

Wealden District Council

Local Development Framework

**Landscape Character Assessment and Development
Option Evaluation Study**

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Volume 1

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Study Aims

1.1.1 The Landscape Group of East Sussex County Council was commissioned in September 2007 by Wealden District Council to carry out a landscape character assessment and Development Option Evaluation Study.

1.1.2 The study is intended to:

- Inform the preparation of Wealden District Council's Local Development Framework Core Strategy.
- Inform the development of policies on landscape management and protection.

1.1.3 The study will need to:

- Assess the existing landscape character of key search areas.
- Assess the quality and value of the existing landscape in these key search areas.
- Assess the sensitivity of the existing landscape and its capacity to accept change or having regard to the scope for mitigation.
- Make recommendations on preferred locations from a landscape perspective.

1.1.4 The assessment set out in this report identifies the indicative capacity of the study areas taking in to consideration opportunities for green infrastructure provision. No assessment of the landscape impacts of specific development proposals has been undertaken as part of this study.

1.1.5 The study brief is included as Appendix 1.

2.0 Methodology for Assessment

2.1 Existing Guidance

2.1.1 There are several sources of guidance relevant to assessing the landscape and visual appraisal of proposed development projects. The primary guidance for assessing the landscape and visual effects of road schemes is provided in DMRB Vol.11, Section 3, Part 5. This can also be used to inform other types of development and potential impacts.

2.1.2 Further guidance is provided by the *Guidance for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (GLVIA)* published by the Institute of Environmental Assessment and the Landscape Institute (Second Edition 2002). Detailed guidance for undertaking landscape character assessments to inform planning policy and decisions is also provided in

the *Landscape Character Assessment Guidance for England and Scotland* published jointly by the Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage (2002).

2.1.3 These various forms of current guidance will be used for the purposes of assessing the capacity of the Wealden District landscape to accommodate development.

2.2 Methodology for Landscape Character Assessment

2.2.1 The Assessment involves an appraisal of the landscape character of the areas surrounding towns and service villages within Wealden District, together with the broad areas of search identified in the Core Strategy Issues and Options Paper for possible new settlements.

2.2.2 Land allocated in the Wealden District Council Non – Statutory Local Plan December 2005 is considered to be undeveloped land for the purposes of the capacity assessment and in the identification of potential development areas.

2.2.3 Desktop and field surveys have been undertaken to identify the character of the defined study areas.

2.2.4 The landscape character of these areas has been assessed according to existing guidance for character assessment. Published assessments are available for Wealden District at regional, county and local levels. The assessment has taken in to consideration the existing assessments and identifies the character of the study areas at the local level.

2.2.5 The following strategies have been considered in defining the landscape character of the various study areas:

- Countryside Character Volume 7: South East & London, The Countryside Agency (1999).
- East Sussex County Council Landscape Character Assessment, East Sussex County Council, (Dec. 2007).
- East Sussex Trees and Woodland Strategy (TAWS), East Sussex Woodland Forum (1990).
- The High Weald; Exploring the Landscape of the AONB, Countryside Commission, (1994).
- Remoteness at the Local Scale, an application in East Sussex, East Sussex County Council, (1997).
- Tranquil Areas Studies, Council for the Protection of Rural England, (1995 and updated 2006).

2.3 Definition of Key Terms

2.3.1 The landscape is a combination of both cultural and physical characteristics and components, which give rise to patterns that are distinctive to particular localities and help to define a sense of place. The landscape is not therefore simply a visual phenomenon but relies upon other influences including topography, land use land management, ecology, and cultural associations. The key terms which are used to describe these different elements of the landscape assessment are listed and defined in section 8.0, the Glossary to this document.

2.4 The Study Area

2.4.1 The identified study areas include the areas around towns up to 1 kilometre, villages up to 0.5 kilometres and new settlements based on a 1 kilometre square area. The character of the identified study areas has been assessed in the context of the East Sussex Landscape Character Assessment (ESCC website 2008), which identifies landscape character areas across the county. The key character area map from this document is reproduced as Appendix 2 of this report.

2.5 Field Survey

2.5.1 Field surveys have been carried out to identify the landscape character for the identified study areas. The areas are subdivided in to smaller character areas; these are mapped in the stage 1 mapping and presented as figures in association with tables in Volume 2 of this report. In some cases there are no defined boundaries to the outer limit of the character areas. This indicates that character extends beyond the study area limit of 1 km or 0.5 km and the character is contiguous with the surrounding countryside.

2.5.2 The individual character of these areas is described using the customised field survey sheets contained within Appendices 3 - 5. These include a typical representative view of each area.

2.6 Desk top Study

2.6.1 The information obtained from the field survey exercise has been supplemented by a desk top study to map existing designations relating to historical, archaeological, biodiversity or other cultural interest which are included on the stage 1 and 2 maps in Volume 2.

2.6.2 Other factors which have been considered as part of the landscape character assessment are local cultural considerations and sense of place. The survey sheets provide the opportunity to record both the objective elements within the landscape in question and the subjective impressions of the viewer.

2.6.3 The assessment of character areas considers the following:

- The quality of each character area.
- The value of each character area.
- The character sensitivity of each character area.
- The visual sensitivity of each character area.
- The potential for mitigating change within the character area and whether mitigation features would be out of character. For example, mounding may be inappropriate in a flat landscape and extensive woodland or tree planting may be out of keeping in an open landscape.
- Requirements for management of the land and associated features
 Where appropriate the assessment has drawn on the management needs identified in existing assessments and management plans.

2.6.4 The comparative methodology for assessing these is outlined in tables 1 to 4 below.

2.7 Landscape Quality

2.7.1 Quality has been defined in accordance with The Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB) Volume 11, Section 3, Part 5 and further refined using GLVIA (2002). Quality of the Landscape is defined according to 5 point scale as indicated in Table 1.

Table 1 Landscape Quality Evaluation Criteria

Quality Classification	Evaluation Criteria
Exceptional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rich, distinctive, unique or outstanding natural landscape character; • Strong landscape structure, characteristics, patterns and unified combination of landform and landcover; • Good condition – appropriate management for land use and landcover; • Distinct features worthy of conservation; • Unique sense of place; • No detracting features; • Strong sense of tranquillity reflected in extensive ‘Most Tranquil Areas’; and • Areas of exceptional remoteness, possibly some wilderness.

Quality Classification	Evaluation Criteria
High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very attractive, semi-natural or farmed landscape with strongly distinctive or unusual features; • Strong landscape structure, characteristic patterns and balanced combination of landform and landcover; • Appropriate management for land use and landcover but potentially scope to improve; • Distinct features worthy of conservation; • Strong sense of place; • Occasional detracting features; • Sense of tranquillity, smaller zones of Most Tranquil Areas; and • Areas of remoteness and possible exceptional remoteness.
Good	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attractive semi-natural or farmed landscape with some distinctive features; • Recognisable landscape structure, characteristic patterns and combinations of landform and landcover are still evident; • Scope to improve management for land use and landcover; • Frequent features worthy of conservation; • Sense of place; • Some detracting features; • No 'most tranquil areas'; and • Possible areas of remoteness, rarely exceptional remoteness.
Ordinary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commonplace landscape with limited distinctiveness; • Distinguishable landscape structure, characteristic patterns of landform and landcover often masked by land use; • Scope to improve management for land use and landcover; • Some features worthy of conservation; • Frequent detracting features; • No relatively tranquil areas; and • No areas of remote landscape.

Quality Classification	Evaluation Criteria
Poor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dull landscape which has lost most of its natural features; • Weak or degraded landscape structure, characteristic patterns of landform and landcover are often masked by land use; • Mixed land use evident; • Lack of management and intervention has resulted in degradation; • Frequent dominant detracting features; • Disturbed or derelict land requires treatment; • Least tranquil areas; and • No areas of remote landscape.

Sources:

Modification of criteria contained in the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (2002) and DMRB Vol. 11.

Remote areas are determined according to Remoteness at the Local Scale (ESCC 1997)

Tranquil areas are determined according to Tranquil Areas South East Region (CPRE 2005)

2.8 Landscape Value

2.8.1 East Sussex has a rich resource of valued landscapes. The importance of its landscapes is recognized in national terms in that two thirds of the county is designated as AONB. This includes the Sussex Downs and the High Weald.

2.8.2 The remainder of the county although not containing nationally designated landscapes consists almost entirely of varied, attractive and valued landscape and many areas are the subject of nature conservation and historic designations.

2.8.3 The assessment appraises the landscape value of each character area using a set of indicators, this is done by assessing the importance of characteristic features:

- Why and who they are important to.
- Their relationship in overall landscape patterns.
- Relative value at the local, county, regional or national scale.

2.8.4 A landscape may be valued by different users for a variety of reasons recognising perceptual aspects such as scenic beauty, tranquility, remoteness, special cultural associations, other conservation or specialist interest.

2.8.5 The Landscape Value Criteria are detailed in Table 2 below.

Table 2 Landscape Value Criteria

Value	Typical Criteria	Typical Scale	Typical Examples/Features
Very High	Very attractive and rare Exceptional landscape quality	International or National	World Heritage Site, National Park, AONB or key elements/features within them. Areas of exceptional remoteness (ESCC) Relatively most tranquil area (CPRE) Accessible wildlife areas of international or national value. Providing setting for internationally valued buildings or cultural features.
High	Very attractive or attractive scenic quality and in part rare High / good landscape quality.	National, Regional, District or Local	National Park, AONB, Areas of Great Landscape Value (or similar designation) or key elements within them. Potential areas of exceptional remoteness Remote countryside (ESCC) Accessible wildlife areas of national value. Providing setting for Listed Buildings or nationally important cultural features.
Medium	Typical and commonplace or in part unusual Good / Ordinary landscape quality	Regional, District or Local	Generally undesignated but value expressed through local cultural associations or through demonstrable use. Possibly some remote countryside Accessible wildlife areas of local value.
Low	Monotonous, degraded or damaged; Ordinary/ Poor landscape quality.	District or Local	Certain individual landscape elements or features may be worthy of conservation and landscape would benefit from restoration or enhancement. No remote countryside Relatively least tranquil areas (CPRE)

Source:

Modification of criteria contained in the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (2002)

2.9 Landscape Sensitivity

2.9.1 The sensitivity of each character area and the scope for mitigation measures has been assessed in accordance with *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment*, Second Edition, 2002 and *Landscape Assessment Guidance – Countryside Agency* (Topic Paper 6, *Techniques and Criteria for Judging Capacity and Sensitivity*).

2.9.2 GLVIA and the Countryside Agency advocate that sensitivity studies are carried out at a regional level to inform strategic and local development frameworks.

2.9.3 Landscape character sensitivity is based on judgements about sensitivity of aspects most likely to be affected e.g. natural, cultural, aesthetic factors. This combined with visual sensitivity and landscape value identifies the capacity of the landscape to accommodate a specific type of change.

