

# Research and Analysis to inform Wealden District Council's Destination Management Plan



**Final Report**  
**January 2017**

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### Presented as Separate Documents

Research Report  
Stakeholder Consultation Feedback

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Tourism is important to the economy of Wealden and the District Council wishes to support this business sector by developing a Destination Management Plan (DMP) that builds on the previous Tourism Strategy 2010-15.

To inform the development of a new DMP Wealden District Council (WDC) commissioned Acorn Tourism Consulting and NGI Solutions in August 2016 to undertake research and analysis of the tourism sector in Wealden. The findings are also required to inform the Wealden Local Plan which is currently being prepared.

The methodology for this study has involved undertaking a detailed destination product audit, four surveys: of visitors, residents, potential visitors and businesses. In addition more than 20 stakeholder consultations were conducted with businesses and organisations involved in operating Wealden's tourism sector.

This report sets out the context for tourism in Wealden, starting with the external factors that influence the sector and the relevant policy objectives. It then presents the current scenario of tourism in Wealden; analysing the tourism product, the District's current and potential visitors and the Council's current activities to support the sector.

An analysis of the sector identifies the potential markets to target and the opportunities and constraints to future development, including the feasibility of two potential development options in the south of Wealden.

The final section of this draft report provides recommendations for the way forward, which need to be discussed with WDC to identify a realistic Action Plan that takes into consideration the available resources for delivery.

## **2. CONTEXT**

### **2.1 NATIONAL CONTEXT: EXTERNAL INFLUENCES**

The tourism industry will always be subjected to a wide range of external influences such as the weather, media both positive and negative and political changes. However there are a number of key issues that Wealden should be aware of when developing their Destination Management Plan. These include:

- Recent Tourism Action Plan launched by the Government identifies growth in international visitors to the South East. This will be further enhanced with the proposed growth of South East Air capacity.
- VisitEngland has demonstrated confidence that the Staycation trend will continue to grow, enhanced in the short term by poor exchange rates and also consumer fears over issues such as terrorism, strikes and disruption.
- There has been a significant growth in food tourism as a driver for visits. Food can't be made digital so will grow as a driver; it is a tangible product that cannot be replicated online.
- 355 million rural tourism trips are taken every year; 20 million of those overnight show a significant appetite for Wealden product.
- There is a potential issue in the self-catering market; the Government surcharge on stamp duty to reduce buy to let could impact on the number of available self-catering properties.
- Availability of good quality broadband is a key issue for both businesses ability to trade and customer satisfaction.
- Potential issues caused by removal of EU subsidies to rural businesses and how these are replaced as a result of Brexit.
- Funding, such as EAFRD, is becoming more widely available for both rural tourism businesses and public sector organisations.

### **2.2 LOCAL CONTEXT**

#### **2.1.1 Policy Framework**

The future development of tourism in Wealden will need to be aligned with the policies objectives of the South East Local Economic Partnership (SELEP); the East Sussex local LEP, Team East Sussex; and East Sussex County Council (ESCC) as well as Wealden District Council's (WDC) own local strategies and the national tourism strategy.

The main strategic objectives that shape the direction of Wealden's tourism sector are the East Sussex County Council Cultural Strategy (2013-23) & Growth Strategy (2014-20); the Wealden Core Strategy Local Plan (2013); the Sussex Heritage Coast Strategy (2016-20) and the South Downs National Park Sustainable Tourism Strategy (2015-20) and the High Weald AONB Management Plan (2014-19).

In alignment with these strategies the overall objectives for the future development of tourism in Wealden are to:

- Stimulate inward investment
- Support job creation, particularly high value jobs
- Contribute to skills development
- Assist town centre regeneration
- Support for villages and the high streets
- Promote healthy living

This direction for the future development of tourism will build on the previous Strategic Framework for Tourism in Wealden (2010).

### **2.1.2 Objectives for Tourism in Wealden**

The 10-year vision for tourism that was developed for the 2010 Strategic Framework for Tourism was founded on the principles of quality and sustainability and is still largely valid.

*A Vision for 2020: “By 2020 Wealden’s visitor economy is renowned for the quality and sustainability of the special places, landscapes and people which contribute to local jobs and the quality of life for its residents”.*

WDC’s current objectives for tourism are to maximise the benefit of tourism to Wealden, while minimising its negative impacts. The focus will be to increase the value of tourism rather than the volume of visitors by appealing to high spending, staying visitors, to support town centres and village high streets and drive employment.

In order to appeal to these visitors a distinctive image needs to be developed based on a quality, niche product.

To be able to monitor the impact of tourism and effectively plan its future development ESCC recognise that there is an urgent need for a robust evidence base and regular data collection.

The continuity in the strategic objectives for the development of tourism is important for the long-term development of the sector and the objectives of the previous tourism strategy remain relevant and appropriate to guiding Wealden’s tourism development for the next three years (see Appendix B).

### **2.1.3 Wealden’s Contribution to the East Sussex Visitor Economy**

Wealden’s tourism sector is currently performing well compared to the other districts in East Sussex. It is the second most important contributor to the East Sussex visitor economy, after Eastbourne, in terms of total business turnover and the number of jobs it supports.

In 2014-15, the latest year in which data is available, tourism contributed £258 million to the local economy and generated 11.4% of jobs.

Wealden attracted more total day and overnight trips (6.1 million) than the other East Sussex districts apart from Rother (6.3 million) in 2014.

### **2.3 MEASURING ECONOMIC IMPACT**

The current data on the economic impact of Wealden's tourism sector is based on the information generated by the Cambridge Model.

A full review of the 'top down' Cambridge Model and 'bottom up' STEAM economic impact models has been undertaken and is provided in Appendix C.

While the utilisation of an economic model is certainly useful, it is strongly recommended that any destination looking to be in a strong position to steer a course for its visitor economy should be measuring performance on a regular on going basis, at least monthly.

A data collection tool such as the one used by City of London, Visit Cornwall, and Newcastle Gateshead amongst others (T-Stats), would provide Wealden with the ideal data warehouse in which to monitor performance on a monthly basis and provide the inputs for a robust economic model.

This would allow WDC to be proactive about the direction of tourism in their destination, understanding the seasonal trends and any changes in patterns of the visitor economy.

The decision of which economic impact model to use, if any, comes down to what the purpose and use of the data will be. This will give a clear steer of the level of resource both in terms of people and cost that Wealden would like to put into this.

If data is to be collected at the local level then STEAM would be the obvious model of choice, however should this not be feasible and a snapshot approach is all that is required then Cambridge provides a cost effective alternative.

### **3. CURRENT SCENARIO**

#### **3.1 WEALDEN'S TOURISM OFFER**

##### **3.1.1 A Natural Attraction**

Wealden's core appeal to visitors is its beautiful, varied and unspoilt landscapes and views. It has undeveloped coastal cliffs, beaches and countryside that varies from ancient woodland, forests and heathland to a patchwork of medieval fields, parkland and open rolling downs.

The quality of the landscape and ecology is well conserved with over two-thirds being protected as part of the South Downs National Park, Sussex Heritage Coast, High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Ashdown Forest Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and Pevensey Levels Ramsar Site.

It offers its visitors relaxation, space and peace – an opportunity to get away from the stress of daily life, and a public rights of way network with areas of open access land enables visitors to partake in a range of free outdoor activities including walking and cycling.

Wealden's most visited attraction is the Seven Sisters chalk cliff coastline at Birling Gap, which attracts around 700,000 visitors each year. In addition the South Downs National Park has recently received International Dark Sky Reserve status with Birling Gap being a designated a Dark Sky Discovery Site. This is expected to attract an increasing number of visitors to the area. Overlooking Cuckmere Valley, is Rathfinney's Wine Estate near Alfriston which attracted more than 30,000 visitors in the last year and is expected to attract much higher numbers after it starts to promote its Sussex Sparkling wine internationally from 2018.

