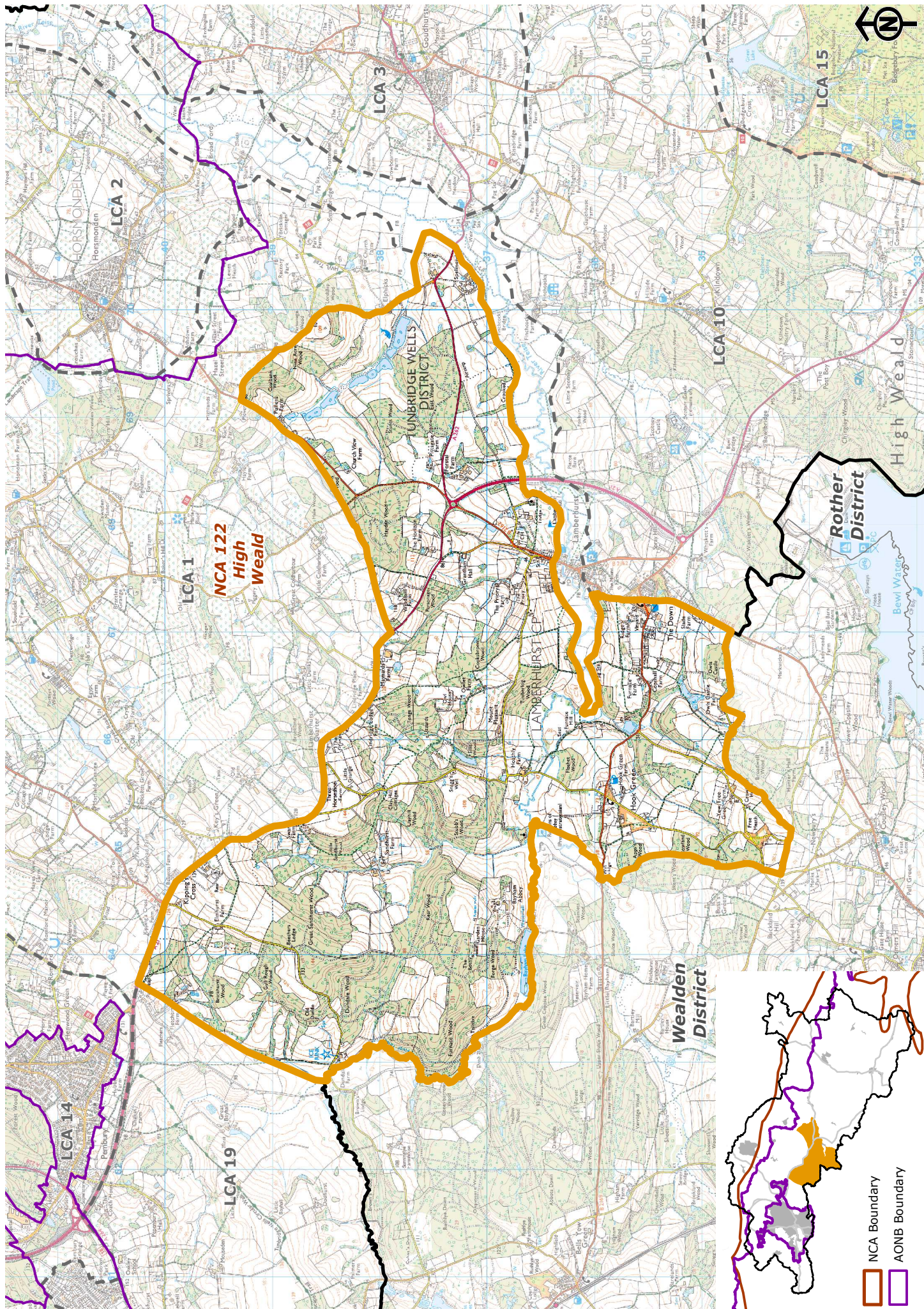


LCA 8 - Bayham Wooded Farmland





## SUMMARY

An elusive area composed of medium to large deciduous woodland blocks, linked by thin strips of shaw woodland enclosing grazed pasture. Permeability is limited to a small number of roads. There is comparatively little settlement which, along with the extensive woodland cover, creates a very secluded rural area. Bayham Abbey, both house and ruins, is an important feature and the grounds are one of the best surviving examples of a Repton landscape.



