

Wadhurst Neighbourhood Plan

Pre-Submission Stage (Regulation 14)

Sustainability Appraisal

November 2022

Contents

1. Introduction	3
The Plan	3
Policy context	4
Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitats Regulations Assessment	5
2. Baseline information about Wadhurst	7
Nature Conservation	10
Landscape	11
Water and flooding	14
Soils and Geology	15
Heritage	15
Air and noise	17
Human characteristics	17
Roads and Transport	18
3. Sustainability Assessment	19
4. Cumulative effects of Neighbourhood Plan policies	40
5. Conclusion	42

1. Introduction

- 1.1. This Sustainability Appraisal has been prepared to support the Wadhurst Neighbourhood Plan (WNP). It demonstrates how the WNP contributes towards the achievement of sustainable development.
- 1.2. Sustainable development is about ensuring a better quality of life for everyone, now and for generations to come. It is about considering the long-term environmental, social and economic issues and impacts in an integrated and balanced way. The UK Government has set five guiding principles to achieve the sustainable development purpose. These principles form the basis for policy in the UK and are as follows:
- Living within environmental limits
 - Ensuring a strong, healthy and just society
 - Building a strong, stable and sustainable economy
 - Promoting good governance
 - Using sound science responsibly
- 1.3. One of the means by which sustainable development can be achieved is through the land-use planning process. The WNP can help to achieve sustainable development as it aims to ensure that development meets the needs of people living and working in the neighbourhood area, while at the same time helping to ensure that adverse environmental impacts are minimised.

The Plan

- 1.4. The designated Neighbourhood Plan area shares its boundary with that of Wadhurst parish (Figure 1.1).

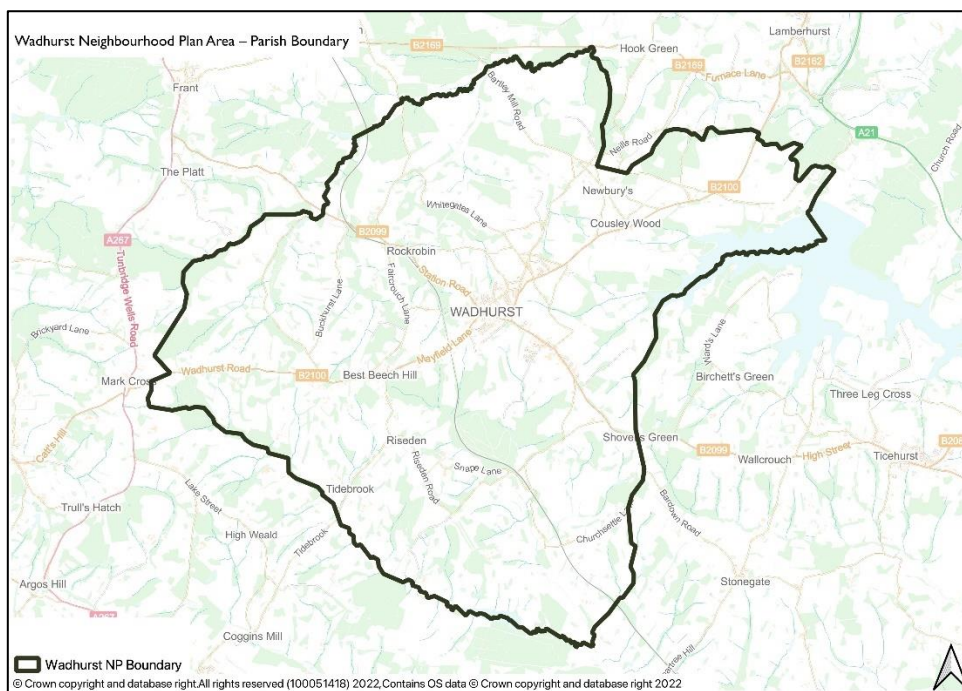


Figure 1.1: Wadhurst Neighbourhood Area

- 1.5. The qualifying body for the WNP is Wadhurst Parish Council. A Steering Group was set up, comprising local councillors and residents, to oversee the neighbourhood plan development process and, following an extensive programme of engagement, they have determined the following vision for the area to 2036:

Wadhurst Parish will continue to be a collection of friendly and vibrant distinct communities. The Parish will retain and support its rural 'village feel', historic character and heritage. Justifiable, sensitive and sustainable development will be supported, whilst robustly protecting the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The Parish economy and its popular High Street will be revitalised by improvements to the roads, traffic control, parking and active support of businesses. Sustainable ways of improving travel and leisure activities and facilities, which promote wellbeing, will be sought wherever possible.

- 1.6. To deliver the vision, the WNP has five objectives:

Objective 1 – Character, Heritage and Design: To provide sympathetically designed high quality housing for parishioners, that meets local housing needs while enhancing the distinctive natural and built character of the Parish through justified, sensitive, sustainable development and healthy placemaking. Recognising and protecting the individual and distinctive settlements that comprise the Parish.

Objective 2 – Getting Around: To address local transport issues, including traffic and parking issues and promoting sustainable transport options by improving connectivity to facilities within and beyond the Parish by integrating and, where possible, extending the existing network of footpaths and bridleways.

Objective 3 – Local Economy: To support and extend business, employment and associated training opportunities – including provision of infrastructure required – to grow the local economy, and to support the development of the Parish as a sustainable and environmentally friendly destination for those visiting the High Weald.

Objective 4 – Environment: To enhance and maintain the rural character and landscape features of the Parish, that led to the area's designation as the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. This includes promoting opportunities for supporting and improving biodiversity, safeguarding valued green spaces and access to these, and protecting key viewpoints afforded by the Parish's ridgeline location.

Objective 5 - Community Wellbeing and Leisure: To retain and, where possible, expand the range of facilities and amenities available for local residents.

Policy context

- 1.7. The WNP has been prepared having regard to national policy and to be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the local development plan. At the national level, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) establishes the scope and purpose of neighbourhood plans. At the local level, the Development Plan for Wealden district comprises the following:

- Affordable Housing Delivery Local Plan (WDC, May 2016)
- Wealden District Core Strategy Local Plan (WDC, February 2013)
- Saved policies of the adopted Wealden Local Plan (WDC, 1998)

- Waste and Minerals Local Plan (East Sussex County Council (ESCC, February 2013)
 - Waste and Minerals Sites Plan (ESCC, February 2017)
 - 'Made' Neighbourhood Plans within the district
- 1.8. Wealden District Council (WDC) is preparing a new Local Plan. On 19 February 2020, WDC formally withdrew its draft Wealden Local Plan 2019 following its Stage One examination process. Work has begun on preparing a new document and the first stage of this was a Direction of Travel Consultation, that took place between 23rd November 2020 and 18th January 2021. The current [Local Development Scheme](#) states that adoption is envisaged for Winter 2023, although this is being updated to reflect the delays to the Local Plan.
- 1.9. To inform the development of the new Wealden Local Plan, a [Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report](#) was prepared in June 2020 and approved in March 2021. This provides an overarching sustainability framework for the district.
- 1.10. It is important to note that Wadhurst Parish falls wholly within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). Local authorities with land in an AONB are legally obliged under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 to produce an AONB Management Plan. The [High Weald Management Plan 2019-2024](#) is used to guide environmental land management and assess the impact of development or other changes on the AONB. Its objectives have been carefully considered during the preparation of the WNP.

Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitats Regulations Assessment

- 1.11. In October 2022 WDC, as the lead planning authority for Wadhurst's Neighbourhood Plan, undertook screenings to determine the need for a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and/or Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA).
- 1.12. Strategic Environmental Assessment: The Screening Opinion prepared by Wealden District Council considered that an SEA would not be required for the Wadhurst Neighbourhood Plan (including the Wadhurst Design Code). Their recommendation was sent to the three statutory bodies for comment (Historic England, Environment Agency and Natural England). Each body agreed with WDC's conclusion that the WNP is not likely to have a significant effect on the environment and an SEA is therefore not required. A copy of the Screening Report can be found on the [Wadhurst Parish Council website](#).
- 1.13. WDC note that the screening opinion is considered to be a 'snapshot in time' and if the scope and/or policies contained within the WNP should change, then a new screening process will need to be undertaken to determine whether an SEA would be required at that time.
- 1.14. Additionally, WDC advises neighbourhood plan groups to undertake a Sustainability Appraisal to assess the impact of the Neighbourhood Plan against social, environmental and economic factors. This is considered good practice and can provide evidence for how the neighbourhood plan meets the requirement to promote sustainable development.
- 1.15. Habitats Regulations Assessment: WDC concluded that the WNP will, in itself, not result in a 'likely significant effect' on a European site, in particular Ashdown Forest SAC, therefore an Appropriate Assessment is not required.

- 1.16. Their conclusion noted that whilst a number of the policies within the WNP seek to support development by confirming acceptability criteria for developments in the plan area, the policies do not in themselves allocate land for development or seek to ensure that any such development comes forward as a result of the policies, neither do they provide any information in relation to the potential location, quantum, type or scale of development. The policies instead provide a framework to guide development should it be the case that 'windfall' development comes forward. At the Neighbourhood Plan level, the policies are therefore too general to make an assessment.
- 1.17. WDC concluded that it is therefore appropriate to rely on the provision in the Habitat Regulations that requires a habitats regulations assessment at a later stage, which in this case would be at the planning application stage, when the exact detail of any proposed development in which to undertake an assessment will be available.
- 1.18. Therefore WDC considered that an Appropriate Assessment of the WNP is not required. WDC consulted Natural England on their report and its conclusion. Natural England's response stated:
- "Natural England agrees with the report's conclusions that the Wadhurst Neighbourhood Plan would not be likely to result in a significant effect on any European Site, either alone or in combination and therefore no further assessment work would be required"*
- 1.19. A copy of the Screening Report can be found on the [Wadhurst Parish Council website](#).

The WNP and sustainable development

- 1.20. Whilst an SEA is not required, it is helpful to demonstrate the way in which the WNP policies individually and collectively contribute to the achievement of sustainable development.
- 1.21. A Sustainability Appraisal (SA) is conducted in conformity with the SEA Directive. However, whilst an SEA is concerned with environmental effects, the Sustainability Appraisal is an iterative process that considers the environmental, social and economic consequences of a plan and its policies and seeks to identify ways of achieving a proper balance between these three considerations.
- 1.22. This report demonstrates how the emerging WNP has been informed utilising the framework of the SA. It sets out baseline information pertaining to the Parish on a range of topics, which in turn have been used to inform a set of sustainability objectives against which each policy of the WNP (and potential alternatives) has been assessed. Monitoring indicators have been identified, which can be used by the Parish Council to assess the contribution of each policy from a sustainability perspective on a regular basis.

