

Wealden District Council

Local Development Framework

Screening of the Core Strategy under the Provisions of the Conservation (Natural Habitats, & c.) Regulations 1994, as amended

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Purpose of this Report

1.1 The Council is required under Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora (EC Habitats Directive) and the Conservation (Natural Habitats, & c.) Regulations 1994, as amended, to undertake an appropriate assessment (AA) of the implications of any land use plan on a site defined in the Natura 2000 network¹ (also described as European sites). This paper documents the initial stages of assessment described as 'screening', which determines whether specific European sites require the application of AA in the plan making process.

1.2 This paper introduces the requirements of the Habitats Directive and the corresponding Habitats Regulations in relation to the Local Development Framework (LDF), and in particular the Core Strategy. As part of the screening process, the plans and strategies considered in combination with the Core Strategy are documented as well as:

- the scope of the study area;
- characteristics of the European Sites;
- possible impacts;
- the determination as to whether the Core Strategy will have a significant in combination effects; and
- whether further AA is required in relation to the European Sites Identified.

The Habitats Directive

1.3 In 1992 the European Community adopted the EC Habitats Directive. The main aim of the Directive is to contribute towards ensuring bio-diversity through the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora.

1.4 The provisions of the Directive require the designation of Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), and together with Special Protection Areas (SPAs) classified under the EC Birds Directive, these form a network of protected areas known as Natura 2000.

1.5 The Directive requires that any plan not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the European Site but likely to give rise to a significant effect², either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, should be subject to appropriate assessment. National authorities are advised that the plan should only be adopted after it is ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the site concerned.

¹ Natura sites as defined by Article 3 of the Habitats Directive

² significance is judged in terms of the features for which the site was designated and the site's conservation objectives.

1.6 The Directive further states that if a negative assessment has taken place, and in the absence of alternative solutions, the plan may be adopted if there are imperative reasons of overriding public interest and all compensatory measures to ensure the overall coherence of Natura 2000 is protected.

1.7 In terms of 'screening' the relevant issue is whether the plan is likely to have a significant effect, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, on a European Site.

The Habitats Regulations

1.8 The Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994 as amended transposes European legislation into national legislation. The national legislation reflects the European Directive, although it further prescribes that the plan-making authority shall consult the appropriate nature conservation body, and have regard to any representations made within such reasonable time as the authority specifies.

Natura 2000/ European Sites

1.9 The Habitats Directive and the Habitats Regulations relate to sites designated as SACs and SPAs. However, Planning Policy Statement 9 'Biodiversity and Geological Conservation' (which has been in part superseded by the Department for Communities and Local Government consultation publication *Planning for the protection of European Sites: Appropriate Assessment Guidance for Regional Spatial Strategies and Local Development Documents* (August 2006)) states that Ramsar sites should, as a matter of policy, receive the same protection as designated SPAs and SACs. Accordingly, Ramsar sites are included under the definition of European Sites for the purposes of appropriate assessment.

Appropriate Assessment

1.10 Draft Government guidance *Planning for the protection of European Sites: Appropriate Assessment Guidance for Regional Spatial Strategies and Local Development Documents* (August 2006) provides advice on how AA may be carried out for plan preparation.

1.11 It is acknowledged that the Habitats Directive does not specify how the stages of the AA should be undertaken, although it is confirmed that the AA must be recorded and carried out with a view to informing decisions in the plan. It is recognised that the assessment should be proportionate to the geographical scope of the option and the nature and extent of any effects identified. In essence, the AA should be fit for purpose.

1.12 Notwithstanding the above, there are four key stages of AA as defined in the European Commission guidance *Assessment of plans and projects significantly affecting Natura 2000 sites – Methodological guidance on the*

provisions of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43 EEC (November 2001).

The stages are described below:

Stage One: Screening

Examination of the likely effects of the plan, either alone or in combination with other projects or plans, upon a Natura 2000 site and consideration whether it can be concluded that these effects will not be significant.

Stage Two: Appropriate Assessment

If it is considered that the plan will have a likely significant effect on a Natura 2000 site it is necessary to undertake an appropriate assessment to determine the implications for the site, alone or in combination with other projects or plans, in view of the site's conservation objectives. If the plan has an adverse effect on the integrity of the European site then mitigation will need to be considered.

Stage Three: Assessment of Alternative Solutions

Where a plan is considered to have an adverse effect on the integrity of a European site, and it is not possible to mitigate against those effects, then it is necessary to assess alternative ways of implementing the plan.

Stage Four: Assessment where no Alternative Solutions Exist and where Adverse Impacts Remain

In exceptional circumstances, where an alternative solution has not been found the plan may commence in light of 'imperative reasons of overriding public interest (IROPI)'³ or, in certain circumstances, where there are human health or safety considerations or important environmental benefits. In such cases compensatory measures must have to be put in place to offset the negative impacts.

1.13 This paper implements the screening element (stage 1) of the Appropriate Assessment process, as described in relevant European and Government guidance.

³ IROPI is discussed in the European Commission paper *Guidance Document on Article 6(4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC*

Appropriate Assessment and Sustainability Appraisal

1.14 Government guidance *Planning for the protection of European Sites: Appropriate Assessment Guidance for Regional Spatial Strategies and Local Development Documents* (August 2006) recommends that the AA should be undertaken in conjunction with the Sustainability Appraisal (SA). Notwithstanding this, it is acknowledged that AA and SA are separate processes and in order to ensure that the individual legal requirements are met it is considered appropriate, at this stage, to address screening of the AA separately.