In the north, Pooh Bridge is adjacent to the Ashdown Forest and is a major draw, although visitor numbers are not recorded, along with Sheffield Park Gardens and the Bluebell Railway.

##### **3.1.2 Activities and Experiences**

In addition to walking and cycling, Wealden offers a range of attractions and activities including:

- Animal attractions
- Bird watching
- Fishing
- Garden centres
- Golf
- Historic villages
- Historic properties, castles, gardens and parkland
- Horse riding
- Literary and cultural connections
- Outdoor activity attractions
- Photography
- Rock climbing
- Sailing
- Science and astronomy
- Spa
- Steam railways
- Vineyards

The historic offer includes the landing of William the Conqueror at Pevensey, and there is a subtle cultural offer, based around the homes of literary and artistic personalities including Roland Penrose and Lee Miller who Picasso visited at Farley

Farm House, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle at Crowborough and Groombridge Place, AA Milne and Winnie the Pooh at Pooh Bridge in the Ashdown Forest.

### **3.1.3 Food and Drink**

Wealden has more than 120 pubs, situated in town, village and rural locations. Many of the pubs offer food and B&B accommodation.

There are also 40 farm shops selling local produce including Wealden produced wine, cider, cheese and meat.

While there are some high quality award winning restaurants and gastro-pubs, others are of mixed quality.

### **3.1.4 Events and Local Festivals**

Around 50 local villages and communities organise local events and festivals with some festivals, such as the Herstmonceux Medieval Festival on August Bank Holiday attracting wider regional audiences.

Some of the more distinctive events are the Sussex Bonfire nights that are organised each weekend across Sussex from early September to the end of November.

WDC organised the Wealden Food and Wine Festival in the summer at Pevensey Castle and Bentley and a nine day Sussex Walking Festival in September in conjunction with Eastbourne.

### **3.1.5 Visitor Accommodation**

#### *Self-catering and Camping Predominate*

Wealden's visitor accommodation is primarily self-catering with a strong camping offer. There are more than 250 businesses offering overnight accommodation for visitors of which two thirds are self-catering units (46%) or camping, caravanning or glamping sites (20%).

This sector offers some interesting and unusual accommodation including wild camping, glamping, shepherds huts, tree houses and large group camping for scouts and brownies.

#### *B&Bs and Small Hotels*

By comparison the serviced sector is considerably smaller, both in volume and the size of the properties. There are more than 50 B&Bs (21% of all accommodation) and relatively few hotels, 36 in total (13%), half of which have less than 10 rooms. Nearly all the hotels have less than 50 rooms with only 3 being larger: a budget hotel with 56 rooms; a golf and conference hotel with 104 rooms and a country house hotel with 106 rooms.

#### *Good Value*

Visitors have a good selection of hotels and B&B accommodation to choose from for under £100 per night with just over half the hotels in this price bracket and nearly three quarters of the B&Bs. Only two hotels cost more than £200 per night.



### *High Quality*

A very small proportion of Wealden's accommodation is quality assessed. Just 9 B&Bs (17%) and 9 hotels (25%) are part of the VisitEngland or AA schemes.

However those that are assessed score highly. Out of the eight B&Bs, three have been awarded 4 Stars and five have been awarded 5 Stars. The majority of the nine assessed hotels have been awarded 4 Stars and the others are 3 Star properties.

In addition, more than three quarters of B&Bs and all the hotels are rated on Trip Advisor, based on customer reviews. All but one of the B&Bs rate 4 or more and nearly two thirds of hotels score a rating of 4 or higher.

### *Green and Accessible Tourism*

The extent of environmental conservation of Wealden's landscape is not reflected in the sustainability accreditation of its visitor accommodation; only one B&B and one hotel have Green Tourism accreditation, both rated as Silver, with one hotel awaiting grading.

No properties in Wealden have National Accessible Scheme accreditation.

## **3.2 CURRENT AND POTENTIAL VISITORS**

The research for this study involved undertaking surveys with four different audiences:

- Tourism businesses in Wealden
- Visitors to Wealden
- Residents of Wealden
- Potential visitors to Wealden

The detailed findings from each survey are available in the Research Report. This section presents the common themes that were identified as part of the research.

The primary finding is that across all of the audiences the key driver for visiting is the untouched beauty of the landscapes and scenery of Wealden. This is a reason to live and visit the area. This should be a key consideration of any future developments.

Key findings were:

- Around half of visitors (47%) come from within the local area.
- Most visitors (43%) travel with their partner/spouse while a fifth were travelling alone.
- Almost 8 out of 10 visitors were visiting to walk in the area.
- Word of mouth and previous visits play a key role in informing what visitors are doing.
- Word of mouth and local knowledge are also key to residents' days out.
- While in the destination visitors tend to pick up information from attractions and accommodation.
- Cleanliness and the quality of accommodation, visitor attractions and eating establishments were all rated highly.

- 88% of those who haven't visited the area said this was due to the fact they were not aware what was there.
- Wealden residents are highly proud of the area in which they live, citing the countryside, scenery and views as the key reason.
- Residents were evenly split as to whether new attractions should be built in the area. Of those that did, they would want them to be in keeping with the current offer, these could be heritage and ecological attractions.

### **3.3 WEALDEN DISTRICT COUNCIL TOURISM ACTIVITY**

#### **3.3.1 Staff Resources**

The staff resource allocated to tourism comprises approximately 1.0 FTE of the Community and Regeneration Officer's role. This role delivers Wealden's tourism marketing activities and events.

The primary activity, in terms of officer time allocation, is organising the annual Wealden Food and Wine Festival and the printed attractions guide and map 'Wealden Do the Best Attractions in Sussex'. It is estimated that these two activities take up approximately 80% of the officer's time.

On going activities involve keeping the WealdenDo website (<http://www.wealdendo-sussex.co.uk/>) up to date and expanding its content; general promotion through organising and negotiating offers for journalist 'fam' trips, answering queries on tourism planning applications and representing Wealden on partner activities.

#### **3.3.2 Partnerships**

The Council works with several partners to maximise the tourism promotion and marketing opportunities for Wealden. These are:

- 1066 Country Marketing
- Ashdown Visitor Management Partnership (AVMP)
- Ashdown Forest Tourism Association (AFTA)
- East Sussex Cultural Advisory Board
- East Sussex Arts Partnership
- Sussex Destination Management Group
- Sussex Heritage Coast Group

#### **3.3.3 Promotion of Wealden**

The main promotional channels for Wealden are online through:

- WealdenDo [www.wealdendo.gov.uk](http://www.wealdendo.gov.uk)
- Sussex Walking Festival <http://sussexwalkingfestival.org.uk/>
- Wealden Festival <http://wealdenfestivals.co.uk/>
- Events on the main council website [www.wealden.gov.uk](http://www.wealden.gov.uk)

The other websites Wealden and its events are promoted through include:

- South Downs National Park [www.southdownsfood.org/](http://www.southdownsfood.org/)
- High Weald AONB [www.highweald.org/](http://www.highweald.org/)
- Ashdown Forest Tourism Association [www.ashdownforest.com/](http://www.ashdownforest.com/)
- Ashdown Forest [www.ashdownforest.org/enjoy/tourist.php](http://www.ashdownforest.org/enjoy/tourist.php)
- Magnet <http://magnetpublications.co.uk/>
- Festival Finder <http://foodfestivalfinder.co.uk/>

### **3.3.4 Marketing Activities**

The findings from the visitor, non-visitor and resident surveys highlighted several issues around the marketing of Wealden that need to be addressed:

- i) Only 8% of visitors are using websites to find things to do. The challenge for Wealden District Council is therefore how to inform people of what's available and to get them to explore the District.
- ii) Only 5% of local residents use WealdenDo website. This is a significant issue in generating new visits.
- iii) Information and visitor racks are very important for visitors who pick up information while they are in Wealden.
- iv) 88% of people that don't visit Wealden, don't come because they don't know what's here. There is clearly a great need to raise awareness and drive people to the WealdenDo website.

