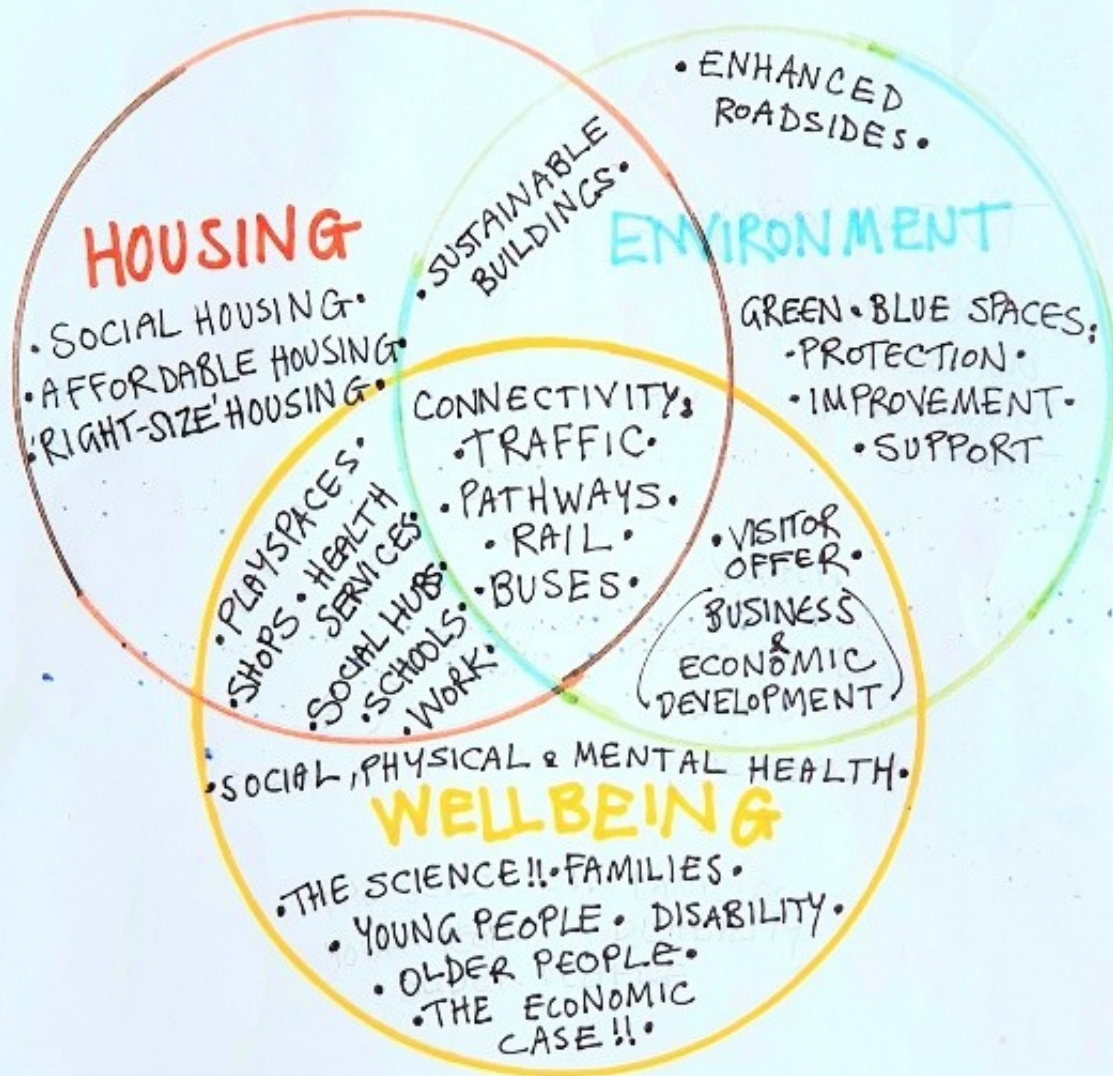


• WEST ST. LEONARDS NEIGHBOURHOOD FORUM •



• OUR VISION FOR NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING •

• patricia W • June 24 • WSLNP • strategic vision •

Draft West St Leonards Neighbourhood Plan

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Foreword

1. WSL has expanded without a plan over the last century and, as a result, feels itself to be a slightly incoherent edgeland. It is both overwhelmed with traffic and poorly connected by public transport or good walking and cycling routes and would like to have a lovelier public realm and a nice centre to go to.
2. Most residents identify the potential “nice centre” as the Old Bathing Pool site, at least part of which they want to see developed as a destination open to everyone. There is great enthusiasm for a tidal pool on the sand between the two easternmost breakwaters and, opposite it on the OBP green, a garden, flexible sports space - like an open sunken basketball court, a beach volleyball court, a small children’s bump track, showers and loos, a water sports shop with kite surfing tuition and a cafe/restaurant with a terrace.
3. This would be a less-expensive-to-run replacement for the Old Bathing Pool, giving teenagers and parents with children, who currently have absolutely nowhere in the neighbourhood to congregate other than school, a fun place to meet with sporty sociable things to do. It would also bring visitors and help draw people to the natural wonders of our glorious beach with oysters growing on the rocks, the wreck of the Amsterdam and petrified forest in its low tide sands.
4. Part of this proposed centre is the Victorian parade of shops on Bexhill Road which has some thriving shops but could draw far more shoppers to stay and spend more if the streetscape were improved to suit their needs. Making the pavement twice as wide, with loading bays at either end and in the middle, would make room for benches and planters along the edge to protect shoppers from the din and danger of traffic. Shopper's parking

could be just round the back on the south side of the eastern end of Seaside Road.

5. As connectivity in the Neighbourhood has increasingly relied on cars, the string of assets, built in the last few years among the Victorian and 1930-40's houses along the Bexhill Road, has brought very mixed benefits. The TKMaxx retail shed, St Leonards Medical Centre, Topps Tiles, Jayar Car Parts, Costa Coffee, Greggs and Aldi, the Jet and Esso petrol stations and the Veolia Recycling Compound are all built on the 'sheds on the bypass' model with large car parks in the expectation of being visited principally by customers in cars. While the amenities themselves may be appreciated by residents, the through-traffic burden it causes is considered a blight.
6. The majority of the West St. Leonards population live in homes built ever further north up to 30 minutes walk from the beach and most amenities like the Old Bathing Pool, shops, West St Leonards Station and main bus routes. If you have no access to a car, to get anywhere you have to walk alongside traffic or cycle among traffic or catch a bus in the wrong direction on an expensive circuitous route. There is nothing but the (very nice) Comet pub in your semi-immediate vicinity and no bus which runs the full length of WSL's Harley Shute north-south axis. WSL residents say they would like to be better served by public transport and have well surfaced, active travel routes, protected from traffic, connecting them north-south and east-west.
7. Residents say renewed effort should be made to reinstate train stations at West Marina and Glyne Gap to create a Bexhill-Hastings rail connection appropriately transporting residents, shoppers and visitors between the Ravenside Retail Park and West St. Leonards and Hastings. A West Marina station would better connect us to Brighton where in-town parking is being actively reduced to encourage city visitors to arrive by public transport. It would be easier for people from WSL to make the journey to car-lite Brighton by train if they didn't feel they had to start their journey by car.
8. Very local travel would be made easier without a car with bus lanes and Low Traffic Neighbourhoods and pedestrian-prioritising road crossings. Every effort should be made to design road and rail to give us the lives we want - as well connected and green as possible.
9. WSL would like the Neighbourhood's derelict buildings and fenced off wasteland either to have homes built on them or, if the ground is unsuitable, have fences removed and the areas reverted to green space for the benefit of wildlife and the community. Where land does become available for development, homes should be built more densely than in recent years with terraced housing, good public transport services and active travel infrastructure to obviate the need for excessive car parking space.
10. Green space for biodiversity and recreation is greatly valued by the community and will be designated as such - including wildlife-rich

Hollington Stream and its adjacent fields, ancient woodland, South Saxon Fields, Marsh Wood, Combe Haven Countryside Park and the cliff green on West Hill Road.

11. Residents would like to emit less carbon and pollutants heating their homes and would like help getting them better insulated to lift the local average energy rating from E/D to C/B/A and the many south facing roofs to have solar panels installed.
12. WSL needs both the Local Authorities and the Environment Agency to assess flood and cliff erosion risk and advise, in advance of disaster, on preparation, repairs and insurance.
13. The overwhelming majority of WSL survey respondents said that excessive traffic was the thing they least liked about their area. Though WSL has been designed, or at least allowed, to be travelled to for shopping, recycling, rubbish processing etc. and to be travelled through for destinations beyond it, this is experienced as a heavy and unwelcome burden by the residents who would also like to see new homes rather than car parks. Fortunately there are design solutions and Government money to alleviate these problems. Let's plan and make it happen.

Anna Sabin, Chair of the West St Leonards Neighbourhood Forum

Background and introduction

West St Leonards Neighbourhood Forum (WSLNF) and the West St Leonards Neighbourhood Area (NA) were designated on 6th February 2024. The NA covers the West St Leonards ward and parts of the adjoining Maze Hill and Central St Leonards wards. This means that the WSLNF can lawfully develop a Neighbourhood Plan (NP), to guide future development across the area for the period until 2040 – the same timescale as the emerging Hastings Borough Council Local Plan.



Figure 1: West St Leonards Neighbourhood Plan Area (inside red line)

Progress on the NP has sped up since WSLNF applied for government funding and government funded support in the autumn of 2024. WSLNF have now successfully applied for:

1. An initial grant of £9980 until the end of March 2025 (of which £9180 was spent) to pay for a community planning advisor, events and marketing materials
2. Technical support to develop:
 - a. Design Codes and Guidance
 - b. Housing Needs Assessment
 - c. Master Plan for the bathing pool site
 - d. Site Options Assessments to look at potential new housing and employment sites

Although led by local people, the project must balance what people in the area see as the best planning or development opportunities for West St. Leonards – drawing on local knowledge, ideas and desires – and what the evidence and planning law will support. In particular, the plan must be in general conformity with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2024) and the adopted Local Plan (2015). It is also advised that it should give regard to the emerging Local Plan (Reg 18).

Hastings Borough Council has an adopted Local Plan which is in two parts:

- The Hastings Planning Strategy (general policies) adopted February 2014
- The Development Management Plan (site policies) adopted September 2015

The NP must be in general conformity with the strategic policies in the adopted Local Plan. Where this is referenced in this NP it will be referred to as the Local Plan 2015.

There is also a new Local Plan in development which has been through its Regulation 18 pre-submission consultation in 2021. It is currently being revised (spring 2025) for its Regulation 19 submission version. It is in part because of delays in adopting a new Local Plan that the WSLNF have gone ahead in developing their NP. Where the emerging Local plan is referenced in the NP, it will be referred to as the emerging Local Plan (Reg 18).

Once the NP is “made” – following two formal rounds of consultation, an examination and referendum – the West St Leonards Neighbourhood Plan will then become part of the overarching Development Plan for the whole Borough. This means that future planning applications will be decided by the local planning authority (currently Hastings Borough Council) based on the planning policies contained within both plans. The community may also choose to include a number of priority projects that aren’t strictly planning related but will improve or conserve the area for future generations. This distinction is explained later in this report.

As well as the technical support packages listed above, WSLNF were able to benefit from the work of post-graduate planning students at the University of Brighton who undertook a range of studies in 2023 including:

- Travel
- Green (parks and open spaces) and blue (streams, ponds) infrastructure
- Design
- Climate change

These studies and the policy recommendations made by the students have also been considered in developing the NP.