Screening Assessment

1.15 In terms of screening Article 6(3) the Habitats Directive states

'Any plan or project not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site but likely to have a significant effect thereon, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, shall be subject to appropriate assessment of its implications for the site in view of the site's conservation objectives. In the light of the conclusions of the assessment of the implications for the site and subject to the provisions of paragraph 4, the competent national authorities shall agree to the plan or project only after having ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the site concerned and, if appropriate, after having obtained the opinion of the general public.'

1.16 European Commission guidance⁴ suggests a four stage process in undertaking screening involving:

Step One: Determination of whether the plan is directly connected or necessary to the management of the Site;
Step Two: Description of the Project or Plan;
Step Three: Characteristics of the Site; and
Step Four: Assessment of significance.

1.17 The European Commission publication, *Managing Natura 2000 Sites – The provisions of Article 6 of the 'Habitats' Directive 92/43/EEC* (2000) provides guidance on the terminology used in the Habitats Directive to ensure that, in legal terms, the provisions of the Habitats Directive are met. In terms of screening the phrase 'likely significant effect' has been defined. It is considered that, *"The notion of what is 'significant' needs to be interpreted objectively. At the same time, the significance should be determined in relation to the specific features and environmental conditions of the protected site concerned by the plan or project, taking into particular account the site's conservation objectives."* In addition, it is necessary to consider the 'likely'

⁴ *Assessment of plans and projects significantly affecting Natura 2000 sites – Methodological guidance on the provisions of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43 EEC* (November 2001).

significant effect, which is in essence adopts the precautionary principle⁵. Therefore it is essential that, in terms of Appropriate Assessment, if the effects are unknown, the European Site is screened in and further appropriate assessment (Stage 2) is undertaken.

⁵ The precautionary principle is defined as "where there are threats of serious or irreversible damage, lack of full scientific certainty shall not be used as a reason for postponing cost-effective measures to prevent environmental degradation". (1992 Rio Declaration on Environment and Development)

2.0 BACKGROUND TO THE WEALDEN CORE STRATEGY

Location

2.1 Wealden is a rural district situated within the County of East Sussex. It is located to the centre of the County and is surrounded by the Districts of Lewes, Mid Sussex, Tandridge, Sevenoaks and Rother. In addition, Tunbridge Wells Borough and Eastbourne Borough have common boundaries to the north and south respectively. Wealden has a number of environmentally significant areas within the local authority boundaries including the Ashdown Forest SPA and SAC and the Pevensey Levels Ramsar site. Wealden has a limited coastline to the south, some of which is associated with the Pevensey Levels.

2.2 Wealden encompasses an area of 836 sq km with a population of around 146,000. The District has five small market towns of Crowborough, Uckfield, Heathfield, Hailsham and Polegate, with a number of villages of varying sizes scattered around the District. The area is serviced via the east/west A27 corridor to the south of the District and the A22/A26 north south route. There is a limited public transport bus network, but there are rail links to both Eastbourne/Lewes and Tunbridge Wells, and longer distance to London.

The Current Development Plan

2.3 The current Development Plan, the Wealden Local Plan was adopted in 1998 and is supplemented by the Non Statutory Wealden Local Plan (approved December 2005). The Non Statutory Wealden Local Plan (2006-2011) is used for Development Control purposes and allocates land for around 3,300 homes, as well as a number of commercial allocations. A number of the housing allocations are now subject of extant planning permissions and constitute a proportion of the Council's housing land supply for the next five years. A number of 'windfall' developments are also subject to planning consent, and have not yet been completed.

The South East Plan

2.4 The relevant Regional Spatial Strategy for the area is the South East Plan. The South East Plan divides Wealden into two planning areas, the south of the District is located in the wider Sussex Coast Sub Region (south Wealden) and the remainder of the District (north Wealden). Housing figures are divided between these two areas with a total requirement of 7000 dwellings from 2006-2026 in south Wealden and 4000 dwellings in north Wealden.

2.6 Policies in the South East Plan focus development around existing urban areas. Therefore development is expected to be focused on the 5 main towns in Wealden with some development in the villages.

Wealden Core Strategy

2.7 The Core Strategy is the key strategic document in the Local Development Framework. It will present an overall vision, strategic objectives and strategy for the District up until 2026.

2.8 The document will be structured along the following lines:

- (a) Introduction and scene setting
- (b) Planning Context and relationship with other plans (including the South East Plan, Community Strategy and plans and proposals of adjoining authorities)
- (c) A spatial portrait of Wealden District
- (d) A vision for Wealden's sustainable future
- (e) Strategic objectives and guiding principles for future development, which includes quantities and general location of development
- (f) Core policies for addressing needs and managing change, and covering protection of the environment, developing housing and the economy, sustainable transport, and promoting quality of life and wellbeing.
- (g) A spatial development strategy covering *place-shaping* – providing broad locations of development as well as quantity and timing. This will focus on housing and business development, transport infrastructure and environment, and include a development strategy for each of the five towns, and for the villages.
- (h) Managing and monitoring arrangements for delivery of the strategy, and for its review.

