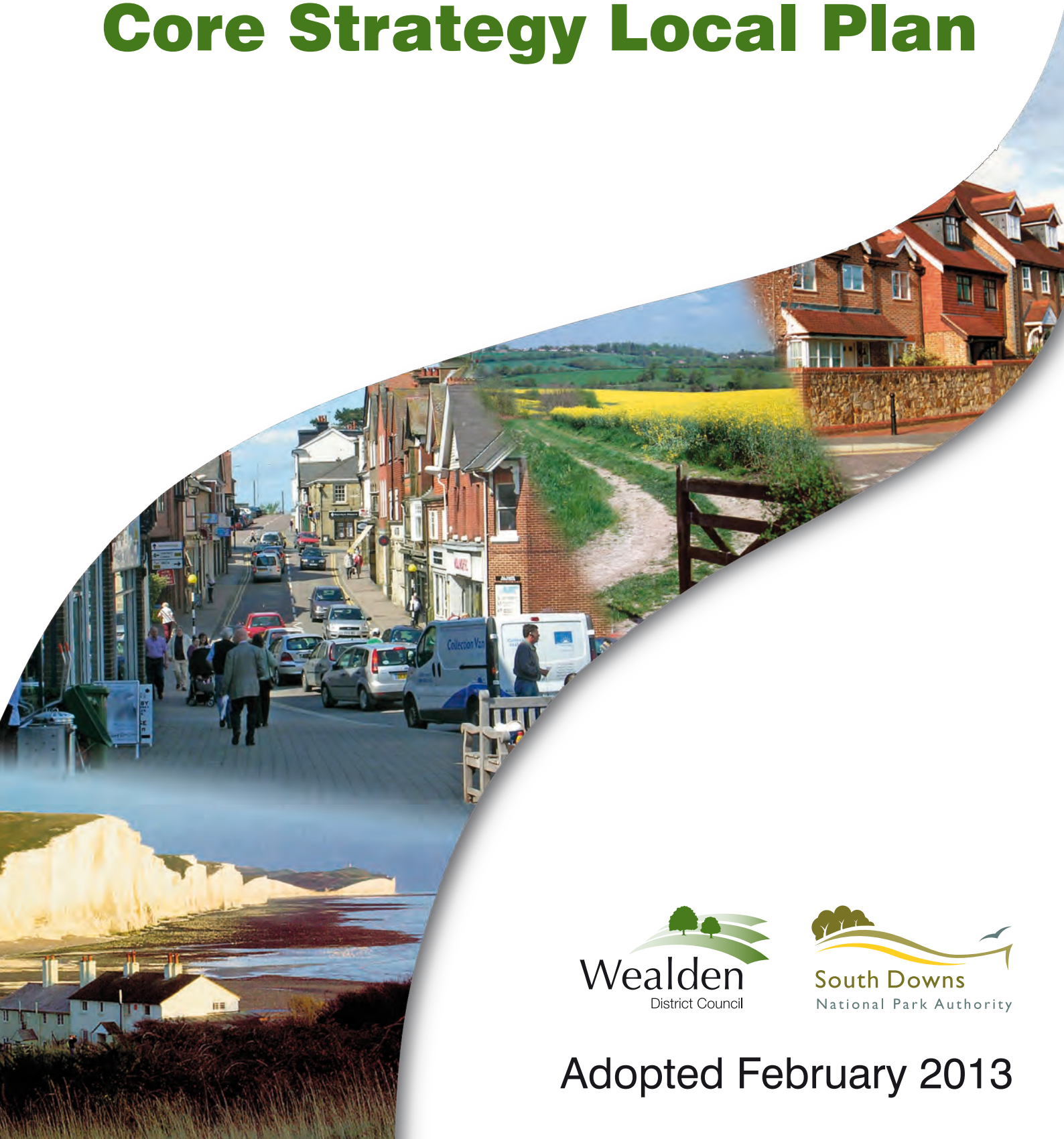
Wealden District (Incorporating Part of the South Downs National Park)

Core Strategy Local Plan



Wealden District Council

South Downs National Park Authority

Adopted February 2013

high carbon emissions are all matters that need to be weighed and addressed in developing our spatial strategy.

2.7 The challenge for the Core Strategy is to focus growth where it is most accessible and sustainable, whilst maintaining the balance between rural settlements and larger service centres, ensuring that the facilities and services within the towns are supported for the wider community. Our spatial strategy must recognise that some of our settlements, while having limited opportunities to accommodate significant growth, could support some development to meet the needs of the community. However, in other settlements, in less sustainable locations, additional growth will simply encourage more travel and out commuting and the potential for increasing social inequality.

