages; together resulting in the sparsely populated settlement pattern seen today. This agricultural system of small holdings contributed to the high amount of surviving ancient woodland, with there being more in the High Weald than anywhere else in the country. This has resulted in the High Weald, according to Natural England, being 'one of the best surviving medieval landscapes in Northern Europe'.



Fig 38 – Ashdown Forest, looking north (Credit: Alan Baxter)

165. The forests of the High Weald have supported successive industries and influenced numerous local crafts and trades. The most important of these has been the iron industry, which was particularly prevalent during the Roman era, as well as the sixteenth to the early eighteenth centuries, when the Weald was the furnace of England. The archaeological record for this agro-industrial past, including hammer ponds, furnaces and prehistoric earthworks, is testament to the long-term draw of the High Weald to successive communities.
166. The forests have also influenced other industries and crafts such as shipbuilding (during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries) and the weaving of Sussex trugs (from c.1500). Lastly, the dense survival of woodland has been an influence for artists and writers, with Ashdown Forest being the inspiration for A.A. Milne's famous children's books, Winnie the Pooh.
167. Taken together, the High Weald's geology, topography and natural habitats have shaped the development of the area's settlement patterns, industry, traditions and agriculture, and continues to shape the District's appearance and economy today, with new-found industries prospering, such as winemaking; and the continued attraction of the High Weald as an unspoiled, rural landscape, seen in its National Landscape designation.

Significance

168. An outstanding medieval landscape of small assart fields, shaws and ancient routeways, containing very high densities of historic farmsteads. There is national importance in Wealden's iron industry heritage. There are also strong cultural associations, such as with Winnie the Pooh in the Ashdown Forest. Natural England terms it "one of the best surviving medieval landscapes in northern Europe," with statutory National Landscape status.

Condition

169. Overall character remains highly legible with extensive ancient woodland and intact field patterns; localised boundary loss, fragmentation and settlement-edge pressures are noted in NCA monitoring and farmstead reports. Targeted management and stewardship support hedgerows, shaws and ghyll woods.

Vulnerability

170. Cumulative edge-of-settlement change; highway works affecting sunken lanes; decline in coppice and woodland management; damage to unrecorded iron-industry archaeology; and climate-driven run-off and ghyll erosion. Visitor pressure on popular sites also requires careful management.

4.2.2 Low Weald

171. The Low Weald also forms part of the Weald-Artois Anticline. However, it is more low-lying, being at 40m above the ordnance datum (AOD), compared to the High Weald's 220m. The landscape is characterised by gently undulating hills, that are dissected by water courses. These support similar High Weald wooded habitats, with a large number of oaks, willows and alders. However, unlike the High Weald, the ground is a softer clay, forming the sides (limbs) of the anticline dome. These ground conditions have lent themselves to agricultural farming and clay mining, with the latter allowing for a brick and tile industry to prosper, shaping the local vernacular. Most notably, this industry led to the one of the oldest significant brick buildings in England to be built, Herstmonceux Castle (1441).



Fig 39 – St Pancras Church, Arlington (Credit: Alan Baxter)

172. As discussed above, the High and Low Weald existed as part of a transhumance network of drove routes and small holdings, with farmers moving their herds to the High Weald in summer and back to the Low Weald and South Downs for winter. Indeed, many of the drove routes link the High Weald, Low Weald and the South Downs, linking these three distinct but interrelated and inter-reliant landscapes. This cemented the tradition of animal husbandry that survives to the present day, seen in the numerous agricultural events and markets, such as the Heathfield Show and Hailsham Cattle Market. The adjacency of the Low Weald to the South Downs also influenced the use of chalk, flint and cobbles in some Low Weald villages.
173. The legacy of transhumance patterns, as well as the prosperous iron industry has marked the landscape, with a large number of isolated farmsteads (sometimes moated), a network of historic droveways, hammer ponds (a relic of the iron industry), and a dense medieval field system shaped by woodland clearance ('assarting'). As a result, along with the High Weald, the Low Weald is one of the best surviving curated medieval landscapes in the country, with its geology, low-lying topography and habitats having influenced the area's industry, agricultural make up and sparse settlement patterns. The archaeological record is particularly rich in historic centres but also dispersed across more sparsely populated areas. These sites are illustrative of earlier settlement patterns and local economic activities.

Significance

174. A broad clay vale of pastoral farming, dense hedged fields and high ancient-woodland cover with considerable landscape, built heritage and habitat; strong farmstead survival; legible droveways and assarts; and brick-and-tile traditions derived from clay geology. The NCA profile underscores its medieval character, agricultural importance and contribution to regional distinctiveness.

Condition

175. Predominantly intact pastoral character with many hedges and shaws; localised field amalgamation, hedgerow decline and flood-plain pressures occur; historic farmstead plans largely survive though out-farms have reduced. Restoration schemes support boundary repair, wet grassland and ponds.

Vulnerability

176. Boundary loss, hedge neglect, and suburbanising pressures; pond/ditch infill; redundancy of traditional farm buildings; and surface-water flooding on heavy clays under climate change. Without continued management, landscape structure and biodiversity connectivity weaken.

4.2.3 Pevensey Levels

177. The Pevensey Levels can be split into two sections, the north-east and the south-west. Like the High and Low Weald, both were heavily developed during the medieval period, with the south-west, on higher ground, having a longer military history dating back to the Roman times. The north-east, which is the result of reclamation work started by local religious houses in the 1300s, is a fascinating example of a surviving curated medieval landscape in England.



Fig 40 – Pevensey Levels, looking in the direction of Herstmonceux (Credit: Alan Baxter)

178. The north-east area was a tidal inlet until the Middle Ages when the eastward drift of coastal shingle isolated it and created a saltmarsh. The area continued to be largely underwater until the thirteenth century, when a process of drainage (known as 'inning') was started, continuing until the late seventeenth century. This led to the remote and curated medieval field system seen today, drained for agricultural use and wet meadows. This area is largely devoid of tree cover and uses ditches rather than hedges to separate fields, contributing to its open and barren appearance. Local landscape diversity is added by 'eyes', which are islands of higher ground often containing farmsteads, and the raised roads and trackways across the marshes. These landscape conditions create long periods of standing water which attract a large number of birds, making it an incredibly important place for wildlife, being both a Ramsar and a Site of Special Scientific Interest. The area was drained further between 1959 and 1977 to extend the grazing season and its viability for arable cropping. However, these have had a negative impact on the ecosystems and habitats of the area.
179. To the south-west of the Pevensey Levels is an area of higher ground that has a far longer human history, being the location of an important Roman fortress. This was built between AD250-280, and named Anderitum, with some of its surviving stonework now forming part of Pevensey Castle. It was also connected to the Roman road network, with a connection to Glynde, where onward connections to London and the south-west could be made. The Roman fort was used again as the first base of the Norman Conquest of England (1066),

being turned into a motte and bailey castle and becoming a ‘limb’ (outpost) of the ‘Cinque Port’ town of Hastings. Alongside this, what may be England’s first Norman church, St Mary’s Westham was built, with the adjoining developments at Westham and Pevensey soon becoming important settlements in the region. The area’s role in the defence of England continued during the Napoleonic Wars, First World War (WWI) and Second World War (WWII). This included three Martello towers, built in the Pevensey Bay area; the use of the Castle as an aircraft lookout during WWI; the use of the Levels for radar defence stations during WWII; and the use of the area for Air Ministry Experimental Stations, also during WWII. Lastly, to support the agricultural development within the reclaimed Levels, farmsteads were developed during the medieval period on the higher surrounding ground, although most of these buildings have been replaced post-1800.

180. The Pevensey area has been fundamental to the military history of England (and later Britain), with Pevensey Castle being a strategic point in the defence of Roman Britain, the newly-established Norman kingdom and later the UK. Its location on the sea also provided a point of trade for produce going in and out of the Weald. The area to the north-east makes a large contribution to the District as a surviving reclaimed and curated medieval landscape, with the Levels being known for their remote and barren character. These together, provide a ballast against the heavily forested and hilly High and Low Weald, as well as the South Downs to the west.
181. Salt making was also an important local industry within the Pevensey Levels, particularly during the medieval period, when the marsh’s medieval shoreline supported extensive production. By 1086, the Domesday Book recorded that the edges of Pevensey Marsh supported around 100 salt works, reflecting the area’s importance as a centre of salt extraction and trade. These operations flourished where tidal inlets allowed seawater to flood and evaporate, leaving salt for collection. Examples of locations linked to this early landscape include Manxey and Horse Eye, former island sites whose names preserve evidence of the area’s historic, water-dominated geography.

Significance

182. An internationally important grazing-marsh wetland—SSSI, Ramsar and SAC—with nationally rare invertebrates and notable ditch flora, as well as a premier example of medieval water management and land drainage. The military-historic landscape focused on Pevensey Castle is of particular interest as a highly special site representing 2000 years of occupation.

Condition

183. Open, treeless marsh with extensive ditch networks remains broadly intact but depends on active water-level management; biodiversity has been sensitive to past drainage and requires careful regulation and monitoring. Management plans continue to balance agriculture, flood risk and habitat quality.

Vulnerability

184. Sea-level rise and coastal flooding; water-level management changes; nutrient enrichment and invasive species; fragmentation from infrastructure; and loss of marsh-edge archaeology. Long-term shoreline strategies and ditch stewardship are critical to resilience.

4.3 Woodland

185. The Weald's association with woodland can be traced back to its name, which in Old English (West Saxon) means forest or woodland upland. At this time, the wooded area was larger and more densely forested, being sparsely inhabited and difficult to travel through. Woodland clearance started early, with there being evidence of it as far back as the Bronze Age in the Low Weald. This continued, picking up in earnest during the Anglo-Saxon period, where the process of woodland clearing for agricultural cultivation began (known as 'assarting'), resulting in the early High Weald settlements in the wood clearings know as felds and leah. This resulted in many place names ending in 'field'.
186. In the areas that were not cleared for agriculture, the woodland was managed for various trades, with trees being grown differently for various uses: to a medium size for charcoal used for smelting and to maturity for structural timber. This resulted in a tradition of coppicing and tree management, ensuring that the forest grew back and remained healthy, resulting in a curated forest environment. This helped several timber and plant-based industries to prosper in the area, such as iron manufacturing (with the timber used for charcoal to heat the furnaces), shipbuilding and later hop production. These all ensured that the Weald remained a largely wooded landscape, with a web of historic habitat corridors interlinking in the area, helping wildlife networks prosper. It also contributed to the building stock, with oast houses, hammer ponds and other industrial buildings leaving their mark on the landscape.
187. As stated in the Wealden Landscape Character Assessment:

    The District [today remains] heavily wooded, with woodland covering 24% of the area (18,755ha), compared with 10% in England and 13% in the UK.



Fig 41 – Broadwater Forest ancient woodland (Credit: Alan Baxter)

188. This remarkable survival has been recognised through designations (internationally, nationally and locally), with the wooded areas being of immense value in terms of habitats, biodiversity and carbon sequestration. Certain areas, such as Ashdown Forest are designated as a SAC for being one of the largest continuous blocks of lowland heath in south-east England. Alongside this, the woodland has also had a large influence on local and national culture, through, for example, the craft of Sussex trugs and for being the inspiration for artists and books, such as the Winnie the Pooh series and Rudyard Kipling. In terms of landscape, it shares similarities with the Forest of Dean, as a heavily wooded area that had a prosperous industrial period before the industrial revolution.

Significance

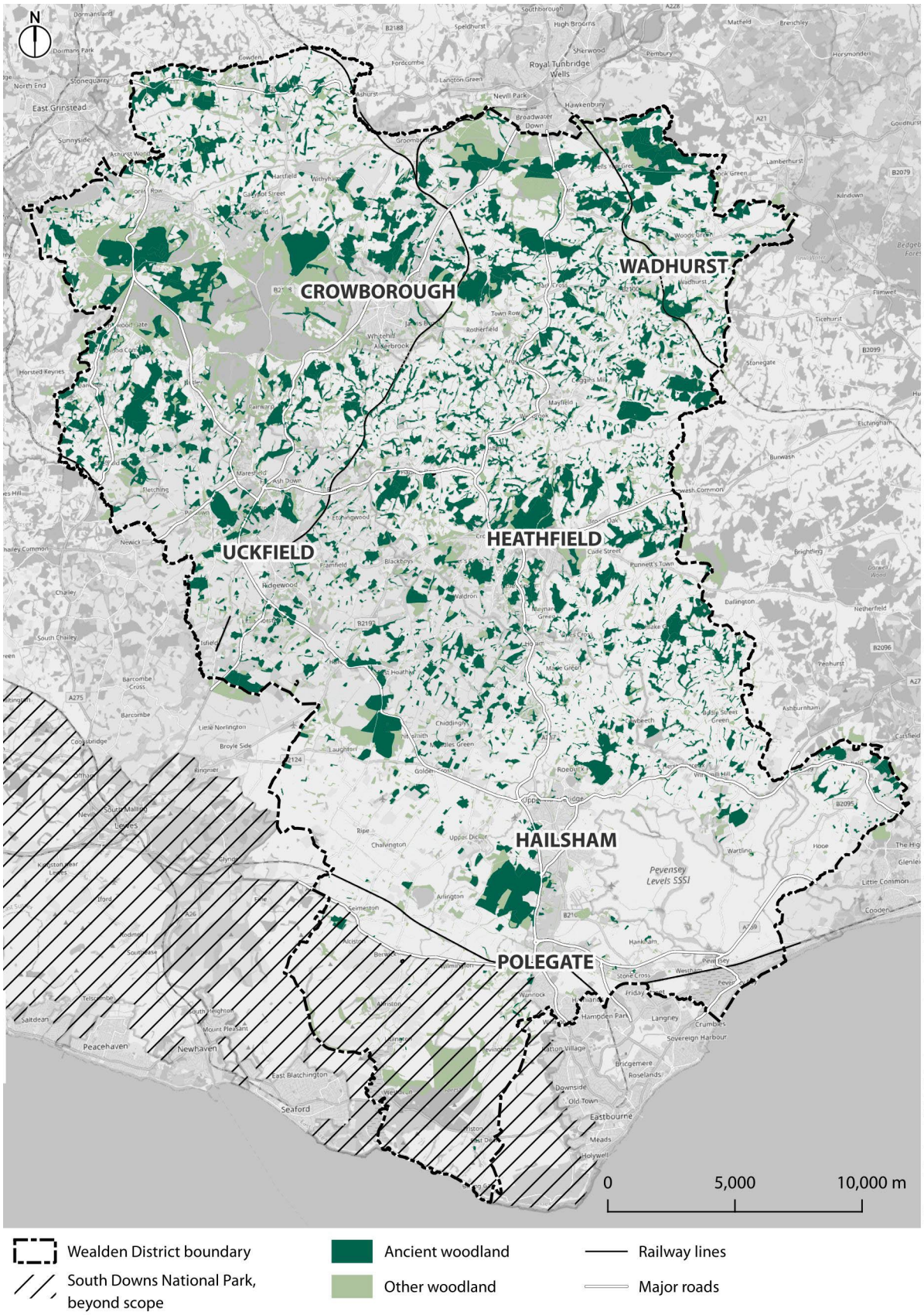
189. Woodland, much of it classified as ancient woodland, structures the High and Low Weald's nationally important medieval character and supports exceptional biodiversity. Routeways, shaws and ghyll woodlands contribute to landscape time-depth and connectivity. Ashdown Forest's heath-wood mosaic is of European importance and underpins sense of place.

Condition

190. Extensive cover persists, but traditional coppice has declined. Some fragmentation and deer pressure reduce structure and regeneration. Local projects and management plans target restoration and connectivity, with active work on rides, edges and veteran trees.

Vulnerability

191. Neglect of traditional woodland management systems like coppicing; diseases and pests, exacerbated by climate change; incremental boundary loss; recreational pressure; and climate-driven drought/storm impacts on ancient woodland and veteran trees. Maintaining skilled management and habitat links is crucial.



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Fig 42 – Map showing the extent of woodland cover across Wealden, illustrating the large amount of ancient woodland within the District (data obtained March 2026) (Credit: Alan Baxter Ltd)

4.4 Medieval land, field and road systems

192. The three landscape areas covered by this strategy within Wealden District are some of the best surviving medieval landscapes in northern Europe: the High Weald, Low Weald and Pevensey Levels. With the exception of a few settlements, these areas largely remained unchanged during the industrial revolution, retaining their late medieval appearance.
193. Due to their history of transhumance, the High and Low Weald can be seen together as an interconnected medieval agricultural network, where herds would have been moved to the High Weald for summer and the Low Weald and South Downs for winter. These created a patchwork of irregularly shaped fields separated by thick hedgerows and wooded corridors, with sections of larger forests and heathland remaining in place across the wider area. These smallholdings were linked together with droveways, that developed over time and have later become roads and public rights of way. These are characterised by their often narrow and sunken character, being edged with trees and/or hedgerows. The presence of so many smallholdings resulted in isolated farmsteads and sparsely located, small, villages. Settlements generally became established on ridgeways through the Weald which ran east-west, perpendicular to the generally north-south drove roads, forming a chequerboard network of historic transportation routes. This, along with the lack of development during the Industrial Revolution, has retained the Weald's medieval agricultural and industrial landscape.
194. Before the 1300s, the Pevensey Levels was largely underwater. This changed over the following centuries when reclamation work (known as 'inning') was started by local religious houses, draining the Levels, creating a curated landscape for agricultural use, wet meadows and saltworks. Other than the few modern roads that cross it, this manmade medieval landscape remains largely unchanged. In contrast, the higher parts of the Pevensey area have been subject to more modern development, although do retain elements of their medieval appearance, such as around Pevensey Castle.



Fig 43 – Historic trackway near Uckfield (Credit: Alan Baxter)

Significance

195. A nationally rare, coherent survival of medieval routeways (dens, droves and sunken lanes), assart fields and farmsteads across the Weald, and inning on the Levels. These systems underpin settlement form and biodiversity connectivity, shaping distinctive town–country relationships.

Condition

196. Patterns remain legible: hedged fields, shaws and sunken lanes in the Weald; rectilinear ditch-bounded fields on the Levels. Localised boundary loss, traffic and drainage changes affect integrity, though stewardship continues to support restoration.

Vulnerability

197. Highway “improvements,” hedge removal, infill and verge erosion; abandonment of traditional management; and hydrological alteration of ditch systems. Loss of legibility compromises both heritage value and ecological networks.

4.5 Small historic settlements

198. Since the medieval period, the Weald has been sparsely populated, punctuated with small settlements, situated along main routes. Although these grew slightly in size during the medieval and early modern period, compared to much of the rest of the country, the Weald remained largely rural. With the exception of a few towns that expanded either as a result of the railway or the car (or both), most settlements have remained small, with little modern development. This has therefore been a continuous characteristic of the Weald for centuries and contributes to its understanding as a largely medieval landscape. In regard to the Pevensey Levels, since their drainage, they have remained completely rural, being punctuated by only a few small hamlets and farmsteads.
199. The Weald's dispersed pattern of small settlements often developed around historic farms or on ridgetop wood clearings, such as Heathfield, Rotherfield and Buxted. These remained small and generally subservient to the adjoining manorial estate, although some had started to grow by the thirteenth century, developing further as a result of the prosperous iron industry in the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries. These small settlements are generally characterised by a market street lined with several buildings of late medieval stock, with a church located just off the main thoroughfare.
200. The quantity of surviving small late medieval villages, widely dispersed across the Weald, contributes to its medieval landscape character, while the lack of almost any large settlements in the Pevensey Levels (outside the Eastbourne urban conurbation) contributes further to this character. Archaeological remains often survive in abundance within and on the fringes of historic settlements, increasing their heritage significance and offering great potential for enhancing understanding of the growth of the District's hamlets, villages and towns.

Significance

201. A dispersed network of ridge-top villages and hamlets, often nucleated around markets, churches and farmsteads, embodies the Weald's medieval and early-modern economy. The Levels remain largely undeveloped, reinforcing long-established rural distinctiveness and settlement patterns. The extent of survival of these patterns across such a large area is of national significance. Many small historic settlements contain groups of individually designated heritage assets that are of national importance in their own right, many listed at Grade I or II*.

Condition

202. Most small centres retain historic cores, timber-framed buildings and brick-and-tile frontages, although incremental infill, traffic and services affect character locally. Through traffic and on-street parking has an acute effect on character in many historic centres. Conservation areas and local-level design guidance e.g. through neighbourhood planning, help safeguard townscape quality.

Vulnerability

203. Pressure for infill development and historic settlement expansion which can erode the historically organic, small-scale development patterns; suburban street furniture and parking of inappropriate design; conversion of commercial units and associated loss of traditional shopfronts and materials; and traffic impacts on narrow historic streets. Poorly designed public realm changes can erode legibility.



Fig 44 – Mayfield High Street (Credit: WDC)

4.6 Local industries

204. The industries that have shaped Wealden District have relied on its varied geology, vast wooded areas and plentiful water courses. These have included iron production, brick and tile production, timber for shipbuilding, hop production, rope making, watermills and windmills.
205. Iron production is the oldest industry in the area, with two periods of intense activity – the Roman era and during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries – although there is some evidence that smelting has been happening in the Weald as far back as the Iron Age. The reason the Weald has historically been so fitting for the iron industry is due to its rich forests for charcoal to heat the furnaces, the geology which provided iron ore to feed the furnaces and masonry to build them, and the multiple streams for cooling. The prosperity of the industry led to the creation of England's first blast furnace at Newbridge in the Ashdown Forest in 1496. The iron industry left its mark on the landscape with the construction of a number of large iron master's houses, hammer ponds, as well as the curious iron grave slabs found in the area.
206. Another historic industry that has prospered from the Weald's rich geology is the production of brick, tiles and terracotta. This has influenced the local building vernacular, with many buildings from the post-medieval period being constructed in brick with tile hanging and tile roofs. An early example that shows the prevalence of the Weald as a centre of brickmaking was Herstmonceux Castle (1441), likely the largest building at the time to have been constructed in brick. Following this, the industry grew between the seventeenth and nineteenth and continued to be popular until the 1950s. Terracotta was also produced, with plaques created by Jonathan Harmer of Heathfield used locally as grave markers, such as in Hellingly churchyard. Soon after, it declined, with there now being no brick or tile works operating in the District.



Fig 45 – Stone Cross Windmill (Credit: WDC)

207. Other industries that have left their mark on the area are the hop industry and rope making. The hop industry grew out of a community of Flemish settlers, reaching its peak in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, contributing to the growth of the beer industry in the Victorian era. The remnants of this industry can be seen in the significant number of surviving oast houses located around the Weald, often next to farmhouses. Another is rope making, which was traditionally made from sisal, cotton, hemp or jute, that grew throughout the nineteenth century, being particularly popular during the early and mid-twentieth century, with the production of ropes continuing in Hailsham today. The distribution of ropewalks within Hailsham is still visible today in the layout of the town centre. Several other trades and industries have historically prospered in the Weald, with evidence seen in surviving windmills, watermills and the tradition of trug making which survives at Herstmonceux, with local initiatives to keep the skill alive.

Significance

208. The number of surviving sites (buildings, landscapes and archaeology) that relate to Wealden's iron, brick and tile and hop-growing industries is testament to the historic size of these networks and nationally significant in its extent and diversity. Sussex trug-making remains a nationally significant endangered craft with active training and outreach.

Condition

209. Historic local industries have almost entirely died out in practice and survive as archaeological sites and converted buildings. Archaeological earthworks (hammer ponds, pits) and industrial buildings survive variably. Most oasthouses have been converted, which typically results in loss of original fabric and can be associated with harmful changes to its external appearance. Trug-making and ropemaking continues on a small scale with revival efforts and public engagement. Documentation and listing capture key sites, but many assets remain undesignated and vulnerable to loss.

