

Legislation and Planning Policy in the High Weald AONB



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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:

- ✦ **Geology, landform, water systems and climate:** deeply incised, ridged and faulted landform of clays and sandstone from which spring numerous gill streams.
- ✦ **Settlement:** dispersed historic settlements of farmsteads and hamlets and late medieval villages.
- ✦ **Routeways:** ancient routeways often narrow, deeply sunken, and edged with trees, hedges, wildflower-rich verges and boundary banks.
- ✦ **Woodland:** a great extent of ancient woods, gills, and shaws in small holdings
- ✦ **Field and heath :** small, irregularly shaped and productive fields often bounded by, and forming a mosaic with, hedgerows and small woodlands

The High Weald AONB 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**.

The JAC is supported by a small, dedicated staff team, the **High Weald AONB 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**.




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

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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 beauty. 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 centuries' ¹. 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.



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

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>

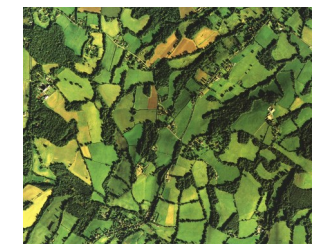
Statement of Significance

The High Weald is one of the best preserved Medieval landscapes in North West Europe. Despite its large size (1,500km sq.) and proximity to London, its landscape has remained relatively unchanged since the 14th century, surviving major historical events and social and technological changes. Its outstanding beauty stems from its essentially rural and human scale character, with a high proportion of natural surfaces and 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 semi-natural habitat in a structurally diverse, permeable and complex mosaic supporting a rich diversity of wildlife.

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.
- **Geology, landform and water systems** - a deeply incised, ridged and faulted landform of clays and sandstone with numerous gill streams.
- **Settlement** - dispersed historic settlement including high densities of isolated farmsteads and late Medieval villages founded on trade and non-agricultural rural industries.
- **Routeways** - a dense network of historic routeways (now roads, tracks and paths).
- **Woodland** - abundance of ancient woodland, highly interconnected and in smallholdings.
- **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.



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 states that 'Relevant authorities' include government, local



"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 shall have regard to the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area of outstanding natural beauty"

authorities, parish councils and statutory undertakers. Section 85 of the Crow Act 2000 can be viewed at: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/37/section/85>

To further AONB objectives, Section 89 of the CROW Act 2000 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 legislation 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' ².

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



2. 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 revised in 2021. It can be accessed at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2>

Paragraph 176 says: '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 Broads⁵⁹. 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 177 says 'When considering applications for development within National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, permission should be refused for major development⁶⁰ 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 60 says:

'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'.



NPPF paragraph 11 states that:

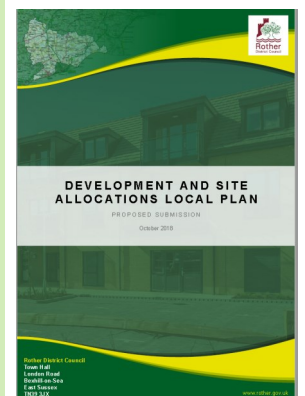
'Plans and decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development.'

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 areas⁶, 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:

- a) approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay; or
- b) where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date⁸, granting permission unless:
 - i) the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear 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'.



Footnote 7 says:

'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 180) and/or designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest; land designated as Green Belt, Local Green Space, an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, 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 67); and areas at risk of flooding or coastal change'.

Footnote 8 says:

This includes, for applications involving the provision of housing, situations where the local planning authority cannot demonstrate a five year supply of deliverable housing sites (with the appropriate buffer, as set out in paragraph 73); or where the Housing Delivery Test indicates that the delivery of housing was substantially below (less than 75% of) the housing requirement over the previous three years.



3.4 National Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)

The National Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) provides the detail to explain and expand It is an online resource which is updated regularly. The landscape section can be accessed at [Natural environment - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/natural-environment)

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



4. Assessing proposals against the AONB Management Plan

A template is appended to this Advice Note which is intended to assist in testing proposals against the objectives of the Management Plan. This should be used as part of a wider landscape and visual impact assessment of the proposal.

