

Tunbridge Wells - Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment of Proposed Allocation Sites within the High Weald AONB



6.8: Brenchley and Matfield

Revision B

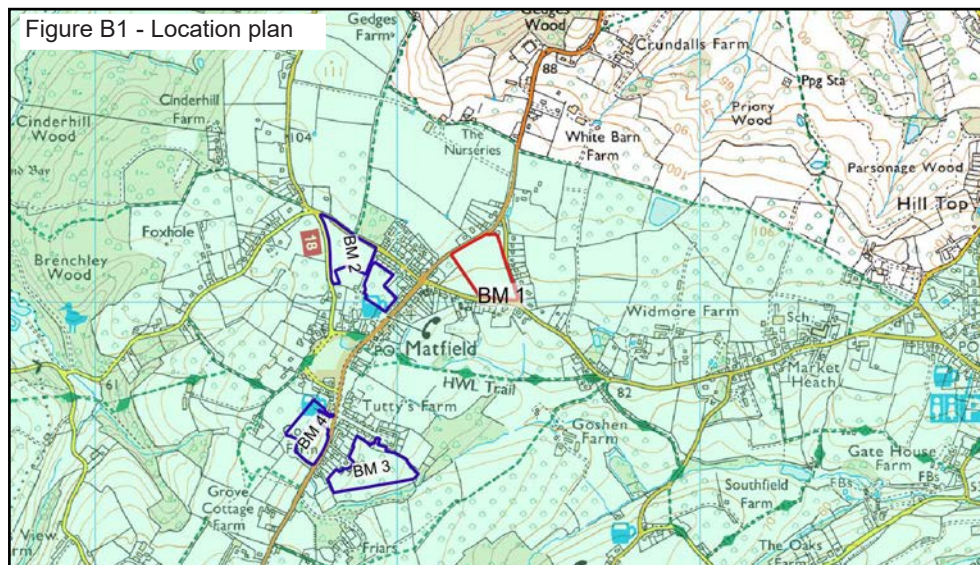
6.8 Brenchley and Matfield

6.8.1 Settlement Context

6.8.1.1 The village of Matfield lies within the Parish of Brenchley and Matfield. It is located approximately 5km east of the nearest settlement edge of Royal Tunbridge Wells and approximately 2km south of the nearest settlement edge of Paddock Wood. The village is served by minor roads and lanes, with the nearest major roads located approximately 2km to the south (A21) and 2km to the north-west (A228).

6.8.1.2 Matfield is a dispersed settlement which historically established around the village green on Maidstone Road (B2160) to the south of the village. The village lies over higher ground, which extends east to the village of Brenchley and south to a high ridge that extends from Tunbridge Wells. To the west land falls away to the rolling High Weald and tributaries of the River Meadway.

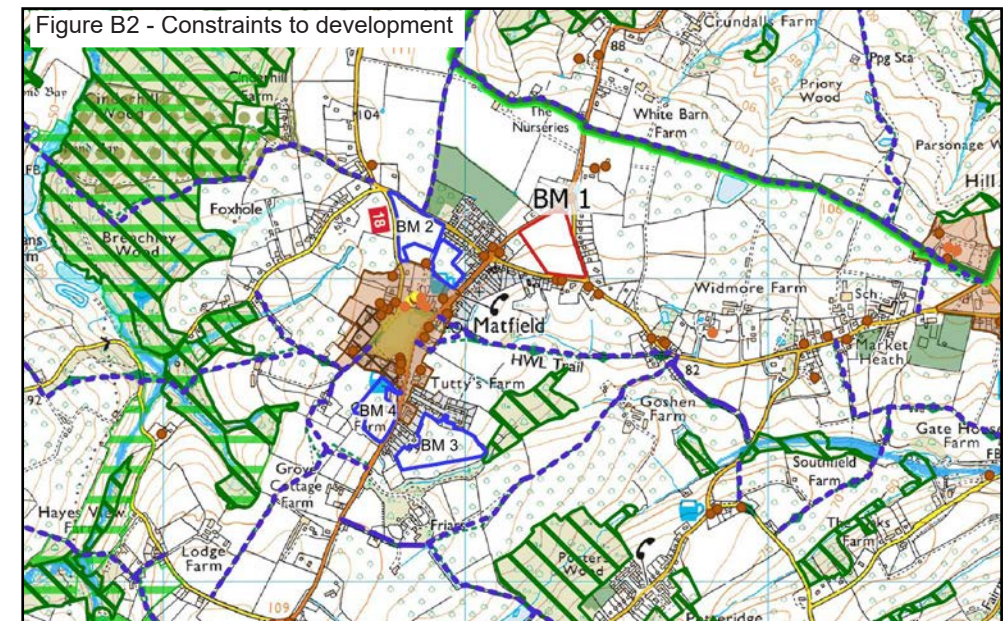
6.8.1.3 The village lies within the High Weald AONB and the designation washes over the settlement. The central part of the village is a Conservation Area, which includes a village green that is also protected through designation. The village contains numerous listed buildings. The majority of woodlands in the rural landscape beyond the village are designated Ancient Woodland. Brenchley Wood, located to the north-west of Matfield, is also designated as a Local Wildlife Site and part of the wood is a candidate nature reserve. An area of Local greenspace is located to the north of the village and the village is well served by public rights of way.



Brenchley and Matfield site considered:

BM 1 - Brenchley Road, Matfield

See Figure B1 for site locations. The High Weald AONB is shown as a green wash.



