

# **Wealden Sustainability Strategy**

## **Introduction**

This strategy has been created to co-ordinate the Council's approach to sustainability and ensure that the objectives of sustainability are reflected across our services and activities. This builds upon and contributes to the delivery of our sustainability commitments within the draft Integrated Community Strategy for East Sussex.

As an employer, a consumer of resources and a provider of services, the Council has a responsibility to ensure that its operations and activities are conducted in a way that not only improves the quality of life for the people of Wealden but also protects and enhances our environment for future generations. As a Local Authority, the Council is also uniquely placed to provide vision and leadership to local communities and promote a culture that involves, supports and empowers individuals to take an active role in their environment.

## **Vision**

Our vision is to meet the needs of all people in Wealden and promote sustainable prosperity for everyone whilst respecting the limits of our environment and resources and ensuring that they are unimpaired for the benefit and enjoyment of future generations.

## **Aim**

The aim of this strategy is to provide an overarching framework to guide the Council in integrating and co-ordinating the principles of sustainability across all its strategies, plans, policies and actions and, in turn, to influence and provide direction on sustainability issues to our key partner organisations.

## **Objectives**

More specifically, this strategy seeks to ensure that Council plans and policies contribute to and support the following objectives:

- Promote sustainable consumption and production
- Reduce energy consumption and the effects of climate change
- Protect and enhance our natural resources
- Foster sustainable communities

These objectives effectively capture the priority areas at the heart of sustainability and are derived from the shared priorities for action outlined in the UK Government's Sustainable Development Strategy 'Securing the Future'. They will provide key points of reference for the further development of Council policies and plans.

## **Reporting**

A sustainability report will be submitted annually to Cabinet

## **Supporting Evidence and Issues**

### **Defining Sustainability**

There are many definitions of sustainability, but the most widely used and recognised is to 'meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs'. This requires improvements in the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of Wealden whilst safeguarding the prospects for future generations. It also requires that the goals set within each of these three areas work together in an integrated way.

### **Wealden District Council's Purpose and Priorities**

The Leader's *Purpose and Priorities* (October 2007) report sets the direction and priorities of the Council for the coming years and is embodied in the following three corporate objectives:

- Putting People First
- Pride of Place
- Purpose through Partnership

The Wealden Sustainability Strategy underpins and builds on all three corporate objectives but specifically *Pride of Place*, which seeks to preserve and enhance our environment for future generations and embed sustainability in all current and future operations of the Council.

In order to achieve this corporate objective, methods of furthering progress towards sustainability must be integrated into, and co-ordinated across, the policies and activities of the Council. The following summaries under each sustainability objective serve to highlight the diverse range of issues that will need to be considered.

#### **Promote sustainable consumption and production**

Sustainable consumption and production is about achieving more with less. This means looking at how goods and services are produced and the impacts of products across their whole lifecycle. This includes reducing the inefficient use of resources and utilising products and services that use fewer resources, minimise waste and harmful emissions, and maximising the reuse of materials.

#### **Reduce energy consumption and the effects of climate change**

The UK Government is committed to reducing the country's greenhouse gas emissions and in the draft Climate Change Bill has set the long-term goal of reducing carbon dioxide emissions by 60% by 2050. To reduce our impact on climate change requires us to reduce carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gas emissions arising from all Council operations and promote reductions across

the district. At the same time we must prepare for the effects of climate change that cannot be avoided.

### **Protect and enhance our natural resources**

Natural resources are vital to our existence and to the development of Wealden as a community. Wealden has a rich and diverse landscape, two thirds of which is designated as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The district also has a high proportion of ancient woodland and over 30 Sites of Special Scientific Interest, including the internationally recognised wetlands of the Pevensy Levels. To ensure a decent environment for everyone, we need to protect and enhance these resources. This means improving and maintaining the quality of our air, water and soil, protecting and enhancing our biodiversity, and making the most efficient use of our land. It also means striving to address national priorities by reducing our use of non-renewable raw materials such as fossil fuels and minerals.

