



Housing Action Plan 2025

October 2025

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1. Introduction

Background

- 1.1 The national housing crisis remains one of the most pressing challenges facing communities across the UK, with rising demand and constrained supply placing increasing pressure on local authorities. In response, the Labour Party's 2024 manifesto¹ set out a clear ambition to deliver 1.5 million new homes over the next parliamentary period.
- 1.2 Central to this ambition is a commitment to reforming the planning system through the Planning and Infrastructure Bill (PIB), introduced on 11 March 2024. Initial changes to the planning system have already taken effect through measures such as revisions to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in December 2024. The revised NPPF supports the government's ambitions through reintroducing mandatory housing targets for local authorities, and mechanisms to hold local planning authorities accountable for under delivery. Further changes to the NPPF are anticipated later in 2025, alongside wider national planning changes such as the introduction of rule-based National Development Management Policies (NDMP)².
- 1.3 Additional legislative changes are also being considered or continued with. The previous government produced a Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill (LURB)³ that was published on 11 May 2022 that is seeking to introduce new planning reforms in the longer-term. The LURB⁴ reached Royal Assent at the end of October 2023, becoming the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act (LURA). Further measures are being consulted upon, most recently with proposals the government publishing a consultation on Planning Reform Working Paper 'Speeding Up Build Out' in May 2025. The paper considered mechanisms to speed up delivery rates on sites that benefit from planning permission.

¹ [Labour Party Manifesto 2024](#)

² [Proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework and other changes to the planning system – Paragraph 11](#)

³ [Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill, DLUHC, May 2022](#)

⁴ [Levelling Up and Regeneration Act, DLUHC, October 2023](#)

- 1.4 These measures intend to deliver more housing, improve housing affordability and where possible, remove barriers to new housing development. This is necessary as the annual net additional dwellings for England have fallen significantly short of delivering the current target of 300,000 homes per year for England. The net housing supply dropped significantly in England in the years following the economic downturn that commenced in 2008/09. Whilst supply then recovered to just above previous levels, further changes in the economic climate and worldwide events such as the Covid-19 pandemic and national lockdowns all took effect. At present, the annual number of net additional dwellings in the 2023-24 period was 221,070; a drop of 6% compared to the previous year and way short of the 300,00 homes per year target.
- 1.5 Local planning authorities have an important and longstanding role in planning for and demonstrating a sufficient supply of housing in their area, contributing to the additional dwellings delivered nationally each year. The Housing Delivery Test (HDT) is one of the government's key initiatives to help boost housing growth and to encourage local planning authorities to have a more proactive role in supporting housing delivery in its area, as well as taking accountability for under-delivery.
- 1.6 The production of this Housing Action Plan is a direct result of HDT measurement 2023⁵ that was published on 19 December 2023 for Wealden District. It should be noted that the HDT measurement is normally updated annually. This Housing Action Plan will be kept under review and updated as and when the new HDT measurement is published.

⁵ [Housing Delivery Test: 2023 measurement](#)

The Purpose, Aims and Status of the Document

1.7 The main aims of the Housing Action Plan are as follows:

- To provide a short summary of the Council's HDT results and its implications;
- To provide an analysis of the key reasons for the historic under-delivery of new homes in the district against its housing requirement;
- To identify the measures the Council has already undertaken and intends to take to increase and accelerate the delivery of new housing in the district; and
- To identify the monitoring arrangements for the Housing Action Plan.

1.8 The Council recognises that delivering growth within the district is complex. Whilst it is noted that a number of the actions identified in the Housing Action Plan are principally within the remit of the Council to resolve (such as the production of planning documents and the timely determination of planning applications for housing schemes), the Council will also need the support and co-operation of those involved in delivering new homes. This includes landowners, developers, land promoters, infrastructure providers (such as utility providers) and upper tier authorities (i.e. East Sussex County Council) to name a few.

Scope of the Action Plan

1.9 The remainder of this Housing Action Plan is structured as follows:

- *Section 2* – This section summarises the Housing Delivery Test (HDT) introduced by the government and provides a summary of the Council's most recent results and its implications.
- *Section 3* – This section provides a summary of the local housing market and delivery context and endeavours to provide the key reasons for the under-delivery of new homes in the district against its housing requirements.
- *Section 4* – This section provides a summary of the key measures the Council intends to undertake to provide a step change in housing delivery for the district.

- *Section 5* – This section provides details of how actions set out in the Housing Action Plan will be implemented, managed and monitored, including any relevant reporting arrangements.

2. The Housing Delivery Test (HDT)

- 2.1 The HDT and Housing Action Plan was first introduced within the revised NPPF that was initially published in July 2018, with the latest revision in December 2024⁶. The mechanisms for the HDT were outlined within the revised NPPF and in the Housing Delivery Test Measurement Rule Book⁷ and has been applied across all local authorities in the country (apart from National Parks⁸). This mechanism was introduced to monitor whether local planning authorities are building enough homes to meet their respective housing requirements over a three-year period.
- 2.2 The HDT measures the net additional number of homes delivered over the previous three-year period against the Council's housing requirements. Local planning authorities are required to take appropriate actions where certain delivery target thresholds are not met. The specific consequences for local planning authorities who do not meet such targets are set out below:
- Where delivery falls below 95% of the requirement over the previous three years, the authority should prepare an Action Plan⁹ to assess the causes of under delivery and identify actions to increase delivery in future years;
 - Where delivery falls below 85% of the requirement over the previous three years, the authority should include a 20% buffer to their identified supply of specific deliverable sites as set out in paragraph 78 of the NPPF, in addition to the requirement for an Action Plan;
 - Where delivery falls below 75% of the requirement over the previous three years, the presumption in favour of sustainable development applies, as set out in footnote 8 of the NPPF, in addition to the requirements for an Action Plan and 20% buffer.

⁶ See paragraph 79 of the NPPF (December 2024)

⁷ [Housing Delivery Test Measurement Rule Book \(December 2024\)](#)

⁸ It is noted that the South Downs National Park (SDNP) is located within a small part of Wealden District, but this has a small population.

⁹ [Planning Practice Guidance \(PPG\) – Housing Supply and Delivery](#)

- 2.3 The consequences will apply the day following the publication of the HDT results and will continue to apply until the next HDT measurement is published.

The Housing Delivery Test Results for Wealden District

- 2.4 Table 1 below outlines the HDT targets for the three annual periods considered for the latest HDT measurement. Table 2 outlines Wealden District Council's (WDC) performance against the HDT measurement 2023 in full. This confirms that WDC is required to publish a Housing Action Plan and to add a 20% buffer to its current housing land supply position.

Table 1: Housing Delivery Test Requirement

Year	HDT Target	Reason	HDT Measurement Summary
2020/2021	816	The 2020/21 housing requirement was based on the minimum local housing need figure identified from the 2014 household projections for that year (2020). However, owing to the national lockdowns associated with the Covid-19 pandemic, we saw temporary disruption to local authorities and the construction sector. Therefore, the Government has reflected this in the 2020/21 HDT results and reduced the 'homes required' within the 2020/2021 period in the HDT by four months, so this equated to a housing requirement figure of 816 dwellings for Wealden District.	The fourth HDT measurement (known as HDT measurement 2021) was published by the Government on 14 January 2022. This stated that Wealden District has an HDT measurement result of 82% and therefore resulted in the Council needing to publish its third Housing Action Plan and to continue to apply a 20% buffer to its housing land supply position.
2021/2022	1,221	The 2021/22 housing requirement was based on the minimum local housing need figure identified from the 2014	The fifth HDT measurement (known as HDT measurement 2022) was published by the Government on 19

Year	HDT Target	Reason	HDT Measurement Summary
		household projections for that year (2021), which equated to 1,221 dwellings.	December 2023. This stated that Wealden District has an HDT measurement result of 78% and has therefore resulted in the Council needing to publish its fourth Housing Action Plan and to continue to apply a 20% buffer to its housing land supply position.
2022/23	1,212	The 2022/23 housing requirement was based on the minimum local housing need figure identified from the 2014 household projections for that year (2022), which equated to 1,212 dwellings.	The sixth HDT measurement (known as HDT measurement 2023) was published by the Government on 12 December 2024. This stated that Wealden District has an HDT measurement result of 80% and has therefore resulted in the Council needing to publish its fifth Housing Action Plan (this document) and to continue to apply a 20% buffer to its housing land supply position that is addressed later in this document.