A brief history

There have been small settlements and farms in West St Leonards since at least the mediaeval period including a small settlement around St Mary’s Church (13th & 14th centuries but some limited Norman remains as well) and the Bull Inn. The Bull Inn’s own website has a short history stating that “Bulverhythe was Burgher’s landing place and was the main harbour to the folk of Hastings until the end of the 15th Century. It was mentioned as a port in 1500 and was one of the limbs of the Cinque Ports of Hastings. By the end of the 17th century most of Bulverhythe was lost to the sea by coastal erosion.”

Others report that the estuary of the Combe River was constantly changing its course and that Little Galley Hill became an island at times. Further east there were a few other buildings including Filsham Farmhouse on Harley Shute Road and the Bo Peep pub on what is now Grosvenor Crescent.

West St Leonards was the last area of the St Leonards New Town to be built. The area was originally farmland until James Burton bought 10.1 hectares of farmland including 1km of sea-shore early in 1828. From the outset the urban concept included public buildings and gardens. From its early days St Leonards was known for its poor

drainage. Hastings and St Leonards jointly formed the County Borough of Hastings in 1875.

The first railway station in St Leonards was at West Marina (a little to the west of the present day West St Leonards Station), opened in 1846 on the London, Brighton and South Coast railway. The arrival of the railway made St Leonards far more accessible for visitors and stimulated more speculative residential development. By 1855 the seafront was built up continuously from what is now West Marina Gardens to the Hastings boundary.

West St Leonards includes the extraordinary buildings to the west of Archery Road, now known as the Highlands estate. They include the Highlands Hotel and Mews (now the Highlands Inn) of 1874, a fully realised Scottish Baronial mansion; and the vast houses at 3-9 Highlands Gardens (c1880), also in the Scottish Baronial style.

Grosvenor Gardens in West St Leonards was the last part of the present Conservation Area to be built up from 1900. This period produced the series of large hospitals, convalescent homes and sanatoria on the cliff top. West Marina Gardens was laid out in 1891 on what was then a shingle beach, with housing development following on its west and north sides. The sculpture in Grosvenor Gardens of King Harold and Edith Swan-Neck (1875 by Charles Wilke) was a gift of Lord Brassey, MP for Hastings and was previously housed in the Hastings Museum.

West Hill Road has Wealden sandstone boundary walls, especially at its western end, which are a prominent feature. The Bo-Peep Hotel replaces an earlier pub of the same name. It is probably the oldest building in the area, early to mid 19th century with later Victorian alterations. By 1914 almost the whole area was built up.

There does not appear to have been any master plan for the western area, although in the late 19th century there were easements attached to land for drainage rights. This area, including Bulverhythe, was very much the working end of town – with Railway Cottages built for workers on the railway, a steam laundry, brickworks, the railway workshops, still in existence and further west just outside the NA a gas works (on the site of the Ravenside Shopping Centre).

Going inland there were middle class developments with large houses at the top of Harley Shute Road and a golf course beside the railway and Harley Shute Road.

West of Grosvenor Gardens, the open-air bathing pool or lido (once one of the largest in Europe), with seating for 2,500, was opened in 1933. It closed in 1986. The town suffered considerable damage from bombing during WWII as a consequence of being on the Luftwaffe bomber flight path between France and London.

(Extracts from the St Leonards Conservation Area Appraisal, 2018, Bull Inn website and members of the WSLNF)

Neighbourhood profile

The 2021 Census recorded 6,815 people living in the West St Leonards Neighbourhood Area indicating an increase of just 48 people since the 2011 Census¹. There has been a decrease of 111 households since 2011 with 2,901 households recorded in 2021.

The Neighbourhood Area (NA) is predominantly occupied by the ward of West St Leonards and the remainder of the NA is made up from parts of the Maze Hill and Central St Leonards Ward. The NA is situated to the southwest of the borough of Hastings and the east of the town of Bexhill on Sea. It lies approximately 19km east of Eastbourne and 85km south of London.

Housing within the NA is set out in a largely linear settlement pattern along two main roads. The first of which the A259, runs east west along the south coast, acting as the most important transport route within the NA. A concentration of housing can also be found to the north of the NA, branching off of Harley Shute Road (B2092) which runs north-south through the NA. Of additional note is the Combe Haven Holiday Park which sits to the west of Harley Shute Road, taking up a significant portion of the NA with space for 497 privately owned caravan pitches and 283 caravans for let. West St Leonards Station is also situated within the NA, and is served by the stated owned Southeastern railway service, providing regular trains to London Charing Cross. It isn't at present possible to take a train westbound from St Leonards towards Brighton.

The following statistical profile has been taken from East Sussex in Figures and is a ward profile based on the ward of West St Leonards. As previously mentioned, the NA is wider than simply West St Leonards but for the basis of the NP, the data is considered sufficient to identify key issues. Matters related to housing are included in the housing section.

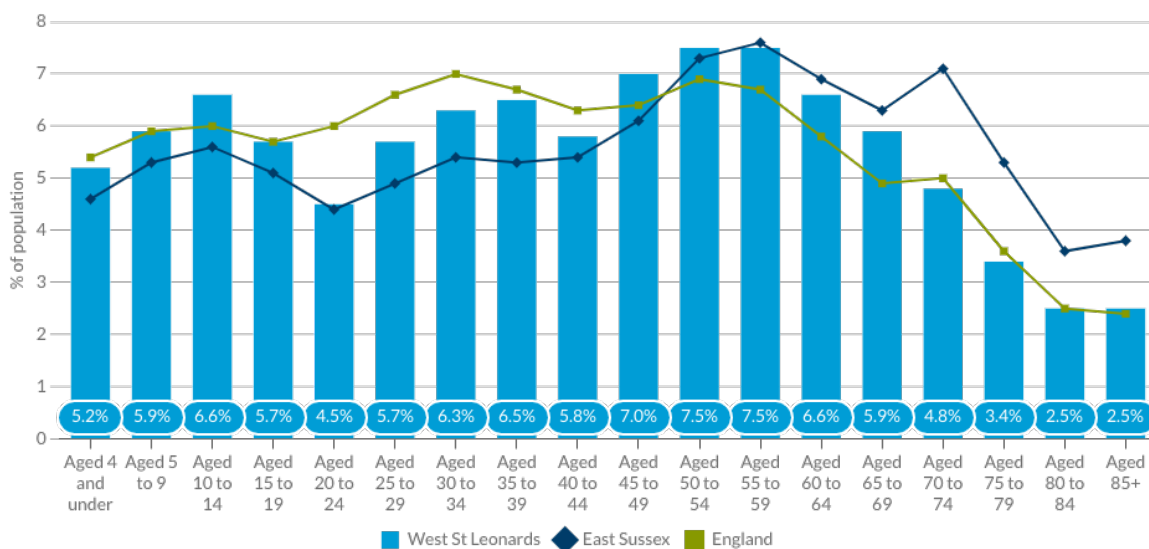


Figure 2: Population by five year age groups (2021)

¹ Source HNA, AECOM, 2025 – based on Super Output Areas mapped to boundary of the NA

West St Leonards has a younger population than East Sussex generally. The NP aims to ensure that this age group is catered for in terms of education, employment and opportunities to find a suitable home.

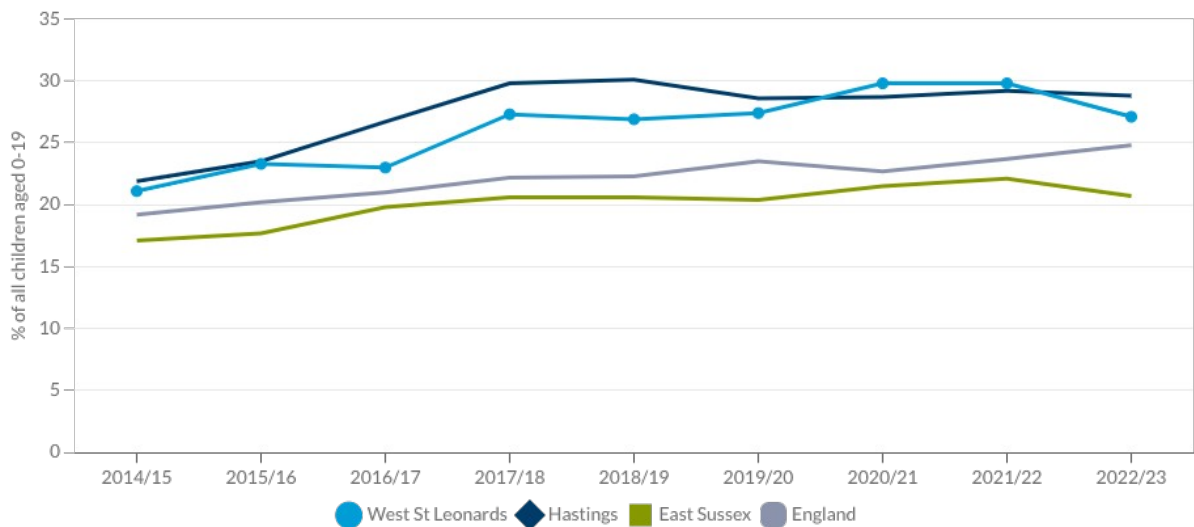


Figure 3: Percentage of children living in relative low income families

West St Leonards has a higher rate of children living in relative low income families than East Sussex or England. The NP can do little about this statistic but can make more provision for outdoor play space and retain provision for organised youth activities such as Sea, Air and Army Cadets.

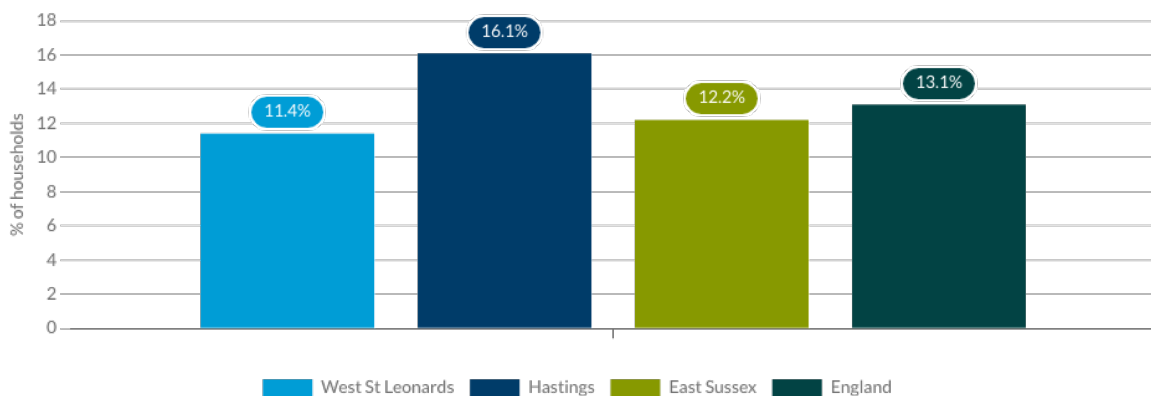


Figure 4: Percentage of households in fuel poverty

Positively West St Leonards has fewer (by percentage) of households in fuel poverty than Hastings, East Sussex or England but is still committed to help those and other households to save on their heating and lighting costs.

