Sustainable Settlements in the High Weald

Draft Final Report

Prepared for The High Weald AONB Unit and the Countryside Agency
by
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1. INTRODUCTION

OVERVIEW

The challenge

1.1. This is a study investigating sustainable settlements in a nationally protected landscape – the High Weald AONB. Its essential focus is what the planning system can do to make settlements there more sustainable. Sustainable development is a phrase in common use now, and making rural communities and settlements more sustainable is seen as a key task for rural planning. As noted in PPS7 (2004):

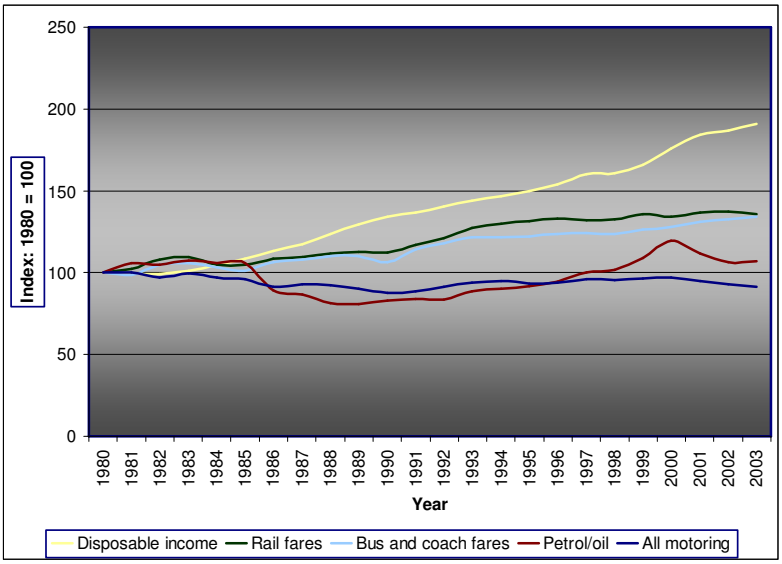
"Planning policies in Regional Spatial Strategies (RSS) and Local Development Plan Documents (LDDs) should facilitate and promote sustainable patterns of development and sustainable communities in rural areas. This should include policies to sustain, enhance and, where appropriate, revitalise country towns and villages (including through the provision of affordable housing) and for strong, diverse, economic activity, whilst maintaining local character and a high quality environment". (PPS7, para 2)

1.2. However, achieving such changes is challenging. In many ways rural settlements and the communities that live in them have become less and less sustainable. Current policy, and that which preceded it, assume that rural residents will adopt relatively localised patterns of travel to work and services. In doing so they are expected to reinforce the traditional roles of market towns and other larger settlements as service and employment centres, and also to maintain the viability of 'essential' services in villages and other smaller rural settlements.

1.3. LUC's earlier work[1] suggests that this is something of a policy mirage. The progressive falling cost of car travel (Figure 1) has lessened the friction of distance that policy assumed contained rural lives. Whilst planning policy has tried to keep rural residents working and shopping locally, transport policy has given them greater mobility, which they have used to travel more widely, to the detriment of their local settlements.

[1] The Role Of Rural Settlements as Service Centres

Figure 1 Real cost of transport



1.4. Most noticeably this social trend has pushed up rural house prices as more and more people have become able to live in the country, whilst not necessarily working there or having to rely on only local services. But rural services have also dwindled, in market towns as well as villages, and rural car use continues to grow at record rates.

1.5. Harder to measure, but no less important, are the effects on rural communities. There is a policy expectation that sustainable communities are *mixed* communities, as referred to in PPS1 which requires that:

"development supports existing communities and contributes to the creation of safe, sustainable, liveable and mixed communities with good access to jobs and key services for all members of the community". (para 5.)

1.6. This is also a strong theme of emerging changes to PPG3[2]:

"Part of what makes a community sustainable is a well-integrated mix of decent housing of different types and tenures to support a wide range of households of different sizes, ages and incomes". (para 1)

1.7. Yet the housing stock of rural settlements has become *less mixed*, and so have the socio-economic characteristics of their residents, principally because only certain sorts of household can now afford to live there. Once again trends in rural communities are moving in the opposite direction to policy's aspirations for them.

1.8. The new UK Sustainable Development Strategy, *Securing the future* (2005), collects together a detailed definition of sustainable communities in Annex A. This is reproduced in Appendix 1. Some of its components are arguably beyond the scope of land use planning. Many are within its scope, though. They are discussed more fully in Chapter 3.

[2] *Planning for Mixed Communities 2005, ODPM consultation paper*

1.9. In short national planning policy guidance suggests that the planning system should help:

- enable environmentally-friendly lifestyles which minimise resource use and waste and emissions (including of greenhouse gasses)
- protect the natural environment
- create high quality living environments, with a good range of services and facilities
- provide sufficient range, diversity, affordability and accessibility of housing
- provide well-integrated mixed-use development
- provide high quality, mixed-use, sustainable buildings
- make jobs, key services and facilities accessible by public transport, walking and cycling, reduce dependence on cars, and manage road traffic demand
- ensure good access to telecommunications and regional, national and international communications networks
- provide employment and training, and support a dynamic local economy
- support economically viable and attractive town centres.

1.10. Many rural communities and the settlements they live in struggle to satisfy these criteria because rural settlements, particularly smaller ones, are increasingly places of residence, and not of work or services. And this reflects the *choices* of their residents.

1.11. It is partly because many current residents of rural settlements choose to work and use services and facilities elsewhere that employment and services in these settlements are not present. Across nearly all of England rural communities have been *growing* while rural employment and services have been declining.

1.12. However '*Securing the Future'* also notes that

"Sustainable communities are diverse, reflecting their local circumstances. There is no standard template to fit them all". (Annex A)

And PPS7 notes, in relation to sustainable patterns of development and sustainable communities in rural areas*:*

To ensure these policies are relevant and effective, local planning authorities should be aware of the circumstances, needs and priorities of the rural communities and businesses in their area, and of the interdependence between urban and rural areas. Where there is a lack of up to date, robust information, local authorities should consider commissioning surveys and assessments of rural economic and social conditions and needs, including local housing needs. (para 2.)

1.13. These are vital aspects of policy. Greater rural sustainability has to be borne out of the existing state of rural communities and settlements. Contemporary rural settlements have deeply embedded roles and functions, fixed by the communities living in them. New development can only augment these roles and functions, not radically change them.

1.14. Therefore planning policy and decisions need to seek out the locations and circumstances where new development can reinforce or extend the existing sustainability of more sustainable rural settlements.

AONB policy

1.15. An additional policy dimension is added to this study by its focus on settlements within an AONB. PPS7 (2004) reconfirms the longstanding commitment to protection of these nationally important landscapes:

> *"Nationally designated areas comprising National Parks, the Broads, the New Forest Heritage Area and* ***Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB),*** *have been confirmed by the Government as having the highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty. The conservation of the natural beauty of the landscape and countryside should therefore be given greater weight in planning policies and development control decisions in these areas".* (para 21.)

1.16. This, then, necessarily restricts both the amount and types of development allowed in AONBs. This has most obviously been felt in local housing markets where the supply of new housing has been more limited than in other rural areas.

1.17. However *Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty: A policy statement* (Countryside Commission, 1991) adds important detail to this basic policy stance:

- *"The primary purpose of designation is to conserve and enhance natural beauty.*
- *In pursuing the primary purpose of designation, account should be taken of the needs of agriculture, forestry, other rural industries and of the economic and social needs of local communities. Particular regard should be paid to promoting sustainable forms of social and economic development that in themselves conserve and enhance the environment".*

1.18. Thus there is an expectation that social and economic development should be linked to the conservation and enhancement of the environment of the AONB.

1.19. Arguably, then, sustainable settlements face the additional challenge in AONBs (and National Parks) not only of meeting the social and economic needs of their communities, but also of ensuring that their communities play a part in conserving and enhancing the environment of the AONB.

1.20. An additional issue is brought into focus in the High Weald, namely, its unusual settlement character. As *The Making of the High Weald,* a document supporting the AONB Management Plan, explains:

> *"Without a doubt the human colonization of the Weald largely through seasonal pannage, or transhumance, had produced a distinctive settlement pattern by the Middle Ages. In contrast with the downs, coastal plain, and indeed much of England, the Weald was marked by an absence of agricultural villages surrounded by communally farmed open fields, instead having a dispersed settlement pattern of farmsteads located within discrete, or enclosed, holdings. The small-scale of the holdings owed its origins to dens and, later, assarts, and ensured that the density of farmsteads was high.*
>
> *"By the early fourteenth century, nucleated villages had emerged, but often in response to opportunity for trade. The hilltop villages of Ticehurst and Wadhurst are typical in their formation around market places that pre-date churches which themselves were in existence by the eleventh century. Such an origin for High Weald villages explains the relative dearth in the hinterland of the dominating ports of Winchelsea and Rye. The pattern of nucleated villages of the early fourteenth century survives today as, more distinctively, does the dispersed settlement.*

1.21. The document goes on to note that this traditional, dispersed settlement pattern was compromised by the disproportionately rapid growth of the towns in or adjacent to the AONB such as Heathfield, Haywards Heath, Hastings, and Crowborough and Tunbridge Wells. The improvements to the turnpikes in the 18th century and then the railways in the mid 19th century supported the expansion of settlements.

1.22. But the greatest change to settlement pattern came in the twentieth century, as car use fostered rural commuting. The document contends that from the 1930s onwards this drove the development of more nucleated villages. The advent of the planning system in 1947, and the designation of the AONB in 1980 have acted as a brake on such change, but the trends behind it – increasing mobility and consequent lack of functional attachment to their locality by many rural residents - has continued to gather force. Now the AONB contains 103 villages and two small market towns. However, over a third of the population live in the countryside outside these settlements.

1.23. Because of these changes, and the threat of continuing development patterns which would further erode the essential character of the AONB, the Management Plan identifies the top five issues for settlement as:

- Need for greater understanding – e.g. of the dispersed settlement pattern of the High Weald, and the connections between settlements and the countryside
- Loss of rural function – becoming dormitories for commuting or places of retirement
- Suburbanization – erosion of AONB character through extension of curtilages, and inappropriate modifications, or treatments, of boundaries and buildings
- Inappropriate new development – e.g. large-sized residences failing to meet needs of the local community
- Inappropriate design and building materials – architecture not respecting AONB character, quality and objectives

The study

1.24. The objectives of this study can be paraphrased as:

- to develop rigorous, evidence-based definitions for settlement sustainability in the High Weald
- to examine the sustainability of villages, hamlets and farmsteads in three case study areas in the High Weald
- to develop a policy framework for sustainable settlements in the High Weald, and advice for its application
- to make broader recommendations for planning in protected landscapes across England.

1.25. So the study focuses on what the planning system might be able to do to make settlements more sustainable in the High Weald. It is important to note that the new planning system sets itself an enhanced challenge through its emphasis on **spatial planning,** as set out in PPS1 (2005):

"Spatial planning goes beyond traditional land use planning to bring together and integrate policies for the development and use of land with other policies and programmes which influence the nature of places and how they can function. That will include policies which can

impact on land use, for example by influencing the demands on or needs for development, but which are not capable of being delivered solely or mainly through the granting or refusal of planning permission and which may be implemented by other means". (para 30.)

1.26. Thus planning policy is expected to provide an arena in which all land use issues, and the means by which they might be influenced by public sector policy and actions, should be brought together to establish better integrated and more effective delivery.

1.27. As PPG7 notes, it is vital that such work is properly supported by strong evidence. Thus the development of a **robust evidence base** covering the settlements of the High Weald, looking at how settlements interrelate with each other and with the surrounding countryside, is the main task of this work. This is then used as a basis for recommendations on future national, regional and local planning policy, and also for connected public sector policy and activities.

1.28. Particular issues raised by the new planning system are that:

- the achievement of more sustainable communities (in market towns, villages and areas of more dispersed settlement) requires a clear understanding of how rural communities currently **work**
- the emphasis on spatial planning requires an integrated approach to policy development and delivery, with a focus on the achievement of *outcomes*
- the use of visions and objectives in policy should be purposeful, informed by a functional understanding of place
- the emphasis on spatial strategy, and its close relationship with transport strategy, sets an imperative to examine settlement functions and relationships closely
- policies for individual topics such as housing, economic development and community services should be framed by this spatial emphasis, and integrated, responding to specific rural circumstances.

1.29. This study has been based on collecting evidence relating to three groups of settlement of differing sizes in different areas of the High Weald. The findings have also been informed by consultation with local planning officers and two meetings were undertaken with representatives of local communities.

1.30. Critically, the central aim of this work has been to identify those sorts of development that could bring significant sustainability benefits to the AONB, and thus enable a more positive planning stance towards appropriate new development there.

1.31. The distinctive nature of the High Weald and the settlements and communities in it presents particular challenges for the development of sustainable settlements. The High Weald is an area of generally dispersed settlements, most of which are relatively small. The AONB contains only two market towns (Battle and Crowborough), though it surrounds Tunbridge Wells and Heathfield which are excluded from it, and is surrounded by Horsham, Crawley, East Grinstead, Tonbridge, Rye, Hastings, Uckfield and Haywards Heath which all abut it.

1.32. Thus the drawing of the AONB boundary has placed a line and change in policy between settlements which should be expected to be closely related to one another. Deeper into the AONB - does the more scattered settlement pattern change how sustainable settlements might be achieved? And across the AONB - how does the

presence of the protected landscape round settlements and communities add to the sustainability mix?

1.33. This report is structured such that it lays out the evidence base collected first, and then considers its implications for future policy and action.

2. APPROACH

2.1. in summary: to build an evidence base for the High Weald, this study:

- reviewed the policy context for planning for sustainable development in AONBs in general and in the High Weald AONB in particular
- selected three case study areas in the High Weald and 15 'sample settlements' (five settlements in each area) to examine in detail
- gathered an evidence base (from existing data sources and door-to-door surveys) and built up socio-economic profiles and functional patterns for the sample settlements
- undertook telephone interviews with land-based businesses in the High Weald
- consulted on all the findings of the study with local organisations and local people.

Case study areas and sample settlements

2.2. The selection of case study settlements aimed to provide insight into the varying rural conditions across the AONB with the chosen settlements being of different sizes and having different relationships to larger settlements. The groups of settlements are also from differing areas of the AONB.

It was not intended that the settlements should be representative of all settlements in the High Weald, as the characteristics of rural settlements are very variable.

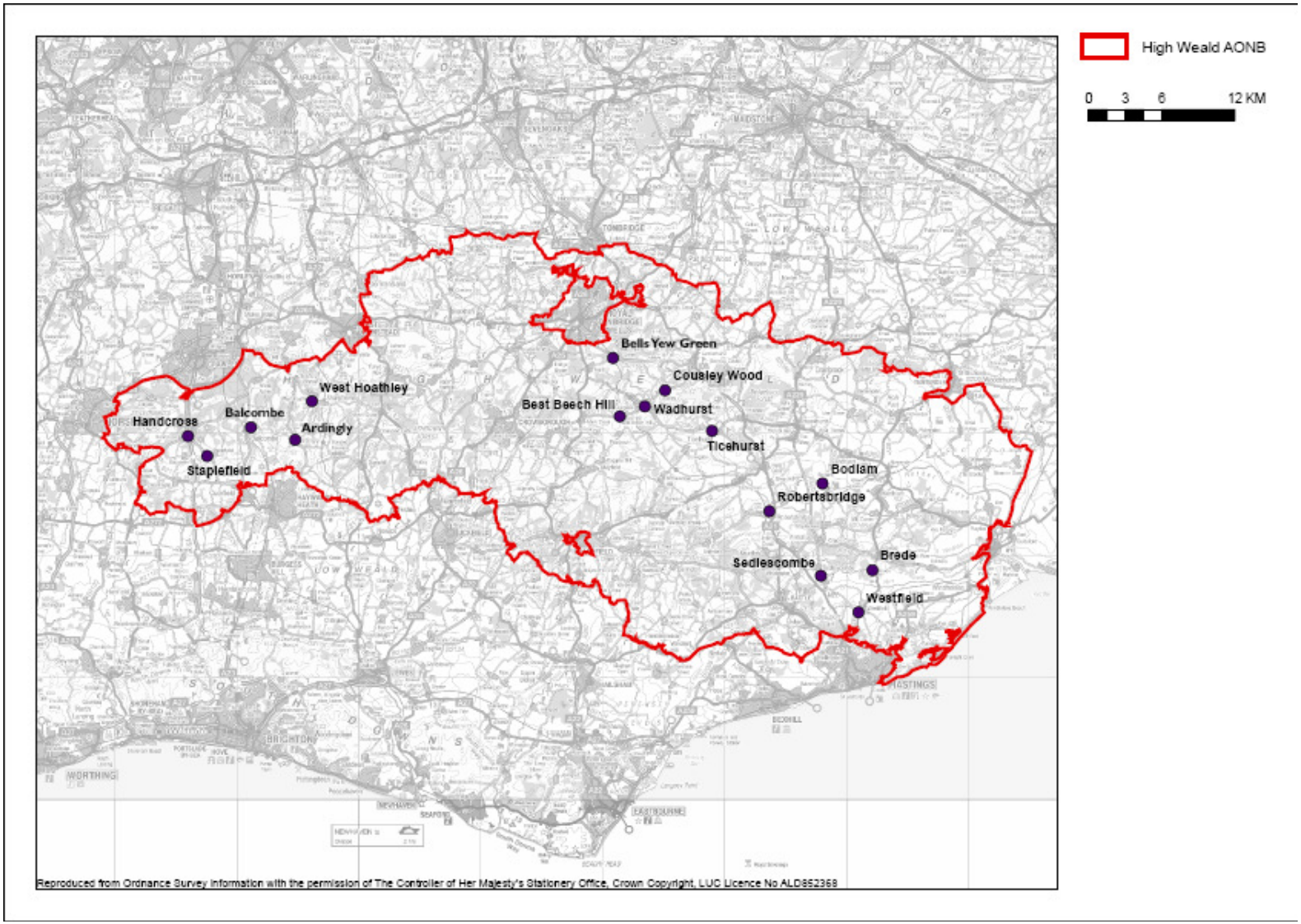
2.3. The case study areas and sample settlements were:

- ***Balcombe –*** *Ardingly, Balcombe, Handcross, Staplefield, West Hoathly*
- ***Sedlescombe –*** *Bodiam, Brede, Robertsbridge, Sedlescombe, Westfield*
- ***Wadhurst –*** *Best Beech Hill, Bells Yew Green, Cousley Wood, Ticehurst, Wadhurst.*

They were chosen in consultation with the AONB unit.

2.4. The location of the case study settlements is shown in Figure 2 below.

Figure 2 Case study settlements



Use of secondary data

2.5. The main secondary data source used in this study was the Census 2001 which is a freely available ***national dataset***. The study extracted data on demographics, household structure, tenure, housing stock profile, resident employment by sector, vehicle ownership and use, and travel to work.

2.6. This data was used to build up a picture of the rural settlement *character* (a socio-economic profile) and *function* (how settlements relate to each other, principally travel between the settlements for work and services). The character of settlements provides an important context for planning but the function of settlements is what planning seeks to influence. ***Planning is interested in influencing both.***

2.7. The travel to work data has been mapped taking the settlements as both the origin and destination of employees. These maps are on the CD-ROM which accompanies this report in the form of a locked GIS project. When viewing these maps, it is possible to turn 'on' and 'off' various data lines so as to look at travel to or from a particular settlement. The thickness of a line or diameter of a circle indicates the number of respondents both who live and work in the settlement. Fuller description of the techniques used can be found in Appendix 2.

Technical note: *There are technical complexities in representing smaller settlements in data. The two basic units for which data is available are wards and Census Output Areas. There are three different sets of wards in play (1991, 1998 and 2001) according to the data set in use. Wards are relatively large and typically will capture several smaller settlements. Thus they are not particularly useful in seeking to represent data for individual villages and hamlets. The same is true for parishes, though parishes are not a standard statistical unit used by Census.*

Census Output Areas are considerably smaller than Wards or Parishes, and down to settlements of 1500 population there are nationally agreed definitions of the output areas which make up that settlement. They have been used in this work.

Below 1500 population the decision of which output areas should be taken as making up the smallest settlements was made by using land cover data to indicate the built up area of the settlement, and then picking the output areas which were a best fit.

On this basis data representing the communities covered in this report may differ from that collected for them for other purposes, which may be based on different geographical assumptions.

For all settlements the approach was to deliberately treat individual settlements separately, whatever their size, or likely relationships with other settlements. This is because development plans have to work in such terms – using the physical state of the settlements as a starting point.

Primary data collection

2.8. **A door-to-door household survey:** A household survey of 421 residents was undertaken to understand:

- *service use*[3] - *where* and by *which mode of transport* respondents travelled for: main food shopping; top-up / convenience shopping; non-food shopping; banking / financial / professional services; leisure, recreation, cultural facilities; socialising; children's primary / secondary school, children's socialising
- *use of local services*: domestic services used (cleaning, childcare, ironing, odd jobs); gardening services (gardening, fencing, tree work); other (catering, accounting)
- *length of residency in* and migration to the AONB and perceptions of the area
- *self-sufficiency* and use of local resources for food, heating and energy supply.

The sampling was on a quota basis such that the sample represented the household composition of the settlement in question.

2.9. Such surveys offer valuable insight into the complex realities of rural service use, which planning policy needs to understand. In this case the surveys also asked about aspects of household behaviour and lifestyles to try and understand the relationships between residents of the High Weald and the environment around them.

2.10. Households selected for survey were drawn both from the sample settlements and from those living in the countryside surrounding them. The High Weald has a dispersed settlement pattern and therefore it was felt important to capture information both from residents of settlements and from those living in he surrounding countryside. The spread of households surveyed was specified to mirror the 70:30 ratio of households in settlements and those in the open countryside in the High Weald, and also to be representative of the relative populations of each of the settlements, stratified by broad types of household.

2.11. The travel to services data arising from these surveys was mapped using a similar approach to that for the travel to work data and is on the CD-ROM which accompanies this report. However, while the travel to work maps include trips made to and from the settlement for work, the travel to service maps only consider trips made by those living in the settlement. They do not therefore cover people from other settlements using services in the study settlements.

2.12. **Interviews of land-based businesses:** As another means of understanding how the residents of the High Weald relate to their surrounding environment, telephone interviews were conducted with 25 land-based businesses directly or indirectly linked to the sustainable management of the landscape.

2.13. The nature of these businesses was:

[3] services were categorised and respondents were questioned on service use in a typical month and not on the frequency of service use

Business type	Number
Green tourism and leisure	6
Wood based businesses	4
Craft/other	3
Fruit and vegetables	3
Meat, fowl and fish	3
Beverages	3
Dairy	2
Baking or processed	1

2.14. The businesses were asked about their history and current character, advantages and disadvantages of being in the AONB, sourcing of materials and labour, the location of markets, and perceived contributions to the AONB.

Consultation

2.15. **Consultation with planning officers:** Telephone interviews were held with planning officers of the constituent planning authorities of the High Weald AONB. A contact list was supplied by the High Weald AONB Unit (Appendix 3). The issues discussed were:

- suggestions for case study areas within the AONB
- the recent history of planning in the AONB (~ last 20 years)
- current policy issues
- the need for additional evidence
- future policy development
- suggestions for sustainable settlements criteria.

2.16. **Consultation with local communities:** Once initial findings were available, two workshops were held to facilitate *informed* discussion about the case study areas with representatives of local communities. Interested persons were invited from Parish Councils, civic societies and other amenity groups, economic development and conservation agencies, and developers.

2.17. These workshops were informal and interactive. Participants were taken through the findings which were then discussed. Those who attended were asked if the findings 'made sense' and if there was some local explanation for the patterns observed. After this, each group collectively discussed an appropriate policy response to the findings.

2.18. In the event these meetings were very lively, underlining the value of sharing this sort of information, even if what to do about it is less easily agreed.

3. POLICY CONTEXT

3.1. Before examining the evidence, this Chapter explores the planning policy context within which settlement planning operates.

AONBs

3.2. The National Parks and AONBs of England are recognised internationally by IUCN as Category V (cultural) landscapes. In other words their landscape has been formed through the close interaction of local inhabitants with their surrounding environment over millennia. As identified by IUCN:

" landscape is much more than scenery, or even a set of purely physical attributes: the visual aspect of landscape is only the outward face of complex human/nature interactions … Landscape may be inherited from the past, but it should be managed for the future". [4]

3.3. These Category V Protected Landscapes are defined by IUCN as an:

"Area of land, with coast and sea as appropriate, where the interaction of people and nature over time has produced an area of distinct character with significant aesthetic, ecological and/or cultural value, and often with high biological diversity. Safeguarding the integrity of this traditional interaction is vital to the protection, maintenance and evolution of such an area." [1]

3.4. Thus the notion of a sustainable relationship between communities and environment is seen internationally as a central component of Category V landscapes:

"*The focus of management of Category V areas is not on nature conservation per se, but about guiding human processes so that the area and its resources are protected, managed and capable of evolving in a sustainable way – and natural and cultural values are thereby maintained and enhanced".* [1]

3.5. As a consequence, the IUCN objectives for the management of Category V protected areas include:

- *to maintain the harmonious interaction of nature and culture through the protection of landscape and/or seascape and the continuation of traditional land uses, building practices and social and cultural manifestations*
- *to support lifestyles and economic activities which are in harmony with nature and the preservation of the social and cultural fabric of the communities concerned*
- *to eliminate where necessary, and thereafter prevent, land uses and activities which are inappropriate in scale and/or character*
- *to bring benefits to, and contribute to the welfare of, the local community though the provision of natural products (such as forest and fisheries products) and services (such as clean water or income derived from sustainable forms of tourism)*
- *to act as models of sustainability, both for the purposes of the people and the area, so that lessons can be learnt for wider application.* [1]

[4] Management Guidelines for IUCN Category V Protected Areas Protected Landscapes/Seascapes

3.6. These ideas are echoed in the national legislation and guidance for AONBs. *Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty: A policy statement* (Countryside Commission, 1991) explains that :

- *The primary purpose of designation is to conserve and enhance natural beauty.*
- *In pursuing the primary purpose of designation, account should be taken of the needs of agriculture, forestry, other rural industries and of the economic and social needs of local communities. Particular regard should be paid to promoting sustainable forms of social and economic development that in themselves conserve and enhance the environment.*

3.7. The High Weald AONB Management Plan[5] understands this and contains the objectives

"To reconnect settlements, residents and their supporting economic activity with the surrounding countryside (objective S1)

"Rationale: to understand and enhance the synergy of the local economy, society and environment, and the symbiosis with the surrounding countryside, that defines sustainable rural settlement. To provide opportunities for economic activity that supports other land management objectives of the management plan and AONB designation".

and

*"**To protect the historic pattern of settlement (objective S2)***

Rationale: to protect the distinctive character of towns, villages, hamlets and farmsteads, and to maintain the hinterlands and other relationships (including separation) between such settlements that contribute to local identity".

3.8. As already noted, the High Weald is characterised by a dispersed settlement pattern reflecting the Medieval origins of the landscape. New development should not dilute or overwrite this defining characteristic of the AONB but there is a parallel danger here that adding to the dispersed development pattern could undercut other important sustainability objectives such as reducing car dependence and use, and supporting local services.

3.9. A strong message to emerge from these guidelines and the High Weald Management Plan is that a productive and sustainable relationship between the AONB's communities and its landscape is locked into its designation, as is the historically dispersed pattern of development in the High Weald. Land use planning, which exerts an important influence on communities and landscape in the AONB, has a central role to play in maintaining these patterns, but in ways that also support the broader objectives of sustainable development

NATIONAL POLICY

3.10. So at the same time, the High Weald must respond to broader national policy and the expectations of the national sustainable development strategy.

[5] see http://www.highweald.org/caring/future/management_index.asp

Planning policy

3.11. The traditional planning approach to rural areas is set out in the Rural White Paper *'Our Countryside Our Future: The future, a fair deal for Rural England'* (2000, and review in 2004[6]) and Planning Policy Statements and Guidance notes: PPS7 *Sustainable Development in Rural Areas* (2004), PPG3 *Housing* (2000) and PPG13 *Transport* (2002). Outside of urban areas, all of these documents support focussing development in settlements that act as 'service centres' or 'local service centres', defined in PPS7 as:

"*where employment, housing (including affordable housing), services and other facilities can be provided close together. This should help to ensure these facilities are served by public transport and provide improved opportunities for access by walking and cycling. These centres (which might be a country town or a large village or a group of villages) should be identified in the development plan as the preferred location for such development".* (para 3)

3.12. This notion of 'local service centres' is quite simplistic and does not distinguish between different types of centre that may provide very different types and qualities of service, housing and jobs, and so may function in very different ways. In particular, national planning policy does not address how to plan for places like the High Weald, which do not contain larger settlements (which are more likely to fulfil the expectations of local service centres).

Outside of these local service centres, PPS7 restricts development to that which will *"meet local business and community needs and help to maintain the viability of these communities."*

3.13. Planning policies are more lenient to development in rural settlements providing affordable housing or a service function, as these are widely agreed to be priorities for rural communities in national policy[7]. PPG3 *Housing* allows planning authorities to specify that a proportion of market housing is affordable housing, even on the smallest development sites. The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) has now issued further amendments to PPG3 which extend the powers of planning authorities to use the rural exception policy to allow planning permission on land that would not otherwise be released for general market housing, to be used solely for affordable housing[8].

3.14. In relation to AONBs and other designated areas, PPS7 advocates balancing the priorities of social or economic well-being and meeting local housing need, with protecting the natural environment.

"Nationally designated areas … [including] the Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)… [afford the] highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty. The conservation of the natural beauty of the landscape and countryside should therefore be given great weight in planning policies and development control decisions in these areas. The conservation of wildlife and the cultural heritage are important considerations in all these areas. As well as reflecting these priorities, planning policies in

[6] http://www.defra.gov.uk/rural/ruralwp/default.htm
[7] Rural White Paper review, http://www.defra.gov.uk/rural/rwpreview/default.htm
[8] http://www.odpm.gov.uk/stellent/groups/odpm_control/documents/contentservertemplate/odpm_index.hcst?n=2316&l=1

LDDs and where appropriate, RSS, should also support suitably located and designed development necessary to facilitate the economic and social well-being of these designated areas and their communities, including the provision of adequate housing to meet identified local needs". (para 21)

3.15. It is important to note here that national policy anticipates the possibility of and need to accommodate development to support local communities and economies in AONBs alongside the clear importance of protecting the landscape.