2.9.4 Other factors which have been taken in to account in assessing the sensitivity of the landscape resource are existing trends for change in the landscape which may be due to natural process or human activities. Landscapes exhibiting reduction in management due to changed farming practices may be considered less sensitive to change. The Evaluation Criteria of the sensitivity to change of a landscape are defined in Table 3 below.

Table 3 Landscape Character Sensitivity to Change Evaluation Criteria

Sensitivity to Change	Evaluation Criteria
High	A landscape sensitive to a proposed type of change, which would result in significant effects on landscape character, features or elements.
Moderate	A landscape capable of accepting limited change, of the type proposed, with some effects on landscape character, features or elements.
Low	A landscape capable of accommodating considerable change, of the type proposed without effects on landscape character, features or elements.

Note: Strong landscape character could tend to be more able to accept change as it is more robust. An area of weak landscape character could tend to be more vulnerable to change.

2.10 Visual Sensitivity

2.10.1 The visual sensitivity of the landscape has been recorded for each character area as part of the character assessment. Key views and viewpoints have been identified and focal features which enhance or detract from the view are noted. The inter-visibility of the area with surrounding areas has been recorded as have distant views into and out of the area. Key visual receptors with views across the area are recorded. The visual sensitivity is evaluated for each character area in accordance with the following table.

Table 4 Visual Sensitivity

Visual Sensitivity	Evaluation Criteria
High	Views can be gained from visual receptor groups with a High sensitivity to the proposed type of visual change i.e. residential properties, access land, footpaths, informal recreational users. High visitor numbers. Sensitivity will be higher in designated landscapes. Long views across the area with few natural visual barriers i.e. landform, trees, hedges and woods. Usually little scope for mitigating potential visual impacts.
Moderate	Views can be gained from visual receptors with a moderate sensitivity to the proposed type of visual change i.e. recreational establishments, hospitals, schools, community uses, roads, railways and equestrian. Moderate visitor numbers. Some long views, some natural visual barriers to contain development. Usually moderate scope for mitigating potential visual impacts.
Low	Views can be gained from visual receptors with a low sensitivity to the proposed type of visual change i.e. commercial properties, farms and industrial sites. Low visitor numbers. Few long views, contained landscape with frequent visual barriers to contain development. Usually considerable scope for mitigating potential visual impacts.

2.11 Landscape Capacity

2.11.1 The following is a definition of landscape capacity taken from the Countryside Agency Guidance:

“Landscape capacity refers to the degree to which a particular landscape type or area is able to accommodate change without significant effects on its character, or overall change of landscape character type. Capacity is likely to vary according to the type and nature of change being proposed.” Further to this: “Capacity is all a question of the interaction between the sensitivity of the landscape, the type and amount of change, and the way that the landscape is valued.”

2.11.2 The above quotes are taken from *Landscape Character Assessment Guidance for England and Scotland, Topic Paper 6: Techniques and Criteria for Judging Capacity and Sensitivity*, Countryside Agency (2002).

In summary, Landscape Character Sensitivity + Visual Sensitivity + Landscape Value = Landscape Capacity

2.11.3 As advised in Topic Paper 6, an overview has been taken of the distribution of the assessments of each aspect and this has been used to make an informed judgement about the overall assessment of capacity. These assessments are arranged in a table or matrix to provide a profile of that particular landscape character area.

2.11.4 The assessment of capacity for each character area is made by combining the quality, value and character / visual sensitivity scores. For example if Quality = High, Value = High, Character sensitivity = High and Visual sensitivity = High, the capacity is most likely to be None. Where Quality = Ordinary, Value = Low, Character sensitivity = Low and Visual sensitivity = Low, the capacity is likely to be High. It is less straightforward where there is more of a differential between the scores. For example an area may be high quality and value, but low character and/or visual sensitivity. In these cases a certain amount of site specific professional judgement has been used to come to a view on the overall capacity score. Where this is the case the tables allow for a comment on the potential for development in landscape terms, such as the scope for landscape mitigation and the need to improve or enhance the existing landscape features.

2.11.5 For the purposes of this study a gradation of capacity for identified character areas is based on high, moderate, low or no capacity. This represents the capacity of a particular area to absorb the proposed type of development without significant adverse effects.

2.12 Character Area Landscape Capacity Evaluation

2.12.1 The areas of study have been identified by Wealden District Council in the *Local Development Framework, Core Strategy Issues and Options Consultation Paper*, July 2007 and in Appendix 1, *Brief for the Core Strategy Landscape Character Assessment and Development Option Evaluation Study*, (August 2007). These are broadly areas around towns up to 1 kilometre and selected new settlement areas based on 1km square and villages up to 0.5 kilometres.

Landscape Capacity Tables

2.12.2 The capacity of each character area is assessed and set into tables presented in association with relevant figures in Volume 2 of this report as follows:

- Towns
- New Settlements
- Villages

2.12.3 Using this information an overall assessment can be made for each character area on the capacity to accept the type of change being considered. This judgement is made according to the combination of characteristics that contribute to a particular area of landscape. The capacity of an area to accept change is related to the potential of the area to accommodate development in a particular location without detracting from the overall character of that landscape. The capacity evaluation for each character area does not assume that this is the capacity across the entire character area.

2.12.4 In this context the capacity is not a reflection of the scale of potential development. Defined boundaries to the potential development areas are identified in the second table for each area and as the second stage of mapping reproduced in Appendix 2.

2.12.5 The potential development areas are identified in the second stage of tables and mapping in Volume 2, as defined in 2.11 below.

2.12.6 The capacity and development potential for business use is based on the assumption that this would be light industrial type uses which would be consistent with a residential environment. These would be single storey units which could be considered as part of a mixed use development.

2.13 Mitigation and Management

Mitigation

2.13.1 The character area landscape capacity evaluation tables in Volume 2 also identify the potential of each character area to accommodate the required landscape mitigation for potential development. The potential to

mitigate change in a particular landscape will depend on the factors which determine the character of the landscape. This will help to determine the visual and character sensitivity of the landscape. The potential for mitigation is scored as considerable, moderate or low in the character area capacity tables.

2.13.2 This assessment of potential for landscape mitigation is based on the following set of factors as follows:

- The need to improve the landscape features at a local scale
- The need to restore lost landscape features such as hedges and woods
- The need to restore degraded landscape
- The need to soften hard urban edges
- Whether mitigation would detract from the sense of place
- Whether the site is already well contained and not visible in the wider landscape.

2.13.3 Outline mitigation is mapped as part of the Stage 2 mapping which identifies potential development areas and is reproduced in Appendix 2. This includes broad areas to show:

- Retention and management of existing landscape features
- New woodland planting to link with existing
- New tree belts to link with existing
- Creation of multifunctional green networks as planting, open space or recreational corridors.

2.13.4 The plans show the key types of mitigation that would be needed as a minimum in landscape terms. The comprehensive landscape mitigation would need to be part of detailed development briefs.

Management

2.13.5 The condition of the landscape will be determined by the degree to which it is soundly managed according to the land use. In the case of the countryside areas of this study this would be assessed according to:

- whether the grazing regime removes invasive weeds and encroaching scrub.
- whether hedges are kept clipped or are grubbed out and replaced with fences.
- whether footpaths are kept open, stiles and gates are maintained.
- unauthorised access is controlled to prevent dumping and tipping.
- Manage copses and tree belts

2.13.6 Other parts of the study area have more formal recreational or institutional uses and should be managed as such. The maintenance and management should conserve and enhance key landscape features such

as trees and hedges. Public access management should be addressed as above.

2.13.7 As most of the areas assessed are on the rural edges of settlements a comment is included in the tables as to how these areas could be managed to maximise the potential amenity value. This may be as areas which are already accessible by public rights of way or which can be seen from public areas.

2.14 AONBs and AONB Buffer Zones

2.14.1 The AONB boundaries are identified in the relevant mapping. The character of the landscape is not assessed on the basis of landscape designations but on the intrinsic characteristics of a particular area. The analysis of the capacity of the landscape as described in section 2.11 above takes in to account all of the relevant factors including any designations. Designated landscapes would be scored as higher value than non designated landscapes by virtue of the designation. When the various factors are considered an assessment of the capacity can be made. An area of landscape within an AONB may have a lower quality score and/or lower visual and character sensitivity than an undesignated landscape elsewhere. Taking this in to account there may be areas within the AONB which have greater capacity for development from a landscape point of view than areas outside the AONB.

2.14.2 There is, in some areas adjacent to the AONB boundary a buffer zone to the AONB landscape. This is usually an area of similar character but not of the same quality as the AONB landscape and not covered by the same planning policies. Where relevant these areas are indicated in the figures.

2.14.3 The consideration of these areas is supported by East Sussex Brighton and Hove Structure Plan 1991-2011 AONB policy EN2 (f) is as follows:

“Conserving and enhancing landscape quality and character will be the primary objective in the Sussex Downs and High Weald AONBs. This will be sought through measures including:-

f)... minimising the impact of any development within AONBs, or close to them and affecting their setting, by measures to carefully integrate the development into the AONB landscape and, where appropriate, providing compensating environmental resource for any necessary loss that is accepted.”

2.14.4 These buffer zones have been identified through the character area analysis. The relative sensitivity of these areas has been considered according to the landscape character to achieve a balanced comparison with AONB and non AONB landscapes.

2.15 Comparative Evaluation of Potential Development Areas

2.15.1 The potential development areas in each character area are mapped as part of the Stage2 mapping, as defined in 12.16 below.

2.15.2 A comparative analysis of the potential development areas has been carried out to identify preferred options.

2.15.3 The potential development areas are assessed in the tables and the Stage 2 mapping, in Volume 2 of the report, as with the character assessment these are separated into:

- Towns
- New Settlements
- Villages

2.15.4 These tables identify the approximate potential development areas around towns, villages or new settlements where residential or possibly mixed development could be acceptable. This analysis gives an early indication of sites which would appear to be worthy of further consideration for development in landscape terms. Prior to coming to a firm view on the full potential and scope in these areas further investigation would be required. From this point of view this may not be an exhaustive site search. Where the potential development areas are limited to infill areas or brown field sites these have not generally been mapped and there are no measured areas identified on the comparison tables.

2.15.5 The areas of developable land identified on the Stage 2 mapping would need to allow for a minimum 10% of green infrastructure and possibly more, depending on the sensitivity of the site and the need to mitigate. This percentage does not include existing landscape features such as hedges and tree belts which would need to be protected and retained. Where there is a particular landscape sensitivity areas are identified in the Stage 2 mapping which must be retained as open space or planted as new woodland. This would be necessary to properly integrate any proposed development in to the character of the area. It is assumed that existing woodland, shaws and significant hedgerows would be retained as part of any green infrastructure. Open space provision would also need to be in accordance with PPG 17 requirements and Wealden District Council's adopted open space strategies.

2.15.6 The potential development area comparison tables indicate the density of development which may be appropriate to the location. This is based on the visual sensitivity of the sites and the character of other adjacent development. The scale, form and massing of adjacent development should be considered as a guide to new development. This has also informed where light industrial business development may be appropriate as part of a mixed use development.