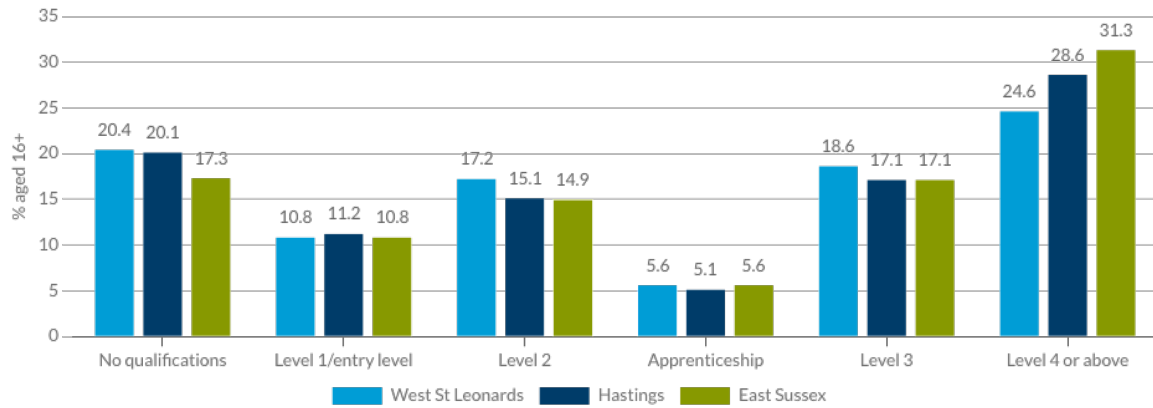


Figure 5: Percentage of young people over 16 and over by highest level of qualification (2021)

West St Leonards has more people with no or low qualifications than East Sussex. The NP is committed to providing opportunities for people to improve their qualifications or provide space for business start-ups / pop-ups, particularly along the seafront.

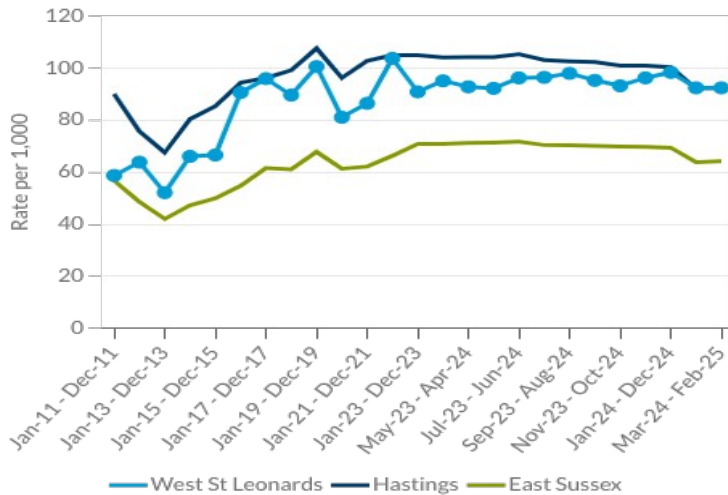


Figure 6: All crime – 12 month rolling rates

West St Leonards has slightly less crime than Hastings as a whole but Hastings has a high rate of crime and more than East Sussex. We will support design measures in and close to new development that discourage vandalism and crime and mitigate those risks.

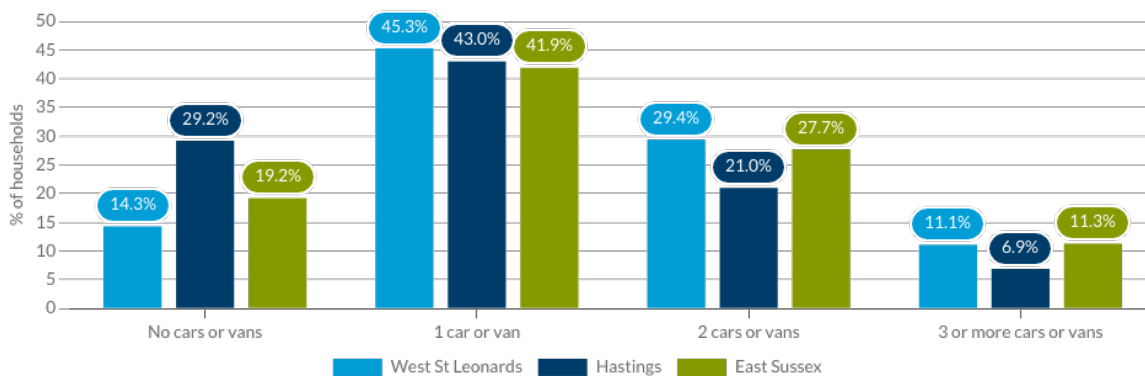


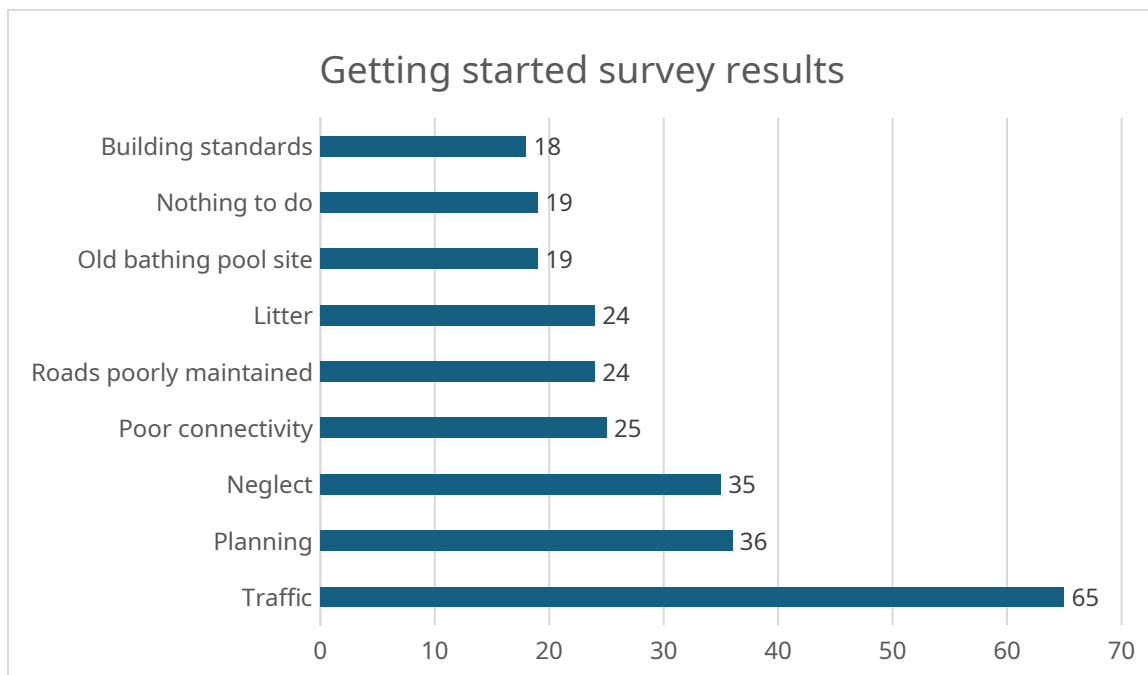
Figure 7: Number of cars or vans - percentage of households in 2021

For an urban area it is surprising that West St Leonards has more households with one car than Hastings and East Sussex and more households with two or three cars than Hastings but the same levels as East Sussex. New developments will be located to discourage car ownership, provide links to walking and cycling infrastructure including the National Cycle Network 2 (NCN2) along the seafront.

Views of residents

The views of residents and businesses are essential in developing the NP. As well as using statistics as an evidence base for the plan, we have also spoken with and surveyed many residents and small business owners. During the early stages of the forum, a survey was carried out in January and February 2020, with distribution to every household in the then proposed area of a leaflet with the survey form. This was followed up by calls to all the households and the collection of completed forms and publicising an on line survey. Three workshops were held in the Comet Public House PH, Marina Fountain PH and the Discovery Centre in the Combe Valley Countryside Park. The covid lock down came soon after this exercise which delayed action on it although the results of the survey, both the paper and on line responses were recorded and a summary was prepared in April 2020. Ad hoc surveys have subsequently been carried out in West Marina, West Hill, Darwell Close and Wishing Tree Lane.

Residents and businesses who have responded have been clear about what needs improving in the area:



- Traffic is extremely difficult to address through a NP (see Transport section). However, policies will discourage car ownership in new developments and improve connections to public transport and the walking and cycling network so that the issue isn't exacerbated.
- Planning remains with HBC until the new devolution measures are put in place. Having a NP will help raise the profile of the area and provide local planning policies to address issues specific to the area rather than across the whole of Hastings.
- Neglected sites will be addressed through policies aimed at bringing them back into use.
- As with traffic, public transport (connectivity) is hard to address through the NP – transport is dealt with by the county council – but contributions from developers to enhancing the network will be sought.
- As with traffic and public transport, poorly maintained roads are the responsibility of the county council and an issue nationally.
- Litter is an operational matter for HBC but also the responsibility of every resident and business to minimise through their own behaviour.
- Old bathing pool site – a Masterplan has been funded – to ensure residents' views are addressed in developing this site.
- Nothing to do – again, there is a strong emphasis on retaining and enhancing existing open spaces and making provision for additional activities including a tidal pool, water sports (kayaking, paddle boarding, sea swimming).
- Building standards – design codes and guidelines have been commissioned to ensure new developments meet the highest standards.

Vision and Objective Setting

In order to bring all these aspects together, WSLNF decided to create an exhibition and a visioning and objective setting workshop on Saturday 22nd February which 100 residents attended. At the event, participants carried out a series of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analyses for the five emerging themes:

Themes

1. Environment including heritage
2. Transport including cycling and walking
3. Community facilities including health
4. Housing including design and character
5. Economy

Based on the SWOTs, particularly considering the Strengths and Opportunities, participants wrote five visions, and then voted on the one they preferred. Using the most popular vision, a composite vision has been created taking the best aspects from the other visions. We would value your feedback on the proposed vision.

Vision for West St Leonards

West St Leonards in 2040 will be climate resilient with residents able to enjoy the green spaces, the sea, beach, rivers and streams without fear. West St Leonards will be life affirming for people and the planet, a mixed community with clean air, reduced car use, safe and accessible pavements and with excellent modern public transport connecting to neighbouring areas. It will be cohesive with great community spirit and a network of local cultural and community centres and facilities.

Objectives

As well as the vision, the participants also drafted a set of objectives – “what did we do in our theme to achieve the objectives”. These themes and objectives will form the basis of the following sections in the plan:

Environment including heritage

For the environment we will celebrate and protect nature, views and vistas, and enhance and link public open spaces so that people can access them on foot or by bike. We will make the area more climate resilient including providing sustainable protection for homes and businesses from rising sea-levels.

Transport including cycling and walking

For transport, we will prioritise alternatives to private car use by developing a better mixed public transport offer, and make the area more attractive and safer for walking and cycling including incorporating desire lines and improving access for people using pushchairs, wheelchairs and mobility scooters.

Housing including design and character

For housing we will provide high quality housing with outdoor spaces where neighbours can mix and people won't need a car to access local facilities and services. We will have a flexible approach to density and height – depending on character areas – which will support the provision of more affordable housing. We will also address empty homes, second homes and holiday lets.

