1. Introduction

1.1 Background

1.1.1 The Wealden District Core Strategy was adopted in February 2013 and Wealden District Council is now preparing its new Local Plan. This plan will identify policies and site allocations for the provision of c. 11,500 new homes in the plan period 2013 – 2028 across all of Wealden District, excluding the area which is within the South Downs National Park.

1.1.2 In August 2016 Wealden District Council (WDC) commissioned The Landscape Partnership (TLP) to undertake landscape and ecological assessments of potential development sites within the areas identified for growth around Hailsham and Polegate. At the time of the commission it was intended that these assessments would form part of the evidence base for a proposed Hailsham Area Action Plan (AAP). However, during the course of the study it was decided by WDC that the Hailsham AAP should be incorporated into the Wealden Local Plan within a section dedicated to the South Wealden Growth Area.

1.1.3 The purpose of the study was to assist the Council with the allocation of sites for residential development and inform the development of site-specific ecological and landscape policies. At the same time, Chris Blandford Associates (CBA) was commissioned to undertake a similar study for sites in and around other settlements in the district identified for growth in the emerging Local Plan. The approach and methodology for these two studies is broadly the same.

1.1.4 Other work which was, or is currently being, undertaken to inform landscape and biodiversity policies for the Core Strategy and the emerging Wealden Local Plan (WLP) includes:

- Wealden Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment (2014)
- Background Paper 5: Biodiversity (2011)
- Background Paper 6: Green Infrastructure (2011)
- Wealden Open Space (PPG17) Study (December 2008 with April 2010 Amendments)
- Wealden Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment (November 2014)
- Wealden Landscape Study (February 2009)
- Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (2009)
- Habitat Regulations Assessment work associated with Ashdown Forest Special Protection Area (SPA)/Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and Pevensey Levels SAC / Ramsar
- Wealden Green Infrastructure Study (2016)

1.1.5 Other more strategic studies which have informed this study include:

- East Sussex Landscape Character Assessment (2010)
- East Sussex Environment Strategy (2011)
- East Sussex Green Infrastructure Study (2014).
- AONB Landscape work provided by the High Weald AONB

1.2 Scope of the Study

1.2.1 The study comprised the preparation of landscape and ecological assessments for sites which have been put forward as potential development sites within and around the following key settlements in the South Wealden Growth area:
1.2.2 A total of 114 sites were assessed as part of the study and Figure 1.1 shows the location of these sites within the South Wealden Growth Area. Further detailed site location plans indicating site reference numbers for sites within each sub-area are provided within each area chapter.

1.2.3 The scope of work for the ecological study comprised preparation of a Phase 1 habitat survey of each site and identification of any further detailed ecological surveys required if the site were to be considered for development, potential key ecological effects if the site were developed and preparation of guidance to inform the development of site-specific ecological policies.

1.2.4 For the landscape study, the scope of work comprised an initial landscape and visual appraisal of the site to identify the landscape sensitivity and landscape capacity of the site to accommodate residential development, potential key landscape and visual effects if the site were developed and preparation of guidance to inform the development of site-specific landscape policies.

1.2.5 Both the landscape and ecological assessments are, by necessity, high level assessments and are concerned with the suitability of the site in general to be allocated for residential development. If sites are allocated and development proposals are developed for them, it will be the responsibility of the developer to prepare updated, comprehensive landscape and ecological surveys and undertake detailed ecological impact assessments and landscape and visual impact assessments of the proposed scheme. These will need to be submitted as part of the planning application process.

1.3 Methodology

1.3.1 The methodology for the landscape and ecology assessment was developed in collaboration with Wealden District Council and to follow current best practice. An initial draft methodology was developed and pilot study undertaken for one site to test the methodology. This was reviewed and refined before undertaking the rest of the study.

Methodology for Ecology Assessments

1.3.2 The ecology assessment comprised three stages: desktop study, field survey and reporting (with associated mapping).

