

Rother District Local Plan 2025 – 2042

High Weald National Landscape and Site Selection - Background Paper

Regulation 19 Version – October 2026

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1. Legislative & Policy Background

- 1.1 83% of Rother district is within the High Weald National Landscape (HWNL), with additional land being within its setting. This means that much land being considered through the Local Plan must be assessed through the legislative and policy frameworks governing development in the HWNL. Approximately 48% of the district's population lives in a Lower layer Super Output Area (LSOA) that is partly or fully within the HWNL; the number of households is at approximately 50% of the district's total.

Legislation

- 1.2 Section 245 of the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023 (LURA) amends the duty on relevant authorities, including Rother District Council (RDC), in respect of their functions which affect land in National Landscapes, formerly known as “Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty”. Relevant authorities must now ‘seek to further’ the statutory purposes of Protected Landscapes. This replaces the previous duty within the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 on relevant authorities to ‘have regard to’ their statutory purposes.
- 1.3 The statutory purpose of National Landscapes (areas of outstanding natural beauty) is:
- “conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area of outstanding natural beauty”.*
- 1.4 The updated duty is intended to facilitate better outcomes for Protected Landscapes, which are in line with their statutory purpose(s). The duty does not prevent relevant authorities from undertaking their statutory functions and discharging their legal duties and other responsibilities. Instead, it is intended to complement these requirements by ensuring that the purposes for which Protected Landscapes are designated for are recognised in reaching decisions and undertaking activities that impact these areas. The duty also applies to functions undertaken

outside of the designation boundary which affects land within the Protected Landscape (i.e. within their setting).

National Planning Policy

- 1.5 The emerging Rother Local Plan will be examined against the previous National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (December 2024). The NPPF (2024) contains two distinct sections important to how RDC as Local Planning Authority (LPA) approaches plan-making with regard to the protection of the HWNL and the discharging of its duty. The first is within paragraph 11 – the presumption in favour of sustainable development:

11. Plans and decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development.

For plan-making this means that:

a) all plans should promote a sustainable pattern of development that seeks to: meet the development needs of their area; align growth and infrastructure; improve the environment; mitigate climate change (including by making effective use of land in urban areas) and adapt to its effects;

b) strategic policies should, as a minimum, provide for objectively assessed needs for housing and other uses, as well as any needs that cannot be met within neighbouring areas⁶, unless:

i. the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a strong reason for restricting the overall scale, type or distribution of development in the plan area⁷; or

ii. any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole.

Footnote 7 confirms that the policies referred to include those in the NPPF relating to: habitats sites; Sites of Special Scientific Interest; Local Green Space, a **National Landscape**; irreplaceable habitats; designated heritage assets; and areas at risk of flooding or coastal change.

- 1.6 Paragraph 11, as above, provides for RDC *NOT* to meet its objectively assessed needs for housing and other uses *IF* the policies around National Landscapes (and/or other listed constraints, many of which are also present in Rother) provide a strong reason for not doing so *OR* where the adverse impacts of doing so would significantly outweigh the benefits when assessed against the NPPF as a whole.
- 1.7 The policies in the NPPF (2024) that protect National Landscapes, as referred to in paragraph 11 (b) (i) are paragraphs 189 and 190, which carry forward the Statutory Duty:

189. Great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and National Landscapes which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues. The conservation and enhancement of wildlife and cultural heritage are also important considerations in these areas, and should be given great weight in National Parks and the Broads. The scale and extent of development within all these designated areas should be limited, while development within their setting should be sensitively located and designed to avoid or minimise adverse impacts on the designated areas.

190. When considering applications for development within National Parks, the Broads and National Landscapes, permission should be refused for major development⁶⁷ other than in exceptional circumstances, and where it can be demonstrated that the development is in the public interest. Consideration of such applications should include an assessment of:

- a) the need for the development, including in terms of any national considerations, and the impact of permitting it, or refusing it, upon the local economy;*
- b) the cost of, and scope for, developing outside the designated area, or meeting the need for it in some other way; and*
- c) any detrimental effect on the environment, the landscape and recreational opportunities, and the extent to which that could be moderated.*

Footnote 67 confirms that for the purposes of paragraph 190, whether a proposal is ‘major development’ is a matter for the decision maker, taking into account its nature, scale and setting, and whether it could have a significant adverse impact on the purposes for which the area has been designated or defined.

- 1.8 The recently updated NPPF (August 2026) largely retains the provisions of previous paragraph 11 with regard to National Landscapes through Policy S1 (Positive plan-making), and the provisions of previous paragraphs 189/190 through Policy N4 (Protected Landscapes).

Local Planning Policy

- 1.9 At a local level, current policies within the adopted Local Plan of particular relevance to the HWNL include Core Strategy (2014) policy EN1 (Landscape Stewardship) and DaSA (2019) policies DEN1 (Maintaining Landscape Character) and DEN2 (The High Weald AONB). These policies have been reviewed and updated through the emerging Local Plan, informed by updated evidence and consultation responses, and policies LAN1 (Landscape Character and Stewardship) and LAN2 (High Weald NL) represent the key HWNL policies for development management purposes in the submission Local Plan. There are also nine “made” Neighbourhood Plans in the district, all of which relate to land within the HWNL, and which contain their own local policies including many relevant to the protected landscape.

The High Weald AONB Management Plan

- 1.10 The High Weald AONB Management Plan 2024-2029 is a material consideration in the planning process. Management Plans describe the natural beauty, special qualities and key characteristics of a Protected Landscape, and articulate the features of the landscape which warrant its nationally designated and protected status.
- 1.11 The High Weald AONB Management Plan contains the “statement of significance” for the HWNL, which notes:

“The High Weald is one of the best-preserved medieval landscapes in north-west Europe. Despite its large size (1,461 sq.km) and proximity to London, its landscape has remained relatively unchanged since the 14th century, surviving major historical events and accommodating significant social and technological changes. The natural beauty of the High Weald AONB is derived from the essentially rural and small-scale landscape

character, rich in wildlife and cultural features. It has been created by historic and locally distinctive agricultural and forestry practices, with the story of its past visible throughout. The extensive survival of woodland and traditional mixed farming supports an exceptionally well-connected green and blue infrastructure, with a high proportion of natural surfaces. Food production and semi-natural habitat are interwoven in a structurally diverse, permeable and complex mosaic supporting a rich diversity of wildlife. A dense network of historic routeways and public rights of way provides access for people to get close to nature and experience its natural beauty. The pattern and landscape setting of dispersed historic settlements enriches its natural beauty, with small, irregular fields and pasture, hedgerows and ancient woodlands interspersed with the rich clay-tiled roofscapes of historic buildings. Greenness, a sense of tranquillity and dark skies contribute to the perceptual and scenic qualities people enjoy...”