### **Foster sustainable communities**

Sustainable communities embody the economic, social and environmental principles of sustainability at the local level to create places where people want to live and work, now and in the future. This involves creating a place that:

- is active, inclusive, safe and healthy
- has a sustainable and diverse economy and strong local culture
- is well-designed and built with good access to services
- maintains the environmental qualities of the area.

The Council has already achieved much that contributes positively to the sustainability objectives outlined above (see Appendix A). Indeed, this strategy brings together and incorporates elements of previous Council policy statements and strategies specifically geared to delivering sustainability objectives. The Council has produced a climate change policy and action plan and is working on the production of a sustainable procurement strategy. The Wealden Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) also has a role in overseeing delivery of the sustainable community strategy for Wealden District. However, there are additional gains still to be made, some of these will come from further consideration of the sustainability objectives and some from implementing co-ordinated actions across the Council. This will require a cross-cutting approach that encompasses new areas of work and brings together existing activities to create a coherent shared standard of sustainability for Wealden.

## **The wider policy context**

In developing this strategy, the following guidance and frameworks have been taken into account:

### ***National indicator set and reporting requirements***

As part of the new Performance Framework the Government has published a single set of 198 national indicators on which local authorities and partners will be required to report. Of these, 14 indicators fall within the Environmental Sustainability block and include such indicators as CO<sub>2</sub> reduction from Local Authority operations (NI 185), per capita reduction of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions in the Local Authority area (NI186) and adapting to climate change (NI188). The primary focus for performance management will be on those indicators against which targets are agreed in the Local Area Agreement (LAA). This will serve to further focus Council policies and activities towards sustainability.

### ***Sustainability Frameworks***

#### *National Framework - Securing the Future*

The UK Strategy for Sustainable Development, 'Securing the Future' (2005) sets out the Government's strategic framework for sustainable development to 2020 and identifies the following four priority areas for immediate action, shared across the UK:

- Sustainable Consumption and Production
- Climate Change and Energy
- Natural Resource Protection and Environmental Enhancement
- Sustainable Communities

#### *Regional Framework - South East Regional Sustainability Framework*

The guiding principles of Securing the Future have been translated into a draft Regional Sustainability Framework (RSF), prepared for the South East by the Sustainable Futures working group, a high level group of key regional partners. The framework sets two regional goals which centre around achieving a strong, healthy and just society that lives within environmental limits, and identifies four regional priorities to help guide sustainable development in the South East.

The four regional priorities are:

- Achieving sustainable levels of resource use
- Reducing the region's carbon footprint
- Ensuring that the South East is prepared for the inevitable impacts of climate change
- Ensuring that everyone, including the most deprived people, has an equal opportunity to benefit from and contribute to the region's sustainable prosperity

