Working in Partnership

WEALDEN DISTRICT (INCORPORATING PART OF THE SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK)
Core Strategy Local Plan
Adoption Statement – 19th February 2013

This Adoption Statement has been prepared in accordance with Regulations 26 and 35 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 and gives notice that the Wealden District Council and the South Downs National Park Authority have resolved to adopt formally the Wealden District (incorporating part of the South Downs National Park) Core Strategy Local Plan on the 19th February 2013.

The Core Strategy forms part of the Local Plan (formerly the Local Development Framework) for the whole of Wealden District and will replace, the adopted Wealden Local Plan (1998) although some policies from this earlier plan are still "saved" where they remain of relevance and until they are superseded by further development plan documents. The Core Strategy is the principal and overarching document of the Local Plan for Wealden District setting out the vision, spatial strategy and strategic policies for development in the District for the period to 2027. The Strategy was submitted jointly for its examination in public by the Wealden District Council and by the South Downs National Park Authority which is the Local Planning Authority for part of south Wealden.

Mr Michael Moore BA (Hons) MRTPI CMILT MCIHT, an independent Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government examined the document in a series of Hearings between the 17th January and 2nd February 2012 and by way of a further day's hearing on 6th September 2012. The Inspector's Report, with its recommendations, was published on 30th October 2012 and concluded that the joint Core Strategy Local Plan was "sound" subject to a number of required changes. The adopted Core Strategy and proposals map incorporate the recommendations of the Inspector. The final report of the Inspector, together with his schedule of proposed main modifications is available on the Council's website www.wealden.gov.uk).

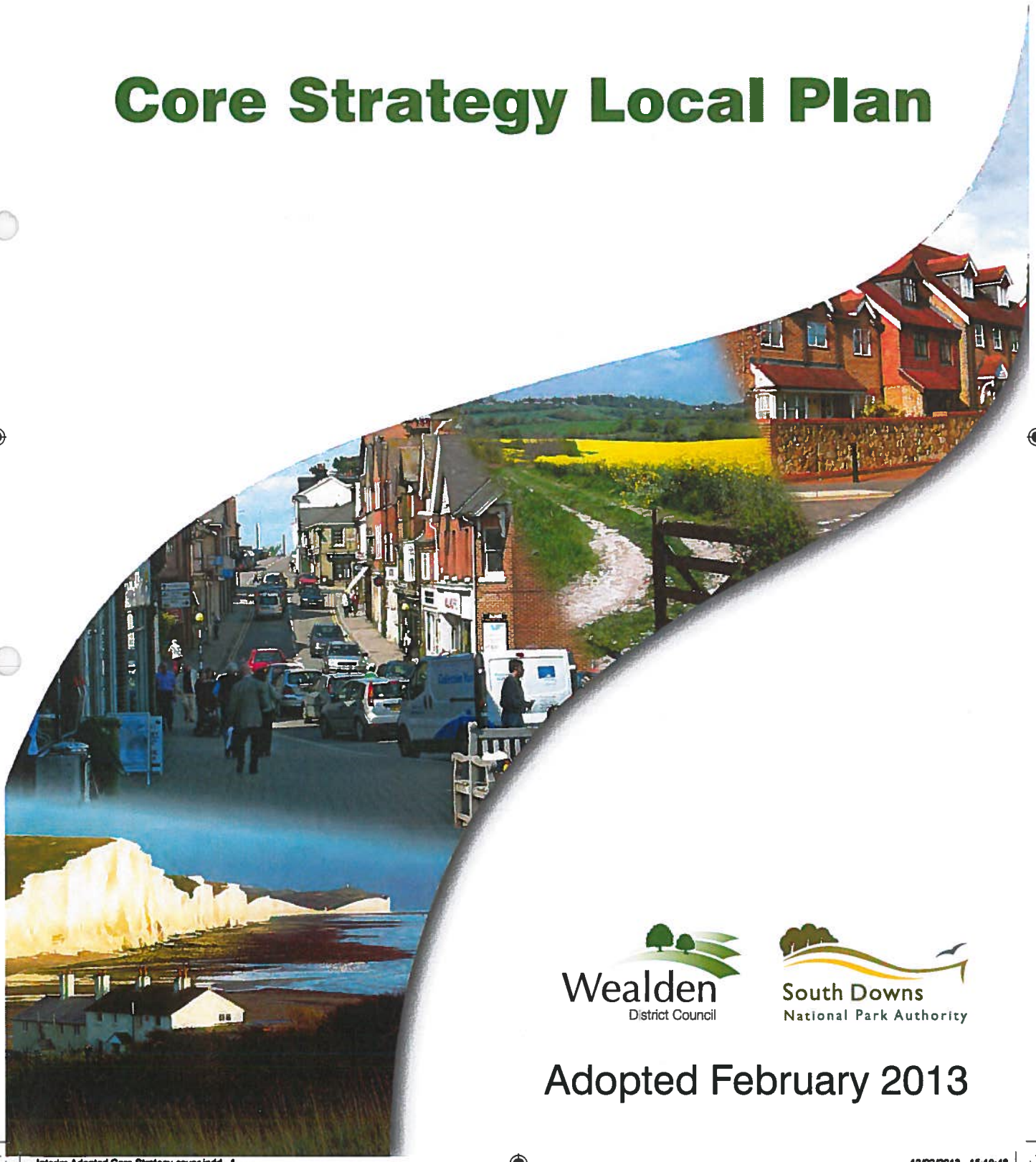
Any person aggrieved by the adoption of Core Strategy may make an application to the High Court under Section 113 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004). Any challenge must be made on the grounds that either the document has not been prepared within the powers conferred by Part 2 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, or that a procedural requirement of the Act or associated Regulations has not been complied with. Any such application must be made promptly and in any event no later the **12th April 2013.**

