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Background

The Council has published a series of background papers to accompany the Core Strategy - Spatial Development Options consultation (July 2009). These cover a range of issues and provide more technical or detailed information than is contained in the consultation document itself. They also provide links to the various published sources of evidence on which the development of the housing and employment options has been based.

The background papers are:

1. Wealden Profile 2009
2. Housing land availability
3. Development of the strategic housing options
4. Summary guide to evidence studies
5. Summary guide to town visioning and masterplanning
6. Rural settlement classification
7. Infrastructure position statement

These background papers can be downloaded from the Council's website or are available from the Council in hard copy at a charge to cover photo copying and postage/packing.

Should you wish to make comments on the contents of this document; please write to Head of Planning and Environmental Policy, Wealden District Council, Council Offices, Pine Grove, Crowborough, TN6 1DH or email ldf@wealden.gov.uk.
1.0 Introduction

1.1 As part of the plan-making process Wealden District Council has commissioned a number of background technical studies to provide evidence during the preparation of the Local Development Framework. The studies aim to strengthen our understanding of the District in relation to the issues and challenges it faces, and the key drivers for change. Evidence from these studies has contributed to the preparation of the Core Strategy – Spatial Development Options consultation document (July 2009) and will continue to play a part as we refine the options and develop the preferred strategy for Wealden District.

The use of evidence

1.2 Planning Policy Statement 12 (PPS12) confirms that a Core Strategy must be founded on a robust and credible evidence base - otherwise there is a risk that it will be found unsound at examination. This position is confirmed within advice recently issued by the Planning Inspectorate.

1.3 PPS12 outlines that the evidence base for the production of core strategies contains two elements – participation, and research/fact finding.

1.4 With regard to public participation, the Council consulted extensively on an 'Issues and Options' document in the summer of 2007. The Council received a substantial number of responses and these have been taken into account in the preparation of the current Core Strategy – Spatial Development Options consultation document. In addition, following the previous consultation, the Council has talked to a wide range of people and organisations. We have worked closely with partners in the Local Strategic Partnership, Parish and Town Councils, East Sussex County Council and neighbouring authorities, developers, environmental bodies and infrastructure providers, to gain a deeper understanding of their issues and their perspectives. The results of this dialogue have been used in the preparation of the current consultation document.

1.5 Full details of the results of the previous Issues and Options consultation in 2007 can be found at:

http://www.wealden.gov.uk/planning_and_building_control/Local_Plan/Issues_Options_Consult07.aspx

1.6 The Council has also undertaken or commissioned a number of technical studies which provide environmental, economic and social information relating to the District and its neighbouring areas. Some of these have been undertaken jointly with neighbouring authorities. Several studies are still underway, including housing development viability, strategic housing land availability, and strategic flood risk assessment. The results of these studies will be posted in due course on the Council’s website.

1.6 The studies that are currently available are summarised in the next sections of this paper. The notes can only be a brief assessment of what each study contains. Further more detailed information will be available from the studies.
themselves and so links are provided to allow access to the full study documents.

2.0 Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA)

Background

2.1 PPS3: Housing\(^1\) states that “…the Government’s key housing policy goal is to ensure that everyone has the opportunity of living in a decent home, which they can afford, in a community where they want to live.”\(^2\)

2.2 To plan for this, local planning authorities are required to undertake a Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA). Its purpose is to understand the structure of the housing market(s) operating across a local authority area and to understand the housing demand, need and supply within that area. The assessment provides a valuable insight into how a housing market operates now and also how it may operate in the future. Understanding these factors helps to inform the development of the housing strategy and the approach to be taken in the Core Strategy.

Introduction

2.3 A housing market is defined by patterns of household and travel to work movements and the level of self-containment demonstrated in each. Wealden District is not a self contained housing market, and part of the District relates closely to Eastbourne. The SHMA has therefore defined two housing market areas - the Eastbourne HMA which includes south Wealden, and the north Wealden HMA, which includes the rest of the District.

