Rother District Local Plan 2020 - 2040

Settlement Study – Part 1

Draft (Regulation 18) Version - April 2024

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Contents

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1   Introduction

1.1   The National Planning Policy Framework[1] (NPPF) and supporting Planning Practice Guidance[2] (PPG) require Local Planning Authorities to review their Local Plans at least once every five years from when they are adopted. Rother District Council (the Local Planning Authority for Rother district) adopted the Local Plan Core Strategy[3], which is the first part of the current Local Plan, in September 2014. It is, therefore, more than five years old and a review of the Core Strategy has indicated that an update to the Local Plan is required, as some of the strategic policies are considered 'out of date' for the purposes of the NPPF.

1.2   The NPPF requires that the district's Local Housing Need be calculated according to the national government derived Standard Methodology[4]. This calculates the district's Local Housing Need to be 737 additional dwellings per year, as of 1 April 2022, which is a substantial increase over the 335 additional dwellings per year[5] under the adopted Core Strategy.

1.3   This Settlement Study forms an important evidence base document for the new Local Plan (2020-2040). It reviews the district's existing designation of settlements by assessing the function, sustainability and physical constraints of built-up areas across the district. This is important to support the council in demonstrating that it has explored all opportunities to meet the significantly increased Local Housing Need figure set by government, through the new Local Plan.

1.4   The document has been developed alongside the council's Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA). The HELAA appraises specific sites and broad locations with the potential for housing and economic development. These two documents together provide a fundamental part of the evidence base for the council's development strategy for the new Local Plan.

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[1] https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-planning-policy-framework
[2] https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/planning-practice-guidance
[3] https://www.rother.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning-policy/corestrategy/
[4] https://www.gov.uk/guidance/housing-and-economic-development-needs-assessments
[5] The standard method identifies a minimum annual local housing need figure. It does not produce a housing requirement figure. Assessing local housing need is the first step in the process of deciding how many homes need to be planned for in an area.

1.5   The scale of the increase in housing need provides a challenge for the council in what is deemed sustainable development, meaning that settlements and broad locations that were considered under previous land availability studies will need to be reviewed according to updated criteria, as described within the methodology section of this document.

1.6   The starting point and key purpose of this study is to consider, from a fresh perspective, how settlements within the district function. It builds on the principles of the council's previous settlement studies[6] which were produced to support the Core Strategy, but adds in more detailed considerations. However, they have provided an important starting point in identifying the settlements and areas of built form that should be assessed.

1.7   The council's previous approach sought to categorise or designate the district's settlements, recognising their different roles and functions as part of a wider network of settlements. In principle, it grouped together settlements that had similar characteristics and roles. At the top of the settlement order were those built areas that fulfilled most functions, had the best infrastructure (facilities and services) and were most easy to get to by sustainable forms of travel. The settlements with the least functions, infrastructure and transport links, were nearer the bottom of the settlement order.

1.8   This study will contribute to a suite of background evidence documents that will come together to provide a robust evidence base document to inform the assessment of options for growth and the proposed development strategy in the new Local Plan. It will primarily help to gain a greater understanding of the sustainability of places where people live, and how well connected they are to other places across the district. It will also assist in providing evidence that all reasonable considerations for growth have been considered across the district in relation to its settlements to satisfy the requirements of the NPPF.

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[6] https://www.rother.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning-policy/background-evidence/spatial-area-studies/

2   Profile of Rother District

2.1   There are significant geographical constraints to the overall sustainability of the district and its capacity to grow. The district is predominantly rural, with some 49,000 of the 93,000 of its residents living outside of Bexhill, which is the only major town in Rother.

Figure 1: District map
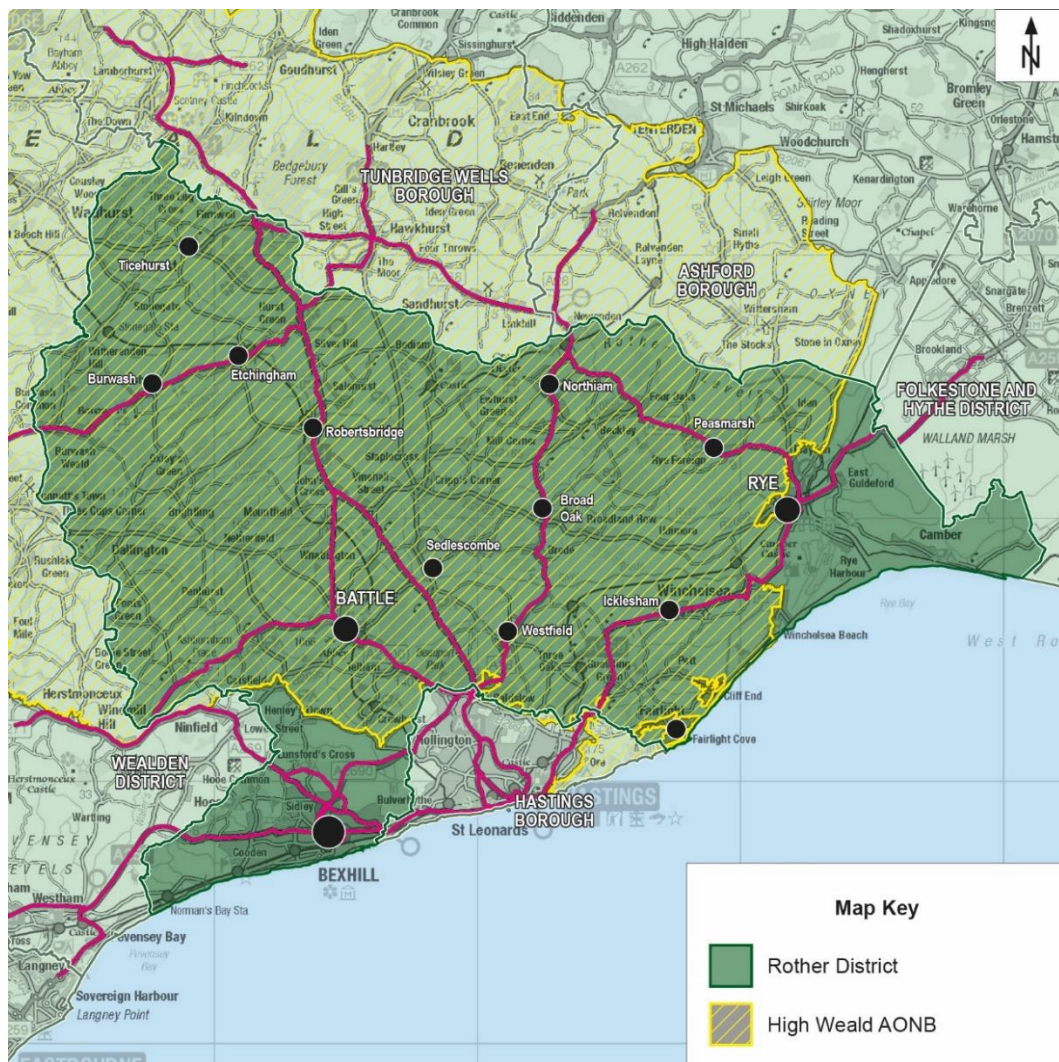
2.2   In terms of its rurality, 83% of the district is within the High Weald National Landscape (NL), an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which is a medieval landscape, typified by small, scattered settlements and a high density of isolated farmsteads. This implies that much of the district is highly sensitive to the impacts of development in terms of landscape and heritage. As a number of smaller

settlements lack the critical mass to deliver a broad range of services and facilities, this has a consequence on the sustainability of the district as a location for growth. Its dispersed and rural settlement pattern, with many settlements connected only by narrow country lanes, is also an obstacle to sustainable transport and limits the potential for access to public transport.

