

Advice Note

www.highweald.org



High Weald
National
Landscape

Legislation and Planning Policy in the High Weald National Landscape (AONB)

Produced by: High Weald National Landscape Unit

Revised January 2025



An Outstanding Medieval Landscape

Our Advice Programme

The High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty is one of the best surviving medieval landscapes in northern Europe. The components of the High Weald's natural beauty that make it recognisably distinct are:

- ❖ Natural systems (geology, soils, water and climate);
- ❖ Settlement;
- ❖ Routeways;
- ❖ Woodland;
- ❖ Fieldsapes and heath;
- ❖ Dark night skies;
- ❖ Aesthetic and perceptual qualities;
- ❖ Land-based economy and rural living;

The High Weald National Landscape Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) is a partnership established in 1991 of 15 local authorities, Defra, Natural England and organisations representing farming, woodland, access and community interests. The JAC is responsible for publishing and monitoring the statutory AONB Management Plan. [high-weald-aonb-management-plan-2024-2029](#)

The JAC is supported by a small, dedicated staff team, the High Weald National Landscape Unit, which develops understanding of the High Weald's key components - their history, development, distribution, special qualities, deterioration, damage and loss - to provide an evidence base for the AONB Management Plan and related policy and guidance.

This guidance is based on that understanding and aims to help everybody conserve and enhance one of England's finest landscapes.

From November 22nd 2023, all AONBs are to be known as National Landscapes. The High Weald National Landscape remains designated an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and is referred to as such in legislation. The statutory purpose "to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the designated landscape" remains unchanged.



High Weald National Landscape Unit
Woodland Enterprise Centre,
Hastings Road,
Flimwell
East Sussex
TN5 7PR
T:01424 723011
E:info@highweald.org
www.highweald.org

The views expressed in this report are those of the National Landscape Unit and do not necessarily reflect those of High Weald National Landscape Joint Advisory Committee members.

Contents

1. Introduction	P.4
2. The High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty	P.4
2.1 The Natural Beauty of the High Weald	P.4
2.2 The High Weald AONB Management Plan	P.4
3. The legal and national policy framework for AONBs	P.6
3.1 The Legal Framework	P.6
3.2 The Development Plan	P.6
3.3 The National Planning Policy Framework	P.7
3.4 The Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)	P.9
4. Assessing proposals against the AONB Management Plan	P.10
Appendix 1: High Weald AONB Management Plan 2024-2029 Assessment Template	P.11

1. Introduction

This Advice Note has been produced to assist all those people involved in making, commenting on and deciding planning applications in, or affecting, the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

2. The High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

2.1. The Natural Beauty of the High Weald

AONBs are designated for the purpose of conserving and enhancing natural beauty¹. The term natural beauty first gained currency in a legislative context in the 1907 Act which gave legal status to the National Trust ('for Places of Historic Interest and Natural Beauty'). It has been the basis for the designation of both AONBs and National Parks since the 1949 National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act, but has never been exhaustively defined in legislation.

Over the years, qualification and amendment to the legislation has made it clear that natural beauty includes considerations such as wildlife, geological features and cultural heritage but is not restricted by them. Government guidance relating to AONBs provides a useful non-technical definition: "Natural Beauty" is not just the look of the landscape, but includes landform and geology, plants and animals, landscape features and the rich history of human settlement over the centuries². The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 clarified that land used for agriculture, woodlands, parkland or with physiographical features partly the product of human intervention in the landscape, is not prevented from being treated as an area of 'natural beauty'.

In the 1949 Act 'Natural beauty' replaced other phrases such as 'landscape beauty' and 'characteristic landscape beauty'. These provide a clue to the importance of landscape character and beauty as an aesthetic experience bringing people a sense of pleasure, well-being and connectedness with nature. Character is interpreted in different ways with the Landscape Institute focusing on the pattern of landscape elements, landscape archaeologists seeing the human process of a landscape 'coming into being', and ecologists also considering the quality of the natural processes and ecological systems which underpin patterns of vegetation. Natural beauty encompasses all of these views.