Economy

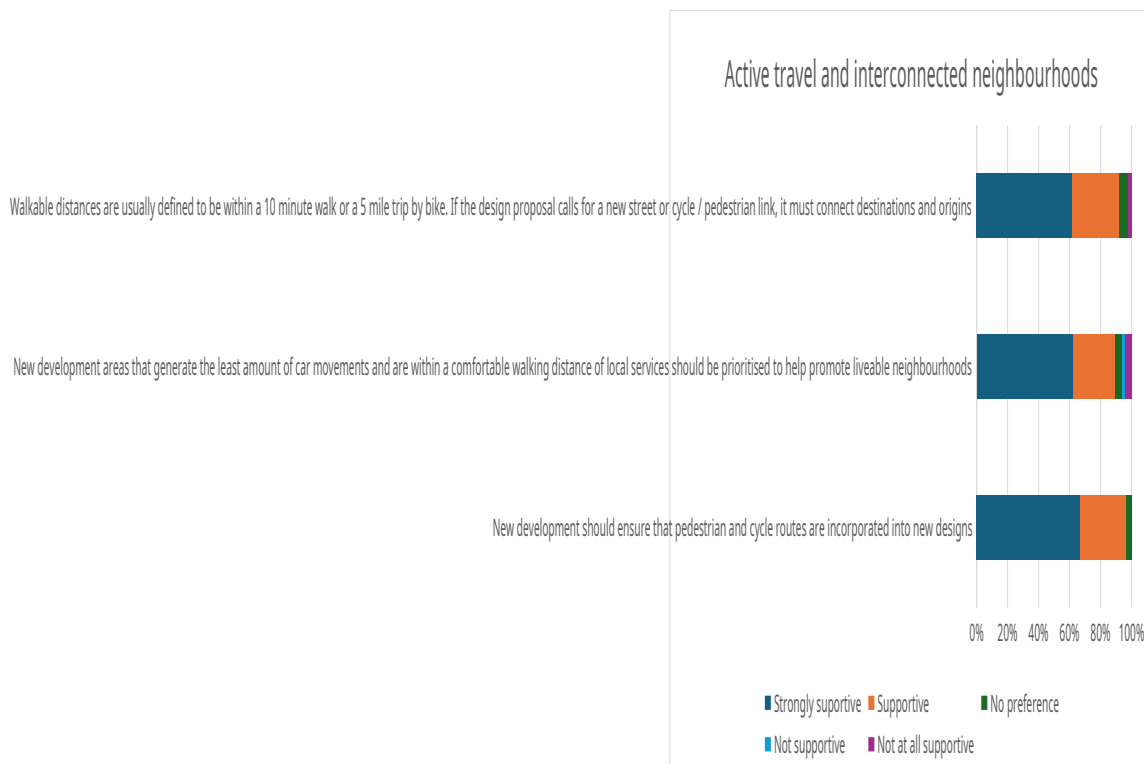
For the economy we will improve opportunities for independent retailers and start-ups develop an all-year economy linked to our seaside position, culture and the arts. Where the market is unable to provide, we will seek inward investment from the public and charitable sectors. We will provide more opportunities for young people.

Community facilities including health

West St Leonards will be cohesive with great community spirit and a network of local cultural and community centres and facilities.

Visioning event and exhibition

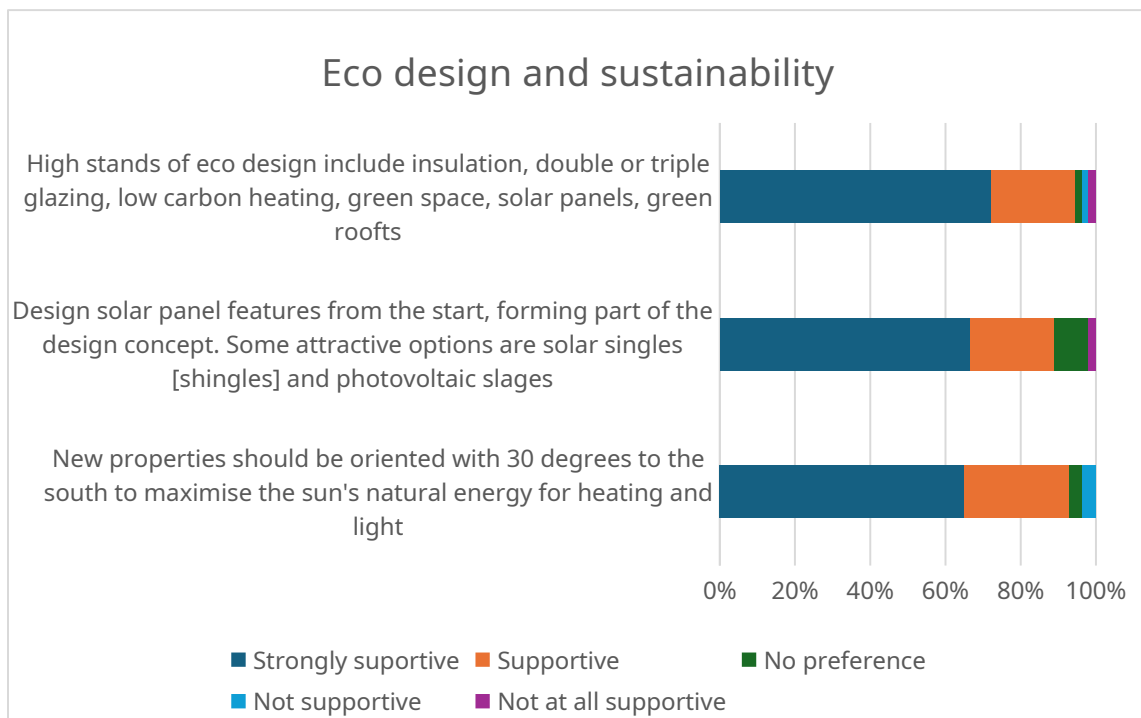
At the visioning event and exhibition held on 22nd February 2025 and in an online survey, residents were also asked to give their views on a range of design related issues. The results have been combined:



Most people were supportive / strongly supportive of these policy suggestions. A policy that encapsulates the idea of walkable communities and services and incorporating walking and cycling into new developments will be included in the Transport Section.



Most people were supportive or very supportive of protecting local open (green) spaces and the idea that they should be overlooked to encourage natural surveillance and improve safety. Policies that address these will be included in the Environment Section.



Most people were supportive of eco design ideas. Policies to reflect these will be included in the Housing Section.

Environment including heritage

Objective: For the environment we will celebrate and protect nature, views and vistas, and enhance and link public open spaces so that people can access them on foot or by bike. We will make the area more climate resilient including providing sustainable protection for homes and businesses from rising sea-levels.

The following priorities emerged from the visioning workshop held on 22nd February. For each of these the national and / or local planning context will be summarised and a policy or project will be proposed. Where there is an existing Local Plan (2015) or emerging Local Plan (Reg 18) policy that achieves the objective, these will be summarised. If the emerging Local Plan is further delayed and the neighbourhood plan is likely to be made first, the proposed local plan policy will be added in later.

Local Green Spaces

Policy intention	Description
Keep green spaces including Old Bathing Pool	<p>Local Green Spaces can be protected in the neighbourhood plan as long as they meet one or more criteria set out in legislation for their value for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heritage • Wildlife • Recreation • Beauty • Tranquillity <p>However, sites that are allocated for development or have extant planning permission cannot be allocated. Some LGS have been allocated on part of recently developed sites.</p>

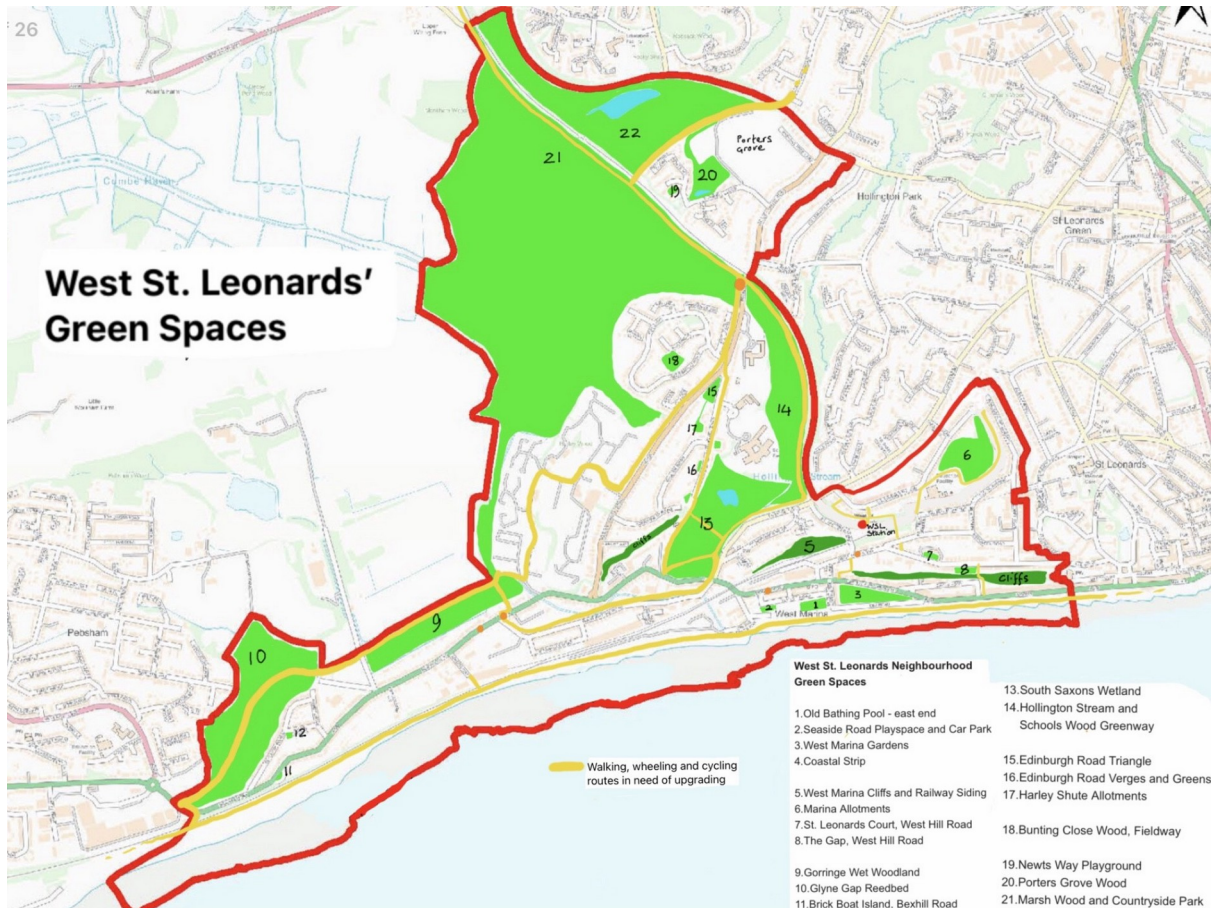
The National Planning Policy Framework, December 2024 states paragraphs 103 and 104:

The designation of land as Local Green Space through local and neighbourhood plans allows communities to identify and protect green areas of particular importance to them. Designating land as Local Green Space should be consistent with the local planning of sustainable development and complement investment in sufficient homes, jobs and other essential services. Local Green Spaces should only be designated when a plan is prepared or updated, and be capable of enduring beyond the end of the plan period. The Local Green Space designation should only be used where the green space is:

a) in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves;

- b) demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance, for example because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value (including as a playing field), tranquillity or richness of its wildlife; and
- c) local in character and is not an extensive tract of land.

The Local Plan (2015) and emerging Local Plan (Reg 18) don't directly mention Local Green Spaces and so it has been decided to protect these in the NP. The following are proposed as Local Green Spaces and have all been assessed as meeting the criteria. The map shows their general location.



Policy En1: Protecting Local Green Spaces

Within these areas new development will only be permitted in very special circumstances or where it is compatible with their character and function as Local Green Spaces. Harley Shute and Marina allotments will be retained as allotments.

