

LCCA 7 - THE NORTH SEAT AREA

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i Location and Landscape Character Summary

There is one large Unit within LCCA7, located atop the ridge to the north-eastern edge of Hastings, before falling to the Brede Valley to the north-east.

The High Weald NL extends across the Unit, other than a small patch to the north, with the Unit limits partly defining the boundary. The High Weald AONB Management Plan 2024-2029 describes how natural beauty is articulated through eight core character components, rooted in the historic characterisation of the High Weald landscape as a whole: Natural systems (geology, soils, water and climate); Settlement; Routeways; Woodland; Fieldscapes and heath; Dark night skies; Aesthetic and perceptual qualities and Land-based economy and rural living.

The Hastings LNR is located through the southern part of LCCA7 within the High Weald National Landscape. Within the Hastings Borough Green and Blue Infrastructure and Biodiversity Net Gain Strategy (2023) the Hastings LNR is described as the largest area of public open space in the borough (covering 345 ha of habitat and 5 km of cliff and coastline), comprising coastal, heathland and wooded habitats with open agri-environment farmland and recreational access. The Area of Hastings Country Park is also designated as a Local Wildlife Site.

The Hastings Country Park is coincident in extent offset to the south of the LCCA, but falls away with pockets only in places within the LNR within LCCA7. The Hastings Country Park is described as a beautiful setting overlooking Hastings old town with views east along the soft rock sandstone cliffs and west towards Beachy Head.

The landscape within LCCA7 is characterised within the East Sussex County Landscape Character Assessment, (2016), with the LCCA located within the south-western extent of The High Wealden Coast, (LCA 12) with the Urban Area of Hastings, (LCA 31) west of this and across the north-western corner of the Unit.

Hastings (LCA 31, 2016)

Hastings extends across the urbanised area of Hastings Town. It is described with characteristics including that: *'The town sits on sandstone, which is eroded into ridges and wooded ghylls, giving a series of parks, open spaces Urban Areas and sheltered woodland within the town; The medieval Old Town is overlooked by the cliff-top castle ruins.'*

The vision for Hastings is identified including: *'A town of strong, highly distinctive character with equally strong and distinctive local communities. A town with good links to the countryside via a network of ghylls, linear open spaces and well designed transport networks worthy of the town.'*

The High Wealden Coast. (LCA 12)

Key positive landscape attributes of LCA12 present within LCCA7 include: *'The main ridge running inland between Batchelor's Bump and Cliff End offers long views across the Brede Valley to the north and Winchelsea, Rye, Dungeness, and the coast of France on a clear day; Scattered areas of semi-natural ancient woodland,'*

The current condition of LCA12 is identified as including: *'a largely unspoilt and tranquil rural landscape with few intrusive features. The landscape is in generally good condition and well managed as farmland with a strong historic structure. As with most of the High Weald landscape the historic field patterns of small fields and significant hedgerows remain intact. There has been some fragmentation of this by removal and decay of hedges around the urban fringes of Hastings and Fairlight Cove.'*

The vision for LCA12 is defined, including: *'A dramatic and varied coastline with a hinterland of rich and intricate unspoilt High Wealden Countryside. Locally remote and tranquil areas combined with high quality visitor and recreational opportunities. A thriving rural economy which maximises the opportunities offered by the unique surrounding landscape.'*

Landscape change and adaptation to meet the vision for LCA12 is identified as requiring the following:

- *'1. Planning for the enhancement of the Romney Marsh Area Biodiversity Opportunity Area, which encompasses Wealden Coast, improving habitat continuity;*
- *2. Protect and manage existing habitats and in particular the woodland, heath and grassland of the glens and Country Park, to restore habitat linkages and continuity;*
- *3. Encourage positive management through coppicing of the ancient woodlands;*
- *4. Conserve and strengthen the pattern of hedges, copses and shaws in the inland areas;*
- *5. Plan for the creation of multifunctional green infrastructure to maximise the opportunities for biodiversity and recreation offered by the cliffs, coast, hedges and woodland;*
- *6. Consider the potential to plan for recreational access in this character area identifying areas where public access can be encouraged whilst protecting other areas where wildlife conservation is the priority;*

