

Rother Local Plan

Core Strategy

Adopted 29th September 2014



5 - Spatial Vision

Vision for Rother in 2028 ...

Rother District is recognised for its high quality of life, where there is a strong emphasis on community life. This has been achieved by continuing to support and further develop vibrant, safe, balanced and inclusive communities.

There is a strong commitment to a more sustainable, low carbon future and adapting to climate change. There is sensitive stewardship of environmental resources and conservation of the area's outstanding environmental and cultural assets.

Sustainable economic growth has been secured, with much improved job opportunities, which encourage young people to stay in the area and provides greater prosperity for all.

Improved economic and social well-being has been facilitated by better access to jobs and services, in both urban and rural areas, and improved connectivity with the rest of the region, including through effective telecommunications networks.

Development and change has contributed significantly to meeting local needs and aspirations, having responded positively to the district's circumstances, as well as to regional and sub-regional imperatives.

There has been a notable improvement in economic conditions in the coastal towns of Bexhill and Rye as a result of a strong focus on regeneration notably through close working with neighbouring Hastings.

Bexhill has retained and strengthened its distinct identity and become one of the most attractive places to live on the south coast - attractive to families, the young and older people alike. It is the main focus of development in the district, and this continues to enable improvements in the supply of jobs and services.

Rye has improved its economic and social circumstances whilst fully respecting and sensitively managing its historic character, vulnerability to flooding and ecologically important setting. It maintains a strong tourism sector and Port activities.

The inland and essentially rural areas of Rother, falling mainly within the High Weald AONB, retain their essential local character.

Battle continues to be a thriving small market town and tourist centre which retains its character, with sensitive conservation of its historic core and setting.

The character and diversity of villages has also been retained. They are vibrant and inclusive, having evolved organically in a manner sensitive to their surroundings.

The countryside continues to be protected for its intrinsic value as well as being more accessible and economically active, while change is carefully managed to respect its character.

Figure 7: Vision for Rother in 2028

Identification of main issues

- 4.1 Key issues and priorities already identified in the Sustainable Community Strategy have provided the starting point for defining the critical issues to be tackled through this strategy. The 'Main Issues' below also reflect the spatial characteristics and trends identified in the previous chapter, feedback from local people at the earlier consultation stages of Core Strategy preparation and the findings of the last 'Place Survey'. Regard is also had to other documents that provide a context to plan-making.

Main issues

- 4.2 For the purposes of developing this Core Strategy, the "Top 10" strategic development issues particular to Rother district – although by no means a comprehensive list (and not in any priority order) – are seen as:

1) Securing economic improvement

Both enterprise and levels of earnings locally are very low, which impacts on prosperity and hence on standards of living. It also impacts on the capacity of the economy to support a wide range of job opportunities, especially for younger people looking to develop careers. Economic improvement is handicapped by relatively low skill levels, a weak commercial market and poor communications. Regeneration is a particular priority for the coastal areas of the district and adjoining Hastings. The current economic climate further compounds these issues in a relative weak local economy.

2) Delivering affordable housing to meet all needs

The challenge of improving the affordability of housing is directly related to low earnings within the locality. The relative affordability of housing in Rother has been a significant issue for some time and is getting worse. The house price/earnings affordability ratio⁴ for Rother in 2013 showed it as being the 'least affordable' district in East Sussex and notably less affordable than both the national and regional averages.

3) Carbon reduction and adaptation to climate change

The South East is expected to see the greatest impact of climate change within the UK. Incidences of more extreme weather are expected with flash flooding, increased storminess, higher sea and air temperatures and rising sea levels.

As a coastal district, it is especially important to mitigate our impacts, to reduce carbon emissions, identify potentials for renewable and other non-fossil fuel based energy and to work with the changing climate through adaptation. The Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) in setting its priorities has stated its commitment to carbon reduction within the district.

⁴ ESiF House price/earnings affordability ratios, 2002-2013 - districts

4 - Main Issues

4) Maintaining safe places to live

Although Rother has generally low crime rates compared with the South East and England and Wales, having a safe place to live is still a priority for local people, both young and older. It is also integral to the area's continuing attractiveness as a place to live and work.

5) Supporting strong, sustainable communities

There will be many economic, social and environmental challenges facing local people over the period of this Strategy, and it is considered vitally important that these are met by having strong communities and highly engaged residents. These are all key visions for the creation of the Government's 'Big Society'.