Vulnerability

210. Loss or insensitive conversion of industrial structures; decay of unprotected sites; skill-loss in traditional crafts; and limited awareness of industrial archaeology in the landscape, leading to unintentional loss. Changes in farm economics and materials supply affect craft viability.

4.7 Local vernacular architecture

211. Vernacular architecture refers to the styles of building typical of a particular region (especially ordinary buildings) that reflect local customs and traditions and make use of locally available materials such as timber, stone and brick. In Wealden, those materials and forms are strongly conditioned by geology and landform: where oak, clay and sandstone are common, timber-framing, tile-hanging and sandstone walling recur; where coastal shingle and chalk flint dominate, flint and cobble construction is widely seen. The District's vernacular is best understood as a mosaic of place-specific materials and architectural forms rather than a single district-wide style.
212. Until the nineteenth century, most vernacular buildings were typically two storeys, with timber frames or brickwork, clay plain tile roofs and either weatherboarding or tile-hanging to upper walls. These are the principal materials and details that remain prominent in many historic village centres. The High Weald in particular shows a long tradition of timber framing, Wealden sandstone, handmade brick and tile-hanging, reflecting the area's wooded landscape and sandstone/clay geology.
213. Many of the oldest buildings began as isolated farmsteads, and across East Sussex and Kent the characteristic "Wealden hall house" type emerged, with its recessed open-hall plan flanked by jettied end bays. A number survive in the District, including Bridge Cottage (1436) in Uckfield, which has been studied and dendro-dated as a prime example of the type.
214. Crucially, the local vernacular expresses marked sub-regional variation. In the High Weald, traditional buildings often combine timber framing and weatherboarding with local sandstone, clay brick and clay tiles; tile-hanging is common on gables and upper storeys, and barn forms with hipped or half-hipped roofs are characteristic. These choices arise directly from the High Weald's geology and medieval woodland economy. By contrast, on and around the Pevensey Levels the ready availability of coastal shingle and chalk flint has long encouraged flint and cobble walling, frequently combined with brick dressings, a tradition visible in historic structures such as Pevensey Castle and widely documented across southern East Sussex. Coastal geomorphology also helps explain the abundance of flint pebbles locally.
215. From the fourteenth to the twentieth centuries, the growth of the brick and tile industry further shaped local building character, but these elements are not uniform across the District: brick became ubiquitous in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, while practices such as tile-hanging and weatherboarding persisted strongly in some High Weald settlements and receded in others. The result is a distinctly local patchwork of pre-modern forms and materials that change from settlement to settlement, a pattern recognised in contemporary landscape and design guidance.

Significance

216. The extent of surviving vernacular architecture in Wealden is unusual and highly significant. The geographic variations in materials and design are major factors in defining local distinctiveness and character. Most of these buildings are designated (often highly) in their own right, and where multiple examples survive in close proximity this enhances their significance through their group value.

Condition

217. Many historic cores retain consistent materials and scale; vernacular quality persists but is diluted by replacement windows, loss of tile-hanging/boarding and insensitive detailing. Vernacular agricultural buildings are often undesignated and liable to inappropriate alteration or loss.

Vulnerability

218. Erosion of character through incremental alterations, material loss, and poor repair; sourcing suitable local materials; and demolition or unsympathetic conversions of outbuildings. The cost and knowledge base for upgrading vernacular buildings can present major barriers to appropriate/necessary works.



Fig 46 – An example of the local vernacular within the south of the District at Westham, where close-studded timber framing is common among surviving pre-modern buildings (Credit: WDC)

4.8 Agriculture and farmsteads

219. Agriculture has long underpinned Wealden's economy, settlement pattern and local culture, visible in the dense survival of historic farmsteads, dispersed hamlets and the mosaic of ancient fields, droveways and woodland assarts across the High Weald, Low Weald and Pevensey Levels. Seasonal transhumance established sunken lanes and ridge-top routes, while piecemeal clearance created small, irregular fields edged by hedges and shaws.
220. Across the High and Low Weald there is a nationally high density of historic farmsteads, many retaining pre-1750 (and locally pre-1550) buildings within landscapes largely fixed in the medieval period. Typical plans are small loose courtyards and dispersed clusters, with L- and U-plans widespread, and larger regular courtyards, sometimes with covered yards, where nineteenth-century estate improvement was strongest. Characteristic building types include three- to five-bay barns (often hipped, sometimes aisled to one side), small brick stables, cow houses and shelter sheds reflecting the emphasis on cattle. Granaries appear either free-standing on staddle stones or incorporated over cart sheds, while field barns were once common in the south Weald but are now scarce, increasing the significance of the few survivors.
221. Hop growing added a distinctive layer from the eighteenth to twentieth centuries: oast houses are concentrated along the northern side of both the High and Low Weald. Unconverted examples with intact fitments are rare and significant, and associated features such as hop-pickers' huts, kilns and yards provide important, if rare, evidence of seasonal working patterns.
222. On the Pevensey Levels, medieval drainage and reclamation created an open grazing marsh divided by ditches rather than hedges, punctuated by "eyes" (islands of higher ground) and raised roads where farmsteads developed, often from monastic granges; small loose courtyard, L- and U-plans dominate, buildings are largely nineteenth–twentieth century, and cattle accommodation is more prevalent than large corn barns, with notable losses of out-farms and field barns.
223. The farmed landscape is rich in archaeology, including but not limited to yard surfaces, platforms, trackways, stock pounds and water-management works. In the Weald, evidence of assarting and route evolution survives, and on the Levels buried peats and alluvium preserve environmental records.

Significance

224. Historic England's regional and National Character Area assessments confirm Wealden District as having one of of England's highest concentrations of historic farmsteads, with strong survival of medieval layouts and buildings. This includes local and production-specific variations, such as how Pevensey farmsteads reflect marsh grazing economies.

Condition

225. Many farmstead plans survive, although outfarms/field barns have been much reduced; conversions mixed in quality; on the Levels, ditch networks remain crucial to viability. Guidance supports sensitive reuse, though loss of internal fittings (e.g., oasts) is common.

Vulnerability

226. Functional redundancy and alteration pressure; piecemeal erosion of yards and boundaries; loss of oast fittings; and drainage changes affecting marsh farmsteads. Without sensitive adaptation and water management, character and evidential value decline.

4.9 Moated manors

227. Wealden District has an unusually high number of moated manors, most of which were constructed between the late-eleventh and the late-fourteenth centuries. These were often connected to agricultural holdings but were themselves generally owned by members of the gentry or wealthy local families. Many of these would have originally had timber framed manor houses, however most were replaced from the late-fourteenth century onwards with stone or brick structures.
228. The majority of these moated manors are in the Low Weald, with six located within a small area around Arlington and Chalvington, including the well-known Michelham Priory. These six are interestingly about 0.5km apart, with the exit water from one often acting as part of the water supply to another. Slightly east of this is the grandest of the surviving manors, Herstmonceux Castle, which is situated at the northern edge of the Pevensey Levels.
229. As stated in *Rural Medieval and Transitional Housing in the Eastern High Weald: 1250 – c1570*, 'moats were never common in the High Weald and were almost extensively the preserve of the seigniorial class'. There are a few good examples, such as Old Sharnden Manor, near Mayfield, which includes a surviving fifteenth century timber-framed house (Grade II) and part of the original moat. Many, perhaps the majority, of historic moats survive as archaeology, the manors themselves having been long since lost. Where they survive, they are often designated as listed buildings or scheduled monuments, although there is significant potential for many others to exist that have not been identified as such and are therefore not designated.

Significance

230. A nationally significant survival of moated manors, both as built structures and as archaeological remains. Their survival is important evidence of historic land ownership frameworks and distribution of land holdings. These sites are often designated in their own right as scheduled monuments or listed buildings and often contain medieval and early modern fabric.

Condition

231. Many earthwork/moat circuits survive with later houses or ruins; setting pressures arise from nearby development or farm change. Routine clearance and water control are decisive for survival, as hydrology and vegetation management affect the integrity of the moats.

Vulnerability

232. Infilling, scrub growth, drainage changes and garden works can damage fabric and water regimes; loss of ancillary features (mills, fishponds) reduces understanding. Unmanaged tree growth can destabilise banks and revetments.



Fig 47 – Michelham Priory (gatehouse pictured here) is one of the many historic moated manors in the Low Weald (Credit: WDC)

4.10 Country estates

233. The number of country estates located within Wealden District is noteworthy. These were built in successive waves, and their presence has shaped both the growth of the area's settlements, as well as the evolution of its cultural traditions and local identity.
234. Following the Norman Conquest, the hundreds of small Saxon manors were reduced to just sixteen larger manors, which consolidated the county's revenues into a few wealthy holdings, allowing for larger houses to be built. Some of the District's earliest date from the following centuries, such as Pevensey Castle (rebuilt in the eleventh century) and Herstmonceux (1441). The next wave came following the dissolution of the monasteries, where former religious institutions were turned into large residential properties, such as at Michelham Priory and Wilmington Priory.
235. As wealth flooded into the area throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and while it was the centre of England's iron industry, a number of large iron master's houses were constructed, such as Marshall's Manor, Hogge House and Great Butts, some on new sites and others on the site of existing estates. These new houses were often finished in a classical style and surrounded by large, planned parks and associated ancillary buildings. Some were designed by notable architects, such as Ashdown House and Hammerwood Park, which were the works of Benjamin Henry Latrobe, (later of United States Capitol fame). Humphry Repton, the successor to Capability Brown, also designed many of the area's English landscape gardens during the late C18 and early C19, such as Buckhurst Park, Kidbrooke Park and Bayham Abbey, while Brown himself designed the gardens of Sheffield Park.
236. Country houses continued to develop into the early twentieth century, with examples including Foxhunt Manor at Waldron (1897) and Homestall Manor Estate, which is a curious 1930s extension of a medieval farmhouse. The late Victorian and Edwardian eras saw many new large houses and villas constructed within Wealden, as the area's train links and improving road connections made it a prime spot for Londoners' 'country piles' (large, newly-built houses with extensive grounds). Many of these are located in and around Ashdown Forest, whose 'wild' aesthetic made it a popular destination for newcomers.
237. Since the Second World War, many large houses have been transformed into hotels, retreats and wedding venues, contributing to the District's tourism and hospitality sectors. In line with wider national trends, many country houses were lost over the twentieth century, either through neglect and decay or deliberate intervention. Notable examples include Maresfield Park (demolished c.1920s), Wadhurst Park (demolished in 1952) and Searles in Fletching (demolished in the late 1940s). The remnants of these estates often survive in the form of ancillary buildings, such as the gate lodge at Maresfield Park and the former stables (now converted to housing) at the Searle Estate.
238. Many other smaller villas and country houses, some with smaller parks, were constructed during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. These 'second tier' estates are often not designated but are still an important element of Wealden's heritage in illustrating the attraction of the area to affluent people.
239. The mark that country estates have had on the District is undoubtable. The parks and grounds have often restricted the urban sprawl, such as at Heathfield, Uckfield and Wadhurst, whilst also providing greenspace. Estates have also sometimes developed their own housing both within the estates themselves as isolated estate cottages, and through planned developments of multiple dwellings. A notable example is the work undertaken by the Earls of Abergavenny, who developed Eridge Green model village in the nineteenth century, and more recently, the western extension of Frant, with their buildings identifiable by the serifed letter 'A'.



Fig 48 – Ashdown Park, currently a hotel (Credit: Alan Baxter)

Significance

240. Successive waves of estates, from medieval to Edwardian, shaped settlement form, planted landscapes and local economies. Many buildings and estates were designed by notable designers (Repton, Brown) and architects (Latrobe), which contributes further to national interest. The regional distinctiveness is derived from many estates' origins as ironmasters' or foresters' houses. Parkland archaeology contributes to understanding of the time-depth of many estates, often dating back to the Norman conquest or earlier.

Condition

241. Many parks, lodges and estate cottages survive, although some main houses have been lost. Changes of use e.g. to schools, hotels, can result in a proliferation of modern outbuildings which can affect setting. Veteran trees and designed views need active management to sustain their significance and contribution to setting of the main house. Increasing setting changes from settlement growth is a recurring issue.

Vulnerability

242. Fragmentation of estates; loss of planting and parkland features; insensitive conversions; and cumulative settlement expansion impacting setting and vistas. Tree diseases and storm events also increasingly threaten designed landscapes due to climate change. Loss of estate cottages where these are not listed, or inappropriate extension and change.

4.11 Late nineteenth and early twentieth century towns

243. Although the Weald is still a remarkably rural part of England, especially given its proximity to the capital, a few larger towns developed during the nineteenth century as a result of enhanced transportation networks (particularly the arrival of the railway during the C19th and the advent of the car in the C20th) and the growth of local industries (as noted above, but also tourism to the south coast and the rural landscapes of the Weald). These towns and villages include Crowborough, Uckfield, Hailsham, Polegate, Stone Cross and Pevensey Bay. Alongside this, some of the smaller settlements have also grown slightly in size, such as at Groombridge and the emergence of the present Heathfield which relocated at the coming of the railway from Old Heathfield.
244. The architectural legacy of the nineteenth century development includes public buildings, such as railway stations, police stations, schools and libraries, as well as parades of shops and suburban housing. Not many buildings of this era and type are listed but often form intrinsic parts of the historic cores of these towns, with many being positive contributors to a town's conservation area. The twentieth century legacy generally takes the form of low-density suburban housing stock, but there are also twentieth century town centre buildings, such as shopping parades, libraries, cinemas and supermarkets. These are generally of less historic and architectural value, although there are some interesting examples where efforts have been made to positively respond to local heritage and the historic context, such as St Mary's Walk in Hailsham, or the early twentieth-century purpose-built shopping parades at Uckfield High Street, which adds interest to the Uckfield Conservation Area. Crowborough, Hailsham, Heathfield and Uckfield possess a number of attractive public buildings and shopping parades from the turn of the twentieth century, illustrating the accelerating pace and scale of growth in these historic settlements during the modern period.

Significance

245. Railways and early motoring catalysed distinctive civic, commercial and suburban fabric in key towns, representing modern growth phases within a predominantly rural district. This layer of historic townscape complements older cores and aids interpretation of nineteenth- and twentieth-century social and economic change. Built form from this period is less nationally-distinct, but retains regional distinctiveness, such as in the use of locally produced brick and the adoption of locally-derived revivalist architecture for civic buildings.

Condition

246. While many centres retain coherent Victorian and Edwardian shops and civic buildings, later infill buildings, inappropriate shopfront changes and traffic engineering have impacted the character of some town centres. Vacancy also erodes character by reducing vitality within the historic town centre. Above-shop vacancy is an issue common nationwide, including in Wealden. Beyond town centres, the erosion of character through loss of original features and inappropriate alteration is more common than in older towns and villages due to the lower concentration of conservation areas and listed buildings.

Vulnerability

247. Loss of original details, signage clutter, insensitive infill, and car-dominated layouts risk eroding streetscape quality and townscape legibility. Vacancy and piecemeal alterations also threaten coherence.



Fig 49 – Groombridge village centre, with primarily nineteenth century buildings (Credit: Alan Baxter)

4.12 Cultural traditions

248. Wealden District hosts many living forms of intangible cultural heritage that enrich the area and foster strong community pride and connections to local history. Much of the District's cultural life explicitly grows from its landscape, towns and villages, and the traditions people continue to make and celebrate today.
249. Wealden's bonfire culture (part of the wider Sussex Bonfire tradition) remains highly active: volunteer-run societies in Hailsham, Ninfield, Isfield & Little Horsted, East Hoathly & Halland, Rotherfield & Mark Cross, Crowborough and Uckfield organise torchlit processions, remembrance ceremonies and firework displays each autumn, sustained by year-round fundraising, torch-making, costume work and inter-society "outmeetings."
250. The historic Sussex sport of stoolball is actively played across the district, with clubs such as Isfield (Ladies & Mixed) fielding teams and the Wealden League publishing fixtures and results each season, embedding inter-village competition and regular training nights in community life.
251. Wealden also sustains a nationally significant craft: Sussex trug-making in Herstmonceux, kept alive in working workshops at Thomas Smith's Trug Shop / Sussex Trug Heritage Centre and The Truggery, where makers use coppiced sweet chestnut and willow, run demonstrations and train newcomers in a craft now listed as critically endangered by the Heritage Crafts Association. Complementing that woodland tradition, coppicing and charcoal-burning continue as living skills: the Sussex & Surrey Coppice Group provides a practitioner network, skills-sharing and public demonstrations; new producer-collectives such as Wealden Charcoal supply local restaurants with coppice-sourced lumpwood charcoal; and hands-on charcoal-making courses near Herstmonceux (e.g., Myrtle Wood Bushcraft) teach the full process from kiln set-up to bagging.
252. Finally, seasonal folk custom still shapes the calendar. The Heffle Cuckoo Fair at Heathfield, traditionally welcoming spring with parades, music and stalls, continues to be publicised locally, with dates listed for April 2026, indicating ongoing community appetite for this enduring rite of spring.

Significance

253. A range of examples of locally-distinctive living heritage are significant for their communal value. This binds communities to landscape and history, sustaining skills, sport and volunteer networks across the District. These practices underpin identity, participation and local pride.

Condition

254. Societies and clubs remain active with annual programmes and events; trug making is critically endangered but under active revival through the Sussex Trug Heritage Centre, training, and public demonstrations. Local media and councils promote seasonal events like the Heffle Cuckoo Fair.

Vulnerability

255. Volunteer fatigue, funding and material shortages, and skill-loss threaten continuity; event safety and regulatory costs can constrain Bonfire and fairs; traditional crafts need apprentices and markets, with raw-material supply an added challenge.



Fig 50 – Unconverted oasthouse in Bird In Eye near Uckfield (Credit: WDC)

Part 5:
Issues and opportunities

5.0 Issues and opportunities

5.1 Introduction

256. Parts 2-4 of this Heritage Strategy have illustrated the exceptional richness and interconnected strands of Wealden's cultural and natural heritage. In developing a strategy to conserve, enhance and celebrate this heritage, it is first necessary to understand its strengths and weaknesses, particularly in terms of emerging trends across the District. To do so, this Part examines the key issues and opportunities relating to Wealden District's heritage. It breaks it down into nine topics:

- New development
- Climate change
- Policy/guidance gaps
- Land management
- Uncontrolled works
- Resourcing in the local authority
- Built heritage conservation and local planning
    - Built heritage at risk
    - Building vacancy
    - Lack of understanding
    - Economic pressures
- Public realm and transport
    - Car-dominated historic centres
    - Public transport and active travel connections
- Health and wellbeing

5.2 New development

257. Housing shortages within Wealden District, as well as the UK Government's housing targets, have resulted in significant pressure to deliver new housing at scale. Sites being brought forward by landowners and developers are varied in both size and location. While some comprise new settlements or large town extensions others are far smaller, sometimes consisting of farm conversions or extensions. In general, the larger the development site, the larger the potential for heritage impacts (both beneficial and harmful). Larger development sites often – although not always – present greater opportunities to control potential impacts at a planning policy level, through site allocation and greater pre-application engagement. At the same time, smaller-scale development – on the scale of a single dwelling or a handful of new dwellings – can have significant heritage impacts where they occur in rich heritage contexts. The setting of heritage assets is often a key consideration in this rural District.
258. New development can be beneficial to heritage in maintaining or enhancing the vitality of settlements, securing viable uses for heritage assets delivering 'heritage benefits' and, if well-designed, can enhance local distinctiveness and a sense of place. However, it requires a particularly careful approach to avoid a number of potential risks. In Wealden District, these include harm to rural character; building on flood risk areas; harm to ecology and arboriculture as a result of overdevelopment, irreversibly changing the character of farmsteads, harm to below ground archaeology; and harm to the setting of historic assets. There is already a wealth of knowledge and guidance available to help developers bring forward schemes that work around and/or mitigate these sensitive issues, including advice from WDC, Historic England and Natural England. These however are not always used or understood, resulting in schemes coming forward that would pose potential harm to built and/or natural heritage.

5.3 Climate change and environmental degradation

259. Climate change and other forms of environmental degradation present one of the greatest threats facing the natural and historic environment, both within Wealden and nationally. Increasingly intense and frequent extreme weather events such as heat waves, storms and flooding, together with a loss of historic woodland trees, has already caused damage to historic buildings, landscapes and archaeology.
260. Biodiversity and habitat loss, along with the degradation of soils, rivers and air quality, are also detrimental to Wealden's heritage value due to the intrinsic link between the District's cultural and natural heritage features. As these trends continue to worsen, it will be become increasingly challenging to manage the District's heritage sites in a manner that is compatible with a changing climate and the emerging 'new normal'.
261. It is therefore imperative that action is taken to mitigate these impacts as far as possible, as quickly as possible, and to adapt historic places and landscapes to the changing conditions in a manner that is, as far as possible, compatible with their heritage significance.
262. Climate change is a high priority within WDC and is supported by a team of officers who contribute to the Council's plans and strategies and ensure that climate considerations are embedded in everything the Council does. In December 2024, Wealden District Council held the 'Big climate change conversation' with 100 local groups and organisations. Their feedback and responses were reflected in the new Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan that was adopted in July 2025 which will guide the Council's actions for the coming years.
263. There are several natural sites across Wealden District that are nationally or internationally important habitats, but also important sites for adapting to and mitigating the effects of climate change. These include (but are not limited to) the Pevensey Levels, which are an important carbon sink and flood storage area and the extensive woodlands across the High and Low Weald, which store thousands of tonnes of carbon. Protecting and celebrating the roles these areas play in the fight against climate change is an important asset for the District. To aid this, several strategies are being produced to provide policy and guidance for landowners and stakeholders, including a proposed tree, woodland and hedgerow strategy. Local landowners are also taking action to adapt to the changing climate and mitigate its worst effects, including at Sheffield Park, where the National Trust has planted a 'Garden of the Future' to test climate-resilient horticultural practices.
264. There is a move by both WDC and East Sussex County Council to decarbonise the existing housing building stock. This is set out in the East Sussex Housing Partnership Strategy 2025–2032 which has the aims of taking a cross-sector strategic approach to domestic retrofit, ensuring new development is energy efficient, and building capacity in the local workforce to enable retrofit. WDC is also applying these aims to its own housing stock, sourcing funding to retrofit social housing within the District. Alongside this, officers are also supporting both the sustainable reuse of buildings and retrofit projects, with a recent example being the current development at Wadhurst's Church of St Peter and St Paul, to make it one of the country's first eco-churches.

5.4 Enhancing existing policy and guidance

265. There are ways in which existing policy and guidance regarding Wealden's heritage could be enhanced.
266. Local lists are an important mechanism for protecting locally and/or regionally important heritage assets, ensuring that they are sustained and factored into proposals for change. Although WDC currently has no local list, conservation area appraisals and a number of neighbourhood plans identify a range of non-designated heritage assets which make a meaningful contribution to the historic environment. Much of this is due to the area's relationship between the built and natural environments, with a number of buildings and structures – either due to their age or type – contributing to Wealden District's historic character. There is an opportunity to collate existing, disparate lists of local heritage assets into a unified local list or list of non-designated heritage assets.
267. In regard to conservation areas in Wealden District, 30 out of the 33 have written appraisals, although all of these are either in draft form (lacking photos, strategic maps or management

plans) and/or are in need of bringing up to date. Leaving the remaining three conservation areas without appraisals gives the council less power and oversight in those areas. Therefore, having those three written and updating the others would allow for WDC to better protect heritage within the area. Updating these documents as a whole would also provide a good opportunity to produce more Article 4 directions if deemed appropriate (with there currently only being one in place) and Conservation Area Management Plans, due to the enhanced control they give councils over works in conservation areas.