- *7. Integrate proposed and existing development into the landscape through planting of tree features and woodland to define the boundaries with the countryside. With particular emphasis on edges of development in Fairlight Cove, the Hastings fringes and mobile home parks;*
- *8. Ensure that the design and layout of new development respects the character and form of the landscape and existing settlements;*
- *9. Control the spread of suburbanisation by minimising clutter of signage and other urban features in lanes and villages;*
- *10. Consider traffic management measures on the lanes, together with off road recreational routes to reduce the conflict with walkers, cyclists and horses;*
- *11. Conserve the setting of historic buildings and landscape features;*
- *12. Consider appropriate species for new plantings to maintain landscape character and biodiversity.'*

Guidelines for managing change within LCA12 are identified including the following: *'Pressures for expansion of Battle and Hastings may impact on the parts of the character area which border the towns. A priority should be to identify opportunities to enhance the degraded and poorly managed parts of the character area on the Hastings urban fringes; Any new development should respect the key positive attributes in the landscape; Proposed development should consider opportunities for proactively meeting the Landscape Change Strategy aims for this Landscape Character Area as set out in 1-10 above.'*

ii Settlement Pattern

There are areas of large detached houses within large gardens to the northern edge of the Unit, which rise about the mid slopes of the ridge as a result of settlement expansion and within designed landscapes, with a further comparable area offset from the eastern corner of the Unit. A cluster of agricultural buildings are located atop the ridge at Mill Farm. There are areas of 20th Century planned estates of semi-detached and terraced housing offset to the west off Rye Road and bordering to the south west of the Unit off Fairlight Road.

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LCCA7 - Context Photograph 7A. South-westerly view of the picnic area adjacent to the Hastings Country Park Car Park.



LCCA7 - Context Photograph 7B. Interpretation board within the Hastings Country Park Car Park.

