Wealden District Council Local Plan

Wealden Local Plan

Housing Market Position Statement

Issues, Options and Recommendations Consultation

October 2015
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1 Purpose

1.1 The purpose of this paper is to set out how Wealden District Council has actively and positively sought to comply with the duty to cooperate in the preparation of the Wealden Local Plan (WLP) with regard to housing provision.
2 Background and policy context

2.1 Section 110 of the Localism Act 2011 places a legal duty on local planning authorities and other prescribed bodies to cooperate with each other on strategic planning matters on cross boundary issues in so far as they are relevant to their administrative areas throughout the preparation of their local plans. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2012 reiterates this duty and requires an independent inspector to assess whether the development plan they are examining has been prepared in accordance with the duty to cooperate.

2.2 It is expected that engagement and cooperation will be constructive, active and ongoing and in order to maximise effectiveness throughout plan preparation as well as implementation, delivery and subsequent review. The National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG) confirms that this is not a duty to agree but that local planning authorities should make every effort to secure the necessary cooperation on cross boundary strategic matters before submitting development plan documents for examination. The examination will test whether the duty has been complied with.
2 Background and policy context
3 Housing Market Areas

3.1 The NPPF and NPPG draw attention to the need to plan for housing across Housing Market Areas (HMAs). Paragraph 10 of the NPPG states;

“A housing market area is a geographical area defined by household demand and preferences for all types of housing, reflecting the key functional linkages between places where people live and work. It might be the case that housing market areas overlap. The extent of the housing market areas identified will vary, and many will in practice cut across various local planning authority administrative boundaries. Local planning authorities should work with all the other constituent authorities under the duty to cooperate.”

3.2 In April 2014 Wealden District Council appointed Bilfinger GVA to undertake a Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) to understand Wealden District Council’s current and future housing market and how this relates to the District’s housing growth and needs.

3.3 The findings of the report will be used to inform policy for long-term delivery of housing within the District.

3.4 Wealden is a relatively large local authority area with a relatively low density population overall. The District faces the challenge of striking an appropriate balance between maintaining and enhancing the environment and addressing housing development pressures.

3.5 The housing market is primarily focused on a set of larger settlements which are influenced by relationships with larger towns which sit just beyond the local authority boundaries. These relationships include those between Forest Row and East Grinstead, Crowborough and Tunbridge Wells, Hailsham and Eastbourne and, to a lesser extent, Uckfield and Haywards Heath. These relationships reflect local commuting patterns, with workers in these larger external towns seeking housing opportunities nearby. There is also some relationship in terms of localised house prices.

3.6 There is also a regional overlay to the housing market, with settlements to the north being closer in travel time to London as well as the Gatwick/ Crawley area and the M25 corridor.

3.7 The overall effect is that the north of the District has a housing market that includes inner south east characteristics, while the south includes characteristics of its nearby south coast. This results in higher prices being found to the north on a per square foot basis or for similar types of properties.

3.8 The SHMA defines Wealden’s wider housing market area as including; Wealden District, Eastbourne Borough, Tunbridge Wells Borough, Rother District, Lewes District and Mid Sussex District. This incorporates the local authorities which have the strongest and most consistent migration and commuting relationships with Wealden, as well as linkages in house prices and rates of change. It is acknowledged that the relationships
with each adjoining authority are different; the relationship with Tunbridge Wells to the north of the District and with Eastbourne in the south of the District are the strongest.

3.9 The wider HMA sets the context for understanding the Wealden housing market and allows comparability between Wealden and other authorities within the wider HMA. Figure 1 shows the identified wider housing market area.
3 Housing Market Areas

Map 1 Identified wider Housing Market Area

Wealden Local Plan
Housing Market Position Statement
3.10 There are clear distinctions in house prices across the sub-markets within Wealden, particularly between the north and the south of the District. Key northern sub-markets including Forest Row, Wadhurst, Crowborough and Mayfield have higher values, whereas southern sub-markets including Hailsham and Polegate represent lower price locations.

3.11 The higher sales and rental values in the north of the District in part reflect the better connectivity of the north with wider economic markets. The north of the District provides access to jobs in nearby towns such as East Grinstead and Tunbridge Wells, as well as access to the Gatwick Diamond, and is also within commuter range of Central London. There is also an element of relative affordability in the Wealden housing market compared to other economic markets and commuter locations i.e. Tunbridge Wells and the wider London market itself.

3.12 The north part of the district therefore presents inner south east characteristics. In contrast, the south of the District does not provide the opportunity for residents to commute to London easily and is more characteristic of neighbouring south coast areas and markets, with a strong emphasis on local employment. It is important to note that whilst location is clearly important, higher values can also be attributed to stock type and quality. There are value differences in individual settlements in Wealden.

