

**fabrik**

# Land north of Balcombe Road, Haywards Heath

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Landscape & Visual Impact Assessment  
January 2026

**Job Name:** Land north of Balcombe Road, Haywards Heath  
**Job number:** D2935  
**Client:** Fairfax  
**Report number:** 0001

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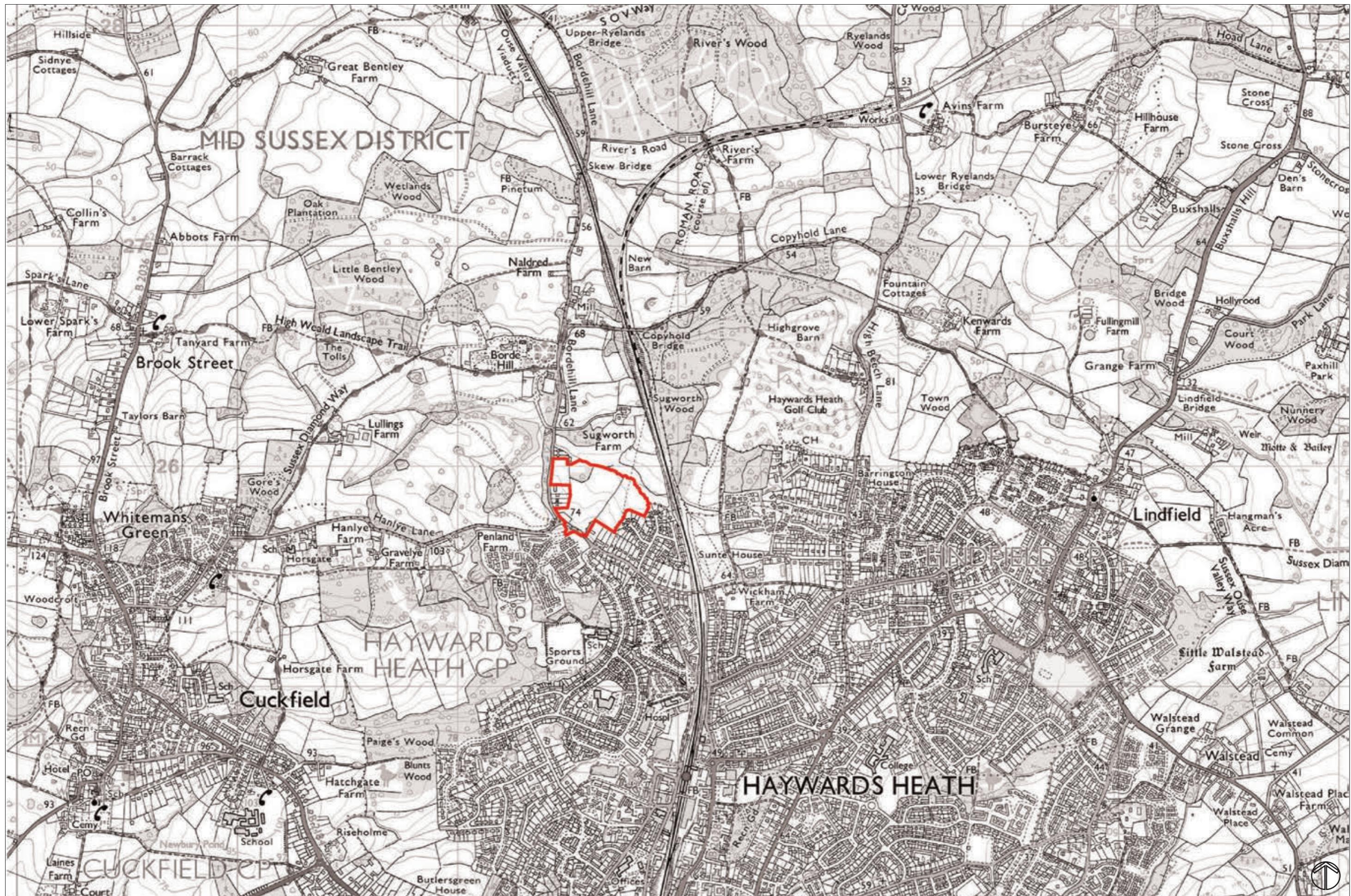


Figure 1.1 – Site location and extent of study area (fabrik, 2025)

Site boundary

# Introduction

fabrik Chartered Landscape Architects have been appointed by Fairfax Acquisitions to carry out this report, in order to consider the likely physical and visual impacts arising as a result of the proposed development of the Site.

The outline planning application is for the residential development of up to 125 dwellings, up to two storeys in height with associated public open space, green infrastructure, and access from Borde Hill Lane via an enlarged roundabout. All matters are reserved except for access.

This report sets out landscape policy (together with any related policy on ecological and heritage assets) and any supporting guidance documents / informatics and then goes on to describe the constituent baseline landscape elements (the existing geology, soils, landform, drainage, vegetation cover, land use, settlement, the history of the landscape and the way that landscape is experienced) which together inform landscape character, landscape condition and value. The LVIA then describes the baseline character and amenity of the identified visual receptors (considering the visual envelope, the different groups of people, places affected, the nature of the view and the visual amenity).

The landscape constraints and opportunities are then set out to inform the proposed development. Any mitigation measures and assumptions which have informed the assessment of effects are set out after the description of the proposed development. The effects of the proposed development are then considered against each of the landscape and visual receptors relative to the particular stages of the project. The penultimate section of this report comprises a landscape policy assessment.

The location of the Site is shown at Figure 1.1.

The methodology for the LVIA is based on the 'Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment' (third edition) by the Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (Routledge, 2013). A full methodology is set out at Appendix 1.

## 1.1 Desktop Research

The desktop survey carried out as part of the LVIA included the review of Ordnance Survey maps, interactive maps, aerial photography, published landscape character assessment documents, planning policy and the emerging development proposals.

## 1.2 Field Work

The field work was carried out on 26th June 2025 and recorded the existing landscape elements within the Site; the contextual landscape elements; and identified a series of key visual receptors. The visual assessment element includes a photographic survey of the Site taken from a series of representative key views, chosen to represent a range of locations including both public and private views, distances and directions around the Site.

## 1.3 Consultation

A pre-application meeting was held with Mid Sussex District Council on 25 June 2025. The Council provided a series of comments relating to landscape and visual matters that should be considered within the LVIA. These are quoted directly below, followed by the LVIA's response to each point.

*"We note the inclusion of a Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) within the LVIA Representative Views and Methodology report. Viewpoints and viewpoint justification should be overlayed onto the ZTV."*

**Response:** A ZTV has not been produced for this Site. During the five years of assessment work for this site, extensive field surveys have consistently demonstrated exceptionally strong visual containment, with the Site visually enclosed by landform, woodland blocks, hedgerows and settlement-edge vegetation.

*"Considering the sloping site levels and the impact this will have on the visual envelope of the development; a topographical plan should be included within the LVIA."*

**Response:** A topographical plan has been included within the LVIA to illustrate the Site's landform and demonstrate how levels have been considered within the assessment.

*"In accordance with best practice the LVIA field work should be undertaken in the winter months, where trees and hedgerows are out of leaf."*

*"Site photography should be provided in accordance with Technical Guidance Note 06/19 and should include winter month photography again where trees and hedgerows are out of leaf."*

**Response:** Winter photography has not been obtained. Across the projects time period, visibility has consistently demonstrated to be highly limited due to the robustness of vegetation structure and landform. While winter photography would typically be preferred, the available baseline evidence provides a sound and reliable basis for assessing views.

*"Reference needs to be made to the impact the proposals may have on the High Weald National Landscape, which the site abuts to the western boundary."*

*"Reference should also be made to the impact in the Registered Park and Garden, again to the western boundary of the site."*

**Response:** These receptors are fully assessed within the LVIA. The assessment demonstrates that intervening woodland, landform and mature tree belts prevent any intervisibility between the Site and both the High Weald National Landscape and Borde Hill Registered Park and Garden.

The significance of effect is assessed as Negligible.

*"The illustrative masterplan needs to demonstrate how it has been shaped and informed by the LVIA (including the site levels, layout, building heights and wider Green Infrastructure)."*

**Response:** The LVIA and Illustrative Masterplan have been closely coordinated. The layout, development extents, building heights and open space structure have been shaped directly by landscape character, visual containment, topography, vegetation retention and key view considerations. These principles are clearly set out in the LVIA's description of the landscape-led design.

*"Viewpoints are generally located close to the site however we acknowledge the constraints of surrounding vegetation. We are satisfied with the included receptors however advise that a few other longer distance views are included:*

- Borde Hill RPG
- Borde Hill
- Gore's Wood"

**Response:** These longer-distance receptors have not been included, for the following reason:

- Extensive fieldwork undertaken has confirmed that none of these locations have any visibility of the Site, due to a combination of landform, woodland blocks, mature tree belts and settlement-edge vegetation.
- This conclusion is consistent with the Council's own recognition of "constraints of surrounding vegetation".
- The LVIA provides a clear demonstration of this strong visual containment, and therefore the omission of these viewpoints is justified.

*"The following landscape receptors should be included:*

- The Site and Immediate Context
- The Wider Context
- HW4 High Weald Fringes – West Sussex LCA
- High Weald National Landscape"

**Response:** All of the above landscape receptors have been included and assessed in the LVIA, with each addressed in accordance with GLVIA3 and local policy requirements.

## 2.0

# Landscape Planning Context

## 2.1 Designations and Policy

### Designations

The Site is not subject to a landscape designation at the national, regional or local level and does not lie within a viewing corridor protected by policy. However, to the north, west and southwest of the Site lies the High Weald National Landscape - formerly known as Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). Also to the west and southwest lies Borde Hill Gardens, a Registered Park and Gardens (RPG).

Within the local landscape to the north, west and east of the Site are areas of Ancient Woodland.

Refer to Figure 2.1.

### Historic and Cultural Landscape

Conservation Areas are located within the study area at Cuckfield to the west and Haywards Heath to south. There are a number of Listed Buildings within the local landscape including:

- Grade II Listed Borde Hill Place, approximately 430m to the northwest of the Site.
- Grade II Listed South Lodge to Borde Hill, approximately 35m to the southwest of the Site.
- Grade II Listed Sugworth Farmhouse, approximately 220m to the north of the Site.

### Public Rights of Way

As illustrated in Figure 2.2. there is a limited network of Public Rights of Way (PRoW) within and around the northern settlement edge of Haywards Heath, providing some connectivity between the Site and the rural landscape (and National Landscape beyond to the north and west). Those PRoW within proximity to the Site include:

- The High Weald Sussex Way, to the northwest and north of the Site.
- The Sussex Diamond Way, to the west of the Site.
- Public footpath the east of the railway line and Sugworth Wood, connecting Haywards Heath Golf Club to the town centre in the south.

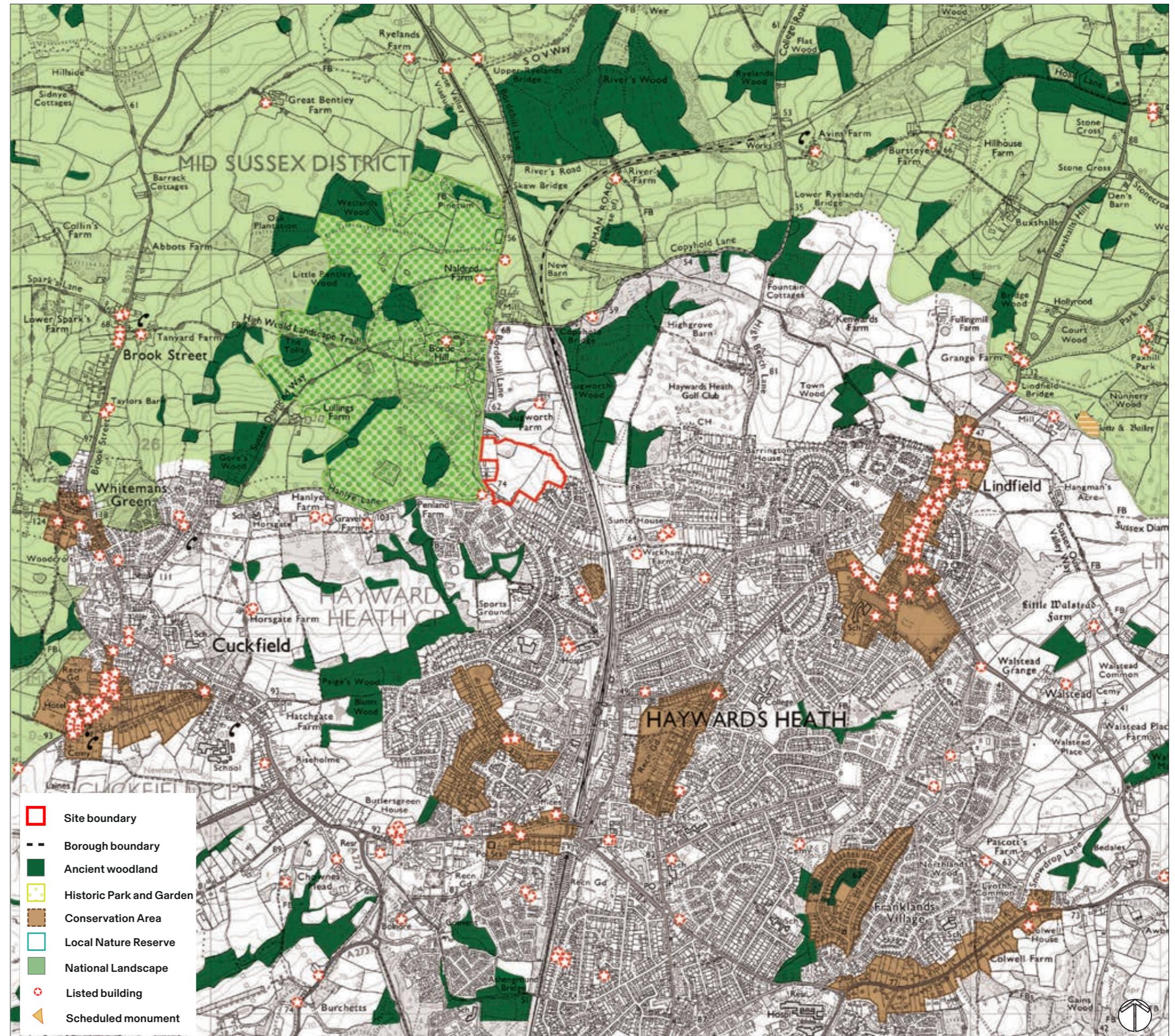


Figure 2.1 – Local designations (fabrik, 2025)



Figure 2.2 – public rights of way, open access land and Registered Common Land (fabrik, 2025)

- Site boundary
- High Weald Landscape Trail - long distance route
- Sussex Ouse Valley Way - long distance route
- Sussex Diamond Way - long distance route
- Footpath
- Bridleway
- Byway

## 2.1.1 National Policy

### National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

The December 2024 NPPF seeks the presumption in favour of sustainable development. The following issues and policies of the NPPF are pertinent to the proposed development and this assessment.

