Wealden District Council

Landscape Character Assessment
for Wealden District

Final report
Prepared by LUC
May 2022



Wealden District Council

Landscape Character Assessment
for Wealden District

Project Number
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Chapter 1
Introduction and Landscape Context

Background and Purpose

1.1 LUC was commissioned in 2021 to prepare a Landscape Character Assessment for Wealden District (as shown in **Figure 1.1**), covering the area outside the South Downs National Park. The National Park Authority has prepared their own landscape character assessment[1]. Together, the two assessments provide integrated district wide coverage.

1.2 The aim is to create a comprehensive and up to date strategic district scale landscape evidence base to help inform the production of the Local Plan and provide a framework for more detailed landscape studies and sensitivity assessments. It is intended to inform work on policy development and development management, guiding development and landscape change that is appropriate to local character and the qualities of the landscape.

1.3 The document can be used to consider landscape character when considering any type of change. This includes opportunities for conserving existing character, strengthening, and enhancing character as well as opportunities for creating new character.

1.4 A User Guide is provided in **Figure A** and a Glossary in **Appendix A**.

The role of Landscape Character Assessment

1.5 Landscape character is defined as:

> "a distinct, recognisable and consistent pattern of elements in the landscape that makes one landscape different from another, rather than better or worse"[2]

1.6 Landscape character assessment is the process of identifying and describing such variations in character across a landscape. It seeks to identify and explain the unique combination of features and attributes (characteristics) that make different landscapes distinctive. The landscape is the result of the interaction between people and place which gives

[1] A Landscape Character Assessment for the South Downs, LUC, August 2020 https://storymaps.arcgis.com/collections/b6120985f1184c3bb3d1c5df317478b2

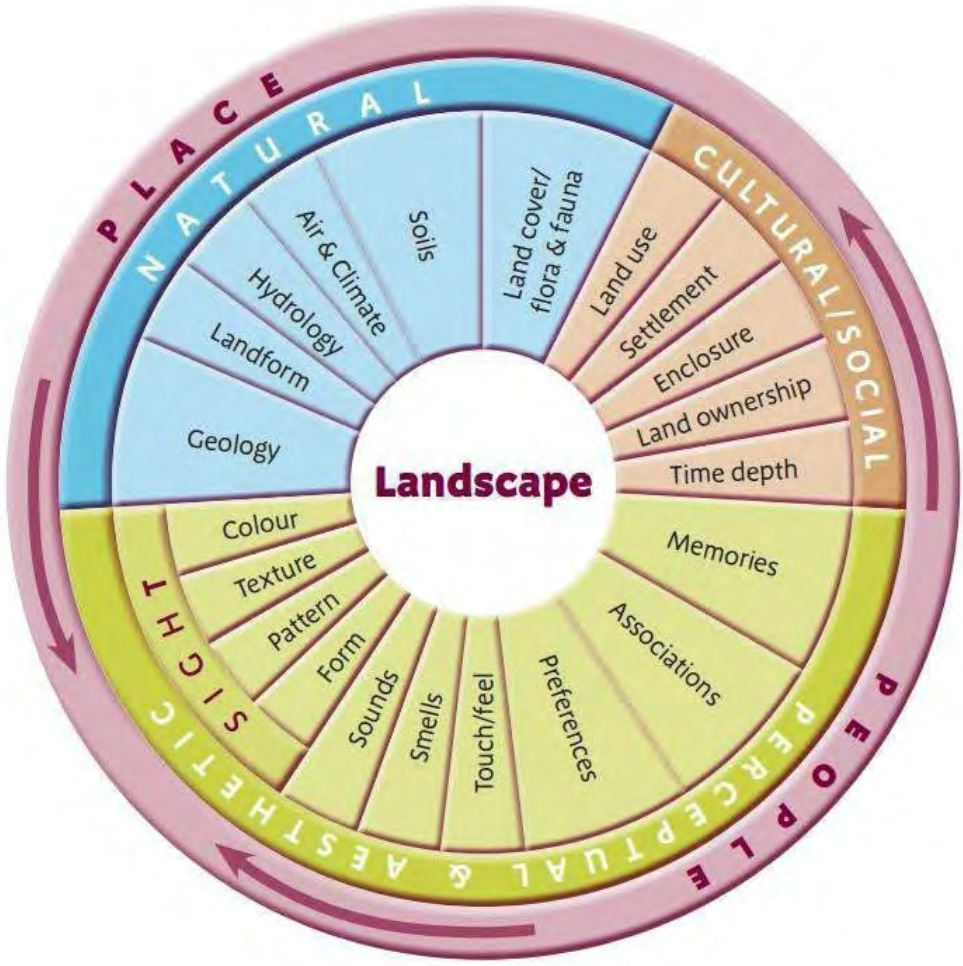
[2] An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment, Natural England, October 2014 https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/691184/landscape-character-assessment.pdf

an area a local identity. The 'landscape wheel' below illustrates how the different natural, cultural, and perceptual attributes of a landscape combine to produce character.

1.7 The process of Landscape Character Assessment is described in 'An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment' (Natural England, October 2014)[3]. Landscapes are divided into Landscape Character Types, which have a consistent, homogeneous character as a result of common combinations of geology, topography, vegetation, or human influences. Within these individual Landscape Character Areas are identified, which are unique geographic areas with a consistent character and identity.

1.8 Understanding the character of place and evaluating an area's defining characteristics is a key component in managing growth sustainably and ensuring that the inherent character and qualities of Wealden's landscape can continue to be appreciated. An understanding of character can be used to ensure that any change or development does not undermine whatever is valued or characteristic in a particular landscape, and help guide positive change that conserves, enhances, restores, or creates local character.

The 'landscape wheel' (Natural England, 2014)



[3] An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment, Natural England, October 2014 https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/691184/landscape-character-assessment.pdf

Figure A: User Guide



The European Landscape Convention

1.9 The European Landscape Convention (ELC) came into force in the UK in March 2007. It establishes the need to recognise landscape in law; to develop landscape policies dedicated to the protection, management and planning of landscapes; and to establish procedures for the participation of the general public and other stakeholders in the creation and implementation of landscape policies. The ELC definition of 'landscape' recognises that all landscapes matter, be they ordinary, degraded, or outstanding:

> *"Landscape means an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors"*

1.10 The ELC puts emphasis on the whole landscape and all its values and is forward looking in its approach, recognising the dynamic and changing character of landscape. Specific measures promoted by the ELC of direct relevance to this study include:

- The identification and assessment of landscape; and
- Improved consideration of landscape in existing and future sectoral and spatial policy and regulation.

1.11 This Landscape Character Assessment builds on a number of previous landscape studies undertaken between 2014 and 2017[4]. This new Landscape Character Assessment helps to reaffirm the importance of landscape, coordinate existing work and guide future work to protect, manage and plan the landscape.

Relationship to published landscape studies

1.12 Landscape Character Assessment can be undertaken at a variety of scales and levels of detail. The Wealden Landscape Character Assessment is part of a hierarchy of landscape character assessment information cascading down from the national to local level.

National level

1.13 At a national level, England is divided into 159 distinct National Character Areas (NCAs). Each is defined by a unique combination of landscape, biodiversity, geodiversity, history, and cultural and economic activity. There are descriptive profiles available for each NCA (published in 2014 by Natural England[5]), setting out information on landscape character, changes in the landscape and an assessment of ecosystem services delivered.

1.14 Wealden District is part of four NCAs:

- NCA 121 Low Weald: a broad, low-lying clay vale which is predominantly agricultural, supporting mainly pastoral farming owing to heavy clay soils, with horticulture and some arable on lighter soils, and has many densely wooded areas with a high proportion of ancient woodland.
- NCA 122 High Weald: an area of ridged and faulted sandstone supporting one of the best surviving medieval landscapes in northern Europe and comprising a mixture of fields, small woodlands and farmsteads connected by historic routeways, tracks and paths.
- NCA 124 Pevensey Levels: a low-lying area dependent on careful and continuous water management through a system of sluices and pumps, supporting grazed pasture.
- NCA 125 South Downs: a 'whale-backed' spine of chalk stretching from the Hampshire Downs in the west to the coastal cliffs of Beachy Head in East Sussex.

1.15 National landscape character areas within Wealden District are illustrated on **Figure 1.2**.

County level

1.16 At the county level, the East Sussex County Landscape Character Assessment (2016) identifies the following 19 landscape character areas (LCAs) which fall wholly or partly within the district:

- 1: Upper Medway Valley
- 2: Ashdown Forest
- 3: Upper Ouse Valley
- 4: Central High Weald
- 5: South Slopes of High Weald
- 6: Upper Rother Valley
- 7: Bewl Water Area
- 8: Dudwell Valley
- 10: Combe Valley Haven
- 14: Western Low Weald
- 15: Eastern Low Weald

[4] Wealden Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment (November 2014); South Wealden Growth Area Landscape and Ecological Assessment Study (April 2017); Wealden Local Plan Sites Landscape and Ecological Assessment Study (July 2017). All available via Wealden District Council here

[5] Natural England, National Character Areas (2014)

- 17: Ditchling-Mount Harry Downs
- 21: Firle Bishopstone Downs
- 22: Lower Cuckmere Valley
- 23: Wilmington Heritage Downs
- 24: Eastbourne Levels
- 25: Pevensey Levels

1.17 The County landscape character areas are shown on **Figure 1.3**.

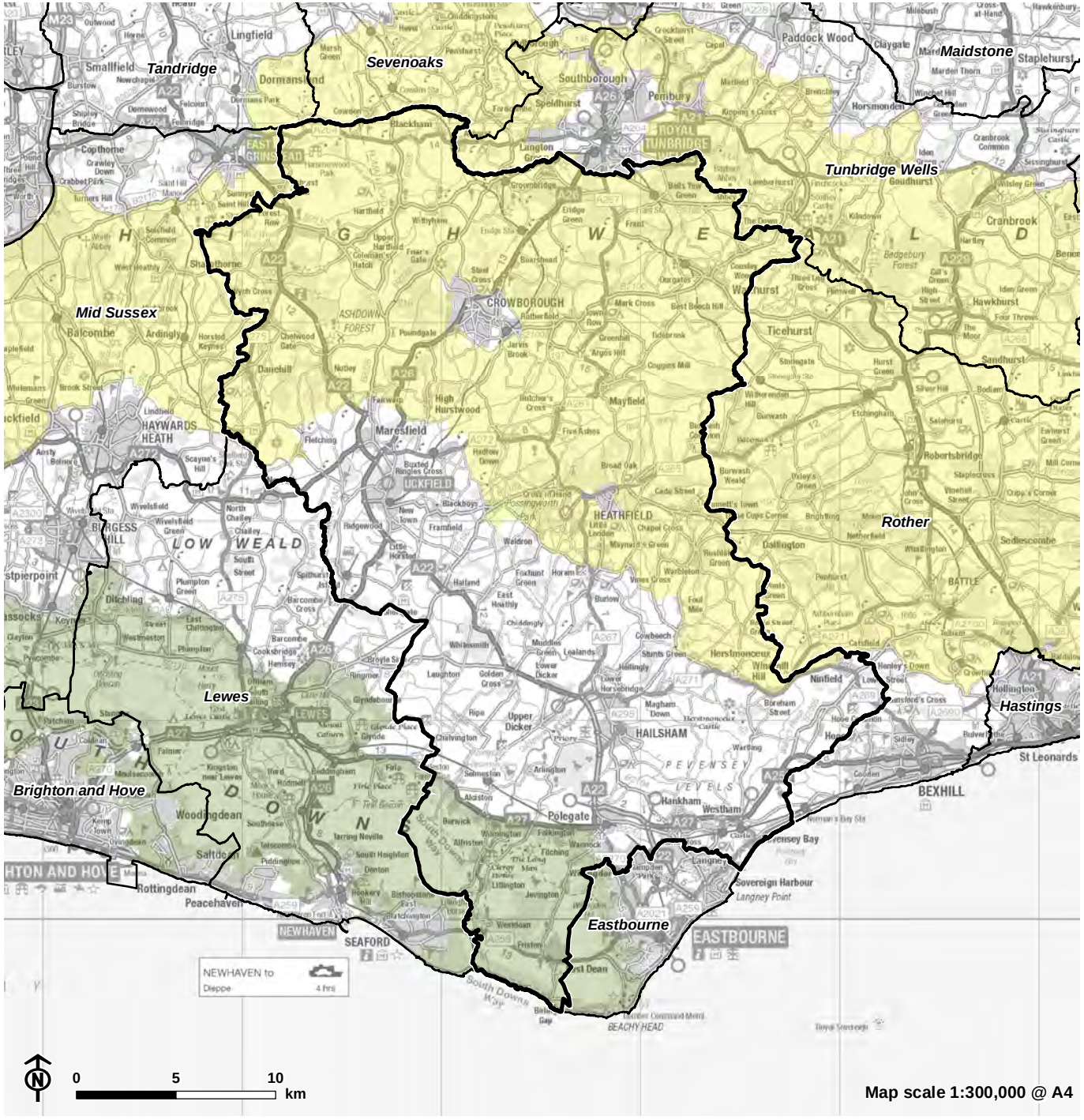
Local level

1.18 Landscape does not stop at administrative boundaries but continues seamlessly into surrounding districts. This assessment therefore sits alongside the Landscape Character Assessments of the adjacent authorities of Mid Sussex, Tandridge, Sevenoaks, Tunbridge Wells, Eastbourne and the South Downs National Park (there is no local landscape character assessment for Rother District).

1.19 The South Downs National Park Landscape Character Assessment is shown in **Figure 1.4**.

Wealden Landscape Character Assessment
Wealden District Council

Figure 1.1: District location



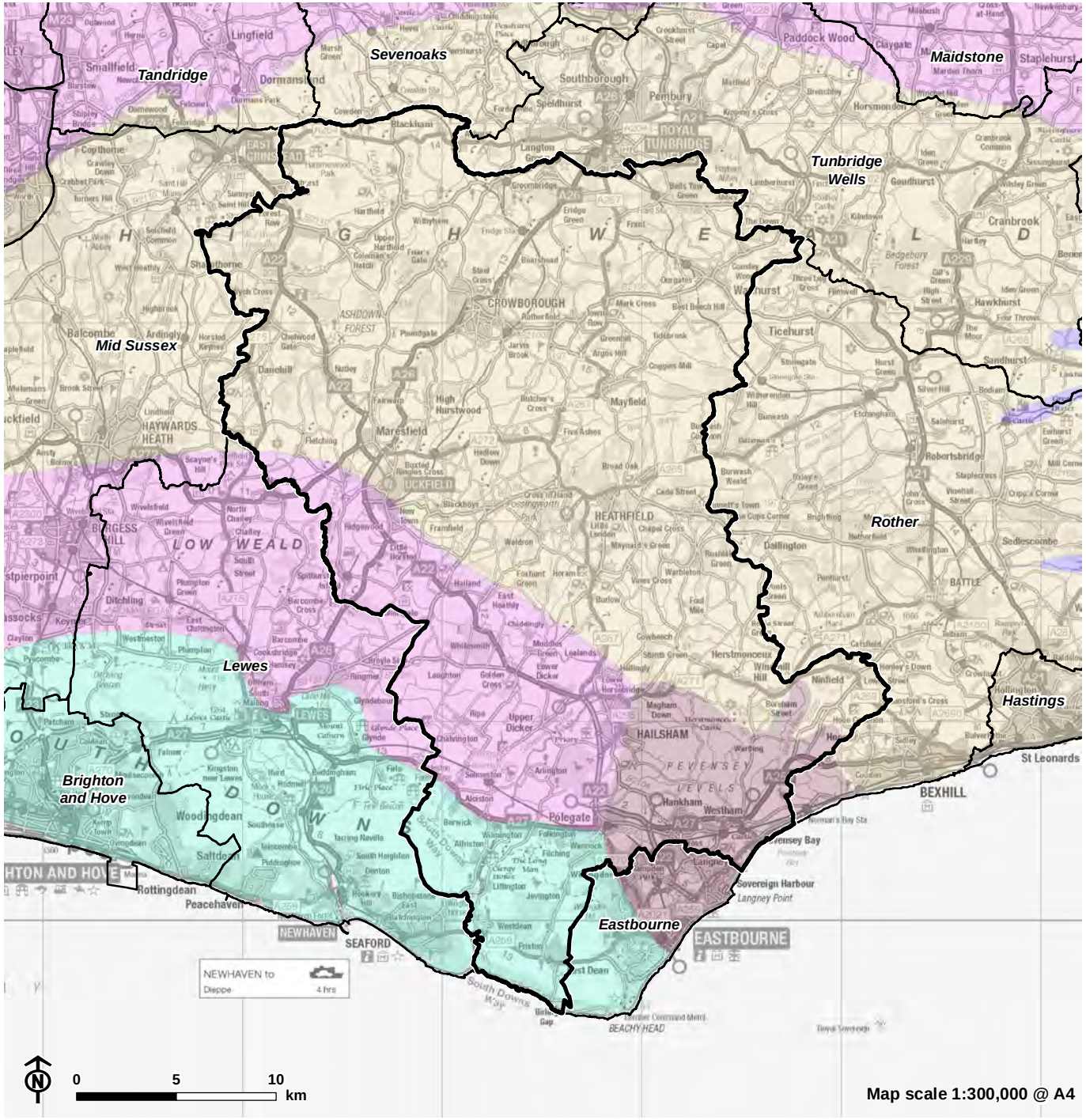
Wealden district
Neighbouring local authority
High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)
South Downs National Park (NP)

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Source: OS, NE

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Figure 1.2: National Character Areas

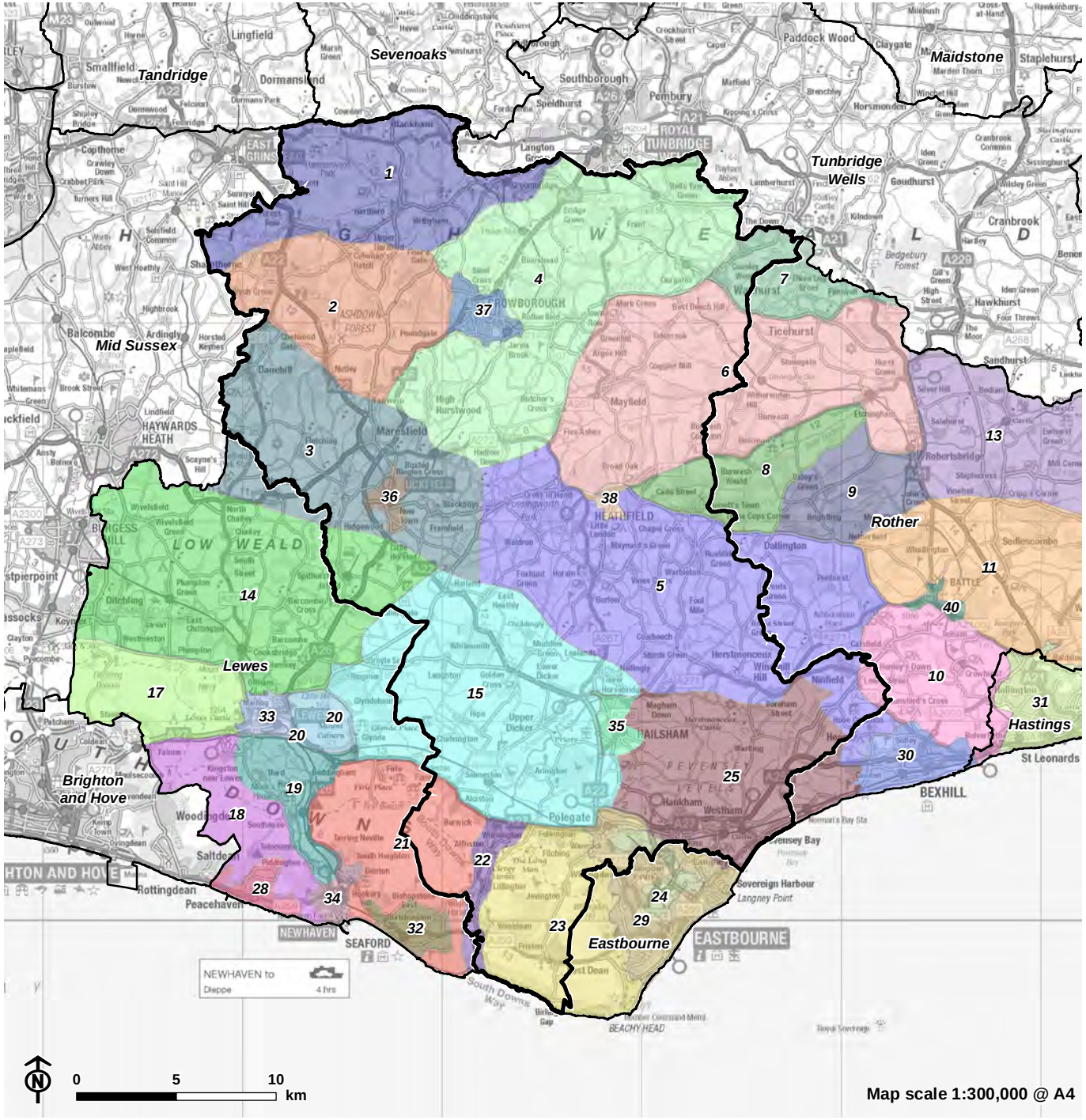


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Source: OS, NE

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Figure 1.3: East Sussex Landscape Character Assessment 2016



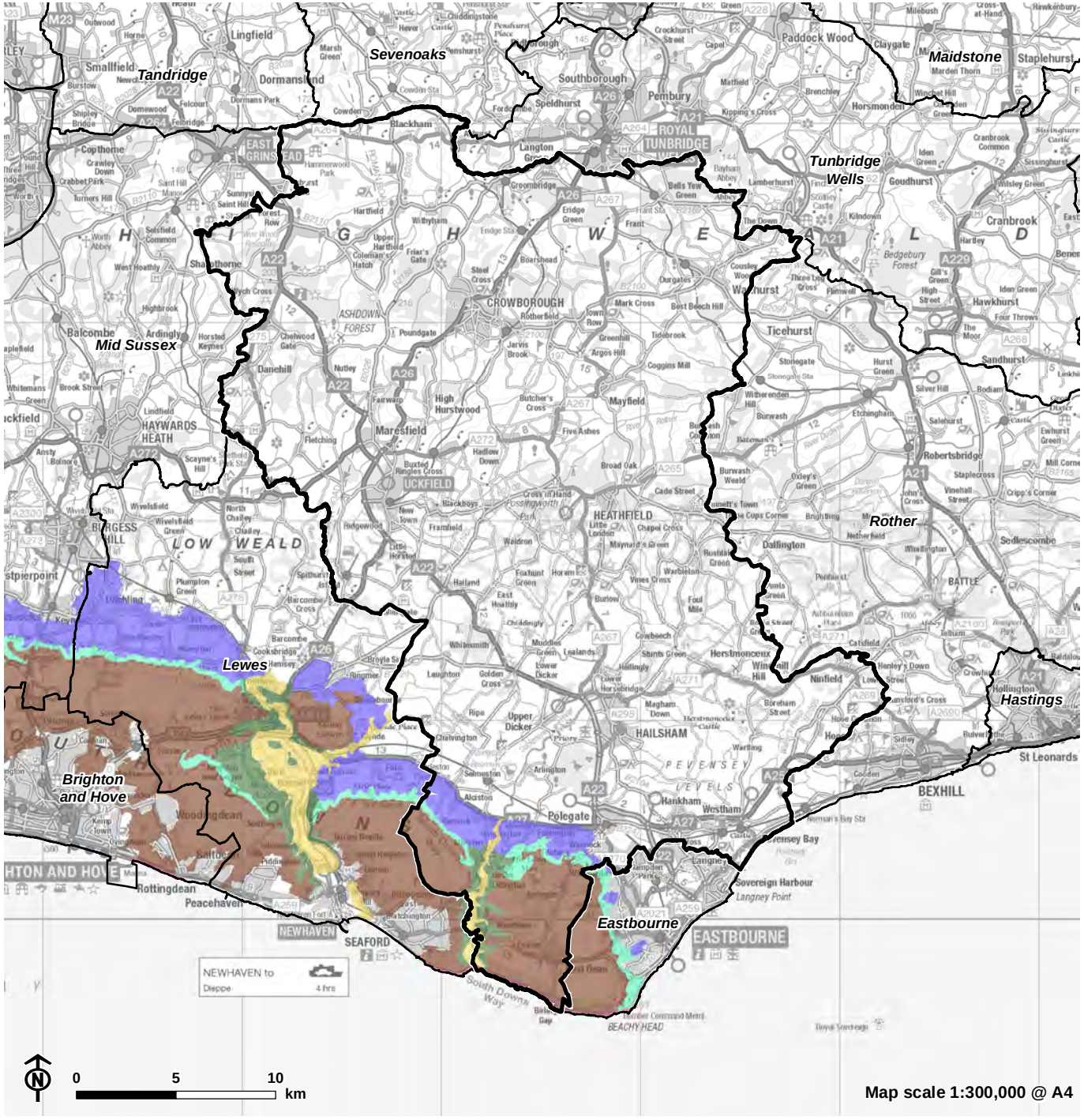
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Wealden Landscape Character Assessment
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Figure 1.4: South Downs National Park Landscape Character Assessment 2020



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Source: OS, SDNP

Chapter 2
Methodology

Approach

2.1 The Landscape Character Assessment component follows the method promoted by Natural England through 'An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment' (2014), which embeds the principles of the European Landscape Convention (ELC) within it.

Process of Assessment

2.2 The process for undertaking the study involved the following key stages:

- Baseline data collection/collation of mapped data in GIS;
- Desk-based classification of the landscape into landscape character types and landscape character areas (including overview site visit);
- Field survey to refine boundaries, check/ identify key characteristics, collecting aesthetic/perceptual information, take photographs and observe forces for change; and
- Draft and final reporting.

2.3 Data used within the report, including data collated in the GIS database, is shown in **Table 2.1**: A full list of data used is listed in **Appendix B.** Commentary on the boundaries is provided in **Appendix C.**

Table 2.1: GIS Data

Data	Source
Base OS mapping at 1:25k and 1:50k	Ordnance Survey
Terrain 50 Contour data	Ordnance Survey
Linear features, mass movement, artificial ground, superficial deposits, and bedrock geology 1:50K	British Geological Survey
Administrative boundaries	Wealden District Council
National Character Areas	Natural England
East Sussex Landscape Character Assessment	Wealden District Council

Data	Source
Public Rights of Way and access land	Natural England
River features and flood zones	Environment Agency
Nature conservation designations	Natural England (national datasets) Wealden District Council (local datasets)
Priority habitats	Natural England
Forestry	Forestry Commission
Historic Landscape Characterisation dataset	Sussex County Council
Heritage conservations	Historic England (national datasets) Wealden District Council (local datasets)
Dark skies and tranquillity	CPRE
Infrastructure	Ordnance Survey
Local Plan designations and policy areas	Wealden District Council

Outputs

2.4 The Landscape Character Assessment is presented by Landscape Character Area (LCA), arranged within their respective Landscape Character Type (LCT) in **Chapter 5**.

2.5 Each LCT section begins with an overview map showing the location of the LCTs within the district and provides a very short description of the type.

2.6 The individual LCA profiles are structured as follows:

- A location map (1:25,000 scale) which shows the extent of the LCA and its relationship with other LCAs;
- A description comprising:
  - A short paragraph summarising the defining landscape character;
  - A representative photograph of the area;
  - Key characteristics in bullet point format, providing a thorough description of the character of the LCA; and
  - Summary maps and text covering: topography and drainage; geology; land cover types; semi-natural heritage; historic map; historic landscape character areas.
- An evaluation comprising:
  - Landscape qualities and the ecosystem services they provide (the qualities that are particularly valued for their contribution to landscape character and ecosystem services);
  - Forces for change acting on the landscape; and
  - Guidelines: guidance on how to ensure future change respects local character.

Chapter 3
Formative Influences

3.1 This chapter summarises the main physical and cultural influences that have shaped the landscape of Wealden District. The landscape of the district has evolved through the interaction of the natural environment and human activities, through the combination of physical and cultural influences. Physical influences such as geology and landform, together with the pattern of settlement and land use are key determinants of landscape character.

3.2 The information from this section has drawn on the National Character Area profiles for the High Weald, Low Weald, and Pevensey Levels; the East Sussex Landscape Character Assessment (2016); High Weald AONB Management Plan 2019-2024 (2019); and Wealden Green Infrastructure Study (2017). Information was also taken from the data collated in the GIS database, listed in **Table 2.1**: GIS data.

Physical influences

3.3 The basic structure of the landscape is fundamentally influenced by its underlying rocks and relief. Geology and the processes of weathering, erosion and deposition influence the shape and form of the landscape, its drainage and soils. These in turn influence the patterns of vegetation and land use, and the differences between the High Weald, Low Weald, and coast.

Geology and soils

3.4 **Figure 3.1** illustrates the solid, or bedrock, geology that underlies the district.

3.5 The bedrocks within the district were formed in the Cretaceous period, laid down in the north in floodplains and deltas which had periodic inundation from the sea, and in the south under shallow marine conditions. The north of the district has alternating sands and clays of the Wealden Group – large areas of Ashdown Formation sandstone and siltstones interspersed with Wadhurst Clay and mudstones, Tunbridge Wells Sand Formation sandstone and siltstone and Weald Clay, which consists of clays, silts and localised sands and limestones.

3.6 The geology of the district is dominated by the Weald Anticline, a broad fold that formed in response to the compressive tectonic forces related to the formation of the Alps around 20million years ago. These compressive forces

and faulting caused a more complex bedrock geology in the north-west of the district around Ashdown Forest. The rocks at the centre of this anticline now form the hills of the High Weald, and the anticline extends to the northern part of the Isle of Wight and parts of Boulonnais and Pays de Bray in France.

3.7 In the south of the district the Wealden Group is overlain by the Lower Greensand sandstones, siltstones and mudstones and the Gault formation mudstone which outcrop close to the scarp face of the chalk South Downs. These form broad, low-lying, gently undulating clay vales with outcrops of limestone or sandstone providing local variation.

3.8 **Figure 3.2** shows the superficial, or drift, geology. The main features are the alluvium along the rivers with older river terrace deposits beside these, particularly along the Cuckmere River. Areas of Head clay, silt, sand and gravel deposits are common in the Low Weald, where there has been slow viscous downslope flow of unsorted and unsaturated deposits. The rising sea levels at the end of the last glaciations, around 10,000 years ago, flooded the Pevensey Levels, creating a tidal estuary. By the 1st century CE storm beach shingle spits developed, which allowed estuarine and marine alluvium to be deposited.

3.9 As shown in **Figure 3.3** the majority of soils in the district are medium silt loam to light silty. Bands of heavy to medium clay-rich soils lie in the east and south-east. Clay to clayey loam soils dominate the Low Weald. Light to medium sand loams are found on the Medway flood plain, and around the Ouse and Uck in the west of the district.

Topography and hydrology

3.10 The underlying geological formations and subsequent weathering processes have created the distinctive landforms and drainage patterns seen across the district today. **Figure 3.4** shows the landform and drainage, revealing the great variety of topography across the district.

3.11 The High Weald in the north of the district is a series of sandstone ridges running east-west, reaching 220m AOD at Ashdown Forest. These ridges are deeply incised with numerous gill streams which form the headwaters of the major rivers: the Rother, Medway, Teise, Ouse and Cuckmere.

3.12 The Low Weald is lower-lying, rarely above 40m AOD, and is less undulating. It is dissected by water courses running in the relatively broad flood plains of the rivers Cuckmere, Ouse, Uck and Glynde Reach. The impermeable clay soil and low-lying nature make many areas prone to localised flooding.

3.13 The Pevensey Levels in the south-east are extremely flat and low-lying, generally under 5m AOD and within the Environment Agency's flood zones 2 or 3. The flat topography, with fairly impermeable marine silts and clay, can result in long periods of standing water on the surface, particularly in winter. Land in the Pevensey Levels has been reclaimed from the sea in the past 1000 years, both by natural processes and human intervention. During the Roman period (43 - 410 CE) the area was a broad shallow bay with an archipelago of small islands or 'eyes', and the names of these have been retained e.g. Horseeye.

Land cover and ecological character

3.14 The presence and distribution of natural habitats and land use within the district is strongly influenced by the geology, soils, landform and drainage. The medium silt to light silty soils result in generally good agricultural soils across much of the district, graded 3 (Good to moderate). As shown in **Figure 3.5** there are bands of poorer quality soils (grade 4) on the edges of Ashdown Forest and along the course of the Medway, Uck and Cuckmere. CORINE Land Cover 2018[6] shows that land use across the district is predominately pasture, with areas of arable cropping in the north and east on lighter soils. There is a larger expanse of arable cropping in the south-west, and Ashdown Forest is an area of moors and heathland.

3.15 Between the farmed land there is a visible distribution of semi-natural land cover. These include woodlands, heathland, freshwater habitats, wetlands and marshes and grassland habitats. The district is heavily wooded, with woodland covering 24% of the area (18,755ha), compared with 10% in England and 13% in the UK. Woodlands are found across the district, although woodland density is greater in the north, within the High Weald. The majority of woodland within the district is broadleaved, although there are areas of conifer within the largest woodlands in the north, including Ashdown Forest and Broadwater Forest. Natural England's Ancient Woodland Inventory shows that 61% of all woodlands within the district are Ancient Woodland, as shown on **Figure 3.6**.

3.16 The district's important ecological habitats, recognised through designations (internationally, nationally and locally), can be seen on **Figure 3.7**, and account for around 24% of the study area. Ashdown Forest and the Pevensey Levels are internationally designated. Ashdown Forest is a Special Area of Conservation (SAC), designated as one of the largest continuous blocks of lowland heath in south-east England, and a Special Protection Area (SPA) designated for supporting breeding populations of Dartford warbler and European Nightjar. Pevensey Levels is a Ramsar wetland site and one

[6] CORINE Land Cover, Copernicus Programme (2018)

of the largest and least fragmented low-lying wet grassland systems in south-east England. It is also designated as an SAC as it supports the largest UK population of Little whorpool ram's-horn snail. The district supports 26 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), one National Nature Reserve (NNR) at Pevensey Levels, six Local Nature Reserves (LNR), and 101 Local Wildlife Sites.

Biodiversity Opportunity Areas

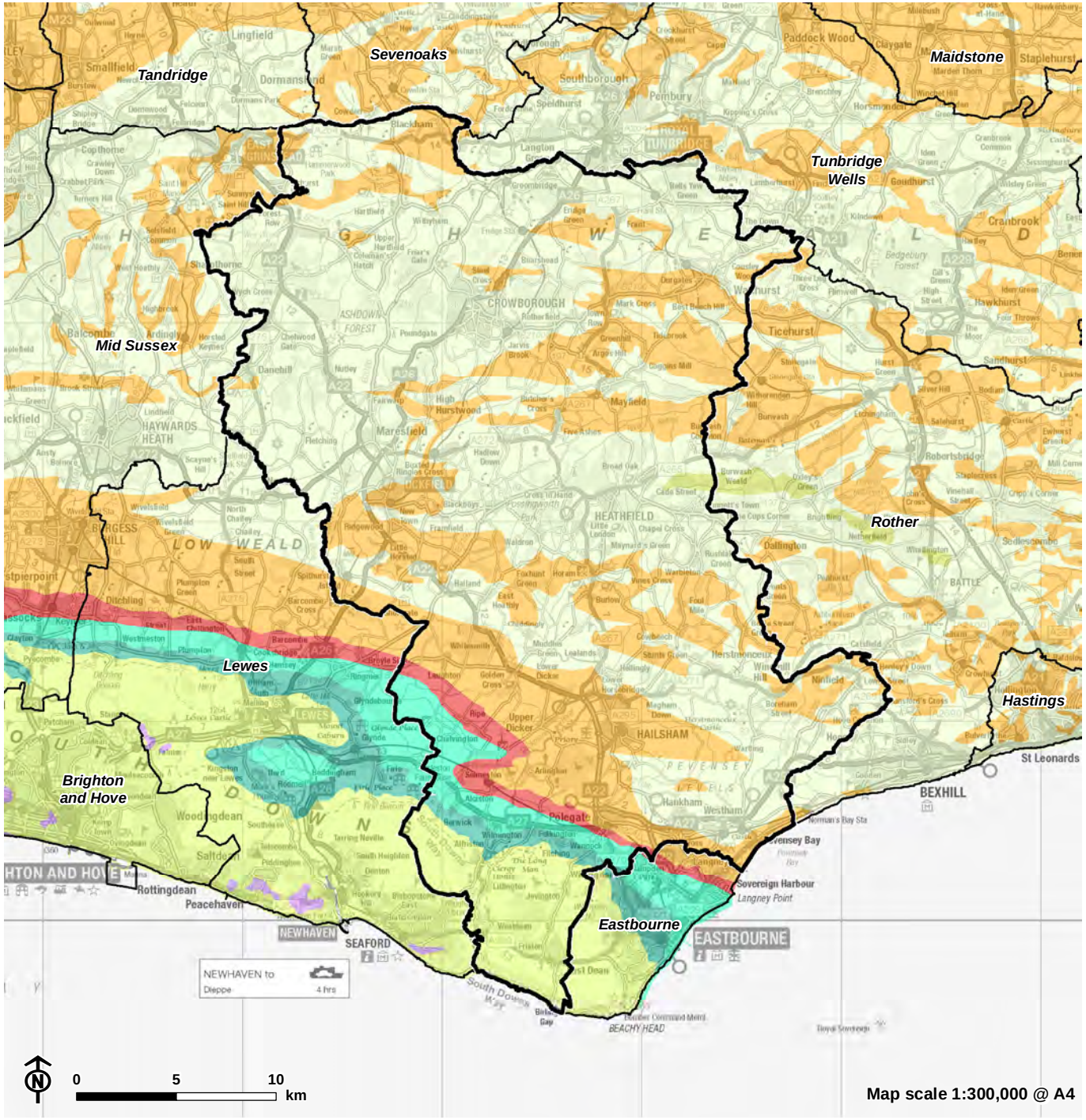
3.17 In order to secure the best opportunity for enhancing biodiversity, the South East Biodiversity Forum in 2008 created a strategy focusing on Biodiversity Opportunity Areas (BOAs). BOAs provide linkages between or buffers around sites designated for their ecological value. These are illustrated on Figure 3.8.

3.18 Several of the Biodiversity Opportunity Areas in the High Weald JCA comprise the watersheds of river catchments and play an important role in allowing the migration of key species. These areas including the Medway Ouse and Rother Watershed (BOA 54), the Pevensey, Rother and Cuckmere Watershed (BOA 56) have valued heathland habitats and ancient woodland (including gill woodland). The River Uck and its Headwater (BOA 49) include areas of ancient woodland and lowland meadow and are important for the flood alleviation of Uckfield. The Western Ouse Stream and Ashdown Forest (BOA 48) provides an important watershed between the Ouse and Medway, but also contains European protected heathlands in Ashdown Forest with its matrix of open health, ancient woodlands (including gill woodlands) and wetlands. Extensive heathland restoration is underway in the Broadwater Forest, part of Eridge and Broadwater (BOA 55) but this area is dominated by Eridge Park with its modern and medieval wood pasture.

3.19 Within the Pevensey Levels JCA, are the internationally important wetland habitats of the Pevensey Levels (BOA 53), as well as smaller wetland areas at Eastbourne Marshes (BOA 52). With the Low Weald JCA, the Cuckmere Ouse Watershed (BOA 50) comprises the watershed of these two river catchments, while the Willington Woodlands and Watershed (BOA 51) includes a large area of ancient woodland.

3.20 Smaller BOAs offer opportunities for links between larger areas of habitats, and allow species migration, including the Cuckoo Trail (BOA 61) which is managed for both leisure and urban wildlife, the Wooton Manor Grasslands Link (BOA 75) to the west of Polegate, and the River Cuckmere Habitat Link (BOA 74) which extends along the Cuckmere River to the Pevensey catchment.

Figure 3.1: Bedrock geology

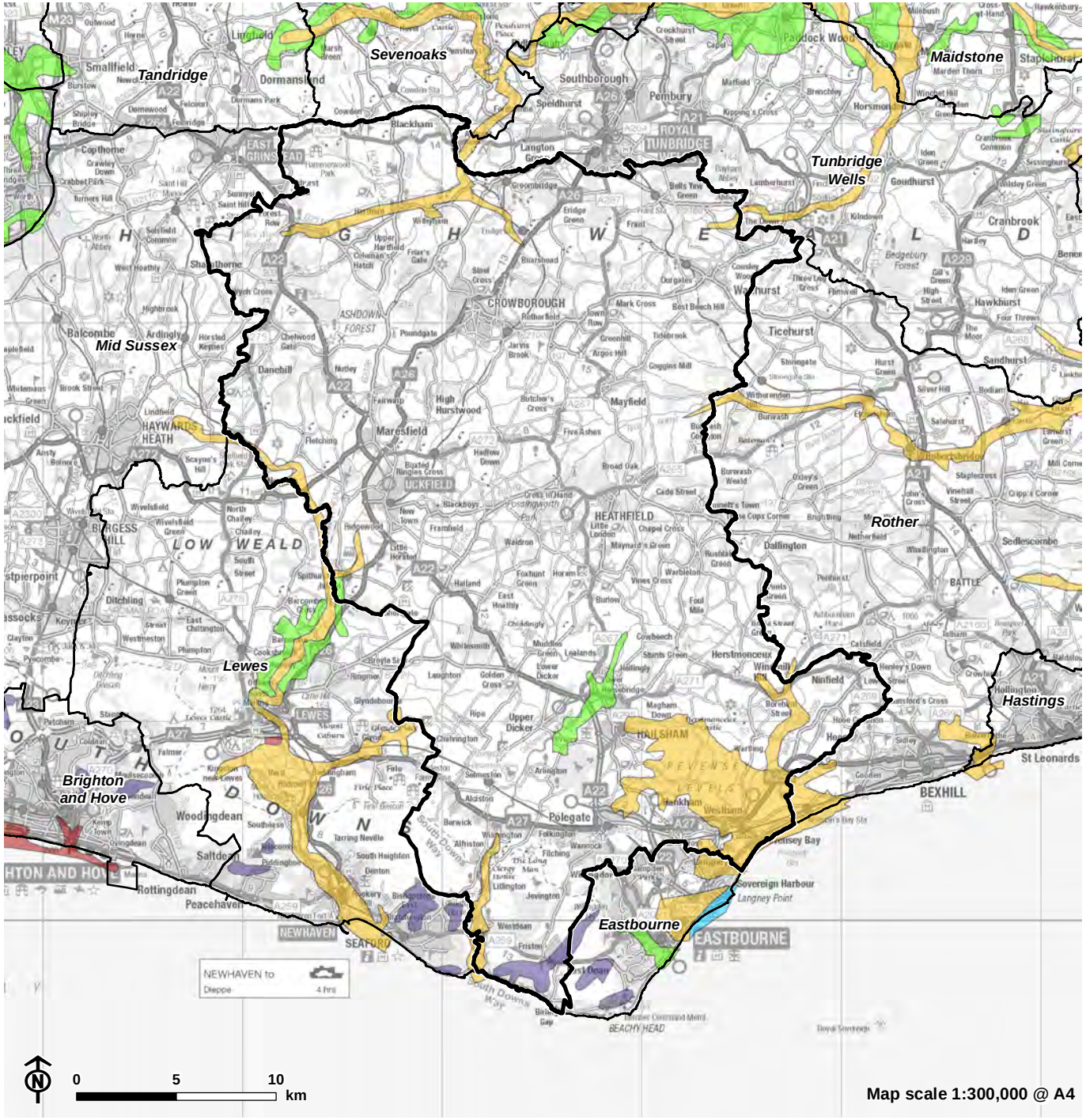


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Source: OS, BGS

Wealden Landscape Character Assessment
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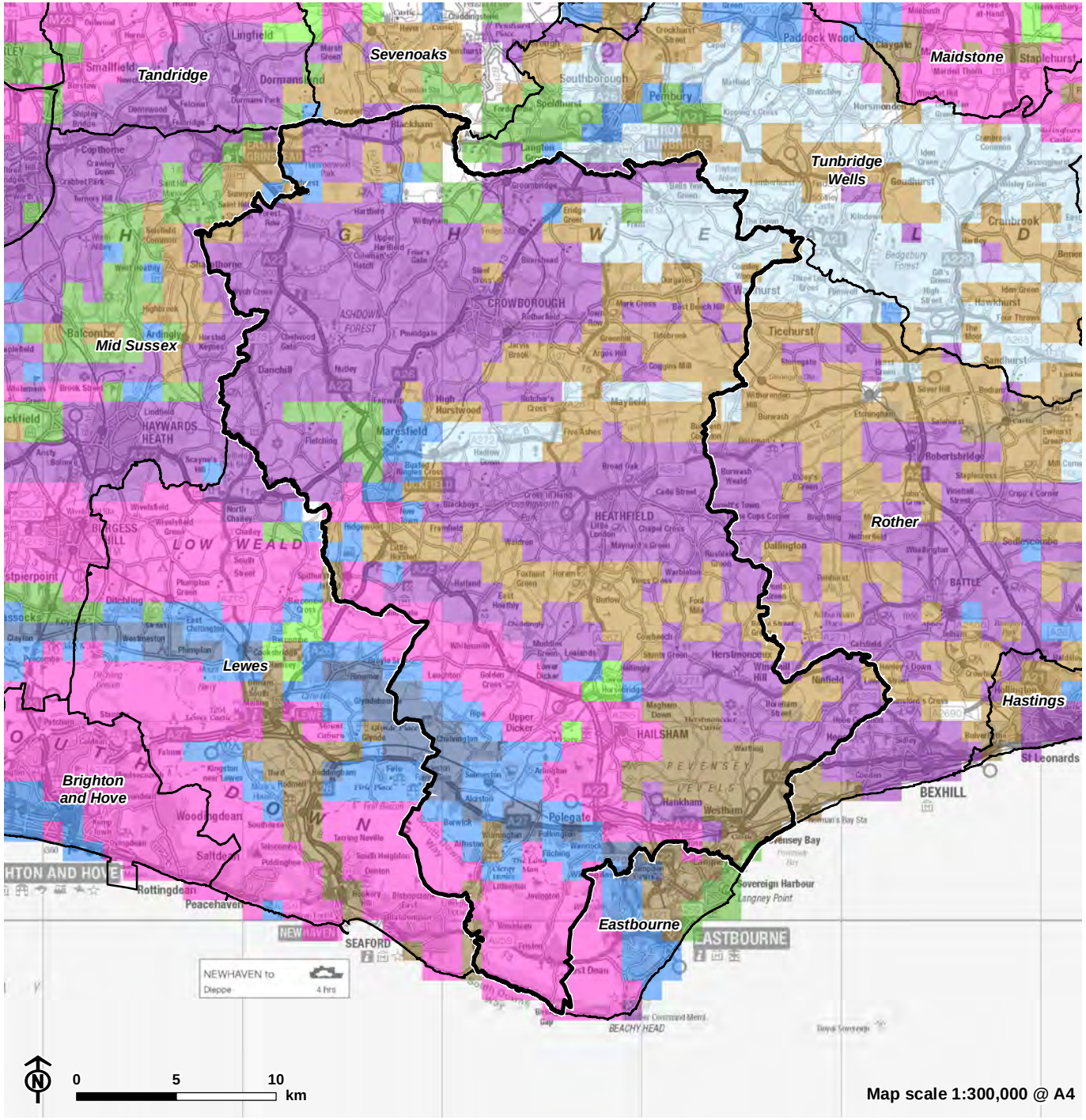
Figure 3.2: Superficial geology



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Source: OS, BGS

Figure 3.3: Soil groups

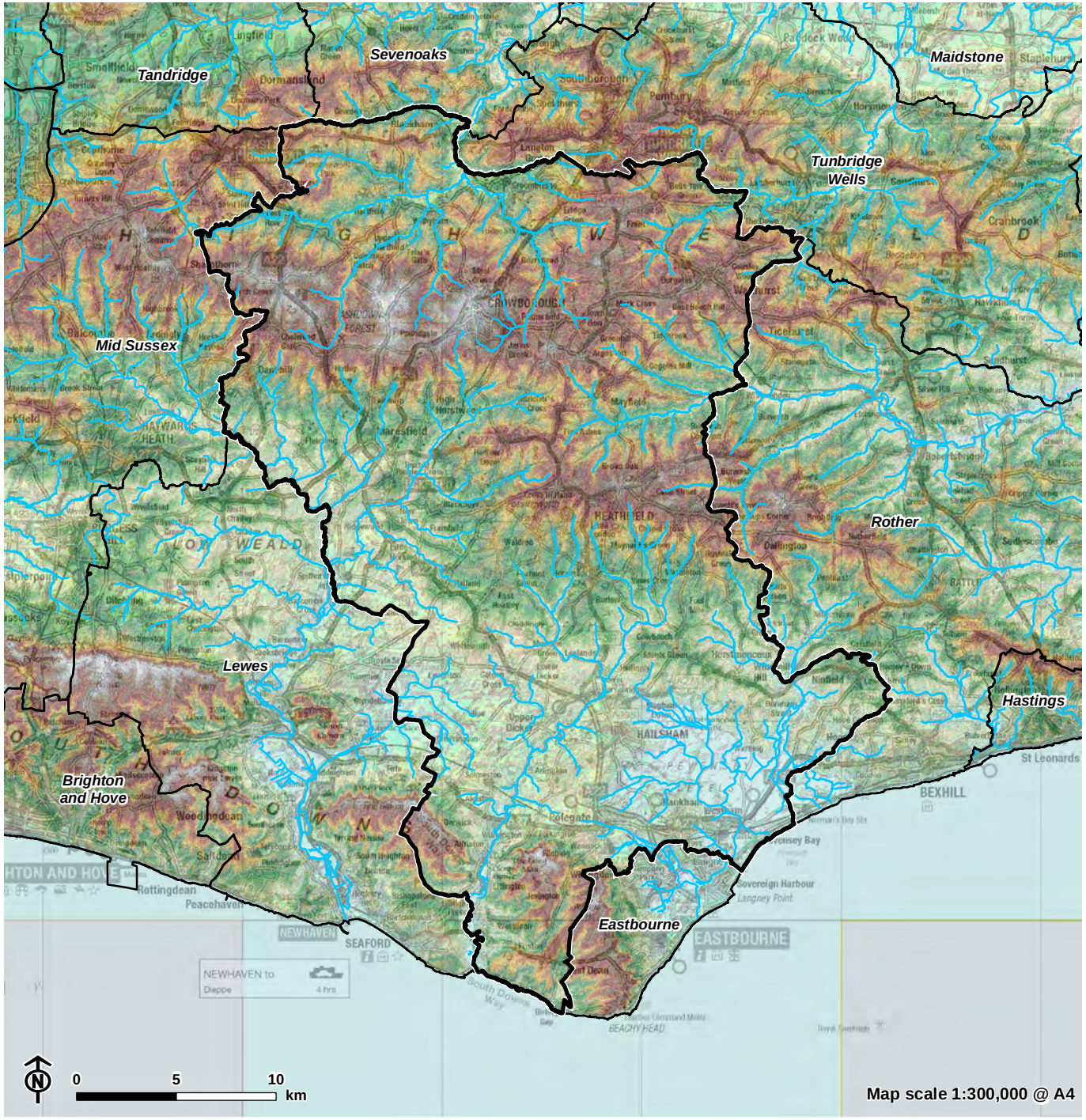


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Source: OS, BGS

Wealden Landscape Character Assessment
Wealden District Council

Figure 3.4: Topography and watercourses



Wealden district
Neighbouring local authority
Watercourse

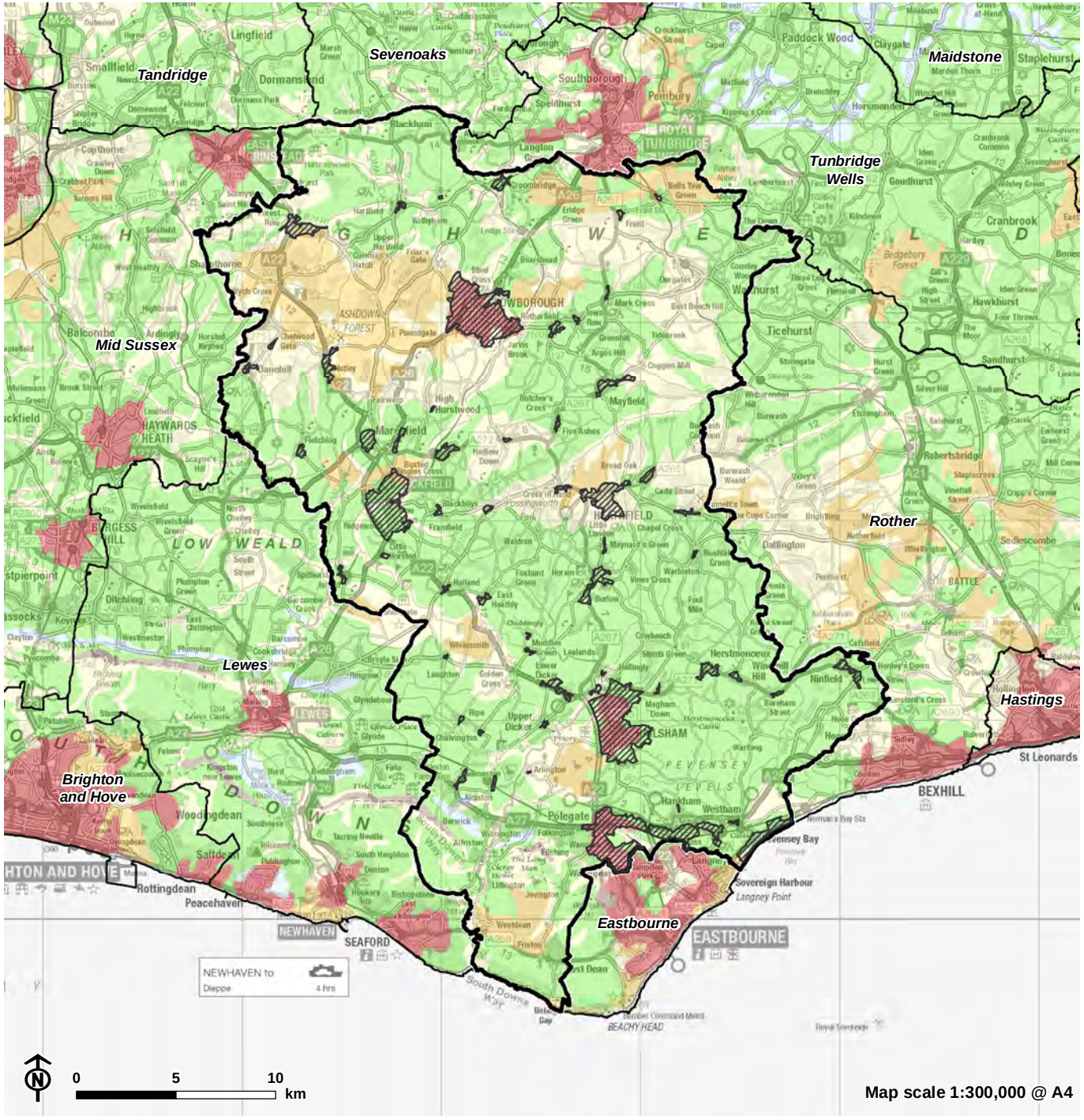
Elevation
Metres AOD

267.7
-2.4

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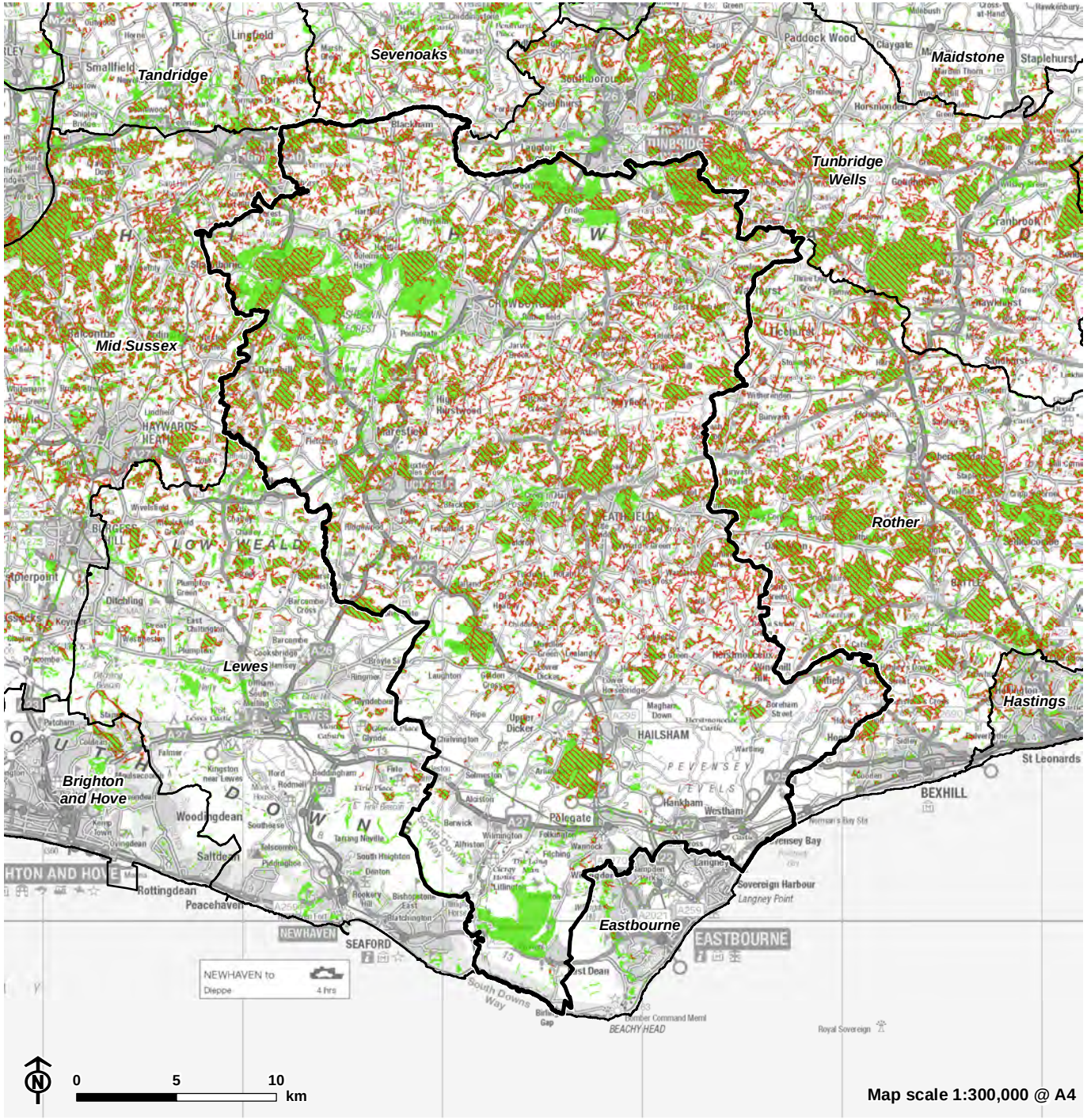
Figure 3.5: Agricultural Land Classification



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Figure 3.6: Woodland

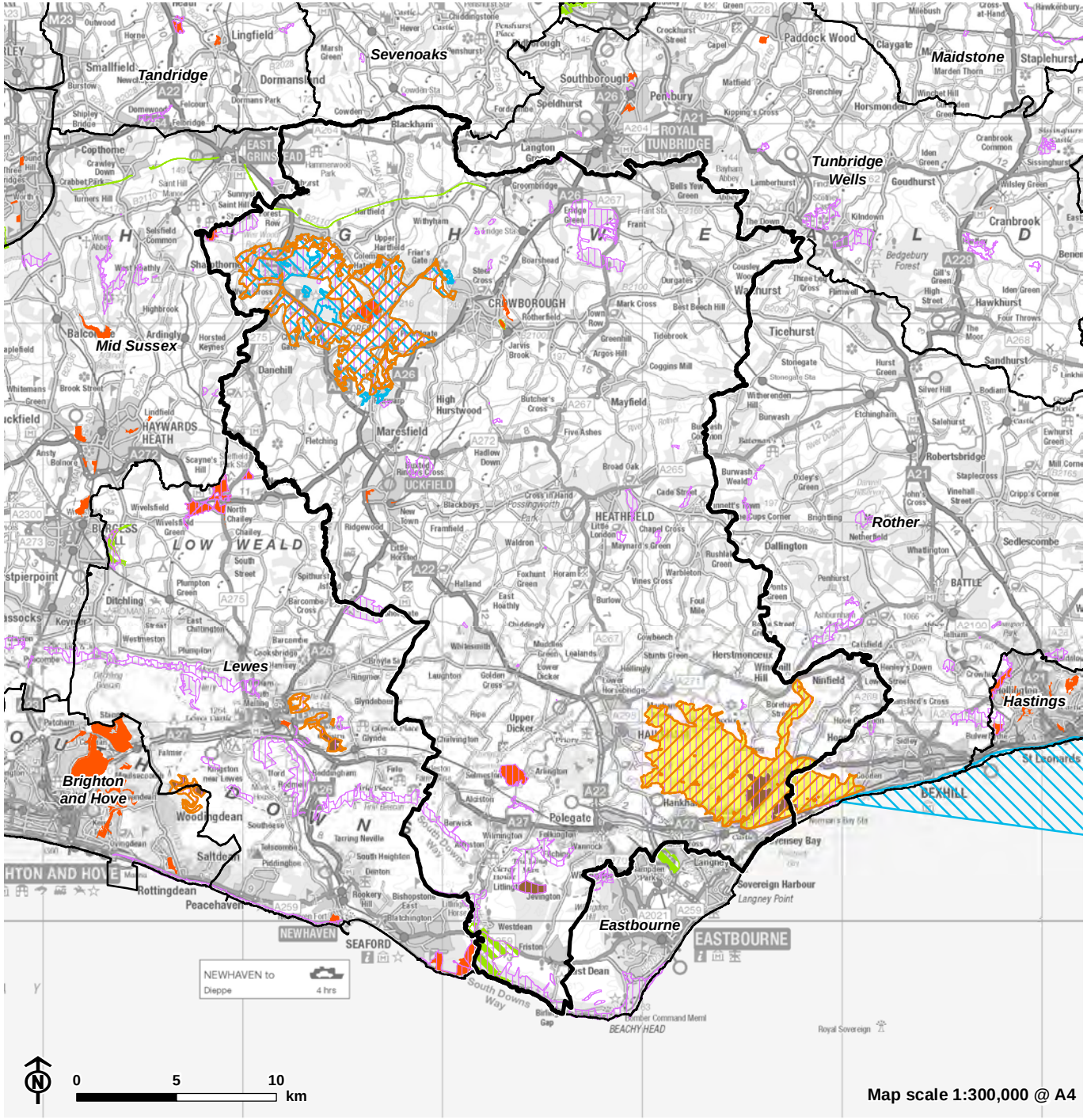


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Source: OS, NE

Wealden Landscape Character Assessment
Wealden District Council

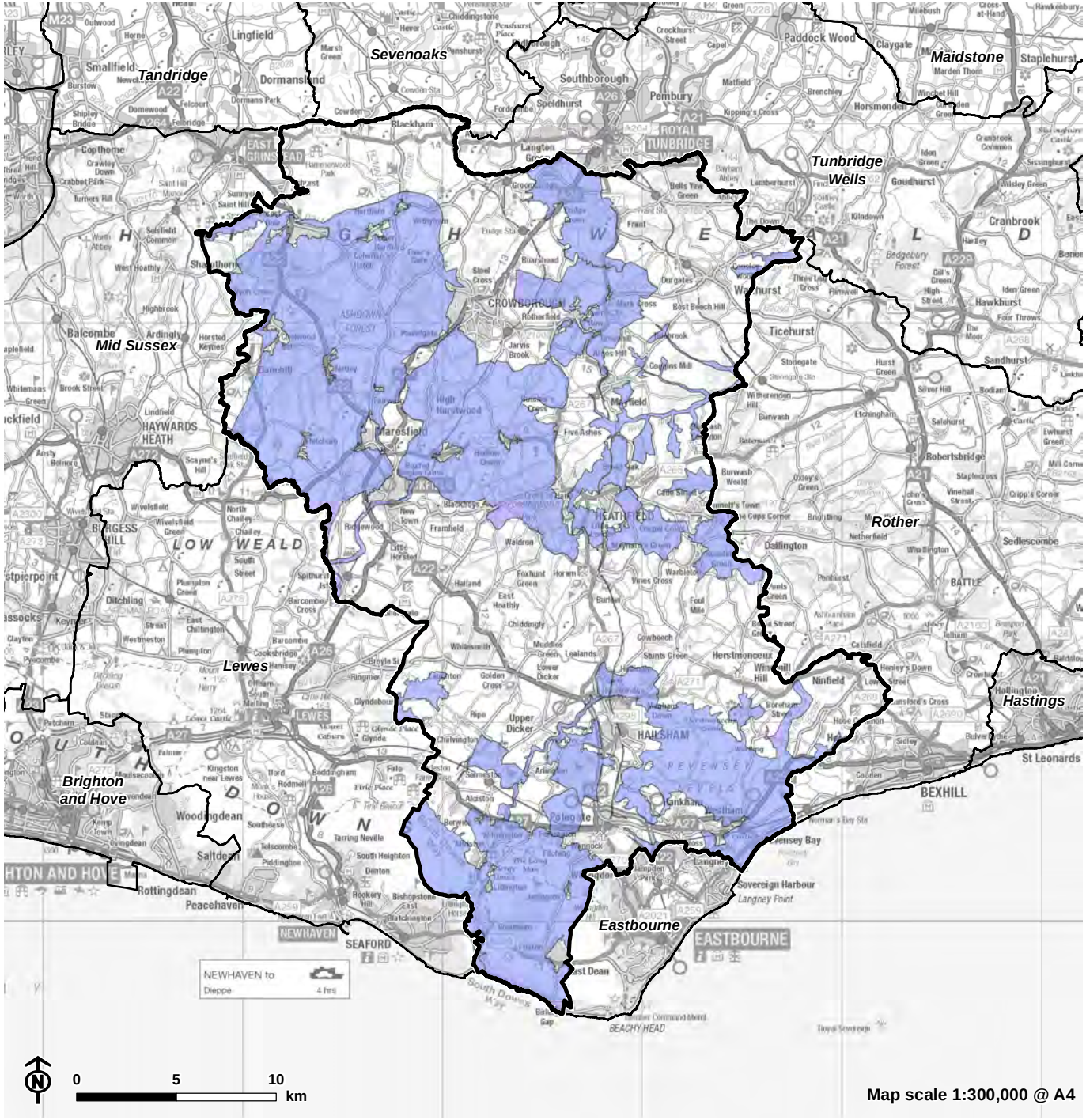
Figure 3.7: Nature conservation designations



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CB:JT EB:Tomlinson_J LUC FIG3_7_r1_nature_c_20211123 02/12/2021
Source: OS, NE

Figure 3.8: Biodiversity Opportunity Areas



Sussex BOA data digitised by Sussex Biodiversity Record Centre (SxBRC). Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown Copyright and database rights 2022

CB:JT EB:Tomlinson_J LUC FIG3_6_r3_woodland_20211123 11/02/2022
Source: OS, SxBRC

Cultural influences

3.21 The landscapes and settlements of the district have developed over time, and have been influenced by human use of the land and successive cycles of reclamation and abandonment of woodland, pasture and arable as population and agricultural pressures have changed. **Figure 3.9** shows the Scheduled Monuments, listed buildings, Conservation Areas and Registered Parks and Gardens within the district.

3.22 Extensive flint finds provide evidence for humans in Wealden in the Palaeolithic period (500,000 to 11,000 years ago). Pollen and charcoal archaeological evidence suggests there was small scale, sporadic and temporary woodland clearance by Mesolithic hunter-gatherers between 10,000 and 8,000 years ago. There are recorded Mesolithic sites, including rock shelters near Eridge and camp sites next to rivers, for example south-east of Hailsham. From c6000 BCE, when Britain became separated from Europe, people had already begun to change the landscape by hunting and using fire to make clearings to entice prey, as well as for agricultural activities. The transition from the Mesolithic to Neolithic way of life is evidenced by the existence of long barrows and funerary monuments, many of which survive today and are Scheduled Monuments. Periodic woodland clearance continued into the Bronze Age (2,600-700BCE).

3.23 The use of the Weald for industry began in the Iron Age. Wadhurst Clay was the main source of raw iron stone exploited by humans from the middle Iron Age (c. 600 BCE), with woodland used for fuel, resulting in further woodland clearance.

3.24 The Roman occupation began in 43 CE, and the Roman influence on the district can still be seen in the road layout and evidence of Roman villas in the Low Weald. The Roman fortress at Pevensey, then known as Anderida, was part of the Saxon Shore forts, constructed in the third century CE to protect against Saxon raiders. The Historic Environment Record (HER) records 87 Romano-British iron production sites within the district, three of which are Scheduled Monuments.

3.25 There is limited evidence in the district for the colonisation by the Saxons, although the traditional view is that by the early 5th century the Saxons had taken control of the fort at Pevensey. The higher ridges in the interior of the High Weald were still heavily wooded and may have been used for hunting by the kings of Sussex.

3.26 The modern settlement pattern began to develop during the later Saxon period (410-1066 CE). Settlements developed on the high ground on the ridge tops, or above floodplains in the south of the district. Possibly since the Iron Age, and certainly during the early Medieval (410 – 1066 CE), the Weald has been shaped by the practice of transhumance – the seasonal movement of people and animals moving between grazing grounds, typically lowlands in the winter and highlands in the summer. The dense network of droveways which connect the Downs and the Weald is still in use as roads and public rights of way, and is a visible legacy of this seasonal movement.

3.27 The Bayeux Tapestry shows that William the Conqueror landed in Pevensey in 1066, and based his first camp in the ruins of the Roman fort. Following William's victory at Battle, his half-brother was granted the Rape (barony) of Pevensey, and used the Roman fort as the base for building a new castle at Pevensey. St Mary's church in Westham is claimed to be the earliest Norman church in the country.

3.28 The Pevensey Levels have a long history of inundation and reclamation, gradually changing from salt marsh to reedy meadows. Much of the area was under water as recently as 700 years ago, although attempts to reclaim the marsh date from as early as 772 CE. There is evidence to suggest that salt making was an important occupation on the levels, and the Domesday Book records 100 salt works on the edges of Pevensey Marsh. Reclamation of the Pevensey Levels began in earnest in the medieval period, through enclosing portions of the marsh within sea walls. By 1696 the 'innings' (reclamation) of the Pevensey Levels was complete. Drainage of the Pevensey Levels continued in the 20th century. Between 1959 and 1977 eight separate pumped-drainage schemes were implemented to extend the grazing season and viability of arable cropping.

3.29 In conjunction with the iron industry, the local clay geology provided the raw materials for brick and tile production. The softer clays were used for roof tiles, decorative tiles and terracotta, while harder loams were used to make bricks. The Romans were the first to produce brick and tiles in the district, and the trade was revived following the Norman invasion to provide materials for churches and monasteries. Herstmonceux Castle was one of the first buildings in England to be built entirely of brick, in the 1440s.

3.30 The High Weald is renowned for its medieval landscape character, and is one of the reasons for its designation as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). Assarts (fields brought into cultivation by clearing from forest or waste lands) are characteristic of both the High and Low Weald. The greatest recorded evidence for assarts is in the 12th and 13th centuries, in order to increase the land available for agriculture. The Historic Landscape Character mapping can be seen in **Figure 3.10**.

3.31 Dispersed settlements formed along route ways on ridge top roads and drove ways in the High Weald. The few nucleated villages and small towns are generally sited on the main routes through the Weald, and developed from the 11th century onwards as small market centres for the sale and dispersal of surplus agricultural and woodland products. Many

obtained licences to hold fairs in the 12th century. In some cases there is evidence that the market was the original feature, and a church was built later. The Low Weald saw the construction of isolated farmsteads, some with moats. There are a significant number of timber-framed buildings throughout the district, some of which date back to the 13th century, although the majority are from the 15th-17th centuries.

3.32 In the 15th to 17th centuries the Weald was again the 'foundry of England', supplying iron across the country, and supported around 100 forges and furnaces. Large numbers of people were employed in digging ore, cutting wood, charcoal making and transporting raw materials and products. The legacy is still evident in the landscape of surviving hammer and furnace ponds, grand houses built by wealthy foundry owners and the remains of the coppiced woodland which was managed for the production of charcoal.

3.33 From the 17th century there was an increase in large country houses in planned parks, often associated with pre-existing medieval manors. Examples include Sheffield Park and Heathfield Park. The trend for large new houses brought famous architects and landscapers to the district, including Lancelot 'Capability' Brown and Humphrey Repton.

3.34 Between 1804 and 1810 defensive measures against the threat from Napoleon's France were built in the form of Martello towers. These towers are now distinctive features in the coastal landscape of Pevensey and Pevensey Bay.

3.35 By the 19th century hop growing was a prominent industry in the district, due to the local supply of wood for hop poles, milder southern climate and sandy slopes. Workers from across the county, Kent and London came to East Sussex to pick the hops which were dried out in oast houses and sold to breweries. The oast houses are visible reminders of this industry, and were often added to historic medieval farmsteads.

3.36 The industrial revolution and population growth resulted in an increased demand for housing and therefore production of bricks in the 19th century. This was aided by the arrival of the railways and abolition of the brick tax in 1850. The increased use of brick can be seen in the brick terraces and villas in the larger towns and villages, including Hailsham, Uckfield and Mayfield. The earliest railway line opened in 1849 between Polegate and Hailsham, particularly to serve the livestock market. Later lines connected Tunbridge Wells and East Grinstead, and Lewes and Eridge. The last remaining railway runs from Uckfield through Crowborough and Eridge onto London. The other railway lines were decommissioned in the 1960s, although two lines are now promoted as cycling trails and footpaths, the Cuckoo Trail and Forest Way.

3.37 The railways also expanded the settlements in the district, including at Heathfield, which was previously a small settlement and the construction of the new town in Uckfield.

3.38 Wealden was heavily used by the military during the First and Second World Wars. Many of the country houses were taken over as military camps and hospitals, including at Maresfield Park. The GHQ Stop Line, intended to halt the German advance in the face of an invasion, ran through the district and many of the pillboxes and anti-tank obstacles survive. The Pevensey Levels held a large radar defence station, one of the original 20 Air Ministry Experimental Stations.

Associations

3.39 The district is associated with writers in the 19th and 20th centuries including Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, who lived in Crowborough, Rudyard Kipling, and AA Milne - the Winnie the Pooh stories were inspired by Ashdown Forest.

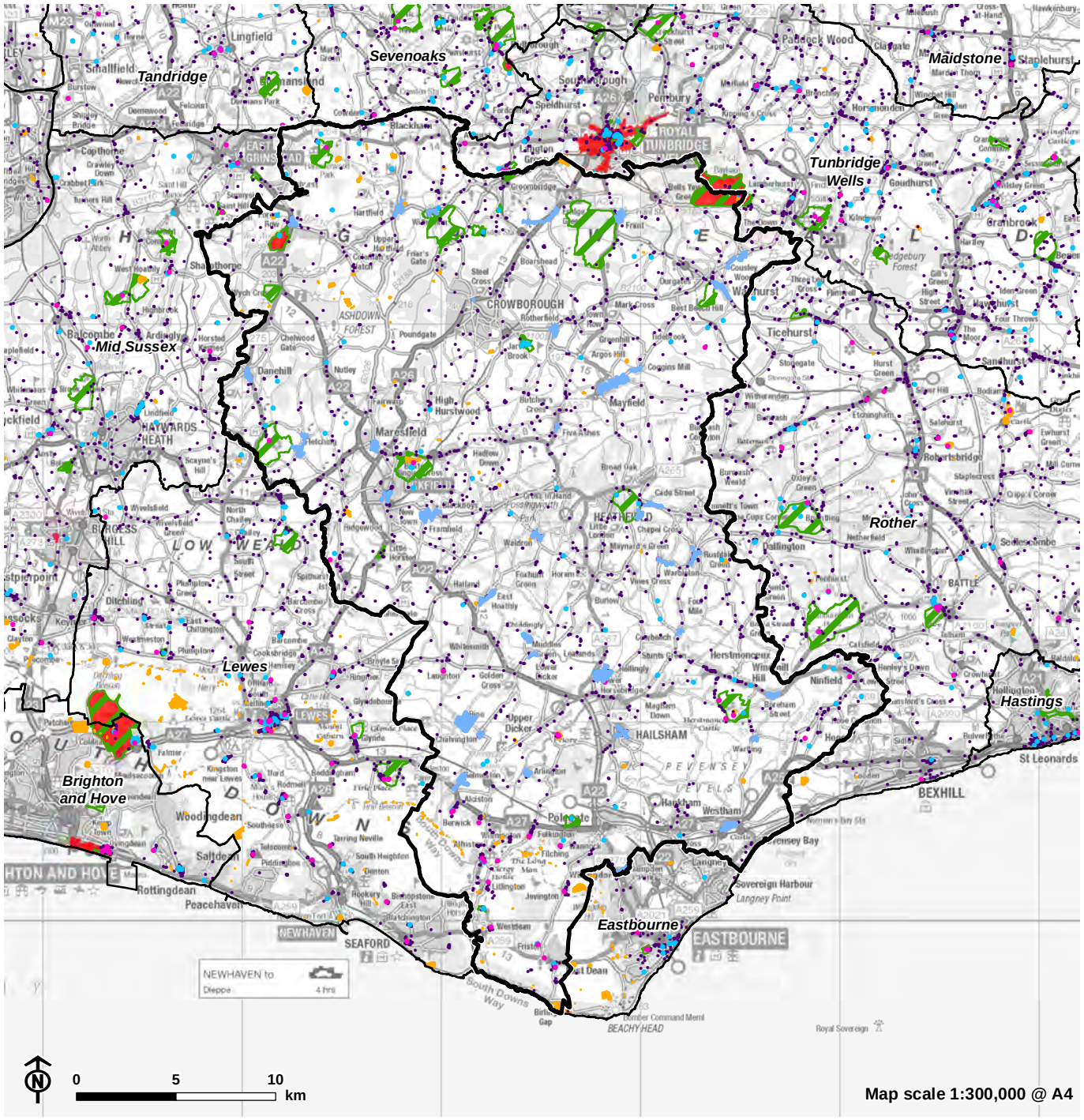
3.40 JMW Turner is known to have painted in Sussex, and produced paintings of Heathfield and Wadhurst, while Pablo Picasso was a visitor at Farley Farm in Muddles Green, Chiddingly. Lee Miller, best known for her photographs at the end of the Second World War, lived at Farley Farm from 1949 to 1977.

Perceptual qualities

3.41 The district enjoys high levels of tranquillity away from the settlements and main roads, as illustrated on **Figure 3.11.**

3.42 The levels of light pollution and dark night skies within Wealden District are shown on **Figure 3.12.** Much of the district experiences dark night skies, with light pollution from the main settlements and major road corridors visible.

Figure 3.9: Cultural heritage designations



- Wealden district
- Neighbouring local authority
- Conservation area
- Heritage at Risk
- Registered parks and gardens
- Scheduled Monument

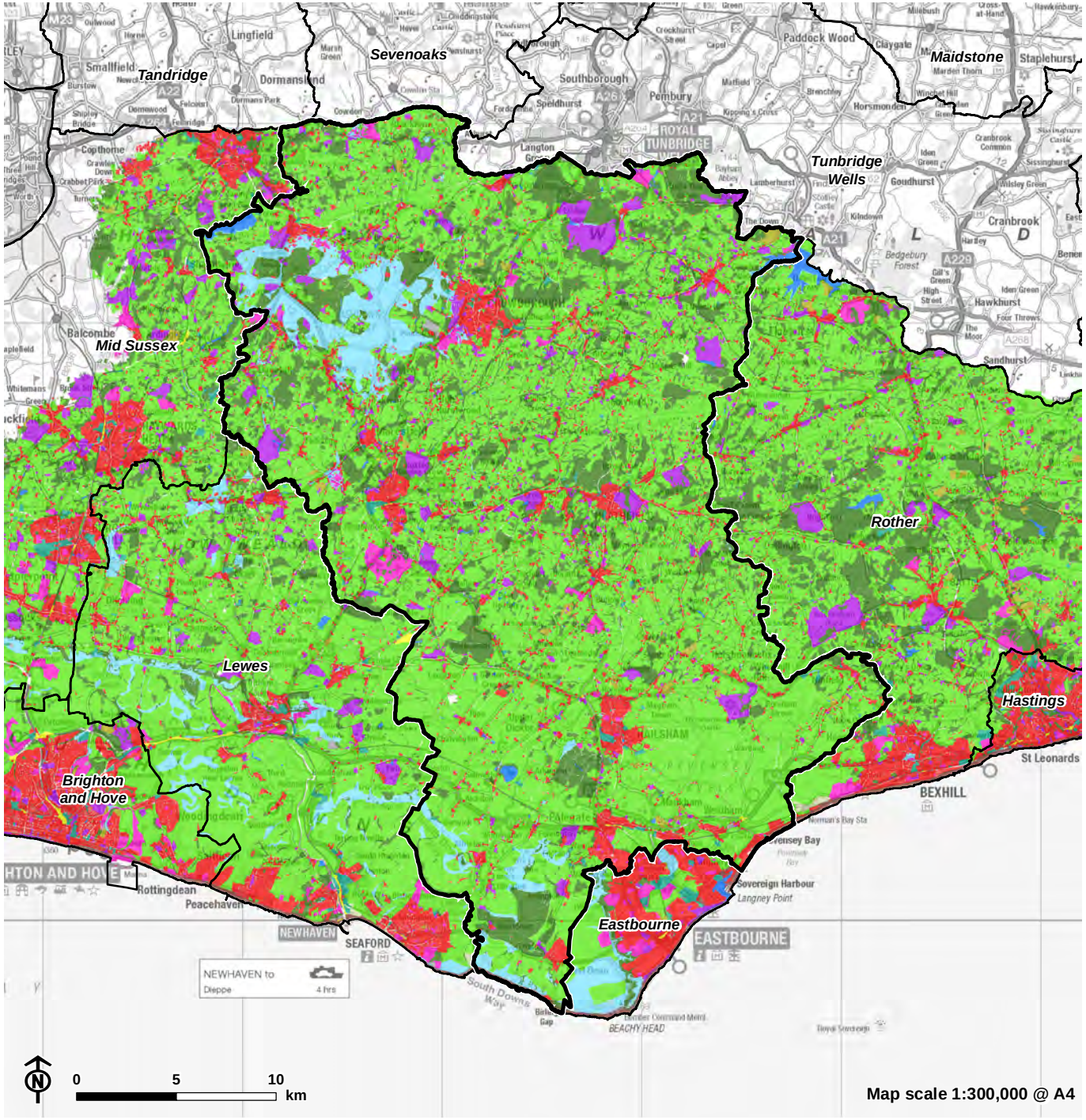
Listed building

- Grade I
- Grade II*
- Grade II

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Source: OS, HE, WDC

Figure 3.10: Historic Landscape Character

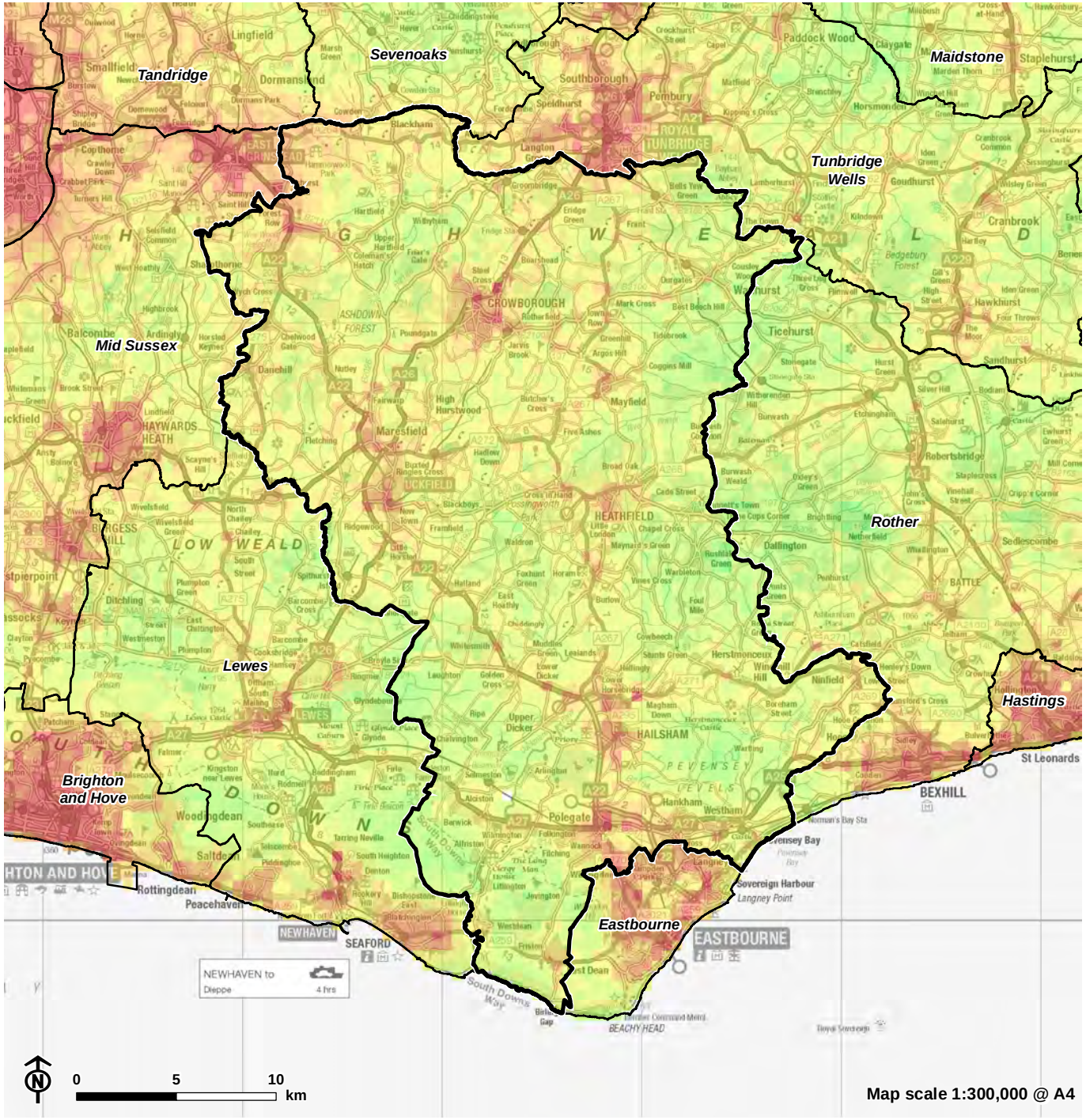


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CB:JT EB:Tomlinson_J LUC FIG3_10_r0_historic_landscape_area_20211122 02/12/2021
Source: OS, ADS

LUC

Figure 3.11: Tranquillity



Wealden district

Neighbouring local authority

Level of tranquillity

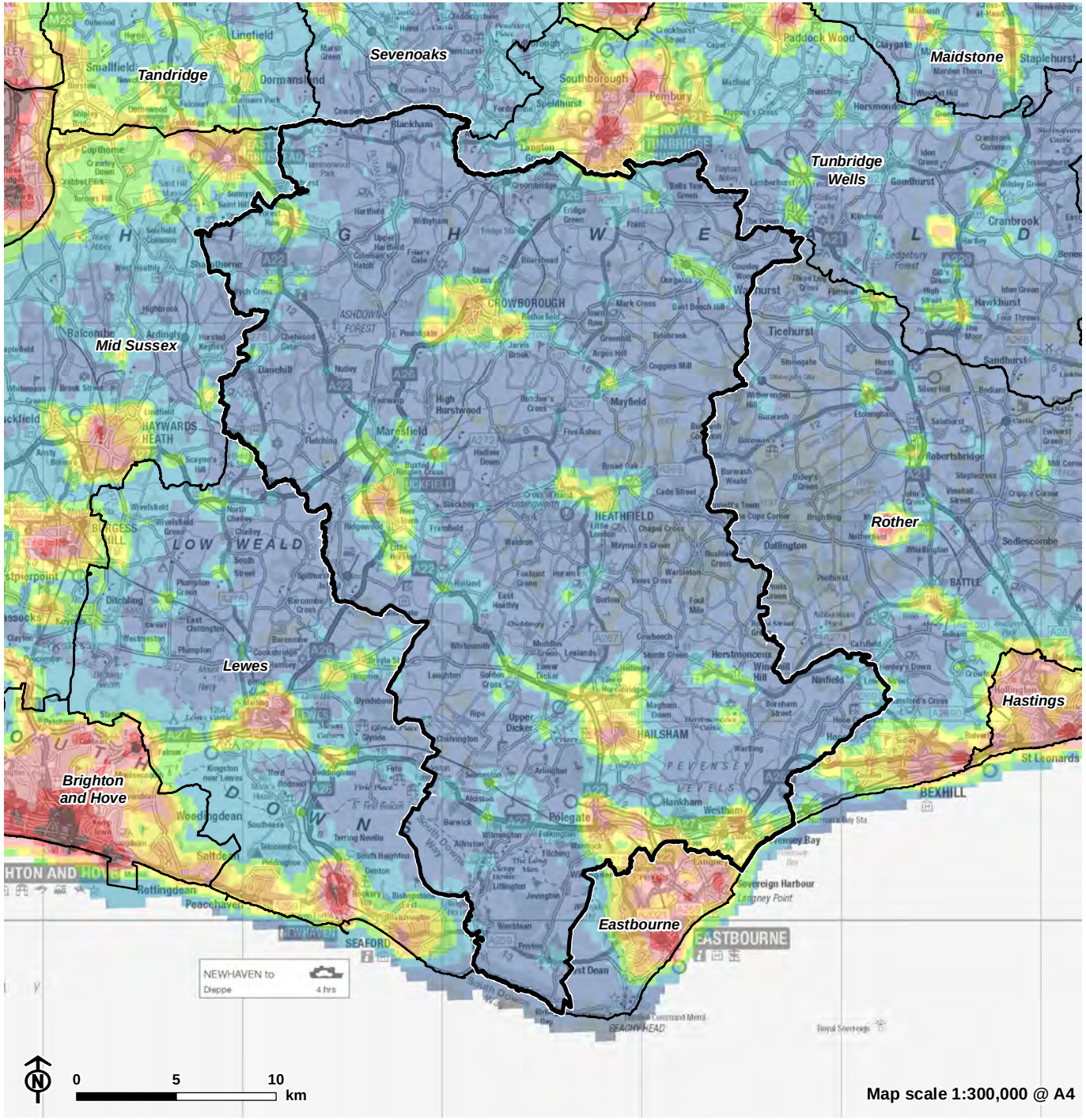
Relatively most tranquil areas

Relatively least tranquil areas

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CB:JT EB:Tomlinson_J LUC FIG3_11_r0_transquility_20211122 02/12/2021
Source: OS, CPRE

Figure 3.12: Dark skies



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Earth Observation Group, NOAA National Geophysical Data Center. Data processed by LUC on behalf of CPRE

CB:JT EB:Tomlinson_J LUC FIG3_12_r0_darksky_20211122 25/11/2021
Source: OS, CPRE

Forces for change and landscape issues

3.43 Wealden's landscape is constantly changing through human activity and natural processes. The cumulative effects of these processes can considerably alter the character of the landscape.

3.44 The individual Landscape Character Area (LCA) profiles include reference to key pressures, past, present and future, derived from discussions with Council Officers and a review of relevant information relating to land use, agricultural trends and development pressures. The main pressures that have potential to influence the landscape character of Wealden as a whole are set out below.

Climate change

3.45 Climate change is a major pressure on rural landscapes and is likely to result in increasingly unpredictable weather with hotter drier summers, more intense rainfall and longer dry periods resulting in the need for agriculture to adapt to grow different crops and develop more flexible and responsive land management practices. Hotter summers and increases in temperatures could result in increased demands for agricultural irrigation. Responses to climate change may also result in pressure for development of renewable energy.

3.46 Climate change resulting in more extreme weather could alter the species composition of existing species-rich woodlands and hedgerows, favouring species with lower water demand. Increasing incidences of pathogens may change the species mix of woodlands and higher temperatures and prolonged drought are likely to put woodlands under further stress and increase the risk of wildfires.

3.47 Climate change is also likely to affect other important semi-natural habitats, particularly river and wetland habitats throughout the district. This will include water shortages in summer and increased water flows and flooding in winter, causing potential damage to habitats and species. These changes may manifest themselves within the natural environment through changes in habitats and a decline of flora and fauna which are unable to adapt quickly enough to the changing conditions. Rising water and sea levels may also impact mudflats and marshes which provide important habitats for migrant bird populations. Longer drier summers may affect heathland and coastal habitats and increase the risk of fire.

3.48 Wealden contains nine main rivers with associated floodplains, including the Rivers Cuckmere, Uck, Ouse, Medway, Teise, Rother and Waller's Haven, as well as the Willingdon Levels and Pevensey Levels. Climate change will cause an increase to river flows and rising sea levels, as well as to the frequency of flood events and put these areas at risk.

Agricultural change

3.49 England's post-Brexit agricultural subsidy regime was set out in the Agriculture Bill 2020. Direct payments to farmers through the Common Agricultural Policy and direct support payments are being phased out, to be replaced by the Environmental Land management Scheme (ELMS) which is being phased in until 2028, with transitional schemes such as the Farming in Protected Landscape Schemes established to reduce gaps in support for farming during the transition period. There is continuing uncertainty about how ELMS will impact farming practices in England and the consequent impacts on landscape character.

3.50 The majority of agricultural land in Wealden is classified as good to moderate (grade 3) (see Figure 3.5), with poorer areas of land (grade 4) on the edges of the woodlands. Poorer quality agricultural land usually supports pastoral farming in the High Weald, while the south of the district has a more mixed farming character with arable farmland interspersed with smaller areas of pasture.

3.51 Agricultural intensification is associated with a loss of pasture for cereal production, providing fodder crops (maize) and straw for bedding, which is in turn resulting in field enlargement and subsequent loss of hedgerows and hedgerow trees. Hedgerows can lose their function in arable landscapes and are often replaced by post and wire fences. There has been a general decline in hedgerow maintenance and condition across the district.

3.52 More intensive farming practices often result in larger amalgamated farms with new agricultural buildings. These agricultural buildings tend to be large scale and have no local distinction and can be detractors within the landscape.

3.53 Small-mixed farming systems are increasingly uncompetitive in the current economic market, and farms are generally decreasing in number with many smaller farms diversifying or going out of business and traditional agricultural buildings steadily converted to residential or commercial use, with accompanying change in lighting and access requirements, roadside signage, further eroding rural character.

3.54 Changes in pasture and grazing livestock, including decrease in traditional sheep and cattle grazing and increase in pig or horse grazing can impact on the character of the countryside. This is through division of existing fields into individual paddocks defined by post and wire or horse tape, increasing stabling and sties and degradation of pasture due to lack of active grassland management leading to either scrub invasion or over grazing. Loss of sustainable grazing for heathland can also lead to soil erosion.

Land management change

3.55 Trees and woodland make a valuable contribution to the Wealden landscape character, particularly in the north of the district, within the High Weald AONB.

3.56 However, the ongoing decline in traditional woodland management practises and under management of woodlands and copses is resulting in the loss of species diversity.

3.57 There is also pressure on semi-natural woodlands (including ancient woodland) from inappropriate management, leading to the introduction of non-native garden species or the spread of invasive alien species (such as Japanese knotweed, Himalayan Balsam and giant hogweed) in parts of the district, which can prevent regeneration of native woodland. Pressure for development also means there is potential for loss of woodland, including valuable semi-natural woodlands.

3.58 Mature hedgerow trees (particularly oak) are an integral part of the traditional hedge system and contribute to the wooded context of the district in both the urban and rural areas. The loss of these trees through senescence, development pressure or climate change and associated pests and diseases together with a lack of replacement, is a key challenge to the existing landscape character.

3.59 Agricultural intensification and consequent field enlargement are leading to direct felling and grubbing up of hedgerow trees. Tree loss is also caused by direct or indirect damage from agricultural machinery, leading to early decline or death.

3.60 The use of fencing, which reduces the agricultural necessity for hedge maintenance, is also hastening the decline of the hedgerow network and neglect of hedgerows, leading to their degradation to a line of standard trees or the development of gaps within hedgerows, is an issue. Too frequent or badly timed cutting can also result in gaps in hedgerows or the decline in the variety and age structure of hedgerows and hedgerow trees, and ultimately the loss of hedgerows.

Development pressure

3.61 The presence of large urban areas both within and immediately outside the district boundaries means that pressure for development, particularly major housing or employment development and accompanying infrastructure, is a challenge to the existing landscape character.

3.62 Infill development or the expansion of existing settlements is likely to lead to the loss of open agricultural land and woodland reducing the rural character of landscapes immediately adjacent to these areas. The requirements for additional public open space adjacent to new development may also impact the character of the local landscape by changing land use from agriculture to recreation.

3.63 New or extended development also risks the urbanisation of rural villages.

Infrastructure

3.64 Infrastructure works can have a significant influence on landscape character through the upgrading of existing facilities and the provision of new infrastructure to facilitate additional development.

3.65 Strategic road improvements, including new or re-aligned roads and junctions, planned to help alleviate the impact of additional traffic, can result in a negative impact on landscape character in terms of fragmentation of the landscape and a loss of tranquillity.

3.66 Narrow winding rural roads are vulnerable to widening, new wider visibility splays for new development, and an increase in the number of vehicles. These cause damage to grass verges and hedgerows, which can degrade their rural character and lead to the decline of species rich roadside grassland.

3.67 The upgrading of footpaths/cycleways in rural locations can also lead to a loss of their rural character.

Recreation and tourism

3.68 Wealden offers a wide variety of visitor attractions and wildlife sites which can make a valuable contribution to the rural economy and sustainable rural development. In 2019 the total value of tourism was around £368 million, which included nearly half a million overnight stays and nearly six million day trips. A newly launched Explore Wealden campaign aims to increase these numbers.

3.69 However, increasing visitor pressure also has the potential to affect the character of the area's natural and historical assets, and its tranquillity.

3.70 Relatively high visitor pressure at certain locations can result in a loss of tranquillity, damage or fragmentation of sensitive habitats or species. Increased recreational activity can also lead to demand for additional facilities at popular locations, resulting in visual intrusion from car parks or visitor centres, increased traffic at 'honey-pot' sites and potential urbanising of the most rural parts of Wealden through the provision of more formalised cycle and walking routes. There may also be increased demand for visitor accommodation such as caravan parks, hotels and leisure complexes and for the expansion of golf courses. An increased resident population within the district will add to these pressures.

Renewable energy

3.71 The need to reduce carbon emissions through an increase in renewable energy sources could have a significant impact on the character of the landscape in the district. Pressure for suitable sites for wind turbines and solar farms is likely to continue.

3.72 Rural diversification and a trend towards green energy from biomass or waste in the future is also likely to have a localised influence on the character of the rural landscape through changes in vegetation patterns such as large-scale single species planting and land management.

Chapter 4
Landscape Character Classification

Classification for Wealden District

4.1 The classification has been undertaken at a scale of 1:25,000. It nests within the National Character Areas and East Sussex Landscape Character Areas, but is at a local scale and mapped to a finer level of detail.

4.2 The mapped information, set out in **Table 2.1**, was overlaid in a Geographic Information System (GIS) to identify areas of common character. In particular, information about geology, soils, landform, hydrology, land cover, land use, field patterns, settlement pattern, time depth and existing character assessments informed the classification.