3.13 The Wealden market also shows some other distinctions between north and south, with a greater concentration of larger homes north and smaller homes south. There is evidence of a generally older population, with an emphasis in the south. There are also indicators of under-occupancy.

3.14 The clear and well-evidenced north-south distinctions in Wealden’s housing market reflect the connectivity and travel to work patterns and times of the two halves of the District. The higher prices in the northern sub-markets such as Forest Row, Wadhurst and Mayfield are contributed to by the ability to live in the north of the District and commute to East Grinstead and Tunbridge Wells, the Gatwick Crawley area, and at the widest level London, therefore providing residents in this part of the District with access to wider economic markets and increasing the desirability of the north Wealden location. These higher prices are also reflective of the delivery of good quality new stock and the relative affordability of stock compared with other commuter locations and London sub-markets (as identified through consultation with lettings and sales agents). Conversely sub-markets in the south of the District like Hailsham and Polegate are more restricted in terms of their accessibility and connection to areas beyond the north of the district, and are more reflective of the southern coast housing market characteristics. Although such coastal locations can be desirable in housing terms, access to wider employment opportunities is not as strong a driver for increasing values in the south of the District to the level of those in the north.

3.15 It is recommended that Wealden District Council should seek to deliver a mix of housing types, sizes and tenures throughout the District. Continuing demand can be expected across all parts of the District given access to employment in other areas from the north, as well as an active local employment market in the south and access to some jobs in nearby south coast towns.
3.16 There is evidence of a broadly similar proportion of affordable need within the north and south of the District based on those households currently registered on the Council’s housing register, although focussed around key settlements (48% in the north and 52% in the south). This reinforces the requirement for mixed delivery throughout Wealden. There is no significant sub-district variation in stock tenure than needs to be considered.

3.17 Wealden’s strongest relationships are in the north with Tunbridge Wells and to the south with Eastbourne.
3 Housing Market Areas
4 Considering neighbouring authorities

4.1 In June and July 2015 separate individual meetings took place with the Council’s adjoining authorities, East Sussex County Council, South Downs National Park Authority and Brighton and Hove City Council to discuss cross boundary issues.

4.2 The meetings included discussion on housing market areas, objectively assessed housing need and the provision of housing development in the Local Plan process. Each authority is at a different stage in the Local Plan process and the preparation of their SHMA’s to inform their Local Plan.

4.3 Table 1 analyses the status of each authority’s SHMA within Wealden’s identified HMA. The table shows that Wealden is not specifically identified as falling within the HMA geographies of any of these separate evidence based reports. The exception to this is Eastbourne which has strong links with South Wealden and forms part of a joint evidence base for both authorities local plan preparation and Tunbridge Wells which identifies a strong relationship with the northern part of the District.

Table 1 Review of neighbouring authority’s evidence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Authority</th>
<th>Defined Housing Market Area</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sevenoaks</td>
<td>Currently working on a joint SHMA with Tunbridge Wells which is anticipated to be published in 2015. The identified HMA includes Sevenoaks, Tunbridge Wells and Tonbridge.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tunbridge Wells</td>
<td>As above for Sevenoaks. The report identifies a functional relationship with the northern parts of Wealden including Crowborough.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tandridge</td>
<td>Currently working on a SHMA to be published in 2015. A technical paper has been prepared to inform the SHMA which identify the HMA which includes Croydon, Reigate and Banstead, Mid Sussex and Sevenoaks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rother</td>
<td>The identified HMA is Rother and Hastings. Evidence published in 2006, 2009/10 and 2012.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lewes</td>
<td>Sussex Coast HMA which includes; Adur, Arun, Brighton &amp; Hove, Chichester, Lewes and Worthing. Evidence published for Lewes in 2008 (SHMA) and 2013.</td>
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</table>
### Authority | Defined Housing Market Area
---|---
South Downs National Park Authority | The part of Wealden District which falls within the South Downs National Park is identified as being in the Eastbourne and Wealden Housing Market Area. The South Downs National Park SHMA was published in support of the preferred options Local Plan in September 2015.

4.4 There is a recurring position within these evidence base documents in that whilst market linkages are identified with Wealden these linkages are weaker than with other neighbouring authorities. As the evidence within the SHMA has shown this is a result of Wealden having connections with a number of areas, including those beyond immediate neighbouring boundaries, resulting in the strength of these relationships being diluted.

4.5 The following map shows the spatial definitions of the HMA geographies being used in comparable studies covering neighbourhood areas. Many of these studies have been undertaken on a multi authority basis and, with the exception of Eastbourne and Tunbridge Wells, Wealden falls outside of the housing market areas being considered in surrounding areas. It is also recognised that the SHMA evidence in areas with which Wealden has some form of housing market linkage has been undertaken to different timetables.
Map 2 Housing Market Areas Relevant to Wealden District
4 Considering neighbouring authorities

The diagram illustrates the housing market areas, including Wealden HMA, UK Districts, Lewes HMA, Tandridge HMA, Mid Sussex HMA, Tunbridge Wells & Sevenoaks HMA, and Rother HMA.