268. There are other policy documents and guidance that could be prepared to help WDC and partners to better manage heritage assets in the District, such as a Cultural Strategy and a Tree, Woodland and Hedgerow Strategy. Alongside this, there are more sites of archaeological interest than is represented through the current extent of Archaeological Notification Areas in Wealden District. East Sussex County Council have been planning a significant review for some time, but this has not yet happened. Updating these would reduce the possibility of archaeological harm through development.
269. The current statutory development plan does not draw an explicit connection between climate change and the historic environment. As the historic environment's vulnerability to climate change increases, it will be increasingly important that WDC has clear local policy on how to accommodate changes to the built and natural environment, balancing heritage conservation and climate action.
270. Planning policy can be challenging to decipher for applicants who are not familiar with the planning system. This can lead to applications being received that do not contain the amount or type of information required for officers to properly assess the impact on heritage, or may present proposals that unintentionally contravene local and national planning policy relating to the historic and natural environments. An important mechanism for avoiding this issue is WDC's pre-application service, which allows applicants to receive advice on their proposals prior to submitting an application. Increased resourcing within the Council and increased awareness of this service among applicants presents an opportunity to avoid heritage impacts and/or delays in the planning process early on and build greater awareness of the value of cultural and natural heritage among the local community.

5.5 Land management

271. Land management has always been at the heart of Wealden culture, with many of the ancient forests that once supported the iron and shipbuilding industries, having been historically replanted and coppiced to ensure that the land remained productive for future generations. This tradition continues today, with management in certain areas guided by the various nature designations, seen specifically in places of particular interest such as Pevensey Levels and the Ashdown Forest. Outside of these areas, wider policy documents such as WDC's *Landscape Character Assessment for Wealden District* (2022) and documents like the High Weald National Landscape AONB Management Plan (2024) help provide guidance and steer for good land management. Nevertheless, there are other documents and mapping exercises that could improve this that are currently lacking. These include (although are not limited to) a map of long-established woodland (the second tier in the hierarchy of woodland habitats in the UK), and policy directed towards or mapping of ancient biodiversity highways and improved HER data to better understand historic land patterns and uses.
272. The growth in intensive farming practices is another issue, increasing the risk of damage to or loss of heritage assets, including sites of archaeological interest. This risk is particularly acute in relation to undesignated and previously unidentified heritage assets due to their lack of policy or legislative protection, or even a lack of knowledge of their existence. Creating resources to better-inform those involved in agriculture and land management within the District could help to raise awareness of the importance of archaeology and historic landscape character and therefore increase the chances of sites of heritage interest being identified and protected or recorded. Encouraging and facilitating local heritage groups that become vital repositories of knowledge about their locality is another way of better understanding areas of heritage potential that are at risk of intensive farming practices, whilst also presenting an opportunity for enhancing community wellbeing and social interaction.

5.6 Uncontrolled works

273. Unauthorised alterations gradually erode the distinctiveness of the historic environment and are an issue that local authorities face across the United Kingdom. Wealden is not immune to this issue; however the Council makes effective use of Building Preservation Notices and other enforcement work, which both ensures that unconsented works are rectified and acts as a deterrent to others who may consider doing the same. This is important, as although some works are done by those knowingly not following the rules, others are unaware, perhaps believing, for example, that only front elevations are listed. Therefore, as well as providing a deterrent, it is important that more information on managing a designated asset is available through both publications and engagement. It is also essential that list descriptions are up-to-date, making sure owners of heritage assets are aware of the reasons why and to what extent their property is listed, although this is a larger exercise that would require significant resourcing from national bodies.
274. The gradual increase in permitted development rights and prior approvals has allowed more homeowners to carry out works to improve the climate resilience of their properties and removed some of the administrative burden upon WDC officers. However, it has also increased the potential for works to be carried out to historic buildings and within sensitive landscapes that are inappropriate and harmful to the District's heritage. Greater guidance on 'best practice' implementation of measures covered by permitted development would be of particular benefit, particularly for historic buildings in conservation areas.

5.7 Resourcing in the local authority

275. Capacity within the District Council has remained relatively consistent over the last two decades, with one to two conservation officers at any given time. If resources allow, enhanced resourcing for conservation would help to deliver the recommendations in this Heritage Strategy, but also increase capacity for development management functions, to the benefit of delivering sustainable economic development within the District. Partnership working with Historic England, the County Council, and community groups also offers opportunities to increase capacity and unlock funding. The County Council are responsible for archaeology and transport. In regard to the former, they are not a statutory consultee but rather deal with things on a case-by-case basis. Out of the five Districts within the County, Wealden makes up around 40% of all consultations.

5.8 Built heritage conservation and local planning

5.8.1 Built Heritage at risk

276. There are many heritage assets within Wealden District which are at risk of losing their heritage value. Some of these are on HE's Heritage At Risk Register. These are:

- Church of St John the Baptist, Church Lane, Chalvington with Ripe (Grade I)
  - Condition: Poor
  - Vulnerability: Medium
  - Trend: Declining
- Church of St Pancras, Arlington (Grade I)
  - Condition: Poor
  - Vulnerability: Low
  - Trend: Declining
- Bayham Abbey, Frant / Lamberhurst (Grade II, Registered Park and Garden)
  - Condition: Generally unsatisfactory with major localised problems
  - Vulnerability: Medium
  - Trend: Stable
- Kidbrooke Park, Forest Row (Grade II, Registered Park and Garden)
  - Condition: Generally unsatisfactory with major localised problems
  - Vulnerability: Medium
  - Trend: Stable
- High Rocks Camp (see also Tunbridge Wells, Kent), Frant (Scheduled Monument)
  - Condition: Extensive significant problems
  - Vulnerability: High
  - Trend: Declining
- Polegate Windmill, Park Croft, Willingdon and Jevington (Grade II*)
  - Condition: Very bad
  - Vulnerability: Medium
  - Trend: Declining
- Cross-In-Hand Windmill, Mill Lane, Heathfield and Waldron (Grade II*)
  - Condition: Very bad
  - Vulnerability: High
  - Trend: Declining
- Gibraltar Tower, Heathfield Park, Heathfield, Heathfield and Waldron (Grade II*)
  - Condition: Very bad
  - Vulnerability: High
  - Trend: Declining
- The Mint House, Village Street, Pevensey (Grade II*)
  - Condition: Very bad
  - Vulnerability: Medium
  - Trend: Declining

277. This list comprises of a varied mixture of building and landscape types including two churches, two Registered Parks and Gardens, one Scheduled Monument, two windmills, and a sixteenth century hall house. Compared to 2021, there are now five more assets on the Register, totalling nine, with many of these being brought forward on the suggestion of WDC. Despite this meaning that more historic assets are identified as at risk than they were five years ago, by being added to the Register, they have both increased visibility and are open to more funding streams.
278. In contrast, there is encouraging progress with some buildings on the At Risk Register within the District. This includes Mint House in Pevensey, which has recently become the Home of Sussex Folklore, being awarded funding by Historic England and the Architectural Heritage Fund to engage with engineers to work towards addressing the building's structural issues. Polegate Windmill has also seen progress, with an active group dedicated to restoring the building.

279. It should also be noted that the Heritage At Risk Register only identifies Grade I and Grade II* listed buildings (alongside other forms of designated heritage assets including scheduled monuments, conservation areas and registered parks and gardens) outside of London, so does not identify more widespread issues associated with Grade II listed buildings and non-designated heritage assets outside conservation areas in poor condition across the District. This includes many buildings left vacant or subject to unsympathetic conversions, such as oast houses, Victorian and Edwardian country houses, churches, small vernacular buildings, windmills and farmsteads (particularly ancillary buildings). Notable examples within the Wealden District include the Grade II Former Legat's School of Ballet and associated church (now the Jameah Islamiyah religious school) and Hailsham Cattle Market (a key unlisted building within the Hailsham Conservation Area), Mill House in Upper Horsebridge and the old school building in Hailsham.

5.8.2 Building vacancy

280. Long-term vacancy poses a significant threat to historic buildings as it can lead to accelerated deterioration of fabric and anti-social behaviour. Although vacancy rates within Wealden District appear to be relatively low in comparison to neighbouring authorities, many historic buildings do stand empty, with particular buildings at risk being buildings no longer needed for agriculture. These are likely to either be demolished, insensitively converted or have their rural setting destroyed. Alongside this, on certain high streets, conversion is sometimes an issue shortly after retail units become vacant. Reuse strategies, partnerships with local groups, and temporary uses could maintain condition and viability while permanent solutions are found.

5.8.3 Lack of understanding

281. There is significant opportunity to increase understanding of the heritage of the District among the local community and visitors, particularly in terms of how it varies area-by-area. This is particularly important when it comes to managing local planning applications, with a common issue relating to the uninformed or misinformed use of materials that are incongruous with the location within the District. Examples of this are seen in how flint is used in the north of the district (when it was historically only used in the south), how slate is used in settlements that were not historically railway towns, how the landscape is managed (e.g. the legacy of assarting and the iron industry), and the use of weatherboarding or tile hanging in areas where this was not the local vernacular. This lack of understanding is exacerbated by the number of out-of-date list descriptions that often only consist of a few lines of text, providing little information on materials, why the building is listed and its relationship with historic building trends in the wider area.
282. A negative result of this is how planning and listed building consent applications are frequently submitted and validated without adequate information about the heritage context of the site. This lack of detail makes it difficult for council officers to assess proposals appropriately without investing significant additional time and resources. As a result, extra costs are incurred on the Council to ensure that proposals affecting heritage assets are properly informed, and it becomes challenging to request vital additional information after the application has been validated. Therefore, there is a clear need to strengthen and clarify the guidance on what should accompany a Listed Building Consent application or any application relating to the historic environment. For example, this could be a building materials toolkit for the area.

5.8.4 Economic pressures

283. The care and repair of Wealden’s built heritage faces mounting economic pressures that affect conservation outcomes and community value. Some of these issues reflect nationwide challenges, while others are felt more acutely in Wealden. Repair and maintenance costs have risen alongside insurance premiums and utility bills, while specialist skills (traditional carpentry, lime work, thatch, conservation of traditional buildings) are in short supply, extending lead-in times and inflating tender prices. Many assets – especially small vernacular buildings, farmstead ranges and places no longer aligned to modern agricultural

or retail needs (for which there are many in Wealden) – struggle for viable uses, increasing risks of vacancy and piecemeal alteration. Often, these buildings come to be viewed as liabilities rather than assets of economic and heritage value, which incentivises their insensitive conversion or demolition. Funding is competitive and project-by-project, making it difficult to plan preventative maintenance or whole-estate strategies.

284. Yet there are practical opportunities to address some of these issues. Encouraging early viability testing and reuse strategies at the pre-application stage can de-risk investment and avoid heritage harm. Targeted small-grant schemes (for roofs, rainwater goods and urgent fabric repairs) often deliver disproportionate benefit, while revolving funds and meanwhile uses can keep buildings in light touch occupation. Training and apprenticeship partnerships with colleges and crafts organisations would grow the local skills base, reduce costs over time and retain spend within the District. Clear guidance on energy upgrades for traditional buildings can unlock savings without compromising significance. Developer contributions, heritage-led masterplans and joined-up tourism initiatives can capture value from growth to support conservation deficits. Finally, coordinated fundraising and business planning which link together site operations, events and retail can improve resilience for independent heritage attractions and community-run assets.

5.9 Public realm and transport

5.9.1 Car-dominated historic centres

285. Due to its rural nature and the disconnection of rail services in the north and south of the District, car travel remains essential for many residents and visitors. As such, Wealden District has some of the highest car ownership in the country and vehicles per household. This puts a large strain on urban areas, especially historic villages, where there is little vehicular infrastructure, such as car parks or by-passes. This results in certain villages having both a lot of on-street parking, but also significant through traffic, resulting in traffic-choked medieval centres. This creates a poor setting for the hearts of these conservation areas and the associated listed buildings, and can even lead to damage to historic buildings where vehicles collide with exposed building elements such as jettied upper floors. Efforts have been made to reduce vehicle numbers by incentivising bus travel, creating a digital demand service for areas not served by busses and improving active travel connections. Alongside this, there are early proposals to introduce car clubs, as well as consented proposals and incentives for more EV chargers, helping to reduce the number of vehicles and pollution within historic centres.

5.9.2 Public transport and active travel connections

286. Although much of the District's railway network was closed in the 1960s, efforts have been made in recent years to reduce the numbers of vehicles on the Wealden District's road and incentivise residents to use more public transport or active travel. Being the authority managing Wealden's roads, East Sussex County Council have introduced several programmes and brought forward many projects to help make this change happen. Regarding public transport, these include introducing the East Sussex Day Ticket, creating cheaper youth fares, increasing rather than reducing local bus services and introducing East Sussex Flexibus (a digital demand service). In the longer term, as part of their Rail Strategy, they also hope to reopen the railway line between Lewes and Uckfield.
287. Concerning active travel, there are already a number of high-quality long-distance routes across Wealden District, such as Forest Way between East Grinstead and Groombridge (NCN 21) and the Cuckoo Trail between Heathfield and Polegate (NCN 21). There are also recently completed cycle paths such as the A27 cycle path between Lewes and Polegate (NCN 2) and a similar measure linking Eridge and Tunbridge Wells. Safeguarding these routes for the longer term will be an important way of securing active travel infrastructure within the District. The County Council now hopes to complement these with more local improvements, such as improved cycle and pedestrian crossing facilities along the A22/A27 corridor between Hailsham and Eastbourne.

5.10 Access and engagement

5.10.1 Community engagement in heritage

288. There is clear and long-standing community engagement with heritage in Wealden, reflected in the number of active history, natural heritage and conservation groups, and in enthusiastic participation in traditional events. The Sussex Bonfire Season is a standout example, with several annual torchlit processions in Wealden, demonstrating strong cultural involvement and a living connection to local history.
289. The widespread uptake of Neighbourhood Plans across the District further underscores this commitment to local matters of importance. These plans often contain detailed assessments of local heritage assets, signalling both a strong community understanding of heritage and a desire to shape development in ways that protect valued historic character. Alongside this, Wealden benefits from a large network of environmental and climate-action groups whose work frequently aligns with heritage conservation, including protecting habitats, enhancing biodiversity and promoting sustainable land management. Even when natural heritage isn't their primary focus, their efforts nonetheless help safeguard ancient and designed landscapes, woodlands and field patterns that form part of the District's historic identity.
290. The extent of coordination between these many groups is unclear. Given their overlapping interests and shared investment in Wealden's cultural and natural heritage, there is clear potential for stronger communication, collaboration and mutual support to help amplify collective impact across the District.

5.10.2 Access to information

291. Access to heritage information in Wealden District is shaped by a mix of rich resources, varied custodianship and evolving digital provision. The District's natural and cultural heritage generates substantial research interest. In general, while Wealden benefits from a wealth of heritage documentation, improving visibility, accessibility and clarity of available sources presents a significant opportunity for strengthening public engagement with the District's historic environment.
292. A key challenge is the fragmentation of information sources. Because Wealden District was only formed in 1974, coherent historical narratives for the District as a whole can be difficult to locate. In a sense, Wealden is not a 'natural' authority with geographically defined boundaries, but rather a composite of different historic landscapes and local governance structures. Earlier records remain embedded within the archives of predecessor authorities and are dispersed across the East Sussex Record Office collections. While the East Sussex Historic Environment Record (HER) remains a central, curated repository of immense value, the requirement to pay for access to detailed records (common to most HERs nationally) can limit its use. At the same time, extensive digitisation, such as the availability of historic tithe maps and datasets through East Sussex County Council, offers opportunities to broaden access, though navigation of these resources can still be daunting for new users and the value of a curated HER should not be underestimated in this regard.
293. Physical access to sources of information on heritage has also been affected by the reduction of local library provision, which previously supported community-level engagement with heritage sources. Local parish records, materials held by history societies, and other analogue collections remain invaluable but are not always easily discoverable. Creating a consolidated directory of these resources, curated by Wealden District Council or partner organisations, would help guide the public toward both digital and physical archives.

5.10.3 Heritage tourism

294. Heritage tourism plays a significant role in Wealden's economy while also contributing meaningfully to community wellbeing by deepening public understanding and appreciation of the District's rich cultural and natural heritage. A wide variety of heritage sites attract visitors, ranging from formally presented and curated destinations to locations where heritage value is not necessarily the primary function but still an important feature, such as historic town centres or public rights of way through historic landscapes.
295. Wealden District Council actively supports this sector through its Explore Wealden initiative,

an accessible and regularly updated platform that highlights places, events and activities across multiple themes. By allowing users to search by category and interest, Explore Wealden provides an effective gateway to the District's diverse cultural and natural attractions, helping both residents and visitors discover the breadth of heritage experiences available.

296. Across the District, however, the standard of on-site interpretation remains mixed. Some areas, such as Forest Way Country Park, are well served by clear, engaging information, whereas others offer limited or outdated interpretation. Improving the consistency and quality of interpretive material, and complementing it with digital tools, such as mobile guides or interactive media, would strengthen visitor engagement and better communicate the significance of local heritage assets.
297. Despite the many benefits heritage tourism brings, it requires careful management. Several popular sites already operate close to capacity, and unmanaged growth in visitor numbers risks physical damage to sensitive places as well as diminished visitor experience. Ensuring that tourism remains sustainable—protecting heritage assets while maintaining their enjoyment—will be essential as Wealden continues to promote and celebrate its distinctive historic environment.
298. The following list captures what are considered the principal cultural and natural heritage destinations within the District, illustrating the vast range of sites that can be accessed by the public. The absence of any particular site from this list does not necessarily convey a lack of significance or value to the District's residents and visitors.
299. Many of the District's principal cultural and natural heritage destinations are listed below, although it is important to note that this list is not comprehensive. The list does not include sites within the South Downs National Park. In the interests of brevity, some types of site have not been included, such as churches, theatres, libraries etc, although many are heritage sites with varying degrees of public access.

Place	Organisation	Location	Free or paid entry	Description
Pevensey Castle	English Heritage	Pevensey	Paid	Roman Saxon Shore fort with extensive medieval castle ruins.
Bayham Old Abbey	English Heritage	Little Bayham, near Lamberhurst	Paid	Ruins of 13th–15th-century abbey in landscaped grounds.
Sheffield Park Gardens	National Trust	Near Uckfield	Paid	Grade I listed landscaped garden and picturesque parkland
Michelham Priory House & Gardens	Sussex Past	Upper Dicker	Paid	Moated Augustinian priory with Tudor house and gardens.
Herstmonceux Castle and Observatory	Private	Herstmonceux	Paid	15th-century moated brick castle with formal gardens.
Bridge Cottage / Heritage Centre	N/A	Uckfield	Free / donation	Medieval hall house with local heritage interpretation.

Place	Organisation	Location	Free or paid entry	Description
The Mint House	N/A	Pevensey	Free / donation	Local heritage centre celebrating folklore and history.
Farleys House & Gallery	N/A	Muddles Green, Chiddingly	Paid	Surrealist art house of Lee Miller and Roland Penrose.
Pevensey Court House Museum & Gaol	N/A	Pevensey	Free / donation	16th-century courtroom with historic gaol cells.
Bluebell Railway – Sheffield Park	N/A	Sheffield Park	Paid	Heritage steam railway through High Weald countryside.
Spa Valley Railway	N/A	High Rocks and Eridge	Paid	Heritage steam railway through High Weald countryside.
Stone Cross Windmill	N/A	Stone Cross	Free / donation	Restored windmill of 1876.
Polegate Windmill	N/A	Polegate	Free / donation	Restored windmill of 1817.
Nutley Windmill	N/A	Nutley, near Crowborough	Free / donation.	Restored windmill, on its present site since around 1817.
Lavender Line	N/A	Isfield	Paid	Heritage steam railway through Low Weald countryside.
Tinkers Park Museum	N/A	Hadlow Down	Paid	Museum of vintage machinery and fairground organs.
Hartfield	N/A	Hartfield	Free	Historic village, home of Winnie the Pooh
Wilderness Wood	N/A	Hadlow Down	Free (donations welcome)	Ancient woodland with sculpture trail and forestry.
Cuckoo Trail	N/A	Heathfield to Polegate	Free	Former railway line converted to walking and cycling route.
Penns in the Rocks	Historic Houses	Withyham / Groombridge	Paid (garden open days only)	18th-century house and formal gardens open on limited days.

Place	Organisation	Location	Free or paid entry	Description
Ashdown Forest	Conservators	Forest Row / Crowborough / Maresfield	Free	Extensive heathland and woodland landscape.
RSPB Broadwater Warren Nature Reserve	RSPB	Near Eridge Green	Free	Restored heathland and woodland with rare heathland birds.
Old Lodge Nature Reserve	RSPB	Ashdown Forest edge	Free	Heath and woodland reserve supporting specialist birds.
Eridge Rocks Nature Reserve	Sussex Wildlife Trust	Eridge Green	Free	Sandstone outcrops within ancient woodland habitat.
Brickfield Meadow Nature Reserve	Sussex Wildlife Trust	Maresfield	Free	Wildflower-rich traditional meadow habitat.
Selwyns Wood Nature Reserve	Sussex Wildlife Trust	Near Heathfield	Free	Mixed woodland supporting diverse fauna.
Arlington Reservoir	N/A	Near Polegate	Free	Reservoir and surrounding habitat for birdwatching.
Bewl Water	Bewl Events and Waterpark Ltd	Near Wadhurst	Free (paid parking and activities)	Reservoir, outdoor activities and habitats for nature discovery.
Weirwood Reservoir	N/A	Near Forest Row	Free	Large waterbody with public paths and waterfowl.
Pevensey Levels	N/A	Pevensey / Westham	Free	Internationally important wetland and grazing marsh.

5.11 Health and wellbeing

300. Heritage contributes directly to individual and community wellbeing in Wealden by supporting identity, belonging and everyday access to high-quality places. Historic town centres, green lanes and rights of way (including the Cuckoo Trail and Forest Way) provide attractive settings for active travel and informal recreation, with proven benefits for physical and mental health. At the same time, some historic environments are currently undermined by traffic, poor air quality, limited seating and wayfinding, and inconsistent interpretation, reducing their value as inclusive, welcoming spaces. There are also barriers for people with disabilities, families and lower-income residents where access relies on private transport or paid entry.
301. Opportunities exist to embed health outcomes in place-making: designing traffic-calmed streets and small public spaces within historic cores; improving step-free connections, benches and lighting; expanding circular walking routes that link village centres to surrounding historic landscapes; and partnering with healthcare providers on social-prescribing trails and “green-heritage” activities. Volunteering, skills workshops and oral-history projects can reduce isolation and strengthen intergenerational ties, while sensitive reuse of vacant buildings for community uses (e.g. warm hubs, libraries, repair cafés) can meet local needs without eroding significance.
302. Clearer digital and on-site information, including heritage waymarkers and family-friendly interpretation, would broaden participation. Taken together, these measures can align heritage conservation with public health priorities, ensuring that historic places actively support everyday wellbeing.