Table 2: Wealden District Performance against the Housing Delivery Test (2020/21-2022/23)

Requirement				Delivered				Housing Delivery Test: 2023 Measurement	Housing Delivery Test: 2023 Consequence
2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	Total	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	Total		
816	1,221	1,212	3,249	768	685	1,138	2,591	80%	Buffer + Action Plan

- 2.5 WDC recognises that it did not deliver sufficient housing to meet its locally identified housing need during this period. The Council also recognises that there has been a step change in the district's housing requirement since 2013. The Council is therefore seeking to meet this challenge and has the ambition to increase both the quantum and speed of new housing delivery within the district. This Housing Action Plan forms part of a suite of documents that will aim to facilitate this change.

3. Housing Delivery Analysis

- 3.1 The PPG¹⁰ confirms that local planning authorities may wish to include an assessment of the reasons as to why the local planning authority has under-delivered in relation to housing in their Housing Action Plans. To improve the future supply of new homes, it is considered helpful to understand the planning context of Wealden and its past housing delivery results. The following section provides the planning background to the district and its performance in relation to housing delivery in previous years.

Geographical Context

- 3.2 Wealden District is the largest local authority in the County of East Sussex, covering some 835 square kilometres. In 2021, it had a population of 160,151 with 68,266 households¹¹. Approximately 55% of the population live within the urban areas of Hailsham, Crowborough, Uckfield, Heathfield, Polegate, Westham and Willingdon, with the remainder living in rural areas.
- 3.3 In terms of significant constraints and designations, Wealden District contains a substantial proportion of the High Weald National Landscape that makes up over 53% of the district. This largely covers the northern half of Wealden District and surrounds the settlements of Heathfield and Crowborough. Over 7% of Wealden District falls within the South Downs National Park (SDNP) to the southwest of the district (to the south of the A27 and to west of Polegate/Eastbourne). In addition, the Ashdown Forest Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protection Area (SPA) is located in the northwest of the district and the Pevensey Levels Ramsar Site and SAC¹² is located in the southeast of district.
- 3.4 It is considered that both the housing market and the economy within the district are heavily influenced by the historic under provision of infrastructure and the influence exerted by other major towns and employment opportunities in the wider region. Both the towns of Eastbourne and Royal Tunbridge Wells are located hard up against the administrative border of Wealden District to

¹⁰ [See Paragraph 050 Reference ID: 68-050-20190722 of the PPG - Housing Supply and Delivery](#)

¹¹ See 2021 Census.

¹² Both the Ashdown Forest and Pevensey Levels are also Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

the south and north respectively, whilst the towns of East Grinstead (Mid Sussex District), Lewes (Lewes District) and Bexhill (Rother District) are located a short distance from the administrative border of Wealden.

Local Planning Context

3.5 The current adopted statutory development plan¹³ for Wealden District consists of the following documents:

- Wealden District Core Strategy Local Plan (February 2013);
- Wealden District Affordable Housing Delivery Local Plan (May 2016);
- 'Saved' policies of the Wealden District Local Plan (1998);
- East Sussex, South Downs and Brighton and Hove Waste and Minerals Local Plan (October 2024)¹⁴;
- East Sussex, South Downs and Brighton and Hove Waste and Minerals Sites Plan (February 2017); and
- Adopted Neighbourhood Plans¹⁵.

3.6 Wealden District Council's most recently adopted development plan document that included a housing requirement for the district, is the Wealden District Core Strategy Local Plan (February 2013)¹⁶. Policy WCS1 (Provision of Homes and Jobs 2006-2027) stated that Wealden District is to provide for 9,440 (net) dwellings over the period 2006-2027, that equated to 450 dwellings per annum (dpa). For the purposes of the HDT, the Wealden District Core Strategy Local Plan became out of date on the 19 February 2018.

3.7 The Council adopted a new Local Development Scheme (LDS) at its Local Plan Sub-Committee meeting on 5 March 2025. The LDS contains the timetable to produce the new Local Plan and to review the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Charging Schedule.

3.8 The Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (SHELAA) involves a technical, high-level assessment of sites which could

¹³ [Wealden District Council Local Plan Documents](#)

¹⁴ [East Sussex, South Downs and Brighton and Hove Waste and Minerals Local Plan Review Revised Policies \(October 2024\)](#)

¹⁵ [Adopted Neighbourhood Plans](#)

¹⁶ [Wealden District Core Strategy Local Plan \(February 2013\)](#)

contribute towards the future supply of housing and employment land within Wealden District. It provides background evidence on the potential availability of sites. The Council has undertaken two formal 'Call for Sites' exercises as part of the preparation of the SHELAA and for the emerging Local Plan.

- 3.9 The first formal 'Call for Sites' exercise was open between late November 2020 and mid-January 2021. Alongside the first 'Call for Sites' exercise, the Council produced the Wealden Local Plan – Direction of Travel Document¹⁷ that considered high level options for housing policy and the potential distribution of growth for the new Local Plan, and this was consulted upon between 23 November 2020 and 18 January 2021.
- 3.10 The latest SHELAA document was published in February 2024, aligned with a second Regulation 18 consultation on the new Local Plan¹⁸ that took place between 15 March 2024 and 10 May 2024. A second 'Call for Sites' exercise also opened on 15 March 2024 and remains open for submission of new SHELAA sites in support of the new Local Plan and work is now underway to publish an updated SHELAA report aligned with a third Regulation 18 consultation on the new Local Plan. This consultation will have a specific focus on the spatial strategy, development sites and other interrelated topics such as housing and economic policies.
- 3.11 At the time of writing, the Council has seven 'made' (adopted) Neighbourhood Plans in the district for the Parishes of East Hoathly with Halland, Hailsham, Herstmonceux, Hellingly, Horam, Ninfield and Wadhurst. These are key documents in terms of the delivery of new housing, as they can seek to allocate housing growth to individual towns and villages within the district.
- 3.12 The Self-Build and Custom Build Register is completed and managed by the Council's Planning Policy Team and is a register of individuals or groups who have expressed an interest in self-build and custom build projects. As of 2 September 2025, there are 292 individuals, and 1 association (with 3 members) enrolled on the register.

¹⁷ [Wealden Local Plan – Direction of Travel Consultation \(November 2020\)](#)

¹⁸ [Wealden Draft Local Plan – Regulation 18 Consultation \(March 2024\)](#)

- 3.13 The Council has published the Wealden Local Housing Need Assessment (August 2021) in support of the Council's new Local Plan. This included an assessment of affordable housing need, the district's relationship with other Housing Market Areas (HMAs), as well as providing recommendations on housing mix to be provided and the needs of specific groups, such as older persons housing. This evidence base document was used to consider planning policies for the Council's emerging Local Plan and this evidence base is to be updated as part of the Local Plan process.
- 3.14 The Wealden District Council Strategy¹⁹ sets out the Council's key priorities for the district that includes several themed around housing delivery. The plan aims for the provision of good housing that local people can afford, in places where they want to live and ensuring that development meets future needs, with associated investment in infrastructure. The Mid Term Update considers what has been achieved in meeting these priorities. It also reviews ongoing priorities over the next three years in the context of government plans to replace two tier authorities with new councils responsible for delivering all local services (known as Local Government Reorganisation (LGR)). In that, it remains a priority to continue the development of the Local Plan as part of our legacy for Wealden.
- 3.15 The Wealden Housing Strategy 2020-2025²⁰ was published in 2020 and contains an individual chapter on increasing housing supply that aims to increase the provision of both affordable homes and the number of smaller properties within the district. The strategy is currently being reviewed and has been out for public consultation. The draft Wealden Housing Strategy 2025-2028 focuses on maximising the delivery of all housing including affordable housing in the district. It outlines proposals to work with developers, landowners and stakeholders to bring forward suitable land for development, ensuring a more responsive and sustainable delivery of housing.