2.15.7 Where existing built up areas are not in keeping with the local character any new development should aim to enhance the existing situation. In this way hard urban edges to the countryside could be improved with new development and associated green infrastructure.

2.15.8 The following average housing densities are assumed for the Wealden context:

Up to 30 dwellings per hectare = Low density (large detached houses in gardens 'Arcadia')

30 to 40 dwellings per hectare = Medium density (typical two storeys and semi-detached)

40 and above dwellings per hectare = High density (terraced housing, some 3 storeys)

2.16 Preferred Development Areas

2.16.1 The preferred development areas within each character area have been given a preference score of High, Medium or Low. This preference is a relative comparison between sites in each town, new settlement or village. A high scoring in this context does not necessarily mean that an area has high capacity for development. The scoring identifies the preferred site for each town, new settlement or village purely from a landscape point of view and does not take in to consideration other planning constraints such as accessibility. This will identify the sites considered to have greatest potential for development in each town, new settlement or village study area without detracting from the landscape character of the area. This is judged purely from a landscape perspective and is based on the character analysis work carried out as part of this report.

2.16.2 Designated sites of nature conservation, archaeological and cultural significance have been mapped and taken into consideration in the identification of potential development areas. This would not preclude the need for site specific ecological or archaeological surveys if these sites were to be considered for further study.

2.16.3 Similarly broad flood risk areas have been mapped from the East Sussex County Council GIS mapping. Detailed hydrological studies and updated information from the Environment Agency would be required for specific site studies.

2.16.4 The key factors in determining potential development area Preferences for each town, new settlement and village are:

- Landscape Capacity
- Potential to Mitigate

- Opportunity to strengthen and therefore enhance landscape structure
- Comparison with other potential development areas for the town, settlement or village

2.17 Mapping

2.17.1 The mapping is presented adjacent to the relevant tables for each area in two stages:

Stage 1

Landscape character areas for each study area.

All designations within the areas of study relating to landscape, biodiversity, historical and Public Rights of Way.

A key viewpoint, focal points, landscape features and detractors.

Stage 2

Stage 2 mapping includes the identification of potential development areas with indicative boundaries. Within these areas any significant landscape features would need to be retained and protected. In addition a minimum area of at least 10% of the land area would need to be allocated for new landscape infrastructure. The exact requirement would depend on the sensitivity of the local landscape and need for mitigation. In some areas green network requirements are mapped in the form of open space, woodland and tree belts. This is where these features would be required as essential landscape mitigation, in addition to the 10% minimum green infrastructure. The green networks would include key landscape features such as tree belts, hedges, stream corridors and ancient track ways. They also identify areas of landscape which should be retained as open corridors in the landscape in order to preserve visual, recreational, biodiversity or historic features.

The stage 2 mapping identifies key woods, shaws, hedges and tree belts within these areas as well as other landscape features.

Where appropriate the stage 2 mapping indicates the potential for mitigation planting to link with existing landscape features, notably woods and shaws.

3.0 Assessment of Wealden Towns

These broad character descriptions need to be read in conjunction with the Stage 1 Mapping and capacity tables reproduced in Volume 2 of this report. Each character area is described in the Site Assessment sheets in Appendices 3 -5.

The character areas from the County Landscape Assessment are reproduced as Appendix 2.

Potential development areas are identified as Stage 2 mapping in Volume 2. These are compared and preferences identified for each town in the Potential Development Area Comparison Tables in Volume 2.

North Wealden Towns

3.1 Crowborough – Character and Capacity

3.1.1 The detailed landscape character of the areas around the town have been analysed in Figure 1 and on the site assessment sheets in Appendix 3.

3.1.2 Crowborough blankets the crest of the main Wealden ridge east of Ashdown Forest. Most of the surrounding countryside is in the Central High Weald landscape character area, apart from the area to the west which is bounded by the Ashdown Forest, as identified in The County Landscape Assessment. The town evolved at a cross roads, where a coaching inn called The Cross was built. The railway came in 1868, which resulted in the growth of the village in to a town. The core of Crowborough was built of red brick, at the turn of the twentieth century. In common with other towns close to the railway the buildings have slate roofs. Crowborough has seen considerable expansion but has preserved its pleasant loose knit, green, suburban character. Crowborough is distinctive as a ridge top town and is the highest town in the County.

3.1.3 The landscape constraints to development around the urban edge of Crowborough are that it is surrounded by high quality countryside much of which is designated as High Weald AONB. There are areas of countryside around the edges of Crowborough which are in the AONB, but where the landscape structure has been degraded. This has resulted in areas of lower quality which is designated AONB. There would be scope to conserve and enhance the landscape structure through improved management or through development and associated mitigation. Equally there are areas to the south of the town which are not designated as AONB but are good quality landscape and may be visible from a wide area. These types of factors could reduce the capacity of these areas for development. These factors are taken in to account in the assessment methodology.

3.1.4 The ridge top location means that the surrounding slopes are potentially open to long views across the surrounding countryside. Much of the residential development surrounding the town lacks character and sense of place. Proposed development would need to address this and provide strong links with the historic existing settlements. New development would also need to have good links with the town centre. There may be scope to improve the existing urban edges with new development and associated green network infrastructure.

Central High Weald

3.1.5 This character area lies south of Tunbridge Wells and east of Crowborough, these urban areas exert a strong influence on the neighbouring countryside. It is a landscape of high ground with outstanding views from the ridge tops across the heart of the High Weald. The bold broad ridges are often crowned by villages and churches, as is the case with Rotherfield. There are urban fringe influences around the towns and some villages, including Rotherfield and Wadhurst. Conservation and enhancement of the setting of these villages and improving the landscape surrounding the villages will be important.

Ashdown Forest

3.1.6 The Ashdown Forest character area in the County Landscape Assessment is a heart shaped area, lying between Crowborough, Forest Row and Maresfield on the more northerly of the two major ridges in the AONB. It is the largest area of lowland heath in the South East and therefore of significant nature conservation and scenic value. The area is visually prominent and affords long views in and out of the area. This is a place of great diversity and a unique history.

3.2 Crowborough – Potential Development Area Comparison

3.2.1 The potential development areas within the character areas are in the tables and Stage 2 mapping which follows on from the character and capacity assessment in Volume 2.

3.2.2 The preferred areas for development around Crowborough from a landscape perspective have been identified as:

- An area around Luxford Farm and adjacent to the leisure centre to the north of the A26
- Parts of the Eridge Road and A26 triangle of land to the north of the town
- Areas of infill around the Steel Cross area at Pellings Wood
- Areas to the south of the town around Kemps Farm and Walshes Road at Jarvis Brook

3.2.3 Crowborough is surrounded by the High Weald AONB which generally extends up to the urban edge. There are some exceptions on the southern and eastern boundaries of the town. The area between Palesgate Road and Poundfield is a steep ghyll with semi - natural ancient woodland, grazed fields and football pitches. This area has considerable amenity value as it is well served with footpaths and is accessible from the urban area.

South Crowborough

3.2.4 The area to the south of the town around Kemps Farm has some areas of good quality landscape which would be vulnerable to change.

3.2.5 The amenity value of the Green Lane and ghyll valley north of Kemps Farm should be protected as valued landscape features. There are some pockets of potential development identified in this area. This would need to be in a strong landscape structure, with multifunctional green corridors on the higher ground and associated with the ghyll and green lane. Other areas of potential development on degraded and less visible land, to the South of Walshes Road, would be preferred in landscape terms. There are opportunities to mitigate development in these areas by the creation of strong landscape structure and green networks. There is an area of land outside the AONB between Whitehill and Alderbrook. This is countryside similar in character to the surrounding AONB countryside and is AONB buffer area. For this reason the areas of potential development are close to the urban edge and are of low or medium preference. These should be limited to areas which are not visible from the wider countryside.

3.2.6 The largest area in Crowborough which has scope for development and is of high preference and outside the AONB is surrounding Kemps Farm and Walshes Road. Some of this area has countryside qualities which are of local landscape value, for this reason these areas score a similar preference in landscape terms to the AONB areas to the north.

West Crowborough

3.2.7 The area to the west of Crowborough is designated as AONB and is also within the Ashdown Forest Pale. There would be little scope for any significant development in these areas due to the character of the landscape and the existing development in these areas is of large houses in the garden setting. The area around St Johns in the north - west of Crowborough has similar landscape constraints and although it is acknowledged there could be some infill on the large estates, the landscape character of the area makes it a low preference in landscape terms.

North Crowborough

3.2.8 Some of the areas around the urban fringes have a landscape structure which has been degraded by urban fringe influences. This includes some of the areas within the AONB. There is scope to improve the landscape structure in order to conserve and enhance the AONB landscape, which would be consistent with landscape planning policies. For this reason some of the preferred areas for development are in the AONB to the north of the town. Some of these areas are favoured over the potential areas to the south of the town which are not within the AONB because of the opportunity to improve the landscape structure albeit in limited pockets of one or two fields. The scope around Luxford Farm and the leisure centre may be limited by the need to protect this area for the established recreational uses.

3.3 Heathfield – Character and Capacity

3.3.1 The detailed landscape character of the areas around the town have been analysed in Figure 4 and on the site assessment sheets in Appendix 3.

3.3.2 As with Crowborough the landscape constrains development around the urban edges of Heathfield are that it is surrounded by high quality countryside, much of which is designated as High Weald AONB. The town is surrounded by the Upper Rother Valley character area to the north and the South Slopes of the High Weald in the south, as identified in the County Landscape Assessment. Heathfield occupies a hill crest position on the main High Wealden ridge. Nineteenth century in origin, the town expanded with the arrival of the railway. Travellers pass through on the main ridge top road, which becomes Heathfield High Street. Suburban development has spread south from the town centre; much of this lacks local identity and focus of character. Future development should be well designed, with good linkages to the town centre and in keeping with the local vernacular.

North Heathfield

3.3.3 To the north of the town two character areas have been identified. The heavily wooded Tilsmore Wood area lies to the north west and the much more open slopes to the north of Mutton Hall at North Down lie to the east. The capacity of the Tilsmore Wood area is limited to areas of clearing at the edge of the urban area, much of which has already been developed as ribbon development along the main road. The potential in the remainder of this area is limited as the woods are a valuable amenity and semi natural ancient woodland, extensive proposals for further development would encroach on this woodland. The open slopes to the north east of the town afford long views across the High Weald landscape to the Mayfield ridge in the north. There are areas of existing development which detract from this landscape. The capacity to expand urban development further in to this landscape is limited by the long views and prominent location. The existing market and depot area could be redeveloped as brown field land. This would need to be a proposal which would conserve and enhance the AONB landscape and be an overall improvement to the area. A mixed use development could be acceptable. A small area of different character is identified between Mutton Hall and the A 265 and Heathfield Park. This area is enclosed and suburban in character and is considered to have some capacity for new development in a strong landscape structure.

East Heathfield

3.3.4 The area to the east of the town is occupied by the Registered Heathfield Park, a distinctive Reptonian landscape in walled parkland. There is no scope for development within the park which needs to be managed and protected.

