



Report 1

NORTH BEXHILL LANDSCAPE AND ECOLOGICAL STUDY August 2015



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Report 1

North Bexhill Landscape and Ecological Study

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Foreword

The North Bexhill Landscape and Ecological Study has been prepared by CSa Environmental Planning on behalf of Rother District Council. The Study evaluates the nature and extent of development potential at North Bexhill as North Bexhill has been identified for further growth within the recently adopted Rother District Council's Local Plan Core Strategy.

The purpose of the document is to identify and appraise the landscape and ecological constraints to potential development at North Bexhill. The Study will assist in the generation of development options at North Bexhill which will be presented in Report 2 called North Bexhill: Appraisal and Recommendation of Development Options.

It is intended the draft development option to be included in the consultative draft of the Development and Site Allocations Plan.

Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1	Introduction	01	2.3	Baseline Information	22
1.1.1	Background	02	2.3.1	Planning Policy	22
1.1.2	Purpose of Study	05	2.3.2	Study Area Context	24

Chapter 2: Landscape Study

2.1	Introduction	08	2.3.3	Landscape Character	26
2.2	Methodology	10	2.3.6	Study Area Description	28
2.2.1	Landscape Character and Landscape Description Units (LDU's)	10	2.3.7	Land Use and Land Cover	29
2.2.2	Landscape Sensitivity	12	2.3.8	Ecological Designations	29
2.2.3	Visual Sensitivity	16	2.3.9	Topography	30
2.2.4	Overall Sensitivity	18	2.3.10	Heritage Assets	32
2.2.5	Landscape Value	19	2.3.11	Public Rights of Way	34
2.2.6	Landscape Capacity	20	2.3.12	North East Bexhill Growth Area	35

2.4	Landscape Description Units (LDU's)	36
2.4.1	LDU A: Land East of Watermill Lane	38
2.4.6	LDU B: Land South of Kiteye Wood	40
2.4.11	LDU C: Land West of Watermill Lane	42
2.4.16	LDU D: Land North of Ninfield Road	44
2.4.21	LDU E: Land South of Freezeland Lane	46
2.4.26	LDU F: Land Between St. Mary's Lane and Ninfield Road	48
2.4.31	LDU G: Land West of St. Mary's Road	50
2.4.36	Summary	52

2.5	Appraisal Sheets	54
2.5.1	LDU A: Land East of Watermill Lane	54
2.5.7	LDU B: Land South of Kiteye Wood	58
2.5.13	LDU C: Land West of Watermill Lane	62
2.5.19	LDU D: Land North of Ninfield Road	66
2.5.25	LDU E: Land South of Freezeland Lane	70
2.5.31	LDU F: Land Between St. Mary's Lane and Ninfield Road	74
2.5.37	LDU G: Land West of St. Mary's Road	78

Chapter 3: Ecological Assessment

3.1	Introduction	84	3.3	Methodology	90
3.1.1	Introduction	84	3.3.1	Desktop Biological Records Search	90
			3.3.2	Phase 1 Habitat Survey	90
			3.3.4	Evaluation and Assessment	91
3.2	Planning Policy and Legislation	86			
3.2.1	National Planning Policy	86	3.4	Results	92
3.2.2	Local Planning Policy	86	3.4.1	Designated Sites	92
3.2.3	Legislation	87	3.4.4	Summary of Results	98
3.2.4	National Legislation	87	3.4.5	General Study Area Description	100
3.2.6	Protected Sites	88	3.4.6	Habitats and Flora	100
			3.4.9	Fauna	106

3.5	Evaluation of Ecological Features	110	3.6	Ecological Constraints and Opportunities	114
3.5.1	Hedgerows	110	3.6.1	Designated Sites	114
3.5.2	Woodland	110	3.6.5	Habitats	116
3.5.3	Scattered trees	110	3.6.6	Fauna	117
3.5.4	Grassland	111			
3.5.5	Wetland Features	111	3.7	Ecological Summary and Conclusions	118
3.5.6	Amenity Habitats	111			
3.5.7	Buildings	111			
3.5.8	Fauna	112			

Chapter 4: Summary and Conclusions

4.1	Introduction	112
4.1.1	Landscape Study	112
4.1.2	Ecological Assessment	112
4.1.3	Next Steps	113

Figures

Introduction

Figure 1.1: Study Area	03
Figure 1.2: Key Diagram Map 2	02

Landscape Study

Figure 2.1: Landscape Sensitivity: Landscape Quality	13
Figure 2.2: Landscape Sensitivity: Landscape Elements	14
Figure 2.3: Landscape Sensitivity: Cultural Elements	15
Figure 2.4: Sensitivity of Receptors	16
Figure 2.5: Visual Sensitivity	17
Figure 2.6: Overall Sensitivity	18
Figure 2.7: Landscape Value	19
Figure 2.8: Landscape Capacity	20
Figure 2.9: Landscape Capacity Descriptions	21
Figure 2.10: Location Plan	23
Figure 2.11: Context Plan	25
Figure 2.12: South Slopes of the High Weald (Source: East Sussex Landscape Character Assessment (2010))	27
Figure 2.13: Aerial Photograph	28
Figure 2.14: Topography Plan	31

Figure 2.15: Historic Map (1875)	32
Figure 2.16: Heritage Plan	33
Figure 2.17: Public Rights of Way	34
Figure 2.18: North East Bexhill Growth Area (Source: North East Bexhill Supplementary Planning Document (2009))	35
Figure 2.19: Landscape Description Units Location Plan	37
Figure 2.20: LDU A: Landscape Constraints	38
Figure 2.21: LDU B: Landscape Constraints	40
Figure 2.22: LDU C: Landscape Constraints	42
Figure 2.23: LDU D: Landscape Constraints	44
Figure 2.24: LDU E: Landscape Constraints	46
Figure 2.25: LDU F: Landscape Constraints	48
Figure 2.26: LDU G: Landscape Constraints	50
Figure 2.27: Summary of Capacity Appraisal	52
Figure 2.28: Overall Landscape Capacity Plan	53

Ecological Assessment

Figure 3.1: Summary of Statutory Sites of International Importance within 15km of the Study Area	92
Figure 3.2: Summary of Statutory Sites of National Importance within 5km of the Study Area	94-95
Figure 3.3: Summary of Non-Statutory Sites of Local Importance within 1km	96
Figure 3.4: Ancient Woodlands within 1km	97
Figure 3.5: Locations of Designated Sites and Habitats.	98-99
Figure 3.6: Habitat Plan	100-101
Figure 3.7: Habitat Summary	102-105
Figure 3.8: Records provided by SxBRC within 1km of the Study Area.	107-109
Figure 3.9: Fauna Assessment	112
Figure 3.10: Ecological Opportunities and Constraints Plan	118-119





Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Background

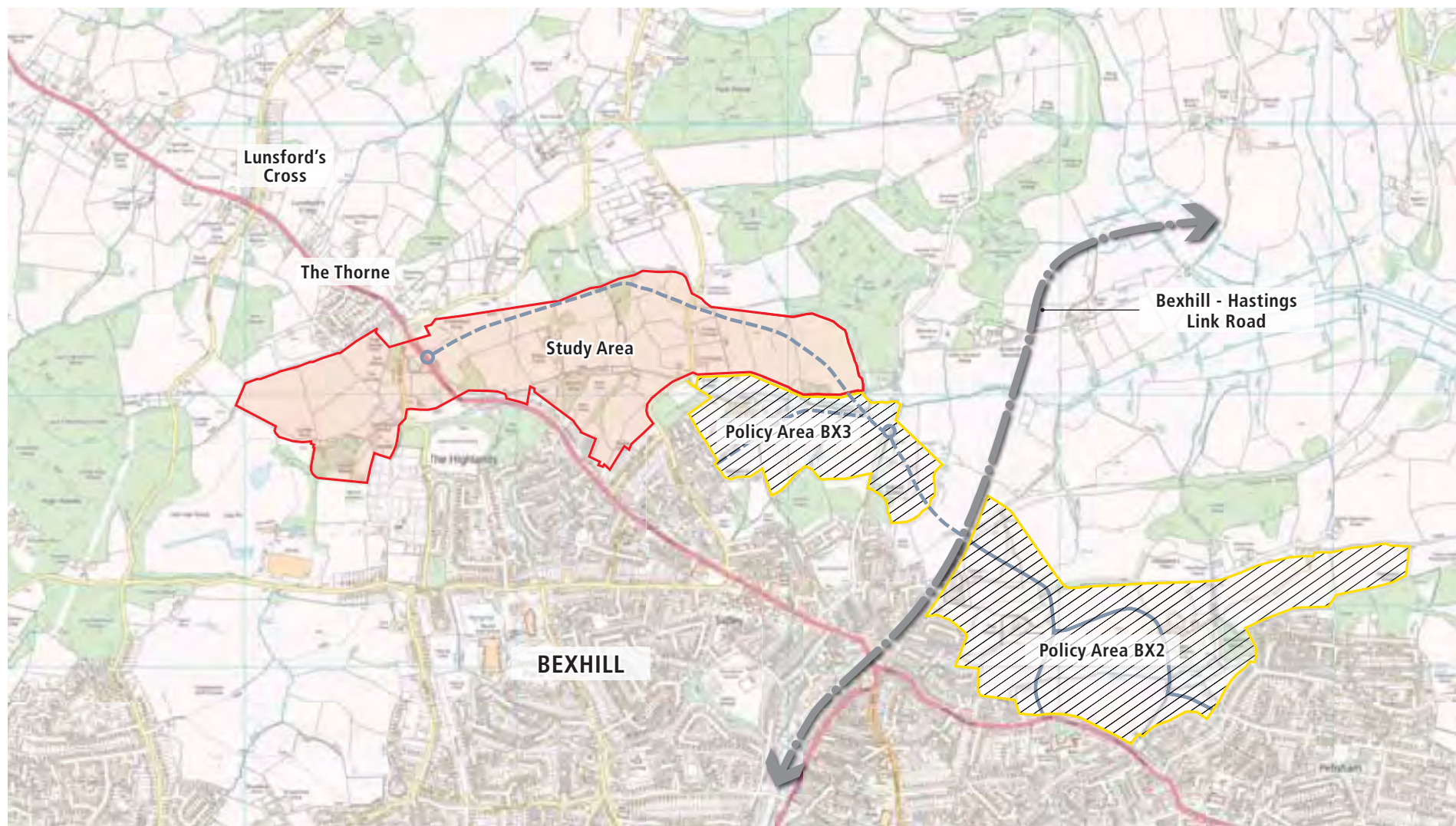
CSa Environmental Planning have undertaken the North Bexhill Landscape and Ecological Study on behalf of Rother District Council.

Bexhill is the main town and administrative centre in Rother District with a population of some 43,700 people and 19,800 households. The strategy for the development of the town is set out in Chapter 8 of the Local Plan Core Strategy (LPCS), which was adopted in September 2014. This envisages significant growth both in housing (3,100 dwellings) and business floorspace (at least 60,000 sq.m) between 2011 and 2028. This new development is integral to a broader strategy to make the town more prosperous and vibrant, with a more balanced demographic profile.

LPCS Policy BX3 (Development Strategy) makes provision for major growth to the north of Bexhill, following on from that already planned (by saved Local Plan policies) at North East Bexhill. Development at North East Bexhill has been facilitated by the construction of the Bexhill to Hastings Link Road, which is expected to open in the Autumn of 2015 (Figure 1.1).



Extracted pages from Rother Local Plan Core Strategy Adopted 2014



Study Area



Strategic Growth Area: North East Bexhill
 Policy Area BX2 - Land north of Pebsham
 Policy Area BX3 - Land North of Sidley

Figure 1.1: Study Area

The general location of the further growth to the north of the town is shown on LPCS Key Diagram Map 2 (Figure 1.2). This shows a new road being built linking the new Bexhill to Hastings Link Road to the A269 (Ninfield Road) just beyond the existing settlement edge, which was identified as necessary to accommodate the scale of planned growth for Bexhill in highway terms.

This new road is known as the North Bexhill Access Road. In addition to providing access to the new development within the Study Area, it will provide a direct connection to the proposed business sites within the growth area at North East Bexhill. The Access Road has received funding approval from the Growth Deal via the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), and the proposals for the road scheme are being led by Sea Change Sussex.

The expansion of Bexhill to the north will, in tandem with the allocated development at North East Bexhill, make a significant contribution to meeting the town's development requirements over the period of the new Local Plan (2011 – 2028). The Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (June 2013) prepared to support the LPCS identifies the 'broad location' for future growth to the north of the town (Ref BX102, p2 and p7 of 'Tables and Maps'). It gives an indicative scale of housing growth of 300 to 575 dwellings. This broad location for future growth forms the area of search for which this Study examines (See Figure 1.1).

Although the land to the north of Bexhill will principally be developed for new housing, it will also include some employment development and community facilities, together with supporting green infrastructure.

For the purposes of this Study the term "Study Area" is used to describe the land to the north of Bexhill.

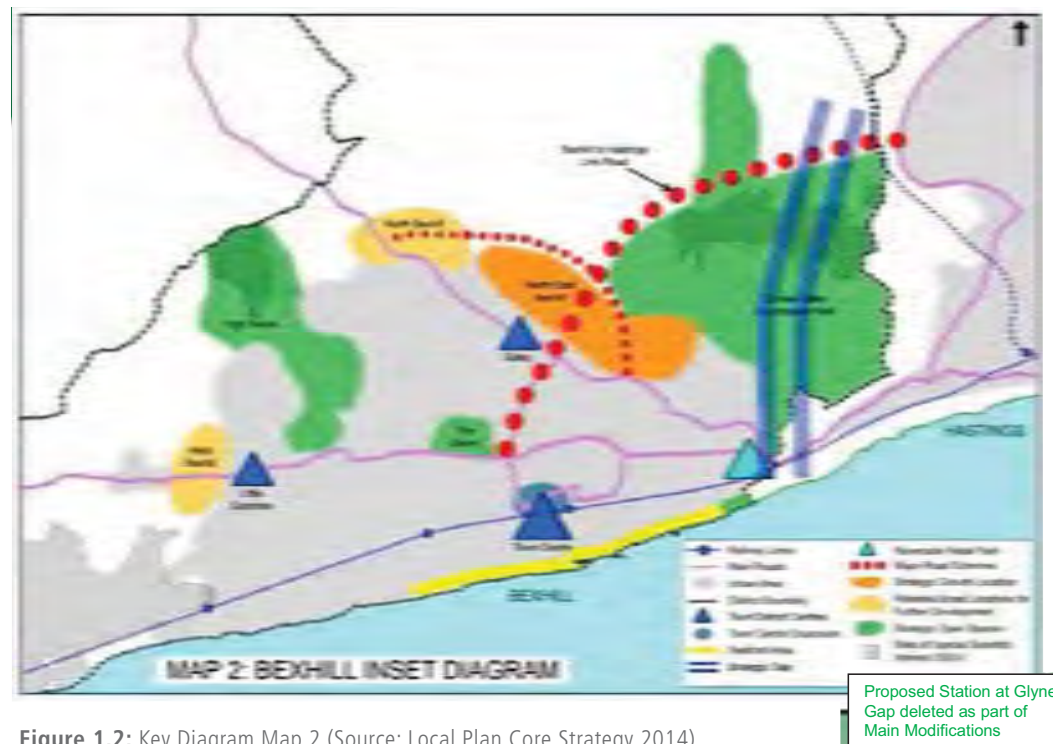


Figure 1.2: Key Diagram Map 2 (Source: Local Plan Core Strategy 2014)

1.1.1 Purpose of Study

The purpose of this Study is to identify and appraise the landscape and ecological constraints to housing growth in the Study Area, in order to assist in evaluating the nature and the extent of potential development options for North Bexhill. These development options are presented in a second document called 'North Bexhill: Appraisal and Recommendation of Development Options'. It is intended that this work will form the basis of the draft proposals to be included in the consultative draft of the 'Development and Site Allocations Plan' (DaSA).

This Study covers the following areas:

- **Chapter 2: Landscape Study** - An assessment of the Study Area that identifies its general Study Area characteristics and extent of visibility in order to ascertain the ability of different parts of the growth area to accommodate development.
- **Chapter 3: Ecological Assessment** - An assessment of the Study Area's habitats to ascertain potential constraints to development and identify ecological opportunities that can be secured as an integral part of the new development.
- **Chapter 4: Summary and Conclusions** – Summary of landscape and ecological findings.





Chapter 2

Landscape Study

2.1 Introduction

This chapter comprises the Landscape Study, assessing the potential of the Study Area to support residential and commercial development in landscape and visual terms.

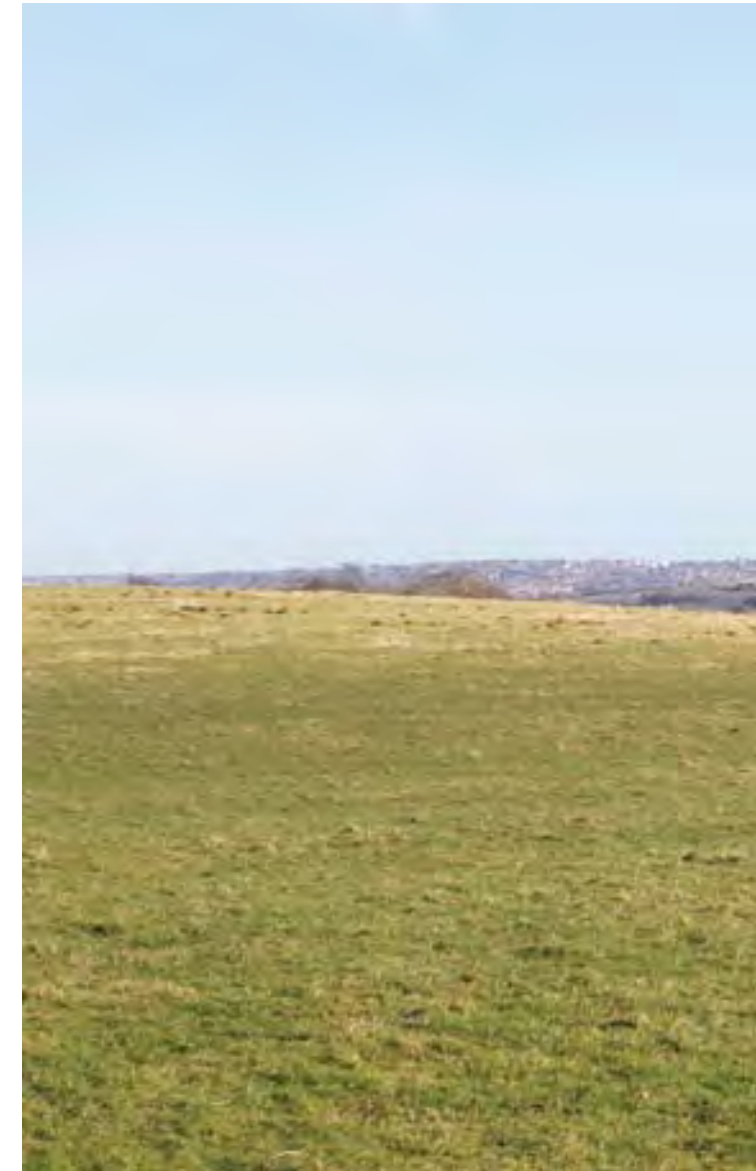
The Landscape Study involves an appraisal of the landscape and visual sensitivity of the Study Area and its intrinsic landscape value in order to inform a judgement on the overall capacity of the Study Area to accommodate change in the form of new housing and commercial development. The Study has been informed by initial desktop research, including existing published landscape character assessments, and by field survey work to identify and map existing landscape features, landscape character and visual sensitivities.

The Study Area occupies a broad expanse of agricultural land to the east and west of Ninfield Road (A269), extending from the quarry at Ibstock Brickworks in the west to Cole Wood in the east. It generally occupies the south facing slopes of a valley with the majority of the Study Area facing towards the existing settlement edge. To the south east the Study Area borders the allocated growth area at North East Bexhill.

Proposals for a new distributor road, the North Bexhill Access Road have received provisional funding from the Growth Deal via the South East LEP. It is proposed for this new road to run through the Study Area connecting Ninfield Road with North East Bexhill. This Study does not consider the direct impacts of the new road proposals, which are still at the planning stage; rather it considers

the landscape sensitivities of individual land parcels within the Study Area, to enable informed decisions to be made about the location of future development. It is also acknowledged that landscape considerations are just one of a number of factors which will inform the location of future growth, which include other environmental and economic considerations.

The field work which supports this Study was undertaken in February 2015. The weather on the days when the Study Area was visited was bright and sunny and visibility was good. Vegetation was out of leaf and the Study Area was at its most visible in views from the surrounding area.



Views across Study Area from Freezeland Lane.



2.2 Methodology

The assessment of landscape and visual sensitivity and landscape capacity is less amenable to scientific or statistical analysis than some environmental topics and inherently contains an element of subjectivity. However, the Study should be undertaken in a logical, consistent and rigorous manner, based on experience and judgement, and any conclusions should be able to demonstrate a clear rationale. To this end, various guidelines have been published, the most relevant of which form the basis of this Study and are as follows:

- **Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment:** Produced jointly by the Institute of Environmental Assessment and the Landscape Institute (GLVIA 3rd edition 2013).
- **Landscape Character Assessment, Guidance for England and Scotland, 2002:** Prepared on behalf of The Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage.
- **Landscape Character Assessment, Guidance for England and Scotland, Topic Paper 6: Techniques and Criteria for Judging Capacity and Sensitivity:** Prepared on behalf of The Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage.

2.2.1 Landscape Character and Landscape Description Units (LDU's)

Landscape is defined in the European Landscape Directive (ELC) as follows:

'Landscape is about the relationship between people and place...It results from the way different components of our environment - both natural (the influences of geology, soils, climate, flora and fauna) and cultural (the historical and current impact of the land use, settlement, enclosure and other human interventions) – interact together and are perceived by us.'

Landscape is therefore a combination of cultural and physical elements which give rise to distinctive landscape patterns and associations. Accordingly, a number of factors need to be taken into consideration in order to get a complete understanding of the landscape character of an area and its associated sensitivity to different forms of change.

In order to provide a basis for the appraisal of the Study Area, the initial desk based work identified and mapped the following elements of the Study Area and the adjoining landscape/townscape:

- Existing landscape character (based on published landscape character assessment at both National and County level).
- Topography.
- Landscape and ecological designations.
- Existing land use and landscape features.
- Public Rights of Way.
- Heritage assets.

This initial mapping provides the context for more detailed consideration of the attributes of the Study Area. In order to refine the Landscape Study, the Study Area has been sub-divided into a series of Landscape Description Units (LDU's). These distinct LDU's have been identified following field survey work and their location has been mapped. The individual LDU's are geographically distinct and share similar characteristics in terms of field pattern, land cover, landform and land use so that they have a broadly consistent character, although there may be some local variations within each LDU.

Within each LDU there may also be variations in sensitivity and for the purpose of mapping sensitivity/capacity these LDU's have been further sub-divided into smaller zones where appropriate. In addition, where specific features within zones contribute to the landscape character or setting these have been identified within the analysis as Areas of Restraint which should act as a constraint to development in this location.

The identification of individual LDU's enables a more detailed consideration of landscape and visual sensitivities and landscape value which together inform the overall judgements about the capacity of these LDU's to accommodate development.



View north towards Study Area from public footpath west of Preston Hall.

2.2.2 Landscape Sensitivity

Topic Paper 6: Techniques and Criteria for Judging Capacity and Sensitivity notes the following with regard to assessing landscape sensitivity:

'Judging landscape character sensitivity requires professional judgement about the degree to which the landscape in question is robust, in that it is able to accommodate change without adverse impacts on character. This means making decisions about whether or not significant elements of the landscape will be liable to loss through disturbance, whether or not they could easily be restored, and whether important aesthetic aspects of the character will be liable to change.'

In order to make an informed decision about the sensitivity of the landscape and the individual LDU's this methodology considers the individual components which contribute to landscape sensitivity. These are as follows:

- **Landscape Quality:** The overall quality and condition of the landscape in terms of its intactness, representation of typical character, detracting elements, relationship to the existing settlement edge, and scenic/aesthetic qualities.
- **Landscape Elements:** Individual components of the landscape including land cover, topography and landscape features.
- **Cultural Elements:** This includes elements such as land use, enclosure pattern, heritage features and their setting; contribution to the setting of the town, settlement pattern and relationship of the LDU to the wider landscape.

The landscape sensitivity of each of the LDU's has been assessed using the criteria set out above and contained on the Appraisal Sheets in Section 2.5 of this document. A judgement has then been made for each category on a sliding scale (High – Low) using the criteria set out in the following pages.

Landscape Quality	Description
High	Intact and very attractive landscape which may be nationally recognised for its scenic beauty. Typical of the wider landscape character with no detracting features. Very strong sense of place.
Moderate High	Attractive, semi-natural or rural landscape with strong landscape structure and distinctive features. A good example of the wider landscape character and possesses a strong sense of place.
Moderate	A pleasant usually non-designated landscape with few distinctive features and relatively ordinary characteristics. No significant visual detractors.
Moderate Low	An ordinary landscape with fragmented landscape structure and frequent detracting elements.
Low	Unattractive or degraded landscape affected by numerous detractors. Poor landscape framework and few scenic qualities.

Figure 2.1: Landscape Sensitivity: Landscape Quality

Landscape Elements	Description
High	Contains an abundance of established, significant landscape features and habitats over a high percentage of its area, the vast majority of which is desirable of retention/protection and pose a significant constraint to development. In addition, the area may contain other landscape features such as watercourses and complex landforms which contribute to a varied and interesting landscape.
Moderate High	Contains a high number of mature, significant landscape features, and/or notable habitats the majority of which are desirable of retention/protection. In addition, the landscape may contain other landscape features of note e.g. watercourses and interesting landforms.
Moderate	Contains some notable landscape features and habitats worthy of retention/protection which would reduce the developable area of the Study Area. May contain some landscape features such as woodland/ scrub in the early stages of regeneration and may be considered desirable to retain. May also contain small watercourses or possess a simple, but varied topography.
Moderate Low	Contains few landscape features/habitats worthy of retention and/or simple landform and minor watercourses/drainage channels.
Low	Very few or no significant landscape features, absence of notable watercourses and simple or flat topography.

Figure 2.2: Landscape Sensitivity: Landscape Elements

Cultural Elements	Description
High	Nationally recognised landscape of very high heritage value e.g. World Heritage Site/ Conservation Area/Grade I Listed Buildings or the landscape contributes directly to the setting of such an asset. Landscape plays a key role in the historic setting of the settlement or would impact on numerous important heritage assets.
Moderate High	The landscape plays an important function in the setting of a number of important heritage assets e.g. Conservation Areas/Listed Buildings. The landscape is an important component in the setting of the town and the adjoining countryside. The landscape exhibits features of historic land use/enclosure pattern desirable for retention.
Moderate	The landscape plays some function in the setting of a small number of heritage assets e.g. Listed Buildings/part of a Conservation Area. Landscape retains some elements of historic land use and retains a moderate landscape framework. The landscape plays some role in the setting of the adjoining town and/or countryside.
Moderate Low	Limited number of registered heritage assets in close proximity to the LDU. Former land patterns are fragmented and little evidence of historical enclosure or land use.
Low	Few or no heritage assets in proximity to the LDU. Fragmented land pattern and no evidence of historic field patterns.

Figure 2.3: Landscape Sensitivity: Cultural Elements

The appraisal also considers the extent to which identified landscape effects can be effectively avoided/ and or mitigated.

2.2.3 Visual Sensitivity

The Study considers the visual sensitivity of each of the identified LDU's. The visual sensitivity of each LDU is assessed against a number of factors. These include the following:

- **Enclosure:** This is the degree to which the individual LDU's are enclosed by vegetation or landform or a combination of both.
- **Sensitivity of Receptors:** This is the individual sensitivity of the individual viewpoints. For instance, people using a public right of way in the countryside will tend to have a higher sensitivity than someone in their place of work.
- **Number of Visual Receptors:** The number of people likely to perceive visual changes.
- **Orientation:** The proposed orientation of potential development. For instance, is it located on sloping ground facing the existing urban area or, conversely is it outward facing and conspicuous in views from the wider countryside. Development which is orientated towards the wider landscape is likely to be more visually sensitive than proposals which are more closely related to the existing settlement.
- **Potential for Mitigation:** The degree to which visual effects can be mitigated by appropriate landscape mitigation measures. Mitigation measures must be in keeping with the scale and landscape character of the wider landscape.