The environment of Wealden

2.8 One of Wealden's principal assets is the high quality of its environment. This is reflected in the high proportion of the District which is protected for its landscape and biodiversity importance. The High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the South Downs National Park together cover some 60% of the District, in formal recognition of its landscape quality. The internationally important areas of conservation at Ashdown Forest and the Pevensey Levels are also situated within the District. The location and scale of future development will be restricted by its potential impact on all these designated areas, although opportunities exist to enhance the quality of the District's biodiversity and geodiversity overall.

2.9 The countryside is also a recreational resource for residents and visitors, with attractions including the South Downs National Park, Ashdown Forest, High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the Pevensey Levels. In this way Wealden helps make a unique contribution to the quality of life of those who live outside the District, in more built up areas of the region, as well as to its own residents.

2.10 The richness and diversity of its biodiversity, landscape and heritage are significant factors in making the District such a desirable place in which to live. This coupled with a limited legacy of brownfield land places additional pressures on the abundant supply of greenfield land. Our Core Strategy needs to ensure that the growth required to meet needs makes the best use of resources without compromising future requirements, and makes an overall positive contribution to the environment where possible. Working in partnership to manage our natural resources is crucial, ensuring that the attractiveness of the resource is not diminished through uncontrolled visitor pressure or development.

2.11 The Core Strategy should contribute to mitigating climate change by seeking to reduce carbon emissions and other greenhouse gases through: the appropriate selection of areas for growth; providing sustainable transport alternatives to the private motor vehicle; sustainable construction techniques; and use of renewable and low carbon energy sources. Adapting and mitigating climate change is also necessary through avoiding inappropriate development in areas of high flood risk and supporting appropriate flood risk infrastructure; providing for a resilient environment within our built up areas; protecting our landscape; and planning for the future effects of climate change on biodiversity through the green infrastructure network.

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

5 Spatial Strategy Policies

5.1 The spatial strategy policies identify what will be delivered on a strategic scale, and when, in line with the spatial strategy. It provides clear direction and information concerning provision of homes and employment and retail from 2006 to 2027.

Provision for homes and jobs

5.2 Wealden's spatial strategy requires land to be allocated for future housing, employment and infrastructure developments. This will be carried forward in the Site Allocation DPDs that follow this Core Strategy. The purpose of our Core Strategy is to confirm the overall strategic land requirements, identify the broad locations of the main growth areas, and ensure that the necessary overall supply of land is deliverable.

5.3 Housing developments already committed[(2)] mean that this Core Strategy, and the DPDs that follow, will be allocating land for at least 4525 additional dwellings over the period April 2010 – March 2027.

5.4 The provision of employment land is based on the latest Employment Land Review update which establishes a need for some 128,695 sq. metres net floorspace between 2006 and 2030. Employment developments in the pipeline[(3)] mean that the DPDs following the Core Strategy will be allocating land for at least 40,000 sq. metres net floorspace of B1, B2 and B8. If growth is slower than forecast, or if other circumstances change, it may be necessary to revise the requirements to reflect a more realistic demand for employment land.

WCS1 Provision of Homes and Jobs 2006-2027

Land will be identified in subsequent Development Plan Documents for the provision of some 4525 net additional dwellings in Wealden District to provide for 9440 dwellings over the period 2006-2027.

Provision will be made for some net additional 40,000 sq. metres net employment floorspace (B1/B2/B8) to provide for 128,695 sq. metres net employment floorspace and 17,000 sq. metres net additional retail floorspace over the period 2006-2027.

The strategy shall be reviewed in 2015 or when a preferred solution to the capacity issues associated with Hailsham North and Hailsham South Wastewater Treatment Works has been identified, whichever is the earlier, in order to ensure that there is an adequate supply of development land in the longer term. The review shall include an assessment of current and future levels of need and demand for housing to provide an appropriate basis for longer term housing provision.

2 Includes extant planning consents as of 1st April 2010, Non Statutory Local Plan allocations assessed as deliverable or developable and planning consent granted on land east of Battle Road WD/2009/2705

3 Includes Non Statutory Wealden Local Plan allocation for Ashdown Business Park

Distribution of homes and jobs

5.5 The broad distribution of land to be allocated for housing development to meet the requirements of Policy WCS1 is guided by the strategy objectives and our settlement hierarchy. Our strategy seeks to concentrate growth at the urban areas, but especially at Hailsham and Uckfield. Within the rural areas there is a wide variety of settlements some of which are assessed as suitable to accommodate some further housing development in an appropriate fashion.

5.6 Specific account has been taken of the distribution of land with potential for housing development identified in the Council's 2010 Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment. This will ensure that there is a reasonable prospect of delivering dwelling requirements.