Sustainable development and sustainable communities

3.16. There is clearly an overlap between sustainable development and sustainable communities. This relationship is reflected in the aim of the UK Sustainable Development Strategy: *Securing the Future*[9] to:

"create sustainable communities in England that will embody the principles of sustainable development at the local level: balancing and integrating the social, economic and environmental components of their community, meeting the needs of existing and future generations and respecting the needs of other communities in the wider region or internationally also to make their communities sustainable". (Chapter 6)

3.17. This expectation of a sustainable community and the subsequent list of components of a sustainable community laid out in the strategy provide a useful framework for examining communities in the High Weald. Not all components of a sustainable community can be influenced by planning policy, but those that can are summarised as[10]:

- **Active, inclusive and safe –** fair, tolerant and cohesive with a strong local culture and other shared community activities. Sustainable communities offer:
  - opportunities for cultural, leisure, community, sport and other activities, including for children and young people
- **Environmentally sensitive –** providing places for people to live that are considerate of the environment. Sustainable communities:
  - actively seek to minimise climate change, including through energy efficiency and the use of renewables
  - protect the environment, by minimising pollution on land, in water and in the air
  - minimise waste and dispose of it in accordance with current good practice
  - make efficient use of natural resources, encouraging sustainable production and consumption
  - protect and improve bio-diversity (e.g. wildlife habitats)
  - enable a lifestyle that minimises negative environmental impact and enhances positive impacts (e.g. by creating opportunities for walking and cycling, and reducing noise pollution and dependence on cars)
  - create cleaner, safer and greener neighbourhoods (e.g. by reducing litter and graffiti, and maintaining pleasant public spaces)

[9] http://www.sustainable-development.gov.uk/documents/publications/strategy/SecFut_complete.pdf
[10] the full text is laid out in full in Annex A of UK Sustainable Development Strategy and Appendix A of this report

- **Well designed and built –** featuring a quality built and natural environment. Sustainable communities offer:
  - a sense of place (e.g. a place with a positive 'feeling' for people and local distinctiveness)
  - user-friendly public and green spaces with facilities for everyone including children and older people
  - sufficient range, diversity, affordability and accessibility of housing within a balanced housing market
  - appropriate size, scale, density, design and layout, including mixed-use development, that complement the distinctive local character of the community
  - high quality, mixed-use, durable, flexible and adaptable buildings, using sustainable construction materials
  - buildings and public spaces which promote health and are designed to reduce crime and make people feel safe
  - accessibility of jobs, key services and facilities by public transport, walking and cycling

- **Well connected –** with good transport services and communication linking people to jobs, schools, health and other services. Sustainable communities offer:
  - transport facilities, including public transport, that help people travel within and between communities and reduce dependence on cars
  - facilities to encourage safe local walking and cycling
  - an appropriate level of local parking facilities in line with local plans to manage road traffic demand
  - widely available and effective telecommunications and Internet access
  - good access to regional, national and international communications networks

- **Thriving –** with a flourishing and diverse local economy. Sustainable communities feature:
  - a wide range of jobs and training opportunities
  - sufficient suitable land and buildings to support economic prosperity and change
  - dynamic job and business creation, with benefits for the local community
  - a strong business community with links into the wider economy
  - economically viable and attractive town centres

- **Well served –** with public, private, community and voluntary services that are appropriate to people's needs and accessible to all. Sustainable communities have:
  - affordable public, community, voluntary and private services (e.g. retail, fresh food, commercial, utilities, information and advice) which are accessible to the whole community

3.18. In addition, national planning policy proposes that sustainable communities are mixed communities. This is reflected in PPS1 which required that

"development supports existing communities and contributes to the creation of safe, sustainable, liveable and mixed communities with good access to jobs and key services for all members of the community" .(para 5)

and in PPG3:

"Part of what makes a community sustainable is a well-integrated mix of decent housing of different types and tenures to support a wide range of households of different sizes, ages and incomes"

3.19. This requirement that communities should be mixed in order to be sustainable also appears in the South East Plan, with specific reference to rural areas. It is a distinctive theme of contemporary planning policy which raises particular challenges in the High Weald.

3.20. Of course even those components of sustainable communities of clear relevance to the High Weald in the UK Sustainable Development Strategy and national planning policy are essentially generic and require interpretation for application there. Figure 3 outlines this interpretation which is then used as a basis for the assessment of findings and to build up policy recommendations.

3.21. We have also adopted a simple but workable definition of sustainable settlements for the AONB:

Settlements where a harmonious and productive relationship between communities and landscape can be reinforced and extended

Figure 3 Framework of objectives of sustainable settlements that Planning policy can help to deliver

Topic	Objectives
Settlements where a harmonious and productive relationship between communities and landscape can be reinforced and extended	
Environmental sustainability	
Landscape Conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty of the High Weald is the central management objective Building links between communities and landscape of the High Weald that support its natural beauty is vital to effective management	• All new development should make a positive contribution to the landscape of the High Weald
Biodiversity Conservation and enhancement of the distinctive biodiversity of the High Weald is central to the retention of natural beauty	• All new development should make a positive contribution to biodiversity in the High Weald
Cultural heritage Conservation and enhancement of the distinctive cultural heritage of the High Weald is central to the retention of natural beauty	• New development should make a positive contribution to the cultural heritage of the AONB

Topic	Objectives
Tranquillity Tranquillity is an increasingly important attribute of natural beauty	• New development should not damage the existing tranquillity of the AONB
Sustainable land management: agriculture; forestry; and horticulture Supporting agricultural, forestry and horticultural enterprises that sustain the landscape, cultural heritage and local economies of the High Weald is essential to ongoing management of the AONB	• Supporting development associated with existing or new agricultural, forestry and horticultural enterprises making sustainable contributions to the landscape and communities of the AONB
Settlement pattern Ensuring that new development reinforces the traditional settlement pattern is important if the distinctive landscape of the High Weald is to be maintained	• New development should reinforce the traditional settlement pattern where this can also deliver other sustainability objectives
Design and materials Ensuring that design and materials used in new development enhance the landscape of the AONB is vital to the retention of natural beauty. In addition, as far as possible construction materials (particularly timber) should be drawn from the AONB to support important land-based enterprise	• Design of new development should make a positive contribution to the protected landscape, with materials drawn from the AONB
Resource use: energy (domestic and industrial) Promoting use of wood fuel for domestic and industrial use can sustain the natural beauty of the High Weald by supporting sustainable land based enterprises and land management	• New development (domestic and industrial) should be carbon neutral. Use of wood fuel from the AONB should be the primary way of achieving this
Transport Promoting the right types of development in locations where it will contribute to minimisation of car use supports global sustainability and also reduces the local impacts of traffic on the AONB	• Development should be of a type which minimises the need for occupants and users to travel, and sited in locations where this is most likely to be achieved
Local produce: food and timber Supporting the production and sale of local food and timber can sustain the landscape, cultural heritage and local economies of the High Weald	• Development should encourage the consumption of local food through - new housing making provision for growing food - supporting commercial enterprises which deliver food to local consumers • New development should utilise

Topic	Objectives
	local timber where technically possible
Waste Waste minimisation is a global sustainability issue, which the High Weald should play its part in addressing	• Development should encourage waste minimisation • Possibility of small scale green waste processing sites in the AONB
Social sustainability	
Age and social balance (housing opportunity ie affordability) Promoting more balanced and mixed communities through new development is important as the communities in the High Weald are generally not mixed – the focus should be on affordable housing as this is what is most clearly needed	• Building more mixed communities through targeted housing provision (often affordable)
Local services New development can bolster local services. Strong local service centres are not that common in the High Weald and so those that exist need targeted support	• Supporting existing local services by directing development to places where localised service use is already strong
Local employment The South East is a prosperous region – so the task is to harness this in the High Weald to benefit the landscape and communities of the AONB	• Focusing on local employment likely to reproduce the environment of the AONB and support local communities
Recreation / access The High Weald is of great importance for informal recreation, both for local residents and visitors	• Ensuring that development areas are well connected to the public rights of way networks
Governance / communication Future planning is often a key concern for communities in the High Weald – Community Strategies, Parish Plans and Village Design Statements should provide a bridge between them and the planning system	• Closer community involvement in policy making and delivery
Inclusion / vibrancy Greater social inclusion and vibrancy are critical issues for the future of High Weald communities and the planning system has a part to play in promoting them	• Seeking development likely to give more inclusive communities
Environmentally-friendly lifestyles The High Weald has great potential to foster environmentally friendly lifestyles which can be facilitated by particular types of development	• Enabling environmentally-friendly lifestyles though supportive development

Topic	Objectives
Quality of life The High Weald already provides a high quality of life for its residents – the issue is to ensure that this high quality of life is compatible with sustainable development	• Ensuring that high quality of life for the individual is not at the expense of wider sustainability objectives
Economic sustainability	
Local economies Economic development can help sustain the landscape and communities of the AONB, but too much or the wrong sorts of economic development will damage the AONB	• Support for local economies rooted in the landscape of the AONB should be an overarching objective for planning polices. This will then include: - identifying and supporting key local sectors - supporting local labour markets though support for local communities - discouraging 'footloose' economic development which might displace economic development rooted in the landscape of the AONB
Land-based economies: materials and skills The land based economy is embedded in the landscape and cultural heritage of the AONB which requires targeted support for the ongoing good management of the High Weald	• This key sector requires targeted support as described above, plus: - reaching beyond the scope of planning's relationship with agriculture to development making wider contributions to sustainable land management - the vital importance of adding value to land-based products within the AONB in some circumstances sustainable development will require tied residences, linked with the sustainable management of land
Recreation and tourism Another key sector for the reproduction of the landscape of the AONB	• Targeted support is needed - the central task here is to distinguish between those types of activity benefiting the landscape of the AONB, and those which 'give nothing back'

REGIONAL AND LOCAL PLANNING POLICY

3.22. The South East region in which the High Weald AONB lies is under very strong development pressure, particularly in rural areas. An overview of the proposed levels of development in the next 20 years is laid out in the Draft South East Plan (2005) which also considers future development in rural areas.

The South East Plan

3.23. The South East Regional Spatial Strategy[11] (commonly referred to as the South East Plan) will be structured in two parts: Part 1 containing core regional policies and the overall housing number for the region to 2026 and Part 2 adding sub-regional 'details' and housing numbers for each local authority area.

3.24. After a 3-month consultation period, Part 1 was approved by the Regional Assembly and submitted to ODPM with an agreed growth of 28,900 dwellings per annum until 2026. Sub-regional and county housing figures (Part 2) have been proposed but are to be concluded following the sub-regional level studies and local consultation. The Plan is expected to be completed in early December 2005 and submitted to Government in March 2006.

3.25. The Plan is led by a vision for the South East, as:

"The Healthy Region – Through the Plan and other measures, the South East will show a sustained improvement in its quality of life over the period to 2026, measured by the well-being of its citizens, the vitality of its economy, the wealth of its environment and the prudent use of natural resources".(section C)

3.26. Key factors laid out in the context for the Plan (section B) include:

- the region's links globally, internationally, nationally and with London and other regions. The Plan proposes that *"the most important relationship is with London. It is different to relationships with the other regions, as London relies on the South East to accommodate some needs and the South East relies on some elements of London's special World City role to support its economy".* (para 4.2)

- the Urban and Rural Focus in which the Plan states that *"although most people live in the region's urban areas, and the Plan has an overall urban and urban renaissance emphasis, the rural parts of the South East form an important part of the region … The geographic and functional relationship between the region's rural and urban areas forms a key part of the character of the South East and is reflected in the Plan".* (para 5.2)

3.27. This latter point is carried through into the outline of the Preferred Spatial Strategy for the distribution of the 28,900 dwelling per annum which is to:

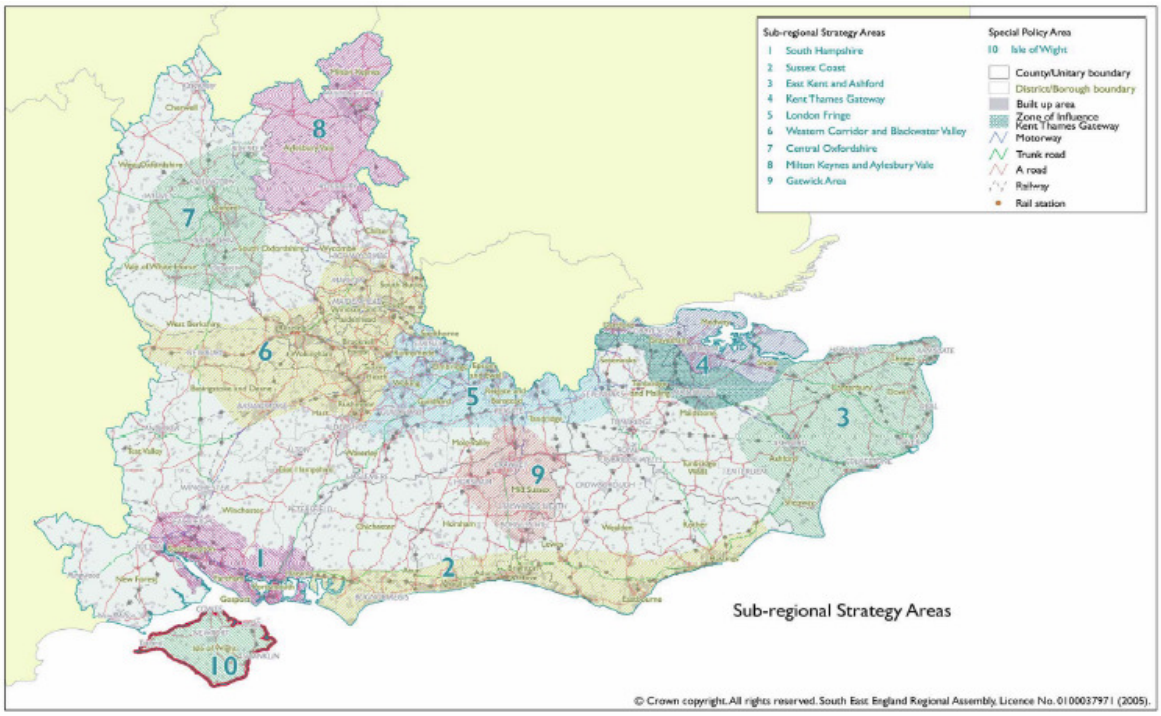
- *Promote the sustainable development of communities in all parts of the South East, urban and rural*

[11] Under the new planning system (for details, see www.odpm.gov.uk/planning), the former Regional Planning Guidance and County Structure Plans are being replaced by Regional Spatial Strategies and Local Plans are being replaced by Local Development Documents.

- *Ensure that development only takes place when necessary infrastructure is available or will be provided in time*
- *Provide an urban emphasis for development with support for the concept of 'urban renaissance'*
- *Provide for appropriate rural development to support the maintenance of thriving, mixed communities*
- *Address intra-regional economic and social disparities*
- *Support agreed proposals for strategically significant housing and economic development in existing Growth Areas (Thames Gateway, Ashford, Milton Keynes/Aylesbury Vale) and in South Hampshire*
- *Facilitate the implementation of strategies for other defined sub-regional and special policy areas*
- *Support continued economic growth in ways that minimise additional pressures on limited land and labour resources, particularly in the most heavily constrained parts of the region*
- *Protect and enhance the region's key environmental, cultural and heritage assets, particularly those that are formally designated as being of international, national or regional importance*
- *Continue to use existing Green Belt designations as key tools for controlling urban growth at the regional level.* (Para 3.4.1)

3.28. Part 1of the Draft Plan contains a Statement of Strategy for the nine sub-regions, identified because of their *"distinctive set of issues that need to be addressed"* (para 4.1) (Figure 4), and also a proposed overall housing figure, broken down by sub-region and by county or unitary authority, as shown in Table 1.

Figure 4: Sub-regional Strategy Areas in the Draft South East Plan



Source: Draft South East Plan

Table 1 Proposed sub-regional and county housing figures (average annual rates of provision 2006-2026)

	Berks	Bucks	E Sussex	Hants	IoW	Kent	Oxon	Surrey	W Sussex	Total
Kent Thames Gateway	-	-	-	-	-	2,400	-	-	-	2,400
MK & Aylesbury Vale	-	3,500	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3,500
East Kent & Ashford	-	-	-	-	-	2,400	-	-	-	2,400
Central Oxfordshire	-	-	-	-	-	-	1,700	-	-	1,700
Gatwick Area	-	-		-	-	-	-	200	1,400	1,600
London Fringe	-	-	-	-	-	100	-	1,710	-	1,810
South Hampshire	-	-	-	4,000	-	-	-	-	-	4,000
Sussex Coast	-	-	1,600	-	-	-	-	-	1,100	2,700
Western Corridor and Blackwater Valley	2,570	390	-	1,300	-	-	-[2]	230	-	4,490
Isle of Wight	-	-	-	-	520	-	-	-	-	520
"Rest of County" areas	50	150	300	800	-	1,200	660	220	400	3,780
County Total	2,620	4,040	1,900	6,100	520	6,100	2,360	2,360	2,900	28,900

Source: Draft South East Plan

3.29. Those sub-regional policies that are most likely to have a knock-on effect on the High Weald are those relating to the East Kent and Ashford and the Sussex Coast Sub-regions which boarder the AONB, and the Gatwick Area Sub-region which includes parts of the AONB. The Statement of Strategy for the Gatwick Area Sub-region does not specify the area as a high growth area but rather seeks to *"capitalize on the sub-region's location in relation to Gatwick Airport, London and Brighton"(*para 4.5.3). The influence of development in this sub-region may place additional pressure for development to spill over into the AONB.

3.30. In reference to AONBs in the region, the Draft Plan notes that they *"make a significant contribution to the distinctiveness of the South East, as well as helping support and sustain the region's high quality of life and economic success"* (section D6 para 1.9) and follows this with a policy that affords priority to their setting and supports AONB Management Plans.

"Priority should be given to conservation and enhancement of natural beauty in the region's Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) and planning decisions should have regard to their setting. Proposals for development should be considered in that context. Positive land management policies should be developed to sustain the Areas' landscape quality. In drafting Local Development Plan Documents Local Planning Authorities should have regard to statutory AONB Management Plans.

"In considering proposals for development, the emphasis should be on small-scale proposals that are sustainably located and designed. Proposals which support the economies and social well being of the Areas and their communities, including affordable housing schemes, will be encouraged provided that they do not conflict with the aim of conserving and enhancing natural beauty ". (policy C2)

Local planning policy

3.31. There are 15 planning authorities whose area includes part of the High Weald AONB. An initial review of the majority of Local Plans (and also of Structure

Plans) for the area[12] was undertaken to provide an overview of how planning policy deals with the area.

3.32. Amongst the plans there is broad consensus in the development strategies to locate new development such that it:

- limits impact upon the countryside
- minimises the need to travel
- is easily accessible without car use
- prioritises re-use of previously developed land
- promotes mixed and sustainable communities

3.33. All of the plans intend to achieve these criteria by concentrating new development in the principal urban areas in line with Government policy. Examples of this approach can be seen as follows:

"New development will be located close to the town or neighborhood centres and will be served by a range of transport provision". (Tunbridge Wells Borough Local Plan)

"Focusing most development and change on existing towns, particularly the main coastal towns, through the implementation of existing commitments to development and the renewal and re-use of existing (brownfield) sites and premises". (East Sussex Structure Plan)

3.34. The focus of development is therefore on urban areas, but the plans also widely acknowledge that some development will be required in rural areas in order to meet the needs of local people. There is clearly an intention that the planning system should aid the sustainability, vitality and diversity of rural communities but without allowing development that would prejudice the character of the rural area.

"We recognise that a carefully controlled amount of development will be necessary where it will help to maintain the economic and social well-being of rural communities". (West Sussex Structure Plan)

3.35. All of these plans acknowledge the statutory protection afforded to AONBs and attach high importance to the High Weald area, but tend to discuss responses within a rural rather than an AONB context. The approach taken therefore is to place an added emphasis on the need to conserve the natural beauty and character of the area:

"Development within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, as defined on the Proposals Map, will only be permitted if it conserves or/and enhances the natural beauty and character of the landscape. Small scale development will be permitted where it meets the social and economic needs of local communities, and provided it is consistent with the purpose of the AONB designation". (Wealden District Local Plan)

3.36. Nevertheless, the area continues to be under threat:

[12] A list of the plans consulted, and those still to be obtained, is included at Appendix4.

"Past policy has served these areas well but there is evidence that their natural beauty and distinctiveness are threatened by a range of activities, many of which are not under planning control".(Kent and Medway Structure Plan)

3.37. There is broad agreement across the plans on the key issues facing rural areas and the common approach taken is to promote development that:

- contributes to the need for affordable housing in rural areas
- creates additional opportunities for rural employment and / or aids the diversification of the rural economy
- contributes to the availability of social services and local, convenience shopping in rural areas
- is integrated with public transport.

and, for development within the AONB:

- conserves or enhances the character of the area.

3.38. Each of the key issues and the local plan responses to them are discussed in turn below.

Key Issue - Housing

3.39. The impact of London, social changes affecting the types of property required, a generally buoyant economy and often attractive settings, combine to create a pattern of high demand for housing, high levels of commuting and particularly high house prices in the region, beyond the reach of large sections of the population, both in urban and rural areas. There is a challenge to ensure a supply of housing, and particularly affordable housing, whilst protecting the countryside and ensuring high quality urban and rural environments.

Local Plan response

- Plans acknowledge the need for new housing development in general and emphasise the need to increase the supply of affordable housing. For example, the Surrey Structure Plan states that at least 40% of new housing provision within the County should be affordable. The equivalent figure for Mid Sussex is 30%.

- Under the rural 'exceptions' policy (PPG3) small sites can be released above and beyond Structure Plan allocations within or adjoining existing rural settlements, to meet clearly defined local needs.

- Whilst being restrictive of development in rural areas, the plans support some development where it meets a definite social need, in particular the need for affordable housing.

Specifically in the AONB

- Few plans make specific reference to the AONB in this context, but a few examples suggest that major development is unlikely:

"to resist major or large scale housing developments in the Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, unless it can be proven that there is a national need, and there are no more suitable alternative sites" (Tandridge District Local Plan).

- Generally, there is an understanding that lack of affordable housing can be felt particularly strongly in the wider rural areas and the AONB.

"Many villages and smaller settlements in Wealden, particularly in the Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, are dominated by housing of a similar characteristic, namely private housing, mostly, if not all out of the reach of those in housing need". (Wealden District Local Plan)

- Given the need for affordable housing development within the AONB, it seems likely that suitable proposals will be supported and dealt with under the 'exceptions policy' with strict criteria to ensure that the character of the landscape is not harmed (for example, the Wealden local plan lists nine criteria that must be met).

Key issue - Economy

3.40. There is a potential need for economic development in rural areas and the AONB, primarily as a response to the socio-economic difficulties in some rural areas and the growing national policy emphasis on farm diversification. The Plans direct economic development towards the urban areas as potentially the most sustainable location with access to local labour and public transport which, taken in isolation, suggests that the rural areas and the AONB will not face pressures for economic development. There is however an acknowledgement of the importance of the rural economy and the need to respond to rapidly declining employment in traditional land-based enterprises. This concern is combined with a recognition of the high mobility of the rural population, with increased use of large supermarkets, loss of employment land to residential development, and increased ability to travel for shopping and services which have combined to further limit rural employment opportunities.

3.41. The High Weald AONB and surrounding areas have a very diverse economy which results in different types and degrees of development pressure across the AONB. For example the Tunbridge Wells area is prosperous and here one of the aims of planning policy is to avoid overheating the economy. In this case the AONB designation could be seen as a positive restriction and it is unlikely that significant economic development will be allowed within the AONB area. In contrast, the Hastings area is experiencing very real economic deprivation, yet there is an identified lack of urban land for development or suitable 'brownfield' sites for redevelopment. This could create pressure for development within the AONB.

Local Plan response

- General consensus that large-scale business development would be inappropriate in rural areas.

- Plans are however unanimous in seeking to encourage development of appropriate employment opportunities in rural areas:

"In order to assist the vitality of villages, it is also considered appropriate to give every encouragement to the provision of further jobs and local facilities". (Rother District Local Plan)

- Enabling a viable rural economy is seen as desirable from the perspective of job creation / income creation. It is also seen as a key element in developing a more sustainable pattern of development by reducing the need to travel and contributing to increasingly vibrant rural communities.

- The desire to improve the vitality of the rural economy is framed within the over-riding context of the need to preserve the environmental character of the countryside. The policies seek to ensure that only suitable developments in terms of business type and location are approved.

Specifically in the AONB

- Few plans make specific reference to the AONB in this context, but those that do take the approach that:

  "there are numerous villages in the AONB and limited development to provide services and local employment for these communities may be necessary. Where this is the case, schemes should respect the character of the settlement and of the surrounding countryside in order to conserve the qualities for which the AONB was designated". (Surrey Structure Plan)

Key issue - Shopping and community facilities

3.42. Limited access to shops is identified as a key issue across the plans reviewed.

"*Access to shops and services, particularly those that meet day-to-day needs, is a vital aspect of sustainable development. Town, village and local centres provide a focus for communities, are a source of jobs and help reduce the need to travel, especially by car*". (Rother District Local Plan)

3.43. Widespread loss of shops (particularly convenience shopping) from rural settlements is identified as a concern as it leads to: increasing car use (*but perhaps is a consequence of it?*), declining vitality and employment in rural settlements and very real difficulties of access to shopping for rural residents who are less mobile or do not have a car.

3.44. However, it is difficult to secure provision of services as many of the settlements in the AONB area are too small to support the services that the inhabitants need, leading to high levels of travel to services. Planning in itself does not provide new services but it can accept proposals to develop new services.

Local Plan response

- Structure and local plans direct major new shopping developments towards town centres and then to district and local centres. The plans are all clear in giving support to maintaining shopping facilities in these settlements and enabling new development where required.

- Throughout the planning authorities there is the intention to resist development in rural areas that will lead to a change of use of rural shops unless continued retail use is not viable.

- There is widespread acknowledgement of the importance of community services and of the need to maintain the buildings and facilities that accommodate these services. Planning policy seeks to conserve these facilities (by resisting development proposals leading to a change of use) and to ensure that new facilities are provided to match new housing developments .

Specifically in the AONB

- Few plans make specific reference to the AONB context, thus we assume, as for other issues, that development proposals are being viewed in a similar light to those in rural areas and judged against the established and more restrictive criteria applying to the designated area.

Key issue - Transport

3.45. The rising dependency on the private car brings negative effects in terms of congestion, atmospheric pollution, degradation of urban and rural character and exclusion of those without access to a car. The high dependence on the private car in the AONB is related to its dispersed settlement pattern, high levels of commuting from within the rural areas (both to London and the other regional urban centres) and lack of public transport alternatives, as well as to the increasing separation of home, work, shopping and leisure activities (there is a consensus in the plans on this).

3.46. There are particular transport-related issues affecting the rural areas and AONB. These can be summarised as:

- A dispersed settlement pattern leading to particularly high car use.

- A dispersed settlement pattern and high car use contributing to bus services being less economically viable.

- The impact of traffic upon the character of the network of rural roads and lanes, particularly the effect of rural roads being used as commuting 'rat-runs'.

3.47. One of the most significant ways in which the planning system can influence transport is through the location of development.

Local Plan response

- Transport is acknowledged as an important issue throughout the local and structure plans in the region.

- The general transport aims of all of the plans governing this region are to achieve a more sustainable transport system through:

  - less dependency on the private car

  - more use of public and alternative modes of transport

- efficient use of the existing transport infrastructure
- the minimisation of traffic impacts on the environment
- the maintenance and improvement of the existing transport infrastructure.

- Plans intend to influence the pattern of development so that the transport system will be more sustainable and focused towards alternative transport methods by:
  - ensuring that development is only located where it can be conveniently accessed via alternative modes of transport (public transport, cycling and walking)
  - ensuring that development includes suitable infrastructure to enable the use of alternative modes of transport (well designed bus shelters, cycle parking facilities etc).
- In addition to considering future developments, the plans aim to reduce dependence on the private car, to be achieved by:
  - continued funding (in partnership with the commercial sector) for non-commercially viable, but socially desirable, bus routes.
  - improvements to bus and train interchanges
  - encouragement of Park & Ride services where these would be beneficial
  - encouragement of and improvements to cycle paths and lanes.
- However, there is an acknowledgement that the private car will inevitably remain the major form of transport. As such, some of the focus across the plans is on improving the existing road network, in response to identified traffic problems and in order to direct traffic flows to the most suitable routes.

Specifically in the AONB

- Few plans make specific reference to the AONB context.
- Plans generally seek to direct traffic away from the minor rural roads and to encourage use of the major routes. This is intended to alleviate the problems of 'rat-running' (which is experienced particularly strongly in the rural areas and AONB due to the high numbers commuting across the region) and also lower general traffic levels on the minor roads.
- The consensus is also that the traffic implications of proposed rural developments should be assessed and that any proposals that would lead to significantly increased use of unsuitable rural roads should be resisted.
- Plans do not place an emphasis on further road building, although there are two major road building schemes of particular relevance - the proposed link

road between Bexhill and north Hastings and the proposed widening of the A21- both of which have the potential to impact on the AONB.

3.48. ***In summary*****,** across the plans reviewed there is general agreement on the key issues facing rural areas but little recognition of how the issues differ in the AONB context.

3.49. In terms of housing, the justifiably restrictive approach to development within the smaller settlements and rural areas taken by the local plans makes securing a supply of affordable housing within these areas especially complex. Given the consistent sensitivity to conservation of the AONB characteristics throughout the plans and given the strict criteria that need to be met, it seems unlikely that development under the exceptions policy will be detrimental to the conservation of the AONB from an environmental / landscape perspective. A pressing question however is whether this policy will allow and encourage enough development to contribute significant amounts of affordable housing to relieve the severe lack in rural areas, including that of the AONB.

Those planners interviewed commented that:

- they are concerned over the need to accommodate large numbers of new homes in the region, both to meet current needs and also to meet requirements in the proposed South East Plan. The focus will be on placing new homes in urban areas but it was felt that these are definitely approaching capacity. Expansion of development into the rural areas (and possibly the AONB) may be necessary to accommodate the numbers required.
- many towns in the area were developing into dormitory / commuter towns with little sense of community and there is a loss of rural 'communities' in villages
- housing is inaccessible to many young people who have grown up in rural areas, leading to a need to move to urban areas to find more affordable housing
- there is a prevalence of 'executive' housing
- they are concerned that any new housing in the AONB will fuel commuting and therefore add to unsustainable development
- policy will need to find a way of accommodating necessary housing development (i.e. for exceptional reasons such as key workers) without harming rural character or opening the floodgates to unsuitable development.

3.50. In terms of transport, it will undoubtedly be tough to provide an alternative to car use given the dispersed settlement pattern in the rural areas of the AONB and because public transport services are provided by private bus and rail

companies rather than the local council[13]. No major initiatives for providing alternatives are put forward in these plans, but there is a widespread commitment in several of the plans to continued support for socially desirable but economically unviable bus services.

Those planners interviewed commented that:

- use of routes through rural areas as "rat-runs" by commuters is leading to high levels of traffic and congestion in some of the rural settlements
- the proposed link road between Hastings and Bexhill with infill development of housing will lead to development close to the borders of the AONB with potential visual impact and increasing levels of traffic through the AONB

3.51. The policies reviewed are clearly aware of the key issues – lack of affordable housing, car-dependency, lack of local employment, service loss and an overall gentrification of rural communities. Whether current policies are making a beneficial difference in rural communities is less certain.

Those planners interviewed commented that

- There is currently no baseline assessment of AONB landscape quality against which development proposals can be judged – Hastings Borough Council found they needed to commission their own.
- there is a need for the planning review to support planning officers decisions regarding beneficial but unpopular developments (i.e to be independent from NIMBY resistance to commercial development such as car mechanics etc)

Interviewees were asked for suggestions for sustainability criteria:

- there was a call for realism, with identified criteria having sensible thresholds, recognising that the smallest settlements will never be 'self-contained'.
- there was, however, no agreed sustainability criteria that could be practically measured.

3.52. While the plans say little of how these issues will change in the AONB context, it is fair to say that they will be accentuated as a result of its desirability as a place to live, the limited supply of existing housing stock and other premises, and the low level of additional development. There is an obvious potential for conflict between criteria for development that apply to all rural areas (provision of affordable housing, employment opportunities, services and integrated public transport) and a criterion for development in an AONB which affords greater protection to the character of the AONB. This is acknowledged within the plans which seem to accept that limited development permitted in the AONB must

[13] although socially necessary services can be funded by Local Authorities under the 1985 Transport Act

offer significant benefits to local communities. In such cases the potential benefits are to be weighed against the potential impact upon the character of the AONB, with high importance attached to protection of the natural beauty of the area.

Those planners interviewed commented that:

- generally planning policy has been successful in restricting major developments in the AONB but has arguably failed the area by allowing dispersed development of 'executive' style housing (widely held belief).
- the planning system has generally enforced high standards of design in the AONB although there have been some examples of poor design.
- historically some authorities have underplayed the importance of AONB designation, although this has definitely changed in the last few years, with greater promotion of AONBs by the Countryside Agency and the statutory requirement for the preparation of AONB Management Plans under the CRoW Act 2000.

It was also suggested that there may be a case for looking at the boundaries of the AONB again as

- there are very real socio-economic problems in the fringe areas, particularly Hastings, and the AONB acts as a limit to development that could help address these issues.
- development on the edges of the AONB may have led to degradation of the landscape such that these areas may not be of high enough landscape quality to merit AONB status.

Summary

3.53. The above policy review has set the context and expectations for sustainable settlements in the High Weald AONB. The objectives of the AONB Management Plan reflect the importance of the close relationship between its communities and environment which was a central reason for its designation and is key to the ongoing maintenance and enhancement of the protected landscape. These objectives have been combined with the components of sustainable communities that can be most influenced by planning policy to produce a framework to assess sustainable settlements in the High Weald (Figure 3).

3.54. This Chapter has also looked at the approach taken in national, regional and local planning policy to AONBs and found that, apart from affording 'greater' priority to protecting their landscape and scenic beauty, there is a lack of guidance on how to plan for AONBs and how to respond to the issues facing rural areas in an AONB context.