KEY

- | | |
|---|--|
| Study Sites | Conservation areas (EN7) |
| Other draft allocation | ● Grade I Listed Building |
| SSSI | ● Grade II* Listed Building |
| Ancient woodlands | ● Grade II Listed Building |
| Local Wildlife Site | Scheduled monuments |
| Sites of Nature Conservation Value | Registered Historic Parks and Gardens |
| Local Nature Reserve | — Byway Open to All Traffic |
| Candidate Local Nature Reserve | — Public Bridleway |
| Open Access Land | --- Public Footpath |
| Local greenspace (EN17) | ●●● Restricted Byway |

6.8.2 Settlement Evolution

6.8.2.1 Early mapping shows that Matfield historically developed around the village green, which is overlooked by Grade I Listed Matfield House. North of the village green early development also established around the junctions of Maidstone Road, Chestnut Lane and Brenchley Road and the junction of Brenchley Road and Coppers Lane. By the mid-20th Century infill development extended along Maidstone Road and Brenchley Road to the south of Study Site BM1. Post-War development saw the introduction of small estates of Council Housing and further infill development including several larger houses adjacent to Coppers Lane to the east of Study Site BM1. Recent development includes a small estate off Maidstone Road, which will infill existing housing to the north-west of Study Site BM1.

Figure B3 - OS Map 1871-1878

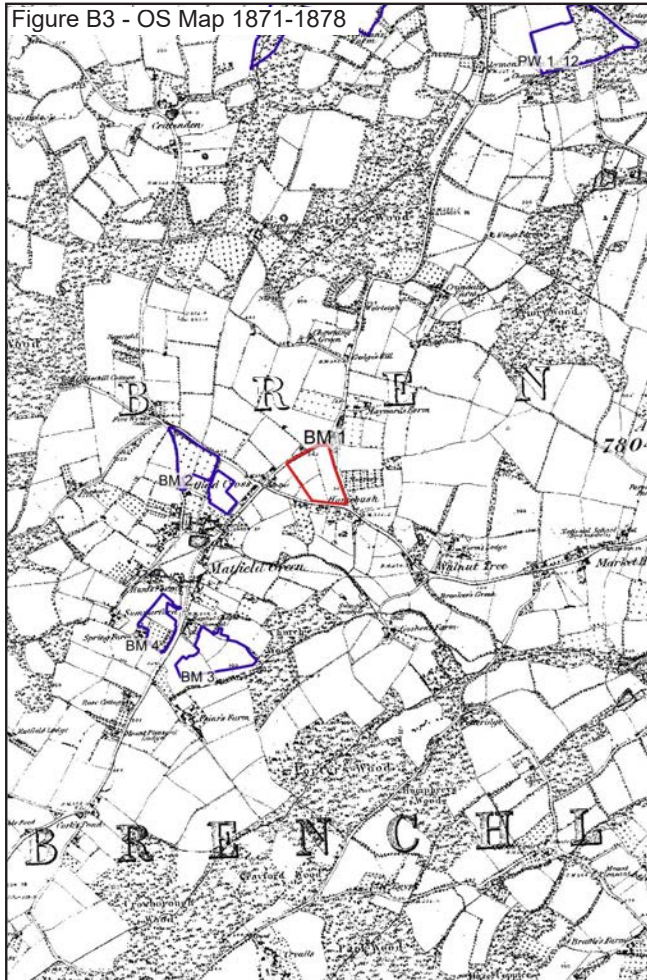


Figure B4 - OS Map 1897-1900

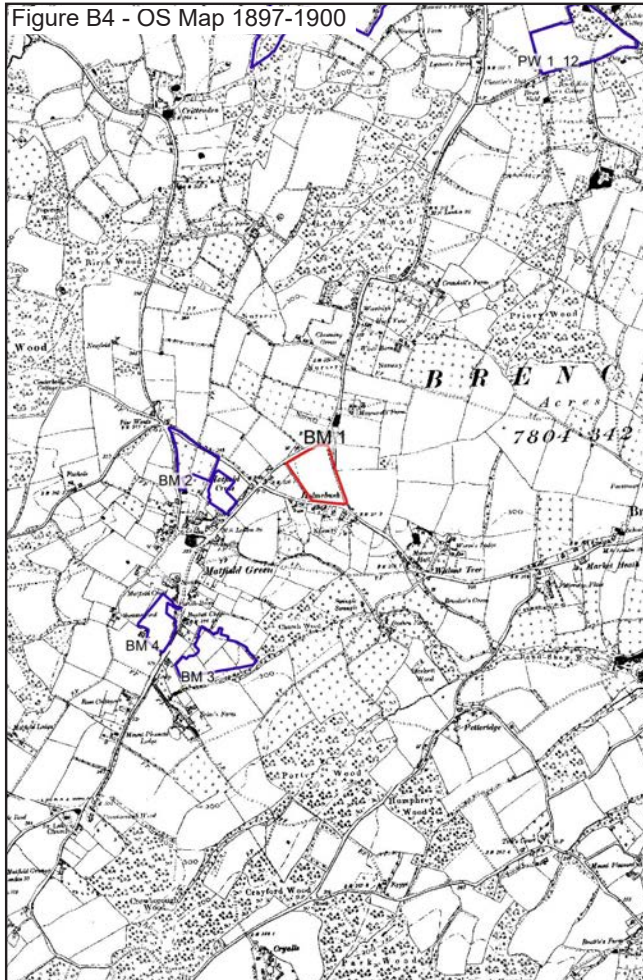
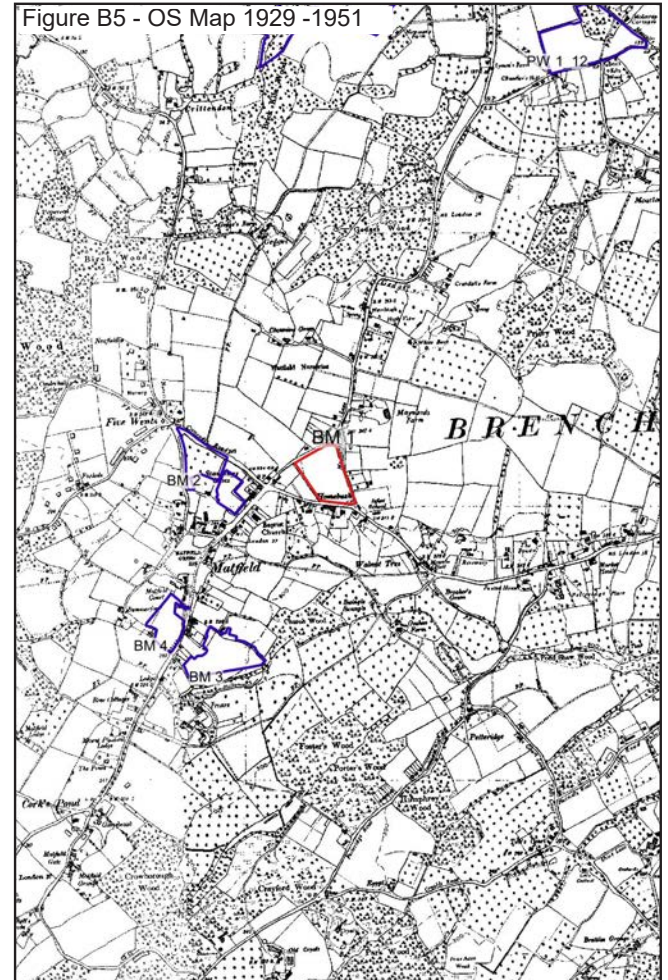


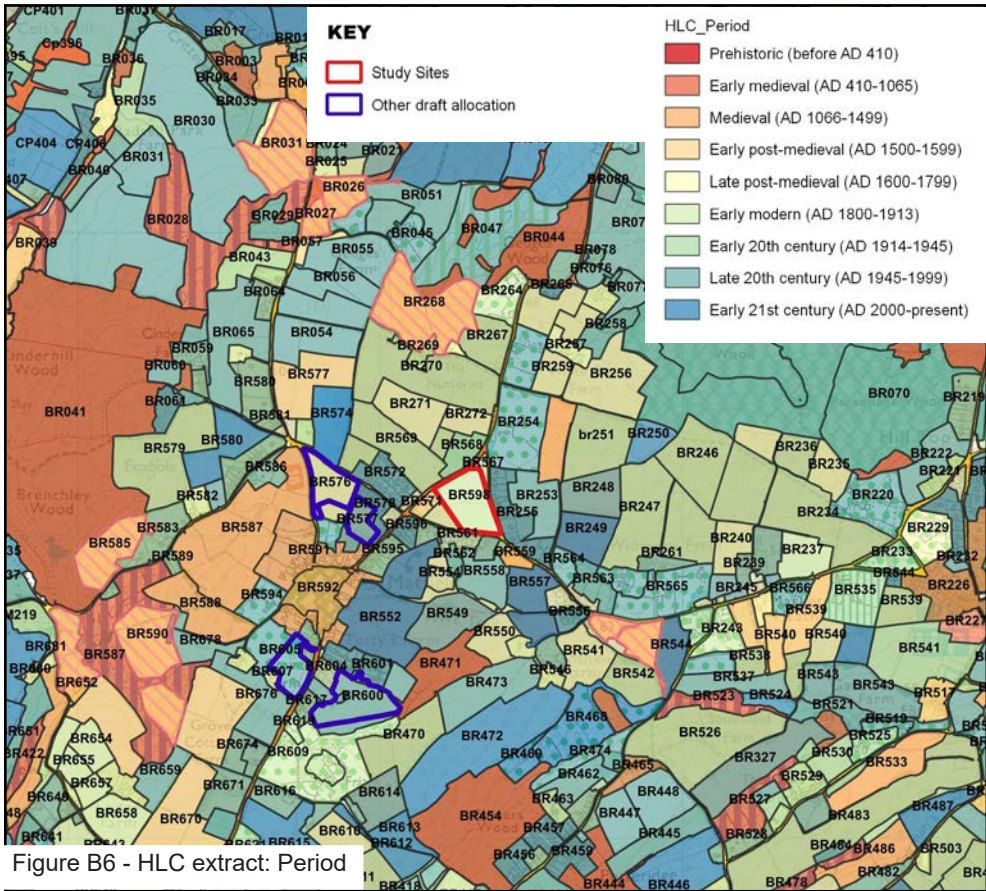
Figure B5 - OS Map 1929-1951



6.8.3 Historic Landscape Character

6.8.3.1 The Kent Historic Landscape Characterisation was updated in 2017. Extracts from the study that are relevant to the Matfield Study site are shown on the adjacent table.

