

Tunbridge Wells - Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment of Proposed Allocation Sites within the High Weald AONB



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CONTENTS

1	Executive summary
2	Introduction
3	Method statement
3.1	Introduction
3.2	Methodology
4	Policy context
4.1	Introduction
4.2	National Planning Policy Framework
4.3	National Planning Practice Guidance
4.4	Local Policy
5	The High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
5.1	Introduction
6	Site assessment
6.1	Introduction
6.2	Contents
6.3	Royal Tunbridge Wells
6.4	Pembury
6.5	Southborough
6.6	Cranbrook
6.7	Hawkhurst
6.8	Brenchley and Matfield
6.9	Lamberhurst
6.10	Sandhurst
7	AONB wide cumulative effects
8	Overall conclusions and recommendations.

Appendix A - Reference documents considered within this assessment.

Appendix B – HDA's LVIA methodology

1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report provides a high-level Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) for 21 potential allocations sites, which all lie within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The background information and methodology for the assessment work is set out within chapters 2-5 of the report. Section 6 contains the assessments for the 21 sites.
- 1.2 For ease of assessment, the sites have been grouped according to settlement location. For each settlement a contextual analysis has been carried out, followed by the site assessments associated with that settlement.
- 1.3 Site assessments contain background information on each site (referred to as the baseline), followed by a description of the proposed development and a description of the likely effects of the development on the landscape and on local views. Advice is given on additional controls or measures (mitigation), which could reduce any effects that have been assessed as adverse.
- 1.4 A conclusion is provided for each site, which summarises the findings and provides recommendations to the council. It includes an evaluation of the likely harm of the proposals, what measures should be included in the policy wording for the site and whether the site is considered suitable for development, in landscape and visual terms, without contradicting national and local planning policy. Example recommendations include: provision of additional open space, landscape screening, reduction in the quantum of development and advice on the design parameters for development within a particular site.
- 1.5 At the end of each settlement chapter, the report considers any additional (cumulative) effects to the integrity of the AONB as a result of development within a combination of potential sites. The findings are provided at the end of the chapter.
- 1.6 Chapter 7 considers the cumulative effects of all 21 potential sites on the overarching integrity of the AONB. The findings of the report are summarised in chapter 8.
- 1.7 Both Natural England and the High Weald AONB Board have been consulted as part of the project.

2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 Hankinson Duckett Associates (HDA) was commissioned by Tunbridge Wells Borough Council (TWBC) to undertake a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment of 21 proposed allocation sites, within the Tunbridge Wells Borough Draft Local Plan Regulation 18 Consultation Draft (20 September to 1 November 2019), which all lie within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and are / may be considered to represent 'major' development. The aim of this study is to provide clear and concise advice concerning the potential landscape and visual issues pertaining to each study site, as a result of the development proposed within the site allocation, in order to assist the council with their decision making in relation to the reg 19 iteration of the draft Local Plan. The study will not include judgements on Green Belt.
- 2.2 All 21 sites assessed within this report are assumed to represent 'major' development (on a precautionary basis and considering the potential for cumulative effects). In response, this assessment has been tailored to address part c) of the required assessment set out within paragraph 172 of the NPPF (regarding major development within a National Park or AONB), which considers: '*any detrimental effect on the environment, the landscape and recreational opportunities, and the extent to which that could be moderated.*'
For the purposes of this assessment it has been assumed that Tunbridge Wells Borough Council have satisfactorily addressed parts a) and b) of the same paragraph i.e. that the allocations within the study are needed and that they could not be delivered outside the AONB. This assumption has been made in order that the sites are given equal weight.
- 2.3 Both Natural England and the High Weald AONB Board have provided comments through the regulation 18 consultation process. Both bodies have raised concerns about the principle of Major Development within the AONB and both have indicated a requirement for any such allocations to be robustly assessed against the criteria in paragraph 172 of the NPPF (above). Natural England have also responded that the evidence base for sites considered to be major development, should include further information in the form of an LVIA.
- 2.4 The AONB Board have provided the following recommendation: '*all allocation policies that deal with sites in the AONB, and within its setting, should include a requirement to design positively to demonstrate enhancement of the High Weald AONB's landscape and beauty.*'

These comments have been incorporated into the brief for this study.

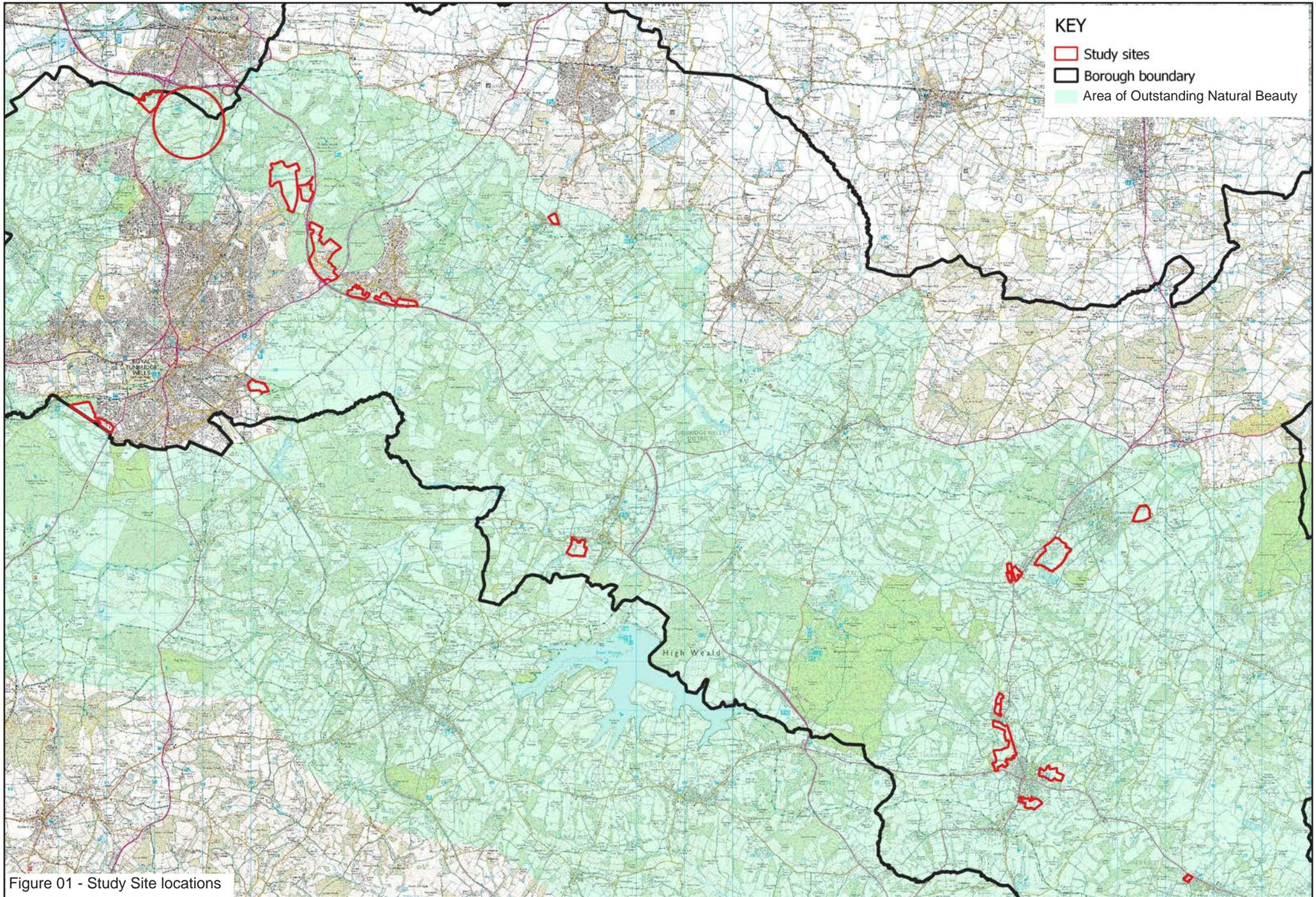


Figure 01 - Study Site locations

2.5 This Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment provides a high-level landscape and visual assessment of each site, which:

- Provides advice on the key landscape and visual sensitivities of each site.
- Identifies key receptors to be considered within more detailed site assessment, which should come forward in application documents provided by site promoters.
- Considers the extent to which each site is representative of AONB characteristics and qualities
- Provides a high-level assessment of potential landscape and visual effects based upon the policies and associated site development maps set out within the Consultation Draft Local Plan.
- Include an assessment of the potential effects of the development of each site on the High Weald AONB.
- Proposes mitigation measures that could avoid or reduce adverse effects, along with opportunities to enhance the landscape of the AONB.
- Provides a cumulative assessment of each site in relation to other major development sites within the AONB.

2.6 The 21 proposed sites have been grouped into geographical study areas, based upon settlements, to identify any overarching issues and to enable any potential cumulative effects to be identified and recorded. These settlements include:

- Royal Tunbridge Wells (site prefix RTW);
- Pembury (site prefix PE);
- Southborough (site prefix SO);
- Cranbrook (site prefix CRS);
- Hawkhurst (site prefix HA);
- Brenchley and Matfield (site prefix BM);
- Lamberhurst (site prefix LA)
- Sandhurst (site prefix DPC)

Due to proximity and the potential for cumulative effects, some of the Royal Tunbridge Wells' sites have been considered within the Pembury Study Area cumulative assessment and visa-versa.

2.7 The sites considered within this assessment are:

- Land adjacent to Longfield Road – Policy AL/ RTW 12
- Land at Colebrook House – Policy AL/ RTW 13
- Land to the west of Eridge Road at Spratsbrook Farm– Policy AL/ RTW 18
- Land to the north of Hawkenbury Recreation Ground – Policy AL/ RTW 23
- Land rear of High Street and west of Chalket Lane – Policy AL/ PE 1
- Land at Hubbles Farm and south of Hastings Road– Policy AL/ PE 2
- Land north of the A21, south and west of Hastings Road – Policy AL/ PE 3
- Land at Tunbridge Wells Hospital, Pembury and adjacent to Tonbridge Road – Policy AL/ PE 6
- Land at Mabledon and Nightingale – Policy AL/ SO 3

- Land at Mabledon House – Policy AL/ SO 4
- Turnden Farm, Hartley Road – Policy AL/CRS 4
- Gate Farm, adjacent to Hartley Road and Glassenbury Road, Hartley – Policy AL/CRS 6
- Land off Golford Road – Policy AL/CRS 7
- Land forming part of the Hawkhurst Golf Course to the north of the High Street – Policy AL/HA 1
- Land at Fowlers Park – Policy AL/HA 4
- Land off Copthall Avenue and Highgate Hill – Policy AL/HA 6
- Hawkhurst Station Business Park – Policy AL/HA 8
- Land at Santers Yard, Gill's Green Farm– Policy AL/HA 9
- Land between Brenchley Road, Coppers Lane, and Maidstone Road – Policy AL/BM 1
- Misty Meadow, Furnace Lane – Policy AL/LA 2
- Sharps Hill Farm – New site not considered within the Reg 18 Draft Local Plan. Site reference DPC12.

2.8 For ease of reference, the sites will be identified by their policy reference from the regulation 18 Draft Local Plan (e.g. RTW 12), within this report.