Sensitivity	Receptor
High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open views from ground floor windows/curtilage of residential dwellings. • Users of Public Rights of Way/non-motorised users of minor or unclassified roads with predominately open views in sensitive or unspoilt areas. • Visitors to recognised view points or beauty spots. • Users of outdoor recreation facilities with predominately open views where the purpose of that recreation is enjoyment of the countryside.
Moderate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Residential properties with partial views from windows, garden or curtilage. • Users of Public Rights of Way with restricted views, in less sensitive areas or where there are significant existing intrusive features. • Users of outdoor recreational facilities with restricted views or where the purpose of that recreation is incidental to the view. • Schools and other institutional buildings, and their outdoor areas. • Users of minor or unclassified roads in the countryside, whether motorised or not.
Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People in their place of work. • Users of main roads or passengers in public transport on main routes. • Users of outdoor recreational facilities with restricted views and where the purpose of the recreation is unrelated to the view.

Figure 2.4: Sensitivity of Visual Receptors

Visual Sensitivity	Description
High	The LDU is highly exposed and visible from a high number of sensitive receptors both locally and from long distance viewpoints. There are limited opportunities to provide appropriate landscape mitigation.
Moderate High	The LDU has little enclosure and is visible from a high number of high and medium sensitivity receptors. Landscape mitigation would have limited effect in offsetting the harm resulting from development on the available views.
Moderate	The LDU benefits from some containment within the surrounding landscape. There may be some distant views of parts of the LDU from sensitive receptors and a number of localised views from receptors of a moderate and high sensitivity. There are some opportunities to provide mitigation, however the visual effects could not wholly be offset.
Moderate Low	The LDU is well enclosed by either landform or vegetation. Views tend to be restricted and limited to predominately moderate and low sensitivity receptors, although there may be restricted views from higher sensitivity receptors. Landscape mitigation would minimise visual effects and would be in keeping with the adjoining landscape character.
Low	There are few views available from the surrounding area owing to the containment of the LDU. Where partial views do occur these tend to be limited to moderate or low sensitivity receptors.

Figure 2.5: Visual Sensitivity

2.2.4 Overall Sensitivity

Once the overall landscape and visual sensitivity has been established following the methodology above, it is possible to establish the overall sensitivity of each LDU or the identified zones within the LDU. The table opposite (Figure 2.6) sets out the criteria for considering the overall sensitivity. In order to avoid the process becoming overly prescriptive some element of judgement is permitted within the methodology. For instance, when combining a High and a Moderate Sensitivity there is scope for the overall sensitivity to be High or Moderate depending on an informed judgement based on an understanding of the constituent elements which have contributed to the sensitivity of the individual LDU.

Landscape Sensitivity	High	Moderate	Moderate / Moderate High	Moderate High	High / Moderate High	High
	Moderate High	Moderate Low / Moderate	Moderate	Moderate / Moderate High	Moderate High	Moderate High / High
	Moderate	Moderate Low	Moderate Low / Moderate	Moderate	Moderate / Moderate High	Moderate High
	Moderate Low	Low / Moderate Low	Moderate Low	Moderate Low / Moderate	Moderate	Moderate / Moderate High
	Low	Low	Low / Moderate Low	Moderate Low	Moderate Low / Moderate	Moderate
		Low	Moderate Low	Moderate	Moderate High	High
Visual Sensitivity						

Figure 2.6: Overall Sensitivity

2.2.5 Landscape Value

Landscape Value is described by the GLVIA as:

‘The relative value that is attached to different landscapes by society. A landscape may be valued by different stakeholders for a whole variety of reasons.’

The value of a landscape can most easily be attributed to international, national or local designations for landscape character (e.g. Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)) however, current guidance acknowledges the value of undesignated landscapes. Accordingly, although designations are a starting point, other considerations should include perceptual factors (e.g. Scenic beauty, scale, remoteness, wildness etc.), Cultural/historical associations and public accessibility.

The Figure 2.7 sets out the assessment criteria that has been utilised for establishing the relative landscape value of the LDU’s.

Landscape Value	Description
High	Very attractive/rare landscape of international/national importance e.g. World Heritage Site/National Park/AONB.
Moderate High	Attractive landscape possessing scenic beauty and intact landscape structure and perceptual qualities valued at a national/regional level. Can form setting for heritage assets and may have other important cultural/historical associations, e.g. National Park/AONB.
Moderate	A pleasant usually non-designated landscape of good/moderate landscape quality. Value expressed through local/cultural associations or by demonstrable use. May possess other perceptual qualities likely to be valued at a District level.
Moderate Low	An ordinary landscape of moderate or low landscape quality subject to a number of detracting elements and in relatively poor condition. May have limited public access and few obvious cultural/historical associations at a district/local level.
Low	Unattractive or degraded landscape with limited public access or known cultural associations.

Figure 2.7: Landscape Value

2.2.6 Landscape Capacity

The capacity of a landscape to accommodate change of a particular type is directly related to the interaction between the sensitivity of the landscape, the type and amount of change and the overall value attributed to the landscape. This Study utilises the following matrix to combine judgements on sensitivity and value to give the landscape capacity of the individual LDU's and zones. The matrix provides some flexibility to apply informed judgement when making a decision on capacity.

Overall Sensitivity	High	Moderate	Moderate / Moderate Low	Moderate Low	Moderate Low / Low	Low
	Moderate High	Moderate / Moderate High	Moderate	Moderate / Moderate Low	Moderate Low	Moderate Low / Low
	Moderate	Moderate High	Moderate High / Moderate	Moderate	Moderate / Moderate Low	Moderate Low
	Moderate Low	High / Moderate High	Moderate High	Moderate High / Moderate	Moderate	Moderate / Moderate Low
	Low	High	High / Moderate High	Moderate High	Moderate High / Moderate	Moderate
		Low	Moderate Low	Moderate	Moderate High	High
Landscape Value						

Figure 2.8: Landscape Capacity

The capacity of the individual LDU's is defined in Figure 2.9.

2.2.7 Assumptions

This appraisal assumes that new housing would be low rise, typically 8 metres (2 storeys) in height. Similarly commercial development will be limited to office use and will typically be two storey and domestic in scale.

Landscape Capacity	Description
High	The landscape and/or visual characteristics of the LDU are robust and/or degraded and/or its intrinsic landscape value is low and the LDU has capacity to accommodate the proposed development without significant adverse effects on the intrinsic character and/or sensitive views.
Moderate High	The landscape and/or visual characteristics are resilient to change and/or its intrinsic landscape value is moderate to moderate low. The potential for landscape/visual mitigation is good. The LDU can accommodate the proposed development in most situations.
Moderate	The landscape and/or visual characteristics are susceptible to change and/or its intrinsic landscape value is moderate. The potential for landscape/visual mitigation is good. The LDU can accommodate the proposed development in some situations without resulting in significant character change or adverse landscape or visual effects.
Moderate Low	The landscape and/or visual characteristics are vulnerable to change and/or its intrinsic landscape value is moderate high/high. The potential for landscape/visual mitigation is moderate/moderate low. The LDU can accommodate the proposed development in limited situations without resulting in significant character change or adverse landscape or visual effects.
Low	The landscape and/or visual characteristics are very vulnerable to change and/or its intrinsic landscape value is high. The potential for landscape/visual mitigation is low. The LDU is unable to accommodate the proposed development without resulting in significant character change or adverse landscape or visual effects.

Figure 2.9: Landscape Capacity Descriptions

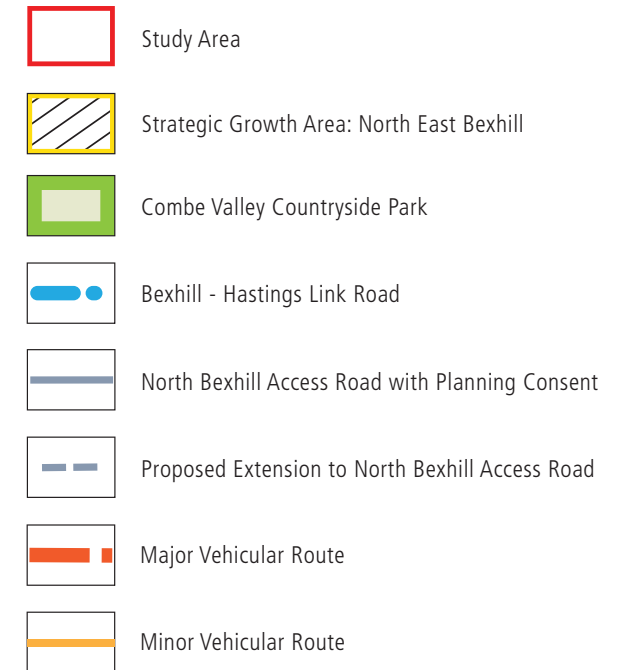
2.3 Baseline Information

2.3.1 Planning Policy

Policy BX3 of the adopted Local Plan Core Strategy sets out the development strategy for Bexhill. Bullet (iii) identifies that outside of the Strategic Growth Area at North East Bexhill, further housing and business growth will be focused on sites to the north and west of the town. The policy notes that the scale, timing and location of these broad development zones will ideally be determined through the Site Allocations process.



The Bexhill - Hasting Link Road Under Construction.



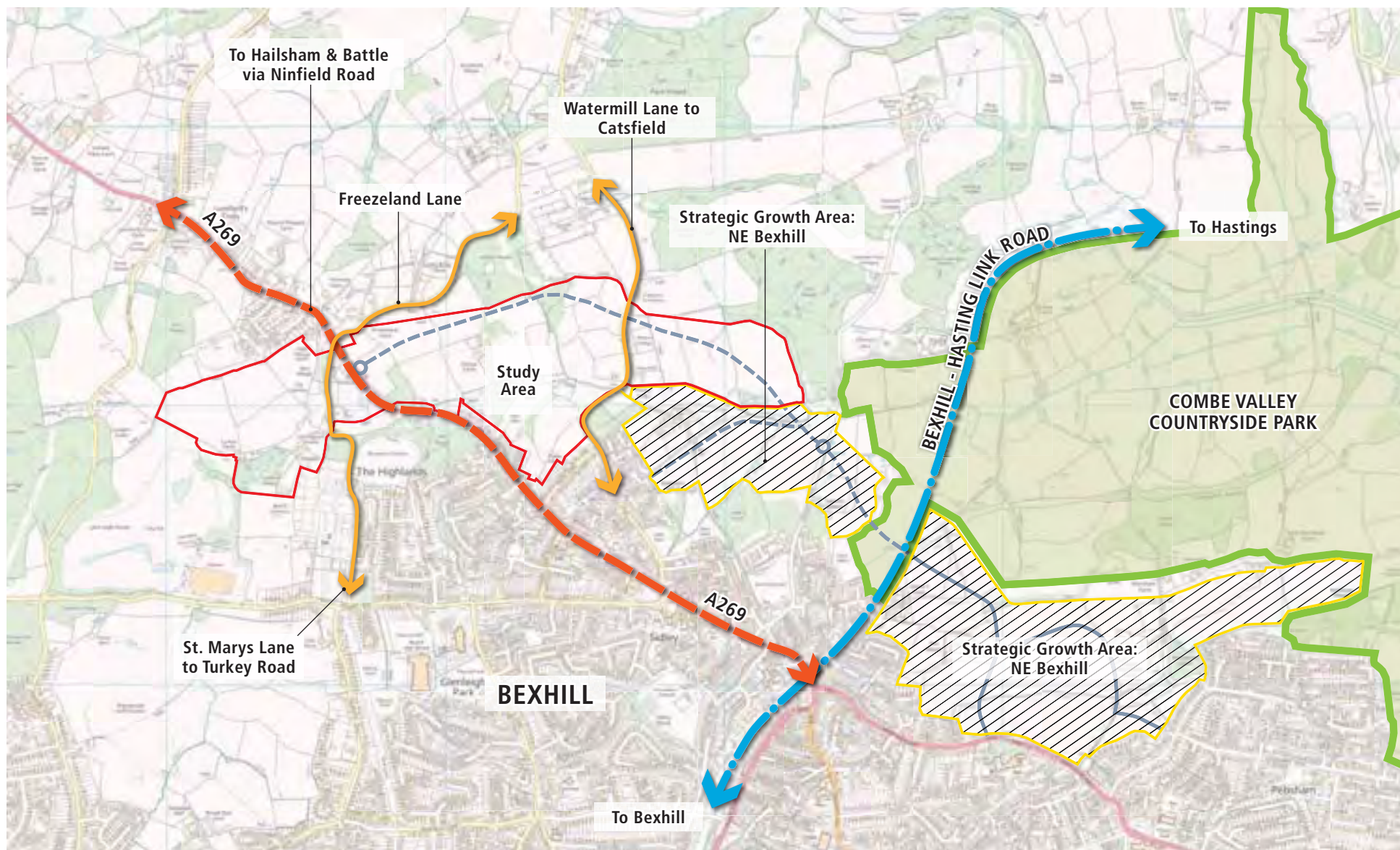


Figure 2.10: Location Plan

2.3.2 Study Area Context

The Study Area occupies a broad swathe of farmland at the northern edge of Bexhill. It extends to the east and west of Ninfield Road (A269) which is the principal route into Bexhill from the north. The Study Area is bordered to the north by two small settlements, The Thorne and Lunsford's Cross which lie along the route of the A269, and by extensive tracts of woodland at Kiln Wood, Kiteye Wood, Cockerel's Wood and Cole Wood. The tree lined, sunken route of Watermill Lane separates the central and eastern parts of the Study Area; and the narrow Freezeland Lane lies in close proximity to sections of the northern boundary.

To the south is the existing settlement edge at Bexhill, which occupies the north facing valley side, with housing visible along the top of the ridgeline in views from the countryside to the north. Bexhill Cemetery occupies higher ground in close proximity to the western part of the Study Area. To the east, the buildings associated with the Listed Preston Hall are visible a short distance south of the Study Area.

The quarry associated with the Ibstock Brickworks lies to the south west of the western part of the Study Area. Further south, beyond Turkey Road is Highwoods Golf Club which forms part of a significant area of open space indented into the western part of Bexhill.

To the east of the Study Area is the lower lying landscape of Combe Valley Countyside Park which extends to meet the adjoining settlement at Hastings.

The wider countryside of the High Weald, to the north, is distinctly undulating, comprising a network of valleys and ridgelines. It is heavily wooded lending this area an enclosed character. There are numerous lanes which cross this area, some of which are sunken and lined by trees/hedgerows.



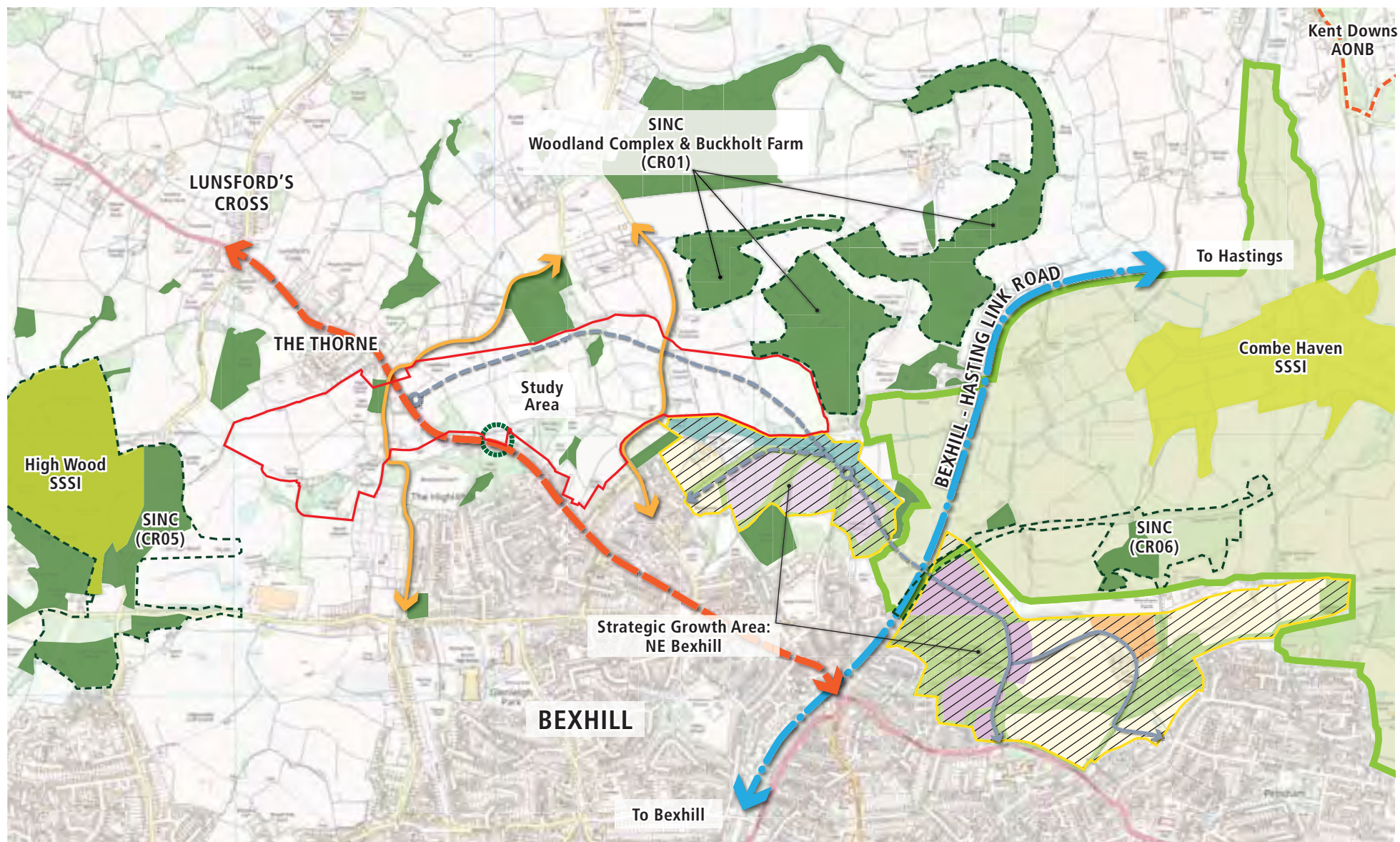


Figure 2.11: Context Plan

2.3.3 Landscape Character

2.3.4 National Landscape Character

Natural England has produced profiles for England's National Character Areas (NCA's), which divides England into 159 distinct natural areas, defined by a unique combination of landscape, biodiversity, geodiversity and cultural and economic activity. The Study Area lies within the High Weald NCA (Area 122) which is a faulted landform with outcrops and ridges running east to west, intersected by the major rivers, the Rother, Brede, Ouse and Medway. Key characteristics of the National character Area include:

- An intimate, hidden and small-scale landscape with glimpses of far reaching views, giving a sense of remoteness and tranquillity.
- Strong feeling of remoteness due to very rural, wooded character. A great extent of interconnected ancient woods, steep sided ghyll woodlands, wooded heaths and shaws.
- Extensive broadleaved woodland cover with a very high proportion of ancient woodland with high forest, small woods and shaws, plus steep valleys with ghyll woodland.
- Small and medium-sized irregularly shaped fields enclosed by a network of hedgerows and wooded shaws, predominantly of medieval origin and managed historically as a mosaic of small agricultural holdings typically used for livestock grazing.

- High density of extraction pits, quarries and ponds, in part a consequence of diverse geology and highly variable soils over short distances.
- A dispersed settlement pattern of hamlets and scattered farmsteads and medieval ridgetop villages founded on trade and non-agricultural rural industries.
- An essentially medieval landscape reflected in the patterns of settlement, fields and woodland.

2.3.5 County Landscape Character

East Sussex County Council adopted the East Sussex Landscape Character Assessment in 2010. The Landscape Character Assessment provides a detailed observation of local landscapes and townscapes, their unique sense of place and the pressures for change which may affect this. It identifies features such as woodlands, farmlands and building styles and can be used to inform decisions about how to manage the landscape.

The Study Area lies across two character areas; the south slopes of the High Weald covers the western parts of the Study Area and the Combe Haven Valley covers eastern parts. The key characteristics of these areas as described in the assessment are summarised opposite:

South Slopes of the High Weald

- High Weald landscape at its most intricate; a very detailed landscape.
- Deeply dissected north – south ridges, valleys and ghylls.
- Close network of ghyll woodland, small woods, shaws and hedges.
- Close network of winding lanes and scattered farms, cottages and linear settlements.
- Parkland and designed landscapes.

The Combe Haven Valley

- Focal, open, flat valley floor with wetland.
- Intricate terrain of small winding valleys and ridges around levels, with abundant woods and ghylls.
- Extensive areas of Ancient Woodland.
- Contrast between valley floor and slopes.

The Landscape Character Assessment also includes visions for these Landscape Character Areas. The vision for the South Slopes of the High Weald is to provide 'a landscape retaining a strong rural backwater feel, with quiet, secluded valleys and ghylls, remote areas and unspoilt rural villages set in a strong indigenous tree and hedge structure'. The vision for the Combe Haven Valley is to provide 'a remote yet accessible valley contained by well wooded slopes. Its proximity to urban areas gives great potential for unique recreational opportunities. Well managed and enhanced wildlife habitats and increased biodiversity'.

The assessment also provides a commentary of the problems, pressures and detracting features affecting each character area, and the associated landscape action priorities. The assessment identifies potential urban fringe problems around Bexhill affecting both character areas. For the Combe Haven Valley it also identifies the impact of the proposed Bexhill – Hastings Link Road and associated development as a potential issue. The following identified landscape action priorities are of relevance to this Landscape Study:

- Establish strong development boundaries to Bexhill, strengthening woodland.
- Urban fringe landscape management.
- Increase tree cover on slopes to help contain development and the proposed link road.

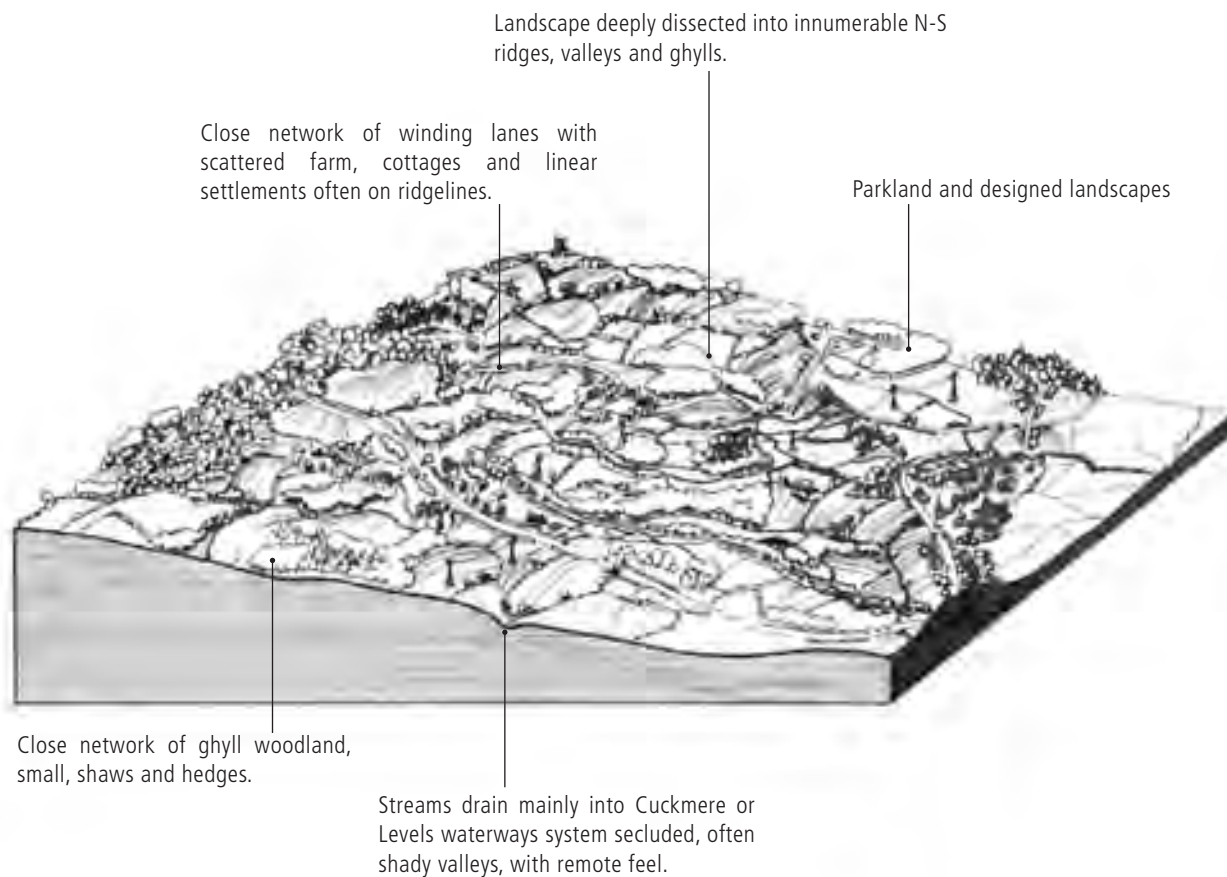


Figure 2.12: South Slopes of the High Weald (Source: East Sussex Landscape Character Assessment (2010))

2.3.6 Study Area Description

The following text briefly describes the Study Area. More detailed descriptions are set out in the individual descriptions of the LDU's. The Study Area and its immediate context are shown on the Aerial Photograph, Figure 2.13.



Figure 2.13: Aerial Photograph

2.3.7 Land Use and Land Cover

The Study Area comprises predominately of pastoral farmland and paddocks typically sub-divided by hedgerows, although in places these have become largely defunct. It has a medium to large scale field pattern over much of its area; although in the central part of the Study Area there is a more intimate field pattern of smaller scale fields, sub-divided by a network of treed hedgerows.

A narrow watercourse extends along the base of the valley, with a number of minor watercourses flowing north to south down the valley sides. The most prominent of these is within the central part of the Study Area and is associated with an area of ghyll woodland which extends to the south of Kiteye Wood.

The southern central part of the Study Area lies on the north facing side of the valley and is closely related to the existing settlement edge. It contains a number of tranches of mature woodland some of which is ancient in origin and an area of public allotments.

There are a number of existing dwellings and farm buildings included within the Study Area. These include a number of dwellings to the east of Watermill Lane; the agricultural buildings, dwelling and storage yard located within the central part of the Study Area; and several dwellings and Turkey Farm located within the western part of the Study Area.

2.3.8 Ecological Designations

There are no statutory wildlife sites located within or adjacent to the Study Area. The Woodland Complex at Buckholt Farm Site of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCI), a non-statutory designation, lies adjacent to the eastern extent of the Study Area. There are also several areas identified as Ancient Woodland, within or in close proximity to the Study Area. The location of these designations is shown on Figure 2.11.

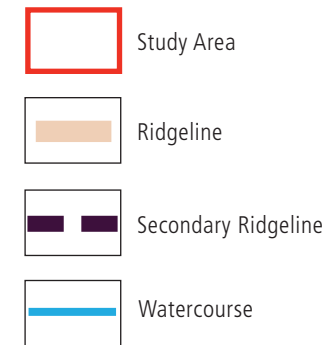


Looking east towards The Woodland Complex at Buckholt Farm Site of Nature Conservation from within the Study Area.

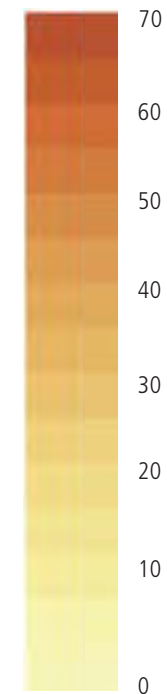
2.3.9 Topography

The landform of the Study Area and its immediate context is illustrated in Figure 2.14. The majority of the Study Area lies on the south facing slope of the valley which extends alongside the northern edge of Bexhill. The base of the valley is marked by a narrow watercourse, which flows west – east. The remainder of the Study Area and the settlement edge at Bexhill lies to the south of the watercourse on the opposing valley side.

