



Rother District Local Plan 2020 - 2040

Heritage Background Paper

Draft (Regulation 18) Version - April 2024

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1. Planning Policy Framework

Legislation

- 1.1. In addition to the planning framework which is primarily set out in the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 provides specific protection for buildings and areas of special architectural or historic interest.
- 1.2. Section 16 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 confers a statutory duty to LPAs when considering whether to grant listed building consent, to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the listed building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.
- 1.3. Section 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 confers a statutory duty to LPAs when considering whether to grant planning permission, to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.
- 1.4. Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 confers a statutory duty to LPAs when exercising planning functions, to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area.
- 1.5. The Historic Buildings and Ancient Monuments Act 1953 makes provision for the compilation of a register of gardens and other land (parks and gardens, and battlefields).
- 1.6. Meanwhile the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 provides specific protection for monuments of national interest. Under this Act, works to these Scheduled Ancient Monuments benefit from a separate consent regime administered by Historic England.

National Policy and Guidance

National Planning Policy Framework

- 1.7. At the heart of the National Planning Policy Framework (“the Framework”) is a presumption in favour of sustainable development, defined in paragraph 8 as having 3 overarching objectives, economic, social and environmental. Para 8c defines the environmental objective as being “*to protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment*”.
- 1.8. Paragraph 20 of the Framework sets out the requirements for strategic policies, which should:
- ... set out an overall strategy for the pattern, scale and design quality of places, and make sufficient provision for [inter alia]:*
- (d) conservation and enhancement of the natural, built and historic environment, including landscapes and green infrastructure, and planning measures to address climate change mitigation and adaptation.*
- 1.9. This is expanded in Chapter 16 of the Framework; ‘Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment, which sets out that
- “Heritage assets range from sites and buildings of local historic value to those of the highest significance, such as World Heritage Sites which are internationally recognised to be of Outstanding Universal Value. These assets are an irreplaceable resource, and should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of existing and future generations.”) para 189*
- 1.10. Para 190 sets out that
- “Plans should set out a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment, including heritage assets most at risk through neglect, decay or other threats. This strategy should take into account:*
- a) the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets, and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;*

- b) the wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits that conservation of the historic environment can bring;*
- c) the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness; and*
- d) opportunities to draw on the contribution made by the historic environment to the character of a place”*

1.11. This chapter of the Framework also contains a number of paragraphs relating specifically to the determination of applications concerning the historic built environment and heritage assets, including

- **Para 194** requires applications to include assessment of significance
- **Para 196** relates to deliberate neglect of a heritage asset
- **Para 197** states that in determining planning applications, LPAs should take account of:
 - the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;
 - the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality;
 - the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.
- **Para 199** sets out that when considering works affecting designated heritage assets, great weight should be given to the asset’s conservation, and that this is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance.
- **Para 200** recognises that harm to a heritage asset can be caused by alteration, destruction, or development within its setting
- **Para 201** refers to refusing consent for the loss of a heritage asset unless certain steps are justified
- **Para 206** refers to new development in Conservation Areas
- **Para 207** refers to loss of buildings which make positive contribution to Conservation Areas
- **Para 208** relates to Enabling Development

Planning Practice Guidance:

- 1.12. The Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) contains a specific chapter on the Historic Environment, and confirms that:
- Any decisions where listed buildings and their settings and conservation areas are a factor must address the statutory considerations of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (see in particular sections 16, 66 and 72) as well as applying the relevant policies in the development plan and the National Planning Policy Framework.¹*
- 1.13. It confirms that
- Conservation is an active process of maintenance and managing change.*
- and that
- Where changes are proposed, the National Planning Policy Framework sets out a clear framework for both plan-making and decision-making in respect of applications for planning permission and listed building consent to ensure that heritage assets are conserved, and where appropriate enhanced, in a manner that is consistent with their significance and thereby achieving sustainable development.²*
- 1.14. The PPG also sets out a range of guidance with regard to decision-making in the historic environment, clarifying terms such as ‘significance’, ‘setting’, ‘harm’, and designated and non-designated heritage assets.
- 1.15. Meanwhile the PPG on Plan-Making sets out that
- Planning policies need to be based on up-to-date evidence about the historic environment in their area. Strategic policy-making authorities can use this evidence to assess the significance of heritage assets and the contribution they make to their environment and to predict the likelihood of currently unidentified heritage assets being discovered in the future. Authorities may draw on a wide range of evidence sources, including the relevant historic environment record, the National Heritage List for England, conservation area management plans and appraisals, and local consultations that have identified assets of local historic importance.³*

¹ Paragraph: 001 Reference ID: 18a-001-20190723

² Paragraph: 002 Reference ID: 18a-002-20190723

³ Paragraph: 045 Reference ID: 61-045-20190315

Historic England

- 1.16. Historic England (formally known as the Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission for England) is an executive non-departmental public body sponsored by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS). Established on 1 April 1984 by the National Heritage Act 1983, it carries out a range of functions that help people care for, enjoy and celebrate England's historic environment, including
- Championing historic places
 - Identifying and protecting our heritage
 - Supporting change
 - Understanding historic places and
 - Providing expertise at a local level
- 1.17. Historic England carry out a range of specialist research and publish a wide range of advice, including technical guidance, advice on caring for heritage, and heritage in the planning system. Amongst these are the four Good Practice Advice notes (GPAs):
- [GPA1 - Local Plan Making](#)
 - [GPA2 - Managing Significance in Decision-Taking in the Historic Environment](#)
 - [GPA3 - Setting and Views](#)
 - [GPA4 - Enabling Development and Heritage Assets](#)

These are supplemented by a series of 16 Historic England Advice Notes covering various planning topics in more detail and at a more practical level, including such matters as Conservation Areas, Making Changes to Heritage Assets, Site Allocations in Local Plans, Local Heritage Listing, the Reuse of Traditional Farm Buildings, Energy Efficiency and Traditional Homes, and Commercial Renewable Energy Development and the Historic Environment.

Government Review of National Policy

- 1.18. The White Paper published by Government, “Planning for the Future” (August 2020) proposed significant changes to the planning system. However, following a consultation and a Cabinet reshuffle, the proposed changes have been “paused” by the Government.

