

Draft Proposed Submission Wealden Local Plan – May 2017

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is the status of the Plan that was reported to Full Council on 22nd March 2017?

The Draft Proposed Submission Wealden Local Plan was reported to Full Council on 22nd March 2017 and it was resolved:

- (1) That the Local Plan to date be welcomed;
- (2) That, based upon the evidence published to date, the strategic direction set out in the current draft Local Plan be supported; and
- (3) That the Local Plan Draft Proposed Submission Document be brought back to Full Council for consideration at the earliest opportunity.

This means that a further version of the Proposed Submission Wealden Local Plan together with accompanying evidence base will be reported to Local Plan Sub Committee, Joint Planning Committee North and South and Full Council later this year. Subject to Council resolution, this document will be published for representations before submitting to the Secretary of State for examination by the Planning Inspectorate.

2. How many new homes are proposed to be built in this new plan?

The draft plan follows on from our earlier Issues Options and Recommendations Consultation document. The proposed new plan reduces the overall number of new homes, from 19,950 contained within the Issues, Options and Recommendations Consultation document to 11,456 dwellings. The timescale of the plan has also changed from an end date of 2037 to 2028.

Of the 11,456 dwellings contained within the Plan some 7,392 new homes have already been granted planning permission or been completed. The Draft Proposed Submission Local Plan provides for an extra 4,064 new homes to be built in the District by 2028 (Issues, Options & Recommendations proposed an extra 12,750).

3. How does the revised proposal affect local communities?

The following table provides information on the additional dwellings in the Draft Proposed Submission document in different locations (with the exception of the highlighted Wealden line the dwelling numbers are those in addition to planning permissions granted as of 30th September 2016):

Location	Issues, Options and Recommendations 2015 (Dwellings)	Draft Proposed Submission Local Plan March 2017 (Dwellings)
Wealden (in total)	19,509	11,456
Hailsham	9,380	2,420
Stone Cross	500	833
Polegate & Willingdon	1,000	108
Horam	400	344
Heathfield	800	191
Wadhurst	285	51
Ninfield	250	85
Berwick Station	15	32

4. Why the revised housing figures?

Two reasons:

One: Following updated population and household figures, our Objectively Assessed Housing Need (OAHN) has been recalculated. This has resulted in a higher figure of over 900 new homes a year compared to the Issues, Options & Recommendations 2015 OAHN of 735 new homes a year. OAHN figures have been revised in many districts and boroughs following changes to the government population and housing data.

Two: Data is now available for three years of nitrogen deposition monitoring in the Ashdown Forest Special Area of Conservation (SAC). This shows that the ecology of the forest is in poor condition, caused by nitrogen emissions from motor vehicles and other sources. The evidence is clear that additional housing will increase nitrogen deposition alongside roads close to Ashdown Forest SAC. The amount of nitrogen deposited depends on the amount and location of housing.

5. What measures is the Council proposing to take?

In view of the two factors described above, and considering the future threat to the Ashdown Forest ecology, the Council is proposing to

- 1) reduce the number of new homes in its Local Plan; and
- 2) introduce compensation measures before any new development in the District that involves increased vehicle use can go ahead.

6. Why is the Council not considering mitigation measures?

A range of mitigation measures are already in place, and others have been discussed including traffic speed restrictions, introducing tolls, restricting categories of vehicles and options for tunnels in the Forest.

For a variety of reasons, these additional measures would not produce significant improvements, because they are either not practical or not economically viable. The Council continue to explore the issues but our current view is that compensation measures are required.

7. What compensation measures are you looking at?

The Council's preferred option for appropriate compensation measures is to provide comparable habitat which can be restored to lowland heath that compensates for the roadside areas affected by nitrogen deposition.

8. Are you re-instating the 7km zone?

The nitrogen deposition levels are affected by traffic movements originating from across the whole District and beyond so there is no specific zone.

Taking into account existing levels of traffic and development commitments that are in place there is already an unacceptable level of impact from nitrogen deposition in the areas close to the forest roads.