2.3   Moreover, where settlements are larger or outside of the High Weald NL, there are other environmental constraints to further development and growth, with 7% of areas outside of the designated AONB being the subject of national or international designations for nature conservation value and many areas being at the most severe flood risk. The growth of Bexhill itself is substantially limited by it being bound by the Pevensey Levels to the west, the Combe Valley to the east and northeast, and the sea to the south.

2.4   In terms of heritage assets, there are also ten Conservation Areas and 2,140 listed buildings within the district, making conservation a further significant constraint to growth.

3   Policy and Historical Context

NPPF Principles

3.1   The current NPPF (2023) is specific about the policy considerations for rural areas. As Rother District is primarily rural in its character with only three larger towns: Bexhill, Battle and Rye, the vitality of rural communities is an important consideration in plan making. Paragraphs 83 and 84 of the NPPF as highlighted below, draw on the importance of sustainable development in rural locations and avoiding isolated development in the countryside.

Figure 2: Paragraphs 83 and 84 of the NPPF

83. To promote sustainable development in rural areas, housing should be located where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities. Planning policies should identify opportunities for villages to grow and thrive, especially where this
will support local services. Where there are groups of smaller settlements, development in one village may support services in a village nearby.

84. Planning policies and decisions should avoid the development of isolated homes in the countryside unless one or more of the following circumstances apply:

a) there is an essential need for a rural worker, including those taking majority control of a farm business, to live permanently at or near their place of work in the countryside;

b) the development would represent the optimal viable use of a heritage asset or would be appropriate enabling development to secure the future of heritage assets;

c) the development would re-use redundant or disused buildings and enhance its immediate setting;

d) the development would involve the subdivision of an existing residential dwelling; or

e) the design is of exceptional quality, in that it:

- is truly outstanding or innovative, reflecting the highest standards in architecture, and would help to raise standards of design more generally in rural areas; and

- would significantly enhance its immediate setting and be sensitive to the defining characteristics of the local area.

3.2   Paragraph 109 of the NPPF goes further to highlight the importance of sustainable travel in managing the pattern of growth across the district. The principle that significant development should be focused on locations that are sustainable or can be made sustainable through offering appropriate choice of transport modes, is a key aspect of consideration in this evidence base document.

3.3   In addition, paragraphs 165-175 of the NPPF demonstrate the key planning considerations for development in relation to flood risk. Flooding forms a key constraint for development opportunities across the district and this evidence base document conforms with the sequential approach through seeking opportunities for future development in Flood Zone 1 first before Flood Zone 2 and 3 is considered.

3.4   Ultimately this study will help the council to consider the sustainability of places and the opportunities for growth to existing settlements. This will be achieved by analysing the existing sustainability of settlements and evaluating the opportunities to make locations more sustainable to support future growth. Engagement with parish and town councils, as outlined in this study, has also been considered in order to meet the ambitions of the NPPF on community engagement in plan-making.

NPPF and the Historical Context

3.5   The council also wishes to consider wider sustainability issues in relation to the historical, cultural and environmental features of the landscape across the district, including its predominantly rural areas through to its more urbanised settlements.

3.6   The historical context forms an important starting point for the settlement analysis and will include an assessment of the evolution of the landscape and historical land use patterns associated with the local area. This is particularly pertinent as 83% of the district's land area falls within the High Weald National Landscape (an AONB). Historical land use patterns and the physical landscape are a valuable base from which an analysis of settlement form and function can be further developed. This reflects the NPPF and supporting PPG's key ambitions to recognise the importance of landscape character and biodiversity, as follows:

- NPPF Paragraph180 – Local Plans should recognise valued landscapes and biodiversity, the character and beauty of countryside, allocating land with the least environmental value;
- NPPF Paragraph 182 - Great weight should be given to conserve and enhance important landscapes and scenic beauty within AONBs;
- PPG 'Natural Environment' Paragraphs 37, 41 and 42 – Recognises the important role of Landscape Character Assessments in analysing opportunities for settlement growth, and that requirement for sensitive development within the AONB; and
- PPG 'Plan Making' Paragraph 43 – Local Plans should provide an appropriate evidence base for the natural environment, looking at site specific considerations at the appropriate timeframe.

3.7   The council considered that a detailed assessment of the historic background of each settlement was appropriate through the desktop analysis, and that this could be presented in a standardised way for each settlement in this document.

3.8   Paragraph 11a (the presumption in favour of sustainable development) in respect to plan-making was broadened through the 2021 update to the NPPF to take greater consideration of sustainability aspects/climate change. The wording relating to meeting the development needs of an area have been tightened i.e. previously it was stated '…*should positively seek opportunities to meet the development needs of their area…*' to '…*should promote a sustainable pattern of development that seeks to: meet the development needs of their area…*'. The omission of the word 'opportunities', which was previously included, points towards more emphasis on councils being clearer on how their development needs will be met. In addition, there is now specific reference to making effective use of land in urban areas underlining the importance of redeveloping suitable previously developed land.

3.9   Paragraph 22 relates to having a vision for longer term development, such as a new settlement or major urban extension, the delivery of which would be beyond the proposed Plan period. It is interesting to note that a 30-year period is stated which realistically acknowledges long lead in periods for such development, an issue that is often discussed at Local Plan examinations. The opportunities for the council to create new settlements will be considered in the development strategy background paper to the Local Plan.

3.10   Paragraphs 180 to 183 of the NPPF provide guidance on how proposed developments within National Parks & AONBs should be assessed which underline the sensitivities of locating new development in such areas. This does not change the council's position on its approach to assessing environmental and landscape constraints and the impact on the setting of the high Weald National Landscape as part of this study.

4   Existing Information

4.1   The settlement study, although a new approach, incorporates, reviews and re-assesses elements of the council's previous evidence base, with the previous supporting settlement studies being of importance to review. Along with existing documentation, new and emerging evidence has also been prepared by external organisations, and where appropriate this has been reviewed and incorporated as part of the assessment.

External Engagement

4.2   Through early engagement with the High Weald National Landscape (NL) team on the emerging Local Plan 2020-2040, the council has been made aware of a suite of background documents that have been prepared to assist with the assessment of sustainability of settlements within the High Weald NL. These documents provide a historical evidence base that has looked at the role that landscape character, heritage and setting plays in the determination of the future potential development of settlements and their sustainability. This evidence base will be used as an important context and starting point for the study to understand the landscape and character considerations that influence the study and will be used to assist in the writing of the historic and landscape context section for each settlement in Part 2: Settlement Summaries.

4.3   The documents that have been reviewed as part of the study are as follows.

- Natural England Guidance 2019 – An approach to landscape sensitivity assessment for spatial planning and land management;
- Nature recovery networks and climate resilience mapping by the High Weald NL team;
- Rural sustainability research by the High Weald NL team;
- Historic farmsteads research by the High Weald NL team; and
- Historic settlement research by the High Weald NL team.