## Key Characteristics

### 1) **Part of the rolling upland plateau of the High Weald, incised by tributaries of the Teise.**

Bayham is underlain by a mix of the hard Tunbridge Wells Sandstone, Wadhurst Clay and outcrops of the Ashdown Formation. The plateau is cut by the upper reaches of the Teise and its tributary streams, which creates the characteristically incised and rolling topography. Here, the valley of the Teise is small and contributes to the character of the surrounding landscape rather than creating a distinctive landscape type in its own right. For this reason, the Teise is incorporated into the character area, rather being described separately as part of Local Character Area 18.

The pattern of topography allows far-reaching views across the series of undulating ridges and wooded valleys of the High Weald.

### 2) **A traditional pattern of land uses with large blocks of deciduous woodland interlinked by thick shaws and narrow ghyll woodlands surrounding sheep grazed pastures and vineyards, although arable land is now increasingly common.**

The Bayham area is distinguished by its extensive woodland cover and almost total absence of orchards and hops which characterise the fruit belt to the north, although there is a large vineyard at Lamberhurst.

The traditional pattern of Wealden land uses is still to be found in this area. On the shallower slopes, sheep graze the pastures surrounded by thick woodland shaw hedges, while the steeper hillsides are clothed by large areas of deciduous woodland. This unified landscape pattern is, however, fragmenting as grazed pastures on the flatter plateau tops are converted to arable production. Here the enclosed wooded character of the landscape is being eroded as some hedges are removed or neglected and field sizes correspondingly enlarged (e.g. arable fields south of the A262/ A21 roundabout). The bright hues of oil seed rape also form a sharp contrast with the muted greens of woodland interspersed with pasture.

This is a typical High Weald landscape with a broadly intact medieval landscape of assart fields and woodland, small irregularly shaped pasture fields forming a mosaic with ancient woodlands and some locally important habitats of unimproved and semi-improved grassland such as at Old Swan Farm.

### 3) **Bayham Abbey, both house and ruins, is a distinctive feature with one of Repton's finest surviving landscapes.**

The most important historic site is Bayham Abbey, an early nineteenth century landscape park situated on undulating ground around the valley of the River Teise on the Kent/ East Sussex border. It is Grade II listed on the Historic England Historic Parks and Gardens Register and is considered to be one of Repton's finest surviving landscapes with a focus on the ruins of Bayham Abbey in the valley. Elements include Bayham Lake, a dammed headwater of the Teise, sweeping lawns with extensive shrub and parkland planting including beech, copper beech, oak, ash and Lebanon cedar against a woodland backdrop. Bayham Abbey House (Grade II listed) is a symmetrical sandstone fronted building prominently located on a hillside with fine views over the lake and monastic ruins in the valley below.

### 4) **A sparse network of secretive green lanes, overhung by thick woodland hedges. Holly and beech hedges along sunken sandy lanes are a locally distinctive feature.**

There are few roads or lanes penetrating the area (with the exception of the A21 Lamberhurst bypass, roundabout and A262 in the eastern part of the area which follows an ancient routeway) and relatively large swathes between the roads remain inaccessible both visually and physically. The lanes represent ancient droveways - former lanes used for transhumance, connecting the

larger settlements outside of the High Weald to the woodland pastures known as 'dens'. They follow ridgelines and descend across valleys to successive ridges.

The lanes often have a secretive character and squeeze between thick overhanging woodlands forming dense green tunnels with bracken dominated verges adjoining the areas of pasture. A particularly attractive lane runs along the ridge above the Teise valley to the northern edge of Lamberhurst village (Mount Pleasant Lane). This cuts through beds of the hard Ashdown sandstone and is characterised by distinctive sandy outcrops along the roadside, wooded herb-rich verges including bluebell, campion, wild garlic and early purple orchid with dark enclosing hedges of beech, holly and yew.

