

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

CHAPTER 4 – CLIMATE CHANGE

Are there any issues or challenges we have missed?

There is an opportunity to be more directive in terms of sustainable development. Wealden DC should be creating an expectation that **sustainable development in new building is the norm**, including the inclusion of low carbon building methods.

It is not enough to promote 'active and sustainable transport'. **Public transport in Wealden is woeful**. This is an opportunity to promote a public transport network (extended rail network and climate friendly buses) that can begin to reduce the number of cars on the road and to ease the gridlock faced by Uckfield and other towns in the District.

In terms of 'carbon capture' we should also be **promoting mass tree planting**, as a way of naturally removing carbon from the atmosphere.

Water efficiency. There is an opportunity to include more options to make house building more sustainable in terms of water saving, utilising excess water and reducing flood risk on new development and the surrounding area i.e. water collected in suds or underground tanks could be used for gardens, the open green spaces within the development and even toilets!

The document references electric vehicles but there is no mention of **battery disposal or charging, etc** – the industry needs more development before it becomes the norm and if there is scattered development, we are going to have more vehicle movements.

Business fuel use is low because we have limited business provision in the district. We need to have more business/commercial provision to create more employment to then increase fuel/energy consumption, reduce travel and thereby improve the environment.

Para 4.25 – discusses **building houses to a higher standard**. In reality, the challenge will be getting a developer to do any more than required by building regulations in terms of efficiency and structure of the building. Can building regs be changed on a local basis?

Flood risk in relation to the River Uck. We have had a number of very near misses in the past 12 months. A previous countywide group discussed creating a retention pond or lake in the Buxted area. Opportunities with new development taking place around Uckfield should not be missed. For example, any soil being moved from new development sites could be used to assist with flood mitigation measures. Also, the **biggest threat to flooding is building houses on the flood plain**, in Hailsham and parts of Uckfield. The concerns with the development due to be built on Mallards Drive involve drainage - the water could cause flooding into Framfield Stream and have an impact on properties in Eagle Close and at the bottom of Fernley Park. Concerns are being ignored. What were 100 year events are becoming bi or even annual events with the increased rainfall. Plus **mature oak trees** are being removed to make way for large developments, these can soak water between 50-300 gallons per day. Planting new small trees which are dying in hot summers will not stabilise the ground or help with flooding.

Improved **road facilities and maintenance** would cut down on congestion and therefore help to reduce pollution

Large housing developments are being **built on the edge of nature reserves and AONBs**; damaging wildlife and well-established biodiversity. Traffic is having a huge effect on ecology and natural cycles – the plans for Downland Farm will have a huge effect on Lake Wood already marked as an SSSI. These cannot be replaced by building SANGS. Creating SANGS will take years to develop the habitat that areas such as Ridgewood Place have destroyed. It is not always efficient replacing old with new.

Do you agree with the proposed policy options?

Whilst we agree with the sentiment behind most of these proposed policy options, they do not go far enough. We need to consider Wealden district in its wider geographical setting, considering, for example, how we can make journeys to work more sustainable. **Wealden DC must work with ESCC to address the issue of overcrowding on our roads**, caused by poor planning and a lack of public transport options.

Do you disagree with any of the options?

'Active and sustainable transport' must include a reliable public transport network.

We are still concerned that if developments are being built further from town/village centres and we have an increasing ageing population, how this can **reduce the use of the car?** Limited walking and cycling facilities may be included but it's the access from the site into the town and village centres are that forgotten. With our local terrain being steep in places, cycling is not going to be a favoured method of transport by the ageing populations, walking yes but cycling not so much. This also includes parents with young children. Perhaps the inclusion of a policy that works with ESCC to ensure the developers upgrade these facilities.

Furthermore the **development of cycle routes sound great** if starting from a blank canvas but the roads in Wealden are in a poor state of repair, with sunken manhole covers and broken surfaces, these are already dangerous for cyclists and a large stretch of pavements would need to be put in place in Uckfield alone to make walking into town safely accessible. Residents will not do their weekly shop by bike and Wealden need to be more realistic about providing more parking and making towns more accessible. Building large **electric car forecourts** as planned near Uckfield will benefit people passing through, but not the residents as in fact this will bring more traffic onto the already congested bypass and locals will be more likely to charge their vehicles from home.

Are there any other policy options we should be considering?

Waste water management

Implementation of minimum standards for sustainable development

Encouraging our public transport systems to include new developments and increase their modes of transport to ensure residents have greater access to a wider area. Ensure that these methods of transport are fairly regular as well to ensure someone can get from A to B and back to A without having to wait too long in between for the return journey.

Reference should be given to the reinstatement of the Uckfield to Lewes extension and

BML2.

Include a policy to **ensure solar panel use**. Our utilities are struggling to meet demand. More solar, wind, and water saving systems.

Do you have any other comments in relation to how we can plan to combat climate change?

Wealden DC needs to be the custodian of our natural environment. The levels of development proposed threaten to encroach on large swathes of undeveloped green land. **Development of brown field sites should be the absolute priority**. We should certainly not be building on AONB land, sites of scientific interest, or other sites of importance for our natural heritage, which are also vital in the struggle against climate change.

Local agricultural land can supply our village and town centres with local produce. The promotion and support of local businesses and local food supplies would help reduce our carbon footprint.

A policy should be included to ensure that larger developments have adequate facilities included such as **providing post office facilities, food and medical collections**.

Our surrounding countryside has helped to keep our emissions down through nature, wildlife and fauna. Taking away or damaging nearby areas with high classifications must be prevented. Around Uckfield we have **wildlife corridors** that link to our nature reserves and protected sites such as Buxted Park and Lake Wood. These corridors and habitats are full of rich and established biodiversity such as Downland Farm which needs to be kept free of development. We must protect the areas that protect us!

More emphasis could be given to look at **hydrogen propulsion** for cars rather than electric. Overall it is less damaging to the environment rather than electric and a more efficient internal combustion engine.

The relevant bodies need to look at building a **new reservoir or at least enhance the existing Arlington Reservoir** now to provide capacity for the planned new houses. This will also attract more wildlife, habitats, jobs and leisure opportunities. It will help to offset the carbon footprint of house building. If built centrally it would reduce the pumping costs throughout the district. We need to trap the flood water and harness it for drought use. The average person uses 66 cubic metres of water per year, - this simply is not sustainable for the houses that are planned for Wealden District without prior planning. There were previously considerations in the Rosehill/Clayhill area some years ago. No further information has since been provided.