- 1.19. Notwithstanding this, the White Paper gave high profile to the conservation of the historic environment; the introduction sets out that a fit for purpose planning system must deliver new development whilst “*at the same time protecting our unmatched architectural heritage and natural environment*”⁴
- 1.20. ‘Proposal 17’ of the White Paper specifically related to conserving and enhancing our historic buildings and areas in the 21st century. It set out that:

*The planning system has played a critical role ensuring the historic buildings and areas we cherish are conserved and, where appropriate, enhanced by development. The additional statutory protections of listed building consent and conservation area status have worked well, and the National Planning Policy Framework already sets out strong protections for heritage assets where planning permission or listed building consent is needed. We want to build on this framework as we develop the new planning system. We envisage that Local Plans will clearly identify the location of internationally, nationally and locally designated heritage assets, such as World Heritage Sites and conservation areas, as well locally important features such as protected views.*⁵

*We also want to ensure our historic buildings play a central part in the renewal of our cities, towns and villages...*⁶

*We will, therefore, review and update the planning framework for listed buildings and conservation areas, to ensure their significance is conserved while allowing, where appropriate, sympathetic changes to support their continued use and address climate change...*⁷

⁴ Planning for the Future, para 1.2 (MHCLG, August 2020)

⁵ Planning for the Future, para 3.29 (MHCLG, August 2020)

⁶ Planning for the Future, para 3.30 (MHCLG, August 2020)

⁷ Planning for the Future, para 3.31 (MHCLG, August 2020)

Adopted Local Policy

Rother District Local Plan Core Strategy (adopted September 2014)

- 1.21. The adopted strategy for the historic environment is set out in the Core Strategy. The district-wide strategy is set out in Policy EN2: Stewardship of the Historic Built Environment (within the 'Environment' chapter), as follows:

Development affecting the historic built environment, including that both statutorily protected and the non-statutorily protected, will be required to:

- (i) Reinforce the special character of the district's historic settlements, including villages, towns and suburbs, through siting, scale, form and design;*
- (ii) Take opportunities to improve areas of poor visual character or with poor townscape qualities;*
- (iii) Preserve, and ensure clear legibility of, locally distinctive vernacular building forms and their settings, features, fabric and materials, including forms specific to historic building typologies;*
- (iv) Make reference to the character analysis in Conservation Area Appraisals, where relevant;*
- (v) Reflect current best practice guidance produced by English Heritage and HELM;*
- (vi) Ensure appropriate archaeological research and investigation of both above and below-ground archaeology, and retention where required.*

- 1.22. Meanwhile Policy EN1: Landscape Stewardship also refers to designated heritage assets in the landscape, setting out that:

Management of the high quality historic, built and natural landscape character is to be achieved by ensuring the protection, and wherever possible enhancement, of the district's nationally designated and locally distinctive landscapes and landscape features; including ...

- (iii) Nationally designated historic sites including listed Parks and Gardens, Scheduled Ancient Monuments and the Registered Historic Battlefield at Battle;*

- 1.23. Core Strategy Policy RA4 relates specifically to traditional historic farm buildings, seeking to ensure their appropriate retention and re-use, and setting out that proposals should (inter alia)

Demonstrate that they are based on a sound and thorough understanding of the significance of the building and its setting, including in terms of history, layout, use, local relevance, fabric and archaeology;

and

Ensure retention of the building's legibility, form (as an example of a specific building typology), historic fabric and setting, and, through design, maintain the agricultural character and the contribution the building and its surroundings make to the wider rural landscape and countryside character;

- 1.24. Core Strategy Policy EN4 relates to management of the public realm, including setting out that

Priority will be given to working with the relevant agencies to: (i) Apply the principles of 'Streets for All: South East', to ensure high quality management and maintenance of the district's public realm, with appropriate materials and strategic design vision, to ensure local distinctiveness in both urban and rural areas is respected, and historic features are retained;

- 1.25. The Core Strategy also contains specific policies for the historic environment in specific locations within the district;

- 1.26. BX2 (vi) relates to the historic character of Bexhill Town Centre, seeking to
Ensure that development and change respects and, where appropriate, enhances the late Victorian/Edwardian character of the Conservation Area.

- 1.27. RY1 (iii) relates to the historic character of Rye, setting out that proposals for development in Rye will (inter alia);

Preserve and enhance the character and historic environment of the Citadel and wider Conservation Area, and the distinctive landscape setting of the town;

- 1.28. BA1 (i) relates to the historic character of Battle, setting out that proposals for development in Battle will (inter alia);

Maintain the essential physical form, local distinctiveness, character and setting of the town, particularly in and adjacent to the Conservation Area;

- 1.29. RA1 (i) relates to the historic character of the villages in the district, seeking to ensure

Protection of the locally distinctive character of villages, historic buildings and settings, with the design of any new development being expected to include appropriate high quality response to local context and landscape;

Rother District Development and Site Allocations Local Plan (adopted 2019)

- 1.30. Whilst there are no specific policies in the DaSA focussed on the historic environment, nevertheless Policy DHG9: *Extensions, Alterations & Outbuildings* refers to character and qualities of historic buildings and areas. Meanwhile Policy DEC1: *Shopfronts, Signage and Advertising* includes references to historic character of the host building, and to Conservation Areas.

Neighbourhood Plans

- 1.31. Policies relating to the historic environment in the ‘made’ Neighbourhood Plans within the district are broadly consistent with, and elaborate on, the above Development Plan policies, in particular:
- **Battle Neighbourhood Plan** – Policies HD8: *Town Centre Boundary*, EN4: *Historic Environment*, and EN5: *Locally Important Historic Buildings, Other Structures, and Other Non-designated heritage Assets*.
 - **Burwash Neighbourhood Plan** – Policies GP02: *Heritage*, and GP04 *Design Standards*
 - **Crowhurst Neighbourhood Plan** – Policy CB2: *Heritage*
 - **Rye Neighbourhood Plan** – Policies D1: *High Quality Design*, and E3: *Heritage and Urban Design*
 - **Salehurst & Robertsbridge Neighbourhood Plan** – Policies EC1: *Retail in the village centre and outskirts*, EC6: *The reuse, conversion and extension of rural buildings*, EN5: *Historic Environment*, EN6: *Listed Buildings and Ancient Monuments*, EN7: *Locally important historic buildings and other structures*, and HO6: *Conservation Areas*.
 - **Ticehurst Neighbourhood Plan** – Policy H6: *Conservation & Heritage*.

Other Material Considerations

- 1.32. The *Bexhill Town Centre Shopfronts and Signage Guidance* was adopted in 2006 as a material consideration in the determination of planning applications and applications for advertisements affecting commercial properties in the Bexhill-on-Sea Town Centre Conservation Area. It recognises that traditional shopfronts are important because they make a very positive contribution to the character and appearance of historic town or village centres, helping to create an attractive retail environment and as such making a major contribution to economic vitality. The guidance seeks to establish good practice in shopfront design by providing positive guidance on how to design new shopfronts and advertisements within the Bexhill Town Centre Conservation Area, or to repair or reinstate an original shopfront, to ensure that surviving historic designs, fabric and detailing are retained where practicable.
- 1.33. Conservation Area Appraisals have been prepared and adopted for 6 of the district's 10 designated Conservation Areas – Battle, Bexhill Town Centre, Robertsbridge & Northbridge Street, Rye, Sedlescombe, and Winchelsea; these contain detailed character analysis, and are a material consideration in development proposals affecting those areas.