- 1.12 The Management Plan articulates the natural beauty of the HWNL through eight core character components, also identifying specific objectives and actions for each component. The core character components are:

1. Natural systems (geology, soils, water and climate) - a deeply incised, ridged and faulted landform of clays and sandstone with highly variable, relatively undisturbed soils and numerous headwaters (gill streams) functioning under an oceanic climate.
2. Settlement - dispersed historic settlement including high densities of isolated farmsteads, hamlets and late-medieval villages founded on trade and non-agricultural rural industries.
3. Routeways - a dense network of historic routeways (now roads, tracks and paths).
4. Woodland – an abundance of ancient woodland mostly in small holdings, highly interconnected with hedges and shaws.
5. Fieldsapes and heath – small, irregular and productive fields, bound by hedgerows and woods, and typically used for livestock grazing; with distinctive zones of lowland heaths and inned river valleys (reclaimed marshland).
6. Dark night skies - intrinsically dark at night with our own galaxy (the Milky Way) visible.
7. Aesthetic and perceptual qualities - arising from the interaction of people with the landscape, including the notion of a quintessential English pastoral landscape, intimacy of

scale, a sense of history and timelessness; rurality and tranquillity; glimpsed long views; freedom to explore and make connections with the natural world, and a rich legacy of features and ideas left by writers, poets and gardeners inspired by the landscape.

8. Land-based economy and rural living - with roots extending deep into history, and which has visibly and culturally shaped the landscape.

- 1.13 The High Weald Housing Design Guide and other supporting guidance supports the objectives of the Management Plan, providing succinct, practical advice to set clear design expectations for new housing development. It aims to ensure the achievement of higher quality, landscape-led design that reflects intrinsic High Weald character, embedded with a true sense of place, without stifling innovation and creativity. The Management Plan and guidance can all be viewed on the [HWNL's website](#).

2. Emerging Local Plan

- 2.1 In accordance with the NPPF, work to support the emerging Rother Local Plan has explored whether RDC can meet its objectively assessed needs for housing and other uses while still meeting its statutory duty with regard to the HWNL. Rother's objectively assessed housing need, calculated in accordance with the Government's standard method, is currently 895 dwellings per year, or 15,215 dwellings over the 17-year Plan Period (2025-2042). This is significantly higher than both the average number of dwellings delivered in Rother during the last 15 years, (some 215 annually); and also the number planned for in the current adopted Local Plan Core Strategy (some 335 per year).
- 2.2 Rother's land requirements for employment uses and gypsy and traveller accommodation must also be identified through the Local Plan, but these needs, as assessed through the Housing and Economic Development Needs Assessment (HEDNA) (2026) and the East Sussex Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Accommodation Needs Assessment (GTAA) (2022), do not represent such a significant increase over the levels previously planned for. As such, the identification of land to meet housing needs represents the most significant challenge.
- 2.3 Key evidence documents which have informed the identification of land for housing through the Local Plan are the Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA) (updated 2026) and the Settlement Study (2024). Both documents have also informed the development (or spatial) strategy of the Local Plan, and site allocations. These are supported by a wide range of other evidence documents including: Landscape Sensitivity Assessments, Strategic Flood Risk Assessment and flooding sequential and exception test, Transport Assessment, Density Study, and Habitats Regulations Assessment.
- 2.4 The Local Plan as a whole has been subject to a process of Sustainability Appraisal (SA). One of the assessment criteria within the SA framework is the potential to cause harm to the HWNL.
- 2.5 The Local Plan's spatial strategy has evolved through the two Regulation 18 consultations, as set out in the Submission (Regulation 19) Local Plan and the

Development Strategy Background Paper (updated 2026). Policy SS1 (Spatial Strategy for Rother) of the Submission Local Plan confirms:

“...Growth and new development in Rother will be landscape-led with an overall pattern of development that reinforces and strengthens the natural beauty of the High Weald National Landscape, protects and enhances the network of blue and green infrastructure, and responds positively to the district’s network of existing settlements... The focus for growth will be in the following broad locations:

- a. West and North Bexhill to consolidate Bexhill as the most sustainable town, within the capacities of the existing transport network;*
- b. The towns of Battle and Rye which act as key transport hubs, along with the clusters of villages based around them;*
- c. Settlements on radial routes connected to the main urban areas of Bexhill and Hastings, allowing sensitive development in locations that rely on the larger towns for services and facilities;*
- d. Development at Hastings Fringes, providing sensitive growth;*
- e. Urban intensification and redevelopment across the district in appropriate and sustainable brownfield site locations;*
- f. Sensitive development in other rural settlements of the district; and*
- g. Growth along the A21 corridor, focussed within and around existing larger settlements.*

2.6 Hence, the Spatial Strategy acknowledges the need for development within the HWNL, with a focus on existing settlements.

3. Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment

- 3.1 The Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA) is a key document to support the identification of land suitable for development in the emerging Local Plan. It considers whether land is suitable, available and achievable for housing or employment development through the Local Plan period. Through assessing sites against a specific methodology, the Rother HELAA categorises each site as either “identified” (i.e. already allocated or permitted for development); “potential” (potentially suitable, available and achievable for development, subject to the conclusion of the Local Plan process); or “rejected” (not suitable, available or achievable for development during the Plan period).
- 3.2 The LPA has carried out a comprehensive HELAA which has been reviewed throughout the production of the emerging Local Plan and has been published at each consultation stage, to ensure that all potential opportunities for suitable land are identified and “no stone is left unturned” in the search for suitable land to meet Rother’s objectively assessed needs, particularly for housing. The latest HELAA (2026), which presents sites across the five sub-areas of the emerging Local Plan, can be viewed on the Council’s [website](#). For further explanation of the HELAA process, please see the HELAA and Site Selection Methodology Background Paper (2026).

HELAA Methodology

- 3.3 Below is an extract from the HELAA Methodology (within the HELAA and Site Selection Methodology Background Paper (2026)) which explains the approach to assessing sites in the HWNL:

Sites will be assessed in accordance with Paragraph 189 of the NPPF, which states that great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Landscapes, which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues, and that the scale and extent of development should be

limited, while development within the setting should be sensitively located and designed to avoid or minimise adverse impacts on the designated areas.