4.3 Six landscape character types (LCTs) have been identified, and within these, 12 landscape character areas (LCAs). These are mapped in **Figure 4.1** and listed in **Table 4.1** below.

Table 4.1: Classification for Wealden District

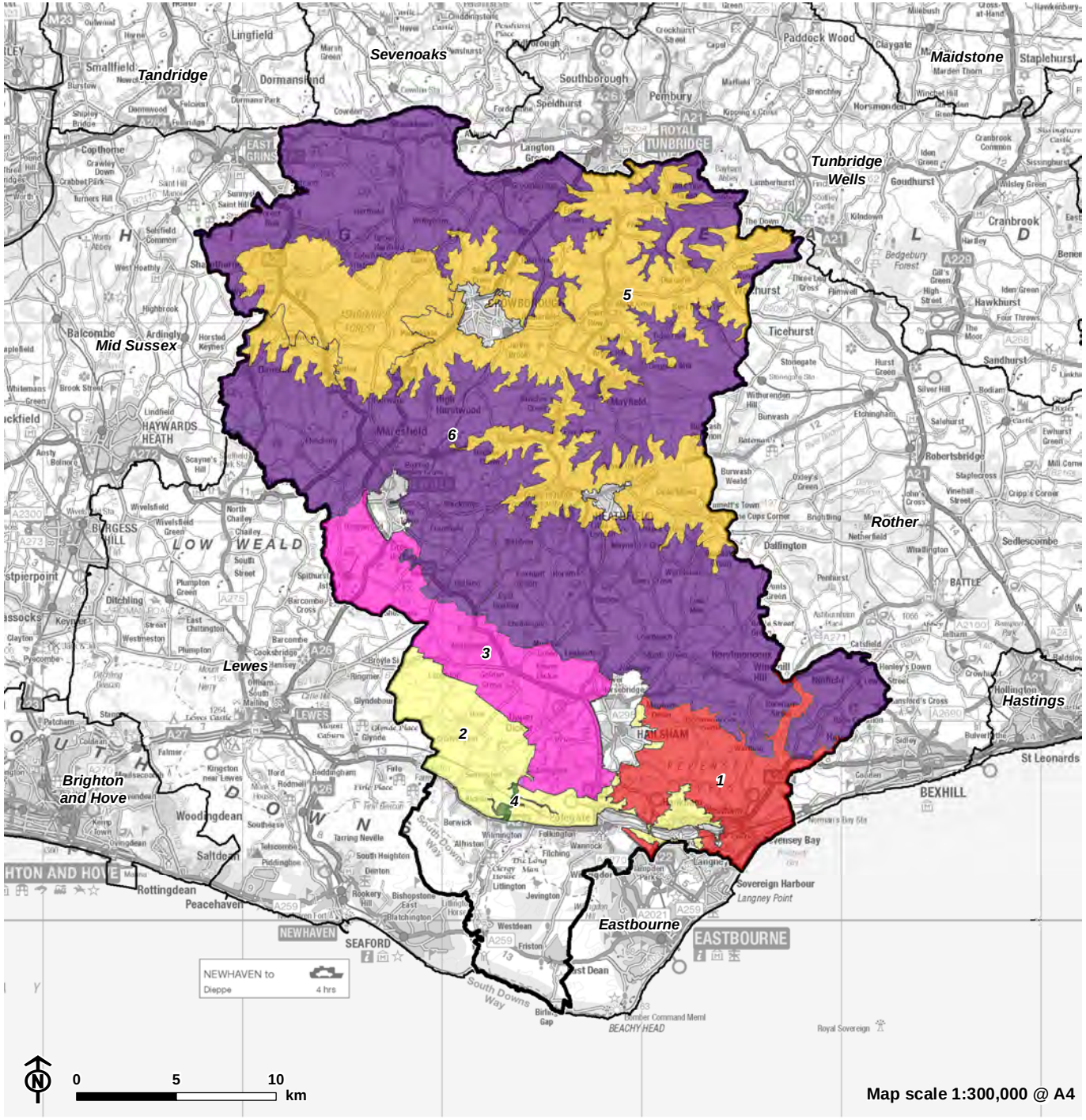
Landscape Character Type (LCT)	Landscape Character Area (LCA)
1 Alluvial levels	1A: Pevensey Levels
2 Open clay vale (Low Weald)	2A: Laughton to Arlington Open Clay Vale
	2B: Polegate Open Clay Vale
3 Wooded clay vale (Low Weald)	3A: Uckfield to Hailsham Wooded Clay Vale
4 River floodplains (Low Weald)	4A: Cuckmere Floodplain
5 Wooded ridges (High Weald)	5A: High Weald - Ashdown Forest
	5B: High Weald - Central
6. Wooded slopes (High Weald)	6A: High Weald - Medway Catchment
	6B: High Weald - Teise Catchment
	6C: High Weald - Rother Catchment
	6D: High Weald - Ouse Catchment
	6E: High Weald - Cuckmere/ Pevensey Catchment

A note on boundary lines

4.4 Mapped boundaries may suggest that there is a sharp change from one landscape to another. Landscape character rarely changes abruptly and so generally the boundary lines represent a zone of transition from one landscape to another. Exceptions are the Cuckmere Floodplain and Pevensey Levels which are largely defined by flood zones/ extent of alluvium.

Wealden Landscape Character Assessment
Wealden District Council

Figure 4.1: Landscape Character Types



Wealden district
Neighbouring local authority

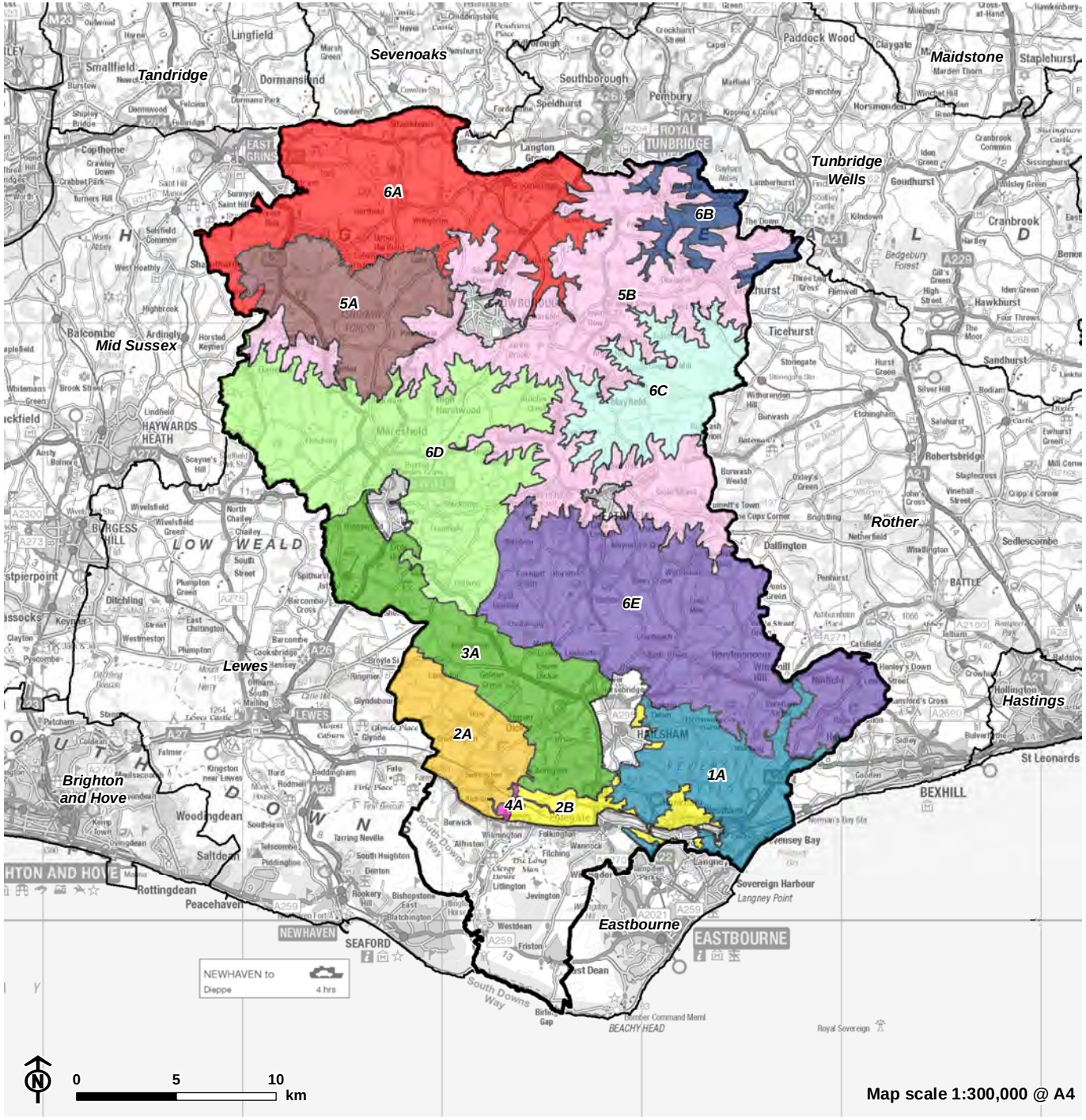
Landscape Character Type

1. Alluvial levels
2. Open clay vale (Low Weald)
3. Wooded clay vale (Low Weald)
4. River floodplains (Low Weald)
5. Wooded ridges (High Weald)
6. Wooded slopes (High Weald)

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Source: OS

Figure 4.2: Landscape Character Areas



Wealden district

Neighbouring local authority

Landscape Character Area

- 1A Pevensey Levels
- 2A Laughton to Arlington Open Clay Vale
- 2B Polegate Open Clay Vale
- 3A Uckfield to Hailsham Wooded Clay Vale
- 4A Cuckmere Floodplain
- 5A High Weald: Ashdown Forest
- 5B High Weald: Central
- 6A High Weald: Medway Catchment
- 6B High Weald: Teise Catchment
- 6C High Weald: Rother Catchment
- 6D High Weald: Ouse Catchment
- 6E High Weald: Cuckmere / Pevensey Catchment

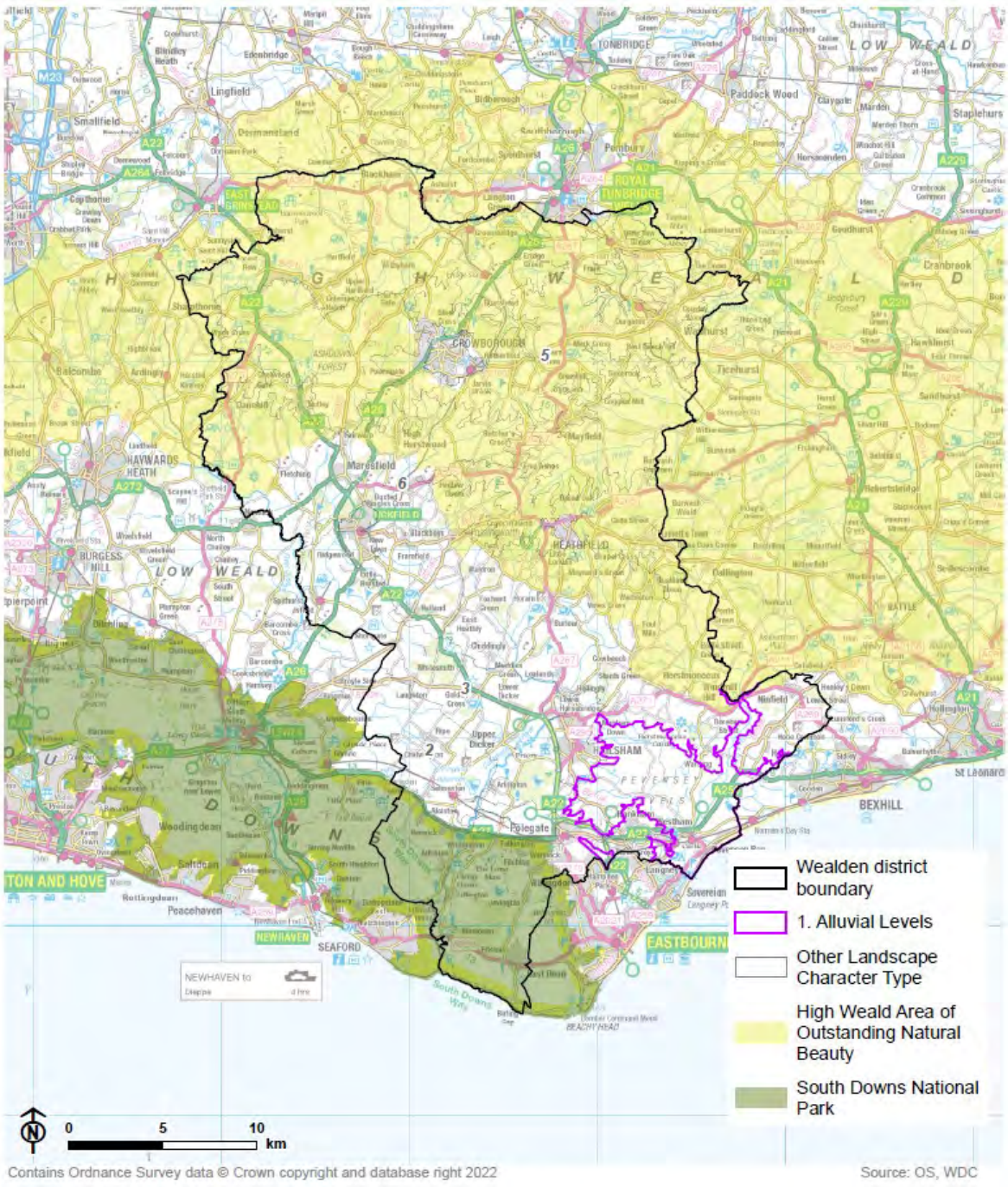
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Source: OS

Chapter 5
Landscape Character Profiles

5.1 This section of the report presents the landscape character profiles, grouped under each landscape type.

Landscape Character Type 1: Alluvial Levels



The Alluvial Levels landscape character type is a distinctively flat and low-lying landscape, defined by the extent of underlying alluvium and Flood Zones 2 and 3 as shown on the Environment Agency's Flood Map. Land use is predominantly pastoral farmland, with extensive wetland habitats. Limited tree cover results in expansive and long-distance views, particularly to the South Downs. The landscape is unsettled with limited access by road, but there is a strong network of public rights of way.

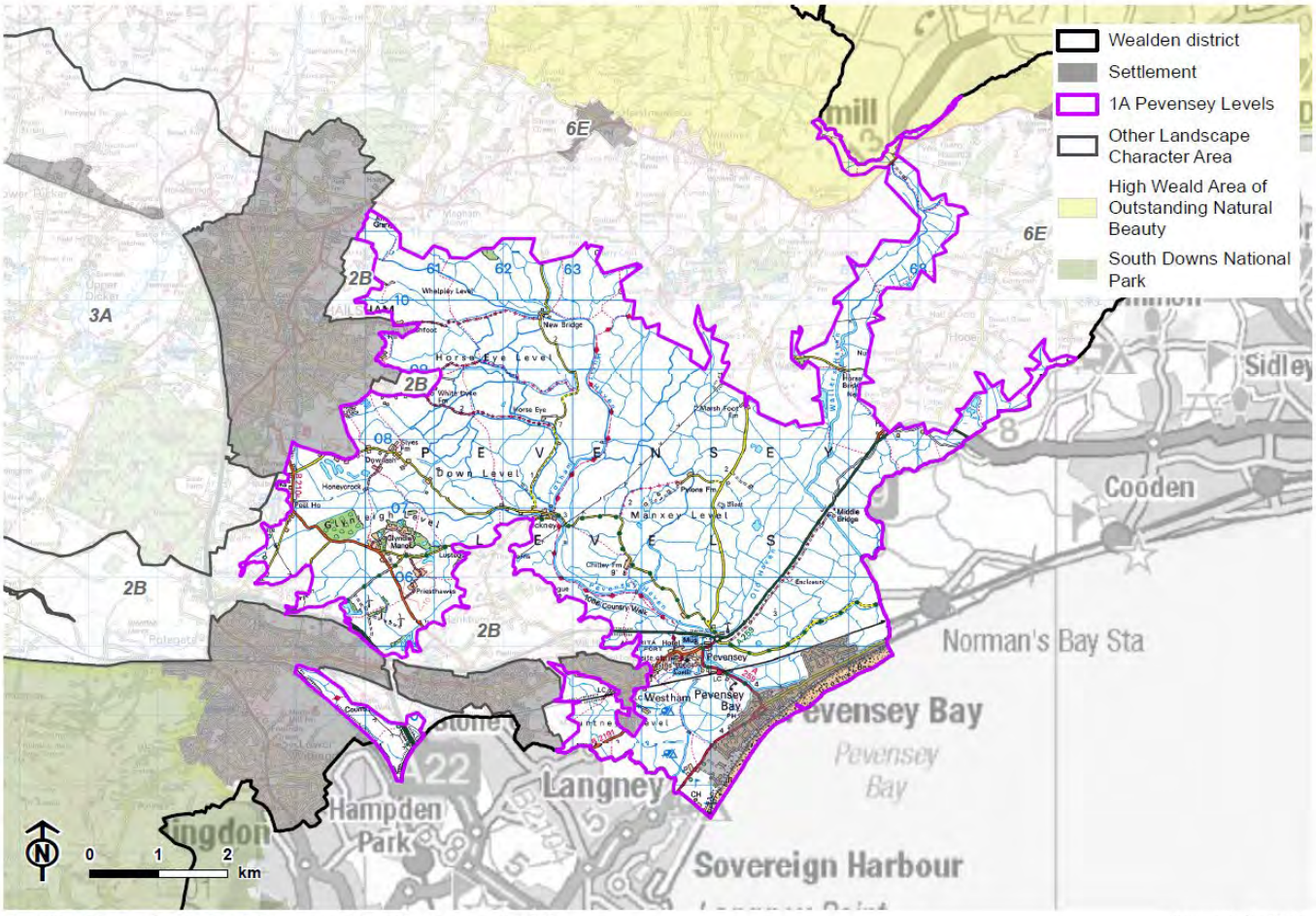
The Alluvial Levels LCT contains one Landscape Character Area:

- 1a Pevensey Levels

LCA 1A: Pevensey Levels

Location and summary

LCA 1A: Pevensey Levels is located in the south-east of the district. It is a distinctive flat and low-lying landscape, which is generally unsettled and has a relatively remote character. The landscape is dominated by reclaimed salt marsh now in use as grazed wet meadows with some arable fields. The wetland landscape is of high ecological value, that supports internationally and nationally important wetland flora and fauna. Settlement is generally confined to low-density dispersed farmsteads on medieval sites, with the exception of 20th century development at Pevensey Bay. A shingle beach shoreline at Pevensey Bay is the district's only shoreline outside the South Downs National Park. The south and western edges of the LCA are influenced by urban fringe elements on the edge of Polegate, Stone Cross, Westham and Hailsham, and the busy A259 is a modern intrusion in the east and south-east.



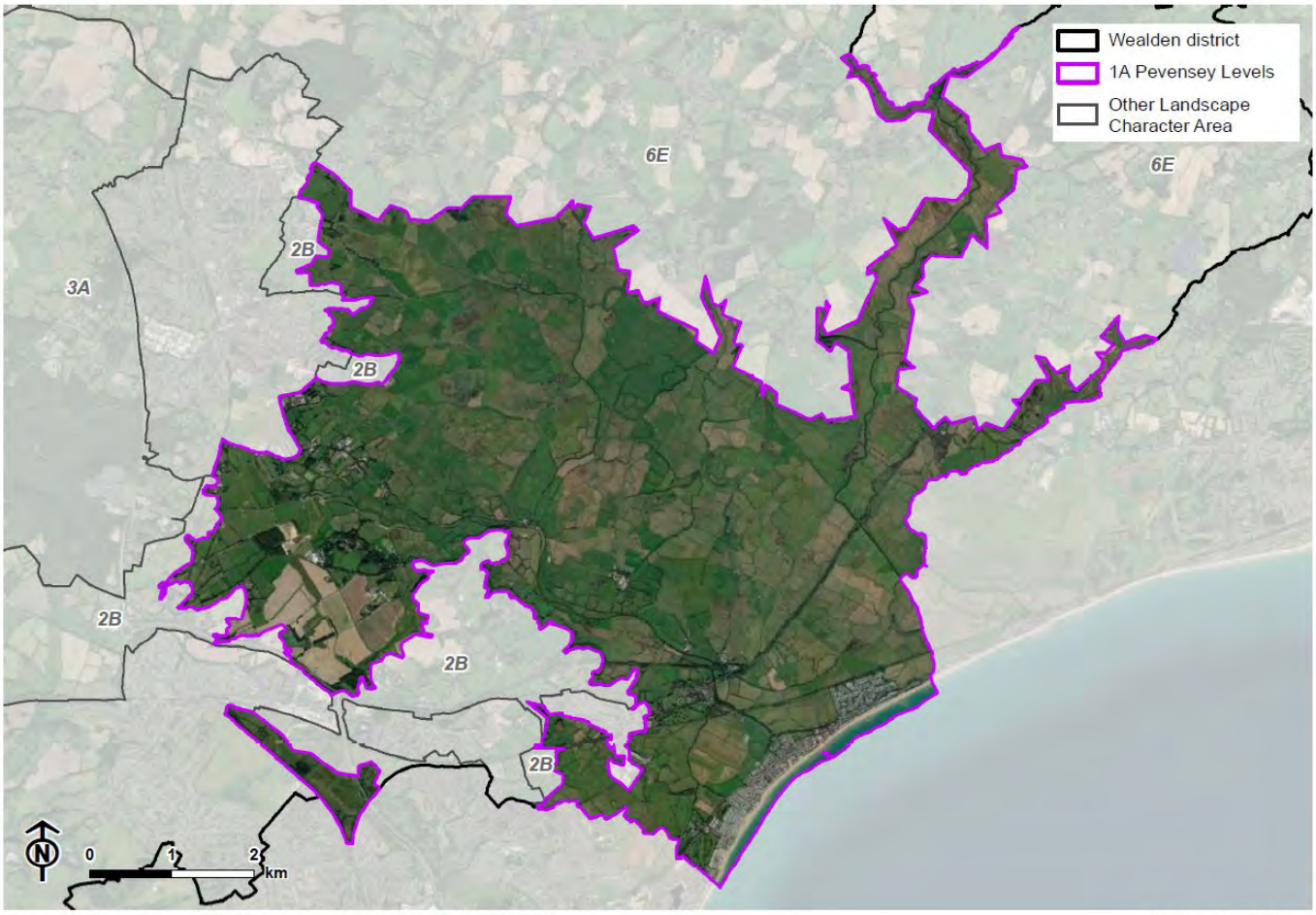
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Typical view of the Pevensey Levels

Key Characteristics

- A flat and low-lying area of reclaimed saltmarsh, comprising grazed wet meadows and some arable fields and drained by a complex system of streams, dykes, ditches, sluices and gates of various ages and shapes, generally in organic forms.
- A distinctive shingle ridge (a relict geomorphological feature of early Holocene origin) lies between the reclaimed saltmarsh and the sea, isolating the wetland from the sea with a shingle beach to the seaward side.
- Some 'eyes' (islands of higher ground) over 5m AOD which support farmsteads, often on medieval sites.
- Very little woodland and relatively few trees (although occasional willows are distinctive) - this results in a predominantly open and windswept landscape with big skies and long views, including to the distinctive and dramatic South Downs ridge.
- Traditional grazing marsh, reed-fringed ditches and areas of standing water form an area of high biodiversity value that supports important communities of wetland flora and fauna, and is recognised as the Pevensey Levels Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and Ramsar site (part is also the Pevensey Levels National Nature Reserve).
- Settlement is concentrated in historic Pevensey, covered by a Conservation Area, and 20th century development at Pevensey Bay, which incorporates the historic fishing village of Wallsend. Outside of these, settlement is typically low-density dispersed farmsteads.
- Typical built vernacular includes simple, white-washed houses, weather boarding, tile hung upper facades and clay tile roofs.
- Distinctive low mounds mark the sites of former salt works (where seawater was evaporated to form salt crystals).
- Historic defensive features include Pevensey Castle (a Saxon Shore fort) and three Martello Towers (Napoleonic coastal defences), now subsumed within the 20th century development of Pevensey Bay. Other historic features include the deserted medieval village of Manxey and Herstmonceaux Castle (which overlooks the area).
- Few roads, but those that exist tend to be slightly raised above the surrounding land and are typically winding in form, bordered by reed fringed ditches. The exception is the A259 which is relatively straight and enclosed by vegetation
- Recreational routes cross the flat landscape, including the 1066 Country Way promoted route, and allow for quiet enjoyment of the landscape.



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Source: OS, WDC

Key Influences

Landform and drainage

The Pevensey Levels is a low-lying area located below the 5m AOD contour line and entirely within the Environment Agency's flood zones 2 and 3. In particular, the area is fed by water entering via Waller's Haven, a river that enters the area from Rother District. It is also fed by sewage treatment works which discharge into the Pevensey Levels.

Bedrock and superficial geology

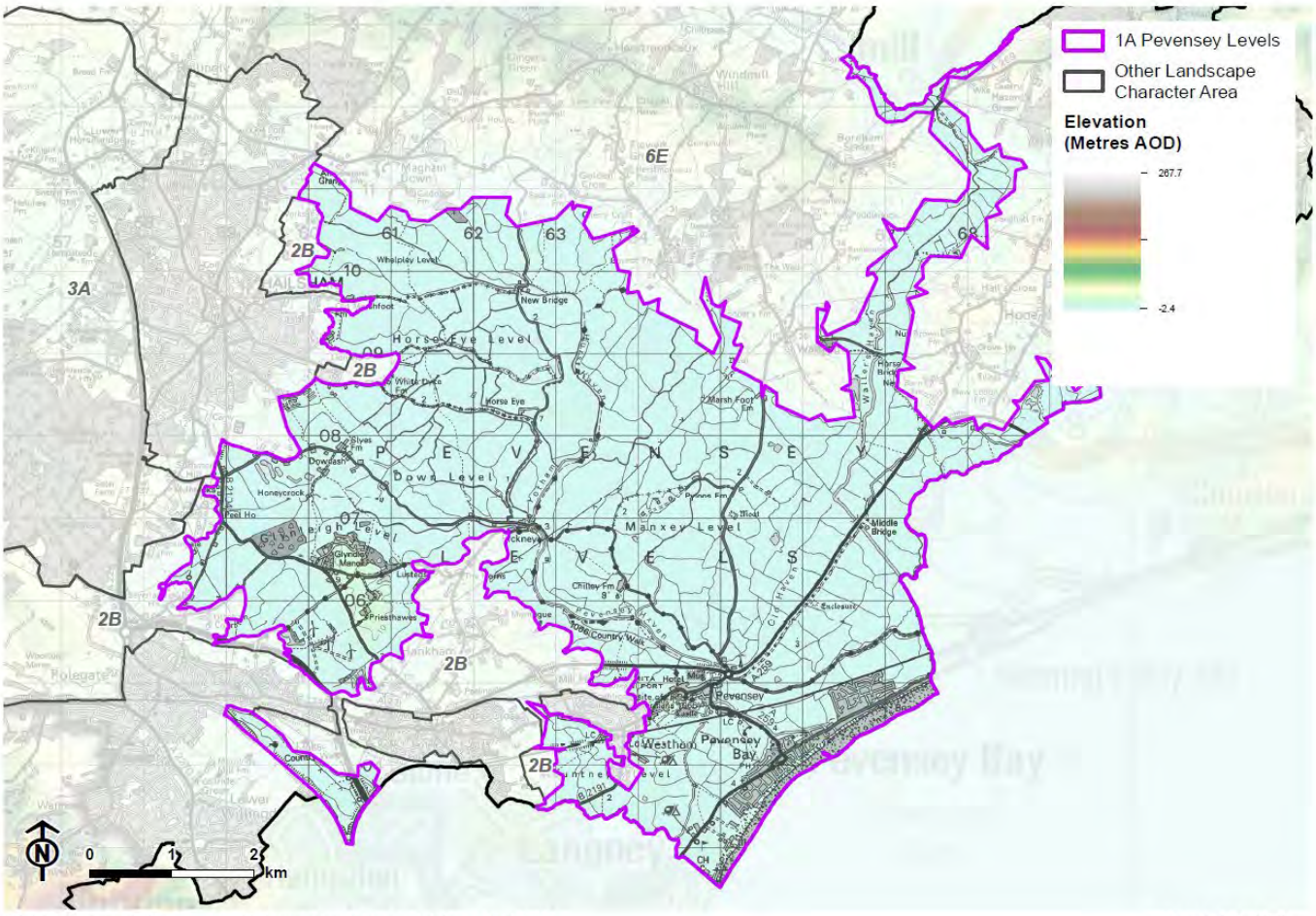
The Pevensey Levels have formed where impervious Weald Clay was overlain by alluvial deposits. Occasionally the Weald Clay forms out-crops as small islands or 'eyes', for example at Horse Eye and Chilley Farm. The geology gives rise to heavy clay-rich soils with peat layers buried within the subsoil. The land is graded 3 ('good to moderate') in the agricultural land classification (with some areas grade 4 'poor'). Storm beach deposits occur along the coastline, forming a shingle beach and low ridge that separates the levels from the sea.



Grazing land to the south of Polegate



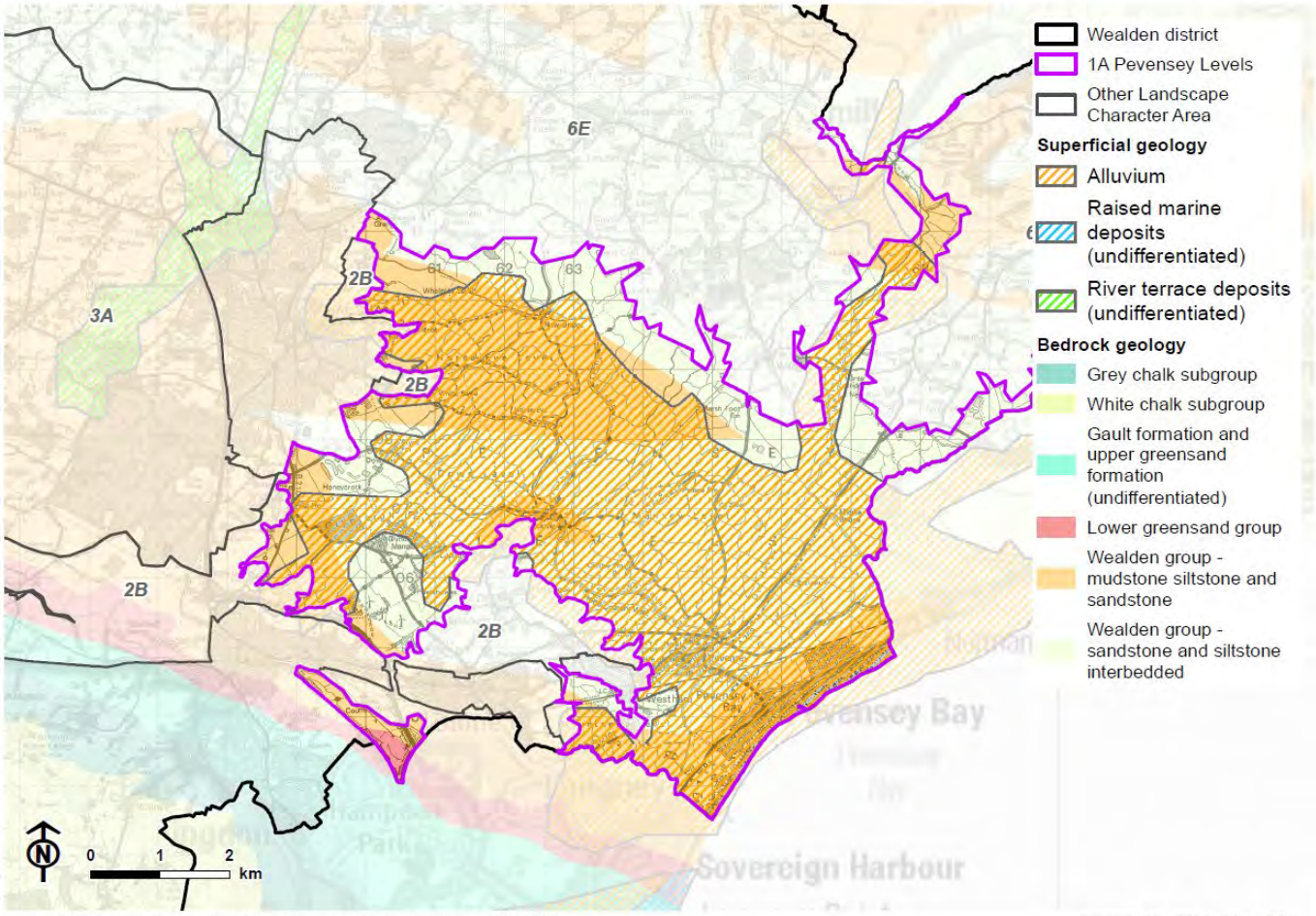
Waterlot stream dividing grazing land



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Source: OS, WDC

Landform and drainage



Bedrock and superficial geology

Semi-natural habitats

The Pevensey Levels support a mosaic of wetland habitats designated as SSSI, SAC, and Ramsar site. These overlapping designations reflect the importance of the area as one of the largest and least-fragmented lowland wet grassland systems in south-east England, which supports rare aquatic plants, invertebrates and molluscs as well as breeding and wintering birds. It is internationally designated as a Ramsar site and SAC for the presence of the Ramshorn snail, and nationally designated as a SSSI, partly due to wintering lapwings. Priority habitat coastal and floodplain grazing marsh is found across the LCA, with smaller areas of good quality semi-improved grassland. The coastline is characterised by coastal vegetated shingle. There are small areas of priority habitat lowland meadows south of Rickney and lowland fens north of Pevensey.

The LCA lies within Biodiversity Opportunity Area (BOA 53): Pevensey Levels due to its internationally important wetland ecology, although this is badly afflicted by the invasive aquatic weed, Floating Pennywort.

Landcover

Landcover is almost entirely pasture, with some areas of marsh, a small area of arable in the west, and an urban area at Pevensey Bay, behind the shingle beach.

There are numerous gates, sluices and pumping stations, used to control the water levels across Pevensey Levels, for flood control and habitat conservation purposes.

Historic landscape

The Pevensey Levels were once a tidal bay studded with small islands, where William the Conqueror landed at the Anderita Roman Fort in 1066. The fort was rebuilt as Pevensey Castle (now a Scheduled Monument).

Reclamation is likely to have occurred progressively from the Middle Ages by enclosing portions of the saltmarsh within sea walls. The Sussex Historic Landscape Character Assessment shows the reclaimed areas as informal and formal 'innings' (from the verb 'to inn' meaning to reclaim).

Historically, settlement was very sparse, limited to occasional farmsteads on the 'eyes' (islands of higher ground), and the village of Pevensey which grew up around the castle. Pevensey was granted a Royal Charter in 2017, and the Grade I listed church of St Nicholas was built in the 13th century. The small village, with its collection of weather boarded tile hung upper houses, and Pevensey Castle are designated as part of the Westham and Pevensey Conservation Area. The small historic fishing village of Wallsend on the gravel ridge by the coast has been subsumed into an area of 20th century development (residential development and caravan parks) that lines the coast at Pevensey Bay, and Polegate has expanded into the south-west of the character area.

The coastline has always been vulnerable to attack, and in the early 1800s a string of Martello towers, manned circular fortifications, were built along England's southeast and east coast in response to the fear of French invasion. The three towers (Grade II) form distinctive features on the skyline.

Perceptual character

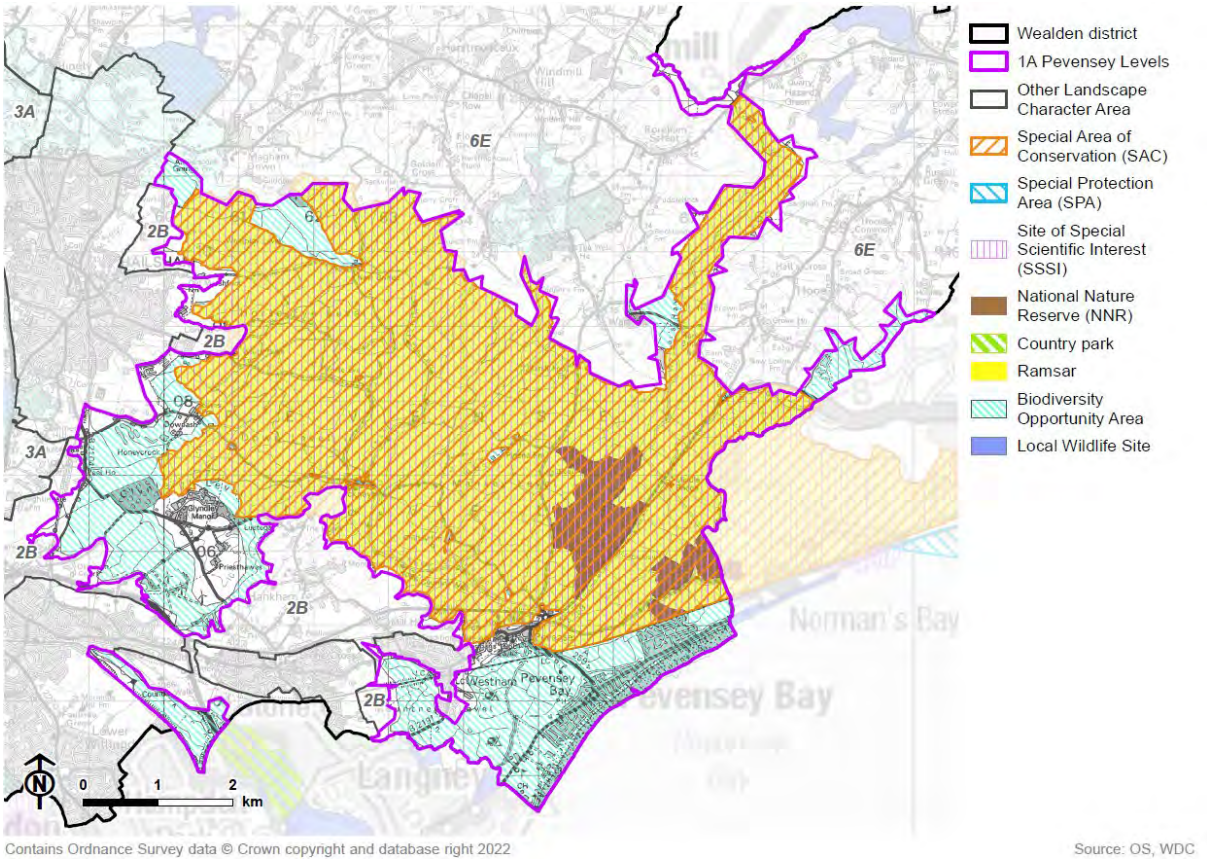
The over-riding open character of the windswept floodplain landscape, and long views across the flat landscape to the South Downs and High Weald, contribute to a sense of remoteness. The Pevensey Levels has high levels of tranquillity and dark skies, particularly in its core.



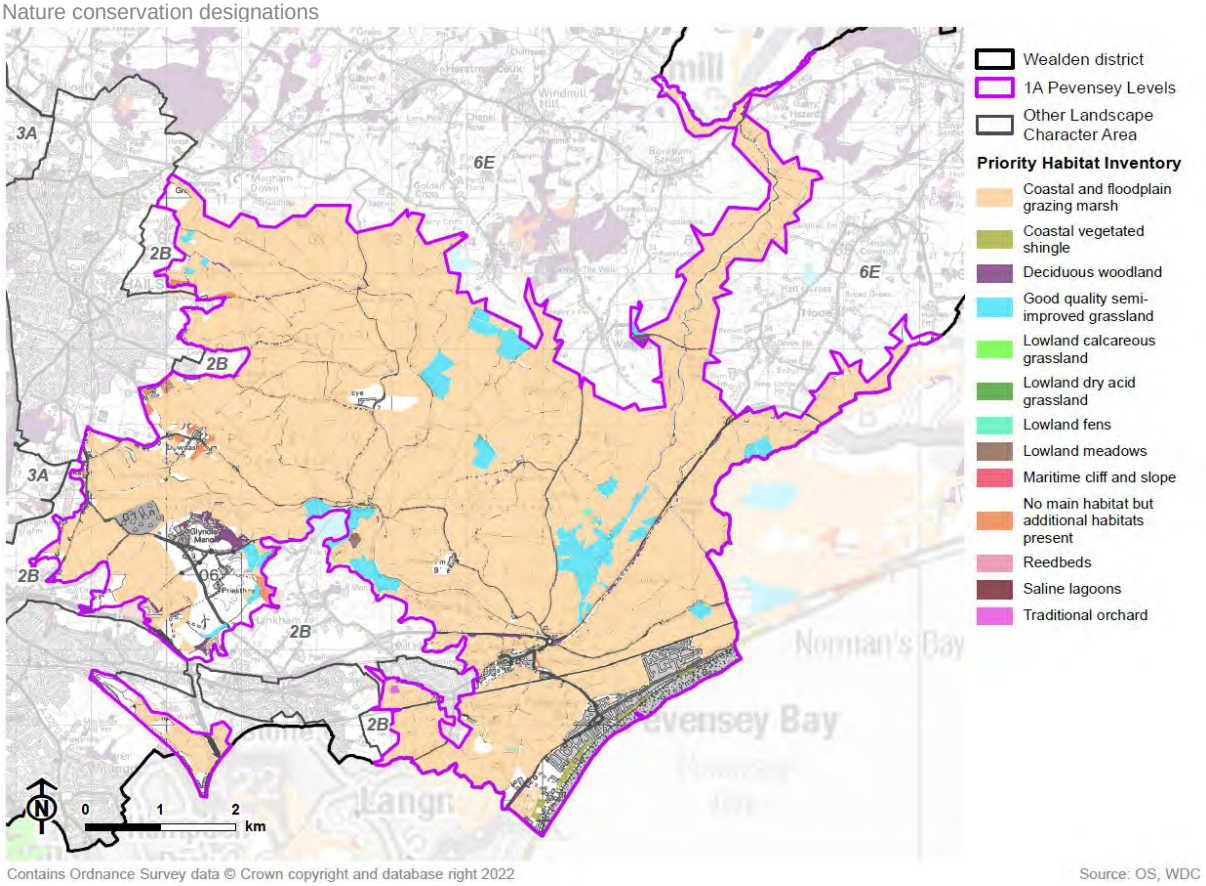
Martello Tower, now within Pevensey Bay



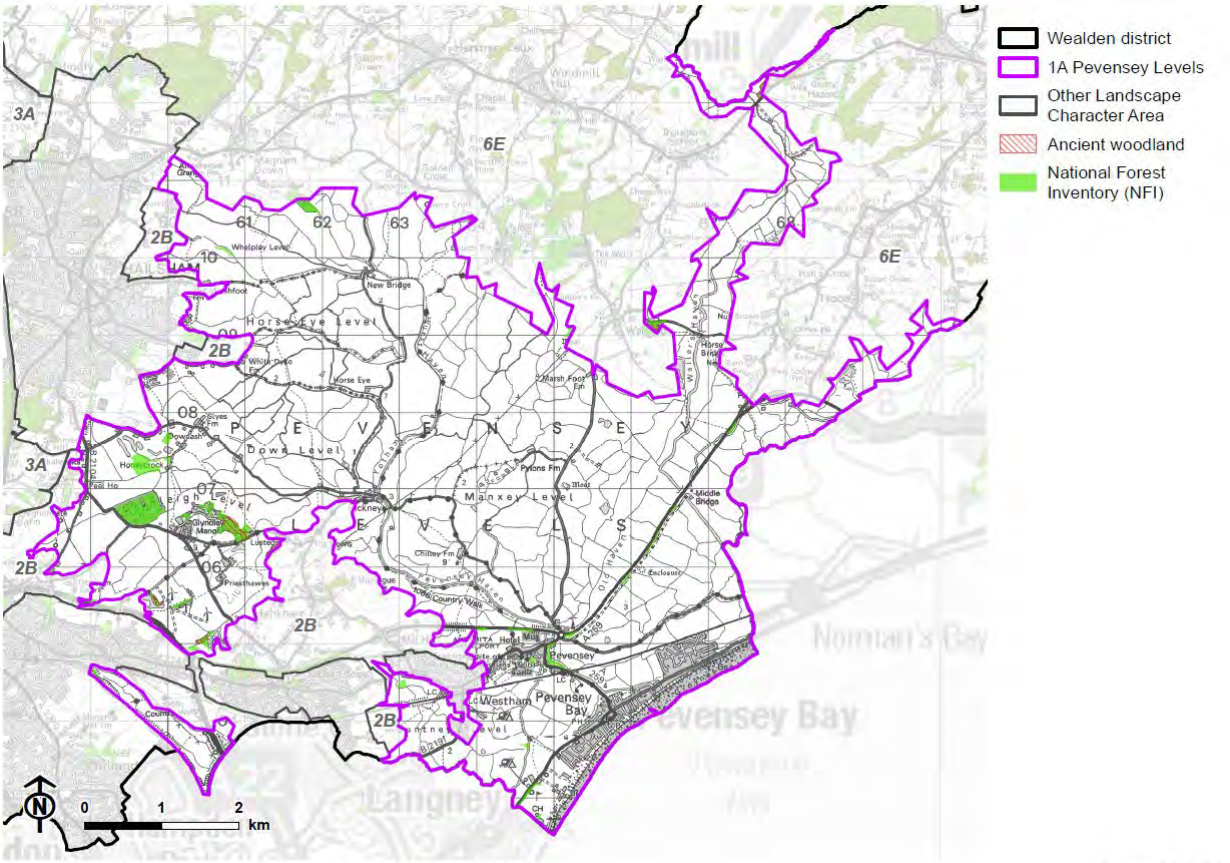
Wetland habitats with views to the South Downs



Nature conservation designations



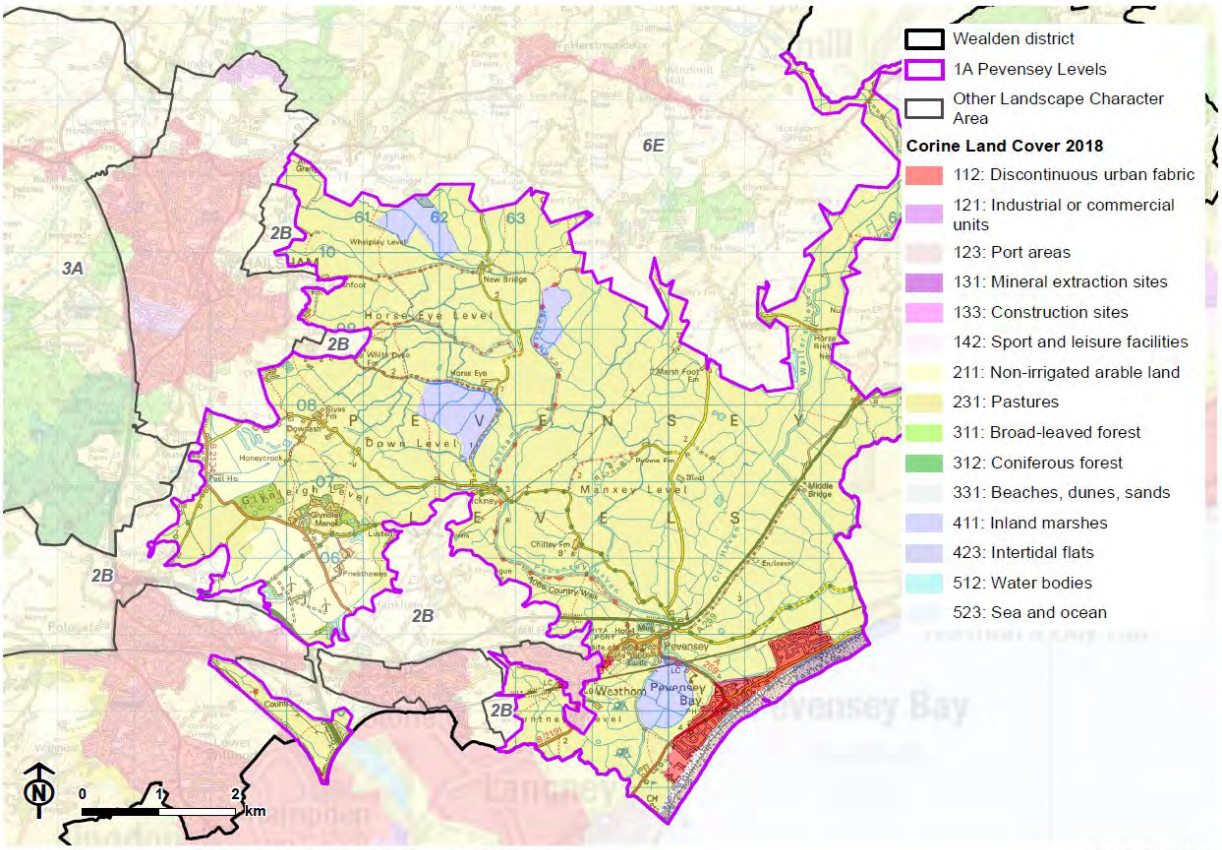
Priority habitat coverage



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Source: OS, WDC

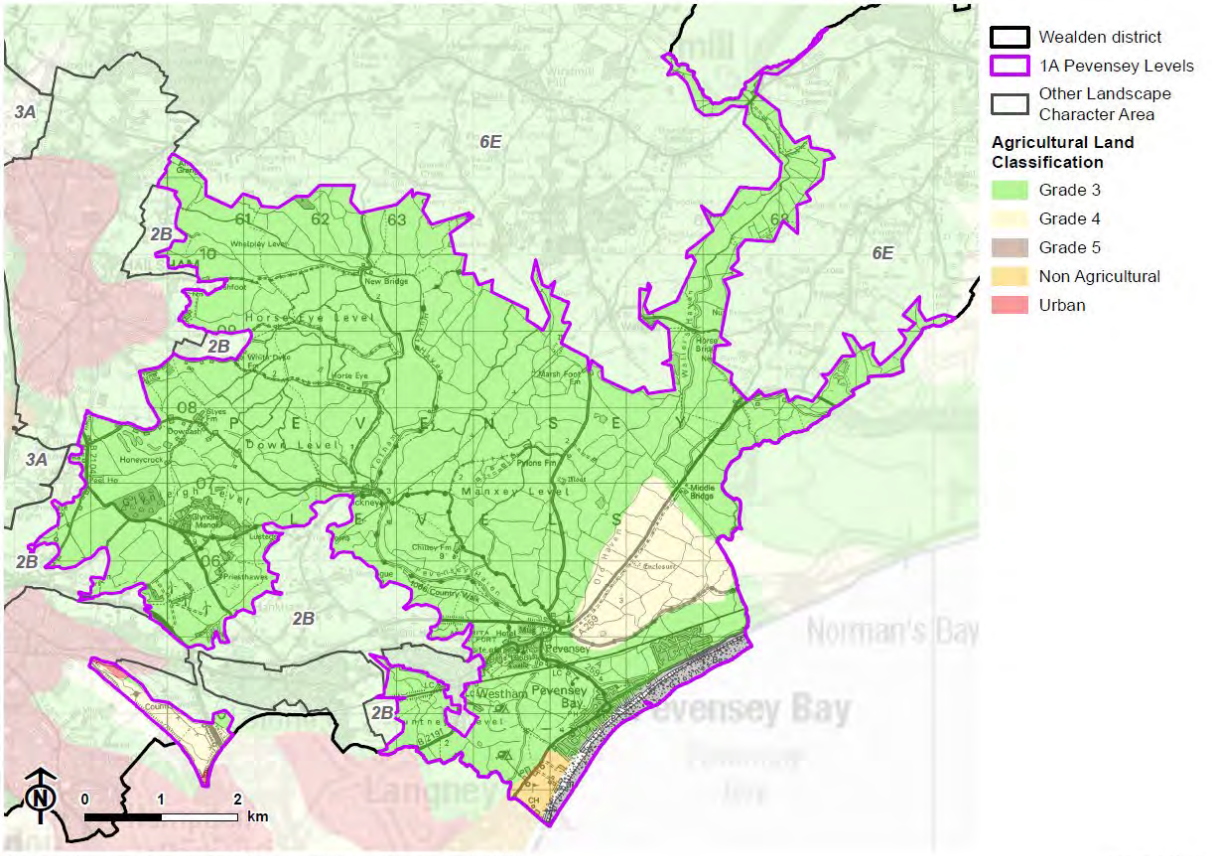
Woodland coverage



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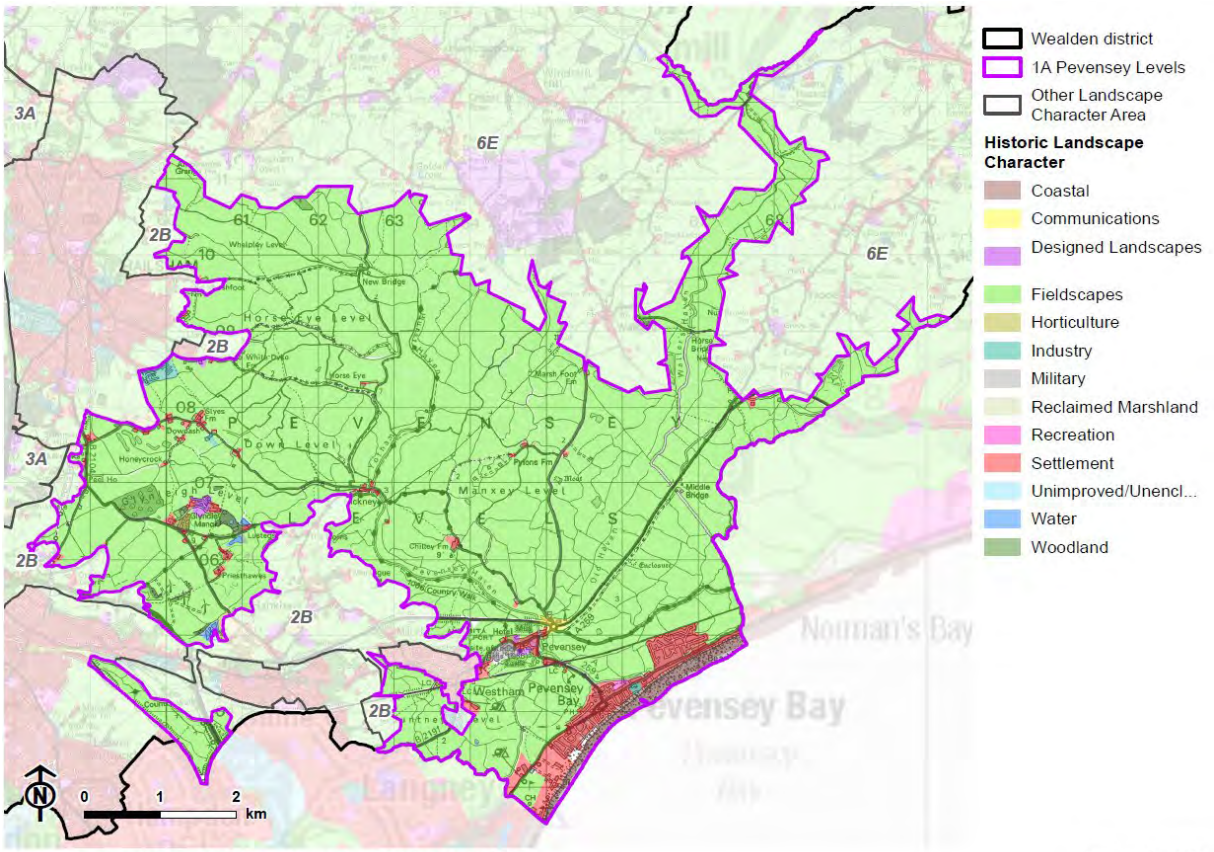
Source: OS, WDC

Landcover type (CORINE Land cover inventory 2018)



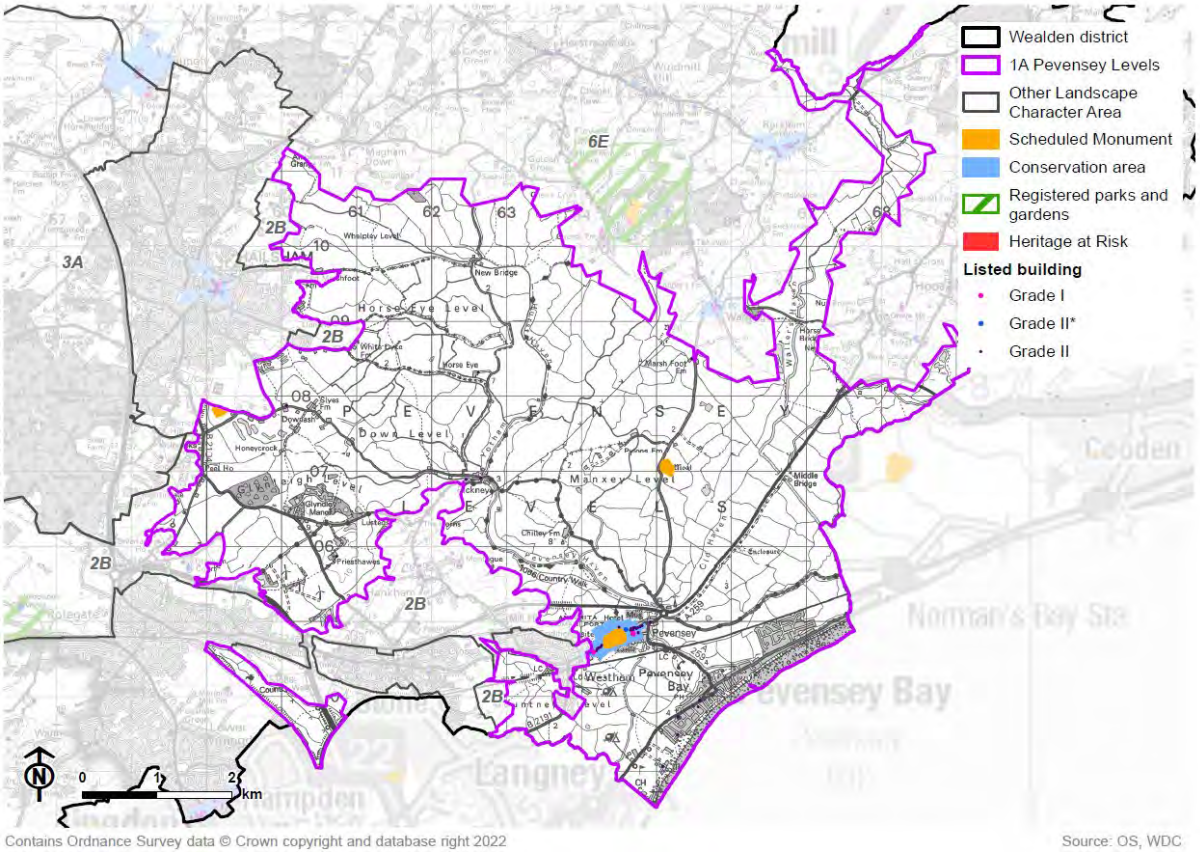
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Agricultural Landscape Classification



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Historic Landscape Characterisation



Cultural heritage designations

Landscape qualities

The following features and characteristics are particularly valued for their contribution to character and for the ecosystem services they provide:

- The complex system of streams, including Waller's Haven, dykes and drainage ditches that supply water for nearby settlements (notably Bexhill), and provide a flood defence line from coastal flooding for inland settlements.
- The distinctive shingle ridge between the reclaimed saltmarsh and the sea, which provides a connection to geological history and provides coastal protection (man-made defences have resisted the natural process of shoreline retreat).
- The wet meadows, grazing marsh, scrub (some trees), reed-fringed ditches and areas of standing water, including those designated as SSSI, SAC, and Ramsar that support biodiversity and provide nutrient filtration, enhancing water quality.
- The grazing marsh that allows soil stabilisation/ retention as well as having a higher soil carbon content than cultivated habitats, providing a carbon sink.
- The unsettled character of the floodplain landscape, which allows natural flooding to occur.
- The historic features of the landscape (drainage and field patterns, former salt works, medieval settlement sites, the fishing village of Wallsend and buildings constructed from local materials) that provide a connection to history, cultural identity and aesthetic value.
- The sense of tranquillity and rural remoteness experienced via the extensive network of public rights of way, that contributes to health and mental well-being, which is especially important for residents of Hailsham, where there is greater deprivation that the rest of the district.
- The long open views across the landscape, including to the South Downs and High Weald, which provide a sense of place.
- The strong historic links to the coastline, with a symbolically important Roman/Saxon site at Pevensey Castle that witnessed the beginning of Norman rule in Britain and other defensive structures including the Martello Towers that provide a connection to history and cultural identity.

Forces for change

- Coastal erosion (the shoreline is naturally retreating) and climate change could result in further erosion pressure through sea level rise and storm events. The Shoreline Management Plan[1] has a policy of 'hold the line' which could require some substantial engineered structures to preserve communities along this coastline.
- Climate change leading to increasing periods of drought, increased temperatures and water abstraction could result in drying of the marsh, changes in water levels and stream slows.
- Changes in water quality entering the wetland could result in the growth of dense algal carpets, reducing the biodiversity of the wetland and causing visual changes in the landscape.
- Climate change and / or a lack of appropriate management of valued wet grassland or shingle habitats could result in changes in flora and an increase in pests and diseases.
- The potential spread of invasive plants in water courses (for example Floating Pennywort and New Zealand pygmyweed) could affect the native flora and fauna.
- Maintenance regimes, agricultural intensification and drainage works could result in the sterilisation of drainage ditches and streams, loss of reedbeds and other waterside vegetation and an increase in scrub, degrading the landscape pattern of grazed meadows bound by vegetated watercourses.
- Changes in grazing pressure, both over grazing and under grazing, as a result of climate change and changing markets / agricultural practices, could be damaging to the biodiversity of grassland habitats and change the existing character of the pastoral landscape.
- Increase in hobby farming and conversion of grazing fields to horse use, and the consequent subdivision of fields with horse tape or post and wire fencing could change the open character of the landscape.
- Expansion of built development around Pevensey Bay, including holiday chalets, caravan and mobile home parks, could affect the rural and remote character of the marshes, increase traffic and potentially change drainage and water levels.
- Expansion of urban areas surrounding the marshes, including Polegate and Hailsham has the potential to affect the sense of remoteness and open views from the Pevensey Levels.
- Electricity pylons are highly visible and detract from the big skies of this flat, open landscape. Building of intrusive modern farm buildings could also draw the eye in this open landscape.
- The A259 brings noise and movement into the otherwise rural and tranquil landscape and an increase in traffic could detract further from the remote character of the landscape.
- Potential pressure for renewable infrastructure, both within the LCA and seen in views from the LCA (e.g. on-shore and off-shore wind turbines and solar farms on open areas, and associated grid connections), which could impact the remote character and long open views.

[1] South East Coastal Group (2006) South Foreland to Beachy Head Shoreline Management Plan https://se-coastalgroup.org.uk/shoreline-management-plans/south-foreland-to-beachy-head/

Landscape Guidelines

These guidelines recommend how the landscape can be managed to ensure future change respects local character:

- Aim to integrate coastal defences and to make them as naturalistic in appearance as possible and enabling recreational use of the coast, as well as maintaining open views between the coastline and sea.
- Preserve shingle habitats and seek opportunities to create new ones.
- Keep the land as wet as possible and maintain ditch water levels as constant as possible (monitoring water abstraction, especially as periods of drought increase) – refer to the Pevensey Levels Water Level Management Plan. Create scrapes to encourage wetland areas.
- Monitor and manage nutrients coming into the marsh, dispose of ditch dredgings at least 5m from the ditch and refrain from the use of fertilisers, herbicides and pesticides, in line with requirements in this Nitrate Vulnerable Zone.
- Monitor potential changes in flora and increase in pests and diseases as a result of climate change and management regimes, including spread of invasive plants and animals in water courses.
- Conserve and restore ditches, reedbeds and grazing marsh, and improve the diversity and connectivity of these habitats, in line with the aims of the Pevensey Levels BOA, SSSI, SAC, Ramsar site and NNR.
- Support proposals to enable the management, conservation, and restoration of traditional grazing marsh to maximise both landscape and biodiversity benefits.

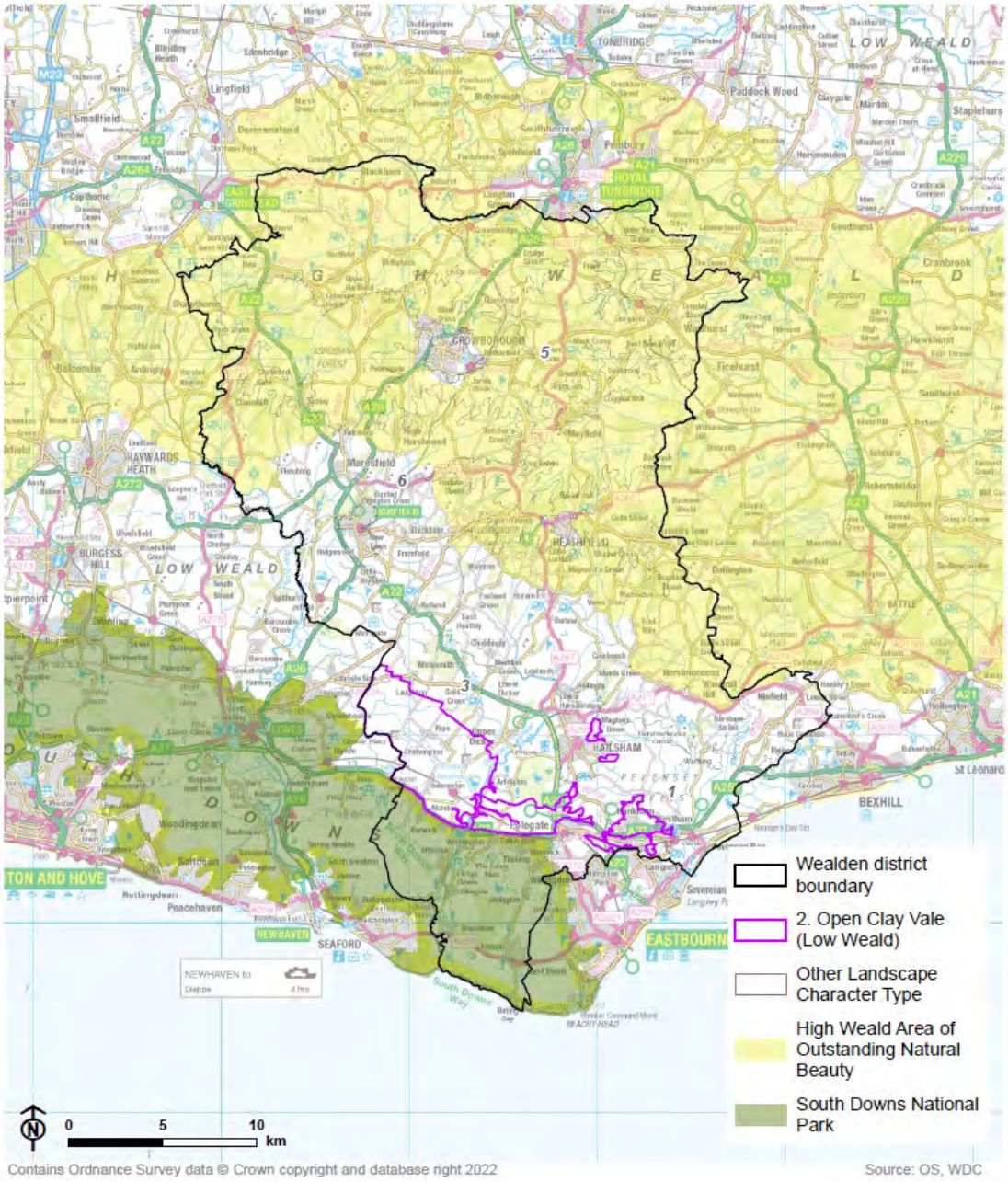


The pebble beach at Pevensey Bay

- Conserve the traditional field pattern of dykes and ditches and traditional grazing marsh character of small, grazed fields balancing this with wetland creation projects.
- Encourage sympathetic integration of horse paddocks, minimising the use of horse tape and avoiding overgrazing of pastures.
- Conserve the 'remote' character of the Pevensey Levels, and its very low-density settlement pattern by limiting development, especially in the rural areas – ensure any building is reflective of the local vernacular in use of materials and has a strong local identity.
- The open character of the landscape accentuates the visual impact of proposals over a wide distance. Avoid development in adjacent areas that could result in the interruption of views of large open skies or horizons or impinge on the remote undeveloped quality of the landscape – and ensure it does not 'spill' into this landscape type.
- Consider ways to prevent modern farm buildings drawing the eye through sympathetic architecture, siting and materiality/ colour.
- Maintain long views to the chalk ridge of the South Downs to the south-west and wooded skylines of the High Weald to the north.
- Manage recreational use to conserve the biodiversity interest of the wetlands, maintaining existing rights of way access and considering opportunities to provide further low-key footpath access.
- Celebrate the history and cultural heritage of the area, including the area's connections with Roman and Norman invasions, providing interpretation that tells the story of the landscape and how it has changed over time.
- Maintain the rural character of the landscape and its roads and the sense of remoteness and tranquillity (and dark skies in its core).
- Ensure any renewable energy generation is compatible with the guidance above and is in scale with the landscape where possible (acknowledging that wind turbines may transcend the scale of existing features in the landscape). Electricity infrastructure associated with renewable energy generation should be efficiently planned to minimise the number of lines required, routeing in accordance with the Holford Rules[2].

[2] The Holford Rules

Landscape Character Type 2: Open Clay Vale (Low Weald)



The Open Clay Vale (Low Weald) landscape character type is a low-lying landscape, typically between 15 and 30m AOD. It is defined by its open character, which contrasts with the wooded landscapes to the north (LCT 3 Wooded Clay Vale), and by a change in geology from Greensand and Gault mudstones to the Wealden Clay mudstones underlying LCT 3. Small streams and tributaries cross the landscape, which has a relatively open character due to the limited woodland. Agricultural land use is mixed, with arable cropping and sheep grazing. dispersed settlements are linked by minor roads.

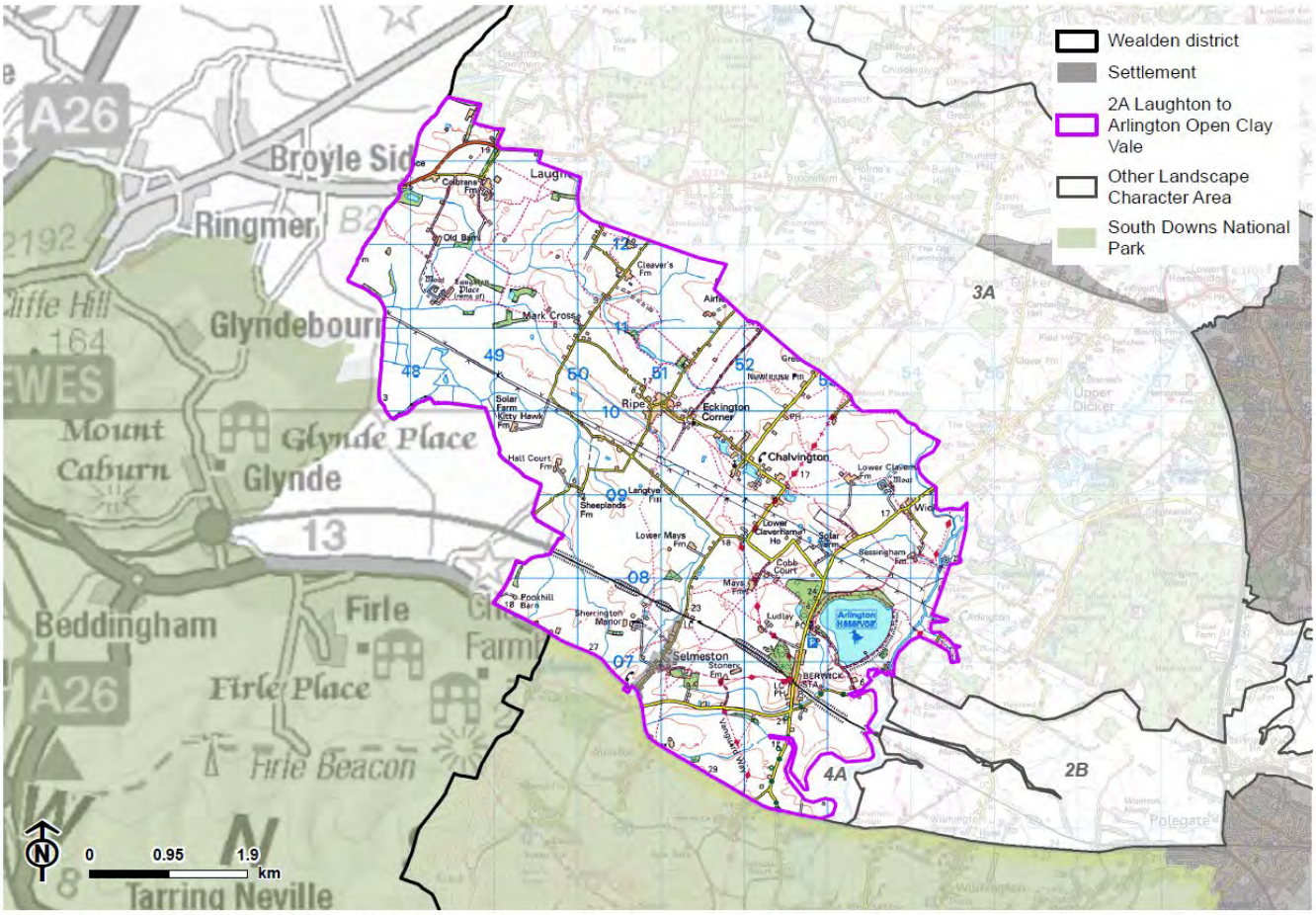
There are two Landscape Character Areas within this Landscape Character Type:

- 2A: Laughton to Arlington Open Clay Vale
- 2B: Polegate Open Clay Vale

LCA 2A: Laughton to Arlington Open Clay Vale

Location and summary

The Laughton to Arlington Open Clay Vale (Low Weald) is a low-lying landscape of mixed arable and pasture farmland with a small-scale settlement pattern of historic villages linked by a network of rural roads. Limited tree cover leads to open views south towards the South Downs.



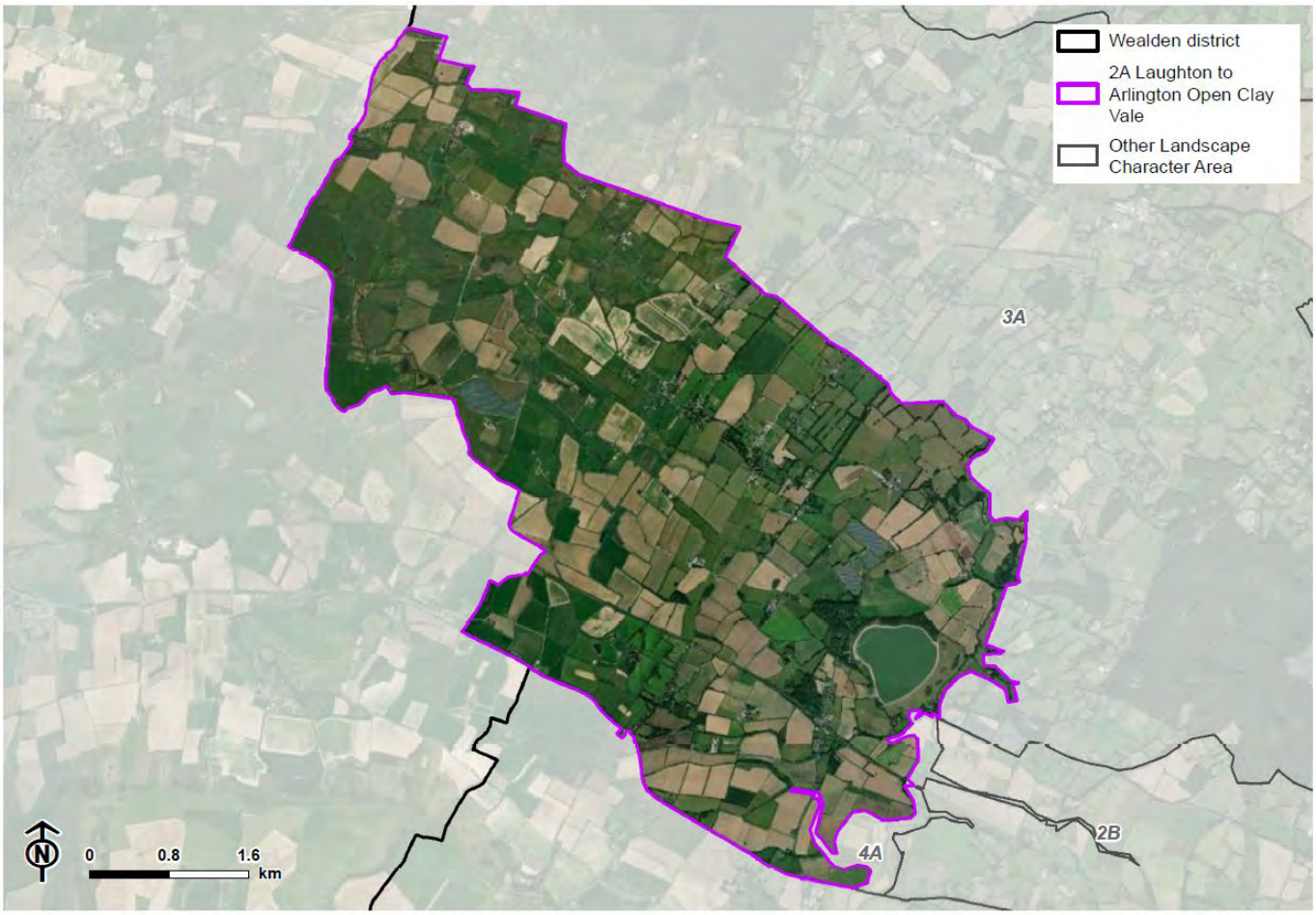
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Open, gently sloping fields with wooded backdrop and mature hedgerows.

Key Characteristics

- The mudstones, sandstones and siltstones of the underlying geology give rise to the flat to gently sloping low-lying landform, generally 10-20m AOD. The Laughton Levels have a distinctive flat topography, from 5-15m AOD.
- Small streams and drainage ditches, particularly at Laughton Levels, cross the landscape. The canalised channel of the Cuckmere River drains from the southern slopes of the Weald to the coast. Field ponds are common at Chalvington and Selmeston.
- Woodland is very limited, with scattered small blocks of priority habitat deciduous woodland, much of which is ancient.
- The Laughton Levels are an area of biodiversity value that supports wetland flora and fauna, including priority habitat floodplain grazing marsh and good quality semi-improved grassland.
- Medium to heavy clay-rich soils support arable cropping and smaller areas of sheep grazing pasture.
- Fields are regular in shape and medium to large in scale, formed by formal planned enclosure. They are bound by hedgerows with mature trees, although there is some reinforcement with post and wire fencing.
- Arlington Reservoir, created in 1971, is enclosed by priority habitat deciduous woodland. It is designated as a SSSI and LNR as an important site for wintering wigeon.
- A small-scale settlement pattern of historic rural hamlets and villages, which has changed little since the 19th century. The hamlets and villages contain numerous listed buildings, reflected in their designation as Conservation Areas. Scattered historic manors, farmsteads and barns are found outside the settlements.
- Typical local built vernacular includes timber framed buildings with red brick or tile upper floors.
- Other historic features include Medieval moated sites at Claverham and Laughton Place, and the remains of a Medieval settlement east of Arlington, all designated as Scheduled Monuments.
- The straight minor rural roads are remnants of historic transhumance (the seasonal movement of men and animal between different grazing grounds in the South Downs and the Wealden forests). Roads are often lined by mature trees and hedgerows, creating pockets of enclosure.
- A strong public right of way network, including the promoted Vanguard Way, allowing for access and enjoyment throughout the landscape. Arlington Reservoir is a popular recreation spot.
- A rural landscape with dark night skies and high levels of tranquillity, particularly away from the A27 and railway line.
- An open windswept landscape with long views to the dramatic South Downs in the south. The High Weald provides a wooded backdrop to the north.



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Key Influences

Landform and drainage

The Laughton to Arlington Open Clay Vale is a low-lying landscape typically around 10-20m AOD, although the flat landscape of the Laughton Level in the west lies below 10m AOD. A number of small meandering streams and drainage ditches cross the landscape draining into the Ouse and Cuckmere. Field ponds are common. The Laughton Levels is the floodplain for the Glynde Reach, which drains south-west into the River Ouse, in Lewes District.

Bedrock and superficial geology

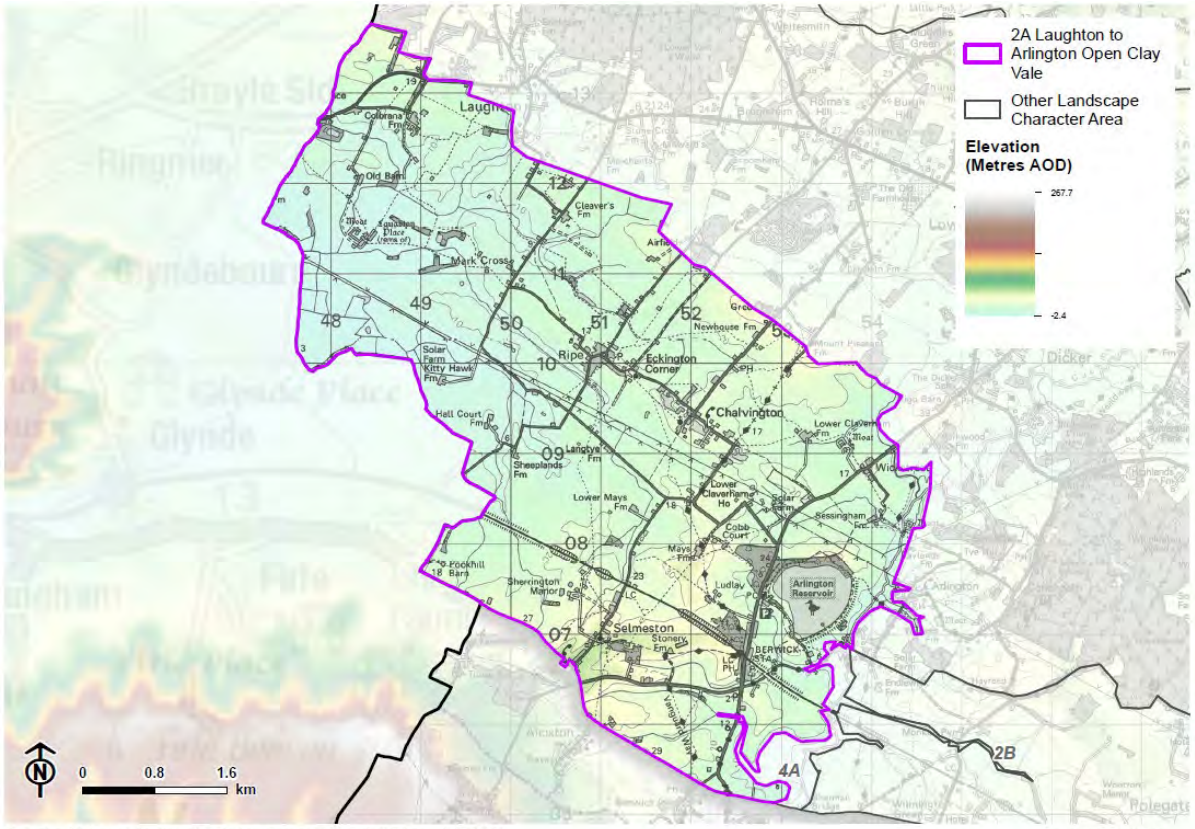
The Laughton to Arlington Open Clay Vale is underlain by the mudstone, sandstone and siltstones of the Gault Formation and Lower Greensand Group, laid down in the Jurassic period under shallow marine conditions. Head deposits (fragmented weathered material moved downslope by freeze-thaw activity) are common, with areas of alluvium along the Glynde Reach and Cuckmere river corridors. The landscape is generally graded 3 ('good to moderate') in the agricultural land classification, with small areas of grade 4 ('poor') to the west and north of Arlington Reservoir.

Semi-natural habitats

The Laughton Levels contain priority habitat floodplain grazing marsh and good quality semi-improved grassland. Arlington Reservoir is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) for its importance for wintering birds including the wigeon, as well as being a Local Nature Reserve (LNR).

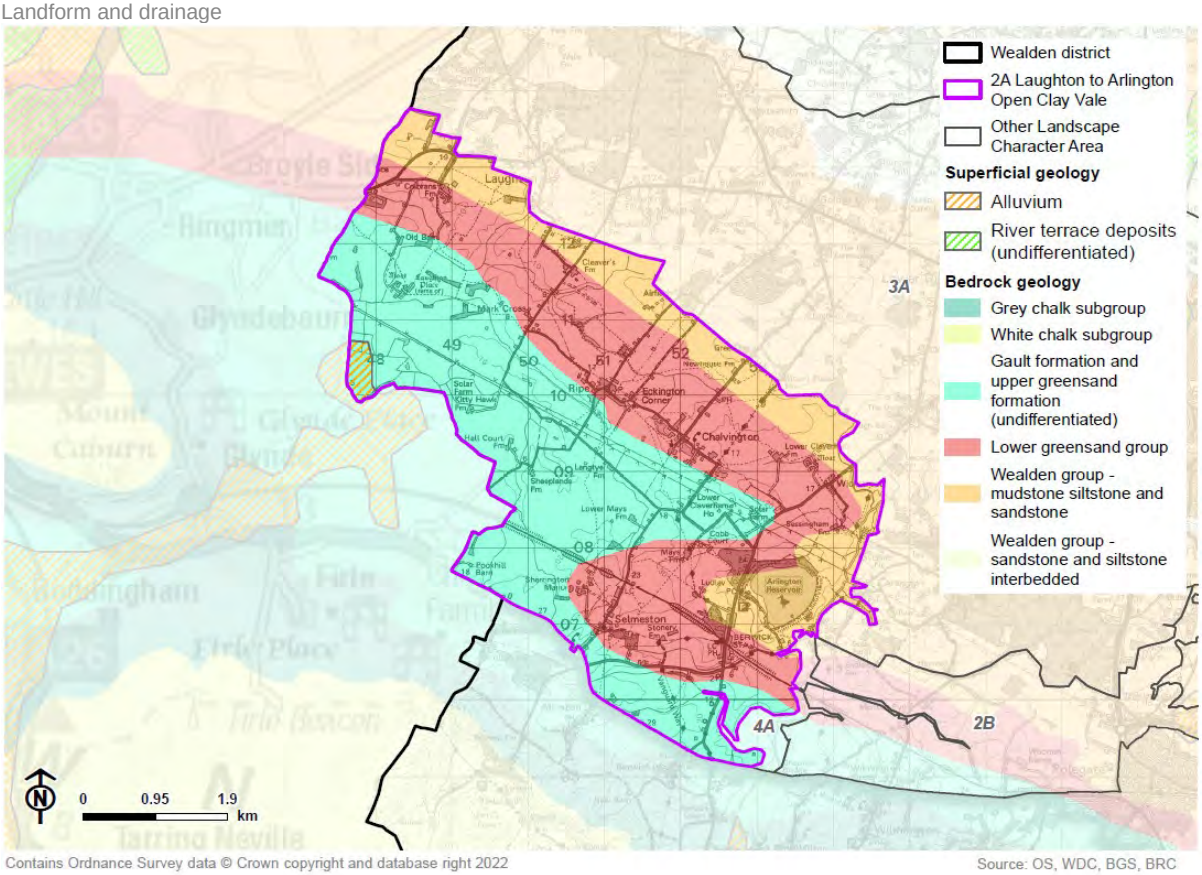
Priority habitat deciduous woodlands are scattered across the LCA, including at Ludlay Coppice, designated as a Local Wildlife Site (LWS). Small priority habitat traditional orchards are found at Chalvington and Ripe.

The Lewes Brooks and Ouse Valley and Cuckmere Ouse Catchment Biodiversity Opportunity Areas (BOAs) cover the Laughton Levels and extend around Arlington Reservoir. These are priority areas for the devlivery of Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) targets, and there are opportunities for wetland habitat enhancement, restoration and creation, and floodplain restoration and reconnection.



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Landform and drainage



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Bedrock and superficial geology

Landcover

Landcover is dominated by arable cultivation, with areas of sheep pasture around Arlington Reservoir and at Laughton Levels. Woodland is small-scale and irregular, although there are some larger blocks of woodland around Arlington Reservoir (including Ludlay Coppice).



Typical view of arable and pasture landscape with mature hedgerow trees

Historic landscape

Settlements within this LCA were historically limited to small villages and farmsteads, that developed in a linear manner on the rural road network. The north-south straight roads throughout the landscape are remnants of drove routes, including The Street in Selmeston. These were used to drive livestock between the Wealden forests and the pasture on the South Downs, known as transhumance.

The linear villages of Ripe, Chalvington and Selmeston retain their historic character, and are designated as Conservation Areas. There are numerous listed buildings within the villages, and farmsteads, cottages and small manors outside of the settlements, such as Cobb Court and the ruins of Laughton Place (now a Scheduled Monument). Traditional buildings are often made of brick, with timber-framed and weather-boarded buildings common.

The Sussex Historic Landscape Character Assessment shows a field pattern largely derived from formal planned enclosure, resulting in medium-large fields with straight hedgerow boundaries. Rare examples of co-axial fields, with a strong 'ladder' pattern, possibly dating from the Anglo-Saxon period, are found around the historic villages of Chalvington and Ripe. Cohesive assart field systems, created by clearance of woodland and enclosure of the land into fields, are found at May Farms and Lower Claverham Farm, suggesting greater woodland cover in the past. There have been some modern field amalgamations in the north-west to accommodate 20th century farming practices.

The Arlington Reservoir was built in 1971 to meet the growing demand for drinking water throughout East Sussex. The reservoir is filled with water pumped from the Cuckmere River when flows are high and can store up to 8,300 million litres of water.

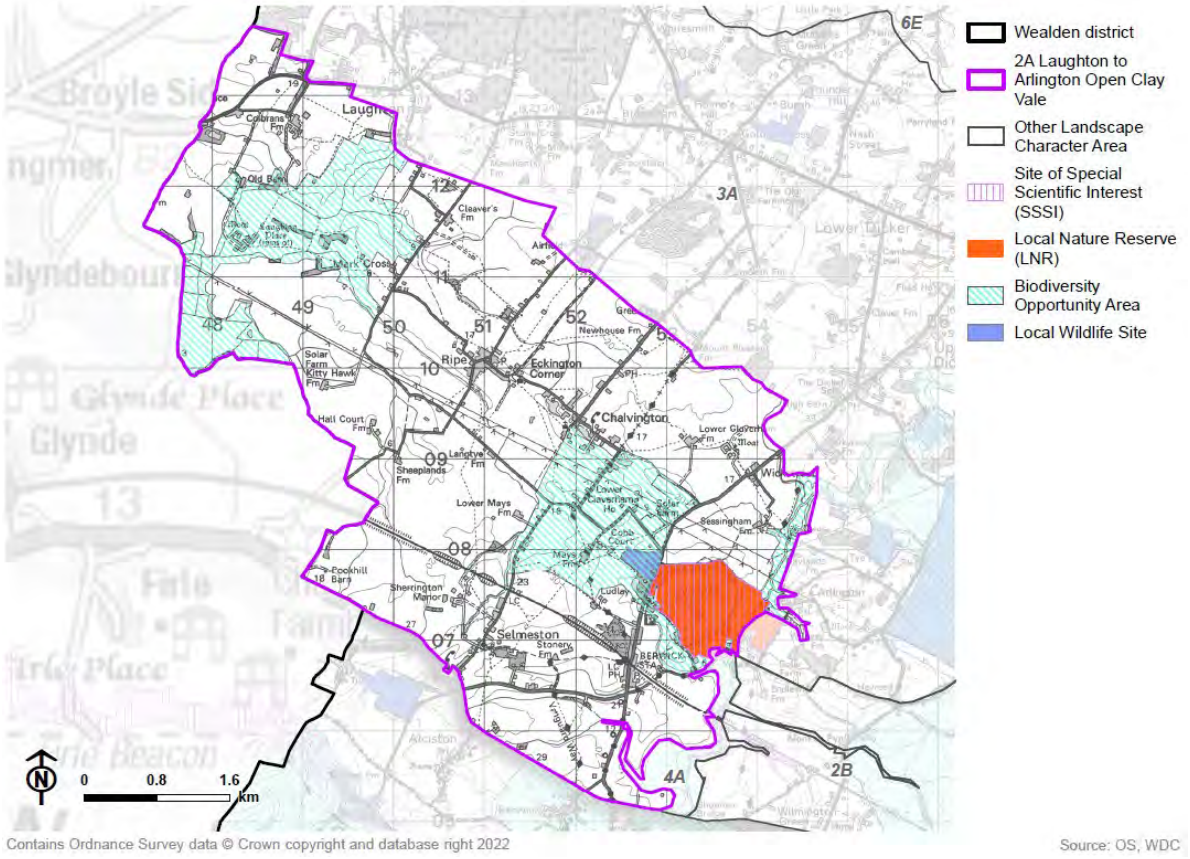
Perceptual character

The overriding rural character of the low-lying landscape, and long open views to the South Downs and High Weald, contribute to a sense of remoteness. The Laughton to Arlington Open Clay Vales LCA has high levels of tranquillity and dark skies, particularly in its core.

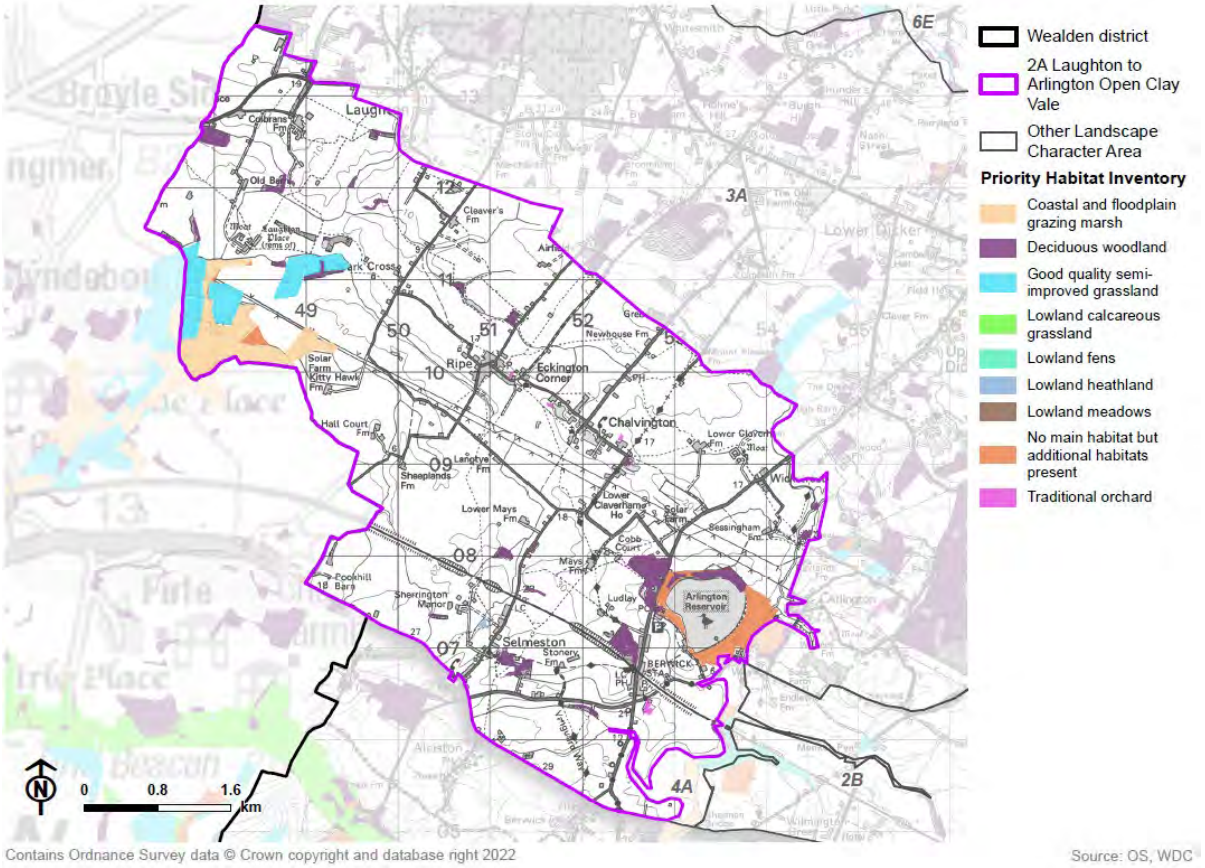
The A27, railway line, electricity pylons, solar farms and views to wind turbines in adjacent landscapes, detract from the rural character and remoteness of this area.