¹⁹ [The Wealden District Council Strategy](#)

²⁰ [The Housing Strategy 2020-25, June 2020](#)

Housing Requirement

- 3.16 The new Local Plan will determine the Council's new housing requirement and will be informed by a local housing needs assessment, conducted using the 'standard method' in national planning guidance. The latest local housing needs assessment, conducted under the 'standard method' equates to 1,457 dwellings per annum (dpa). This housing needs figure is significantly higher (over 3 times) the housing target set out within the Council's adopted Wealden District Core Strategy Local Plan (February 2013) that was published 12 years ago and is a significant reason as to why the Council is now unable to deliver against its new housing requirement without adopting a new Local Plan. The Council will be seeking to address this issue through the production of its new Local Plan.
- 3.17 Under the Localism Act 2011, local planning authorities and other duty to cooperate partners are required to cooperate with each other when preparing or supporting the preparation of policies which address strategic matters. This is known as the duty to cooperate. Making appropriate provision for housing (including affordable housing) is considered to be one of these strategic matters under the NPPF (December 2024). The new housing requirement for Wealden District will therefore have to consider the unmet housing needs of neighbouring local planning authorities and whether it can be met within Wealden District as part of its new Local Plan.
- 3.18 The Council is in the process of producing a new Local Plan, with the Regulation 18 Local Plan²¹ published on the 15 March 2024. The Regulation 18 Wealden Local Plan looked ahead to 2040 and provided a vision for the district, a long-term spatial strategy for growth, including the locations where development will take place. Draft Policy SS2: Provision of Homes of the draft Wealden Local Plan (Regulation 18) confirms at that stage, that 15,729 (net) dwellings can be delivered between 1 October 2023 and 31 March 2040. This equates to 953 dpa.
- 3.19 A formal consultation on the Draft Wealden Local Plan (Regulation 18) took place between 15 March and 10 May 2024. As part of the Local Plan

²¹ [Draft Wealden Local Plan \(Regulation 18\), March 2024](#)

consultation, the Council did undertake a further 'Call for Sites' exercise as discussed above, and the Council will consider the sites submitted through this exercise and will undertake further testing of those sites already submitted to the SHELAA.

- 3.20 Since the consultation on the Draft Wealden Local Plan (Regulation 18) there has been changes to national planning policy, primarily the revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), published on 12 December 2024. The revised NPPF included changes to the 'standard methodology' for housing need, meaning an increase for the Wealden district from 1,200 dwellings per annum as at the time of the Local Plan Regulation 18 consultation, increasing to 1,457 dwellings per annum at the time of writing. Given these changes, a further draft Regulation 18 Local Plan is required to address the increase in standard method calculation for the district through the review and assessment of current and new SHELAA sites. The consultation on the targeted draft Local Plan is due to take place in Quarter 3 of 2025/2026 as stated in the Council's Local Development Scheme (LDS)²².

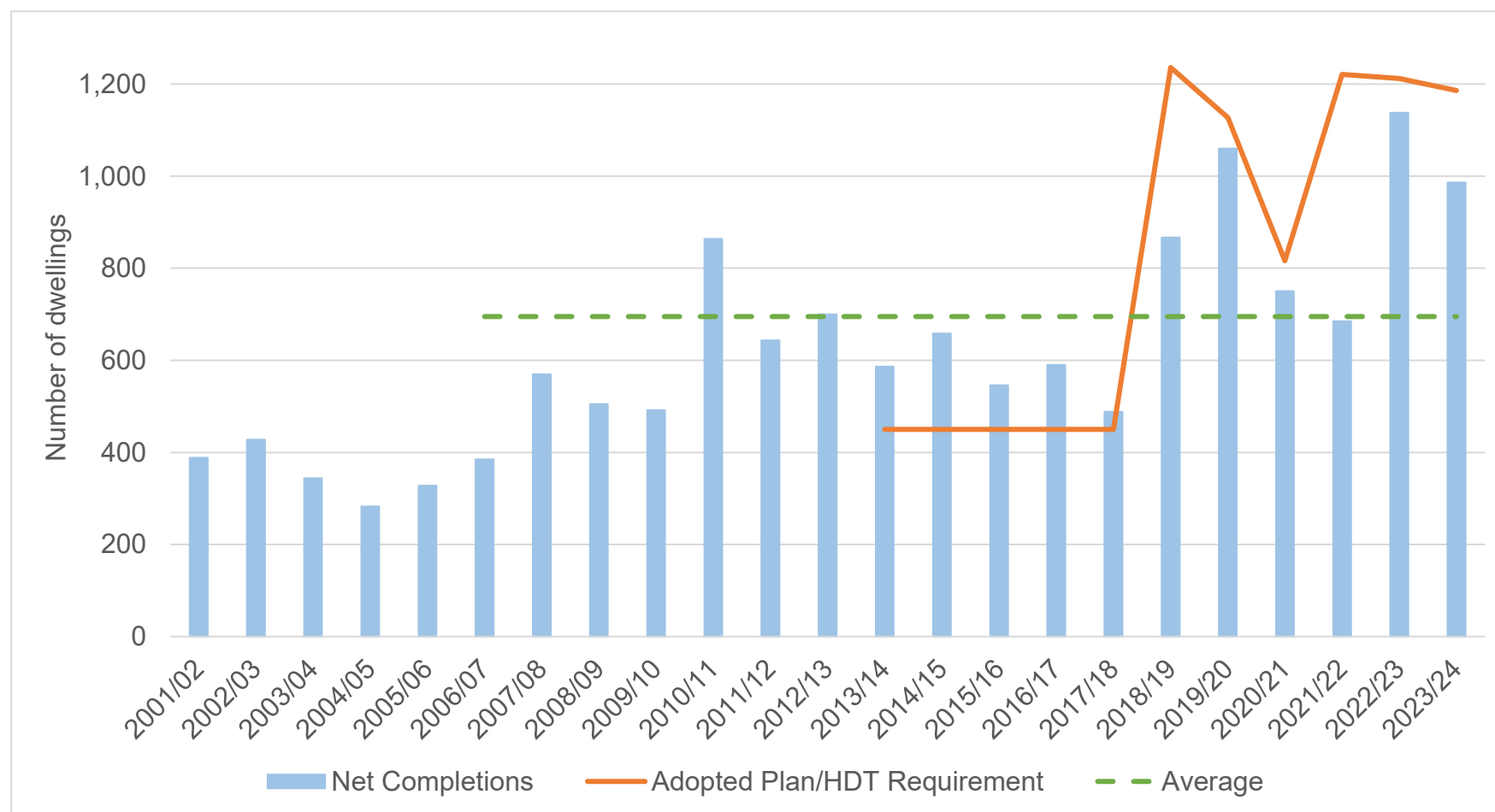
Housing Delivery

- 3.21 The Council monitors housebuilding through the collection of data on planning applications and the completion/commencement of individual dwellings. These two elements provide the basis for measuring performance against the Council's housing requirement as set out in its adopted Local Plan. The data collected on housing approvals and completions feeds into the Council's Authority Monitoring Report (AMR) and Housing Land Supply Position Statement, which are published at least on an annual basis.
- 3.22 The monitoring process consists of site visits to existing development sites (i.e. sites with extant planning permissions) and engaging with developers/house builders where necessary to understand potential delivery rates and completion targets. The monitoring process also includes an assessment of historical delivery rates and lead-in times for different types of housing development in the district.

²² [Local Development Scheme 2025-2028](#)

3.23 Figure 1 below shows the number of new homes built in Wealden District between 2000/01 and 2023/24. Since the start of the Wealden District Core Strategy Local Plan period in 2006, a total of 12,513 net additional dwellings (including new dwellings in the Wealden part of the SDNP) have been delivered up until 31 March 2024. This equates to 695 dpa over the current plan period to date, which is higher than the housing requirement set out in the Wealden District Core Strategy Local Plan (February 2013). It should be noted that from 2007/08 period, annual net housing completions has consistently been above the adopted housing requirement.

Figure 1: Annual Net Housing Completions in Wealden District - 2000/01 to 2023/24



²³ [Housing Supply; Net Additional Dwellings, by Local Authority District, England: Table 122, DLUHC, November 2024](#). Please note that all net housing completions have been included in data, including those dwellings completed in Wealden District that now forms part of the South Downs National Park (SDNP).

- 3.24 The number of houses built in any given year is, in part, a reflection of the number of sites with planning permission. There is a lag between the granting of planning permission and the completion of new homes on site, often around 1-3 years for sites with detailed planning permission and potentially longer on sites with outline planning permission. The lag time between the granting of planning permission and commencement is dependent on the size of the site and other related matters (such as the provision of infrastructure). We now turn to the supply of new housing in the district.