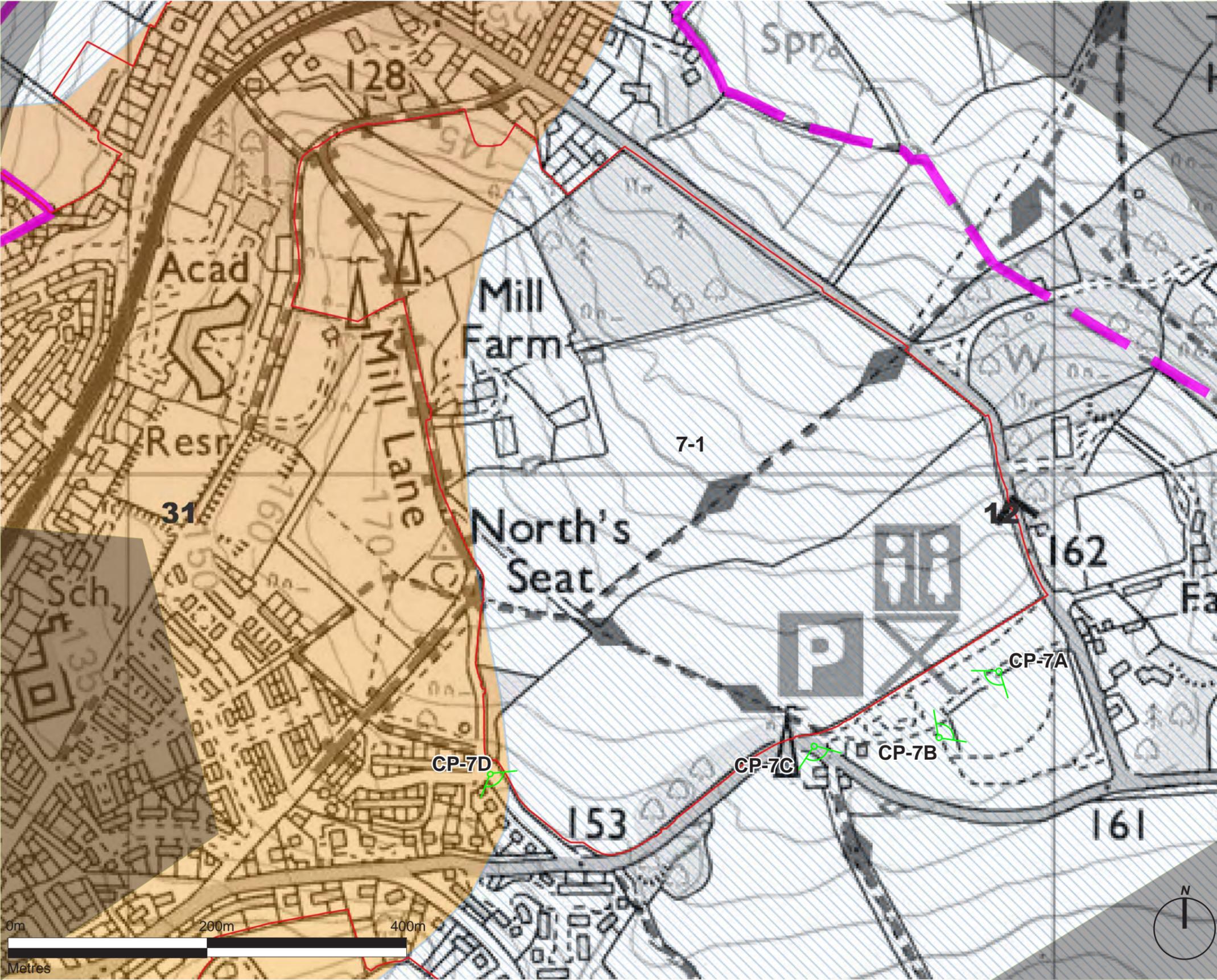


LCCA7 - Photograph 7C. Fairlight Place Lodge off the southern boundary of the Unit.



LCCA7 - Context Photograph 7D. Southern end of Mill Lane adjacent to the Unit.

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Legend

Hastings Borough Boundary

LCCA7 Landscape Assessment Unit

7-1 Hastings Country Park - North Seat

East Sussex Landscape Character Areas (2016)