2.9 This Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment draws on a number of existing studies across the Borough, within adjacent Districts / Boroughs and on relevant higher-level documents produced by the High Weald AONB Board, East Sussex County Council and Natural England. Appendix A contains a list of reference documents considered within this assessment.

3 METHOD STATEMENT

3.1 Introduction

3.1.1 This methodology is based upon an abbreviated form of HDA's LVIA methodology (see Appendix B), which follows the current best practice set out within the third edition of the 'Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment' (GLVIA), Natural England's 'An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment'; and Natural England's 'An approach to landscape sensitivity assessment – to inform spatial planning and land management'.

3.1.2 The assessment also utilises the advice set out within the High Weald AONB 'Advice Note: Legislation and Planning Policy in the High Weald AONB' (2019), along with other guidance published by the AONB unit and Natural England, in order to comment on the potential effects of development in the High Weald AONB.



3.2 Methodology

Stage 1: Agree Methodology and outputs

3.2.1 An outline methodology was submitted with HDA's successful tender, which followed a clear brief set out by the council, based upon S4-5 (pre-planning landscape and visual impact assessments) of the landscape consultants' scope of services. The timetable, methodology, consultation requirements, milestones and outputs were agreed with Tunbridge Wells Borough Council (TWBC) at an inception meeting. The original project brief and subsequent proposed methodology were shared with Natural England and the High Weald AONB Board for comment.

Stage 2: Review

3.2.2 Consultation responses from key stakeholders, including the High Weald AONB and Natural England were reviewed along with all relevant existing studies, available site surveys and any submitted development proposals or representations for each site. Results were collated and evaluated to identify potential constraints for each of the 21 proposed development sites and to provide initial feedback to the council.

Stage 3: Desk study

3.2.3 The baseline data for the borough was collated and mapped using GIS and other appropriate software. The data was analysed and reviewed along with current aerial photographs to form an initial appraisal of the character of each site, prior to verification by field work. Mapping has included:

- Geology and soils
- Topography
- Land use and landscape features (based initially on aerial photography and OS mapping)
- Regional and county / AONB landscape character types and areas, and associated guidelines
- Historic Landscape Characterisation
- Local Plan designations including local landscape, nature conservation, and heritage designation
- Extent of existing built development (Existing limits to built development)
- Listed buildings, Conservation Areas, Registered parks & gardens, Ancient Monuments and historic farmsteads
- Historic mapping
- Ancient Woodland
- Public rights of way (including long distance footpaths etc) and notable viewpoints
- Areas at risk of flooding
- Locally valued features e.g. landmarks
- Any known cultural associations

- 3.2.4 The 21 proposed sites have been grouped into geographical study areas, generally related to a specific settlement, which enabled potential cumulative effects to be identified. Landscape structure analysis has been undertaken for each study area to identify the main elements which contribute to the character, structure and setting of both the surrounding AONB landscape and the settlements themselves. This information was then 'ground truthed' through field work (Stage 4). The survey sheets for the field work and proposed site assessment templates were shared with Natural England and the AONB Board for comment.
- 3.2.5 A 'viewshed' analysis has been undertaken to identify the zone of theoretical visibility for each site. The information has been used in combination with the desk study information to identify potentially sensitive viewpoint locations, which were then visited and verified as part of the field work.
- Stage 4: Site visits and field work**
- 3.2.6 Field assessment has underpinned all subsequent project stages. Site visits were undertaken to identify the key characteristics and visual envelope of each proposed site within the context of the study area, with particular regard to the distinctive qualities and key characteristics of the AONB. The landscape features for each site were noted and landscape character analysis was undertaken. A survey sheet has been completed for each site to create a working record, which has been refined and included within the written report. Survey sheets are supported by annotated mapping and a photographic record of each site.
- 3.2.7 The desk study and fieldwork data were collated, and initial feedback provided to TWBC in order to identify key issues facing each site in landscape and visual terms, along with identification of any other landscape considerations and opportunities.
- Stage 5: Assessment of effects**
- 3.2.8 The assessment of sites has been considered in relation to the landscape and settlement pattern of the surrounding study area, which forms an initial overview prior to the analysis of individual sites. For further details on HDA's Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment methodology see Appendix B
- 3.2.9 Each individual site assessment includes a comprehensive assessment of the baseline condition (situation at the time of the field survey). The landscape baseline identified the landscape character and key characteristics of the site, along with landscape features that contribute to its landscape character. This was then assessed against the key characteristics of the wider landscape to analyse the site's contribution to the character and appearance of the AONB. The landscape value of all 20 sites is intrinsically high, given their location within the AONB. This study has not set out to dispute this sensitivity, but rather to provide independent and specialist assessment of individual sites which seeks to inform the Borough Council's decision making. This information has been drawn from the designations and demonstrable physical attributes (e.g. landscape quality and condition, scenic quality and rarity) attributable to each site.
- 3.2.10 A visual baseline serves to "*identify the people within an area who will be affected by changes in views and visual amenity – usually referred to as 'Visual Receptors'*" (GLVIA, page 106, para 6.13). Within this study, the visual baseline established the existing visibility of the site and identified key viewpoint locations against which the visual effects of the site were then tested.
- 3.2.11 The perceptual and experiential qualities of the site have been discussed to identify the site's contribution to the landscape and scenic beauty of the AONB. This section refers back to the special qualities of the AONB identified within the published High Weald AONB Management Plan.
- 3.2.12 The recreational value of each site has been considered in terms of its contribution to recreational use and the public enjoyment of the AONB. This could be direct (e.g. recreational provision within the site) or indirect (e.g. the site is a key component to views from a national trail, long-distance route or local footpaths).
- 3.2.13 Commentary is then given about the overall representativeness of each site in relation to the character and appearance of the AONB.
- 3.2.14 The predicted landscape and visual effects of proposed development within each site were then considered. For consistency, the assessment of effects has been considered in relation to the individual site-specific policies and associated site development maps as set out within the Regulation 18 Consultation Draft Local Plan. The maps set out the site boundary and proposed strategic Open Space and Landscape Buffers considered by TWBC as mitigation for the proposed development areas.
- 3.2.15 For the purposes of this study, the proposed development areas were initially considered in isolation, without the potential benefits of the strategic Open Space and Landscape Buffers, however only the land put forward for development was assessed at this stage. The introduction of the strategic Open Space and Landscape Buffers was considered to be inherent mitigation already carried out by the Council and is considered within the mitigation section of each site assessment.
- 3.2.16 **Landscape effects:** The direct effects of the development on the site itself were assessed, identifying the potential loss or change to existing landscape features within or adjacent to the site, together with the creation of new landscape elements. The effects on local landscape character were also assessed.
- 3.2.17 **Visual effects:** The likely change to existing views of the site following development have been described. A direct comparison has been given of the potential views of

the site following development with that of the existing situation, which together with degree of visibility provides the likely extent of change predicted to the view.

- 3.2.18 The predicted landscape and visual effects have been summarised and referenced back to relevant AONB Management Plan objectives, using the same referencing for the objectives as the Management Plan.

Stage 6: Avoidance and mitigation

- 3.2.19 Mitigation is defined in the Landscape Institute Guidelines as:
'Measures proposed to prevent/avoid, reduce and where possible remedy (or compensate for) any significant adverse landscape and visual effects...' (GLVIA, page 57, para 4.21).

This definition is consistent with the provisions of the NPPF which states that 'any detrimental effect on the environment, the landscape and recreational opportunities, and the extent to which that could be moderated', in line with paragraph 172, part c).

- 3.2.20 The Regulation 18 Consultation Draft Local Plan sets out high-level mitigation measures for some of the sites in the form of strategic Open Space and Landscape Buffers. These have been considered in combination with any identified alterations or additional mitigation measures, which respond to the constraints of the site and mitigates against the foreseen landscape and visual effects arising from the development of each site allocation. The combined proposed measures take the form of a strategic green infrastructure strategy for each site, which links to wider local plan policy. Potential enhancements have also been considered and put forward as potential solutions, where practicable.

- 3.2.21 The effectiveness of the proposed mitigation has been analysed, and overall conclusions drawn about the development potential of the site in terms of likely residual landscape and visual effects.

- 3.2.22 The potential cumulative effects of different combinations of sites have been discussed for each study area. This considered combinations of effects expected by the development of multiple sites, which are predicted to result in more significant or wider ranging effects than the individual sites in isolation.

4 LANDSCAPE PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 The Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment has regard to the requirements of the development planning process including both national and local policy.

4.2 National Planning Policy Framework

4.2.1 The National Planning Policy Framework sets out the government's planning policy. Relevant paragraphs from the Framework include:

- Paragraph 98 – Rights of Way and access
- Paragraph 91 – Achieving healthy, inclusive and safe places (Section 8 – Promoting healthy and safe communities);
- Paragraph 127 – Design of developments (Section 12 – Achieving well-designed places);
- Paragraphs 133-144 – Green Belt
- Paragraph 170 – Valued landscape (Section 15 – Conserving and enhancing the natural environment).
- Paragraph 172 – AONB (see below)
- Paragraph 184 – Protection and enjoyment of heritage assets.

4.2.2 All of the sites within this assessment are located within High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). Paragraph 172 of the Framework states that: *'Great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, 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 these designated areas should be limited. Planning 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.'*

4.3 National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG)

4.3.1 The NPPG was launched as a web-based resource on 6th March 2014. The guidance supports and informs the framework and sets out further specific planning guidance. NPPG categories relevant to this development include 'Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment', 'Design' and 'Natural Environment'. Both the 'Design' and 'Natural Environment' categories advocate a character-based approach to the design and implementation of new development.

4.3.2 Guidance within the NPG on Green Infrastructure states that: *'Green infrastructure opportunities and requirements need to be considered at the earliest stages of development proposals, as an integral part of development and infrastructure provision, and taking into account existing natural assets and the most suitable locations and types of new provision.'* (Paragraph: 008 Reference ID: 8-008-20190721, Revision date: 21 07 2019). This guidance is relevant to potential mitigation for the assessment sites.