2. Baseline information about Wadhurst

2.1. Had an SEA been required, the SEA Regulations require that certain environmental topics are included within the environmental baseline collected to inform the work. The topics required by the SEA Regulations are shown in Table 2.1. These topics have been used to inform the collation of baseline information for Wadhurst.

Table 2.1: Topics and their relevance to the Wadhurst Neighbourhood Plan

Topic	Relevance to the Wadhurst NP
Nature conservation	Potential for development to impact on the habitats of species within areas of nature conservation value, including the protected High Weald AONB.
Landscape	Potential for development to impact on the varying landscape qualities of the area.
Water	<p>Limited risk of flooding impacts on where people live which can impact on the economic prosperity of an area.</p> <p>The way in which water is drained off land, including road and other hard surfaces, can be important to the level of flood risk experienced in an area.</p> <p>Availability of water may be an issue in the context of climate change.</p>
Soils	Limited potential for site allocations and development to impact on best agricultural soils or important geological sites.
Heritage	Historic environment features can be vulnerable to damage and other impacts from neglect, decay or development pressures.
Air and Climate	Potential for any future site allocations / windfall development to contribute to pollution (notably air, noise) by way of additional traffic generation.
Human characteristics	Potential for the plan to impact positively on human health, for example through provision of improved access to health, sport and leisure activities.

Roads and transport	Development could impact on the already congested local road network. Scope to introduce management measures to improve the traffic environment and assist in creating better links to the main routes from the neighbourhood area. Potential to improve active travel opportunities.
Infrastructure	Development could have an impact on the infrastructure necessary to keep society running smoothly.
Economic characteristics	Development could impact on the ability of communities to function effectively (in their interaction with services) and on the economic prosperity of an area.

2.2. The following sections summarise the headline information for the Parish. It also identifies key trends and pressures for the future. The information is categorised under topics, although it must be recognised that many of the topics are interlinked.

2.3. Information has been sourced from:

- A review of the plans and policies produced by WDC where reference is made to Wadhurst.
- An analysis of baseline data on Wadhurst.
- An assessment of feedback from consultation events undertaken by the WNP Steering Group for the neighbourhood plan to date.
- The SA prepared for the emerging Wealden District Local Plan, approved March 2021.

2.4. Information about relevant Plans, Policies and Programmes (PPPs) at the international and national level is contained in the [Wealden Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report](#) and is therefore not repeated in this document.

Baseline Information – overview

2.5. Wadhurst is a rural Parish located in the northern extremity of East Sussex. Falling wholly within the High Weald AONB, it lies six miles south of Royal Tunbridge Wells on the east-west Forest Ridge of the Sussex and Kent Weald. The Parish covers an area of 15.5 square miles and includes the main residential settlements of Wadhurst village, Durgates, Sparrows Green, Turners Green, Pell Green and Cousley Wood. Smaller hamlet communities comprise Primmers Green, Woods Green, Tidebrook, Best Beech and Stone Cross/Moseham.

2.6. The population of the Parish has now risen to over 5,000, living in approximately 2,500 households. Since the adoption of the Core Strategy in 2013, a total of 144 homes (net) have been completed in Wadhurst, with a further 56 homes approved. WDC's Direction of Travel Consultation, which formed part of the work on the emerging Local Plan, sets out that for housing, there is a housing need target of 1,225 homes per annum to be delivered across the district as a whole. This is currently the highest out of all East Sussex local authorities. In terms of employment provision, further work is being carried out at the district level to determine what is required.

- 2.7. The WNP does not seek to allocate sites for housing. Rather where development is proposed in the adopted and emerging District Plans, the WNP seeks to improve the quality of that development in terms of local character, design and materials, as well as carefully considering its impact on the sensitive natural environment. The WNP seeks to ensure that, to enable sustainable development, any proposals are guided to the most sustainable locations, in terms of their impact on the AONB. This focusses development within the existing Development Boundary and ensuring that such is carefully planned in terms of its impacts on landscape quality, flooding, biodiversity, local amenity and sustainability.
- 2.8. Since the initiation of the WNP project in September 2017, a considerable amount of work has been undertaken to gauge the views and aspirations of parishioners and businesses within the Parish. Five residents' Focus Groups reviewed core subjects comprising: Design, Development and Character; Getting Around; Local Economy; Environment; Wellbeing and Leisure. Summaries of the detailed reports of the five Focus Group findings are included in the Evidence Base (The Future – What Parishioners Want) for the WNP. The key opportunities and challenges that have emerged and which the WNP seeks to address are:
- Protecting the valued High Weald landscape setting and important views and green spaces within it, including its contribution to biodiversity, recreation and local character. Access to green spaces is important to safeguard as is the provision of new green spaces.
 - Maintaining the identity and distinctiveness of the individual settlements within the Parish.
 - Tackling traffic issues, including congestion, narrow lanes, lack of car parking, and road safety.
 - Ensuring that any new development is in keeping with and contributes positively towards the character of the Parish.
 - Supporting the ongoing viability and vitality of Wadhurst village centre
 - Meeting the demands of younger people and families and an ageing population in terms of ensuring housing, services and facilities are accessible and suited to their needs.
 - Seeking to ensure that necessary and adequate infrastructure is provided.
 - Improving accessibility within Wadhurst village and to nearby settlements – through the provision and improvement of footpaths, cycle paths, and public transport, if possible – to help reduce over-reliance on car use.
 - Addressing the provision of housing that is affordable on local average incomes.
 - Supporting employment that exists in the Parish, including opportunities for those wishing to work from home or more flexibly.
 - Preserving the dark skies of the Parish.

Nature Conservation

- 2.9. Situated wholly within the High Weald AONB, Wadhurst Parish has a range of varying environmental areas which provide enjoyment and natural resources to the community as well as habitats to a variety of flora and fauna.
- 2.10. The Parish is home to a significant number of trees and woodland – including veteran trees and ancient woodland (Figure 2.1). As noted in the NPPF at paragraph 131, trees play a vital part in dealing with the effects of climate change and managing pollution. They provide shade, reduce flood risk, enable carbon capture, improve air quality and contribute to the purification of water. They also contribute to local character.

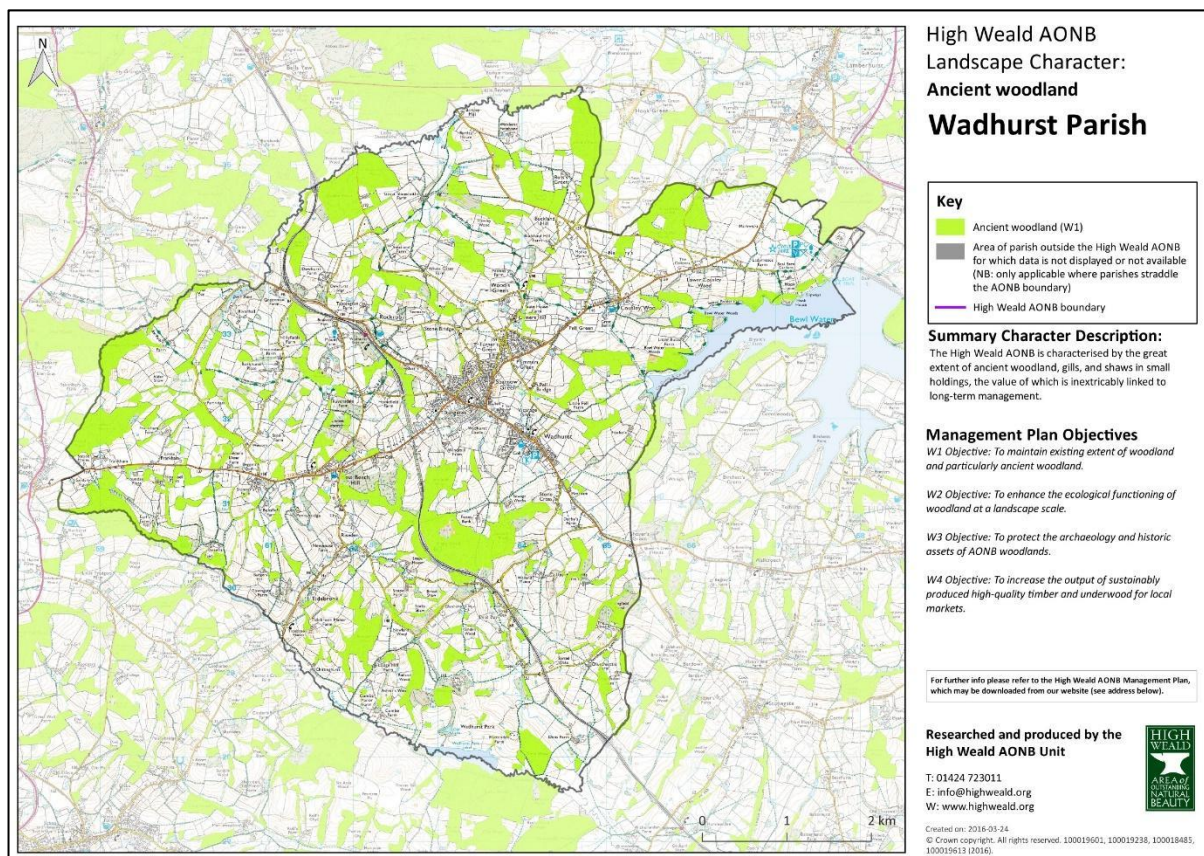


Figure 2.1: Ancient woodland recorded in Wadhurst Parish (source: High Weald AONB Unit)

- 2.11. There are a number of Local Wildlife Sites in the Parish, including Bewl Reservoir, which partially falls in the northeastern part of the Parish. The reservoir provides a haven for wildlife, notably birds, and is identified in the Wealden Green Infrastructure Study as a Biodiversity Opportunity Area. This reservoir is the largest expanse of open water in South East England and was created by damming the River Bewl and flooding its three main tributary stream valleys. Bewl Water is extremely important for large numbers of waders and wildfowl during the winter and as a stopping point during migration. Specific management requirements are: wetland habitat management, restoration and creation and access improvements.
- 2.12. Restricting light pollution is an important issue for the community and something that is endorsed by the High Weald AONB Unit. Wadhurst benefits from some of the darkest skies in the southeast, providing the conditions to support both nocturnal and diurnal animals.

2.13. Section 41 habitats in the Parish include lowland meadow, deciduous woodland, ancient woodland and ghyll woodland. The Sussex Biodiversity Record Centre has recorded numerous species including those with international and national designations.

