

**RESPONSE TO CHAPTERS WITHIN THE LOCAL PLAN DIRECTION OF TRAVEL  
CONSULTATION DOCUMENT – 18 JANUARY 2021  
Uckfield Town Council**

**CHAPTER 10 (i) NATURE**

**Are there any issues or challenges we have missed?**

These policy **statements appear very passive** and do not go far enough to create new natural spaces through activities such as rewilding and tree planting.

The **creation of SANGs** should not be a default position – you cannot replace like for like – when housing is built on years and years of naturally formed rich and varied biodiversity such as the risk currently at Downland Farm, it could take hundreds of years to replace that. Rocky outcrops and evidence of the High Weald landscape is evident in the West Park Nature Reserve and Lake Wood (north west of Uckfield) – years of historical wildlife corridors preserved by local people could be lost by one movement of a bulldozer. These sites also need routine care and maintenance in their early years to enable the wildlife to become established and settle in.

Despite creating reduced parking for open space service users such as the small car park at the SANGs, there is still a dependence on vehicle travel to reach the site, likely to be in part due to the ongoing works on the site of Ridgewood Farm. However the current parking facilities do not accommodate the demand for service users. Perhaps a temporary solution is required.

There also needs to be specific protection for named areas, such as Pevensey Levels and Ashdown Forest.

**Do you agree with the proposed policy options?**

Yes, but the policies need to be firmly promoted by Wealden DC.

**Do you disagree with any of the options?**

Presumably '**off-site biodiversity**' is like carbon offsetting, but for nature. This seems no substitute for maintaining the existing biodiversity within Wealden and a lazy get out option. It does not replace like for like, as highlighted above – a SANGs does not replace thousands of years of rich biodiversity, which has naturally formed.

Wealden DC is located right in the heart of the English countryside and much of the agricultural land is of very high quality.

**Are there any other policy options we should be considering?**

Working with **farmers to encourage re-wilding and tree planting.**

Set much stricter criteria when considering development of greenfield development sites.

A review of the conservation areas – the conservation zone should match the 2015 map including Budletts Common and Downlands. Budletts Common encompasses ancient woodland and priority habitat deciduous woodland, priority habitats wet woodland, acid grassland which is very rare, and protected species such as dormice, bats etc and SSSI

level herpetology. There are also High AONB characteristics in this area, and evidence of historical settlements.

**Do you have any other comments in relation to how we can plan for biodiversity within the district?**

**Protection of the natural environment** should be a fundamental concern of all development consideration.

**CHAPTER 10 PART 2 (ii) NATURE**

**Are there any issues or challenges we have missed?**

Whilst the SANGS that have been created at Horsted Park and Walshes Park are well thought out and of good quality, **green spaces that are less managed and more natural also need to be created.**

**Do you agree with the proposed policy options?**

We agree with the creation of new green spaces where possible, but **SANGS should not be the default position. The default position should be to not build on green land, and brownfield sites should be prioritised.**

**Do you disagree with any of the options?**

**Towns like Uckfield do not have sufficient land for football and other sports or recreation.** Thought should be given as to how these can be created to cater for the needs of our growing communities.

**Are there any other policy options we should be considering?**

No response.

**Do you have any other comments in relation to how we can plan for green infrastructure and green/blue spaces within the district?**

The plan puts the environment at the centre of the planning process. But, there is no suggestion of **increased recreational green space, development of underused recreation grounds, running tracks, football pitches.** Thought should be given to recreational space not just natural space.

For example in Ridgewood, despite the possibility of up to 1,500/2,000 new homes coming to a very small area, only Ridgewood recreation ground is accessible on foot, the other leisure facilities are in the north of the town and currently under review. The football pitches are at maximum use and Ridgewood recreation ground is in need of upgrading and improving. Ridgewood Village Hall has undergone a £90k internal refurb to bring it up to spec but needs an extension and only able to receive funding for this via charitable donations or fundraising. Other recreational facilities in Uckfield also need financial support. The Town Council can only do so much. All this is unsupported by other local authorities.