

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

**CHAPTER 5 – INFRASTRUCTURE**

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

These policy aims would be laudable, except for the fact **they never seem to happen**. So many infrastructure improvements have failed to materialise despite the promises made during planning processes. Wealden DC must take up a joined-up approach with other relevant bodies to district-wide planning. Particular considerations must be how people move around the District; their essential needs e.g. education, health, shopping, banking, exercise, socialising. These needs should be considered BEFORE planning permission is granted. It is not acceptable to grant more and more planning permissions on the basis of infrastructure promises, that never materialise.

**Location of facilities.** There is a risk that facilities being provided on the outskirts of town rather than in the centre, are detrimental to the High Street. Out of town retail parks also lead to more car use and pollution.

If **road networks and the condition of roads** were improved and invested in, travel would be more efficient and it would reduce pollution.

Uckfield and Hailsham are suffering from a lack of **road infrastructure planning**. ESCC and Wealden DC are well aware that the lack of planning foresight means that where alternative roads could be built to support housing and past approved planning applications for large developments, mean that there is no longer the space for roads to be built. The decision not to make the Uckfield bypass a dual carriageway when built makes it not fit for purpose to manage increasing traffic flows. The proposed access from Ridgewood where 250 of the 1000 home development are already being built and another 500 are being screened (Horsted Pond Farm and Ridgewood House) into the small Lewes Road and meeting with Eastbourne road where other developments could be put forward will offload onto the same small roundabout. Road infrastructure **MUST** be built before new large developments are agreed or traffic will be at a standstill, subsequently increasing carbon emissions. Road networks are very inefficient in this area along with public transport which leads to more car use. The **lack of road infrastructure also limits the business that will come here** and creation of jobs.

**All the data used by Wealden DC is pre COVID.** Job opportunities are now very different to 2016 and house building cannot be based on this data. The plan clearly uses large town job opportunities and Gatwick airport as its base for house building. These will take years to recover from COVID and indeed will change forever. More people are now working from home and will need to access local amenities. Building large out of town developments will only increase traffic. COVID will also have an impact on the use of public transport. Confidence has vastly reduced in sharing space and this will take a long time to recover.

The list of infrastructure providers needs to be broader, and should include **emergency services and employment**. The list should read, roads, rail and public transport, education, community and social, utilities (gas, water supply, water waste, electric, communication), health (medical centres, emergency services) and employment. Many of these facilities are listed as outside of Wealden DC's remit but there should be policies to ensure these are included in new developments. If they cannot be incorporated directly into the new

development they should be included within CIL and S106 contributions.

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

They need expanding to take account of the above challenges.

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

Measures need to be put in place to ensure that these are more than mere recommendations. They should be elements of development that are set in stone.

5.7 In reality, Wealden DC cannot deliver appropriate healthcare provision to equal housing growth as this is not in their control. The GP surgeries in Uckfield are already at capacity with no new surgeries planned to deal with the new developments agreed or being currently screened. A national shortage of GPs and clinicians throughout the NHS will determine available healthcare provision. Wealden DC need to have basic infrastructure such as health care provision agreed and in place before new housing is passed to avoid the facilities being swamped and residents needing to travel outside the area or district.

5.11 Wealden DC acknowledges that the supply of key infrastructure networks are not in their control and again these services are being overstretched with the building already being passed. An example is the sewage being removed from Hailsham by lorries because the sewage works cannot cope. Infrastructure can no longer follow building when it is already at capacity, infrastructure must be agreed and set in place first.

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

It has been noted that **utility providers** are brought into negotiations early however we would like to ensure that if new services are required the timing of these works are planned in the early stages to avoid the current UKPN issues in Uckfield.

When an area is earmarked for development and it will be built on by more than one developer the whole area should be **looked at holistically** not just each planning application on its own merits.

**Education is an essential part of infrastructure** that is not been given forward thinking. Uckfield College has been recently rebuilt but with no capacity for more pupils despite the new build. The plans for a primary school at Ridgewood Place are also not clear even now.

With more people working from home **telecommunications** are more essential than ever again.

Providing **business/commercial facilities where people live** so there is less travel and if a new development includes business space and areas for employment, these should be created at the same time as the initial houses. This will ensure that occupants of the new housing can work locally and may even move to the area to work and thus help to reduce travel out of the area.

The **coordination of existing public transport systems** – bus, rail etc.

Infrastructure planning must take **the needs of all sections of the community into account** e.g. those who have no access to transport, or have reduced mobility, or small children.

**Do you have any other comments in relation to how we support the delivery of infrastructure in Wealden?**

**Infrastructure planning should be preceded by careful identification of the needs of the community in Wealden.** What is needed to make sure our residents have the highest possible quality of life, whilst ensuring environmental sustainability?

**BML2** has not be mentioned and would be integral to bring funding to the area. The current rail network is poor with no direct connection to Brighton and the South, nor to Royal Tunbridge Wells and Kent. Connections into London are poor and rolling stock is old and slow.

**COVID** will have a huge impact on our local economy - small businesses and high streets could take years to recover and the government planning in its white paper to 'level up' with the North could see many jobs in London and South East move northwards. The plan must have more recent data to show the full impact of COVID and the government and civil service shift in roles. We cannot continue to build houses when the jobs could reduce in this area. Point 8.5 clearly outlines that Wealden DC have no idea of how the impact of COVID - 19 which is understandable due to its recent impact. It will affect the area and that must be clearly defined before we agree a housing strategy. Many people will continue to work from home and are moving to 'the countryside' or 'coast' as this becomes more accessible for home working. The destruction of the countryside to provide housing and the lack of local amenities and infrastructure could potentially cause a wasteland of high unemployment in the Wealden area as was seen in the North of the country in the 80s and 90s.

**Ensure that the policies cover every aspect of a new development.** Services such as education need to be considered with an increase in housing. More lobbying should have been carried out with ESCC to ensure the right provision before permission was granted.