1. Brick Boat Island, Bexhill Road
2. Bunting Close Wood, Fieldway
3. Coastal strip (still to be added to map)
4. Inland cliffs (various)
5. Dog Kennel Wood
6. Edinburgh Road Triangle

7. Edinburgh Road verges and greens
8. The Gap, West Hill Road
9. Glyne Gap Reed Beds Local Nature Reserve
10. Gorringe Wet Woodland
11. Harley Shute Allotments
12. Hollington Stream and Schools Wood greenway
13. Little Galley Hill (sea cliffs – still to be added to map)
14. Marina Allotments
15. Marsh Wood and Countryside Park
16. Newts Way playground and green space
17. Old Bathing Pool – east end green space
18. Porters Grove Wood
19. Seaside Road (old bathing pool) play space
20. South Saxons Wetlands
21. St Leonards Court green space
22. St Mary’s Church, Bulverhythe (to be mapped)
23. West Marina Station and Cliffs
24. West Marina Gardens

The areas listed above and described within Appendix : Local Green Spaces Assessments are designated as Local Green Spaces.

Other environmental features

Policy intention	Description
Vegetated shingle all along the seafront	A protective policy based on shingle habitat

The Local Plan (2015) has policies providing protection to ancient woodland, the Hastings Cliffs Special Area of Conservation, the Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Local Nature Reserves and Local Wildlife Sites. SACs, SSSIs and LNRs can all be found on Natural England’s Magic Map www.magic.gov.uk. A list of Local Wildlife Sites can be found in Hastings Local Wildlife Sites Review, Sussex Wildlife Trust, 2020. Although this includes the Bulverhythe Shingle Beach and Cliffs, it is proposed the important vegetated shingle running from just west of Marina Gardens to Glyne Gap including Sea Kale, Horned Poppies is protected.

Policy En2: Vegetated shingle

Any impacts of planning proposals that would impact the coastal flora and or fauna should be assessed through an Ecological Impact Assessment and fully

mitigated.

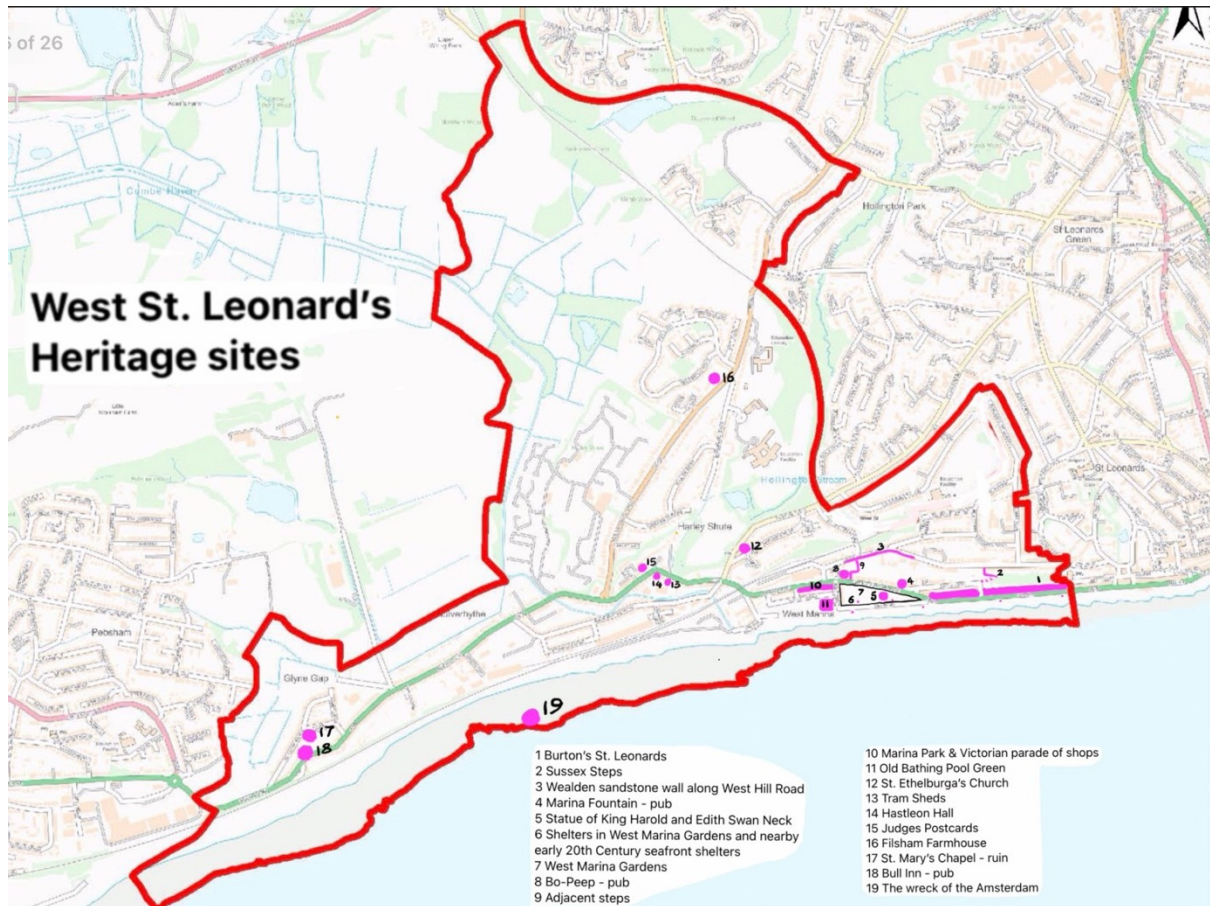
Non designated heritage assets

Policy intention	Description
Promote history and natural assets of WSL	As well as designating Local Green Spaces because of their heritage value, it is also possible to draw up and assess a list of non-designated heritage assets in the neighbourhood plan area over and above the existing listed buildings (see Historic England). These can then have a policy which requires the owner to seek planning consent if they aim to make any changes that would impact on the heritage asset.

The following are currently already listed in the Neighbourhood Area by Historic England:

- St Mary's Chapel Grade II (ruins)
- Bull Inn Grade II (Public House)
- Filsham Farmhouse Grade II
- Marina Properties Grade II (111-127)

Policy EN1 of the Local Plan (2015) sets out the intention to develop a historic environment strategy including those heritage assets identified as being most at risk. A list of heritage assets has been created <https://www.hastings.gov.uk/conservation/adopted-assets/> which includes Bohemia Estate, Linton Gardens, Wellington Gardens and White Rock Gardens. The WSLNF aren't aware of any other local or non-designated heritage assets list. It is proposed to protect the following non-designated heritage assets (see map below and Policy En3 below and overleaf):



Policy En3: Non-Designated Heritage Assets

Development proposals that affect an identified non-designated heritage asset (listed below) should demonstrate how the proposal will preserve or enhance the significance of the asset. Where a proposal would demonstrably harm a non-designated heritage asset, the damage caused to the identity and character of the assets will be weighed against the overall benefits that would arise from the proposed development.

1. Bo-Peep Hotel / Public House
2. Adjacent steps
3. Bull Inn
4. Burton St Leonards
5. Hastleon Hall
6. Filsham Farmhouse
7. Judges Postcards
8. Marina Fountain Public House
9. Marina Park and Victorian shopfronts along Bexhill Road
10. Old Bathing Pool Green

11. Shelters in West Marina Gardens and nearby early 20th Century seafront shelters
12. St Ethelburga's Church
13. St Mary's Chapel - ruin
14. Statue of King Harold and Edith Swan Neck
15. Steps to St Leonards Church
16. Sussex Steps
17. Tram Sheds
18. Wealden sandstone wall along West Hill Road
19. West Marina Gardens
20. Wreck of the Amsterdam

Public realm

Policy intention	Description
Improving public realm – more playgrounds/safe	The public realm aspect would be best addressed through the emerging Design Codes. These may in time be funded by developer contributions from adjacent sites as was done to a limited degree by the developers of Greggs and Aldi although this could also be seen as somewhat of a missed opportunity. See above for “more playgrounds”.

The Local Plan (2015) Policy EN1 states: “Importance will be placed on new development making a positive contribution to the quality, character, local distinctiveness and sense of place of historic buildings and areas. Particular care will be given to protecting the significance and setting of the following heritage assets:

- a. Listed buildings;
- b. Conservation areas;
- c. locally listed heritage assets
- d. historic parks and gardens;
- e. scheduled monument sites; and
- f. areas of archaeological potential and known archaeological find sites

There is a presumption in favour of the conservation of heritage assets and their settings. The more important the asset, the greater the weight that will be given to the need to conserve it. As heritage assets are irreplaceable, any harm or loss will require clear and convincing justification.” However, other aspects of the public realm aren't addressed, despite the concerns of residents expressed in the Neighbourhood Profile. A policy to encourage improvements to the public realm is therefore proposed (based on one from Arches Chatham):

Policy En4: Improvements to the public realm

The following public realm improvements will be supported:

- Widening and improving pedestrian routes, including high quality paving, dropped kerbs and raised crossing points.
- Enhancing the connectivity of the neighbourhood area, including ecological connectivity through the creation of linear parks and ecological corridors.
- Where possible, incorporating permeable surfaces and/or other suitable sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) designs to reduce the risk of surface water flooding and increase local resilience to climate change.
- Increasing the frequency and quality of greenery in the area.
- Improving the safety of the public realm from road traffic collisions and anti-social behaviour.
- Contributing to the identity of the neighbourhood through public art interventions.

The key improvements being sought are illustrated in the following set of sketches:



Figure 8: Marine Parade of shops seating, planters and wider footway



Figure 9: Walking route from station to sea showing planting and run-off management