Housing Land Supply

- 3.25 The latest housing supply position was undertaken on 1 April 2025 and is documented within Council's latest Housing Land Supply²⁴. This housing supply position is updated by the Council at least for each financial year to ensure that the Council's housing land supply position remains up to date. As part of this process, the Council identifies all dwellings that have been completed during the previous monitoring period, all housing sites where construction is underway and all sites with extant planning permissions (or with a resolution to grant planning permission) as of the 1 April 2025.
- 3.26 In total, the number of dwellings that either have extant planning permissions (or a resolution to grant planning permission) as of 1 April 2025 and are anticipated to come forward within the next five years is 6,020 (net) dwellings compared to a five-year housing requirement of 8,742 (net) dwellings under the 'standard methodology' with a 20% buffer applied. This equates to the equivalent of 3.44 years of housing land supply. Dwellings with extant planning permissions as of 1 April 2025 have been categorised in the table below.

²⁴ [Housing Land Supply Statement – 1 April 2025 \(September 2025\)](#)

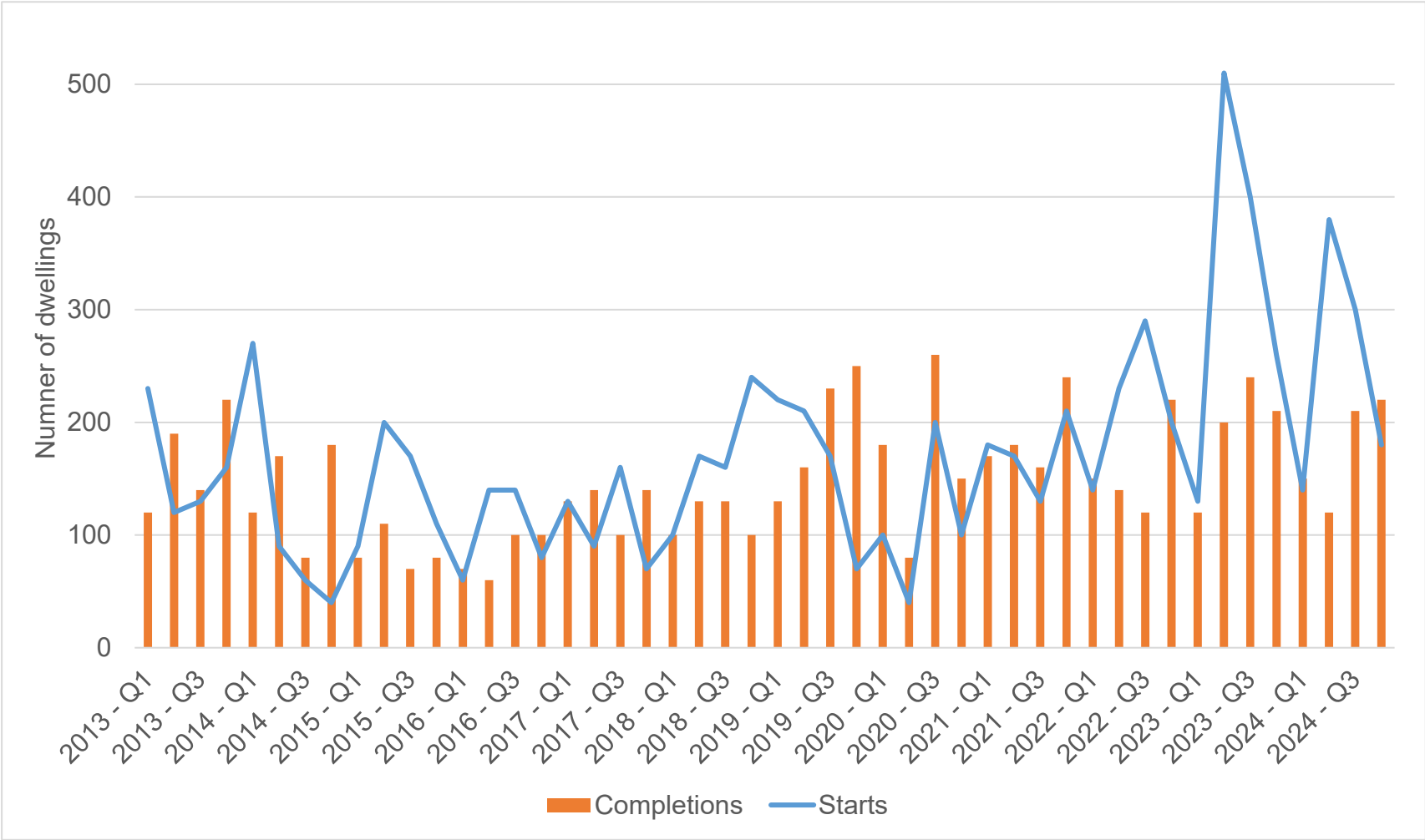
Table 3: Composition of Five Year Housing Supply as of 1 April 2025

Category of Supply	No. of Dwellings (Net)
Small Sites with 9 dwellings or less with Planning Permission	638
Major Sites with 10 dwellings or more with Detailed Planning Permission or under Construction	3,872
Major Sites with 10 dwellings or more with Outline Planning Permission or a Resolution to Grant Outline Planning Permission	1,396
Sites with Planning Permission or Resolution to Grant Planning Permission with C2 accommodation (equated to C3)	114
Total	6,020

- 3.27 In terms of the overall housing land supply position in the district, the total number of dwellings with extant planning permissions or resolutions to grant planning permission equates to 7,845 dwellings; this is just over five years' worth of the housing need for the district but would still not meet our five-year housing requirement inclusive of the 20% buffer. The Council will need to steadily increase the supply of new homes with planning permission over the coming years and to identify sites in a new Local Plan that can be developed for new homes. It is noted that over three quarters of all dwellings in supply either have detailed planning permission or are small sites (9 dwellings or less) that have either commenced and/or are very likely to deliver homes in the short term.
- 3.28 The crucial issue, and one of the main objectives of this Housing Action Plan, is to translate outline planning permissions into development on the ground. The government monitors the number of dwellings started for each local planning authority in England, including Wealden.

3.29 Figure 2 below shows housebuilding starts in Wealden since the adoption of its current Local Plan in 2013 by each quarter. Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic in March 2020, the district was experiencing its highest number of commencements since the adoption of the current Local Plan in 2013, with both the 2018 and 2019 periods recording 670 commencements. However, during the 2020 period this figure dropped significantly to 440, as a result of the partial closure of the construction industry during the period. This significant drop off in housing commencements during the Covid-19 period has partially recovered, with 1,300 commencements in 2023; by far the highest number of commencements annually recorded between 2013 and 2023. In 2024, similar rates have been recorded with 1,000 housing commencements taking place.

Figure 2: Housebuilding Starts (commencements) in Wealden – 2013 to 2024²⁵



²⁵ [Permanent Dwellings Started and Completed, by Tenure and District: Table 253a, MHCLG, June 2024.](#)

Housing Land Supply Position

3.30 The NPPF (December 2024) at paragraph 78 confirms that local planning authorities:

‘should identify and update annually a supply of specific deliverable sites sufficient to provide a minimum of five years’ worth of housing against their housing requirement set out in adopted strategic policies, or against their local housing need where the strategic policies are more than five years old’.

3.31 As discussed above, the latest housing land supply position was undertaken on 1 April 2025 and is documented within the Council’s Housing Land Supply Statement that was published in September 2025²⁶. The calculation of the housing land supply position as of the 1 April 2025, in line with the current NPPF is shown below.