2.2 The High Weald AONB Management Plan

The Management Plan is adopted by the Area's 15 constituent local authorities as their policy for the management of the area and for the carrying out of their functions in relation to it, and is a material consideration for planning applications. The natural beauty of the High Weald is defined in the Statement of Significance. To view the current Management Plan, visit <http://www.highweald.org/high-weald-aonb-management-plan.html>

¹ [Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](http://www.legislation.gov.uk)

² Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty: A guide for AONB Partnership members, Countryside Commission, CA24, November 2001, P6

High Weald AONB Management Plan Statement of Significance

The High Weald is one of the best-preserved medieval landscapes in north-west Europe. Despite its large size (1,461 sq.km) and proximity to London, its landscape has remained relatively unchanged since the 14th century, surviving major historical events and accommodating significant social and technological changes.

The natural beauty of the High Weald AONB is derived from the essentially rural and small-scale landscape character, rich in wildlife and cultural features. It has been created by historic and locally distinctive agricultural and forestry practices with the story of its past visible throughout. The extensive survival of woodland and traditional mixed farming supports an exceptionally well-connected green and blue infrastructure, with a high proportion of natural surfaces. Food production and semi-natural habitat are interwoven in a structurally diverse, permeable and complex mosaic supporting a rich diversity of wildlife. A dense network of historic routeways and public rights of way provides access for people to get close to nature and experience its natural beauty. The pattern and landscape setting of dispersed historic settlements enriches its natural beauty with small, irregular fields and pasture, hedgerows and ancient woodlands interspersed with the rich clay-tiled roofscapes of historic buildings. Greenness, a sense of tranquillity and dark skies contribute to the perceptual and scenic qualities people enjoy.

The Plan articulates natural beauty through eight core components of character (expanded below) which are rooted in historic characterisation of the High Weald landscape as a whole and represent the cultural imprint of generations on the natural inheritance of the area. These core character components of natural beauty encompass finer-grained key characteristics which include habitats, features of interest and cultural associations, and all combine to create a distinct and recognisable landscape whose natural beauty exceeds the sum of its parts.

Each component of natural beauty is of equal and stand-alone importance in its own right, (i.e., they cannot be ranked) and any policy or action may be considered harmful to the AONB if it results in the loss of, or material harm to, any of these components of character. *All* of the AONB is important; any areas perceived as 'degraded' should be seen as opportunities for enhancement of natural beauty contributing positively to the purpose of designation and objectives of the Management Plan.

The Core Character Components of the High Weald's natural beauty comprise:

- ❖ **Natural systems (geology, soils, water and climate)** – a deeply incised, ridged and faulted landform of clays and sandstone with highly variable, relatively undisturbed soils and numerous headwaters (gill streams) functioning under an oceanic climate.
- ❖ **Settlement** – dispersed historic settlement including high densities of isolated farmsteads, hamlets and late medieval villages founded on trade and non-agricultural rural industries.
- ❖ **Routeways** – a dense network of historic routeways (now roads, tracks and paths).
- ❖ **Woodland** – an abundance of ancient woodland mostly in small holdings, highly interconnected with hedges and shaws.
- ❖ **Fieldsapes 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.
- ❖ **Dark night skies** – intrinsically dark at night with our own galaxy (the milky way) visible.
- ❖ **Aesthetic and perceptual qualities** arising from the interaction of people with the landscape, including the notion of a quintessential English pastoral landscape, intimacy of scale, a sense of history and timelessness; rurality and tranquillity; glimpsed long views; freedom to explore and make connections with the natural world, and a rich legacy of features and ideas left by writers, poets and gardeners inspired by the landscape.
- ❖ **Land-based economy and rural living** – with roots extending deep into history, and which has visibly and culturally shaped the landscape

3. The legal and national policy framework for AONBs

3.1 The Legal Framework

The National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 legislates for the designation of AONBs and National Parks. The legal framework for AONBs is provided by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (CRoW) 2000. This includes:

Section 84 - which confirms the powers of a local authorities to take ‘all such action as appears to them expedient’ to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of an AONB, and sets consultation and advice on development planning and on public access on the same basis as National Parks in the 1949 Act.