A ridgeline extends in close proximity to the northern edge of the Study Area, beyond which the landform falls to the adjoining valley along the route of Watermill Stream. The wider landscape is distinctly undulating comprising numerous ridges and valleys which lend both the local landscape and the Study Area a strong degree of enclosure.



Elevation Key (m)



The landform falls towards the watercourse in the eastern part of the Study Area, before rising towards the dwellings at Preston Hall.

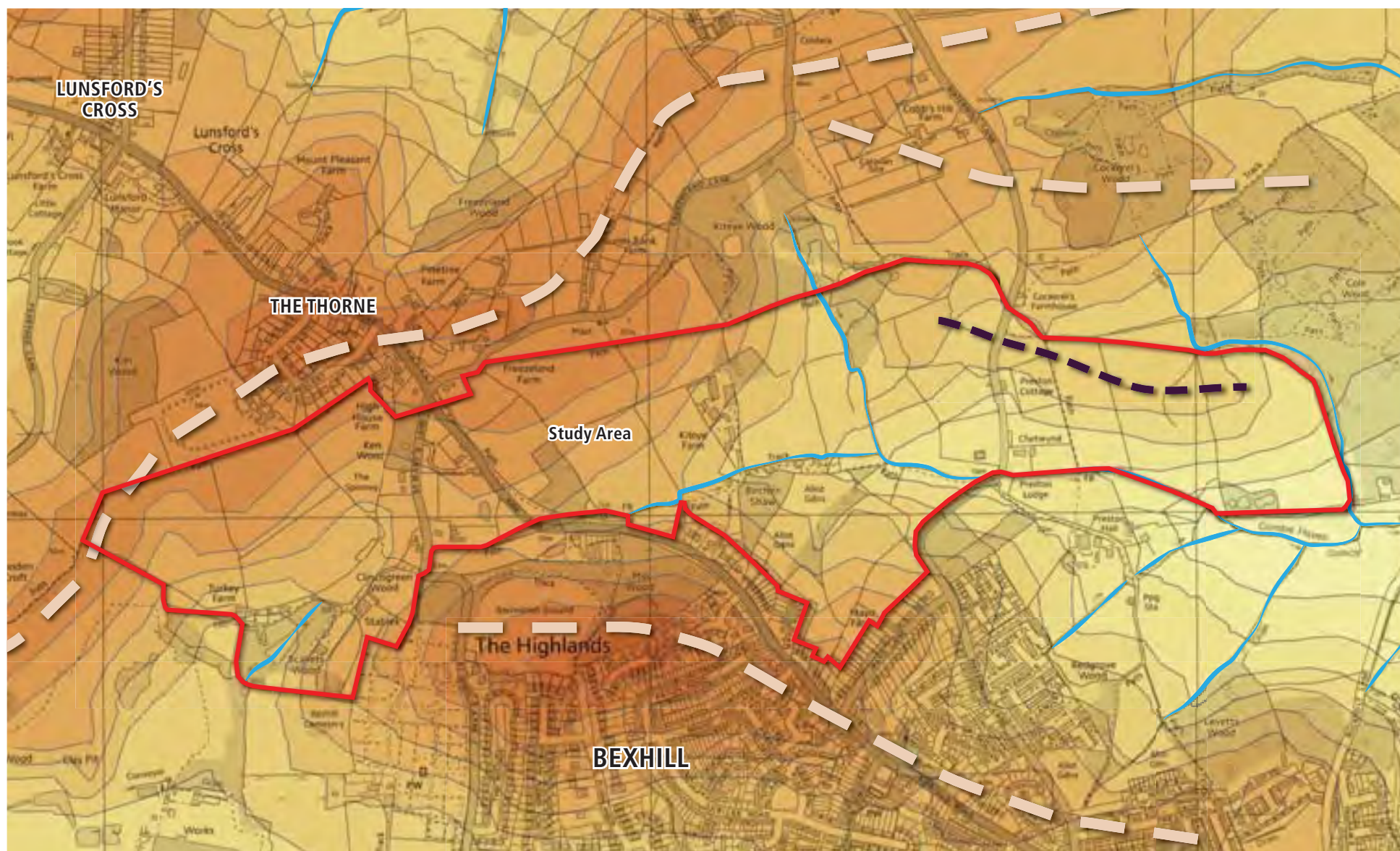


Figure 2.14: Topography Plan

2.3.10 Heritage Assets

Figure 2.16 identifies that there are a number of Listed Buildings and areas identified as Archeological Notification Areas located within close proximity to the Study Area. However there are none within the Study Area itself. The following Listed Buildings lie a short distance from the Study Area:

1. The High House, Grade II
2. Preston Hall, Grade II
3. Cottage in the grounds of Preston Hall, Grade II
4. Cockerels Farmhouse, Grade II

Historic mapping dating back to 1875 shows that the current field pattern remains largely unaltered and has not been subject to further rationalisation over the intervening years.

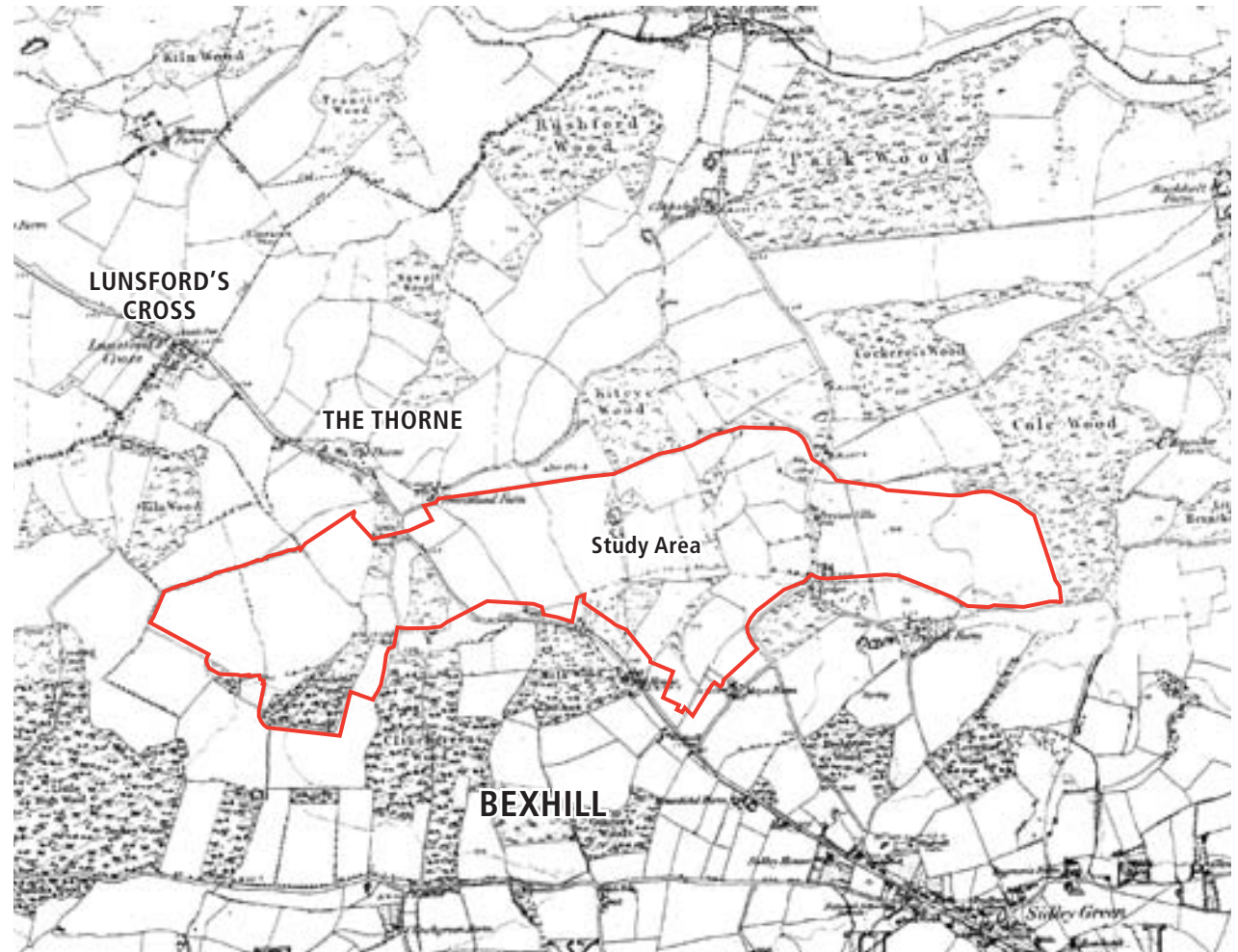


Figure 2.15: Historic Map (1875)

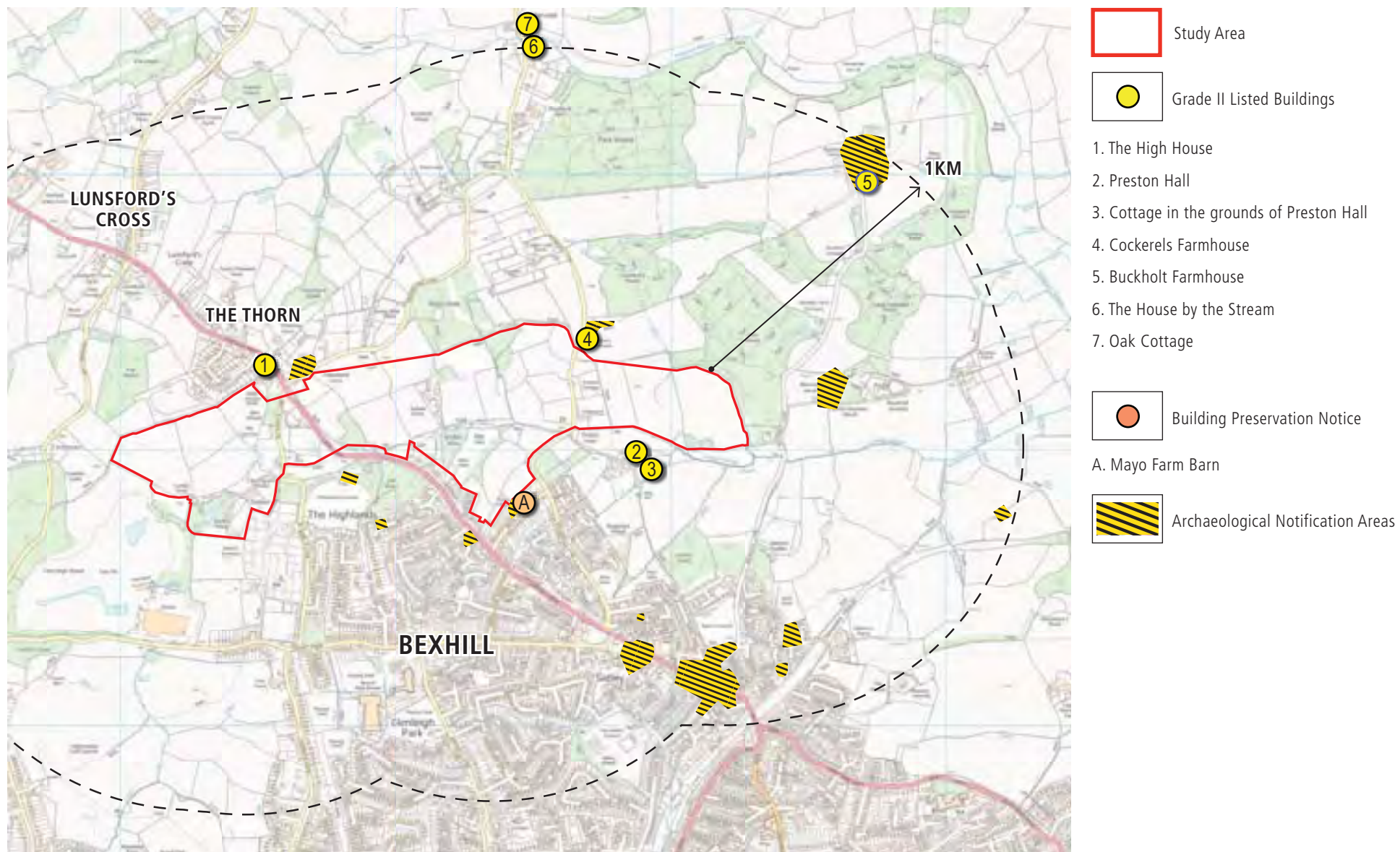


Figure 2.16: Heritage Plan

2.3.11 Public Rights of Way

The existing Public Rights of Way are illustrated on Figure 2.17. The Study Area is crossed by two Public Rights of Way; Bexhill 56 leads from Ninfield Road to Watermill Lane; and Bexhill 16b which crosses the eastern part of the Study Area, leading from Preston Hall through to Watermill Lane. In addition, Bexhill 61 follows the central part of the northern boundary, with Bexhill 47 following the western section. Bexhill 35a, crosses the land to the north of the eastern LDU. Bexhill 18 crosses the land between Ninfield Road and St. Mary's Lane. There are also numerous footpaths which cross the countryside to the north and east, however given the rolling topography and intervening vegetation, these are well contained within the surrounding landscape.

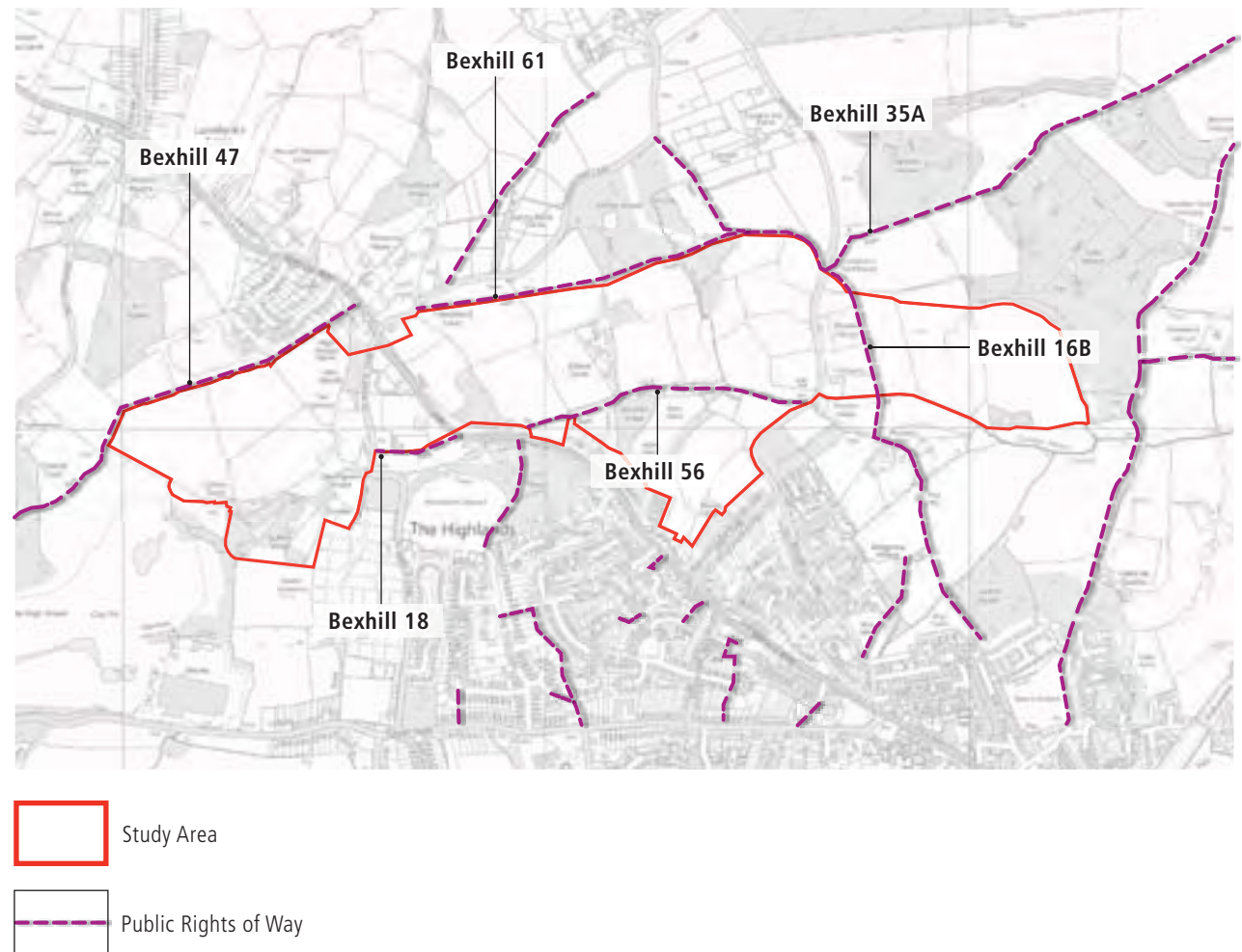


Figure 2.17: Public Rights of Way

2.3.12 North East Bexhill Growth Area

The land at North East Bexhill is allocated within the adopted Local Plan as a new major urban extension. To assist in delivering growth in this area, the Council have prepared the North East Bexhill Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG). Figure 2.18 shows the concept plan for development in North East Bexhill. This illustrates the proximity of the proposals to the eastern edge of the Study Area, with the land a short distance to the south of Preston Hall identified for both residential and commercial use. A greenspace corridor and structural landscape planting is identified in the vicinity of Preston Hall, separating the south eastern part of the Study Area from the growth area.

Although not directly related to this Landscape Study, in considering the landscape and visual effects of development within the eastern part of the Study Area, reference is made to the proximity of the North East Bexhill Growth Area, as development within this area will inevitably impact on the neighbouring landscape character.

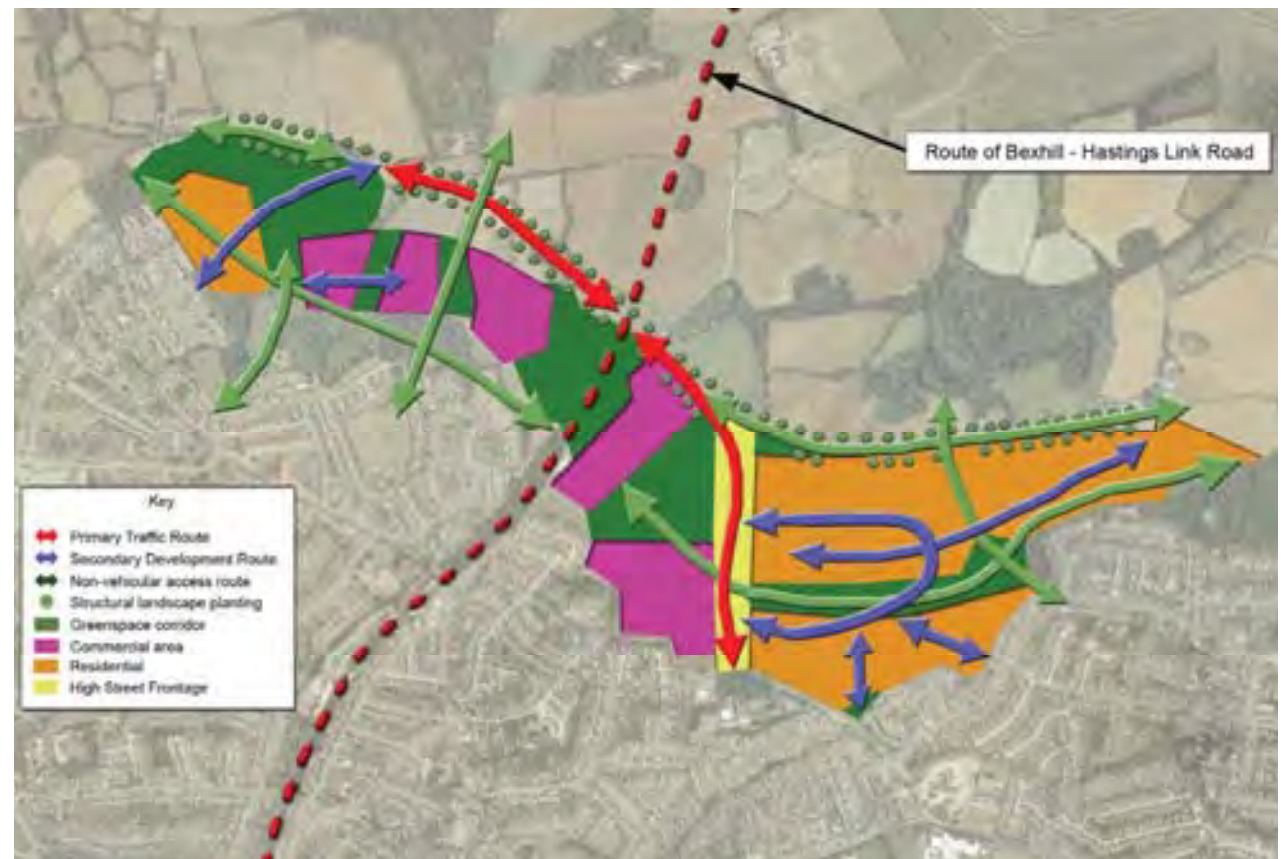


Figure 2.18: North East Bexhill Growth Area (Source: North East Bexhill Supplementary Planning Guidance (2009))

2.4 Landscape Description Units (LDU's)

In order to refine the Landscape Study, the Study Area has been sub-divided into a series of Landscape Description Units (LDU's). These distinct LDU's have been identified following field survey work and the locations of the individual LDU's is shown in Figure 2.19. The identification of individual LDU's enables a more detailed consideration of landscape and visual sensitivities and landscape value, which together inform the overall judgements about the capacity of these individual LDU's to accommodate development.

The individual LDU's are geographically distinct and share similar characteristics in terms of field pattern, land cover, landform and land use so that they have a broadly consistent character, although there may be some local variations within each LDU. Within each LDU there will also be some variation in sensitivity and for the purpose of mapping sensitivity/capacity some LDU's have been sub-divided into smaller sensitivity zones where appropriate.

The detailed findings of the Landscape Study are set out on the Appraisal Sheets in Section 2.5 of this Study, and are summarised in the following section. A Summary Table and Overall Landscape Capacity Plan are contained at the end of this section.



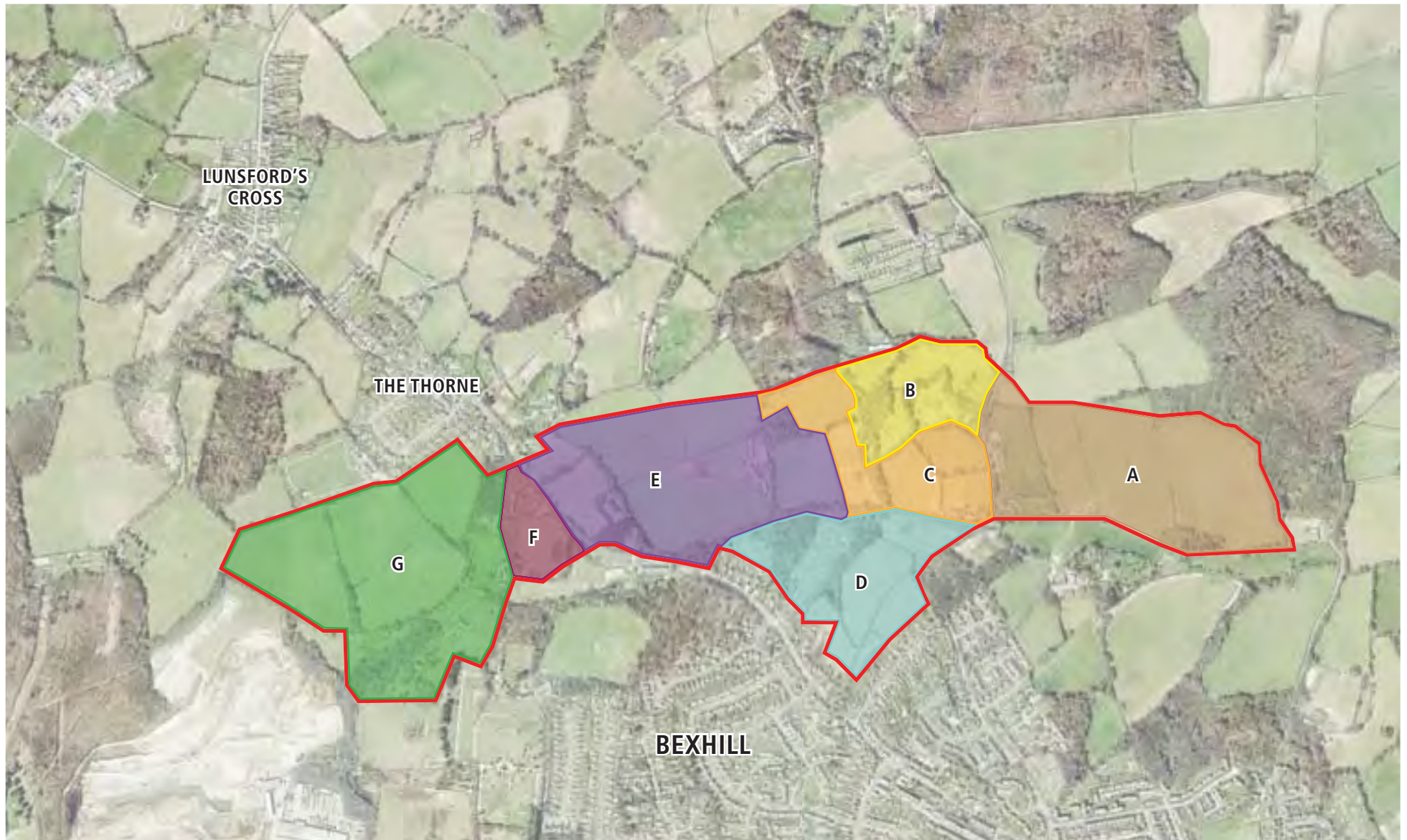


Figure 2.19: Landscape Description Units Location Plan

2.4.1 LDU A: Land East of Watermill Lane

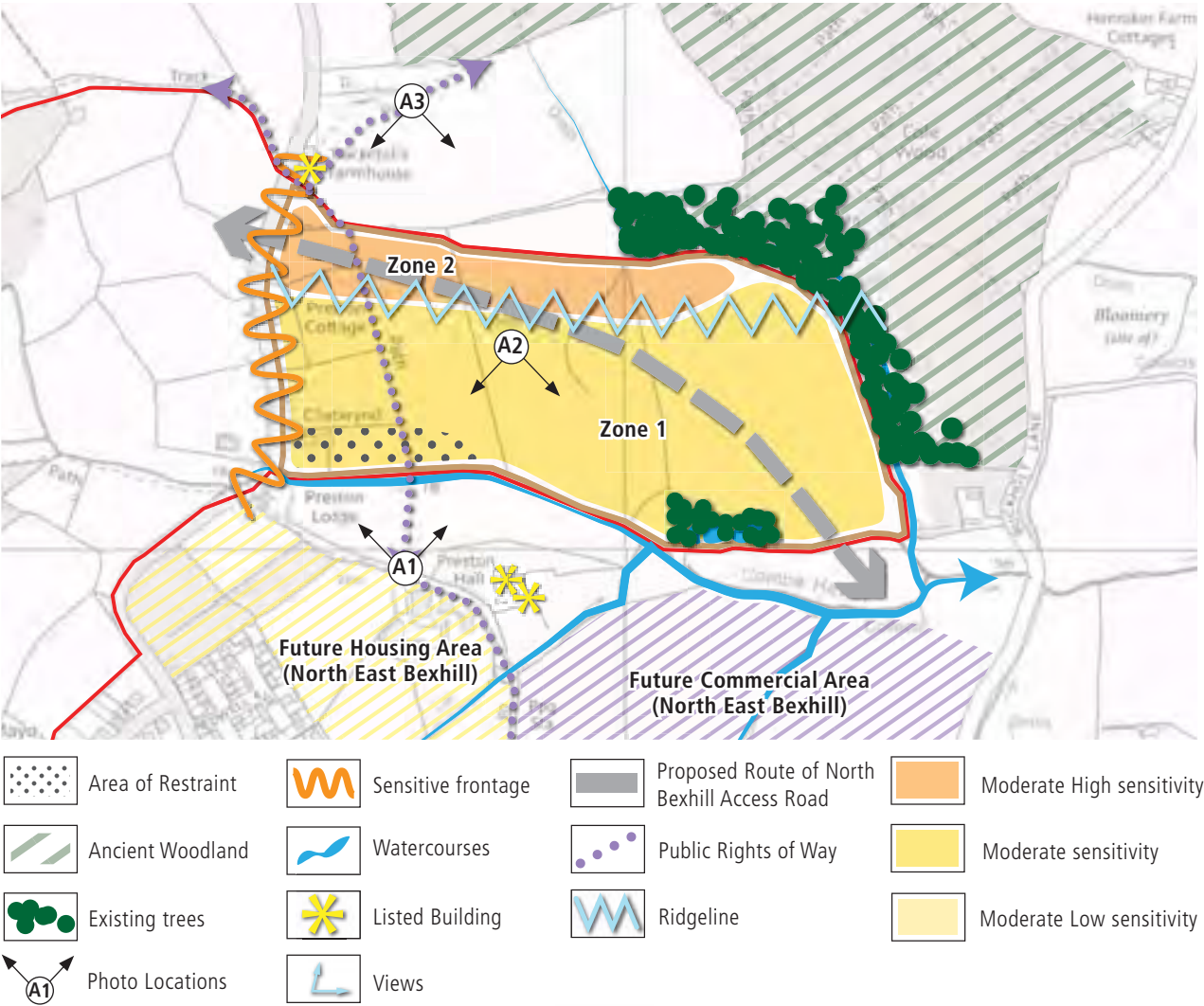


Figure 2.20: LDU A: Landscape Constraints

2.4.2 LDU Description

The LDU comprises the south facing slopes of a valley on the northern edge of Bexhill. The dominant land use is pastoral farmland, with a number of paddocks and two dwellings contained within the western part of the LDU. The landform generally slopes towards the watercourse at the southern boundary with the land immediately beyond rising to form the setting of the Grade II listed Preston Hall.

