Wealden Design Guide

Supplementary Planning Document



Wealden District Council

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Councillor Roy Galley
Portfolio Holder for Strategic Planning and Housing Delivery

Wealden is a very special area. It has overall an almost unique local distinctiveness containing within it parts of the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, the Low Weald, the Pevensey Levels and the South Downs. It is not one cohesive distinctiveness but a variety of different landscapes and architectural styles. For these reasons we need to take steps to preserve and enhance this special environment.

The Quality of what is built and the surroundings in which we live and work are important to us all and for future generations. The Design Guide is intended to retain and enhance that quality. It is available to help developers and individual homeowners when framing their planning applications.

It is a guide. It is not prescriptive or meant to be inflexible. It is not intended to stifle initiative. Without the new ideas of our forebears we would not have the exciting variety of built environment that we do.

Many people have worked very hard to put this Design Guide together and I would like to thank them all. Many Council staff have been involved as have Town and Parish Councils, amenity groups, architects and agents. Their contributions are highly valued. Several workshops have been held to shape this document and I'm very grateful for the efforts made by a lot of people.

In particular, I would like to thank my predecessor as portfolio holder, Councillor Keith Whitehead, whose dedication and hard work have been invaluable in completing this important piece of work.



Councillor Keith Whitehead
Formerly Portfolio Member for Planning and Development

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Character zones and local distinctiveness

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1 Background

1.1 The diverse character of the District's natural environment is apparent from the number, size and range of the various sites and areas singled out over time for special designation. Such designations are made in accordance with local, national and international criteria and have to be given due weight as part of the planning process.

1.2 Other forms of designation are used to ensure that special consideration is given to various aspects of Wealden's historic built environment, where they would be affected by development proposals.

1.3 Historically, in Wealden, the design and character of buildings in the landscape was directly influenced by the sustainable use of local materials. This meant that buildings of the same type, constructed within a few miles of one another, could have a totally different appearance because of changes in the materials available.

1.4 Geography and the geological changes within the District largely determine which materials are available where. Areas where significant change occurs tend to have their own particular character. The types of buildings found within these character zones, and their particular design and appearance, provides local distinctiveness.

1.5 The desire to remain 'fashionable' often led to older, timber-framed buildings being remodelled using 'expensive' alternative materials and incorporating the latest stylistic details. Those parts of a building which were in public view tended to make use of the best materials and detailing, even where they might technically be 'minor' side or rear elevations.

1.6 There is a significant difference in appearance between handmade and machine-made clay products and concrete and artificial alternatives. Originally, bricks and tiles were very expensive and their size, colour and finish varied enormously as they were being produced in small batches. These materials therefore tended to be used as an indication of social standing - or aspirations. With industrial production techniques and cheap transport, bricks and tiles of a more uniform character became readily available and, together with slate, became the materials of choice for most building work.

1.7 The traditional steeply-pitched roofs were originally likely to have been thatched, although relatively few have survived to the present day. Such roofs invariably had deeply-projecting eaves which helped to shed the water runoff some distance from the wall. The increased availability of 'fireproof' clay roofing tiles led to their widespread adoption and the general introduction of gutters, normally spiked onto the end of the projecting rafter feet, and downpipes (originally lead, later cast metal). Highly decorative bargeboards were often used with clay-tiled roofs but fascias and soffits are a relatively recent addition. Although there was some use of Horsham stone for roofing, this was very costly and required substantial support. Slate only became generally used as an alternative to clay tiles with the arrival of the railways.

1.8 The quality and range of detailing used historically on buildings is also, to some extent, dependent on the materials available. Original window openings tend to be fairly squat, occupied by leaded-light casements. These were gradually superseded by small-paned timber casements or, in rare cases, horizontally-sliding ('Yorkshire') sliding sashes.

1.9 With increasing room heights from the seventeenth century on, vertical sliding sashes were more common, becoming a particular feature of buildings of the Georgian, Victorian and Edwardian eras. Constant improvements in the manufacture of glass led to these window types having fewer and fewer subdivisions although, perversely, metal-framed, leaded-light, windows were often fitted between the 1930's to the 1950's, largely thanks to the marketing efforts of the Crittal Company.

1.10 Both windows and hearths were taxed in past centuries and this had a direct effect on the appearance of houses during these periods as a person's relative wealth might be judged by the number of windows and chimneys on display.