31 Urban Area of Hastings (LCA 31)

11 Brede Valley (LCA 11)

12 High Wealden Coast (LCA 12)

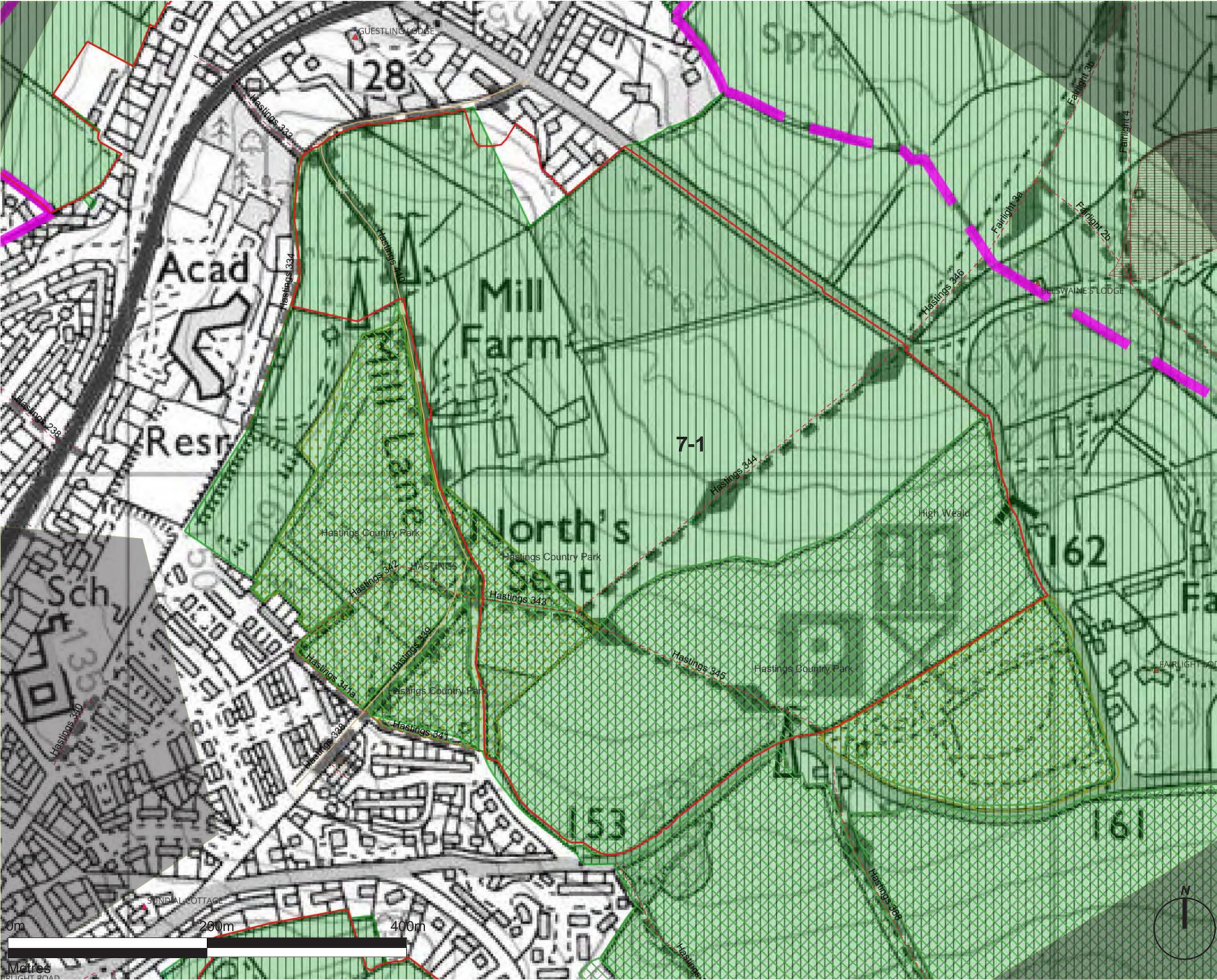
Context Photograph Locations

CA Context Photographs (CA)

Figure A7.1. LCCA7 - East Sussex Landscape Character Areas

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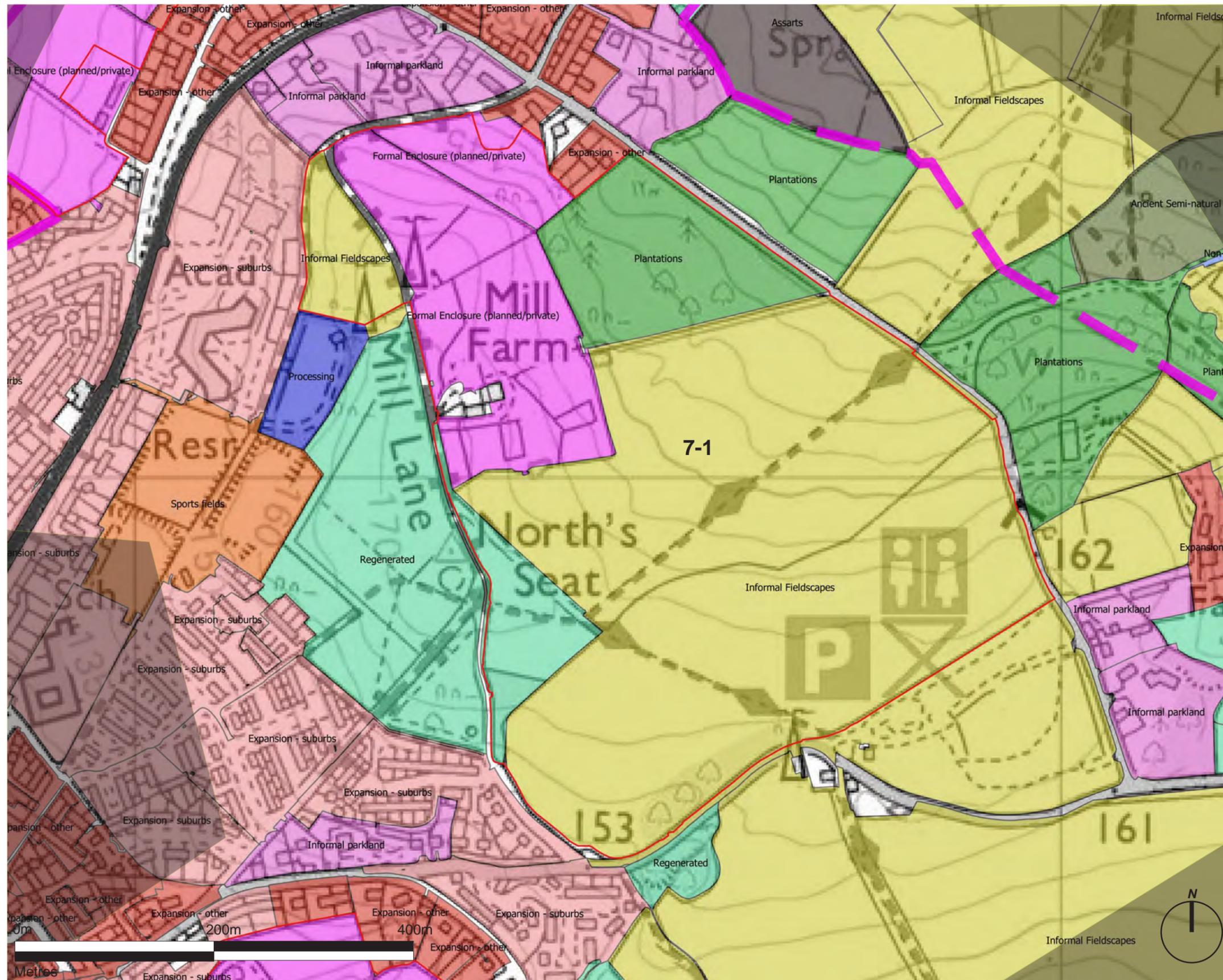
Legend