Review of the Settlement Hierarchy Study and Rural Settlements Study

4.4   A key starting point of the study is to comprehensively review the purpose and analysis behind the existing settlement hierarchy that was formalised for the Core Strategy Local Plan. As the council is looking at this aspect from a fresh perspective, factoring in other considerations such as the historical and landscape context of settlements, it is considered that the use of the term settlement hierarchy is not appropriate at this stage. Where the term settlement hierarchy has been used previously, the council will now refer to the terms 'form and function' to assess the network of settlements as part of this study. In addition, as a starting point for the assessment previous settlement areas have been identified as 'areas of built form' before they are then further categorised for the purpose of the Local Plan

4.5   The council's previous work on its settlement hierarchy was initially produced in support of the Core Strategy Local Plan. The council produced a Rural Settlements Study in November 2008 as a background paper, forming an evidence base to inform the Core Strategy. This study was divided into three parts, part 1, which is the Main Document, part 2 the Village Appraisal and part 3 comprising Appendices and Maps. In 2011, the council also produced Town Studies for Bexhill, Battle, Rye and the Hastings Fringes. These documents helped to inform the Core Strategy and recommended a preferred spatial distribution of development based upon the designation of service centres and meeting local needs. While it is considered that the analysis within these documents generally needs updating, it is also important that this project brings all aspects of the settlement work together into one document.

4.6   In these studies, it was recognised that Bexhill was the only settlement of significant size and status while Battle and Rye were described as market towns. The Rural Settlements Study focused on the rural villages scattered across the district. This study makes a distinction between settlements and parishes.

4.7   The term 'settlements' for the purpose of the previous study were defined as a contiguous or coherent area of housing and services, not fragmented by large expanses of intervening countryside'' and the general threshold was set at a population of at least 100 people.

4.8   The previous study also distinguished that "parishes may contain any number of villages, in addition to large areas of countryside containing dispersed dwellings".

4.9   Over 40 villages across the district had been subject to the previous study, including 34 of those with defined development boundaries[7]. However, this assessment is an opportunity to review the analysis of settlements from scratch without the constraints of development boundaries. Engagement will be required with development management officers and other senior officers, along with the parish councils to confirm whether any other areas of built form should be included for consideration as part of the assessment.

4.10   A desktop assessment was undertaken in order to provide an up-to-date position of the role and function played by various settlements in the district and to create an overview of their existing baseline level of sustainability. For this study all locations are called 'areas of built form' until such time as they are confirmed as settlements through the recommendations of this study.

4.11   This study considers a combination of information covering factors such as: its population; the range of services and facilities provided; and local accessibility considerations (e.g., local transport and proximity to employment opportunities, along with internet access) for each settlement.

Landscape Character Assessments

4.12   A series of Landscape Character Assessments[8] (LCA) were undertaken in 2008 and 2009 to support the production of the 2011-2028 Local Plan Core Strategy and some later in 2018 to support the Development and Site Allocations (DaSA) Local Plan.

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[7] Development Boundaries differentiate between areas where most forms of new development would
be acceptable and where they would not. This is discussed in paragraphs 7.60 to 7.62 of the Core Strategy.
[8] https://www.rother.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning-policy/background-evidence/environment/

4.13   The aims and objectives of the LCA were to define the relative capacity of the landscape around existing settlements to accommodate new development, where this would be compatible with a residential environment. To support this, consultants looked at the quality, value and sensitivity of the landscape, building on existing landscape character assessments of the area, resulting in a relative capacity score and recommendation for each of the defined areas. The assessment had regard to the scope for mitigation of potential development without detracting from the existing intrinsic character of the landscape.

4.14   The recommendations for each settlement area outline where there may be opportunities for development based on the impact of landscape character. The council consider that this evidence is still fit for purpose and robust and, as such, have helped inform the settlement study. The assessments remain relevant as they assess landscape character features that will likely not have changed over a short period of time. As such, it is important that they are referred to and considered as part of the desktop assessment. A number of landscape character areas were assessed as defined sub-divisions of the County Landscape Character Areas identified in the East Sussex County Council Landscape Assessment (2008).

4.15   The progression of the HELAA has led to a series of site-specific Landscape Character Assessments, that have been commissioned from East Sussex County Council in respect to HELAA sites that have warranted further consideration. These Assessments have identified where sites may have some capacity for development, as well as where sites are unsuitable for development in landscape terms. Sites discussed by the Assessment have been summarised under their respective settlement within the Part 2 Settlement Summaries document. Specific sites are not identified within this document, but within the HELAA, which is a live document which will evolve through the Local Plan process.

5 Objectives of the Study

5.1 This study aims to provide a key starting point to understand the sustainability of areas of built form. It is therefore fundamental to help inform the assessment of options for growth across the district and contributes towards a robust evidence base to support the new Rother District Local Plan. The study will be used to inform future site assessments and sustainability considerations/appraisals of strategic development options to enable the council to maximise its housing and employment land supply to meet local need. It is therefore an important piece of evidence base, from which the sustainability of locations for growth can be assessed, supported by more detailed site assessments that will be made through the HELAA process.

5.2 The objectives of this study are:

- To undertake a comprehensive assessment, under a set methodology, which maximises the opportunity to identify potential areas for future development, in line with national policy and guidance;
- To add in or remove any settlements that do/or do not form part of the areas of built form criteria, in line with the methodology, and refine the threshold for defining a settlement;
- Set a historical and cultural context to all relevant settlements across the district in relation to landscape and land use, especially in relation to areas within the High Weald National Landscape;
- To audit and assess the available range of services, facilities, and infrastructure provision in all relevant settlements across the district;
- To identify the physical constraints in and around settlements as an important background to more detailed site specific HELAA work;
- To assess accessibility, connectivity and factors which assess the overall sustainability of areas of built form; and
- To help inform the council's HELAA and provide a proactive tool to help identify further potential sites or areas of search, in addition to those identified externally through the call for sites process.

6 Methodology

Overview

6.1 The methodology for assessing settlements within the district can be divided into five main stages, and this provides a clear process for how the study has been undertaken:

- Stage 1: Identification of Areas of Built Form.
- Stage 2: Assessment of Settlement Sustainability.
- Stage 3: Consideration of Relevant Settlements.
- Stage 4: Assessment of Physical and Environmental Constraints.
- Stage 5: Settlement Summaries.

Stage 1: Identification of Areas of Built Form

6.2 It is a key objective of the Settlement Study to assess all areas of the district that are considered to be a relevant settlement or 'area of built form'. The term 'area of built form' is used initially to define the areas which will be assessed as part of this study.

6.3 The previous Rural Settlements Study, produced to support the Core Strategy, defined a settlement as "*a contiguous or coherent area of housing and services, not fragmented by large expanses of intervening countryside*". A population threshold of at least 100 people was also used in the previous studies to identify the settlements and areas of built form that should be assessed, with areas of built form below this threshold being noted, but not assessed in any detail.

6.4 There were, however, four areas of built form (Brightling, Dallington, John's Cross and Wood's Corner) which were also defined as settlements and assessed in detail. This is because, while they didn't meet the population threshold, they did have essential services such as a primary school, village hall or post office which were considered important factors in categorising places as a settlement.

6.5   It is considered that using a population threshold of at least 100 people for contiguous or coherent areas of built form, as well as the presence of important services and facilities, is still fit for purpose and are suitable criteria for defining the district's settlements. Therefore, all areas of built form that were previously identified as settlements have been reassessed as part of this study.

6.6   Additional small areas of built form, identified either by officers through local knowledge and aerial photography or by town and parish councils through early engagement, have also been considered, along with the areas of built form around the Hastings Fringes, which form part of the Hastings urban area, but fall just outside the jurisdictional boundary and are therefore within Rother, to see if they meet the criteria.