1.11 The original high cost of the bricks used in their construction meant that the size and decorative detail of original chimney stacks was often emphasised. Throughout the District, this practice contributes to the character of the built environment in general, and certain individual buildings in particular.

1.12 The availability of materials also influenced the type of boundary treatment used as alternatives to hedgerows within different rural areas, with timber paling fences giving way to masonry and metal 'estate' fencing as costs reduced. Again, the type of boundary treatment often reflected the social status of the landholder.

1.13 Unfortunately, the ready availability of standardised timber fence panels and the desire on the part of owners and developers for prominent entrances and 'containment' is resulting in an inappropriate urban character being imposed on what is, essentially, a rural District.

1.14 The need for new development to respect established landscape character and preserve local distinctiveness is emphasised in both local and national policy and guidance.

1.15 Within Wealden there are four main character zones:

- The High Weald
- The Low Weald
- The South Downs
- The Coastal Levels

[Not to be confused with designated Areas of Natural Beauty (AONBs) which have clearly defined boundaries.]

These zones incorporate subtle local variations and do not have sharply defined boundaries. However, the information in the following paragraphs provides the essential details about the significant differences between each zone, including potential constraints.

1.16 This information, together with a detailed study of the site and its setting, should be used as the basis for preparing a 'bespoke' scheme tailored to the specific site. The study of the site will be expected to clearly demonstrate an understanding of those elements of the local landscape setting, building design and use of materials that contribute to the area's local distinctiveness.

1.17 Officer support is unlikely to be given where proposals for new development fail to relate to the established landscape character. Similarly, 'localising' the names and the range of materials and details for use with 'standard' building designs of the sort found throughout the country, is not considered acceptable.

