

Settlement

Summary of historic settlement
development in the High Weald

September 2011



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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The importance of understanding settlement history

When the *National Parks and Access to Countryside Act 1949* legislated for the designation of AONBs and National Parks this was for the conservation and enhancement of natural beauty. The use of the term *natural beauty* reflected the Romantic idea of scenic value then still prevalent, but research, guidance and legislation has moved on since 1949, so that now *natural beauty* is not simply defined as ‘the look of the landscape, but includes landform and geology, plants and animals, landscape features and the rich history of human settlement over the centuries’.¹

The historic environment of the High Weald AONB includes the wider landscape with its distinctive routeways, woodlands, fields and heaths. It also includes buildings and settlements, ranging from farmsteads to towns, although the designated area has holes in it to exclude the large urban areas of Tunbridge Wells, Crowborough and Heathfield, and its outer boundary skirts urban centres on the fringe that might otherwise be considered part of the High Weald. These include Hastings, Rye, Tenterden, East Grinstead, Crawley, Horsham, Cuckfield, Lindfield, Haywards Heath, Uckfield and Bexhill, which all, except Rye, fall wholly or partly within the High Weald National Character Area. The choice of the AONB boundary reflects thinking current at the time of the designation of the High Weald AONB,² which predates much of the increased awareness of the importance of cultural heritage – and the built environment – within protected landscapes. This more culturally aware thinking was enshrined in the *Environment Act 1995* and, tellingly, was reflected in the recent decision on the boundary of the new South Downs National Park,³ which includes the towns of Lewes, Midhurst and Petersfield.

With the built environment firmly included within the remit of AONBs and, of course, within the legislated responsibilities of local planning authorities, comes a need to understand how settlements developed. Such understanding forms an essential part of informing national, regional and local policy, underpinning urban historic land and buildings management and interpretation, and encouraging the wider process of protecting and enhancing urban character.

Aspects of settlement history have been explored in primary – usually period-specific – research (most notably, for the High Weald, by Mark Gardiner⁴). The benefit of settlement research to planning policy, management and interpretation has been recognized to some extent in conservation area statements and in the *Historic Towns Survey of Kent*,⁵ and, especially, in the later *Extensive Urban Survey of Sussex*.⁶ For the High Weald AONB, the origins of settlement have been considered, along with those of other major components of the character of the area, in the AONB’s own *The Making of the High Weald*,⁷ produced to support the *High Weald AONB Management Plan 2004* (reviewed 2009).⁸

The present study aims to provide a brief summary of settlement history in the High Weald AONB, looking at origins of settlement through to the present day. This will be used to support the identification of settlement character in the AONB Management Plan, and to underpin settlement policy, and policy research, arising.

1.2 Types of settlement today

1.2.1 Introduction

The High Weald AONB has a range of settlement types today, most of which have, in functional and physical terms, much in common with other settlements in England. The main types of present-day settlement are summarized below. In addition to these general types there are various other places of residence that form, or formed, rather specialized isolated settlements. These include castles (most notably Bodiam and Hever), monasteries (most substantially the abbeys at Battle, Robertsbridge and Bayham), great houses (including 14th-century Penshurst Place; the 16th-century examples at Battle Abbey, Buckhurst, Bolebroke and Wakehurst; and 17th-century Groombridge Place), workhouses, boarding schools, temporary military camps, holiday camps, and prisons.

1.2.2 Farmsteads

The High Weald AONB has a high density of farmsteads, reflecting the modest size of farm holdings in the AONB. A recent study identified 3,500 farmsteads or outfield barns, using the c.1895 large-scale Ordnance Survey maps as a source. This survey usefully distinguished between farm types at this date on the basis of plan form. The most common type was that described as having a ‘loose courtyard where detached buildings are grouped on one or more

sides of a yard, sometimes with the farmhouse also facing into the yard'.⁹ 24% of the farmsteads were identified as having buildings predating 1600:¹⁰ given that the dating was derived from cursory listed building descriptions, this is likely to underestimate the survival of 16th-century and earlier buildings. A separate study has shown that 52% of historic farm properties are in residential use, with only 40% remaining in agricultural use.¹¹

1.2.3 Hamlets

The term hamlet here is used to cover a range of small settlements in the High Weald. Clusters of farmsteads are rare, and the term here typically refers to groups of houses sometimes, but not always, associated with a farm. Examples with a long history include Dale Hill (between Ticehurst and Flimwell), which c.1300 consisted of a mix of cottages, some with very small plots of land and some with more substantial holdings, on the edge of common land.¹² Today it comprises a cluster of historic properties, to which have been added a golf club and a row of 20th-century council houses: it does just, however, retain its historic separation from adjacent Ticehurst.

1.2.4 Villages and towns

Although the High Weald purposefully lacks large towns (see section 1.1), it does have a range of nucleated settlement. The largest of these is Battle, which has a parish population of 6,194¹³ and which is the only 11th-century borough in the AONB. Although the most substantial town in the AONB for much of its history, it was for several centuries overshadowed by Edward I's new town of Winchelsea: founded on its present site in 1288-92, this once nationally important port went into final decline between 1490 and 1530, and now only occupies a small part of the medieval town. Below the size of Battle there are numerous settlements that originated as trading places and, thus, can be considered towns or substitute towns (see section 2.4.3): these range from modest-sized places conventionally and locally called villages – such as Burwash and Ticehurst – to more substantial places commonly called towns – such as Cranbrook.

2 THE DEVELOPMENT OF SETTLEMENT IN THE HIGH WEALD AONB

2.1 The natural inheritance

2.1.1 *Geology and landform*¹⁴

Along with the whole of south-east England, the rocks of the High Weald AONB are sedimentary. The sediments that form the rocks of the area today – the iron-rich clays and sandstone of the Hastings Group – were laid down in horizontal beds in a landscape of flood-plains and rivers. Further sediments – known as the Weald Clay Formation – continued to be laid down, until the whole area sank below the sea around 110 million years ago.

The gradually deepening sea created new layers, initially clays and sands, and then chalk. Around 70-75 million years ago a great uplift began, continuing up to 1.8 million years ago and creating the Wealden Anticline: a huge chalk-topped dome that would have reached c.970m OD. Under compression the strata both folded and faulted, mostly on an east-west axis.

River and stream erosion then removed most of the chalk dome leaving only a rim around the edge that is the North Downs and the South Downs. Likewise, in the centre of the anticline, the soft Weald Clay Formation also eroded leaving exposed the older geologies of the Hastings Group. Rivers and streams wore down these layers too, reducing the anticline further to a more modest peak of 241m OD at Crowborough Beacon. The differing erosion of the soft clays and harder sandstones, the closely related subsidiary folds, and the faults have given us the ridged High Weald of today with its disjointed outcrops of the geological formations.