2.4 A comprehensive study report has been produced for each of the Housing Market Areas. Each document contains an executive summary that draws out and concludes on the main findings and policy recommendations for that particular HMA. A summary of the key findings for the Eastbourne HMA can also be found in the Wealden SHMA. This is to ensure that we can gain a district-wide understanding of both housing market areas when considering a policy approach for Wealden’s Core Strategy, and that this fully considers the relationship with approaches being developed for the Eastbourne Core Strategy.

2.5 Should you wish to read the Eastbourne and / or Wealden SHMAs, you may access these documents below:

http://www.wealden.gov.uk/planning_and_building_control/Local_Plan/Evidence Base.aspx

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\(^1\) Planning Policy Statement 3 (PPS3) Housing (Communities and Local Government, November 2006)

\(^2\) Communities and Local Government (2006, paragraph 9) Planning Policy Statement 3 Housing
Summary of main findings

The Eastbourne HMA.

2.6 The Eastbourne HMA is a well integrated housing and labour market which operates across Eastbourne and the southern part of Wealden. The relationship between Eastbourne and south Wealden is reciprocal, demonstrated by flows of households and workers into Eastbourne from Polegate and Hailsham, and vice versa.

North Wealden HMA.

2.7 In contrast, north Wealden has a number of localised housing markets. There is a particularly close inter-relationship between Tunbridge Wells and Crowborough, as well as between East Grinstead and Forest Row. Many north Wealden residents commute to Tunbridge Wells, East Grinstead, Gatwick and London.

Pattern of future development.

2.8 Trend-based forecasts (assuming what has happened in the past will continue in the future), and policy-based forecasts (how policy intends to guide future growth), in relation to housing and job growth, create very different patterns of future development across the Wealden HMA and the Eastbourne HMA.

Past trends of household growth.

2.9 If past trends were to continue, household growth in both Eastbourne and Wealden over the next 20 years would be well in excess of the housing targets set out in the South East Plan.

Policy based projection of household growth.

2.10 This would see constrained household growth in Eastbourne. Policy constraints would also mean housing growth redistributed within Wealden away from the north of the District and into south Wealden. This would tend to imply that the demand for housing may not be fully met in north Wealden.

Other key findings.

2.11 Other key findings concluded that:

- It is important that the level of housing proposed in the South East Plan is delivered to address affordability issues and to meet housing need;
- Given the nature of the north Wealden housing market, it is suggested that new housing be secured in a range of locations across north Wealden; and
- In order to attract skilled workers to the area, new larger types of housing are required. A more skilled workforce will help attract business investment to the area and contribute to future economic development.
Job growth in the Eastbourne HMA.

2.12 The SHMA highlights that the Eastbourne HMA has an under-performing, limited and weak economic base. Furthermore, there are major concerns that at its current level it may become principally a dormitory area where skills shortages may deter and affect the area's ability to attract and sustain new and higher paid jobs in the future. This would be contrary to the economic regeneration objectives outlined in the South East Plan.

**Assuming past levels of job growth in Eastbourne.**

2.13 In the context of constrained housing growth, if job growth is maintained in the Eastbourne HMA area at past levels, this could lead to a shortage of labour. Maintenance of job growth could also have the effect of unemployment, increasing economic activity rates and reducing out commuting. Another possibility is that labour may be drawn from outside of the market area. This may result in the demand for housing outstripping supply or an increase in commuting.

**Assuming limited job growth in Eastbourne.**

2.14 Alternatively, if job growth is limited, new housing supply may outstrip job growth which would fuel further out-commuting and in-migration of the less economically active households to the market area. The study highlights that it is important that the provision of future housing is balanced with job growth.

Job growth in north Wealden.

2.15 Historically, job growth has been more buoyant in north Wealden compared with south Wealden. Economic activity rates have also been higher. However, the delivery of new housing in north Wealden will be constrained by South East Plan policies, and the population is also ageing. Both these factors will have the effect of reducing or limiting the future growth of the workforce.