3.0 APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT SCREENING

Plans and Strategies to be considered in combination with the Core Strategy

3.1 The South East Plan prescribes the level of development in the south east region and therefore is the primary plan 'in combination' with Wealden's Core Strategy. However, Local Development Frameworks in the area and saved policies in Local Plans may also have an in-combination impact. Other local strategies, carried out by other organisations, may also have an impact and are also included. A brief summary of each plan is set out in Appendix II.

3.2 The plans considered in the assessment include:

- South East Plan (2009)
- East Sussex and Brighton & Hove Structure Plan (May 2000)
- East Sussex and Brighton & Hove Waste Local Plan (February 2006)
- East Sussex and Brighton & Hove Minerals Local Plan (November 1999)
- East Sussex Local Transport Plan (LTP2) (July 2005)
- South Foreland to Beachy Head Shoreline Management Plan (April 2006)
- Beachy Head to Selsey Bill Shoreline Management Plan (January 2005)
- Emerging River Ouse Catchment Flood Management Plan (Consultation Draft Plan April 2008)
- Catchment Abstraction Management Strategy
- Cuckmere and Sussex Havens Catchment Flood Management Plan
- Emerging River Rother and Romney Catchment Flood Management Plan (Draft Report, March 2008)
- The Medway Catchment Flood Management Plan (July 2004)
- Rother District Local Plan (July 2006)
- Eastbourne Borough Plan (January 2004)
- Mid Sussex Local Plan (May 2004)
- Mid Sussex LDF (ongoing)

- Tunbridge Wells Borough Local Plan (March 1996)
- Lewes District Local Plan (March 2003)
- Lewes District LDF (ongoing)
- Rother District LDF (ongoing)
- Sevenoaks District Local Plan (March 2000)
- Tandridge District LDF (ongoing)
- Tunbridge Wells Borough LDF (ongoing)
- Non Statutory Wealden Local Plan (approved December 2005)

European Sites and Scope of Study Area

3.3 European sites are unique in terms of their characteristics and the prescribed conservation objectives. Accordingly, the determination of the geographic range of sites to be considered is dependent on the qualities of the site as well as the way in which the sites' natural resources are utilised. It has been agreed with Natural England to screen European sites within the boundaries of the District as well as European Sites falling within 15 kilometres from the District's boundaries. A map detailing the European Sites within 15 kilometres of the District's boundaries is included in Appendix II.

3.4 Consideration has also been given to sites situated at greater distance, which are potentially affected by development in Wealden District. An example of this may be water abstraction, where the source of water may be of some distance from the District.

3.5 The Ashdown Forest SAC and SPA and the Pevensey Levels Ramsar site are situated within the boundaries of the District. Within 15 kilometres of the local authority boundaries two further SACs are located namely Castle Hill and Lewes Downs. These sites are situated in Lewes District, and Brighton and Hove City respectively and are included in the screening stage for consideration.

Characteristics of European Sites

3.6 The detailed characteristics of the relevant European Sites and their conservation objectives are included in Appendix III.

Screening

3.7 The following Tables (Tables 1 to 4) demonstrate the key factors in relation to AA, namely the characteristics of the European Sites and the resulting possible impacts (including in-combination with other plans) with the

consideration as to whether the Core Strategy will have a significant, in combination, effect so that further assessment is required.

3.8 Based on information currently available to Wealden District Council it is considered that, for the purposes of the Council's Core Strategy, further AA will be required for the Ashdown Forest SPA and SAC, Pevensey Levels Ramsar Site and Lewes Downs SAC. Castle Hill SAC is screened out.

3.9 As the Core Strategy progresses towards submission, an Appropriate Assessment will be undertaken with respect to the Ashdown Forest SPA and SAC, the Pevensey Levels and Lewes Downs SAC. The Appropriate Assessment will accompany the Core Strategy when submitted.

**Table 1: Ashdown Forest SAC/SPA
(Situated in Wealden)**

Qualifying Features	Key Environmental Conditions to Support Site Integrity	Possible impacts arising from Core Strategy	Is there a significant effect?	Possible impacts from other trends, plans etc	Is there a significant 'in combination' effect?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Northern Atlantic wet heaths with Erica tetralix. • European dry heaths • Great crested newt • Nationally important breeding populations of Nightjar and Dartford Warbler (SPA) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimal air pollution(nitrogen deposition can cause compositional changes over time) • Suitable foraging and refuge habitat within 500m of the pond • Relatively unpolluted water • Grazing management to prevent succession • balanced hydrological regime to maintain wet heath • Some ponds deep enough to retain water throughout February to August at least one year in every three • Good connectivity of landscape features 	<p>Development of 11,000 new dwellings in Wealden District.</p> <p>A proportion of the 11,000 dwellings will be located to the north of the District. This may result in increased recreational pressure causing erosion, and making it more difficult to manage the site.</p>	Yes	New housing in Mid Sussex, Sevenoaks, Tandridge and Tunbridge Wells in accordance with the South East Plan could increase recreational pressure.	Yes