A domed ridgeline crosses the northern part of the LDU with the land falling beyond towards the Listed Building at Cockerell's Farmhouse and Cockerell's Wood. The Ancient Woodland at Cole Wood encloses the LDU to the east and partially to the north. The existing settlement edge is visible along the ridgeline of the adjoining valley side to the south. Proposed residential and commercial development in the North East Bexhill Growth Area will enclose Preston Hall to the south of the LDU as part of the current planned expansion of the settlement.

2.4.3 Landscape and Visual Sensitivity

The LDU lies on the opposing valley side to the existing settlement and is contained by the ridgeline and woodland to the north. Overall, it has a pleasant rolling landform, although it possesses relatively ordinary scenic qualities in comparison to the wider landscape character. The lower slopes of the valley contribute to the setting of the adjoining Preston Hall, whilst the higher ground in the northern part of the LDU is more visually sensitive in

views from the immediate north. The approach to Bexhill along Watermill Lane has a rural lane character which would be sensitive to increased urbanisation.

The LDU is currently located outside of the existing settlement and is poorly related to the current settlement pattern. However, future development in North East Bexhill would extend the urban area to the south of Preston Hall making this area a more logical zone for expansion

2.4.4 Potential Mitigation/Avoidance of Effects

Development should be avoided on the lower slopes of the valley which would intrude on the setting of Preston Hall and on the existing watercourse. Similarly, development should be avoided on the domed ridge line to the north minimising the effect of development on the wider countryside. There is an opportunity to provide new woodland planting on the higher ground, which would be characteristic of the wider landscape character and would form a wooded backdrop to the LDU. In addition, development proposals should respect the rural quality of Watermill Lane through the careful siting, design and density of any development frontage.

2.4.5 Capacity to Accept Change

Overall the majority of this LDU has a moderate capacity to accommodate development in conjunction with the wider planned expansion at North East Bexhill.



Photo Location A1



Photo Location A2



Photo Location A3

2.4.6 LDU B: Land South of Kiteye Wood

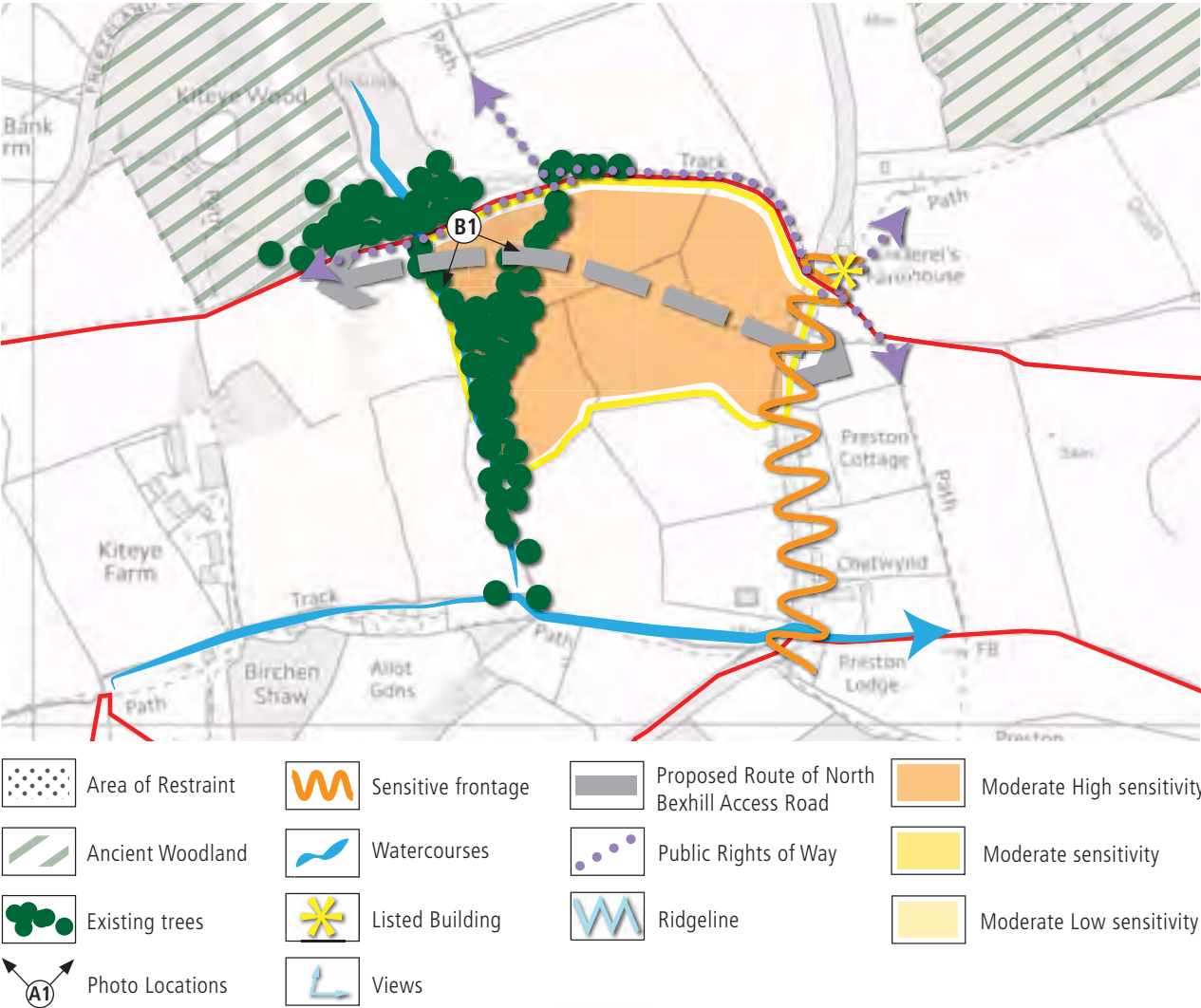


Figure 2.21: LDU B: Landscape Constraints

2.4.7 LDU Description

Predominately south facing slopes of small scale pastoral fields subdivided by a network of treed hedgerows and pockets of ghyll woodland to the south of Kiteye Wood. The LDU has a complex topography as the south facing slope is folded along the north-south route of a shallow watercourse that passes through the area leading from Kiteye Wood. Woodland and associated wetland species follow the course of the woodland. The area has an intimate character and is contained in views to and from the existing settlement edge.

2.4.8 Landscape and Visual Sensitivity

The LDU contains a number of mature landscape features. It is poorly connected to the existing settlement edge both visually and physically. It has a pleasant, rural character and sense of remoteness with few detracting visual elements. In visual terms, it is well contained from the wider landscape, although there are open views from the footpath which follows the northern extent of the LDU.

2.4.9 **Potential Mitigation/Avoidance of Effects**

Proposals should seek to retain the existing character of this area through the retention and management of mature landscape features.

2.4.10 **Capacity to Accept Change**

This LDU has a Moderate Low capacity to accommodate change owing to its inherent landscape qualities.



Photo Location B1

2.4.11 LDU C: Land West of Watermill Lane

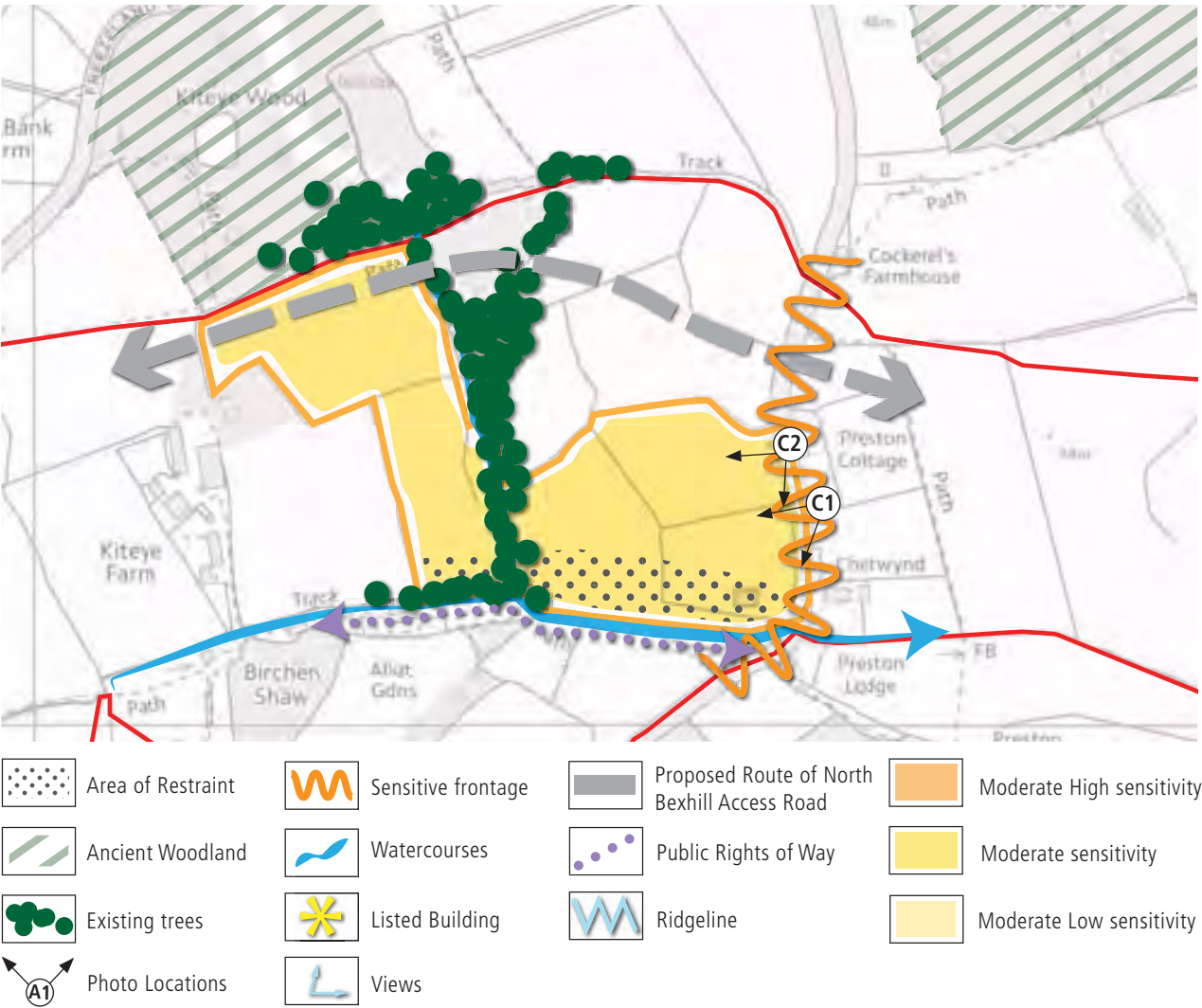


Figure 2.22: LDU C: Landscape Constraints

2.4.12 LDU Description

This LDU occupies an area of south facing pastoral farmland with a small to medium field pattern and relatively intact field structure. It contains a number of mature landscape features including hedgerows and several large oak trees. It has a pleasant character although it contains a number of detracting elements, including horticulture, pig and poultry sheds and a materials storage site.

2.4.13 Landscape and Visual Sensitivity

The LDU contains a number of mature landscape features and a relatively intact field structure. It has a pleasant character but relatively ordinary scenic qualities. It adjoins Watermill Lane which possesses a rural character along the approach to the settlement at Bexhill. It is currently poorly related to the existing settlement pattern and is located on the opposing valley side. It is visually contained in views from the wider area by a combination of vegetation and topography.

2.4.14 Potential Mitigation/Avoidance of Effects

Proposals should seek to retain the existing character of this area through the retention and management of mature landscape features to provide a robust landscape framework. The lower slopes of the valley could be retained free from development to provide a setting for the public footpath and existing watercourse.

2.4.15 Capacity to Accept Change

This LDU has a moderate capacity to accommodate change owing to its inherent landscape qualities and dislocation from the existing settlement edge. In addition, it contains a number of elements which detract from its overall landscape quality. In the event development came forward as part of a wider planned extension, visual effects would be relatively localised owing to the containment of this LDU in views from the wider landscape.



Photo Location C1



Photo Location C2

2.4.16 LDU D: Land North East of Ninfield Road

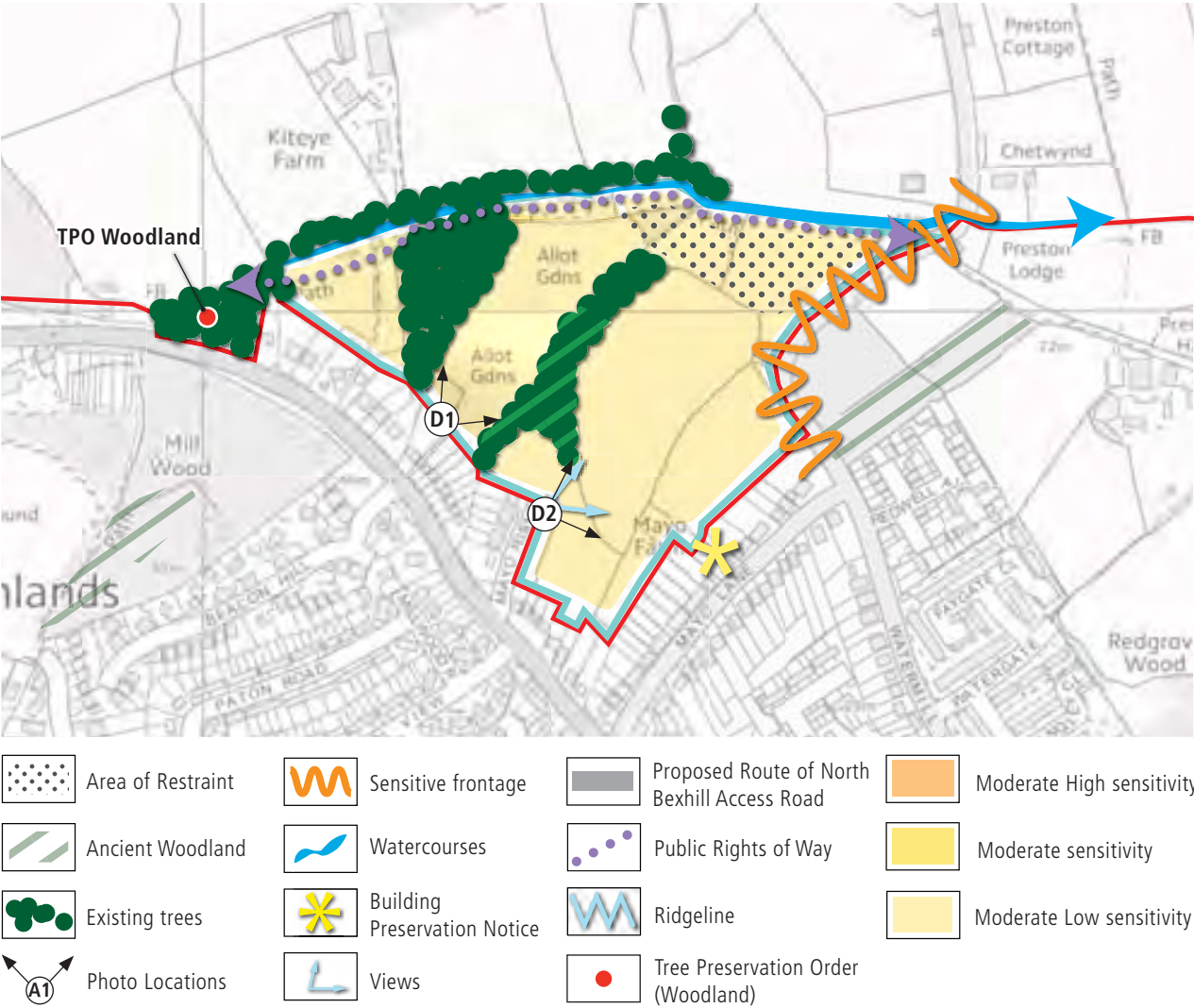


Figure 2.23: LDU D: Landscape Constraints

2.4.17 LDU Description

This area lies on the north facing slope of the valley, in close proximity to the existing settlement edge. It comprises areas of grazing land, allotments and mature woodland, some of it Ancient Woodland. It slopes towards the stream corridor which extends alongside its southern edge. The fields are sub-divided by a network of field hedgerows.

2.4.18 Landscape and Visual Sensitivity

LDU comprises a relatively intact landscape of pastoral fields, allotments and woodland. In terms of landscape character it is undistinguished and subject to a number of detracting elements including the existing settlement edge, and the presence of urban fringe influences such as the allotments and horticulture. There are opportunities for far reaching views towards the landscape to the north east. The LDU is visible in views from the adjoining valley side to the north, although, in these views the LDU is perceived alongside the existing settlement edge.

2.4.19 **Potential Mitigation/Avoidance of Effects**

Proposals should seek to retain the existing and mature landscape features. The lower slopes of the valley should be retained free from development to provide a setting for the public footpath and the existing watercourse, and to minimise the urbanisation of this section of Watermill Lane.

2.4.20 **Capacity to Accept Change**

This LDU has a Moderate High capacity to accommodate change as new housing in this location would be well related to the existing settlement pattern.



Photo Location D1



Photo Location D2

2.4.21 LDU E: Land South of Freezeland Lane

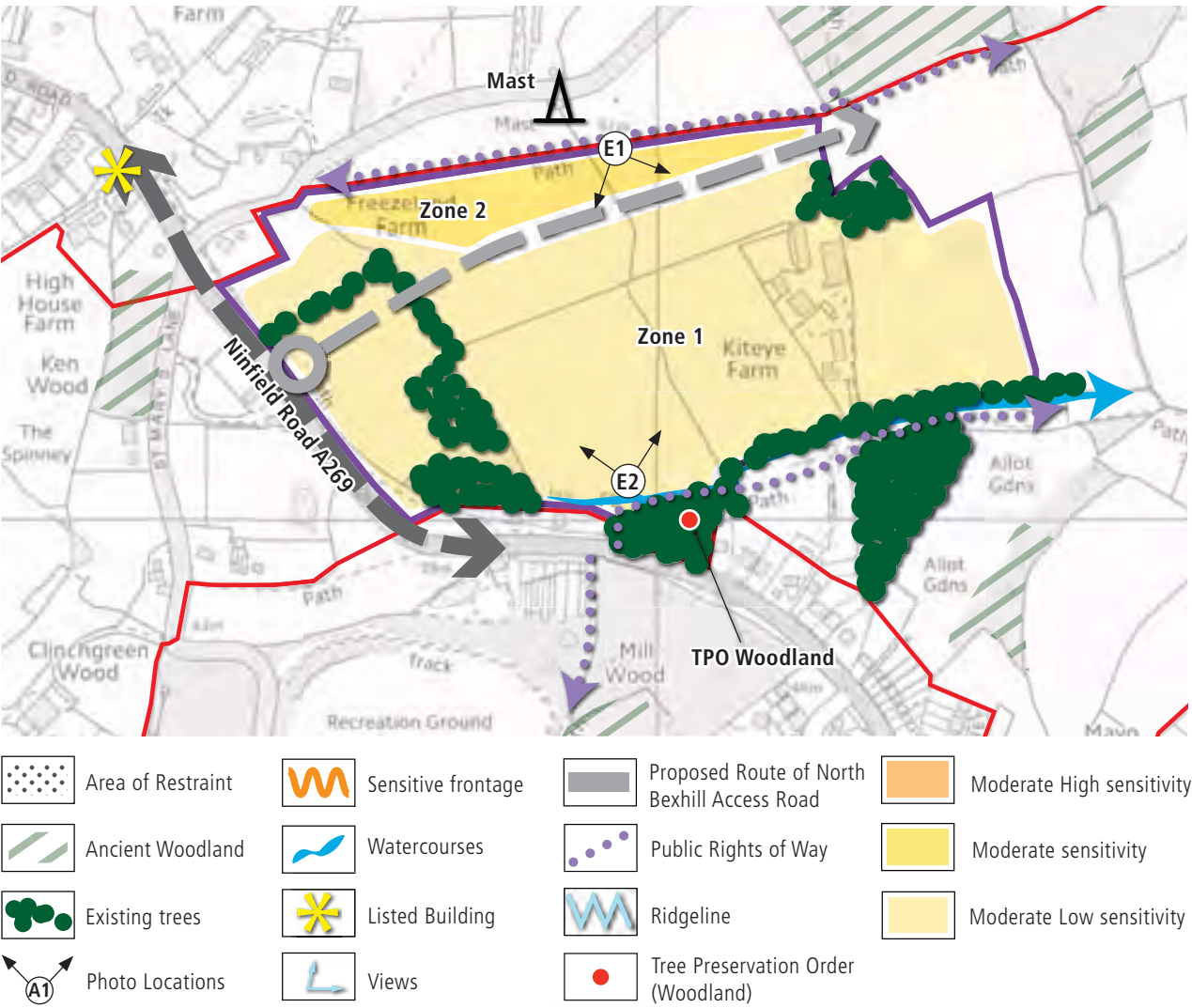


Figure 2.24: LDU E: Landscape Constraints

2.4.22 LDU Description

This area lies on the south facing slope of the valley which extends alongside the northern edge of Bexhill. It comprises a medium to large field network subdivided by intermittent field hedgerows. To the west are a couple of smaller paddocks enclosed by mature treed hedgerows. To the south west is an area of mixed woodland which encloses an area of hard standing. A wide verge separates the LDU from the route of Ninfield Road at this point. There are a number of agricultural buildings located within the eastern part of the LDU.

2.4.23 Landscape and Visual Sensitivity

This LDU comprises an undistinguished area of landscape on the edge of the settlement. It contains few notable landscape features and has a relatively simple topography which is not particularly characteristic of the wider landscape of the High Weald. It lies on the opposing valley to the existing settlement, however is quite well related to existing housing development along Ninfield Road. The higher ground in the northern part of the LDU is more sensitive in landscape and visual terms.

2.4.24 Potential Mitigation/Avoidance of Effects

New woodland planting along the higher ground in the northern part of the Study Area would provide an appropriate backdrop to the LDU, screen views from the north and assist in preserving the separation between the adjoining settlements at Lunsford's Cross/The Thorne.

2.4.25 Capacity to Accept Change

This LDU has a Moderate High capacity to accommodate change as it has limited landscape value and is separated from the wider landscape to the north as a result of the intervening topography. New development on the south facing slopes could be accommodated without significant impacts on the setting of the settlement and would not appear discordant with the existing settlement pattern.



Photo Location E1



Photo Location E2

2.4.26 LDU F: Land between St. Mary's Road and Ninfield Road

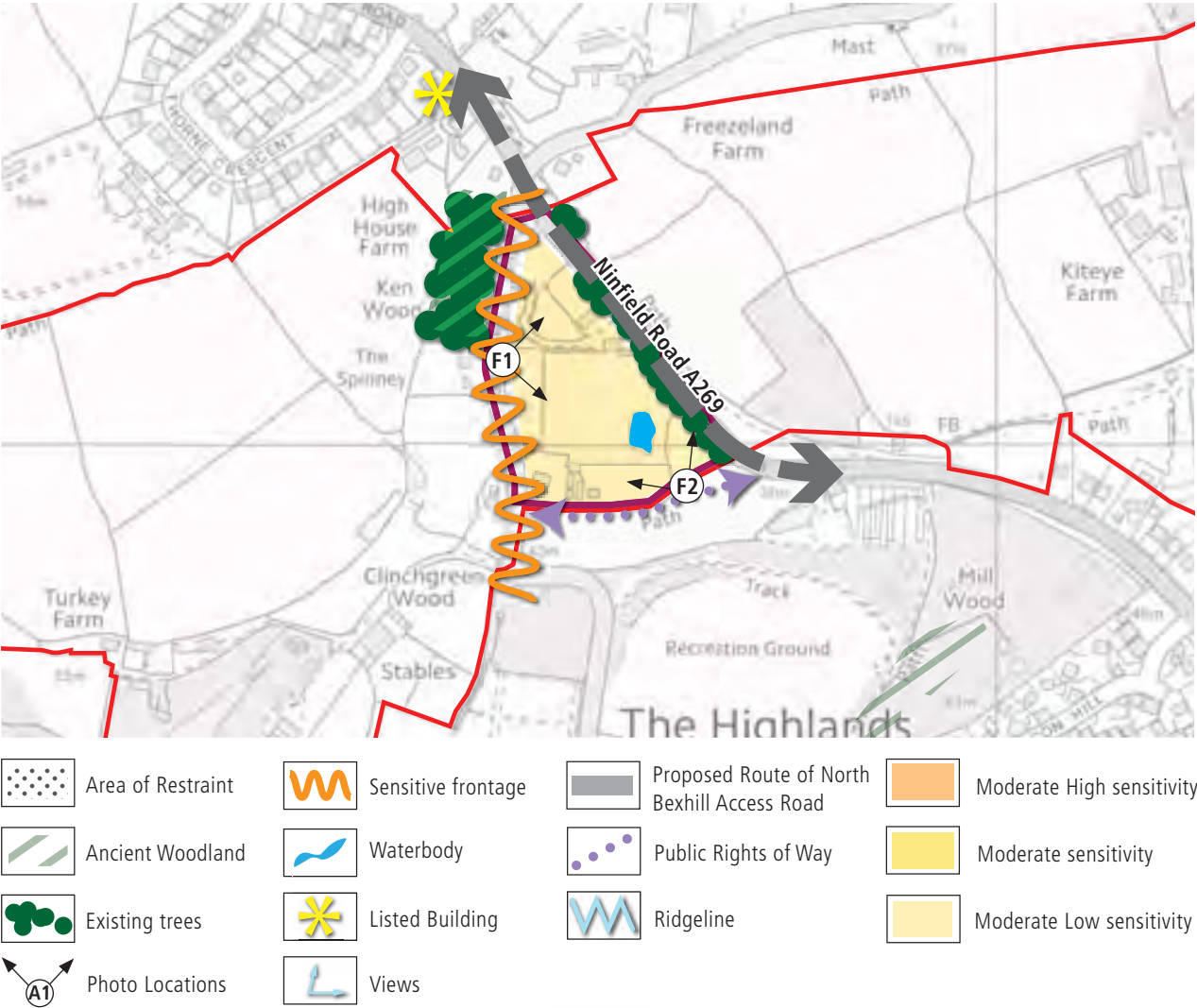


Figure 2.25: LDU F: Landscape Constraints

2.4.27 LDU Description

The LDU comprises a triangular land parcel of relatively flat land. It contains two properties set within generous grounds and an area of pastoral farmland. It is bordered to the south by a wooded embankment, beyond which is a recreation ground. There are a number of mature trees located within the southern part of the LDU and an established hedgerow/tree line along the route of Ninfield Road. The internal field hedgerows are intermittent. A pond is located a short distance to the south of this area.