3.55. National and local planning policy for rural areas takes a traditional planning approach - focussing development in 'local service centres' which directly conflicts with the existing historic pattern of dispersed settlements in the High Weald. But whether either of these approaches to guiding development in the

High Weald will further the aims of sustainable settlements is the key question of this study.

3.56. The Draft South East Plan reflects an image of the region as one with strong ties outside the region and particularly with London with which it identifies a two-way economic and employment link. The Draft Plan also speaks of the *"functional relationship between rural and urban areas as a key part of the character of the South East" (section B para 5.2)* and sees AONBs as *"contributing to the distinctiveness and helping support region's high quality of life and economic successes"* (section D6, para 1.9*)*. In terms of distributing development, the Draft plan proposes allowing development in rural areas to *"to support and maintain thriving, mixed communities"* (section C para 3.4.1) while having regard to the setting of AONBs (policy C2). There is a possible (or probable) knock-on pressure for development in areas outside of the AONB, such as in the East Kent and Ashford and the Sussex Coast Sub-regions and, anomalous, sections of the High Weald are included in the Gatwick Area Sub-region. The development of sub-regional policies (Part B of the Plan, expected to be completed in early 2006) may offer further clarity on this.

4. FINDINGS

THE EVIDENCE BASE

4.1. As discussed in Chapter 2, the evidence base collected for this study comes from the Census 2001, a door-to-door household survey, telephone interviews with land-based businesses in the AONB, and consultation with local planning officers and communities. The study has particularly focussed on collecting data on a selection of 15 sample settlements in three 'study areas'. These are not considered to be representative of all settlements in the High Weald, but may offer an insight into common features and the degree of variation between settlements across the AONB.

4.2. The data is summarised below and is subdivided into *characteristic* data on the people and businesses in the High Weald, and *functional* data on patterns of travel for work and services in the study settlements. The particular value of the functional data is that it indicates the roles and functions of the sample settlements in terms of providing employment and services for those living within and outside the settlements, and so also shows interrelationships between settlements. It is these sorts of things that planning directly seeks to influence.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE HIGH WEALD

People and businesses in the settlements of the High Weald

4.3. *The following socio-economic profile of the sample settlements in the Balcombe, Sedlescombe and Wadhurst study areas comes from the* ***Census 2001.*** *This snap-shot socio-economic profile of the population, housing and employment of the people living in the settlements provides a context for planning policy to respond to. It is particularly relevant to the emerging policy themes of balanced and mixed communities.*

The Census data represents the settlements only, and not the households in the open countryside around them. However in the survey 30% of responses were from households in the open countryside, and so this distinction can be made for this data.

4.4. Table 2 gives the 2001 resident populations of the sample settlements and shows the spread of settlement sizes considered in the study. Only Wadhurst is of sufficient size (2,000+) to be considered a market town.

Table 2 Population of sample settlements

Settlement	Usual resident population (Census 2001)
Balcombe Study Area	
Ardingly	1178
Balcombe	1303
Handcross	874
Staplefield	376
West Hoathly	1474
Sedlescombe Study Area	
Bodiam	400
Brede	642
Robertsbridge	1987
Sedlescombe	746
Westfield	1511
Wadhurst Study Area	
Bells Yew Green	356
Best Beech Hill	371
Cousley Wood	338
Ticehurst	1450
Wadhurst	3686

4.5. **Demographics**: The sample settlements are home to significantly fewer 20-29 year olds than the England and Wales average (6.54% compared to 12.6%) but have more 75+ year olds (9.27% compared to 7.6%). There are particularly few 20-29 year olds in Staplefield (3.46%) and more 60+ year olds in Sedlescombe (40.08%). There are noticeably higher proportions of young people in Bells Yew Green (25.88% are 16-19 year olds) and Bodiam (31.5% under 16 year olds).

4.6. **Housing tenure:** House ownership is above the England and Wales average in most of the study settlements. Sedlescombe, Brede and Cousley Wood have particularly high ownership levels (>90%). The highest proportion of rented accommodation is provided in Handcross (29.41%). There are very few council rented houses, but some villages offer significant proportions of social rented accommodation. Cousley Wood and Best Beech Hill do not provide any council or social rented accommodation. Private rented accommodation is also significantly lower in the sample settlements than the national average for all settlements except in Bells Yew Green.

Thus in terms of demographics and housing tenure the sample settlements are not that mixed.

4.7. **Housing stock and occupancy:** House occupancy levels are high in all of the settlements, and very few houses are second or holiday homes. Table 3 shows the abundance of detached housing and low levels of terraced housing in the villages. Particularly high proportions of detached housing are found in Sedlescombe (68.8%) and Brede (68.5%) and particularly low proportions of terraced housing are found in Bodiam (4.1%), Bells Yew Green (5%) and Brede (5.5%). This indicates a lack of smaller and cheaper housing that may be more suitable for smaller or lower-income households such as first time buyers – another characteristic of lack of mix.

Table 3 Type of housing provided in the study

Type of housing	Average across settlements	England and Wales average
Detached	43.3%	22.8%
Semi-detached	32.0%	31.6%
Terraced	13.2%	26%

4.8. **Car ownership**: Across the sample settlements, the proportion of households that do not own a car is less than half the national average and almost 50% of households across the settlements have 2+ cars. Car ownership is particularly high in Best Beech Hill, where only 3% of households do not own a car (compared to the England and Wales average of 26.8%) and where 70.41% of households own 2+ cars. High levels of car ownership indicate a propensity to less sustainable transport use.

4.9. **Employment:** The number of people in full-time employment within the sample settlements (34.5%) is lower than the national average (40.8%), potentially reflecting a high retired population. There are also high proportions of working residents that are self-employed, particularly in Brede, Cousley Wood and Bells Yew Green (between 20 and 23% of all people of working age – national average 8.3%). Proportions of unemployed people (but actively seeking work) are low or close to the England and Wales average (3.4%) in all sample settlements except Bodiam (4.03%).

Table 4 Occupational grouping

Occupational group	Average across settlements	Average for South East of England
Managers and senior officials	19.14%	17.44%
Professional occupations	12.94%	12.11%
Associate professional and technical occupations	15.99%	14.62%
Administrative and secretarial occupations	12.62%	13.84%
Skilled trades occupations	12.35%	10.97%
Personal service occupations	8.08%	6.92%

Occupational group	Average across settlements	Average for South East of England
Sales and customer service occupations	5.53%	7.34%
Process; plant and machine operatives	4.68%	6.29%
Elementary occupations	8.67%	10.47%

4.10. **Occupational grouping:** Table 4 shows that the break down of employees into occupational groups is similar across the settlements and across the South East region, with the greatest differences being the higher proportions of managers and senior officials and lower proportions of those employed in sales and customer service occupations, process plant and machine operatives and elementary occupations. There are particularly high proportions of managers and senior officials in Best Beech Hill (26.0%), Bodiam (27.3%) and Sedlescombe (24.8%). This breakdown differs from the village averages in Cousley Wood where there are high proportions employed in associate professional and technical occupations (22.8%) and professional occupations (20.4%).

4.11. **Sectors of employment:** Table 5 shows that the most common sector of employment for working residents in the sample settlements is real estate, renting and business activities and that the proportion in this sector is significantly higher than the South East average (15.93% compared to 9.24%). Bells Yew Green, Cousley Wood and Wadhurst stand out as villages where between 28% and 30% of working residents are employed in either real estate, renting and business activities or in financial intermediation.

4.12. The proportion of village residents working in land-based employment is similar to the average for the South East of England with only slightly more people working in agriculture, hunting and forestry. Bodiam and Brede however stand out as villages with higher proportions of people employed in this sector (12.8% and 9.0% respectively, compared to a regional average of 2.01%).

Table 5 Sector of employment

Agriculture; hunting and forestry	3.14%	2.01%
Fishing	0.00%	0.06%
Mining and quarrying	0.24%	0.27%
Manufacturing	10.05%	11.28%
Electricity; gas and water supply	0.37%	0.62%

Sector of employment	Average across settlements	Average for South East England
Construction	7.59%	5.85%
Wholsesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles	12.96%	13.86%
Hotels and catering	3.80%	4.53%
Transport; storage and communication	7.48%	5.01%
Financial intermediation	7.84%	3.45%
Real estate; renting and business activities	15.93%	9.24%
Public administration and defense	4.27%	5.70%
Education	8.96%	6.11%
Health and social work	11.20%	8.92%
Other	6.17%	3.96%

4.13. **Economic activity:** Sections of the population that are not economically active include the retired, economically inactive students, and those who are permanently sick or disabled. Across the sample settlements there are slightly higher proportions of retired people than the England and Wales average (15.12% average across the settlements, 13.61% England and Wales average), and particularly high proportions in Sedlescombe (25.45%) and Brede (21.4%). The proportions of economically inactive students in the settlements are close to the England and Wales average in all settlements except Best Beech Hill where there are more 16-19 year olds. The proportion of permanently sick or disabled people in the sample settlements is less than half the national average and there are no permanently sick or disable people in Best Beech Hill.

Door to door survey

4.14. *The **door-to-door survey** supplements the Census data with information on the relationship between residents of the High Weald and the local economy and environment. The survey particularly questioned how households either in the settlements or the open countryside support the local environment and economy by, for example, using local wood for fuel, buying local products and/or using local services.*

4.15. 30% of the sample related to households in the open countryside and 70% to households in villages. Table 6 below gives the average household structure in the settlements and in the open countryside and shows that there are significantly fewer pensioner households, slightly fewer lone parents and more couples without dependent children in the open countryside.

Table 6 Average household composition

Household composition	Villages	Open Countryside
single person only (not pensioner)	13.0%	12.0%
pensioner / s	27.6%	23.9%
couple with dependent children	28.6%	27.2%
couple without dependent children	20.5%	23.9%
lone parent	7.5%	6.5%
other	2.3%	4.3%

4.16. Table 7 then gives the average household income band before tax in the settlements and in the open countryside. The most obvious difference is that there are almost three times as many households in the open countryside with an income of more than £40,000 than households in the settlements.

Table 7 Average household income before tax

Household income per annum	Villages	Open countryside
<£4,999	2.9%	6.8%
£5,000-£9.999	19.1%	9.1%
£10,000-14,999	18.4%	18.2%
£15,000-19,999	22.1%	4.5%
£20,000-24,999	10.3%	13.6%
£25,000-29,999	6.6%	9.1%
£30,000-34,999	6.6%	4.5%
£35,000-39,999	3.7%	4.5%
£40,000+	10.3%	29.5%

4.17. **Attachment to the locality:** The majority of surveyed households (53%) had lived in their current house for between 1 and 10 years, while 20% had lived in their current house for between 11 and 20 years, and 25% even longer. When asked about length of residence in the wider area, 35% of respondents had lived in the area for the majority of their lives, and 62% looked forward to spending the rest of their lives in the area.

Table 6 Residency in the High Weald

Number of years lived in local area (within 25 miles)						
	% of life					
	Not Specified	1 to 20	21 to 40	41 to 60	61 to 80	81 to 100
Mean	0.3%	15.6%	21.8%	20.4%	6.8%	35.1%

Table 7 Future residency in the High Weald

Length of time anticipate living in local area (within 25 miles)					
	Not specified	Less than a year	A few years	Rest of life	Don't know
Mean	0.9%	2.0%	11.0%	62.3%	23.8%

4.18. **Attraction to place of residents**: Respondents were asked to rate how influential various characteristics of the area had been on their choice to live in the area (on a scale of 1 = no influence to 5 = strong influence) and then to rate the 'performance' of those characteristics from their experience since moving to the area (on a scale of 1= very poor to 5= very good). Table 8 shows that the environment and access to the countryside were the factors that most influenced residents' decision to move to the area and residents gave a high rating to the 'performance' of these characteristic in the area. Access to schools and other services and work were not as strong an influence as other factors in residents' decision to move. Thus we have a contradiction here whereby the environmental quality of the High Weald apparently attracts residents more strongly than the ability to live more sustainable, localised, lifestyles.

Table 8 Features of life in the High Weald

Features of area	Level of influence on choice of residence / performance
Environment influence	4.3
Environment performance	4.3
Countryside Access influence	4.1
Countryside Access performance	4.3
Community influence	3.8
Community performance	4.0
Character influence	3.7
Character performance	3.7
Housing affordability influence	3.6
Housing affordability performance	3.6
Services access influence	3.2
Services access performance	3.7
Friends access influence	3.2
Friends access performance	3.4
Work access performance	3.2
Work access influence	3.2
Schools access influence	2.7
Schools access performance	2.8
Transport influence	2.6
Transport performance	2.4

4.19. **Land ownership**: Households in the open countryside were asked about land they owned beyond their garden. 26% of the households surveyed own additional land, two thirds of which is actively managed. A third of people who own land own more than 100 acres. Most of this land is a combination of woodland and pasture.

4.20. **Food production and purchase:** The majority of households surveyed grow or purchase some of their food from within the High Weald. Amongst households within the settlements, around 1 in 5 grow their own vegetables, 1 in 10 grow their own fruit and over half of households buy some local produce. Households in the open countryside appear to be significantly more self-sufficient and half grow their own vegetables, around 1 in 3 grow their own fruit and some households also produce their own dairy or meat produce. 3 in 4 households in the open countryside buy some local produce. Such self sufficiency contributes to a more sustainable lifestyle.

Table 9 Home-grown and purchase of local food produce

	Households in settlements	Households in open countryside
households that grow own vegetables	21%	50%
households that grow own fruit	10%	35%
households that provide own eggs	1%	17%
households that provide own dairy	0%	1%
households that provide own meat	0%	9%
buy local produce	54%	75%

4.21. Households were also asked to give a breakdown of their weekly food bill for products that they bought within the High Weald. They were asked to specify the food type, the food source and the proportion of their weekly food bill (for that item) that usually comes from this local source. The Table below shows a significant difference between households in the sample settlements and those in the open countryside.

4.22. Almost twice as many households in the open countryside purchase dairy, fruit, fruit juice and meat locally and these households spend the majority of their weekly food bill locally for dairy, flour, fruit juice, meat and wine/beer/cider but for both types of household the proportion of the weekly food bill this makes up is much the same. For any particular food produce, less than half of the households surveyed buy the product locally. The most commonly bought local produce are eggs, fruit and vegetables and around 1 in 3 households in the sample settlements spend 30-50% of their weekly spend on these products locally.

Table 10 Main sources of local produce

Produce	Households in sample settlements		Households in open countryside	
	% respondents who source some of this product locally	average % of weekly food bill for this product sourced locally	% respondents who source some of this product locally	average % of weekly food bill for this product sourced locally
Cakes and Pies	-	-	2%	6%
Dairy produce	11%	50%	21%	55%
Eggs	30%	65%	43%	79%
Flour	1%	55%	1%	-
Fruit	32%	33%	61%	34%
Fruit Juice	2%	62%	10%	60%
Honey	0.3%	5%	-	-
Meat	14%	50%	28%	56%
Vegetables	35%	38%	54%	39%
Wine/Beer/Cider	1%	88%	7%	74%

4.23. A breakdown of the sources of these products (direct from a producer, from a farmers' market, from a shop and combination of these) shows that for households in the settlements the main sources of local produce are the producers themselves (mainly for dairy, eggs, fruit and vegetables) and local shops (main for honey, meat, fruit and wine/beer/cider). For households in the open countryside the most common sources of local produce are farmers' markets (mainly for cakes and pies, eggs, fruit, meat and vegetables) and local shops (main for flour and wine/beer/cider).

4.24. **Domestic heating and electricity:** The survey questioned the use of wood fuel to heat homes and found that while many houses have a fireplace or wood burner, significantly fewer households use them. Again, the proportion of households using wood fuel is higher amongst households in the open countryside. Wood fuel is a renewable form of energy, and thus its use assists sustainable development.

When questioned on other energy sources, only three households surveyed indicated using other forms of renewable energy.

Table 11 Use of woodfuel

House has open fireplace / wood burner / wood boiler?	Yes	Yes and use
village	45%	14%
open countryside	75%	39%

4.25. **Use of specific village services:** The survey asked about the use of specific services that might be available within the settlements or neighbouring settlements. Of the households surveyed, 25% use village domestic services

(mainly cleaning but also child care, odd jobs and ironing), 20% use village garden services (gardening, fencing, tree work) and 9% use other village services (catering, accounting etc).

4.26. **Involvement in the local community:** Only 6% of the surveyed households felt that they were 'very involved' in their local community and over 40% felt 'not involved at all'.

Businesses in the High Weald[14]

4.27. **Telephone interviews** *with 25 land-based businesses, most of which have been located in the High Weald for between 10 and 30 years, explored the contribution they make to the AONB environment and economy.*

4.28. **Reason for location:** The most common reason businesses gave for being located in the High Weald was that their family originated from the area. This reinforces the survey finding that residents of the High Weald feel strongly attached to living in the area. Amongst wood working businesses, closeness to woodland was also identified as a key "pull" factor.

Table 12 Reason for land-based businesses locating in the High Weald

Reason for location	Number
Originating from the area	11
Inherited land / property / business here	7
Location of business' natural resource	3
Close to London	2
Work opportunity	1
Liked the area	1

4.29. **Local sources:** Nearly all businesses interviewed said that they source materials locally where they can. A high number of businesses also source materials from wholesalers or abroad and more fruit, vegetable and beverage businesses source from wholesalers or abroad than source locally. Almost an equal number of tourism businesses source from specialist distributors or wholesalers / abroad as source locally. The businesses that most commonly source locally are meat, dairy and processed food businesses and wood and craft businesses. Wood production businesses argued that local sourcing would be even higher if woodlands had been better managed over the last 40 years, as in some cases they have to source high quality hardwoods from outside the AONB. These businesses also use mostly local labour.

[14] A copy of the prompts for the telephone interviews can be found in Appendix 5

Figure 5 Source of materials for businesses

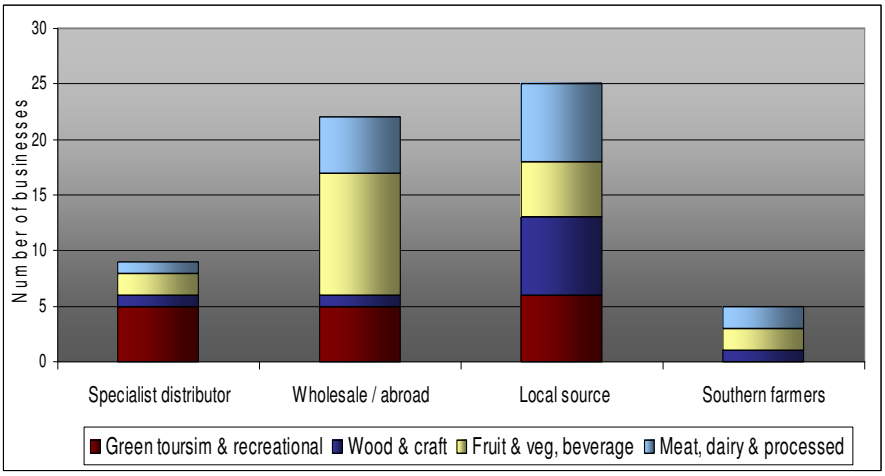


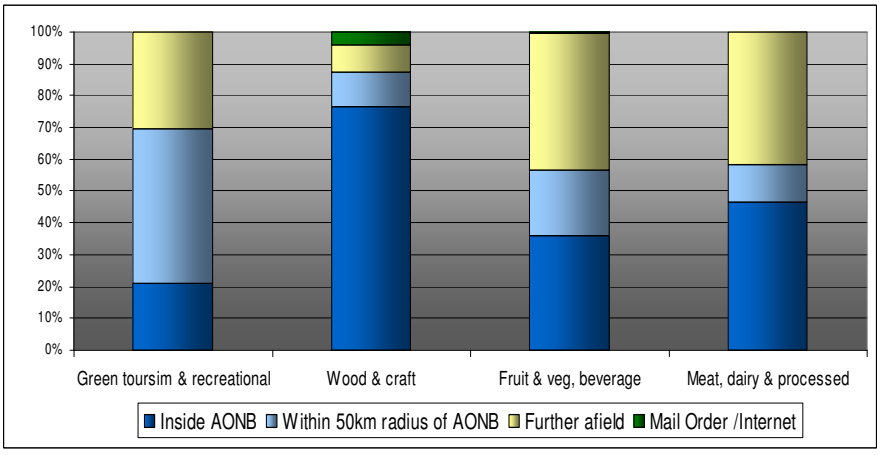
Table 13 Local sourcing of materials and labour

% of material and labour sourced locally/ within the AONB		
Business type	**Materials**	**Labour**
Green tourism & recreation	37%	36%
Wood & craft	70%	90%
Fruit & vegetables, beverage	25%	79%
Meat & dairy, processed	47%	97%
Average	45%	76%

4.30. **Location of customers:** Businesses involved in wood and craft activities have a particularly high number of customers from within the AONB and the majority of customers for tourism and recreation businesses are within a 50km radius of the AONB. The food industries rely most heavily on customers from further afield.

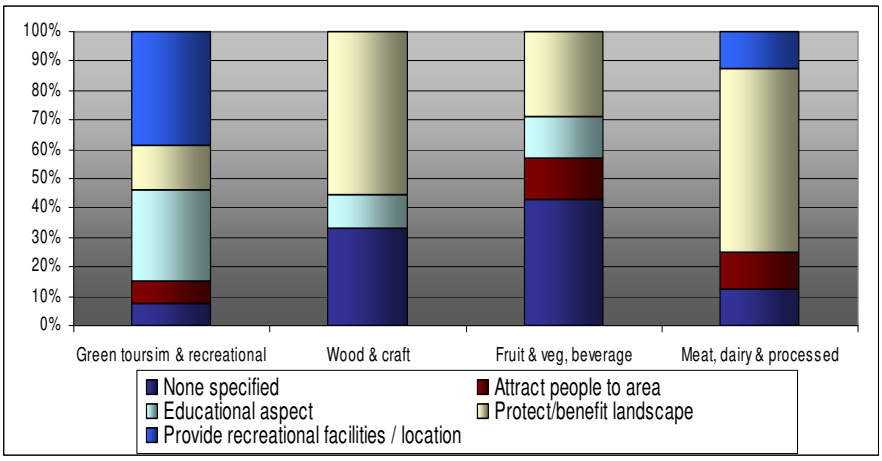
Overall, then, whilst the businesses are partly rooted in the AONB, the sustainability potential of closer connections is not wholly fulfilled.

Figure 6 Location of customers



4.31. **Contribution to the locality:** Businesses were asked if they undertook any other activities that contributed in any other ways to the local community, economy or environment. In most cases the businesses felt that they made a variety of contributions to the AONB - green tourism and recreation businesses particularly identified recreational and educational contributions and wood and craft and food businesses particularly identified landscape contributions.

Figure 7 Contribution of businesses to the locality



4.32. While land-based businesses source locally and have local customers, most businesses felt that the main advantage of being located in the High Weald was the 'character and attractiveness of the area' rather than factors relating to the local economy or other environmental resources. This apparently compromises the benefits that the enterprises can *actually* bring to the AONB.

Table 14 Main advantages for businesses of being located in the High Weald

Advantages of location	Number
Character and attractiveness of area	11
Affluence of area	3
Attracts tourists	3
Local demand for goods / services	3
None specifically business related	2
Woodland resource	2
Near to London	1

4.33. The next section looks more closely at the relationship between the residents in these settlements and the AONB by considering patterns of travel from these settlements, particularly for work and services.

THE ROLES AND FUNCTIONS OF SETTLEMENTS THE HIGH WEALD

4.34. *The study explores the roles and functions of settlements in the High Weald by examining where residents of the sample settlements usually travel for work and services. This information gives an insight firstly into the employment and service roles of the sample settlements and secondly into the sustainability of travel patterns to and from the settlements. The analysis particularly explores whether local residents support the local economy by taking local jobs and using local services or if they travel longer distances to access work and services elsewhere.*

Travel to work[15] across the AONB

4.35. To give a summary picture of travel to work, the ***average distance to work*** is mapped for the whole of the AONB. Figure 8 illustrates a clear arc within which between 11% and 19% of the working population of each output area commutes between 40 and 60 km daily to work and Figure 9 shows a shifted arc where 11-19% of the working population commute over 60 km. These arcs, perhaps not surprisingly, trace the distance between these settlements and central London, indicating that London acts as a significant employment influence over the area.

[15] All of this data comes from the Census 2001 Travel to Work data. Maps of this data can be found on the CD-ROM that accompanies this report

Figure 8 Proportion of residents commuting an average of between 40km and 60km

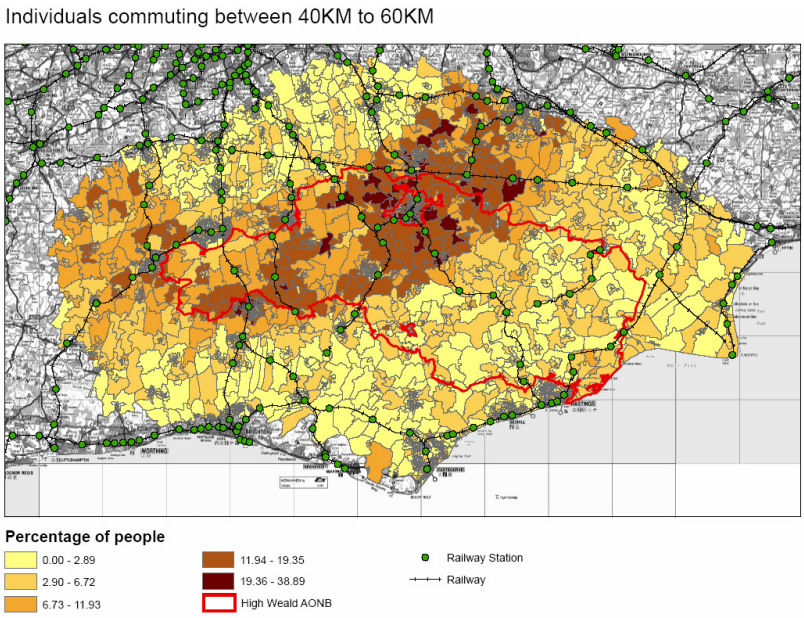
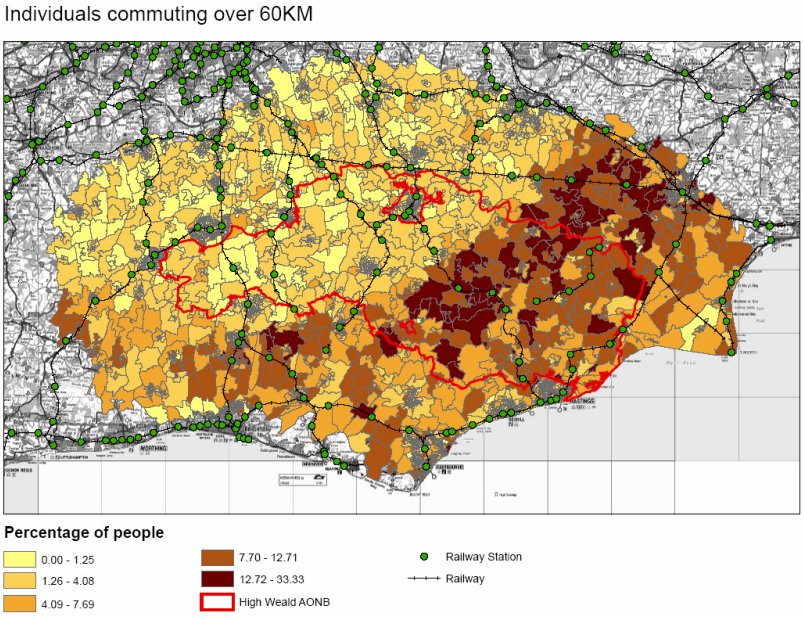


Figure 9 Proportion of residents commuting an average of over 60km

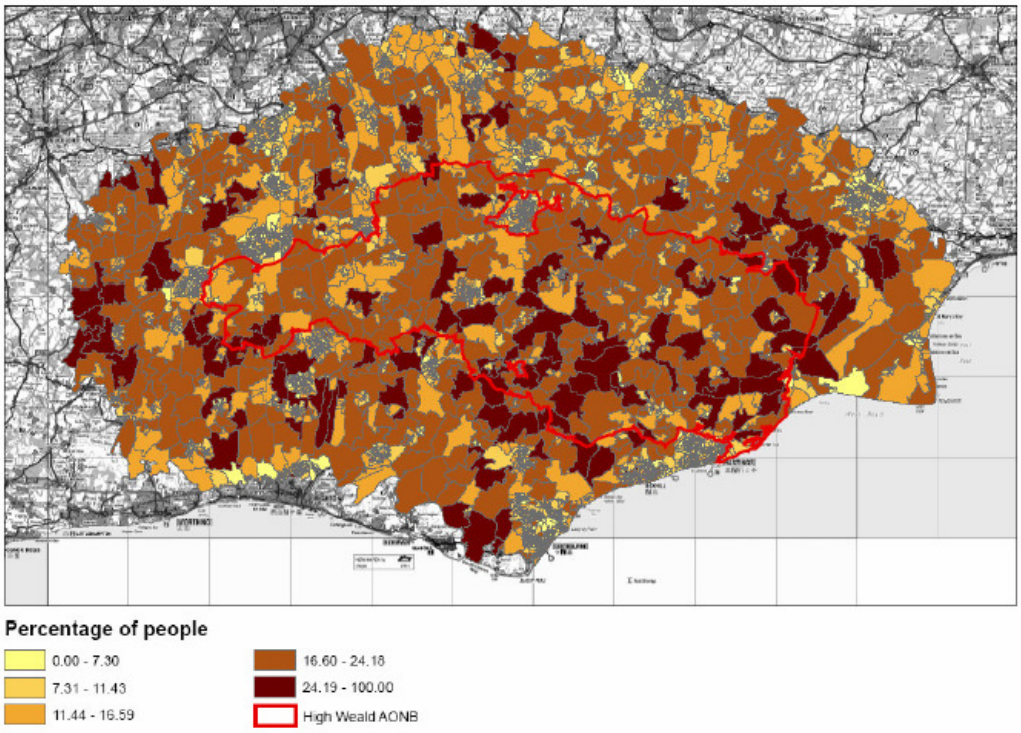


4.36. From Figure 8, it is evident that the areas where there is a higher proportion of residents travelling between 40 and 60km to work are not confined to the AONB, but are shared characteristics with the wider countryside of the region. It is also suggested that the pull of settlements on the south coast, such as Brighton, is less significant than that of the conurbation.

4.37. The analysis also suggests that up to 30% of residents across wide areas of the AONB are long-distance commuters. But this has to be set against information such as that in Figure 10 which shows the proportion of residents working from

home. The centre and west of the AONB has a noticeable concentration of working from home (with over 25% of economically active residents working from home). This means that in some areas of the AONB over half of the working population either work at home or in Greater London.

Figure 10 Proportion of residents working from home



4.38. The Census data identifies a definite cluster of longer commutes starting around the rail stations, but the majority of trips to London are recorded as being by car. This may partly be down to a weakness of Census data whereby people record only the dominant mode for multi-modal trips.

4.39. Travel is a key indicator of sustainability as many of the objectives of sustainable communities are much more likely to be fulfilled when rural households contain their service, employment and rural lives within smaller territories. In an area of essentially dispersed settlement like the High Weald fewer of the employment opportunities and services that modern households might expect to have access to will be available locally, and travel to them further afield will usually be easiest by car.

4.40. Such a proposition explains much of the patterns described above, and those examined below. However, the relatively high incidence of working from home cannot be explained in this way. It appears that for some aspects of their lives some households in the High Weald make choices that allow them not to have to travel, and which are therefore more sustainable.

Travel to Work in the Study Areas

4.41. Looking more closely at travel to work to and from the sample settlements in the three study areas shows a large variation in the travel patterns across the settlements, with varied levels of commuting to London, surrounding towns and cities and self-containment within the settlements. The net flow of employees ('trips in' minus 'trips out') indicates the significance of the settlement's employment and residential roles, and the number of trips within the settlement (level of 'self-containment' for work) indicates the strength of the settlement as an employment role for its own population.