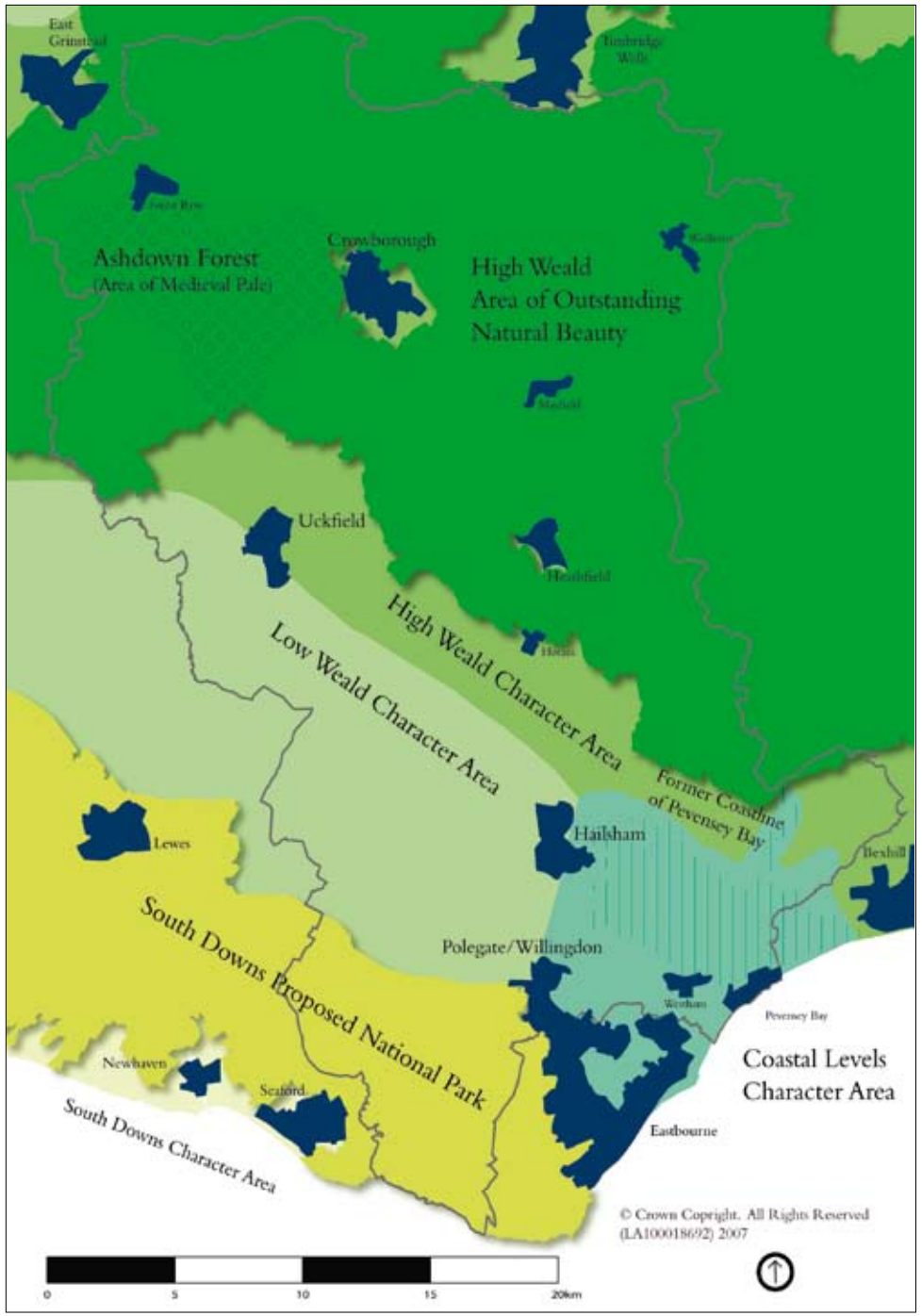


Fig 1.1 Schematic map showing the various character areas within Wealden District

Fig 2.1



Fig 2.1 Cultivation on the south-facing slopes of the High Weald

Fig 2.2



Fig 2.2 The hedgerow-dominated mediæval landscape of the High Weald

Fig 2.3



Fig 2.3 The sandstone outcrops which underpin the High Weald

2 The High Weald

2.1 Elements of this character zone can be seen in the High Weald AONB which was designated in 1983 and extends over a number of Districts, from Horsham in the west to beyond Hastings in the east. Nearly one third of it is contained within Wealden, cutting diagonally across the District from Fletching in the north-west to near Ninfield in the south-east.

2.2 With an underlying geology consisting of layers of sand, clay and sandstone, the landscape is generally hilly. Two main forest ridges, running roughly east/west, are crossed by streams and smaller ridges and valleys (ghylls). The extent of the surviving woodland cover emphasises these physical characteristics.

2.3 In addition to the larger wooded hillside areas, there are many small copses, ridgeline and roadside tree belts and hedges of varying types, many being ancient in origin. Extensive use was made of coppicing by the early iron industry, which was also responsible for the construction of the numerous characteristic 'hammer ponds' required to power the mills and forges. There is also a patchwork of small open fields and, towards the western side of the District, the broad ridges of the Ashdown Forest, which developed, through their long-term management for recreation and grazing, a distinctive heathland landscape, being kept open by grazing and management . This Forest, once a royal hunting ground, is the largest area of land in the South East which has never been under the plough. Its elevated position gives wide-ranging views towards the Sussex and Kent Downs.

2.4 The principal settlements within the High Weald occupy the higher ground, with the main lines of communication running between them, following the ridgelines. Other villages, hamlets, estates, farmsteads, houses and cottages in the area are linked to these main roads by a complex of narrow, winding lanes. There are few buildings within Ashdown Forest itself, although there are archæological remains associated with its historical uses.

2.5 Architecturally, use was made of a wide range of materials. Originally these were locally sourced, until the arrival of the railways in the mid-nineteenth century provided cheap access to alternatives from further afield. These materials include:

- Timber framing, originally with wattle-and-daub infill panels
- Stone of varying quality and colour, normally square-cut (but not always)
- Local orange/red brick, normally laid in English or Flemish bond
- Blue/grey burnt brick headers, often used to form patterns
- Lime render (limewashed), sometimes marked out to imitate stone
- Handmade orange/red clay plain tiles for roofs and vertical hanging
- Feather-edged weatherboarding, often black (pitch) for agricultural use

2.6 The following constraints relating to the High Weald should be considered as part of the preparatory process for any proposed development:

- The remote, unspoilt landscapes and secluded valleys
- The extensive ancient woodlands
- The traditional pattern of fields, shaws, hedges and woods
- The green lanes and Drove-ways crossing the landscape
- The openness of heathland ridges
- Extensive views to and from ridges
- Safeguarding rivers, streams and ponds
- Safeguarding archæological sites and elements
- Safeguarding traditional buildings, unspoilt villages and their settings
- The natural beauty of the High Weald
- The natural elements of scenic beauty
- Habitat and species of principal importance and Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) habitats and species

2.7 The High Weald landscape is particularly vulnerable to new development on the fringes of settlements which fail to respect local distinctiveness in terms of materials, design, detailing and relationship to neighbouring buildings. Another significant issue is the erosion or loss of characteristic established landscape features. This can have a number of causes, such as inappropriate management, the fragmentation of the setting of agricultural buildings and their unsympathetic conversion.