6.7   Furthermore, the areas of built form which were noted in previous studies but not assessed in detail due to not meeting the population threshold have also been reconsidered to see if their population has changed or if there are services and facilities present which make them suitable for further analysis.

Early Engagement with Town and Parish Councils

6.8   As part of the early engagement stage with town and parish councils, a series of maps were produced which identified a working draft boundary created internally by officers for each of the areas of built form within the district. This was important as it allowed the town and parish councils to establish their views on the extent of the areas of built form and to suggest any others built up areas that should be considered through this study.

6.9   Where responses were received, and additional areas of built form identified or boundary amendments suggested, these have been taken on board and considered further through the standard methodology outlined in this document.

6.10   Maps showing the draft built form boundaries can be found at the start of each settlement summary in Part 2: Settlement Summaries of this document.

<u>Settlement Population</u>

6.11 To identify the settlements and areas of built form which should be assessed in detail through this study, it is necessary to have an up-to-date estimate of their populations.

6.12 Detailed population figures, down to settlement level, are only currently available through Census (2011) data and are not available for some of the areas of built form which have been considered at this stage. Therefore, estimated population figures have been produced by counting the number of residential properties within the draft built form boundaries produced for, and in response to, the early engagement with town and parish councils, and multiplying the result by the average household size within the parish. This is the same approach that was taken for the previous settlement studies and is considered a viable and sound approach to calculating population for the purposes of this document.

<u>Issues requiring consideration</u>

6.13 A number of issues were identified at this stage, which required consideration before an agreed methodology was set. These are explained below, along with the actions taken to resolve them where necessary and relevant.

6.14 Several areas of built form extend out into different neighbouring parishes, which can cause issues when setting future development targets in the Local Plan as a potential settlement could lie within two (or more) parish areas. Examples include Playden, which extends into the parish of Rye Foreign and Hurst Green which extends into the parish of Etchingham. Where this occurs, the areas extending into a neighbouring parish have been considered separately at this stage for clarity, and have been given different names, e.g., Rye Hill and Burgh Hill.

6.15 In some instances, the areas of built form which are considered to be a part of a settlement are different to those identified in the previous settlement studies. Also, a number of settlements have designated 'development boundaries' for the purposes of the existing development plan and these generally differ from the total built up area of the town or village. This can make direct comparisons between the

estimated population figures in the previous settlement studies and this study difficult.

6.16   Some areas of built form have irregular, dispersed forms without an obvious settlement area or core, for example Whatlington. Where this occurs, an initial draft built form boundary was drawn to include as much of the built form as possible, while minimising the amount of open countryside included. In these instances, there may not be a continuous boundary and the area of built form may consist of several pockets, each with their own boundaries.

6.17   Ashburnham and Penhurst, as considered in the previous Rural Settlements Study, is a collection of scattered and dispersed dwellings across a countryside area, without an obvious core or defined built form boundary. Therefore, in order to better estimate the settlement populations within Ashburnham and Penhurst, each area of built form has been considered separately at this stage. They are Brownbread Street, Ponts Green, The Pound, and Penhurst.

6.18   The areas of built form which have been identified at this initial stage, along with their estimated populations, can be found in Figures 11 and 12, as well as in Part 2: Settlement Summaries.

Stage 2: Assessment of Settlement Sustainability

6.19   It is another key objective of this Settlement Study to obtain a clear understanding of the services, facilities and employment opportunities that are available within the district's areas of built form. It is also important to know the infrastructure and accessibility options that serve them. This understanding is essential in helping to guide development to the most sustainable settlements across the district or to those settlements where there are opportunities to improve its sustainability through additional development and growth.

6.20   This part of the assessment has been undertaken through a combination of early engagement with town and parish councils, who have key local information on their areas, and desktop analysis internally.

6.21   As part of the early engagement process with town and parish councils, the council sent out a questionnaire asking for local information on the quantum and location of services, facilities, employment and infrastructure provision for each of the settlements and areas of built form that were located within their parish, including the Hastings Fringe areas.

6.22   The information received from the questionnaire has then been validated and supplemented through the internal desktop analysis part of this assessment and, in instances where questionnaires have not been returned, planning officers' local knowledge regarding settlements has also been taken on board where necessary and relevant.

6.23   The results of this assessment have then been entered into a scoring matrix (explained below) which has assisted in determining the wider sustainability of each area of built form. This has enabled the council to easily compare the sustainability factors of different settlements within the district.

6.24   The scoring matrix devised by the council, is composed of five key sustainability factors:

- Essential Services.
- Service Level.
- Employment Opportunities.
- Public Transport.
- Broadband Access.

<u>Essential Services</u>

6.25   For the purposes of this assessment, 'Essential Services' are defined as follows:
- Supermarkets or Convenience Stores;
- Primary Schools or Secondary Schools;
- Doctors Surgeries; and
- Post Offices.

6.26   Each area of built form has been given a score from zero to five based on the presence of these Essential Services as shown in Figure 3 below.

Figure 3: Essential Services Scoring

Score	Description
5	Settlements which have access to 2+ of each of the four essential services
4	Settlements which have access to each of the four essential services
3	Settlements which have access to three of the four essential services
2	Settlements which have access to two of the four essential services
1	Settlements which have access to only one of the four essential services
0	Settlements which have access to no essential services

Service Level

6.27   For each area of built form, the council has identified all relevant services and facilities within the draft built form boundaries produced for Stage 1. Services and facilities within a 1km radius of the population weighted centre[9] of the settlement or area of built form have also been identified. This is considered appropriate as 1km equates to approximately 15 minutes walking time and so services and facilities within this 1km catchment, but outside of the draft built form boundaries, are considered to be accessible and therefore add to a settlement's sustainability.

6.28   Each of the services and facilities, listed in Figure 4 below, that are within the area of built form, as well as those within 1km of the population weighted centre of the area of form, have been given a score, with those seen as being more important to daily life being given a larger score.

Figure 4: Service Level Component Scores

Service/Facility	Score	Service/Facility	Score
Supermarket	3	Post Office	3
Convenience Store	2	Pub/Restaurant/Cafe/Take Away	1
Other Class E Use	1	Cinema/Theatre	3
Nursery Pre-school	3	Leisure Centre	3

[9] In this document the settlement centre is defined as the population weighted centre, and it is from this point that catchment areas are drawn for services and facilities, employment, and public transport access.

Service/Facility	Score
Primary School	3
Secondary School	3
Hospital	3
Doctors Surgery	3
Dentist	3
Pharmacy	3
Bank	3

Service/Facility	Score
Community/Village Hall	2
Play Area	1
Public Parks/Garden	1
Sports Pitch	3
Place of Worship	1
Library/Museum	3
Petrol Station	3

6.29 Due to the size of Bexhill, and the number of services and facilities in the town, the council has used data gathered from the National Land and Property Gazetteer (NLPG) to estimate the number of services and facilities that fall under the 'Other Class E Use' and 'Pub/Restaurant/Cafe/Take Away' categories.

6.30 Services and facilities which are only open at limited times have been given half scores. Services and facilities which were found to be permanently closed at the time of the desktop analysis have not been scored. In instances where services and facilities share a building, a separate score has been given for each one, for example, where post offices are within convenience stores.

6.31 Supermarkets are defined as having a minimum retail floorspace of at least 200sqm. Convenience stores are defined as shops up to 200sqm that supply everyday items, including food, drinks, newspapers and confectionary.