4.42. Statistics for each of the sample settlements are shown in Table 15 and Table 16 below.

Table 15 Trips into, out of and within the villages for work

Village	Trips into village for work	Trips out of village for work	Trips within the village for work	*Contained trips (as % of total trips to work)*	*Trips to London (as % of total trips to work)*	*Main destinations*
Balcombe Study Area						
Ardingly	126	336	130	*28%*	*15%*	*Crawley Urban Area (19%), Haywards Heath (16%)*
Balcombe	114	383	142	*27%*	*14%*	*Crawley Urban Area Urban Area (26%) Haywards Heath (11%)*
Handcross	132	264	107	*29%*	*12%*	*Crawley Urban Area Urban Area (33%)*
Staplefield	63	88	67	*43%*	*8%*	*Crawley Urban Area Urban Area (16%),*
West Hoathly	72	498	207	*29%*	*17%*	*Crawley Urban Area (27%), East Grinstead (12%)*
Sedlescombe Study Area						
Bodiam	180	90	64	*42%*	*10%*	*Hastings (14%))*
Brede	42	117	118	*50%*	*6%*	*Hastings (24%)*
Robertsbridge	382	411	217	*35%*	*20%*	*Hastings (16%)*
Sedlescombe	99	169	114	*40%*	*12%*	*Hastings (24%)*
Westfield	150	616	150	*20%*	*5%*	*Hastings (34%)*
Wadhurst Study Area						
Bells Yew Green	126	108	64	*37%*	*21%*	*Royal Tunbridge Wells (24%)*
Best Beech Hill	90	123	54	*31%*	*10%*	*Wadhurst (34%), Royal Tunbridge Wells (10%)*
Cousley Wood	68	148	50	*25%*	*25%*	*Wadhurst (33%)*
Ticehurst	264	336	208	*38%*	*14%*	*Royal Tunbridge Wells (19%)*
Wadhurst	330	934	640	*41%*	*21%*	*Royal Tunbridge Wells (20%)*

4.43. In total, 6,870 trips are made from the sample settlements for work, of which 34% are self-contained within the settlements. The level of ***self-containment*** for work exceeds 40% in only five of the settlements: Brede (50%); Staplefield (43%), Bodiam (42%); Wadhurst (41%); and Sedlescombe (40%). These are all smaller settlements. From previous research, whilst ~45% would not be a strong degree of self-containment for a larger settlement, such as a market town, it is for a village, and so indicates relative sustainability.

4.44. The remaining 4,538 ***trips out*** of the villages for work is almost double the number of ***trips in***to the villages for work, such that most of the settlements are significant net exporters of employees and thus serve a more residential or dormitory role.

4.45. Residents of the sample settlements in the same study area are clearly attached to a particular town within the AONB. There are also relatively strong links from most settlements to ***London***, which accounts for an average of 15.2% of trips made from these settlements and over 20% of trips made from Robertsbridge, Cousley Wood, Wadhurst and Bells Yew Green, all of these are at or close to train stations.

4.46. Table 16 shows levels of working from home, main mode of transport to work and the average distance to work for the sample settlements and also for some comparison towns. Comparing Table 15 and Table 16 shows that

- in most villages, less than half of the self-contained trips relate to ***home working*** but that generally there are higher levels of self-containment in those settlements with higher levels of home working.

- ***average distance travelled to work*** varies from 15.81km (Westfield) to 27.27km (Cousley Wood) with an overall average of 21.18km. This is substantially further than the England average for rural commuting distances (16.29km in 2002) and for the average across the comparison towns (14.45 km)

- the ***modal split for travel to work***[16] is similar for all of the settlements and on average 64.7% of working residents in the sample settlements travel to work by private transport, 12.4% travel by public transport (11% by train, 1.3% by bus) and 7.9% by bike or on foot. The remaining 15% mainly work from home. Working from home is more common in the sample settlements than in the comparison towns.

4.47. Thus the settlements generally exhibit a split personality with a proportion of households supporting sustainability by working from home or within the settlements while the remaining economically active residents undermine sustainability by travelling further than average and by car. Of course these features vary across the settlements, and in this variation lies the key to finding the more sustainable settlements.

4.48. The next section considers in more detail the distinctly different travel to work patterns generated in each of the study areas. In each study area, the travel

[16] The Census 2001 asks for the principal mode of travel (by distance)

patterns are compared to one or more comparison towns close to the case-study area.

Table 16 Mode of travel to work, as a percentage of total working population

Settlement	Working mainly from home	Private transport	Public transport	Bike or foot	Other	Average distance traveled to work (km)
Balcombe study area						
Ardingly	12%	70%	10%	7%	0.5%	16.08
Balcombe	13%	65%	15%	7%	0.5%	20.21
Handcross	10%	74%	5%	10%	0.7%	18.24
Staplefield	19%	60%	8%	13%	- %	16.70
West Hoathly	13%	72%	8%	6%	0.8%	17.56
Sedlescombe study area						
Bodiam	20%	64%	9%	5%	1.7%	22.53
Brede	22%	64%	6%	7%	1.1%	22.05
Robertsbridge	12%	63%	18%	7%	- %	24.62
Sedlescombe	23%	64%	7%	6%	- %	26.85
Westfield	9%	77%	6%	8%	- %	15.81
Wadhurst study area						
Best Beech Hill	21%	56%	14%	7%	2.1%	22.63
Bells Yew Green	20%	58%	18%	2%	1.7%	23.24
Cousley Wood	20%	54%	24%	3%	- %	27.27
Ticehurst	13%	62%	11%	13%	0.5%	21.33
Wadhurst	15.%	58%	18%	9%	0.5%	22.55
Comparison towns						
Battle	13%	65%	9%	13%	0.2%	19.54
Crowborough	12%	70%	10%	8%	31.0%	17.72
Hayward's Heath	10%	58%	18%	13%	0.4%	19.23
Hastings	9%	65%	10%	16%	0.4%	13.51
Tunbridge Wells	10%	55%	17%	18%	0.5%	16.82

Balcombe Study Area

4.49. The Balcombe study area is towards the west of the AONB and the sample settlements are ~10 km from the Crawley Urban Area[17] and slightly closer to Haywards Heath, which is used as a comparison town for this study area.

4.50. Table 15 shows that none of the sample settlements in this study area are net importers of employees such that they all serve primarily residential or dormitory roles. Staplefield does however display a relatively high level of self-containment for work (43%), almost half of which are incidents of working from home. Self-containment in the other samples settlements accounts for ~30% of trips to work.

4.51. Table 15 also clearly shows the dominance of the Crawley Urban Area and, to a much lesser extent, Haywards Heath as places of work for high proportions of the employed residents of these sample settlements. The proportion of residents working in the Crawley Urban Area is highest from Handcross from where there are dual carriageways and main roads to the Crawley Urban Area.

4.52. Another significant destination of travel to work is London which is the place of work for over 15% of residents from West Hoathly, Ardingly and Balcombe. There is a train station at Balcombe and also close to West Hoathly and almost 75% of trips from Balcombe and between 30% and 50% of the trips from West Hoathly and Ardingly to London are by train. The patterns of travel to work out of the five settlements in the Balcombe case study area are shown in Figure 11.

4.53. Averaging across all journeys from the sample settlements, a high proportion of trips to work are by car (68%) and few trips are made by public transport or by bike / foot.

4.54. Conversely, Figure 12 shows trips into the sample settlements for work. While none of the villages are net employment centres, this map shows that the strongest flows of employees are from the Crawley Urban Area and from Brighton into Handcross, from Haywards Heath into Ardingly and from East Grinstead into West Hoathly. These commuting distances are generally shorter than the trips out of the settlements and so the average distance commute into the settlements will be shorter than the average commuting distances out of the settlements.

4.55. The nearby town of Haywards Heath is a net employment centre and has higher level of self-containment of resident employees - 44% - but this is not strong for a market town of this size. London pulls a similar percentage of working residents from Haywards Heath as from the sample villages (15% from Haywards Heath) but fewer people from Haywards Heath work in Crawley (12%). The average distance travelled to work from Haywards Heath is somewhat further than from the sample settlements in the Balcombe study area (19.23km compared to an average of 17.8km

[17] The Office of National Statistics identifies the boundaries and a central point for the urban areas (e.g. London Urban Area, Crawley Urban Area). For reasons of clarity, the data used does not distinguish precisely where within the Urban Area trips start or terminate. In the case of Crawley Urban Area, Horley is considered to be within the urban area conurbation and has been identified as its central point.

across the sample settlements) but 10% more trips are made by public transport and 10% fewer are made by car.

Figure 11 Trips out of the Balcombe study area for work

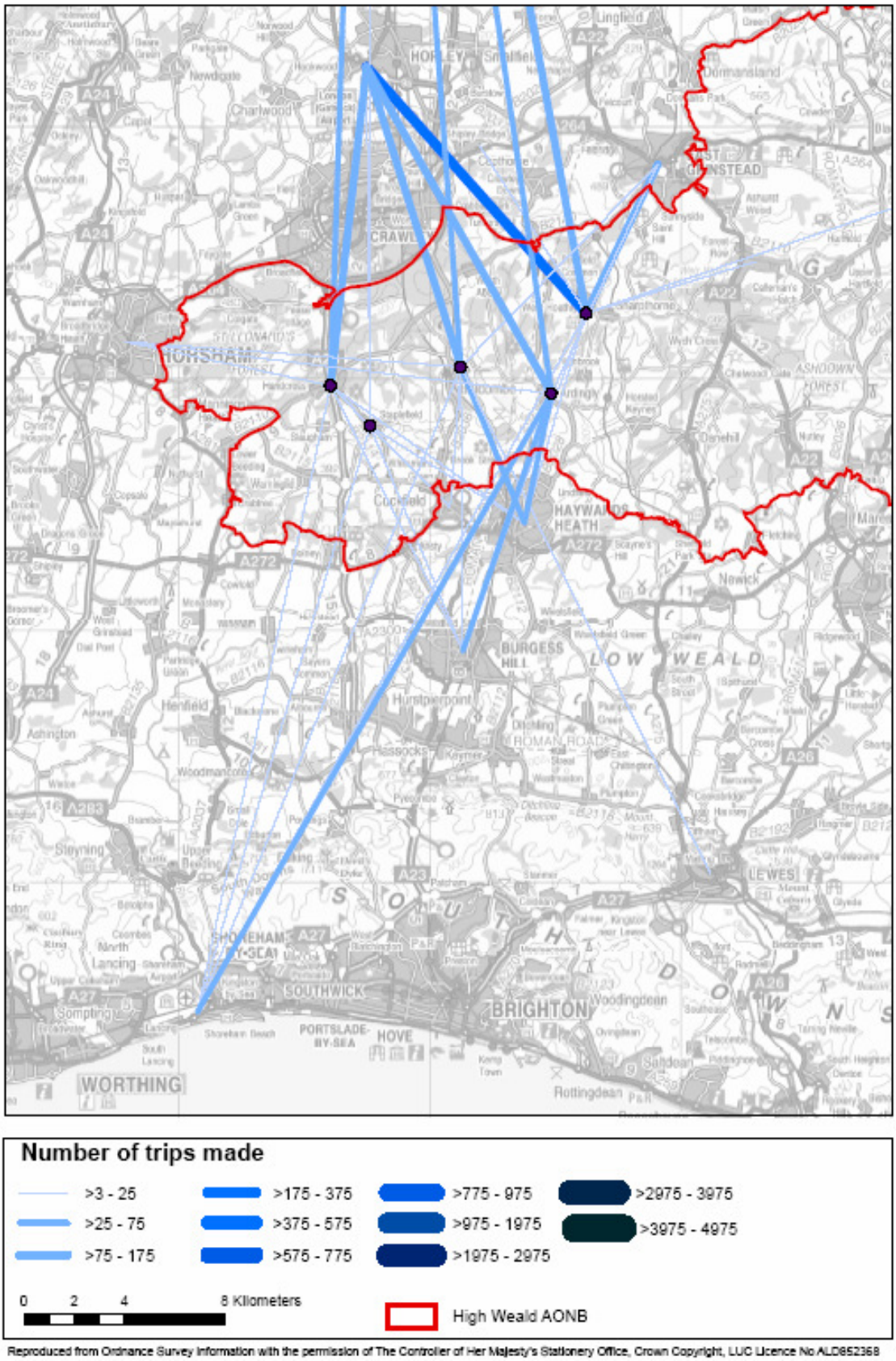


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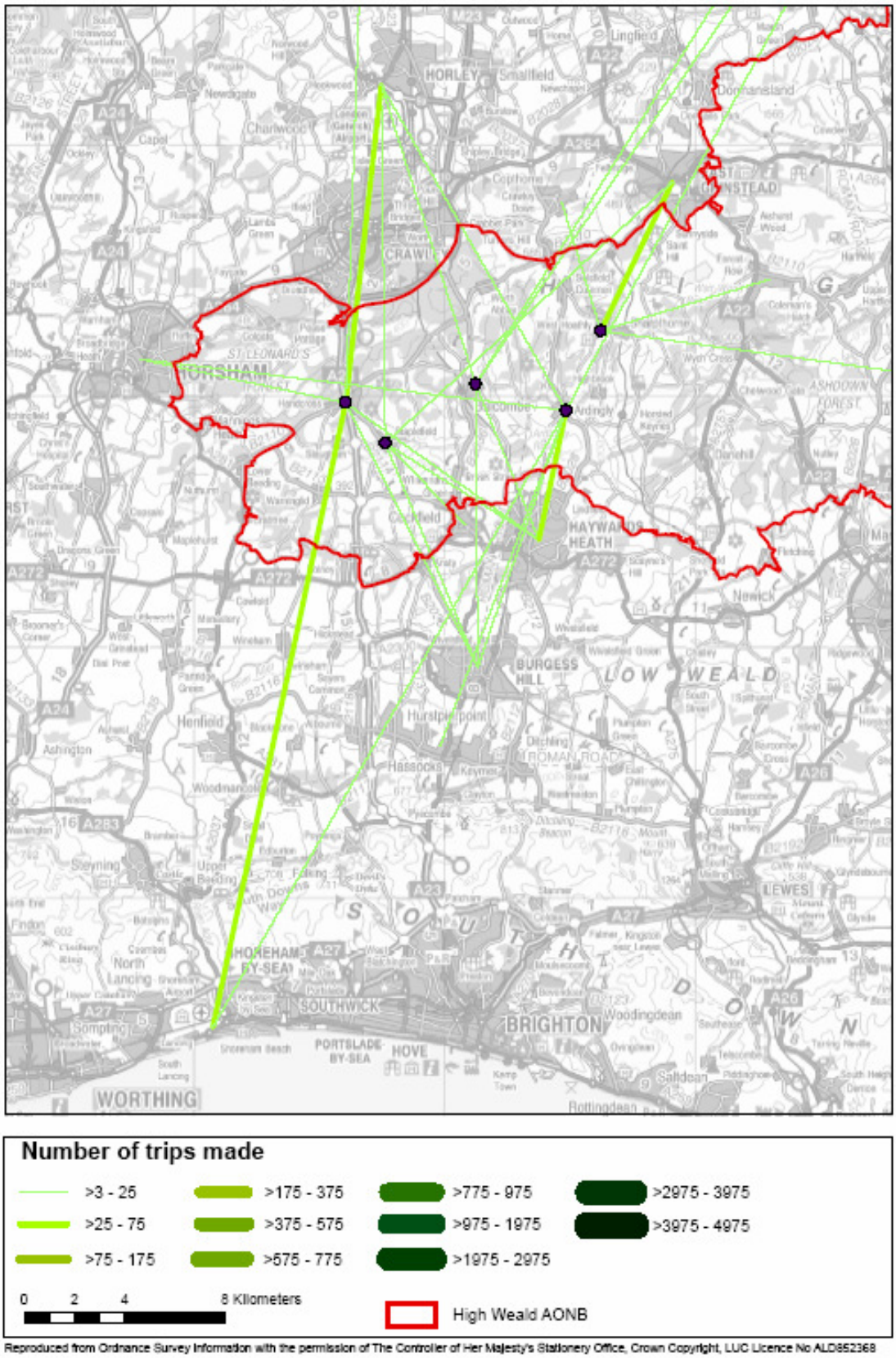
Figure 12 Trips into the Balcombe study area for work



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Sedlescombe Study Area

4.56. The Sedlescombe study area is towards the east of the AONB and closer to Hastings. Across the settlements, there are generally strong flows from the villages closest to Hastings (Westfield, Sedlescombe and Brede) into Hastings for work (>24%).

4.57. Generally, London pulls a smaller proportion of residents from this study area than from the Balcombe or Wadhurst study areas, but there are strong flows from Robertsbridge to London. Robertsbridge has a train station and over 85% of these trips to London are by train.

4.58. Bodiam stands out from the other settlements as the only net employment centre and the number of employees travelling into the village is double the number travelling out for work (180 travelling in compared to 90 travelling out). The level of employment provision is amongst the highest of all the settlements, but local residents still take only ~25% of the jobs provided. Brede also stands out as having a high level of self-containment for work (50%) with almost half of those working from home

4.59. Villages other than Bodiam are net exporters of employees but with relatively high levels of self-containment. Almost all of those travelling into the settlements for work come from Hastings (50-100 employees into each village).

4.60. For settlements other than Robertsbridge, the modal split of trips to work is similar to the settlements in the Balcombe study area, i.e. predominantly by car and with few trips by public transport, bike or foot. There are a higher proportion of trips to work by train in Robertsbridge, most of which are trips to London.

4.61. The comparison towns of Hastings and Battle are both net employment centres and there is net a inflow of 34,114 employees into Hastings. Self-containment in Hastings is also particularly high (76.7%) but in Battle is closer to the average for the sample settlements (40.6%). Higher levels of self-containment explain why the proportions travelling to work by bike or on foot is higher in the towns (16% in Hastings, 13% in Battle, 6.6% average for the sample settlements).

4.62. The pattern of travel out of Battle for work is similar to the sample settlements – i.e. with main flows to Hastings (25%) and secondary flows to London (6.1%). The patterns of travel from Hastings are completely different as there is a strong relationship with Eastbourne.

Figure 13 Trips out of the Sedlescombe study area for work

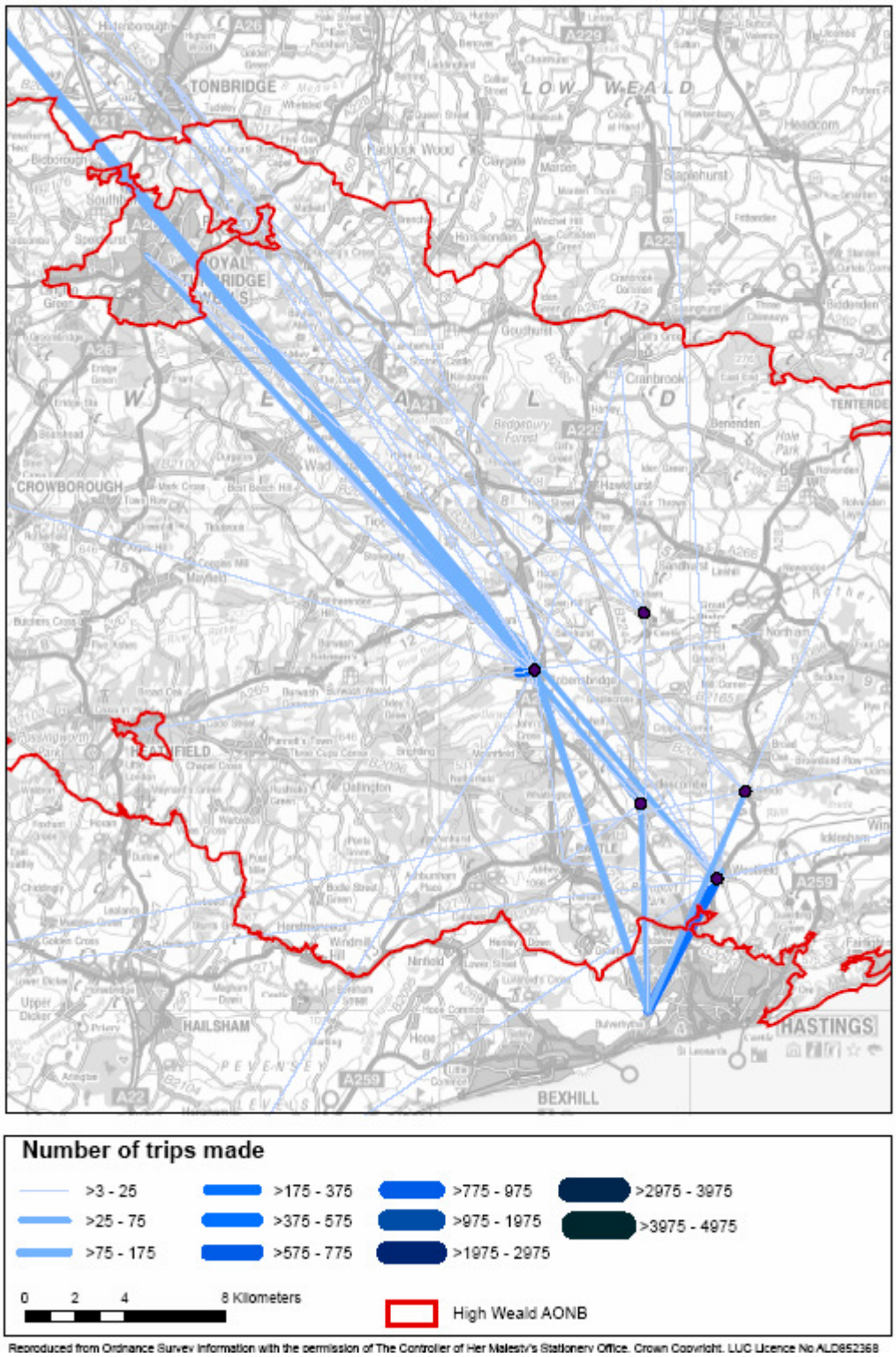

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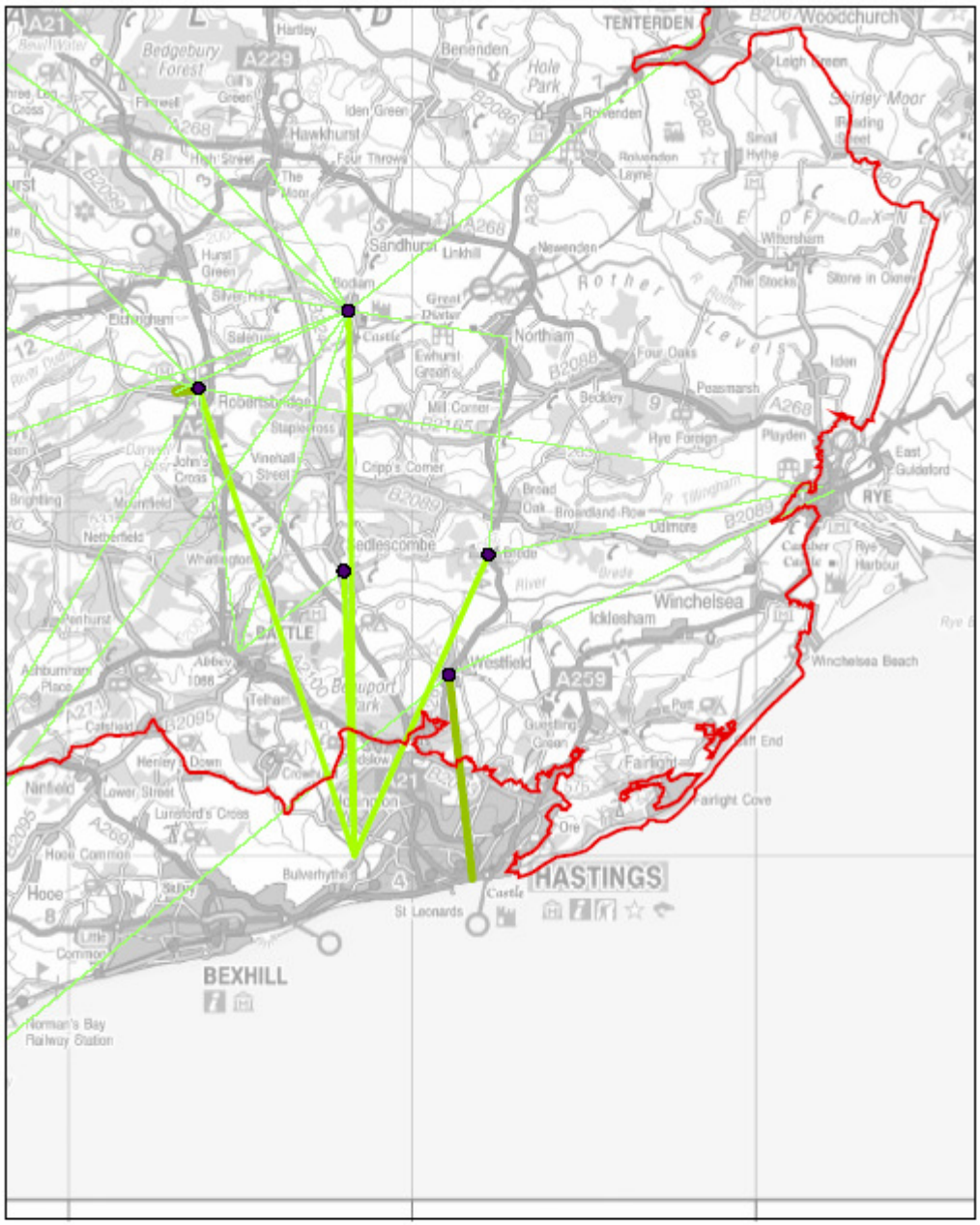
Figure 14 Trips into the Sedlescombe study area for work



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Wadhurst Study Area

4.63. The Wadhurst study area is also towards the east of the AONB but closer to Royal Tunbridge Wells. Royal Tunbridge Wells stands out as an employment centre for residents in these sample settlements and Wadhurst is also a centre of employment for those living in the nearby settlements of Cousley Wood and Best Beech Hill, which is very close to Wadhurst.

4.64. A shown in Table 15 and Table 16, the flow of commuters to London is stronger from these settlements than from the other study areas and more than 20% of trips to work from Bells Yew Green, Cousley Wood and Wadhurst are to London. The majority of these trips are by train (65-75%) as these three settlements are all on or close to train stations. However, averaging over all trips to work, the car is the dominant mode of travel to work.

4.65. The data indicates that Bells Yew Green had a strong employment role relative to its size in 2001. Local consultation identified that this has changed in the past four years and that many of the old industrial sites are now disused. This may also mean that the self-containment for work (37% in 2001) has also reduced, although it is unlikely to have affected those who worked from home (20% in 2001).

4.66. While Ticehurst and Wadhurst have a net loss of employees, they are both larger settlements and attract larger numbers of employees than the other sample settlements. The majority of trips into Ticehurst and Wadhurst for work come from Hastings (50-100 employees into each village). Wadhurst also attracts employees from Cousley Wood and Best Beech Hill and may therefore serve an employment role for nearby settlements. The level of self-containment in Wadhurst is reasonably high (41%) but it also displays strong commuting flows to London (21%).

4.67. The comparison towns of Royal Tunbridge Wells and Crowborough are both net employment centres and their levels of self-containment for work are 56.2% and 42.3% respectively. The average distance travelled to work from these towns is substantially shorter than from the sample settlements in the Wadhurst study area (16.8km from Royal Tunbridge Wells, 17.7km from Crowborough compared to 23.4km average from the sample settlements). The proportion of residents travelling to London for work is 9.0% from Crowborough and 16.0% from Royal Tunbridge Wells.

Figure 15 Trips out of the Wadhurst study area for work

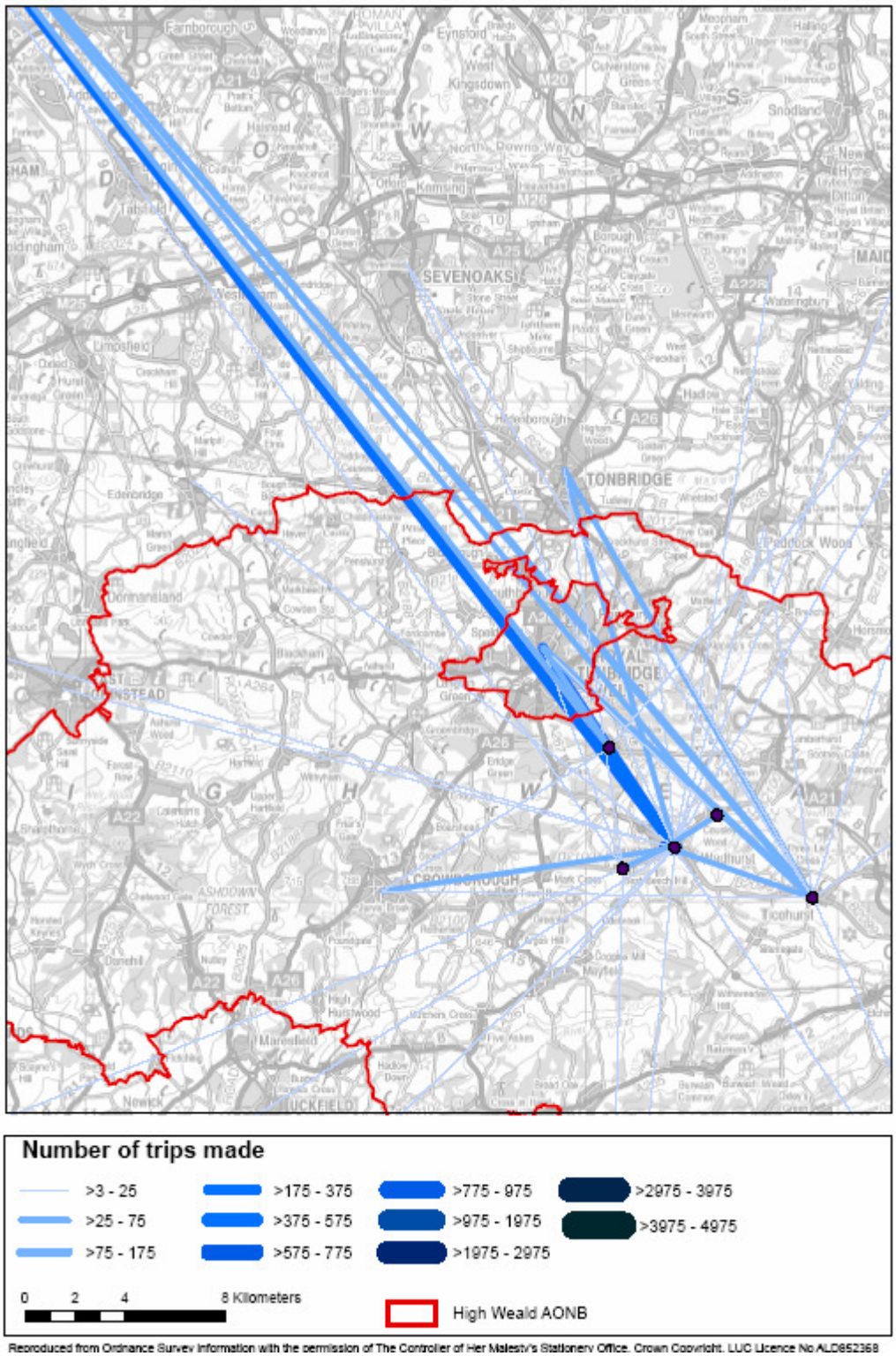

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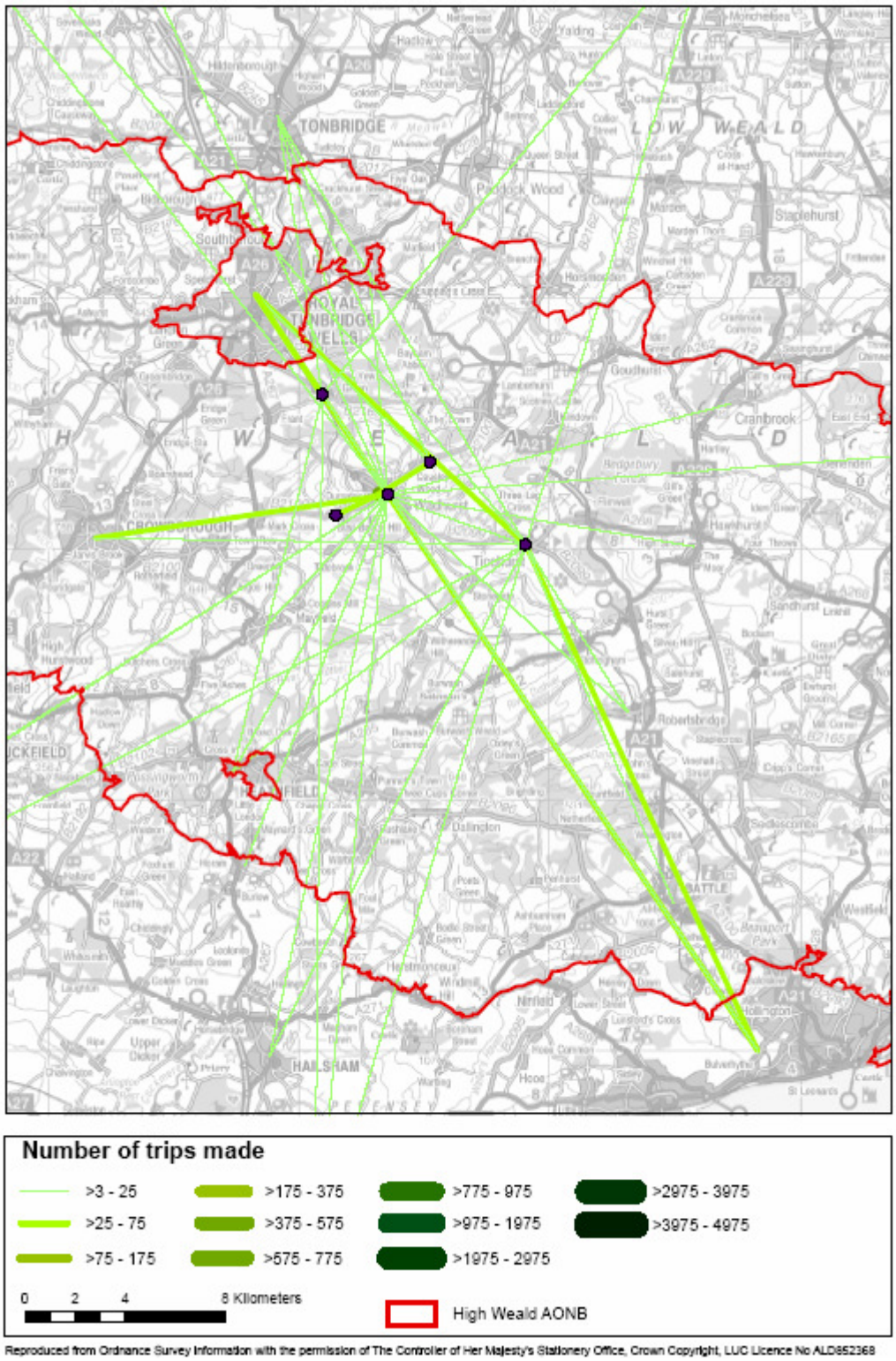
Figure 16 Trips into the Wadhurst study area for work



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Travel to services

*4.68. This data comes from the **household survey** which questioned where residents in the settlements travel in a typical month for various categories of services. Past research by Land Use Consultants[18] has found that provision does not always equal use and rural settlements are often heavily reliant on neighbouring larger settlements for accessing even daily service needs.*

4.69. The analysis below considers each study area in turn and identifies where levels of self-containment for services are high (indicating that settlements have a service role for their own population) and where there are strong flows to other settlements for services.