Section 85 – which sets out that:

“In exercising or performing any functions in relation to, or so as to affect, land in an area of outstanding natural beauty, a relevant authority must seek to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area of outstanding

Section 85 of the CRoW Act 2000 can be viewed at: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/37/section/85>

‘Relevant authorities’ include government (including the Planning Inspectorate), Local Authorities, parish councils and statutory undertakers, amongst others.

Defra has published [Guidance for relevant authorities on seeking to further the purposes of Protected Landscapes - GOV.UK](#)

Meanwhile the National Landscapes Association has published a Briefing Note to provide practical, easy-to-follow guidance on meeting the strengthened S.85 duty tailored specifically to plan-making and decision-making in Local Planning Authority (LPA) functions. [CRoW-s.85-duty-guidance-for-LPAs NLA-Briefing-Nov-24.pdf](#)

Section 89 – which places a statutory duty on local planning authorities to act jointly to prepare a management plan for an AONB within or partly within their administrative areas which ‘formulates their policy for the management of the area and for carrying out of their functions in relation to it’.

3.2 The Development Plan

District or Borough Councils are responsible for preparing a Local Plan for their area and for taking decisions about most planning applications. Minerals and Waste Local Plans are prepared by the County Councils and they will also determine any planning applications for this type of development, as well as development on their own land such as school extensions. Town or Parish Councils (or Neighbourhood Forums in unparished areas) may also prepare Neighbourhood Plans for their area. These policy documents together comprise the statutory Development Plan.

Planning legislation³ requires that:

‘to the extent that development plan policies are material to an application for planning permission, the decision must be taken in accordance with the development plan unless there are material considerations that indicate otherwise’

Material considerations include national policy and guidance and the High Weald AONB Management Plan.

³ Section 7(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004).

3.3 The National Planning Policy Framework

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was last revised in 2023. It can be accessed at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2>

Paragraph 189 sets out that:

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

Paragraph 190 sets out that:

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

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

Footnote 64 clarifies:

‘For the purposes of paragraphs 190 and 191, whether a proposal is ‘major development’ is a matter for the decision maker, taking into account its nature, scale and setting, and whether it could have a significant adverse impact on the purposes for which the area has been designated or defined’.

With regard to para 190, it should be noted that exceptional *need* does not necessarily equate to exceptional *circumstances*.⁴

⁴ This principle is recognised in relevant case law (R (Mevagissey Parish Council) v Cornwall Council [2013] EHC 3684 (Admin) (link), paragraph 52): ‘Even if there were an exceptional need ... that would not necessarily equate to exceptional circumstances for a particular development, because there may be alternative sites that are more suitable because development there would result in less harm to the AONB landscape’.

NPPF paragraph 11 states that:

‘Plans and decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development.

For plan-making this means that:

- a) all plans should promote a sustainable pattern of development that seeks to: meet the development needs of their area; align growth and infrastructure; improve the environment; mitigate climate change (including by making effective use of land in urban areas) and adapt to its effects;**
- b) strategic policies should, as a minimum, provide for objectively assessed needs for housing and other uses, as well as any needs that cannot be met within neighbouring areas, unless:
 - i. the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a strong reason for restricting the overall scale, type or distribution of development in the plan area⁷; or**
 - ii. any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole.****

For decision-taking this means:

- c) approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay; or**
- d) where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, granting permission unless:
 - i. the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a strong reason for refusing the development proposed⁷; or**
 - ii. any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole, having particular regard to key policies for directing development to sustainable locations, making effective use of land, securing well-designed places and providing affordable homes, individually or in combination⁹.****

Footnote 7 confirms that:

‘The policies referred to are those in this Framework (rather than those in development plans) relating to: habitats sites (and those sites listed in paragraph 189) and/or designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest; land designated as Green Belt, Local Green Space, a National Landscape, a National Park (or within the Broads Authority) or defined as Heritage Coast; irreplaceable habitats; designated heritage assets (and other heritage assets of archaeological interest referred to in footnote 75); and areas at risk of flooding or coastal change.’