Site	HLC ID	Type	Period	Additional information
BM1	BR598	Modern field amalgamation	Early modern	Medium regular fields with straight boundaries



6.8.4 Landscape Character

6.8.4.1 Matfield lies within the Fruit Belt Character Type identified within the Tunbridge Wells Borough Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) SPD (LUC December 2017). The Fruit Belt Type is described as:

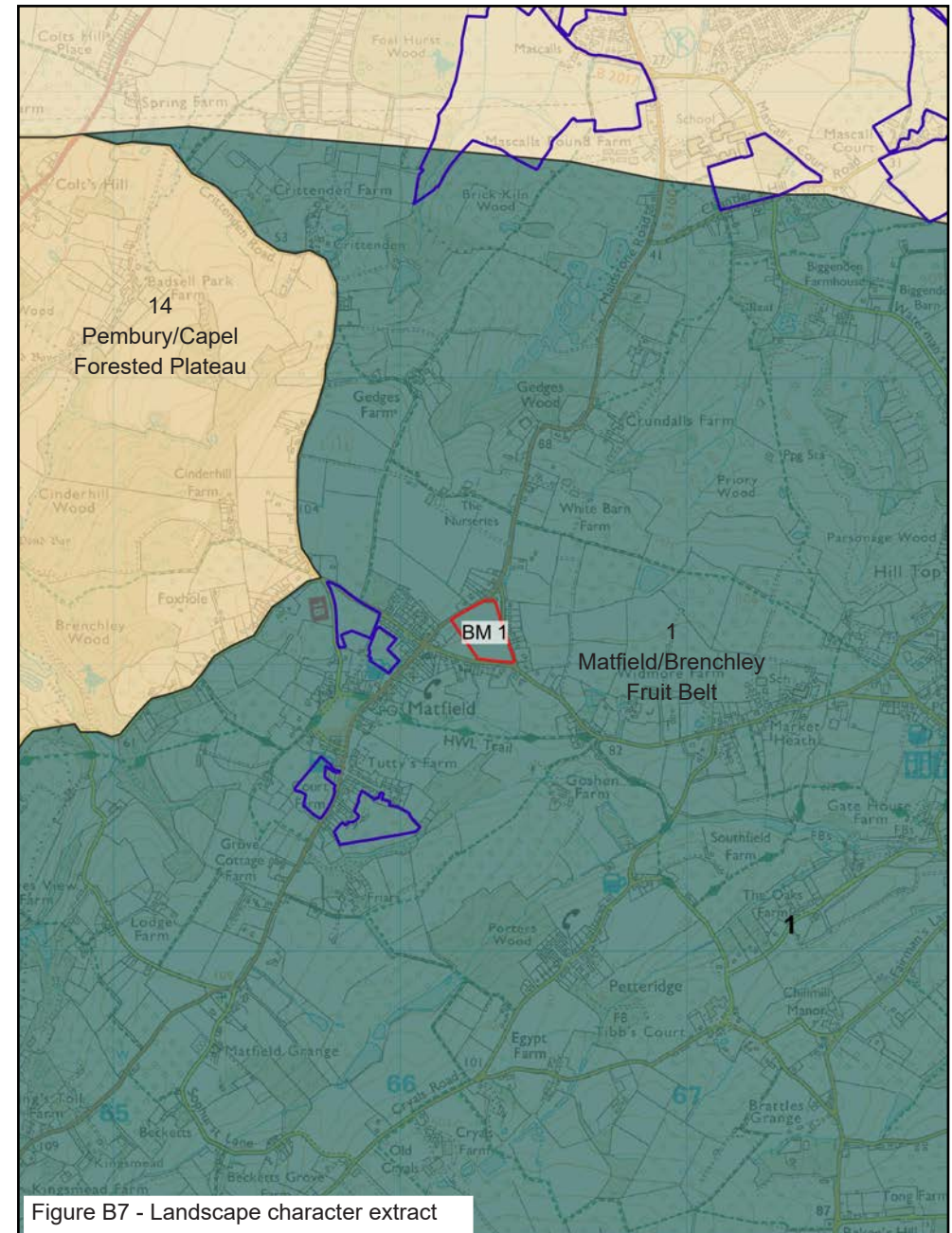
'An intensively managed and cultivated series of landscapes comprising orchard plantations extending across sandstone plateaux, rolling slopes and ridges which in turn are intersected in parts by intricate wooded ghyll valleys and sunken lanes. The undulating ridge around Goudhurst has a more intricate, rural landscape comprising smaller orchards, occasional hop fields and open to long views.'

6.8.4.2 The landscape character type has been broken down into Landscape Character Areas. Study site BM1 lies within the 'Matfield/Brenchley Fruit Belt' character area. Key characteristics of the 'Matfield/Brenchley fruit belt' Character Area include:

- 1) A plateau landscape, consisting of a series of low undulating ridges and intersecting valleys.
- 2) The High Weald 'scarp slope' provides extensive views out over the Low Weald to the north.
- 3) Orchards with regimented ranks of fruit trees and hop poles lend a patchwork and 'gardenesque' quality.
- 4) The narrow, wooded ghyll valleys which cut the plateau top create a more intimate, enclosed and ecologically rich landscape.
- 5) Rural lanes dip down from the open plateau top and into the wooded valleys, winding beneath a network of green, woodland tunnels. These are bound by diverse and colourful hedge banks, important for their ecological diversity.
- 6) A patchwork with fields of arable and pasture interspersing orchards. Large arable fields in the north-west and occasional large fruit packing stations.
- 7) The distinctive villages of Matfield, Brenchley and the hamlet of Castle Hill.
- 8) Historic farmsteads and timber-framed houses are dispersed across the area, creating a harmonious balance with the landscape of woodlands, orchards and fields.
- 9) Calm, colourful and vibrant rural landscape with relatively dark skies across the whole area.