2.16 It is suggested that the most likely scenario for north Wealden is that jobs will continue to grow, supported by increases in activity rates of the working age group and growth in activity rates amongst retirement age people. The development of high quality and better paid jobs in north Wealden could help reduce out-commuting.

**Linking housing development and job growth.**

2.17 Overall it is concluded within the SHMAs that new housing development will only marginally impact on factors such as workforce growth, in-migration and commuting. To this end it is suggested that efforts should be concentrated on shifting the low wage economy to one of higher skills and wages. If successful, the creation of higher skilled and well paid jobs could result in a reduction in out-commuting with sustainable development benefits.
House prices in Wealden.

2.18 House prices differ quite significantly within the District as prices are considerably higher in the north of Wealden than in the south. House prices are also higher within the more rural areas of the district compared with the market towns.

2.19 There are clear affordability issues within Wealden and a significant proportion of households are unable to meet their needs and gain access to housing in the open market. This is particularly the case for new forming households.

Meeting housing needs.

2.20 The totality of housing need is far in excess of the total amount of housing planned to be built in Wealden as set out in the South East Plan housing targets, and new affordable housing supply will only provide a proportion of this.

Priority housing need.

2.21 There is a case for focusing on priority housing need in the consideration of housing stock and new supply within both north and south Wealden, as it is these households that are most likely to be re-housed in the short - medium term.

Location of affordable housing.

2.22 For north Wealden, it is suggested that affordable housing should be secured in a range of locations given the nature of the housing market. In relation to south Wealden and Eastbourne, it is suggested that affordable housing should be maximised within the HMA.

Market housing.

2.23 The HMA concludes that the provision of market housing is key to achieving affordable housing units and addressing affordability issues.

3.0 Wealden Employment Land Review (ELR)

Background

3.1 Planning Policy Statement 1 sets out the Government’s commitment to promote a strong, stable, productive and competitive economy. Development plans need to ensure that adequate supplies of good quality and easily accessible land are available to meet the needs of the market, and that opportunities are identified for future investment.

3.2 To plan for economic development draft government guidance\(^3\) requires local planning authorities to use a wide evidence base to understand both existing

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\(^3\) Consultation Paper on a new Planning Policy Statement 4: Planning for Prosperous Economies (Communities and Local Government, May 2009)
business needs and likely changes in the market. More specifically, planning authorities are required to assess the supply of land for economic development with the aim to ensure that it is sufficient and suitable to meet both existing and future needs. The purpose of the Employment Land Review (ELR) assessment is to provide evidence to help assist in planning for employment land uses.

Introduction

3.3 Eastbourne and South Wealden fall within the South East Plan's Sussex Coast Sub-Region policy area - an area where economic regeneration is to be supported. Wealden District Council therefore commissioned a joint ELR with Eastbourne Borough Council to cover the joint housing market area. Consequently the Wealden ELR reports separately for the south and the north of the District.

3.4 The ELR is a comprehensive and detailed document. It provides information and recommendations concerning the requirements for additional industrial / office and warehouse floor space, based upon market conditions and policy objectives for south Wealden and Eastbourne, and for north Wealden. In particular the study:

- Identifies the type and amount of employment land required over the plan period to 2026 by sub-area and geographic locations;
- Assesses the suitability of the planned supply of employment space to meet the requirement;
- Identifies employment areas and sites that should be retained, and those which can be used for alternative uses; and
- Considers policy options for the retention of employment land.

3.5 Should you wish to read the study you may access it at:

http://www.wealden.gov.uk/planning_and_building_control/Local_Plan/CoreStrategyIO/Wealden_and_Eastbourne_ELR_Report_aug08.pdf

Summary of main findings - Eastbourne and south Wealden

Employment.

3.6 Low skills and poor transport access explain why higher value businesses are disinclined to locate in the area. The South East Plan seeks to address such issues through economic regeneration policies.