Footnote 9 confirms that:

The policies referred to are those in paragraphs 66 and 84 of chapter 5; 91 of chapter 7; 110 and 115 of chapter 9; 129 of chapter 11; and 135 and 139 of chapter 12.

3.4 National Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)

The National Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) provides the detail to explain and expand upon the policy statements in the NPPF. It is an online resource which is updated regularly and can be accessed at [Planning practice guidance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/planning-practice-guidance)

Of particular relevance to AONBs are the following paragraphs:

What are the statutory duties of local planning authorities in relation to National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty?

....[section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000](#) require[s] that ‘in exercising or performing any functions in relation to, or so as to affect, land’ in Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, relevant authorities ‘must seek to further’ their purposes for which these areas are designated.

This duty is particularly important to the delivery of the statutory purposes of protected areas. It applies to all local planning authorities, not just National Park authorities, and is relevant in considering development proposals that are situated outside National Park or Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty boundaries, but which might have an impact on their setting or protection.

Paragraph: 039 Reference ID: 8-039-20190721

How should development within National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty be approached?

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.

All development in National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Beauty will need to be located and designed in a way that reflects their status as landscapes of the highest quality. Where applications for major development come forward, [paragraph 172 of the Framework](#) [now 190] sets out a number of particular considerations that should apply when deciding whether permission should be granted.

Paragraph: 041 Reference ID: 8-041-20190721

Revision date: 21 07 2019

Do planning policies and decisions need to take account of management plans for National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty?

Management plans for National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty do not form part of the statutory development plan, but they help to set out the strategic context for development. They provide evidence of the value and special qualities of these areas, provide a basis for cross-organisational work to support the purposes of their designation and show how management activities contribute to their protection, enhancement and enjoyment. They may contain information which is relevant when preparing plan policies, or which is a material consideration when assessing planning applications.

Paragraph: 040 Reference ID: 8-040-20190721 Revision date: 21 07 2019

How should development within the setting of National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty be dealt with?

Land within the setting of these areas often makes an important contribution to maintaining their natural beauty, and where poorly located or designed development can do significant harm. This is especially the case where long views from or to the designated landscape are identified as important, or where the landscape character of land within and adjoining the designated area is complementary. Development within the settings of these areas will therefore need sensitive handling that takes these potential impacts into account.

Paragraph: 042 Reference ID: 8-042-20190721

Revision date: 21 07 2019

4. Assessing proposals against the AONB Management Plan

A template is appended to this Advice Note which, whilst not definitive, is intended to assist in assessing proposals against each of the Objectives of the Management Plan, under each of the core component of natural beauty. It is important to remember that the Management Plan confirms that each component of natural beauty is of equal and stand-alone importance in its own right, and any policy or action may be considered harmful to the HWNL if it results in the loss of, or material harm to, any of these components.

This should also be used as part of a wider landscape and visual impact assessment of the proposal.

As set out in section 2 of this Note, AONBs are designated for their natural beauty, which is a holistic concept and includes considerations such as wildlife, geological features and cultural heritage but is not restricted by them. Hence, it is expected that any landscape assessment considers both the visual impacts of any site or proposal on the intrinsic scenic qualities of a National Landscape and the impacts on its landscape character or features.