6.32 Each area of built form has then been given a score from zero to five based on the combined services and facilities component score, as shown in Figure 5 below.

Figure 5: Service Level Scoring

Score	Description
5	Settlements with a service level component score of 900 or more
4	Settlements with a service level component score of 300 to 900
3	Settlements with a service level component score of 100 to 300
2	Settlements with a service level component score of 30 to 100
1	Settlements with a service level component score of 10 to 30
0	Settlements with a service level component score of 0 to 10

<u>Employment Opportunities</u>

6.33   To broadly assess the range of employment opportunities within the district, the council has conducted a desktop analysis of property types, using GIS.

6.34   Again, using data gathered from the NLPG, the council has identified the type of property at each address within the draft built form boundaries for all the areas of built form identified in Stage 1.

6.35   Each property type that could potentially employ people has been given an appropriate score, which is reflected in Figure 6.

6.36   Employment sites identified in the Employment Sites Review background paper[10] (produced for the DaSA Local Plan in 2016) which are outside of the draft built form boundaries but within a 2km radius of the population weighted centre of areas of built form have also been scored for each NLPG property type within the site.

6.37   It should be noted that, while there have been no significant employment sites created since 2016, the findings of any following employment sites work will be incorporated into the employment analysis here.

Figure 6: NLPG Property Type Business and Employment Scoring

Property Type	Score
Hospitals	4
Colleges	3
Offices	3
Commercial; Education; Secondary School	2
Commercial; Offices; Offices and work studios	2
Factories & Manufacturing	2
Industrial	2
Offices and work studios	2
Secondary School	2
Banks/financial services	1
Care homes	1

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[10] https://www.rother.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning-policy/background-evidence/employment-and-retail/

Property Type	Score
Commercial; Education; Primary, Junior, Infant or Middle School	1
Commercial; Industrial; Warehouses	1
Commercial; Industrial; Workshops	1
Mineral workings & quarries/mines	1
Police Station	1
Primary, Junior, Infant or Middle School	1
Warehouses	1
Wholesale distribution	1
Workshops	1
Agricultural	0.5
Ambulance Station	0.5
Amusements	0.5
Animal Sanctuary	0.5
Arenas and stadia	0.5
Betting offices	0.5
Builders yards	0.5
Catteries	0.5
Coastguard Station	0.5
Commercial	0.5
Commercial; Hotels, Boarding and Guest Houses; Holiday Let, Other Accom.	0.5
Commercial; Leisure	0.5
Commercial; Leisure; Sporting activities e.g., leisure centre, golf course	0.5
Commercial; Medical; Professional medical services	0.5
Commercial; Retail	0.5
Commercial; Retail; Estate agents	0.5
Commercial; Retail; Public houses and bars	0.5
Commercial; Retail; Restaurants and cafes	0.5
Commercial; Retail; Shops	0.5
Commercial; Utilities; Waste management	0.5
Community service centres	0.5
Community Services	0.5
CR09 Other Licensed Premises	0.5
Dentist	0.5
Education	0.5
Estate agents	0.5
Farms	0.5
Fast food outlets / takeaways (hot and cold)	0.5
Fire Station	0.5

Property Type	Score
Fisheries	0.5
GP surgeries and clinics	0.5
Horticulture	0.5
Hotel	0.5
Hotels, Boarding and Guest Houses	0.5
Kennels	0.5
Leisure	0.5
Libraries	0.5
Licensed private members clubs	0.5
Lifeboat Station	0.5
Maintenance depots	0.5
Markets (indoor & outdoor)	0.5
Medical	0.5
Medical laboratories	0.5
Mixed	0.5
Museums	0.5
Nursery/Creche	0.5
Other educational establishments	0.5
Other utility use	0.5
Petrol filling stations	0.5
Power stations/energy production	0.5
Professional medical services	0.5
Public and village halls	0.5
Public houses and bars	0.5
Recycling sites	0.5
Restaurants and cafes	0.5
Retail	0.5
Shops	0.5
Special Needs establishments	0.5
Sporting activities e.g., leisure centre, golf course	0.5
Stations and interchanges	0.5
Theatres/arenas/stadium	0.5
Transport	0.5
Utilities	0.5
Vet	0.5
Waste management	0.5
Water/sewage treatment works	0.5

6.38   Each area of built form has then been given a score from zero to five based on the combined business and employment score, as shown in Figure 7 below.

Figure 7: Employment Opportunities Scoring

Grade	Description
5	Settlements with a business and employment score of 900 or more
4	Settlements with a business and employment score of 300 to 900
3	Settlements with a business and employment score of 100 to 300
2	Settlements with a business and employment score of 30 to 100
1	Settlements with a business and employment score of 10 to 30
0	Settlements with a business and employment score of 0 to 10

6.39   It should be noted that the NLPG GIS data that identifies property types is not available for areas within Hastings Borough. Consequently, the employment scores for Hastings Fringe settlements do not represent the full level of employment that is accessible from these settlements. However, it is not assumed that the employment scores of the Hastings Fringe settlements would be significantly higher, as each is over 2km from Hastings Town Centre.

Public Transport

6.40   Public transport availability is an important factor in sustainability as it reduces reliance on private car use. Therefore, it is important to assess access to bus services and train stations.

6.41   Accessibility to bus services has been assessed using bustimes.org[11]. This has allowed the council to assess both the number of bus services available to an area of built form, as well as the quality of those bus services.

6.42   Bus service quality has been defined as follows:

- Good Service - 10 or more inbound and outbound buses for at least five days per week.

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[11] https://bustimes.org/map#14/50.85/0.465

- Average Service - Five to nine inbound and outbound buses for at least five days per week.
- Infrequent Service - Less than five inbound and outbound buses for at least five days per week.
- Limited Service - Few inbound and outbound buses and only operate a few days per week.

6.43   There are limited situations where a settlement is frequented by two average services, that have very similar connections, and effectively constitute one good service of 10 or more buses. In these situations, public transport availability is scored as if the settlement had one good service.

6.44   Accessibility to train stations has also been considered in this assessment. Train stations within, or immediately adjacent to, the draft built form boundaries produced for Stage 1 have been considered, as well as those within a 2km radius of the population weighted centre of the area of built form. This is similar to the approach taken in the previous settlement studies.

6.45   Each area of built form has been given a score from zero to five based on public transport accessibility, as shown in Figure 8 below.

Figure 8: Public Transport Scoring

Grade	Description
5	Settlements with access to multiple Train Stations and Good Bus Services
4	Settlements with access to a Train Station and a Good Bus Service
3	Settlements with access to either a Train Station or a Good Bus Service
2	Settlements with access to an Average Bus Service
1	Settlements with access to an Infrequent Bus Service
0	Settlements with no access to Bus Services or only Limited Bus Services

Broadband Access

6.46   Accessibility to broadband internet services is an important sustainability factor as it allows people to easily access information and services online, as well as allowing greater participation in working from home initiatives.

6.47   Broadband accessibility for each of the district's areas of built form has been assessed using Ofcom's Broadband Availability checker[12].

6.48   This was initially achieved through the use of a 'heat map' style service which showed the approximate speeds that were available in certain areas. This service appears to no longer be available however, so each of the areas of built form have been reassessed using the post code checking service. Essentially this means selecting a post code near to the population weighted centre of an area of built form and scoring the broadband speeds that are available to that post code.