Balcombe Study Area

4.70. Table 17 lists the main destinations of travel to services from the sample settlements in the Balcombe study area. It can be seen that Crawley Urban Area, Haywards Heath, Horsham and East Grinstead (each between 5km and 15km from the sample settlements) are all used for services.

4.71. Crawley Urban Area and Haywards Heath are the main service centres for all sample settlements except West Hoathly, which also uses services in East Grinstead. This travel pattern is similar to the pattern of travel to work. Handcross is the only settlement that also uses services in Brighton and London.

4.72. While residents from all villages regularly travel to the nearby towns for a range of services, Table 17 shows that most residents do their convenience shopping (see Figure 17) and socialising within their village of residence. Ardingly and Balcombe display high levels of self-containment for a wider range of services.

4.73. Figure 18 shows travel for main-food shopping, which is rarely provided in settlements of these sizes but appears to be provided and regularly used by local residents in Ardingly. These facilities are not however regularly used by residents of the other sample settlements in this study area and most travel to Haywards Heath and Crawley for main-food shopping.

[18] The Role of Rural Settlements as Service Centres, LUC for the Countryside Agency (2004)

Figure 17 Travel for convenience shopping from Balcombe study area

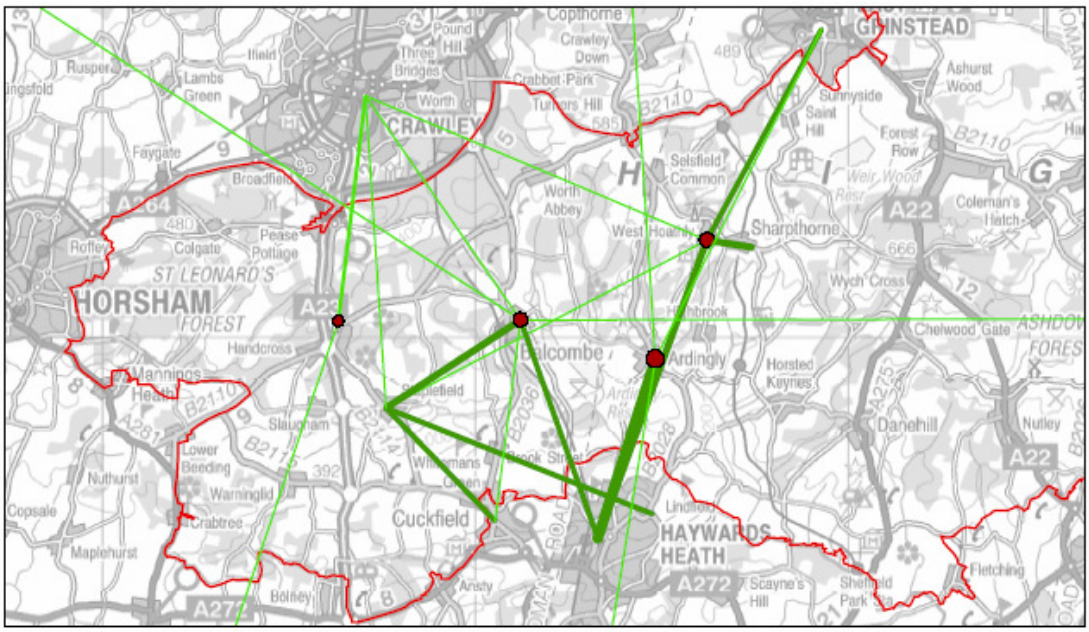

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Figure 18 Travel for main-food shopping from Balcombe study area

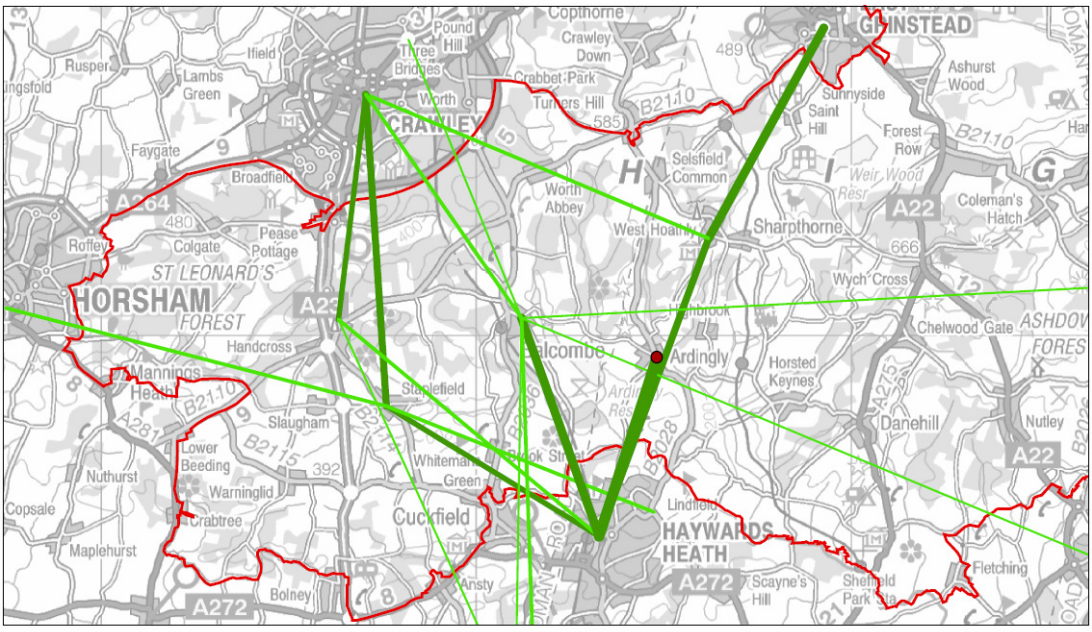

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Table 17 Where residents regularly access services - sample settlements in the Balcombe Study Area

Settlement	Services with high self-containment	(other) main destinations for services
Ardingly	banking (main[19]) convenience shopping (main) main food shopping (main) socialising (main)	Haywards Heath for all services
Balcombe	convenience shopping (main) leisure (main) socialising (main) schooling	Haywards Heath for all other services Crawley Urban Area is also used for main food shopping
Handcross	Banking convenience shopping (main) leisure schooling (main) socialising	Crawley Urban Area is main destination for range of services. Horsham, Haywards Heath, Brighton and London also used for some services
Staplefield	Leisure socialising	Crawley Urban Area is main destination for range of services Balcombe main for convenience shopping Haywards Heath and Horsham secondary for range of services
West Hoathly[20]	Convenience shopping (main) leisure schooling socialising (main)	Haywards Heath and East Grinstead used ~ equally for all services Crawley Urban Area used for leisure (main)

[19] 'main' indicates where most people access a particular service

[20] Travel for services in Sharpthome are included as self-contained trips. While Sharpthome does not fall within the boundaries identified for West Hoathly, the settlement is adjacent and may be considered as part of the same settlement

Sedlescombe Study Area

4.74. The patterns of travel for services from the Sedlescombe study area are generally more scattered than patterns in the other study areas as residents access services from a range of other settlements. However, Table 18 and Figure 19 show that all settlements except Bodiam are regularly used by most residents for services such as convenience shopping and leisure.

4.75. Hastings appears to have an important service role for the residents of Bodiam, Brede, Robertsbridge and Westfield, as illustrated in Figure 20 which shows travel for main-food shopping from the sample settlements.

4.76. Interestingly, some of the households in the sample settlements travel to other smaller settlements within the High Weald, such as Rye and Tenterden, for services such as convenience shopping (see Figure 19). This indicates a degree of networking amongst the smaller settlements. This is particularly apparent for Bodiam – Figure 21 shows the pattern for convenience shopping for Bodiam and that there is a strong relationship with Hawkhurst and Sandhurst for this service.

We are confident that close local networks of smaller settlements are a functional characteristic of villages and hamlets in the High Weald (the survey only picks up trips out of a single settlement, and thus cannot pick up all components of a network).

4.77. Robertsbridge displays the highest level of self-containment amongst these sample settlements for service use and most of its residents do banking, convenience shopping, leisure, schooling and socialising locally. Travel patterns to other destinations are scattered and residents also regularly travel relatively long-distances to Royal Tunbridge Wells, Hastings and Battle for services. **Error! Reference source not found.** overlays travel from Robertsbridge for all services and illustrates the spread of destinations.

4.78. Sedlescombe and Westfield also display a reasonable level of self-containment for a range of services but they are both within 5km of Battle or Hastings and more often travel to these towns for services.

Figure 19 Travel for convenience shopping from the Sedlescombe study area

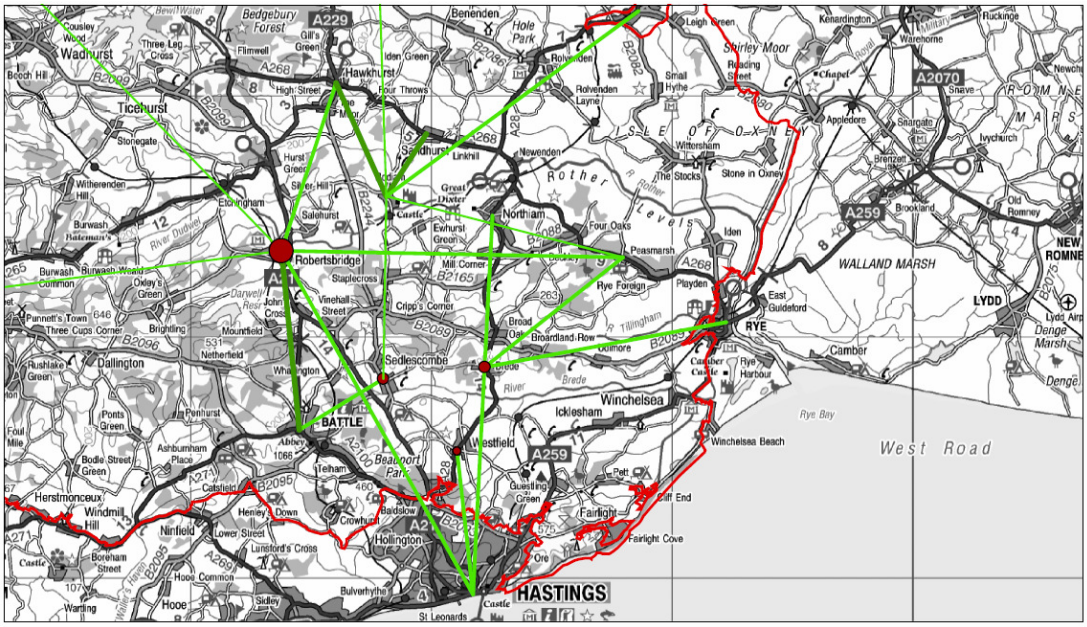

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Figure 20 Travel for main-food shopping from the Sedlescombe study area

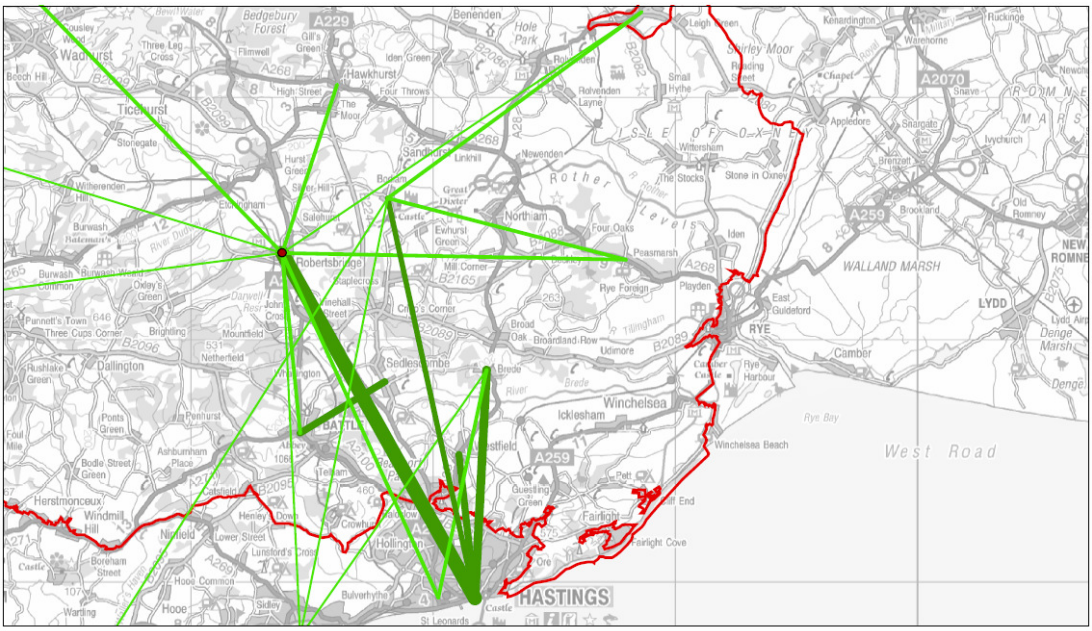

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Figure 21 Trips from Bodiam for convenience shopping

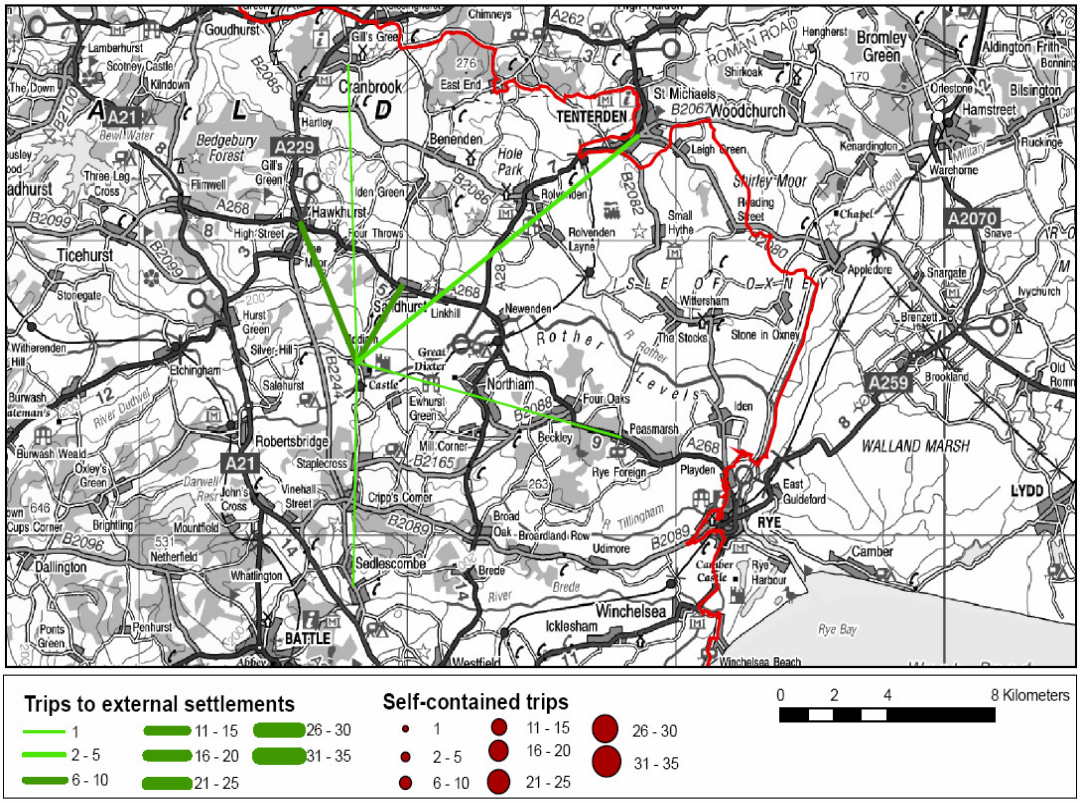

Figure 22 Trips from Robertsbridge for all services

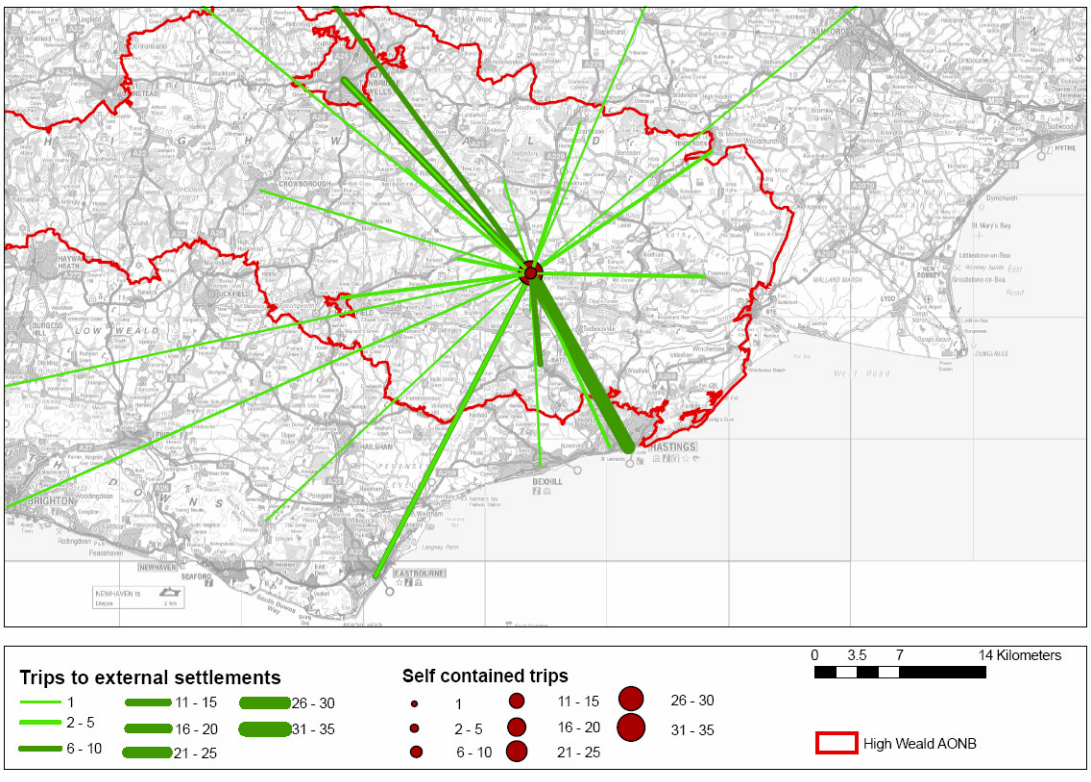

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Table 18 Where residents regularly access services - sample settlements in the Sedlescombe Study Area

Settlement	Services with high self-containment	(other) main destinations for services
Bodiam	schooling leisure socialising	Hawkhurst and Tenterden for socialising , convenience shopping and banking Hastings main for main-food and non-food shopping
Brede	convenience shopping (main[21]) leisure socialising (main)	Rye is also used for banking, convenience shopping and leisure Robertsbridge main for secondary schooling Hastings for range of services and main for socialising and main-food and non-food shopping
Robertsbridge	banking (main) convenience shopping (main) leisure (main) schooling (main) socialising (main)	Battle used for banking and convenience shopping Hastings main for main-food and non-food shopping and also used for banking and leisure Royal Tunbridge Wells used for leisure, non-food shopping and socialising
Sedlescombe	Convenience shopping (main) leisure (main) socialising (main)	Battle main for main-food and non-food shopping Plus some banking, convenience shopping, leisure and socialising Hastings used for some non-food shopping
Westfield	convenience shopping (main) leisure (main) pre- and primary schooling socialising (main)	Hastings main or secondary for all services

[21] 'main' indicates where most people access a particular service

Wadhurst Study Area

4.79. Table 19 shows that Royal Tunbridge Wells is an important service centre for all of the sample settlements in this study area. Bells Yew Green is particularly reliant upon Royal Tunbridge Wells (3km away) for services and displays a low level of self-containment for all services.

4.80. Several categories of service are regularly used locally in Wadhurst and Ticehurst but none are used locally in Bells Yew Green, Best Beech Hill or Cousley Wood. Wadhurst displays a particularly high level of self-containment for all services except main-food and non-food shopping. Residents of Best Beech Hill and Cousley Wood also travel to Wadhurst (<2km) for convenience shopping and socialising but not for the other services evidently provided there and instead are attracted to Royal Tunbridge Wells (<10km) for other services. It is interesting that residents in Best Beech Hill and Cousley Wood do not use as many services in Wadhurst as Wadhurst residents, suggesting that settlements with low containment for services are more likely to travel long distances for even 'everyday' services rather than simply use these services in the nearest villages.

4.81. Levels of self-containment are also reasonably high in Ticehurst where most residents regularly do convenience shopping, schooling and socialising locally. Again, residents in Ticehurst are also heavily reliant on Royal Tunbridge Wells, particularly for main-food and non-food shopping, as shown in Figure 25 which overlays trips from Ticehurst for all services. Ticehurst residents also travel to Hastings and other settlements for some services.

Figure 23 Travel for convenience shopping from the Wadhurst study area

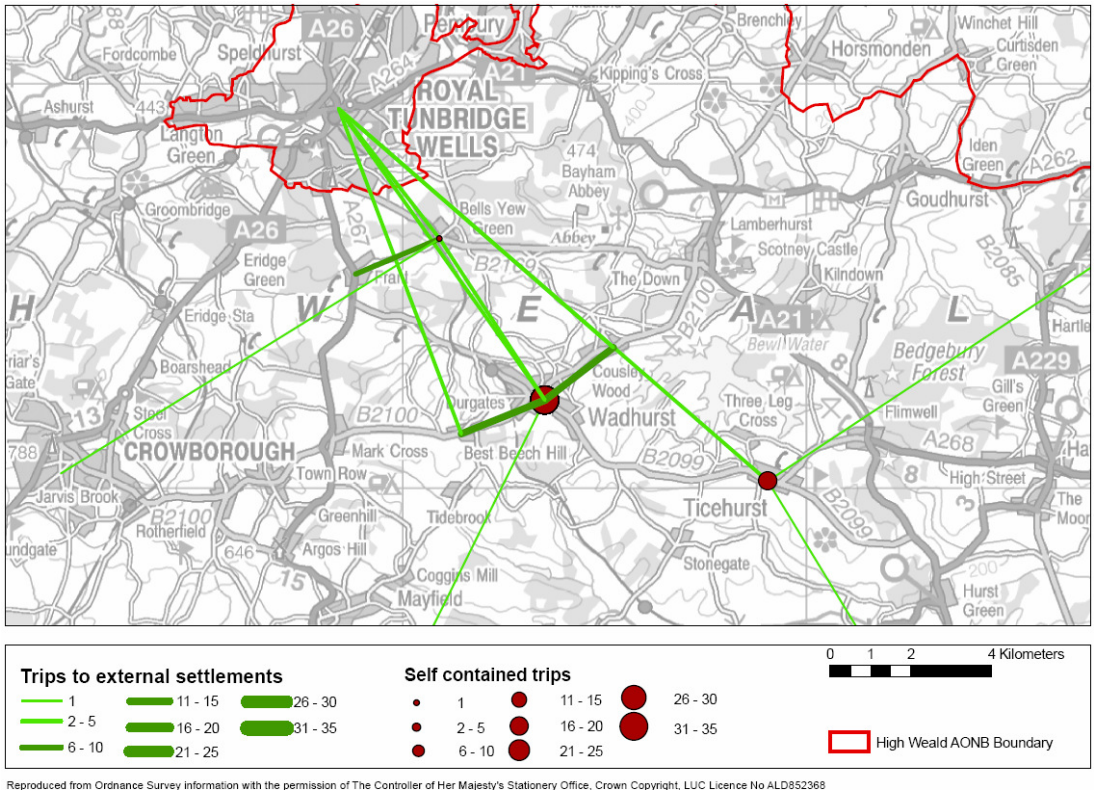

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Figure 24 Travel for main-food shopping from the Wadhurst study area

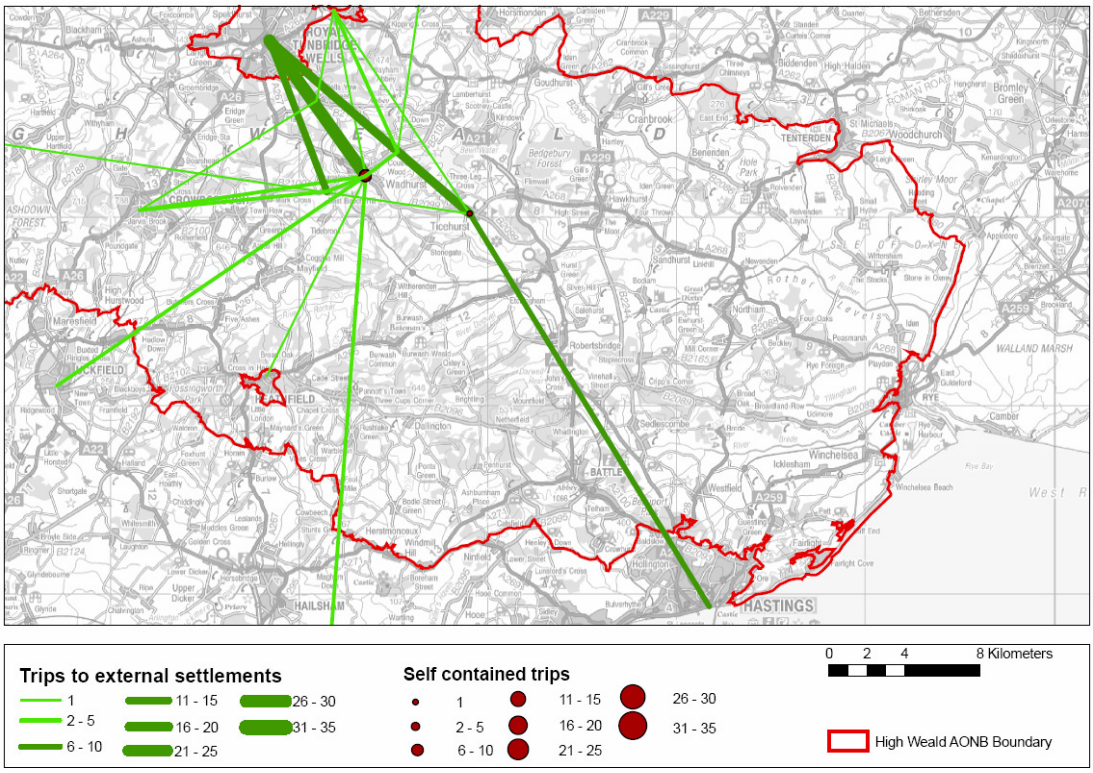

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Figure 25 Trips from Ticehurst for all services

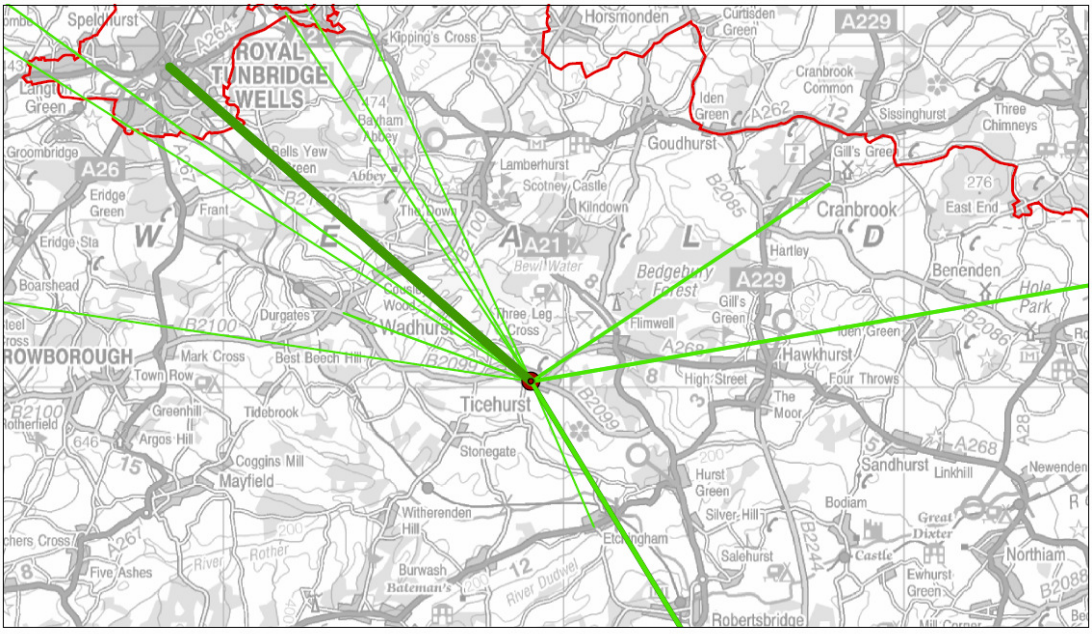

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Table 19 Where residents regularly access services - sample settlements in the Wadhurst Study Area

Settlement	Services with high self-containment	(other) main destinations for services
Bells Yew Green	leisure	Royal Tunbridge Wells main for every service except convenience shopping Frant (small settlements nearby) main for convenience shopping Wadhurst secondary destination for all services
Best Beech Hill	none	Wadhurst main for convenience shopping, leisure and socialising Royal Tunbridge Wells main for banking, main and non-food shopping
Cousley Wood	none	Wadhurst main for banking, convenience shopping, schooling and socialising Royal Tunbridge Wells main for main-food and non-food shopping
Ticehurst	convenience shopping (main[22]) leisure schooling (main) socialising (main)	Royal Tunbridge Wells main for banking, leisure, main-food and non-food shopping and secondary for other services
Wadhurst	banking (main) convenience shopping (main) leisure (main) main- and non-food shopping schooling (main) socialising (main)	Royal Tunbridge Wells main for main- and non-food shopping and secondary for other services

[22] 'main' indicates where most people access a particular service

Local consultation

4.82. After the bulk of these findings had been gathered two workshops (one for the Balcombe case study area and one combining the Sedlescombe and Wadhurst case study areas) were held to give local communities the opportunity to comment on the findings and how to respond to them.