The principal ridge (the Forest Ridge) runs roughly east-west, stretching from Horsham to Cranbrook. South of Crowborough an attached ridge (Battle Ridge) extends from Hadlow Down and meets the sea with cliffs of sands and clays at Fairlight. In the southern slopes of the Battle Ridge and the Forest Ridge are found the upper reaches of the north-south Sussex rivers – the Adur, Ouse, Cuckmere, and, on a smaller scale, Waller's Haven and Combe Haven. Other subsidiary ridges curve northwards and north-easterly from the Forest Ridge, creating a horseshoe housing the headwaters of the Medway and its tributary, the Eden. The Medway

is also fed by the Teise and Bewl, running north-east from the Kentish end of the Forest Ridge. By contrast, the south-eastern part of the AONB is relatively low lying, with the long and broad valleys of the Brede, Rother and Tillingham. All of these rivers are fed by small streams descending the main ridges in narrow steep-sided valleys known as gills. The gills are especially prevalent on the southern face of the Forest Ridge.

2.1.2 *Natural colonization*¹⁵

With the rise in temperatures at the beginning of the post-glacial period and a continuing land link to continental Europe, arboreal species were able to expand at the expense of the herb dominated communities that existed in the periglacial conditions prevailing in the Late Devensian (c.10600-9500 BC). Evidence for the rapid development of woodland in the High Weald (by c.9400BC) comes from Pannel Bridge, near Winchelsea.¹⁶ Birch and scots pine were early colonizers, followed by the expansion of hazel (c.8500 BC) that dominated from c.8200-6200 BC. The arrival of oak and elm is dated to c.8300 BC,¹⁷ and both pollen and plant microfossils indicate that alder was present from c.7500 BC. Later arriving taxa include lime (c.7300 BC), ash (c.5800 BC) and beech (which was present at least by 2500 BC).¹⁸ The former expanded c.6200 BC and came to dominate the Weald with its taller canopy and longer life span, reducing hazel to the understorey.¹⁹ The palaeoecological evidence strongly suggests dominance of woodland in the High Weald,²⁰ albeit very possibly with differentiation between the valley slopes and the ridges.

The survival of more woodland in the High Weald than in the Low Weald and, especially, the more open North Downs and South Downs does not mean that the High Weald has a longer history of purely natural formative processes, or that it was a wilderness. Indeed, some of its common arboreal species, such as hornbeam, have been shown in European terms at least to correlate closely with Iron Age iron-ore smelting.²¹

2.2 Prehistoric to Roman activity²²

2.2.1 *Post-glacial hunter-gatherers*²³

Although not representing permanent settlement, the Mesolithic saw extensive use of the High Weald for hunting. Most of the evidence is confined to the period after c.6000 BC (by which

High Weald AONB settlement history

point what is now Britain became separated from the continent).²⁴

Discoveries within natural rock-shelters in the Ardingly Sandstone south and south-west of Tunbridge Wells provide the most compelling evidence of Mesolithic and Early Neolithic hunting activity, although the use of such shelters merely echoes that by Palaeolithic predecessors. Of the High Weald rock overhangs, at least 17 have produced evidence of Mesolithic hunter-gatherers, who may have used these as seasonal shelters while away from home-base camps on the Lower Greensand.²⁵ Finds – especially the microlithic flint points so closely associated with the Mesolithic – provide substantial evidence of the activities of hunters beyond the rock-shelters.

2.2.2 Prehistoric farming

The Neolithic (c.4000-2350 BC) saw no immediate change from the Mesolithic use of the High Weald, with hunting continuing. Indeed, artefacts of the two periods are often found together.²⁶ Nevertheless, Neolithic ideas of farming did eventually permeate the High Weald, and this period provides the earliest evidence for substantial clearance of woodland.

The build-up of deep alluvial deposits at Stream Farm, Chiddingly and in the Rother at Robertsbridge has been identified as the result of input of sediment to the valley floors arising from deforestation. That agriculture was behind this deforestation is evidenced by pollen analysis at Mayfield, Robertsbridge, Chiddingly, and Sharpsbridge (at the edge of the High Weald in the upper Ouse Valley) through the presence of cereal grain, grasses, and the grassland indicator rib wort plantain.²⁷ At Pannel Bridge and Brede Bridge, there is palynological evidence of limited human activity at the time of the elm decline (dated at the former site to c.3800 BC), but the first major disruption of woodland is indicated by the removal of lime dominated woodland c.2000 BC.²⁸

To this environmental evidence can be added that of finds, settlements, and burials. Finds of polished stone axes are a direct record of Neolithic tree felling. Less directly, barrows on Ashdown Forest,²⁹ at Ewhurst,³⁰ and at Mockbeggars (Playden)³¹ also support the impression of widespread Bronze Age usage, with farmsteads established in cleared areas of woodland. Gardiner suggests that this activity peaks in the Late Neolithic (3000-2350 BC) and the Early Bronze Age (2350-1500 BC), supporting the palynological evidence outlined

above: the subsequent retreat of settlement perhaps resulted from soil exhaustion.³²

Late Iron Age agricultural activity has been discovered by Ivan Margary on Ashdown Forest, where enclosures and field boundaries survive.³³ A settlement has been located at Eridge Park, only 1km from Saxonbury. Pollen analysis of the palaeosol preserved between the first-phase Iron Age hillfort at High Rocks places the hillfort not in a woodland clearing, but in an area cultivated for some time before construction of the defences.³⁴

More obvious evidence of Iron Age activity survives in the form of prominent enclosures, or hillforts, at six sites in the High Weald. These are distinct from their counterparts on the South Downs: the latter are mostly Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age (c.1000-400 BC), with some dating to the Middle Iron Age (c.400-100 BC), whereas in the High Weald only the two successive forts at Castle Hill date to the Middle Iron Age, with the rest not really active until the Late Iron Age (c.100 BC-AD 43).¹ Although it has been suggested that the Wealden hillforts were linked to the iron industry (see below),³⁵ other possibilities are equally compelling: they may have been chiefly associated with defence, livestock farming, trade, and exploitation of the woodlands.³⁶

2.2.3 Iron industry

The Weald, and especially the High Weald, is well known for its Roman (and later) iron industry, and was one of three main concentrations of activity in the country, along with the Forest of Dean, and Northamptonshire and environs (e.g. Rockingham Forest³⁷). The earliest evidence of ironmaking in the Weald is from the 1st century AD and represents a later (slag-tapping) technology than other early furnaces found on the western side of the British Isles (400-100 BC). While Cleere and Crossley state that there appears to have been 'no ironmaking in the High Weald in the prehistoric period', in fact 11 of the 13 prehistoric sites that they identify fall within the High Weald AONB and, thus, are far from concentrated on the fringes of the Weald.³⁸ The majority of these sites form a ring around Crowborough, with other sites in the East Grinstead-Crawley area, and south of Battle.

