

HAILSHAM NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN REVIEW (2026)

Modification Statement

Under Regulation 17(e)(ii) of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended)

September 2026

1. Introduction

This Modification Statement has been prepared by Wealden District Council in accordance with Regulation 17(e)(ii) of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended)¹.

The statement accompanies the submission of the proposed modifications to the Hailsham Neighbourhood Development Plan Review for Independent Examination.

Regulation 17(e)(ii) requires the local planning authority to submit:

"a statement setting out whether or not the authority consider that the modifications contained in the modification proposal are so significant or substantial as to change the nature of the neighbourhood development plan which the modification proposal would modify, giving reasons for why the authority is of this opinion."

The purpose of this statement is therefore to:

- summarise the principal modifications proposed;
- consider the significance of those modifications;
- assess whether they change the nature of the made neighbourhood plan; and
- provide the Council's opinion to assist the Independent Examiner.

2. The Made Hailsham Neighbourhood Plan

The Hailsham Neighbourhood Plan was made (21 July 2021)² following a local referendum and forms part of the statutory Development Plan for Wealden District.

The Plan establishes a vision, objectives and planning policies to guide development within the neighbourhood area. It includes policies relating to:

- housing development;
- town centre development;
- employment development;
- heritage assets;
- design and character;
- green infrastructure;
- community facilities; and
- transport and movement.

¹ [The Neighbourhood Planning \(General\) Regulations 2012](#)

² [Hailsham Neighbourhood Plan \(July 2021\)](#)

The overarching purpose of the Plan is to guide sustainable growth within Hailsham whilst protecting the town's character, environmental assets and community infrastructure.

3. Background to the Review

The Town Council has undertaken a review of the made Plan to ensure that it remains effective and up to date. The Regulation 16 Neighbourhood Plan states that although the Hailsham Neighbourhood Plan was made as 'recently' as 2021, much of the work undertaken to inform the Neighbourhood Plan took place during 2017 and 2018. It is the view of the Neighbourhood Plan body that changes that have taken place over the last seven years now need reflecting in an updated version of the Neighbourhood Plan.

These include:

- Ongoing growth and expansion of Hailsham, which has seen new residential development in the area, including that in adjacent Hellingly Parish which, although outside of the Plan area, has implications for Hailsham in the way that services and facilities are used.
- The emergence of a new draft Local Plan being prepared by Wealden District Council which establishes requirements for further development in Hailsham.
- Changes at the national level, including increasing awareness of the impacts of climate change, and the importance of health and well-being, as well as new planning policy/guidance, changes to permitted development rights, and the relationship between good design and creation of attractive, liveable and healthy places.

These factors have been reviewed as part of the update of the Neighbourhood Plan and have been considered against responses to consultation activities to help refocus and refine the Neighbourhood Plan.

The review has been undertaken having regard to:

- changes in national planning policy and guidance;
- updated local planning policy and evidence;
- changing development circumstances within Hailsham;
- the delivery of existing allocations;
- updated environmental information; and
- local aspirations identified through consultation.

The review seeks to ensure that the neighbourhood plan continues to provide an effective framework for determining planning applications and supporting sustainable development.

4. Summary of Proposed Modifications

When comparing the 'made' Neighbourhood Plan to the Neighbourhood Plan Review (Regulation 16), the following comparison can be made:

The 'Made' Plan	The Neighbourhood Plan Draft Review (Regulation 16)
The made Plan contained 27 policies and six projects.	The draft Neighbourhood Plan Review now contains 34 policies and ten projects. Some of the existing policies have been amalgamated. In total, there are fifteen new policies in the draft Neighbourhood Plan Review.
The made Plan was accompanied by a Character Assessment and included a number of design related policies but was not supplemented with a design guide or code.	A set of Design Guidelines have now been prepared as a free-standing Design Guide document which supplements policies in the draft Neighbourhood Plan Review.
The made Plan does not allocate sites for development.	The draft Neighbourhood Plan Review does not allocate sites for development.
Policies were presented across the following main topic areas: Habitat Regulations, Design Quality, Promoting Active, smarter and Sustainable Travel, Enhancing Green Space and Biodiversity Value, Employment, Community Facilities, Tourism, Air Quality and Renewables, The Growth of Hailsham, Hailsham Town Centre.	Policies are presented across five main topic areas, albeit some of these cut across the wider topics in the made Plan and thus streamline the way these are presented. The main topic areas are Community, Town Centre, Housing Development and Design, Movement, Green and Blue Infrastructure.

