

Wealden
District Council

Wealden District Council Local Plan

Sustainability Appraisal (SA) SCOPING REPORT (Update)

January 2024

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Wealden District Council (WDC) is currently developing a new Local Plan, which will provide an overarching planning framework for the local area, excluding a small area in the south of the District, which forms part of the South Downs National Park. The South Downs National Park has planning powers for its own area.

1.2 The District's new Local Plan will replace the current set of adopted development plan documents (the Wealden Local Plan 1998 saved policies, the Core Strategy 2013 and the Affordable Housing Delivery Local Plan 2016) with a new planning framework for the District up to 2040. The Local Plan will provide a vision for the District, a long-term spatial strategy for growth, including the locations where development will take place. The plan will also provide a range of both strategic and non-strategic policies that will guide development across the District contributing to sustainability goals. In doing so, it will help to deliver the Council's corporate priorities including supporting communities, delivering on climate change and achieving net zero carbon by 2050 or sooner, protecting and enhancing our built and natural environment and ensuring that our economy is thriving, vibrant and diverse.

1.3 To support the development of the new Local Plan, the Council is required by law to undertake a Sustainability Appraisal (SA). The SA is an integral part of the plan making process and from the outset, must consider ways by which the plan can contribute to improvements in environmental, social and economic conditions as well as a means of identifying and mitigating any potential adverse effects that the plan might otherwise have.

Introduction

What is this Report?

1.4 The first stage in the SA process is to produce a Scoping Report. A previous scoping report was consulted upon and published in 2020/2021. A new Scoping Report was issued for consultation in June 2023 in order to:

- **Provide an updated consideration of plans, policies and programmes that are relevant for consideration in plan-making**
- **Provide updated economic, environmental and social policy context and baseline information**
- **Consider the updated baseline information to identify sustainability issues and to review and update the SA objectives**
- **Set out a refined method of approach to the SA, to strengthen the robustness of the SA and therefore the soundness of the Local Plan.**

1.5 In line with the **Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (the SEA Regulations)**[1], the Council is required to consult with the three statutory bodies for a period of 5 weeks – the Environment Agency, Natural England and Historic England – on the content of the SA Scoping Report.

1.6 In addition, the Council's Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) 2020, requires the Council to engage local communities and other interested parties in developing and reviewing emerging planning documents and determining planning applications. The Council therefore consulted on the SA Scoping Report with the neighbouring authorities, organisations such as the Sussex Local Nature Partnership, Sussex Wildlife Trust, High Weald AONB Unit, National Highways as well as consulting our communities, which is wider than the statutory requirement.

1 Regulation 12(5) and 12(6) of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (the SEA Regulations)

Introduction

Consultation Process

1.7 The Consultation on the SA Scoping Report ran from **26th June 2023 to 7th August 2023** to provide the opportunity to feed into the SA process. Comments were invited on the Draft SA Scoping Report and further information was provided on the Council's Consultation webpage **Consultation Home - Keystone (wealden.gov.uk)** where comments could be made directly online, using the consultation portal.

1.8 Alternatively, a paper comments form could be collected from the Council's offices where the Draft SA Scoping Report could be viewed or a comments form downloaded from the website as above.

Consultees were welcome to comment on the content of the report and asked to consider in particular:

- **Plans, Policies and Programmes**
  Are there any plans, policies and programmes set out in **Appendix A** that have not been included, which are considered relevant to the sustainability appraisal of the Local Plan?
- **Baseline Data**
  Are there any sources of baseline data, which have been omitted or need to be updated?
- **Sustainability Issues**
  Are the Sustainability Issues suitable and relevant to the district? Do any of the sustainability issues need to be added to or amended? If so, why?
- **Sustainability Framework**
  Are the sustainability objectives and indicators set out in the SA Framework appropriate?
- **Sustainability Methodology**
  Is the sustainability appraisal methodology suitable? Is the methodology clear and complete?

Responses to Consultation

1.9 Around fifty responses were received to the consultation, including statutory consultees the Environment Agency and Historic England, which are summarised in **Appendix D** to this report. A response was not received from Natural England. In general, the view was that the Scoping report provided an appropriate methodology and framework for the Sustainability Appraisal of the Local Plan.

1.10 The key issues raised related to some changes to the baseline data in particular, the sections on Air Quality (chapter 7) and Water (chapter 14). The wording for the sustainability objectives and indicators has also been refined to remove any duplication and improve clarity. Appendix A have also been updated to include plans, policies or programmes which had been omitted.

1.11 Since the Scoping Report was published in June the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act (LURA) 2023 has come into effect. The Act brings forward significant changes to the planning system including development plan preparation. However, Local Authorities can continue to follow the existing process if a plan is in place by 30 June 2025. The Council has therefore decided to continue the preparation of the Local Plan under the existing regime, which includes Sustainability Appraisal.

1.12 The revised NPPF was published on 19th December 2023. The main changes in the NPPF have limited impact upon the Council's Regulation 18 consultation. Where NPPF wording has been updated this will be picked up as the Plan moves towards its Regulation 19 stage, given the timing of the Local Plan Regulation 18 consultation and publication of the new NPPF, and the limited impact of the wording updates to the Regulation 18 Draft Local Plan.

2.0 What is Sustainable Development?

2.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) refers to the most widely accepted definition of sustainable development as **"meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs"** [2].

2.2 The NPPF acknowledges that the purpose of the planning system is to achieve sustainable development, which has three overarching objectives; social, economic and environmental. These objectives should be delivered through the preparation and implementation of plans:

- **An Economic Objective**
  To help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure.
- **A Social Objective**
  To support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering a well-designed and safe built environment, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities' health, social and cultural well-being.
- **An Environmental Objective**
  to contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, helping to improve biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.

SA & Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

2.3 The **Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004** requires Local Plans throughout their evolution to be subject to Sustainability Appraisal. The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) Regulations (2012) state that a Sustainability Appraisal report must be completed for Local Plan documents in accordance with section 19(5) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

2.4 The SA must also show how the requirements of the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directive have been met. The Strategic Environmental Assessment **EU Directive (2001/42/EC)** requires a 'Strategic Environmental Assessment' (SEA) of plans and programmes, including development plans, which is transposed into UK law through the **Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations (2004)** (commonly referred to as the SEA Regulations).

2.5 The purpose of the Sustainability Appraisal (SA) is to ensure that sustainable development has been integrated in the formulation of development plans and to verify that due consideration has been given to social, economic and environmental factors.

2.6 The SA process is intended to promote sustainable development in plan preparation by assessing the extent to which an emerging plan and its policies, when judged against reasonable alternatives, will help to achieve relevant environmental, economic and social objectives. The process will help ensure that the proposed policy options in the emerging Wealden Local Plan are appropriate.

2 Resolution 42/187 of the United Nations General Assembly

2.7 The SA and SEA are separate processes but share many similarities. The SEA focuses mainly on the likely environmental effects of a plan whilst the SA includes the social and economic effects of a plan in addition to the environmental effects required by the SEA Regulations.

2.8 Whilst there are formalised approaches for both SA and SEA, the **Government's Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) on SEA and SA** notes that it is possible to satisfy both requirements by undertaking a joint SA and SEA process, to present an integrated 'SA' that incorporates the requirements of the SEA Regulations.

Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA)

2.9 The UK left the European Union (EU) on 31 January 2020 under the terms set out in the European Union (Withdrawal Agreement) Act 2020 ("the Withdrawal Act"). While the UK is no longer a member of the EU, a requirement for Habitats Regulations Assessment continues, as set out in the **Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019**.

2.10 The Habitat Regulations set out a requirement for a Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) to be applied to all land use plans to assess the potential effect of a plan against the conservation objectives of European Sites including Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and Ramsar Sites.

2.11 The Sustainability Appraisal will need to take account of the findings of any Habitats Regulations Assessment that is carried out on the new Wealden Local Plan, as per national planning guidance. The SA/SEA process and the HRA process should work collaboratively and in step with each other.

2.12 Under the Habitats Regulations, competent authorities have a duty to undertake an appropriate assessment where a land use plan or any other regulatory activity including projects and programmes is likely to have a significant effect on a European site. The purpose of an Appropriate Assessment is to assess the implications of a plan against the conservation objectives of the European site, and to ascertain that the plan would not, even in combination with other plans or projects, adversely affect the integrity of the site. The Habitats Directive applies the precautionary principle to European sites when assessing whether the effects of a plan are significant. This means that a plan can only be permitted after it has been determined that there will be no adverse effect on the integrity of the site(s) in question.

2.13 Plans and projects that are associated with potential adverse impacts on European sites may still be permitted if there are no reasonable alternatives and there are Imperative Reasons of Overriding Public Interest (IROPI) as to why they should go ahead. In such cases, compensation would be necessary to ensure the overall integrity of the site network.

2.14 Prior to undertaking an appropriate assessment, a local authority must first assess whether or not a plan is likely to result in a significant effect. This is essentially a risk assessment or screening process to decide whether or not the full appropriate assessment is required. Should it be determined that a plan will not result in significant effects then no further assessment will be required. If significant effects cannot be ruled out as unlikely, then an appropriate assessment will be required to consider any potential impacts further.

2.15 There are a number of sites designated as sites of European importance located within Wealden District. These include:

- Ashdown Forest Special Area of Conservation (SAC)
- Ashdown Forest Special Protection Area (SPA)
- Pevensey Levels SAC
- Pevensey Levels Ramsar site and SAC.

2.16 There are also SACs, SPAs and Ramsar Sites located in other districts and boroughs that the Council will need to consider as part of its HRA process.

2.17 The Council has engaged specialist consultants to undertake the HRA for the Local Plan. Similar to the SA, the HRA is an iterative process and will inform plan-making and HRA Reports will be published alongside the Regulation 18 draft Wealden Local Plan and the Interim SA Report as well as subsequent stages (Regulation 19 and submission) in the plan-making process.

Equalities and Health Impacts

2.18 The **Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) contained in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010** is clear that public authorities must have due regard to a number of equality considerations when exercising their functions. The Duty requires the Council to consider or think about how their policies and/or decisions affect people who are protected under the Equality Act and, this includes planning policies or decisions. Therefore, as part of developing the District's new Local Plan, the Duty requires the Council to assess whether the Local Plan policies are likely to have an equal and fair impact upon all people and sectors of the community.

2.19 Since the emerging Local Plan will be subject to SA, the effects of the plan's policy options on social issues will be assessed. Therefore, the Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) requirements will be considered as part of the SA process. Notwithstanding this, the Council will produce an EqIA for the emerging Local Plan to ensure that the plan and its policies do not discriminate against those with protected characteristics as well as ensuring that opportunities to address inequality in the plan are taken.

2.20 As part of the consideration of social issues, the SA process will be used to assess the potential health impacts of the plan on the population. The NPPF requires planning policies and decisions to **"enable and support healthy lifestyles, especially where this would address identified local health and wellbeing needs"**. In essence, national policy requires a Health Impact Assessment (HIA) of the Local Plan to be undertaken to ascertain whether planning policies prevent ill health, promote good health and/or healthy lifestyles and reduce health inequalities.

2.21 The Council has integrated health considerations into the SA where the SA Framework provides a number of Objectives that are either directly or indirectly relevant to health. This includes SO1 and SO2 relating to climate change, SO7 pollution, SO8 green and blue infrastructure, SO10 landscape and townscape, SO12 digital infrastructure, SO13 sustainable travel and accessibility, SO14 housing, SO15 health and well-being, SO16 quality of life and place, SO17 social deprivation, SO18 economy and employment, SO19 town and village centres, SO20 education and skills.

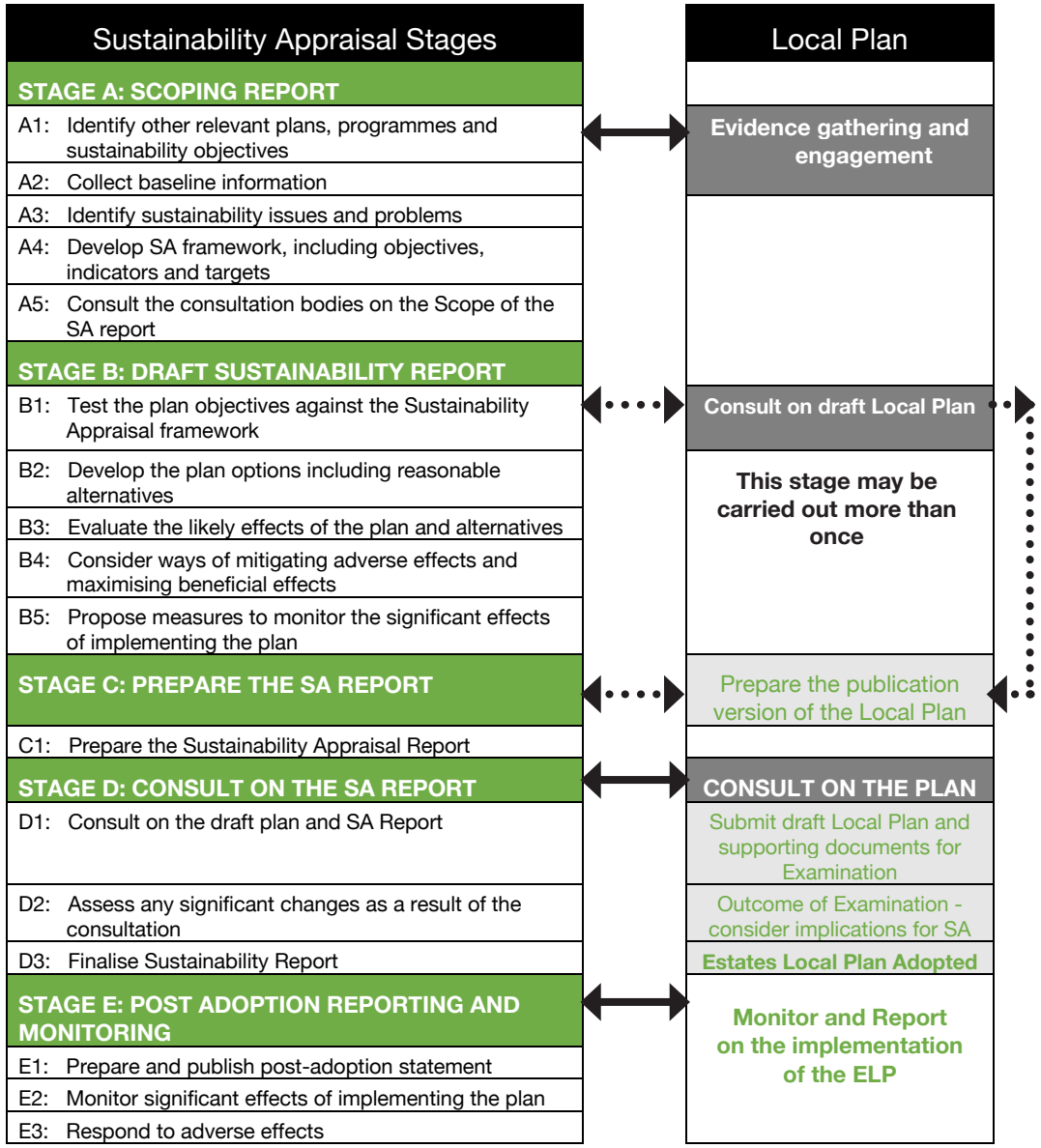
3.0 The SA Process

3.1 The SA process utilises a holistic approach in assessing the likely significant social, economic and environmental effects of the policies and proposals within a plan from the outset of its development. SA is an iterative process as it evolves alongside, and feeds into, the development of the Local Plan. The SA will inform the selection and refinement of policy options and allocations to improve sustainable development for each draft of the Local Plan until the Plan is finally adopted.

3.2 The Government's PPG on SEA and SA sets out five key stages in the preparation of Sustainability Appraisal for Local Plans. Each key stage is also divided up into a number of tasks, as set out in **Figure 3.1**. To reflect the iterative nature of SA, some of the tasks are undertaken simultaneously and will inform each other. Similarly, the outcomes of some tasks will feedback into tasks already undertaken.

3.3 **Figure 3.1** shows the five stages within the SA process and its relationship with the emerging Local Plan, which is illustrated in the Government's Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) on SEA and SA.

Figure 3.1: Stages within the SA process + relationship to Local Plan preparation



STAGE A - Scoping Report

3.4 The first part of a Sustainability Appraisal is the Scoping Report. This stage involves undertaking a number of key tasks as set out in **Figure 3.1**. The key tasks are further explained below:

- **Stage A1:** Identify other relevant plans, policies programmes and objectives, which should be taken into account during the Local Plan preparation
- **Stage A2:** Collect baseline information on a range of social, economic and environmental data from a number of sources
- **Stage A3:** Identify the sustainability issues and problems (social, economic and environmental)
- **Stage A4:** Develop the SA Framework, including SA Objectives, which will be used to appraise the Local Plan policies and site allocations.
- **Stage A5:** Consult on the Scope of the SA with statutory bodies and other relevant stakeholders across the district and the wider area as appropriate.

3.5 To establish a clear scope for the Sustainability Appraisal, relevant international, national, regional, subregional and local Policies, Plans and Programmes (PPPs), which could potentially have implications for the SA and the Local Plan have been identified and reviewed to establish any relationships between them and the Local Plan. A full list of the PPPs reviewed is provided in Appendix A of this report.

3.6 The review has mainly focused on the national and local PPPs, as the objectives and requirements of international and European strategies and Directives are now sufficiently well established to have translated down into the lower tier PPPs. However, where relevant and useful in terms of context, higher level PPPs have been included. Whilst a review of the PPPs is provided in **Appendix A**, under each baseline data section we have provided a brief summary of key PPPs, which are particularly relevant to the SA and Local Plan.

3.7 A discussion on stages A2 to A4 is presented in the following chapters:

- Stage A2 is presented in chapters 4 with the baseline information described in chapters 5 to 18
- Stage A3 is presented at the end of each of the baseline chapters
- Stage A4 is presented in chapter 19
- Stage A5 consultation is explained in chapter 1.

4.0 Baseline Overview

4.1 The term 'baseline data' refers to the existing environmental, economic and social characteristics of the area likely to be affected by the Local Plan, and their likely evolution without the implementation of new policies.

4.2 Stage **A2** of the SA process requires the collection of baseline information to provide an evidence base for the sustainability issues in the District to enable the selection of the sustainability objectives, the prediction of effects and future monitoring.

4.3 As set out in the SEA Directive Annex 1 (b and c), the information to be provided must include:

"The relevant aspects of the current state of the environment and the likely evolution thereof without implementation of the plan or programme" and

"The environmental characteristics of areas likely to be significantly affected" **SEA Directive**

4.4 Over the last few years, the Council has been collecting up to date information and data on various topic areas, including housing, the economy, health and well-being, flooding, the environment and infrastructure provision. In addition, partners and organisations have also released new information.

4.5 This Report contains updates to the baseline information gathered in the previous Scoping Report. Throughout the report links and references to data sources are provided, however, the main data sources used include the following:

- **Data published by central government and public bodies**
- **Census data (Office of National Statistics)**
- **Natural England**
- **Environment Agency**
- **National Highways**
- **Public Health Outcomes Framework**
- **East Sussex Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA)**
- **East Sussex in Figures (ESiF)**
- **Local Plan Evidence Base**

Context For Wealden

4.6 Wealden is a large rural District, encompassing a large number of settlements and communities. There are five main towns, Crowborough, Hailsham, Heathfield, Polegate and Uckfield with the remaining settlements being villages and hamlets. Unlike other districts, Wealden is not dominated by any one of its towns and overall it is a District of many centres, with the towns generally serving the local population, with interactions between the villages and towns, and between the towns themselves.

4.7 As a rural District, many residents rely on private cars to access services and facilities and to generally move around the District and beyond. This reliance on the car is compounded by a relatively poor public transport network. There are good rail connections within the north of the District providing access to London via Uckfield and Crowborough, and in the south at Polegate providing access to southern towns and cities such as Brighton, Eastbourne, Lewes and Hastings. However, rail connections within the rest of the District are very limited with no connections between the south and north of the District. The public transport system is focused on bus services, which are reasonable but journey times can be long and so the car is often preferable. There are also issues of bus frequency, especially in our more rural settlements.

4.8 One of Wealden's principal assets is its high quality environment. This is reflected in the high proportion of the District which is protected for its landscape and biodiversity importance. The High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the South Downs National Park together cover some 60% of the District and there are numerous European, national and locally designated sites protected for their habitats and species. The richness and diversity of its biodiversity, landscape and heritage are significant factors in making the District such a desirable place to live, work and visit. However, this fact, coupled with a limited legacy of brownfield land, places additional pressures on our countryside and settlement edges.

4.9 The local economy comprises a range of manufacturing industries, professional services, construction and land-based industries, including viticulture, tourism and the visitor economy, and is characterised by a high number of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and a highly qualified workforce. Despite this, the District is close to other employment centres, such as those in Eastbourne, Brighton and Tunbridge Wells, which offer higher paid jobs and there are high levels of out-commuting, with higher paid earners in the north accessing jobs outside of the District compared to the south.

4.10 Wealden's good quality of life, and its proximity to London, Crawley, Gatwick and other employment centres, creates a high demand for housing, especially in the north of the District where transport connections are better. This has often placed upwards pressure on house prices and widened the gap between local incomes and market prices, and led to shortages of affordable housing.

4.11 While the general picture is of an attractive and reasonably affluent area, there are inequalities within the District, with areas of relative affluence masking pockets of deprivation and health inequality. This is particularly apparent between the north and south of the District, with higher mean incomes in the north contrasting with lower incomes around Hailsham and Polegate in the south.

Baseline Data: Overview

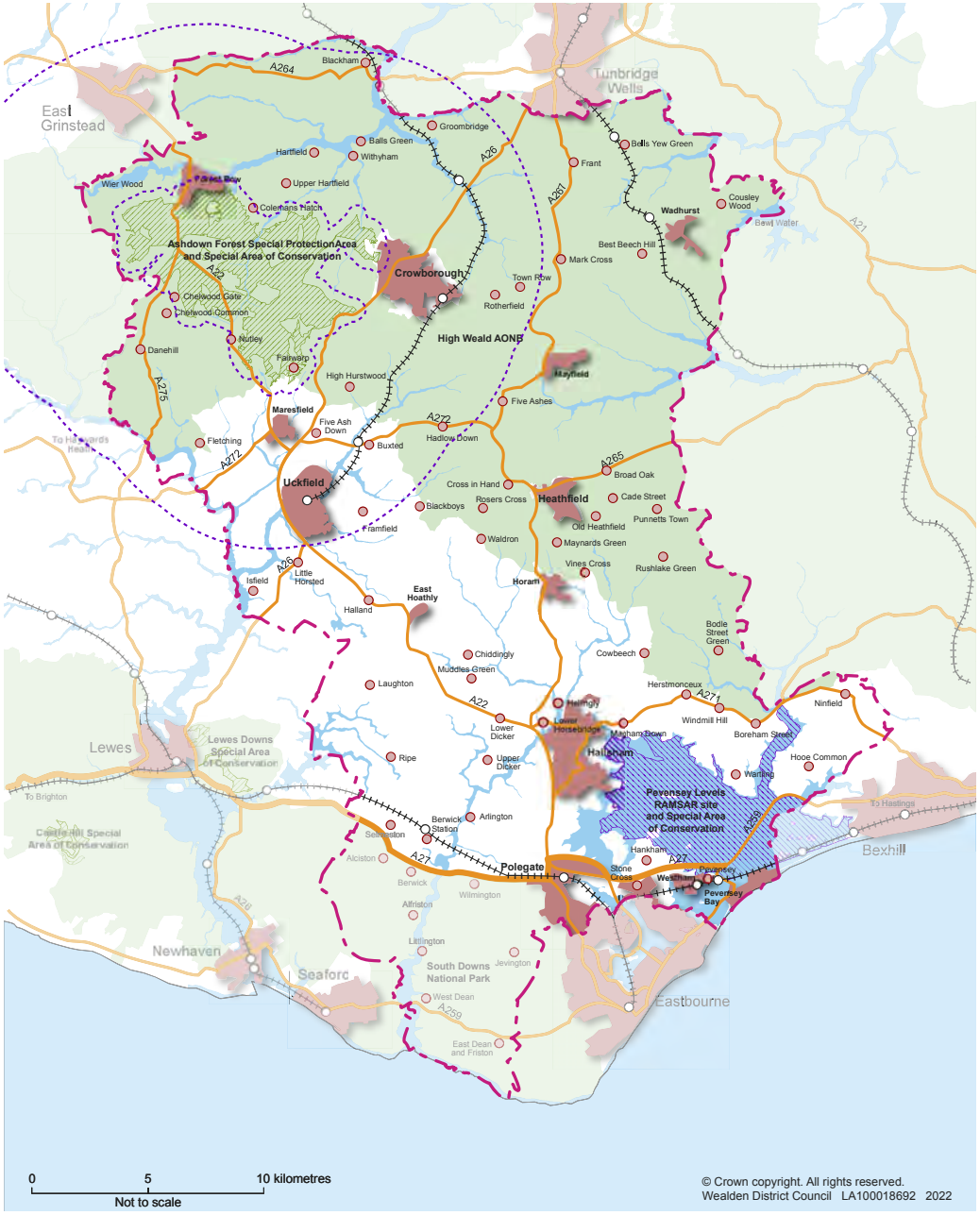


Figure 4.1 Map of District

5.0 Population and Community

KEY PPPs

- **The Census 2021**
- **The Housing White Paper 'Fixing our Broken Housing Market 2017**
- **National Planning Policy Framework**
- **East Sussex Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Accommodation Needs Assessment 2022 Wealden Local Housing Needs Assessment 2021**

KEY MESSAGES

- To achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places which are safe and accessible, so that the quality of life or community cohesion are not undermined
- To enable and support healthy lifestyles, especially where this would address identified local health and well-being needs
- To support the delivery of local strategies to improve health, social, cultural and creative well-being, for all sections of the community
- To guard against the unnecessary loss of valued facilities and services, particularly where this would reduce the community's ability to meet its day-to-day needs
- To ensure an integrated approach to considering the location of housing, economic uses and community facilities and services
- To provide for different sizes, types and tenures of housing including those who require affordable housing and those associated with the ageing population
- To ensure the provision of sufficient and suitable new homes to meet identified local needs for all sections of society
- To provide for travellers and people wishing to commision their own homes.

Population Size, Change and Age Structure

5.1 The 2021 Census provides the most up-to-date figures for the population size of Wealden, which stands at 160,100, rising from 148,900 in 2011, an increase of 7.5%[3]. This is higher than the overall population increase for England during the same period that stands at 6.6%, but in line with the southeast region that also stood at 7.5%. However, except for Mid Sussex District (an increase of 9.1%), all of Wealden's neighbouring local authority's population grew at lower levels over that period.

5.2 The age structure of the District shows a significant proportion of the population are over 65 years old, with the baseline percentage figure of 26.6% of the overall population in 2021, which has risen from 22.9% in the 2011 Census. Conversely, there has been a drop (in percentage terms) in all age categories under 49 years old between the 2021 Census and the 2011 Census (the only exception being the 25-34 age group). This is shown in **Table 5.1**[4] below.

5.3 When compared to both the national and regional picture, the latest Census 2021 reveals that Wealden District has a significantly higher percentage of the population in the over 65-age group (at 26.6%) with the south east region only at 19.4% and England as a whole at 18.3%. This mirrors the population projections into the future (see below) and indicates that Wealden District is an attractive place to live for older people, whilst it appears more difficult for younger people to stay in the area, albeit that 25-34 age group has bucked this trend.

Table 5.1: Age Breakdown in Wealden for 2011 and 2021 Census

Age Group	2011 Wealden % Population	2021 Wealden % Population
85 years and over	3.4%	3.7%
75 to 84 years	7.7%	9.2%
65 to 74 years	11.8%	13.7%
50 to 64 years	21.5%	22.7%
35 to 49 years	20.6%	16.5%
25 to 34 years	8.3%	9.6%
20 to 24 years	4.2%	4.2%
16 to 19 years	4.7%	3.9%
10 to 15 years	7.3%	6.8%
5 to 9 years	5.4%	5.3%
4 years and under	5.0%	4.5%

5.4 The majority of the District's population (as of 2011, the latest information available) live in urban areas, with the split being 55% of residents living in urban areas to 45% living in rural areas. However, the age profile of residents living in urban or rural areas is relatively similar, as shown in the table below.

Table 5.2: Population age profile by urban and rural areas in 2011[5]

Age group	Urban (%)	Rural (%)
0-15	18.2	17.2
16-64	59.2	59.4
65+	22.6	23.4

3 Office of National Statistics (ONS), Census 2021. Population Change. Available at: https://www.ons.gov.uk/visualisations/censuspopulationchange/E07000065/

4 Office of National Statistics (ONS), How life has changed in Wealden: Census 2021. Available at: https://www.ons.gov.uk/visualisations/censusareachanges/E07000065/

5 Office for National Statistics (ONS), KS102EW. Population by urban and rural areas in 2011 – parishes. Available at: www.eastsussexinfigures.org.uk

Migration

5.5 The District has consistently seen a net outflow of younger people (15-24) between 2010 and 2020. This may reflect that many younger people are moving to higher education provided outside the District (with no university in the District) or that house prices on the private market make it difficult for that cohort to stay within the District (alongside accessing well paid jobs etc.). For all other age categories, there has been a net inflow to the area, that highlights that the area is attractive to both families and retirees. This is shown in the tables 5.3, 5.4 and 5.5.

5.6 During the 2019/2020 monitoring period, Wealden had a positive net migration ratio for both Long-Term International Migration and Internal Migration (within UK), with the International Migration into the District being 26.9% higher than the outflow and the inflow migration from within the UK being 20.8% higher than the outflow.

Table 5.3: Internal Migration (net) by age group – Wealden in 2010 and 2020[6]

Age Group	2010	2020
0-14	508	599
15-24	-536	-267
25-44	527	877
45-64	476	442
65+	187	157

Table 5.4: Population change 2019 to 2039 by five-year age bands – Wealden (2018-based SNPP – alternative internal migration assumptions)

Age Group	Population 2019	Population 2039	Change (no.)	% change (from 2019)
Under 5	7,527	7,739	212	2.8%
5-9	8,864	8,533	-331	-3.7%
10-14	9,361	9,081	-280	-3.0%
15-19	8,234	8,619	384	4.7%
20-24	6,667	6,570	-97	-1.5%
25-29	7,274	7,673	398	5.5%
30-34	7,446	7,853	407	5.5%
35-39	8,210	8,119	-91	-1.1%
40-44	8,321	9,653	1,332	16.0%
45-49	10,997	10,844	-153	-1.4%
50-54	12,666	11,512	-1,154	-9.1%
55-59	12,436	12,139	-297	-2.4%
60-64	11,256	11,888	633	5.6%
65-69	10,576	13,807	3,231	30.5%
70-74	11,820	14,533	2,713	23.0%
75-79	8,113	12,644	4,531	55.9%
80-84	5,825	9,290	3,466	59.5%
85+	5,988	10,763	4,775	79.7%
Total	161,581	181,261	19,680	12.2%

Source: ONS

6 Office for National Statistics (ONS Internal migration by age group, 2002-2020) – districts. Available at: www.eastsussexinfigures.org.uk

5.7 **Table 5.4** shows a breakdown of Wealden's population change by five-year age bands from 2019. The population of Wealden by the five-year age bands is projected to increase by 12.2% over the next 10 years from 161,581 in 2019 to 181,261 in 2039. The population of England is projected to increase by 5.0% over the next 10 years, from 56.0 million in mid-2018 to 58.8 million in mid-2028. The population of every region in England is also projected to increase by mid-2028, with Wealden's population projected to increase by 6% by mid-2028. More information on this is available in the 2018-based national population projections.

Table 5.5: Long-Term International Migration and internal Migration 2019/20

Mid-2019 to Mid-2020				
Wealden	Long-Term International Migration		Internal Migration (within UK)	
	Inflow	Outflow	Inflow	Outflow
	528	386	8,698	6,890

Source: ONS 2023

Disabilities

5.8 In terms of disabilities, the Census 2021 confirms that in that period, 15.7% of residents in Wealden considered themselves to be disabled, which is very similar to the 2011 Census that stood at 15.6%. This compares favourably with the region and national rates of disability, and this is shown in the table below.

Table 5.6: Long-term health condition or illness of usual residents in Wealden (2011 and 2021)

Classification	2011 Census (%) Wealden	2021 Census (%) Wealden	2021 Census (%) South East	2021 Census (%) England
Disabled and limited a lot	6.5%	5.8%	6.2%	7.5%
Disabled and limited a little	9.2%	9.9%	9.9%	10.2%
Not disabled	84.4%	84.3%	83.9%	82.3%

People who Provide Unpaid Care

5.9 According to the 2021 Census 4.9% of residents within Wealden (aged five years and over) are reported to be providing up to 19 hours of unpaid care each week. This is almost a 40% decrease from the 8% of residents who reported to be providing up to 19 hours of unpaid care in the 2011 Census. **Table 5.7** below shows the percentage of residential (aged fives and over) providing up to 19 hours of unpaid care per week.

Table 5.7 Percentage of residential (aged fives and over) providing up to 19 hours of unpaid care per week

Area	2011 Census	2021 Census
Wealden	8%	4.9%
South East	7.3%	4.5%
England	7.2%	4.4%

Source: Office for National Statistics – 2011 Census and Census 2021[7]

7 Office for National Statistics – 2011 Census and Census 2021 Available at https://www.ons.gov.uk/visualisations/censusareachanges/E07000065/ Last accessed 04/01/2024

Indices of Multiple Deprivation

5.10 Relative deprivation is an aspect of population. The Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) 2019 is the official measure of relative deprivation for small areas (or neighbourhoods) in England. The IMD ranks every small area (Lower Super Output Area) in England from 1 (most deprived) to 32,844 (least deprived). For larger areas, we can look at the proportion of LSOAs within the area that lie within each decile. Decile 1 represents the most deprived 10% of LSOAs in England, while decile 10 shows the least deprived 10% of LSOAs.

5.11 The number of LSOAs within the most deprived 10% nationally has improved slightly, from 200 in 2015 to 195 in 2019. Using the IMD rank of average summary measure, Wealden ranks 254 in 2019[8], out of 317 local authorities, which indicates a low level of deprivation overall. However, this apparent relative lack of deprivation within the District hides a more complex picture. For example, of the 95 neighbourhoods in Wealden, 3 (all located in Hailsham) were among the 20% most income-deprived in England.

5.12 The percentage of households within the District living in fuel poverty was 8.1% in 2020. This means that 8.1% of households in Wealden find it difficult to afford sufficient fuel to maintain a satisfactory heating regime[9]. This data follows the LILEE definition for fuel poverty, whereby the metric that a fuel-poor household has both a low income and low energy efficiency in their home, so there may be low-income households whose homes have high-energy efficiency so are not recognised as fuel poor[10].

5.13 The percentage of children living in low-income families (used to be known as 'children in poverty') in the District has not improved. In 2017/18, 12.6% of children lived in low-income households and in 2021/22, this has risen to 14.7%[11] (or 4,859 children).

5.14 There are several datasets provided by the Local Government Association in relation to the cost of living crisis. This information is available at https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/safer-and-more-sustainable-communities/cost-living-hub/cost-living-external-resources.

5.15 Wealden is ranked 478 within The Cost of Living Vulnerability Index, which places Wealden within the 50 least vulnerable local authorities. The index, whilst closely related to existing measures of deprivation, takes a broader view by incorporating a range of economic factors to determine:

1) a place's relative risk of more people being pulled into poverty; and
2) the relative risk of those who were already hard up being pushed into destitution.

8 Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG), Indices of Deprivation, 2019 (constructed by Oxford Consultants for Social Inclusion (OCSI). Available at: https://www.eastsussexinfigures.org.uk/webview/index.jsp?mode=area&submode=result&areaname=Wealden&areatype=LA

9 Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS). Households in fuel poverty, 2008-2020 - super output areas. Available at: https://www.eastsussexinfigures.org.uk/webview/index.jsp?mode=area&submode=result&areaname=Wealden&areatype=LA

10 Office for National Statistics (ONS). How fuel poverty is measured in the UK: March 2023. Available at:https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/housing/articles/howfuelpovertyismeasuredintheuk/march2023#:~:text=The%20LILEE%20metric%20specifies%20that,not%20recognised%20as%20fuel%20poor

11 Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), via the StatXplore website. Children in low-income families 2014-2022 - super output areas. Available at: https://www.eastsussexinfigures.org.uk/webview/index.jsp?mode=area&submode=result&areaname=Wealden&areatype=LA

Ethnicity

5.16 Wealden's population has become slightly more ethnically diverse between the 2011 Census and the 2021 Census. The percentage of the population in Wealden that does not identify as 'British and Northern Irish' has increased to 8.2% in 2021, from 6.2% in 2011. The table below shows the percentage of ethnic groupings in Wealden within the 2011 Census and 2021 Census, although more granular information can be found on the 'East Sussex in Figures' website[12].

Table 5.7: Percentage of ethnic groupings in Wealden between 2011 and 2021

Ethnic Groups	2011 Census (%)	2021 Census (%)
Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh	1.2%	1.4%
Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African	0.2%	0.4%
Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups	1%	1.7%
White	97.5%	96%
Other ethnic groups	0.2%	0.5%

5.17 The table above shows that most residents described themselves as 'white', albeit that all other ethnic groupings have also increased in percentage terms between 2011 and 2021. Wealden is less ethnically diverse than the southeast region and England as whole, as those describing themselves as 'white' in the region was 86.3% and nationally was 81%.

12 Office for National Statistics (ONS). Ethnic group, 2011-2021 - super output areas. Available at: https://www.eastsussexinfigures.org.uk/webview/index.jsp?mode=area&submode=result&areaname=Wealden&areatype=LA

Crime

5.18 In terms of overall crime levels within Wealden District, the latest information[13] provided for the 2020/21 period was 34.8 crimes per 1,000 population (a total of 5,659 offences), which was the lowest crime rate for any East Sussex District/Borough. This crime rate was lower than the East Sussex average that stood at 57.9, the southeast average that stood at 66.5 and the national average that stood at 72.0. The crime rates for individual offences in Wealden, compared with the East Sussex, the region and national averages for the 2020/21 period are shown below.

Table 5.8: Recorded crime by key offences – 2020/21 in Wealden

Offences	Eng. & Wales	South East	E. Sussex	Wealden
All recorded offences	72.0	66.5	57.9	34.8
Theft offences	20.3	17.6	13.7	9.1
Violence against the person	28.0	26.7	23.3	13.3
Criminal damage and arson	7.4	7.4	7.2	4.5
Drug offences	3.3	2.8	2.2	1.2
Public order offences	7.4	6.8	6.5	4.0
Sexual offences	2.3	2.3	2.3	1.3
Robbery	0.9	0.5	0.5	0.1
Miscellaneous crimes against society	1.7	1.7	1.4	0.9
Possession of weapons offences	0.7	0.7	0.8	0.5

Population Changes Over Time

5.19 The Council has published a Local Housing Needs Assessment (LHNA)[14] that has considered population projection trends for the overall population and for different age groups using the latest (2018-based) set of subnational population projections (SNPP) that were published by ONS in March 2020. Those projections provide estimates of the future population of local authority areas, assuming a continuation of recent local trends in fertility, mortality and migration.

5.20 As well as the principal projection, the ONS also provided:

- an alternative internal migration variant
- a 10-year migration variant.

5.21 It should be noted that the period for the population projection covers a twenty-year period from 2019-2039 and has an estimated population base for 2019[15]. The alternative internal migration variant is the preferred projection for Wealden[16].

13 Home Office, Police Recorded Crime (PRC). Recorded crime by key offences, 2003-2021. Available at:https://www.eastsussexinfigures.org.uk/webview/index.jsp?mode=area&submode=result&areaname=Wealden&areatype=LA

14 Wealden Local Housing Needs Assessment, August 2021

15 This was estimated to be 161,339 people for Wealden District in 2019. However, the population for Wealden in the 2021 Census was 161,100 people, so there is a slight discrepancy here.

16 See paragraph 6.25 of the LHNA (August, 2021) for reasoning.

Table 5.9: Projected Population Growth (2019-2039) – Wealden – 2018-based SNPP

	Population 2019	Population 2039	Change in population	% Change from 2019
Principal Projection	161,339	177,461	16,121	+10.0%
Alternative Internal Migration	161,581	181,261	19,680	+12.2%
10-year trends	161,356	178,510	17,154	+10.6%

5.22 The LHNA also provides information on projected population change during the 2019 to 2039 period for broad age bands and this shows significant changes particularly for an ageing population. In short, there will be a slight reduction in those under 16 during the period, with the working age population remaining steady (a 1.5% increase), but with a significant increase in those 65 and over of 44.2%. This will have significant implications for housing provision (i.e. the type provided), as well as the economy and service provision (i.e. health care).

Table 5.10: Population Change 2019 to 2039 by broad age bands – Wealden – 2018-based SNPP

Age Group	Population 2019	Population 2039	Change in population	% Change from 2019
Under 16	27,576	27,198	-378	-1.4%
16-64	91,682	93,025	1,343	1.5%
65 and over	42,322	61,038	18,716	44.2%
Total	161,581	181,261	19,680	12.2%

5.23 The LHNA also provides information on projected population change during the 2019 to 2039 period for a range of disabilities. Of particular note are the expected large increases in the number of older people with dementia (increasing by 75% from 2019 to 2039) and mobility problems (66% increase over the same period). It should be noted that there will be an overlap between categories (i.e. some people will have both dementia and mobility problems), so the numbers for each of the illnesses/disabilities should not be added together to arrive at a total.

Table 5.11: Projected Changes to Wealden's Population with a Range of Disabilities over the 2019 to 2039 Period

Disability	Age Range	2019	2039	Change (%)
Dementia	65+	2,594	4,528	+74.5%
Mobility problems	65+	6,778	11,231	+65.7%
Autistic Spectrum Disorders	18-64	706	837	+18.5%
	65+	336	531	+57.9%
Learning Disabilities	15-64	1,861	2,207	+18.6%
	65+	759	1,170	+54.2%
Challenging Behaviour	15-64	35	41	+18.4%
Impaired mobility	16-64	4,592	5,243	+14.2%

Baseline Data: Population and Community

Key Sustainability Issues

- The District's ageing population, those with disabilities and net out-migration of younger people has the potential to affect areas such as housing provision, the economy, service provision (i.e. health care) and transport and neighbourhood design.
- The proportion of the District's population living with a long-term illness, or a disability is projected to increase by 2039, with implications for housing provision (i.e. homes suitable for adaptation to the life stage of the occupant(s)) as well as health care provision
- The percentage of children living in low-income families in the district has not improved
- Although not widespread, there are pockets of deprivation within Wealden District, with 3 out of 95 neighbourhoods being in the most deprived 20% of the country as a whole.

Likely Evolution without the Local Plan

- Potential for out-migration of young people to continue due to a lack of affordable homes, higher education locally and the availability of a range of jobs, including suitable higher-paid employment opportunities in the district
- Potential for a lack of adequate services and facilities for elderly and young people
- Deprivation levels may continue to worsen for certain areas of the district due to a lack of appropriate and adequate housing and employment opportunities and a healthy environment
- The proportion of the resident population with a limiting long-term illness or disability continues to increase, and facilities or services may not be provided to support them
- Lack of health facilities and services to assist those with long term illnesses or disabilities
- Lack of adaptable housing or specialist housing accommodation (i.e. extra care provision, nursing home/ sheltered accommodation) provided to meet needs of an ageing population and/or those with disabilities.

Local Plan Opportunities

5.24 The Local Plan can influence population and communities in the following way:

- Ensure the provision of sufficient and suitable homes to meet the needs of the District (i.e. specialist accommodation for older persons and those with disabilities and smaller accommodation for young people);
- Ensure homes are constructed to be adaptable to the changing life stages of the occupants (i.e. to take account of the increasingly ageing population);
- Ensure sufficient provision of, and access to, local health care facilities for those with long term illness and/or disability;
- Ensure the delivery of appropriate health infrastructure as part of new strategic housing developments, including easy and sustainable access to them for future occupiers and nearby existing residents alike;
- Address issues of social and economic exclusion and accessibility for disadvantaged groups, particularly for those wards within the District in the lowest IMD ranking.

Data Gaps

5.25 As established above, there is already significant baseline information on population and communities either through the Census 2021 or our own evidence base, and this will provide essential background information for the Wealden Local Plan. However, further work will be undertaken in terms of updating the LHNA (August, 2021), following the release of information for Census 2021. The release of further information from the Census 2021 will also assist us, particularly in terms of local geographies (at the Parish level).

6.0 Climate Change

KEY PPPs

- **The Climate Change Act 2008 (as amended by the 2050 Target amendment Order 2019)**
- **Climate Change Committee Sixth Carbon Budget (2020)**
- **The UK Climate Change Risk Assessment (2022)**
- **The Climate Change Committee Progress in Adapting to Climate Change (2023 Report to Parliament)**
- **The UK Government Net Zero Strategy (2021)**
- **An update to the Building Regulations (uplift in standards for Part L, Part F and new Part O) (June 2022).**
- **Future Homes and Building Standards (due to come into effect in 2025)**
- **National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) - Climate Change**
- **Wealden Climate Emergency Plan (2019)**

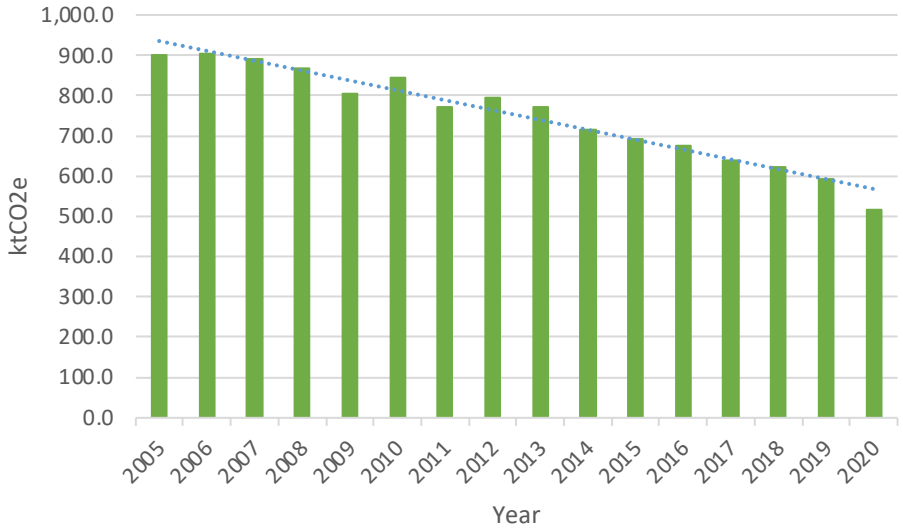
KEY MESSAGES

- Support the transition to a low carbon future, taking full account of flood risk and coastal change
- Help to shape places in ways that contribute to radical reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, minimise vulnerability and improve resilience
- Encourage the reuse of existing resources, including the conversion of existing buildings
- To be a net zero district by 2050 or sooner
- To reduce heat and power demands in new and existing buildings
- To increase the uptake of low and zero carbon technologies and battery storage
- To transform the transport sector, replacing all existing vehicles with low and zero emissions vehicles
- To explore measures to offset any residual emissions i.e. by promoting carbon sequestration through sustainable woodland management
- To understand and minimise the impact of climate change on human health, especially those within vulnerable or disadvantaged groups.

Baseline Data: Climate Change

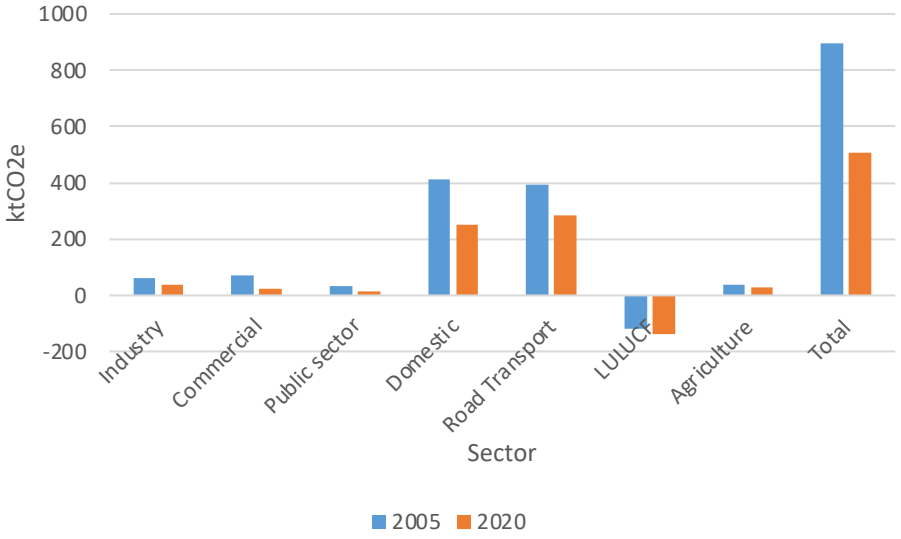
6.1 In 2020, Wealden's CO_2 emissions totalled 516.3ktCO_2e, which is a decrease of 42.8% since 2005. CO_2 emissions have shown a consistent pattern of decreasing since 2005 **(see Figure 6.1)**. This can be largely attributed to the decarbonisation of the national grid.

Figure 6.1: CO_2e emissions estimates in Wealden



6.2 The majority of emissions come from road transport (55.6%), with domestic and commercial and industrial emissions accounting for 49.8% and 12.8% respectively. However, it is interesting to note that in 2005 the domestic sector accounted for a slightly higher proportion of emissions, which has now been reversed **(see Figure 6.2)**. Since 2005, total CO_2 emissions in all sectors have reduced, with domestic emissions seeing a 38.3% reduction and road transport a 28.3% reduction. The reduction may reflect the improvements in energy efficiency within new and existing developments, together with the switch to ULEVs and the decarbonisation of the national grid.

Figure 6.2: Total CO_2e emissions in Wealden by sector



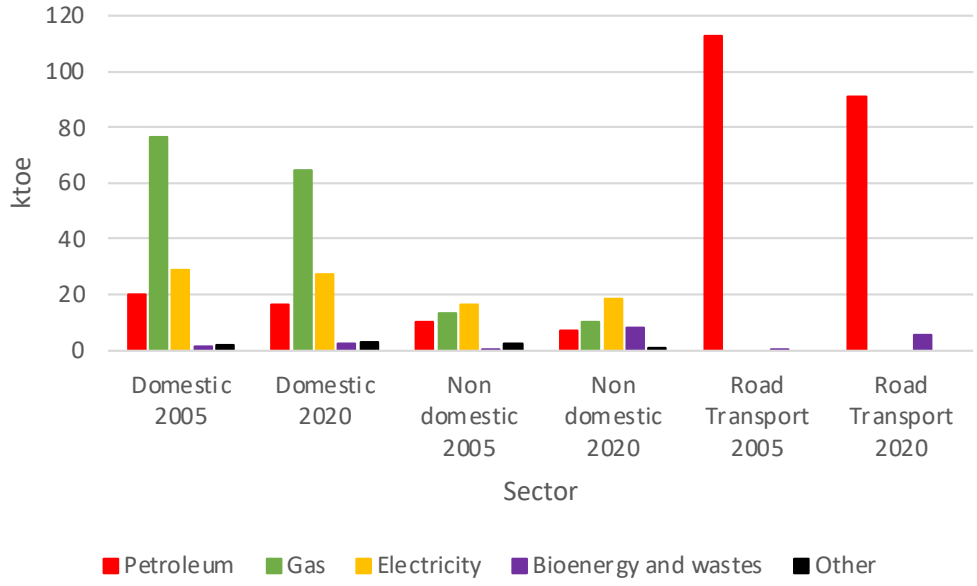
6.3 Figure **6.2** also shows that since 2005, land use, land use change and forestry (LULUCF) has played an increasingly important part in reducing the District's emissions, with the removal of 137.6ktCO_2e in 2020 compared to 119.7ktCO_2e in 2005. This is an increase of 15%.

6.4 Per capita CO_2 emissions in Wealden were 4 tonnes in 2020, with 1.6 tonnes from domestic sources. This is higher than the per capita emissions in East Sussex, which in 2020 were 3.5 tonnes and 1.4 tonnes respectively. In comparison with the Southeast, the per capita emissions are lower, although they are higher than the domestic per capita emissions (1.4 tonnes). Road transport in Wealden accounted for 1.7 tonnes of per capita CO_2 emissions in 2020, compared to 1.3 tonnes in East Sussex and 1.2 tonnes[17] in the Southeast.