Guidance has been received from the High Weald National Landscape Unit on assessing sites in, or within the setting of, the HWNL. This guidance has evolved since the HELAA was commenced in 2020 to reflect the adoption of a new HWNL Management Plan (with additional character components) in 2024. Sites will be considered against the defining components of character, as set out in the High Weald NL Management Plan (2024-2029), informed by Geographic Information System (GIS) data supplied by the HWNL Unit. Guidance from the HWNL (2025) on how to assess the character components is as follows:

- Natural systems (geology, soils, water and climate). To consider matters including: impacts on floodplains, watercourses, topography, changes to landform, disturbance to undisturbed fields and loss of soil carbon storage.*
- Settlement. To consider matters including: erosion of historic settlement pattern, separation between settlements, suburbanisation, proportionality in size to settlement, need to retain key landscape features, impact on heritage assets.*
- Routeways. To consider matters including: impacts on any historic routeways or PRowS within the site, impacts on verges or trees along routeways, damage to form and character of sunken routeways.*
- Woodland. To consider matters including: impacts on ancient woodland, trees, wood pasture, historic parkland, connections of woodland to other habitats.*
- Fieldscape and heath. To consider matters including: impacts on productive agricultural land, historic field boundaries, medieval field systems, historic farmsteads, species-rich grassland or heathland, ecology and archaeology associated with the field/ heathland.*
- Dark skies. To consider matters including: impacts of new lighting near wildlife-sensitive areas including ancient woodland, or into a topographically prominent location, or a presently unlit location.*

- *Aesthetic and perceptual qualities. To consider matters including: impacts of development on the intrinsic rural character of the landscape; sense of connection with the countryside; tranquillity; valued viewpoints; historical/ cultural features.*
- *Land-based economy and rural living. To consider matters including: impact on farming, forestry or small-scale horticulture, support/ retain local services, rural businesses, improvement of agricultural and forestry infrastructure.*

Assessments of sites within or affecting the setting of the HWNL will consider the level of impact on the HWNL (e.g. a high, medium or low impact), having regard to the components of character detailed above. The HWNL Unit will be consulted, where practicable, on sites likely to have a moderate to high impact.

Paragraph 190 of the NPPF rules out major development within National Landscapes other than in exceptional circumstances. For the purpose of paragraph 190, ‘major development’ is defined as a matter for the decision maker, taking into account its nature, scale and setting, and whether it could have a significant adverse impact on the purposes for which the area has been designated or defined. Sites will not be ruled out for constituting ‘major development’ but will need to be identified as such within the assessment.

Assessment of Sites within the HWNL

- 3.4 This section of the background paper explores the extent to which the HELAA assessed sites within the HWNL.
- 3.5 Overall, the HELAA has assessed 956 sites across the district, of which 678 are partly or fully within the HWNL, equating to 71% of all sites assessed.
- 3.6 The identification method for every site assessed, and the proportion of those in the HWNL, is shown in Figure 1 below. A key method for identifying sites has been through the LPA’s “Call for Sites” process, which has been open for submissions since 2020. Importantly, sites submitted through the Call for Sites are known to be “available” for development within the Plan period, as indicated by the landowner.

- 3.7 Figure 1 below shows that 74% of all sites submitted to the Council during the Call for Sites process are within the HWNL. Additionally, 77% of sites which fell into the categories of “previously assessed” or “council search” are within the HWNL.

Figure 1: Summary of identification method for HELAA sites

Identification	Total number of sites	Number (and proportion) of sites in HWNL
Existing Allocation	55	34 (62%)
Site Submitted during Call for Sites	289	215 (74%)
Planning Application	58	16 (28%)
Considered through Neighbourhood Plan process	43	36 (84%)
Council Search	204	162 (79%)
Previously Assessed	251	189 (75%)
RDC Owned Land	48	24 (50%)
Other LA Owned Land	8	2 (25%)
Total	956	678 (71%)

- 3.8 These figures are unsurprising, given the high proportion of Rother’s land area which falls within the HWNL (83%).
- 3.9 Figure 2 below shows the assessment conclusions of all the sites assessed through the HELAA in each sub-area of the district, as well as the proportion of the number of sites in each sub-area that are within the HWNL. Note that the Bexhill sub-area falls wholly outside the HWNL and the Northern sub-area falls wholly within it. The remaining three sub-areas lie largely within the HWNL, with some land falling outside.
- 3.10 Figure 2 shows that overall, just under half of the “Identified” sites (i.e. those assessed through the HELAA as being suitable, available and achievable for development) and just over half of all “Potential” sites, are within the HWNL. Therefore, while some 83% of Rother’s land falls within the HWNL, and some 73% of sites assessed through the HELAA lie within it, the HWNL contains only around 50% of the total number of sites assessed as suitable or potentially suitable for development. This helps illustrate alignment with the statutory duty and national policy position set out above, whereby the natural beauty of the HWNL must be conserved and enhanced, and consequently, a greater proportion of development is

focused outside the HWNL rather than inside it. This is demonstrated further in Section 4, below, when the development capacity of emerging site allocations is considered.

- 3.11 Figure 2 also shows that 75% of all “Rejected” sites are within the HWNL. Therefore, despite the LPA taking a proactive and positive approach to identifying sites for assessment through the HELAA (“leaving no stone unturned”), the district’s significant environmental constraints, and particularly the extent of the HWNL and the need to conserve and enhance its natural beauty, has meant that the majority of sites assessed have been found to be unsuitable, unavailable or unachievable for development. A key reason for rejecting sites within the HWNL has been due to the harmful impact of development on the Protected Landscape.

Figure 2: Number and proportion of HELAA sites in the HWNL

Sub area	Total number of sites	Total Identified sites	Total Potential sites	Total Rejected sites	Number of sites in HWNL	Identified in HWNL	Potential in HWNL	Rejected in HWNL
Bexhill	140	21	32	87	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Southern Rother and Hastings Fringes	165	6	11	148	139 (84%)	6 (100%)	9 (82%)	124 (84%)
Battle and surrounding settlements	194	15	16	163	177 (91%)	14 (93%)	13 (81%)	150 (92%)
Rye and the eastern areas ¹	256	24	16	216	161 (63%)	8 (33%)	10 (63%)	143 (66%)
Northern Rother	201	8	24	169	201 (100%)	8 (100%)	24 (100%)	169 (100%)
Total	956	74	99	783	678 (71%)	36 (49%)	56 (57%)	586 (75%)

- 3.12 Further analysis of the rejected sites (Figure 3 below) shows that of the 781 rejected sites across the district, 213 were submitted during the Call for Sites process (and consequently, known to be available). 170 of these rejected, submitted sites are within the HWNL. Furthermore, comparing Figures 1 and 3 shows that of

¹ There are no site allocations proposed through the Local Plan in Rye as these will be made by the Neighbourhood Plan. Figure 13.2 of the Regulation 19 Local Plan outlines the scale of development the Neighbourhood Plan will need to meet.

215 submitted sites in the HWNL, 170 have been rejected, meaning almost 80% of submitted sites within the HWNL have been found not to be suitable for development, following assessment in accordance with the HELAA Methodology.