The adopted Core Strategy, this Adoption Statement and the Sustainability Appraisal Report (prepared in accordance with Regulation 16 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 and the Habitats Regulations Assessment) are available for public inspection on the Council's website, www.wealden.gov.uk, and at the Council's Offices. The documents will also be made available for a six week period from **Monday 4th March until Friday 12th April 2013** at the following venues across the district.

Council Offices		
Wealden District Council – Council Offices, Vicarage Lane, Hailsham, BN27 2AX Tel. 01892 653311 Mon, Tue, Thu and Fri 8.30am - 5pm; Wed 9am - 5pm	**South Downs National Park Authority** – Rosemary's Parlour, North Street, Midhurst, West Sussex, GU29 9SB Tel. 01730 811759 Mon – Fri 8.30am – 5pm	**East Sussex County Council** - County Hall, St Annes Crescent, Lewes, BN7 1UE Tel. 01273 481000 Mon - Thu 8am -5pm; Fri 8am-4.30pm
Libraries		
Crowborough Library - Pine Grove, Crowborough, TN6 1DH Tel. 0345 60 80 196 Mon and Wed 9.30am-5.30pm; Tue 10am-5.30pm; Thu and Fri 9.30am-7pm; Sat 9.30am-4pm	**Forest Row Library** - The Community Centre, Hartfield Road, Forest Row, RH18 5DZ Tel. 0345 60 80 196 Mon, Tue, Thu and Fri 2pm-5pm; Wed 10am-1pm	**Hailsham Library** - Western Road, Hailsham, BN27 3DN Tel. 0345 60 80 196 Mon 2pm-5pm; Tue 10.30am-7pm; Wed, Thu and Sat 9.30am-5pm; Fri 9.30am-6pm
Heathfield Library - 21 High Street, Heathfield, TN21 8LU Tel. 0345 60 80 196 Mon and Sat 9.30am-1pm; Tue 9.30am-5pm; Wed closed; Thu 9.30am-7pm; Fri 10.30am-5pm	**Polegate Library** - Windsor Way, Polegate, BN26 6QP Tel. 0345 60 80 196 Mon and Fri 9.30am-1pm, 2pm- 5pm; Tue 9.30am-1pm, 2pm-5.30pm; Thu 9.30am-1pm; Sat 9.30am- 4pm	**Uckfield Library** - High Street, Uckfield, TN22 1AR Tel. 0345 60 80 196 Mon 9.30am-1pm; Tue and Thu 9.30am-5.30pm; Wed 9.30am-7pm; Fri 10am-7pm; Sat 9.30am-4pm
Wadhurst Library - The Institute, High Street, Wadhurst, TN5 6AP Tel. 0345 60 80 196 Mon, Thu and Fri 2pm-4.30pm; Tue Closed; Wed and Sat 10am-12.30pm	**Willingdon Library** - Coppice Avenue, Lower Willingdon, Eastbourne, BN20 9PN Tel. 0345 60 80 196 Mon, Wed, Thu and Fri 9.30am-12pm, 2pm-5pm; Tue Closed; Sat 9.30am-12.30pm	
Town and Parish Council Offices		
Crowborough Town Council - Town Hall, The Broadway, Crowborough, TN6 1DA Tel. 01892 652907 Mon-Thu 9am-5pm; Fri 9am-4.30pm	**Forest Row Parish Council** - Forest Row Community Centre, Hartfield Road, RH18 5DZ Tel. 01342 822661 Mon-Fri 9am-4pm	**Hailsham Town Council** - Inglenook. Market Square, Hailsham, BN27 2AE Tel. 01323 421702 Mon-Fri 9am–4pm
Heathfield and Waldron Parish Council - 92 High Street, Heathfield, TN21 8JB Tel. 01435 865700 Mon-Fri 9.30am-3pm	**Maresfield Parish Council** - Parish Office, Churchfields, Nutley, TN22 3NA Tel. 01825 714555 Mon-Fri 9am-4.30pm	**Mayfield and Five Ashes Parish Council** – The Clerks Office, Old Manor House, Mayfield, TN20 6AL Tel: 01435 873784 Mon & Fri 9.30am – 12.30pm, Wed 9am – 4pm
Polegate Town Council - 49 High Street, Polegate, BN26 6AL Tel. 01323 488114 Mon-Fri 9am-1pm	**Uckfield Town Council** - Civic Centre, Uckfield, TN22 1AE Tel. 01825 762774 Mon-Thu 9am-5pm; Fri 9am-4pm	**Willingdon and Jevington Parish Council** - 3 Gorringe Valley Road, Willingdon, BN20 9SX Tel. 01323 489603 Mon-Fri 9am-1pm