Section 2 - achieving sustainable development, para 8, subsection c relating to an environmental objective, states:

*"to protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, improving biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change..."*

Section 8 - promoting healthy and safe communities, para 103 under the open space and recreation sub-heading states:

*"Access to a network of high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and physical activity is important for the health and well-being of communities, and can deliver wider benefits for nature and support effects to address climate change..."*

Para 105 states:

*"Planning policies and decisions should protect and enhance public rights of way and access, including taking opportunities to provide better facilities for users, for example by adding links to existing rights of way networks including National Trails."*

Para 106 on Local Green Space states:

*"The designation of land as Local Green Space through local and neighbourhood plans allows communities to identify and protect green areas of particular importance to them..."*

Para 108 goes on to state: *"Policies and decisions for managing development within a Local Green Space should be consistent with national policy for Green Belts set out in chapter 13 of this Framework."*

Section 12 - achieving well-designed places. Para 131:

*"The creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities..."*

Para 132:

*"... Design policies should be developed with local communities so that they reflect local aspirations, and are grounded in an understanding and evaluation of each area's defining characteristics..."*

Para 135:

*"Planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments:*

- a. will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;*
- b. are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;*
- c. are sympathetic to local character and history, including the*

*surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities);*

*d. establish or maintain a strong sense of place, using the arrangement of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live, work and visit;*

*e. optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development (including green and other public space) and support local facilities and transport networks; and*

*f. create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users; and where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion and resilience."*

Para 136 relates to trees and states:

*"Trees make an important contribution to the character and quality of urban environments, and can also help mitigate and adapt to climate change. Planning policies and decisions should ensure that new streets are tree-lined, that opportunities are taken to incorporate trees elsewhere in developments (such as parks and community orchards), that appropriate measures are in place to secure the long-term maintenance of newly-planted trees, and that existing trees are retained wherever possible. Applicants and local planning authorities should work with highways officers and tree officers to ensure that the right trees are planted in the right places, and solutions are found that are compatible with highways standards and the needs of different users."*

Para 137:

*"Design quality should be considered throughout the evolution and assessment of individual proposals..."*

Para 139:

*"Development that is not well designed should be refused, especially where it fails to reflect local design policies and government guidance on design, taking into account any local design guidance and supplementary planning documents which use visual tools such as design guides and codes. Conversely, significant weight should be given to:*

- a. development which reflects local design policies and government guidance on design, taking into account any local design guidance and supplementary planning documents which use visual tools such as design guides and codes; and/or*
- b. outstanding or innovative designs which promote high levels of sustainability, or help raise the standard of design more generally in an area, so long as they fit in with the overall form and layout of their surroundings."*

Section 14 - meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change. The elements relevant to landscape matters include para 164 states: *"New development should be planned for in ways that:*

*a. avoid increased vulnerability to the range of impacts arising from climate change. When new development is brought forward in areas which are vulnerable, care should be taken to ensure that risks can be managed through suitable adaptation measures, including through incorporating green infrastructure and sustainable urban drainage systems;..."*

Under the sub section on planning and flood ris, Para 172,

subsection c goes on to state with regard to 'all plans' that:

*"c. using opportunities provided by new development and improvements in green and other infrastructure to reduce the causes and impacts of flooding, (making as much use as possible of natural flood management techniques as part of an integrated approach to flood risk management."*

Section 15 - conserving and enhancing the natural environment. Para 187:

*"Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:*

*a. protecting and enhancing valued landscapes... (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan);*

*b. recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the nest and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland.*

*c. maintaining the character of the undeveloped coast, while improving public access to it..."*

Para 189:

*"Great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and National Landscapes which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues. The conservation and enhancement of wildlife and cultural heritage are also important considerations in these areas, and should be given great weight in National Parks and the Broads. The scale and extent of development within all these designated areas should be limited, while development within their setting should be sensitively located and designed to avoid or minimise adverse impacts on the designated areas."*

Para 190:

*"When considering applications for development within National Parks, the Broads and National Landscapes, permission should be refused for major development other than in exceptional circumstances, and where it can be demonstrated that the development is in the public interest. Consideration of such applications should include an assessment of:*

- a. the need for the development, including in terms of any national considerations, and the impact of permitting it, or refusing it, upon the local economy;*
- b. the cost of, and scope for, developing outside the designated area, or meeting the need for it in some other way; and*
- c. any detrimental effect on the environment, the landscape and recreational opportunities, and the extent to which that could be moderated."*

Section 16 - conserving and enhancing the historic environment, para 202 states:

*"Heritage assets range from sites and buildings of local historic value to those of the highest significance, such as World Heritage Sites which are internationally recognised to be of Outstanding Universal Value. These assets are an irreplaceable resource, and should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of existing and future generations"*

Under the subsection on considering potential impacts, para 213:

*"Any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification. Substantial harm to or loss of:*

*a. grade II listed buildings, or grade II registered parks and gardens, should be exceptional;*

*b. assets of the highest significance, notably scheduled monuments, protected wreck sites, registered battlefields, grade I and grade II\* listed buildings, grade I and II\* registered parks and gardens, and World Heritage Sites, should be wholly exceptional."*

### Planning Practice Guidance

The NPPF is supported by the on-line resource Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) There are a number of sections of relevance, as set out below. Climate change is considered in para 001 (ID 6-001-20140306) states: *"... local planning authorities should ensure that protecting the local environment is properly considered alongside the broader issues of protecting the global environment. Planning can also help increase resilience to climate change impact through the location, mix and design of development."*

Addressing climate change is one of the core land use planning principles which the National Planning Policy Framework expects to underpin both plan-making and decision-taking.."

Planning for well-designed places and the sub-section on 'How are well-designed places achieved through the planning system?' are set out at para 001 (ID: 26-001-20191001) which states: *"Well-designed places can be achieved by taking a proactive and collaborative approach at all stages of the planning process, from policy and plan formulation through to the determination of planning applications and the post approval stage... To be read alongside this guidance, the National Design Guide sets out the characteristics of well-designed places and demonstrates what good design means in practice.*

*... significant weight should be given to: a) development which reflects local design policies and government guidance on design, taking into account any local design guidance and supplementary planning documents such as design guides and codes; and/or b) outstanding or innovative designs which promote high levels of sustainability, or help raise the standard of design more generally in an area, so long as they fit in with the overall form and layout of their surroundings.*

Good design is set out in the National Design Guide under the following 10 characteristics:

- context*
- identity*
- built form*
- movement*
- nature*
- public spaces*
- uses*
- homes and buildings*
- resources*
- lifespan*

The National Design Guide can be used by all those involved in shaping places including in plan-making and decision making."

With regards to the factors to be taken into account when considering the potential impact of development on the openness of the Green Belt, para 001 (ID: 64-001-20190722) states that: "... where it is relevant to do so, requires a judgment based on the circumstances of the case. By way of example, the courts have identified a number of matters which may need to be taken into account in making this assessment. These include, but are not limited to:

- openness is capable of having both spatial and visual aspects – in other words, the visual impact of the proposal may be relevant, as could its volume;
- the duration of the development, and its remediability – taking into account any provisions to return land to its original state or to an equivalent (or improved) state of openness; and
- the degree of activity likely to be generated, such as traffic generation."

With regard to development on brownfield land in the Green Belt, para 004 (ID: 64-004-20231219) states that: "The National Planning Policy Framework sets out the policy on proposals affecting the Green Belt. Where previously developed land is located within the Green Belt, the National Planning Policy Framework sets out the circumstances in which development may not be inappropriate. This includes limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed land, subject to conditions relating to the potential impact of development on the openness of the Green Belt.

The Framework indicates that certain other forms of development are also 'not inappropriate' in the Green Belt provided they preserve its openness and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it. This includes the re-use of buildings provided that the buildings are of permanent and substantial construction."

The setting to a heritage asset is described at para 013 (ID: 18a-013-20190723) as follows: "All heritage assets have a setting, irrespective of the form in which they survive and whether they are designated or not. The setting of a heritage asset and the asset's curtilage may not have the same extent.

The extent and importance of setting is often expressed by reference to the visual relationship between the asset and the proposed development and associated visual/physical considerations. Although views of or from an asset will play an important part in the assessment of impacts on setting, the way in which we experience an asset in its setting is also influenced by other environmental factors such as noise, dust, smell and vibration from other land uses in the vicinity, and by our understanding of the historic relationship between places. For example, buildings that are in close proximity but are not visible from each other may have a historic or aesthetic connection that amplifies the experience of the significance of each.

The contribution that setting makes to the significance of the heritage asset does not depend on there being public rights of way or an ability to otherwise access or experience that setting. The contribution may vary over time.

When assessing any application which may affect the setting of a heritage asset, local planning authorities may need to consider the implications of cumulative change. They may also need to consider the fact that developments which materially detract from the asset's significance may also damage its economic viability now, or in the future, thereby threatening its

ongoing conservation."

Green infrastructure is the topic of para 004 (ID: 8-004-20190721) and states: "Green infrastructure can embrace a range of spaces and assets that provide environmental and wider benefits. It can, for example, include parks, playing fields, other areas of open space, woodland, allotments, private gardens, sustainable drainage features, green roofs and walls, street trees and 'blue infrastructure' such as streams, ponds, canals and other water bodies. References to green infrastructure in this guidance also apply to different types of blue infrastructure where appropriate."

Para 006 (ID: 8-006-20190721) then sets out that green infrastructure can help in:

- "Building a strong, competitive economy: Green infrastructure can drive economic growth and regeneration, helping to create high quality environments which are attractive to businesses and investors.
- Achieving well-designed places: The built environment can be enhanced by features such as green roofs, street trees, proximity to woodland, public gardens and recreational and open spaces. More broadly, green infrastructure exists within a wider landscape context and can reinforce and enhance local landscape character, contributing to a sense of place and natural beauty.
- Promoting healthy and safe communities: Green infrastructure can improve the wellbeing of a neighbourhood with opportunities for recreation, exercise, social interaction, experiencing and caring for nature, community food-growing and gardening, all of which can bring mental and physical health benefits. Outdoor Recreation Value (ORVal) is a useful online tool that can be used to quantify the recreational values provided by greenspace. Green infrastructure can help to reduce health inequalities in areas of socio-economic deprivation and meet the needs of families and an ageing population. It can also help to reduce air pollution and noise.
- Mitigating climate change, flooding and coastal change: Green infrastructure can contribute to carbon storage, cooling and shading, opportunities for species migration to more suitable habitats and the protection of water quality and other natural resources. It can also be an integral part of multifunctional sustainable drainage and natural flood risk management.
- Conserving and enhancing the natural environment: High-quality networks of multifunctional green infrastructure contribute a range of benefits, including ecological connectivity, facilitating biodiversity net gain and nature recovery networks and opportunities for communities to undertake conservation work."

Guidance on trees and woodland is set out under the natural environment is set out within para 029 (ID 8-20190721) and states: "Well-placed and well-chosen trees on streets and in urban spaces can provide a range of benefits: encouraging walking and enhanced physical and mental health; contributing to local environmental character and distinctiveness; providing habitats for wildlife; reducing noise and excessive heat; and supporting sustainable drainage. Changing climate, in particular hotter summers and more frequent periods of dry weather, and unknown pests and diseases, will place new pressures on green infrastructure in the long-term, so trees of the right species and age profile are essential".