2.8 The introduction of urban elements, such as lighting and close-boarded fencing, also has a detrimental impact on the area's essential rural character. Similarly, any development affecting the skyline, such as telecommunications masts, is likely to be visually intrusive and could encroach onto sensitive areas designated for their nature conservation and landscape value.

3 The Low Weald

3.1 The Low Weald lies between the High Weald and the South Downs. Although not covered by a national landscape designation, it is an area of generally attractive countryside. The towns of Uckfield, Hailsham and Polegate lie within its bounds.

3.2 The underlying geology is essentially the softer Wealden clays, with small sandstone ridges and outcrops on the fringes of the High Weald. The landscape is generally more open than the High Weald, becoming flatter towards the Downs. The area is well wooded and has extensive blocks of ancient coppiced woodland. Other woods tend to be small but numerous with the primarily agricultural landscape being further broken up by the dense network of boundary hedges and tree belts (shaws). There are a number of ponds, largely industrial in origin, and streams and ghylls flow south from the slopes of the High Weald to feed the Cuckmere and Uck rivers, with the latter then flowing into the river Ouse.

3.3 Uckfield lies to the north, on the edge of the High Weald, with Hailsham and Polegate to the south-east, on the edge of the Pevensey Levels. There is a scatter of villages and other settlements throughout, sustained by a network of narrow country lanes. Overall, the Low Weald retains a strong rural character which is evident in views from the higher ground to north and south. The area beneath the slopes of the South Downs is particularly exposed and therefore sensitive to change. Views within the Low Weald tend to be fairly restricted due to its well wooded nature.

3.4 As with the other character zones, buildings initially drew on local sources for their materials. This palette broadened, however, with the coming of the railways in the mid-nineteenth century which gave access to a wider range. Materials used here include:

- Timber framing, originally with wattle-and-daub infill panels
- Stone of varying quality and colour, normally square-cut (but not always)
- Local orange/red brick, normally laid in English or Flemish bond
- Blue/grey burnt brick headers, often used to form patterns
- Coursed flint (both knapped and unknapped)
- Lime render (limewashed), sometimes marked out to imitate stone
- Handmade orange/red clay plain tiles for roofs and vertical hanging
- Mathematical tiles (particularly in Uckfield) over timber framing
- Feather-edged weatherboarding, often black (pitch) for agricultural use

Fig 3.1



Fig 3.1 The Low Weald clearly shows how man has used the landscape over time

3.5 The following constraints relating to the Low Weald should be considered as part of the preparatory process for any proposed development:

- The remote, unspoilt landscapes
- The ancient woodlands
- The traditional pattern of fields, shaws, hedges and woods
- The heathland
- Safeguarding rivers, streams and ponds
- Protecting the character of rural lanes
- Safeguarding archæological sites
- Safeguarding traditional buildings, unspoilt villages and their settings

3.6 The Low Weald landscape is particularly vulnerable to pressure for the expansion of existing towns and village settlements and the erosion of their character through insensitive infilling. Another significant issue is the erosion or loss of characteristic established landscape features such as the field system, hedgerows, and associated trees. Fragmentation of agricultural land around houses, such as that which can occur with equestrian uses, and the unsympathetic conversion of agricultural buildings which potentially adds to this problem.

3.7 The use of urban elements, such as lighting and close-boarded fencing, also has a detrimental impact on the area's essential rural character, as does the introduction of telecommunications masts. These are likely to be visually intrusive and could encroach onto sensitive areas designated for their nature conservation and landscape value.

Fig 3.2



Fig 3.2 The pattern of small fields, hedgerows and woodland

Fig 3.3



Fig 3.3 The undulating nature of the Low Weald's landscape

Fig 3.4



Fig 3.4 Ancient Woodland with a carpet of wood anemone

Fig 4.1



Fig 4.1 Trees on the chalk slopes of the South Downs

4 The South Downs

4.1 Elements of this character zone can be seen in the Sussex Downs AONB which was designated in 1966 and covers parts of both East and West Sussex, traversing the south-western coastal part of the District to terminate at Beachy Head near Eastbourne. The Sussex Downs Conservation Board (now the South Downs Joint Committee) was established in 1992 to promote conservation management. At the time of writing, the plans to designate the entire South Downs as a National Park are well advanced.