South Heathfield

3.3.5 To the south and west of the town there are three distinct areas. The area to the south of Sandy Cross has some limited capacity closely associated with the existing development and away from the open ridge lines. There is an area to the west of Ghyll Road which is more enclosed and wooded. The capacity of this area is constrained by steep topography and the need to retain the ghyll woodland. There are areas of degraded and enclosed landscape where development could be accommodated

West Heathfield

3.3.6 The area around Tilsmore to the west is within the AONB. There are urban fringe influences and areas of degraded landscape where capacity for development would rely on the conservation and enhancement of the existing landscape in accordance with AONB policy.

3.4 Heathfield - Potential development area comparisons

3.4.1 The potential development areas within the character areas are in the tables and Stage 2 mapping which follows on from the character and capacity assessment in Volume 2.

3.4.2 The preferred areas for development around Heathfield from a landscape perspective have been identified as:

- The existing market site and depot areas to the north of the A265, which is brown field land
- Areas adjacent to Ghyll Road and Horam Road to the south of the road
- Areas to the south west of Tilsmore in the AONB

3.4.3 The landscape and topography surrounding the town of Heathfield does limit the scope for extensive development on the urban edges. The countryside is generally high quality and in some areas affords long views across the AONB landscape. In other areas Semi-natural ancient woodland extends from the urban edge, often in deep ghylls. There are pockets of landscape where the landscape structure is weak and degraded. These areas offer greatest potential for new development, especially where they could enhance and conserve the AONB landscape.

North Heathfield

3.4.4 To the north of the town, the existing market and depot site could be redeveloped but would need to reflect the fact that it is away from the centre and the existing uses are not residential in character. Residential development here would be out of character with the settlement pattern of the town and business uses may be more appropriate.

South Heathfield

3.4.5 The preferred area would be adjacent to Ghyll Road to the south of the existing industrial uses.

3.4.6 These areas are adjacent to the AONB and a steep sided ghyll valley. The detailed design and associated landscape framework for these areas would need to reflect this.

West Heathfield

3.4.7 The area adjacent to existing residential development at Tilsmore is a self contained area where the existing landscape framework could be strengthened and enhanced. Proposed development would need to reflect the local landscape character in a strong landscape framework which would redefine the boundary between the urban area and the wider AONB landscape.

3.5 Tunbridge Wells – Character and Capacity

3.5.1 Tunbridge Wells lies to the north of the Central High Weald character area, as identified by the County Landscape Assessment. The urban areas of Tunbridge Wells and Crowborough exert a strong influence on the neighbouring countryside. The urban fringe areas are affected by suburbanisation, a proliferation of horse paddocks and increasing traffic on the country lanes. There are areas where a stronger landscape structure and improved landscape management would improve these influences of the urban fringe.

3.5.2 The detailed landscape character of an area specifically identified by Wealden District has been considered.

3.5.3 This area is in Wealden District and on the urban fringe of the town has been analysed on Figure 6 and in the site assessment sheet in Appendix 3.

3.6 Tunbridge Wells – Potential development area comparisons

3.6.1 The potential development areas within the character areas are in the tables and Stage 2 mapping which follows on from the character and capacity assessment in Volume 2.

3.6.2 The area of search for Tunbridge Wells was limited to an area specifically identified by Wealden District Council which is outside the AONB. There would be some potential in this area where the landscape has been degraded by urban fringe pressures. There would be scope to mitigate the development and strengthen the landscape structure as part of any development proposal. The existing Site of Nature Conservation Importance is a potential constraint. The area is poorly managed and development should be regarded as an opportunity to create a local nature

reserve and secure the areas of nature conservation interest in the long term as part of a local amenity area.

3.7 Uckfield – Character and Capacity

3.7.1 The detailed landscape character of the areas around the town have been analysed in Figure 8 and on the site assessment sheets in Appendix 3.

3.7.2 Uckfield lies within gently rolling countryside on the southern edge of the High Weald. Most of the surrounding countryside lies within the Upper Ouse landscape character area, as identified in the County Landscape Assessment. The landscape is a rich mosaic of woods, shaws, ghylls, small fields and hedges which blanket the gentle ridges to create a well wooded appearance. There is also parkland, particularly the Registered Buxted Park to the north east of the town. Streams cross the area and converge on the River Uck which winds across a narrow flood plain.

3.7.3 Uckfield is in the Low Weald and to the south of the High Weald AONB the landscape to the north of the town forms part of the buffer between the AONB landscape and the Low Weald. The nature of the landscape surrounding the town is varied and intricate. Urban fringe influences are evident in places. The finer grained landscape character assessment of areas around the town tend to be more complex and detailed than those in the other High Weald towns of Crowborough and Heathfield.

3.7.4 The wooded character softens the impact of the expanding town on the surrounding countryside; however, as is typical of this character area there are relatively open, gently sloping areas with larger fields and exposed development edges.

West Uckfield

3.7.5 The Uckfield bypass cuts across the area to the west of the town, introducing some noise and visual intrusion. The open slopes are a constraint to development on the western side of the town due to the potential impact on the wider countryside. There should be a presumption against developing too close to the bypass as the impact of this is demonstrated where the existing industrial estate is intrusive when viewed from the bypass and there is inadequate space for mitigation planting.

North Uckfield

3.7.6 The development around the town has tended to creep outwards and in places encroaching on the gaps between surrounding villages. This is particularly the case to the north of the town at Ringles Cross. Ribbon development has tended to spread along the lanes and roads entering the town.

3.7.7 The need to prevent coalescence with other settlements to the north and east are also constraints to expansion.

East Uckfield

3.7.8 There are areas to the east of the town where the landscape structure is weak and could be redefined with a strong landscape structure. Urban fringe influences have spread in the form of fences replacing hedges, light industrial uses and associated clutter. These are notably areas surrounding Bird in Eye Farm and the paving works depot to the north of Framfield Road. There is a need to strengthen the countryside gap between Uckfield and Framfield in this area.

South Uckfield

3.7.9 The southern part of the town is more enclosed and may offer opportunities for new development. The area of the Millennium Green is protected as an open space which has been given in trust to the community.

3.7.10 The rolling well wooded landscape offers potentially good cover and containment for sensitively designed and located development, particularly to the south and south east of the town.

3.8 Uckfield – Potential development area comparisons

3.8.1 The potential development areas within the character areas are in the tables and Stage 2 mapping which follows on from the character and capacity assessment in Volume 2.

3.8.2 The preferred areas for development around Uckfield from a landscape perspective have been identified as:

- The areas to the north and south of Bird In Eye Hill to the north east of the town, including the area to the north of Mallard Drive.
- The area to the south of Eastbourne Road at Mount Ephraim
- The area to the west of Lewes Road at Ridgewood Hill, including the old quarry pits.

West Uckfield

3.8.3 There is a small area to the west of Lewes Road at Ridgewood Hill which could accommodate development from a landscape perspective. The scope and scale of this area is limited to the more enclosed areas surrounding the disused sandpits east and north of Ridgewood Farm. This area is visually contained, unlike the fields to the west of this which are open to long views from the by-pass and wider countryside.

East Uckfield

3.8.4 Proposed development around Bird in Eye Farm would need to be in a strong landscape framework in order to strengthen the existing landscape and redefine the urban edge. The eastern boundary would need to be well defined to reinforce the gap between Uckfield and Framfield. This could be established by a wooded boundary which would tie in with existing woodland. The area between the hospital site and Mallards Drive is included in this preferred area. The landscape structure should include a multifunctional green corridor in the Framfield Stream valley and the tributary valley of Bird in Eye Shaw.

South Uckfield

3.8.5 The area to the west of Eastbourne Road between New Road and Mt Ephraim has a strong landscape framework of mature trees and hedges. The area is enclosed to the west by woodland and the wooded stream valley of Ridgewood Stream. Development in this area should incorporate the existing treed hedges as part of a multifunctional green network providing links to the countryside and Uckfield Millennium Green. The area to the north Eastbourne Road is less favoured in landscape terms as it is open to relatively long views from Framfield Place and accessible countryside to the north. It is noted that part of this area is allocated in the non statutory local plan for housing development. Proposed development in this area should be used to redefine the urban edge and strengthen the existing landscape structure.

Sussex Coast Towns

3.9 Hailsham – Character and Capacity

3.9.1 The detailed landscape character of the areas around the town have been analysed in Figure 12 and on the site assessment sheets in Appendix 3.

3.9.2 This medieval market town is a historic focus for the surrounding villages and countryside. It sits on a slight rise in the flat landscape of the Low Weald and has extensive views to the High Weald and Downs.

3.9.3 Hailsham is situated between the Eastern Low Weald and the Pevensy Levels character areas according to the County Landscape Assessment. It is a low-lying landscape of gentle relief. The surrounding countryside is fairly flat with abundant small woods, hedges and shaws. Hedges and hedgerow trees are important components of the landscape.

3.9.4 Hailsham has expanded considerably in recent decades and some of the urban edges are intrusive in the countryside. As with many Sussex market towns Hailsham has spreading suburban growth which lacks focus of character. New development would need to have good links to the town centre or create new communities with their own focus of character.

3.9.5 As with Uckfield the nature of the landscape surrounding the town is varied and intricate and urban fringe influences are evident. There has been pressure for agricultural diversification with encroachment of recreational activities and horseyculture. Ribbon development has tended to spread along the approach roads and is often in the form of small holdings. The finer grained landscape character assessment of areas around the town tend to be more complex and detailed than those in the High Weald towns of Crowborough and Heathfield.

North Hailsham

3.9.6 To the north of the town the brick edifice of Hellingly Hospital stands proudly on a ridge as a key feature in the area. To the west of the hospital site, across the winding, tree lined Cuckmere River and its flat meadows lies the pleasant village of Hellingly.

3.9.7 Development of the northern fringes of Hailsham would be north of the A271 and isolated from the town, these areas should be considered in the context of redevelopment of the Hellingly Hospital site.

East Hailsham

3.9.8 In some areas, especially to the south east of the town, there are urban fringe influences and areas of poorly managed land. The town centre abuts on to countryside with hedge patterned slopes descending towards the Pevensey Levels; this provides a countryside that is both visually and physically accessible. This attractive countryside to the east of the town is highly visible from the sensitive countryside of the Pevensey Levels.

South Hailsham

3.9.9 The more enclosed areas to the south and south east would offer greater potential for development but a natural limit to this is the presence of the flood plain. There are areas where the urban fringe landscape needs management. There are intrusive developments on the urban edge especially associated with the industrial uses, caravan and chalets sites. The landscape has been degraded in places by loss of structure, notably hedges. There are also some ancient landscape features worthy of retention, notably remnant hedges and trees

West Hailsham

3.9.10 The areas of High lands Farm and Knockhatch are to the west of the A22 and are isolated from the town centre by busy traffic on this road. These areas are a mix of attractive countryside with small woods hedgerow and a well defined field pattern. There are also frequent intrusive elements and degraded landscape where previous landfill has taken place.

3.9.11 There are only narrow strip of undeveloped land between the A22 and the built up edge of Hailsham. These are important landscaped buffer zones between the urban edge and the road. The remaining areas at Welbury Farm and Arlington Road East have been under increasing development pressure.