Figure 3: Number and proportion of rejected HELAA sites in the HWNL

Identification	Total number of sites rejected	Number (and proportion) of sites rejected in HWNL
Existing Allocation	5	4 (80%)
Site Submitted during Call for Sites	213	170 (80%)
Planning Application	35	11 (31%)
Considered through Neighbourhood Plan process	42	35 (84%)
Council Search	199	160 (80%)
Previously Assessed	242	183 (76%)
RDC Owned Land	39	21 (54%)
Other LA Owned Land	8	2 (25%)
Total	783	586 (75%)

Conclusion of analysis

- 3.13 Overall, this analysis strongly evidences the LPA's position, in line with paragraph 11 (b) of the NPPF (2024), that it is unable to meet its objectively assessed needs for housing, due to (i) conflict with policies of the NPPF that protect areas or assets of particular importance, particularly the HWNL, which provide strong justification for restricting the overall scale, type and distribution of development in the plan area; and (ii) the fact that the adverse impacts of meeting the objectively assessed needs, i.e., identifying land sufficient to accommodate some 895 dwellings per year, would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies of the NPPF taken as a whole.
- 3.14 The analysis also evidences the method by which the LPA has sensitively planned for development within the HWNL – through the assessment of hundreds of sites against a detailed methodology, the rejection of the majority of them - frequently because of their harmful impact on the HWNL – and the taking forward only of those sites judged to have a potentially acceptable impact on the HWNL.

- 3.15 Within the HWNL, sites for housing that have been assessed as suitable (or potentially suitable), available and achievable, are found largely on the edges of the more sustainable settlements, in line with the Settlement Study (2024) and the Spatial Strategy (see paragraphs 2.5 - 2.6 above). As a result, most of the proposed housing allocations within the HWNL represent minor extensions to existing settlements. This has the benefit of minimising impacts on the core character components of the HWNL while allowing for sustainable and sensitive housing growth within settlements to meet the housing needs of the district's rural communities.
- 3.16 The method for selecting site allocations through the HELAA is illustrated further, through the following examples of two villages within the HWNL, Beckley and Icklesham.

Example village: Beckley

- 3.17 Beckley is a historic village with ribbon development straddling an ancient east-west route, which is characteristic of many villages in the HWNL. The undeveloped gaps in the otherwise built-up frontage along the main road have the effect of bringing the countryside into Beckley, giving the village a semi-rural feel. The countryside surrounding the village is remote and tranquil. Beckley sits somewhat centrally within the wider Lower Rother Valley landscape character area which is characterised by the broad valleys of the lower reaches of the River Rother and the secondary reaches of the Tillingham River. The valleys are surrounded by rolling, well-wooded countryside affording long views. There are limited, but some key, services and facilities within the village – a primary school and a bus service. The neighbouring villages of Peasmarch and Northiam have a greater selection of services and facilities, with Rye being the nearest transport hub.
- 3.18 Through the HELAA, the LPA has assessed 25 sites in the village of which nine were submitted during the call for sites. Figure 4 shows that eight of these submitted sites have been rejected through the HELAA and overall, 21 of the 25 sites have been rejected. One of the “potential” sites forms part of a submitted site and would represent an extension to an adopted Local Plan allocation. The other “potential” site was originally included as a “previously assessed” site, with its

ownership and availability later investigated by the LPA. Note there are two adopted Local Plan allocations in the village, which are assessed as “identified”.

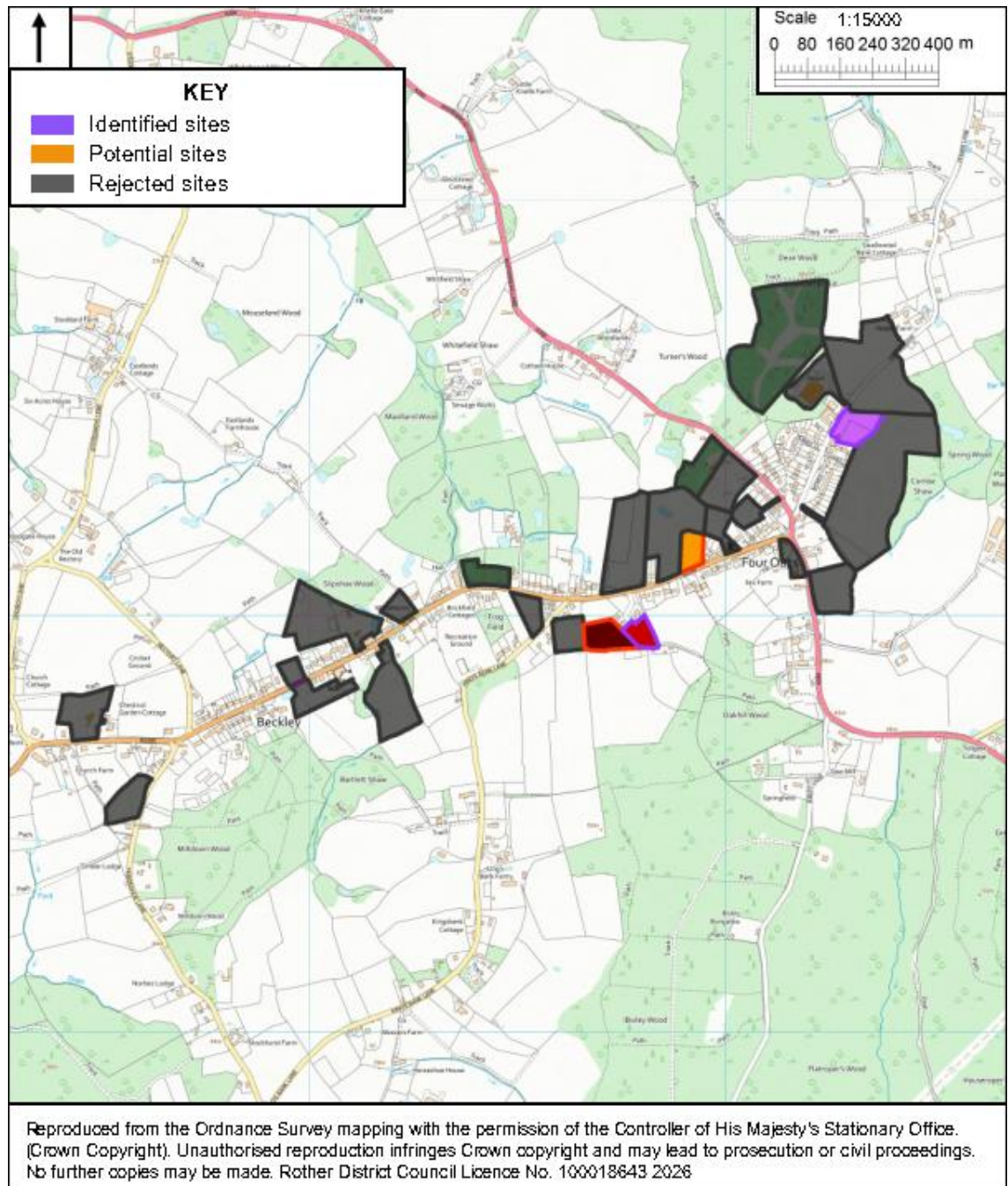
Figure 4: Summary of HELAA site assessments in Beckley