High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan

- 1.34. Much of the rural area of Rother district falls within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and with specific regard to the historic built environment, the High Weald AONB Management Plan 2019-2024 sets out specific objectives relating to settlement character⁸;
- **Objective S2: To protect the historic pattern and character of settlement.** - To protect the distinctive character of towns, villages, hamlets and farmsteads and to maintain the hinterlands and other relationships (including separation) between such settlements that contribute to local identity
 - **Objective S3 To enhance the architectural quality of the High Weald and ensure development reflects the character of the**

⁸ HW AONB Management Plan 2019-2024 p31-35

High Weald in its scale, layout and design. - To protect and enhance the character and quality of buildings in the High Weald, and re-establish the use of local materials as a means of protecting the environment and adding to this distinctiveness.

These objectives are supported by a number of proposed actions.

2. Strategic/Corporate Policy Framework

Strategy Documents - Rother District Public Realm Strategic Framework

- 2.1. The Rother District Public Realm Strategic Framework (PRSF) was formally adopted by the Council on 24th February 2020. The PRSF sets out the vision, objectives and key principles for the public realm in Rother district, and aims to address the need for better and more co-ordinated plans, standards and procedures to guide successful management of, and improvements in, Rother district's public realm in co-operation with relevant stakeholders.
- 2.2. The PRSF is intended to help drive a cultural step change to embed the goal of achieving a quality public realm in Rother, encouraging a more co-ordinated and consistent approach to public realm design, quality and appearance throughout the district and will promote local distinctiveness, helping to deliver community and civic pride in the environment, and economic prosperity and regeneration initiatives. While the PRSF is district-wide, it contains specific references to designated Conservation Areas within the district, and much of the content refers to heritage features in the public realm.

3. Facts and Figures

Key Facts for Rother

- 3.1. Rother District has a rich heritage environment and a valuable and extensive historic building stock, including as it does the historic market towns of Battle and Rye, the Victorian and Edwardian seaside town of Bexhill-on-Sea, the important planned medieval town of Winchelsea, and a host of picturesque

villages and hamlets, listed buildings, including many isolated farmsteads dispersed throughout the High Weald, together with modernist buildings from the 1930s and 1960s.

- 3.2. The historic built environment within the Rother District benefits from a high level of statutory protection; designated heritage assets include Listed Buildings, Conservation Areas, Scheduled Ancient Monuments, Registered Parks and Gardens, and the ‘Historic Battlefield’ at Battle.

Figure 1 : Designated Heritage Assets in Rother District

Designated Heritage Asset Type	Number
Listed Buildings – Grade I	41
Listed Buildings – Grade II*	78
Listed Buildings – Grade II	2024
Total Listed Buildings	2143 ⁹
Scheduled Ancient Monuments	46
Conservation Areas	10
Registered Parks and Gardens	7
Historic Battlefields	1

- 3.3. However, there remain many other non-designated buildings and archaeological assets which contribute positively to the physical, historic and socio-cultural character of the district, and which warrant retention and interpretation. Under the provisions of the Framework¹⁰, such structures are frequently considered by the LPA to be non-designated heritage assets, either through identification in the Local Lists of Neighbourhood Plans, or during the decision-making process.

- 3.4. Such features of the historic environment, both designated and non-designated, are referred to as ‘Heritage Assets’ in the Framework.

⁹ This refers to total number of list entries; some list entries are for example a terrace, which may contain more than one dwelling.

¹⁰ NPPF p67

Figure 2: Heritage Assets in Rother:



Authority Monitoring Report and SA/SEA Scoping Report Indicators

3.5. There are a number of indicators in the Authority Monitoring Report and SA/SEA Scoping Report that are of relevance to this background paper. This includes the following:

- **Support of Policy EN3 Design Quality at Appeal** – Performance changed from 62.1% success in 2019/20 to 50% success in 2020/21
- **Reducing the number Listed Buildings at Risk in Battle** - At present there are no listed buildings at risk in Battle.
- **Heritage at Risk** - In 2021 there were 5 Scheduled Monuments (4 of which are also Listed Buildings) and 1 Listed Place of Worship.

4. Evidence

Overview – The Historic Environment in Rother District

- 4.1. The historic built environment underpins the distinctive character of Rother District; towns and villages display particular relationships with their landscape surroundings, while the pattern, form, appearance and use of individual buildings and the materials of their construction are peculiar to both the regional and local location and contribute to the unique sense of place, cultural identity and local distinctiveness of both the district as a whole, and of the each settlement.
- 4.2. The landscape setting of individual towns and villages varies from the linear form most usually associated with ridge-top development, to the less common valley setting associated with river crossings. Particularly distinct settlements are the nucleated hill-top setting of the ancient town of Rye, and the formalised medieval grid plan of Winchelsea. Historic farmsteads with farm building typologies representing locally distinctive historic agricultural practices, are prolific within the undulating pastureland.
- 4.3. Particularly locally distinctive building typologies and features include long sweeping catslide roofs, oasthouses, timber-framed barns and other agricultural buildings associated with local historic farming practices, and medieval Wealden Hall Houses, found either as rural farmhouses, or incorporated into the fabric of villages and towns, and often much disguised through later alterations. Archaeological survey and investigation is invaluable in such instances to understand the history and significance of these timber-framed buildings.
- 4.4. Historic buildings in the district generally deploy a limited palette of materials associated with the local High Weald geology, namely timber-framing, clay tiles (for roofs and wall hanging) and brickwork. In specific pockets to the east of the district, white-painted weatherboarding is prolific, and to the west of the district are distinctive groups of buildings constructed from the local Brightling sandstone.

- 4.5. Meanwhile, the coastal resort town of Bexhill-on-Sea has a rich heritage of late Victorian and Edwardian villa architecture, imposing in scale and ornate in detailing, which plays an important role in defining the local character and street scene.
- 4.6. A number of academic heritage studies have been prepared for certain areas of the district, to better understand and interpret the historic environment, including:
- Rye Rebuilt - Regeneration And Decline Within A Sussex Port Town, 1350-1660 (*D & B Martin*) 2009
 - New Winchelsea Susses – A Medieval Port Town (*D & B Martin*) *Institute of Archaeology, English Heritage* 2004
 - Bexhill Historic Character Assessment Report – Sussex Extensive Urban Survey (EUS) (*Dr R Harris*) *English Heritage* 2008
 - Battle Historic Character Assessment Report – Sussex Extensive Urban Survey (EUS) (*Dr R Harris*) *English Heritage* 2009
 - Rye Historic Character Assessment Report – Sussex Extensive Urban Survey (EUS) (*Dr R Harris*) *English Heritage* 2009
 - Robertsbridge Historic Character Assessment Report – Sussex Extensive Urban Survey (EUS) (*Dr R Harris*) *English Heritage* 2009
 - Farm Buildings of the Weald 1450-1750 (*Martin, D. & Martin, B.*) (2006)
 - Historic Farmsteads and Landscape Characterisation in the High Weald AONB (*Forum Heritage Services*) (2007)
- 4.7. Meanwhile the written conservation area appraisals of Battle, Bexhill Town Centre, Robertsbridge & Northbridge Street, Rye, Sedlescombe, and Winchelsea, contain detailed analysis of the special character of those areas.
- 4.8. The High Weald AONB Management Plan 2019-2024 sets out defining settlement characteristics of the High Weald¹¹, much of which applies to that part of the district, including
- High concentrations of historic buildings in all settlement types, many listed, with locally distinctive typologies