A landscape and visual impact assessment (LVIA) which may accompany a planning application should distinguish between landscape impact at a National Landscape scale by reference to the Management Plan and impact on local landscape character. Some LVIA's have a tendency to focus on visual and scenic aspects more than character, at the expense of the key components which contribute to sense of place, distinctiveness, heritage, and tranquillity.

While the extent to which development is visible, especially from public vantage points, is an accepted planning consideration, the Courts⁵ have held that the fact that a development is not viewable by the general public does not mean that there is no harm to the intrinsic character of an AONB. This is particularly relevant in a largely enclosed landscape such as the High Weald.

The extent to which the siting, layout and design of development proposals are compatible with, and reinforce the landscape character of, the AONB will be important. In this regard, the High Weald AONB Housing Design Guide (2019) seeks to support the High Weald AONB Management Plan, and particularly objectives S1 and S2 of the Settlement Character Component of the Management Plan. The Guide aims to give succinct, practical and consistent advice to set clear design expectations for new housing development within the High Weald AONB, to help to ensure higher quality and landscape-led design that reflects intrinsic High Weald character, and is embedded with a true sense of place, without stifling innovation and creativity.

Locally sourced materials, particularly timber, can contribute positively to the AONB not just visually but by helping to support the economic management of woodland.

⁵ Great Trippetts Estate Ltd v Secretary of State for Communities & Local Government [2011] EWCA Civ 203 26 Jan 2011

Similarly, developments intended to support the agriculturally productive use of land can also contribute positively to conserving and enhancing the High Weald AONB. This is particularly the case where they support the agricultural infrastructure and traditional farming practices that created the High Weald landscape such as livestock farming and the management of grassland meadows. However, the Management Plan is clear that the pursuance of the objectives or actions set out in the 'Land Based Economy & Rural Living' section should not harm the other character components or be at the expense of their contribution to the natural beauty of the High Weald AONB.

Appendix 1: High Weald AONB Management Plan 2024-2029 Assessment Template

The following template should be used at an early stage in the planning process to consider how a proposal would align with the objectives of the High Weald AONB Management Plan. It should be informed by the evidence available on the High Weald AONB website at [Welcome to the High Weald National Landscape](#) This includes maps of the key landscape characteristics identified in the [high-weald-aonb-management-plan-2024-2029](#) which can be found under each parish at [Document Library - High Weald](#) It also includes detailed reports on particular aspects of the High Weald at [Document Library - High Weald](#)

High Weald AONB Management Plan 2024-2029 Objective	Assessment of Impact (see MP Actions for more detail)
Natural systems (geology, soils, water and climate)	
G1 Objective: To restore the natural function of rivers, water courses and water bodies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider surface water run-off quality and quantity impacts on local watercourses. • Would the natural functioning of a floodplain be hindered (such as through built development, drainage or culverts)? • Have results from archaeological surveys been used to assess the impact on historic remains in the floodplain? • Have at surface drainage methods (such as ponds, ditches and swales) been used rather than underground storage methods? • Ensure water is retained / slowed e.g., by sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) • Do solutions for crossing water courses minimise adverse impacts on river and stream habitats (such as clear-span bridges); avoiding new culverts and remove existing culverts where possible?
G2 Objective: To protect landform and geological features including sandstone outcrops.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would the proposal impact on the natural landform of the site through cut-and-fill operations or embankment creation? • Has the design taken account of local landform and avoided substantial alterations in levels? Would an exposed sandstone outcrop/cutting and any associated habitat be affected?
G3 Objective: To pursue net zero across the High Weald without compromising its characteristic landscape beauty.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What impact would the proposal have on climatic conditions, through construction methods, materials, energy and water use and air pollution from associated traffic? • Can impacts on climate conditions be reduced through sustainable design? • Has the use of local materials such as timber been maximised and the use of polluting materials such as plastics and construction waste been minimised? Would the proposal reduce soil carbon storage potential through the loss of green fields?
G4 Objective: To restore soil health across the High Weald.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would the proposal affect soils on the site through compaction, erosion or pollution or by sterilising soil through hard surfacing or built development? • Is the use of permanent impermeable surfaces minimised? Does the Construction Management Plan include best practice to protect soils during construction from compaction, pollution and erosion?