WCS2 Distribution of Housing Growth 2006-2027

Land will be allocated to meet the housing provision of WCS1 in accordance with the following distribution:

Town/settlement	*Built or already committed[4] (dwellings)*	*New allocations (dwellings)*	*Total dwellings (2006-2027)*
Uckfield	*742*	*1000*	*1742*
Hailsham and Hellingly	*1645*	*1300*	*2945*
Polegate and Willingdon	*565*	*700*	*1265*
Stone Cross and Westham	*42*	*650*	*692*
Crowborough	*632*	*300*	*932*
Heathfield and Waldron	*292*	To be determined in a subsequent DPD	*292*
Adjacent to Tunbridge Wells boundary (within Frant Parish)	*53[5]*	*120*	*173*
Rural villages	*918*	*455*	*1373*
Total Wealden	*4889*	*4525*	*9414*

Broad locations for housing development in Policy WCS2 are shown as insets on the Key Diagram. Individual sites to meet these housing provisions will be allocated in the Site Allocation DPDs.

4 *Includes extant planning consents as of 1st April 2010, Non Statutory Local Plan allocations assessed as deliverable or developable and planning consent granted on land east of Battle Road WD/2009/2705*

5 *Commitments for Frant Parish including the settlements of Frant and Bells Yew Green*

Use of previously developed land

5.7 For the last 10 years some 80% of housing completions in Wealden have been on previously developed (brownfield) land. As similar site opportunities for future growth in Wealden are limited, it will not be possible to maintain this high proportion in future years. Evidence suggests that the expected contribution from brownfield land over the period from 2010-2027 may be nearer 35%.

5.8 The brownfield component of the spatial strategy is therefore likely to be well below the national annual target of 60% identified in Planning Policy Statement 3. This is an average target and in a rural area such as Wealden, where there is a limited supply of brownfield opportunities, it is inevitable that there will have to be a substantial use of greenfield land to meet existing and future housing needs. However, in order to maximise the use of previously developed land we will provide policies to support appropriate brownfield development as part of the Site Allocation DPDs.

Windfalls

5.9 Strategic policy WCS2 makes no allowance for windfall sites. However over the past 10 years around 200 dwellings per annum have been provided as windfall. Whilst the projected provision of such sites cannot be included at this stage in land supply projections, completions on these sorts of sites will count towards the overall house building totals achieved in Wealden. Windfalls will be used as part of the manage and monitor system, and provide some limited contingency. However, windfall sites can increase the demands on the District's environmental and infrastructure constraints, and this in turn could have a determining effect on overall delivery capacity at any particular settlement. Through monitoring arrangements the Council will need to ensure that the unplanned development of windfall sites does not conflict with the strategy.

WCS3 Distribution of Employment (B Class) and Retail (convenience and comparison)

Land will be allocated to meet the employment and retail provision of Policy WCS1 in accordance with the following distribution:

Town/ Settlement	*New allocations Employment (B1/B2/B8) (net floorspace sq. metres)*	*New allocations Retail (A1 convenience and comparison) (net floorspace sq. metres)*
Uckfield	*12,650*	*10,707*
Hailsham and Hellingly	*8,650*	*6,230*
Crowborough	*0*	*0*
Heathfield	*0*	*0*
Polegate and Willingdon/ Stone Cross	*16,890*	*0*
Rural area	*0*	*0*
Total Wealden	*38,190*	*16,937*

Broad locations for employment and retail development in Policy WCS3 are shown as insets on the Key Diagram. Individual sites to meet these provisions will be allocated in the Site Allocation DPDs.

Strategic development areas

5.10 The key diagram identifies broad locations for future development. The exact extent and detailed form of the developments at these locations are not defined precisely on a map. This will be undertaken in the Site Allocation DPDs that follow this Core Strategy.

5.11 The Council recognises the need to identify a deliverable supply of housing land for both the short-medium and the longer term. Our Core Strategy therefore identifies "strategic development areas" that are of such a scale that they are considered critical to the delivery of the overall strategy.

5.12 A number of strategic development areas will be priority for inclusion in the Strategic Sites DPD, in line with the housing trajectory and to ensure delivery.