Qualifying Features	Key Environmental Conditions to Support Site Integrity	Possible impacts arising from Core Strategy	Is there a significant effect?	Possible impacts from other trends, plans etc	Is there a significant 'in combination' effect?
		Development of 11,000 new dwellings in Wealden District would add to demand for water.	Unknown as to whether abstraction of water for Wealden residents will impact upon the hydrology of Ashdown Forest.	New housing in Mid Sussex, Sevenoaks, Tandridge and Tunbridge Wells in accordance with the South East Plan could have an impact on hydrology.	Based on the precautionary principle - Yes
		Development of 11,000 new dwellings in Wealden District. A proportion of the 11,000 dwellings will be located to the north of the District. New development in the north of the District may result in increased traffic movements on the A22, adjacent to Ashdown Forest. General increase in atmospheric nitrogen deposition related to increased development and subsequent road use may adversely affect vegetation community. This may also result in changes to the habitats on which the species of European importance depend.	Yes	New housing development in Mid Sussex could increase traffic along the A22, adjacent to the Ashdown Forest.	Yes

**Table 2: Castle Hill SAC
(situated in Brighton and Hove)**

Qualifying Features	Key Environmental Conditions to Support Site Integrity	Possible impacts arising from Core Strategy	Is there a significant effect?	Possible impacts from other trends, plans etc	Is there a significant 'in combination' effect?
<p>Dry grasslands and scrublands on chalk or limestone.</p> <p>Early Gentian</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintenance of grazing • Minimal air pollution – nitrogen deposition may cause reduction in diversity, sulphur deposition can cause acidification. • Absence of direct fertilisation. • The site is vulnerable to spray drift (i.e. eutrophication) from surrounding intensive arable land. • Low recreational pressure 	<p>Potential air pollution emissions from additional traffic related to new housing and commercial uses in Wealden District.</p> <p>Site is situated in close proximity to the B2123, but greater than 200 metres from the edge of the road. As guidance⁶ suggests pollution emissions decline exponentially from the road edge it is considered that the proportion of vehicle movement from and to new development in Wealden District would not have a significant impact on the SAC. Notwithstanding this, it is considered that the B2123 is not a primary route for Wealden residents and businesses accessing Brighton. Therefore any increase in traffic from Wealden residents is considered to be <i>deminimus</i>.</p>	No	<p>Development of new homes in Brighton and Hove in accordance with the South East Plan and associated increased car use may lead to negative air quality impacts on this site, depending on location of development.</p>	No

⁶ Scott Wilson and Levett-Thevial *Appropriate Assessment of the Draft South East Plan Final Report* 31 October 2006 (pages 44 to 45)

Table 3: Lewes Downs SAC

Qualifying Features	Key Environmental Conditions to Support Site Integrity	Possible impacts arising from Core Strategy	Is there a significant effect?	Possible impacts from other trends, plans etc	Is there a significant 'in combination' effects?
Dry grasslands and scrublands on chalk or limestone (Important orchid sites)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintenance of grazing • Minimal air pollution – nitrogen deposition may cause reduction in diversity, sulphur deposition can cause acidification • Absence of direct fertilisation • The site is vulnerable to spray-drift (i.e. eutrophication) from surrounding intensive arable land • Low recreational pressure 	<p>Site is situated approximately half a kilometre outside the boundaries of Wealden District.</p> <p>Potential air pollution emissions from additional traffic, related to new housing and commercial floor space, using the A26 from Wealden District towards Lewes Town. Amount of additional traffic not quantified, however travel to work data confirms that a proportion of the population commute out from Wealden into Lewes/Brighton. It can be concluded that an increase in dwelling numbers will increase traffic movement along the A26 from Wealden. The A26 is situated within 200 metres of the SAC however, the SAC is in a elevated position compared to the road decreasing the probability of pollution deposition. Any increase in nitrogen deposition can not be quantified and therefore based precautionary principle there may be</p>	yes	Development of new housing in Lewes District, in accordance with the South East Plan, may result in increased air pollution in proximity to the site and recreational pressure.	Yes

Qualifying Features	Key Environmental Conditions to Support Site Integrity	Possible impacts arising from Core Strategy	Is there a significant effect?	Possible impacts from other trends, plans etc	Is there a significant 'in combination' effects?
		<p>possible impacts upon the SAC.</p> <p>A number of recreational sites are situated in Wealden District including the Ashdown Forest and the Cuckmere Valley, and therefore the probability of recreational use arising from new development is low.</p>			

Table 4: Pevensey Levels Ramsar Site

Qualifying Features	Key Environmental Conditions to Support Site Integrity	Possible impacts arising from Core Strategy	Is there a significant effect?	Possible impacts from other trends, plans etc	Is there a significant 'in combination' effects?
<p>One of the largest and least fragmented lowland wet grassland systems in southeast England.</p> <p>The site supports an outstanding assemblage of wetland plants and invertebrates and is probably the best site in Britain for freshwater molluscs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unpolluted water • Absence of nutrient enrichment • Control of non-native species • Maintenance of appropriate hydrological regime • Low recreational disturbance 	<p>New housing and commercial development in Wealden District may result in increased water demand and changes in water supply to the levels.</p> <p>New housing and commercial development will result in increased waste water treatment works discharges with water quality implications and altered water supply to the Levels.</p> <p>Pevensey Levels is within 200 metres of the A27, a strategic route within Wealden District. Increased car use associated with new housing and commercial floor space may give rise to increased atmospheric pollution and nutrient enrichment, resulting in changes to the habitats on which the species of European importance depend.</p> <p>It is acknowledged that there are rights of way and bridle ways crossing the Pevensey</p>	Yes	<p>In combination effects with Rother District and Eastbourne Borough in relation to water demand and hydrological effects.</p> <p>In combination effects with Rother District, Eastbourne Borough and Hastings Borough in relation to atmospheric pollution.</p>	Yes

