

Wealden Local Plan Update – 28 June 2018

As previously reported Wealden District Council (WDC) has been working to deliver an updated Wealden Local Plan by the end of June for consideration at the Full Council meeting on 18 July 2018.

The draft Wealden Local Plan was published on 27 June for consideration by the Local Plan Sub Committee on 5 July and the Joint Planning Committee North and South on 6 July before proceeding to Full Council on 18 July.

It is available at <http://council.wealden.gov.uk/ieListMeetings.aspx?CIId=534&Year=0> under the agenda for the Local Plan Sub Committee meeting of 5 July.

WDC have undertaken a Habitats Regulations Assessment as the “competent authority” for the Wealden district, taking into account Natural England advice. This work has determined, based on Wealden’s specific set of circumstances and the evidence and advice it has available to it, that there is an adverse effect on the integrity of the Ashdown Forest SAC from the proposed Wealden Local Plan, either alone or in combination with other plans and projects.

The Council understands and supports development proceeding and wishes to achieve its objectively assessed housing need of 950 per annum. It has therefore investigated and is proposing a range of mitigation measures under the general heading of a low emission strategy which will allow development within Wealden to proceed up to the level of 950 dwellings per annum but not beyond this, within the period of the plan (2013 to 2028).

A key element of this approach is the continued monitoring of the level and impact of nitrogen deposition and the introduction of developer contributions to fund the mitigation measures. This approach follows the principles which apply to Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMMs) which has successfully allowed development to proceed in relation to the Ashdown Forest SPA following the adoption of the Council’s Core Strategy.

Alongside this the Council will work with Natural England, DEFRA and neighbouring authorities to jointly progress a Site Nitrogen Action Plan (SNAP) to proactively further reduce levels of nitrogen deposition in the longer term.

The Council has also identified an impact on the integrity of the protected areas of Lewes Downs SAC and the Pevensy Levels SAC and Ramsar Site as a result of nitrogen deposition and other pollutants and proposes, in conjunction with neighbouring authorities, to progress the range of mitigation measures referred to above in order to allow development to proceed in relation to these areas as well.

WDC are actively determining the appropriate level of tariff for the mitigation measures in order to have this in place as soon as possible thereby allowing planning applications which are currently being held to be determined. We will continue to keep all stakeholders informed as this work progresses.

Nigel Hannam
Director Planning Policy and Economic Development
28 June 2018