4.3.3 The NPG also addresses how development within an AONB should be approached (Paragraph: 041, Reference ID: 8-041-20190721, Revision date: 21 07 2019): *'The National Planning Policy Framework makes clear that the scale and extent of development in these areas should be limited, in view of the importance of conserving and enhancing their landscapes and scenic beauty. Its policies for protecting these areas may mean that it is not possible to meet objectively assessed needs for development in full through the plan-making process, and they are unlikely to be suitable areas for accommodating unmet needs from adjoining (non-designated) areas. Effective joint working between planning authorities covering designated and adjoining areas, through the preparation and maintenance of statements of common ground, is particularly important in helping to identify how housing and other needs can best be accommodated.'*

4.4 Local Policy

4.4.1 This Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment will form part of the evidence base for the emerging Local Plan for Tunbridge Wells Borough. The Tunbridge Wells Borough Draft Local Plan, Regulation 18 Consultation Draft (20 September to 1 November 2019) sets out draft policies that would be relevant to the assessment sites within this report. These include the individual allocation policies for each site (referenced within paragraph 2.1.5 above), along with the policies set out within section 6 of the Draft Local Plan, which relate to the Environment. These include:

- Policy EN 1 Design and other development management criteria;
- Policy EN 5 Climate change adaptation
- Policy EN 6 Historic environment
- Policy EN 10 Outdoor Lighting and Dark Skies
- Policy EN 11 Net Gains for Nature: biodiversity
- Policy EN 12 Protection of designated sites and habitats
- Policy EN 14 Trees, Woodlands, Hedges, and Development
- Policy EN 15 Ancient Woodland and Veteran Trees
- Policy EN 16 Green, Grey, and Blue Infrastructure
- Policy EN 17 Local Green Space
- Policy EN 21 High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)

4.4.2 Of these, Policy EN21 is particularly relevant to this study, which states that: *'All development within, or affecting the setting of, the High Weald AONB shall seek to conserve and enhance its landscape and scenic beauty, having particular regard to the impacts on its character components, as set out in the High Weald AONB Management Plan.*

Development in the AONB on sites not allocated in the Local Plan will need to be of a limited scale appropriate in terms of its nature and location... and will need to:

1. *Be sensitive to the topography and landscape features of the location;*
2. *Improve where possible connections between settlements and countryside through the provision of high quality green infrastructure (see Policy EN 16: Green, Grey, and Blue Infrastructure);*
3. *Protect, enhance, and restore ancient routeways;*
4. *Retain and support the distinctiveness of individual settlements;*
5. *Help restore the natural functioning of water courses;*
6. *Improve the management of associated agricultural land, woodland, and heaths; and*
7. *Where possible and appropriate, improve public access to the countryside providing way marking and interpretation material to assist in the public enjoyment, appreciation and understanding of the AONB.*

Major development in the AONB is defined in the NPPF paragraph 172 and footnote 55 (or subsequent revision). Proposals for major development in the AONB will need to demonstrate exceptional circumstances and be assessed against the three tests in the NPPF (or subsequent revisions), including the possibility of alternatives to meet the identified need.'

4.4.3 Adopted Local policy is set out within the Core Strategy, which was adopted in June 2010. Core policy 4: Environment is the most relevant to this assessment.



Tunbridge Wells Borough

LOCAL Plan



Draft Local Plan Regulation 18 Consultation Draft 20 September to 1 November 2019



Figure 02 - Draft Local Plan front cover

4.5 Other guidance

- 4.5.1 The key guidance document for this study is the third edition of the 'Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (GLVIA)' as it corresponds to both the brief set out by Tunbridge Wells Borough Council and to Natural England comments on the reg 18 draft Local Plan, which request LVIA's for each of the proposed major development sites within the AONB. Other relevant guidance produced by Natural England include 'An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment'; and 'An approach to landscape sensitivity assessment – to inform spatial planning and land management'. The approaches to sensitivity assessment are broadly comparable between GLVIA and Natural England's more recent guidance on landscape sensitivity assessment.
- 4.5.2 This Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment has also considered the policies set out within the High Weald AONB Management Plan (see section 4 of this report for further details) and the policies set out within any relevant Neighbourhood Plans (both adopted and draft plans are considered).
- 4.5.3 Appendix A contains a list of reference documents which have been considered within this assessment.

5 THE HIGH WEALD AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY

5.1 Introduction

5.1.1 Tunbridge Wells Borough Council have a statutory duty to *'have regard to the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty'* of an AONB (Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000). The conservation and enhancement of the character and appearance of the High Weald AONB is an overarching consideration for all the proposed allocation sites within this study. The High Weald AONB Management Plan contains a 'Statement of Significance' which defines the qualities that make the High Weald special at a national level. This statement sets out 5 key 'character components' that contribute to the unique natural beauty of the area and make the High Weald distinctive (see extract below).

5.1.2 For each of these components the High Weald Management Plan lists out key characteristics, issues and objectives, along with actions that would assist in the achievement of the objectives. The High Weald AONB Unit has also produced an advice note titled 'Legislation and Planning Policy in the High Weald' (February 2019), which contains an assessment template (at Appendix 1), that is *'intended to assist in testing a development proposal against the objectives of the Management Plan'*. Both

the Management Plan and assessment template have been referenced within this study in order to assess the baseline sensitivity of each allocation site and to test the potential effects of development on each site.

5.1.3 To be included within an AONB, landscape should meet the 'Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000' designation criteria. Natural England's 'Guidance for assessing landscapes for designations as National Park or Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in England' (March 2011), explains the criteria.

5.1.4 The factors which contribute to 'natural beauty' are listed within Table 3 of the report, an extract of which is given below:

- *'Landscape quality: This is a measure of the physical state or condition of the landscape.'*
- *'Scenic quality: The extent to which the landscape appeals to the senses (primarily, but not only, the visual senses).'*
- *'Relative wildness: The degree to which relatively wild character can be perceived in the landscape makes a particular contribution to sense of place.'*
- *'Relative tranquillity: The degree to which relative tranquillity can be perceived in the landscape.'*
- *'Natural heritage features: The influence of natural heritage on the perception of the natural beauty of the area. Natural heritage includes flora, fauna, geological and physiographical features.'*
- *'Cultural heritage: The influence of cultural heritage on the perception of natural beauty of the area and the degree to which associations with particular people, artists, writers or events in history contribute to such perception.'*

The natural beauty of the High Weald comprises

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

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.

■ **Land-based economy and related rural life** bound up with, and underpinning, the observable character of the landscape with roots extending deep into history. An increasingly

broad-based economy but with a significant land-based sector and related community life focused on mixed farming (particularly family farms and smallholdings), woodland management and rural crafts.

■ **Other qualities** and features that are connected to the interaction between the landscape and people and which enrich character components. Such qualities and features enhance health and wellbeing, and foster enjoyment and appreciation of the beauty of nature. These include locally distinctive features which enrich the character components such as historic parks and gardens, orchards, hop gardens, veteran trees, along with their rich and varied biodiversity, and a wide range of appealing and locally distinctive historic buildings including oast houses, farm buildings, Wealden Hall houses and their associated features such as clay-tile catslide roofs. People value the wonderful views and scenic beauty of the High Weald with its relative tranquillity. They appreciate the area's ancientness and sense of history, its intrinsically dark landscape with the opportunity to see our own galaxy – the Milky Way – and the ability to get close to nature through the myriad public rights of way.

5.1.5 This guidance document has been considered within the assessment of sites in relation to the contribution that an individual site makes to the overarching principles of AONB designation.

5.1.6 The Tunbridge Wells Landscape Character Assessment considers what landscape characteristics make the Borough unique. Table 1-2 of the report sets out valued features and qualities across the borough, which have been split into 'Values associated with the High Weald AONB and its setting' and 'Values of all landscapes'. The contents of the table (excluding the information within the evidence column) is replicated below:

'Values associated with the High Weald AONB and its setting'

Geology, landform, water systems and climate

- Deeply incised and ridged landform including ghyll streams which are of high scenic quality and are representative of the High Weald AONB.

Settlement

- Dispersed historic settlement pattern of farmsteads, hamlets and late medieval villages founded on trade and non-agricultural rural industries. The survival rate and density of medieval buildings in the Weald is probably the highest in the country.

Routeways

- Presence of ancient routeways in the form of ridge- top roads and a dense system of radiating droeways which are often narrow and deeply sunken.

Woodland

- Ancient woodland, ghylls, shaws.

Field and heath

- Small irregularly shaped fields often bounded by (and forming a mosaic with) hedgerows and small woodlands, typically used for livestock grazing.
- Presence of heathland – representative of the AONB and a nationally rare feature.

Views

- Views into or out of the AONB.

All landscapes

Perceptual qualities

- Particularly high scenic quality indicated by harmonious pattern of features or scenic contrasts.

- Sense of tranquillity or 'remoteness'.
- Important , distinctive or memorable views.
- Dark skies.

Historic character

- Heritage designations (Conservation Areas, listed buildings, Scheduled Monuments) .
- Historic Parks and Gardens – both from the National Register compiled by Historic England, and from the Kent Compendium.
- Intact historic (medieval) landscape character indicated by a prevalence of medieval historic landscape types.
- Relics of the iron brick and tile industries – including ponds, pits and archaeological features.
- Scattered man-made ponds relics of industry, and agricultural activities such as marling.
- Routeways.

Natural character

- Ecological or wildlife designations (e.g. Local Wildlife Sites, SSSI).

Built character

- Locally distinctive buildings (including castles, windmills, abbeys, oast houses, parish churches).

Recreational value, where experience of the landscape is important

- Recreational routes.
- Outdoor visitor attractions.
- Quiet rural lanes.

Functional value

- Special function as a setting to designated landscapes or towns, as a visual backdrop or open gap.

5.1.7 'Valued Features and Qualities' are also considered within the Landscape Character Assessment. Within this report, mention is made of valued elements that are unique to a particular character area and which sit outside of the values mentioned above.

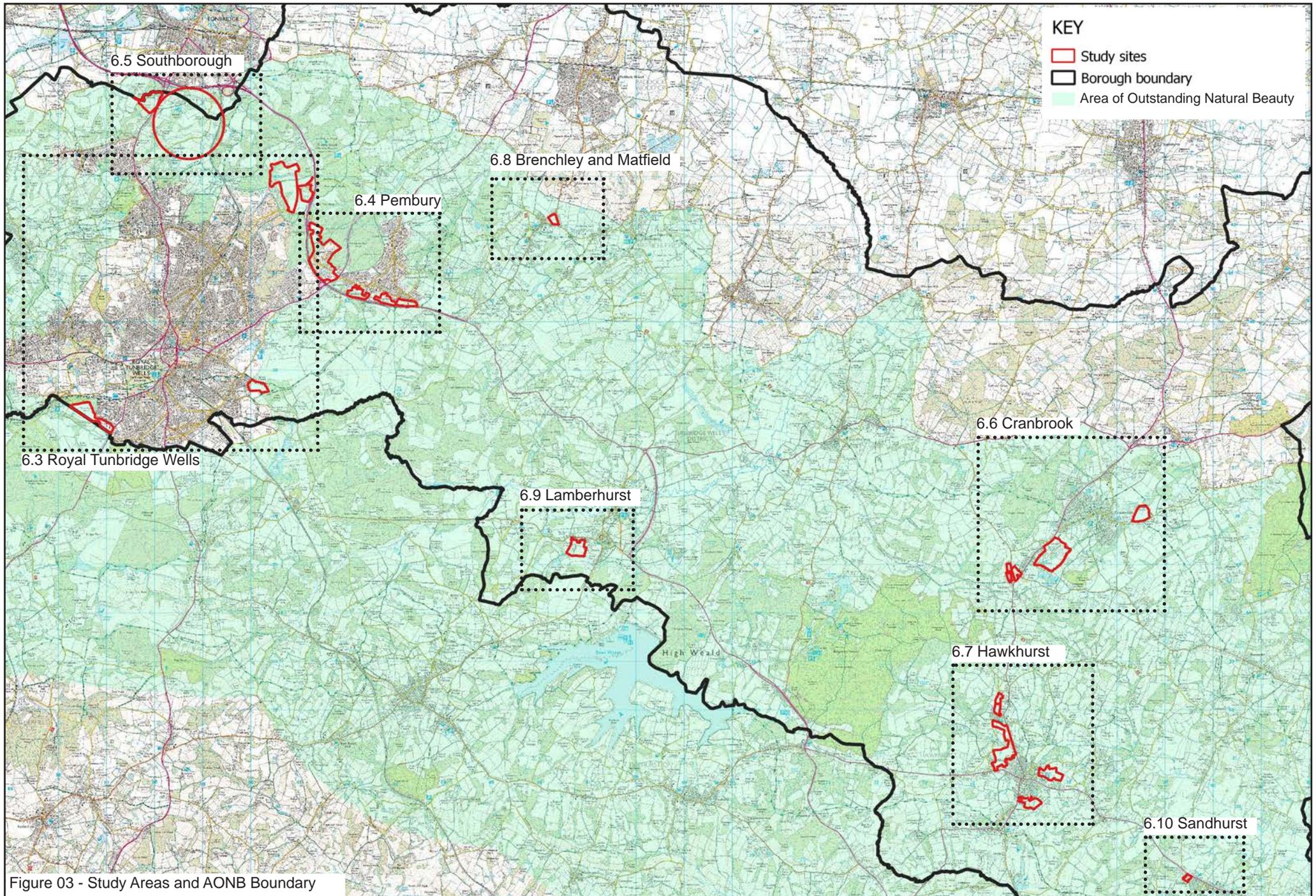


Figure 03 - Study Areas and AONB Boundary

6 SITE ASSESSMENT

6.1 Introduction

6.1.1 As set out in section 2 of this report, the 21 proposed sites have been grouped into geographical study areas, based upon settlements, to identify any overarching issues and to enable any potential cumulative effects to be identified and recorded. The introduction to each study area identifies the various study areas and their relationship with settlements and the AONB.