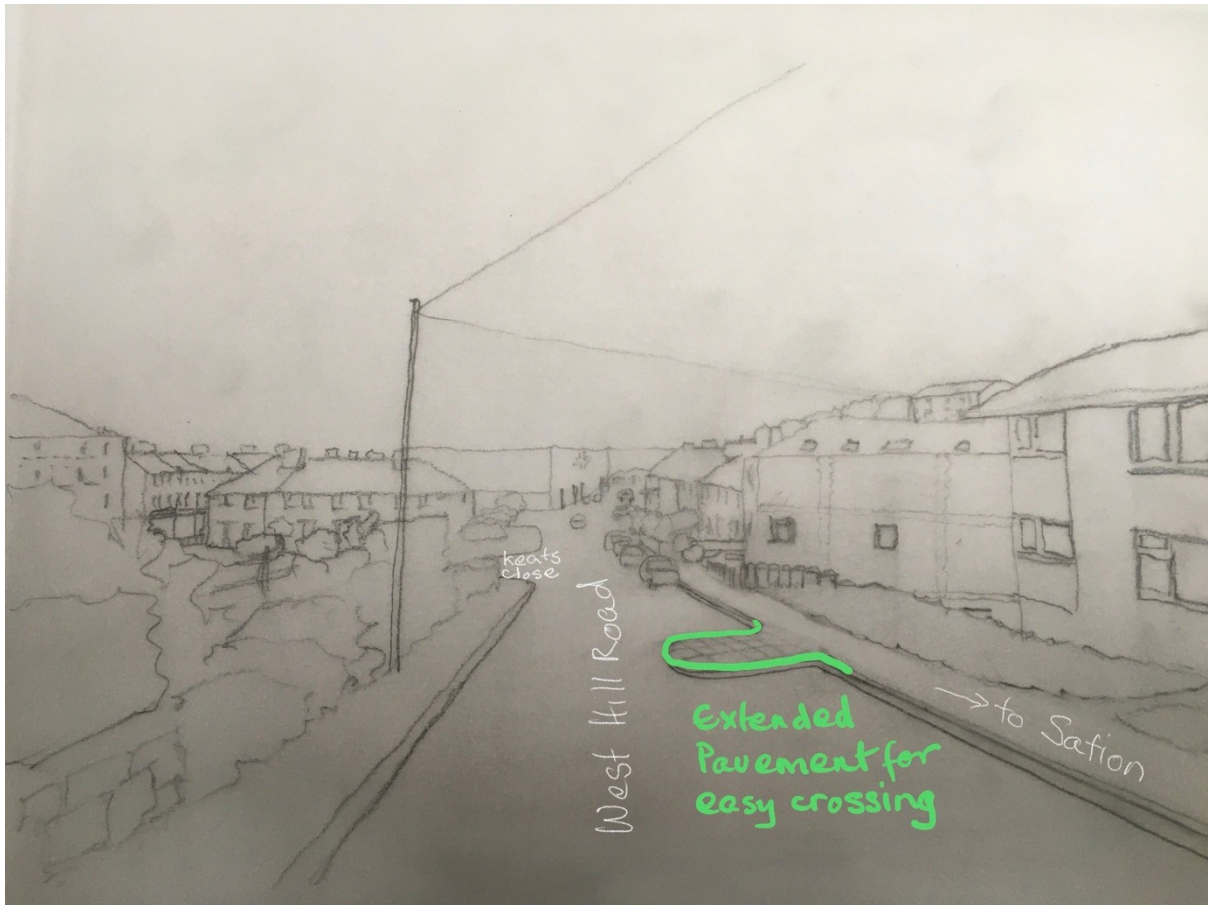


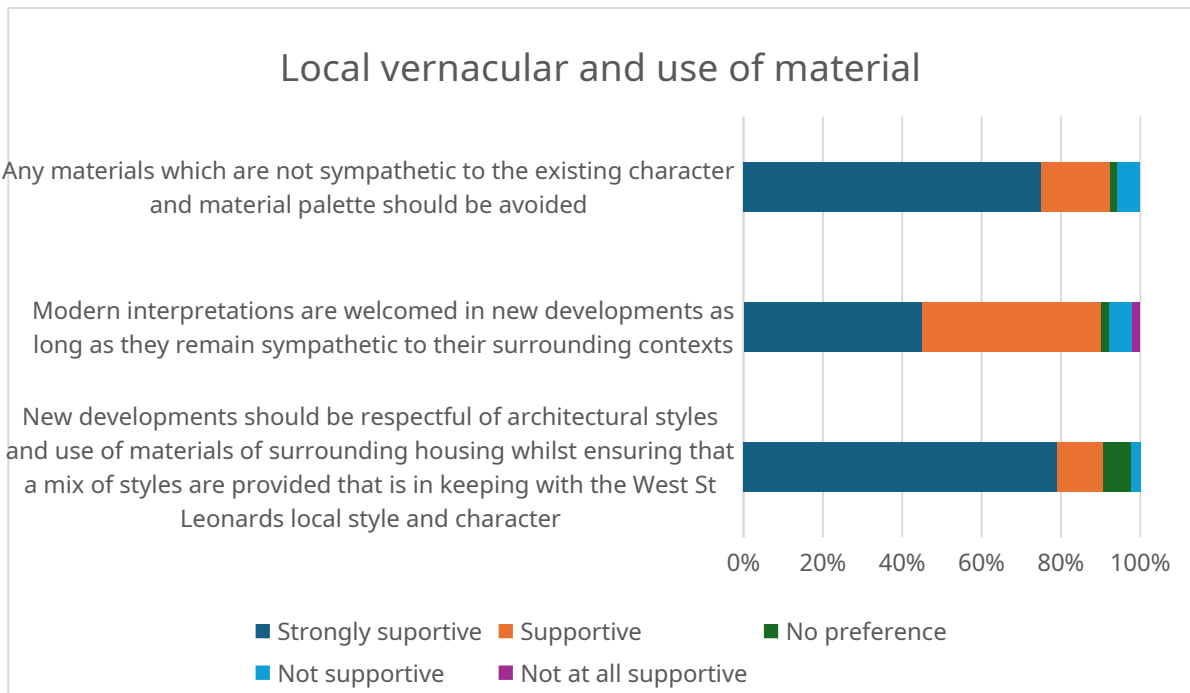
Figure 10: Suggestion for build-out to improve pedestrian safety

Design guidance and design codes

As set out in the Brief History, West St Leonards was first laid out as the western end of the Burton St Leonards Resort, approximately up to Grosvenor Gardens and the Marina Fountain Pub. The western part was the home of local artisans and workshops with until the early 1960s a range of local shops and workshops from Bulverhythe Road to Abbey Drive with buildings from the late 19th Century through until today. The predominant style is 1920s. As such it has a very strong sense of design and character. The NPPF (2024), Local Plan (2015) and emerging Local Plan (Reg 18) all support “well designed, beautiful and safe places” but also support design that is locally relevant. The NPPF (2024) states paragraph 131:

The creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities. Being clear about design expectations, and how these will be tested, is essential for achieving this. So too is effective engagement between applicants, communities, local planning authorities and other interests throughout the process.

At the Visioning Event on 22nd February 2025 and the online survey residents responded positively to continuing the local vernacular or character of the area in new developments:



There was also support for using the existing material palette and modern interpretations as long as they remain sympathetic to their surrounding contexts. With this in mind, bespoke Design Guidance and Codes, are being developed by AECOM working in partnership with the WSLNF. The following policy is proposed to ensure that developers adhere to the West St Leonards Design Guidelines and Codes when developing their proposals.

Policy En4: Achieving High Quality Design

- 1. All proposals for development should demonstrate how they have taken into consideration the West St Leonards design guidance and codes (Appendix 2).**
- 2. All proposals for development should be designed to a high standard, using sustainable materials suitable for the location and setting out how materials have considered “Zero Avoidable Waste²” in construction.**
- 3. All proposals should demonstrate consideration to the existing form and street scene in terms of scale, mass, height, siting, character, spacing and materials**
- 4. Proposals for development should be sympathetic to West St Leonards’s local character and history, which includes the spaces around buildings (including adequate buffer / distance from clifftops), landscape settings and filtered views.**
- 5. Proposals should seek to protect existing landscaping features and enhance urban greening of the site by retaining existing Sandstone**

² The Construction Leadership Council promotes a Routemap for Zero Avoidable Waste in Construction <https://www.constructionleadershipcouncil.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/ZAW-Interactive-Routemap-FINAL.pdf>

walls, trees and hedges or using planting rather than fencing or walls for boundary treatments where existing boundaries are absent.

Children’s play

Policy intention	Description
Facilities for children	A policy could be included which requires play or sports facilities for children in new developments (commensurate on the size of the development) or contributions sought from developers towards enhancing facilities within the Neighbourhood Area.

The Local Plan (2015) already includes a Policy C13: Children’s Play Provision:

The Council will require developers to design housing environments in which children have *space to play informally and safely and where they have priority over vehicles, and where such spaces contribute to the provision of open space. Developer contributions will be sought to improve existing equipped play provision in proximity to the proposed development. Where no good neighbourhood playgrounds exist within 600 metres or a 15-20 minute walking distance, new play facilities will be required.*

In some neighbourhoods where it is not appropriate or viable to provide further equipped play areas, developers may be required to enhance community green spaces as an alternative.

There are a number of children’s play areas in the Neighbourhood Plan area which might be affected by development proposals or may need to be enhanced or maintained during the life of the plan. These include:

- Edinburgh Road triangle (removed)
- Heron’s Way
- Newts Way
- Old Bathing Pool
- Sophie’s Play Space – Bulverhythe Recreation Grounds

Policy EN5: Children’s Play

New or enhanced children’s and young people’s play and sports facilities will be supported. The loss of such facilities will not be supported unless it can be demonstrated that replacement facilities are proposed on or off site of better functionality to serve the needs of the immediate area.

Tidal swimming pool

Policy intention	Description
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Tidal swimming pool – impact on economy.	This would work best as a project taken forward either by the WSLNF or a community group. Contributions could be sought from developers of adjacent sites.
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This aspiration could be considered a project rather than a policy. It is therefore proposed to list this project in the Projects section of this report although an enabling policy has been developed within the Economy section.

Transport including cycling and walking

Objective: For transport, we will prioritise alternatives to private car use by developing a better mixed public transport offer, and make the area more attractive and safer for walking and cycling including incorporating desire lines and improving access for people using pushchairs, wheelchairs and mobility scooters.

Traffic was identified in the early survey and more recently at the visioning event as one of the most concerning issues in the area. The SWOT analysis included in the Appendix that the NCN 2, coastal path, West St Leonards train station and direct buses to Eastbourne and Hailsham are all strengths that should be retained or improved. It is perhaps the weaknesses where the “quickest wins” could be achieved. However, NPs have only limited powers to direct transport improvements as will be seen later in this section.

Guidance on Neighbourhood Planning and Transport, Locality (2024) sets out examples of transport matters relevant to planning including:

- *Ensuring new development has adequate parking and servicing provision. This could include car parking, cycle storage and delivery areas for commercial development.*
- *Making sure the layout of development allows for pedestrian convenience and safety.*
- *Ensuring development includes cycle paths.*
- *Creating easy pedestrian access to public transport facilities in terms of direct and convenient connections.*
- *Considering whether access arrangements to a site, existing or proposed, are adequate.*
- *Making sure that local transport capacity is adequate to serve development. This could include consideration of highway capacity, train services, bus services and other modes of transport.*

While all these are relevant to West St Leonards and have indeed been raised by residents, it is perhaps the latter which fits with the objective most closely. The Guidance continues:

- *Many traffic matters fall outside of the scope of planning. For example, changes to traffic management on existing transport networks are usually a matter for the highways authority to deal with. So changes to traffic lights, restrictions, speed limits, signage, traffic circulation, crossing points and other traffic management devices usually fall outside the scope of planning.*
- *A possible exception to this may be where new development would impact on existing networks, and this necessitates changes to those networks in order to accommodate such development. However, even in cases like these, a*

neighbourhood plan cannot be prescriptive about the actual solution. For example, planning policies could not include changes to the speed limit or specific highway improvements.

- *However, the plan could highlight localised traffic capacity and safety issues, or infrastructure deficiencies that would need to be addressed when considering development proposals. It would then be down to the local planning authority (LPA) to assess development proposals submitted for planning permission and to decide whether it would be necessary to impose conditions or a Section 106 obligation in order to approve the scheme.*

As mentioned East Sussex County Council is the Highways Authority. The East Sussex Local Transport Plan (LTP4) has rated itself with an active travel capability rating of 1 (with 1 being low and 4 being high). Their stated aim is to improve the rating. They have developed a Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) adopted in September 2020. LTP4 also states its intention:

- *To encourage an increase in walking, wheeling and cycling, partners will deliver inclusive active travel infrastructure and the segregation between modes, where feasible and where space is available in both urban and rural areas. As set out in Policy B2, infrastructure will take into consideration the LTN 1/20 guidance for cycle infrastructure design, emerging Active Travel England rural active travel guidance and the outcomes of stakeholder and public engagement.*
- *From a policy perspective the design of streets and public spaces will reflect those that enable the creation of ‘active environments’ and a sense of place, including walkable communities, providing active travel routes, providing high quality streets and spaces, as referred to in Sport England’s Active Design principles. (See Policy B2 for further details.)*
- *At a scheme development level the County Council has adopted [Lucy Saunders’ ‘Healthy Streets’](#) approach with the overarching aim of ‘Making streets healthy places for everyone’.*

These strategic aims link to the issues identified in the SWOT but translating these into action in West St Leonards (LTP 4 does not directly mention West St Leonards) is a challenge for the NP.