Wealden's current marketing activities currently rely primarily on traditional marketing. This helps to inform current visitors and residents about what is available; however it is not effective at reaching new visitors.

The development of the WealdenDo website is considered to be in its infancy and despite the effort involved in creating and maintaining the site, it is underutilised by both residents and visitors. This has been highlighted by the findings from the surveys.

The website has the potential to raise awareness of Wealden as a destination, particularly amongst the younger market segments. However there is a need to undertake an effective social media campaign to drive traffic to website.

In addition, the initial consultations with businesses highlighted their need for greater understanding of social media and how to use it effectively to promote tourism businesses and activities as well as the wider destination.

### **3.3.5 Business Engagement and Support**

The business survey generated a considerably lower response rate than would be expected in comparable rural destinations. From those responses that were received businesses appear to be positive about performance with many reporting an increase in performance, however the lack of response indicates that there are low levels of engagement. There also appears to be a low level of awareness of the role of Wealden District Council amongst the business community.

Initial stakeholder feedback indicated that there is a need for business support in the following areas:

- Business start ups and growth
- Planning advice
- Market knowledge and research
- Social media marketing

WDC is proactive in its general business support; it produces a business newsletter three times a year. It also offers business support provided by a range of organisations including Locate East Sussex, EDEAL, Let's Do Business Group, East Sussex Region of the FSB, Business Breakfasts, and the Business East Sussex Growth Hub.

However greater engagement between Wealden and the tourism businesses would help identify the specific support that is required by the tourism sector.

### **3.3.6 Summary**

Wealden offers visitors an affordable, high quality, 'boutique' destination. The experience of staying in Wealden is likely to be a quite a personal one, engaging with local people either by staying in a B&B or small hotel, or using local shops, pubs and restaurants as part of a self-catering or camping holiday.

The rural offer complements the urban facilities provided by Eastbourne, Brighton and Tunbridge Wells.

Stakeholders describe the atmosphere in Wealden as quirky, niche and personal. The overall quality of the offer is high, with some good quality facilities and services.

There is a strong product to build on, however the current lack of awareness, limited Council resources and low levels of business engagement and data collection mean that Wealden's tourism sector is not fully realising its potential as a significant contributor to the local economy.

## 4. SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS

### 4.1 MARKET SEGMENTS

#### 4.1.1 Introduction

Wealden current strategy results in a focus on attracting the day visitor market, which makes up three quarters of its visitors, and works with the attractions to promote them through the attractions guide and on the website.

However if the objective for tourism is to increase the value to the visitor economy whilst minimising the number of trips taken, it will also be important change the strategy to increase attracting staying visitors and increasing visitor spend.

The survey findings highlighted the geographical areas where Wealden's visitors currently come from and its primary market segments. It will be important to retain these visitors and also consider which additional segments should be targeted.

#### 4.2.1 Priority Markets

##### ***Geographical Areas***

*Local residents:* from Wealden and neighbouring districts: currently the majority of visitors. The wealthy demographic and important for generating VFR visits.

*South East:* currently a third of visitors. Residents of coastal towns including Eastbourne and Seaford enjoy the contrast of the woodland environment in the north of the district.

*London:* a tenth of visitors currently come from London. This is a prime short-stay market that has the potential to deliver younger 18-45 year old audiences.

*Northern Europe:* Belgium, France, Netherlands are the main northern European markets to the South East.

*International:* The Seven Sisters at Birling Gap is a major attractor for visitors from Japan and Korea. There may be potential to increase length of stay with greater promotion of Wealden's wider offer.

##### **Primary target markets**

*Domestic short break and holidays: Couples post-family, plus friends or family*

- Potential to be high spending, take multiple trips and prepared to travel throughout year.
- Empty-nesters and early retired are active and enjoy walking, cycling, nature, gardens and cultural heritage and other special interest activities.
- Look for new places to visit with historic sites and good quality places to eat out.

*Day Visitors*

- A stable market largely drawn from local residents and VFR visits.
- Attracted by quality and variety of landscape.
- Looking for good walking, heritage and garden attractions, places to eat out.

## Secondary target markets

### *Domestic short breaks and holidays – Families and multi-generational families*

- Wealden has a strong self-catering sector that can offer flexible space that appeals to the family and growing multi-generational family market; self-catering has the potential to drive local spend in villages and towns.
- The outdoor activity offer in Wealden, including camping, has strong potential to appeal to city dwelling families with younger children.
- Attracting families is important for growing future loyalty to the destination.
- This market is limited by school holidays but can be attracted out of season.

### *Niche Segments: Special Interest*

- Walking
- Parks and Gardens
- Heritage
- Culture
- Photography
- Cycling
- Riding, golf
- Growing Trends
  - Food
  - Wine
  - Dark Skies
  - Wellness

### *People with Disabilities*

- A business opportunity - large and highly valuable market, with little competition particularly in rural areas; includes groups where one person has a disability.
- Good facilities for people with special needs of all sorts, also meets the needs of the older demographic of residents.
- There is considerable need for businesses to understand the business potential and provide for this market.

## 4.2 STRENGTHS, OPPORTUNITIES, CONSTRAINTS

### 4.2.1 Introduction

An analysis of the strengths, opportunities and constraints of the Wealden tourism sector has been undertaken based on the findings of the surveys, destination product audit and stakeholder consultations.

### 4.2.2 Strengths

- **Core product – Unspoilt, Beauty, Views, Variety**
  - Coast and countryside
  - High quality and varied natural landscape
  - Forest, park, woodland, heathland, downland, chalk cliffs, beach
  - Conservation: Ashdown Forest SAC/SPA, High Weald AONB, Pevensey Levels Ramsar Site, SDNP
- **Relaxation: Space, Peace, Freedom**
  - Offers an opportunity to get away from the stress of daily life, time to relax

- **Hotspots:**
  - South: Seven Sisters (700,000 visitors pa)
  - North: Pooh Bridge
- **Quality:** Mixed in some areas but overall good quality facilities and services
- **Complementary** offer to Eastbourne, Brighton and Tunbridge Wells
- **Small scale**, quirky, niche, personal, intimate, boutique
- **Outdoor activities:**
  - Walking
  - Parks and gardens
  - Photography
  - Animal attractions, cycling, dark skies, fishing, golf, riding
- **Eating and Drinking**
  - Farm shops
  - Local producers: cider, wine, cheese, meat
  - Local pubs
  - Some high quality restaurants and gastro-pubs
- **Heritage:**
  - Historic villages
  - Railways: Lavender Line; Bluebell Railway; Spa
  - National Trust, English Heritage, Sussex Archaeological Society
  - Hidden culture: eg, Farley's Farmhouse, Michelham Priory, castles
  - Science: astronomy at Hertmonceux
  - Bonfire Societies events – Sept-Oct-Nov
- **Unusual accommodation:** wild camping, glamping, tree houses, large groups (scouts, brownies); award winning boutique hotels
- **Local Festivals:** Food & wine, walking, medieval heritage, trees/woodworking; music; village events
- **Wealthy** local demographic: potential to generate high spending resident and VFR trips