Table 4: Five Year Housing Land Supply Position for period between 1 April 2025 and 31 March 2030

Five Year Housing Requirement	7,285 (net) dwellings
20% buffer (20% of 7,825)	1,457 (net) dwellings
Five Year Housing Requirement including buffer	8,742 (net) dwellings
Total Housing Land Supply (Projected Net Housing Completions)	7,845 (net) dwellings
Five Year Housing Land Supply (Projected Net Housing Completions)	6,020 (net) dwellings
Housing Land Supply against Requirement	3.44 years

3.32 Therefore, as of 1 April 2025, there are 6,020 (net) dwellings on identified sites that are considered available, suitable and available now for the five-year period, which is some 2,722 (net) dwellings less than the 8,742 (net)

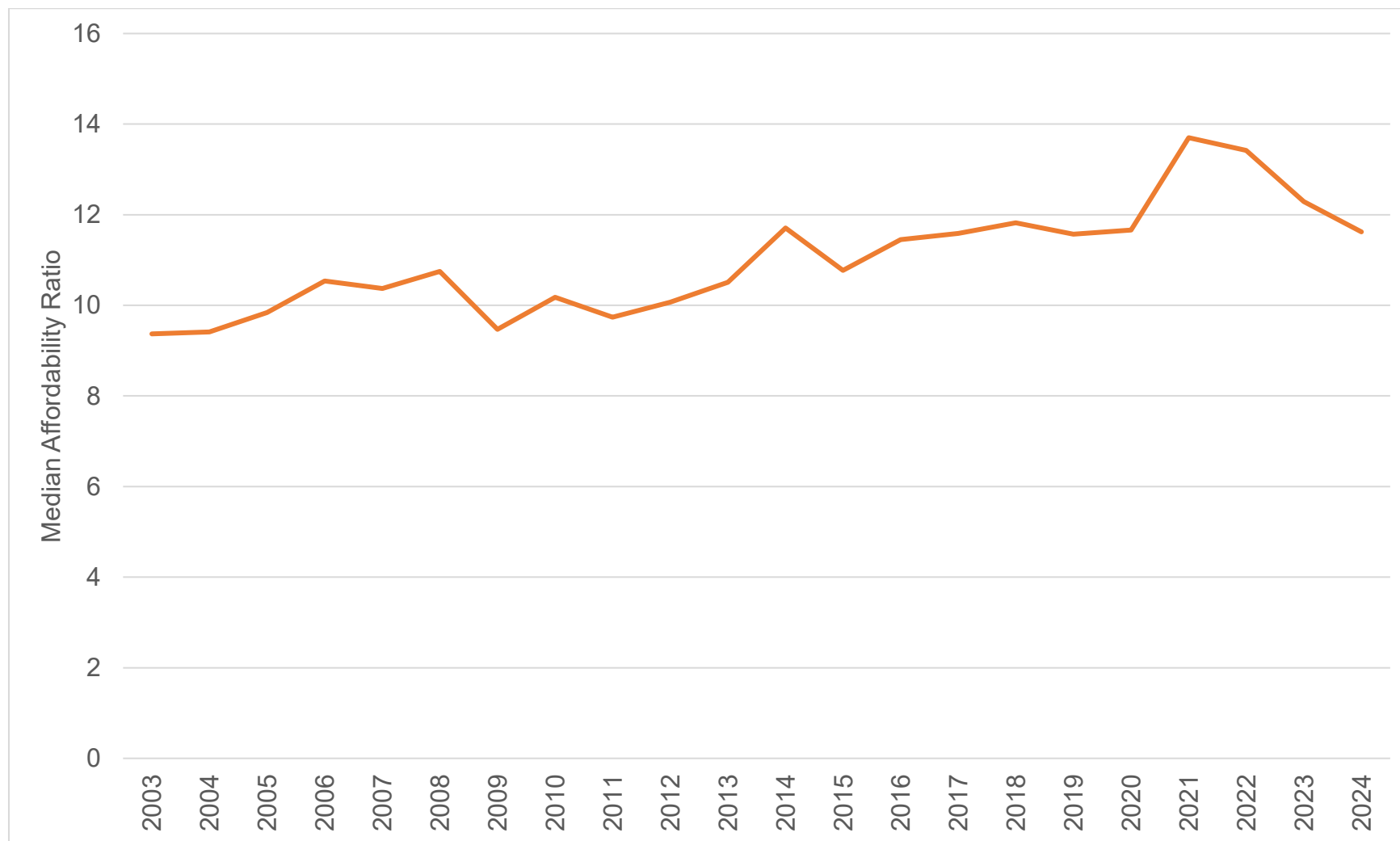
²⁶ [Housing Land Supply Statement – 1 April 2025](#) (September 2025)

dwellings required to be deliverable (inclusive of a 20% buffer). This equates to 3.44 years of housing land supply as of 1 April 2025.

Affordability

3.33 It is also recognised that the affordability of homes within Wealden does not align with median wages in the district and that there has been a continuing trend for worsening affordability for housing over time. Figure 4 below shows the ratio of median house prices to median gross annual workplace-based earnings for Wealden District since 2003. In short, the ratio provides the number for median gross annual workplace-based earnings needed to purchase a median priced house in Wealden. In 2003, this ratio was at 9.37 and in 2024, it had risen to 11.62. This is largely comparable with a number of outer boroughs in Greater London and other shire district's within Southeast England. In East Sussex, only Lewes District has a marginally worse affordability ratio in 2024 at 12.09.

Figure 3: Median Affordability Ratio for Wealden since 2003²⁷



²⁷ [House price to workplace-based earnings ratio, MHCLG, March 2024](#)

- 3.34 The continuing worsening of affordability in Wealden District is an issue that can be partly addressed through the new Local Plan process (particularly the delivery of both market and affordable housing), although it is recognised that many local authorities in the south east of England have similar issues.
- 3.35 Whilst there has and continues to be progress for housing delivery in the district, it is clear that there are a number of challenges to overcome that require intervention and support. The next section provides details on some of the actions already undertaken and future actions that will be taken forward.

4. Key Actions and Responses

- 4.1 This Housing Action Plan focuses on the intervention options open to the Council, recognising that a wide range of partners will need to be involved in helping to achieve the objectives of the Housing Action Plan. This will involve working with landowners, developers, registered providers and development bodies, as well as infrastructure providers to ensure that more new housing is delivered within Wealden District.
- 4.2 The government has announced through its reforms to the NPPF and other changes to the planning system a number of additional measures to deliver new homes and has identified housebuilding as a significant issue and economic driver to address. The Planning Reform Working Paper: Speeding up Build Out²⁸ looks to address the slower build out rates and proposes measures that could be implemented to encourage homes to be built out faster than previous years. The Council is committed to working constructively with government and other partners to take advantage of funding opportunities and other proposed measures to help deliver new housing and supporting infrastructure, in line with national planning policy. These issues will be key elements of the new Local Plan moving forward.

What has the Council done so far?

- 4.3 The Council has already made progress in supporting the delivery of housing, working with partners to bring development forward and recognising opportunities. The following table provides the specific actions that have been undertaken by WDC so far in tackling housing supply and delivery.

²⁸ [Planning Reform Working Paper: Speeding up Build Out](#)

Table 5: Actions undertaken so far by WDC to Support Housing Delivery

Action	How is the Council addressing this action?
Preparing a new Local Plan	<p>The Council is committed to updating its Local Plan. It will contain both strategic and non-strategic policies and will replace all existing Local Plan documents that the Council has adopted. The Local Development Scheme (LDS) was adopted by Wealden District Council on 5 March 2025 following the NPPF reforms in December 2024 and confirms the following timetable for the preparation of the new Local Plan.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early Engagement Consultation – This document, known as the ‘Direction of Travel’ Consultation Document was published and consulted upon between 23 November 2020 to 18 January 2021. • Draft Wealden Local Plan (Regulation 18) consultation – this was published in the spring of 2024, with the consultation running from Friday 15 March 2024 to Friday 10 May 2024. • Second draft Wealden Local Plan (Regulation 18) consultation – Quarter 3 2025/26 • Local Plan Submission Draft (Regulation 19/20) –Quarter 1 2026/27 • Local Plan Pre-Submission Draft to the Secretary of State (Regulation 22) – Quarter 2 2026/27 • Adoption of the Local Plan (Regulation 26) –Quarter 1 2027/28 <p>The Council will endeavour to meet the future key deadlines within the LDS to ensure that an up-to-date Local Plan is in place and so the Council can deliver against its housing requirements and the Housing Delivery Test in the future.</p>

Action	How is the Council addressing this action?
Review of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Charging Schedule	<p>The Council is committed to updating its CIL Charging Schedule. The LDS was adopted by Wealden District Council on 5 March 2025 and confirms the following timetable for the preparation of a new CIL Charging Schedule.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultation on Draft Charging Schedule –Quarter 1 2026/27 • Submission of CIL Charging Schedule (aligned with Local Plan Submission (Regulation 19) – Quarter 2 2026/27 • Adoption and Publication of CIL Charging Schedule (Regulation 25) – Quarter 1 2027/28 <p>The review of the CIL Charging Schedule will ensure that new housing development within the district remains viable and that funding for infrastructure to support new homes is secured. This will be aligned with the review of the Local Plan.</p>
Self-Build and Custom Housebuilding Register	<p>The Council has established a self-build and custom housebuilding register to record the interest of those looking to build their own home in Wealden District. This process is ongoing. The latest reporting for the Council's self-build and custom-build register is provided below:</p> <p>https://www.wealden.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning-policy/self-build-and-custom-housebuilding/</p> <p>Since 2019, the Council has sought 5% Self-Build and Custom Housebuilding on major application schemes for housing of 20 units or more and secured these by legal agreement.</p>