6) Planning for an ageing population

Planning for an ageing population – in delivering services, economic activity and housing - is a particularly significant issue in Rother as its already older age profile is set to increase. However, this does not mean simply accommodating projections, but also requires a comprehensive strategy to make the area more attractive to young people and families.

7) Better access to jobs and services

Road and rail infrastructure gives rise to particular concerns locally, not only by businesses, but also by residents. Current prospects for real improvements in journey times, either by road or rail, from elsewhere in the region are limited. The role of Information Technology is therefore set to become more significant in terms of access to jobs and services.

As a large, essentially rural district, access to services is a particular issue. Particular threats are seen in the centralisation and increasing electronic delivery of public services, although this may also reduce access difficulties if effectively managed. An increasing focus of commerce in larger urban centres outside of Rother may threaten the viability and hence access of local shops and services.

8) Conserving environmental quality

The district's environmental designations impose stringent international and national obligations upon how land is used. Accommodating growth whilst ensuring that this does not conflict with the unique wildlife and habitats protected under these designations is particularly challenging. At the same time, the rich built and natural heritage is highly valued by local people, who demand high design standards and proactive management to conserve.

6 - Strategic Objectives

6.1 The Vision in the previous chapter is translated into the Strategic Objectives set out in Table 1 below:

Theme	Strategic Objective
Overall Spatial Strategy	To achieve a pattern of activity and development that contributes to the Sustainable Community Strategy, the 'Spatial Vision' and responds to particular local circumstances and environmental resources.
Bexhill	To strengthen the identity of Bexhill and for it to become one of the most attractive places to live on the south coast, attractive to families, the young and elderly alike, within an integrated approach to securing a more prosperous future for the Bexhill and Hastings area.
Hastings Fringes	To provide attractive and accessible fringes of Hastings, consistent with environmental designations.
Rye	To improve the economic and social well-being of Rye, including in relation to its market town role, tourism and the Port of Rye, whilst fully respecting and sensitively managing its historic character, vulnerability to flooding and ecologically important setting.
Battle	To support the market town and tourist centre role and character of Battle, and conserve its historic core and setting.
Rural Areas	To meet local needs and support vibrant and viable mixed communities in the rural areas, whilst giving particular attention to the social, economic, ecological and intrinsic value of the countryside.
Sustainable Resource Management	To mitigate and adapt to climate change impacts, and to use natural resources efficiently.
Communities	To continue to support, and further develop, vibrant, safe, balanced and inclusive communities.
Local Housing Needs	To provide housing in a way that supports local priorities and provides choice, including for affordable housing.
Economy	To secure sustainable economic growth for existing and future residents and provide greater prosperity and employment opportunities for all.
Environment	To maintain the high quality, and improve the long term stewardship, of the natural and built environment, with full regard to potential future consequences of climate change.
Transport and Accessibility	To provide a higher level of access to jobs and services for all ages in both urban and rural areas, and improve connectivity with the rest of the region.

Table 1: Strategic Objectives

18 - Transport and Accessibility

Policy TR1: Management and Investment in Strategic Accessibility

Support will be given to the improvement of strategic infrastructure that will strengthen the role of Rother, and especially Bexhill, as an area of economic activity and investment opportunity. Priority will be to improve connectivity along key transport corridors; enable regeneration and reduce entrenched economic and social disparities. This will include:

- (i) Support for early implementation of the Bexhill to Hastings Link Road and associated bus and cycle improvements;**
- (ii) Working with agencies and stakeholders to deliver effective management of strategic transport corridors;**
- (iii) Investment into providing transport choice; and**
- (iv) Working with agencies to upgrade the capacity and capability of the East Coastway and Hastings to London rail corridors.**

Integrated Transport

- 18.24 In 2008, there were 428 road casualties⁶⁹ on Rother's road network, approximately 20% of the County's total. In terms of [road safety](#), indicators demonstrate Rother is significantly worse than the regional and national average.
- 18.25 In 2008/09, 33% of respondents in Rother cited public transport as a Priority for Improvement in the Local Area⁷⁰. Access to rural transport and road safety have also been identified as key to improving the quality of life for residents of Rother⁷¹. However there appears to be a poor perception of public transport in Rother; a car is seen as a "necessity" for the majority of people⁷².
- 18.26 Access to facilities and services relates not only to where they are located, but also to the provision of transport to access those services. In 2011, 19% of households in Rother did not have a car. Such households can find it difficult to access jobs, services and other facilities. This can exacerbate rural poverty and social disadvantage. [Studies](#) have demonstrated an insufficient public transport network can impact disproportionately on deprived communities.
- 18.27 In 2010, a [survey](#) of businesses across East Sussex found that the most common transport concerns for businesses are accessibility for customers/clients visiting a business and staff travelling to work.