4.2 Consisting of an undulating chalk ridge, the South Downs present a dramatic north-facing escarpment, overlooking the Low Weald. Dry valleys are a feature of this escarpment, which is characterised by mature woodland extending along the lower slopes.

Fig 4.2



Fig 4.2 View north from South Downs

4.3 The main river valleys, such as the Cuckmere, cut through the Downs to meet the coast in broad alluvial floodplains with wet grazing meadows, contrasting markedly with the high, exposed downlands. The open nature of the Downs accommodates large fields, mostly in arable use, and substantial areas of environmentally sensitive grassland. Woodland is present but tends to be in isolated blocks. There are few hedgerows and that do exist are normally sparse, narrow, and incorporate a few windswept trees.

4.4 The South Downs is relatively sparsely settled, scattered villages and isolated farmsteads predominating. The larger settlements tend to be found occupying sheltered sites on the lower slopes of valleys and in particular on the edge of the floodplain. Typically, villages are built around a central core with some linear development along the valleys. Although dense tree cover provides some screening for buildings, the villages are often the focus of views over and along the valleys. Traditional farmsteads and isolated barns tend to be found on the more elevated slopes with more modern farm buildings nestling in dry valleys or clustered along the floor of the escarpment.

Fig 4.3



Fig 4.3 Environmentally Sensitive Area in the South Downs

4.5 Whilst timber-framing is to be found, as the extensive survival of predominantly masonry structures indicates, the range of locally availalable building materials differs somewhat from those found in the Weald, The range of materials here includes :

- Coursed flint (knapped and un-knapped)
- Coursed cobble
- 'Bungeroosh', an irregular mix of brick, chalk and flint
- Chalk block (generally used internally)
- Stone usage tends to be limited to quoins and detailing
- Local orange/red brick, originally mainly used for quoins and detailing
- Mathematical tiling, some examples of which can be found in Alfriston
- Lime render (limewashed), sometimes marked out to imitate stone
- Handmade orange/red clay plain tiles for roofs and vertical hanging
- Weatherboarding (relatively rare)

4.6 It is extremely difficult to form sharp angles using flints or cobbles on their own so elements requiring defined edges were normally constructed in brick or, more rarely, stone. Flint and cobble walls also make use of brick 'lacing' courses to help in tying them together. Flint and cobble construction generally results in thicker walls, often gently tapering with height, which gives a very specific character to both the exterior and interior of buildings.

4.7 The following constraints relating to the South Downs should be considered as part of the preparatory process for any proposed development :

- The open nature of the landscape
- Remote, unspoilt areas
- Safeguarding nature conservation designations
- Safeguarding archæological sites
- Safeguarding building character, unspoilt villages and their settings

4.8 The open character of the South Downs landscape makes it highly vulnerable to change as there is little capacity for it to absorb further residential development, even around existing settlements. The erection of new, large scale, agricultural buildings of modern construction is also impacting on the character of the area, as is the loss of traditional boundary types such as hedgerows and flint walls. Increasing pressure for telecommunications masts, many of which are likely to prove visually intrusive, also has the potential to compromise this important landscape. Finally, attention must be drawn to the difficulties involved in maintaining local distinctiveness when craftsmen with the traditional skills required are becoming more and more scarce.

5 The Coastal Levels

5.1 The Coastal Levels describes an area of wetlands, largely reclaimed, with pockets of raised land. Its importance to biodiversity and the natural environment is recognised by means of a variety of designations, both national and international The area is bounded to the north and east by the High Weald and to the south-west by the South Downs.

5.2 Together with some arable fields, extensive, exposed, wet meadows used for grazing characterise this area. The openness of the landscape is emphasised by the limited presence of trees and hedgerows, the main internal subdivisions taking the form of an irregular network of reeded drainage channels and ditches along which some willows and hawthorns occur. Woodland tends to be associated with settlements on the higher ground. The coastline is shingley and virtually undeveloped. Some sporadic ribbon development has grown up along parts of this coastline in a haphazard and unsympathetic fashion, with no reflection of local distinctiveness or respect for the character of the coast.