¹¹ HW AONB Management Plan 2019-2024 p31

- A limited palette of local materials: clay as tiles and brick, timber as weatherboard and framing, and some localised instances of stone.
 - Hamlets occurring around the junction of routeways or small commons (which became greens or forstals), or as clusters of cottages
 - High density of historic farmsteads, with high numbers of pre-1750 timber-framed farm buildings with typologies representing locally-distinctive historic agricultural practices
 - Villages and towns of Medieval origin located at historic focal points or along ridge top roads; typically open areas used for meeting places and trade.
- 4.9. The district's known archaeological and historic sites are mapped and described within a county-wide database called the East Sussex Historic Environment Record (HER). The HER holds information on a range of sites dating from the Palaeolithic period (c.800,000 years ago) up to 20th Century monuments, and include many 'Archaeological Notification Areas'.
- 4.10. Brief summaries of the heritage significance of specific areas of the district are set out below.

Bexhill

- 4.11. Bexhill-on-Sea Town Centre provides a fine example of an unusually complete Edwardian townscape built principally between 1880 and 1905 under the patronage of the 7th and 8th Earls De La Warr, who pursued a vision of creating a fashionable seaside resort.
- 4.12. The flat land to the south west of the Old Town of Bexhill, between the railway line and the beach, was made suitable for development by the construction of the sea wall, and the town was planned with a grid pattern of streets which mainly lie at right angles or parallel to the shore. The wide Devonshire Road was laid out as the principal shopping street, running north-south, as does Sackville Road, while Western Road and St Leonard's Road run east-west. These formed the main commercial streets, and continue to do so to this day, while in between run north-south subsidiary residential streets.

- 4.13. As a result of the short period of construction of most of the buildings in the town centre, the architecture here is particularly homogenous, with a variety of examples of competent Edwardian architecture including lavish ornamentation and elaborate detailing.
- 4.14. At the southern end of the town, Marina runs east-west cutting off the seafront itself from the core of the town. Marina itself is fronted by large scale buildings in residential and commercial uses, while on the seafront is the modernist icon, the grade I listed De La Warr Pavilion, as well as other architecturally interesting buildings including Marina Arcade and Marina Court Avenue, both displaying Moghul design influences. The seafront area has been the subject of significant heritage led regeneration projects in recent years, including the Next Wave West Parade Scheme; a major investment in the public realm by RDC, supported by a £1m grant from the then Commission for Architecture & the Built Environment, which aimed to support the core section of Bexhill's seafront to become a high-quality, attractive destination for both residents and visitors, with consequential regeneration benefits for the whole town, and included improving the landscape setting of the grade I listed De La Warr Pavilion, and improving the facilities at the grade II listed Colonnade. This has been supplemented by further public realm improvements at Marina Court Square, and associated ESCC highways improvement works to Marina; these projects were created to collectively improve pedestrian links from Bexhill town centre to the seafront, and make a more attractive public space.
- 4.15. As a result of its relatively late period of construction, there few listed buildings in Bexhill town centre, though this is to diminish its architectural quality and heritage significance. Bexhill town centre was designated a Conservation Area in 1992, in recognition of its architectural and historic significance, and reviewed in 2003. The Conservation Area Appraisal highlights the unique plan form of the town, architectural styles, detailing and ornamentation and building materials, the role played by open spaces, trees and vistas, including the Seafront and Devonshire Square.

Bexhill Shopfronts

- 4.16. The majority of the main shopping terraces in the town centre; Devonshire Road, Western Road, St Leonards Road and Sackville Road, were constructed within a very short period of time between 1895 and 1905, and together form a substantial part of the town's architectural character. Designed as planned shopping terraces, they originated at a time when shopfront design often followed architectural pattern books. A number of shopfronts within the town centre have retained a high degree of original Victorian and Edwardian fabric and detail, though in some instances this is more visually obvious than others. However, shopfronts in Bexhill have suffered during the twentieth century as throughout the country, with the removal of many historic shopfronts and their replacement with bland, poor quality modern versions, often not responding to the wider context of the building as a whole, or the rhythm of the streetscene, and often of lightweight material with stuck-on box fascia boards obscuring original details. Meanwhile, declining economic prosperity in the town and high labour costs has resulted in a lack of ongoing maintenance of shopfronts, and the consequential fall into disrepair of historic details and features
- 4.17. During the 2000s, the Council ran a successful grant programme under the Historic England Heritage Economic Regeneration Scheme (HERS) – a joint funding initiative for the repair and improvement of buildings and spaces in Conservation Areas. Over a four year period, over £400,000 was awarded in shopfront repair and replacement grants to 28 shops in Bexhill town centre, providing funding for reinstatement and repair works for architectural features on shopfronts, and for new replacement and shopfront works, in order to improve the attractiveness of both the individual grant recipient shops themselves, and the character and aesthetic appeal of the townscape as a whole, leveraging in a significant amount of additional match-funding investment from the private sector into the town, and bringing a number of vacant shops back into use at the time. This programme was followed up by the preparation and adoption in 2006 of the Bexhill Town Centre Shopfronts and Signage Guidance in 2006; guidance which provides positive guidance on how to design new shopfronts and advertisements within the Bexhill Town Centre Conservation Area, or to repair or reinstate an original shopfront, to ensure that surviving historic designs, fabric and detailing are retained where practicable.

Bexhill Suburbs

- 4.18. The rich heritage of Victorian and Edwardian villa architecture, both imposing in scale and ornate in detailing, plays an important role in defining the character and streetscene in a number of areas in and around the town centre, not only in terms of their design qualities of height, scale, mass, materials and detailing, but also for their intrinsic historic character and social significance. They are an important physical legacy and reflection of the unusually compact time period within which the town of 'Bexhill-on-Sea' was developed. However, many of these lie outside the designated Conservation Areas of Bexhill Town Centre and Bexhill Old Town, and therefore do not benefit from that protection.
- 4.19. Post 1830s buildings are rarely added to the Statutory List of Buildings of Special Architectural and Historic Interest, largely on the basis of the sheer quantities of buildings from this period that survive throughout the country. However, in recognition of the critical role that such buildings play in defining local identity, distinctiveness and streetscape character, together with the fact that there has been substantial loss of such buildings in recent years due to redevelopment pressure, Historic England has prepared advice for Local Planning Authorities, to evaluate and highlight areas of Victorian and Edwardian suburbs of particular importance, and to develop policies to ensure the preservation of their special character in development proposals.