6.49   Download speeds have been defined as follows:

- Ultrafast Broadband - 300Mbit/s or more
- Superfast Broadband - between 30Mbit/s and 300Mbit/s
- Standard Broadband - between 10Mbit/s and 30Mbit/s
- Poor Broadband - between 0Mbit/s and 10Mbit/s

6.50   Each area of built form has been given a score from zero to three based on the measured download speed, as shown in Figure 9 below.

Figure 9: Broadband Access Scoring

Grade	Description
3	Settlements which have access to Ultrafast Broadband
2	Settlements which have access to Superfast Broadband
1	Settlements which have access to Standard Broadband
0	Settlements which have access to Poor Broadband

6.51   It should be noted that it is not possible to accurately determine download speeds across the whole area of built form so, in some cases, available download speeds could vary within the same settlement.

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[12] https://checker.ofcom.org.uk/en-gb/broadband-coverage

Stage 3: Consideration of Relevant Settlements

6.52 At this stage, it is possible to determine which areas of built form should be considered as relevant settlements for the purposes of this study and which areas of built form can be dismissed from further assessment.

6.53 All areas of built form with an estimated population greater than 100 people are included as a relevant settlement, as well as those areas of built form that have access to one or more of the following essential services and facilities:

- Supermarket or Convenience Store.
- Primary School or Secondary School.
- Doctors Surgery.
- Post Office.

6.54 The areas of built form which are considered to be relevant settlements for the purposes of this study are assessed further in Stage 4 and summarised in Part 2: Settlement Summaries. Relevant settlements are listed in the Settlement Sustainability Score Table in Figure 12 on page 40 and at the start of Part 2: Settlement Summaries.

6.55 Areas of built form which have been dismissed from further analysis are listed in Figure 11 on page 37.

Stage 4: Assessment of Physical and Environmental Constraints

6.56 Another key objective of the Settlement Study is to ascertain the potential for land that may be suitable for future development, based on the physical and environmental constraints that exist in and around the settlements.

6.57 This has been achieved by identifying potential sites or 'areas of search' which are not subject to designations of significant environmental importance, historic importance, landscape importance or severe topography, through a combination of

desktop analysis using the council's GIS, Google Earth and previous Landscape Character Assessments.

6.58   The types of physical and environmental constraints that have been considered during the desktop analysis are presented in Figure 10 below.

Figure 10: Physical and Environmental Constraints Analysis for Settlements

Landscape value and sensitivity to new development
- Landscape openness (views into and out of site/area).
- Landscape importance.
- Formal/informal uses – evidence that the site may be used by the community.
- Condition of the landscape - well maintained or neglected.
- Landscape Character Assessment designated views.
- Recommendations from the existing Landscape Character Assessment Reports.

Landscape designations
- Strategic Gaps and Green Gaps (subject to review as part of the Local Plan/Neighbourhood Plan process).
- Open Spaces.
- Local Green Spaces (subject to review as part of the Neighbourhood Plan process).
- Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs).

High Weald National Landscape
- Whether the settlement is within or partly within the designated AONB.

Where a settlement is within or partly within the designated AONB, the following components as identified in the High Weald AONB Management Plan have also been assessed:
- Geology, landform, water systems and climate (topography and watercourses).
- Settlement (historic settlement pattern and scale of development relative to settlement).
- Routeways (impact on adjacent historic routeways, ecology and archaeology).
- Woodland (on site and adjacent woodland and ancient woodland including downstream).
- Field and heath (field systems and meadows / heathland – looking at Historic Land Characterisation (HLC) data).
- Public understanding and enjoyment (including views (where known), enjoyment of public rights of way and public open space).

Environmental and wildlife designations, Natural capital and ecosystems
- International designations (Special Protections Areas (SPA), Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), Ramsar sites, National Nature Reserves (NNR)).

- Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Local Wildlife Sites (LWS), Local Geological Sites, former/historic landfill sites.
- Ancient Woodland.
- Combe Valley Countryside Park.
- Water catchment areas (Pevensey Levels Hydrological Catchment Area, Fairlight and Pett Level Drainage Area).
- Groundwater source protection zones.
- Biodiversity Opportunity Areas.
- Priority Habitat Inventory.

The extent and location of heritage assets
- Listed Buildings.
- Scheduled Monuments.
- Conservation Areas.
- Archaeological Notification Areas.
- Registered Battlefields, Registered Parks and Gardens.
- Historic Field Boundaries.

Flood Risk
- Tidal and fluvial flood risk (Flood Zones 2, 3a & 3b).
- Surface water flood risk.

Areas of severe or important site topography
- Ordnance Survey (OS) contour data and Google Earth have been used to identify areas in which it will not be possible to develop because of the land's topography.

Other considerations that may be relevant
- East Sussex, South Downs and Brighton & Hove Waste and Minerals Local Plan consultation areas.

6.59   Using the council's GIS, detailed constraints maps have been produced for each settlement within the district and can be found in Part 3: Appendices and Maps.

6.60   The Constraints Maps show the constraints which affect the settlements, along with the areas of land which are relatively unconstrained and may be suitable for development.

<u>Landscape Character Assessments</u>

6.61   It is important to note that Landscape Character Assessments do not currently exist for all of the district's settlements and, therefore, it has not been possible to assess in detail the impact on landscape character in some areas. If such areas are not constrained by other means, then this has been noted in the individual summaries in Part 2: Settlement Summaries, along with the recommendation that further Landscape Character Assessments be undertaken.

6.62   A list of all additional Landscape Character Assessments that are required can be found under Section 6: Conclusions.

Stage 5: Settlement Summaries

6.63   The summaries found in Part 2: Settlement Summaries draw together all of the findings from Stages 1 to 4 of this study and comprise of the following information:

- Settlement Map.
- Settlement Overview.
- Historical and Landscape Character.
- Physical and Environmental Constraints.
- Settlement Sustainability.
- Potential Land Availability.
- Recommendations for the Local Plan.

6.64   Each individual settlement has been summarised, except in cases where settlements are clearly interlinked and contiguous, for example Peasmarsh and Flackley Ash or Beckley and Four Oaks. In these instances, the settlements have been summarised together.

<u>Settlement Map</u>

6.65   The Settlement Map shows the extent of the area which has been considered as the area of built form for the purposes of this study. The settlement's location

within the district and its proximity to other settlements can be seen in the District Overview map at the start of Part 2: Settlement Summaries.

Settlement Overview

6.66 The Settlement Overview presents a summary of the settlement's location within the district, its relationship to other settlements or areas of built form and its relationship to the local landscape and geography, as well as the form of the settlement itself and whether it has development boundary defined in the current Local Plan.

6.67 The number of residential properties within the settlement and the estimated population is also included here.

Historical and Landscape Character

6.68 This section is broken down into two subsections, 'Heritage and History' and 'Landscape Character'.

6.69 The Heritage and History subsection draws on wide variety of sources, including local knowledge, parish council websites and other historical websites and sources. It summarises the history of the settlement and how it has developed over the years.

6.70 The Landscape Character subsection presents a general overall view of the character of the surrounding landscape, as well as the wider area. For areas where previous Landscape Character Assessments have been completed, the conclusions of those assessments have also been included.

Physical and Environmental Constraints

6.71 This section summarises the physical and environmental constraints affecting the settlement, drawing from the findings of Stage 4 of this study.

<u>Settlement Sustainability</u>

6.72   This section summarises the findings from Stage 2 of this study.

<u>Current Development Commitments</u>

6.73   This section notes any significant developments that have been allocated or permissioned in the vicinity of the settlement.