Similarly the Local Plan (2015) Policy T3: Sustainable Transport prioritises the following:

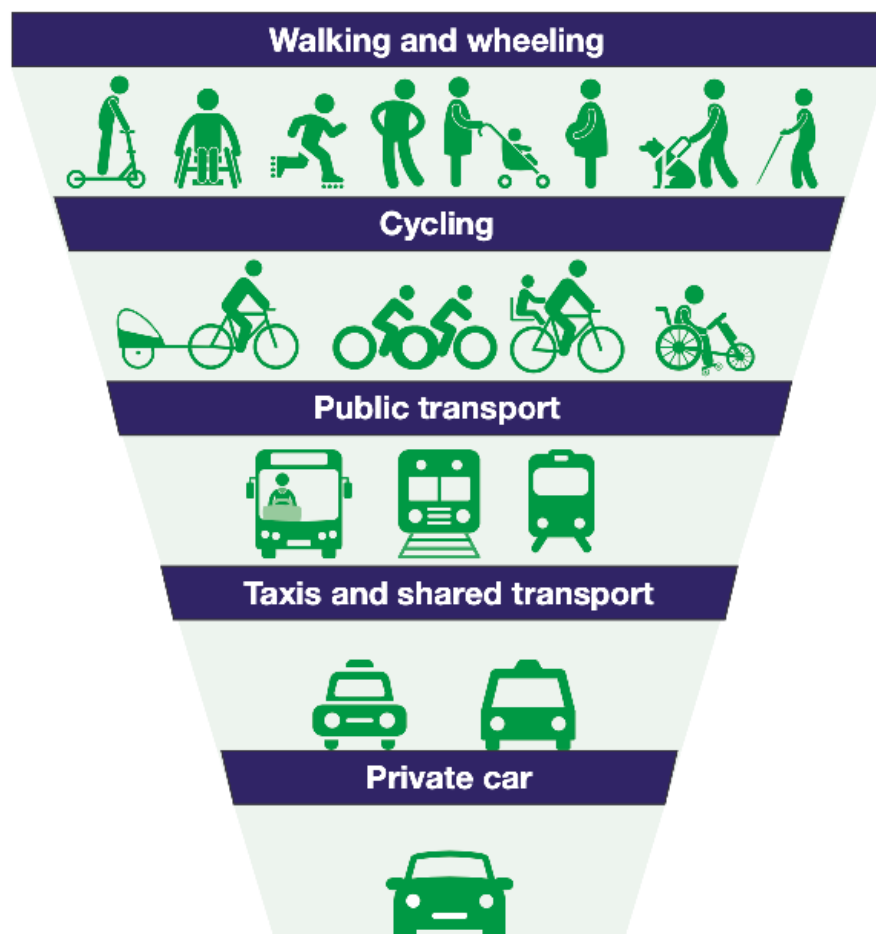
- *Improving bus routes, through support for the provision and improvement of bus priority lanes and junction approaches, services and passenger facilities,*
- *Supporting the provision of new and enhanced cycle routes in the town, and in particular, supporting the implementation of the strategic cycle network as identified on the key diagram and the policies map,*
- *Improving walking routes for pedestrians,*
- *Ensuring that new development is located close to existing public transport provision where possible,*

- Requiring developers to consider the needs of pedestrians and cyclists in developments and deliver appropriate measures,
- Improving the safety of the highway network,
- Improving air quality and the environment generally,
- Examining the potential for adopting other “smarter choices” measures, including workplace and school travel plans; travel awareness campaigns, car clubs/car sharing schemes, teleworking and home shopping

And states: “Transport Assessments maybe required for development schemes depending on the potential impact on the road network.”

These are all measures which if implemented will benefit West St Leonards. However it is as true for the Local Plan as for the NP that all these measures are reliant on funding becoming available and the Highways Authority ESCC being willing to implement them.

Having said that, as a general principle, WSLNF would like all developments to follow the hierarchy set out below when considering how people should access their homes and facilities:



Parking

The Emerging Local Plan (Reg 18) Development Policy (DP7): Access, Servicing and Parking, also seeks to limit car parking in new developments, particularly in accessible locations and in close proximity to Hastings Station. It is therefore proposed to mirror this approach in the NP.

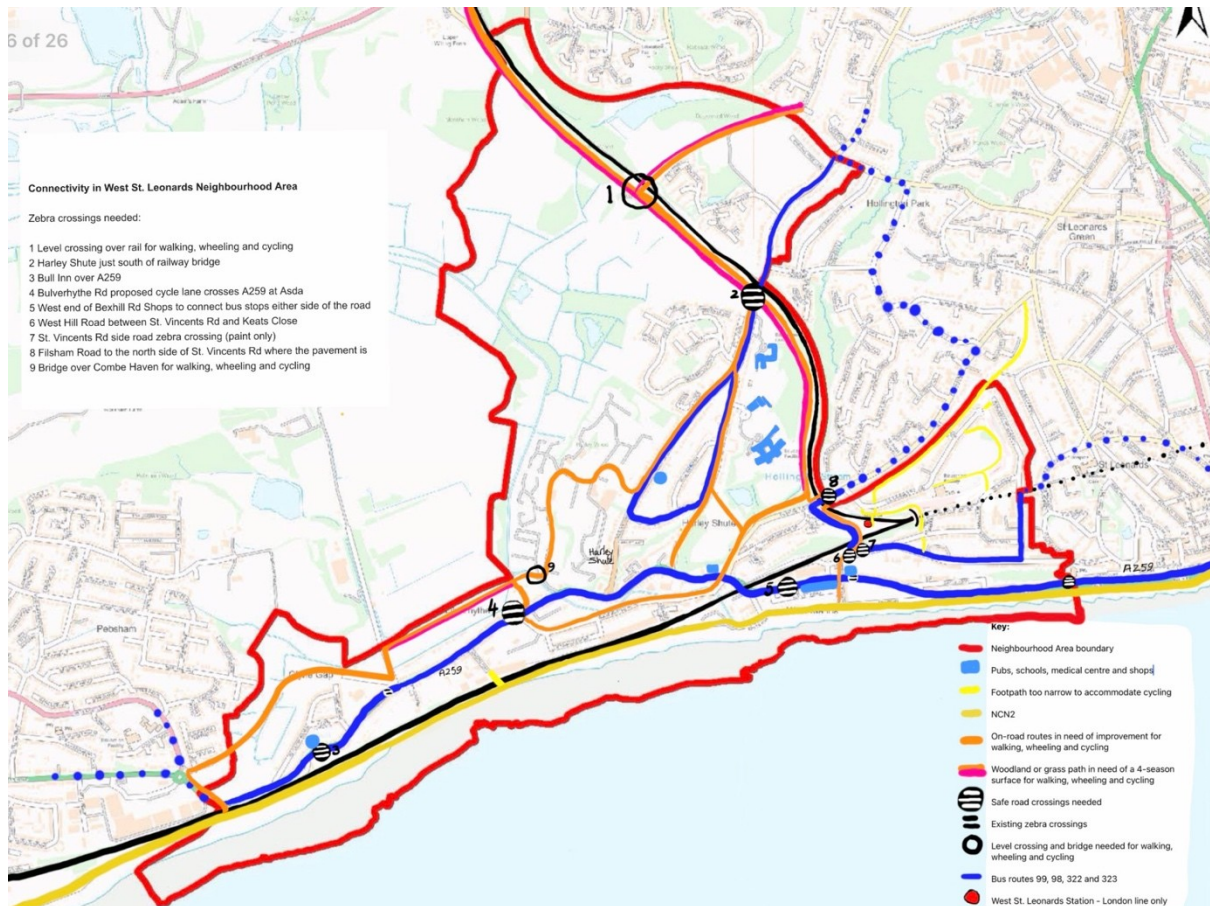
Policy T1: Minimising parking provision

Development that minimises car parking provision, particularly in accessible locations with a maximum of 1 car parking space for each home will be supported. Car parking will be restricted for residential and office development in the low car parking area within a 400m radius of West St Leonards Station. No new parking should be provided except disabled bays unless:

- **It is demonstrated through a transport assessment that car parking is necessary to support safety on the highway network or**
- **A viability assessment indicates an element of parking is necessary to ensure the development is deliverable. In such cases, it is expected that the car parking provision will be less than 1 space per home.**

Active travel and interconnected neighbourhoods

At the Visioning Event and Exhibition on 22nd February participants were asked if they supported a range of active travel measures and interconnected neighbourhoods. There was strong support for these. Therefore the approach proposed for the Neighbourhood Plan in relation to transport is to minimise car parking, promote walkable neighbourhoods, map where opportunities / deficiencies exist and to actively seek Section 106 or developer contributions to make improvements when the opportunity arises (from new development). Also, the WSLNF will work with HBC, ESCC, Sustrans (for the NCN2) and Network Rail (for West St Leonards station) to actively seek funding to make these improvements. The Active Travel Map below sets out the key opportunities for improvement:



These aspirations are addressed by the following policies:

Policy T2: Active travel and interconnected neighbourhoods

- **Developments that contribute to improving active travel (as set out on the Active Travel map) within the NA will be supported.**
- **New developments that generate the least amount of car movements and are within a comfortable walking distance of local services will be prioritised to help promote liveable neighbourhoods.**
- **New cycle and pedestrian routes should be incorporated into new developments and must link to the local walking and cycling infrastructure and to NCN2.**
- **Where possible walking and cycling routes should be separated in line with Sustrans guidance**

<https://www.sustrans.org.uk/for-professionals/infrastructure/sustrans-traffic-free-routes-and-greenways-design-guide/sustrans-traffic-free-routes-and-greenways-design-guide-contents/4-sharing-of-paths/>

Policy T3

New development proposals over three dwellings or equivalent commercial floor space should prioritise contributions for transport / highways

improvements to:

- **Provide disabled access and exit for WSL station**
- **Improve pavements in the immediate vicinity of the development including drop curbs**
- **Traffic calming on roads in the immediate vicinity of the development**

Other transport projects

The following additional projects were proposed at the Visioning event. It is considered that these are not viable or else would be dealt with through the normal or statutory duties of the Highways Authority:

Policy intention	Description
Potholes	This is outside the scope of land-use planning and hence the NP.
Sea front shuttle	Unless there is a requirement for safeguarding land for example for a start point / terminus, this is a project. It may worthwhile engaging with the local bus company/s to explore the viability of such a service.

Housing including design and character

Objective: For housing we will provide high quality housing with outdoor spaces where neighbours can mix and people won't need a car to access local facilities and services. We will have a flexible approach to density and height – depending on character areas – which will support the provision of more affordable housing. We will also address empty homes, second homes and holiday lets.