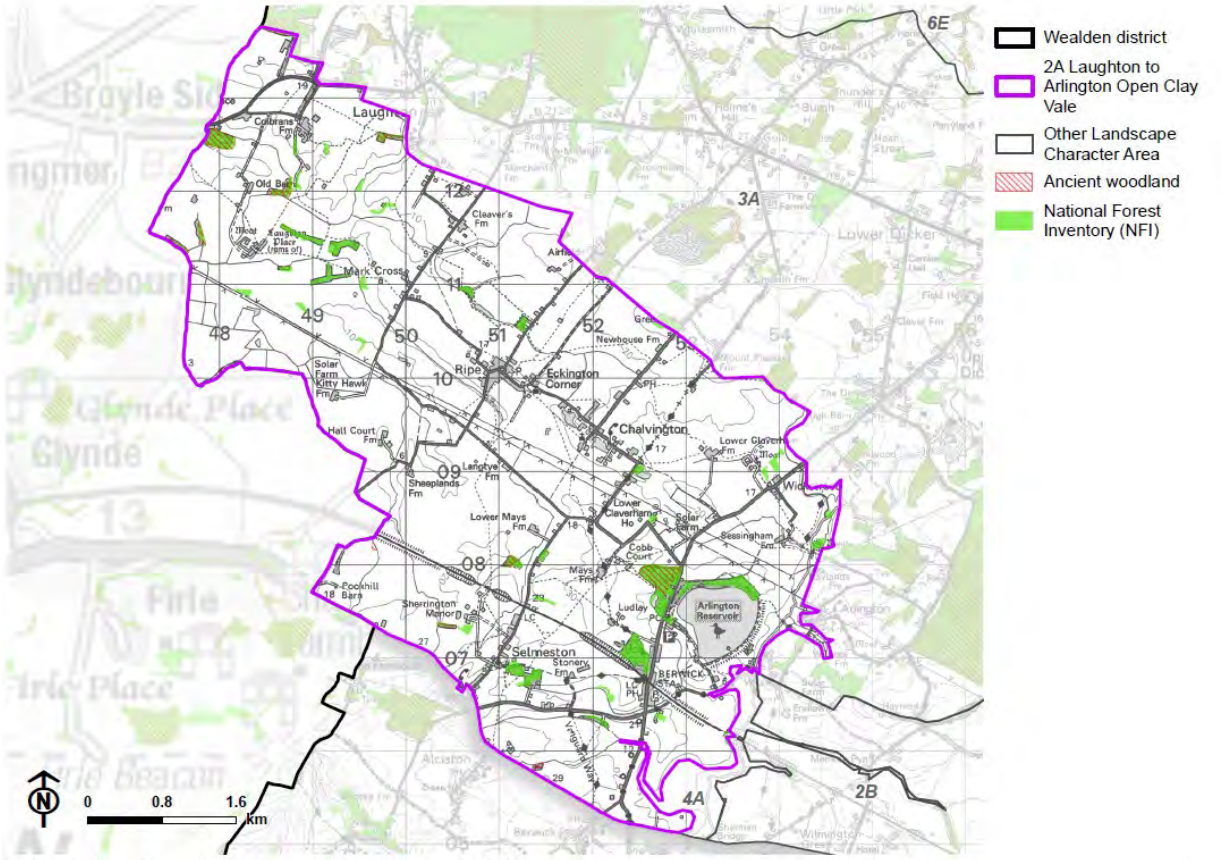
Pasture fields with electricity pylons and solar farm visible in front of the wooded backdrop



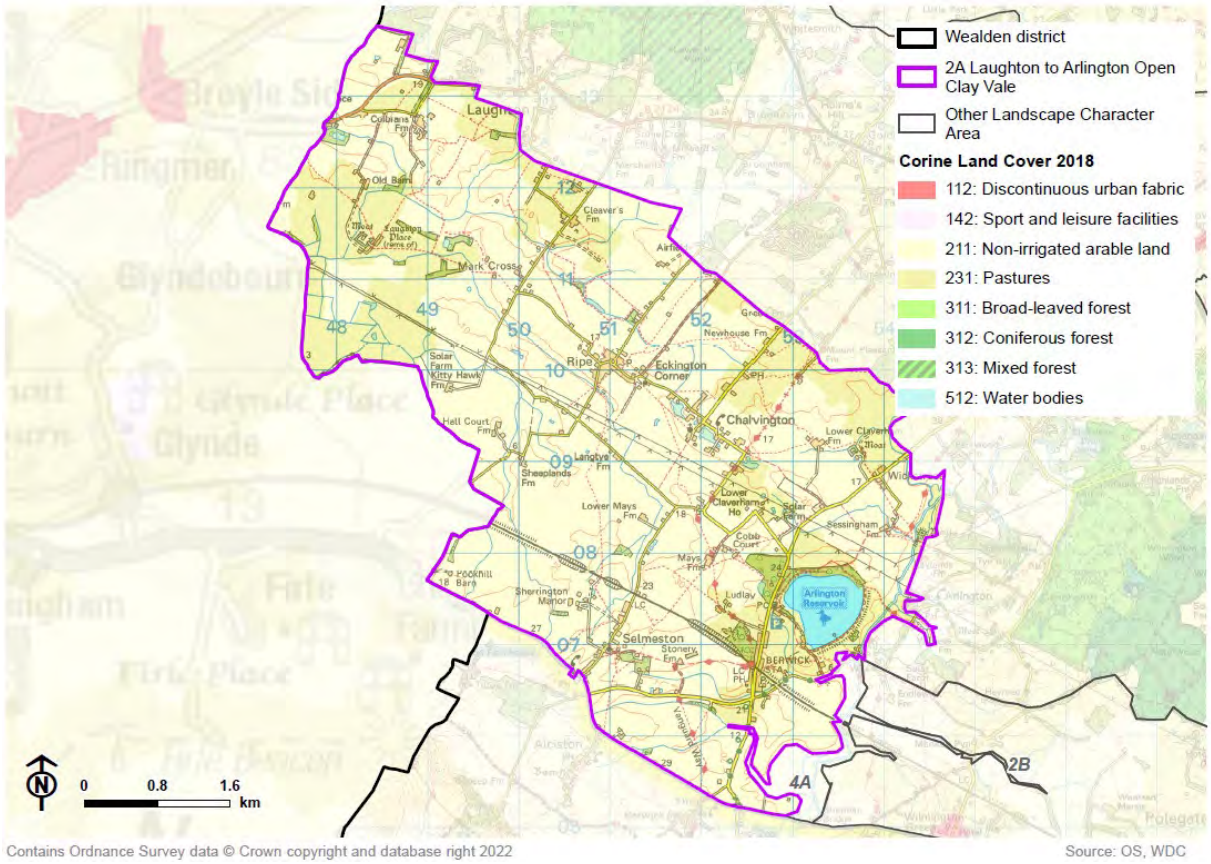
Nature conservation designations



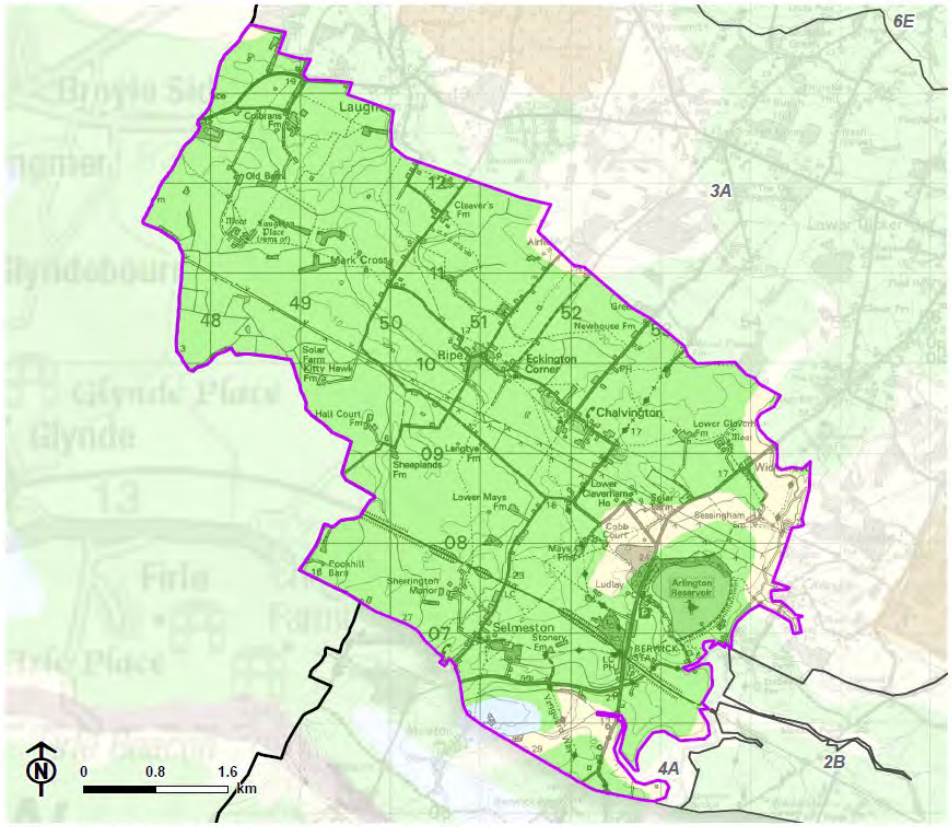
Priority habitat coverage



Woodland coverage



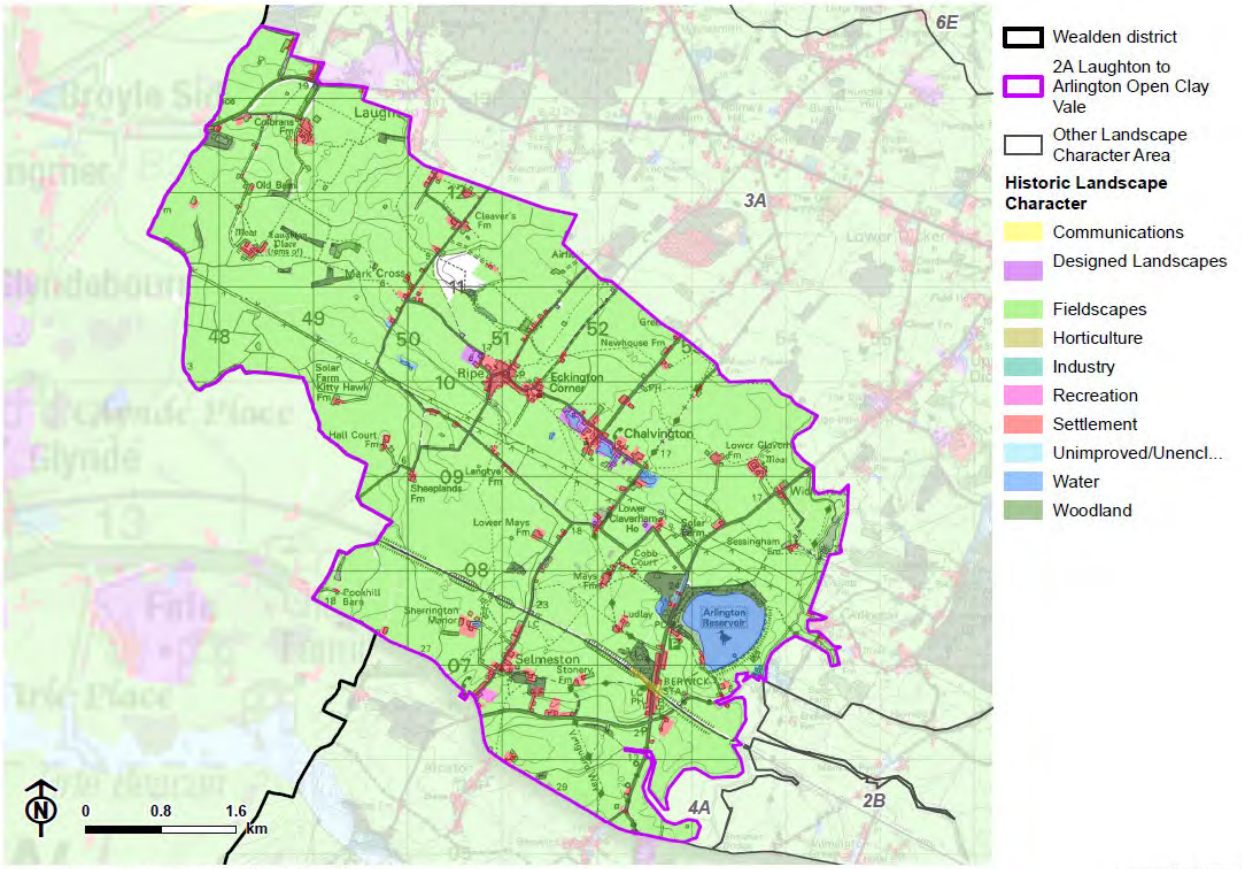
Landcover types (CORINE Land cover inventory 2018)



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Source: OS, NE

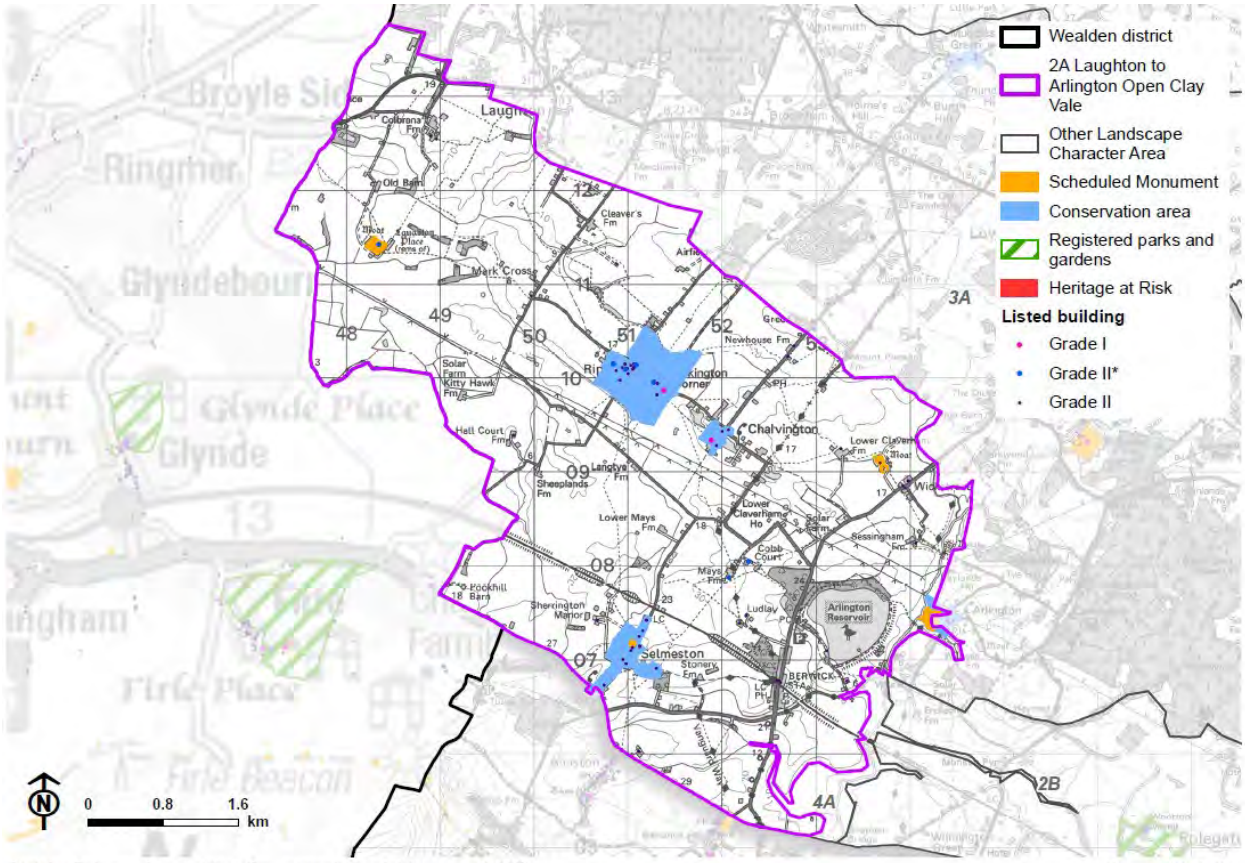
Agricultural Landscape Classification



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Source: OS, WDC

Historic Landscape Characterisation



Cultural heritage designations

Landscape qualities

The following features and characteristics are particularly valued for their contribution to character and for the ecosystem services they provide:

- The streams and drainage ditches, in combination with the clayey soils, that help to control flooding downstream and protect aquifers.
- The small woodlands and hedgerow boundaries
- The landscape pattern of small ancient woodlands, historic field patterns and field ponds create a sense of place and local distinctiveness.
- The hedgerow network provides landscape structure, habitat connectivity to support biodiversity, aid the absorption of airborne pollutants and facilitate carbon sequestration and the regulation of temperatures.
- The floodplain grazing marsh, good quality unimproved grassland and areas of permanent pasture at Arlington Reservoir and Laughton Levels allow soil stabilisation/retention, provide higher biodiversity value that supports flora and fauna, and the undisturbed soils provide carbon storage.
- The Arlington Reservoir supplies water to Eastbourne, Hailsham, Polegate and Heathfield, and supports nationally important populations of wintering birds, important for biodiversity.
- The historic settlement pattern of small villages and hamlets, with small manors outside of settlements, create time depth, provide a connection to history, cultural identity and local distinctiveness.
- The vernacular of brick which reflects the locally available materials and provides a sense of place.
- The rural road pattern resulting from transhumance create a sense of time depth as well as a physical and cultural link to the South Downs and the High Weald.
- The sense of tranquillity and rurality experienced via the extensive network of public rights of way, contributes to people's health and mental well-being.
- The windswept character and long open views to the South Downs and High Weald, which provide a sense of place.

Forces for change

- Climate change leading to increasing periods of drought and higher temperatures, resulting in drying of floodplain grazing marsh or conversely an increase in the frequency and severity of seasonal flooding in low-lying areas, particularly at Laughton Levels.
- Increasing water abstraction reducing water flow in ditches, small streams and rivers and resulting in a decline of water course habitats.
- Spread of invasive plants and animals in water courses, affecting the native flora and fauna (for example Floating Pennywort).
- Climate change and a lack of traditional woodland management resulting in changes to species composition of the small, scattered woodlands, decline in woodland regeneration and loss of mature trees.
- Changes in agricultural practices (partially as a result of the decline of smaller-sized farms), resulting in the loss of pasture and associated hedgerows and increase in arable cropping, changing the landscape pattern and altering the mixed agricultural character of the landscape.
- Loss and decline of hedgerows and hedgerow trees, and reinforcement with post and wire fencing, which reduces the rural character and sense of enclosure provided by the hedgerow network.
- Increasing pressure for horse paddocks, including division of fields with horse tape, impacting the structure and open character of the landscape.
- Increasing recreation at Arlington, resulting in pressure for additional cark parking and visitor facilities, negatively impacting semi-natural habitats and the nationally important populations of wintering birds that they support.
- Recreational pressures in the wider LCA increasing demand for recreational facilities, which would introduce further built development into the rural landscape.
- Development pressures for housing expanding from settlements within the LCA altering the small-scale settlement pattern. Development pressures outside the LCA impacting the landscape's open views.
- An increase in traffic on rural roads, leading to associated upgrades to roads and infrastructure and reducing the levels of dark night skies, tranquillity and the rural character of minor roads.
- Potential pressure for renewable energy infrastructure (e.g. solar farms in open areas with associated grid connections), which may be out of scale within the landscape, and interrupt the open views.



Arlington Reservoir, an enclosed site important for biodiversity and recreation



View across arable fields to Ripe church

Landscape Guidelines

These guidelines recommend how the landscape can be managed to ensure future change respects local character:

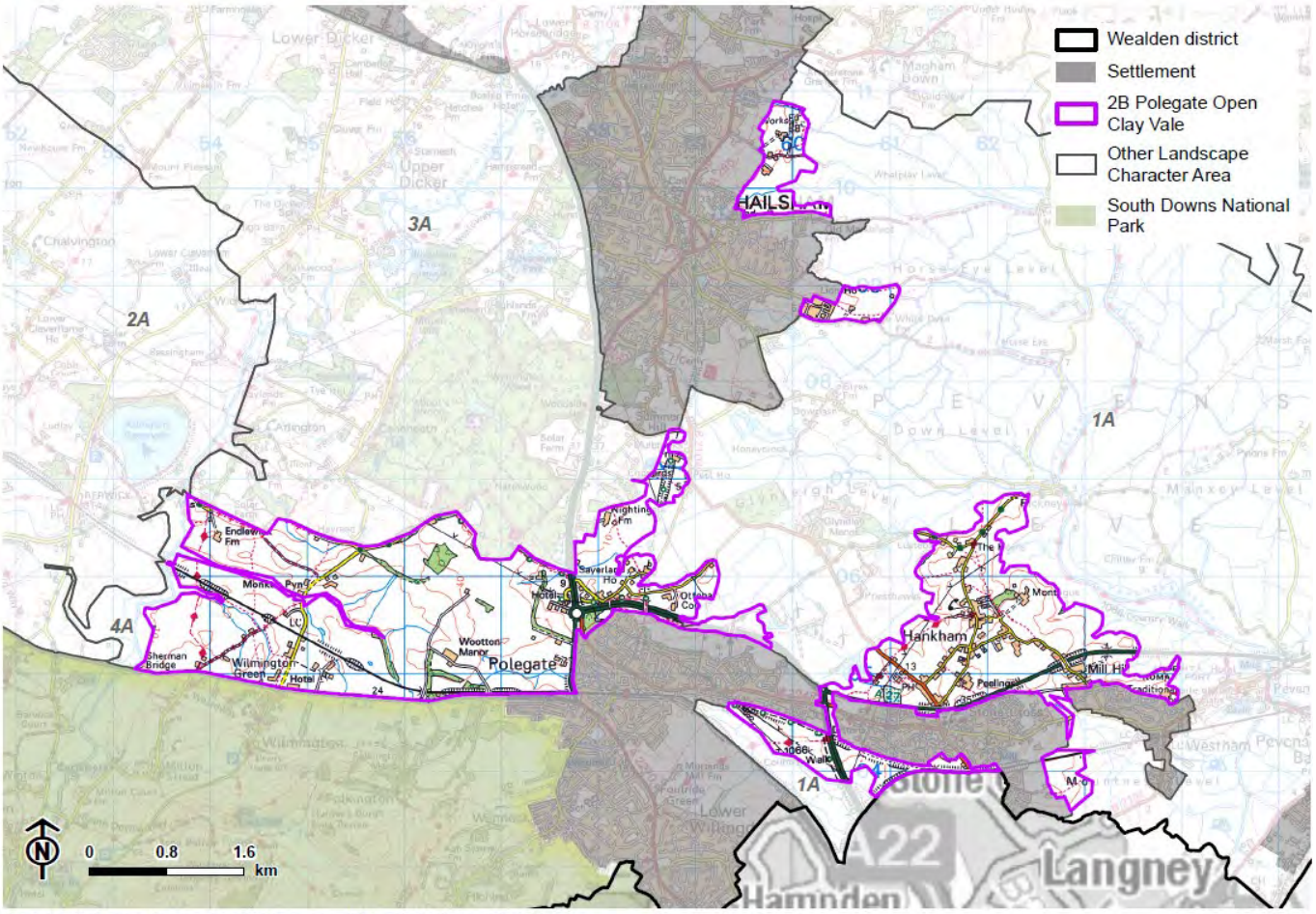
- Reinstate ponds, ditches, and streams and improve the biodiversity and connectivity of wetland habitats, including the Laughton Levels, in line with the aims of the Lewes Brooks and Ouse Valley and Cuckmere Ouse Watershed Biodiversity Opportunity Areas.
- Minimise water pollution from agriculture through sensitive land management practices, including restoration of buffer strips along watercourses and field ponds to minimise run off.
- Monitor potential changes in flora and increase in pests and diseases as a result of climate change, including spread of invasive plants and animals in water courses and woodlands.
- Manage the small areas of deciduous woodland to ensure a diverse species and age structure by thinning, coppicing and replanting as necessary. Consider all the habitats found in woodlands, including shrub layers. As climatic conditions change, plant suitable species and manage the woodlands to improve structure, health and diversity of habitat.
- Increase areas of permanent pasture (aiming to convert arable land to permanent pasture, or create grassland margins to arable fields) and manage to maintain and increase biodiversity.
- Protect and manage existing hedges, and plan for restoration and linkages between hedgerows, to improve landscape structure, connectivity and biodiversity, replacing post and wire fencing where possible.
- Encourage sympathetic integration of any future horse paddocks through the maintenance of hedgerow field boundaries and avoid overgrazing of pastures.
- Ensure management of Arlington reservoir, including any new small-scale development for recreational facilities, follows the management set out by Natural England to retain the favourable SSSI status.
- Preserve the typical settlement pattern of small-scale villages and hamlets, ensuring new development is sympathetic to the historic settlement pattern.
- Encourage use of vernacular materials to maintain the character and sense of place of the historic settlements.
- Ensure new roads or upgrades take account of their rural context and avoid over-engineered features or introduction of lighting into dark areas and protect the historic road pattern resulting from transhumance.
- Consider opportunities to increase interpretation of the impacts of transhumance, including the road network, and the landscape's links to the High Weald.
- Maintain the rural character of the landscape and the sense of tranquillity and dark skies.
- Ensure long-distance views to the South Downs are maintained. Consider intervisibility with the South Downs in any new developments.
- Ensure any renewable energy generation is compatible with the guidance above and is in scale with the landscape where possible (acknowledging that wind turbines may transcend the scale of existing features in the landscape). Electricity infrastructure associated with renewable energy generation should be efficiently planned to minimise the number of lines required, routeing in accordance with the Holford Rules[1].

[1] https://www.nationalgrid.com/sites/default/files/documents/13795-The%20Holford%20Rules.pdf

LCA 2B: Polegate Open Clay Vale

Location and summary

The Polegate Open Clay Vale (Low Weald) is a low-lying landscape of mixed arable and pasture farmland, with a small-scale settlement pattern linked by a network of enclosed rural road corridors. The landscape comprises small-medium fields with a strong hedgerow network. Limited tree cover leads to open views south towards the South Downs. The rural character of the landscape is compromised by its proximity to Hailsham and Polegate and the busy A27 and A22 which cross the landscape.



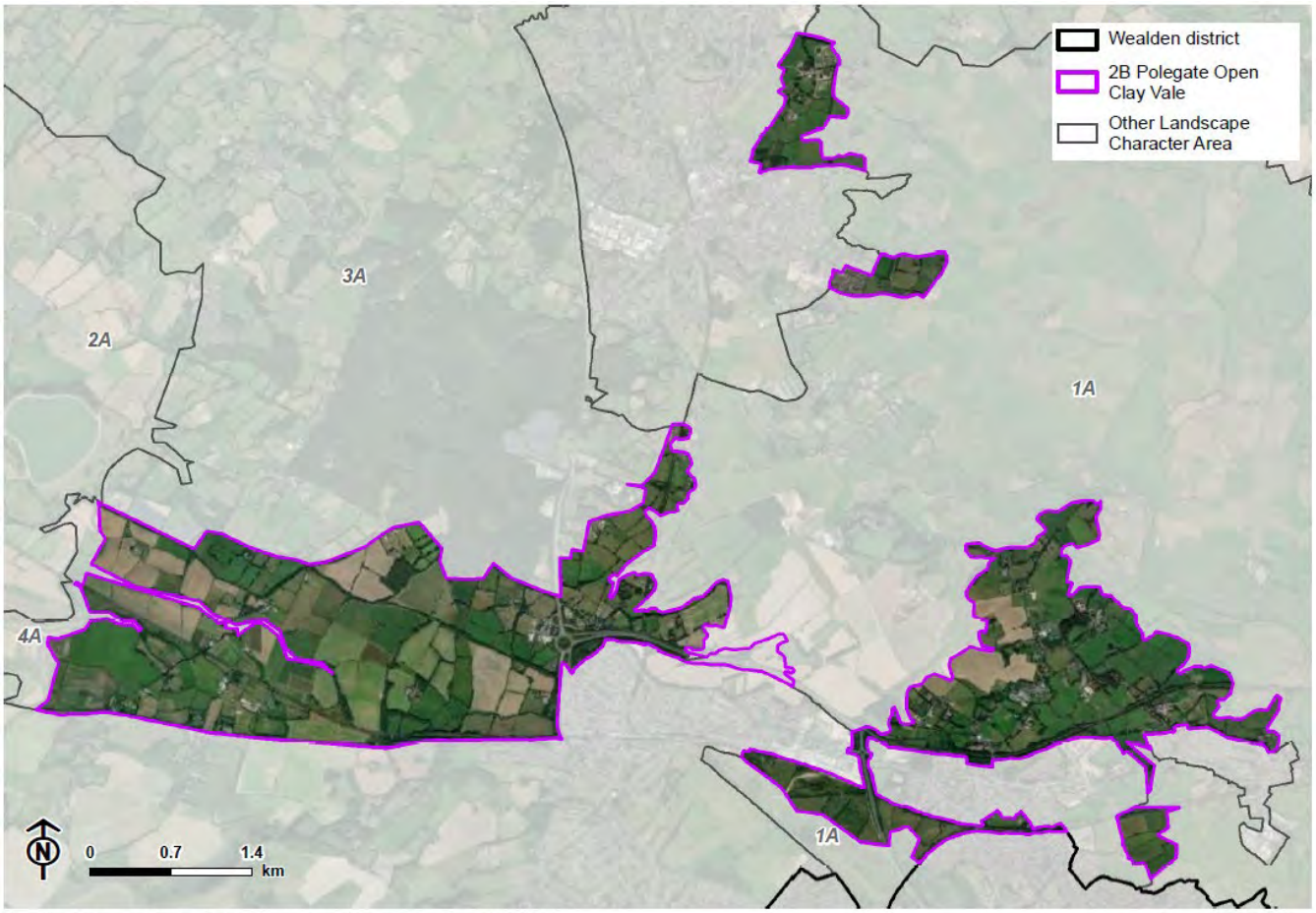
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Pasture field with post and wire reinforced hedgerows, wooded backdrop and an electricity pylon

Key Characteristics

- The underlying geology of mudstones, sandstones and siltstones form a flat to gently sloping low-lying landform, lying between 10-20m AOD. A series of small hills in the north-west around Moors Hill reach 37m AOD.
- The landscape is crossed by small streams and drainage ditches.
- Woodland is limited to small blocks and linear deciduous woodland (priority habitat), some of ancient origin.
- Semi-natural habitats are limited to small pockets on the edge of the LCA including floodplain grazing marsh and good quality semi-improved grassland connected to the Pevensey Levels and lowland fen associated with the Cuckmere and its tributaries. Small traditional orchards lie to the east of Hailsham.
- Medium clay soils support pasture, predominantly sheep with some cattle, and some areas of arable cropping. Fields are bound by hedgerows, although these are sometimes unmanaged and reinforced with post and wire fencing.
- A varied field pattern with a small to medium scale, including assarts in the west (formed by the clearance of woodlands), piecemeal field enclosures (e.g. around Hankham), and some areas of modern field amalgamation.
- Settlement within the LCA is low-density and dispersed, with historic farmsteads and cottages on enclosed rural lanes. Hankham is the only settlement in the character area, with large towns, including Polegate, Stone Cross and Hailsham bordering the LCA.
- Typical built vernacular includes flint, brick and tile hung upper stories. Wootton Manor is a 20th century designed landscape and Registered Park and Garden.
- Promoted routes cross the area, including the Wealdway, Cuckoo Trail (also a National Cycle Network Route) and 1066 Country Walk, however there is limited access to most of the landscape.
- A landscape with pockets of dark skies and tranquillity, particularly in the west. Urban areas surrounding the LCA, busy trunk roads and the railway have a strong influence on the landscape character.
- An open landscape with striking views south to the South Downs ridges, and views north to the wooded backdrop of Abbot's Wood. Some views across the flat, open Pevensey Levels on the eastern edges of the LCA. Hedgerows and mature trees provide a sense of enclosure, especially along rural lanes.



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Source: OS, WDC

Key Influences

Landform and drainage

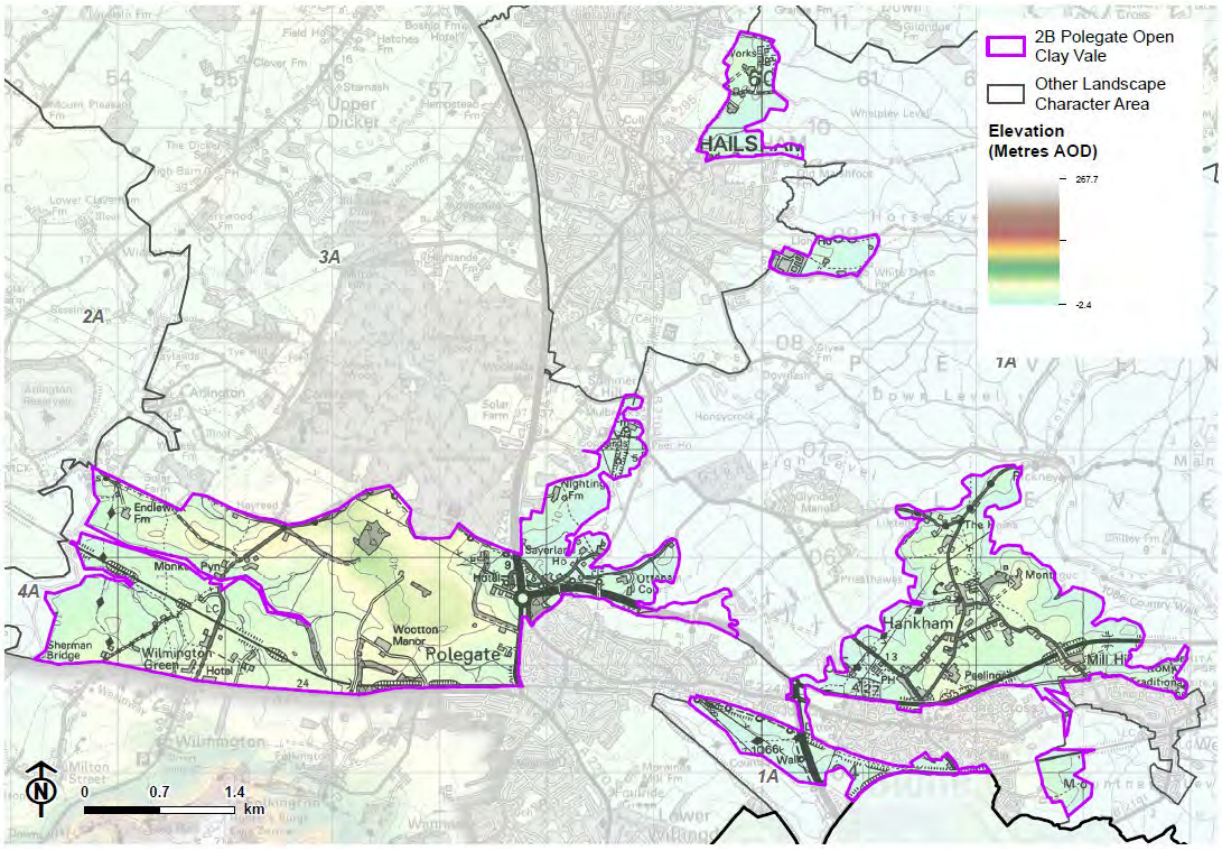
The Polegate Open Clay Vale is a gently sloping landscape around 10-25m AOD, rising from the Cuckmere in the west. The landscape is crossed by small watercourses and drainage ditches draining to the Cuckmere River (LCA 4A). A series of small hills at Monk Hills in the north-west provide topographical interest and reach 37m AOD.

Bedrock and superficial geology

The Polegate Open Clay Vale is underlain by the mudstone, sandstone and siltstones of the Gault Formation, Lower Greensand Group and Weald Clay, laid down in the Jurassic period under shallow marine conditions. Head deposits, (fragmented weathered material moved downslope by freeze-thaw activity), are common in the west of the LCA, close to the Cuckmere River. The landscape is graded 3 ('good to moderate') in the agricultural land classification.

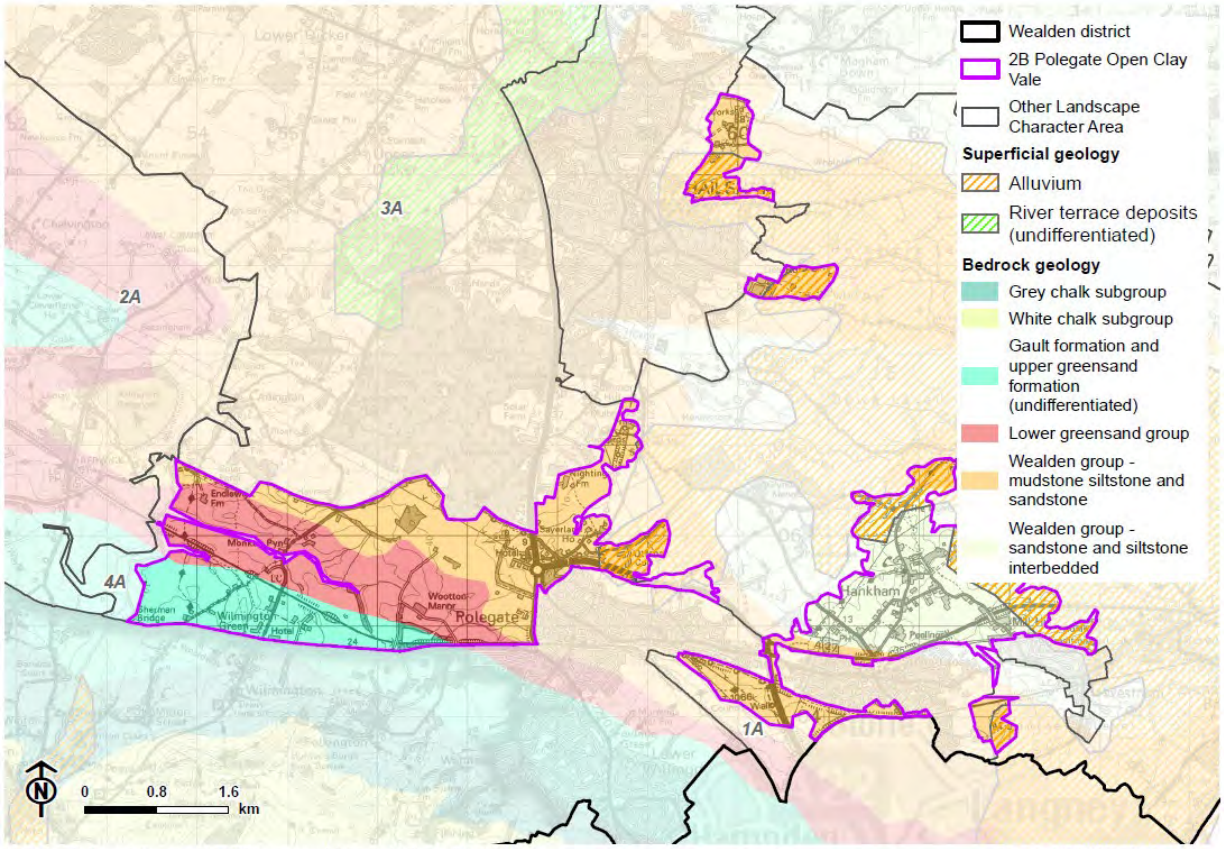


Pasture fields with hedgerows and wooded backdrop, and a small caravan park



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Landform and drainage



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Bedrock and superficial geology

Semi-natural habitats

Small areas of priority habitat floodplain grazing marsh and good quality semi-improved grassland are recorded on the edge of the LCA, connected to the adjacent Pevensey Levels (LCA 1A). An area of neutral grassland is designated as the Monkyn Pin Local Wildlife Site (LWS).

Woodland is limited to small blocks of priority habitat deciduous woodlands, with three areas of Ancient Woodland recorded, including at Montague Wood. Woodlands also line the A27, particularly north of Stone Cross.

The Wootton Manor Grassland Link, Wilmington Woodlands and Watershed and Pevensey Levels Biodiversity Opportunity Areas (BOAs) cover much of the landscape. These areas are considered to be important for habitat enhancement, restoration and creation of priority habitats, particularly wetland, woodland and meadow habitats.

Landcover

Landcover is predominately pasture, with sheep and cattle grazing. There are sizeable areas of arable cultivation around Monken Pye and north of Polegate. Woodland is limited within the landscape to small blocks or linear planting.

Historic landscape

The Sussex Historic Landscape Character Assessment identifies a complex field pattern across the LCA, with regular fields derived from planned private enclosure and piecemeal enclosure (particularly around Hankham) as well as cohesive assarts (formed by the clearance of woodlands), resulting in semi-regular fields with wooded boundaries in the west. There has also been some modern field amalgamation.

Historically the settlements were limited to small, dispersed hamlets, such as Hankham (which contains a number of listed buildings). Farmsteads were strung out on the rural road network, many of which are now listed buildings. Since the 19th century and the arrival of the railway, the neighbouring settlements of Polegate and Hailsham have considerably expanded and have a strong influence on the character of the surrounding landscape.

Wootton Manor is a 17th century manor house with a 20th century designed landscape by architect Detmar Blow, now a Grade II* Registered Park and Garden. Detmar Blow used the concept of garden rooms to provide formal structure to the gardens. The cookery writer Elizabeth David was brought up at Wootton. The house and gardens are still in private hands and not open to the public.



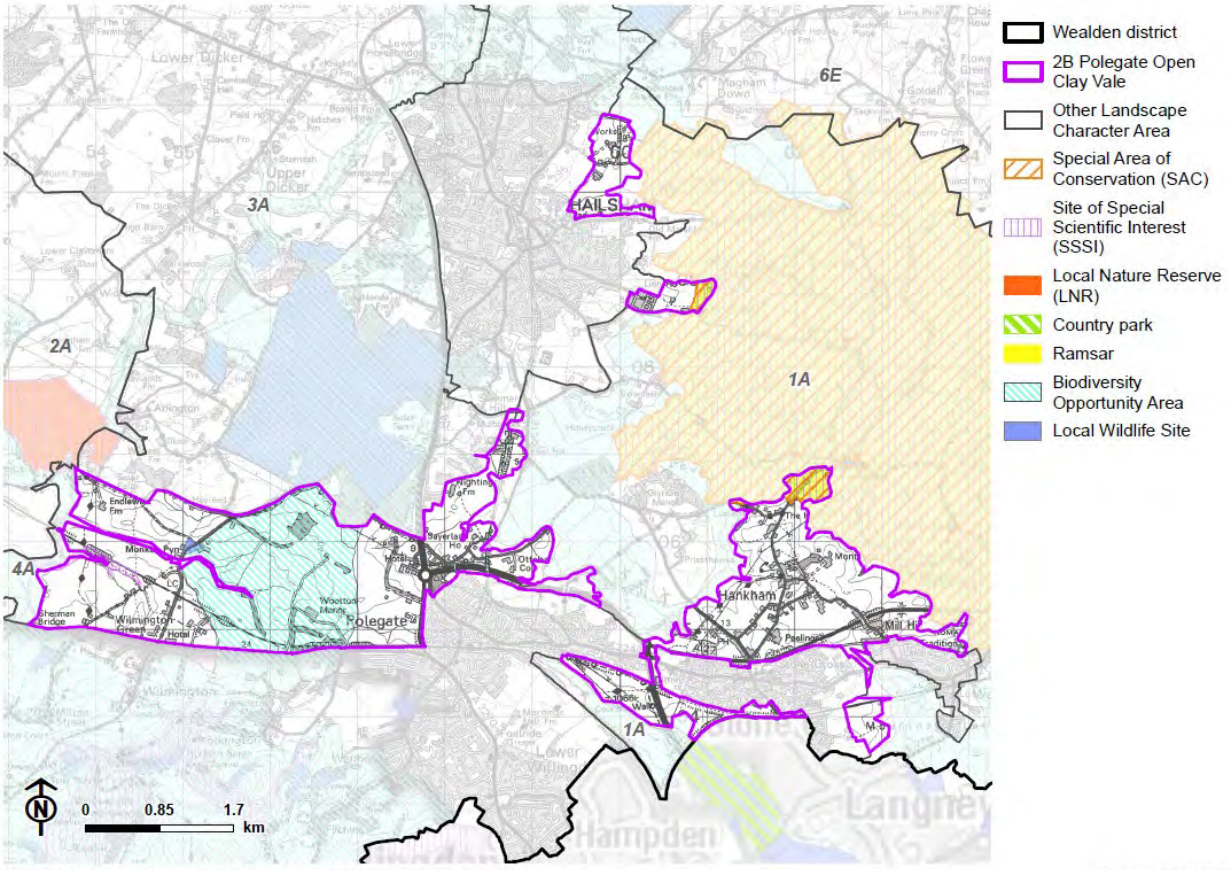
Enclosed footpaths run though the landscape

Perceptual character

Proximity to large settlements at Hailsham to the north, Polegate, Stonecross, Westham and Eastbourne to the south limit the dark skies and tranquillity experienced within the LCA. Electricity pylons, major transport corridors of the A27, A22 and railway line, the Polegate service station and views to wind turbines on the Pevensey Levels are modern influences on the landscape.

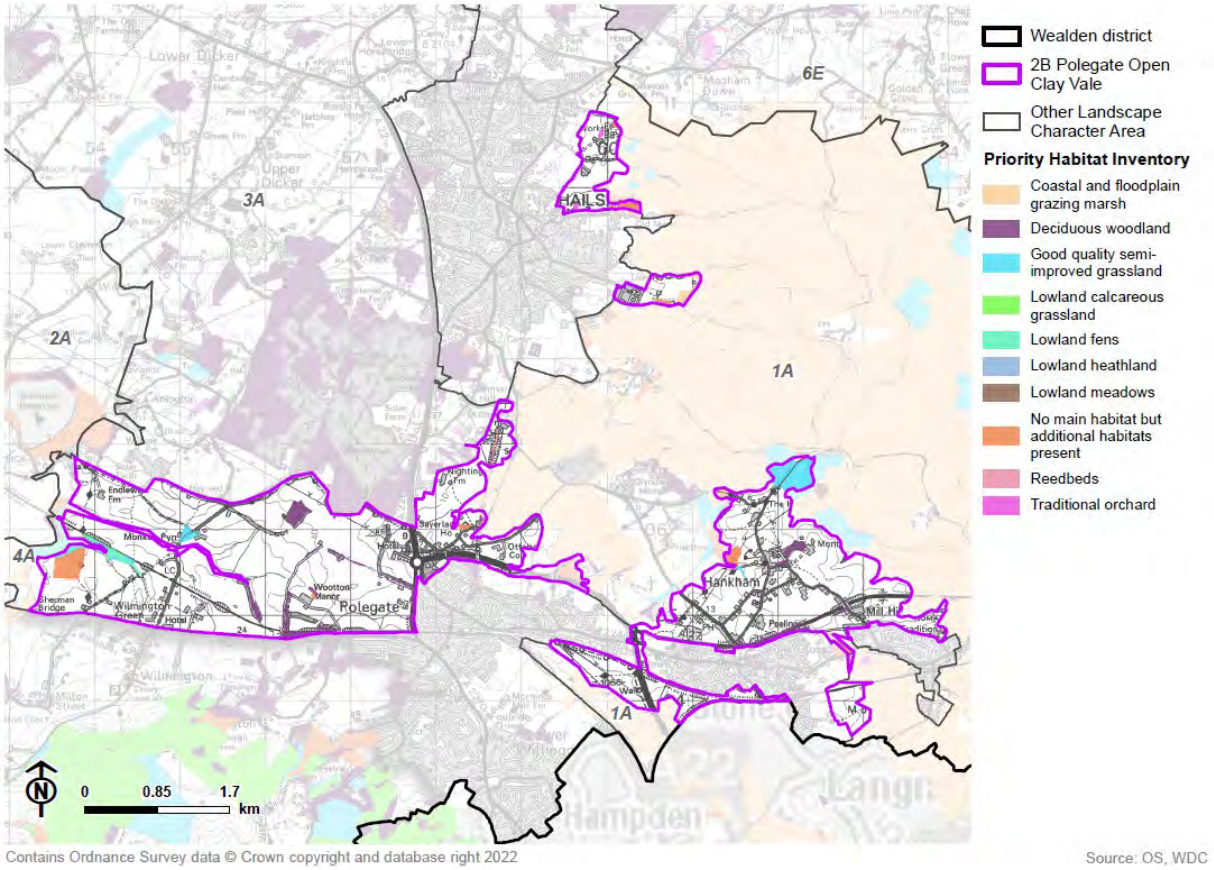
There are some pockets of darker skies on the northern and western edges, away from major roads and settlements.

Horse paddocks on the edges of Hankham and Hailsham have resulted in the subdivision of fields with horse tape and post and wire fencing, and there has been some reinforcement of hedgerows with post and wire fencing. This reduces the rural character of the landscape in these locations.



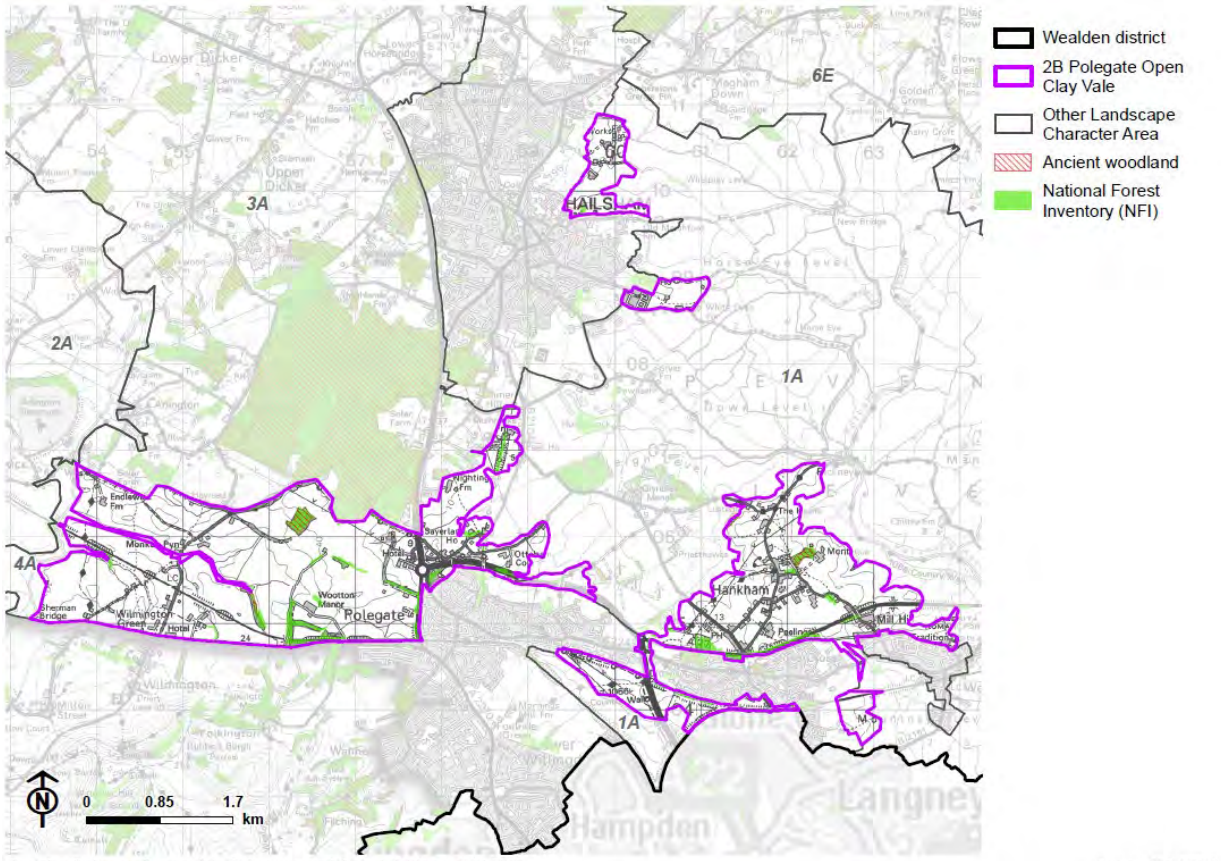
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Nature conservation designations

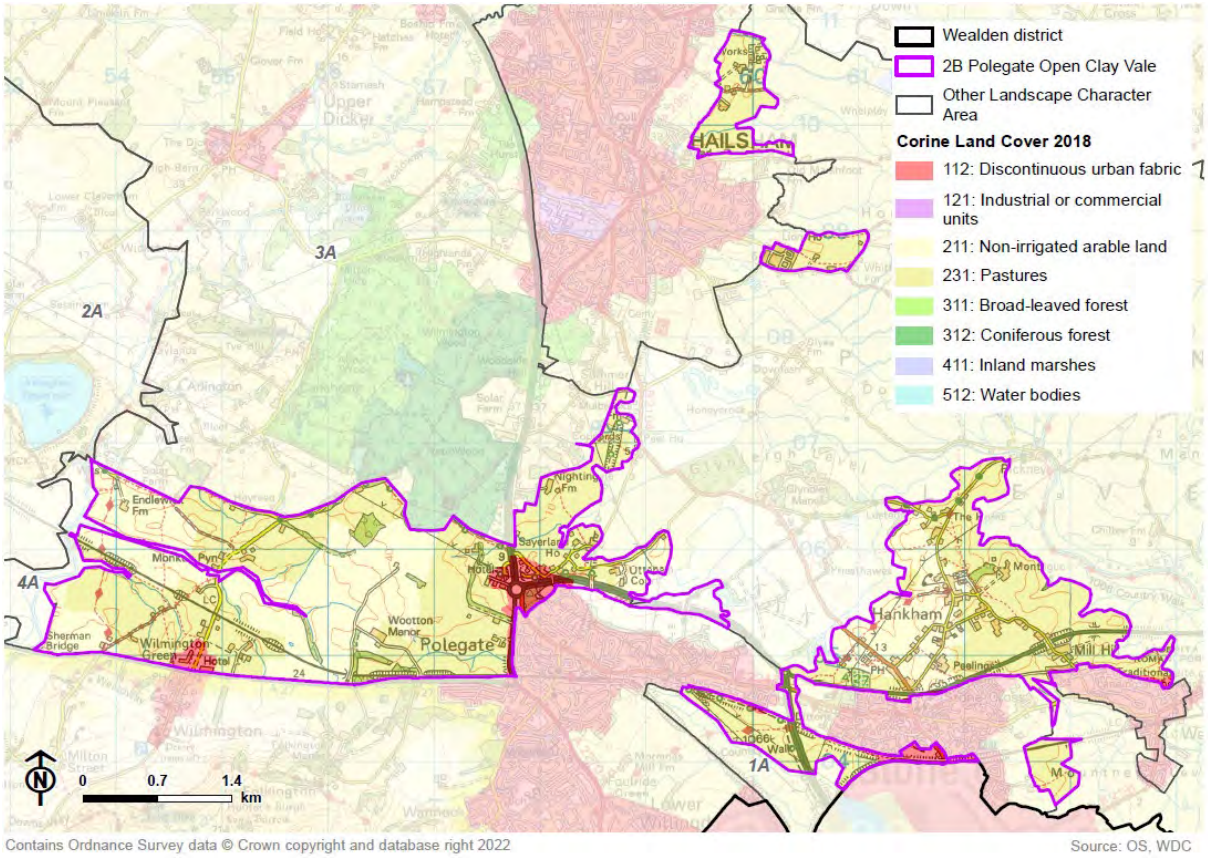


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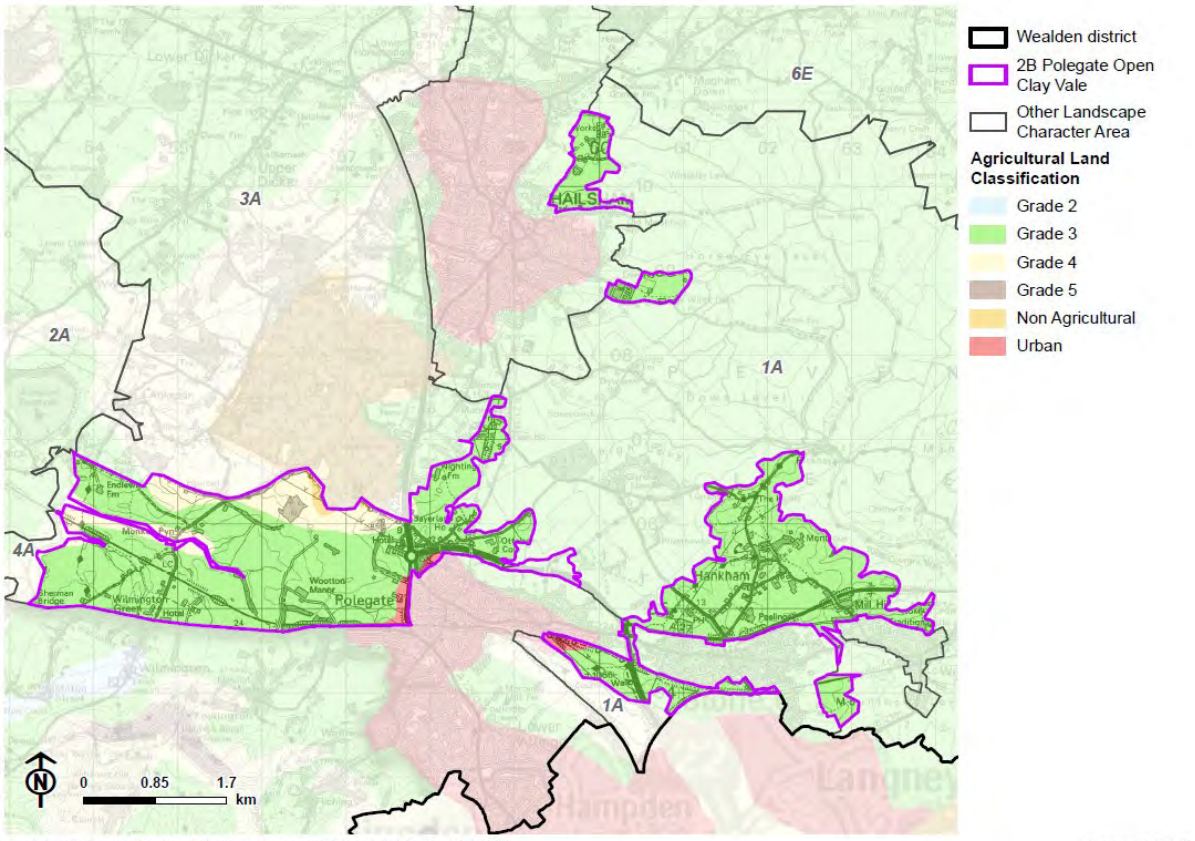
Priority habitat coverage



Woodland coverage

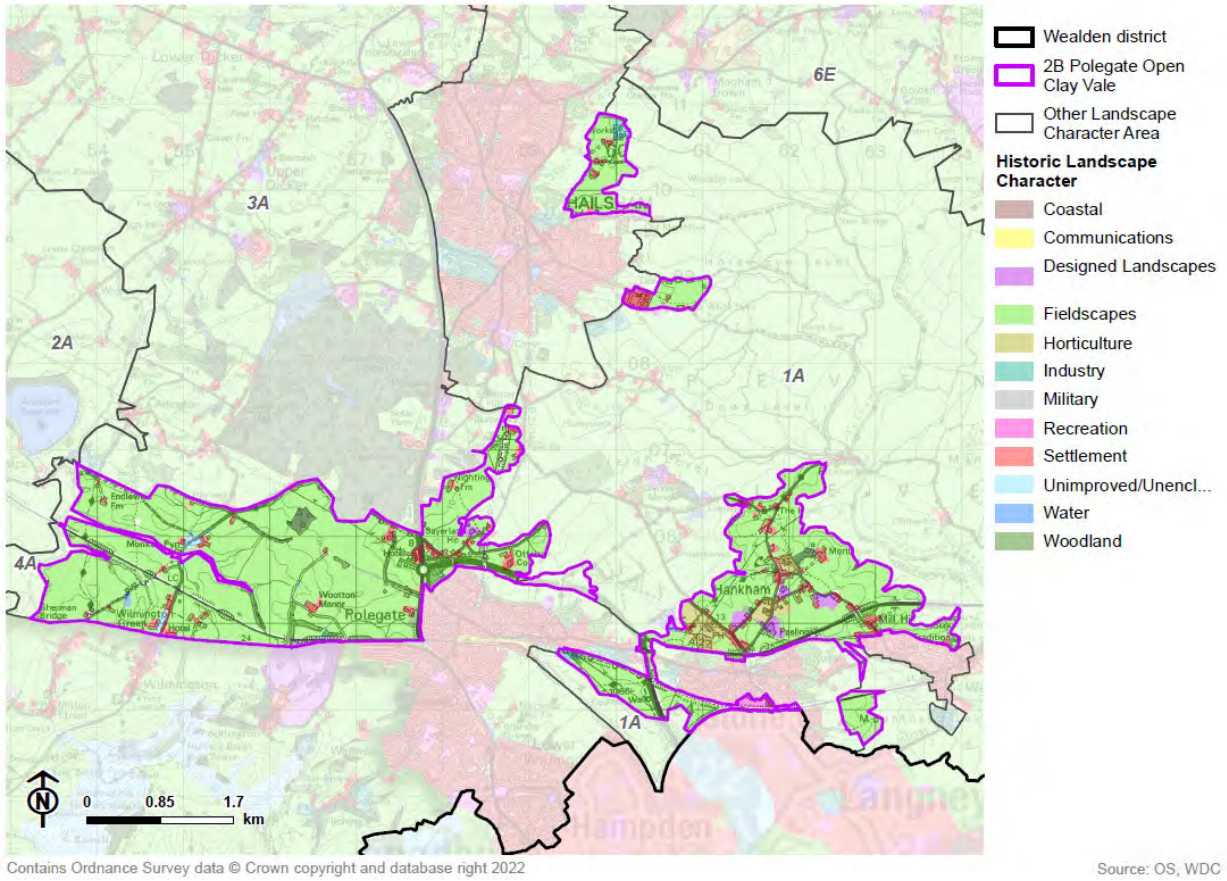


Landcover types (CORINE Land cover inventory 2018)



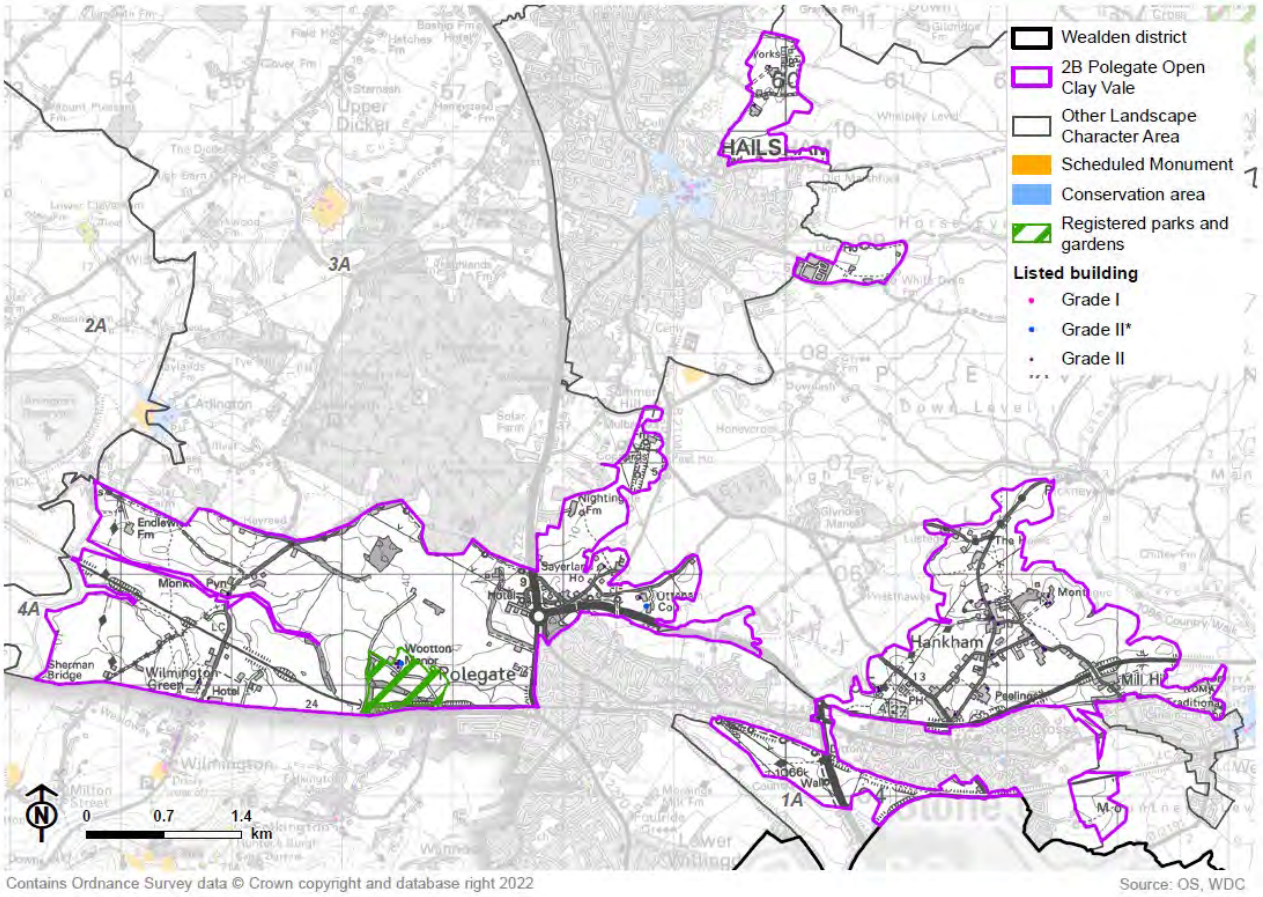
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Source: OS, NE

Agricultural Land Classification



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Historic Landscape Characterisation



Cultural heritage designations

Landscape qualities

The following features and characteristics are particularly valued for their contribution to character and for the ecosystem services they provide:

- The small streams and drainage ditches that cross the LCA, help control flooding downstream, and provide topographic interest within the low-lying landform.
- The scattered woodlands and hedgerow boundaries with mature hedgerow trees that aid the absorption of airborne pollutants, carbon sequestration and the regulation of temperatures.
- Soils that are under permanent pasture and woodland, are less susceptible to soil erosion, and can therefore maintain nutrient and moisture levels, leading to greater resilience to drought and compaction.
- The pattern of woodlands, some ancient, traditional orchards and hedgerow network with mature hedgerow trees create a sense of local distinctiveness, and provide habitat connectivity to support biodiversity.
- The floodplain grazing marsh and lowland fen associated with the Pevensey Levels allow soil stabilisation, have a higher soil carbon content than cultivated soils, provide nutrient filtration, enhancing water quality, and overall have higher biodiversity value.
- The mixed agricultural character, which adds visual variety to the landscape.
- The historic features of the landscape (historic field patterns, historic buildings and designed landscape at Wootton Manor) that provide a connection to history and provide a sense of place.
- The vernacular of flint and brick which reflects the locally available materials, and provides a sense of place.
- The public rights of way and promoted routes such as the 1066 Country Walk provide recreational opportunities and contribute to people's health and mental well-being, particularly in close proximity to deprived areas in Hailsham and Eastbourne.
- Open views from the LCA to the South Downs, Abbot's Wood and over the Pevensey Levels provide a sense of place.

Forces for change

- Climate change leading to increasing periods of drought and higher temperatures, resulting in drying of the wetland habitats, and a reduction in water flow in streams, resulting in a decline in stream habitats.
- Climate change and a lack of traditional woodland management resulting in changes to species composition of the small woodlands, decline in woodland regeneration and loss of mature trees.
- Changes in agricultural practices resulting in the loss of pasture and associated hedgerows and increased arable cropping, changing the landscape pattern and altering the mixed agricultural character of the landscape.
- Increase in hobby farming, particularly on the edge of Polegate and Hailsham, and the conversion of grazing fields to equestrian use, including subdivision of fields with horse tape or post and wire fencing, impacting the structure of the landscape and reducing its rural character.
- Increase in horticultural / plant nurseries and large farm buildings around Hankham which are not in keeping with the small-scale landscape and introduce development into the landscape.
- Development pressure for both housing and commercial/industrial units and associated infrastructure, extending from the settlement edge of Polegate and Stone Cross and Hailsham, and increasing urban fringe land uses expanding into the rural landscape may further reduce rural character, dark skies and tranquillity. This and development in adjacent landscapes may also impact on views to and from the LCA.
- An increase in traffic on rural roads leading to associated upgrades to roads and infrastructure and introducing urban clutter to rural roads.
- Potential pressure for renewable energy infrastructure (e.g. solar farms in open areas with associated grid connections), which would further alter the small-scale landscape character and impact on views both within the LCA and from further afield.



Pasture field with mature hedgerows and views to the South Downs



Arable field with electricity pylon and wind turbines and views to the South Downs

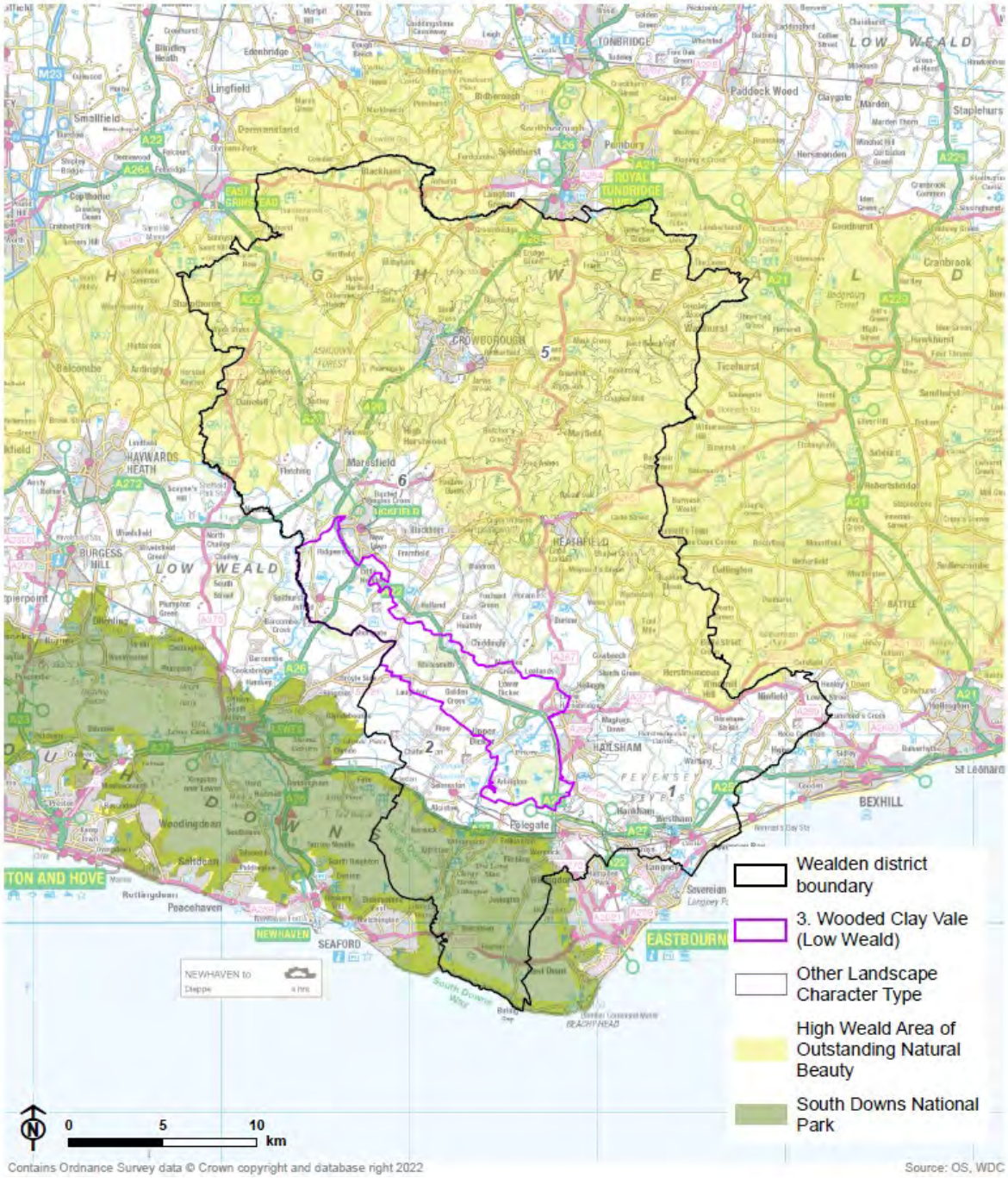
Landscape Guidelines

These guidelines recommend how the landscape can be managed to ensure future change respects local character:

- Retain and enhance the biodiversity of watercourses and drainage ditches and their associated habitats, by minimising water pollution from agriculture through sensitive land management practices, including restoration of buffer strips along watercourses and field ponds to minimise run off.
- Manage the small areas of deciduous woodland to ensure a diverse species and age structure by thinning, coppicing and replanting as necessary. Consider all the habitats found in woodlands, including shrub layers. As climatic conditions change, plant suitable species and manage the woodlands to improve structure, health and diversity of habitat, in line with the aims of the Wilmington Woodlands and Watershed, and Wootton Manor Grassland Link Biodiversity Opportunity Areas.
- Plant new woodlands, hedgerows and hedgerow trees to reinforce and link existing small woodlands to provide habitat connectivity
- Expand and improve the connections between areas of floodplain grazing marsh and lowland fen, to create habitat corridors, providing links to the Pevensey Levels where appropriate, in line with the aims of the Pevensey Levels Biodiversity Opportunity Area.
- Monitor potential changes in flora and increase in pests and diseases as a result of climate change, including spread of invasive plants and animals in water courses and woodlands.
- Maintain the mixed farmed character of the area, while increasing areas of permanent pasture (aiming to convert arable land to permanent pasture or creating grassland margins to arable fields) and manage to maintain and increase biodiversity.
- Protect and manage existing hedges, and plan for restoration and linkages between hedgerows, to increase biodiversity and connectivity and to retain the historic field patterns, replacing post and wire fencing where appropriate.
- Encourage sympathetic integration of horse paddocks through the maintenance of hedgerow field boundaries and avoid overgrazing of pastures.
- Ensure new development extending from Hankham is sympathetic to the existing settlement pattern and the local vernacular.
- Retain and enhance the historic features, including historic field patterns, historic buildings and designed landscape at Wootton Manor. Increase interpretation of these features where appropriate.
- Avoid coalescence or perceived coalescence between settlements, including large settlements on the boundary of the LCA, maintaining the open character of the fringing landscape.
- Consider ways to integrate horticultural nurseries and farm buildings into the landscape, drawing the eye through sympathetic architecture, siting and materiality/ colour.
- Improve the function of the verges along the major road and rail corridors to promote biodiversity, air quality and minimise visual impacts.
- Ensure new roads or upgrades take account of their rural context and avoid over-engineered features or introduction of lighting into dark areas,
- Ensure existing public rights of way are maintained and explore opportunities for new pathways extending from urban areas. Plant wooded corridors along footpaths, such as the 1066 Country Walk.
- Retain and where possible enhance long-distance views to the South Downs, which form a strong backdrop to the landscape. Any new developments should consider intervisibility with the South Downs.
- Ensure any renewable energy generation is compatible with the guidance above and is in scale with the landscape where possible, acknowledging that wind turbines may transcend the scale of existing features in the landscape. Electricity infrastructure associated with renewable energy generation should be efficiently planned to minimise the number of lines required, routeing in accordance with the Holford Rules[2].

[2] https://www.nationalgrid.com/sites/default/files/documents/13795-The%20Holford%20Rules.pdf

Landscape Character Type 3: Wooded Clay Vale



The Wooded Clay Vales landscape character type (LCT) is a low-lying small-scale landscape, characterised by farmland interspersed by woodlands. The LCT is defined by the 40m contour line to the north where the land rises to the wooded slopes of the High Weald, the transition to the low-lying flood zones of the Pevensey Levels to the east and the change to the less wooded landscape to the south which are also marked by a transition in underlying geology from Weald Clay to Lower Greensand/ Gault Mudstones. The mixed agricultural landscape is interspersed with areas of woodland, some very extensive. Linear settlements and farmsteads are strung along the rural road network. The edge of the LCT is impacted by its proximity to the large settlements of Hailsham and Uckfield.

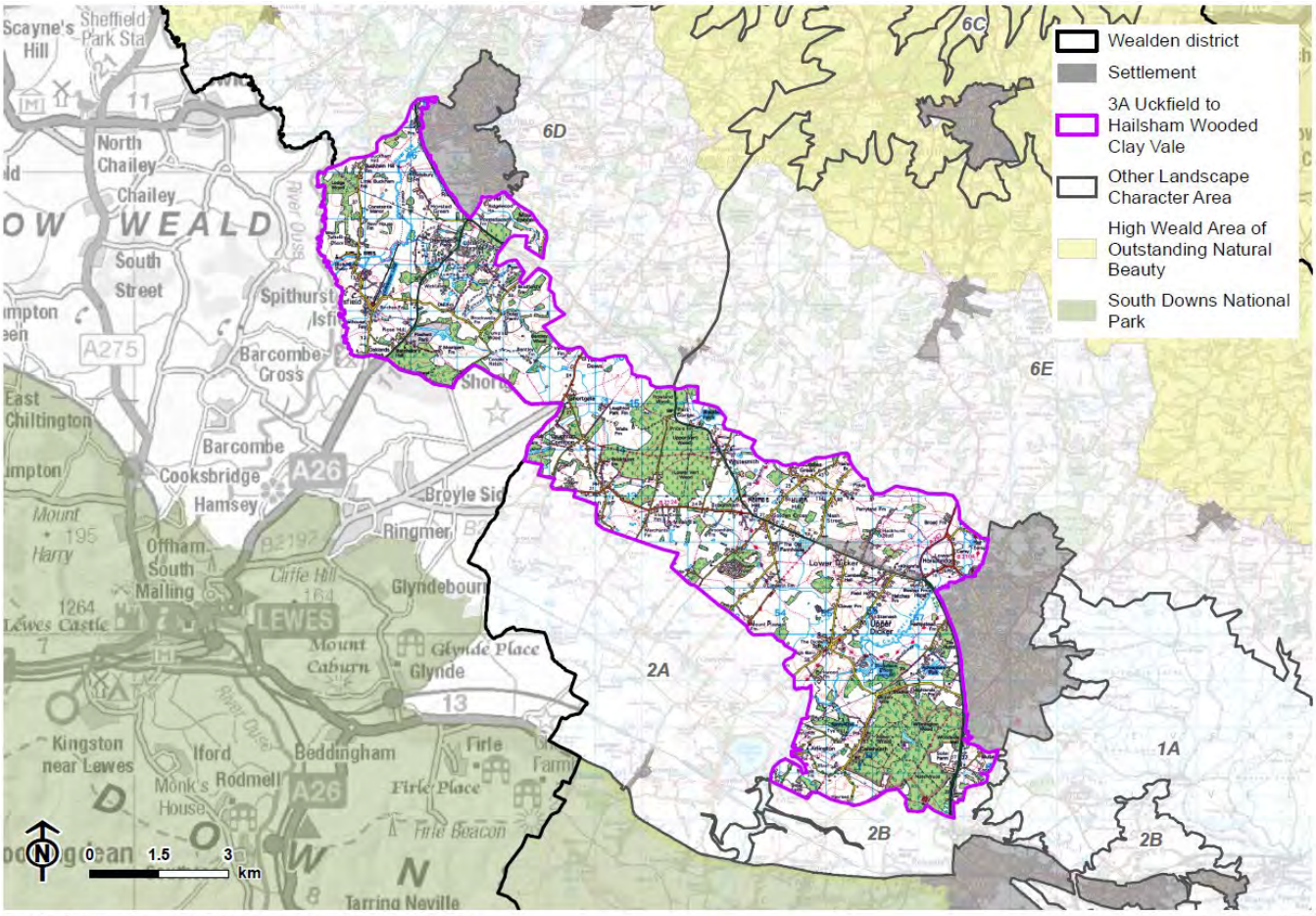
The Wooded Clay Vales LCT contains one Landscape Character Area:

- Uckfield to Hailsham Wooded Clay Vale

LCA 3A: Uckfield to Hailsham Wooded Clay Vale

Location and summary

The Uckfield to Hailsham Wooded Clay Vale is a low-lying landscape, crossed by the narrow river valleys of the Uck and its tributaries in the west and the Cuckmere in the east. The landscape supports a patchwork of arable and pastoral fields, interspersed with areas of woodland, much of ancient origin, and more extensive mixed plantations. Scattered linear settlements and farmsteads are strung along the rural road network. The edge of the LCA is strongly influenced by its proximity to Hailsham and Uckfield.



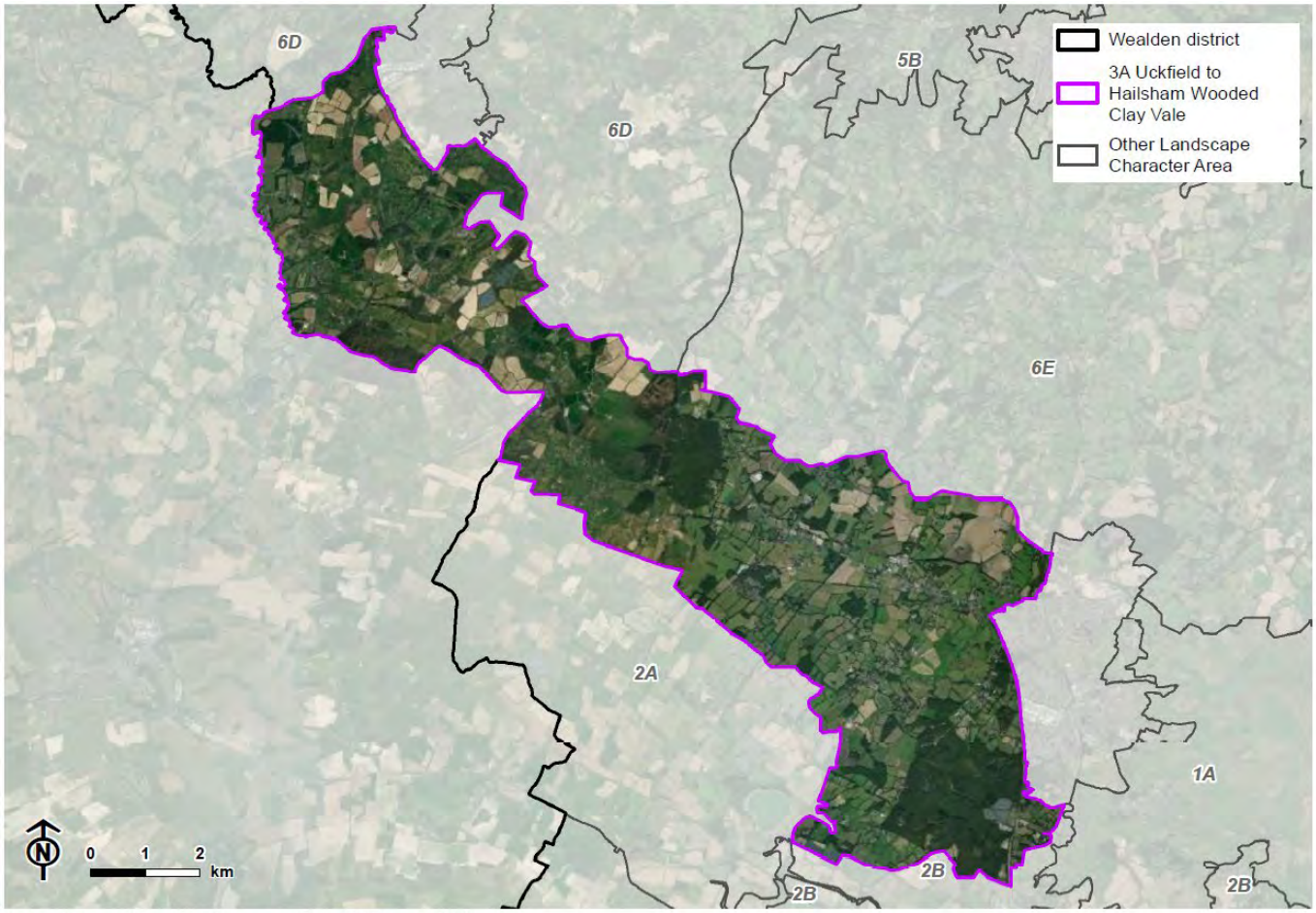
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Rolling, pasture landscape with mature trees

Key Characteristics

- The underlying geology of mudstones, siltstones and sandstones give rise to a gently rolling landscape, dissected by the narrow river valleys of the Uck, Ouse and Cuckmere.
- A well wooded landscape containing small broadleaved woodland blocks and copses, with extensive mixed plantations at Abbot's Wood and Vert Wood. Much of the deciduous woodland is priority habitat with a high proportion of ancient woodland, including Plashett Park Wood, a designated SSSI.
- Scattered pockets of remnant semi-natural grassland provide valued habitats for birds and invertebrates, with grasslands at Park Corner Heath designated as a SSSI.
- Fields are varied in size and origin, ranging from sinuous irregular medieval 'assarts' (fields formed by cleared areas of woodland) located on the edges of existing woodlands, regular or semi-regular medium to large scale fields derived from planned private or piecemeal enclosure around Lower and Upper Dicker, as well as some larger modern fields.
- The heavy clay soils give rise to a mixed land use of sheep and cattle grazing and arable cultivation. Fields are bound by hedgerows, and mature hedgerow trees are common.
- A small-scale pattern of historic rural hamlets and villages with scattered farmsteads, many of which are listed buildings. Muddles Green is the only village covered by a Conservation Area, although the Conservation Areas of Hellingly and Arlington extend into the LCA. Village and farm ponds are common.
- An estate character in places, built by families made wealthy through the Wealden iron industry, with small country houses with parklands at Plashett Park, Bentley Farm and Horsted Place, the latter with gardens designed by Geoffrey Jellicoe, now a Registered Park and Garden.
- The network of rural roads, lined with clipped hedgerows and mature trees, contrasts with the busy A22.
- A strong network of public rights of way including the promoted routes of the Vanguard Way and the Wealdway, and public access across Vert Wood and Abbot's Wood.
- The woodland, hedgerows and trees result in an enclosed landscape, although the distinctive ridges of the South Downs are visible to the south and south-west, while the High Weald provides a wooded backdrop to the north.
- A rural landscape with areas of tranquillity and dark skies, although this decreases with proximity to Hailsham, Uckfield and the A22/A26.



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Source: OS, WDC

Key Influences

Landform and drainage

The land is generally low-lying and rolling, with topographic variation along the river and stream corridors of the Uck, Ouse, Cuckmere and Ridgewood Stream. The landscape generally lies around 25-40m AOD, although elevations reach 50m AOD in Vert Wood.

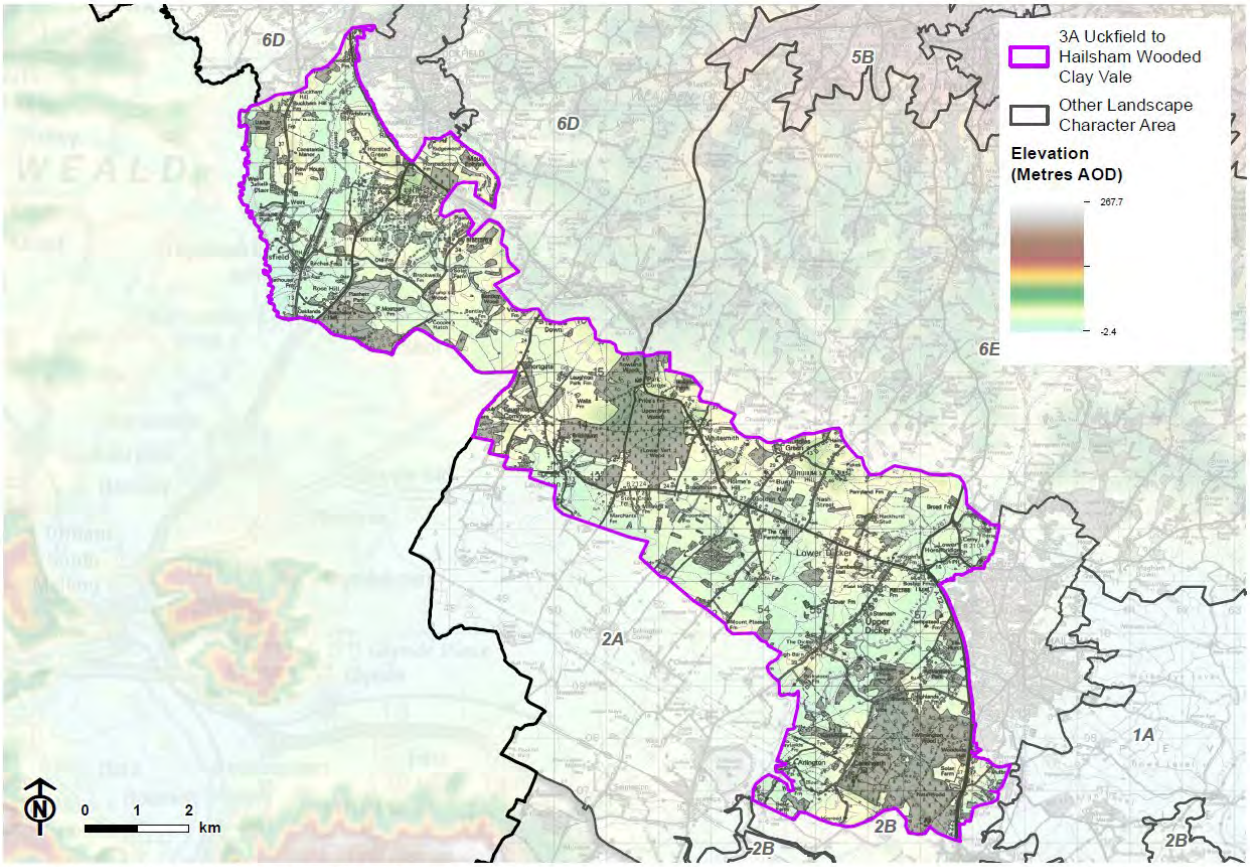
Bedrock and superficial geology

The Uckfield to Hailsham Wooded Clay Vale is underlain by a series of mudstones of the Weald Clay formation and Wadhurst Clay formation, and siltstones, mudstones and sandstones of the Upper and Lower Tunbridge Wells Sand formations. These were laid down in the Cretaceous era in fluvial, palustrine (marshy) or shallow marine conditions. Superficial deposits relate to the river corridors, with alluvium, older river terrace deposits and some areas of Head deposits, caused by freeze-thaw activity moving fragmented weathered material downslope. A small geological Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) at Lower Dicker provides the southern most exposure of Weald Clay sand in Britain.

The geology gives rise to heavy clay-rich soils, which are generally graded 3 ('good to moderate') in the agricultural land classification. Land along the Ouse and Uck river corridors and between Isfield and Golden Cross are graded 4 ('poor)'.

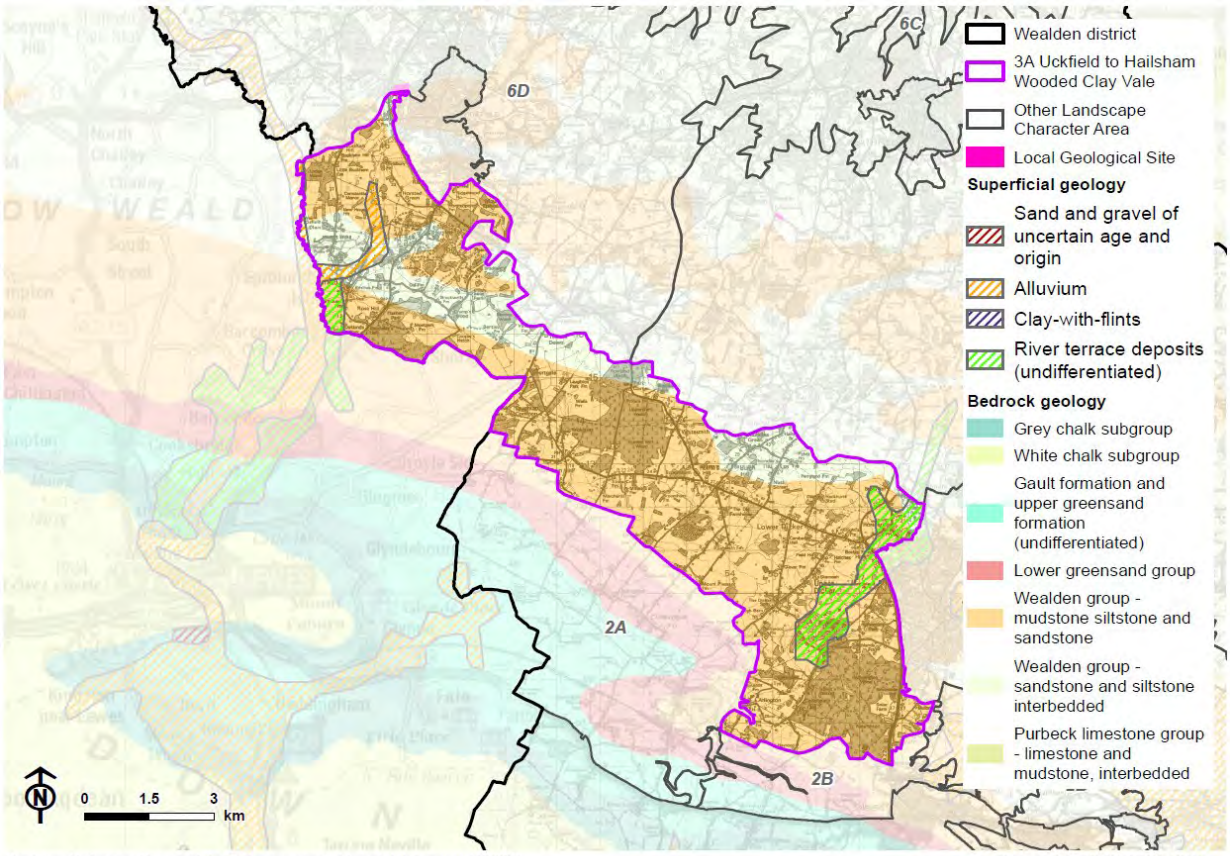


Abbot's Wood, important for recreation.



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Landform and drainage



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Bedrock and superficial geology

Semi-natural habitats

Priority habitat deciduous woodland is found across the LCA, with much of ancient origin, although the largest woods at Vert Wood and Abbot's Wood are recorded as Plantation on Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS) and contain conifer planting on ancient woodland sites. Plashett Park Wood is an ancient woodland designated as a SSSI, which supports a rich community of breeding birds.

Priority habitat good quality semi-improved grassland is scattered across the LCA, in fragmented blocks. Priority habitat lowland dry acid grassland is found at Park Corner Heath, which is designated as a SSSI for the heath, woodland and scrub habitats that support moths and butterflies. Ecologically valued riverside vegetation includes lowland meadows to the north of Isfield, associated with the Uck and priority habitat floodplain grazing marsh along the Ouse floodplain in the west.

Many of the grassland and woodland sites are designated as Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) including Tollgate Meadow, land at Isfield Church and Bramble Grove.

The Mid Ouse Floodzone, River Cuckmere Habitat Link and Wilmington Woodlands and Watershed Biodiversity Opportunity Areas are within the LCA. These areas represent priority areas for delivering Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) targets, with opportunities for wetland habitat management, restoration and creation, floodplain restoration and reconnection, and woodland management and restoration.

Landcover

Mixed agricultural land use, with both non-irrigated arable cropping and pasture, is found across the LCA, with larger tracts of pasture to the east of Vert Wood. The LCA contains a large number of small woodlands, generally deciduous, with oak, birch and hazel common species. Larger blocks of woodland at Vert and Abbots Wood have been replanted with coniferous species.



Sheep grazing with South Downs forming a prominent backdrop

Historic landscape

The Sussex Historic Landscape Character Assessment shows a varied field pattern. This includes medieval assarts, which are irregular, sinuous fields with wooded boundaries formed by the clearance of woodlands or wooded commons. These are often located on the edges of existing woodlands (including Abbots Wood, Vert Wood and Camberlot Wood). Regular or semi-regular fields in the west are derived from piecemeal enclosure, while medium to large regular shaped fields with straight boundaries are found south of the A22 and around Shortgate. There are also small areas of modern field amalgamations, particularly west of Horsted Green, a result of the increasing industrialisation of agriculture in the 20th century.

The dispersed medieval settlement pattern is still evident today, with little change from the 19th century. There are numerous scattered houses and farmsteads set back from rural roads, many of which are listed. Muddles Green is the only village covered by a Conservation Area, although areas of Hellingly and Arlington extend into this LCA.

The medieval farmstead at Buckham Hill, with its area of associated closes or small fields on a sandstone hill, is typical of the dispersed medieval rural settlement pattern and is now a Scheduled Monument. The motte and bailey castle at Isfield is an unusual feature in this lowland landscape and its position is likely strategically defensive, at the former confluence of the rivers Uck and Ouse. Michelham Priory, a 13th century moated priory founded by Augustinian canons, was dissolved in 1536, and is now looked after by the Sussex Archaeological Society.

Horselunges Manor is a moated timber-framed house built at the end of the 15th century for the Devenish family, after John Devenish was knighted by Henry VII for his role in the Wars of the Roses. The manor is now Grade I listed and considered one of the finest timber-framed buildings in Sussex.

Small country houses and large farmsteads dating from the 18th century, such as Plashett Park and Bentley Farm, are surrounded by informal areas of parkland. Horsted Place house was reduced in size in the 1960s when Sir Geoffrey Jellicoe redesigned the ornamental gardens, which are now a Grade II listed Registered Park and Garden. The wider parkland at Horsted Place has since been converted into use as the East Sussex National Golf Course.

Many of the rural roads and public rights of way follow medieval, or possibly earlier, drove roads, such as Burgh Hill Road and Nash Street. These were used to move livestock to and from grazing, a process known as 'transhumance'. In the 18th and 19th centuries new road and rail links changed the landscape. The Lewes to Uckfield line was built in the late 1850s, creating links between Wealden and the coast. This line was eventually closed in the 1960s, although a small stretch is now in use as the Lavender Line, a functioning vintage steam railway.

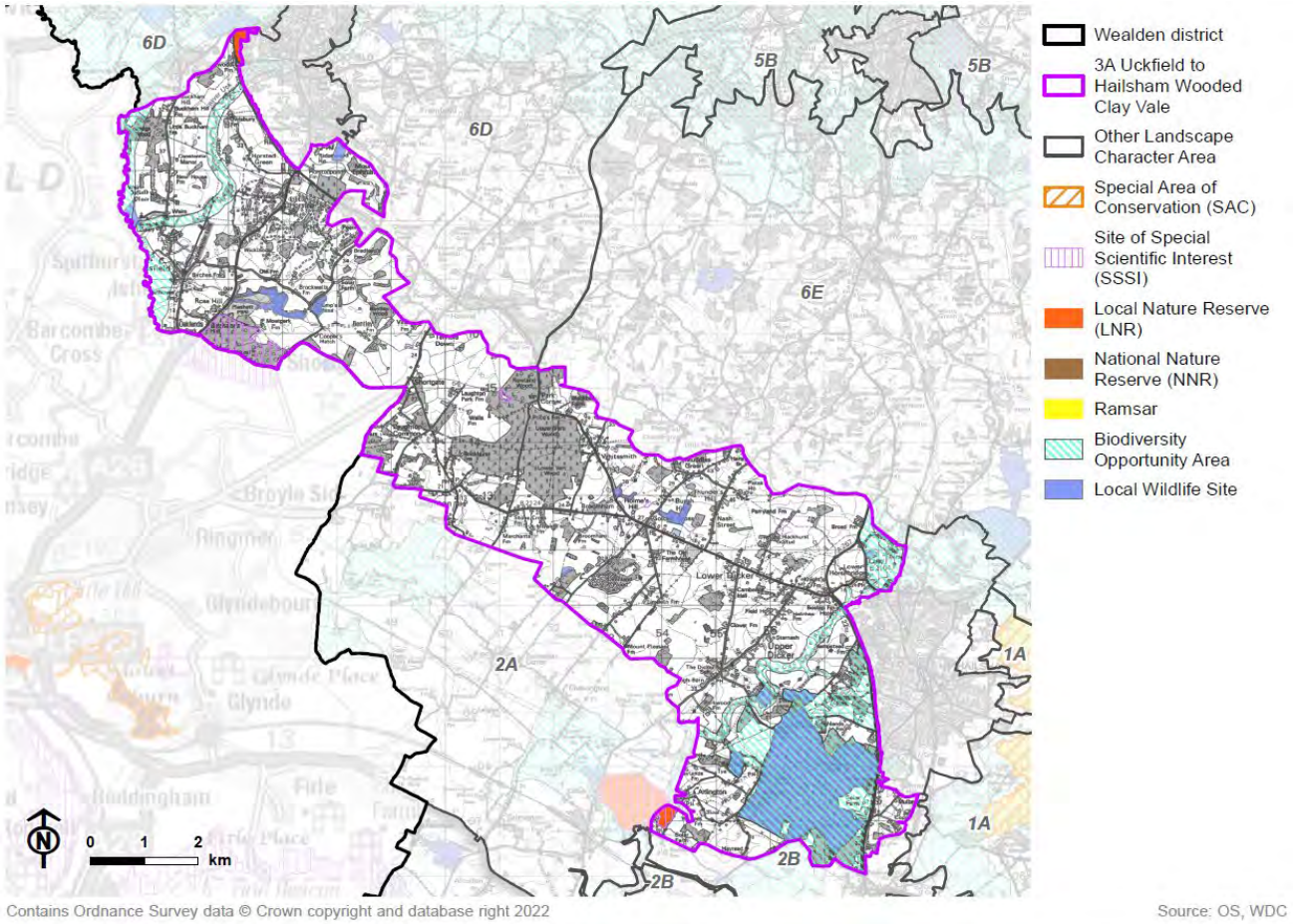
More modern additions to the landscape include horticultural nurseries, caravan parks and urban fringe development along the busy A22 and extending from the edge of Hailsham and Uckfield. Light industry and other employment uses have grown up between Lower Dicker and Golden Cross.