Identified employment locations

3.7 In 2005 there were 16 development sites in Eastbourne and south Wealden's planning pipeline (either allocated in the Wealden Local Plan or with planning permission) providing approx 54 hectares of employment land. There is no single dominant existing business location in Eastbourne and south Wealden. Instead there is a wide range of relatively small estates spread across the towns.
Recommendations for Eastbourne and south Wealden:

3.8 The following recommendations have been made for Eastbourne and south Wealden:

• Identify a minimum of 6,000 sq m of additional industrial / warehousing floor space in the period up to 2026 (taking into account the South East Plan housing requirements), focusing on B1c light industrial, B2 general industrial and an ancillary element of B8 warehousing;

• Identify some sites on the fringes of towns; new industrial/warehouse sites should be identified in edge of town centres and rural locations with better access to strategic roads;

• Focus on creating opportunities for small-scale office and industrial developments; and

• Maintain all existing industrial estates and existing employment sites assessed as being fit for the future.

Summary of main findings - north Wealden

Employment in North Wealden.

3.9 Just under half of north Wealden residents work in the district, but there are a low number of jobs relative to the number of residents of working age. Furthermore, the shortage of well paid jobs results in longer than usual car travel and, should residents work locally, lower earnings.

Future employment objective.

3.10 North Wealden has a high level of out-commuting for an economy of its size; therefore, the employment objective for the Council should be to increase the level of self-containment to reduce commuting distances.

Main employment locations.

3.11 There is no single dominant existing business location in north Wealden. The main employment locations are Uckfield, Crowborough and to a lesser extent Heathfield. Forest Row and Wadhurst are smaller employment centres.

Identified employment land.

3.12 In 2005 there were 14 identified development sites in north Wealden's planning pipeline (either allocated in the Wealden Local Plan or with planning permission) providing 14.5 hectares of employment land.

Recommendations for north Wealden:

3.13 The following recommendations have been made for north Wealden:

• Identify supply for delivering a minimum of 12,500 sq m of additional office floor space in the plan period up to 2026;

• Focus on small scale office (less than 200sqm) and industrial developments (less than 400sqm);
• Uckfield and Crowborough should be the focus for additional allocations, with opportunities for expansion of existing business areas at both towns;
• Further investigation is required regarding farm diversification;
• Mixed use development may be necessary; and
• Maintain all existing industrial / business / existing employment sites assessed as being fit for the future.

4.0 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) Level 1: Inception Report and Scope of Works

Background

4.1 PPS25⁴ outlines the Government's planning policy on development and flood risk. The aim of the policy is to ensure that flood risk is taken into account at all stages in the planning process to avoid inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding, and to direct development away from areas at highest risk.

4.2 To ensure that flood risk is understood and effectively managed, PPS25 requires a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) to be undertaken by local planning authorities (LPAs). Its purpose is to assist in decision making in relation to allocating sites for development. The SFRA is also a component of the Sustainability Appraisal.

4.3 SFRA s should present sufficient information to enable LPAs to apply the sequential test to proposed development sites. A sequential test is a planning principle that seeks to identify, allocate or develop certain types or locations of land before others. In the case of flood risk the sequential test seeks to guide developments to areas of low flood risk.

4.4 If it is not possible for a development to be located in a low flood risk zone a development may be located in a higher risk area, but only in exceptional circumstances. This may only occur where it can be demonstrated that there are no reasonably available alternative sites in areas of lower risk, and the benefits of that development outweigh the risks from flooding. In such circumstances an exception test must be undertaken that examines these issues.

4.5 The aim of an SFRA is to provide sufficient information to enable the sequential test to be applied to potential development sites. Where sites cannot be located in a lower flood risk zone, further information may be required through a Level 2 SFRA. The purpose of a Level 2 SFRA is to use the information from the level 1 assessment as a basis for reducing any uncertainty regarding flood risk.

Introduction

4.6 The Level 1 SFRA for south Wealden and Eastbourne was completed in April 2008. The study area covers the urban centres of Hailsham, Heathfield, Pevensey Bay, Polegate and East Dean.