Wealden District (Incorporating Part of the South Downs National Park)

Core Strategy Local Plan



Wealden District Council

South Downs National Park Authority

Adopted February 2013

Interim Adopted Core Strategy cover.indd 1 12/02/2013 15:19:48

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Office hours Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday 8.30am to 5.00pm and Wednesday 9.00am to 5.00pm

You may also visit the offices Monday to Friday, to view other Local Plan documents.

A copy of Wealden's Core Strategy Local Plan can be downloaded from the Planning Policy pages of the Wealden website, www.wealden.gov.uk or scan the QR code below with your smart phone.

If you, or somebody you know, would like the information contained in this document in large print, Braille, audio tape/CD or in another language please contact Wealden District Council on 01323 443322 or info@wealden.gov.uk

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Foreword

Wealden District Council

South Downs National Park Authority

This Core Strategy is the overarching planning policy document for the Wealden District Area, setting out our vision for the future development of the area over the period to 2027. It sets down a number of strategic objectives, and key planning policies for the area together with the broad locations, amounts and types of development that will take place within Wealden over the next 14 years. It covers the whole of Wealden District and has been prepared and adopted by both Wealden District Council and the South Downs National Park Authority which is the Local Planning Authority for part of south Wealden.

This new Core Strategy Local Plan identifies how we intend to meet our housing needs, provide for new employment and business opportunities and plan for the provision of necessary supporting infrastructure whilst also protecting our special environment and rural landscape character. The policies and proposals contained within this Plan affect us all and will have a profound influence upon the future shape and form of our towns, villages and countryside.

Developing the plan to meet all of these potentially competing needs has been a major challenge and one that would not have been possible without the help and contributions received from very many individuals and organisations. The document has been produced following major consultation exercises carried out in 2007 and 2009 and over 25,000 representations have been received on its contents. The Council and National Park Authority have carefully considered all responses received and the Plan has been refined and changed during its development in response to a number of the matters and concerns raised.

We have also published a wide range of technical studies and evidence to support the overall direction and detailed policies contained within it and each stage of the Plans production has been the subject of a separate sustainability appraisal to ensure that sustainability is at the core of the document and its delivery.

The Plan was submitted jointly by Wealden District Council and the South Downs National Park Authority for public examination in 2011. Following a series of public hearing sessions held in 2012 our independently appointed Inspector found the Plan "sound", that is to say, justified, effective and deliverable.

Foreword

Many individuals and organisations have been involved in putting this document together including both the Council's and National Park Authority's Members and Officers, Town and Parish Councils, Wealden's Local Strategic Partnership, developers, amenity groups and organisations as well as residents and statutory consultees. Their contributions are greatly appreciated and have been invaluable in completing this important piece of work which provides clarity and direction for the future sustainable growth and development of the District.