Fuel Consumption

6.5 Total fuel consumption within the District in 2020 was 260,900 tonnes of oil equivalent (ktoe), with the domestic sector accounting for 43.5% of total fuel consumed. The transport sector accounted for 37.4% whilst industrial, commercial and other uses accounted for 19.1%[18]. The types of fuel consumed in the District have remained unchanged since 2005, however gas and petroleum consumption has been reducing, particularly in the domestic and road transport sectors **(see Figure 6.3)**.

6.6 The reduction may reflect the shift towards more energy efficient appliances or an uptake of ULEVs but could also reflect changes in consumer behaviour in the face of rising energy costs. Of note is the emergence of the bioenergy and waste fuel type being used in the non-domestic and road transport sectors in 2020. As a proportion of total fuel consumption in 2020, bioenergy and waste represented 6.1% compared to only 0.6% in 2005. Electricity usage has remained relatively stable in both the domestic and non-domestic sectors.

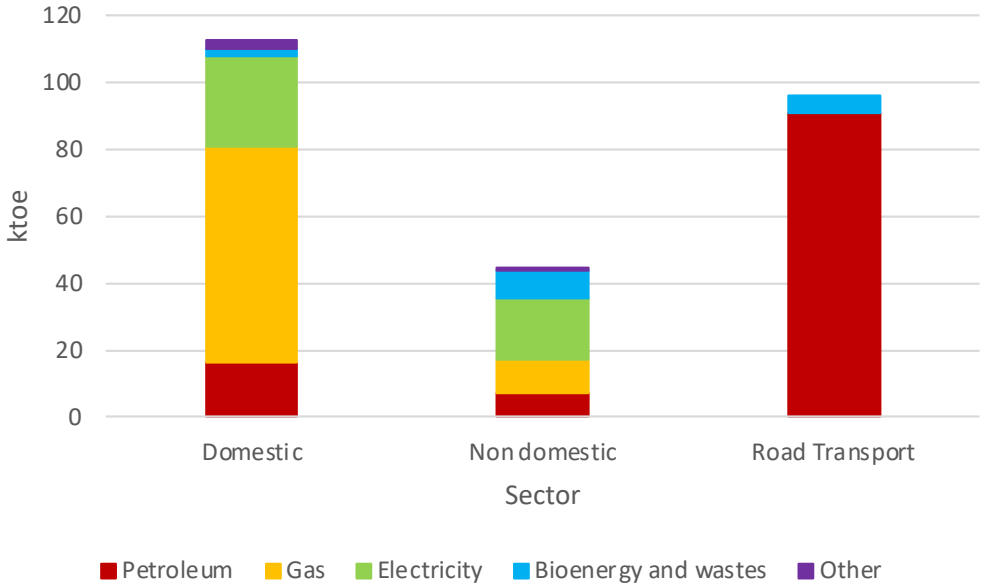


17 This figure excludes motorways.

18 Subnational total final energy consumption (ktoe), United Kingdom, 2020. Available at: Total final energy consumption at regional and local authority level: 2005 to 2020 - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk). Published September 2022

6.7 Petroleum remains the largest fuel consumed in Wealden and is predominantly associated with road transport (45%). Gas and electric account for 29.6% and 17.9% respectively, whilst bioenergy and wastes account for 6.1% of the total fuel consumed in 2020. The consumption of gas is significantly higher in the domestic sector than the non-domestic sector, highlighting the fact that most homes in the District use gas for their heating and hot water **(see Figure 6.4)**. Petroleum products account for around 14.4% of domestic fuel consumption reflecting the relatively high proportion of buildings that use oil for heating.

Figure 6.4: Fuel consumption in Wealden by sector, 2020



Energy Consumption

6.8 Total energy consumption within the District has reduced by 11.9% between 2005 and 2020. The reduction is slightly better than East Sussex where it has reduced by 10.6%, but is lower than the Southeast, where consumption has reduced by 14.6%, England by 15% and the UK by 14%[19]. However, as **Figure 6.8** shows, energy consumption remains high and has in fact slightly increased (3.9%) between 2015 and 2020 in the domestic sector and industrial and commercial sector (3.1%).

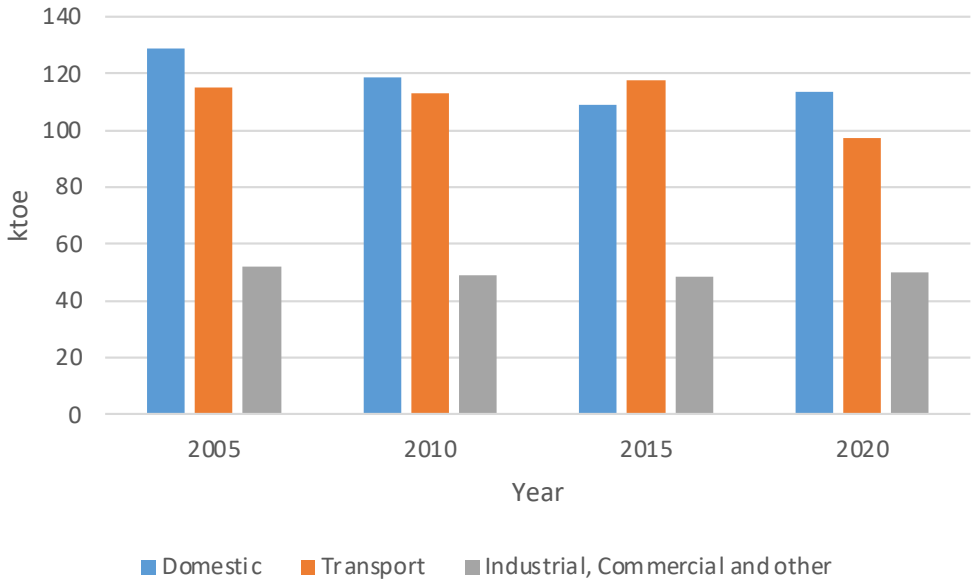
6.9 Total energy consumption in transport has decreased by just over 17% between 2015 and 2020, which may reflect a switch to electric vehicles as the number of ULEV registrations has increased. By the end of Q3 in 2022 (June), there were 2,135 licensed ultra-low emissions vehicles (ULEVs) in Wealden[20]. However, this only represents 1.7% of all registered vehicles in Q3 of 2022 within Wealden[21] (there were just over 126,000 vehicle registrations in Q3 2022).

19 Subnational total final energy consumption (ktoe), United Kingdom, 2020. Available at: Total final energy consumption at regional and local authority level: 2005 to 2020 - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk). Published September 2022

20 See Table VEH0132 Licenced ultra low emissions vehicles (ULEVs) at the end of the quarter. Available at: Vehicle licensing statistics data tables - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

21 See Table VEH0105 Licensed vehicles at the end of the quarter. Available at: Vehicle licensing statistics data tables - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Figure 6.5: Total final energy consumption ($ktCO_2e$) in Wealden



Renewable + Low Carbon Energy

6.10 As of April 2023, there are eight operational renewable energy developments within Wealden, of which seven are ground mounted solar photovoltaics (solar farms) and one is an onshore wind farm comprising three turbines. Together these developments have an installed capacity of 63.8MW.

6.11 There are a further four developments with a planning application submitted, including three battery storage applications and one roof mounted solar photovoltaics. Another six applications have been granted planning permission and are awaiting construction, including three solar farm developments with an installed capacity of 14.5MW and one battery storage (to be co-located with one of the solar farms) and two roof mounted solar arrays. **Table 6.1**[22] sets out the developments and their status.

22 Renewable Energy Planning Database (REPD): April 2023, updated 2 May 2023. Available at: Renewable Energy Planning Database: quarterly extract - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Table 6.1: Renewable and low carbon technology installations in Wealden

Site Location	Status	Installed capacity
Ground Mounted Solar Photovoltaics		
Land at Stone Hill, Chiddingly Road, Horam	Operational	2.6
Kitty Hawk Farm, Darp Lane, Ripe, Lewes, East Sussex	Operational	7
Berwick, Polegate, East Sussex	Operational	8.2
Natewood Farm, Polegate Road, Hailsham, East Sussex	Operational	8.9
Bentley Estate, Uckfield	Operational	5
Land and west of Horam Manor, Horam	Operational	8.1
Wilbees Farm, The Street, Polegate	Operational	5
Pashley Farm, Ninfield Road, Bexhill on Sea, East Sussex	Operational	11.5
Land At Wick Street Berwick, Berwick, Polegate	Awaiting construction	4
Land At Copwood Barn, Rocks Road, Uckfield, East Sussex	Awaiting construction	5.5
Lower Mays Farm Solar Farm, Selmeston (Co-located with battery storage)	Awaiting construction	5
Roof Mounted Solar Photovoltaics		
Lansdowne Secure Childrens Home, Hawks Road, Hailsham	Awaiting construction	0.15
Lake View Farm, Poundfield Road, Chalvington, Hailsham	Awaiting construction	0.23
Staverton Nursery, Eastbourne Road, Halland, Lewes (Co-located with battery storage)	Application Submitted	0.15
Lansdowne Secure Childrens Home, Hawks Road, Hailsham	Awaiting construction	0.15
Battery Storage Developments		
Lower Mays Farm Solar Farm, Selmeston (Co-located with solar farm)	Awaiting construction	-
Kilnwood Farm - Greener Grid Park & Energy Storage, Lunsford Cross (Stand-alone Storage)	Application Submitted	-
Olives Farm, Hooe - Battery Energy Storage Facility, Ninfield (Stand-alone Storage)	Application Submitted	-
Staverton Nursery, Eastbourne Road, Halland (Co-located with roof mounted solar)	Application Submitted	-
Onshore Wind Developments		
Land off Shepham Lane, North of A27, Polegate (3 turbines)	Operational	7.5MW

Carbon Sequestration

6.12 As already highlighted, LULUCF has a significant role to play in reducing emissions within the District. Natural England's Carbon Storage and Sequestration by Habitat (2021)[23] report takes an overview, looking across the full range of habitats to build up a clear, quantitative picture of which store most carbon, which are sources of emissions, and where the best opportunities are to promote carbon uptake (sequestration).

6.13 The report highlights that woodland would have covered most of the land in England before human clearance but now covers only 10% of the land and that remaining fragments of ancient woodland are significant carbon stores. Creating new woodland where there once was forest cover has the greatest potential to sequester carbon.

6.14 The Report shows that a natural woodland composed of native species without active production management is a reliable way of capturing carbon and at the same time supporting the recovery of biodiversity. However, for context the District's Climate Emergency Action Plan[24] identifies that, as a rough estimate, offsetting the Council's remaining 2018/19 CO_2e emissions (after all other measures are applied) would require conversion of around 170 hectares (1.7 square kilometres) of low-grade agricultural land to sustainably managed woodland[25].

6.15 The Natural England Report also highlights that marine and coastal habitats have the potential to sequester and store large amounts of carbon. Saltmarshes, seagrass meadows and kelp forests can all play a valuable role but are under pressure from rising sea levels and damage. Land use change from wetlands to other habitat tends to result in net carbon loss (emission), whereas drainage and disturbance causes changes to carbon cycling, decomposition and fluxes. Damaged wetlands can be restored and this does increase carbon sequestration, but does not compensate for the net accumulation of carbon in the original system before disturbance.

6.16 Allowing these habitats to recover, including through protection and managed realignment of the coasts is another important climate change mitigation action. The Pevensey Levels is one such habitat within the District and is designated as a SAC and Ramsar site, however, protection and appropriate management is still required to ensure no carbon loss.

6.17 Heathlands and semi-natural grasslands are important carbon stocks due to their 'permanence' and lack of soil disturbance over time. In relation to heathland, wet heath on peaty soils has more significant carbon stores than drier heaths on sandy/mineral soils. Most of the carbon stock associated with heaths is in the soil[26] .

23 Carbon Storage and Sequestration by Habitat 2021 - NERR094 (naturalengland.org.uk) and Carbon storage by habitat: Review of the evidence of the impacts of management decisions and condition of carbon stores and sources NERR043_edition_1.pdf

24 Wealden-District-Council-Climate-Emergency-Plan-FINAL.pdf

25 Estimate based on an average of 3.56 tCO2e / hectare of new woodland per year, based on nation-wide reporting by the UK Woodland Carbon Registry. See https://www.woodlandcarboncode.org.uk/uk-woodland-carbon-registry for more information.

26 Carbon concentrations in heathland soils can be greater than in forest soils

6.18 Carbon emissions can result from soil disturbance, from damage or even from management and restoration practices which remove or invert soil. Therefore, minimising disturbance to soil when undertaking management practices is key.

6.19 Whilst the Natural England Report finds that creating new heathlands and semi-natural grasslands may not be the top priority for carbon[27], it does state that it is important to protect old established sites due to the carbon stocks they hold and their importance for biodiversity, as both may have taken centuries to accumulate. Wealden contains many areas of heathland and semi-natural grassland habitats, especially within the Ashdown Forest (wet and dry heathland) and the High Weald AONB (semi-natural grassland).

6.20 Carbon storage in hedges/hedgerows is found in above ground biomass; below ground biomass and soil. How hedges are managed is key - increasing the height (to 3.5m) and in particular the width of hedgerows (to 2m) is effective in raising carbon stored in biomass and soil[28].

Climate Change Resilience, Adaptation and Flood Risk

6.21 A wide range of possible future climate change scenarios need to be considered, including planning for the worst-case scenario. The Met Office has released the UK Climate Projections 2018 study (UKCP18)[29], which provides up to date information on how the climate of the UK is expected to change in the period to the end of the 21st Century. The projected climate change trends show an increased chance of warmer, wetter winters and hotter, drier summers, along with an increase in the frequency and intensity of extremes (i.e. heatwaves and torrential rain).

Current Projects

6.22 The **Blue Heart Project** [30] is seeking to try out innovative ways to predict and mitigate the impact of flooding in Eastbourne and southern Wealden, to benefit local people and businesses. The Blue Heart Project began in 2021 and will take place over a 6 year period, ending in 2027.

6.23 In order to sustainably manage flood risk to communities, businesses, infrastructure and the Pevensey Levels designated site, it is imperative that the pumping stations are operating optimally. However, these pumping stations are reaching the end of their design life and require significant investment to continue operating.

27 Natural England publishes major new report on carbon storage and sequestration by habitat - Natural England (blog.gov.uk)

28 Utilising hedgerows for landscape scale carbon sequestration. Available at: Energy Conservation (agroforestry.ac.uk)

29 ukcp18_headline_findings_v4_aug22.pdf (metoffice.gov.uk)

30 Blue Heart Project – understanding water in Eastbourne and south Wealden

6.24 Consequently, the WLMB is developing a business case seeking for funding to replace these pumps and two Environment Agency operated pumps that serve the Pevensey Levels. The project is titled Pevensey Water Management Improvement Scheme. This project is also considering improvements to climate change adaptation which complement the pumps. Additionally, it will also benefit biodiversity and communities in terms of health and well-being.

6.25 The Project is investigating:

- how rain, rivers, groundwater and waste water move through Eastbourne and south Wealden
- learning how different types of water relate to each other and the environment, and how this may affect flooding
- using smart technology to monitor water to better issue flood warnings and automatically control water levels to protect drainage
- sharing information and working with agencies and organisations who manage water
- talking with local people with a personal connection to local green and blue spaces to understand the impact of changing water levels on these environments
- listening to communities and special interest groups about their hopes and concerns for the future.

6.26 The **Pevensey Bay to Eastbourne Coastal Management Scheme** [31] is one of the largest coastal flood defence projects in England and stretches for 15km from Cooden Beach in Bexhill to Holywell in Eastbourne. The scheme will help reduce the risk of flooding to more than 10,000 properties.

6.27 East Sussex County Council (ESCC) are also undertaking other work in relation to managing flood risk including a catchment study on the wider Waldron Ghyll to reduce flooding in the area of Heathfield. In addition, consultants are also updating surface water mapping in the south Wealden and Eastbourne area to factor in the new climate change allowances.

Temperature Increases

6.28 By the end of the 21st century, all areas of the UK are projected to be warmer, more so in summer than in winter. The temperature of hot summer days, by the 2070s, show increases of 3.8 °C to 6.8 °C, under a high emissions scenario, along with an increase in the frequency of hot spells[32], rising from an average of 0.20 occurrences per year in the present day to 4.1 occurrences per year by 2070[33]. Hot spells are largely confined to the south east at present and so their frequency is likely to increase most here in the future.

31 Project overview | Pevensey Bay to Eastbourne Coastal Management Scheme (pevenseyandeastbournecoast.co.uk)

32 Typically defined as maximum daytime temperatures exceeding 30 °C for two or more consecutive days

33 UKCP Local (2.2km) projections

Increased Flood Risk

6.29 Rainfall patterns across the UK are not uniform and vary on seasonal and regional scales and will continue to vary in the future. In UKCP18, the probabilistic projections provide local low, central and high changes across the UK, corresponding to 10%, 50% and 90% probability levels. By 2070 it is predicted that average summer precipitation changes will range from -45% to +5%, with winter precipitation changes ranging from -3% to +39% (where a negative change indicates less precipitation and a positive change indicates more precipitation).

6.30 Despite overall summer drying trends in the future, new data from UKCP Local Projections[34] suggests future increases in the intensity of heavy summer rainfall events. This prediction is mirrored by the Environment Agency who predict 20% and 40% increase in rainfall intensity in Wealden in the future under the Environment Agencies new range of allowances[35]. For the more urban areas of the district, this will impact on surface water flooding, increasing the likelihood, frequency and severity of such events. UKCP Local (2.2km) Projections suggests significant increases in hourly precipitation extremes in the future, although it is worth noting that whilst the intensity of hourly rainfall is projected to increase in the future, overall summers are projected to become drier.

6.31 The **Wealden Level 1 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA)**[36] states that due to the often-steep topography of river catchments in the District, an increase in river flows from climate change is not predicted to increase the extent of fluvial flood risk in the District, with the exception of the River Cuckmere and Knockhatch Stream at Hailsham and the River Medway at Forest Row. However, climate change is likely to increase flood frequency and the impact of a flood event with a given probability is also likely to become more severe, as water depths, velocities and flood hazard increase.

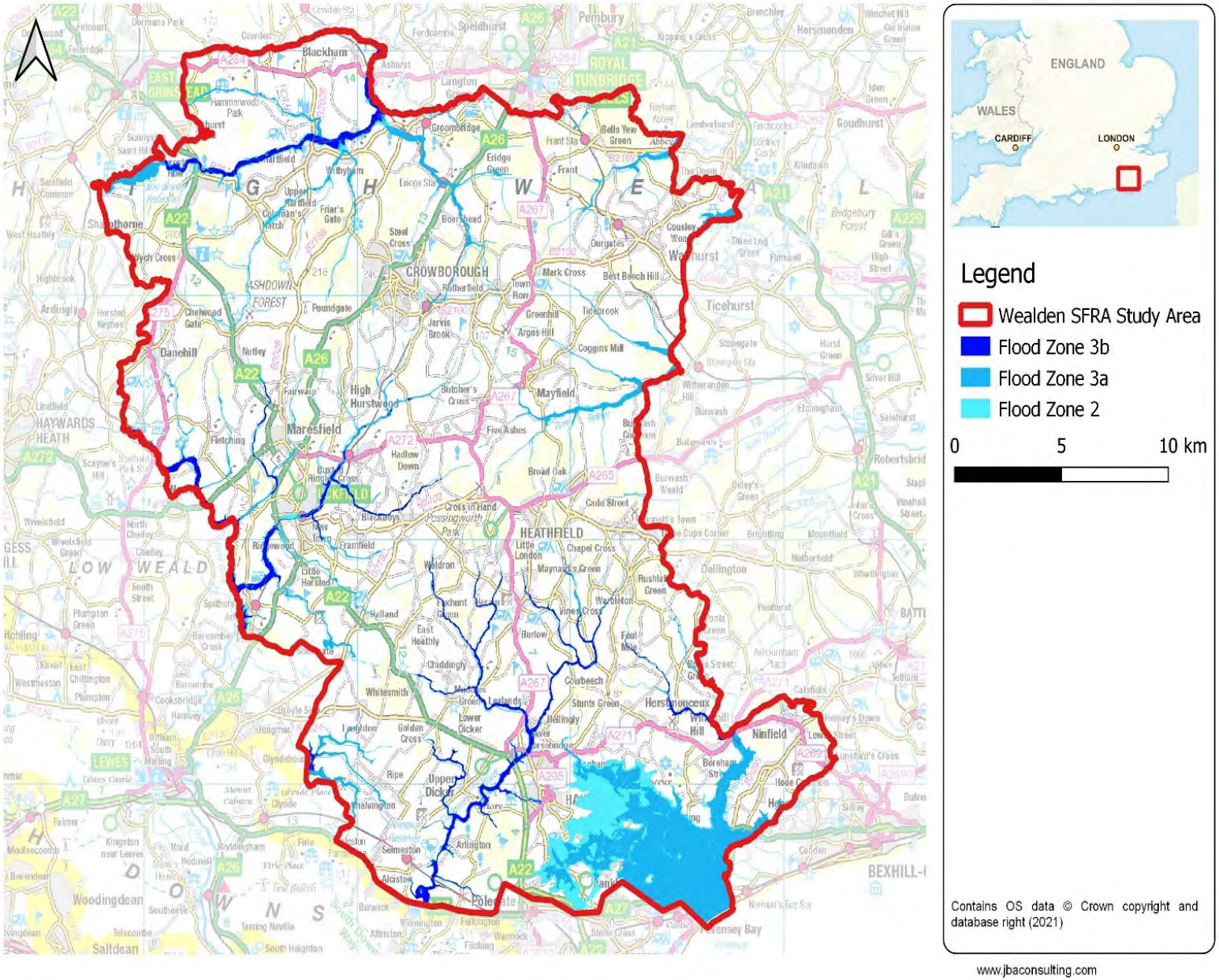
6.32 Fluvial flood risk is most notable on the Pevensey Levels but is also found to a lesser extent along the other four principal watercourses (Rivers Medway, Uck, Cuckmere and Shortbridge Stream), resulting in predicted flooding in Uckfield, Crowborough, Forest Row, Horam, Hailsham and Polegate as well as large rural areas. **Figure 6.6** shows the extent of fluvial flood risk in Wealden in the present day.

34 https://www.metoffice.gov.uk/binaries/content/assets/metofficegovuk/pdf/research/ukcp/ukcp18-factsheet-local-2.2km.pdf

35 The new climate change allowances are split by Water Management Catchment, of which there are 4 in Wealden, and by different epochs and event probabilities. See Chapter 4 of the Wealden SFRAs available at: Strategic Flood Risk Assessment - Wealden District Council - Wealden District Council

36 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment - Wealden District Council - Wealden District Council

Figure 6.6: Fluvial Flood Zones in Wealden (present day)



6.34 The District's coastline at Pevensey Bay comprises a shingle beach and the Pevensey Levels behind are potentially vulnerable to coastal flooding, given the low-lying topography and the reliance on flood defences. Pevensey is defended to a 1 in 400-year standard of protection which makes "still water" flooding unlikely, even during extreme surge events. However, there is still a residual risk of tidal flooding if the defences were to fail, which is of particular concern when considering the rising sea levels under climate change are predicted to be 1.60m by 2125 for Wealden.

6.35 Parts of the District are also at a high risk of surface water flooding, which will be exacerbated by increased rainfall intensity and duration as a result of climate change. The updated Risk of Flooding from Surface Water (RoFSW) map shows surface water flood risk in Wealden is concentrated along watercourses or fluvial corridors.

6.36 In general, less is known about groundwater flooding than other sources. Lasting for days, weeks or even months, groundwater flooding is much harder to predict and to provide warnings for. There are large areas of Wealden that are shown to be areas of groundwater concern. In the High Weald, the steep topography and impermeable geology limit the areas of groundwater concern to the fluvial river basins. However, in the north of Wealden, a sandstone geology acts as a secondary aquifer with the potential to hold water within the rock. During high water table periods these areas are at risk of groundwater flooding to basements and at the surface.

6.37 To the south of the District, a permeable geology coupled with low lying topography presents conditions which could cause groundwater to emerge. The SFRA concludes that groundwater flood risk is considered the most prevalent source of flood risk across Wealden.

6.38 Guidance from the Environment Agency states that in Wealden, under an 'Upper End' climate change scenario[37] we can expect peak river flows to increase by up to 107% by 2080 and sea levels to rise by 1.60 m by 2125. Increased sea levels and river flows increase the extent of predicted future fluvial and tidal flood zones under climate change and are likely to increase the frequency of flooding and the likelihood of current defences being overtopped[38].

37 This is the most extreme modelled climate change scenario

38 These future flood zones have been mapped and can be found in Appendix H of the Wealden SFRAs. Available at: Strategic Flood Risk Assessment - Wealden District Council - Wealden District Council

Baseline Data: Climate Change

Key Sustainability Issues

- Current rates of emissions reductions are too slow
- Reducing emissions from the transport sector will be a particular challenge given the rural nature of the district
- Delivering new housing and commercial development in sustainable locations to reduce the reliance on private car/van use and to promote the use of sustainable transport measures
- The reliance on the de-carbonisation of the national grid in terms of the amount and type of renewable energy technology / generation the Council is able to facilitate and support
- Facilitating the local community and businesses in reducing energy consumption in both new and existing buildings to achieve net zero carbon
- Balancing economic development with the imperative to reduce CO_2 emissions and the delivery of renewable energy developments, whilst ensuring the protection and enhancement of the districts valued and designated landscape / natural environment
- Ensuring that important carbon stores are protected, enhanced and managed in a way to continue their role to store and capture carbon to reduce emissions
- Flood risk and drought will become more prevalent with an increase in the frequency of extreme weather events
- Delivering future growth that is designed and delivered in ways that mitigate the effects of climate change, but which also allow for adaptation to climate change
- To reflect environmental hazards as a threat to population health and wellbeing.

Likely Evolution without the Local Plan

- CO_2 emissions continue to decrease because of national approaches and commitments
- Road transport and housing will continue to be high emitters of CO_2 and high consumers of energy without local requirements
- De-carbonising heat from the domestic sector is especially reliant on local action/plans as this cannot be delivered by national government, unlike de-carbonisation of the national grid
- National approaches are less well placed to take account of local circumstances and less able to take advantage of any local opportunities, especially potential for local heat generation
- Development of an EV network across the district may stall or will not meet its full potential
- Development comes forward without full consideration of cumulative and downstream flood risks
- The district fails to meet its targets set out in the Climate Emergency Plan
- Increased levels of poor health in some sectors of the population due to poor air quality/increasing heatwaves.

Scope of the Local Plan

6.39 The Local Plan can influence climate change in the following ways:

- Ensure that planning and future development contributes to meeting national and local targets in reducing greenhouse gas emissions and becoming a net zero District, as soon as possible
- Locate development sensitively and in the most sustainable locations, where communities can be close to existing services, facilities and employment opportunities to reduce car dependency and promote the use of sustainable transport measures
- Provide and improve safe and attractive walking and cycling routes, ensuring connectivity with key destinations and providing supporting infrastructure such as bike stores
- Improve energy efficiency and the use of low carbon technologies in existing buildings and limit embodied carbon emissions, energy use and space heating demand in new buildings
- Require decentralised, renewable and low carbon energy for new developments, including battery storage
- Ensure that renewable energy developments are sensitively and appropriately located
- Incorporate electric charging facilities and support the take up of electric vehicles
- Ensure that development considers future climate risks and coastal change through location and design
- Require the incorporation of design features (i.e. trees and biodiversity enhancements / creation) and use of construction materials to ensure that a building provides resilience and resistance to climate change
- Protect allotments and encourage local food production, by providing opportunities to own or have access to space to grow food; and
- Maximise the incorporation of nature-based solutions and the multiple benefits that they can deliver for communities and the environment.

Data Gaps

6.40 The government statistics have been used as they are the most up to date figures. As part of the Local Plan evidence base consultants will be procured to undertake specific work to understand and test emerging Local Plan policies to ensure that the Local Plan maximises its potential to contribute to climate change. As work progresses this will feed into the further development of Local Plan policies and the Sustainability Appraisal process.

6.41 Work to understand the sensitivity of the District's landscapes to solar farms and wind turbines is also underway and the findings will inform policy development for the Local Plan policies and the Sustainability Appraisal process.

7.0 Air, Light and Noise

KEY PPPs

- **The Environment Act 2021**
- **A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment**
- **Air Quality Standards (2010)**
- **Noise Policy Statement for England (2010)**
- **National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)**
- **Wealden Air Quality Annual Status Report (ASR) 2022**

KEY MESSAGES

- To improve the UK's air quality by meeting legally binding targets to reduce emissions of five damaging air pollutants to halve the effects of air pollution on health by 2030
- To minimise and mitigate air pollution to reduce the potential for higher temperatures, which in turn leads to poorer air quality
- To end the sale of new conventional petrol and diesel cars and vans by 2040 and maintain the continuous improvement in industrial emissions
- To ensure new development is appropriate for its location taking into account the likely effects of pollution on health, living conditions and the natural environment
- To mitigate and reduce potential adverse impacts resulting from noise and avoid noise giving rise to significant adverse impacts on health including mental health and the quality of life
- To identify and protect tranquil areas including those which have remained relatively undisturbed by noise
- To limit the impact of light pollution from artificial light on local amenity, intrinsically dark landscapes and nature conservation.

Baseline Data: Air, Light and Noise

Air Quality

7.1 Air pollution is associated with a number of adverse health impacts. It is recognised as a contributing factor in the onset of heart disease and cancer. Additionally, air pollution particularly affects the most vulnerable in society: children and older people, and those with heart and lung conditions. There is also often a strong correlation with equalities issues, with poor air quality often found in the less affluent areas.

7.2 All local authorities have a duty to review and assess air quality in their districts in order to establish if Air Quality Objectives are being, or are likely to be, exceeded. The Council monitors the air quality in the District to ensure that it meets or exceeds **DEFRA Air Quality Objectives** and protects air quality by acting as a consultee on planning applications and overseeing **environmental permitting** to control pollution from certain industrial processes. The Council manages local air quality in close collaboration with East Sussex County Council and with the **Sussex Air Quality Partnership**, which promotes improvements in air quality across Sussex. As a member, the Council supports their **Air Alert service**, which sends free messages to users informing that poor air quality is predicted in their area of Sussex.

7.3 The latest Air Quality Report for the District (2023)[39] identifies that road traffic is the dominant source of air pollution in the area, the major routes being the A22, the A26, the A267, the A259, the A27 and the A272. The main pollutants of concern with respect to road traffic are nitrogen dioxide (NO_2) and particulate matter (PM_{10} and $PM_{2.5}$).

7.4 Ozone (O_3) is another pollutant of concern and is monitored within the District at Lullington Heath, along with sulphur dioxide (SO_2). Annual average O3 concentrations at Lullington Heath have increased since 2011. The number of days with high ozone concentrations (above the 8-hour objective) has also increased with exceedances of the 8- hour objective in each year from 2018 to 2022. Comparing 2021 and 2022 data for Lullington Heath, an increase in both O3 annual mean concentration and O3 8-hour exceedances was observed. In recent years there have been no exceedances of any of the three AQS objectives (15- minute, 1-hour and 24-hour) related to SO_2 annual mean concentration.

7.5 In general, air quality is good within Wealden and currently there are no areas in the District where members of the public are exposed to concentrations of NO_2, O_3, SO_2, PM_{10} or $PM_{2.5}$ in excess of the AQS objectives and there are no Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) within the District. The A26 AQMA within Tunbridge Wells Borough is close to the boundaries of Wealden. Any traffic increases in the area could have an impact on the AQMA.

39 Air Quality Annual Status Report (ASR) 2023. Available at: Monitoring air quality - Wealden District Council - Wealden District Council

Nitrogen Dioxide (NO_2)

7.6 The Wealden Air Quality Annual Status Report (ASR) 2023 notes that in previous years local monitoring has identified high concentrations of NO_2 at three roadside locations (A267 East of Cross in Hand (W7), West of Boship Roundabout (W8) and Forest Row High Street (W10)). In March 2017 the A267 East of Cross in Hand (W7) monitoring location was changed, due to difficulty with access and it not being a representative site, with the monitor moved along the road nearer to residential properties. In more recent years (2018 – 2022), concentrations at all these locations achieved the UK air quality objective for annual mean NO2, with concentrations lower than 40 µg/m3.

7.7 Two new locations for monitoring NO_2 were introduced in 2021 at Stone Cross B2104 Red Lion Pub (W13) and Stone Cross Dittons Road (W14). Both locations showed levels of NO_2 well below the annual mean AQS objective, with levels of 22.9 µg/m^3 and 17.8 µg/m^3 respectively. Two new locations for monitoring NO2 were also introduced in 2022, High Street Wadhurst (W15) and Styles Lane Wadhurst (W16). In 2022, the annual mean NO2 concentration observed at W15 was 15.1 µg/m3 and at W16 was 6.8 µg/m3 , both well below the annual mean AQS NO2 objective. (see **Table 7.1**).

Table 7.1: Annual Mean NO_2 Monitoring Results: Non-Automatic Monitoring (µg/m^3)[40]

Diffusion tube ID	Site Type	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
W1	Urban background	13.1	13.9	12.0	9.2	15.7	9.3
W2	Roadside	23.6	23.6	21.9	14.1	10.3	15.3
W3	Urban background	15.6	14.9	13.4	12.1	11.2	10.1
W4	Roadside	37.1	36.7	33.6	23.0	25.0	26.2
W5	Roadside	30.0	32.6	27.9	19.9	22.4	23.7
W8	Roadside	26.1	27.1	24.0	16.9	19.2	20.4
W7	Roadside	23.0	20.8	19.1	13.4	13.4	12.4
W8	Roadside	35.0	34.2	33.2	25.1	24.3	21.9
W9	Urban background	10.7	12.6	9.5	6.9	7.3	7.3
W10	Kerbside	40.6*	34.6	28.6	23.7	24.1	23.9
W11	Roadside	-	-	-	11.1	12.7	13.0
W12	Roadside	-	-	-	17.7	22.0	19.8
W13	Roadside	-	-	-	-	22.9	23.3
W14	Roadside	-	-	-	-	17.8	19.6
W15	Roadside	-	-	-	-	-	15.1
W16	Urban background	-	-	-	-	-	6.8

*** Exceedances of the NO_2 annual mean objective of 40µg/m^3 are shown in bold**

40 Compiled from Table A.4 – Annual Mean NO2 Monitoring Results: Non-Automatic Monitoring (µg/m3) 2023 Air Quality Annual Status Report (ASR) (wealden.gov.uk)

7.8 All sites, show decreasing concentrations since 2018. In 2020 the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic likely caused concentrations to be lower than might have been expected following the trends observed and the increase at some sites in 2021 likely due to the increase in traffic after COVID-19 restrictions were lifted. Annual mean NO_2 concentrations at W4 (Uckfield Town Centre) had been increasing from 2014 to 2017. However, since 2017, concentrations have fallen at this location. At other roadside sites, there has been some year-to-year variability, but with a decreasing trend in concentrations in the last couple of years.

Ozone (O_3)

7.9 The Isfield O_3 monitoring site was decommissioned at the end of 2020, therefore the pollutant is now only monitored in Lullington Heath. Annual average O_3 concentrations at Lullington Heath have increased since 2017, although there was a drop at Isfield in 2019 (see **Table 7.2**).

Table 7.2: Annual Mean O_3 2022 Monitoring Results (µg/m³)[41]

Site ID	Site type	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
AR2 (Isfield)	Rural	50.1	53.2	45.2	52.1	-	-
LL1 (Lullington Heath)	Rural	55.4	61.1	61.4	65.4	58.3	61.6

7.10 Table **7.3** presents the ratified continuous monitored annual mean O_3 concentrations at the Isfield and Lullington Heath rural sites. Between 2017 and 2020, the annual mean concentrations monitored at Isfield were between 45.2 µg/m³ and 52.1 µg/m³. Between 2017 and 2022, annual mean concentrations have been between 55.4 µg/m³ and 65.4 µg/m³ at the Lullington Heath station. There is no annual mean AQS objective or target value for annual mean O_3 concentrations, although this does not mean it is not an issue.

7.11 Whilst there is no AQS objective or target value for annual mean O_3 concentrations, Defra sets, in the Air Quality Standards Regulations 2010, the target for ozone to a maximum daily eight hour mean concentration of 120mg. This target value is not to be exceeded on more than 25 days per calendar year averaged over three years. In Wealden, the number of days with ozone concentrations above the 8-hour AQS objective has been exceeded each year from 2018 to 2022 (see Table 7.3). However, a decrease in both O_3 annual mean concentration, and O_3 8-hour exceedances, was observed at Lullington Heath between 2020 and 2021.

Table 7.3: Running 8-Hour Mean O_3 2022 Monitoring Results[42]

Site ID	Site type	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
AR2 (Isfield)	Rural	27	19	7	21	-
LL1 (Lullington Heath)	Rural	3	13	10	39	15

41 Compiled from Table A.10 - Annual Mean O3 2022 Monitoring Results (µg/m3) 2023 Air Quality Annual Status Report (ASR) (wealden.gov.uk)
42 Compiled from Table A.11 Running 8-Hour Mean O3 2022 Monitoring Results 2023 Air Quality Annual Status Report (ASR) (wealden.gov.uk)

Sulphur dioxide (SO_2)

7.12 Sulphur dioxide (SO_2) is another pollutant of concern that is measured at Lullington Heath, however there have been no exceedances of any of the three AQS objectives for SO_2 between 2017 and 2022.

Particulate matter (PM_{10} / $PM_{2.5}$)

7.13 In previous years there has been no PM_{10} or $PM_{2.5}$ monitoring undertaken within the District, with concentrations instead monitored at two urban background sites in Eastbourne (Devonshire Park and Holly Place) and used for indicative purposes. However, in 2022 PM_{10} and $PM_{2.5}$ concentrations were measured for the first time at the Lullington Heath monitoring site. The PM_{10} and $PM_{2.5}$ analysers were installed in June 2022 and subsequently the data was annualised as per the method set out in the Technical Guidance LAQM.TG22. Both PM_{10} and $PM_{2.5}$ levels were significantly below annual mean AQS objectives and lower than the continuous monitoring sites located at Devonshire Park and Holly Place.

7.14 **Table 7.4** compares the ratified and adjusted monitored PM_{10} annual mean concentrations for the monitoring sites with the AQS objective of 40µg/m^3. The results indicate that annual mean PM_{10} concentrations were well below the AQS objective between 2017 and 2022. No data is available for Holly Place for 2017 and 2018 as the PM_{10} analyser was withdrawn on 4th January 2017.

7.15 Table **7.5** compares the ratified continuous monitored PM_{10} daily mean concentrations for the past five years with the AQS objective of 50µg/m^3, not to be exceeded more than 35 times per year. These results show that both Eastbourne sites achieved the daily mean PM_{10} AQS objective every year from 2019 to 2022.

Table 7.4: Annual Mean PM_{10} Monitoring Results (µg/m^3)[43]

Site ID	Site type	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
LL1 Lullington Heath	Rural	-	-	-	-	-	12.3
EB1 Devonshire Park	Urban background	18.9	18.5	17.2	17.5	17.3	19.3
EB3 Holly Place	Urban background	-	-	15.5	14.5	13.2	14.6

Table 7.5: 24-Hour Mean PM_{10} Monitoring Results, Number of PM_{10} 24-Hour Means > 50µg/m^3 [44]

Site ID	Site type	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
LL1 Lullington Heath	Rural	-	-	-	-	-	0
EB1 Devonshire Park	Urban background	0	2	1	1	0	0
EB3 Holly Place	Urban background	-	-	0	0	1	0

43 Compiled from Table A.6 Annual Mean PM10 Monitoring Results (µg/m3) 2023 Air Quality Annual Status Report (ASR) (wealden.gov.uk)
44 Compiled from Table A.7 24-Hour Mean PM10 Monitoring Results, Number of PM10 24-Hour Means > 50µg/m3 2023 Air Quality Annual Status Report (ASR) (wealden.gov.uk)

7.16 Table **7.6** presents the ratified and adjusted monitored $PM_{2.5}$ annual mean concentrations for the past six years. Between 2017 and 2022, the measured concentrations have been below the AQS objective of 20 µg/m³.

Table 7.6: Annual Mean $PM_{2.5}$ Monitoring Results (µg/m³)[45]

Site ID	Site type	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
LL1 Lullington Heath	Rural	-	-	-	-	-	7.6
EB3 Holly Place	Urban background	11.3	12.7	10.5	8.7	8.4	8.9

7.17 The Council is taking the following measures to address $PM_{2.5}$ within the District:

- Supporting the Energise Network of electric vehicle charging points, together with the Sussex Air Quality Partnership
- Requiring the assessment of $PM_{2.5}$ as part of Air Quality Assessments for planning applications.

Actions to improve air quality

7.18 Whilst air quality has improved significantly in recent decades, there are some areas where local action is needed to protect people and the environment from the effects of air pollution. The Environmental Improvement Plan[46] sets out actions that will drive continued improvements to air quality and to meet the new national interim and long-term $PM_{2.5}$ targets.

7.19 The National Air Quality Strategy, published in 2023, will provide more information on local authorities' responsibilities to work towards these new targets and reduce $PM_{2.5}$ in their areas. The Road to Zero[47] details the approach to reduce exhaust emissions from road transport through a number of mechanisms; this is extremely important given that the majority of Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) are designated due to elevated concentrations heavily influenced by transport emissions.

7.20 The ASRs confirm that concentrations of air pollutants continue to be well within the annual mean AQS objectives at relevant locations. However, the Council is helping the public to avoid the worst effects of O_3 pollution by informing the public of pollution events through the airAlert pollution warning service using the O_3 monitoring data obtained from Lullington Heath. This service is provided and maintained through the Sussex Air partnership.

7.21 The Council also contributes to the Air Quality and Emissions Mitigation Guidance for Sussex, which supports the principles of the Sussex Air Quality Partnership to improve air quality across Sussex and encourage emissions reductions to improve the environment and health of the population. Other actions being implemented to improve public health include promoting active modes of transport like walking, cycling and using public transport, as well as car clubs and car sharing.

45 Compiled from Table A.8 Annual Mean PM2.5 Monitoring Results (µg/m3) 2023 Air Quality Annual Status Report (ASR) (wealden.gov.uk)
46 Defra. Environmental Improvement Plan 2023, January 2023
47 DfT. The Road to Zero: Next steps towards cleaner road transport and delivering our Industrial Strategy, July 2018

7.22 Given the above, it is welcome to note that the latest information from the Public Health Outcomes Framework[35] stated that, in 2020, the fraction of mortality attributable to particulate air pollution in Wealden was 5.4%, which is lower than the regional and national averages of 6% and 5.6% respectively.

Noise pollution

7.23 Generally, noise can be defined as any unwanted sound. Noise can occur unexpectedly or be too loud or repetitive. At certain decibels, it can be hazardous to health, with low frequency noise as damaging as loud noise. Exposure to noise pollution causes increased levels of stress hormones, which have been linked to long-term negative effects on cardiovascular disease and blood pressure. Excessive environmental noise has also been linked to impaired cognitive performance in children.

7.24 The planning system has a role in seeking to ensure that new noise-sensitive development, such as housing and schools, is not located close to existing sources of noise and vibration, including industrial uses and noise generated by transport. It should also ensure that potentially noise-creating uses, such as some industrial processes or some recreational activities, are not located where they would be likely to cause nuisance.

7.25 Wealden is mainly a rural District and as a result there are areas of recognised tranquillity and landscapes of national and local significance. Noise pollution has the potential to have a significant impact on these areas, where the ambient noise levels are low. The District also includes urban areas where concentrations of development have the potential to affect residential amenities by virtue of noise impacting health and well-being and quality of life.

Light pollution

7.26 Minimising the amount of light pollution within the District is important for the protection and enhancement of the natural environment as well as people's health and wellbeing and quality of life. National policy is clear that planning policies and decisions should ensure that new development is appropriate for its location and in doing so should limit the impact of light pollution from artificial light on local amenity, intrinsically dark landscapes and nature conservation.

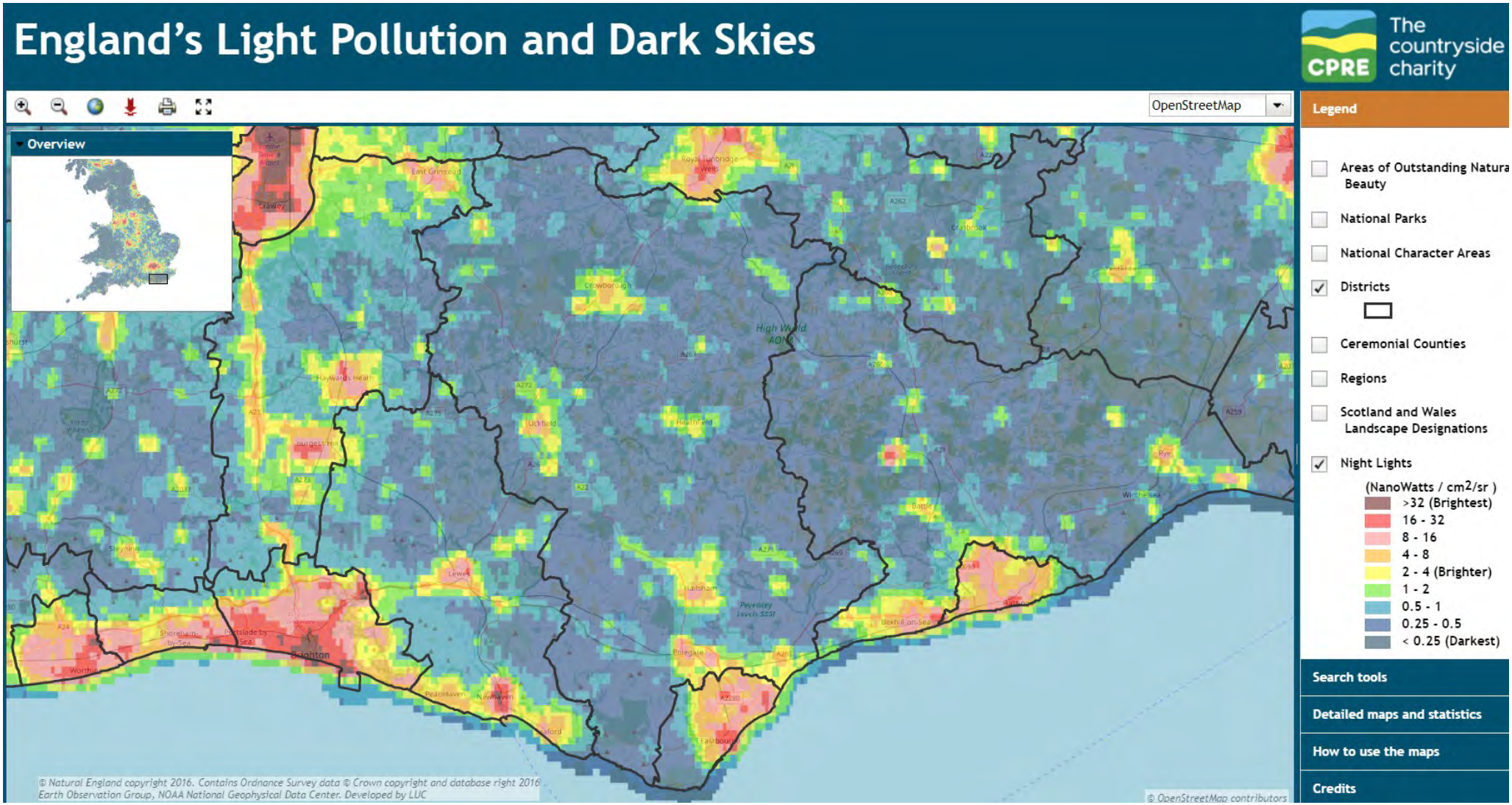
7.27 The PPG provides further guidance and information on what light pollution considerations developments need to address, acknowledging that artificial light provides valuable benefits to society, but that for maximum benefit, it is important to get the right light, in the right place and for it to be used at the right time. Lighting schemes can also be costly and difficult to change, so getting the design right at the outset is important.

7.28 Lighting becomes a problem where it is excessive, poorly designed and located, badly installed or poorly maintained. It is also an issue where it is located near to sensitive receptors, such as dark sky areas or areas with specific habitats and species. Increases in lighting have also been shown to have an adverse effect on our native wildlife, particularly on those species that have evolved to be active during the hours of darkness (i.e. bats) but also invertebrates, birds and mammals.

7.29 Wealden is currently the 20th darkest District in England[48]. Whilst levels of darkness differ across the District, areas such as the Pevensey Levels and undeveloped areas within the countryside benefit from high levels of darkness. The South Downs National Park, located to the south of the District, is designated an International Dark Sky Reserve (IDSR).

48 England's Light Pollution and Dark Skies (cpre.org.uk)

Figure 7.1: Dark skies in Wealden District [49]



49 Source: CPRE Interactive Map England's Light Pollution and Dark Skies (cpre.org.uk)

Baseline Data: Air, Light and Noise

Key Sustainability Issues

- Air pollution is associated with a number of adverse health impacts affecting the most vulnerable people in society
- Road traffic is the most dominant source of air pollution
- There are no locations in the district with air pollutant concentrations in excess of Air Quality Standards but there are a handful of roadside locations with high concentrations of NO2
- Nitrogen Dioxide (NO_2) Ozone (O_3) and Sulphur Dioxide (SO_2) are pollutants of concern where action is required to improve air quality
- Failure to promote and adopt the use of more sustainable modes of transport and improve infrastructure could contribute to a deterioration in air quality levels
- The District's population will need to move away from the use of fossil fuels to prevent the deterioration in air quality and to assist in reducing emissions relating to climate change
- There is potential for adverse impacts on health and well-being if inappropriate new development is located near a major source of noise
- Construction impacts can have adverse effects on both air and noise
- Balancing the delivery of housing and commercial developments whilst ensuring minimal / no impact on light pollution to ensure that the District's dark skies, the International Dark Sky Reserve (IDSR) within the South Downs National Park, and amenity and natural environment are protected.

Likely Evolution without the Local Plan

- Increase in vehicular traffic and potential for increased air pollution, adversely affecting human health and the natural environment
- Potential for adverse impacts on health and well-being if inappropriate new development is located near a major source of noise, for example new roads or locations of high traffic flow and/or congestion
- A worsening of dark night skies and dark landscapes if lighting on new or existing development goes unchecked.

Scope of the Local Plan

7.30 The Local Plan can influence air quality, noise and light pollution in the following way:

- By locating development in sustainable locations to contribute to reducing traffic movements and congestion and reduce the reliance and use of motorised transport
- Improve residents access to sustainable transport and enhance and provide additional facilities to make walking, cycling and travel by public transport an attractive and easy choice
- Support the delivery of a comprehensive ULEV charging network within the District
- Address construction impacts and good design such as the deterioration in air quality from dust to lessen impacts
- Address potential noise pollution issues through sensitive site selection and good site design
- Ensure that new development does not contribute to, or be adversely affected by, unacceptable levels of noise pollution
- Ensure that developments do not result in excessive or obtrusive light that negatively affects habitats, species and people
- Ensure that new and existing development does not contribute to, or be adversely affected by, unacceptable levels of light pollution.

Data Gaps

7.31 As can be seen from the baseline, there is regular monitoring of air quality and key air pollutants within the District, and this is reported annually. However, there is no regular monitoring of noise or light pollution. This shall be considered as part of the monitoring framework developed for the Local Plan.

8.0 Health and Wellbeing

KEY PPPs

- **Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill 2023**
- **Health and Care Act 2022**
- **Public Health England (PHE) Healthy Places Guidance (2021)**
- **Public Health England Strategy 2020-2025**
- **Quality of Life Framework, Quality of Life Foundation 2021**
- **The 2020 Lancet Commission Report on Dementia prevention, intervention, and care**
- **Childhood Obesity: applying All Our Health (April 2022) and Childhood obesity: a plan for action (2015)**
- **National Planning Policy Framework**
- **East Sussex whole system healthy weight plan 2021-2026**
- **Wealden District Council Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2022 – 2025**

KEY MESSAGES

- To improve jobs, incomes, health, skills, transport, pride in place, safety and well-being across the UK
- To narrow the gap in Healthy Life Expectancy (HLE) between local areas and improve wellbeing in every area of the UK by 2030
- To support the development of healthy places and homes and address health inequalities when planning, developing and improving the built environment
- To promote healthy, inclusive and safe places which promote social integration, are safe and accessible, and enable and support healthy lifestyles
- To support local strategies to improve health, social and cultural well-being for all
- To promote strong neighbourhood centres and create safe and accessible environments
- To provide shared space, community facilities and other local services and guard against unnecessary loss of valued facilities and services
- To ensure an integrated approach to considering the location of housing, economic uses and community facilities.