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

A landscape and visual impact assessment (LVIA) which may accompany a planning application should distinguish between landscape impact at an AONB 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 Courts³ 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 layout and design, including materials, of development proposals are compatible with and reinforce the landscape character of the AONB will be important. Locally sourced materials, particularly timber, can contribute positively to the AONB not just visually but by helping to support the economic management of woodland.

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.



3. Great Trippetts Estate Ltd v Secretary of State for Communities & Local Government [2011] EW-CA Civ 203 26 Jan 2011

Appendix 1: High Weald AONB Management Plan 2019-2024 Assessment Template

The following template should be used at an early stage in the planning process to demonstrate how a proposal contributes to meeting the objectives of the High Weald AONB Management Plan. It should be informed by the evidence available on the High Weald AONB website at www.highweald.org. This includes maps of the key landscape characteristics identified in the [Management Plan](#) which can be found under each parish at www.highweald.org/downloads/publications/parish-information.html. It also includes land management advice for the different landscape features at www.highweald.org/look-after/land-management/land-managers-pack.html and detailed reports on particular aspects of the High Weald at www.highweald.org/downloads/publications/uk-landscape-research-reports.html?limit=20&limitstart=0.

The High Weald AONB Management Plan 2019-2024 Objectives	Assessment of Impact	Examples of Mitigation and Opportunities for Enhancement
Geology, landform, water systems and climate		
Objective G1: To restore the natural function of rivers, water courses and water bodies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Surface water run-off quality and quantity impacts on local watercourses.</i> • <i>Will the natural functioning of a floodplain be hindered (such as through built development, drainage or culverts)?</i> • <i>How have results from archaeological surveys been used to assess the impact on historic remains in the floodplain?</i> • <i>Have at surface drainage methods (such as ponds, ditches and swales) been used rather than underground storage methods?</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Are there opportunities to restore natural meanders and channels?</i> • <i>Are there opportunities to restore or create wetland habitats?</i> • <i>Can the proposal contribute to any local water catchment strategies or provide a demonstration project for natural flood management?</i> • <i>Are there any invasive non-native species on the site that could be removed?</i>
Objective G2: To protect and enhance soils, sandstone outcrops, and other important landform and geological features of the AONB.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Will an exposed sandstone outcrop/cutting and any associated habitat be affected?</i> • <i>Will the proposal effect soils on the site through compaction, erosion or pollution or by sterilising soil through hard surfacing or built development?</i> • <i>Will the proposal impact on the natural landform of the site through cut and fill operations?</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>If a sandstone outcrop is affected do the proposals include a management plan to protect the rock and any plants and ferns associated with it?</i> • <i>Does the proposal include grass, hedges and trees with on-going management to protect soils and reduce soil erosion?</i> • <i>Has the design taken account of local landform and avoided substantial alterations in levels?</i>
Objective G3: To help secure climatic conditions and rates of change which support continued	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>What impact will the proposal have on climatic conditions through construction</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Can impacts on climate conditions be reduced through sustainable design?</i>

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The High Weald AONB Management Plan 2019-2024 Objectives	Assessment of Impact	Examples of Mitigation and Opportunities for Enhancement
conservation and enhancement of the High Weald's valued landscapes and habitats.	<i>methods, materials, energy and water use and air pollution from associated traffic?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can a travel plan and other transport measures reduce air pollution impacts? • Has the use of local materials such as timber been maximised? • Does the proposal include landscape-sensitive, small scale renewable energy generation? • Has construction waste been minimised?
Settlement		
Objective S1: To reconnect settlements, residents and their supporting economic activity with the surrounding countryside.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will 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'? • Does the proposal take account of or impact on the natural capital and ecosystems services of the High Weald? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the proposal use locally sourced materials which support AONB conservation such as timber? • Does the proposal conserve and enhance views in and out of the site? • Does the proposal support local services and rural businesses? • Does the proposal support community agriculture or small scale horticulture? • Does the proposal accommodate the needs of land based key workers and include the necessary infrastructure to support their occupation such as additional storage and parking space? • Does 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? • Does the proposal make space for wildlife to thrive around buildings, gardens and open spaces?
Objective S2: To protect the historic pattern and character of settlement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does analysis of the historic pattern and character of the settlement inform the 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has available guidance been used to inform the proposal such as the Farmstead Assessment Guidance and the High Weald AONB Design Guide?