Qualifying Features	Key Environmental Conditions to Support Site Integrity	Possible impacts arising from Core Strategy	Is there a significant effect?	Possible impacts from other trends, plans etc	Is there a significant 'in combination' effects?
		<p>Levels. The Pevensey Levels is in general use as farmland. Pevensey Levels is not historically known for recreational use, which is demonstrated an absence of public car parks situated in the area for such purposes. Notwithstanding this, the conservation objectives relate to the water courses in the area and the wetland habitat. As recreation will not take place in such habitats it is considered unlikely that any limited recreation would have an impact on the water habitat.</p>			

APPENDIX I

Plans and Strategies to be Considered in Combination with the Core Strategy

South East Plan

The Regional Spatial Strategy for South East England sets the context for development in the South East of England.

The South East Plan requires policies to provide for a range of sites for employment provision, with a particular emphasis of giving priority to delivering economic development in allocating land in the Sussex Coast sub Region. The South East is required to deliver, as part of the South East Plan, 654,000 net additional dwellings between 2006 and 2026. The local authorities surrounding Wealden District are required to provide:

Eastbourne 4,800 dwellings
Lewes 4,400 dwellings
Mid Sussex 17,100 dwellings
Rother 5,600 dwellings
Sevenoaks 3,300 dwellings
Tandridge 2,500 dwellings
Tunbridge Wells 6,000 dwellings
Wealden 11,000 dwellings

East Sussex and Brighton & Hove Waste Local Plan

The Waste Local Plan sets out a strategy for the management and disposal for all types of waste generated in the plan area. Sites are allocated in Lewes District, Wealden District, Eastbourne Borough and Rother District for waste management purposes.

East Sussex and Brighton & Hove Minerals Local Plan

The key issue in the Local Plan is to balance, through its proposals, the essential need for minerals against the protection of the environment and local amenity. Areas for mineral extraction/ aggregates imports are:

Sovereign Harbour, Eastbourne
Stanton Farm, East Chiltington, Lewes
Beddingham, Lewes
Tarring Neville, Newhaven
Newhaven Quay
Glynde, Lewes
Mountfield and Brightling Gypsum Mines
Ashdown Brickworks, Bexhill

East Sussex Local Transport Plan (LTP2)

Aims to:

- improve transport systems and services to facilitate business growth
- widen sustainable transport choices and reduce harmful impacts on the environment
- offer more accessible transport
- reduce crime and the fear of crime, so that people feel safe when out walking or using public transport
- provide for a healthier community by tackling pollution
- provide safe, sustainable access to education

South Foreland to Beachy Head Shoreline Management Plan

The Shoreline Management Plan (SMP) provides a large-scale and long-term assessment of the risks associated with coastal flooding and erosion and presents a policy framework to address these risks to people and the developed, historic and natural environment in a sustainable manner.

The Plan provides the short, medium and long term policies for the defence of shoreline in the locations of Hooe and Pevensey Levels, Sovereign Harbour, Eastbourne and Beachy Head

Beachy Head to Selsey Bill Shoreline Management Plan (January 2005)

The Shoreline Management Plan (SMP) provides a large-scale and long-term assessment of the risks associated with coastal flooding and erosion and presents a policy framework to address these risks to people and the developed, historic and natural environment in a sustainable manner.

The Plan provides the short, medium and long term policies for the defence of shoreline in the locations of Beachy Head to Cuckmere Haven and Cuckmere Haven.

Emerging River Ouse Catchment Flood Management Plan

The aim of the CFMP is to identify long-term, sustainable policies to manage flood risk within the catchment. These policies will form the basis for development of Strategy Plans, covering all or part of the overall catchment area, which will identify in more detail appropriate flood defence measures.

Catchment Abstraction Management Strategies (CAMS)

The relevant CAMS affecting the District and relevant Natura 2000 sites are:

The Cuckmere and Pevensey Levels CAMS (March 2007)

The Medway CAMS (April 2005)

Adur and Ouse CAMS (March 2005)

Rother CAMS (May 2006)

These strategies set out how the Environment Agency will manage water abstraction in the area.

In terms of the Pevensey Levels the resource availability status is no water available at low flows. Therefore there is no water available for new licences and measures are in place for existing licences. The Ashdown Forest is split between two CAMS area. The Adur and Ouse CAMS conclude that sites identified in the area, including Ashdown Forest, do not have features that are impacted by water resource activities. However, the Medway CAMS states that as the longest continuous valley bog it is important to ensure that there is sufficient spring flow from the underlying Hailsham Beds to maintain the ecological value of this site.

Cuckmere and Sussex Havens Catchment Flood Management Plan

The Cuckmere and Sussex Havens CFMP identifies long-term policies and actions that need to be taken over the next 50 to 100 years to deliver a better, more environmentally sustainable approach for managing flood risk. It plans for the likely impacts of climate change, future land use change and further development in the catchment area and provides a strategic direction for guiding future flood risk management investment, efforts and resources in the Cuckmere and Sussex Havens catchment.