4.83. The meetings were well-attended and provoked some lively debate. Perhaps the most striking finding was a quite widely shared scepticism over national policy's aspirations for more sustainable rural communities. The desire to strengthen the service and employment roles of villages in the High Weald was seen as simply '*unrealistic'* as was the objective of reducing use of the private car. Mobility was seen by many as a precondition of rural life – a necessity for accessing employment and services.

4.84. Moreover some participants expressed clear satisfaction with their current lifestyles, and were concerned with the privations that national policy seemed to imply for them. They saw their lives as '*sustainable'* already, not requiring change. Features such as long distance commuting and the lack of connection between communities and the AONB's environment were seen as part of 'modern life' and not something they were personally responsible for correcting.

4.85. This is not to say that community representatives were not concerned for the environment of the High Weald – they cherish it greatly, and have a clear concern that it is principally threatened by new development, and were specifically concerned that the South East Plan would mean more development in the High Weald. Thus there was a consensus that new development was generally not needed in the villages and open countryside, with the possible exception of affordable housing to meet established needs.

4.86. Concerning the function of the settlements, the travel to work patterns were seen as a fair reflection of their understanding, as were most travel to service patterns. Representatives from Wadhurst, however, questioned the patterns, and also the case study settlements selected. The notion that settlements can form close local networks for use of certain services was well supported, with examples of both village shops and schools serving neighbouring villages.

4.87. Overall, then, the consultation events provided something of a 'reality check', clearly exposing the gap between policy's high aspirations for sustainable rural settlements and those of local communities, and the views of the communities on their current and future situations. On reflection this may not be that surprising but is important.

An important footnote here is that the study only engaged with those involved with bodies such as parish councils and resident's associations. Other groups within these communities may hold different views.

5. DISCUSSION AND RECOMMMENDATIONS

SYNOPSIS OF FINDINGS

5.1. The focus of this study has been to try and identify those types of rural settlements in the High Weald that show the greatest aspects of sustainability, and which therefore are the most suitable locations for planning to concentrate new development which can reinforce and extend local sustainability.

5.2. This has two basic dimensions. First, in common with other rural areas, planning policy seeks out the places where service use and travel to work are relatively localised, and where travel by means other than the private car is more possible. Second, as an AONB there is a policy expectation that local communities, either directly or indirectly, contribute in some way to the conservation and enhancement of the local landscape.

5.3. The first dimension has been investigated by looking at the roles and functions of the settlements in the case study areas in terms of patterns of travel to work, use of a variety of services, and also by looking at the key characteristics of the settlements in terms of demographic and housing stock structures.

5.4. The second dimension is harder to grasp. Through the household survey, a variety of connections to the landscape of the AONB were investigated, mainly concerning local food and other natural resource uses ie seeing the extent to which the local communities of the High Weald create a market for products that assist in the sustainable management of the landscape of the High Weald. The interviews with land-based businesses augmented this work by giving greater detail on the connections of businesses in the High Weald with their landscape.

5.5. So the High Weald presents a sustainability conundrum. It is a protected landscape where the pursuit of more sustainable development includes seeking out closer and more productive relationships between the communities living in the AONB and the landscape that surrounds them. However, it is also part of the most dynamic region of England where all areas of attractive countryside[23] are under significant pressure for housing and other development. This is because they are the location of choice for an increasing number of households and enterprises, and thus property in the High Weald is expensive, and the communities there becoming less and less mixed.

5.6. In addition, the essentially dispersed settlement pattern of the AONB gives a greater propensity for travel, and particularly car use, than in areas of more nucleated settlement, or larger settlements (market towns). Seeking out sustainable settlements and communities needs to reconcile these factors. Sustainable communities need to both ensure the reproduction and enhancement of the landscape of the AONB and ensure that the AONB makes a positive contribution to wider, ultimately global sustainability.

The distinctiveness of this challenge is arguably not yet sufficiently recognised in policy (national, regional or local).

[23] with the exception of the Isle of Wight which, for obvious reasons, is considerably less accessible

Summary of the characteristics and functions of the settlements in the High Weald

Characteristics

5.7. **Overall**, the characteristic data identifies some important features of life in the High Weald and the links between the people and businesses of the High Weald and their local environment and economy.

5.8. Within the settlements, this data has identified imbalances compared to the average national for England and Wales and the regional average for the South East, such as:

- fewer 20-29 year olds and more 75+ year olds
- higher levels of house and car ownership
- high proportion of detached housing and lack of terraced housing
- lower level of full-time employment and low or close to national average level of unemployment
- high proportion of residents working from home
- high proportion of residents in management or senior official occupations and in real estate, renting and businesses activity sector

5.9. These features indicate generally affluent communities. The housing stock indicates a lack of what might be more affordable to smaller or less well-off households.

5.10. Some settlements stand out as being more demographically imbalanced than the average across the settlements, for example:

Balcombe study area

- ***Staplefield*** has particularly few 20-29 year olds

Sedlescombe study area

- ***Bodiam*** has a high proportion of residents under 16 years old. There are very few terraced houses. There are slightly higher than national average proportions of unemployed (but actively seeking work) residents but also high proportions of self-employed residents, high proportions of managers and senior officials but also high proportions of residents employed in agriculture, hunting and forestry.

- ***Brede*** has an abundance of detached housing, lack of terraced housing and high house ownership levels. There is a high proportion of economically inactive residents and a high proportion of residents employed in agriculture, hunting and forestry.

- ***Sedlescombe*** has more 60+ year olds, an abundance of detached housing and high house ownership levels, a high proportion of economically inactive residents but also a high proportion of managers and senior officials.

Wadhurst study area

- ***Best Beech Hill*** does not provide any council or social rented accommodation, has a particularly high car ownership level and is home to a high proportion of managers / senior officials.

- ***Bells Yew Green*** is home to more 16-19 year olds. It provides few terraced houses. A high proportions of working residents are self-employed and/or work in either real estate, renting and business activities or in financial intermediation.

- ***Cousley Wood*** does not provide any council or social rented accommodation and has a particularly high level of house ownership. A high proportion of working residents are self-employed and/or employed in associate professional / technical / professional occupations and a high proportion work in either real estate, renting and business activities or in financial intermediation sector.

- ***Wadhurst*** has a high proportion of working residents employed in either the real estate, renting and business activities or the financial intermediation sector.

5.11. The door-to-door survey questioned the link between households and the local area, environment, and economy and identified some interesting differences between the households in the settlements and those in the open countryside. Key findings are:

- 62% of respondents plan to spend the rest of their life in the local area. The 'environment' and 'countryside' of the High Weald are the factors that most influenced choice of residency and are also the factors that are rated highest by local residents.
- Few households in the settlements produce their own food but 54% buy some local produce. In contrast, over 50% of households in the open countryside produce some of their own food and 75% buy some local produce.
- Almost half of households in the settlements and two-thirds of households in the open countryside have open fireplaces/ wood boilers/wood burners, but less than half of these households regularly use them.

5.12. There are marked differences in the contributions that different sectors of land-based businesses make to the local economy and environment:

- ***Meat and dairy produce***, and ***wood production businesses*** appear to make the strongest contribution in terms of sourcing most of their materials and labour locally.
- ***Fruit, vegetable*** and ***beverage businesses and tourism and recreation businesses*** appear to make a smaller contribution to the local economy as they source a higher proportion of their materials and labour from outside of the AONB. Fruit, vegetable and beverage businesses also sell their produce further than 50km outside the AONB.
- Most businesses are located in the High Weald because they originated from the area and most identify the 'character and attractiveness of the area' as a key advantage of being located there.

Functions

5.13. **Overall**, the analysis of functional relationships involving the sample settlements within the High Weald shows that:

- levels of self-containment for work in the settlements are between 25% and 50% and most are net residential or dormitory settlements

- across the settlements, around half of those working within the settlements are working from home, with a correlation between settlements with a high percentage of self-containment and a high percentage of self-employment.
- most trips to work and services outside of the settlements are to the nearest towns just outside the AONB
- around 1 in 7 trips to work across all of the settlements are to London
- the majority of trips to work are by car
- the average distance travelled to work is 21.18km - substantially further than the England average for rural commuting distances (16.29km in 2002)
- commuting flows into the settlements for work are shorter distances that commuting flows out of the settlements
- 10 of the 15 sample settlements display high levels of self-containment for the 'everyday' services such as socialising and convenience shopping but the remaining settlements do not display high self-containment for any services
- all settlements show low self-containment for other services

5.14. The patterns of travel to work from the settlements have been compared to those from a selection of towns just outside the boundary of the AONB. All of these towns are net employment centres but there are significant differences between these towns. The highest levels of self-containment, lowest levels of commuting to London and shortest average travel to work distances displayed in sample settlements such as Staplefield and Brede are similar to these values for the towns of Battle (40.6% self-containment, 6.1% commute to London, 19.54km average distance to work), Haywards Heath (44% self-containment, 15% commuting to London, 19.23km average distance to work) and Crowborough (42.3% self-containment, 9% commute to London, 17.7km average distance to work). The remaining comparison towns of Royal Tunbridge Wells and Hastings have significantly higher levels of self-containment – 56.2% and 76.7% respectively. The patterns of travel into and out of Hastings indicate that it is a particularly strong local service centre.

5.15. The patterns emerging from each of the study areas are as follows:

Balcombe study area

- the Crawley Urban Area is the main employment and service centre and Haywards Heath is also regularly used for services. Some also use services in Horsham
- the average distance travelled to work is ~5km shorter from these settlements than from settlements in the other study areas
- West Hoathly is partly reliant on East Grinstead for work and services and has stronger flows of commuters to London. It displays a reasonable level of self-containment for services
- Staplefield displays the highest level amongst all sample settlements of self-containment for work (43%), lowest level of commuting to London (8%) and a reasonably short average distance commute (16.7km)
- Ardingly and Balcombe have a high level of self-containment for a range of every day services such as banking, convenience shopping, schooling and socialising. Ardingly also displays high self-containment for main-food shopping but its facilities are not used by the other sample settlements
- Handscross displays a reasonable level of self-containment for services but Staplefield is not commonly used for any services

Sedlescombe study area

- Hastings is the main employment and service centre. The sample settlements do however display more dispersed patterns of travel to services and some level of local networks with other smaller settlements in the High Weald
- the proportion of residents commuting to London is smaller from all of the sample settlements in this study area except from Robertsbridge where 20% commute to London
- Robertsbridge displays a high level of self-containment for a range of every day services such as banking, convenience shopping, schooling and socialising
- Bodiam has a net in-flow of employees and a relatively high self-containment level for work. The total number of trips made for work in Bodiam (in-flow plus self-containment) is over 240 which is significant relative to its size and it therefore appears to have a modest employment role serving its residential and hinterland populations. It does not however have a strong service role and no village services are commonly used by its residents
- Sedlescombe, Brede and Westfield display a reasonable level of self-containment for everyday services

Wadhurst study area

- Royal Tunbridge Wells is the main employment and service centre but there are also the highest levels of commuting to London
- 20-25% of residents of Bells Yew Green, Cousley Wood and Wadhurst commute to London
- Wadhurst and Ticehurst display a high level of self-containment for a range of every day services such as banking, convenience shopping, schooling and socialising
- Bells Yew Green, Best Beech Hill and Cousley Wood are not commonly used for any services - the former is heavily reliant on Royal Tunbridge Wells (3km away) and the latter two are heavily reliant on Wadhurst (<2km away)
- Bells Yew Green is recorded as having a net inflow of employees, but local consultation suggests that this has changed since 2001 (year of the Census) and that many of the industrial sites in Bells Yew Green have closed in recent years.

5.16. **Overall,** sustainability features that are common to the settlements are that they do not reflect the ideals of the sustainable communities agenda in terms of being 'mixed' (demographically or housing stock) or the planning policy concept of local service centres where people display relatively localised patterns of travel to work and services.

5.17. However, against this apparently weak overall performance there are noticeable differences between the settlements as there are settlements that display :

- lower self-containment for work and / or longer average commute plus low self-containment for all services
- higher levels of self-containment for work and / or shorter average commute plus low or reasonable self-containment for all services
- lower self-containment for work and / or longer average commute but high self-containment for everyday services.

5.18. Bells Yew Green, Best Beech Hill, Cousley Wood, Handscross and West Hoathley fit into the first category. Bells Yew Green, Best Beech Hill and Cousley Wood are all small settlements (330-370 residents) in the relatively accessible north of the AONB. Average commuting distances from these settlements are significantly further than the Great Britain average for rural areas and self-containment for work is low. None of these settlements are strongly used for any services. The characteristic data on these settlements indicates that they are more affluent and 'gentrified' than the other sample settlements as they provide few or no council or social housing, or terraced housing, and have high proportions of residents employed as managers or senior officials or in the real estate or financial sectors. Bells Yew Green and Cousley Wood perform particularly poorly because of their strong commuting flows to London (partly because they are very close to Wadhurst).

5.19. While there may be an acute need for affordable housing with the benefit of providing for more mixed communities in these settlements, it will be difficult to reverse the current functional patterns and support more localised behaviour amongst existing residents.

5.20. Handscross and West Hoathley are larger settlements (874 and 1474 residents respectively) towards the west of the AONB. They display noticeably stronger service roles for their resident populations than Bells Yew Green, Best Beech Hill or Cousley Wood but display similarly low levels of self-containment for work (29% in both settlements).

5.21. All five of these settlements show the features of what might be coined 'commuter' villages (which is confirmed by the travel to work mapping). In these instances, as in other work of this sort, the conclusion is that the sustainability of these villages is weak.

5.22. Staplefield, Bodiam, Sedlescombe, Brede and Westfield fall into a second category. These settlements are generally amongst the smaller of the sample settlements with resident populations ranging from 350 to 750, except for Westfield which has 1511. All except Staplefield are in the more remote south of the AONB. Their functional strength is that they all display 40-50% self-containment for work and/or close to Great Britain average commuting distance.

5.23. Staplefield and Bodiam display low levels of self-containment for services but Sedlescombe, Brede and Westfield are regularly used for 'everyday' services. Bodiam apparently forms part of a close local network for services and is a local employment centre. Lower proportions of residents from these settlements commute to London (5-12%).

5.24. These settlements clearly demonstrate the dangers of simplistic assumptions such as greater size equating to greater sustainability. These are smaller villages, yet display clear sustainability strengths. Whilst not satisfying all of the expectations of the policy model 'local service centres' there is a clear case for the right sorts of additional development making these villages more sustainable.

5.25. The age demographics, economic activity levels and housing stock varies between these settlements and Bodiam stands out from the other settlements for its strong and contrasting features. It is the only settlement that experiences a net in-flow of employees but also the only settlement with a higher than national average level of

unemployment. It has a reasonably high level of self-containment for work but low self-containment for services. It has a high proportion of residents that are managers and senior officials and also a high proportion that are employed in agriculture, hunting and forestry. The population appears to be relatively 'mixed' – a strength in terms of the sustainable communities agenda – but the housing stock displays an imbalance with an acute lack of housing at the lower end of the market.

5.26. In addition, Bodiam, Brede, Sedlescombe and Westfield are close together in the south east of the AONB, one of its most remote parts. They show that small villages in areas of dispersed settlement can sometimes embody features of sustainability which too simplistic policy assumptions would not anticipate. This is partly due to the close local functional networks the settlements can form, and partly due to the features of the villages themselves.

5.27. There is then a third category of settlements that display lower levels of self-containment for work and/or long average commuting distances than Staplefield, Bodiam, Sedlescombe, Brede and Westfield, but significantly higher levels of self-containment for services. Balcombe, Ardingly, Robertsbridge, Wadhurst and Ticehurst fall into this category.

5.28. These are the larger settlements with resident populations ranging from 1178 residents (Ardingly) to 3686 residents (Wadhurst). They are in more accessible locations and all are close to train stations and consequently experience strong out-commuting flows to London (14-21%), much of which is done by train (50%+). Thus average distances are long but arguably the more favourable modal split adds to the relative sustainability of these trips.

5.29. Their stronger service roles for their own residents, and some of those of surrounding settlements is also important. Although by no means fulfilling the complete policy expectations for local service centres, in the context of the High Weald, where larger market towns fall outside the AONB, these are clearly places of local significance for services, and thus again are places where the right sorts of additional development could enhance these sustainability roles.

DISCUSSION

The state of communities and settlements in the High Weald

5.30. In Chapter 3 the components of sustainable communities gathered from the UK Sustainable Development Strategy of greatest relevance to this study were assembled and discussed. Thus to set terms for the discussion of the findings, these are summarised against the components for sustainable communities, as outlined in the Table below.

5.31. The columns for both responses in policy and action, and monitoring and indicators attempts to be comprehensive, though ambitious. The intention is not to suggest that all items in the table should be followed, but to capture all areas of work that are collected and which should therefore be considered.

Table 20 Sustainability Performance of the Settlements in the High Weald

How the traffic lights work

unsustainable – communities/settlements do not meet this objective

partly sustainable - communities/settlements have a mixed impact

sustainable – the sustainability objective is substantially fulfilled

Issue		Objective	Assessment	Responses in policy / action
Environmental sustainability				
Landscape		• All new development should make a positive contribution to the landscape of the High Weald	*Connections between communities and businesses in the High Weald and maintenance of the landscape that surrounds them are generally not strong although a small proportion of businesses are directly concerned with the sustainable management of the landscape and local purchasing helps create a market for environmental goods* *However the residents of the High Weald have a strong affinity with their local landscape*	*Better targeted support for economic sectors sustaining the High Weald landscape* *Promotion of the importance of these linkages to local communities* *Facilitating greater linkage through local market support* *Appropriate targeting of the Higher Level Scheme*
Biodiversity		• All new development should make a positive contribution to biodiversity in the High Weald	*Support for biodiversity is limited to the few households managing land beyond their gardens and to some land-based businesses*	*Promotion of the importance of local biodiversity to local communities* *Appropriate targeting of the Higher Level Scheme* *Actions supporting Local Biodiversity Plan targets for species and habitats*
Cultural heritage		• New development should make a positive contribution to the cultural heritage of the	*The findings did not investigate this issue, but it is discussed below*	*Better targeted support through public programmes*

Issue		Objective	Assessment	Responses in policy / action
		AONB		*Promotion of the importance of cultural heritage to local communities* *Appropriate targeting of the Higher Level Scheme to support features identified in Historic Landscape Characterisations*
Tranquillity		• New development should not damage the existing tranquillity of the AONB	*High ownership and use of cars is a threat to tranquillity*	*Promotion of the importance of tranquillity to public bodies and local communities*
Sustainable land management • **agriculture** • **forestry** • **hortic.**		• Supporting development associated with existing or new agricultural, forestry and horticultural enterprises making sustainable contributions to the landscape and communities of the AONB	*Consumption of local produce supports local agriculture, but this is small-scale* *Using firewood gives limited support to local woodland management* *Consumption of local produce supports local horticulture, but this is small-scale*	*Better targeted support for the land-based sectors sustaining the High Weald landscape* *Promotion of the importance of the land based sector to local communities* *Facilitating greater purchasing of local products through focused support of all markets for it*
Settlement pattern		• New development should reinforce the traditional settlement pattern where this can also deliver other sustainability objectives	*The findings did not directly investigate this issue, but it is discussed below*	*Promotion of the importance of the traditional settlement pattern to public bodies and local communities* *Fuller investigation of the settlement pattern to provide a fuller evidence base*
Design and materials		• Design of new development should make a positive contribution to the protected landscape, with materials drawn from the AONB	*The findings did not directly investigate this issue, but it is discussed below*	*Promotion of the importance of the local design and materials to public bodies and local communities*

Issue		Objective	Assessment	Responses in policy / action
Resource use: ***Domestic energy use***		• New development (domestic and industrial) should be carbon neutral. Use of wood fuel from the AONB should be the primary way of achieving this	*Modest use of wood fuel, particularly by houses in the open countryside*	*Development of technical guidance on the design and technology issues involved* *Targeted support for local wood fuel market*
Industrial energy use			*There is insufficient industry in the sample settlements, so no conclusion is offered*	*Feasibility investigation of use of renewable energy by existing and future commercial operations in the High Weald (eg Energy Parks))*
Transport		• Development should be of a type which minimises the need for occupants and users to travel, and sited in locations where this is most likely to be achieved	*Extensive travel by car is a major source of energy consumption*	*Location of development in locations most likely to generate fewer / shorter trips* *Encouragement of development most likely to generate fewer / shorter trips* *Initiatives to reduce car use, such as public transport, infrastructure for walking and cycling, car share and green travel schemes, biofuels*
Local produce • **food** • **timber**		• Development should encourage the consumption of local food through - new housing making provision for growing food - supporting commercial enterprises which deliver food to local consumers • New development should utilise local timber where	*A significant minority of residents either buy local produce or grown their own* *Local timber is rarely used as a material for construction but is more often used as firewood*	*Requiring facilities for food growing in new residential development* *Better targeted support for local horticulture and agriculture to produce local and locality foods* *Better targeted support for processing, marketing, and distribution of local food, eg food technology centres, abattoirs, farmers markets, box schemes* *Policy requirements for new development to use*

Issue		Objective	Assessment	Responses in policy / action
		technically possible		*local timber where possible* *Development of advice for design and construction utilising local timber* *Maintenance of the High Weald directory of local producers*
Waste		• Development should encourage waste minimisation • Possibility of small scale green waste processing sites in the AONB	*The findings did not directly investigate this issue, but it is discussed below*	*Feasibility study for green waste processing facilities in the AONB*
Social sustainability				
Age balance **Social balance** **Housing opportunity (ie affordability)**	🔴 🔴 🔴	• Building more mixed communities through targeted housing provision (often affordable)	*Most of the settlements are not age balanced, with fewer younger people the data infers that most settlements are relatively socially exclusive* *The housing stock across the settlements is biased towards larger houses*	*Development of the sorts of housing most likely to bring about more age mixed communities* *Development of the sorts of housing most likely to bring about more socially mixed communities* *Development of more affordable, intermediate and smaller open market housing to meet established local needs*
Local services	🔴	• Supporting existing local services by directing new development to places where localised service use is already strong	*Only a third of the settlements show relative strength in use of certain local services, though they also depend on neighbouring larger settlements for a range of services* *The other two-thirds of settlements are highly dependent on neighbouring larger settlements for most services*	*Location of development in settlements with stronger service roles* *Better targeted support for local public and private services in settlements with stronger service roles* *Innovation in service delivery for those communities in settlements where service*

Issue		Objective	Assessment	Responses in policy / action
				availability is poor, eg online and mobile services
Local employment	🟠	• Focusing on local employment likely to reproduce the environment of the AONB and support local communities	*In five settlements working from home and elsewhere in the settlement accounts for over 40% of the employment of all working residents (in other words they show a high level of self-containment)* *This drops to 20% for the weakest of the other 10 settlements*	*Location of development in settlements with stronger employment roles* *Targeted support for existing local employers* *Targeted support for working from home, eg ICT availability, design of new housing*
Recreation / access	🟠	• Ensuring that development areas are well connected to the public rights of way networks	*Local residents will frequently travel considerable distances within the AONB for recreation*	*Targeted support for recreation activities sympathetic to and / or sustaining the landscape of the AONB* *Promotion of the importance of recreation activities supporting and sustaining the landscape of the AONB as their primary resource* *Maintenance and enhancement of the informal recreation infrastructure of the AONB*
Governance / communication		• Closer community involvement in policy making and delivery	*The findings did not investigate this issue, but it is discussed below*	*Promotion of the importance of the linkages between local communities and the landscape of the High Weald for its ongoing management* *Placing these issues centrally in future community strategy work*
Inclusion / vibrancy	🟠	• Seeking development likely to give more inclusive communities	*A majority of residents consider themselves not very involved in their local communities, though local community groups are strong*	*Targeted support for initiatives likely to support community inclusion and vibrancy where community strategies and related work indicate this is needed / would be effective*

Issue		Objective	Assessment	Responses in policy / action
Environmentally-friendly lifestyles		• Enabling environmentally-friendly lifestyles though supportive development	*Overall most residents cannot be said to lead environmentally friendly lifestyles* *This is not to say that some elements of their lifestyles do not support sustainable development, but like residents of other rural areas, other elements clearly do not (especially in terms of dependency on the private car for travel)*	*Types of new development specifically designed and controlled to support strongly environmentally friendly lifestyles, eg ecovillages, sustainable farmsteads, low impact development* *Facilities and opportunities for more environmentally sustainable lifestyles for existing residents – as described above and below*
Quality of life		• Ensuring that high quality of life for the individual is not at the expense of wider sustainability objectives	*Residents of the High Weald confirm that quality of life is high, and important to their choice of living in the High Weald* *The issue here is how to achieve a high quality of life **and** environmental sustainability*	*Promotion of better understanding of the potential tensions between quality of life and sustainability in the communities and settlements of the High Weald, and of the need to reconcile these tensions as ultimately unsustainable communities will undercut quality of life in the AONB*
Economic Sustainability				
Local economies		• Support for local economies rooted in the landscape of the AONB should be an overarching objective for planning polices. This will then include: - identifying and supporting key local sectors - supporting local labour markets though support for local communities - discouraging 'footloose' economic development which might displace economic development	*Connections between communities and local economies are variable – there are local points of strength, but also widespread and significant connections with economies outside the AONB*	*Better targeted support for the sectors sustaining the High Weald landscape including:* • *the land based sector* • *other locally significant sectors* • *support for **local** economies, eg community enterprise, local trading and exchange schemes, skills training*

Issue		Objective	Assessment	Responses in policy / action
		rooted in the landscape of the AONB		
Land-based economies • **materials** • **skills**		• This key sector requires strong targeted support as described above, plus: - reaching beyond the scope of planning's relationship with agriculture to ensure development makes wider contributions to sustainable land management - the vital importance of adding value to land-based products within the AONB In some circumstances sustainable development will require tied residences, linked with the sustainable management of land	*Land-based businesses have obvious importance in supporting the land-based economy, both in terms of production of materials and supporting skills* *However these make up only a small proportion of all businesses in the AONB* *Residents mostly are only weakly linked to the sector through their purchasing habits*	*Better targeted support for the land-based sectors sustaining the High Weald landscape – as described above, plus support for land based skills and techniques*
Recreation and tourism		• Targeted support is needed - the central task here is to distinguish between those types of activity benefiting the landscape of the AONB, and those which 'give nothing back'	*Recreation and tourism businesses have obvious connections here, but also make up only a small proportion of all businesses in the AONB* *Residents use the AONB for recreation, but how far they in turn support the landscape of the AONB is not clear*	*Targeted support for activities sympathetic to and / or sustaining the landscape of the AONB as described above plus investigation of new opportunities for informal and commercial recreation which would sustain the landscape of the AONB*

5.32. There are many red and amber lights in Table 20, and only one green. Although the findings contain some components of sustainability in the communities and settlements of the High Weald, they also reveal more obvious characteristics which are clearly **unsustainable**, underlining how challenging the pursuit of sustainable settlements is in the High Weald (and in rural areas more generally).

5.33. The connections between the communities of the High Weald, and the protected landscape they live in, are often tenuous. The harmonious and productive relationship between communities and landscape which international policy envisages within a category V landscape, is functionally weak for most of the lives of most of the people living in the High Weald. This is not to say that the High Weald's landscape is not important to its residents – it clearly is – but their presence in it offers little to its ongoing good heart.

5.34. They have some functional connections to the environment of the AONB, primarily through purchasing of local products, but this cannot outweigh the environmental costs of their lifestyles, particularly those borne out of high car-dependence. Thus particular aspects of their lifestyles have to be seen as environmentally unfriendly.

5.35. People living in the High Weald are highly mobile, and satisfy the majority of their work and employment needs outside their home settlement. Although some villages appear relatively strong in terms of being places of employment and use of some services, the majority of the employment and service lives of the majority of the residents of the AONB are lived outside their home settlement, and frequently outside the AONB altogether. So their connections with local economies are only partial.

The communities they form are not very mixed or balanced, principally influenced by the local housing stock and market.

5.36. Transport, and specifically use of private cars, is a pervasive issue across the assessment. Arguably the increasing cheapness of private car travel to households in the AONB has been the main cause of key trends such as soaring house prices and dwindling local services. It has brought houses in rural settlements within the reach of those with urban jobs, and it has enabled households to spread their 'territory' over wider areas, bypassing local services in search of more choice or lower prices. Rural communities are fragmented – socially and economically, and the local and global environment is eroded.

5.37. Heightened rural car use and dependence is a talisman of rural unsustainability across England, including the High Weald, where the more dispersed settlement pattern might be expected to heighten the trend. The findings suggest that in some places this is the case, but that in others the functional strengths of some smaller settlements and local settlement networks can counter this.

5.38. It is significant that the only green light in the table above concerns quality of life. The residents of the High Weald clearly see themselves as enjoying a high quality of life, which this study does not doubt. However this quality of life makes little connection with the management of the landscape of the AONB, and also the wider objectives of sustainable development.

A key focus, then, is to maintain quality of life whilst addressing the many unsustainable aspects of the lifestyles and livelihoods of the residents of the High Weald. As Table 20 shows there are many potential ways in which this *could* be done for existing residents.

5.39. It is interesting that residents in the open countryside, and more isolated villages, do appear to make important contributions to markets for local produce, but like the residents in the other villages, are highly car dependent for most of their work and service lives.

5.40. This is perhaps not that surprising as it is a shared characteristic with other villages that have been researched in England[24], but is more resonant here where the AONB designation sets a greater expectation of connection and rootedness for its residents. There is, of course, little reason to expect the lifestyles of the residents of the High Weald to differ greatly from the lifestyles of those living in other areas of attractive, relatively accessible, countryside.

5.41. Over the last few decades broad social and economic change has eroded the connections between rural communities and the landscape around them across the majority of rural England (and in corollary made rural communities more dependent on their urban neighbours). It is already known[25] that residents in the AONB's across the South East, including the High Weald, are now mainly employed in sectors not connected with their surrounding landscape, and are often employed outside the AONB. However, these trends undercut both the founding principles of the AONB designation, and also raise serious challenges for wider sustainability.

5.42. Though these conclusions might appear gloomy, there are certain places in the AONB, and certain types of communities, residents and businesses, that appear to be more sustainable than the norm for the area. Size does not appear to be a definitive guide to the relative functional sustainability of settlements and communities. Nor does the presence of 'key' services.

5.43. What is more important is **geography**. Smaller settlements in the south east of the AONB seem to be more functionally sustainable than those in the north and west where small villages appear more strongly to resemble dormitories. This is probably because the former are relatively more isolated. The functionality of the larger villages, and the market towns inside and just outside the AONB is strongly influenced by railway stations and hence commuting. Thus whilst they are often clearly important local centres for services and employment, they are also commuter towns.

5.44. The findings clearly warn against the dangers of simplification and generalisation. There are some small settlements in the AONB which display clear sustainability strengths, partly because of the close local networks they form with other small settlements. So here modest amounts of the right sort of development could reinforce and extend these strengths and so make positive contributions to wider sustainability objectives.

[24] The Role of Rural Settlements as Service Centres, and work in the East Riding and North Norfolk (both forthcoming)

[25] Socio-economic profiles for protected landscape areas in south east England (2005)

5.45. The distinctive dispersed settlement pattern of the High Weald does not mean that sustainable settlements are automatically harder to achieve. The crucial task is to distinguish between those settlements that have sustainability attributes and those that do not. It appears that hamlets and isolated dwellings can also show certain sustainability strengths such as greater propensity to use and produce products associated with management of the landscape of the AONB. But this is obviously offset by car-dependent longer trips to services not provided in this way. So again the task is to encourage the former without the latter.