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	<p><i>proposals?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does it erode the historic settlement pattern? • Is the proposal informed by specialist reports on heritage and archaeology including information from the Historic Landscape Characterisation? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there opportunities to reinstate historic features such as field boundaries and routeways? • Are there opportunities to support the historic settlement pattern?
<p>Objective S3: To enhance the architectural quality of the High Weald and ensure development reflects the character of the High Weald in its scale, layout and design.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the proposal maintain and enhance the local distinctiveness and the built environment character and the 'sense of place' of the High Weald? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has available guidance been used to inform the proposal such as the High Weald AONB Design Guide and the High Weald Colour Study? • Does the proposal reflect landscape character and include locally sourced/grown or locally provenanced native planting? • Does the proposal set high design standards that reflect traditional features but are innovative and 'of their time' rather than pastiche? • Does the proposal use local materials, such as timber, that enhance local distinctiveness and support the sustainable management of High Weald resources? • Does the proposal include detailing which is locally distinctive and supports the sustaining of local crafts and trades?
Routeways		
<p>Objective R1: To maintain the historic pattern and features of routeways.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will the proposal impact on public rights of way or rural lanes? Will it remove historic features such as banks and hedges, or introduce urbanising features such as wide splays, curbing and signage? • Is the proposal informed by specialist reports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there opportunities to reinstate historic lost routeways? • Can new accesses and routes be designed to reflect High Weald character of historic routeways? • Are historic routeways reinstated and connections between routeways conserved and enhanced?

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The High Weald AONB Management Plan 2019-2024 Objectives	Assessment of Impact	Examples of Mitigation and Opportunities for Enhancement
	<i>on heritage and archaeology associated with the routeways?</i>	
Objective R2: To enhance the ecological function of routeways.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will the proposal impact on verges or result in the removal of trees or hedgerows along routeways? • Does the proposal include non-native planting along routeways (such as laurel)? • Is the proposal informed by an ecological report? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can verges and open spaces be managed for wildlife? • Can trees and hedgerows be retained, protected, restored or replaced? • Can any non-native plants be replaced with locally sourced/grown or locally provenanced native species?
Woodland		
Objective W1: To maintain the existing extent of woodland and particularly ancient woodland.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will the proposal result in a loss of woodland or a degradation of woodland such as through increased visitor pressure, predation by pets or garden waste disposal? • Does the proposal impact on wood pasture or historic parkland? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there opportunities for woodland expansion, particularly wet woodland, on land that is appropriate for this use and not ecologically or culturally valuable as open field or parkland? • Are there opportunities to improve woodland condition and management?
Objective W2: To enhance the ecological quality and functioning of woodland at a landscape scale.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the proposal informed by an ecological report? • Will the proposal result in the loss or degradation of the existing ecological quality of woodland? • Will the proposal reduce the connectedness of woodland on the site to adjacent habitats? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there opportunities to improve the management of woodland and hedges to support native species of flora and fauna and provide connections between woodlands? • Can non-native species, such as rhododendron and conifers, be removed to enable improved ecological functioning? • Can woodland be connected and suitable buffers provided? • Can any new planting be carried out with locally sourced/grown or locally provenanced native species?
Objective W3: To protect the archaeology and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the proposal informed by specialist reports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there opportunities to carry out surveys within the

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The High Weald AONB Management Plan 2019-2024 Objectives	Assessment of Impact	Examples of Mitigation and Opportunities for Enhancement
historic assets of AONB woodlands.	<p><i>on heritage and archaeology associated with the woodland?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will the proposal have an impact on any historic and archaeological features in woodland, including the woodland boundary? 	<p><i>woodland to inform the Historic Environment Record?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there opportunities for interpretation of archaeological features?
Objective W4: To increase the output of sustainability produced high-quality timber and underwood for local markets.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the proposal encourage the sustainable management of woodland? • Will access to woodland to enable management be made more difficult/prevented, for example by the erection of fences? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can the proposal use local timber products to support the sustainable management of woodland in the AONB? • Can the proposal make provision for wood burners and space for wood storage into developments to encourage use of local timber as fuel?
Field and Heath		
Objective FH1: 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"> • 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? • Does the proposal prevent the agriculturally productive use of fields through loss of workyards, storage barns etc? • Does the proposal remove land from agricultural use? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there opportunities to provide community growing facilities such as allotments or orchards as part of the proposal? • Can any open space be managed in an agriculturally productive way such as for hay or silage or grazed by livestock? • Can the proposal include infrastructure that enables the future management of open land such as tracks, barns and storage areas? • Where a proposal involves part of a wider landholding, can the future management of that landholding be considered holistically as a 'whole farm plan' or similar to produce overall benefits for the AONB?
Objective FH2: To maintain the pattern of small irregularly shaped fields bounded by hedgerows and woodlands.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has information about the age and surviving features of fields and boundaries (such as from the Historic Landscape Characterisation) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can lost historic field boundaries (hedges, ditches etc) be reinstated? • Can existing boundaries be managed and better