#### 4.2.3 Opportunities

- **Identity**
  - Small, quirky, niche, intimate, 'boutique'
    - Focus on villages rather than towns
    - The *Sussex* brand works
    - Create a cohesive Wealden story
- **Niche** products for niche audiences
  - Walking, photography, wine, dark skies
  - Cycling in south
  - Walking in the north – High Weald under utilized
  - Package 3 day tours
  - Seasonal offers

- **Events**
  - Build on success of local events e.g. Food & Wine Festival
  - Complement local /regional events: e.g. 1066 Seafood & Wine, England's Medieval Festival
  - Bonfire tradition in shoulder season
- **Transport**
  - Explore potential for sustainable eco-transport hub or southern transport hub
  - HS1 to Hastings, Rye, Bexhill may open up east London short break market
- **Existing Activities**
  - Discover England Fund: support bookable products e.g. Gardens and Gourmet; E-car Club
  - Arts Council: Great Places Scheme
  - Coastal Cultural trail
  - Pevensey Coastal Communities
- **Partnerships**
  - Build networking and co-ordination of sector
  - Build on existing partnerships: Eastbourne hotels, Tourism South East, Sussex Top Attractions, 1066 Country; Love Sussex, Sussex Camping & Caravanning Guide; National Trust, English Heritage, Sussex Archaeological Society
  - Filming partners
- **Hailsham**
  - Promote healthy living activities
  - Gateway to the SDNP
  - High tech hub (digital, social media, virtual/augmented reality R&D) to support tourism and other sectors
  - Create a sustainable transport hub.

#### **4.2.4 Constraints**

##### **Economic opportunity**

- ESCC overlooking economic benefits that investing in tourism can create
- Lack of data; robust evidence required to demonstrate economic impact

##### **Current visitors - primarily day trips by older demographic**

- 79% are over 45 years old
- 47% are over 66 years old

##### **Lack of identity**

- Lack of awareness of what to do amongst potential and current visitors
- Need for cohesive and co-ordinated message
- Traditional marketing, limited social media expertise in businesses and WDC
- Towns uninteresting
- All a bit serious - needs to be FUN – especially for kids, to attract Millennials

##### **Access/ Transport:**

- Lack of connectivity within Ashdown Forest and across the District
- Traffic congestion
- PROW not consistently maintained



- Lack of cycle hire/ electric bike hire
- Lack of public transport for staff to get to work
- Disabled access to countryside

#### **Lack of business engagement**

- Only one tourism business association (AFTA)

#### **Connectivity**

- Poor Internet and mobile signal particularly in Ashdown Forest, limits business potential and visitor experience

#### **Environmental Conservation v. Development**

- Confusion over planning regulations in Ashdown Forest e.g. advertising and signage restrictions
- Scope to differentiate land-based business from other businesses in Ashdown Forest

#### **Accommodation**

- Lack of large hotels limits conference market
- Lack of Green Tourism accredited and fully accessible accommodation

#### **Community**

- Parish Council lack of understanding of value of local product or how to promote it
- Lack of co-ordination of local, Parish events
- Volunteering and community Parish activities undertaken by older people; increased community hubs, engagement and volunteering by younger people needed
- Increasing conversion of properties from commercial to residential on village high streets.

#### **4.2.5 Digital Marketing and Social Media**

The resources that are being invested in developing the WealdenDo website are not being realised to their full potential due to the low levels of participation by users.

Increasing visitor traffic to the website would require Wealden to invest in promoting the website online and through the development of regular social media activity.

A proactive social media campaign should be enabled by reviewing necessary resources and developing a digital marketing and social media strategy that involves the Council and businesses, taking into consideration the need to provide the relevant digital marketing support to businesses.

## 5. DEVELOPMENT OPTIONS

### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

As part of this study a top-level feasibility assessment of two development options was required.

Option 1: A major attraction to be located in the south of the District

Option 2: Promoting the South as a destination in its own right, building on the existing attractions and developing niche themes.

Based on the market analysis and survey findings, the opportunities and constraints of each option are listed below.

### 5.2 OPTION 1: MAJOR ATTRACTION

Opportunities	Constraints
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Could put Wealden on the map</li> <li>• Attract younger demographic</li> <li>• Drive overnight visitors</li> <li>• Job creation – but low value jobs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Potential to detract from Wealden’s key attractor – its natural beauty</li> <li>• Unlikely to fit with current product</li> <li>• Increased traffic and congestion</li> <li>• High level investment required</li> <li>• Highly professional management and marketing essential</li> <li>• Could compete with existing attractions e.g. Knockhatch and Drusillas</li> <li>• Limited benefit to local economy</li> <li>• Large scale attraction already exists in south: Seven Sisters</li> </ul>

### 5.3 OPTION 2: PROMOTION OF SOUTH AS A DESTINATION BASED AROUND EXISTING ATTRACTIONS AND NICHE THEMES

Opportunities	Constraints
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build on current strengths</li> <li>• Develop niche products based on interests and expertise of lifestyle businesses and SMEs</li> <li>• Organic growth</li> <li>• Attract niche markets</li> <li>• Package existing attractions in South: Alfriston Clergy House, Drusillas Park, Knockhatch Adventure Park, Michelham Priory, Pevensy Castle, Seven Sisters Country Park</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fragmented, needs good co-ordination</li> <li>• All stakeholders need to be in agreement and have shared objectives</li> <li>• Small scale, small marketing budgets</li> <li>• Well targeted business support required</li> <li>• Unlikely to put Wealden on the map</li> <li>• Prioritises South of district over North</li> </ul>

## **5.4 RECOMMENDED DEVELOPMENT OPTION**

### **5.4.1 Core Objectives**

The aim of any new development would be to:

- Put Wealden on the map
- Drive high value visitors
- Drive high value jobs
- Build and add value to existing product
- Attract investment
- Increase local pride
- Benefit whole District

### **5.4.2 Proposed Development Opportunity: English Wine Festival**

The proposed development opportunity is for Wealden to invest in creating a national festival that embracing all English wines and that targets the growing national and international wine tourism market.

The festival could include activities such as tutored tastings, local food stalls, music, entertainment, wine accouterments, local and celebrity chefs, wine critics. It could embrace business across the district by packaging vineyard tours, and developing 2-3 day overnight packages that incorporate Wealden's wider visitor offer.

The festival could be located in south: potentially starting at Rathfinnys and moving nearer to Hailsham when it grows in size.

It would be important to establish the early buy-in of potential partners such as Rathfinnys, Plumpton College and the Sussex Food and Drink Network.

Developing an international standard English Wine Festival could offer the opportunity for Wealden to:

- Create large scale event in south of District that fits with the core Wealden product
- Claim English Wine (before someone else does)
- Facilitate leadership for a valuable, growing but fragmented segment. There are existing wine events but they are local/ regional
- Build on Wealden's specialist wine producers – from the largest in UK/ Europe to small trade only producers
- Promote a strong landscape message, relevant to north and south of District; eg Wine and Chalk
- Appeal to local, regional, national, international high spending visitors
- Tap into growth markets – experiential, gastronomy and wine tourism + walking, cycling, staycation, short breaks, multigenerational families
- Create opportunities to package and develop existing products
- Potential funding and support from the SELEP or Team East Sussex.

### **5.4.3 Recommended Action**

The recommendation is for Wealden to invest in undertaking a full feasibility study for an international standard English Wine Festival. This would need to identify stakeholders, partners, funding opportunities, potential markets and best practice international wine festivals.