5.46. Overall, achieving sustainable settlements and communities in the High Weald is very challenging, partly because the unintended effect of pervasive but often unconnected socio-economic policies and regulations has been to make these communities and settlements successively less sustainable. Households have been given little encouragement to behave more sustainably, with many indirect incentives to be less sustainable.

Nonetheless the importance of sustainable development is undiminished in the AONB, and given particular accent by the AONB designation. Policy and regulation have to wrestle significantly greater sustainability from the settlements and communities of the High Weald.

Future planning in the High Weald

5.47. At this point it is vital to remember that the prime focus of this study is what the planning system, and connected areas of policy and work, can do to make the settlements in the High Weald more sustainable. This involves both finding the best locations for development (in terms of sustainability) and also the right development for those locations (also in terms of sustainability). We have to conclude that planning's role here can only be a limited one, as new development cannot transform how communities and settlements in the High Weald currently 'work', it can only augment and marginally alter this existing functionality.

5.48. Earlier work[26] has indicated that rural communities and economies in the region, such as those in the High Weald, are likely to be significantly urbanised in character. This work has confirmed the detail that the communities of the AONB are tenuously linked to the maintenance and reproduction of its protected landscape. This is a feature likely to be shared with England's other AONBs and National Parks.

5.49. The AONB boundary has been rightly drawn to exclude larger settlements. Smaller settlements will always struggle to match the strategic influence of larger ones, and it is not at all surprising that the towns around the edges of the AONB provide strategic foci for the lives of so many residents of the AONB. The same is true of any area of market towns and smaller settlements. Also, the links to London, particularly for work, also reflect conditions elsewhere in the region and close to other larger conurbations in other regions.

5.50. However, that villages such as Stapleford, Brede, and Bodiam can perform proportionately as well as towns such Battle, Haywards Heath and Crowborough in terms of sustainability of travel to work speaks not only of the relative weakness of

[26] SEEPA and SE rural economy

these towns (in comparison to Royal Tunbridge Wells and Hastings), but also of the surprising strength of these small villages.

5.51. Although comparisons of service use within the towns relative to the sample settlements are not possible, the relative strength of Ardingly, Balcombe, Brede, Sedlescombe, Westfield, Ticehurst and Wadhurst for service use also suggest that certain settlements in the High Weald are currently more functionally sustainable than others.

5.52. None of the settlements studied can completely fulfil the role of a *local service centre where employment, housing (including affordable housing), services and other facilities can be provided close together* (PPS7) as they do not currently function fully in this way. Indeed the volumes of development necessary to create this new functionality would be enormous[27], particularly when it is considered how much larger settlements in the area apparently are unable to function as local service centres. Also, if a majority of the people already living in the settlements in the High Weald are choosing to pattern their lives unsustainably there is a clear danger that more development containing similar people would just reinforce this situation, not reverse it.

It is only for services such as primary schools and health centres that relatively direct links between new households and patronage can be assumed.

5.53. However, those villages currently showing greater functional strengths for sustainability than others do offer locations where the right sorts of new development could reinforce and extend these existing functional strengths. Looking for sustainable settlements in the High Weald is not a question of scale, therefore. Nor is it a search for 'key settlements'. But the findings do contain significant elements of greater sustainability that offer clues as to where sustainability gains for the villages and hamlets in the AONB might lie. These are:

- the relatively high levels of self-containment for certain services and work, in some settlements (including smaller ones)
- the importance of close networks of settlements for services and work in some parts of the AONB.

5.54. PPS7 goes some way towards understanding this as it states that "*local service centres… might be a country town or a large village or a group of villages"* (para 3), but captures less well that settlements might have only partial service or employment roles which are nonetheless locally significant.

5.55. In addition, the findings that the residents of houses in the open countryside have a propensity to purchase a greater range of local products, that these products will make up a greater proportion of their weekly needs, and that they are also likely to grow more food for themselves, provide indications of supporting the local landscape. Clearly a proportion of those captured by the surveys were farms, and so these findings are not that surprising.

5.56. Nonetheless it appears that houses in the open countryside are generally more attached to the landscape of the AONB than those in villages. Thus the focus for planning is to seek out sorts of development that can also manifest these connections

[27] Are Villages Sustainable (2002)

whilst avoiding the unsustainable outcomes that might also occur. National policy contains no substantial recognition of these issues.

5.57. The principles behind the designation of the AONB do not mean that it is a 'no go' area for development. It should be seen as a 'go' area for development that is good for the AONB – development which builds mixed communities, increases local employment and service use, and fosters a beneficial and sustainable relationship between communities and landscape.

5.58. The findings clearly show that broader socio-economic change is unlikely to deliver this. The High Weald is a very desirable place to live, but residence is not strongly harnessed to the benefit of the AONB. Therefore the correct role of planning is to intervene more and seek out development which is good for the AONB – sustainable development. A vital point here is the importance of a long-term perspective. Planning need to put in place development that will support more sustainable settlements and communities in the AONB for decades into the future, and be resilient to changing wider social and economic conditions.

5.59. The South East is a region under great pressure to deliver considerable volumes of new housing over the next decades. However the findings provide no justification for the AONB being a sustainable location for such scales of development. Aside from the obvious and important observations that the landscape of the AONB would be damaged by large-scale development, and that the AONB's infrastructure would not cope with its impacts, the central conclusion of this study is that the sort of development that the AONB needs to help its settlements and communities to become more sustainable is **small scale development**, which can reinforce and extend the existing modest (yet important for the AONB) and particular sustainability strengths.

Large amounts of new development rightly seek to establish new functionality and sustainability when and where they take place. Such radical change is not what the AONB needs.

5.60. The evolving approach to affordable housing is a good example of how planning can work in such a local-scale, targeted mode. Planning sets out to secure particular sorts of housing to deliver particular outcomes that are needed – now captured by the term *mixed communities* - and locally exemplified through the HOPE project in Wealden District. In order to do this additional planning tools are needed – permitting certain types of development where 'open market' development would be refused, and controlling the ongoing occupation and use of that development.

5.61. Essential dwellings are another case in point where development is allowed exceptionally for reasons of agriculture and forestry[28]. However it has to be remembered here that essential dwellings are justified because of the functional needs of agriculture, further justified through a financial test. Only small parts of the communities and settlements of the High Weald are still connected to agriculture, and not all agriculture is wholly concerned with the maintenance and reproduction of the landscape of the AONB. Thus to ensure that exceptional development

[28] see http://www.wales.gov.uk/subiplanning/content/research/essential-dwellings-e.pdf for a recent review of the issues involved

contributes more widely to sustainable development requires going considerably beyond what is required of essential dwellings.

5.62. The linking of communities and landscape is a bigger issue, then. It is a central objectives of management of the High Weald, as a Category V landscape. But is it simply outmoded in the UK context, where the findings of this study have shown it to be so fragile? The landscape of the AONB could perhaps be managed more effectively as a 'living museum', but this is clearly contrary to why it was designated, and offers little to wider sustainability.

5.63. However the findings suggest that reconnecting the communities and landscape of the High Weald cannot rely on mildly amended versions of the planning and management tools that have prevailed for the last few decades. The findings show that many of these connections are in danger of being severed, maybe irreversibly. Trickle-down does not appear to work. More effective approaches are needed.

5.64. The thorny issue of transport has to be tackled better. Communities in the High Weald have become more and more car dependent, as have rural *and urban* communities across most of England. But in the High Weald public transport, with the exception of main line rail to London, is insignificant as an alternative to the car. Major modal shifts are not likely.

5.65. This does not mean that public and community transport will not remain important for those without car access, but that for the majority of members of rural communities the target is to reduce trips and trip lengths – to draw in the territory of households' lives to more local scales, bringing social and economic benefit to those communities and reducing environmental burdens.

5.66. Thus it is imperative that new development in the AONB generates transport use that is significantly more sustainable than the current norm for the AONB, as well as producing other strong sustainability benefits to give an overall sustainability gain in terms of its outputs. This is undoubtedly demanding, but new development in the AONB has to play its part in weaning communities off hypermobility, and in any case mobility reductions have tangible local sustainability benefits.

5.67. So what are sustainable settlements in the High Weald and how should they be planned for? We have defined them as:

Settlements where most of the needs of their communities are met locally and where a harmonious and productive relationship between communities and landscape can be reinforced and extended

5.68. As the majority of possible development in the AONB would not fulfil this definition, the task is to find and protect the existing niches that do, and create new ones. Such development is likely to be 'exceptional', requiring exceptional policies, and exceptional controls to resist reversion to more 'general' unsustainable development. Such approaches are needed in the AONB, and are technically possible through the planning system and associated mechanisms.

5.69. In order to give a systematic basis to identifying such development in policy and planning decisions we have again used the traffic light system for the components of sustainable settlements (below), to show which aspects of sustainability the planning

system can influence and which ones it cannot. This is an important point – there are aspects of sustainable settlements and communities that planning simply cannot help with. Planning's influence should not be overblown. However, those where it can contribute remain significant. Under the new planning system, planning also has an important role in coordinating other policy and action.

5.70. Table 21 is long and quite complex, but necessarily so as it reflects both the complexity of sustainable development in the High Weald, and therefore the complexity of achieving it through policy. In summary, though, what this suite of objectives and criteria are setting out to address can be captured by four essential routes in which new development can contribute to more sustainable development in the AONB:

Enhancing the landscape of the High Weald by ensuring that all new development makes positive contributions to landscape, biodiversity, and cultural heritage through means such as good design and supporting the traditional settlement pattern

Supporting agriculture and land management that sustains the landscape of the High Weald, both by directly supporting existing and new enterprises, and markets for local produce and timber.

Enabling High Weald communities to become more locally sustainable by supporting mixed community structures, strong local economies, facilitating environmentally friendly lifestyles and stronger links between communities and the landscape around them, and seeking strong local quality of life respecting environmental limits.

Enabling High Weald Communities to play their part in global sustainability through increased use of local resources, reducing energy use and increasing use of renewable energy, and minimising waste.

A key point is that although through a single type of development it may not be possible to pursue all four routes simultaneously, development cannot harm any of the four routes and remain sustainable.

5.71. Appropriate tools and mechanisms are identified, as are potential indicators or other monitoring approaches. However the difficulty of monitoring and identifying useable indicators should not be underestimated. This column is filled with possible approaches to monitoring and indicators – not all of them will be practical to adopt.

5.72. A critical point here is that development permitted through planning should aim to satisfy several components of sustainability at once.

Table 21 Planning policy framework for sustainable settlements in the High Weald

How the traffic lights work: Can planning policy make a difference

🔴 planning has a minimal role in achieving this objective – effort better deployed elsewhere

🟠 planning has an important role in achieving this objective – but this requires purposeful policy and coordination with other activities

🟢 planning has a central role in achieving this objective – a core issue for policy

Topic	Planning policy objectives	Policy criteria	Tools / mechanisms	Monitoring / indicators
Environmental sustainability				
Landscape 🟠	• **All new development should make a positive contribution to the landscape of the High Weald** 🟠 The planning system has a vital role in preventing development of poor design, the wrong scale and otherwise unsympathetic to the historic settlement pattern and landscape context	**Policy criteria** – new development should make a positive contribution to the landscape and historic settlement form of the AONB	• AONB Management Plan and supporting evidence • Joint Character Area descriptions • Landscape Character Assessments (for the whole AONB and composite Districts) • Historic Landscape Characterisation • Forthcoming extensive urban survey	• Countryside Quality Counts
Biodiversity 🟠	• **All new development should make a positive contribution to biodiversity in the High Weald** 🟠 The planning system has a vital role in preventing development which would reduce biodiversity 🟠 HOWEVER new development of the scale	**Policy criteria** – new development should make a positive contribution to the biodiversity of the AONB	• AONB Management Plan and supporting evidence • National Biodiversity Action Plans for species and habitats • Local Biodiversity Action Plans for species and habitats • Natural Area Descriptions	• Defra Public Service Agreement targets • Local Biodiversity Action Plan targets • Higher Level

Topic	Planning policy objectives	Policy criteria	Tools / mechanisms	Monitoring / indicators
	envisaged is likely to be a minor contributor to enhancing the biodiversity of the AONB			Scheme targets • Countryside Quality Counts
Cultural heritage	• **New development should make a positive contribution to the cultural heritage of the AONB** The planning system has an important role in protecting the existing cultural heritage of the AONB, such as the historic settlement pattern HOWEVER new development can only make limited *additional* contributions as responsibility for much of the cultural heritage rests with those already living there	**Policy criteria** – new development should make a positive contribution to the cultural heritage of the AONB through siting and design	• AONB Management Plan and supporting evidence • Historic Landscape Characterisation • Parish Plan and Village Design Statements • Conservation Area Appraisals • Listed Buildings at Risk register • Ancient Monuments At Risk register • forthcoming extensive urban survey	• Higher Level Scheme targets
Tranquillity	• **New development should not damage the existing tranquillity of the AONB** As the principle issue threatening tranquillity is increasing car use new development should aim to minimise car use	**Policy criteria** – new development should not damage the existing tranquillity of the AONB	*Tranquillity mapping is not commonly undertaken but would be a useful tool and indicator* *Traffic is a major threat to tranquillity –dealt with separately below*	
Sustainable Land Management (agriculture	• **Supporting development associated with existing or new agricultural, forestry and horticultural enterprises making sustainable contributions to**	**Policy criteria** – planning should support the viability of existing agricultural enterprises,	• Regional Delivery Plan for Sustainable Farming and Food • Environmental Stewardship Scheme (Entry and Higher	• High Weald Management Plan Indicators • targets for the

[29] the High Weald in particular has been the scene of considerable historic abuse of the planning system regarding essential dwellings for agricultural workers. Avoiding such abuse in future is a key concern, stressing that the sustainability outputs of new development have to be better justified and guaranteed than they have been in the past.

Topic	Planning policy objectives	Policy criteria	Tools / mechanisms	Monitoring / indicators
forestry horticulture) 🟢	**the landscape and communities of the AONB** 🟢 Planning can support existing enterprises through accommodating their development needs, including the need to provide local housing affordable to those in the lower incomes typical of the sector 🟢 Planning can give 'exceptional' support to such development by permitting new development in locations where other development might not be allowed[29] 🟠 Planning can assist the development of local markets for land-based products by supporting outlets and encouraging new households to use these products 🟢 The area is commercially attractive to employment and housing development – great care is required to ensure the connection of new development to maintenance and enhancement of the landscape of the AONB – *this is discussed further below.*	including exceptional support for new development where there will be a clear benefit for sustainable land management. Planning should support outlets for local products. Planning should not support new development on agricultural or forestry holdings not giving support either directly or indirectly to land-based activities.	Levels) • Project based schemes – Rural Enterprise Scheme and Processing and Marketing Grant • Regional Forestry Framework • England Woodland Grant Scheme	Higher Level Scheme • targets for the England Woodland Grant Scheme • Countryside Quality Counts
Settlement pattern 🟢	• **New development should reinforce the traditional settlement pattern where this can also deliver other sustainability objectives** 🟢 The planning system has direct control over development patterns. HOWEVER it would be possible to reinforce the traditional settlement pattern of the AONB with development that would otherwise be highly unsustainable because of its dispersed nature.	**Policy criteria** – new development should support the traditional settlement pattern of the AONB where this can also deliver other sustainability objectives	• Joint Character Area descriptions • Landscape Character Assessments (for the whole AONB and constituent Districts) • Historic Landscape Characterisation • forthcoming extensive urban survey • forthcoming historic	• High Weald Management Plan Indicators • location and nature of new planning permissions • location of housing completions

Topic	Planning policy objectives	Policy criteria	Tools / mechanisms	Monitoring / indicators
			farmsteads work	
Design and materials 🟢	• **design of new development should make a positive contribution to the protected landscape, with materials drawn from the AONB** 🟢 The planning system has a vital role to play here, both in maintaining the appearance of development in the AONB and supporting markets for local materials	**Policy criteria** - the design of new development should make a positive contribution to the AONB, either by being in keeping with local vernacular, or being of complimentary high quality design **Policy criteria** - new development should be of a design such that it can be constructed using local materials	• design guide for the whole of the High Weald (does not currently exist) • directory of local materials and craftspeople	• photo records of new development
Resource use: ***Domestic and industrial energy and transport*** 🟢	• **New development (domestic and industrial) should be carbon neutral. Use of wood fuel from the AONB should be the primary way of achieving this** • **Development should be of a type which minimises the need for occupants and users to travel, and sited in locations where this is most likely to be achieved** 🟢 Planning should aim to influence the energy efficiency of all new development in the AONB, and the energy sources used 🟠 Although planning is anticipated to have a	**Policy criteria** – new development should be designed to maximise energy efficiency. All housing development should be equipped with wood-fired heating or other forms of sustainable energy For development above 5 units this should include micro-CHP **Policy criteria** – new development should be in locations where there is	• SDP on renewable energy use in the High Weald • design guidance should include how to accommodate renewable technologies in new development • Low Carbon Building Programme • rural road hierarchies in LTPs	• monitoring traffic (car counts) on key roads in the AONB

Topic	Planning policy objectives	Policy criteria	Tools / mechanisms	Monitoring / indicators
	key role in reducing the need to travel, care is needed to only direct development to locations where existing travel patterns indicate new development would also produce relatively sustainable patterns of travel	greatest opportunity to reduce travel, and car travel in particular. **Policy criteria** – all new development should generate transport use that is significantly more sustainable than is currently the norm for the AONB		
Local produce (food and timber) 🟢	• **Development should encourage the consumption of local food through** - **new housing making provision for growing food** - **supporting commercial enterprises which deliver food to local consumers** • **New development should utilise local timber where technically possible** 🟢 Planning should encourage local food production by incorporating communal facilities for cultivation in new residential development, without excessive land take 🟠 Planning should support new and existing enterprises producing local food. HOWEVER planning cannot ensure local purchasing. 🟢 Planning should support use of local timber in new development, and also enterprises producing such timber	**Policy criteria** – new residential development should include flexible facilities for food production such as allotments **Policy criteria** – new and existing enterprises producing local food should be supported **Policy criteria** – use of local timber in construction should be supported	• planning conditions and obligations for provision of allotments and similar in new development • project-based schemes – Rural Enterprise Scheme and Processing and Marketing Grant • whole farm plans in relation to new development on holdings • technical guidance for the use of High Weald timber in construction	• High Weald Management Plan Indicators • directory of local producers • number of farm shops / farmers' markets / other outlets for local produce
Waste	• **Development should encourage waste**	*Criteria are not give here*		

Topic	Planning policy objectives	Policy criteria	Tools / mechanisms	Monitoring / indicators
🟠	**minimisation** • **Possibility of small scale green waste processing sites in the AONB** 🟠 Planning has a limited role here as more sustainable waste management depends on household choices and local authority recycling policy	*because:* • *waste minimisation is a general goal, not specific to the AONB* • *the feasibility of small scale green waste processing needs to be assessed before criteria can be set*		
Social sustainability				
Age balance 🟠 **Social balance** 🟠 **Housing opportunity (ie affordability)** 🟢	• **Building more mixed communities through targeted housing provision (often affordable)** 🟢 New housing (either affordable or open market) should be of a type likely to promote a better age balance in the community concerned. This judgement would need to be based on knowledge of the existing age structure, and the established need – ie is there potential to make it more balanced? 🔴 Planning should not over-sell its abilities to change the state of existing settlements, new developments will only add a small % to the total population of individual settlements.	• **Policy criteria** - the mix of housing development should reflect established local need – for affordable housing and necessary types of open market housing.	• specifying the type and size of new housing • securing more affordable homes through a variety of means – including private development, housing associations, local authorities and Community Land Trusts	• census data (and interim national population data) • data gathered through Community Strategies and Parish Plan work • location and number of planning permissions for affordable, intermediate and open market housing
Local services 🟠	• Supporting existing local services by directing development to places where	• **Policy criteria** – development should	• assessing the roles and functions of villages in the	• presence, nature and

Topic	Planning policy objectives	Policy criteria	Tools / mechanisms	Monitoring / indicators
	localised service use is already strong 🔴 Planning in smaller rural settlements cannot counteract the broader socio-economic trends working against the retention of local rural services 🟠 BUT – where settlements form part of a local network that supports a greater range of services planning can reinforce this pattern 🟠 Planning can also try and protect existing services and encourage the provision of new ones where there is an established need	be directed to rural settlements where localised service use is already strong, either for a single settlements or as part of a local network	High Weald	strength of services • use of services by community • data gathered through Community Strategies and Parish Plans
Local employment 🟠	• **Focusing on local employment likely to reproduce the environment of the AONB and support local communities** 🔴 The provision of employment sites in smaller rural settlements cannot ensure that it is taken up by local people unless covered by a personal condition. 🟠 BUT – where there is already strong localisation of employment new economic development can reinforce this 🟠 Planning can also provide opportunities for working from home 🟠 Exceptional dwellings can support land-based enterprises that make a strong overall contribution to sustainability – these are sustainable employment niches – more than	• **Policy criteria** – development should be directed to rural settlements where localised employment is already strong, either for a single settlements or local network. Sustainable employment niches should be identified and supported.	• assessing the roles and functions of villages in the High Weald • assessing the nature and sectoral composition of High Weald businesses • strengthening the benefits of project based schemes such as Rural Enterprise Scheme and Processing and Marketing Grant where they assist local sustainability	• ABI data • data gathered through Community Strategies and Parish Plans

Topic	Planning policy objectives	Policy criteria	Tools / mechanisms	Monitoring / indicators
	essential dwellings			
Recreation / access	• **Ensuring that development areas are well connected to the public rights of way network** Planning can deliver improvements to existing recreational resources and new resources in connection with other development	**Policy criteria** – new development should have a net positive impact on the recreation resources of the AONB	• Rights of Way Improvement Plans / Access Fora	• assessment of access to Rights of Way from development on foot / by bike
Governance / communication	• **Closer community involvement in policy making and delivery** Planning is intended to form close connections with local communities. It therefore offers an important opportunity to present and further the case for more sustainable rural settlements and communities within the AONB.	This is more a matter of practice in plan preparation than policy criteria	• closer focus in Community Strategies on the issues to be tackled in achieving more sustainable settlements in the AONB	
Inclusion / vibrancy	• **Seeking development likely to give more inclusive communities** These are central objectives for planning, encompassing housing, employment and local services. HOWEVER, new development can only make a limited difference. Vibrancy, in particular, rests mainly in the hands of existing residents.	Though these matters can be influenced by planning setting criteria **directly** to achieve them is unrealistic	• closer focus in Community Strategies on the issues to be tackled in achieving more sustainable settlements in the AONB	

Topic	Planning policy objectives	Policy criteria	Tools / mechanisms	Monitoring / indicators
Environmentally -friendly lifestyles 🟠	• **Enabling environmentally-friendly lifestyles though supportive development** 🟠 Planning has a potentially crucial role in ensuring that the means necessary for more environmentally-friendly lifestyles are in place – such as affordable housing, local services and jobs, and sustainable transport networks. HOWEVER this is not the same as ensuring that they are taken up, emphasising the importance of directing development to locations where a propensity for environmentally-friendly lifestyles is already evident. 🟢 New development specifically designed to support highly environmentally-friendly lifestyles can make modest but important contributions to sustainability in the High Weald. HOWEVER it is vital that such development is closely controlled to ensure delivery of sustainability outcomes	• **Policy criteria –** new development that enables highly environmentally friendly lifestyles, including Low Impact Development, will be supported where the sustainability benefits of such lifestyles to the AONB can be guaranteed through appropriate controls	• legal agreements, covenants, trusts including Community Land Trusts	• planning permissions for and development that supports highly environmentally friendly lifestyles • requirements for ongoing reporting on environmental and other sustainability benefits from the occupiers of such development
Quality of life 🟠	• **Ensuring that high quality of life for the individual is not at the expense of wider sustainability objectives** 🟠 HOWEVER it is crucial to understand that a community with a high quality of life can be one which is very unsustainable. The significant challenge here is to achieve both simultaneously.	**Policy criteria** – all new development in the High Weald should enhance the quality of life of local communities	• Quality of Life Assessmentapproach	• making quality of life a strong theme of Community Strategies and Parish Plans
Economic sustainability				

Topic	Planning policy objectives	Policy criteria	Tools / mechanisms	Monitoring / indicators
Local economies 🟢	• **Support for local economies rooted in the landscape of the AONB should be an overarching objective for planning polices. This will then include:** - **identifying and supporting key local sectors** - **supporting local labour markets though support for local communities** - **discouraging 'footloose' economic development which might displace economic development rooted in the landscape of the AONB due to the attractiveness of the area** 🟢 This is a core area for planning but needs to be approached with caution as this objective is currently not satisfied	**Policy criteria** – new economic development should have the central objective of supporting the landscape and communities of the AONB	covered above	covered above
Land-based economies • **materials** • **skills** 🟠	• **This key sector requires targeted strong support as described above, plus:** - **reaching beyond the scope of planning's relationship with agriculture to development making wider contributions to sustainable land management** - **the vital importance of adding value to local products within the AONB** - **the need in some circumstances**	**Policy criteria** – the land-based economy should be given targeted support, including ongoing businesses, new businesses, and justified exceptional for residence to support sustainable land managements	covered above	covered above

Topic	Planning policy objectives	Policy criteria	Tools / mechanisms	Monitoring / indicators
	for sustainable development to include tied residence, linked with land ● Planning has an important role here			
Recreation and tourism ●	• **Targeted support is needed - the central task here is to distinguish between those types of activity benefiting the landscape of the AONB, and those which 'give nothing back'** ● Again planning has an important role for this sector, but not a dominant one	**Policy criteria** – tourism and recreation activities should be given targeted support for development that supports the landscape and local economies of the AONB.	• Tourism South East's Green Tourism Business Scheme (GTBS) • encouragement of non car-borne tourism and recreation	

5.73. This analysis identifies that planning has a clear but limited role to play in seeking greater social sustainability in the High Weald's settlements, principally through the provision of affordable housing and other necessary development which supports existing strengths in localised employment and service use. Planning also has a task in setting out and justifying the case for more sustainable communities and lifestyles in the AONB, though it may not be able to deliver all of what is required.

5.74. Planning can directly contribute to environmental sustainability by giving targeted support to land-based activities contributing to the landscape of the AONB, by ensuring that necessary development reinforces the traditional settlement pattern of the AONB, and by supporting the production and use of local products, and high standards of energy efficiency in new development and use of local wood fuel.

5.75. However the ongoing health of the landscape, biodiversity and cultural heritage of the AONB is something that planning is only a relatively minor player in. Land management activities have a far more direct impact on the natural environment of the AONB. The protection of cultural heritage is something in which planning is only a lesser partner – it can ensure the preservation of features of cultural heritage but cannot ensure the maintenance and future development of the distinctiveness of the AONB's communities – this is a matter for its existing residents rather than those that might occupy new development.

5.76. Planning can give targeted support to local enterprises supporting the landscape and wider sustainability of the AONB, and those supporting local economies, but it has to be remembered that the economy of the High Weald is substantially based in sectors and activities without such local connections. The challenge is to try and grow those sectors with local connections, especially to the landscape, whilst not encouraging more widespread development of economic activity in the High Weald where it will not bring any sustainability benefits to the High Weald. A larger part in meeting this challenge is arguably played by economic policy and activities, than planning.

5.77. Planning also has an important role in enabling highly environmentally friendly lifestyles and livelihoods in the High Weald that are currently impossible to achieve. The High Weald is settled in a relatively scattered pattern. Holdings are generally small and frequently mixed – this is an intimate, small scale and intricate landscape where for centauries people and the natural environment enjoyed a tight-knit existence. Many of these features remain, though the productive relationship that made them has often faded, as already discussed.

5.78. However, the High Weald retains clear potential to foster highly sustainable lifestyles and livelihoods[30] precisely because of the potential built into its landscape for small scale close relationships between people and the natural environment. Such livelihoods would make direct positive contributions to the landscape of the AONB.

5.79. But the cost of housing in the AONB forms an effective barrier to such lifestyles and livelihoods. Firstly because access to land is usually required, but difficult to achieve or sustain without residence, and second because incomes associated with such lifestyles and livelihoods are generally low (as they are for many land-based activities). Thus the High Weald is an increasingly ossified landscape.

[30] a lifestyle is the result of a set of choices by an individual or household to live in a certain fashion where as a livelihood is the means by which an individual or household supports themselves

5.80. Planning can do something about this though, by allowing exceptional development which is designed to facilitate such lifestyles and livelihoods, particularly through the provision of accommodation linked to land which will be managed sustainably as a direct result of people living on or close to it. There is no model for such development as it forms a spectrum from Low Impact Development[31], through eco villages to new sustainable farm holdings and hamlets.

5.81. It is vital to understand, though, that such development is only acceptable if there are concrete guarantees as to the longevity and robustness of its sustainability benefits and outputs. Such is the appeal of living in the High Weald that the temptation to secure residence there under false pretences is a well-understood and established problem. Controls are needed that remove any possibility of abuse of such exceptional development.

These ideas are explored more below.

5.82. Overall a salutary exercise here is to compare the ambitions represented in Table 20 with the current performance of the communities and settlements in the High Weald summarised in Table 21. There is a long way to go to make settlements which are currently quite unsustainable **more sustainable**, rather than fully sustainable, which seems likely to remain a distant prospect.

There is also a considerable risk that the settlements could become **less sustainable** through the influences of wider social and economic change (principally increasing mobility and its knock-on consequences). Planning needs to track these issues and work within their overbearing influence.

5.83. These observations and reservations also reinforce the conclusion that the High Weald is the wrong place for strategic levels of development. The existing functionality of its settlements and their generally low levels of sustainability, suggest that a significant increase in the levels of development in them would most likely lead to further unsustainable outcomes. The existing residents of the High Weald choose to pattern their lives unsustainably because policy outside the planning system enables them to. Why should new residents be any different? Thus the inclusion of the western part of the AONB in the Gatwick Area Sub-region growth area in the South East Plan is concerning.

5.84. As discussed above, planning is likely to achieve more by differentiating between the settlements in the High Weald where there is existing greater sustainability, and those where there is not, and directing the right sorts of development to them which can reinforce and extend this greater sustainability.

5.85. Similarly the findings also suggest that houses in the open countryside can embody certain aspects of sustainability, such as greater self-sufficiency in food and use of local timber for fuel, than houses in settlements. This suggests that these sustainability attributes might also be encouraged, but these houses will inevitably pose greater challenges for accessing services and employment not derived 'at home'. Policy cannot be blind to this, and needs to find ways of capturing the former while avoiding the latter.

[31] a term first coined by Simon Fairlie in his book of the same name (1997), now in wider use - see http://www.tlio.org.uk/chapter7/ for details. Given partial approval in PPS7, Annex A, para 8.

5.86. Planning can also engineer niches for lifestyles and livelihoods which bring direct, if usually localised, sustainability benefits to the AONB's landscape.

5.87. Finally, all new development, of what ever type, can assist sustainable development in the AONB by making as great a use as is possible of local materials, by being designed to high standards of energy conservation and use of other resources, and using local renewable energy. The High Weald is not a place where there will be large scale development. Thus it is even more important that each little development plays its part in encouraging wider sustainability.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Overview

5.88. To reiterate the main findings, the High Weald's settlements and the communities in them generally perform poorly as sustainable communities or settlements from the strategic perspectives laid out in national, regional and local policy. They are not places where the majority of the service and employment needs of residents are met locally, and so generate concerning levels of travel, mainly by car. Nor are they very mixed communities, or environmentally-friendly, though their local environment is of great importance to their residents and they do provide a market for local produce.

5.89. However, some settlements perform noticeably better than others – Stapleford, Brede, and Bodiam within the sample are relatively strong local employment centres, and Ardingly, Balcombe, Brede, Sedlescombe, Westfield, Ticehurst relatively strong local service centres. Bodiam also appears to form a local service network with surrounding villages. However, some of the market towns surrounding the AONB are significantly stronger in terms of sustainability, and in being so attract residents from settlements in the AONB.

5.90. Thus, as laid out above, the main task for future planning in the settlements is to identify, reinforce and extend existing functional strengths, not to seek to transform them by new development. In this respect the approach is similar to that which should be taken in other areas of accessible, attractive countryside.