Councillor Roy Galley, Portfolio holder Planning and Development, Wealden District Council

Margaret Paren OBE, Chair of the South Downs National Park Authority

Working with the South Downs National Park Authority

On 1st April 2011 the South Downs National Park Authority became the statutory Planning Authority for the South Downs National Park. This Joint Core Strategy applies to that part of the South Downs National Park which is situated within Wealden District.

In commenting upon the proposed Core Strategy document the South Downs Joint Committee / Shadow National Park Board as predecessor to the National Park Authority considered it to be a sound document and based upon robust evidence. During the South Downs National Park Authority's shadow year, the Planning Committee formally endorsed the Draft Wealden Core Strategy as the proposed strategic planning policy framework for that part of the National Park within Wealden District.

In due course the South Downs National Park Authority will produce its own, Park-wide Core Strategy, which will supersede this Core Strategy as it applies to the area of the National Park within Wealden District.

During the course of the examination in public of this joint Core Strategy the Government published the National Planning Policy Framework or NPPF. At the same time and as a consequence many of the previous Planning Policy Statements and Guidance Notes were cancelled by Government. The term Local Development Framework has also now been replaced by Local Plan. An additional period of consultation together with an additional Hearing date was held as part of the Examination in order to test this Core Strategy against criteria for soundness in the NPPF. Our Inspectors final report was received on 30th October 2012 and concluded that (with modifications) the Core Strategy was sound. These modifications are now incorporated in this adopted Local Plan Development Plan Document.

Working with the South Downs National Park Authority

Summary

This Core Strategy has been produced following extensive consultation with a wide range of stakeholders. It is supported by a number of detailed evidence studies and background papers which are available on our website at www.wealden.gov.uk.

The Strategy promotes sustainable growth to meet our needs by balancing the ability of our environment and infrastructure to accommodate that growth. We have tested a number of alternatives and consider the approach now proposed to be the most reasonable and deliverable when assessed against possible alternatives. Our Core Strategy runs until 2027 and aims to deliver some 450 homes per annum over the plan period, but will be subject to annual monitoring and review.

Wealden wishes to retain its rural character and high quality environment whilst also providing sufficient growth to improve the performance of our economy, regenerate our market towns and provide a more vital future for villages. We also wish to reduce the disparities in economic performance that are apparent within the District by enhancing employment opportunities, particularly in south Wealden, and tackling deprivation. We will to seek to optimise opportunities for the provision of much needed affordable housing, subject to environmental and other limitations.

To promote sustainability, ease of access to services and to reduce the carbon footprint of development most growth is proposed in the form of sustainable urban extensions. The Strategy proposes significant growth within Hailsham(1300 dwellings) and Uckfield (1000 dwellings) with additional growth at Stone Cross (650 dwellings) and Polegate (700 dwellings) to help meet the needs of the south of the District and to support the agenda for regeneration and investment emerging from the Local Plan of our neighbouring authority Eastbourne Borough Council. Lesser and proportionate growth is proposed for Crowborough (300 dwellings) owing to environmental and economic constraints. To further support sustainable development, increase in economic performance and the provision of employment opportunities, the Strategy allocates some 40,000 sq metres of employment land, principally in Hailsham, Polegate and Uckfield and promotes provision of an additional 17,000 sq m of retail floorspace, centred upon Uckfield and Hailsham.

To support our rural areas we have developed a settlement hierarchy based upon sustainability, accessibility and range of services available. Thirteen settlements are identified as suitable to sustainably accommodate growth in order to support the vitality of our villages and rural areas. These will provide for some 455 units over the lifetime of the Core Strategy.

Summary

1 Introduction

What is the Core Strategy?

1.1 The Core Strategy is the key policy document which sets out how the places and communities within Wealden will change up until 2027. This document has been produced in consultation with the public and other organisations who have an interest in the future of Wealden.

1.2 The Core Strategy is only one of the documents, which will steer change in the next 24 years, in the Local Plan. Following the Core Strategy we will be producing more Development Plan Documents (DPDs) which will be guided by the Core Strategy. These Development Plan Documents are called Strategic Sites DPD and Delivery and Site Allocations DPD collectively called Site Allocation DPDs. Together these documents comprise the new development plan for Wealden and will eventually replace the saved adopted Wealden Local Plan policies.