## Local Framework - *Sustainable Community Strategies*

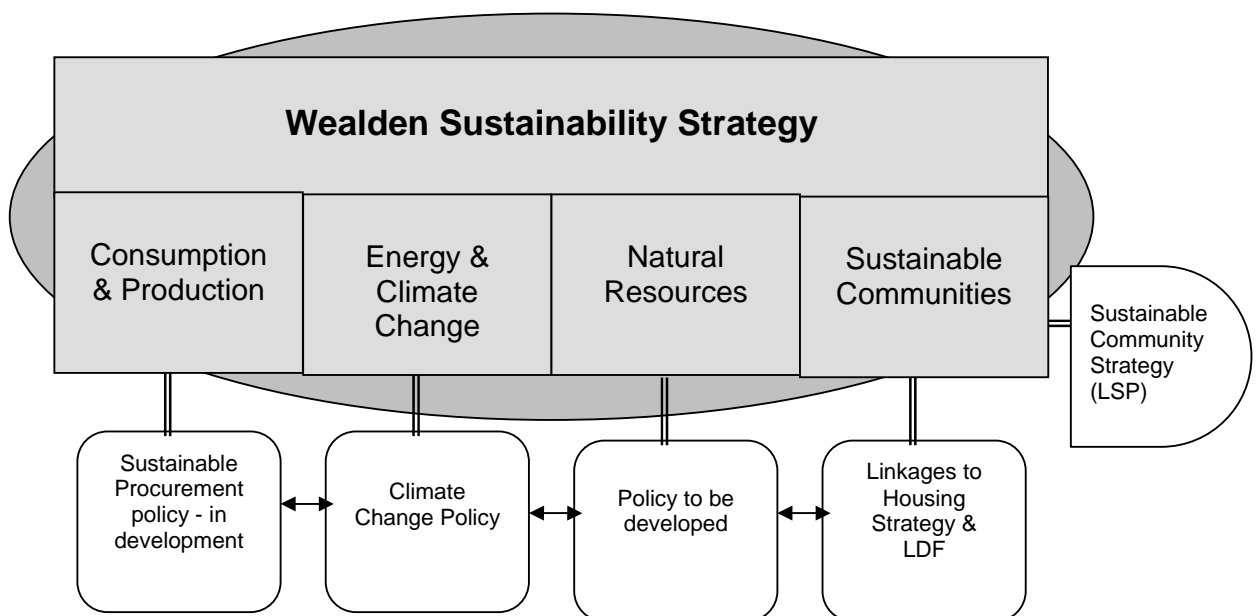
The draft Integrated Sustainable Community Strategy for East Sussex, 'Pride of Place', brings together the individual community strategies of East Sussex into an over-arching strategy with a single shared vision for the future, 'a place where everyone can prosper, be safe and healthy, and live in a high quality environment'. One of its three cross cutting priorities is to be sustainable by considering social, economic and environmental impacts.

Wealden's Sustainable Community Strategy 'Wealden Voices, Wealden Choices', has the environment as one of eight key areas. Its vision is to maintain and develop a healthy, rich and diverse environment based on sustainable principles that will

- Protect and enhance the rural and urban environments for people and wildlife
- Reduce waste, pollution and environmental crime
- Ensure sustainability principles underpin decisions about local development and the future of Wealden
- Encourage wise use and enjoyment of natural resources
- Provide for healthy lifestyles and improved quality of life

## Wealden's Sustainability Strategy

The following diagram illustrates the four key objectives of the sustainability strategy and the current and future policy documents that will contribute to meeting those objectives. Various other Council policies and plans from across all service areas will also contribute to and be aligned with these objectives.



## Appendix A – Review of Progress

The following additional information sets out the objectives of the sustainability strategy and provides a review of the priorities identified in the Council's previous sustainability policy statement (2006) and progress made against those priorities. It also provides selected examples of further achievements.

\*denotes where priorities have been incorporated into the climate change policy action plan.

### Objective: Promote sustainable consumption and production

2006 sustainability policy statement	
Priority	Action
Adopt a sustainable procurement policy to guide both employees and suppliers.*	A draft sustainable procurement policy was produced and is now being revised and updated in light of the Sustainable Procurement Taskforce recommendations. <b>Climate change action plan target:</b> meet Procurement Taskforce Level 1 standard by June 2008 and implement to level 3 by 2010.
Support seeking of Fairtrade status for the area.	The Council has been supporting Fairtrade fortnight with articles on Wealdnet, quizzes for staff, fair-trade food at the Pinetum, and articles in the press.
Pilot a Zero Waste Strategy within Council offices*	All paper and printer cartridges are recycled and communal bins are used to discourage waste. <b>Climate change action plan target:</b> to identify waste streams from offices and further recycling where appropriate by end of 2008.
Contact supermarket chains to establish policies on waste reduction and identify opportunities for linking with the Council's overall approach to waste management.	A letter was sent from the then Sustainability Champion to supermarkets in the district raising the issue of waste reduction, however no replies were received.
Expand CROWN collections to include plastic bottle recycling.	The CROWN scheme now includes plastic bottle recycling for 17,000 households.
Develop a local campaign to deter litter/fly-tipping as part of the Cleaner, Safer, Greener Communities Initiative.	The Council liaises with the Police and other partners in Operation Crackdown for the removal of abandoned vehicles. Information on flytipping is shared with neighbouring authorities and provided at Joint Action Groups for multi agency action plans. Street Scene Officers target specific areas and press releases highlight areas of concern.