2.4.28 Landscape and Visual Sensitivity

This LDU has few significant landscape features and has relatively ordinary scenic value. It occupies an area of flat topography in proximity to Ninfield Road and the northern approach to Bexhill. It is well contained in views, although there are localised views from St. Mary's Lane and from the public footpath which extends along the southern boundary of the LDU.

2.4.29 **Potential Mitigation/Avoidance of Effects**

Retain and enhance the existing landscape framework and respect the semi-rural setting of St. Mary's Road.

2.4.30 **Capacity to Accept Change**

This LDU has a Moderate High capacity to accommodate change owing to its relatively ordinary landscape character and limited visual sensitivity. Limited development in this location would not appear discordant with the existing settlement pattern on the northern edge of Bexhill.



Photo Location F1



Photo Location F2

2.4.31 LDU G: Land West of St. Mary's Road

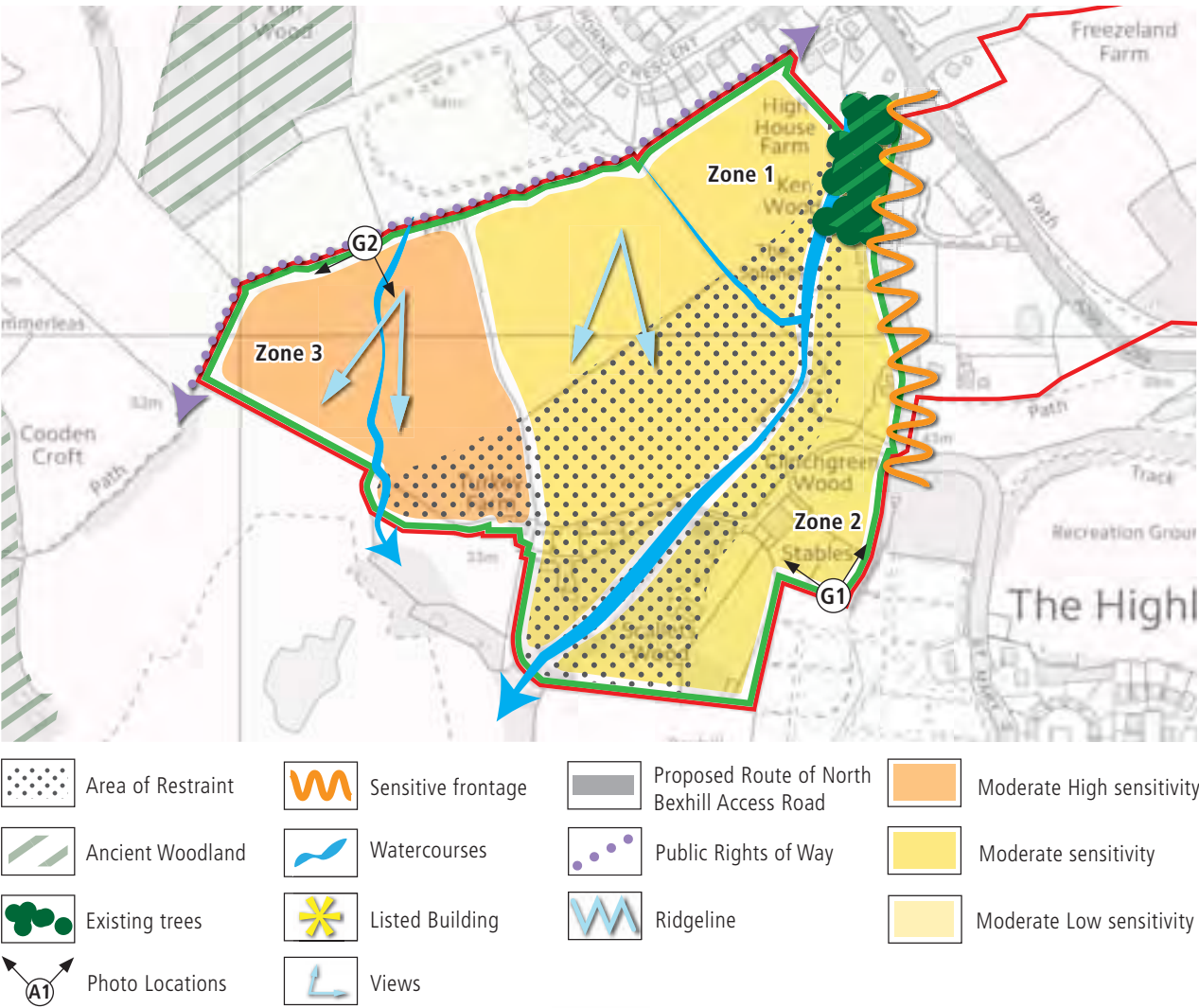


Figure 2.26: LDU G: Landscape Constraints

2.4.32 LDU Description

This LDU comprises an area of valley farmland on the north western extent of the settlement. It is bordered to the north by the adjoining settlement of The Thorn and an existing caravan/camp site. It contains two dwellings and the farm buildings at Turkey Farm on the north facing slope of the valley. The remainder of the LDU comprises a medium scale network of pastoral fields. A shallow water course flows along the base of the valley which is fed by a couple of ephemeral watercourses which dissect the valley sides to the north. There are extensive views from the higher ground on the northern valley slopes, southwards towards the coast.

2.4.33 Landscape and Visual Sensitivity

This LDU has a pleasant rural character and exhibits characteristics of the wider High Weald character area, particularly within the north western field. It forms the northern extent of a wider landscape corridor which extends southwards through the western edge of Bexhill and separates Bexhill from the smaller settlements at Lunsford's Cross and The Thorne. There are views from St. Mary's Road, Bexhill Cemetery and from the public footpath and caravan park which extends alongside the northern boundary of the LDU. Long distance views tend to be contained by the intervening topography and significant areas of established vegetation. The LDU adjoins the north western edge of Bexhill although it is separated from the wider settlement by the open space at Bexhill Cemetery and the recreation ground.

2.4.34 Potential Mitigation/Avoidance of Effects

Avoid development in the higher quality part to the north west of the LDU. Retain the existing landscape framework, valley landform and respect the setting of Bexhill Cemetery.

2.4.35 Capacity to Accept Change

The LDU occupies the valley sides on the north western edge of Bexhill. It has a relatively intact and pleasant landscape character and forms part of a wider landscape corridor extending through the western part of Bexhill. Development in this location, particularly the northern valley side, would be separated from the main settlement at Bexhill by existing areas of open space and by a change in topography. Development could also result in coalescence with the adjoining settlement at Lunsford's Cross and The Thorne.



Photo Location G1



Photo Location G2

2.4.36 Summary:

The tables in Section 2.5 set out the findings of the Landscape Study. A summary of the inherent landscape and visual sensitivities of each of the individual LDU's and their overall capacity to accommodate new development is shown in Figure 2.27. The findings of the Landscape Study, in terms of capacity, are illustrated on Figure 2.28.

Land Description Unit		Landscape Sensitivity			Overall Landscape Sensitivity	Visual Sensitivity	Overall Combined Landscape & Visual Sensitivity	Landscape Value	Capacity to accept change (See Figure 2.9)
		Landscape Quality	Landscape Elements	Cultural Elements					
A	Land East of Watermill Lane								
	Zone 1:	Moderate	Moderate Low	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
	Zone 2:	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate High	Moderate High	Moderate High	Moderate High	Moderate	Moderate Low
B	Land South of Kiteye Wood	Moderate High	Moderate High	Moderate	Moderate High	Moderate	Moderate High	Moderate	Moderate Low
C	Land West of Watermill Lane	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
D	Land North East of Ninfield Road	Moderate Low	Moderate	Moderate Low	Moderate Low	Moderate	Moderate Low	Moderate Low	Moderate High
E	Land South of Freezeland Lane								
	Zone 1:	Moderate Low	Moderate Low	Moderate Low	Moderate Low	Moderate	Moderate Low	Moderate Low	Moderate High
	Zone 2:	Moderate Low	Moderate Low	Moderate	Moderate Low	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate Low	Moderate
F	Land between ST. Mary’s Lane and Ninefield Road	Moderate Low	Moderate Low	Moderate Low	Moderate Low	Moderate Low	Moderate Low	Moderate Low	Moderate High
G	Land West of St. Mary’s Road								
	Zone 1:	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate High	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
	Zone 2:	Moderate	Moderate High	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
	Zone 3:	Moderate High	Moderate High	Moderate High	Moderate High	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate High	Moderate Low

Figure 2.27: Summary of Capacity Appraisal

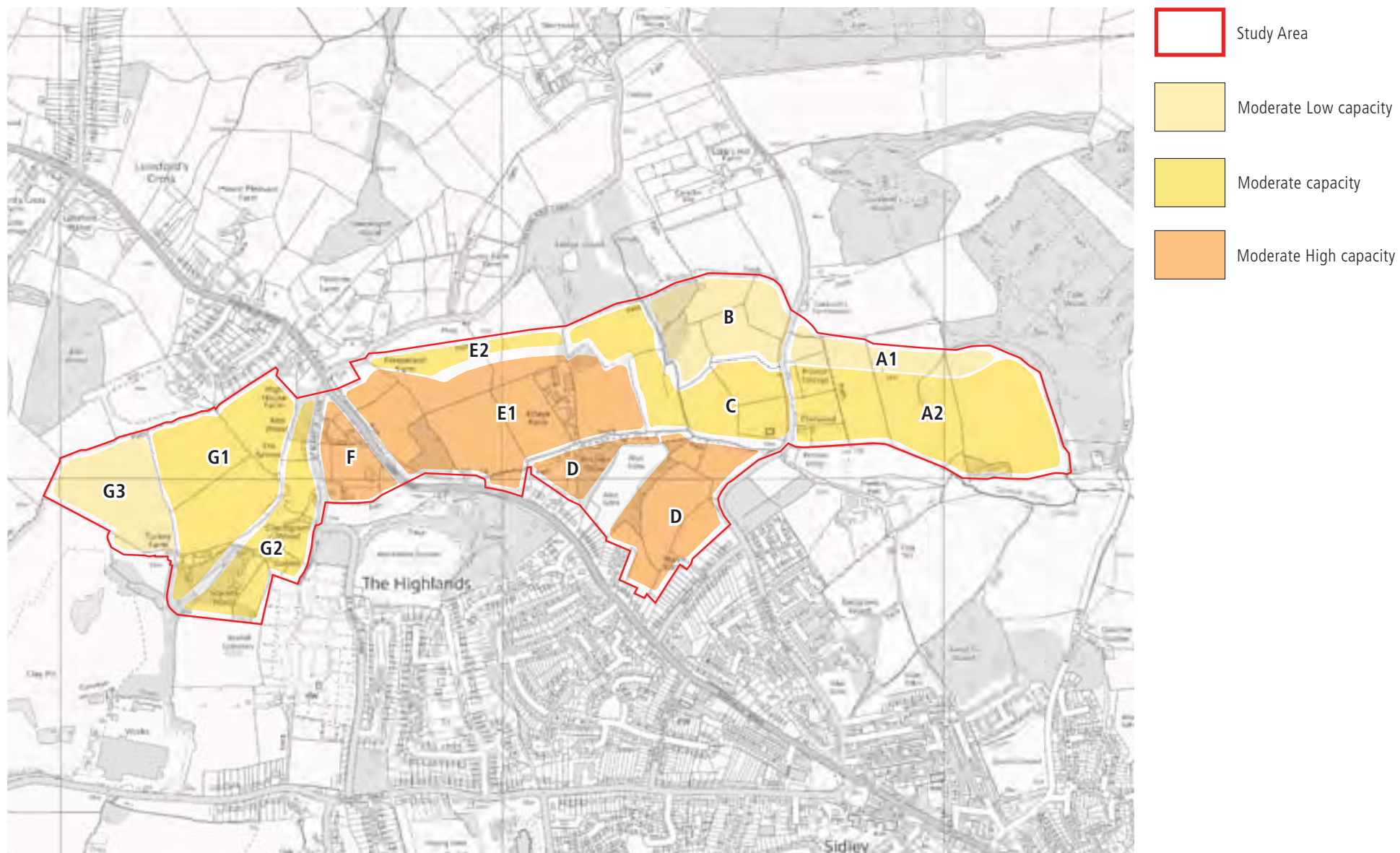


Figure 2.28: Overall Landscape Capacity Plan

2.5 Appraisal Sheets The following section contains the findings of the Landscape Study in accordance with the methodology set out in Section 2.2.

2.5.1 LDU A: Land East of Watermill Lane

Predominately south facing slopes of pastoral farmland, sloping towards the narrow watercourse adjacent to the southern boundary. Land beyond rises to form the setting of the Grade II Listed Building at Preston Hall. A domed ridgeline crosses the northern part of the LDU with the land falling beyond towards the Listed Building at Cockerell's Farmhouse and Cockerell's Wood. The ancient woodland at Cole Wood encloses the LDU to the east and partially to the north. Smaller paddocks and several dwelling are located in the western part of the LDU, alongside Watermill Lane. Existing settlement edge conspicuous on the adjoining valleyside to the south. Residential and commercial development in North East Bexhill Strategic Growth Area will enclose Preston Hall further south.

2.5.2 Landscape Sensitivity

		Description	Overall Rating	
			Zone1	Zone2
Landscape Quality	Intactness	Medium field pattern. Hedgerows often intermittent and dominated by bramble. Double hedgerow follows the route of the PRow.		
	Represents typical character	Sloping valley landform indicative of the wider topography. Does not display intimate qualities of the High Weald and there are few mature landscape features, although it is contained by the woodland at Cole Wood.		
	Detracting Elements	Crossed by overhead cables. The existing settlement edge is visible above the woodland at Redgrove Wood and Levetts Wood.		
	Relationship to settlement edge	On opposing valleyside to existing settlement, however would be better related to future growth within North East Bexhill.		
	Scenic / Aesthetic Qualities	Relatively ordinary agricultural landscape.		

		Description	Overall Rating	
			Zone1	Zone2
Landscape Elements	Trees / Woodland / Hedgerows	Few significant landscape features. Hedgerows intermittent and defunct in places and dominated by bramble. Mature double hedgerow with trees along the route of the PRow. Pockets of wet woodland scrub adjacent to watercourse and pond. Ancient woodland within Cole Wood to the north east and east.		
	Watercourses	Small watercourse runs alongside southern edge of LDU. Ponds located along southern boundary.		
	Topography	Sloping valley landform and domed ridgeline to north.		
	Other landscape features	None		






		Description	Overall Rating	
			Zone1	Zone2
Cultural Elements	Land use	Pastoral farmland and horse grazing. Some residential properties.		
	Enclosure pattern	Medium scale fields although smaller paddocks to the west.		
	Heritage features and setting	Slopes adjacent to the watercourse provide some role in the setting of Preston Hall. Development which extends beyond the ridgeline to the north would intrude on the rural setting of Cockerel's Farmhouse		
	Contribution to setting of town	Contributes to countryside edge of settlement however little direct contribution to the setting of the built up area of Bexhill.		
	Settlement pattern	Lies beyond the principle settlement pattern and is located on the opposing valley side. Housing would intrude on the existing rural approach along Watermill Lane. Development proposals should be contained by ridgeline to north. Would provide a more natural extension to future development within North East Bexhill. Southern valley slopes contribute to the setting of the Listed Building at Preston Hall.		
	Relationship to wider landscape	Visually and physically contained from the wider landscape by a combination of topography and the adjoining established woodlands. Development which extends above the ridgeline would be more conspicuous.		

Potential For Mitigation/Avoidance of Effect
Avoid development which intrudes on the domed landform within the northern part of the LDU. Woodland creation on the higher ground would be in keeping with the wider landscape character and provide an appropriate backdrop to the housing area. Similarly, housing should be set back from the lower slopes of the valley, which should be retained open to provide a setting for Preston Hall and the route of the watercourse. The existing character of Watermill Lane should be respected.

	Rating	
	Zone1	Zone2
Overall Landscape Sensitivity		

Each of the landscape elements have been attributed a rating in accordance with the following colour coded criteria.

Sensitivity/Value:

	High
	Moderate High
	Moderate
	Moderate Low
	Low

2.5.3 Visual Sensitivity

	Visual Elements	Sensitivity	Description	Overall Rating	
				Zone1	Zone2
Visual Receptors	Main Roads / workplaces/ unrelated recreational activities	Low	No views		
	Restricted views from dwellings / PRoW / outdoor recreation / institutional buildings and minor roads	Moderate	Filtered views from Preston Hall and from the approach along Windmill Lane. Views from the rear of dwellings along Windmill Lane.		
	Open views from dwellings / PRoW / non motorised users of minor roads	High	Views from sections of the footpaths which pass to the south of the LDU and from the open space adjacent to Redwood Grove of the south facing slopes. Development in the northern part of LDU would be conspicuous in views from the PRoW alongside Cockerel's Wood.		
	Long Distance Views	High	Typically prevented by landform and vegetation.		

Visual Elements (cont.)	Description	Overall Rating	
		Zone1	Zone2
Enclosure	LDU is generally well enclosed by a combination of topography and mature vegetation.		
Orientation	Majority of the LDU faces towards the existing settlement and is contained in views from the countryside to the north.		
Potential for Mitigation	Landscaping on the higher parts of the LDU would screen views of housing from the north.		

2.5.4 Overall Landscape Sensitivity

Combined Landscape and Visual Sensitivity		
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2.5.5 Landscape Value






Landscape Value	Description	Overall Rating	
		Zone1	Zone2
Designations	No designations for landscape value. Ancient woodland at Cole Wood and the woodland at Cockerel's Wood are SNCI's. 3 Listed Buildings in proximity to boundaries.		
Perceptual factors	The area possesses ordinary scenic qualities. The southern valley slopes do contribute to the setting of the adjoining Preston Hall. The existing settlement edge is perceptible on higher ground to the south and the topography separates it from the wider countryside north and east.		
Public access	Crossed by public footpath Bexhill 16b.		

2.5.6 Capacity to Accept Change






Description	Rating	
	Zone1	Zone2
In landscape terms this area is somewhat remote from the existing settlement, however would be better related to development within North East Bexhill. The LDU is of ordinary landscape character and quality and is relatively well contained in views.		

Each of the landscape elements have been attributed a rating in accordance with the following colour coded criteria.

Sensitivity/Value:

	High
	Moderate High
	Moderate
	Moderate Low
	Low

Capacity:

	High
	Moderate High
	Moderate
	Moderate Low
	Low

2.5.7 LDU B: Land South of Kiteye Wood

Predominately south facing slopes of small scale pastoral fields subdivided by a network of tree hedgerows and pockets of ghyll woodland to the south of Kiteye Wood. The LDU has a complex topography as the south facing slope is folded along the north-south route of a shallow watercourse that passes through the area leading from Kiteye Wood. Woodland and associated wetland species follow the course of the woodland. The area has an intimate character and is contained in views to and from the existing settlement edge.

2.5.8 Landscape Sensitivity

		Description	Overall Rating
Landscape Quality	Intactness	Small scale field pattern. Hedgerows typically overgrown containing numerous mature trees. Woodland follows the route of the watercourse as it traverses the LDU providing a relatively intact landscape.	
	Represents typical character	Presence of sloping topography, intimate character and mature woodland features are representative of the High Weald Character.	
	Detracting Elements	Few visible detracting elements.	
	Relationship to settlement edge	Located on the opposing valleyside and visually and physically disconnected from Bexhill, this area in isolation is poorly related to the existing settlement.	
	Scenic / Aesthetic Qualities	Lack of management has lent this area an unkempt feel, however the presence of mature landscape elements and the lack of visual intrusion give this area a pleasant landscape quality.	

		Description	Overall Rating
Landscape Elements	Trees / Woodland / Hedgerows	There are a number of mature overgrown hedgerows which contain significant trees. There is an area of established woodland and damp ghyll Woodland along the route of the watercourse.	
	Watercourses	A narrow watercourse passes north south through this area. There is a pond located within the northern part of the LDU.	
	Topography	South facing valley landform is dissected by the route of the watercourse creating a secondary small valley through this area.	
	Other landscape features	Ruderal vegetation.	

		Description	Overall Rating
Cultural Elements	Land use	Pastoral farmland and horse grazing and woodland.	
	Enclosure pattern	Small scale field pattern enclosed by out grown trees / hedgerows.	
	Heritage features and setting	Cockerel's Cottage is located a short distance north east.	
	Contribution to setting of town	The area makes little or no contribution to the setting of the town.	
	Settlement pattern	Lies beyond the principle settlement pattern and is located on the opposing valley side. There is little visual or physical connection to the settlement.	
	Relationship to wider landscape	The LDU is well contained and although it shares characteristics with the wider landscape to the north it is visually separated.	

Potential For Mitigation/Avoidance of Effect
Management of existing landscape features to provide a robust landscape framework.

	Rating
Overall Landscape Sensitivity	

Each of the landscape elements have been attributed a rating in accordance with the following colour coded criteria.

Sensitivity/Value:

	High
	Moderate High
	Moderate
	Moderate Low
	Low

2.5.9 Visual Sensitivity

	Visual Elements	Sensitivity	Description	Overall Rating
Visual Receptors	Main Roads / workplaces/ unrelated recreational activities	Low	No views	
	Restricted views from dwellings / PRoW / outdoor recreation / institutional buildings and minor roads	Moderate	No significant views, although there are views from Watermill Lane.	
	Open views from dwellings / PRoW / non-motorised users of minor roads	High	There are open views across this area from the public footpath which crosses to the south of Kiteye Wood.	
	Long Distance Views	High	Prevented by landform and vegetation.	

Visual Elements (cont.)	Description	Overall Rating
Enclosure	LDU is very well enclosed by a combination of vegetation, both within the LDU boundaries and beyond, and by the surrounding topography.	
Orientation	Majority of the Study Area faces towards the existing settlement and is contained in views from the countryside to the north.	
Potential for Mitigation	Retain and manage existing landscape features.	

2.5.10 Overall Landscape Sensitivity

Combined Landscape and Visual Sensitivity	
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2.5.11 Landscape Value






Landscape Value	Description	Overall Rating
Designations	No designations for landscape value. Ancient woodland at Kiteye Wood. Grade II Listed Building at Cockerel's Farmhouse.	
Perceptual factors	No designations for landscape value. Ancient woodland at Kiteye Wood. Grade II Listed Building at Cockerel's Farmhouse.	
Public access	Crossed by public footpath Bexhill 61.	

2.5.12 Capacity to Accept Change






Description	Rating
This area has an intimate feel and sense of remoteness. It is poorly connected to the existing urban area. It has a number of mature landscape features, including the treed hedgerows and ghyll woodland. It is visually well contained and development should be avoided given its inherent landscape qualities, although if it did come forward as part of planned expansion it would be contained in views from the wider area.	

Each of the landscape elements have been attributed a rating in accordance with the following colour coded criteria.

Sensitivity/Value:

	High
	Moderate High
	Moderate
	Moderate Low
	Low

Capacity:

	High
	Moderate High
	Moderate
	Moderate Low
	Low

2.5.13 LDU C: Land West of Watermill Lane

An area of south facing pastoral farmland with a small to medium field pattern and relatively intact field structure. It contains a number of mature landscape features including hedgerows and several large oak trees. It has a pleasant character although it contains a number of detracting elements, including horsiculture, pig and poultry sheds and a materials storage site.

2.5.14 Landscape Sensitivity

		Description	Overall Rating
Landscape Quality	Intactness	Relatively intact landscape of small scale fields and mature treed hedgerows.	
	Represents typical character	Presence of sloping topography, mature landscape features and small scale field network characteristic of the wider High Weald. The presence of horticulture and a storage site within the woodland are more characteristic of the urban fringe.	
	Detracting Elements	Menage and horsiculture, pig and poultry sheds and materials storage site. Housing visible to the south.	
	Relationship to settlement edge	Located on the opposing valley side it is separated from the existing housing area off Ninfield Road by the rising farmland to the south (LDU D).	
	Scenic / Aesthetic Qualities	There are a number of mature landscape features which lend this area a pleasant landscape character however its overall scenic qualities are relatively ordinary for this area.	

		Description	Overall Rating
Landscape Elements	Trees / Woodland / Hedgerows	There are a number of outgrown heavily treed hedgerows which subdivide this area.	
	Watercourses	A narrow watercourse extends along the bottom of the valley to the south.	
	Topography	Sloping south facing landform.	
	Other landscape features	None.	






		Description	Overall Rating
Cultural Elements	Land use	Pastoral farmland, horse grazing, storage shed and works shops and one small holding.	
	Enclosure pattern	Small scale field pattern enclosed by out grown treed hedgerows.	
	Heritage features and setting	No known heritage features in close proximity to this area.	
	Contribution to setting of town	The area makes little or no contribution to the setting of the town however the eastern part contributes to the rural approach along Watermill Lane.	
	Settlement pattern	Lies beyond the principle settlement pattern and is located on the opposing valley side. There is currently little visual or physical connection to the settlement.	
	Relationship to wider landscape	The LDU forms an area of farmland along the edge of the settlement. The valley landform means that it is contained in views from the wider landscape.	

Potential For Mitigation/Avoidance of Effect
Retention of significant landscape features including hedgerows and mature trees. Potential to retain open space corridor along route of the PRoW and watercourse.

	Rating
Overall Landscape Sensitivity	

Each of the landscape elements have been attributed a rating in accordance with the following colour coded criteria.

Sensitivity/Value:

-  High
-  Moderate High
-  Moderate
-  Moderate Low
-  Low

2.5.15 Visual Sensitivity

	Visual Elements	Sensitivity	Description	Overall Rating
Visual Receptors	Main Roads / workplaces/ unrelated recreational activities	Low	No views	
	Restricted views from dwellings / PRow / outdoor recreation / institutional buildings and minor roads	Moderate	There are restricted views from the houses to the east of Watermill Lane and from Watermill Lane itself.	
	Open views from dwellings / PRow / non-motorised users of minor roads	High	There are open views from the public footpath which crosses this area and from users of Watermill Lane.	
	Long Distance Views	High	Prevented by landform and vegetation.	

Visual Elements (cont.)	Description	Overall Rating
Enclosure	LDU is well enclosed by surrounding woodland and topography.	
Orientation	Majority of the LDU faces towards the existing settlement and is contained in views from the countryside to the north.	
Potential for Mitigation	Management of existing landscape features to provide a robust landscape framework.	

2.5.16 Overall Landscape Sensitivity

Combined Landscape and Visual Sensitivity	
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2.5.17 Landscape Value

Landscape Value	Description	Overall Rating
Designations	No designations for landscape value. Ancient woodland to the south of Kiteye Wood.	
Perceptual factors	The area has a relatively ordinary scenic qualities although it does contain a number of mature landscape features. Its proximity to Watermill Lane means that it contributes to the existing rural character of the approach. The presence of horsiculture is characteristic of the urban fringe.	
Public access	Crossed by public footpath Bexhill 56.	

2.5.18 Capacity to Accept Change

Description	Overall Rating
This area has a relatively intact landscape framework. In isolation it is poorly related to the existing settlement area, however if development came forward in LDU A and D it could form part of wider urban expansion. Proposals for development would need to consider the setting of Watermill Lane. In addition, the lower slopes of the valley provide a setting for the adjoining stream corridor and PRoW.	

Each of the landscape elements have been attributed a rating in accordance with the following colour coded criteria.

Sensitivity/Value:



High



Moderate High



Moderate



Moderate Low



Low

Capacity:



High



Moderate High



Moderate



Moderate Low



Low

2.5.19 LDU D: Land North East of Ninfield Road

This area lies on the north facing slope of the valley in close proximity to the existing settlement edge. It comprises areas of grazing land, allotments and mature woodland, some of it Ancient Woodland. It slopes towards the stream corridor which extends alongside its southern edge. The fields are sub-divided by a network of field hedgerows.