3.9.12 The extensive woodlands of Abbots and Wilmington wood lie to the south west, these are valued recreational areas accessible to the growing population in Hailsham.

3.10 Hailsham – Potential development area comparisons

3.10.1 The potential development areas within the character areas are in the tables and Stage 2 mapping which follows on from the character and capacity assessment in Volume 2.

3.10.2 The preferred areas for development around Hailsham from a landscape perspective have been identified as:

- Areas to the north of the town, to be considered in conjunction with the proposed Hellingly Hospital development
- A small area to the east of the town at Marshfoot Farm
- Areas north of Old Swan Lane
- An area to the south of the town at New Barn Farm
- A small area at Arlington Road East
- The area at Welbury Farm to the north and south of Hempstead Lane

North Hailsham

3.10.3 From a landscape perspective the favoured opportunity for new development around the fringes of Hailsham would be to the north of the town. The structure of the landscape could be improved and strengthened to create multifunctional green networks around existing strong tree belts and hedgerows. This would be essential to prevent coalescence with the proposed hospital site and the built up areas to the north of Hailsham. The Hellingly Hospital site is considered to be an opportunity to improve the existing landscape, whilst preserving the key landscape features, notably existing parkland. The parkland should be retained and managed as part of a multifunctional green network which should be linked to potential new development north of Hailsham.

3.10.4 The area north of New Road around Park Farm has been considered as a potential new settlement in conjunction with the hospital site. The areas north of Hailsham should not be considered in isolation from this. This proposed development would require a strong landscape structure retaining the more exposed fields and incorporating new woodland, linked to Park Wood.

East Hailsham

3.10.5 The north of Hailsham is favoured over the slopes to the east of the town which fall towards the Pevensey Levels. There are pockets of land which could be developed without detracting from the setting of the levels whilst strengthening the urban edge. Large scale development to the east of the town would be difficult to mitigate as extensive planting would be out of character with this open landscape. The historic setting of the church and town centre Conservation Area and its relationship with the surrounding countryside needs to be protected.

South Hailsham

3.10.6 There are areas to the south off the town at Old Swan Lane and New Barn Farm where the landscape is degraded and could be strengthened. The hard urban edges to the countryside could be softened with new development in a strong landscape structure.

3.10.7 The countryside to the south of Ersham Road and Ingrams Way is more enclosed and has a stronger character than areas to the east. This is the strategic gap between Polegate and Hailsham and should be protected to prevent coalescence.

West Hailsham

3.10.8 The areas with greatest potential to the west of the existing built up area are at Welbury Farm and Arlington Road East.

3.10.9 The area to the west of the A22 has some scope for new development as there are areas where the landscape structure could be improved and some of this could be considered as brown field land. The development of these areas is constrained by the need to retain a landscape buffer to Abbots Wood. The views from the A22 should be protected and enhanced as countryside setting and an open buffer retained.

3.11 Polegate and Stone Cross – Character and Capacity

3.11.1 The detailed landscape character of the areas around the town have been analysed in Figure 17 and on the site assessment sheets in Appendix 3.

3.11.2 Polegate lies at the meeting point of five character areas in the County Landscape Assessment, the Eastern Low Weald to the north-west, the Wilmington Downs to the south west, Eastbourne and Pevensey Levels to the east. To the north of the town, between the A22 and A27, the land rises to a broad gentle ridge patterned with fields, hedges and tree belts. The A27 Polegate bypass traverses the north of the town.

3.11.3 The sensitivity of views across the levels and views from the Downs are constraints to development around Polegate. The need to retain gaps between the surrounding settlements of Hailsham, Eastbourne and Stone Cross are also important considerations.

West Polegate

3.11.4 The area to the south west of the town is the open landscape of the Wilmington Downs as described above. To the north of the A27 and west of the A22 there is a more physically and visually enclosed area of countryside which is separated from the built up area by the two roads. This area is a visual buffer between the Downs and the urban area. To the north of this lies the the Cophall area which has been influenced by road development, urban fringe uses and creeping commercial development.

North Polegate

3.11.5 North of the bypass gentle rolling countryside of low ridges descend to the Glynleigh Level and the open expanses of the Pevensey Levels.

3.11.6 The area between Hailsham and Polegate is a strategic gap between the two settlements. Any extensions to Polegate northwards or Hailsham southwards would begin to encroach on this gap. Small pockets of potential development have been identified on the edge of both settlements. This should be in the context of a strong landscape framework and well defined boundaries. Consideration has been given to the potential of a new settlement within this area as part of this study, under section 4.0 below.

East Polegate

3.11.7 The A22 new route traverses the eastern side of this area in the gap between settlements at Polegate and Stone Cross. A ribbon of development follows the Dittons Farm ridge eastwards to Stone Cross where substantial expansion has taken place in recent years. An area of land on either side of the A22 New Route at Dittons Farm needs to be retained as an open gap. This includes the area around Dittons Business Park where further development would encroach on the remainder of the gap.

South Polegate

3.11.8 South east of Polegate a swathe of open countryside separates the town from the extensive residential estates of Lower Willingdon. Some of this rural landscape is degraded by urban fringe pressures, notably to the north of the railway.

3.11.9 The area of playing fields and at Hindslands is sensitive as recreational space and has been omitted at the request of Wealden District Council.

3.11.10 The area of land at Willows Farm gently rises from the A2270 and gives the impression of a gap between the settlements of Polegate and Lower Willingdon. Should the remainder of this area be considered suitable for development consideration must be given to retaining adequate open space on this rising land to retain the impression of a gap.

Stone Cross

3.11.11 The areas to the west of Stone Cross are open levels which form part of the gap between Polegate and Stone Cross and are similar in character to the area west of the A22 New Route into Eastbourne. To the north of Stone Cross the areas between the A27 by pass and urban edge are an important open buffer between the by-pass and the urban edge. These areas are influenced by urban fringe uses and a hard urban edge to the countryside. The extensive planting along the A27 reduces the impact of this from the wider levels and the road.

3.11.12 To the east of Stone Cross the Mountney Levels form an important and very open gap between the historic village of Pevensey and the built up edge of Stone Cross. There are some urban fringe influences and hard urban edges at Friday Street which impact on the rural the character of the areas close to the built up edge.

3.12 Polegate and Stonecross – Potential Development Area Comparisons

3.12.1 The potential development areas within the character areas are in the tables and Stage 2 mapping which follows on from the character and capacity assessment in Volume 2.

3.12.2 The preferred areas for development around Polegate and Stone Cross from a landscape perspective have been identified as:

The area to the west of Cophall roundabout junction with the A22 and the A27.

The area to the north of Winfield Farm and the Dittons Road.

Mornings Mill Farm area to the north of Lower Willingdon

West Polegate

3.12.3 The area to the west of Cophall roundabout is a degraded landscape of large fields where much of the landscape structure has been lost. The existing uses for horse paddocks and boot sales have led to a proliferation of fences and other clutter. Proposed development in this area would need to have a well defined western edge to the wider countryside. A strong landscape structure and multifunctional green networks linking the surrounding woodland would need to be established.

North Polegate

3.12.4 The areas to the north of the Dittons Road at Winfield Farm would provide an opportunity to create a new urban edge on the north side of Polegate. A strong landscape buffer of open space and bold planting would need to be established as part of a multifunctional green network between the A27 and residential development.

South Polegate

3.12.5 The extensive area of land between Lower Willingdon and the railway at Mornings Mill is open and exposed to long views from the Downs. This area has degraded landscape structure due to urban fringe pressures and loss of hedges and trees. Proposals for development would require considerable mitigation to soften existing urban edges and create a strong structure. To avoid the coalescence of existing settlements strong open landscape gaps would need to be established as part of a multifunctional green network.

3.12.6 Extensive areas of open landscape are shown to be required as part of this network this would ensure the gap between Stone Cross and Polegate is retained.

Stone Cross

3.12.7 There are small areas of potential development opportunity identified around Stone Cross. These are not preferred over the areas of proposed extension to Polegate due to the need to retain strategic gaps between the settlements and to avoid coalescence. These areas would be widely visible from the Willingdon Levels and the A27.

3.13 Comparative Assessment between North Wealden Towns

Crowborough and Heathfield

3.13.1 The scope for expansion around the towns of Crowborough and Heathfield is restricted by the character and quality of the surrounding landscape, which is reflected in the AONB designation. The countryside surrounding both of these towns is often on steep rolling slopes which fall away from the urban edge. This makes many of the areas open to long views and visually sensitive. Equally the countryside character in many places is sensitive to change. The capacity analysis has identified some potential areas for development where this could strengthen the existing landscape character. Where this is within the AONB there is scope to mitigate proposed development at the same time as conserving and enhancing the existing landscape, in accordance with AONB policy.

Uckfield

3.13.2 There are similar visual constraints on the expansion of Uckfield on sloping ground to the west of the town. The need to keep a visual buffer on the sloping ground between the bypass and the existing urban edge would make it unacceptable for development to be taken up to the edge of the bypass. From this point of view some of these areas are of equal sensitivity as parts of the AONB around Heathfield and Crowborough where there would be limited capacity. There is some limited scope to improve the urban edges and create new edges to the north Wealden towns in a strong landscape framework. There is particular scope to redefine the urban edge of Uckfield at Bird in Eye Farm and create a cohesive new development. This should be considered in conjunction with the area between Mallards Drive and the hospital and the areas could have strong footpath and cycleway links. These are favoured over those areas of preferred potential around Crowborough. The area at Mount Ephraim is spread out along the Eastbourne Road. The potential to create a cohesive community with a central focus is lower than at Bird In Eye Farm due to the nature of landscape and the need to retain important hedgerows. Expansion in this area should be considered in conjunction with those areas to the north of Eastbourne Road at Cysleys Farm. Although less favoured due to visual constraints it is recognised that there is some scope in these areas, if the urban edge is redefined and views from the north are protected with new planting. This should take in to account the fast traffic on this road and create a residential focus facing on to the road with consequently slower traffic speeds.

3.14 Comparative Assessment between Sussex Coast Towns

3.14.1 The expansion of both Hailsham and Polegate has been driven by the coming of the railway and the A27 / A22 road networks. Hailsham has the benefit of a historic town centre at its core. Polegate has tended to spread within the constraints of the Sussex Downs AONB and the flood plain of the Pevensey Levels. The need to protect the sensitive open landscape from further expansion is a constraint to the expansion of both urban areas.

3.14.2 In order to avoid coalescence of the two towns and the spread of urban development into the countryside, a well defined landscape gap needs to be preserved. From a landscape point of view it is important that the major trunk roads are retained as countryside routes and bringing development up to the edges of these roads should be avoided.

3.14.3 The favoured location for substantial development in the Hailsham and Polegate areas is the landscape to the North of Hailsham. This area should be considered in conjunction with the Hellingly Hospital site. There is considerable scope to create a new community with a focus on New Road. A strong multifunctional green network to link these areas with the existing settlement at Lower Horsebridge could be provided as a framework for a new community. From a landscape point of view this is

favoured over scattered piecemeal expansion on the edges of the existing urban areas.