1.3 Further details of saved Wealden Local Plan policies and the timetable for the production of the Local Plan are set out in the "Local Development Scheme".

How is the Core Strategy structured?

1.4 The Core Strategy describes the current interaction of people and places in Wealden, and from this key issues and the need for change is identified. The aspirations of the Local Plan are described through the long term vision, with associated objectives for the District as a whole. These objectives are delivered through the spatial strategy, which identifies how much development is intended to happen where, when and by what means it will be delivered. In order to ensure that the spatial strategy is delivering the vision and objectives, arrangements for managing and monitoring delivery are identified within the document.

How has it been prepared?

1.5 The Core Strategy is founded upon, but does not duplicate, guidance contained within a series of documents provided by the Government called Planning Policy Statements and Planning Policy Guidance. It also takes into account local strategies and policies, factual evidence, responses from consultations and views from all the partners involved in the Core Strategy process. Specific regard has been made to the responses to the Spatial Development Options Consultation in 2009 and Town and Parish Council responses supplemented with Parish Templates and Town Master Plans. Of the six alternative housing consultation options, proportionate growth and growth in the Lewes/ Uckfield railway line catchment were not as well received as the options which focused growth on Uckfield, Polegate and Hailsham. The spatial strategy reflects the preferred elements contained within individual options expressed by respondents, as reported to the Cabinet LDF Sub Committee in December 2009 and reported in Background Paper 1: Development of the Core Strategy.

1.6 The Core Strategy also contributes to the achievement of sustainable development through Sustainability Appraisal where alternative options have been assessed against the Council's agreed sustainabilty criteria, meeting the requirement of the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive. The delivery of necessary infrastructure, required to deliver the Core Strategy, is detailed in the Infrastructure Delivery Plan.

1.7 A number of specialist studies have been produced to help provide a robust evidence base to inform the Local Development Framework including the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment, The Strategic Housing Market Assessment and the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment. A comprehensive list of evidence base studies can be found on the Council's website www.wealden.gov.uk. In addition to these a number of background papers have been produced, which explain how we have developed the Core Strategy.

These papers include:

BP1: Development of the Core Strategy

BP2: Managing the Delivery of Housing

BP3: The Economy and the Provision of Jobs

BP4: Provision for Gypsies and Travellers

BP5: Biodiversity

BP6: Green Infrastructure

BP7: Summary of Town Masterplanning Documents

BP8: Summary of Core Strategy Consultation and Participation

BP9: Assessment of the Core Strategy under the Habitat Regulations

BP 10: Sustainability Appraisal of the Core Strategy

BP 11: Infrastructure Delivery Plan

BP12: Equalities Impact Assessment

BP13: Implementation and Monitoring Framework

4 Vision and Spatial Planning Objectives

4.1 Our vision for Wealden is drawn from the responses received from public consultations and working with stakeholders including the Local Strategic Partnership, Parish and Town Councils and Members of Wealden District Council concerning the vision elements of the Core Strategy. For further information electronic links are provided in Background Paper 8: Summary of Core Strategy Consultation and Participation and the vision elements in the Spatial Development Options Consultation.

Our vision is that:

By 2027 Wealden will have successfully accommodated growth to meet future needs whilst protecting and enhancing its essential rural character and high quality environment and promoting the countryside as a resource for recreation and tourism. Its market towns will have been regenerated providing opportunities for residents to access suitable housing, local jobs, services, facilities and recreational opportunities and a number of its villages and rural settlements will have enhanced their sustainability through successful growth including provision of affordable housing.

Wealden's spatial planning objectives

SPO1 We will help manage countryside resources and assist in the development of the rural economy whilst protecting and enhancing recognised biodiversity and geodiversity attributes, in particular we will protect the internationally important sites of the Pevensey Levels and Ashdown Forest and other designated areas of bio and geodiversity. We will also protect, and will work with others to enhance and manage, the distinct landscapes of the District, particularly, but not exclusively, those nationally designated

SPO2 We will ensure that the intrinsic quality of the historic environment is protected and that Wealden's environmental, heritage and cultural assets are used appropriately to encourage suitable tourism development and support inward investment