Para 036 (ID: 8-036-20190721) considers landscape and sets out that: 'The National Planning Policy Framework is clear that plans should recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and that strategic policies should provide for

the conservation and enhancement of landscapes. This can include nationally and locally designated landscapes but also the wider countryside. Where landscapes have a particular local value, it is important for policies to identify their special characteristics and be supported by proportionate evidence.. The cumulative impacts of development on the landscape need to be considered carefully.'

Open space, sports and recreation facilities are considered under para 001 (ID: 37-001-20140306) which states: 'Open space should be taken into account in planning for new development and considering proposals that may affect existing open space (see National Planning Policy Framework paragraph 96). Open space, which includes all open space of public value, can take many forms, from formal sports pitches to open areas within a development, linear corridors and country parks. It can provide health and recreation benefits to people living and working nearby; have an ecological value and contribute to green infrastructure (see National Planning Policy Framework paragraph 171, as well as being an important part of the landscape and setting of built development, and an important component in the achievement of sustainable development (see National Planning Policy Framework paragraphs 7-9).'

## National Design Guide

The National Design Guide (30 January 2021) illustrates how well-designed places that are beautiful, enduring and successful can be achieved in practice. Paragraph 20 sets out the components of good design, including layout, form and scale, appearance, landscape, materials and detailing. The 10 characteristics of a well designed place are described in paragraph 36 as follows:

- 'Context - enhances the surroundings.
- Identity - attractive and distinctive.
- Built form - a coherent pattern of development.
- Movement - accessible and easy to move around.
- Nature - enhanced and optimised.
- Public spaces - safe, social and inclusive.
- Uses - mixed and integrated.
- Homes and buildings - functional, healthy and sustainable.
- Resources - efficient and resilient.
- Lifespan - made to last'.

## National Model Design Code

The National Model Design Code forms part of the Planning Practice Guidance expanding on the characteristics of good design set out in the National Design Guide.

### 2.1.2 Development Plan

Mid Sussex District Council's relevant development plan policy is set out below.

#### Mid Sussex District Plan 2014 - 2031 (adopted March 2018)

The Plan sets out a vision for how Mid Sussex wants to evolve and a delivery strategy for how that will be achieved. It supports the National Planning Policy Framework's 'presumption in favour of sustainable development'. As such, it sets out broad

guidance on the distribution and quality of development in the form of 'higher level' strategic policies. The following policies are of relevance to the Site and surrounding area:

**Policy DP12** aims to deliver on the following Strategic Objectives:

- 3 "To protect valued landscapes for their visual, historical and biodiversity qualities;
- 11 To support and enhance the attractiveness of Mid Sussex as a visitor destination; and
- 15 To create places that encourage a healthy and enjoyable lifestyle by the provision of first class cultural and sporting facilities, informal leisure space and the opportunity to walk, cycle or ride to common destinations".

The policy states: "The countryside will be protected in recognition of its intrinsic character and beauty. Development will be permitted in the countryside, defined as the area outside of built-up area boundaries on the Policies Map, provided it maintains or where possible enhances the quality of the rural and landscape character of the District, and:

- it is necessary for the purposes of agriculture; or
- it is supported by a specific policy reference either elsewhere in the Plan, a Development Plan Document or relevant Neighbourhood Plan.

Agricultural land of Grade 3a and above will be protected from non-agricultural development proposals. Where significant development of agricultural land is demonstrated to be necessary, detailed field surveys should be undertaken and proposals should seek to use areas of poorer quality land in preference to that of higher quality.

The Mid Sussex Landscape Character Assessment, the West Sussex County Council Strategy for the West Sussex Landscape, the Capacity of Mid Sussex District to Accommodate Development Study and other available landscape evidence (including that gathered to support Neighbourhood Plans) will be used to assess the impact of development proposals on the quality of rural and landscape character.

Built-up area boundaries are subject to review by Neighbourhood Plans or through a Site Allocations Development Plan Document, produced by the District Council.

Economically viable mineral reserves within the district will be safeguarded."

**Policy DP13** aims to deliver on Strategic Objective 2: "To promote well located and designed development that reflects the District's distinctive towns and villages, retains their separate identity and character and prevents coalescence."

The policy states: "The individual towns and villages in the District each have their own unique characteristics. It is important that their separate identity is maintained. When travelling between settlements people should have a sense that they have left one before arriving at the next.

Provided it is not in conflict with Policy DP12: Protection and Enhancement of the Countryside, development will be permitted if it does not result in the coalescence of settlements which harms the separate identity and amenity of settlements, and would not have an unacceptably urbanising effect on the area between settlements.

Local Gaps can be identified in Neighbourhood Plans or a Site Allocations Development Plan Document, produced by the District Council, where there is robust evidence that development within the Gap would individually or cumulatively result in coalescence and the loss of the separate identity and amenity of nearby settlements. Evidence must demonstrate that existing local and national policies cannot provide the necessary protection."

Policy DP16 aims to deliver on the following strategic objectives:

- 3 "To protect valued landscapes for their visual, historical and biodiversity qualities; and
- 11 To support and enhance the attractiveness of Mid Sussex as a visitor destination";

The policy states: "Development within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), as shown on the Policies Maps, will only be permitted where it conserves or enhances natural beauty and has regard to the High Weald AONB Management Plan, in particular;

- the identified landscape features or components of natural beauty and to their setting;
- the traditional interaction of people with nature, and appropriate land management;
- character and local distinctiveness, settlement pattern, sense of place and setting of the AONB; and
- the conservation of wildlife and cultural heritage.

Small scale proposals which support the economy and social well-being of the AONB that are compatible with the conservation and enhancement of natural beauty will be supported.

Development on land that contributes to the setting of the AONB will only be permitted where it does not detract from the visual qualities and essential characteristics of the AONB, and in particular should not adversely affect the views into and out of the AONB by virtue of its location or design."

Policy DP22 aims to deliver on the following Strategic Objectives:

- 5 "To create and maintain easily accessible green infrastructure, green corridors and spaces around and within the towns and villages to act as wildlife corridors, sustainable transport links and leisure and recreational routes; and
- 15 To create places that encourage a healthy and enjoyable lifestyle by the provision of first class cultural and sporting facilities, informal leisure space and the opportunity to walk, cycle or ride to common destinations."

The policy states: "Rights of way, Sustrans national cycle routes and recreational routes will be protected by ensuring development does not result in the loss of or does not adversely affect a right of way or other recreational routes unless a new route is provided which is of at least an equivalent value and which does not sever important routes.

Access to the countryside will be encouraged by:

Ensuring that (where appropriate) development provides safe and convenient links to rights of way and other recreational routes;

Supporting the provision of additional routes within and

between settlements that contribute to providing a joined up network of routes where possible;

Where appropriate, encouraging making new or existing rights of way multi-functional to allow for benefits for a range of users. (Note: 'multi-functional' will generally mean able to be used by walkers, cyclists and horse-riders)."

Policy DP37 aims to deliver on the following strategic objectives:

- 3 "To protect valued landscapes for their visual, historical and biodiversity qualities;
- 4 To protect valued characteristics of the built environment for their historical and visual qualities; and
- 5 To create and maintain easily accessible green infrastructure, green corridors and spaces around and within the towns and villages to act as wildlife corridors, sustainable transport links and leisure and recreational routes."

The policy states: "The District Council will support the protection and enhancement of trees, woodland and hedgerows, and encourage new planting. In particular, ancient woodland and aged or veteran trees will be protected.

Development that will damage or lead to the loss of trees, woodland or hedgerows that contribute, either individually or as part of a group, to the visual amenity value or character of an area, and/ or that have landscape, historic or wildlife importance, will not normally be permitted.

Proposals for new trees, woodland and hedgerows should be of suitable species, usually native, and where required for visual, noise or light screening purposes, trees, woodland and hedgerows should be of a size and species that will achieve this purpose.

Trees, woodland and hedgerows will be protected and enhanced by ensuring development:

- incorporates existing important trees, woodland and hedgerows into the design of new development and its landscape scheme; and
- prevents damage to root systems and takes account of expected future growth; and
- where possible, incorporates retained trees, woodland and hedgerows within public open space rather than private space to safeguard their long-term management; and
- has appropriate protection measures throughout the development process; and
- takes opportunities to plant new trees, woodland and hedgerows within the new development to enhance on-site green infrastructure and increase resilience to the effects of climate change; and
- does not sever ecological corridors created by these assets.

Proposals for works to trees will be considered taking into account:

- the condition and health of the trees; and
- the contribution of the trees to the character and visual amenity of the local area; and
- the amenity and nature conservation value of the trees; and

- the extent and impact of the works; and
- any replanting proposals.

The felling of protected trees will only be permitted if there is no appropriate alternative. Where a protected tree or group of trees is felled, a replacement tree or group of trees, on a minimum of a 1:1 basis and of an appropriate size and type, will normally be required. The replanting should take place as close to the felled tree or trees as possible having regard to the proximity of adjacent properties.

Development should be positioned as far as possible from ancient woodland with a minimum buffer of 15 metres maintained between ancient woodland and the development boundary."

Policy DP38 aims to deliver on the following strategic objectives:

- 3 "To protect valued landscapes for their visual, historical and biodiversity qualities; and
- 5 To create and maintain easily accessible green infrastructure, green corridors and spaces around and within the towns and villages to act as wildlife corridors, sustainable transport links and leisure and recreational routes."

The policy states: "Biodiversity will be protected and enhanced by ensuring development:

- Contributes and takes opportunities to improve, enhance, manage and restore biodiversity and green infrastructure, so that there is a net gain in biodiversity, including through creating new designated sites and locally relevant habitats, and incorporating biodiversity features within developments; and
- Protects existing biodiversity, so that there is no net loss of biodiversity. Appropriate measures should be taken to avoid and reduce disturbance to sensitive habitats and species. Unavoidable damage to biodiversity must be offset through ecological enhancements and mitigation measures (or compensation measures in exceptional circumstances); and
- Minimises habitat and species fragmentation and maximises opportunities to enhance and restore ecological corridors to connect natural habitats and increase coherence and resilience; and
- Promotes the restoration, management and expansion of priority habitats in the District; and
- Avoids damage to, protects and enhances the special characteristics of internationally designated Special Protection Areas, Special Areas of Conservation; nationally designated Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty; and locally designated Sites of Nature Conservation Importance, Local Nature Reserves and Ancient Woodland or to other areas identified as being of nature conservation or geological interest, including wildlife corridors, aged or veteran trees, Biodiversity Opportunity Areas, and Nature Improvement Areas.

Designated sites will be given protection and appropriate weight according to their importance and the contribution they make to wider ecological networks.

Valued soils will be protected and enhanced, including the best and most versatile agricultural land, and development should not contribute to unacceptable levels of soil pollution.

Geodiversity will be protected by ensuring development

prevents harm to geological conservation interests, and where possible, enhances such interests. Geological conservation interests include Regionally Important Geological and Geomorphological Sites."

Policy DP26 states: "All development and surrounding spaces, including alterations and extensions to existing buildings and replacement dwellings, will be well designed and reflect the distinctive character of the towns and villages while being sensitive to the countryside. All applicants will be required to demonstrate that development:

- is of high quality design and layout and includes appropriate landscaping and greenspace;
- contributes positively to, and clearly defines, public and private realms and should normally be designed with active building frontages facing streets and public open spaces to animate and provide natural surveillance;
- creates a sense of place while addressing the character and scale of the surrounding buildings and landscape;
- protects open spaces, trees and gardens that contribute to the character of the area;
- protects valued townscapes and the separate identity and character of towns and villages;
- does not cause significant harm to the amenities of existing nearby residents and future occupants of new dwellings, including taking account of the impact on privacy, outlook, daylight and sunlight, and noise, air and light pollution (see Policy DP29);
- creates a pedestrian-friendly layout that is safe, well connected, legible and accessible;
- incorporates well integrated parking that does not dominate the street environment, particularly where high density housing is proposed;
- positively addresses sustainability considerations in the layout and the building design;
- take the opportunity to encourage community interaction by creating layouts with a strong neighbourhood focus/centre; larger (300+ unit) schemes will also normally be expected to incorporate a mixed use element;
- optimises the potential of the site to accommodate development."

Other policies pertinent to landscape and visual matters are listed below:

DP34: Listed Buildings and Other Heritage Assets; and

DP36: Historic Parks and Gardens.

## Mid Sussex District Plan 2021 - 2039 Consultation Draft (Regulation 19)

Draft policies of the draft new Local Plan that are pertinent to this LVIA are included below.

The Site is proposed as a site allocation and is therefore subject to Policy DPA7: Land east of Borde Hill Lane, Haywards Heath

"1. Contain development to central and eastern parts of site to reduce potential impacts on the setting of High Weald AONB (to be informed by an LVIA).

2. Follow a sequential approach by directing development away from areas of flood risk and mitigate impacts through integration of SUDS to deliver biodiversity/environmental improvements and flood resilience.

3. Provide suitable vehicular, pedestrian and cycle access from Borde Hill Lane via a fourth arm from the roundabout, south west of the site.

4. Roundabout to be enlarged and positioned to allow safe movement of road users and provision of new dropped kerbs and tactile paving on southern approach, in agreement with the Highway Authority.

5. Informed by a Heritage Statement, provide appropriate layout and design which preserves the setting of nearby Grade II listed building 'South Lodge'.

6. Submit a Statement of Significance on Borde Hill Gardens together with an assessment of the impact of the proposal on that significance.