2.14. Figure 2.2 illustrates the green and blue access links in the Parish, which are important corridors for wildlife.

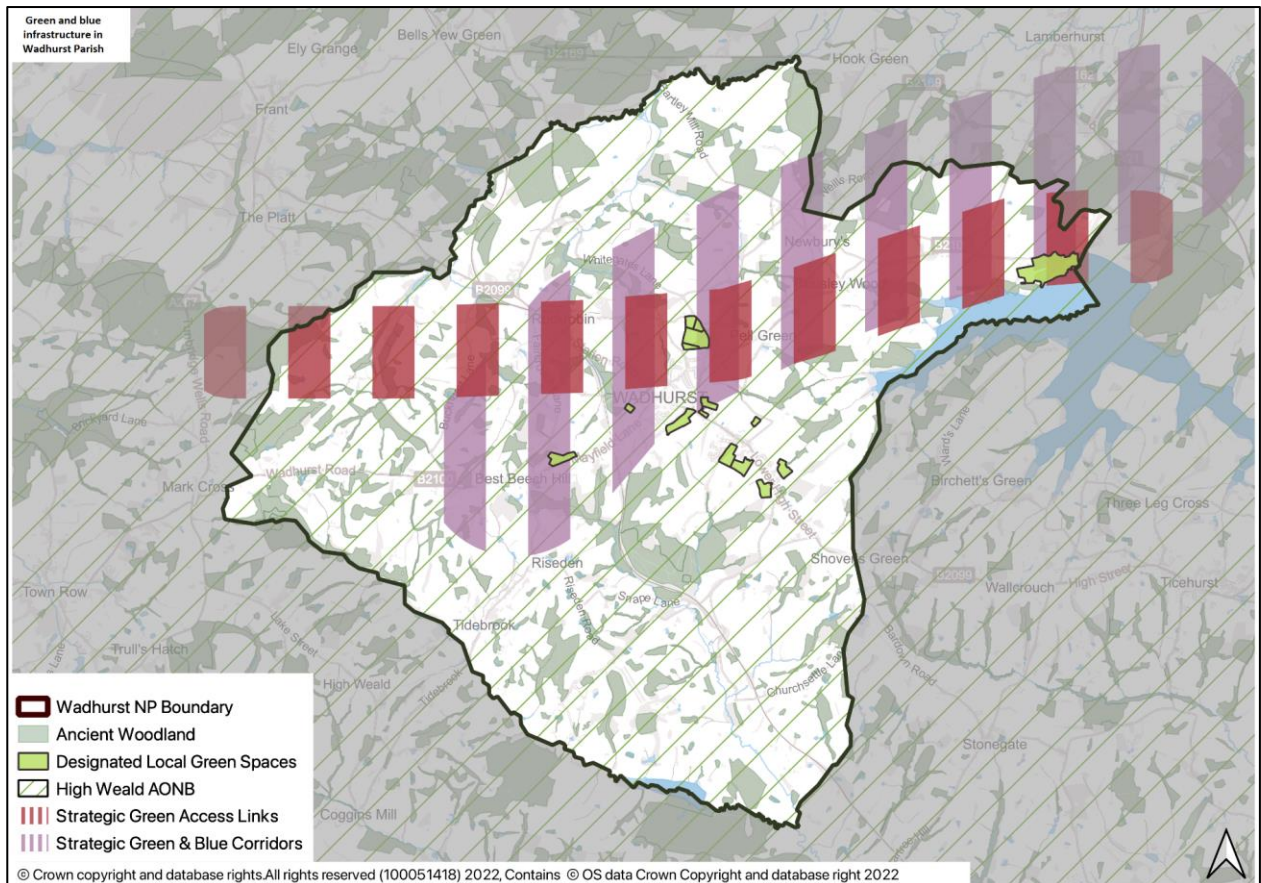


Figure 2.2: Biodiversity in the Parish

2.15. The potential negative impacts of development on biodiversity need to be carefully managed and restricted. Opportunities to enhance habitats and connectivity between them should be sought.

Landscape

2.16. The AONB landscape is one of sandstone ridges, small ancient woodlands and irregular-shaped fields. The High Weald is one of the best surviving medieval landscapes in North West Europe and has remained a unique and recognisable area for at least the last 700 years.

2.17. The landscape within the Parish itself has retained this medieval character of small irregular-shaped fields and scattered farmsteads, often grazed by sheep or Sussex cattle. Oak and sweet chestnut dominate the wooded rolling hills and streams run red from iron ore in the local rock. Close by, Bewl Water, the largest body of fresh water in the south east, is an active water sports and trout fishing centre.

2.18. The Parish falls within three East Sussex County Landscape Areas (Figure 2.3), defined as follows:

- Central High Weald: This is a largely unspoilt and tranquil rural landscape with few intrusive features. The landscape is in generally good condition and well managed as farmland with a strong historic

structure. Agricultural change and diversification has led to some gentrification of the rural landscape and farm steads. Creeping suburbanisation and urban fringe pressures are evident around the towns and larger villages detracting from local distinctiveness. As with most of the High Weald landscape the historic field patterns of small fields and significant hedgerows remain intact. Many woodlands have been affected by lack of management, rhododendron invasion and coniferisation.

- Upper Rother Valley: This is a largely unspoilt and tranquil rural landscape with few intrusive features. The landscape is in generally good condition and well managed as farmland with a strong historic structure. The lack of main roads and large settlements in the heart of the area means that it retains a relative remoteness. Agricultural change and diversification has led to some fragmentation of farm steads. There is evidence of creeping suburbanisation around the villages and on country estates which detracts from local distinctiveness. As with most of the Wealden landscape the historic field patterns of small fields and significant hedgerows remain intact, apart from in the wider more fertile river valleys where farming is more intensive. Woodlands have been affected by lack of traditional coppice management, rhododendron invasion and coniferisation.
- Bewl Water: This is a largely unspoilt and tranquil rural landscape with few intrusive features. The reservoir has become an established natural and recreational feature. The landscape is in generally good condition and well managed as farmland with a strong historic structure. The lack of main roads and large settlements in the area means that it retains a relative remoteness. Agricultural change and diversification has led to some fragmentation of farm steads. There is evidence of creeping suburbanisation around the villages and on country estates which detracts from local distinctiveness. As with most of the Wealden landscape the historic field patterns of small fields and significant hedgerows remain intact. Woodlands have been affected by lack of traditional coppice management, rhododendron invasion and coniferisation. Historic designed landscapes contribute to the character of the area.

2.19. The [Wealden Landscape Character Assessment](#), prepared in 2022, provides detailed guidance on the landscape character areas, including management priorities. It will be important to ensure that development proposals in the Parish carefully consider their impact on the protected landscape, including managing public access where this may add to negative impacts.

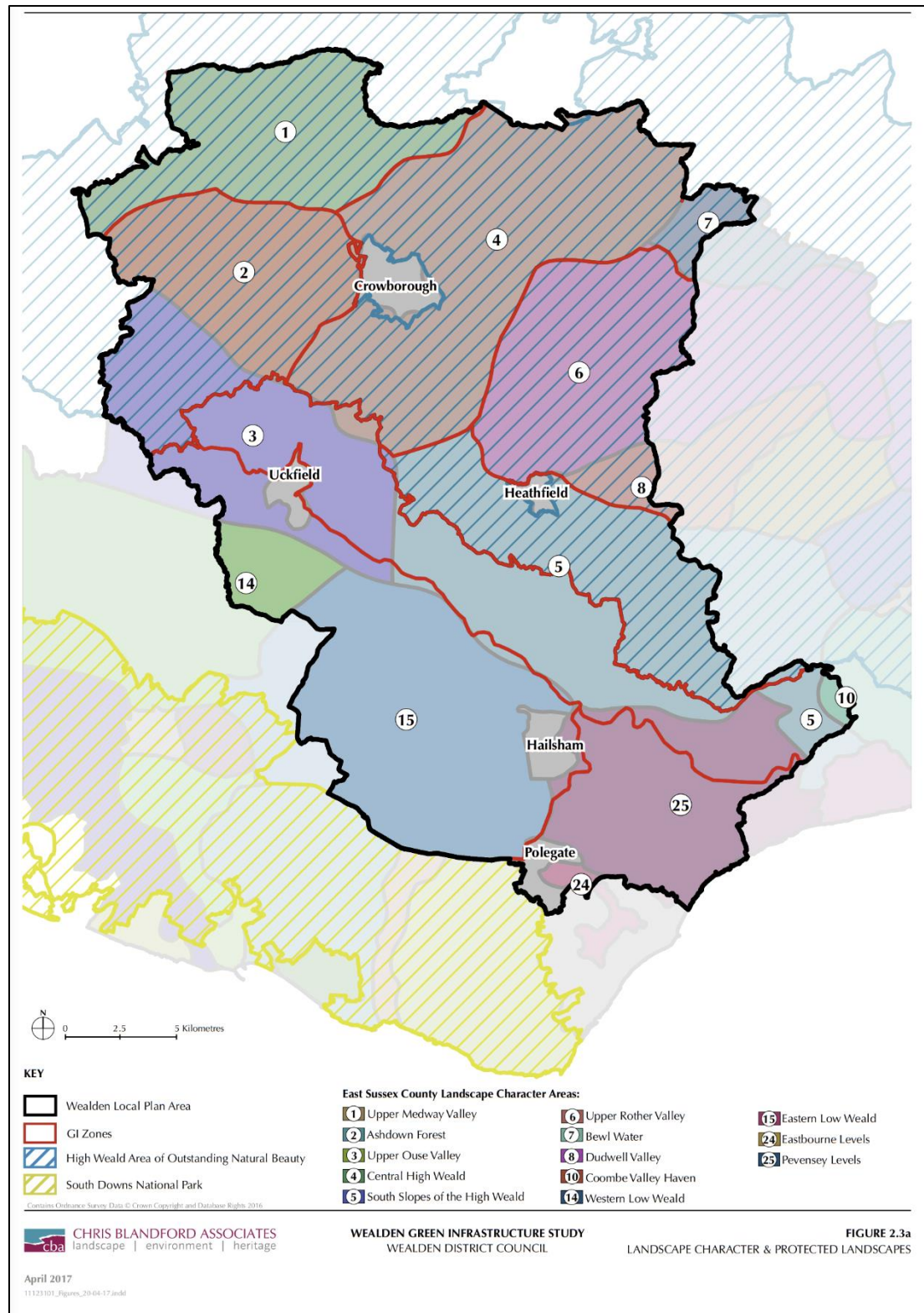


Figure 2.3: Landscape character areas

Water and flooding

- 2.20. Flooding has not been identified as a significant issue for the Parish, with land falling predominantly within Flood Zone 1. Figure 2.4 illustrates the risk posed by surface water in the north east of the district, as set out in WDC's [Level 1 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment](#). Note, however, that the area marked in magenta as 'High Risk' is the water body of Bewl Water. Due to the land around the reservoir sloping into the reservoir, there is in fact little to no risk of flooding from the reservoir and there has not been any in at least the last 38 years.
- 2.21. Wadhurst does, however, fall within an area considered to have been suffering severe water stress since at least 2013 according to the [Environment Agency's records](#). This presents an issue for Bewl Water in particular, where the challenge is in keeping the reservoir full, due to climatic changes.