Bexhill Old Town

- 4.20. Pre-dating the 19th century development of the seaside resort town to the south, 'Bexhill Old Town' was historically a small rural village on a hill about half a mile inland. The ruins of the 13th century Manor House, built by the Bishops of Chichester, can be seen at Manor Gardens. With the advent of the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, in 1804 soldiers of the King's German Legion were stationed in barracks at Bexhill Old Town. The area contains some 37 listed buildings, most of which date from the 18th century, with some early 19th century buildings.
- 4.21. Bexhill Old Town Conservation Area was designated in 1975.

Battle

- 4.22. Battle is a small market town of considerable character. Being situated astride one of the principal High Weald east-west ridges, the town has grown up in a linear fashion. The town centre forms the historic core, with the majority of the buildings dating from the eighteenth century or earlier. and it is this part of Battle which is contained within the designated Conservation Area.
- 4.23. The initial development of the town of Battle may be attributed to the foundation of the Abbey by William I on the site of the Battle of Hastings in 1066. The Gatehouse was erected in 1338 when Abbot de Ketling was granted a licence from Edward III to crenellate the Abbey. The Gatehouse still stands today as the dominant architectural feature of the town, while many of the Abbey Buildings were destroyed following the dissolution of the monasteries in the reign of Henry VIII. The siting of the market place directly in front on the Gatehouse demonstrates how the town grew out of the abbey, and during the medieval period the weekly markets and cattle markets were a major component of the town's social and economic structure.
- 4.24. Of great significance in townscape terms within Battle is the survival of the original medieval property or 'burghage' plots. The plots, generally between 300 and 400 feet long and 20 to 40 feet wide were laid out either side of the High Street, and each consisted of a developed frontage with a long narrow strip of agricultural land to the rear. With population growth creating pressure for new land, the medieval core of the town expanded in the eighteenth and nineteenth century with relatively high-density development in the former plots' back gardens, creating courtyards accessed by narrow passageways between the frontages buildings along the High Street. However, the historic plot structure remains clearly visible and sets a rhythm along the street scene, maintained by the fact that new development has largely taken place within, rather than across, the old boundary lines.
- 4.25. Much of the architecture in the Conservation Area itself is medieval in origin, with a substantial amount of Georgian and even Victorian re-facing to reflect changing tastes in a prosperous market town, and later shopfronts in many of

the High Street buildings. The main dense concentration of architectural and historic interest in Battle occurs in the High Street, Mount Street and Upper Lake including the Abbey, an area containing some 107 listed buildings, (including 10 grade I or grade II* listed buildings, including the Gatehouse and the Precinct Walls to Battle Abbey). In addition, Battle Abbey is a Scheduled Ancient Monument, and the Battlefield is a Registered Historic Battlefield.

- 4.26. Battle Conservation Area was originally designated in 1971, and extended and reappraised in 2006.

Rye

- 4.27. Rye is an ancient citadel town of national historic importance and high architectural value. The visual appearance of the town of Rye is almost entirely a function of its unique geographical and geological situation. Positioned atop a rocky sandstone outcrop, the historic core of the town, generally known as the Citadel and defined by cliffs and remnants of the town wall, overlooks the flat level marshland that surrounds it to the north-east, east and south. Consequently the town possesses a distinctive outline in silhouette and is a focal point for many miles around.
- 4.28. Rye's geographical position, a highly defensible location with good access to the sea, has also been responsible for its economic prosperity. During the 13th and 14th centuries, Rye enjoyed immense wealth based on thriving international trade at the 'new' port, together with associated shipbuilding industries. In 1336, as a reflection of its importance, economically and geographically, Rye became a full member of the Confederation of the Cinque Ports, with associated obligations and privileges. Defence of such a valuable town was a priority, hence the development of the town as a fortified settlement. An abundance of defences is still visible today, namely the old town wall, Ypres Tower, and the later Camber Castle built in the 16th century out on a shingle spit amid the salt marshes to command the entrance to the port.
- 4.29. The town's topographical and landscape setting is a fundamental part of its architectural and historic character. The compact and cohesive historic built core is still highly legible today; Its distinctive form and strong silhouette, sitting

as a tight-packed mound of ancient buildings topped by the short pointed spire of St Mary's Church, is in striking and absolute contrast to the dead flat marshland that surrounds it. Its composition of distinctive forms, building up over a mosaic of pitched roofs to the climax of the church tower, is artistically satisfying, architecturally well composed and historically unique.

- 4.30. Rye possesses a townscape of strong visual character and high visual quality, informed by the cohesion of the medieval architecture, characterised by a high number of timber-framed buildings, with the more formal work of the medieval period being represented in the few buildings of stone, a restricted palette of materials, prevalent ones being brick, handmade clay tile (for roof or tile hanging), weather boarding, painted render and slate, good historic street surfaces including several streets that are paved with cobbles, and a highly visible and important roofscape of jumbled historic clay-tiled roofs, its impact heightened by the topography of the town. The historic core has a compact density; a medieval pattern of narrow streets and tight urban grain with compact massing of buildings.
- 4.31. The main concentration of architectural and historic interest occurs within the Citadel, which contains some 265 listed buildings, (including 13 listed grade I or II*) along with 7 Scheduled Ancient Monuments including the Landgate and the Town Walls. An unusual feature of Rye is that a number of the cobbled streets are listed in their own right.
- 4.32. Rye Conservation Area was originally designated in 1968, subsequently expanded in 1974, and extended and reappraised in 2006.

Winchelsea

- 4.33. Winchelsea, officially a town, though appearing today as a large village, is a settlement of immense historic and archaeological interest and value, and an outstanding and rare example of early medieval town planning. It was once a major settlement and one of the principal naval ports of the country, a centre of royal shipbuilding contributing to the King's fleet.

- 4.34. The settlement we see today occupies about one third in the north-eastern corner of the 150 acres allocated by Edward I in the late 13th century for the erection of a new town. It was designed as a planned town, on a squared plan within an irregular boundary, and the basic grid pattern, which Edward's commissioners set out in the 1280s, has formed the framework for the town to the present day. A considerable part of Winchelsea's formal grid structure of historic street pattern is still clearly legible today and is the singularly most important contributor in defining the town's special character.
- 4.35. Winchelsea contains a dense concentration of some 130 listed buildings, 25 of which are listed Grade I or II*, along with 7 Scheduled Ancient Monuments, comprising much of the hinterland of the historic town, along with 3 mediaeval gates into the town. Much of the architecture within Winchelsea is medieval or Tudor in origin, with a large amount of Georgian re-modelling, such that a later appearance prevails. However, there are a substantial amount of buildings dating from the 1910s to the 1930's, many of which are built over the historic medieval cellars. Many of these cellars are themselves Listed Buildings, highly valued for both their architectural, socio-historic and archaeological interest.
- 4.36. Winchelsea Conservation Area was originally designated in 1969, and extended and reappraised in 2008, and is subject to an Article 4 Direction, and is an Archaeological Notification Area.