3.14.4 The area at Mornings Mill Farm is a preferred location for major development in the Polegate area. The area north of Hailsham is considered to have greater potential as it is further from views from the Downs and has greater scope for creating a strong landscape structure linked to existing landscape features.

4.0 New Settlement Options

North Wealden

4.1 Isfield – Character and Capacity Assessment

4.1.1 Isfield lies in the Western Low Weald character area of the County Landscape Assessment. This is described as being a low lying clay vale which stretches from the foot of the downland scarps to the High Weald between Ditchling and Ringmer in the south and North Chailey and Isfield in the north. Its abundant trees and hedges, combined with the undulating landform create a sheltered, secluded countryside with a strong landscape structure. The older part of Isfield grew up around the mill on the River Uck and the ancient church, which is remote from the rest of the village adjacent to the River Ouse. The later village developed around the Lewes to Uckfield railway line. The village is dispersed as ribbon development along the surrounding lanes, with a focus at the Lavender Line and the Laughing Fish pub. The surrounding area is typical of the description given for the Western Low Weald, as gently undulating low –lying countryside. There are abundant trees with small woods and hedges and larger areas of woodland. There is good access to the village from the A26. The area becomes more open to the west of the village where it opens out in to the River Ouse flood plain. There has been some intrusive development the past in the form of the disused army camp and intrusive farm buildings.

4.1.2 The detailed landscape character of the areas around the village have been analysed in Figure 21 and on the site assessment sheets in Appendix 4.

4.2 Isfield – Summary of Potential

4.2.1 The potential development areas for Isfield are indicated in the tables and Stage 2 mapping which follows on from the character and capacity assessment in Volume 2.

Advantages

- Not in the AONB
- No long views
- Could create a focus of character around pub and railway
- Could create a new community
- Could mitigate with woodland planting and tree belts

- Existing brown field land at army camp
- Existing road network
- Could be assimilated in to local settlement pattern

Disadvantages

- Would detract from rural character of area
- Would change the character from hamlet to village/town
- Would encroach on relative remoteness of the Ouse Valley
- Would increase traffic on rural lanes
- Would require green field sites which are currently good quality

4.3 Halland – Character and Capacity Assessment

4.3.1 Halland, like Isfield lies in the Western Low Weald, but at the very eastern edge. It lies at the crossroads of the main A22 and the B2192. The village is severed by busy traffic on the main road. The settlement is little more than a hamlet strung along the two roads and for this reason lacks focus of character.

4.3.2 The detailed landscape character of the areas around the village have been analysed in Figure 23 and on the site assessment sheets in Appendix 4.

4.4 Halland – Summary of Potential

4.4.1 The potential development areas for Halland are indicated on the tables and Stage 2 mapping which follows on from the character and capacity assessment in Volume 2.

Advantages

- Not in the AONB
- Could create new focus of character and reduce severance effect of A22
- There are areas which are enclosed with no views in
- Could be assimilated in to local settlement pattern, but limited in scale to a village

Disadvantages

- South slopes are open with long views
- Limited area to develop without encroaching on wider countryside
- Little scope to mitigate more open areas
- Severance effect of A22.

Sussex Coast

4.5 Golden Cross – Character and Capacity

4.5.1 The potential new settlement areas in the Sussex Coast area of Wealden District, with the exception of Hellingly Hospital, are all within the Eastern Low Weald character area as identified in the County Landscape Assessment. This area is more exposed than the western low weald, with many more flat and treeless areas. It contains the large woodland areas of Abbots and Vert Woods, but is generally less wooded and more open than the Western Low Weald. Running from Ringmer in the west to Polegate in the east the area contains the Glynde Reach, the Upper Cuckmere River and Arlington Reservoir. Particular features of the area are the distinctive north south ancient drove roads which linked the Downs to the Low Weald. Many of these are country lanes or ancient byways now valuable for recreational access to the countryside. There are many small remote and unspoilt villages in the heart of the area. There are some notable historic buildings in a designed landscape setting, especially Wooton Manor and Michelham Priory. Ribbon development along the main roads has detracted from the area, notably along the A22 at Lower Dicker. Other intrusive development is associated with farm developments and diversification. There would be considerable scope in parts of this character area to strengthen the existing landscape structure with new woodland and hedgerow planting. The area affords often dramatic and open long open views to the Downs and there are views across the area from the Downs.

4.5.2 The detailed landscape character of the areas around this settlement have been analysed in Figure 25 and on the site assessment sheets in Appendix 4.

4.6 Golden Cross – Summary of Potential

4.6.1 The potential development areas for Golden Cross are indicated on the tables and Stage 2 mapping which follows on from the character and capacity assessment in Volume 2.

Advantages

- Area not in the AONB
- Could create new focus of character
- Opportunity to mitigate intrusive development
- Opportunity to improve weak landscape structure
- No long views into the area

Disadvantages

- Mitigation would require extensive planting which would be out of character
- Difficult to assimilate in to local settlement pattern

- Rural location away from existing built up areas
- Severance effect of the A22

4.7 Lower Dicker – Character and Capacity

4.7.1 The detailed landscape character of the areas around this settlement have been analysed in Figure 26 and on the site assessment sheets in Appendix 4.

4.8 Lower Dicker – Summary of Potential

4.8.1 The potential development areas for Lower Dicker are indicated on the tables and Stage 2 mapping which follows on from the character and capacity assessment in Volume 2.

Advantages

- Area not in the AONB
- create new focus for scattered and ribbon development
- considerable scope to mitigate
- scope to improve local landscape structure
- no long views across the area
- scope to improve landscape structure

Disadvantages

- Severance effect of the A22
- Rural location, but adjacent to Hailsham
- Mitigation would require planting which would be out of character with the area
- Need to retain gaps between settlements at Golden Cross and Hailsham to prevent coalescence

4.9 Hellingly Hospital – Character and Capacity

4.9.1 This part of Hailsham is on the edge of the Eastern Low Weald and the South Slopes of The Weald in the County Landscape Assessment. The land rising towards Hellingly Hospital has a landscape of gentle slopes with long views to the Downs. It is enclosed by the wooded ridge and Park Wood to the north and east.

4.9.2 The consideration of this area as a new settlement should avoid coalescence between the settlements at north Hailsham and the village of Hellingly. The potential development areas identified to the north of Hailsham should not be considered in isolation from this area. A new community in this area would need to include the areas to the north of Upper Horsebridge. A well defined multifunctional green network would need to be established to prevent the coalescence of potential development areas. The Cuckoo trail and flood plain of the River Cuckmere would form a key part of the retained gap between this area

and the historic Hellingly village as well as the village of Lower Horsebridge.

4.9.3 Consideration has been given to a potential new settlement at Lower Dicker, the cumulative impact of these potential development areas should be considered in conjunction with Lower Horsebridge village.

4.9.4 The detailed landscape character of the areas around this settlement have been analysed in Figure 29 and on the site assessment sheets in Appendix 4.

4.10 Hellingly Hospital – Summary of Potential

4.10.1 The potential development areas for the Hellingly Hospital area are indicated on the tables and Stage 2 mapping which follows on from the character and capacity assessment in Volume 2.

Advantages

- Not in the AONB
- Some brown field land
- No long views
- Scope to mitigate
- Scope to improve landscape structure

Disadvantages

- The risk of coalescence with existing settlements
- Need to create new community focus
- Need to preserve gap with Hellingly and Lower Horserbridge

4.11 Summer Hill – Character and Capacity

4.11.1 The area of Summerhill is the part of the countryside gap between Polegate and Hailsham. A limited area with potential for development has been identified whilst retaining a gap between these settlements. This should not be considered in isolation from the potential development of areas of land on the urban fringes of Polegate and Hailsham. The character of the countryside between the two settlements is fairly uniform and the differences identified for the purpose of this study are subtle. The limited potential for development in this countryside is mainly due to the need to retain a viable gap between the settlements.

4.11.2 The detailed landscape character of the areas around this settlement have been analysed in Figure 31 and on the site assessment sheets in Appendix 4.

4.12 Summerhill – Summary of potential

4.12.1 The potential development areas for Summerhill are indicated on the tables and Stage 2 mapping which follows on from the character and capacity assessment in Volume 2.

Advantages

- Not AONB
- Few long views cross
- Access from A22
- Scope to mitigate with woodland planting
- Some degrade landscapes could be improved

Disadvantages

- Countryside gap between Hailsham and Polegate
- Some long views over Pevensey Levels
- Countryside character vulnerable to change

4.13 Wilmington – Character and Capacity

4.13.1 The village of Wilmington is within a visual buffer zone between the AONB boundary and the wider countryside of the Low Weald to the north. This area is very open to views from the downs and the scattered villages in the landscape setting are important to the visual amenity of this area.

4.13.2 The detailed landscape character of the areas around this settlement have been analysed in Figure 33 and on the site assessment sheets in Appendix 4.

4.14 Wilmington – Summary of Potential

4.14.1 The potential development areas for Wilmington are indicated on the tables and Stage 2 mapping which follows on from the character and capacity assessment in Volume 2.

Advantages

- opportunity to strengthen weak landscape structure
- potential to mitigate with woodland planting

Disadvantages

- All in the AONB buffer zone and very visible from the Downs
- Very open countryside with large exposed fields
- Large development here would not be in character with the existing settlement pattern
- Difficult to mitigate as large scale planting out of character

4.15 Berwick – Character and Capacity

4.15.1 The area to the south of Berwick village and Arlington Reservoir is in the visual buffer zone between the Downs and the Low Weald. To the north of Berwick Station and village the area becomes less visible from the Downs.

4.14.2 The detailed landscape character of the areas around this settlement have been analysed in Figure 34 and on the site assessment sheets in Appendix 4.

4.16 Berwick – Summary of Potential, Berwick

4.16.1 The potential development areas for Berwick are indicated on the tables and Stage 2 mapping which follows on from the character and capacity assessment in Volume 2.

Advantages:

- opportunity to strengthen weak landscape structure
- potential to mitigate with woodland planting

Disadvantages

- Southern parts are in the AONB buffer zones and very visible from the Downs
- Very open countryside with large exposed fields
- Large development here would not be in character with the existing settlement pattern

4.17 Comparison of New Settlement Development potential

North Wealden

4.7.1 There could be scope to create a new community centred on the villages of Halland or Isfield without an unacceptable impact on the rural character of the areas. The scope is greater at Isfield as this low lying settlement is well contained and enclosed from wider views. A self contained settlement could be created focused on the existing village without detriment to the wider countryside setting. The landscape character of the flood plain of the River Ouse would need to be protected and enhanced. The scope to create a community at Halland is restricted by the visual sensitivity of the southern slopes and the potential impact on countryside to the north.