Whilst no site allocations are proposed, a Design Guide document has been produced as well as 15 new policies, after some have been amalgamated.

Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)³ advises that there are three types of modification that can be made to a Neighbourhood Plan.

These are:

³ [PPG: Paragraph 106 Reference ID: 41-106-20190509](#)

1) **Minor (non-material) modifications** to a neighbourhood plan or order are those which would not materially affect the policies in the plan or permission granted by the order. These may include correcting errors, such as a reference to a supporting document, and would not require examination or a referendum.

2) **Material modifications** which do not change the nature of the plan or order would require examination but not a referendum. This might, for example, entail the addition of a design code that builds on a pre-existing design policy, or the addition of a site or sites which, subject to the decision of the independent examiner, are not so significant or substantial as to change the nature of the plan.

3) **Material modifications** which do change the nature of the plan or order would require examination and a referendum. This might, for example, involve allocating significant new sites for development.

The PPG states that if the made Neighbourhood Plan includes design policies that are intended to help shape growth, then modifications that seek to take this forward and supplement them with production of a Design Code would be unlikely to represent a change to the nature of the Plan. WDC considers that this applies to the review of the Hailsham Neighbourhood Plan.

The draft revised Plan includes new policies, albeit these respond to the overarching vision of Hailsham as a ten-minute town encapsulated in the made Plan. It is also accompanied by a new Design Guide (Hailsham Design Guidelines) that further develops design policies in the made Plan. It does not include allocations for new development. As with the made Plan, the review takes a pragmatic approach in that it recognises that development will come forward, that the scale and direction of this still needs to be fully tested through the Local Plan process, but that a principles-based approach should be taken to influence the form and quality of that development.

The changes presented in the draft Neighbourhood Plan Review are intended to support continued use of the Neighbourhood Plan, improve the clarity of the Plan and support more effective implementation of the vision and aspiration for Hailsham. The modifications are consistent with the overall direction of the made Plan and although new policies have been introduced, these are aligned with the overall thrust and direction of policy in the Made Plan. They would not give rise to a different spatial strategy. Despite this, there are a significant number of new policies presented in the review of the Plan, including those which address new or updated policy areas. In addition, the review of the Plan has changed the overall structure of the Plan and the number and focus of policies contained within it.

The principal modifications proposed through the review are summarised below.

Modification	Explanation
Structural Changes	<p>The Plan period has been extended to 2042 to align with the Proposed Submission Wealden Local Plan (Regulation 19).</p> <p>The Vision has been updated following consultation feedback, with a stronger focus on sustainability, climate resilience, communities and green infrastructure.</p> <p>The Plan's objectives have been streamlined from nine to five, reflecting key local priorities while retaining core themes such as design, accessibility and the town centre.</p> <p>Key principles from the made Plan, including the ten-minute town concept, good placemaking and sustainable travel, have been retained.</p> <p>Policies are now organised around five objectives, making a clearer link between consultation feedback, the vision and policy themes.</p> <p>New Design Guidelines support and strengthen the Plan's design policies.</p>