<u>Summary of Settlement Strengths and Weaknesses</u>

6.74   This is a brief, bullet point summary of the strengths and weaknesses for each settlement, considering all of the preceding information and assessment.

<u>Recommendations for the Local Plan</u>

6.75   The final part of the Settlement Summary makes recommendations regarding the sustainability of each settlement. The Settlement Study forms part of the evidence base, and alongside other documents, is intended to inform the development strategy for the Local Plan. As such, any recommendations made in respect of settlement sustainability sit parallel to other considerations, and it is not designed to direct development or designate settlements at this stage. The recommendations in this report fall under three subsections:

- Overall sustainability;
- Opportunities to improve sustainability within the settlement; and
- Ability for new growth to support additional services and facilities.

6.76   The settlement's 'overall sustainability' considers the settlement's sustainability score as the outcome of its services and facilities, access to public transport, employment and broadband connectivity. Settlements are grouped according to their score and can be compared in this way.

6.77   The opportunities to improve sustainability subsection highlights and summarises any sustainability needs that could be addressed through a reasonable level of development.

7   Conclusions

7.1   This section of the Settlement Study discusses the general findings and conclusions that can be drawn out of the assessments made in Stages 1 to 4. More detailed summaries for each settlement can be found in Part 2: Settlement Summaries.

Identified Areas of Built Form and Settlements

7.2   In total, there have been 101 areas of built form identified within the district, including the Bexhill subdivisions of Central Bexhill, Sidley and Little Common.

7.3   Of the 101 areas of built form which have been identified, 72 have been determined to be relevant settlements for the purposes of this study and have been analysed in full. These are listed in the Settlement Sustainability Score Table, see Figure 12 below, as well as at the start of Part 2: Settlement Summaries.

7.4   The 30 remaining areas of built form have been dismissed from further analysis as they do not meet the requirements of having an estimated population of at least 100 people or having access to at least one of the four essential services and facilities, as discussed in paragraph 6.26 of Section 6: Methodology (see page 21). These areas of built form are therefore not sustainable locations for growth that the Local Plan should focus on, and any windfall development would be considered on an individual basis based on their planning merits.

7.5   Areas of built form which have been dismissed from further analysis are listed in Figure 11 below and briefly discussed in the 'Other Settlements and Areas of Built Form' section at the end of Part 2: Settlement Summaries.

Figure 11: Areas of built form dismissed from further analysis

Parish/Area	Settlement	Est. Population
Ashburnham and Penhurst	Brownbread Street	22
Ashburnham and Penhurst	Penhurst	7
Ashburnham and Penhurst	Ponts Green	29
Ashburnham and Penhurst	The Pound	17
Beckley	Clayhill	57
Bexhill	Whydown	90
Brede	Broadland Row	46
Brightling	Brightling	53
Brightling	Hollingrove	34
Brightling	Oxley's Green	31
Brightling	Twelve Oaks	26
Camber	Jury's Gap	99
Catsfield	Henley's Down	48
Crowhurst	Green Street	23
Etchingham	Burgh Hill	73
Ewhurst	Ewhurst Green	97
Guestling	Doleham	35
Guestling	Guestling Thorn	51
Icklesham	Broad Street	21
Mountfield	John's Cross	70
Mountfield	Vinehall Street	65
Northiam	Horns Cross	55
Rye Foreign	Bowler's Town	42
Rye Foreign	Rye Foreign	68
Salehurst and Robertsbridge	Salehurst	48
Ticehurst	Wallcrouch	78
Udimore	Cock Marling	37
Westfield	Kent Street	74
Westfield	Moat Lane	86
Whatlington	Woodman's Green	95

7.6   It is worth noting that Brownbread Street, Penhurst, Ponts Green and The Pound, collectively known as Ashburnham, as well as Brightling, were analysed in full in the previous Rural Settlements Study due to the presence of a village hall. They do not, however, meet the criteria for this study and as such have been dismissed from further analysis.

Settlement Sustainability

7.7   Sustainability modelling has been completed for all relevant settlements and the results have been compiled into the Settlement Sustainability Score Table shown in Figure 12 below. This has allowed the council to easily compare the different settlements and identify where the sustainability factors can be improved.

7.8   See Figure A2.2 in Part 3: Appendices and Maps for a table which shows a breakdown of the individual sustainability factors for each settlement.

Figure 12: Settlement Sustainability Score Table

	Settlement	Parish/Area	Essential Services (5)	Service Level (5)	Public Transport (5)	Employment Opportunities (5)	Internet Broadband (3)	Total Score (23)	Estimated Population
Highly Sustainable	Bexhill	Bexhill	5	5	5	5	2	22	49,715
	Central (Bexhill)	Bexhill	5	4	5	4	2	20	14,906
Sustainable	Rye	Rye	4	4	4	4	2	18	5,443
	Battle	Battle	4	3	4	4	2	17	6,447
	Sidley (Bexhill)	Bexhill	4	3	4	3	2	16	10,313
	Little Common (Bexhill)	Bexhill	4	3	4	2	2	15	7,302
Moderately Sustainable	Northbridge Street	Salehurst and Robertsbridge	4	2	4	2	2	14	329
	Robertsbridge	Salehurst and Robertsbridge	4	2	4	2	2	14	1,895
	Rock Lane and Austen Way	Hastings Fringes	4	2	3	2	2	13	224
	Ticehurst	Ticehurst	4	2	3	2	2	13	2,108
	Northiam	Northiam	4	2	2	2	2	12	1,903
	Westfield	Westfield	4	2	2	2	2	12	1,766
	Camber	Camber	3	2	3	2	2	12	2,136
	Playden	Playden	3	2	3	2	2	12	112
	Rye Hill	Rye Foreign	3	2	3	2	2	12	292
	Etchingham	Etchingham	3	1	3	2	3	12	528
Potentially Sustainable	Burwash	Burwash	4	2	2	1	2	11	1,530
	Peasmarsh	Peasmarsh	4	2	2	1	2	11	1,042
	Sedlescombe	Sedlescombe	4	1	2	2	2	11	1,025
	Winchelsea	Icklesham	3	1	4	1	2	11	607
	Chowns Hill and Ivyhouse Lane	Hastings Fringes	2	1	3	2	2	10	136
	Woodlands Way and Parkwood Road	Hastings Fringes	2	1	3	2	2	10	242
	Hurst Green	Hurst Green	2	1	4	1	2	10	1,315
	Saltbarn Lane	Playden	2	1	3	1	3	10	24
	Dale Hill	Ticehurst	2	1	3	2	2	10	63
	Rye Harbour	Icklesham	1	1	2	4	2	10	817
	East Guldeford	East Guldeford	1	0	4	2	3	10	37
	Broad Oak	Brede	3	1	2	1	2	9	1,010
	Staplecross	Ewhurst	3	1	2	1	2	9	527
	Fairlight Cove	Fairlight	3	1	3	0	2	9	1,496
	Crowhurst	Crowhurst	2	1	3	1	2	9	697
	Westfield Lane	Hastings Fringes	2	1	3	1	2	9	365
	Icklesham	Icklesham	2	1	3	1	2	9	890
	Poppyfield	Playden	2	1	3	1	2	9	48
	Winchelsea Beach	Icklesham	1	1	3	2	2	9	1,029
	Flimwell	Ticehurst	1	1	3	2	2	9	898
	Catsfield	Catsfield	3	1	2	0	2	8	403