Settlement	
S1 Objective: To protect the historic pattern and character of settlements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Would the proposal erode the historic settlement pattern, and would it erode areas of separation between settlements?</i> • <i>Does analysis of the historic pattern and character of the settlement inform the proposals? (including specialist reports on heritage and archaeology including information from the Historic Landscape Characterisation?)</i> • <i>would the proposal result in the erosion of HWNL character through suburbanisation in rural areas?</i> • <i>Has the potential for harm through the cumulative effects of separate developments on the designated landscape been considered?</i> • <i>does the proposal represent a landscape-led positive planning approach in the HWNL?</i> • <i>Has the High Weald AONB Housing Design Guide been used in a robust and meaningful way to inform the proposal?</i>
S2 Objective: To enhance the architectural quality of the High Weald and ensure new development reflects the character of the High Weald in its siting, scale, layout and design.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Does the proposal maintain and enhance the local distinctiveness and the built environment character and the 'sense of place' of the High Weald?</i> • <i>Is the scale and form of the proposal discordant with surrounding settlement scale and form?</i> • <i>Has available guidance been used in a robust and meaningful way to inform the proposal such as the High Weald AONB Design Guide and the High Weald Colour Study, including for the scheme layout and design of the 'place' as well as of individual buildings, to avoid generic approaches to layout and design of new development?</i> • <i>Do the soft landscaping strategies reflect local landscape character and include appropriate native planting?</i>
S3 Objective: To conserve the distinct built heritage of the High Weald.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>does the proposal protect and preserve the character and setting of historic traditional buildings, settlements and features distinct to the High Weald area, including the historic public realm?</i> • <i>Have heritage statements evaluated the role of the any affected heritage asset as part of the cultural heritage and natural beauty of the AONB?</i>
Routeways	
R1 Objective: To maintain the historic pattern, morphology and features of routeways.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Would the proposal impact on public rights of way or rural lanes?</i> • <i>Are historic routeways proposed to be diverted?</i> • <i>Would it remove historic features such as banks and hedges, or introduce urbanising features such as wide splays, surfacing, curbing and signage?</i> • <i>Would it involve new access points that would damage the character of sunken routeways?</i> • <i>Is the proposal informed by specialist reports on heritage and archaeology associated with the routeways?</i> • <i>Can new accesses and routes be designed to reflect High Weald character of historic routeways?</i>
R2 Objective: To protect and enhance the ecological function of routeways.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Would the proposal impact on verges or result in the removal of trees or hedgerows along routeways?</i> • <i>Does the proposal include non-native planting along routeways (such as laurel)?</i> • <i>Is the proposal informed by an ecological report?</i> • <i>Can trees and hedgerows be retained, protected, restored or replaced?</i>