Part 6:
Heritage Vision and Strategic Objectives

6.0 Strategy for Wealden's Heritage

6.1 Introduction

303. The previous Parts of this Heritage Strategy have explored the development of the District's rich heritage over time, its national significance and the themes defining its distinctiveness and unique character, and the issues and opportunities relating to heritage in Wealden.
304. Building on this baseline, Part 6: Heritage Vision and Strategic Objectives sets out a vision for the District's heritage, and a series of strategic objectives that will help guide the actions of WDC, its partners and other stakeholders in securing this vision. It sets the broad parameters within which Wealden's heritage should be conserved, enhanced and celebrated in the coming years in support of and in parallel to the Council's other statutory duties and objectives.

6.2 Who is involved in delivering this Heritage Strategy?

305. The preservation, enhancement and celebration of Wealden's heritage has always been a shared effort, with contributions by many different groups and individuals. This remains as true today as it did historically.
306. **Wealden District Council** holds ultimate responsibility for delivering this Strategy and associated recommendations. However, it is envisaged that the District Council will be aided in its efforts by a range of key partners and stakeholders who have supported the conservation, enhancement and celebration of Wealden's heritage over many years. Four key partners are:
307. **East Sussex County Council.** ESCC is the upper tier local authority for East Sussex. It is responsible for strategic services within Wealden District, including social care for adults and children, public health, education and schools, roads and transportation, waste and recycling, libraries and archaeology.
308. **Historic England.** Historic England is the public body responsible for protecting and promoting the historic environment, and for advising national and local government on heritage. A number of individuals within HE have made significant contributions to the conservation and enhancement of Wealden's heritage over many years, and this continued input will be essential in years to come, linking local government with the wider national heritage context.
309. **Natural England.** Natural England is the government's adviser for the natural environment in England, established to protect and restore our natural world.
310. **Local community organisations.** There are many local groups involved in the preservation, enhancement and celebration of heritage within Wealden, covering both cultural and natural heritage. They play a vital role in promoting local community involvement in heritage and are repositories for detailed knowledge of their subject or geographical area. The implementation of this Heritage Strategy offers an exceptional opportunity to better connect these groups with one another, and with the District Council.
311. The degree to which different parties will contribute to the delivery of individual recommendations will vary. In some cases, it may be appropriate for the District Council to hand day-to-day management or coordination of certain recommendations to other organisations, particularly where their relevant expertise and experience would increase the likelihood of the recommendation being delivered.
312. It is envisaged that the successor body to Wealden District Council as local authority following the Local Government Reorganisation will fulfil the role of the Council in the ownership and delivery of this Heritage Strategy, including collaboration with partners.

6.3 Wealden's Heritage Vision

313. Part 6 of this Heritage Strategy will provide a vision so that the District's heritage can be conserved, enhanced and celebrated in the years ahead, and a set of strategic objectives, tailored to Wealden, to deliver on the vision.
314. Following desk-based assessment, site visits and stakeholder engagement, the strongest common themes regarding Wealden's heritage are:

- The national distinctiveness and significance of the District's historic agro-industrial landscapes in a national context.
- The rich history of the District's smaller and larger settlements within the landscape and the way in which the two are interlinked.
- The opportunities and pressures of accommodating new development within and on the edge of settlements, and within the wider landscape.
- The need to better understand and conserve the District's cultural and natural heritage.
- Harnessing heritage in strengthening the District's response to the climate and ecological emergencies.
- Enhancing opportunities for public engagement in heritage, through improved understanding and access.

315. These themes broadly tie into wider WDC and partner strategies such as the WDC Strategy and ESCC East Sussex Prosperity: 2050 Economic Prosperity Strategy.
316. Taking these considerations into account, the vision for Wealden's heritage is:

Wealden's heritage is a highly interconnected network of landscapes, buildings, archaeological sites, activities and habitats, which together represent one of England's most important and extensively surviving historic land management systems. The aim is that Wealden's heritage will be widely understood and deeply valued as a unique and irreplaceable asset by decision makers, residents, designers, those involved in promoting development and visitors. Together, these groups will harness Wealden's heritage to deliver sustainable economic growth, heritage-led placemaking, climate and environmental action, and community resilience and wellbeing.

6.4 Securing the Vision: Strategic Objectives

317. Securing the vision for Wealden's heritage will be achieved by delivering on four strategic objectives, relating to conservation; economic activity; climate change and the environment; and access and engagement.

6.4.1 **Strategic Objective 1: Conservation**.

Strengthen efforts to better understand, conserve and enhance the District's cultural and natural heritage assets

318. Conservation and enhancement of heritage assets should be the foundation of any Heritage Strategy. The distinctive character of Wealden is defined by the wealth and diversity of its buildings, places, landscapes and habitats, and the loss or deterioration of even a single component affects the value of the District's heritage as a whole. Taking action to better understand, conserve and enhance these cultural and natural assets also offers opportunities to strengthen local communities and support the local economy, particularly in sectors such as design, construction, land management and tourism. As outlined in Part 5 (Issues and Opportunities), the District's heritage faces a range of threats. Although relatively few assets appear on Historic England's Heritage at Risk Register, this does not fully represent the breadth of risks and challenges affecting conservation locally.
319. Despite these challenges, there is a strong appetite among local communities and organisations to engage with heritage issues, demonstrated in part by the high number of Neighbourhood Plans prepared across Wealden. Developing a fuller understanding of the District's heritage is a prerequisite for ensuring it is conserved and maintained effectively. This work presents many opportunities for collaboration between public bodies, the private sector and local communities.

Key related strategies and guidance

- Wealden District Council, Heritage advice [link]
- East Sussex County Council, Standards for Archaeological Work in Sussex [link]
- East Sussex County Council, Sussex Standards for Historic Building Archaeology [link]
- High Weald National Landscape, AONB Management Plan 2024-2029 [link]
- Historic England has published an extensive range of guidance documents for those looking to better understand, conserve or enhance heritage assets. They are hosted on Historic England's website [link], and include:
    - Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance (2010) [link]
    - Advice Note 2: Making Changes to Heritage Assets (2025) [link]
    - Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning: 3 (2nd Edition): The Setting of Heritage Assets [link]
    - A Guide for Owners of Listed Buildings (2016) [link]
    - Statements of Heritage Significance: Analysing Significance in Heritage Assets (2019) [link]
    - Understanding Historic Buildings: A Guide to Good Recording Practice (2016) [link]
    - Understanding the Archaeology of Landscapes: A Guide to Good Recording Practice (2017) [link]
- Institute of Historic Building Conservation (IHBC) Technical Bibliography [link]



Fig 51 – The Mint House in Pevensey (Credit: WDC)

6.4.2 **Strategic Objective 2: Economic activity.**

Fully harness Wealden's heritage as a positive influence in securing sustainable development and economic growth.

320. Sustainable development underpins planning policy across the UK, and paragraph 135 of the NPPF (December 2024) highlights the importance of maintaining a strong sense of place and ensuring development is sympathetic to local character and history. Wealden's cultural and natural heritage is central to this sense of place. Although the District faces considerable development pressure – which can bring benefits such as increased vitality in historic centres – such change must be carefully managed to conserve, and ideally enhance, local distinctiveness. This is especially true of large-scale development, but smaller-scale developments (individual properties or units) must also be carefully managed due to the risk of attritional loss of locally distinctive features, buildings or landscape forms. WDC must continue to work constructively with applicants and the local community more widely to secure the many benefits of sustainable development whilst also conserving, enhancing and celebrating the District's heritage, especially when heritage benefits can be delivered through development.
321. Heritage has the potential to contribute positively to a wide range of economic activities beyond development, including town centre activity, tourism, skills development and recreation. It also plays a significant role in placemaking, helping to create development that reflects the organic growth patterns of settlements across the Wealden landscape and avoids inappropriate forms of urban planning, particularly on the edges of towns and villages. The significant potential for heritage to positively contribute to the local economy should be harnessed through a range of activities by WDC and its partners.

Key related strategies and guidance

- Wealden District Council, Strategy 2023-2027 [link]
- Wealden District Council, Wealden Economic Development Strategy 2023-2033 [link]
- Wealden District Council, Design Guide (2008) [link]
- Wealden District Council, Housing Strategy 2025-28 [link]
- East Sussex County Council, East Sussex Housing Partnership Strategy Draft 2025-2030 [link]
- Historic England, Heritage and the Economy (2024) [link].



Fig 52 – Uckfield High Street (Credit: WDC)

6.4.3 **Strategic Objective 3: Climate change and the environment.**

Ensure that heritage is both considered and harnessed in efforts to address environmental crises including climate change

322. Climate change and ecological crises pose some of the most significant threats to the historic and natural environment and, therefore, to the District's heritage. While all parts of the country are affected, Wealden is especially vulnerable due to the highly interconnected nature of its heritage: its buildings, places and landscapes form an integrated whole. Part 5 of this Heritage Strategy (Issues and Opportunities) highlights in detail the specific risks climate change poses to the District.
323. Heritage relates to climate and environmental action in two key ways. First, a range of stakeholders must take action to improve the resilience of heritage assets themselves, whether through innovative or nature-based landscape management approaches (such as those used at Sheffield Park) or through sensitive climate adaptation measures for buildings and streetscapes. Second, heritage assets can actively support climate mitigation and nature regeneration efforts, including through the reuse and retrofitting of existing buildings, which reduces emissions and energy demand, and through the management of historic landscapes to sequester carbon or reduce downstream flooding. Climate and environmental action initiatives involving heritage can also provide valuable opportunities for community engagement and wellbeing. Wealden District Council has a firm commitment to addressing the climate and ecological crises and is working hard to put words into practice. WDC's Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan and emerging strategies such as the Tree, Woodland and Hedgerow Strategy set the overarching aims and objectives for climate and ecological action, providing guidance for the recommendations contained in this Heritage Strategy.
324. While heritage can make a significant contribution to climate action, this must be done carefully to avoid unnecessary harm to a finite and irreplaceable resource.

Key related strategies and guidance

- Wealden Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan (2025) [link]
- Historic England Advice Note 18: Adapting Historic Buildings for Energy and Carbon Efficiency (2024) [link]
- British Standard BS5250:2021 – Management of Moisture in Buildings. Code of Practice [link]
- PAS2035:2023 – Retrofitting Dwellings for Improved Energy Efficiency [link]
- High Weald National Landscape, AONB Management Plan 2024-2029 [link]
- Environment Agency South Foreland to Beach Head Shoreline Management Plan 11 [link]
- Institute of Historic Building Conservation, Guidance Notes: Retrofitting of Traditional Buildings [link]



Fig 53 – ‘Garden of the Future’ at Sheffield Park (Credit: WDC)

6.4.4 **Strategic Objective 4: Access and engagement.**
Enhance public engagement with and access to heritage

325. Improving access to and engagement with heritage is essential for ensuring its continued vitality. Part 5 (Issues and Opportunities) identifies several barriers to access, as well as the benefits that overcoming them can bring to residents and visitors. Enhancing access includes improving physical access, such as transport links and inclusive access measures, as well as enhancing digital access through online resources.
326. There is already a strong level of community engagement in local issues such as neighbourhood planning and climate change, although engagement with heritage is more uneven. This presents a significant opportunity to channel community interest and participation into the delivery of this strategic objective and associated actions.

Key related strategies and guidance

- Wealden District Council, Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2022-2025 [link]
- East Sussex County Council, East Sussex Libraries: The Way Forward - Updated Strategic Commissioning Strategy 2022/23 - 2027/28 (2021) [link]
- East Sussex, Brighton & Hove and West Sussex Local Visitor Economy Partnership, Visitor Economy Strategy for Growth 2024- 2034 (2025) [link]
- Historic England, Easy Access to Historic Buildings (2015) [link]
- Historic England, Easy Access to Historic Landscapes (2015) [link]



Fig 54 – Bridge Cottage at Uckfield (Credit: WDC)

Part 7: Recommendations

7.0
Delivering the Strategic Objectives: Recommendations for Wealden's Heritage

7.1 Introduction

327. With the strategic objectives set out in Part 6 above providing the direction for the District and its partners in delivering the vision for Wealden's heritage, this Part provides 23 prioritised recommendations that will guide the practical implementation of the objectives. The recommendations are arranged in groups relating to the four strategic objectives, along with a fifth group for general recommendations relating to the management and implementation of this Heritage Strategy.
328. The key partners and stakeholders who it is envisaged will support WDC are specified for each recommendation. Each recommendation is also assigned a level of priority from 1 (most urgent) to 4 (least urgent), against these timescales:

- 'Ongoing' – Ongoing activities that should be maintained throughout the lifetime of the Heritage Strategy
- Priority level 1 – Within 12 months of publication of the Heritage Strategy
- Priority level 2 – Within 1-2 years of publication of the Heritage Strategy
- Priority level 3 – Within 3-5 years of publication of the Heritage Strategy
- Priority level 4 – To be carried out as and when time and resources allow, within the lifetime of the Heritage Strategy.

329. These recommendations are a guide for how Wealden's heritage could be better conserved, enhanced and celebrated in the coming years. It is recognised that delivering all 23 recommendations will require considerable resource from a wide range of stakeholders, over a timespan that will include Local Government Reorganisation. This may have implications for the ownership and delivery of these recommendations. If certain recommendations cannot be delivered during the lifespan of the Heritage Strategy, this should not be viewed as a 'failure' – Wealden's heritage is already appreciated and protected by many individuals, organisations and the planning system.
330. A pragmatic and flexible approach should be taken to the recommendations, to take account of opportunities and developments that may emerge over the lifetime of the Strategy. These may suggest implementation in a different manner, by different groups, or in a different order of priority to that described here, or indeed that the recommendation is not deliverable due to resource constraints or other factors. In this context, the recommendations are an initial guide at the start of the Heritage Strategy's implementation, not a rigid list of actions.

7.2 General Recommendations

Recommendation 01	**Make this Heritage Strategy publicly accessible through Wealden District Council Website.**
Description	It is important that this Heritage Strategy is made publicly available, not just as part of the Local Plan process, but to enable sustained input from all stakeholders following adoption of the local plan. This will bolster accountability for all those involved in implementing the Heritage Strategy and demonstrate commitment to the recommendations in this Heritage Strategy, particularly from Wealden District Council and its successor authorities.
Key partners and stakeholders	-
Priority	1
Recommendation 02	**Establish the position of Heritage Champion for an elected member.**
Description	Historic England has stated that a Heritage Champion is normally a local councillor who has been nominated by their authority to promote all aspects of the historic environment in their area. Heritage Champions can make sure that local plans and strategies capture the contribution that the local historic environment can make to the success of the area. This can include informing discussions about development management; promoting knowledge and awareness of the District's heritage within the administration; helping to ensure that commitment to the proper care of the historic environment is embedded in all relevant activities and plans of the local authority; and supporting the authority's local historic environment services. There is no set way of nominating or appointing a Heritage Champion, although Historic England has guidance on how this can be achieved. Wealden would particularly benefit from a Heritage Champion at this pivotal moment in the District's development, with major changes emerging from climate change, new development, the new Local Plan and LGR.
Key partners and stakeholders	-
Priority	2
Recommendation 03	**Review the Heritage Strategy every five years, amend as necessary and publish progress reports.**
Description	Periodic reviews of the Heritage Strategy will provide a record of progress with the recommendations and a mechanism for revaluating priorities and emerging matters. The review might be undertaken in collaboration with the proposed Heritage Forum (see Recommendation 20 below).
Key partners and stakeholders	East Sussex County Council, Historic England and local community groups
Priority	3

7.3 Conservation Recommendations

Recommendation 04	**Increase specialist heritage resources within the District Council.**
Description	Wealden is a large and complex district from a heritage perspective and delivering all strands of heritage-related work is resource intensive for WDC. Increasing heritage resources within the District Council would enhance the team's ability to engage with a range of key functions from pre-application advice to reviewing and updating supplementary guidance such as Conservation Area Appraisals and formulating a Local List. It is recognised that this recommendation would require an ongoing increase in resource which would be borne by one of WDC's teams. However, it is felt that increased specialist heritage resources would enhance WDC's abilities to safeguard the District's heritage and greatly enhance potential for harnessing heritage in wider objectives such as economic development, community wellbeing, placemaking and climate and biodiversity action.
Key partners and stakeholders	-
Priority	1
Recommendation 05	**Continue to work with Historic England and asset owners to secure the removal of heritage assets from the Heritage At Risk Register.**
Description	HE's Heritage At Risk Register identifies designated heritage assets (excluding Grade II listed buildings outside of London) within a District that are at particularly acute risk of loss or substantial harm. Although Wealden District has comparatively few assets on the At Risk Register, many of these assets have been on the Register for a long time and are particularly challenging cases. Although the At Risk Register only captures a snapshot of vulnerable heritage sites within the District, it provides a useful focus and, importantly, additional funding opportunities that can help to address some of the more significant and threatened sites.
Key partners and stakeholders	HE, local community groups, asset owners
Priority	Ongoing/1

Recommendation 06	**Establish a project to create and make publicly accessible a list of non-designated heritage assets within Wealden District.**
Description	The absence of a local list or formal record of non-designated heritage assets leaves many unlisted buildings in the District vulnerable to harmful alteration or loss. This issue is compounded by the poor quality of the National Heritage List for England's coverage in Wealden, where numerous buildings that appear to be listable have seemingly been overlooked. Establishing a project offers a valuable opportunity to engage local groups in addressing this gap. Neighbourhood Plans provide a strong foundation, as many already identify locally significant buildings and features, while the District Council's Conservation Area Appraisals contain detailed information on key unlisted heritage elements that could quickly populate an initial list. Once these known assets are captured, the wider community could be mobilised to identify additional sites and features, effectively 'filling in the blanks'. Importantly, the project should encompass not only built heritage but also non-designated natural features, such as ancient trackways, which contribute significantly to the District's historic character.
Key partners and stakeholders	Local community groups, Town and Parish Councils
Priority	2
Recommendation 07	**Review and update the District Council's heritage-related guidance to strengthen protection of heritage assets and provide enhanced guidance about their appropriate maintenance.**
Description	The heritage-related guidance currently available on the District Council's website is robust and clearly presented for a wide audience, offering a sound basis for supporting good conservation practice. However, there are some notable gaps, particularly relating to retrofit and climate resilience measures, which limit its ability to fully support decision-making on contemporary challenges. Conducting a gap analysis would provide an effective first step in identifying where the existing guidance could be strengthened or expanded. In many cases, these gaps could be addressed relatively easily through the addition of concise explanatory text and links to high-quality external best practice resources, especially those published by Historic England. One particularly valuable enhancement, which may require additional funding and specialist input, would be the development of a building materials toolkit to explain the locally distinctive materials found across different parts of the District.
Key partners and stakeholders	-
Priority	2

Recommendation 08	**Encourage heritage pre-application engagement at an early stage for developments affecting heritage assets.**
Description	Delivering heritage-specific workshops early in the pre-application process would rely largely on increased conservation resourcing within the District Council, but the benefits would be significant. Engaging with applicants at the outset helps to foster a heritage-sensitive approach to development from the beginning, reducing the likelihood of issues arising later in the pre-application process or during determination. This is particularly valuable on sites involving non-designated heritage assets, where the level of protection is less formalised and early guidance can be crucial in ensuring appropriate and informed design responses.
Key partners and stakeholders	-
Priority	2
Recommendation 09	**Adopt Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plans and where appropriate Article 4 Directions for all conservation areas within the District.**
Description	Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plans are a vital tool for managing change to the historic environment within the District, providing detailed information on locally-specific character and appearance for both minor, small-scale changes but also larger developments. Article 4 directions can further strengthen protection of local character where appropriate. 30 of the 33 conservation areas managed by WDC as the Local Planning Authority already have Draft Conservation Area Appraisals. These documents contain a wealth of information about each conservation area including local building styles, materials, undesignated heritage assets etc. However, none are adopted, many lack Management Plans, and some were drafted some years ago and warrant significant revision. Adopting Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plans (and Article 4 Directions where appropriate) is particularly important in light of the District's significant housing need, which is likely to require development in or near conservation areas. This recommendation could be carried out with support from local community groups and other parts of local government such as town and parish councils, to foster community engagement in heritage.
Key partners and stakeholders	Local community groups, town and parish councils
Priority	2

Recommendation 10	**Working with county partners, facilitate a detailed survey of archaeological sites within the District as part of a reassessment of Archaeological Notification Areas.**
Description	Archaeological Notification Areas are an important tool in ensuring development within the District appropriately identifies and records the interest of sites with higher archaeological potential. However, there is a general view that the current extent of ANAs within Wealden does not fully reflect the deep archaeological interest of the District. A detailed survey of the District's archaeological potential, enabled through external funding, would help to fill gaps in the record and give greater protection to this important element of the District's heritage. Although a District-level study would be valuable, the study would have even greater utility if undertaken at a County level. It is recognised that in either scenario, this would require considerable resource, so external funding options may have to be sought.
Key partners and stakeholders	ESCC
Priority	4
Recommendation 11	**Working with national and county partners, undertake a project to record the distribution and extent of long-established woodland within Wealden District.**
Description	Long-established woodland is an important category of woodland habitat, comprising woodland that has been present since at least 1893. They have had many decades to develop rich biodiversity and often contain important old-growth features and deliver a range of ecosystem services. There are extensive tracts of long-established woodland within the District but it is not currently mapped, which places it at greater risk of loss or damage. This could be addressed through a mapping programme in partnership with national and county partners. Although long-established woodland does not have the same protection as ancient woodland (an irreplaceable habitat) from a planning perspective, improved awareness of its ecological significance and distribution within the District could enhance efforts to conserve and enhance it.
Key partners and stakeholders	East Sussex County Council; Natural England
Priority	3

Recommendation 12	**Continue to use the District's rich and varied heritage to promote tourism to the District through Explore Wealden.**
Description	Wealden's heritage – both individual sites and broader landscape and townscape elements – are a significant (perhaps the principal) draw for tourism to the District. Explore Wealden rightly places heritage front and centre in its presentation of the District to visitors. This should be maintained and opportunities to add new sites and experiences relating to the District's heritage should be explored. Wealden's programme of cultural heritage events such as the Heffle Cuckoo fair and wassailing at Michelham Priory, should also be promoted, given the importance of active participation in maintaining these longstanding traditions
Key partners and stakeholders	Local community groups, tourism and heritage attractions/businesses, 1066 Country, Experience Sussex, Local Visitor Economic Partnership
Priority	Ongoing
Recommendation 13	**Promote and support opportunities to enhance understanding of the District's heritage through the planning system.**
Description	The heritage themes set out in Part 4 of this Heritage Strategy illustrate the local distinctiveness and character of Wealden, but many aspects of this heritage is underappreciated or poorly understood, which can lead to harm through uninformed development and land management choices. The Council should actively promote opportunities to enhance understanding of the District's heritage through the planning system. This could include requiring detailed setting studies in line with best practice guidance to accompany planning applications for developments of a particular scale and/or involving areas with historic landscape character value, as identified by officers during the pre-application process. Parish and town councils could also support the District Council in this recommendation in identifying proposed developments that could affect undesignated heritage assets (both buildings and landscape features), and continuing the progress made on developing Neighbourhood Plans across the District.
Key partners and stakeholders	Applicants, parish and town councils
Priority	Ongoing

Recommendation 14	**Support a research programme to map agro-industrial historic landscape features across the District in partnership with a higher education institution.**
Description	This recommendation would help to secure outcomes in relation to a number of other recommendations in this Heritage Strategy. The agro-industrial historic landscape character of Wealden has been studied in some detail and is presented in the Sussex Historic Landscape Characterisation study (2010), freely available online. This existing work could be bolstered by a more targeted investigation into surviving historic landscape features within the District. A particular focus for the research could be selected in conjunction with District heritage officers. One option would be the distribution and survival of farmsteads and their associated managed landscapes, as this building/landscape typology has had a significant impact on the growth and development of Wealden but are at risk of being eroded or lost through development. The scope could also include overtly industrial landscape features such as sites of ironworking, charcoal burning and distribution works, to highlight the intrinsic connections historically between industrial processes and land management.
Key partners and stakeholders	Higher education institution/independent researcher
Priority	4