5.91. But this is also an AONB, and the economic and social activities of its communities are expected to form supportive links with the landscape surrounding them. These are not strong at present, and unlikely to be strengthened without more direct policy and action.

5.92. So the task here is essentially to try and create sorts of development in the High Weald which have not been created by planning policy and decisions to date. The connections between the communities and landscape of the High Weald are weak because prevailing socio-economic conditions there do not favour them. Planning's influence on these socio-economic conditions is not strong. Thus to make new connections requires planning to support different conditions, outside the norm, were the connections become possible.

5.93. This is planning in a precision, exceptional mode, and so will be more exacting of planners and ultimately applicants, developers and occupiers and users of the development. But this is necessary planning, because without it one of the fundamental aspects of AONB designation will slip away.

5.94. Planning should seek out those locations and those types of development which functionally encourage localised employment and service use AND which have a link to maintenance of landscape QUALITY. This combination does not create a simple development solution. Rather it means that each development opportunity should be expected to address as many of the objectives for sustainable settlements and satisfy as many of the criteria identified in Table 21 as possible.

5.95. In addition, the considerable body of landscape assessment that has been undertaken for the High Weald as a whole (*The High Weald: Exploring the Landscape of the Area of*

Outstanding Natural Beauty 1994), and those that have been undertaken in the constituent districts, together with work such as The Making of the High Weald (2002), the ongoing extensive urban survey in Sussex, and mapping of historic farmsteads provide a rich template against which to consider the location of new development. There is an evolving understanding of the importance and detailed characteristics of the AONB's landscape which should be used to help find the right locations for necessary development.

5.96. The findings and conclusions of this work therefore offer the means to boost the sections of regional and local policy addressing the AONB. Table 21 gives a detailed locally-specific run through all of the issues relevant to sustainable settlements and communities in the High Weald, strongly supported by a range of national policy. In turn it then identifies the particular topics that spatial planning is best placed to address, the criteria which policy might use, and the other tools and mechanisms that could be used alongside policy. It follows also that this also forms a template by which to evaluate individual proposals for development.

5.97. On this basis this report does not offer model policies for LDFs. Instead it offers a comprehensive package of components to be used in LDFs, recognising that LDFs will vary in their form. It also offers clear headline messages for the Regional Spatial Strategy and how it should broadly frame policy for the AONB.

5.98. Most of the topics are already covered in development plans – issues such as landscape, biodiversity, cultural heritage, land management, design and materials, waste, housing, local services, local produce, local employment and economies (including land-based economies), recreation, access and tourism. The objectives and criteria now offer greater definition than was available before.

5.99. Topics such as age and social balance, environmentally friendly lifestyles, quality of life, resource use and settlement pattern are potentially less familiar but of clear relevance to spatial planning, and its focus on sustainability. The new suite of LDFs should encompass a moving on in approach, and these are topic of clear importance to planning for greater sustainability in the High Weald. Governance, inclusion and vibrancy are also issues of clear relevance to spatial planning, particularly how planning should go about its work and dovetail with a range of other activities, such as the development of community strategies and economic development strategies.

Testing the Planning policy framework

5.100. To test this suggestion we have worked through six types of theoretical new development below, covering:

residential extension to a village

a new farmstead in the open countryside

conversion of farm buildings for business use

an ecovillage

prestige development.

5.101. These are **not** included as recommendations for future development, but to illustrate how types of new development should be systematically evaluated, and also to show how a range of types of development can contribute to more sustainable development in the AONB.

Table 22 runs through the key sustainability requirements, sustainability benefits, and drawbacks of each sort of development, and then outlines the planning requirements such development would raise – both for assessment and means of control. This systematic testing of the different types of development draws directly on the topics, objectives and criteria laid out in Table 21.

Table 22 Testing new development

Key sustainability requirements	Sustainability benefits	Sustainability drawbacks	Planning requirements
Residential extension to village - *a fairly 'normal' type of rural development*			
Located in an area of comparatively localised use of services and employment – either within an individual settlement or network Housing amount and mix to meet established local needs – including affordable housing Flexible accommodation to facilitate live-work Sustainable construction and design including the use of local timber and grey water systems Wood fuel micro CHP	Reinforces and extends local service use and employment Supports more mixed communities Access to housing for those in established need Offers potential for more environmentally friendly lifestyles Should support local design and materials Should support energy efficiency and sustainable use Local timber use May support local economy	Inevitably increases car travel out of settlement / network Possible difficulty of achieving positive landscape impact Only weak links to support for and reproduction of the landscape of the AONB, and land based sectors May not support traditional settlement pattern where it is a sizeable extension to a small settlement	Requires an assessment of local patterns of travel to work and services, and of housing needs Affordable housing component controlled by condition and planning obligation (through RSL or similar). Live work requires control through a planning obligation Design, construction and wood fuel heating arguably will also require control through a planning obligation.
This is a fairly common sort of planning case, but in order to bring the required sustainability benefits a considerable uplift in the expectations of the development is needed. The design of new housing has long been a material planning consideration in terms of its appearance and impact on the local landscape. Requiring design to also have a wider environmental effect is an extension of this approach. *The High Bickerton Community Property Trust provides an inspiring example of how such a potentially mundane sort of development can be taken to new heights of local sustainability.* The availability of a county farm on the edge of the village led the local community to bring forward proposals for 15 homes for rent and shared ownership, 17 mixed tenure homes, 4 self-build homes, 16 houses for sale on the open market, 750 square metres of employment/retail space, a new 'Rural Primary School of the Future' with extensive integrated community facilities, and new community woodland and sports field. Sustainable building methods will be used throughout the project and energy will be supplied from renewable sources. For more information see http://www.communitylandtrust.salford.ac.uk/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=22&Itemid=38.			

Key sustainability requirements	Sustainability benefits	Sustainability drawbacks	Planning requirements
New farmstead in open countryside – *creation of a new farmstead – dwelling and land and buildings, either through conversion of farm buildings or new build*			
Sufficient land (and land types) to provide a sustainable livelihood is crucial A land management plan that demonstrates how the whole farm unit will be managed for the benefit of sustainability and the landscape of the High Weald Sustainable construction and design. If this is a new development it should be of the highest quality design reflecting sustainability principles and interpreting the traditional vernacular of the area Wood fuel heating Renewable electricity generation Located to reinforce the traditional settlement pattern	Clear connections between community and landscape Sustainable use of local resources Directly contributes to the management and enhancement of the landscape Supports local products and economies Supports traditional settlement pattern	Inevitably increases car use May not contribute to local communities greatly May not support local services or provide local employment beyond household	The key issue here is the totality of the development – the combination of residence and land management to give a sustainable livelihood that directly contributes to the sustainable management of the landscape. Thus strong controls are required to ensure that residents deliver this package. Doubtful that condition and legal agreement are sufficient as there is a need for a higher guarantee, as RSLs bring for affordable housing. Thus estates or trusts could ultimately guarantee the land use as land owners. However the most appropriate mechanism for the delivery and control of such development may be Community Land Trusts – see fuller description in box. Planning is interested in the benefits of the land use, not the individuals therein.

Against a backdrop of considerable abuse of the concessions in planning for essential dwellings in support of agriculture in the High Weald, great care is needed here.
There is no difference in principle between conversion of farm buildings and new build as the overall land use package is the key issue, but in practice existing buildings should be used where available as they are far more likely to be of a design in keeping with the locality, and may also already be linked to suitable land parcels.
Due to the threat of abuse, and the significant chance of it occurring under the provisions for essential dwellings, there is little 'track record' for such an approach, although the Shetland Isles are currently considering the creation of new crofts to make local communities more sustainable (see http://www.shetland.gov.uk/coins/commpdfs/doc/6233.htm). To be clear this type of development should not be seen as the same as essential dwellings. It would rarely pass the tests for essential dwellings but would centrally be committed to delivering conservation and enhancement of the landscape through the implementation of a conservation management plan. It therefore requires different and stronger controls than essential dwellings focused on the beneficial links between residence and land management.

Key sustainability requirements	Sustainability benefits	Sustainability drawbacks	Planning requirements
Commercial floor space in redundant farm building – *already favoured in national policy*			
Located in an area of comparatively localised employment – either for individual settlement or network Meets an established existing need, not speculative Sustainable construction and design in conversion Wood fuel heating	Reinforcing localised travel to work Supports local economies Sustainable use of local resources May support adding value to land-based products Could support the land-based economy Likely to support traditional settlement pattern	Inevitably increases car and commercial vehicle use unless workers are already living on-site May not contribute to local communities greatly If not tightly controlled could offer little to local economies or communities, and significantly increase use of rural roads	This sort of development is familiar and always controlled through condition and sometimes planning obligation. To ensure that the development delivers the envisaged sustainability benefits, a legal agreement would certainly be needed.
This is a type of rural development usually encouraged, but using the sustainability objectives shows how significantly more than 'normal' is required to realise benefits to the AONB and its communities. *This issue boils down to a close interest in the nature of the activities of the occupiers of such development which goes well beyond the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987. Planning will struggle to control sufficient detail of the activities of the occupants but agreement of these requirements through the involvement of a private landlord or Community Land Trust overseeing community enterprise, and close coordination with the work of the Regional Development Agency and its local agents could do this.*			

Key sustainability requirements	Sustainability benefits	Sustainability drawbacks	Planning requirements
Ecovillage – *small development of new housing (under ten) with a central requirement that the residents are primarily engaged in a livelihood drawn from the sustainable use and management of the surrounding farmland and woods.*			
Central functional connection between residence and sustainable management of surrounding land. Seen as a single unified land use Need not be directly attached to settlement (depending on local settlement structure) Highest environmental standards for design and resource use High use of local materials Restrictions on ownership/use of cars and other vehicles Management plan for the immediate site, linked to management plan for the wider land holding Potential for site to have exemplar role	Essentially a highly-sustainable rural development – residence is intimately linked to management of the AONB, minimising external environmental impacts Local services likely to be supported Likely to support traditional settlement pattern Very local employment, and contribution to local economies Minimises car use Sustainable use of local resources	Has to be inked to sufficient land (and land types) to provide a sustainable livelihoods Will require careful siting (potentially within woodland) to ensure that the development is assimilated into the landscape of the AONB	Again the key issue here is the totality of the development – the combination of residence and land management to give sustainable livelihoods. Thus strong controls are required to ensure that residents deliver this package. The involvement of estates or trusts, such as community land trusts, is essential. There are now clear precedents for these sorts of measures from Low Impact Development.
An ecovillage offers more potential for on-site environmental gains and also for a greater positive impact on the wider landscape through land management and associated enterprises. This is a long way from what current policy envisages is needed in the AONB, but perhaps only bold development of this sort is likely to make sufficient inroads into rebuilding a productive relationship between communities and the landscape. *Low Impact Development (LID) and ecovillages are close relatives, separated essentially by a higher degree of environmental impact in built structures for ecovillages*			

and the more subsistence-based livelihoods of LID. Although both appear at first sight to be highly unusual and not practicable or deliverable though the planning system there is a small but growing folder of cases of successful ecovillages and LID. This does not mean that they have not sometimes been highly contested, but through the planning system development has been allowed in ways that guarantee the delivery of its sustainability promises.

http://gen.ecovillage.org/ is a central source of information about ecovillages. Probably the most well known ecovillage in England is Hockerton (http://www.hockerton.demon.co.uk/), though Findhorn in Scotland is considerably longer established (http://www.ecovillagefindhorn.com/). Low Impact Development is well defined at http://www.tlio.org.uk/chapter7/, and probably the best known LID, Tinkers Bubble, is described at thttp://www.tlio.demon.co.uk/tinkers.htm. There is a comprehensive assessment of LID in Wales, undertaken for CCW, at http://www.tlio.org.uk/chapter7/Welsh%20Low%20Impact%20Report.pdf, and a follow up report for Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority at http://www.pembrokeshirecoast.net/judp/LID%20Final%20Report.pdf, which has led to the policy detailed at http://www.pembrokeshirecoast.net/judp/proposed%20revised%20policy%2050.pdf.

Although there has been more progress made on LID policy and means of control, the application of the principles of such policy and the detail of the means of control used, transfer well to ecovillages. This is undoubtedly an area of planning innovation, but there is now good track record elsewhere to draw on to support the development of policy and mechanisms for delivering and controlling development in the High Weald.

Key sustainability requirements	Sustainability benefits	Sustainability drawbacks	Planning requirements
Prestige development – *development of a very small number of luxury houses with large gardens with endowment of a large area of woodland and accommodation for the forestry workers required to manage it in perpetuity* ***Under this option the sale of a number of luxury houses built to high sustainability standards would be tied to a large woodland estate. The sale value of the houses would be used to fund the building of one or more houses for woodland workers who would be employed full-time in the management of the woodland estate for conservation benefits according to a pre-agreed conservation management plan***			
A viable woodland holding is a prerequisite Sustainable construction and design of all buildings Wood fuel heating Whole-site management plan	Partial sustainable use of local resources Clear (but compromised?) connections between community and landscape Partly supports local products and economies Supports traditional settlement pattern	Inevitably increases car use Allows some clearly unsustainable lifestyles to be based in the AONB. Possible difficulty of achieving positive landscape impact	*A clear compromise to enable ends perhaps not achievable by other means. Using the value of development in the High Weald to pay for its environmental management and to establish some more sustainable livelihoods there.* *Would clearly require a comprehensive legal agreement, and again the probable involvement of a trust of estate.*
Using new development of this sort to deliver large-scale landscape management gains is a controversial idea finding no support in existing policy.			

Community Land Trusts

Where new development has to guarantee sustainability benefits, such as the provision of affordable housing for local people, the management of land linked to residence (such as for new farmsteads or ecovillages), or that the profits of community enterprise development will be reinvested in local communities, it can be difficult when this requirement rests with an individual (even when controlled by a planning obligation).

Community Land Trusts overcome this problem by guaranteeing the form of the development and its outputs through the rules by which they are established and the way in which they build and then manage the completed development.

"A Community Land Trust is a mechanism for creating community ownership of land, locking in land value and underpinning sustainable development for the benefit of a defined locality or community. A Community Land Trust is an instrument for democratic ownership of land by the local community. Land is taken out of the market and separated from its productive use so that the impact of land appreciation is removed, therefore enabling long-term affordable and localised development."
(Capturing value for rural communities (2005), CA, p.6)

They offer a means to acquire land, to develop land for sustainable purposes without heavy public subsidy, to plough the benefits of the development directly back into the local landscape and communities, and to ensure that these benefits continue in perpetuity.

More information about Community Land Trusts can be found in *Capturing value for rural communities* (2005) and at http://www.communitylandtrust.salford.ac.uk/.

5.102. These examples are intended to stimulate debate rather than as firm recommendations. The first example, a residential extension to a village, shows that with refinement planning in the AONB can not only satisfy more familiar requirements, such as housing which is needed locally, but can also help address other aspects of sustainability in the AONB such as greater use of local materials, and lessening the resource-impact of new development through appropriate technologies.

5.103. Affordable rural housing is a central policy concern at the moment, as rural housing has become increasingly unaffordable to lower income households, directly impacting on the nature of rural communities. House prices are high in the High Weald, and the supply of new housing is rightly restricted due to the need to protect the landscape of the AONB. Thus the High Weald cannot 'build its way out of the problem' through providing enough new housing to lower the cost of all housing as might be advocated in areas where large amounts of new development are feasible.

5.104. Instead a targeted approach is needed whereby affordable housing[32] is provided to meet identified needs, filling in this substantially-missing part of the local market. Affordable housing provided in this way needs to be protected to remain affordable housing. The proposals in the draft PPS3 (2005) provide clear support to such an approach, suggesting the allocation of sites solely for affordable housing in market towns and larger villages where justified, and also within and adjoining smaller villages under the exceptions sites mechanism. Initiatives such as the Rural Housing Enabling

[32] defined in PPS3 (2005) as "Non-market housing, provided to those whose needs are not met by the market for example homeless persons and key workers."

group in Kent are already in place to drive forward such work. Innovative mechanisms such as community land trusts offer additional means through which affordable housing can be provided without need for public subsidy, partially when institutional landowners such as estates are involved.

5.105. Across the High Weald it is estimated[33] that planning permissions for over 250 houses a year are being granted, but very few of these are either affordable houses or provide any wider environmental benefits. In terms of what the AONB needs to make it more sustainable these are arguably significant wasted opportunities.

5.106. The conversion of redundant farm buildings is also a familiar type of rural development which the assessment shows can be adapted to serve a wider range of sustainability objectives in the AONB relatively easily.

5.107. The provision of new farmsteads or an ecovillage are more controversial types of development, as both are examples of the planning system looking at *exceptional* types of development in an areas where most development is restricted. In both instances the exceptional nature of the development is found in its direct connections to the maintenance and enhancement of the landscape of the AONB, though there are also other potential environmental, social and economic benefits. The key issues here is rejoining people living in the AONB with managing its landscape – connections which more widely have and continue to decline dramatically.

5.108. However there can only be exceptional justification for such development if there is a concrete guarantee that it will deliver its sustainability promises. Thus there is need for strong controls, both using familiar planning tools such as planning obligations, but also going beyond them to structures such as community land trusts which give additional security of the nature of the final development and its ongoing use, plus direct means of redress should things go wrong.

5.109. At first sight such an extension of the operation of the planning system may seem unduly burdensome or unnecessary. But it has to be remembered that most of the development which has been allowed in the High Weald over the last decades has failed to deliver sustainable settlements or communities. The need to do these things is a strong policy imperative. So if actually achieving them requires different approaches to planning then these should be embraced.

5.110. The last example – prestige development – is of course the most extreme. It involves a clear compromise – exchanging very desirable development for environmental benefits. In the sense that one half of this equation clearly does not support sustainable settlements or communities in the AONB, overall the development cannot be judged as sustainable. Nonetheless it draws attention to the important point that a variety of development, including large houses, is going ahead in the AONB offering virtually nothing back to the High Weald's environment. Such a type of development, however compromised, would arguably offer more to the ongoing sustainability of the AONB.

5.111. To repeat, none of these five examples are offered as recommendations for development in the AONB. They are included to show how the topics, objectives and criteria for sustainable settlements in the AONB can be used to evaluate

[33] High Weald AONB Unit

development proposals, and how types of development can be best attuned to contributing so sustainability in the AONB. LDF policies based on these objectives and criteria could be used in development control decisions in this way.

5.112. There are definitely opportunities for new development to increase the sustainability of settlements and communities in the High Weald, but that this requires a very purposeful approach to new development.

5.113. A very important point is that the High Weald is an AONB in which securing sustainable links between its communities and landscape is deeply embedded in the Medieval origins of the landscape. People live in intimate proximity with the environment and landscape of the AONB. These are characteristics not shared with all other AONBs, particularly where there are more extensive open uplands or large farm holdings. Thus it should be expected that policies should be tailored to what delivering sustainable development specifically means in the High Weald. In particular this means finding ways of delivering sustainable development that fits with the important historic settlement character.

5.114. A final important clarification of detail concerns essential dwellings (also called agricultural workers' dwellings). As discussed above, though they may appear superficially similar to some of the examples considered above, their purpose is only to support the functional needs of agriculture. This is a much narrower policy target than supporting the sustainability of communities and settlements in the AONB. Thus essential dwellings are not the correct vehicle by which to deliver this wider policy agenda. The two should not be linked, and the requirements of development delivering greater sustainability for communities and settlements in the AONB should be expected to be different, though both forms of development need strong safeguards and controls.

Policy Recommendations

5.115. Although the study has an essentially local focus, the sorts of development that will make the settlements and communities of the High Weald more sustainable require the support of changes to national and regional policy as well as development of new local policy. This is particularly important because AONBs are a national family, and what has been learnt in the High Weald is of value to this wider group of protected landscapes.

5.116. These policy recommendations are directly connected to the objectives and criteria explored in Table 21 and it is anticipated that should the recommendations be taken up these would form the basis of the policies then developed. Thus policies should be expected to bring together several of the objectives for sustainable settlements where the types of development in question can deliver them simultaneously.

National Policy

5.117. PPS7 offers considerable scope for local settlement planning to be tailored to fit local circumstances and needs.

5.118. National policy for AONBs, however, is modest, limited to PPS7's requirements for enhanced landscape protection, and the 1991 Policy Statement's additional identification of the particular benefits of sustainable forms of social and economic development that conserve and enhance the environment. This basic policy stance, which has existed for 15 years, has not secured these sorts of sustainable development in the High Weald, and we doubt in other AONBs either.

5.119. This is because there has been no additional guidance on what this sort of development might be like, nor a recognition that it is unlikely to be delivered through wider social and economic development.

National policy should articulate the need for more purposeful development in AONBs linking communities in them with the ongoing maintenance and enhancement of the AONB's landscape. It should be recognised that this is likely to be secured only though exceptional, more sustainable types of development.

Without such a change the aspired-for connections between communities and landscape are likely to fade to near-invisibility, to the clear detriment of the AONBs.

5.120. We have a strong suspicion that the High Weald will not be the only protected landscape where these important connections between local communities and their surrounding landscape are fading away. Indeed the High Weald is arguably one of the protected landscapes where these relationships should be expected to be strongest, as it is evenly populated, and has a pattern of smaller, mixed holdings.

This suggests an urgent need to investigate the state of these important relationships across a wider range of protected landscapes, in order to establish what action is required to ensure that these connections do not fade to insignificant levels.

Regional planning policy

5.121. The new planning system sets out that planning strategy work should seek to draw together a broad range of spatial issues in order to establish the best way in order to achieve greater spatial sustainability, even if it is not responsible for delivering all of the actions required to achieve this end. In addition the development plan is now to be split across two documents – the RSS and the LDF.

5.122. Thus both regional and local planning policy need to clearly articulate how the High Weald (and other AONBs in the region) are different from other areas of countryside in the South East, and should be planned accordingly. Such planning policy should stress the importance of more purposeful development in AONBs, linking communities in them with the ongoing maintenance and enhancement of the AONB's landscape. The South East Plan contains elements of this approach but needs to go further.

The South East Plan should contain a clear recommendation that planning for rural settlements in AONBs (and the wider countryside) should be based on sound understanding of the roles and functions of settlements, directing the right types of new development to the locations where they can reinforce and extend existing functional sustainability strengths.

The South East Plan should clearly state that development in the region's AONBs should make an overall positive contribution to the maintenance and enhancement of the landscapes of the AONBs. In this way it should carry the same message as national policy – that there is a need for more purposeful development in AONBs linking communities in them with the ongoing maintenance and enhancement of the AONBs' landscape, and that this is likely to be secured only though exceptional, more sustainable types of development. This differentiation is particularly important in the South East, where there is intense pressure for development in attractive countryside.

5.123. The findings emphatically suggest that the High Weald is the wrong place for large scale development to meet the strategic growth needs of the region.

The extent of the Gatwick sub regional strategy area should be redrawn to exclude the High Weald AONB. It should be stressed that the AONB is not a sustainable location for strategically significant levels of development.

Local policy

Planning Policy

5.124. Although the existing development plans in the AONB espouse the principles of sustainable rural development, the findings and discussion of this report suggest that they need to be more purposeful in its application to achieve more sustainable settlements and communities on the ground. Key settlements policy and its variants and successors have failed to deliver sustainable settlements in the High Weald. Many of the reasons for this are not the fault of such policy, but of wider non-planning policy. Nonetheless planning policy has to grasp the complexity of contemporary

settlements and communities in the High Weald in order to extract greater sustainability from them.

Thus there are the following recommendations for LDFs:

Overall

5.125. Although Core Strategies of LDFs are expected to be concise documents it is important that they capture the essential significance of the AONB in the district, and what this should mean for planning there. AONBs are a national designation, but are all different, thus the Core Strategies have to define what is distinctive about the landscape of the AONB and how to preserve and enhance it through the planning system.

The Core Strategies should define what is distinctive about the landscape of the High Weald and require that all new development makes a positive contribution to the landscape of the AONB, and to the communities therein – *this is the fundamental test of development in the AONB being good enough to approve.*

5.126. This will set out a core spatial strategy for the AONB, which should also be shared with the High Weald Management Plan.

5.127. Understanding the existing roles and functions of settlements is key to planning for future sustainable settlements by identifying the places where new development can bring the greatest sustainability benefits.

Other Development Plan Documents should set the existing role and functions of settlements as the primary consideration in identifying the most sustainable location for new development, including close local networks of settlements

Other Development Plan Documents should stipulate that such new development should be specifically tailored to reinforce and extend the sustainability strengths of the settlement, and in so doing facilitate environmentally-friendly lifestyles.

5.128. There is a need to facilitate new sorts of development in the AONB which build stronger and closer relationships between residents and the management of the landscape around them. Such development needs to be tightly controlled to ensure delivery of its sustainability outputs.

Other Development Plan Documents should also support other development in the AONB that will specifically forge closer connections between communities and the maintenance and enhancement of the landscape of the AONB. Such development should be expected to be exceptional, in that it is likely to be permitted in circumstances and locations where other development would not be, and will need to be more tightly controlled through planning. This sort of development should additionally be expected to reinforce the traditional dispersed settlement pattern of the AONB.

5.129. Such development may, in particular, be well suited to supporting the traditional dispersed settlements pattern of the AONB. However if supporting this development pattern is the only substantial sustainability benefit of new development it is insufficient to justify the development. The traditional settlement pattern sets a template for the distribution of necessary development, but cannot justify development which is not needed.

Other Development Plan Documents should support the traditional settlement pattern of the AONB where new development is needed. In itself, though, supporting the traditional settlement pattern of the AONB is not sufficient reason for new development.

Other Development Plan Documents should stipulate that the design of all new development should make a positive contribution to the AONB, either by being in keeping with the vernacular, or complementary high quality design.

There is a clear need for a design guide to cover the whole of the High Weald, adopted by the local planning authorities as a Supplementary Planning Document.

Other Development Plan Documents should stipulate that all new development should have a positive impact on biodiversity in the AONB.

Other Development Plan Documents should stipulate that all new development should have a positive impact on the cultural heritage of the AONB

Other Development Plan Documents should stipulate that all new development should not damage the existing tranquillity of the AONB

Other Development Plan Documents should stipulate that all new development should be of a design such that it can be constructed mainly from local materials

Other Development Plan Documents should stipulate that all new development should be designed to maximise energy efficiency. All housing development should be equipped with wood-fired heating. For development above 10 units this should include micro-CHP

Specifically

5.130. Housing will comprise the majority of new development. This is because demographic change means that the population of communities will form more households and so need more houses in future, and also because the population of the South East, and the High Weald, is growing. There will be new housing in the High Weald. The issue is how much, of what sort and in which locations new housing will bring greater sustainability to the AONB's communities.

Housing policy should direct new development to settlements which exhibit existing strengths of local service use and travel to work and thus

where new development can reinforce and extend these relative strengths.

5.131. National policy sets a clear expectation that for communities to be sustainable they need to be mixed, and that the available housing stock is a prerequisite to such a mix. This, then, gives a clear imperative for new housing development.

Housing policy should emphasise the need to bring greater age- and social-balance to communities by meeting established *needs* for new housing *only*, particularly for affordable housing.

5.132. Working from home is a strong characteristic of the settlements of the High Weald which can bring sustainability benefits. New development should assist and accommodate this characteristic.

Where new housing is needed it should be designed to be suitable for working from home. *This cannot justify new housing where it is otherwise not needed.*

Housing policy should stipulate that all new residential development should include flexible facilities for food production such as allotments

5.133. The planning system cannot overcome wider socio-economic trends of rural residents to use fewer local services in favour of those in larger settlements at greater distances. New development in rural areas generally has too small an impact to reopen rural services that have declined and closed. However, where rural services are already sufficiently strong new development can provide them with additional support.

Policy for rural services should aim to protect services in locations where they play existing strong local roles. *This is a complementary policy to that directing new development to such locations.*

5.134. The High Weald is an attractive location for economic development (as is much of the rural south east). However not all economic development there will support the landscape of the AONB, especially through the land based sector, or local economies – yet these are the areas most needing support to deliver sustainable development.

Employment policy should set the central objective for new economic development as supporting the landscape of the AONB, and supporting local communities through local employment.

Employment policy should direct new development to locations where travel to work is already comparatively localised and sustainable, and tailor it to provide support for local economies.

Employment policy should give specific support to new and existing enterprises producing local food

Employment policy should give specific support to the production of local timber for construction use.

Policy for rural development should give targeted support to land-based enterprises making wider contributions to sustainable development in the AONB. This will include ongoing businesses, new businesses, and justified exceptional residence to support wider sustainable development outputs. Policy should support outlets for local products. New development on agricultural or forestry holdings that do not support sustainable land-based enterprises either directly or indirectly should not be allowed. ***Where residential development is approved it should be tied to the land holding and also to the wider sustainability outputs of the proposed development.***

Policy for rural development should give targeted support to tourism and recreation enterprises and activities that directly supports the landscape and local economies of the AONB.

5.135. With 11 District Councils covering the High Weald there is a risk that local policy will not be coordinated and that there will be unnecessary repetition in policy preparation. This is not to say that policy should be the same across the High Weald, as the AONB is diverse. The most appropriate vehicle to achieve this coordination would be a join Supplementary Planning Document.

The 11 District Councils preparing LDFs covering the High Weald should consider preparation of a joint Supplementary Planning Document for the High Weald, in consultation with the four County Councils covering the area. It should:

- **set out an agreed set of overall spatial objectives for sustainable development in the AONB, including settlement planning**
- **set out specific objectives for certain types of development including housing development, employment development, land-based enterprises, and tourism and recreation**
- **explain the necessary policy linkages with other plans and strategies**

The best way in which to implement these objectives will vary from LDF to LDF. The SPD would ensure coordination across this large number of Local Planning Authorities and give opportunity for a fuller justification for the policy approaches than will be possible in the LDFs themselves.

Other Local Policy

5.136. There is also an important role for spatial planners, under the new planning system, to set out the case for the importance of sustainable communities and settlements, and the forming of links between them and the landscape of the AONB so that these policy themes are picked up and reflected in connected plans and strategies, and the actions that flow from them.

5.137. In particular sustainable settlements and communities are themes of central importance to Community Strategies and local initiatives such as Parish Plans. If at the outset of such work the need for community planning to feed directly into spatial

planning in the AONB is emphasised, it can both improve the quality of community planning and of spatial planning. This study was evidence-based primarily through use of secondary data and primary survey data. Community planning can be an alternative source for this data.

Sustainable settlements and communities should be a key focus for Community Strategy work in the AONB. Planning policy should play a central role in facilitating such work. This work should stress the importance of sustainable communities, and links between them and the landscape of the AONB

Rural development policy and programmes such as the targeting of the Environmental Stewardship scheme, the Rural Enterprise Scheme (RES), the Process and Marketing Grant, and the Regional Farming and Food Delivery Plan should seek the sustainable management of land in the High Weald in ways that support its high landscape quality.

Regional and local economic development policy and programmes should be targeted to support enterprises in the AONB making strong contributions to the maintenance and enhancement of the landscape of the AONB *and* to local communities and economies. Business activities not making these contributions to the AONB should not be encouraged there.

BEYOND THE HIGH WEALD

5.138. The High Weald is one of 36 AONBs in England, and a sister to its eight National Parks. Although the landscape of the High Weald differs significantly from many of the other protected landscapes in this family, there will be common ground in the issues uncovered and addressed in this study.

5.139. Across rural England the challenge of achieving more functionally sustainable rural settlements and communities is considerable as the influence of urban areas, borne by the car, spreads wider and wider. Also, the dwindling of the connections between communities and the cherished landscape that surrounds them is a likely feature of all of the Category V landscapes in England.

5.140. The clear message from this study to the other protected landscapes is two fold, and comprises:

- the critical importance of a better understanding of the characteristics and functions of rural settlements and functions, as a precursor to planning for their future sustainability

- the need for more purposeful and exceptional development to foster the rebuilding of links between landscape and communities.

5.141. A further message is that responsibility for achieving more sustainable settlements and communities in the protected landscapes goes well beyond the work of the planning system, but that the planning system, working in its spatial mode, is an important forum for bringing the issues involved together, and then considering how they should be tackled across a range of policy and regulation.

5.142. This study is accompanied by a guide, *Planning for Sustainable Settlements in AONBs*, which seeks to explain how the most useful elements of the study might be repeated across the whole of the High Weald and in other AONBs.