Villages

- 4.37. As a district of predominantly rural character, Rother has a high number of villages and hamlets scattered across the High Weald and coastal belt, many of which are historic in origin and picturesque in nature.
- 4.38. Conservation Areas have been designated in a number of the larger villages in the district:
- Burwash (designated 1969) – a particularly fine linear ridge-top village of medieval origins, with a high concentration of listed buildings lining the east/west High Street, their 18th century appearance reflecting that period's substantial upgrading to older buildings with tile-hanging and weatherboarding. Though characterised by the tight terraces lining it the

High Street also includes a number of significant larger dwellings of the same period. Extensive brick pavements and street trees are also important to the character of the place.

- Robertsbridge & Northbridge Street (originally designated 1986, reviewed and extended 2009) – a large historic village centered along the historic High Street, with a vibrant mix of residential and commercial properties. This is separated from the discrete historic settlement of Northbridge Street to the north by a causeway over the low-lying pasture land of the floodplain, adjacent to which sit the imposing buildings of Robertsbridge Mill. The village has 14th century origins, with much medieval building fabric still surviving, and substantial 18th and early 19th century infilling that created the tightly packed street scene that we see in the High Street today, much of which is listed. This was followed by significant late 19th century development following the arrival of the railways.
- Northiam (designated 1989) – the historic core of which is predominantly linear in character, with a high concentration of white-weatherboarded buildings reflecting the prevailing character of settlements on this part of the Sussex/Kent border. A key part in defining the character of Northiam are the two important historic estates; Great Dixter to the north-east, and Brickwall to the south, both registered parks and gardens, as well as containing grade I and II* listed buildings.
- Ticehurst (designated 1990) – a large village with a historic core focussed on a crossroads, historically a market place. This has created a picturesque, dense grouping of mainly 17th and 18th century listed buildings, often brick and rendered on the still commercial buildings around the marketplace itself, with long runs of tile-hung terraces on the roads leading out to the south and west.
- Sedlescombe (designated 2004) – with a concentration of 16th – 18th century buildings grouped around the defining element of ‘The Green’, having a generally spacious character, with a more continuous built frontage on the east side of The Green.

4.39. Additionally, a number of smaller villages and hamlets are scattered across the district, often with distinct historic and architectural characters. Of particular note are

- Brightling, with its clusters of listed buildings in the local sandstone, surrounded by the registered Brightling Park, which itself contains a number of individually listed early 19th century follies.
- Ewhurst Green, a linear, ridge-top hamlet, characterised by 15th – 18th century buildings; terraces, houses and converted farm buildings.
- Dallington, with a dense cluster of listed buildings, brick and tile-hung over older timber frames, lining The Street, which has the visual character of a narrow lane.
- Staplecross, the historic core of which is centred on a crossroads, and architecturally characterised by long, low terraces of 18th and 19th century cottages, white-weatherboarded or white painted brickwork.
- Iden, with a loose group of buildings in a historic core centred on a crossroads, and a further cluster of late 18th century cottages some quarter of a mile to the south.

Rural Areas

4.40. Rother's countryside has a highly distinctive and important architectural character by way of settlement pattern and building typologies. The historic hamlets and farmsteads of the High Weald create a distinct and picturesque landscape, with the rolling pastureland and small ancient woodlands of the countryside interspersed with the rich clay-tiled roofs of historic buildings. Building typologies reflect locally distinct historic agricultural practices, for example the distinctive brick roundels of the hop industry's oast-houses, fine timber-framed barns and modest brick cowsheds, dairies and outbuildings, along with the domestic building stock of medieval farmhouses, and 17th and 18th century cottages.

Farmsteads

4.41. Traditional historic farm buildings are a vital element in defining the distinctive character of the district's countryside, as well as being a valuable economic resource. They have cultural and archaeological value, not just in their fabric, but also their location and setting, to help our understanding of the historical and socio-cultural development of farming in the district. Traditional historic farm buildings are generally considered to be those dating from pre 1880,

though there may be late Victorian or other pre-war buildings, that are of interest in a farmstead or landscape context and may be worthy of retention.

- 4.42. There is a high density of historic farmsteads¹² generally, across the High Weald AONB, and therefore in that part of the High Weald within which Rother district sits. The character of a large proportion of High Weald farmsteads can be at least partly defined as being medieval, and many of these farmsteads exist within landscapes that also retain a highly legible medieval character with small, irregularly shaped fields, including assart fields, droveways, copses and ancient woodland, providing strong historic functional and landscape contexts for these farmsteads. The High Weald is remarkable for the number of farmsteads that retain at least one building of pre-1600 date with a high concentration of these at the eastern end of the AONB, in Rother district. Farmsteads with their earliest recorded fabric dating from the 17th century are also well represented in the High Weald and there is also a concentration of 18th century farmsteads in the far eastern end of the High Weald, in Rother district, and in the Romney Marshes.
- 4.43. The predominant farmstead form is the ‘loose courtyard’, where detached buildings are grouped on one or more sides of a yard, sometimes with the farmhouse also facing into the yard. In Rother district, in the south-eastern part of the High Weald, these mainly comprise small scale farmsteads with buildings on just 1 or 2 sides of the courtyard, characterised by usually just 1 or 2 farm-buildings and a farmhouse. The second most commonly found form is the ‘dispersed cluster’; the smallest farmstead type, where a farmhouse is accompanied by a barn or other building standing nearby, sometimes in an adjacent paddock or field. Together, these farmstead forms account for some 80% of historic farmsteads in the High Weald, and are particularly represented in the south-east part of the AONB, in Rother district. A smaller number of farmsteads in the area are the ‘dispersed multi-yard’; similar to clusters but the defining characteristic is the presence of two or more defined yards (loose courtyard plans or regular courtyards) that usually stand detached from each other.

¹² Farmsteads historically comprise the farmhouse, farm buildings and their attendant yards, closes, orchards and gardens.

- 4.44. The range of farm buildings include specific building typologies that reflect the locally distinct historic agricultural practices of the area; barns (historically for crop threshing, and later for storage of hay and straw), single-storey brick-built dairy buildings reflecting the small scale pasture grazing, and oast-houses; an important and locally distinctive historic agricultural building typology in this area of East Sussex, intimately linked to traditional locally-prevailing agricultural practices of hop farming.
- 4.45. Some historic farm buildings are listed buildings in their own right, but others are not, since Historic England has not carried out a thematic listing programme on this building typology in the south-east. However, some are considered listed by virtue of being in the curtilage of a listed farmhouse. All traditional historic farm buildings would be considered Heritage Assets, either Designated or Non-designated.
- 4.46. Many historic farm buildings have been converted into other uses; residential, holiday accommodation, and workshops and studios.