⁶⁹ East Sussex in Figures - Recorded Road Casualties between 1994-2008 by district

⁷⁰ East Sussex in Figures – Priorities for Improvements in the Local Area - Place Survey 2008/09

⁷¹ East Sussex Pride of Place A Sustainable Community Strategy for East Sussex 2008 – 2026 Rother Section

⁷² [Hastings and Rother Accessibility Assessment June 2007](#)

18 - Transport and Accessibility

- 18.34 [Passenger Focus](#), the independent passenger watchdog, commissioned a survey amongst passengers (South East - 2010) to identify elements of the service they would like to see improved. Adequate car parking facilities was identified as one of the issues where passenger's expectations were not being met. The Kent and Sussex Route Utilisation Strategies have recommended any proposal to expand parking facilities at stations should be given detailed consideration at local level.
- 18.35 At a local level, there may be scope to increase parking at railway stations. However in some cases, the expansion of car parking facilities may not be physically possible or economically viable. Priority will be to encourage passengers to access stations by bus or cycle, with suitable provision.

Policy TR2: Integrated Transport

Improvements in the provision and use sustainable transport will be achieved through:

- (i) **Maximising the best and most effective use of the existing transport network and facilitating enhancements with priority given to improving bus, community transport and rail network;**
- (ii) **The promotion of public transport patronage and associated infrastructure;**
- (iii) **Supporting the provision of a high quality cycle network to encourage a modal shift away from the car;**
- (iv) **Improvements to the pedestrian environment and wider public realm to encourage integration between different modes of transport, employment areas and settlement centres;**
- (v) **Promotion of road safety through education and design; and**
- (vi) **Safeguarding sites and routes with the potential to contribute towards the provision of an efficient and sustainable public transport network.**

Access and New Development

- 18.36 Government transport guidance seeks to reduce the need to travel especially by car, with the aim of reducing congestion, improving the environment, increasing social inclusion and improving health. As part of planning applications, applicants are expected to assess the transport impact of their development proposals and mitigate the impact of any material increase in traffic on the district's roads.

18 - Transport and Accessibility

- 18.37 The Spatial Strategy indicates new development will be directed mainly to the district's towns and villages where there is a good range of services, facilities and jobs. This will contribute to reducing the need to travel and journey lengths. It will also help achieve a more sustainable form of development and support the viability of public transport.
- 18.38 Paragraph 36 of the National Planning Policy Framework sets out that all development which generates significant amounts of transport movement should provide a Travel Plan and be supported by a Transport Statement or Assessment.
- 18.39 Where existing transport infrastructure is inadequate to meet the needs of new development, conditions or planning obligations will be used to ensure that proposals are made acceptable through securing the provision of necessary improvements.
- 18.40 The design and layout of road and street networks, in accordance with DfT's 'Manual for Streets', is considered in Chapter 16 – Environment, under 'Design Quality'.

Policy TR3: Access and New Development

New development should minimise the need to travel and support good access to employment, services and communities facilities, as well as ensure adequate, safe access arrangements. Development will be permitted where mitigation against transport impacts which may arise from that development or cumulatively with other proposals is provided. This will be achieved through the submission of a transport assessment, transport statement or travel plan⁷⁸, and where it is appropriate through:

- (i) Ensuring that new developments in their design and layout prioritise the needs of pedestrians, cyclists and minimise the distance to local public transport nodes;**
- (ii) Working with the relevant agencies to seek funding for contributions for improvements to local infrastructure needed to facilitate highway capacity and safety and/or public transport accessibility and capacity, where this is necessary to serve the new development; and**
- (iii) Provision of electric vehicles charging infrastructure.**

⁷⁸ Threshold criteria definition contained in the "Guidance on Travel Plans for New Development" East Sussex County Council, Sept 2008