WCS4 Strategic Development Areas

The following strategic development areas are the locations that are considered to be critical to the delivery of the overall strategy and provide for the new housing employment and community facilities as follows:

- SD1: Land at West Uckfield - provision of around 1,000 dwellings, 12,650 square metres net employment floorspace and education provision
- SD2: Land at East Hailsham- provision of around 600 dwellings
- SD3: Land at North Hailsham - provision of around 700 dwellings, 8,650 square metres net employment floorspace, 300 square metres retail floor space and education provision
- SD4: Land at South Polegate and East Willingdon- provision of around 700 dwellings, 8,600 square metres net employment floorspace, leisure, recreation and community facilities
- SD5: Land at Dittons Road, Polegate - provision of around 8,290 square metres net employment floorspace
- SD6: Land at East and South East of Stone Cross - provision of around 220 dwellings with flexibility between SD6 and SD7
- SD7: Land at North Stone Cross - provision of around 430 dwellings with flexibility between SD6 and SD7
- SD8: Land at Pine Grove, Crowborough and SD9: Land at Jarvis Brook, Crowborough - provision of around 140 dwellings
- SD10:Land at South East Crowborough - provision of around 160 dwellings
- SD11: Land adjacent to Tunbridge Wells, in the Parish of Frant - provision of around 120 dwellings

The Strategic Development Areas are provided in the Key Diagram and allocation of sites and specific policies, including phasing where necessary, will be provided in the Strategic Sites Development Plan Document.

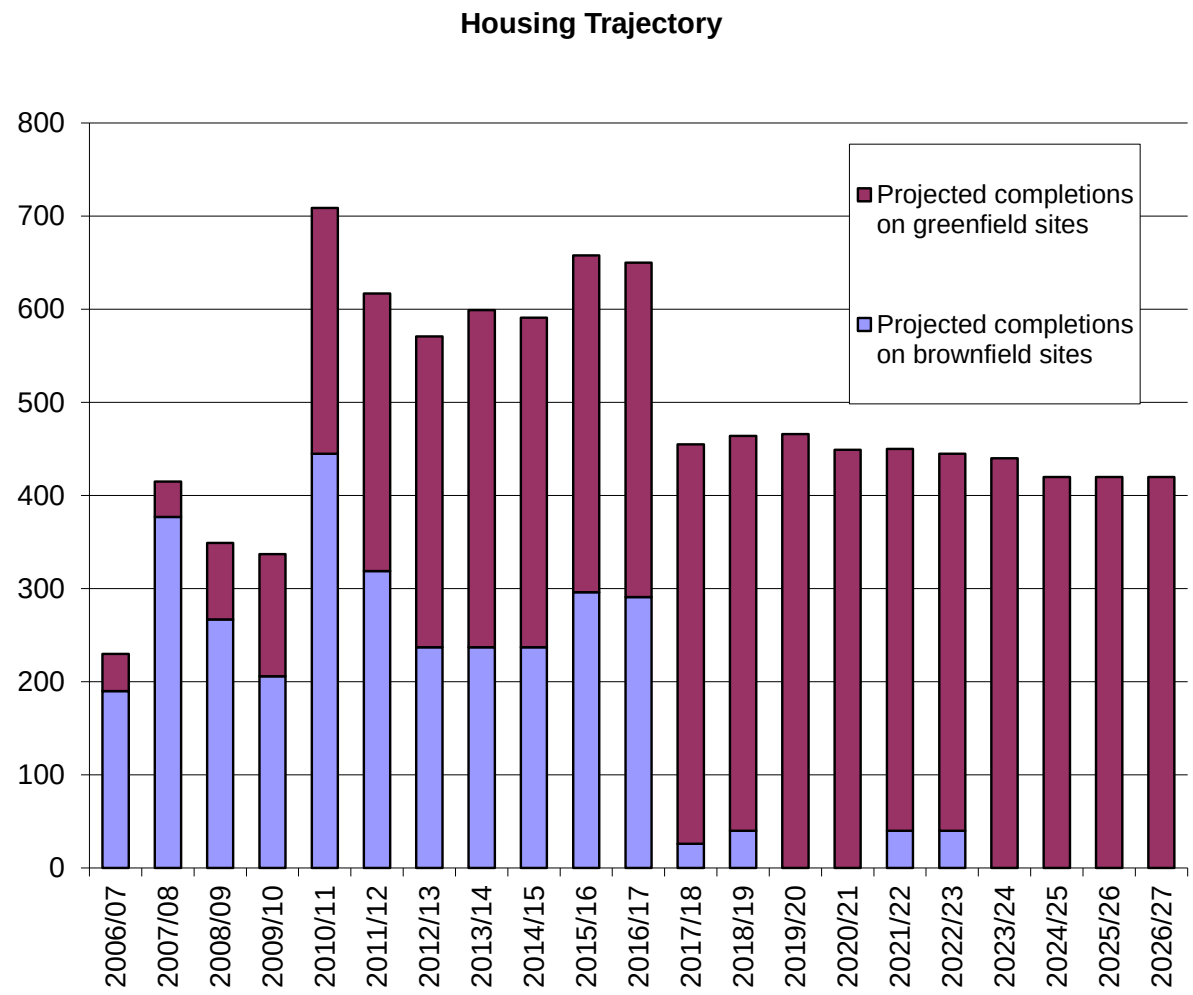
Managing the release of housing land

Housing trajectory

5.13 The following trajectory sets out what has been achieved in Wealden from 2006 to date and our forecast of future housing delivery until 2027. This will be kept under review and annual monitoring reports will update the trajectory as necessary to demonstrate how progress will be made towards meeting our housing growth targets.