Sussex Coast

4.7.2 The area around Lower Dicker would provide greater scope for the creation of a new community than those at Golden Cross, which is more rural in character. The open and comparatively weak character of the area at Golden Cross would make this area more vulnerable to change and more sensitive. There would be more scope to mitigate a new community at the former and strengthen existing landscape structure. The existing development pattern at Lower Dicker would also offer greater scope to create a community focus. For this reason it is of higher preference to Golden Cross.

4.7.3 The need to conserve a viable countryside gap between Hailsham and Polegate would make it difficult to create a new community between the two settlements. There may be an opportunity to provide new development on the south side of Hailsham and on the north side of Polegate. Development centred around the small group of houses at Summerhill would begin to coalesce with the south of Hailsham. The retention of a viable gap would be difficult in these circumstances. Similarly extension north of Polegate would need to be well defined and it would be difficult to keep this separate from other development within the gap. Further to this there are long views from this area to the Pevensey Levels and new development in the area could encroach on the open character of the levels.

4.7.4 This would need to be considered in conjunction with potential development opportunities to the north and west of Hailsham.

4.7.5 There would be scope to create a new community at Berwick focused on the existing village and the station. Great care would need to be taken not to encroach on the visual buffer zone to the South Downs. This sensitivity would make the development of a new community at Wilmington unacceptable on landscape grounds.

5.0 Villages

5.1 North Wealden Sub Area Villages – Character and Capacity

5.1.1 Surrounding Ashdown Forest

Villages in the Upper Medway Valley

The villages of Hartfield, Forest Row and Groombridge (Figures 44, 36 and 42 respectively) are in the Upper Medway Valley character area of the County Landscape Assessment. Hartfield and Forest Row have strong associations with Ashdown Forest and are close to the boundary of the Ashdown Forest character area described below. This area covers the Medway Valley from Weir Wood to Groombridge. The broad flat river valley is overlooked by gentle spurs emphasised by fine mature woods. Unlike much of the High Weald where the villages are on the ridge tops

the main villages lie in the valley. The unity of the area is strengthened by the tree fringed winding river and by Forest Way Country Park. The villages are individually distinctive. As in many rural parts of East Sussex increasing numbers of cars, parking and speed management are issues. Another action priority is to develop traffic management schemes for the villages and surrounding lanes.

Villages in the Ashdown Forest

The Ashdown Forest character area in the County Landscape Assessment is a heart shaped area, lying between Crowborough, Forest Row and Maresfield on the more northerly of the two major ridges in the AONB. It is the largest area of lowland heath in the South East and therefore of significant nature conservation and scenic value. The area is visually prominent and affords long views in and out of the area. This is a place of great diversity and a unique history.

Nutley is on the southern boundary of the Ashdown Forest character area. The village straddles the main A22 and is severed by traffic on this road.

There are distinct areas of character on either side, as described in the detailed character assessment for the village in Figure 38.

Upper Ouse Basin character area

Dane hill is in the North West corner of the Upper Ouse Basin character area of the County Landscape Assessment. This is a gently sloping country of low ridges and wider valleys covered by an intricate pattern of streams and woods. The valley includes the valley system of the River Ouse, Longford Stream and River Uck. The village of Danehill straddles and is severed by traffic on the main A275, Figure 40.

The detailed character assessment for the villages surrounding Ashdown Forest is in Figures 36 to 45 and the character assessments in Appendix 5.

The potential development areas within these are in the tables and Stage 2 mapping which follows on from the character and capacity assessment in Volume 2.

5.1.2 Heart of High Weald

Central High Weald

Wadhurst and Rotherfield are in the Central High Weald as identified in the County landscape Assessment. This character area lies south of Tunbridge Wells and east of Crowborough, these urban areas exert a strong influence on the neighbouring countryside. It is a landscape of high ground with outstanding views from the ridge tops across the heart of the High Weald. The bold broad ridges are often crowned by villages and churches, as is the case with Rotherfield. There are urban fringe

influences around the towns and some villages including Rotherfield and Wadhurst. Proposed development would need to demonstrate conservation and enhancement of the setting of these villages and improve the landscape surrounding the villages.

Upper Rother Valley

Mayfield has many of the characteristics of the villages in the central High Weald but falls in the Upper Rother Valley character area of the County Landscape Assessment. The valley of the River Rother dominates the landscape and is overlooked by ridges and spurs with ghylls and shaws. The area extends to the ridge top Burwash Road in the south. Mayfield is on a prominent ridge overlooking the valley to the south. The village is typical of the distinctive villages in this area with its landmark church and citadel location. There are long views to and from the village and the surrounding slopes would be particularly sensitive to development. Any proposed development in the village would need to be sensitive to the local vernacular of the village and high quality surrounding countryside.

A detailed assessment of the character of these villages is contained in Figures 46 – 51 and Appendix 5.

The potential development areas within these are in the tables and Stage 2 mapping which follows on from the character and capacity assessment in Volume 2.

5.1.3 Around Uckfield

Upper Ouse Basin

Maresfield, Five Ash Down and Framfield are in the Upper Ouse Basin of the County Landscape, Assessment, the key characteristics of this area are described in 3.15 above. Buxted is on the edge of this character area and the Central High Weald character area, see 3.16 above, and has characteristics of both.

The villages have some distinctive features and groups of buildings with strong local distinctiveness and local vernacular. These villages have been affected by the creeping urban expansion of Uckfield and suburbanisation of new developments however; they do retain their own distinctive character. Any proposals for new development would need to address this and ensure that the local distinctiveness of the villages is strengthened.

A detailed assessment of the character of the villages is contained in Figures 52 to 59 and Appendix 5.

The potential development areas within these are in the tables and Stage 2 mapping which follows on from the character and capacity assessment in Volume 2.

South Slopes High Weald

East Hoathly and Blackboys are in the character area identified as the South Slopes of the High Weald in the County Landscape Assessment. This is an intricate, small scale landscape with a strong pattern of hedgerows, falling southward from the Heathfield to Battle ridge towards the Low Weald and Pevensey Levels. This landscape of gentle valleys and slopes affords good views of the Downs. The typical characteristics are deeply dissected north south ridges, valleys and ghylls. An intricate network of country lanes linking scattered development and villages. Varied villages often situated on ridges and with remote rural character. These villages tend to be strung out and ribbon development along the local roads and lack a village focus. Proposed development would need to address the creation of a strong sense of place and links to the existing village communities. East Hoathly has a stronger village focus as the bypass and traffic calming in the village centre have provided an opportunity to strengthen the character.

A detailed assessment of the character of the villages is contained in Figures 60 to 63 and Appendix 5.

The potential development areas within these are in the tables and Stage 2 mapping which follows on from the character and capacity assessment in Volume 2.

5.1.4 Around Heathfield

South Slopes of the High Weald

Cross in Hand and Horam are in the character area described in 3.17 above.

A detailed assessment of the character of the villages is contained in Figures 64 to 67 and Appendix 5.

The potential development areas within these are in the tables and Stage 2 mapping which follows on from the character and capacity assessment in Volume 2.

Broad Oak is in the Upper Rother Valley character area, as described in 3.16 above. The village straddles the ridge which forms the southern boundary of this character area and the Dudwell Valley.

Punetts Town is on the south side of the Dudwell Valley. This narrow deep valley is bounded to the north by the ridge top A265 and the Burwash villages and contained by the Dallington ridge in the south. The villages have many buildings in the local vernacular style and ribbon development along the ridge top roads is characteristic.

A detailed assessment of the character of the villages is contained in Figures 68 to 71 and Appendix 5.

The potential development areas within these are in the tables and Stage 2 mapping which follows on from the character and capacity assessment in Volume 2.

5.2.0 Potential Development Area Comparison of Villages in the North Wealden Sub area

5.2.1 Ashdown Forest

Forest Row is a large village with limited scope for further expansion due to the sensitivity of the surrounding countryside, the location adjacent to Ashdown Forest and visual sensitivity. There would be scope for small areas of infill development to west of village and a larger area related to large gardens to the east of village.

Development in the village of Nutley is constrained by the sensitivity of the wider AONB and Ashdown Forest, this makes the rural area to the east particularly sensitive to further development. The area of greatest scope is located within the village envelope on an area of degraded land.

The village of Danehill offers greater scope than other villages close to Ashdown Forest and in the High Weald AONB. Areas to the south of the village offer greatest potential as they are not visible from the wider countryside. There could be scope to considerably enlarge the village compared with other AONB villages.

In Groombridge there are areas of higher potential to the east of the village, which are favoured over more remote areas to the south. These would be visually sensitive and difficult to mitigate.

Hartfield has limited scope and low capacity.

Wadhurst could accommodate some development in scattered areas on infill pockets of land close to the village edge. These are small areas of high or moderate preference. The two largest areas are of medium preference outside the core of the village. This type of development need not be out of character with the existing settlement pattern.

5.2.2 Heart of High Weald

Rotherfield is the only village in the High Weald AONB with a significant area of high capacity. The area of enclosed derelict land to north of village could support development in a strong landscape framework. This could achieve conservation and enhancement of the landscape and strengthen the village edge. Development would need to relate to the character of

village. There is a similar, but smaller area to the south of the village. Both of these areas would require good pedestrian and cycle links to village centre in a strong landscape framework.

The characteristic citadel character of Mayfield makes it exposed with steep slopes and limited capacity for further expansion.

5.2.3 Villages Around Uckfield

Maresfield has limited additional scope for expansion due to the visual and character sensitivity to south. Much of the available area has planning permission or is part of the Ashdown business park area. There is scope for more infill development in Maresfield Park, this would need to respect the historic parkland character of the area and retain existing landscape features such as trees and avenues.

Five Ash Down has a distinctive character of a village established along an ancient road and strong ribbon development. There are areas with potential for new development to the north and south, especially on previously developed land. It is difficult to define a 'core' to village and any development proposals would need to prevent coalescence with Ringles Cross, Maresfield and Uckfield. Proposed development would need a strong landscape structure with well defined green networks.

Buxted would have limited scope for future expansion due to the sensitivity of the AONB landscape to the north. There is some potential in enclosed areas to the west and south of the village.

In Framfield there is an area to the east of the village with moderate capacity. The east of the village is sensitive due to the need to retain a gap between Framfield and Uckfield.

5.2.4 Around Heathfield

Blackboys has limited scope for future expansion and no areas of high capacity.

East Hoathly has limited scope and no high capacity areas.

As a small village or hamlet with no core to village and no areas of high capacity Cross in Hand offers little potential for new development.

Horam sits on the edge of AONB and there could be scope to considerably extend the village without destroying the existing landscape character. There would be a requirement to conserve and enhance the landscape as the High Weald bounds the village AONB to the north. The northern edges of the village need stronger definition. Mitigation in a strong landscape setting would be possible.

Broad Oak and Punnetts Town would offer little scope for major expansion due to landscape constraints and sensitivity.

5.3.0 Sussex Coast Sub Area Villages Character and Capacity

A detailed assessment of the character of the villages is contained in Figures 72 – 81 and Appendix 5

The potential development areas within these are in the tables and Stage 2 mapping which follows on from the character and capacity assessment in Volume 2.