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4.7 The document provides information concerning the probability of flood risk in the area from a number of sources, including tidal and fluvial flooding, and is based on the probability of a flood event occurring up to the year 2115.

4.8 The main river catchments within the study area are the Cuckmere River, watercourses on the Pevensey Levels, watercourses on the Willingdon Levels and Wallers Haven. Where information is available, future flood risk is also included. This information will allow the Council to consider locating development in low flood risk zones by identifying the most suitable locations for development.

4.9 A Strategic Flood Risk Assessment for the north of the District commenced in January 2008. The draft Level 1 has been completed and is currently being considered by the Council. A Level 2 SFRA has also commenced and is nearing completion. Reports are being finalised and will be made available on the Council’s website as soon as possible.

4.10 The main findings in relation to the SFRA for the south of the District are presented below. However, geographical data such as the extent of flood zones and watercourse routes are provided to the Council in the form of Geographical Information System (GIS) maps. Should you wish to see the full assessment including the maps you can use the following link:

http://www.wealden.gov.uk/planning_and_building_control/Local_Plan/Evidence Base.aspx

Main findings

Eastbourne and South Wealden

Flood risk recommendations for Alfriston and West Dean

4.11 Groundwater flooding has taken place in Alfriston and West Dean. Therefore new developments should undertake a site investigation to determine the risks from groundwater flooding and incorporate mitigation measures into the design of any buildings to prevent flood damage.

Flood risk recommendations for Polegate and Willingdon

4.12 Flooding has occurred as a result of incapacity of the river systems in the area. The study contains a number of recommendations in relation to investigating and alleviating surface water flooding in these locations.

Flood Risk Management

4.13 Flood risk throughout the study area is intensified by structures such as bridges or culverts where water is not transported effectively. With the impact of climate change, flooding caused by poor conveyance is expected to increase. To mitigate against this, a number of recommendations have been made. These include returning culverted rivers to a natural system, upgrading culverts or bridges, improving existing local defences, safeguarding floodplains from
development, and where practical, viable and deliverable, considering opportunities to restore natural river forms and floodplains.

**Sustainable Drainage Systems**

4.14 Due to the expansion of developed areas, the drainage systems designed to serve the original settlements can become overloaded, leading to flooding. Additionally, should storm events increase this may also result in flooding. Where storm waters typically discharge into nearby watercourses this may also impact on water quality. A number of detailed recommendations are made within the SFRA to alleviate this.

**Existing drainage infrastructure**

4.15 The areas surrounding Polegate, Willingdon, Eastbourne and Hailsham suffer from flooding as a result of incapacity in the existing drainage infrastructure and/or the speed at which storm water is delivered to the Brooks. To mitigate this, the implementation of strategic flood storage areas to reduce flood risk to towns and villages should be considered where necessary, practicable, viable and deliverable.

**Overland flow**

4.16 The areas around Pevensey and Willingdon suffer from flooding through overland flow. To mitigate against this, the implementation of strategic flood storage areas, operated by a single authority, in areas of the High Weald and South Downs should be considered to reduce flood risk to towns and villages.

**Water efficiency measures**

4.17 As the population increases and climate change leads to hotter drier summers, the prospect of droughts will increase. New developments can tackle this by incorporating water efficiency measures such as grey-water recycling, rainwater harvesting and water use minimisation technologies.

**Existing resource provision**

4.18 It should be ensured that proposed developments can be accommodated by the existing resource provision. Where a development cannot be met by current resources, the phasing of development should be in tandem with resource infrastructure investment.

**Access to watercourses**

4.19 Consider opportunities to ‘daylight’ (de-culvert) watercourses where necessary, viable and deliverable, and increase people’s interaction with the watercourse (as opposed to concealing it in a concrete channel).
4.20 Where necessary and achievable adopt a policy for the routine maintenance of all watercourses ensuring that they are clear of debris that could affect flood flow conveyance and water quality.