5.14 The trajectory shows the change in housing delivery performance that will be required over the plan period to 2027 to ensure that sufficient housing is provided to meet the housing provision target of 9440 dwellings to 2027.

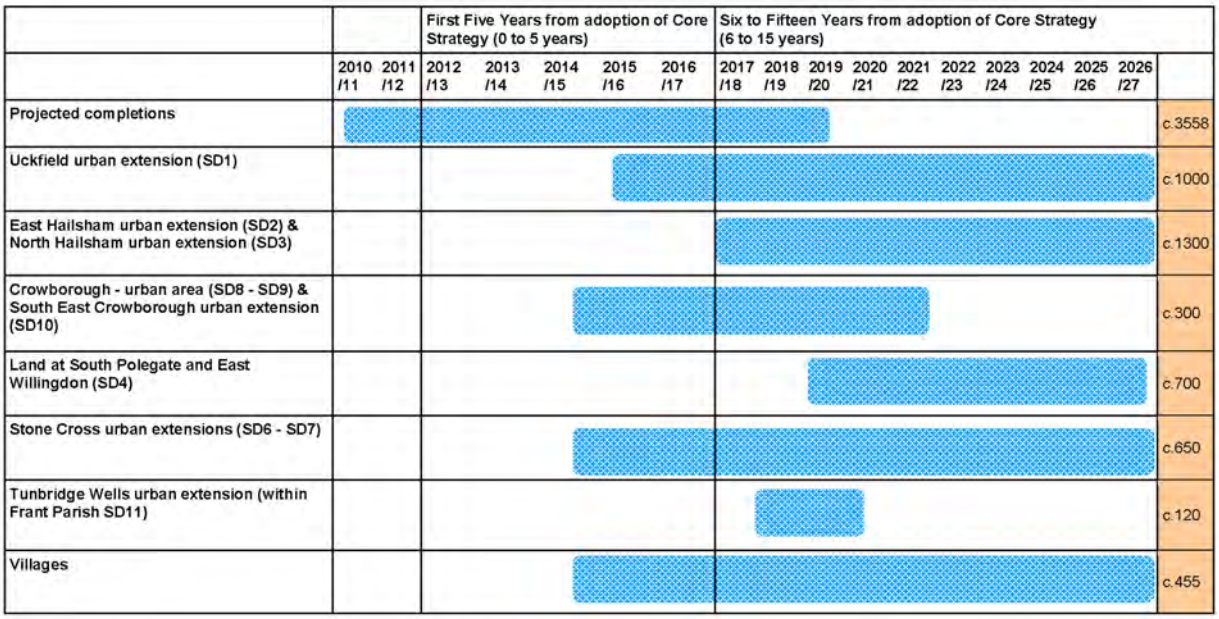
Figure 4



5.15 The trajectory includes projected completions from sites which have been assessed as being deliverable based on a range of evidence, including the Council's published SHLAA. This includes sites which already have planning consent in addition to sites allocated in the Non Statutory Local Plan which currently do not have planning consent that are considered suitable, available and achievable. The trajectory peaks in the period 2013 to 2015 as this is the period when a large number of sites allocated in the Non Statutory Local Plan are anticipated to be built out.

5.16 Post 2015 the aim is to phase delivery such that new housing development is delivered at a constant rate in order to ensure that there is a continuous housing supply throughout the Plan period, allowing for market considerations, the ability of our community to assimilate growth and the development and delivery of necessary infrastructure. Figure 5 provides an indication of delivery of Strategic Development Areas, which provides a basis of the housing trajectory. The delivery of housing will be subject to the delivery of infrastructure in accordance with WCS7, as part of the Site Allocation DPDs, and the provisions of WCS5 in terms of managing the delivery of housing along with the timely provision of infrastructure.

Figure 5 Indicative Delivery of Housing Development



Development will be subject to the provisions of WCS5 and WCS7 in terms of infrastructure provision. The following matters are of relevance to the delivery of housing:

Development in the catchment areas of Hailsham North and Hailsham South Waste Water Treatment Works will be subject to the consented capacity constraints of the respective treatment works until such time as an appropriate alternative discharge location and all attendant infrastructure is delivered.

