

Appendix D2 – Environment: High Weald National Landscape (Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty) Partnership

Mid Sussex District Plan

The High Weald National Landscape team has inputted into the preparation of the District Plan. The methodology and approach for assessing the impact of the SHELAA sites on the High Weald AONB has been developed and refined in discussion with the High Weald National Landscape team [ENV6, para 26 and para 29]. Similarly, the methodology and approach for the Major Development in the High Weald AONB paper has been developed and refined in discussion with the High Weald National Landscape team [ENV7, para 17]. The High Weald National Landscape team has also provided advice on the character components that comprise the natural beauty of the High Weald AONB which has assisted with the assessment of sites. These two background papers [ENV6 and ENV7] form part of the site selection process and background evidence for the District Plan.

The table below sets out the key outcomes of the High Weald National Landscape Partnership from April 2018 to July 2024 (adoption of the District Plan 2014-2031 to Submission of the District Plan 2021-2039).

| Cooperation Mechanism | Group/Prescribed body | Membership | Date of Meeting | Agenda - Key Issues Covered | Outcomes |
|---|----------------------------------|--|--|---|---|
| High Weald National Landscape Partnership | Officer Steering Group (Officer) | Ashford Borough Council, Crawley Borough Council, East Sussex County Council, Hastings Borough Council, Horsham District Council, Kent County Council, Mid Sussex District Council, Rother District Council, Sevenoaks District Council, Surrey County Council, Tandridge District Council, Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council, | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 18 April 2018 • 26 September 2018 • 30 January 2019 • 18 September 2019 • 5 February 2020 • 30 September 2020 • 10 February 2021 • 15 September 2021 • 9 February 2022 • 14 July 2022 • 29 September 2022 • 24 January 2023 • 28 February 2023 | Regular agenda items include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High Weald AONB Management Plan • National AONB updates • Planning updates including preparation of evidence and guidance • Land management updates • Project updates | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparation, consultation and approval of the High Weald AONB Management Plan 2019-2024 • Preparation, consultation and approval of the High Weald AONB Management Plan 2024-2029 • Preparation, consultation and |

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| | | Tunbridge Wells Borough Council, Wealden District Council and West Sussex County Council. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 14 June 2023 • 12 October 2023 • 14 February 2024 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grant funding programme updates • Training | approval of the High Weald Housing Design Guide |
| High Weald National Landscape Partnership | Design Sub-Group (Officer) | A Sub-Group formed of a small group of officers from the Officer Steering Group including MSDC | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 18 April 2018 • 26 September 2018 • 20 February 2019 • 24 April 2019 • 15 July 2019 • 4 September 2019 | Preparation of the High Weald Housing Design Guide | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of the Service Level Agreement • Preparation and approval of the Dark Skies Planning Advice Note |
| High Weald National Landscape Partnership | Management Board (MSDC Member and MSDC officer attend) | A smaller group of local authorities including MSDC | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 31 October 2018 • 6 March 2019 • 16 October 2019 • 4 March 2020 • 1 July 2020 • 14 October 2020 • 10 March 2021 • 7 July 2021 • 13 October 2021 • 9 March 2022 • 25 October 2022 • 7 March 2023 • 20 September 2023 • 12 March 2024 | Regular agenda items include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High Weald AONB Management Plan • National AONB updates • Planning updates including preparation of evidence and guidance • Land management updates • Project updates • Grant funding programme updates • Budget update | |
| High Weald National Landscape Partnership | Joint Advisory Committee (MSDC Member and MSDC officer attend) | Ashford Borough Council, Crawley Borough Council, East Sussex County Council, Hastings Borough Council, Horsham District | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 28 November 2018 • 27 March 2019 • 25 November 2019 • 25 November 2020 • 31 March 2021 | Regular agenda items include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High Weald AONB Management Plan | |

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| | | <p>Council, Kent County Council, Mid Sussex District Council, Rother District Council, Sevenoaks District Council, Surrey County Council, Tandridge District Council, Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council, Tunbridge Wells Borough Council, Wealden District Council and West Sussex County Council. The JAC also includes representatives from the Country Land and Business Association, Forestry Commission, the National Farmers Union and Natural England, and other co-optees.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 24 November 2021 • 30 March 2022 • 23 November 2022 • 22 March 2023 • 22 November 2023 • 27 March 2024 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National AONB updates • Planning updates including preparation of evidence and guidance • Land management updates • Project updates • Grant funding programme updates • Budget update | |
| Explanation of how the cooperation has influenced plan making | | | | | |
| <p>Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (as amended) places a statutory duty on all relevant authorities, including a local authority such as Mid Sussex District Council, that in exercising or performing any functions in relation to, or so as to affect, land in an AONB, they must seek to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the AONB.</p> <p>One of the ways the Council meets this statutory duty is through the Submitted District Plan. Protection of the High Weald AONB is one of the four principles of the spatial strategy and Policy DPC4 seeks to ensure development conserves and enhances the AONB. The methodology and approach to assess the SHELAA sites [ENV6 and ENV7] has been developed in partnership with the High Weald National Landscape team and this work has informed the site selection process and its conclusions. Information provided by the High Weald National Landscape Partnership has also been used in the site selection criteria [SSP3].</p> <p>High Weald AONB Management Plan</p> | | | | | |

The High Weald AONB Management Plan is a statutory document. The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 requires local authorities with land in an AONB (National Landscape) to prepare and publish an up-to-date plan which ‘formulates their policy for the management of the area and for the carrying out of their functions in relation to it’. Where National Landscapes cross administrative boundaries, local authorities are required to act jointly to prepare the plan. In the High Weald, this requirement is delivered through the High Weald Joint Advisory Committee (JAC). Following a formal consultation process, the High Weald JAC recommends the Management Plan to individual local authorities who then adopt the Plan as their policy for the management of the National Landscape.

Thus, as a key function and outcome of the High Weald National Landscape Partnership, the High Weald AONB Management Plan is an important document for plan-making. The High Weald AONB Management Plan has been adopted by Mid Sussex District Council and it is a material consideration in the planning process, including plan-making, site allocations and assessing the impact of development proposals or other changes on the High Weald AONB. There is also an agreed policy approach (Policy DPC4) with the High Weald National Landscape team to ensure development conserves and enhances the High Weald AONB and this utilises the High Weald AONB Management Plan.

High Weald Housing Design Guide

The High Weald Housing Design Guide was prepared by the High Weald AONB Partnership to support the objectives of the High Weald AONB Management Plan. The High Weald Housing Design Guide aims to give succinct, practical and consistent advice to set clear design expectations for new housing development within the High Weald AONB, to help ensure higher quality and landscape-led design that reflects intrinsic High Weald character, and is embedded with a true sense of place, without stifling innovation and creativity. Importantly, the High Weald Housing Design Guide is not solely focused on the appearance or style of individual buildings, but rather it is about creating successful places in terms of layout, grain and massing of development.

High Weald Dark Skies Planning Advice Note

The High Weald Dark Skies Planning Advice Note aims to support those objectives of the AONB Management Plan which seek to protect the dark skies of the High Weald. The Planning Advice Note is technical guidance, aimed specifically at helping local authority planning officers to assess lighting proposals in the High Weald, and help planning policy teams consider dark skies in their policy formulation and site allocations. The Planning Advice Note should also help scheme designers to submit well-informed and place-appropriate lighting proposals.