Emerging River Rother and Romney Catchment Flood Management Plan

The aim of the CFMP is to identify long-term, sustainable policies to manage flood risk within the catchment. These policies will form the basis for development of Strategy Plans, covering all or part of the overall catchment area, which will identify in more detail appropriate flood defence measures.

The Medway Catchment Flood Management Plan (July 2004)

The Medway CFMP identifies the significant factors that influence flood flows and flood damages throughout the catchment, at an overview scale, whether they be part of the natural or built environment. It determines how these factors may change with time (for example, by considering future climate change or changes in land use) and seeks to formulate the long term policies and tests some measures for flood risk management at the catchment scale.

Rother District Local Plan (July 2006)

The Local Plan allocates 953-1003 dwellings to ensure the delivery of the overall Structure Plan housing requirements, with 200-250 dwellings located in the Bexhill area (prior to 2011).

Eastbourne Borough Plan (September 2003)

The Borough Plan allocates 1170 dwellings in the Eastbourne area, with allocations for B1, B2 and B8 uses.

Mid Sussex LDF

The Small Scale Housing Allocations Development Plan Document, which is not yet adopted allocated in the region of 1586 dwellings in locations in Mid Sussex.

Lewes District Local Plan (March 2003)

The Plan makes provision for 4,600 dwellings from 1991 to 2011, consisting of windfall sites and allocations. Policies also seek to promote and increase employment opportunities in the Plan period.

Sevenoaks District Local Plan (March 2000)

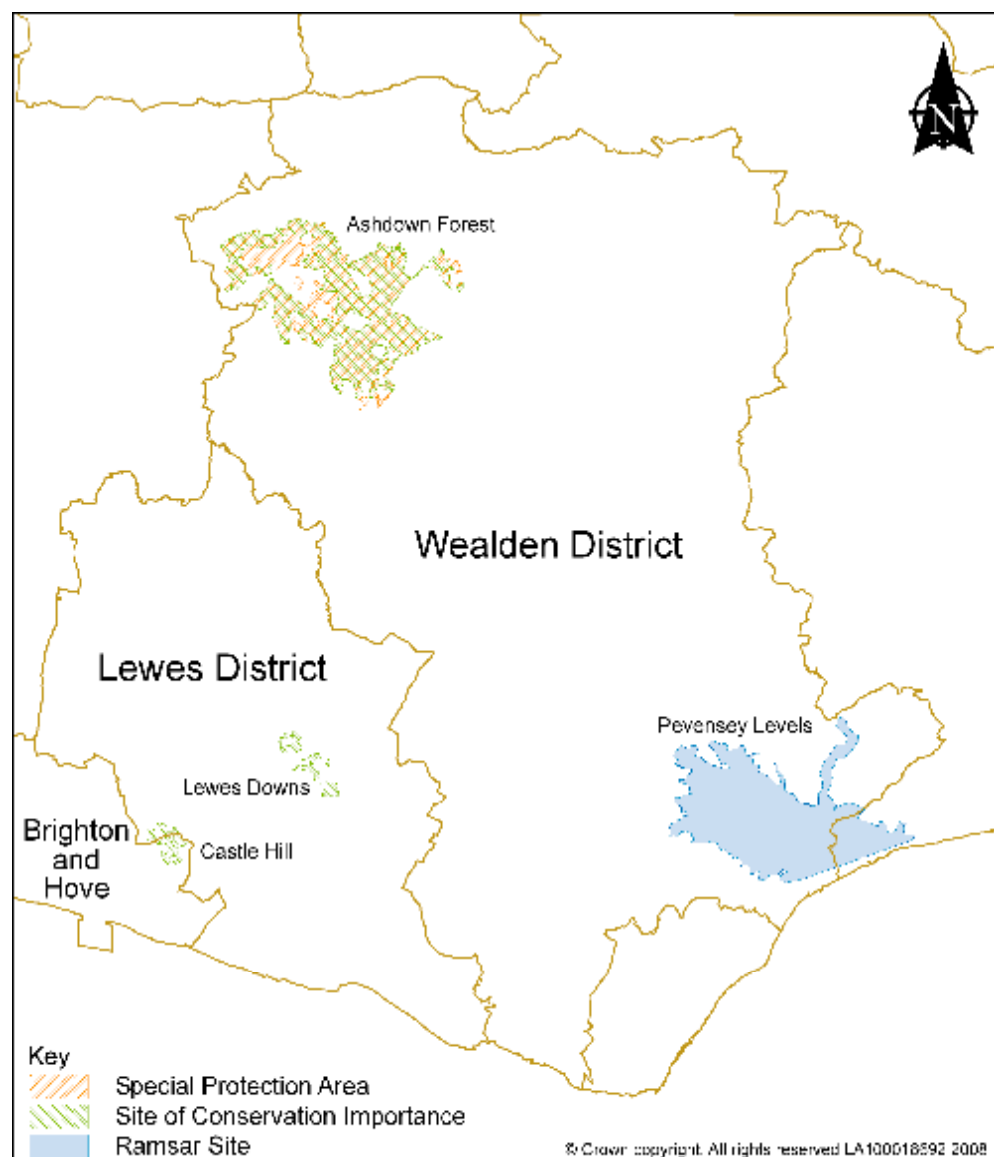
Provides that 3100 dwellings need to be provided between 1991 to 2011. The Plan makes provision for 61,840 sq. m. of floor space for business development.