Identification	Identified	Potential	Rejected	Total
Existing Allocation	2	0	0	2
Site Submitted during Call for Sites	0	1	8	9
Council Search	0	0	4	4
Previously Assessed	0	1	8	10
Total	2	2	21	25

As can be seen from Example village: Icklesham

- 3.19 below, a number of the sites assessed are within the open gaps between existing pockets and ribbons of built form. As noted above, these gaps are a particular characteristic of the village and form part of the wider qualities of the HWNL. Therefore, overall, the number of sites capable of accommodating development without causing harm to the HWNL is very limited.
- 3.20 However, the two “potential” sites have not been rejected because they relate well to the settlement pattern and represent small extensions to the village. The site on the northern side of Main Street (BEC0011: Land west of Oaklea Cottages), is relatively enclosed in the landscape without the same long views northwards as the adjoining, larger fields, and its development with a short terrace of dwellings along the frontage could be in keeping with adjoining development and be accommodated without harming the rural character or setting of the village or the landscape of the High Weald National landscape, subject to the retention of boundary hedges and trees. The site on the southern side of Main Street (BEC0037: Land adjacent to Buddens Green) forms the southern part of an open field to the west of a small modern housing estate, potentially suitable to accommodate an extension to an adjacent small adopted Local Plan allocation, providing the northern part of the field (adjacent to the road) remains undeveloped for flood risk and landscape reasons, and that trees and hedges on field boundaries are retained.

Figure 5: HELAA map of Beckley



Example village: Icklesham

- 3.21 Another example of a sensitive location is Icklesham. It is a generally linear settlement adjacent to the A259 atop a ridge that forms the southern boundary of the Brede Valley. Much of the settlement's earlier development was located fronting the A259, but more recent development has taken place in depth, to the

north of the main road. On the western side of the village, development extends away from the main core of the village, towards the open countryside, which gives the impression that the village is fairly extensive when viewed from the main road. There are limited services and facilities in the village – a primary school and a bus service, with residents likely to rely on services in Rye and also Hastings.

- 3.22 The LPA assessed 17 sites in the village of which four were submitted. Three of these submitted sites are on the southern side of the A259 which, as previously identified, is not where the majority of the existing development is. Figure 6 shows that two of these submitted sites were rejected (both to the south of the A259) with two potentially suitable for development (one either side of the A259).

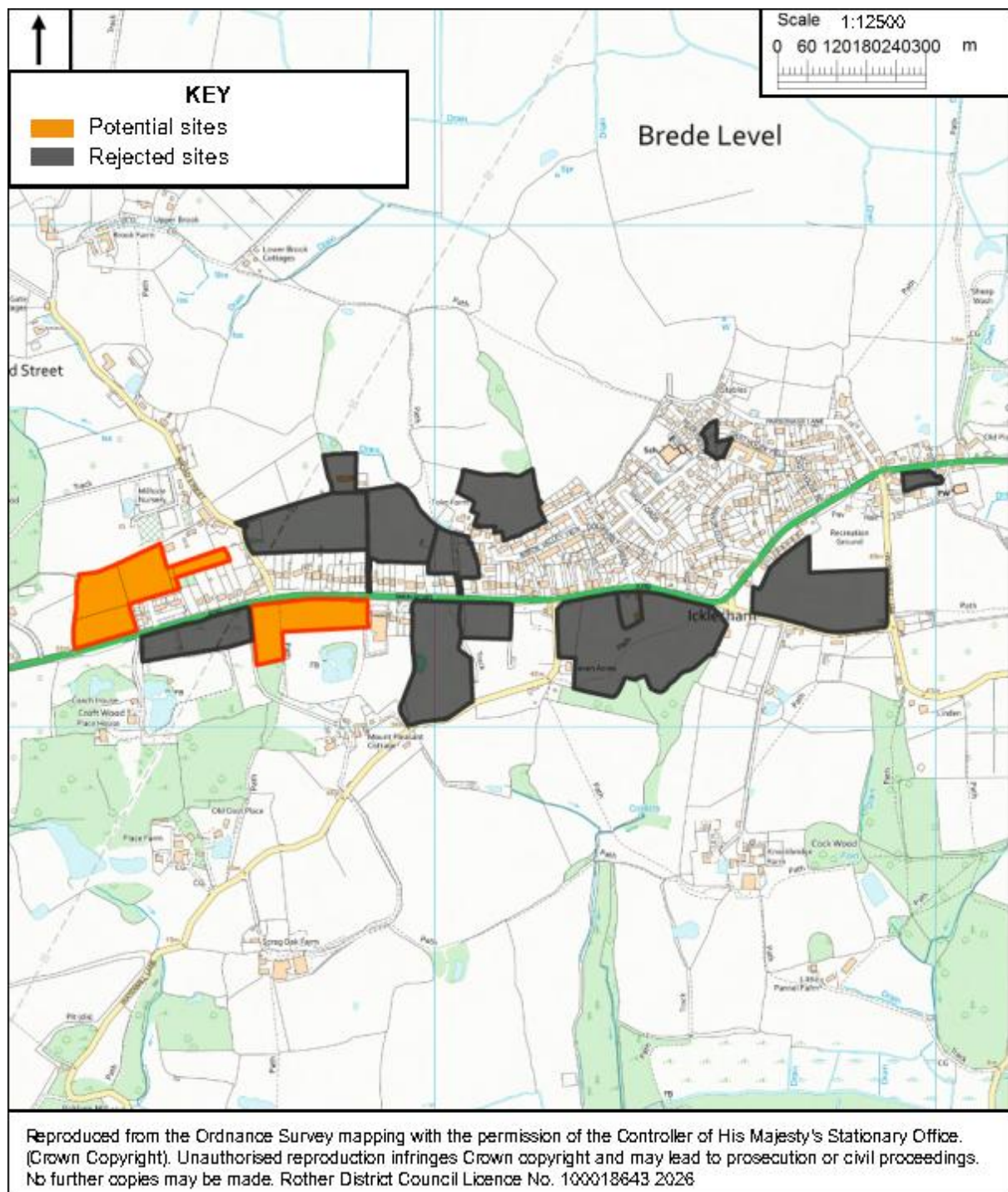
Figure 6: Summary of HELAA site assessments in Icklesham

Identification	Identified	Potential	Rejected	Total
Existing Allocation	0	0	0	0
Site Submitted during Call for Sites	0	2	2	4
Council Search	0	0	7	7
Previously Assessed	0	0	5	5
Planning Application	0	0	1	1
Total	0	2	15	17

- 3.23 The linear and ridgetop nature of the village means that many sites assessed would cause development to encroach harmfully into the countryside, as shown in Figure 7, and be visible in longer views. This key component of the HWNL therefore gives a strong justification to restrict development in the village.
- 3.24 However, the two “potential” sites were taken forward, similarly to Beckley, as small extensions to the built form of the village. The site to the south of the A259 (ICK0017: Land adjacent to Little Sherwood Industry Park) was found, unlike many parts of the village, to not be exposed in the wider landscape due to the field being relatively enclosed by boundary trees and woodland, and there being a small amount of development on the southern side of the road, just east of this site, well screened from the road behind a tall hedge, and development at this site could potentially be similarly screened. The site to the north of the road (ICK0050: Land adjacent to Orchard Close, Main Road), is adjacent to a small, recently constructed housing estate, and viewed in the context of the adjacent development and with the

inclusion of a sensitive landscaping scheme, the landscape impact of additional development here could also potentially be accepted.