6.8.4.3 'Valued features and qualities' that are unique to the character area, relevant to the study sites and sit outside of the special qualities noted within the AONB Management Plan include:

'7) The distinctive character of the villages of Matfield and Brenchley, with strong focal points around village green, church and historic buildings.'



6.8.5 AONB Landscape Character Analysis

6.8.5.1 The High Weald AONB Unit has published a set of Landscape Character Plans for Brencley and Matfield Parish, which relate back to objectives of the High Weald AONB Management Plan. Extracts of the maps and associated key information are shown below. The Ancient Woodland map is not shown below as this information is included within Figure B9.

6.8.5.2 The five defining components of character defined for the High Weald include:

1. Geology, landform and water systems – a deeply incised, ridged and faulted landform of clays and sandstone with numerous gill streams.
2. Settlement – dispersed historic settlement including high densities of isolated farmsteads and late Medieval villages founded on trade and non-agricultural rural industries.
3. Routeways – a dense network of historic routeways (now roads, tracks and paths).
4. Woodland – abundance of Ancient Woodland, highly interconnected and in smallholdings.
5. Field and Heath – small, irregular and productive fields, bounded by hedgerows and woods, and typically used for livestock grazing; with distinctive zones of lowland heaths, and inned river valleys.

KEY

- Study sites
- Other draft allocation
- High Weald AONB boundary

Geology, landform, water systems & climate

- Water - ponds, reservoir, etc (G1)
- Watercourses (G1)
- Sandstone outcrops (G2)

Settlement

- Historic farmsteads (S2)
- Historic settlement extent c.1860 (S2)

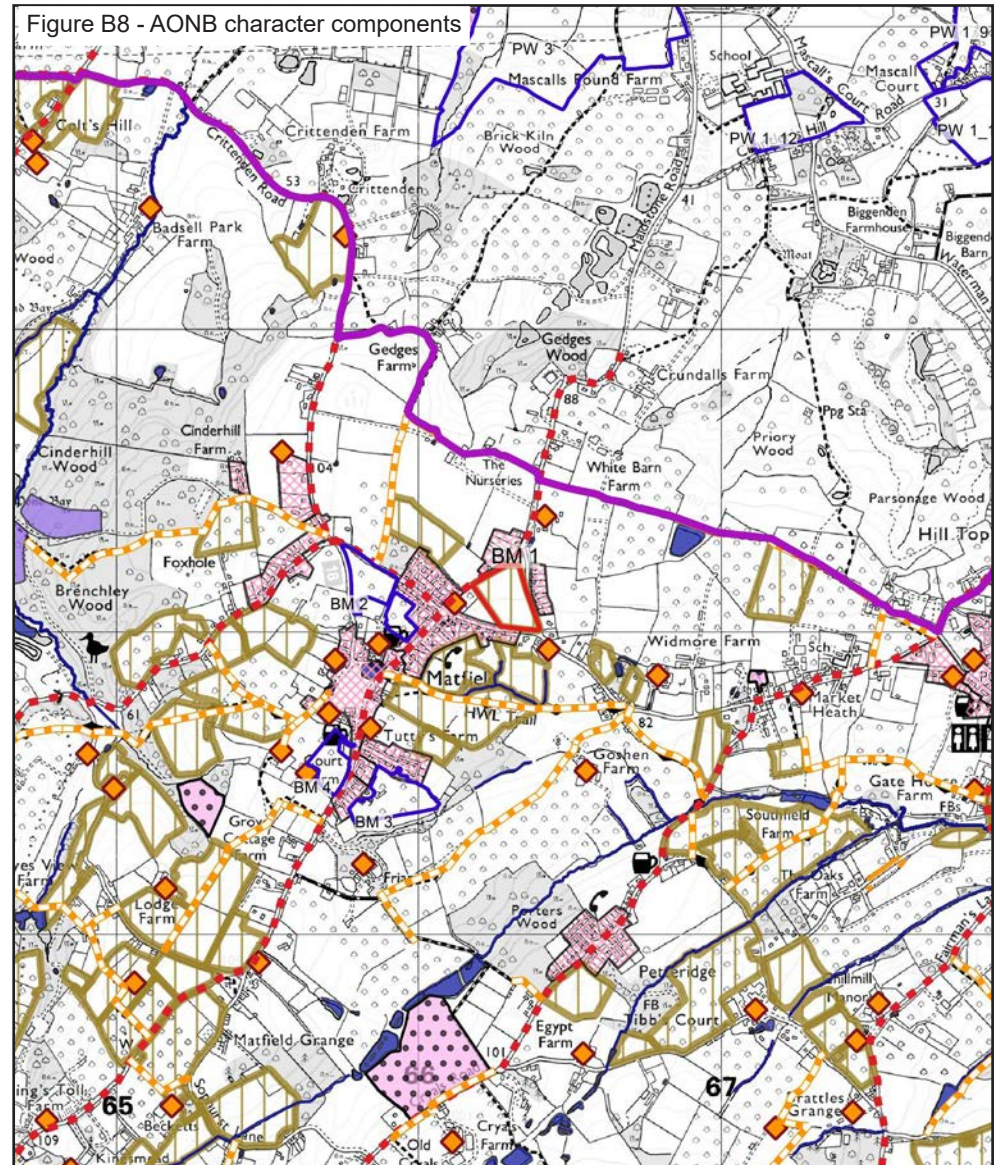
Historic routeways

- PROW (R1)
- Roads (R1)