6.1.2 Each study area would be assessed as follows:

1. Structural analysis, which introduces the landscape and settlement context for the study area.
2. Landscape character analysis identifying key characteristics and sensitivities,
3. Historic Landscape Character Analysis

6.1.3 Within each study area chapter, each site has been assessed individually, followed by an assessment of cumulative effects and overall conclusions for the study area.

6.1.4 The study areas and assessment sites are identified on Figure 3

6.2 Contents

Section	Study Area	Sites included
6.3	Royal Tunbridge Wells (RTW);	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Land adjacent to Longfield Road – RTW 12 • Land at Colebrook House – RTW 13 • Land to the west of Eridge Road at Spratsbrook Farm – RTW 18 • Land to the north of Hawkenbury Recreation Ground – RTW 23
6.4	Pembury (PE);	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Land rear of High Street and west of Chalket Lane – PE 1 • Land at Hubbles Farm and south of Hastings Road – PE 2 • Land north of the A21, south and west of Hastings Road – PE 3 • Land at Tunbridge Wells Hospital, Pembury and adjacent to Tonbridge Road – PE 6

6.5	Southborough (SO);	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Land at Mabledon and Nightingale – SO 3 • Land at Mabledon House – SO 4
6.6	Cranbrook (CRS);	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Turnden Farm, Hartley Road – CRS 4 • Gate Farm, adjacent to Hartley Road and Glassenbury Road – CRS 6 • Land off Golford Road – CRS 7
6.7	Hawkhurst (HA);	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Land forming part of the Hawkhurst Golf Course to the north of the High Street – HA 1 • Land at Fowlers Park – HA 4 • Land off Cophthall Avenue and Highgate Hill – HA 6 • Hawkhurst Station Business Park – HA 8 • Land at Santers Yard, Gill's Green Farm – HA 9
6.8	Brenchley and Matfield (BM);	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Land between Brenchley Road, Coppers Lane, and Maidstone Road – BM 1
6.9	Lamberhurst (LA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Misty Meadow, Furnace Lane – LA 2
6.10	Sandhurst	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sharps Hill Farm - DPC12.

7 AONB WIDE CUMULATIVE EFFECTS

- 7.1 The High Weald AONB covers a substantial proportion of the Borough. The development proposals set out within the Reg 18 draft of the Local Plan (for the 21 potential allocation sites considered within this study), would give rise to cumulative effects on the AONB, if taken as submitted.
- 7.2 Within the Reg 18 draft Local Plan, the proposed allocation sites are grouped around existing settlement. This is both a sustainable approach to development and maintains large areas of the AONB free from additional development. The advantages of locating new development on the edge of existing settlements, are that they can build upon existing employment, community facilities and infrastructure. This approach is likely to lead to lower adverse effects on the AONB than if either:
- a high number of smaller sites were put forward, scattered across the AONB; or
 - if fewer, but larger sites were proposed, which required new infrastructure and facilities as part of the development.
- 7.3 This study has identified the potential effects of the 21 proposed allocation sites, on the character and appearance of the AONB, both on a site-by-site and settlement basis. This section looks at the wider potential effects of development within all 21 sites across the AONB.
- 7.4 Two areas of the High Weald within Tunbridge Wells Borough have the highest likelihood of cumulative effects (see Figure 04). These are:
- To the north-east of Tunbridge Wells, along the A21 corridor and including land to the south of Pembury; and
 - The area of the AONB around and between Cranbrook and Hawkhurst.
- 7.5 There are 8 potential allocation sites located to the north-east of Royal Tunbridge Wells, including two to the north of Southborough and four at Pembury. If all sites were developed as part of the Reg 18 Draft Local Plan, there is the possibility of cumulative effects on this part of the AONB. The quantum of development proposed could further fragment the AONB and lead to increased traffic, light pollution and disturbance, which would affect the tranquillity of the surrounding AONB.
- 7.6 The recommendations set out within this report, for the 21 potential site allocations, would result in a reduction in development area and a focus on increased quality and quantum of Green Infrastructure which, if developed positively in more detail, could mitigate against the predicted cumulative effects.
- 7.7 The quantum of development proposed at Cranbrook and Hawkhurst within the Reg 18 Draft Local Plan, would lead to expansion of both settlements and potential intensification of development along the A229, which runs between the two settlements. The cumulative loss of land to development around and between these settlements could adversely affect the character and appearance of the AONB in this area.
- 7.8 The measures set out within this report would reduce the potential for cumulative effects, through the proposed removal of one of the Cranbrook Sites (CRS7), and the reduction in development within a further site at Cranbrook (CRS6) and three sites at Hawkhurst (HA1, HA8 and HA9). The reduction in development would provide an increased open space provision within these sites. These measures would reduce the intensity of development along the A229 and would provide localised improvements to the AONB, which, if developed positively in more detail, could mitigate against the predicted cumulative effects.
- 7.9 The remaining sites are unlikely to rise to additional cumulative effects on the AONB (over and above the predicted effects that the development of each allocation would have individually). These sites include:
- RTW 18
 - RTW 23
 - BM 1
 - LA 1; and
 - DPC 12
- 7.10 These sites are physically and visually separated from each other, would affect different parts of the AONB and would remain unaffected by the inclusion or removal of any other potential allocation.

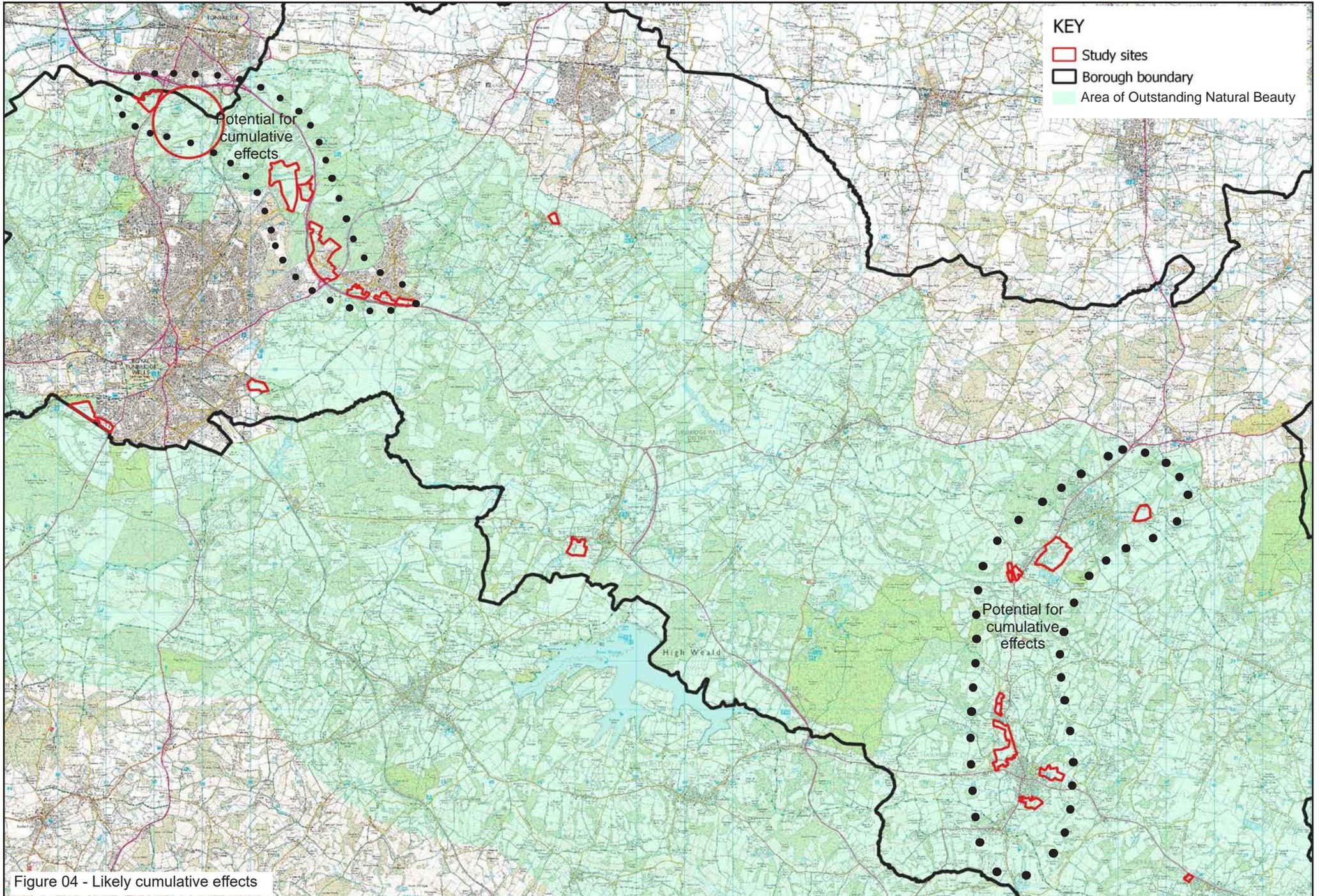


Figure 04 - Likely cumulative effects

8 OVERALL CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 This report provides a high-level Landscape and Visual Assessment (LVIA) for 21 potential allocations sites, which lie within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The purpose of this assessment is to provide information and recommendations to inform Tunbridge Wells Borough Council and assist in the decision making for the regulation 19 Draft Local Plan. The report responds to comments received from Natural England and the High Weald AONB Board at the regulation 18 draft Local Plan consultation.

8.2 It should be noted that the results and recommendations set out within this study make up one component of the Council's wider decision making and that a wide range of other factors will determine the shape of the reg 19 Draft Local Plan. This includes the wider criteria set out within the NPPF at paragraph 172, which would need to be met in order to justify major development within the High Weald AONB.