Registered Parks and Gardens

- 4.47. There are 7 Registered Parks and Gardens in Rother District, and these are 'designated heritage assets'. The LPA has a statutory requirement to consult Historic England where a planning application affects a Grade I or II* registered park or garden, and to consult the Gardens Trust on all applications affecting registered sites, regardless of the grade of the site.
- 4.48. Registration is a 'material consideration' in the planning process, meaning that planning authorities must consider the impact of any proposed development within, or affecting the setting of, a registered park or garden, on the landscapes' special character. This is in addition to considering the impact on the setting of any listed buildings that may be on the site.
- 4.49. Below are the 7 sites in our district, and the weblinks for each to the Historic England list entry for each of them; these list entries contain extensive descriptions of the history, character and special interest of the park/garden.

Figure 3: Registered Parks & Gardens

Site	Grade of Listing	Link to List Entry
Ashburnham Park (Catsfield parish)	Grade II*	ASHBURNHAM PLACE, Ashburnham - 1000145 Historic England
Brickwall (Northiam / Beckley parishes)	Grade II*	BRICKWALL, Beckley - 1000177 Historic England
Battle Abbey (English Heritage)	Grade II	BATTLE ABBEY, Battle - 1000309 Historic England
Batemans (Burwash parish. National Trust)	Grade II	BATEMANS, Burwash - 1000734 Historic England
Great Dixter (Northiam parish)	Grade I	GREAT DIXTER, Northiam - 1000736 Historic England
Brightling Park (Brightling parish)	Grade II	BRIGHTLING PARK, Brightling - 1001261 Historic England
Ticehurst House Hospital (Ticehurst parish)	Grade II*	TICEHURST HOUSE HOSPITAL, Ticehurst - 1001600 Historic England

- 4.50. In addition, the historic Battlefield at Battle is registered within the Register of Historic Battlefields by Historic England for its special historic interest.

The Historic Public Realm

- 4.51. Rother District is fortunate to possess a number of quality historic public realm features and surface treatments, including the listed cobbled streets of Rye, brick paving in Winchelsea and Robertsbridge, and raised pavements in Battle, which all are important in defining the special character and local distinctiveness of individual settlements. The retention and sensitive repair, and, where

appropriate, reinstatement of such features is important in maintaining such character.

- 4.52. Rye Conservation Society has produced specific guidance for those carrying out repairs to the town's historic cobbled streets.
- 4.53. Meanwhile the historic public realm is also important in defining local character and sense of place in the rural areas; historic features such as milestones, historic fingerpost signs and red telephone kiosks and letterboxes contribute positively to the character of the rural public realm.

Figure 4: Rother's historic public realm



Energy Efficiency and Historic Buildings

- 4.54. Historic England has carried out a large number of research programmes, and continues to do so, focussing on the complex area of understanding and improving the energy performance of historic buildings and the effects of measures to increase energy efficiency. This research has underpinned the range of guidance and advice that they have produced, and which is generally considered to represent best practice in this field.
- 4.55. Generally speaking, improving the energy efficiency of historic buildings and those of traditional construction means reducing heat losses wherever possible without damaging their special character or compromising their performance. The two principal areas of risk when upgrading older buildings in the aspiration of reducing energy consumption are:

- causing unacceptable damage to the **character and appearance of historic buildings**, and
 - causing damaging technical conflicts between existing **traditional construction** and changes to improve energy efficiency.
- 4.56. Historic England’s overarching guidance [Energy Efficiency and Historic Buildings: How to Improve Energy Efficiency \(historicengland.org.uk\)](https://www.historicengland.org.uk/energy-efficiency) sets out their holistic ‘whole building approach’ which considers:
- Context
 - Construction
 - Condition
 - Historic significance
 - An understanding of all the factors that affect energy use, and
 - How to devise an energy efficiency strategy for any building
- 4.57. The ‘whole building’ approach can help in meeting the combined objectives of increasing energy efficiency and sustaining significance in heritage assets, while avoiding unintended consequences. It supports Government guidance that underlines the usefulness of coordinating energy improvements with design and heritage matters.
- 4.58. The ‘whole building’ approach recognises that the thermal efficiency of historic buildings can be greatly improved without replacing elements that contribute to their significance. It sets out that it is better to consider energy conservation measures that address the thermal efficiency of the whole of the building. In this way, the aim should be to strike an appropriate balance between energy conservation and building conservation. Adopting a ‘whole building’ approach can help in understanding where energy goes, and identifying less harmful options to achieve energy savings.
- 4.59. Historic England have also produced a more detailed suite of guidance on the principles, risks, materials and methods of installing insulation and draught-proofing of:
- [Roofs \(including pitched, flat, thatched, dormer windows and flues\)](#)
 - [Walls \(including solid and timber-framed\)](#)

- [Windows and Doors \(including draught-proofing, secondary glazing, improving the thermal efficacy of historic sash windows, and the conservation and thermal upgrading of traditional windows\)](#)
- [Floors \(including suspended timber floors and solid ground floors\)](#)

5. Consultation and Engagement

Early Engagement Strategy

5.1. The Council published its Early Engagement Document and Strategy which set out how the Council would engage throughout the Local Plan process. It contains a table that outlines how the Council will undertake their Duty to Cooperate functions with partner organisations. Alongside this, the Council conducted a wide-ranging questionnaire on all matters that the emerging Local Plan could address. Concerning built heritage assets, a question was asked about how the Council should ensure effective protection of built heritage assets whilst ensuring delivery of development, and the infrastructure in the respondent's local area. In relation to built heritage specifically, the following key issues were raised. The need for:

- Stronger environmental and heritage policies
- Improved enforcement of standards
- Sensitive design of development (especially in the High Weald National Landscape)
- Working with Parish and Town Councils and local groups for delivery

5.2. One of the key local issues of importance to those that responded included the need to protect conservation areas and listed buildings. Historic England responded to the early engagement stage, referencing the key requirements of the NPPF. The Council considered that it can meet the requirements of national policy through consideration of built heritage and historic character as part of the settlement study and as part of site assessments in the HELAA.

- 5.3. The Council summarise the feedback received from Members and Town/Parish Councils, including other local organisations in Figure 5 of the New Local Plan: Early Engagement Document.

Working Groups

Sussex Conservation Officers Group

- 5.4. The Sussex Conservation Officers Group is made up of Conservation & Design Officers across the county, along with representatives from the regional officer of Historic England, to discuss key heritage and planning issues as well as best practice.

Duty to Cooperate

- 5.5. As part of the Council's Duty to Cooperate requirements, there has been correspondence with the Specific Consultation Bodies as per the Local Planning Regulations (2012) (as amended), in the case of the historic environment, the relevant SCB is Historic England (formerly English Heritage).
- 5.6. There have been no major issues in relation to the historic environment discussed as part of general duty to cooperate discussions in relation to the development of the Rother Local Plan.