Office of National Statistics Health Index

8.1 According to the Office of National Statistics, the start of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic caused widespread changes to health in England. This included a worsening of personal well-being, mortality, mental health, and economic and working conditions. However, there were also some improvements such as reduced air pollution and crime during this period.

8.2 The Office of National Statistics (ONS) has created an index that gives every local area in England an overall health score for each of the past six years. This overall score is made up of measures in different categories, called domains and sub-domains. These measures include physical and mental health conditions like diabetes or anxiety, local unemployment, road safety, and behaviours such as healthy eating.

8.3 The Health Index score for Wealden in 2020 is **112.8**, which is the best index within East Sussex. The scores for the neighbouring Districts are set out in **Table 8.1**.

8.4 More detailed information in relation to specific health indices may be reviewed at https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/constituency-data-how-healthy-is-your-area. This information will be useful in the delivery of major development that will have health impacts and for Health Impact Assessments.

Table 8.1: Health Index Scores for local Districts in East Sussex 2020

District	Health Index Score (2020)
Wealden	112.8
Lewes	107.6
Rother	105.2
Eastbourne	94.5
Hastings	89.6

Source ONS - How health has changed in your local area: 2015 to 2020[50]

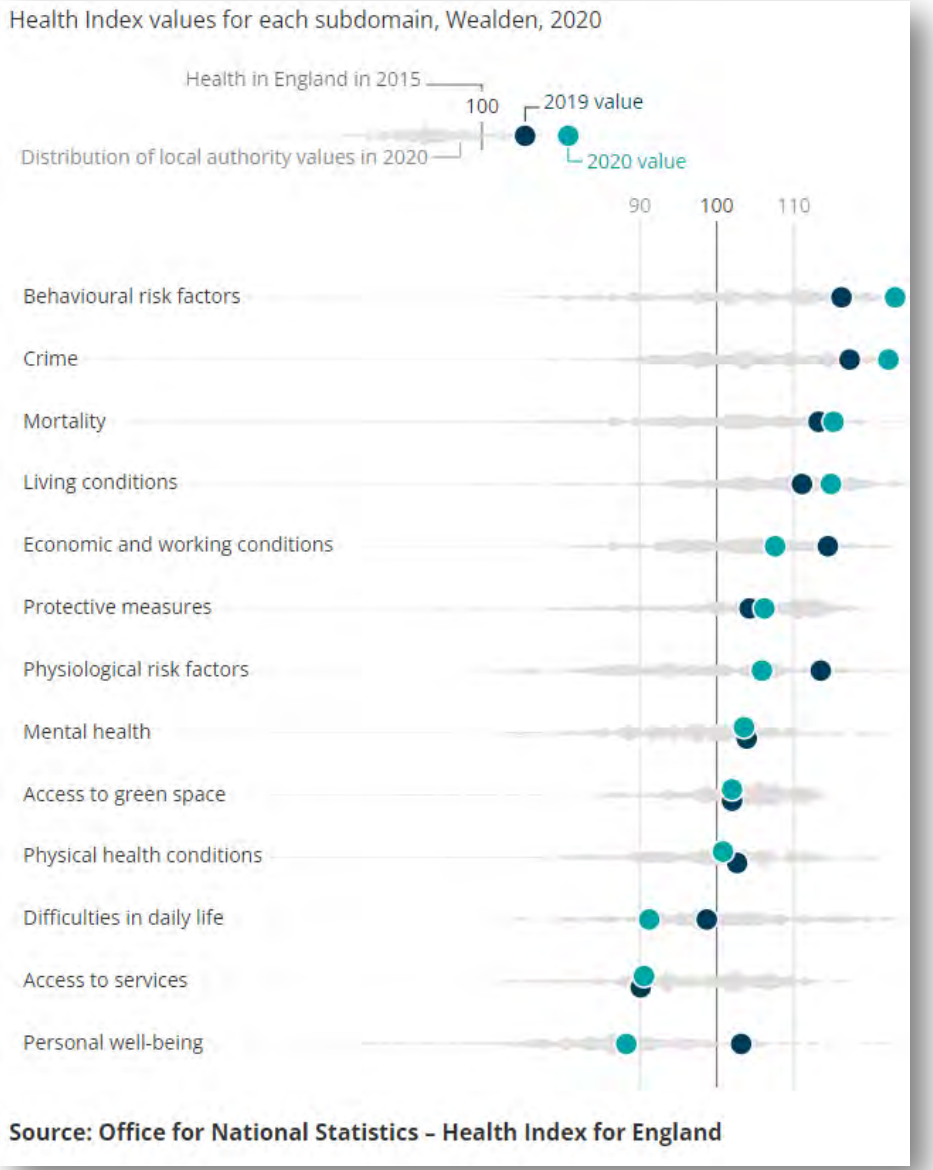
8.5 The Health Index is derived from the key areas identified below and shows the health in England baseline (2015) as 100 and then Wealden's position for each criterion in 2015 (dark blue spot) and 2020 (turquoise spot).

8.6 Areas where Wealden has the strongest performance include, behaviours and risk factors, low levels of crime, mortality and living conditions. However, there are areas of concern including those where there has been a significant reduction since 2015 or where the District sits below the 2015 average baseline. Three areas of particular concern are, personal wellbeing, access to services and difficulties in daily life.

8.7 What is vital to note is that all low performing health index areas for Wealden have a direct impact on the health and wellbeing of our residents and must therefore be given due consideration in the emerging Local Plan policies.

50 ONS How health has changed in your local area: 2015 to 2020

Figure 8.1: ONS Health index values for Wealden in 2020 [51]



General Health (Self-Reported Health)

8.8 The current health of the District's residents is a critical area to understand as part of the Local Plan process. When asked to assess their overall health as part of the 2021 Census, the overwhelming majority (85.2%) of Wealden residents reported themselves as being in either "very good" or "good health", an increase of 2.7% from the 2011 census data. Those residents describing their health as "bad" or "very bad" decreased to 3.8% from 4.5% as reported in 2011.

8.9 However, the Census 2021 was conducted during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic and this may have influenced how people perceived and rated their health, and therefore may have affected how people chose to respond.

Infant Mortality

8.10 The most recent figures from the ONS show that in 2021 the infant mortality and child mortality rates in England and Wales were 3.7 deaths per 1,000 live births and 8 deaths per 100,000 population of the same age, respectively, both following a general decline since the 1980s.

8.11 The levels within Wealden and East Sussex are lower 3.0 and 2.6 respectively with the slightly higher rate in Wealden being attributed to greater travelling times to hospital with emergency birth facilities.

8.12 Within Wealden itself there is no NHS Hospital providing emergency maternity services (see hospital section below) although there is a birthing centre in Crowborough. The birthing centre is a midwife led service that is suitable

51 ONS Health index values for Wealden in 2020

for uncomplicated deliveries. More complicated births and in particular those that might result in death are usually dealt with by a hospital based team.

Excess Winter Mortality

8.13 The winter mortality index (WMI) is a measure expressed as a ratio of the difference in all-cause mortality during winter months (December to March) compared to the average in the non-winter months (the preceding August to November and following April to July). Wealden is ranked as having the 24th worst winter morality index ratio in the South East of England with 50.5% difference between the average winter and non-winter morality rates. Table **8.2** below shows the winter mortality index values for the August 2020 to July 2021 period.

Table 8.2: Winter Mortality Index values August 2020 - July 2021

Area	Count	Value
England	58,040	36.2%
South East	12,070	47.6%
Wealden	280	50.5%

Source: Office for Health Improvement & Disparities[52]

Disabilities

8.14 In 2021, census data has identified that 5.8% of Wealden residents were identified as being "disabled and limited a lot". This figure decreased from 6.5% in 2011, and just under 1 in 10 people (9.9%) were identified as being "disabled and limited a little", compared with 9.2% in 2011.

8.15 The decrease in the proportion of residents who were identified as being "disabled and limited a lot" was greater across the South East (1.0 percentage point, from 7.2% to 6.2%) than in Wealden (0.7 percentage points). Across England, the proportion fell by 1.6 percentage points, from 9.1% to 7.5%.

8.16 The proportion of Wealden residents who were not disabled decreased from 84.4% to 84.3% (from the 2011 to 2021 Census)[53], while across the South East, the proportion of non-disabled residents increased from 83.4% to 83.9%; Wealden therefore has a marginally smaller proportion of disabled residents relative to the South East average.

8.17 Although life expectancy and overall health reporting are "very good" for the District, there are a proportion of residents who are currently living with one or more disabilities. The graph above shows the projected number of people with a disability by age group in the District, for the period 2020-2035 and it is clear that although there is a 38% increase in total number of people living with disabilities over this time period, the majority of this growth (90%) is within the 65+years age group. This increase of older residents with disabilities correlates with the increased life expectancy of older residents within Wealden.

52 Office for Health Improvement & Disparities Available at https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/profile/health-profiles/data#page/3/gid/1938132701/pat/6/par/E12000008/ati/501/are/E07000065/iid/90360/age/1/sex/4/cat/-1/ctp/-1/yrr/1/cid/4/tbm/1/page-options/car-do-0

53 Office for National Statistics – Disability, Census 2021

Figure 8.2: Projected number of Wealden residents living with disability (2023-2035)

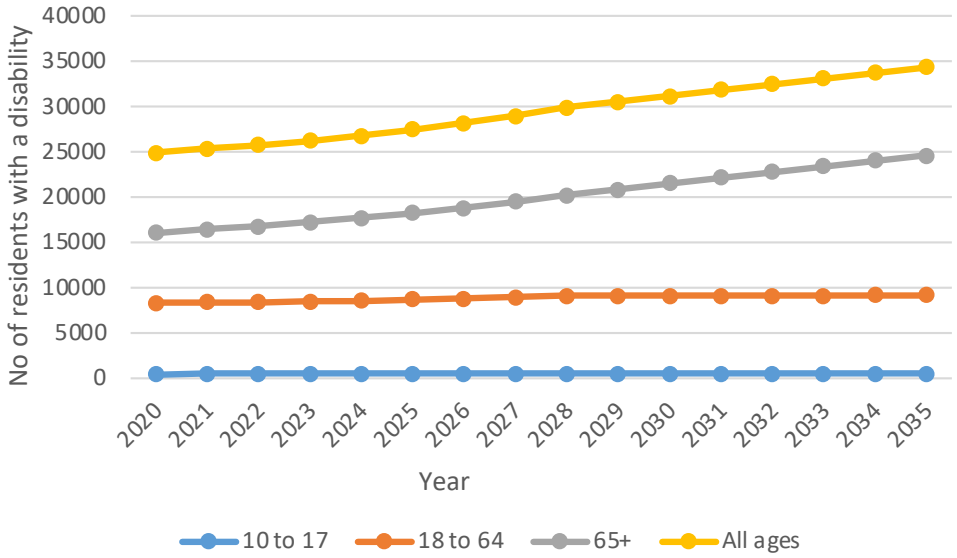
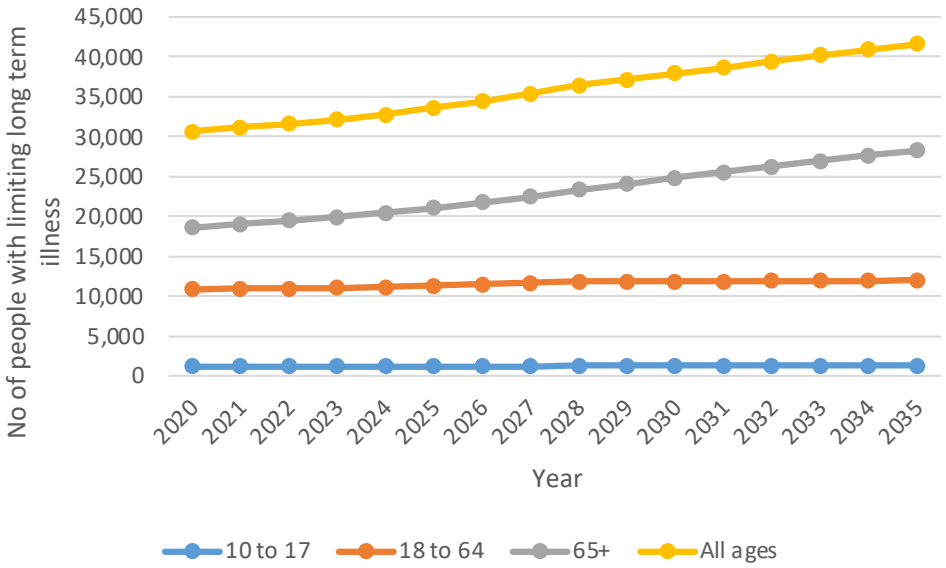


Figure 8.3: Projected number of Wealden residents living with limiting long term illness (2020-2035)



8.18 There is also a similar trend in the number of people living with a limiting long term illness in the District. The graph below shows the projected number of people with a limiting long-term illness by age group in the District, for the period 2020-2035.

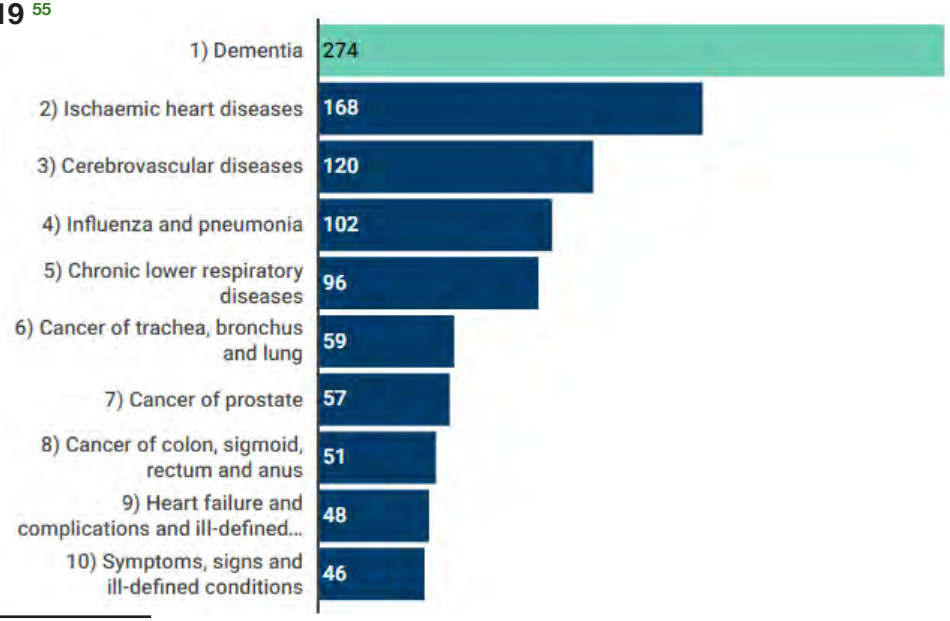
8.19 As with the data on disability, it is clear that the largest projected increase will be within the 65+ age group, with an increase of 35.8% by 2035. Again, this data shows that the District will have a large proportion of older residents with limiting long term illnesses that may need additional help and services. However, it also reflects the case that as people age, illnesses may become more prevalent in general.

Dementia

8.20 The Office for Health Improvement and Disparities[54] indicates that the diagnosis rate for dementia has, and is, projected to remain stable, however the number of people living with dementia will rise due to the increase in the level of people living longer.

8.21 The projected increase (10-11%) of individuals living longer in the age 65years + category within the District, in combination with the levels of dementia projected, will require consideration within the emerging Local Plan. For all ages, dementia within Wealden is the leading cause of death in 2019 (See **Figure 8.4**).

Figure 8.4: All ages, leading cause of death (with cancers broken down), 2019 [55]



Mental Health and Wellbeing

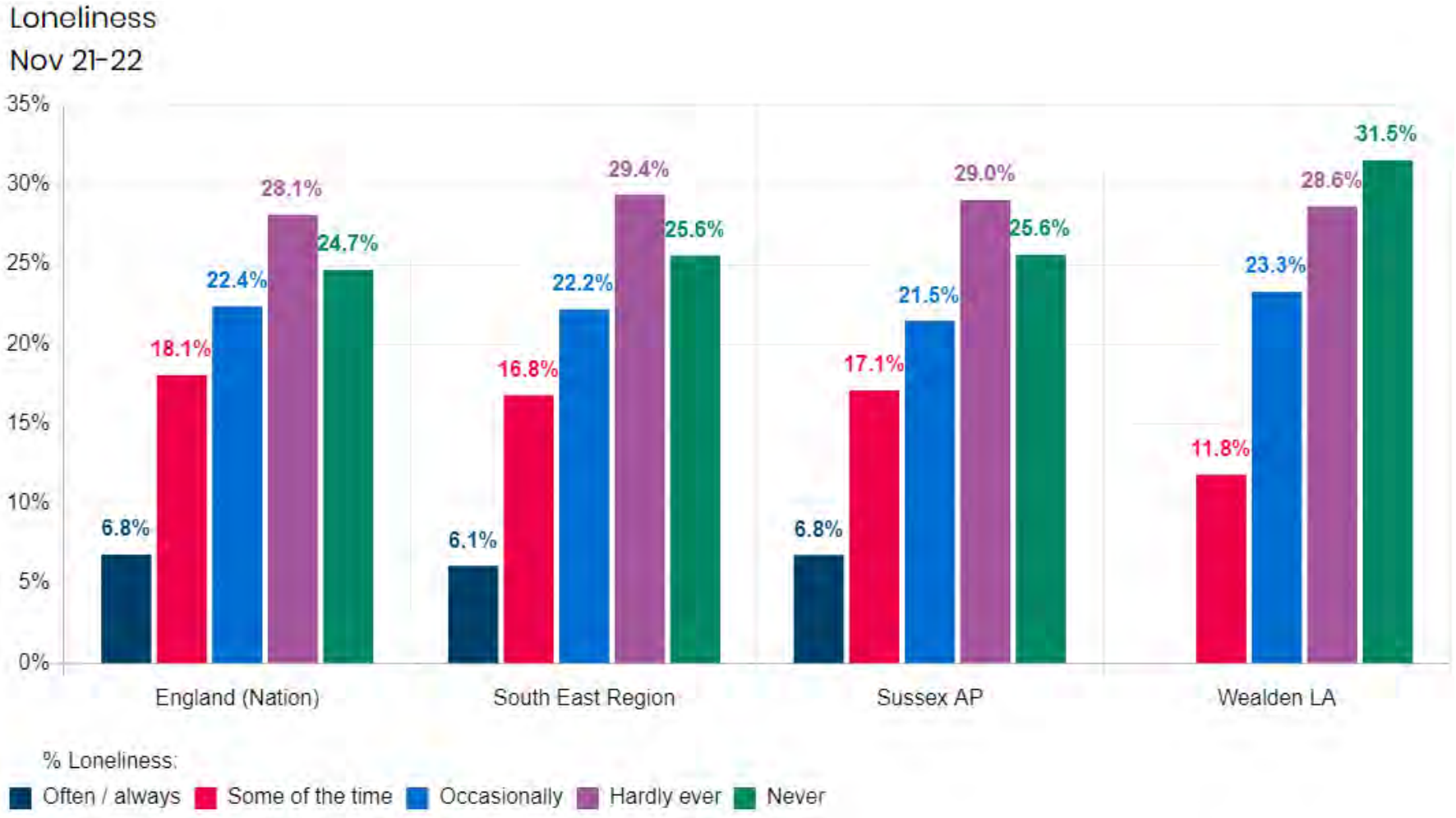
8.22 Wealden's lowest ONS Health Index indicator, "Feelings of anxiety", was rated at 90.7 in 2015 already nearly ten points below the national average, but during the next 5 years the rating continued to fall with the level in 2020 reaching 75.1[56]. With general health appearing to be excellent within the District these figures would indicate that there is a worsening trend in poor mental health. No details have been provided as to the cause of this trend therefore further research may be required.

Loneliness and isolation

8.23 Within Wealden the percentage of residents who "often or sometimes felt lonely" was slightly lower than other Districts within East Sussex. There was also no discernible trend, with levels broadly plateauing at 21% between 2015-2019[57]. More recent figures for Sussex show a small rise to 22.1% in 2020/2021 but this remains in line with historical percentages. Social Isolation and Loneliness if not considered now, may be an issue for the District in the future, particularly given the ageing population, with the potential for complicated health conditions.

54 Office for Health Improvement and Disparities – Dementia Profile
55 ESCC JSNA Wealden District Area Profile (Table 5)
56 ONS Health Index Summary
57 ESCC JSNA Community Survey – Responses to the question "do you ever feel lonely living in your local area?", 2015 – 2019 – Chart 12

Figure 8.5: Sport England's Levels of Loneliness for 2021-2022 by regional comparison



Access to a hospital

8.24 There are no Acute Care hospitals within Wealden, although there are two community hospitals located in Uckfield and Crowborough. Hospitals outside the District include Eastbourne District General Hospital, Conquest Hospital in Hastings, Pembury Hospital near Tunbridge Wells, the Royal Sussex County Hospital in Brighton and the Princess Royal Hospital in Haywards Heath. Some satellite services run within the District. The table below sets out the percentage of residents who are able to access a hospital within 15 minutes travel time. Wealden is above the East Sussex average for travelling by car only.

Table 8.3: % of Residents able to access hospital within 15 minutes via specific transport types

Area	Walk	Public Transport	Cycle	Car
East Sussex	1.1%	1.4%	6.8%	3.65%
Eastbourne	2.9%	2.9%	25.6%	87.1%
Hastings	3.3%	4.5%	10.1%	90.0%
Lewes	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	3.4%
Rother	0.2%	0.5%	0.5%	5.4%
Wealden	0.00%	0.00%	0.4%	9.9%

Source: East Sussex in Figures [58]

Access to a GP Surgeries (2014 - 2019)

8.25 Within the District, only 54.6% of households have access to a GP practice within 15 mins by public transport or walking[59] , this is down by 12.8% on the 2014 figure of 67.4%. This remains the lowest percentage out of the local authorities in East Sussex and is far below the county figure of 63.5%[60].

8.26 Within the District are a number of Middle Super Output Areas (MSOAs) where some residents have no access to a GP within 15 mins by walking or public transport. These include some residents living within the following areas:

- Chiddingly & East Hoathly
- Danehill/Fletching/Nutley
- East Dean
- Horam
- Hartfield
- Heathfield East

8.27 There are 34 GP Surgeries within Wealden, however 6 of these currently have closed lists and are not taking on new patients. These surgeries are located in:

- Heathfield (2)
- Mayfield (1)
- Hartfield (1)
- Hailsham (2)

58 East Sussex in Figures - % of Residents able to access hospital within 15 minutes via specific transport types
59 Department for Transport, Journey time statistics: Access to services 2016. Access to GPs, 2014-16 - super output areas. Available at: http://www.eastsussexinfigures.org.uk
60 East Sussex Sussex In figures – Access to GP's 2014-2019

8.28 For specific and up to date information, it is recommended that information is gathered from NHS Digital – Patients Registered at a GP Practice available at https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/patients-registered-at-a-gp-practice. These figures are updated on a monthly basis and reflect a more accurate picture of the current position at a local level.

8.29 The capacity of GP surgeries is important to acknowledge as part of future partnership working with clinical providers as well as the infrastructure and growth considerations of the Local Plan.

NHS Dentist Availability

8.30 Within Wealden there are 22 Dental Practices registered on the NHS Find a dentist website.[61] Of these dentists 45% (10 Dentists) have closed lists and only 18% (4 Dentists) offer a full NHS service to all age groups. Table 8.2 below shows the location of each practice and where there are conditions on accepting patients.

Table 8.4 Location of NHS Dentists and restrictions for patients[62]

Dentist	Parish	Taking NHS Patients	Restrictions
Heathfield Dental Clinic	Heathfield & Waldron	Yes	
North Street Dental Care	Hailsham	No	
BUPA Dental Care, Hailsham	Hailsham	No	
Portman Healthcare Limited	Hailsham	Conditional	Only taking NHS patients referred by another dentist
Kingswood Dental Practice	Hailsham	Unknown	
Hailsham Dental Centre	Hailsham	Yes	Accepting children aged 17 or under only
Polegate Dental Practice	Polegate	No	
Stonecross Dental Clinic	Pevensey	No	
Magpies Dental Practice	Horam	No	
Hartfield Road Dental Practice	Hartfield	Yes	Only taking NHS patients referred by another dentist
Oak Lodge Dental Practice	Heathfield & Waldron	No	
Applegate Dental Practice	Uckfield	No	
Total Orthodontics	Uckfield	Conditional	Only taking NHS patients referred by another dentist
Mayfield Dental Centre	Mayfield	Unknown	
Crowborough Dental Clinic	Crowborough	Yes	
Ashdown Dentil Clinic	Crowborough	No	
Mermaid Dental Care Limited	Crowborough	Conditional	Accepting children aged 17 or under
Durban Dental Surgery	Crowborough	Unknown	
Wadhurst Dental Practice	Wadhurst	Conditional	Only taking NHS patients referred by another dentist
Country Dental Practice	Wadhurst	No	
Riverview Dental Centre	Forest Row	Conditional	Accepting children aged 17 or under
Stone Cottage Dental Surgery	Forest Row	No	

61 NHS Find a Dentist Website Available at https://www.nhs.uk/service-search/find-a-dentist Last accessed 04/10/2023
62 Source: NHS Find a Dentist Website

Clinically extremely vulnerable for COVID 19

8.31 One quarter of the East Sussex residents estimated clinically extremely vulnerable for Covid 19 reside in Wealden[63]. People defined as clinically extremely vulnerable (CEV) were classified as at greatest risk of severe illness from COVID-19 and were advised to shield by the government during the lockdown periods. People were identified as CEV if they had an underlying health condition and/or weak immune system, including: solid organ transplant recipients; specific cancers; severe respiratory conditions; people at significantly increased risk of infections; people on immunosuppression therapies; and women who are pregnant with significant heart disease.

Table 8.5: Clinically Extremely Vulnerable residents by District and Borough, July 2020

Local Authority	Number
East Sussex	37,926
Eastbourne	7,699
Hastings	6,785
Lewes	6,890
Rother	6,904
Wealden	9,616

Childhood obesity

8.32 The national percentage of Year 6's who are classed as overweight or obese is 35.8%, with Wealden District's population being moderately lower at 28.6%. Whilst the majority of the District is below the national average there are a few electoral wards where there is a higher level and therefore a greater concern in relation to childhood obesity. These are included in the table below:

Table 8.6: Childhood obesity

Electoral Ward	% of Year 6 Overweight / Obese	% above Area average	% above Wealden average
England Average	35.8%	N/A	N/A
East Sussex Average	18.1%	N/A	N/A
Wealden Average	28.6%	-7.2%	N/A
Hailsham East	39.4%	+3.6%	+10.8%
Uckfield East	36.4%	+0.6%	+7.8%
Hailsham Central	40%	+4.2%	+11.4%
Herstmonceux & Pevensey Levels	40%	+4.2%	+11.4%

8.33 For other indicators related to obesity, the East Sussex Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA)[64] indicates that Wealden has similar percentages of reception year children with excess weight and similar percentages of overweight or obese adults compared to England.

63 ESCC JSNA Community Survey - Table 10 – Clinically Extremely Vulnerable residents by District and Borough , July 2020
64 East Sussex Joint Strategic Needs Assessment

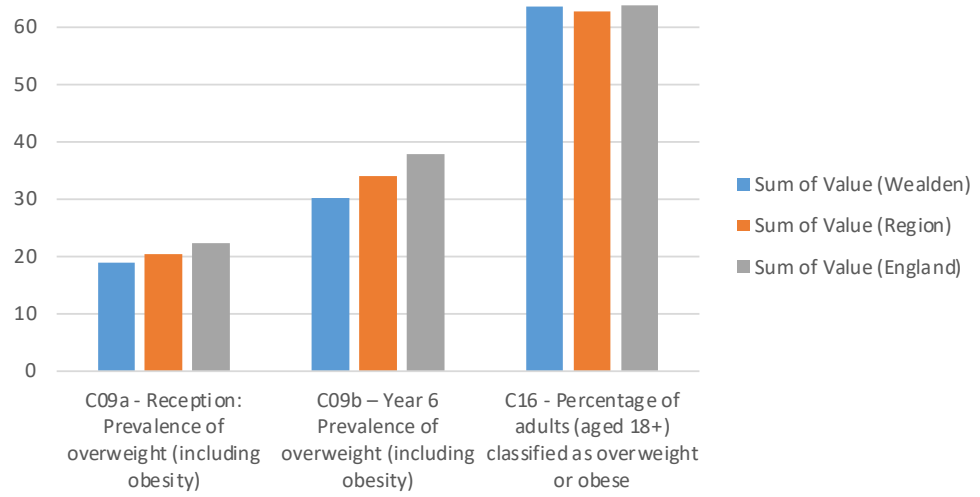
8.34 Therefore, while obesity levels in Wealden are not considered a critical issue, there are small pockets of concern throughout the District which will require specific remedial attention. This outcome is reflected in the Council's Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2022-2023[65] where obesity in children is no longer considered as one of the four main priorities.

8.35 Table 8.7 below summarises the five key indicators from the Public Health Outcomes Framework that impact upon levels of obesity within the District. The table compares the Wealden statistics to those of the County and the Country. In all but adult obesity the District is performing better than the regional average and at a National level all indicators are better than average.

Table 8.7 – Public Health Outcomes Framework – Indicators that impact upon Obesity Levels

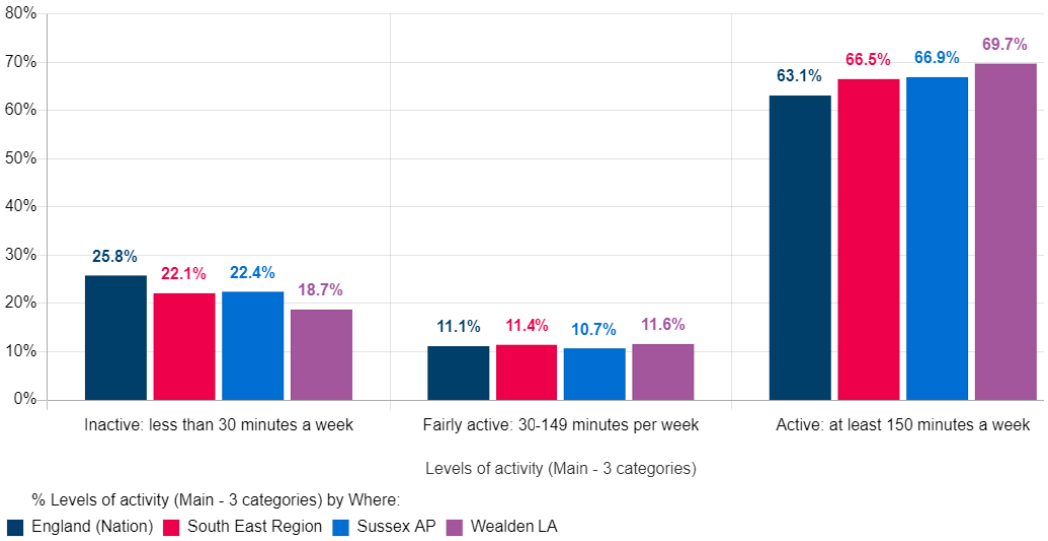
Indicator	Age & Sex	Period	Value % (Wealden)	Value % (Region)	Value % (England)
C09a - Reception: Prevalence of overweight (including obesity)	4–5 yrs Persons	2021/22	18.8	20.3	22.3
C09b – Year 6 Prevalence of overweight (including obesity)	10-11 yrs Persons	2021/22	30.1	34.0	37.8
C16 - Percentage of adults (aged 18+) classified as overweight or obese	18+ yrs Persons	2021/22	63.7	62.7	63.8
C17a - Percentage of physically active adults	18+ yrs Persons	2021/22	76.4	70.5	67.3
C17b - Percentage of Physically inactive adults	18+ yrs Persons	2021/22	15.4	18.8	22.3

Figure 8.6 Comparison of Obesity levels at local, regional, and national level



65 Wealden Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2022 - 2025

Figure 8.7: Levels of Activity by Area for 2020-2021[66]



Adult Activity Levels in Wealden

8.36 Sport England Active Lives Survey results May 2019 – May 2020 aged 16+ show Wealden has a higher rate of active residents (67.8%) participating in at least 150 minutes of physical activity per week than the England average (62.8%) and that Wealden's rate is higher than the Sussex average (66.8%).

8.37 There are less inactive residents in Wealden (18.7%) than in Sussex (22.1%), and Wealden inactivity levels are lower than the England average of 25.8%. More adults are enjoying sports and recreational activities with those adults living longer continuing to partake in these recreational activities to older ages.

8.38 This position is supported by data from Active Sussex in its Levels of Activity by ward data. Five wards within the District have greater levels of inactivity than the national average of 25.8%. These areas include Pevensey Bay, Hailsham Central, Arlington, Hailsham East and Polegate South and Willingdon Watermill.

8.39 Table 8.8 below provides further details on the levels of inactivity within the Parishes that have the greatest levels of inactivity.

Table 8.8: Levels of Inactivity within Wealden's five most inactive wards

Wards	Average of Estimated Inactive 2021	Average of Median age
Pevensey Bay	31.3%	58
Hailsham Central	29.1%	53
Arlington	28.7%	69
Hailsham East	27.9%	39
Polegate South & Willingdon Watermill	26.1%	53

Source: Active Lives Survey

66 Sport England - Levels of Activity by Area for 2020-2021

Activity Levels in Children

8.40 In Wealden in 2020/2021, Sport England identified that 49% of children[67] (5-16 years) were 'Active' across the week, This percentage is higher than the national average (47%) but lower than the proportion of children who are 'active' in East Sussex (52%).

8.41 The Active Lives Children and Young People Survey carried out annually throughout the school year by Active Sussex, asks children aged between five and 16 years old about how much physical activity they take part in, both in and out of school.

8.42 In Wealden in 2018/19, 53% of children surveyed stated they were 'Active' across the week, meaning they did an average of 60 minutes of exercise per day. This is a significant increase on the 2017/18 survey results of just 36%. There has also been a significant decrease in the proportion of children who are 'Less Active' in Wealden (doing less than an average of 30 minutes exercise per day) with only 24% coming into this category in 2018/19 compared to 39% in 2017/18. Other than in the 2017/18 period the level of activity for Wealden's children has been higher than both County and National levels.

Table 8.9: Active Lives Children and Young People Survey Results for Wealden Compared to County and National Levels

Level of Activity	2017/18 %	2018/19 %	2019/20[68] %	2020/21[18] %
Wealden				
60+ minutes of activity a day across the week	**36**	**53**	**47**	**49**
30 and 59 minutes a day across the week	**24**	**23**	**25**	**21**
Less than 30 minutes a day across the week	**39**	**24**	**28**	**30**
East Sussex				
60+ minutes of activity a day across the week	**44%**	**52%**	**41%**	**42%**
30 and 59 minutes a day across the week	**33%**	**24%**	**28%**	**24%**
Less than 30 minutes a day across the week	**23%**	**24%**	**31%**	**34%**
England				
60+ minutes of activity a day across the week	**43%**	**47%**	**45%**	**45%**
30 and 59 minutes a day across the week	**24%**	**24%**	**24%**	**23%**
Less than 30 minutes a day across the week	**32%**	**29%**	**31%**	**32%**

67 ESCC Joint Strategic Needs Assessment Wealden District area profile

68 The figures for 19/20 and 20/21 are not as accurate due to the COVID 19 pandemic and have a much lower level of participation and therefore are less confident

Leisure Centres and Indoor Facilities and Playing Pitches

8.43 The provision of good quality open spaces and opportunities for sport, leisure and recreation provide an important contribution to the health and well-being of the District's communities. They can also provide cultural, ecological, townscape and landscape functions. On a social level, sport and recreation facilities can also promote community cohesion and can encourage community development. The leisure sector, including tourism, also provides an important economic function.

8.44 There are three Leisure Centres within Wealden, Hailsham, Crowborough and Uckfield. However, the future of Uckfield Leisure Centre is currently under consultation by East Sussex County Council.. Heathfield Leisure Centre was closed on 17th October 2022.

8.45 The three remaining leisure centres can provide some or all of the following services:

- Swimming
- Exercise Classes
- Gym and personal training
- Café
- Tenpin bowling
- Badminton
- Indoor Basketball
- Indoor Football
- Squash
- Sauna/Steam Room

8.46 The following table summarises the existing indoor facilities across Wealden.

Table 8.10: Existing Indoor sports facilities in Wealden [69]

Facility Type	Number within Wealden
Sports Hall (3+ Courts)	11
Swimming Pools (Main, Learner & Leisure	10 (Main), 6 (Learner/Teaching), 1 (Leisure)
Health and Fitness Suites	15
Studios	23
Squash Courts	10 (Normal) 2 (Glass Backed)
Indoor Bowls Rinks	6
Activity Halls	20
Indoor Tennis Court	1
Community Space	84

8.47 In summary there are:

- A total of 11 sports halls and 20 activity halls
- 11 sports halls in total (all strategic size i.e., 3 courts+) providing pay and play and sports club community organisation usage. 2 sports halls provide private school use only
- 3 community accessible pay and play sports hall (strategic size i.e., 3 courts+)
- 6 community accessible sports halls i.e., available for sports club use
- 11 activity halls providing sports club usage & 9 activity halls providing private use only.[70]

69 WDC – Indoor Sports Facilities Assessment – September 2022
70 Wealden District Council Indoor Sports Facilities Assessment

8.48 **Table 8.11** sets out the District's outdoor sports provision showing the number of clubs, teams and sports pitches within the District.

Table 8.11: Outdoor Sports Facilities

Sport	Number of Clubs	Number of Teams	Total Number of Pitches	Number of Pitches for public use
Football (Grass)	34	236	140	110
Football (3G)	-	-	3	1
Rugby	5	77	36	30
Hockey	2	14	5	2
Cricket	34	85	45	43

8.49 A number of evidence base reports have identified there are deficiencies in most sport facilities within Wealden, including:

- Wealden District Council – **Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sports Strategy – Assessment Report (April 2022)**
- Wealden District Council **Open Space – Assessment Report (April 2022)**
- Wealden District Council **Open Space – Parish Summaries Report (April 2022)**
- Wealden District Council - **Leisure Provision Scoping Paper (January 2019)**
- Wealden District Council – **Indoor Sports Facility Needs Assessment (March 2022)**
- Sport England's Active Places data - which identified a deficiency of sports hall and swimming provision in Wealden based on a population increase to 174918[71] by 2035.

8.50 **Table 8.12** shows the projected shortfall in three main categories as identified by Sports England's Active Places data based on a projected population growth to 2028.

71 ONS – nomis official census and labour market projection

Table 8.12: Current and projected shortfall of main sport facility types as a result of projected population growth to 2028

Facility	Comment	Standard	Calculation as applied to additional population increase by 2028
Swimming[72]	Only 900 square metres of water space in community use	National comparative data suggest an appropriate level of provision should be 1609 square metres and ideally with a 15 minute drive	With the projected housing growth, data suggests there will be an additional demand for an extra 278 sq.m. of water space – around the equivalent of 1.2 25m x 4 lane pools
Sports Halls	The District currently has the equivalent of 40 courts within sports hall that are available for some level of community use.	National comparative data suggest an appropriate level of provision should be 41 courts (10.3 sports halls) and ideally within a 15 minute drive	Need for an extra 1.77x4-sports hall (7.1 courts) using the projected population demand
Health and Fitness Suites	It is estimated that only 226 of the 504 health & fitness stations are easily available for community use on a pay and play basis and at public centres (leisure centres and community schools).	This equates to 1.4 stations per 1000 population in 2016, lower than the recommended average.	There is currently a deficit of facilities and a need for an additional 39 health & fitness stations over one or more of its centres

Access to Sports and Leisure Facilities

8.51 The findings for Wealden from the Sport England's Facility Planning Model (FPM) are that 91% of visits to sports halls are by car (up to 20 minutes' drive time), 5% of all visits by walking (20 minutes/1- mile catchment area), and 4% of visits are by public transport (20 minutes catchment area).

8.52 The most recently available figures sourced via East Sussex in Figures show that approximately 42% of households in Wealden have access to sports facilities within 20 minutes travel time. Travel time is defined as a 20 minute walk time in urban areas or a 20 minute drive time in rural areas, based on the Office for National Statistics (ONS) classification for urban and rural areas. A 20 minute walk time is approximately 1.6km.

8.53 Table **8.10** compares the percentage of Local Authority residents within this 20-minute threshold, relating it to the national, regional and County figures.

8.54 10.6%[73] of residents within Wealden do not have access to a vehicle and are therefore reliant on public transport or active travel (walking/cycling) to access sports facilities within Wealden. Depending on where these residents live would make travelling to sports facilities difficult given the rural nature of the District.

72 This data was calculated in 2019 and does not take into consideration the potential closure of the swimming pool at Uckfield.
73 ONS Census 2021 - Car or van availability by household composition

Table 8.13: Population within 20 minutes of sports facilities, 2006-2007 (%)[74]

Years	December 2006	June 2007	November 2007
Area			
England	32.2	33.6	38.2
South East	28.0	28.8	31.5
East Sussex	30.9	34.4	34.6
Hastings	8.0	29.7	30.1
Lewes	68.8	68.8	69.7
Rother	27.3	25.7	27.6
Wealden	42.0	42.0	41.8

Walking and cycling

8.55 Walking and cycling is covered within the transport section of this SA Scoping Report. In summary, walking and cycling within the District is undertaken for all purposes (leisure and work), although cycling uptake is significantly lower than walking. This may indicate that there is a lack of sufficient or suitable cycling infrastructure or concerns of the safety of the District's roads for cyclists.

Open Space - Accessibility, Quality and Quantity

8.56 Open space is defined as parks and gardens, natural and semi-natural greenspace, and amenity greenspace**.** The table below shows an overview of open space provision within Wealden as identified within the WDC Open Space Assessment Report (April 2022).

Table 8.14: Overview of Open Space provision in Wealden

Open space typology	Wealden (excluding SDNP)		Wealden (including SDNP)	
	No. of sites	Total (hectares)	No. of sites	Total (hectares)
Allotments	17	15	18	16
Amenity greenspace	89	89	93	93
Cemeteries	70	40	79	43
Natural & semi-natural greenspace	47	1,728	55	3,099
Park and gardens	23	85	24	87
Provision for children and young people	126	8	129	8
TOTAL	**372**	**1,965**	**398**	**3,346**

8.57 Wealden District Councils Open Space Assessment Report (April 2022)[75] has identified the time residents are willing to travel to different types of open space for recreational activities.

74 East Sussex in Figures - Population within 20 minutes of sports facilities, 2006-2007
75 WDC Open Space Assessment Report (April 2022)

8.58 Results from this survey show that individuals are generally willing to walk to access provision of amenity greenspace (76.4%), play areas for young children (72.2%), parks (66.7%), and outdoor networks (65.9%). People also seem more inclined to walk to cemeteries/ churchyards (58.5%) and civic space (53.2%)

8.59 The exception to this is for country parks (72.6%) which most individuals normally travel to by car. This is a reflection that country parks are not typically on the 'doorstep' of all residential areas within the District. Similarly, there is a more mixed response for nature reserves and teenage provision.

8.60 In general, the WDC Open Space Assessment Report found that respondents considered the availability of provision of open space to be quite satisfactory for most typologies. For cemeteries/churchyards (65.4%), nature reserves (65.2%), play areas for children (62.1%) and outdoor networks (61.4%) were viewed as being very or quite satisfactory in terms of availability. This was followed by responses for country parks (59.9%), local parks (57.0%) and civic space (58.0%).

8.61 For teenage provision, a greater proportion of respondents' rate availability as either quite unsatisfactory (19.5%) or very unsatisfactory (25.2%). A response that was also repeated in the quality assessment where the greater proportion of respondents rated the quality of teenage provision as quite unsatisfactory (21.7%) and very unsatisfactory (23.9%). The Assessment also identified the areas where residents felt there might be improvement within the quality and accessibility of open space provided in Wealden. This is summarised in the **Figure 8.12**.

Figure 8.12: How residents of Wealden normally travel to the open spaces

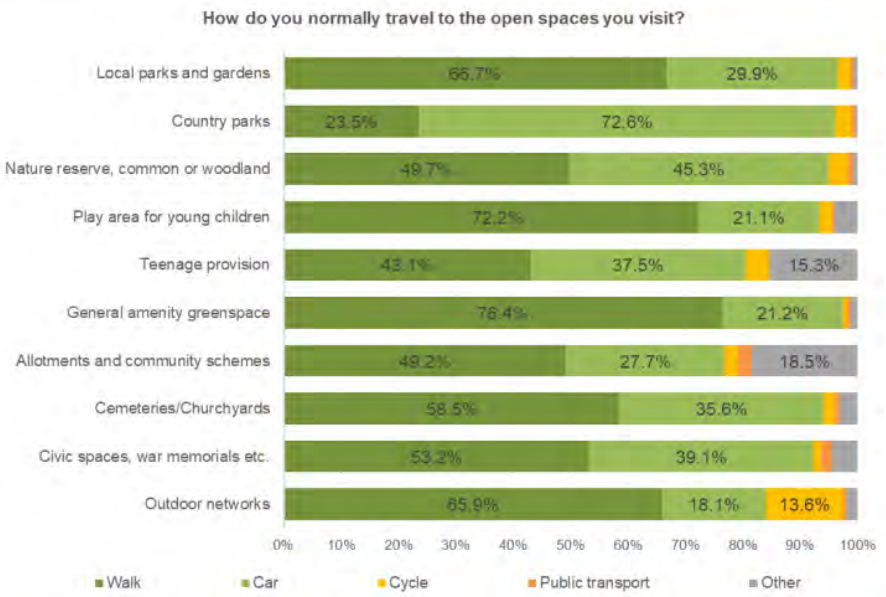


Figure 8.13: Time residents of Wealden are willing to travel to open space provision

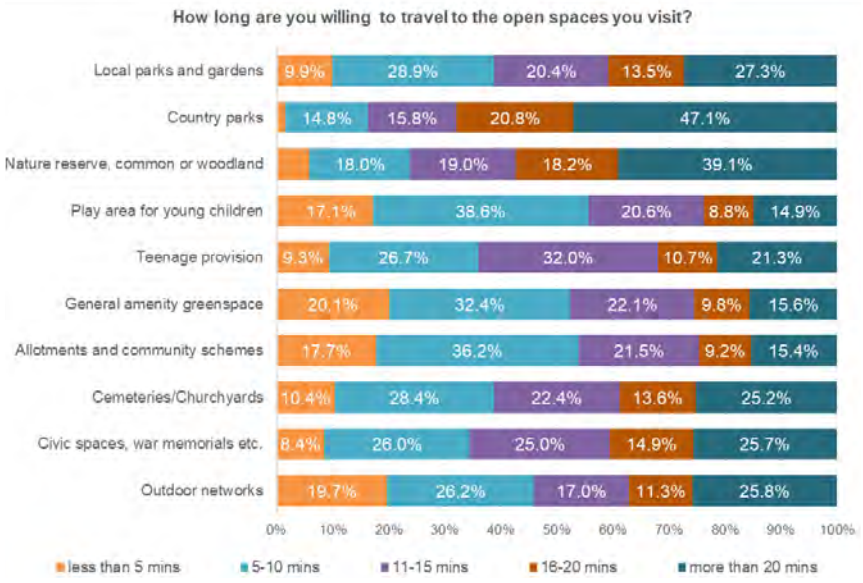


Figure 8.14: Satisfaction with availability of open space provision

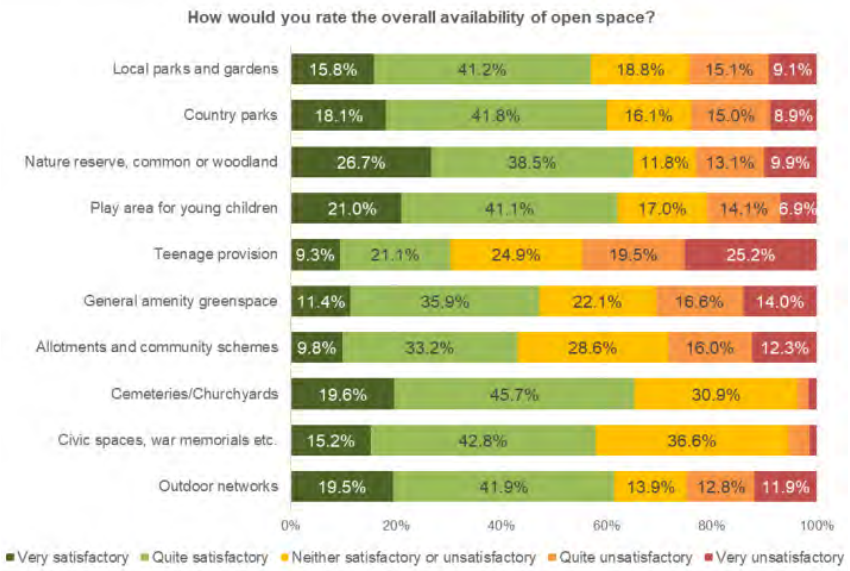
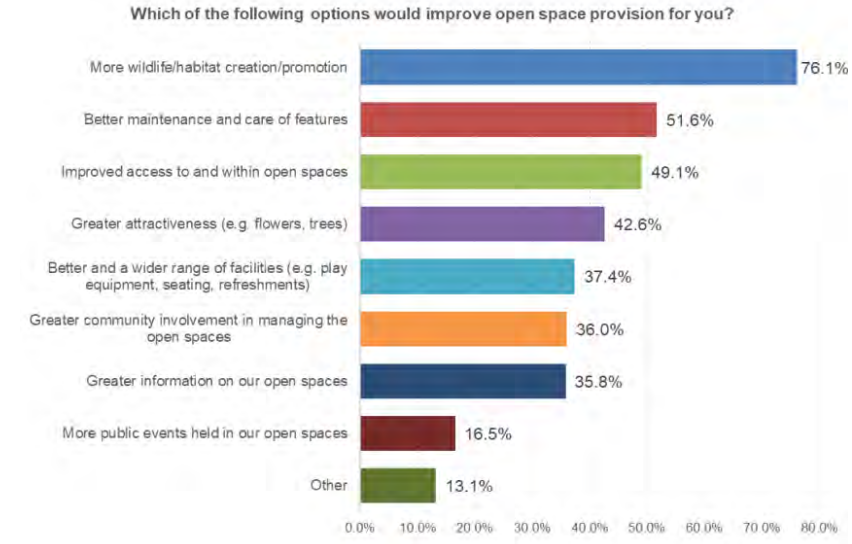


Figure 8.15: Improvements to open space[76]



Food Growing Opportunities

8.62 Allotments and community orchards provide opportunities for people to grow their own produce. They encourage physical activity, improve mental health and provide a sense of well-being thereby contributing to people's quality of life. Within Wealden there are 17 allotment sites covering a total of 15ha. The largest site in Wealden is Framfield Road allotments, Uckfield (2.38 hectares)

8.63 The National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners (NSALG) suggests a national standard of 20 allotments per 1,000 households (20 per 2,000 people based on two people per house or one per 100 people). This equates to 0.25 hectares per 1,000 populations based on an average plot-size of 250 square metres (0.025 hectares per plot)

8.64 Wealden based on its current population (158,380) is short of the NSALG standard. Using this suggested standard, the minimum amount of allotment provision for Wealden is 39.59 hectares. Existing provision of 15.26 hectares is below this guideline. On this basis, as population increases, the deficit is also likely to increase. In addition, several parish and town councils highlight waiting lists across sites; suggesting demand is outweighing supply.

76 Table 3.8 WDC Open Space Assessment

Identified Gaps in Open space provision by type

- **Parks and Gardens** - Potential catchment gaps were identified in the settlements of Polegate, Heathfield, and Forest Row when a 15 minute walk time or a 15 minute drive time is applied.
- **Natural and Semi-natural greenspace** - A potential gap is highlighted in the settlement of Wadhurst.
- **Amenity Greenspace** - A potential gap is highlighted to the settlement of Heathfield.
- **Provision for children and young people** - Potential catchment gaps in play provision for young ages are noted to the settlements of Polegate, Forest Row, Heathfield and Crowborough. In some instances, gaps can be addressed by exploring an option to provide new play provision. In other instances, gaps could look to be addressed by expanding the range/ amount of provision at existing play site.
- **Allotments** - Potential gaps in allotment provision are noted for the settlements of Crowborough, Polegate and Heathfield.