7. Provide good acoustic design to address noise impacts associated with the railway.

8. Investigate, assess and address any land contamination issues arising from former uses of the site or from uses, or former uses, of land in proximity to the site.

9. Address any impacts associated with the building stone (Cuckfield) Minerals Safeguarding Area, the building stone (Ardingly) Minerals Consultation Area and the brick clay (Wadhurst) Minerals Safeguarding Area.

10. Meet the requirements of other relevant development plan policies."

#### DPN5: Historic Parks and Gardens:

"The character, appearance and setting of a registered park or garden, or park or garden of special local historic interest will be protected. This will be achieved by ensuring that any development within or adjacent to a registered park or garden, or park or garden of special local historic interest will only be permitted where it protects and enhances its special features, setting and views into and out of the park or garden."

#### DPN8: Light Impacts and Dark Skies:

"The natural environment and people's health and quality of life will be protected from unacceptable levels of light pollution.

Development proposals must demonstrate that all opportunities to reduce light pollution (including sky glow, glare and light spillage) have been taken including minimising impacts on local amenity, intrinsically dark landscapes including protected landscapes and areas important for nature conservation and nature recovery.

Artificial lighting proposals (including outdoor lighting, floodlighting and new street lighting) should be minimised in terms of intensity and number of fittings. The applicant should demonstrate that:

- the minimum amount of lighting necessary to achieve its purpose is specified or otherwise justified on safety or security grounds; and
- the design and specification of the lighting would minimise sky glow, glare and light spillage in relation to the visibility of the night sky, local amenity and local character; and
- the means of lighting would be unobtrusively sited and well-

screened by landscaping; and

- low energy lighting is used; and
- there would not be an adverse impact on wildlife such as through consideration of the appropriate colour and temperature of lighting.

Development proposals must carefully consider the design and layout of parking arrangements to avoid headlight nuisance.

Where lighting of a landmark or heritage feature is proposed, the level and type of illumination used would enhance the feature itself.

Development proposals will need to take into account the Institute of Lighting Professionals guidance and other relevant guidance."

#### DPC4: High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty:

"... Setting of the High Weald AONB

Development within land that contributes to the setting of the AONB will only be permitted where it does not adversely affect the identified components of natural beauty of the AONB.

Development proposals in the setting of the AONB should be sensitively located and designed, be consistent with AONB purposes, and should not adversely affect transitional landscape character in the setting of the AONB and views, outlook and aspect, into and out of the AONB by virtue of its location, scale, form or design.

Assessment of such development proposals will have regard to the High Weald AONB Management Plan and other adopted planning documents and strategies such as the High Weald Housing Design Guide and High Weald Colour Study."

### 2.1.3 Guidance Documents

#### High Weald National Landscape / AONB Management Plan 2019 - 2024

The High Weald National Landscape (formerly Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty - AONB) is described as: "An outstandingly beautiful landscape cherished by people and celebrated for its scenery, tranquillity and wildlife. Its ridges and valleys are clothed with an intricate mosaic of small fields interspersed with farmsteads and surrounded by hedges and abundant woods, all arranged around a network of historic routeways. One of the best surviving Medieval landscapes in North West Europe, the High Weald has remained a unique and recognisable area for at least the last 700 years. Covering 1500 km<sup>2</sup> and close to London, this extensive area offers millions of people opportunity to experience the beauty of nature within a working countryside. It was designated an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) in 1983."

The Management Plan coordinates policy and action, in order to: "Achieve the legal purpose of 'conserving and enhancing natural beauty' for the benefit of current and future generations."

The plan describes the High Weald's five defining components of character as:

- 1 "Geology, landform and water systems - a deeply incised, ridged and faulted landform of clays and sandstone with numerous gill streams;
- 2 Settlement - dispersed historic settlement including high

densities of isolated farmsteads and late Medieval villages founded on trade and non-agricultural rural industries;

3 Routeways - a dense network of historic routeways (now roads, tracks and paths);

4 Woodland - abundance of ancient woodland, highly interconnected and in smallholdings;

5 Field and Heath - small, irregular and productive fields, bounded by hedgerows and woods, and typically used for livestock grazing; with distinctive zones of lowland heaths, and inned river valleys."

The Management Plan defines 'Setting' as: "The surroundings in which the AONB is experienced by people" and states: "The term 'setting' is used to refer to areas outside the AONB where development and other activities may affect land within an AONB. Its extent will vary depending upon the issues considered but some can be mapped, for example, the impact of development on views into and out of the AONB. Section 85 of the CROW Act 2000 requires public bodies to consider whether any activities outside the AONB may affect land in an AONB, and Planning Practice Guidance (Natural Environment: 003) emphasises that this duty is relevant in considering development proposals that are situated outside the AONB boundary."

#### High Weald Statement of Significance

Five defining components of character that have made the High Weald a recognisably distinct and homogenous area for at least the last 700 years:

"Geology, landform and water systems - a deeply incised, ridged and faulted landform of clays and sandstone with numerous gill streams.

Settlement- dispersed historic settlement including high densities of isolated farmsteads and late medieval villages founded on trade and non-agricultural rural industries.

Routeways - a dense network of historic routeways (now roads, tracks and paths).

Woodland – abundance of ancient woodland, highly interconnected and in small holdings.

Field and Heath – small, irregular and productive fields, bounded by hedgerows and woods, and typically used for livestock grazing; with distinctive zones of lowland heaths, and inned river valleys."

#### High Weald Housing Design Guide (November 2019)

As the Site lies adjacent to the High Weald National Landscape, the above document is also pertinent. It notes that "delivering appropriate new housing development within the AONB, and on land that affects its setting, is a key part of local planning policy for the local authorities covering the High Weald and for qualifying bodies producing neighbourhood plans."

The aim of the guide is to "ensure higher quality and landscape-led design that reflects intrinsic High Weald character, and is embedded with a true sense of place, without stifling innovation and creativity."

Additional pertinent paragraphs are included below:

#### DG1 Responding to Site and Landscape Context:

"For development to reflect and enhance the character of the High Weald it must be designed to integrate into its setting. This means more than reflecting merely the visual appearance of the current setting, but includes understanding how the landscape and its settlements have evolved and why the area is the way it is today."

"Rather than being a constraint, context offers opportunities to retain and embed the character of the High Weald into a genuinely landscape-led design. This will include landscape features such as field patterns and boundaries, ponds, gill streams and ditches, and on-site mature trees, and embracing the 'natural capital' assets of the area, in particular the rich and diverse ecology of the High Weald, which are key elements of the components of natural beauty set out in the Management Plan, and which should inform site selection and layout. Seeking to avoid harm to existing biodiversity assets in the earliest site layout decisions will help meet the 'mitigation hierarchy' set out in the NPPF. Meanwhile, how the scheme design manages topography and watercourses will be important to how successful the development is at mitigating and dealing with the effects of climate change."

"Landscape-led design means using landscape as a framework to understand the site and formulate a design response. Applying a landscape-led design approach requires analysing the context, character, qualities and socio-ecological functioning of the proposed site within its wider landscape setting, and using this understanding to inform site layout, design, and capacity"

#### Mid Sussex Design Guide SPD (November 2020)

The Mid Sussex Design Guide has been produced to provide "clear design principles that aim to deliver high quality new development across Mid Sussex that is inclusive and responds appropriately to its context while prioritising sustainability in the design process. These principles are based on the policy framework provided by District Plan Policy DP26: Character and Design." Landscape and green infrastructure provision are a key part of the Design Guide's sustainability objectives:

- "Planning schemes around Green Infrastructure provision that is underpinned by: (a) healthy living and well-being principles; (b) helping to deliver a net gain in bio-diversity; (c) responding to the beauty of the natural landscape and ensuring that natural features are retained and enhanced; and
- Designing for adaptation and resilience to future weather events (drier/hotter summers and wetter/warmer winters)."

The Design Guide sets out a model design process, including information on landscape and settlement character and landscape designations within the District. It also sets out the expectations around how proposals should consider their landscape context in order to establish the structure of a proposed development.

## 3.0

# Landscape Character

## 3.1 Published Landscape Character

The term 'landscape' commonly refers to the view or appearance of the land as perceived by people. Landscape applies to any natural, rural, urban or urban edge areas, in land, water and seascape areas.

Landscape character is the combination of both natural / physical, cultural / social and perceptual / aesthetic influences, which give rise to a distinct, recognisable and consistent pattern of elements in the landscape that makes one landscape different from another, rather than better or worse and which define the 'sense of place'. The landscape is not therefore simply a visual phenomenon.

The following sections set out the published landscape character framework of the study area based upon existing character assessments undertaken by West Sussex County Council and Mid Sussex District Council.

### 3.1.1 County Character Assessment

Within the West Sussex county level landscape character assessment, the Site lies within the landscape character area identified as HW4: High Weald Fringes as shown on Figure 4.1. The key characteristics pertinent to the study area are described as:

- “Wooded, often confined rural landscape of intimacy and complexity partly within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).”
- “South and east-draining gills and broad ridges sweeping gently down to the Low Weald.”
- “Significant woodland cover, a substantial portion of it ancient, and a dense network of shaws, hedgerows and hedgerow trees.”
- “Pattern of small, irregular-shaped assart fields and larger fields, and small pockets of remnant heathland.”
- “Biodiversity concentrated in the valleys, heathland, and woodland.”
- “Network of lanes, driveways, tracks and footpaths.”
- “Dispersed historic settlement pattern... the principal settlements Cuckfield, Haywards Heath and Lindfield and a few villages and hamlets.”
- “Some busy lanes and roads including A and B roads bounding the area to the west, and other roads crossing north to south, including the A23 Trunk Road.”

- “Varied traditional rural buildings built with diverse materials including timber-framing, Horsham Stone roofing, Wealden stone and varieties of local brick and tile-hanging.”
- “Designed landscapes and exotic treescapes associated with large country houses.”

The key issues pertinent to the Site include the following:

- “Continuing amalgamation of small fields with orchard, hedgerow loss and the ageing and loss of hedgerow and field trees.”
- “Visual impact of new urban and rural development...”
- “Increasing pervasiveness of traffic movement throughout much of the area, especially in the vicinity of Haywards Heath.”
- “Increasing pressures for a wide variety of recreational activities.”
- “Perceived increased traffic levels on small rural lanes with consequent demands for road improvements.”
- “Gradual loss of locally distinctive building styles and materials.”
- “Gradual suburbanisation of the landscape including the widespread use of exotic tree and shrub species”.

Landscape and visual sensitivities are described as:

- “Woodland cover limits the visual sensitivity of the landscape and confers a sense of intimacy, seclusion and tranquillity.”
- “Unobtrusive settlement pattern in many parts.”
- “Older, small assart pastures contribute to the intimacy of the landscape.”
- “Important pockets of rich biodiversity are vulnerable to loss and change.”
- “Network of lanes, driveways, tracks and footpaths provides a rich terrain for horse-riding, cycling and walking and for the appreciation of nature.”
- “Settlement pattern currently sits well within the rural landscape although there is a danger of the cumulative visual impact of buildings and other structures...”
- “Legacy of designed landscapes and treescapes.”

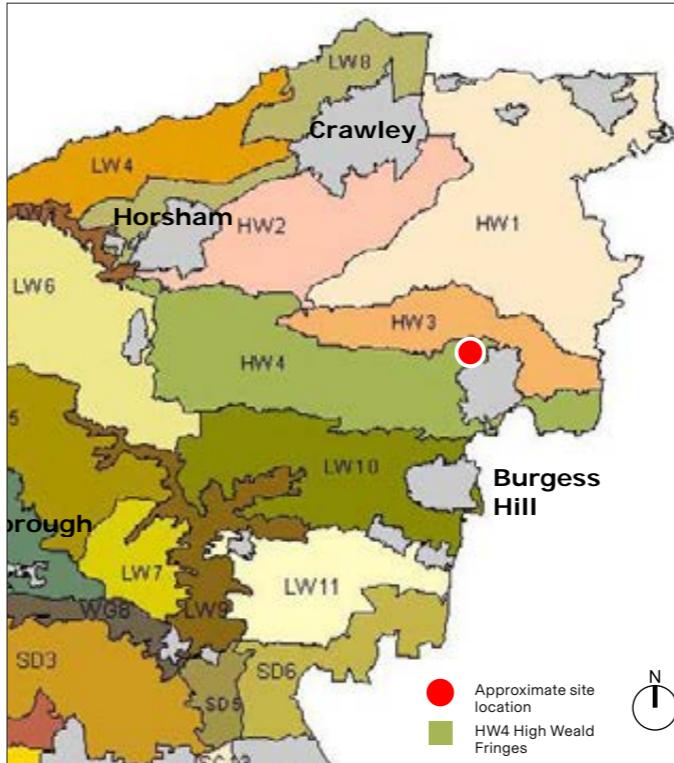


Figure 3.1 – Extract from the West Sussex Landscape Character Area Map (2003)

### 3.1.2 District Character Assessment

A Landscape Character Assessment for Mid Sussex was prepared and published in 2005. The Site lies within the landscape character area identified as LCA 10: High Weald Fringes.

The LCA is summarised as: “densely-wooded southern flanks of the High Weald Forest Ridge, dissected gentle gill streams draining west to the River Adur and east to the River Ouse. Includes the settlements of Cuckfield, Haywards Heath and Lindfield”. The key characteristics are described and are consistent with those described within the county level landscape character assessment.