<p>Expanded Policy Areas</p>	<p>Community Facilities – an expanded set of policies that apply to different types of facility. Community policies in the revised plan are generally broader, more prescriptive and embed matters such as health and social inclusion.</p> <p>Town Centre – an expanded set of policies, now including safety by design, gateways and green infrastructure, public art and the roofscape. A project opportunity identified includes future potential part-pedestrianisation of the high street.</p> <p>Housing Development and Design – The importance of design has been strengthened by Design guidelines for the context of Hailsham. New policies are produced on housing mix and type, and expanded policies on street design.</p> <p>Movement – Existing policies have been expanded and a new policy produced in respect of community mobility hubs. A set of active travel projects are also identified.</p> <p>Green and Blue Infrastructure – The draft Neighbourhood Plan Review has a stronger emphasis on biodiversity, climate adaptation and resilience to flooding. New policies relate to biodiversity net gain, strengthening green corridors, encouraging multifunctional Sustainable Drainage (SUDs) and diversifying green space.</p>
<p>Specific Policy Changes</p>	
<p>HAIL HRA1: Habitat Regulations</p>	<p>Deleted from the draft Neighbourhood Plan Review. The Hailsham Neighbourhood Plan Review HRA Screening Report (November 2025) assessed the reviewed Plan as a whole and concluded that it would not give rise to likely significant effects on relevant Habitats Sites, either alone or in combination, and that Appropriate Assessment was not required. The statutory consultation bodies were consulted and concurred with the screening conclusion. The screening report forms part of the supporting material for the modification proposal.</p>
<p>HAIL D1: High Quality Design</p>	<p>This policy is developed further through production of the Hailsham Design Guidelines, which is referenced in multiple policies in the draft Neighbourhood Plan Review. Policy HaHD1 establishes general principles for good residential design which is supplemented by Policy HaHD2 in respect of how development should be integrated within the existing built form. Policy HaTC2 establishes design principles for the town centre and Policy HaTC3 has a specific focus on creating safe and inclusive spaces for all.</p>

HAIL D2: Small scale residential development and householder extensions	This is not specifically taken forward in the draft Neighbourhood Plan Review but is rather integrated within an overall approach to good design set out in policy HaHD1 which establishes an approach to good design, and Policy HaHD2 in respect of integrating development within the existing built form. These policies cross reference the Design Guidelines which includes a section on small sites.
HAIL D3: Innovation and Variety	This is incorporated within Policy HaHD1 of the draft Neighbourhood Plan Review.
HAIL D4: Design for self and custom build homes	This is taken forward into Policy HaHD5 of the draft Neighbourhood Plan Review which updates the wording and also includes cross reference to the Design Guidelines.
HAIL D5: Residential Car Parking Design	Taken forward and expanded upon in Policy HaHD7 of the draft Neighbourhood Plan Review. This draws upon the associated Design Guidelines to clarify expectations with regard to good parking design in residential areas.
HAIL AT1: Active Travel	Taken forward and expanded upon in Policy HaM1 of the draft Neighbourhood Plan Review and which includes new principles in respect of national standards (as set out in Department for Transport (DfT) 1/20 and associated Cycling Level of Service Tool), the Healthy Street indicators, the East Sussex Cycle Parking Standards, and the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan. The policy also now includes reference to the opportunity for last mile freight delivery to be made by cargo-bike.
HAIL AT2: The Cuckoo Trail	Taken forward and expanded upon in Policy HaM2 of the draft Neighbourhood Plan Review. The policy is expanded to include reference to recommendations from the Cuckoo Trail User Report and Strategy. Support is also expressed for proposals for a 'hub' which includes visitor and cycle facilities. This was previously presented as a project idea in the made Neighbourhood Plan (see project AT1).

HAIL AT3: Public Transport	Taken forward and expanded upon in Policy HaM3 of the draft Neighbourhood Plan Review, which introduces walking catchment distances from bus services to be applied to major new development.
HAIL GS1: Natural and Amenity Green Space	This is taken forward and expanded upon through multiple policies in the draft Neighbourhood Plan Review. Policy HaG11 establishes the approach to biodiversity and wildlife corridors. Policy HaG12 seeks to retain and improve connections with the green and blue infrastructure network across Hailsham. Support for provision of amenity space in new development is now incorporated into and expanded upon in Policy HaCF6, which establishes additional principles in respect of the location, design and inclusivity of that space.
HAIL GS2: Open Space within Major Development Areas	Now incorporated into and expanded upon in Policy HaCF6 which establishes principles for well located, designed and inclusive play and amenity space.
HAIL GS3: Pevensey Levels	This is carried forward in Policy HaG14 of the draft Neighbourhood Plan Review, although amended to provide clarity on development expectations in respect of landscape character and biodiversity. Wider flood risk matters are addressed in Policy HaG15, which also sets out design principles for SuDS, cross referencing the Design Guidelines.
HAIL EMP1: Providing for a mix of Employment Opportunities	Deleted from the draft revised Plan. It is superseded by the Proposed Submission Wealden Local Plan (Regulation 19).