Baseline Data: Health and Wellbeing

Scope of the Local Plan

- Ensure that development is located in sustainable locations and planned for in such a way that it encourages healthier lifestyles including safe walking and cycling provision, play spaces, open space, green space and sports facilities etc. so that all residents can be directed towards a healthier way of living.
- Support the enhancement of existing and provision of new open space, sports and community facilities, prioritising those areas with an existing deficiency in provision or where new development may take place
- Enable the provision of facilities and services that accommodate the older population who wish to remain active as well as for younger age groups
- Ensure that new development has good levels of accessibility to medical services by both public transport and active travel methods of transport
- Support the delivery of services and inclusive and accessible infrastructure that supports the health and wellbeing of those living with dementia, long term illness and disability
- Support the creation of environments and links to services and facilities, which enable increased physical activity including those living with dementia and long-term illness and disability.

Data Gaps

8.65 The evidence base documents that have been produced in support of the new Local Plan provide important baseline information, in addition to development monitoring undertaken by the Council. For some areas relating to health and well-being, census information for the 2021 data has yet to be completely published therefore not all trends are available at this stage.

Baseline Data: Health and Wellbeing

Key Sustainability Issues

- An increase in elderly residents (65+) and levels of people living with disability, long term illness and dementia
- Areas of poor access to medical services including hospitals, GP's and dentists
- Levels of anxiety are higher than national levels which can have an adverse impact on learning, workplace performance and health
- Services need to remain accessible to all, given the aging population and the health and well-being benefits of being active
- Access to open space / certain types of open space is limited in some areas of the district
- There are a number of areas within the district where deficiencies in open space, sport, leisure and recreation facilities have been identified
- New development will result in an increased demand to existing forms of provision in open space, sport, leisure and recreation facilities
- All levels of obesity are significantly lower than the national and regional averages but continue to have an impact on the health and wellbeing of our communities.

Likely Evolution without the Local Plan

- There would be no strategic plans to enhance and maintain open space within the district or strategically plan for health
- Investment into health services such as GPs could be miss managed / calculated without the consideration of future housing developments within the district, putting a further strain on existing health services
- Demand for existing sports facilities could reach capacity in areas of the district, which could reduce the active levels of Wealden residents
- New open space and sports facilities within the district could be located in areas that would be less beneficial to new or existing residents.

9.0 Housing

KEY PPPs

- **Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill 2023**
- **The Housing White Paper 'Fixing our Broken Housing Market 2017**
- **The Housing and Planning Act 2016**
- **The Self-Build and Custom Housebuilding Act 2015 (as amended by the Housing and Planning Act 2016)**
- **Planning Policy for Traveller Sites (PPTS) 2015**
- **National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)**
- **East Sussex Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Accommodation Needs Assessment 2022**
- **Housing Needs Survey Report - Wealden District: Settlements in Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (August 2016)**
- **Wealden Housing Strategy 2020 – 2025 (June 2020)**
- **Wealden Local Housing Needs Assessment 2021**
- **Wealden Older Persons Housing & Support Strategy 2008-28**

KEY MESSAGES

- The need to plan for the right homes in the right places, to build homes faster, to diversify the market and to help people now
- To meet the demand for self-build and custom housebuilding in the local authority's area
- To support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations
- To provide for objectively assessed needs for housing, as well as any housing needs that cannot be met within neighbouring areas (where practical)
- To assess the size, type and tenure of housing needed for different groups in the community and reflect these in planning policies
- To specify the type of affordable housing required
- To respond to local circumstances and support housing developments that reflect local needs
- To address the likely permanent and transit site accommodation needs of travellers in the area
- To provide a range of local housing-related options for older people within the district, in response to locally assessed needs
- To provide accessible and adaptable accommodation for local residents with a temporary or permanent physical impairment, in line with the Lifetime Homes Standard.

Housing and Population in Wealden

9.1 The 2011 Census estimated the population of the District to be 148,900. This has increased in the 2021 Census by 7.5% to 160,200, or an additional 11,300 people in the District over the ten-year period. The District's population has increased at a similar rate to the overall population of the Southeast that also stands at 7.5%, but at greater rate than England that stood at only 6.6% between the two periods.

9.2 The 2011 Census estimates the number of dwellings in the district to be 65,159 and this has increased in the 2021 Census by 10.6% to 72,048 dwellings, or an additional 6,889 dwellings in the District over the ten-year period. Both the population increasing and the additional homes within the District between the last two censuses shows an increasing need for housing.

Overall Housing Need

9.3 The NPPF confirms that to determine the minimum number of homes needed for a local authority area, strategic policies should be informed by a local housing need assessment, conducted using the 'standard method' in national planning guidance. For Wealden District, this equates to 1,200 dwellings per annum (dpa). This figure does not include any potential unmet housing need from neighbouring Local Planning authorities. This is a significant uplift from the latest adopted Wealden District Core Strategy Local Plan (February, 2013) that only requires 450 dpa to be delivered and represents a significant housing delivery challenge for the District in the future.

9.4 The District is surrounded by seven other Districts and Boroughs in Surrey, Kent and Sussex[77] (not including the South Downs National Park (SDNP)) and is overlapped by a number of HMAs. At this stage, although it is known that some neighbouring Local Planning authorities will find it difficult to meet their own housing need, it is not known what the quantum of this unmet housing need will be, as this has not been agreed in an adopted Local Plan to date. However, it is known that there will be pressure from neighbouring Local Planning authorities to meet their unmet housing needs (and potentially other development needs) in the future.

77 This includes Rother District Council, Tunbridge Wells Borough Council, Sevenoaks District Council, Tandridge District Council, Mid Sussex District Council, Lewes District Council and Eastbourne Borough Council.

Affordable Housing Need

9.5 The latest local information on affordable housing need is contained within the LHNA that was published in 2021[78] (see chapters 7 and 8 of the report for further details). An analysis was undertaken to estimate the need for affordable housing in the 2019-2039 period and this calculated that there was a need for 519 affordable homes per annum to rent (i.e. social or affordable rent) and a further need for 335 affordable homes per annum in the ownership model (i.e. shared ownership, first homes etc.). In short, it is clear that the provision of new affordable housing is an important and pressing issue in the District and the Council is justified in seeking to secure as much affordable housing as viability allows.

Housing and Affordable Housing Completions

9.6 The 2021/22 Authority Monitoring Report (AMR)[79] confirms that there were only 685 housing completions (net) during the financial period, which was lower than the previous financial period in 2020/21at 722 (net) dwellings and the 2019/20 period at 1,034 (net) dwelling completions. The output for 2021/22 period (and indeed the financial periods before) is below the 'standard method' calculation of housing need that equates to 1,200 dpa.

9.7 It should be noted for 2020/21 and 2021/22 period, there was an impact on construction as part of the Covid-19 pandemic and multiple lockdowns, which halted progress on some sites. These challenges continued to an extent into the 2022/23 period, with the addition of supply chain issues.

9.8 The latest Housing Delivery Test (HDT) measurement for Wealden in 2021[80] shows that the Council fell short of its housing requirement at 82% and therefore were required to produce a Housing Action Plan in order to improve housing delivery rates, as well as a 20% buffer being applied to the five-year housing land supply position. The Council's latest five-year housing land supply position as of 1 April 2022[81] was 3.92 years, which is also a shortfall on the Council's housing delivery target.

9.9 In terms of affordable housing completions, the 2021/22 AMR confirms that 176 affordable dwellings were completed during the period, which was 99 less than the 2020/21 period that stood at 275 affordable dwelling completions. In terms of tenure, Wealden District has a comparatively small number (to the region and nationally) of affordable homes overall, which is discussed below.

78 Wealden Local Housing Needs Assessment (August, 2021)
79 Wealden District Council – Authority Monitoring Report (AMR), December 2022
80 Housing Delivery Test (HDT): 2021 Measurement
81 Five Year Housing Land Supply Statement – as of 1st April 2022, December 2022

The Housing Market Area (HMA)

9.10 The Council's latest LHNA that was published in 2021[82] shows that Wealden District is overlapped by a number of other HMAs across Sussex and Kent, that are centred on several large towns that exist on the outskirts of Wealden (specifically Eastbourne to the south and Royal Tunbridge Wells to the north), which has led to the existence of quite distinct housing market areas overlapping into the District. This has in the past exerted considerable upward pressure on house prices, particularly in the north of the District that is both in closer proximity to and commutable from London.

House Prices and Affordability

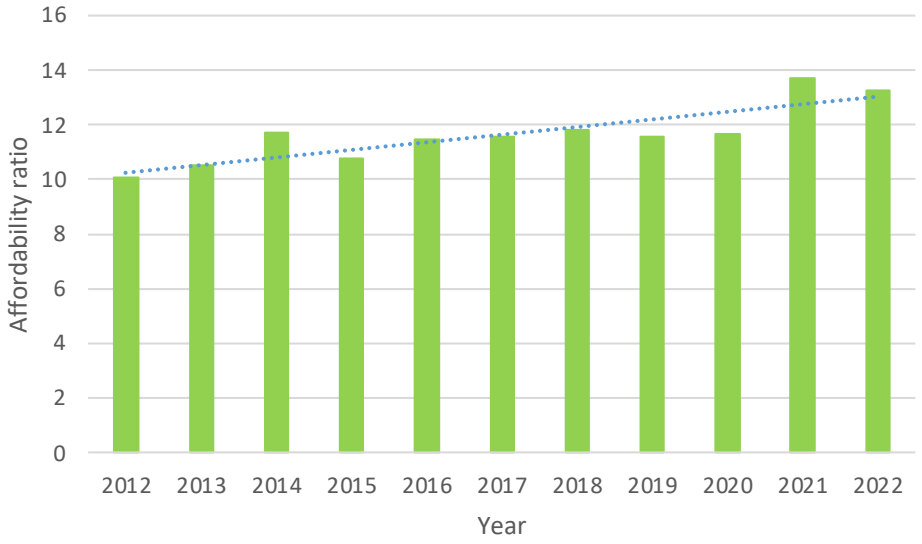
9.11 In common with other neighbouring local authorities and the rest of South East England, the cost of housing in Wealden is high. The median house price in Wealden District in 2022 was £380,000, which was the second highest in East Sussex[83] and just above the South East average that stood at £370,000. In England only, the median house price in 2022 was only £275,000[84], which shows that Wealden District is a comparatively expensive area to purchase a home.

9.12 The 'affordability ratio' indicates how many median annual salaries are needed to purchase a median priced house in a local authority area. In 2022, for England only, this ratio was 8.28 and regionally for South East England, this ratio equated to 10.75. In Wealden District, the affordability ratio was above both the national and regional average and stood at 13.25, which was the highest in East Sussex and comparable with outer London Boroughs. High house prices and relatively low earnings has meant that access to affordable housing is a key issue facing our local communities. This will particularly impact younger people in our communities who may wish to stay in the District, but have limited options to stay, either through purchasing a new home (or entering the private rental market, as discussed below).

9.13 Figure **9.1** shows the median affordability ratio for Wealden District between 2012 and 2022 (the latest information available). This demonstrates a steady rise for the median affordability ratio of 10.07 in 2012 to 13.25 in 2022 and shows worsening affordability in the District over time, which is expected to continue.

82 Wealden Local Housing Needs Assessment (August, 2021)
83 Only Lewes District was higher at £383,500.
84 See House Price to Workplace-Based Earnings Ratio on the ONS website (March, 2023)

Figure 9.1: Median Affordability Ratio for Housing in Wealden between 2012 and 2022



Private Sector Rental Market

9.14 The latest LHNA confirms following consultation with lettings agents that in 2021, the rental market in the District was buoyant with high levels of demand, which had not been negatively affected by the onset of Covid-19. It also noted that a higher proportion of younger people were renting in the north of the District, albeit that levels of private renting amongst younger people in Wealden are lower than the national and regional average.

9.15 As of the 2011 census, the private rental sector in the District made up approximately 11.1% of all housing tenures in the District, a lower level than the county, region and nationally. The 2021 Census shows that the private rental sector in the District made up 13.5% of all housing tenures in the District, which is higher than the previous Census, although still significantly lower than the regional (19.2%) and national (20.5%) tenure split.

9.16 In terms of the cost of private renting, the median monthly rent for all types of accommodation in Wealden District was £975, which is above the national average (£795), regional average (£950) and East Sussex average (£850)[85]. This shows that market housing for private rental within the District is unaffordable for many residents. It is also relevant that there are disparities in terms of house prices and affordability between the north and south of the District, with the north historically being more expensive and therefore less affordable than the south.

Long-term vacant dwellings

9.17 Vacant dwellings falling under Council Tax Exemption Classes A to I, which are unoccupied on the monitoring date with no usual residents, has no indication of being used as a second home and is not inhabited by short-term residents are monitored by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities. In the 2022 to 2023 monitoring period Wealden has a total 71 vacant dwellings of which 49 have been vacant for over 6 months. This has declined from the 2020 to 2021 recent high of a total of 113 vacant dwellings with 59 of these being vacant for over 6 months.

85 See the East Sussex in Figures website.

Migration

9.18 The District has consistently seen a net outflow of younger people (15-24) between 2010 and 2020. This may reflect that many younger people are moving to higher education provided outside the District (with no university in the District) or that house prices on the private market make it difficult for that cohort to stay within the District (alongside accessing well paid jobs etc.). For all other age categories, this has remained as a net inflow of people into the District. Table 9.1 below shows the time frame for vacant dwellings within Wealden between the 1st of April 2018 and the 31st of March 2023.

Table 9.1: Vacant dwellings within Wealden - April 2018 to March 2023

Date	Dwellings Vacant for 0-6 wks	Dwellings Vacant for 6 wks-6mths	Dwellings Vacant for over 6 mths	Total Dwellings Vacant
2022 - 2023	18	4	49	71
2021 - 2022	21	6	51	78
2020 - 2021	34	21	58	113
2019 - 2020	25	7	53	85
2018 - 2019	10	17	6	33

Source: Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities[86]

Table 9.2: Internal Migration (net) by age group – Wealden 2010 to 2020 [87]

Year	0-14	15-24	25-44	45-64	65+
2010	508	-536	527	476	187
2011	670	-404	608	469	73
2012	502	-673	910	673	231
2013	500	-356	798	561	362
2014	577	-239	840	675	323
2015	605	-425	762	629	264
2016	339	-396	633	441	253
2017	489	-673	619	498	212
2018	564	-408	718	548	55
2019	481	-362	662	586	75
2020	599	-267	877	442	157

Housing Type

9.19 The 2021 Census has provided the most up-to-date figures on the number of dwellings within Wealden District that stands at 72,048. The Census 2021 also provides what housing types exist within Wealden District and can provide direct comparisons to the region and nationally, which can be seen in the table below. It is shown below that the District has a high percentage of detached homes, but less terraced and flatted accommodation compared to the region and nationally.

86 Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Available at https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/local-authority-housing-data Last accessed 04/01/2024
87 Office for National Statistics (ONS Internal migration by age group, 2002-2020) – Districts. Available at: www.eastsussexinfigures.org.uk

Table 9.3: Housing types within Wealden District

Area	Detached	Semi-Detached	Terraced	Flatted	Other
Wealden	43.7%	31.0%	12.5%	8.7%	4.1%
South East	28.0%	28.4%	21.3%	16.8%	5.5%
England	22.9%	31.5%	23.0%	17.1%	5.6%

9.20 In terms of trends, the Census 2021 provides us with the information to compare housing type with the previous Census conducted in 2011 that provides a snapshot of the changes during that period. This is provided in the table below and shows a limited difference between the two periods, with only a small percentage decrease in detached dwellings and a small percentage increase in semi-detached dwellings.

Table 9.4: Housing Type in Wealden in 2011 and 2021

Census Year	Detached	Semi-Detached	Terraced	Flatted	Other
2011	44.5%	30.0%	12.7%	8.5%	4.2%
2021	43.7%	31.0%	12.5%	8.7%	4.1%

Tenure Composition

9.21 The 2021 Census also provides the most up-to-date figures on tenure composition in the District, Southeast England and England as a whole, which is presented in the table below. This shows that Wealden District has a higher proportion of private home ownership, with more limited provision of social and private rented properties compared to the region and nationally.

Table 9.5: Tenure composition in Wealden District, South East England and England

Area	Owned Outright	Owned - Mortgage	Shared Ownership	Social Rented	Private Rented
Wealden	44.7%	32.3%	1.2%	8.4%	13.5%
South East	34.3%	31.4%	1.4%	13.6%	19.2%
England	32.5%	28.8%	1.0%	17.1%	20.5%

9.22 In terms of tenure composition, there has been slight reductions in private ownership between 2011 and 2021, with smaller increases in private rented accommodation and social rented accommodation that chimes with worsening affordability issues in the District over time.

Table 9.6: Housing Tenure in Wealden in 2011 and 2021

Census Year	Owned Outright	Owned - Mortgage	Shared Ownership	Social Rented	Private Rented
2011	42.3%	36.5%	0.8%	7.7%	11.1%
2021	44.7%	32.3%	1.2%	8.4%	13.5%

Number of Bedrooms

9.23 The 2021 Census also provides the most up-to-date figures on the number of bedrooms for each dwelling in the District that is presented in the table below, alongside the figures for Southeast England and England as a whole. This shows that Wealden District has a lower proportion of 1-bedroom dwellings and more 4 or more-bedroom dwellings, when compared with the region and nationally.

Table 9.7: Number of bedrooms for each dwelling in Wealden District

Area	1-Bed	2-Beds	3-Beds	4 + Beds
Wealden	7.6%	26.9%	34.9%	30.6%
South East	11.6%	25.9%	37.5%	25.0%
England	11.6%	27.3%	40.0%	21.1%

9.24 There was also a modest increase between 2011 and 2021 of 4 or more bedrooms homes in the District and a small reduction in both 2 and 3 bedroom housing. This is a key issue for the District and will need to be addressed within the Council's Local Plan, as our LHNA (August, 2021) suggests that smaller homes within the District are needed to support younger families and to ensure that older people have appropriate accommodation to downsize too, thereby releasing larger homes into the housing market.

Table 9.8: Number of Bedrooms (per dwelling) in Wealden 2011 and 2021

Census Year	1-Bed	2-Beds	3-Beds	4 + Beds
2011	7.6%	28.2%	35.4%	28.6%
2021	7.6%	26.9%	34.9%	30.6%

Table 9.9: Number of dwellings by property type and number of bedrooms (March 2020)

Property Type	Number of bedrooms					
	1	2	3	4+	Not Known	All
Bungalow	550	7,400	3,330	880	30	12,190
Flat/Maisonette	4,070	3,770	420	90	60	8,400
Terraced house	320	3,830	4,930	660	20	9,760
Semi-detached house	100	3,470	9,630	1,960	40	15,190
Detached house	50	1,220	7,310	13,230	120	21,920
All flats/houses	5,090	19,690	25,620	16,820	270	67,460
Annexe	-	-	-	-	-	590
Other	-	-	-	-	-	1,120
Unknown	-	-	-	-	-	1,230
All properties	-	-	-	-	-	70,400

Source: Valuation Office Agency

Older Persons Accommodation and those with Disabilities

9.25 Due to the significant demographic changes expected in Wealden between 2019 and 2039, particularly in terms of a greater proportion of older people expected in the District by 2039 and the prevalence of disabilities at that time, this will have implications for the types of housing needed in the future (see the chapter on population and community within this scoping report for further information on the demographics of the District).

9.26 The LHNA (August, 2021) estimated the needs for different types of housing linked to the population projections provided within the report. It should be recognised that there could be some overlap between these categories and a brief summary of the findings is shown below:

- **Age-restricted** – the analysis suggests a potential shortfall of accommodation both currently and by 2039 in both broad tenures
- **Housing with support (sheltered/retirement housing)** – the analysis suggests a shortfall in both the market and affordable sectors. By 2039, a total shortfall of 2,169 units is estimated – some 1,420 in the market sector (65% of the total)
- **Housing with care (e.g. extra-care housing)** – a total shortfall of 1,088 units is estimated by 2039, of which 66% is in the market sector
- **Residential/nursing care bedspaces** – the analysis estimates a total need for an additional 993 bedspaces by 2039.

9.27 In addition, the LHNA (August, 2021) suggested that there was an estimated current need for 526 wheelchair user homes and a projected need for a further 1,248 wheelchair user homes by the end of 2039. In short, it was recommended that there is a need for around 1,800 dwellings to be for wheelchair users (meeting technical building control standard M4(3)). This suggests that there is a clear need to increase the supply of accessible and adaptable dwellings and wheelchair user dwellings as well as providing specific older persons accommodation in the future.

9.28 The sources used for analysis in the LHNA makes it difficult to quantify a need/demand for bungalows in the District as Census data (which is used to look at occupancy profiles) does not separately identify this type of accommodation. However, data from the Valuation Office Agency (VOA) does provide estimates of the number of bungalows (by bedrooms) although no tenure split is available. **Table 9.9** shows a notable proportion of homes in Wealden are bungalows (18% of all dwellings) with over half of these having 2-bedrooms (and most of the rest 3-bedrooms); a lower proportion (9%) of homes across England are bungalows.

9.29 The LHNA notes that bungalows are likely to see a particular need and demand in the market sector and also for rented affordable housing. In addition, the LHNA notes that bungalows are likely to particularly focus on 2-bedroom homes, including in the affordable sector where such housing may encourage households to move from larger 'family-sized' accommodation (with 3+-bedrooms).

Self-Build and Custom Build Housing

9.30 There have been 209 applicants to Wealden's Self-Build and Custom-Build Register during the 8 base periods that have taken place between 31 March 2016 and 30 October 2023. The demand for self-build and custom-build homes has been steady in the District and the Council is considering the most appropriate method to deliver such homes in the future.

Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople

9.31 The Council has undertaken a Gypsy, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople Accommodation Needs Assessment (GTAA)[88] that was jointly commissioned by all East Sussex local authorities (and the South Downs National Park Authority) and outlined the accommodation needs for this community between 2021 and 2040. This stated that there was a Gypsy and Traveller requirement (using the ethic definition) for 51 pitches[89] and a further requirement to provide 3 plots for Travelling Showpeople during this period.

9.32 This included 22 households in a current or imminent need (i.e. 2021 to 2026) that included households on unauthorised developments, those in overcrowded accommodation, needs from older teenage children and movement from bricks and mortar. A further 29 households had a future need (beyond five years) largely from new household formation. There is no current or imminent need (i.e. 2021 to 2026) for travelling showpeople plots.

88 East Sussex Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Accommodation Needs Assessment, May 2022

89 Using the definition in the Planning Policy for Traveller Sites (PPTS), August 2015, this is reduced to only 32 pitches.

Scope of the Local Plan

9.33 The Local Plan can influence housing in the following ways:

- Ensure that new housing development provides sufficient and suitable homes for all sections of society (as far as possible), including meeting affordable housing needs, older persons housing needs, gypsies, travellers and travelling showpeople accommodation, as well as self-build and custom-build homes
- Consider the housing mix required in the District (particularly the number of bedrooms) in order to accommodate the changing age profile of the District that will be older, ensuring suitable housing adaptability where possible. This should also consider younger families and their housing requirements in line with the LHNA (August, 2021)
- Deliver an appropriate mix of tenures in line with the LHNA (August, 2021)
- Maximise opportunities to deliver new homes in sustainable locations
- Maximise opportunities to deliver new affordable housing, particularly of the tenure mix supported by the LHNA (August, 2021)
- Ensure that new homes cater for the ageing population within the District through the provision of specialist accommodation, as well as dwellings for those who have a disability or are wheelchair users under Building Standard M4(3)
- Ensure that the Local Plan considers the scale and location of new housing allocations in the District, supported by the Strategic Housing Economic Land Availability Assessment (SHELAA), to support sustainable patterns of transport, reducing the impacts of climate change and delivering sustainable communities. This could include strategic development opportunities providing they support those objectives
- Where possible, support the redevelopment of housing on previously developed land, although it is acknowledged that this type of land is limited within the District.

Data Gaps

9.34 As established above, there is already significant baseline information on housing either through our own evidence bases or monitoring, or via the Census 2021 and this will provide essential background evidence for the Wealden Local Plan. However, further work will be undertaken in terms of updating the LHNA (August, 2021), following the release of information for Census 2021, the SHELAA and in relation to gathering information on existing internal floorspace standards for new homes in the District.

Baseline Data: Housing

Key Sustainability Issues

- The affordability of new homes remains a significant issue for our local communities and is worsening
- The affordability of new homes has resulted in net outflow of younger people (15-24) from the district, although there may be other factors involved (i.e. moving for higher education)
- To deliver as much of the housing need as possible whilst taking into account the sensitive natural environment of the district
- The number of both market and affordable housing completions has not kept pace with housing need,which has resulted in the Council not meeting its Housing Delivery Test (HDT) requirement or demonstrating a robust five-year housing land supply position
- The type of housing mix at present does not match the demand including a need for smaller (3-bedrooms or less) and affordable homes
- There is a limited number of, and high demand for, affordable homes (rented or ownership)
- There is a current need for more older persons and specialist accommodation to be delivered, which will worsen with an ageing population
- The need to accomodate the self-build and custom-build market
- There is a limited amount of Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Accommodation and demand to deliver new permanent pitches/plots.

Likely Evolution without the Local Plan

- The district will fail to meet its housing target and meet its Housing Delivery Test (HDT) requirements, which may deliver housing in areas that are less appropriate, or which have not been planned
- House prices continue to rise in the area and affordability worsens
- There will be a continued failure to provide housing that meets the needs of households within the district in terms of their tenure, size, age requirements etc.
- The lack of a strategic framework to deliver new homes would likely leave a void that would result in speculative development coming forward in villages and towns across the district
- The Council would not be able to meet the accommodation needs of the Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople community and would be subject to speculative development of this nature
- The Council would not be able to meet the needs of the self-build and custom build market
- The Council would not be able to deliver the appropriate amount or type of affordable housing needed within the district.

10.0 Education and Skills

KEY PPPs

- **National Planning Policy Framework**
- **The East Sussex County Council Organisation Plan 2022 to 2026**

KEY MESSAGES

- Ensure that strategic policies set out the overall strategy for the pattern, scale and quality of development and make sufficient provision for community facilities, including educational facilities
- To set out in policy the contributions expected from development for the types of affordable housing provision required, along with other infrastructure including education
- Give great weight to the need to create, expand or alter schools
- Work with school promoters, delivery partners and statutory bodies to identify and resolve key planning issues before applications are submitted
- New strategic housing plans may require more capacity for further primary, secondary and special school places in the future.

Working Age Qualifications

10.1 The 2021 Census data[90] provides the most up-to-date information regarding the academic qualifications of the District's residents that were aged 16+ at the time of the Census. The data demonstrates that Wealden has a lower proportion of the population with a level 4 or above qualification (higher education) than the national and regional averages.

Table 10.1: Qualifications of working age population in 2021

Qualifications	England	South East	Wealden
No Qualifications (%)	18.1	15.4	14.9
Level 1 and entry level (%)	9.7	9.8	10.4
Level 2 (%)	13.3	13.9	15.6
Apprenticeship (%)	5.3	5.1	5.8
Level 3 (%)	16.9	17.4	18.0
Level 4 or above (%)	33.9	35.8	32.6
Other Qualifications (%)	2.8	2.7	2.7

GCSE Performance and Young People in Training

10.2 As shown in **Table 10.2**, data[91] for 2021/22 period demonstrates that pupils in Wealden District are over-performing at GCSE level in comparison to the regional or national averages. However, additional data[92] shows that at a District level, the number of 16-17 year olds recorded in education or training is only 91.9%, compared to the national average of 93.2%.

Table 10.2: Data on pupils achieving grades 4 or above in English and Mathematics GCSEs on a national, regional and local level

Area	Pupils achieving grades 4 or above in English and Mathematics GCSEs (%)	Pupils achieving grades 4 or above in the English Baccalaureate (%)
England	69.0%	26.9%
South East	70.9%	28.6%
East Sussex	66.3%	24.8%
Wealden	74.8%	29.4%

Apprenticeships

10.3 The number of residents in Wealden achieving apprenticeships (of all levels) has reduced from 540 in 2017/18 to 290 in 2021/22[93] and this has been steadily reducing since that time as seen in the table below. However, the number of residents starting apprenticeships has risen during the same period, albeit with a small dip in the 2019/20 and 2020/21 period, which may reverse this trend in the future. Furthermore, the number of residents achieving a higher apprenticeship has increased from 30 in 2017/18 to 60 in 2021/22.

90 Education, England and Wales: Census 2021 https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/educationandchildcare/bulletins/educationenglandandwales/census2021#:~:text=Level%204%20or%20above%3A%20Higher,other%20qualifications%2C%20of%20unknown%20level

91 National Statistics: Key stage 4 Performance

92 NEET and participation: local authority figures (See Table 1)

93 Skills Funding Agency and Department for Business, Innovation & Skills, via GOV.UK website. Apprenticeship starts and achievements, 2005-2022 – Districts. Available at eastsussexinfigures.org.uk)

Table 10.3: Apprenticeships Starts and Achievements, 2017/18 to 2021/22 in Wealden

Year	All Apprenticeship Starts	All Apprenticeship Completions
2017/18	780	540
2018/19	790	420
2019/20	690	340
2020/21	730	360
2021/22	830	290

Demand for School Places and Total School Capacity across the District

10.4 At the local level, East Sussex County Council is responsible for education provision, working in partnership with the Council to ensure the educational needs of development coming forward in the District can be sufficiently accommodated.

10.5 East Sussex County have developed a School Organisation Plan (SOP), which covers the period 2022-2026[94] and is a four-year rolling plan that is updated annually. It sets out how East Sussex County Council, in accordance with its statutory duty, seeks to ensure there are sufficient primary, secondary and special school places in the right locations to meet demand.

10.6 The SOP notes that for many areas of Wealden, that in the longer term, Year 7 numbers could be impacted by the new strategic housing plans that the Council may publish as part of its Local Plan process, which may require more capacity for secondary schools in the future.

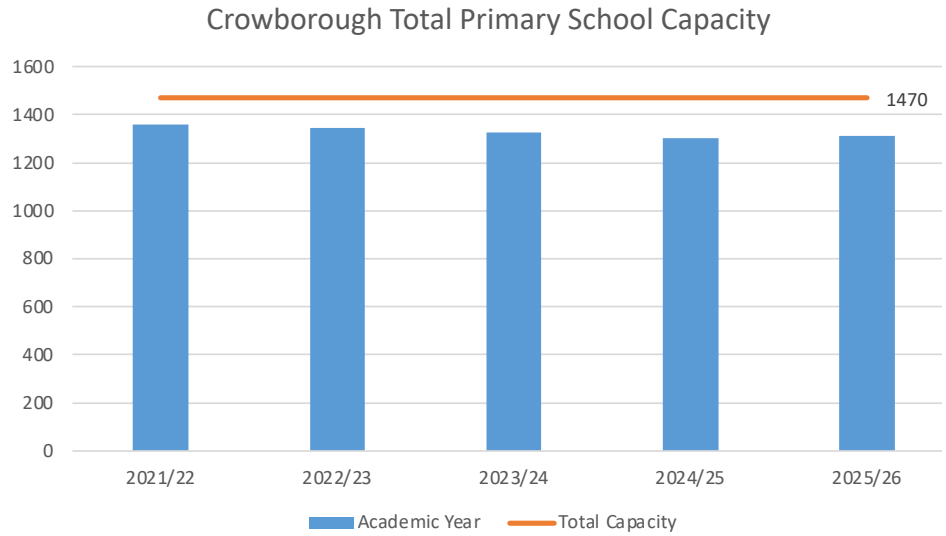
10.7 The Published Admissions Number (PAN) refers to maximum number of pupils that the admission authority will admit to each year group. Each location within Wealden is provided with its own PAN as set out below.

Crowborough

10.8 There are five primary schools in Crowborough and one secondary school. One primary school has nursery provision and the secondary school has a sixth form.

10.9 Figure **10.1** shows that within primary schools in Crowborough in the 2021/22 monitoring period there was a 7% surplus in the total capacity of primary schools. This capacity will increase to 11% by 2025/26.

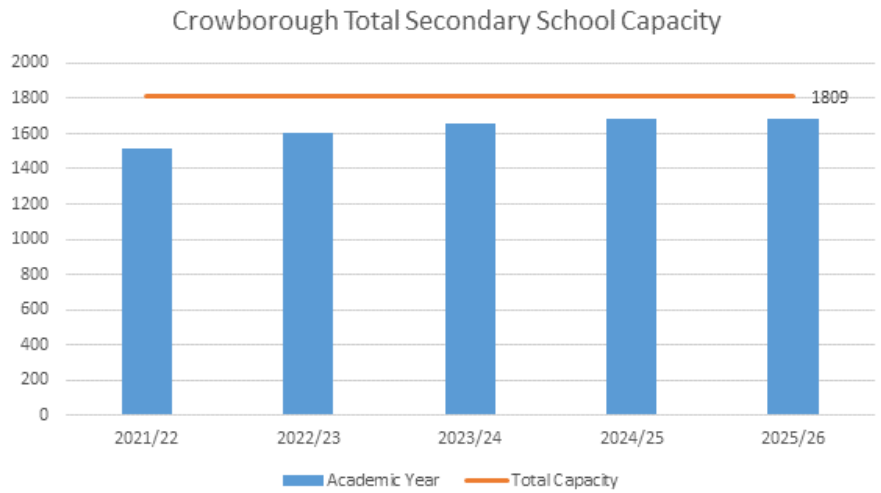
Figure 10.1: Crowborough Total Primary School Capacity 2021-2026



94 School Organisation Plan 2022 to 2026 for East Sussex

10.10 Figure **10.2** shows that within secondary schools in Crowborough in the 2021/22 monitoring period there was a 16% surplus in the total capacity of secondary schools. This capacity will decrease to 7% by 2025/26.

Figure 10.2: Crowborough Total Secondary School Capacity 2021-2026



Hailsham

10.11 There are six primary schools in Hailsham and one all through school (primary, secondary and sixth form). Three schools have nursery provision. Figure **10.3** shows that within primary schools in Hailsham in the 2021/22 monitoring period there was a 20% surplus in the total capacity of primary schools. This surplus will decrease to 12% by 2025/26. Figure **10.4** shows that within secondary schools in Hailsham in the 2021/22 monitoring period there was a 5% surplus in the total capacity of secondary schools. This capacity will increase to 13% by 2025/26.

Figure 10.3: Hailsham Total Primary School Capacity 2021-2026

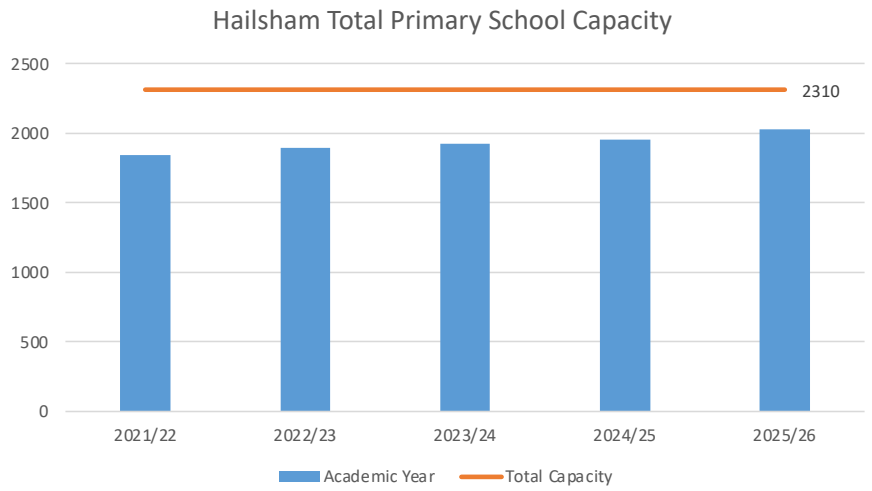
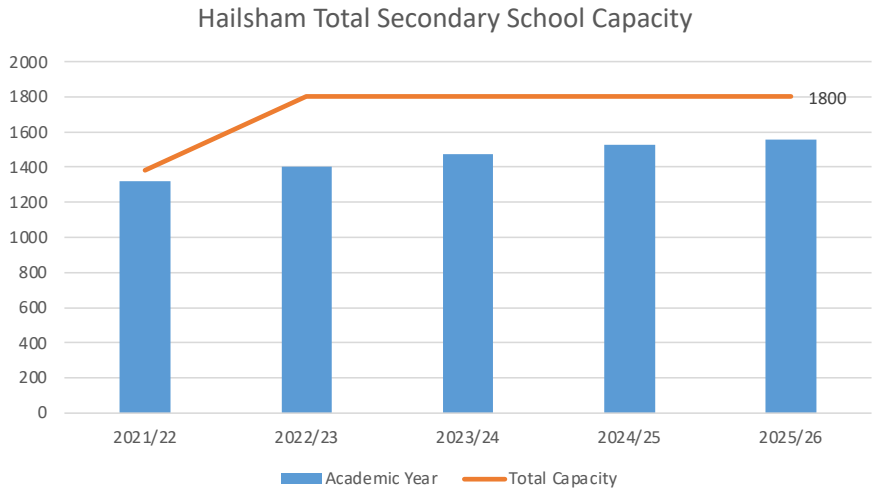


Figure 10.4: Hailsham Total Secondary School Capacity 2021-2026



Heathfield

10.12 There are three primary schools in Heathfield and one secondary school. One primary school has nursery provision and the secondary school has a sixth form.

10.13 Figure **10.5** shows that within primary schools in Heathfield in the 2021/22 monitoring period there was a 9% surplus in the total capacity of primary schools. This surplus will continue to stay at 9% by 2025/26.

10.14 Figure **10.6** shows that within secondary schools in Heathfield in the 2021/22 monitoring period there was a 5% surplus in the total capacity of secondary schools. This capacity will decrease to 3% by 2025/26.

Figure 10.5: Heathfield Total Primary School Capacity 2021-2026

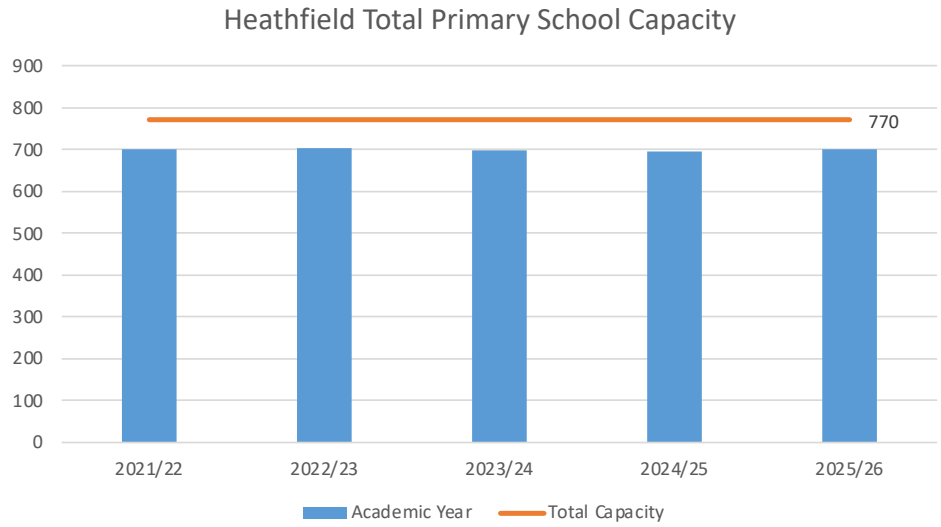
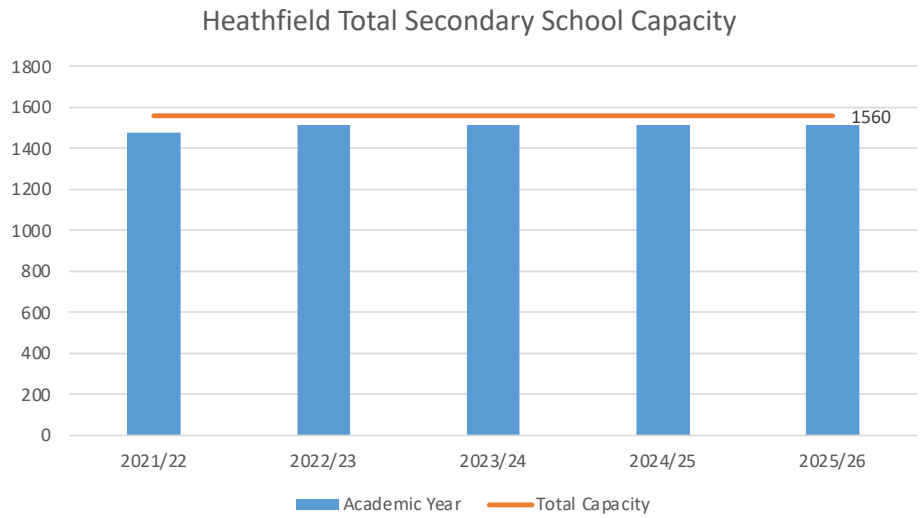


Figure 10.6: Heathfield Total Secondary School Capacity 2021-2026



Polegate and Willingdon

10.15 There are two primary schools in Polegate and Willingdon and one secondary school. One primary school has nursery provision. Figure **10.7** shows that within primary schools in Polegate and Willingdon in the 2021/22 monitoring period there was a no surplus in the total capacity of primary schools. This will continue to stay at 0% by 2025/26.

10.16 Figure **10.8** shows that within secondary schools in Polegate and Willingdon in the 2021/22 monitoring period there was a 4% surplus in the total under capacity of secondary schools. This capacity will turn into a deficit of 3% by 2025/26.

Figure 10.7: Polegate and Willingdon Total Primary School Capacity 2021-2026

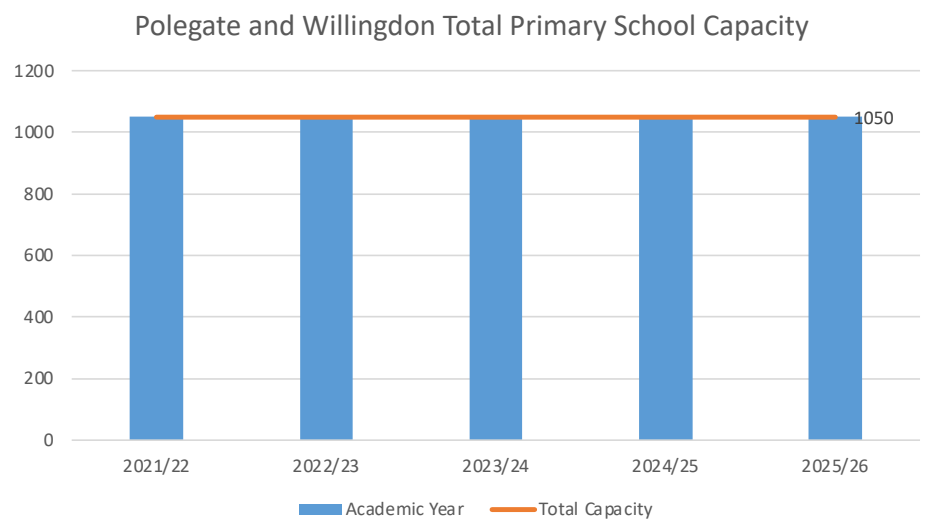
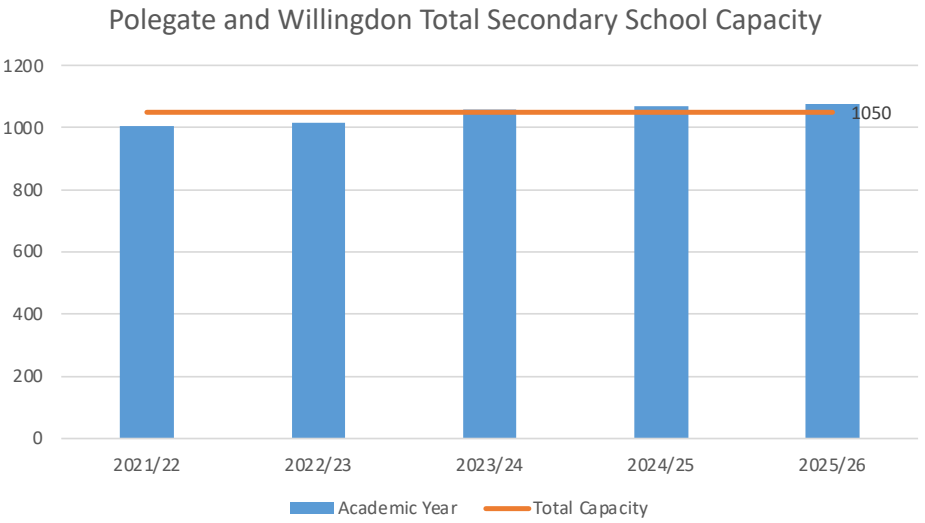


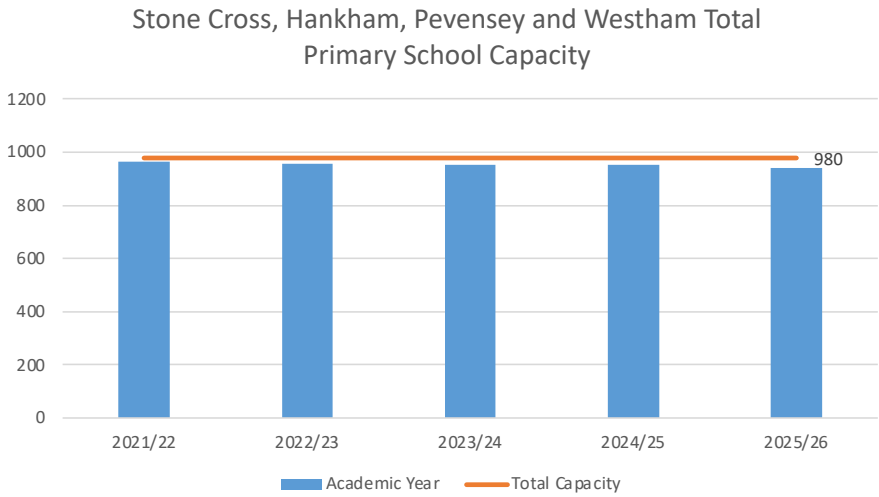
Figure 10.8: Polegate and Willingdon Total Secondary School Capacity 2021-2026



Stone Cross, Hankham, Pevensey and Westham

10.17 There are three primary schools in Stone Cross, Hankham, Pevensey and Westham. Figure **10.9** shows that within primary schools in Stone Cross, Hankham, Pevensey and Westham in the 2021/22 monitoring period there was a 1% surplus in the total capacity of primary schools. This surplus will increase to 4% by 2025/26.

Figure 10.9: Stone Cross, Hankham, Pevensey and Westham Total Primary School Capacity 2021-2026



Uckfield

10.18 There are five primary schools in Uckfield and one secondary school. One primary school has nursery provision, and the secondary school has a sixth form. Figure **10.10** shows that within primary schools in Uckfield in the 2021/22 monitoring period there was a 15% surplus in the total capacity of primary schools. This capacity will increase to 21% by 2025/26.

10.19 Figure **10.11** shows that within secondary schools in Uckfield in the 2021/22 monitoring period there was a 11% surplus in the total capacity of secondary schools. This surplus in capacity will decrease marginally to 10% by 2025/26.

Figure10.10: Uckfield Total Primary School Capacity 2021-2026

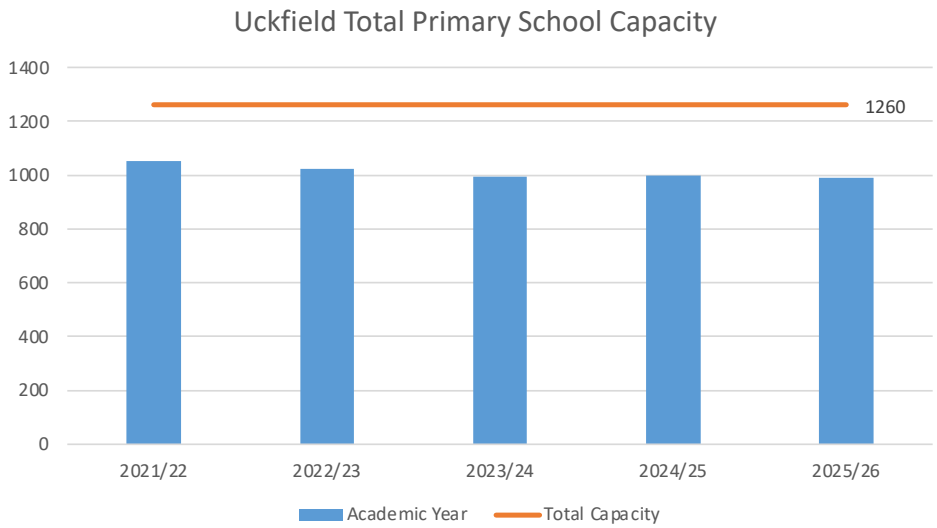
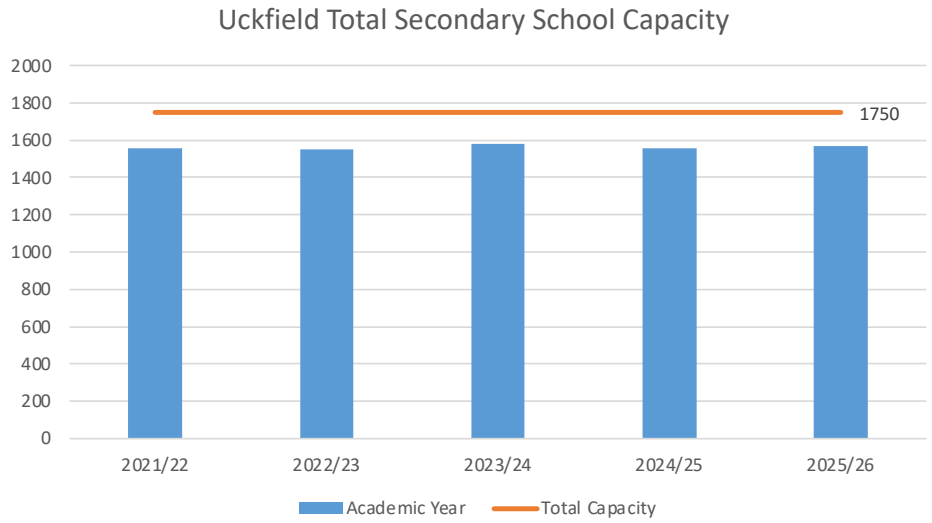


Figure 10.11: Uckfield Total Secondary School Capacity 2021-2026



Rural Wealden

10.20 There are 29 primary schools in the remainder of Rural Wealden and one secondary school. Three primary schools have nursery provision, and the secondary school has a sixth form. Figure **10.12** shows that within primary schools in Rural Wealden in the 2021/22 monitoring period there was a 16% surplus in the total capacity of primary schools. This capacity will stay at 16 by 2025/26.

10.21 Figure **10.13** shows that within the secondary school in Rural Wealden (Wadhurst) in the 2021/22 monitoring period there was a 17% surplus in the total capacity of secondary schools. This capacity will decrease to 10% by 2025/26.