2.5.20 Landscape Sensitivity

		Description	Overall Rating
Landscape Quality	Intactness	Relatively intact landscape on the urban edge. Allotments have replaced former farmland.	
	Represents typical character	The presence of allotments and the proximity of the existing housing area detract from this areas landscape qualities. It benefits from a significant amount of woodland cover, however in other respects has little in common with the wider character of the High Weald.	
	Detracting Elements	Existing settlement edge, horsiculture and allotments detract from the inherent character of the landscape.	
	Relationship to settlement edge	This LDU is well related to the housing off Ninfield Road and Mayo Lane.	
	Scenic / Aesthetic Qualities	There are a some mature landscape features which contribute to the character of this area, however its proximity to the existing urban area detracts from its overall quality. There are far reaching views available to the landscape to the north east. The lower slopes play some role in the setting of the PRow and watercourse at the base of the valley.	

		Description	Overall Rating
Landscape Elements	Trees / Woodland / Hedgerows	There area a number of field hedgerows and significant areas of woodland, some Ancient and some protected by a TPO.	
	Watercourses	A narrow watercourse extends along the bottom of the valley to the north.	
	Topography	Sloping north facing landform.	
	Other landscape features	None.	






		Description	Overall Rating
Cultural Elements	Land use	Pastoral farmland, allotments and woodland.	Moderate
	Enclosure pattern	Small scale field pattern enclosed by hedgerows and blocks of woodland.	
	Heritage features and setting	No known heritage features in close proximity to this area.	
	Contribution to setting of town	The land forms the setting to the existing settlement edge in views from the north. The existing edge occupies the high ground, however is currently rather blunt with dwellings typically backing onto this area.	
	Settlement pattern	Lies alongside the existing settlement edge.	
	Relationship to wider landscape	The LDU is closely related to the existing settlement and plays no significant role in the setting of the wider landscape.	

Potential For Mitigation/Avoidance of Effect
Retain areas of mature and Ancient Woodland. Respect setting of Windmill Lane through careful siting and new landscaping. Potential to create open space corridor along the base of the valley.

	Rating
Overall Landscape Sensitivity	Moderate

Each of the landscape elements have been attributed a rating in accordance with the following colour coded criteria.

Sensitivity/Value:

	High
	Moderate High
	Moderate
	Moderate Low
	Low

2.5.21 Visual Sensitivity

	Visual Elements	Sensitivity	Description	Rating
Visual Receptors	Main Roads / workplaces/ unrelated recreational activities	Low	No views	
	Restricted views from dwellings / PRoW / outdoor recreation / institutional buildings and minor roads	Moderate	There are restricted views from the rear of adjoining houses and heavily filtered views from a section of Watermill Lane.	
	Open views from dwellings / PRoW / non motorised users of minor roads	High	There are open views from a number of dwellings in proximity to the LDU. There are open views from the PRoW which follows the stream corridor to the south. There are views from the south facing slopes of the land to the north, although these are often restricted from PRoW.	
	Long Distance Views	High	There are far reaching views from this area to the north east, however views back from this direction are restricted by intervening vegetation.	

Visual Elements (cont.)	Description	Rating
Enclosure	LDU is well enclosed by surrounding woodland however its north facing aspect means that it is visible in views from the adjoining valley side to the north.	
Orientation	Majority of the LDU lies on the north facing slope in line with the existing settlement pattern.	
Potential for Mitigation	Management of existing landscape features to provide a robust landscape framework. New planting on the lower slopes of the valley and reinforcement of vegetation along Watermill Lane to assist in screening housing area.	

2.5.22 Overall Landscape Sensitivity

Combined Landscape and Visual Sensitivity	
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2.5.23 Landscape Value

Landscape Value	Description	Rating
Designations	No designations for landscape value. Ancient Woodland adjacent to allotments. TPO'd woodland to the west.	
Perceptual factors	The area is closely related to the existing settlement and plays some role in its setting in a limited number of views from the north. Area has few scenic qualities save the existing mature vegetation.	
Public access	Crossed by public footpath Bexhill 56.	

2.5.24 Capacity to Accept Change

Description	Rating
Development in this location would fit with the existing settlement pattern and there would be opportunities to provide an improved settlement edge. The northern slopes of the valley floor provide a setting for the adjoining stream corridor and public footpath and consideration should be given to retaining this as open space.	

Each of the landscape elements have been attributed a rating in accordance with the following colour coded criteria.

Sensitivity/Value:



High



Moderate High



Moderate



Moderate Low



Low

Capacity:



High



Moderate High



Moderate



Moderate Low



Low

2.5.25 LDU E: Land South of Freezeland Lane

Lying on the south facing slope of the valley which extends alongside the northern edge of Bexhill, this area comprises a medium to large field network sub-divided by intermittent field hedgerows. To the west are a couple of smaller paddocks enclosed by mature treed hedgerows. There are a number of agricultural buildings located within the eastern part of the LDU and to the south west is an area of mixed woodland which encloses an area of hard standing. A wide verge separates the LDU from the route of Ninfield Road.

2.5.26 Landscape Sensitivity

		Description	Overall Rating	
			Zone1	Zone2
Landscape Quality	Intactness	Hedgerow structure has become gappy and intermittent in places, although mature tree lines remain intact around the paddocks to the west.		
	Represents typical character	Large scale field pattern, absence of significant areas of mature vegetation and relatively simple topography are not characteristic of the wider High Weald.		
	Detracting Elements	Telecoms tower visible to the north, as is housing and development within Bexhill to the South.		
	Relationship to settlement edge	The LDU lies on the opposing valley side to the main settlement, however the lower slopes are well related to the approach along Ninfield Road and to the housing a short distance to the South.		
	Scenic / Aesthetic Qualities	This LDU has few scenic qualities of note save a number of mature trees within the field boundaries to the west.		

		Description	Overall Rating	
			Zone1	Zone2
Landscape Elements	Trees / Woodland / Hedgerows	Field hedgerows are species poor and have become gappy. The mixed woodland to the south west is relatively recent and comprises species such as pine and birch which are not characteristic of the area. There are more established trees contained within the field boundaries to the west.		
	Watercourses	A narrow watercourse extends along the bottom of the valley to the south.		
	Topography	Sloping south facing landform with domed ridgeline within the northern part of the LDU.		
	Other landscape features	None.		






		Description	Overall Rating	
			Zone1	Zone2
Cultural Elements	Land use	Pastoral farmland, paddocks and woodland.		
	Enclosure pattern	Typically large / medium scale field pattern sub-divided by gappy hedgerows.		
	Heritage features and setting	Listed Building at High House to the north west.		
	Contribution to setting of town	This area of farmland extends along the northern edge of the settlement however makes no significant contribution to the setting of the town at this point.		
	Settlement pattern	Lies on the opposite valley side however is well related to the existing housing and approach along Ninfield Road. Northern parts of LDU extend towards adjoining settlement at Lunsford Cross.		
	Relationship to wider landscape	The south facing landform makes little contribution to the wider landscape to the north. Higher domed land visible in views from Freezeland Lane.		

Potential For Mitigation/Avoidance of Effect
Woodland planting and open space along domed landform in northern part of LDU would form wooded backdrop to LDU and provide separation to the adjoining settlement at Lunsford Cross/The Thorne.

	Rating	
	Zone1	Zone2
Overall Landscape Sensitivity		

Each of the landscape elements have been attributed a rating in accordance with the following colour coded criteria.

Sensitivity/Value:

	High
	Moderate High
	Moderate
	Moderate Low
	Low

2.5.27 Visual Sensitivity

	Visual Elements	Sensitivity	Description	Overall Rating	
				Zone1	Zone2
Visual Receptors	Main Roads / workplaces / recreational	Low	There are filtered views from the approach along Ninfield Road.		
	Restricted views from dwellings / PRoW / outdoor recreation / institutional buildings and minor roads	Moderate	There are restricted views from a number of dwellings located to the south. Views from Freezeland Lane are largely prevented by the tall hedgerows to the roadside.		
	Open views from dwellings / PRoW / non-motorised users of minor roads	High	There are open views from the PRoW which crosses the southern part of the LDU and for pedestrians and cyclists walking alongside Ninfield Road. There are open views from the footpath at the northern boundary.		
	Long Distance Views	High	Views are restricted by topography and intervening vegetation.		

Visual Elements (cont.)	Description	Overall Rating	
		Zone1	Zone2
Enclosure	The LDU is enclosed to the north by its valley landform, although the domed land in the northern part of the LDU is more prominent and conspicuous in views from Freezeland Lane.		
Orientation	The LDU lies on the south facing slope of the valley facing the existing settlement and away from the wider countryside.		
Potential for Mitigation	Good potential for woodland planting along the ridgeline and the higher ground in the northern part of the LDU. Reinforcement of existing vegetation along the route of the stream.		

2.5.28 Overall Landscape Sensitivity

Combined Landscape and Visual Sensitivity		
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2.5.29 Landscape Value

Landscape Value	Description	Overall Rating	
		Zone1	Zone2
Designations	No designations for landscape or ecological value.		
Perceptual factors	This area has little scenic value and comprises undistinguished farmland on the edge of the settlement. It is visible in views from the principle northern approach to the settlement.		
Public access	Crossed by public footpath Bexhill 56 and 61.		

2.5.30 Capacity to Accept Change

Description	Rating	
	Zone1	Zone2
This area comprises undistinguished farmland with few existing landscape features of note. It is relatively well related to the existing settlement pattern and would not intrude significantly on views from further afield. New open space and landscaping should be located along the ridgeline to the north and as part of an open space corridor to the stream.		

Each of the landscape elements have been attributed a rating in accordance with the following colour coded criteria.

Sensitivity/Value:



High



Moderate High



Moderate



Moderate Low



Low

Capacity:



High



Moderate High



Moderate



Moderate Low



Low

2.5.31 LDU F: Land Between St.Mary's Lane and Ninfield Road

The LDU comprises a triangular parcel of relatively flat land. It contains two properties set within generous grounds and an area of farmland. It is contained to the south by a wooded embankment, beyond which is the recreation ground. There are a number of mature trees located within the southern part of the LDU and an established hedgerow / tree line along the route of Ninfield Road.

2.5.32 Landscape Sensitivity

		Description	Overall Rating
Landscape Quality	Intactness	The internal hedgerow structure is gappy and largely defunct. There are extensive areas of conifer hedging around the perimeter of the northern dwelling.	
	Represents typical character	The LDU lies in proximity to the settlement edge and shares few characteristics with the wider High Weald.	
	Detracting Elements	Existing housing and conifer hedging.	
	Relationship to settlement edge	The LDU lies to the north of the recreation ground but is reasonably well related to housing on Ninfields Road and St. Mary' Lane at the edge of the town.	
	Scenic / Aesthetic Qualities	This LDU has few scenic qualities of note save a number of mature trees within the southern part of the LDU.	

		Description	Overall Rating
Landscape Elements	Trees / Woodland / Hedgerows	Field hedgerows are gappy. There is an established treed hedgerow alongside St. Mary's Road. There are a number of mature trees located in the southern parts of the open space.	
	Watercourses	There is a pond located a short distance to the south of the LDU.	
	Topography	Predominately flat topography.	
	Other landscape features	None.	






		Description	Overall Rating
Cultural Elements	Land use	Pastoral farmland, residential dwellings and gardens.	
	Enclosure pattern	Small / medium scale field pattern sub-divided by gappy hedgerows.	
	Heritage features and setting	None in close proximity.	
	Contribution to setting of town	This LDU lies on the approach to the settlement however is screened in views from Ninfields Road by a dense treed hedgerow. St. Mary's Lane is a rural lane on the edge of the town.	
	Settlement pattern	Is relatively well related to the existing settlement pattern on the edge of town.	
	Relationship to wider landscape	Is separated from the wider rural area by a combination of the local road network and by the surrounding topography.	

Potential For Mitigation/Avoidance of Effect
Retention and management of existing landscape features. Respect the semi-rural setting of St. Mary's Lane.

	Rating
Overall Landscape Sensitivity	

Each of the landscape elements have been attributed a rating in accordance with the following colour coded criteria.

Sensitivity/Value:

	High
	Moderate High
	Moderate
	Moderate Low
	Low

2.5.33 Visual Sensitivity

	Visual Elements	Sensitivity	Description	Overall Rating
Visual Receptors	Main Roads / workplaces/ unrelated recreational activities	Low	There are filtered views from the approach along Ninfield Road.	
	Restricted views from dwellings / PRoW / outdoor recreation / institutional buildings and minor roads	Moderate	There are views from the dwellings located within this LDU and from St. Mary's Road.	
	Open views from dwellings / PRoW / non-motorised users of minor roads	High	There are open views from the PRoW which crosses to the south of the LDU.	
	Long Distance Views	High	Views are restricted by topography and intervening vegetation.	

Visual Elements (cont.)	Description	Overall Rating
Enclosure	The LDU is enclosed by the wooded embankment to the south and by the vegetation along Ninfields Road.	
Orientation	The LDU lies on a relatively flat area of land at the edge of the settlement.	
Potential for Mitigation	Reinforcement and management of existing vegetation along St. Mary's Road and Ninfields Road.	

2.5.34 Overall Landscape Sensitivity

Combined Landscape and Visual Sensitivity	
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2.5.35 Landscape Value

Landscape Value	Description	Overall Rating
Designations	No designations for landscape or ecological value and no heritage assets which would be directly affected.	
Perceptual factors	This area has little scenic value and comprises farmland on the edge of the settlement and the grounds of two dwellings.	
Public access	Public footpath Bexhill 18 crosses alongside the southern LDU boundary.	

2.5.36 Capacity to Accept Change

Description	Overall Rating
This area comprises relatively ordinary farmland and the curtilage of two properties. It has potential to accommodate some development without giving rise to significant landscape and visual effects.	

Each of the landscape elements have been attributed a rating in accordance with the following colour coded criteria.

Sensitivity/Value:



High



Moderate High



Moderate



Moderate Low



Low

Capacity:



High



Moderate High



Moderate



Moderate Low



Low

2.5.37 LDU G: Land West of St. Mary's Road

This LDU comprises an area of valley farmland on the north western extent of the settlement. It is bordered to the north by the adjoining villages of Lunsford's Cross and The Thorne, and by an existing caravan / camp site. It contains two dwellings and the farm buildings at Turkey Farm on the north facing slope of the valley. The remainder of the LDU comprises a medium scale network of pastoral fields. A shallow water course flows along the base of the valley which is fed by a couple of ephemeral watercourses which cross the valley to the north. There are extensive views from the higher ground southwards towards the coast.

2.5.38 Landscape Sensitivity

		Description	Overall Rating		
			Z1	Z2	Z3
Landscape Quality	Intactness	The internal hedgerow network is relatively intact particularly within the northern valley side. To the south much of this area has been given over to formal gardens associated with the existing dwelling.			
	Represents typical character	The agricultural land has a distinctly rolling valley topography and rural character. It has a medium scale field pattern contained by relatively intact field boundaries. It is contained by mature bands of woodland at Kiln Wood and High Wood further west.			
	Detracting Elements	Caravan Site and existing gardens detract from the essentially rural feel.			
	Relationship to settlement edge	The LDU is separated from the existing settlement by the cemetery and by the recreation ground. The majority of this area occupies the adjoining valley side and is closely related to the caravan site and housing on the edge of Lunsford's Cross.			
	Scenic / Aesthetic Qualities	The rolling farmland, particularly on the northern valley flank has a pleasant rural character and exhibits characteristics of the wider High Weald Landscape, particularly evident in the western field (zone 3) There are also opportunities for far ranging views down the course of the valley towards the coast and across the valley to the edge of Bexhill and the cemetery.			

		Description	Overall Rating		
			Z1	Z2	Z3
Landscape Elements	Trees / Woodland / Hedgerows	Field hedgerows define internal field boundaries. Mature trees and woodland follow the bases of the valley. There is also an area of ancient woodland located in the north east of the LDU. Pockets of emerging scrub vegetation are present with areas of tussocky grazing land.			
	Watercourses	A watercourse passes along the base of the valley. There are also a couple of ephemeral water course which transect the valley to the north.			
	Topography	Pleasant rolling valley landform.			
	Other landscape features	None.			

		Description	Overall Rating		
			Z1	Z2	Z3
Cultural Elements	Land use	Pastoral farmland, residential dwellings and gardens and farm buildings.			
	Enclosure pattern	Medium scale field pattern sub-divided by relatively intact hedgerows.			
	Heritage features and setting	None in close proximity.			
	Contribution to setting of town	This LDU lies on the approach to the settlement however is screened in views from Ninfield Road by a dense treed hedgerow. St. Mary's Lane is a rural lane on the edge of the town.			
	Settlement pattern	Lies on the edge of Bexhill but is separated by the existing cemetery and recreation ground from the main residential area. The northern valley side adjoins the settlement of The Thorne and further north Lunsford's Cross.			
	Relationship to wider landscape	This area forms part of a wider landscape corridor which includes Highwoods Golf Course which extends southwards into the western edge of Bexhill. The Northern valley side is typical of the wider agricultural landscape, although it is visually contained in views from the north by the presence of mature blocks of woodland.			

Potential For Mitigation/Avoidance of Effect			
Retention of existing landscape features. Avoid development on higher quality LDU to the north west (Zone 3). Retain valley characteristics and avoid development on lower slopes of valley. Respect the setting of the adjoining cemetery.			
			Rating
			Z1 Z2 Z3
Overall Landscape Sensitivity			

Each of the landscape elements have been attributed a rating in accordance with the following colour coded criteria.

Sensitivity/Value:

	High
	Moderate High
	Moderate
	Moderate Low
	Low

2.5.39 Visual Sensitivity

	Visual Elements	Sensitivity	Description	Overall Rating		
				Z1	Z2	Z3
Visual Receptors	Main Roads / workplaces/ unrelated recreational activities	Low	No significant views.			
	Restricted views from dwellings / PRoW / outdoor recreation / institutional buildings and minor roads	Moderate	There are views the adjoining caravan park and from the grounds of Bexhill Cemetery.			
	Open views from dwellings / PRoW / non-otorised users of minor roads	High	There are views from the PRoW which crosses alongside the northern boundary. There are views from St. Mary's Road and from the dwellings which are located within the LDU.			
	Long Distance Views	High	Although views are available southwards along the valley from within the LDU. Views towards the LDU from within the valley are restricted by topography and intervening vegetation.			

Visual Elements (cont.)	Description	Overall Rating		
		Z1	Z2	Z3
Enclosure	The LDU is enclosed by woodland and topography to the north and west. To the south there are opportunities for far reaching views along the valley.			
Orientation	The LDU occupies a valley landform with the majority contained on the south facing slope of the valley and the remainder on the north facing slope.			
Potential for Mitigation	Retain and reinforce existing landscape features. Increase overall tree cover within western part of LDU and along northern boundary to provide wooded backdrop to housing and assist in screening views from the north and south.			

2.5.40 Overall Landscape Sensitivity

Combined Landscape and Visual Sensitivity			
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2.5.41 Landscape Value

Landscape Value	Description	Overall Rating		
		Z1	Z2	Z3
Designations	No designations for landscape or ecological value. Contains an area of Ancient Woodland.			
Perceptual factors	This area has a pleasant scenic quality. The northern part, and in particular the north western field, has an attractive rolling topography and affords long distance view along the valley to the south.			
Public access	Public Rights of Way Bexhill 47 follows the northern LDU boundary.			

2.5.42 Capacity to Accept Change

Description	Rating		
	Z1	Z2	Z3
<p>The LDU occupies the valley sides on the north western edge of Bexhill. It has a relatively intact and pleasant landscape character and forms part of a wider landscape corridor extending through the western part of Bexhill. Development in this location would be less well related to the built up area of Bexhill, particularly the northern valley side and could result in coalescence with The Thorne/Lunsford's Cross.</p> <p>In addition, development should respect the valley landform and should be avoided on the lower slopes of the valley.</p>			

Each of the landscape elements have been attributed a rating in accordance with the following colour coded criteria.

Sensitivity/Value:



High



Moderate High



Moderate



Moderate Low



Low

Capacity:



High



Moderate High



Moderate



Moderate Low



Low





Chapter 3

Ecological Assessment

3.1 Introduction

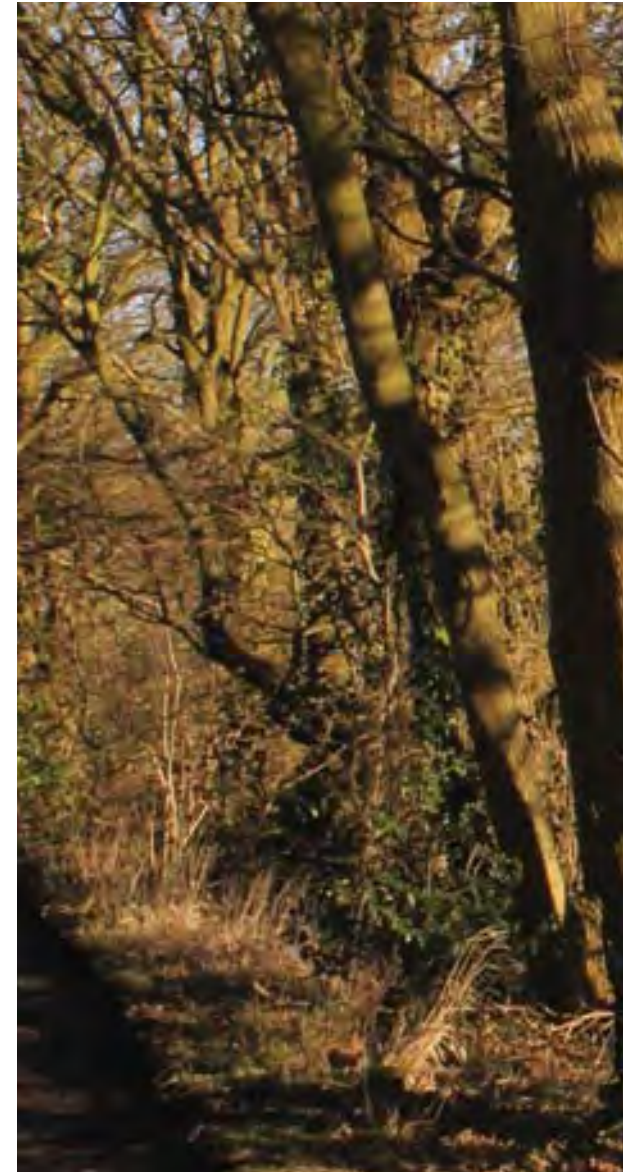
3.1.1 Introduction

This section of the North Bexhill Landscape and Ecological Study sets out the findings of the Ecological Assessment completed during February 2015 at the Study Area.

The Ecology Assessment has been informed by a desktop study and a Phase 1 Habitats Survey. The Ecological Assessment aims to:

- Present the results of a desktop search for relevant biological records and assess their significance.
- Review the Study Area in relation to its wider ecological context.
- Describe and map the habitats present at the Study Area.
- Identify the potential for any potential impacts to protected species and habitats.
- Assess potential ecological impacts and opportunities relating to future development at the Study Area.

This section presents the Ecological Assessment information in a standard format accepted by ecological consultees across the country, adopting various best-practice procedures and methodologies.





3.2 Planning Policy and Legislation

3.2.1 National Planning Policy

The National Planning Policy Framework (2012)¹ (NPPF) sets out the government planning policies for England and how they should be applied. With regards to ecology and biodiversity, Chapter 11: Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment, paragraph 109, states that the planning system and planning policies should:

Minimise impacts on, and provide net gains in, biodiversity where possible, *'contributing to the Government's commitment to halt the overall decline in biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures'*, and recognise the wider benefits of ecosystem services.

Under these aims, paragraph 117 states the need to plan for biodiversity at a landscape scale, linked to national and local targets. Paragraph 118 sets out the principles that local planning authorities should apply when determining planning applications:

- Refuse planning permission if significant harm cannot be avoided, adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for.
- Encourage opportunities to incorporate biodiversity in and around developments.
- Permission should not normally be permitted where an adverse effect on a nationally designated Site of Special Scientific Interest is likely, either individually or in combination with other developments.
- Refuse planning permission if development will result in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats, such as Ancient Woodland and the aged or veteran trees, unless the need for, and benefits of, the development in that location clearly outweigh the loss.

3.2.2 Local Planning Policy

The Rother District Council Local Plan Core Strategy (adopted September 2014) forms 'part 1' of the new Local Plan.

The Core strategy acknowledges that the District is covered with significant areas of biodiversity interest. Rother District Council aims to protect and enhance biodiversity in accordance with national guidance and have regard to the targets set out in the Sussex Biodiversity Action Plan.

Policy EN5 (Biodiversity and Green Space) is the relevant policy for ecology stating biodiversity, geodiversity and green space will be protected and enhanced, by multi-agency working where appropriate, to:

- Maintain and develop a district-wide network of green infrastructure where possible linking areas of natural green space.
- Protect and enhance the international, national and locally designated sites, having due regard to their status.
- Establish a major area of accessible open space at Combe Valley Countryside Park, between Bexhill and Hastings.
- Enhance the nature conservation value and multi-functional nature of the Romney Marsh Biodiversity Opportunity Area.

¹Department for Communities and Local Government (2012) National Planning Policy Framework

- Support opportunities for management, restoration and creation of habitats in line with the opportunities identified for the Biodiversity Opportunity Areas (BOAs) and targets set out in the Sussex Biodiversity Action Plan.
- Continue to develop the wetland habitat at Bewl Water Reservoir, with compatible recreational uses.
- Increase accessibility to the countryside from urban areas, especially in the Hastings and Bexhill fringes.
- Ensure that development retains, protects and enhances habitats of ecological interest, including Ancient Woodland, water features and hedgerows, and provides for appropriate management of these features.
- Require developers to integrate biodiversity into development schemes by avoiding adverse impacts from development on biodiversity or habitat, or where wholly unavoidable, provide appropriate mitigation against or compensation for any losses. In any event, developers will also be expected to consider and promote opportunities for the creation and/or restoration of habitats appropriate to local context.

3.2.3 Legislation

There are several pieces of legislation relating to wildlife and biodiversity. Those of particular relevance to ecology and development are listed below:

- Conservation of Habitats & Species Regulations 2010 (as amended), (informally known as 'The Habitats Directive') which enacts the Habitats and Birds Directives² into UK law.
- Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 sets the requirement for planning authorities to consider impacts on '*species of principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity*' when determining planning applications.
- Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), strengthened by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, are together the most important legislation aimed at protecting wildlife in England.
- The Protection of Badgers Act 1992, with regards specific protection of badgers.

3.2.4 National Legislation

3.2.5 NERC Act 2006

The NERC Act 2006 Section 40(1) states that each public authority '*must, in exercising its functions, have regard, so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity*'.

This legislation makes it clear that planning authorities should consider impacts to biodiversity when determining planning applications, with particular regard to the Section 41 (S41) list of 56 habitats and 943 species of principal importance, irrespective of whether they are covered by other legislation.

The S41 list was taken forward for action under the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UK BAP) (first published in 1994). The UK BAP has now been superseded by the Biodiversity 2020 Strategy³, which continues to prioritise the S41 list, setting national targets for the period to 2020, and the UK Post-2010 Biodiversity Framework⁴, which shows how these contribute to targets at the European level.

Whilst BAPs are therefore no longer formally recognised, many of the tools and resources originally developed for the BAP remain in use, such as the background information which still forms the basis of work at national level.

²Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora, and Council Directive 79/409/EEC on the Conservation of Wild Birds, respectively.

³Defra (2011) Biodiversity 2020: A strategy for England's wildlife and ecosystem services. Defra, London.

⁴JNCC and Defra (2012) UK Post-2010 Biodiversity Framework (on behalf of the Four Countries' Biodiversity Group). July 2012.

3.2.6 Protected Sites

3.2.7 Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)

Under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 1981 (as amended) anyone who intentionally or recklessly destroys or damages any of the flora, fauna or geological or physiological features of an SSSI is guilty of an offence.

3.2.8 Sites of Nature Conservation Importance (SNCI)

SNCIs have no statutory protection however they need to be considered in the planning process through the NPPE. Local Councils are required to conserve and enhance the natural environment.

3.2.9 Ancient Woodland

Standing Advice from Natural England and the Forestry Commission⁵ states that Local Authorities have a key role to play in the protection of this unique resource through the planning process. The National Planning Practice Guidance paragraph 118 states that:

'planning permission should be refused for development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats, including Ancient Woodland and the loss of aged or veteran trees found outside Ancient Woodland, unless the need for, and benefits of, the development in that location clearly outweigh the loss'

If the need outweighs the loss of/harm to Ancient Woodland then an appropriate package of measures to address the loss/harm will be agreed with local planning authorities. Measures include mitigation and compensation such as buffer zones (recommended 15 metre around affected Ancient Woodland), new native woodland planting or Ancient Woodland translocation.