6. Key Issues

- 6.1. The following key issues in relation to built heritage will be addressed through the emerging Rother Local Plan.

Conserving Heritage Assets

- 6.2. Rother District has a rich heritage environment and a valuable and extensive historic building stock, including as it does the historic market towns of Battle and Rye, the Victorian and Edwardian seaside town of Bexhill-on-Sea, the important planned medieval town of Winchelsea, and a host of picturesque villages and hamlets, listed buildings, including many isolated farmsteads dispersed throughout the High Weald, together with modernist buildings from the 1930s and 1960s.
- 6.3. The historic built environment within the Rother District has a high level of statutory protection; designated heritage assets include Listed Buildings, Conservation Areas, Scheduled Ancient Monuments, Registered Parks and Gardens, and the 'Historic Battlefield' at Battle. Many other non-designated buildings and archaeological assets contribute positively to the physical, historic and socio-cultural character of the district, and warrant retention and interpretation. Under the provisions of the Framework¹³, such structures are frequently considered by the LPA to be non-designated heritage assets, either through identification in the Local Lists of Neighbourhood Plans, or during the decision-making process.
- 6.4. The historic built environment underpins the distinctive character of Rother District; the pattern, form, and appearance of settlements and individual buildings, and the materials of their construction are peculiar to both the regional and local location and contribute to the unique sense of place, cultural identity and local distinctiveness of both the district as a whole, and of each settlement.

¹³ NPPF December 2023, footnote 72.

Responding to Climate Change and the Historic Environment

- 6.5. The Council recognise that there is sometimes tension between achieving climate change measures and protecting the historic environment, as heritage buildings are not necessarily energy efficient and suitable for retrofitting. To take account of these constraints it is proposed to include wording within green to the core policies to take account of the historic built environment:

“In relation to statutorily and non-statutorily protected historic buildings or Conservation Areas, Policy HER1 will apply, guided by Historic England advice on climate change and historic building adaptation”.

Managing and Conserving the Historic Public Realm

- 6.6. As discussed in previous sections of this document, Rother District possesses a number of quality historic public realm features and surface treatments, including the listed cobbled streets of Rye, brick paving in Winchelsea and Robertsbridge, and raised pavements in Battle, which all are important in defining the special character and local distinctiveness of individual settlements. The retention and sensitive repair, and, where appropriate, reinstatement of such features is important in maintaining such character.
- 6.7. The historic public realm is also important in defining local character and sense of place in the rural areas; historic features such as milestones, historic fingerpost signs and red telephone kiosks and letterboxes contribute positively to the character of the rural public realm. These will be important considerations in the live well locally chapters of the Local Plan, where public realm will be considered in a number of policy areas.

Conservation Areas

- 6.8. The Council is not reviewing its Conservation Areas as part the Local Plan and these designations will carry forward. The existing Conservation Area appraisals provide important context setting for the historic environment and these have helped influence the development of policies in the Local Plan.

7. Vision and Spatial Objectives for the Local Plan

Vision and Objectives for the District to 2040

- 7.1. The protection of built heritage is clearly referenced in the vision for district to 2040 in the Local Plan. One of the strategic spatial objectives is to ‘promote high quality design and protect and enhance Rother’s built and natural heritage, while providing opportunities for recreation and tourism. This can be achieved by providing policies which protect and enhance our natural and built heritage. The objective highlights that Rother’s built heritage plays an important role in the local tourism offer and therefore local economy.

Green to the Core and Live Well Locally

- 7.2. Twin Overall Priorities have been identified to meet the Local Plan’s vision and create clear concepts against which the Plan’s strategies and policies and decision-making can be tested. These are:

- **Green to the Core** – considering the impact of all planning decisions on the climate emergency. Linkages to the historic built environment include the role built heritage can play in delivering energy efficiency and nature recovery
- **Live Well Locally** – the goal of creating healthy, sustainable and inclusive communities across all the community. Built heritage is considered important in the last sentence of the description in which places should be those ‘that are not just visually appealing, but also inspire and foster a sense of belonging, identity and shared experience.

- 7.3. There are therefore clear synergies between the vision/objectives of the Local Plan and the aims of policies within the heritage policies.

8. Policy Options

Policy Options for the Local Plan

8.1. There are three policy areas that will be presented within the heritage chapter of the Local Plan:

- **Heritage Management** – details how built heritage should be managed in relation to planning applications. This presents the context and important considerations in relation to designated heritage assets and minimising impacts for development;
- **Traditional Historic Farm Buildings** – details policy protection in relation to heritage assets within historic farm buildings
- **Shopfronts, Signage and Advertising** – details policy requirements for shopfront, signage and advertising, where it would impact the built heritage within Rother.

8.2. The following table (Figure 5) presents the policy options for the heritage chapter of the Local Plan.

Figure 5: Heritage Policy Options for the Local Plan

Policy Options	Justification
Carry forward with small changes the current policy in relation to heritage management	This policy option is carried forward from the adopted plan and is still fit for purpose, subject to small changes and clarification which are detailed in the proposed policy. This has a positive long term impact on a number of objectives, and there are synergies with policies in the live well locally in relation to protecting the distinct design and character of local areas and built form. Recommended
No heritage management policy, rely on NPPF policies	This option would rely on the strength of national policy in the NPPF to cover the requirements for planning applications. This is not felt a sustainable or practical option as there is local distinctiveness which needs to be taken account of. Whilst there is protection afforded with national policy, Not recommended

<p>Carry forward the existing policy approach in relation to traditional Historic Farm Buildings</p>	<p>This policy option is carried forward from the adopted plan and is still fit for purpose. This has a positive long term impact on a number of objectives, and there are synergies with policies in the live well locally and economy in relation to protecting the distinct design and character of local areas and built form, as well as protecting rural economies</p> <p>Recommended</p>
<p>No traditional historic farm buildings policy, rely on NPPF policies</p>	<p>This option would rely on the strength of national policy in the NPPF to cover the requirements for planning applications. This is not felt a sustainable or practical option as historic farmsteads is a specific issue for Rother District which needs to be taken account of.</p> <p>Not recommended</p>
<p>Carry forward existing policy approach in relation to Shopfronts, Signage and Advertising</p>	<p>This policy option is carried forward from the adopted plan and is still fit for purpose, s. This has a positive long term impact on a number of objectives, and there are synergies with policies in the live well locally in relation to protecting the distinct design and character of local areas and built form.</p> <p>Recommended</p>
<p>No shopfronts, signage and advertising policy, rely on NPPF policies</p>	<p>this option would rely on the strength of national policy in the NPPF to cover the requirements for planning applications. More detailed requirements as outlined in the proposed policy is justified and appropriate to be brought forward in the Local Plan.</p> <p>Not recommended</p>



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