Baseline Data: Education and Skills

Figure 10.12: Rural Wealden Total Primary School Capacity 2021-2026

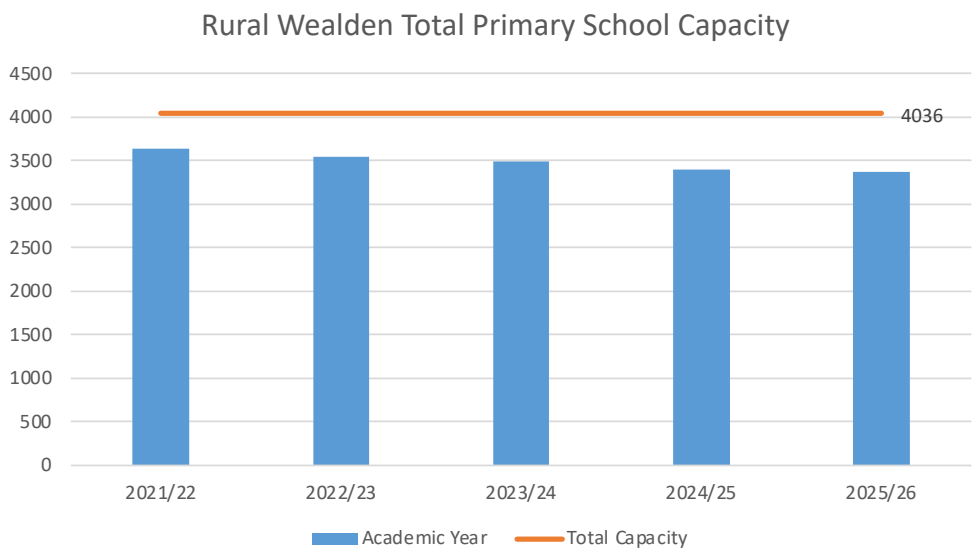
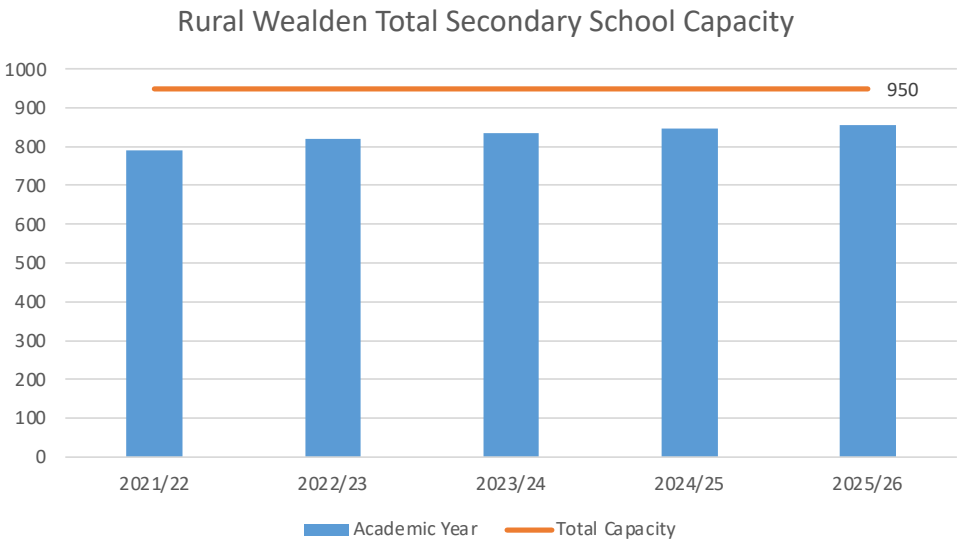


Figure 10.13: Rural Wealden Total Secondary School Capacity 2021-2026



Baseline Data: Education and Skills

Key Sustainability Issues

- The district has a lower level of highly qualified residents (at level 4 or above) than the national average and there has also been a decrease in the number of apprenticeship completions
- An increase in housing development could place pressure on the existing schools in terms of school places of all ages
- Rising pupil numbers in Year 7 across the district may result in a need to provide additional secondary schools places in the appropriate locations
- There is a relatively low percentage of the working age population with no qualifications and a very high percentage with at a least Level 4 qualifications. The district's population is generally highly qualified
- Overall, the numbers of people taking an apprenticeship over the past five years has increased
- Performance of pupils in Wealden District at GCSE level is stronger than at East Sussex, regional and national level
- High house prices could lead to a shortage of key workers (i.e. teachers) particularly at the start of their careers, given the lower salaries on offer.

Likely Evolution without the Local Plan

- Sufficient school places may not be provided in the future;
- That more speculative housing development comes forward without a strategic approach to the provision of school places;
- That there continues to be the loss of well-educated population to other areas of the country to find employment; and
- Due to high house prices, less educational employees are attracted/ retained within the area leading to shortages of such staff in Wealden's school system.

Baseline Data: Education and Skills

Scope of the Local Plan

10.22 The Local Plan can influence education and skills in the following way:

- Ensure that it supports the work undertaken by East Sussex County Council to provide an enhanced education system across the District
- That the Local Plan supports East Sussex County Council in relation to areas in the District where there is a need for more secondary, special and primary school places and ensures that the provision of school places is considered in relation to future housing growth and projections for education need
- That planning policies pro-actively support new schools within the District, where large scale housing development is planned, and work with site promoters and education providers to ensure that such school places can be provided
- Ensure that affordable housing targets are met including the provision of sufficient social/affordable rented accommodation, as well as affordable home ownership products for both lower paid and key workers (such as teachers/teaching assistants).

Data Gaps

10.23 There is already significant baseline information on education and skills within Wealden District and this will form part of the evidence base for the new Local Plan. It is known that school capacity forecasting is limited to 2026 at the current time. An updated SOP will be published later this year and will take forecasts forward to 2027. The Council will continue to work in partnership with East Sussex County Council as the Local Plan progresses to ensure that longer-term forecasting of school places can take place and to the delivery of school places where they are needed.

11.0 Economy

KEY PPPs

- **Build Back Better High Streets (2021)**
- **National Planning Policy Framework**
- **South East LEP Growth Deal and Strategic Economic Plan (2014)**
- **South East LEP Economic Recovery and Renewal Strategy (2021)**
- **East Sussex Economy Recovery Plan: East Sussex Reset (2020)**
- **East Sussex Growth Strategy 2014 – 2020**
- **The Eastbourne and Wealden Employment and Economic Study 2022**
- **Wealden Economic Development Strategy 2023-2033**
- **The Wealden Town Centre Study 2022**
- **The Wealden Viticulture Feasibility Study Final Report 2018**

KEY MESSAGES

- The planning system should help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy
- The need to set out a clear economic vision and strategy which positively and pro-actively encourage sustainable economic growth, having regard to Local Industrial Strategies
- The need to set criteria, or identify strategic sites, for local and inward investment to match the strategy and to meet anticipated needs over the plan period
- Address potential barriers to investment, such as inadequate infrastructure, services or housing, or a poor environment
- Enable the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas, both through the conversion of existing buildings and well-designed new buildings
- Enable sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments, which respect the character of the countryside
- Define a network and hierarchy of town centres and promote their long-term vitality and viability
- The A22/A27 Eastbourne growth corridor should be a focus for growth of both homes and businesses.

Functional Economic Market Area (FEMA)

11.1 The Council's latest Employment and Economic Study (July, 2022)[95] demonstrates that Wealden is overlapped by a number of Functional Economic Market Areas (FEMAs) across Sussex and Kent. The FEMA for Wealden is considered to align with the Housing Market Area (HMA) geographies that are set out within the Council's Local Housing Needs Assessment (LHNA) (August, 2021)[96]. This includes significant overlaps with the Eastbourne FEMA to the south and Sevenoaks and Tunbridge Wells FEMA to the north. There are also smaller overlaps with the Coastal West Sussex FEMA, Northern West Sussex FEMA and Hastings and Rother FEMA.

Employment and Retail Floorspace Completions

11.2 Policy WCS1 of the Wealden Core Strategy Local Plan (2013)[97] confirms that there is a need to deliver 128,695m^2 of employment floorspace (at that time Use Class B1, B2 and B8) from 2006 to 2027, with an additional 40,000m^2 of floorspace to be provided from the adoption of the Local Plan in 2013. The latest Authority Monitoring Report (AMR)[98] for the 2021/22 period confirms that between 1 April 2013 and 31 March 2022, there has been a net gain of employment floorspace within Wealden District of 42,454m^2 meaning that Wealden District has met the quantum of employment development required through that Local Plan.

11.3 Policy WCS1 of the Wealden District Core Strategy Local Plan (2013) confirms that there is a need to deliver 17,000m^2 of net additional retail floorspace over the period 2006-2027. However, the AMR for the 2021/22 period confirms that between 1 April 2013 and 31 March 2022, there has actually been a net loss of retail floorspace of 35m^2. The loss is not unexpected given the retail climate, the rise of online retail, and the most recent Covid-19 pandemic, which saw mandatory closures of non-essential shops occurring throughout the period.

Employment Need

11.4 The Council's latest Employment and Economic Study (July, 2022), published jointly with Eastbourne Borough Council, identified that across the period of 2019-2039, there is a limited shortfall in office requirements (Use Class E(g)) of 3.1 to 6.8 ha and more substantial shortfall for industrial floorspace (Use Class B2 and B8) of 48.3 ha (or 196,700 sqm) as the market remains strongly under supplied of this type of employment floorspace.

11.5 The study identified that there is a need for provision across the District as all the towns with both northern and southern industrial estates are 'essentially' full. The District contains part of the A22/A27 Eastbourne-South Wealden Growth Corridor, which was identified within the South East LEP Growth Deal and Strategic Economic Plan (2014)85 and the study recommends that the market could have at least one large allocation to be made (10ha +) in the A22/A27 area to support growth and investment

95 Employment and Economic Study (July, 2022)
96 Local Housing Needs Assessment (LHNA) (August, 2021)
97 Wealden District Core Strategy Local Plan, (February, 2013)
98 Wealden District Council – Authority Monitoring Report (AMR), December 2022

accommodating larger units. This should not be at the expense of exploring ways to support development within Wealden's main towns [99]. The Iceni report highlights that 'further delivery in this area would be met well by the market.'

11.6 The Plan sought to support the upgrade of the route between Eastbourne and Lewes, to improve connectivity to the A23/M23 and to enhance the accessibility of Newhaven port. Employment growth along the A22/A27 corridor at the Ashdown Business Park (Maresfield), Uckfield, Hailsham, Polegate, Willingdon and at Sovereign Harbour (in Eastbourne) were all supported and this will be considered in the Local Plan.

Business Enterprises

11.7 The most recent data[100] available confirms that the total number of businesses within Wealden District has increased from 7,390 in 2012 to 8,585 in 2022, which is an increase of 16% over the ten-year period. The three biggest sectors[101] which form the majority of business enterprises within Wealden are: the construction sector; the professional, scientific and technical sector; and the business administration and support services sector, which equates to 42.8% of all businesses within Wealden.

11.8 The only sectors where the number of businesses decreased within Wealden since 2012 were the wholesale sector (-10.8%) and the arts, entertainment, recreation and other services sector (-0.1%). The District has also seen an increase[102] in the number of creative businesses[103] located within Wealden from 700 in 2011 to 885 in 2021, or a 26% increase during that period.

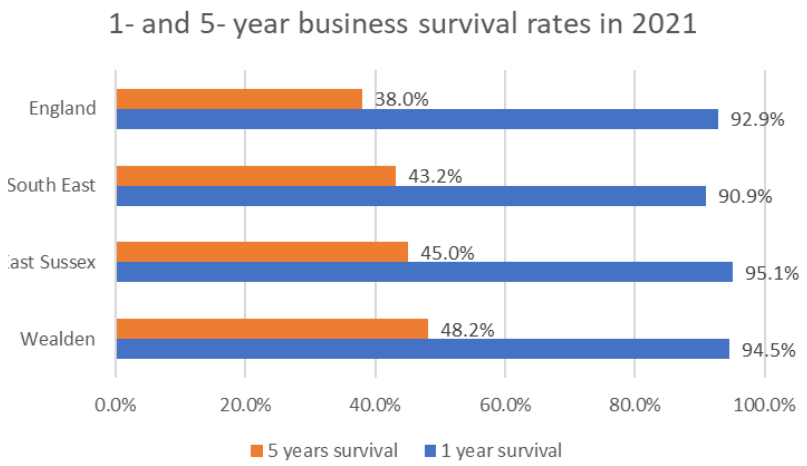
5-year business survival rate

11.9 Within Wealden 48.2% of businesses that were started in 2016 have survived their first five years to 2021. This is a higher five-year survival rate than the survival rates for East Sussex (45%), the South East (43.2%) and England (38%). **Figure 11.1** below shows the 2021 report on the survival rates of businesses that were started in 2016.

99 Employment and Economic Study (July, 2022, page 87)
100 Office for National Statistics (ONS). Business enterprises by industry group UK SIC (2007), 2009-2022 – Districts. Available at eastsussexinfigures.org.uk)
101 ONS. Business enterprises by industry group UK SIC (2007), 2009-2022 – Districts. Available at eastsussexinfigures.org.uk)
102 ONS/Inter Departmental Business Register (IDBR), via NOMIS UK Business Counts. Creative businesses, 2010-2021 – Districts. Available at eastsussexinfigures.org.uk)
103 The Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) define 'creative industries' as 'those industries which have their origin in individual creativity, skill and talent and which have a potential for wealth and job creation through the generation and exploitation of intellectual property'.

Baseline Data: Economy

Figure 11.1 Survival Rates of Business started in 2016



Source: East Sussex Joint Strategic Needs Assessment[104]

Industries of Employment

11.10 The most recent data[105] from the 2021 Census demonstrates that the three biggest industries of employment within the District are: human health and social work; wholesale, retail and repair of motors; and the construction sectors, which employ around 42% of all economically active residents. The table below shows the increases/decreases between the 2011 Census and 2021 Census for employment in Wealden. This shows that those employed in both the information and communication sector and the administrative and support services sector have increased substantially (over 20%) in the period. It also shows reductions in those employed in manufacturing, transport and storage and accommodation and food services during the period.

Table 11.1: Increases and decreases between the 2011 and 2021 for employment in Wealden.

Employment Category	2011 Census	2021 Census	Increase/ Decrease %
All People in Employment	71,755	74,538	+3.9%
Agriculture, energy and water	1,948	2,048	+5.1%
Manufacturing	4,458	3,876	-13.1%
Construction	7,282	8,664	+19.0%
Wholesale, retail and repair of motors	11,272	10,453	-7.3%
Transport and storage	2,693	2,336	-13.3%
Accommodation and food service	3,444	3,035	-11.9%
Information and Communication	2,474	3,030	+22.5%
Financial and insurance activities	3,658	3,640	-0.5%
Real Estate Activities	1,152	1,363	+18.3%
Professional, scientific and technical	5,570	5,610	+0.7%
Administrative and support services	3,502	4,317	+23.3%
Public administration and defence	3,333	3,904	+17.1%
Education	7,093	6,954	-2.0%
Human health and social work	9,596	11,066	+15.3%
Arts, entertainments and other service activities	4,280	4,242	-0.9%

104 East Sussex Join Strategic Needs Assessment Available at https://www.eastsussexjsna.org.uk/media/35tjpbg1/economic-performance-january-2023.pdf Last accessed 04/01/2024

105 ONS. Industry of employment, 2011-2021 - middle layer super output areas. eastsussexinfigures.org.uk)

Economically active

11.11 The data[106] demonstrates that for the 2011 Census, 67.5% of the District's residents (aged 16 above and in employment[107]) were economically active and that by 2021 Census, this had decreased to 55.8% of residents. It appears that the District had considerable drop off in economically active residents, but it should be noted that the 2011 Census only considered usual residents between ages of 16-74, whilst the 2021 Census considered all usual residents over 16, which likely explains the change. In terms of the unemployment rate for the 2021 Census in Wealden District, 2.2% (or 2,961 people) are unemployed, which is lower than the East Sussex average (2.9%) the national average (3.5%)

Table 11.2: Economically active residents aged 16 above and in employment between 2011 and 2021

Classification	Wealden	East Sussex	England and Wales
Economically Active (2011 Census)	71,544	241,449	26,860,333
Economically Active (2021 Census)	74,543	241,714	26,405,214
Economically Active (2011 Census) %	67.5%	64.4%	65.3%
Economically Active (2021 Census) %	55.8%	55.9%	60.9%
Economically Active (Percentage Change between 2011 and 2021) %	-11.7%	-8.5%	-4.4%

Average (Median) Earnings, Residence-Based

11.12 The data[108] demonstrates the average (median) earnings for a full time worker on a national, regional and local level. In 2012, the average (median) earnings for a full-time worker in Wealden was significantly higher than the national average by 13.4%; however, in 2022, a full-time worker in Wealden was earning 2.8% less than the national average. This could indicate that the District is struggling to attract high paying jobs to the area, in comparison to previous years.

106 East Sussex in Figures – Economic activity and inactivity in 2011 and 2021
107 This includes economically active full-time students.
108 Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE), Office for National Statistics. Average (median) earnings, residence-based, 2002-2022 – Districts. eastsussexinfigures.org.uk)

Table 11.3: Average (median) earnings for a full-time worker on a national, regional and local level

Geography	Average (median) full time earnings 2012	Average (median) full time earnings 2022
England	£26,826	£33,208
East Sussex	£24,878	£31,145
Wealden	£30,420	£32,256

Occupations

11.13 The 2021 Census data[109] provides the most up-to-date information regarding the occupations of Wealden residents. The data demonstrates that residents of Wealden are employed in a greater proportion of higher paid occupations than in 2011. It is important to understand why the wage in Wealden has significantly lowered in comparison to the national average, given the increases in traditionally higher paid occupations.

Table 11.4: Occupations of Wealden residents

Occupation	England 2011 (%)	Wealden 2011 (%)	England 2021(%)	Wealden 2021(%)
Managers, directors and senior officials	10.8	14.0	12.9	17.3
Professional	17.4	17.1	20.3	18.3
Associated professional and technical	12.7	13.5	13.3	13.7
Administrative and secretarial	11.4	11.4	9.3	9.9
Skilled trades	11.5	14.1	10.2	13.1
Caring, leisure and other service	9.4	10.0	9.3	9.7
Sales and customer service	8.4	6.9	7.5	6.6
Process, plant and machine operatives	7.2	4.7	6.9	4.2
Elementary	11.1	8.3	10.5	7.3

Commuting Patterns

11.14 Table **11.5** is taken from the 2011 Census (the latest information available as it stands) and demonstrates that there is a notable level of net-out commuting for work with the number of people resident in the area who are working being about 28% higher than the total number who work in the area. A commuting ratio greater than 1.00 indicates that the size of the resident workforce exceeds the level of employment available in the area, resulting in a net out-commute.

109 Office for National Statistics (ONS). Occupations in 2021 - super output areas. Available at eastsussexinfigures.org.uk)

Table 11.5: Commuting Patterns in Wealden (2011 Census)

Classification	Residents
Live and work in Local Authority (LA)	21,579
Home workers	12,045
No fixed workplace	7,607
In-commute	15,009
Out-commute	30,524
Total working in LA	56,240
Total living in LA (and working)	71,755
Commuting ratio	1.28

Town Centres and Retail

11.15 The Council's latest analysis of our town centres is set out in the Wealden Town Centre Study (July, 2022)[110]. The study shows that the town centres within the District have coped relatively well with regards to the Covid-19 pandemic and are in a good position for the future. The study also calculated convenience retail capacity from 2021 to 2039, with the study identifying that between 3,300 and 4,800 net sqm floorspace will be required by the end of the period.

11.16 In relation to comparison goods floorspace capacity, the study identified that between 1,300 sqm and 1,800 sqm will be required by 2039, albeit that it did not recommend for the Local Plan to allocate land for this purpose.

11.17 The study also found that 44.6% of convenience good trades and 75.8% of comparison goods spending from Wealden residents 'leaked' to other areas outside of the District including to East Grinstead (Mid Sussex District), Eastbourne, Royal Tunbridge Wells and Lewes. This was a slight improvement over the previous study undertaken in 2016.

Tourism

11.18 In terms of tourism, the latest information on performance was produced by the Tourism South East (TSE) Research for the 2019 period[111]. The study estimated that there were 0.47m overnight trips (0.97m bed nights) that generated a spending of £87.8m. The study estimated that there were 5.5m day trips that generated £214m of spending. The study found that tourism helped to create 6,219 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) jobs, and 8,743 actual jobs. The data demonstrates very clearly the significantly higher levels of spend and increased economic impact of staying visits compared to day visitors.

Tourist Accommodation

11.19 The forthcoming Wealden Visitor Accommodation Study confirms that the stock of visitor accommodation has increased from 8,540 bed spaces in 2009, to 11,801 bedspaces in 2021 (this includes South Downs National Park (SDNP) area of Wealden). Touring and caravan and camping sites dominate bedspace provision making up 40% of overall tourist accommodation provision, with hotels only accounting for 12% of overall provision.

110 Wealden Town Centre Study, July 2022

111 Given the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic on the sector, this is the latest data available for normal market conditions and the accepted industry baseline.

Baseline Data: Economy

Key Sustainability Issues

- To deliver as much of the employment need as possible for the district, against the employment requirements
- To consider the employment needs of neighbouring local authorities where they are unable to meet their own employment needs
- The average wage within Wealden has seen a decrease in recent years in comparison to the national average
- The number of residents who are economically inactive has increased between 2011 and 2021
- Out-commuting for work is a considerable issue, which causes pressure on the transport network
- There are constraints on availability of the workforce, skills and premises, which affects business performance and growth
- Business, particularly small-to-medium sized enterprises (SMEs), need support to access and build skills, knowledge and capacity to reach net zero, and to minimise costs
- The district's town centres have faced significant economic turmoil as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic and also face threats from residents spending leakage to neighbouring areas.
- The need to provide a greater variety and quantum of visitor accommodation to encourage overnight visitors who will financially contribute a greater amount to the economy
- To manage any negative impacts of new tourism businesses within the district, particularly in terms of designated landscapes and amenity.

Likely Evolution without the Local Plan

- The loss of employment floorspace, including office floorspace, will continue at pace due to the pressure from other higher value uses (including housing)
- The Council would not have a strategic framework, or the ability to allocate land for employment uses, which may lead to speculative development in locations that are less appropriate (i.e. lack of infrastructure, sustainability etc.)
- The loss of retail floorspace has been continuous in recent years, in part due to the rise of online shopping and the more recent Covid-19 pandemic and this would likely continue to negatively impact the district's town and village centres
- That 'town centre' development would not be delivered in Wealden's town and village centres, but would instead be located in out-of-town locations that are less accessible by sustainable modes of transport. This would also cause harm to existing town and village centres
- Less growth in the tourism sector due to the lack of support in a Local Plan, as well as the delivery of any required supporting infrastructure
- The tourism sector would likely see a reduction in the financial and economic benefits of the industry within the district, including our town and village centres and wider economy.

Scope of the Local Plan

- Ensure that existing employment floorspace is protected from other forms of higher value development (such as losses to residential) where possible and provide sufficient employment land to meet the identified employment need for the District
- Provide new employment allocations, particularly along the A27/A22 corridor, to deliver against the Council's requirement for new employment floorspace
- Encourage the retention and provision of a range of small business units to meet the needs of local business
- Consider opportunities to meet the needs of existing employment sites/ businesses seeking to expand. This should take into account potential sustainable locations, where there is a demand, as well as more rural settings
- Ensure that all main town centre uses are protected within existing town centres, and that any new town centre uses are located within those existing centres, rather than out-of-town
- Address issues associated with town and village centres
- Promote an evening economy in our town centres, where this is appropriate
- Support for housing allocations being situated in locations where access to local shopping facilities, village and town centres exist or where new facilities can be provided
- Ensure that the overall health and vitality of town centres main uses are maintained and protected
- Seek to restrict the loss of tourism accommodation and attractions within the District, whilst providing opportunities for new accommodation and attractions in suitable locations, avoiding harm to designated landscapes.

Data Gaps

11.20 The evidence base documents that have been produced in support of the new Local Plan provide important baseline information, in addition to development monitoring undertaken by the Council. However, alongside the release of data from the 2021 Census, the Council will consider updating its Employment and Economic Study (July, 2022) and its Wealden Town Centre Study (July, 2022) in due course to align this with the latest information, albeit that some data, such as commuting patterns have yet to be released by the ONS.

12.0 Cultural Heritage and Historic Environment

KEY PPPs

- **The Historic England 'The Historic Environment in Local Plans, Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning: 1**
- **The Historic England 'Energy Efficiency and Traditional Homes' (2020) Advice Note**
- **The Heritage Statement 2017**
- **The Government's Statement on the Historic Environment for England 2010**
- **National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)**
- **Conservation Area Character Appraisals**

KEY MESSAGES

- To support the heritage sector to protect and care for the historic environment, in order to maximise its economic and social impact and to ensure that everyone can enjoy and benefit from it
- To take a 'whole building' approach that can help in meeting the combined objectives of increasing energy efficiency and sustaining significance in heritage assets
- That strategic policies set out an overall strategy for the pattern, scale and quality of development, but continue to make sufficient provision for the conservation and enhancement of the natural, built and historic environment
- To make clear that heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource and should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of existing and future generations
- To set out a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment, including heritage assets most at risk through neglect, decay or other threats
- When considering the designation of conservation areas, ensure that an area justifies such status because of its special architectural or historic interest, and that the concept of conservation is not devalued through the designation of areas that lack special interest

Baseline Data: Cultural Heritage and Historic Environment

12.1 Wealden District has a rich cultural heritage, which is an important asset to be safeguarded and enhanced and is evident in its historic towns and villages, as well as within the historic rural landscape which stretches from the Kent border in the north at Royal Tunbridge Wells, to Pevensey Bay on the South Coast. Wealden District (including parts of Wealden located in the SDNP) has a high number of designated 'heritage assets', with 2,259 listed buildings recorded on Historic England's website[112] as of June 2023 (only one additional listed building in 2022/23 monitoring period). This included:

- 52 Grade I Listed Buildings
- 110 Grade II* Listed Buildings
- 2,097 Grade II Listed Buildings.

12.2 Wealden District has 41 designated Conservation Areas[113], 33 of which are located within the planning jurisdiction of Wealden District Council and 8 of which are located within the South Downs National Park.

12.3 The Council is currently drafting Conservation Area Character Appraisals for each of the Conservation Areas in Wealden's jurisdiction and an overarching Management Plan for all Conservation Areas in the District. The Conservation Area Character Appraisals will seek to articulate the special interest and character of each of the Conservation Areas to help inform planning decisions.

12.4 Historic England's Register of Historic Parks and Gardens of Special Interest was established in 1983. Within Wealden District, including the part of Wealden in the SDNP, there are 20 entries across the District. In addition, there are also 105 scheduled monuments in the District. There are no Protected Wreck Sites, Registered Battlefields or World Heritage Sites located within the District.

12.5 Historic England undertakes an annual audit of the historic environment and produces a 'Heritage at Risk' register for all local authorities in England[114]. This has been documented in the Council's Authority Monitoring Report for the 2022 period as four listed buildings (this includes a single listed building in the South Downs National Park), a registered park and garden (that additionally includes two listed buildings) and a single Scheduled Monument (SM). These are listed as follows:

- Cross in Hand Windmill, Mill Lane, Heathfield and Waldron (Grade II* Listed Building)
- The Mint House, Village Street, Pevensey (Grade II* Listed Building)
- Church of All Saints, Waldron, Heathfield and Waldron (Grade I Listed Building)
- Church of St Andrew, The Tye, Alfriston, Wealden (Grade I Listed Building)[115]
- Kidbrooke Park, Forest Row (Grade II Registered Park and Garden and 2 Listed Buildings)
- High Rocks Camp, Frant (Scheduled Monument).

112 Historic England Listing
113 For further information on the Council's Conservation Areas, please see the website below: https://www.wealden.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/heritage/conservation-areas/
114 Heritage at Risk Register: London and South East, 2022, Historic England
115 Situated within the SDNP.

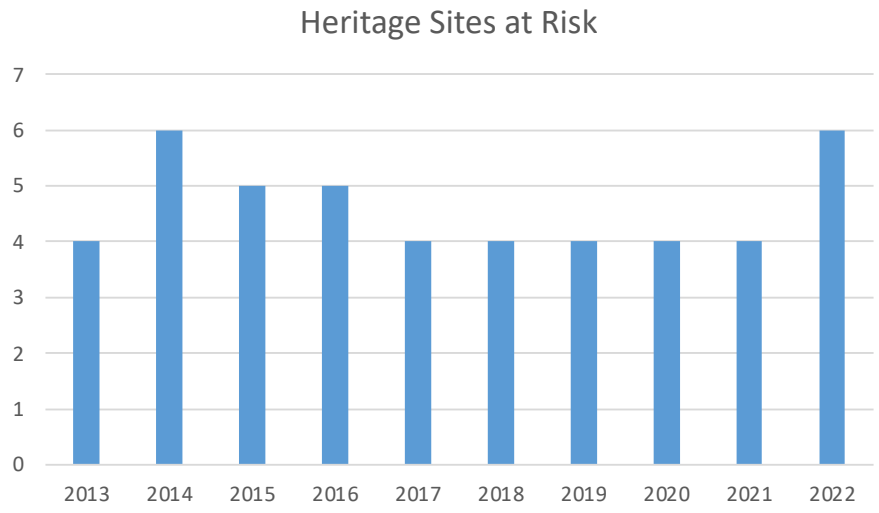
12.6 In percentage terms, the number of listed buildings that are considered to be 'at risk' by Historic England in Wealden District is limited, at only 0.3%, albeit that two of the Listed Buildings are categorised as high priorities (category A[116]). The percentage of buildings at risk remains very low by national standards, which is likely to reflect the high property values in the area. Buildings and structures of limited or no economic value are expected to become ever more prominent among those listed buildings identified as 'at risk'.

12.7 Wealden's rich heritage is also reflected in the number of Archaeological Notification Areas (ANAs) that are located within Wealden District. These sites are designated where there are recorded archaeological remains and details of these sites are held by East Sussex County Council Archaeological Team[117].

12.8 Lastly, Local Planning authorities may identify non-designated heritage assets. These are defined as buildings, monuments, sites, places, areas or landscapes as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, but which do not meet the criteria for designated heritage assets. Wealden District Council does not have a Local List of non-designated heritage assets itself. However, the Hellingly Neighbourhood Plan[118] under Policy LHA1 does list several non-designated heritage assets located within the Parish of Hellingly, including in Hellingly, Lower Dicker, Lower Horsebridge and Roebuck Park. Other emerging neighbourhood plans have also put forward a local list of non-designated heritage assets.

12.9 As discussed above, Historic England undertakes an annual audit of the historic environment and produces a 'Heritage at Risk' register for all local authorities in England. Over the past ten years, the number of sites (i.e. listed buildings, scheduled monuments and registered parks and gardens) that are considered to be 'at risk' on the register has remained relatively static, with limited changes in the number of sites 'at risk', with a number of sites being at risk for sustained periods of time.

Table 12.1: Heritage Sites at Risk in Wealden District (including the SDNP) between 2013 and 2022



116 This is defined as in 'immediate risk of further rapid deterioration or loss of fabric; no solution agreed'.
117 Further information on ANAs can be found at the following website: Heritage and planning | East Sussex County Council
118 Hellingly Neighbourhood Plan 2018 to 2028, July 2021

12.10 Historic England and other commissioned bodies have explored the relationship between wellbeing and the historic environment. Their research has shown that interaction with heritage or the historic environment can be a positive factor in supporting individual and community wellbeing. Historic assets and places and their associated activities and interventions can have a wide range of impacts on the physical, mental and social wellbeing of individuals and communities. People's wellbeing improves when they not only engage with heritage but can also shape how they connect to their historic environment through action.

12.11 Whether through visiting, volunteering, learning or creative practice, engaging with heritage and/ or interacting with the historic environment can show positive impacts on wellbeing with outcomes such as strengthened confidence, resilience, hope, pride/sense of a place and ownership.

Baseline Data: Cultural Heritage and Historic Environment

Key Sustainability Issues

- There are several heritage assets within Wealden District that are on Historic England's 'Heritage at Risk' register, some for a period of time, which will present site specific conservation issues
- Heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource and need to be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance
- There are threats to the character of the district from the cumulative impact of development proposals and associated infrastructure requirements
- Potential loss or harm caused to the setting of heritage assets as a result of development
- Short-term visions for new development and the demand for new housing and other needs (i.e. employment/ infrastructure uses) could result in inappropriate development and even demolition, which would affect the character of historic assets/buildings within the district
- Opportunities through new development to enhance existing heritage assets may exist through sensitive design or through the retention/repurposing of existing heritage assets.

Likely Evolution without the Local Plan

- There may be an incremental loss of historic character of settlements through the delivery of large-scale or piecemeal housing/mixed use development sites;
- Potential loss or harm caused to the setting of heritage assets as a result of new development;
- Depending on location, new development has the potential to impact on both designated and non-designated heritage assets; and
- Sites, areas and buildings that have not been formally designated, such as those on a local list, will have limited protection against inappropriate development.

Scope of the Local Plan

12.12 The Local Plan can influence cultural heritage and the historic environment in the following ways:

- Ensure that new development does not adversely affect the character of the District and reflects the character of place created by the historic environment, whilst recognising the positive contribution that heritage assets can make to sustainable communities, including their economic vitality
- Ensure that development makes a positive contribution to the heritage assets, or reflects and enhances local character and distinctiveness, with regard given to the prevailing styles of design and materials used in Wealden
- Ensure development responds sensitively to the landscape and visual characteristics of the site and its setting, enhancing character and views leading to positive impacts on the quality, character and local distinctiveness of the landscapes and townscapes, and the features within them
- Support initiatives to reduce the number of sites on the 'Heritage at Risk' register through the repurposing of heritage assets where appropriate
- Consider the formulation of a Local List of non-designated heritage assets in the District
- Outline how new development can preserve and record archaeological remains, as well as record findings on the East Sussex Heritage Environment Record
- Consider matters regarding 'Enabling Development'[119] to support the protection and enhancement of heritage assets.

Data Gaps

12.13 There is significant baseline information on cultural heritage and the historic environment within Wealden District and this will form part of the evidence base for the new Local Plan. This will include the formulation of heritage policies within the emerging Local Plan and will also consider cultural and heritage matters as part of the site assessment process.

119 Development that would ordinarily conflict with other planning policies, but which would secure the future conservation of a heritage asset.

13.0 Soil, Land and Minerals Resources

KEY PPPs

- **A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment 2018**
- **Defra's Safeguarding our Soils: A strategy for England 2009**
- **National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)**

KEY MESSAGES

- To use resources from nature more sustainably and improve approaches to soil management, with all of England's soils managed sustainably by 2030
- Use natural capital thinking to develop appropriate soil metrics and management approaches
- Better management of agricultural soils to be addressed
- Soils to play a greater role in the fight against climate change and in helping to manage its impacts
- Soils in urban areas will be valued during development, and construction practices will ensure vital soil functions can be maintained and pollution of soils prevented
- Protect and enhance valued soils
- Prevent new and existing development from contributing to or being put at risk from unacceptable levels of soil pollution and land instability
- Ensure that a site is suitable for its proposed use taking account of ground conditions and any risks arising from land instability and contamination

Baseline Data: Soil, Land and Minerals Resources

13.1 Impacts on soil include the loss of productive areas and erosion of soils due to construction activities, as well as contamination from the use of chemical agents, and past contamination from lead in vehicle exhausts and other toxic land uses and processes. Impacts on soil also include contamination and erosion from agricultural practices and farming.

Land contamination

13.2 There is increased pressure to redevelop brownfield sites (previously developed land). It is important to ensure that elevated levels of contamination identified on these sites are reduced to levels that no longer pose a significant risk to human health or the wider environment. As a predominantly rural District, with a relatively limited industrial legacy, there are few brownfield sites within Wealden. However, commercial premises, including farmyards and barns, may be affected by contamination due to past uses. Such contamination may have occurred due to oil leaks, buried waste, asbestos containing materials, leaking pesticides etc.

13.3 Some forms of permitted development, such as the conversion of offices to residential uses, may also fall into the category of contaminated land. This is because such premises, if built before the year 2000 are likely to contain asbestos containing materials (ACMs), which could be a source for hazardous contact with future occupants of the premises. Therefore, a suitable asbestos survey would be required and potential removal of any ACMs.

13.4 The Council's approach to dealing with contaminated land can be found on the website[120] together with the Contaminated Land Strategy[121] that sets out the Council's approach for the identification, inspection, assessment and remediation of contaminated land.

Soil

13.5 The Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) published by Natural England in 2016[122] provides the best local data the Council has for soil quality and its agricultural use. The ALC uses a grading system to enable the quality of agricultural land in England to be assessed and compared. A combination of climate, topography and soil characteristics and their unique interaction determines the limitation and grade of the land. The ALC is graded from 1 to 5 with grade 1 being 'excellent quality agricultural land' and grade 5 being 'very poor quality agricultural land'. The full gradings are described below:

- Grade 1 – excellent quality agricultural land
- Grade 2 – very good quality agricultural land
- Grade 3 – good to moderate quality agricultural land
- Subgrade 3a – good quality agricultural land
- Subgrade 3b – moderate quality agricultural land
- Grade 4 – poor quality agricultural land
- Grade 5 – very poor quality agricultural land

120 Wealden District Council, Land that may be contaminated. Available at: https://www.wealden.gov.uk/environment-and-pollution/pollution/land-that-may-be-contaminated/
121 Wealden District Council, Contaminated Land Inspection Strategy. Available at: https://www.wealden.gov.uk/UploadedFiles/ContaminatedLandstrategy.pdf
122 Natural England, Agricultural Land Classification detailed Post 1988 ALC survey. Available at: https://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5241218628321280

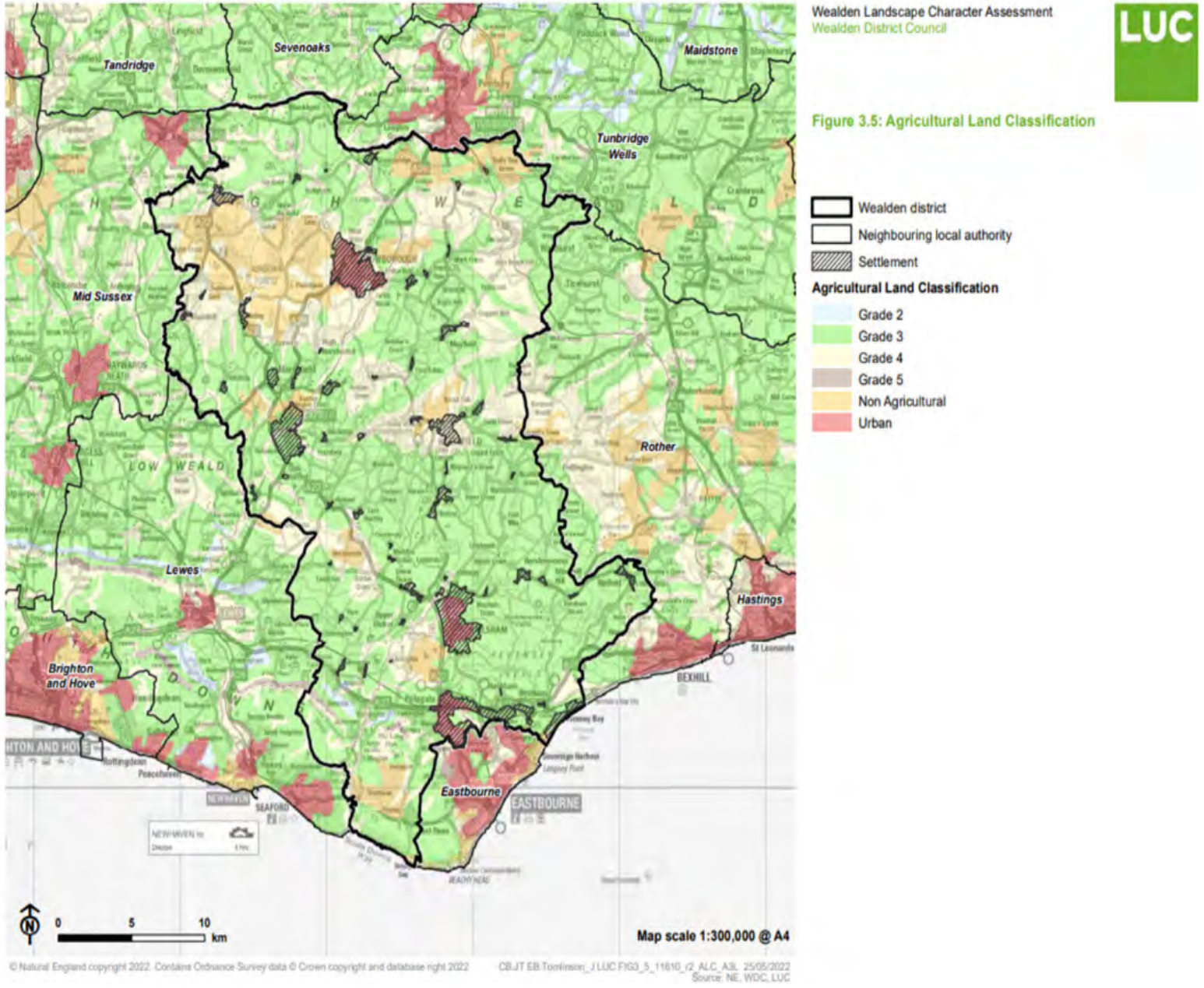
13.6 Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) should consider development proposals that affect agricultural land and soils and should aim to protect the best and most versatile (BMV) agricultural land from significant, inappropriate or unsustainable development proposals. Land that is considered to be BMV agricultural land is grade 3a or above on the ALC. The table below shows the ALC for all land surveyed in Wealden District.

Table 13.1: Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) in Wealden District, Natural England

ALC Grading	Hectares	Percentage
Grade 1	31.48	0.83%
Grade 2	349.38	9.22%
Grade 3a	559.25	14.76%
Grade 3b	2097.79	55.36%
Grade 4	169.92	4.48%
Grade 5	1.79	0.05%
Other	19.15	0.51%
Not Surveyed	560.91	14.80%
Total	3789.67	100%

13.7 As shown above, the percentage of land surveyed in Wealden District that is considered to be BMV agricultural land only stands at 24.8%, meaning that the vast majority of land in Wealden District is only of moderate to very poor quality agricultural land, albeit that there are pockets of land (over 10%) that are of excellent to very good quality (see **Figure 13.1**).

Figure 13.1: ALC classification in Wealden[123]



123 Wealden-LCA.pdf

13.8 Improving soil health is a key commitment in the 25 Year Plan for the Environment[124] and the NPPF also highlights it as an important issue, requiring planning policies and decisions to protect and enhance valued soils and prevent new development contributing to soil pollution or being affected by soil pollution and land instability.

13.9 As part of the governments approach to soil management, a Soil Health Action Plan for England (SHAPE) is being developed and will provide a framework of actions to improve and protect the health of our soils.

13.10 Soil degradation is both a driver and an indicator of climate change. Soil's ability to carry out essential environmental services is under serious threat with soil's role in carbon storage, flood prevention, food production and as a home to biodiversity in jeopardy.

13.11 There are many benefits of having healthy soils including the fact that soil holds three times as much carbon as the atmosphere, it reduces the risk of flooding by absorbing water, it is a wildlife habitat and it delivers 95% of global food supplies.

13.12 UK soil contains about 10 billion tonnes of carbon, roughly equal to 80 years of annual greenhouse gas emissions. Intensive agriculture has caused arable soils to lose 40 to 60% of their organic carbon, and the impacts of climate change pose further risks. Extended periods of wet weather can cause widespread damage to soil structure with very heavy rainfall and thunderstorms causing soil erosion that exacerbates flood risks.

Minerals

13.13 East Sussex County Council, the South Downs National Park Authority and Brighton and Hove City Council outlined the waste and minerals planning strategy for East Sussex (including Wealden) in a series of documents that form their statutory plan. The latest document published is the Waste and Minerals Local Plan (Revised Policies) Submission document (September, 2021)[125]. Although not yet adopted, the plan at Policy RM1 (Provision of Aggregates for Consumption in the Plan Area) confirms that authorities (i.e. East Sussex) will enable the provision of at least 22 million tonnes (averaging 1.48 million tonnes per annum mtpa) of aggregate material over the Plan period (2019-2034) by seeking to protect, maintain and enhance existing:

- Aggregate importation infrastructure and capacity
- Recycled and secondary aggregate production

13.14 There are two sites within Wealden District that are safeguarded for minerals capacity (clay) at both Horam and Ninfield that are listed below.

Table 13.2: Safeguarded Minerals Sites in Wealden District under draft Policy RM3 (Minerals Safeguarding Area)

Safeguarded Minerals Site	Resource	Location
Horam Brickworks	Clay Site	Horam
Little Standard Hill Farm	Clay Site	Ninfield

124 A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment, January 2018

125 East Sussex County Council, East Sussex, South Downs and Brighton & Hove Waste and Minerals Revised Policies Examination in Public. Available at: https://eastsussex-consult.objective.co.uk/kse/folder/95335

Baseline Data: Soil, Land and Minerals Resources

Key Sustainability Issues

- Limited brownfield land in the district, which means most development will likely come forward on greenfield sites
- New development could lead to increased soil compaction and erosion, during the construction phase of development, which in turn can increase flood risk
- Disturbance to soils results in the release of large quantities of CO_2 into the atmosphere as well as impeding the soil's ability to store carbon
- Failure to protect soils can have a negative impact on soil health and its ability to sustain the flora and fauna that depend on it
- Importation of soil for development can result in negative effects such as introducing invasive species
- The Council has several safeguarded 'minerals' sites in the district and proposals for non-minerals development on or near Mineral Safeguarding Areas (MSA) could sterilise or prejudice the extraction of the mineral resource, or result in incompatible development
- The remediation of contaminated land can be expensive but if this is not undertaken, or if undertaken incorrectly, it can pose a significant health risk to people and the environment.

Likely Evolution without the Local Plan

- Deterioration in soil health from increased disturbance, compaction and erosion;
- Loss of carbon to the atmosphere as a result of soil disturbance and impaired ability of soil to store (sequester) carbon;
- Loss of soil biodiversity through inappropriate development, increased disturbance, compaction and erosion.

Scope of the Local Plan

13.15 The Local Plan can influence soil, land and minerals in the following ways:

- Ensure that in locating development, the best and most versatile (BMV) agricultural land and minerals safeguarding areas (MSAs) are avoided
- Ensure the efficient use of land
- Ensure the efficient use of construction / mineral resources
- The prioritisation of and support for the redevelopment of brownfield land, ensuring appropriate remediation where this is required
- Promoting best practice in construction to protect soils.

Data Gaps

13.16 There is no significant local data on the health of the District's soils, aside from the ALC. Whilst the ALC provides some level of information as to soil health, this is mainly in relation to crop farming, which is not the predominant type of farming within Wealden. The ALC also fails to take account of the soils value in terms of its importance for grasslands and the biodiversity / nutrients it holds. This data is also limited nationally.

14.0 Water

KEY PPPs

- **The Environment Act 2021**
- **A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment 2018**
- **Defra: Our integrated plan for delivering clean and plentiful water (2023)**
- **South East River Basin Management Plan (updated 2022)**
- **National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)**
- **Building Regulations Approved Document G**

KEY MESSAGES

- A legally binding target to reduce the use of public water supply in England per head of population by 20% by 2038
- Reduce the damaging effects of abstraction of water from rivers and groundwater
- Reach or exceed objectives for rivers, lakes, coastal and ground waters that are specially protected
- Minimise the amount of water lost through leakage with water companies expected to reduce leakage by at least an average of 15% by 2025 and by 37% by 2038
- Minimise the harmful bacteria in designated bathing waters and continuing to improve the cleanliness of waters by 2030
- Consumption of water by person occupying a new dwelling must not exceed a maximum of 125 litres per person per day or 110 litres per person per day if supported by evidence
- Expand the use of natural flood management solutions to store water temporarily on open land
- Set out strategic policies to provide infrastructure for water supply, wastewater and flood risk
- Take a proactive approach to mitigating and adapting to climate change, taking into account the long-term implications for water supply

Water Quality

14.1 South East Water supplies the District with drinking water and Southern Water is the wastewater provider. The Cuckmere and Pevensey Levels Management Catchment covers parts of the south and east of the District within the South East River Basin District (SERBD) and the Environment Agency (EA) monitors water quality within the waterbodies present. The catchment comprises three 'operational' catchments - the Combe Haven, Cuckmere Upper and Pevensey – and all three cover parts of the District. **Table 14.1** identifies the categories of the 18 waterbodies within the catchment and **Table 14.2** identifies their ecological and chemical status between 2013 and 2019.

Table 14.1: Number and type of waterbodies within the Cuckmere and Pevensey Levels Management Catchment (2022)[126]

Water bodies	Natural	Artificial	Heavily modified	Total
River, canals and surface water transfers	8	0	9	17
Lake	0	1	0	1
Coastal	0	0	0	0
Estuarine	0	0	0	0
Groundwater	0	0	0	0
Total	8	1	9	18

14.2 The waterbodies within the Cuckmere and Pevensey Levels catchment have been relatively stable in terms of their ecological status since 2013, however their chemical status has significantly deteriorated with all 18 waterbodies now classified as failing (see **Table 14.2**).

Table 14.2: Number of waterbodies – Ecological and Chemical status within the Cuckmere and Pevensey Levels Management Catchment [127]

Year	Ecological status or potential					Chemical status	
	Bad	Poor	Moderate	Good	High	Fail	Good
2013	0	3	10	5	0	1	17
2014	0	5	10	3	0	1	17
2015	0	7	10	1	0	1	17
2016	0	6	11	1	0	0	18
2019	0	6	11	1	0	18	0

14.3 The latest data from the EA monitoring identifies that the main issues preventing waters reaching good ecological and chemical status within the Cuckmere and Pevensey Levels catchment relate to physical modifications to waterbodies, pollution from rural areas and pollution from wastewater treatment works (see **Table 14.3**). Water quality has significant impacts on the protected features of the levels and also the spread of non-native invasive species, such as floating pennywort. The spread of floating pennywort on the levels within the area east of Hailsham is affecting the biodiversity of the watercourses.

126 Source: Cuckmere and Pevensey Levels Management Catchment | Catchment Data Explorer
127 Compiled from Cycle 2 data. Available at: Cuckmere and Pevensey Levels Management Catchment | Catchment Data Explorer

Table 14.3: Reasons for not achieving good status by business sector in the Cuckmere and Pevensey Levels Management Catchment (2022)[128]

Water Management Issue	Invasive non-native species	Physical modifications	Pollution from rural areas	Pollution from towns, cities & transport	Pollution from waste water
Agriculture and rural land management	0	9	13	0	0
Domestic	0	0	0	1	0
Local & Central government	0	3	0	0	0
No sector responsible	2	0	0	0	0
Sector under investigation	0	3	0	0	0
Urban and transport	0	4	0	0	0
Water industry	0	0	0	0	30
Total	2	19	13	1	30

14.4 As **Table 14.3** shows, the incidents of wastewater pollution come from the water industry sector and this is largely due to a number of wastewater treatment works (WwTWs) which feed the Pevensey Levels, the principal ones being Hailsham North and South WwTWs, and the wider catchment waterbodies. The WwTWs discharge treated effluent under strict discharge consents from the EA. The EA has previously expressed concerns regarding new development within the catchment area of the Hailsham North and South WwTWs because of the relationship between the discharge of treated effluent and the continued decline in ecological quality downstream. To accommodate this Southern Water has invested £30m upgrading Hailsham North and Hailsham South WwTW's. This allows for increased flow from new developments to at least 2030.

14.5 The Rother Management Catchment also covers parts of the District including Mayfield, Wadhurst and parts of Heathfield. There are five operational catchments within it – Brede and Tillingham; Reading, Cradlebridge and RMC; Romney Marsh South; Rother Levels and the Upper Rother. The Upper Rother is the operational catchment relevant to the District and has 6 waterbodies, all of which are classified as natural rivers by the EA[129].

14.6 The rivers in the Upper Rother catchment have been stable in terms of their ecological status since 2013, however their chemical status has significantly deteriorated with all 6 rivers now classified as failing (see **Table 14.4**).

128 Adapted from Challenges data for Cuckmere and Pevensey Levels Management Catchment | Catchment Data Explorer
129 Rother Upper Operational Catchment | Catchment Data Explorer

Table 14.4: Number of waterbodies – Ecological and Chemical status within the Upper Rother catchment[130]

Year	Ecological status or potential					Chemical status	
	Bad	Poor	Moderate	Good	High	Fail	Good
2013	0	3	2	1	0	1	5
2014	0	3	3	1	0	1	5
2015	0	3	3	0	0	0	6
2016	0	3	3	0	0	0	6
2019	0	3	3	0	0	6	0

14.7 The latest data from the EA monitoring identifies that the main issues preventing waters reaching good ecological and chemical status within the Upper Rother catchment relate to pollution from rural areas, pollution from towns, cities and transport and pollution from wastewater (see **Table 14.5**).

Table 14.5: Reasons for not achieving good status by business sector in the Upper Rother catchment (2022)[131]

Water Management Issue	Pollution from rural areas	Pollution from towns, cities & transport	Pollution from wastewater
Agriculture and rural land management	13	0	0
Domestic	0	7	0
Water industry	0	2	9
Total	13	9	9

14.8 The challenges facing the water environment in both catchments may explain the deterioration in chemical status and failure to reach good ecological status. There is also concern that parts of the Cuckmere catchment has limited conveyance and capacity to take further run off from development making Sustainable drainage on new development a high priority

14.9 The Medway Management Catchment also covers parts of the District, including Wadhurst, Bells Yew Green and Crowborough, and sits within the Thames River Basin District (RBD). The catchment comprises 6 'operational' catchments – Beult, Eden, Medway Lower, Medway Middle, Medway Upper and Teise – however only the Medway Upper and Teise are relevant to the District. The Medway Upper operational catchment contains 12 waterbodies and the Teise operational catchment contains 9 waterbodies. Tables 14.6 and 14.7 identify the categories of the waterbodies.