8.3 This report has considered each site individually and cumulatively and has set out recommendations going forwards. The following table provides a summary of the findings of the study and a judgement on whether development on the site is likely to harm the character and appearance of the AONB.

8.4 The potential for harm has been given on a five point scale for ease of reference, with High representing a site where it is unlikely that adverse effects could be mitigated and Low representing a site that could be developed without harm to the character or appearance of the AONB. The judgements are high-level and are for guidance purposes only. The exact nature of effect of the likely effects on the AONB can only be determined once more detailed proposals are available for the potential allocation sites.

Site	Potential for harm to the AONB if developed in accordance with the reg 18 Draft Local Plan	Potential for harm to the AONB if recommendations with report are met	HDA conclusions (see settlement chapters for further information)
Land adjacent to Longfield Road – Policy AL/ RTW 12	Medium	Medium / Low	Approximately 50% of the site is allocated as open space, within which the character of the site (and AONB) could be enhanced. The site is enclosed by woodland to the north and new woodland planting to the east, which could create a robust buffer to the proposals. Recommendations include control of building heights, protection of characteristic landscape features and enhancement of the landscape within areas proposed as open space.
Land at Colebrook House – Policy AL/ RTW 13	Medium	Medium / Low	The site is highly enclosed, however the development potential of the draft allocation site is dependent on the detailed proposal put forward, both in terms of design and location. There are areas within this site suitable for sensitive development and other areas which could give rise to harmful landscape and visual effects if careful mitigation is not provided.
Land to the west of Eridge Road at Spratsbrook Farm – Policy AL/ RTW 18	High (Western part), Medium (eastern part)	High (Western part), Medium / Low (eastern part)	The development potential of the allocation changes across the site. The eastern part of the site lies outside the AONB and could accommodate sensitive development. In contrast the western part of the site has a particularly high landscape sensitivity and is not suitable for development in landscape terms. The retention of the western part of the site as open space could provide opportunities for enhancement within the AONB that would offset the potential effects of development located to the east.
Land to the north of Hawkenbury Recreation Ground – Policy AL/ RTW 23	Low / Medium depending on proposals	Low / Medium depending on proposals	The site has an extant permission for the type of development proposed. The sports facilities defined within the draft policy could be implemented without long term harm to the AONB, however the final judgements will depend upon detailed design. This document has put forward recommendations that would ensure that appropriate mitigation is in place and that potential enhancements are also considered.
Land rear of High Street and west of Chalket Lane – Policy AL/ PE 1	Medium / Low	Low	The site conforms to the existing settlement pattern and has the potential for development without significant harm to the High Weald AONB. The measures stipulated within this report, including protection of characteristic landscape features, the setting to Chalket Lane and enhancement of the landscape within increased areas proposed as open space, would be sufficient to moderate the potential effects of development. There are opportunities within the site for the protection of existing rights of way and improvements to the recreational resource.

Site	Potential for harm to the AONB if developed in accordance with the reg 18 Draft Local Plan	Potential for harm to the AONB if recommendations with report are met	HDA conclusions (see settlement chapters for further information)
Land at Hubbles Farm and south of Hastings Road– Policy AL/ PE 2	Medium / Low	Low	The site conforms to the existing settlement pattern and has the potential for development without significant harm to the High Weald AONB. The measures stipulated within this report, including control of building heights, protection of characteristic landscape features and enhancement of the landscape within areas proposed as open space, would be sufficient to moderate the potential effects of development. There are opportunities within the site for the protection of existing rights of way and improvements to the recreational resource.
Land north of the A21, south and west of Hastings Road – Policy AL/ PE 3	Medium / Low	Low	The site conforms to the existing settlement pattern and has the potential for development without significant harm to the High Weald AONB. The measures stipulated within this report, including, protection of characteristic landscape features, the setting to the routeway and enhancement of the landscape within areas proposed as open space, would be sufficient to moderate the potential effects of development. There are opportunities within the site for the protection of existing rights of way and improvements to the recreational resource.
Land at Tunbridge Wells Hospital, Pembury and adjacent to Tonbridge Road – Policy AL/ PE 6	High (Low – on areas already developed)	High (Low – on areas already developed)	The development potential of the site is dependent on the proposal put forward, both in terms of design and location. There are areas within this site suitable for sensitive development and other areas which could give rise to harmful landscape and visual effects if careful mitigation is not provided. The designated wooded areas of the site should not be developed. The development potential of the northern field is limited as it is unclear how the harm caused by development in this area could be mitigated.
Land at Mabledon and Nightingale – Policy AL/ SO 3	High	High / Medium	This draft allocation represents an area of search, which has an ambitious set of policy requirements that seek to create an exemplar scheme within the High Weald AONB. The area of search is located within a highly sensitive landscape, where there is potential for harm to the AONB, but also potential for a series of landscape scale enhancements that would benefit the AONB. Consideration should be given as to whether there is a better mechanism for delivering the vision for SO 3 than the current allocation, for example as part of a whole estate plan. It is recommended that a lower housing number is allocated and that numbers of dwellings should be intrinsically linked to enhancements within the wider land ownership.
Land at Mabledon House – Policy AL/ SO 4	High	Medium	The site is located in a highly sensitive landscape, covered by multiple designations. The potential effects of development within his site are highly dependent of the detailed design of the proposals. The GI and associated policy recommendations stipulated for the site as part of this report, could be sufficient to moderate the potential effects of development. There are opportunities within the site to provide long-term landscape and maintenance benefits that would protect the Registered Park and Garden, in conjunction with new development within this site. The harm, mitigation and proposed enhancements that would result from the draft allocation would need to be carefully balanced in order to protect the character and appearance of the AONB.
Turnden Farm, Hartley Road – Policy AL/ CRS 4	Medium	Medium / Low	The draft allocation seeks to develop approximately 1/3 of the site, with the remainder allocated as open space. The allocation proposes development to the north and east of the site, integrating the permitted development at Turnden Farm with the allocation located to the north of the site. The retained open space to the west and south, would protect the separate settlement identities between Cranbrook and Hartley and provides opportunity for substantial enhancements within the site.
Gate Farm, adjacent to Hartley Road and Glassenbury Road, Hartley – Policy AL/ CRS 6	High	Medium	The site has intrinsic sensitivities associated with field pattern, long and attractive views and landscape features. It is recommended that if this site is to be retained as an allocation that it be split into two parts, with a substantially reduced housing allocation to the east of Glassenbury Lane (providing that a suitable access can be designed), and the employment allocation located within redeveloped agricultural buildings associated with Bull Farm. The substantial reduction in development within the site may change whether the proposals are considered to be Major Development within the AONB. The Strategic Green Infrastructure proposals set out within this report seek to protect and enhance the key features and characteristics of the site(s).

Site	Potential for harm to the AONB if developed in accordance with the reg 18 Draft Local Plan	Potential for harm to the AONB if recommendations with report are met	HDA conclusions (see settlement chapters for further information)
Land off Golford Road – Policy AL/CRS 7	High	High	The site is not considered to be appropriate for development in landscape terms and it is recommended that this allocation is dropped from the reg 19 Draft Local Plan.
Land forming part of the Hawkhurst Golf Course to the north of the High Street – Policy AL/HA 1	High / Medium	Medium	The site has some potential for development provided that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The northern half of the site is protected as open space, which could offer multiple benefits for landscape character, biodiversity and recreation; and If the access onto the A229 can be designed without substantial effects on landscape features or the introduction of a large and engineered junction at a rural edge location within the village.
Land at Fowlers Park – Policy AL/HA 4	Medium	Medium / Low	The site has a tangible increase in rurality from west to east. This change in development potential across the site is reflected in the proposals map for the draft allocation, which safeguards the more sensitive areas of the site as open space land-uses. These provide opportunities for enhancement within the site, including potential new recreational routes and facilities, which would benefit the AONB landscape within the site. The proposed allocation could round off the existing edge to Hawkhurst without significant harm to the wider AONB, however the design of the proposed allocation will be critical. The proposed housing should be designed to sit well with the existing settlement, with a soft edge to break up the massing of the proposals.
Land off Copthall Avenue and Highgate Hill – Policy AL/HA 6	Medium	Medium / Low	The site is a small scale and semi-enclosed landscape, with many features and characteristics that are typical of the High Weald AONB. It is recommended that any proposed development should be concentrated to the north and west of the site as shown on the draft allocations map. A sensitive and well designed housing development would be acceptable in this location, providing that it creates a positive edge to settlement and respects the separation between Highgate and The Moor.
Hawkhurst Station Business Park – Policy AL/HA 8	Medium	Medium	The site consists of a disturbed and unkempt field in pasture, which is heavily influenced by the industrial estate to the north. The site is well contained from the wider landscape, however the introduction of tall buildings within the site is likely to change this assessment of visibility. The suitability of this site for development is largely dependent on the employment need and the detailed design of the proposals. If the allocation is to be taken forward, it is recommended that the additional mitigation measures set out within this report should be included. Any development within the site should be designed to minimise visibility and subsequently the effects of the development on the wider AONB. The open space proposed within the GI plan provides opportunities to protect existing features and provide enhancements within the site.
Land at SanTERS Yard, Gill's Green Farm – Policy AL/HA 9	Medium	Medium / Low	The site is typical of a village edge landscape within the High Weald and is rural in character. The site consists of two small fields. The southern field is surrounded on three sides by existing housing. The northern field is part of the landscape setting to the village and forms part of the separation between the hamlet of Gill's Green and the industrial estate, located to the north. It is recommended that the employment allocation within the northern field should be removed from the allocation. The suitability for the southern field for a housing development will be dependent on the ability to maintain the enclosed and vegetated character of the lanes to the south and west, which are both mapped as historic routeways. Reduction of development within the site may change whether the proposals are considered to be Major Development within the AONB.

Site	Potential for harm to the AONB if developed in accordance with the reg 18 Draft Local Plan	Potential for harm to the AONB if recommendations with report are met	HDA conclusions (see settlement chapters for further information)
Land between Brenchley Road, Coppers Lane, and Maidstone Road – Policy AL/BM 1	Medium / Low	Medium / Low	The site is well related to settlement and is separated from the wider landscape. The field itself contains relatively few attributes that are characteristic for the AONB landscape. There are some views out of the site, to the south, however these include the existing dwellings that surround the site. Development of the site would require careful consideration of local vernacular, but would be achievable without significant adverse effects to the AONB.
Misty Meadow, Furnace Lane – Policy AL/LA 2	High / Medium	Medium / Low	The quantum of development proposed within the site is likely to give rise to adverse effects on the settlement pattern of The Down and consequently the AONB. It is possible that a sensitively designed scheme with reduced numbers, confined to the north-western part of the site, would reduce the predicted adverse effects. If the allocation is put forward within the regulation 19 draft plan, it should be supported by enhancements within the remainder of the site. Reduction of development within the site may change whether the proposals are considered to be Major Development within the AONB.
Sandhurst Site - DPC 12	Medium	Medium / Low	The quantum of development initially assessed for the site is likely to give rise to adverse effects on the settlement pattern of Sandhurst and consequently the AONB. It is likely that a sensitively designed scheme with reduced numbers and retained features to the north and east, would reduce the predicted adverse effects. If the site is put forward as an allocation within the regulation 19 draft plan, it should set out the expectation for a design that responds positively to its location on the edge of settlement and the existing, well treed character of the site. Reduction of development within the site may change whether the proposals are considered to be Major Development within the AONB.