Perceptual character

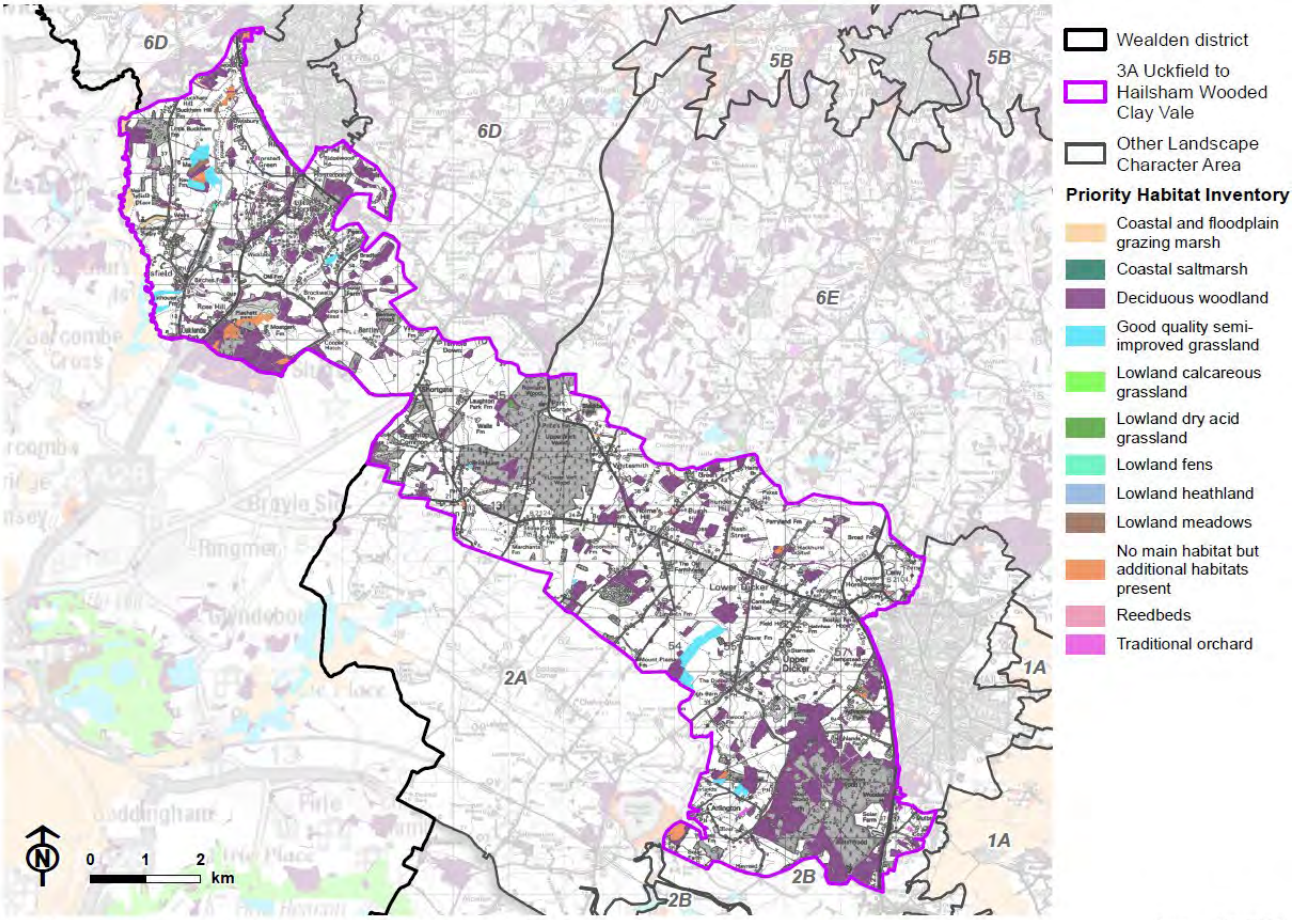
The A22, A26 and proximity to Hailsham and Uckfield reduces tranquillity and dark skies, and there are some areas with a suburban character between Lower Dicker and Golden Cross. Away from these influences there are areas of tranquillity and relative remoteness, particularly within the larger woodlands of Abbots Wood and Vert Wood and in the west of the LCA. Electricity pylons and solar farms are modern elements in the landscape which reduce the sense of rurality. The pylons traverse the landscape north of Arlington and across the Uck valley, and frequently dominate views, but the solar farms are generally well-screened by woodland and topography.



Abbots Wood.

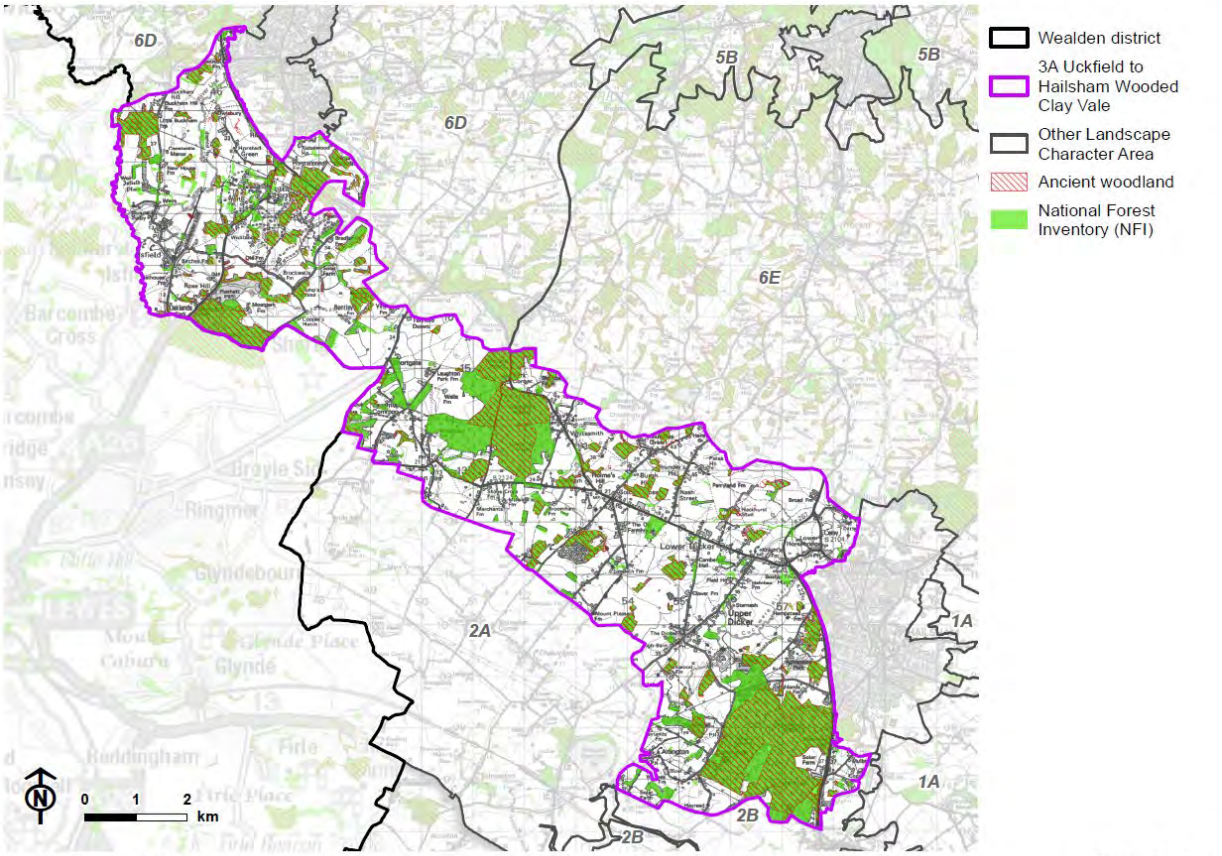


Nature conservation designations



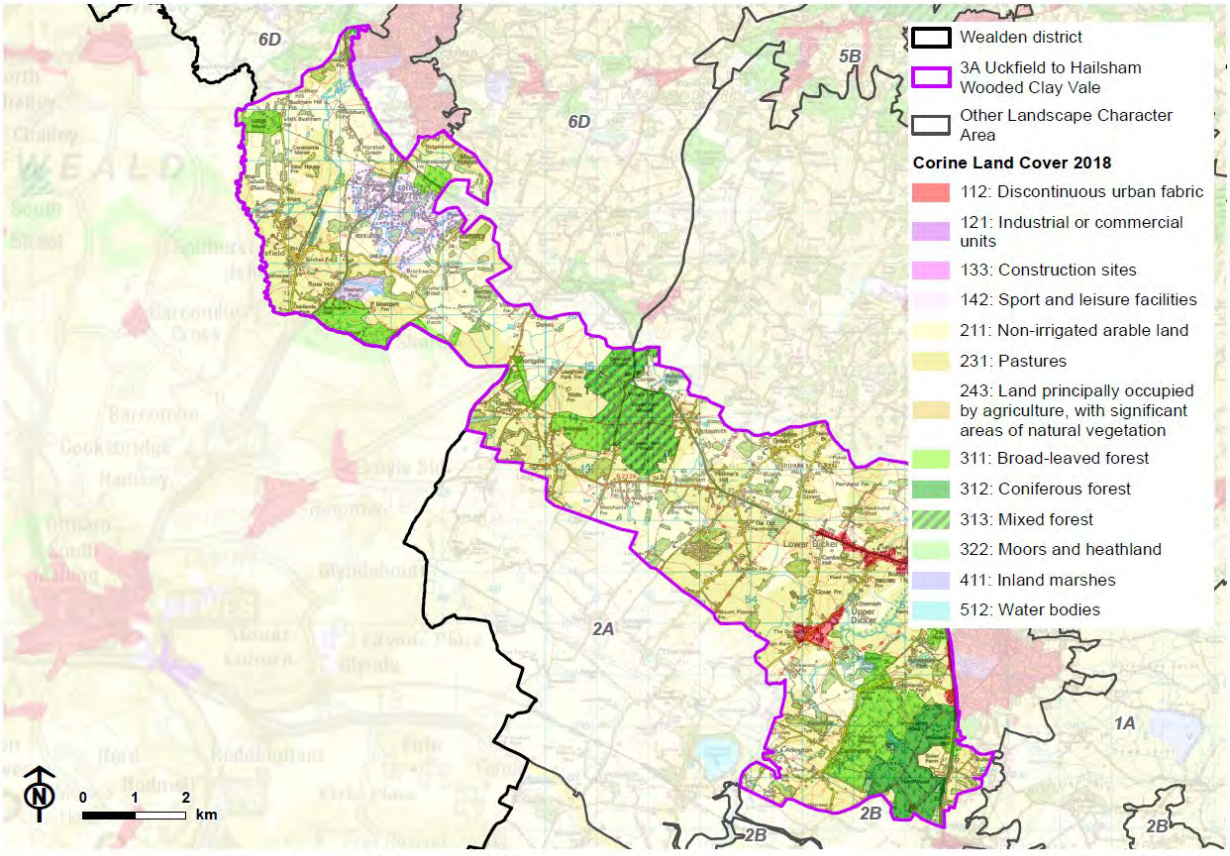
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Priority habitat coverage



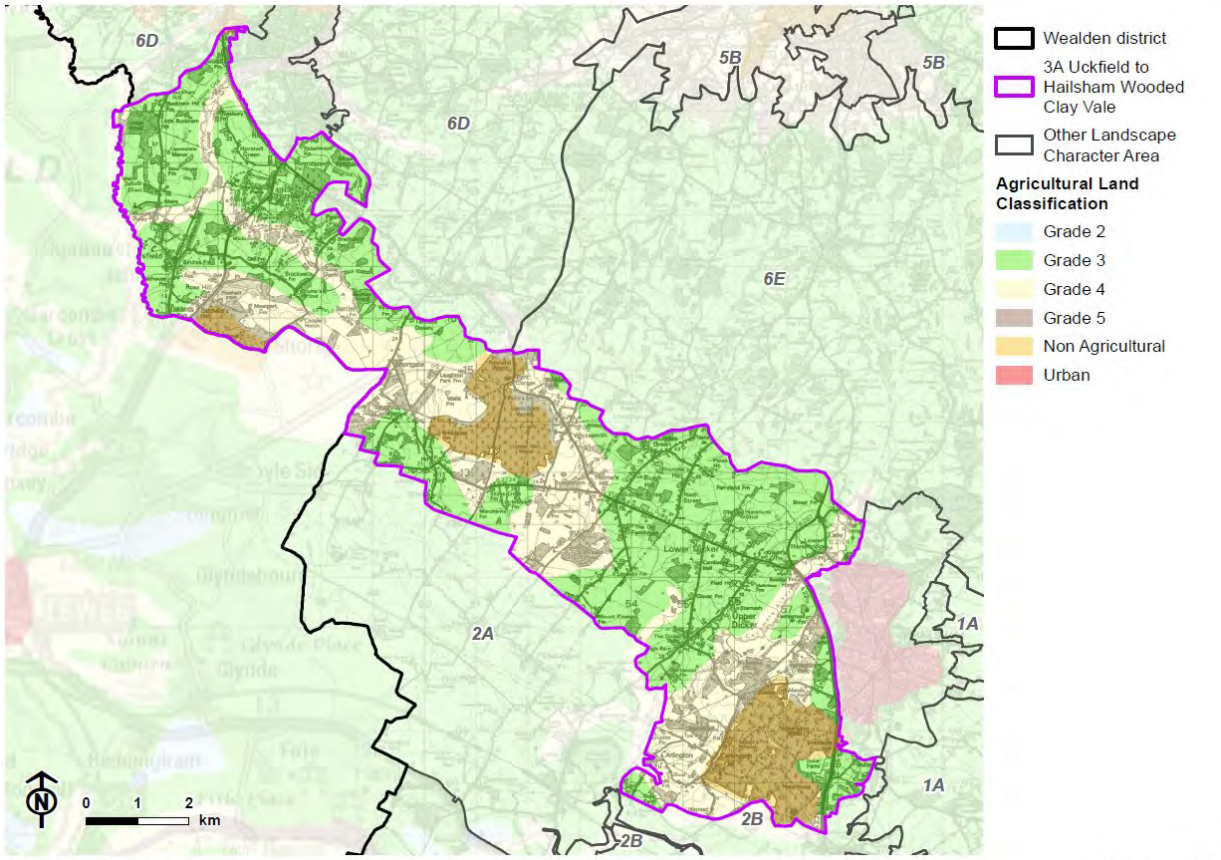
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Woodland coverage



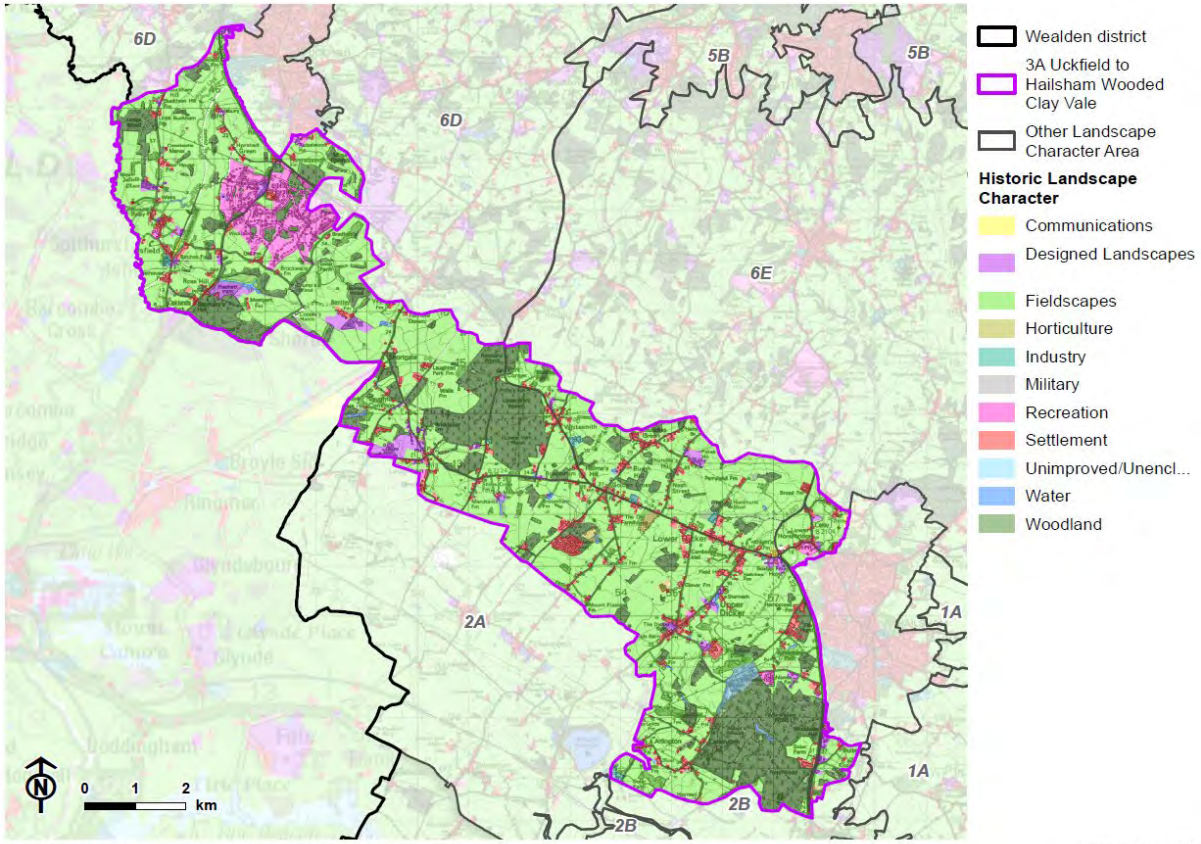
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Source: OS, WDC

Landcover types (CORINE Land cover inventory 2018)



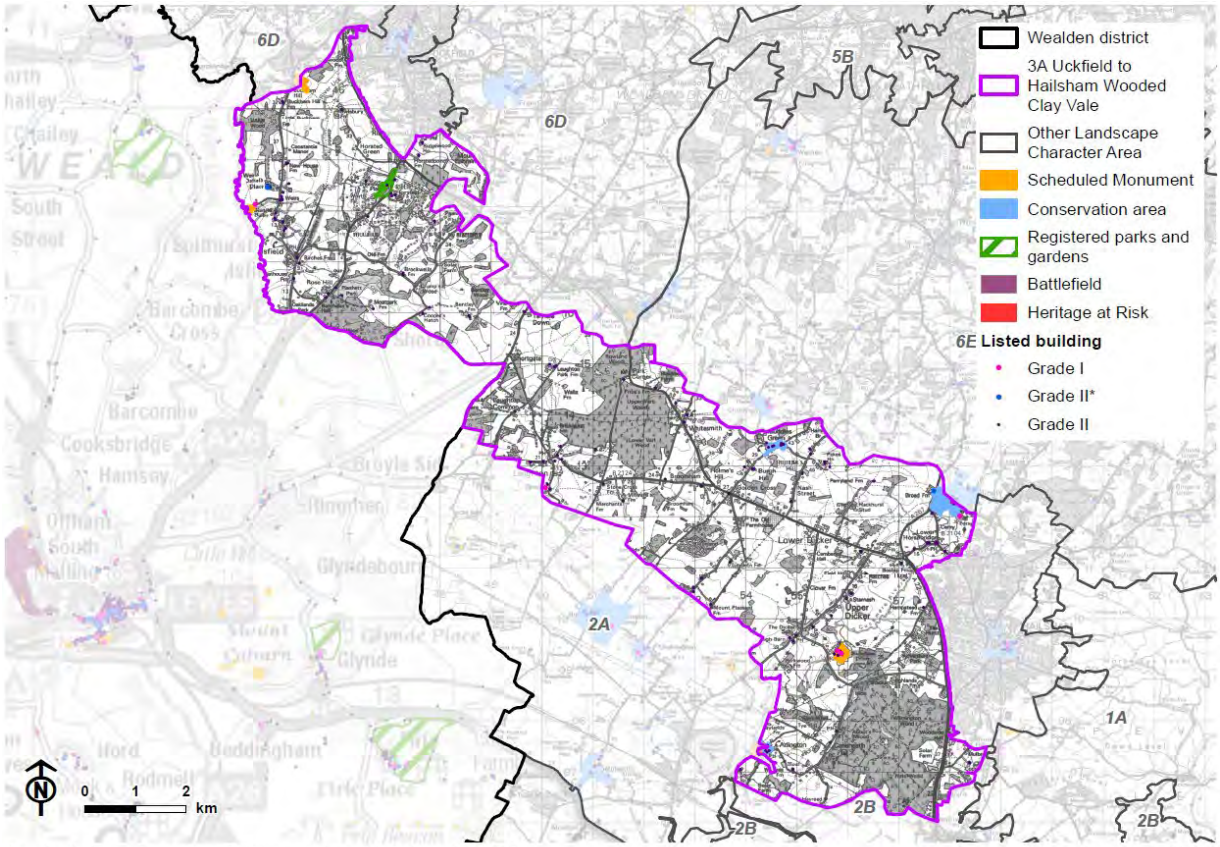
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Source: OS, NE

Agricultural Land Classification



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Historic Landscape Characterisation



Cultural heritage designations

Landscape qualities

The following features and characteristics are particularly valued for their contribution to character and for the ecosystem services they provide:

- The Cuckmere, Ouse and Uck catchments regulate water quality and water flow and prevent flooding downstream.
- The river valleys provide topographical interest to the landscape, creating a sense of place.
- The numerous broadleaved woodlands and copses provide a sense of place and aid the absorption of airborne pollutants, carbon sequestration and the regulation of temperatures. Mixed plantations offer opportunities for fuel and timber provision.
- The woodland habitats and hedgerow boundaries provide landscape structure and habitat connectivity to support biodiversity.
- The semi-natural habitats, including deciduous woodland, heathland and grasslands, some designated as SSSI, support a range of important flora, insects and breeding birds.
- Soils that are under permanent pasture and woodland are less susceptible to soil erosion, and can therefore maintain nutrient and moisture levels, leading to greater resilience to drought and soil compaction.
- The historic landscape features (historic field patterns, ancient woodland, and parkland) contribute to the time-depth of the landscape and local distinctiveness.
- Historic rural hamlets and villages with listed buildings provide time depth and create a small-scale landscape pattern.
- Parkland estates provide links to the historic wealth of the Wealden iron industry and create variation within the agricultural landscape.
- The public rights of way and open access woodlands provide recreational opportunities and contribute to people's health and mental wellbeing.

- The rural landscape, with its traditional pattern of small villages and scattered farms enclosed by woodlands, provides a sense of place, with areas of tranquillity and dark skies.
- The contrast between the enclosed character created by woodland and hedgerows and long views to the South Downs provides visual interest.



Horse grazing with horse tape and a wooded backdrop



Designed landscape of East Sussex National Golf Course, with woodland

Forces for change

- Climate change leading to increasing periods of drought and increased temperatures resulting in a change in water levels and river flows or conversely an increase in frequency and severity of seasonal flooding in the low-lying landscape, and consequent changes in associated riverside vegetation and wetland habitats.
- Climate change resulting in changes in woodland and tree species composition. This could also result in wind damage due to increases in severe gales (ancient woodland is particularly susceptible to storm damage), drought, and an increase in pests and diseases, such as ash dieback, oak decline or sweet chestnut blight.
- An on-going decline in woodland management, including traditional techniques such as coppicing, resulting in a loss of species diversity and varied age structure.
- Maturing parkland trees on estates, which are vulnerable to pathogens and limit the ability of woodland to regenerate.
- Replanting of deciduous woodlands with conifers, resulting in a loss of biodiversity, and visual change in the woodland composition.
- Changes in agricultural practices resulting in the loss of pasture and associated hedgerows and increase in arable cropping. Changes in grazing pressure as a result of climate change and changing markets, changing the landscape pattern and altering the mixed agricultural character of the landscape.
- Potential expansion of Uckfield and Hailsham into the LCA, and an increase in light industrial and urban fringe land uses, which would reduce the rural character of the landscape.
- Development pressure for housing expanding from the villages within the LCA diluting the historic dispersed settlement pattern.
- Increasing pressure for horse grazing, including division of fields with horse tape, impacting the structure and rural character of the landscape.
- Increasing traffic on rural roads leading to demands for road upgrades and associated infrastructure, reducing tranquillity and dark skies and the rural character of minor roads.
- Further pressure for renewable energy infrastructure and associated grid connections including pylons, both within the LCA and in adjacent landscapes, reducing the rural character and interrupting long views to the South Downs and High Weald (e.g. wind turbines on elevated ridges and solar farms on south-facing slopes or in open areas).

Landscape Guidelines

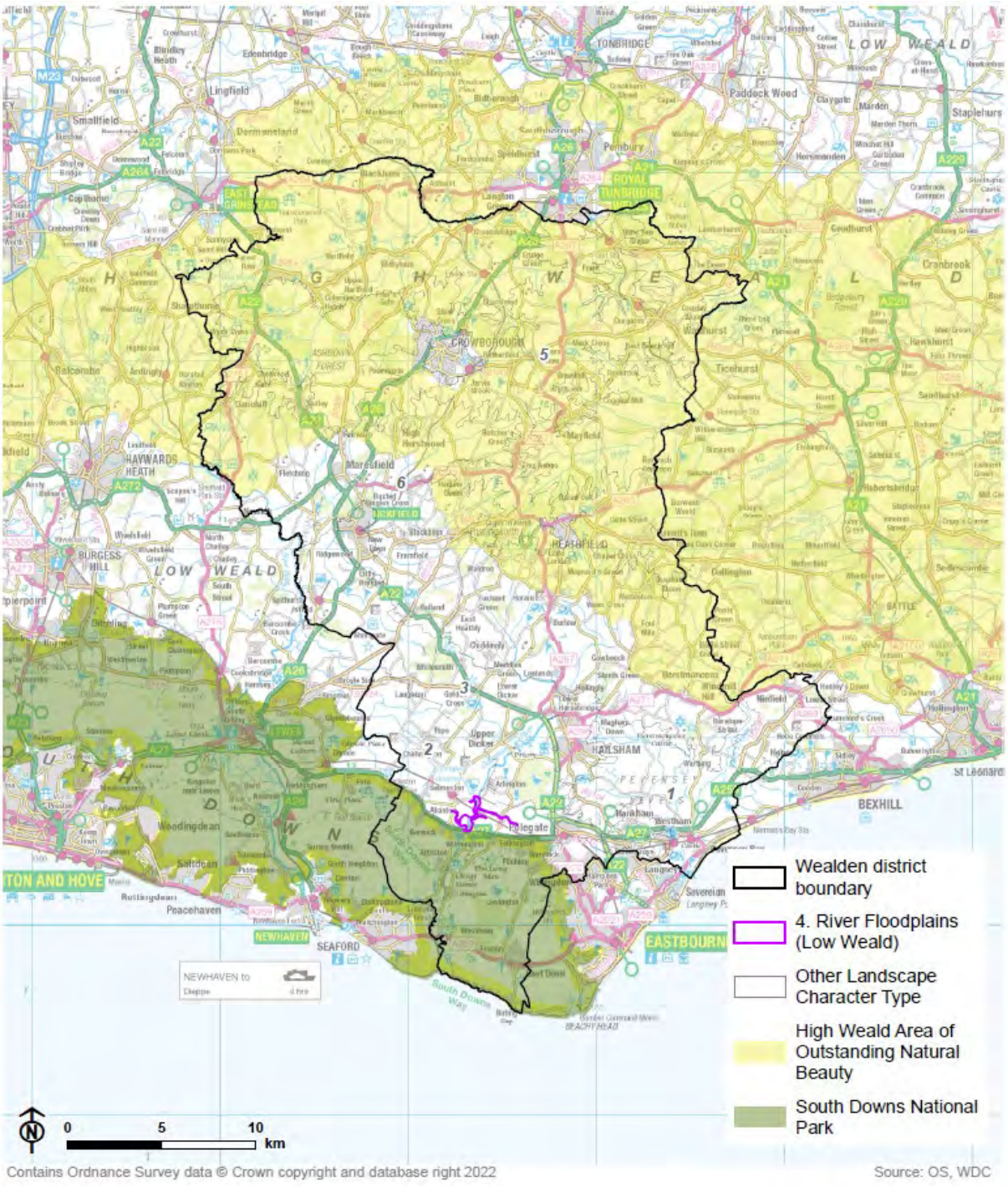
These guidelines recommend how the landscape can be managed to ensure future change respects local character:

- Retain and enhance the biodiversity of watercourses and their associated wetland habitats by minimising water pollution from agriculture through sensitive land management practices, including restoration of buffer strips along watercourses to minimise run off.
- Conserve and manage the streamside woodlands and copses, conserving and restoring riverside vegetation and wetland habitats, to ‘slow the flow’ and increase biodiversity, in line with the aims of the Mid Ouse Floodzone, River Cuckmere Habitat Link and Wilmington Woodlands and Watershed Biodiversity Opportunity Areas.
- Manage deciduous woodland to ensure a diverse species and age structure by thinning, coppicing and replanting as necessary, including those at Plashett Park Wood SSSI. Consider all the habitats found in woodlands, including shrub layers. As climatic conditions change, plant suitable species and manage the woodlands to improve structure, health and diversity of habitat.
- Improve the connectivity of woodlands across the LCA through tree planting and hedgerow corridors, in line with the River Cuckmere Habitat Link and Wilmington Woodlands and Watershed Biodiversity Opportunity Areas.
- Encourage the gradual restructuring of coniferous plantations to woodlands with a high broadleaved content, particularly for plantations on ancient woodland sites (PAWs) such as Vert Wood and Abbot's Wood.
- Protect and manage the existing hedgerow network, and plan for restoration and linkages between hedgerows, including planting hedgerow trees to increase biodiversity and connectivity. Encourage the conservation of historic field patterns and boundary features.
- Expand and improve connections between fragmented grassland, heath and scrub habitats, such as those at Park Corner Heath SSSI.

- Conserve and manage parkland landscapes, planning for the succession of individual veteran trees which form an integral part of the historic landscape.
- Monitor potential changes in flora and increase in pests and diseases as a result of climate change, including spread of invasive plants and animals in watercourses and woodlands.
- Increase areas of permanent pasture (aiming to convert arable land to permanent pasture or creating grassland margins to arable fields) and manage to maintain and increase biodiversity.
- Encourage sympathetic integration of horse paddocks through the maintenance of hedgerow field boundaries and avoid overgrazing of pastures.
- Conserve the dispersed rural settlement pattern, encouraging the use of local materials, to maintain a strong local identity. Use woodland or tree planting to screen development on the edge of settlements.
- Consider the impact of urban fringe development extending from Uckfield and Hailsham on the existing landscape, aiming to preserve the rural character of the LCA. Ensure a sensitive and integrated urban edge.
- Further development along the A22 should be managed to avoid coalescence, or perceived coalescence, of Lower Dicker and Golden Cross.
- Improve the function of verges along major road corridors to promote biodiversity, air quality and minimise visual impacts, for example by increasing vegetation along the A22/ A26 to soften both existing and any future development.
- Ensure road upgrades take account of their rural context and avoid over-engineered features of the introduction of lighting into dark areas.
- Ensure existing public rights of way and public access within woodlands are maintained and explore opportunities for new pathways extending from urban areas. Plant wooded corridors along footpaths, such as the Vanguard Way and the Wealdway.
- Ensure any renewable energy generation is compatible with the guidance above and is in scale with the landscape where possible (acknowledging that wind turbines may transcend the scale of existing features in the landscape). Electricity infrastructure associated with renewable energy generation should be efficiently planned to minimise the number of lines required, routeing in accordance with the Holford Rules[1].
- Maintain the rural character of the landscape away from the large urban areas on the boundary of the LCA and the busy A22 and A26, retaining tranquillity and dark skies where present.
- Retain and where possible enhance long views to the South Downs and High Weald, which form a strong backdrop to the landscape and provide a sense of place in the landscape. Any new developments should consider intervisibility with the South Downs and High Weald.

[1] https://www.nationalgrid.com/sites/default/files/documents/13795-The%20Holford%20Rules.pdf

Landscape Character Type 4: River Floodplains



The River Floodplains landscape character type is a small area of flat and low-lying river floodplain, whose boundaries are defined by the extent of underlying alluvium and Flood Zones 2 and 3 (as shown on the Environment Agency's Flood Map). Although the river itself is generally hidden from view, the character of the landscape is influenced by the river corridor and contains wetland habitats and riparian woodland. Riverside fields support arable cropping with limited pasture. The lack of settlement and limited access by road or public right of way, results in an isolated and hidden rural character.

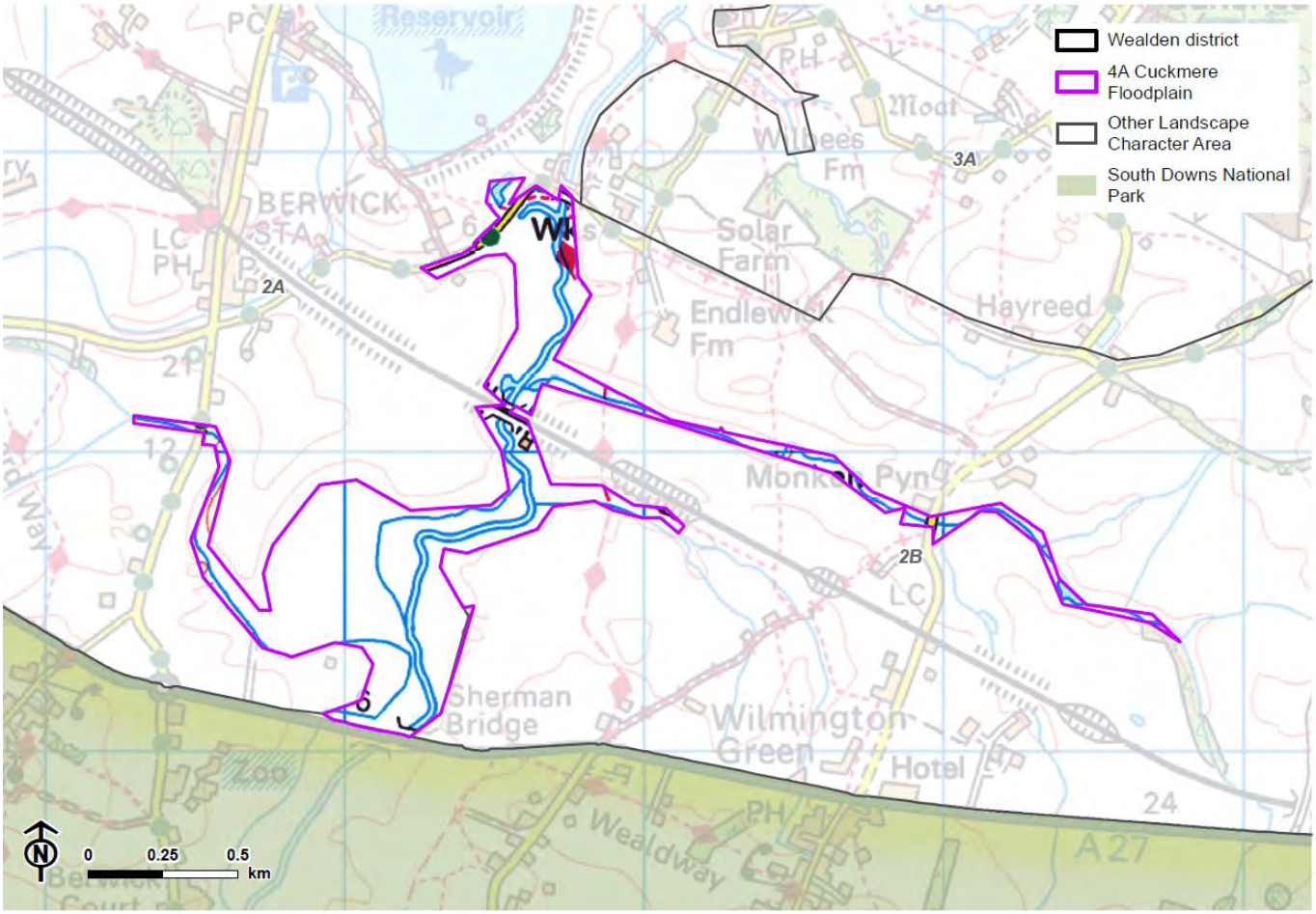
The River Floodplains LCT contains one Landscape Character Area:

- 4a Cuckmere Floodplain

LCA 4A: Cuckmere Floodplain

Location and summary

The Cuckmere River Floodplain is a small low-lying, unsettled landscape of farmland, located along the course of the River Cuckmere. The landscape comprises arable fields and riparian woodland which lines the course of the river and its tributaries.



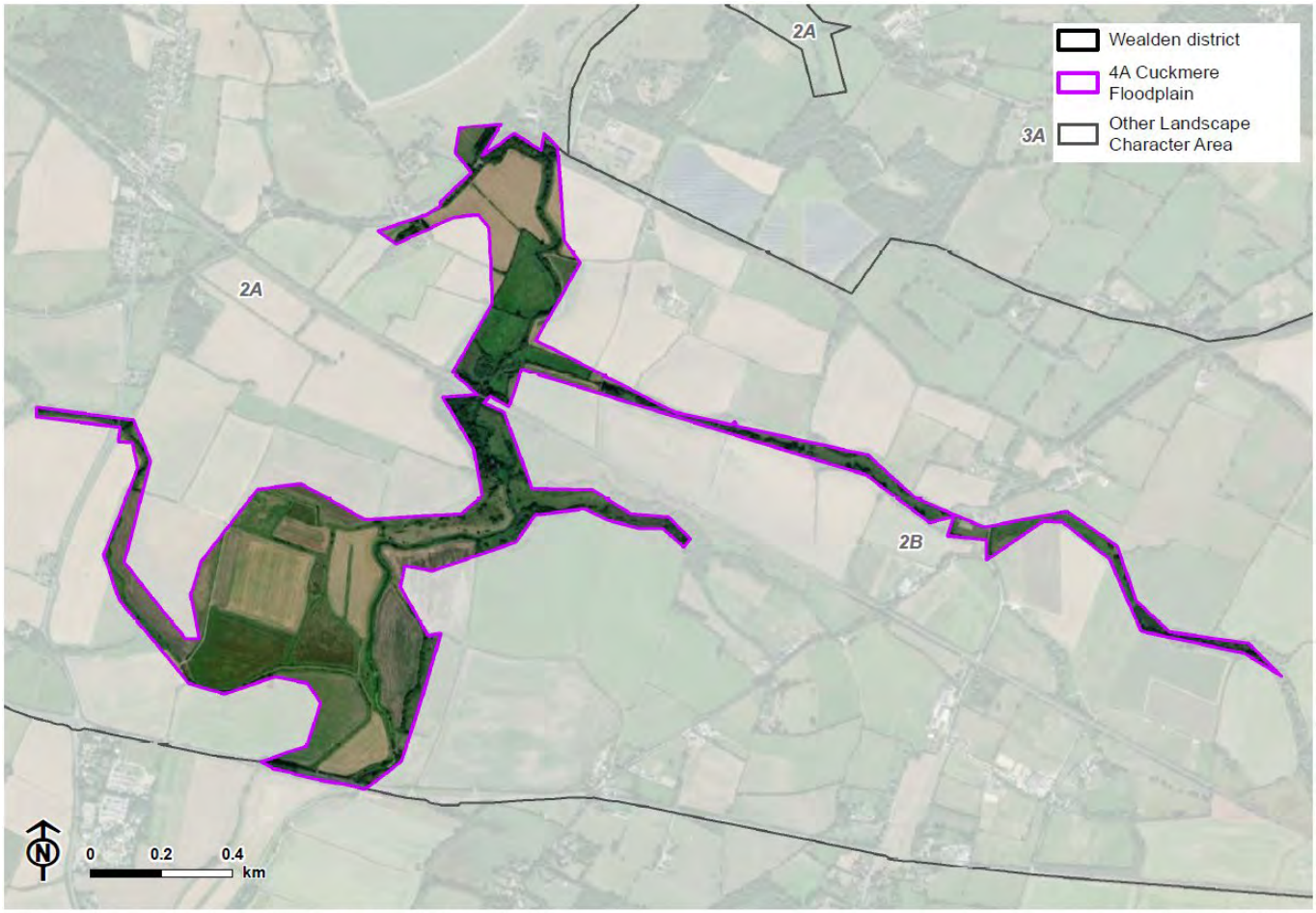
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Typical view of the Cuckmere River Floodplain

Key Characteristics

- The flat, narrow valley floor of the Cuckmere River and its tributaries, is underlain by alluvium deposits, giving rise to periodically waterlogged clay to sandy loam soils.
- Deciduous woodland, fringing alder and willow and other riverside vegetation, line the meandering course of the river channel.
- The floodplain supports some important wetland habitats, including grazing marsh, lowland fens and semi-improved grassland, identified as priority habitats. These form an area of high biodiversity, valued for its support of wetland flora and fauna, particularly breeding bird communities. Milton Gate Marsh is recognised as a SSSI.
- The small to medium riverside fields with fragmented hedgerow boundaries support arable cropping and occasional pasture.
- The area has a varied field pattern, ranging from historic riverside meadows ('brooks innings') bound by sinuous ditches derived from the medieval enclosure of the marshland, to assarts (formed from the historic clearance of woodland) in the east of the LCA at Monken Pyn, and modern amalgamated fields.
- The floodplain is unsettled, although individual houses and farmsteads lie on the higher ground just outside the LCA, including the Grade II listed Stream Farmhouse at Monken Pyn.
- Most of the area is inaccessible, with access limited to two minor roads at Chilver Bridge and Monken Pyn, and the Wealdway long distance public right of way, which offers the only access along the river channel.
- A rural landscape with high levels of dark night skies and tranquillity.
- An isolated hidden rural landscape due to the absence of settlement, limited access, and vegetation screening the river from view.
- There are far reaching views to the distinctive ridge of the South Downs to the south.



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Key Influences

Landform and drainage

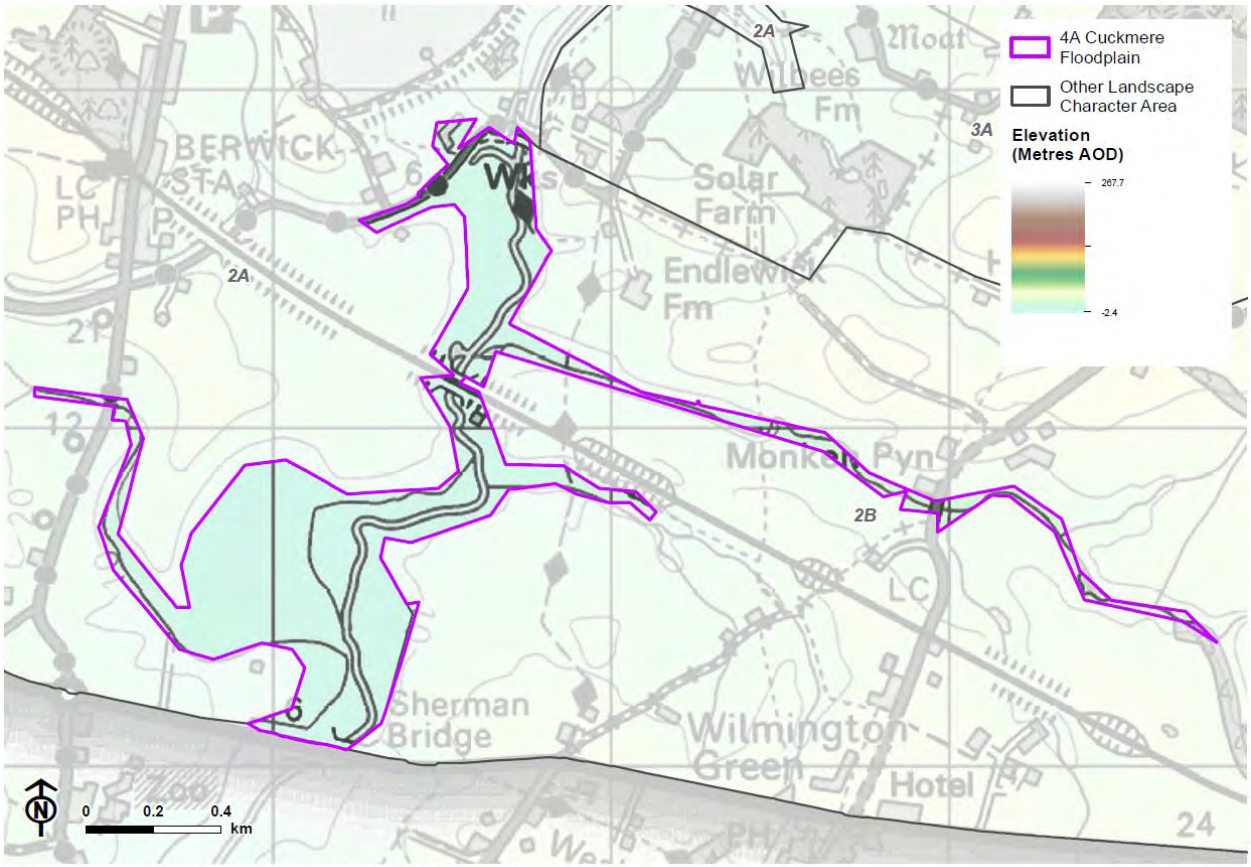
The Cuckmere Floodplain is a flat, low-lying landscape which lies between 5m and 10m AOD along the upper Cuckmere River and its tributaries. The watercourses are small and winding and lie in narrow valleys, lined by fringing alder and willow, and riverside vegetation.

Bedrock and superficial geology

The Cuckmere River Floodplain is underlain by the mudstone, sandstone and siltstones of the Gault Formation, Lower Greensand Group and Weald Clay Formation, laid down in the Jurassic period under shallow marine conditions. Alluvium drift geology across the LCA creates the distinctive low-lying form of the floodplain landscape and give rise to clay to sandy loams. Despite the generally fertile nature of alluvial soils, the valley floors are generally graded 4 ('poor') in the agricultural land classification, with some areas of grade 3 ('good to moderate)' in the north around Chilver Bridge Road and in the south-west of the LCA.

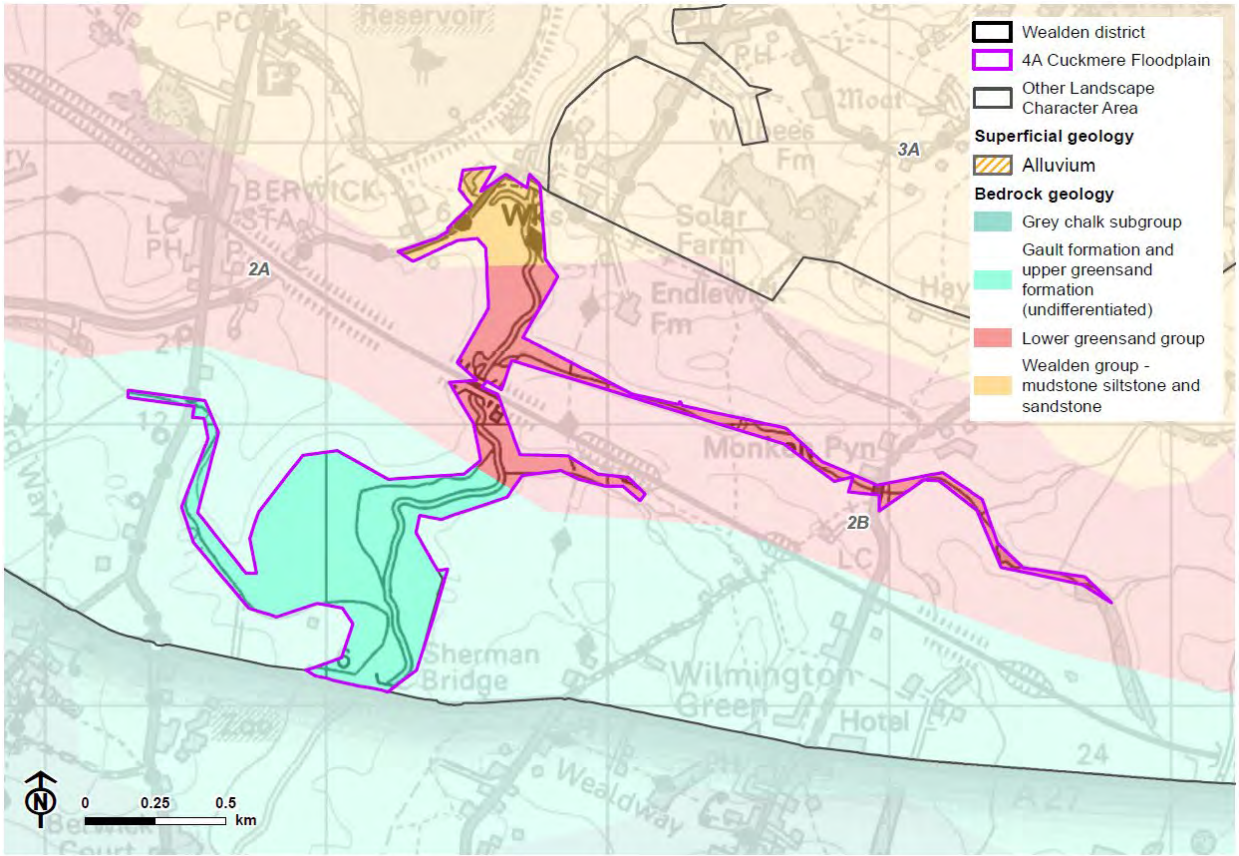

Arable fields rising from the river


The narrow river channel is often hidden from view. The South Downs form a prominent backdrop.



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Landform and Drainage



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Bedrock and superficial geology

Semi-natural habitats

The floodplain supports a varied range of important wetland habitats, including priority habitat floodplain grazing marsh in the south of the LCA, with semi-improved grassland, lowland fen and carr woodland further north. This area is designated as Milton Gate Marsh Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) for these habitats, which support rare flora, invertebrates and breeding birds.

The River Cuckmere Habitat Link Biodiversity Opportunity Area covers most of the LCA and is considered to be important for habitat enhancement, restoration and creation of priority habitats, particularly wetlands.

Landcover

Landcover is almost entirely arable cultivation, with some areas of pasture along the narrower tributaries. Hedgerow boundaries are fragmented in places.

Historic landscape

The name ‘Cuckmere’ probably originates from the Old English for fast flowing. The route of the river has moved naturally in the past, but was canalised to the north of the LCA, when the Arlington Reservoir was built (see LCA 2A).

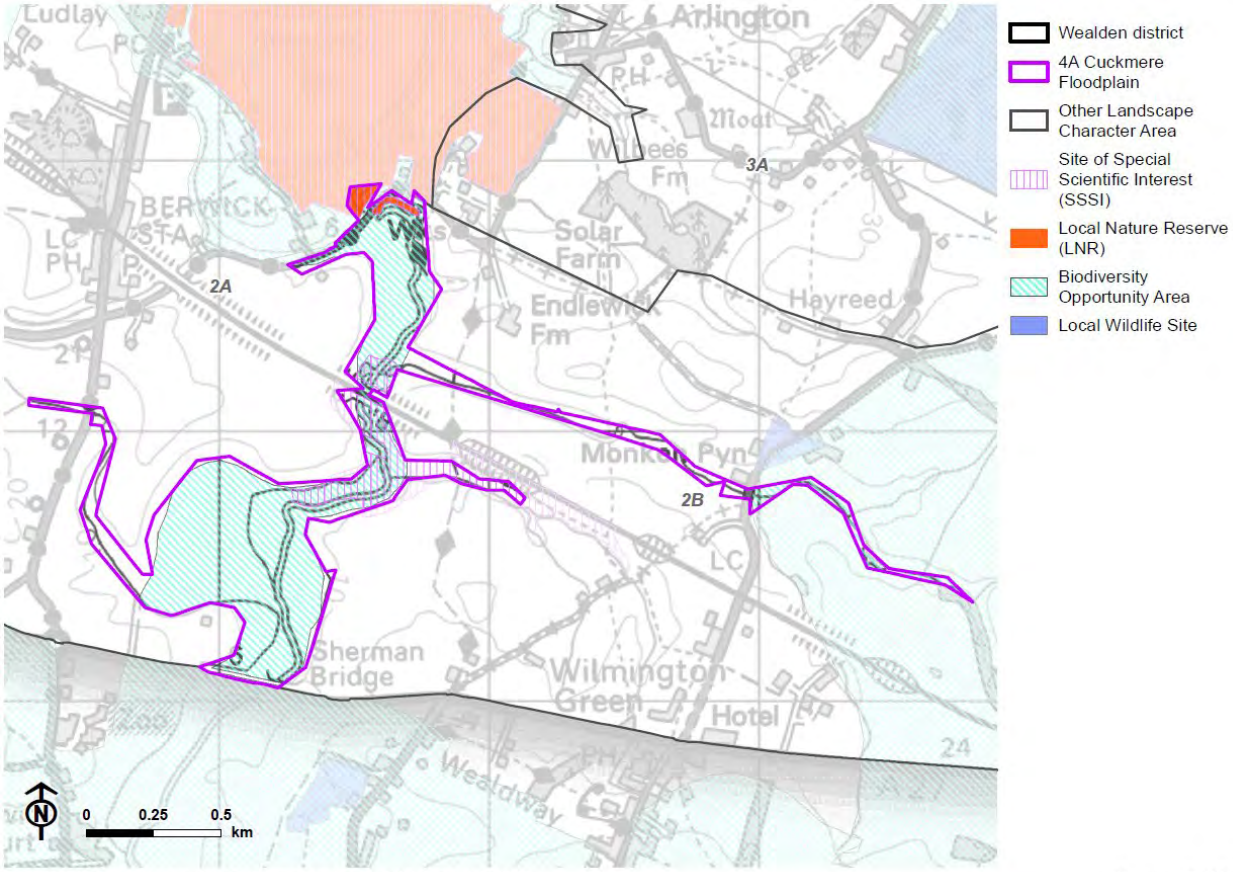
The Sussex Historic Landscape Character Assessment shows the field pattern immediately adjacent to the river channel as reclaimed fresh water marshland, or 'brook innings' (from the verb 'to inn' meaning to reclaim). Fields in the east near Monken Pyn are recorded as cohesive assarts, formed by cleared areas of woodland, showing evidence of previous woodland cover. In the south-west the regular field pattern, may be a result of late medieval or Tudor field re-organisation. The north-east has a regular shaped, straight edged pattern from planned private enclosure pattern, and there is some modern field amalgamation in the south-west.

Modern influences on the landscape include the A27 which runs along the southern boundary and the East Coastway railway line which crosses the floodplain.

Perceptual character

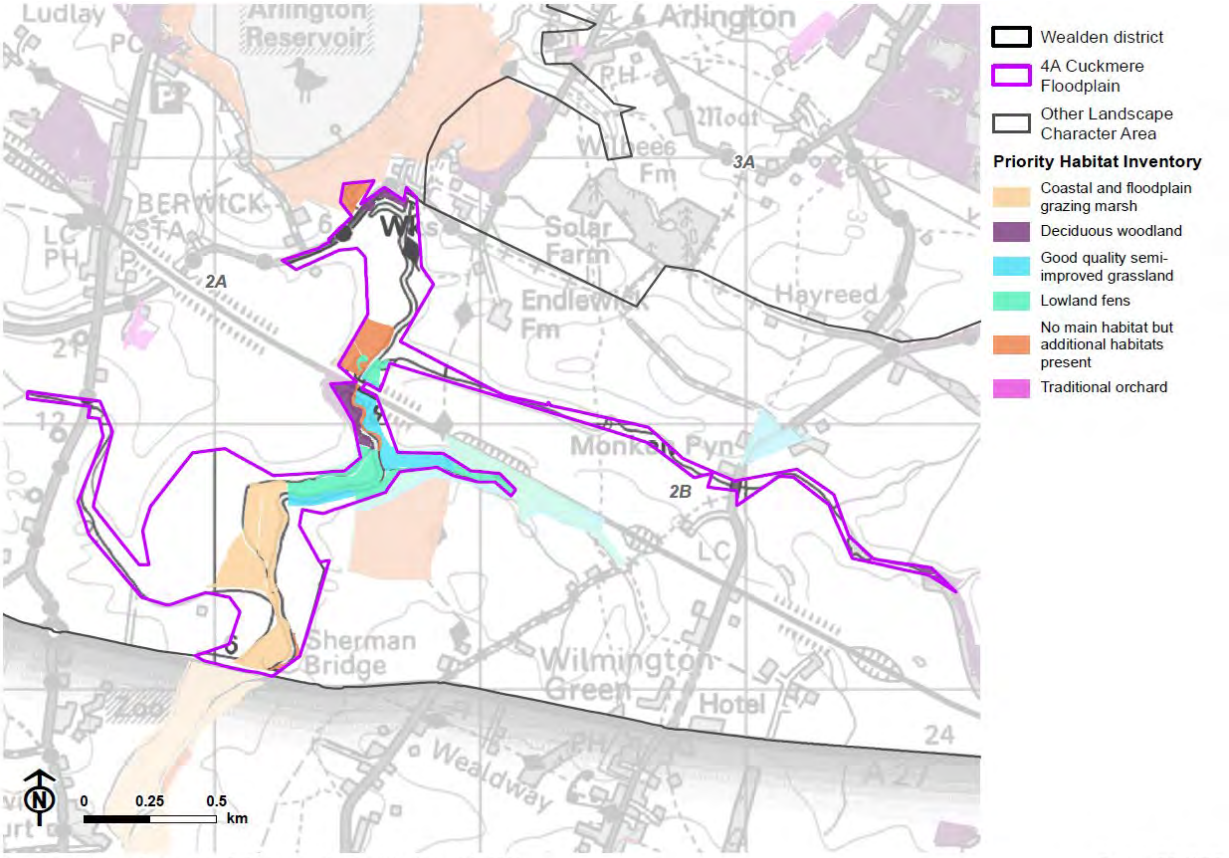
The landscape has an isolated and hidden character, as a result of the limited public access, absence of settlements, and the vegetation screening the river from view. The landscape has some sense of tranquillity, dark skies and remoteness, however the A27 and railway line introduce noise and movement to the area.

There are far reaching views to the distinctive ridge of the South Downs to the south.



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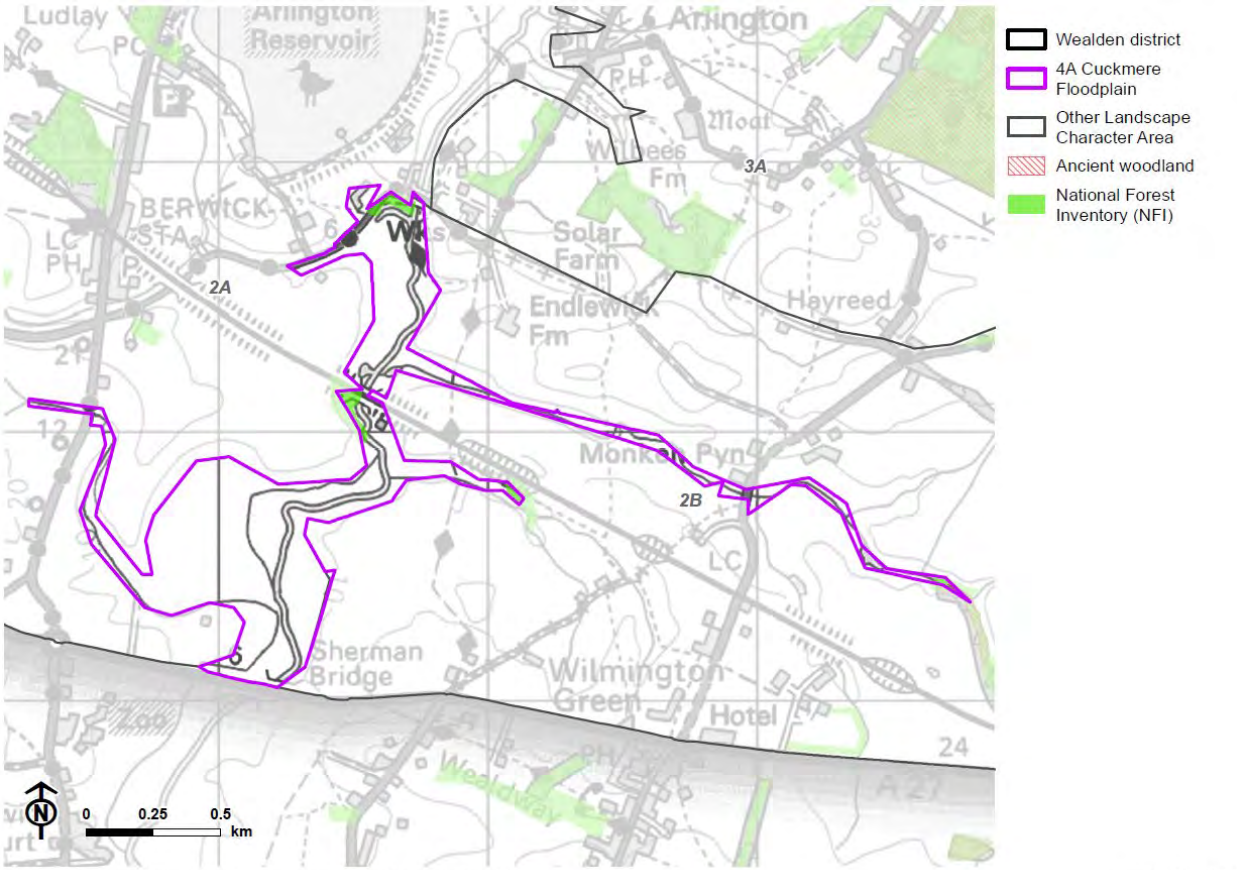
Nature conservation designations



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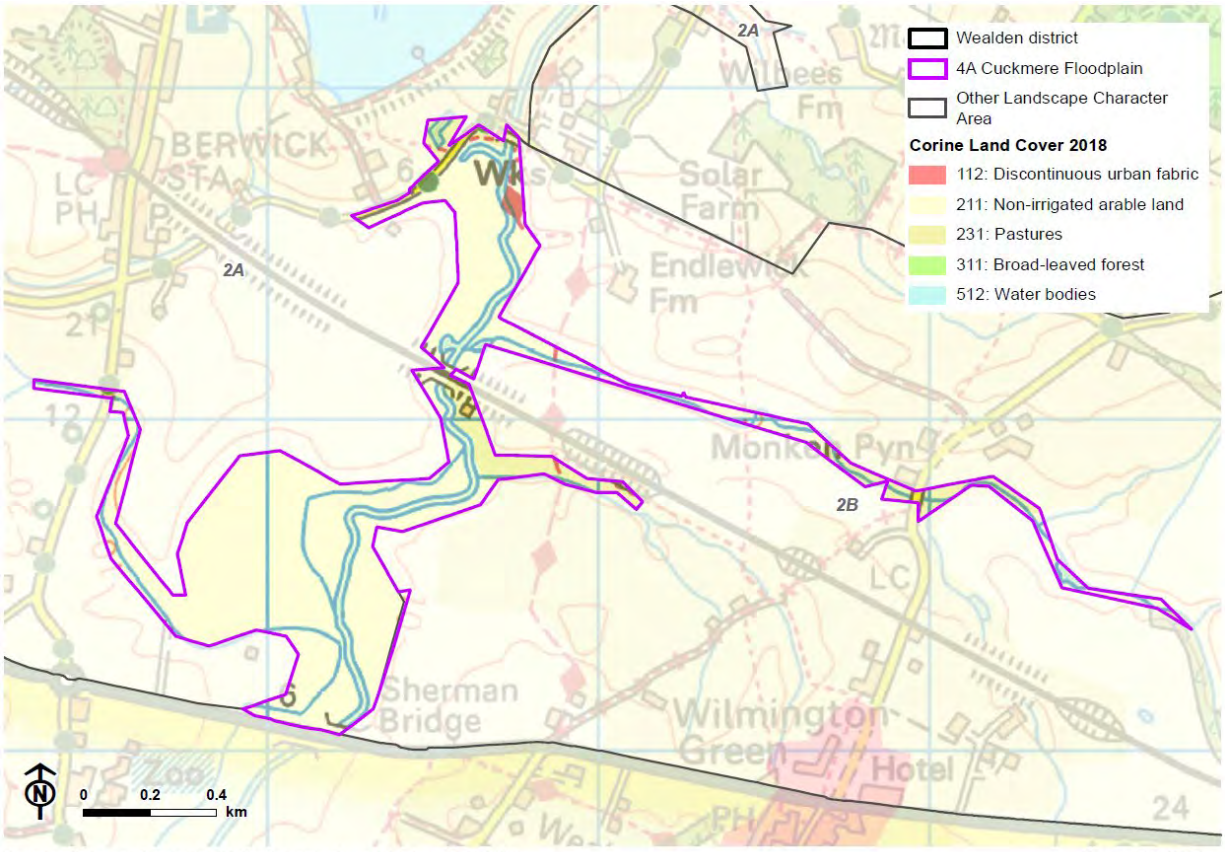
Priority habitat coverage



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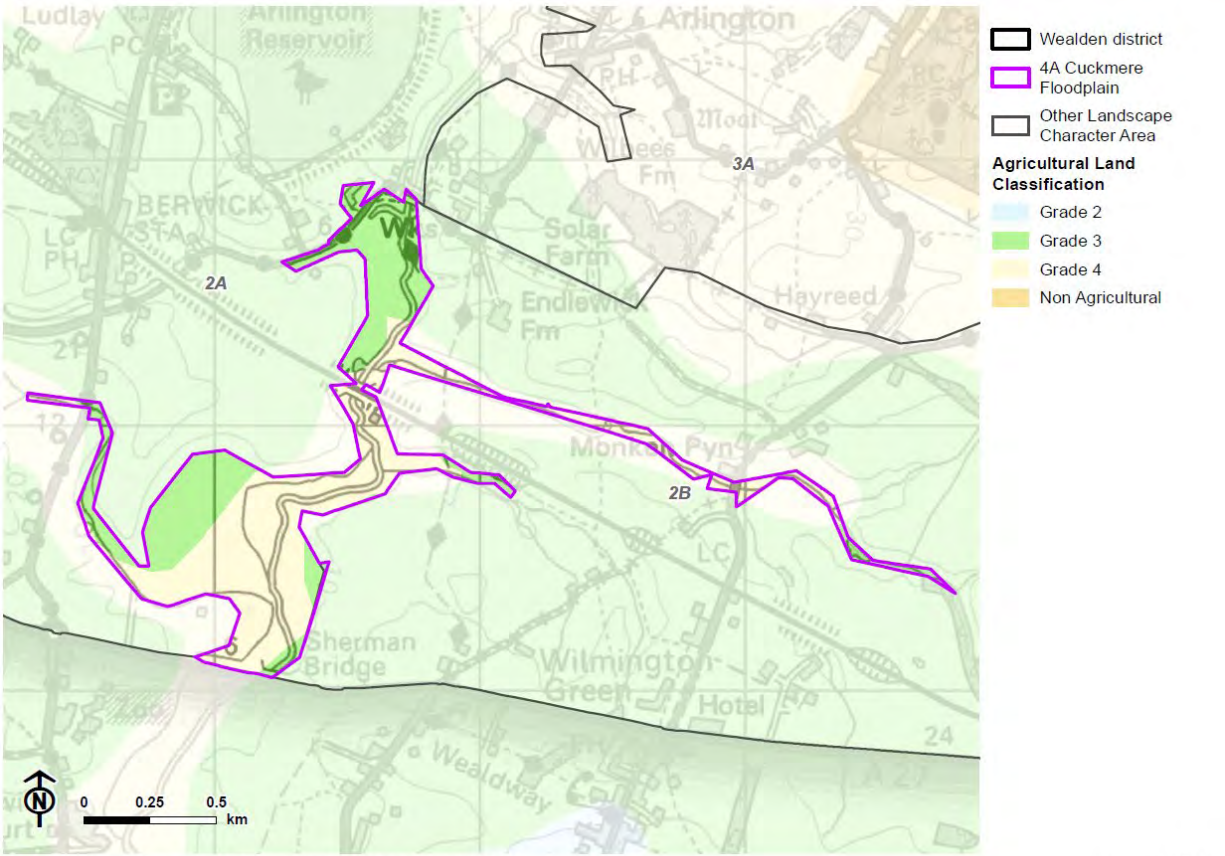
Source: OS, WDC

Woodland coverage



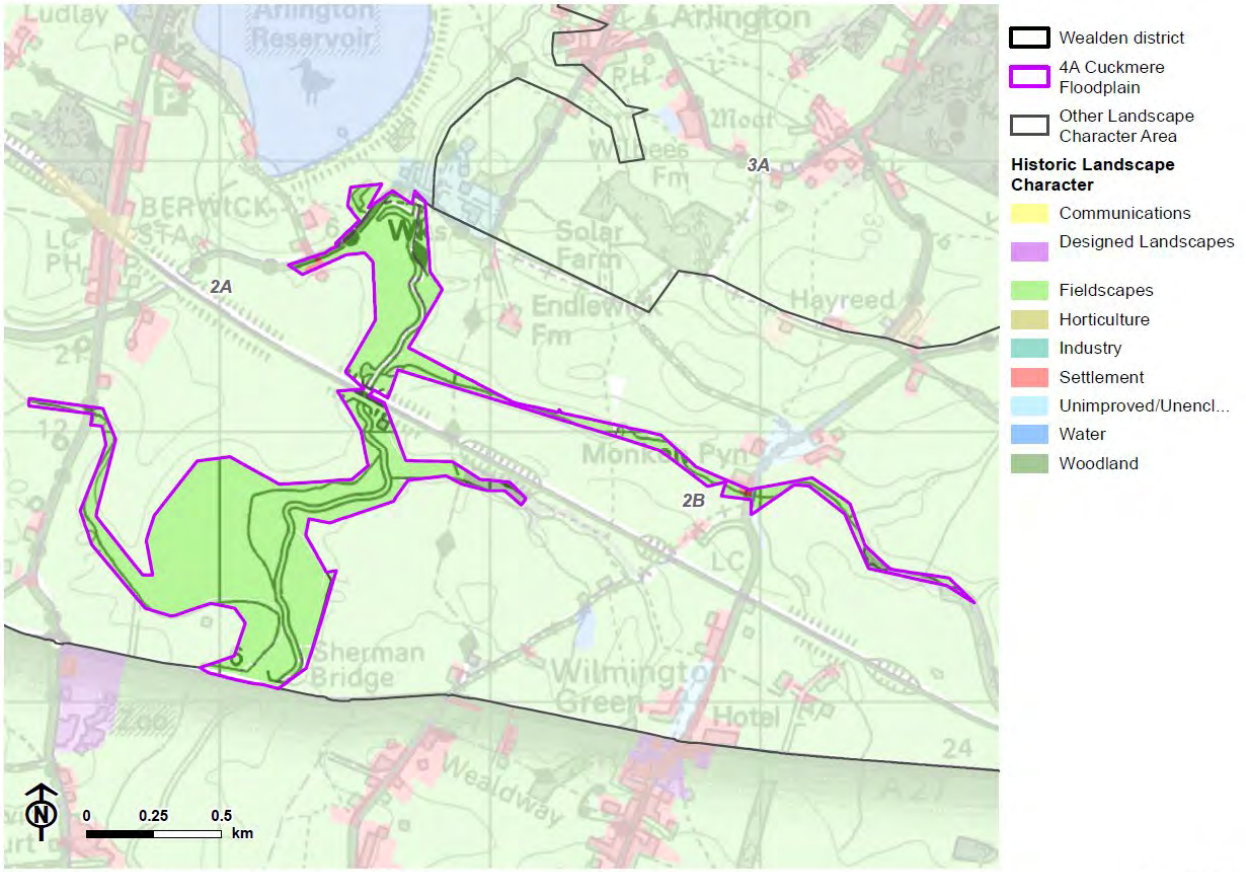
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Landcover types (CORINE Land cover inventory 2018)



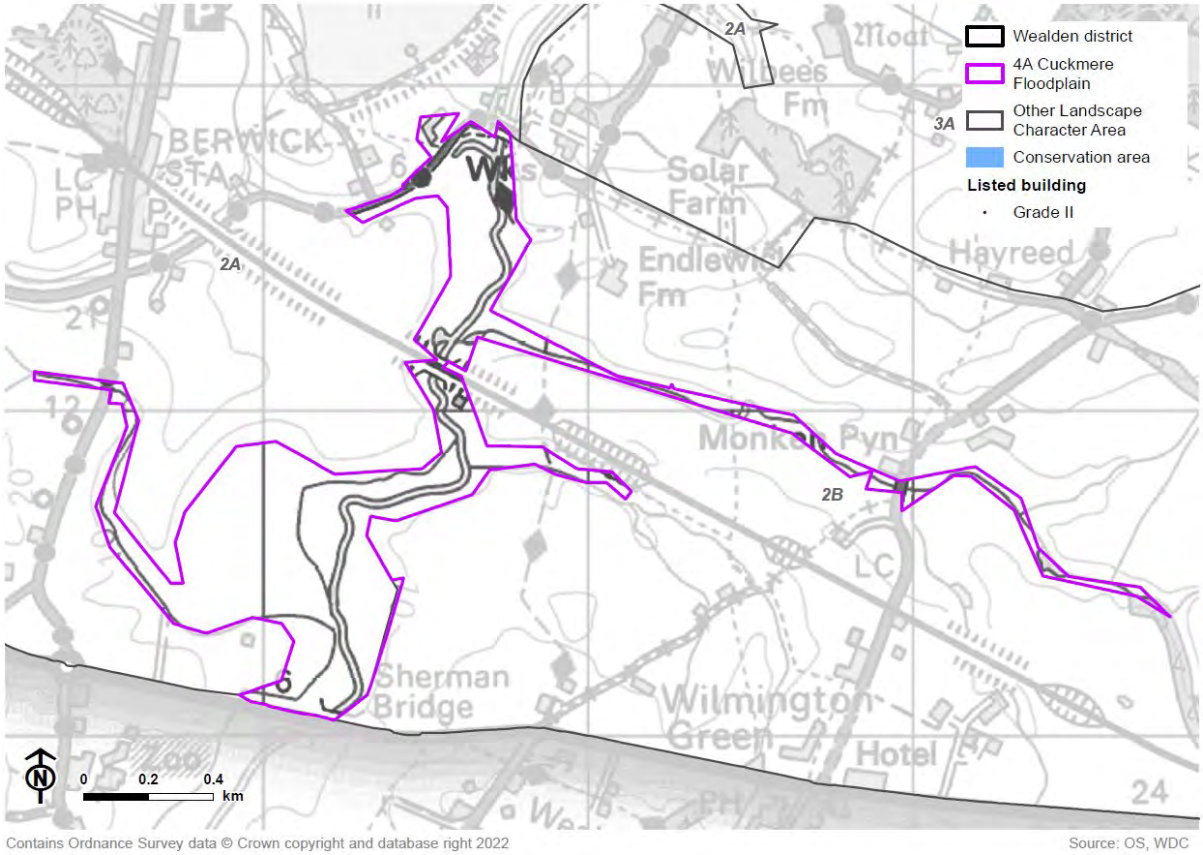
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Agricultural Land Classication



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Historic Landscape Characterisation



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Cultural heritage designations

Landscape qualities

The following features and characteristics are particularly valued for their contribution to character and for the ecosystem services they provide:

- The meandering river and its tributaries provide a sense of place and naturalness.
- The semi-natural floodplain habitats, including wet meadows, grazing marsh, reed beds and riparian woodland and scrub contribute to the naturalistic character of the landscape, support biodiversity and provide nutrient filtration, enhancing water quality and regulating water flow.
- The riparian woodland and vegetation aid the absorption of airborne pollutants, provide carbon sequestration and the regulation of temperatures.
- The woodland habitats and hedgerow boundaries provide habitat connectivity to support biodiversity.
- The unimproved grasslands of the wet meadows allow soil stabilisation and have a higher soil carbon content than cultivated habitats.
- The historic field patterns including brooks innings and cohesive assarts, which contribute to the sense of place and time depth.
- The unsettled character of the floodplain landscape allows natural flooding to occur minimising the risks of flooding downstream.
- The long views across the landscape to the South Downs provides a sense of place.
- The relatively isolated but intimate character of the rural landscape, with high levels of tranquillity and dark night skies, contributes to people's health and mental well-being, especially in contrast to the nearby settlement at Polegate.

Forces for change

- Climate change leading to increasing periods of drought and higher temperatures, resulting in drying of the wet meadows and grazing marsh, changing the landscape character of the floodplain.
- Increasing demand for water extraction reducing water flow in streams and rivers resulting in a decline in wetland habitats and riparian woodland, changing the character of the watercourses.
- Changes in water quality and increasing water temperatures entering the wetland resulting in the growth of dense algal carpets, reducing the biodiversity of the wetland and causing visual changes to the landscape.
- Climate change leading to an increase in the frequency and severity of seasonal flooding, impacting land use potential and vegetation.
- A lack of management of the river floodplain leading to increased bramble and nettle cover and declining ecological condition, particularly of Milton Gate Marsh SSSI.
- Climate change leading to an increase in pests and diseases and the potential spread of invasive plants and animals in water courses (for example Floating Pennywort) resulting in changes or loss of the native flora and fauna
- Continuing fragmentation or removal of hedgerow boundaries, to create larger fields for arable cropping, altering the landscape structure and reducing habitat connectivity.
- Pressure for the introduction of horse paddocks and associated stables, affecting the unsettled, intimate character of the floodplain.
- The rural character and sense of tranquillity is vulnerable to noise from transport corridors, especially the A27 on the southern boundary and the East Coastway railway line.
- Pressure for development within adjacent LCAs (2A, 2B and 3A) could affect the undeveloped character and associated tranquillity and dark skies of the floodplain.
- Potential pressure for renewable infrastructure, both within the LCA and in views from the LCA (e.g. solar farms and associated grid connections) altering the enclosed character of the landscape and impacting rural views within and from the LCA.



Heavily vegetated riverbank

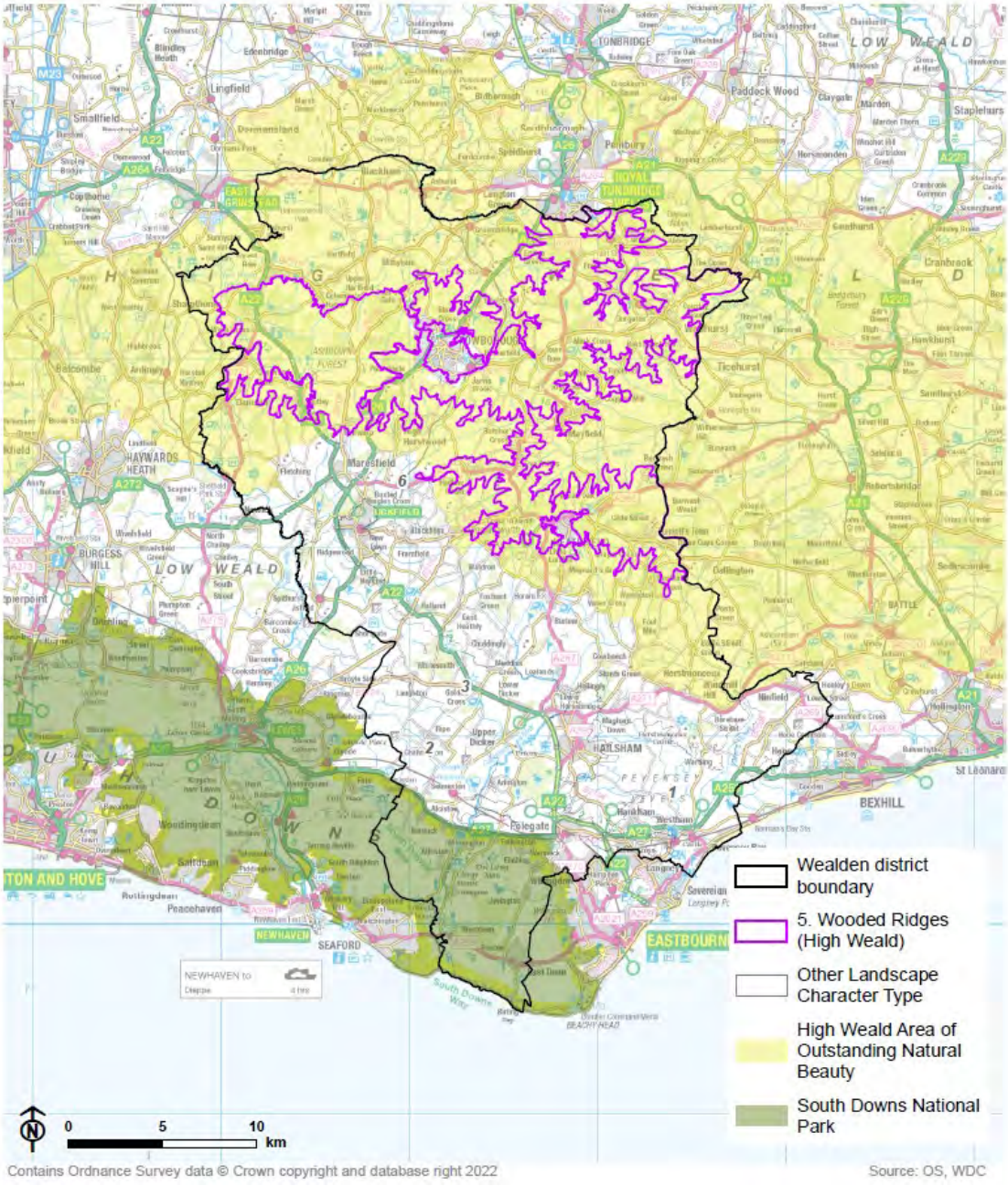
Landscape Guidelines

These guidelines recommend how the landscape can be managed to ensure future change respects local character:

- Maintain constant water levels (monitoring water abstraction, especially as periods of drought increase).
- Retain and enhance the biodiversity of River Cuckmere and its winding tributaries by minimising water pollution from agriculture both within the LCA and outside, through sensitive land management practices, including restoration of buffer strips along watercourses to minimise run off.
- Improve the diversity and connectivity of wetland habitats, particularly those recognised by designation as part of the Milton Gate Marsh SSSI, in line with the management aims of the River Cuckmere Habitat Link Biodiversity Opportunity Area.
- Monitor potential changes in flora and increase in pests and diseases as a result of climate change, including spread of invasive plants and animals in water courses.
- Manage riparian woodland to ensure a diverse species and age structure by thinning, coppicing and replanting, as necessary. As climatic conditions change, plant suitable species and manage the woodlands to improve structure, health and diversity of habitat.
- Increase areas of permanent pasture (aiming to convert arable land to permanent pasture or create grassland margins to arable fields) and manage to maintain and increase biodiversity.
- Encourage the conservation of historic field patterns, including medieval assarts and brooks-innings and their boundary features, to retain the traditional landscape pattern. Replant hedgerows where field boundaries have been lost as a result of expansion of arable farming.
- If horse paddocks are introduced, encourage sympathetic integration through the maintenance of hedgerow field boundaries and avoid overgrazing of pastures.
- Consider additional planting to screen the A27 and railway line within the LCA and reduce the intrusion of movement and noise from traffic and trains.
- Maintain the undeveloped rural character of the floodplain. Carefully consider development in adjacent LCAs, to retain the secluded nature of the floodplain landscape, maintaining its dark skies and sense of tranquillity.
- Retain and where possible enhance long-distance views to the South Downs, which form a strong backdrop to the landscape.
- Ensure any renewable energy generation is compatible with the guidance above and is in scale with the landscape where possible (acknowledging that wind turbines may transcend the scale of existing features in the landscape). Electricity infrastructure associated with renewable energy generation should be efficiently planned to minimise the number of lines required, routeing in accordance with the Holford Rules[1] .

[1] https://www.nationalgrid.com/sites/default/files/documents/13795-The%20Holford%20Rules.pdf

Landscape Character Type 5: Wooded Ridges (High Weald)



The Wooded Ridges (High Weald) landscape character type is an extensive area of elevated landform, generally located above the 100m contour line, in the north of the district. The landscape type lies within the High Weald AONB and is one of the best surviving medieval landscapes in northern Europe, as a result of the historic field patterns, extensive woods and network of historic routeways. The landform is complex with a series of ridges and incised stream valleys, which combined with extensive areas of woodland (much of ancient origin), results in an enclosed character. In contrast, extensive open views across lower surrounding landscapes are possible. The landscape type contains large tracts of open access land and is heavily used for recreation.

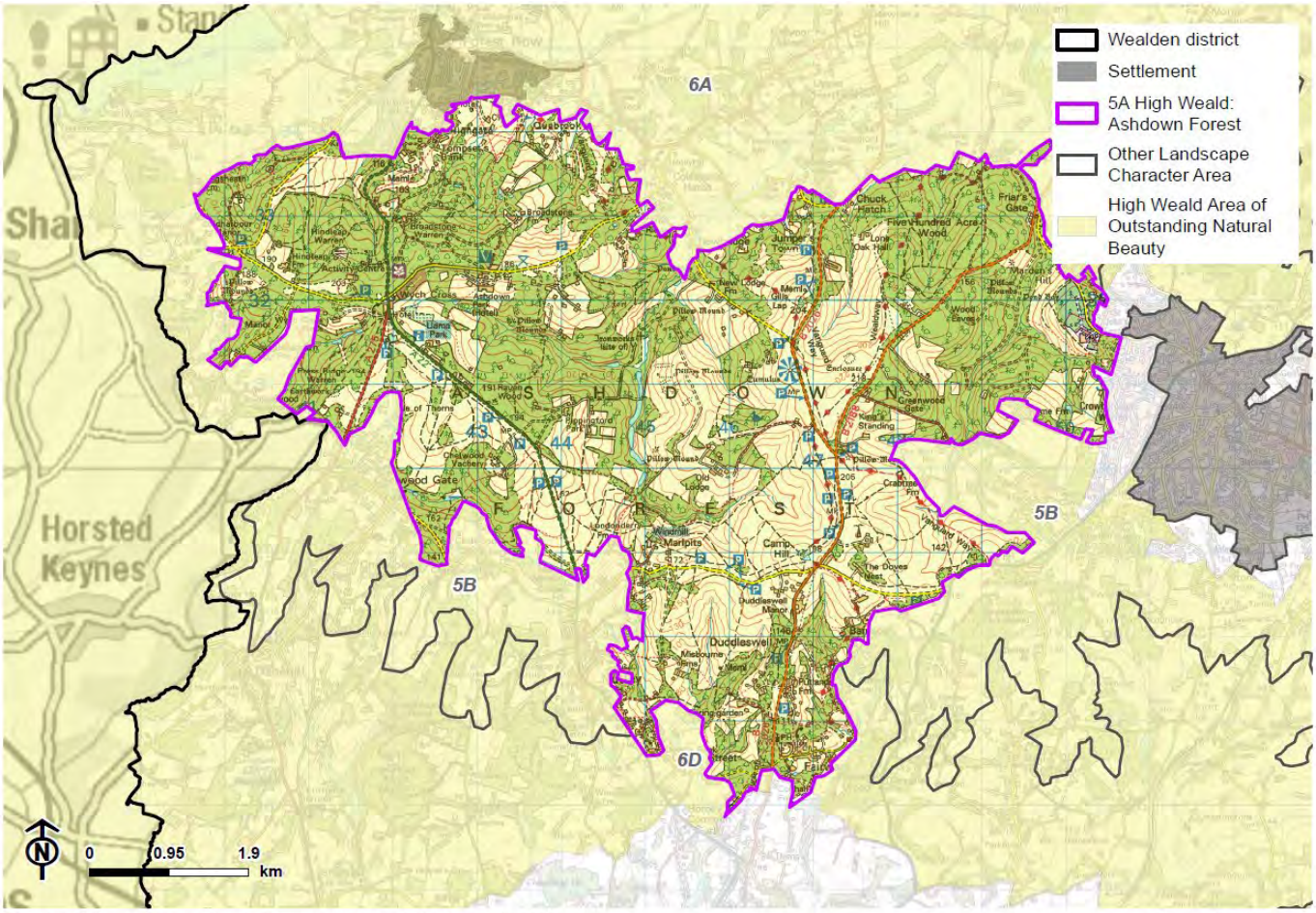
There are two LCAs located within this LCT:

- 5A: High Weald - Ashdown Forest
- 5B: High Weald – Central

LCA 5A: High Weald - Ashdown Forest

Location and summary

The High Weald - Ashdown Forest LCA is a rolling landscape of elevated ridges incised by gill streams and watercourses, which drain north to the River Medway and south to the River Ouse. The landscape comprises open areas of heathland interspersed with mixed or coniferous woodland, including extensive areas of ancient woodland, streams, dispersed historic farmsteads and scattered dwellings. The LCA is located within the High Weald AONB.



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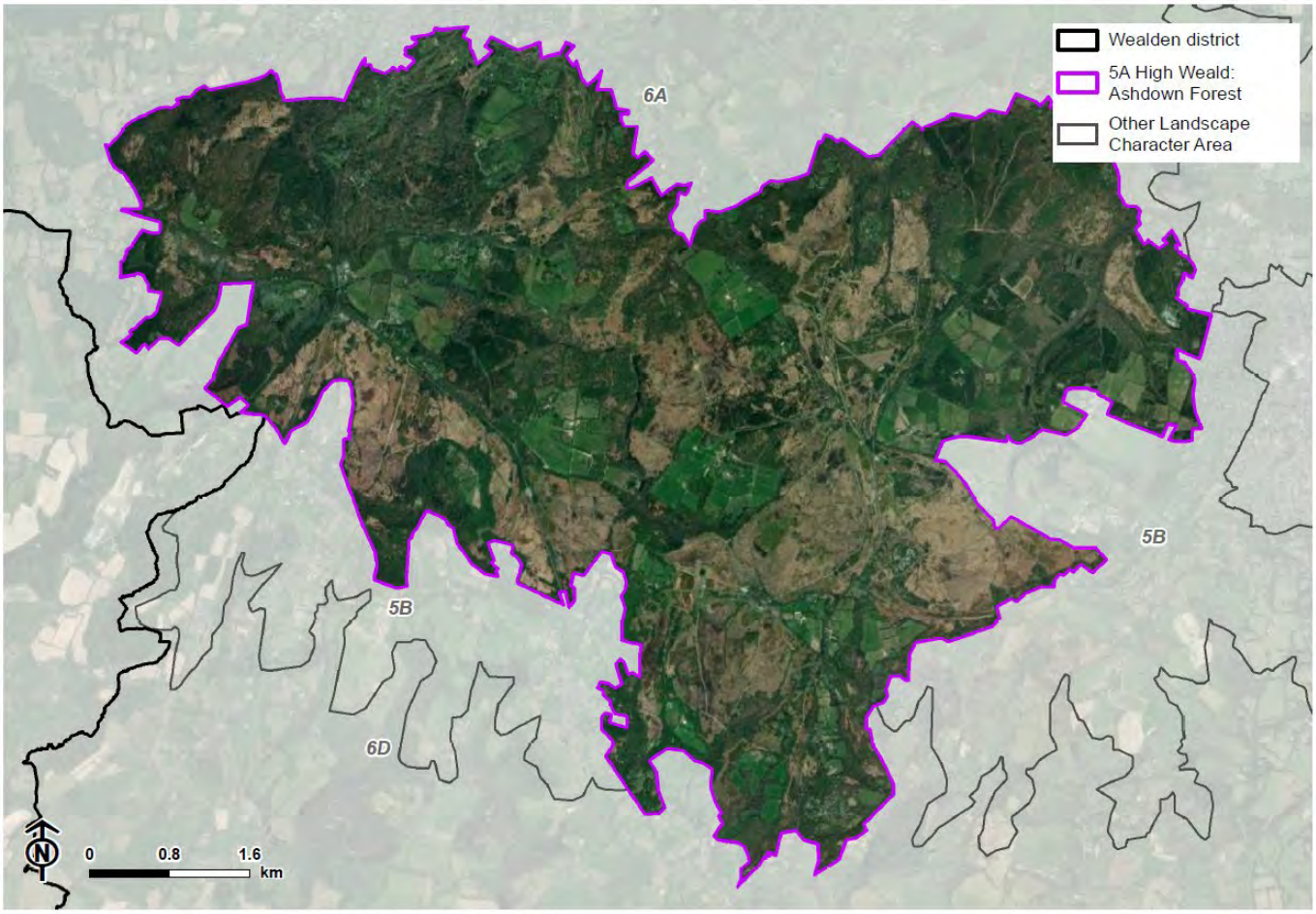


Typical view of the High Weald - Ashdown Forest

Key Characteristics

- The underlying geology of interbedded sandstone, siltstone and mudstone give rise to an elevated area of broad rolling ridges, ranging from 175m to 220m AOD. These are incised by narrow wooded stream valleys, including steep sided gills which drain to the river catchments in adjacent LCAs. The incised and ridged landform is a defining component of character of the High Weald AONB.
- The poor soils dictated traditional land uses including grazing commons, deer hunting, iron workings, forest management and military training. These historic land uses shaped the landscape, resulting in today's distinctive pattern of open heath, mixed and conifer forest with small areas of pasture.
- A well wooded landscape, which is a defining component of character of the High Weald AONB. There are large areas of mixed and deciduous woodland, much of ancient origin, and a high density of gill and wet woodlands. Characteristic species include oak-birch woodland, with beech and chestnut.
- The LCA is rich is semi-natural habitats, with a large continuous block of lowland heathland, which is a defining component of character of the High Weald AONB. This is interspersed with small areas of lowland dry acid grassland, and valley bog. These habitats support uncommon plant, invertebrate and bird species and are internationally designated as a SAC, SPA and SSSI.
- The area is rich in relics of the Wealden iron industry, including large hammer ponds (constructed to power forge hammers) and remnants of coppiced woodland, managed to produce charcoal and the furnaces at Crowborough Warren and Newbridge (Scheduled Monuments).
- A strongly dispersed settlement pattern, which is a defining component of character of the High Weald AONB, comprising isolated, often historic, farmsteads set back from ridge top roads. There are occasional small linear villages, typically located along the edges of the LCA (such as Fairwarp and Duddleswell in the south-east).
- The local vernacular architecture comprises red brick laid as Flemish bond with blued brick ends, red tiled roofs and tile hung upper stories. These materials, including sandstone, oak timber frames, and flint reflect the abundance of locally sourced materials.
- Ashdown Forest offers abundant recreational opportunities, as the largest free public access space in south-east England, with a visitor centre and a network of local and promoted trails including the Vanguard Way and Weald Way.
- The open and large scale character of the landscape, most strongly expressed from elevated ridgelines within the interior of the LCA, becomes more contained, wooded and smaller in scale approaching the LCA boundaries.
- Outstanding open views are available from higher ridges over the lower-lying valleys, particularly from roads along the most prominent ridgelines (including the A22, B2026 and B2188) and from public rights of way, with a promoted viewpoint at Tile Lodge.
- A varied pattern of mixed woodland and open rolling heathland characterise the ridgelines, with distinctive clumps of Scots pine, planted in the 19th century forming skyline features.

- Numerous features in the landscape are affiliated with 'Winnie the Pooh'.
- The contrasting landscape pattern of heathland and woodland gives rise to a varied landscape colour palette with sweeps of brown and green, with further added seasonal interest from yellow gorse in spring and purple heather in the summer.
- A sense of tranquillity and relative remoteness characterises the LCA, particularly within the extensive areas of woodland and heath, away from main roads and the larger settlements located outside the LCA, such as Crowborough.



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Source: OS, WDC

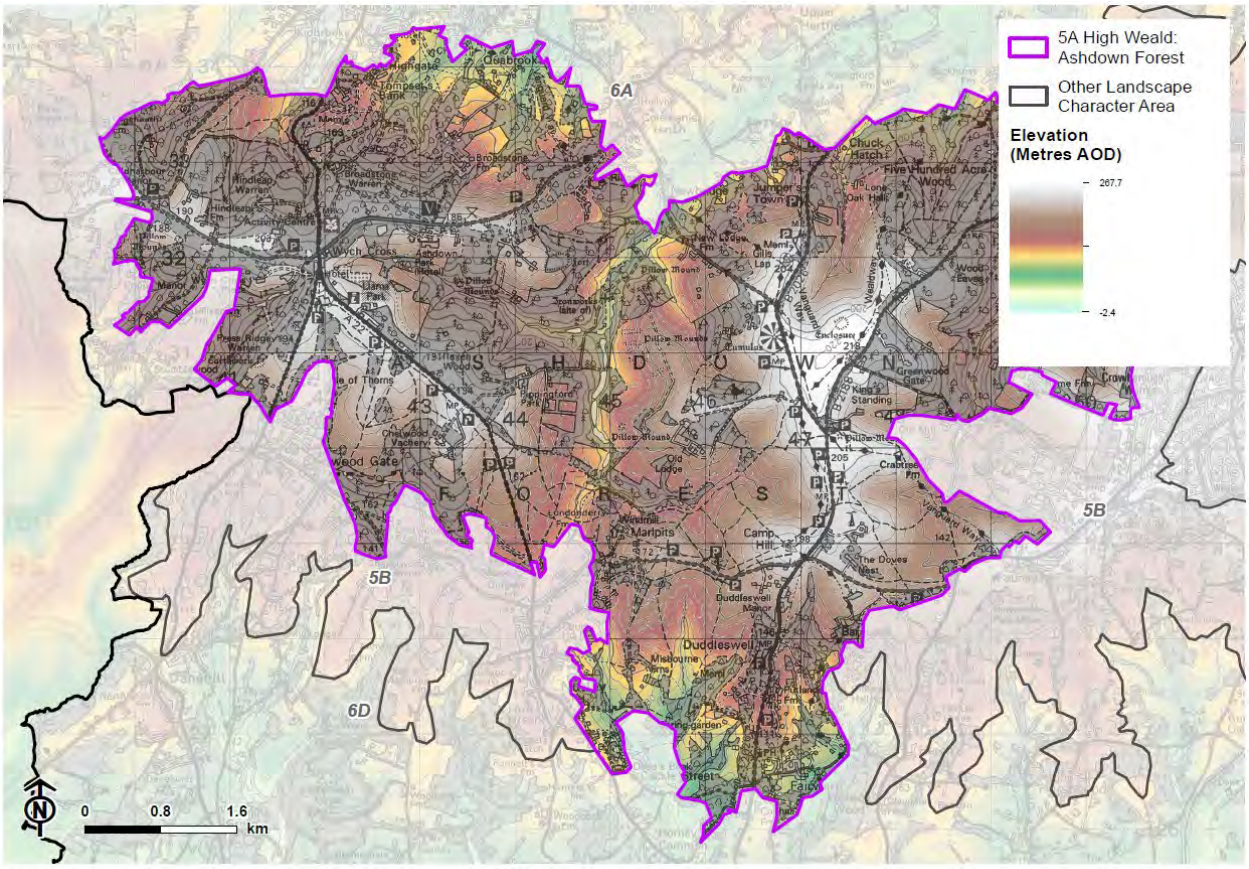
Key Influences

Landform and drainage

The High Weald - Ashdown Forest is an elevated area, generally lying above 100m AOD and reaching a high point of 220m AOD. The landform is formed of rolling ridgelines falling towards lower-lying incised gill streams, chains of hammer ponds (see history section for more information about these) and other watercourses. These watercourses form the headwaters for the River Medway, draining to the north, and the River Ouse, draining to the south.