7.4 Climate Change and Environmental Recommendations

Recommendation 15	**Incorporate policy regarding the role of Wealden's heritage in addressing climate change and other environmental crises into the Local Plan.**
Description	Climate change poses the single greatest long-term threat to heritage, both locally and nationally. Meeting the challenges posed by climate change and other environmental crises will require (and cause) substantial changes to the historic and natural environment. Historic landscapes, places and buildings have an important role to play in addressing the climate and ecological crises. At the same time, approaches to climate and environmental action involving historic places must be informed by an awareness of the immense, multifaceted value of heritage to a sustainable future, as well as its acute vulnerability to harmful change and maladaptation. The current Local Plan lacks specific policy addressing the historic environment and climate change. Including a specific policy, or amending an existing draft heritage policy, in the emerging Local Plan will give clarity to residents, decision makers, developers and designers on this increasingly important matter.
Key partners and stakeholders	-
Priority	1
Recommendation 16	**Working with partners, explore opportunities to reduce vehicular traffic in historic centres whilst enhancing public transport and active travel facilities.**
Description	Many historic centres are overwhelmed by through traffic and cars parked along narrow pavements. Opportunities to better manage this traffic in key historic centres such as Mayfield and Rotherfield would be beneficial to people's experience and understanding of the District's heritage. At the same time, opportunities may exist to implement new or improved active travel routes that incorporate historic movement routes such as disused railways or ancient trackways, along with on-site interpretation. The District Council and its partners could choose a town or village where issues and corresponding opportunities are particularly acute, to act as a pilot for this review of options. Reducing vehicular traffic and encouraging public transport and active travel also closely aligns with local and national ambitions relating to climate action and improving air quality.
Key partners and stakeholders	ESCC
Priority	3

Recommendation 17	**Through the Wilder Wealden partnership, explore opportunities to restore elements of historic landscape character and strengthen traditional, low-impact forms of land management within the District.**
Description	The Wilder Wealden partnership between Wealden District Council and Sussex Wildlife Trust already focuses on restoring habitats and creating connected nature-recovery networks across the District. Integrating historic landscape restoration aligns naturally with its aims and strengthens Wealden's long-term resilience. By working with landowners, farmers and community groups, Wilder Wealden provides an effective framework to revive traditional, low-impact land-management practices that both enhance biodiversity and help safeguard the District's historic landscape character.
Key partners and stakeholders	Wilder Wealden, local community groups
Priority	3
Recommendation 18	**Establish a traditional buildings module as part of a retrofit course in association with local college or training centre.**
Description	Retrofitting historic buildings can enhance their climate resilience as well as reducing carbon emissions and energy bills and improving thermal comfort and indoor air quality. Traditional buildings require a different approach to the design and implementation of retrofit compared to buildings of modern (post-1920s) construction, especially where they are designated. Integrating a traditional buildings module into existing retrofit courses within the District will provide new retrofit tradespeople with the knowledge required to approach traditional buildings in the correct manner, helping to ensure their heritage value is maintained.
Key partners and stakeholders	Local education institution
Priority	3

7.5 Access and Engagement Recommendations

Recommendation 19	**Create a public directory of local heritage groups on the WDC website to improve collaboration, volunteering and skills pathways, and to widen participation.**
Description	There are numerous community groups across Wealden actively involved in the conservation, enhancement and celebration of the District's heritage. Hosting a curated list of these groups on the District Council's website would help encourage broader participation in local heritage activities, support greater communication and collaboration between groups working on complementary initiatives, and provide a valuable resource for residents and visitors seeking to learn more about their local heritage, drawing on the extensive knowledge these groups often hold. This would primarily comprise archaeological, conservation and local history groups alongside museums, libraries and other repositories of local heritage knowledge.
Key partners and stakeholders	Local community groups
Priority	1
Recommendation 20	**Establish a Heritage Forum.**
Description	Collective action to protect the District's cultural and natural heritage would be strengthened through the creation of a Heritage Forum, bringing together representatives from public bodies, charities and community groups already engaged in conserving, enhancing and celebrating Wealden's heritage. The Sussex Archaeology Forum and Sussex Conservation Officer Group may provide a starting point or model for how this group could operate. This could be achieved without significant financial or administrative burden on WDC or its partners. Meetings could be convened several times a year to share updates on recent activity and discuss District-wide matters, cultivating new connections between groups previously operating in relative isolation from one another. The ambition would be the creation of a local heritage network to match the quality, sophistication and level of engagement of the climate-related and local neighbourhood planning groups that already exist within the District.
Key partners and stakeholders	Local community groups, HE, ESCC
Priority	2

Recommendation 21	**Continue to support and encourage local events, activities and initiatives which promote or are implicitly part of Wealden's cultural identity and heritage.**
Description	There is a range of events and activities within Wealden that keep longstanding cultural traditions alive, such as the Sussex Bonfires. In addition, there are several locally-specific traditional crafts which enrich Wealden's cultural identities such trug making, coppicing and blacksmithing. The Council promotes such activities and crafts through initiatives such as Wealden Craft Week. The Council should continue to support and facilitate efforts by local community groups to maintain these traditions alive. This could include featuring events or experiences on the Explore Wealden website, liaising with event organisers to streamline logistics for annual events, and where appropriate and feasible, financial support for new initiatives to promote community wellbeing based around the District's cultural identity and heritage.
Key partners and stakeholders	Local community groups, local businesses
Priority	Ongoing
Recommendation 22	**Review access to heritage sites within the District and work with partners to enhance access where possible.**
Description	Enhancing access to heritage sites, both physical and digital, has the potential to enhance public understanding and appreciation of the District's heritage. However, many sites are not easily accessible by public transport, walking or wheeling. Working with the local transport authority (ESCC), the District Council could explore how access could be enhanced through physical measures and digital platforms, prioritising more popular sites where access enhancements could be more easily achieved and/or where demand is particularly high and/or where there are signs of overtourism.
Key partners and stakeholders	ESCC
Priority	3
Recommendation 23	**Explore opportunities to enhance and, where appropriate, coordinate on-site interpretation heritage sites within Wealden District, and to better promote or establish trails and routes between sites within the District.**

Description	On-site interpretation, such as display boards, blue plaques and guided trails, is an important way to enhance public understanding and appreciation of the significance of heritage sites. Existing interpretation across the District varies in quality and accessibility. There is limited consistency between sites and in some places the interpretation is outdated. A refresh, expansion and coordination of existing interpretation methods would enhance visitor experience of sites. This would have to be carefully planned with local and national partners With the support of external funding, it would be beneficial to create online counterparts for on-site interpretation to enhance accessibility and reach.
Key partners and stakeholders	ESCC, Natural England, local community groups, HE, National Trust, and other owners and managers of heritage sites
Priority	4

Part 8:
Conclusion and next steps

8.0 Conclusion and next steps

331. This Heritage Strategy has set out why Wealden's heritage matters, both in its own right and as a driver of prosperity, wellbeing and climate action. It has explained what makes the District nationally significant in heritage terms, what issues and opportunities exist in relation to heritage, and how this heritage can be conserved, enhanced and celebrated through a targeted set of recommendations based around four strategic objectives. Delivering the vision now depends on purposeful steps that embed heritage in everyday decision-making and unlock investment.

8.1 Immediate priorities

332. Five actions have been identified that are an immediate priority, to be undertaken within a year of completion of this strategy. Every effort should be made to deliver these actions as the foundation for delivering the rest of the Heritage Strategy. These actions are:

- Recommendation 01 – Make this Heritage Strategy publicly accessible through Wealden District Council Website.
- Recommendation 04 – Increase specialist heritage resources within the District Council
- Recommendation 05 – Continue to work with Historic England and asset owners to secure the removal of heritage assets from the Heritage At Risk Register
- Recommendation 15 – Incorporate policy regarding the role of Wealden's heritage in addressing climate change and other environmental crises into the Local Plan
- Recommendation 19 – Create a public directory of local heritage groups on the WDC website to improve collaboration, volunteering and skills pathways, and to widen participation

8.2 Mobilising investment

333. The Council and partners should align projects with external funding streams wherever possible. There is ever-greater pressure on funding for cultural and natural heritage projects, but key sources of external funding will include:

- National Lottery Heritage Fund – Heritage 2033, which prioritises saving heritage, environmental outcomes, participation and organisational resilience.
- Historic England Repair Grants for Heritage at Risk for urgent fabric works and project development.
- Arts Council England's Museum Estate & Development Fund (MEND) for capital repairs to Accredited museums and associated public heritage buildings.
- Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF) and UKSPF "Communities & Place" interventions, where heritage, rural diversification and visitor infrastructure align.

8.3 Monitoring and review

334. Within 12 months of publication, the Council will report progress against Priority 1 recommendations, then review the full set of recommendations every five years, updating evidence and priorities with partners. Success will be measured through: numbers of assets conserved; adoption of guidance and Conservation Area Appraisals; uptake of sensitive retrofit; external funding secured; and participation indicators for volunteering, training and events. This cyclical review will keep the Strategy live, ensure alignment with the Local Plan, and maintain the shared momentum required to safeguard—and celebrate—Wealden's exceptional heritage for generations to come.

Part 9:
Supporting information

9.0 Supporting information

9.1 Introduction

335. Part 9 of this Heritage Strategy provides a bibliography of sources used during the production of the Strategy, and a glossary of terms used throughout the document.

9.2 Bibliography

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9.3 Glossary of terms

Assart: Clearance of woodland to create new enclosed fields for agriculture (common in the medieval Weald).

BNG (Biodiversity Net Gain): Mandatory approach ensuring habitats are left measurably better. Developers must deliver at least a 10% gain through planning applications.

Centuriation: Roman grid-pattern field system associated with formal estates. It can be reflected in later boundaries and route layouts.

Conservation (heritage policy): The process of maintaining and managing change to a heritage asset to sustain and, where appropriate, enhance its significance.

Conservation Area: An area of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance.

Cultural heritage: Inherited assets people identify and value as expressions of evolving knowledge, beliefs and traditions, and understanding of others' beliefs and traditions.

Dendrochronology: Tree-ring dating method for timbers, supporting accurate dating and understanding of historic building development.

Droveway: Historic route used for moving livestock (notably between Downs and Weald), often forming today's trackways, country lanes and even main roads.

Ghyll: Deep, steep-sided wooded valley or ravine with a stream, characteristic of the High Weald's sandstone-and-clay landscape.

Hammer pond: Impounded water body powering iron forges (bellows/tilt hammers) via waterwheels. These are a major Wealden iron-industry landscape feature.

HER (Historic Environment Record): Information service providing access to resources on archaeology, historic buildings and landscapes for a defined area. It is a key evidence base for planning.

Heritage: All inherited resources which people value for reasons beyond mere utility.

Heritage asset: A building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest. It includes designated heritage assets and assets identified by the local planning authority (including local listing).

Ironstone: Iron-rich stone within Wealden geology, a key ore source for ironworking and influences brick colour via iron oxides.

Leat: Man-made water channel feeding mills/forges, with sluices controlling flow to wheels.

Lime mortar: Lime-based mortar used for bedding, pointing and rendering, which is typically more breathable and compatible with historic fabric than cement.

Listed Building: A building or structure of special architectural or historic interest on a statutory list (graded) and protected through the planning system.

LWS (Local Wildlife Site): Sites identified by the local authority as especially important for

wildlife, identified using robust scientific criteria and surveys.

National Landscape: Formerly known as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), these are areas legally designated as areas of outstanding natural beauty under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 and Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000.

Natural heritage: Inherited habitats, species, ecosystems, geology and landforms (including in and under water) to which people attach value.

Oast house: Hop-drying building with kiln(s) and cowls, which are prominent survivals of the Wealden hop industry.

Pale: Bank, ditch and fence line enclosing a forest/park to restrain deer, a notable surviving feature in Ashdown Forest.

Pannage: Woodland grazing practice, especially feeding pigs on mast (acorns/beech), which was historically important in Wealden wood-pasture economies.

Ramsar site: Wetland of international importance designated under the Ramsar Convention.

SAC (Special Area of Conservation): Internationally protected site designated for habitats/species under the Habitats framework and UK regulations.

Scheduled Monument: A nationally important archaeological site protected through “scheduling” under the Ancient Monuments legislation.

Setting: The surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral.

Significance (for heritage policy): The value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. The interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset’s physical presence, but also from its setting.

Slag: Smelting waste from iron production which commonly survives as archaeological evidence at furnace/forge sites.

SPA (Special Protection Area): Internationally protected site classified for rare/vulnerable or migratory birds under the Birds framework.

SSSI (Site of Special Scientific Interest): Nationally protected site notified for special interest by flora, fauna, geology or landform.

Tile-hanging: Weatherproof cladding of overlapping tiles to external walls, characteristic of Wealden brick-and-tile vernacular.

Timber frame: Structural system of posts, beams and braces. The dominant medieval Wealden building material and characteristic of local vernacular.

Transhumance: Seasonal movement of livestock between grazing grounds (typically lowlands in winter, highlands in summer) along established routes.

Wattle and daub: Wall infill of woven wattle coated with daub (clay/lime mix), common with Wealden timber framing.

Weald clay: Local clay geology underpinning widespread historic brick and tile production across the Wealden landscape.

Wealden hall house: Traditional high-status Wealden timber-framed house type, identified by a central open hall flanked by two-storied jettied wings, all sheltered under a single roofline with a characteristic crown-post design.

Wealden sandstone: Local building stone from Wealden sandstones, used in structures and landscape features where available.

Appendix A: A timeline of historic settlement and activity in Wealden (Wealden District Council)

A timeline of historic settlement and activity in Wealden

Introduction

The following historical timeline covers human settlement and activity from the prehistoric period to the 20th century, and also touches on the influence of social and cultural change, and individual people, on the historic environment in the District.

The timeline is split into specific sections to cover the following:

- The Weald
- Prehistoric activity and settlement
- Roman activity and settlement
- Saxon activity and settlement
- Medieval activity and settlement
- Post medieval activity and settlement
- Historic Farmsteads
- Major local industries
- Other trades and industries
- Transport
- Military history
- Famous and notable local figures

The Weald

Wealden District lies within the ‘Weald’, and includes two landscape areas: the High Weald, and the Low Weald. The name ‘Weald’ is derived from the Old English weald, meaning "forest". In the Anglo-Saxon period, the area had the name Andredes weald’, meaning "the forest of Andred", the latter derived from Anderida, the Roman name of present-day Pevensey. The area is also referred to in Anglo-Saxon texts as Andredesleage, where the second element, leage, is another Old English word for "woodland".

Many important fossils have been found in the sandstones and clays of the Weald, including, for example, Baryonyx and Iguanodon teeth.The famous scientific hoax of Piltdown Man was claimed to have come from a gravel pit at Piltdown near Uckfield.

Archaeological evidence from the Prehistoric periods suggests that, following after the Mesolithic Period which was dominated by hunter-gatherer communities, sections of the population had begun to settle and farm the landscape during the Neolithic Period. This resulted in clearance of sections of the forest, especially the less dense woodland on the South Downs, and this clearance and expansion of farmland continued in earnest into the Bronze Age, with large sections of the Low Weald probably cleared of trees.

With the Iron Age Period came the first use of the Weald as an industrial area. Wealden sandstones contain ironstone, and with the additional presence of large

amounts of timber for making charcoal for fuel, the area was the centre of the Wealden iron industry from then, through the Roman times, until the last forge was closed in 1813. The East Sussex Historic Environment Record (ESHER) records 87 positively identified Romano-British iron production sites in Wealden District, 3 of which are Scheduled Monuments.

The entire Weald was originally heavily forested. According to the ninth century Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, the Weald measured 120 miles (193 km) or longer by 30 miles (48 km) in the Saxon era, stretching from Lympne, near Romney Marsh in Kent, to the Forest of Bere or even the New Forest in Hampshire. The area was sparsely inhabited and inhospitable, being used mainly as a resource by people living on its fringes. The Weald was used for centuries, possibly since the Iron Age, for transhumance [1] of animals along droveways in the summer months from the Low Weald into the High Weald.

While most of the Weald was used for transhumance by communities at the edge of the Weald, several parts of the forest on the higher ridges in the interior seem to have been used for hunting by the kings of Sussex. The pattern of droveways which occurs across the rest of the Weald is absent from these areas, such as within Ashdown Forest, however, there is potential evidence that later high medieval use of the forest has obscured earlier use for transhumance, as recent LiDAR[2] survey shows large numbers of what could be animal tracks/transhumance routes.

The forests of the Weald were often used as a place of refuge and sanctuary. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle relates events during the Anglo-Saxon conquest of Sussex when the native Britons (whom the Anglo-Saxons called Welsh) were driven from the coastal towns into the recesses of the forest for sanctuary, viz; "A.D. 477. This year came Ælle to Britain, with his three sons, Cymen, and Wlencing, and Cissa, in three ships; landing at a place that is called Cymenshore. There they slew many of the Welsh; and some in flight they drove into the wood that is called Andred'sley." The same warband is then recorded capturing the Roman fortress at Pevensey and slaying all the inhabitants.

Until the Late Middle Ages the forest was a notorious hiding place for bandits, highwaymen and outlaws.

Settlements on the High Weald are widely scattered. Villages evolved from small settlements in the wood clearings know as felds and leah, thus place names like Mayfield and Uckfield. These early settlements, which were often connected by manorial ownership to other settlements on the Downs and Low Weald, were typically four to five miles apart; close enough to be an easy walk but not so close as to encourage unnecessary intrusion. Few of these settlements are mentioned in the Domesday Book, probably because they were subordinate to the main manorial

[1] Transhumance is the action or practice of moving livestock from one grazing ground to another in a seasonal cycle, typically to lowlands in winter and highlands in summer.

[2] LiDAR is a remote sensing technology that measures distance by illuminating a target with a laser and analyzing the reflected light and is commonly used to map terrain. Lidar has many applications in the field of archaeology including mapping features beneath forest canopy, and providing an overview of broad, continuous features that may be indistinguishable on the ground.

estate. However, indications of wealth and status appears after the Norman conquest at places like Wadhurst whose population was of a sufficient size by the mid thirteenth century to be granted a royal charter permitting a market to be held.

During the early medieval period much of the Weald was used as summer grazing land, particularly for pannage by communities living in the surrounding areas. Many places within the Weald have retained names from this time, linking them either to owners, such as Chiddingly: “the woodland clearing of Citta’s people”, or the specific location in the landscape, such as those at Northeye, Rickney or Manxey denoting the former ‘eyes’ or ‘islands’ in the Pevensey marshes.

Permanent settlements certainly existed from an early date in the medieval period, but significant settlement in much of the Weald developed much later than in other parts of lowland Britain. It is likely that there were fluctuations in settlement, such as with the influx of migrant workers during the height of the late medieval iron industry when there were as many as one hundred furnaces and forges operating by the later 16th century, employing large numbers of people; and associated with the hop industry in the 19th and early 20th century, when large numbers of people travelled to the area in late summer to pick the hops.

The first major expansion of settlements in the Weald occurred with the arrival of the railways in the mid to late 19th century. This brought easily accessible transport to the masses, increased the opportunities for trade, brought in cheaper building materials, and also led to the arrival of the first tourists to the area, such as to the new Spa town in Crowborough, which became known as ‘Scotland in Sussex’.

Further expansion of the settlements in the Weald has taken place in the mid and late 20th century and into the 21st century due to its easy access to London by road and rail, the attractiveness of the landscape, and its proximity to the sea.

The following information relates specifically to the historical development of Wealden District from the prehistoric era, through to the 20th century.

Prehistoric Activity and Settlement

Due to a low level of past archaeological excavation targeting prehistoric sites in the District, activity from this period is not fully understood. There is evidence from finds of flint tools of extensive early activity in the area, including with the Palaeolithic Period (c.500,000 to c.11,000 years ago) finds from the surviving glacial river terrace gravels.

The main access to the landscape would have been by rivers such as the Ouse and Cuckmere. It is also likely that some of the historic ridgeway routes leading across the Weald where formed in the Prehistoric periods such as the Newenden to Wadhurst ridgeway (now the B2087) and the Oldham (Ightham) to Cross in Hand trackway that partly follows the route of the current A267.

After the ice ages, the warmer period that we are in now saw dramatic rising sea levels and significant changes to the environment, with the development of forests

and marshes. In this fertile landscape, rich in wild resources, Mesolithic 'hunters and gatherers' thrived and there are numerous recorded Mesolithic sites from rock shelters in the High Weald near Eridge, to camp sites adjacent to rivers and marshes, for example south-east of Hailsham.

Evidence of later prehistoric activity in the area is also mainly represented by spot finds, including Bronze Age pottery sherds, worked flints and stone tools. On the Pevensey Levels, there is both an early prehistoric land surface buried by alluvium as a result of rising sea levels after the end of the last ice age as well as potential for evidence on the original 'island' or 'eye's in the march, as well as evidence of an extensive buried Neolithic and Bronze Age land surface surviving as peat deposits. Within the alluvium, buried peat deposits, and on the former islands, there is the potential for important organic remains such as timber trackways, platforms, boats and even "bog bodies.

The District also has sites which evidence the changes that took place around 4000BC during the transition from the Mesolithic way of life to the Neolithic, when monuments were constructed, farming developed and pottery and other technologies became more sophisticated. This is witnessed by the existence of long barrows (elongated earthwork burial mounds), for example those located just within the South Downs National Park at Long Burgh Alfriston and flint mines such as those surviving by the Long Man at Windover Hill[3].

The transition to the Early Bronze Age, when metals first began to be used, is represented by nationally important sites such as the late Neolithic / early Bronze Age settlement at Belle Tout near Birling Gap[4] and the period as a whole by a range of burial sites (round barrows) and evidence for rural settlements and a farmed landscape across the parishes in the south of the district. The evidence for prehistoric farming is strongest on the Downs, but increasingly, evidence for prehistoric field systems, settlement and burials is being found in the Low Weald, and into the High Weald. Recent development around the towns of Maresfield, Uckfield and Hailsham, for example, has provided evidence for later prehistoric farming and settlement. On Ashdown Forest and in the north of the District there are recorded Bronze Age barrows and enclosures.

The first evidence of the industrial use of the area comes from the Iron Age, when iron ore extraction began in the Weald. Iron Age ironworking sites have been found, for example, at Sandyden (Mark Cross) and Frant, together with ironworking evidence at Saxonbury hillfort, which dates to the Late Iron Age. Also discovered is a Late Iron Age pottery assemblage believed to represent an occupation site in Eridge Park.

Two Iron Age hillforts are located within the wider High Weald landscape, at High Rocks to the north west of Frant, and Saxonbury to the south, as well as sites on Ashdown Forest. During this later Iron Age period, there is a noticeable shift in the location of hillfort construction from the South Downs to the High Weald (such as Garden Hill near Hartfield), probably representing a need to defend the rich iron ore

[3] Within that part of Wealden covered by the South Downs National Park Authority.

[4] Within that part of Wealden covered by the South Downs National Park Authority.

deposits and processing sites, but also perhaps reflecting a new wealth and status being generated by these miners and smelters.