Appendix A - Reference documents considered within this assessment.

National Guidance

- National Planning Policy Framework and Guidance
- An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment October 214 Natural England NE579
- An approach to landscape sensitivity assessment, by Natural England
- The Countryside Commission and Scottish Natural Heritage (2002) Landscape Character Assessment Guidance for England and Scotland (CAX 84)
- Council of Europe (2000) European Landscape Convention
- Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment 3rd edition

Tunbridge Wells Borough Council Publications

- Tunbridge Wells Borough Draft Local Plan, Regulation 18 Consultation Draft (20 September to 1 November 2019)
- Tunbridge Wells Borough Core Strategy, adopted in June 2010
- Borough Landscape Character Assessment SPD 2017
- Tunbridge Wells Borough Historic Landscape Characterisation 2017
- Landscape Sensitivity Studies 2017 and 2018
- Biodiversity Evidence Base 2019
- Development Constraints Study 2016
- Green Infrastructure Framework 2019
- Historic Environment Review 2018
- Tunbridge Wells Green Belt Study 2017
- A Revision of the Ancient Woodland Inventory for Tunbridge Wells Borough 2007
- Farmstead Assessment Guidance for Tunbridge Wells Borough SPD 2016

Other Sources

- The High Weald AONB Management Plan 2019-24
- Legislation and Planning Policy in the High Weald' (February 2019), by the High Weald AONB Unit.
- Components of natural beauty GIS data sets from the High Weald AONB Unit
- National Character Area Profiles; 122 High Weald
- East Sussex County Landscape Assessment 2010
- Landscape Assessments from adjacent Boroughs, where appropriate.

APPENDIX B - HDA LVIA methodology

1.1 Guidance

1.1.1 The proposed development is subject to the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (England) Regulations (2011, amended 2015), which implement EC Directive 2011/92/EU. The structure of this assessment accords with Schedule 4 of the Regulations.

1.1.2 The methodology used in preparing this Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment has been developed by HDA from guidance given in the following documents:

- The Landscape Institute with the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment, (2013), “*Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment*” (third edition) (GLVIA);
- Natural England (June 2019), “*an approach to landscape sensitivity assessment – to inform spatial planning and land management*”;
- Natural England (October 2014), “*An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment*”; and
- Countryside Agency (now Natural England) and Scottish Natural Heritage (by Carys Swanwick and Land Use Consultants), (April 2002), “*Landscape Character Assessment – Guidance for England and Scotland*”.

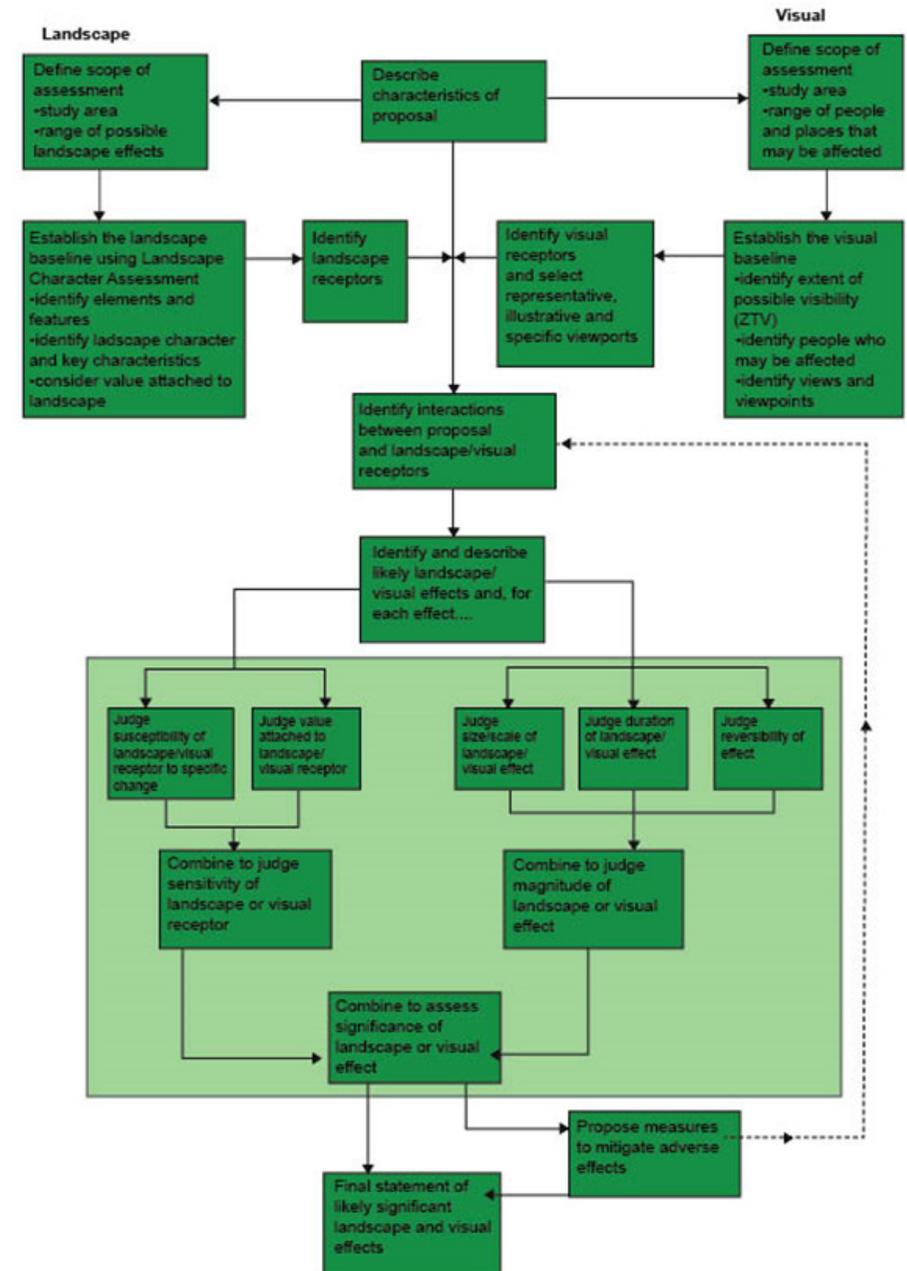
1.1.3 The assessment of likely impacts is considered in two separate but inter-linked parts defined within GLVIA (page 21, para 2.21) as follows:
‘Assessment of landscape effects: assessing effects on landscape as a resource in its own right;
Assessment of visual effects: assessing effects on specific views and on the general visual amenity experienced by people.’

1.2 Process

1.2.1 The iterative process undertaken through the course of a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment is illustrated in Figure 1.

1.2.2 The level of detail included within a report will be proportionate to the anticipated extent of potential impacts caused by the proposed development and is also likely to vary between a full LVIA chapter and a more concise Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA). Within an EIA compliant LVIA, the assessment section of the report (shown as a pale green box in Figure 1), would provide details of the relative judgement on sensitivity, magnitude of change and would provide an assessment on the significance of effects of the development on various features, character areas and views. A Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) of a small development is likely to cover the key effects but not include any detailed references to judgements on significance.

Figure 1: Steps in assessing landscape and visual effects.



1.3 Desk Study

- 1.3.1 A desk-study is undertaken to establish the physical components of the local landscape and to identify the boundaries of the study area. The following data sources were consulted:
- Ordnance Survey (OS) maps – (a range from 1:25,000 to 1:1,250) to identify local features relating to topography, field pattern/shape/size, drainage pattern, woodland cover, existing settlement pattern, rights of way network, transport corridors and any important extant historic features.
 - Vertical aerial photography – used to supplement the OS information.
- 1.3.2 This data informs the field survey by providing a basis for mapping landscape features and to indicate the likely visibility of the proposed development.
- 1.3.3 Topographical analysis is used to identify the extent of potential visibility of the site and the proposed development. The zone of theoretical visibility is identified through mapping, together with potential visual receptors (VRs), for verification by field survey. The VRs include locations with public access within the visual envelope; public rights of way, public open space, key vantage points, roads, etc. together with residential properties and workplaces.
- 1.3.4 Natural England's National Character Area Profiles, together with local landscape character assessment, provide the landscape character context.
- 1.3.5 The current landscape planning context for the site is provided by the development plan documents for Tunbridge Wells Borough Council.

1.4 Field Survey

- 1.4.1 Field survey of the study sites were carried out in January and February 2020. This involved walking the sites and travelling extensively through the local area, the extent of the study area being identified within the study, to verify any variations in landscape character and the locations of visual receptors. The field surveys also served to understand the immediate setting of the proposed allocations, including the local topography, existing land uses and vegetation structure, position and condition of trees, hedgerows and stream courses. The findings were recorded on survey sheets.
- 1.4.2 The site visits were undertaken from publicly accessible viewpoints around the site such as roads and public rights of way. Intervisibility analysis (projective mapping) was used to verify the zone of theoretical visibility and to evaluate the extent and nature of views from nearby properties (properties were not visited as part of the study). A working photographic record of each visit was also made.

1.5 Establishing the Baseline

- 1.5.1 In order to form a comprehensive assessment of the effects of a proposed development, the existing situation, or baseline condition, must be established. The proposed changes resulting from the proposed development can then be identified and described. As described in section 1.1.3, the assessment considers the landscape and visual effects of the proposals.
- 1.5.2 GLVIA describes the landscape and visual baseline as follows:
1. *'For the landscape baseline the aim is to provide an understanding of the landscape in the area that may be affected – its constituent elements, its character and the way this varies spatially, its geographic extent, its history, its condition, the way the landscape is experienced and the value attached to it.*
 2. *For the visual baseline the aim is to establish the area in which the development may be visible, the different groups of people who may experience the views of the development, the places where they will be affected and the nature of the views and visual amenity at those points.'* (page 32, para 3.15 – Ref 2)

1.6 Landscape Baseline

- 1.6.1 For the purposes of assessment, the landscape resource is considered in two ways:
1. Local landscape character variation across each site and Study Area is described and evaluated; and
 2. Existing landscape features in and immediately adjacent to the site are identified, quantified and their condition assessed.
- 1.6.2 The objective of the landscape baseline is first to schedule, describe, and where possible, quantify the landscape resource that potentially could be affected by the proposed development. A judgement is then made as to the Landscape Value of the Study Area.
- Landscape Sensitivity
- 1.6.3 Landscape sensitivity is defined as:
'a term applied to specific receptors, combining judgements of the susceptibility of the receptor to the specific type of change or development proposed and the value related to that receptor' (GLVIA, page 158)
- 1.6.4 The susceptibility of the landscape to change is *'the ability of the landscape receptor to accommodate the proposed development without undue consequences for the maintenance of the baseline situation and/or the achievement of landscape planning policies and strategies'* (GLVIA, page 89, para 5.40)
- 1.6.5 The way that landscape responds to or is affected by proposed development is

determined in part by the nature of that development. The sensitivity of the landscape will vary depending on the type, form, appearance, extent or scale, duration (temporary or permanent) and phasing of proposed development. Landscape effects are also dependent upon the *'degree to which the proposals fit with existing character'* (GLVIA, page 88, para 5.37), or indeed the potential to design-out potential adverse effects. Outline information about the proposed development such as type and scale helps inform preliminary judgement about the relative susceptibility of the landscape. However, the final judgement on susceptibility may change from the preliminary assessment as the scheme's detail design evolves in parallel with EIA (an iterative process).