130 Compiled from Cycle 2 data. Available at: Rother Upper Operational Catchment | Catchment Data Explorer
131 Adapted from Challenges data for Rother Upper Operational Catchment | Catchment Data Explorer

Table 14.6: Number and type of waterbodies within the Medway Upper operational catchment [132]

Water Body Category	Natural	Artificial	Heavily Modified	Total
River, canals & surface water transfers	10		1	**11**
Lakes	0	0	1	**1**
Coastal	0	0	0	**0**
Estuarine	0	0	0	**0**
Groundwater	0	0	0	**0**
Total	**10**	**0**	**2**	**12**

Table 14.7: Number and type of waterbodies within the Teise operational catchment [133]

Water Body Category	Natural	Artificial	Heavily Modified	Total
River, canals & surface water transfers	3	0	5	**8**
Lakes	0	0	1	**1**
Coastal	0	0	0	**0**
Estuarine	0	0	0	**0**
Groundwater	0	0	0	**0**
Total	**3**	**0**	**6**	**9**

14.10 Not all waterbodies within the operational catchments of the Medway Upper and Teise are located within the District. Those that are, and their ecological and chemical status over the last 6 years, are shown in Tables 14.8. Table 14.9 sets out the ecological and chemical status over the last 6 years for those waterbodies that are located within Wealden District.

Table 14.8: Ecological and Chemical status within the Medway Upper operational catchment – 8 waterbodies [134]

Year	Ecological Status or Potential					Chemical Status	
	Bad	Poor	Moderate	Good	High	Fail	Good
2013	1	0	6	1	0	3	5
2014	1	1	6	0	0	3	5
2015	1	1	5	1	0	0	8
2016	1	1	5	1	0	0	8
2019	1	1	6	0	0	8	0
2022	1	1	6	0	0	-	-

132 Medway Upper Operational Catchment | Catchment Data Explorer
133 Teise Operational Catchment | Catchment Data Explorer
134 Eridge Stream; Friars Gate Stream; Grom; Jarvis Brook; Medway at Weir Wood; Mid Medway from Hartfield to Eden Confluence; Pippingford Brook and Upper Eridge Stream. Medway Upper Operational Catchment | Catchment Data Explorer

Table 14.9: Ecological and Chemical status within the Teise operational catchment – 3 waterbodies [135]

Year	Ecological status or Potential					Chemical Status	
	Bad	Poor	Moderate	Good	High	Fail	Good
2013	0	0	2	1	0	0	3
2014	0	0	2	1	0	0	3
2015	0	0	3	0	0	0	3
2016	0	0	3	0	0	0	3
2019	0	0	3	0	0	3	0
2022	0	0	2	1	0	0	0

14.11 The latest data from the EA monitoring identifies that the main issues preventing waters reaching good ecological and chemical status within the Medway Upper catchment relate to invasive non-native species, physical modifications, pollution from rural areas, pollution from towns, cities and transport and pollution from waste water (see Table 14.10).

Table 14.10: Reasons for not achieving good status by business sector in the Upper Rother catchment (2022) [136]

Water Management Issue	Invasive non-native species	Physical modifica-tions	Pollution from rural areas	Pollution from towns, cities & transport	Pollution from waste water
Agriculture & rural land management	0	0	11	0	0
Domestic / general public	0	0	0	8	0
Industry	0	0	0	0	2
Local & central government	0	1	0	0	0
No sector responsible	2	0	0	0	0
Other	0	1	0	0	0
Water industry	0	4	0	0	23
Total	2	6	11	8	25

14.12 The latest data from the EA monitoring identifies that the main issues preventing waters reaching good ecological and chemical status within the Teise catchment relate to changes to natural flow and water levels, physical modifications, pollution from rural areas, pollution from towns, cities and transport and pollution from waste water (see Table 14.11).

135 Bartley Mill Stream; Upper Teise and Bewel Water Body. Teise Operational Catchment | Catchment Data Explorer
136 Adapted from Challenges data for Medway Upper Operational Catchment. Challenges data for Medway Upper Operational Catchment | Catchment Data Explorer

Table 14.11: Reasons for not achieving good status by business sector in the Upper Rother catchment (2022) [137]

Water Management Issue	Changes to natural flow & level of water	Physical Modifica-tions	Pollution from rural areas	Pollution from towns, cities & transport	Pollution from waste water
Agriculture & rural land management	1	7	18	0	0
Domestic / general public	0	0	0	8	0
Industry	0	0	0	1	0
Local & central government	0	5	0	0	0
Other	0	0	0	2	0
Urban and transport	0	0	0	2	0
Water industry	0	6	0	0	13
Total	**1**	**18**	**18**	**13**	**13**

14.13 The Adur and Ouse Management Catchment also covers parts of the District, including Uckfield, Maresfield, Framfield, Nutley, Chelwood Common, Little Horsted and Halland, and sits within the South East River Basin District (RBD). The catchment comprises 3 'operational' catchments – Adur Upper, Ouse Upper and Teville – however only the Ouse Upper is relevant to the District.

14.14 The Ouse Upper operational catchment contains 26 waterbodies, of which 15 flow within the District. Of the waterbodies, 17 are classified as natural rivers, canals and surface water transfers, 8 are classified as heavily modified natural rivers, canals and surface water transfers and 1 is a lake. The ecological and chemical status of the 15 waterbodies within the District over the last 6 years is shown in **Table 14.12.**

Table 14.12: Ecological & Chemical status within the Ouse Upper operational catchment – 15 waterbodies[138]

Year	Ecological Status or Potential					Chemical Status	
	Bad	Poor	Moderate	Good	High	Fail	Good
2013	4	2	6	3	0	3	12
2014	3	3	8	1	0	3	12
2015	3	4	7	1	0	0	15
2016	4	3	6	2	0	0	15
2019	5	1	9	0	0	13	2
2022	3	5	7	0	0	1	0

14.15 The latest data from the EA monitoring identifies that the main issues preventing waters reaching good ecological and chemical status within the Ouse Upper catchment relate to changes to natural flow and water levels; invasive non-native species; physical modifications; pollution from rural areas; pollution from towns, cities and transport and pollution from waste water (**Table 14.13**).

137 Adapted from Challenges data for Teise Operational Catchment. Challenges data for Teise Operational Catchment | Catchment Data Explorer

138 Glynde Reach; Iron River; Ouse between Isfield and Coast; Little Horsted Stream; Uck (Ridgewood Stream to Ishurst); Framfield Stream; Uck at Uckfield; Tributary of the River Uck north of Uckfield; Shortbridge Stream; Sheffield Park Stream; Searless Stream; Uck Upstream of Buxted; Tickerage Stream; Ridgewood Stream and Middle Ouse. Ouse Upper Operational Catchment | Catchment Data Explorer.

Table 14.13: Reasons for not achieving good status by business sector in the Ouse Upper catchment (2022)

Water management issue	Changes to natural flow & water levels	Invasive non-native species	Physical Modifi-cations	Pollution from rural areas	Pollution from towns, cities & transport	Pollution from waste water
Agriculture & rural land management	1	0	5	9	0	0
Domestic general public	0	0	0	0	2	0
Local & central gov.	0	0	5	0	0	0
No sector responsible	0	3	0	0	0	0
Other	0	0	1	0	0	0
Sector under investigation	0	0	4	0	0	0
Urban & transport	0	0	4	0	0	0
Water Industry	2	0	8	0	0	24
Total	**3**	**3**	**27**	**9**	**2**	**24**

Pollution

14.16 In terms of tackling pollution from wastewater, in the Cuckmere and Pevensey Levels catchment, Southern Water completed significant works in December 2021 at the Hailsham North and South WwTWs to enable a high-rate biological treatment process that is capable of meeting the tighter permits from the Environment Agency. This investment to achieve a high-quality effluent will improve water quality within the Pevensey Levels.

14.17 In proposing locations for new development, account should be taken of the drainage systems which don't necessarily follow administrative boundaries. Development in South Wealden may connect to the Eastbourne wastewater system as the nearest point. The cumulative impact of all development proposed to drain to a wastewater treatment works will need to be considered by the incumbent Water and Sewerage Company as part of impact scenarios and investment planning. It is critical for planning authorities and utility companies to work together to understand the timing and phasing of developments in order that optimal and sustainable investment is made in the required infrastructure.

14.18 Pollution from rural land management and agriculture is a significant issue in both catchments and results from chemicals and pesticides being conveyed to watercourses through surface runoff and spraying, as well as waste matter from livestock. The farming industry faces big challenges in this respect to transfer to more sustainable farming practices to ensure soils, air, and water quality can be improved and are protected, whilst still producing food. The EA are working with the farming community in the District to address particular problems around rural pollution and farming more sustainably through the new Environmental Land Management System (ELMS), which pays landowners for undertaking actions to improve the environment.

14.19 Pollution from urban areas comes from waste, drainage, roads, transport, industries and housing. Historic pollution from factories and heavy industry has also left a legacy contaminating land, soils and water. However, principal sources of pollutants entering the water environment are drainage misconnections and urban runoff.

14.20 Surface water run-off has the potential to be a major source of water pollution within the District. Pollutants reach wetland areas/watercourses mainly through run-off, whereby water flows over impervious surfaces picking up a number of pollutants generated by human activity. Such pollutants can include sediment from construction sites, toxic metals and petroleum wastes from roadways and industrial or commercial areas, nutrients and bacteria from residential areas and nutrients and pesticides from agriculture and gardening activities.

14.21 Table **14.3** shows pollution incidents from the agricultural and rural land management sector as well as the urban and transport sector to be an issue in reaching good status, including physical modifications (i.e. construction / alterations of roads or changes to drainage infrastructure) and pollution from rural areas (i.e. field runoff).

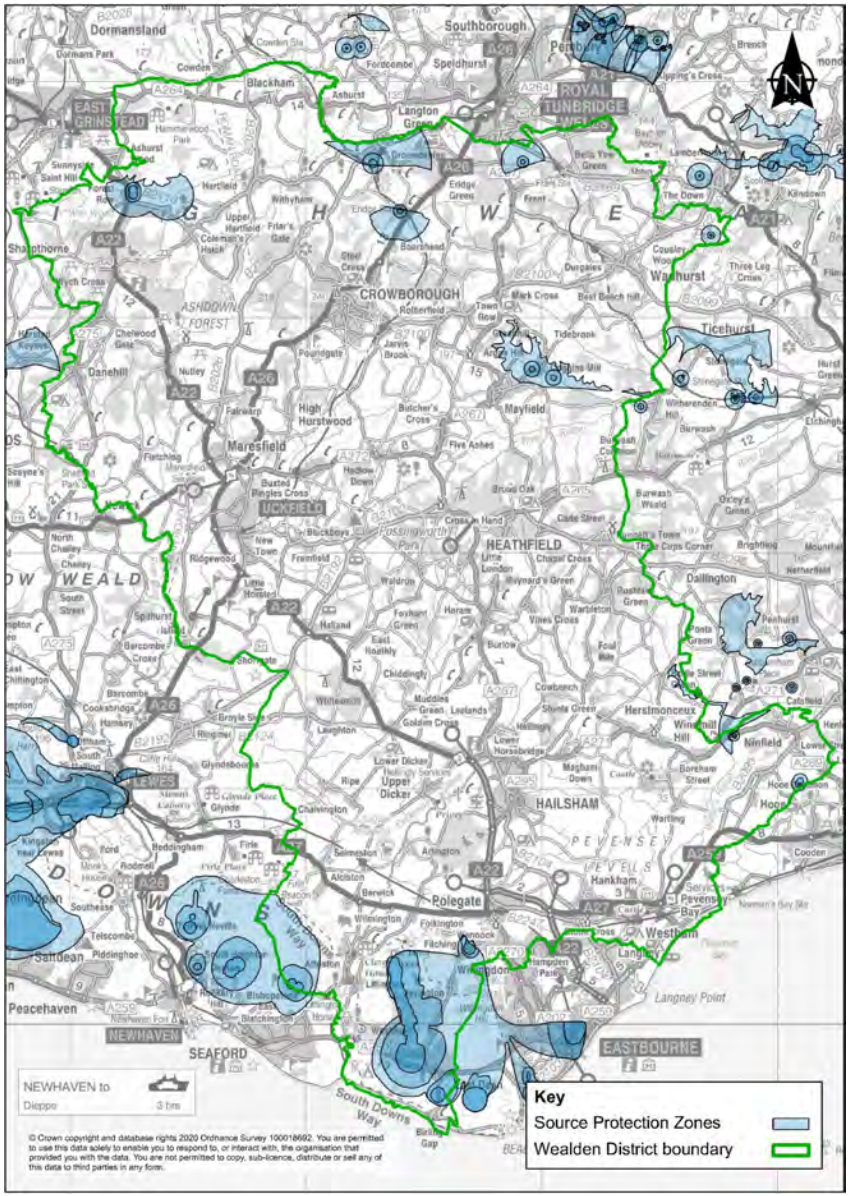
14.22 The EA's Towns, cities and transport: challenges for the water environment document (2021) identifies that identifying the source of urban pollution and drainage misconnections is not easy, which means using established approaches to controlling polluting activities, such as through permits, cannot as easily be applied because there may be more than one source of pollution.

14.23 The EA acknowledges that a strategic, partnership approach is required to better understand and address the broader urban diffuse pollution issue, particularly at the catchment scale and that there is a need to improve knowledge and awareness of the issues, foster behavioural change, encourage targeted investment and promote the correct action from public and private sectors.

Physical modifications

14.24 According to the EA's Physical modifications: challenges for the water environment document (2021), built structures and physical modifications within rivers, catchments and coastlines are the primary reasons England's waters have an ecological quality that the EA class as less than good. Humans have, over centuries, physically modified rivers, lakes, estuaries and coasts to improve quality of life i.e. the draining of the wetlands for agriculture, the building of towns and cities and measures to manage flood risk. Completely unaltered environments no longer exist. In the future, rivers, wetlands, estuaries and coasts will need greater space and freedom to function naturally and to provide greater resilience from continued economic and population growth, and from the effects of climate change.

Figure 14.1: Groundwater Source Protection Zones in Wealden



Groundwater

14.25 Groundwater supplies a third of drinking water within the UK and as such the Environment Agency (EA) has defined Source Protection Zones (SPZs) for groundwater sources (wells, boreholes and springs) across England. SPZs are a tool to aid the decision-making process when assessing risks to groundwater supplies posed by potentially polluting activities and release of contaminants. Generally, the closer the activity or release is to a groundwater source, the greater the risk. There are a number of SPZs within the District as shown on **Figure 14.1**. These are primarily located in the south of the District, around the chalk aquifers of the South Downs, and the north of the District.

Water consumption

14.26 The Government has set a new legally binding target under the Environment Act 2021 to reduce the use of public water supply in England per head of population by 20% by 2038. To achieve this, the government aims, by 2038, to:

- Reduce household water use to 122 litres per person per day;
- Reduce leakages by 37%; and
- Reduce non-household (for example, business) water use by 9%.

14.27 These targets form part of the trajectory to achieving 110 litres per person per day for household water use (as per the optional requirement within the current Building Regulations) as well as a 50% reduction in leakage and a 15% reduction in non-household water use by 2050.

14.28 These targets have also been carried forward in Defra's Policy Paper on Water[139], which states that half of the 4 billion litres a day gap in public water supply by 2050 will be delivered through increased supply and the other half will be delivered through improving water efficiency, reducing demand, and cutting wasted water.

14.29 Due to the warm, dry climate in the Southeast, the region is classed by the EA as an area of serious water stress, and this includes Wealden. The most recent Water Resources Management Plan published by South East Water shows that during 2021/22 customers used an average of 150 litres of water per person per day[140]. This is far higher than the Building Regulations requirement of 125 litres per person per day.

14.30 The Building Regulations only apply to new build houses, therefore to reduce water consumption, wider retrofitting of existing properties with water saving measures and consumer behavioural change will be needed.

14.31 By 2025, South East Water are targeting the annual amount of water used by each of its customers (including Wealden residents) to reduce to 131.5 litres per person per day. The Water Resources Management Plan sets a target to reduce household water use to 124 litres per person per day by 2024 and 112 litres per person per day by 2050[141].

14.32 The latest data from South East Water shows that there was a 4.4% reduction in water consumption per person per day from 2020/21 to 2021/22. However, there has been a 2.9% increase on the 2020/21 three year average baseline of 144 litres per person per day to 154 litre per person per day[142].

Water Supply

14.33 Population growth, climate change and the protection of fragile ecosystems are all putting increasing pressure on the South East's water resources. The 25 Year Environment Plan states that it will reform the UK's approach to water abstraction and increase water supply, whilst the Environment Act seeks to manage water sustainably, taking into account the impacts of climate change. The Act also introduces additional requirements for Water Company planning for future water supply.

14.34 The Environment Agency develops Abstraction Licencing Strategies (ALS) for catchment areas, which set out how water resources are managed by the Agency within each catchment. For Wealden, the relevant Abstraction Licencing Strategies are the Cuckmere and Pevensey Levels Abstraction Licencing Strategy (March 2019)[143] and the Adur & Ouse Abstraction Licencing Strategy (March 2019)[144].

139 Our Integrated Plan for Delivering Clean and Plentiful Water (publishing.service.gov.uk)
140 04e9cbe34f2bf1559afa39043f0580b3_1._Highlights_document.pdf (amazonaws.com)
141 South East Water Draft Water Resources Management Plan 2025 to 2075 Highlights. Available at: 04e9cbe34f2bf1559afa39043f0580b3_1._Highlights_document.pdf (amazonaws.com)
142 South East Water per capita consumption (published 11/07/2022) Available at: South East Water PPP - ODI - Per Capita Consumption
143 Cuckmere and Pevensey Levels abstraction licensing strategy - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
144 Adur and Ouse abstraction licensing strategy - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

14.35 South East Water abstracts a significant amount of water from Hazards Green in the Wallers Haven for the public water supply to serve existing residents. Within the Cuckmere and Pevensey Levels ALS Area the EA have identified a number of waterbodies where recent actual flows have fallen below the Ecological Flow Indicator (EFI) and one waterbody where fully licensed flows might fall below the EFI. The abstraction licences within these water bodies that cause these issues have been identified by Catchment Abstraction Management Strategy (CAMS) and are being investigated.

14.36 As part of their Water Resources Management Plan, South East Water are planning to invest £2.2 billion over the next 50 years to build large-scale infrastructure projects such as reservoirs, water recycling plants and desalination schemes. They are also planning to reduce the amount of water they abstract from the environment by 158 million litres a day by 2050, in order to support thriving habitats[145].

14.37 Of relevance to Wealden is South East Water's plans to investigate additional water supply options by improving the existing water treatment plant at Bewl, and importing around 9 million litres a day from a neighbouring water company, Sutton and East Surrey (SES) Water. South East Water is also investigating the development of a second new reservoir at Arlington.

Wastewater and Drainage

14.38 As already highlighted above, Southern Water is the sewerage undertaker for Wealden and is implementing measures at several WwTWs (particularly Hailsham North and South) to improve wastewater discharges and therefore help to improve water quality.

14.39 Water pollution can also occur as a result of surface water runoff. New developments can inadvertently add to water pollution and surface water flood risk by covering permeable surfaces like grassland and soil that would otherwise assist in dealing with heavy rainfall, slowing down runoff and filtering pollutants. Pollution from surface water runoff is a significant factor in compromising the water quality standards that are required under the **Water Environment (Water Framework Directive) (England and Wales) Regulations 2017**, which establish a statutory framework for the protection of ground water and inland surface water, estuaries, and coastal waters.

Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS)

14.40 Sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) are the most effective way to manage rainfall where it falls and the resulting surface water runoff. SuDS are made up of interconnected features that surface water flows through. Each feature reduces pollution, flow rates, the volume of water and improves water quality. In this way, SuDS can be used to manage the environmental risks caused by surface water run-off from new and existing development and can be designed to enhance the environment.

145 04e9cbe34f2bf1559afa39043f0580b3_1._Highlights_document.pdf (amazonaws.com)

14.41 SuDS can help to improve water quality as well as manage surface water flood risk. SuDS mimic natural catchment processes and provide the following beneftis:

- Allow water to soak into the ground (infiltration)
- Store water and releasing it slowly (attenuation)
- Slowly transport (conveying) water on the surface
- Filter out pollutants
- Allow sediments to settle out by controlling the flow of the water
- Form attractive environments that provide pleasant, open spaces and valuable wildlife habitats.

14.42 The Government recently undertook a review of whether to make the provision of SuDS mandatory for all new developments[146]. This would implement Schedule 3 of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010. The Act was not originally commenced as the use of SuDS was addressed through planning policy from April 2015, which only applied to major developments of 10 or more dwellings.

14.43 The review recommends implementation of Schedule 3 subject to final decisions on scope, threshold and process, once a full regulatory impact assessment has been completed to look at different options and the expected costs and benefits. The government has accepted this recommendation.

14.44 East Sussex County Council (ESCC) encourages all developments to use SuDS to manage flood risk and improve water quality, the local environment and wildlife habitats. To that end, the Council has produced a guide that sets out the framework for integrating SuDS in development layouts[147,148].

14.45 At present, Wealden District Council seeks to implement SuDS into all appropriate and relevant developments, and has due regard to ESCC's guidance as well as directing applicants to this guidance.

146 Sustainable drainage systems review - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
147 guide-to-sustainable-drainage-systems-in-east-sussex2.pdf
148 se7-suds-masterplanning_low_res_reduced.pdf

Baseline Data: Water

Key Sustainability Issues

- There is already significant pressure on the region's water resources and water infrastructure including existing sewage systems and wastewater facilities. An increase in population and climate change will add to this pressure
- Tighter environmental protection is required to protect the natural environment and biodiversity and this extends to reductions in the amount of water that can be extracted for public use
- Climate change and changing rainfall patterns is likely to result in less water available to turn into clean drinking water, especially in the summer months when increased temperatures may also mean prolonged dry spells and droughts.
- More intense rainfall in the winter may mean that water is unable to infiltrate into groundwater supplies or be adequately stored in reservoirs
- Diffuse pollution from rural and urban runoff continues to reach watercourses preventing them from reaching good ecological and chemical status
- Development pressures result in greater areas of hard / impermeable surfacing being created which exacerbate surface runoff and the conveyance of chemicals / pollutants to waterbodies.

Likely Evolution without the Local Plan

- Reducing water consumption will rely on national and water company strategies, which may not be met in a timely manner or be suitable to the specific needs of the district
- New development will still have to meet Building Regulations requirements for water consumption (125 litres per person per day) but WDC may not be able to implement the tighter 110 litres/person/day
- Waterbodies within the district continue to fail to achieve good ecological and chemical status, in particular those within and feeding the Pevensey Levels SAC and Ramsar site
- Speculative development fails to take account of the local issues in relation to water supply and wastewater treatment.

Scope of the Local Plan

14.46 The Local Plan can influence water resources in the following ways:

- Ensure that the spatial strategy and future development minimise their impact on surface water and groundwater networks, supporting measures to reduce water pollution and actively improve water quality, particularly within the Pevensey Levels SAC and Ramsar site and catchment area
- Promote the maximum water efficiency standard of 110 litres per person per day if there is evidence to do so
- Work with South East Water to safeguard land for additional water supply in the form of a second / extended reservoir at Arlington as required
- Ensure SuDS are included on relevant developments to minimise impacts on drainage and water supply infrastructure as well as protecting / improving water quality
- Ensure natural and green and blue infrastructure is incorporated into the design of development to assist in the sustainable management of water resources and contributing to climate change mitigation and adaptation
- Ensure water efficiency and recycling approaches are included within the design and construction of development i.e. rainwater harvesting, grey water recycling for toilets, rain gardens, street trees etc.

Data gaps

14.47 As can be seen from the baseline, the water quality within the District is monitored by the EA and significant detailed documents regarding the challenges the water environment faces and the approaches to these are also produced by the EA for the catchments. However, these documents are at the catchment scale rather than at the District scale.

14.48 As part of the evidence base for the new Local Plan, the Council will undertake a Water Cycle Study to understand how the Local Plan and development proposals will affect the environment. The Study will also help the Council to plan for sustainable growth and the sufficient provision of infrastructure in relation to water supply, wastewater as well as flood risk and coastal management change.

15.0 Biodiversity

KEY PPPs

- **The Environment Act 2021**
- **The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended)**
- **The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006**
- **The Environmental Improvement Plan 2023 is the first five-year review of the 25 Year Environment Plan (25YEP)**
- **Natural England's Green Infrastructure Framework 2023**
- **The National Pollinator Strategy 2014-2024**
- **National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)**

KEY MESSAGES

- To ensure that plans or projects do not adversely affect the integrity of a habitats site, taking account of the need for mitigation where appropriate
- To create, restore, and extend areas for wildlife through projects including new National Nature Reserves, and Landscape Recovery Projects;
- The introduction of Local Nature Recovery Strategies to identify areas to create and restore habitat, and Biodiversity Net Gain to enhance the built environment
- The Introduction of a mandatory requirement of 10% biodiversity net gain for developments, which comes into force from November 2023
- To contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by protecting and enhancing valued sites of biodiversity or geological value
- To recognise the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland
- To establish coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures and wherever possible, help to improve local environmental conditions
- To allocate land with the least environmental or amenity value
- To bring about the best possible conditions for bees and other insects to flourish.

Baseline Data: Biodiversity

15.1 The Natural History Museum says the UK is one of the world's most nature-depleted countries and is in the bottom 10% globally and last among the G7 group of nations[149]. At the UK scale, the State of Nature in the UK Report (2019)[150] found that the abundance and distribution of UK species has, on average, declined since 1970 and many measures suggest this decline has continued in the most recent decade, with no let-up in the net loss of nature in the UK. The pressures that have caused the loss of biodiversity over recent decades continue to have a negative effect.

15.2 The State of Nature 2019 report highlights agricultural management, climate change, hydrological change, urbanisation, pollution, woodland management and invasive non-native species as among the most significant of pressures acting upon terrestrial and freshwater wildlife. However, for England, the Report summary concludes that pressure on the country's diverse landscapes caused by human activity has resulted in both losses and gains for biodiversity[151].

15.3 In July 2022, the Environment Agency's 'Working with Nature Report'[152], set out the global challenges facing the basics for life on Earth - clean water, climate regulation and food – and describes the potential loss of complex natural ecosystems that provide such essentials as an existential risk to human survival on a par with the climate emergency.

15.4 The report highlights that since the mid-20th Century large areas of habitats have been lost, with 99.7% of fens, 97% of species-rich grasslands, 80% of lowland heathlands, up to 70% of ancient woodlands, and up to 85% of saltmarshes destroyed or degraded. The report also states that demands on the land will increase in the next few decades, as the population grows and measures to mitigate against and adapt to climate change are implemented. However, it also states that by working with nature, including tree planting, peat restoration, species reintroductions, and natural flood management, there are opportunities to restore biodiversity, while providing other benefits such as carbon sequestration, flood protection and clean and plentiful water. To maximise these opportunities, the report states that choices made must be appropriate to local conditions and connectivity between different habitats to support biodiversity and help plants and animals adapt to climate change must be achieved.

15.5 At the UN's COP15 summit on biodiversity in December 2022, countries reached an agreement to protect 30% of Earth's land and seas by 2030. The agreement aims to halt and reverse the decline in biodiversity by 2030, and for humans to live in harmony with nature by 2050, to deliver benefits essential for all people[153].

149 UK has 'led the world' in destroying the natural environment | Natural History Museum (nhm.ac.uk)
150 rspb_state-of-nature_summary-report_uk.pdf
151 State-of-Nature-2019-England-summary.pdf (nbn.org.uk)
152 Working with nature - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
153 Convention on Biological Diversity (cbd.int)

15.6 The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 makes biodiversity a central consideration in policy and decision-making processes, by placing a legal duty in Section 40 on every public body in exercising its functions, [to] **"...have regard…to the purpose of conserving biodiversity."** There is an expectation that public bodies, when complying with this duty, will refer to the list of habitats and species of principal importance in England (Section 41 list). These habitats and species should be treated as material considerations when making planning decisions.

15.7 It is also cemented in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) that the planning system has an environmental role to play that is fundamental to achieving sustainable development. In particular, the planning system should:

- Provide net gains in biodiversity (paras 8, 174, 179);
- Take a strategic approach to maintaining and enhancing networks of habitats and green infrastructure (para 175);
- Plan for the enhancement of natural capital at a catchment or landscape scale across local authority boundaries (para 175);
- Promote the conservation, restoration and enhancement of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species (para 179);
- Identify suitable ways of mapping and monitoring biodiversity in Local Plans (para 179); and
- The preparation and review of all policies should be underpinned by relevant and up-to-date evidence (para 31).

15.8 Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) will become a mandatory requirement for development schemes from November 2023, through the Environment Act 2021, with a minimum target of 10% net gain to be achieved. Many local authorities are already seeking this target, or higher, through their planning policies.

15.9 Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS) are also being introduced and will provide spatial strategies for nature and environmental improvement, required by law under the Environment Act. Each strategy must include the following for its area:

- Priorities for nature's recovery
- Map the most valuable existing areas for nature
- Map specific proposals for creating or improving habitat for nature and wider environmental goals.

15.10 The main purpose of the strategies is to identify locations to create or improve habitat most likely to provide the greatest benefit for nature and the wider environment. The strategies do not force the owners and managers of the land identified to make any changes. Instead, the Government is encouraging action through opportunities for funding and investment.

15.11 Wealden has a high-quality natural environment, reflected in designation of the Ashdown Forest Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protection Area (SPA) and the Pevensey Levels SAC and Ramsar site, as well as many national and local designations for flora and fauna. There are also numerous priority habitats and species within the District, adding to the high-quality natural environment. Maps to accompany the sites discussed below can be found in **Appendix B** of this report.

Nature Conservation Sites

15.12 There are a variety of nature conservation sites within the District, designated at varying levels, which are important for biodiversity. **Table 15.1** details how much of the District is covered by some of the designations.

Table 15.1: Coverage of Wealden by conservation designations[154]

Designation	No of sites	Area of designation / reserve in Wealden (ha)	% of Wealden covered
Special Area of Conservation (SAC)	2	5,827.10	6.97
Special Protection Area (SPA)	1	3,205.33	3.83
Ramsar site	1	3,098.92	3.71
Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)	32	8,237.44	9.85
Local Geological Site (LGS)	-	126.34	0.15
Local Wildlife Site (LWS)	101	3,376.75	4.04
National Nature Reserve (NNR)	2	239.36	0.29
Local Nature Reserve (LNR)	26	275.27	0.33

15.13 The areas of designated sites within the District have remained largely unchanged since 2016, apart from Local Nature Reserves and Local Wildlife sites that saw an increase in 2019 and 2017 respectively, following a review of local sites within the District (see **Table 15.2**).

Table 15.2: Area of designated sites in Wealden (ha)[155]

Site	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Ramsar	**3,098.9**	**3,098.92**	**3,098.92**	**3,098.92**	**3,098.92**	**3,098.92**	**3,098.92**
SAC	**5,827.4**	**5,827.38**	**5,827.38**	**5,827.38**	**5,827.1**	**5,827.1**	**5,827.1**
SPA	**3,207**	**3,206.97**	**3,205.33**	**3,205.33**	**3,205.33**	**3,205.33**	**3,205.33**
NNR	**239.4**	**239.36**	**239.36**	**239.36**	**239.36**	**239.36**	**239.36**
SSSI	**8,233.6**	**8,226.4**	**8,237.44**	**8,237.44**	**8,237.44**	**8,237.44**	**8,237.44**
LGS	**126.3**	**126.34**	**126.34**	**126.34**	**126.34**	**126.34**	**126.34**
LNR	**256.8**	**256.84**	**256.84**	**275.27**	**275.27**	**275.27**	**275.27**
LWS	**3,313.1**	**3,374.62**	**3,374.62**	**3,374.62**	**3,376.76**	**3,376.75**	**3,376.75**

154 All statistics are based on information held at the Sussex Biodiversity Record Centre as at 01/11/22. Note that designated sites may overlap therefore the totals shown in the designated site table do not necessarily reflect the total percentage of the District covered by designated sites. Source: Wealden District Council Biodiversity Annual Monitoring Report 1st April 2021 – 31st March 2022.

155 Source: Sussex Biodiversity Records Centre Annual Monitoring Reports

Pevensey Levels Ramsar Site and Special Area of Conservation (SAC)

15.14 The Pevensey Levels are designated an SAC for the presence of the Ramshorn snail and a Ramsar site for the outstanding assemblage of ditch flora and fauna supporting wetland plants, invertebrates including the rare Fen Raft spider, aquatic beetles and dragonflies amongst others species. The Pevensey levels is also a SSSI (**see Appendix B, Map 1**).

15.15 As set out in the previous section relating to water, there are concerns around water quality within the Pevensey Levels and how a deterioration in water quality could affect the stability of the Ramshorn Snail and Fen Raft Spider.

Ashdown Forest SPA and SAC

15.16 The Ashdown Forest SPA was classified in 1996. It is a 3,200 hectare site comprising predominantly lowland heathland and woodland. The Ashdown Forest SPA is an internationally important habitat classified because of the presence of breeding populations of Dartford warbler and European nightjar.

15.17 The Ashdown Forest SAC was designated in 2005 and covers 2,700ha. It has a slightly different boundary to the SPA, but the two designations overlap. The qualifying features for the designation are the Annex I habitats: Northern Atlantic wet heaths and European dry heaths, and the Annex II species: Great crested newt. Ashdown Forest is also a SSSI (**see Appendix B, Map 1**).

Habitats Regulations Assessment

15.18 Under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended), any proposed plan (including the new Wealden Local Plan) that may affect a European site must first undergo an assessment to look at its potential impacts. This is to determine if the plan will adversely affect the integrity of the European site(s) concerned. The potential effects of development on the Ashdown Forest and Pevensey Levels will be assessed during the Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) for the new Wealden Local Plan.

15.19 Currently, in accordance with Policy WCS12 of the adopted Wealden Core Strategy (2013), mitigation measures are necessary to counteract the effects of the potential for an increase in recreational pressure on the Ashdown Forest SPA. Mitigation is required for developments proposing a net increase in dwellings within a 400m - 7km zone of influence. This includes the provision of Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) and Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM) at the forest itself. The mitigation approach is supported by Natural England and ensures the requirements of the Habitats Regulations are met. The SAMM Strategy is delivered by the Conservators of Ashdown Forest in partnership with those local authorities whose administrative areas fall within the 7km mitigation zone. Alongside Wealden, this includes Lewes, Sevenoaks, Mid Sussex, Tandridge and Tunbridge Wells.

National Nature Reserves

15.20 There are two National Nature Reserves (NNRs) in Wealden, Lullington Heath and part of the Pevensey Levels (**see Appendix B, Map 2**). Lullington Heath is one of the largest areas of chalk heath in Britain, comprising lowland calcareous grassland and lowland chalk heath habitats, it is open to the public to access on foot. Over 250 types of plant grow at Lullington Heath and more than 98 types of bird have been seen, 50 of which nest on the Reserve, and 34 butterflies are listed amongst the hundreds of types of insects known to be present. Badgers and foxes do well on the Reserve, as do other small mammals such as rabbit, stoat, weasel and several types of mouse, vole and shrew.

15.21 The Pevensey Levels NNR lies in the heart of the marsh and comprises wet meadows, scrub, willow carr, freshwater fen, pools and managed ditches habitats. The part of the NNR owned by Natural England is currently closed to the public except for the eastern-most field. The rest of the site is so fragile that unrestricted access would damage the wildlife interest. To the north of the NNR lies a 132 hectare reserve, owned and managed by the Sussex Wildlife Trust, which was declared a National Nature Reserve in July 1996. Access is by permit only. Species on the NNR include 20 species of dragonfly and damselfly, including black-tailed skimmer, Orthetrum cancellatum, and red-eyed damselfly, Erythroma naja. Rare invertebrates include the fen raft spider, Dolomedes plantarius, and several species of water snail and water beetles. Waders and wildfowl include redshank, lapwing and snipe. Smaller birds of wetland habitats include reed bunting, yellow wagtail, reed, sedge and Cetti's warbler.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)

15.22 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) are the finest sites for wildlife and natural features in England, supporting many characteristic, rare and endangered species, habitats and natural features. There are 32 SSSIs within the District (**see Appendix B, Map 3**).

15.23 In 2022, of the 230 units which comprise the District's SSSI, the vast majority are in favourable (25.7%) and unfavourable recovering (63%) condition, as recorded by Natural England.

Table 15.3: Condition of SSS Units in Wealden, 2022

Condition	No of units	% of units
Favourable	59	25.7
Unfavourable recovering	145	63.0
Unfavourable no change	3	1.3
Unfavourable declining	23	10.0
Part destroyed	0	0
Destroyed	0	0
Total	**230**	100.0

15.24 Since 2016 the number of SSSI Units in 'favourable' and 'unfavourable recovering' condition have declined by 8.1%, whereas those in 'unfavourable declining' condition have increased by 78.3%. The increase in 'unfavourable declining' SSSI units is most pronounced between 2020 and 2022 and has gained units from the 'favourable' and 'unfavourable recovering' category, although 3 units did move into the 'favourable' category from 'unfavourable recovering' in 2022 indicating some improvement.

Table 15.4: Condition of Wealden's SSSIs[156]

Condition	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Favourable	69	69	68	68	68	56	59
Unfavourable recovering	153	153	154	154	149	148	145
Unfavourable no change	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Unfavourable declining	5	5	5	5	10	23	23
Part destroyed	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Destroyed	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	**230**	**230**	**230**	**230**	**230**	**230**	**230**

Local Nature Reserves (LNRs)

15.25 Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) are declared and managed for nature conservation purposes under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949. LNRs provide opportunities for research, education, or to simply enjoy and have contact with nature. Local Authorities manage LNRs to maintain and enhance their special wildlife and geology. Some of Wealden's LNRs are privately owned and some are owned by Town Councils. The LNRs in Wealden can be seen in **Table 15.5 and Appendix B, Map 2.**

Table 15.5: Local Nature Reserves in Wealden

Site name	Area (ha) within the District
Arlington Reservoir (also a SSSI)	100.539
Crowborough Country Park	7.338
Hempstead Meadows	1.603
Old Lodge, Nutley	102.795
Weirwood Reservoir	32.507
West Park, Uckfield (also a SSSI)	10.571

Local Geological Sites (LGS)

15.26 Local Geological Sites (LGS) are the most important places for geology and geomorphology outside statutorily protected land such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). Sites are selected under locally-developed criteria, according to their value for education, scientific study, historical significance or aesthetic qualities. LGS do not benefit from statutory protection. Instead they have equivalent status to Local Wildlife Sites (LWS). Therefore, consideration of their importance is integral to the planning process and the weighing of this against other material planning considerations. In Wealden there are several LGS, mainly confined to the north east of the District around Eridge and Groombridge with some near Uckfield, High Hurstwood and along the coastline. The sites can be seen in **Table 15.6 and Appendix B, Map 4**.

156 Source: Sussex Biodiversity Records Centre Annual Monitoring Reports

Table 15.6: Local Geological Sites within Wealden

Site name	Area (ha) within District
Rocks Park, Uckfield, East Sussex	1.906
The Hermitage, High Hurstwood, Buxted	3.366
Lake Wood Rocks, Uckfield	3.237
Waldron Cutting, Tullaghmore	0.728
Hastingford Cutting, Hadlow Down	0.069
High Rocks, Frant, Tunbridge Wells	2.292
Harrison's Rocks, Groombridge	5.190
Eridge Rocks, Eridge Green	8.458
Glen Andred Rocks, Groombridge	0.390
Rocks Wood, near Groombridge,	5.944
Coastal section: Birling Gap	36.078
Coastal section: Hope Gap Steps-Cuckmere Haven	3.697
Coastal section: Seven Sisters	42.192
Coastal section: Belle Tout-Birling Gap	11.842

Local Wildlife Sites

15.27 Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) represent local character and distinctiveness but also have an important role to play in meeting local and national targets for biodiversity conservation. The sites also help to provide linked corridors along which species can migrate and colonise to help biodiversity adapt to long-term changes such as those resulting from climate change There are 101 LWS in Wealden and these are shown in **Appendix B, Map 4**.

Habitats

15.28 There are a variety of priority habitats within the District (see **Table 15.7 and Appendix B, Map 5)**) which are important in their own right but also support various species of wildlife.

15.29 The areas of habitats within the District have also remained largely unchanged since 2016 (see **Table 15.8**). Any changes in habitat extents year on year are extremely small and are likely to be a reflection of improved datasets, therefore they should not be assumed to be habitat expansion or contraction.

Table 15.7: Priority Habitats in Wealden, 2022 [157]

Habitat	Area of habitat in Wealden (ha)	% of Wealden covered
Ancient woodland	11,528.49	13.8%
Coastal & floodplain grazing marsh	4,248.92	5.1%
Coastal saltmarsh	6.42	0.01%
Coastal sand dunes	0	0%
Coastal vegetated shingle	10.28	0.01%
Deciduous woodland	13,466.67	16.1%
Ghyll woodland	3,633.54	4.4%
Intertidal chalk	61.18	0.07%
Intertidal mudflat	3.94	0%
Lowland calcareous grassland	681.24	0.8%
Lowland fen	20.54	0.02%
Lowland heathland	1,252.87	1.5%
Lowland meadow	227.47	0.3%
Maritime cliff and slope	2.87	0%
Reedbed	7.11	0.01%
Saline lagoon	8.44	0.01%
Traditional orchard	52.35	0.06%
Wood-pasture & parkland	2,714.42	3.3%

15.30 There are changes between 2016 and 2022 in the area of the District covered by coastal vegetated shingle (-24.8%), lowland heathland (+0.9%) and lowland meadow (+22%) and whilst this is likely to be explained by improved datasets and data collection, it could also be due to other factors such as coastal erosion from climate change and sea level rise or improved habitat management and creation.

15.31 Climate change is likely to affect important semi-natural habitats, particularly river and wetland habitats throughout the District. This will include water shortages in summer and increased water flows and flooding in winter, causing potential damage to habitats and species. These changes may manifest themselves within the natural environment through changes in habitats and a decline of flora and fauna which are unable to adapt quickly enough to the changing conditions. Rising water and sea levels may also impact mudflats and marshes which provide important habitats for migrant bird populations.

157 Source: Wealden District Council Biodiversity Annual Monitoring Report 1st April 2021 – 31st March 2022.
All statistics are based on information held at the Sussex Biodiversity Record Centre as at 01/11/22. Many habitat datasets overlap with one another, e.g. lowland meadow may be classed as grazing marsh and recorded in both inventories.

Table 15.8: Area of habitat in Wealden (ha)[158]

Habitat	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Ancient woodland	11,529.7	11,529.7	11,529.7	11,529.7	11,528.8	11,528.5	11,528.5
Coastal & floodplain grazing marsh	4,248.9	4,248.9	4,248.9	4,248.9	4,248.9	4,248.9	4,248.9
Coastal saltmarsh	6.4	6.4	6.4	6.4	6.4	6.4	6.4
Coastal sand dunes	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Coastal vegetated shingle	13.7	13.7	10.3	10.3	10.3	10.3	10.3
Deciduous woodland	13,465.2	13,465.4	13,465.4	13,465.4	13,466.7	13,466.7	13,466.7
Ghyll woodland	3,644.8	3,633.7	3,633.7	3,633.5	3,633.5	3,633.5	3,633.5
Intertidal chalk	61.2	61.2	61.2	61.2	61.2	61.2	61.2
Intertidal mudflat	3.9	3.9	3.9	3.9	3.9	3.9	3.9
Lowland calcareous grassland	681.2	681.2	681.2	681.2	681.2	681.2	681.2
Lowland fen	20.5	20.5	20.5	20.5	20.5	20.5	20.5
Lowland heathland	1,242.3	1,250.8	1,252.9	1,252.9	1,252.9	1,252.9	1,252.9
Lowland meadow	186.5	186.5	186.5	186.5	227.5	227.5	227.5
Maritime cliff and slope	2.9	2.9	2.9	2.9	2.9	2.9	2.9
Reedbed	7.1	7.1	7.1	7.1	7.1	7.1	7.1
Saline lagoon	8.4	8.4	8.4	8.4	8.4	8.4	8.4
Traditional orchard	45.7	45.7	45.7	45.7	52.4	52.4	52.4
Wood-pasture & parkland	2,714.4	2,714.4	2,714.4	2,714.4	2,714.4	2,714.4	2,714.4

158 Source: Sussex Biodiversity Records Centre Annual Monitoring Reports

Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) Species

15.32 There are a variety of BAP species within the District as set out in **Table 15.9**.

Table 15.9: BAP species in Wealden[159]

Species[160]	No of records in East Sussex	No of records in Wealden
European protected species	15,869	7,699
Wildlife and Countryside Act species	29,668	14,133
Section 41 Species[161]	389,822	146,993
Bats	10,285	5,288
Notable birds	173,255	75,122
Rare species (excludes bats and birds)	78,797	19,469
Invasive non-native species	9,373	3,984
Ancient tree hunt[162]	2329	1409
Tree register	507	187
Black poplar[163]	24	14

***The Sussex Notable Bird Inventory is based on a list of species that are particularly scarce or vulnerable to development in Sussex.**

Table 15.10: BAP species records in Wealden 2016 - 2022[164]

Species	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
European protected species	4,984	5,207	5,722	6,342	6,608	7,784	7,699
Wildlife & Countryside Act species	10,503	10,151	11,590	12,339	12,715	14,171	14,133
Section 41 Species	12,266	104,278	111,438	119,312	126,041	140,389	146,993
Bats	3,111	3,459	3,603	4,161	4,350	5,477	5,288
Notable birds	18,753	58,599	62,518	71,387	67,544	72,977	75,122
Rare species (excludes bats and birds)	13,790	15,399	15,852	16,734	17,532	18,314	19,469
Invasive non-native species	3273	3205	3297	3424	3657	3936	3,984
Ancient tree hunt	1127	1127	1127	1409	1409	1409	1409
Tree register	187	187	187	187	187	187	187
Black poplar	0	14	14	14	14	14	14

159 Source: Table 3 of the Wealden Biodiversity Annual Monitoring Report 2022.
160 Badger and otter records are not included.
161 Section 41 (S41) of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 requires the Secretary of State to publish a list of habitats and species which are of principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity in England
162 These records are from the Ancient Tree Hunt (a national survey carried out in 2007/2008) and Tree Register of the British Isles (a charity which collates and updates data on notable trees).
163 The black poplar is naturally a tree of wet woodland and forested floodplains. Much black poplar habitat has been drained and cleared in the past, and there are now under 50 mature trees remaining in Sussex.
164 Compiled from the Wealden Biodiversity Annual Monitoring Reports 2016 – 2022 produced by the Sussex Biodiversity Records Centre

15.33 The number of species records in Wealden have either remained relatively stable or have significantly increased over the years, which is a positive sign. Most notably is the increase in S41 species from 2016 to now. This may be down to improved datasets and record collecting rather than a significant increase in these species. However, it is a positive trend that all of the species recorded numbers have increased within the District and one that the Local Plan should look to support and further.

15.34 The Council holds a District Licensing Scheme for Great Crested Newts (a Section 41 Species) and baseline data on the use and implementation of the licence. The data is available in the form of Impact Risk Zone and Strategic Opportunity Area maps of the District, which have been produced in consultation with the Council and other relevant bodies. This will inform the evidence base to support the Local Plan.

Woodland

15.35 Ancient woodland and priority habitat deciduous woodland covers a significant part of the District (nearly 30%) and the District contains one of the greatest concentrations of ancient woodland in England, around 13%. Woodland is therefore an integral part of the District's habitats and landscape **(see Appendix B, Map 6)**. Whilst there are some large blocks of woodland, many of the ancient woodlands (6%) are less than 2ha in size, often surrounding ancient disused historic features such as marl and iron pits, occupying narrow linear features such as gills, or surviving as field boundary shaws. They are also highly fragmented.

15.36 Trees and woodland make a valuable contribution to the Wealden landscape character, particularly in the north of the District, within the High Weald AONB. However, the ongoing decline in traditional woodland management practises and under management of woodlands and copses is resulting in the loss of species diversity.

15.37 There is also pressure on semi-natural woodlands (including ancient woodland) from inappropriate management, leading to the introduction of non-native garden species or the spread of invasive alien species (such as Japanese knotweed, Himalayan Balsam and giant hogweed) in parts of the District, which can prevent regeneration of native woodland.

15.38 Climate change resulting in more extreme weather could alter the species composition of existing species-rich woodlands and hedgerows, favouring species with lower water demand. Increasing incidences of pathogens may change the species mix of woodlands and higher temperatures and prolonged drought are likely to put woodlands under further stress and increase the risk of wildfires.

Biodiversity Opportunity Areas (BOAs)

15.39 The District's Biodiversity Opportunity Areas (BOAs) were defined in a project lead by the South East Biodiversity Forum in 2008. They currently present the best opportunity for enhancing biodiversity in the District, often being buffers around existing reserves or linkages between existing sites **(see Appendix B, Map 7)**. The BOAs comprise a variety of the habitats detailed in **Table 15.8** above, including ancient woodland and priority habitat deciduous woodland as well as other designated sites such as LWS and LNRs.

Green and blue infrastructure

15.40 Green infrastructure is a term used to describe the network of natural and semi-natural environmental assets including green spaces, water and other environmental features within urban and rural areas. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that planning should encourage multiple benefits from the use of land recognising the many functions that it can perform. It also states that Local Planning Authorities should set out a strategic approach, planning positively for the creation, protection, enhancement and management of networks of biodiversity and green infrastructure. As set out in the Governments Natural Environment White Paper, the approach should guide development to the best locations, encourage greener design and enable development to enhance natural networks.

15.41 Green infrastructure is a network of integrated spaces and features, not just individual elements; that it is 'multi-functional', providing multiple benefits simultaneously. Green Infrastructure plays an important role in our urban and rural environments. It helps improve people's health and wellbeing by providing access to nature and natural spaces, as well as encouraging walking and cycling. Green infrastructure can also address issues of social inequality through the creation of attractive environments which can attract business and investment, which also benefits the economy.

15.42 In addition, green infrastructure can help improve air quality by absorbing/filtering pollutants; support and enhance nature recovery and reverse environmental decline through the provision of habitats, green/blue corridors and stepping stones; and help us build resilience to, and mitigate, climate change impacts such as providing shade and cooling in urban areas during prolonged hot spells or mitigating flood risk.

15.43 The District's biodiversity assets discussed above form part of the green infrastructure network within Wealden but it also includes farmland, woodland, access routes, natural features such as rivers and hedgerows, other habitats such as grassland, heathland or wetlands, as well as more urban features such as trees, parks and gardens, amenity greenspace, allotments, churchyards and cemeteries, green roofs and walls.

15.44 The District's BOAs provide significant opportunities to strengthen the quality and value of the District's green infrastructure network, as they are considered to be the most important areas for habitat enhancement, restoration and the creation of BAP habitats.

15.45 The protection and retention of green and blue links / corridors and maintaining an inter-connected network of green spaces will be essential to retaining existing biodiversity and enhancing additional areas. It will also help to protect against habitat fragmentation and will allow species migration.

15.46 The **Wealden Green Infrastructure Study (2017)** identifies the District's green and blue infrastructure assets and identifies gaps in the network and the components and opportunities for improvement, having regard to factors such as accessibility, existing open spaces, natural and semi-natural habitats, protection of the water environment, landscape and geodiversity, and contribution to ecological networks. The mapping shows that there are deficiencies and gaps in the network in the south and south west of the District in comparison with the north of the District. The South Downs People and Nature Network (PANN) supports the District's GI work.

15.47 Key strategic green infrastructure assets and components where improvement opportunities exist include, but are not limited to:

- Green corridors
- Blue corridors
- Green access links
- Urban green grids
- Habitat enhancement, linkage and creation
- Conservation of landscape character and the historic environment.

15.48 Further detail in relation to strategic opportunities for both urban and rural areas is provided in the study. Opportunities are expressed on the Green Infrastructure Network Plans set out in the Study at a strategic level for the whole of the District, at a sub-District level and at a town scale for Crowborough, Uckfield, Heathfield and Hailsham & Polegate.

15.49 The green infrastructure network offers opportunities to link with biodiversity net gain (BNG), Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRSs), the national Nature Recovery Network and Natural Capital approaches to things such as flood risk mitigation and climate change adaptation. This is most prominently emphasised in Natural England's recently published Green Infrastructure Framework. There will also be opportunities to link with other local, regional and national projects through the production of a Wealden Green Infrastructure Strategy that will be developed to support green infrastructure delivery.

15.50 In terms of BNG, the metric used to calculate net gain includes within it many common green infrastructure habitat features, such as sustainable drainage systems, green roofs and walls etc and their inclusion in a scheme design can contribute towards meeting BNG requirements.

15.51 LNRSs will provide a shared spatial framework for improving local environments and draw on other relevant spatial plans and strategies such as GI strategies. It will be important to link GI strategies to Local Nature Recovery Strategies so that they work together and support each other, as well as support the aspirations for a national Nature Recovery Network. A key recommendation of the Wealden GI Study is to develop a GI Strategy for the District and this will be undertaken alongside the development of the Local Plan.