Development in the Hailsham, Hellingly, Stone Cross, Polegate and Willingdon area will be subject to the delivery of transport mitigation measures required to resolve capacity and safety constraints at the appropriate time.

Development within 7 kilometres of the Ashdown Forest will be required to provide for mitigation measures, including the provision of Suitable Alternative Natural Green Space prior to the occupation of development.

Development at the Tunbridge Wells urban extension (within Frant Parish) will be subject to there being enough capacity within the relevant Waste Water Treatment Works in combination with development arising from the Tunbridge Wells Local Plan.

5.17 The indicative delivery of housing shown in Figure 5 is based upon the following:

- Development at land west of Uckfield (SD1) will require significant preparation work for infrastructure purposes and in order to allow the market to deliver on the large single site housing will be built out over the long term.
- Development at Stone Cross will be subject to the provision of necessary transport infrastructure enhancements in south Wealden.
- Development of SD2 to the east of Hailsham will require prior studies to be carried out concerning potential odour control issues at the wastewater treatment works at east Hailsham in order to protect the amenities of the occupants of new dwellings. Any necessary mitigation measures will need to be in place prior to occupation. Development at east Hailsham (SD2) and north Hailsham (SD3) will be subject to the resolution of highway infrastructure capacity and safety issues.
- Development at south Polegate and east Willingdon (SD4) will be contingent upon transport infrastructure requirements and interventions in south Wealden.
- At Heathfield consideration will be given in a subsequent DPD to the identification of housing sites having regard to national policy on AONBs and any opportunities for redevelopment within the town. Any housing land identified will be in addition to the overall District provision of 9440 dwellings.
- Development on land within Frant Parish adjacent to the boundary with Tunbridge Wells (SD11) will require resolution of infrastructure capacity issues, in particular waste water treatment capacity at Tunbridge Wells, prior to development taking place.
- Development of south east Crowborough (SD10) will require highway issues to be addressed at Western Road.
- New housing growth is being proposed at 13 villages throughout the District and amounts to 455 dwellings. For the purposes of the housing trajectory it is assumed that these developments will take place at an even rate throughout the Plan period. In reality development is unlikely to be at an even rate and some developments may come forward earlier in the plan period.

5.18 The Council will, through its implementation and delivery framework and monitoring arrangements, ensure that delivery of its strategy and the overall provision of appropriate levels of growth is not prejudiced by windfalls. Further details of the management and phasing of delivery is contained within our Background Paper 2: Managing the Delivery of Housing.

Contingency

5.19 The housing trajectory is compiled from a detailed assessment of capacities and constraints at the broad locations chosen for growth and is based on reasonable assumptions about the deliverability of housing and infrastructure over the plan period.