1.6.6 Landscape value consists of:

- *'The value of the Landscape Character Types or Areas that may be affected, based on review of any designations at both national and local levels, and, where there are no designations, judgements based on criteria that can be used to establish landscape value;*
- *The value of individual contributors to landscape character, especially the key characteristics, which may include individual elements of the landscape, particular landscape features, notable aesthetic, perceptual or experiential qualities and combinations of these contributors.'* (GLVIA page 89, para 5.44 – Ref 2)

1.6.7 Paragraph 170 a) of the National Planning Policy Framework gives weight to *'protecting and enhancing valued landscapes'*, however no definition of 'valued landscape' is given. In a judgement by Mr Justice Ouseley in the case of Stroud District Council v Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government (February 2015), Mr Justice Ouseley supported the inspector's finding that for a landscape to be valued it would need to *'show some demonstrable physical attribute, rather than just popularity'*. The assessment of value should therefore first assess the intrinsic value of the physical attributes demonstrated by *"the site in situ as an integral part of the surrounding land rather than divorcing it from its surroundings"* and then consider the popularity of the landscape as a community asset.

1.6.8 Indicators of landscape value include:

- **Landscape quality (condition):** *'A measure of the physical state of the landscape'*. This includes land use, the intactness of the landscape and the quality and condition of the features within the landscape and the influence of incongruous features or elements;
- **Scenic quality:** The effect that a landscape is likely to have on the senses. For example visual enclosure/openness or the pattern and scale of the landscape, whether there is a distinctive sense of place, striking landform or visual interest in the landscape;
- **Rarity:** *'the presence of rare elements or features in the landscape or the presence of a rare Landscape Character Type'*;

- **Representativeness:** whether the landscape or features within it are exemplary for the local area or whether the landscape being considered covers a high proportion of a particular character area;
- **Conservation interests:** recognition of importance through designation, or local consensus. Includes features of wildlife, archaeological, historic and cultural interest;
- **Recreation value:** *'evidence that the landscape is valued for recreational activity where experience of the landscape is important'*;
- **Perceptual aspects:** including tranquillity and appropriateness of substitution of the characteristics affected;
- **Associations:** *'with particular people, such as artists or writers, or events in history that contribute to perceptions of the natural beauty of the area'*.

The above list is based on Box 5.1, page 84 of GLVIA.

Landscape Character

1.6.9 Landscape character areas were identified on plans and published descriptions and trends summarised. Where published documents create a hierarchy of landscape areas, this is stated and the scale most appropriate to the assessment is explained. The landscape characteristics within the site are compared to the character of the wider area.

1.6.10 The assessment focuses on the landscape within which each allocation (site) is located. The character of a neighbouring character unit may be strongly influenced by the adjacent area, within which the site is located. This relationship may be dependent on the scale of assessment (size of landscape units), as well as landscape characteristics that affect intervisibility, e.g. topography, vegetation cover.

Landscape Features

1.6.11 Key landscape features that define site character are identified on plans, together with the tables, which provide information relating to their type, condition, value, and quantification (area/length/number). The potential for impact on each landscape feature is assessed using a combination of their relationship to the site/ proposed development (e.g. within, on or adjacent to site boundary and for those outside the site, the distance from the boundary) and sensitivity.

1.6.12 The landscape value of site landscape features is evaluated using factors in the following checklist:

- Type of landscape feature (e.g. natural or man-made);
- Size/extent (e.g. covers a large or small area; individual or part of a group);
- Condition or quality of landscape feature (intact);
- Maturity (is feature well established or recent);
- Contribution feature makes to landscape character (e.g. distinct and recognisable pattern or limited influence);

- Rarity (rare or widespread in local and/or regional/national context);
- Recognised importance (e.g. designation either nationally or locally);
- Ease with which the feature may be substituted or recreated.

1.6.13 The susceptibility of landscape features is closely allied to the ease with which a feature may be substituted or recreated.

1.6.14 The assessment of landscape features is an integral part of the initial design process and often influences the location of development. The landscape value of features is a contributory factor for the assessment of landscape character, as the assessment of the quality and condition of a landscape is intrinsically linked to its component features.

1.7 Criteria for Evaluation of Sensitivity of Landscape Resource

1.7.1 The evaluation of overall landscape sensitivity to change is considered to be a product of susceptibility to change and the value of the receptor. The evaluation is an expression of comparative sensitivity based on a five-point scale: Very High, High, Medium, Low and Very Low as follows:

Very High:

- An exemplary part of a nationally recognised landscape, e.g. National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, World Heritage Sites of international importance (if landscape reason for designation);
- Strong landscape structure, characteristic patterns and balanced combination of landform and land-cover;
- Appropriate management with distinctive features worthy of conservation;
- Sense of place (usually tranquil);
- No (or occasional) detracting features;
- Landscape not substitutable.

High:

- Part of a nationally or locally recognised landscape of particularly distinctive character.
- Recognisable landscape structure, characteristic patterns and combinations of landform and land-cover are still evident;
- Appropriate management, but potential scope for improvement;
- Some features worthy of conservation;
- Sense of place;
- No or occasional detracting features;
- Very limited substitutability and susceptible to relatively small changes.

Medium:

- Locally recognised, but undesignated, landscape of moderately valued characteristics;
- Distinguishable landscape structure, with some characteristic patterns of landform and land-cover;
- Scope to improve management (e.g. of hedgerows);
- Occasional detracting features;
- Landscape resource reasonably tolerant to change.

Low:

- Ordinary undesignated countryside;
- Weak landscape structure, without characteristic patterns of landform or land-cover;
- Limited management which is beginning to show signs of degradation;
- Abundance of detracting features;
- A relatively unimportant landscape, the nature of which is potentially tolerant to substantial change.

Very Low:

- Degraded to damaged/polluted or derelict landscape structure;
- Single land use dominates;
- Lack of or poor management/maintenance/intervention which has resulted in degradation;
- Presence of disturbed or derelict land requiring treatment;
- Extensive or dominant detracting features.

1.8 Visual Baseline Methodology

1.8.1 The visual baseline serves to “*identify the people within an area who will be affected by changes in views and visual amenity – usually referred to as ‘Visual Receptors’*” (VR) (GLVIA, page 106, para 6.13). The baseline should combine information on “*the nature, composition and characteristics of existing views*” (GLVIA, page 111, para 6.24), “*the potential extent to which the site of the proposed development is visible from surrounding areas, the chosen viewpoints, the types of visual receptor affected*” (GLVIA, page 112, para 6.25), and “*their susceptibility to change in views and the value attached to particular views*” (GLVIA, page 113, para 6.31).

1.8.2 The susceptibility of visual receptors (VRs) to changes in views and visual amenity is affected by the type of activity that person or VR is engaged in (to determine the expectations of the viewer), in combination with the extent of the view of the site they experience, which relates to the degree to which the site is visible by a VR from a viewpoint as described in the baseline assessment (adapted from GLVIA, page 113, para 6.32).

1.8.3 All viewpoints (from chosen representative, specific and illustrative viewpoint locations), were visited as part of the field survey and “*the nature, composition and characteristics*” of their existing views noted. Where appropriate, the existence of temporary structures or features in the landscape that vary with the seasons and that may therefore affect visibility, such as deciduous vegetation, were noted in order to evaluate the worst case situation in the assessment. The initial appraisal is based on a grading of degrees of visibility, from not visible to fully open in close views. To indicate the degree of visibility of the site from any location, that continuum has been divided into four categories:

- **None:** no view (no part of the site or proposed development is discernible);
- **Glimpse:** only a minor area of the site or proposed development is discernible and/or the view is transient or at such a distance that it is difficult to perceive in the wider view, or sequence of views;
- **Partial:** the site or proposed development forms a relatively small proportion of a wider view. There are open views of part of the site or proposed development such that it is easily visible as part of the wider view;
- **Open:** there are open views of the site or proposed development such that it forms a substantial part (is a dominant element) of the overall view and affects its overall character and visual amenity; or the site or proposed development is the dominant feature of the view, to which other elements become subordinate and where the site/proposed development significantly affects or changes the character of the view.

1.8.4 The value attached to views should also be considered i.e. whether the visual receptor/s being assessed are within a designated landscape, the site forms the setting to a heritage asset or there are particular tourism activities associated with the viewpoint location. The combined susceptibility to change in views/visual amenity and the value attached to particular views within the zone of visual influence of the site/proposed development, is evaluated using a combination of the information in the following checklist:

- *‘The type and relative number of people (visual receptors) likely to be affected, making clear the activities they are likely to be involved in;*
- *The location, nature and characteristics of the chosen representative, specific and illustrative viewpoints, with details of the visual receptors likely to be affected by each;*
- *The nature, composition and characteristics of the existing views experienced at these viewpoints, including the direction of view;*
- *he visual characteristics of the existing views, for example the nature and extent of the skyline, aspects of visual scale and proportion, especially with respect to any particular horizontal or vertical emphasis and any key foci;*
- *Elements, such as landform, buildings or vegetation, which may interrupt, filter or otherwise influence the views.’*

(GLVIA, page 111, para 6.24)

1.9 Criteria for Evaluation of Visual Sensitivity

1.9.1 The evaluation of sensitivity, in relation to visual receptors is considered to be a product of susceptibility to change and the value attributed to the view by the visual receptor. It is represented as an expression of comparative sensitivity, based on a five-point scale: Very High, High, Medium, Low and Very Low as follows:

Very High:

- An open view, where the site forms a dominant part of the view, seen from a viewpoint that has a high value (nationally significant), by visual receptors that would be highly susceptible to a change in the view (e.g. walkers/cyclists on rural public rights of way), whose attention or interest is likely to be focused on the landscape. For example a walker on a national trail within an AONB, where the site forms the foreground to the view and is a characteristic part of a scenic and rural landscape.

High:

- A distant open or partial view of the site from a viewpoint that has a high value (nationally significant), seen by visual receptors that would be highly susceptible to a change in the view, whose attention or interest is likely to be focused on the landscape; for example a walker on a national trail within an AONB, where the site forms a distant part of a wider view and is seen in the context of a foreground which is characteristic and forms part of a scenic and rural landscape;
- An open view of the site from a viewpoint that either has a medium scenic value (i.e. is locally appreciated), seen by visual receptors that would be highly susceptible to a change in the view or that the viewpoint has a high value (nationally significant) but the visual receptors experiencing the view have a medium susceptibility to change (i.e. a scenic road route, where the view is transient but is still a focus).

Medium:

- An open view of the site from a viewpoint that either has a low scenic value (i.e. has a number of visual detractors / a degraded landscape character), seen by visual receptors that would have a medium susceptibility to a change in the view or that the viewpoint has a medium scenic value (i.e. is locally appreciated) and the visual receptors experiencing the view have a low susceptibility to change (i.e. a major road or an office, where the view is not the focus of people’s attention);
- A partial view of the site from a viewpoint with medium value, seen by visual receptors with a medium susceptibility to change;
- A glimpse of the site from a viewpoint that has a high scenic value (nationally significant), seen by a high number of visual receptors and / or visual receptors that would be highly susceptible to a change in the view and whose attention or interest is likely to be focused on the landscape.