As a result, any new planning applications within the District will need to show that they will not generate any additional vehicle movements in order to be considered for approval. This applies to development in the south of the District as well as the north.

As a planning authority, we cannot guarantee that new vehicle movements, resulting from a development in the District, will not involve routes near or through the Ashdown Forest and lead to consequent environmental damage. Once appropriate compensation measures are in place, new development will be possible up to the level set out in the Plan.

9. Will existing planning permissions be affected?

No. Existing planning permissions are not affected and can proceed.

10. Will this affect just Wealden District?

No. It is clear increased vehicle movements in other planning authority areas close to Ashdown Forest will also affect the local ecology.

Local authorities have a duty to co-operate on Local Plan issues, and we have informed a number of planning authorities including: Mid Sussex District Council, Tunbridge Wells Borough Council, Eastbourne Borough Council, Rother District Council, South Downs National Park and Lewes District Council about the findings of the nitrogen deposition monitoring and the action Wealden District Council is taking.

11. How do you know the measures you are proposing will work?

The scientific monitoring and evaluation of the likely impact of the proposals will continue and there may be further adjustments if the evidence suggests they are required.

12. Why does the new version of the Local Plan have a new time period ?

The reduced time period allows us to take better account of the changing situation in Ashdown Forest, takes into account the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework and reflects the aims of the latest Housing and Planning White Paper.

13. Aren't the housing numbers going to be the same each year over the plan period?

The housing numbers proposed per year will work out to be less over the period of the plan compared to those proposed in the Issues, Options and Recommendations Consultation Document. In addition, as the plan period is shorter the total numbers are lower and as some 7,500 permissions and completions are included in both totals, the number of additional new dwellings per annum beyond the permissions and completions is also lower under the latest draft plan .

14. What are the next steps with the plan?

The plan is being updated taking into account permissions granted after 30th September 2016 and the emerging evidence base. Once this work is complete the document and the evidence base will be reported to the Local Plan Sub Committee, Joint Planning Committee North and South and Full Council later this year. If approved, the document will go out for formal representations.

The representations submitted through this process will be considered and the document submitted to the Planning Inspector for examination.

15. Will I have a chance to comment?

Yes, through the representations process outlined above which will be widely publicised.

16. How does this impact on Neighbourhood Plans?

We will continue to work closely with those Towns and Parishes that are progressing with Neighbourhood Plans to ensure close ongoing co-ordination.

17. I want to apply for an extension to my house – is that affected?

No that will not be affected. Domestic extensions can proceed once planning consent is granted (if required).

18. Will all types of new planning applications be affected?

Yes, with the exception of domestic extensions, adverts, most agricultural applications, telecommunication installations, local retail and some brownfield sites and / or where there are existing vehicle movements greater than what is proposed.

19. When will the evidence base for the Ashdown Forest approach be available?

The Council has published additional information on the Ashdown Forest monitoring and modelling at the Local Plan Sub Committee in March 2017. Further information will follow.

20. How long before the compensation measures will be in place?

We are looking to work with Natural England and the Ashdown Forest Conservators and involving DCLG in our discussions to progress the approach and move this forward as soon as possible.

21. Can new development still go ahead on existing brown field sites within the District?

The Council is keen to utilise brown field sites which are within development boundaries wherever possible, but the development will depend on the previous use of the site and the current situation regarding development limits within that location.

22. What will happen to the planned economic and retail development?

It is important there are enough employment opportunities for the people living in the new housing and those already living in Wealden so fewer people have to travel outside of the District to work. The Draft Proposed Submission Local Plan includes 38,600 square metres of employment opportunities centred about the A22 which is already becoming an attractive location for new and growing businesses. During the Plan period, there will need to be a further 4,350 square metres of retail floor space in Uckfield and Hailsham. Our aim is to concentrate shopping within our town centres and not allow retail to migrate to secondary areas out of town.