-  Hastings Borough Boundary
- LCCA7 Landscape Assessment Unit**
-  **7-1** Hastings Country Park - North Seat
- Designations**
-  High Weald National Landscape
-  Ancient Woodland
-  Site of Special Scientific Interest
-  Listed Buildings
-  Local Nature Reserve
-  Local Wildlife Site
-  Hastings Country Park
-  Public Footpath
-  Public Bridleway

Figure A7.2. LCCA7 - Relevant Designations

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LCCA 7 - THE NORTH SEAT AREA



Legend

-  Hastings Borough Boundary
- LCCA7 Landscape Assessment Unit**
-  7-1 Hastings Country Park - North Seat

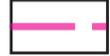
Figure A7.3. LCCA7 - Sussex Historic Landscape Character Types (2010)

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 HISTORIC LANDSCAPE CHARACTERISATION GIS DATASET: DATA COPYRIGHT © EAST SUSSEX COUNTY COUNCIL, HISTORIC ENGLAND

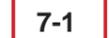
LCCA 7 - THE NORTH SEAT AREA



Legend

-  Hastings Borough Boundary
-  Watercourse, (Source: OS Open Rivers)

LCCA7 Landscape Assessment Unit

-  7-1 Hastings Country Park - North Seat

Level above Ordnance Datum, (aOD)

-  ↑ 140-170m aOD
-  ↑ 115-140m aOD

Light Detection and Ranging (LiDAR) is an airborne mapping technique, which uses a laser to measure the distance between the aircraft and the ground. Up to 100,000 measurements per second are made of the ground, allowing highly detailed terrain models to be generated.

The content of this LiDAR plan is sourced from the Environment Agency as digital elevation data supplied as a Digital Terrain Model to 1m, (2024) through QGIS.