Field and heath

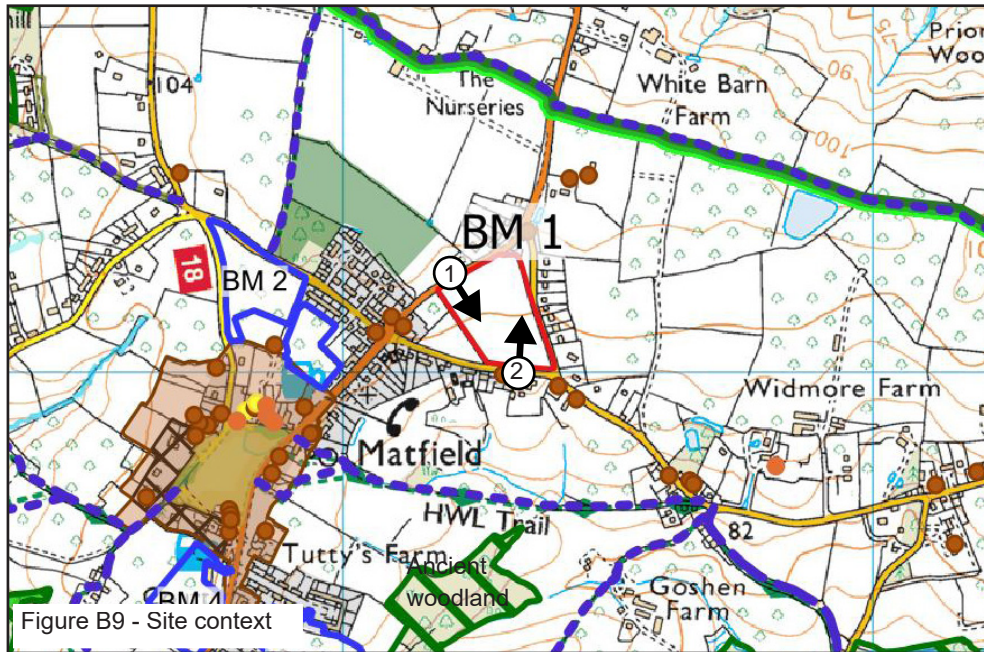
- Historic field boundary
- Heathland
- Known wildflower meadows

Figure B8 - AONB character components



Site : BM 1 – Brenchley Road, Matfield;

Site : BM 1 – Brenchley Road, Matfield



Site location and context:

Site BM 1 lies to the north-east of Matfield village. It forms part of a triangle of land, bound by existing housing and new development on Brenchley Road, Maidstone Road and Coppers Lane. Adjacent to the site, within the western corner of the triangle, lies allotment plots on Brenchley Road; and two detached dwellings, Thorn House and Thorn Barn on Matfield Road. The site is bound by hedgerows and comprises a single, relatively flat field of approximately 2.7 hectares in size.

Designations and development considerations:

The site lies within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural beauty (AONB). Grade II Listed Buildings close to the site include Thorn House and Standings Cross Public House on Maidstone Road to the south-west; Thorn Cottages on Maidstone Road to the north; Homebush Cottage and Holmbush on Brenchley Road to the south-east and Whitethorn Cottage and Whitethorn Cottages on Brenchley Road to the south. Matfield Conservation Area is centred around the Village Green approximately 350m south-west of the site. There are no Public Rights of Way within or adjacent to the Site. The High Weald Landscape Trail is located around 250m to the south.



Photograph 1: View south-east from Maidstone Road at the north-eastern corner of the site.

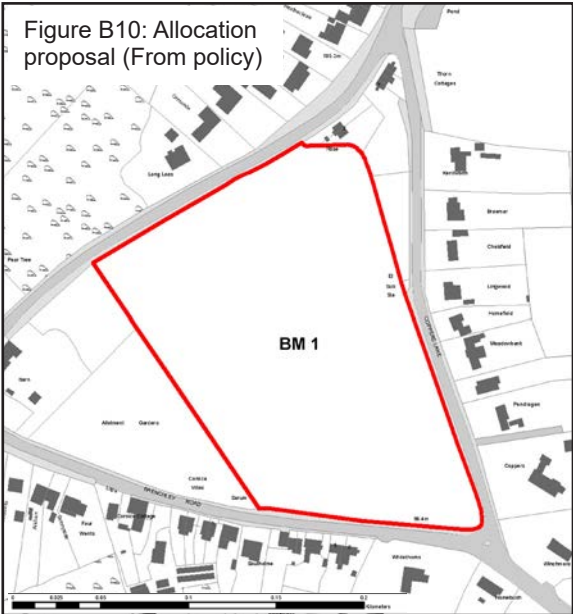


Photograph 2: Looking north from the field gate on Brenchley Road.