Low:

- A partial view of the site from a viewpoint that has either:
- a low scenic value, seen by visual receptors that would have a medium susceptibility to a change in the view;
- a medium scenic value and the visual receptors experiencing the view have a low susceptibility to change; or
- that the viewpoint has a low scenic value and the visual receptors experiencing the view have a low susceptibility to change;
- A glimpse of the site from a viewpoint with medium value, seen by visual receptors with a medium susceptibility to change;
- No view of the site, but that the viewpoint has a high scenic value and would be seen by a high number of visual receptors and/or visual receptors that would be highly susceptible to a change in the view, whose attention or interest is likely to be focused on the landscape.

Very Low:

- A glimpse of the site from a viewpoint that has either:
- a low scenic value, seen by visual receptors that would have a medium susceptibility to a change in the view;
- a medium scenic value and the visual receptors experiencing the view have a low susceptibility to change; or
- that the viewpoint has a low scenic value and the visual receptors experiencing the view have a low susceptibility to change;
- No view from a viewpoint with medium value (or lower), seen by visual receptors with a medium susceptibility to change (or lower).

1.12 Summary of Landscape/Visual Baseline

- 1.12.1 The baseline survey identifies the landscape resource (landscape features and character) and visual receptors (VRs) likely to be affected by the proposed development, and then evaluates the susceptibility, value and combined sensitivity of each to the likely effects of the proposed development.

2 Mitigation

- 2.1 Mitigation is defined in the Guidelines as: *'Measures proposed to prevent/avoid, reduce and where possible remedy (or compensate for) any significant adverse landscape and visual effects...'* (GLVIA, page 57, para 4.21).
- 2.2 Mitigation proposals are designed to respond to the constraints of the site and mitigate the landscape and visual impacts that arise from the proposed development.

The mitigation measures considered fall into two categories: primary and secondary mitigation.

- Primary mitigation – the iterative process of masterplanning
- Secondary mitigation – additions or changes to the landscape proposals in order to address predicted residual effects remaining after primary mitigation measures are in place and assuming that standard construction and management practices, to avoid and reduce environmental effects, have been adhered to.

3 Assessment of Landscape Effects

- 3.1 The landscape impact assessment addresses both direct and indirect impacts of the proposed development. Firstly, the direct effects of the development on the site itself are categorised, through an assessment of the magnitude of change. The magnitude of change is a judgement on the size/scale of effect, including the consistency of the proposed development with the baseline assessment, the extent of the area influenced and the duration and reversibility of the proposed effects. The focus is on the loss or change to identified landscape features within or adjacent to the site, together with the creation of new landscape elements.
- 3.2 Landscape character: The effects on local landscape character that would result from the proposed development are assessed. The effect on site landscape character directly correlates with the impact on landscape features (extent and duration). The effect on landscape character in the environs of the site is dependent on a range of factors (sensitivity) and overlaps with the visual assessment because the extent to which the proposed development would be visible from the surrounding countryside may influence neighbouring character areas. Effects on landscape character will also be directly influenced by the type of development proposed and whether it is consistent with existing land-use patterns.
- 3.3 Changes to landscape features and character may be adverse, beneficial or neutral. The erosion of a feature/character equates to an adverse impact, whilst strengthening of features/characteristics is regarded as beneficial. The substitution of a landscape feature/character area with another that is different but locally appropriate may be assessed as a negligible significance of effect. Refer also to GLVIA, page 88, para 5.37.
- 3.4 For the purposes of this assessment, 'magnitude of change' on each landscape feature and landscape character area is classified using the categories listed below (Whilst potential effects may be adverse or beneficial, for simplicity, the following definitions use examples of adverse impact, bearing in mind that significant effects on landscape features, in the context of LVIA, usually equate with total or partial loss. Where effects are deemed to be beneficial this will be clearly stated in the assessment text):

High:

- Notable change in landscape characteristics over an extensive area;
- The proposals are the dominant feature and there is substantial damage (or major improvement) to key characteristics, features and elements that contribute to landscape, and/or the effects are long term and irreversible;
- Effect on a landscape feature of designated importance that cannot be replaced; total loss of features that would be difficult to replace;
- Loss of, or substantial effect on, existing landscape character and its replacement with characteristics that are atypical of the character area;
- The proposed development is inconsistent with existing land-use patterns.

Medium:

- Moderate changes in localised area;
- The proposals form a visible and immediately apparent new feature that results in partial damage to (or addition of) key characteristics, elements and features that contribute to landscape, and/or the effects are medium to long term and largely irreversible;
- Total loss of feature that may be recreated over time; loss of small proportion of a feature that would be difficult to replace (e.g. mature woodland or historic species rich hedgerow);
- A considerable change to landscape character (proposed landscape character appropriate to character area but different from adjoining areas).

Low:

- Small change in any components;
- Some measurable change where the proposal constitutes a minor feature in the landscape and results in loss (or addition) of one (or maybe more) key characteristics, and/or the effects are short to medium term or could be irreversible;
- Total loss over sizeable area of a feature that can be recreated relatively easily (e.g. arable farmland); partial loss of feature that may be recreated over time, (e.g. young plantation/hedgerow); very minor loss of feature that would be difficult to recreate (e.g. woodland);
- A noticeable change to landscape character (proposed landscape character similar to existing landscape character of the area).

Very Low:

- Virtually imperceptible change of a temporary nature;
- The proposals result in very minor loss (or benefit) to the characteristics, features and elements that contribute to character, and/or effects are likely to be short term or could be reversible;
- Partial loss of feature that can be recreated relatively easily or which would regain its characteristics over time; minor or temporary effect on feature that can accommodate limited removal without noticeable change (e.g. gappy

hedgerow);

- A barely perceptible change to landscape character.

3.5 The degree of significance of the landscape effect of the development is a product of sensitivity and magnitude of change.

4 Assessment of Visual Effects

4.1 The degree of significance of visual effects are assessed at two levels:

1. The significance of the effect on each individual VR;
2. The overall significance of the visual effects in the context of the zone of visual influence and the range of VRs as a whole.

4.2 Following on from the visual baseline, the degree of visibility of the proposed development from each VR is assessed based on the same four categories: No view; Glimpse; Partial view, Open view. The view as it would be both during construction and operation of the proposed development is described. A direct comparison of the descriptions of the view following development (or during construction) with that of the existing situation, together with degree of visibility, indicates the extent of the change to the view. The relationship between visual intrusion and extent of change to the view is dependent upon the character of the development in the context of the view and whether they are consistent or contrasting.

4.3 The scale or magnitude of visual change has been made with reference to the following:

- *'The scale of the change in the view with respect to the loss or addition of features in the view and changes in its composition, including the proportion of the view occupied by the proposed development;*
- *'The degree of contrast or integration of any new features or changes in the landscape with the existing or remaining landscape elements and characteristics in terms of form, scale and mass, line, height, colour and texture; and*
- *'The nature of the view of the proposed development, in terms of the relative amount of time over which it will be experienced and whether views will be full, partial or glimpses.'*

(GLVIA, page 115, para 6.39)

4.4 The geographical extent of a visual effect will vary with different viewpoints and is likely to reflect:

- *'The angle of view in relation to the main activity of the receptor;*
- *'The distance of the viewpoint from the proposed development; and*
- *'The extent of the area over which changes would be visible.'*

(GLVIA, page 115, para 6.40)

4.5 The magnitude of change can be classified as follows:

High:

- Total loss of, or major alteration to, key elements of the baseline view, and/or introduction of elements considered to be uncharacteristic of the baseline view. The development would occupy most of the view (open or panoramic view) resulting in significant change in the existing view.
- The proposals would cause a significant deterioration/improvement in the view. (If adverse, the proposals would be a dominant and incongruous feature in the view).

Medium:

- Partial loss of, or alteration to, (one or more) key elements of the baseline view, and/or introduction of elements that may be prominent but may not necessarily be considered to be substantially uncharacteristic to the baseline view.
- The development may affect a partial view of most of it, or viewers would have a clear view of only a small part of the development. Also refers to distant views in which the site forms a significant proportion of the wider view resulting in a noticeable change in the existing view;
- The proposals would cause a noticeable deterioration/improvement in the view. (If adverse, the proposals would form a visible and recognisable incongruous new element readily noticed by a casual observer. If beneficial, the proposals would form a recognisable improvement that could be noticed by a casual observer.)

Low:

- Minor loss of, or alteration to, one or more key elements of the baseline view, and/or introduction of elements that may not be uncharacteristic of the baseline view. Poor or difficult view of the development resulting in a perceptible change in the existing views; and
- The proposals would cause a minor deterioration/improvement in the view. If adverse, the proposals would be a small incongruous element in the view that could be missed by a casual observer. If beneficial, the proposals would form a small improvement to the view that could be missed by a casual observer.

Very Low:

- Very minor loss of, or alteration to, one or more key elements of the baseline view, and/or introduction of elements that are not characteristic of the baseline view.
- Poor or difficult view of the development resulting in barely perceptible change of a temporary nature. Approximating to the 'no change' situation, where the proposals overall would not form a noticeable deterioration or improvement in the view.

5 Landscape and Visual Significance

5.1 The methodology is first to identify the sensitivity of the landscape features, local landscape character or the viewer and then the scale of change. From these the significance of the effects arising from the proposed development are assessed. At its simplest; sensitivity x scale of change = significance of effects, but modified by professional judgement. The significance matrix provided below makes the judgements made by the professional assessors transparent so they can be understood easily by any reader of the assessment. The distribution of judgements is not intended to create a symmetrical matrix, but reflects a pragmatic approach to determining levels of significance based upon its refinement over many years.

5.2 Significance matrix for landscape and visual effects

		Sensitivity of receptor				
		Very High	High	Medium	Low	Very Low
Magnitude of change	High	Major	Substantial	Substantial or Moderate	Moderate	Minor
	Medium	Substantial	Substantial or Moderate	Moderate	Minor	Negligible
	Low	Moderate	Minor	Minor	Negligible	Negligible
	Very Low	Minor	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible

Major significance of effect: An effect of international/national importance and is important to the decision-making process;

Substantial significance of effect: An effect of regional/district significance and could be a key decision-making issue; prominent changes to a sensitive view or substantial change or widespread loss of characteristic features in a sensitive landscape with little capacity for change;

Moderate significance of effect: An effect of local significance and not likely to be a key decision-making issue; noticeable change to view in an average, ordinary landscape with some capacity to accommodate development; in combination the cumulative impacts of VR's with a moderate significance would be more significant (district significance) and may be a key decision-making issue.

Minor significance of effect: An effect of very local significance and unlikely to be of importance to the decision-making process; small scale or temporary changes to view

or to a low sensitivity landscape with capacity to accommodate development;

Negligible significance of effect: Minimal effect and not significant to the decision-making process.

- 5.3 Effects are judged to be 'Significant' if they are assessed as being Substantial effects or higher. The professional judgement of experienced landscape assessors is used throughout the assessment, particularly in those cases where the outcome lies between two levels of assessment, such as Substantial and Moderate. This is reflected in the landscape and visual impact significance matrices.