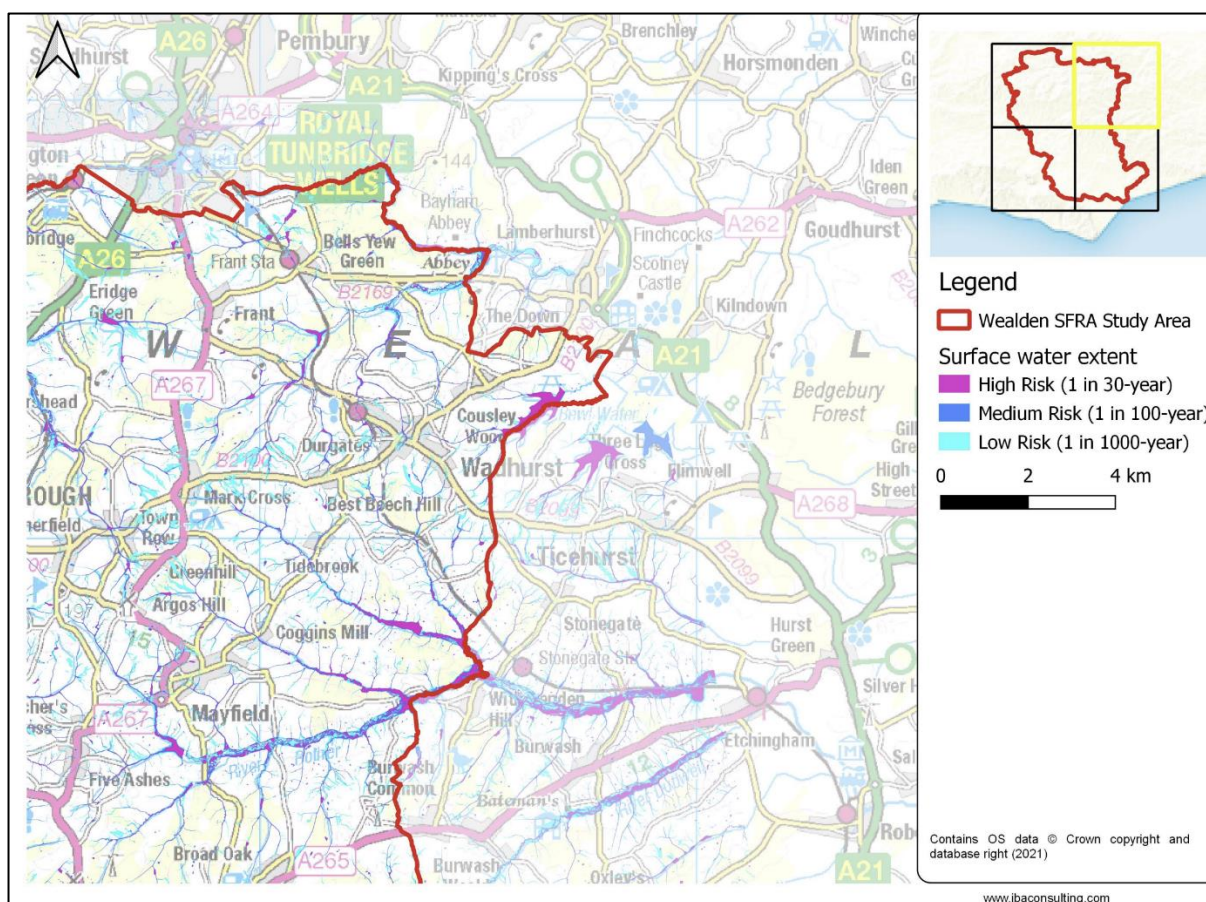


Figure 2.4: Risk posed by surface water in the north east of the district

- 2.22. Wadhurst's water is sourced through South East Water, with sewerage provided by Southern Water. It should be noted that due to the rural nature of the Parish a large proportion of homes have private sewerage.
- 2.23. South East Water note in their [Climate Change Adaptation Report](#) that rising temperatures and lower levels of rainfall threaten the supply of clean drinking water while demand is also increasing due to population and economic growth. The risk of flooding, sinkholes and burst pipes may rise as the weather becomes more volatile and prone to extremes.
- 2.24. Southern Water have also identified climate change as the major factor that could impact on how they deal with flooding in the future. The company is working on ways in which to respond to the additional

pressure exerted through climate change and increased development. Climate change is likely to result in the more frequent occurrence of all types of flooding including fluvial, surface water, sewer and ground water flooding.

- 2.25. [Wealden's Level 1 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment](#) provides additional evidence regarding the vulnerability in terms of flooding issues.

Soils and Geology

- 2.26. The soil in the Parish is composed largely of clay and sandstone, reflecting the nature of the High Weald as a whole. The clay is soft and easily worn away creating a rolling landscape. The harder sandstone forms the high land and ridges, which generally run east-west across the High Weald.
- 2.27. The Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) provides a method for assessing the quality of farmland to enable informed choices to be made about its future use within the planning system. Published by Natural England, the ALC provides a classification in 5 grades using several criteria including climate (temperature, rainfall, aspect, exposure, frost risk), site (gradient, micro-relief, flood risk) and soil (depth, structure, texture, chemicals, stoniness). The scales ranges from 1 (high quality) to 5 – poorest.
- 2.28. Figure 2.5 illustrates the agricultural classification for Wadhurst Parish, which can be seen to fall within Grades 3 and 4.

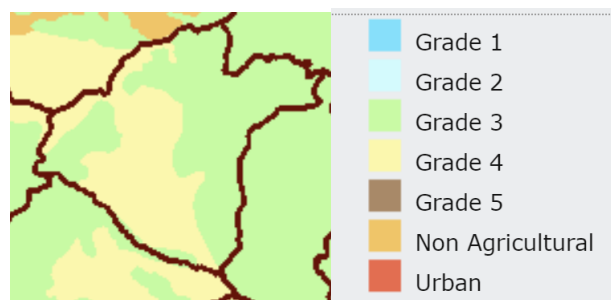


Figure 2.5: Agricultural classification for Wadhurst Parish (source: Magic Map)

- 2.29. The NPPF (paragraph 112) states that relevant planning authorities should take into account the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land. Where significant development of agricultural land is demonstrated to be necessary, local planning authorities should seek to use areas of poorer quality land in preference to that of higher quality.
- 2.30. Equally, consideration should be given to the impact of development on soils, particularly softer clays, which can lead to erosion and greater flood risk.

Heritage

- 2.31. Wadhurst village itself is a historic market settlement, granted a royal charter in 1253. The High Street follows the line of an ancient trackway connecting prehistoric and Roman ironworking sites and communities. This became the old drovers' road and, in 1767, the turnpike around which the village grew. Wadhurst centre still has over 25 buildings dating from between 1500 and 1800, with predominantly small independent retail outlets that attract people from outside the village. Untouched by the advent of steam

in 1851 (the railway station is 2.2Km/1.4 miles away), changes began to occur after an RAF aeroplane crash into the centre of the High Street in 1956.

- 2.32. Oak and iron formed the fundamental character of Wadhurst. The village still has a working blacksmith and an old, converted forge, grand ironmasters' homes and the Parish Church of St Peter and St Paul where can be seen the finest collection of iron memorial slabs in England, dating from 1617 to 1799. The Church also commemorates the fallen of the two World Wars.
- 2.33. Local oak was used to build great wooden warships at Chatham Dockyard. It is said that oak from the Whiligh estate in Wadhurst forms the hammer-beam roof of Westminster Hall, commissioned in 1393 by King Richard II; it was certainly used to rebuild it after its bombing in the 2nd World War.
- 2.34. There are two Conservation Areas in the Parish, [Wadhurst](#) and [Pell Green and Cousley Wood](#). There are also 154 individual/groups of buildings and assets that are recognised through a national listing for their contribution to national heritage. This includes the Grade I listed Church of St Peter and St Paul in Wadhurst village. There are also locally important heritage assets that hold a significance to the population of Wadhurst. For instance, the Parish is home to the location of the Last Great Prize Fight on 10th December 1863, when Englishman, Tom King, beat the American, John Heenan.
- 2.35. A map of heritage assets is shown in Figure 2.5.