In the Roman period ironworking broadly followed this distribution. Even allowing for the longer timescale of the Roman industry, however, the density of sites was greater than in the Late Iron Age: Cleere and Crossley have identified 76 ironworking sites of the Roman

period, of which 68 fall within the High Weald AONB.³⁹ Kaminski's analysis of the density of Roman bloomeries suggests that a conservative total for the High Weald AONB would be around 1700±400.⁴⁰ However, although bloomeries were ubiquitous in the High Weald, it is clear that the bulk of the iron output came from only nine sites – concentrated in the east – that were of industrial scale.⁴¹

At a few ironworking sites archaeological excavation has provided limited evidence of associated settlement. Thus, we now know of the large-scale (possibly 8-10ha) settlement at Beauport Park, complete with bath-house; smaller settlements, such as the 3ha at Bardown; and the Bardown satellites such as Holbeam Wood (1ha).⁴² Likewise, there is some evidence for the immediate vicinity of the Roman ironworking sites. Palynological evidence from Ludley Farm (Beckley parish) suggests hay-meadow, while macro-botanical remains from Great Cansiron (Forest Row) suggest damp meadow. This could suggest fodder for draught animals rather than significant agriculture, for which evidence is lacking.⁴³

2.2.4 Transhumance

Given the importance of transhumance – here the seasonal use of the Weald by downland inhabitants for fattening pigs on acorns (pannage) – to the medieval development of settlement in the High Weald (see below, section 2.3), it is significant that there is evidence that the radial lanes, or droves, that were used (and which survive today) have Romano-British or, more probably, prehistoric origins.

The evidence for pre-medieval origins is complex and suggestive rather than conclusive.⁴⁴ One key element is the rich source of Saxon charters for Kent, which show that the rights to Wealden woodland pastures (dens) almost entirely pertain to the earliest-settled areas of the county, on the Kentish Plain north of the North Downs and along the scarpfoot.⁴⁵ This then links dens to the earliest phases of 'Jutish' settlement and, given that the people of these areas had inherited so much from their Romano-British predecessors, it is also possible that they had inherited from them something of a tradition of transhumance and the exploitation of the Weald as a zone of detached pastureland. A second element is provided by the Roman road system. The two main Roman roads that cross the Weald (the London-Lewes road and the London-Hassocks/Brighton road) are aligned with the radial droves. Most remarkably, the two Roman roads change from a SSW-NNE to SSE-

NNW orientation in the High Weald, so that they correspond with the differently aligned lanes of Sussex and Surrey. Given that these orientations also coincide with the pattern of medieval detached holdings, and the major territorial divisions (i.e. Sussex rapes and Surrey *regiones*), it appears that there is a common alignment of routes and territories across a wide period of time. At a more local level, Margary has demonstrated that the area of unusually regular grid of fields and roads at Ripe is not a consequence of post-medieval enclosure, but very probably the result of Roman centuriation, or planned state land settlement.⁴⁶ Importantly for us, Gardiner has observed that this grid was aligned upon, and regularized, a pre-existing pattern of tracks, which extends beyond the centuriated area:⁴⁷ these tracks follow the south-west to north-east pattern of droves in this area, and link the scarp-foot settlements of Alciston, Firle, and Selmeston with the Weald.

Although there is something approaching a context for transhumance in the Mesolithic in that subsistent-settlement systems and routinized or seasonal patterns are being identified,⁴⁸ it is the Neolithic that provides the earliest echo of the medieval system in the Weald. Bradley has identified Rackham, and less extensive sites nearby, as one of two sites in Britain supporting the hypothesis that the type of transhumance involving seasonal use of woodland was established during the period of expansion of settlement in the Late Neolithic, although he appears to stop short of arguing for continuity with Saxon transhumance.⁴⁹ However, it is the dramatic changes of the Late Iron Age (that included the shifting of the distribution of enclosures from the Downs to the High Weald,⁵⁰ and a similar movement of population⁵¹) that provide the most obvious context for either the establishment or the large-scale expansion of Downland-Wealden transhumance.

2.3 Medieval dens and assart

2.3.1 Defining dens

A den (Old English: *denn*) is a woodland pasture. The creation of dens represents one of the principal processes of settlement, or colonization, in the Weald, even 'the main theme of Wealden history'.⁵² In origins they were seasonal woodland pastures typically, but not exclusively,⁵³ used for swine feeding on acorns and mast during a short season in the autumn. These pastures were detached (often by 30km or more) from their parent settlements and connected by droves.

2.3.2 The development of dens

Witney argues for an early correspondence of the major territorial or administrative units of Kentish lathes (the equivalent of Sussex rapes and Surrey *regiones*), and the commons.⁵⁴ Given the season of usage it is inconceivable that Wealden transhumance did not include construction of shelters, and this may have increased the tendency for habitual return of individuals to the same sites: regular and undisputed occupation is seen by Witney to lie behind the creation of early dens from common land from the late 6th to 9th centuries. Certainly the earliest documentary sources (i.e. 8th-century charters) show a transition from transhumance operating within the wide commons to within a system of clear tenure and ownership in which individual swine pastures or dens are clearly identified. By the late 11th century, as Gardiner demonstrates,⁵⁵ dens had given rise to permanent settlement in even the most distant parts of the Sussex Weald. Ultimately, dens were detached from their parent settlements, or manors: it is this earlier attachment that makes the Wealden holdings, and thus much of Wealden settlement, so invisible in Domesday Book (1086).

2.3.3 The size of dens

The mean size of dens in the Kentish Weald has been estimated by Witney as 130ha, but there was considerable variation, examples ranging from c.40-c.280ha.⁵⁶ Gardiner identifies similar holdings in east Sussex ranging from 30ha to 200 or 240ha.⁵⁷

2.3.4 Assart

Dens were concentrated on the better soils of the High Weald and their period of creation was followed, in the 12th to 14th centuries, by clearance of the poorer wasteland for cultivation (assart).⁵⁸ Although Peter Brandon, by underestimating the level of settlement in the Weald in the 11th century, has overestimated the impact of post-Conquest assarting,⁵⁹ there can be no doubt that it brought significant amounts of land into cultivation.

The location of assart on the waste is seen clearly in the contraction of Ashdown Forest through the efforts of 13th-century assarters. Similarly vigorous creation of fields from what must have been fairly open and degraded woodland occurred in similar conditions at Dallington Chase, and in Heathfield and Waldron.⁶⁰ The manor of Rotherfield has been investigated thoroughly as a consequence of its good documentary record, from Domesday

onwards. Here assarting accelerated up to the Black Death, which marked a general collapse in assart across the High Weald, with Brandon suggesting that between 1086 and 1346, c.15km² was assarted and divided into farms and smallholdings.⁶¹

The nature of assarting ensured that the landscape created by clearance and improvement was consistent with the older agrarian landscape of the former dens. The holdings were of smaller scale and have none of the long-term stability of those dens that became manorial demesnes and sub-manors, yet, the two types of colonization produced a field and woodland pattern, together with a dispersed settlement pattern of isolated farmsteads, that was, and is, characteristic of the High Weald.

2.4 Medieval villages and towns

2.4.1 11th-century boroughs

By the late 11th century there were boroughs in the vicinity of the High Weald AONB at Pevensy, Hastings, Old Winchelsea and Rye, which were significant market centres and ports.