## **6. THE WAY FORWARD**

### **6.1 INTRODUCTION**

In the context of East Sussex, Wealden's tourism is performing well, with its core audience being mostly day visitors and local residents. However there is the opportunity to significantly increase the value that the sector brings to the local economy.

The current resource available within WDC to achieve this is limited to one person's job and this is not expected to change significantly over the next three years. It is therefore necessary for WDC to develop a realistic strategy identifying how it can support the tourism sector with the available resources.

During the process of undertaking the consultations and research for this study it became evident that the level of engagement between WDC and businesses across the tourism sector (e.g. accommodation providers, attractions, activity providers, food and drink outlets) was limited and insufficient to create and deliver a full Destination Management Plan (DMP) and Action Plan.

A key priority of WDC's tourism sector strategy should therefore be to improve and build the level of business engagement across the sector, so that a Steering Group can be established to develop a DMP that can be delivered jointly by WDC and the District's tourism sector. VisitEngland provides guidance for destinations on how to develop and deliver a DMP and Action Plan and emphasises the need for strong business engagement throughout the process.

This Section sets out the key objectives for developing tourism in Wealden over the next three years, together with an initial action plan for taking forward the recommended themes that have emerged from the research findings and stakeholder consultations undertaken for this study.

### **6.2 STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES FOR WEALDEN'S TOURISM 2017-2019**

The strategic objectives for the 2010 Strategic Framework for Tourism in Wealden, as presented in Appendix B are still valid and address the issues that have been highlighted during the research for this study. The core objectives remain to:

- i) Conserve natural beauty – Wealden's core product and main attractor;
- ii) Raise awareness – locally and to wider audiences before they visit;
- iii) Encourage and increase staying visitors – particularly off season;
- iv) Encourage and increase visitor spend – from day and staying visitors; and
- v) Deliver a fulfilling and enjoyable experience that exceeds visitor expectations and delivers positive recommendations.

### **6.3 WORK THEMES AND INDICATIVE ACTION PLAN**

The potential work themes that have been highlighted by the consultation undertaken for this study should form the basis of WDC's tourism strategy for the next three years and should be reviewed on an annual basis.

Work Themes	Timeframe		
	Short 2017-18	Medium 2018-20	Long 2020+
<b>1. Business Engagement</b>	✓	✓	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>WDC to lead on coordinating the sector and increasing networking with businesses, to encourage business participation in the development of a Destination Management Plan, data collection, product development and marketing.</li> <li>WDC will need a clear strategy on the level of support it can provide the tourism sector over the next 3 years, to ensure businesses are aware of the respective roles of the public and private sector.</li> <li>WDC is planning a tourism event in March 2017 to launch its Attraction Guide and establish the level of support within the sector for creating a destination management Steering Group.</li> <li>Ways to share product knowledge across the sector about Wealden's visitor offer should be identified to encourage local accommodation providers, food and beverage businesses, taxis and local residents, to promote the District to its local visitor market.</li> </ul>			
<b>2. Data Management and Dissemination</b>		✓	✓
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is an urgent need for the regular collection of timely data to track visitors, inform and monitor management and marketing decisions across the sector and report to funders, investors and stakeholders.</li> <li>Data collection, management and reporting should be used to help drive and support business engagement.</li> <li>Cost effective ways to collect data and encourage stakeholder participation need to be identified.</li> <li>Data collection systems could be developed in conjunction with ESCC.</li> <li>Information on accommodation occupancy is required to inform planning decisions, particularly in relation to the development of serviced accommodation.</li> </ul>			
<b>3. Business and Parish Council Support</b>	✓	✓	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tourism SME's need a range of sector specific business support including understanding planning and businesses regulations, grant applications and in particular improved digital and social media expertise.</li> <li>Parish Councils have potential to initiate local business networking and encourage participation but need support to understand tourism development priorities and digital media marketing.</li> <li>WDC should work with Parish Councils and businesses to identify their specific needs.</li> </ul>			
<b>4. Product Development and Packaging</b>	✓	✓	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The development of quality and niche rural and coastal products, including green and accessible tourism businesses, should be supported.</li> <li>WDC plan an initial focus on village tourism encouraging business and parish networks and identifying strong local products. Villages should be featured on the WealdenDo website.</li> <li>Accommodation and activity packages should be developed and promoted.</li> </ul>			

<b>5. English Wine Tourism Festival Feasibility Study</b>	✓		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wine tourism is a growth market, both domestically and internationally. In Wealden there is strong potential to develop high profile activities and packages that could attract both international visitors and local audiences to engage with top quality English wine producers and incorporate smaller vineyards and other tourism businesses across the District, including accommodation, food and beverage and activity providers.</li> <li>• WDC plan to develop a brief to undertake a Feasibility Study for the development of an international standard English Wine Festival in the District.</li> </ul>			
<b>6. Identity and Marketing</b>	✓	✓	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increasing awareness of Wealden’s tourism offer and raising its profile as a destination will require a collective marketing strategy delivered by both WDC and the sector as a whole.</li> <li>• The WealdenDo website has the potential to be a key driver in the marketing of Wealden and to engage businesses with updating content and collecting data.</li> <li>• However further investment of time and the relevant skills, is required to improve the website’s content and visibility through improved search engine optimisation.</li> <li>• Key marketing issues to be addressed with the sector include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Whether a ‘Wealden’ tourism brand is necessary when the ‘Sussex’ brand already works; is it more effective to build on the Sussex brand?</li> <li>○ Developing a cohesive story about Wealden that creates an identity and provides consistent messaging for all partners to use.</li> <li>○ Improved market segmentation is required by most businesses; stakeholder partners such as the National Trust could share good practice.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>			
<b>7. E-Transport</b>		✓	✓
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A working group should be set up to explore innovative options for sustainable transport around District, potentially based around a hub in the south of the District eg, commercial sponsor / branding of electric taxis, charging points.</li> <li>• Explore the potential for Wealden of the E-Car Club initiative funded by the Discover England fund.</li> </ul>			

## 6.5 NEXT STEPS

The Work Themes should form the basis of WDC’s tourism sector strategy over the next three years. A brief for the English Wine Festival Feasibility Study should be developed early in 2017 and put out to tender. Following the WDC tourism event planned for March 2017 the Steering Group, if established, should review the strategy and action plan to agree appropriate priorities based on partner expertise and available resources.

## ACRONYMS

AFTA	Ashdown Forest Tourism Association
AONB	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
AVMP	Ashdown Visitor Management Partnership
DMP	Destination Management Plan
ESCC	East Sussex County Council
FTE	Full Time Equivalent
SNDP	South Downs National Park
VFR	Visiting Friends and Relatives
WDC	Wealden District Council

## **APPENDICES**

- A. Stakeholders Consulted
- B. Strategic Objectives for the Development of Tourism in Wealden
- C. Measuring Tourism – A Comparator of Models
- D. Destination Audit Analysis
- E. Potential Steering Group Members