Significantly, some modern settlements in the District have evidence for almost continuous occupation from the early prehistoric periods through to the present day. One particular example is Selmeston, where an early settlement site from the Mesolithic period is located to the east of Selmeston Church. Excavations have revealed Mesolithic storage pits and abundant quantities of flint tools and burnt flint nodules used for cooking. There was also evidence of Neolithic occupation, and later occupation evidence from the Bronze Age, Iron Age, Romano British, Saxon and medieval Periods. The Street, running north-south through the village, is likely to be an ancient Drove road linking the South Downs with the High Weald to the north and is evidence of the seasonal agricultural use of the landscape.

This demonstrates the rich archaeological potential of the District, which is as yet relatively unexplored. Ongoing research is demonstrating that the District has a particularly important resource of Mesolithic sites, the understanding of which in the future will contribute to local, regional and national studies.

Roman Activity and Settlement

Roman occupation within the District commenced in A.D.43, although the influence of Rome was probably seeping into the lives and culture of the native Britons well before the invasion, with East Sussex probably forming part of a pro-Roman tribe known as the' Atrebates'.

Abundant evidence for Roman occupation in Wealden District ranges from spot finds of pottery and coins, through to excavated remains of settlements and roads, and to the impressive remains of the late Roman fortress at Pevensey. The Romans formalised and improved the existing road network, constructing links from Pevensey along the Greensand Way to a Roman town at Barcombe on the River Ouse in the west and through into the High Weald and onto London, providing an important link to iron working areas of the District, such as at Blacklands in Forest Row. Lesser roads have also been recorded, such as at Selmeston, running along the base of the South Downs, from Arlington through to the Ouse Valley. It is thought the Roman Road turned towards the South Downs and ran south along The Street and then returned west along the present day route of the A27.

There have been numerous discoveries of Roman iron workings in the District, with a number around Wadhurst, Mayfield and Eridge Park in the High Weald. Further iron working sites and a tile kiln have been recorded near Hartfield around Garden Hill and close to the Lewes to London Roman Road. Many of the sites in the eastern section of the Weald were under the control of the Roman navy the Classis Britannia.

There is some evidence for Roman Villas and estates in Low Weald landscape, the most probable being at Ripe and Chalvington. Here, the current field boundaries and roads form a grid pattern similar to the formal Roman estates found in Italy. Known as a 'centuriation', the fields in this area have produced significant quantities of

Roman artefacts and evidence of at least two villa buildings. It is very likely more villas existed, many of which may now be buried under modern villages, especially those at the foot of the South Downs. The discovery of a Roman bath house building with the Iron Age hillfort at Garden Hill, near Hartfield, indicates that the production and export of iron was also an income to match the status of the rich agricultural landowners building the villas.

The best known Roman site in the area is' Anderida', the Roman name for Pevensey, and the associated Pevensey Castle. Pevensey is situated on a spur of sand and clay, about 10 metres (33 ft) above sea level and in Roman times this spur was a peninsula that projected into a tidal lagoon and marshes. A small river, the River Ashburnham, runs along the north side of the peninsula and would originally have discharged into the sea near Pevensey Bay, but is now largely silted up and replaced by a series of medieval water channels. The lagoon extended inland as far north as Hailsham and eastwards to Hooe. This large bay was gradually cut off from the sea by shingle, so that today's marshes are all that remain behind the shingle beach. By the 4th century the south and east of the province of Britannia was under frequent attack from marauding barbarian tribes: including the Jutes and Saxons. To counter these attacks the Romans built a total of eleven forts between Essex and the Isle of Wight, now known as the *Saxon Shore Forts*.

The Roman fortress at Pevensey, built between AD250-280, was named Anderitum. The earliest stone remains on the site date from the Roman period, including the outer bailey wall of the medieval castle. Locally made Roman bricks were also used in the construction of the fort. The sea washed over what is now Pevensey Marshes, surrounding the fort on three sides, so that ships were able to sail right up to the walls. There is evidence that a port and settlement was located at Westham prior to the fortress being constructed.

Saxon Activity and Settlement

After the Roman army left Britain, the province was more vulnerable to raiding and later migration by Germanic tribes known as Saxons, Angles and Jutes. The traditional view was that in the early 5th century AD, Saxons, possibly led by a war lord called Ælle, began to colonise East Sussex, including taking control of the Roman fortress Anderitum (Pevensey), and by the 7th century the Kingdom of the South Saxons, later called 'Sussex' had formed.

A number of very early Saxon cemeteries have been discovered in southern section of Wealden District, such as at Selmeston and Winton Street, Alfriston[5], suggesting the focus for settlement was on the rich agricultural land of the South Downs. However, scientific analysis of human remains from Saxon cemetery sites such as St Annes Road, Eastbourne[6] is indicating a more complex story of integration between small numbers of migrants into an indigenous population which quickly adopted the culture of the incoming Germanic people.

[5] Within that part of Wealden covered by the South Downs National Park Authority.

[6] Within the adjacent Eastbourne Borough Council area.

The occupation of the Weald during this period is poorly understood, but hints of industrial activity and occupation have been found on Ashdown Forest and at Boreham Street. During the later Saxon period, many of the modern settlements in the District began to develop, some of whose populations began to construct the parish churches that survive today, such as the one at Arlington.

The District also contains many hamlets and farms, a number of which originated during the late Saxon and early Norman period. These developed on the high ground along the ridge top routes and would have originally been small clearings in the forest of the Weald or small farms and settlements on the higher ground on the edge of the floodplain to the south of the District. Many were satellite settlements to larger manorial centres on the richer agricultural land of the South Downs, and resourced material such as wood and wild game from the Weald and grazed livestock there in the summer months. Thus, many of the medieval estates had land on various geological and topographic regions, each of which produced a different resource or opportunity. The large estates were owned by the ruling classes and the church, and an example is that of the Archbishop of Canterbury's extensive manor of South Malling, - around Lewes, Mayfield, Wadhurst and Malling in Kent.

When William the Conqueror invaded Sussex in September 1066, he was able to land apparently unopposed at Pevensey and set up a base within the remains of the Roman fortress at Pevensey Castle; Harold Godwinson the new Saxon king having marched north to meet the Norwegian invaders.

After the conquest of Southern England, Robert de Mortain (William's half-brother) was granted the Rape of Pevensey (an area of land roughly covering what is now Wealden District) and quickly used Anderida as the base for building his castle. It is likely that he also instigated the formation of a new town, called Pevensey, outside its eastern gate. St Mary's Church at Westham outside the western end of the castle is claimed to be the earliest Norman church in the country.

Pevensey became an important port, known as one of the 'Cinque Ports' and quickly became one of the most important settlements in Wealden District. Land access to the town and castle continued to use the old Roman road network, with no apparent construction of major new routes happening until the post-medieval period.

Medieval Activity and Settlement

Landscape

The medieval landscape character of the High Weald (considered to be one of the best surviving coherent medieval landscapes in northern Europe) is distinctive through the dispersed historic settlement pattern of farmsteads, hamlets and late medieval villages, largely sited on ridges within the landscape, linked by ancient route ways (now often roads and rights of way) in the form of ridge top roads and a dense system of radiating drove ways, often narrow, deeply sunken and edged with trees and hedgerows and wildflower-rich verges and boundary banks.

The relatively few nucleated villages and small towns are usually sited alongside the main routes through the Weald. Many of these types of settlements developed as trading centres, associated with non-rural industries, and in several examples it is clear that the market was the original feature, later accompanied by a church.

Within the Low Weald, there is a strong sense of an anciently settled and farmed landscape, with farmsteads (often of medieval origin) set in landscapes originally enclosed in the medieval period and then successively reorganised. The historical pattern of field enclosure and assarting[7] from woodland remains mostly intact.

The key characteristics of the historic built environment in the Low Weald, pertinent to Wealden, are isolated farmsteads often occupying ancient sites (some moated), and these, intermixed with villages, form the predominant settlement pattern. Many of the dispersed manorial farms and market settlements have developed into today's villages and hamlets.

The current landscape of the Pevensey Levels was formed by the reclamation work started by local religious houses in the medieval period. The relative permanence of the ditches and the continued pastoral use makes parts of this landscape a remarkable survival of a medieval field system in a lowland context and some drainage channels and sea defences are relatively unchanged since medieval times.

The key characteristics of the historic built environment of the Pevensey Levels are identified to be low density, dispersed settlements, comprising mainly a thin scattering of farmsteads on medieval sites, away from main centres of population, with settlement on the slightly higher ground surrounding the levels, such as around Hooe.

Churches, markets and fairs

Evidence of medieval settlements and trade in the District is represented by the many early churches, markets and fairs. The list of early churches in the District in the table below (13th century or earlier) represents settlement across the entire District. Other earlier churches also existed that have subsequently been rebuilt, such as the early chapel that is documented at Frant.

Church	Date	Listing Grade
The Parish Church Of St Pancras, Arlington	Saxon	I
The Parish Church Of St Michael And All Angels, Little Horsted	Norman	II
The Parish Church Of St Andrew And St Mary, Fletching	Norman	I
The Parish Church Of St Peter And St Paul, Hellingly	Norman/Early English	I
The Parish Church Of St Bartholomew, Maresfield	11C (c.1080)	I
The Parish Church Of St Peter And St Paul, Wadhurst	12C	I
The Parish Church Of St Mary The Virgin, Willingdon	12C	I
The Parish Church Of All Saints, Church Road, Herstmonceux	12C	I

[7] Assarting is the act of clearing forested lands for use in agriculture or other purposes.

The Parish Church Of St Margaret, Isfield	12C	I
The Parish Church Of St Thomas A Becket, Framfield	13C	II
The Old Parish Church Of St Margaret, Buxted	13C	I
The Parish Church Of St Oswald, Hooe	13C	I
The Parish Church Of All Saints, Church Road, Laughton	13C	I
The Parish Church Of St Mary, Church Lane, Ninfield	13C	I
The Parish Church Of St Mary, Church Street, Hartfield	13C	I
The Parish Church Of St Dunstan, High Street, Mayfield	13C	I
The Parish Church Of St Denys, Rotherfield	13C	I
The Parish Church Of All Saints, Old Heathfield	13C	II*
The Parish Church Of All Saints, Waldron	13C	I
The Parish Church Of St Bartholomew, Chalvington With Ripe	13C	I
The Parish Church, Chiddingly Village, Chiddingly	13C	I
The Parish Church Of St Nicolas, Church Lane, Pevensey	13C	I
The Parish Church Of St Mary, Warbleton Village, Warbleton	13C	II
The Parish Church Of St Mary Magdalene, Wartling	13C	I
The Parish Church Of St Mary, High Street, Westham	c.1300	I

Markets and fairs were important trading events or institutions that met at regular intervals. Many of them were held at towns, but they were also held at a range of other settlements. In terms of function, however, it is often difficult to distinguish a small town from a non-urban settlement with a market or fair.

After the Norman Conquest, it is clear that the right to grant markets and fairs was considered to be a royal franchise, although this does not appear to have been comprehensively asserted until around 1200. In England royal grants of markets and fairs are known to have been made from soon after the Norman Conquest onwards. Generally, these grants from the king took the form of charters. Many markets and fairs certainly existed before the period of recorded grants: these were held by custom and are described as prescriptive.

By 1200 there was a network of markets and fairs in England that was dense and highly developed and from this time anyone who wanted to set up a market or fair had to secure a royal grant, which gives us documentary evidence of these early markets and fairs. The number of markets and fairs granted rose sharply in the thirteenth century, declined after the mid fourteenth century and remained low in the fifteenth century.

Usually a market was held once a week, on a set day. Before c.1200 many markets were held on Sunday. This was the day that people gathered together at churches to worship: Sunday markets appear to have developed out of these regular assemblies. Markets were held at a set place: obviously it was important that buyers and sellers knew where to turn up. Older Sunday markets were often held in and around churchyards, conveniently near the church. During the early thirteenth century there was a movement against these Sunday markets and against trading in cemeteries. This may be part of the reason why many early marketplaces are located in front of the church, possibly gravitating here from the churchyard itself, and it is thought that the earliest site for a market in Wadhurst is in front of the church.

Throughout the District from the medieval period onwards there is evidence of local markets and fairs. Many of the markets have endured for centuries, although they have all but died out now. A number of market and fair charters were granted in the District in the 13th-15th centuries, the earliest being Pevensey market and fair, which were granted in 1207 by King John. A summary of the fairs and markets granted is provided below:

Town/village	Market granted	Fair granted and annually held	Monarch
Alfriston[8]	1406	1406, 1 May	Henry IV
Framfield		1314, 7 July	Edward II
Frant	1297	1297, 1Nov	Edward I
Hailsham	1252		Henry III
Heathfield	1234	1316, 3 April	Henry II, Edward II
Maresfield	1332	1301, 24 Aug	Edward I, Edward III
Mayfield	1261	1261, 19 May	Henry III
Pevensey	1207	1207, 29 Aug	King John
Rotherfield	1318	Recorded 1376, 9 Oct	Edward II
Uckfield	1220	1253, 29 June	Henry III
Wadhurst	1253	1253, 29 June	Henry III
Willingdon	1301	1301, 15 Aug	Edward I

Many of the market places can still be identified through place name evidence and wide spaces, often along the High Street and close to the church. Hailsham has held a market charter since 1252 when it was granted by Henry III and is now the only livestock sales in the county. This market continued until the 17th century when it ceased for a time until it was re-established in 1786. By the middle of the 19th century, Hailsham had become one of the largest markets in the country and drovers accompanied their cattle from as far afield as Wales. The market was held in the High Street and the focus of the town was Market Square. In 1862 the Hailsham Cattle Market Co. Ltd was formed to provide a new cattle and livestock area and in 1868 new facilities were constructed in Market Street, where the market continues today.

[8] Within that part of Wealden covered by the South Downs National Park Authority.

A fair was held once a year and was almost always associated with a religious festival, generally a saint's day. The date of the fair was expressed in terms of that feast, although many fairs were held over several consecutive days. Like a market, a fair was normally held at a set place. Urban centres almost inevitably had at least one fair; many had several, held at intervals through the year. Fairs were sometimes held outside the physical limits of the town, where there was space for large gatherings of people and animals.

Most of the local fairs took place on an annual basis and some of these were related to the agricultural industry, such as the sheep fair at Selmeston, and others were held by the Lord of the Manor, such as that at Withyham. The Heffle Cuckoo Fair was originally held in Cade Street and dates back to 1315 when the Bishop of Chichester obtained a grant from Edward II for an annual fair and a weekly market to commemorate St Richard, a former Bishop of Chichester. It was a livestock trading show and produce market with all the accompanying fun fair events. The last of these traditional Cuckoo Fairs was held in Cade Street in 1914, although it now forms part of an annual craft fair and procession in Heathfield. The former fairs and associated fair-fields are part of the social and cultural heritage of the District and are also likely to be rich in archaeological deposits.

Manors

After the Norman Conquest, the 387 manors in Sussex that had been in Saxon hands were replaced by just 16 heads of manors or ‘tennants in chief’ who were the representative of the King. Only two of these lords were English, the remaining manors being given to Norman Lords by William the Conqueror.

Sussex was of great importance to the Normans, particularly due to the fact that Hastings and Pevensey were on the most direct route for Normandy. Because of this, the county was divided into five new baronies, called rapes, each with at least one town and a castle. This enabled the ruling group of Normans to control the manorial revenues and thus the greater part of the county's wealth. William, the Conqueror gave these rapes to five of his most trusted Barons. Wealden lies within the Rape of Pevensey which was given to Robert, Count of Mortain, half-brother to the King. The Rape of Pevensey had 19 hundreds, which had the principal function of the administration of law and the keeping of the peace. The manors were tenanted out to supporters who maintained the land and kept the peace through manorial courts.

Over the medieval period, manors changed hands or were amalgamated into larger land holdings. This is demonstrated clearly by Sir Thomas Sackville, made Lord Buckhurst by Elizabeth I, who acquired the Manor of Withyham c.1569 and by the end of the 16th century he held seventeen manors in total in northeast Sussex. The size of his holding led to the survey of his lands and compilation of the Buckhurst Terrier and accompanying maps.

Later in the medieval period, many of the large manors were split into smaller areas and a good example is the Manor of South Malling, which contained Buxted. The great manor of South Malling, which was granted to the archbishops of Canterbury before the Norman Conquest and remained in their possession, until the 16th century, stretched from Lewes Bridge up to the Kent border at Lamberhurst. In the

16th century, the manor was then broken up into three new lordships – the manors of Ringmer, Framfield and Mayfield. Buxted formed part of the manor of Framfield. Two independent manorial islands existed within Buxted – a manor of Shodwell, controlling land in the region of High Hurstwood, and the manor of Buxted itself. This division of land would have had an impact on settlement growth and the way in which land was used along with associated human activity and will therefore, have impacted on the development and significance of the historic environment within the District.

The major landowners within the District have had a substantial role in the evolution of settlements and activity in the landscape from the medieval period right through to the Victorian period.

Ashdown Forest

Ashdown Forest was part of the Andredswald, described by Saint Bede the Venerable (c.672-735) as *'thick and inaccessible; a place of retreat for large herds of deer and swine'.* The area was not necessarily heavily wooded, and would have consisted of a mixture of heath, woodland and other habitats, and seasonal grazing may have taken place from quite early times

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Ashdown Forest as a distinct entity did not appear to exist before the Norman Conquest, nor is it mentioned in the Domesday Book of 1086, and the first recorded reference to it by name is in 1100-1130, when Henry I confirmed the right of monks to use a road across the forest.

The Forest Area was part of lands awarded to Robert, Count of Mortain (half-brother to William the Conqueror), but with two important provisos, that the King could keep the deer and hunt whenever he desired, and that the inhabitants, later known as 'Commoners', could continue to use it in their customary way. The land was subject to 'Forest Law', which protected the animals that the King would hunt and the vegetation that provided the animals with food and cover. The Forest area was delineated in medieval times by a Pale - a wooden fence built on top of a soil bank, with a ditch on the Forest side of the fence, to create an effective restraint for deer. The Pale was breached by a number of gates, such as those at Colemans Hatch Gate, Newbridge Gate, Chuck Hatch Gate, Fishers Gate and Friar's Gate. These names are still in use today and the line of the medieval pale can still be traced within the landscape and is an important archaeological feature.

The Forest changed hands many times, and entered into the ownership of the Queens of England at the time of Eleanor. The Forest transferred ownership again in 1372 to John of Gaunt, 1st Duke of Lancaster and son of Edward III, and became known as the Great Park of Lancaster. On his death, the ownership of the Forest reverted to Henry IV, son of John of Gaunt.

The Forest changed hands many times between this period and the later 17th century, when area was divided into common land in the vicinity of villages and farms, and areas for' inclosure and improvement.' This would have affected the way in which local people would have been able to use large areas of the Forest.

By the 19th century, the Forest land not subject to common land was owned by the De La Warr/Sackville family, and transferred to East Sussex County Council in the

1980s[9].

Moated sites
There are a number of early moated sites in the District, providing archaeological evidence for medieval occupation, including that at East Hoathly, which has been interpreted as a moated farmstead; and that at Waldron, which appears to have been the site of a late medieval hunting lodge.

Early Buildings
Apart from the churches already mentioned and that were built of stone, the local medieval building material was almost exclusively timber, used in conjunction with lime, wattle and daub, and probably thatch as a roofing material, with later replacement by tiles. There were only few very high status late medieval brick buildings, such as Bolebroke Castle, near Hartfield.

There are, therefore, a significant number of timber-framed buildings in the District, some of which date from as early as the 13th century, but with the majority appearing to be 15th or 16th century and later. The term 'Wealden House' is often used as a generic description. The plan form, timber frame techniques and architectural detailing of these building can be used for dating purposes, along with other techniques such as dendrochronology, in order to help understand their national and/or local significance when considering development proposals.

Post Medieval Activity and Settlement

Manors
Although there had been an initial country house movement after the dissolution of the monasteries, in Wealden, the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries saw a boom in the building of large country dwellings in planned parks. Associated with the large dwellings were normally lodge houses or gate houses, estate cottages, and planned farmsteads. There are several good examples in the District, including Sheffield ark, Hammerwood Park, Heathfield Park, Eridge Park, and Shernfold Park.

In 1766, the land and house at what is known today as Heathfield Park was purchased by Lt-General George Augustus Eliot who in 1775 was sent to command the garrison of Gibraltar and on his return to England in 1787 was raised to the peerage as Lord Heathfield of Gibraltar. Eliot owned the house until his death in 1790 and it was renamed Heathfield Park after him in 1791 by his successor Francis Newbery. Newbery hired the eminent landscape designer Humphrey Repton to landscape the park and as part of the design he had an ornamental tower of 3 storeys erected to commemorate the successful defence of Gibraltar by General Lord Heathfield (Eliot), now known as the Gibraltar Tower and which remains a local landmark today.

Repton also designed landscapes in the District at Sheffield Park; Kidbrooke Park in Forest Row; Buckhurst Park in Withyham; and at Bayham Abbey which partly lies within Wealden, on the border of Sussex and Kent.

[9] History of Ashdown Forest courtesy of www.ashdownforest.org

The movement for large new houses brought eminent architects into the District. In the late 18th century, an example is the building of Sheffield Park House, which was designed by Architect James Wyatt for the first Lord Sheffield. He also designed the gate lodges. Both Capability Brown and Humprey Repton had a hand in designing the parkland. An early 19th century model farm was constructed to serve the large house and associated land.

In the late 19th century, the famous architect Edwin Lutyens, who often worked in tandem with the garden designer, Gertrude Jekyll, worked in the District, as evidenced by The Hooe in Willingdon, and Buckhurst Park at Withyham.

Philanthropic Movement

The influence of the large landowners often extended beyond their great houses and parkland and there are examples of the 19th century philanthropic movement in the District.

Charles Richard Blunt owned Heathfield Park in 1819 and was an enlightened owner. The wall he built around the Park in 1833-1836 was undertaken in part to provide local jobs and he also loaned the parish money to pay poor relief and helped fund sixty people from Heathfield and twenty six from Waldron to emigrate to the United States during 1830 and 1831. Blunt's record as a reformer won him a seat in Parliament for Sussex, which he held until he died in 1840. He also took a keen interest in the National School which opened in Old Heathfield in 1819.

In 1792, when the second Earl of Abergavenny (1755-1843) decided to make Eridge the family seat, a designed landscape park was laid out. He intended Eridge to be a model village and estate and rebuilt the cottages in a distinctive estate style, often with the letter ‘A’ incorporated prominently on the front elevation. His son and grandson continued this philanthropy, expanding the village in the distinctive style and providing a church for the settlement.

National schools

The dramatic social, political and economic transformation of the Industrial Revolution served to reveal the utter inadequacy of England's educational provision for the masses. A number of reports highlighted the deficiencies and called for more and better schools. One such report looked at 12,000 parishes in 1816, and found that 3,500 had no school, 3,000 had endowed schools of varying quality, and 5,500 had unendowed schools of even more variable quality.

To fill the gaps, and to provide for England's newly-industrialised and (partly) enfranchised society, various types of school began to be established to offer some basic education to the masses.

The type of school most commonly found in the District are those that began as National Schools, founded in the 19th century by the National Society for Promoting Religious Education. The aim of the National Society was to establish a National school in every parish of England and Wales. The schools were usually adjacent to the parish church, and named after it. These schools were founded in many hamlets, villages and towns in the District in this period and provided elementary education, in accordance with the teaching of the Church of England, to the children of the poor.

In the early period of these schools, attendance was not compulsory and a fee had to be paid to attend. However, the Forster Elementary Education Act 1870 required partially state-funded board schools to be set up to provide primary (elementary) education in areas where existing provision was inadequate. The schools remained fee-charging, but poor parents could be exempted. The Act meant that compulsory attendance at school ceased to be a matter for local option, as children had to attend between the ages of 5 and 10, with exceptions such as illness, if children worked, or lived too far from a school.