5.0 Wealden Shopping Study 2008

Background

5.1 PPS6\(^5\) confirms that the Government's key objective for town centres is to promote their vitality and viability. It is essential for town centres to provide a high-quality and safe environment if they are to remain attractive and competitive in their function. For this to be achieved, PPS6 outlines that local planning authorities should plan for growth and development by promoting and enhancing existing centres to ensure that they perform their appropriate roles and meet the needs of their catchment populations.

5.2 In order to understand and to plan for Wealden's existing town centres, Wealden District Council commissioned a shopping study from external specialist consultants. This meets the requirements of national planning policy by providing an insight into the existing function of Wealden's town centres and examining whether there is a need or scope to make improvements to them in the future.

Introduction

5.3 Wealden has five main shopping centres - Crowborough, Hailsham, Heathfield, Polegate and Uckfield. The shopping study provides an account of the health of each of the five main centres in 2008, and considers options for future development up to 2016 by:

- Considering current and future retail and leisure trends;
- Reviewing existing shopping patterns. This includes both convenience (food) and comparison shopping (infrequent and price competitive items eg clothes, televisions, fridges etc));
- Undertaking a household needs survey. This provides information on respondents’ perceptions of the town centres to identify the towns’ strengths and weaknesses;
- Assessing the health of Wealden's town centres. This includes reviewing the diversity of different uses within each retail centre, the potential for future growth, rental levels, retail representation and demand, vacant properties, accessibility, crime and disorder and environmental quality;
- Assessing whether there are any future retail floorspace requirements for Wealden District and its five main towns, and
- Recommending four policy options.

5.4 The shopping study and its appendices are available at:

5.5 Only a summary of the main findings is provided below. Please note that the shopping study does not yet take into account new housing development coming forward as part of the adopted South East Plan. Our work on the Core Strategy - Spatial Development Options will be further tested by the external consultants and the results made available on the Council's website.

Summary of main findings

Convenience goods shopping behaviour.

5.6 Despite the level and diversity of supermarket provision across the District, a significant amount of convenience expenditure in Wealden is currently being spent in locations outside the District.

Comparison goods shopping behaviour.

5.7 None of the main towns within Wealden can claim to provide an extensive comparison goods offer. This is due to the size of the various centres and their proximity to higher-order centres such as Eastbourne and Tunbridge Wells. Therefore, shopping of this nature tends to be undertaken by the majority of shoppers in the larger towns outside the District.

The role of the town centres.

5.8 The principal roles of the towns are to serve day-to-day shopping needs.

The health of the town centres.

5.9 All five main centres in the District are generally healthy and currently fulfil their potential role in serving the day-to-day shopping needs of the District’s residents. The study highlights the town centres’ strengths, opportunities, weaknesses and threats. Below is a brief overview of the findings:

- **Uckfield.** Largest and most successful centre in Wealden with a more extensive comparison goods offer than the other towns. Perceived as a vital and viable trading location. Has the potential physical capacity to accommodate further retail floor space.
- **Hailsham.** Second largest town centre. It is believed that currently comparison shopping is fragile, although, the potential exists to create a more up to date retail experience. The new Tesco store should produce long-term benefits; therefore Hailsham's prospects are likely to improve.
- **Crowborough.** Well established as a service centre and well served by a range of food stores. There is limited comparison shopping, however, as this role is provided by nearby Tunbridge Wells.
- **Heathfield.** An established service centre with its main function served by foodstores. Comparison goods shopping is limited, although, there is
a range and variety of retail providers. A healthy centre, addressing day to day needs.

- **Polegate.** Functionally part of the Eastbourne area as regards shopping provision. Adequately serves local need. There is limited physical space for improvement or expansion.

**Convenience floor space**

5.10 The study concludes that whilst there may be a potential need for further convenience floor space in all the centres during the course of the LDF over the next twenty years, this is not of a scale to justify the specific allocation of land for development of a new store. Any need which currently exists could probably be accommodated through the improvement or expansion of one or more of the existing food stores during the plan period. However, there could be clear-cut benefits arising from the provision of further food stores within the recognised town centres in terms of competition and enhancing the vitality and viability of the centre as a whole.