Non Statutory Wealden Local Plan (approved December 2005)

The Non Statutory Wealden Local Plan identifies land for the development of 3,300 dwellings from 2006-2011 to meet the Structure Plan and new allocations for business floor space of 25,000 square metres.

APPENDIX II

Map detailing European sites within 15 Kilometres of Wealden District Administrative Boundaries



APPENDIX III

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE EUROPEAN SITES

Ashdown Forest SAC

General site character

Heath. Scrub. Maquis and garrigue. Phygrana (60%)
Mixed woodland (40%)⁷

Qualifying features of the Ashdown Forest SAC

The two qualifying features of the Ashdown Forest SAC are:

- 1) Northern Atlantic wet heaths with *Erica tetralix* (for which this is considered to be one of the best areas in the United Kingdom)

Ashdown Forest contains one of the largest single continuous blocks of lowland heath in south-east England, with both 4030 European dry heaths and, in a larger proportion, wet heath. The M16 *Erica tetralix* – *Sphagnum compactum* wet heath element provides suitable conditions for several species of bog-mosses *Sphagnum* spp., bog asphodel *Narthecium ossifragum*, deergrass *Trichophorum cespitosum*, common cotton-grass *Eriophorum angustifolium*, marsh gentian *Gentiana pneumonanthe* and marsh clubmoss *Lycopodiella inundata*. The site supports important assemblages of beetles, dragonflies, damselflies and butterflies, including the nationally rare silver-studded blue *Plebejus argus*, and birds of European importance, such as European nightjar *Caprimulgus europaeus*, Dartford warbler *Sylvia undata* and Eurasian hobby *Falco subbuteo*.⁸

- 2) European dry heaths (this is considered to be one of the best areas in the United Kingdom)

The dry heath in Ashdown Forest is an extensive example of the south-eastern H2 *Calluna vulgaris* – *Ulex minor* community. This vegetation type is dominated by heather *Calluna vulgaris*, bell heather *Erica cinerea* and dwarf gorse *Ulex minor*, with transitions to other habitats. It supports important lichen assemblages, including species such as *Pycnothelia papillaria*. This site supports the most inland remaining population of hairy greenweed *Genista pilosa* in Britain.⁹

⁷ <http://www.jncc.gov.uk/protectedsites/sacselection/SAC.asp?EUCode=UK0030080>

⁸ <http://www.jncc.gov.uk/protectedsites/sacselection/SAC.asp?EUCode=UK0030080>

⁹ <http://www.jncc.gov.uk/protectedsites/sacselection/SAC.asp?EUCode=UK0030080>

- 3) Great Crested newt *Triturus cristatus* (for which the area is considered to support a significant presence)

The breeding sites of the great crested newts are mainly medium sized ponds, though ditches and other waterbody types may also be used. Ponds with aquatic vegetation are favored.¹⁰

Ashdown Forest SPA

General site character

Heath. Scrub. Maquis and garrigue. Phygrana (60%)
Mixed woodland (40%)¹¹

Qualifying features of the Ashdown Forest SPA

Together with the nearby Wealden Heaths SPA and Thames Basin Heath SPA, Ashdown Forest forms part of a complex of heathlands in southern England that support breeding bird populations of European importance.

The following species are of importance:

- 1) Dartford Warbler *Sylvia undata*, 29 pairs representing at least 1.8% of the breeding population in Great Britain (Count as at 1994)
- 2) Nightjar *Caprimulgus europaeus*, 35 pairs representing at least 1.0% of the breeding population in Great Britain (Two year mean, 1991 & 1992)

Vulnerability of Ashdown Forest

The vulnerability of the Ashdown forest is reported "Ashdown Forest is one of the most extensive areas of heathland in south-east England. The optimum management for this site is grazing; however, only approximately 19% of the SAC is grazed. Spread of scrub and bracken is a major threat to the SAC. The majority of the SAC (including the grazed area) is managed sympathetically by the Conservators of Ashdown Forest but there is high demand on resources for scrub clearance, bracken mowing, etc., particularly in the ungrazed area. There is ongoing liaison with the Conservators and other land owners/managers to increase the area of grazed heathland. Obstacles to grazing include public opposition to fencing, availability of graziers/suitable livestock, and constraints on dog-walkers. In general, public access is not a threat to the SAC, unless it prevents expansion of the grazed area. Also, possible long-term drying out of the site may take place, due to borehole extraction and transpiration from increase in vegetation cover. Consultations with the Environment Agency over the possible impact of extraction are

¹⁰ <http://www.jncc.gov.uk/protectedsites/sacselection/species.asp?FeatureIntCode=S1166>

¹¹ <http://www.jncc.gov.uk/protectedsites/sacselection/SAC.asp?EUCODE=UK0030080>

ongoing. Recent increased scrub clearance is likely to have a beneficial effect on wet heath.”¹²

Pevensey Levels Ramsar Site

General Site Character

Pevensey Levels is one of the largest and least-fragmented lowland wet grassland systems in southeast England. The low-lying grazing meadows are intersected by a complex system of ditches which support a variety of important wetland communities, including nationally rare and scarce aquatic plants and invertebrates. The site also supports a notable assemblage of breeding and wintering wildfowl. A small area of shingle and intertidal muds and sands is included within the site¹³.