In addition to the key characteristics, the settlement of Haywards Heath is described as:

“... a pleasant Victorian suburban town and quite leafy, the residential developments of varying ages deriving amenity from the built quality of many of the residential estates and from the remnant oaks and pines at home on the heathy land upon which the town was built. The topography of the town is complex, the

main portion lying on high ground fringed by the Ouse Valley and, in the east, tilted into it at the broad embayment of the valley at Walstead. All but the western side of the town rises to higher ground. On the whole, the wooded setting screens the town well, particularly along the edges of the Ouse Valley. Only to the south are new housing and the hospitals on the high ridge at Rocky Lane and below Hurstwood Lane highly visible in the landscape, easily seen from the downs at Clayton. Haywards Heath was first joined to the medieval market town of Lindfield by inter-war suburban development, a link that is now solid and complete.”

Land management guidelines pertinent to the Site and development proposals include:

- “Protect existing views from the area and avoid skyline development...”
- “Plan for long-term woodland regeneration, the planting of new small broadleaved farm woodlands, and appropriate management of existing woodlands, and reduce rhododendron invasion and bracken cover in woodlands and on heathland.”
- “Extend existing woodland areas rather than creating new woodland features, reinforcing existing, distinctive landscape patterns.”
- “Conserve woodland biodiversity and the landscape of the gills, protecting rare and uncommon woodland plant communities associated with them.”
- “Increase tree cover in and around villages, agricultural and other development including along the approach roads to settlements and along busy urban routes.”
- “Conserve and re-plant single oaks in hedgerows to maintain succession.”
- “Conserve, strengthen and manage existing hedgerows and hedgerow trees and re-plant hedgerows where they have been lost.”
- “Conserve and manage remnant open heathland by preventing the encroachment of scrub and create new, interconnected heathlands.”
- “Conserve species-rich meadows and road verges.”
- “Protect the tranquil and historic character of rural lanes and manage road verges to enhance their nature conservation value.”
- “Minimise the effects of adverse incremental change by seeking new development of high quality that sits well within the landscape and reflects local distinctiveness.”

Published Landscape Capacity Assessment

In 2007 HDA prepared the Mid Sussex Landscape Capacity Study. This defined 75 Landscape Character Areas (LCA) around a number of settlements and villages within the District and assessed the landscape value, sensitivity and capacity of each. Of the character areas assessed within this study, the Site lies within Zone 4 "Haywards Heath, Linfield, Cuckfield and Surrounding Areas", of which pertinent descriptions include:

*"A ridgeline to the north of Haywards Heath contains the town from the wider landscape with the existing settlement situated on the lower south-facing slopes of this ridgeline... To the west of the railway the ridgeline continues west to Cuckfield. Here there is a mixture of arable fields, woodland, pasture and recreation adjacent to the settlement, with a significant area of intact parkland, to the northwest of the town. along with an area of undeveloped land on similar topography."*

Within Zone 4, the Site is situated in "LCA 46 Horsgate High Weald", as shown on Figure 4.3 and which is described as:

- "Mixture of small-medium size fields, wooded setting to north-west of Haywards Heath."
- A judgement of moderate sensitivity is assigned to LCA 46, due to:
- "Significant boundary loss."
- Wooded contribution to the northern setting of Haywards Heath.
- Open topography sloping towards Haywards Heath to the east.
- Woodland counters effect of settlement upon perception of rurality.
- Limited separation function."

A judgement of substantial landscape value is assigned to LCA 46 due to:

- "Small part in the AONB."
- Contains some listed buildings, some Ancient Woodland, RSI and SNCI.
- Forms the setting to the AONB and Borde Hill to the north and west.
- Has moderate scenic beauty."

As such a judgement of Low capacity is made in the 2007 HDA study, described as:

*"A Low or Negligible rating for landscape capacity indicates that development would have a significant and detrimental*

*effect on the character of the landscape as a whole, and, or, on the setting to existing settlement or outstanding assets in the District. Development in these character areas should only be small scale and proposals would need to demonstrate no adverse impacts on the setting to settlement or wider landscape."*

In 2014, LUC prepared an updated Capacity Assessment, which covered the remaining areas of the District that were not assessed in the 2007 study only. This led to the definition of five new Landscape Character Areas. Judgements for capacity were made for all previous LCA's as well as those additional. Within the 2014 study a judgement of Low/Medium is made for LCA 46.

The description of the low/medium landscape capacity rating within the 2014 study states:

*"A Low/medium capacity rating indicates that development is likely to have an adverse effect on most of the character area and while smaller development may be possible in a very few locations within the character area, it will not be suitable for strategic scale development."*

#### **Primary and secondary constraints**

In addition to the landscape capacity assessment, a range of primary and secondary constraints have been mapped relating to environmental designations by LUC. However, and as shown in Figure 3.5, the Site lies outside of the areas where there are primary constraints. Primary constraints are identified as the AONB and National Park.

Furthermore, the Site lies within an area where there are secondary constraints - these include a buffer of 1km around the AONB and National Park. It is noted that the buffer zone is described as indicative only - paragraph 4.3 clarifies that: *"It should be noted that the buffer zones developed for the secondary constraints are indicative of the area where development may cause the most negative impacts, or where mitigation is most likely to be needed. In practice, each location for development would need to be assessed individually for potential effects on the environment and mitigation needed. For example, the effects on the setting of the AONB or on a listed building can vary markedly depending upon their context, from very localised (e.g. a few hundred metres in locations that are well screened; to many kilometres where vistas and views are important)."*

Paragraph 6.11 goes on to state that: *"... Although these secondary constraints do not necessarily represent areas that cannot be developed, some are afforded protection under national policy, and often they represent areas where significant environmental impacts could occur, and where mitigation*

*measures are likely to be required to avoid or reduce the significance of the impacts."*

Paragraph 6.25 sets out a series of mitigation measures that are likely to be needed for development to occur in areas which still have secondary constraints. Those relevant to the Site are:

- *"A detailed ecological assessment would be required to determine the existing biodiversity within potential development locations, its status and condition, and its potential in order to inform what mitigation measures would be required to safeguard and enhance the District's biodiversity interest (such as areas of ancient woodland)."*
- *"Development would need to be designed to maintain or where possible enhance the quality of the rural and landscape character of the District."*
- *"Development in the areas around some of the main settlements may need to avoid small areas of flood risk zone 2 and 3, and incorporate SuDS into new development to ensure that run-off is managed so that the risk of flooding is not exacerbated elsewhere."*
- *"Development would need to protect and incorporate the National Cycle Routes and PRoWs, as well as existing open space, sport and recreation areas."*

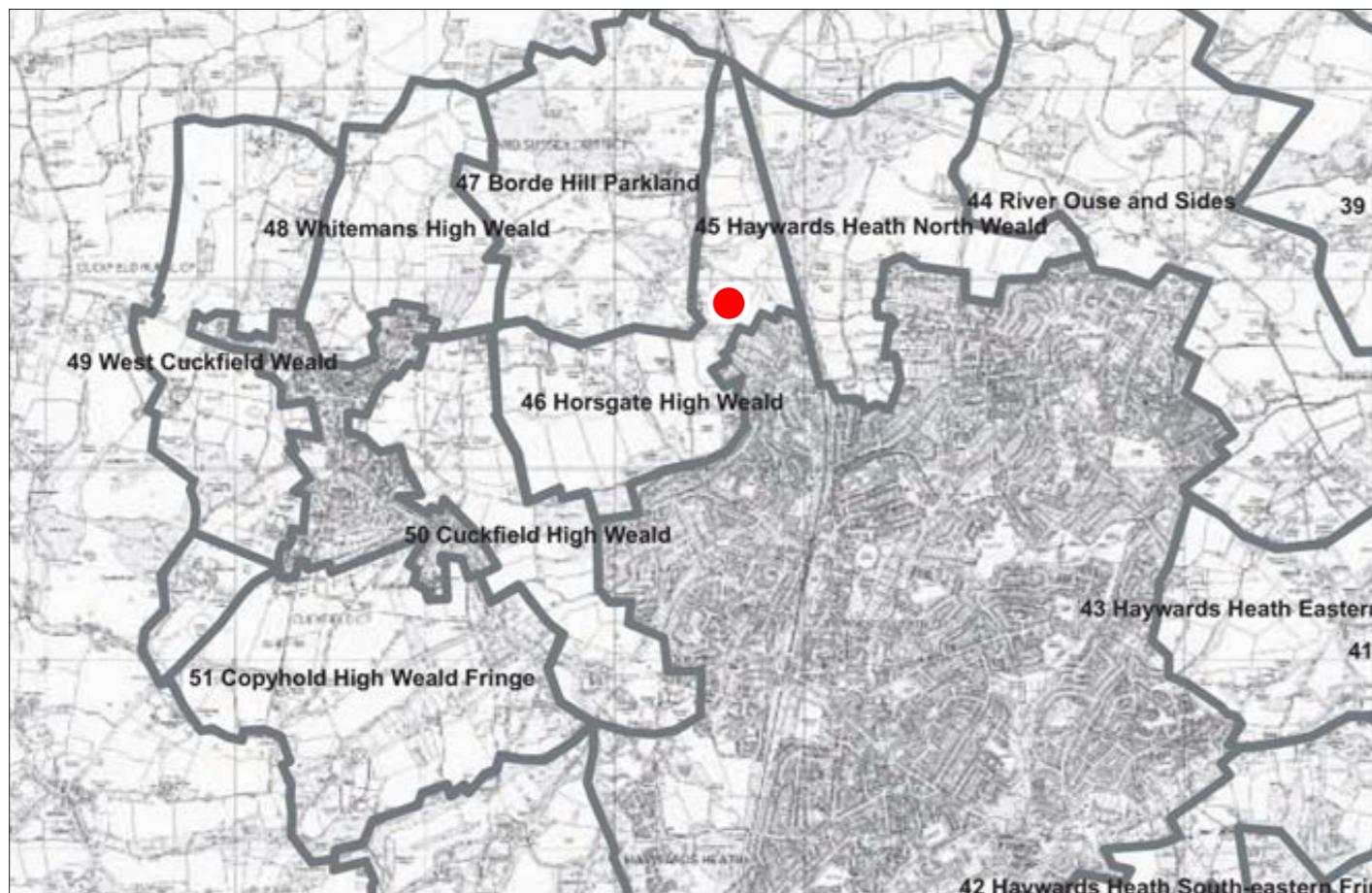


Figure 3.2 – Extract from Landscape Character Areas Map - Mid Sussex Landscape Capacity Study (HDA, 2007)

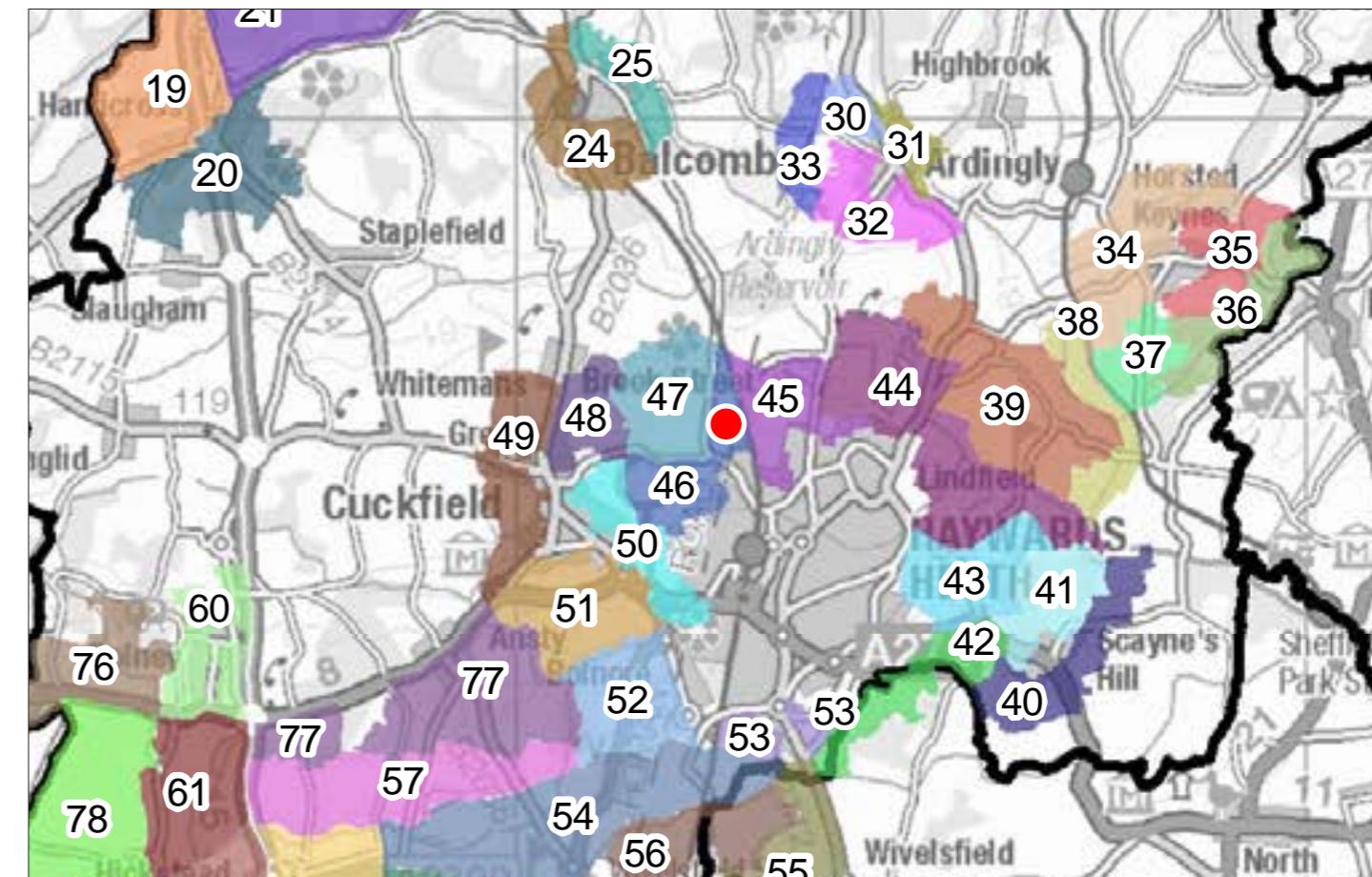


Figure 3.3 – Extract from district Landscape Character Area Map figure 3.1 - Mid Sussex Capacity Study (LUC, 2014)