1.3.3 The desktop study was undertaken at the start of the project and commenced with a review of relevant general background documents including:

- Local planning policy in respect of biodiversity
- Background Paper 5: Biodiversity (2011)
- Background Paper 6: Green Infrastructure (2011)
- Previous ecological survey information where available
- East Sussex Environment Strategy (2011)
- East Sussex Green Infrastructure Study (2014).

1.3.4 The study also included a later review of the Wealden Green Infrastructure Study (CBA, 2016) which was undertaken concurrent with this study. A draft was available in
December 2016 and used to inform the assessment of the role of each site in the local Green Infrastructure network.

1.3.5 A desk top assessment for each of the individual sites was then undertaken in accordance with CIEEM guidance. Key elements of this comprised:

- A review of statutory and non-statutory designated sites, and BAP sites in close proximity, as well as a review of protected species and other data sourced from the Sussex Biological Records Centre for 500m/1km/2km radius (depending upon size of site and features present).
- Preliminary site habitat mapping based on OS map- and aerial-based imagery and identification of key on- and off-site features such as ponds, streams, woodlands or other possible habitats of potential biodiversity interest such as unimproved grassland.
- GIS mapping of protected species records in proximity to survey site.
- GIS mapping of wildlife sites in vicinity, including the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites of importance for biodiversity, wildlife corridors and stepping stones that connect them and areas identified by local partnerships for habitat restoration or creations.
- Identification of any other obvious key features or habitats for detailed investigation on site.

1.3.6 On completion of the desk top study for the group of sites around each settlement, field surveys were undertaken. These were used to verify data collected during the desktop assessment and to provide additional detailed information. Surveys were undertaken in accordance with the most recent JNCC survey methodology guidance for phase 1 habitat surveys and included habitat descriptions and descriptions of key features, including location of protected or BAP species observed opportunistically during survey, and/or the potential presence of these based on presence in nearby areas and the existence of suitable habitats of site. Target notes were used to identify specific features of particular interest and areas requiring a further Phase 2 Habitat Survey. Brief notes on habitat condition were made together with observations on current management and whether this met the requirements of that habitat and maximised biodiversity value.

1.3.7 All field survey work was undertaken using a standard pro-forma incorporating a checklist to ensure a comprehensive assessment and consistency of approach.

1.3.8 Mapping and reporting was provided for each of the individual sites to BS 42020:2013 and in accordance with CIEEM guidance for Preliminary Ecological Assessment. This included:

- Detailed Phase 1 mapping using JNCC colour coding and habitat codes.
- Mapping of areas of higher and lower ecological value or potential ecological value on site.
- Identification and mapping of local wildlife corridors/components of the local ecological networks.
- Identification of indicative constraints and opportunities for each site including recommendations on where habitats or features could be protected, maintained, enhanced, restored or created.

1.3.9 A full detailed record of the methodology used for the ecology assessment is provided in Appendix 1.10.

**Methodology for Landscape Assessments**

1.3.10 The methodology for the landscape assessments adopted a similar three stage approach as that used for the ecology assessment and comprised a desktop study, site survey and reporting (with associated mapping).
1.3.11 A general policy and document review was undertaken at the start to inform the study before moving on to site-specific assessments.

1.3.12 For each site, an appraisal of planning policy context, aerial photographs, the 2014 Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment (LSCA), planning and environmental designations and historic landscape studies/designations was undertaken. This was used to provide the context for the study and identify the key landscape opportunities and constraints for each site. Key information reviewed as part of the desk-based analysis was:

- Landscape character types and areas around each of the sites;
- Historic environment characterisation assessment (including field patterns, settlement patterns and time depth);
- Key landscape features (e.g. topography, vegetation, land use/cover, transport corridors, rivers/watercourses, field patterns);
- Perceptual characteristics (e.g. openness, tranquillity, wildness etc); and,
- Key ecological, landscape and heritage designations.

1.3.13 The District-wide LSCA contains a significant amount of information on landscape context and analysis. Wherever possible, this was used to provide the landscape character context for each site to maintain a consistency of approach and assessment.