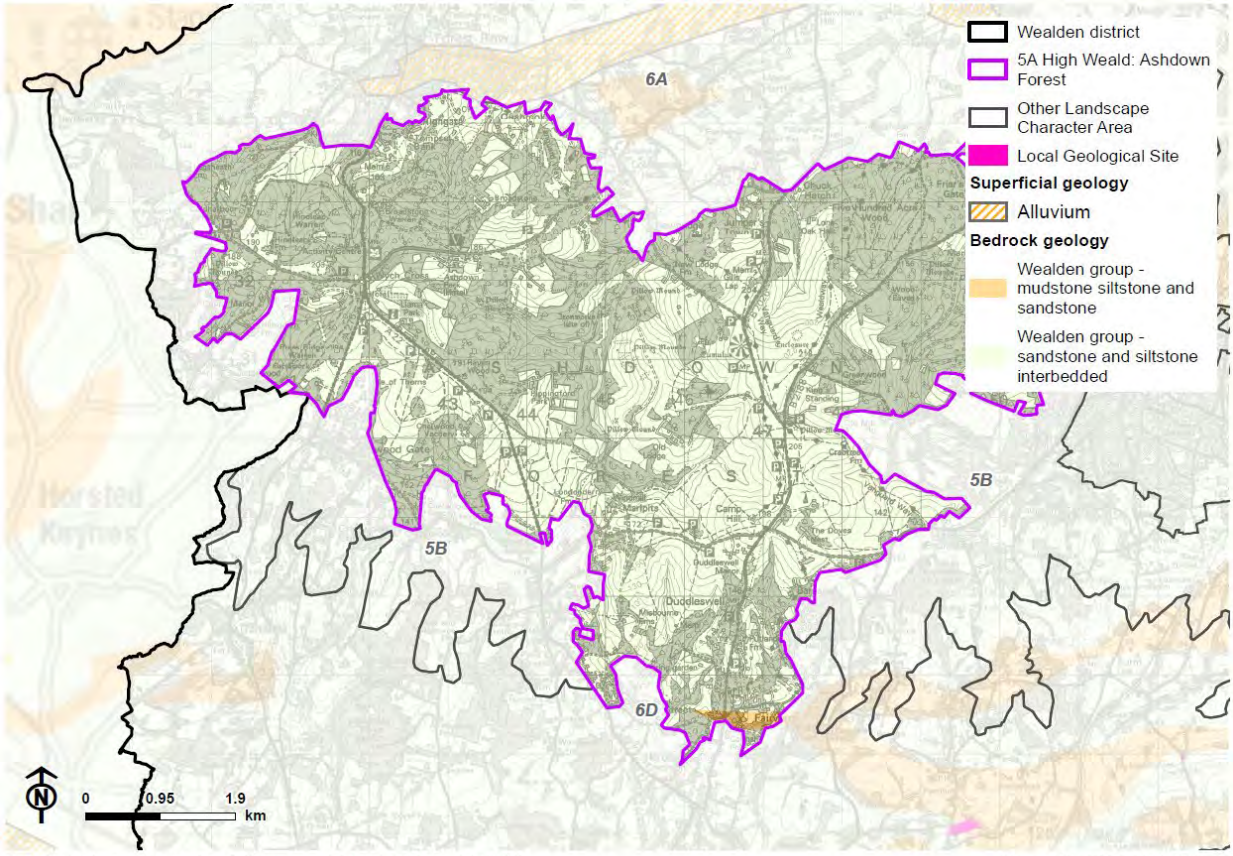
Bedrock and superficial geology

The area is underlain by interbedded sandstone, siltstone and mudstone of the Ashdown Formation, laid down in the Cretaceous period by periodic inundation of floodplains and deltas. Superficial deposits include alluvium, which relate to the river corridors. The elevated nature of the Ashdown Forest is a result of the Weald Anticline, which formed from the late Oligocene to middle Miocene periods and the resulting sandstone ridges run east-west. Subsequent weathering has deeply incised the sandstone ridges and led to the formation of steep-sided gills. The geology gives rise to medium to poor light silty loam and sandy loam soils and the small areas of farmland are graded 4 ('poor') in the agricultural land classification.



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Landform and drainage



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Bedrock and superficial geology

Semi-natural habitats

The LCA supports extensive semi-natural habitats, with a matrix of open heath, ancient woodland, gill woodland and wetlands. The LCA contains one of the largest continuous areas of lowland heathland, semi-natural woodland and valley bog in south-east England and its value is reflected in its designation as the Ashdown Forest Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Special Protection Area (SPA) and Special Areas of Conservation (SAC). Much of the woodland, including wet woodland, is of ancient origin, with smaller areas of lowland dry acid grassland located in the centre and north of the area. Wetland habitats are associated with streams and hammer ponds throughout the LCA.

These habitats support distinctive plant species, including dwarf gorse, heather and cross-leaved heath, invertebrate populations, reptiles including adders, and heath and woodland bird populations, such as Nightjar and Dartford warbler (the reason for its designation as an SPA). Old Lodge Sussex Wildlife Trust Reserve is found west of High Road.

The Western Ouse Streams and Ashdown Forest Biodiversity Opportunity Area (BOA) covers much of the LCA. BOAs are priority areas for the enhancement, restoration and creation of priority habitats, specifically heathland, wetlands and woodlands in this LCA.

Landcover

Land cover comprises a mixture of extensive heathland and mixed woodland and coniferous forest, with small pockets of pasture. The Royal Ashdown Forest Golf Club.is located along the northern boundary of the LCA.

Historic landscape

Early occupation of the area is evidenced by earthworks which survive in the landscape today including a Late Neolithic/Bronze Age bowl barrow near Tile Lodge, an Iron Age settlement at the King's Standing and Chelwood Gate Enclosure, all designated as Scheduled Monuments.

In the Middle Ages, the area was managed for deer hunting (Ashdown Forest was a Royal Hunting Forest), alongside the grazing of swine and cattle and the collection of fallen wood. This led to the establishment of commoners' rights over the land which, in combination with the poor sandy soils, prevented field enclosure. The resulting landcover pattern of open heathland with woodland is still evident in the landscape today. There is evidence of post-medieval use of the land for rabbit farming and a number of surviving pillow mounds, or artificial rabbit warrens, are designated as Scheduled Monuments.

Evidence of Wealden iron working, which was prominent until the 18th century, is seen in the iron farm ponds and large hammer ponds, constructed to provide a sufficient head of water for forges. A number of sites relating to the iron industry are designated as Scheduled Monuments, including the Crowborough Warren furnace, Crowborough forge and Newbridge blast furnace and the iron works on Garden Hill.

A focus on improved forest management emerged in the early 19th century, with distinctive pine clumps planted at this time and a committee of Commoners formed to influence the implementation of forest management.

Ashdown Forest was used for military training exercises from the Napoleonic era but was also used extensively during World War II. Remnants of slit trenches and firing range mounds, are visible in the landscape today. Radio towers near King's Standing have since been dismantled, but the radio station is still used for police training today.

Historically, settlement was very sparse and limited to dispersed farmsteads and cottages, with some larger manor houses and mansions, such as Pippingford and Ashdown Park, built in the 19th century. Settlement follows a similar pattern today, with some linear growth including near Duddleswell and Fairwarp, and ribbon development along the A22. Larger settlements abut the boundaries of the LCA, most notably Crowborough.

The Sussex Historic Landscape Character Assessment shows 'unimproved/unenclosed' areas, which include heathland and commons, interspersed with woodland. There are small areas of informal fieldscapes derived from irregular piecemeal enclosure and assarts scattered across the area and occasional 18th and 19th century planned or private enclosures, as well as informal parkland associated with farmsteads.

Perceptual character

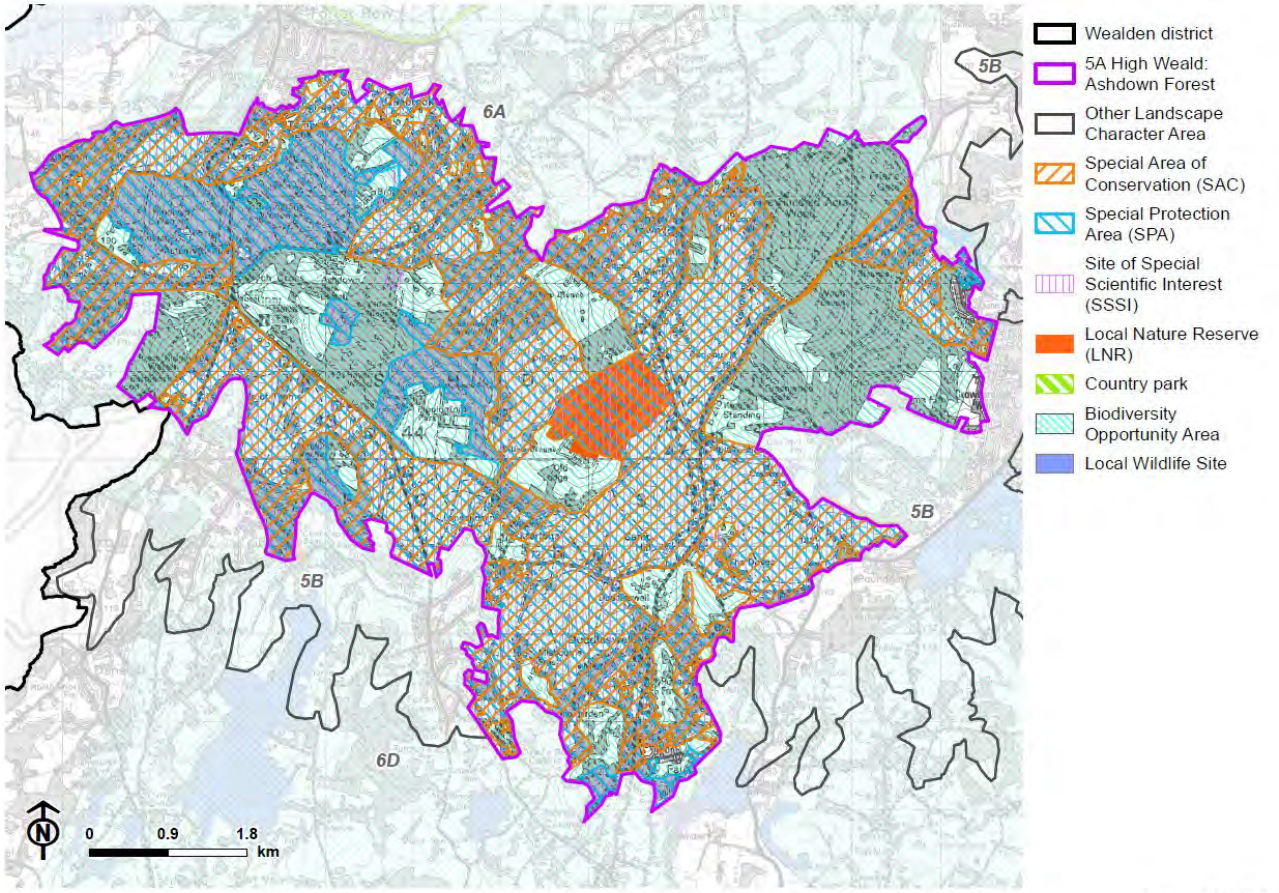
The LCA has high levels of tranquillity and experience of dark night skies, resulting in a strong sense of relative remoteness, particularly within the larger woodlands including Broadstone Warren, Raven Wood and Five Hundred Acre Wood.

The proximity of the eastern part of the LCA to Crowborough, the north-west of the LCA to Forest Row and traffic on the A22 reduces tranquillity locally. Seasonal tourism in the area further reduces tranquillity near popular locations and visitor amenities.

Numerous features in the landscape are affiliated with 'Winnie the Pooh', which draw visitors to the area. This includes 'Pooh Sticks Bridge', the 'Pooh Walk' across the 100 Aker Wood, a memorial to A.A. Milne, 'The Heffalump Trap' (a solitary pine tree located within a hollow) and 'The Enchanted Place' (a clump of tall pine trees). Ashdown Forest also inspired William Robinson who pioneered the English natural garden movement and writers such as Rudyard Kipling.



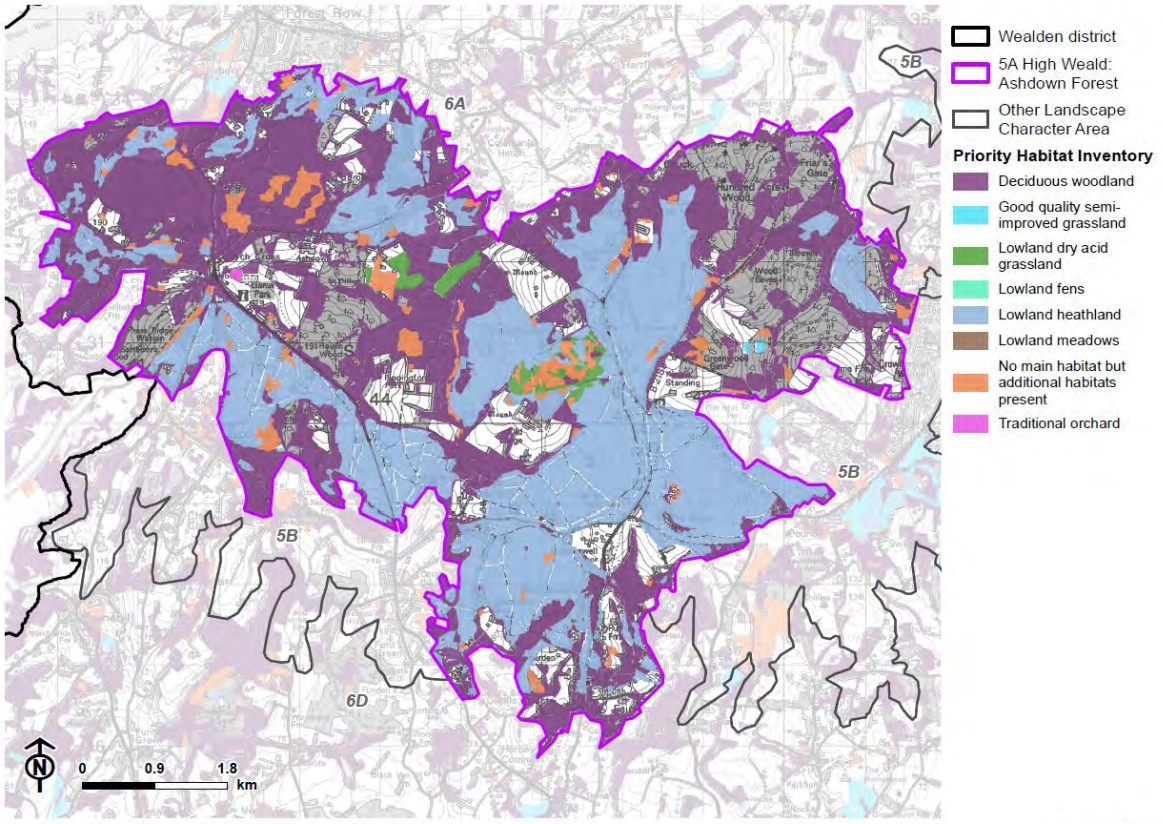
Wooded gill



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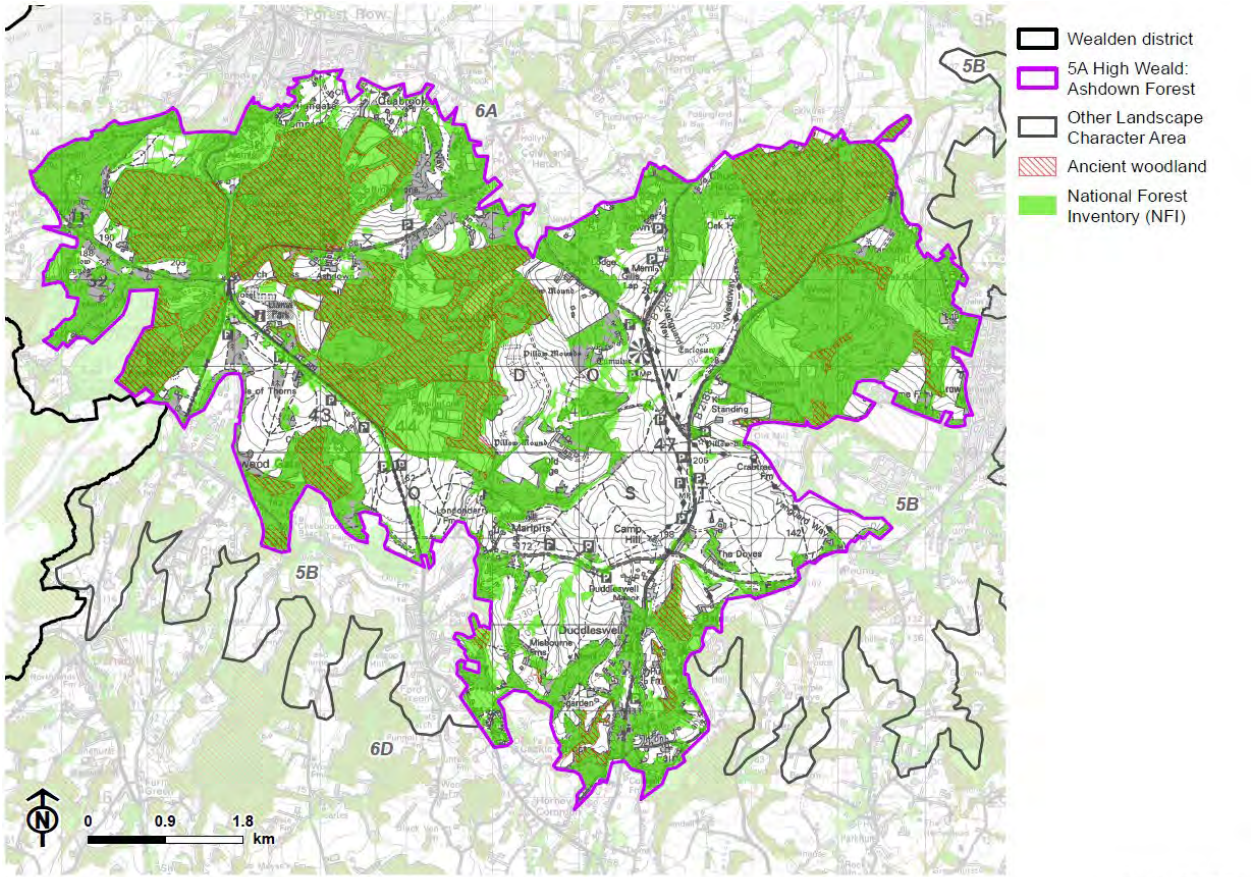
Source: OS, WDC

Nature conservation designations



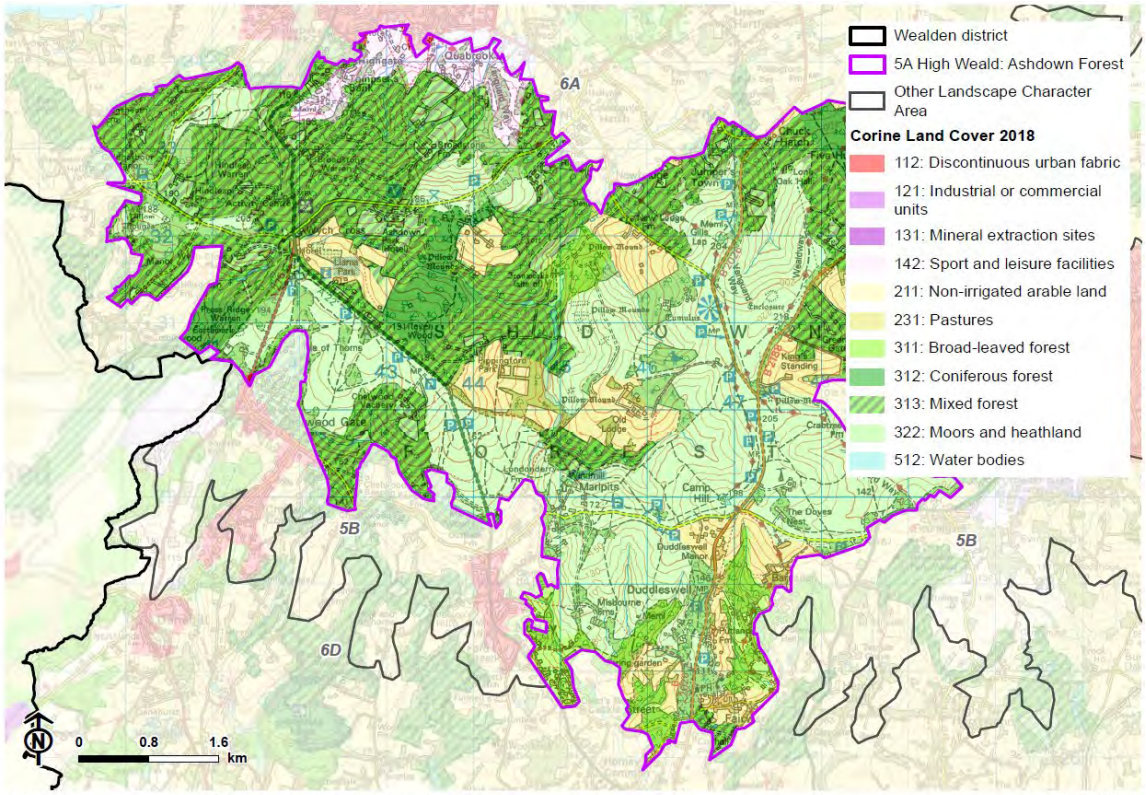
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Source: OS, WDC

Priority habitat coverage

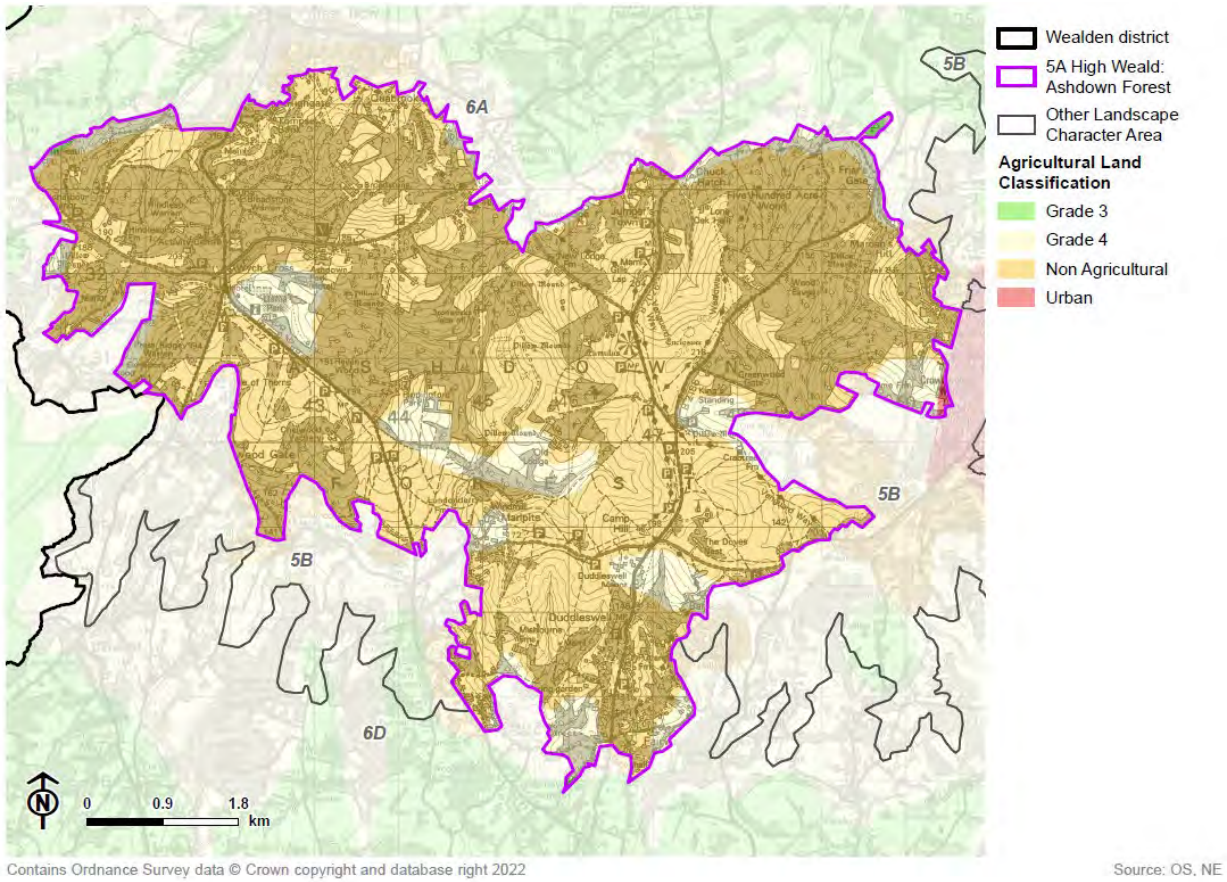


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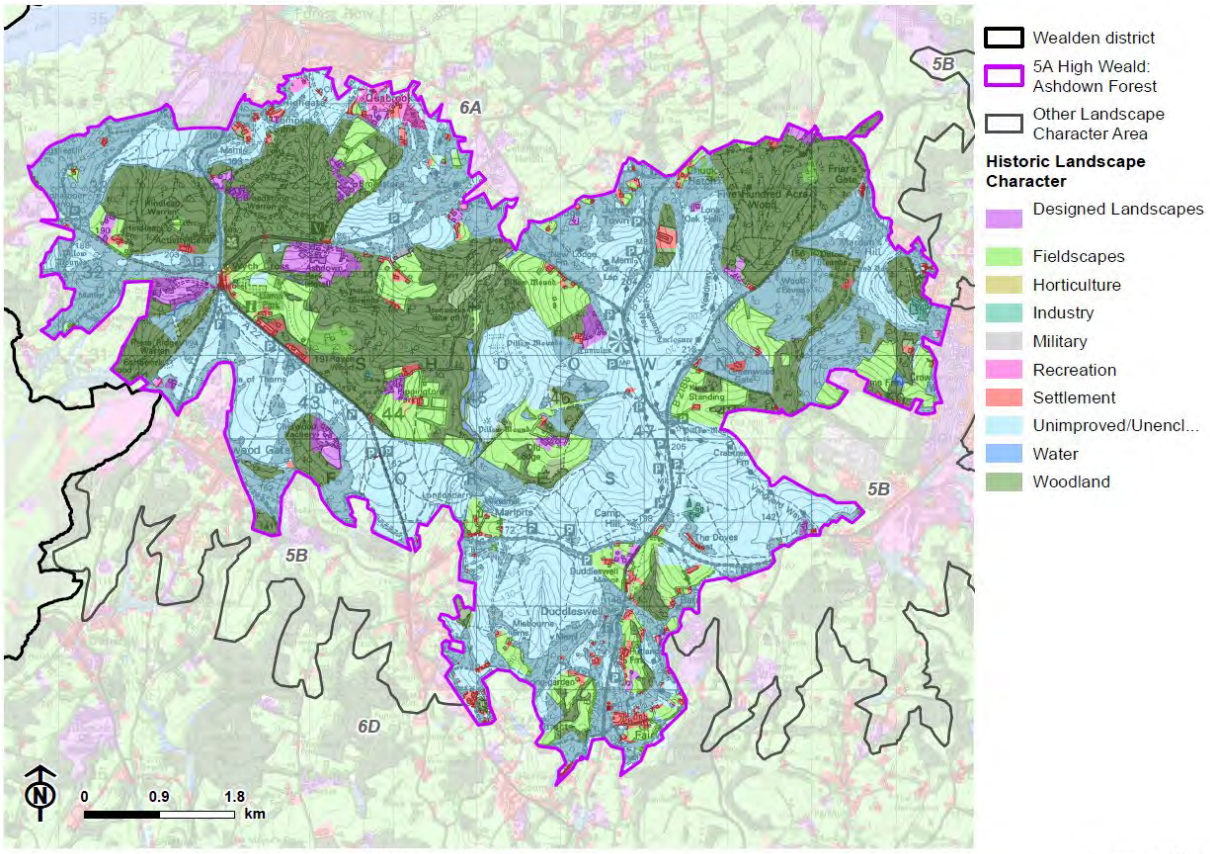
Woodland coverage



Landcover types (CORINE Land cover inventory 2018)

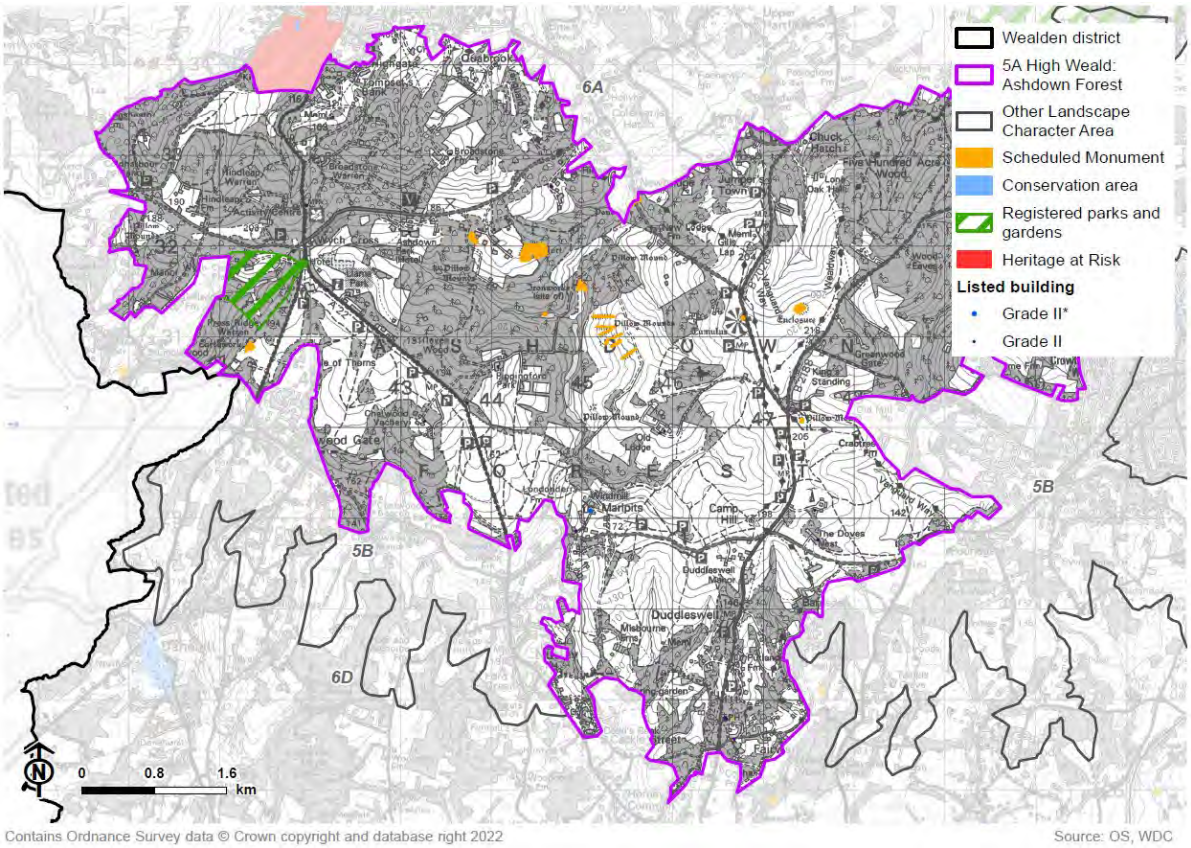


Agricultural Land Classification



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Historic Landscape Characterisation



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Cultural heritage designations

Landscape qualities

The following features and characteristics are particularly valued for their contribution to character and for the ecosystem services they provide:

- The broad rolling ridges and incised valleys provide topographical interest to the landscape, creating a sense of place.
- Hammer ponds and gill streams support wetland habitats, increasing biodiversity and providing nutrient and sediment filtration that in turn enhances water quality.
- The extensive woodlands (with a high proportion of ancient woodland), provide a sense of place as well as habitat connectivity to support biodiversity, carbon sequestration and the regulation of temperatures.
- Coppicing of woodland provides timber and is a source of local fuel and building materials.
- The semi-natural habitats including lowland heathland, woodland and valley bog habitats, recognised through designation as the Ashdown Forest SSSI, SAC and SPA, contribute to the biodiversity of the area and support important flora and fauna, including internationally important populations of Nightjar and Dartford warbler.
- The heathland, grassland, permanent pasture and woodland allow soil stabilisation/retention, have a higher soil carbon content than cultivated habitats, and provide nutrient filtration, which in turn enhances water quality.
- The wealth of historic landscape features (including prehistoric sites, heathland grazing commons and iron industry hammer ponds/earthworks) contribute to the time-depth, cultural identity and aesthetic value of the landscape and its local distinctiveness.
- The historic dispersed settlement pattern of farmsteads and occasional small villages provide a connection to history, cultural identity and aesthetic value
- The vernacular architecture of brick, oak, sandstone and flint which reflects locally available materials, provides a sense of place and accords with a distinctive architectural colour palette.
- The extensive recreational opportunities offered by open access across Ashdown Forest and the network of public rights of way contribute to the local economy and enhance physical health, mental health and sense of well-being.
- The outstanding outward views across valleys and heath-covered or wooded ridges provide visual interest and reinforce the distinctive sense of place and further promotes a sense of well-being.
- The scenic wooded backdrop that the LCA provides to adjacent landscapes that provides visual interest and reinforces the distinctive sense of place.
- The distinctive landscape pattern of open rolling heathland and woodland and open views contributes to the strong scenic quality of the area and is reflected in its designation as an AONB.
- The strong sense of 'naturalness', tranquillity, and experience of dark skies, particularly within the larger woodlands and expansive heathlands.
- Associations with 'Winnie the Pooh' provide links with cultural identity.



Pine woodland interspersed with rough grassland and heath



Outward views looking towards the Medway Catchment

Forces for change

- Climate change leading to increased temperatures and periods of drought resulting in a change in stream flows, altering the species composition of wetland habitats (primarily ponds, wet woodland and wet heath).
- Climate change and land management practices leading to potential changes in woodland and tree species composition. Increases in severe gales could result in wind damage to woodland edges. Ancient woodlands are particularly susceptible to damage from storms and drought.
- Climate change and changing land management practices leading to potential changes in flora and an increase in pests and diseases, such as acute oak decline or sweet chestnut blight.
- Changes in woodland management including a reduction in traditional coppicing techniques resulting in a loss of species diversity and varied age structure and influencing landscape pattern and texture.
- Decline in heathland management resulting in encroachment of lowland heathland habitat by trees, scrub, bracken and exotic plants.
- Increased risk and severity of heath fires due to climate change and increased recreational usage, which sometimes leads to fire safety negligence.
- Expansion of existing villages and adjacent urban areas impacting the dispersed settlement pattern and affecting the area's dark skies and tranquillity.
- Fragmentation and suburbanisation of historic farmsteads, through unsympathetic conversions to residential use, alienation of landholdings and pressure to divert historic routeways away from farmsteads.
- Recreational pressure on the landscape, particularly an increase in the visitor numbers accessing Ashdown Forest, resulting in increased road traffic, informal car parking on verges and foot traffic, disturbance to wildlife from visitors' dogs and damage to habitats from dog faeces, damaging sensitive heathland habitats and disturbance to ground nesting birds.
- Increased visitor numbers with demand for recreational infrastructure, particularly around popular sites, such as car parks or further visitor amenities, introducing additional built development into the rural landscape.
- Increased road traffic and associated noise and light pollution reducing the sense of rural tranquillity and dark skies.
- Increased numbers of walkers, horses, bicycles and 4-wheel drives eroding unsurfaced routes including public rights of way, byways and narrow lanes, damaging vegetation on verges or boundary banks, and impacting the sense of tranquillity and rurality.
- Pressure for renewable energy infrastructure (e.g. wind turbines on elevated ridges and solar farms on south facing slopes or open areas, and associated grid connections), which would reduce rural character and impact views.

Landscape Guidelines

These guidelines recommend how to ensure future change respects local character and should be read in conjunction with the objectives and proposed actions of the High Weald AONB Management Plan:

- Conserve and enhance the biodiversity of wetland features, including gill streams and hammer ponds and their associated wetland habitats.
- Encourage active and appropriate management[1] of woodland, ensuing a diverse species and age structure by thinning, coppicing and replanting as necessary, in line with the aims of the Western Ouse Streams and Ashdown Forest Biodiversity Opportunity Area. Avoid damage from large machinery. No management is recommended for gill woodland as the habitats are too sensitive and insufficiently understood.
- As climatic conditions change, plant suitable species or encourage natural regeneration to create climate resistant woodland.
- Safeguard ancient woodland and veteran trees, and protect and enhance vulnerable woodland habitats and soils, including gill woodlands and wet woodlands, for the benefit of biodiversity.
- Avoid changes to landform and disturbance to soils to protect the landscape character of the High Weald, and the carbon sequestration function of its soils.
- Maintain, enhance, and restore links between woodlands, and links to species-rich heathlands and acid-grasslands, to create a robust mosaic of woodland and open semi-natural habitats, which support biodiversity and contribute to an integrated green infrastructure network. Ensure that any woodland establishment does not replace other important habitats,

[1] To be implemented under the statutory duties of the Conservators of Ashdown Forest under the Ashdown Forest Act (1974)

such as species-rich grassland, or erode the legibility of historic field systems.

- Encourage the gradual restructuring of coniferous woodland to woodlands with a high broadleaved content, particularly for plantations on ancient woodland sites (PAWs) in line with the aims and objectives of the relevant Biodiversity Opportunity Areas and of the High Weald AONB Management Plan[2].
- Support sustainable woodland industry, encouraging small-scale operations using traditional techniques including coppicing, to develop new markets and products for locally sourced timber, and to maintain carbon sequestration.
- Monitor potential changes in flora and increase in pests and diseases including the spread of invasive plants and animals in woodlands and watercourses.
- Conserve and manage heathland habitats and encourage public awareness of the fire risk during hot and dry seasons.
- Protect the historic rights of commons in the area and encourage responsible low-density grazing in order to maintain the unique species composition of heathland habitats, in line with the aims of the Western Ouse Streams and Ashdown Forest Biodiversity Opportunity Area.
- Protect the historic landscape features, including prehistoric sites and features related to the Wealden Iron industry, such as hammer ponds. Increase interpretation and opportunities to raise awareness and link communities with the local heritage, including opportunities for heritage trails or walks.
- Limit the amount and scale of development in the rural areas, protecting the historic pattern of low-density settlement of this landscape, and the separation between hamlets and scattered farmsteads.
- Ensure new building reinforces and responds to local character in its scale, layout and design, reflecting the local vernacular in use of materials. Developments should draw on the principles contained within the High Weald AONB design guidance, High Weald AONB 'Guidance on the selection and use of colour in development' and objectives of the High Weald AONB Management Plan.
- Maintain the historic network of routeways, ensuring new roads or upgrades take account of their rural context and avoid over-engineered features or the introduction of lighting into dark areas. Maintain the trees and species-rich grasslands on road verges.
- Manage recreational access and infrastructure to minimise disturbance of sensitive habitats, including the erosion of heathland, and adverse effects on the sense of remoteness and tranquillity. Ensure facilities are consistent with nature conservation objectives and conserve natural beauty in line with the AONB Management Plan.
- Ensure any renewable energy generation is compatible with the guidance above and is in scale with the landscape where possible. Where larger scale renewable energy development is justified to meet climate change objectives, any harm to the landscape should be compensated for by landscape-scale enhancements of the surrounding area. Electricity infrastructure associated with renewable energy generation should be efficiently planned to minimise the number of lines required, routeing in accordance with the Holford Rules[3].
- Protect and enhance key views which provide Ashdown Forest its unique sense of place. Resist landscape change which might affect characteristic skylines or distinctive skyline features such as pine clumps.
- Maintain the strong scenic qualities of the landscape and its sense of remoteness, tranquillity, and experience of dark skies.

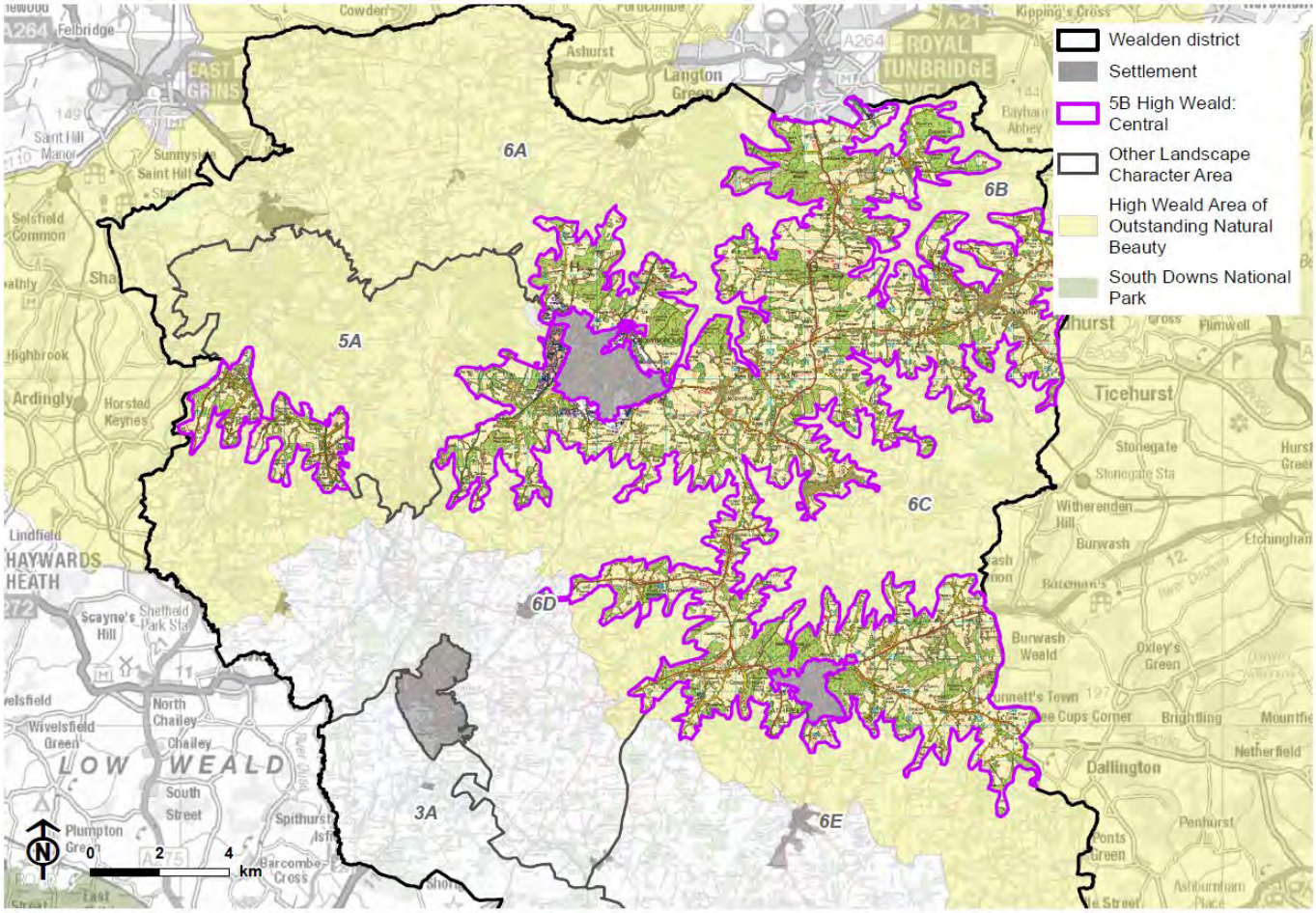
[2] High Weald AONB - Objective W2

[3] https://www.nationalgrid.com/sites/default/files/documents/13795-The%20Holford%20Rules.pdf

LCA 5B: High Weald – Central

Location and summary

The High Weald - Central LCA is located within the High Weald AONB. It is a rolling landscape of elevated ridges incised by gill streams and watercourses, which drain north to the River Medway and River Teise, and south to the River Ouse and River Rother. The landscape comprises a patchwork of fields (including ancient fields and assarts), mixed woodlands, including ancient woodland, streams and numerous ridge-top settlements, some of which are historic.



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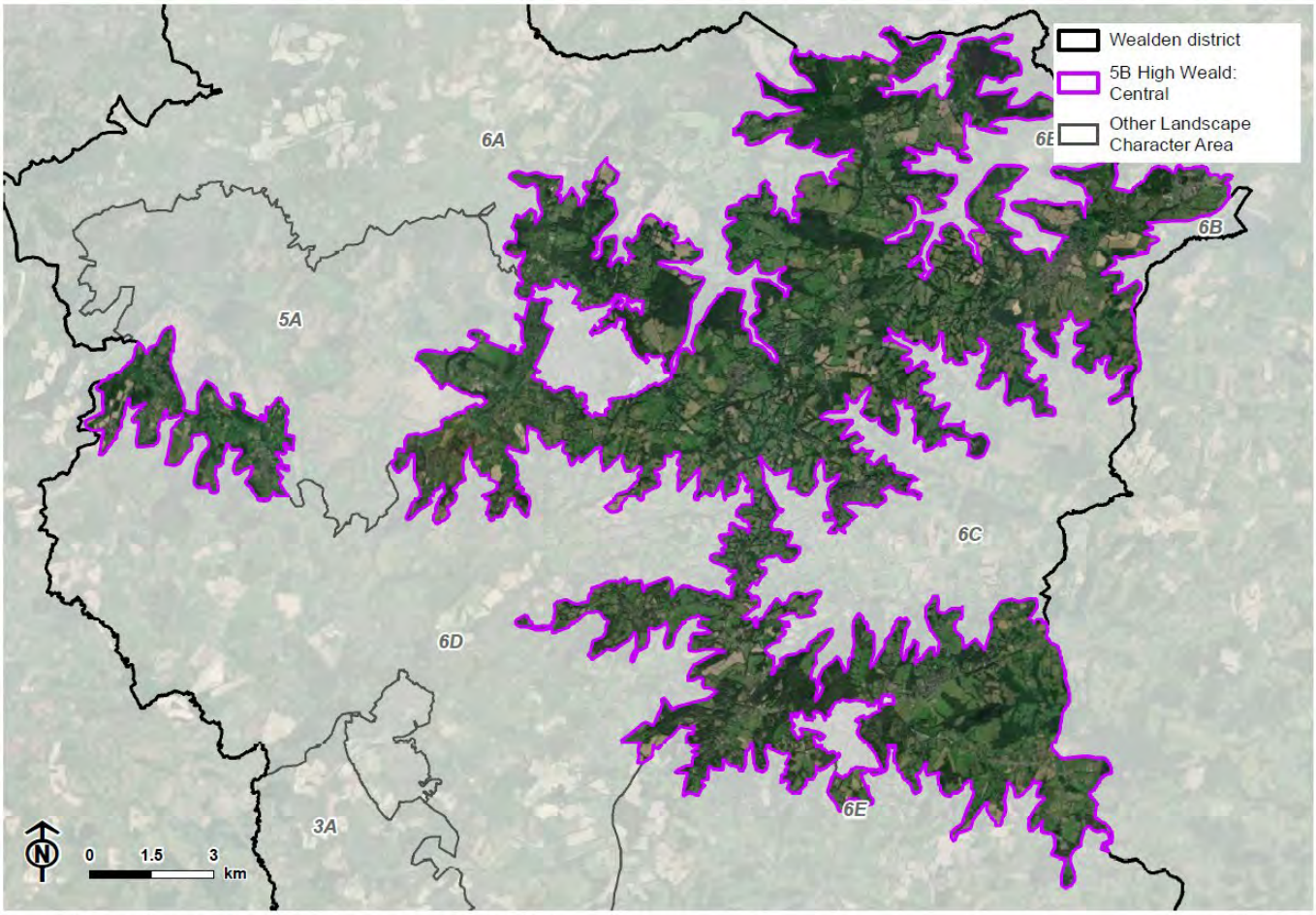


Typical view of the High Weald – Central

Key Characteristics

- Interbedded sandstone, siltstone and mudstone give rise to elevated, narrow, rolling ridges ranging in height from 150m to 220m AOD. The landform is incised by numerous narrow deep, often wooded, stream valleys, including steeply incised gills which drain to the river catchments in adjacent LCAs. The incised and ridged landform is a defining component of character of the High Weald AONB.
- Variable soils, including light silty, slightly loamy soils and heavier clay soils support a mixed agricultural land use of pasture and arable cropping.
- A well wooded landscape of mixed and broadleaved woodland (much of ancient origin), which is a defining component of character of the High Weald AONB. Gills woodlands, and small areas of conifer plantations are also present. Characteristic species include chestnut (which is often coppiced), oak, beech and yew. Swathes of wildflowers provide seasonal springtime displays in these areas.
- The large areas of priority habitat deciduous woodland, including Eridge Park, Heathfield Park and Binglett's Wood SSSIs, support significant lichen flora, bryophytes, and invertebrate and bird populations. There are also fragmented pockets of priority habitat unimproved and semi-improved grassland and lowland meadow scattered throughout the LCA.
- A strong field pattern of irregular medieval assarts (formed by cleared areas of woodland) interspersed with piecemeal enclosures. This small-scale irregular field pattern is a defining component of character of the High Weald AONB.
- Fields are enclosed by hedgerows, shaws and woods, with some hedgerows reinforced by post and wire fencing. There are also some larger scale arable fields with thin or sometimes deteriorated field boundaries.
- The area is rich in relics of the Wealden iron industry including large hammer ponds (constructed to power hammer forges) and remnants of coppiced woodland, managed to produce charcoal.
- A number of historic estates with country houses and associated designed landscapes characterise the area. Many of these are Registered Parks and Gardens, including Eridge Park, a historic deer park, Rotherfield Hall, Wadhurst Castle, Heathfield Park and Frant Court.
- Historic ridgetop villages, typically linear in form, as well as farmsteads and cottages give a well settled feel to the landscape. Many listed buildings are located within the LCA, mostly concentrated within villages, which is reflected in their designation as Conservation Areas.
- Historic oast houses, used for the drying of hops, are a visible reminder of the hop industry and are distinctive in their conical form and construction from local materials, such as red bricks and tile roofs.

- The local architectural vernacular comprises red brick laid as Flemish bond with blued brick ends, red tiled roofs and tile hung upper stories. Oak timber framed, sandstone and flint buildings reflect locally sourced timber and stone.
- The network of historic routeways (roads, tracks and paths) in the form of ridgetop roads and radiating droveways that are often narrow, sunken and edged by trees, hedgerows and wildflower-rich verges and boundary banks.
- The area offers abundant recreational opportunities, including public open space and local and long-distance walking trails including the High Weald Landscape Trail, Vanguard Way, Sussex Border Path, trails at the Selwyn Wood Nature Reserve and Wilderness Wood.
- Overall, the LCA has an enclosed character, due to the extensive woodland cover, with occasional glimpsed views from more open ridgelines across the rolling pastoral landscape towards more distant wooded ridgelines. Distinctive church towers and spires rise above woodland on the skyline.
- The elevated landform of the LCA forms receding layers of wooded skyline in views from outside of the area.
- The contrasting landscape pattern of pastoral and arable fields combined with dense areas of mixed woodland and scattered historic villages, results in a varied landscape colour palette.
- There is a sense of tranquillity and relative remoteness particularly within larger woods and sheltered valleys, away from main roads and larger settlements. Main roads are enclosed by woodland, limiting their impact on the landscape.



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Key Influences

Landform and drainage

The High Weald - Central LCA is an elevated area, generally lying above 100m AOD and reaching high points of between 200m-220m AOD in the west of the LCA. The landform is formed of rolling ridgelines, falling towards lower-lying incised gill streams, chains of hammer ponds (see history section for more information about these) and other watercourses. These watercourses form the headwaters for the River Medway and River Teise, draining to the north; the River Ouse, draining to the south-west; and the River Rother, draining to the south-east.

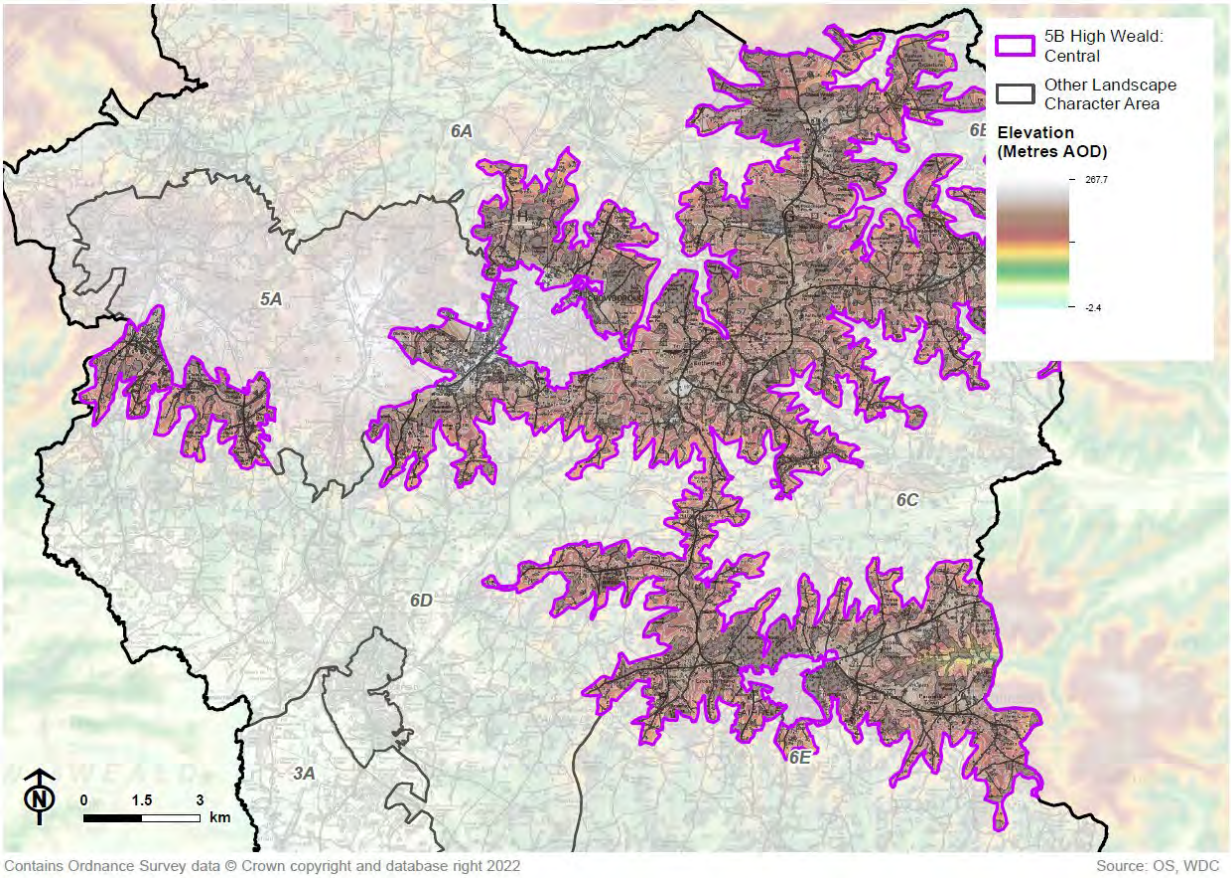
Bedrock and superficial geology

The area is underlain by interbedded sandstone, siltstone and mudstone of the Ashdown Formation in the west and interspersed with claystone and mudstone of the Wadhurst Clay Formation in the east. There are some areas of interbedded sandstone and siltstone of the Tunbridge Wells Sand Formation in the north-east and south-east of the LCA. These sedimentary rocks were laid down in the Cretaceous period by periodic inundation of floodplains and deltas. Superficial deposits include alluvium, which relate to the river corridors. The elevated nature of the High Weald is a result of the Weald Anticline, which formed from the late Oligocene to middle Miocene periods. The sandstone ridges resulting from the Anticline run east-west across the Central Weald and are generally more pronounced in the west of the LCA. Subsequent weathering has deeply incised the sandstone ridges and led to the formation of steep-sided gills and relatively thin soils.

The geology gives rise to medium to light silty loam and sandy loam, which are predominant in the west of the LCA, and graded grade 3 (‘good to moderate’) in the agricultural land classification. Heavier clay to clayey loam soils are grade 4 (‘poor)’ and generally located along the upper reaches of watercourses in the east of the LCA.

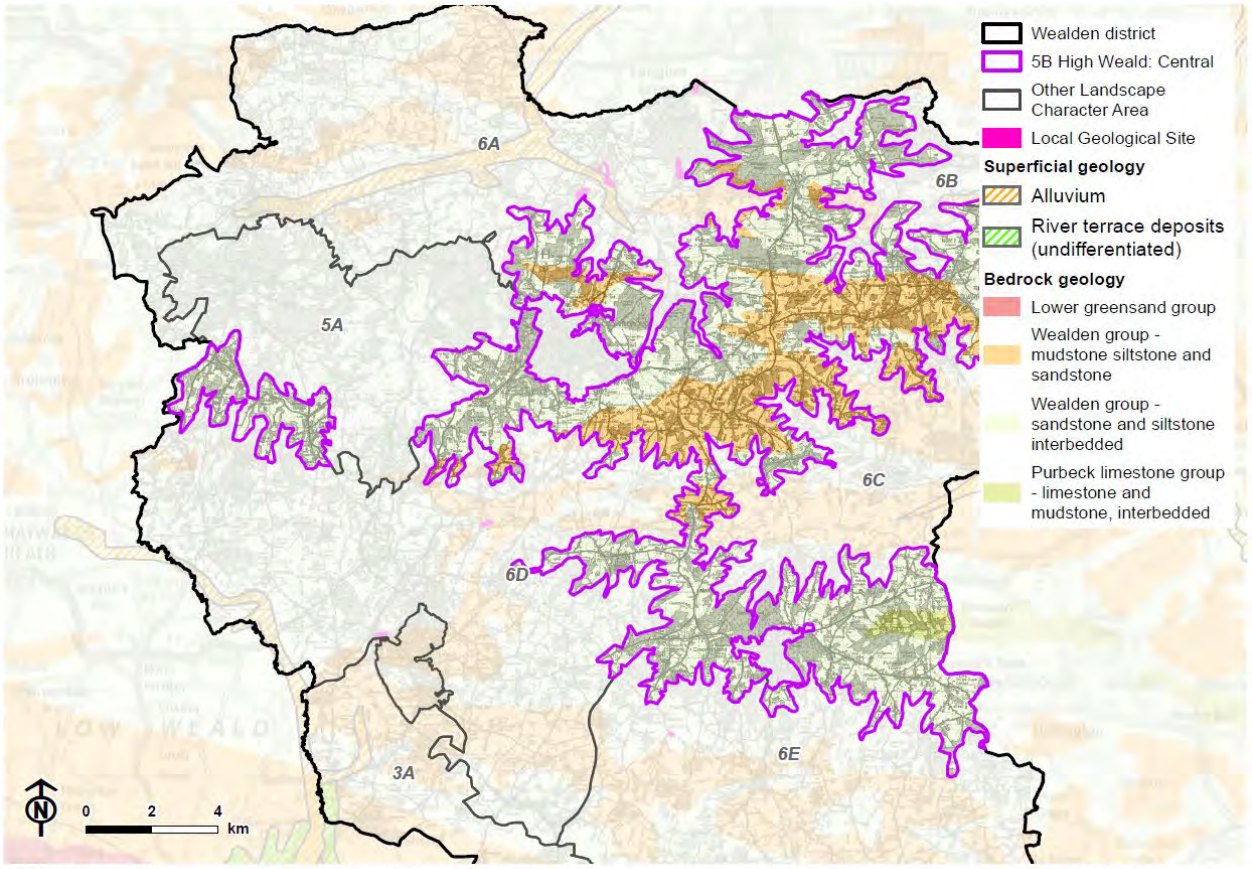


Vernacular architecture in Rotherfield



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Source: OS, WDC

Landform and drainage



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Bedrock and superficial geology

Semi-natural habitats

Priority habitat deciduous woodland is found across the LCA, with areas at Binglett's Wood, Eridge Park and Heathfield Park designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) for their ancient gill woodlands which support significant lichen flora, bryophytes, invertebrate and bird populations. There are also fragmented pockets of unimproved and semi-improved grassland and meadow priority habitat scattered throughout the LCA Wetland habitats associated with streams are also located throughout the area. A number of the woodlands and meadows are designated as Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) including Crowborough Common and Lodge, Wet & Treblers Wood.

A number of Biodiversity Opportunity Areas cover the LCA, including: the River Uck and its Headwaters; Medway, Ouse, Rother Watershed; Eridge and Broadwater; Heathfield Habitat Link; and Pevensey, Rother, Cuckmere Watershed. BOAs represent priority areas for delivering Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) targets, with opportunities for heathland and wetland habitat management, restoration and creation and woodlands management and restoration.

Landcover

Landcover comprises numerous woodlands, pasture and small areas of arable land. There are industrial/commercial units associated with the Crowborough Training Camp in the west and some sport and leisure facilities associated with settlements.

Historic landscape

The LCA is part of the High Weald's ancient countryside and forms part of the designated Area of Outstanding Beauty. The settlement pattern of ridgetop villages and irregular shaped fields with strong hedgerow networks are typical of the medieval era and one of the best surviving medieval landscapes in northern Europe.

Evidence of the transhumance movement, where people and animals moved seasonally between the Downs to the south and woodlands of the High Weald remain in the routes of the local lanes and public rights of way across the landscape.

Evidence of Wealden iron working, which was prominent until the 18th century, is seen in the farm ponds and large hammer ponds, constructed to provide a sufficient head of water for hammer forges, and the coppiced woodland used for charcoal making, some of which is still managed today such as Nap Wood and Bingletts Wood.

Sites in the west of the LCA were used for military training during WWII and Crowborough Training Camp is still actively used.

The Medieval settlement pattern is still evident today and comprises villages located along ridgelines and numerous scattered farmsteads linked by a network of sunken lanes. A

number of villages and hamlets, developed from the 14th century onwards, typically centred around a church and market, which is indicative of the influence of agriculture and trade in the area. Iron production in the area led to the expansion of many of these villages, most of which are covered by Conservation Areas, including Frant, Cousley Wood, Pell Green, Wadhurst, Mayfield, Rotherfield, Five Ashes and Old Heathfield. The available local materials and sources of timber are reflected in the vernacular of brick, timber, stone and tile hanging. Further growth resulted from the arrival of railways in the area in the mid-19th century. More recent suburbanisation has led to linear sprawl along roads and outward expansion from some villages and is most evident at Crowborough and Heathfield.

A number of historic estates with country houses and associated parkland and designed landscapes are located in the area, some originating as deer parks, most notably at Eridge Park. The designed landscapes of Eridge Park (which includes the Saxonbury Tower Scheduled Monument), Frant Court, Wadhurst Castle, Rotherfield Hall and Heathfield Park, are designated as Registered Parks and Gardens. These estates demonstrate the historic wealth of manored estates in the High Weald, some of which can be attributed to the iron industry in the area.

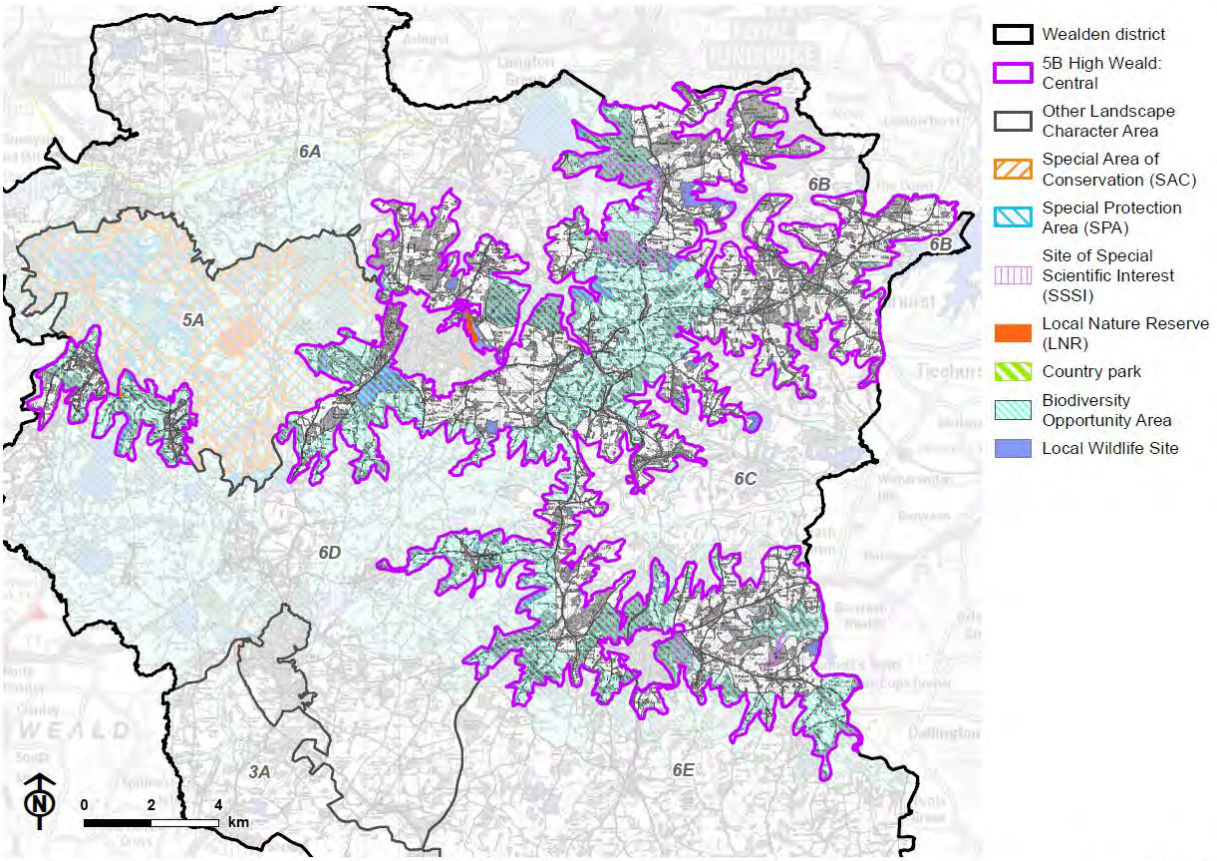
The Sussex Historic Landscape Character Assessment shows a varied field pattern of informal fieldscapes, derived from regular piecemeal enclosure, cohesive and aggregate assarts, (created by the clearance of woodland) and modern field amalgamation. There are also areas of woodland, some of which are ancient in origin including at Saxonbury Wood, Whitehill Wood, Nap Wood and Heathfield Park.

Perceptual Character

Proximity to towns outside the LCA, including Crowborough and Tunbridge Wells, and larger villages such as Heathfield, as well as transport corridors which cross the LCA (including the A267, A272, A22 and A275 and two railway lines) reduces tranquillity and the experience of dark skies. There is also some influence of suburban and ribbon development around villages. However, overall, the LCA has a strong sense of remoteness, particularly within the larger woodlands of Nap Wood, Whitehill Wood, Markly Wood and Hornshurst Wood.



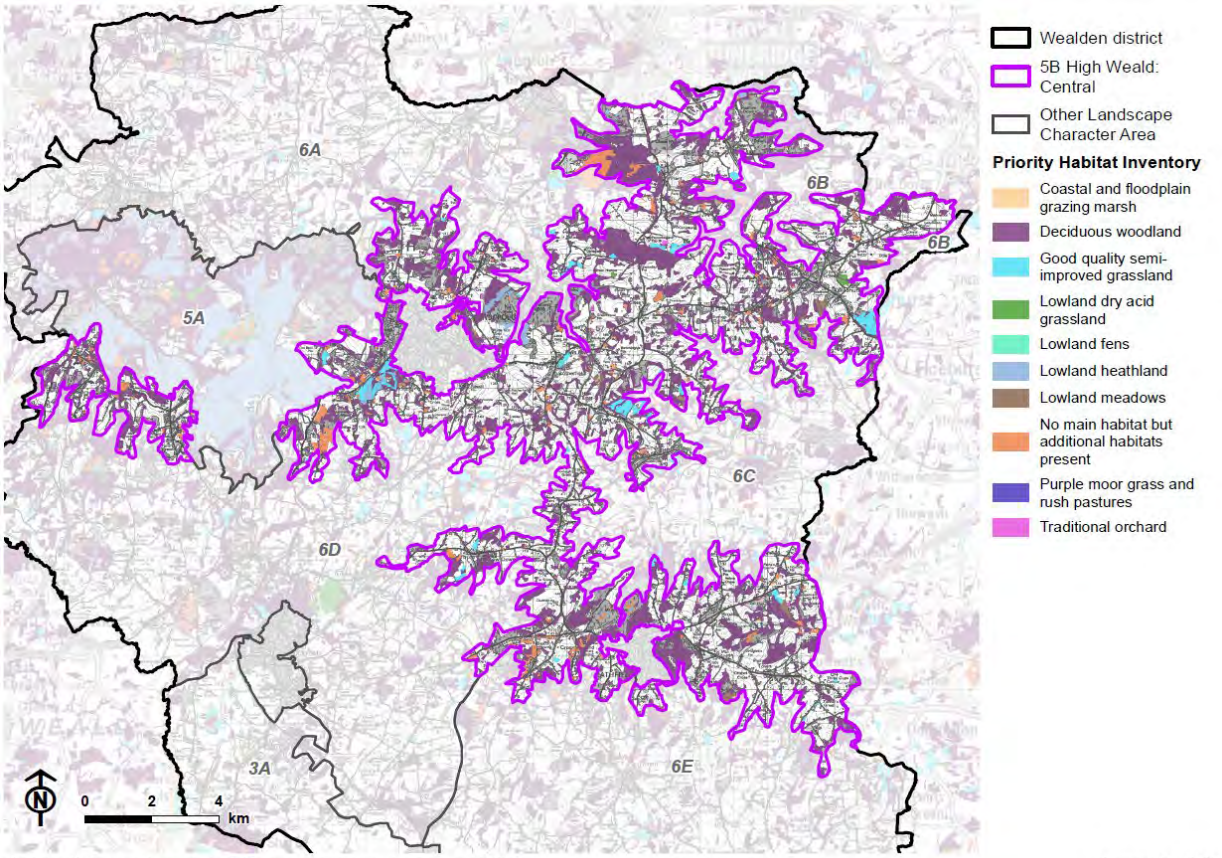
Horse paddocks on the edge of settlement with wooded backdrop



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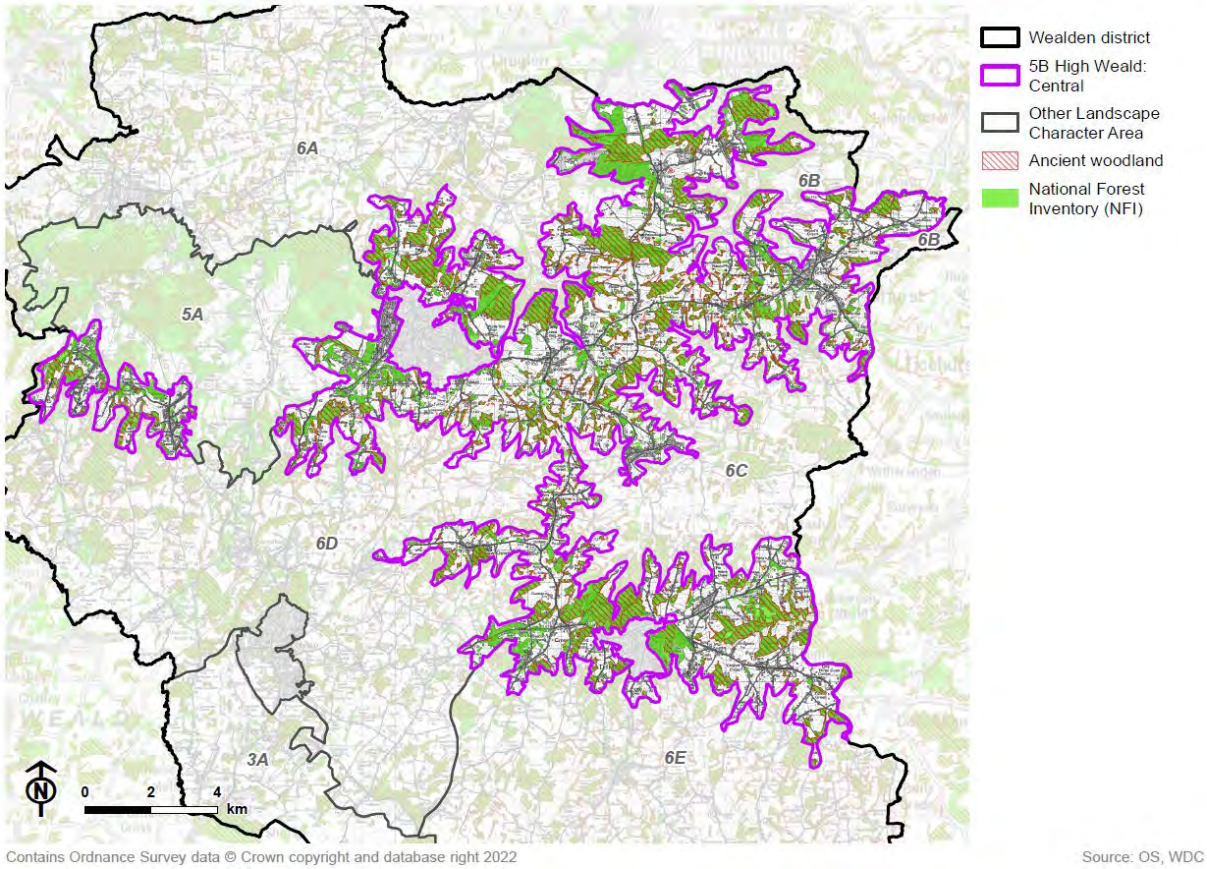
Source: OS, WDC

Nature conservation designations



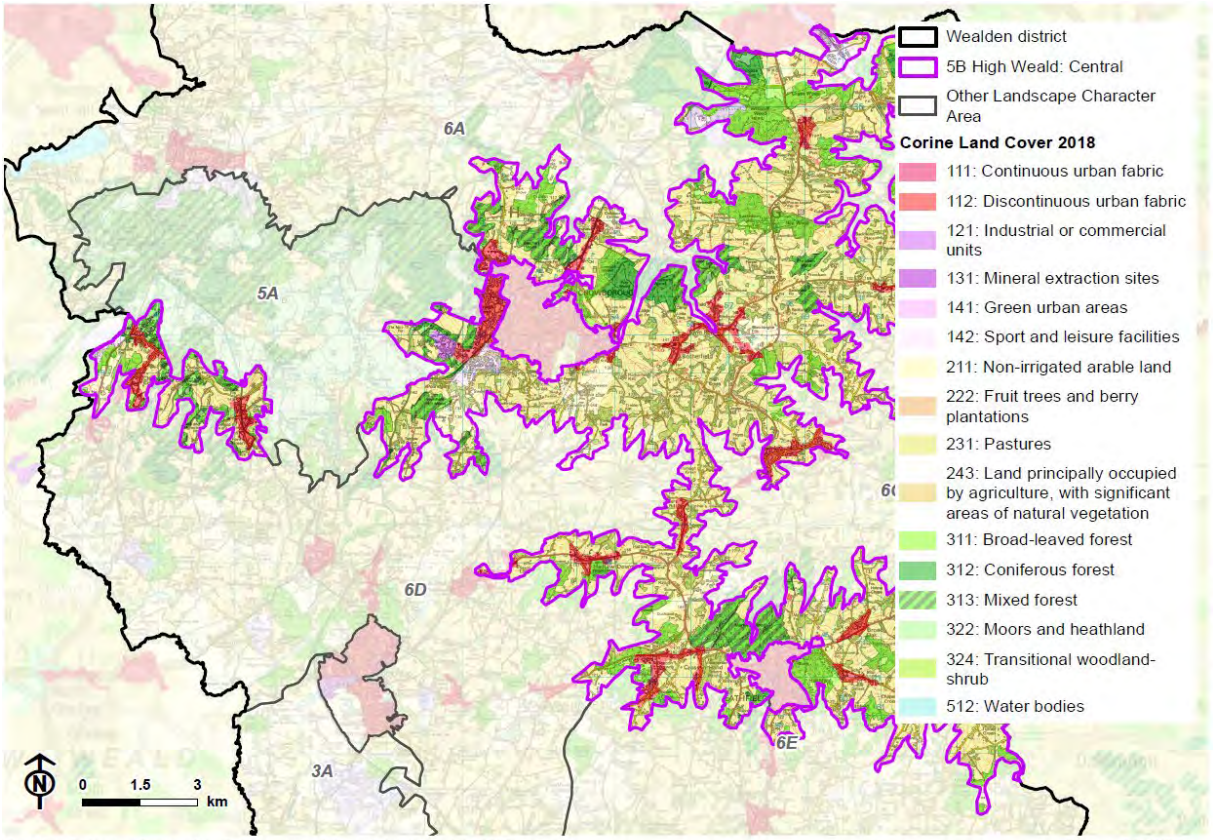
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Priority habitat coverage



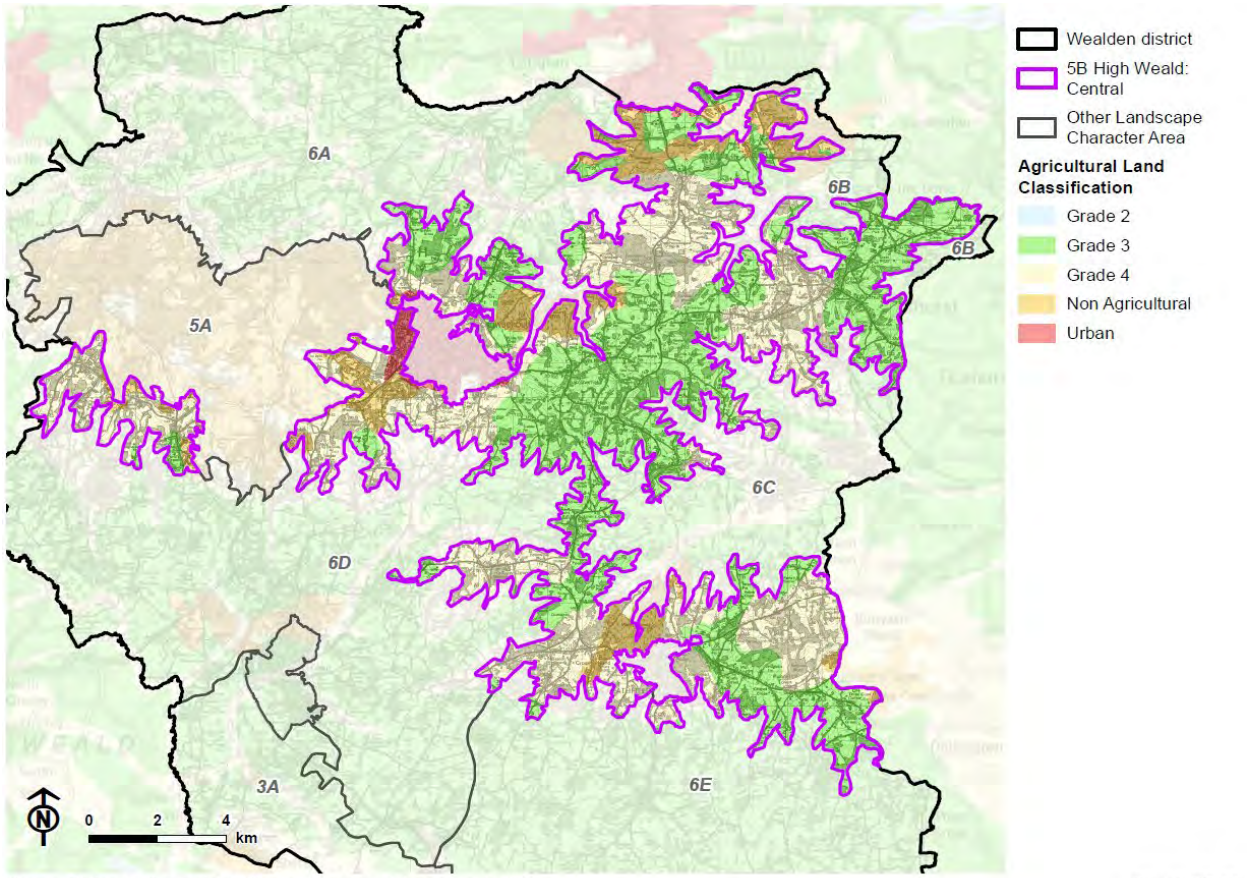
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Woodland coverage



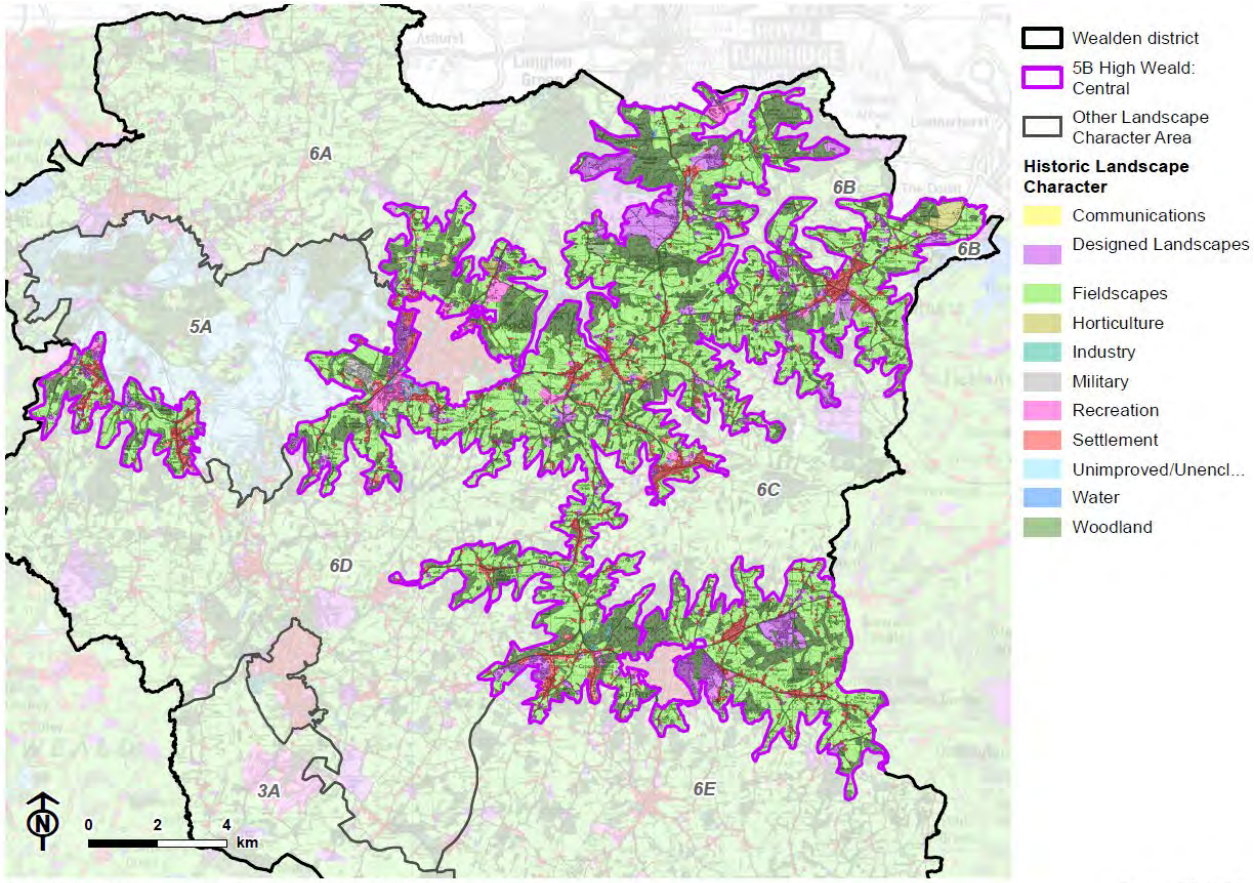
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Landcover types (CORINE Land cover inventory 2018)



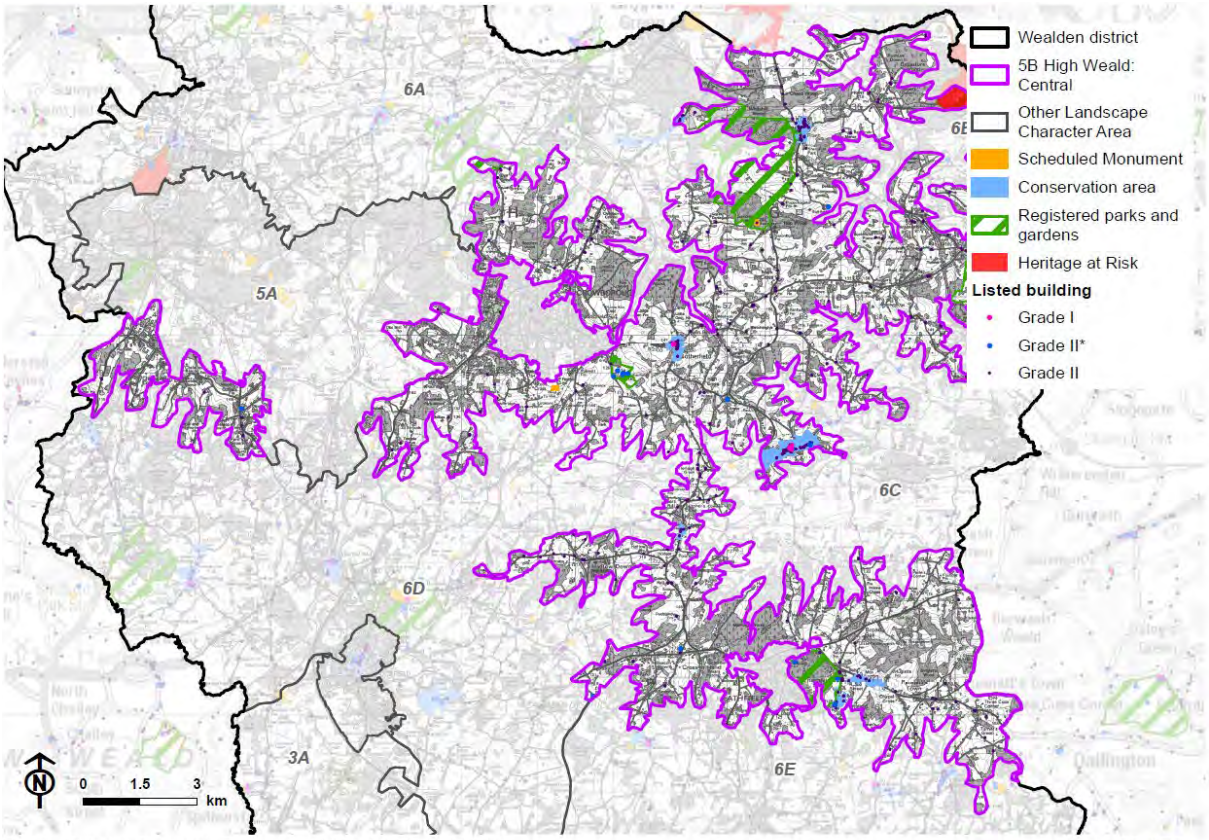
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Agricultural Land Classification



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Source: OS, WDC

Historic Landscape Characterisation



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Source: OS, WDC

Cultural heritage designations

Landscape qualities

The following features and characteristics are particularly valued for their contribution to character and for the ecosystem services they provide:

- The distinctive landform of ridges and incised valleys that provide topographical interest to the landscape, creating a sense of place.
- Hammer ponds and gill streams provide a wetland habitat, supporting biodiversity and providing nutrient and sediment filtration, enhancing water quality.
- Interconnected small woodlands (with a high proportion of ancient woodland), shaws, trees and mature hedgerow boundaries that provide a sense of place, as well as habitat connectivity to support biodiversity, carbon sequestration and the regulation of temperatures.
- Coppicing of woodland provides timber and is a source of local fuel and building materials.
- The ancient woodlands, whose value is recognised through designation at Binglett's Wood, Eridge Park and Heathfield Park SSSIs, contribute to the biodiversity of the area and support important flora and fauna, particularly lichen and liverwort.
- Permanent pasture, grassland and woodland allow soil stabilisation/retention, have a higher soil carbon content than cultivated habitats, and provide nutrient filtration which in turn enhances water quality.
- The historic features of the landscape (historic field patterns, hammer ponds, historic buildings including oast houses, constructed from local materials) provide a connection to history, time depth, cultural identity and aesthetic value.
- Historic parkland and formal garden landscapes (designated as Registered Parks and Gardens) at Eridge Park, Frant Court, Rotherfield Hall, Heathfield Park and Wadhurst Castle contribute to the time depth of the landscape as well as its cultural identity.
- The numerous historic ridgetop villages (whose value is recognised through Conservation Areas), and whose church spires and towers are landmark features in the landscape which add to a sense of time depth.
- The vernacular architecture of brick, oak, sandstone and flint which reflects the locally available materials and provides a sense of place.
- The dense radiating network of routeways that has a strong relationship with the settlement pattern and is a rare survival of the Medieval landscape providing a sense of place and time-depth to the landscape.
- The extensive network of public rights of way provides recreational opportunities and contribute to physical and mental health and a sense of well-being.
- The harmonious landscape pattern of small-scale hedged fields, dense woodland and open views across the wooded ridges and valleys contributes to the strong scenic quality of the area and its distinctive sense of place and is reflected in its designation as an AONB.
- The scenic wooded backdrop that the LCA provides to adjacent landscapes that provides visual interest and reinforces the distinctive sense of place.
- The sense of rurality, tranquillity and experience of dark skies, particularly with the sheltered valleys and woodlands.



Outward elevated views from Punnett's Town looking towards the South Downs



Shady and secluded gill wood

Forces for change

- Climate change leading to increased temperatures and periods of drought resulting in a change in stream flows, altering the species composition of wetland and gill habitats.
- Climate change and changing land management practices leading to changes in woodland and tree species composition. Increases in severe gales could result in wind damage to woodland edges. Ancient woodlands may be particularly susceptible to damage from storms and drought.
- Climate change and changing land management practices leading to potential changes in flora and an increase in pests and diseases, such as acute oak decline or sweet chestnut blight.
- The former replacement of broadleaved woodland with coniferous species and changes to woodland management including a reduction in traditional coppicing techniques resulting in a loss of species diversity and varied age structure and influencing landscape pattern and texture.
- A decline in mixed farming and increase in arable cropping and/or development, leading to the loss of pasture and meadows with their associated historic hedge structure, influencing the pastoral character of the landscape.
- Increase in hobby farming and conversion of grazing fields to horse pasture, particularly near settlements, including subdivision of fields with horse tape or post and wire fencing and the proliferation of field shelters which reduces the rural character of the landscape.
- Maturing parkland trees on estates, which are vulnerable to pathogens and limit their ability to regenerate.
- Expansion of urban areas including Crowborough and Tunbridge Wells, and larger villages, Rotherfield, Mayfield, Wadhurst and Heathfield has the potential to affect the area's dark skies and sense of tranquillity.
- Fragmentation and suburbanisation of historic farmsteads through unsympathetic conversions to residential use, alienation of landholdings, and pressure to divert historic routeways away from farmsteads.
- Increased road traffic and associated noise and light pollution reducing the sense of rural tranquillity and dark skies, resulting in pressure for highway works that are unsympathetic to historic routeways.
- Recreational pressure on the landscape, including an increased visitor numbers with demand for recreational infrastructure, such as car parks or visitor amenities, introducing further built development into the rural landscape.
- Increased numbers of walkers, horses, bicycles and 4-wheel drives eroding unsurfaced routes including public rights of way, byways and narrow lanes, damaging vegetation on verges or boundary banks, and impacting the sense of tranquillity and rurality.
- Pylons are a distinctive modern influence on the landscape, and often highly visible in this undulating landscape.
- Pressure for renewable energy infrastructure (e.g. wind turbines on elevated ridges and solar farms on south facing slopes or open areas, and associated grid connections), which would reduce rural character and impact views.

Landscape Guidelines

These guidelines recommend how to ensure future change respects local character and should be read in conjunction with the objectives and proposed actions of the High Weald AONB Management Plan:

- Monitor water quality in streams. Minimise water pollution from agriculture through sensitive land management practices, including regenerative agricultural systems such as no or minimal till, holistic grazing, reduction or removal of chemical inputs, cover crops, and restoration of buffer strips along watercourses and field ponds to minimise run off.
- Conserve and maintain the biodiversity of wetland features, including gill streams and hammer ponds associated with the Wealden iron industry.
- Encourage active and appropriate management of woodland, to ensure a diverse species and age structure by thinning, coppicing and replanting as necessary, in line with the aims of the Biodiversity Opportunity Areas within the LCA. Avoid damage from large machinery. No management of gill woodland is recommended as these habitats are too sensitive and insufficiently understood.
- As climatic conditions change, plant suitable species or encourage natural regeneration to create climate resistant woodland.
- Safeguard ancient woodland and protect and enhance vulnerable woodland habitats and soils, including gill woodlands and wet woodlands for the benefit of biodiversity.
- Maintain and restore links between woodlands and with species-rich grassland and lowland meadow, to create a

robust network of woodland and open semi-natural habitats, which support biodiversity and contribute to an integrated green infrastructure network.

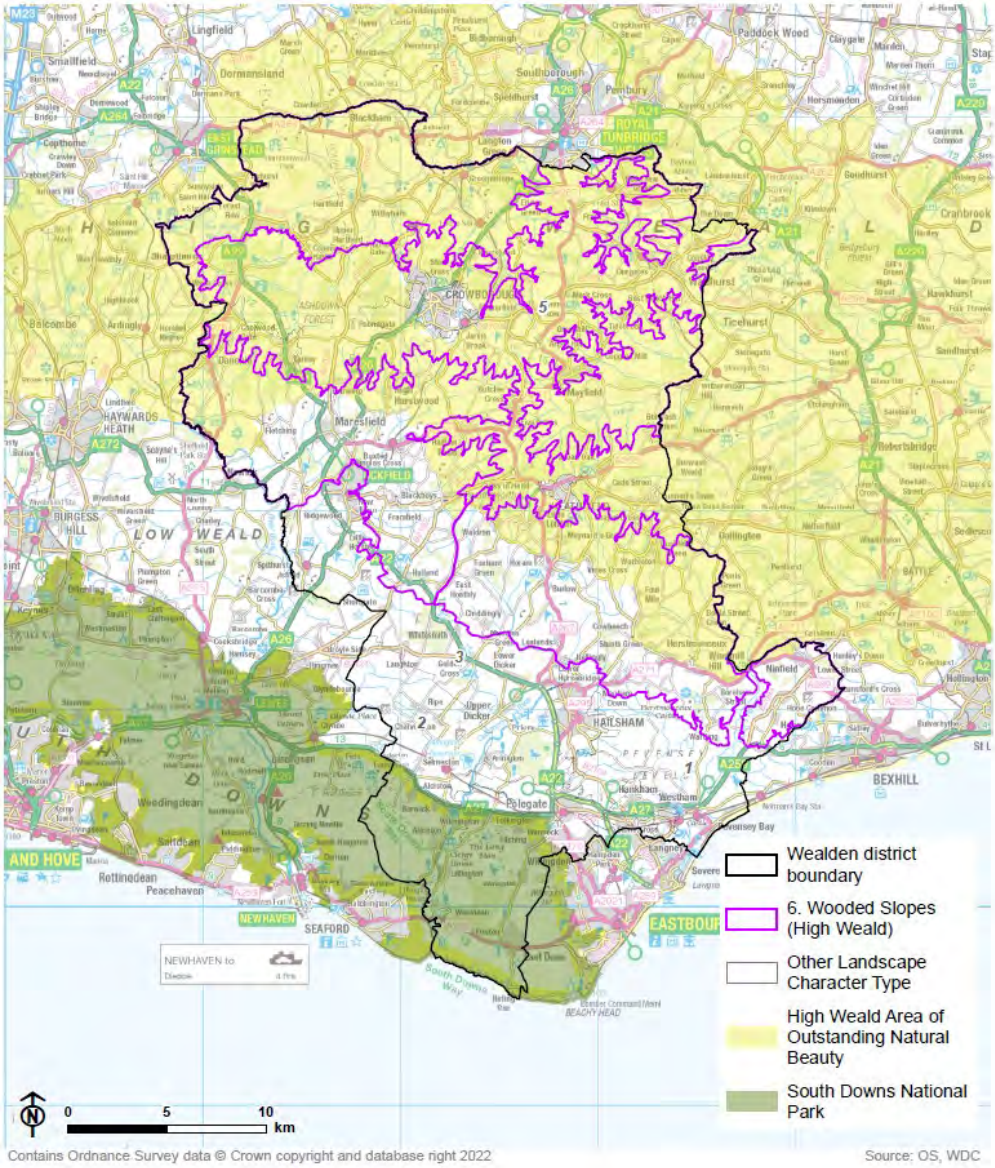
- Encourage the gradual restructuring of coniferous woodland to woodlands with a high broadleaved content, particularly for plantation on ancient woodland sites (PAWs) in line with the aims and objectives of the relevant Biodiversity Opportunity Areas and the High Weald AONB Management Plan[4].
- Avoid changes to landform and disturbance to soils to protect the landscape character of the High Weald, and the carbon sequestration function of its soils.
- Support sustainable woodland industry, encouraging small-scale operations using traditional techniques including coppicing, to develop new markets and products for locally sourced timber, and to maintain carbon sequestration.
- Protect and manage the existing hedgerow network, and plan for the restoration of, and linkages between, hedgerows, including establishing hedgerow trees, to maintain habitat corridors and to retain the medieval field pattern typical of the High Weald. Replace post and wire fencing where appropriate.
- Maintain permanent pasture (aiming to convert arable land to permanent pasture or to regenerative forms of agriculture which combine arable, livestock and agro-forestry uses and creating grassland margins to arable fields) and manage the number and grazing regimes of livestock to maintain and increase biodiversity.
- Encourage sympathetic integration of horse paddocks through the maintenance of hedgerow field boundaries, and conservation of existing scale of field parcels. Avoid overgrazing of pastures and a proliferation of field shelters and other hard infrastructure that reduces the rural character.
- Monitor potential changes in flora and increase in pests and diseases including spread of invasive plants and animals in water courses and woodland.
- Restore species-rich grasslands through appropriate management and, where necessary, reseeding with Weald Native Origin Seed.
- Conserve and enhance the parkland character of the numerous estates which characterise the LCA, putting in place a programme of parkland tree establishment or planting where appropriate.
- Protect the remaining historic features related to the hop industry, and Wealden Iron industry such as hammer ponds. Increase interpretation and access where appropriate to raise awareness and link communities with their local heritage, including opportunities for heritage trails or walks.
- Limit the amount and scale of development in rural areas, protecting the existing historic settlement pattern of ridgetop villages and hamlets, and the separation between these settlement types.
- Ensure new building reinforces and responds to local character in its scale, layout and design, reflecting the local vernacular in use of materials. Developments should draw on the principles contained within the High Weald AONB design guidance, High Weald AONB 'Guidance on the selection and use of colour in development' and objectives of the High Weald AONB Management Plan.
- Reduce the visual impact of the transmission lines which cross this LCA, in line with the Beautiful Boundaries project with the National Grid's Landscape Enhancement Initiative.
- Extend woodland, using planting that is in character with the landscape, to filter light pollution and reduce the visual impact of both existing and future urbanisation.
- Maintain the historic network of routeways, ensuring new roads or upgrades take account of their rural context and avoid over-engineered features or the introduction of lighting into dark areas. Maintain the trees and species-rich grasslands on road verges.
- Manage recreational access and infrastructure to minimise disturbance of sensitive habitats, and adverse effects on the sense of remoteness and tranquillity. Ensure facilities are consistent with nature conservation objectives and conserve natural beauty in line with the AONB Management Plan.
- Ensure any renewable energy generation is compatible with the guidance above and is in scale with the landscape where possible. Where larger scale renewable energy development is justified to meet climate change objectives, any harm to the landscape should be compensated for by landscape-scale enhancement of the surrounding area. Electricity infrastructure associated with renewable energy generation should be efficiently planned to minimise the number of lines required, routeing in accordance with the Holford Rules[5].