SPO3 To help address the need for homes, to ensure the economic prosperity of the District and to support its residents and the changing requirements of residents in terms of size, type, tenure and location of homes, whilst protecting our valued environment we will provide for at least 9440 homes within Wealden from 2006 to 2027. The delivery of on average 450 dwellings per annum provides a realistic timeframe for the market to deliver the housing and also better provides for the timely delivery of necessary infrastructure. The majority of new housing will be accommodated within, or as sustainable extensions to, existing towns, while allowing for limited growth within those villages capable of accommodating development in a sustainable fashion. Development will be focused in and around the settlements of Hailsham/ Hellingly, Polegate/ Willingdon/ Stone Cross and Uckfield to help stimulate investment in those centres, and, to varying but lesser degrees, in and around Crowborough and Heathfield to meet housing need

SPO4 We will ensure the long term viability of our five principal towns by supporting a range of improvements compatible with their local retail and service functions and reflecting the scope that exists for physical change within their centres. This will include more substantial investment in Uckfield and Hailsham which will allow multi-agency planned and managed developments with improved business and community infrastructure, and with a range of new job opportunities

SPO5 We will continue to work with East Sussex County Council and schools to meet the learning needs of local people, and to ensure that the local workforce has the necessary skills and facilities to be able to participate fully in local employment

SPO6 In order to improve economic prosperity we will support the growth of the Wealden economy by helping existing companies to expand and develop. We will help improve the range of employment opportunities available and provide for an additional 40,000 sq. metres net of employment floorspace, to that already committed, and 17,000 sq. metres net of retail floorspace. There will be an increased opportunity for people to work close to where they live, to improve access to jobs, help reduce current levels of net out commuting from Wealden and decrease the net out migration of 15 to 24 year olds. New jobs will make a positive contribution to the improved economic performance of Uckfield, Hailsham, Polegate and Willingdon and assist in tackling forms of deprivation caused by economic circumstances

SPO7 We will encourage reduction of the need to travel by car by concentrating development where it can most closely relate to public transport opportunities, improving the offer of our towns in terms of retail, leisure and recreation and by making it easier to travel by more sustainable modes of transport. We want to see noticeable improvements in journey quality for those people making trips on foot, bicycle or by public transport

SPO8 We will maintain and where appropriate enhance through the encouragement of growth, the effective network of villages that will continue to support the day to day needs of our rural communities, and which will accommodate some additional growth where this would be sustainable

SPO9 We will ensure development takes full account (by mitigation or adaptation) of the likely forecast impacts of climate change including: minimising the emissions of greenhouse gases; the use of non-renewable energy and natural resources; and by encouragement of construction using sustainable techniques

SPO10 We will seek to ensure the safety of residents and reduce the economic impact of flooding events by avoiding the allocation of land for employment and housing growth in areas subject to medium and high flood risk, taking into account the predicted impact of climate change

SPO11 We recognise the shortfalls in open space, leisure and recreational facilities identified within the District and will work with others to enhance the District's geodiversity and biodiversity by creating a coherent network of green infrastructure, especially in and around our towns, that can better support wildlife and reduce the impact of climate change as well as improving human health through increased accessibility

SPO12 We will continue to work with partners to help ensure that Wealden remains a safe place, with levels of crime and disorder well below the national average, and to achieve significant improvements in the safety records on Wealden's roads

SPO13 We will encourage the development of high quality, safe and attractive living environments for communities in both towns and villages, while promoting local distinctiveness through good design in all new development. We want future built development to create spaces and places which are sustainable, distinctive and durable- places where people will want to live. These will be expected to make a real contribution to addressing climate change issues and addressing the needs of our ageing population

SPO14 We will maximise the use of previously developed land for new development wherever possible, and make the most efficient use of existing resources, for example by ensuring housing densities are compatible with the particular location and by utilising existing capacity in infrastructure, services and facilities

SPO15 We will ensure, with our partners, that the spatial strategy's infrastructure requirements are clearly identified and will work with partners to ensure that this is provided at the right time to support development. New development will be expected to contribute to strategic and local infrastructure requirements, through both on site facilities and financial contributions for off-site works. In some cases development will require to be phased to ensure delivery of necessary infrastructure to support proposed growth

7 Core Delivery Policies

7.1 In addition to policies relating to the spatial strategy, the Core Strategy provides a limited suite of policies, which should be read in conjunction with saved Local Plan policies, until such time as saved polices are superseded by Development Plan Documents. These are in addition to national guidance and are considered to reflect local circumstances. In time, additional and complementary policies will be provided through subsequent DPDs.