South Slopes of the High Weald

Herstmonceux and Ninfield are in the county landscape character area described in 3.17 above. Herstmonceux is in a prominent position on the southern edge of the area which slopes down towards the Pevensy Levels. The main part of the village straddles the busy A271, the older settlement of the church and castle are remote from the village at Flowers Green.

Ninfield is on the eastern edge of this character area on the slopes above the Hooe Levels. The nucleus of the village is to one side of the main A269 and the newer parts of the village are strung along this road as ribbon development.

Eastern Low Weald

Lower Horsebridge and Upper Dicker are in the Eastern Low Weald, as defined by the County Landscape Assessment. This area is more exposed than the western low weald, with many more flat and treeless areas. It contains the large woodland areas of Abbots and Vert Woods, but is generally less wooded and more open than the Western Low Weald. Running from Ringmer in the west to Polegate in the east the area contains the Glynde Reach, the Upper Cuckmere River and Arlington Reservoir. Particular features of the area are the distinctive north south ancient drove roads which linked the Downs to the Low Weald. Many of these are country lanes or ancient byways now valuable for recreational access to the countryside. There are many small remote and unspoilt villages in the heart of the area. There are some notable historic buildings in a designed landscape setting, especially Wooton Manor and Michelham Priory. Ribbon development along the main roads has detracted from the area, notably along the A22 at Lower Dicker. Other intrusive development is associated with farm developments and diversification. There would be considerable scope in parts of this character area to strengthen the existing landscape structure with new woodland and hedgerow planting. The area affords often dramatic and open long open views to the Downs and there are views across the area from the Downs.

Lower Horsebridge is small unspoilt village which retains some historic character and the nucleus of the village focused on the church.

Upper Dicker is more dispersed as a village and strung along the approaching roads as ribbon development. The main focus of the village is the Dicker School, the buildings and activities of which dominate the village.

Pevensy Levels

This character area lies to the North East of Eastbourne. This large, flat, open landscape is dominated by grazing marsh and reeds. The landscape is characterised by winding reed fringed drainage channels with scattered thorns and willows. Away from the roads there is a distinct remoteness amongst the big skies and cries of wetland birds. Not surprisingly there is little or no development on the marshy flood plains and the villages are scattered along the surrounding ridge top roads which afford long views across the levels.

Westham is the modern western extension of the ancient village of Pevensy. The village has grown up from the railway station and is situated between the flood plains of the Pevensy Levels. The relatively modern housing estates lack focus of character.

5.4.0 Potential Development Area Summary of Villages in the Sussex Coast Sub area

Herstmonceux is on the edge of the AONB in a ridge top location, which affords some long views. There would be some limited scope for development to soften the village edge where this is intrusive to the surrounding countryside. Any proposals would need to be carefully designed to maintain the character of the settlement. A distinct character separation between the old and new villages must be retained. Quality of views to the village from the AONB should be protected and enhanced.

Lower Horsebridge – could offer considerable scope for new development. This would require a carefully defined new edge treatment to the village. New development should be in the context of a green network based around existing tracks, tree belt and flood plains.

Consideration should be given to potential new communities to the north of Hailsham and at Lower Dicker. It will be important to retain defined gaps between these potential settlements.

The village of Westham offers little scope for expansion due to the sensitive location adjacent to the open levels and the historic core of Pevensy village.

At Upper Dicker there would be limited opportunity as natural extension to redefine the village edge on the north side.

Ninfield would offer some development opportunity. There is a small area of high preference where the village edge could be redefined. There is some potential for larger areas of expansion to the village; any proposals

would require a strong landscape framework to protect the village edge relationship with the countryside.

6.0 Employment Focus Area Comparison

Sussex Coast

The capacity tables identify the capacity for business development in each character area. The areas identified as having high to moderate capacity for employment development are generally in areas where there is existing business development. Where these are not a direct extension to an existing business park they would usually be considered to be part of integrated mixed use developments.

The area between Lower Horsebridge and New Road, to the north of Hailsham could support some business development. This would need to be integrated into a strong landscape framework with a well defined green network. There is limited scope to the north of New Road as the land rises gently towards the hospital site. There should be an assumption against large scale business development in this area but mixed use development with some business, as part of an integrated new community could be considered.

To the south of Hailsham there are areas which could be considered for business development. An extension to the existing industrial estate on Station Road could be considered as an opportunity to improve and redefine the urban edge.

An extension to the existing small business park at Swanborough is also a possibility and it could compliment the existing facility. The amount of space here is limited. The area at Welbury Farm is also high preference for business development. This would need to be in the context of mixed use development which would not detract from the existing residential character of the area.

The areas to the west of the A22 at Hailsham are considered to be of medium preference for business development. This is particularly where the landscape has been degraded by previous filling activities and where there are non residential developments. The character of the area could be enhanced with some high quality business development in a strong landscape setting.

The existing developments at Hackhurst Lane and Boship in Lower Dicker could support extended business uses. This would provide an opportunity to improve the character of the existing development and strengthen the edges of the development in the countryside.

The areas surrounding the Cophall roundabout to the north of Polegate do offer opportunities for some business development. The preferred area would be in association with existing development to the west of the roundabout. This would need a well defined boundary to the west and new

woodland planting on the ridge to defend this. The area to the east of the A22 has a weak structure and there would be scope to mitigate development with a new landscape structure. This area is more rural and vulnerable to change. There are long views from the higher ground to the Pevensey Levels in the east. There could be scope to develop this and create a new buffer to the wider countryside provided this had well defined boundaries and a strong landscape framework. The area north of Polegate which is between Wooton Manor and the A22 is open to views from the Downs and is not therefore considered as the higher preference. However some development could be accommodated here in a strong landscape framework which should build on existing landscape features.

7.0 Conclusions

7.1 Towns Assessment

North Wealden Towns

The largest area in Crowborough which has scope for development and is of high preference and outside the AONB is surrounding Kemps Farm and Walshes Road. Some of this area has countryside qualities which are of local landscape value, for this reason these areas score a similar preference in landscape terms to the AONB areas to the north.

There are some smaller areas with high preference in the AONB to the north of Crowborough which could be considered favourable for development from a landscape point of view.

Compared with the other towns in the north Wealden area Heathfield does not hold great development potential from a landscape point of view.

The preferred areas around Uckfield would be favoured for development in landscape terms over those around either Crowborough or Heathfield.

From a landscape point of view the favoured sites in North Wealden are:

1. Bird in Eye Farm, Uckfield
2. Walshes Road, Kemps Farm area, Crowborough

Sussex Coast Towns

From a landscape point of view order of preference for major development in the Hailsham and Polegate areas are:

1. North Hailsham, including Hellingly Hospital site.
2. Mornings Mill, Polegate

7.2 New Settlements

The favoured area for potential new settlements from a landscape point of view would be in order of preference:

1. Hellingly Hospital
2. Lower Dicker
3. Berwick
4. Isfield

7.3 Villages

North Wealden

The villages with greatest potential in the north Wealden area:

Danehill
Rotherfield
Maresfield
Five Ash Down
Framfield
Horam

Sussex Coast

The villages with greatest potential in the Sussex Coast area:

Lower Horsebridge
Ninfield

7.4 Employment focus

The areas of greatest potential for future employment focus from a landscape point of view tend to be where there is existing employment uses and as an extension to this. There are areas where this should be considered as part of a mixed use residential and business area. Where this is the case it is highlighted in the tables. This would be especially where there may be opportunities to improve the landscape setting of these facilities.

From a landscape point of view the areas considered to have the most potential for business development in the Sussex Coast area of Wealden District are:

1. Cophall, Polegate
2. New Barn Farm, Hailsham
3. North Hailsham

Those with some potential but less favoured as these sites are only medium preference for development are:

1. Bramley Farm, Polegate
2. Knockhatch, Hailsham
3. Dittons, Polegate
4. Wooton, Polegate

8.0 Glossary of Key Terms

Agricultural Diversification. This refers to the pressure for change of use for farm buildings and agricultural land as alternative development such as offices, riding stables and other recreational uses.

Analysis (landscape) The process of breaking the landscape down into its component parts to understand how it is made up.

Ancient Woodland Land continuously wooded since AD1600.
Arable land used for growing crops other than grass or woody species.

Assessment (landscape) An umbrella term for description, classification and analysis of landscape.

Characteristics Elements, features and qualities which make a particular contribution to distinctive character.

Characterisation The process of identifying areas of similar character, classifying and mapping them and describing their character.

Element A component part of the landscape such as woods, hedges, structures, roads and rock outcrops.

Field Pattern The pattern of hedges or walls that define fields in farmed landscapes.

Green Infrastructure is a network of multifunctional green space, both new and existing, both rural and urban, which supports the natural and ecological processes and is integral to the health and quality of life of sustainable communities.

Landscape capacity is the indicative ability of the landscape to accommodate different amounts of change or development of a specific type without adverse impacts. In the context of this study this will be a relative comparison for each settlement.

Landscape character is the recognisable and consistent pattern of elements that make a place different or distinct. Character is influenced by particular combinations of physical elements such as settlement, land use and built features, and other perceived aspects such as views, tranquillity and sense of place

Landscape character areas are single unique areas in the landscape, which have a particular sense of place. These are discrete areas of an identifiable character reflected by differing vegetation, settlement and field patterns, cultural associations and other landscape characteristics. They share general characteristics with other areas but have their own particular identity, these are distinct from landscape types.

Landscape character types are generic types which possess broadly similar patterns of geology, landform, soils, vegetation, land use, settlement and field pattern discernable in maps and field survey records. They can occur in different geographical locations.

Landscape Framework. A framework of landscape elements or features, which would be required as a setting for proposed or existing development. For example earthworks, tree belts, hedges and woodland, the framework may also include open areas of landscape where this would be in character with the setting.

Landscape management is concerned with the development of management actions which conserve, enhance and maintain landscapes for current and future generations. The discipline of landscape management ensures that the design intention of a landscape is realised in the long-term, be it a newly designed or an historic landscape, and that it fulfils its intended function as a component in the landscape, as an amenity resource for people and as a habitat for wildlife.

Landscape Mitigation is measures, including any process, activity, or design to avoid reduce, or compensate for adverse landscape and visual effects of a development project. The potential to mitigate change in a particular landscape will depend on the factors and features which determine the character of the landscape.

Landscape Sensitivity is the inherent sensitivity of the landscape resource, which includes the sensitivity of both its character as a whole and the individual elements contributing to the character. Sensitivity also includes the visual sensitivity of the landscape in terms of views, types of viewers and the scope to mitigate visual impact.

Landscape Value. The relative value or importance attached to a landscape. A landscape may be valued by different communities of interest for different reasons. These can include scenic beauty, tranquility, and special cultural / conservation interests. Some may be designated.

Mitigation Measures to avoid, reduce, remedy or compensate for adverse landscape and visual effects of a development project.

Sense of Place The character of a place that makes it locally distinctive
i.e. different from other places.

Settlement All dwellings/habitations whether single or clustered in cities,
towns and village.

Settlement Pattern The predominant pattern of settlement in an area.

Vernacular Built in the local style, from local materials.