There was only one such town within the AONB itself, at Battle. Here, the foundation of the town was a direct product of William I's new abbey, built on the site of the Battle of Hastings. The abbey was probably founded in 1070-1, and the town was established by the abbey soon after. The 21 bordars listed in Domesday Book (1086) may represent the early burgesses of the town, while a remarkably early rental of c.1102-7, copied within the later 12th-century *Chronicle of Battle Abbey*, lists 110 householders and 114 plots, in the planned new town. For much of the town the medieval rentals, most especially that of c.1102-7, can be related to surviving and recorded burgage plots.⁶²

The case of Winchelsea is a little confusing, in AONB terms, in that the 11th-century borough (i.e. Old Winchelsea) lies lost under the sea in Rye Bay, but its late 13th-century successor, however, is firmly within the AONB. Old Winchelsea appears to have emerged as a significant port in the 11th century, stimulated by commerce (which included trade with the continent) and the fishing industry, and was actively developed by Fécamp Abbey. Old Winchelsea and Rye were founded on the same inlet, and were closely linked ports: under a lost charter of Henry II (1154-89) both Rye and Winchelsea became Cinque Ports (a confederation with privileges – which included the right to land and sell fish at Yarmouth – nominally in exchange for ship-service to the

king, but also reflecting their strategic location for control of movement across the Channel to Flanders and Calais). In the early 13th century Winchelsea was wealthier than Rye, but exposed on its shingle barrier it was to bear the brunt of storms that hit the coast from 1236 onwards. The port was bolstering sea defences from the 1240s, lost a quay and part of the adjacent church in 1271, and was mostly submerged in 1280.⁶³

2.4.2 Early meeting and trading places

The Late Saxon and Norman boroughs of Kent, Surrey and Sussex did not provide the only scope for trade, markets and meeting places for the permanent dispersed – and, in most cases, rather distant – population of the High Weald, in the 11th century. Rather, as Mark Gardiner has shown, there is compelling evidence for focal places used for meeting points and trade within the High Weald, which were established before c.1100, possibly significantly earlier. The evidence for these comes from his analysis of the development of villages, or substitute towns, in the 13th century (see below, section 2.4.3), which shows the emergence of stalls and shops along the edges of large, once open, areas. Typically of triangular form, these open areas were located on main roads (mainly major ridge-top routes), and can be dated on the basis that set back at the edge of the areas – and thus post-dating their creation – are churches established by c.1100. Examples where churches are secondary to the open spaces are evident at Wadhurst (where the triangular space is now mostly infilled, but preserved by the street plan, and further evidenced by the presence within the later infill development of a timber-framed market house, demolished in the mid-19th century), Ticehurst (where the triangular space is partly infilled and included, in the 17th century, a market hall) and Rotherfield (where the church is located, as a secondary development, within a funnel-shaped focal place).⁶⁴

2.4.3 Medieval planned and permissive settlements

With the exception of the late 11th-century planned town built next to the new abbey at Battle (see above, section 2.4.1), there were no significant nucleated settlements in the High Weald AONB until the 13th century. Although not in the AONB itself, evidence of the development of market towns in the Weald comes with the granting of markets at Crawley (1202-3) and Uckfield (1220), and the establishment of boroughs at Horsham (by 1235, but probably

from c.1200), East Grinstead (by 1235), and Tonbridge (by 1241).⁶⁵

Six markets were granted in Sussex in the early 1250s – at Burwash, Cuckfield, Hailsham, Robertsbridge, Salehurst and Wadhurst – of which five are in the High Weald, but only four in the AONB. These represent a largely successful spurt of growth in the formal economy of the Weald, and were followed by further markets at Frant (1297), Ticehurst (by 1300), Lamberhurst (1314), Heathfield (1316) and Rotherfield (1318).⁶⁶ In Kent, markets were granted at this time at Cranbrook (1290) and Hawkhurst (1312).⁶⁷ Although all these were primarily places of trade, and, thus, might be termed substitute towns rather than villages, Mark Gardiner's analysis of the Sussex examples distinguishes between permissive and planned settlements.

In the case of some permissive settlements, trading at the earlier unoccupied focal places (see above, section 2.4.2) saw establishment of stalls or shops-places, then developing into places with permanent settlement. This is the case at Wadhurst, where stallage for the market is recorded in a rental of c.1285. There is, however, no clear indication of a nucleated settlement at this date. A survey of 1498 records the replacement of stallage by houses at an advanced state.⁶⁸ At Rotherfield some of the settlement was cut out of the demesne land, but part appears to have been established on an extensive encroachment on the highway, made by 1274, which here comprised the open focal or market place represented by the funnel-shaped piece of land running westwards from the church: if so, this suggests that the village was established in the second half of the 13th century, and significantly before the market grant of 1318.⁶⁹ In 1346-7 the tenements 'on the hill' – that is, in the village – comprised 34 plots with buildings. The fact that less than half the village tenants had landholdings elsewhere suggests that many may have been craftworkers or wage labourers.⁷⁰

In the case of Heathfield (i.e. what is now called Old Heathfield), there is no evidence for an early focal place, nor indeed is it on a major route, but an urban function is suggested by the earliest rental (1253-62), which records four shops. The surnames in the rental – at this date unlikely to be inherited and, thus, a reflection of livelihood – include Chaloner, Weaver, and Mercer, suggesting that Heathfield was based on textile manufacture and merchant trade. Two of the shops were built on former farmland, consistent with a nascent settlement.⁷¹ The granting of a weekly market in 1316 simply formalized

customary usage, dating from the mid-13th century: political expediency by Edward II had much to do with the flurry of market grants at this time.⁷² At Mayfield, which again lacks a pre-existing focal place, the immediate context for the granting of the market in 1261 was the start of work on the palace of the Archbishop of Canterbury, shortly after 1260, which appears to have stimulated seigneurial interest. The building of the palace (possibly a direct successor to the pre-Conquest *hospitium*), and the frequent visits of the archiepiscopal household (typically, twice yearly in the late 13th century) would have boosted the local economy. However, no rents for stalls are recorded in a rental of c.1285, perhaps implying little immediate development of the market. A century later, the village was evidently well established for the 1388-9 fire damaged 85 shop places. At this point the shop places seem to have comprised groups of the smaller original stall plots, amalgamated to allow the construction of permanent buildings. Certainly this combination of plots was the case in the mid-15th century, when smaller properties combined two small plots and larger buildings occupied the site of three or more stalls.⁷³ These permissive settlements then seem to have had modest seigneurial input, limited to some regularizing of plots for stalls and acquisition of market charters, and the unplanned nature of the eventual settlements is reflected in the lack of regular burgage plots and the typically restricted space for permanent settlement.⁷⁴