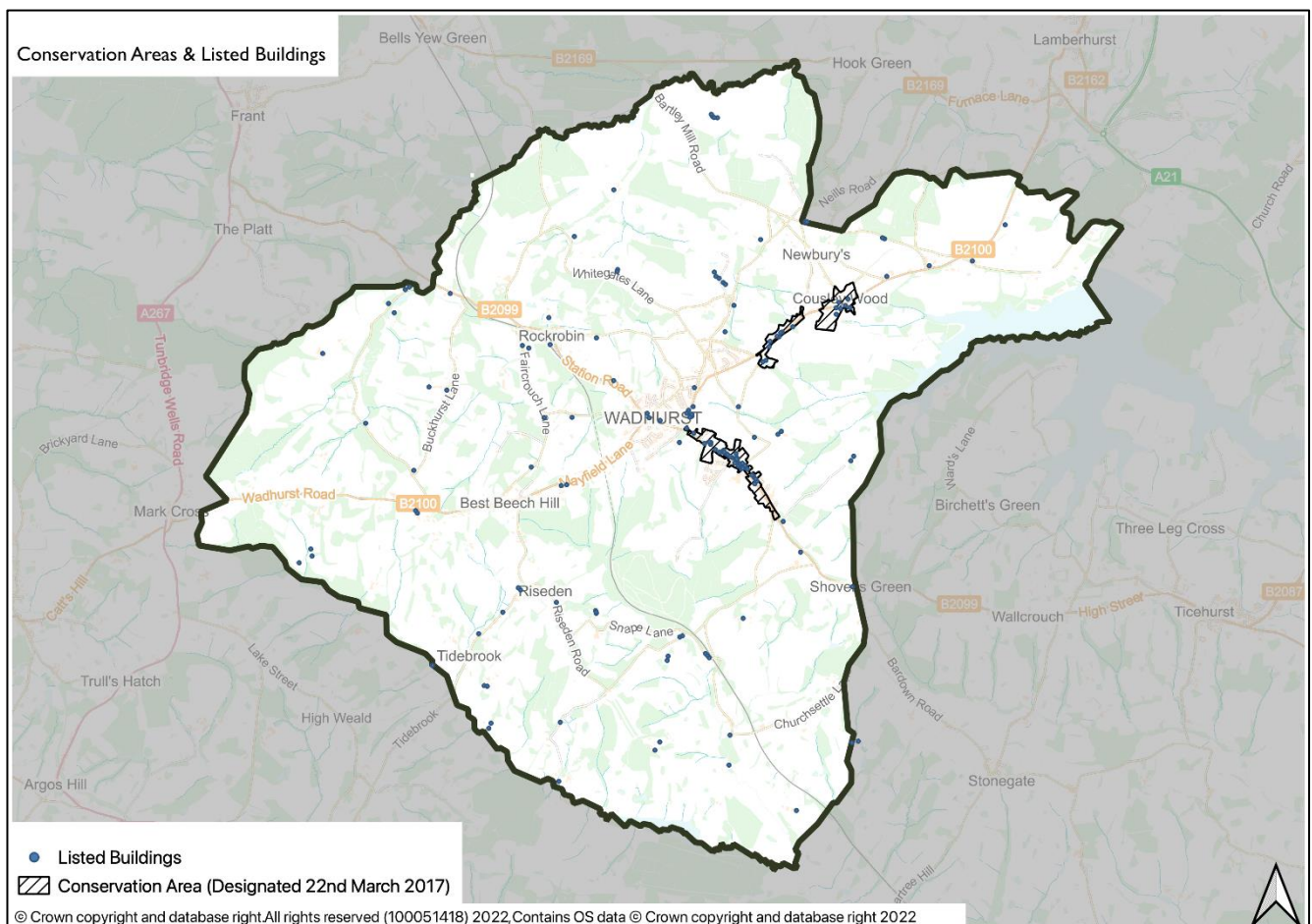


Figure 2.5: Heritage features in the parish

- 2.36. Opportunities must be sought to continue protecting, and wherever possible sustaining, enhancing and better revealing the significance of the district's rich historic environment, including designated and non-

designated heritage assets, through new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.

Air and noise

- 2.37. The latest [Air Quality Report](#) for Wealden identifies that road traffic is the dominant source of air pollution in the district as a whole, the major routes being the A22, the A26, the A267, the A259, the A27 and the A272. The main pollutants of concern with respect to road traffic are nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) and particulate matter (PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5}). The report states that currently, there are no areas in Wealden district where members of the public are exposed to levels of these pollutants in excess of the UK Air Quality Objectives.
- 2.38. At the Parish level, traffic is a major cause of concern for the community in relation to both air pollution and noise pollution, the major Parish residential areas of Durgates and Sparrows Green sitting at the crossroads of the busy B2100 and B2099 with Wadhurst village on the B2099 nearby. Development has the potential to lead to a deterioration in air quality due to increased traffic movements, unless a modal shift away from car use to sustainable transport measures is achieved. The district suffers from the lack of a comprehensive electric vehicle charging network which, notwithstanding the cost of such vehicles, impedes their take up. The Parish is predominately rural with numerous disparate settlements. This means that car usage is high. The lack of a connected public transport network, cycle network and walking infrastructure in some parts of the Parish hinders the shift away from private cars that would help improve air quality.

Human characteristics

- 2.39. At the time of the 2011 Census, there were 4,883 usual residents in the Parish. Of these, 21% were aged over 65 and 31% were aged 45-64 (Figure 2.6). The population of the district as a whole is aging, and this is mirrored in the Parish - ten year's on from the 2011 census, the 45-64 year old cohort will have reached the upper ages. An aging population brings with it a series of challenges, that need to be considered carefully within the planning framework.

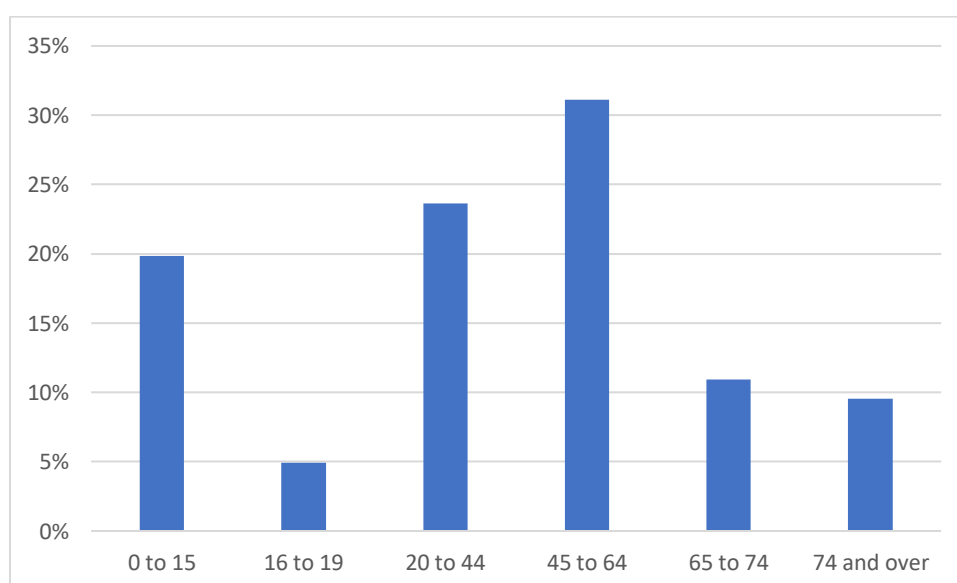


Figure 2.6: Age profile of Wadhurst residents (2011 Census)

- 2.40. Around 28% of dwellings were one-person households and 56% of those single households were aged over 65. Feelings of social isolation and loneliness can ensue, which can impact negatively on people's health and wellbeing.
- 2.41. Figure 2.7 shows that the general health of Wadhurst residents is good. The figures largely mirror those for Wealden District with 86% of residents in Wadhurst Parish experiencing 'good' or 'very good' health.



Figure 2.7: General health in Wadhurst in 2011, compared to the district (source, Census 2011)

Roads and Transport

- 2.42. The way the Parish has evolved from a geographic and historical perspective has led to a relatively inaccessible set of settlement communities, since they are scattered and widely distributed along two main ridge lines. The Parish is far from being an ideal '10-minute (walk) town' - because the main hub and services are located in Wadhurst Village and in Durgates/Sparrows Green, while its main transport link is located some 2.2km away from Wadhurst Village centre. Thus, the Parish can be best described as being 'car dependent'.
- 2.43. Traffic-related issues are commonly reported in the Parish, including congestion and speeding. Active travel (by foot and by bike) can be limited including by lack of routes/ narrow routes and parked vehicles. Some residents are also less able to undertake journeys by foot or by bike, exacerbated by the hilly nature of the Parish.
- 2.44. Opportunities to improve movement in the Parish could include:
- providing choices for more sustainable travel, including walking and cycling provision.
 - Exploring options for increased accessible public transport, which is largely lacking in the rural areas of the district, such as Wadhurst.
 - Considering the impact of traffic on key roads and junctions and ensuring that this is not exacerbated.
- 2.45. Policies should seek to encourage development proposals to enable these opportunities where possible.

3. Sustainability Assessment

- 3.1. To demonstrate that the WNP contributes to the achievement of sustainable development, a Sustainability Framework has been developed to assess the social, economic and environmental effects of the policies through the identification of objectives and indicators.
- 3.2. The sustainability objectives and indicators have emerged through the following considerations:
- Through the review of relevant Plans and Programmes (detailed in the [Wealden District Council Sustainability Scoping Report](#))
 - Issues identified in the Baseline Information for Wadhurst Parish (Section 2)
 - To help address sustainability issues known locally
 - To help address the 'opportunities and threats' outlined in Section 2 of this Report
- 3.3. The Sustainability Framework is shown in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1: Sustainability objectives and criteria for the Wadhurst Neighbourhood Plan

Sustainability Theme / Topic	Objectives	Monitoring criteria leading to indicators of success
1/Env: Natural Environment	To preserve and enhance the natural beauty of Wadhurst in terms of its geology, landform, soils, green space, water systems and climate, tranquillity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Change in area of Local Wildlife Sites within the parish - Change in area of ancient/ veteran trees (data from Sussex Biodiversity Record Centre) - Change in area /grade of agricultural land classification (ALC) land lost. - Number of developments in the AONB. - Designation and retention of Local Green Spaces across Plan period. - Change of use/access within the Bewl Reservoir perimeter. - Local Green Gaps safeguarded from development.
2/Env: Biodiversity	To protect, enhance and provide net gain in the biodiversity of the parish, its wildlife habitats and species	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Area of habitats within the parish (data from Sussex Biodiversity Record Centre) - Change in area of priority habitats within the parish (data from Sussex Biodiversity Record Centre) - Condition of ancient/veteran trees - Number of trees with TPOs. - Net gain in biodiversity offered by developments. - Length of hedgerows in parish. - Variety of BAP species recorded. - Additional green spaces/ecological networks provided.

3/Env: Local Character and Design	To protect the landscape character of Wadhurst and its individual settlements through use of land with a low landscape impact and by focusing development on previously developed land	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Loss of/impact on views of value. - Number of planning applications granted in areas with low landscape capacity. - Number of developments on previously developed land. - Extent of encroachment between individual settlements. - Instances where the Wadhurst Design Code is quoted in development proposals and brought into force. - Number of developments installing low carbon or renewable energy solutions - Reductions in carbon emissions.
4/Soc: Housing Need	To ensure that housing addresses the needs of the existing community of the Parish as well as contributing to wider needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mix of housing built by dwelling size. - Number of people with a local connection on the Housing Register that are newly housed. - Number and type of affordable homes completed.
5/ Econ: Employment	To maximise the potential of existing employment/ employers and support the need for new employment opportunities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Number of existing businesses retained. - Number of new businesses in the Parish. - Number of local start-ups. - Number of new jobs likely to be created through development proposals. - Number of businesses and dwellings (for home workers) with access to ultrafast broadband.
6/Env: Heritage	To protect the identity and local distinctiveness of Wadhurst by conserving and enhancing the historic environment, built heritage assets and their settings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Number of listed buildings. - Number of applications for listed building consent. - Number of developments within or adjacent to the Conservation Areas. - Number of trees with TPOs. - Number of non-designated heritage assets.
7/Soc: Health	To ensure that the community can benefit from a high quality and healthy lifestyle.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Census figures on long term illness and general health. - Number/area of green spaces within walking distance of homes. - Usage of formal green spaces within the parish. - Number of formal recreation facilities within walking distance of homes. - Number of homes experiencing unacceptable levels of noise. - Air quality readings locally.

