



SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK

PUBLIC INQUIRY

TOPIC 4  
MAP 9 NUMBER 11  
LAND AT WILMINGTON

WRITTEN STATEMENT

SUBMITTED ON BEHALF OF  
EAST SUSSEX COUNTY COUNCIL



## Introduction

1. East Sussex County Council has already submitted representations objecting to the addition of land to the north of the A27 at Wilmington Green (addition 11)
2. In its submission the County Council considered that addition 11 is:
  - not justified in terms of the National Park Designation objectives;
  - a technical one based on the mistaken assumption that Wilmington (south of the A27 and Wilmington Green to the north are one settlement and should not be split by the National Park boundary;
  - out of proportion given the small amount of land and few buildings present; and,
  - based on the incorrect assumption that traffic improvements were less likely.
3. This written statement intends to update the County Council's submission to Defra in respect of the scale of planned development at Polegate/Hailsham and regional transport priorities.

## Programmed Transport Improvements

4. In its representations submitted in August 2007 the County Council brought to Defra's attention that the draft South East Plan proposes strategic levels of development at Polegate/Hailsham, to the east of Wilmington, of the order of 4600 dwellings and related employment development.
5. Following the South East Plan's Examination in Public, the Panel reported on its findings in August 2007. In this the Panel recommended that the Polegate/Hailsham component of the Sussex Coast housing figures should be increased by 1000 dwellings to 5600. The Panel concluded that the location of the Polegate/Hailsham area on the periphery of Eastbourne provides one of the few opportunities in East Sussex to develop a major mixed use extension (The South East Plan: Report of the Panel Volume 1 (August 2007) page 239).
6. The area (as part of the Sussex Coast sub region) is characterised by weaknesses in the local economy and strategic policy is focussed on the active pursuit by all relevant agencies and authorities of sustainable economic growth and regeneration. As part of this strategy improvements to the coastal transport spoke including the A27/A259 will be necessary, a view endorsed by the Panel report (Ibid. page 244).
7. The relevant extracts from the Panel's Report are attached as part of Annex 1 of this written statement.
8. To support this strategic objective East Sussex County, Wealden District and Eastbourne Borough Councils and SEEDA have commissioned work on a Masterplan for the Eastbourne – Hailsham Triangle. This will set the route and broad programme to take the area from its current under performance to realise the local authorities' vision of a sustainable, vibrant and economically buoyant area (derived from South East Plan policy SCT1).

9. The Regional Transport Programme for the region is aligned with the development strategy for this part of the sub region and expects work to commence on improvements to the A27 (from Wilmington to Eastbourne) in 2015/16.
10. Fact sheet 27 (Wilmington) taken from SEERA's Regional Transport Programme (2006 – 2016) Fact Book (October 2007) is included in Annex 1 of this written statement.

**Conclusion**

11. There is no doubt that improvements to the A27 are a necessary component of the development strategy for this part of the Sussex Coast sub region, and the Panel's recommendation to increase proposed levels of development serve only to emphasise their importance. Whilst the Hailsham/Polegate area is well served by rail connections, there is a need to provide a multi modal response to support the considerable level of growth and regeneration planned for. Improvements to the A27 in the Wilmington area are identified in the Regional Funding Allocation and are scheduled for 2015/16, providing a considerable degree of certainty that work will take place in the Wilmington area.
12. The County Council therefore maintains its objection to the inclusion of land north of the A27 at Wilmington Green (addition 11) within the National Park.

**ANNEX 1**

**EXTRACTS FROM THE SOUTH EAST PLAN: REPORT OF THE PANEL  
(VOLUME 1 (AUGUST 2007))**

**Chapter 17 Sussex Coast**

**Wealden (part)**

17.58 The draft Plan provision for the whole of Wealden district of 400 dpa is well below the RPG9 housing figure. Even so, since the level of recent dwelling completions has been under 200 dpa we recognise that delivery of the draft Plan will be challenging. Nevertheless this under provision against the RPG9 housing requirement must not be seen as an incentive to continue doing so and we are not convinced by the local authorities' arguments that the draft Plan figure for this part of Wealden is the maximum that can be achieved.

17.59 The location of the Polegate/Hailsham area on the periphery of Eastbourne, with its good rail communications and close to the intersection of the A27 and A22 trunk roads, provides one of the few opportunities in East Sussex to develop a major mixed use urban extension. Existing structure plan policies provide for a strengthening of Polegate's employment role including a high quality business park and there is potential for rail access. Hailsham's function as a service and employment focus will also be enhanced as part of the proposed regeneration of the town centre. We recognise the current congestion problems and the importance of improved transport infrastructure to support further growth in this area. We consider that there should certainly be scope for private sector contributions towards new infrastructure in association with development. In relation to this broad location our attention was drawn to the aspiration to plan for as many as 10,000 houses in the 'Eastbourne/Hailsham Triangle'. While we appreciate that this informal local blueprint is at an early stage we are encouraged by the partnership that has evolved between Eastbourne BC, Wealden DC and other bodies to co-ordinate future planning. This joint approach augurs well for the development of the area.

17.60 Taking all these factors into account we consider that some increase in the subregional apportionment to this part of the district would be justified. We recommend that an additional 1,000 houses be included in the RSS provision for this part of the Wealden district.

### **Infrastructure and Implementation Plan Proposals**

17.83 While prioritisation of schemes has some attractions, in the Sussex Coast it is not sought by many participants, most of whom support the Regional Assembly's approach to the SRIF. However we believe that the most critical infrastructure needed to support the strategy should be identified in the Plan. The definition of such schemes would be those which will assist delivery of the economic objectives for the region and/or enable implementation of the housing proposals. As well as the broad reference in Policy SCT2 to east-west communications within the sub-region and links between it and the rest of the South East, we therefore recommend that the following key themes should be mentioned in the text relating to Infrastructure:

- Improvements to the coastal transport spoke, namely those on the A27/A259 corridor and rail improvements including the Willingdon rail chord and Coastal Expressway (several of which will provide environmental relief as well as enhanced access)
- Linking the sub-region to the CTRL by upgrading the Ashford-Hastings rail service
- Newhaven Port Access Road
- Eastbourne Park Road Links
- Shoreham Harbour access improvements
- New station at Polegate
- Rail improvements in the central rail corridor and Arun valley
- Brighton & Hove rapid transit and strategic interchange facilities
- Eastbourne-Hailsham Quality Bus Corridor
- Hailsham North and South WWT
- Chichester WWT.

**EXTRACT FROM THE SOUTH EAST PLAN – SECTION E2 - SUSSEX COAST  
SUB-REGIONAL STRATEGY (MARCH 2006)**

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**POLICY SCT1:**

**CORE SUB-REGIONAL STRATEGY**

Local authorities and other agencies should, as a priority, pro-actively pursue and promote the sustainable economic growth and regeneration of the Sussex Coast that will:

- i Reduce intra-regional disparities and help bring the performance of the subregional economy up to the South East average**
- ii Respond to the different needs, opportunities and characteristics of each town, or group of towns and all sections of their communities**
- iii Build upon and help deliver major improvements to the strategic transport infrastructure and services both to reduce its peripherality and to improve accessibility within the sub-region**
- iv Achieve a better balance between the provision of housing and the capability of both the local environment and economy to absorb this in a sustainable way whilst responding as far as possible to the needs of local people (including key workers) for decent homes at a price/cost that they can afford**
- v Protect the sub-region's high environmental quality (in both town and country), enhance its cultural and historic assets and promote excellence in the design of new developments in recognition of their importance to economic success and quality of life.**