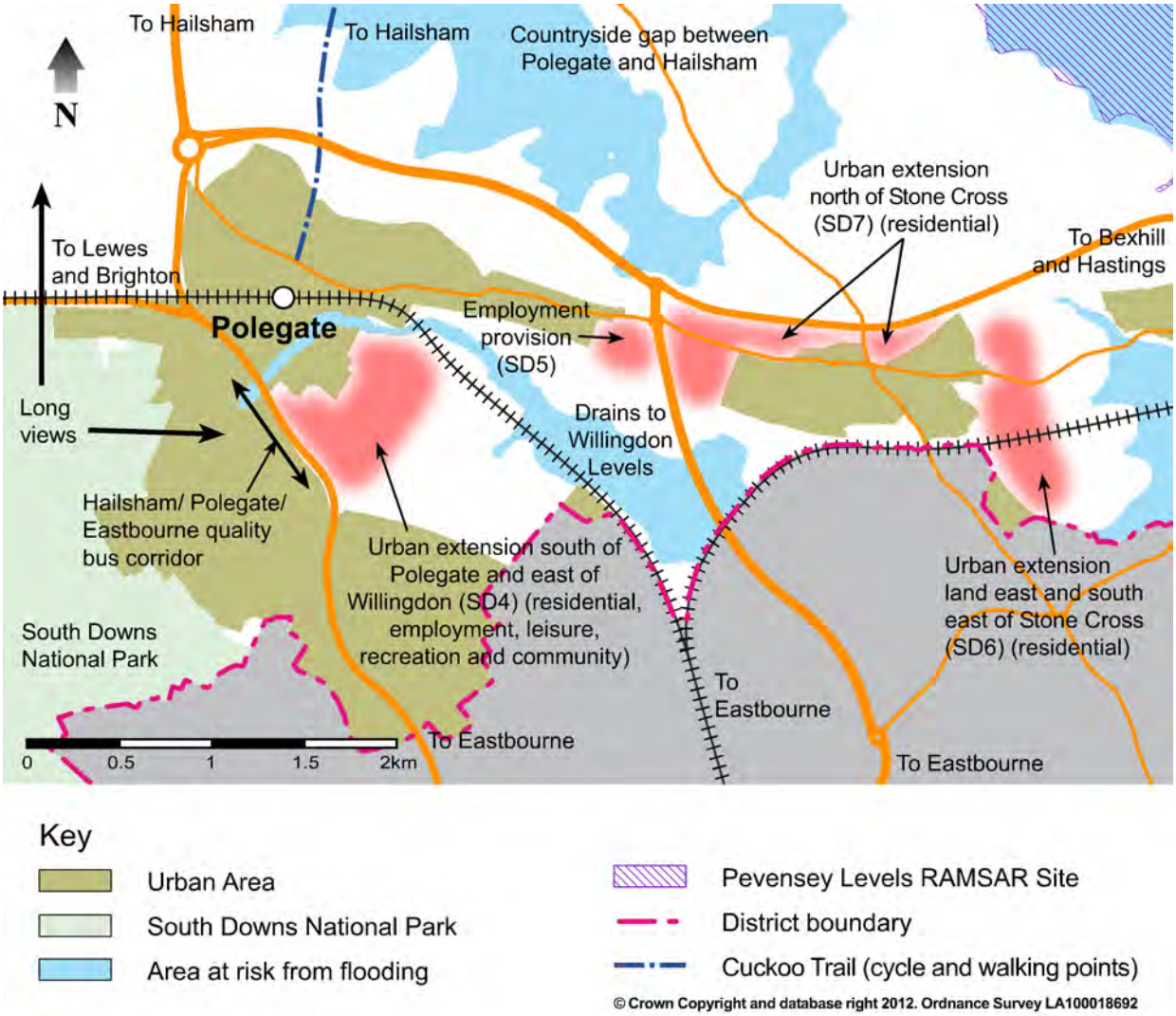
5.20 Because of potential unforeseen infrastructure constraints which may prevent housing being delivered, this plan contains contingency arrangements in the towns in the event of housing delivery substantially falling behind the trajectory.

5.21 The Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) provides information as to when infrastructure is required and the risks associated from non-delivery. If infrastructure is critical to delivery of any proposed growth and is not able to be delivered this will have an impact on the delivery of growth. In such cases monitoring through the IDP, will necessitate a review of the Core Strategy.

WCS5 Managing the Release of Housing Land

The release of land for housing will be managed so that it will deliver the level and broad distribution of development set out in Policy WCS2. The release of land will be dependant on the timely provision of infrastructure necessary to deliver housing, including affordable housing. The adequacy of housing land supply will be assessed regularly through reviews of the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment, the Infrastructure Delivery Plan and through regular housing land availability monitoring. Monitoring will allow effective cohesion between housing delivery and the provision of infrastructure.

Figure 8 Polegate and Willingdon and Stone Cross Area Strategy



© Crown Copyright and database right 2012. Ordnance Survey LA100018692

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.

Green infrastructure

7.22 Green infrastructure includes all forms of recreational open space and areas of particular importance or potential for wildlife. The network of green infrastructure is therefore of importance for wildlife and eco-systems, and for meeting a wide range of social, environmental and economic needs and functions. It covers both rural and urban areas of the District and guidance recognises that it is integral to the health and quality of life of sustainable communities. In order to maximise the benefits, policy places emphasis on the creation and maintenance of linkages between green spaces.

7.23 There is a wide range of sports, civic amenity and recreational open spaces available for both public and private use within Wealden and its neighbouring authorities. However deficiencies exist in many categories of open space and other facilities within Wealden. These are covered in more detail in our settlement strategies and will form the basis of detailed polices within the Site Allocation DPDs. Further detail is contained in our PPG17 study and the Background Paper 6 Green Infrastructure.

7.24 Sports provision is an important part of infrastructure and has strong linkages with health provision. The Council currently has four leisure centres in Hailsham, Crowborough, Uckfield and Heathfield, which are managed by a leisure contractor. In 2009 a Leisure Options Appraisal was undertaken on behalf of the Council, and the Council decided to support the retention of the Leisure Centres. The Council will also investigate how a new leisure centre located in the centre of the District may be provided within a 10 year time scale which would lead to the withdrawal of the Council's support to the Heathfield and Uckfield leisure centres.