Figure 7: HELAA map of Icklesham



4. Emerging Site Allocations

- 4.1 The assessments from the HELAA fed into the Local Plan site allocations process. The LPA included the draft site allocations in the Regulation 18 Consultation in early 2026. Previously, the HELAA was made available for comment during the Regulation 18 consultation in 2024. That consultation did not propose formal site allocations but the LPA did seek comments on the potential sites that could form future allocations, to gain feedback from residents and statutory consultees. At each consultation stage, the HELAA has been revised to reflect the latest evidence available, including any representations made at the previous consultation stage.

Site allocations within the HWNL

- 4.2 The Submission Local Plan includes 129 site allocations for housing or employment uses, of which 81 are within the HWNL. A list of these sites is contained within Appendix 1. Figure 8 below illustrates how the sites were identified, e.g. via an adopted Local or Neighbourhood Plan allocation, a planning application, or through the HELAA. Sites shown as being identified through more than one method usually represent adopted allocations which have been extended to accommodate additional growth.

Figure 8: Summary of Identification method for Local Plan allocations in HWNL

Identification	In HWNL	Not in HWNL	Total
DaSA Allocation	8	10	18
NP Allocation	15	0	15
Planning application	6	9	15
Part DaSA Allocation, part HELAA	2	4	6
Part DaSA Allocation, part planning application	5	0	5
Part NP Allocation, part HELAA	1	0	1
HELAA	44	25	69
Total	81	48	129

- 4.3 The total quantum of development for housing and employment within the HWNL is summarised in Figure 9 below.

Figure 9: Quantum of development of Local Plan allocations in HWNL

Sub area	Number of sites	Total dwellings	Employment floorspace (sqm)
Southern Rother and Hastings Fringes	15	377	6,000
Battle and surrounding settlements	25	785	12,971
Rye and the eastern areas ²	15	350	400
Northern Rother	26	799	4,200
Total	81	2,311	23,571

4.4 The overall scale of development for each sub-area and the proportion of that which is within the HWNL is summarised in **Error! Not a valid bookmark self-reference..** This shows that while 63% of the sites proposed for housing and employment uses are within the HWNL, when the total quantum of development is taken into account, these proportions are 32% of the total number of dwellings and 20% of the total employment floorspace. Therefore, while 83% of Rother's land is within the HWNL, less than a third of the dwellings planned for lie within the protected landscape (and only a fifth of its employment land). This, again, helps to demonstrate compliance with the statutory duty and national policy position set out above, whereby the natural beauty of the HWNL must be conserved and enhanced, and consequently, a greater proportion of development is focused outside the HWNL rather than inside it.

4.5 Given the Local Plan is not making any allocations in Rye town (as this is being done through the advancing Neighbourhood Plan), the majority of the development outside of the HWNL is located in Bexhill.

4.6 There are also five sites in the HWNL for gypsy & traveller pitches in the Regulation 19 Local Plan, which are also listed in Appendix 1. One of the sites is an existing allocation in the DaSA. Three of the sites are either adjacent to existing pitches or seek to expand the number of pitches on an existing site. The fifth site

² There are no site allocations proposed through the Local Plan in Rye as these will be made by the Neighbourhood Plan. Figure 13.2 of the Regulation 19 Local Plan outlines the scale of development the Neighbourhood Plan will need to meet.

currently has temporary planning permission. These sites have been assessed against national policy and guidance, as outlined in Chapter 1.

Figure 10: Proportion of proposed Local Plan allocations in the HWNL

Sub area	Total number of sites	Total number of dwellings	Total employment floorspace (sqm)	Number of sites in HWNL	Number of dwelling in HWNL	Employment floorspace in HWNL (sqm)
Bexhill	40	4,474	78,225	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Southern Rother and Hastings Fringes	15	377	6,000	15 (100%)	377 (100%)	6,000 (100%)
Battle and surrounding settlements	26	800	12,971	25 (96%)	785 (98%)	12,971 (100%)
Rye and the eastern areas	31	737	18,480	15 (68%)	350 (47%)	400 (2%)
Northern Rother	26	799	4,200	26 (100%)	799 (100%)	4,200 (100%)
Total	138	7,187	119,876	81 (63%)	2,311 (32%)	23,571 (20%)

4.7 The High Weald National Landscape Unit raised strong objections to a number of the proposed site allocations within the HWNL at Regulation 18 stage in 2026. The Unit also noted that a number of sites were considered “major” within the meaning outlined in paragraph 190 and footnote 67 of the NPPF. In response, the LPA carried out additional Landscape Sensitivity Assessment (LSA) on the larger (circa 20 dwellings plus) draft allocations which the HWNL Unit had objected to and which had not previously been subject to a planning application or other detailed assessment.

4.8 The LSA (2026) complemented earlier LSAs completed to inform selected HELAA sites (2022), and can be viewed on the Council’s [website](#). The conclusions of the assessments have informed the proposed allocations in the Submission Plan, and in some instances resulted in a change to the quantum of development and/or identified which parts of the site are suitable/ unsuitable for development. In two cases, site allocations within the Regulation 18 Local Plan were not carried forward into the Regulation 19 Plan due to being assessed as having a high sensitivity to development. For the remainder of the sites assessed through the LSA (2026) the suitable area for development is indicated on a landscape analysis plan for each site, contained within the LSA. This has contributed to informing both the capacity of the sites as well as any mitigation measures as detailed in the site allocation policies.

- 4.9 Site allocations not subject to additional LSA have also been further considered since the Regulation 18 consultation, in line with the consultation responses, and in many cases, amended, or been subject to additional policy criteria.
- 4.10 The SA process has also contributed to identifying where any mitigation measures may be required as part of site allocation policies. This is on top of the suite of strategic and development management focused policies within the Submission Local Plan, that would further guide appropriate forms of development.