1.3.14 Following the desktop study, all sites were visited by a chartered landscape architect and an assessment made of the following:

- Key land use and landscape types within and around the site;
- Local landscape character and key defining characteristics;
- Significant landscape features within and around the site (both positive and negative);
- Key areas of landscape sensitivity within the site;
- Landscape opportunities and constraints of the site (including opportunities for landscape enhancement);
- Approximate Zone of Visual Influence/Zone of Theoretical Visibility of the site (assuming two storey development across the site); and
- Key views of and within the site and key visual receptors.

1.3.15 The above were recorded using supporting plans and photographs.

1.3.16 On completion of the main site surveys, a further brief visit was undertaken to all sites by the project team leader to verify and moderate the results and ensure consistency of approach and assessment across all the sites.

1.3.17 The fieldwork was followed by a period of analysis for each sub-area and individual site which focused on identifying/assessing:

- areas of local landscape character and the key characteristics of each of these;
- landscape sensitivity of the site;
- landscape value of the site;
- landscape capacity of the site to accommodate residential development;
- development limits in relation to potential landscape and visual impacts;
- opportunities for landscape enhancement; and,
- potential effects that development would have on local landscape character and visual amenity.

1.3.18 The criteria used for assessing the landscape sensitivity, landscape value and landscape capacity of each site closely followed those used in the LSCA study in 2014. Further details of these are provided in Appendix 2.10.
1.3.19 Mapping and reporting for each of the individual sites was prepared using GIS mapping and a supporting written report. Table 1.1 below provides a summary of the information sources for each field within the landscape report.

**Table 1.1 – Information sources for landscape report**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Report field</th>
<th>Source of information</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Landscape Character Context</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>County Landscape Character Area</td>
<td>East Sussex County Landscape Assessment, East Sussex County Council (2010)</td>
<td>Where sites extend across two county landscape character areas, both areas are noted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Landscape Character Type and Sensitivity</td>
<td>Wealden Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment, Chris Blandford Associates (2014)</td>
<td>Where sites extend across two character types, both areas are noted together with their sensitivity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Landscape Character Area</td>
<td>Wealden Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment, Chris Blandford Associates (2014)</td>
<td>Where sites extend across two or more local landscape character areas, all areas are noted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Landscape Setting Area</td>
<td>Wealden Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment, Chris Blandford Associates (2014)</td>
<td>For sites which did not fall within a Landscape Setting Area, the nearest Landscape Setting Area to the site are noted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distinctive Characteristics (of Landscape Setting Area)</td>
<td>Extract from Wealden Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment, Chris Blandford Associates (2014)</td>
<td>For sites which did not fall within a Landscape Setting Area, the distinctive characteristics of the nearest Landscape Setting Area to the site are noted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Site character areas and key features</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Character description</td>
<td>Field survey</td>
<td>Notes key features and character areas only – further site survey and analysis will be required as part of the design development process if site is allocated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key features</td>
<td>Field survey</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Visual analysis</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual context</td>
<td>Field survey</td>
<td>Noted from publicly accessible viewpoints only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ZVI</td>
<td>Field survey</td>
<td>ZVI mapping is approximate and represents the likely principal area within which visual effects would be notable if the site were developed. Some sites may be visible from more distant viewpoints as well. (Further ZVI refinement</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
and analysis will be necessary during the design development process if the site is brought forward for development.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key views and principal visual receptors</th>
<th>Field survey</th>
<th>Noted from publicly accessible viewpoints only. Sensitivity of visual receptors is based on methodology set out in Appendix 2.10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Landscape sensitivity and capacity**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sensitivity, Value and Capacity of Landscape setting area</th>
<th>Extract from Wealden Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment, Chris Blandford Associates (2014)</th>
<th>For sites which did not fall within a Landscape Setting Area, the setting, value and capacity of the nearest Landscape Setting Area to the site was noted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Site sensitivity and capacity assessment</td>
<td>Desktop analysis</td>
<td>Based on criteria as set out in Appendix 2.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significant variations in sensitivity within the site</td>
<td>Field Survey</td>
<td>Minor variations not considered (Further assessment including a full LVIA will be required if the site is brought forward for development)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Key landscape opportunities and constraints**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Landscape target notes</th>
<th>Field survey and desktop analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Potential landscape and visual impacts if site is developed**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key landscape effects</th>
<th>Field survey and desktop analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Key visual effects</td>
<td>Field survey and desktop analysis</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sets out key likely landscape and visual effects if site was developed but assuming landscape mitigation measures are in place as identified in landscape target notes. (Further assessment including a full LVIA will be required if the site is brought forward for development). For most sites, the assessment is based on likely effects arising for large or medium scale development (i.e. if all or most of the site were to be developed). Where appropriate, additional commentary is provided on likely effects arising from small scale development on the site.
1.4 **Structure of report**