8/Soc: Community Facilities	To ensure the provision / adequate access to services and facilities that provide for the needs of the community, including health facilities, convenience shops, schools, broadband, leisure facilities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Number of community facilities within the parish, distinguished by target user age. - Distance the population of the parish live from key services. - Availability of regular public transport. - Number of shops in the village. - Speed of broadband services. - Availability of nature- and water-based activities for residents and day visitors within the Bewl Reservoir perimeter.
9/Econ: Visitor Economy	To protect, manage, enhance and expand the sustainable visitor experience in Wadhurst Parish.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Number of visitor facilities serving the village and wider parish. - Number of day visitors. - Number of staying visitors.
10/Env: Transport and Movement	To improve safe and sustainable movement around the parish and to key facilities and amenities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Levels of traffic using the B2100 and B2099 and other critical junctions specified in the WNP - Number and distance of new footpaths/cyclepaths. - Speed data. - Accident data from police. - Number of safe crossing points serving the village centre. - Number of public parking spaces. - Number of electric vehicle charging points.

3.4. The qualitative scoring system used to assess the likely effects is shown below:

++	The policy is likely to contribute significantly towards the sustainability objective
+	The policy is likely to contribute positively towards the sustainability objective, although not significantly
0	The policy is considered to have no significant positive or negative effect
-	The policy is likely to detract from the achievement of the sustainability objective, although not significantly
--	The policy is likely to detract significantly from the achievement of the sustainability objective
?	The policy has an uncertain relationship to the sustainability objective. Alternatively, insufficient information may be available to enable an assessment to be made.

3.5. The tables below provide an assessment of each policy against the sustainability framework, with commentary, including potential alternatives that have been considered.

Assessment of policies in the Wadhurst Neighbourhood Plan against Sustainability Appraisal Objectives

Assessment of Neighbourhood Plan policy options										
Policy WAD1 – Location of development										
<p>Policy Options:</p> <p>Option A: To have an NP policy that broadly directs where development is considered most appropriate in the Parish and areas that should be safeguarded.</p> <p>Option B: To have no neighbourhood level spatial strategy for the location of development, relying instead on the strategic policies of the adopted Core Strategy (notably WCS1) and associated site allocations.</p> <p>Option C: To consider provisions for option A and in addition to allocate sites for development within the neighbourhood plan area.</p>										
Policy options	1/Env – Natural environment	2/Env – Biodiversity	3/Env – Local character/Desig	4/Soc – Housing Need	5/Econ - Employment	6/Env – Heritage	7/Soc - Health	8/Soc – Community facilities	9/Econ – Visitor economy	10/Soc – Transport / movement
A	+	+	+	+	+	0	0	0	0	+
B	-	-	-	+	0	0	0	0	0	0
C	-	-	-	+						
Preferred Policy Option:				A						
<p>Summary and conclusion:</p> <p>Option A reinforces the existing Development Boundaries in the neighbourhood area, which will ensure that development continues to be directed to the most appropriate parts of the parish, i.e. those areas where potential negative impacts on factors including landscape, character and biodiversity, are least. This will also assist in minimising the risk of coalescence between individual settlements in the Parish and neighbouring settlements beyond.</p> <p>Option A optimises greater use of sustainable and active transport methods, by focussing development in existing residential areas, which could in turn lessen the impact of car transport reliance, which has been raised as a concern locally.</p> <p>Option A is felt to be more sustainable than Option B as it specifically reinforces the existing boundaries and also encourages development away from greenfield and the wider AONB beyond the development boundaries, and towards brownfield where possible.</p> <p>Option C would have enabled a contribution toward the local housing need (and wider strategic need), however in the context of the uncertainty around the emerging Local Plan, the Parish Council is keen to delay potential site work until the broader strategic development strategy is known. An early review of the WNP (in the six to 9 months following the adoption of the new Local Plan) would be a prudent measure.</p>										

Assessment of Neighbourhood Plan policy options										
Policy WAD2 – Meeting Local Housing Needs										
<p>Policy Options:</p> <p>Option A: To have an NP policy to influence the range of general housing that is designed to be capable of meeting the specific housing needs of the Parish.</p> <p>Option B: To have no policy on housing need, relying instead on Policy AFH1 of Wealden’s Affordable Housing Delivery Local Plan.</p>										
Policy Options	1/Env – Natural environment	2/Env – Biodiversity	3/Env – Local character/Design	4/Soc – Housing Need	5/Econ - Employment	6/Env – Heritage	7/Soc - Health	8/Soc – Community facilities	9/Econ – Visitor economy	10/Soc – Transport / movement
A	0	0	0	+	0	0	0	0	0	0
B	0	0	0	+	0	0	0	0	0	0
Preferred Policy Option:				A						
<p>Summary and conclusion:</p> <p>Option A supports the provision of housing that reflects the housing needs evidenced within the most recent Local Housing Needs Assessment for Wadhurst Parish.</p> <p>Option B as an alternative would have been to rely on the WDC policy relating to housing mix. The benefit of having a localised policy for Wadhurst is that the Local Housing Needs Assessment drills down to a more local level, demonstrating the specific and unique circumstances and needs facing the Parish, which are likely to be more nuanced than for the district as a whole.</p> <p>This policy is therefore considered helpful in addressing social sustainability.</p>										

Assessment of Neighbourhood Plan policy options										
Policy WAD3 – Design and character of development										
<p>Policy Options:</p> <p>Option A: To have an NP policy that identifies and defines the distinct character of the Parish and sets out design criteria to ensure that development is sympathetic to its local context.</p> <p>Option B: To have no NP policy, rather to rely on the broader character policy content contained in the adopted development plan, for instance Saved Local Plan Policy EN27.</p>										
Policy Options	1/Env – Natural environment	2/Env – Biodiversity	3/Env – Local character/design	4/Soc – Housing Need	5/Econ - Employment	6/Env – Heritage	7/Soc - Health	8/Soc – Community facilities	9/Econ – Visitor economy	10/Soc – Transport / movement
A	0	0	+	0	0	+	0	0	0	0
B	0	0	+	0	0	+	0	0	0	0
Preferred Policy Option:				A						
<p>Summary and conclusion:</p> <p>In a rural AONB-situated parish such as Wadhurst, with the historic market settlement and surrounding hamlets, it is important that development is designed in a way that is in-keeping with the local character.</p> <p>Whilst the policies at the local authority level provide a broad context for contributing to local character, Option A enables Wadhurst Parish Council to provide greater detail and definition relevant to the local level, which in turn is in greater synchronicity with the NPPF and national and AONB design guidance.</p> <p>This will lead to the improved achievement of environmental and social sustainability.</p>										

Assessment of Neighbourhood Plan policy options										
Policy WAD4 – Sustainability and design										
Policy Options: Option A: To have an NP policy that focusses specifically on the environmental sustainability of development in the parish. Option B: To have no NP policy, rather to rely on the broader policy content contained in the adopted development plan.										
Policy Options	1/Env – Natural environment	2/Env – Biodiversity	3/Env – Local character/design	4/Soc – Housing Need	5/Econ - Employment	6/Env – Heritage	7/Soc - Health	8/Soc – Community facilities	9/Econ – Visitor economy	10/Soc – Transport / movement
A	+	0	+	0	0	+	+	0	0	+
B	+	0	-	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Preferred Policy Option:				A						
Summary and conclusion: Option A, to include a specific policy on energy efficiency and design, reflects the WNP’s objectives to secure energy efficient and sustainable developments within the Parish. It actively encourages developments of all scales to maximise energy efficiency through a range of actions in respect of zero carbon technologies. It also encourages development to minimise waste through the development of more energy efficient buildings, for instance incorporating grey water systems and solar panels. This is particularly relevant in terms of ensuring that development that takes place within the AONB setting is sustainable. The policy makes reference to the potential to retrofit historic buildings, which is relevant in Wadhurst. Option B would rely on existing policy, however the importance of sustainable design is of paramount importance and the WNP policy reflects the most recently adopted national policy and guidance in seeking to achieve reductions in greenhouse gas emissions. The adopted strategic policies are some years out of date. Option A provides a clear set of requirements and support for developments to incorporate measures that will secure energy efficiency and sustainability in line with national and local objectives.										

Assessment of Neighbourhood Plan policy options										
Policy WAD4 – Conserving heritage assets										
<p>Policy Options:</p> <p>Option A: To have an NP policy that identifies the heritage assets in the Parish (including below ground deposits and assets which are not nationally listed, but which are important locally) to preserve and enhance them.</p> <p>Option B: To have no NP policy, rather to rely on the broader policy content contained in the adopted development plan.</p>										
Policy Options	1/Env – Natural environment	2/Env – Biodiversity	3/Env – Landscape character	4/Soc – Housing Need	5/Econ - Employment	6/Env – Heritage	7/Soc - Health	8/Soc – Community facilities	9/Econ – Visitor economy	10/Soc – Transport / movement
A	+	0	0	0	0	+	0	0	0	0
B	0	0	0	0	0	+	0	0	0	0
Preferred Policy Option:				A						
<p>Summary and conclusion:</p> <p>Option A enables the WNP to identify locally important heritage assets and routeways that, whilst not nationally listed, are considered to contribute significantly to the local heritage offering of Wadhurst, and in turn its local character. The Option would enable these assets to be afforded additional consideration in the planning system.</p> <p>Option B would neglect the significance of Wadhurst’s rich rural heritage.</p> <p>The policy supports environmental sustainability by safeguarding – and enabling the celebration and understanding of Wadhurst’s rich heritage.</p>										