Landscape baseline and key features	Visual baseline and key viewpoints	Perceptual and experiential qualities	Representativeness of AONB Qualities (with reference to the relevant character components and objectives of the High Weald AONB Management Plan)
<p>The site has a strong relationship with existing settlement. It is bound on all sides by existing housing and new development and lies adjacent to allotment gardens.</p> <p>The site is relatively level with a gentle fall from north to south and is contiguous with adjacent housing areas. It is bound by clipped native hedgerow and hedgerow trees, which are generally well maintained on all sides, with gaps and lower sections on Matfield Road and an existing gap for access on Brenchley Road.</p> <p>The site comprises a single field of pasture bound by hedgerows, with associated hedgerow trees, which are the only landscape feature of note within the site. There are no landscape features such as trees, hedgerow or structures within the site itself.</p> <p>The strong relationship with existing settlement and containment from the wider landscape reduces the overall susceptibility to change.</p>	<p>The site is contained in views from the wider landscape by adjacent settlement together with vegetation and local landform.</p> <p>Locally the site is partly contained by the boundary hedgerow. There are views across the site from Maidstone Road, through gaps in the hedgerow (photograph 1), or where the hedgerow is lower. Views consist of a field in pasture with the boundary hedgerow adjacent in the mid-ground; and beyond the upper storeys and rooftops of adjacent houses. The tops of trees and a spur of higher ground are visible in distant skyline views.</p> <p>There are partial views into the site at the Brenchley Road field access (photograph 2).</p> <p>The site is not visible from footpaths or bridleways. Existing housing on Brenchley Road, vegetation and local landform also screen views from the High Weald Landscape Trail to the south.</p> <p>Visual receptors (public views) to be considered (ordered from higher to lower sensitivity) include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pedestrians on Maidstone Road, Coppers Lane and Brenchley Road; • Users of the adjacent allotment site; and • Motorists on Maidstone Road, Coppers Lane and Brenchley Road. <p>There are private views of the site from adjacent dwellings</p>	<p>The site is small scale and enclosed on all sides. It comprises a single field of pasture with boundary hedgerow and hedgerow trees, which add interest to an otherwise simple site.</p> <p>The adjacent roads, dwellings and allotment gardens that surround the site provide activity. The site in combination with the allotment gardens, Thorn House and Thorn Barn and framed by adjacent housing forms an attractive open space.</p> <p>There are pleasant views across the site from Maidstone Road. Although undeveloped, the site does not feel rural, given its containment from the wider landscape and intervisibility with settlement.</p>	<p>Geology, landform, water systems and climate: The site is located on a plateaux landscape of underlying Tunbridge Wells Sand Formation – Sandstone and Siltstone interbedded. There are no sandstone outcrops or water features associated with the site.</p> <p>Settlement: The historic centre of Matfield lies around the village green, south of the site area. Much of the settlement is linear/ribbon development along the roads, with the exception of land to the west of the site either side of Chestnut Lane which has a consolidated/nuclear structure. The allocation would be in keeping with the settlement pattern to north of village. Historically, farmsteads existed to the south-west of the site at the junction of Maidstone Road and Brenchley Road; to the south-east at the junction of Coppers Lane and Brenchley Road; and north of the Maidstone Road/Coppers Lane junction.</p> <p>Routeways: Maidstone Road is mapped as a historic routeway within the AONB database.</p> <p>Woodland: There are no areas of woodland within or adjacent to the site however boundary hedgerow and trees contribute to woodland connectivity.</p> <p>Fields and Heath: The site consists of a small irregular shaped field. The AONB database identifies that the field boundary is historic.</p> <p>Whilst the site displays some of the qualities of the AONB, it is separated from the wider rural landscape by the existing and new development on all sides.</p>

Proposals:

Site : BM 1



KEY

-  Existing GI retained
-  Proposed public open space
-  Proposed landscape feature / connection

Description of proposed development:

A mixed-use scheme, including approximately 30-45 (C3) residential dwellings, allotments, and play space.

Proposed mitigation measures:

Mitigation relating to reg 18 Allocation policy AL/BM 1.	Additional mitigation measures proposed within this study
A single point of vehicular access onto Maidstone or Brenchley Road (not Coppers Lane).	Existing boundary hedgerow to be gapped up and enhanced where necessary.
A landscape and visual impact assessment to inform site access and site layout, and to maintain the setting of the settlement, including views from and through the site to the countryside beyond, including from Maidstone Road.	If removal of boundary hedgerow to form a site access is unavoidable this should be translocated or replanted with a replacement native hedgerow.
Regard shall be given to existing hedgerows and mature trees on site, with the layout and design of the development protecting those of most amenity value, as informed by an arboricultural survey and landscape and visual assessment.	
Provision of on-site amenity/ natural green space, improvements to parks and recreation grounds and youth play in accordance with policy.	
Provision of children's play space in the northern part of the site to include fully equipped and funded playground.	
Provision of allotments in south west corner adjacent to existing allotments	

Landscape and recreational opportunities:

The scheme should protect and enhance existing boundary hedgerow features and trees. This should include the provision of suitable offsets and complementary habitat creation such as rough grass margins. There are also opportunities to incorporate new habitats and landscape features, through tree planting and the integration of naturalistic SuDS features.

There are opportunities to improve pedestrian permeability with footpath links to adjacent areas. Seating is particularly important for older people and should be incorporated on pedestrian routes. The housing scheme provides the opportunity to make part of the site available as public open space through the provision of additional allotment plots and an equipped children's play area. The location and design of open space provision should reflect the character of the existing village green.