The National Society responded to the creation of the new board schools by raising £10 million and almost doubling the number of its schools to 12,000 in 15 years. The Elementary Education Act 1880 tightened up school attendance laws and made school compulsory between the aged of 5 and 10. The 1891 Elementary Education Act 1891 was the first to introduce law that elementary education was to be provided for free and in 1893 the school leaving age raised to 11.

Many of the National Schools were closed or handed over to the school boards in the late 19th-early 20th century. During the 20th century the remaining National Schools became voluntary aided or voluntary controlled primary schools, funded by the state but still able to promote the teachings of the Church of England. These schools can still be seen in most villages, towns and even the smaller hamlets, although some of these school buildings have ceased to be used as schools and have been converted to houses or other uses. The schools are an important part of the social and cultural history of the District, and are often designed to exacting standards and in distinctive styles, making them prominent buildings in the streetscene.

Farmsteads

Along with the significance of the development and evolution of settlements within the District, another particularly defining feature is the survival of historic farmsteads within the High and Low Weald landscapes and, to a certain extent, on the Pevensey Levels.

Historic England identifies that historic farmsteads and their buildings are a prominent contributor to regional distinctiveness and landscape. To promote better understanding of the character of farm buildings at a broad landscape and regional scale, a series of Regional Farmstead Character Statements have been written, outlining the development of farmsteads within each of the 159 National Character Areas (NCAs) in England. This information can be used to help identify designated and non-designated historic farmsteads in the District and better understand their historic development and significance, as well as any potential threats through change and redevelopment.

The three NCAs within the Wealden District Council area are the High Weald, the Low Weald and the Pevensey Levels and the following information provides specific details on the development, planform and significance of historic farmsteads in each of these particular landscape areas.

High Weald

Key Characteristics

- Very high densities of historic farmsteads.
- Many farmsteads retaining pre-1750 buildings set within a landscape predominantlyof medieval origin, this close association being highly significant.
- Small farmsteads with loose courtyard plans or dispersed plans.
- Barns, often aisled to at least one side and with hipped roofs.
- Buildings for cattle including covered yards in the western High Weald.
- Oast houses, unconverted examples retaining internal fitments and farmsteads retaining a range of structures associated with the hop industry being rare and significant.

Farmstead Plan, Buildings and Dating

- A high density, by national standards, of pre-1750 and pre-1550 buildings.

Farmstead types

- The small farmsteads of the High Weald often only required a farmhouse and ac ombination barn which could house both cattle and the corn crop. These buildings could be set close to one another or the barn could stand in a nearby close.
- As with much of South East England, loose courtyard plans, typically with one or two detached working farm buildings standing around a yard area, is the most common plan form.
- Small L-plan steadings with a barn and later cattle shed attached at right angles are also widespread.
- Dispersed plans are a major characteristic of High Weald farmsteads. Such plans include clusters of buildings with little or no evidence for planning in their arrangement and plans where buildings are ranged alongside a wide route-way leading into the farmstead.
- Many farmsteads have ‘multi-yard plans’ where there are a number of separate yards reflecting the careful management of stock. Such plans can be sub-divided into those where the yards are largely dispersed and detached from one another and those where the yards are mostly grouped together.
- Larger regular courtyard plan farmsteads are mainly found in the western part of the High Weald where estates developed farmsteads in the 19th century, creating full courtyard plans, some E-plans and steadings with covered yards.
- Linear plans and Attached L-plans with a barn attached to the farmhouse are rare but not entirely absent from the character area.

Building Types

- Medieval timber-framed houses, including Wealden houses, survive on a high proportion of farmsteads.

- Barns, typically of 3-5 bays, were often aisled to at least one side resulting in low eaves-lines, emphasising the mass of the roof over walling. The earlier barns of the area, dating from the 15th and 16th centuries tend to be unaisled. The majority of barns in the area are of 17th or 18th century date. Hipped roofs are characteristic. Many barns retain evidence – either in partitions or in evidence for lost partitions - for being combination buildings in that they housed both animals and crops.
- Granaries were rarely required on the smaller farms where grain could be stored in the farmhouse or in a loft in the barn. On larger farms the granary was often incorporated with the oast house or above a cart shed. Granaries pre-dating the 19th century are rare and significant.
- The importance of cattle on High Weald farms is reflected in shelter sheds and cow houses, although these are mostly of 19th century date. These may be found added to an earlier barn or detached and associated with individual yard areas. In the later 19th century some larger farms, particularly those in the western part of the area, provided large covered yards for cattle. Some yards would have been used for the working oxen that were widely used for ploughing.
- Stables are typically small buildings, usually brick-built, and mostly date from the 18th or 19th centuries.
- Oast houses are a highly characteristic building type, particularly on the northern side of the High Weald. There are very few oasts in the area west of Ashdown Forest. Most oast houses date from the late 18th and 19th century although there are some older examples built within earlier barns. Only a small number of unconverted oast houses survive. Farmsteads that retain unconverted oast houses, early to mid 20th century hop buildings and features such as hop-pickers huts are highly significant.
- Field barns were once a common feature, particularly in the southern part of the Weald east of Ashdown Forest. Over 2/3rds of these buildings have been lost from the landscape. The surviving field barns are an important remnant of a once widespread building type. Most probably date from the 19th century but it is possible that some barns are earlier. Few are listed.

Low Weald

Key Characteristics

- Very high densities of historic farmsteads.
- Many farmsteads retaining pre-1750 buildings set within a landscape largely of medieval origin.
- Many small farmsteads with loose courtyard plans.
- Regular courtyard plans concentrated in the area immediately west of the High Weald.
- Dispersed Multi-Yard and Regular Multi-Yard plan farmsteads.
- Barns, often aisled to at least one side and with hipped roofs.
- Buildings for cattle including covered yards in the western High Weald.
- Oast houses concentrated along the northern arm of the Character Area, unconverted examples retaining internal fitments and farmsteads retaining a range of structures associated with the hop industry being rare and significant.

Farmstead Plan, Buildings and Dating

- Much of the Low Weald, together with the High Weald is remarkable in a national context for the high numbers of farmsteads that retain early, pre-1750 buildings.
- The north part of this character area in particular has a major concentration of pre-1550 barns.
- These farmsteads are set within a landscape of fields and woodland that largely took its present form in the medieval period.
- The close association of these early farmsteads and landscapes is highly significant.

Farmstead Types

- There is a mixture of farmstead plan types across the area.
- Small loose courtyard plans are the most common plan form encountered in the Low Weald.
- Small L-plan steadings with a barn and a later cattle shed attached at right angles are also widespread. Loose courtyards with an L-plan element are mostly concentrated in the west of the area.
- Regular U-plan courtyards, mostly of the mid-late 19th century, are a strong characteristic of the farmsteads of the western part of the character area where some full regular courtyard, E- and F-plans and covered yards, are also often found. Beyond this part of the character area the larger regular plan types are rarely encountered.
- Dispersed plans are a characteristic of Low Weald farmsteads although not to the same extent as in the High Weald except for the in the northern part of the Character Area where there are similar densities to the adjacent part of the High Weald. Such plans include clusters of buildings with little or no evidence for planning in their arrangement and a limited number of plans where buildings are ranged alongside a routeway leading to the farmstead. The density of dispersed plans falls markedly towards the western part of the character area.
- ‘Multi-yard plans’ where there are a number of separate yards reflecting the careful management of stock are a major characteristic of the Wealden landscape, including the Low Weald. Such plans can be sub-divided into those where the yards are largely dispersed and detached from one another and those where the yards are mostly grouped together (Regular MultiYards). The distribution of Regular Multi-Yards is concentrated in the south-eastern and northern sections of the Low Weald.

Building Types

- Medieval timber-framed houses, including Wealden houses, survive on a considerable number of farmsteads.
- Barns, typically of 3-5 bays, were often aisled to at least one side resulting in low eaves-lines, emphasising the mass of the roof over walling. The earlier barns of the area tend to be unaisled. Hipped roofs are characteristic. Many barns retain evidence for being combination buildings in that they housed both

animals and crops. The concentration of pre-1550 barns in the north of the character is a particularly significant feature. The majority of barns in the area date from the 17th and 18th centuries.

- Granaries, either free-standing buildings on staddle stones or forming part of combination buildings such as granary/cart sheds are relatively uncommon. It is probable that grain was stored within the farmhouse or in a loft in the barn. A small number of granaries date from before 1700 but most are of 18th and 19th century date.
- Oast houses are a building type highly characteristic of the Low Weald, particularly on the northern side of the Weald where some large oast houses are found. Most date from the late 18th and 19th century although there are some examples of older oast houses built within earlier barns. Only a small number of unconverted oast houses survive. Farmsteads that retain unconverted oast houses, early to mid-20th century hop buildings and features such as hop-pickers huts are highly significant.
- The importance of cattle on Low Weald farms is reflected in shelter sheds and cow houses. These may be found added to an earlier barn or detached and associated with individual yard areas.
- Whilst oxen were often used for ploughing stables for working oxen have rarely been identified. Any surviving examples of stabling for oxen would be highly significant.
- Pigs were a key feature of the farming economy and pigsties would have been common to most farmsteads. Small stone or brick-built pigsties, including 19th century examples, are becoming increasingly rare.
- Field barns were once a common feature but many have been lost from the landscape. The surviving field barns are an important remnant of a once widespread building type.

Pevensey Levels

Key Characteristics

- Low density of farmsteads, mainly small loose courtyard or L- and U-plans.
- A number of farmsteads that originated as monastic grange farms.
- Farm buildings predominantly of 19 th or 20th century date.
- A small number of farmsteads retaining buildings dating from pre-1800.

Farmstead Plan, Buildings and Dating

- This is an area with a low density of surviving farmsteads, very few of which retainbuildings pre-dating 1800.
- Many of the sites of the lost farmsteads have been subsumed within the urban development of Eastbourne and Langney.

Farmstead Types

- As with much of South East England, loose courtyard plans, typically with one or two detached working farm buildings standing around a yard area are the most common plan form.

- Small L-plan and U-plan arrangements with a barn and a cattle shelter shed attached at right angles were found on some farmsteads and outfarms.
- There are few large regular courtyard plan farmsteads but there are a small number of regular 'multi-yard' plans which reflect the management of stock.
- A small number of dispersed plans with little or no evidence for planning in their arrangement are found in the area.

Building Types

- Barns are not a strong feature of the Pevensey Levels landscape given the predominance of cattle in the farming of the area.
- A few timber-framed and solid-walled barns are found in the area, especially on farmsteads at the fringes of the area.
- Cattle buildings consist of open fronted shelter sheds and enclosed single storey cow houses, typically of 19th century date.
- Outfarms and field barns were once a common feature but many have been lost from the landscape. Single buildings with an attached yard were typical but there were also some small L- and U-plans. The surviving field barns are an important remnant of a once widespread building type.
- There are a small number of oast houses within the character area.

Major Local Industries

Wealden Iron Industry

There is a substantial archaeological, landscape and built legacy within the District relating to the Iron Industry within the Weald over the past 1000 years.

Iron has been smelted in Wealden landscape for over 2000 years due to the fact that the Wealden geology of sands and clays yielded the iron ore, as well as the stone and brick to build the furnaces. In addition, there was plenty of woodland to provide fuel and streams and valley to ensure water power for the bellows and hammers of the forges and furnaces.

There are two main periods of iron making in the Weald dating from the Roman, and later Tudor/Stuart times, but there is some evidence of Iron Age iron working sites.

In the Roman period, ironmaking was conducted using small clay bloomer furnaces.

The height of the iron industry in the area was predominantly in the 15th to 17th centuries when the Weald was the foundry of England. This influence dominates the present landscape in the form of hammer ponds, furnace sites and evidence of charcoal-burning. Charcoal was used to heat the iron ore to a high enough temperature to smelt the iron, as it burns at a higher and more constant temperature than wood. The hammer ponds were a series of water containment features, at a higher level than the furnace, and the water power was used to turn water wheels to work the bellows used to keep the burning charcoal at a high temperature and to power the tilt hammers.

In the reign of Henry III, the iron industry in the County of Sussex was required to provide the king with 30,000 horse shoes and 60,000 nails. By 1496, continental ironmasters from Pays de Bray, northern France, were employed to operate a water powered blast furnace in the area, establishing the first English blast furnace at Newbridge in the Ashdown Forest.

The local iron industry had a significant impact on the local Wealden economy and the local landscape, with demand for armaments generated from successive wars with European forces. At its peak there were 36 ironworks within 10km of Wadhurst alone, with local families owning and operating furnaces and forges predominantly in the late 16th and early 17th century.

One other result of the iron industry was wealth and the many of the large iron master's houses constructed in this period remain within the District, along with iron grave slabs within the Parish Churches. The most notable is Wadhurst Church, which contains 31 iron grave slabs dating between 1617 and 1799.

The Wealden social composition of small farms with multiple-occupation work-forces also involved in the iron industry, allowed for a seasonal cycle of skilled workers.

The ironmaking industry within the Weald died out by the end of the 18th century with water shortages hindering production, increased foreign imports and increased national competition for more efficient coal powered ironworks.

There remains a rich local archaeology relating to the industry, including the hammer ponds, sites of furnaces, slag from the smelting process etc, the iron master's houses and the influence the industry had on settlements through the requirement to employ so substantial a workforce within this period.

Hop Industry

Another local historic industry of note is hop growing, which was introduced first by Flemish settlers in the 16th century, before becoming more prominent in the 18th and 19th centuries. Hops were brought back from Flanders in 1533, and had become a major industry by the nineteenth century. Previous to this England had been reliant on hops from Europe, but once they had the expertise, the small enclosed fields of Kent and Sussex provided the opportunity to try out this new crop and grow it alongside the main livestock farming. The local supply of wood for poles, milder southern climate and suitable sandy slopes ensured that this region became the dominant supplier of hops.

Hops are the ingredient that adds bitterness to beer and hop growing became probably the biggest industry in East Sussex in Victorian times. Every September the plants were ready to be picked and casual workers from Kent, London, Sussex and East Anglia would come to the County to work in the hop gardens for 6 weeks. Once the hops were picked, they were dried out in oast houses and sold to the breweries. The most visible remains of the industry are the oast houses dotted around the High and Low Weald landscape within the District. These oast houses were often added to the more historic medieval farmsteads as the farming industry changed to embrace hop growing and drying. Hop growing reached its peak in the 19th century,

with many farms having a 'hop garden' and building their own roundel to dry hops for the local or London market.

Wealden has a significant number of oast houses surviving which comprise a barn building with at least one attached kiln. The remaining kilns are predominantly round, but there are also examples of square kilns in some locations. The pyramidal or conical kiln roofs with the white cowls on top are prominent in views across the landscape. Many of these buildings are now converted to residential use, but some few remain unconverted and are particularly important for recording the built form and associated ancillary fittings which may remain.

Brick and tile works

The local building vernacular provides evidence for the production of bricks and tiles in the local area. Many buildings from the post medieval period are brick with tile-hanging and tile roofs and there is a consistency in the materials used that suggests that were being sourced locally. In addition, many of the boundary treatments around the towns and villages such as Wadhurst, Frant and Hailsham, include brick walls, attesting to the local availability of the bricks, which would otherwise have been an expensive boundary treatment.

The local clay geology provided the raw materials for brick and tile production, whilst the availability of wood and industrial heritage of the area in iron furnace works naturally lends the area to brick and tile manufacture. The variety of local products relates to the properties of the different clay and brick earth/loams available in the area; softer clays being used for plain roof tiles, decorative tiles and terracotta mouldings, as well as pottery in some areas; and harder loams used to make bricks. Red bricks are characteristic of the area due to the iron oxide in the clays and loams, which also produces the black flecks on some of the local bricks where the iron oxide burns in small concentrations during firing, but paler and buff bricks are also made from local clays and loams with a higher chalk content, such as Gault clay bricks and where chalk has been added to lighten the bricks and/or fired in a reducing atmosphere.

The Romans were the first to produce brick and tile in the area, with bricks being locally produced for the construction of Anderida/Pevensey Fort. A Roman tile kiln has also been excavated near Hartfield and some of the early churches in the District also incorporate reused Roman brick and tile, for example Arlington Church.

The Saxons did not build in brick, using wood instead and the use of tiles was revived following the Norman Conquest when tile works were create by the monastic houses for their own use. These are documented at Battle Abbey, which also had a tile kiln at Snape near Wadhurst in the 14th century; at Michelham Priory, which was also producing bricks, as attested by small 14th century bricks in the walls of the building; and also at the Archbishops Palace at Mayfield, which was selling a small amount of excess tiles.

The first building to be built entirely of brick in the area is Herstmonceux Castle, built in the 1440s by Sir Roger Fiennes using his own kilns. Following this, New Place (now Whitefriars) was built in the 1470s and Old Buckurst was built by the Sackvilles at Withyham in the 1480s, incorporating brickwork. The surviving 15th century

gatehouse at Bolebrook Castle is also brick built, as is the Dacre Chapel, added to Herstmonceux Church in the 15th century.

Bricks continued to be expensive and the preserve of the rich and were often used sparingly on otherwise timber-framed buildings. For example, a brick tower was built at Laughton Place in the 16th century adjacent to the timber-framed house. During the 17th century the wealthy Wealden ironmasters began lining their blast furnaces with bricks to withstand the intense heat and early maps often show brick related field names adjacent to iron working site. The prosperity of the ironmasters was largely responsible for the building of high-status large houses in the District from the later 16th century, often incorporating brick. Halland House in East Hoathly and the new house of the Sackville family in Hartfield were built at this time.

Permanent brickyards began to be set up to supply bricks and tiles for house building rather than just the temporary kiln set up next to specific building projects. The popularity of bricks gradually increased throughout the 17th, 18th and early 19th century when many houses were rebuilt or substantially altered. The brick kiln and clay pits were often set up on the edge of Commons and the greatest concentration is on the Weald Clay belt from Hailsham in the south to Horsham in the north.

Population growth, resulting in a demand for housing and cheap labour for growing industries, saw increased production and use of bricks in the 19th century, further increased by the arrival of the railway to the area in the mid-19th century and abolition of the brick tax in 1850. This is especially evident in the towns and larger villages, such as Hailsham, Uckfield and Mayfield, where the familiar rows of Victorian brick terraces and villas grew up around the earlier core. Brick buildings and walls dating to the later 18th and 19th century are also evident in the smaller villages around the District.

The railways allowed the movement of bricks from the area to supply the markets in London to the north and Eastbourne, Brighton and Worthing to the south and further brickworks grew up along the railway lines to take advantage of these markets, for example Hailsham. The railways themselves also required vast quantities of bricks for tunnels, cuttings, viaducts, stations and other buildings.

By the late 19th century brickmaking had been mechanised and production was on a much larger scale, making machine made bricks at large brickworks. However handmade bricks were still being made in the smaller brickworks. Production of bricks declined in the area in the earlier 20th century with increased competition and price drops from over-production. Many of the smaller works closed, exacerbated by the opening of the large and mechanically efficient Sussex Brick and Estates Company, which produced 20 million bricks annually. However, many of the larger brickworks survived or reopened after WWI and enjoyed success from the demand for housing and shortage of building material after WWI and WWII. This continued until the increased use of breezeblocks and concrete in the 1950s.

There are no remaining working brick or tile works within Wealden District, but there is a rich archaeological resource, with many locations shown on the earlier Ordnance Survey maps. Some associated ancillary buildings, such as worker's cottages, remain in areas in the District.

Rope making

Rope making was a local industry in Hailsham from the beginning of the 19th century and gave Hailsham the title of 'String Town'. It was started by Thomas Burfield in 1807 as a cottage industry and there were several Rope Walks around the town where rope was manufactured and then brought to Burfield's premises in the High Street. As the industry grew, a bespoke factory was constructed on South Road, of which there are still some buildings remaining today. A former employee of Burfield started a rival rope maker, Green Bros, in Summerheath Road, and for many years the two businesses provided the main employment in the town.

The hangman's rope was reputedly made in Hailsham and during the two world wars, tents, camp beds and even canvas decoy hurricane planes were manufactured for the war effort at the rope works. Today, although the original Burfield rope making site is no longer in use for that purpose, rope making continues in the town at Marlow Ropes.

Salt making

There is evidence to suggest that salt making was an important occupation on the Pevensey Levels at the initial stages of the economic exploitation of the marsh in the Saxon period. The Domesday Book (1086) records that the edges of Pevensey Marsh reputedly supported 100 salt works at that time. It is highly likely that evidence remains on the edges of the Pevensey Levels for this important early industry.

Other Trades and Industries

Windmills

There appears to be evidence for the erection of around 50 windmills in the District from the 18th century to late 19th century, although some of these windmills are likely to be replacements of earlier mills on the same site that collapsed or burnt down. Only 6 windmills survive in their original locations and in an unconverted state, 4 of which are in working order. The remaining structures have either been lost completely or have been converted to domestic use in the past with significant change to their structures and appearance, resulting in significant loss of historic fabric, including sails and mill machinery. Of the 6 windmills that survive unconverted, 4 are earlier post mills and 2 are later tower mills.

The Post Mill was probably the first type of windmill to be built. The main body or 'buck' of the mill is built around a centre post on which it pivots so that the mill can turn into the wind and respond to the wind direction. The post is supported by cross trees, originally resting on a wooden trestle (Nutley is an example) and later the trestle was protected by a brick roundhouse under the buck (Windmill Hill being an example). This type of mill was common until the 19th century when the more powerful tower and smock mills replaced them, of which there are examples of both types in the District.
The masonry tower mill was introduced to provide large and more stable sources of power and in contrast to the post mill, only the cap is rotated rather than the whole body of the mill. These types of mills could be constructed taller with large sails and could be operated at lower wind speeds. The smock mill is a later development of

the tower mill, where the tower is replaced by a wooden framework, called the "smock." The smock is commonly of octagonal plan, though examples with more, or fewer, sides exist. The lighter construction in comparison to tower mills made smock mills practical as drainage mills as these often had to be built in areas with unstable subsoil. One further mill survives that was previously located at Westham, but has been moved to the Weald and Downland Open Air Museum in West Sussex. This was an example of a hollow post mill.

Wind power was obviously a significant asset in the District due to the topography and the proximity to the sea and prevailing south westerly winds. Their significance in relation to the industrial heritage and social history within the District is clearly substantial and the preservation and maintenance of the remaining un-converted mill buildings of particular importance. There is also a rich record of lost or converted mills which can provide additional evidence for the historic environment record in the District and offer opportunity for archaeological investigation through development[10].

Watermills

There is evidence for at least 33 watermills in the District, but only 13 mill buildings appear to survive relatively intact, of which two are in working order. The other 10 surviving watermills are either in an empty or derelict state, some with or without their machinery, or have been converted to dwellings.

The majority of the watermills appear to have been for flour production, but some were sawmills or later mills for producing animal feeds. It appears that the majority of parishes within the District had at least one watermill, and these were a mixture of sizes, with some having undershot wheels and some overshot. Where mill buildings no longer survive, there is potential for significant archaeology, relating not just to the remains of the building, but the water infrastructure, including the mill ponds and the leats with associated sluices for directing the water over or under the waterwheel[11].

Gas works

There are a number of gas works shown on the early Ordnance Survey maps of the District, but unfortunately, very few structures associated with this late 19th century industry remain and those that do are therefore particularly significant.