In contrast with the network of lanes, the main A21 Lamberhurst bypass slices through the area in cutting and is a major generator of noise and traffic in the area.

**5) A dispersed settlement pattern of isolated historic farmsteads, rural dwellings and converted oasts.**

Buildings and settlements are not visually dominant in the landscape with the extensive woodland cover and successive landform ridges limiting long views. The settlement pattern comprises scattered isolated farmhouses and converted oasts with a fairly dispersed distribution. Unlike the Fruit Belt, it is not a densely settled landscape and there are no significant villages to create a focus within the area (with the exception of Lamberhurst which is predominantly within character area 18).

Many of the scattered houses, especially those that belong to the large estates, are built of local sandstone while red brick and tile is also common.

**6) Extensive woodland cover, comprising broad swathes of ancient woodland in ghylls, and on hillsides linked by thin strips of shaw woodland. Small copse woodlands are an important feature within the valley west of Lamberhurst.**

The valley west of Lamberhurst is almost entirely open. Woodland is restricted to a small area upstream from Lamberhurst and at the point where the valley opens out towards the Low Weald.

**7) A sense of rural 'remoteness' and tranquility, with relatively dark skies across much of the area, particularly the south and west.**

Permeability is limited to a small number of roads (except the main A21 junction and Lamberhurst bypass). There is comparatively little settlement which, along with the extensive woodland cover, creates a very secluded rural area.

**8) Commons at Hook Green, Free Heath and The Down, Lamberhurst.**

**Evidence of Past Use and Cultural Evolution**

- 1) The unclassified lane to the west of Bayham Abbey has been identified as an important route as both a drove road and ironway, and Dundale Road, running south from Kipping's Cross, is identified as a drove road.
- 2) The area was also important area for the wool trade, with the area along the water meadows of the River Teise important from the 13<sup>th</sup>, fuelling the growth of the village of Lamberhurst (meaning "a wooded hill for lambs near a stream"). Lamberhurst became a village with cloth and cattle (and leather) industries and a large tannery was established near Hook Green in the 1450s, after moving from Lamberhurst village.
- 3) From the 16<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> century it was also important as a heartland of the Wealden iron industry and much of the area's woodland was felled to provide fuel for furnaces and clearings for hammer ponds. All that remains today are place names such as Furnace Farm and Furnace Mill, and occasional built artefacts.
- 4) There had been a forge on monastic land at Bayham in the 1520s, but by 1548 after the abbey had been dissolved, Hoathly Forge had been relocated downstream. A leat –



known as the Hoathly Ditch – diverted water from the River Teise to provide a head of water to drive the bellows and hammer. In 1694 it was purchased by a local ironmaster who built a furnace in its place. The furnace was named Gloucester Furnace following a visit by Princess Anne and her young son in 1697. The furnace cast the railings of St Paul's Cathedral.

- 5) Bayham Abbey ruins, just over the border in East Sussex, are a Scheduled Monument.
- 6) The fording point was the reason for the growth of Lamberhurst and was initiated as ancient droveway, being the only easily accessible site at which to cross the River Teise, connecting the Weald to the towns in the north (the North Downs and the North Kent Plain). The building of a church on the site of the present Church of St Mary in the 9th century led to the growth of the village, which developed on both sides of the river. Both banks of the Teise consisted of large areas of water meadow, a rarity within the Weald, and were used for raising and grazing sheep. The village developed a wool and cloth industry in the 12th and 13th centuries and as this demised, developed a weekly market to serve drovers of Welsh cattle on their way to summer pasture on Romney Marsh. The village established inns, a tannery and slaughter house, during the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries. However, by the 1450s the leather industry had moved to nearby Hook Green. Lamberhurst became an important centre of the iron industry in the 16<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, as well as containing small leather workshops, tailors and clock and watch makers. Following the decline of the iron industry the village took on more of an agrarian character and the surrounding area was mostly owned and shaped by a few large landowners. From the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, hops and arable farming became the main industry.
- 7) Owl House is another historic park and garden between Tongs Wood and Cooksbroom Wood to the west of Lamberhurst.