Infrastructure

7.2 Ensuring infrastructure provision keeps pace with new development is an essential part of delivering our approach to developing sustainable growth within the communities we have set out in the area strategies above. Having the right infrastructure is critical to making a place somewhere that people want to be – either to work, live or visit. The fundamental principle is that development that generates a need for infrastructure or enhancements to existing infrastructure will only be permitted if the necessary infrastructure to support it is either already in place, or there is a reliable mechanism to ensure that it will be provided at the right time, when it is needed.

7.3 The Council has good working relationships with the principal infrastructure suppliers and will continue to work with them to ensure delivery of what is needed to support existing and proposed developments in Wealden. The Local Strategic Partnership will play an important role in coordinating the plans of key agencies to assist spatial planning in the District, and in helping integrate the existing structures for delivery.

7.4 Where infrastructure deficiencies exist the Council will seek a consistent and coordinated approach to meeting these needs through partnership working. Throughout this process it will be important to be able to demonstrate that development makes the most effective use of existing infrastructure, and that there are reliable mechanisms in place to ensure that any new infrastructure is provided, maintained and will continue to serve its purpose in the future. We will work in partnership with all infrastructure providers in order to support their work in determining the most appropriate approach to deal with infrastructure deficiencies and the necessary delivery mechanisms. This includes the infrastructure issues of water supply, sewerage infrastructure, transport, education provision, health care and other community facilities. Developers who are required to provide or contribute to infrastructure will need to engage with the Council and with the range of delivery agencies, to ensure compliance with the approach in this strategy.

7.5 In 2009 Wealden joined a national pilot project sponsored by the Planning Advisory Service to develop its Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) approach. The IDP defines infrastructure and has provided the evidence which confirms the main elements of infrastructure needed to support this strategy. This covers the means, broad cost and timing of provision in relation to development and identifies the delivery agencies. It should be recognised that this table covers the provision of infrastructure at a relatively high level and within each principal phase of the plan further detail will be provided. In addition the potential of a tariff approach to infrastructure provision (to replace the Community Infrastructure Levy) or other appropriate mechanism will be explored as part of the preparation of the Site Allocation DPDs in consultation with East Sussex County Council.

7.6 We will seek through policies contained within the Delivery and Site Allocations DPD to identify and protect appropriate infrastructure and essential community services/facilities located within the District which are required to ensure the delivery of the spatial strategy in Wealden and help meet the requirements of the region where appropriate e.g in the provision of water supply. We will also provide support through policies contained within the Delivery and Site Allocations DPD for appropriate new infrastructure required to meet the needs of the District and that of the region. The key infrastructure for the delivery of the Core strategy is shown on the key diagram.

WCS7 Effective Provision of Infrastructure

The release of land for development will be conditional upon there being sufficient capacity in the existing local infrastructure to meet the requirements generated by the proposed development. Where development would create the need to provide additional or improved community facilities, services and infrastructure to mitigate its impact, a programme of delivery must be agreed with the relevant infrastructure providers which will ensure that these improvements are provided at the time they are needed. These may involve coordinating contributions from the development with other investment streams. This approach will ensure that the necessary improvements can be completed in a timely manner to support growth.

Arrangements for the provision or improvement of infrastructure to the required standard will be secured by planning agreement/ obligation, or by condition attached to the planning consent or by any other appropriate mechanism.

The adequacy of infrastructure provision in Wealden will be the subject of regular review with infrastructure providers as part of the ongoing work on the Infrastructure Delivery Plan. This will include health, transport, utility services, and education providers and will be reported as part of the Local Plan monitoring arrangements in the Annual Monitoring Report.

Environment

Biodiversity

7.19 Wealden has a significant biodiversity and geodiversity interest which is sustained through our unique land and water environment, and is reflected in the designation of international, national and local sites within Wealden. Further information can be found in the Habitat Regulations Assessment and our Biodiversity Background Paper 5. Biodiversity Opportunity Areas have been identified by the Sussex Biodiversity Partnership in consultation with local authorities, statutory agencies and conservation organisations, and provide the regional, and therefore strategic, priority areas. These are areas where targeted conservation action will have the greatest benefit to wildlife.