One local example of a former gasworks is at Heathfield, where natural gas was discovered by accident at the end of the 19th century. In its heyday, the Heathfield gasworks produced some 15 million cubic feet a day and provided the railway station with lighting until the 1930s. Unfortunately, the operation never proved commercially viable and no evidence remains for the industry today. It is interesting to note that a medallion was struck to commemorate the coronation of Edward VII and Queen Alexandra – one side portrayed the Royal heads, and the other side was the inscription 'Heathfield, Sussex, 1902. Natural gas first used for light and power'. Another example was at Eridge, a gasometer was built in the Estate Yard in 1869, and gas manufactured there provided Eridge Castle with lighting until the coming of electricity in 1921.The yard is located to the north of Eridge Green on the road adjacent to the entrance to Eridge Park and is now used as small industrial units, but

[10] http://www.sussexmillsgroup.org.uk/index.html and https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_windmills_in_East_Sussex

[11] http://www.sussexmillsgroup.org.uk/index.html

a chimney and possible buildings associated with the gas works still remain on the site.

Cottage industries
Within each settlement and Parish, cottage and service industries sprang up to serve the local population.

Some of the earliest local industries would have been blacksmiths and tanyards.

Each village would have had a blacksmith for providing and repairing basic domestic and agricultural implements; for shoeing horses and repairing carts etc. The actual smithy building is often lost, but the accompanying blacksmiths accommodation adjacent often survives. In the late 19th century and early 20th century, the site of the blacksmiths often became the car repair garage and petrol station, as at Selmeston.

Tanning was also important in the District throughout the middle ages and into the 19th century. This industry was normally confined to the outskirts of settlements (due to smell) and adjacent to water courses. Tanyard Farm in Underhill, Maresfield, is an example.

The leather products from the tanning industry were then used within other cottages industries in the District, from glove-making, to tack and saddle making. Wadhurst was one of the leather industry's Wealden centres in the mid-16th century. The area was well suited to this process as the market and surrounding farms ensured a supply of hides and the oaks that were abundant in the Weald had a particularly high tannin content. Water was also available for the process, which required soft water for the tanning stages.

Another particularly important and specific local industry to Wealden for at least the last 200 years is trug making. Herstmonceux was an important local centre and trugs are still made in the vicinity today. The word 'trug' is derived from 'trog', an Anglo Saxon word meaning wooden vessel or boat shaped article. Trugs were originally used for measures or scoops for grain or liquid but are more generally used as a type of basket for containing articles, particularly useful for gardening. Trugs are made from sweet chestnut, which is used for their frame, and thin boards of cricket bat willow.

By the 19th century, the census' can provide an idea of the variety of small cottage industries and services within settlements in the District. For example, the Kellys Directory entry of 1882 notes that Boreham Street had its own Post Office, a Public House, The Misses Ladies School, tailors, saddlers, miller, bootmaker, butcher, grocer and draper and a hair dresser (reference: Kelly's Directory of Sussex, by E. R. Kelly, M.A., F.S.S., published by Kelly & Co, 51 Great Queen Street, London WC in 1882). At Withyham, , the 1882 Kelly's Directory of Sussex shows that within the wider Parish there were a variety of commercial tradespeople, including: blacksmiths; wheelwrights; shoe and boot makers; shop keepers and drapers; wine and spirit merchants; millers; a coal merchant, farms, surgeon and saddler. Within the village itself the 1881 census lists the most common occupation was farm

labourer. The other occupations listed were: smith; draper, grocer and post master; Rector; coachman; gardener; innkeeper; and school teacher.

This demonstrates a snapshot of the significance of the rich social history relating to service industries within settlements, the remains of which may survive within buildings, particularly shop fronts and plan forms, or within ancillary buildings within the curtilages of domestic buildings.,

Worthy of note as a local industry are the Harmer plaques found throughout the District. Jonathan Harmer was the son of a Heathfield stonemason, who used his skills as a potter to enhance his father's gravestones. Jonathan created a method of attaching terracotta plaques to gravestones or tombs, which has enabled some of them to last for 200 years. The method he devised was to cut the outline of the terracotta into the stone, then cut about 3/4 inch deeper into the stone creating a cavity. The terracotta plaque of the same or slightly thicker depth was made, then the plaque was glued into the cavity using a mortar. He took over the family firm in 1799, and from then until around 1840 he added these unusual terracotta bas-reliefs to a large number of local grave stones. The plaques came in seven main varieties including baskets of fruit and flowers, urns with horn handles, cherubs and figure groups representing Faith, Hope and Charity. They were made in various colours, too, the red versions originating from a local claypit at Heathfield Park and the paler creams and buffs from further afield.

There are many many examples of his work in the Wealden area, including:
Cade Street (6), Chiddingly (1), East Hoathly (2), Old Heathfield (1), Hailsham (1), Hellingly (3), Herstmonceux (8), Mayfield (5), Wadhurst (1), Waldron (2), Warbleton (2). His work can also be found in other parts of East Sussex, and into Kent.

Transport

Drove roads and ridgeways

The earliest routes were the drove roads for animals from the Downs into the Weald and the ridgeway routes, and more details are provided earlier in this document. Evidence for these routes remain within the District landscape and in some cases are still in use for modern transport.

Navigable rivers

There were originally several navigable routes along rivers in the District. These included the River Cuck, up to Arlington and various navigable streams and rivers within the Pevensey Levels area. There is evidence for a Romano-British port on the River Cuckmere to the west of Arlington; and at Boreham Street, just to the south of the village, along Boreham Lane is an area known as Puddledock. This denotes the area of a wharf on the river going out to sea two miles south of the confluence of the Nunningham Stream and the Ash Bourne. This part of the river was navigable by large, seagoing vessels, permitting the movement and trade of iron, corn, timber and ironwork.(reference: Wartling Past & Present, Wartling Parish Local History Group 2009) Ships could dock here until 1645 and the wharf was still visible until as recently as 1930.

It is likely that further evidence may be discovered for navigable water routes in the District, particularly due to the proximity of areas of the District to the coast.

Railways and their influence on settlements and activity in the District
The railways arrived in the District from the mid-19th century, with the earliest line being that between Polegate and Hailsham, opened in 1849, particularly to serve the livestock market in the town, as well as passengers. The line was later extended through to Eridge in 1880 and was called the 'Cuckoo Line'. There were also lines between Tunbridge Wells and East Grinstead, and between Lewes and Eridge.

The remaining operational railway line is from Uckfield north, through Buxted, Crowborough and Eridge and on to London (opened in 1868), but the link between Uckfield and Lewes no longer exists. The other railway lines in the District fell under Dr Beechings axe in the 1960s, and the Cuckoo Line is now a national cycle trail and footpath called the 'Cuckoo Trail, and the line between Tunbridge Wells and East Grinstead is similarly used and named the 'Forest Way'.

However, infrastructure from these disused lines still remains including in most areas the line of the track bed, which in two instances are now national cycle ways. Other infrastructure including railway bridges, some signal boxes, and railways stations survive and their architecture is often specific to location and the particular railway line, and therefore can be particularly locally distinctive. A good example is the railway station at Mayfield which has particularly decorative architectural detailing.

With the advent of the railways and easier travel, alternative industries sprang up in the late Victorian period in the District. One example was widespread industry in chicken-fattening. Trains would bring in chickens for fattening from all over and take them away when they were ready. The chickens were fattened in their gardens, and would be put on a cramming machine to fatten them up with a mixture of sour milk, ground oats and rendered down fat. Men would do the plucking and the women did the stubbing (pinching out the beginnings of new feathers). As this activity expanded, it spawned a range of related activities such as corn and seed merchants, carriers and suppliers of equipment and machinery, as well as the increase in the production of cereals and hops. This industry started in the 1860s and finished around 1960 when broilers were introduced. (Reference: Heathfield.net) There remains evidence around the District for the built infrastructure serving the associated industries.

The railways also transformed settlements in the District, leading to a building boom. Particular examples are Heathfield, which was transformed from a tiny settlement called 'Tower Street' to a large village; the construction of New Town in Uckfield; the building of large Victorian and Edwardian villas in Mayfield; and a significant expansion of Hailsham. The domestic building industry of this period benefited from the new money arriving in the towns from the arrival of the railways, the easier access to building materials, and even tourism in the north of the District, with visitors bringing money into the economy of the emerging spa town of Crowborough. There are significant areas of built form remaining from this period within the settlements particularly affected by the railways that demonstrate important architectural detailing. These buildings are particularly at risk from complete loss through redevelopment, or erosion of detail through loss of architectural

features, which, through cumulative change, will erode the character and appearance of these parts of the settlements and lead to a loss of interpretation of their evolution.

Roads
The Wealden roads were notoriously bad, no doubt exacerbated by the movement of heavy materials associated with industry, and the roads throughout the District began to be improved and some became turnpikes from the mid-18th century. These were roads owned by land owners and a toll had to be paid to pass through individual sections of road, towards maintenance and upkeep. A number of tollhouses, now private houses, still survive along the former toll roads in the towns and villages around the District, although there is evidence from the Tithe Maps and early Ordnance Survey maps that many of these buildings have now been lost through later road widening schemes. There is likely to be archaeological evidence remaining for these lost buildings.

Also associated with the turnpikes were the 18th and 19th century coaching inns, of which a number survive in the District, including: The Chequers at Maresfield; the former Shelley Arms, Nutley; and The Maiden's Head, Uckfield.

Military History

Roman fort of Anderida and the Norman fortification of Pevensey Castle
The earliest military history in the District relates to Pevensey and the influence of the Romans and Normans, as discussed earlier. Interestingly, the military importance of the castle was also acknowledged in the 20th century when in 1942 small additions were made to Pevensey Castle for the defence of Britain, when it became a lookout over the channel for German aircraft during World War II.

Canons and Gunpowder
In the medieval period, the Iron Industry in the Weald provided cannon and ammunition for wars, and later also gunpowder, as evidenced by the powdermill at Maresfield.

Napoleonic War
There is evidence of the influence of the Napoleonic War in the early 19th century in the District, including the Martello Towers, Baracks and Army Camps.

The Martello Towers are small defensive forts first built in the South East of England during the Napoleonic War between 1805 and 1808.The round structures followed a standard plan, though varied in size. A typical South East Martello would be about 45 ft* (13.7m) in diameter at base and up to 40ft* (12m) tall. The masonry walls were built of brick and rendered with lime mortar externally, and were up to 13ft thick. Inside there were two main floors, the lower floor housing supplies and a powder store, and the first floor the men's quarters and officer's quarters. A single Martello housed between 15 and 25 men; a garrison of up to 24 men and 1 officer. The internal floor area of both floors was 1300 sq ft. Towers 60-63 were constructed in the Pevensey Bay area and three remain, now converted to dwellings.

There is evidence for an army barracks from this period in Hailsham. Constructed in 1803, the barracks were built to quarter troops intended to man the Martello towers which defended the Pevensey area from the French. The Barracks were closed after the defeat of Napoleon at Waterloo in 1815. The officer's houses remain as evidence, along with the Grenadier Inn.

During the Napoleonic Wars an army camp was established at Waterdown near Frant village, extending to the crossroads of the Eridge-Tunbridge Wells and Frant-Groombridge roads. In 1793, 18 soldiers from the camp were buried in Frant Churchyard after contracting smallpox.

In addition to the militia, which was compulsory service, various East Sussex landowners raised volunteer regiments during the Napoleonic Wars, paid for out of their own pockets. The North Pevensey Legion was raised by the Earl of Sheffield of Sheffield Park, which had a company based in Frant led by Sir John Macpherson and another at Eridge led by George Nevill.

World War I and II

The influence of the First and Second World Wars on the historic environment in the District is substantial and includes locations of military camps; airfields; pill boxes and tank traps; a radar station; as well as the evidence for bomb craters in the landscape and the impact of bombs on the built environment, leading to substantial rebuilding in settlements. Due to its location on the south coast, the District was also important in the World War II defences of the country. Part of the GHQ Stop line network passes through the District and the stop lines were intended to halt the German advance should the invasion of Britain have taken place. The stop lines comprised pill boxes and continuous anti-tank obstacles, both of which are still evident throughout the Wealden landscape.

The Pevensey Levels were the location for one of the large radar defence stations in World War 2. In the mid-1930s, the Air Ministry established a programme of building radar stations around the British coast to provide warning of air attack on Great Britain and this network of radar stations was called Chain Home. Pevensey faced south for attack across France from Germany and was in the right position for the Battle of Britain.

As first built, RAF Pevensey covered a considerable area of the Pevensey Levels, now Pylon Farm, but the transmitters and receivers were housed in sandbagged wooden huts with 90' guyed wooden masts and a mobile generator. Later, the operations blocks were given a much higher level of protection against attack and were constructed of brick, built on the surface but surrounded with a traverse and topped with a six foot thick shingle filled concrete sandwich roof. Shortly after completion the blast from a German bomb dislodged several tons of shingle, some of it falling into the receiver building. RAF Pevensey was one of the original 20 Air Ministry Experimental Stations.

As originally planned there should have been four 360 foot steel transmitter towers spaced 180ft apart and four 240ft wooden receiver towers in a rhombic pattern set at a distance from the transmitters. RAF Pevensey was short lived and by December

1945 the station was described as ‘caretaking’. As the station was not required for the post war rotor radar programme RAF Pevensey was offered for sale by public auction in Battle (Sussex) in November 1958. The inventory of buildings and equipment offered for sale included: brick sectional timber and handcraft buildings, 350 foot steel towers and water towers. The contents of the buildings included diesel engines, electrical equipment and all fittings, steel and timber doors and windows, air ventilation systems, fuel and water tanks, sewage pumps, electric motors, tubular wall heaters, RSJ's, baths, sinks and power cables.

Today, very little above ground evidence remains for RAF Pevensey and the area will be a rich future archaeological source for the activity during World War 2.

Military camps
Maresfield Park became a military camp for the duration of the Great War and it became a training camp for Kitchener's new armies and a riding school for yeomanry units and housed 10,000 men in 1914. It was used by Canadian forces in 1917/1918 and in 1921, the Royal Corps of Signals was formed here.

Maresfield continued its connection with the military after the end of the Great War, and in World War II a large army camp was established in the vicinity of the current Ashdown Business Park to the west of the village. King George VI inspected troops at Maresfield on the eve of D-Day. The association with the military finished in c.1985 when the army camp was closed, but housing developed as married quarters for soldiers remains at Queen's Drive and in the southern part of Parklands.

Heathfield Park was requisitioned and turned over to the Army, with the Gibraltar Tower being used as a look-out post and had a firing range close by. From the summer of 1941 Canadian troops took over the responsibility for the defence of the area. From early in 1944 Sussex was one of the areas where troops were concentrated for the launch of the invasion to re-conquer the continent. At the end of April the Heathfield Park become the HQ for the Guards Armoured Division and 5,000 men of the Worcesters were also billeted there.

During World War II the house and garden at Sheffield Park became the headquarters for a Canadian armoured division, and Nissen huts were sited in the garden and woods.

Military and Auxillary Hospitals during World War I
Home hospitals were formed under the Joint War Committee of the British Red Cross Society and the Order of St. John of Jerusalem to care for troops injured during WWI. Before the conflict even began, suitable properties were identified that could be used as temporary hospitals if war broke out. On the outbreak of war both the Joint War Committee and the War Office were inundated with offers of accommodation. It was the Committee’s job to sort through these 5,000 offers to find suitable buildings. They included anything from town halls and elementary schools to large and small private houses. Large numbers of public and private buildings (often large houses) were turned over for use as small hospitals, most of which operated as annexes to nearby larger hospitals (the majority of the larger military hospitals in the county were in Brighton). They were staffed by members of the local Voluntary Aid Detachment (VAD), who were trained in first aid and home nursing and local

volunteers, and local examples in the District included: Shernfold Park, Frant; Hill House, Wadhurst; Claytons, Mayfield; and the Red Cross Hospital, Hailsham and Beech Green Hospital, Withyham[12].

War memorials

There are a large number of war memorials in the District relating to different conflicts predominantly within the 19th and 20th centuries. The memorials do not just take the form of the large monuments erected in settlements to commemorate those lost in the first and second world wars, but to smaller church monuments, village halls, village greens, and personal memorials such as gates and plaques on other types of buildings and structures. The memorials relate to people with strong historical association to the places in which they lived and are therefore, a significant cultural and social historical record.

Air Fields

There are several older air fields in the District, which are significant to the early history of aviation and that of the Second World War, and are therefore of particular historic importance locally.

An early airfield is that at Bellhurst in the Parish of Wartling. In the grounds of the house was the landing strip for the Eastbourne Aviation Company. Founded by Bernard Fowler in 1909, the company had a flying school and built planes at St Anthony's Mount, Eastbourne with the seaplane factory at The Crumbles, Eastbourne.

The Deanland airfield was planned as an Advanced Landing Ground in order to provide support for the D-Day Landings on 6th June 1944. Construction was started in the Spring of 1943, and the first aircraft to take to the air on D-Day flew from Deanland, providing top-cover over the Omaha and Gold beach-heads.

Famous People and Notable Local Figures

Introduction

There are a number of notable people and historical figures of both national and local importance, that are linked with the District and whom have had an impact on the significance of the historic environment, and social and cultural history. The following is intended as a snapshot to demonstrate the influence on the historic environment and social history of different types of individuals from Royalty, landowners, craftsmen, artists, writers and designers, and is by no means considered to be a definitive list.

Historical Figures

Both Henry VIII and Elizabeth I were visitors to the District. Henry VIII is purported to have visited Bolebroke Castle outside of Hartfield with Anne Boleyn, and Elizabeth I visited Eridge Castle and the Archbishop's Old Palace at Mayfield.

[12] http://www.redcross.org.uk/~/media/BritishRedCross/Documents/Who%20we%20are/History%20and%20archives/List%20of%20auxiliary%20hospitals%20in%20the%20UK%20during%20the%20First%20World%20War.pdf

The persecution of the Protestants in the reign of Mary I touched upon people living in the District. Six people from Mayfield were martyred, four of whom were burned at the stake in the village, the other two died in Lewes; and one person from Warbleton, who was also executed at Lewes. Memorials to the martyrs in the two villages form part of the local historical significance of the area.

In the 15th century, Jack Cade, the leader of the 15th century rebellion that bears his name, died in a garden at Cade Street, being shot with an arrow by the Sheriff of Kent. Jack's body was taken to London and his head fixed to a pike on London Bridge. A pillar at Cade Street commemorates the event.

There are also connections in the District to the first permanent English colony in North America. Robert Hunt, vicar of Heathfield from 1602 to 1606, sailed as chaplain with the 1607 expedition to settle the colony of Jamestown, Virginia, 13 years before the Pilgrim Fathers set sail in the Mayflower, and so became the first Christian minister to preach in America.

Another notable former resident is Lieutenant-Colonel John By of Shernfold Park, in Frant. In August 1802 John By went to Canada, where he was involved in repairs to the Cascades bateaux canal on the St Lawrence and superintended the construction of four Martello towers for the defence of Quebec. In 1826 he designed and constructed a military canal between the Ottawa River and Lake Ontario, safe from attack by the Americans. The town which grew up around his headquarters, originally named Bytown, was renamed Ottawa after the union of Upper and Lower Canada. The Rideau Canal is now a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

An important local figure in the late 18th century was Thomas Turner who lived at East Hoathly. Turner wrote a diary which is a unique chronicle of the village life of a shop keeper in that period.

Landowners

Due to the large manorial estates within the District, many notable families have had an influence over the historic environment throughout the centuries, including the Sackvilles of Buckhurst, related to the Tudor/Elizabethan Royal Family; the Earls and Marquesses of Abergavenny of Eridge and Kidbrooke Park; the Pelham Family of Laughton; the Dacre-Fiennes of Herstmonceux; the Gage Family of Firle; and the Duke of Devonshire and Lord Burlington; who owned large tracts of land in the south of the District.

Crafts people

The iron industry has had a substantial impact on the historic environment in the District and the ironmasters were local prominent figures of the late and post medieval period and owned large properties. In Wadhurst Parish, for example, the ironmasters included John Barham, Nicholas Fowle and John Legas, along with their families and descendants. The Barhams and Fowles were already established landowners in the Wadhurst area before the iron boom, whereas John Legas moved to the area from the North and started out as a clerk at a furnace he later owned. John Barham and his descendants owned local forges and furnaces from 1561 until the mid-17th century; Nicholas Fowles operated a local furnace and forge in the mid-

16th century; and John Legas and his partner William Harrison operated forges and furnaces in the early-mid 18th century.

Many of these local prominent figures involved in the iron industry have left their mark on the settlements in the District and outlying area through the houses that survive and the worker's houses built to support the industry. In many of the local churches, there are memorials to the Ironmasters by way of unusual iron grave slabs.

Listed among notable residents in the District is the cartographer Richard Budgen. In 1723 Richard Budgen published 24 maps as loose sheets that had been engraved by John Senex of Shropshire entitled "*An Actual Survey of the County of Sussex divided into Rapes Hundreds and Deanryes. In which the exact longitude and atitude of all the remarkable places are determined from observation. Also an accurate delineation by and measurement of the sea-coast, roads and the rivers so far as navigable'.*

In the 19th century, George Smart, a local tailor in Frant, was popular with those visiting from Tunbridge Wells spa town. He exhibited cloth decorated with animals, birds and grotesque figures, and some of his fabric pictures still survive and show local scenes in the background, such as the houses surrounding Frant Common and the church.

Writers

The District has been associated with writers, particularly in the 19th and early 20th centuries, including: Sir Arthur Conan Doyle who lived in Crowborough, and A.A. Milne.

In 1925, A.A. Milne purchased Cotchford Farm, Hartfield, which was to become his home and that of Christopher Robin Milne. Milne is most famous for his two Pooh books about a boy named Christopher Robin, named after his son, and various characters inspired by his son's stuffed animals, most notably the bear named Winnie-the-Pooh. The fictional Hundred Acre Wood of the Pooh stories derives from Five Hundred Acre Wood in Ashdown Forest where the Pooh stories were set. Popular tourist locations at Ashdown Forest include: Galleon's Lap, The Enchanted Place, the Heffalump Trap and Lone Pine, Eeyore's Sad and Gloomy Place, and the wooden Pooh Bridge where Pooh and Piglet invented Poohsticks.

Artists and photographers

Two particularly famous artists are linked to the District. Joseph Mallord William Turner is known to have painted in Sussex, and produced paintings of the Vale of Heathfield and Wadhurst. Pablo Picasso was also a visitor to Farley Farm in Muddles Green, Chiddingly in the early 20th century and examples of his work are within the house today. The house and gardens are full of surrealist paintings and sculptures.

There are also two photographers of note who lived and worked in the District. Edwin Isaac Baker, who lived in Hailsham in the second half of the 19th century, set up a photographic studio at his bookstore premises in the High Street and was a

prolific photographer, who took a large amount of photographs of Hailsham and the local area. His photographic record is a valuable resource in understanding the significance of the historic environment in this area.

Lee Miller was born in 1907, in the USA and lived at Farley Farm from 1949 until her death in 1977. She is perhaps best known for her photographs during the end of the Second World War. In 1944 Miller joined up with Time Life photographer David E. Scherman, following the US forces to Europe twenty days after the D Day landings. As a photojournalist and official war correspondent with the US Army, Miller documented key moments of the war such as the Liberation of Paris and the meeting of US and Russian troops on the river Elbe. Miller's photographs of the Buchenwald concentration camp brought the horrors of the holocaust to the American public when they were published in US Vogue in June 1945. While in Germany Miller was billeted in Hitler's secret apartment in Munich and famously took a bath in his bathtub. She also photographed his house Wachenfeld at Berchtesgaden ablaze on the eve of Germany's surrender[13].

[13] http://www.farleyfarmhouse.co.uk/Default.aspx

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