

The Local Plan

2013 - 2027

Protecting the Ashdown Forest

Impacts from general development and nitrogen oxide emissions from motor vehicles are threatening the rare heathland ecosystem of the Ashdown Forest. Local communities need to remain vibrant and Wealden District Council is seeking 21st century solutions to the problems modern development is causing.



The Wealden Local Plan places a high priority on protecting the District's valuable landscape assets including the Ashdown Forest and the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. It has successfully argued the case against a larger increase in housing in the north of the District as too much growth would cause significant environmental harm to these areas.

New Homes

The Local Plan Core Strategy allows for 1300 new homes, 10,700 m² of retail space and 12,650 m² of work premises in the north of the District at the main settlements of Uckfield and Crowborough. A further plan, looking at the growth needs of the District's principal villages, will be produced.

Increases in traffic, caused by growth beyond that envisaged in the Local Plan, are likely to have a detrimental effect

on the Ashdown Forest's ecosystem. The continued increase in nitrogen deposition, causing eutrophication, will result in the rare lowland heathland of this internationally important site being overgrown by invasive new vegetation. Similarly unplanned-for visitor pressure could destroy some of the Forest's special flora and fauna including Marsh Gentian, and protected birds such as nightjars and the Dartford Warbler.

International Responsibilities

Limiting overall levels of housing and other growth, and setting a 7km protection zone around the Forest to manage recreational pressure, is necessary to meet the Council's responsibility under international Habitat Directives to protect this site. This covers both Uckfield and Crowborough and will affect all developments that are not already accounted for in the Wealden Local

Plan and which lead to increased traffic within the protection zone. The Council recognises that development providing economic and community benefits may be vital to local communities and is keen for business and tourism proposals to go ahead in the area provided they do not breach Habitats Regulations.

Employment Provision

In developing its plan it has therefore specifically allowed for significant increases in allocations of land for employment and retail uses in areas where this will not cause problems. Growth beyond this level, that may otherwise be acceptable in planning terms, will not be permitted unless it can show that it can be accommodated without causing any environmental damage.

Wealden is working with environmental consultants to provide guidance and

assistance to local applicants looking to bring forward proposals. This includes identifying alternative green spaces in the north of the District to relieve some of the recreational pressure on the Forest, and carrying out a detailed survey of the sources and impact of nitrogen deposition with a view to providing examples of how traffic connected to new developments can be managed and reduced. This guidance is expected to be available later this year.

Following an independent Examination of Wealden's Core Strategy last year, the total number of new homes proposed for the District will be reviewed in 2015.

Further information about the Ashdown Forest Protection Area and the Local Plan is available from Wealden's Planning Policy Team:

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A copy of Wealden's Core Strategy Local Plan can be downloaded from the Planning Policy pages of the Wealden website, www.wealden.gov.uk/planningpolicy or scan the QR code with your smart phone.

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