[4] High Weald AONB Management Plan – Objective W2.

[5] https://www.nationalgrid.com/sites/default/files/documents/13795-The%20Holford%20Rules.pdf

- Protect key views within and looking outwards from the LCA. Resist development which might affect the wooded skylines and detract from skyline features such as church towers and spires.
- Maintain the strong scenic qualities of the landscape and its sense of remoteness, tranquillity, and experience of dark skies.

Landscape Character Type 6: Wooded Slopes (High Weald)



The Wooded Slopes (High Weald) landscape character type is a rolling landscape of ridges and valleys that form the slopes to the most elevated ridgelines of the High Weald, typically between 40m and 100m AOD. Much of the landscape type lies within the High Weald AONB, and is one of the best surviving medieval landscapes in North West Europe, as a result of the historic field patterns, extensive woods and network of historic routeways. The landscape type contains the catchments of the rivers Medway, Teise, Rother, Ouse and Cuckmere that drain the High Weald and flow through the district. The landscape is a mix of arable and pasture fields, interspersed by extensive areas of woodland, much of ancient origin. Scattered villages are linked by generally narrow roads, and there is very good recreational access on public rights of way.

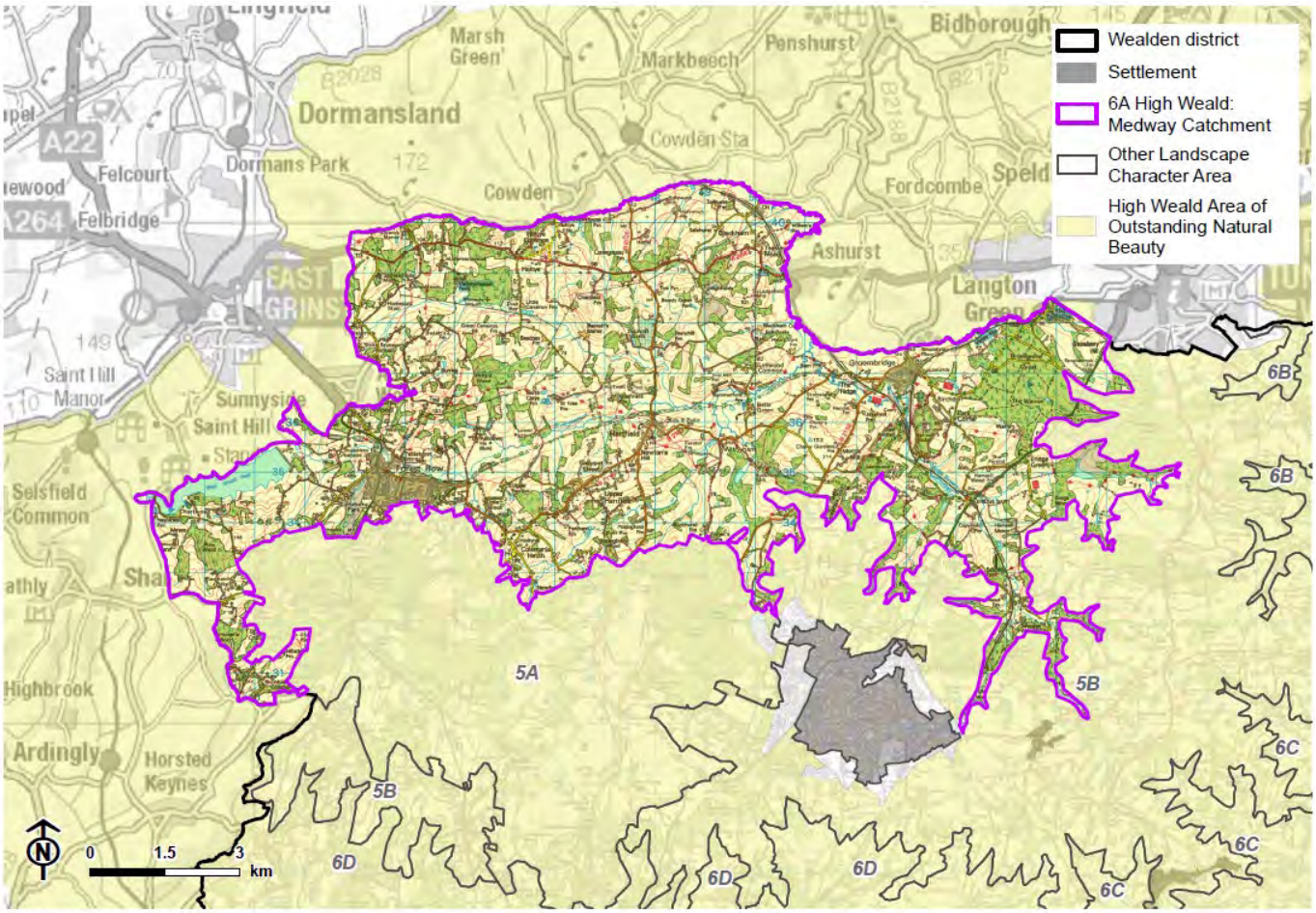
There are five Landscape Character Areas within this LCT:

- 6A: High Weald - Medway Catchment
- 6B: High Weald - Teise Catchment
- 6C: High Weald - Rother Catchment
- 6D: High Weald - Ouse Catchment
- 6E: High Weald - Cuckmere/ Pevensey Catchment

LCA 6A: High Weald - Medway Catchment

Location and summary

The High Weald - Medway Catchment is a rolling landscape of ridges and valleys containing the River Medway and its tributaries that drain northwards from Ashdown Forest into Sevenoaks District. A heavily wooded landscape with a pattern of small irregular fields, streams and scattered picturesque and historic settlements including Groombridge, Forest Row and Hartfield. The entirety of the LCA is located within the High Weald AONB.



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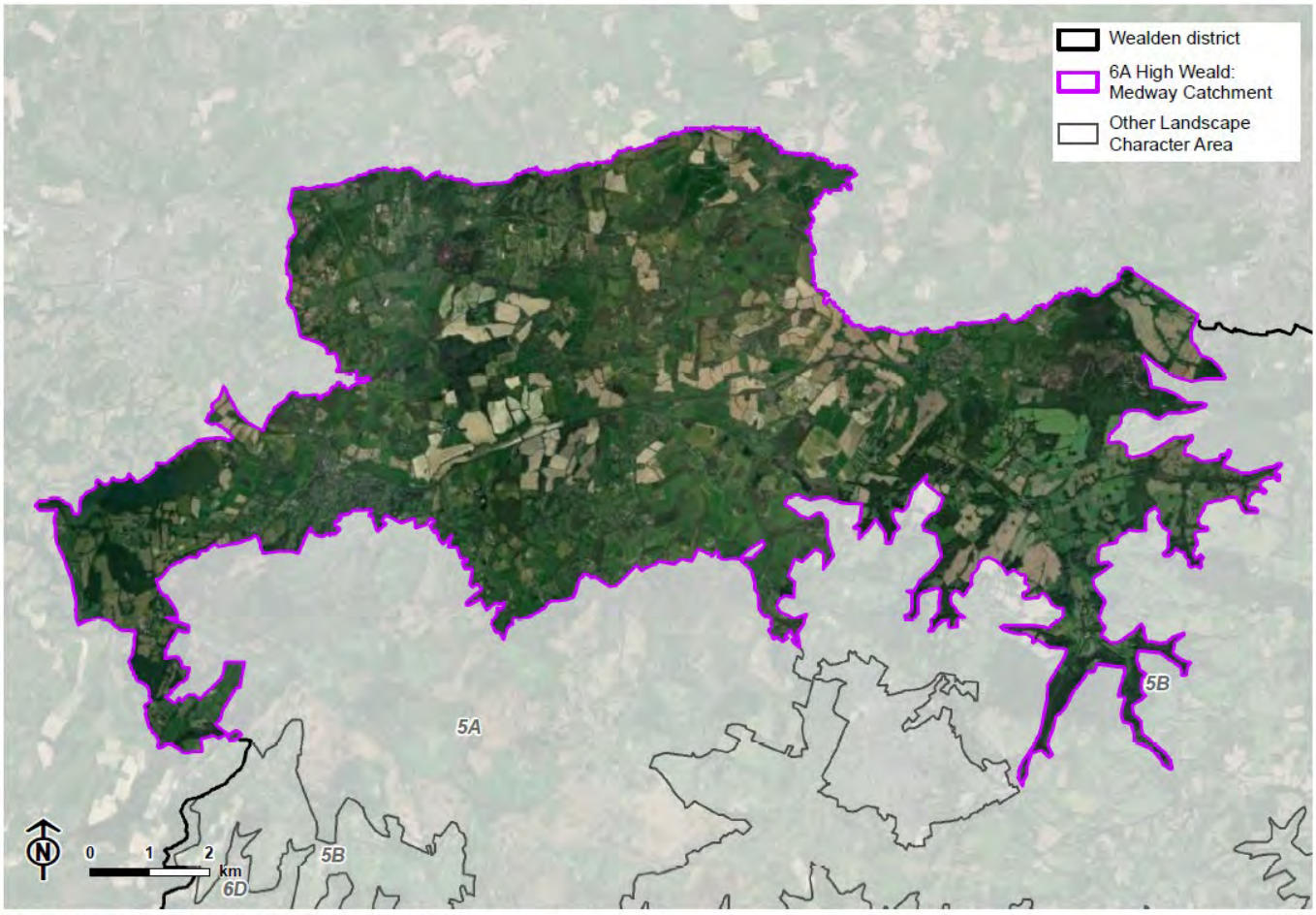


Extensive view across the High Weald - Medway Catchment from a ridge top road.

Key Characteristics

- The underlying geology of interbedded sandstones, siltstones and mudstones give rise to a rolling landscape of ridges, spurs and incised valleys associated with the winding River Medway and its tributaries, which drain north from the Ashdown Forest. The incised and ridged landform is a defining component of character of the High Weald AONB.
- Distinctive sandstone outcrops located along narrow gill streams provide a contrast in texture to the surrounding woodland and support a distinctive flora of ferns and bryophytes, which is recognised by the designation of SSSI at Eridge Green, Penn's Rocks and High Rocks.
- A well wooded landscape, which is a defining component of character of the High Weald AONB. The landscape has an intricate mosaic of small broadleaved woods (most recorded as priority habitats) interlinked with shaws and thick hedgerows as well as large mixed and coniferous plantations.
- Many of these interconnected woodlands are of ancient origin, managed in the past as broadleaved coppice with swaths of wildflowers providing springtime displays. Characteristic species include chestnut and oak. Wet woodlands, with alder and willow line the River Medway and gill woodlands extend up its tributaries.
- Fragmented pockets of priority habitat semi-improved grassland and lowland meadow are scattered through the LCA.
- Light silty and slightly loamy soils, with areas of heavier clay soils in valleys, support a mixture of arable cropping, typically at lower elevations within the Medway valley, and pasture on steeper slopes.
- A distinctive field pattern of small irregular fields, predominantly medieval in origin, which are a defining component of character of the High Weald AONB. These are often derived from assarting (formed from cleared areas of woodland) with some modern field amalgamation located within lower-lying areas of the valley.
- Fields are enclosed by mature hedgerows and shaws, although the boundaries of large arable fields are often reinforced by post and wire fencing.
- The area is rich in relics of the Wealden iron industry including scattered farm ponds and large hammer ponds (constructed to power forge hammers) and remnants of coppiced woodland, managed to produce charcoal.
- Country houses with formal gardens and parkland such as Kidbrooke Park, Buckhurst Park and Hammerwood Park (designated as Registered Parks and Gardens) demonstrate the wealth of manored estates in the High Weald.
- Unusually for the landscape character type (LCT), larger villages are located on slight spurs overlooking the river valley (Groombridge, Hartfield, Forest Row). These villages developed with the arrival of the railway from the mid-19th century, giving rise to a more settled feel to the landscape than other LCAs within this LCT.
- In other locations, the historic settlement pattern of dispersed late Medieval villages and isolated farmsteads have been retained and are sited along ridges above the river valley, such as at Hammerwood and Holtye. The dispersed settlement pattern is a defining component of character of the High Weald AONB.

- The local vernacular architecture comprises red brick laid as Flemish bond with blued brick ends, red tiled roofs and tile hung upper stories. These local materials, including sandstone, oak timber frames and white weatherboarding reflect the abundance of locally sourced materials.
- Villages are connected by a historic network of ridge-top roads and radiating winding sunken lanes edged with trees, hedges and wildflower-rich verges and boundary banks.
- An accessible landscape with numerous promoted walking trails (including the High Weald Landscape Trail, Vanguard Way and Sussex Border Path). The Forest Way Country Park (which runs across the area along the line of the old railway) and rock climbing on the sandstone outcrops provide further recreational opportunities.
- Extensive views open up from more open ridgetop roads over the rolling wooded ridges, for example south of Hartfield or around Hartwell, and across the wider sections of the river valley, particularly west of Groombridge. Elsewhere, a sense of enclosure is provided by woodland and tree lined lanes.
- The LCA forms a rural backdrop to views from elevated open ridges within Ashdown Forest, such as Gills Lap.
- The contrasting landscape pattern of pastoral and arable fields combined with dense mixed woodland gives rise to a varied landscape colour palette.
- There is a sense of tranquillity and experience of dark skies with the LCA, particularly away from the influence of the railway lines in the east of the LCA, the A264, Forest Row and the large towns of East Grinstead and Royal Tunbridge Wells (both located just outside of the LCA boundary).
- Many locations within the LCA are affiliated with A.A Milne's 'Winnie the Pooh' and E.H Shepard drew inspiration from the local landscapes for many of the books' illustrations.



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Source: OS, WDC

Key Influences

Landform and drainage

The High Weald - Medway Catchment comprises a rolling landscape of ridges, spurs and valleys associated with the River Medway and its tributaries, falling from 130m AOD on ridges, to 40m AOD along the valley floors. The River Medway drains northwards, its water courses flowing within narrow floodplains. The valley west of Forest Row was flooded in 1954 to create the Weir Wood Reservoir. Other water features include a number of small farm ponds as well as remnant hammer ponds.

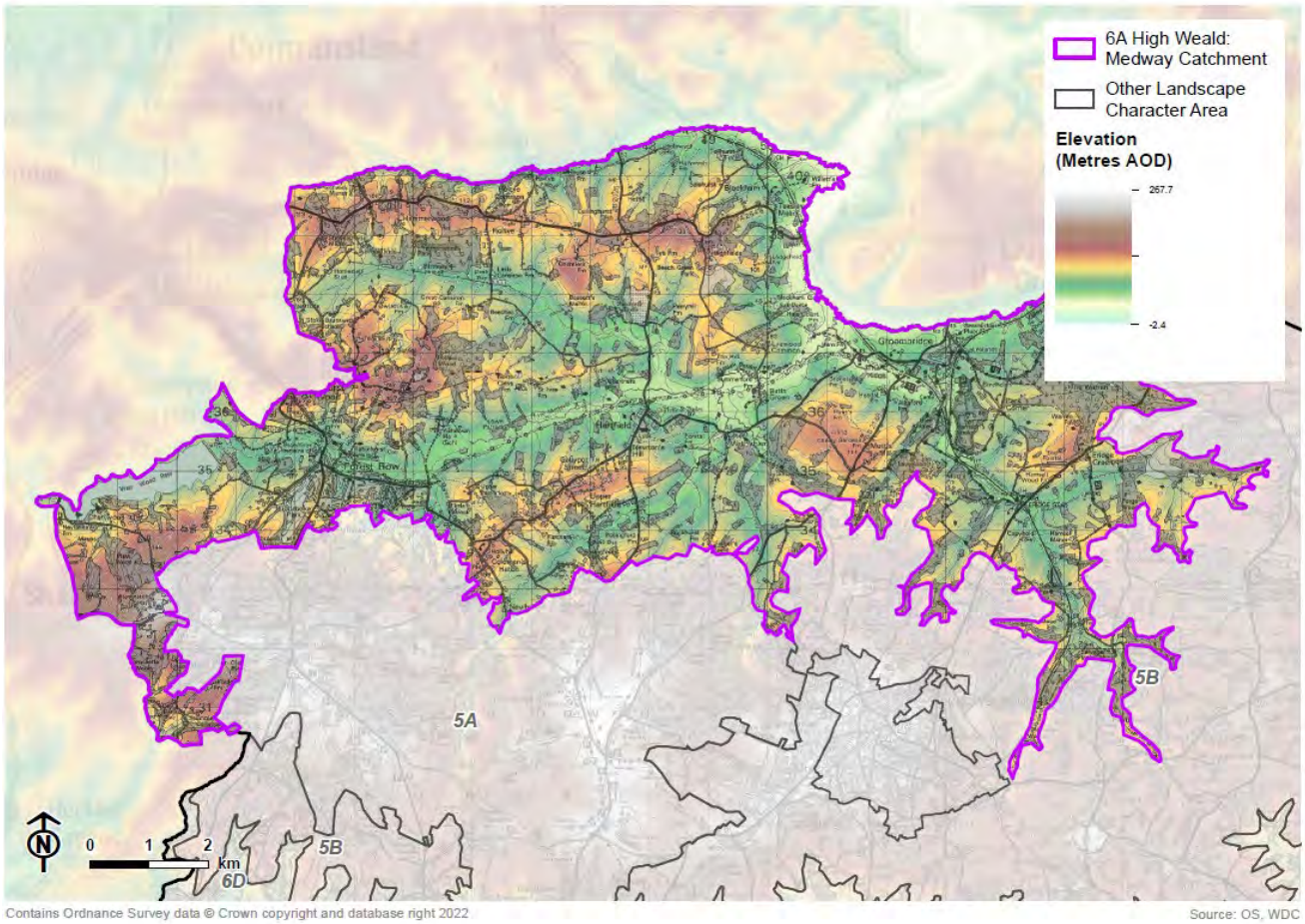
Bedrock and superficial geology

The area is predominantly underlain by interbedded sandstone, siltstone and mudstone of the Ashdown Formation with occasional areas of claystone and mudstone of the Wadhurst Clay Formation and sandstone, siltstone and mudstone of the Lower Tunbridge Wells Sand Formation located across the LCA. These sedimentary rocks were laid down in the Cretaceous period by periodic inundation of floodplains and deltas. Superficial deposits relate to the river corridors, with alluvium and some small areas of Head deposits (caused by freeze-thaw activity moving fragmented weathered material downslope).

The geology gives rise to medium to light silty and slightly loamy soils with some smaller areas of heavier clay soils. In the agricultural land classification, the land is predominantly classed as grade 3 ('good to moderate)', with some smaller areas of grade 4 ('poor') where heavier clay soils are prominent along river valleys and watercourses.

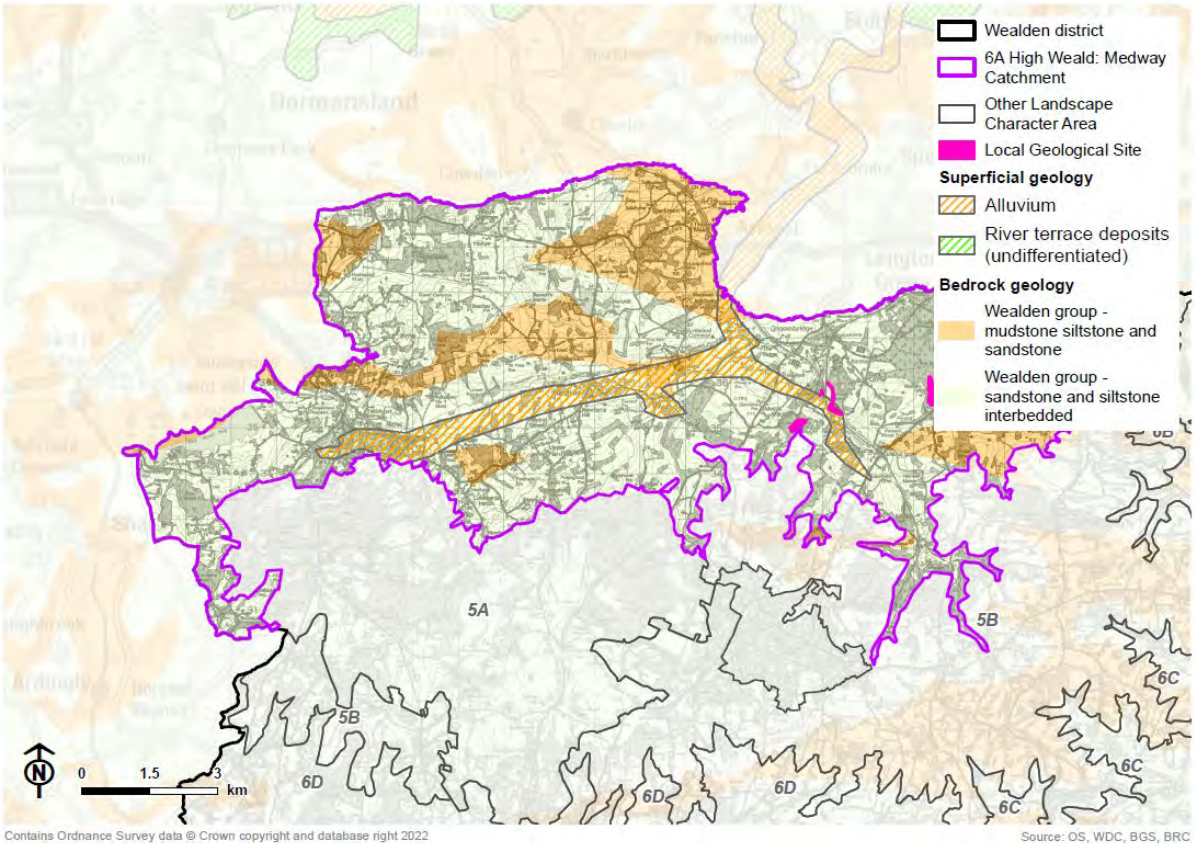


Sandstone outcrops at Harrisons Rocks



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Source: OS, WDC

Landform and drainage



Bedrock and superficial geology

Semi-natural habitats

Small but numerous priority habitat deciduous woodlands are found across the LCA. There are fragmented areas of good quality semi-improved grassland and lowland meadows as well as small areas of lowland dry acid grassland and floodplain grazing marsh in the south-east and south of the LCA. Eridge Green, Penn's Rocks and High Rocks Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) are designated for their sandstone outcrops, which support unique fern and bryophyte flora. Eridge Park SSSI in the east of the LCA is designated for its combination of woodland, parkland and sandstone outcrops, which create a rare habitat for numerous dragonfly and bird species. The Weir Wood Reservoir SSSI, with its mosaic of wetland, grassland, scrub and woodland habitats, supports a number of migratory and breeding bird populations. Many of the woods and meadows are also designated as Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) including The Warren & Broadwater Forest and Holtye Common.

The Western Ouse Streams and Ashdown Forest Biodiversity Opportunity Area (BOA) covers part of the southern extents of the LCA. BOAs are priority areas for the enhancement, restoration and creation of priority habitats, specifically wetlands, woodlands and heathland in this LCA.



A long view towards the High Weald

Landcover

Landcover comprises predominantly areas of pasture and arable land, interspersed with numerous woodlands ranging from large mixed and coniferous plantations to small broadleaved woods and shaws. There are settlements at Groombridge and Forest Row and sport and leisure facilities at the Holtye Golf Club and Eridge Park.

Historic landscape

The High Weald - Medway Catchment is part of the High Weald's ancient countryside, the dispersed settlement pattern and irregular shaped fields with strong hedgerow network are typical of the medieval era and one of the best surviving medieval landscapes in northern Europe.

Rare prehistoric rock shelters and an Iron Age hill fort at High Rocks (both designated as Scheduled Monuments) are evidence of the early occupation of the area. The rock shelters survive as below-ground archaeological remains, however the hill fort forms a discernible feature and emphasises the relationship of the sandstone outcrops to the surrounding landscape.

The route of a Roman Road, which formed part of the London to Lewes Way, historically passed from north to south across the centre of the LCA. Though much of this road is no longer visible, a partially exposed section of the road east of Holtye is designated as a Scheduled Monument.

Evidence of Wealden iron working, which continued until the 18th century, is seen in the numerous farm ponds, created as by product of clay extraction and large hammer ponds, constructed to provide a sufficient head of water for forges. The Far Blacklands Romano-British Iron Bloomery and Iron mine pits in Tugmore Shaw (Scheduled Monuments) survive as earthworks in the landscape. The medieval moated site and adjoining fishponds at Blackham Court and medieval moated site at Brambletye Manor and the castle mound near Hartfield, all Scheduled Monuments, add further to the time depth evident in the landscape today.

Historically the settlement pattern was strongly dispersed, with villages and hamlets located along ridges or on lower spurs overlooking the river valley. A number of these settlements, including Forest Row, Hartfield, Withyham and Eridge Green have designated Conservation Areas. Historic farmsteads and cottages, many of which are now listed buildings, are scattered between villages. This medieval settlement pattern is linked to the practice of cultivating small land holdings and assarting (clearing of forested land) and its development can be attributed to the iron industry, a major Wealden industry from the late medieval period, and to historic estates, including Buckhurst Park and Eridge Park. This settlement pattern largely remains today, although Forest Row, Hartfield and Groombridge developed with the arrival of the railway from the mid-19th century, giving rise to a more settled feel to the landscape. The Spa Valley Heritage Railway, which once formed part of a wider railway network in the area, passes along the north-eastern boundary of the LCA into Groombridge.

The availability of local materials and sources of timber are reflected in the local vernacular of brick, timber, stone, weather boarding and tile hanging.

Bolebroke Castle is a 15th century lodge, from which Henry VIII accessed the Ashdown Forest on hunting excursions. A number of large country houses with designed parkland landscapes dating from the late 18th to 19th century are located in the area, including Highfields Park, Hammerwood House, Buckhurst Park and Kidbrooke Park. The parklands at Buckhurst and Kidbrooke are attributed to the landscape designer Humphrey Repton and provide another layer of historic interest and time depth of the historic landscape. Many of these estates were built by wealthy ironmasters and clothmakers.

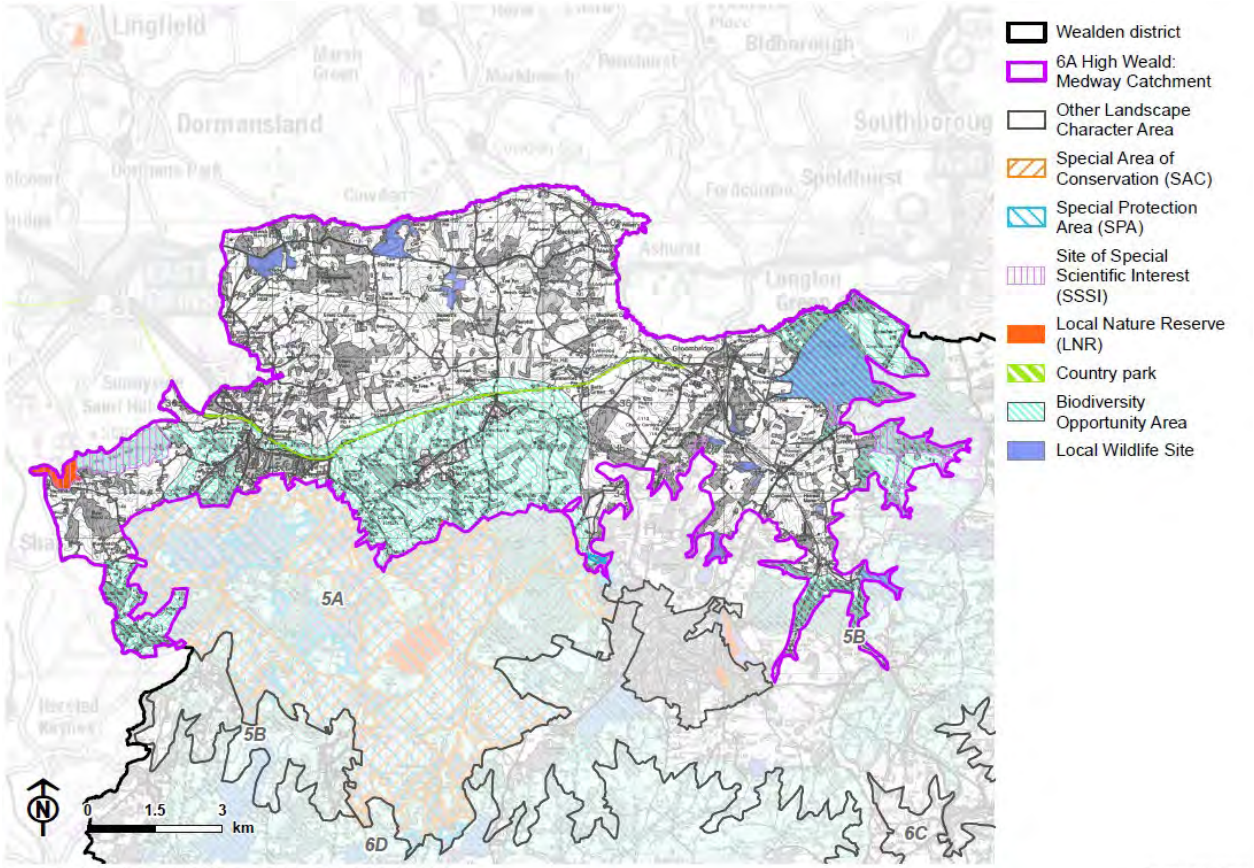
The Sussex Historic Landscape Character Assessment shows a varied field pattern indicative of a typical medieval landscape, mainly derived from irregular piecemeal enclosure, with some smaller areas of cohesive assarts on sloping valley sides. There is some modern field amalgamation located within lower-lying areas of the valley. This patchwork of fields is enclosed by thickly wooded areas, as well as designed landscapes, horticultural land, recreation areas and dispersed settlements. There are also discrete industrial areas, mainly water treatment facilities, generally located on the outskirts of settlements.

Perceptual character

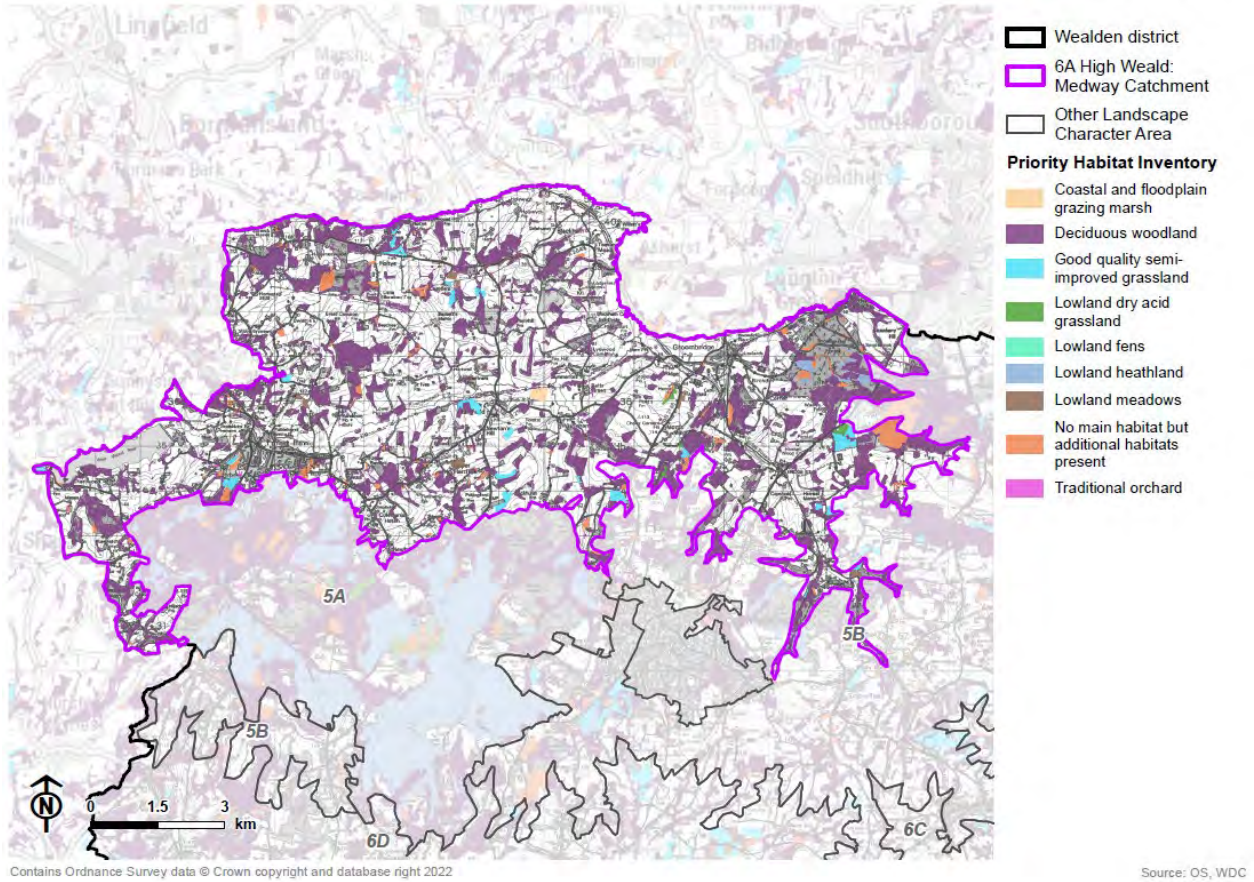
The pattern of pastoral and arable fields and dense woodland, combined with open views across the wooded valleys and ridges contribute to a sense of rural remoteness. The area has a good experience of dark skies with little light pollution and high levels of tranquillity, particularly along the valley floor or within the larger woodlands, such as Broadwater Forest. However, larger villages such as Forest Row, and the influence of adjoining towns including East Grinstead and Royal Tunbridge Wells impact perceptual qualities on the edge of the area. Traffic along the A264, and noise associated with the railway lines in the east of the LCA, impact tranquillity within localised extents of the LCA.


Vernacular architecture at Eridge Green

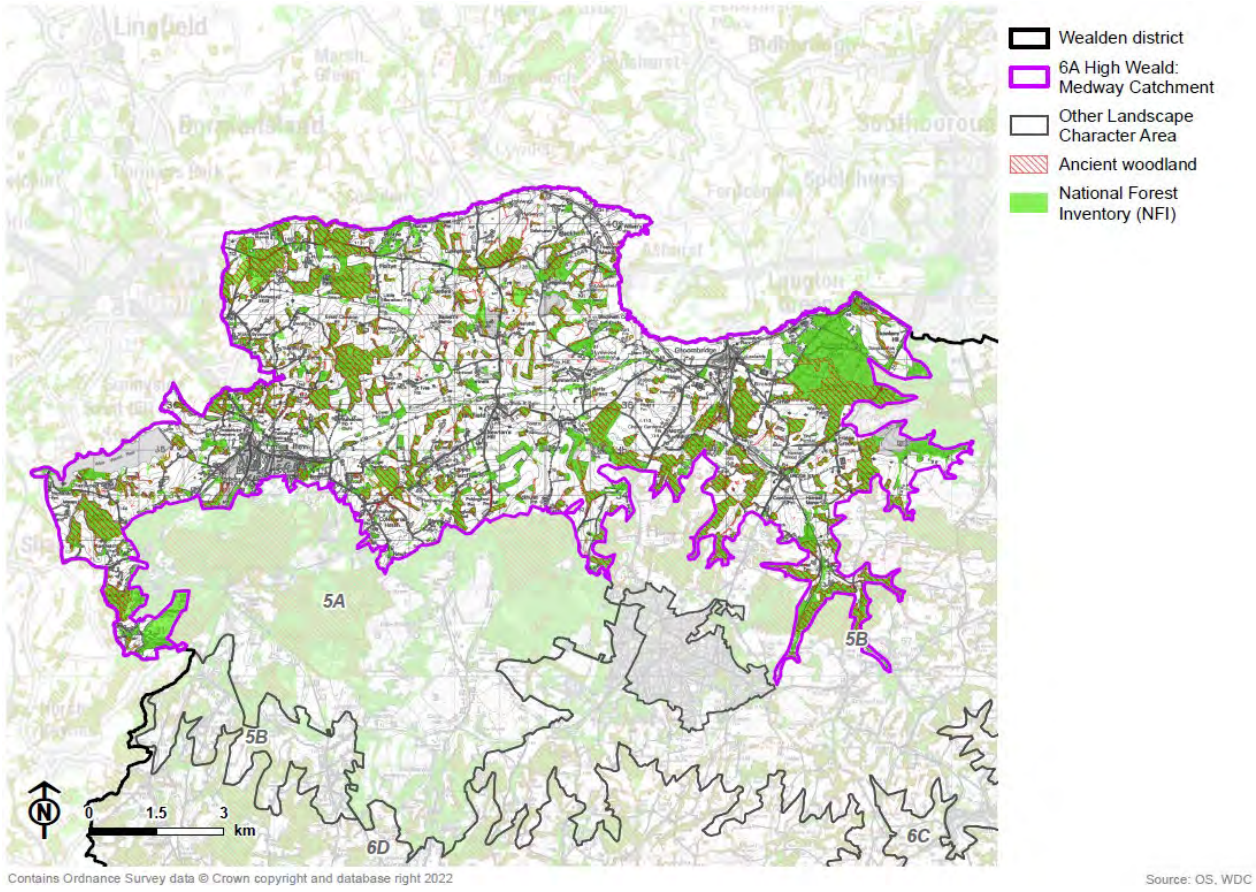

The winding River Medway crossing the valley floor with a wooded skyline seen beyond



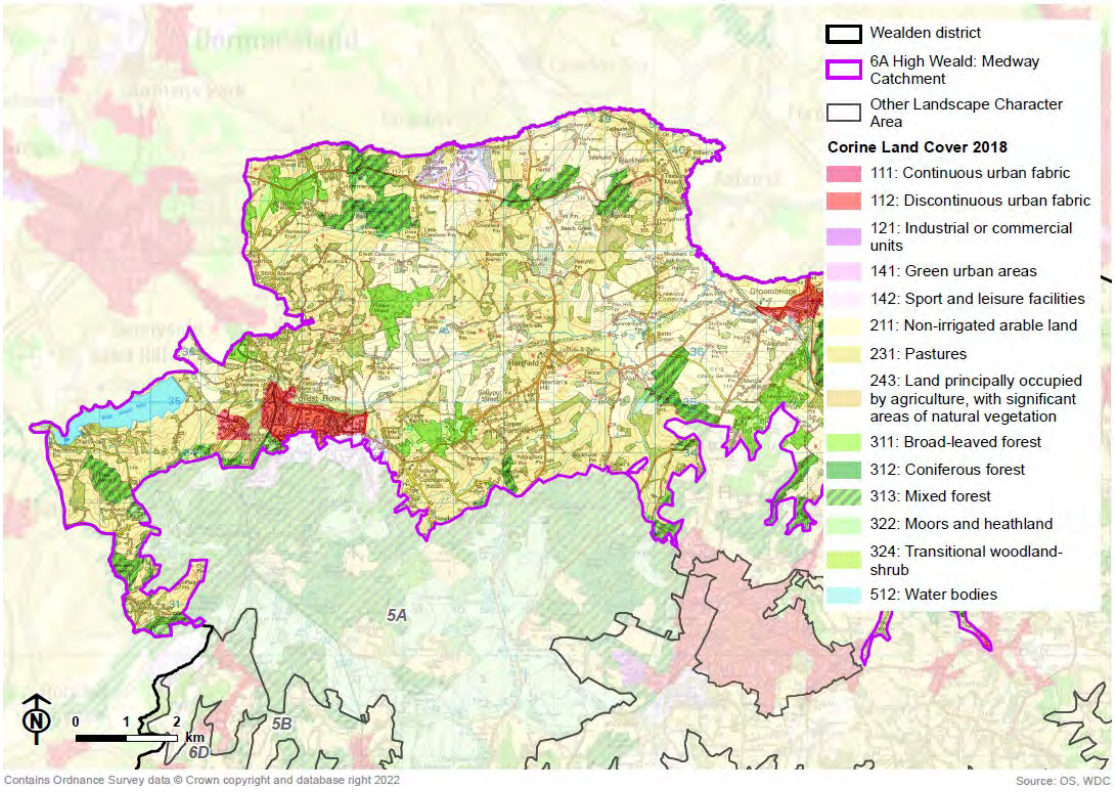
Nature conservation designations



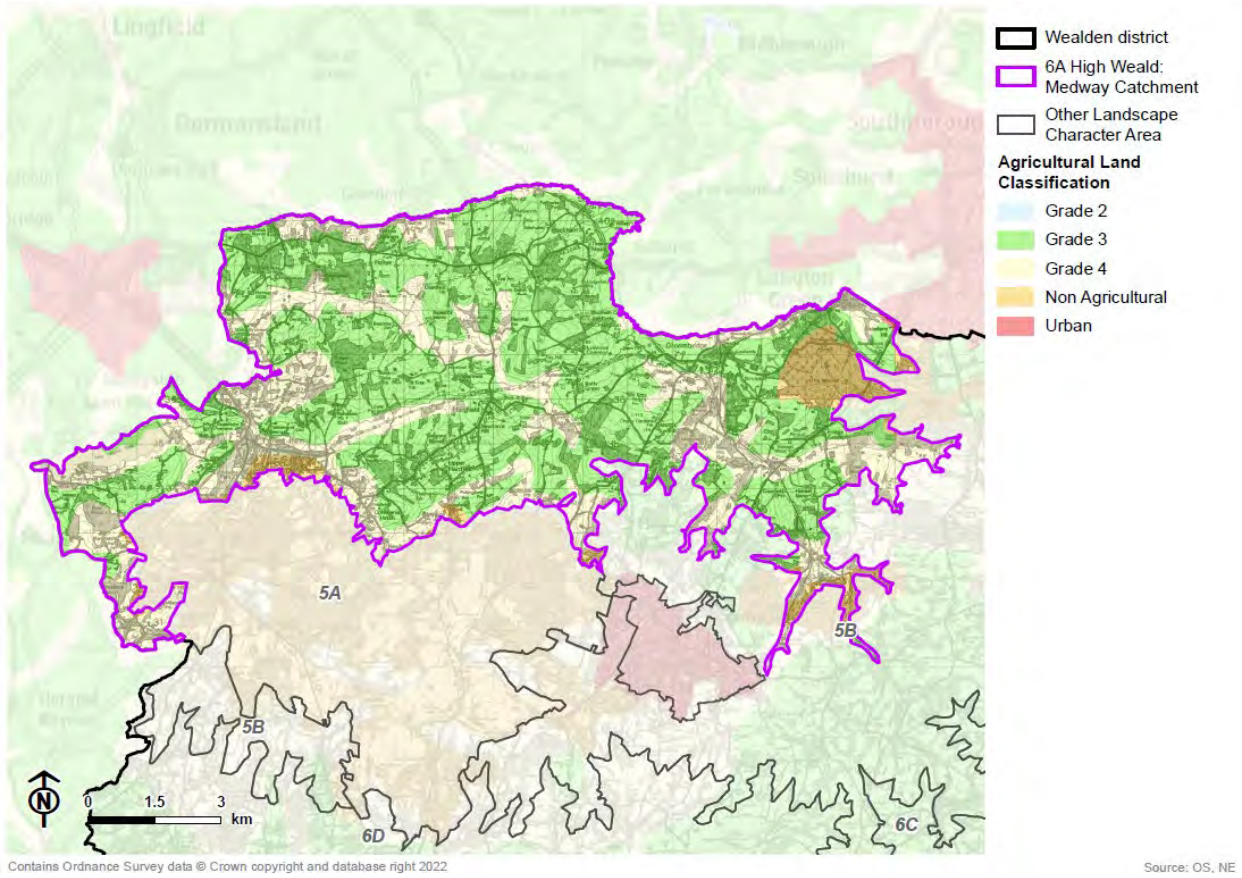
Priority habitat coverage



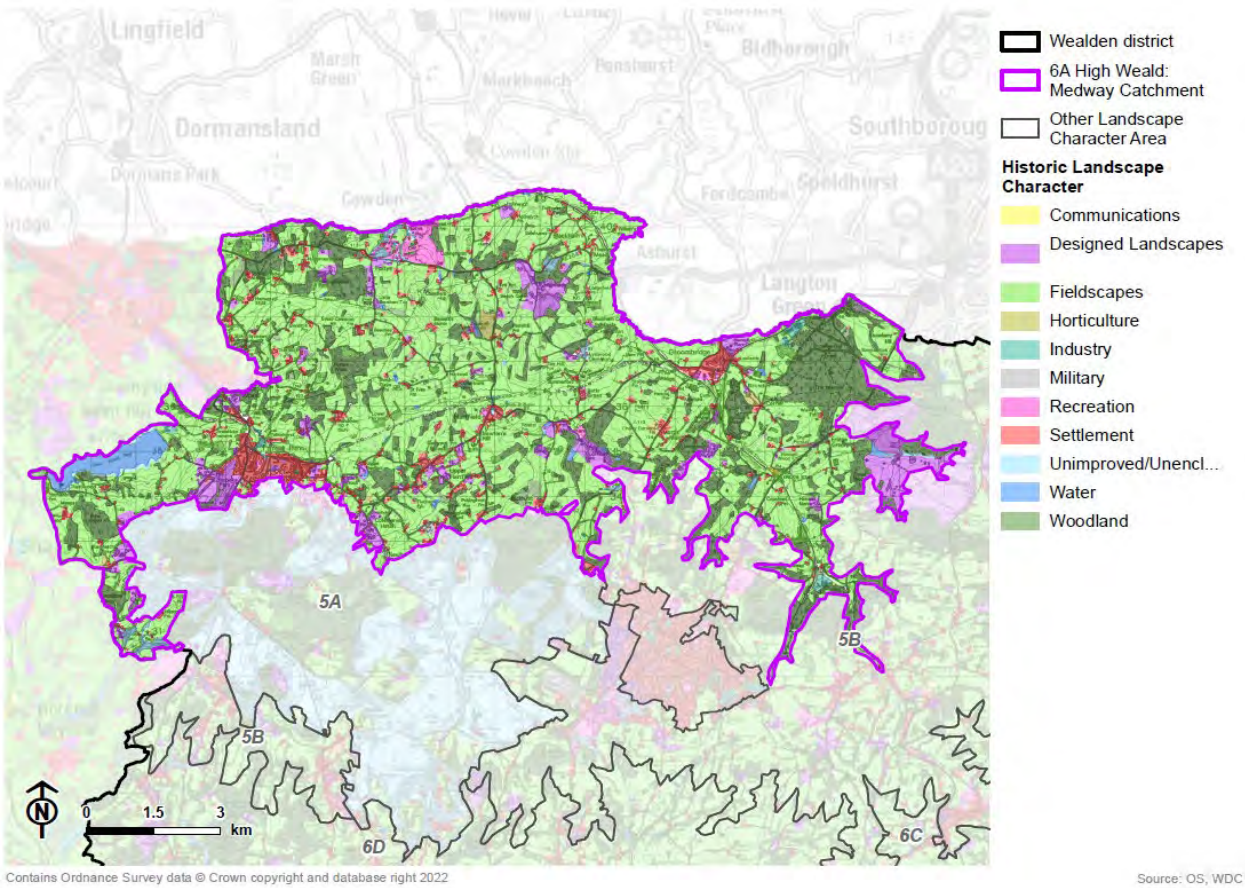
Woodland coverage



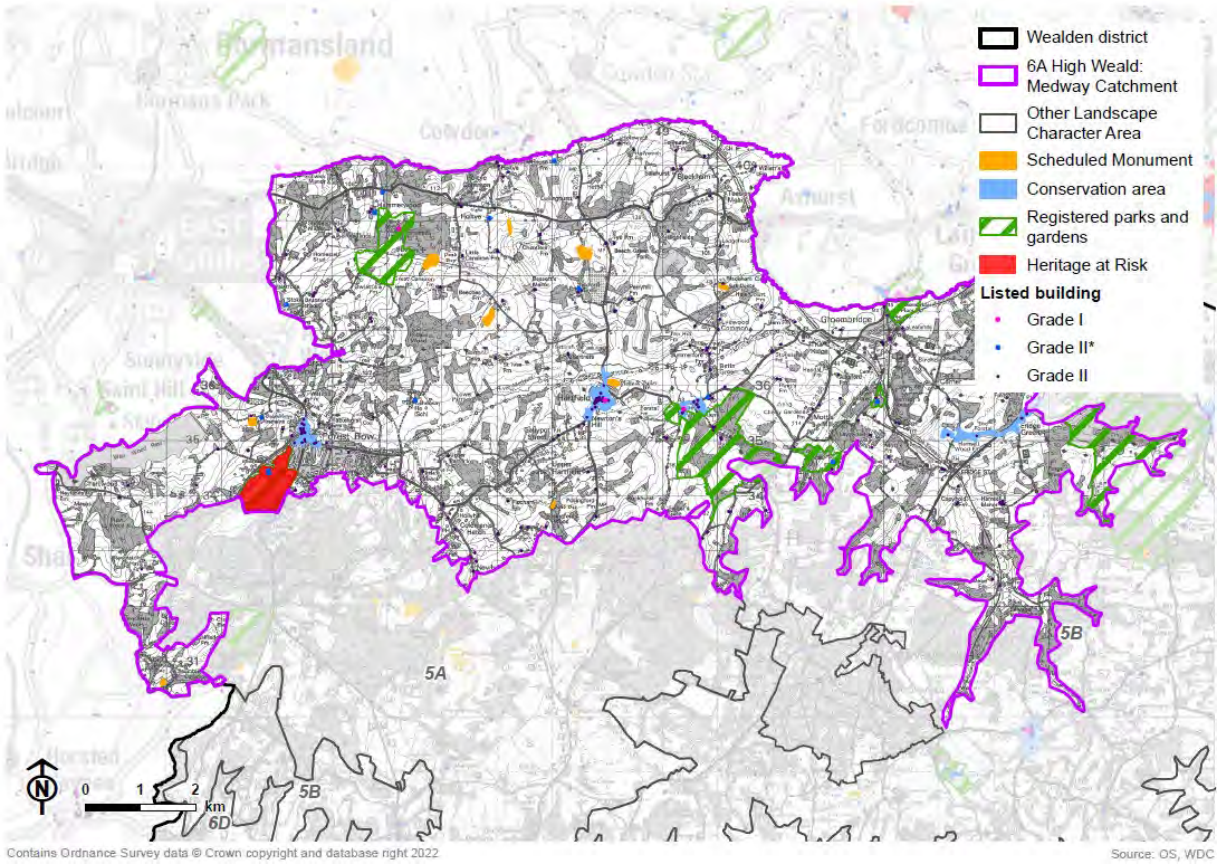
Landcover types (CORINE Land cover inventory 2018)



Agricultural Land Classification



Historic Landscape Characterisation



Cultural heritage designations

Landscape qualities

The following features and characteristics are particularly valued for their contribution to character and for the ecosystem services they provide:

- The distinctive landform of ridges, spurs and valleys associated with the River Medway provide topographical interest to the landscape, creating a sense of place.
- The ponds, streams and open water (including the Wier Wood Reservoir SSSI), support wetland habitats in the valleys, increasing biodiversity.
- The woodland, riparian vegetation and wetland habitats of the Medway catchment provide nutrient and sediment filtration that enhances water quality, help to regulate water flow and assist in reducing flooding during heavy rainfall.
- The extensive woodland cover (with a high proportion of ancient woodland), shaws, trees and mature hedgerows, provide a sense of place as well as habitat connectivity to support biodiversity, carbon sequestration and the regulation of temperatures.
- Coppicing of woodland offers opportunities for timber provision and a potential source of local fuel and building materials.
- Semi-natural habitats including deciduous woodland, semi-improved grassland and wet meadows, some designated as SSSI, support a range of important flora and fauna. They allow soil stabilisation/retention, support biodiversity, have a higher soil carbon content than cultivated habitats, and provide nutrient filtration which enhances water quality.
- Distinctive sandstone outcrops, that are recognised through designation at Harrison's Rocks and the Eridge Green, Penn's Rocks and High Rocks SSSIs, contribute to the sense of place and support unique flora.
- The small-scale medieval field patterns, with sinuous hedgerow boundaries provide a sense of place and history.

- Hammer ponds, coppiced woodlands and remnants of forges provide a link to the Wealden iron industry and a sense of time depth.
- The dispersed pattern of ridge-top villages (whose value is recognised through designation as Conservation Areas) linked by winding hedged lanes, provide a connection to history, cultural identity and aesthetic value.
- The vernacular architecture of brick, oak and sandstone which reflects the locally available materials, provides a sense of place and accords with a distinctive architectural colour palette.
- The 18th-19th century parkland and gardens of Hammerwood Park, Buckhurst Park and Kidbrooke Park contribute to the time depth, history and cultural identity of the landscape.
- The extensive network of public rights-of-way contributes to people's physical health and mental well-being.
- The harmonious small-scale landscape pattern of mixed farms, dense woodland and open views across the wooded ridges and valleys contribute to the strong scenic quality of the area, reflected in its designation as an AONB.
- The strong sense of tranquillity and experience of dark night skies, particularly on the wooded valley floors and within larger woodlands.
- Associations with Winnie the Pooh and Ashdown Forest provide links with cultural identity.

Forces for Change

- Climate change leading to increasing temperatures and periods of drought resulting in a change in water levels and stream flows, altering the species composition of wetland habitats.
- Climate change resulting in an increase in the frequency and severity of seasonal flooding in lower-lying valleys. Associated pressures to build flood management works that are unsympathetic to local landscape character and sensitive habitats.
- Decreased water quality resulting from sediment run-off after ploughing and increased use and accumulation of herbicides, pesticides and fertilisers associated with industrial arable farming.
- Climate change and changing land management practices leading to potential changes in woodland and tree species composition. Increases in severe gales could result in wind damage to woodland edges. Ancient woodlands may be particularly susceptible to damage from storms and drought.
- Climate change and changing land management practices leading to potential changes in flora and an increase in pests and diseases, such as acute oak decline or sweet chestnut blight.
- The former replacement of broadleaved woodland with conifer and mixed plantations and changes to woodland management, including a reduction in traditional coppicing techniques, which has resulted in a change to the species composition, continuity and density of woodland and influenced the landscape pattern and texture.
- A decline in mixed farming leading to the loss of pasture and meadows, with their associated mature and historic hedges, influencing landscape structure and pattern.
- Maturing parkland trees on estates, which are vulnerable to pathogens and limit their ability to regenerate. Further degradation of the registered park and garden landscape at Kidbrooke Park, which is on the Heritage at Risk register.
- Expansion of urban areas, particularly outside of the boundary of the LCA, has the potential to affect the area's dark skies and sense of remoteness and tranquillity.
- Recreational pressure on the landscape, including an increase in visitor numbers to promoted visitor locations and pressure for additional recreational infrastructure. Increased recreational use causing erosion of sandstone outcrops. Visitors' dogs causing disturbance to wildlife and damage to habitats from dog faeces.
- Increased number of walkers, horses, bicycles and 4-wheel drives eroding unsurfaced routes including public rights of way, byways and narrow lanes, damaging vegetation on verges or boundary banks, and impacting the sense of tranquillity and rurality.
- Building of modern farm buildings that are intrusive and draw the eye, especially in open areas. Pylons are also a distinctive modern influence on the landscape and can be highly visible in the undulating landscape.
- Pressure for renewable energy infrastructure (e.g. wind turbines on elevated ridges and solar farms on south facing slopes or open areas, and associated grid connections), which would reduce rural character and impact views.

Landscape guidelines

These guidelines recommend how to ensure future change respects local character and should be read in conjunction with the objectives and proposed actions of the High Weald AONB Management Plan:

- Maintain constant stream levels when possible (monitoring water levels especially as periods of drought increase), to retain wetland habitats.
- Address flooding issues with the implementation of natural flood management schemes (e.g. the creation of flood meadows and wet woodland in the floodplain, planting of woodland on slopes and installation of leaky wood dams to slow flows, in line with the aims of the Western Ouse Streams and Ashdown Forest Biodiversity Opportunity Area) and working with landowners to consider a holistic approach to catchment management.
- Ensure that woodland establishment does not replace other important habitats, such as species-rich grassland, or erode the legibility of historic field systems.
- Monitor water quality in the rivers and streams. Minimise water pollution from agriculture through sensitive land management practices, including regenerative agricultural systems such as no or minimal till, holistic grazing, reduction or removal of chemical inputs, cover crops and restoration of buffer strips along watercourses and field ponds to minimise run off in order to maintain the biodiversity of wetland features.
- Protect the distinctive sandstone outcrops and their associated habitats from erosion or inappropriate recreational use.
- Encourage active and appropriate management of woodland to ensure a diverse species and age structure by thinning, coppicing and replanting as necessary, in line with the aims of the Western Ouse Streams and Ashdown Forest Biodiversity Opportunity Area. Avoid damage from large machinery. No management is recommended for gill woodland as these habitats are too sensitive and insufficiently understood.
- As climatic conditions change, plant suitable species or encourage natural regeneration to create climate resistant woodland.
- Safeguard ancient woodland and protect and enhance vulnerable woodland habitats and soils, including gill woodlands and wet woodlands, for the benefit of biodiversity.
- Avoid changes to landform and disturbance of soils to protect the landscape character of the High Weald and the carbon sequestration function of its soils.
- Encourage the gradual restructuring of coniferous woodland to woodlands with a high broadleaved content, particularly for plantations on ancient woodland sites (PAWs), in line with the aims of the objectives of the High Weald AONB Management Plan.
- Support a sustainable woodland industry, encouraging small-scale operations using traditional techniques including coppicing, to develop new markets and products for locally sourced timber, and to maintain carbon sequestration.
- Protect and manage the existing hedgerow network, and plan for the restoration of, and linkages between, hedgerows, including establishing hedgerow oaks, to maintain habitat corridors and to retain the medieval field pattern typical of the High Weald. Remove post and wire fencing where appropriate.
- Maintain and restore links between woodland, other woodland habitats (such as hedgerows and parkland) and species-rich habitats such as grasslands. This will create a robust network of woodland and open semi-natural habitats, which support biodiversity and contribute to an integrated green infrastructure network.
- Maintain the mixed farmed character of the area, while increasing areas of permanent pasture (aiming to convert arable land to permanent pasture or to regenerative forms of agriculture which combine arable, livestock and agro-forestry uses and creating grassland margins to arable fields) and manage the number and grazing regimes of livestock to maintain and increase biodiversity.
- Monitor potential changes in flora and increase in pests and diseases, including spread of invasive plants and animals in water courses and woodlands.
- Protect and enhance the historic designed landscape at Kidbrooke Park, ensuring holistic management of the property, and putting in place a programme of parkland tree planting where appropriate. Minimise encroachment of further built development into the parkland landscape and protect key designed views.
- Protect the remaining historic features related to the Wealden iron industry, such as hammer ponds. Increase interpretation and access where appropriate to link communities with their local heritage,
- Limit the amount and scale of development in rural areas, protecting the existing settlement pattern of dispersed rural villages, hamlets, scattered farmsteads and country houses, and the separation between these different settlement types.
- Ensure new building reinforces and responds to local character in its scale, layout and design, reflecting the local vernacular in use of materials. Developments should draw on the principles contained within the High Weald AONB design guidance, High Weald AONB ‘Guidance on the selection and use of colour in development’ and objectives of the High Weald AONB Management Plan.
- Encourage tree establishment through natural regeneration to soften existing settlement edges and infrastructure development to filter light pollution and reduce the visual impact of further urbanisation.
- Maintain the historic network of routeways, ensuring new roads or ‘upgrades’ take account of their rural context and avoid over-engineered features and/or the

introduction of lighting into dark areas. Maintain the trees and species-rich grasslands on road verges.

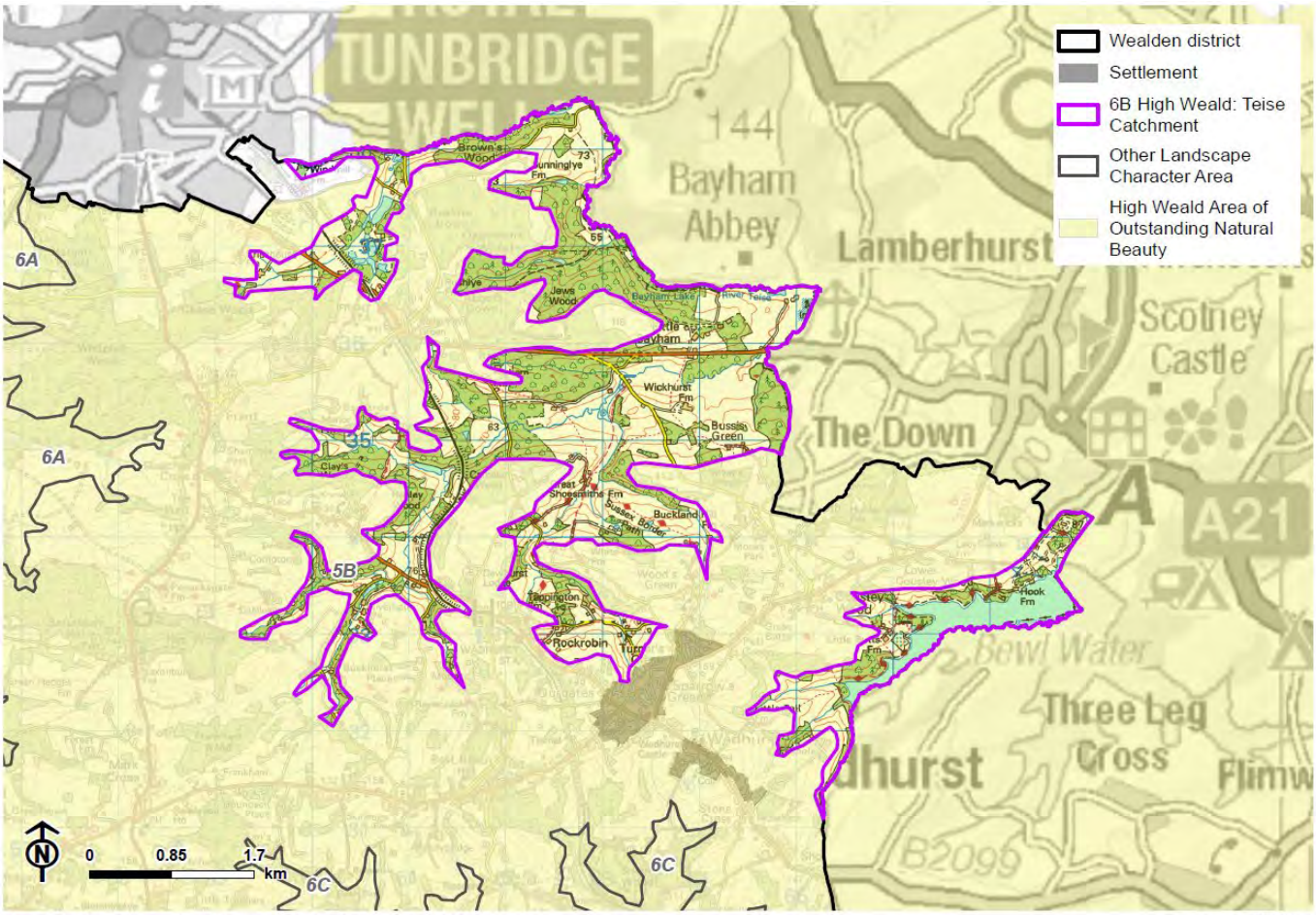
- Ensure any renewable energy generation is compatible with the guidance above and is in scale with the landscape where possible. Where larger scale renewable energy development is justified to meet climate change objectives any harm to the landscape should be compensated for by landscape-scale enhancements of the surrounding area. Electricity infrastructure associated with renewable energy generation should be efficiently planned to minimise the number of lines required, routeing in accordance with the Holford Rules[1].
- Restore and establish new hedgerows and shaws to create habitat connectivity and restore historic landscape character. Reduce the visual impact of the transmission lines which cross this LCA, in line with the Beautiful Boundaries project with the National Grid's Landscape Enhancement Initiative.
- Protect the characteristic views from open ridgetop roads and ridgetop settlements.
- Maintain the strong scenic qualities of the landscape and its sense of remoteness, tranquillity, and experience of dark skies.

[1] https://www.nationalgrid.com/sites/default/files/documents/13795-The%20Holford%20Rules.pdf

LCA 6B: High Weald - Teise Catchment

Location and summary

The High Weald - Teise Catchment is a gently rolling valley landscape containing the River Teise and its tributaries that drain north-eastwards from the Central High Weald into Tunbridge Wells District. The landscape comprises fields on valley slopes (including ancient fields and assarts), woods, small winding streams, ponds, part of Bewl Water (a flooded valley), dispersed historic farmsteads and scattered dwellings. The LCA is in two sections, separated by LCA 5B High Weald - Central. The LCA is located within the High Weald AONB.



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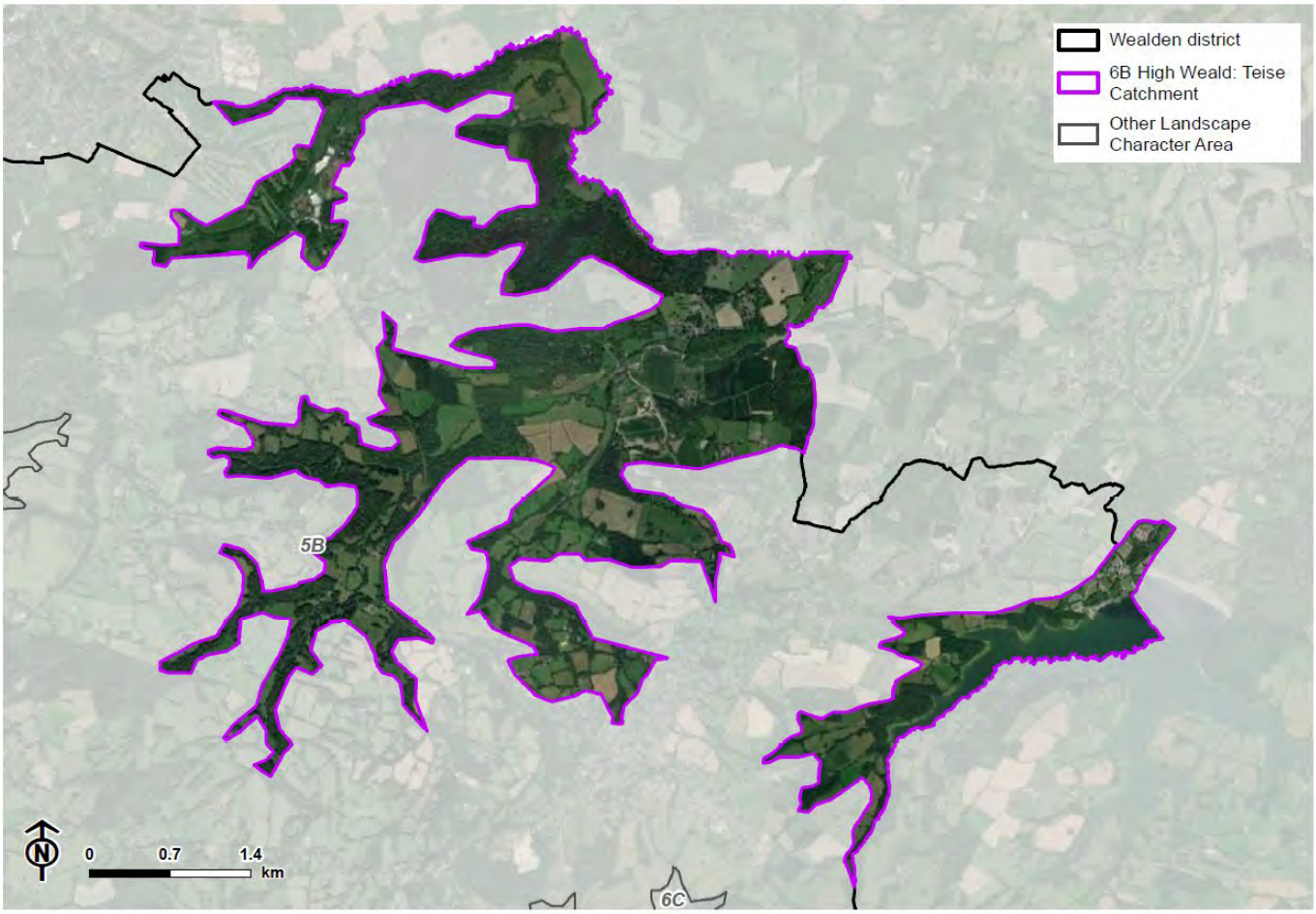


Typical view of the Teise Catchment

Key Characteristics

- The underlying geology of interbedded sandstone and siltstone give rise to a gently undulating and incised valley landscape associated with the branching upper reaches of the River Teise and the Bewl Water Reservoir. The incised valleys are a defining component of character of the High Weald AONB.
- Underlying silt-loam soils are generally of 'good to moderate' agricultural capability and support a mix of pasture and arable land. Areas of heavier clayey soils at Bewl Water.
- A heavily wooded landscape of broadleaved and mixed woodland (most recorded as priority habitat), which is a defining component of character of the High Weald AONB, interconnected by wooded shaws and mature hedgerows. Chestnut, oak, beech and ash are predominant species.
- Many woodlands are of ancient origin, managed in the past as broadleaved coppice, with swaths of wildflowers providing springtime displays.
- Some woods have been replanted as mixed or coniferous plantations, particularly in the north of the LCA, although these are softened by broadleaved woodland borders.
- Small pockets of priority habitat lowland meadows and semi-improved grassland are scattered throughout the LCA, mostly located on the fringes of priority habitat deciduous woodland.
- A strong historic field pattern of small irregular fields of medieval origin, which is a defining component of character of the High Weald AONB. Fields include assarts (formed by woodland clearance) interspersed with piecemeal enclosure, which is strongly expressed on gently sloping landform located along the boundaries of the LCA.
- Fields are enclosed by thick, sometimes sinuous, hedgerows and shaws, although modern field amalgamation as a result of intensive agriculture has led to some deterioration of field boundaries.
- The impressive sandstone ruins of Bayham Abbey dating from the 13th century (Grade I listed and a Scheduled Monument), sits within the Teise valley and provides a picturesque setting for a wooded park (a Registered Park and Garden) designed by Humphrey Repton in the early 19th century.
- A strongly dispersed settlement pattern of cottages and historic farmsteads of 16th, 18th and 19th century origin, which is a defining component of character of the High Weald AONB, generally set back from the roads or enclosed by woodland. These are connected by rural minor roads lined with woodland.
- The local vernacular architecture comprises oak timber framing, weatherboarding, red brick, tile hung upper stories and red tiled roofs, reflecting the abundance of locally sourced materials.
- The gently rolling landform, dense woodland and wooded sunken lanes channel and limit distant outward views, resulting in a sense of shelter, relative remoteness and seclusion.
- The northern extents of Bewl Water lie in the south of the LCA. The public access and open views across the water, contrast with the more secluded nature of the landscape elsewhere.

- The contrasting landscape pattern of pastoral and arable fields, combined with dense areas of mixed woodland and the expanse of Bewl Water, gives rise to a varied landscape colour palette.
- A tranquil rural landscape, with an experience of dark night skies and a strong sense of remoteness, particularly in valleys and larger woods.



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Key Influences

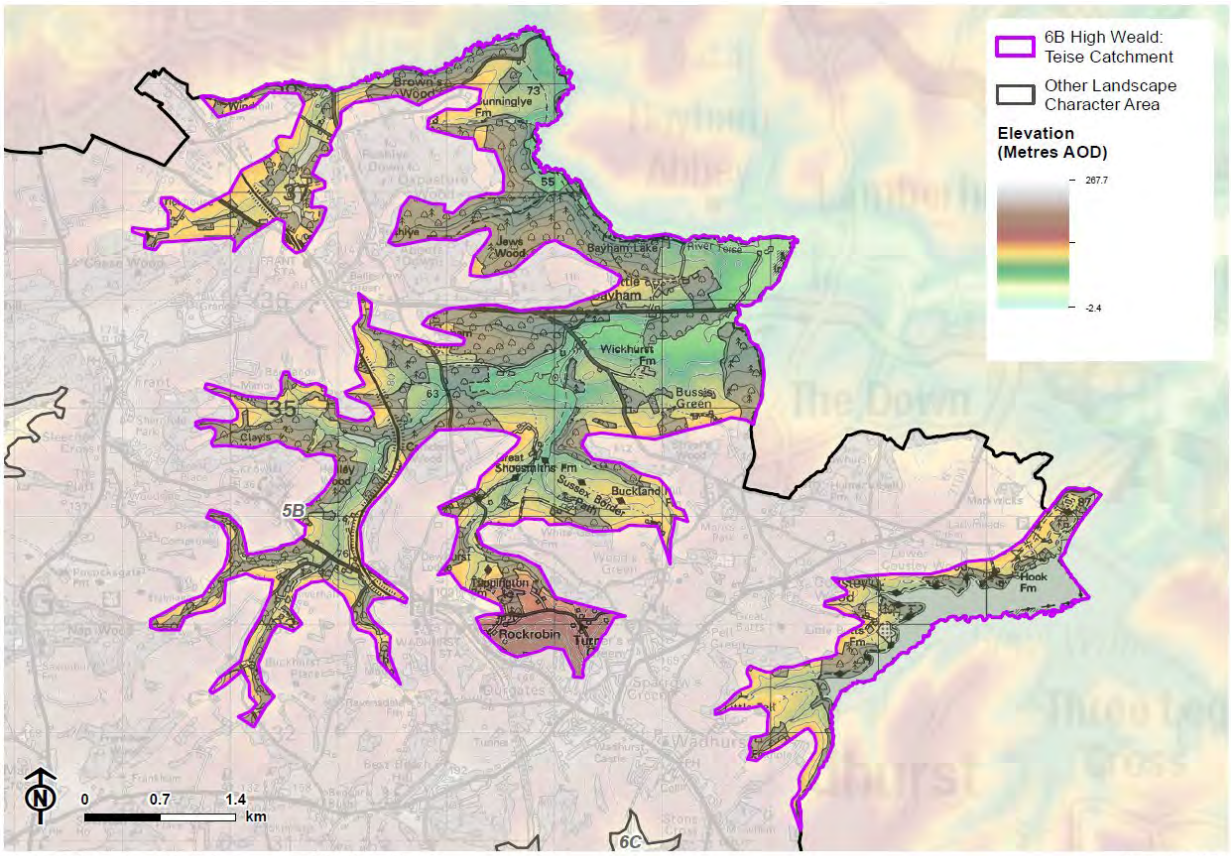
Landform and drainage

The Teise Catchment is a gently undulating valley landscape rising from 40m AOD at Bewl Water to100m AOD along the slopes in the west of the LCA. Numerous winding streams form the upper reaches of the River Teise, a tributary of the River Medway, which drains north-east into Tunbridge Wells District. The watercourses tend to be small and winding in their upper extents, lined by woodland, and are often hidden from view. The reservoir at Bewl Water, formed by the damming of the River Bewl in 1973, is located in the south of the LCA and is the largest artificial area of water in the south-east of England. There are also a number of manmade water bodies associated with designed landscapes and fishing lakes located across the LCA.

Bedrock and superficial geology

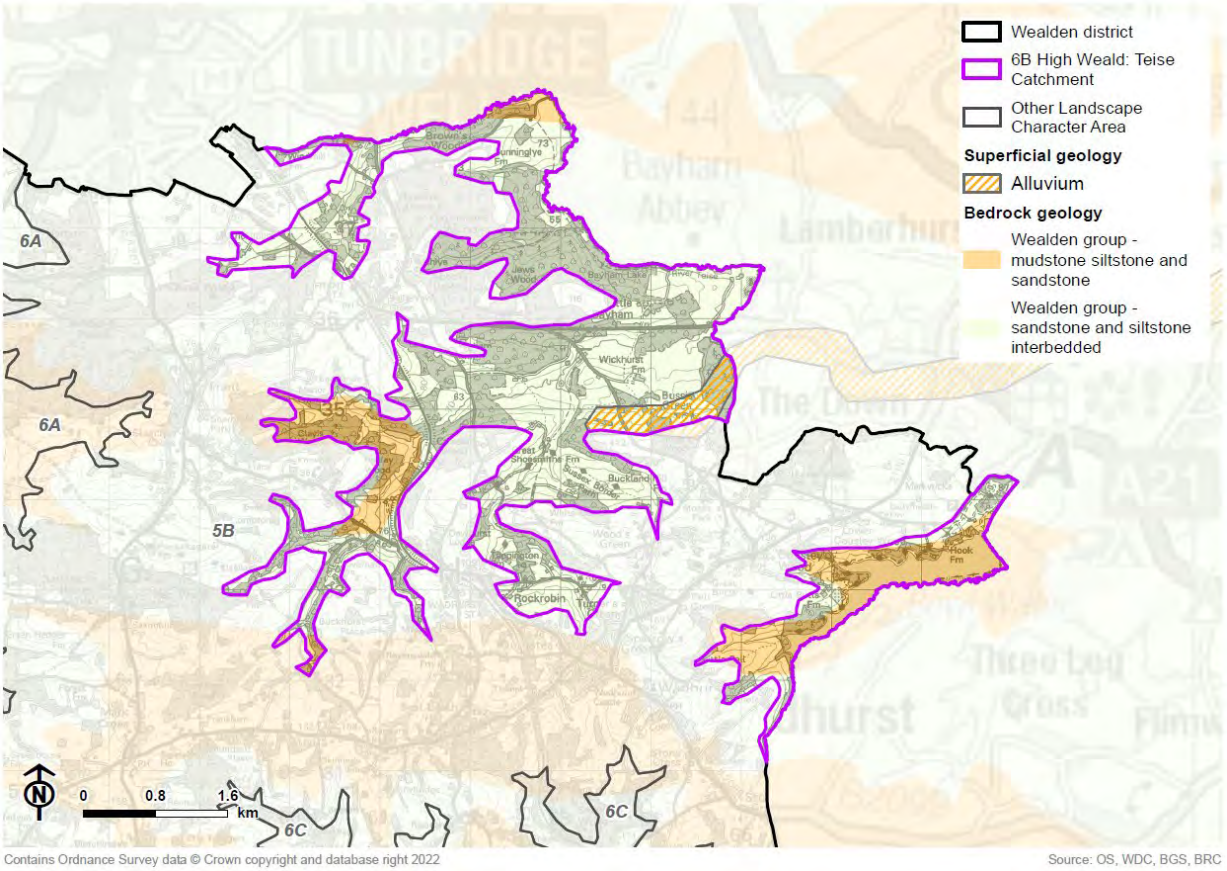
The area is predominantly underlain by interbedded sandstone and siltstone of the Tunbridge Wells Sand Formation with small areas of mudstone of the Wadhurst Clay Formation and interbedded sandstone and siltstone of the Ashdown Formation. These sedimentary rocks were laid down in the Cretaceous period by periodic inundation of floodplains and deltas. Superficial deposits relate to the river corridors, with alluvium and some small areas of Head deposits (caused by freeze-thaw activity moving fragmented weathered material downslope).

The geology predominantly gives rise to medium silt-loam soils graded grade 3 (‘good to moderate’) in the agricultural land classification. There are some areas of heavier clay soils, particularly in the south-eastern near the Bewl Water and the west of the LCA along the upper reaches of the River Teise, graded 4 (‘poor’).



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Landform and drainage



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Bedrock and superficial geology

Semi-natural habitats

Priority habitat deciduous woodland is found across the LCA, with fragmented areas of good quality semi-improved grassland and lowland meadows dispersed throughout the area. There is a small area of lowland heathland in the north of the LCA. The Bewl Water, Colesgrove Wood Complex and Clays Wood Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) are found within the LCA.

The Bewl Water Biodiversity Opportunity Area (BOA) covers part of the south of the LCA. BOAs are priority areas for the enhancement, restoration and creation of priority habitats, specifically wetlands as relevant to this BOA.

Landcover

Landcover is a mix of pasture, arable land, broadleaved and mixed woodland and a small area of coniferous forest in the north of the LCA. Bewl Water is located in the south of the LCA.



View looking along the wooded shore of Bewl Water

Historic landscape

The High Weald -Teise Catchment is part of the High Weald's ancient countryside, the dispersed settlement pattern and irregular shaped fields with strong hedgerow network are typical of the medieval period and one of the best surviving medieval landscapes in northern Europe. Evidence of the transhumance movement, where people and animals moved seasonally to the woodlands of the High Weald, remain in the routes of the local lanes across the valley landscape, including some public rights of way in the south of the area which cross the LCA broadly on a north-south alignment.

Bayham Abbey (listed grade II and a registered historic park and garden) was founded in the 13th century and functioned as a monastic site until dissolution in the 16th century. Renowned landscape designer Humphry Repton was commissioned in the late 19th century to provide designs and advice for the estate, which is partially located in the adjacent county of Kent. Repton's Red Book for Bayham, detailed proposals for the parkland and grounds of the sandstone ruins of the abbey, which remain a focal point in the landscape today.

The existing settlement pattern has remained dispersed, with scattered historic farmsteads (such as Bartley Mill and Wickhurst Farm), and cottages connected by winding rural lanes. This pattern reflects the medieval practise of cultivating small-scale land holdings and assarting (clearance of forested land). The local vernacular of brick, timber, stone, weather boarding and tile hanging reflect the availability of local materials.

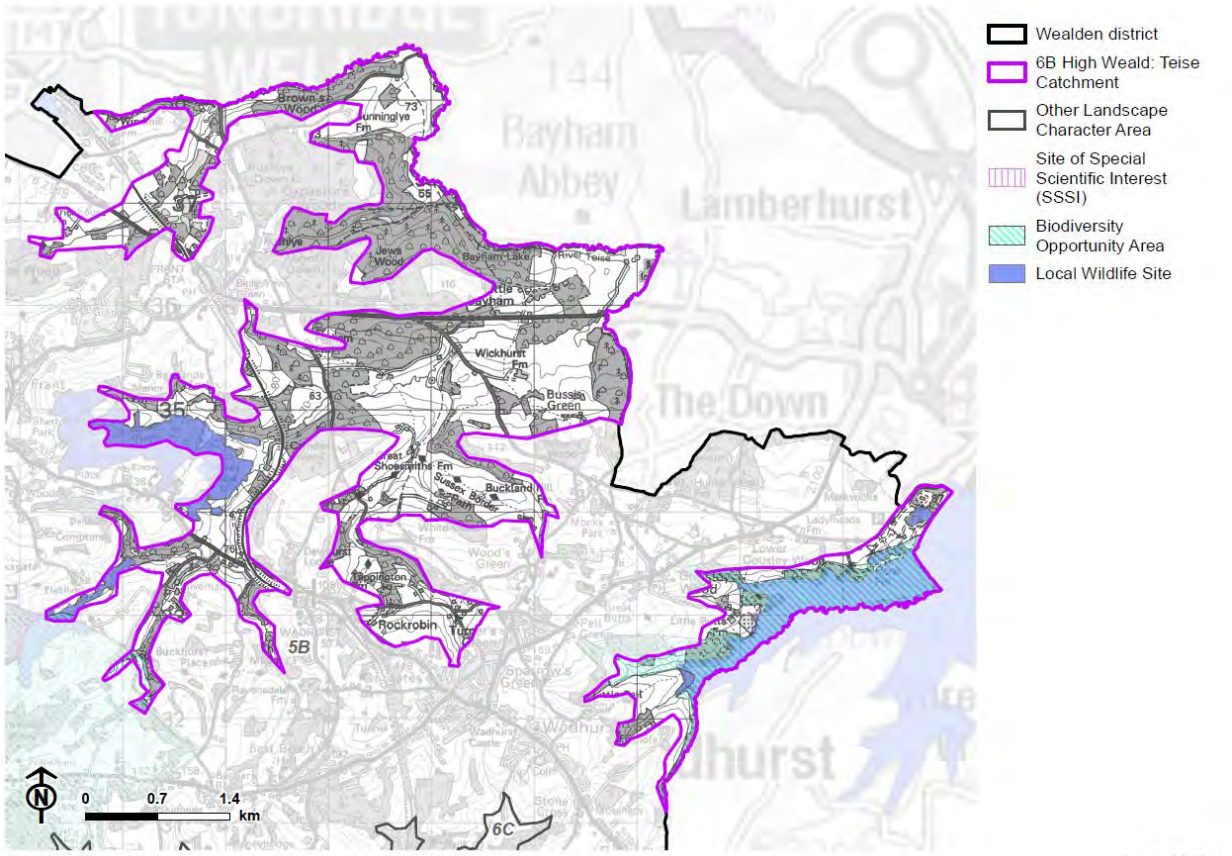
The Sussex Historic Landscape Character Assessment shows a varied field pattern indicative of a typical medieval landscape, comprising assarts and fieldscapes derived from irregular piecemeal enclosure. There are smaller areas of formal and informal parkland located throughout the LCA and a recreational marina in the south near the Bewl Water reservoir.

Perceptual Character

The small-scale pattern of hedged fields, tree-lined sunken lanes and numerous woodlands contribute to a sense of enclosure and remoteness. The area has a good experience of dark skies with little light pollution and consistently high levels of tranquillity throughout. The wooded character of the area limits the adverse effects of noise associated with the railway in the west of the LCA and traffic along the B2026.

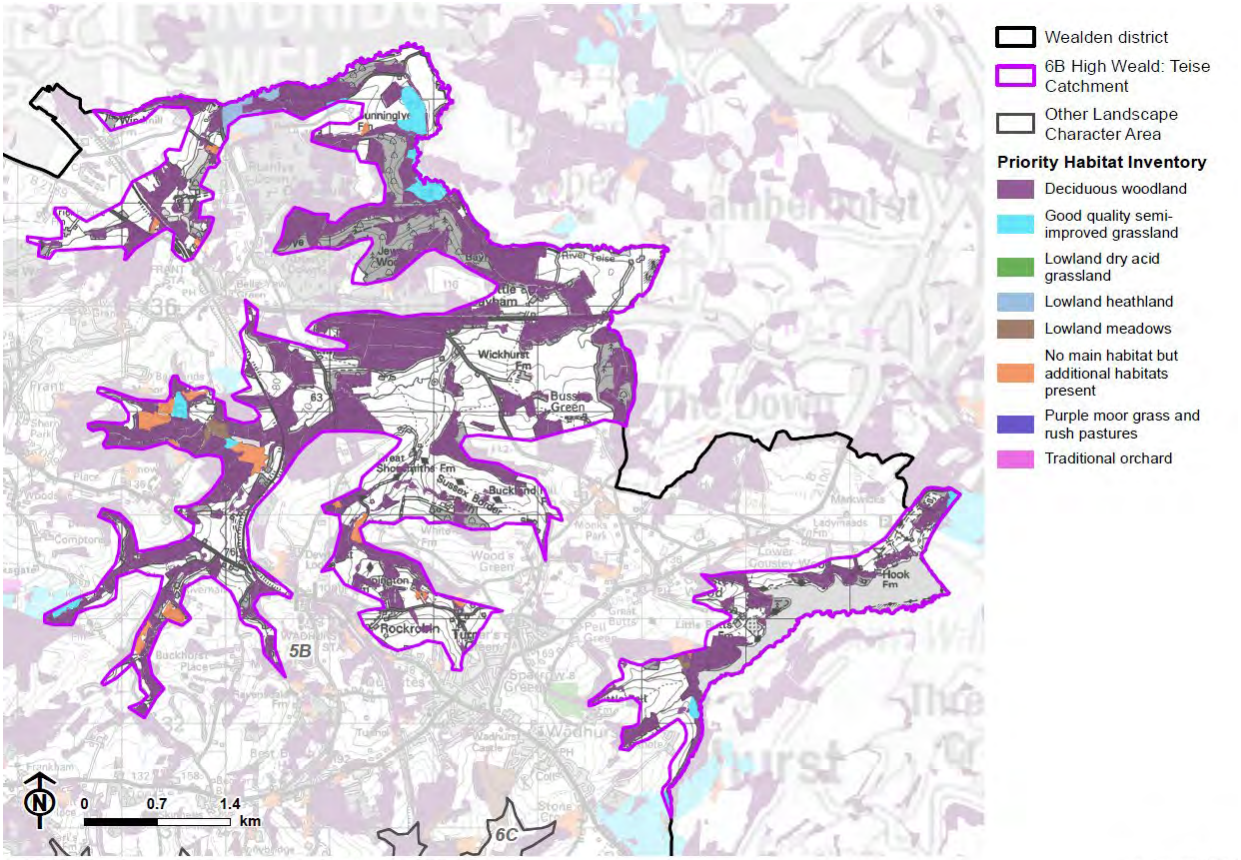


Woodland lining the winding Bartley Mills Road



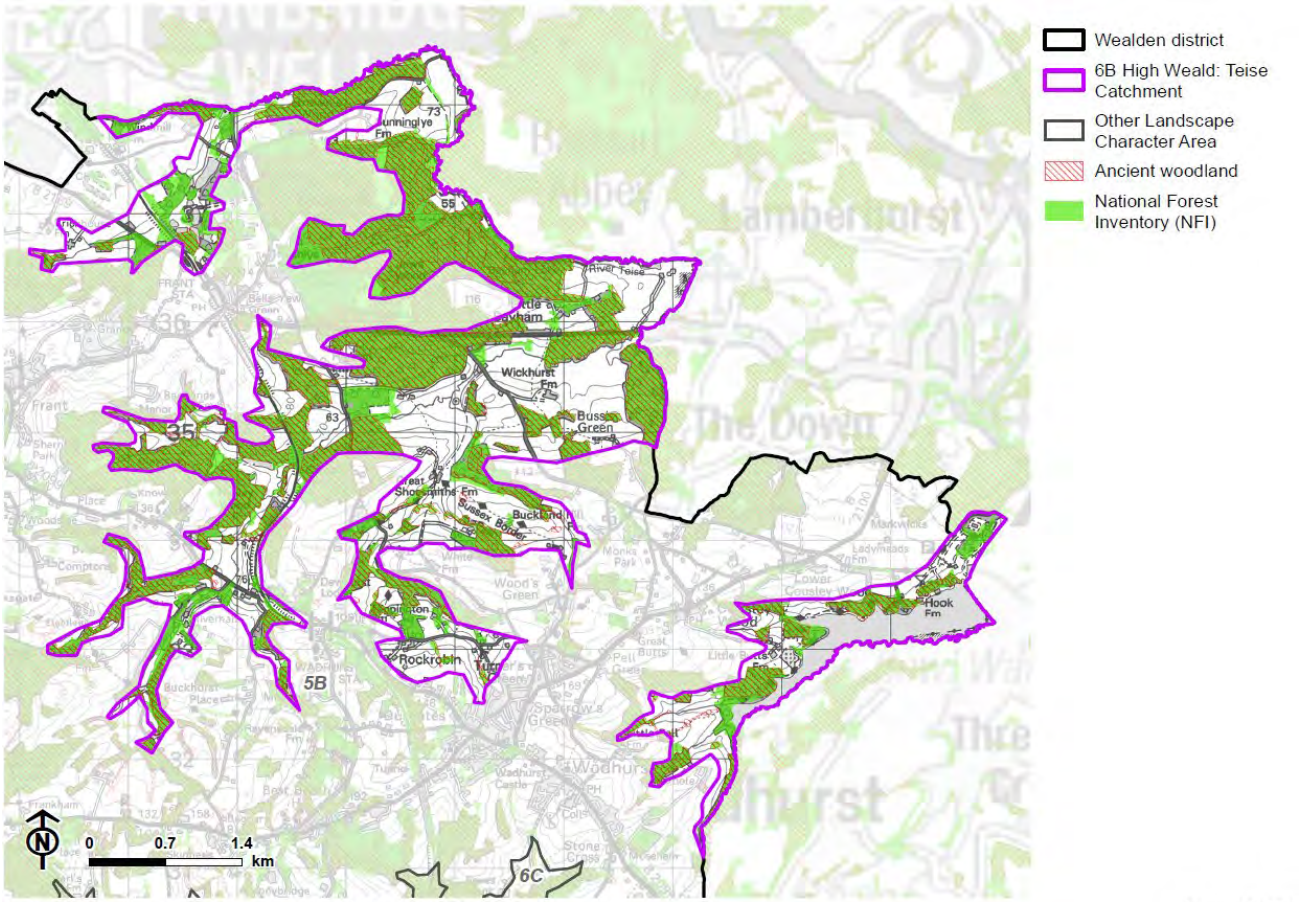
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Nature conservation designations



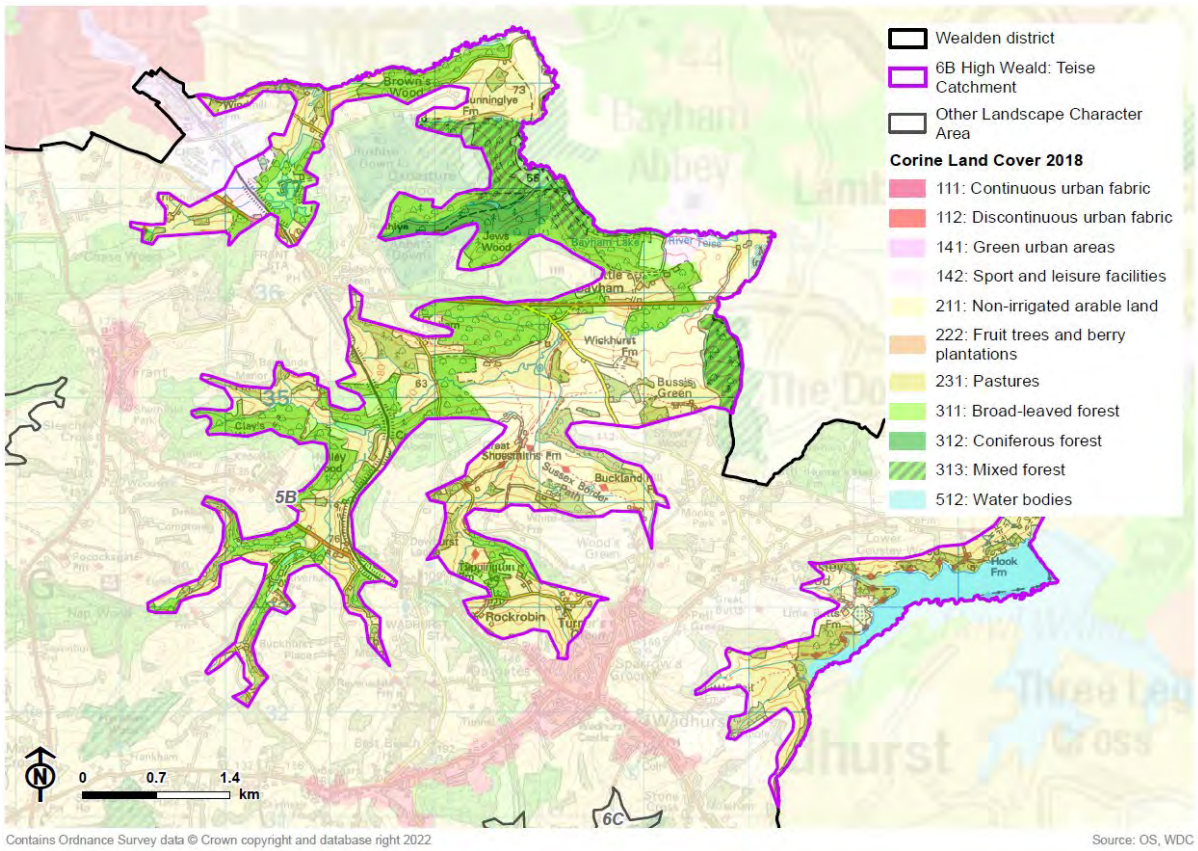
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Priority habitat coverage



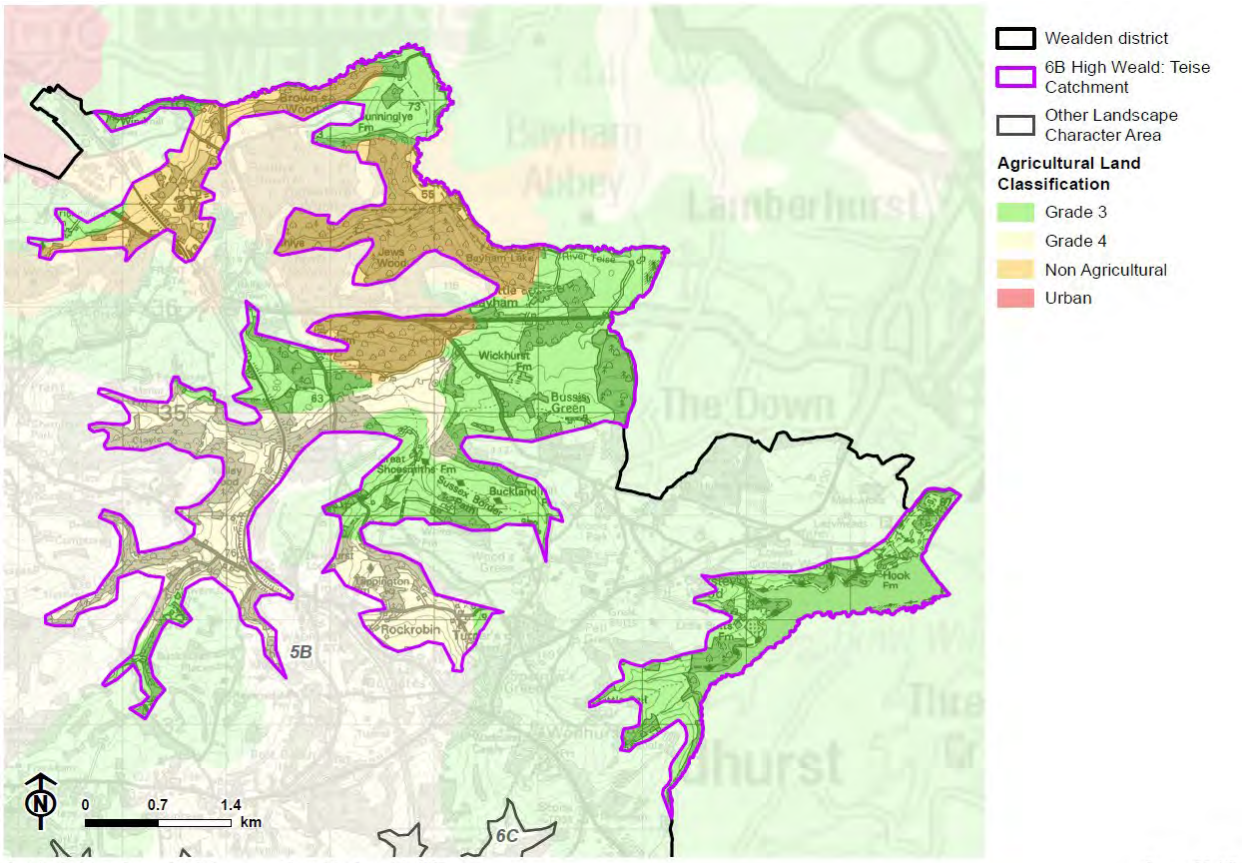
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Woodland coverage



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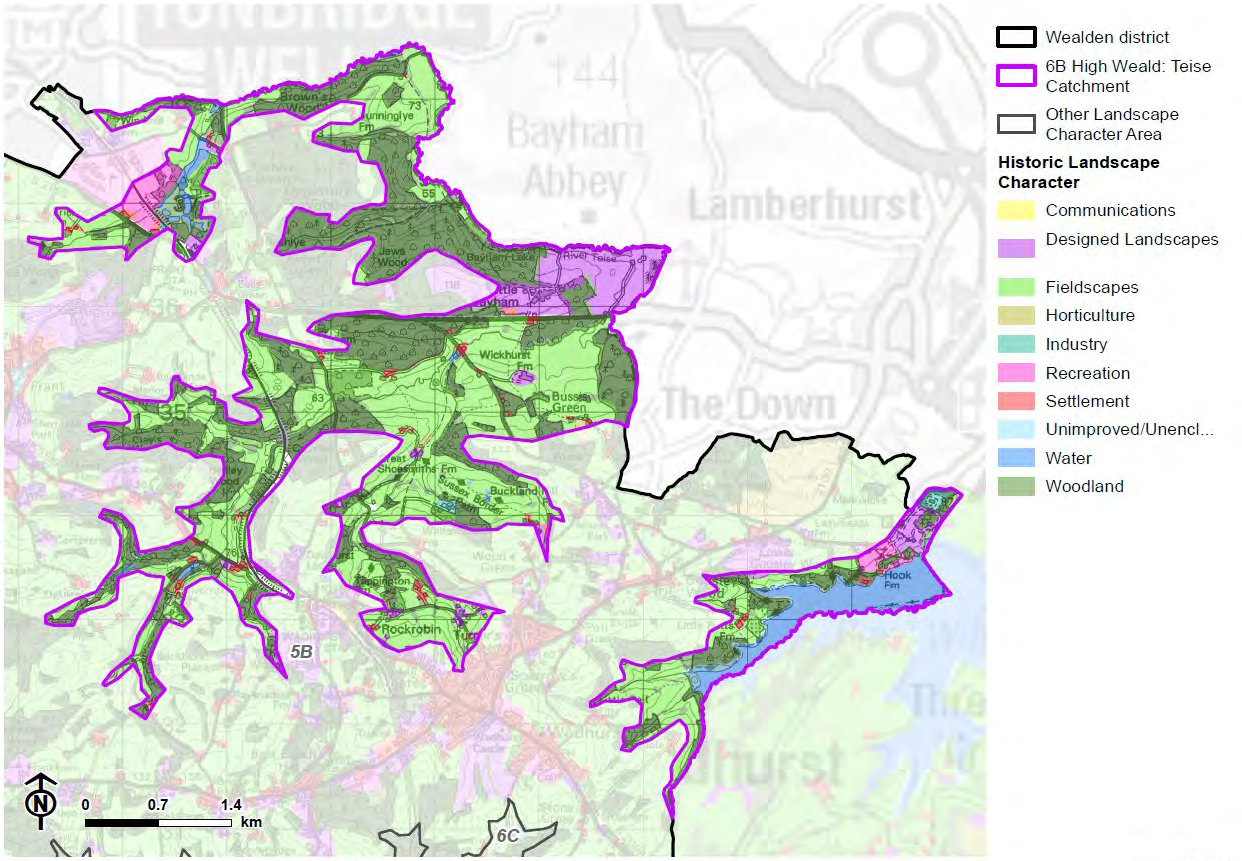
Landcover types (CORINE Land cover inventory 2018)



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Source: OS, NE

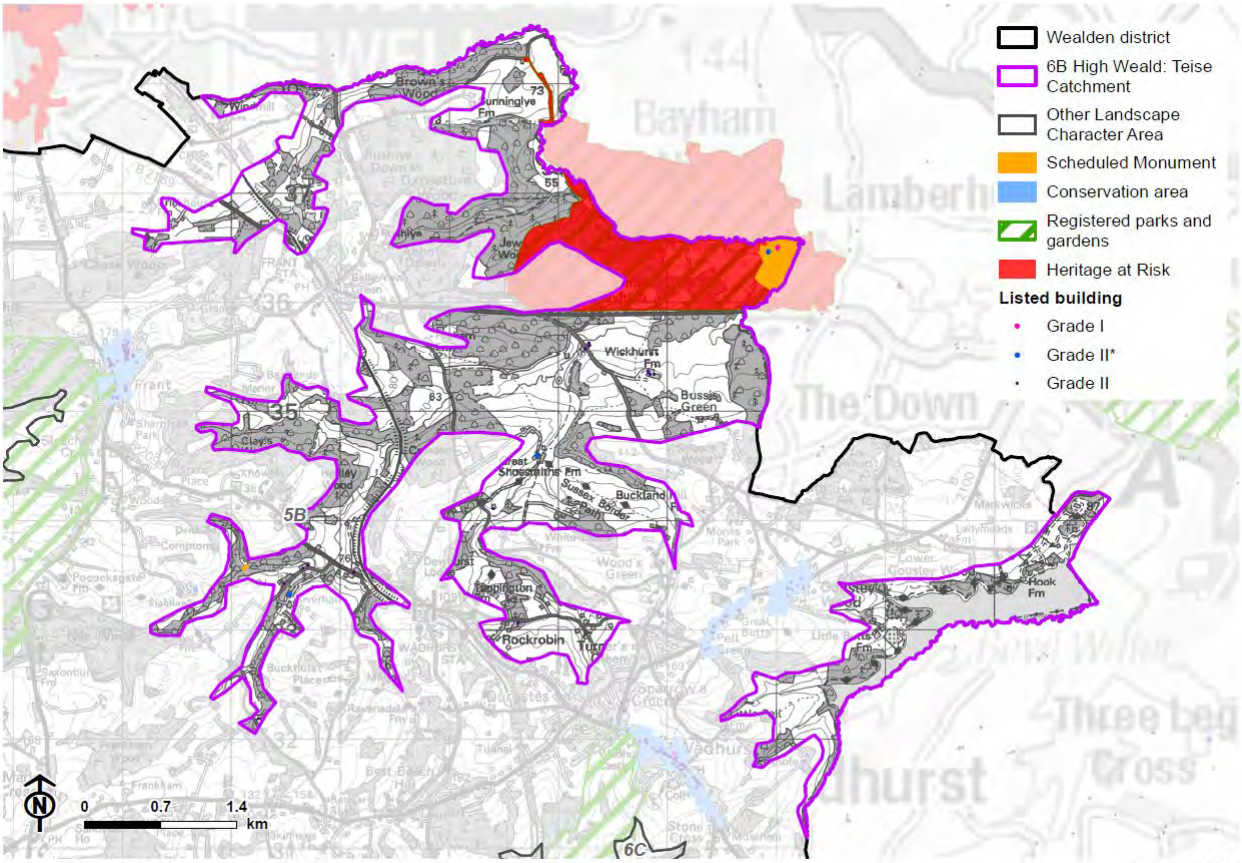
Agricultural Land Classification



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Source: OS, WDC

Historic Landscape Characterisation



Natural heritage designations

Landscape qualities

The following features and characteristics are particularly valued for their contribution to character and for the ecosystem services they provide:

- The distinctive landform of ridges and valleys associated with the River Teise and its many tributaries provide topographical interest to the landscape, creating a sense of place.
- The River Teise and its tributary streams support wetland habitats in the valleys, increasing biodiversity. Bewl Water reservoir supplies water to the Medway towns, Thanet and Hastings.
- The extensive areas of woodland (with a high proportion of ancient woodland), shaws, trees and mature hedgerow boundaries that provide a sense of place, as well as habitat connectivity to support biodiversity, carbon sequestration and the regulation of temperatures.
- Coppicing of woodland offers opportunities for timber provision and a potential source of local fuel and building materials.
- Semi-natural habitats including deciduous woodland, lowland meadows and semi-improved grassland support a range of important flora and fauna. They allow soil stabilisation/retention, support biodiversity, have a higher soil carbon content than cultivated habitats, and provide nutrient filtration which enhances water quality.
- The small-scale medieval field patterns, with sinuous hedgerow boundaries provide a sense of place and history.
- The historic settlement pattern of dispersed cottages and farmsteads linked by winding hedged lanes, provide a connection to history, cultural identity and aesthetic value.
- The vernacular architecture of brick and oak which reflects the locally available materials, provides a sense of place and accords with a distinctive architectural colour palette.