Baseline Data: Biodiversity

Key Sustainability Issues

- To ensure that development does not significantly affect internationally important areas of conservation to meet their conservation objectives
- To continue to protect, restore and maintain designated sites and priority habitats and species
- Limited brownfield development opportunities, which will mean that new development will mainly be delivered on greenfield sites and could contribute to biodiversity loss
- Rural development, increased urbanisation and transport infrastructure provision all has the potential to contribute to the further fragmentation and deterioration of habitats and a net loss of biodiversity
- Changes in the rural economy, which have traditionally been based upon farming and forestry, may lead to the inappropriate management of habitats and habitat and species loss
- Climate change may lead to changes in the distribution of fauna and flora, where southern species may expand northwards and cold-loving species may decline or disappear
- Locating development near to sensitive habitats, without an appropriate management can lead to potentially negative effects for habitats and species
- Uncertainty in relation to the scope of the Nature Recovery Network and Local Nature Recovery Strategy
- Biodiversity net gain will become mandatory in November 2023.

Likely Evolution without the Local Plan

- Potential deterioration of designated sites and priority habitats as a result of speculative development;
- The isolation and fragmentation of priority and other important habitats;
- The potential decline in biodiversity (species and habitats) due to speculative development pressures.

Scope of the Local Plan

15.52 The Local Plan can influence biodiversity and geodiversity in the following ways:

- Ensure that development follows the mitigation hierarchy in regards to protecting the key habitats, species and sites within the District
- Ensure that development maximises opportunities to protect and enhance the green and blue infrastructure network; ensuring current ecological networks are not compromised, and opportunities are taken to improve habitat connectivity and features
- Enable the delivery of strategic green infrastructure where required
- Facilitate minimum 10% BNG on site using the Defra Metric, and create resilient habitat connections as well as securing 30 year management and monitoring plans for BNG habitat
- Support the delivery of the Local Nature Recovery Network
- Support the delivery of nature-based solutions to help mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change within the District, whilst also improving the natural environment for people and wildlife
- Ensure developments maximise on-site biodiversity enhancements
- Contributing to and enhance the natural and local environment and support the delivery of wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services

Data gaps

15.53 Available data is presented above. Work in relation to the Local Nature Recovery Strategy has begun and this will provide further information and direction as the Local Plan progresses. We will also be undertaking a study to understand whether a higher than 10% BNG requirement is justified, feasible and achievable alongside an understanding of our biodiversity resource within the District. This work will commence shortly.

16.0 Landscape and Townscape

KEY PPPs

- **Environment Act 1995 (Section 62)**
- **The European Landscape Convention (ELC)**
- **Countryside & Rights of Way Act 2000**
- **National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)**
- **East Sussex Landscape Character Assessment 2016**
- **Wealden Landscape Character Assessments 2022**

KEY MESSAGES

- To develop landscape policies dedicated to the protection, management and planning of landscapes; and to establish procedures for the participation of the general public and other stakeholders in the creation and implementation of landscape policies
- To produce Management Plans for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) within their boundaries and to review them every five years.
- Strategic policies should set out an overall strategy for the pattern, scale and design quality of places, and make sufficient provision for: conservation and enhancement of the natural, built and historic environment, including landscapes
- Ensure that developments: are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities)
- Contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by protecting and enhancing valued landscapes
- Great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Baseline Data: Landscape and Townscape

16.1 Around 60% of the District is covered by protected landscape designations. Around 53% of the District lies within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and 7% lies within the South Downs National Park (see **Figure 16.1**). The South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) is the planning authority for its own area and has adopted its own Local Plan[165]. Those areas of the District within the South Downs National Park are not within the plan area for the Wealden Local Plan, however, in accordance with national planning policy and per duty of regard, the Council is required to consider both the impacts of the South Downs National Park itself and the impacts of its setting.

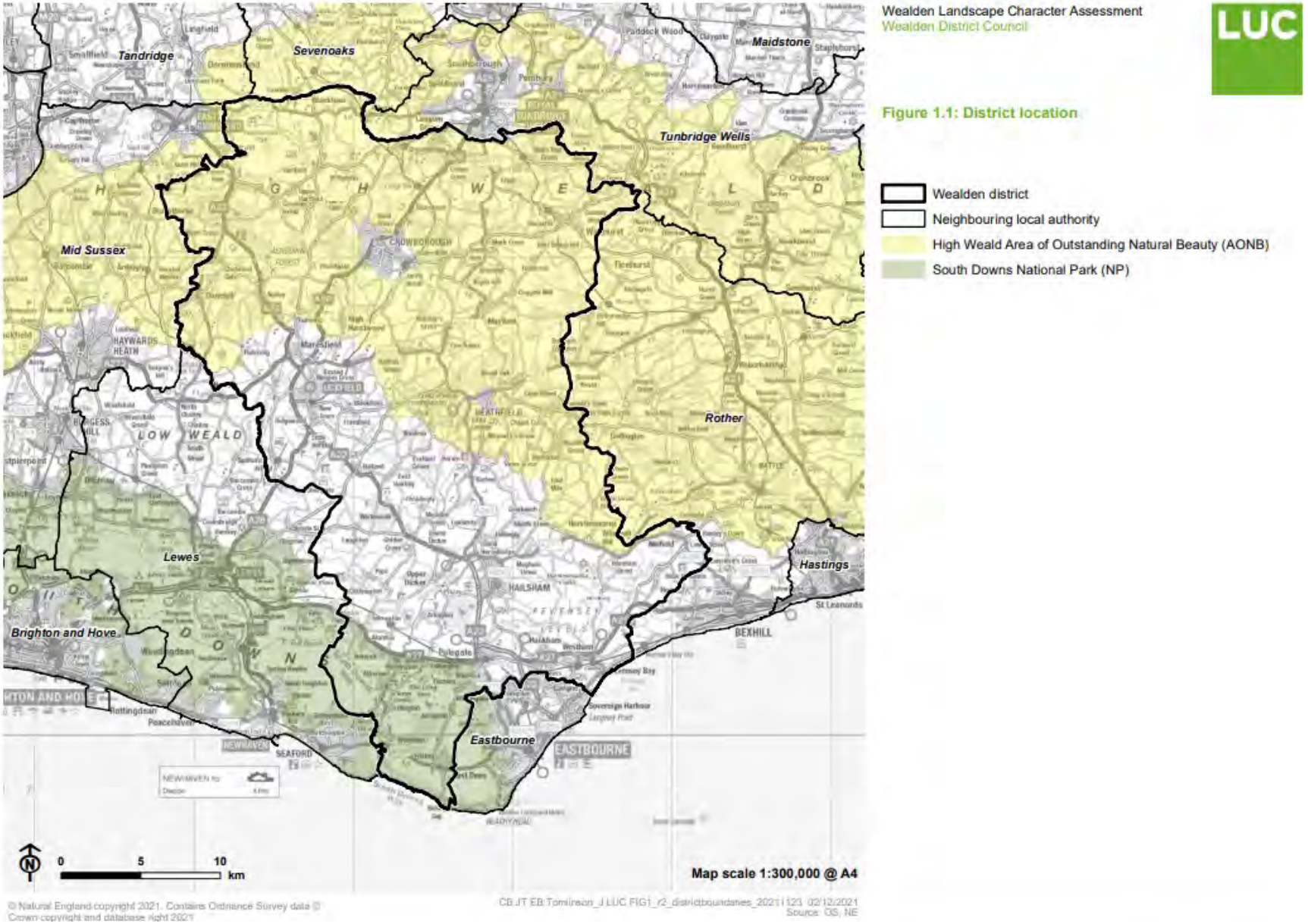
16.2 There are 4 National Character Areas within Wealden: the Low Weald, High Weald, Pevensey Levels and South Downs (see **Figure 16.2**). These contribute to the unique landscape character of the District.

- **NCA 121 Low Weald:** a broad, low-lying clay vale which is predominantly agricultural, supporting mainly pastoral farming owing to heavy clay soils, with horticulture and some arable on lighter soils, and has many densely wooded areas with a high proportion of ancient woodland
- **NCA 122 High Weald:** an area of ridged and faulted sandstone supporting one of the best surviving medieval landscapes in northern Europe and comprising a mixture of fields, small woodlands and farmsteads connected by historic routeways, tracks and paths
- **NCA 124 Pevensey Levels:** a low-lying area dependent on careful and continuous water management through a system of sluices and pumps, supporting grazed pasture; and
- **NCA 125 South Downs:** a 'whale-backed' spine of chalk stretching from the Hampshire Downs in the west to the coastal cliffs of Beachy Head in East Sussex.

16.3 The NCAs are further categorised at the county level into landscape character areas (LCAs) through the East Sussex County Landscape Character Assessment 2016, also shown on **Figure 16.1**[166]. The County LCA can be read on the ESCC website[167].

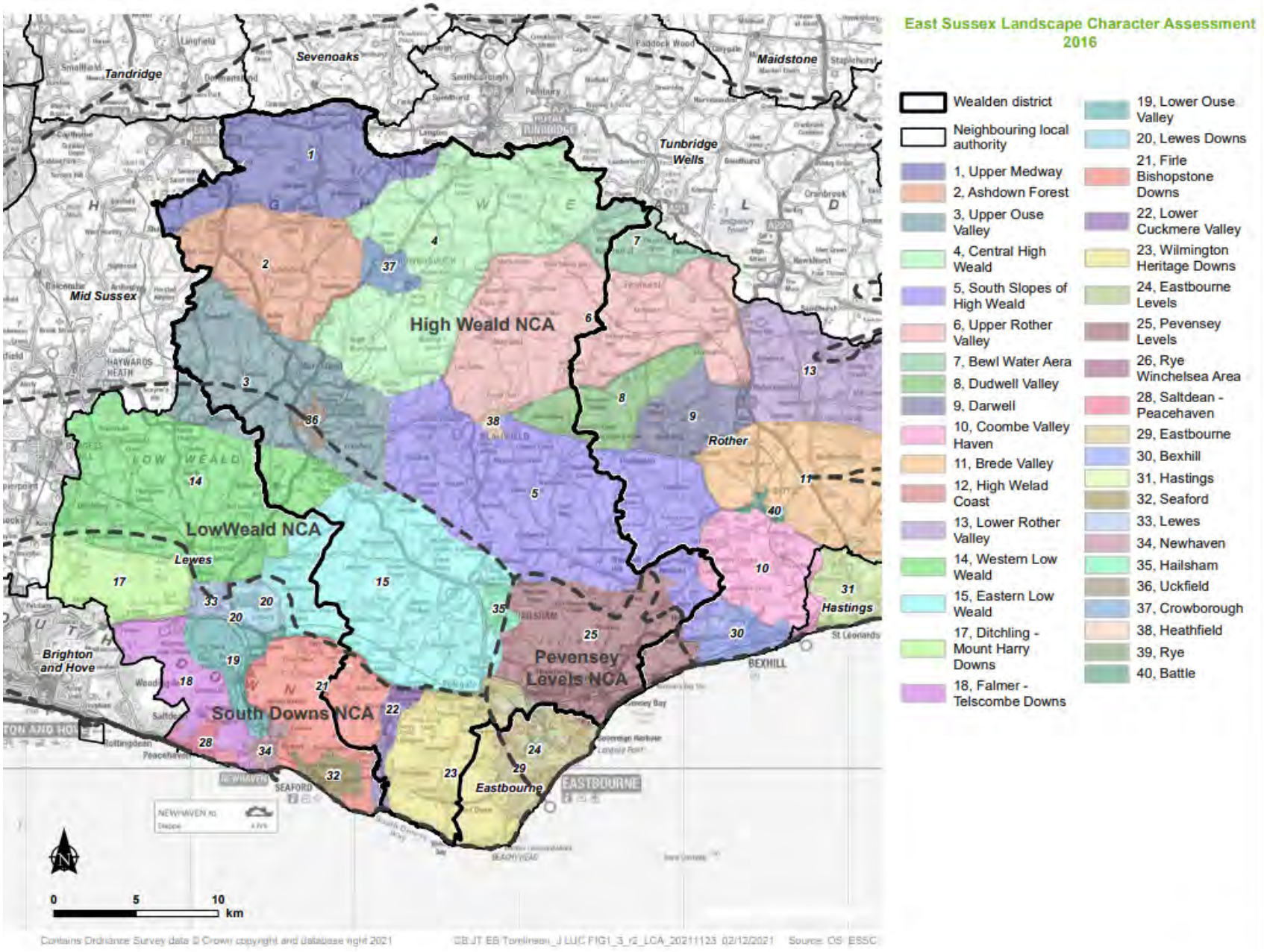
165 Adopted in July 2019. Available at: South Downs Local Plan - South Downs National Park
166 Source: Wealden Landscape Character Assessment, 2022. Landscape - Wealden District Council - Wealden District Council
167 Download – East Sussex Landscape Character Assessment | East Sussex County Council

Figure 16.1: High Weald AONB and South Downs National Park[168]



168 Source: Wealden Landscape Character Assessment, 2022. Landscape - Wealden District Council - Wealden District Council

Figure 16.2: National Character Areas covering Wealden



Wealden Landscape Character Areas and Types

16.4 The Wealden Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) was published in 2022 with the aim to create a comprehensive and up to date strategic District scale landscape evidence base to help inform the production of the Local Plan and provide a framework for more detailed landscape studies and sensitivity assessments. The LCA took account of the National and county level LCAs but then analysed the District's landscape further to determine discreet Landscape Character Types (LCTs) and Landscape Character Areas (LCAs).

16.5 The classification of the landscape within the assessment was undertaken at a scale of 1:25,000 and nests within the National Character Areas and the East Sussex Landscape Character Areas (shown above), but is at a local scale and mapped to a finer grain of detail. The classification and mapping involved identifying areas of common character, in particular information about geology, soils, landform, hydrology, land cover, land use, field patterns, settlement pattern, time depth and existing character assessments.

16.6 From the data gathering, six landscape character types (LCTs) were identified and within these 12 landscape character areas (LCAs). These are shown in **Figures 16.3** and **16.4**. It should be noted that the mapped boundaries may suggest that there is a sharp change from one landscape to another, however landscape character rarely changes abruptly and so generally the boundary lines represent a zone of transition from one landscape to another. Exceptions are the Cuckmere Floodplain and Pevensey Levels which are largely defined by flood zones/ extent of alluvium.

16.7 The Wealden LCA provides a detailed discussion of the key characteristics of the LCTs and LCAs along with the forces for change and landscape guidelines should development come forward in them. This is not site specific guidance. A summary of the LCTs and LCAs character is provided in **Tables 16.1 and 16.2**.

Figure 16.3: Wealden Landscape Character Types

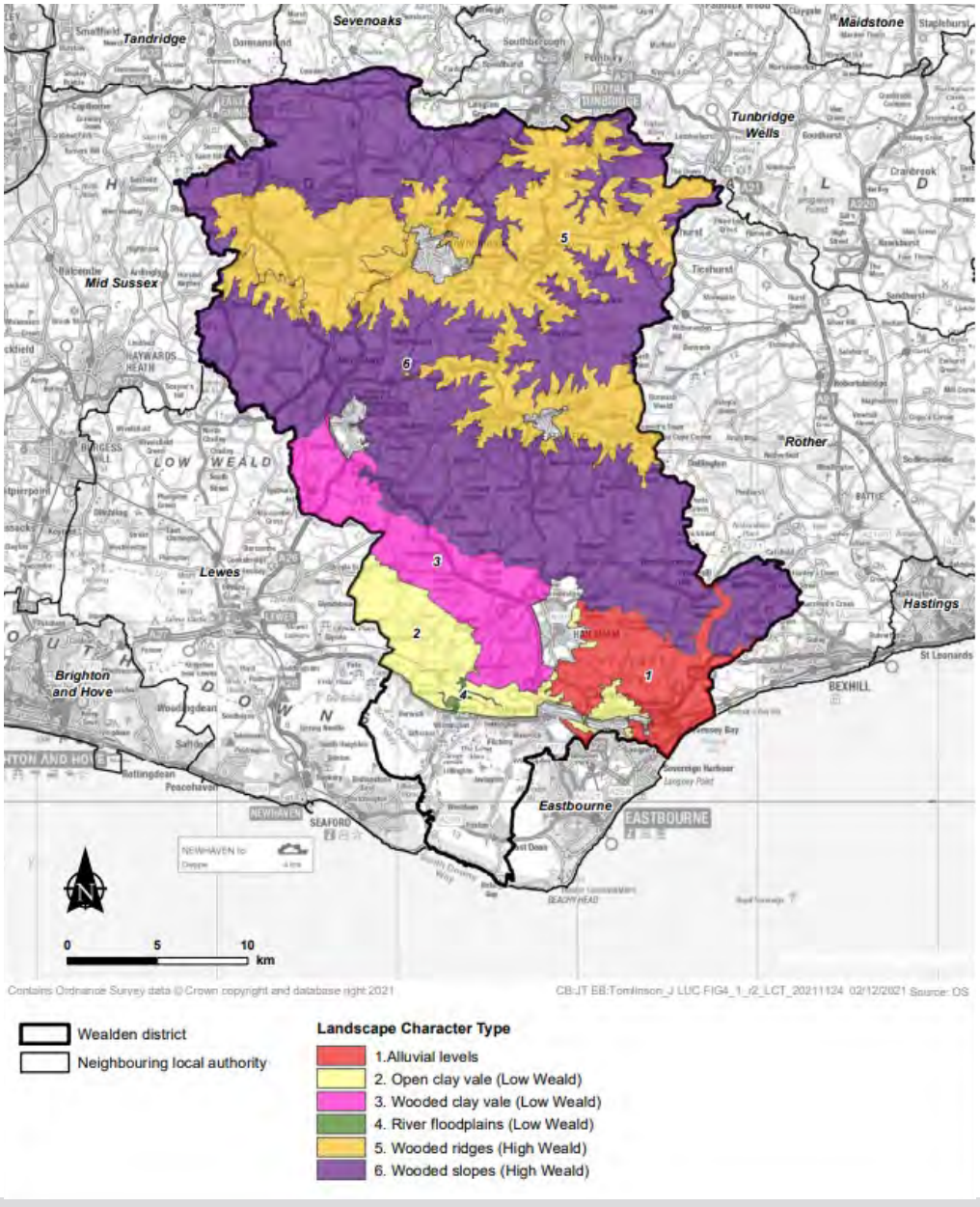


Figure 16.4: Wealden Landscape Character Areas

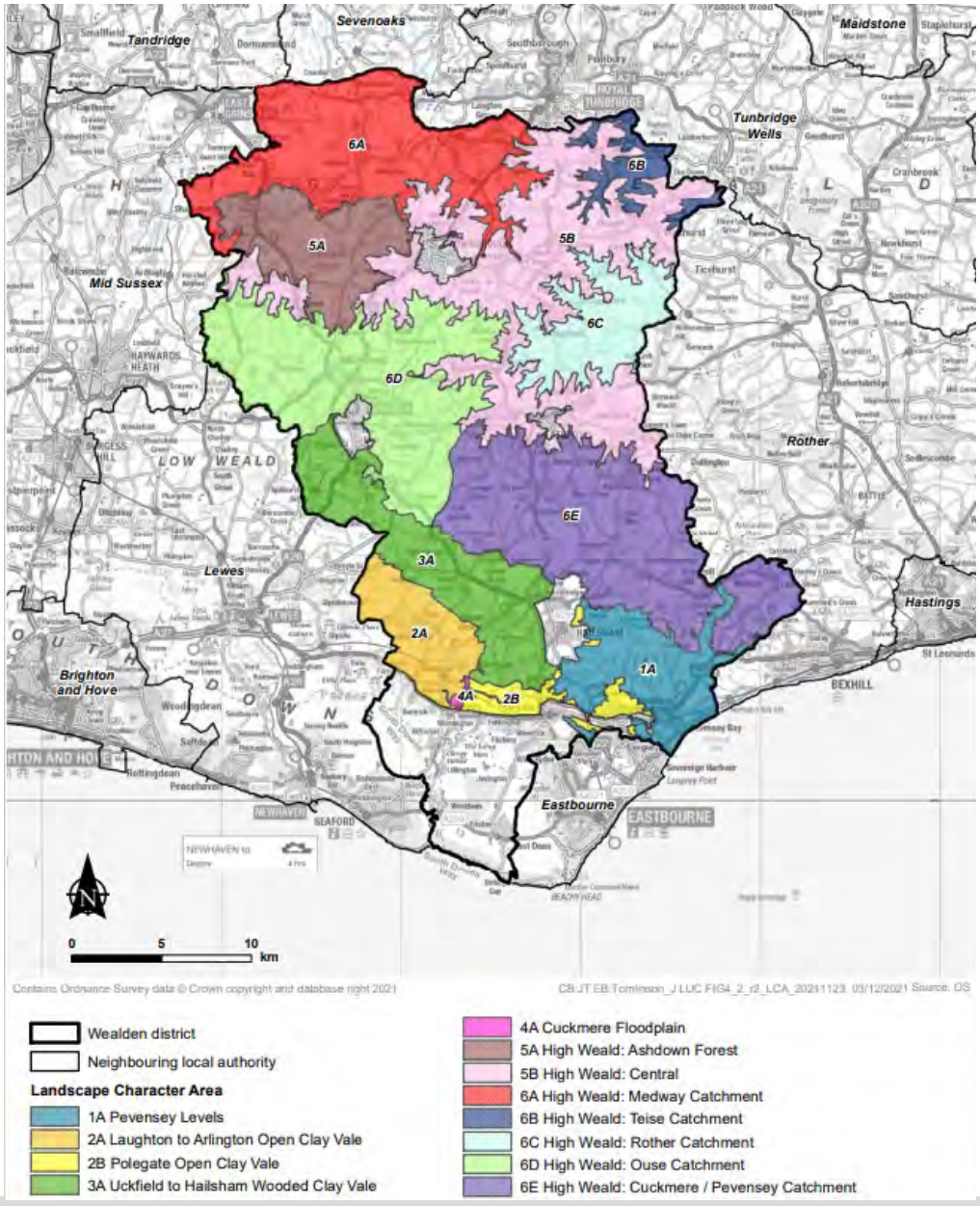


Table 16.1: Summary of the Landscape Character Types in Wealden

Landscape Character Type	Description
LCT1: Alluvial Levels	A distinctively flat and low-lying landscape, defined by the extent of underlying alluvium and Flood Zones 2 and 3. Land use is predominantly pastoral farmland, with extensive wetland habitats and limited tree cover which results in expansive and long-distance views, particularly to the South Downs. The landscape is unsettled with limited access by road, but there is a strong network of public rights of way.
LCT2: Open Clay Vale (Low Weald)	A low-lying landscape, typically between 15 and 30m AOD. It is defined by its open character, which contrasts with the wooded landscapes to the north (LCT 3 Wooded Clay Vale), and by a change in geology from Greensand and Gault mudstones to the Wealden Clay mudstones underlying LCT 3. Small streams and tributaries cross the landscape, which has a relatively open character due to the limited woodland. Agricultural land use is mixed, with arable cropping and sheep grazing. dispersed settlements are linked by minor roads
LCT3: Wooded Clay Vale	A low-lying small-scale landscape, characterised by farmland interspersed by woodlands. The LCT is defined by the 40m contour line to the north where the land rises to the wooded slopes of the High Weald, the transition to the low-lying flood zones of the Pevensey Levels to the east and the change to the less wooded landscape to the south which are also marked by a transition in underlying geology from Weald Clay to Lower Greensand/ Gault Mudstones. The mixed agricultural landscape is interspersed with areas of woodland, some very extensive. Linear settlements and farmsteads are strung along the rural road network. The edge of the LCT is impacted by its proximity to the large settlements of Hailsham and Uckfield
LCT4: River Floodplains	A small area of flat and low-lying river floodplain, whose boundaries are defined by the extent of underlying alluvium and Flood Zones 2 and 3 (as shown on the Environment Agency's Flood Map). Although the river itself is generally hidden from view, the character of the landscape is influenced by the river corridor and contains wetland habitats and riparian woodland. Riverside fields support arable cropping with limited pasture. The lack of settlement and limited access by road or public right of way, results in an isolated and hidden rural character
LCT5: Wooded Ridges (High Weald)	An extensive area of elevated landform, generally located above the 100m contour line, in the north of the District. The landscape type lies within the High Weald AONB and is one of the best surviving medieval landscapes in northern Europe, as a result of the historic field patterns, extensive woods and network of historic routeways. The landform is complex with a series of ridges and incised stream valleys, which combined with extensive areas of woodland (much of ancient origin), results in an enclosed character. In contrast, extensive open views across lower surrounding landscapes are possible. The landscape type contains large tracts of open access land and is heavily used for recreation
LCT6: Wooded Slopes (High Weald)	A rolling landscape of ridges and valleys that form the slopes to the most elevated ridgelines of the High Weald, typically between 40m and 100m AOD. Much of the landscape type lies within the High Weald AONB, and is one of the best surviving medieval landscapes in North West Europe, as a result of the historic field patterns, extensive woods and network of historic routeways. The landscape type contains the catchments of the rivers Medway, Teise, Rother, Ouse and Cuckmere that drain the High Weald and flow through the District. The landscape is a mix of arable and pasture fields, interspersed by extensive areas of woodland, much of ancient origin. Scattered villages are linked by generally narrow roads, and there is very good recreational access on public rights of way.

Table 16.2: Summary of the Landscape Character Areas in Wealden

Landscape Character Area	Description	Landscape Character Type
1A: Pevensey Levels	A distinctive flat and low-lying landscape, which is generally unsettled and has a relatively remote character. The landscape is dominated by reclaimed salt marsh now in use as grazed wet meadows with some arable fields. The wetland landscape is of high ecological value that supports internationally and nationally important wetland flora and fauna. Settlement is generally confined to low-density dispersed farmsteads on medieval sites, with the exception of 20th century development at Pevensey Bay. A shingle beach shoreline at Pevensey Bay is the District's only shoreline outside the South Downs National Park. The south and western edges of the LCA are influenced by urban fringe elements on the edge of Polegate, Stone Cross, Westham and Hailsham, and the busy A259 is a modern intrusion in the east and south-east	**LCA1: Alluvial Levels**
2A: Laughton to Arlington Open Clay Vale (Low Weald)	A low-lying landscape of mixed arable and pasture farmland with a small-scale settlement pattern of historic villages linked by a network of rural roads. Limited tree cover leads to open views south towards the South Downs.	**LCT2: Open Clay Vale (Low Weald)**
2B: Polegate Open Clay Vale (Low Weald)	A low-lying landscape of mixed arable and pasture farmland, with a small-scale settlement pattern linked by a network of enclosed rural road corridors. The landscape comprises small-medium fields with a strong hedgerow network. Limited tree cover leads to open views south towards the South Downs. The rural character of the landscape is compromised by its proximity to Hailsham and Polegate and the busy A27 and A22 which cross the landscape.	
3A: Uckfield to Hailsham Wooded Clay Vale	A low-lying landscape, crossed by the narrow river valleys of the Uck and its tributaries in the west and the Cuckmere in the east. The landscape supports a patchwork of arable and pastoral fields, interspersed with areas of woodland, much of ancient origin, and more extensive mixed plantations. Scattered linear settlements and farmsteads are strung along the rural road network. The edge of the LCA is strongly influenced by its proximity to Hailsham and Uckfield.	**LCT3: Wooded Clay Vale**
4A: Cuckmere River Floodplain	A small low-lying, unsettled landscape of farmland, located along the course of the River Cuckmere. The landscape comprises arable fields and riparian woodland which lines the course of the river and its tributaries.	**LCT4: River Floodplains**
5A: High Weald - Ashdown Forest	A rolling landscape of elevated ridges incised by gill streams and watercourses, which drain north to the River Medway and south to the River Ouse. The landscape comprises open areas of heathland interspersed with mixed or coniferous woodland, including extensive areas of ancient woodland, streams, dispersed historic farmsteads and scattered dwellings. The LCA is located within the High Weald AONB.	**LCT5: Wooded Ridges (High Weald)**
5C: High Weald - Central	Located within the High Weald AONB. It is a rolling landscape of elevated ridges incised by gill streams and watercourses, which drain north to the River Medway and River Teise, and south to the River Ouse and River Rother. The landscape comprises a patchwork of fields (including ancient fields and assarts), mixed woodlands, including ancient woodland, streams and numerous ridge-top settlements, some of which are historic	

Landscape Character Area	Description	Landscape Character Type
6A: High Weald - Medway Catchment	Located within the High Weald AONB. A rolling landscape of ridges and valleys containing the River Medway and its tributaries that drain northwards from Ashdown Forest into Sevenoaks District. A heavily wooded landscape with a pattern of small irregular fields, streams and scattered picturesque and historic settlements including Groombridge, Forest Row and Hartfield.	**LCT6: Wooded Slopes (High Weald)**
6B: High Weald - Teise Catchment	Located within the High Weald AONB. A gently rolling valley landscape containing the River Teise and its tributaries that drain north-eastwards from the Central High Weald into Tunbridge Wells District. The landscape comprises fields on valley slopes (including ancient fields and assarts), woods, small winding streams, ponds, part of Bewl Water (a flooded valley), dispersed historic farmsteads and scattered dwellings. The LCA is in two sections, separated by LCA 5B High Weald - Central.	
6C: High Weald - Rother Catchment	Located within the High Weald AONB. A rolling landscape of ridges and valleys containing the River Rother and its tributaries that drain eastwards from the Central High Weald into Rother District. A heavily wooded landscape with a pattern of small irregular fields (including ancient fields and assarts) with scattered cottages and farmsteads, many of which are historic.	
6D: High Weald - Ouse Catchment	A rolling landscape of ridges and valleys containing the River Ouse and its tributaries that drain south-westwards from Ashdown Forest and the Central High Weald into Lewes District. A wooded landscape with an intricate pattern of small irregular fields, streams and small, historic ridge-top settlements. The High Weald AONB extends into the north of this LCA, west of Fletching and east of Blackboys and Buxted	
6E: High Weald - Cuckmere/ Pevensey Catchment	A rolling landscape of ridges and valleys containing the River Cuckmere and its tributaries that drain south from the Central High Weald into the Low Weald, and the tributaries of Waller's Haven that drain east into the Pevensey Levels. A wooded landscape with a pattern of small-scale irregular fields, streams and historic ridge-top villages. The LCA is separated into two sections by LCA 1A Pevensey Levels at Waller's Haven (and the District boundary). The north of the LCA, north of Horam, Windmill Hill and Ninfield, lies within the High Weald AONB	

Townscape

16.8 The built environment in Wealden is dominated by a number of market towns as well as numerous smaller settlements and villages. The towns of Crowborough, Heathfield, Uckfield, Hailsham and Polegate comprise both residential and commercial development as well as supporting infrastructure, services and facilities. Some of our larger villages also provide this but on a smaller scale.

16.9 The historical growth of Wealden as a District and the settlements within it, address locality, topography, typology, local climate, urban (town or village) form, building types and materials which provide a colour signature (arising from localised mineral and clay content), social and commercial identity, all of which nurture local distinctiveness. This has been as a result of an evolutionary process and it is important in the future for new development to continue this evolutionary process.

Main pressures on our landscape and townscape

16.10 Wealden's landscape is constantly changing through human activity and natural processes. The cumulative effects of these processes can considerably alter the character of the landscape. The individual Landscape Character Area (LCA) profiles within the Wealden Landscape Character Assessment (2022)[169] include reference to key pressures, past, present and future. It identifies that the main pressures on the District's landscape as climate change, changes in agricultural practices, land management change, development pressure and need for renewable energy development.

16.11 In relation to climate change, this can affect our landscapes by a requirement for land management practices to adapt to hotter drier summers and more intense rainfall events. It may be the case that agriculture needs to adapt to grow different crops and develop more responsive and flexible land management practices, such as to account for irrigation for example. Agricultural intensification is also of relevance to our landscapes for example. This could result in a loss of pasture for cereal production, providing fodder crops (maize) and straw for bedding, which in turn can result in field enlargement and subsequent loss of hedgerows and hedgerow trees, which are important landscape features, especially in the north of the District within the High Weald AONB.

16.12 Changes in pasture and grazing livestock, including decrease in traditional sheep and cattle grazing and increase in pig or horse grazing can impact on the character of the countryside through the division of existing fields into individual paddocks defined by post and wire or horse tape, increasing stabling and sties and degradation of pasture due to lack of active grassland management leading to either scrub invasion or over grazing.

169 Source: Wealden Landscape Character Assessment, 2022. Landscape - Wealden District Council - Wealden District Council

16.13 Direct payments to farmers through the Common Agricultural Policy and direct support payments are being phased out, to be replaced by the Environmental Land management Scheme (ELMS) which is being phased in until 2028, with transitional schemes such as the Farming in Protected Landscape Schemes established to reduce gaps in support for farming during the transition period. There is continuing uncertainty about how ELMS will impact farming practices in England and the consequent impacts on landscape character.

16.14 The need to reduce carbon emissions through an increase in renewable energy sources could have a significant impact on the character of the landscape in the District. Rural diversification and a trend towards green energy from biomass or waste in the future is likely to have a localised influence on the character of the rural landscape through changes in vegetation patterns such as large-scale single species planting and land management. The move towards more solar farms, and potentially onshore wind turbines, is also likely to have an effect on the character of the District's landscape.

16.15 Infill development or the expansion of existing settlements can lead to the loss of open agricultural land and woodland, which in turn reduces the character of the landscape immediately adjacent to these areas. This includes the provision of additional public open space adjacent to new developments, as well as infrastructure works such as upgrading existing infrastructure and the provision of new infrastructure such as that associated with new roads or road improvements. These developments can all result in a negative impact on landscape character in terms of fragmentation of the landscape, the erosion of the pattern and character of settlements, a loss of tranquillity and a decline in biodiversity. There is also potential for tourism to affect landscape, including increased pressure on tourist facilities, demand for new facilities as well as increased demand for visitor accommodation such as caravan parks, hotels and leisure complexes.

Baseline Data: Landscape and Townscape

Key Sustainability Issues

- The district has a rich and varied landscape including a significant proportion located within the High Weald AONB, which is nationally protected
- The Wealden Plan area is located adjacent to the South Downs National Park and there is potential for growth to impact upon its setting
- The need to manage pressure from new development on the AONB as well as protecting and enhancing areas of landscape value and our townscapes outside of the AONB including landscape features and characteristics
- The response to the climate emergency is likely to increase pressure for renewable energy developments on greenfield sites within rural landscapes.
- New woodland creation will need to take place in the right locations to ensure that maximum benefits are gained for climate change
- Pressure for the development of greenfield sites, given a lack of suitable brownfield sites for development
- Pressure for development in the countryside including rural diversification and development associated with tourism
- The need to ensure the protection and enhancement of local distinctiveness and character and ensure high quality design.

Likely Evolution without the Local Plan

- Increased development pressure on our landscape and sensitive landscape areas;
- Inappropriate development in our landscape / countryside

Scope of the Local Plan

16.16 The Local Plan can influence landscape and townscape in the following ways:

- Avoid harmful impacts on our nationally designated landscapes (High Weald AONB and the South Downs National Park and its setting.)
- Protecting areas of landscape / townscape value and ensuring good quality design and connections with surrounding landscape
- Protecting local distinctiveness and rural tranquailty
- Ensure that development responds sensitively to our existing landscape and townscape, taking into account character, views, local distinctiveness and landscape / townscape features
- Ensuring that landscape features are protected and where appropriate enhanced to retain their landscape and ecological value
- Ensuring that renewable energy developments take full account of landscape impacts.

Data gaps

16.17 Much of the baseline data and future trends comes from the Wealden Landscape Character Assessment (2022), which takes a strategic analysis of the District's landscape.

16.18 As part of the evidence base for the new Local Plan, the Council will undertake work to establish the sensitivity of the District's landscape to development. This work will assess the ability of the landscape to accommodate different scales and types of development, including renewable energy schemes and development within the High Weald AONB, as well as provide landscape management and mitigation guidance. The evidence will also cover the strategic and site level sensitivity of the landscape and will assist in informing the Local Plan, especially in the consideration of growth options.

17.0 Transport, Connectivity and Communications

KEY PPPs

- Transport Act (2020)
- DfT Outcome Delivery Plan 2021 to 2022
- HM Government Transitioning to zero emission cars and vans - 2035 delivery plan
- Active Travel England - The Second Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy 2022
- DfT Gear Change - A bold vision for Cycling and Walking 2020
- De-carbonising Transport – Setting the Challenge (2020)
- Road investment Strategy 2020-2025
- TCPA Guidance to 20 minute neighbourhoods
- The Building Regulations 2010 (2021 edition) Infrastructure for the charging of electric vehicles
- The Road to Zero (2018)
- National Planning Policy Framework - Transport
- East Sussex County Council Local Transport Plan (2011-2026)
- East Sussex Local Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP)

KEY MESSAGES

- Ensure transport issues and opportunities are considered from the earliest stages of plan-making and development proposals
- Improve connectivity by enhancing the transport network and creating a more integrated transport system
- Create enhanced, safer, reliable and inclusive transport networks for all users
- Tackle climate change and improve air quality by de-carbonising transport.
- Require electric vehicle charging points to be provided in all new development to facilitate the uptake of vehicular zero emission journeys through the delivery of supporting infrastructure
- Accelerate modal shift to public and active transport through the delivery of infrastructure and travel behaviour change initiatives, cycle training and travel information
- Promote innovation through new technology to support the de-carbonisation of transport
- Prepare the Strategic Road network to align with net zero targets by 2050.

Baseline Data: Transport, Connectivity and Communications

Road network and capacity

17.1 The District is connected to the Major Road Network (MRN) via the A22 and A26, which run through the District providing access to and between Eastbourne, Tunbridge Wells, East Grinstead as well as providing links to Gatwick and London via the M23 and M25. Several key junctions and roads on these corridors are currently at, or reaching capacity, and experience congestion and delay during peak hours. A package of highway improvement schemes to the southern part of the A22 are currently being progressed as part of a Major Road Network funding programme, however, the outcome of the Major Road Network bid will not be known until later this year.

17.2 The A27, which is part of the Strategic Road Network, is situated in the southern part of the District, providing connections with Lewes and Brighton. National Highways (NH) have recently implemented highway improvements on the A27. An offline A27 to improve capacity issues has also been mooted as part of future opportunities to improve congestion between Polegate and Lewes. However, should this be an option it is unlikely to be delivered until after this plan period.

17.3 Throughout the Local Plan process the Council will be working with East Sussex County Council to consider and test Local Plan growth strategy options. A 'vision and validate' approach will be used to assess highway capacity highway capacity alongside assessing transport measures which create places for people and support healthier, safer, prosperous and carbon neutral development.

17.4 Testing will be an iterative process and information will be published at key Local Plan consultation stages. Work will involve testing options using a new County-wide Transport Model. This model will also be used to test future growth options in surrounding District's and borough's.

17.5 The study is required to address the requirements of both East Sussex County Council and National Highways. Work will also take place to inform sustainable transport options and mitigation. The outcomes of this work will be set out in the Local Plan Infrastructure Delivery Plan.

17.6 In addition, East Sussex County Council is updating their Local Transport Plan 4, with a timeframe between 2024 - 2050. The Council will liaise with East Sussex County Council closely through the production of the Local Plan to strengthen the links between spatial and transport planning and alignment of emerging approaches and policies associated with transport, highways, active and sustainable travel.

17.7 The Council also works in partnership with Transport For The South East, who are a sub-national transport body. A Transport Strategy for the South East was published in 2020 and sets out a regional vision and set of priorities, initiatives and schemes that are required to deliver sustainable economic growth across the south east region. This is supported by TfSE's Strategic Investment Plan 2023, which sets out a framework for investment in strategic transport infrastructure, services, and regulatory interventions up to 2050.

17.8 As part of the Council's Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) and working in partnership with surrounding District's and boroughs, work will take place to identify forecast changes in traffic flows on roads entering Ashdown Forest SAC/SPA as a result of proposed housing and commercial development proposed in the Local Plan. The results of this work will be used for the air quality and ecological interpretation work for the Local Plan HRA. The results of the HRA will be reported at each key Local Plan consultation stage.

Public transport

17.9 The public transport network within the District is currently considered poor. There are bus and rail services for some settlements to neighbouring larger key destinations, such as Eastbourne, Brighton and Tunbridge Wells as well as from some settlements to our towns. However, whilst rail services run through the day and evening, bus services can be less regular, often providing a limited frequency, especially at weekends or in the evenings. There are also often poor bus and / or rail connections for onward journeys.

17.10 A considerable number of bus service improvements, including improvements to the frequency of some services, the later running of others and improvements to some weekend services, were made for Wealden District from 23 July 2023. Many of these improvements will also support access to rail stations and key urban centres. The specific bus service improvements for the District can be viewed via Wealden District Bus Service Improvements | East Sussex County Council.

17.11 The specific areas within Wealden where these services are being delivered also benefit from FlexiBus, which is a flexible, on-demand rideshare service. Residents can book a FlexiBus journey to their nearest town, train station, hospital and other key destinations.

17.12 In relation to rail, Wealden has a number of train stations connecting Frant, Wadhurst, Uckfield, Buxted, Crowborough and Eridge to London. Services also connect Pevensey, Westham, Polegate and Berwick to Hastings, Eastbourne, Brighton and Lewes, with an onward journey from these stations to Gatwick, London and Ashford from Hastings.

17.13 In general terms, rail services in Wealden are located within the eastern and southern part of the District and there is no north / south rail network within the District itself. This means that many urban areas, such as Hailsham and Heathfield, as well as many of the District's settlements do not have direct access to rail services.

Active Travel

17.14 Key to reducing traffic and congestion on the road network, and reducing carbon emissions, will be an increase in walking, wheeling and cycling for short journeys or as part of longer journeys. The District benefits from **National Cycle Network Route 21** running north-south through the middle of the District. This route makes use of the **Cuckoo Trail**, which is mainly an off-road shared cycling and pedestrian route running between Polegate to Heathfield incorporating Hailsham, Horam and Maynards Green. The route continues on-road from Heathfield to Groombridge and Tunbridge Wells. In addition to the Cuckoo trail, a shared cycling and pedestrian route has recently been delivered alongside the A27 corridor connecting Polegate with Lewes, which now offers an alternative to driving along this busy route. In all other locations across the District cycle infrastructure is currently limited.

17.15 In 2021, East Sussex County Council published their Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan. This identified a number of priorities for walking and cycling improvements. Potential schemes are identified with a focus around Wealden's main towns of Hailsham, Polegate, Crowborough and Uckfield. These schemes will however rely on growth and partnership working for both their funding and delivery and influencing people's travel behaviour to encourage 'modal shift' away from using the highest emitting forms of transport towards lower emitting forms of transport (public transport, cycling or walking) where possible will be an important focus in the Local Plan.

Car ownership

17.16 The number of households within the District owning one or more cars has increased from 50,042 in 2001 to 54,875 in 2011 to 61,047 in 2021. This is an increase of 11,005 in the twenty year period.

17.17 The majority of households in Wealden if not working from home (34.9%) travel to their place of work by car (55.8%). Both these figures are higher than the national and county percentages, as can be seen in **Table 17.1**.

17.18 Car ownership will continue to rise during the lifetime of the Local Plan with the projected population rise in the District, number of households and members of households wanting their own car.

Table 17.1: Method of travel to Work in 2021 as a percentage of total workforce

Area	WFH	Train	Bus	Motor bike	Car	Bike	On Foot	Other
England	31.5	3.9	4.3	0.5	49.1	2.1	7.6	1.0
South East	35.8	2.4	2.5	0.5	48.2	1.9	7.6	1.0
East Sussex	31.1	2.3	2.4	0.5	53.2	1.3	8.2	1.0
Wealden	34.9	1.8	0.9	0.3	55.8	0.7	5.4	0.9

Source Data from ONS Census data 2021

17.19 Table **17.2** shows a greater level of residents in Wealden travel 10+km each day to work than nationally or regionally, with 24.8% of the population within the District travelling more than 10+km to work compared to 18.7% nationally.

Table 17.2: Distance Travelled to Work (2021) shown as percentages

Area	Works mainly from home	Travels less than 10km	10km to less than 30km	30k & over	Other
England	31.5	35.3	14.4	4.3	14.5
South East	35.8	30.9	13.5	4.9	14.8
East Sussex	31.1	31.0	14.9	5.0	17.8
Wealden	34.9	22.5	19.2	5.6	17.8

Source: East Sussex in Figures - Distance travelled to work in 2021 - super output areas

Commute to work

17.20 According to the Census 2011, the net commuting flow within Wealden is -15,463 meaning more people commute out of the District for work than the number of people that commute into the District for work from neighbouring areas.

17.21 Table **17.3** shows the majority of commuters into Wealden (82.2%) drive a car or van with only 6.2% using public transport. A similar pattern is shown for residents commuting out of Wealden, where 74.9% drive a car or van and only 17.3% use public transport. This illustrates the deficiencies of the public transport system within the District, especially for work purposes.

17.22 The low percentage of individuals using active travel methods to commute to work reflects the findings of Active Travel provision within Wealden, as identified in the walking and cycling section (paras. 17.21-23).

Table 17.3: Commuting Flows by method of travel to work 2011 (Source: East Sussex in Figures)

Mode of Transport	Total In commuters (%)	Total out commuters (%)
Public Transport	6.2	17.3
Car or van	82.2	74.9
On Foot	3.2	1.6
Cycling	1.0	0.8
Passenger of a car /van	5.7	4.1
Motorcycle	1.0	0.8
Taxi	0.2	0.1

Traffic Congestion

17.23 Data on traffic congestion for the county, as shown in Table 17.4, shows that average speeds on A Roads in East Sussex have reduced from around 29.4mph in 2015 to 26.3mph in 2021[170].

17.24 With average speeds continuing to decrease this potentially highlights increased levels of congestion throughout the major road and strategic road networks in East Sussex. Without intervention this has the potential to worsen in the future with population increases within East Sussex and Wealden.

Table 17.4: Average speeds on A road, 2015-2021

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
England	25.5	25.2	25.2	24.9	25.3	27.3	24.1
South East	28.5	28.1	28.2	28	28.3	30.7	26.7
East Sussex	29.4	29	29.1	28.8	29.2	30.9	26.3

Walking and cycling

17.25 The Active Travel England rating for East Sussex is level 1. Level 1 is categorised as having some local leadership with basic plans and isolated interventions that do not yet obviously form a plan for a network.

17.26 This finding is confirmed by the East Sussex County Council Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan 2021[171] (LCWIP). The current LCWIP adopted in 2021 is designed to run to 2031, which covers some but not all of the emerging Local Plan period.

17.27 The East Sussex Local Cycling & Walking Investment Plan (LCWIP) will be reviewed during 2023 – 2024 to ensure alignment with current government active travel policy and scheme design guidance (i.e. Local Transport Note 1/20). This will be alongside the opportunities to align with the emerging East Sussex LTP4 and the Wealden Local Plan, to review the opportunities to improve connectivity within and between key town and village centres to support sustainable development.

17.28 The current LCWIP **"focuses on areas where there are the greatest opportunities to increase levels of cycling and walking"**[172]. For Wealden this means the five key locations of Uckfield, Heathfield, Crowborough and Polegate.

170 East Sussex in Figures - Average speeds on A roads, 2015-2021 - county
171 ESCC LCWIP
172 ESCC LCWIP (September 2021) Page 5 paragraph 2.4

17.29 The LCWIP identifies the following issues that are relevant to Wealden:

- Limited cycling and walking network on key corridors of movement, within key growth areas
- Limited and inconsistent provision for cycling and walking connecting residential areas and key local trip attractors
- Inconsistent provision for cycling and walking to support inclusive access
- A lack of high-quality segregated routes and suitable (width of) highway space to be able to introduce such routes
- Safety issues – volume and speed of traffic
- Inconsistent provision connecting new development and the existing cycling and walking network
- Poor maintenance of existing infrastructure for cycling and walking
- Town centres dominated by traffic movements, impacting on ambience, safety and air quality
- Poor legibility in key centres
- Limited cycle parking provision at key destinations
- Prevalence of mental health issues in certain District and boroughs
- Education and awareness to help combat this perception, especially in vulnerable groups.

17.30 These issues are reflected in the low levels of adults who cycle regularly as shown in **Table 17.5**.

Table 17.5: Percentage of adults who cycle for any purpose by frequency (2021)[173].

AREA	At least once per month	At least once per week	At least 3 times per week	At least 5 times per week
England	13.1	9.1	3.9	2.1
East Sussex	10.4	6.3	2.4	1.1
Wealden	8.9	4.2	1.7	0.4
Eastbourne	11.6	7.9	3.7	1.8
Hastings	8.7	5.9	1.5	0.8
Lewes	14.6	10.3	3.8	2.2
Rother	8.6	4.2	1.7	0.4

17.31 The data in **Table 17.5** shows that residents of Wealden cycle less frequently at all levels of frequency when compared nationally or at a county level. Cycling within Wealden has a low overall percentage and this could reflect the perception of safety on the roads or the lack of cycle infrastructure within the District.

173 Proportion of adults who cycle, by purpose, frequency (2021

17.32 Conversely, there is a higher than the national average percentage of adults that walk regularly within Wealden, although less adults walk in Wealden than the East Sussex average as detailed in **Table 17.6**.

Table 17.6: Percentage of adults who walk, for any purpose by frequency (2021)[7].

AREA	At least once per month	At least once per week	At least 3 times per week	At least 5 times per week
England	77.4	69.7	42.9	31.3
East Sussex	79.0	72.8	46.2	35.2
Wealden	79.2	72.2	42.4	32.6
Eastbourne	78.0	72.6	49.4	37.3
Hastings	78.2	71.7	48.5	37.4
Lewes	81.0	75.3	49.1	36.1
Rother	78.3	72.6	44.1	34.2

Road Safety

17.33 Table **17.7** shows the locations in the District where road casualties were recorded in 2020. The largest concentration of road casualties were near the larger District centres in the southern part of the District, particularly around the Hailsham and Hellingly area as well as Pevensey, Polegate, Westham, Willingdon and Jevington.

Table 17.7: Recorded road casualties in 2020[174]

District Centres	Number of Casualties 2020
Crowborough	10
Forest Row	14
Hailsham and Hellingly	45
Heathfield and Waldron	17
Horam	8
Maresfield and Uckfield	29
Pevensey, Polegate, Westham, Willingdon and Jevington	89
Other Rural Parishes	211

17.34 Table **17.8** shows that there were a total of 330 casualties on the public highways in the District during 2023. This is a significant drop from the high point of 633 road casualties in 2016.

17.35 Table **17.9** shows motorised and non-motorised user fatalities for 2010 – 2023. Wealden shows a larger percentage of fatalities across the county than non-motorised vehicle fatalities. The Covid-19 pandemic may have influenced data leading to the noticeable decrease in the 2019-2020 period.

174 East Sussex in Figures - Recorded road casualties in 2020 - parishes

Table 17.8: Recorded road casualties, 2010-2023[175]

Area	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
East Sussex	1799	1631	1708	1795	1969	2065	1882	1818	1724	1802	1332	1374	1614	877
Eastbourne	258	241	288	277	307	311	288	286	234	239	181	218	222	116
Hastings	235	250	260	261	270	296	295	251	236	296	202	215	256	130
Lewes	339	293	284	291	337	381	296	308	337	332	241	246	282	119
Rother	372	291	320	327	439	448	370	358	352	397	285	300	375	182
Wealden	**595**	**556**	**556**	**639**	**616**	**629**	**633**	**615**	**565**	**538**	**423**	**395**	**479**	**330**

Table 17.9: Recorded motorised/non-motorised user fatalities 2010-2023[176]

Year	Motorised Vehicle User			Non-motorised Vehicle User		
	East Sussex	Wealden	% of County	East Sussex	Wealden	% of County
2010	21	9	56	5	0	0
2011	25	8	32	3	1	33
2012	13	5	40	3	1	33
2013	17	9	64	3	0	0
2014	16	7	55	5	1	20
2015	22	8	44	6	1	17
2016	24	9	42	5	1	20
2017	26	18	78	8	4	50
2018	21	10	50	5	2	40
2019	14	6	60	4	0	0
2020	17	8	38	4	3	75
2021	18	10	56	5	3	60
2022	20	6	30	9	3	33
2023	7	1	14	1	0	0
Total	**261**	**114**	**44**	**66**	**20**	**30**

175 Source Sussex Safer Roads partnership Data Portal available at https://ssrp.shinyapps.io/dataportal/ Last accessed 03/10/2023
176 Source Sussex Safer Roads partnership Data Portal available at https://ssrp.shinyapps.io/dataportal/ Last accessed 03/10/2023

Publicly available EV charging devices (April 2023)

17.36 As shown in **Table 17.10** The number of publicly available charging stations in Wealden currently sits at 32 units, which is 0.1% of the total in England and 19% of the total provided in East Sussex[177]. The provision of EV charging points across the County and District continues to be slower than the national average.