7.25 The Council will continue to work in partnership with the County Council, Parish and Town Councils, private and state schools and other stakeholders, to support the development of local leisure resources including Multi Use Games Areas, play areas and sports pitches across the district. The Council will develop a leisure strategy encouraging greater use of the District's natural resources, which will be informed by the Local Plan.

7.26 In order to meet the following objectives a Green Infrastructure Strategy will be developed alongside the IDP, as part of the Site Allocation DPDs to identify on a site by site basis where improvements are required and overall how development can be delivered to contribute to the green infrastructure networks to:

- protect, improve and enhance Wealden's existing green infrastructure network;
- provide additional green infrastructure to meet the needs of Wealden's existing and future population;
- improve the connectivity of Wealden's existing green infrastructure network;
- improve Wealden's urban and rural landscape;
- improve accessibility to green infrastructure to benefit local communities and visitors to the District;
- increase the opportunities for healthy living within the District;

- maximise the provision of green infrastructure to contribute to biodiversity, healthy ecosystems and to address climate change; and
- protect and improve the setting of Wealden's cultural heritage and improve provision of information relating to key features available to both residents and visitors.

WCS13 Green Infrastructure

The District's existing network of green infrastructure will be protected, improved and enhanced by the implementation of a Green Infrastructure Strategy, ensuring a multifunctional, accessible network which maintains and improves biodiversity and landscape character, increases opportunities for healthy living and contributes to healthy ecosystems and climate change objectives.

Development proposals will not be permitted which would result in the loss of existing open space or harm to Wealden's network of green spaces unless measures are incorporated within the development that will either mitigate the effects of development or alternative and suitable provision is made that is accessible, of good quality and value to its users, in an appropriate location, at an appropriate scale and nature and would positively contribute to the overall network of green space.

All new residential development will be required to contribute to the green infrastructure network and where appropriate to make provision for new or enhancement of existing open space. Where the scale of development would be too small to make on-site provision, the Council will seek developer contributions either towards the improvement of existing open spaces or towards the provision of open space elsewhere.

7.27 Green infrastructure relates to a number of issues including Biodiversity, flood risk, historic buildings and landscape. Development management policies concerning the historic environment are contained within Planning Policy Statement 5 and therefore will not be duplicated in the Core Strategy or any other Development Plan Document. Although landscape issues have been considered as part of the spatial strategy, our landscape classification and specific measures for protection and enhancement will be contained in the Delivery and Site Allocations DPD with particular regard to the South Downs National Park, the High Weald AONB and the Low Weald, as shown in Figure 12.

Figure 12 Wealden's Landscape Areas



Climate change and sustainable construction

7.28 In order to set targets for sustainable construction techniques it is necessary to justify the need for any local targets and not duplicate those provided in other legislation. Work has been undertaken in relation to setting a carbon emission target in both residential and commercial properties and is set out in the Wealden Renewable Energy Study. However, it is proposed that through revisions to Part L of the Building Regulations that national requirements for carbon emission reductions will be introduced (for both domestic and non-domestic buildings). Therefore it will not be necessary to duplicate a similar provision in the Core Strategy. However, if opportunities arise for decentralised renewable energy in sites allocated in the Strategic Sites or Delivery and Site Allocations DPDs this can be detailed in these documents, and if changes in Building Regulations do not occur further consideration will be made as to the need to implement carbon reduction targets. Criteria for the siting of renewable and or low carbon energy sources will be provided in the Delivery and Site Allocations DPD.

7.29 It is acknowledged that Wealden is located in a water stress area, however, compulsory water metering and changes in Building Regulations requiring measures to restrict water usage will assist in demand management and it is considered that any imposition of targets would duplicate other legislation. We will work with both Southern Water and South East Water to assist in meeting the objectives of the respective water resources management plans, including supporting the delivery of appropriate water supply and sewerage infrastructure.

7.30 The Code for Sustainable Homes is a rating system which considers a number of factors in relation to residential dwellings ranging from carbon efficiency and lifetime homes to bin storage facilities. A number of matters including biodiversity, flood risk and surface water run off are already considered in other parts of the strategy and provide for local circumstances. Further detailed design requirements will be included as part of the Delivery and Site Allocations DPD, which will seek to mitigate and adapt to the effects of climate change. Guidance regarding development in flood risk areas is contained within Planning Policy Statement 25 and will not be duplicated in the Core Strategy or any other DPD. It is considered all relevant justifiable requirements are already considered as part of the strategy and therefore imposition of a code level is not considered necessary. Further guidance is available in the Council's formally adopted Supplementary Planning Document Wealden Design Guide based upon saved polices in the adopted Wealden Local Plan.

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.