3.2.10 Tree Protection Orders (TPO)

Protected under the Town and Country Planning (Tree Preservation) (England) Regulations 2012 which came into force on 6th April 2012.

A TPO prohibits the following without Local Planning Authorities consent.

- Cutting down
- Topping
- Lopping
- Uprooting
- Wilful damage
- Wilful destruction

If consent is given it can be subject to conditions which have to be followed.

⁵[http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/AncientWoodsSA_v7FINALPUBLISHED14Apr3.pdf/\\$FILE/AncientWoodsSA_v7FINALPUBLISHED14Apr3.pdf](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/AncientWoodsSA_v7FINALPUBLISHED14Apr3.pdf/$FILE/AncientWoodsSA_v7FINALPUBLISHED14Apr3.pdf)

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3.3 Methodology

3.3.1 Desktop Biological Records Search

The Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (MAGIC) online database was searched to identify all statutory nature conservation sites within 10km of the central grid reference within the Study Area. Potential effects were considered to statutory sites of international importance within 15km and statutory Study Areas of national to local importance within 5km.

A biological records search was also conducted for the area of land encompassing the Study Area and adjacent land within approximately 1km of the boundary of the Study Area. Sussex Biodiversity Records Centre (SxBRC) provided records of non-statutory designated wildlife sites, protected and notable habitats and species within this radius.

Biological records provide a useful indication of the species present within a searched locality. However, it should be noted that the absence of a given species from a data search cannot be taken to represent actual absence. Furthermore, species distribution patterns should be interpreted with caution.

Natural England Guidelines suggest that all ponds within 500 metre of a proposed development area should be considered with respect to great crested newts. A search for waterbodies within a 500 metre radius of the Study Area was undertaken by examining maps and aerial photography sources (including Ordnance Survey maps, MAGIC, ProMap).

3.3.2 Phase 1 Habitat Survey

A Phase 1 Habitat Survey was carried out on 12th and 13th February 2015 by Clare Caudwell MCIEEM and Claire Dovey GradCIEEM, encompassing the Study Area and immediately adjacent habitats that could be viewed. A Phase 1 Habitat Survey (JNCC, 2010) comprises a standardised habitat mapping methodology. Where possible, botanical species were identified to species level, although this was subject to access and seasonality constraints. Scientific names of botanical species are referenced in accordance with Stace (2010).

Note was also taken of the more conspicuous fauna present during the survey, with particular attention paid to any evidence of, or potential for, the presence of protected or notable species.

3.3.3 Survey Limitations

Access was constrained to Public Rights of Way across the majority of the Study Area, with full access being granted to land at Preston Hall (on the eastern side of the Study Area). Where access was constrained the best vantage point was sought and binoculars were used to aid assessment. Aerial photographs were cross referenced with field notes to ensure that accurate habitat mapping could be achieved as far as possible. Whilst identification of some species/habitat features was compromised where access was constrained, it is considered that for the most-part it was possible to make a basic assessment of the habitat features present.

With regards to botanical identification/habitat quality assessment it should be noted that the Study Area visit was also carried out early in the botanical survey season when many plant species would not be visible. Therefore, this assessment presents an estimate on the quality of many features throughout the Study Area.

3.3.4 Evaluation and Assessment

The spatial scope of this appraisal aims to identify all ecological features within the 'likely zone of influence', i.e. the area across which direct and indirect impacts may occur, throughout the lifespan of the project.

Ecological features are valued based on the IEEM Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment 2006⁶. These guidelines promote a standardised, scientifically rigorous and transparent approach to the assessment process, which is then further informed by professional judgment and interpretation. The process of valuing ecological features can be complex and subjective.

A number of factors need to be taken into account when applying professional judgement to value ecological features. Those addressed in this report include:

- Designated sites and features.
- Biodiversity value.
- Potential value, specifically in relation to statutory designated sites and S41/BAP habitats and species.
- Secondary or supportive value to SSSI.
- Legal issues, such as may arise as a result of designated sites and features being affected.

Parameters such as the size, conservation status and viability of any given feature are all relevant in determining biodiversity value. Furthermore, the value of a species and/or habitat may vary depending on the location within its range.

Legal protection needs to be considered separately from biodiversity value. Our assessment and reporting will highlight legal issues and the appropriate mechanism for dealing with any such constraint. However, not all legally protected species are rare (e.g. badgers) so legal requirements and ecological value are separate considerations.

3.3.5 Geographic Frame of Reference

In assigning value to an ecological feature, the following geographic frames of reference are used:

- International
- National
- Regional
- County (or metropolitan in London)
- District (or borough or unitary authority)
- Local (or parish)
- Study Area (less than local or parish)

⁶ Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (2006) Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the United Kingdom

3.4 Results

3.4.1 Designated Sites

3.4.2 Statutory Sites

The MAGIC database search revealed that there are no statutory wildlife site designations covering any part of the Survey Area or occurring on adjacent land.

Four statutory wildlife sites of international importance occur within 15km of the Study Area, these are summarised in Figure 3.4.1 opposite.

Site Name & Designation	Area (ha)	Distance & Bearing from Study Area (km)	Reason(s) for Designation
Pevensy Levels SAC*	3585.38	c.2.94km SW	Grazing marsh supporting a good population density class of Annex II species Ramshorn snail <i>Anisus vorticulus</i> for which it is designated.
Pevensy Levels Ramsar	3585.38	c.2.94km SW	Designated due to its outstanding assemblage of wetland plants and invertebrates including many British Red Data Book species and supports 68% of vascular plant species in Great Britain that can be described as aquatic. It is probably the best site in Britain for freshwater molluscs, one of the five best sites for aquatic beetles <i>Coleoptera</i> and supports an outstanding assemblage of dragonflies <i>Odonata</i> .
Hastings Cliffs SAC*	182.47	c.8.98km E	Designated for Annex I habitats, vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts.
Dungeness to Pett Levels SPA**	1478.59	c.15.1km NE	Shingle beaches, grazing marshes, saltmarshes, mud and sandflats. Designated for Annex 1 species Bewick's swan <i>Cygnus columbianus</i> , Common tern <i>Sterna hirundo</i> , Little tern <i>Sterna albifrons</i> , Mediterranean gull <i>Larus melanocephalus</i> and internationally important populations of Shoveler <i>Anas clypeata</i> .

Figure 3.1: Summary of Statutory Sites of International Importance within 15km of the Study Area

Note: *SAC = Special Area of Conservation, **SPA = Special Protected Area

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Seven statutory wildlife sites of national importance occur within 5km of the Study Area, these are summarised in Figure 3.4.2 opposite.

Site Name & Designation	Area (ha)	Distance & Bearing from Study Area (km)	Reason(s) for Designation
High Woods SSSI	33.5	c.315m W	Designated due to its importance for sessile oak <i>Quercus petraea</i> coppice, occurring nowhere else in East Sussex. Includes several notable plant species, supports a very local yellow-necked mouse <i>Apodemus flavicollis</i> population and likely to support rich insect fauna.
Combe Haven SSSI	156.1	c.1.19km E	Designated due to containing a rich diversity of habitat types including alluvial meadows, fen communities, woodland and a railway embankment. Carries rich community of breeding, passage and wintering birds, Ancient Woodland, wide diversity of plant and invertebrate life.
Fore Wood SSSI	21.5	c.2.6km NE	Designated due to being one of 5 East Sussex examples of ghyll woodland and contains a rich breeding bird community, including hawfinch <i>Coccothraustes coccothraustes</i> , woodcock <i>Scolopax rusticola</i> , cuckoo <i>Cuculus canorus</i> and great spotted woodpecker <i>Dendrocopos major</i> .
Pevensey Levels SSSI	3501	c.2.94km SW	Large area of low-lying grazing meadows intersected by complex system of ditches, supporting important communities of wetland fauna and flora, including one nationally rare and several nationally scarce aquatic plants and nationally rare invertebrates. Site is of national importance for wintering lapwing <i>Vanellus vanellus</i> .

Site Name & Designation	Area (ha)	Distance & Bearing from Study Area (km)	Reason(s) for Designation
Marline Valley Woods SSSI	55	c.3.39km NE	Ancient Woodlands on Wadhurst Clay and Lower Tunbridge Wells sandstone, dominated by nationally uncommon woodland type, pedunculate oak-hornbeam woodland. The stream valley supports 61 species of bryophytes and a species-rich neutral grassland in agriculture unimproved pasture.
Blackhorse Quarry SSSI	0.19	c.4.96km NE	Designated for vertebrate palaeontological interest, yielding large numbers of specimens of fish and reptiles.
Ashburnham Park SSSI	110.7	c.5.1km NW	Former medieval deer park. The Ancient Woodland is one of largest remaining areas of its kind in the country and contains many over mature trees with outstanding lichen floras and supports diverse breeding bird community.

Figure 3.2: Summary of Statutory Sites of National Importance within 5km of the Study Area

Note: SSSI = Sites of Special Scientific Interest

3.4.3 Non-Statutory Sites

The data request response from SxBRC includes details of three non-statutory designated wildlife sites, which are all Sites of Nature Conservation Importance (SNCI). One of these sites, Woodland Complex at Buckholt Farm SNCI, is adjacent to the eastern boundary of the Study Area. These sites are described within Figure 3.4.3 opposite.

Site Name & Designation	Area (ha)	Distance & Bearing from Study Area (km)	Reason(s) for Designation
Woodland Complex at Buckholt Farm SNCI	53.0	Adjacent to the east boundary	A large complex of five Ancient Woodlands comprising hornbeam <i>Carpinus betulus</i> coppice and oak standards. All woodlands contain derelict ponds and streams. Cole Wood is adjacent to the eastern boundary of the Study Area.
High Peartree, Smiths and High Woods SNCI	22.1	c. 0.2km W	Complex of woods, comprising ancient oak coppice, which is an unusual woodland type in Sussex. The site is important as it is located within an urban area and has open access.
Disused Railway, Bexhill SNCI	19.0	c. 0.8km S E	A disused railway line, running north-east out of Bexhill. An important semi-natural habitat on the edge of town, acting as a link between small areas of woodland.

Figure 3.3: Summary of Non-Statutory Sites of Local Importance within 1km

SxBRC have also provided records of Ancient Woodlands within a 1km radius of the Study Area, some of which are included on the Ancient Woodland Inventory. These sites along with sites identified using GIS Data supplied by Rother District Council are highlighted in Figure 3.4.4.

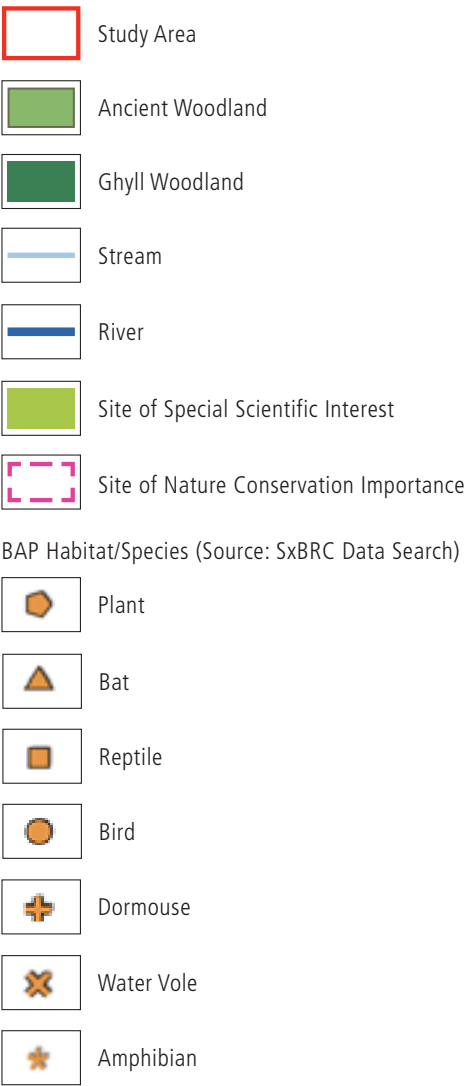
Site Name	Distance and Bearing from Study Area
South of Kiteye Wood	On site
Ken Wood	On site
Woodland east of Birchen Shaw	On site
Kiteye Wood	Adjacent to northern boundary of the Study Area
Cole Wood	Adjacent to eastern boundary of the Study Area
Woodland off Watermill Lane	c. 0.01km E
Mill Wood	c. 0.01km S
Kiln Woodland	c. 0.07km N
Hanging Woods: Cockerel's Wood	c. 0.16km N
High Woods: Little High Woods	c. 0.20km W
Freezeland Wood	c. 0.20km N
Levetts Wood	c. 0.23km S
Hanging Woods: Bloomery (<i>site of</i>)	c. 0.3km E
Woodland east of Oaktree Stables	c. 0.3km E
Redgrove Wood	c. 0.37km S

Site Name	Distance and Bearing from Study Area
High Woods: Jack O'Borehams/Great High Wood/Freehold Wood	c. 0.4km W
Jack O'Boreham's Shaw 2	c. 0.6km W
Jack O'Boreham's Shaw	c. 0.6km W
Hanging Woods: Park Wood	c. 0.40km N
Woodland north of Freezeland Wood	c. 0.40km N
Hanging Woods: Great Henniker Wood	c. 0.4km E
Hanging Wood/Ring Wood:	c. 0.5km E
Woodland adjacent to Turkey Road	c. 0.60km S
High Woods: Smiths Wood	c. 0.6km W
Woodland west of Park Wood	c. 0.7km N
Woodland east of Francis Wood	c. 0.8km N
Sweetwillow Shaw	c. 0.8km W
High Woods: High Peartree Wood	c. 0.8km W
Woodland west of Combe Wood	c. 0.9km W
High Woods: High Woods	c. 1km W

Figure 3.4: Ancient Woodlands within 1km

3.4.4 **Summary of Results**

Figure 3.4.5 opposite identifies designated sites and habitats .



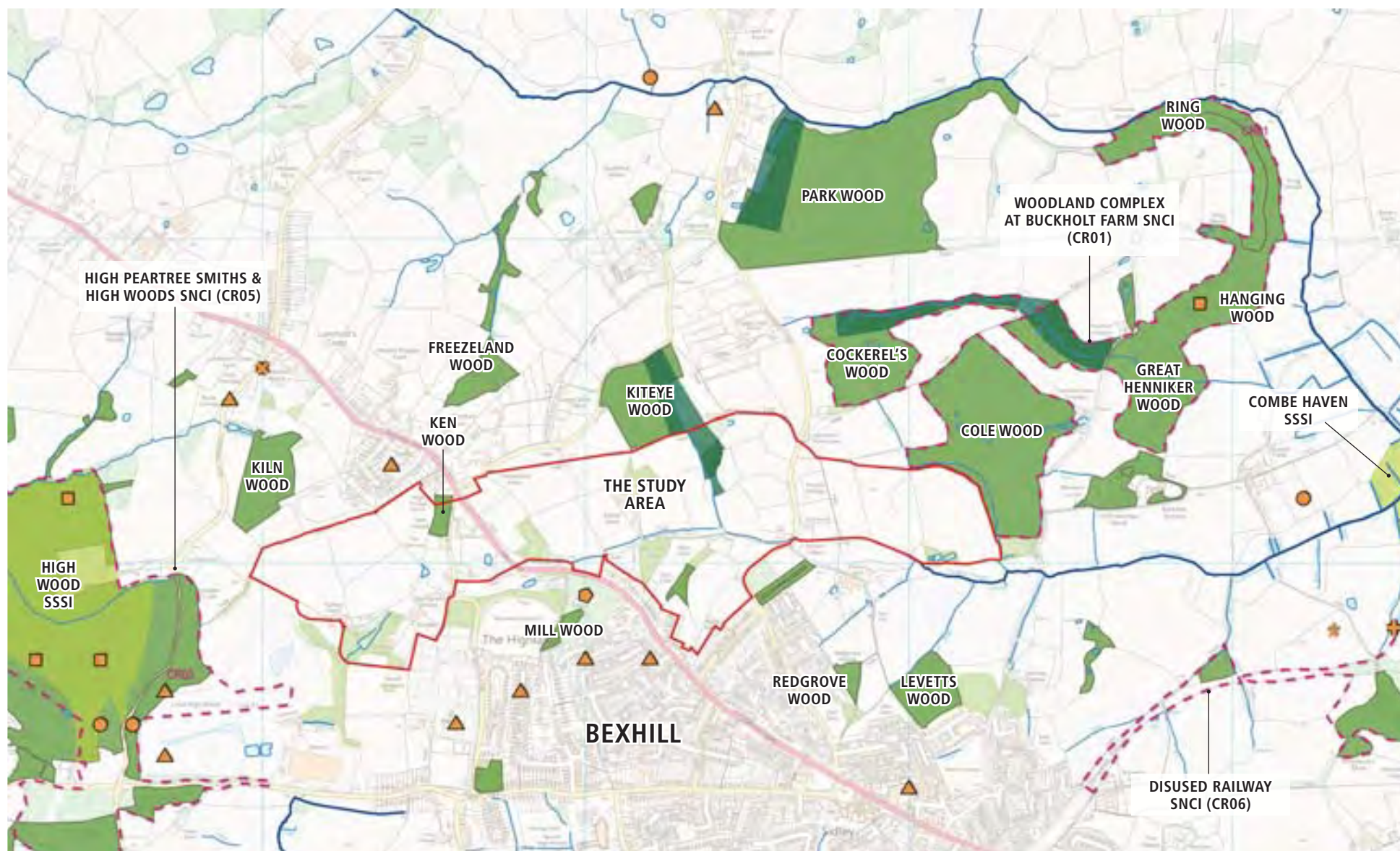


Figure 3.5: Locations of Designated Sites and Habitats.

3.4.5 General Study Area Description

The Study Area comprises 81.84 hectares of land to the north of Bexhill. The majority of the Study Area spans across a high ridge, falling away to the Combe Haven valley bottom to the south which runs west to east. Beyond the valley bottom to the south the land starts to rise once more to meet existing development on the northern edge of Bexhill. A large quarry part of Ibstock Brick Ltd occurs adjacent to the western part of the Study Area.

Land use with the Study Area is dominated by farmland, with semi-improved pasture bisected by hedgerows and wet ditches being the most prevalent habitat types. Pockets of woodland (including some ancient and wet Ghyll woodland) are scattered across the Study Area, with larger woodland blocks adjacent to the west, north and east. The Combe Haven stream flows through the valley bottom, with several ponds scattered along the valley. The Study Area also includes several private houses, associated gardens and farm buildings.

3.4.6 Habitats and Flora

3.4.7 Notable Flora Records

SxBRC have supplied a record for Section 41 (S41) and Sussex BAP species big blue pinkgill *Entoloma bloxamii* 0.2km south, pennyroyal *Mentha pulegium* 0.07km south within Mill Wood in 2004 and a historic record of S41 and Sussex BAP species shepherd's-needle *Scandix pecten-veneris* 0.32km south east of the Study Area in 1970. SxBRC also supplied several records of invasive species from within the 1km search area including two which were found within the Study Area. Rhododendron *Rhododendron ponticum* records ranged from 0.2km to 0.9km north east and 0.99km south west (all records from 1993) and Japanese knotweed *Fallopia japonica* 0.88km south east in 1993 and 1km north in 2008.



Target Notes

- 01 Wet flush
- 02 Woodland strip with Rhododendron and birch, dense gorse and bracken at edges
- 03 Mixed woodland with heathland indicators (gorse and broom)
- 04 Broadleaved woodland with large old sweet chestnut stools and hazel coppice
- 05 Allotments
- 06 Japanese Knotweed on hedge bank behind a series of wood sheds and small cabins
- 07 Rush Pasture
- 08 Three ponds surrounded by wet grassland and woodland including heathland indicators such as gorse and dense hazel coppice

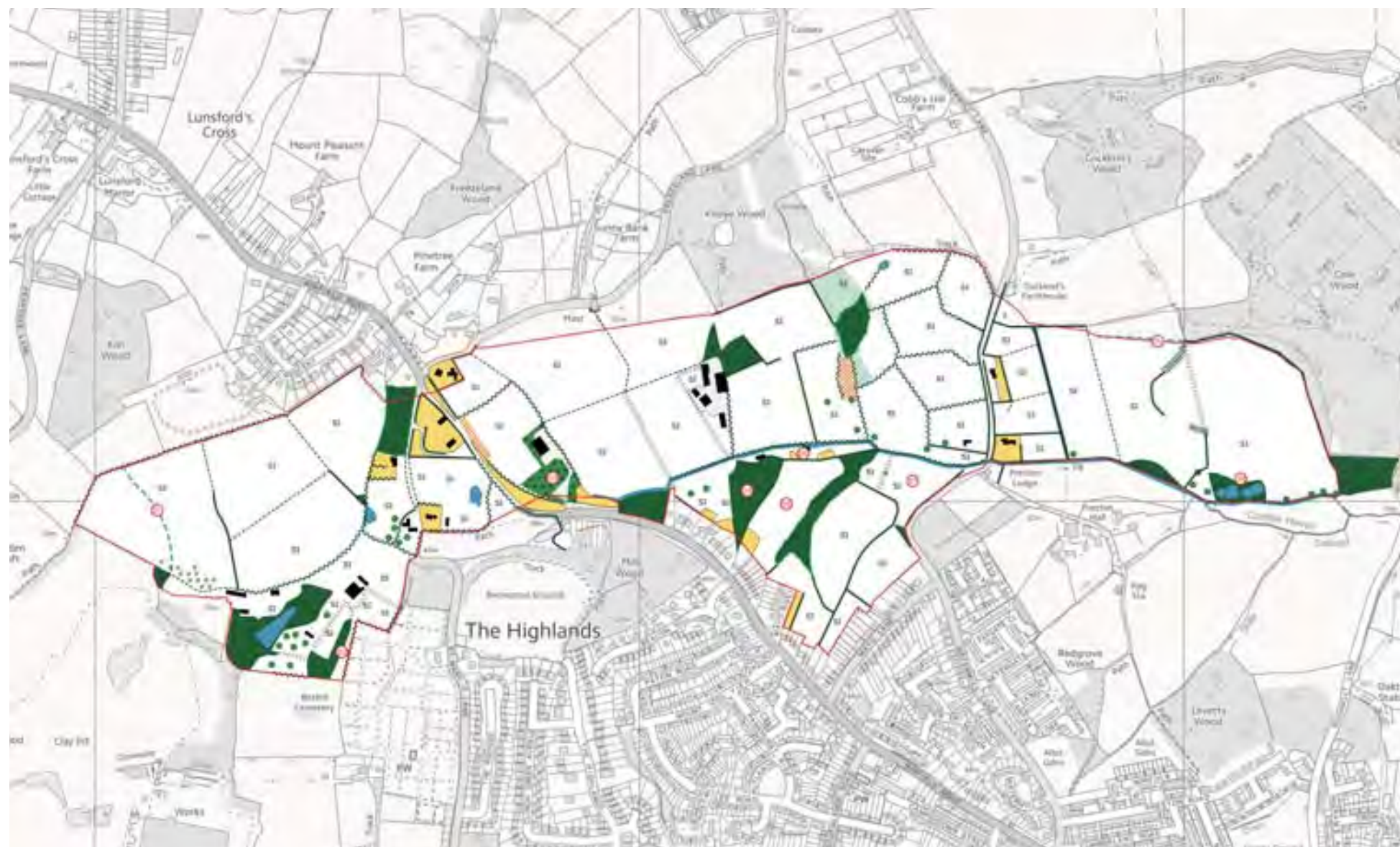


Figure 3.6: Habitat Plan

3.4.8 Habitat Summary

Habitat Type	Description	Habitat Designations / TPO's / Ancient Woodland	S41 / BAP Habitat	Potential for S41 / BAP / Protected / Rare Species
Hedgerows - Intact	Dense tall hedgerows with good structure throughout the eastern part of the Study Area and towards the western end, supporting a good range of native species, such as hazel <i>Corylus avellana</i> and rose <i>Rosa sp.</i> and incorporating adjacent ditches and banks. Associated ground flora includes bracken <i>Pteridium aquilinum</i> , gorse <i>Ulex europaeus</i> , broom <i>Cytisus scoparius</i> and rough grassland species.		✓	✓
Hedgerows - Defunct	Several hedgerows on Study Area are considered to be of low quality due to their poor structure and low species diversity. Boundaries between the grazed fields comprise of heavily managed defunct/gappy hawthorn <i>Crataegus monogyna</i> or blackthorn <i>Prunus spinosa</i> hedges made stock proof with fencing. Ground flora is poor, with exposed bare ground frequent.		✓	
Hedgerow with Trees	<p>Hedge lines with standard trees including oak, beech <i>Fagus sylvatica</i>, ash <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>, willow <i>Salix sp.</i> Alder <i>Alnus glutinosa</i> and birch <i>Betula pendula</i>, are associated with a good quality hedgerow. The hedgerows with trees are associated with the woodland edges, provide connectivity between woodland features and are more common along the valley bottom and along the boundaries of the smaller field parcels.</p> <p>Mature trees comprising oak and ash form dense tree lines along a stream bisecting the far south of the Study Area and the central fields. Tree lines along the northern boundary adjacent to Kiteye Wood and along a lane on the northern edge of the Study Area also comprise hedge banks and ditches.</p>		✓	✓
Scattered Trees/Tree Lines	<p>Several mature trees (mainly oak or ash) are included along field boundaries throughout the Study Area with a small cluster of scattered semi mature/mature trees in the south west corner.</p> <p>Several sparse tree lines on defunct field boundaries predominately within the centre of the Study Area include semi-mature willow, ash and oak and are considered to have some ecological value.</p>	✓		✓

Habitat Type	Description	Habitat Designations / TPO's / Ancient Woodland	S41 / BAP Habitat	Potential for S41 / BAP / Protected / Rare Species
Broadleaved & Wet Woodland	<p>Three Ancient Woodland parcels (Ken Wood towards the west, south extension of Kiteye Wood, and the woodland to the east of Birchen Shaw) occur within the Study Area with a further two Ancient Woodland parcels adjacent to the Study Area (Cole Wood and Kiteye Wood).</p> <p>Two parcels (extension of Kiteye Wood and woodland east of Birchen Shaw) of Ancient Woodland within the central part of the Study Area are connected via a wet ditch and hedge/tree network/Ghyll woodland habitat, to each other and to Kiteye Wood to the north of the Study Area. The ditch network feeds into a stream that flows south into the Combe Haven stream corridor.</p> <p>A third parcel of Ancient Woodland occurs to the west of St. Mary's Lane. This Ancient Woodland is connected to further woodland habitat south-west of the Study Area via a hedgerow and ditch network.</p> <p>A further broadleaved woodland parcel (not identified as Ancient Woodland), comprising old sweet chestnut and hazel coppice, occurs along the Combe Haven stream corridor in the valley bottom.</p> <p>Other woodlands within the Study Area have not been identified as Ancient Woodland and due to access restrictions were only able to be assessed from a far. These small parcels of woodland are connected to hedgerows and tree lines across the Study Area and are therefore considered to be of high quality.</p> <p>Tree Preservation Orders are relevant for Mill Wood to the south of the Study Area, a parcel of woodland on the southern boundary of the Study Area (across from Mill Wood) and a woodland parcel off Watermill lane.</p>	<p>Ancient Woodland and Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs)</p> <p>✓</p>	✓	✓
Mixed Woodland	<p>A parcel of mixed woodland occurs adjacent to Ninfield Road. No access into the interior of this woodland block was provided. However, it was noted to comprise a mixed age stand of holly <i>Ilex aquifolium</i>, hazel, birch, pine <i>Pinus sp.</i>, ash and oak with gorse and broom on the boundaries.</p>			✓

Habitat Type	Description	Habitat Designations / TPO's / Ancient Woodland	S41 / BAP Habitat	Potential for S41 / BAP / Protected / Rare Species
Semi-Improved Grassland (incl. wet grassland/ rush pasture)	<p>The majority of the Study Area comprises grazed semi-improved grassland. Due to this assessment being undertaken outside the optimum botanical season it is difficult to determine the quality of the grassland present. In addition access across grassland areas was limited by access permissions.</p> <p>The majority of semi-improved grassland habitat across the higher ground on the northern side of the Study Area is grazed by livestock (sheep/cattle), with smaller fields used as horse pasture and are intensively grazed. It is considered likely that botanical diversity within these fields is likely to be fairly poor.</p> <p>Small fields along the Combe Haven stream corridor along the valley bisecting the Study Area east to west have a damp nature, with some sections being liable to flood during times of heavy rainfall. Rush pasture occurs on land to the south of the stream corridor within the central section of the Study Area, with distinct water meadows occurring adjacent to the southern boundary at the eastern end of the Study Area. These smaller fields along the valley bottom are considered to hold the potential to be more botanically diverse.</p>		✓	✓
Improved Grassland	A small part of an improved field to the north of the Study Area is within the red line boundary. This area is dominated by perennial rye grass <i>Lolium perenne</i> .			
Amenity Grassland	The Study Area encompasses gardens and grass verges these are classed as amenity grassland areas. Whilst these areas can offer opportunities for local wildlife they are considered to have a low habitat quality.			
Standing Water (Ponds)	Eight ponds were identified to be within the Study Area. Only five were able to be seen from the footpaths and access given to the eastern end of the Study Area. These five ponds were all considered to be of high biodiversity value and were connected to wet ditches/streams running through the Study Area to the Combe Haven corridor.		✓	✓

Habitat Type	Description	Habitat Designations / TPO's / Ancient Woodland	S41 / BAP Habitat	Potential for S41 / BAP / Protected / Rare Species
Running Water (streams/wet ditches)	Combe Haven stream runs south from Kiteye Wood through the Study Area before flowing east along the southern boundary. Several wet ditches form tributaries in to the stream throughout the central area of the Study Area. Across more managed farmland areas field ditches have recently been dredged, and waste material left on the ditch banks. Combe Haven stream has a more natural profile and supports some marginal wetland flora (e.g. pendulous sedge <i>Carex pendula</i> and water dropworts <i>Oenanthe sp.</i>)		✓	✓
Ruderal/Scrub	There are patches of gorse and bracken scrub throughout the Study Area predominately along hedgerows.			
Buildings	Private dwellings, barns and farm buildings occur within the Study Area. Buildings were not closely surveyed as not access permission was provided. However it is considered that built development within the Study Area could provide opportunities for roosting bats and nesting birds.			✓

Figure 3.7: Habitat Summary

3.4.9 **Fauna**

SxBRC provided records of protected and notable species from within the 1km search area. Several of these species are included on UK and Local BAP lists. Species records provided and the relevance of these records to the Study Area is summarised in Figure 3.4.8 opposite..