Potential Landscape effects (Assuming no mitigation)	Potential effects on Visibility (Assuming no mitigation)	Assessment of effects against the landscape character components of the High Weald AONB Management Plan (assuming no mitigation)	Potential to avoid or reduce adverse effects (draft policy AL/BM 1, the site analysis plan for the site and the text on mitigation measures opposite, set out the proposed mitigation for the site)
<p>Development within the proposed allocation would have a limited effect on the wider 'Matfield/Brenchley Fruit Belt' Character Area by virtue of the site's containment from the wider landscape.</p> <p>Locally, development would result in a change of character from an open field to development and open space. The scheme would need to be sensitively designed to avoid an adverse effect upon the character of the site and adjacent settlement, and ensure that the potential beneficial effects of the scheme can be fully realised.</p> <p>The scheme would result in the loss of an open field of pasture and potential loss of hedgerow to form the site access (subject to detailed design). The effects on recreation would be positive with the provision of new allotment plots and an equipped children's play area.</p>	<p>The site is contained in views from the wider landscape, however the scheme would be visible from adjacent roads, properties and the existing allotment site.</p> <p>In views from the adjacent section of Maidstone Road, there would be open views of the scheme. In views from Brenchley Road and Coppers Lane there are likely to be glimpsed and partial views of the scheme seen beyond boundary hedgerow. Site access proposals may also affect the extent to which the proposals are visible from adjacent roads.</p> <p>Views of new housing would not be inconsistent with existing views experienced from these roads.</p>	<p>Geology, landform, water systems and climate: No water features, or sandstone outcrops would be affected by the proposed development. The effects on climate conditions fall outside of the scope of this assessment.</p> <p>Settlement: The location of development would be in keeping with the villages existing settlement pattern and permitted development. Detailed proposals for the site would need to ensure that the scheme would enhance the overall character of the village and would not adversely affect the setting to adjacent listed buildings.</p> <p>Routeways: Access into the site from Maidstone Road would have a limited impact upon the character of this historic routeway given the open nature of this section of road and existing views into the site. Enhancements to the boundary hedgerow along Maidstone Road would benefit the setting to the routeway.</p> <p>Woodland: The proposed allocation would not result in the loss of Ancient Woodland or mapped woodland, however there is the potential for loss of hedgerow subject to detailed design.</p> <p>Field and Heath: The proposals would involve the loss of a small field and potential loss of hedgerow associated with a historic field boundary.</p>	<p>Adverse effects could be avoided or reduced through the retention and enhancement of boundary hedgerow; native planting and habitat creation; open space provision including equipped play and allotment plots; retention of views through the site; and sensitive design proposals informed by a landscape and visual assessment and heritage assessments.</p> <p>The housing scheme provides the opportunity to make part of the site available as public open space through the provision of additional allotment plots and an equipped children's play area. The location and design of open space provision should reflect the character of the existing village green.</p> <p>Important considerations will include how views through the site can be maintained, such as those from Maidstone Road to the wooded skyline beyond Brenchley Road.</p> <p>The scheme should protect and enhance existing boundary hedgerow features and trees. This should include the provision of suitable offsets and complementary habitat creation such as rough grass margins. There are also opportunities to incorporate new habitats and landscape features, through tree planting and the integration of naturalistic SuDS features.</p> <p>The scheme should provide good pedestrian permeability with footpath links to adjacent areas. Seating is particularly important for older people and should be incorporated on pedestrian routes. Opportunities to overlook areas of public open space and take in views through the site should be considered.</p>

Conclusions:

The site forms part of a triangle of land contained from the wider AONB by roads and adjacent housing and new development on all sides. The site comprises a relatively level field of pasture contained by hedgerow. There are views over the site from Maidstone Road, which extend beyond adjacent housing to a wooded skyline.

There is potential for sensitive development of the site, following the principles set out within the allocation policy, proposed Green Infrastructure Strategy and relevant design guidance. Development of the site would require careful consideration of local vernacular.

The scheme should be informed by a landscape and visual assessment. The development of the site in conjunction with open space and proposed mitigation could be achieved without residual significant adverse landscape and visual effects.

Policy recommendations:

- Wording to protect and enhance boundary hedgerow and trees. If hedgerow removal is unavoidable to form the site access then this should be translocated or replaced.
- Allotments and play areas should be in accessible locations for pedestrians with good natural surveillance. The design of the play area should fit in with local vernacular and the colour study.
- The proposed parking for existing residents (on Brenchley Road) and the allotments could be combined.

6.8.6 Cumulative effects of development proposed at Matfield

- 6.8.6.1 The proposed allocations as shown in the reg 18 submission may give rise to cumulative landscape and visual effects on the size and settlement pattern of Matfield. The sites are disparate and are unlikely to give rise to cumulative effects on individual landscape or visual receptors.
- 6.8.6.2 There is the potential for cumulative adverse effects on characteristic features including orchards and woodland, however more information is required to make an informed assessment. Any application within these sites should consider cumulative landscape effects on local character and features within the 'Matfield/Brenchley Fruit Belt' Character Area.

6.8.7 Summary and conclusions

- 6.8.7.1 Draft allocation site BM 1 is located to the north-east of Matfield and consists of one field in pasture, which is generally flat. It is well related to settlement and is separated from the wider landscape. The field itself contains relatively few attributes that are characteristic for the AONB landscape. There are some views out of the site, to the south, however these include the existing dwellings that surround the site. Development of the site would require careful consideration of local vernacular, but would be achievable without significant adverse effects to the AONB.