Action	How is the Council addressing this action?
Monitoring	<p>As discussed within this Housing Action Plan, the Council through its Authority Monitoring Report (AMR) process does monitor both housing delivery and supply. The monitoring process consists of site visits to existing development sites, the monitoring of planning permissions and engaging with developers/house builders where necessary to understand delivery rates and completion targets. This process is ongoing. The latest AMR for the 2023-24 period is below:</p> <p>https://www.wealden.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning-policy/planning-policy-documents/authority-monitoring-report/</p>
Neighbourhood Plans	<p>The Council is supporting the preparation of new Neighbourhood Plans within the District. The Herstmonceux Neighbourhood Plan was adopted by the Council on 24 July 2019. Both the Hailsham Neighbourhood Plan and the Hellingly Neighbourhood Plan were ‘made’ by the Council on 21 July 2021. The Wadhurst Neighbourhood Plan was ‘made’ on 15 May 2024. The East Hoathly with Halland, Ninfield and Horam Neighbourhood Plans were ‘made’ on 16 October 2024.</p> <p>The latest reporting for Neighbourhood Planning in the district can be found at the webpage below:</p> <p>https://www.wealden.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning-policy/neighbourhood-planning/neighbourhood-plans/</p>
Brownfield Land Register	<p>The Council has established and maintains a Brownfield Land Register containing sites that are appropriate for residential development. The Brownfield Land Register is updated on an annual basis. Future iterations of the Brownfield Land Register will consider whether any sites can be included on ‘Part</p>

Action	How is the Council addressing this action?
	<p>2' of the register (i.e. be granted 'permission in principle') so may contribute towards housing supply. The Council's current Brownfield Land Register can be found at the following link:</p> <p>https://www.wealden.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning-policy/brownfield-register/</p>
Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (SHELAA)	<p>The Council, in preparation for the new Local Plan has undertaken two formal 'Call for Sites' with the first taking place between 1 June and 10 August 2020 and the second taking place between 15 March 2024 and 10 May 2024. The Council continues to accept new SHELAA sites for assessment as part of the Local Plan process in between these formal 'Call for Sites'. This process ensures that the Council has the latest evidence from landowners/developers on existing SHELAA sites and provides an opportunity for new sites to come forward and be assessed. The Council had published its latest SHELAA document alongside the Regulation 18 consultation for the new Draft Local Plan in March 2024 that can be found at the web link below:</p> <p>https://www.wealden.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning-policy/strategic-housing-and-economic-land-availability-assessment-shelaa/</p> <p>The Council is currently in the process of preparing an updated SHELAA, which will be published alongside the second Regulation 18 consultation for the new Draft Local Plan.</p>
Engaging with Developers	<p>The Council has maintained an ongoing dialogue with landowners and developers (including agents and registered providers) to understand what progress is being made on sites. The Council also utilises this</p>

Action	How is the Council addressing this action?
	<p>information to help identify potential solutions to deliver new homes and to keep accurate records for the projected housing land supply position that the Council maintains.</p> <p>The Council has a good track record of working with housebuilders to purchase their affordable housing element as part of larger development schemes. It is an active member of Developers East Sussex (DES). Established in May 2016, DES is a subgroup of Team East Sussex. It takes an active role in the delivery of quality sustainable development in East Sussex. DES is committed to making a difference to East Sussex's growth agenda to bring about deliverable, high quality and sustainable development.</p> <p>The Council, when there are pertinent issues to discuss, meets with a working group of planning/land agents (named the Wealden Agents Panel) to raise the quality of planning applications being lodged with the local planning authority and to support the effective determination of planning applications.</p> <p>The Council has published a weekly report of validated and approved planning applications for housing (amongst other matters) that is shared with a mailing list of developers, housebuilders and registered providers to help identify opportunities. It is also shared on social media and the Council's Planning Hub of the LetsTalk platform.</p>
Investigation of Funding Opportunities	<p>The Council has worked with funding providers such as Homes England and is seeking opportunities to draw in financial assistance to help stimulate the development of sites. The Council is also working collaboratively with East Sussex County Council's economic development team moving forward.</p>

Action	How is the Council addressing this action?
The Direct Provision of New Homes through Council Initiatives	<p>The Council has reviewed its estate and brought surplus land and premises to the market where it is suitable for new housing. The Council has also put forward land to be included within SHELAA process.</p> <p>The Council will utilise its Housing Development Officers to provide an extra resource aimed at delivering affordable homes within the district and in turn supporting the delivery of larger developments sites.</p>
Improvements to the Planning Service – Validation	<p>The Council has a specialist validation team within the Planning Service to process planning applications, which has helped in speeding up the planning application process. We offer a FastTrack validation process (funded via Planning Performance Agreement (PPA)) for those sites where speed is priority.</p>
Improvements to the Planning Service – Legal Agreements	<p>Working with the Council's Legal Practice, the Development Management Team has worked up a form to help process legal agreements for developments only needing to make Suitable Alternative Natural Green Spaces (SANGS)/Strategic Access Management and Monitoring Strategy (SAMMS) payments to secure mitigation concerning in-combination impacts on the Ashdown Forest SAC/SPA.</p> <p>A Section 106 template is also being drafted. This will cover the topical and frequent issues which arise when a planning permission is to be granted. Examples include affordable housing and play/open space as well as mitigation concerning in-combination impacts on the Ashdown Forest. An online version of that agreement will be made available for use, along with a commitment to reduce legal fees where the template is utilised. It is envisaged that using the template will dramatically reduce the time between resolution to grant permission and the formal issuing of the permission.</p>

Action	How is the Council addressing this action?
	We are exploring greater use of Unilateral Undertakings where legal agreement topics are straightforward and a bilateral is not required (further reducing time in process).
Improvements to the Planning Service – Planning Conditions	<p>The Council's Development Management Team has also reviewed the use of planning conditions and particularly whether the Council could reduce the number of pre-commencement conditions required for new housing schemes.</p> <p>We have also reviewed the process of condition discharge, making this a project-based workflow with automation of some consultations (where required). This has reduced the time for condition case processing.</p> <p>We will continue to review the discharge of planning conditions to speed up the process, which will include a system review.</p>
Improvements to the Planning Service – Reduced time limits for scheme commencement	The Development Management Team have secured reduced time limits on the commencement of development via condition(s). This requires that development must begin within a shorter timescale than the relevant default period, where this would expedite the development without threatening its deliverability or viability. This reduced time period is typically 18 months – to recognise condition discharge matters that may be seasons based, such as ecology surveying or drainage monitoring. This approach is consistent with advice contained within the NPPF at paragraph 73 and in the PPG section on Use of Planning Conditions at paragraph 27 (Reference ID: 21a-027-20140306).

Action	How is the Council addressing this action?
Improvements to the Planning Service – Pre-Application Advice	<p>The Council has improved both the speed and quality of its pre-application advice service.</p> <p>This is structured as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • an ‘free’ initial advice service is offered by the Senior Management Team in the service area. • If this leads to a formal request for advice, then pre-application advice is offered as a FastTrack written letter or as a meeting. • Further elements of FastTrack advice are available (and free) for development presenting an over provision of affordable housing (more than 35% on site) and for SMEs and small house builders who are proposing between 3-5 dwellings on land in the district and can commit with evidence to early delivery and implementation. <p>The link to the pre-application process is below:</p> <p>https://www.wealden.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning-advice/pre-application-advice/</p>
Improvements to the Planning Service – Digital Access	<p>Improve digital access – the Council’s Development Management Team continues to update the website content for the Planning Service. We use the website and social media for consulting on key events in the life of an application, particularly amended plans which has the potential to speed up case processing. Changes have been made to the public access element where users view applications to further create efficiencies in how applications are viewed externally.</p>