Figure A7.4. LCCA7 - Landform

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Unit 7-1 Hastings Country Park - North Seat - Unit Assessment				
Location and Landscape Character Summary	Unit 7-1 comprises an area of high ground about the north-eastern end of Hastings, forming part of the High Weald NL and the High Wealden Coast (LCA 12). The Unit rises to a high about the 170m contour, whilst falling across open fields and wooded areas to the north east about the 135m contour. Smaller fields in use as paddocks are located to the northern end of the Site. The Hastings Country Park Fairlight Road Car Park and Picnic Area is located off the south-east of the Unit, with Public Footpaths extending north from this across the Unit, forming part of the 1066 Country Walk. Telecommunication masts are located on the high ground to the north of the Unit off Mill Lane (Byway 410) and to the southern edge of the Unit. There is housing to the north-western and south-western edges of the Site.			
Commentary against susceptibility evaluation criteria, informed by the field survey and desktop review.				
1. Landform (>)	<i>Presence of strong topographical variety</i> - The Unit rises to a high about the 170m contour, whilst falling across open fields and wooded areas to the north east about the 135m contour and to the south west about the 155m contour. Landform extends along Mill Lane (Byway 410) about the 170m contour before falling to the 150m contour about the northern edge of the Site.			
2. Landscape pattern and time depth (>)	<i>Complex. Irregular and varied field patterns</i> -.Through reference to the Sussex Historic Characterisation, (Bannister, 2010) the main part of the Unit forms an Informal fieldscape, which extends to north and south outside of the Unit. Areas to the west and south outside of the Unit are characterised as regenerated woodland, whilst to the west is an area of suburban settlement expansion, resulting from a planned estate. Regarding the historic field boundary dataset from the High Weald AONB, the fields are substantially defined as maintaining their historic boundary, but with some internal change other than the central field, which is identified as a Medieval field to those to the north and south. The AONB Storymap (hosted online) identifies that the fields south of Mill Farm comprise Medieval field systems.			
3. 'Natural' character (< >)	<i>Some occurrence of valued semi-natural habitats and features</i> - Unit 7-1 is entirely located within the High Weald NL, with the western boundary of the NL coincident with the Unit. The Hastings LNR extends across the southern part of the Unit and beyond the western and southern edges of the Unit. There are areas of scrub, regenerated woodland and heathland within the area of the LNR. A Plantation woodland extends across part of the north-eastern edge of the Unit. Through reference to data provided by the High Weald AONB Management Unit, there are dispersed ponds within the Unit, which are a characteristic, albeit widespread component of the High Weald NL. The Hastings Country Park Local Wildlife Site extends across the southern half of the Unit and outside of the western boundary.			
4. Historic features (< >)	<i>Presence of some historic features that contribute to landscape character, or adjacent to historic features</i> - Regarding the historic field boundary dataset from the High Weald AONB, the fields are substantially defined as maintaining their historic boundary, but with some internal change other than the central field, which is identified as a Medieval field to those to the north and south. The AONB Storymap (hosted online) identifies that the fields south of Mill Farm are all Medieval fields. Fairlight Road to the southern edge of the Site is identified on the AONB Storymap as an historic Ridgeway route, whilst Mill Lane and the PRoW are identified as historic routes. A Grade II LB, named Fairlight Lodge Hotel is located in closest proximity off the eastern edge of the Unit. Further Grade II LBs are offset to the north east and south west in more enclosed settings. Regarding the historic farmsteads dataset from the High Weald AONB, the AONB Storymap (hosted online) identifies the Mill farmstead (not Medieval) within the Unit.			
5. Recreational use (>)	<i>Landscapes important for access and enjoyment of the landscape such as Country Parks / High density of well-connected Public Rights of Way</i> - The Hastings Country Park Fairlight Road Car Park and Picnic Area is located off the south-east of the Unit, with Public Footpaths extending north from this across the Unit, forming part of the 1066 Country Walk. Mill Lane (Byway 410) extends on a northerly alignment across the Unit at an inset from the western boundary.			
6. Perceptual aspects (< >)	<i>Some sense of rural character but with some signs of human activity and modern development. Relative tranquillity associated with rural character / some scenic value</i> - The open character about the ridge and long reaching views east of this contribute to a highly rural landscape. However, the presence of regular dog walkers, including those from the Hastings Country Park Fairlight Road Car Park area and telecommunication masts to south and north limit rural character.			
7. Settlement pattern and setting (< >)	<i>The area has some association with surrounding settlement pattern / contributes to views that are important to the character of a settlement</i> - There are areas of large detached houses within large gardens to the northern edge of the Unit, which rise about the mid slopes of the ridge as a result of settlement expansion and within designed landscapes, with a further comparable area offset from the eastern corner of the Unit. A cluster of agricultural buildings are located atop the ridge at Mill Farm. There are areas of 20th Century planned estates of semi-detached and terraced housing offset to the west off Rye Road and bordering to the south west of the Unit off Fairlight Road. Views extend to the sea to the south-east and Dungeness in the far distance to the east, (see Photograph's 7-1A and 7-1B).			
8. Visual prominence (< >)	<i>Semi-enclosed or has some enclosed and some open areas</i> - Open character to the main southern part of the Site, more enclosed within smaller paddocks to the northern edge. Area is visually prominent or contains distinctive skylines for those offset on lower ground to the east. Westerly views from up Martineau Lane observe a distinctive ridgeline from the trees along and about the ridge.			
9. Landscape Character strength of expression (>)	<i>'Rare' landscape with many key positive landscape attributes</i> - Key positive landscape attributes of LCA12 include: <i>'The main ridge running inland between Batchelor's Bump and Cliff End offers long views across the Brede Valley to the north and Winchelsea, Rye, Dungeness, and the coast of France on a clear day.'</i> This aspect is heightened due to the value within the High Weald NL.			
10. Coalescence (< >)	<i>The area plays some role in separation of settlements although development could be designed so as to retain separation between settlements</i> - The			
Sensitivity Analysis				
Sensitivity Analysis Commentary	The open character of historic field systems about the ridge and long reaching views east and south-west of this, which is enjoyed by those accessing the Public Footpaths within the Hastings Country Park from the Fairlight Road Car Park area to the south, including the ridge top route along and off Mill Lane contribute to rural qualities and perceptual aspects within the southern edge of the High Weald NL which is very susceptible to change without adverse change and significant effects. It may have some potential to accommodate the relevant type of development but only in limited situations without adverse change or significant effects. Such as to the northern edge of the Unit, where paddocks extend about, are more enclosed, with areas of large detached houses within large gardens surrounding, (see Photograph's 7-1C).			
Landscape Guidelines	Retain and reinforce field boundary vegetation, particularly along historic routeways, including Mill Lane (Byway 410). Development should be of high quality and landscape-led, being guided by the High Weald AONB Management Plan 2024-2029, (see Generic Guidance provided within the Report).			
Sensitivity Judgement				
	Development Scenario			
	Residential - Low scale	Residential - Medium scale	Commercial / Industrial - Low-Medium scale	Solar
Landscape Sensitivity Rating	Moderate – High	High	High	Moderate – High