- Bayham Abbey and the surrounding parkland landscape contribute to the time depth of the landscape, history and cultural dimension of the LCA.
- Bewl Water offers water and land-based recreational opportunities, including public rights of way, that contribute to people's physical health and mental well-being.
- The harmonious small-scale landscape pattern of low density, dispersed settlement, mixed farms and dense woodland contribute to the strong scenic quality of the area, reflected in its designation as an AONB.
- The strong sense of tranquillity and experience of dark night skies throughout the LCA.

Forces for change

- Climate change leading to increasing periods of drought and increased temperatures, as a result of climate change, may result in a change in water levels and stream flows and may lead to options required for water management at Bewl Water reservoir and its associated infrastructure.
- Decreased water quality resulting from sediment run-off after ploughing and increased use and accumulation of herbicides, pesticides and fertilisers associated with industrial arable farming.
- Climate change and changing land management practices leading to potential changes in woodland and tree species composition. Increases in severe gales could result in wind damage to woodland edges. Ancient woodlands may be particularly susceptible to damage from storms and drought.
- Climate change and changing land management practices leading to potential changes in flora and an increase in pests and diseases, such as sweet chestnut blight, acute oak decline and ash dieback.
- The former replacement of broadleaved woodland with conifer and mixed plantations and changes to woodland management, including a reduction in traditional coppicing, which has resulted in a change to the species composition, continuity and density of woodland and influenced the landscape pattern and texture.
- A decline in mixed farming leading to the loss of pasture and meadows with their associated mature and historic hedges and influencing the character of the landscape.
- Degradation of the historic parkland at Bayham Abbey, which is on the heritage at risk register. Maturing parkland trees which are vulnerable to pathogens and limit their ability to regenerate
- Expansion of urban areas and infrastructure has the potential to affect the area's dark skies and sense of remoteness and tranquillity.
- Increased number of walkers, horses, bicycles and 4-wheel drives eroding unsurfaced routes including public rights of way, byways and narrow lanes, damaging vegetation on verges or boundary banks, and impacting the sense of tranquillity and rurality. Increased road traffic has the potential to reduce the sense of tranquillity, and may result in pressure for highway works that are unsympathetic to historic routeways.
- Pressures for additional recreational infrastructure at Bewl Water that is not sympathetic to local landscape character and sensitive habitats.
- Pressure for renewable energy infrastructure (e.g. wind turbines on elevated ridges and solar farms on south facing slopes or in open areas, and associated grid connections), which would reduce rural character and impact views.

Landscape Guidelines

These guidelines recommend how to ensure future change respects local character and should be read in conjunction with the objectives and proposed actions of the High Weald AONB Management Plan:

- Maintain constant water levels when/where possible (monitoring levels, especially as periods of drought increase).
- Monitor water quality in the river and streams. Minimise water pollution from agriculture through sensitive land management practices, including regenerative agricultural systems such as no or minimal till, holistic grazing, reduction or removal of chemical inputs, cover crops and restoration of buffer strips along watercourses and field ponds to minimise run off.
- Protect and maintain wetland habitats, in line with the aims of the Bewl Water Biodiversity Opportunity Area.
- Encourage active and appropriate management of woodland to ensure a diverse species and age structure by thinning and coppicing as necessary to support ground flora, avoiding damage from large machinery. No management is recommended for gill woodlands, as these habitats are too sensitive and insufficiently understood.
- Encourage natural regeneration to create woodland with native species characteristic of the area.
- As climatic conditions change, plant suitable species or encourage natural regeneration to create climate resistant woodland.
- Safeguard ancient woodland and protect and enhance vulnerable woodland habitats, including gill woodlands and wet woodlands, for the benefit of biodiversity.
- Encourage the gradual restructuring of coniferous woodland to woodlands with a high broadleaved content, particularly for plantations on ancient woodland sites (PAWs).
- Support a sustainable woodland industry, encouraging small-scale operations using traditional techniques including coppicing, to develop new markets and products for locally sourced timber, and to maintain carbon sequestration.
- Encourage the conservation of historic field patterns and boundary features. Protect and manage the existing hedgerow network, and plan for the restoration of, and linkages between, hedgerows, including establishing hedgerow oaks, to maintain habitat corridors and to retain the medieval field pattern typical of the High Weald. Replace post and wire fencing where appropriate.
- Maintain and restore links between woodland, other woodland habitats (such as hedgerows and parkland) and species-rich habitats such as grasslands. This will create a robust network of woodland and open semi-natural habitats, which support biodiversity and contribute to an integrated green infrastructure network.
- Maintain the mixed farmed character of the area, while increasing permanent pasture (aiming to convert arable land to permanent pasture or to regenerative forms of agriculture which combine arable, livestock and agro-forestry uses and creating grassland margins to arable fields) managing the number and grazing regimes of livestock to maintain and increase biodiversity.
- Monitor potential changes in flora and increase in pests and diseases, including the spread of invasive plants and animals in water courses and woodlands.
- Protect and enhance the historic designed landscapes and features of archaeological importance at Bayham Abbey. Ensure implementation of a joint approach to conservation priorities, restrict further arable conversion and put in place a programme of parkland tree planting where appropriate.
- Limit the amount and scale of development in rural areas, protecting the existing dispersed settlement pattern of cottages and farmsteads.
- Ensure new building reinforces and responds to local character in its scale, layout and design, reflecting the local vernacular in use of materials. Developments should draw on the principles contained within the High Weald AONB design guidance, High Weald AONB ‘Guidance on the selection and use of colour in development’ and objectives of the High Weald AONB Management Plan.
- Maintain the historic network of routeways, ensuring new roads or ‘upgrades’ take account of their rural context and avoid over-engineered features and/or the introduction of lighting into dark areas. Maintain the trees and species-rich grasslands on road verges.
- Improve recreational access and infrastructure, whilst minimising disturbance of sensitive habitats, in line with the aims of the Bewl Water Biodiversity Opportunity Area. Minimise adverse effects of recreational infrastructure on the sense of remoteness and tranquillity.
- Restore and establish new hedgerows and shaws to create habitat connectivity and restore historic landscape character. Reduce the visual impact of transmission lines, in line with the Beautiful Boundaries project with the National Grid’s Landscape Enhancement Initiative.
- Ensure any renewable energy generation is compatible with the guidance above and is in scale with the landscape where possible. Where larger scale renewable energy development is justified to meet climate change objectives any harm to the landscape

should be compensated for by landscape-scale enhancements of the surrounding area. Electricity infrastructure associated with renewable energy generation should be efficiently planned to minimise the number of lines required, routeing in accordance with the Holford Rules[2].

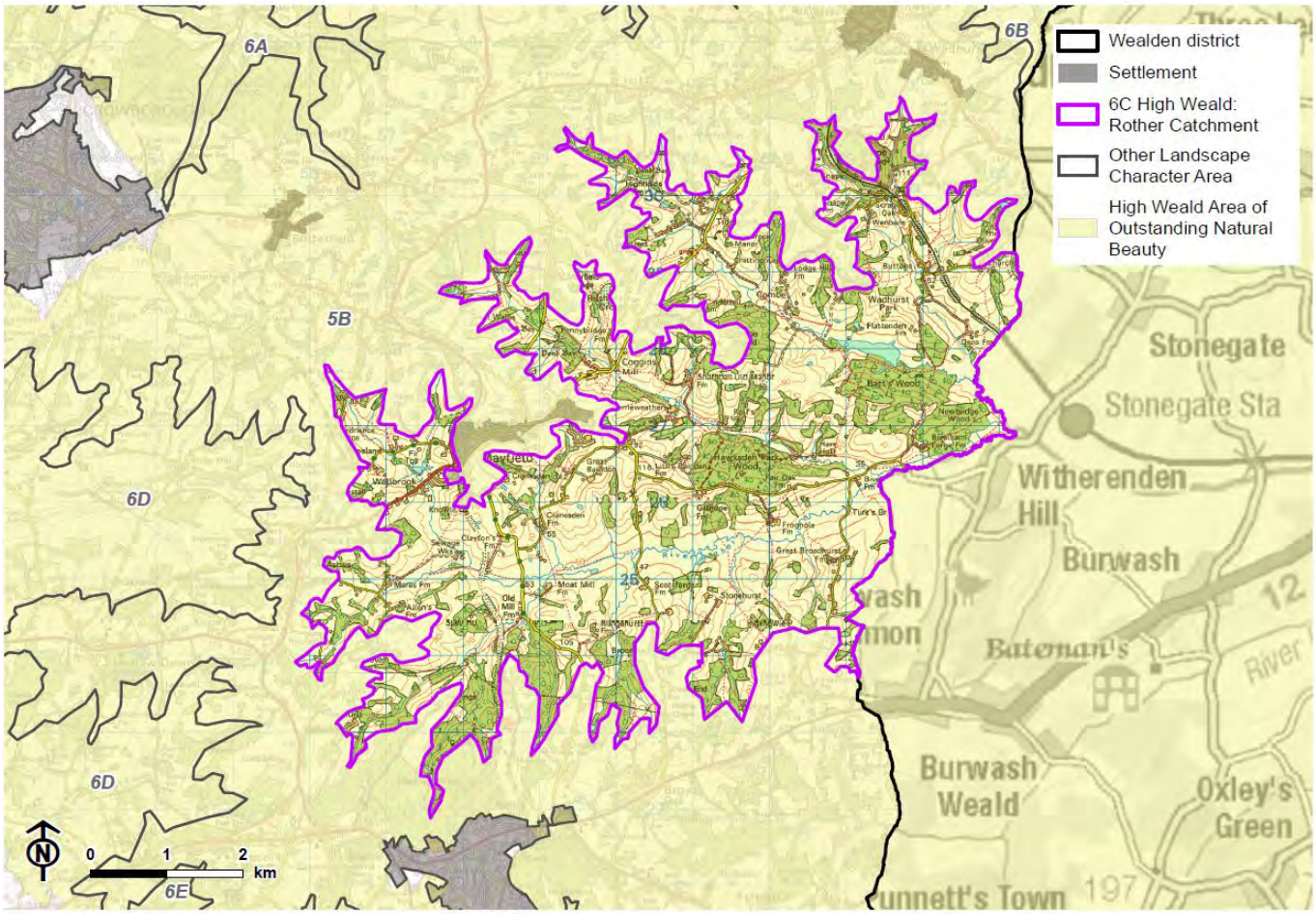
- Maintain the strong scenic qualities of the landscape and its sense of remoteness, tranquillity and experience of dark skies.

[2] https://www.nationalgrid.com/sites/default/files/documents/13795-The%20Holford%20Rules.pdf

LCA 6C: High Weald – Rother Catchment

Location and summary

The High Weald - Rother Catchment is a rolling landscape of ridges and valleys containing the River Rother and its tributaries that drain eastwards from the Central High Weald into Rother District. A heavily wooded landscape with a pattern of small irregular fields (including ancient fields and assarts) with scattered cottages and farmsteads, many of which are historic. The entirety of the LCA lies within the High Weald AONB.



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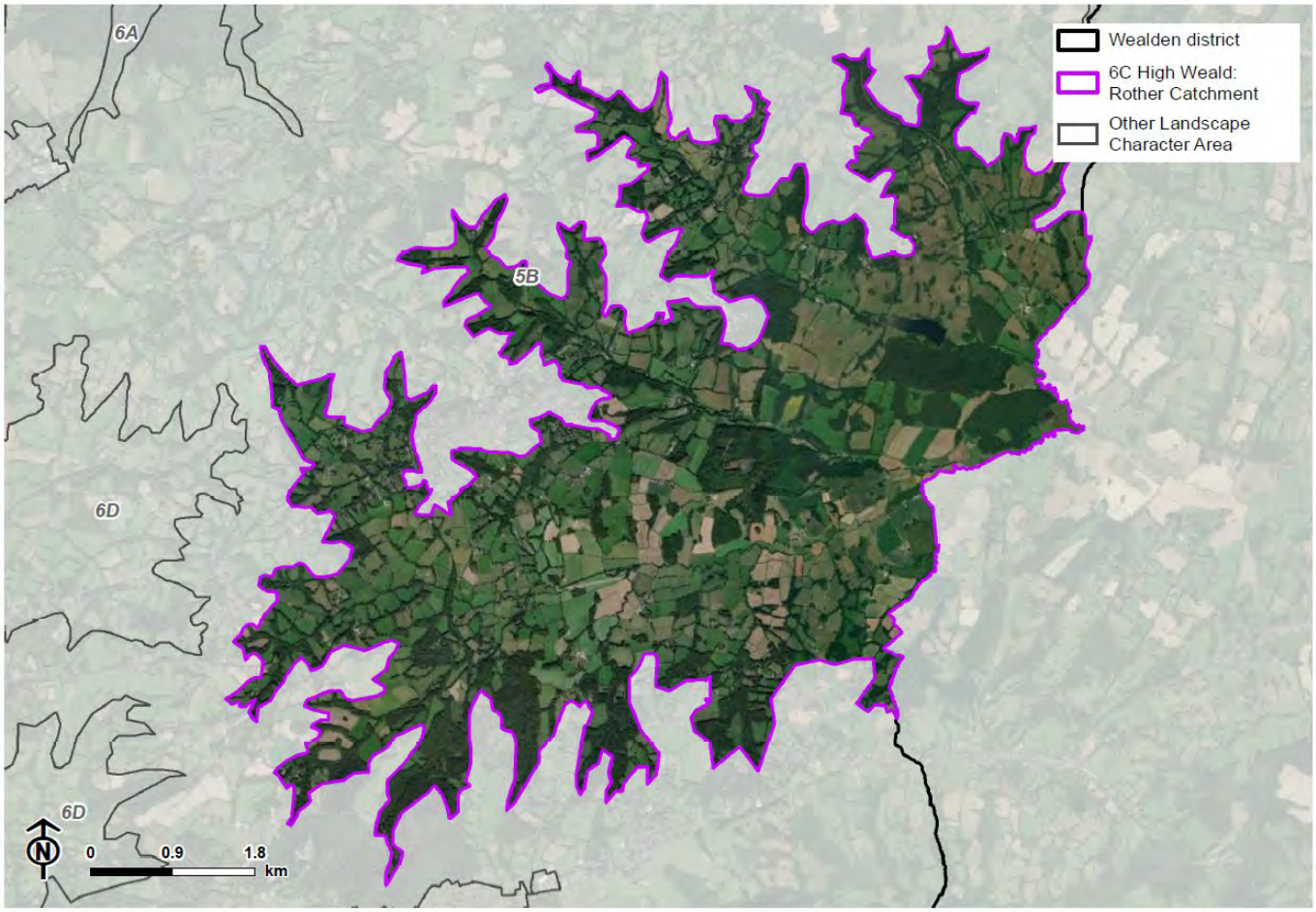


Typical view of the High Weald - Rother Catchment

Key Characteristics

- The underlying geology of interbedded sandstones, siltstones and mudstones give rise to a rolling landscape of ridges, spurs and incised valleys associated with the River Rother and its tributaries, which drain eastwards from the Central High Weald. The incised and ridged landform is a defining component of character of the High Weald AONB.
- A well-wooded wooded landscape, which is a defining component of character of the High Weald AONB. The landscape has a mosaic of shaws, linear gill woods and larger broadleaved woodlands (most recorded as priority habitats). Oak, chestnut, ash and hornbeam are the predominant species.
- Many woodlands are recorded as being of ancient origin with swaths of wildflowers providing seasonal displays.
- Pockets of priority habitat lowland meadows and semi-improved grasslands are located along watercourses, including the Paines Cross Meadow SSSI which is a wet fen meadow habitat that supports a variety of invertebrate species.
- The underlying silt-loam soils support pasture with some arable cropping. Fields are bound by a strong network of hedges and shaws, some reinforced by post and wire fencing.
- A distinctive medieval field pattern of small irregular fields, often derived from assarting (formed from cleared areas of woodland), which is a defining component of character of the High Weald AONB, are interspersed with medium to large fields derived from piecemeal enclosure, often on upper slopes. Larger scale arable fields, evidence of field amalgamation, become more prominent as the valley widens in the east of the LCA.
- The area is rich in relics of the Wealden iron industry including hammer ponds (constructed to power forge hammers), coppiced woodland managed for charcoal and the 16th century Mayfield and Woolbridge furnaces (Scheduled Monuments).
- The distinctive conical shape of historic oast houses, used for the drying of hops, are a visible reminder of the historic importance of the hop industry in the area.
- A strongly dispersed settlement pattern, which is a defining component of character of the High Weald AONB, with scattered historic farmsteads and cottages and occasional hamlets connected by winding rural lanes lined with hedgerows and mature trees.
- Ribbon development extends from larger settlements outside the LCA such as Mayfield along the northern boundary of the LCA.
- The local vernacular architecture comprises red brick laid as Flemish bond with blued brick ends, red tiled roofs and tile hung upper stories. The use of oak timber framing, sandstone and flint reflect locally sourced materials.
- The interconnected public rights of way network provide access to, and enjoyment of, the landscape.
- The dense woodland and tree-lined lanes results in an enclosed landscape. There are with some glimpsed views across the valley floors and to skyline features within ridgeline settlements located outside the LCA, such as Mayfield.

- The contrasting landscape pattern of pastoral and arable fields combined with dense areas of mixed woodland gives rise to a varied landscape colour palette.
- The small-scale fields, rolling landform, wooded slopes interconnected by hedgerows and general absence of main roads and large settlements results in a strong sense of remoteness and tranquillity, particularly in the east of the area and within the larger woodlands.



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Key Influences

Landform and drainage

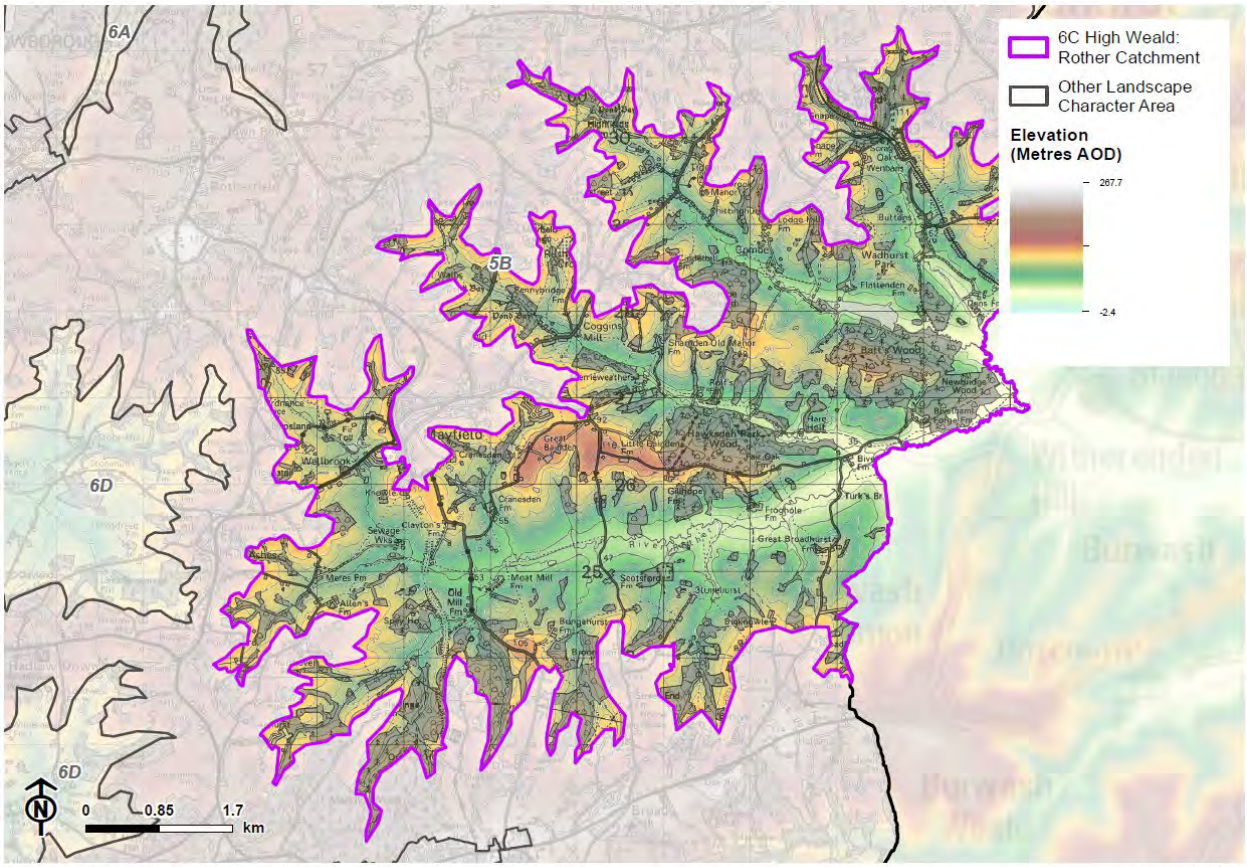
The High Weald - Rother Catchment is a rolling landscape of ridges, spurs and valleys associated with the River Rother and its tributaries, ranging from 120m AOD on ridges to 40m along the floors of the valleys. The River Rother drains eastwards, its water courses flowing within narrow floodplains. The lower lying reaches of the river valley in the east of the LCA become broader and more open.

Wadhurst Park Lake, which is fed by Tide Brook, a tributary of the River Rother, is located in the north of the LCA. A number of small farm ponds and hammer ponds are dispersed across the area.

Bedrock and superficial geology

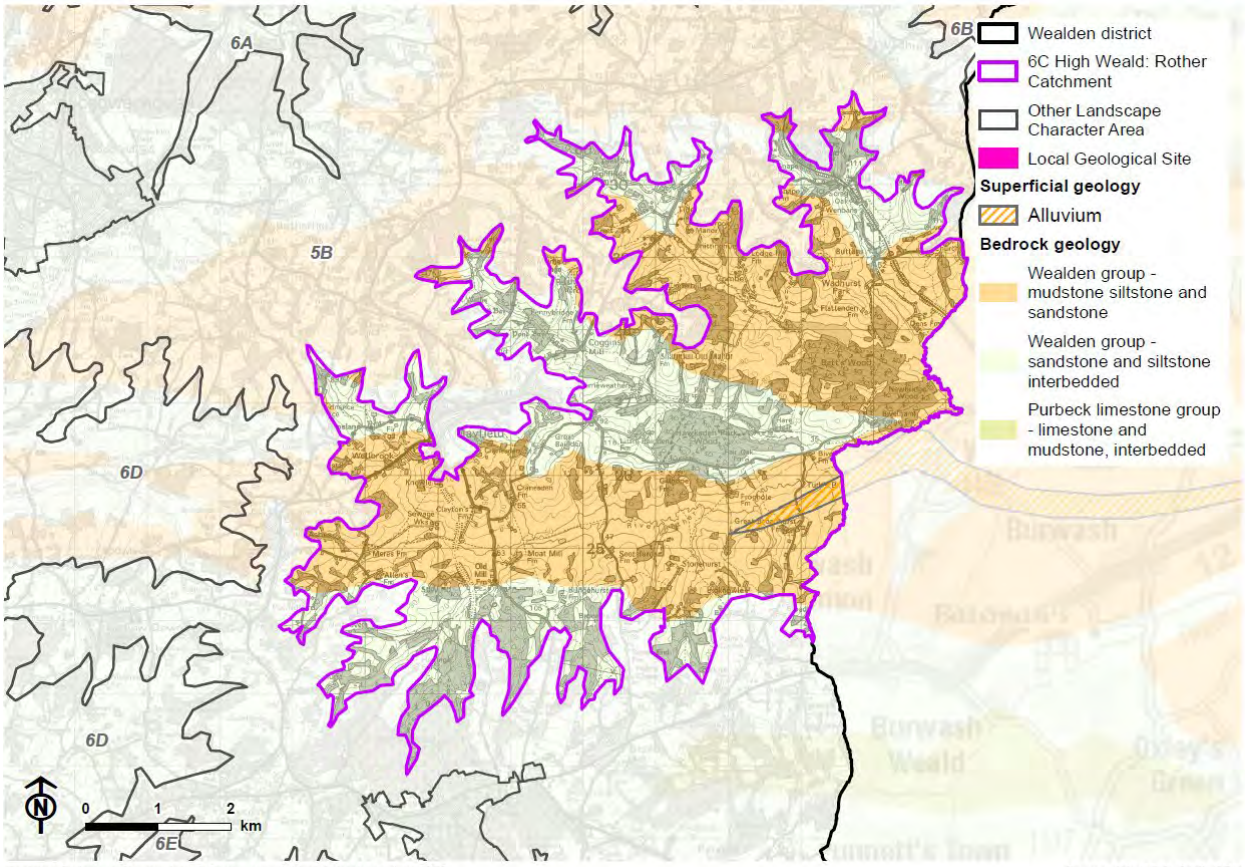
The area is underlain by alternating bands of interbedded sandstone and siltstone of the Ashdown Formation and Tunbridge Wells Sand Formation, and mudstone of the Wadhurst Clay Formation. These sedimentary rocks were laid down in the Cretaceous period by periodic inundation of floodplains and deltas. Superficial deposits include alluvium, which relate to the river corridors.

The varied geology gives rise to an alternating soil structure, including medium to light silty soils with some heavier clay soils in the lower-lying valleys. In the agricultural land classification, the land is graded grade 3 (‘good to moderate’) and grade 4 (‘poor’), where heavier clay soils are prominent along river valleys and watercourses.



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Source: OS, WDC

Landform and drainage



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Source: OS, WDC, BGS, BRC

Bedrock and superficial geology

Semi-natural habitats

Priority habitat deciduous woodland is found across the LCA, along with fragmented areas of good quality semi-improved grassland and lowland meadows. Wetland habitats are associated with the River Rother and its tributaries and with farm ponds and Wadhurst Park Lake. The lowland meadow at Paines Cross Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) is a regionally unique habitat due to the presence of wet fen meadow, which supports a variety of invertebrates. Many of the woods and gill woods are designated as Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) including Butcher's Wood and Cranesden Gill Complex.

The Rother, Brede and Tillingham Woods Biodiversity Opportunity Area (BOA) covers part of the LCA and is generally located along the floodplain. BOAs are priority areas for the enhancement, restoration and creation of priority habitats, specifically wetlands, meadows and woodland as relevant to this BOA.



View overlooking rolling valley with wooded backdrop

Landcover

Landcover is predominantly pasture, with some discrete areas of arable land interspersed with broadleaved and mixed woodland. Urban development extends into the north-west of the LCA from Mayfield, located within the adjoining LCA 5B: High Weald - Central.

Historic landscape

The High Weald - Rother Catchment is part of the High Weald's ancient countryside, the dispersed settlement pattern and irregular shaped fields, with strong hedgerow networks, are typical of the medieval period and the landscape within this LCA represents one of the best surviving medieval landscapes in northern Europe. Evidence of the transhumance movement, where people and animals moved seasonally to the woodlands of the High Weald, remain in the routes of the local lanes across the ridge and valley landscape. This includes a number of public rights of way which cross the LCA broadly on a north-south alignment and the minor road which passes across the north of the LCA between Tidebrook and Mayfield.

Evidence of Wealden iron working, which was prominent until the 18th century, is seen in the farm ponds and large hammer ponds, constructed to provide a sufficient head of water for forges. A number of iron-industry sites are designated as Scheduled Monuments, including the Woolbridge and Mayfield furnaces, and associated earthworks which remain visible in the landscape today. The Wadhurst Park estate, located in the north of the LCA, was expanded as a result of wealth accumulated from the iron industry. Whilst more contemporary influences have since shaped the landscape of the estate, extensive restoration works are being undertaken to restore the landscape and natural environment of the area.

Hop growing emerged as a prominent industry in the 17th century, reaching its peak in the 19th century, with fields extending along the silty slopes of the area. Numerous 19th century oast houses are scattered throughout the area. Used for the drying of hops, and typically constructed with local materials such as red bricks with tile roofs, they form distinctive conical features in the local landscape.

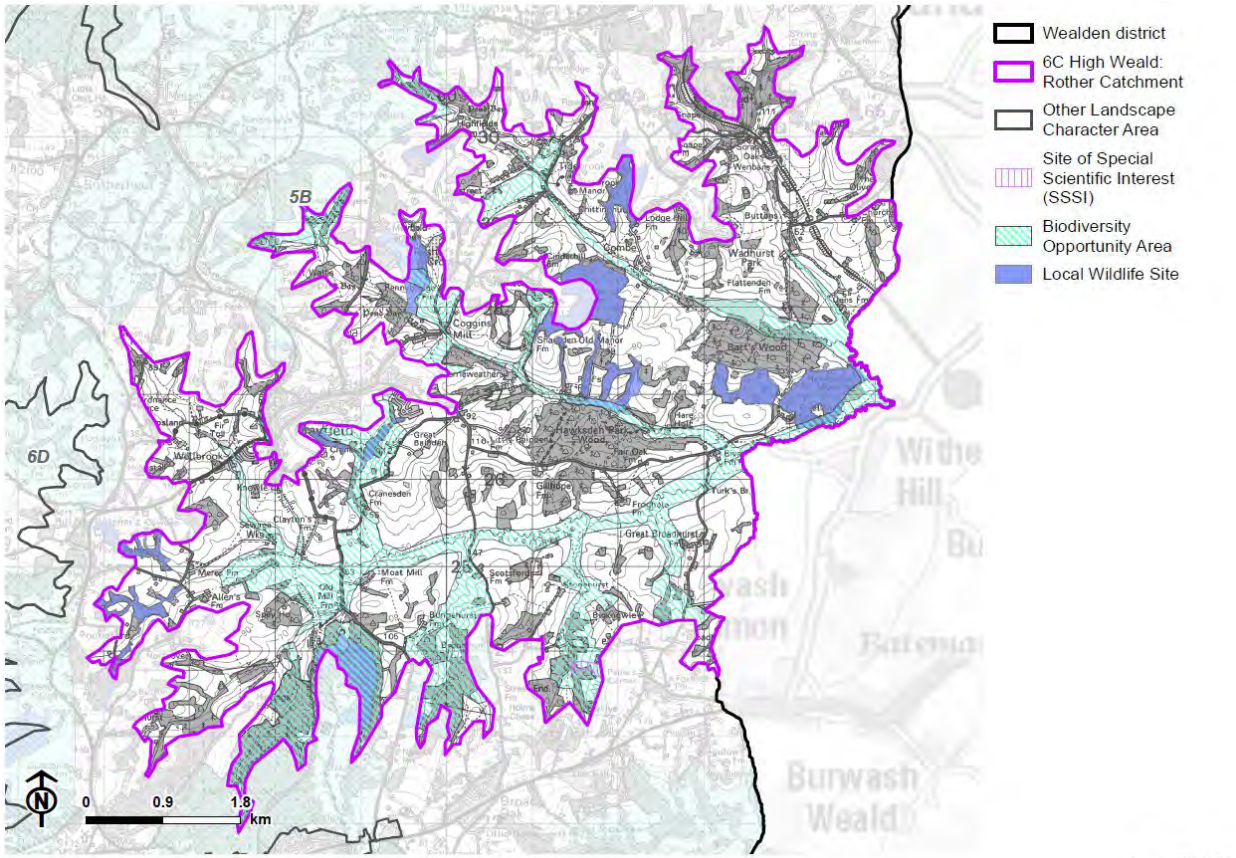
Historically, settlement comprised scattered farmsteads and individual dwellings connected by the network of rural lanes, a medieval settlement pattern that was based on small scale land holdings. The historic hamlet of Coggins Mill, which sits at a historic river crossing to the north-east of Mayfield, is designated at a Conservation Area. The formation of this medieval hamlet can be attributed to the presence of iron workings and a mill in the area.

Settlement remains much the same today, although ribbon development has encroached along the area's boundaries and extending from larger settlements located on prominent ridgelines outside of the LCA, particularly Mayfield. The availability of local materials, particularly timber, is reflected in the vernacular of brick, timber, stone, weather boarding and tile hanging.

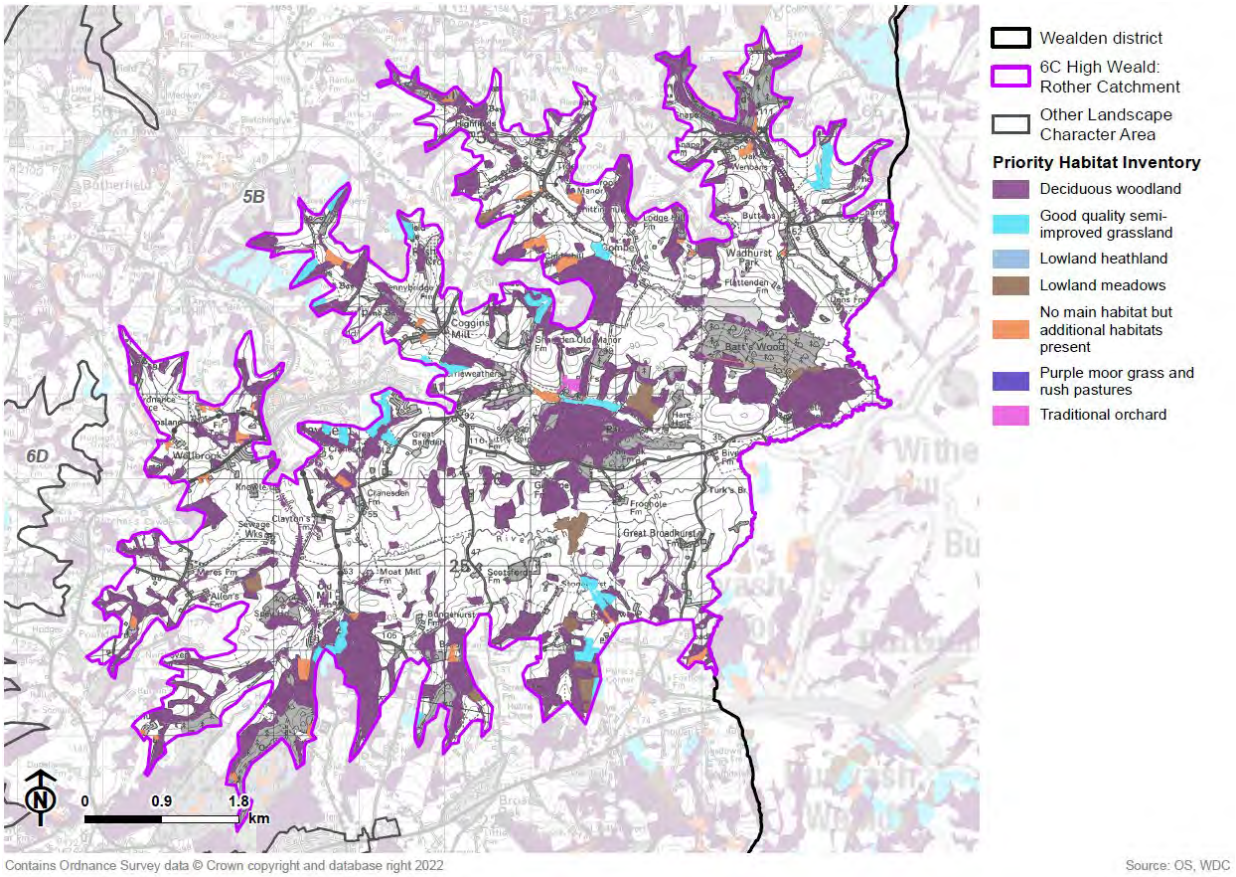
The Sussex Historic Landscape Character Assessment shows a varied pattern indicative of a typical medieval landscape, mainly derived from assarts and informal (regular and irregular) enclosure. There are areas of informal parkland located throughout the LCA, most significantly at Wadhurst Park.

Perceptual Influences

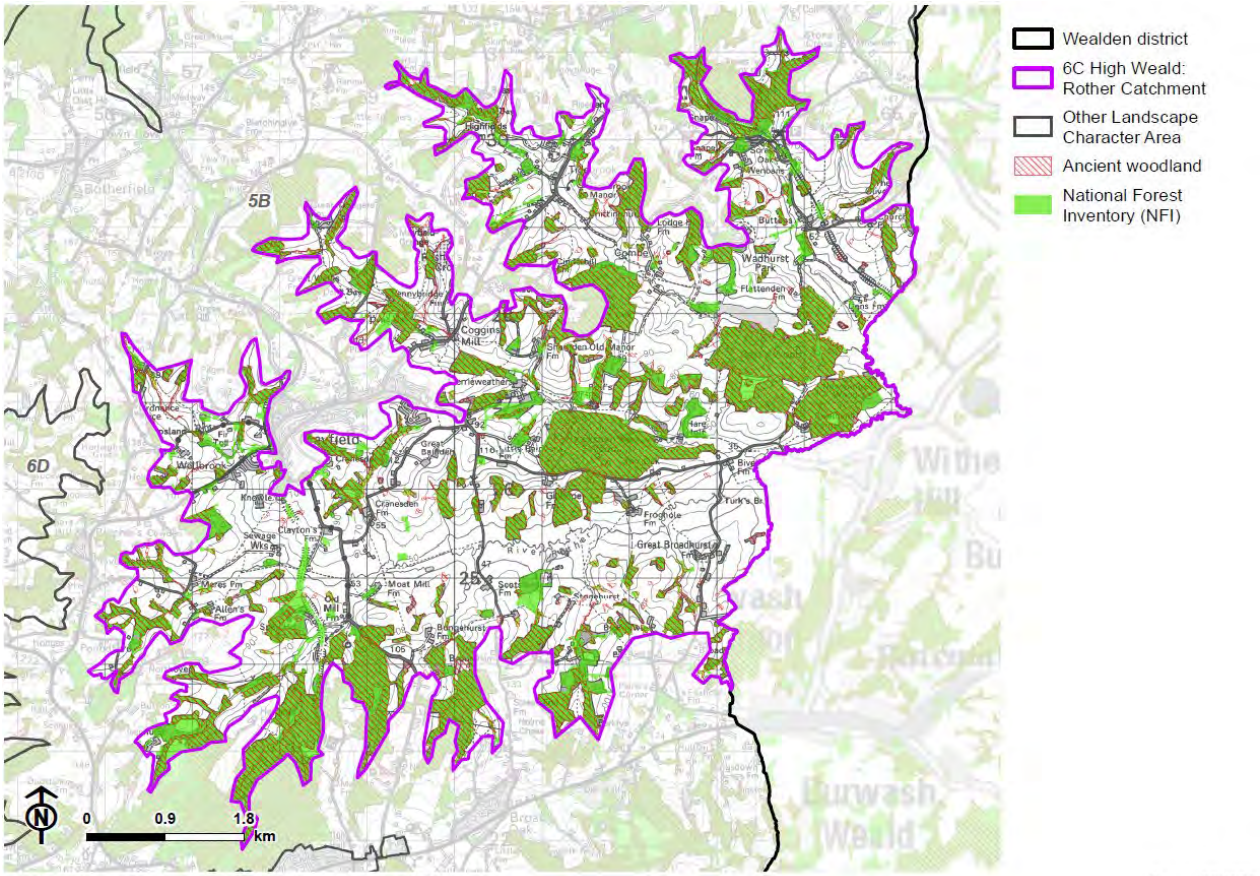
The small-scale pattern of hedged fields, tree-lined winding lanes and numerous woodlands contribute to a sense of enclosure and remoteness. with only occasional views to historic ridgeline villages outside the LCA and skyline features, such as the church tower to St Dunstan's at Mayfield. The area has a good experience of dark skies with little light pollution and consistently high levels of tranquillity throughout, with some influence of ribbon development and nearby settlement at Mayfield influencing tranquillity along the north-western boundary of the LCA.



Nature conservation designations

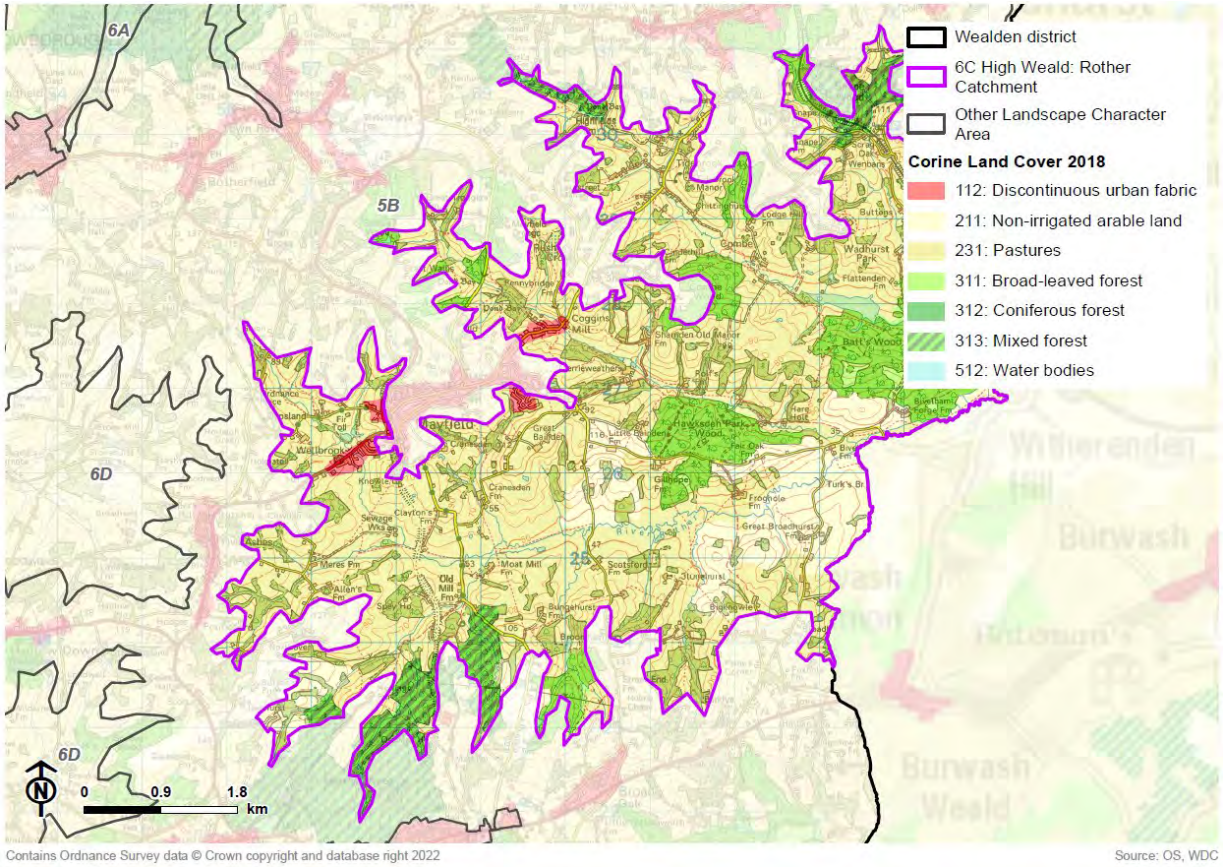


Priority habitat coverage



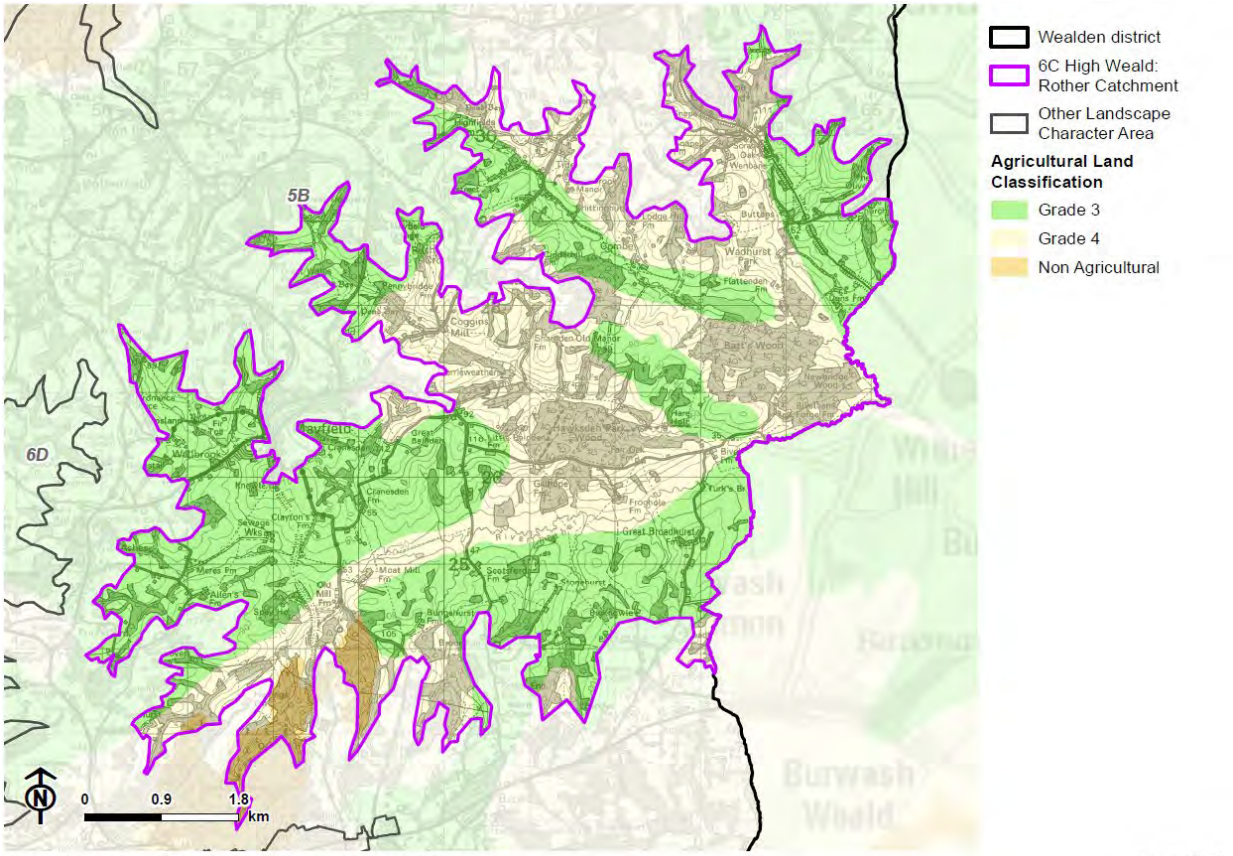
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Woodland coverage



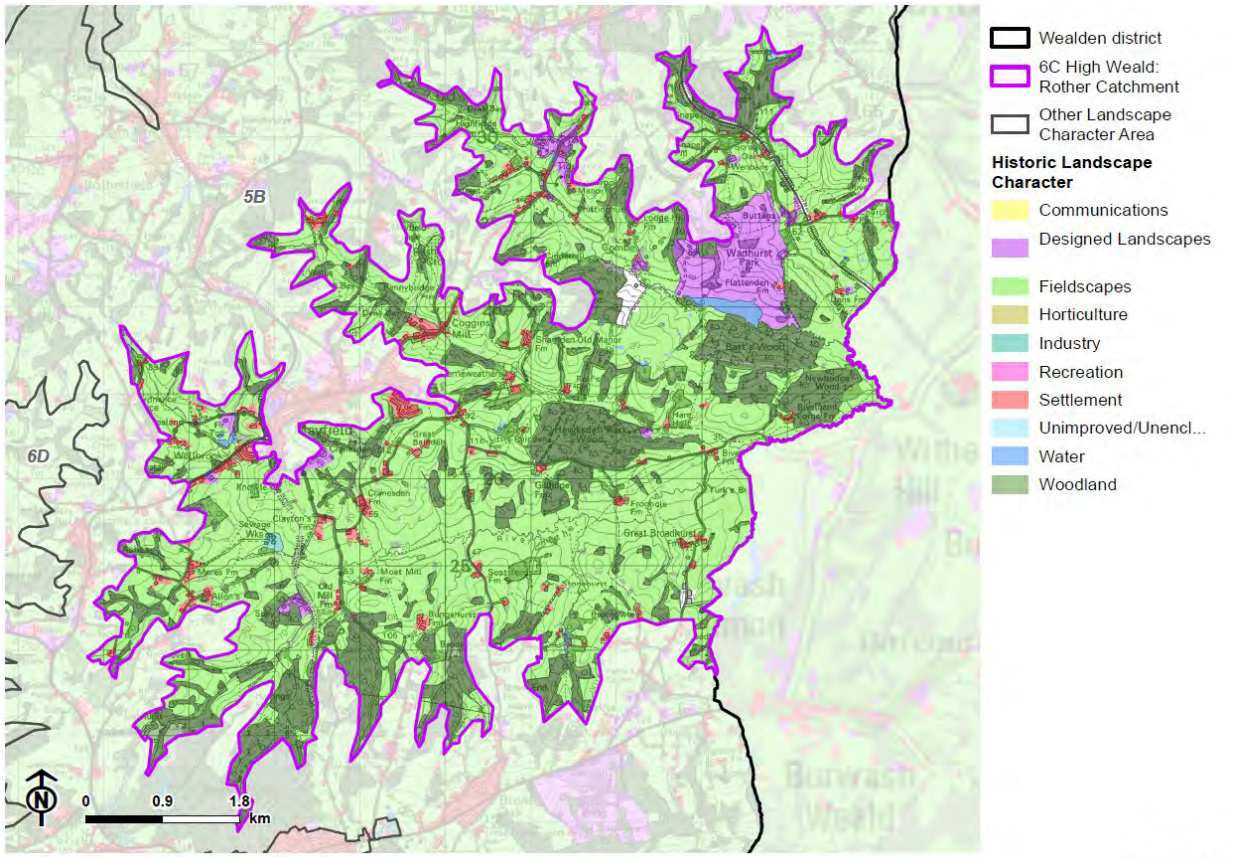
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Landcover types (CORINE Land cover inventory 2018)



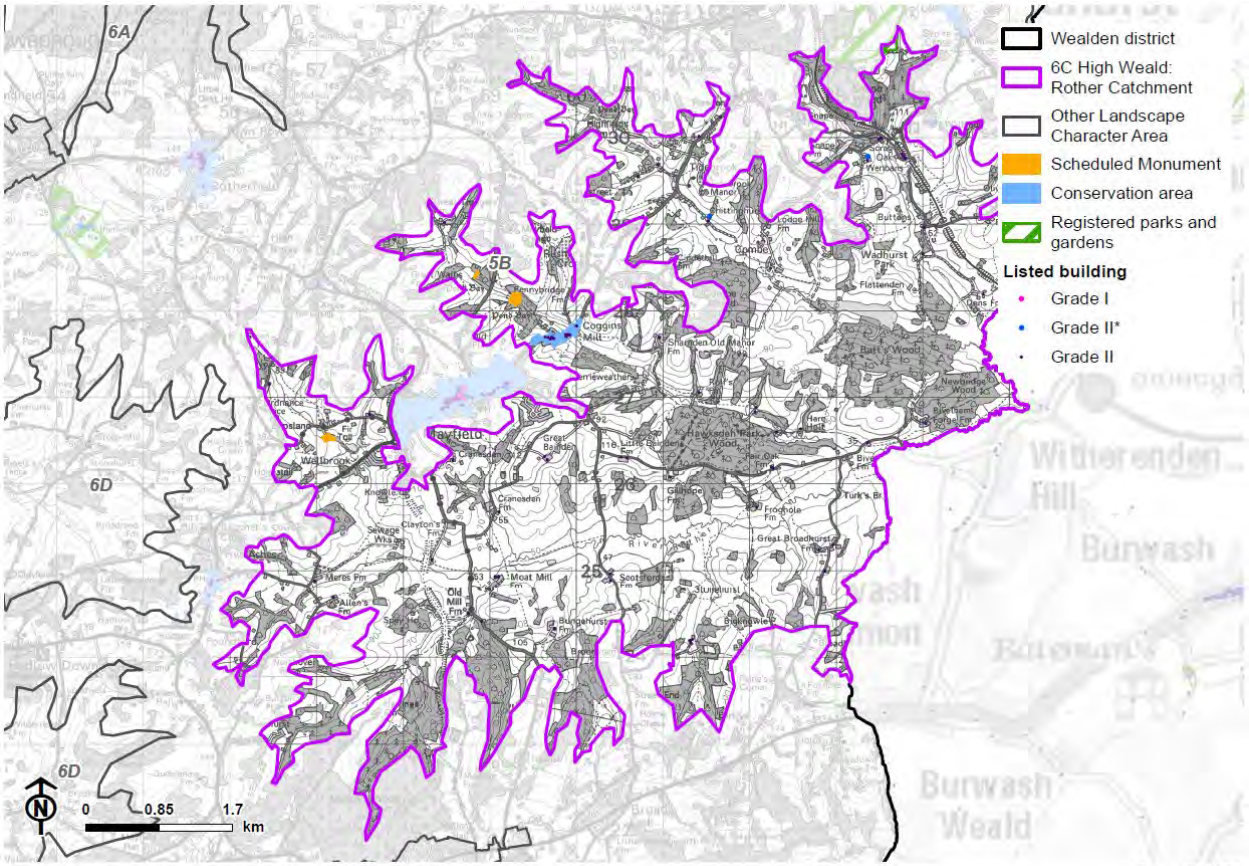
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Source: OS, NE

Agricultural Land Classification



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Historic Landscape Characterisation



Cultural heritage designations

Landscape qualities

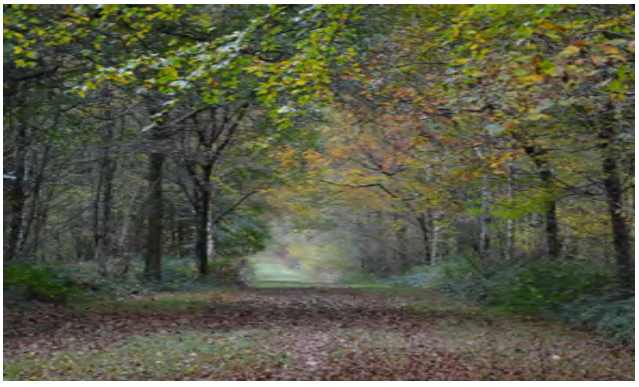
The following features and characteristics are particularly valued for their contribution to character and for the ecosystem services they provide:

- The distinctive landform of ridges, spurs and valleys associated with the River Rother provide topographical interest to the landscape, creating a sense of place.
- The numerous streams and ponds, support wetland habitats in the valleys, increasing biodiversity.
- The woodland, riparian vegetation and wetland habitats of the Rother catchment provide nutrient and sediment filtration that enhances water quality, help to regulate water flow and assist in reducing flooding during heavy rainfall.
- The extensive woodland cover (with a high proportion of ancient woodland), shaws, trees and hedgerow boundaries that provide a sense of place as well as habitat connectivity to support biodiversity, carbon sequestration and the regulation of temperatures.
- Coppicing of woodland offers opportunities for timber provision and a potential source of local fuel and building materials.
- Semi-natural habitats including deciduous woodland, grassland and wet meadows, some designated as SSSI such as the Paines Cross Meadow SSSI, support a range of important flora and fauna. They allow soil stabilisation/retention, have a higher soil carbon content than cultivated habitats, and provide nutrient filtration which enhances water quality.
- The small-scale medieval field patterns, with sinuous hedgerow boundaries which provide a sense of place and history.
- Hammer ponds, coppiced woodlands and remnants of forges provide a link to the Wealden iron industry and the distinctive conical features of oast houses which survive as remnants of the hop industry, provide a sense of place and time depth.

- The dispersed pattern of ridge-top villages (whose value is recognised through designation as Conservation Areas) linked by winding rural lanes, provide a connection to history, cultural identity, and aesthetic value.
- The vernacular of brick, oak, sandstone and flint which reflects the locally available materials, provides a sense of place and accords with a distinctive architectural colour palette.
- The extensive public rights of way network contribute to people's physical health and mental well-being.
- The harmonious small-scale landscape pattern of pastoral fields, areas of dense, often ancient, woodland and low density of settlement contribute to the strong scenic quality of the area, reflected in its designation as an AONB.
- The strong sense of tranquillity and experience of dark night skies, except in proximity to Mayfield, along the north-western boundary of the LCA.

Forces for change

- Climate change leading to increasing temperatures and periods of drought resulting in a change in water levels and stream flows, altering the species composition of wetland habitats.
- Climate change resulting in an increase in the frequency and severity of seasonal flooding in lower-lying valleys. Associated pressures to build flood management works unsympathetic to local landscape character and sensitive habitats.
- Decreased water quality resulting from sediment run-off after ploughing and increased use and accumulation of herbicides, pesticides and fertilisers associated with industrial arable farming.
- Climate change and changing land management practices leading to potential changes in woodland and tree species composition. Increases in severe gales could result in wind damage to woodland edges. Ancient woodlands may be particularly susceptible to damage from storms and drought.
- Climate change and changing land management practices resulting in potential changes in flora and increase in pests and diseases, such as acute oak decline or sweet chestnut blight.
- The former replacement of broadleaved woodland with conifer or mixed plantations along the southern boundary of the LCA, which has resulted in a change to the species composition, continuity and density of woodland and influenced the landscape pattern, texture and sense of place within localised extents of the LCA.
- A decline in mixed farming, leading to a loss of pasture and meadows with their associated mature and historic hedge structure.
- Expansion of urban areas, particularly on the boundary of the LCA, has the potential to affect the area's dark skies, and sense of remoteness and tranquillity.
- Increased number of walkers, horses, bicycles and 4-wheel drives eroding unsurfaced routes including public rights of way, byways and narrow lanes, damaging vegetation on verges or boundary banks, and impacting the sense of tranquillity and rurality. Visitors' dogs also have the potential to disturb wildlife, and cause damage to habitats from dog faeces.
- Building of intrusive modern farm buildings that draw the eye, especially in open areas.
- Potential pressure for renewable energy infrastructure (e.g. wind turbines on elevated ridges and solar farms on south facing slopes or open areas, and associated grid connections), which would reduce rural character and impact views.



Public right of way passing through broad-leaved woodland



Grazing pasture bound by hedgerow and woodland

Landscape Guidelines

These guidelines recommend how to ensure future change respects local character and should be read in conjunction with the objectives and proposed actions of the High Weald AONB Management Plan:

- Maintain constant stream levels when/where possible (monitoring water level management, especially as periods of drought increase) to retain wetland habitats.
- Address flooding issues with the implementation of natural flood management schemes (e.g. the creation of flood meadows in the floodplain, planting of woodland on slopes and installation of leaky woody dams to slow flows, in line with the aims of the Rother, Brede & Tillingham Woods Biodiversity Opportunity Area) and working with landowners to consider a holistic approach to catchment management.
- Monitor water quality in the rivers and streams. Minimise water pollution from agriculture through sensitive land management practices, including regenerative agricultural systems such as no or minimal till, holistic grazing, reduction or removal of chemical inputs, cover crops and restoration of buffer strips along watercourses and field ponds, to minimise run off in order to maintain the biodiversity of wetland features.
- Encourage active and appropriate management of woodland to ensure a diverse species and age structure by thinning, coppicing and replanting as necessary, in line with the aims of the Rother, Brede & Tillingham Woods Biodiversity Opportunity Area. Avoid damage from large machinery. No management is recommended for gill woodland as these habitats are too sensitive and insufficiently understood.
- As climatic conditions change, plant suitable species or encourage natural regeneration to create climate resistant/resilient woodland.
- Safeguard ancient woodland and protect and enhance vulnerable woodland habitats including gill woodlands and wet woodlands for the benefit of biodiversity.
- Support restoration of coniferous woodland and planted ancient woodland sites to deciduous woodland in line with objectives of the High Weald AONB Management Plan.
- Support a sustainable woodland industry, encouraging small-scale operations using traditional techniques including coppicing, to develop new markets and products for locally sourced timber, and to maintain carbon sequestration.
- Protect and manage the existing hedgerow network, and plan for the restoration of, and linkages between, hedgerows, including establishing hedgerow oaks, to maintain habitat corridors and to retain the medieval field pattern typical of the High Weald. Remove post and wire fencing where appropriate.
- Maintain and restore links between woodland, other woodland habitats (such as hedgerows and parkland) and species-rich habitats such as grasslands. This will create a robust network of woodland and open semi-natural habitats, which support biodiversity and contribute to an integrated green infrastructure network.
- Maintain and manage permanent pasture (aiming to convert arable land to permanent pasture or to regenerative forms of agriculture which combine arable, livestock and agro-forestry uses and creating grassland margins to arable fields) and manage the number and grazing regimes of livestock to maintain and increase biodiversity.
- Monitor potential changes in flora and increase in pests and diseases, including spread of invasive plants and animals in water courses and woodlands.
- Avoid changes to landform and disturbance of soils to protect the landscape character of the High Weald and the carbon sequestration function of its soils.
- Protect the remaining features related to the Wealden, Iron industry, such as hammer ponds, and the oast houses which are a reminder of the hop industry. Increase interpretation and access where appropriate to link communities with their local heritage, including opportunities for heritage trails or walks.
- Limit the amount and scale of development in rural areas, protecting the existing dispersed settlement pattern. Avoiding further ribbon development expanding from adjacent settlements to retain the separation between settlements.
- Ensure new building reinforces and responds to local character in its scale, layout and design, reflecting the local vernacular in use of materials. Developments should draw on the principles contained within the High Weald AONB design guidance, High Weald AONB ‘Guidance on the selection and use of colour in development’ and objectives of the High Weald AONB Management Plan.
- Consider use of using planting that is in character with the landscape to soften urban edges.
- Maintain the historic network of routeways, ensuring new roads or ‘upgrades’ take account of their rural context and avoid over-engineered features and/or the introduction of lighting into dark areas. Maintain the trees and species-rich grasslands on road verges.
- Restore and establish new hedgerows and shaws to create habitat connectivity and restore historic landscape character. Reduce the visual impact of transmission lines, in line with the Beautiful Boundaries project with the National Grid’s Landscape Enhancement Initiative.

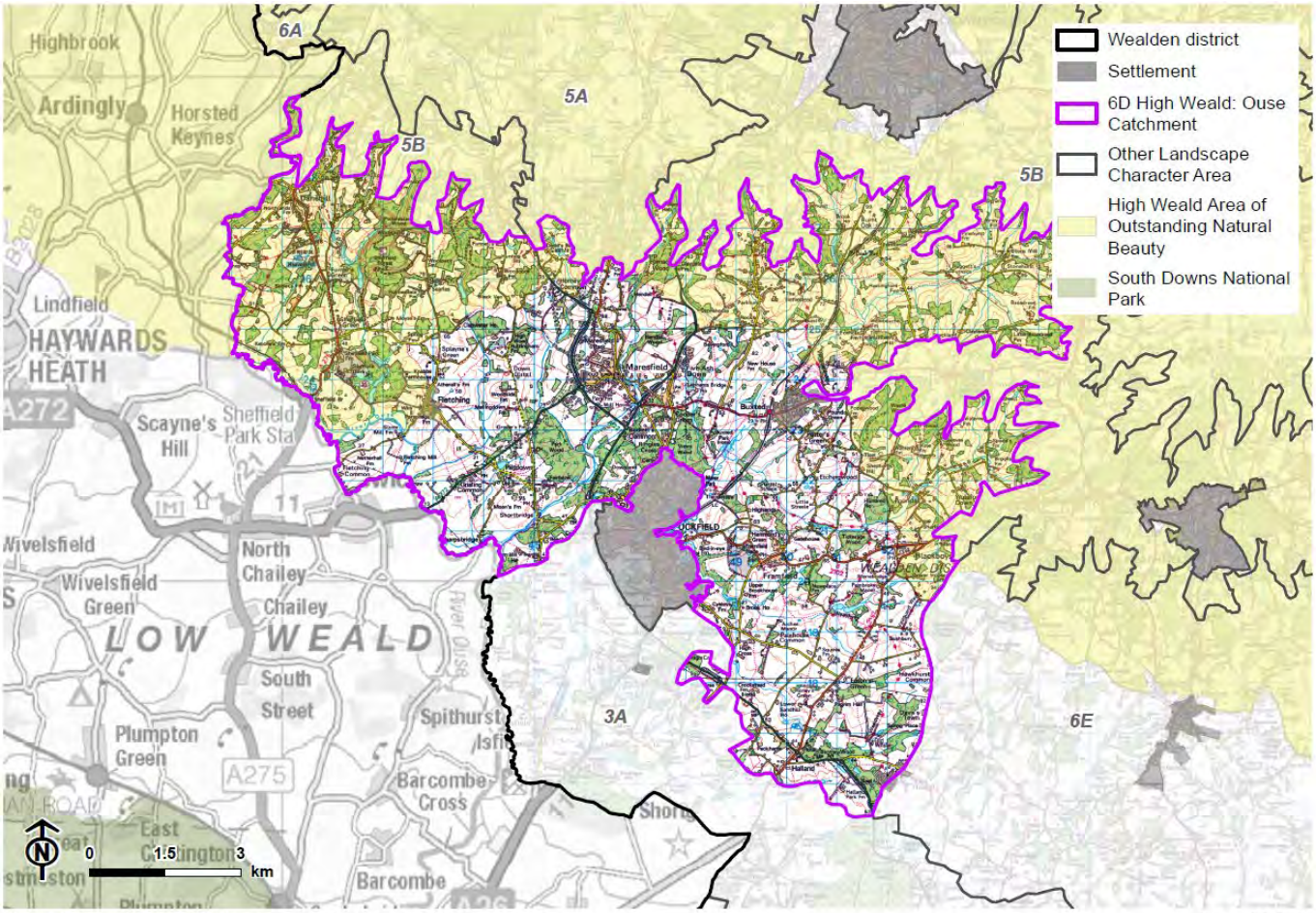
- Ensure any renewable energy generation is compatible with the guidance above and is in scale with the landscape where possible. Where larger scale renewable energy development is justified to meet climate change objectives, any harm to the landscape should be compensated for by landscape-scale enhancements of the surrounding area. Electricity infrastructure associated with renewable energy generation should be efficiently planned to minimise the number of lines required, routeing in accordance with the Holford Rules[1].
- Protect key views towards skyline features within historic settlements located along ridgelines outside of the LCA, such as Mayfield.
- Maintain the strong scenic qualities of the landscape and its sense of remoteness, tranquillity, and experience of dark skies.

[1] https://www.nationalgrid.com/sites/default/files/documents/13795-The%20Holford%20Rules.pdf

LCA 6D: High Weald - Ouse Catchment

Location and summary

The High Weald: Ouse Catchment is a rolling landscape of ridges and valleys containing the River Ouse and its tributaries that drain south-westwards from Ashdown Forest and the Central High Weald into Lewes District. A wooded landscape with an intricate pattern of small irregular fields, streams and small, historic ridge-top settlements. The High Weald AONB extends into the north of this LCA, west of Fletching and east of Blackboys and Buxted.



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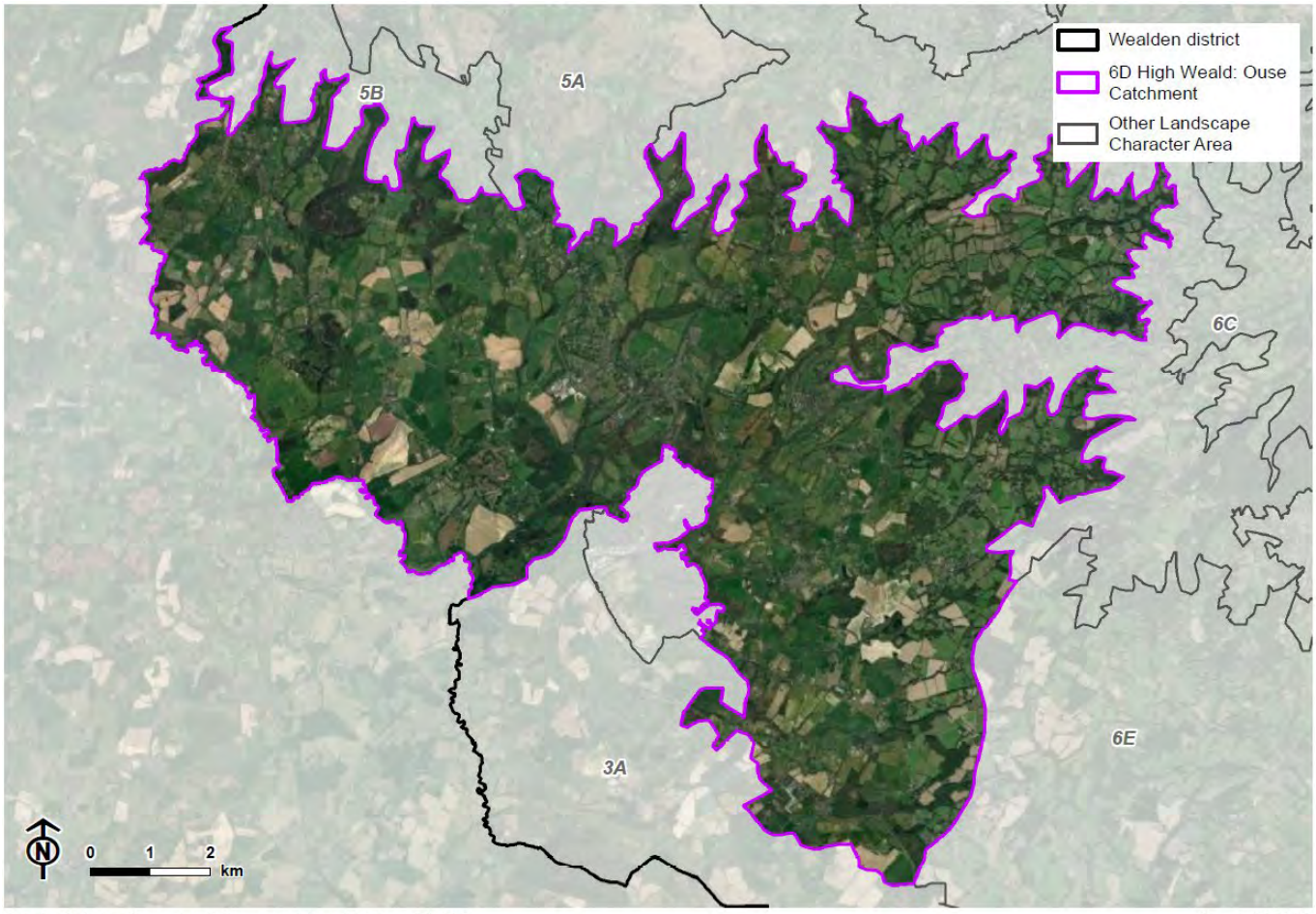


Well wooded ridge and valley landscape

Key Characteristics

- The underlying geology of interbedded sandstones, siltstones and mudstones give rise to a ridge and valley landscape associated with the winding upper courses of the River Ouse, River Uck and their tributaries. The incised and ridged landform is a defining component of character of the High Weald AONB.
- A well wooded landscape, which is a defining component of character of the High Weald AONB. The landscape has a mosaic of deciduous and mixed woodlands, interlinked with shaws, linear gill woodlands and hedgerows. Many woodlands are of ancient origin, with some ancient replanted woodland.
- Fragmented areas of priority habitat lowland heathland at Piltdown Common and in Sheffield Forest, provide evidence of previous woodland cover.
- Priority habitat lowland meadows and good quality semi-improved grassland are scattered throughout the LCA, including the flower-rich fields at Stockland Farm Meadow SSSI. Buxted Park contains priority habitat lowland dry acid grassland, which supports a large invertebrate population, and is designated as a SSSI.
- The silty soils support pasture, grazed by sheep and horses, with larger arable fields near to settlements. Viticulture is becoming more common within the LCA.
- An intricate pattern of small irregular shaped fields, predominantly of medieval origin, which is a defining component of character of the High Weald AONB. These are derived from piecemeal enclosure or assarting (formed from cleared areas of woodland).
- Fields are enclosed by a network of shaws and hedgerows with mature hedgerow trees, although these are often reinforced by post and wire fencing.
- The area is rich in relics of the Wealden iron industry, including furnace hearths, hammer ponds (constructed to power forge hammers) and coppiced woodlands managed to produce charcoal. The site of Pounsley iron furnace, a major cannon producer, is designated as a Scheduled Monument.
- The historic settlement pattern of small ridgetop villages, such as Danehill and Framfield (designated as Conservation Areas) is a defining component of character of the High Weald AONB. Distinctive church spires and towers often form landmark features. Farmsteads and hamlets are strung along the rural roads, and many of the buildings are listed.
- The local vernacular architecture comprises red brick laid as Flemish bond with blued brick ends, red tiled roofs and tile hung upper stories. These local materials, including oak timber frames, sandstone and flint reflect the abundance of locally sourced materials.

- Country houses with formal gardens and parkland such as Sheffield Park and Buxted Park (designated as Registered Parks and Gardens) demonstrate the wealth of manored estates in the High Weald.
- Villages are connected by a historic network of winding, sunken rural lanes enclosed by woodland. Busy trunk roads are also enclosed by woodland, limiting their impact on the landscape.
- The strong public rights of way network include promoted routes such as the Vanguard Way, Wealdway and the Sussex Diamond Way, enabling access to the landscape.
- Woodland, hedgerows and mature trees provide an enclosed character, although there are some dramatic long views to the wooded Central High Weald to the north and east and to the distinctive ridge of the South Downs to the south.
- The contrasting landscape pattern of pastoral fields combined with dense areas of mixed woodland and scattered historic villages, results in a varied landscape colour palette.
- A rural landscape, with areas of remoteness, tranquillity and experience of dark skies in the valleys and larger woods of the LCA, particularly away from the main settlements and busy A roads.
- Piltdown was at the centre of an archaeological hoax in 1912 when a skull was discovered that appeared to be the 'missing link' between humans and apes.



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Source: OS, WDC

Key Influences

Landform and drainage

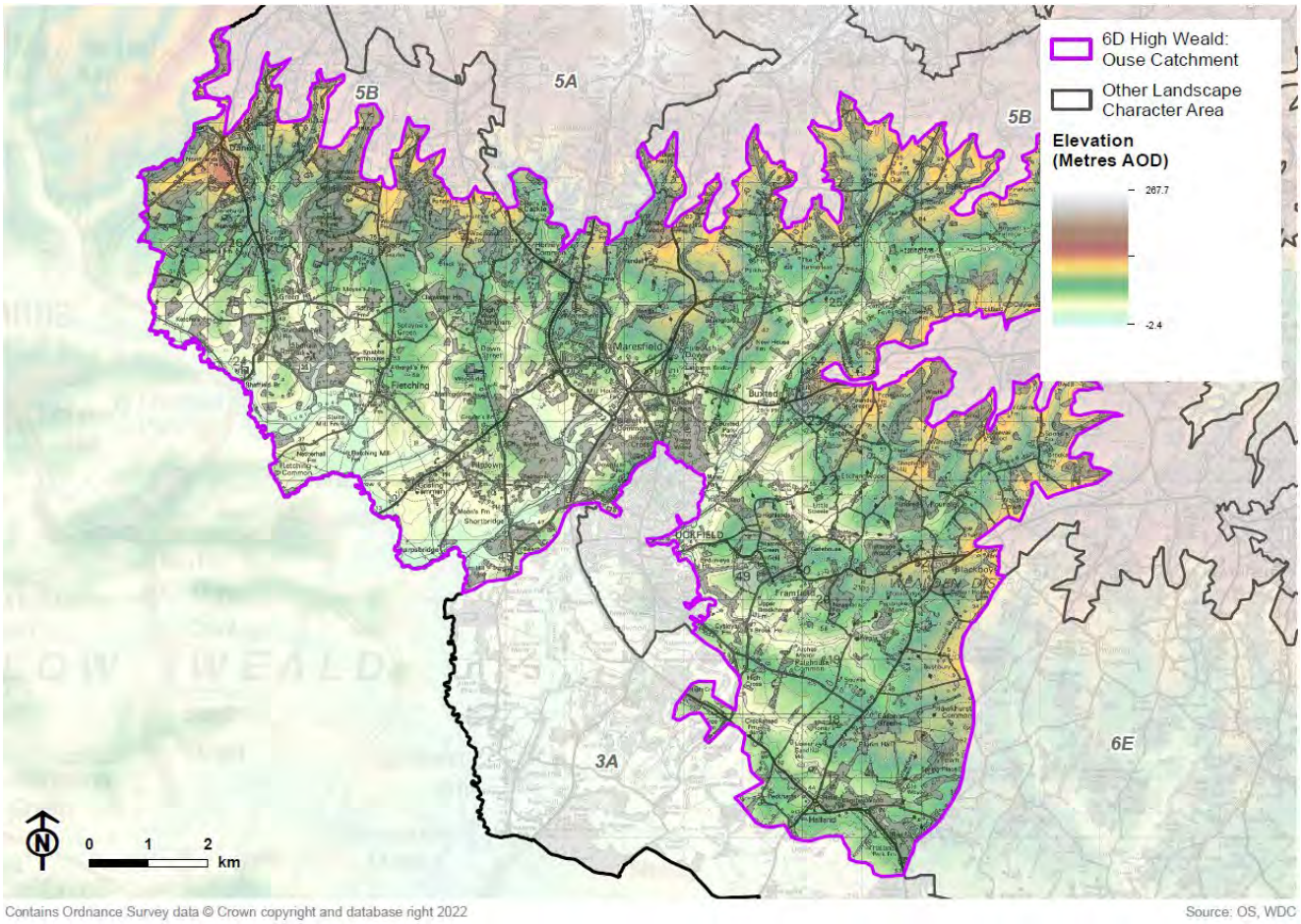
The landform comprises a rolling topography of ridges, spurs and valleys associated with the rivers Ouse and Uck and their tributary streams, which drain south-west into Lewes District and the Low Weald. The watercourses tend to be small and winding in their upper extents, lined by trees and woodland (with alder being a prominent species), widening with larger floodplains in their lower reaches. This landscape lies between 20m AOD along the course of the Ouse and 110m AOD at Danehill.

Bedrock and superficial geology

The High Weald - Ouse Catchment is underlain by a series of sandstones, siltstones and mudstones of the Ashdown Formation, Upper Tunbridge Wells Sand formation, Lower Tunbridge Wells Sand formation, Ardingly Sandstone and Wadhurst Clay formation. These were laid down in the Cretaceous period in fluvial, palustrine (marshy) or shallow marine conditions. Superficial deposits relate to the river corridors, with alluvium, older river terrace deposits and some areas of Head deposits, caused by freeze-thaw activity moving fragmented weathered material downslope. The geology gives rise to medium silty soils, which are generally graded 3 ('good to moderate') in the agricultural land classification, with areas of grade 4 ('poor') along the river corridors and in the north towards the High Weald.

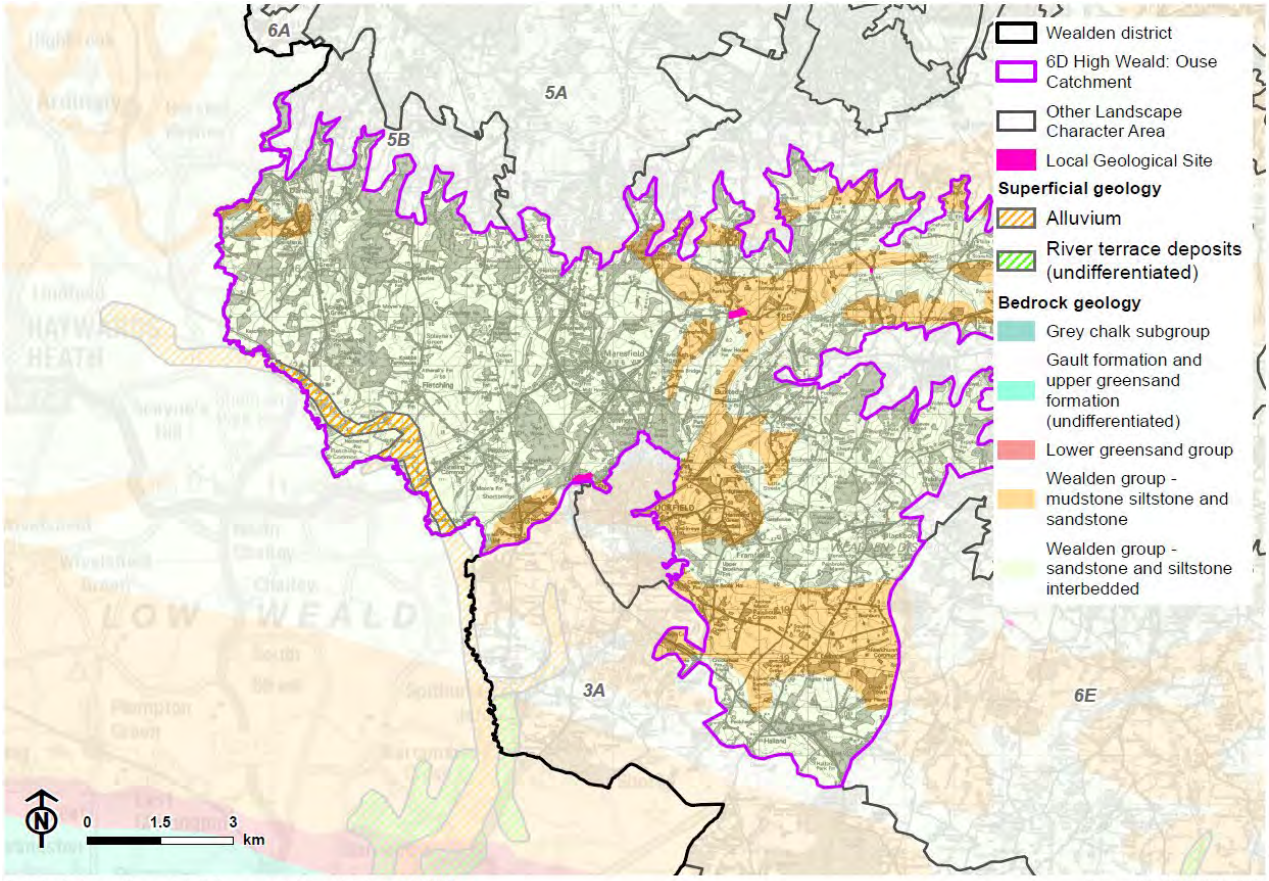


Designed landscape and unimproved grassland at Buxted Park



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Landform and drainage



Bedrock and superficial geology

Semi-natural habitats

Priority habitat deciduous woodland is found across the LCA, with fragmented areas of lowland meadow and good quality semi-improved grassland, particularly in the north-east, where a small area of meadow is designated as Stockland Farm Meadows Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). A large expanse of lowland dry acid grassland is designated as the Buxted Park SSSI. Lowland heathland is found around Piltdown Common, evidence of greater woodland extent, and within clearances in Sheffield Forest. There are a number of Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) across the landscape, including Hastingford Meadow, Barnet Wood Common and Pound & Furzefield Wood.

The Western Ouse Streams and Ashdown Forest and River Uck and its Headwaters Biodiversity Opportunity Areas cover most of the LCA. These areas are considered to be important for habitat enhancement and restoration, as well as the creation of priority habitats, particularly wetlands, woodlands and heathland.

Landcover

Small-scale pasture landcover dominates the LCA, although there are sizeable areas of larger-scale arable cropping.

Woodland is widespread, with small areas of woodland and the larger woodlands of Sheffield Forest and Park Wood.

Historic landscape

The High Weald - Ouse Catchment is part of the High Weald's ancient countryside, the dispersed settlement pattern and irregular shaped fields with strong hedgerow network are typical of the medieval period and represent one of the best surviving medieval landscapes in northern Europe.

Ancient woodland is found across the LCA, although some areas have been replanted with conifers in the 20th century, such as parts of Park Wood and Hollybush Wood. Evidence of the transhumance movement, where people and animals moved seasonally between the Downs to the south and woodlands of the High Weald, remain in the routes of the local lanes and public rights of way across the ridge and valley landscape, such as Bell Lane east of Sheffield Forest.

Evidence of Wealden iron working, which was prominent until the 18th century, is seen in the farm ponds and chains of large hammer ponds, constructed to provide a sufficient head of water for forges. Forges at Hendall, Oldlands Furnace, Buxted Wood and Buxted are designated as Scheduled Monuments.

Sheffield Park and Buxted Park are large, designed landscapes, both Registered Parks and Gardens. Sheffield Park is a 16th century deer park, remodelled by Capability Brown and Repton, with large ponds and lakes, and was the location of the first England v Australia cricket match, played in 1884. Buxted Park is an 18th century park with significant 17th century features.

The settlement pattern within the LCA has remained dispersed, with historic villages located on the ridges (including Danehill, Fletching, Maresfield and Framfield which covered by Conservation Areas) and often located at road junctions. The available local materials and sources of timber are reflected in the vernacular architecture of brick, timber, stone, weather boarding and tile hanging.

The Sussex Historic Landscape Character Assessment shows a varied pattern indicative of a typical medieval landscape. Assarts (created by clearance of woodland), are common, indicating a more wooded landscape in the past. Regular or semi-regular piecemeal enclosure is seen in fields in the centre and west of the area, although there have been considerable modern field amalgamations. There are also large, designed parklands at Sheffield Park, Buxted Park and Framfield Place.

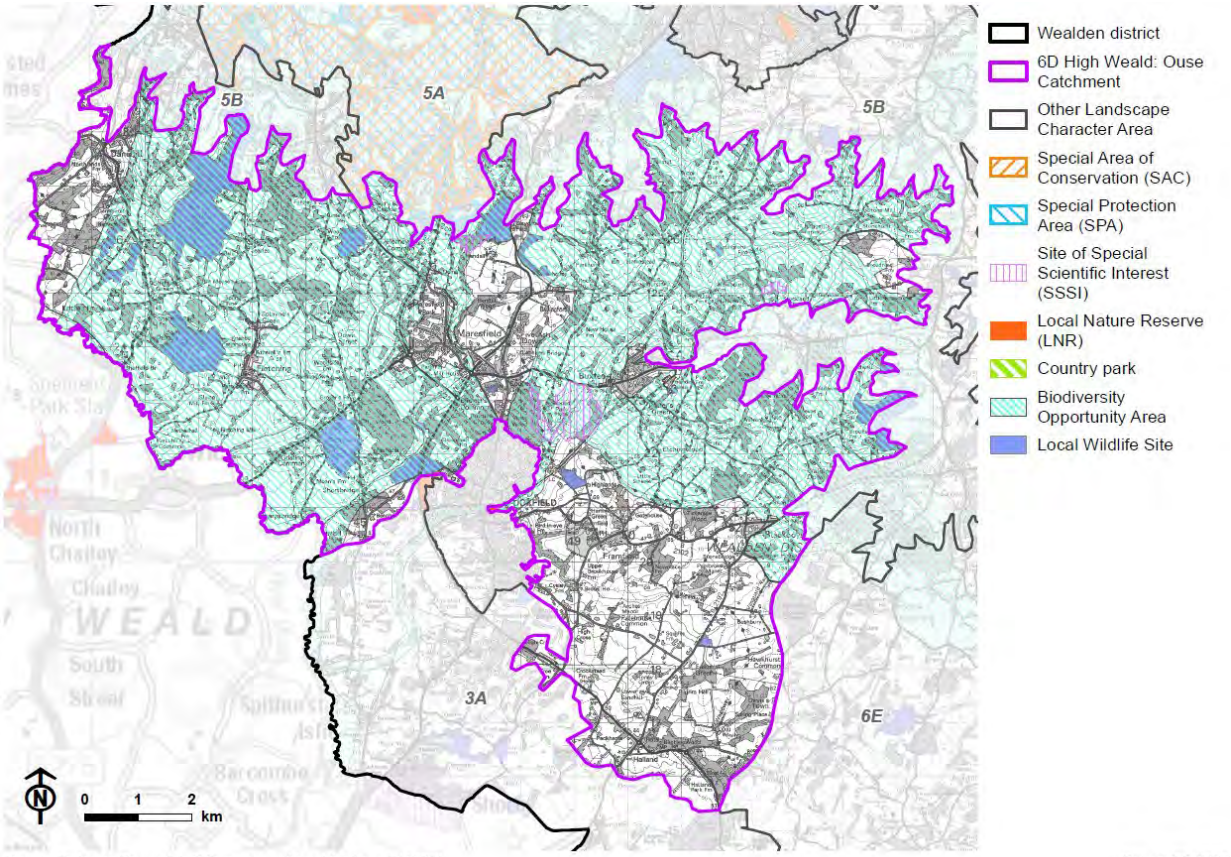
Perceptual character

The LCA is largely rural landscape, with areas of enclosure formed by the woodland, hedgerows and mature trees. There are areas of relative remoteness, tranquillity and an experience of dark skies in the valleys and larger woods, particularly away from Uckfield and Maresfield and the busy trunk roads. There are some dramatic long views to the wooded Central High Weald to the north and east and to the distinctive ridge of the South Downs to the south.

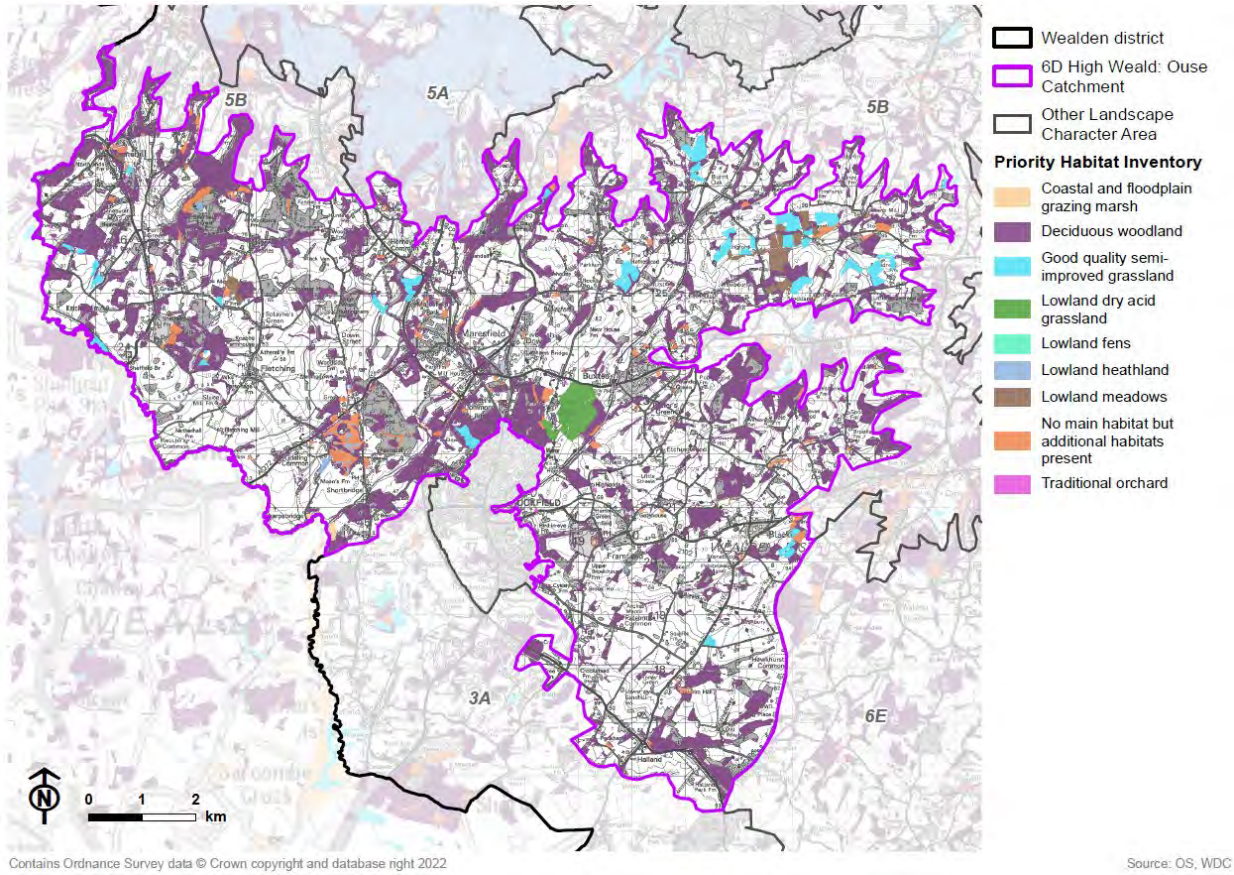
Busy trunk roads, including the A22 and A26, as well as light industrial land uses and urban fringe activities around Uckfield and Maresfield, influence landscape character, particularly outside the High Weald AONB. This includes developments such as the Ashdown Business Park and recycling centre on the A22. Electricity pylons are also a modern element in the landscape which reduce the sense of rurality in the immediate vicinity.