In addition to trade, planned settlements of this period were designed with housing in mind from the outset, and have less restricted sites, with regular burgage plots in evidence. At Burwash it is unclear whether there was a settlement when the market was granted in 1252, but this was certainly the case by 1329. The village, probably planned as a town but only partly successful, has a wide linear street, or market place, flanked by regular burgage plots 50-90m long, at right-angles to the street, which attest to careful planning.⁷⁵ Robertsbridge has similar regular plots, resulting from its planned foundation by Robertsbridge abbey. The earliest indication of secular activity at Robertsbridge comes from the granting to the abbot of Robertsbridge in January 1225 of a weekly market. Within three weeks the grant was cancelled, apparently due to the threat to existing markets in the area. In 1253 the abbot was again granted a weekly market at Robertsbridge: this followed the granting, to William of Etchingam, of a Wednesday market at nearby Salehurst five months earlier.⁷⁶ An undated rental, probably of the late 13th or early 14th century, includes several tenants with occupational names: a

weaver, a fuller, a dyer, a trader, a smith and a turner. Evidently, Robertsbridge was a significant centre for trading and manufacturing by c.1300, and its success may already have been at the expense of the rival market of Salehurst (which had certainly declined by 1349).⁷⁷ The burgage plots were of comparable lengths on both sides of the High Street generally tapering towards the river crossing at the north (in a manner similar to earlier Bramber): secondary developments on Fair Lane and at the northern end of the High Street probably date to the 14th and 15th centuries.⁷⁸ At Sedlescombe Street the half of the village on the eastern side of the Hastings road was developed by Battle Abbey, probably in the second half of the 13th century. Regular plots c.140m long characterize this part of the village, and contrast with the irregular plots on the west side of the main road, which lay in the manor of Brickelhurst and may have developed in piecemeal fashion.⁷⁹

Although in a rather different context – in that its economy was based on cross-Channel and coasting trade rather than Wealden demand⁸⁰ – Winchelsea represents the best example of urban planning in the High Weald AONB at this time. The deterioration of Old Winchelsea (see above, section 2.4.1), saw the intervention of Edward I in 1280, with a new site selected in 1283 and the foundation of a replacement in 1288-92. The new *bastide* and port ensured the continued pre-eminence of Winchelsea amongst Sussex ports, at least for the time being (see below, section 2.5.3).⁸¹ The gridded street plan, burgage plots (many with remains of 13th and 14th-century townhouses), town walls and religious houses of the former town, now only partly occupied by a very reduced settlement, remain visible.⁸²

2.5 Late medieval and post-medieval change

2.5.1 Introduction

By the mid-14th century the High Weald had a pattern of settlement recognizable today: that is, a dispersed pattern of isolated farmsteads achieved through dens and assarts, together with a scattering of villages, or substitute towns, providing places of trade, and also two more substantial towns at Battle and, above all, Winchelsea.

There are no comparably important pan-High Weald themes in the period from the late 14th century to the arrival of the railways in the mid-19th century. In part this is due to the fact that the AONB boundary, by deliberately omitting larger

towns in the centre or on the fringes of the High Weald (of which Tunbridge Wells and Hastings are most relevant to this period), has been shaped so that, from a strictly AONB perspective, the most dramatic developments in settlement history are of less importance than would have been the case with a more inclusive boundary.

2.5.2 Industries

Craftworkers and wage labourers were a significant part of the late 13th and 14th-century towns and villages (see above, section 2.4.3), and the fluctuations of different industries continued to have an effect on these settlements.

For example, tanning and leatherworking, which was a typically Wealden industry, became a major industry in Battle with the stimulation provided by the abbey's investment in a tannery and bark mill (next to Sedlescombe) in the late 13th century. Leatherworking was the most widespread trade of Battle residents at this time, with cordwainers most numerous, followed by glovers, saddlers, cobblers, skippers and furriers, curriers and tanners.⁸³ The leatherworking industry evidently stimulated the weekly market and the annual fairs at Battle, with sales of cattle and leather goods. Both fairs and the market appear to have continued throughout the medieval period.⁸⁴

Established in the 14th century, the important Wealden woollen broadcloth industry was centred on the Cranbrook area. This saw considerable expansion in the 16th century, with Cranbrook remaining the centre, and with 75% of the Kentish workers located in this and seven surrounding parishes. The broadcloth industry went into decline from 1616 and, despite minor revivals in the 1620s and the 1630s, it had effectively gone by the end of the century.⁸⁵

Wealden iron production also had a significant impact on the economy of the towns. The first English blast furnace had been established 18km from Wadhurst, at Newbridge on Ashdown Forest, in 1496. The industry expanded rapidly in the 16th century, thereafter declining to the point of extinction by the end of the 18th century.⁸⁶ Local families were owners and operators of furnaces and forges in the late 16th and early 17th centuries: for example, at Wadhurst John Barham and his descendants owned Brookland forge from 1521 until its closure (c.1629-40), Verridge forge (1521 to mid-17th century), and Coushopley furnace (mid-16th century); Nicholas Fowle operated Riverhall furnace and forge in 1562-74 (and almost certainly longer). The

Barhams and Fowles were established landowners in the Wadhurst area before the ironworking boom, and put their money into houses in the parish. By contrast, John Legas had humbler and less local origins, but – in partnership with William Harrison – operated forges and furnaces across a wider area of the Weald in the early to mid-18th century. Legas lived at what is now the Old Vicarage and then the house he had built next door in the 1740s (Hill House).⁸⁷ The documented involvement of local landowners and the identifiable architectural legacy (which includes rural gentry houses such as Batemans, of 1634, and Rowfant, of 1597⁸⁸), however, was doubtless negligible compared to the general impact on local employment.

2.5.3 Decline of the ports

The High Weald's most important medieval town, the port of Winchelsea, went into rapid and terminal decline between 1490 and 1530 for very specific reasons, largely as a result of losing its harbour to silting.⁸⁹ In 1490/1 the customs revenues of Winchelsea were £88 16s 7³/₄d (65% of the total of all the ports covered by the customs officials of the Port of Chichester – i.e. from Folkestone to Chichester), with those of Rye a modest £12 8s 1³/₄d. By 1513/4 Winchelsea's revenues had almost halved, and Rye's more than tripled, so that the revenue of the two ports almost matched. Thereafter, Rye quickly overtook its neighbour and in 1549/50, paid £96 14s 6d, compared to Winchelsea's £1 4s 9d, and well above the other most prosperous ports of the Port of Chichester (i.e. from Folkestone to Chichester).⁹⁰ The Tudor boom of Rye ended suddenly, however, as the port slipped into a severe decline in the later 1580s, thereafter ceasing to be of national importance.⁹¹

2.5.4 The Reformation

The impacts of the 16th-century Reformation were considerable in the High Weald, as elsewhere in England. Other than immediate loss of the monastic communities, such as those at the abbeys of Battle, Bayham and Robertsbridge, there were obvious impacts on settlements. For example, the Dissolution of the Monasteries was a severe blow for Battle town, which had been founded and largely maintained to service the abbey. The transfer of the abbey to Sir Anthony Browne in 1538, who created a country house within the remains, must have slightly mitigated the impact, but the demand for locally supplied goods and services can hardly have matched that of the monastery. This is reflected in a survey of 1569, which records 124

houses within the town: a fall in the order of 46 houses from c.1500, which was mainly a case of contraction of the suburbs.⁹²