### **Provided as Separate Documents**

Research Report  
Stakeholder Consultation Feedback



## APPENDIX A

### STAKEHOLDERS CONSULTED

Marina	Brigginshaw	Wealden District Council
Jeremy	Burgess	Sussex Heritage Coast SDNP/ National Trust Birling Gap
Jane	Cecil	National Trust Birling Gap
Clr Nick	Collinson	Chapter 12 Wine Bar; Community Leadership, Communications
Nina	Elliot-Newman	Sheffield Park & Garden National Trust
Roy	Galley	Councillor, Wealden District Council
Sandra	Grant	SDNPA Interim Tourism officer
Barbara	Hibbert	AFTA Ashdown Forest Tourist Association
Charles	Hooper	Shovelstrode Forest Garden
Graham	Kean	WDC officer/Cuckoo Trail/Walking
Jane	Kilby	Wealden District Council
Hilary	Knight	Sussex Food Network
Russell	Lines	East Sussex National Hotel
Georgia	Mallinson	Rathfinny Vineyard
Helen	Markwick	Wealden District Council
Debbie	Matthews	Michelham Priory
Dee	Mcdonald	The National Cat Centre
Belinda	Mercer	General Secretary of the South East Vineyards Association
Barbara	Molog	PVP Pevensey Villages Partnership
Graham	Peters	TEAM East Sussex
Gerry	Sherwin	High Weald AONB
Sally	Staples	East Sussex County Council
Jerry	Watkiss	Mayfield Councillors
Emma	Wray	1066/ Rother District Council

### Contacted but not responded

Dawn	Champion	Pevensey Castle, English Heritage
Laura	Gooch	Drusillas
Colin	Jagger	Knockhatch Adventure Park
Emily and Dan	Morrish	Wilderness Wood
Mark	Ramsay-Smieht	Wimbles Farm
Malcom	Ramsden	The Clerk, Wadhurst Parish Council
Kelvin	Williams	Head of Planning & Environment, WDC
Garry	Winwood	Stone Cross Nurseries

## **APPENDIX B**

### **STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF TOURISM IN WEALDEN BASED ON THE STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK FOR TOURISM 2010**

- Contribute to improving the quality of life for local people, particularly in terms of improving market town vitality, helping to maintain and enhance local services and amenities
- Capitalise on the economic benefits, job and wealth creation which the visitor economy brings to the area
- Provide more effective management of visitors and responsible visitor behaviour to minimise any adverse impact on the environment and local communities
- Improve the quality of the visitor economy product and visitor experience
- Achieve better geographic and seasonal spread of visitor demand, to boost off-peak business
- Contribute to wider strategic objectives to help reduce car miles and increase public transport and non-car based visitor activity
- Champion local distinctiveness, produce and traditions in the development and promotion of the area
- Ensure there are profitable, well managed, sustainable and responsible quality businesses in the visitor economy
- Make the best use of available public sector resources and funding for the visitor economy in Wealden.

## **APPENDIX C**

### **MEASURING TOURISM – A COMPARATOR OF MODELS**

#### **What is tourism and why is it difficult to measure?**

The internationally agreed definition of tourism goes beyond the concept of tourists as being the same as holiday-makers, and indicates that that:

“Tourism comprises the activities of persons travelling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes ... tourism refers to all activities of visitors, including over-night visitors and same day visitors.” (UNWTO, OECD, Eurostat, International Recommendations on Tourism Statistics. 2009)

There is no such thing as a tourism industry but it is major sector made up of many individual component Industries. For example: The airline and other transport industries; hotel and other accommodation industries; leisure and entertainment industries, and so on. Indirectly it involves and affects many other industries in the economy such as: Agriculture; Retail; Building; and Finance.

The result is that there is little commonly understood or commonly usable communication of tourism statistics. Most attempts at the defining of tourism have revolved around the definition of the user - the so-called “tourist”. Each industry again describes the tourist user differently as guest, customer, passenger, visitor, client, and so on. Furthermore, in each of these industries tourism represents only part of the use of available capacity.

Because of this lack of understanding of tourism, the value and volume of its demand can be underestimated which can limit the full analysis of demand potential and consequent development.

Despite this all within the tourism industry have a need to determine a value it brings to their locality. This will usually involve some form of modelling.

This document examines these models and their required inputs to provide some context for Wealden in its objectives to gather economic data.

#### **Why Measure?**

To meet their current and future needs effectively, Destination Management Organisations (DMO's) and local authorities have to be able to measure the changing volume and value of tourism locally on a reliably accurate basis and to assess the positive and negative economic, environmental and social impacts of visitors on local communities.

Positive and negative in these terms is not something to be measured once every five years or so but a fluid, constantly shifting balance that can only be traced by measurement. It reflects what local businesses do (and do not do) and the policies and actions (and inactions) adopted and implemented or not by local authorities.

Most Authorities need to measure and collect tourism information for general PR and communication purposes but more specifically for decision and delivery purposes that range from:

- Marketing responsibilities
- Planning and development responsibilities
- Development of more sustainable tourism
- Making bids for central and regional funds
- Compliance with information demands from national and regional government
- Devising effective visitor management plans for destinations and monitoring the results over time
- Implementing their best value obligations.

At its simplest those responsible for tourism need to be able, at the least possible cost, to estimate the:

- Total number of visitors
- Total revenue attributable to tourism
- Total employment attributable to tourism

### **Inputs Required**

There are two sides to the inputs required for the models to work. The level of data collation required for each may have an impact on the decision on a DMO or local authority on which model to use.

On the supply side inputs required include:

- Accommodation Stock
- Resident population
- Tourism attractions

On the demand side data includes:

- Event Data
- Day visit data
- Room occupancy data
- Room rate data
- Visitor numbers to attractions
- Car parking data
- Visits to Tourist Information Centres
- Tourism Spend data
- International visitor numbers

### **Models Available**

Over the past 30 years there have been two main models for measurement, each allowing the user to make estimates of the impact of tourism.

Both incorporate the supply and demand side measures although they start at opposite ends of the estimation process. STEAM being a 'bottom up' model and 'Cambridge' being very much a top down model.

Top down generates its estimates by disaggregating the data from the annual national surveys of consumer demand into first regional and then local authority estimates of the all important volume data.

Bottom up generates its key volume estimates from surveys of visitor flows measured on a weekly and monthly basis at local businesses (also known as 'trade surveys'). Once the key estimates of volume are made, both methods follow broadly similar procedures for estimating revenue and calculating employment.

## **The STEAM Model**

STEAM measures data locally from both a supply and demand side should the data be available, borrowing data from similar destinations at the demand side if this data is not available.

Although there is a claim that data can be provided in a very short turnaround time, in practise this is not always the case but data is usually made available at a faster pace than that of Cambridge.

To utilise STEAM the onus is on the DMO to gather intelligence on a monthly basis to feed into the model which can have its own resource and cost implications which would need to be considered.

This data is more responsive to any issues at a local level which should be seen more accurately in the reporting and provides data on seasonality and monthly patterns

STEAM costs more than Cambridge but it delivers more. Provided that a local authority works with the STEAM team to develop its supply side database and collaborate with local businesses the data it produces will be acceptably reliable and capable of comparison over time and between areas. Although the absolute numbers cannot be guaranteed, as with any model, the direction of change for trends should be valid and reliable as well as actionable in decision terms.

## **The CAMBRIDGE Model**

Cambridge is based upon the main national surveys such as the United Kingdom Tourism Survey, Day Visit Survey and International Passenger Survey. This data is disaggregated to a more local level with outputs set at regional estimates generated by these national surveys. This can give limited confidence in the results.

The model is run at a lower cost to the alternative STEAM.

While the model uses local supply side information its reliance on the national data sources does make it subject to any variations with these surveys due to changes in local level sampling. In some cases these swings and variances can be in excess of 10% year on year. This can provide issues when looking at year on year comparisons and the statistical confidence when making these comparisons.

The utilisation of national level data make it more difficult to identify any local issues which may be playing a defining part in any changes in visitor patterns and trends.

The CAMBRIDGE model is essentially a low cost means of establishing a broad pattern of the overall value of local tourism. To use the CAMBRIDGE model, it is only necessary for a local authority to supply what it knows of its local database of accommodation capacity

## **Issues and challenges**

It will not always be possible for those responsible to collect all of the data at a local level due to both resource and cost, data such as occupancy or the ability to carry out visitor surveys to gather expenditure data.