HAIL CF1: Community Facilities	<p>This policy has been replaced in the Neighbourhood Plan Review by a suite of new policies that address specific community facilities, including Healthcare (Policy HaCF1), Education (HaCF2), Community Halls, Centres and Hubs (HaCF3), Allotments and Food Growing (HaCF4), Sports Facilities and Playing Pitches (HaCF5), and delivery of community infrastructure (Policy HaCF8).</p> <p>Whilst the original policy provided a single overarching approach to community facilities, the revised Plan introduces a significantly expanded and more detailed policy framework that establishes distinct policy requirements across a broad range of infrastructure and community service areas. This represents a substantial change in the scope and operation of the Plan's community facilities policies, moving from a general policy approach to a comprehensive suite of topic-specific policies.</p>
HAIL TOU1: Tourism	Deleted from the Neighbourhood Plan Review. It is superseded by the emerging Local Plan.
HAIL AQ1: Charing Points for Electric Vehicles	Taken forward in Policy HaM5 of the Neighbourhood Plan Review. Clarifications have been made to the policy wording. Text in respect of the provision of charging points at new homes has been removed to avoid repeating Part S of the building Regulations.
HAIL AQ2: Sustainable Design and Construction	Taken forward into and expanded upon in Policy HaHD3 of the draft Neighbourhood Plan Review. This now incorporates additional principles that proposals for development are encouraged to meet as well as establishing water efficiency standards and support for energy efficiency measures to be incorporated into the refurbishment and retrofitting of existing buildings.
HAIL AQ3: High Energy Efficient Buildings	This is incorporated into the wording for Policy HaHD3 in the draft Neighbourhood Plan Review.
HAIL AQ4: Renewables	Deleted from the draft Neighbourhood Plan Review.

HAIL SD1: Development Frameworks	The requirement for a development framework for schemes that involve multiple land ownership areas is taken forward and embedded within Policy HaHD2 of the draft Neighbourhood Plan Review. This also establishes principles in respect of how new development should be integrated with the existing built form. Reference to delivery of infrastructure, including the relationship with major growth areas that cross multiple landownerships, is taken forward and expanded upon in Policy HaCF8 in the draft Neighbourhood Plan Review.
HAIL SD2: Design and Placemaking Principles	This is taken forward in Policy HaHD1 of the draft Neighbourhood Plan Review which has been updated to reflect the principles established in the Design Guidelines.
HAIL SD3: Design Codes and Quality	This is not specifically taken forward into the draft Neighbourhood Plan Review. It will be superseded by the emerging Local Plan.
HAIL TC1: Hailsham Town Centre	This is taken forward and amended in Policy HaTC1 of the draft Neighbourhood Plan Review, and which supports a range of uses in the Town Centre.
HAIL TC2: Town Centre Design Principles	This is taken forward and further expanded upon in Policy HaTC2 of the draft Neighbourhood Plan Review. This incorporates reference to the principles contained within the Design Guidelines and also provides clarity on the approach to development within the setting of a heritage asset.
HAIL TC4: Town Centre Car Parking	This is taken forward in Policy HaTC8 of the draft Neighbourhood Plan Review, with revised wording providing clarity on the approach to be taken.
HAIL TC5: Shopfronts	This is taken forward and expanded upon in Policy HaTC4 of the draft Neighbourhood Plan Review. It draws upon principles in the Design Guidelines, providing further clarity on how proposals should be judged.