By contrast, it appears that the underlying decline in Rye's economy (see above, section 2.5.3) was masked by the substantial influx of French Protestant exiles during the French Wars of Religion (1562-98): this brought many skilled tradesmen and merchants to the town and stimulated local demand (as well as outbursts of Francophobic protectionism⁹³). In 1569 the alien population (which included Walloons and Flemings) probably numbered around 300. In 1571 this had fallen to 77, but rose again the following year and in the 1570s (when the total population was perhaps c.5,000⁹⁴) and 1580s the number of exiles was substantial: Samuel Jeake recorded 1,534 French refugees in Rye in 1582 (when the total population was perhaps c.4,000), but the numbers reduced quickly in the 1590s as the exiles returned home.⁹⁵

2.5.5 Resorts

The High Weald area has a long history of resorts, although all lie outside the AONB boundary: within the AONB the principal impacts were supplying the resorts with goods and services, the boost to High Weald towns on the coaching routes and, ultimately, the role these resorts played in opening up the Weald to railways.

Tunbridge Wells developed as a spa following the identification of springs there by Lord North in 1606, although significant building did not occur until c.1680-1700. Access was good from London, which was only 55km away, and improved when the route via Sevenoaks became Kent's first turnpike road in 1709.⁹⁶

Hastings was one of several Sussex places that were visited for recreational sea bathing by the 1750s. Although Hastings was like Brighton in that it too was a substantial town before a resort, it lacked Brighton's good access to Lewes and London, its desperate need for an alternative to a failed fishing industry, and its ready availability of a workforce, accommodation and capital.⁹⁷ The first recorded enquiry regarding sea bathing at Hastings dates from 1736,⁹⁸ and the resort developed in the second half of the 18th century. Good road connections were fundamental to the earliest function of Hastings as a resort. The Hastings to Flimwell road via Battle was turnpiked in 1753.⁹⁹ The improvement in roads and the increasing demand for access to the resort are reflected in the coach services: in 1745 there was a weekly service to London taking three days each way, but by 1788 the

service ran three times a week (four in summer), completing the journey each way in a day. By 1815 this service was running six days a week, and by the 1830s journey times had substantially shortened.¹⁰⁰

2.6 The age of the railway and motor car

2.6.1 Introduction

Although the turnpike roads of the 18th and early 19th centuries significantly improved the notoriously poor communications in the Weald, the railway and, in turn, motorized road transport were to have a much greater effect.

The first main railway line in the area was from London to Brighton (opened in 1841), followed by the line from London to Dover (reaching Tonbridge in 1842 and Dover in 1844), with other transwealden lines to Hastings, Horsham, East Grinstead, Lewes, Hawkhurst and Tenterden established by the end of the century.¹⁰¹

2.6.2 New industries

One effect of the railway was to stimulate new Wealden industries. For example, a new and distinctive industry had developed in the Uckfield and Heathfield area in the mid-19th century in the form of artificial fattening of poultry by force feeding, or cramming. Although pre-dating the arrival of the railway in Heathfield and Uckfield the new transport system improved access to markets with dramatic effect: for example, in 1892, 1,840 tons left Uckfield and Heathfield, ten times the output of 1864. The railway also increased the scope for supply to the cramming industry: for example, in the late 1890s Welsh fowls were arriving at Uckfield. The period after 1914 was marked by the demise of the chicken cramming industry in the area. The lack of cheap imported feed during the First World War saw the industry go into decline. Revival after the war saw a more evenly distributed Wealden poultry industry with the centre shifting slightly east of Heathfield and Uckfield, with the industry all but dead by 1950.¹⁰²

However, while Low Weald towns such as Burgess Hill and Hailsham saw similar expansion of earlier small-scale industries (respectively of brick-making and rope-making), the High Weald AONB's post-railway industries were of modest scale.

2.6.3 Suburbanization

Of more significance for settlement in the High Weald was the fact that the new railways allowed commuting, and either directly or indirectly (e.g. through opening up the area to speculative housing) encouraged those of independent means, or the retired, to move in.

At Heathfield, despite the successful chicken cramming industry, the development of the area was increasingly reliant on commuters, or those of independent means, living in detached and semi-detached villas. A similar purpose lay behind development of other new or expanding Wealden towns such as Haywards Heath, and the same tradesmen were often involved in early investment. For example, after raising mortgages on two properties in Haywards Heath, in 1910 William Toye then raised a mortgage on a house and shop in Heathfield: all these enterprises were successful and he followed up with further investments in Uckfield and elsewhere.¹⁰³ Within the centre of the High Weald, Crowborough represents the most significant development. Following earlier 19th-century ventures, it was the arrival of the railway in 1868 that allowed the potential of the poor land to be realized for housing. Most importantly, Crowborough became accessible from London and, more specifically, to the predominantly mercantile classes for whom Crowborough was a not too distant escape from and increasingly industrialized metropolis: the open landscape of Crowborough itself and, importantly, the large area of adjacent Ashdown Forest appears to have been a stimulus for visitors and new residents from the outset.¹⁰⁴

With the larger High Weald towns that saw so much 19th-century expansion excluded from the designated area, the impact of railway age commuting and suburbs within the AONB is less clear. Certainly, overall population numbers in most High Weald parishes with good access to railway stations show little evidence of sharp increases in the decades following the building of the lines. In part, this was due to the fact the effect of the railway on population in the later 19th and early 20th centuries was limited to helping these parishes escape the more severe effects of rural depopulation that marked many of the parishes in eastern Sussex and eastern Kent.¹⁰⁵ Within the parishes, however, there is evidence of new building in the villages or towns with railway stations. At Mayfield, for example, the opening in 1880 of the railway station and goods yard, 550m west of the edge of the town was followed by building: by the late 1890s, five pairs of semi-detached houses and, opposite, a

nonconformist chapel had been built on the edge of the historic town, and strung out along the south side of Station Road between the town and the station was a series of larger detached villas. With the station buildings themselves (including a railway hotel) this marked the first significant expansion of the town outside its medieval footprint.¹⁰⁶ At Wadhurst population expansion was steady in the 1860s and thereafter. This expansion, however, was seen in the development of detached suburbs at Durgates and Sparrows Green, significantly on the railway station side of the town, rather than within the historic core.¹⁰⁷

The residential expansion of the small towns of the High Weald AONB, however, is more noticeably a feature of the 20th century. At Wadhurst, for example, 20th-century large-scale housing developments were concentrated in the areas developed in the 19th century around Durgates and Sparrows Green (with the main expansion during the inter-war period and, especially, since 1945), with only modest development of the historic core of Wadhurst. The latter brought new housing types to what was hitherto a small town dominated by densely built-up street frontages. Council housing at Courthope Avenue (1950s) adopted short terraces of three to four houses, combined with semi-detached houses: semi-detached housing was subsequently used at the expansion of council housing into Snape View, and in limited development on and off the Lower High Street (e.g. at Stone Cross Road).¹⁰⁸ Similar examples can be multiplied across the AONB, albeit with different scales of development and different relationships to the historic core. At Battle for example, the linear form of the settlement has largely remained, with suburbs (again mostly post-1945) concentrated on the north: even here, though, building of flats at St Martins (partly on the site of a short-lived 20th-century fruit-preserving factory), together with an adjacent car park accessed from Mount Street, has removed a significant section of the 900 year-old interface between burgage plots and open countryside.¹⁰⁹ At Cranbrook, the post-1945 suburbs have engulfed the town successively on different sides, so that, although the medieval plots are not as well defined nor as significant as those at Battle, the interface between historic core and countryside has been lost almost entirely.

