

The New Wealden Plan
Issues and Options: Core Strategy, generic policies and sites

Orientation template

Part One Context

The South East Plan sets out Government requirements for housing development and these targets underpin the rationale for the new Wealden Plan. The challenge lies in delivering housing in an integrated way, with all the other physical, social and economic infrastructure that is essential for communities to flourish in a sustainable manner. At this stage, we are required to set out a *comprehensive* exploration of the issues and options impacting on the Wealden area. Options explored have to be spatially distinct enough for a general understanding of their impact in order to stimulate practical debate. The South East Plan divides Wealden into two broad areas: the 'Sussex Coast Policy Area' and the rest of Wealden. The 'coastal' area reaches as far north as Hellingly, and includes the Eastbourne – Hailsham triangle area. The South East Plan designates this area for about 60% of housing in the District, but with a priority on regeneration and lower levels than the national norm due to its environmental constraints.

Part Two	Wealden's Landscape	How do these factors impact on our town / village / parish?
	<p>Factors which affect the character of Wealden, and how the landscape shapes opportunities for creating places such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ the high proportion of nationally designated land (AONB, potential National Park) ▪ character areas (High Weald, Low Weald, the Pevensey Levels) ▪ SSSIs ▪ biodiversity ▪ water resources ▪ flooding ▪ conservation areas ▪ heritage ▪ potential for renewable/low carbon energy sources ▪ the shift away from traditional farming 	

Part Three	Wealden's Settlement Patterns	Where do we obtain key services? Is our town / village / parish a service centre?
	<p>The District demonstrates a highly dispersed settlement pattern with a distinct urban – rural split. Although received wisdom tends towards development around towns, the parish conference indicated a preference for a more even spread, and there was broad support for developing a methodology for assessing the settlements. For example, those villages which act as service centres (shops, bus routes, schools, doctors etc) are fundamental to determining locations for development in relation to the critical population mass.</p>	
Part Four	Wealden's Places	What is our relationship with the (other) towns? How would a new settlement impact on our town / village / parish?
	<p>This section will take a detailed look at the five main towns, for a range of different town and villages extensions as well as the role a new settlement or settlements might play.</p>	

Part Five	Wealden's Communities	What is the existing provision in these areas? What changes would we like to see?
	<p>Access to services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Education ▪ Health ▪ Social care <p>Relaxation and amenity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Crime and safety ▪ Open space – parks for each town ▪ Leisure ▪ Cultural opportunities ▪ The needs of the elderly <p>Well-connected</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Transport / accessibility ▪ Transport infrastructure ▪ Communications ▪ Working from home <p>Prosperous</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Business land ▪ New business development ▪ Rural economy ▪ Revitalisation and regeneration ▪ Learning & Skills ▪ Business support 	

Part Six	Developing a Spatial Vision for Wealden	Do we agree with the three main themes? Are there important omissions?
	<p>A preliminary suggestion: Wealden District by 2026....</p> <p>Its beautiful landscape of weald, forest and down, coast, level, village and town will be preserved and enhanced for future generations. Development and land management will flow from the potential of landscape and place in innovative and sustainable ways.</p> <p>Necessary development for homes, employment, tourism and farm diversification, new community facilities and enhanced infrastructure will be sensitively integrated into this landscape. Growth will be focused where it will be accessible, most sustainable and most benefits the objectives set out for that place.</p> <p>It will be a constellation of small towns and villages working together. These and their rural surrounds will be made better, not worse, places to live, and affordability of housing will be improved.</p> <p>There will be increased economic momentum – it will be a place for small businesses to start and grow, and for all businesses to invest – in particular the Eastbourne – Hailsham triangle will have become the South Coast choice for investment.</p> <p>It will be a much better connected place. The Wealden Line will be re-opened, with direct rail links to Tunbridge Wells and the South Coast, and major north – south through road traffic will continue to be discouraged.</p>	

	Possible spatial objectives for Wealden	Do we agree with these possible spatial objectives for Wealden?
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That the importance of the District's landscapes, including the nationally designated landscapes of the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Sussex Heritage Coast and the proposed South Downs National Park, are protected, well-managed and enhanced, together with appropriate development to meet local needs. 2. In recognition of the need to protect the countryside, to maximise the use of previously developed land, and make full and efficient use of land, ensuring at least 75% of new residential development is at a density of at least 40 dwellings per hectare. 3. To enhance the biodiversity and geodiversity of Wealden, meeting local biodiversity action plan targets, and protecting locally and nationally designated sites of nature conservation importance; in particular the internationally important sites of the Pevensey Levels and Ashdown Forest. 4. To ensure that the built heritage of the Sussex countryside and towns, which is nationally important, is protected and enhanced for future generations. 5. To meet the requirements for additional housing as set out in the South East Plan, also ensuring that the backlog of housing completions is 'on trajectory' by 2012, and ensuring that the minimum target in the plan for provision of affordable housing is met. 6. To increase visitors staying in Wealden by at least X(tbd) by 2026, focusing on sustainable tourism, whilst ensuring that the tranquillity and beauty which attract people to the area is not undermined. 7. To ensure a step change in the quality of urban and rural design in Wealden through the application of policies in the new plan and the principles set out in the Wealden Design Guide. 	

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	<p>8. To work with partners to help ensure that Wealden remains a safe place, with levels of crime and disorder well below the national mean.</p> <p>9. Working with partners to effectively meet the health and lifelong learning needs of a widely dispersed population.</p> <p>10. Broadening the weak retail offer of the District's towns through meeting the need for an additional X(tbd) comparative goods floorspace, and an additional Y(tbd) convenience goods floorspace by 2016.</p> <p>11. Ensuring that by 2026, no Super Output Areas within Wealden District are within 15% of the most deprived such areas within England.</p> <p>12. Increasing the Gross Value Added (GVA) of the District by X% (tbd) from 2007 levels by 2026.</p> <p>13. To reduce the shortfall of open space, leisure and recreational facilities in the District, providing quality parks in or adjoining each of the District's towns by 2026.</p> <p>14. To take full account of the local impacts of climate change and to ensure that development is 'carbon neutral' as far as practical.</p>	

Part Seven What happens next?

The Core Strategy Issues and Options paper will be published for a six week formal consultation period beginning in July. Each section of the paper will set out a range of options and ask which you favour. You will also have the opportunity to offer additional views or options which will be considered in the light of the evidence. All assertions must be supported by evidence to meet the stringent tests of soundness set by the Government.

For example, the Inspector will not just want to know where development should not go, he/she will require evidence as to where else it should go instead, presenting an alternative strategy for development. The lesson is that we need to be positive and constructive in our approach. The new system is designed to 'frontload' discussion on the key planning issues and future choices for Wealden. We face a range of complex issues and this is an exploratory phase – highlighting an issue in the forthcoming consultation is simply that – bringing it to notice. No decisions have been made.

The next key stage will be the publication of preferred options – for further consultation, together with a draft Strategic Environmental Appraisal. Following this, the Council will submit its plan for examination, when you will have an opportunity to say if and why you think it 'sound' or not.