#### Further Achievements:

- 31% of household waste in 2006/07 was recycled and composted. This is projected to rise to 35% for 2007/08.
- The CROWN Caddy Recycling Scheme pilot was launched in May 2007 in Forest Row, Danehill and Chelwood Gate. Free composters and subsidised Green Johanna's were also made available to residents in the pilot area. The trial achieved a 48.7% recycling rate in the first three months and is now achieving over 50%.

- A new Commercial Corrugated Cardboard Collection is being launched to collect cardboard from businesses across Wealden. This follows a successful trial with Uckfield businesses where over 22 tonnes of cardboard was collected in 6 months.
- Wealden has recently launched a Nappy Trial pack providing a range of washable nappies for parents to borrow and try for a month before they buy. The loan of the pack is free to all Wealden parents.
- Wealden work in partnership with ESCC to promote subsidised compost bins, kitchen composters, food digesters, wormeries and water butts.
- Since 2007 all Wealden's commercial fleet vehicles are supplied with 5% ultra low sulphur biodiesel fuel as standard.
- All new heavy goods vehicles (HGVs) such as refuse lorries purchased during 2007 have engines that meet the Euro 4 standard set by the European Union to control vehicle emissions.
- Wealden's Economic Development team provides support and advice for businesses wishing to reduce their environmental impact. A Business Breakfast was organised to give practical tips to businesses in Wealden on reducing waste, energy and water use.

### **Objective: Reduce energy consumption and the effects of climate change**

<b>2006 sustainability policy statement</b>	
<b>Priority</b>	<b>Action</b>
Produce a green travel plan linked with the Council's approach to more flexible working arrangements and the accommodation strategy.*	<b>Climate change action plan targets:</b> conduct an audit of staff car journeys and establish baseline by end of 2008. Reduce staff business mileage by 2% per annum compared to baseline and review in year 3.
Organise a Wealden Business Breakfast event to explore and encourage options for more flexible working and the links to green travel plans.	Business Breakfast held "Reduce your environmental impact and save money!" See above.
Set improved emissions standards for taxi and private hire vehicles licensed to operate within the district.*	<b>Climate change action plan target:</b> examine feasibility and budgetary requirements of varying taxi licence fees according to vehicle fuel efficiency and/or use of alternative fuels.
Seek to purchase an increased proportion of the Council's electrical energy requirements from sustainable sources.	The energy contract is due for renewal in 2008. <b>Climate change action plan target:</b> review current contract and seek to extend renewable electricity supply to all Council sites.

#### **Further Achievements:**

- In 2007 Wealden District Council signed the Nottingham Declaration on Climate Change.
- Hailsham and Pingrove offices are supplied with electricity that is matched by production from renewable sources.

- Wealden has a long history of promoting energy efficiency, in its own buildings and Council housing stock. An ongoing programme of works seeks to ensure that where possible, Council owned homes have 250mm of loft insulation and cavity wall insulation.
- Wealden's Council housing stock is currently achieving a Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP) rating of 72.
- We provide regular advice and information on energy efficiency measures and grants to all householders in Wealden.
- Since 1996 there has been an overall improvement in the energy efficiency of all housing tenures in Wealden of 23.61% and the Council is on target for achieving the 30% improvement by 2011 as required under the Home energy Conservation Act (HECA).
- The Wealden Eco Homes Project is piloting the use of wood pellet boilers (biomass) and solar thermal hot water panels in two Council owned properties as a means of reducing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and increasing energy efficiency. Biomass boilers are also being investigated for use in our sheltered schemes. The results of these trials will be used to inform future programmes.
- The Wealden Car Lease Scheme is limited by carbon dioxide emissions rather than engine size, encouraging users to choose models with less carbon dioxide emissions.
- At our award winning public toilets in Pevensey bay, the tap water is heated using solar panels, and a roof mounted wind turbine generates electricity to run the car park pay and display machine. It also has a rainwater collection system.