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	<p><i>informed the proposal?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the proposal avoid the loss of intact medieval features including fields? Is the scale and design of the proposal reflective of the area's field size and pattern? 	<p><i>protected?</i></p>
Objective FH3: To enhance the ecological function of field and heath as part of the complex mosaic of High Weald habitats.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is the proposal informed by an ecological report? Does the proposal avoid loss of species-rich grassland or heathland? Does the proposal prevent the future enhancement of semi-improved grassland through good management to produce species-rich grassland as part of a Nature Recovery Network for the High Weald? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can the existing ecology of field and heath on the site be enhanced, such as managing semi-improved grassland to increase its species diversity? Can grass verges alongside routeways be managed to increase species diversity? Can locally sourced/grown or locally provenanced native trees and shrubs be planted and invasive non-native species be removed?
Objective FH4: To protect the archaeology and historic assets of field and heath.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is the proposal informed by specialist reports on heritage and archaeology associated with the field or heathland? Will the proposal have an impact on any historic and archaeological features in the field or heathland? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are there opportunities to carry out surveys within the field or heathland to inform the Historic Environment Record?
Land-based Economy and Related Rural Life		
Objective LBE1: 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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the proposal support farming, forestry or small scale horticulture? 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? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the proposal include community growing facilities such as allotments or orchards as part of the proposal? Can any open space be managed in an agriculturally productive way such as for hay or silage or grazed by livestock? Can the proposal include infrastructure that enables the future management of open land such as tracks, barns and storage areas?

Appendix 1: High Weald AONB Management Plan 2019-2024 Assessment Template

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where a proposal involves part of a wider landholding, can the future management of that landholding be considered holistically as a 'whole farm plan' or similar to produce overall benefits for the AONB?
Objective LBE2: To improve amenities, infrastructure (including the provision of appropriate affordable housing), and skills development for rural communities and related sectors that contribute positively to conserving and enhancing natural beauty.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the proposal impact on existing rural community amenities or infrastructure that support the AONB such as village shops, and facilities used for land-based skills and rural crafts? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the proposal include affordable housing to meet local housing needs, including those of land-based key workers, and include the necessary infrastructure to support their occupation such as additional storage and parking space? Are there opportunities to create additional rural community facilities?
Other Qualities		
Objective OQ1: To increase opportunities for learning about and celebrating the character of the High Weald.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the proposal open up access to areas of the High Weald previously inaccessible to the public? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are there opportunities to provide interpretation material / information pack explaining the AONB character of the site and how the development conserves and enhances the area's natural beauty?
Objective OQ2: To increase the contribution of individuals and communities to the conservation and enhancement of the AONB.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will an area that was conserved and enhanced through public or private contributions be affected by the proposal? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are there opportunities to involve future residents or users of a development in the management of open areas on the site?
Objective OQ3: To develop and manage access to maximise opportunities for everyone to enjoy, appreciate and understand the character of the AONB while conserving its natural beauty.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the development enable pedestrian access to villages/towns and the countryside? Is public transport available and accessible? Does the development include community space for informal, open-air recreation? Is there any impact of increased use of rights of way on neighbouring land management activity? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are there opportunities to enhance and extend public rights of way / permissive routes for walking, riding and cycling? Are there sensitive areas that would need a visitor management plan?
Objective OQ4: To protect and promote the perceptual qualities that people value.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the development protect tranquillity; dark night skies, valued viewpoints and historic and cultural features? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have you consulted with the local community about what matters to them about the area? Keep lighting to a minimum and select lighting designs that direct light downwards below the horizontal.