Major development in the HWNL

- 4.11 It is acknowledged that despite the quantum of development in the HWNL being significantly proportionally lower than its land coverage in Rother, a small number of the allocations within the Submission Local Plan do represent major development within the HWNL within the meaning of paragraph 190 and footnote 67 of the NPPF (2024). Therefore, it has been necessary to consider the tests contained within paragraph 190 of the NPPF, i.e.:

“...permission should be refused for major development other than in exceptional circumstances, and where it can be demonstrated that the development is in the public interest. Consideration of such applications should include an assessment of:

- a) the need for the development, including in terms of any national considerations, and the impact of permitting it, or refusing it, upon the local economy;*
- b) the cost of, and scope for, developing outside the designated area, or meeting the need for it in some other way; and*
- c) any detrimental effect on the environment, the landscape and recreational opportunities, and the extent to which that could be moderated.”*

- 4.12 In these cases, it is considered the test is passed because:
1. There is an exceptional circumstance, in that the Government has set out a clear objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes. While it is the LPA’s position that Rother cannot meet its objectively assessed need for housing, in accordance with paragraph 11 of the NPPF (2024), in order for the

new Local Plan to be found sound, the LPA must demonstrate that it has left “no stone unturned” in its search for suitable housing sites.

2. Development is in the public interest. Rother’s housing affordability ratio is 9.9 (2025) meaning the average cost of a house is nearly ten times average earnings. There are areas of deprivation, and housing affordability is often worse in the rural areas. The HEDNA (2026) identifies a significant need for affordable housing in the district (some 375 dwellings per year), which is greater than the average total number of dwellings currently delivered. There is a clear need for additional housing in the district, including sensitive growth in its rural settlements, in line with the emerging spatial strategy.
3. The “major” sites represent extensions to existing settlements which have an existing level of services and facilities. The size of the developments would also allow for affordable housing, green infrastructure and improvements to services, as appropriate.
4. The site allocations have been identified through a rigorous exercise (the HELAA), which has assessed many hundreds of sites and found the majority to be unsuitable, particularly in the HWNL. It is simply not possible to meet Rother’s objectively assessed need for homes outside the HWNL. The amount of land identified for development outside the HWNL has been maximised as far as possible, as illustrated through the HELAA and site allocations, but much of this land is also constrained (for example, as a result of flood risk or internationally protected habitats sites). The emerging Local Plan’s spatial strategy and site allocations have been informed by sustainability appraisal and represent a sustainable pattern of development. Planning for additional housing in rural settlements within the HWNL will help to support local services and the vitality of villages.

- 4.13 Those “major” sites which have been found suitable through the HELAA have been subject to additional Landscape Sensitivity Assessment, the recommendations of which have been carried forward into the site allocation policies. This has ensured that any detrimental effect on the environment, the landscape and recreational opportunities are mitigated.

5. Conclusions

- 5.1 The Council has a statutory duty to seek to further the purpose of the HWNL. The Council as Local Planning Authority (LPA) is also required through national planning policy to plan for the future needs of the district and set out a development (or spatial) strategy through the Local Plan.
- 5.2 Through the HELAA the LPA has assessed over 950 sites across the district, of which 71% are within the HWNL. The majority of these sites have been rejected through the HELAA as not being available, suitable and/or achievable for development. The effect on the HWNL formed a key consideration.
- 5.3 The conclusions from the HELAA have formed part of the evidence base to support the emerging Local Plan. Landscape Sensitivity Studies, the Settlement Study and Sustainability Appraisal are further key pieces of evidence, forming part of a wider evidence base, that has informed the Submission Local Plan. Taken together, these key evidence base documents have shaped the allocated sites in terms of the quantum of development, the location of development within each site, and any mitigation measures that would be required to make the development acceptable.
- 5.4 Rother is unable to meet its objectively assessed need for housing. This is strongly evidenced through the HELAA and other evidence base work. The key reason, is that to do so, would not allow the HWNL to be conserved or enhanced, contrary to legislation and national planning policy.
- 5.5 The spatial strategy and the site allocations of the submission Local Plan represent a sustainable and sensitive pattern of development that meets the needs of rural communities, contributes to boosting Rother's housing supply, while also conserving and enhancing the HWNL.

Appendix 1: Submission Local Plan allocations partly or fully within the HWNL or its setting

Site reference	Address	Parish	Identification	Development Quantum
BT1	Land south of Hastings Road, Battle	Battle	Part NP Allocation, part HELAA	200 dwellings
BT2	Land at Breadsell, Battle (wholly outside HWNL, within setting)	Battle	HELAA	145 dwellings
BT3	Beech Farm, Battle	Battle	Planning application	1895 sqm employment floorspace
BT4	Land at Caldbec House, Battle	Battle	NP Allocation	5 dwellings
BT5	Rutherfords Business Park, Marley Lane, Battle	Battle	HELAA	2700 sqm employment floorspace
BT6	Land at Sunny Rise, Battle	Battle	HELAA	10 dwellings
BT7	Land adjacent to 1 Loose Farm Cottages, Battle	Battle	HELAA	5 dwellings
BT8	Land east of Coronation Gardens, Battle	Battle	HELAA	75 dwellings
BT9	Land adjoining Little Brans, Battle	Battle	HELAA	73 dwellings
BT10	Battle Market Square, Battle	Battle	HELAA	(a) 52 dwellings (b) retention of existing retail floorspace
NE1	Swallow Barn, Netherfield	Battle	NP Allocation	10 dwellings
NE2	White House Poultry Farm, Netherfield	Battle	NP Allocation	24 dwellings
BRI1	Coldharbour Farm Estate, Coldharbour Lane, Brightling	Brightling	Planning application	1861 sqm employment floorspace

CT1	Land west of B2204, Catsfield	Catsfield	DaSA Allocation	30 dwellings
CT2	Land south of Wilton House Equestrian Centre, Catsfield	Catsfield	HELAA	20 dwellings
SD1	Land at Sunningdale, Sedlescombe	Sedlescombe	NP Allocation	8 dwellings
SD2	Land at Church Hill Farm, North of Village Hall, Sedlescombe	Sedlescombe	NP Allocation	12 dwellings
SD3	Land at Sedlescombe Sawmills, Sedlescombe	Sedlescombe	NP Allocation	(a) 8 dwellings (b) 1115 sqm employment floorspace
SD4	Land adjacent to St John the Baptist Church, Sedlescombe	Sedlescombe	NP Allocation	17 dwellings
SD5	Land at Gate Cottage, Sedlescombe	Sedlescombe	NP Allocation	8 dwellings
SD6	Land at Church Hill Farm, Sedlescombe	Sedlescombe	NP Allocation	10 dwellings
SD7	Marley Lane Business Park, Sedlescombe	Sedlescombe	Planning application	2400 sqm employment floorspace
SD8	Land at Felon's Field, Sedlescombe	Sedlescombe	DaSA Allocation	3000 sqm employment floorspace
SD9	Land north of Gorselands, Sedlescombe	Sedlescombe	HELAA	15 dwellings
SD10	Land north of Brede Lane, Sedlescombe	Sedlescombe	HELAA	38 dwellings
BW1	Land north of Shrub Lane, Burwash	Burwash	HELAA	35 dwellings
BW2	Land at 101 Shrub Lane, Burwash	Burwash	HELAA	6 dwellings
BW3	Land east of Shrub Lane (north), Burwash	Burwash	HELAA	15 dwellings
BW4	Land east of Shrub Lane (south), Burwash	Burwash	HELAA	8 dwellings
BWC1	Land south of Heathfield Road, Burwash Common	Burwash	HELAA	7 dwellings
BWC2	Old Orchard Nursery, Heathfield Road, Burwash Common	Burwash	Planning application	9 dwellings
EC1	Land at Oxenbridge Lane, Etchingham	Etchingham	HELAA	10 dwellings
EC2	Croft Field, Etchingham	Etchingham	HELAA	30 dwellings