Assessment of Neighbourhood Plan policy options										
Policy WAD6 – Conservation Areas										
<p>Policy Options:</p> <p>Option A: To have an NP policy that sets out development expectations for the two Conservation Areas.</p> <p>Option B: To have no NP policy, rather to rely on the broader policy content contained in the development framework.</p>										
Policy Options	1/Env – Natural environment	2/Env – Biodiversity	3/Env – Landscape character	4/Soc – Housing Need	5/Econ - Employment	6/Env – Heritage	7/Soc - Health	8/Soc – Community facilities	9/Econ – Visitor economy	10/Soc – Transport / movement
A	0	0	0	0	0	+	0	0	0	0
B	0	0	0	0	0	+	0	0	0	0
Preferred Policy Option:				A						
<p>Summary and conclusion:</p> <p>Option A emphasises the important of the two Conservation Areas in the Parish and provides additional detail on issues such as design, building on the work of the Conservation Appraisals that are fairly dated. This is achieved by way of the Design Code which has been developed specifically for the Parish and which drills into greater local detail, than that contained in the development plan.</p> <p>Option B would rely wholly on the Conservation Area appraisals, which were written prior to the introduction of the NPPF and therefore do not take account of the most up-to-date planning guidance and legislation.</p> <p>Option A is considered to offer greater environmental sustainability.</p>										

Assessment of Neighbourhood Plan policy options										
Policy WAD7 – Safe and sustainable movement										
Policy Options: Option A: To include a policy that sets out the key sustainable movement routes in the Parish, to encourage non-car ‘active’ modes of transport, particularly for intra-Parish journeys. Option B: To not include a policy, instead relying on adopted policy.										
Policy Options	1/Env – Natural environment	2/Env – Biodiversity	3/Env – Landscape character	4/Soc – Housing Need	5/Econ - Employment	6/Env – Heritage	7/Soc - Health	8/Soc – Community facilities	9/Econ – Visitor economy	10/Soc – Transport / movement
A	0	0	0	0	0	0	+	0	+	+
B	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	-
Preferred Policy Option:				A						
Summary and conclusion: Option A enables the main movement routes at the neighbourhood local level to be mapped and to ensure there is a safe environment for pedestrians, cyclists and equestrians as well as motorists - both residents and visitors. The policy associated with Option A makes reference to improvements to the rights of way network that could enhance opportunities for safer and more sustainable modes of transport, in a way that is in-keeping with local character. The Current adopted Development Plan has no such detailed policy, so Option B would leave the Parish vulnerable to proposals that might not prioritise active travel, public transport, accessibility and connectivity. Overall, Option A is considered the most sustainable, contributing to environmental sustainability by identifying key routes to prioritise for investment to make them safe, accessible and pleasant. This in turn will encourage local journeys to be made in ways other than the car.										

Assessment of Neighbourhood Plan policy options										
Policy WAD8 – Mitigating traffic congestion										
Policy Options: Option A: To include a policy that identifies particular ‘hot spots’ for traffic congestion in the Parish, which should be carefully considered as part of any development proposals. Option B: To not include a policy, instead relying on adopted policy.										
Policy Options	1/Env – Natural environment	2/Env – Biodiversity	3/Env – Landscape character	4/Soc – Housing Need	5/Econ - Employment	6/Env – Heritage	7/Soc - Health	8/Soc – Community facilities	9/Econ – Visitor economy	10/Soc – Transport / movement
A	0	0	0	0	0	0	+	0	+	+
B	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	-
Preferred Policy Option:				A						
Summary and conclusion: Option A provides an opportunity to highlight locally specific issues on the very local transport network that should be actively and carefully considered within any development proposals (both individually and cumulatively). This will help to ensure that air pollution is minimised and will assist in supporting active travel in the Parish and not exacerbating traffic pressure at key roads and junctions. The current adopted Development Plan has no such detailed policy, so Option B would leave the Parish vulnerable to proposals that might exacerbate existing problems leading to negative environmental (e.g. air quality, noise) and social (e.g. healthy living) impacts.										

Assessment of Neighbourhood Plan policy options										
Policy WAD9 – Car parking provision										
Policy Options: Option A: To include a policy which safeguards against the loss of publicly accessible car parking in Wadhurst, and support additional parking, including for lesser polluting vehicles. Option B: To not include a policy, instead relying on Core Strategy Policy WSC7.										
Policy Options	1/Env – Natural environment	2/Env – Biodiversity	3/Env – Landscape character	4/Soc – Housing Need	5/Econ - Employment	6/Env – Heritage	7/Soc - Health	8/Soc – Community facilities	9/Econ – Visitor economy	10/Soc – Transport / movement
A	-	-	-	0	+	0	0	+	+	+
B	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	+
Preferred Policy Option:				A						
Summary and conclusion: Wadhurst’s rural nature inevitably means that there is a greater reliance on car transport. Whilst the WNP seeks to encourage greater non-car movements, the historic character of its settlements has resulted in a general lack of off-street parking. This in turn leads to more on-street parking, which can often restrict pavement access for pedestrians. Option A would enable this problem to be targeted by continuing to support the provision of the existing parking and seeking additional parking in particular parts of the parish, where this would support access to facilities and reduce parking on-street pressures. Option B would rely wholly on the 2013 saved policy, which does not drill down to the neighbourhood level sufficiently and may lead to an erosion of parking for those reliant upon it. Option A is assessed as more sustainable from a social perspective than Option B as it is more locally specific.										

Assessment of Neighbourhood Plan policy options										
Policy WAD10 – Employment retention and local economy viability										
<p>Policy Options:</p> <p>Option A: To have an NP policy that seeks to encourage new employment opportunities, where these are sensitively achieved, and protect against the loss of commercial premises or land which provides employment.</p> <p>Option B: To have no NP policy, instead relying on saved policies from the local plan.</p> <p>Option C: To have an NP policy that seeks to allocate additional employment land.</p>										
Policy Options	1/Env – Natural environment	2/Env – Biodiversity	3/Env – Landscape character	4/Soc – Housing Need	5/Econ - Employment	6/Env – Heritage	7/Soc - Health	8/Soc – Community facilities	9/Econ – Visitor economy	10/Soc – Transport / movement
A	0	0	0	0	+	0	0	0	0	0
B	0	0	0	0	+	0	0	0	0	0
C	-	-	-	0	+	0	0	0	0	0
Preferred Policy Option:				A						
<p>Summary and conclusion:</p> <p>The provision of local employment is a key aspect of the vitality of any community and Option A would help to encourage new business development where appropriate and complementary to the sensitive High Weald AONB setting. It also seeks to safeguard existing business premises and associated employment.</p> <p>Option A is considered to be more sustainable than Option B as it encourages flexible and new ways of working, in line with the most up-to-date NPPF, which is considered to be more complimentary to the AONB.</p> <p>Option C would have a detrimental impact on the sensitive landscape and is considered to be unsustainable in comparison to Option A.</p>										

Assessment of Neighbourhood Plan policy options										
Policy WAD11 – Supporting sustainable rural tourism										
Policy Options: Option A: To have an NP policy that encourages proposals that would enable the sustainable tourism sector with a particular focus on ‘green tourism’ that complements the special landscape qualities of the Parish and wider AONB. Option B: To have no NP policy, instead relying on saved policies from the saved Local Plan.										
Policy Options	1/Env – Natural environment	2/Env – Biodiversity	3/Env – Landscape character	4/Soc – Housing Need	5/Econ - Employment	6/Env – Heritage	7/Soc - Health	8/Soc – Community facilities	9/Econ – Visitor economy	10/Soc – Transport / movement
A	-	0	0	0	+	0	0	+	+	0
B	-	0	0	0	+	0	0	0	+	0
Preferred Policy Option:				A						
Summary and conclusion: Option A would help to promote and support the development and expansion of tourism facilities, accommodation, attractions and activities in the Plan area, in order to capitalise on the Parish’s location as a gateway to the High Weald. Encouraging tourism will bring additional income and jobs to the parish. Option A would enable this to be undertaken in a way that is complementary to the protected AONB landscape, and ensure that any development is in-keeping with the landscape and local character. Whilst the saved policies of the Local Plan contain support for tourism – and restrict certain activities – an NP policy would build upon this and add additional local detail. Option A is therefore considered to be the most sustainable approach.										

Assessment of Neighbourhood Plan policy options										
Policy WAD12 – Communication infrastructure support										
<p>Policy Options:</p> <p>Option A: To have an NP policy that supports the provision of communications infrastructure (notably broadband, mobile) where this can be achieved sympathetically in terms of the landscape and local character.</p> <p>Option B: To have no NP policy, instead relying on saved policies from the saved Local Plan.</p>										
Policy Options	1/Env – Natural environment	2/Env – Biodiversity	3/Env – Landscape character	4/Soc – Housing Need	5/Econ - Employment	6/Env – Heritage	7/Soc - Health	8/Soc – Community facilities	9/Econ – Visitor economy	10/Soc – Transport / movement
A	0	0	0	0	+	0	0	+	+	0
B	0	0	0	0	+	0	0	0	0	0
Preferred Policy Option:				A						
<p>Summary and conclusion:</p> <p>Option A would help to provide access for local people and businesses to communications services that are vital for both employment and day-to-day living. The saved policies of the Local Plan are now outdated and therefore Option A is considered to be more sustainable from an economic and social perspective.</p>										

Assessment of Neighbourhood Plan policy options										
Policy WAD13 – Conservation of the natural environment, ecosystems and biodiversity										
Policy Options: Option A: To have an NP policy that identifies the green and blue infrastructure within the Parish, to enable better connectivity and enhancement, and to require a net gain in biodiversity. Option B: To have no NP policy, rather to rely on the broader policy content contained in the Core Strategy.										
Policy Options	1/Env – Natural environment	2/Env – Biodiversity	3/Env – Landscape character	4/Soc – Housing Need	5/Econ - Employment	6/Env – Heritage	7/Soc - Health	8/Soc – Community facilities	9/Econ – Visitor economy	10/Soc – Transport / movement
A	+	+	+	0	0	0	+	0	+	0
B	+	+	+	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Preferred Policy Option:				A						
Summary and conclusion: The NPPF encourages Plans to map out the green and blue infrastructure that contributes positively to biodiversity and geodiversity. Option A would enable this to take place at the Parish level, to encourage the retention and improved connectivity of such spaces and corridors. It would also assist in ensuring that development delivers a net gain in biodiversity, by illustrating important corridors of green space to conserve, as well as opportunities for improvements and an indication of the sorts of landscapes and flora that could be supported within Wadhurst Parish that would contribute positively to this network. Option B would also support this but without the additional detail provided at a local level. The Core Strategy was also written prior to the most recent NPPF updates and the introduction of the Environment Act, so has fewer references to biodiversity net gain, for instance. In this way, Option A is considered to contribute most effectively to environmental sustainability.										