This is where the possibility of a top down model can play a role being driven by national level data or perhaps regional data collected at a national level.

There is also the possibility of utilising 'proxy' data. For example if a destination is not collecting non serviced accommodation data it could be borrowed from neighbouring or similar destinations and used as an applied assumption

Sometimes these guesstimates and proxy data are not as transparent as we would like which is what allows those running the models the ability to charge destinations for the information which they provide.

One of the key issues for both models is the fact that receipt of the data is at very best based on a time lag of around 6 months for STEAM and potentially longer for Cambridge. The latter being due to the need to wait for the publication of national data sources.

Whilst this does not undermine the usefulness in monitoring trends and having overall economic data. It may provide issues in strategic planning.

In the favour of STEAM the requirement to collate data on a weekly/monthly basis to form the inputs means that it is more likely the destination has a keener understanding of what is happening 'on the ground'.

### **Recommendations**

While the utilisation of an economic model is certainly something we would not advise against, we would strongly recommend that any destination looking to be in a strong position to steer a course for its visitor economy should be measuring performance on a regular ongoing basis, at least monthly.

This allows the DMO/Local Authority to be proactive about the direction of tourism in their destination, understanding the seasonal trends and any changes in patterns of the visitor economy.

The decision of which model to use, if any, comes down to what the purpose and use of the data will be. This will give a clear steer of the level of resource both in terms of people and cost that Wealden would like to put into this.

If data is to be collected at the local level then STEAM would be the obvious model of choice, however should this not be feasible and a snapshot approach is all that is required then Cambridge provides a cost effective alternative.

## APPENDIX D

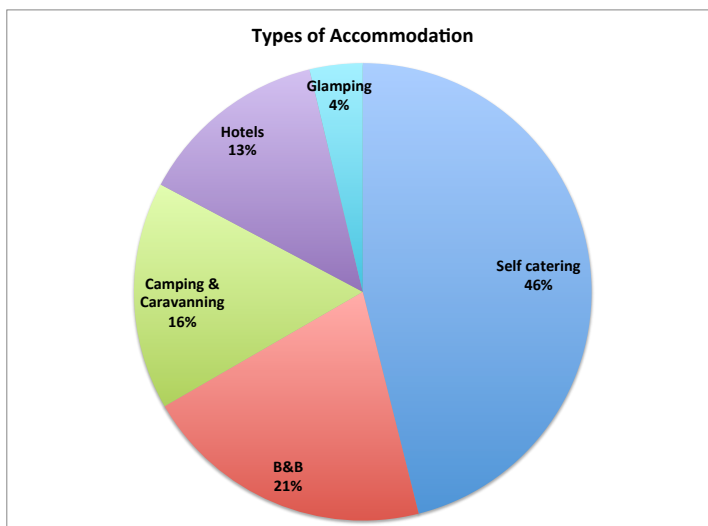
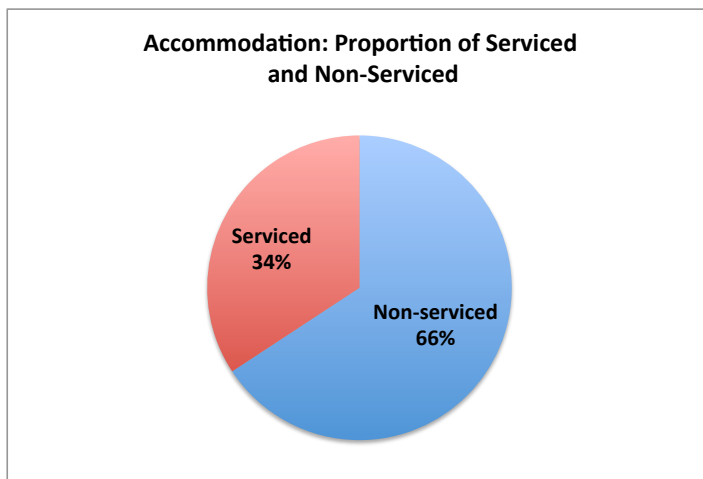
### DESTINATION PRODUCT AUDIT

#### 1. Accommodation

Wealden has more than 250 visitor accommodation establishments comprising of hotels, B&Bs, self-catering units, camping and glamping and static caravan sites.

Two thirds of Wealden's visitor accommodation is non-serviced. Almost half (46%) is comprised of self-catering units and an additional 20% are camping, glamping or static caravan sites.

In August 2016 the product audit checked a wide range of sources (listed below) to identify the accommodation offer in Wealden however it is expected that there may be more self-catering establishments available particularly through Airbnb.



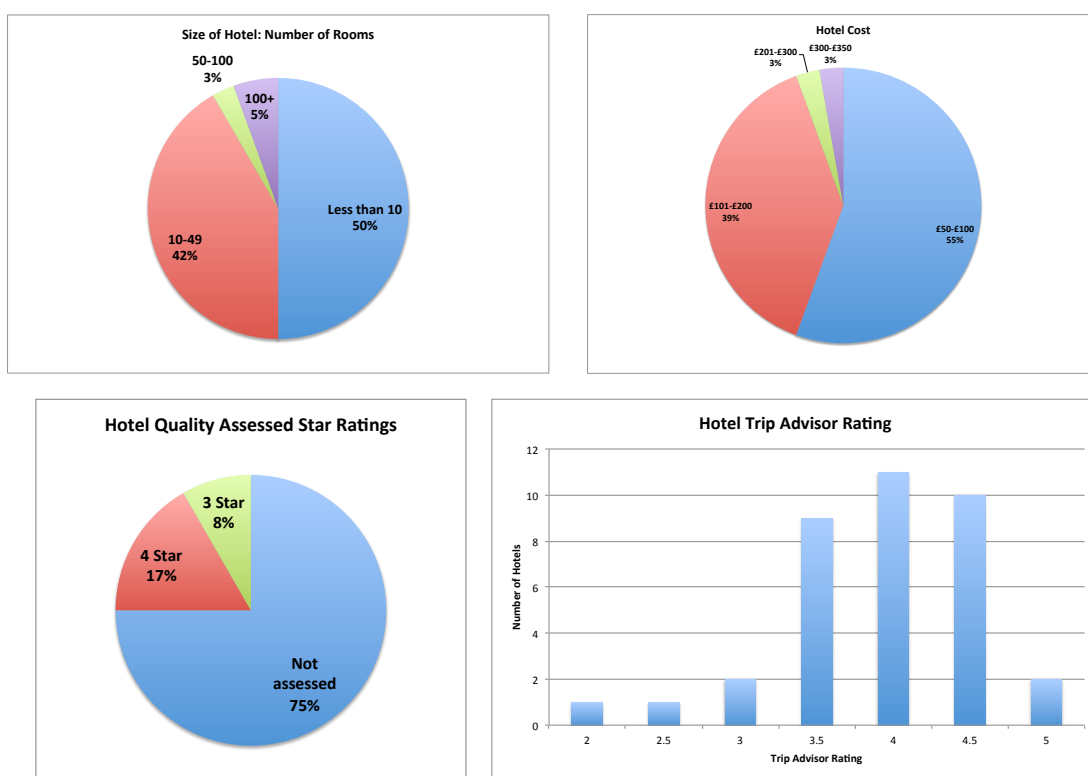
#### **Size, Price, Quality: An Affordable, High Quality, Boutique Destination**

There are 36 hotels in Wealden District. Nearly half of these properties have less than 10 rooms and include a high proportion of pubs with rooms.