5.3 Scattered settlements and farmsteads are to be found on the high ground, linked by open roads, often raised above the surrounding land. The southern part is more developed as a result of encroachment from existing settlements on the fringes of the Levels and the coast. In terms of the built form, churches and fortifications of various ages tend to provide the strongest historic visual focuses, although the presence of power lines and pylons is marked in the relatively flat and open landscape.

5.4 Again, architecturally, wider use was made of masonry for construction here than in the Weald. The character of the built form in this area thus has a deal in common with that found in the South Downs drawing, as it does, on a similar range of materials. These include:

- Coursed flint (both knapped and un-knapped)
- Coursed cobble
- 'Bungeroosh', an irregular mix of brick, chalk and flint
- Local orange/red brick, originally mainly used for quoins and detailing
- Lime render (limewashed), sometimes marked out to imitate stone
- Handmade orange/red clay plain tiles for roofs and vertical hanging
- Weatherboarding

5.5 As noted for the South Downs, it is extremely difficult to form sharp angles using flints or cobbles on their own so elements requiring defined edges were normally constructed in brick. Flint and cobble walls also make use of brick 'lacing' courses to help in tying them together. Flint and cobble construction generally results in thicker walls, often gently tapering with height, which gives a very specific character to both the exterior and interior of buildings.

5.6 The following constraints relating to the Coastal Levels should be considered as part of the preparatory process for any proposed development :

- The open nature of the landscape
- Large expanses of remote, unspoilt areas
- Safeguarding nature conservation designations
- Maintaining and conserving the network of drainage channels
- Protecting the undeveloped coastline
- Safeguarding archæological sites
- Safeguarding building character, unspoilt villages and their settings

5.7 The open character of the Coastal Levels, in particular the Pevensey Levels, makes the area highly vulnerable to change. The limited high ground means that there is little capacity for it to absorb further residential development, even around existing settlements, and the loss of the area's characteristic dyke, wetland and wet meadow vegetation will be resisted. Again, attention must be drawn to the problems of maintaining local distinctiveness when the traditional skills required are becoming increasingly scarce. Technical guidance notes on specific topics will be issued and updated from time to time by the Council. Please check the Council's website or contact the Planning department for up-to-date details.

Fig 5.1



Fig 5.1 View south over the Levels towards the Channel

Fig 5.2



Fig 5.2 Drainage ditch & evidence of traditional grazing regime

Fig 5.3



Fig 5.3 Cuckmere Valley flood-plain near Alfriston

6 Local distinctiveness

6.1 By Design: Urban Design in the planning system: towards better practice (DETR/Cabe 2000) states that 'local distinctiveness' refers to:

"The positive features of a place and its communities which contribute to its special character and sense of place."

6.2 As indicated by Planning Policy Statement PPS1 'Delivering Sustainable Development', it is a requirement for new development to make a 'positive' contribution to the character and identity of a place. Wealden District Council sees this as an opportunity to draw upon that established built form and its relationship with the landscape to contribute to the area's overall quality. This includes the way in which materials, traditional styles, construction and detailing are correctly employed, avoiding the introduction of 'pastiche' designs.

6.3 Due to its varied landscape and geology, the Wealden District has a wealth of building styles ranging from the medieval to the present day. The Visual Glossary attached as Appendix A provides examples of components, materials, finishes and details that are used in the District than can positively influence or inspire a scheme. Where distinctiveness is ignored or used incorrectly, the results are often visually inharmonious and discordant.

6.4 In providing this comprehensive Visual Glossary, the District Council is not intending that it should be used to justify the 'pastiche' approach to design, merely 'bolting on' elements as a means of providing 'local character'. Designing for local distinctiveness is not a 'shopping basket' approach to design but requires a creative input to the process of reconciling local practices and traditions with the latest technologies, building types and needs.

6.5 By identifying that which is distinctive about Wealden, it is the intention that developers, applicants and decision-makers have an understanding of the environment in which they are working. By Design clearly states that

"Development that responds sensitively to the site and its setting, by contrast is likely to create a place that is valued and most pleasing to the eye."