7.20 Planning Policy Statement 9 "Biodiversity and Geological Conservation" identifies that biodiversity and geological conservation interests should be maintained, enhanced, restored or increased, and that appropriate weight is attached to designated sites of international, national and local importance; protected species; and to biodiversity and geological interests. Certain identified species are protected by law and Natural England provide up to date standing advice to aid the assessment of the effect of development in relation to these species. The Council acknowledge the importance of protected species and species of principal importance and its role in seeking to enhance and promote their wellbeing through the protection, enhancement, restoration and creation of their associated habitats. For this reason, development proposals must be informed by up to date information about biodiversity that may be affected. Furthermore, guidance requires an approach of seeking to avoid significant harm to biodiversity and geological interests before considering adequate mitigation measures or lastly seeking appropriate compensation measures.

7.21 PPS 9 outlines the required approach in relation to internationally and nationally designated biodiversity and geodiversity sites and ancient woodlands. In accordance with PPS9 a criteria based policy for regional and local sites will be developed in later DPDs as well as policies seeking to address proposed avoidance and mitigation measures in respect of the Ashdown Forest SPA and SAC, Lewes Downs SAC and Pevensey Levels Ramsar site and now proposed candidate SAC. Policies will also address the fragmentation of natural habitats, which will be part of a comprehensive integrated green network strategy. Allocations will also take into account the objectives of the Water Framework Directive.

WCS12 Biodiversity

In order to contribute to the biodiversity targets provided in the Sussex Biodiversity Action Plan the Council will prevent a net loss of biodiversity, ensure a comprehensive network of habitats, and work with partners to maximise opportunities to ensure habitats, biodiversity features and ecological networks are maintained, restored, enhanced and where possible created to achieve a net gain in biodiversity and sustain wildlife in both rural and urban areas. This will be achieved through the development and implementation of an integrated green network strategy.

In accordance with Planning Policy Statement 9, please see page 49 'Working with the South Downs National Park Authority' and the reference to publication of the NPPF and cancellation of a number of Planning Policy Statements and Guidance Notes, there may be exceptional circumstances when compensatory measures for a net loss of biodiversity is required. Appropriate compensatory measures will be required to contribute to Wealden's overall biodiversity resource, and may include enhancement of Wealden's Biodiversity Opportunity Areas and other relevant Biodiversity Action Plan habitats, so that there is overall no net loss of biodiversity.

In order to avoid the adverse effect on the integrity of the Ashdown Forest Special Protection Area and Special Area of Conservation it is the Council's intention to reduce the recreational impact of visitors resulting from new housing development within 7 kilometres of Ashdown Forest by creating an exclusion zone of 400 metres for net increases in dwellings in the Delivery and Site Allocations Development Plan Document and requiring provision of Suitable Alternative Natural Green Space and contributions to on-site visitor management measures as part of policies required as a result of development at SD1, SD8, SD9 and SD10 in the Strategic Sites Development Plan Document. Mitigation measures within 7 kilometres of Ashdown Forest for windfall development, including provision of Suitable Alternative Natural Green Space and on-site visitor management measures will be contained within the Delivery and Sites Allocation Development Plan Document and will be associated with the implementation of the integrated green network strategy.In the meantime the Council will work with appropriate partners to identify Suitable Alternative Natural Green Space and on-site management measures at Ashdown Forest so that otherwise acceptable development is not prevented from coming forward by the absence of acceptable mitigation.

The Council will also undertake further investigation of the impacts of nitrogen deposition on the Ashdown Forest Special Area of Conservation so that its effects on development in the longer term can be more fully understood and mitigated if appropriate.

Sustainable Development

7.31 The National Planning Policy Framework confirms that there should be a presumption in favour of sustainable development and that all plans should be based upon and reflect this presumption will be applied locally. The Framework also confirms that there are three clear dimensions to sustainable development, economic, social and environmental. Proposed development that accords with an up to date Local Plan should be approved and proposed development that conflicts should be refused unless other material considerations indicate otherwise. In order to meet this requirement the following policy will be applied.

WCS14 Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development

When considering development proposals the Council will take a positive approach that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained in the National Planning Policy Framework. It will always work proactively with applicants jointly to find solutions which mean that proposals can be approved wherever possible, and to secure development that improves the economic, social and environmental conditions in the area. Planning applications that accord with the policies in the Local Plan (and, where relevant, with policies in neighbourhood plans) will be approved without delay, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Where there are no policies relevant to the application or relevant policies are out of date at the time of making the decision then the Council will grant permission unless material considerations indicate otherwise – taking into account whether:

- Any adverse impacts of granting permission would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the National Planning Policy Framework taken as a whole; or
- Specific policies in that Framework indicate that development should be restricted.