Woodland	
W1 Objective: To maintain and restore the existing extent and pattern of woodland cover and particularly ancient woodland.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Would the proposal result in a loss of woodland or trees?</i> • <i>would the proposal result in a degradation of woodland such as through increased visitor pressure, predation by pets or garden waste disposal?</i> • <i>Does the proposal impact on wood pasture or historic parkland?</i> • <i>Can the proposal be designed to avoid loss of trees or woodland, and use existing on-site trees as placemaking to embed a genuine local sense of place in the scheme and to create positive green spaces within the scheme, around which the development can be structured?</i>
W2 Objective: To protect and restore the ecological quality and functioning of woodland at a landscape scale.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Would the proposal result in the loss or degradation of the existing ecological quality of woodland including adjacent ecological corridors?</i> • <i>Consider direct and indirect impacts as set out in the Natural England and Forestry Commission ‘standing advice’ (Ancient woodland, ancient trees and veteran trees: advice for making planning decisions)</i> • <i>Are suitable buffers and woodland connections be provided?</i> • <i>Would the proposal reduce the connectedness of woodland on the site to adjacent habitats?</i> • <i>Is the proposal informed by an ecological report?</i> • <i>Is any new planting be carried out with locally sourced/grown or locally provenanced native species?</i>
W3 Objective: To protect the archaeology and historic assets of AONB woodlands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Is the proposal informed by specialist reports on heritage and archaeology associated with the woodland?</i> • <i>Would the proposal have an impact on any historic and archaeological features in woodland, including the woodland boundary?</i>
W4 Objective: To increase the output of sustainability produced high-quality timber and underwood for local markets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Does the proposal encourage the sustainable management of woodland?</i> • <i>Can the proposal use local timber products to support the sustainable management of woodland in the AONB?</i>
Fieldscape and Heath	
FH1 Objective: To secure agriculturally productive use for the fields of the High Weald, especially for local markets, as part of sustainable land management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Does the proposal sustain or re-introduce land management practices which support the High Weald landscape character such as livestock farming and small scale horticulture?</i> • <i>Does the proposal prevent the agriculturally productive use of fields through loss of work-yards, storage barns etc?</i> • <i>Does the proposal remove land from agricultural use?</i> • <i>Recognise the food productivity value and quality of grade 3a and 3b soils as being of greater importance to the High Weald’s pastoral agriculture economy and landscape character than simply the ALC grade.</i>
FH2 Objective: To maintain the pattern of small irregularly shaped fields bounded by hedgerows and woodlands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Has information about the age and surviving features of fields and boundaries (such as from the Historic Landscape Characterisation) informed the proposal?</i> • <i>Would the proposal result in the loss of intact medieval features including fields?</i> • <i>does the proposal retain, protect and enhance existing field patterns, including hedges and ditches?</i> • <i>Is the scale and design of the proposal reflective of the area’s field size and pattern?</i> • <i>Can lost historic field boundaries (hedges, ditches etc) be reinstated?</i>

<p>FH3 Objective: To protect and enhance the ecological function of field and heath as part of the complex mosaic of High Weald habitats.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Is the proposal informed by an ecological report?</i> • <i>Does the proposal avoid loss of species-rich grassland or heathland?</i>
<p>FH4 Objective: To protect individual archaeological features as well as historic assets and pattern of fields and heath.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Is the proposal informed by specialist reports on heritage and archaeology associated with the field or heathland?</i> • <i>Would the proposal have an impact on any historic and archaeological features in the field or heathland?</i>
<p>Dark Skies</p>	
<p>DS1 Objective: To preserve the dark skies of the High Weald AONB by minimising light pollution, obtrusive external lighting and internal light spill from domestic, commercial and public premises in both existing and new developments within the High Weald, and from highways lighting.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Has available guidance been used to inform the proposal such as the High Weald AONB Dark Skies Planning Advice Note?</i> • <i>Has a suitable lighting assessment been submitted with the proposals, and does the proposal follow the Institute of Lighting Professionals (ILP) guidance on reducing obtrusive lighting, and other relevant guidance to aid protecting dark skies?</i> • <i>Would the proposal introduce lighting into a topographically prominent location in the AONB?</i> • <i>Does the proposal include large areas of glazing in new building designs, especially wrap-around glazing and floor-to-ceiling windows, which could result in significant light spill, especially in rural areas with intrinsically dark skies?</i> • <i>Has new street lighting been avoided where possible?</i> • <i>Can planning conditions be used to ensure that flood-lit facilities such as sports pitches and carparks are turned off when not in use, to reduce light pollution?</i>
<p>DS2 Objective: To protect wildlife and habitats from light pollution across the High Weald.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Would the proposal introduce lighting in close proximity to wildlife sensitive areas, including ancient woodland?</i> • <i>Does the proposal use appropriate light temperature lamps (ideally less than 2700K)?</i>
<p>Aesthetic & Perceptual Qualities</p>	
<p>PQ1 Objective: To increase opportunities for learning about and celebrating the High Weald's character and aesthetic qualities, and to promote and facilitate contributions by communities and individuals to the conservation and enhancement of the High Weald.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Does the proposal open up access to areas of the High Weald previously inaccessible to the public?</i> • <i>Would an area that was conserved and enhanced through public or private contributions be affected by the proposal?</i>