Table 17.10: Electric charging stations

Region	Total	Oct 2019	Jan 2023	Change
England	34203	12549	31466	+21654
East Sussex	165	59	163	+106
Wealden	32	12	31	+20

Bus Journeys 2009-2020

17.37 The Department for Transport's bus statistics data shows that in 2009/2010 there were 18.89 million journeys undertaken in East Sussex by bus. In 2021/2022 this figure had dropped to 12.0 million.[178] The noticeable drop in bus journeys during 2020/21 can potentially be attributed to the pandemic as all of the country witnessed this large decrease during this period.

17.38 In the northern part of the District hospitals were the most difficult service to access by bus. Lack of direct services was a barrier to public transport use, particularly for rural north Wealden.

17.39 Access to adult social care and to supermarkets via public transport was also perceived to be an issue, with access to further education and employment more of an issue for areas located in the north and east of the District. Heathfield had the largest number of issues relating to access to services by public transport, in particular hospitals, adult social day care and employment.[179]

17.40 In more southern areas of the District access to hospitals via public transport is generally better, but rural areas have longer journey times compared to urban areas. Access to employment and further education outside the District from Hailsham was reduced when the interchange between public transport services was not available.

17.41 Areas within the south of Wealden, Ripe, Chalvington and Arlington, had the poorest accessibility by bus to all services. Travel by bus within East Sussex has seen a persistent decline over the last ten years, a trend that is currently expected to continue.

Rail Travel in the South East [180]

17.42 The South East has four sub-regions (ITL2) with the Surrey, East and West Sussex sub-region accounting for the most (46.8 million) journeys to or from other regions. As **Figure 17.1** shows the use of rail travel in the South East is gradually increasing since the pandemic, however it is still a long way from achieving the pre-pandemic figures.

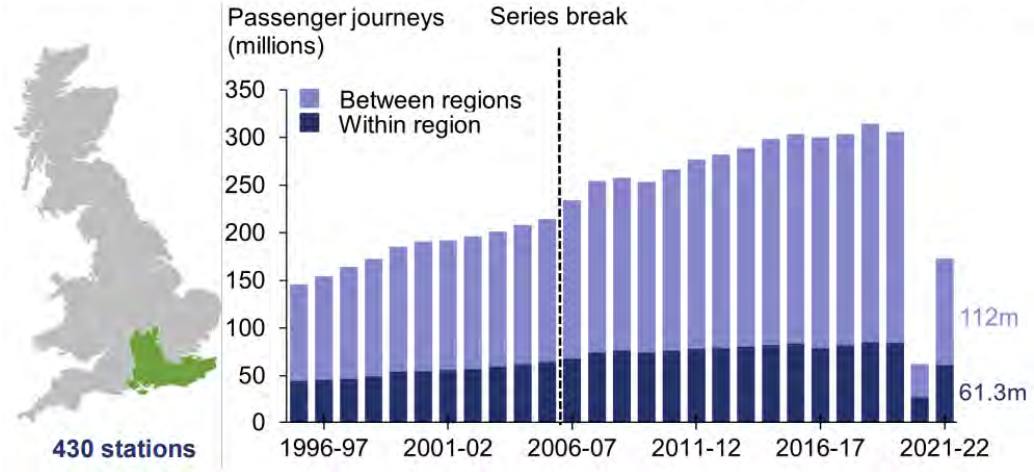
177 Dept for Transport: Electric vehicle charging statistics January 2023
178 Dept for Transport: Local bus passenger journeys (BUS01), 2009-20212
179 ESCC Bus Service Improvement Plan
180 Office of Rail and Road – Regional Rail Usage 2021-2022

17.43 The total number of journeys for the Southeast region was 173 million between April 2021 and March 2022, which equates to 57% of the 306 million journeys that were made before the pandemic in the period between April 2019 and March 2020. The 61.3 million journeys, made between April 2021 and March 2022, within the Southeast equates to 73% of the 84.4 million journeys made within the area, before the pandemic, during the April 2019 and March 2020.

17.44 The total number of journeys made to and from stations within Wealden during April 2021 to March 2022 was 1,759,076, 39% fewer trips than the same period in 2019 (Pre-Covid). This number of journeys equates to a little over 1% of the regions total trips during this timeframe.[181]

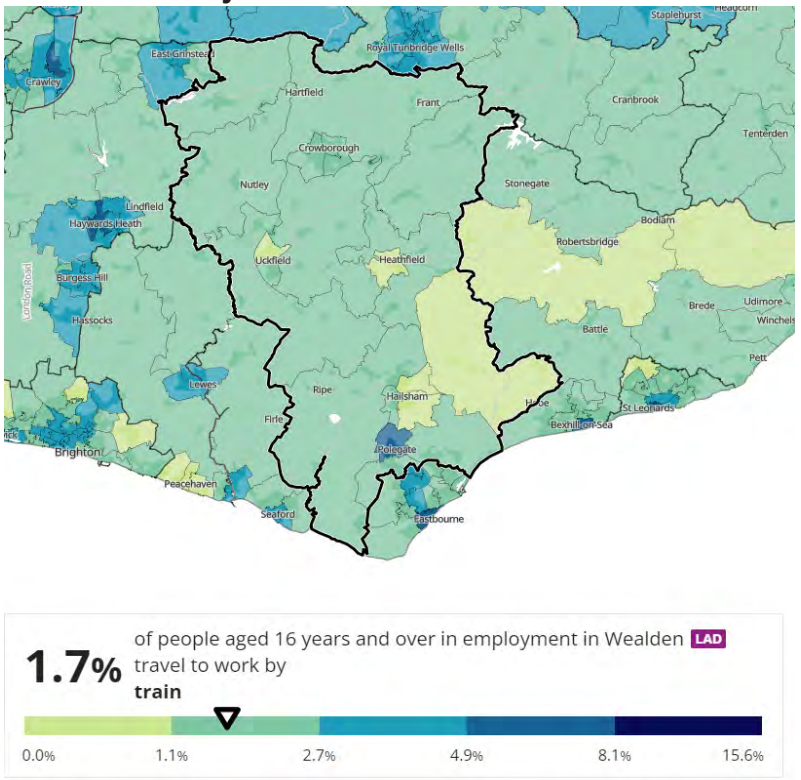
Figure 17.1

Passenger journeys, South East, annual data, 1 April 1995 to 31 March 2022 (Table 1570)



17.45 Within Wealden 1,255 households in 2021 regularly used the train to travel to their place of work[182], this equates to 1.7% of the total working age population within the District. As shown in **Figure 17.2**, Polegate and Uckfield have higher proportions of the population who commute to work by train. The figure shows the percentages of areas within the District of those who are working age who travel by train.

Figure 17.2: Percentage of the working age population that travel to work by train in Wealden [183]



181 Office of Rail and Road (2023) Estimates of Station Usage. Available at https://dataportal.orr.gov.uk/statistics/usage/estimates-of-station-usage/ Last Accessed 04/10/2023
182 East Sussex in Figures - Method of travel to work in 2021 - super output areas
183 Office for National Statistics – Census 2021

Digital Communications

17.46 Due to Wealden's rural infrastructure the District broadband service lacks behind the national levels, with only 47 % of all premises (residential and business) covered by at least one broadband operator for a fixed download speed[184]. The entire District is covered by at least one mobile network provider, including 4G provision[185].

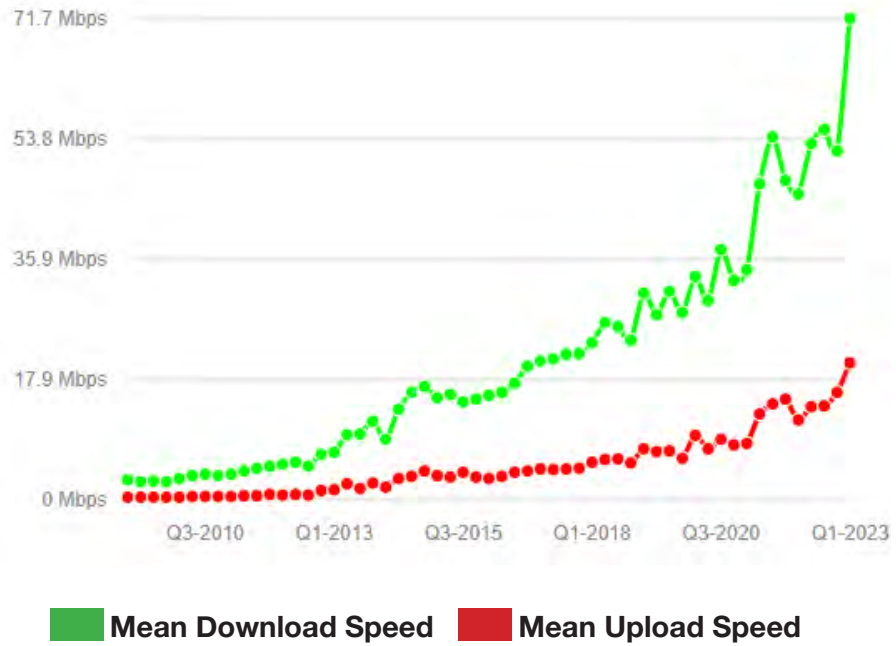
17.47 Economically, the District will benefit from increased access to useful broadband speeds. The growth of broadband penetration/speeds will lead to increased levels of productivity which in turn is associated with long term transformative impacts on the economy with the creation of new industries and job opportunities and new ways of working.

17.48 Whilst Wealden has a less-than-average percentage of premises with gigabit capable broadband, the District is performing comparably with East Sussex and Nationally. Rural areas are generally behind urban areas in terms of gigabit broadband coverage.

Table 17.11: Fixed broadband services [186]

AREA	<10 Mbit/s DL or <1 Mbit/s UL	>=30 Mbit/s	>=300 Mbit/s	Gigabit capable	Full Fibre
England	2%	96%	70%	69%	41%
Wealden Overall	1%	96%	47%	47%	47%
Wealden Urban	0%	91%	36%	35%	35%
Wealden Rural	3%	91%	54%	54%	54%

Figure 17.3: Wealden broadband speed test results



184 Ofcom Fixed Broadband coverage 2022
185 Ofcom Mobile Coverage Data 2022
186 Ofcom – Fixed Broadband Coverage 2022

Baseline Data: Transport, Connectivity and Communications

Key Sustainability Issues

- The rurality of the district brings challenges for transportation and connecting communities with employment, education, services and facilities
- Nearly half of the district's population lives in rural or remote areas with no or very limited access to public transport. The network, frequency and connectivity of different services is currently poor.
- Wealden has some A road connectivity but the more rural areas of the district are poorly connected by road.
- Improving choices and safety for more sustainable travel, walking and cycling, and accessible public transport is needed to reduce the high dependency on the private car
- Transport infrastructure is at or near to capacity during peak times at certain locations / key junctions
- More people commute out of the district for work by car or van rather than public transport. Those who work within the district also have a high reliance on the car / van.
- The provision of and retention of employment, education, services and facilities locally will help to reduce additional car trips and associated effects
- There is poor broadband connectivity in some areas mainly due to the rural nature of the district
- There are constraints on the capacity and reliability of the Transmission Network Operators (TNOs) and Distribution Network Operators (DNOs) to enable sufficient EV charging infrastructure.
- The 4G mobile service lags behind the national average for 4G mobile coverage due to the rural infrastructure.

Likely Evolution without the Local Plan

- Use of public transport may struggle to recover from the impacts of the pandemic and may continue to decrease or not reach levels pre-pandemic
- Development of an EV network across the district may stall or will not meet its full potential
- Increased congestion on the districts road infrastructure
- Broadband connectivity levels will lag behind the national levels, however continued development from providers will still mean that broadband speeds will improve
- District fails to meet its targets in the Climate Emergency Plan.

Local Plan Opportunities

17.49 The Local Plan can influence transport and communication in the following ways:

- Ensure that developments, particularly those within housing and employment allocations, seek to incorporate opportunities for superfast broadband infrastructure, particularly where superfast broadband is not available to the existing households
- Support the development of a comprehensive electric vehicle charging strategy and its swift implementation
- Ensure the sensitive location of new development in order to maximise access to community facilities particularly by sustainable modes of transport i.e. walking, wheeling, cycling, public transport
- Ensure that new development sites are designed and built with the appropriate walking and cycling infrastructure, to make people feel safe and confident to access local services and facilities by active travel
- Ensure new development provides appropriate contributions towards transport infrastructure and community services, and encourage provision of on-site services and access to public transport where appropriate
- Support for the provision of an improved public transport system within the District, including connections to areas outside of the District
- Promote and facilitate the delivery of sustainable travel, active travel routes and healthy streets, as well as links to green and blue infrastructure
- Support the development of Rapid Transit solutions in and out of the District and more flexible local transport dial and ride schemes.

Data Gaps

17.50 There is already significant and relevant data in relation to transportation and communications, however, further work will be undertaken once additional data is released from the Census 2021. As the plan progresses, essential transport modelling will be undertaken to understand mitigation requirements and sustainable travel opportunities to inform the Local Plan.

18.0 Waste

KEY PPPs

- **The Environment Act 2021**
- **Defra Waste Management Plan for England 2021**
- **The Resources and Waste Strategy for England 2018**
- **HM Government: A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment 2018**
- **National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)**
- **East Sussex Joint Waste Strategy 2014-2025**

KEY MESSAGES

- To minimise waste, promote resource efficiency and move towards a circular economy
- To minimise the damage caused to the natural environment by reducing and managing waste safely and carefully, and by tackling waste crime
- To work towards zero avoidable waste by 2050
- To eliminate avoidable plastic waste by the end of 2042
- To significantly reduce and where possible prevent all kinds of marine plastic pollution.
- To help deliver sustainable development through driving waste management up the waste hierarchy
- Ensure waste management is considered alongside other spatial planning concerns
- Provide a framework in which communities take more responsibility for their own waste;
- Help secure the recovery or disposal of waste without endangering human health and without harming the environment
- Ensure the design and layout of new development supports sustainable waste management

18.1 The amount of household waste in tonnes arising from Wealden District and East Sussex is provided below for the 2010/11 to 2020/21 period. This shows that the waste levels[187] have remained relatively static, albeit that 2020/21 did see an increase of waste in Wealden District specifically.

Table 18.1: Household waste arising from East Sussex and Wealden District, 2010/11 to 2020/21

Years	East Sussex (Tonnes)	Wealden District (Tonnes)
2010/11	242,804	58,155
2011/12	239,829	57,970
2012/13	238,106	58,457
2013/14	241,113	57,001
2014/15	245,062	59,315
2015/16	244,942	58,613
2016/17	249,306	59,297
2017/18	245,807	59,965
2018/19	241,907	58,908
2019/20	237,821	58,035
2020/21	242,787	63,773

18.2 The percentage of household waste that has been recycled in Wealden has increased significantly over the past 11 years, with the baseline figure in 2010/11 showing that only 16.8% (or 9,757 tonnes) of waste was recycled, but for 2020/21 this had increased to 29.6% (or 18,845 tonnes). This is a percentage increase over the period of 93.1% and shows that recycling in the District has substantially improved.

18.3 In terms of household waste sent to landfill in the District, this has significantly decreased over the past 11 years, with the baseline figure in 2010/11 showing 36.7% (or 21,332 tonnes) of waste was disposed to landfill, but for 2020/21 this was only 0.2% (or 111 tonnes). The figures are set out in the table below.

Table 18.2: Household waste sent to landfill from East Sussex and Wealden District, 2010/11 to 2020/21

Years	East Sussex (Tonnes)	Wealden District (Tonnes)
2010/11	89,313	21,332
2011/12	39,402	8,545
2012/13	13,002	3,173
2013/14	10,570	1,891
2014/15	6,700	447
2015/16	12,223	115
2016/17	11,131	129
2017/18	11,035	690
2018/19	9,401	399
2019/20	7,778	260
2020/21	2,987	111

187 East Sussex County Council, East Sussex in Figures (ESiF)

18.4 In terms of the composting of household waste, this has also decreased over the past 11 years, although it has continued to be relatively static over the period. In 2010/11, the composting of household waste equated to 24.9%, whilst this decreased to 19.8% in 2020/21. This level of composting is still above the East Sussex average.

Table 18.3: Percentage of household waste composted from East Sussex and Wealden District, 2010/11 to 2020/21

Year	East Sussex	Wealden
2010/11	16.5	24.9
2011/12	18.4	27.5
2012/13	18.6	28
2013/14	17.9	23.5
2014/15	17.6	24.2
2015/16	16.7	23.9
2016/17	16.6	24.2
2017/18	17.7	24.3
2018/19	17.5	24.8
2019/20	17.4	22.8
2020/21	15.7	19.8

18.5 However, perhaps the most significant trend has been in the percentage of household waste being used in energy recovery, with a baseline figure of 21.6% for the year 2010/11. In the 2020/21 period, this stood at over 50% of all household waste being used in energy recovery in Wealden District.

Table 18.4: Percentage of household waste used in energy recovery from East Sussex and Wealden District, 2010/11 to 2020/21

Year	East Sussex	Wealden
2010/11	25.5	21.6
2011/12	44.5	41.1
2012/13	55.9	50.7
2013/14	55	49.7
2014/15	55.7	49.6
2015/16	53.6	49.3
2016/17	52.9	47.5
2017/18	53.3	46.1
2018/19	54.2	46.7
2019/20	54.6	47.7
2020/21	57.6	50.4

18.6 Policy WMP5 (Provision of Built Waste Facilities) from the East Sussex, South Downs and Brighton & Hove Waste and Minerals Local Plan identifies the future need for recycling and recovery facilities and to provide flexibility in the Plan to demonstrate 'net self-sufficiency'. The estimated future requirements for East Sussex County Council are set out in the table below, which shows the amount of non-hazardous waste that will need to be managed up to 2025/2026[188].

188 East Sussex, South Downs and Brighton and Hove Waste and Minerals Local Plan. Adopted February, 2013

Table 18.5: Estimated Quantity of Waste to be Managed in the Plan Area (tonnes)

	2015/16		2020/21		2025/26	
	Min	Max	Min	Max	Min	Max
LACW[189]	361,000	392,000	356,000	414,000	352,000	437,000
C&I[190]	429,000	478,000	420,000	481,000	412,000	483,000
CDEW[191]	853,000	879,000	832,000	924,000	811,000	971,000

18.7 Estimating future requirements for waste management facilities is not a simple task and depends on a host of factors, including population and household growth; economic fluctuations; as well as changes in waste creation, management and disposal. For this exercise, both a minimum and maximum range was developed.

Table 18.6: Estimated Quantity of Recycling and Composting Capacity (Tonnes Per Annum) Required to Ensure Net Self-Sufficiency

	Recycling and composting capacity	
Year	Minimum	Maximum
2015/16	0	80,000
2020/21	0	120,000
2026/27	30,000	170,000

18.8 As with minerals sites, the adopted East Sussex, South Downs and Brighton & Hove Waste and Minerals Site Plan (February, 2017)[192] provides a list at Appendix B of Safeguarded Waste Sites in East Sussex, including a number in Wealden District. This is currently being updated through the East Sussex, South Downs and Brighton and Hove Waste and Minerals Revised Policies Plan (September, 2021)[193] that is at examination at the time of writing.

189 Local Authority Collected Waste (LACW)
190 Commercial and Industrial Waste (C&I)
191 Construction, Demolition and Excavation Waste (CDEW)
192 East Sussex, South Downs and Brighton and Hove Waste and Minerals Local Plan (February, 2017)
193 East Sussex, South Downs and Brighton and Hove Waste and Minerals Local Plan – Revised Policies – Proposed Submission Consultation Document (September, 2021)

Baseline Data: Waste

Key Sustainability Issues

- An increase in households and businesses will lead to an increase in household waste generation including construction waste
- The district has a very good record of recycling waste but will need to increase recycling rates and ensure that facilities are available for dealing with waste locally.

Likely Evolution without the Local Plan

- Significant increased waste generation associated with new development; and
- Waste recycling and recovery facilities are located within the district without taking account of local circumstances.

Scope of the Local Plan

18.9 The Local Plan can influence waste and recycling in the following way:

- Avoid creating waste by promoting and supporting the sustainable waste management hierarchy within developments, ensuring disposal to landfill is a last resort
- Ensure that new developments are sustainably designed and constructed, including the consideration of recycled and / or recyclable materials to reduce a developments embodied carbon emission
- Facilitate behavioural change by providing suitable waste and recycling facilities within homes and business premises (as relevant) to increase recycling and composting rates
- Ensure that the ESCC Waste Management Strategy is taken into account alongside any locally derived strategies
- Safeguard waste sites identified in the adopted Waste and Minerals Sites Plan (2017) and the East Sussex, South Downs and Brighton and Hove Waste and Minerals Revised Policies Plan once adopted
- Look to minimise the quantities of aggregates used in construction and prioritise the use of recycled and secondary aggregate over virgin aggregate

Data Gaps

18.10 There are no current data gaps in relation to waste and recycling information for Wealden and the wider East Sussex area. The Council will continue to monitor local data, as well as the publication and adoption of Waste and Minerals Local Plans as they proceed through the examination process.

19.0 SA Methodology and Framework

Introduction

19.1 The Sustainability Appraisal Framework (SA Framework) provides a way in which the sustainability effects of the plan can be described, analysed and compared. The framework provides a set of sustainability objectives and indicators to be used when undertaking the appraisal. The indicators should be measurable to provide a way of checking whether the objectives are being met, for example, the number of homes built.

Developing the SA Objectives and the Framework

19.2 Stage A4 of the Scoping process entails developing the SA/SEA Objectives and Framework. Sustainability issues have been identified in the consideration of the baseline information and policies, plans and programmes and these are detailed under the respective baseline sections.

19.3 The issues have then been used to inform the Sustainability Objectives. The objectives within the SA Framework were initially developed at the Scoping Stage in 2020/2021 and were refined and updated following 'The Direction of Travel' Consultation.

19.4 As part of this Report, the SA Objectives have been further refined and updated to reflect policy changes, the assessment of new baseline data and the findings of the further review of the PPPs. The updated SA Objectives have also been informed by the specific SEA topics within Schedule 2 of the SEA Regulations, which the Council is required to include.

19.5 It should be noted that the SA objectives are distinct from the Local Plan objectives though they may in some cases overlap with them. The SA objectives have been expressed as targets and will complement the Local Plan objectives.

19.6 The revised SA Framework is designed to reflect the key issues facing the District's environment, the economy and society. The Framework sets out 20 objectives, accompanied by a set of 'decision aiding criteria' and 'sustainability indicators' for consideration in the SA assessment and to enable future monitoring. The 'decision aiding criteria' within the SA Framework are developed to provide some guidance on assessing the likely significant sustainability impacts of the Local Plan.

19.7 When selecting indicators, attention has been given to the following criteria:

- **Important:** Indicators should measure something significant to the achievement of the sustainable development aims of the Plan. Indicators should assist in the identification of the need to review a strategy, policy or proposal.
- **Supported by readily available information:** The data necessary to support the use of the indicator must be available. This may be of a technical nature.
- **Capable of showing trends over time:** Data over a reasonable time scale is required (e.g. 5 - 10 years) to enable trends to be identified. Data must be available during the Plan period.
- **Easy to understand and communicate:** Any indicator should be readily understood by non-specialists so that the wider community can understand its relevance to sustainable development and the Local Plan.

19.8 Table **19.1** sets out the Council's revised Sustainability Appraisal Framework, which will be used in the preparation of the interim SA Report and draft new Local Plan.

Table 19.1 SA Framework

Sustainability Objective		Decision Making Criteria		Sustainability Indicators	
SO1	**CLIMATE CHANGE MITIGATION** **To become a net zero-carbon District by 2050 or sooner tackling the climate emergency through reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and reducing energy and fuel consumption**	1.1	Minimise or reduce greenhouse gas emissions?	1.1	Level of installed MWs of commercial scale renewable energy schemes (wind and solar) in the local authority area (Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy)
		1.2	Ensure energy efficiency?	1.2	Per capita CO_2 and total emissions in the local authority area, including the breakdown for buildings, industry and transport (Department of Energy and Climate Change)
		1.3	Promote the use of decentralised, renewable and low carbon energy?	1.3	Car and van availability by household in the local authority area (East Sussex in Figures)
		1.4	Support the provision of electric charging infrastructure to enable the take up of electric vehicles?	1.4	Publicly available electric vehicle charging devices at all speeds within the local authority area (Department for Transport)
		1.5	Ensure that development is located in sustainable locations?	1.5	Increase (Ha) in community allotments/orchards (Council records)
		1.6	Reduce embodied carbon emissions in new buildings?		
		1.7	Reduce space heating demand in new buildings?		
		1.8	Encourage local food production?		
		1.9	Promote sustainable methods of construction and design?		
SO2	**CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION** **To reduce vulnerability to the adverse effects of climate change through adaptation and adjustment**	2.1	Contribute to climate change adaptation?	2.1	The percentage of new dwelling energy performance certificates at band C and above (Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities)
		2.2	Ensure the use of sustainable construction and design i.e. reduce overheating, incorporate trees / GI for urban cooling?	2.2	The percentage of all dwelling energy performance certificates (existing and new dwellings) at band C and above (Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities)
		2.3	Maximise opportunities to deliver nature-based solutions i.e. green infrastructure	2.3	The percentage of all non-domestic energy performance certificates at band C and above (Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities)
		2.4	Provide for future changes in energy supply?	2.4	Woodland as percentage of area in the local authority area; (Forest Research, Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs).
		2.5	Ensure there is suitable energy infrastructure capacity?		

Sustainability Objective		Decision Making Criteria		Sustainability Indicators
SO3	**FLOOD RISK** **To manage and reduce our vulnerability to flood risk taking into account climate change**	3.1	Reduce the risk of, and minimise flooding from all known sources, taking into account the impact of climate change?	3.1 Estimated number of properties in the local authority area at risk from flooding (Environment Agency) 3.2 Major planning permissions granted contrary to Environment Agency and Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) advice on flooding grounds (Environment Agency/East Sussex County Council)
		3.2	Avoid development in higher flood risk areas or in adjacent areas which would increase flood risks, having regard to the impacts of climate change?	
		3.3	Support the provision of natural flood management solutions?	
		3.4	Encourage best practice measures for managing flood risk (i.e. SuDS or other flood alleviation measures)	
SO4	**WATER RESOURCES AND WATER QUALITY** **Protect our water resources and reduce water demand and consumption**	4.1	Promote measures to minimise water consumption and use?	4.1 Southeast Water Per Capita Consumption of Water in litres (South East Water) 4.2 Recorded water quality in rivers, estuaries and groundwater from River Basin Management Plans that includes the Cuckmere, the Adur and Ouse basins and Pevensey Marshes (Environment Agency) 4.3 Percentage of river and groundwater units in the plan area with biological and/or chemical quality rated as good (Environment Agency) 4.4 Bathing Water Quality in Wealden District (Environment Agency) 4.5 Planning permission granted contrary to Environment Agency advice on water quality grounds (Environment Agency)
		4.2	Encourage water efficiency?	
		4.3	Ensure infrastructure is adequate to support water supply and sewer connections?	
		4.4	Ensure that wastewater treatment infrastructure is available?	
		4.5	Protect water resources including those used for the supply of water and abstraction?	
		4.6	Improve the water quality of water resources?	

Sustainability Objective		Decision Making Criteria		Sustainability Indicators	
SO5	**SOIL, LAND & MINERALS** **Use land efficiently and maintain, conserve and enhance soil quality and mineral resources**	5.1	Minimise the loss of the best and most versatile agricultural land (Grades 1-3a)?	5.1	Allocations within a Local Plan that are located on safeguarded mineral sites (Council Records)
		5.2	Protect and enhance valued soils?	5.2	Allocations within a Local Plan on best agricultural land quality (Grade 1-3a) (Council Records and DEFRA)
		5.3	Prevent soil pollution?	5.3	Percentage of housing development recorded on greenfield/brownfield land (Council Records)
		5.4	Prevent land contamination and promote the remediation of contaminated land?	5.4	Percentage of employment development (Use Class E(g), B2 and B8) recorded on greenfield/brownfield land (Council Records)
		5.5	Seek to prevent soil disturbance, compaction or erosion including promoting best practice in construction?	5.5	The number of dwellings recorded on the Brownfield Land Register during the monitoring period (Council records)
		5.6	Ensure the efficient use of land?		
		5.7	Prioritise the use of previously developed (brownfield) land to minimise greenfield development?		
		5.8	Reduce the amount of derelict, underused and vacant land, and promote the re-use of buildings?		
		5.9	Prevent the sterilisation of mineral deposits?		

Sustainability Objective		Decision Making Criteria		Sustainability Indicators	
SO6	**WASTE & MATERIALS** **Reduce and minimise waste and promote resource efficiency through re-use and recycling (circular economy)**	6.1	Promote sustainable waste management in line with the waste hierarchy – reduce, reuse, recycle, recover, disposal?	6.1	Estimated Household Waste produced in tonnes in the local authority area (East Sussex County Council Record)
		6.2	Prevent and minimise waste through sustainable design and construction including the re-use of aggregates and the use of sustainable/local materials?	6.2	Estimated Household Waste produced collected in tonnes per capita in the local authority area (East Sussex County Council Record)
		6.3	Ensure the provision of waste and recycling facilities within homes and at commercial premises?	6.3	Estimated Percentage of Household Waste recycled or composted in the local authority area in tonnes (East Sussex County Council Record)
		6.4	Reduce household and business waste generated/ head of population?		
		6.5	Reduce construction waste?		
SO7	**POLLUTION** **To reduce air, noise and light pollution**	7.1	Minimise increases in traffic and congestion?	7.1	Estimated traffic flows by all vehicles within East Sussex (East Sussex County Council Record, Department for Transport))
		7.2	Ensure that development minimises exposure to poor air quality?	7.2	Number of designated AQMAs in the local authority area (Council records)
		7.3	Avoid, mitigate or reduce noise pollution?	7.3	Dark Skies Ranking by local authority area (Campaign to Protect Rural England)
		7.4	Ensure that development is located away from major sources of noise?	7.4	The rate of complaints about noise (Public Health Outcome Framework PHOF B14a)
		7.5	Protect tranquil areas from noisy activities?	7.5	The percentage of the population exposed to road, rail and air transport noise of 65dB(a) or more, during the daytime (Public Health Outcomes Framework PHOF B14b)
		7.6	Limit the impact of light pollution including not adversely affecting the International Dark Skies Reserve?		

Sustainability Objective		Decision Making Criteria		Sustainability Indicators
SO8	**GREEN & BLUE INFRASTRUCTURE** **To improve the quality and connectivity between functional habitats and greenspaces to provide for people and nature recovery**	8.1	Positively contribute to nature recovery?	8.1 Hectares of green and blue infrastructure delivered through strategic site allocations (Council Records) 8.2 Hectares of Suitable Alternative Natural Green Spaces (SANGS) delivered through strategic site allocations (Council Records) 8.3 Average distance to nearest Park, Public Garden, or Playing Field in metres for the local authority area (ONS) 8.4 Average number of Parks, Public Gardens, or Playing Fields within 1km radius (ONS) 8.5 The loss and/or inappropriate development of Local Green Spaces during the monitoring period (Council Records) 8.6 Quantity of open spaces provided through residential developments annually (Council Records).
		8.2	Support the provision of new or enhanced green or blue infrastructure?	
		8.3	Prevent the loss of green or blue infrastructure?	
		8.4	Increase or improve access to green space?	
		8.5	Ensure that existing ecological networks are not compromised and future improvements in connectivity are not prejudiced i.e. through fragmentation?	

Sustainability Objective		Decision Making Criteria		Sustainability Indicators
SO9	**BIODIVERSITY** **To protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity**	9.1	Maintain and enhance International / European designated sites?	9.1 The recorded condition/status of designated ecological sites in the District that includes the Ashdown Forest SPA/SAC and Pevensey Levels SAC and Ramsar Site (i.e. the proportion of the SSSI units in favourable condition or unfavourable recovering condition (Natural England) 9.2 Estimated visitor numbers on designated ecological sites, namely the Ashdown Forest SAC/SPA (Council records) 9.3 Estimated visitor numbers on SANGS within the local authority area (Council records) 9.4 The number of new dwellings (net) completed within the 400 metre to 7km buffer of the Ashdown Forest SPA during the monitoring period (Council records) 9.5 Changes in (a) priority habitats and species (by type) and (b) change in areas designated for their intrinsic environmental value including sites of international, national, regional, sub regional or local significance (Council records) 9.6 The number of sites that deliver at least 10% biodiversity net gain through the planning application process (Council Records) 9.7 Area (Ha) under Woodland Trust Management. (Woodland Trust).
		9.2	Maintain and enhance nationally designated sites?	
		9.3	Maintain and enhance locally designated sites?	
		9.4	Ensure that development follows the mitigation hierarchy (Avoid, minimise, remediate, compensate)?	
		9.5	Conserve, restore and enhance priority habitats including those located within Biodiversity Opportunity Areas (BOAs)?	
		9.6	Protect and support the recovery of priority species?	
		9.7	Protect irreplaceable habitats (e.g. ancient woodland / veteran trees)?	
		9.8	Conserve, enhance or improve biodiversity by design?	
		9.9	Seek to secure a minimum of 10% or higher biodiversity net gain?	
		9.10	Lead to the creation of new habitat?	

Sustainability Objective		Decision Making Criteria		Sustainability Indicators
SO10	**LANDSCAPE & TOWNSCAPE** **To protect and enhance the District's urban and rural landscape and townscape**	10.1	Protect and enhance the quality and local distinctiveness of the district's landscapes and townscapes?	10.1 The number of new dwellings completed (net) within the High Weald AONB in the local authority area (Council Records) 10.2 The quantum of floorspace (net) for employment uses (Use Class E(g), B2, B8) completed within the High Weald AONB in the local authority area (Council Records) 10.3 The percentage of new dwellings completed (net) within the High Weald AONB compared with the remainder of the district (Council Records).
		10.2	Conserve and enhance the High Weald AONB?	
		10.3	Impact upon the South Downs National Park and its setting?	
		10.4	Contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by protecting and enhancing valued landscapes?	
		10.5	Protect and enhance valued landscape features and characteristics and promote local distinctiveness?	
		10.6	Protect and enhance the distinct identities and setting of a settlement, its character and its setting including sensitive design?	
		10.7	Enhance local distinctiveness in town and village centres?	
		10.8	Promote high quality design in context with its urban / rural landscape?	
		10.9	Improve the public realm?	

Sustainability Objective		Decision Making Criteria		Sustainability Indicators
SO11	**HISTORIC AND CULTURAL HERITAGE** **To improve and enhance the District's historic environment and cultural heritage assets**	11.1	Help to conserve and/or enhance heritage assets, cultural heritage and historic character of place?	11.1 The number of heritage assets recorded as 'at risk' in the local authority area (English Heritage) 11.2 The number of new designated and non-designated heritage assets recorded in the monitoring year in the local authority area (English Heritage, Council Records).
		11.2	Protect the setting of heritage assets?	
		11.3	Protect sites and features of archaeological value?	
		11.4	Promote and develop and where appropriate increase access to cultural and heritage assets and settings?	
SO12	**DIGITAL INFRASTRUCTURE** **To improve digital infrastructure and connectivity to ensure it meets the needs of all our communities**	12.1	Improve digital infrastructure and broadband coverage?	12.1 Average Broadband Speed across the local authority area (East Sussex County Council Record/ Ofcom) 12.2 Fibre to the property availability in percentage terms in the local authority area (East Sussex County Council Records/Ofcom).
		12.2	Improve mobile phone connectivity and services?	

Sustainability Objective		Decision Making Criteria		Sustainability Indicators
SO13	**SUSTAINABLE TRAVEL & ACCESSIBILITY** **To promote sustainable and active travel, ensuring access to key local services and facilities.**	13.1	Reduce the need to travel by car, including accessing services, facilities, work and leisure?	13.1 Travel to work distances (Census) 13.2 Travel to work mode (Census) 13.3 The percentage of residents within 15 & 30 minutes of primary schools by transport mode (walking, cycling and car) (Department for Transport) 13.4 The percentage of residents within 15 & 30 minutes of employment centres by transport mode (walking, cycling and car) (Department for Transport) 13.5 The percentage of residents within 15 & 30 minutes of a food store by transport mode (walking, cycling and car) (Department for Transport) 13.6 The percentage of residents in the local authority area who walk (at least ten minutes), or cycle 3 times per week; (East Sussex County Council Record) 13.7 The number of bus journeys taken in East Sussex for each monitoring year (East Sussex County Council Record) .
		13.2	Reduce journey times?	
		13.3	Improve public transport provision, including frequency of services?	
		13.4	Consider the capacity of the existing infrastructure and ensure appropriate mitigation and/or new/improved transport infrastructure can be provided where required?	
		13.5	Promote and facilitate sustainable travel, active travel and healthy streets?	
		13.6	Support the delivery of 20 minute walkable neighbourhoods?	
		13.7	Create safer routes and permeability for both pedestrians and cyclists?	
		13.8	Avoid impacts on the quality and extent of public footpaths, bridleways and / or the cycle network, and create opportunities for enhancing connectivity?	
		13.9	Help to connect communities by improving access to key services and facilities?	
		13.10	Provision and retention of key services and facilities?	

Sustainability Objective		Decision Making Criteria		Sustainability Indicators
SO14	**HOUSING** **To provide housing that meets local needs**	14.1	Contribute to housing supply and deliver homes in sustainable locations?	14.1 New homes (net) completed in the monitoring year (Council records) 14.2 New homes (net) approved planning permission in the monitoring year (Council records) 14.3 New permanent pitches/plots approved planning permission in the monitoring year (Gypsy and Traveller) (Council records) 14.4 New affordable homes (net) completed in the monitoring year (Council records) 14.5 Ratio of median house price to median gross annual (where available) workplace-based earnings in Wealden 14.6 The percentage of new 1, 2, 3 and 4+ bedroom dwellings (net) delivered within a monitoring period in the local authority area 14.7 The number of new applicants to the Self-Build and Custom Build Register during the monitoring period (Council records) 14.8 The number of self-build and custom build plots granted planning permission (secured through a S106 agreement) during the monitoring period (Council records) 14.9 Homeless Assessment as owed a duty (Department for Levelling-Up, Housing and Communities).
		14.2	Contribute to meeting local housing needs, including the provision of affordable and specialist homes to meet the identified needs for all sections of society?	
		14.3	Ensure the provision of sufficient and suitable new homes to meet identified needs for all sections of society?	
		14.4	Provide self-build and custom-build housing plots?	
		14.5	Ensure that an appropriate mix of dwelling size, type and tenure is provided?	
		14.6	Reduce the number of unsuitable/unfit homes?	
		14.7	Reduce or prevent homelessness?	

Sustainability Objective		Decision Making Criteria		Sustainability Indicators
SO15	**HEALTH & WELLBEING** **To protect and improve the health and well-being of the district's population and reduce health inequalities**	15.1	Contribute to improving health and well-being?	15.1 Child Obesity Levels within Wealden District at Year 6 (ages 10-11) (NHS) 15.2 Life Expectancy for Males and Females in Wealden (East Sussex County Council and NHS) 15.3 The percentage of residents within 30 minutes of GPs by transport mode (walking, cycling and car) (Department for Transport) 15.4 The percentage of Wealden residents who consider themselves to have a disability (Census) 15.5 Quantity (Ha) of additional open,space, sports and recreation facilities (Council records) 15.6 The number of sports playing fields loss during a monitoring period in the local authority area (Council records) 15.7 Percentage of physically active children and young people, persons, 2021/22 (PHOF C10) 15.8 Percentage of physically active and inactive adults,persons, 2021/22 (PHOF C17a and C17b) 15.9 Percentage of adults who feel lonely often or always or some of the time, person, 2019/20 (PHOF B19).
		15.2	Contribute and encourage healthy lifestyles for all?	
		15.3	Contribute to the provision, protection, enhancement or expansion of sport and recreation facilities?	
		15.4	Impact a designated Local Green Space?	
		15.5	Ensure development is located in reasonable proximity to medical services with sufficient capacity to meet needs?	
		15.6	Support the diverse health needs within the community including those associated with an ageing population?	

Sustainability Objective		Decision Making Criteria		Sustainability Indicators
SO16	QUALITY OF LIFE & PLACE To create safe and attractive places, which contribute towards quality of life and community cohesion	16.1	Help to reduce crime and fear of crime in the district?	16.1 The recorded rate of crime offences per 1,000 of the Wealden population (East Sussex County Council Record) 16.2 The recorded rate of violent crime offences per 1,000 of Wealden population (East Sussex County Council Record) 16.3 Number of Masterplans submitted and approved.
		16.2	Promote the use of secured by design principles, which contribute towards a safe and secure built environment?	
		16.3	Contribute to the creation of a sense of place, which is well-designed, inclusive, accessible for all and reduces social isolation?	
		16.4	Ensure good quality design including the use of design codes, where appropriate?	
SO17	SOCIAL DEPRIVATION To tackle social deprivation by improving access to essential services and facilities, supporting diversity and equality for all	17.1	Help to overcome social exclusion?	17.1 Indices of Multiple Deprivation Ranking across the Country (Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities) 17.2 Proportion of Lower Super Output Areas within the most deprived 20% of wards in the country (Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities) 17.3 Percentage of children in low income families within the monitoring period (East Sussex County Council Record) 17.4 The number universal credit claimants in the local authority area each monitoring period (East Sussex County Council Record).
		17.2	Help to address issues of deprivation, disadvantage or poverty?	
		17.3	Help address inequality for those with protected characteristics?	
		17.4	Help reduce dependency on benefits?	
		17.5	Encourage engagement and participation in the community?	

Sustainability Objective		Decision Making Criteria		Sustainability Indicators
SO18	**ECONOMY & EMPLOYMENT** **To maintain high levels of employment and encourage sustainable economic growth across the District, including higher value jobs**	18.1	Protect the amount of existing employment floorspace in the District?	18.1 Net additional gains in employment floorspace (Use Class E(g), B2, B8) in the district over the monitoring period (Council Records) 18.2 The number of business enterprises within the local authority are each year (East Sussex County Council Records) 18.3 New Business Registration Rate in the local authority area (East Sussex County Council Records) 18.4 Percentage of working age residents who are unemployed (East Sussex County Council Records) 18.5 Economic Inactivity Rates in the local authority area (East Sussex County Council Records) 18.6 The total number of visitor trips undertaken within the local authority areas (millions) (South East Tourism) 18.7 The total amount of expenditure (£) by tourists during visits (millions) (South East Tourism)
		18.2	Support the delivery of employment floorspace requirements through expanding or making land available for new employment sites?	
		18.3	Encourage the retention and provision of small business units to meet the needs of small and medium enterprises?	
		18.4	Support businesses performance, growth and resilience?	
		18.5	Support and encourage both urban and rural businesses to grow, expand and diversify?	
		18.6	Support the growth of sustainable tourism and leisure sectors?	
		18.7	Protect and restrict the loss of tourism accommodation and visitor attractions?	
		18.8	Support the tourism sector by increasing overnight stays and visitor spend?	
		18.9	Assist in making Wealden an attractive place to visit?	
		18.10	Support the provision of higher value jobs?	
		18.11	Assist in delivering the District's employment needs?	
		18.12	Create new employment opportunities and local jobs?	

Sustainability Objective		Decision Making Criteria		Sustainability Indicators
SO19	**TOWN & VILLAGE CENTRES** **Protect and enhance the viability and vitality of town or village centres**	19.1	Help retain and provide additional retail floorspace?	19.1 Net Additional Gains/Losses in retail floorspace (Use Class E(a) in the district over the monitoring period (Council Records) 19.2 Net Additional Gains/Losses in retail floorspace (Use Class E(a) in designated town centres over the monitoring period (Council Records) 19.3 Net Additional Dwellings (Use Class C3) in designated town centres over the monitoring period (Council Records) 19.4 The percentage of vacant units with designated town centres during the monitoring period (Council Records 19.5 The percentage of residents within 30 minutes of a Town Centre by transport mode (walking, cycling and car) (Department for Transport)
		19.2	Decrease the number of vacant units?	
		19.3	Support the long-term vitality and viability of town and village centres?	
		19.4	Support town centre first principles and limit out of town retail?	
		19.5	Support high street businesses and the provision of business opportunities?	
		19.6	Support the provision of residential development in our town centres?	
		19.7	Provide for resident and visitors needs including places of work, places to socialise and key services and facilities?	
		19.8	Help improve the night-time economy?	
SO20	**EDUCATION & SKILLS** **To improve the level of skills, education and training of the District's population**	20.1	Improve qualifications and skills of young people and adults?	20.1 Percentage of working age population with level 4 (or more) qualifications (Census) 20.2 Percentage of working age population with no qualifications (Census) 20.3 Apprenticeships (of all levels) starts and completions during the monitoring period (East Sussex County Council Records) 20.4 School Capacity within the district for secondary school and primary school places (East Sussex County Council Records)
		20.2	Assist to meet the skill needs of businesses including that required for greener jobs?	
		20.3	Deliver opportunities for education, apprenticeships and vocational training?	

The Sustainability Appraisal Methodology

19.9 The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes 2004 (Section 12) sets out the requirements to be included in the SA, which are detailed in Schedule 1 and 2 of the regulations.

19.10 The assessment will need to identify, describe and evaluate the likely significant sustainability effects of the plan. When determining the likely significant effects on the environment, the SA should include the following issues:

- biodiversity
- population
- human health
- fauna and flora
- soil
- water
- air
- climatic factors
- material assets
- cultural heritage including architectural and archaeological heritage and landscapes.

19.11 The assessment should also consider the inter-relationships (how they interact with one another) between the effects and the decision making criteria set out in the SA Framework.

19.12 The assessment must also assess:

- the probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects
- the cumulative nature of the effects
- the risks to human health or the environment (e.g. due to accidents)
- the magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected)
- the value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to:
  - special natural characteristics or cultural heritage
  - exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values
  - intensive land-use
  - the effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, community or international protection status.

19.13 The assessment will be carried out in the form of a matrix and include the identification of potential mitigation measures. The SA will include the prediction and evaluation of the likely significant effects including:

- short, medium and long term effects
- temporary and permanent, direct and indirect effects
- cumulative or synergistic effects
- consideration of mitigation measures
- proposals to monitor the effects of the plan.

19.14 A commentary will accompany the matrix to explain the reasons for the results. The results will be assessed in terms of short, medium and long-term effects (5, 10 and 15 years) including permanent and temporary effects. The assessment of alternative options will include a clear audit trail of the details for selection and rejection in order to document a transparent approach.

19.15 The SEA Directive also requires an assessment of secondary, cumulative and synergistic effects. Collectively these effects are called cumulative impacts. Cumulative impacts may arise, for example, where several developments each have insignificant effects but together have a significant effect or where several individual effects have a combined effect. Synergistic effects interact to produce a total effect greater than the sum of the individual effects. Significant synergistic effects often occur as habitats, resources or human communities get close to capacity.

19.16 The SA matrix in **Table 19.2** is not intended to actually score or weight (measure) the policy options during the SA process, but to provide an indication of the likely, and potentially likely significant effects of the Plan's policies options when judged against SA Objectives. The system utilises symbols (also characterised by specific colours) to summarise the performance of an emerging Plan's policy options in sustainability terms.

19.17 It should be noted that the prediction and evaluation of effects should be an objective process. The use of evidence and professional judgment will be used to justify results and minimise any subjectivity.

19.18 The SEA checklist will be completed when undertaking the SA to ensure that all stages of the assessment have been completed according to the regulations and to set out clearly, which section of the report the results can be found. The checklist can be found at **Appendix C**.

Table 19.2: SA Scoring System

Symbol	Impacts on SA Objective	Definition of impact
++	Major positive impact	The policy or site option is likely to have a major positive effect (i.e. enhance, improve, protect/conserve, restore, benefit) and/or contribute significantly to one or more key elements, features or characteristics of the sustainability objective being appraised?
+	Minor positive impact	The policy or site option is likely to have a minor positive effect (i.e. enhance, improve, protect, restore, benefit and/or contribute moderately to one or more key elements, features or characteristics of the sustainability objective being appraised?
0	No significant impact	The policy or site option has no significant impact on the objective. There are no impacts anticipated on the sustainability objective being appraised, or any impacts anticipated are negligible.
-	Minor negative impact	The policy or site option is likely to have a minor negative effect (i.e. loss, harm or damage on one or more key elements, features or characteristics of the sustainability objective being appraised?
- -	Major negative impact	The policy or site option is likely to have a major negative effect (i.e severe loss, harm or damage, or is unable to entirely mitigate one or more key elements, features or characteristics of the sustainability objective being appraised?
?	Uncertain impact	The impact of the policy or site option is not known/unclear at this stage or is too unpredictable to assign a conclusive score at this stage of the plan making process. This is due to information not available at this time to understand/ determine the extent of either positive or negative impacts on one or more key elements, features or characteristics of the sustainability objective being appraised.

Compatibility testing of the SA Objectives

19.20 As well as developing the SA Objectives, it is important to test their compatibility against one another to identify whether there are any potential areas of conflict or support that would benefit from further consideration. The matrix below (**Table 19.3**) has been prepared to establish the positive or negative impact the SA Objectives may have on one another. Overall, the SA Objectives are broadly compatible. However, there are instances where a possible conflict exists. For example, the protection/ enhancement of the natural environment and housing or economic growth.

19.21 The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. This means balancing the economic, environmental and social goals. In the development of the Local Plan, it will be essential to balance our approach to ensure that policies and future growth achieves and delivers sustainable development taking into account both local and strategic issues. Undertaking the SA process alongside Local Plan production and policy formulation will enable the Council to consider and mitigate any likely significant effects.

Table 19.3: Compatibility Assessment of SA Objectives

SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL OBJECTIVES		Climate Change Mitigation	Climate Change Adaptation	Flood risk	Water Resources & Water Quality	Soil, Land & Minerals	Waste & Materials	Pollution	Green & Blue Infrastructure	Biodiversity	Landscape & Townscape	Historic and Cultural Heritage	Digital Infrastructure	Transport & Accessibility	Housing	Health and Wellbeing	Quality of Life and Place	Social Deprivation	Economy & Employment	Town & Village Centres	Education & Skills
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL OBJECTIVES	1																				
	2	+													**Key**						
	3	0	+												+	Broadly compatible					
	4	0	+	+											0	Neutral/No clear relationship					
	5	0	?	?	?										?	Mixed or uncertain relationship					
	6	+	+	0		+									x	Possible conflicts/tensions					
	7	+	+	?	?	?	?														
	8	0	+	+	+	+	0	+													
	9	+	+	+	+	+	0	+	+												
	10	?	+	+		?	0	+	+	+											
	11	?	?	+	0	?	0	+	0	+	+										
	12	?	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0									
	13	+	+	0	0	?	0	0	+	0	0	0	+								
	14	?	+	0	?	+	?	?	x	x	x	x	0	+							
	15	+	+	+	+	?	?	?	+	+	+	0	?	+	+						
	16	+	+	+	+	0	0	+	+	+	+	0	0	+	+	+					
	17	+	+	+	0	0	0	0	+	0	0	0	+	+	+	+	+				
	18	0	+	0	?	?	0	?	0	0	0	?	+	+	x	0	+	+			
	19	0	+	0	?	?	0	?	?	0	0	0	+	+	+	0	+	+	+		
	20	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	+	0	+	?	+	+	0	

20.0 Next Steps

20.1 The Council has considered the comments and feedback received from the SA Scoping Report consultation and the SA Scoping Report has been updated. This SA Scoping Report will now inform the SA/SEA and the plan-making process.

20.2 An Interim SA Report will be prepared to accompany the draft new Local Plan as part of the Regulation 18 Consultation. Regulation 18 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) Regulations 2012 requires that various bodies and stakeholders be notified that the Council is preparing a plan. The consultation will invite and encourage stakeholders to comment upon what the plan ought to contain as well as provide an opportunity to comment on the Regulation 18 draft preferred policies..

20.3 The draft new Local Plan at Regulation 18 will include:

- The draft vision for Wealden District for 2040 and the objectives needed to meet the vision
- The draft spatial strategy and draft site allocations for meeting the spatial strategy and the growth and development needs for the plan period
- A series of draft strategic and non-strategic policies for guiding future development in the District.

20.4 The Interim SA Report will contain assessments of a range of alternative policy options, weighing up their compatibility with and the likely significant effects against each objective within the SA Framework. This report will also enable the prediction and evaluation of environmental, social and economic effects and future monitoring.