Although the new suburbs of the 19th and 20th centuries are the most obvious elements of settlement history in the age of railways and private transport, the functional change that they brought – with new housing typically occupied by

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commuters, the retired or those of independent means – has spread more widely across the earlier settlements of the High Weald, especially since 1945. Thus, it is now hard to distinguish any functional, or socio-economic, differences between the 19th and 20th-century suburbs and the historic cores. Nearly 30 years ago, much of the area now within the AONB was identified as having become urbanized¹¹⁰ and this trend has continued, if not accelerated: given the substitute town origins of the nucleated settlements in the High Weald (see section 2.4.3) and the loss of many defining functions in the larger settlements (such as those represented by courthouses, banks, chapels, workshops and shops) being urban in character, suburbanization may be a better term. This recent change has not been limited to the nucleated settlements, but has also been seen within the isolated farmsteads of the AONB: we have seen above (section 1.2.2) that over half of the AONB's historic farm properties are now in residential use.

3 CONCLUSIONS

3.1 Introduction

The history of permanent settlement in the High Weald AONB as outlined above is both long and complex. It is not impenetrable, however, and the principal themes of settlement are reasonably well understood, not least since village, or substitute town, formation in the High Weald is unusually late, with the consequence that the formation processes, and subsequent changes, are better recorded in documentary sources than in many parts of England.

From an AONB perspective, a key question arising is can the history of settlement development inform management and policy, and, if so, what needs to be done to enable that?

3.2 Existing and future settlement history research

3.2.1 *Farmsteads*

Farmsteads have seen significant research from two very different angles. Mark Gardiner's study of medieval settlement in the eastern Sussex High Weald has considered the boundaries of selected dens and early holdings.¹¹¹ The different Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) projects for Kent, Surrey and Sussex cover a wider area, but being based largely on map regression, it is perhaps of little surprise that many definitive forms of holdings – such as dens – have not been identified through these means. Taking a different approach, the recent pan-AONB study of farmsteads by Bob Edwards has looked at plan form as recorded on late 19th-century maps in conjunction with listed building data.¹¹² Evidently, there is considerable scope for future research to consider the relationship of present-day farmsteads with medieval farmsteads, and to explore this firmly in the context of the holding and the type of colonization (e.g. dens or assart). The difficulty in such research is the combination of documentary, archaeological and historic buildings research skills and, above all, the enormity of the task if undertaken across the AONB.

3.2.2 *Hamlets*

Research into High Weald AONB hamlets has been extremely limited. Although Gardiner has examined examples, this serves to illustrate the early (i.e. 13th and 14th-century) origins of some hamlets, and does not represent a wide study.¹¹³

The HLC projects for Kent, Surrey and Sussex map hamlets and provide a useful means of distinguishing comparatively recent – say post-1800 – developments from earlier hamlets, but evidently there is considerable scope for research into the diverse forms and origins of such settlements which, as with farmsteads, needs to incorporate historic buildings evidence. Again, the scale of any pan-AONB research is likely to be daunting.

3.2.3 *Villages and towns*

Analysis of individual settlements for which documentary evidence survives has proved important, for not only have such sources thrown light on to the origins of the settlements, they have also allowed for more informed interrogation of the topography. For example, we have seen that the documented development of villages such as Wadhurst as places of trade around market places from the mid-13th century led Mark Gardiner to identify, largely on topographic grounds, pre-existing market places adjoining the ridge-top routes, which themselves predate the adjacent churches (established by or during the 11th century). Although similar topographical analysis has long been used – most notably by Brian Roberts¹¹⁴ – Gardiner's research has been crucial in demonstrating that with these late Wealden settlements the documentary context enables understanding of settlement form and development to go far beyond the classifications used in national studies. For example, application of broad typologies would not lead to identification of the pre-settlement focal places that characterize some of the High Weald towns and villages. The importance of individual study of settlements, which combine the archaeological, documentary, architectural and topographic evidence, is not only essential to identify such key primary features, but also to examine the subsequent, and often quite diverse, development of settlements to the present day.

In the Sussex High Weald research into villages and towns has made advances with the Sussex Extensive Urban Survey (2004-10), which amongst its analysis of 41 towns across Sussex includes archaeological, documentary, buildings and topographic analyses of the AONB settlements of Battle, Mayfield, Robertsbridge, Rotherfield and Wadhurst. Although largely chronologically presented research, these reports also consider and define the physical evidence of the past in today's townscape by means of a character-based approach, operating at two different scales: areas of common Historic Character Type; and larger and topographically

familiar Historic Urban Character Areas. In short, they present the findings of analysis of the settlements in a way that is easily accessible for the purposes of management (including development control), strategy and policy: indeed, it is for this purpose that the project was established by English Heritage in partnership with East Sussex County Council, West Sussex County Council, Brighton and Hove City Council, and all the borough and district councils. The coverage is partial, however, since the study excludes – essentially on the basis of present-day size – significant medieval small, or substitute, towns such as Burwash, Sedlescombe Street, Salehurst and Ticehurst. EUS-styled analyses of such settlements, and, indeed, minor medieval villages such as Bodiam, would be comparatively straightforward, not least as many such studies – at least for the eastern Sussex High Weald – would be able to draw on Gardiner’s important primary research. Winchelsea is also excluded from the Sussex EUS, but on the basis that this had already been the subject of a more intensive study. Although the Sussex EUS is not exclusively concerned with towns with medieval origins (it does, for example, include the non-AONB High Weald towns of Heathfield and Crowborough), it does not include modern urban or suburban areas within the AONB. Of these, Forest Row is the only significant example, and its development – along with smaller 19th and 20th-century settlement – is covered to a useful extent by the HLC projects for Sussex.

In Kent, the Extensive Urban Survey (known as the *Kent Historic Towns Survey* and undertaken in 2004) covers two AONB towns only (Cranbrook and Goudhurst) and the reports are very brief, unreferenced, and lack the character-based analysis of the Sussex reports. Additionally, the studies of Cranbrook and Goudhurst take no account of Gardiner’s research on the eastern Sussex High Weald, which is almost certainly of relevance, so that, for example, both settlements are very implausibly identified (on the basis of early churches) as being established in the Late Saxon period. Evidently more detailed analyses, with a character-based component, would be useful for the Kent part of the AONB, and these would need to be extended to other medieval villages, or substitute towns, such as Brenchley, Groombridge, Hawkhurst, Lamberhurst, Newenden and Smallhythe.