Action	How is the Council addressing this action?
	<p>In March 2020 we introduced a Twitter/X feed for news and updates. The account has posted just under 1,000 times since then with various updates including new applications, appeal decisions, policy and guidance updates. It has just under 300 regular followers.</p> <p>We continue to use the Planning Hub on the Council's Let's Talk platform. This is a single location for updates and information on the Planning Service. It includes an Ask the Development Manager forum, where the public can ask questions of senior officers in the team.</p> <p>We offer a Planning Duty Officer phone service wherein applicants can call in on a Tuesday and Thursday to speak to an officer and lastly</p> <p>We produce a podcast (new episodes envisaged fortnightly) where senior officers in the department talk about all things planning in the Council. The latter has proved to be popular, and episodes regularly receive c.100 listens back. Together, there are 1,500 listens of the podcast, which trails news and events and changes to policy; and generally, shows we are open and approachable.</p>
Improvements to the Planning Service – Planning Performance Agreements (PPAs)	We have been using Planning Performance Agreements (PPAs), with associated charter on what can be expected. Initial feedback from Agents is that this would be welcomed in the Wealden context. PPAs could lead to additional income stream that could add resource, which would speed up case processing.
Improvements to the Planning Service – Casework review	The Development Management Team have instigated greater casework review where cases are lodged for assessment, not negotiation. This results in the swift turnaround of schemes. The refusal to accept amendments on unacceptable schemes (and refusal to determine schemes that have already been

Action	How is the Council addressing this action?
	<p>refused and dismissed at appeal) helps free up capacity to deal with those submissions that are acceptable. This has been trialled with active Agents who know what to expect from the Local Planning Authority.</p>
Improvements to the Planning Service – Agile Working and Digital Improvement	<p>Building on the experience during Covid-19 ‘stay at home’ advice, we will continue to explore agile and digital working. This includes electronic case processing, managing workloads and performance, improving the use of resources.</p> <p>We extensively use ‘Teams’ for meetings with agent and applicants, together with other virtual meetings. There are other areas of work to be explored – such as triaging cases where a site inspection may occur unaccompanied or digitally (if all material issues can be assessed electronically).</p> <p>The Planning Service is due to upgrade the version of its system used for process applications. This will involve a new web interface with updated interface for searching and displaying applications online. We have already begun exploring digital ways of advertising major (or contentious) applications, using mini videos, how to guides and walk throughs showing drawings and proposals. These are fit for social media and the Planning Hub. Elsewhere there is a drive to update the corporate Geographical Information System (GIS).</p> <p>Subject to internal development, a business case is being written to explore implementation of a planning chat bot – this is perceived to enable users to answer simple questions relating to the planning application</p>

Action	How is the Council addressing this action?
	<p>process, improving the customer offer. We are also exploring the use of AI technology with our validation team.</p> <p>A form was launched to enable customers to report any alleged breaches of planning. The form is designed to allow users to upload additional information in the form of photographs to free up the time taken by compliance dealing with telephone contact and will promote the drive to digital. Elsewhere, we have introduced an online form for the new requirement in the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act (LURA) 2023 to serve a “commencement notice” under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, with the new section 93G.</p> <p>These might be viewed as small gains but will ensure the Planning Service is more efficient at case processing and decision making.</p>
Improvements to the Planning Service – Training and Professional Development	<p>The Council has increased its internal and external training and development opportunities for staff, including supporting officers through university courses, conferences, specialist short term training events and through topic specific in-house training.</p> <p>We have continued to provide ongoing Member training particularly in relation to housing delivery.</p>

What more can the Council be doing?

- 4.4 The actions identified above will continue to be taken forward and developed further where appropriate, and the Council will explore new avenues to stimulate development and facilitate growth within the district. However, the Council recognises that there is more that can be done and that a mix of measures will have to adapt to the new challenges facing the development industry in the months and years to come.
- 4.5 The Housing Action Plan includes a number of broad objectives where the Council will continue to focus its efforts. These are as follows:
- Help to provide opportunities for the local development industry;
 - Work to address blockages to specific development sites;
 - Joint working to address infrastructure issues within the district;
 - Providing certainty for developers and landowners;
 - Translate planning permissions into new homes;
 - Support further housing provision to meet needs; and
 - Supporting communities to grow sustainably.
- 4.6 The following paragraphs set out some of the key actions that will be explored in more detail.

Help to provide opportunities for the Local Development Industry

- 4.7 The Council will continue to build relationships with developers and housebuilders to understand the challenges in bringing sites forward. Building on the work undertaken through the Developers East Sussex (DES) Forum, this will include specific developer forum events that could cover topics such as: SME collaboration, self-build opportunities, working with registered providers, development management processes and procedures, and government funding opportunities.
- 4.8 The Council, in preparation for the new Local Plan, has undertaken two formal 'Call for Sites' with the first taking place between 1 June and 10 August 2020 and second commencing on 15 March 2024. This call for sites remains open and the Council continues to accept new SHELAA sites for assessment as part of the Local Plan process. This process ensures that the Council has the

latest evidence from landowners/developers on existing SHELAA sites and provides an opportunity for new sites to come forward and be assessed.

Work to Address Blockages for Specific Development Sites

- 4.9 Joint working with organisations such as Homes England will focus on helping to ensure the financial viability of developing sites in Wealden. The Council will explore opportunities to help bring public sector land forward, as well as work with housebuilders to support them in accessing available resources.
- 4.10 In addition, the Council will continue to take a robust but pragmatic view on development viability, as set out in the adopted Local Plan and NPPF. This will include utilising the Council's Housing Development Team to explore alternative ways of delivering affordable housing, including through the Council's own Housing Company (Sussex Weald Homes).
- 4.11 One of the biggest risks to future delivery (consistently raised by DES) is the availability of skilled labour, now and over the next few years noting the rising average age of those in the sector. Therefore, the Council considers that it is important to work with education, training and business providers to highlight the value of careers in the construction industry. The Council is working with DES to identify ways to attract more people into the construction industry and through regular career fairs, highlight the opportunities for jobs and careers in the industry in Wealden and beyond.

Joint Working to Address Infrastructure Issues within the District

- 4.12 There are several infrastructure concerns that are affecting the district and are influencing housing delivery in the short to longer term. This includes the provision of Suitable Alternative Natural Green Spaces (SANGS) as an alternative visitor space to the Ashdown Forest Special Protection Area (SPA), the provision and upgrading of highways within the district and the provision of social infrastructure, such as education, health and leisure facilities. The latest Council approach to infrastructure issues in terms of priorities is detailed at section 2 of the Council's latest Infrastructure Funding Statement (IFS)²⁹.

²⁹ [Infrastructure Funding Statement 2023 - 2024](#)

- 4.13 In terms of SANGs, two SANGs have been provided at Crowborough and Uckfield to mitigate the impacts of housing development on the Ashdown Forest SPA (through increased recreational pressure) and funding is required to maintain these sites through developer contributions. These greenspaces provide significant additional benefits to both the incoming residents of the associated developments and existing Wealden residents and visitors. The SANGS are accessible to all users and offer a pleasant environment to visit and spend time. The SANGS also offer substantial ecological and biodiversity improvements to this former agricultural land. The Council has secured a further SANGS to east of Uckfield along Birds-in-Eye Hill (planning reference WD/2024/1799/MAO) although this has yet to be delivered.
- 4.14 In terms of transport interventions, highway improvements, particularly in the south of the district, proximate to the major growth of recent years continue to be a priority. An outline business case and the associated technical documents for the A22 Major Road Network (MRN) junction improvement package was submitted to Department for Transport (DfT) by East Sussex County Council. The MRN bid has been confirmed by National Highways. WDC has currently earmarked a £4.35 million contribution raised from development contributions and CIL monies. The package of capacity improvements to five roundabouts will support housing and employment growth in the Eastbourne and South Wealden area and many of the development sites already have planning permission.
- 4.15 The Council has also earmarked £3.2 million of CIL receipts to support interventions required at the Ersham Road/Diplocks Roundabout Scheme, which are also identified as critical improvements required to support the level of growth. As the location of the proposed roundabout would impact on the green space at this junction a new village green has been developed further down Ersham Road which is significantly more accessible and links into the Cuckoo Trail.
- 4.16 The status of the Ersham Road roundabout project is now at the detailed design stage, which is being undertaken by contractors on behalf of ESCC. WDC is working with ESCC to identify the preferred option for this scheme, in consultation with residents.