	Settlement	Parish/Area	Essential Services (5)	Service Level (5)	Public Transport (5)	Employment Opportunities (5)	Internet Broadband (3)	Total Score (23)	Estimated Population
Low Sustainability	Iden	Iden	2	1	2	1	2	8	391
	Pett	Pett	2	1	2	1	2	8	667
	Bodiam	Bodiam	1	1	2	2	2	8	216
	Netherfield	Battle	3	1	0	1	2	7	462
	Flackley Ash	Peasmarsh	2	1	2	0	2	7	143
	Stonegate	Ticehurst	1	1	3	1	1	7	233
	Guestling Green	Guestling	1	0	4	0	2	7	147
	Mountfield	Mountfield	0	1	2	2	2	7	252
	Dallington	Dallington	3	1	0	0	2	6	61
	Wood's Corner	Dallington	3	1	0	0	2	6	38
	Swiftsden	Hurst Green	1	1	3	0	2	7	88
	Catsfield Stream	Catsfield	2	1	0	0	3	6	63
	Beckley	Beckley	1	1	2	0	2	6	284
	King's Bank	Beckley	1	1	2	0	2	6	31
	Brede	Brede	1	0	2	1	2	6	163
	Cackle Street	Brede	1	0	2	1	2	6	323
	Burwash Common	Burwash	1	0	2	1	2	6	400
	Bachelor's Bump	Hastings Fringes	0	0	4	0	2	6	169
	Cottenden	Ticehurst	1	1	0	1	2	5	30
	Three Leg Cross	Ticehurst	1	1	0	1	2	5	108
	Four Oaks	Beckley	1	0	2	0	2	5	304
	Friar's Hill	Guestling	1	0	2	0	2	5	70
	Lunsford Cross	Bexhill	0	0	3	0	2	5	202
	Norman's Bay	Bexhill	0	0	3	0	2	5	197
	Burwash Weald	Burwash	0	0	2	1	2	5	175
	Cripp's Corner	Ewhurst	0	0	2	0	3	5	131
	Fairlight	Fairlight	0	0	3	0	2	5	192
	Three Oaks	Guestling	0	0	3	0	2	5	290
	Pett Level	Pett	0	0	3	0	2	5	460
	Whatlington	Whatlington	0	0	2	0	3	5	154
	Silver Hill	Hurst Green	1	0	3	0	1	5	95
Not Sustainable	Udimore	Udimore	0	0	1	0	3	4	140
	Houghton Green	Playden	1	0	1	0	1	3	44
	Mill Corner	Northiam	0	0	1	0	2	3	160

<u>Highly Sustainable Settlements</u>

Bexhill

7.9   Bexhill has an estimated population of 49,715 and is, by far, the most populous town within Rother District, accounting for roughly half of the district's entire population.

7.10   It is, perhaps, unsurprising then that Bexhill has been assessed as being the most sustainable settlement in the district, scoring 22 out of 23 overall. It has scored maximum points for all sustainability factors except for Internet Broadband, as Ultrafast Broadband is not yet available in the town.

7.11   As well as modelling the sustainability of Bexhill as whole, the areas of Central Bexhill, Sidley and Little Common have also been modelled by considering sustainability factors within 1km of the middle of their respective Town/District Centres. This subdivision of Bexhill into several centres responds to the need to consider settlement areas that can function as 'walkable' communities, and is indicated through the 1km radius.

Central Bexhill

7.12   Central Bexhill has also been assessed as being a highly sustainable location, scoring 20 out of 23 overall. It has a high level of access to essential services and public transport and good levels of services and facilities and employment opportunities. This is to be expected considering that the majority of the services and facilities within Bexhill Town are clustered around the Town Centre.

<u>Sustainable Settlements</u>

Sidley, Bexhill

7.13   Sidley, Bexhill has scored 16 out of 23 indicating good overall sustainability. It has good access to essential services and public transport and moderately good levels of services and facilities and employment opportunities.

Little Common, Bexhill

7.14 Little Common, Bexhill has scored 15 out of 23 also indicating good overall sustainability. It has good access to essential services and public transport, moderately good levels of services and facilities and moderate employment opportunities.

The Market Towns of Battle and Rye

7.15 The market towns of Battle and Rye are the next two most populous settlements in the district with estimated populations of 6,447 and 5,443 respectively. Both towns perform well in terms of sustainability, with Battle scoring 17 out of 23 and Rye scoring 18 out of 23, again indicating good overall sustainability.

7.16 Rye scores slightly better than Battle due to better access to general services and facilities.

Moderately Sustainable Settlements

7.17 Robertsbridge and Northbridge Street have been assessed as the most sustainable rural villages in the district, with each settlement scoring 14 out of 23, followed by Ticehurst which scored 13; indicating moderately good overall sustainability. This aligns with the conclusions of the previous Rural Settlements Study and hierarchy which previously categorised Robertsbridge and Ticehurst as Rural Service Centres. It should be noted that Northbridge Street was considered as part of Robertsbridge in the previous study but has been considered separately for this study, because there is a considerable amount of intervening open space between the two individually contiguous areas of built form.

7.18 Other rural villages which have been assessed as having moderately good overall sustainability are Northiam, Westfield, Camber, Playden, Rye Hill and Etchingham, along with Rock Lane and Austen Way in the Hastings Fringes, with each of these settlements scoring 12 out of 23 overall.

7.19 The main sustainability factors holding these villages back from scoring higher, are the general service level and employment opportunities. Essentially, there is only a

moderate to low number of shops and other services and facilities available to these settlements, which suggests residents will often need to travel further afield for luxury goods or banking facilities, for example. This also suggests that there are generally less jobs available in the locale, resulting in more commuting.

Potentially Sustainable Settlements

7.20   Burwash, Peasmarsh and Sedlescombe have each scored 11 out of 23, indicating moderate overall sustainability. Importantly however, they have each scored 4 out of 5 for access to essential services, but only 2 out 5 for public transport accessibility. This suggests that if public transport accessibility could be improved, through the provision of improved bus services, then these settlements could potentially be sustainable locations for development.

7.21   Winchelsea has also scored 11 out of 23, although it only has access to three essential services. While it scores 4 out of 5 for public transport accessibility, its railway station is sited outside of the settlement, and ultimately has a limited range of services.

7.22   Of settlements that score 10 and 9 out of 23, Broad Oak, Staplecross and Hurst Green may have the most potential for sustainability, as they each score 3 out of 5 for access to essential services. Woodlands Way and Parkwood Road and Westfield Lane are also considered to have a higher potential for sustainability because they are Hastings Fringe areas with an inherent proximity to a wide array of services in Hastings.

7.23   The settlement areas of Chowns Hill and Ivyhouse Lane, Saltbarn Lane, Dale Hill, East Guldeford and Poppyfield, despite scoring either 10 or 9 out of 23, are not considered to have any reasonable potential for sustainability. This is due to their having no footways, meaning that any local services are not considered accessible by foot.

<u>Low Sustainability</u>

7.24   Settlements that have scored less than 9 out of 23 are generally considered to be of a low sustainability.

7.25   Some exceptions are Catsfield, Dallington, Netherfield and Woods Corner, which have each scored 3 out of 5 for access to essential services and could benefit from the provision of additional essential services and/or better public transport accessibility. They could potentially be considered sustainable locations for limited amounts of development, depending on the recommendations of the Development Strategy.