<p>PQ2 Objective: To protect the unspoilt rural landscape with its intrinsic sense of naturalness, valued views, and the extent of green space which foster experiences of rurality and tranquillity.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>consider the impact of development on the intrinsic rural character of the landscape and seek to avoid intrusive development</i> • <i>Would a sense of connection with the countryside be affected through reduced views, reduced or more unattractive access or a significant change in 'sense of place' through urbanisation?</i> • <i>Does the proposal conserve and enhance views in and out of the site?</i> • <i>Would the proposal impact on tranquillity; dark night skies, valued viewpoints and historic and cultural features?</i> • <i>Does the proposal follow the High Weald Housing Design Guide for best practice on incorporating green-ness into new developments, by including grass verges, trees and shrubs, and greenspaces?</i> • <i>Would proposals introduce urbanising features associated with utilities infrastructure (such as security fencing, lighting etc) into the rural landscape.</i>
<p>PQ3 Objective: To foster and promote equitable access and informal enjoyment of the High Weald landscape and the integrated management of its resources for the enjoyment of natural beauty by all.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Does the development enable pedestrian access to villages/towns and the countryside?</i> • <i>Is public transport available and accessible?</i> • <i>Does the development include community space for informal, open-air recreation?</i> • <i>Is there any impact of increased use of rights of way on neighbouring land management activity?</i> • <i>consider potential harm to landscape character, including tranquillity and wildlife, from intensified recreational and tourism related activity</i>
<p>Land-based Economy & Rural Living</p>	
<p>LBE1 Objective: To improve returns from, and thereby increase entry and retention in, farming, forestry, horticulture and other land management activities that conserve and enhance natural beauty.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Does the proposal support farming, forestry or small scale horticulture? (including supporting the maintenance and development of agricultural infrastructure and food processing facilities)</i> • <i>Does the proposal prevent the productive use of fields or woodland through their loss to development, their isolation from the wider holding or the loss of ancillary infrastructure such as barns?</i> • <i>Would any farm diversification projects in the proposal support, and not adversely impact on, the agricultural viability of a holding in terms of retention of sufficient productive land and compatible uses.</i> • <i>Would the proposal result in the removal of an agricultural occupancy condition?</i>
<p>LBE2 Objective: To reconnect settlements and residents with the surrounding countryside, and maintain and improve rural amenities and services that support communities within the context of the rural settlement pattern.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Does the proposal support and retain local services and rural businesses? Does the proposal impact on existing rural community amenities or infrastructure that support the HWNL such as village shops?</i> • <i>Does the proposal make space for wildlife to thrive around buildings, gardens and open spaces?</i> • <i>Are there opportunities to create additional rural community facilities?</i> • <i>Can the proposal allow installation of (or make provision for) wood-fuel heating systems and adequate firewood storage facilities in the design and layout of the development?</i>
<p>LBE3 Objective: To improve agricultural and forestry infrastructure (including the provision of appropriate affordable housing and workspaces for land-based workers), along with skills development for rural communities and related sectors that contribute positively to conserving and enhancing natural beauty.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Would the proposal deliver a mix of housing sizes that responds to local needs and key worker housing, including for land-based workers and include the necessary infrastructure to support their occupation such as additional storage / parking?</i> • <i>Does the proposal support community agriculture or small scale horticulture?</i> • <i>Does the proposal impact on existing rural facilities used for land-based skills and rural crafts?</i>