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Unit 7-1 Hastings Country Park - North Seat - Landscape Analysis



Legend

Hastings Borough Boundary, (Rother District to north of line)

Designations

- High Weald National Landscape
- Ancient Woodland
- Local Nature Reserve
- Local Wildlife Site
- Tree Preservation Order
- Hastings Country Park
- Public Footpath

High Weald National Landscape Dataset

- Ponds in the AONB
- Historic Routeways - PRoW
- Historic Routeways - Roads
- Historic Farmstead
- Historic Fields - Partial (Sections match historic field boundaries).
- Historic Fields - Merged (Boundaries match but with internal change)
- Historic Fields - Original (No change)

Landscape Analysis

- Watercourse
- Built form
- Contour lines (5m increments)
- Unit Photographs

Figure A7.5. Landscape Analysis for Unit 7-1.

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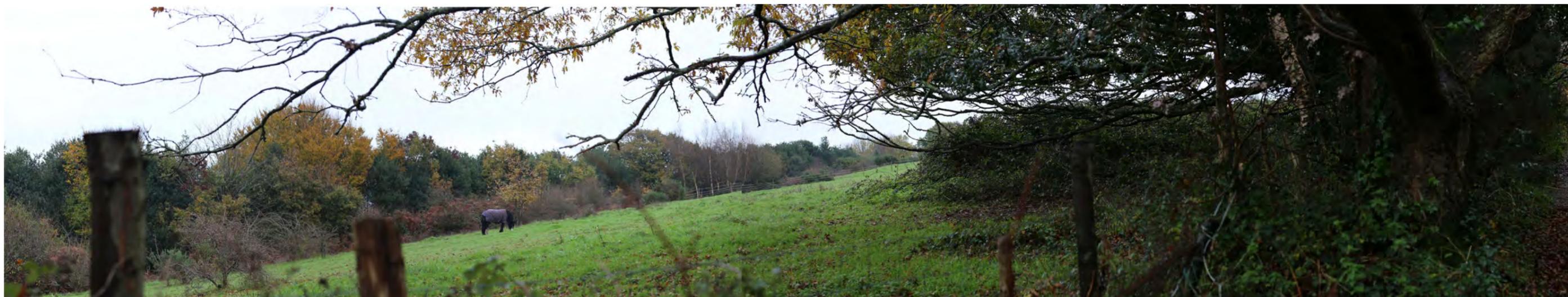
Unit 7-1 Hastings Country Park - North Seat - Photographs



Photograph 7-1A. Southerly view from Public Footpath 345, showing the view to the sea over the treeline off the south-western edge of the Unit.



Photograph 7-1B. Easterly view from a pathway off Public Footpath 343, showing the open character of the Unit leading to the lower Brede valley and across the Pett Levels towards the cuspate foreland of Dungeness.



Photograph 7-1C. Easterly glimpsed view through the dense vegetation along Public Byway 410, (Mill Lane) towards an enclosed paddock to the northern end of the Unit.