Enhancement of tree lines and hedgerows will improve connectivity between woodland blocks and dispersal corridors for wildlife across the Study Area.

Species	Records	Legal Protection	S41 / BAP Species	Potential to Occur within Study Area
Bats	<p>Records of eight species of bat were provided. Records include roosts (0.1km - 0.95km from the Study Area) as well as bats recorded using the landscape. Species include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brown long-eared <i>Plecotus auritus</i> • Natterers <i>Myotis nattereri</i> • Whiskered <i>Myotis mystacinus</i>/Brandts <i>brandtii</i> • Noctule <i>Nyctalus noctula</i> • Serotine <i>Eptesicus serotinus</i> • Soprano pipistrelle <i>Pipistrellus pygmaeus</i> • Common pipistrelle <i>Pipistrellus pipistrellus</i> • Nathusius' pipistrelle <i>Pipistrellus nathusii</i> 	Habs Regs 2010 & W&CA 1981	S41 / UK BAP / LBAP	<p>Trees and buildings present across the Study Area potentially provide roosting opportunities for bats.</p> <p>Woodlands, hedgerows and tree lines, ponds, stream corridors and grassland all provide suitable foraging and commuting habitat for bats.</p>
Badger	No badger meles records were provided due to confidentiality. However, signs of badger across the Study Area were observed during the Study Area survey.	Protection of Badgers Act 1992		Habitats such as hedgerows and woodland provide areas where badgers may have setts. Woodland and grassland habitat provide suitable foraging resources.
Dormouse	Records of dormouse <i>Muscardinus avellanarius</i> were provided from 1993, 1.24km south east, within Combe Wood and c.1.4km north in 2011. An unoccupied dormouse nest has also been found further south east in woodland along a disused railway embankment during 2013 during surveys by Applied Ecology for the NE Bexhill Gateway Road ⁷ .	Habs Regs 2010 & W&CA 1981	S41 / UK BAP / LBAP	The Study Area supports high quality hedgerows linking parcels of woodland both within and adjacent to the Study Area. These habitats provide potential habitat for dormouse.

⁷ Applied Ecology (2013). Land at North East Bexhill – Protected Species Survey Report http://planweb01.rother.gov.uk/OcellaWeb/viewDocument?file=dv_pl_files%5CRR_2013_2166_P%5CRR_2013_2166_P-SI_6.pdf&module=pl

Species	Records	Legal Protection	S41 / BAP Species	Potential to Occur within Study Area
Water Vole	One record of water vole <i>Arvicola amphibius</i> was provided 0.5km north of the Study Area in 2000.	W&CA 1981	S41 / UK BAP / LBAP	The Combe Haven stream runs through the Study Area with other smaller streams/brooks linking up to this water course. Whilst the majority of these ditches are not considered to provide good habitat for water vole, it is possible that a population could be present within the Combe Valley.
Birds	<p>109 bird records were provided by SxBRC. Six Schedule 1/Red Listed Birds of Conservation Concern were recorded between 0.6km – 1.56km of the Study Area:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Barn owl, <i>Tyto alba</i> • Lapwing, hobby <i>Falco Subbuteo</i> • Tree sparrow, <i>Passer montanus</i> • Hawfinch • Lesser spotted woodpecker, <i>Dendrocopos minor</i> 	W&CA 1981 (Schedule 1 species incl. barn owl, hobby)	S41 / UK BAP	All habitats within the Study Area have the potential to provide foraging for farmland and garden bird species, with woodlands, trees and hedgerows providing nesting opportunities. The less intensively grazed grassland within the centre of the Study Area and surrounding the stream corridor provide more optimal habitat for lapwing.
Reptiles	<p>Eight records of reptiles have been provided including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grass snake <i>Natrix natrix</i> • Slow worm <i>Anguis fragilis</i> • Common lizard <i>Zootoca vivipara</i> • Adder <i>Vipera berus</i> (1989 and 1991) <p>The records predominately came from the High Woods SSSI to the west of the Study Area.</p>	W&CA 1981	S41 / UK BAP / LBAP	The hedgerows, woodland edges, the less intensively managed grassland parcels, stream corridor and ponds all offer foraging, basking and hibernation opportunities for reptiles. Damp habitat within the valley bottom may be most suitable grass snake, whilst drier more heathy habitats on the ridge towards the western end of the Study Area may provide more suitable conditions for common lizard and adder.

Species	Records	Legal Protection	S41 / BAP Species	Potential to Occur within Study Area
Amphibians	Three records of great crested newt (GCN) <i>Triturus cristatus</i> and one record of common toad <i>Bufo bufo</i> were provided within the 1km search area.	GCN: Habs Regs 2010 & W&CA 1981	UK BAP / LBAP	The ponds within and outside the Study Area may provide breeding opportunities and the woodland, hedgerows, semi improved grassland and scrub/ ruderal areas provide terrestrial/hibernation opportunities for GCN and other amphibian species.
Invertebrates	841 invertebrate records are provided from within the 1km of the Study Area. These records predominantly relate to moths and butterflies however beetles, dragonflies, true flies, ants, spiders and molluscs were also recorded.	-	LBAP	All habitats within the Study Area have the potential to support LBAP invertebrate species with dead wood within woodlands/hedgerows providing habitat for stag beetles <i>Lucanus cervus</i> .

Figure 3.8: Records provided by SxBRC within 1km of the Study Area.

3.5 Evaluation of Ecological Features

Evaluation of ecological features has been informed by results of the desktop study and Phase 1 habitats survey, as detailed within the previous section. With reference to the evaluation criteria set out in the IEEM Guidelines, a range of factors are considered when evaluating the ecological features of a Study Area, as set out within Section 3.3. The value of ecological resources across the Study Area are assessed in terms of their geographical level of importance.

3.5.1 Hedgerows

A coherent network of hedgerows occurs across the Study Area. The majority of hedgerows have good structure and species diversity, with many incorporating mature trees, old hedge banks and ditches. Whilst some hedgerows are of lesser quality they still provide habitat connectivity across the landscape and have the potential to be restored. Hedgerows are a NERC Act Section 41/ BAP habitat and overall the hedgerow resource within the Study Area is considered to be of County level importance.

3.5.2 Woodland

Three of the woodland blocks on the Study Area are classed as Ancient Woodland, with Ghyll Wood stretching in to the Study Area from Kiteye Wood adjacent to the northern boundary. Several other parcels of Ancient Woodland occur within the local area/adjacent to the Study Area. Ancient Woodland is a declining resource and is considered to be of value at the National level.

Woodland not identified as 'Ancient' is considered to be of County value as broadleaved woodland is included on the Sussex Biodiversity Partnership Habitat Action Plan. This habitat is also of value in terms of the woodland plant communities and fauna which it is likely to support.

3.5.3 Scattered Trees

Mature trees, largely comprising oak and ash, occur within fields and along old hedgerow and woodland boundaries. Mature trees are considered to be a resource of County level value, with any veteran trees (should they be present) likely to be of Regional value.



Mature trees provide habitat for a variety of species such as bats, birds and invertebrates.

3.5.4 Grassland

The majority of grassland within the Study Area is grazed pasture, with some areas being very overgrazed by horses. Whilst it is considered that most of this grassland is likely to be species poor, semi-improved grassland provides a valuable resource for a range of local wildlife. Smaller fields along the Combe Haven valley are considered to hold the greatest potential for botanical interest/unimproved grassland status, although it was not possible to accurately assess their value due the Phase 1 survey being undertaken outside of the optimal period for botanical survey and direct access being limited to some areas. Semi-natural grasslands such as neutral and wet grassland are S41/BAP habitats.

Overall the grassland resource across the Study Area is considered to be of at least Local level value, with grassland habitats along the Combe Haven valley having the potential to be of County level value.

3.5.5 Wetland Features

Ponds, streams, wet ditches and flushes are scattered across the Study Area, with the majority feeding into the Combe Haven stream. Such features comprise Section 41/BAP habitats. These wetland features offer resources for a wide range of local biodiversity and are considered to be a resource of at least Local importance.

3.5.6 Amenity Habitats

Gardens habitats associated with private properties within the Study Area are likely to provide some resources for local wildlife, but are not considered to be habitats of key importance. Highways verges also include close-mown semi-improved and amenity grassland habitats, which offer some resource for local biodiversity. In the context of the wider landscape the amenity habitat resource is considered to be of Site level value.

3.5.7 Buildings

Buildings present across the Study Area were not considered in any detail, but are known to include a range of building types from fairly modern residential dwellings to old farm houses / barns. These features may provide opportunities for local wildlife to shelter, and as such their potential value is discussed as appropriate herein.

3.5.8 Fauna

The Study Area is likely to support a wide range of native wildlife, including S41/BAP, protected/notable species. Whilst further detailed survey work will be required to establish the presence/absence of such species and to fully evaluate the value of the Study Area for these species, a summary of habitats of importance to species likely to be present within the Study Area is highlighted in Figure 3.5.1 opposite.

Species	Context	Habitats of Primary Value
Bats	9 species recorded locally, including common and rarer species.	Roosting: buildings & mature trees. Foraging/Commuting: woodland, hedgerows, grassland and wetland corridors – particularly where habitat connectivity is good and light pollution is minimal.
Badgers	No records provided, but badgers known to be well distributed and abundant locally.	Woodland, hedgerows and grassland.
Dormouse	Dormouse known to occur locally.	Woodland and associated old hedgerow networks across the Study Area provide good quality habitat.
Water Vole	One record provided 0.5km north of Study Area. No records from within 1km in Combe Haven valley.	Stream/ditch network and associated habitat (where suitable).
Birds	Good diversity of bird species recorded locally including BOCC Red list and Schedule 1 species.	Woodland, hedgerows and grassland all provide some resource for nesting/foraging birds. Hedgerows/woodland with good structure/species diversity likely to be of the greatest value.
Reptiles	All four widespread reptile species recorded locally.	Rough grassland, hedge bases and woodland edge habitats likely to be greatest value.
Amphibians	Great crested newt and common toad recorded locally. Potential for other amphibian species to occur.	Thirty four potential ponds were identified within 500m of the Study Area from viewing Ordnance survey maps, MAGIC, ProMap and aerial photography. Ponds (within and outside the Study Area) and associated grassland, hedgerows and woodland areas offer both breeding and hibernation opportunities for amphibians.
Invertebrates	Wide variety of invertebrate species recorded locally.	Woodland, hedgerows, wetland and marginal habitats offer the best opportunities for the majority of invertebrate species.

Figure 3.9: Fauna Assessment

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3.6 Ecological Constraints and Opportunities

3.6.1 Designated Sites

3.6.2 International Important Sites

No statutory wildlife sites of international importance occur within or immediately adjacent to the Study Area and therefore direct impacts to such sites are not anticipated.

The potential for indirect impacts to European statutory sites will need to be carefully assessed with regard to future proposals at North Bexhill. Potential indirect impacts associated with new development within the borough have been identified in the Rother District Council Core Strategy Development Plan Document, Appropriate Assessment (AA) Screening Report 2007; points of potential relevance to North Bexhill are as follows:

- **Dungeness to Pett Levels SPA** (c.15.1km north east) – Potential impacts from housing provision and associated infrastructure on water quality that could affect the integrity of the SPA. Potential for impacts on species that forage outside the SPA. Potential for increased recreational pressure and disturbance that could affect the integrity of the SPA.
- **Hastings Cliffs SAC** (c. 8.98km east) – Potential for increased recreational pressure and disturbance that could affect the integrity of the SAC.

- **Pevensey Levels SAC and Ramsar Site** (c. 2.94km south west) - Potential for impacts from housing provision and associated infrastructure relating to potential changes in pollution levels, water quality and quantity.

Future proposals at North Bexhill will need to consider how impacts to European designated sites can best be avoided/mitigated, and future proposals will need to comply with the requirements of Core Strategy Policy EN5. Future proposals may need to be subject to a Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA).

Potential increased recreational pressures on the SPA and SAC sites due to future proposals at North Bexhill should be avoided through adequate provision of Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) for informal recreation. The proposed Combe Valley Countryside Park to the east of the Study Area will provide such opportunities for new and existing residents of Bexhill. In addition, it is considered that the provision of suitable areas of informal recreation within future proposals at North Bexhill could help minimise any visitor related impacts to the European designated sites.

3.6.3 Nationally Important Sites

No SSSI's occur within the Study Area, however seven SSSIs occur within 5km of the Study Area, the closest is High Woods SSSI c.0.3km to the west. The High Wood has well maintained footpaths and a horse ride to encourage visitors whilst reducing the impact on habitats. High Woods is part of the Bexhill Fringe Biodiversity Opportunity Area.

- Strengthening access and habitat links between High Woods SSSI and the Study Area would improve linkages to woodland resources for the local community and enhance connectivity for habitats, in line with objectives of the RDC Green Infrastructure Study.

3.6.4 Locally Important Sites

Three sites of local importance are within 1km of the Study Area, including the Woodland Complex at Buckholt Farm SNCI which lies adjacent to the Study Area's eastern edge. Buckholt Farm SNCI is a large complex of five Ancient Woodlands and is part of the Bexhill Fringe Biodiversity Opportunity Area. Existing public access into the SNCI comprises a public footpath along the north-east section of the Study Area.

- New development on the eastern edge of the Study Area may create opportunities to improve and enhance access into the woodland complex for informal recreation, but will need to be carefully managed to avoid degradation and disturbance of flora and fauna present.
- Opportunities for woodland management and restoration should be explored.



3.6.5 Habitats

- Habitats of County value and above should be retained as a priority. This includes woodland, hedgerows and scattered trees.
- Where possible features of local level value should also be retained, such as ponds and wet meadow/ rush pasture.
- Retained habitats should be adequately buffered from new development.
- With regards to Ancient Woodland a 15m buffer from the woodland edge is required under Natural England guidance.
- Root Protection Areas (RPA's) should be observed around retained trees and hedgerow features.
- With regards to Watercourses, the Environment Agency advice should be followed. Buffers around retained pond features related to the presence/absence of protected species (e.g. Great crested newts) may be needed. Impacts to local hydrological systems should be closely considered and necessary measures put in place to avoid pollution related impacts.

Where future proposals result in potential impacts to key habitats, suitable mitigation and/or compensation packages will need to be developed to ensure no net loss to biodiversity, in line with local and national objectives.

Opportunities to restore and enhance retained habitat features and new habitat creation should be maximised, in line with national and local planning policy. The benefits of new habitat creation should be maximised by developing new habitats adjacent to areas of habitat restoration and enhancement, with the objective of linking existing and new habitats being a key objective. Implementation of a coherent Green Infrastructure Strategy (in line with Rother District Council Green Infrastructure Background Paper⁸) will be an important consideration for future proposals at North Bexhill.

Potential opportunity and constraint areas are highlighted on the Ecological Opportunity and Constraints Plan (see Figure 3.10) with key priorities summarised below:

- Combe Valley: Manage and enhance wetland and associated grassland and woodland habitats within the valley bottom to strengthen this habitat corridor and maximise biodiversity value.
- Retain and enhance existing hedgerow networks where possible. Seek to buffer hedgerows with areas of semi-natural habitat to provide ecological functional habitat corridors.
- Provide new habitat linkages between the valley bottom habitats and retained areas of woodland and grassland within proposed development zones north and south of the valley corridor.

- Improve public access from new development and the existing urban fringes of Bexhill into retained woodlands. Ensure appropriate Management Plans are developed to manage visitor access and protect/enhance woodland resources.
- Provide new areas of woodland and hedgerow planting to ensure an on-going resource is maintained for the future.
- Strategic design of new 'green corridors' to provide habitat and access linkages between existing/new development and the wider countryside.

⁸ Rother District Council. (2011) Local Development Framework: Green Infrastructure Background Paper. <http://www.rother.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=14911&p=0>

3.6.6 Fauna

Habitats across the Study Area have the potential to support a wide range of local biodiversity, including protected/notable species. Future proposals at North Bexhill will need to be informed by a further suite of detailed surveys to assess the potential impacts of future development. The results of these surveys can be used to inform a suitable package of impact avoidance, mitigation and compensation.

Further survey work for the following species will be appropriate:

- **Bats:** Roost identification and activity surveys.
- **Badgers:** Identification of sett locations and foraging territories.
- **Dormice:** To confirm presence/absence and distribution
- **Birds:** Assessment of breeding and winter bird assemblages.
- **Reptiles:** To confirm presence/absence and distribution.
- **Great crested newt:** To confirm presence/absence and distribution.
- **Invertebrates:** To assess community assemblages and presence of rare/ notable species.

In addition to mitigation/compensation where impacts to protected/notable fauna are predicated, opportunities to enhance conditions for local biodiversity exist. Consideration of key species is advised when developing proposals for habitat restoration, enhancement and creation to ensure that opportunities for target species can be maximised in line with local and national Biodiversity Action Plan objectives.



Enhancement and creation of ponds will improve habitats for wetland species. Enhancement of habitats surrounding these features will not only protect them but provide important terrestrial habitat and connectivity between other wetland features.

3.7 Ecological Summary and Conclusions

The 81.84 hectare Study Area is dominated by semi-improved grassland, woodland parcels and hedgerows. The Combe Haven valley bisects the Study Area west to east, and supports key wetland habitats. Habitat features across the Study Area contribute to connectivity between ecological features in the local landscape such as Ancient Woodland. Habitats within the Study Area are likely to support a range of notable and protected wildlife, including bats, badgers, dormouse, birds, reptiles and amphibians.








Whilst no designated wildlife sites occur within the Study Area, a number of SNCI and SSSI's occur within close proximity. European designated sites (SPA/SAC) occur within the wider area. Potential access to these sites from future proposals at North Bexhill will need close consideration, due to increased visitor pressures, hydrological and pollution impacts. Measures to avoid impacts and maximise opportunities to enhance, restore and improve access to such sites should be incorporated into new development proposals for the area, with strategic green infrastructure principles being applied.

The Study Area falls within a Biodiversity Opportunity Area (BOA). In line with the objectives of the BOA future proposals within this area should seek to retain and enhance existing key habitat features, maintain and improve linkages between key habitats and maximise the creation of new habitats to form meaningful




















habitat corridors across the landscape. Where habitats could be lost/impacted appropriate mitigation and/or compensation measures will be required to ensure no net loss of biodiversity occurs as a result of new development.

Habitats across the Study Area offer opportunities for a range of notable/protected species to be present. Further protected species surveys are recommended to determine the species present and inform assessment of the importance of the Study Area for these species. This data will provide a robust baseline to further inform the evolving proposals at North Bexhill and to identify appropriate mitigation and enhancement measures, which will be required as part of the planning application.

In advance of protected species survey data being available, potential constraints are identified in relation to possible European Protected Species (EPS) licensing requirements in respect of bats, dormice and GCN, which would convey strict mitigation and compensation requirements on the proposed development area. Mitigation for potential impacts to badgers, reptiles and birds are also likely to be of relevance.

	Study Area
	Opportunities area
	Grassland habitat
	15m buffer around Ancient Woodland
	Tree / hedge line
	Public footpath
	Byway

Habitat Key

	Mixed woodland
	Broad leaved woodland
	Ghyll woodland
	Ancient Woodland
	Scattered scrub
	Dense scrub
	Intact hedgerow
	Hedgerow with trees
	Defunct hedgerow
	Fence
	Scattered trees
	Tall ruderal
	Bare ground
	Pond
	Stream/Brook
	Wet flush
	Amenity area
	Improved grassland
	Semi-improved grassland

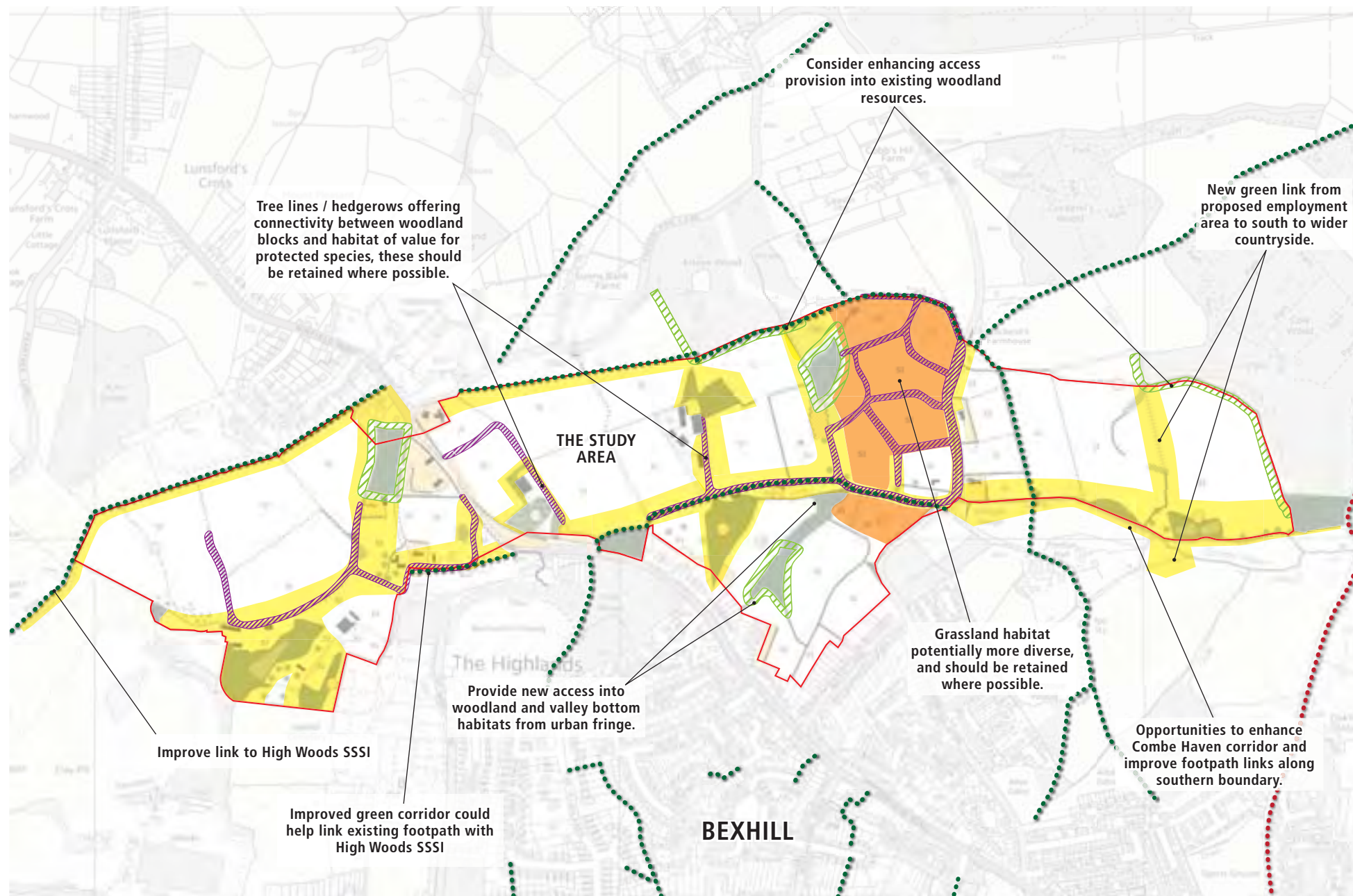


Figure 3.10: Ecological Opportunities and Constraints Plan





Chapter 4

Summary and Conclusions

4.1 Introduction

The North Bexhill Landscape and Ecological Study has been undertaken by consultants CSa Environmental Planning on behalf of Rother District Council. The Study appraises the relevant landscape and ecological factors bearing upon the development potential of the North Bexhill Growth Area. It has been split into two principal components to comprehensively appraise the identified broad location of growth around the northern edge of Bexhill.

4.1.1 Landscape Study

The Landscape Study appraises the Study Area by subdividing it into a series of Landscape Descriptions Units (LDU's). These distinct LDU's have been identified following field survey work and their location has been mapped as part of the Study.

The individual LDU's are geographically distinct and share similar characteristics in terms of field pattern, land cover, landform and land use so that they have a broadly consistent character.

The identification of individual LDU's enables a more detailed consideration of landscape and visual sensitivities and landscape value which together inform the overall judgements about the capacity of these individual LDU's to accommodate development.

The Landscape Study concludes by summarising the inherent landscape and visual sensitivities of each of the individual LDU's and their overall capacity to accommodate development.

4.1.2 Ecological Assessment

The Ecological Assessment finds that no designated wildlife sites occur within the Study Area, although there are a number of SNCI and SSSI's within close proximity of the Study Area.

The Assessment also finds that the Combe Haven valley bisects the Study Area in a west to east direction, and supports key wetland habitats. Habitat features across the Study Area contribute to connectivity between ecological features in the local landscape such as Ancient Woodland.

It is recognised that the Study Area falls within a BOA. In line with the objectives of the BOA new development within the Study Area should seek to retain and enhance existing key habitat features, maintain and improve linkages between key habitats and maximise the creation of new habitats to form meaningful habitat corridors across the landscape. Where habitat could be lost/impacted appropriate mitigation and/or compensation measures will be required to ensure no net loss of biodiversity as a result of new development.

The Ecological Assessment identifies a number of opportunities and constraints for the development of the Study Area. These include the opportunity to retain and enhance existing hedgerow networks, the opportunity to provide new habitat linkages between the valley bottom habitats and retained areas of woodland, and the opportunity to improve public access from the new development and the existing urban fringes of Bexhill into retained areas of woodland.

4.1.3 **Next Steps**

Taking the work completed as part of this Study the next stage is to consider the evidence base of the landscape and ecological findings as part of the process for formulating the development options for the Study Area. These development options are to be presented in a second document called 'North Bexhill: Appraisal and Recommendation of Development Options'. The Development Options document will identify and assess the potential development options for the Study Area, together with proposing how the development should integrate with the construction of the new North Bexhill Access Road.



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