1.4.1 The report is set out with the following structure:

**Main report**
- *Landscape and ecological context* – an introduction to the overarching landscape and ecological context which is relevant to the study area as a whole
- *Summary of assessments for each sub-area* – a summary of the local landscape and ecological context for each sub-area and an overview of the assessment results for each sub-area

**Appendices**
- *Volume 1 – Ecology assessments* – Site-specific ecology assessments for every site within each sub-area and detailed methodology for the ecology assessments
- *Volume 2 – Landscape assessments* – Site-specific landscape and visual assessments for every site within each sub-area and detailed methodology for the landscape assessments

1.4.2 Survey information has been mapped using GIS ArcMap with site-specific mapping provided within the appendices and overviews of each area provided within the summary chapters of the main report.

1.5 **List of sites**

1.5.1 A list of the sites assessed within each sub-area is provided below and the location of all sites is shown on Figure 1.1.

**Hailsham West**
- 044_1310 Arlington Station
- 237_1310 Chicheley farm
- 692_1310 Land west of A22
- 751_1310 Land at Hempstead Lane (adj. A22)
- 775_1310 Land at Paulalyn, Hempstead Lane
- 825_1310 Land at West Hailsham
- 839_1310 Highlands Farm, Arlington Road West
- 842_1310 Land at Arlington Road West
- 843_1310 Plot 4 Knockhatch Wood
- 844_1310 Highlands Farm Cottages
- 857_1310 Stables adjacent to Bushfield, Arlington Rd
- 859_1310 2 Highlands Farm Cottages
- 860_1310 Land to the north of Arlington Road
- 862_1310 Land on the North West Side of Hempstead Lane
- 866_1310 Arlington Cattery, Arlington Road West
- 868_1310 Knockhatch Wood Smallholding
- 873_1310 Bushy Wood Farm, Main Road
- 887_1310 Knockhatch Farm Cottage, Hailsham East

**Hailsham East**
- 052_1310 Former Southern Water Sewage Works
- 135_1310 Land South of A271
- 197_1310 Land East of Battle Road
- 215_1310 Poplar Cottage Farm
- 308_1310 Amberstone Grange

(i.e. if only a small part of the site were to be developed).
379_1310 Part of Marshfoot Farm
454_1310 Land South of Howard Close
467_1310 Land at Station Road
523_1310 Land at and to Rear of Lynton
524_1310 Land at Harebeating Nursery
724_1310 Land North of Old Swan Lane
746_1310 Land South of Mill Road
781_1310 Former Eastbourne Waterworks
804_1310 Land at Mill Road
883_1310 Land at Harebeating Farm
885_1310 Hailsham Ambulance Station
897_1310 Land at Peppers adjacent to Amberstone Grange