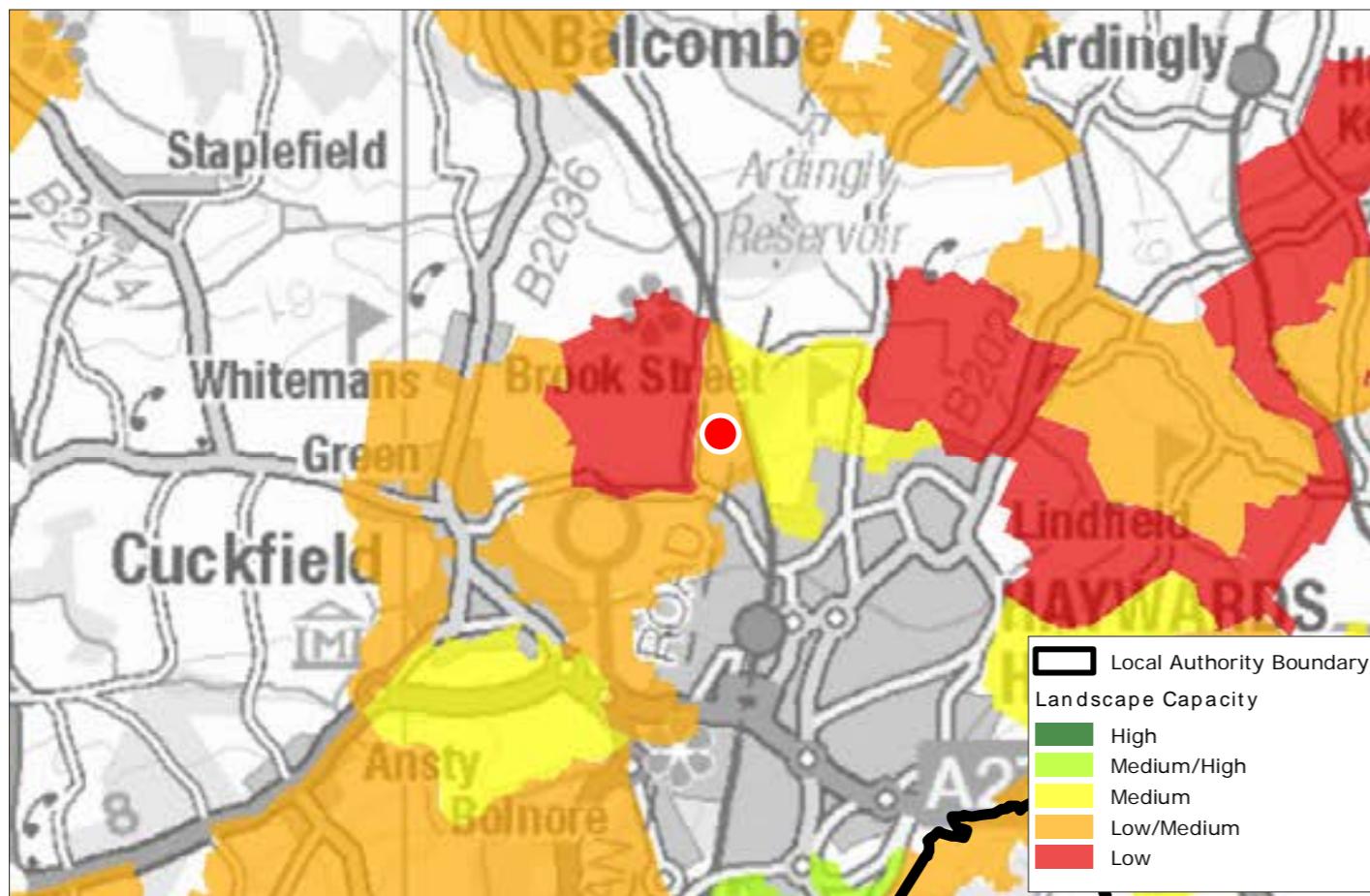


Figure 3.4 – Extract of Landscape Capacity Plan figure 4.7 - Mid Sussex Capacity Study (LUC, 2014)

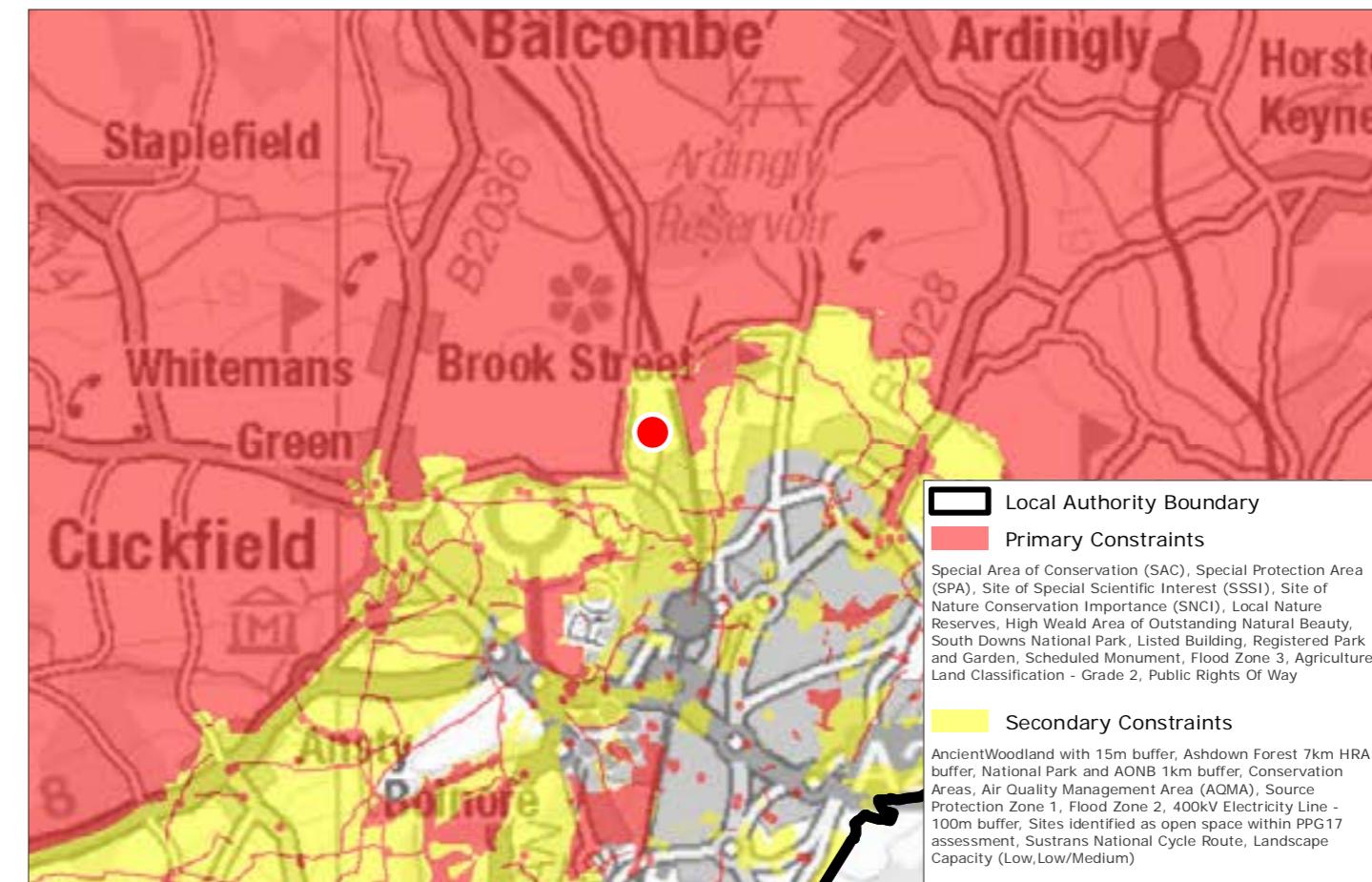


Figure 3.5 – Extract of constraints to development plan figure 4.2 - Mid Sussex Capacity Study (LUC, 2014)

## 3.2 Contextual Landscape Appraisal

This section describes the landscape elements beyond the Site boundary and therefore the landscape setting to the Site. Figure 3.6 illustrates the various land uses and land cover within the study area.

### Geology and Soils

As set out in the Landscape Character Assessment for Mid Sussex: *"the geology of the area is an extension of the Hastings Beds, lying south of the Weald Clay inlier along the Ouse Valley. The majority of the area comprises mainly Upper and Lower Tunbridge Wells Sandstone and clays and Grinstead Clay in alternating sequences. More localised beds include Cuckfield Stone and Ardingly Sandstone. There are limited deposits of Wadhurst Clay at Cuckfield Park and small areas of inlaid Weald Clay and Horsham Stone south of Warninglid and north of Bolney."*

### Landform and drainage

The topography of the study area is heavily influenced by the network of ridgelines and valleys. These include the ridge line north of and outside the Site (and within the National Landscape) at approximately 80-90m AOD and the valley bottoms, with the Site's northern boundary (again, outside of the National Landscape), which continues eastwards through the north of Haywards Heath.

The settlement of Haywards Heath is located on undulating landform, with the valley sides and bottoms creating a sense of enclosure within the central and northern parts of the town, whilst to the south, the landform is less undulating.

Refer to Figure 3.6 overleaf.

### Vegetation Cover

The landscape of the study area is well treed with significant woodland blocks (including numerous Ancient Woodlands). There is no overriding pattern to the areas of woodland which follow both the valley floor and valley slopes. Woodlands often are a mix of areas of plantation woodland and mixed broadleaf. These significant woodlands and associated treebelts provide a sense of enclosure to the landscape and create a verdant horizon, with built form generally set below. Individual mature trees within open fields are associated with the parkland landscape at Borde Hill.

Field boundaries are marked either by clipped hedgerows with occasional hedgerow trees; intermittent clipped hedgerows; mature, tall overgrown hedgerows; treebelts; or stock proof fencing.

### Land Use

Beyond the settlement edges, the land use is predominantly farmland, comprising both arable and pasture, interspersed with large woodland blocks (some of which are classified as Ancient Woodland), farmsteads, and parkland estates, containing significant historic buildings such as Borde Hill Park (Grade II Listed and a RRG). The field sizes locally vary, however, there is no unifying pattern to the field sizes in terms of location or use.

Closer to the settlement edges other greenfield uses include horticulture and recreation grounds with associated pavilions. The land uses are identified on Figure 3.6

### Settlement Pattern / Setting / Building Heights / Urban Grain

Haywards Heath originated as a railway town, on the London to Brighton Railway. The historic core and centre of the town has evolved as ribbon development along the B2272 and B2112 road corridors.

Residential building heights within Haywards Heath are predominantly 2 storey, with occasional 1 and 3 storey, with the more recent developments being predominantly 2 storey, with pitched roofs. Commercial and community premises are predominantly single storey with either flat or pitched roofs.

The predominantly fine / domestic urban grain of the settlement reflects its expansion along the undulating valleys and is therefore typically suburban in nature, with cul-de-sac developments off the movement corridors. Built form beyond the settlement edge is generally intermittent and linear - associated with road corridors.

The physical setting to the northern edge of Haywards Heath comprises fields, parkland and golf courses with woodland blocks set on the valley sides which limit views and provide a sense of intimacy.

### Enclosure

The study area has a rural character beyond the settlement and consists of areas of ancient and planned field enclosure, which give time depth to the area. The undulating topography and well wooded landscape create another sense of enclosure in combination with the vegetated field boundaries.

### Time Depth

According to the National Historic Landscape Characterisation, the study area predominantly consists of enclosed agriculture, typically of ancient and pre-modern form and field types predominantly considered to be Assart or planned. Borde Hill Park is a Grade II Listed house and associated RPG within the centre of the study area, northwest of Haywards Heath and the Site. Borde Hill is a late 19th to mid 20th Century plantsman's and collector's garden with wooded parkland plus ornamental gardens close to the house. Today it is a visitor attraction in the District. Pockets of Ancient Woodland and settlement are scattered throughout the rural landscape, beyond the fringes of Haywards Heath, to the west, north and east.