### **Semi-Natural Landscape and Priority Habitats**

- 1) This is essentially based on the extensive interlinked network of woodlands. Collectively these woodland areas form a rich natural habitat including Bayham Woods LWS.
- 2) The shaw hedges around the pasture fields and those remaining around the arable land are species-rich and include oak, field maple, ash, hornbeam and hazel, and play an important role in creating the woodland framework for the area, interlinking and connecting the larger woodland blocks.
- 3) The woodland includes actively managed sweet chestnut coppice under oak standards as well as extensive stands of unmanaged ancient broad-leaved woodland with pedunculate oak over ash, hazel and hornbeam coppice with alder and willow common along streams.
- 4) Woodland lakes and ponds are an important feature.
- 5) Where acid sands are at the surface, pockets of wooded heath survive.
- 6) Old Swan Farm is a designated LWS. It contains areas of herb-rich, neutral grassland, as well as adjacent habitats of ancient semi-natural woodland.
- 7) The area west of the Teise is designated a LWS and contains wooded copses, pasture and woods and pasture south of Mount Pleasant Road and at Owls Farm.



## Valued Features and Qualities

In addition to the valued features and qualities which apply to the whole of the Borough noted in **Chapter 1**, features and qualities considered to be of particular value in the landscape character area are identified below.

The area lies within the High Weald AONB. The following elements of character related to the AONB are particularly valued in this character area:

- 1) The distinctive and scenic rolling topography of high ridges intersected by incised valleys and steep-sided ghylls.
- 2) The dispersed historic settlement pattern of isolated historic farmsteads, rural dwellings and oasts.
- 3) The network of ancient routeways which are now ridge-top roads and lanes and numerous small greens and some commons framed by the routeways.
- 4) The frequent and extensive areas of ancient woodland in the form of ghylls, shaws and small woodlands.
- 5) The pattern of small intact irregular fields of grazing pasture forming a mosaic with woodlands, shaws, ghylls and hedges which reflect a medieval historic landscape character.

Other features and qualities considered to be of particular landscape and visual value to the character area include:

- 6) Bayham Abbey, both house and ruins, is an important feature and the grounds are one of the best surviving examples of a Repton landscape. Views of the abbey in the context of the surrounding landscape are distinctive and memorable.
- 7) Extensive rural views from higher areas of land across wooded valleys to undeveloped ridges and sheep grazed fields.
- 8) The sense of tranquillity, with relatively dark skies across much of the area, the rural character of built development and 'secretive' rural lanes.
- 9) The strong natural character resulting from the extensive areas of woodland and unimproved or semi-improved grassland, as well as woodland lakes and ponds.
- 10) Historic remnants of the former industries of the area.

## Detractors and Opportunities

In addition to the detractors noted in **Chapter 3**, features which detract from the character area are identified below.

### Detractors and Opportunities

- 1) Fragmentation of grazed pastures on the flatter plateau tops due to conversion to arable production which erodes the enclosed wooded character of the landscape as some hedges are removed or neglected and field sizes correspondingly enlarged.

*Any enhancement possible through the development process should encourage the creation of a network of unploughed field margins and environmentally sensitive arable land management, enhancing the landscape and habitat diversity of arable fields.*

- 2) The Lamberhurst bypass and junction of the A21 introduces noise and traffic into the area



locally.

## Landscape Strategy

Borough landscape considerations are detailed in **Chapter 3**, and local objectives are outlined below.

### Landscape Strategy

The Local Character Area should be considered in the context of the High Weald AONB, particularly the role the character area plays in the setting of the AONB. The valued features and qualities of the landscape should be conserved and enhanced.

- 1) Maintain the essentially wooded and rural character of the area and sense of comparative 'emptiness' and seclusion with an absence of settlement on any significant scale.
- 2) Where appropriate follow the existing pattern of settlement, i.e. occasional small scale, scattered isolated farmsteads and rural buildings with no clustered settlements.
- 3) Avoid erosion of the tranquillity of the rural lanes. Discourage the introduction of new access routes where possible and ensure that where developments require them they are designed sensitively for the rural character of the area.