## Objective: Protect and enhance our natural resources

2006 sustainability policy statement	
Priority	Action
Continue to support and promote local farmers' markets.	The Council hosts quarterly Farmers Market Coordinators meetings and funds and assists in promotion and key events throughout the year E.g. Grand Farmers' Market in Uckfield (2007), local producers directory, recipe cards, signage, and street entertainment.
Make the most efficient use of land by prioritising brownfield sites for development and the re-use of existing buildings. Emphasise within LDF documents.	Part of current LDF process. PPS 3 stipulates that the Core Strategy should contain a local target, trajectory and strategy for bringing previously developed land into housing use.
Produce a Landscape and Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Document.	Currently not within the Council's approved Local Development Scheme.
Work with all partners to develop South Downs National Park status.	Process ongoing.



**Further Achievements:**

- 83.5% of new housing completions in 2006/07 were built on previously developed land.
- The Wealden Ancient Woodlands survey conducted in 2006 has been applauded by Central Government and highlighted in Good Practice Guidance. The project resulted in some 1374 sites (2000 hectares) of previously unknown Ancient Woodland being recognised and added to the district's biodiversity heritage.
- Wealden District Council, the Sussex Wildlife Trust and the Woodland Trust's Ancient Tree Hunt is enlisting the support of local people to help find, identify and measure ancient and veteran trees in the district. Once logged, the information will be listed on a register on the Wealden web site.
- The Wealden Design Guide (draft SPD) includes a section advising on the conservation and enhancement of the district's landscape, tree and wildlife heritage.

**Objective: Foster sustainable communities**

<b>2006 sustainability policy statement</b>	
<b>Priority</b>	<b>Action</b>
Ensure that everyone has the opportunity to live in good quality, sustainably constructed and affordable homes. Embed principle within LDF process.	Embedded as an objective within the LDF Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report.
Ensure that all new, converted and renovated buildings meet BREEAM/Ecohomes standards (to include measures such as solar power, grey water systems, green energy provision, natural paints and finishes etc). Stipulate within Wealden Design Guide and associated planning documents.	To be considered as part of the current LDF Core Strategy process.
Ensure that new housing developments are planned to enable everyone to have access to health, education and leisure services.	Part of current LDF process and embedded as an objective within the LDF Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report.
Maintain active role within Safer Wealden Partnership.	Wealden continues to actively support the Safer Wealden Partnership. The Portfolio Holder for Community Development sits on the Partnership and plays a key role in the direction the partnership takes.

**Further Achievements:**

- The Council works to encourage and build environmental action in the community. For example, we provide links for local schools with recycling campaigns and initiatives such as the Alupro tree planting scheme where for every tonne of aluminium recycled, a fruit tree is donated to rural communities in Malawi.

- The Wealden Youth website ([www.w4y.co.uk](http://www.w4y.co.uk)) was launched in April 2006 and provides advice and information for young people on a range of subjects as well as an opportunity for two-way communication.
- The Parish Conference, Parish Clerk Conference and the Parish Planning Conference are organised annually by the Council and enable parishes to contribute to issues affecting their area.
- Wealden's Economic Development Team are actively involved in several projects providing support and advice to local businesses such as the Market Towns Revitalisation Event (held in Jan 2008), supporting the Ashdown Forest Tourism Association, and Alfriston and Cuckmere Valley Partnership and the provision of training events and advice for local tourism businesses.
- The Wealden Design Guide (draft SPD) and the Sustainability Checklist encourage the development of new buildings with lower CO<sub>2</sub> emissions through improved design and energy efficiency.
- The sustainability checklist encourages additional information regarding sustainability when submitting a planning application.
- The Sustainability Appraisal evaluates the social, economic and environmental impacts of policies and strategies in a Local Development Document to ensure that our policies are in accordance with sustainable development objectives.