Assessment of Neighbourhood Plan policy options										
Policy WAD14 – Bewl Water Reservoir Area and associated public activities										
<p>Policy Options:</p> <p>Option A: To have an NP policy to protect this important open space in the Parish, setting out criteria to support development that would enhance it from a biodiversity, community, recreational and visitor perspective.</p> <p>Option B: To have no NP policy, rather to rely on the broader policy content contained in the Core Strategy relating to green infrastructure and saved policies relating to tourism provision.</p>										
Policy Options	1/Env – Natural environment	2/Env – Biodiversity	3/Env – Landscape character	4/Soc – Housing Need	5/Econ - Employment	6/Env – Heritage	7/Soc - Health	8/Soc – Community facilities	9/Econ – Visitor economy	10/Soc – Transport / movement
A	+	+	+	0	0	0	+	+	+	0
B	+	+	+	0	0	0	0	+	+	0
Preferred Policy Option:				A						
<p>Summary and conclusion:</p> <p>Bewl Water is the only ‘accessible natural green space’ in the Parish. Option A would enable the benefits of this asset – from both a community and wildlife perspective - to be protected. This will help to safeguard the space for the enjoyment of its open space, natural beauty, dark skies, tranquillity, recreational and leisure activities and beautiful views into and out of the area.</p> <p>Option A is considered to provide important additional local detail about aspects of this asset that have been raised by the community and others, which is not contained in the broader strategic policies. It is therefore considered to be the most sustainable option from an environmental perspective.</p>										

Assessment of Neighbourhood Plan policy options										
Policy WAD15 – Protection of locally significant views										
Policy Options: Option A: To include a policy that sets out local views and view points that are worthy of protection. Option B: To not include a policy, instead relying on the saved policies of the Local Plan.										
Policy Options	1/Env – Natural environment	2/Env – Biodiversity	3/Env – Landscape character	4/Soc – Housing Need	5/Econ - Employment	6/Env – Heritage	7/Soc - Health	8/Soc – Community facilities	9/Econ – Visitor economy	10/Soc – Transport / movement
A	+	0	+	0	0	0	0	0	+	0
B	+	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Preferred Policy Option:				A						
Summary and conclusion: Option A enables the community to identify a series of views and viewpoints in the Parish that are particularly valued by local people. This offers additional local detail to that included in the adopted strategic planning documents and contributes to preserving the character and landscape setting of the parish. The rural location of the Wadhurst within the AONB, combined with its built heritage, means that there are some significant local views which help to define the Parish and which are significant to visitors and residents alike. Not including a policy to safeguard these could potentially lead to development that detrimentally impacts such views.										

Assessment of Neighbourhood Plan policy options										
Policy WAD16 – Local Green Spaces										
Policy Options: Option A: To have an NP policy that identifies Local Green Spaces within Wadhurst Parish. Option B: To not include a policy on Local Green Spaces.										
Policy Options	1/Env – Natural environment	2/Env – Biodiversity	3/Env – Landscape character	4/Soc – Housing Need	5/Econ - Employment	6/Env – Heritage	7/Soc - Health	8/Soc – Community facilities	9/Econ – Visitor economy	10/Soc – Transport / movement
A	+	+	+	0	0	0	+	+	0	0
B	-	-	-	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Preferred Policy Option:				A						
Summary and conclusion: Option A would enable the designation of ten local sites as Local Green Spaces that meet the requirements of the NPPF. The designation recognises their special qualities and importance to the local community and will ensure that they are safeguarded against inappropriate development. The saved policies of the Local Plan were developed prior to the introduction of the Local Green Space designation. Option A is therefore considered to be the most sustainable option.										

Assessment of Neighbourhood Plan policy options										
Policy WAD17 – Protection of dark skies										
Policy Options: Option A: To include an NP policy that recognises the importance of dark skies above the Parish and seeks to safeguard them against light pollution. Option B: To not include a policy on this matter, instead relying on the saved policies of the Local Plan.										
Policy Options	1/Env – Natural environment	2/Env – Biodiversity	3/Env – Landscape character	4/Soc – Housing Need	5/Econ - Employment	6/Env – Heritage	7/Soc - Health	8/Soc – Community facilities	9/Econ – Visitor economy	10/Soc – Transport / movement
A	+	+	+	0	0	0	+	0	+	0
B	+	+	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Preferred Policy Option:				A						
Summary and conclusion: Dark skies are important to maintain for a range of reasons: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• enjoyment and appreciation – improving quality of life and providing creative inspiration• health – promoting better sleep patterns and reducing stress• wildlife – supporting a more natural environment for both nocturnal and diurnal animals• energy efficiency – reducing wastage from unnecessary or excessive lighting, thus reducing the Parish’s carbon footprint Wadhurst Parish benefits from some of the darkest skies in the southeast. Option A would enable the WNP to set out how development proposals should carefully consider their impact on the dark skies, providing criteria that offers additional detail to that contained in the saved policies of the Local Plan. This is a topic that is particularly supported by the High Weald AONB Unit, who actively encourage such policies within neighbourhood plans.										

Assessment of Neighbourhood Plan policy options										
Policy WAD18: Important community facilities										
<p>Policy Options:</p> <p>Option A: To include an NP policy that identifies important community facilities that should be retained in their current usage where viable.</p> <p>Option B: To not include a policy on this matter, instead relying on the saved policies of the Local Plan.</p>										
Policy Options	1/Env – Natural environment	2/Env – Biodiversity	3/Env – Landscape character	4/Soc – Housing Need	5/Econ - Employment	6/Env – Heritage	7/Soc - Health	8/Soc – Community facilities	9/Econ – Visitor economy	10/Soc – Transport / movement
A	0	0	0	0	0	0	+	+	+	0
B	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	+	0	0
Preferred Policy Option:				A						
<p>Summary and conclusion:</p> <p>Whilst saved Policy LR1 of the Local Plan seeks to resist the loss of open space with recreational or amenity value, Option A would enable this to be extended by safeguarding those facilities and assets that have been specifically identified by the community as being particularly important to them.</p> <p>Some of these have been, or could be, nominated for designation as Assets of Community Value.</p> <p>Option B does not provide this level of detail, therefore Option A is considered to be the most sustainable option from a social perspective.</p>										

4. Cumulative effects of Neighbourhood Plan policies

- 4.1. As well as assessing the policies individually, it is important to explore the potential cumulative effects of policies taken collectively. A summary of the likely cumulative impacts of the policies is provided in Figure 4.1. The key areas where policies are likely to have negative cumulative implications are as follows:
- 4.2. **Increased traffic** - Any development within the Parish will inevitably result in an increase in car traffic. Concentrating housing (and other) development within the existing Development Boundaries (as per Policy WAD1) will ensure that development is located close to the existing public rights of way and local services, which will enable residents to have easier access to local facilities by foot or cycle. This will assist in reducing reliance on car transport at least for some intra-Parish journeys.
- 4.3. Sustainable and active travel is further encouraged by the push for additional cycling facilities and electric charging points and the safeguarding of off-road parking spaces (Policy WAD9).
- 4.4. Policy WAD8 identifies key roads and junctions in the Parish that already experience significant traffic problems and seeks to ensure that development proposals carefully consider their impact on these and how it will be mitigated.
- 4.5. Furthermore, many people in the Parish commute out to work. Policy WAD10 of the WNP seeks to retain existing employment land and, in conjunction with Policy WAD12, provide the environment to enable new, flexible ways of working including from home. This will provide opportunities for residents to work locally, thus negating the need to travel longer distances beyond the boundary, potentially adding to traffic concerns.
- 4.6. **Impact on the protected AONB countryside, landscape character and biodiversity** – It is vital that development proposals are considered in respect of their potential impacts on the sensitive, protected AONB landscape. Policies WAD9 and WAD11 have the potential to negatively impact the environment, for instance if new parking areas or visitor facilities are introduced. The WNP is underpinned by a detailed set of design codes that form the backbone of many of the WNP policies. These set out locally specific criteria that must be followed to ensure that development proposals are in-keeping with and contribute positively to the natural and built environment and are sensitively and sustainably designed.
- 4.7. The WNP is mindful of the need to protect the natural environment and Policies WAD13 to WAD17 offer ways to safeguard local green infrastructure, important views, dark skies and key landscape features and biodiversity, with a view to contributing to the character and biodiversity of the parish.
- 4.8. Equally the built heritage of the Parish is considered and strengthened through various policies exploring sustainable design, local character and the conservation of heritage assets.

Figure 4.1: Cumulative impact of Neighbourhood Plan policies

Policy	Sustainability Objectives									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
WAD1	+	+	+	+	+					+
WAD2				++						
WAD3			++			++				
WAD4	++		++		+	+				+
WAD5	+					++				
WAD6						++				
WAD7							++		+	++
WAD8							++		+	++
WAD9	-	-	-		+			+	+	++
WAD10					+					
WAD11	-				++			+	++	
WAD12					++			+	++	
WAD13	++	++	++				+		+	
WAD14	++	++	++				+	++	+	
WAD15	++		++						+	
WAD16	++	++	++				++	++		
WAD17	++	++	++				++		+	
WAD18							+	++	+	

- 4.9. It is acknowledged that there are a number of uncertainties when considering the effects of the policies over the time scale of the Plan. The sustainability effect of the WNP should therefore be monitored on a regular basis, against the Sustainability Framework, for both its positive and negative impacts.

5. Conclusion

- 5.1. This report presents an assessment of the contribution to sustainability made by the Wadhurst Neighbourhood Plan (WNP).
- 5.2. The Pre-Submission (Regulation 14) Version Wadhurst Neighbourhood Plan was screened by WDC to ascertain if a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) would be required. The screening, which was subject to consultation with Historic England, Natural England and the Environment Agency, concluded that an SEA would not be required as the WNP is unlikely to have significant environmental impacts.
- 5.3. Nevertheless, it is good practice to consider the sustainability of the WNP policies in terms of their potential environmental, social and economic impacts and this report has sought to do this. It has explored key issues as they relate to Wadhurst Parish on a range of topics in order to develop a sustainability framework against which each policy can be evaluated.
- 5.4. On the whole, the policies of the WNP will bring a range of positive impacts across the three sustainability pillars. For some of the policies that could have a negative impact, particularly on the environment, there are other aspects that contribute positively to social or economic objectives. Moreover, many of the other policies in the WNP, and the associated Design Codes will help to mitigate these negative environmental impacts.
- 5.5. Overall the most sustainable policy options have been chosen for inclusion in the WNP when considered against reasonable alternatives.
- 5.6. None of the policies are likely to have any significant adverse effects, giving confidence that the WNP will contribute to sustainable development.