Although there has been an Extensive Urban Survey for Surrey this did not result in any settlements in the small part of the county that lies within the High Weald AONB for the good

reason that this area includes nothing above the size of a hamlet.

More generally, the studies of villages and towns that have been undertaken in the High Weald AONB are consistent in identifying a lack of archaeological excavation, which would usefully advance the understanding of settlement development. For example, only two of the seven High Weald settlements for which there are EUS reports have had any controlled subsurface archaeological investigation. At Robertsbridge there have been four minor watching briefs, and at Battle a mixture of larger excavations and watching briefs: seven in the town and 10 at the abbey. Only Winchelsea has seen significant subsurface archaeological investigation, with a series of excavations since 1974.¹¹⁵ In part this lack of archaeological investigation outside Winchelsea reflects a lack of redevelopment in the villages and towns of the High Weald, but it is clear that there have been many missed opportunities for developer-funded investigation (let alone pure research). Indeed, the experience of the medieval market town of Horsham, on the fringe of the High Weald AONB, illustrates a lamentable lack of interest in Wealden urban archaeology during decades of major redevelopment:¹¹⁶ again on the AONB boundary, the better experience at Crawley, which has seen a series of excavations since 1995, raises hopes that archaeological conditions may increasingly be applied to developments within the settlements of the High Weald and, certainly, has demonstrated the potential value of such work.¹¹⁷

3.3 Policy research

3.3.1 Introduction

While further research into the history of settlements – most particularly that of individual towns and villages – is desirable to improve understanding, it is important, from an AONB, local authority and, indeed, central government perspective, that such research is relevant to planning policy and decision making. We have seen (above, section 3.2) that a body of settlement history research already exists and this could be used to test the relevance of existing settlement research to planning and management, and to help shape future settlement research.

3.3.2 Farmsteads

Although there has been no analysis considering farmsteads in the context of historic holdings, such as those developed from dens and assart,

the recent pan-AONB study of late 19th-century farmstead plans by Bob Edwards, perhaps together with the mapping in the HLC projects for Kent, Surrey and Sussex, could be tested to assess its value for informing strategy, policy and planning decision making for farmsteads.

3.3.3 Hamlets

The modest amount of research into the origins and development of hamlets in the High Weald AONB suggests that there is little scope for developing policy on an historically informed basis. However, the mapping of hamlets in the HLC projects for Kent, Surrey and Sussex provides a good means of differentiating pre and post-1800 development (and more finely defining post-1800 periods) and its value for informing strategy, policy and planning decision making for hamlets could be explored.

3.3.4 Villages and towns

Given that the Sussex EUS reports (and GIS datasets) were designed in a planning context (albeit primarily concerned with assessing, characterizing and valuing the historic environment), it is hardly surprising that they represent the most relevant form of existing research on nucleated settlement in the High Weald AONB. It would seem logical to determine:

- a) how these have been used by central government (e.g. use of the Ditchling and Lewes EUS reports as core evidence in the consideration of the South Downs National park boundary¹¹⁸), and by local authorities in developing strategy/policy, and in planning decision making;
- b) whether any additional or alternative digest, or representation, of the analysis of settlement history therein would make the EUS approach more widely applicable to planning policy and decision making; and
- c) whether any AONB (or other) reinforcement of the value of such reports and GIS data (by policy or other means), could improve the use of settlement history research in strategy, policy and planning decision making.

4 Notes

¹ *Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty: A guide for AONB partnership members* (Countryside Agency, CA 24, November 2001), 6.

² The High Weald AONB Designation Order dates to 1980 and the Confirmation Order to 1983.

³ The South Downs National Park Designation Order dates to 2009, and the authority became fully operational in 2011.

⁴ Gardiner, M. F., *Medieval Settlement and Society in the Eastern Sussex Weald* (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of London, 1995); Gardiner, M., 'Trade, Rural Industry and the Origins of Villages: some Evidence from South-East England', in de Boe, G., & Verhaeghe, F., (eds.), *Rural Settlements in Medieval Europe: Papers of the Medieval Europe Brugge 1997 Conference* 6 (1997), 63-73.

⁵ The Kent Historic Towns Survey studies for towns within the designated AONB comprise Cranbrook and Goudhurst (anon, Kent County Council, 2004). Other towns of the Kent Historic Towns Survey immediately adjacent to the High Weald AONB boundary comprise Tenterden and Tonbridge.

⁶ Of the 41 towns of the Sussex EUS, the following are within the High Weald AONB: Battle, Mayfield, Robertsbridge, Rotherfield and Wadhurst (Harris, R. B., 2004-10). Winchelsea was omitted as it was the subject of a more intensive study. Other towns of the Sussex EUS immediately adjacent to the High Weald AONB boundary comprise Bexhill, Crawley, Crowborough, Cuckfield, East Grinstead, Hastings, Haywards Heath, Heathfield, Horsham, Lindfield, and Uckfield.
http://www.westsussex.gov.uk/living/planning/the_county_plan/west_sussex_character_project/extensive_urban_surveys_eus.aspx

⁷ Harris, R. B., *The Making of the High Weald* (version 2.2., Nov. 2003). <http://www.highweald.org/home/research/88-making-of-the-high-weald.html>

⁸ <http://www.highweald.org/home/policy/aonb-management-plan.html>

⁹ Edwards, B., *Historic Farmsteads & Landscape Character in the High Weald* (report for the High Weald AONB), 34: <http://www.highweald.org/home/research/475-historic-farmstead-character.html>

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 27.

¹¹ Bibby, P., and Brindley, P., *Historic Farm Complexes in Current Socio-Economic Context: High Weald* (report by the University of Sheffield for the High Weald AONB, 2007): <http://www.highweald.org/home/research/474-socio-economics-of-farmsteads.html>

¹² Gardiner, M. F., *Medieval Settlement and Society in the Eastern Sussex Weald* (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of London, 1995), 161.

¹³ CACI 2011, via <http://www.eastsussexfigures.org.uk/webview/index.jsp?mode=area&submode=result&areaname=Battle&areatype=PA>

¹⁴ This section on geology and landform is a shortened version of the author's previous summary in *The Making of the High Weald* (version 2.2., Nov. 2003), 12-15. <http://www.highweald.org/home/research/88-making-of-the-high-weald.html> and, for the geological component, relies heavily on several brief published accounts of the geology of the area: Worsam, B., 'The geology of Wealden iron', in Cleere, H., and Crossley, D., *Iron Industry of the Weald*, (2nd edition, 1995), 1-30; Mortimer, R. N., 'The Geology of

Sussex', in Geography Editorial Committee (eds.), *Sussex: Environment, Landscape and Society* (1983), 15-32; Williams, R., 'Geology' in Leslie, K., and Short, B., (eds.), *An Historical Atlas of Sussex* (1999), 2-3; and Williams, R., 'Natural Regions', in Leslie, K., and Short, B., (eds.), *An Historical Atlas of Sussex* (1999), 6-7.

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