Just over half of the hotels (55%) cost less than £100 per night for a standard double room with breakfast, based on peak season rates in 2016. Ninety four per cent of hotels in Wealden cost less than £200 per night with only two costing more.

Although only just over a quarter (27%) of Wealden’s hotels are quality assessed, of those that are rated the majority are 4 star and the rest have 3 stars. In addition, all the hotels are rated on Trip Advisor, based on customer reviews, and nearly two thirds (64%) score a rating of 4 or higher.

B&Bs also score even higher than hotels, with only 9 quality assessed, but five of these gaining 5 Star status and three being 4 Star properties. Three quarters (78%) of B&Bs are rated on Trip Advisor, and of these 40 properties (95%) score 4 or more, with 27 (64%) of B&Bs scoring 5.



### Green and Accessible Tourism

One B&B and one hotel have Silver Green Tourism accreditation and one hotel is awaiting grading.

No properties in Wealden have National Accessible Scheme accreditation.



## 2. Attractions

### Natural Attractions

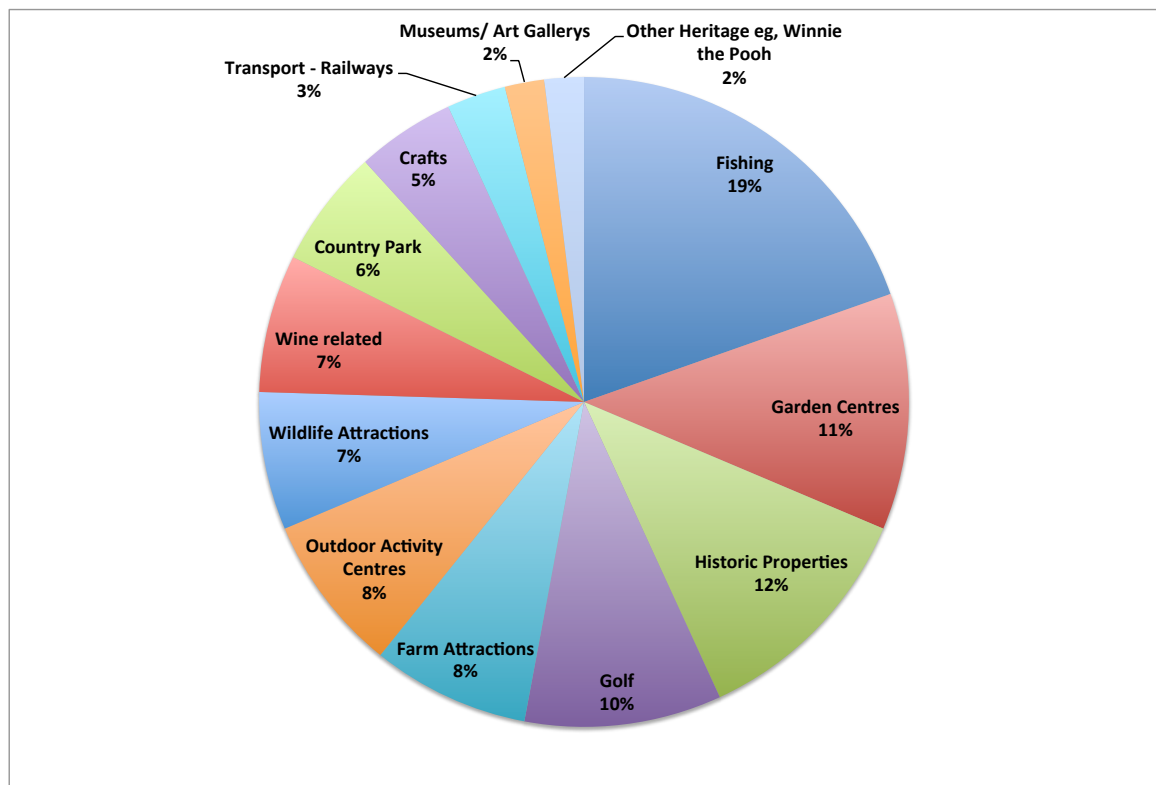
Wealden District is primarily rural, offering a high quality and varied coastal and countryside landscape including woodland, forest, heathland, down land, parkland, chalk cliffs and beaches.

Two-thirds of the landscape has protected status as part of the South Downs National Park, High Weald AONB, Ashdown Forest Special Protected Area and Pevensey Levels Special Conservation Area.

This well conserved landscape offers visitors an opportunity to get away from the stress of daily life, particularly from the London and other urban areas, providing an environment where they can relax and free or low cost outdoor activities including walking and cycling.

### Built Attractions

In addition to walking and cycling, Wealden offers a range of activities including historic properties and traditional railways, golf, fishing, horse riding farm, wildlife and outdoor activity attractions and garden centres. It has a growing number of wine related activities.



## **Towns and Villages**

Wealden has six main towns: Crowborough, Hailsham, Heathfield, Pevensey, Polegate and Uckfield. While there are useful facilities in these towns, they are not considered to be destinations in their own right and the main attraction in Wealden is its historic villages and the surrounding countryside.

## **Food and Beverage**

Wealden has more than 120 pubs, situated in town, village and rural locations. Many of the pubs offer food and B&B accommodation

There are also 40 farm shops selling local produce including Wealden produced wine, cider, cheese and meat.

## **Sources used for accommodation audit**

AA Hotels and B&Bs  
Amberly House Cottages  
Booking.com  
Bramley and Teal Holiday Cottages  
Coolcamping.co.uk  
Crowborough Town Council  
East Grinstead Town Council  
Google  
Lovecamping.co.uk  
Mulberry Cottages  
Quality in Tourism  
Trip Advisor  
Wealden Do

## APPENDIX E

### POTENTIAL STEERING GROUP MEMBERS

The following people have expressed interest in the setting up of a Steering Group to manage the delivery of the DMP.

#### Organisations

- ESCC - Sally Staples
- WDC - Cllr Nick Collinson
- National Trust (Sheffield Park)
- SDNPA (new tourism officer to be appointed)
- High Weald AONB (Gerry Sherwin)

#### Community

- Pevensey - Barbara Molog (tbc)
- Mayfield, Wadhurst Parish Councils? (tbc)

#### Private Sector

- Charles Hooper, Lisa Aitken, Forest Garden, Shovelshode;
- Dee McDonald, National Cat Centre
- Debbie Matthews (Michelham Priory)
- AFTA Barbara Hibbert?
- Rathfinnys? (if relevant)
- Jonathan Chiswell Jones. 01323 469009 JCJ Pottery [jo@jcjpottery.co.uk](mailto:jo@jcjpottery.co.uk)
- Peter Evans 01323 760581 [peter.broadsword@gmail.com](mailto:peter.broadsword@gmail.com)
- Ian Ledger, Fair Oak Farm [ian@fairoakfarm.co.uk](mailto:ian@fairoakfarm.co.uk)
- Mark Reeves 01323 763165 [enquiries@fairfieldsfarm.com](mailto:enquiries@fairfieldsfarm.com)
- D Hilsdon. [farmoffice@sharnfoldfarm.co.uk](mailto:farmoffice@sharnfoldfarm.co.uk)
- Bobby Schuck, Llama Park, 01825712040 [bobby@llamapark.co.uk](mailto:bobby@llamapark.co.uk)
- Bee Frost, Windmill Hill [bee@windmillhillwindmill.org](mailto:bee@windmillhillwindmill.org)
- [wilson180@hotmail.com](mailto:wilson180@hotmail.com)
- [audreymcdonald01@gmail.com](mailto:audreymcdonald01@gmail.com)