Qualifying Features of the Pevensey Levels Ramsar Site

The criteria by which the Ramsar site is designated:

1) Ramsar criterion 2

The site supports an outstanding assemblage of wetland plants and invertebrates including many British Red Data Book species.

2) Ramsar criterion 3

The site supports 68% of vascular plant species in Great Britain that can be described as aquatic. It is probably the best site in Britain for freshwater molluscs, one of the five best sites for aquatic beetles Coleoptera and supports an outstanding assemblage of dragonflies Odonata¹⁴.

Lewes Downs SAC

General Site Character

Heath. Scrub. Maquis and garrigue. Phygrana (5%)
Dry grassland. Steppes (85%)
Humid grassland. Mesophile grassland (5%)
Improved grassland (5%)¹⁵

Qualifying Features of Lewes Downs SAC

Lewes Downs qualifies as an SAC due to the chalk grassland site consisting of largely of CG2 *Festuca ovina* – *Avenula pratensis* and CG3 *Bromus erectus* calcareous grasslands. This site contains an important assemblage of rare

¹² <http://www.jncc.gov.uk/protectedsites/sacselection/n2kforms/UK0030080.pdf>

¹³ <http://www.jncc.gov.uk/pdf/RIS/UK11053.pdf>

¹⁴ <http://www.jncc.gov.uk/pdf/RIS/UK11053.pdf>

¹⁵ <http://www.jncc.gov.uk/protectedsites/sacselection/sac.asp?EUCode=UK0012832>

and scarce orchids, including early spider-orchid *Ophrys sphegodes*, burnt orchid *Orchis ustulata* and musk orchid *Herminium monorchis*. The colony of burnt orchid is one of the largest in the UK.¹⁶

Vulnerability

The grassland habitats depend upon grazing by sheep and cattle to conserve and enhance plant (and associated animal) species diversity, particularly of the rarer chalk grassland species. Encroachment by scrub is prevented by cutting and by grazing animals. The site is an NNR managed by the landowner under a management agreement. Where arable land meets the SSSI boundary, leaching and spray-drift are potential threats.¹⁷

Castle Hill SAC

General Site Character

Heath. Scrub. Maquis and garrigue. Phygrana (5%)

Dry grassland. Steppes (90%)

Humid grassland. Mesophile grassland (5%)

Qualifying Features of Castle Hill SAC

The site qualifies as an SAC in relation to the two following matters:

1) This chalk grassland consists of a mosaic of calcareous **semi-natural dry grasslands**, notably CG2 *Festuca ovina* – *Avenula pratensis* grassland, CG3 *Bromus erectus* grassland and CG4 *Brachypodium pinnatum* grassland. Castle Hill's important assemblage of rare and scarce species includes early spider-orchid *Ophrys sphegodes* and burnt orchid *Orchis ustulata*. The colony of early spider-orchid is one of the largest in the UK; and

2) *Gentianella anglica* for which the area is considered to support a significant presence.¹⁸

Early gentian *Gentianella anglica* is an annual plant, occurring in calcareous grassland, mainly on steep, south-facing slopes. It grows on bare ground or in thin turf that is kept open by a combination of rabbit or sheep-grazing and trampling by livestock on thin droughted soils. In dense turf it becomes shaded out and unable to compete with other more vigorous species. It is found on a variety of substrates and in different habitats, but is particularly frequent in coastal grasslands. At most of its localities the vegetation is referable to **6210 Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (Festuco-Brometalia)**.

¹⁶ <http://www.jncc.gov.uk/protectedsites/sacselection/sac.asp?EUCode=UK0012832>

¹⁷ <http://www.jncc.gov.uk/protectedsites/sacselection/n2kforms/UK0012832.pdf>

¹⁸ <http://www.jncc.gov.uk/protectedsites/SACselection/sac.asp?EUCode=UK0012836>

Gentianella ***anglica*** shows considerable phenotypic plasticity, influenced by such factors as management and germination time. The occurrence of what was believed to be probably the hybrid between *G. anglica* and autumn gentian *Gentianella amarella*, *G. x davidiana*, prompted a taxonomic reassessment of *G. anglica* throughout its British range. Ecological monitoring and genetic investigation of *G. anglica* populations began in 1998. Initial results of this research appear to question the validity of maintaining *G. anglica* as a separate species from the more widespread *G. amarella* (Winfield & Parker 2000). However, the Habitats Directive continues to recognise ***G. anglica*** as a separate taxon.¹⁹

Vulnerability

The grassland habitats depend upon grazing by sheep and cattle to conserve and enhance plant (and associated animal) species diversity, particularly of the rarer chalk grassland species. Encroachment by scrub is prevented by cutting and grazing animals. The site is an National Nature Reserve leased to English Nature from the local authority. The site is surrounded by arable land, so leaching and spray-drift are potential threats.²⁰

¹⁹ <http://www.jncc.gov.uk/protectedsites/SACselection/species.asp?FeatureIntCode=S1654>

²⁰ <http://www.jncc.gov.uk/protectedsites/SACselection/n2kforms/UK0012836.pdf>