**Hailsham South**

210_1310 Bolneys Wood Land, off A22
245_1310 Land West of Sustrans Route
283_1310 Land off Sandbanks Close
305_1310 Bolneys Farm, South Road
696_1310 Land Adjoining Summerhill Lane
701_1310 Land at Coppards
711_1510 Land at Bramley Farm
719_1510 Land at Little Bramley Farm
728_1310 Land south of Hailsham
808_1310 Coldthorne Barn, Coldthorne Lane
833_1310 Land South of Summerhill Lane
845_1310 2 Summerhill Cottages, Summerhill Lane
846_1310 Summerhill Barn
851_1310 1 Summerhill Cottages, Summerhill Lane
854_1310 Creepers Cottage, Coldthorn Lane
856_1310 Byeways, Sayerland Lane
871_1510 Land on the South East Side of Sayerland Lane
872_1510 Bay Tree House, Baytree Lane
882_1310 Land on North West Site of Coldthorn Lane
890_1310 Coldthorn Cottage, Coldthorn Lane
891_1510 Land at Stockhall Farm, Summerhill Lane
895_1310 Davmau Farm, Coldthorn Lane
896_1510 (ex 256_1510) Land at and Adjoining Baytree Farm
900_1310 Land Adjoining Old Loom Mill

**Polegate and Willingdon**

120_1510 Hindsland Fields (East)
193_1510 Land Bounded in Part by A27 & Levett Road
204_1510 Cophall Farm
236_3370 Mornings Mill Farm
241_1510 Land at Shepham Lane
255_1510 Land at and Adjoining Honey Farm
257_1510 Land Adjacent to Cophall Farm
271_1510 Land South of Aberdale Road
457_1510 Little Shepham, Shepham Lane
540_3370 Land at Broderickland & Hamlands Farm
772_1510 Land at Rear of Dittons Farm
835_1510 Land at Polly Arch, Lynholm Road

**Hellingly**

009_3000 Field at North Street, Horsebridge
107_3000 Land Adjoining 13 Station Road
262_3000 Park Farm (West), New Road
263_3000 Park Farm (East), New Road
264_3000 Park Farm, New Road
534_3000 Sussex Plants Ltd
574_3000 Horselunges Business Park
784_3000 Land at Park Road

**Lower Horsebridge**
067_3100 Land to the East of A267
080_3100 Rothwebis Nursery
428_3100 Land at North Street
780_3100 Land East of A22 and South of A271

**Lower Dicker**
010_3090 Rosendale, Hackhurst Lane
233_3090 Land West of Hackhurst Lane
311_3090 1 Mill House
579_3090 Land Comprising Units 7 & 4
659_3090 Land at Lower Dicker Garden Centre
662_3090 Shep Plastics, A22
799_3090 Rainbow Farm and Oak Tree Farm
802_3090 Land to the Rear of Terra
803_3090 Land to the Rear of Prospect House
852_3090 Old Mill Paddock
853_3090 Land Adjoining Spindles, Mansers Lane
863_3090 Merriefields, Hackhurst Lane
864_3090 Ades Farm BN27 4BH
869_3090 Meadowswest, Caldicotts Lane
870_3090 Laurelhurst Farm BN27 4BD
880_3090 Marigolds Farm, Nash Street
881_3090 Little Mount, Mansers Lane
888_3090 Land at Marigolds Farm, Nash Street

**Upper Dicker**
015_3300 Field Between Adams Cottage & Field House
224_3300 Mayfields Farm, Coldharbour Road (formerly 387_3300 Mayfields Farm)
405_3300 Brickfields, Coldharbour Road
836_3300 Land to the north of 3&4 Crossways Cottages
861_3300 Old Pottery Farm, Coldharbour Farm
867_3300 Land on North Side of Coldharbour Road
878_3300 Robins Nursery, Coldharbour Road

**Magham Down**
088_3110 Land Adjoining Woodside Cottage
184_3110 Land Adjoining the Former Red Lion PH
391_3110 Onslow House
759_3110 Land at 3 Sussex Cottages
788_3110 Land to the West of Old Road
793_3110 Orchard Cottage, Old Lane
Figure 1.1

Site Locations

Key
- Hailsham West (Chapter 3)
- Hailsham East (Chapter 4)
- Hailsham South (Chapter 5)
- Polegate & Willingdon (Chapter 6)
- Hellingly (Chapter 7)
- Lower Horsebridge (Chapter 7)
- Lower Dicker & Upper Dicker (Chapter 8)
- Magham Down (Chapter 9)