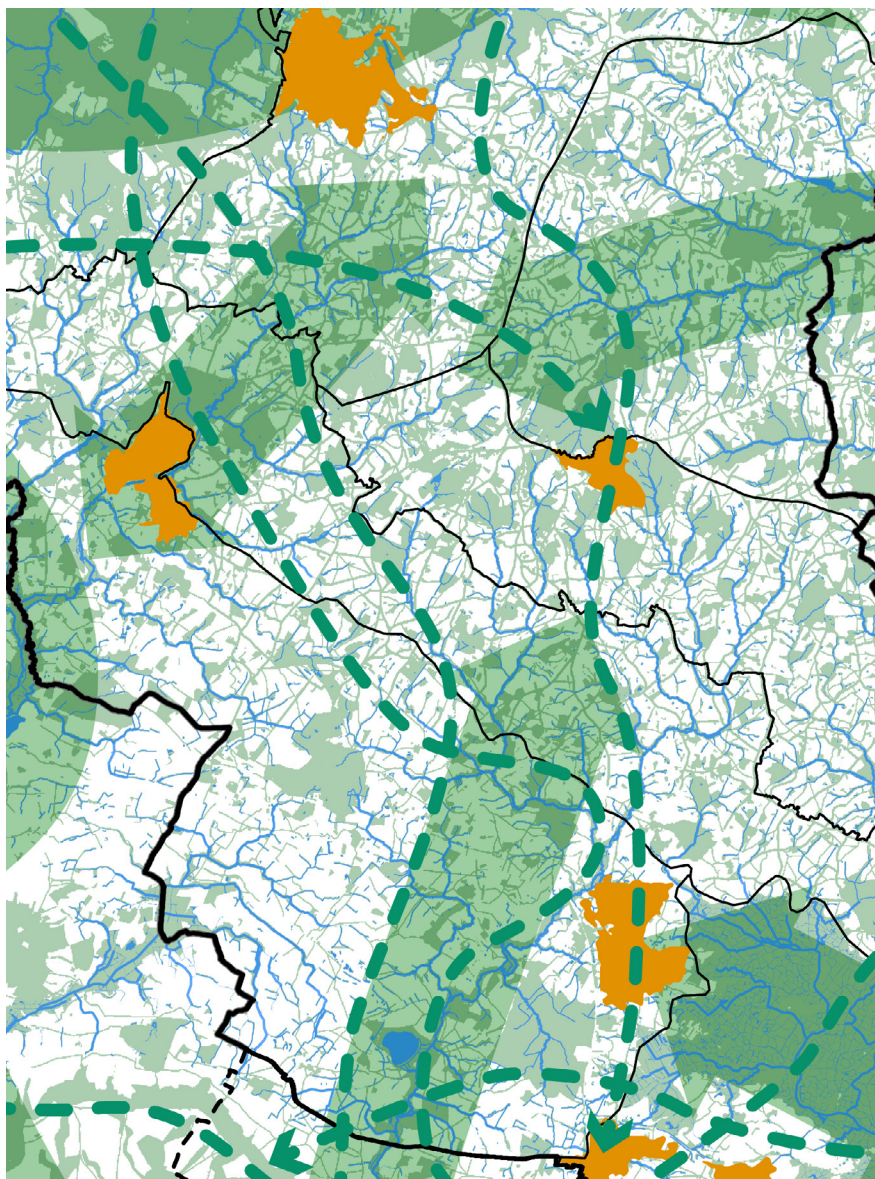


Wealden District Council
Wealden Green Infrastructure Study



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Approved

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. Watkins', enclosed within a circular flourish.

Dominic Watkins

Position Director

Date 10th May 2017

Revision FINAL V2

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

In June 2016, Wealden District Council commissioned Chris Blandford Associates to undertake a strategic assessment of the quantity, quality and accessibility of current Green Infrastructure provision within Wealden District, and identify opportunities for addressing deficiencies.

The purpose of the Study is to assist the Council in meeting the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework and associated guidance with regards to its plan making and, where relevant, making planning decisions.

What is Green Infrastructure?

Green Infrastructure is the multi-functional network of natural and semi-natural features, green spaces, rivers and lakes that intersperse and connect villages, towns and cities. Individually, these elements are Green Infrastructure assets, and the roles that these assets play are Green Infrastructure functions.

Green Infrastructure has an important role to play in delivering sustainable development. When appropriately planned, designed and managed, Green Infrastructure assets and the functions (or ecosystem services) derived from natural systems and processes have the potential to deliver a wide range of benefits integral to the quality of life for Wealden's communities. These benefits include:

- An improved natural environment, including well-connected ecological networks.
- Strengthened landscape character and enhanced appreciation of historic environment assets.
- Local energy and food production opportunities.
- Flood attenuation, water resource management and adapting to climate change.
- Contributing to the health and well-being of communities through improved access to nature.

Green Infrastructure is a holistic approach to planning and managing the natural environment that acknowledges the multiple benefits and functions it provides for the economy, wildlife, local people, communities and cultural heritage assets. Investment in the provision of new and enhanced Green Infrastructure is therefore an essential part of planning for sustainable development.

Green Infrastructure Assessment

An assessment of Green Infrastructure assets, needs and opportunities within Wealden District was undertaken at three related scales:

- **District Scale Green Infrastructure** – a high level assessment and overview of Green Infrastructure assets, needs and opportunities at a strategic scale, taking into account needs and opportunities for Green Infrastructure provision in adjoining areas where relevant. The study area includes Wealden District but excludes the area that lies within the South Downs National Park.
- **Sub-District Scale Green Infrastructure Zones** – a more detailed assessment of Green Infrastructure assets, needs and opportunities within eight discrete zones of broadly similar Green Infrastructure assets and landscape types within the study area. These zones can provide a framework for neighbourhood planning at the Parish level.
- **Town Scale Green Infrastructure** – a more detailed assessment of Green Infrastructure assets, needs and opportunities focussed on the five main towns within the District (Crowborough, Uckfield, Heathfield and Hailsham & Polegate).

Green Infrastructure Network

Informed by the assessment, the Study sets out a proposed Green Infrastructure Network for Wealden District at the various scales. The network comprises broadly defined strategic green and blue corridors containing a mosaic of land uses, natural and semi-natural wildlife habitats and access links. The corridors act as linkages and stepping stones for dispersal of wildlife, provide sustainable transport linkages through provision of footpaths and cycle routes connecting local communities to natural greenspace, and enable strategic linkages with Green Infrastructure networks in adjoining areas. The proposed Green Infrastructure Network provides a recommended framework for the delivery of Green Infrastructure to support the planning of sustainable development. It is not a statement of Council policy.

Recommendations

Drawing on the findings of the Study, advice and recommendations to assist in the development and implementation of Green Infrastructure policies in the Wealden Local Plan are provided, which includes planning guidance on principles and standards for embedding Green Infrastructure into development for use by planners, developers and local communities. The Study also provides advice on developing a Green Infrastructure Strategy for Wealden.