**Comparison floor space**

5.11 There is potential for further comparison floor space in Uckfield, Hailsham and Crowborough. However, with the exception of Uckfield, commercial interest in developing further floor space is limited at the present time.

**Future development opportunities**

5.12 Opportunities to accommodate further development in Uckfield should be explored. Additionally, in the longer term, there could also be potential for further comparison floorspace in Hailsham town centre and options for this should be investigated.

6.0 Recreation study and open space assessment

**Background**

6.1 Open space and sport and recreation facilities can make a major contribution to ensuring that villages and towns are attractive places for people to live, and provide a basis for a good quality of life. Our plans should ensure that these facilities exist in sufficient quantity, in the right places and that they are of a high quality and attractive to users. In accordance with Planning Policy Guidance 17\(^6\), Wealden District Council commissioned an external assessment of the existing and future needs of its communities for open space, sports and recreational facilities.

**Introduction**

6.2 The Wealden Open Space Assessment covers the following:

- Local policy including the Council's key priorities / objectives;

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\(^6\) Planning Policy Guidance 17: Planning for open space, sport and recreation (ODPM, 2002)
- Local needs;
- A review of the amount, distribution and quality of existing provision;
- An assessment of where there is a need for more or better provision and the types of enhancements which will benefit existing facilities and spaces;
- Possible provision standards for the District Council to use as part of the planning process;
- Suggestions as to how to tackle the key issues relating to open space, sport and recreation provision facing the District Council and its partners; and
- Recommended priorities for the future.

6.3 The study looks at a number of different types of open space, sport and recreational facilities, concentrating on the quality, value, accessibility and quantity of provision. The types of facilities covered include bowling greens, grass and artificial turf pitches, intensive-use sports facilities, multi-sports courts and tennis courts. Additionally, the study looks at the provision of allotments, green spaces, children's and teenage play areas / facilities as well as community halls. The study presents an overview of the provision and needs of open space, sport and recreation for the five market town areas.

6.4 A link to the study results can be found at:

http://www.wealden.gov.uk/planning_and_building_control/Local_Plan/Evidence Base.aspx

Summary of main findings

Children's play

6.5 The study found that accessibility for children's play is generally poor and that as a priority additional play space is required in locations within Crowborough, Hailsham and Polegate. However, it advocates a more flexible approach for children's play areas which is less dependent on formulaic equipment-based play areas. Instead designs should be more diverse, so as to stimulate children's imaginations. Consideration should be given to making greater use of natural features and landscaping within residential areas.

Teenage facilities

6.6 The findings highlight the need to improve the quality and quantity of informal leisure provision for young people across the district, including teenage shelters and floodlit basketball courts, skateboard areas and multi-use games areas.

Parks

6.7 Wealden has few traditional 'parks', especially within its towns. The identification and conversion of existing green spaces into more 'park' like spaces is recommended, especially in those settlements without one.
A lack of specialist sports facilities

6.8 The District lacks modern specialist sports facilities such as an athletics facility, netball centre, and artificial turf pitches suitable for hockey and football. It also has few indoor tennis courts, no 5-a-side soccer centres, very few cricket nets with artificial wickets and no competition-standard sports hall.

A lack of floodlit sports pitches

6.9 It is recommended that Wealden needs more floodlit pitches as members of local sport clubs have to travel outside the District to access floodlit facilities for training, and, in relation to hockey, for matches as well. This is holding back the development of sport and recreation and forcing people to travel further than should be necessary.

Localised solutions based on local need

6.10 In some cases it may be more appropriate for developers to contribute towards improving the quality of existing nearby play or leisure provision, rather than contributing towards building new provision. This may help ensure the provision of good quality facilities rather than a greater number of facilities which may be of lesser quality or difficult to maintain.