A number of Listed Buildings are present both within the settlements and scattered through the landscape. Those closest to the Site include:

- Grade II Listed Borde Hill Place, approximately 430m to the northwest of the Site.
- Grade II Listed South Lodge to Borde Hill, approximately 35m to the southwest of the Site.
- Grade II Listed Sugworth Farmhouse, approximately 220m to the north of the Site.

### Perceptual and aesthetic

The distinctive topography of the area, with the settlements set on ridgelines between well wooded slopes and valleys, creates a dramatic and striking character with areas of both openness and enclosure.

Settlement is generally perceived below the tree line, with the exception of some large buildings in Haywards Heath such as the new apartment blocks (three storeys) at the junction of Bordehill Lane, Hanlye Lane and Balcombe Road which are visually prominent from the surrounding landscape.

The railway line cuts through the study area and is a source of noise, reducing the sense of tranquillity within its immediate surrounds.

### Summary of contextual landscape character

The landscape character of the study area is defined by its landform, vegetation, land use and time depth. These factors have all informed the historic settlement pattern and growth. The rural character, field patterns and valleys are characteristic of the local area and contribute to the landscape quality and scenic quality of the study area. The study area is broadly representative of the district level character area within which it sits. It has high recreation value and conservation value with a number of areas designated for their ecological and heritage importance. Considering the above factors, the overall value of the contextual landscape character is considered to be High.

- Site boundary
- Settlement
- Woodland
- Agricultural land
- Gold course
- School
- Railway line



Figure 3.6 – Land Cover (fabrik, 2025)

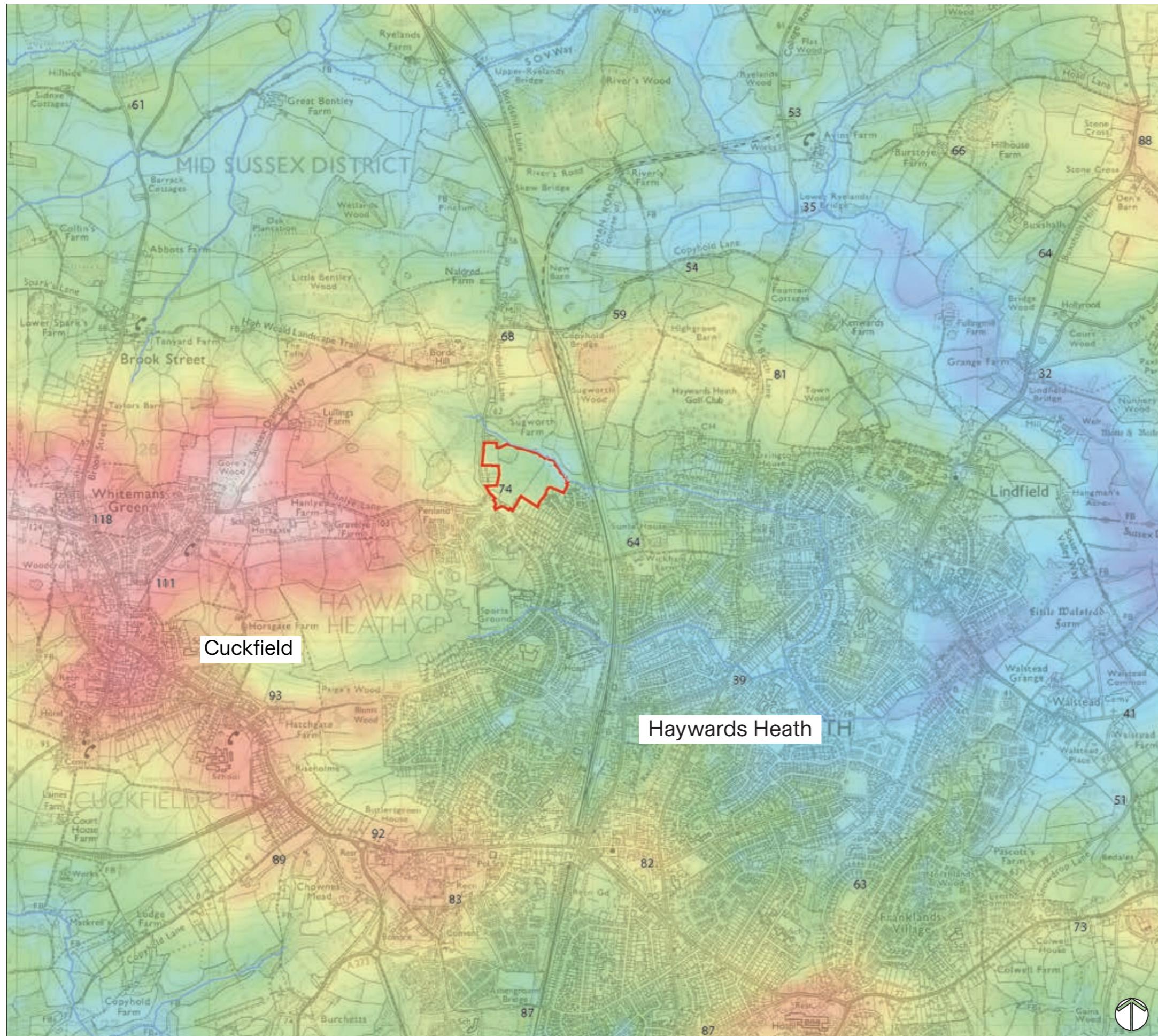
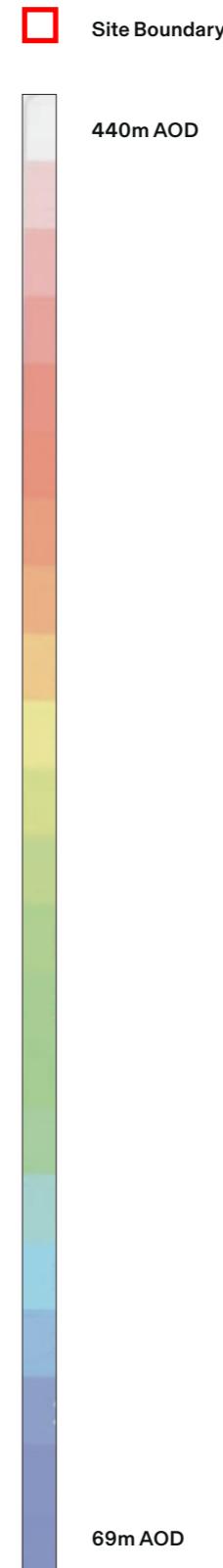


Figure 3.7 – Topography and Drainage (fabrik, 2025)



### 3.3 Site and Immediate Context Appraisal

The Site is bound by the existing suburban townscape to the southeast and south, and is situated adjacent to the recently completed residential development at Penlands Farm to the southwest. The Site is bound by a line of dwellings along its western edge, accessed from Borde Hill Lane. Borde Hill Grade II Listed country house and Registered Park and Garden (RPG) is situated beyond Borde Hill Lane to the west.

The boundary of the Registered Park and Garden with Borde Hill Lane additionally forms the edge of the High Weald National Landscape.

#### Geology and Soils

The UK Soil Observatory mapping identifies the soils of the Site as "slightly acid loamy and clayey soils with impeded drainage".

During the late 1800s and early 1900s, the Site was utilised for its clayey soils - brick fields situated within the northwest and south. Evidence of localised earthworks are still apparent in these locations today.

#### Landform and drainage

The Site comprises of a north facing hillside, sloping from approximately 75m AOD at the south western boundary close to Balcombe Road, to approximately 50m AOD at the north eastern boundary, where a small stream forms a definitive edge to the Site.

#### Vegetation Cover

The Site is in agricultural use with fields set to pasture. Within the northwest of the Site a small area of woodland is associated with the former brick field and mature trees line the northern boundary, forming a continuous green corridor which connects with the woodland block in the northwest of the Site and beyond to the Ancient Woodland west of the Site at Borde Hill Gardens. Mature trees additionally frame the railway line at the northeastern edge of the Site.

Mature intact hedgerows in a good condition frame the westernmost field parcel where it joins Borde Hill Lane and form internal field boundaries. Hedgerow trees are sizeable and distinct - contributing positively to the Site's green infrastructure network.

At the Site's southern and southeastern boundaries, vegetation comprises of tree groups with some mature specimens, plus

hedgerows, shrubs and ornamental species associated with garden boundaries.

#### Key natural elements, features and characteristics

The Site is characterised by its landform and vegetation, which creates areas of both enclosure and openness. The landscape features are generally in good condition and contribute to the scenic quality of the local area. The fields are in agricultural use and form part of a wider rural landscape. The undulating landform generally funnels water into the watercourse at the northern boundary.

#### Land Use

The Site comprises three fields of varying shapes and sizes used for pastoral practices. Land uses within immediate proximity of the Site include dwellings to the south, east and west, agricultural land to the north and parkland to the west (beyond Borde Hill Lane).

#### Built form

Buildings within the Site include the small and storage sheds within the northwestern section, to the immediate east of those dwellings at Borde Hill Lane.

Whilst outside the Site, in terms of immediate context, the Grade II listed building - the South Lodge to the west of the Site at Borde Hill Lane is 1 - 1/2 storeys in height. Those other residential dwellings within proximity - to the immediate west, south and east are typically 2 storeys, some with rooms in attics and are mostly detached and semi-detached. A newly constructed apartment block, at the roundabout junction to the immediate south of the Site is 3 storeys in height, which together with its elevated topographical position results in prominence in local views.

#### Time Depth

As previously discussed, brick fields were located within the northwest and south of the Site during the 1800s and early 1900s. Remnants of the earthworks from this time are still apparent in these locations today. As such, the Site's field shapes are still as they were from this time. Adjacent fields to the south and east, which once contained woodland and orchards, have been replaced with residential development. This is consistent with Hayward Heath's pattern of development over the past 200 years.

The alignment of Hanley Lane, to the immediate south of the Site was amended in recent years, moving eastwards, away from the Borde Hill Lodge House (Grade II Listed building)

and incorporating a roundabout junction to accommodate the development at the new Coniston Avenue.

#### Perceptual and aesthetic

The Site is perceived as a relatively enclosed landscape due to the steeply incised hillside in which it forms part, and due to the south facing hillside to the north, which is framed by trees and woodland. Built form is prevalent within the Site's setting, with residential dwellings and their gardens to the immediate east - at Orchard Way and Fairfield Way. Dwellings frame the Site to the south - at Balcombe Road and to the west and Borde Hill Lane. When viewed from the Site, dwellings in the immediate vicinity are set on sloping hillsides and with the backdrop of mature trees and woodland.

Recent residential development at Coniston Avenue to the south of the Site and Balcombe Road is additionally apparent from the Site and within local views. Given that these dwellings are situated on the upper slopes of the hillsides associated with the Site and include 3 storey apartment buildings at the southern fringe, they contribute to the perception of settlement edge.

There is limited perception of the adjacent Borde Hill RPG from the Site. The mature tree belt to the immediate west of Borde Hill Lane limits views into the parkland. The entrance to the gardens is from a newly created junction at Borde Hill Lane, to the northwest of the Site. The access drive continues northwards, away from the Site, up the hillside and towards the house on top of the hill. As such, there are limited views into the RPG from Borde Hill Lane. In addition, the new road alignment with roundabout to the immediate south of the Site has further altered the setting to the Lodge House (Grade II Listed) associated with RPG. The gateposts and building indicate that a formal landscape is situated beyond these features to the north, but as this driveway (at one time the main access to the house and gardens) is no longer in use, and given the sloping landform and prevalence of woodland, the historic landscape is not perceived.

The Site is not remote or tranquil, due to the adjacent settlement and surrounding road network. In views north from the Site, the Grade II Listed Sugworth Farmhouse is visible on the south facing hillside. The farmhouse and the associated agrarian fields provide the rural fringe context and reinforce the perception on travelling northwards, of leaving the settlement of Hayward Heath.

#### Function

The Site is representative of the character of the LCA within which it sits. Its topographical profile and its well treed fringes are in keeping with the surrounding landscape, which limit its perceptual relationship with the wider area.

The Site contributes to a relatively unified character of agricultural landscape set within a well vegetated framework adjacent to the existing settlement of Haywards Heath. Built form within Haywards on rising ground to the south is apparent within the local area.

The Site has a limited role to the setting of both Borde Hill RPG and the High Weald National Landscape. The mature tree belts to the immediate west of the Site and that woodland within the local landscape to the north, form definitive edges, treed skylines and a woodland character. As such, the prominence of trees limits intervisibility between the RPG, National Landscape and the Site from public vantage points. The Site therefore forms a discrete parcel of land, and has a minor function in the rural - settlement fringe at this northern edge of Haywards Heath.

#### Overall Landscape Character

The Site's landscape character is informed by the following features:

- pastoral land use;
- mature woodland within the northwest of the Site;
- mature trees along field boundaries and the water course;
- woodland and trees within the immediate local landscape providing physical and visual enclosure;
- the mature hedgerow which divides the field parcels;
- sloping landform which falls north-eastwards from approximately 75m AOD in the southern corner of the Site to approximately 50m AOD in the northeastern corner;
- the contextual adjacent undulating landform;
- adjacent built form at Borde Hill Lane to the west, Orchard Way and Fairfield Way to the southeast and the recently completed development at Penland Farm to the southwest, the latter of which is prominent on the skyline due to its elevated position;
- adjacent built form at Sugworth Farm to the north.