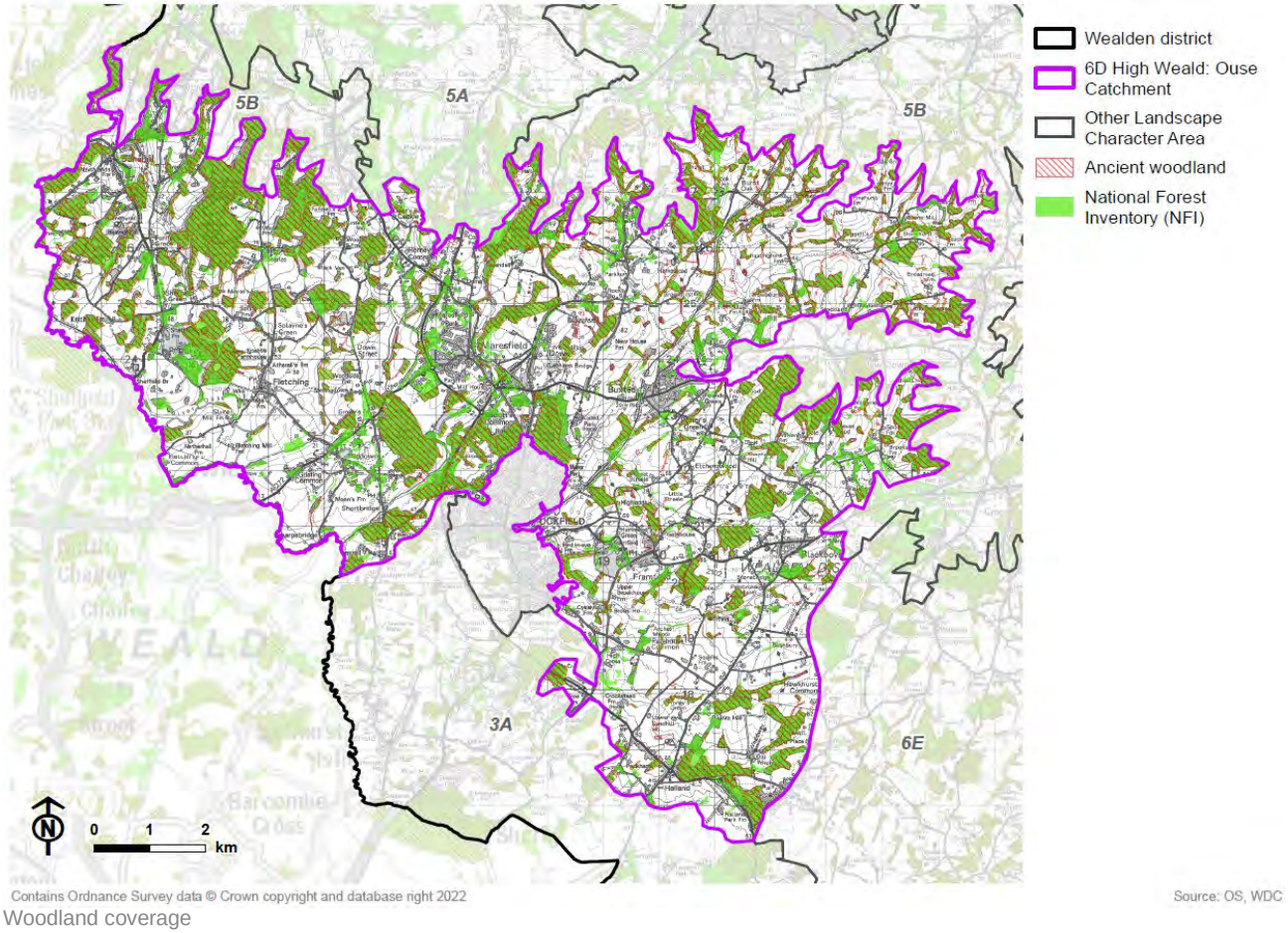
Vernacular architecture in Danehill



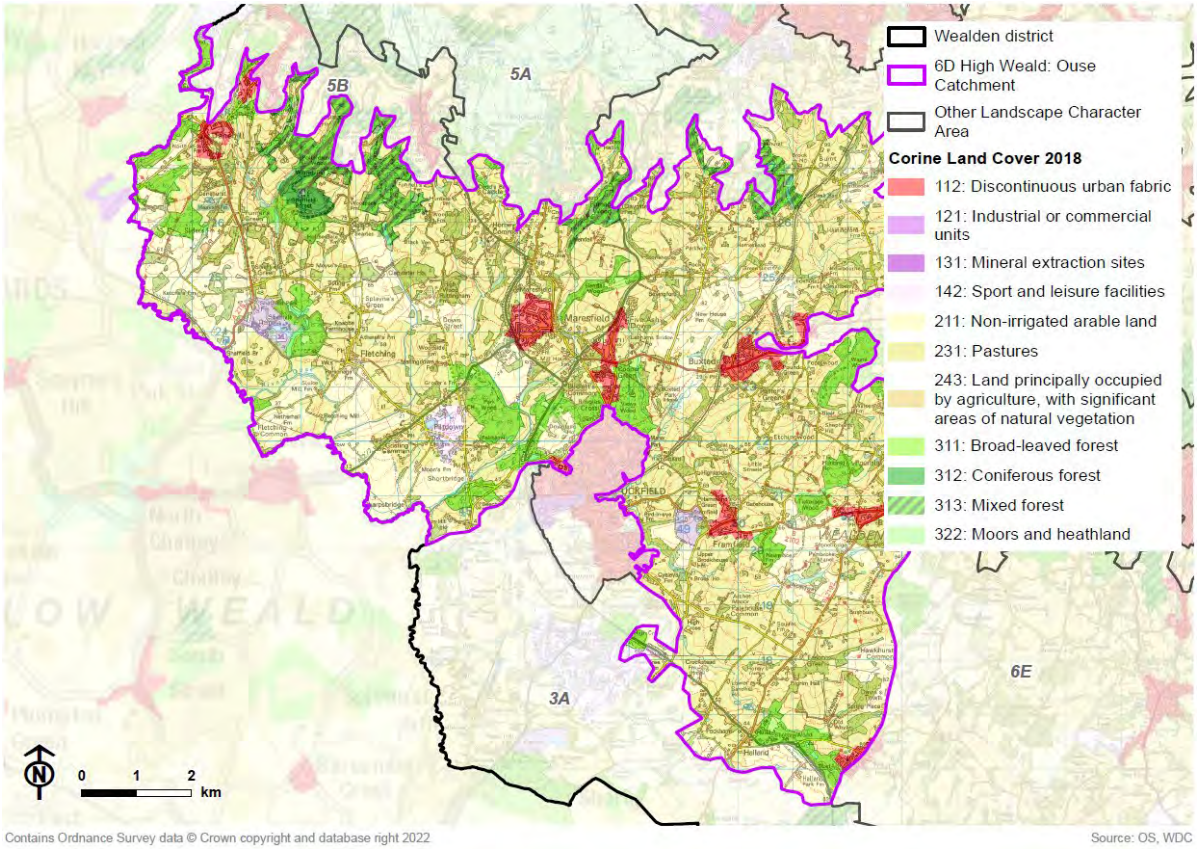
Nature conservation designations



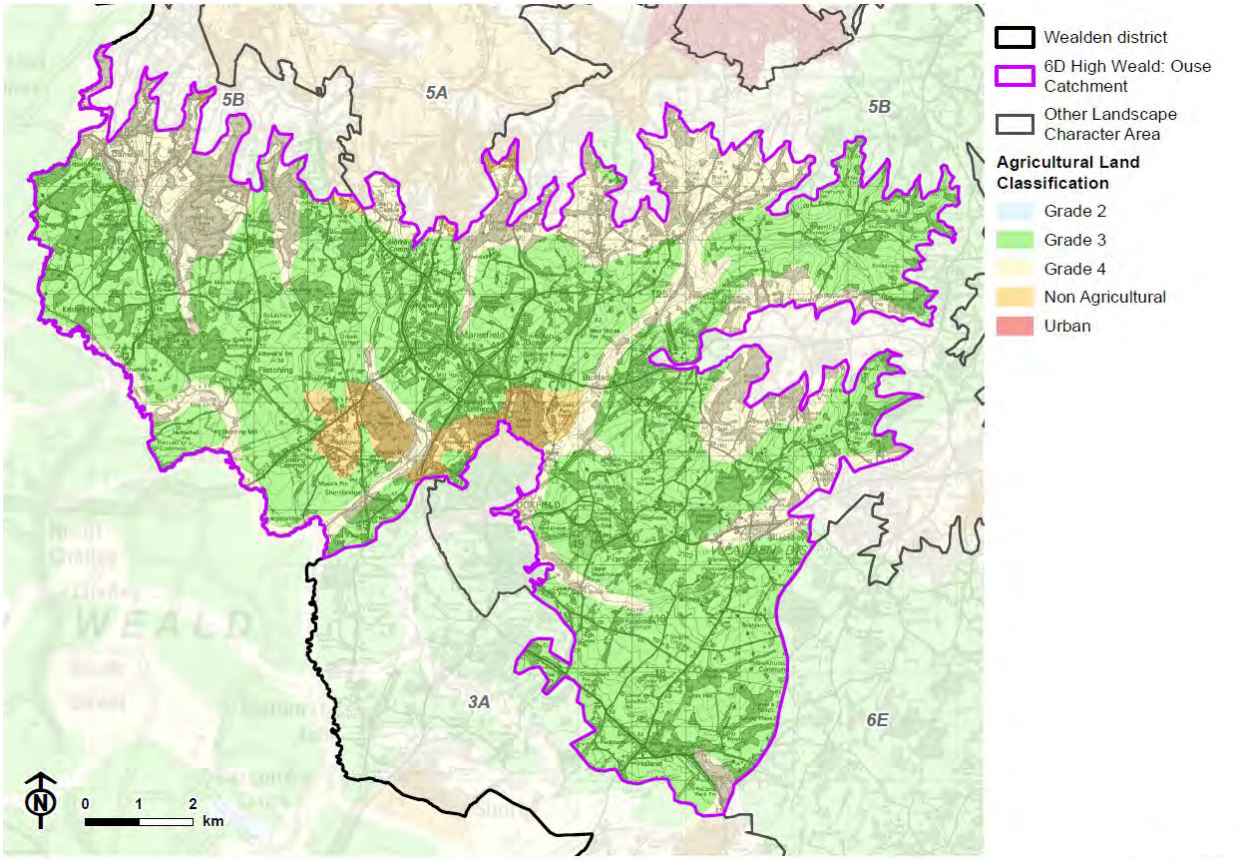
Priority habitat inventory



Woodland coverage

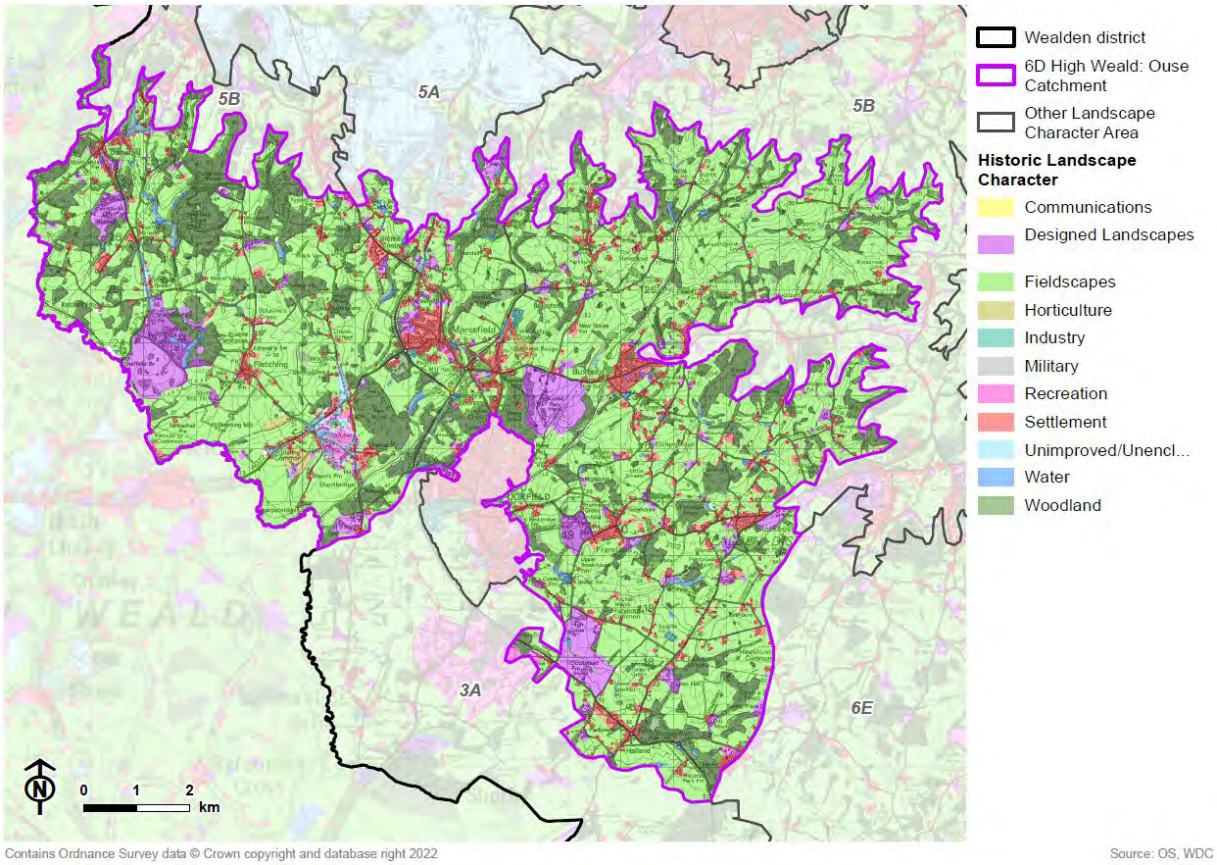


Landcover types (CORINE Land cover inventory 2018)



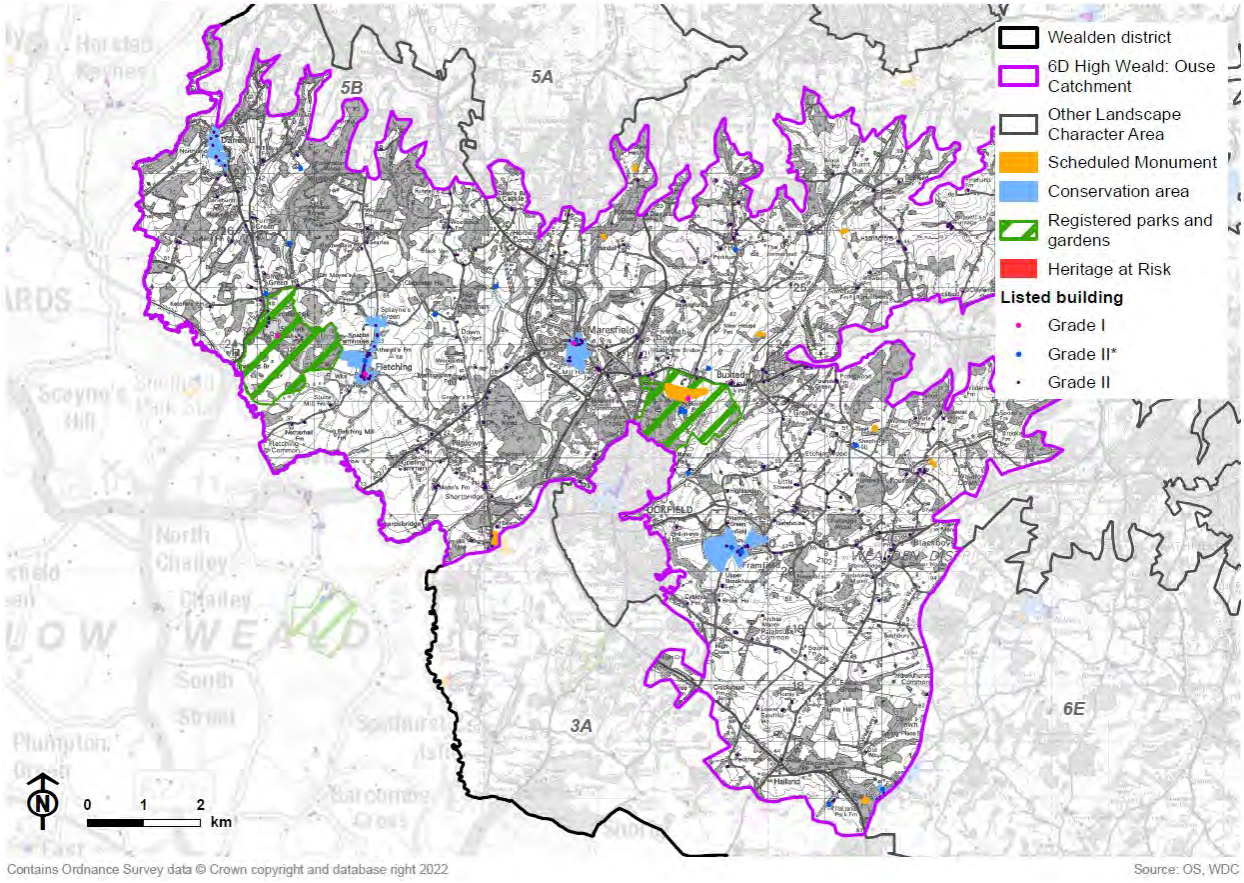
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Source: OS, NE

Agricultural Land Classification



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Historic Landscape Characterisation



Historic landscape designations

Landscape qualities

The following features and characteristics are particularly valued for their contribution to character and for the ecosystem services they provide:

- The distinctive landform of ridges and valleys associated with the River Ouse provide topographical interest to the landscape, creating a sense of place.
- Hammer ponds and gill streams, support wetland habitats, increasing biodiversity.
- The woodland, riparian vegetation and wetland habitats of the Ouse and Uck catchments provide nutrient and sediment filtration that enhances water quality, help to regulate water flow and assist in reducing flooding downstream during heavy rainfall.
- The numerous woodland (including ancient woodland), shaws, trees and hedgerows provide a sense of place as well as habitat connectivity to support biodiversity, carbon sequestration and the regulation of temperatures.
- The mixed and deciduous plantations and coppiced woodland offer opportunities for timber provision and a potential source of local fuel and building materials.
- The wet meadows, unimproved and acid grassland, heathland and broadleaved woodland (including Buxted Park and Stockland Farm Meadows SSSI), support a range of important flora and fauna. They allow soil stabilisation/retention, have a higher soil carbon content than cultivated habitats, and provide nutrient filtration which enhances water quality.
- The small-scale medieval field patterns, with sinuous hedgerow boundaries which provide a sense of place and history.
- Hammer ponds, coppiced woodlands and remnants of forges provide a link to the Wealden iron industry and a sense of time depth.
- The dispersed pattern of ridge-top villages (whose value is recognised through designation as Conservation Areas), with landmark church spires and towers, and linked by winding rural lanes, provide a connection to history, cultural identity and aesthetic value.

- The vernacular architecture of brick, oak, sandstone and flint which reflects the locally available materials, provides a sense of place and accords with a distinctive architectural colour palette.
- Designed parklands at Sheffield Park, Buxted Park and Framfield Place contribute to the time depth of the landscape. Sheffield Park and Buxted Park are also valued for the opportunities they provide for open air recreation.
- The public rights of way provide recreational opportunities, with contrasting long views to the High Weald, South Downs and enclosed views within the landscape, which contribute to people's physical health and mental well-being.
- Rural roads resulting from transhumance patterns of movement create a sense of time depth and sense of place, and are part of the medieval landscape of the High Weald AONB.
- The harmonious small-scale landscape pattern of mixed farms, dense woodland and open views across the wooded ridges and valleys contribute to the strong scenic quality of the area, reflected in its designation as an AONB.
- The sense of tranquillity and experience of dark skies in some areas, particularly away from the larger settlements in the south of the LCA.


Horse grazing with post and wire fencing and a wooded backdrop



Extensive areas of woodland

Forces for change

- Climate change, leading to increasing temperatures and periods of drought resulting in a change in water levels and stream flows altering the species composition of wetland habitats.
- Climate change resulting in an increase in the frequency and severity of seasonal flooding in lower-lying valleys. Associated pressures to build flood management works that are unsympathetic to local landscape character and sensitive habitats.
- Decreased water quality resulting from sediment run-off after ploughing and increased use and accumulation of herbicides, pesticides and fertilisers associated with industrial arable farming.
- Climate change and changing land management practices leading to potential changes in woodland and tree species composition. Increases in severe gales could result in wind damage to woodland edges. Ancient woodlands may be particularly susceptible to damage from storms and drought.
- Potential changes in flora and increase in pests and diseases as a result of climate change and changing land management practices, such as acute oak decline or sweet chestnut blight.
- The former replacement of broadleaved woodlands with conifer and mixed woodland, and changes in woodland management, including a reduction of traditional coppicing techniques, which has resulted in a change to the species composition, continuity and density of woodland and influenced the landscape pattern and texture.
- A decline in mixed farming leading to the loss of pasture and meadows, with their associated mature and historic hedgerow boundaries and shaws, influencing landscape structure and pattern.
- Increase in hobby farming and conversion of grazing fields to equestrian use, including subdivision of fields with horse tape or post and wire fencing and proliferation of field shelters, which reduces the rural character of the landscape.
- Expansion of adjacent urban areas, such as Uckfield, and an increase in light industrial and urban fringe land uses expanding into the rural landscape has the potential to impact the area's dark skies and sense of remoteness.
- Pressure for housing in the rural villages altering the historic dispersed settlement pattern.

- Recreational pressures on the landscape, including pressure for additional recreational infrastructure, including car parks or visitor centres introducing further development into the landscape.
- Pylons are a distinctive modern influence on the landscape, and often highly visible in this undulating landscape.
- Pressure for renewable energy infrastructure (e.g. wind turbines on elevated ridges and solar farms on south facing slopes or open areas, and associated grid connections), which would reduce rural character and impact views.

Landscape Guidelines

These guidelines recommend how the landscape can be managed to ensure future change respects local character and should be read in conjunction with the objectives and proposed actions of the High Weald AONB Management Plan:

- Maintain constant stream levels when/where possible (monitoring water abstraction, especially as periods of drought increase), to retain wetland habitats.
- Address flooding issues with the implementation of natural flood management schemes in the River Ouse catchment (e.g. the creation of flood meadows and wet woodland, planting of woodland on slopes and installation of leaky woody dams to slow flows) working with landowners to consider a holistic approach to catchment management, in line with the Sussex Flow Initiative.
- Monitor water quality in the rivers and streams. Minimise water pollution from agriculture through sensitive land management practices, including regenerative agricultural systems such as no or minimal till, holistic grazing, reduction or removal of chemical inputs, cover crops and restoration of buffer strips along watercourses and field ponds, to minimise run off in order to maintain the biodiversity of wetland habitats.
- Encourage active and appropriate management of woodland to ensure a diverse species and age structure by thinning, coppicing and replanting as necessary in line with the aims of the Western Ouse Streams and Ashdown Forest and the River Uck and its Headwaters Biodiversity Opportunity Areas. Avoid damage from large machinery. No management is recommended for gill woodlands as these habitats are too sensitive and insufficiently understood.
- As climatic conditions change, plant suitable species or encourage natural regeneration to create climate resistant woodland.
- Safeguard ancient woodland and protect and enhance vulnerable woodland habitats and soils including gill woodlands and wet woodlands for the benefit of biodiversity.
- Encourage the gradual restructuring of coniferous woodland to woodlands with a high broadleaved content, particularly for plantations on ancient woodland sites (PAWs), in line with the aims of the objectives of the High Weald AONB Management Plan.
- Support a sustainable woodland industry, encouraging small-scale operations using traditional techniques including coppicing, to develop new markets and products for locally sourced timber, and to maintain carbon sequestration.
- Protect and manage the existing hedgerow network, and plan for the restoration of, and linkages between, hedgerows, including establishing hedgerow oaks, to maintain habitat corridors and to retain the medieval field pattern typical of the High Weald. Remove post and wire fencing where appropriate.
- Maintain and restore links between the numerous woodlands in the area, other woodland habitats (such as hedgerows and parkland), and species-rich habitats such as wet meadows, unimproved grassland and heathland to create a robust network of woodland and open semi-natural habitats.
- Maintain the mixed farmed character of the area, while increasing areas of permanent pasture (aiming to convert arable land to permanent pasture or to regenerative forms of agriculture which combine arable, livestock and agro-forestry uses and creating grassland margins to arable fields) and manage he number and grazing regimes of livestock to maintain and increase biodiversity.
- Restore species-rich grasslands through appropriate management and, where necessary, reseeding with Weald Native Origin Seed.
- Monitor potential changes in flora and increase in pests and diseases, including spread of invasive plants and animals in water courses and woodlands.
- Encourage sympathetic integration of horse paddocks through the maintenance of hedgerow field boundaries, conservation of existing scale of field pastures, avoiding overgrazing of pastures and proliferation of field shelters and other hard infrastructure.
- Protect and enhance the historic designed landscapes, at Sheffield Park and Buxted Park, increasing interpretation and access where appropriate to link communities with their local heritage.

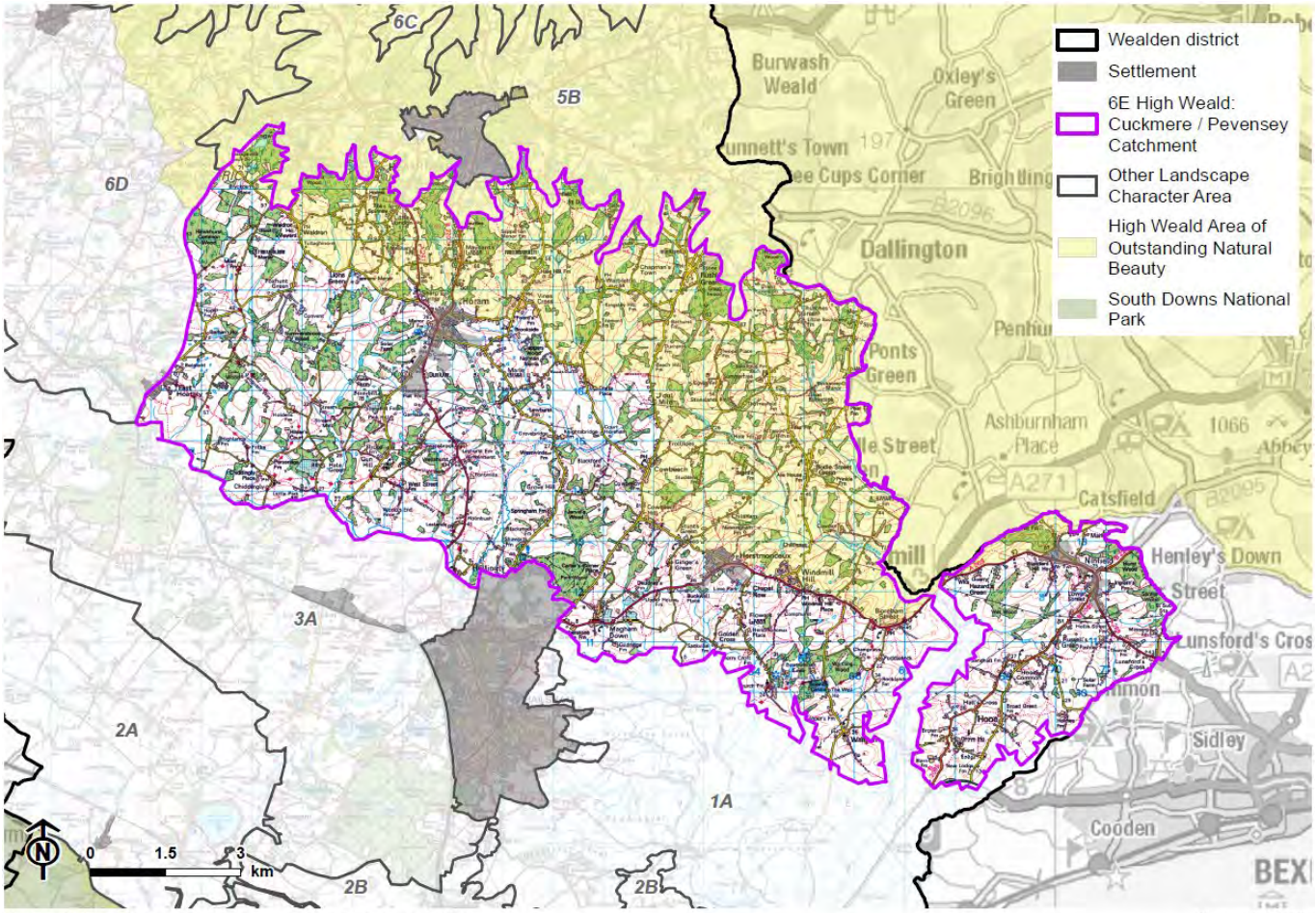
- Protect the remaining historic features related to the Wealden iron industry, such as hammer ponds. Increase interpretation and access where appropriate to raise awareness and link communities with their local heritage, including opportunities for heritage trails or walks.
- Limit the amount and scale of development in rural areas, protecting the existing low-density settlement pattern of dispersed rural villages, hamlets, and scattered farms, and the separation between these different settlement types.
- Ensure new building reinforces and responds to local character in its scale, layout and design, reflecting the local vernacular in use of materials. Developments should draw on the principles contained within the High Weald AONB design guidance, High Weald AONB 'Guidance on the selection and use of colour in development' and objectives of the High Weald AONB Management Plan.
- Extend woodland around settlements and infrastructure development to filter light pollution and soften the visual impact of further urbanisation.
- Maintain the historic network of routeways, ensuring new roads or 'upgrades' take account of their rural context and avoid over-engineered features and/or the introduction of lighting into dark areas. Maintain the trees and species-rich grasslands on road verges.
- Ensure any renewable energy generation is compatible with the guidance above and is in scale with the landscape where possible. Where larger scale renewable energy development is justified to meet climate change objectives, any harm to the landscape should be compensated for by landscape-scale enhancements of the surrounding landscape. Electricity infrastructure associated with renewable energy generation should be efficiently planned to minimise the number of lines required, routeing in accordance with the Holford Rules[2].
- Restore and plant new hedgerows to create habitat connectivity and reduce the visual impact of the transmission lines which cross this LCA, in line with the Beautiful Boundaries project with the National Grid's Landscape Enhancement Initiative.
- Protect long views to the wooded Central High Weald to the north and east and to the distinctive ridge of the South Downs to the south.
- Maintain the strong scenic qualities of the landscape and its sense of remoteness, tranquillity and experience of dark skies.

[2] https://www.nationalgrid.com/sites/default/files/documents/13795-The%20Holford%20Rules.pdf

LCA 6E: High Weald - Cuckmere / Pevensey Catchments

Location and summary

The High Weald – Cuckmere / Pevensey Catchments LCA is a rolling landscape of ridges and valleys containing the River Cuckmere and its tributaries that drain south from the Central High Weald into the Low Weald, and the tributaries of Waller's Haven that drain east into the Pevensey Levels. A wooded landscape with a pattern of small-scale irregular fields, streams and historic ridge-top villages. The LCA is separated into two sections by LCA 1A Pevensey Levels at Waller's Haven (and the District boundary). The north of the LCA, north of Horam, Windmill Hill and Ninfield, lies within the High Weald AONB.



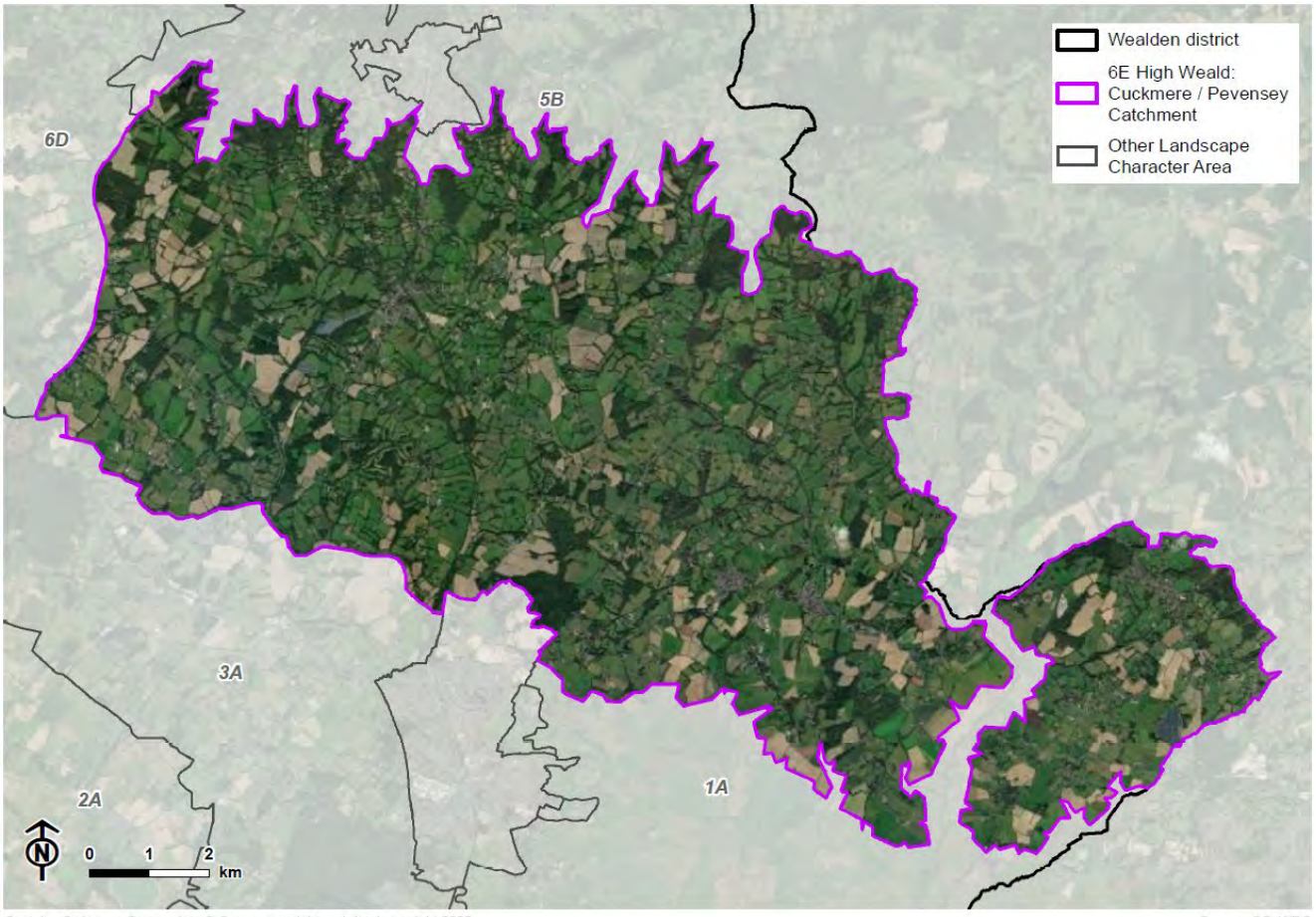


Rolling pasture fields with mature hedgerow trees and wooded backdrop

Key Characteristics

- Sandstones, siltstones and mudstones give rise to an undulating ridge and valley landscape associated with the Cuckmere River and its tributaries to the west, and tributaries of Waller's Haven to the east which flow into the Pevensey Levels. The incised and ridged landform is a defining component of character of the High Weald AONB.
- Narrow gill stream corridors and ponds support wetland habitats. Herstmonceux Park is designated as a SSSI for its fen vegetation and associated wet woodland.
- A well wooded landscape of small-scale woodlands, which is a defining component of character of the High Weald AONB. Most woodlands are recorded as priority habitat and many are of ancient origin, while some have been partially replanted with mixed or coniferous species.
- Dispersed areas of priority habitat semi-improved grassland and lowland meadows are often located on the edges of woodlands. The rich pastures and grassland at Sapperton Meadows and St Dunstan's Farm Meadows are designated as SSSI. Priority habitat orchards are also recorded close to small settlements including Magham Down.
- Medium to light silty soils support mixed farming, predominantly sheep and cow pasture, as well as arable cropping at Hooe and around Hawkhurst Common.
- A distinctive field pattern, of small to medium irregular fields, predominantly medieval in origin, which is a defining component of character of the High Weald AONB. These are often derived from assarting (formed from cleared areas of woodland), interspersed with medium-large fields derived from piecemeal enclosure or planned private enclosure at Hooe and Waldron. Modern amalgamations do not detract from this.
- Fields are bound by unmanaged hedgerows, sometimes reinforced by post and wire fencing.
- The area is rich in relics of the Wealden iron industry including hammer ponds (constructed to power hammer forges), charcoal hearths and remnants of coppiced woodland, managed to produce charcoal. The Heathfield furnace built in 1693, is designated as a Scheduled Monument.
- An historic settlement pattern of small, ridge-top villages, such as Cowbeech and Rushlake Green, many designated as Conservation Areas. Large farmsteads and manors are set back from the roads. The dispersed settlement pattern is a defining component of character of the High Weald AONB.
- The local vernacular architecture comprises red brick and tile hung upper stories. These local materials, including oak timber frames, sandstone and flint reflect locally sourced materials.

- Herstmonceux Castle, one of the oldest brick buildings in England, is set in formal gardens and parkland (Grade II* Registered Park and Garden). An observatory, built in 1958 for the Royal Greenwich Observatory is a distinctive visual landmark.
- Herstmonceux and surrounding villages were the home of traditional Sussex trug making, and some traditional businesses are still in operation.
- Villages are connected by a historic network of ridgetop roads and winding, sometimes sunken, lanes lined with mature trees and hedgerows.
- An accessible landscape with numerous promoted routes including the Wealdway, Vanguard Way, Cuckoo Trail and 1066 Country Walk, which provide access to, and enjoyment of, the landscape.
- Woodland, hedgerows, and sunken lanes result in an enclosed character, and many views are terminated by woodland blocks either within the LCA or further afield in the High Weald.
- There are open views across the Pevensey Levels, including across Waller's Haven, and to the distinctive ridge landforms of the South Downs to the south. Church towers in ridgetop villages form landmark features which rise above the tree line.
- The contrasting landscape pattern of pastoral fields combined with dense areas of mixed woodland and scattered historic villages, results in a varied landscape colour palette.
- A rural and tranquil landscape with areas of relative remoteness, tranquillity and experience of dark skies away from the towns of Horam and Hailsham.



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Source: OS, WDC

Key Influences

Landform and drainage

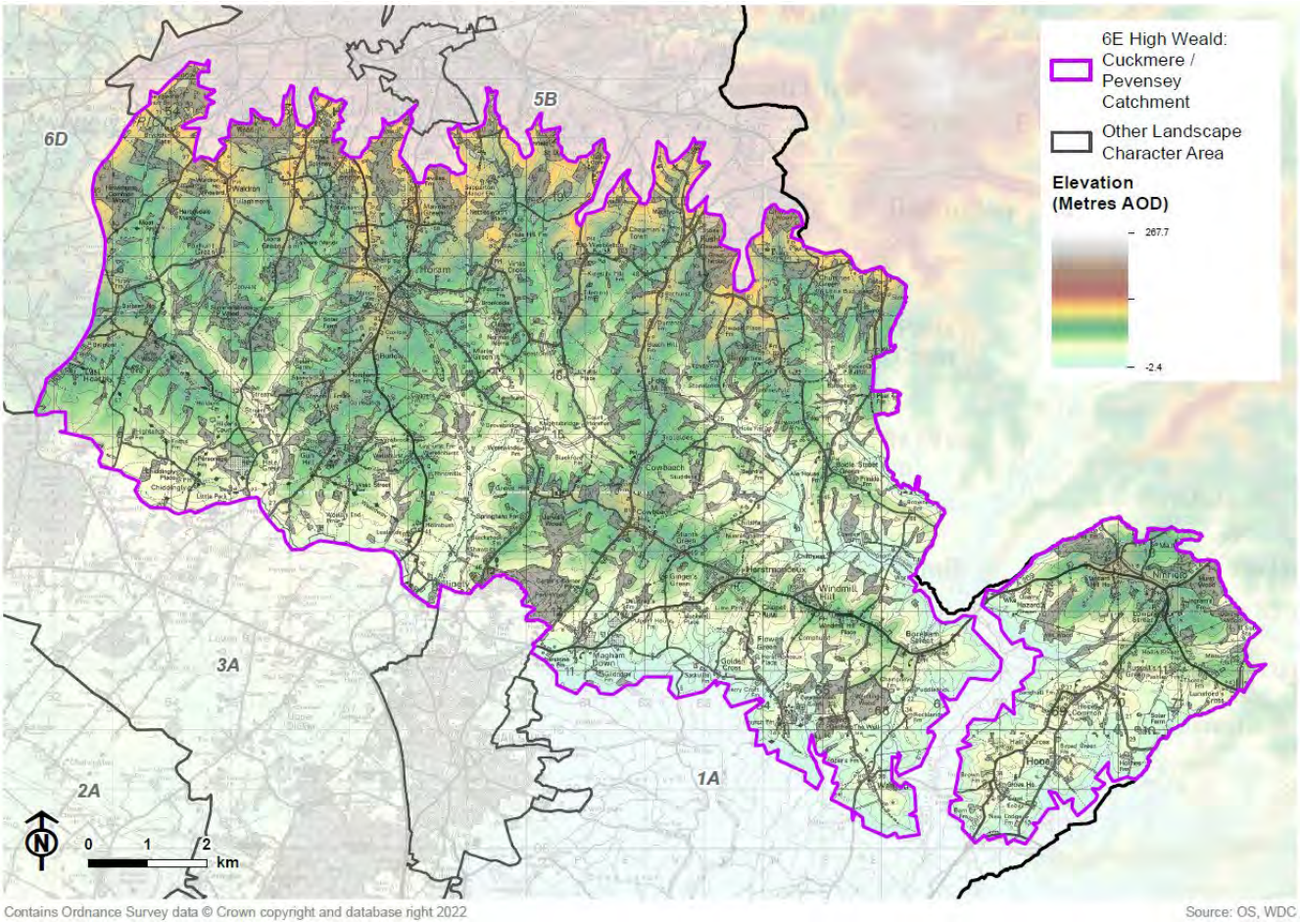
The High Weald - Cuckmere / Pevensey Catchments LCA is a rolling landscape, associated with tributaries of the River Cuckmere, Ashbourne Stream and Waller's Haven (within LCA 1A) which drain into the Low Weald to the west and the Pevensey Levels in the east. The watercourses tend to be small and winding, lined by trees and woodland, and are often hidden from view. This landscape lies at 5m AOD at the edge of the Pevensey Levels and rises to 110m AOD along the ridge tops, for example at Rushlake Green.

Bedrock and superficial geology

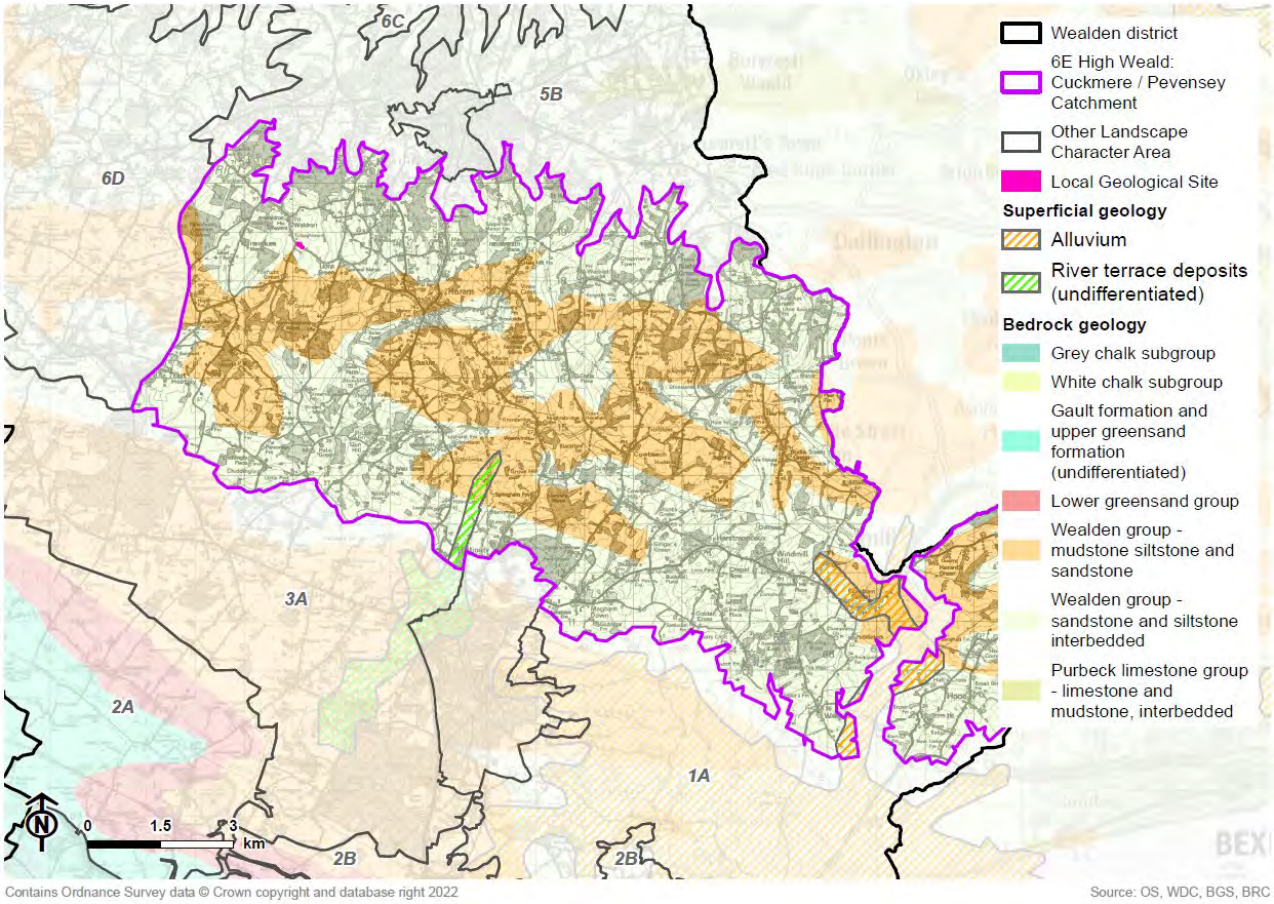
The area is underlain by the sandstones, siltstones and mudstones of the Ashdown Formation, Tunbridge Wells Sand formation and Wadhurst Clay formation. These were laid down in the Cretaceous period in fluvial, palustrine (marshy) or shallow marine conditions. Superficial deposits relate to the river corridors, with alluvium, older river terrace deposits and some areas of Head deposits, caused by freeze-thaw activity moving fragmented weathered material downslope. The geology gives rise to a variety of soils, with sandy loams on the river corridors. The soils are all graded 3 ('good to moderate') in the agricultural land classification.



Long views across the Pevensey Levels



Landform and drainage



Bedrock and superficial geology

Semi-natural habitats

Priority habitat deciduous woodland is found across the LCA, much of it of ancient origin. Small traditional orchards are found outside villages including at Magham Down and between Ninfield and Hooe Common. Woods and meadows throughout the LCA are designated as Local Wildlife Sites (LWS), including Combe Wood and Furnace Lane Meadow.

There are small areas of priority habitat good quality semi-improved grassland and lowland meadow on the edges of woodlands, with two areas of grassland designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) – Sapperton Meadows and St Dunstan's Farm Meadows. Herstmonceux Park contains fen vegetation and associated wet woodland and is designated as a SSSI.

The Pevensey and Cuckmere Valley Link and Pevensey Levels Biodiversity Opportunity Areas are found within the LCA. These areas are considered to be important for habitat enhancement, restoration and creation of priority habitats, particularly wetland.

Landcover

Agricultural landcover is predominately pasture, with sheep and cow grazing. There is some horse grazing on the outskirts of settlements, where fields are often sub-divided by horse tape. Arable cultivation is also present, and these fields are generally larger in size. There are golf courses at Horam Park and Wellshurst.

Historic landscape

The High Weald - Cuckmere / Pevensey Catchments is part of the High Weald's ancient countryside, one of the best surviving medieval landscapes in northern Europe. The dispersed settlement pattern and irregular shaped fields, with a strong hedgerow network, are typical of the medieval period.

Ancient woodland is found across the LCA, with some conifer replanting. Evidence of the transhumance movement, where people and animals moved seasonally between the Downs to the south and woodlands of the High Weald, remain in the routes of the local lanes and public rights of way across the ridge and valley landscape, for example Burn Oak Lane and Nettlesworth Lane.

Evidence of Wealden iron working, which was prevalent until the 18th century, is seen in the farm ponds and large hammer ponds (constructed to provide a sufficient head of water for forges) and surviving forges, such as at Heathfield Place, and the iron stocks in the village of Ninfield.

Herstmonceux Castle is one of the oldest buildings to use brick in England and is a Grade I listed building and Scheduled Monument, set in a Grade II* Registered Park and Garden. The Greenwich Royal Observatory relocated to

Herstmonceux in the 1940s and 1950s, as light pollution in London was interfering with observations. The observatory, a Grade II* listed building, is now in use as a science centre and is a landmark building in the landscape.

The settlement pattern has retained it medieval dispersed character, with historic ridge top villages often located at road junctions (the majority with Conservation Areas including Waldron, Warbleton and Boreham Street). The available local materials and sources of timber are reflected in the local vernacular of brick, timber, stone, weather boarding and upper storey tile hanging. Horam is the largest settlement in the LCA, and developed with the arrival of the London, Brighton and South Coast railway line, which closed to passengers in 1965 and freight in 1968. The former line is now used as a recreational path, the Cuckoo Trail.



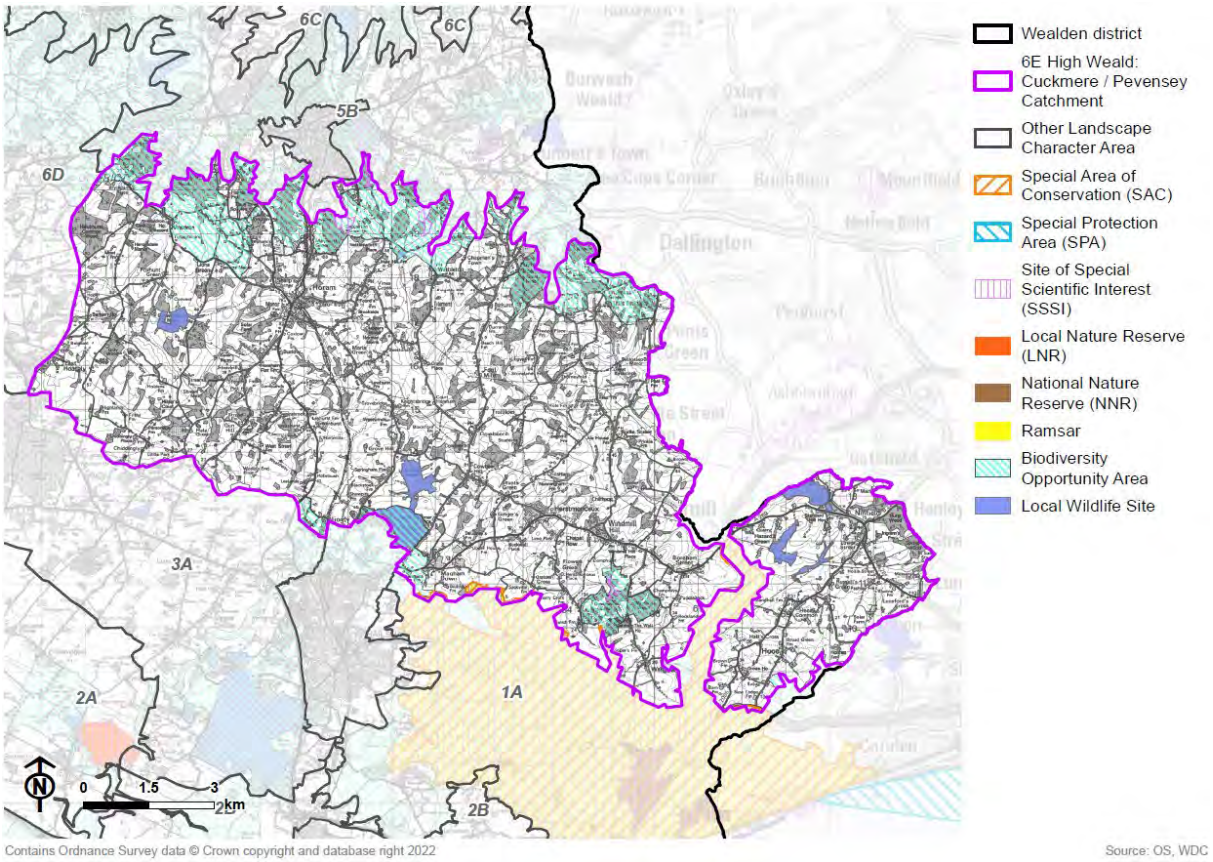
Herstmonceux Castle

The Sussex Historic Landscape Character Assessment shows a varied pattern of historic field patterns, ancient woodland and small settlements, typical of a medieval landscape. Cohesive assart field systems, created by clearance of woodland and enclosure of the land into fields, are common, indicating a more wooded landscape in the past. Regular planned private enclosure patterns around Hooe and Waldron reflect more planned enclosure, although without the written evidence of Parliamentary enclosure. Medium-large regular piecemeal enclosure pattern, possibly a result of late-medieval/Tudor field reorganisation, is found across the LCA. There is some 20th century field amalgamation reflecting modern agricultural needs.

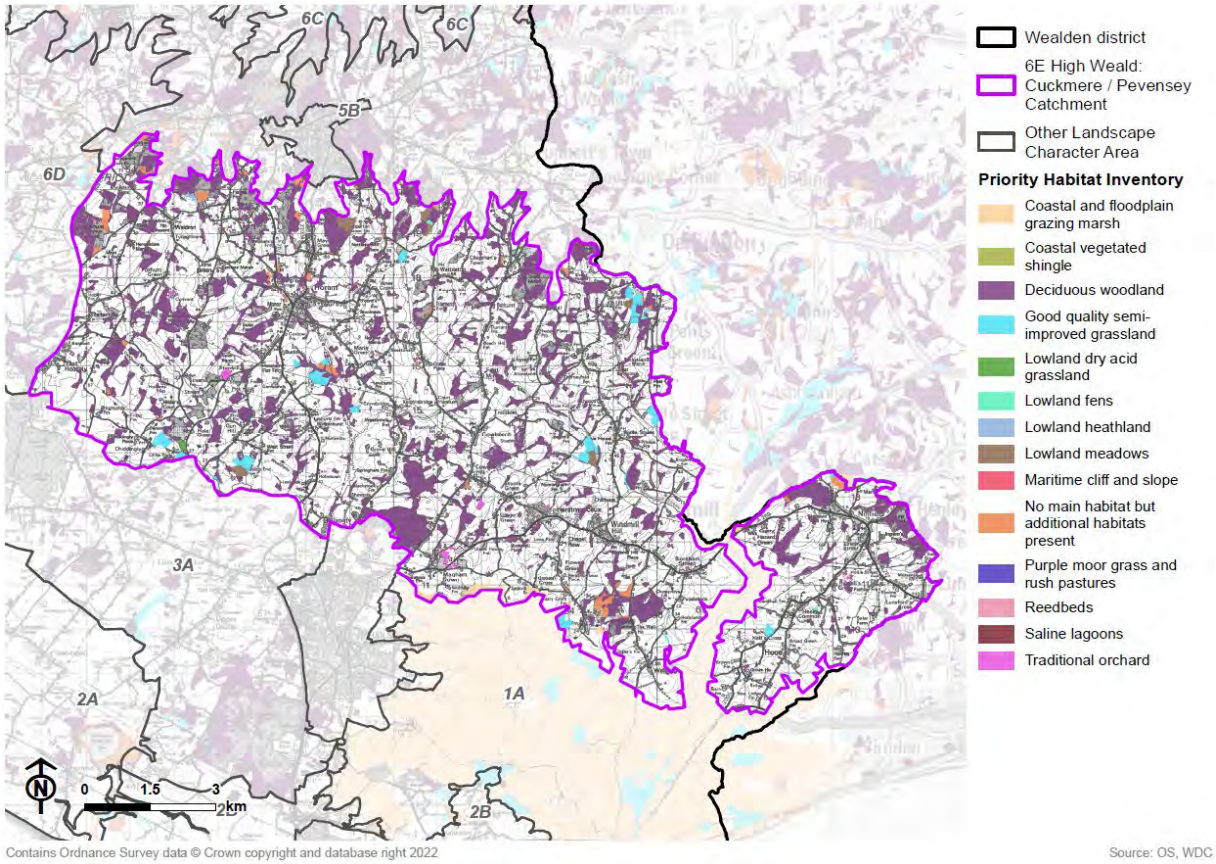
Perceptual character

The LCA is a largely rural landscape, with areas of enclosure formed by the woodland, hedgerows and mature trees. There are areas of tranquillity and dark skies in the valleys and larger woods, away from Hailsham and Horam and the busy trunk roads. In the east there are open views across the Pevensey Levels, including across Waller's Haven and the distinctive ridge landforms of the South Downs are also visible in views to the south. Church towers in the ridgetop villages, including at Waldron and Chiddingly, form landmark features which rise above the tree line, and the observatory at Herstmonceux forms a landmark building both within and outside of the LCA.

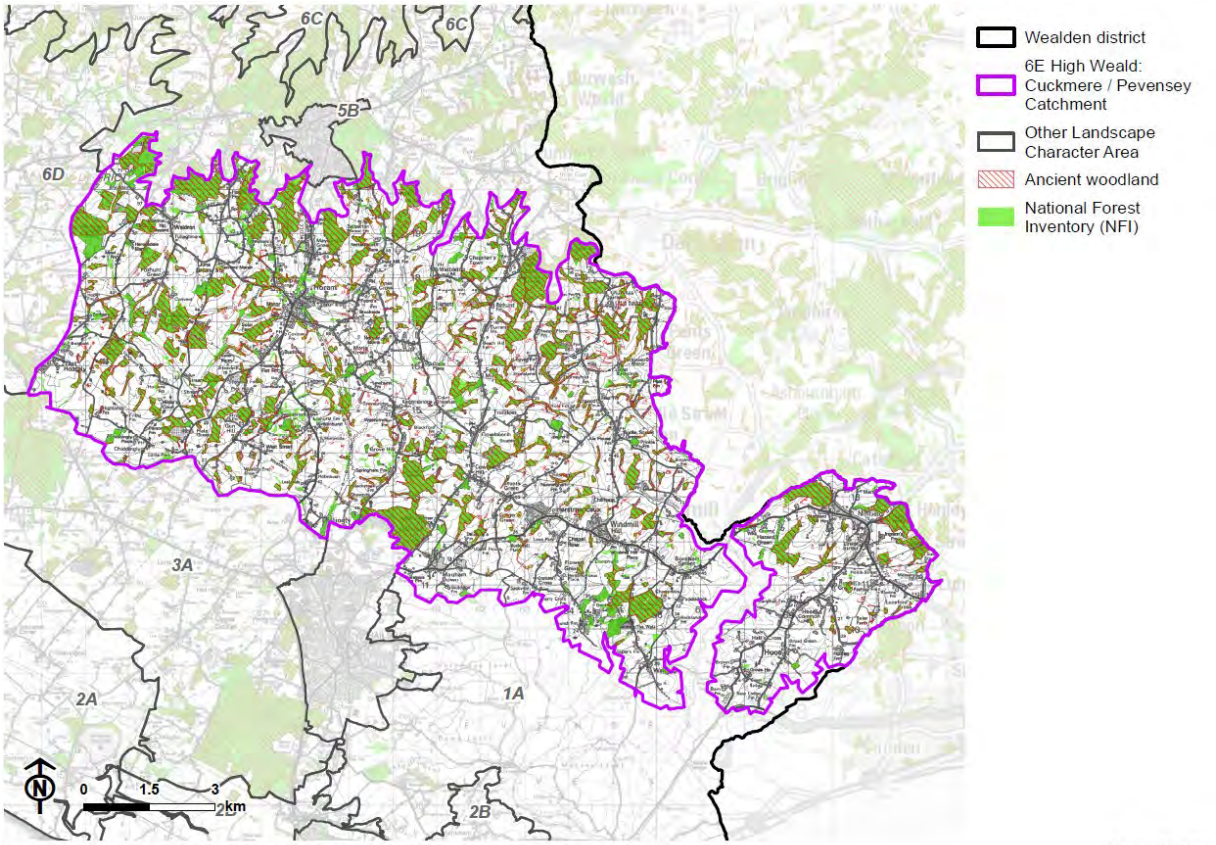
Electricity pylons and solar farms are modern elements in the landscape which reduce a sense of rurality in the immediate vicinity, although the solar farms are generally well-screened by woodland and topography.



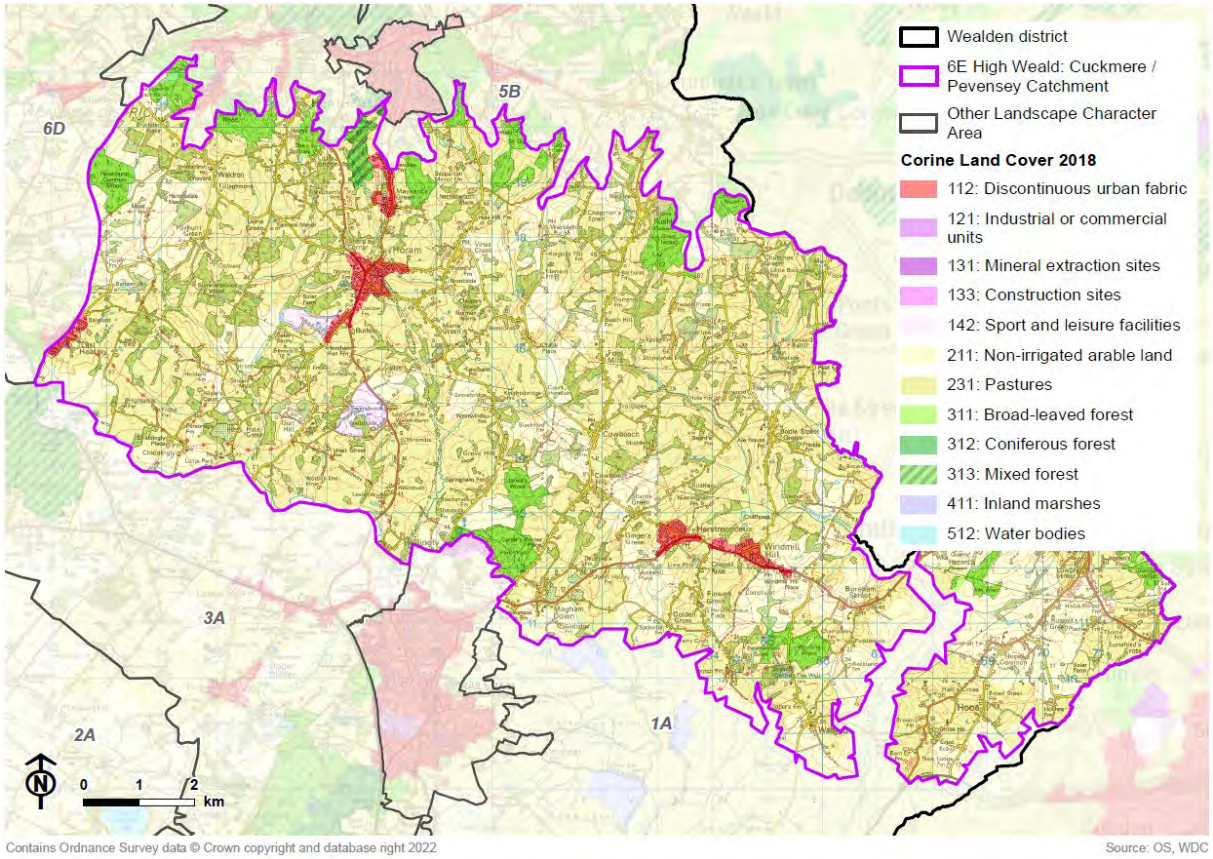
Nature conservation designations



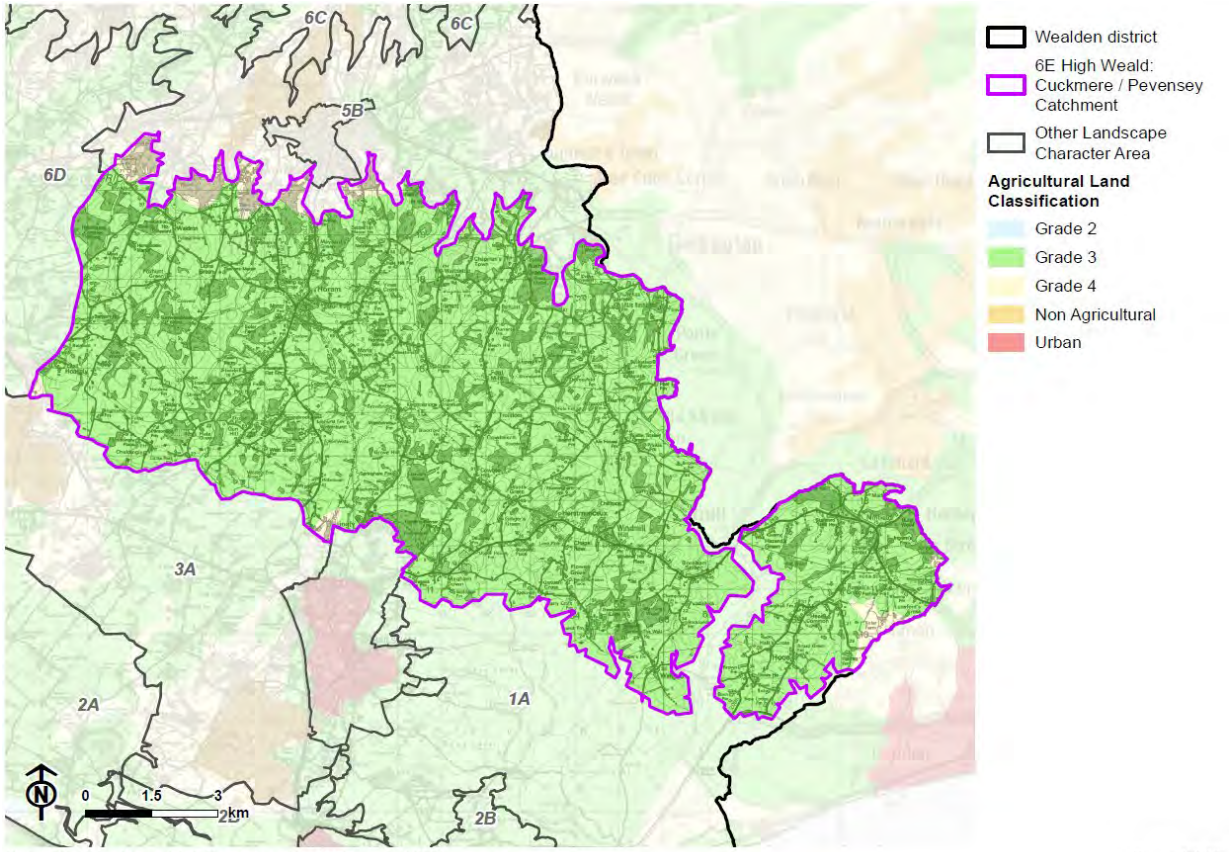
Priority habitat coverage



Woodland coverage

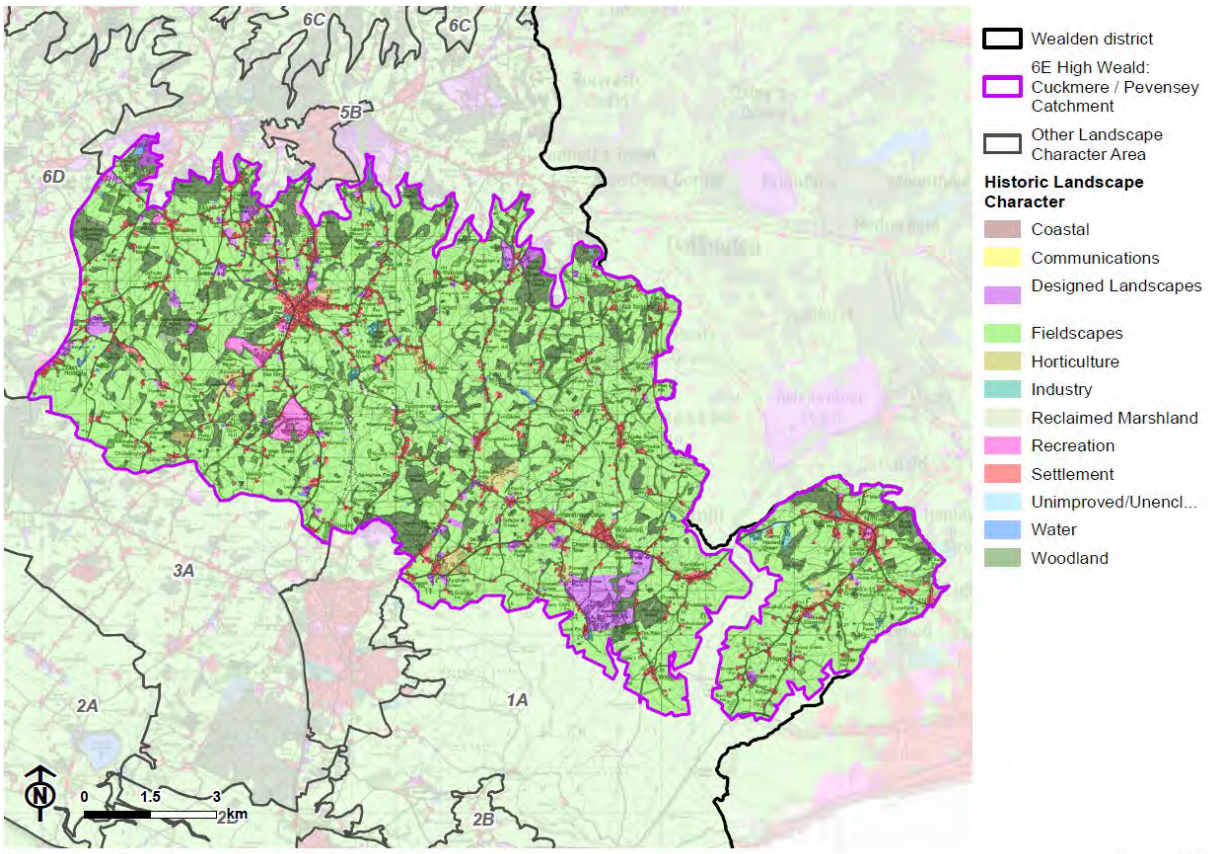


Landcover types (CORINE Land cover inventory 2018)



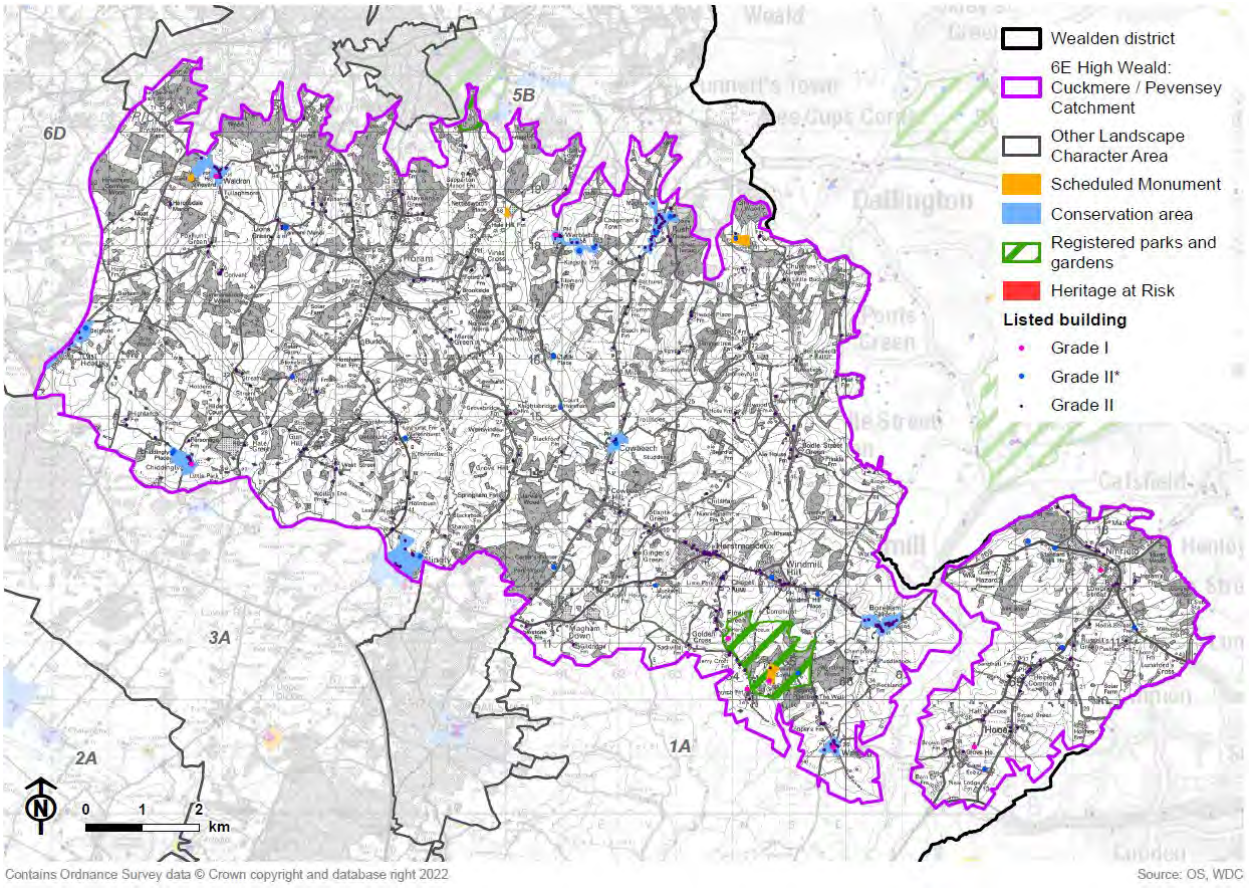
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Source: OS, NE

Agricultural Land Classification



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Source: OS, WDC

Historic Landscape Characterisation



Cultural heritage designations

Landscape qualities

The following features and characteristics are particularly valued for their contribution to character and for the ecosystem services they provide:

- The landform of ridges and valleys associated with the River Cuckmere and Waller's Haven provide topographical interest to the landscape, creating a sense of place.
- Hammer ponds and gill streams, support wetland habitats, increasing biodiversity.
- The woodland, riparian vegetation and wetland habitat of the Cuckmere and Waller's Haven catchments provide nutrient and sediment filtration that enhances water quality, help to regulate water flow and assist in reducing flooding during heavy rainfall.
- The numerous woodlands (with a high proportion of ancient woodlands), trees and mature hedgerows, provide a sense of place as well as habitat connectivity to support biodiversity, carbon sequestration and the regulation of temperatures.
- Coppicing of woodland offers opportunities for timber provision and a potential source of local fuel and building materials.
- Semi-natural habitats including deciduous woodland, grassland and wet meadows, some designated as SSSI, support a range of important flora, insects and breeding birds. They allow soil stabilisation/retention, have a higher soil carbon content than cultivated habitats and provide nutrient filtration, enhancing water quality.
- The small-scale medieval field patterns, with sinuous hedgerow boundaries provide a sense of place and history.
- Hammer ponds, coppiced woodlands and historic forges provide a link to the Wealden iron industry and a sense of time depth.

- The pattern of historic ridgetop villages (whose value is recognised through designation as Conservation Areas), linked by winding rural lanes, provide a connection to history, cultural identity and aesthetic value.
- The vernacular of red brick, oak timber, sandstone and flint which reflects the locally available materials, provides a sense of place and accords with a distinctive architectural colour palette.
- Herstmonceux Castle, Observatory and parkland contribute to the time depth of the landscape and are distinctive landmarks in the landscape.
- The extensive network of public rights of way contributes to people's physical health and mental well-being.
- Contrasts between the enclosed character around woodlands and sunken lanes, and open views to the Pevensey Levels and the South Downs provides visual interest and a sense of place.
- The harmonious small-scale landscape pattern of mixed farms, dense woodland and open views across the Pevensey Levels contribute to the strong scenic quality of the area, reflected in its partial designation as an AONB.
- The low density of settlement provides a sense of rural tranquillity and experience of dark skies.


Enclosed sunken rural lanes


Horse grazing on the edge of settlements, with mature hedgerow trees

Forces for change

- Climate change leading to increasing temperatures and periods of drought resulting in a change in water levels and stream flows, altering the species composition of wetland habitats.
- Climate change resulting in an increase in the frequency and severity of seasonal flooding in lower-lying valleys. Associated pressures to build flood management works that are unsympathetic to local landscape character and sensitive habitats.
- Decreased water quality resulting from sediment run-off after ploughing and increased use and accumulation of herbicides, pesticides and fertilisers associated with industrial arable farming.
- Climate change and changing land management practices leading to potential changes in woodland and tree species composition. Increases in severe gales could result in wind damage to woodland edges. Ancient woodlands may be particularly susceptible to damage from storms and drought.
- Climate change and changing land management practices leading to potential changes in flora and an increase in pests and diseases, such as acute oak decline or sweet chestnut blight.
- The former replacement of broadleaved woodland with conifer and mixed plantations and changes in woodland management, including reduction in traditional coppicing techniques which has resulted in a change to the species composition, continuity and density of woodland and influenced the landscape pattern and texture.
- A decline in mixed farming leading to the loss of pasture and meadows, with their associated mature and historic hedges, influencing landscape structure and pattern.

- Increase in hobby farming and conversion of grazing fields to equestrian use, including subdivision of fields with horse tape or post and wire fencing, and the proliferation of field shelters, which reduces the rural character of the landscape.
- Expansion of urban areas, particularly Horam and Hailsham, and pressure for housing in rural villages, could alter the historic dispersed settlement pattern and has the potential to impact the area's dark skies and sense of tranquillity.
- Recreational pressure on the landscape, leading to an increase in recreational infrastructure, including visitor centres and toilets, reducing the rural character of the landscape. Visitors' dogs can also disturb wildlife and damage habitats from dog faeces.
- Pylons are a modern influence of the landscape, and often highly visible in this undulating landscape.
- Pressure for renewable infrastructure (e.g. wind turbines on elevated ridges and solar farms on south facing slopes or open areas, and associated grid connections), which would reduce rural character and impact views.

Landscape Guidelines

These guidelines recommend how the landscape can be managed to ensure future change respects local character and should be read in conjunction with the objectives and proposed actions of the High Weald AONB Management Plan:

- Maintain constant stream levels when/where possible (monitoring water abstraction, especially as periods of drought increase), to retain wetland habitats.
- Monitor water quality in the streams, field ponds and hammer ponds. Minimise water pollution from agriculture through sensitive land management practices, including regenerative agricultural systems such as no or minimal till, holistic grazing, reduction or removal of chemical inputs, cover crops and the restoration of buffer strips along watercourses and field ponds to minimise run off in order to maintain the biodiversity of wetland features.
- Protect and manage the riverside vegetation and riparian tree cover, to restore habitat linkages and improve connectivity, in line with the aims of the Pevensey Levels Biodiversity Opportunity Areas.
- Encourage active and appropriate management of woodland to ensure a diverse species and age structure by thinning, coppicing and replanting as necessary, while avoiding damage from large machinery. No management is recommended for gill woodland as these habitats are too sensitive and insufficiently understood.
- As climatic conditions change, plant suitable species or encourage natural regeneration to create climate resistant woodland.
- Safeguard ancient woodland and protect and enhance vulnerable woodland habitats including gill woodlands and wet woodlands for the benefit of biodiversity and the landscape structure.
- Encourage the gradual restructuring of coniferous woodland to woodlands with a high broadleaved content, particularly for plantations on ancient woodland sites (PAWs), in line with the aims of the objectives of the High Weald AONB Management Plan.
- Support a sustainable woodland industry, encouraging small-scale operations using traditional techniques including coppicing, to develop new markets and products for locally sourced timber, and to maintain carbon sequestration.
- Protect and manage the existing hedgerow network, and plan for the restoration of, and linkages between, hedgerows, including establishing hedgerow oaks, to maintain habitat corridors and to retain the medieval field pattern typical of the High Weald. Remove post and wire fencing where appropriate.
- Maintain and restore links between the numerous woodlands in the area, other woodland habitats (such as hedgerows and parkland) and species-rich habitats such as wet meadows and unimproved grasslands, to create a robust network of woodland and open semi-natural habitats for the benefit of biodiversity and to contribute to an integrated green infrastructure network.
- Restore species-rich grassland through appropriate management and, where necessary, reseeding with Weald Native Origin Seed.
- Maintain the mixed farmed character of the area, while increasing areas of permanent pasture (aiming to convert arable land to permanent pasture or to regenerative forms of agriculture which combine arable, livestock and agro-forestry uses and creating grassland margins to arable fields) and manage the number and grazing regimes of livestock to maintain and increase biodiversity.
- Monitor potential changes in flora and increase in pests and diseases as a result of climate change and changes in land management practices, including spread of invasive plants and animals in water courses and woodlands.
- Encourage sympathetic integration of horse paddocks through the maintenance of hedgerow field boundaries,

conservation of existing scale of field parcels, avoiding overgrazing of pastures or the proliferation of field shelters and other hard infrastructure.

- Protect and enhance the historic designed landscape at Herstmonceux, increasing interpretation and access where appropriate to link communities with their local heritage.
- Protect the remaining features related to the Wealden, Iron industry, such as hammer ponds, increasing interpretation and opportunities for heritage trails and walks where appropriate to link communities with their local heritage.
- Limit the amount and scale development in rural areas, protecting the existing settlement pattern of dispersed rural villages, hamlets and scattered farmsteads, and the separation of these different settlement types.
- Ensure new building reinforces and responds to local character in its scale, layout and design, reflecting the local vernacular in use of materials. Developments should draw on the principles contained within the High Weald AONB design guidance, High Weald AONB 'Guidance on the selection and use of colour in development' and objectives of the High Weald AONB Management Plan.
- Consider any northern expansion of Hailsham and urban fringe uses carefully, ensuring new development is in keeping with the local vernacular, and does not disrupt the dispersed settlement pattern.
- Extend woodland around existing settlement edges and infrastructure development to filter light pollution and reduce the visual impact of further urbanisation.
- Maintain the historic network of routeways, ensuring new roads or 'upgrades' take account of their rural context and avoid over-engineered features and/or the introduction of lighting into dark areas. Maintain the trees and species-rich grasslands on road verges.
- Ensure any renewable energy generation is compatible with the guidance above and is in scale with the landscape where possible. Where larger scale renewable energy development is justified to meet climate change objectives, any harm to the landscape should be compensated for by landscape-scale enhancements of the surrounding area. Electricity infrastructure associated with renewable energy generation should be efficiently planned to minimise the number of lines required, routeing in accordance with the Holford Rules[3].
- Restore and establish new hedgerows and shaws to create habitat connectivitiy and restore historic landscape character. Reduce the visual impact of transmission lines in line with the Beautiful Boundaries project with the National Grid's Landscape Enhancement Initiative.
- Retain views to the Herstmonceux Observatory, from within and outside the LCA.
- Retain the characteristic contrast between areas of enclosed character and long open views to the Pevensey Levels, South Downs and landmark church towers.
- Maintain the strong scenic qualities of the landscape and its sense of remoteness, tranquillity and experience of dark skies.

[3] https://www.nationalgrid.com/sites/default/files/documents/13795-The%20Holford%20Rules.pdf

Appendix A: Glossary



Appendix A
Glossary

Table A.1: Glossary

Term	Definition
AOD	Above Ordnance Datum (sea level).
Aesthetic	Concerning the visual appeal of a feature or landscape.
Agricultural Land Classification	The classification of agricultural land in England in Wales
Alluvium	Loose soil or sediments, which have been eroded, reshaped by water in some form, and redeposited.
Analysis	The process of breaking the landscape down, usually in descriptive terms, into its component parts in order to understand how it is made up.
Ancient trees and veteran trees	Individual trees or groups of trees with wood pastures, historic parkland, hedgerows, orchards, park, and other areas. They are often found outside ancient woodlands. irreplaceable habitats with some or all of the following characteristics: *Ancient trees* An ancient tree is exceptionably valuable. Attributes can include its great age, size, condition, biodiversity value (as a result of significant wood decay and the habitat created from the ageing process), cultural and heritage value. *Veteran trees* A veteran tree may or may not be very old, but it has decay features, such as branch death and hollowing. These features contribute to its biodiversity, cultural and heritage value.
Ancient Woodland	Woodland which the evidence shows has had had continuous woodland cover since at least 1600 AD and has only been cleared for underwood or timber production. It is an extremely valuable ecological resource, with an exceptionally high diversity of flora and fauna.
AONB	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty – a statutory national landscape designation.
Approach	The stepwise process by which a landscape assessment is undertaken.
Arable	Land used for growing crops.

Term	Definition
Assessment	An umbrella term used to encompass all the many different ways of looking at, describing, analysing, and evaluating landscape.
Assart	A piece of land converted from forest to agricultural use. Most such piecemeal enclosures date to the medieval or early post-medieval period and are bounded by species rich hedgerows, an indicator of land assarted from woodland.
Assarting	The act of clearing forested lands for use in agriculture or other purposes (in English land law, it was illegal to assart any part of a Royal Forest).
BAP	UK Biodiversity Action Plan priority species and habitats were identified as being the most threatened and requiring conservation action under the UK BAP. The original lists of UK BAP priority habitats were created between 1995 and 1999 and were subsequently updated in 2007. See http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-5155 for further information.
Biodiversity	The measure of the variety of organisms present in different ecosystems.
Brownfield Site	A development site which is re-using previously developed land.
Built form	The characteristic nature of built development.
Carr woodland	Marsh or fen woodland in waterlogged terrain. Characteristic trees include alders and willows.
Characteristic	An element that contributes to local distinctiveness (e.g. narrow winding lanes, vernacular building style).
Classification	A process of sorting the landscape into different types, each with a distinct, consistent, and recognisable character.
Combe	A small dry valley, without a permanent watercourse.
Condition	A judgement on the intactness and condition of the elements of the landscape.
Coppicing	The traditional method of woodland management in which trees are cut down to near the ground to encourage the production of long, straight shoots, which can subsequently be harvested.
Description	Verbal description of what a landscape looks like. This is usually carried out in a systematic manner, but it may also include personal reactions to the landscape.
Drift	The name for all material of glacial origin found anywhere on land or at sea, including sediment and large rocks.
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment

Term	Definition
Element	A component part of the landscape (e.g. hedges, roads, woods).
Enclosure	The placing in private hands of land to which there were previously common rights; the merging of commonly held strip fields to form a block surrounded by hedges.
Equine development	A term used to describe areas on the fringes of settlements which are dominated by horse paddocks, stable buildings, and associated paraphernalia.
Feature	A prominent, eye-catching element (e.g. wooded hilltop, church spire).
Floodplain	The area that would naturally be affected by flooding if a river rises above its banks, or if high tides and stormy seas cause flooding in coastal areas.
GIS	Geographic Information System
GPS	Global Positioning System
Grassland	Land used for grazing. Grassland can be improved (by management practices) semi-improved (modified by management practices and have a range of species less diverse than unimproved grasslands), or unimproved (not treated with fertiliser, herbicide or intensively grazed and consequently species diversity is high).
Greenfield site	A development site, usually on the fringes of a settlement, which has not previously been used for built development.
Habitat	The natural home or environment of an animal, plant, or other organism.
HLC	Historic Landscape Characterisation
Hydrology	The science dealing with the occurrence, circulation, distribution, and properties of the waters of the earth and its atmosphere.
Innings	From verb 'to inn' meaning to reclaim.
Intact	Not changed or diminished.
Land cover	Combinations of land use and vegetation that cover the land surface.
Landmark	An object or feature of a landscape or town that is easily seen and recognized from a distance, especially one that enables someone to establish their location.
Landscape	The term refers primarily to the visual appearance of the land, including its shape, form, and colours. However, the landscape is not a purely visual phenomenon; its character relies on a whole range of other dimensions, including geology, topography, soils, ecology, archaeology, landscape history, land use, architecture, and cultural associations.

Term	Definition
Landscape character	A distinct pattern or combination of elements that occurs consistently in a particular landscape.
Landscape character area (LCA)	A unique geographic area with a consistent character and identity, which forms part of a landscape character type.
Landscape character type (LCT)	A generic term for landscape with a consistent, homogeneous character. Landscape character types may occur in different parts of the county, but wherever they occur, they will share common combinations of geology, topography, vegetation, or human influences.
Landscape condition	Based on judgements about the physical state of the landscape, and about its intactness, from visual, functional, and ecological perspectives. It reflects the state of repair or intactness of individual features or elements (relating to that feature's primary condition or ultimate *desire*).
Landscape strategy	Principles to manage and direct landscape change for a particular landscape type or character area including identification of any particular management needs for specific elements.
Landscape value	The relative value that is attached to different landscapes. In a policy context the usual basis for recognising certain highly valued landscapes is through the application of a local or national landscape designation. Yet a landscape may be valued by different communities of interest for many different reasons without any formal designation, recognising, for example, perceptual aspects such as scenic beauty, tranquillity or wildness; special cultural associations; the influence and presence of other conservation interests; or the existence of a consensus about importance, either nationally or locally.
Linear settlement	A settlement that is built along a road, in comparison to a nuclear or dispersed settlement.
Listed Building	A building, object or structure that has been judged to be of national importance in terms of architectural or historic interest.
Local Plan	A development plan prepared by local planning authorities.
LWS	Local Wildlife Site
Martello towers	Small defensive forts that were built across the British Empire during the 19th century.
Natural character	Character as a result of natural or semi-natural features such as woodland, grassland, hedgerows etc.
National Character Areas (NCAs)	National Character Areas are defined within the *National Character Area Study, Natural England (2013).* NCAs divide England into 159 distinct natural areas. Each is defined by a unique combination of landscape, biodiversity, geodiversity, history, and cultural and economic activity.
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation

Term	Definition
NNR	National Nature Reserve
Nucleated settlement	A settlement that is clustered around a centre, in comparison to a linear or dispersed settlement.
Open-field system	An area of arable land with common rights after harvest or while fallow. The fields date from the medieval period and are usually without internal divisions (hedges, walls, or fences).
OS	Ordnance Survey
Parliamentary fields / enclosure	Fields formed by a legal process of enclosure (or inclosure), typically during the 18th and 19th centuries – by passing laws causing or forcing enclosure to produce fields for use by the owner (in place of common land for communal use).
Pastoral	Land used for keeping or grazing sheep or cattle.
Pollarding	A traditional woodland management practice in which the branches of a tree are cut back every few years to encourage new long, straight shoots for harvesting. Differs from *coppicing* because the cuts are made at sufficient distance from the ground to prevent them from being eaten by animals.
PRoW	Public Right of Way
Ramsar	Wetlands of international importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat
Remediation	Process by which a contaminated or damaged site is repaired and brought back intomore general use, or for a specific purpose (e.g. wildlife conservation).
Remnant	A part or quantity left after the greater part has been used, removed, or destroyed.
Riparian habitat	Riverbank habitat.
RNR	Roadside Nature Reserve
SAC	Special Area of Conservation (EC Directive 92/43/EEC Habitats Directive)
SANGS	Suitable Alternative Green Space
Scheduled Monument	Nationally important archaeological sites or historic buildings, given protection against unauthorised change.
Semi-natural vegetation	Any type of natural vegetation which has been influenced by human activities, either directly or indirectly.
Sense of Place	A person's perception of a location's indigenous characteristics, based on the mix of uses, appearance and context that makes a place memorable.
Sensitive	The response to change or influence.

Term	Definition
Skyline	The outline of a range of hills, ridge or group of buildings seen against the sky.
SPA	Special Protection Area (EC Directive 2009/147/EC on the Conservation of Wild Birds)
SSSI	Site of Special Scientific Interest
Time depth	The time period expressed in the landscape, or the extent to which the landscape reflects a certain time period (a landscape with greater time depth will comprise older elements than a landscape with lesser time depth).
Topography	Combinations of slope and elevation that produce the shape and form of the land surface.
Valued landscape attributes	Positive features and characteristics that are important to landscape character and that, if lost, would result in adverse change to the landscape.
Vernacular	Buildings constructed in the local style, from local materials. Concerned with ordinary rather than monumental buildings.

Appendix B: Data list



Appendix B

Data List

Data	Data source
Background mapping	
■ Aerial Imagery	ESRI
■ OS MasterMap ■ OS 25k ■ OS 50k	Wealden District Council
Boundary	
■ Local Authority boundary	Ordnance Survey
Landscape Character Assessments	
■ Wealden Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment (2014) ■ East Sussex County LCA (2016)	Wealden District Council
Landscape Character Assessments for adjacent authorities*	
■ Mid-Sussex LCA (2005) ■ Tunbridge Wells LCA (2017) ■ Eastbourne LCA (2010)	Wealden District Council
Cultural heritage	
■ Listed Buildings ■ Scheduled Monuments ■ Registered Parks and Gardens ■ Heritage at risk ■ WHS	Historic England
■ Conservation Areas ■ Conservation Area Appraisals (including draft Appraisals) ■ Locally listed buildings (including any interim date being prepared for the new Local Plan) ■ Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC)	Wealden District Council
Natural Heritage	
■ Local Nature Reserves (LNR)	Natural England

Data	Data source
■ Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) ■ National Nature Reserves (NNR) ■ Ancient Woodland Index (AWI) ■ Priority habitats ■ Special Protection Areas (SPA) ■ Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) ■ Ramsar / Proposed Ramsar	
■ National Forestry Index (NFI)	Forestry Commission
■ Important Bird Areas (IBA)	RSPB
■ Regional Important Geological Sites (RIGS) / Local Geological Sites ■ Broad Habitat Types ■ Wildlife Verges ■ Green Infrastructure areas ■ Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs)	Wealden District Council
Landscape	
■ Light pollution ■ Tranquillity	CPRE
■ National Character Areas ■ High Weald AONB ■ South Downs National Park ■ Heritage Coasts	Natural England
■ Topography	Ordnance Survey
■ Flood zone 2/3 ■ Areas that benefit from flood defences ■ Flood storage areas (FSA) ■ Spatial flood defence (SFD) ■ Source protection zone (SPZ)	Environment Agency
■ Lakes	Ordnance Survey (meridian)
■ Flood Zones 3a and 3b ■ Land at risk from groundwater flooding	Wealden District Council
Access and recreation	
■ National Cycle Network	Sustrans

Data	Data source
■ National Trails ■ Common Land ■ Country Parks	Natural England
■ National Trails	National Trust
■ Green Space	Ordnance Survey
■ Accessible Natural Greenspace ■ Public rights of way/Promoted Routes ■ Brownfield land	Wealden District Council
Planning	
■ Settlement boundaries ■ Consented sites / committed sites / allocations	Wealden District Council
Agriculture	
■ Agricultural Land Classification (ALC)	Natural England
■ CORINE landcover 2018	EEA

Appendix C: Classification



Appendix C

LCA Boundary Classification

Landscape Character Type (LCT)	Landscape Character Area (LCA)	Relevant NCA and County (ESCC) LCA	Notes on boundaries
1 Alluvial levels	1A: Pevensey Levels	NCA 124 Pevensey Levels County Area 25 Pevensey Levels	Boundaries drawn to edge of flood zone 2 or 5m contour line
2 Open clay vale (Low Weald)	2A: Laughton to Arlington Open Clay Vale	NCA 121 Low Weald County Area 15 Eastern Low Weald	Boundary between open and wooded clay vale roughly follows a change in geology (Wealden Clay mudstones underlying the 'Wooded clay vale' and Lower Greensand/ Gault Mudstones underlying the 'Open clay vale').
	2B: Polegate Open Clay Vale	NCA 121 Low Weald NCA 124 Pevensey Levels County Areas 15 Eastern Low Weald, 29 Eastbourne and 24 Pevensey Levels	
3 Wooded clay vale (Low Weald)	3A: Uckfield to Hailsham Wooded Clay Vale	NCA 121 Low Weald County Area 15 Eastern Low Weald	The boundary between the 'Low Weald' and 'High Weald' approximates to the 40m contour west of Hailsham, and by the edge of the Pevensey Levels east of Hailsham.
4 River floodplains (Low Weald)	4A: Cuckmere Floodplain	NCA 121 Low Weald County Area 15 Eastern Low Weald	Boundary informed by flood zones 2 & 3 (this is a continuation of SDNP LCA Cuckmere Floodplain)
5 Wooded ridges (High Weald)	5A: High Weald - Ashdown Forest	NCA 122 High Weald County Area 2 Ashdown Forest	Boundary includes open access land and area of woodland west of Crowborough.
	5B: High Weald - Central	NCA 122 High Weald County Areas 4 Central High Weald, 2 Ashdown Forest, 3 Upper Ouse Valley, 6 Rother Valley, 7 Bewl Water Area and 5 South Slopes of High Weald	Includes the ridge/ higher land above the 100m contour line
6. Wooded slopes (High Weald)	6A: High Weald - Medway Catchment	NCA 122 High Weald County Areas 1 Upper Medway, 2 Ashdown Forest and 4 Central High Weald	Slopes below the 100m contour line (digitised from 1:50K OS)

Landscape Character Type (LCT)	Landscape Character Area (LCA)	Relevant NCA and County (ESCC) LCA	Notes on boundaries
	6B: High Weald - Teise Catchment	NCA 122 High Weald County Areas 4 Central High Weald and 7 Bewl Water Area	As above
	6C: High Weald - Rother Catchment	NCA 122 High Weald County Area 6 Upper Rother Valley	As above
	6D: High Weald - Ouse Catchment	NCA 122 High Weald County Areas 3 Upper Ouse Valley, 4 Central High Weald and 5 South Slopes of High Weald	As above Meets Low Weald at its southern extent
	6E: High Weald - Cuckmere/ Pevensey Catchment	NCA 122 High Weald County Areas 5 South Slopes of High Weald, 15 Eastern Low Weald and 25 Pevensey Levels	As above Meets Low Weald/ Pevensey Levels at its southern extent