Fig 6.1



Fig 6.1 Timber-framed 'Wealden' house

Fig 6.2



Fig 6.2 Thatched timber-framed house

Fig 6.3



Fig 6.3 Stone-built, parallel-range house

Fig 6.4



Fig 6.4 Burnt brick symmetrical façade

Fig 6.5



Fig 6.5 Raised verandah to front of house

Fig 6.6



Fig 6.6 Mid-C18 formality

Fig 6.7



Fig 6.7 C19 'Gothic' gatehouse

Fig 6.8



Fig 6.8 Special agricultural requirements

Fig 6.9



Fig 6.9 Box-framed house and thatched, weatherboarded barn

Fig 6.10



Fig 6.10 The new local distinctiveness ?

7 Buildings of local importance

7.1 In addition to those buildings and structures which appear within the current "List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest", there are a number of other properties which are considered by local communities to contribute to the character and quality of the built environment within their particular settlements and areas.

7.2 Often such buildings embody materials and architectural detailing relating to the specific character areas in which they are located. They may, however, be buildings of a generic type, such as hospitals or railway structures, which tend to relate more to 'national' standardisation in terms of design and materials.

7.3 During the course of the last listed building resurvey in Wealden (carried out in the late 1970s/early 1980s) these buildings were not considered to merit statutory protection through inclusion in the List. There has, however, been a long-standing recognition that (for instance, in the designation of Conservation Areas) certain non-listed buildings are of considerable visual, historical or social importance, both in their own right and taken in context. The Council is generally supportive of organisations who wish to approach English Heritage to consider adding a building to the current Statutory List.

7.4 English Heritage and others encourage communities, with the guidance of their Local Authority, to compile their own 'local lists' in line with agreed criteria.

7.5 Although those buildings featured in such local lists do not enjoy the statutory protection given to entries in the national List, their inclusion is a material consideration for planning purposes and has been taken into account at Appeal.

7.6 In recent years, a number of Parish Councils have taken the opportunity to produce their own 'Village Design Statements', each of which identifies those aspects of a locality that contribute to its special character.

7.7 These include the style, materials and detailing of the local architecture which are considered to define historic built form within the Parish. They are described with a view to their serving as models for any future development.

7.8 Such work can also provide a useful basis for the identification, by individual communities, of those unlisted local buildings which they consider to be of most importance to them.

7.9 Wealden District Council has held workshops on the subject of local listing and been encouraged by the response. As a result, draft criteria have been drawn up and sent to each Parish/Town Council with an invitation to consult with their communities to see whether they wish to put any buildings forward for inclusion in a local list.

7.10 Although, at the time of writing, buildings included in such local lists have no statutory protection, the Council will respect local opinion when considering any planning applications relating to their immediate locality.

7.11 There is no specific timescale for suggestions to be submitted to the District Council as the principal requirement is that they should be prepared as a result of community involvement.

Fig 7.1



Fig 7.1 East Dean Conservation Area

Fig 7.2



Fig 7.2 Frant Village Green

The pictures below give an idea of the types of buildings which could be considered to be of local importance in terms of their architectural character or history

2

Fig 7.3



Fig 7.3 Unusual corner building in Uckfield

Fig 7.5



Fig 7.5 The prominently sited former Rush's butcher's shop in Crowborough

Fig 7.7



Fig 7.7 Terracotta 'Aesthetic' date panel on the Rush's building in Crowborough

Fig 7.8



Fig 7.8 Part of the Hellingly Hospital site

Fig 7.4



Fig 7.4 Former flour mill at Horsebridge

Fig 7.6



Fig 7.6 Faience tiling and stained glass at the former butcher's shop

Fig 7.9



Fig 7.9 Former Uckfield signal box now used as Taxi office

8 Summary

8.1 Much of the development in Wealden has been influenced by the diverse character of the natural environment. The use of local materials is a typical example of how such variations occur, although changing fashions and access to mass-produced materials have led to urbanisation and standardisation.

8.2 The need for new development to respect established landscape character and preserve local distinctiveness is emphasised in both local and national policy and guidance.

8.3 Within Wealden there are four main character zones

- The High Weald
- The Low Weald
- The South Downs
- The Coastal Levels

8.4 These zones do not have sharply defined boundaries but, within them, encompass subtle local variations in terms of their landscape and architectural character.

8.5 Wealden District also contains a large number of buildings of special architectural or historic interest. Some of these are listed and thereby recognised as being of national importance. Others may be included in local lists prepared by town or parish councils and/ or of importance within a designated Conservation Area

8.6 The Council is keen to support all efforts to maintain and enhance buildings which are of visual, historical or social significance and which contribute to local distinctiveness, including the preparation of local lists and village design statements.