The farming features of the Site are typical and the landscape features are characteristic of the local setting. There is no sense of remoteness, given that the adjacent residential dwellings are apparent in views to the west, south and east.



Figure 3.8 – Site landscape appraisal with photograph locations (fabrik, 2025)

- Site Boundary
- Public Right Of Way
- ★ Listed Buildings
- Borde Hill Rpg, Plus High Weald National Landscape
- Existing Trees And Woodland
- Existing Pasture
- Existing Scrub Vegetation
- Existing Built Form
- Existing Hedgerows
- Existing Water Courses
- Viewpoint Location
- 50 Contour

#### Internal Visual Survey

A visual inspection of the Site was conducted on 26th June 2025. Photos A - N on the following pages illustrate the existing Site conditions and characteristics. The viewpoint locations are illustrated on Figure 3.8.

The photographs demonstrate that, with the exception of the vegetated edge, there are no views into the National Landscape from the Site due to the well vegetated nature of the field boundaries, woodland blocks and undulating topography. There are views of a small section of the National Landscape boundary, which in turn forms the boundary of the RPG at Borde Hill Lane. This is comprised of mature woodland vegetation, which truncates wider views.

From the south, north and centre of the Site, the recently completed residential development at Coniston Avenue is apparent, including the 3 storey apartment block, close to the roundabout junction. Built form to the immediate west, south and east informs the character and amenity of views out from the Site, and to the north, the agricultural fields and Sugworth farmhouse (Grade II Listed) inform the rural nature of the Site's fringe character. Vegetation on the upper valley slopes creates a backdrop of woodland truncates views to the wider landscape beyond.



**Photograph A**

View looking east into the woodland within the Site, associated with the former brick field. Trees are apparent in locations where landform has been manipulated historically, providing topographical variety in a location which is low lying.



**Photograph B**

View looking southwest across the field in the west of the Site. The mature tree belt is apparent beyond Borde Hill lane, west of this Site. This forms the definitive boundary of the national landscape and Borde Hill Park (RPG), and is prominent on the skyline. From this location there are glimpsed views of the detached dwellings to the southwest, at Borde Hill Lane.



 Site boundary  
 Photo location



**Photograph C**  
View looking northwest across the field parcel in the west of the Site. The trees at the edge of Borde Hill Park RPG are visible from this location, as are those semi-detached dwellings at Borde Hill Lane to the northwest. The treed skyline continues beyond those dwellings, limiting views out of the Site to the immediate locality.



**Photograph D**  
View looking southeast of the Site from the edge of the woodland block within the Site. The sloping landform is apparent and the internal field boundary is visible, with its standard trees and treed horizon beyond.





Photograph E

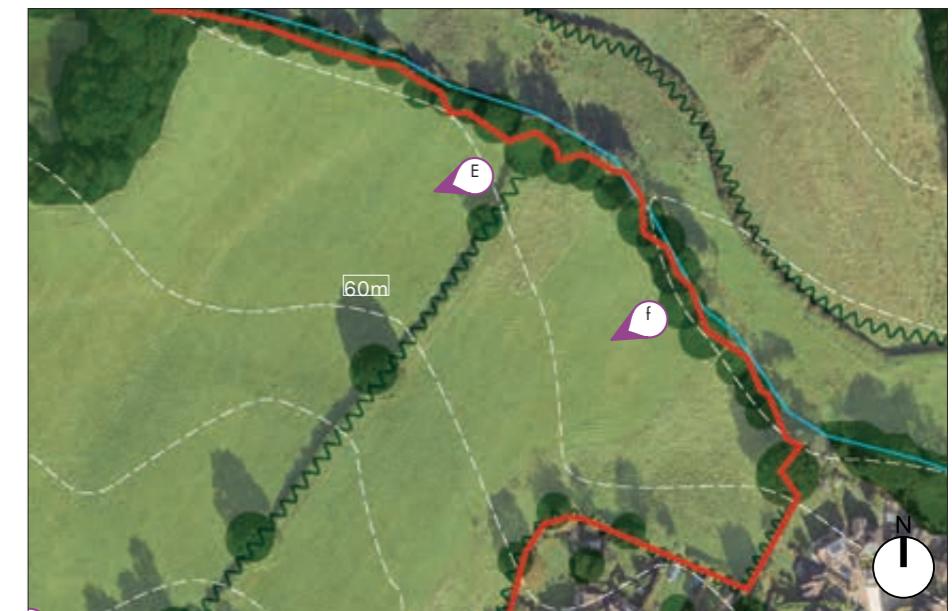
View looking west from the northeastern corner of the central field parcel on Site. The treed skyline is prominent, with dwellings at Balcombe Road and Borde Hill Lane visible amongst the trees.



Photograph F

View looking south towards the existing settlement edge from the northern boundary, within the easternmost field parcel. Dwellings at Orchard Way and Fairfield Way are visible, set behind hedgerows and trees. The Site's sloping landform is clear.

 Site boundary  
 Photo location





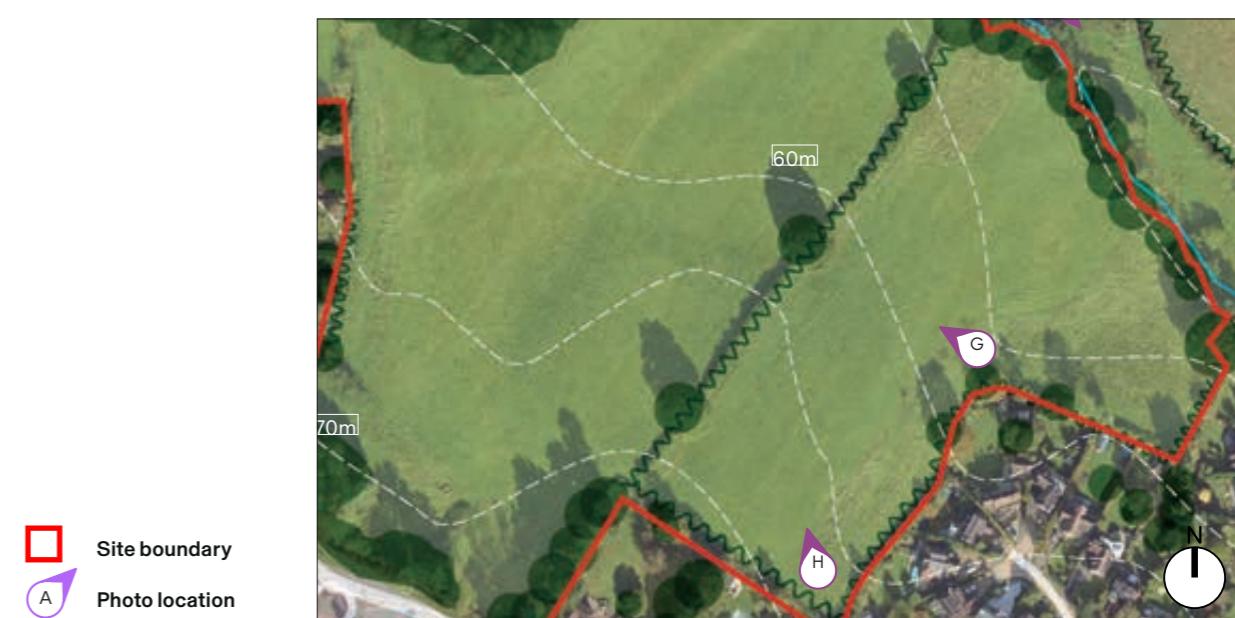
**Photograph G**

View looking west from the Site's eastern boundary. The internal field boundary and trees is visible, together with the sloping landform and treed horizon beyond.



**Photograph H**

View looking north towards Sugworth Farm. Whilst the farmhouse is not apparent from this location, the south facing sloping fields beyond the Site are apparent, together with the treed horizon beyond. The Site's sloping landform and mature oak trees are visible.



■ Site boundary  
A Photo location



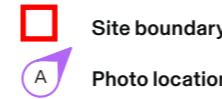
**Photograph I**  
View looking east towards the existing settlement edge. The rear elevations of dwellings are apparent, set behind hedgerows and vegetation and below a treed skyline. The sloping landform is visible as is the treed skyline beyond.



**Photograph J**  
View looking northeast from the southwest of the internal field boundary hedgerow. The Site's sloping landform is apparent, as is the tree skyline, dwelling at Borde Hill Lane and the Grade II Listed Sugworth Farmhouse, set amongst fields and trees on the south facing hillside north of the Site.



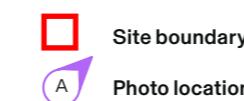
**Photograph K**  
View looking south towards Balcombe Road. The recently completed apartment blocks (three storeys in height) are prominent on the rising ground south of the Site, set behind mature trees at the Site's boundary.





**Photograph 1**

View looking north from the south of the Site. The Site's sloping landform is apparent, as is the tree skyline, dwelling at Borde Hill lane and the Grade II Listed Sugworth Farmhouse, set amongst fields and trees on the south facing hillside north of the Site.



## 3.4 Landscape Receptors

Based on the detailed site-specific character area analysis, a number of key landscape receptors have been identified as being representative of the Site's character and are taken forward for assessment. These receptors reflect the physical, perceptual, and experiential attributes of the Site, including vegetation cover, landform, natural features, land use, built form, visual enclosure, and perceptual qualities. Each receptor is accompanied by a professional judgement of landscape value, informed by factors such as scenic quality, rarity, representativeness, conservation interest, perceptual qualities, and cultural or historical associations.

### 3.4.1 Published Landscape Receptors

#### LCAs GW4 and 10, High Weald Fringes: High

The HW4: High Weald Fringes Landscape Character Area is considered to be of **High** value. This reflects its predominantly rural character, pattern of woodland, shaws, hedgerows and assart fields, and its cultural and historic associations with the wider High Weald landscape. Importantly, a substantial proportion of this LCA lies within the High Weald National Landscape, a nationally designated landscape that elevates the overall value of the character area. The presence of ancient woodland, traditional rural buildings, designed landscapes, and a coherent, well-preserved landscape structure further reinforce its high landscape value.

### 3.4.2 Contextual Landscape Receptors

#### Setting of the High Weald National Landscape and Borde Hill RPG: High

The receptor is considered to be of **High** value. Both designations are recognised for their scenic, historic, and cultural importance, with the National Landscape valued for its distinctive medieval landscape pattern, woodland cover, and settlement form, and the RPG valued for its designed landscape, heritage significance, and contribution to local character. Although the Site does not make a strong contribution to the immediate setting of either designation due to intervening landform and vegetation, the receptor itself is inherently of high value.

### 3.4.3 Site Landscape Receptors

#### Landform and Drainage: Medium

The Site comprises of a north facing hillside, sloping from approximately 75m AOD at the south western boundary close to Balcombe Road, to approximately 50m AOD at the northern boundary, where a small stream forms a definitive edge to the Site. A value of **Medium** is assigned as the landform is typical of the local landscape.

#### Vegetation Cover: Medium

The on-site vegetation has a **Medium** value as it contributes positively to the Site's landscape character and green infrastructure. Key features include a small woodland in the northwest, mature trees along the northern and northeastern boundaries forming a green corridor linking to Ancient Woodland at Borde Hill Gardens, and intact hedgerows with notable hedgerow trees, particularly in the west. Tree groups, mature specimens, and ornamental planting along the southern and southeastern boundaries further enhance the Site's visual and ecological value.

#### Landuse: Medium

The Site's agricultural fields are not designated and are common features in the immediate and wider landscape context. They are in a relatively good condition, being in pastoral use. The tranquillity of the fields and their immediate surroundings are however degraded by the presence of surrounding built form and the adjacent road corridors. On this basis, the value of the feature is considered to be **Medium**.

#### Perceptual / Aesthetic Qualities: Medium

The Site has a semi-rural, enclosed character shaped by its sloping landform and surrounding tree cover. While influenced by adjacent residential development and road infrastructure, it retains perceptual value through its landscape structure and views north toward the Grade II Listed Sugworth Farmhouse and its agrarian setting, which reinforce the rural fringe context. Importantly, the Site is not visible from the adjacent National Landscape, limiting its contribution to the wider scenic quality. On this basis, the perceptual and aesthetic elements are considered to be of **Medium** value.

#### Site and Immediate Context: Medium

The Site forms part of the landscape on the northern settled edge of Haywards Heath, where the urban fringe meets a more rural setting. Its character is shaped by the steep landform, mature vegetation, and enclosed visual quality, while also being influenced by surrounding residential development and road infrastructure. Although adjacent to the Borde Hill RPG and High Weald National Landscape, the Site is visually and physically separated from it by mature tree belts and topography, limiting its contribution to the setting of this designated asset. The wider character is already eroded by modern built form, but the Site still offers a degree of separation between the settlement and the open countryside to the north, including views toward the Grade II listed Sugworth Farmhouse. On this basis, the Site's setting and overall character are considered to be of **Medium** value.

3.1 Summary of Landscape Receptors	
Landscape Receptors	Value
Landscape Character Areas GW4 and 10: High Weald Fringes	High
Setting of the High Weald National Landscape and Borde Hill RPG	High
Site Landform and Drainage	Medium
Site Vegetation	Medium
Site Land Use	Medium
Site Perceptual / Aesthetic Qualities	Medium
Site and Immediate Context	Medium

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