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SC1	Land east of Stockwood Meadow, Northiam Road, Staplecross	Ewhurst	HELAA	25 dwellings
SC2	Land east of Hop Gardens, Northiam Road, Staplecross	Ewhurst	HELAA	10 dwellings
HG1	Land south of Iridge Place, London Road, Hurst Green	Hurst Green	NP Allocation	28 dwellings
HG2	Land to Rear of The Olde Bakery, London Rd, Hurst Green	Hurst Green	HELAA	25 dwellings
HG3	Land at The Lodge, London Road, Hurst Green	Hurst Green	HELAA	(a) 150 dwellings (b) A mix of uses that may include community, employment, leisure or retail
RB1	Land south of Heathfield Gardens, Robertsbridge	Salehurst & Robertsbridge	Part NP Allocation, part HELAA	55 dwellings
RB2	Grove Farm, Robertsbridge	Salehurst & Robertsbridge	Part NP Allocation, part HELAA	96 dwellings
RB3	Vicarage Land, Land south of the western end of Fair Lane, Robertsbridge	Salehurst & Robertsbridge	NP Allocation	10 dwellings
RB4	Culverwells, Land north of Station Road, Robertsbridge	Salehurst & Robertsbridge	Planning application	(a) 21 dwellings (b) doctor's surgery
RB5	Hodson's Mill, Northbridge Street, Robertsbridge	Salehurst and Robertsbridge	Part NP Allocation, part HELAA	(a) Some 125 dwellings (b) flexible commercial, retail or community use
FW1	Land rear of Fruitfields, High Street, Flimwell	Ticehurst	Part NP Allocation, part HELAA	27 dwellings
FW2	South of Hawkhurst Road, Flimwell	Ticehurst	HELAA	1,800 sqm employment floorspace
FW3	North of Hawkhurst Road, Flimwell	Ticehurst	HELAA	35 dwellings
FW4	Cedar Farm, London Road, Ticehurst	Ticehurst	HELAA	2,400 sqm employment floorspace
SG1	Land at Lynden Lane, Stonegate	Ticehurst	HELAA	5 dwellings
SG2	Land east of Bardown Road, Stonegate	Ticehurst	HELAA	20 dwellings

TC1	Land at Steellands Farm, Field Rise, Ticehurst	Ticehurst	HELAA	42 dwellings
TC2	Orchard Farm, Ticehurst	Ticehurst	NP Allocation	5 dwellings
BC1	Land South and West of Buddens Green, Beckley	Beckley	Part DaSA Allocation, part HELAA	20 dwellings
BC2	Land East of Hobbs Lane, Beckley	Beckley	DaSA Allocation	20 dwellings
BC3	Land west of Oaklea Cottages, Beckley	Beckley	HELAA	10 dwellings
BR1	Land west of A28, Northiam Road, Broad Oak	Brede	DaSA Allocation	29 dwellings
BR2	Land west of Tillingham View, Broad Oak	Brede	HELAA	70 dwellings
BR3	Land at Broad Oak Lodge, Chitcombe Road, Broad Oak	Brede	HELAA	10 dwellings
ID1	Land south of Elmsmead, Iden	Iden	Part DaSA Allocation, part planning app	15 dwellings
ID2	Land at Street Field, Main Street, Iden	Iden	HELAA	10 dwellings
NR1	Land south of Northiam CE Primary School	Northiam	DaSA Allocation	7 dwellings
NR2	Land South of Coppards Lane, Northiam	Northiam	HELAA	15 dwellings
PE1	Land south of Main Street, Peasmarsh	Peasmarsh	HELAA, planning application	55 dwellings
PE2	Land rear of Pippins, Main Street, Peasmarsh	Peasmarsh	DaSA Allocation	45 dwellings
PE3	Tanyard, Main Street, Peasmarsh	Peasmarsh	HELAA	15 dwellings
PE4	Land east of Orchard Way, Peasmarsh	Peasmarsh	NP Allocation	5 dwellings
PE5	Malthouse Business Park, Peasmarsh	Peasmarsh	HELAA	(a) 6 dwellings (b) 400 sqm employment floorspace
CR1	Land at Station Road and Forewood Lane, Crowhurst	Crowhurst	Part NP Allocation, part HELAA	25 dwellings
CR2	Land south of Forewood Rise, Crowhurst	Crowhurst	NP Allocation	18 dwellings
CR3	Land adjacent to Station Car Park, Crowhurst	Crowhurst	NP Allocation	6 dwellings

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FA1	Land east of Waites Lane, Fairlight Cove	Fairlight	DaSA Allocation	35 dwellings
GU1	Land north of A265, Ivyhouse Lane, Hastings Fringes	Guestling	DaSA Allocation	2500 sqm employment floorspace
GU2	Brackendale, Rock Lane, Hastings Fringes	Guestling	HELAA	16 dwellings
GU4	Wild Meadows, Chapel Lane, Guestling Green	Guestling	HELAA	15 dwellings
GU5	Former Guestling Highways Depot, Guestling Green	Guestling	HELAA	8 dwellings
GU6	Field at Halfhouse, Butchers Lane, Three Oaks	Guestling	HELAA	12 dwellings
IK1	Land adjacent to Little Sherwood Industry Park, Icklesham	Icklesham	HELAA	30 dwellings
IK2	Land adjacent to Orchard Close, Icklesham	Icklesham	HELAA	38 dwellings
WS1	Land east of Beaney's Lane, Hastings Fringes	Westfield	HELAA	104 dwellings
WS2	Land at Moor Farm, Westfield	Westfield	Part DaSA Allocation, part HELAA	50 dwellings
WS3	Land on east side of Cottage Lane, Westfield	Westfield	Planning application	20 dwellings
WS4	Freshfields Farm, Westfield Lane, Westfield	Westfield	HELAA	3500 sqm employment floorspace
GYP1	Land adjacent to High Views, Loose Farm Lane, Battle	Battle	DaSA Allocation	1 pitch
GYP2	Land south of Hastings Road, Battle	Battle	Site submission	5 additional pitches
GYP3	Land adjacent to Fir Tree Cottage, Netherfield Hill, Battle	Battle	Planning application	2 pitches
GYP4	Land south of Redlands Lane, Salehurst	Salehurst & Robertsbridge	Site submission	4 pitches
GYP5	Land adjacent to Valentine Ridge, A2100, Mountfield	Mountfield	Site submission	6 additional pitches