Wealden HMA includes the northern part of Wealden District.
4.6 Table 2 summarises the relationship with each of Wealden's adjoining authorities and the outcomes of the duty to co operate meetings with regard to the Wealden HMA. With the exception of Rother the HMA identified in the SHMA is accepted by each authority which falls within it. The reference to the SHMA in the second column is to the 2014 Wealden SHMA being published alongside the Wealden Local Plan Issues, Options and Recommendations consultation document.

4.7 Given the strength of the relationships within the Wealden HMA it is evident that Wealden should continue to work with each authority identified in the HMA however the housing needs of Eastbourne and Lewes in relation to the southern part of the district and with Tunbridge Wells with regard to the north are the strongest.

4.8 The part of Wealden District that falls within the South Downs National Park Authority is excluded from the Wealden Local Plan however the area is included in the 2014 SHMA. The South Downs National Park Authority published a SHMA to support its preferred option Local Plan in September 2015 which identifies that the area within the South Downs National Park is located in the Eastbourne and Wealden HMA.

Table 2: Relationship between authorities identified in Wealden’s housing market area

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Authority</th>
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<th>Outcome of Duty to cooperate meetings</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mid Sussex</td>
<td>The SHMA concludes that there are strong localised migration links between Wealden and Mid Sussex. It is the second highest area from which residents are moving to Wealden. Out commuting (5%) and in commuting (4%) indicates a strong connection. There is a particularly strong alignment in the mean average house price levels between 1996 and 2012.</td>
<td>It is accepted that Mid Sussex falls within Wealden's HMA but that the relationship is not as strong as with Tunbridge Wells and Eastbourne.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sevenoaks</td>
<td>The SHMA indicates that the only evidence linking Wealden and Sevenoaks is in and out migration; there is a 2% movement into Wealden from Sevenoaks and 1% flow from Wealden to Sevenoaks. There is no evidence to suggest Wealden has a link with Sevenoaks with regard to in and out commuting. The SHMA concludes Sevenoaks is not within Wealden’s HMA.</td>
<td>It is accepted that Sevenoaks should not fall within the Wealden HMA.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tunbridge Wells</td>
<td>The SHMA concludes that Wealden has a strong relationship with Tunbridge Wells particularly in the north of the District. In 2013 10% of Wealden’s new residents moved from Tunbridge Wells (the second</td>
<td>It is acknowledged that Tunbridge Wells has a strong relationship with Wealden, especially in north Wealden.</td>
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### Considering neighbouring authorities

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<td>Tandridge</td>
<td>Tandridge is not included in Wealden’s HMA. The only evidence in the SHMA with regard to linkages with this authority is that Tandridge is 9th in the top ten areas from which residents are moving to Wealden. There is no other evidence to indicate there is a relationship between the two authorities.</td>
<td>It is accepted that Tandridge should not fall within the Wealden HMA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rother</td>
<td>The SHMA concludes that 6% of new residents into Wealden were from Rother and 7% moved from Wealden into Rother. The net migration loss shows the recent trend (between 2010 and 2013) for people to migrate out of Wealden to Rother (which is the highest level of net migration losses). In terms of out commuting 3% of Wealden’s residents work in Rother and 5% of Rother’s residents work in Wealden.</td>
<td>Following discussion and subsequent correspondence Rother District Council’s view is that Rother District Council should be excluded from the Wealden HMA. This is on the basis that Rother more strongly relates to Hastings and hence more properly falls within the defined Hastings/Rother HMA.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lewes</td>
<td>Wealden has a strong relationship with Lewes. 7% of people moving into Wealden in 2013 were from Lewes (3rd highest) and 5% moved from Wealden to Lewes (5th highest). Overall Lewes is the top area from which residents are moving to Wealden between 2010 and 2013. In terms of out commuting 5% of Wealden’s residents work in Lewes and 5% of Lewes residents work in Wealden.</td>
<td>It is accepted that Lewes falls within Wealden’s HMA but that the relationship is not as strong as with Tunbridge Wells and Eastbourne. The closest link is between the area surrounding Uckfield in Wealden and the northern areas of Lewes District.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Eastbourne</td>
<td>Wealden has the strongest relationship with Eastbourne in terms of migration and commuting trends. In 2013 17% of residents moving to Wealden were from Eastbourne and 19% of Wealden’s residents moved to Eastbourne. 13% of Wealden’s residents work in Eastbourne and 12% of Eastbourne’s residents work in Wealden.</td>
<td>It is acknowledged that Eastbourne has the strongest relationship with Wealden, especially in the South Wealden area.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

There are notable differences in prices across the HMA with Eastbourne having the lowest mean average house price (£197,081) compared with Wealden (£274,907).