- 4.17 The Council will continue to prioritise the provision of necessary education provision across the district, working with partners at East Sussex County Council to establish needs and plan for provision early as part of the local plan review.
- 4.18 The Council has been working on providing health and wellbeing infrastructure in the district. The Council's current evidence base for both indoor/built sports facilities³⁰ and playing pitch and outdoor sport's needs³¹, along with the open space assessment report³² and playing pitch and outdoor sports strategy – strategy and action plan³³, outlines the areas of the district, including Hailsham, which have deficits in such facilities. These areas of infrastructure have therefore been prioritised for funding through CIL receipts. The Council has created a Community-Led Infrastructure Fund (CLIF) to provide grants for community infrastructure projects such as multi-use community spaces, green spaces and sports/leisure facilities. The fund has an initial £2 million allocated to enable to rapid delivery of a number of these projects, working closely with our partners (including Parish and Town Councils, sport's clubs etc.).
- 4.19 In addition, the Council has launched the Sports Infrastructure Fund 2024-2027³⁴ which will have £600,000 invested over the three-year period to improve outdoor sports pitches and facilities throughout the district. The outdoor sports that could benefit from the funding programme include football, rugby union, tennis, cricket, lawn bowls, hockey, netball and stoolball.
- 4.20 The Council is progressing with its own project to deliver a new community sports hub on Council owned land at Knights Farm East to the northwest of Hailsham. The Council granted planning permission for the project in April 2024 that can be found on our planning register³⁵ by searching for planning application reference WD/2023/2100. Full Council agreed in November 2023 to allocate an additional £5.183 million from unallocated CIL monies to assist

³⁰ [Wealden District Council Indoor Sports Facilities Assessment \(March 2022\)](#)

³¹ [Wealden District Council – Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sports Strategy – Assessment Report \(April 2022\)](#)

³² [Wealden District Council Open Space Report \(April 2022\)](#)

³³ [Wealden District Council Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sport Strategy and Action Plan \(2023\)](#)

³⁴ [Sports Infrastructure Fund 2024-2027](#)

³⁵ [Wealden District Council's Planning Register](#)

with the delivery of the sports hub. The total capital funding for the sports hub is £16.6 million.

- 4.21 The project seeks to provide a state-of-the-art leisure and sports facility, creating a variety of new outdoor sport and leisure facilities for local communities. The planning applications includes two full size 3G floodlit football pitches, four floodlit multi-use games areas for tennis / netball, two padel tennis courts along with a walking and cycle route, BMX and skate area, children's play area, outdoor tennis tables, outdoor gym equipment and a community café. In September 2024, WDC began construction work, in partnership with the Football Foundation, to deliver the new Community Sports Hub with an expected opening in 2026.
- 4.22 CIL funding towards improvement to the Beacon Academy hockey pitch saw £311,000 of CIL funding for its replacement as a community use Artificial Grass Pitch (AGP), approved in May 2023 and opened in late 2024. With a further £300,000 (CIL and S106) towards a 3G football pitch on the same site, which is anticipated to be completed in 2026/27. In addition, CIL monies were secured for Hailsham Community College for community-use, AGP for hockey has also been agreed. A £216,000 contribution was agreed by Cabinet in March 2024. It is earmarked towards the resurfacing and improving the lighting of this hockey pitch.
- 4.23 The Council continues to explore the potential for the delivery of a new medical facilities in the district, including working to utilise our own assets in partnership with the NHS. Projects are ongoing in places such as Hailsham, Polegate and Mayfield. It is considered that all these projects will support housing growth within the district by delivering infrastructure in the right locations.

Providing Certainty for Developers and Landowners

- 4.24 As part of the process of managing and updating the Council's Brownfield Land Register, the Council will consider whether there are any sites that could be granted 'permission in principle'. This type of consent provides greater certainty for developers by confirming that the fundamental principles of

development are acceptable, before developers need to get into costly, technical matters.

- 4.25 The Council will consider the benefits of preparing masterplans for individual sites as part of the Local Plan process, setting out what is expected as part of the development of an allocated site, particularly on large and potentially complex sites. The Council will continue to work with landowners, prospective developers and the community to prepare masterplans that provide certainty for investors.
- 4.26 Where sites are yet to reach the pre-application stage, the Council's development management service will actively liaise with relevant partners to facilitate development, including acting as a conduit for discussions with Homes England and/or the Council's own Housing Company to facilitate new development.
- 4.27 The Council will continue to provide a pro-active approach to the pre-application service for landowners and developers at the early stages of the development process to discuss the constraints and opportunities for different sites. A large number of informal meetings have already been held with landowners and their representatives to discuss progress and identify ways forward.
- 4.28 Where appropriate, the Council will use PPAs to direct and tailor resources for determining potentially more complex planning applications, covering all aspects of the planning process from the pre-application stage to the discharging of conditions.
- 4.29 The programme of improvements within the planning service (as highlighted above) will continue, with a view to ensuring that all planning applications are determined as efficiently as possible. This includes improving the quality and speed of the pre-application process, streamlining the validation process, reducing the time it takes to validate planning applications, and speeding up the process of completing legal agreements. The planning service will also continue to invest in the use of new technology to improve the productivity of all parties involved in the planning process and to enable greater mobile working – for example, planning constraints and online mapping.

Translate Planning Permissions into New Homes

- 4.30 Where planning applications have lapsed, or about to lapse, the Council will continue to take a proactive position and investigate with the applicant the reasons why the site(s) have not come forward. As identified above, the monitoring of housing schemes with extant planning permissions is undertaken regularly and can identify sites that have not progressed as expected. There may be opportunities, linked to other actions in this Plan, to identify ways forward for new sites and to make development a more realistic prospect.
- 4.31 The Council will seek to explore alternative housing delivery arrangements, including the use of the Council's own Housing Company on stalled sites where the market is currently failing to bring forward sites that have extant planning permissions. Sussex Weald Homes (wholly owned by WDC) are actively developing a plan for homes in the area, to help address the housing needs of the local area.

Support further Housing Provision to Meet Needs

- 4.32 To enhance the potential role of small and medium sized housebuilders, the Council will seek to support the creation of developer consortiums where appetite exists. This is where developers can work together to share costs to acquire and deliver sites that they may otherwise be unable to access including portions of larger sites. This model is currently working well to the north of Hailsham to deliver shared infrastructure across two large development sites that are now complete. Where other opportunities exist, they are under active consideration in other parts of Wealden District.
- 4.33 The Council will continue to review its portfolio of land and premises with a view to recognising opportunities for housing development, for example. The Council will seek to use its assets effectively to unlock land and stimulate private investment. The Council has submitted a number of sites for new development as part of the recent 'Call for Sites' processes.
- 4.34 As required, the Council will continue to monitor housing delivery against the target set out in its adopted Local Plan through the AMR process and is reviewing its current target as part of the new Local Plan process. The Council

is committed to ensuring that it responds to the latest evidence and policy guidance on this matter.

Supporting Communities to Grow Sustainably

- 4.35 Opportunities for the delivery of alternative forms of housing, such as ‘rural exception’ housing sites and community-led housing are being explored as part of the new Local Plan process and may also be explored through Neighbourhood Plans. Further work is required to bring land and development forward which is likely to involve working in partnership with landowners, developers, registered providers and community organisations.
- 4.36 For those on the self-build and custom housebuilding register, the Council will seek to fulfil our responsibilities to make land available for self and custom build housing. We will seek to highlight the self-build and custom build opportunities that are currently coming through the planning system, as well as investigating whether other sites specifically be identified to meet the needs of people on the register. The Council will consider, as part of the new Local Plan, what policy should be used to support such opportunities in its area.

5. Monitoring Arrangements

- 5.1 This Housing Action Plan will be reviewed at least on an annual basis where Wealden District Council does fall short of 95% of its HDT measurement during the reported year. The Council will monitor the effectiveness of actions themselves, as well as the outcomes (e.g. housing delivery rates and supply, the Council's housing land supply position etc.). The actions will be updated where necessary and new ones may be added in response to external changes, such as new funding streams, Government initiatives and changes to legislation and/or policy.
- 5.2 Furthermore, the Council does welcome suggestions on any future actions the Council may take to help support house building in Wealden District. If you do have any suggestions on further measures the Council can take to support housebuilding within Wealden, please contact us using the following details:

E-mail: planningpolicy@wealden.gov.uk

Telephone: 01892 602008

Address: Planning Policy, Wealden District Council, Vicarage Lane, Hailsham,
East Sussex, BN27 2AX