HAIL TC6: Streets and Spaces in the Town Centre	This is not directly taken forward in the draft Neighbourhood Plan Review, although Policy HaTC5 does address the Public Realm, gateways and wayfinding. As per the made Plan, this seeks to improve the quality and attractiveness of the movement network, particularly for pedestrians. It provides further detail on proposals for improvements to arrival points or gateways into the town centre as well as wayfinding solutions to support orientation.
New Policies	
Policies HaCF1 (Healthcare), HaCF2 (Education and Early Years), HaCF3 (Community Halls, Centres and Hubs), HaCF4 (Allotments and Food Growing Opportunities), and HaCF5 (Sport Facilities and Playing Pitches)	<p>All of these expand on the existing Community Facilities Policy in the made Plan and respond to community feedback highlighting the importance of delivering specific forms of community infrastructure across Hailsham. This was recognised in the made Plan, although not broken down by infrastructure type.</p> <p>Whilst the original policy provided a single overarching approach to community facilities, the revised Plan introduces a significantly expanded and more detailed policy framework that establishes distinct policy requirements across a broad range of infrastructure and community service areas. This represents a substantial change in the scope and operation of the Plan's community facilities policies, moving from a general policy approach to a comprehensive suite of topic-specific policies.</p>
Policy HaCF7 (Burial Space)	<p>The made Plan included a Project in respect of providing additional Cemetery Space (see Project CF1). The draft Neighbourhood Plan Review takes this forward into a formal policy which establishes principles that support appropriate provision of such space but does not allocate land for this.</p> <p>However, this represents a substantial change in the scope and operation of the Plan as new policy area.</p>
Policy HaTC3 (Safety by Design)	Builds upon the good design theme within the made Plan but specifically responds to concerns raised through consultation as to concern for personal safety in the town centre.

Policy HaTC6 (Public Art)	This expands upon public realm ideas and expands this to cover proposals for public art that can help enrich the quality and attractiveness of the town centre.
Policy HaTC7 (Roofscape)	Builds upon Policy HAIL AQ2 in the made Plan by looking at how the roofspace of buildings might be better utilised to help respond to the climate change agenda, but also where greater use of that space might be made to help diversify the town centre offer (building upon existing Policy HAIL TC1 in the made Plan that supports a diverse, vibrant and vital town centre).
Policy HaHD4 (Housing Mix, Size and Type)	Responds to consultation feedback that said that should new housing development come forward, then it should respond to local housing needs. This expands significantly upon the reference in Policy HAIL D1 of the made Plan which states that proposals for development should provide for the necessary dwelling mix of future occupiers. The new policy provides greater clarity on what is expected.
Policy HaHD6 (Street Types, Design and Hierarchy)	This reflects principles in the Design Guidelines. It reflects consultation comments as to the impact of the design of the street network in new development. It expands upon references in Policy HAIL SD2 of the made Plan in respect of creating a legible layout well- integrated with the existing built form, and Policy HAIL SD1 requiring development frameworks to present a movement plan that establishes the street hierarchy and typologies. The policy in the draft Neighbourhood Plan Review provides greater clarity on expectations for future development.
Policy HaM4 (Community Mobility Hubs)	This is a new policy that responds to consultation comments in respect of providing for a safe network of active travel, encouraging people to walk and cycle for shorter journeys, and the need for community facilities to be provided. This policy combines those aspirations and supports a network of community mobility hubs. This is directly relevant to the concept of the ten-minute town, being a place that is easy to get around and where the full range of services and facilities that support day-to-day activity can be easily accessed by all.

Policy HaGI1 (Biodiversity)	This a new policy that reflects the provisions of the Environment Act 2021 in respect of biodiversity net gain, and how this should be delivered in Hailsham.
Policy HAGI3 (Diversifying and improving existing amenity green space).	This a new policy that specifically looks at how existing underutilised amenity green space in Hailsham could be diversified, bringing benefits to this community by enhancing access to a wider range of green space types.
Policy HaGI5 (Flood Risk and Sustainable Drainage) and HaGI6 (Paving of Front Gardens)	These are new policies that respond to concerns raised through consultation in respect of the impact of development on the flood plain in which is a sensitive area with high risk of surface and fluvial flooding.

5. Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitats Regulations Assessment

Strategic Environmental Assessment

The Hailsham Neighbourhood Plan Review was screened under the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004. The Hailsham NDP SEA Screening Opinion (November 2025) assessed whether the reviewed Plan was likely to have significant environmental effects.

The screening concluded that Strategic Environmental Assessment was not required. In reaching that conclusion, regard was had to the nature and scope of the revised policies and the absence of site allocations. The statutory consultation bodies were consulted and concurred with the screening conclusion.

The Council has reviewed the modifications made to the Neighbourhood Plan since publication of the November 2025 SEA Screening Opinion and is satisfied that those changes do not materially alter the nature, scope or likely environmental effects of the Plan. Accordingly, the conclusions of the SEA Screening Opinion remain valid and no supplementary SEA screening has been considered necessary.

Habitats Regulations Assessment

The Hailsham Neighbourhood Plan Review was screened under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. The Hailsham NDP HRA Screening Report

(November 2025) considered whether the reviewed Plan could give rise to likely significant effects on relevant Habitats Sites, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects.

The screening concluded that the reviewed Plan would not give rise to likely significant effects and that Appropriate Assessment was not required. The statutory consultation bodies were consulted and concurred with the screening conclusion.

The Council has reviewed the modifications made to the Neighbourhood Plan since publication of the November 2025 HRA Screening Report and is satisfied that those changes do not materially alter the potential effects of the Plan on relevant Habitats Sites. Accordingly, the conclusions of the HRA Screening Report remain valid and no supplementary Habitats Regulations Assessment has been considered necessary.

The SEA and HRA screening documents support the conclusion that the modified Plan is capable of meeting the applicable basic conditions. They are separate from, but relevant to, the Council's assessment of whether the modifications change the nature of the made Plan.

6. Assessment of Whether the Modifications Change the Nature of the Plan

The determination of whether modifications change the nature of a neighbourhood plan is ultimately a matter for the Independent Examiner. However, the local planning authority is required to provide its view and reasoning.

In reaching its opinion, the Council has considered:

- the vision and objectives of the made Neighbourhood Plan;
- the extent of policy changes proposed;
- the overall scale and significance of amendments;
- whether the review fundamentally changes the Plan's approach to growth and development.

The Council has assessed the modifications individually and cumulatively, having regard to their combined effect on the structure, scope and operation of the Plan.

Many of the individual modifications build upon the vision, objectives and policy themes of the made Plan and, if considered in isolation, may not change its nature. However, the relevant judgement is whether the modification proposal, taken as a whole, is so significant or substantial as to change the nature of the Plan.

Taken together, the review:

- extends the Plan period to 2042;
- updates the vision and restructures the Plan around five revised objectives;

- increases the number of policies from 27 to 34 and introduces 15 new policies;
- introduces a new Design Guide that forms an important part of the revised design framework;
- significantly expands the scope and detail of policies relating to community infrastructure, housing, movement, biodiversity, climate resilience and flood risk;
- introduces new policy areas that were not previously addressed through development management policies; and
- materially changes the structure, content and operation of the Plan, notwithstanding that it does not allocate sites or establish a different spatial strategy.

The Council considers that these changes are mutually reinforcing and should not be viewed as a series of isolated amendments. Their cumulative effect is to create a substantially broader, more detailed and differently structured planning framework for Hailsham. Taken as a whole, the modification proposal is considered to be sufficiently significant and substantial that it changes the nature of the made Neighbourhood Plan.

It is therefore the view of Wealden District Council that the modification proposal comprises material modifications which, when considered cumulatively, are sufficiently significant and substantial to change the nature of the made Neighbourhood Plan. An examination and referendum are therefore required. In line with the three categories identified in Planning Practice Guidance, the proposal represents modification type (3).