The WSLNF were able to commission a Housing Needs Assessment (HNA) from AECOM. This sets out the housing context for the NA. The following are extracts from the HNA:

According to the Local Plan (2015), Hastings has a housing delivery target of 481 units for the year 2023-24 but delivered only 116 units, resulting in a presumption in favour of sustainable development due to under-delivery³. HBC have provided an indication of the scale of housing growth expected within the NA by identifying a number of draft allocations within the NA. The sum of all the allocations within the NA boundary in the emerging Regulation 18 Local Plan adds up to 406 dwellings over the plan period, as set out below:

HL9	Seaside Road, West St Leonards for approx. 152 homes;	152
HL11	Cinque Ports Way for approx. 25 homes;	25
HL12	Former Malmesbury House, West Hill Road for approx. 117 homes;	11 7 ⁴
HL14	190 Bexhill Road for approx. 32 homes;	32
HL11 1	Gambier House, 111 West Hill Road and West House, 115 West Hill Road for approx. 20 homes;	20
HL11 5	Former West St Leonards Primary School, Bexhill Road for approx. 60 homes	60
	Total	406

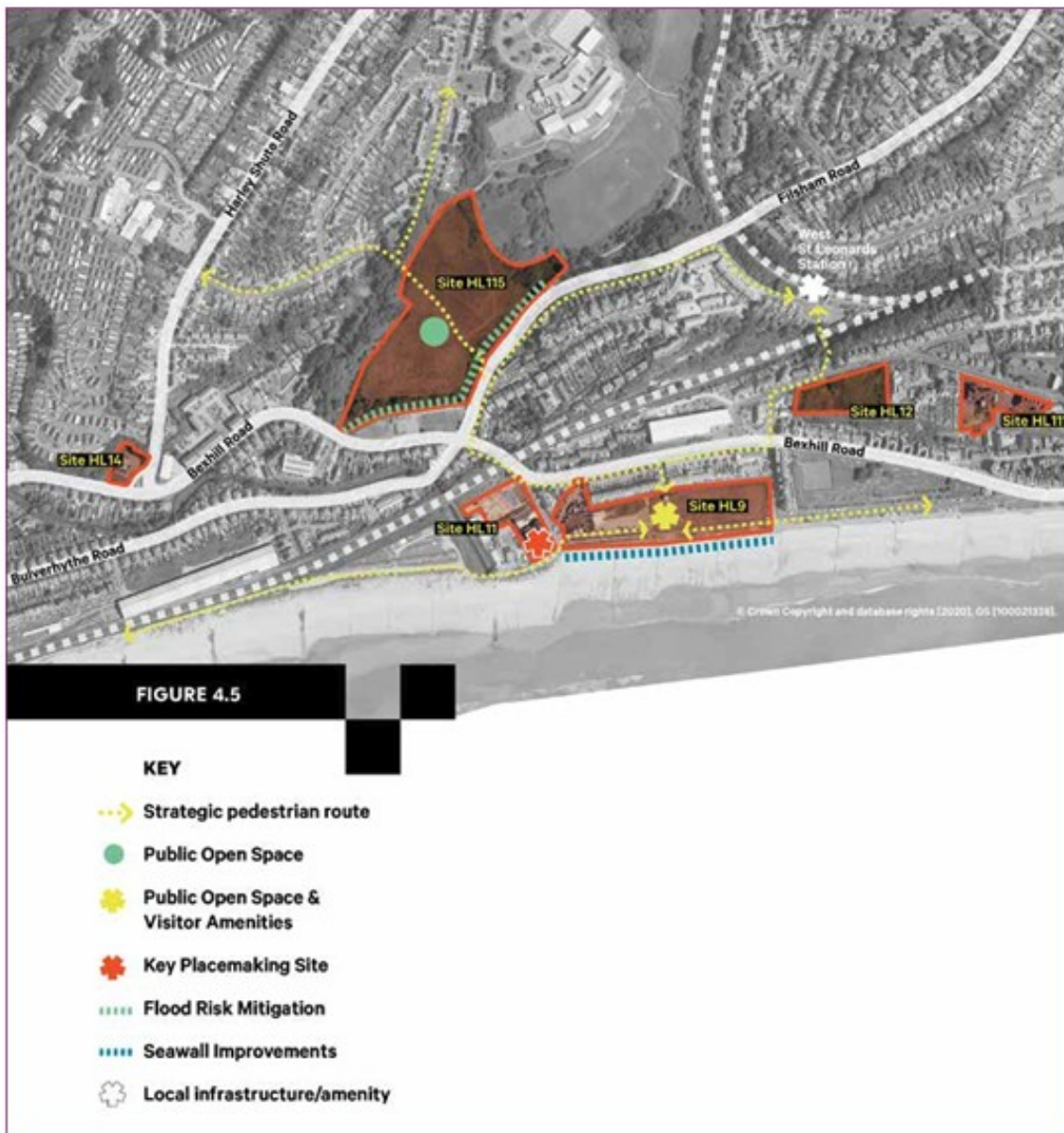
See over for map showing proposed sites

However, there are a number of underused, derelict or abandoned mainly industrial or employment sites particularly in Bulverhythe and so the WSLNF have successfully applied to have a site options assessment taken for these and other potential sites within the NA. This has not yet been completed but there will be an additional section here to reflect their findings.

³ See NPPF, 2024 paragraph 11 for explanation for “presumption in favour of sustainable development”.

⁴ Planning permission has been given (?) for 37 homes and 70+ cars. Normally councils would seek to maximise the number of homes nearer to or even higher than the allocation to meet targets.

Figure 4.5 Focus Area Policy 4: West Marina and West St Leonards map



West Marina and West St Leonards will have coherent sense of place supported by better connections serving residents and visitors. This will be anchored by coastal development, which is a 'place of colour and delight which celebrates the seafont, rather than a conventional housing estate'.

Figure 11: Extract from emerging Local Plan (Reg 18)

Home values in the NA have followed a general upward trajectory despite some year-on-year fluctuations. The current median house price (middle number when arranged from lowest to highest) is £300,000, which is a growth in 85.2% since 2014. It is worth noting that house prices in the NA are consistently more expensive than those in the surrounding local authority. It was found that local households on average incomes are unable to access even entry-level homes unless they have the advantage of a very large deposit.

Housing mix and affordable housing

AECOM recommends that the emerging Local Plan (Reg 18) housing mix appears to offer a suitable approach for West St Leonards because it prioritises the delivery of social or affordable rent homes and also provides scope to deliver [other] affordable home ownership products [discounted market homes or shared ownership].

However, because of the scarcity of affordable homes within the NA the approach of the Local Plan (2015) Policy H3: Provision of affordable housing which makes provision for a 10% financial contribution for affordable housing for 1-4 units, 20% for 5-14 units and 25% for 15 + units, is preferred. However, it is acknowledged that should the emerging Local Plan (Reg 18) supersede this, there would be no requirement for a financial contribution for affordable housing on brownfield sites until the threshold of 20+ units is proposed and then at 25% (although this threshold would apply to the old bathing pool HL9) and at Saxons wetlands (HL115) at 40%. However, where off-site provision is proposed by a developer this should only be accepted where that provision can be made within the neighbourhood area:

Policy H1: Affordable housing

Affordable housing will be provided on the application site to meet the need identified in the HNA, AECOM (2025). Where it is determined that off-site provision can provide an equivalent or better housing solution, off-site provision or a financial contribution in lieu of on-site provision (of at least equivalent value) may be required. In both cases, this will only be done where the agreed approach contributes to the creation of affordable housing within the NA.

Designing out crime

The Neighbourhood Profile shows that the crime rate in West St Leonards is close to but slightly lower than Hastings Borough as a whole but much higher than in East Sussex generally. While the NP is unable to require higher levels of policing it could encourage existing communities and new developments to join or set up Neighbourhood Watch Schemes. One area that it can influence is “designing out crime” in new developments - designs will take into account the risks of vandalism and crime generally and aim to mitigate those risks.

Policy H2: Secure by design

New developments should incorporate the principles of ‘Secured by Design’ (SBD) and, wherever possible, achieve SBD accreditation to ensure that a safe and sustainable community is maintained.

Second homes and holiday lets

The HNA report also identifies that there are an increasing number of vacant homes (which could be caused by low demand in some areas) or an increasing number of second homes in West St Leonards (which could be caused by people using dwellings

as second homes or holiday lets). The national average for non- occupation rates stands at 6%, however in West St Leonards just over 10% of homes are not occupied by households and this is likely to reflect the presence of second homes/ holiday lets in the stock ... and so a policy that encourages use of homes as principal residential homes is proposed.

Policy H2: Principal residency requirement

New open market housing, excluding replacement dwellings, will only be supported where there is a restriction to ensure its occupancy as a Principal Residence.

Sufficient guarantee must be provided of such occupancy restriction through the imposition of a planning condition or legal agreement. New unrestricted second homes will not be supported at any time.

Principal Residences are defined as those occupied as the residents' sole or main residence, where the residents spend the majority of their time when not working away from home.

Climate change – reducing carbon and adaptation

The climate change evidence base for the emerging Local Plan (Reg 18) shows that most of the town's emissions come from the existing housing stock, which accounts for 49% of direct emissions. The Visioning Event and Exhibition asked residents if they would support eco design and sustainability, and new homes should go beyond minimum energy efficiency standards which are set out in current Building Regulations. They supported higher standards of eco design including insulation, double or triple glazing, low carbon heating, solar panels and green roofs. These ideas are largely addressed through the existing Local Plan and so an additional policy isn't proposed within this plan but property owners and developers are encouraged to reference the West St Leonards Design Guidance and Codes which are a key supporting document to this plan (also see Policy En4).

The Climate Change Report, University of Brighton (2023) identifies that:

WSL is likely to experience an accelerated rise in sea levels caused by the impacts of climate change (South East Coastal Group (SECG), 2006). WSL seafront would be difficult to retain in long term with the increase in sea level rise and the shortage of beach materials entering the system (SECG, 2006).

... significant changes that would occur to the character and appearance of the coastline of WSL by 2105 due to the heavily protected seafront and substantial narrowing of the shingle beach. The draft Local Plan, Strategic Policy 7, for HBC has designated the whole of WSL seafront as falling within Coastal Change Management Area.

While the report recommends that no new permanent residential development be permitted, to be in conformity with the emerging Local Plan (Reg 18) policy 7 the following is proposed:

Policy H3: Coastal Change Areas

In the West St Leonards Coast Change Management Area new permanent residential development or non-residential development would only be supported where it can demonstrate that:

- a. The development would be safe over its planned lifetime, without increasing risk to life or property;**
- b. The development would not affect the natural character of the coastline or exacerbate the rate of shoreline change to the extent that the change to the coastline area increase nearby or elsewhere;**
- c. The development would not prevent the delivery of the Shoreline Management Plan policies or related coastal strategies;**
- d. The development would allow communities and natural environment to adapt sustainably to the impacts of climate change (including coastal squeeze); and**
- e. The development would not hinder the creation and maintenance of a continuous signed and managed route around the coast (King Charles III Way).**

The Climate Change Report, University of Brighton, 2023 further identifies that there are a number of geographical features that make the NA particularly vulnerable to flood risk including:

- Tidal flooding for the low lying area of coast at Glyne Gap and Bulverhythe;
- Fluvial flooding from Hollington Stream (steep and fast flowing) and Combe Haven
- Groundwater flooding from the high water table in the gravel beds along Glyne Gap and Bulverhythe coastal areas
- Surface water from steep topography of the area and extent of impermeable surfaces.

These are expected to be exacerbated in the plan period by sea-level rise, warmer drier summers (leading to more run-off), wetter winters and greater rainfall intensity across all seasons. In addition as identified in the Neighbourhood Profile, some households are experiencing low incomes and other challenges. The Local Plan (2015) has policies to address flooding which are supported but it is felt that the proposed additional policy is required because of the special circumstances in the NA:

Policy H4: Flood Resilience

New development in the plan area should be directed away from areas at highest risk of flooding.

New or additional residential, commercial or other development which would materially add to water discharge generally in the neighbourhood area, and into Combe Haven or Hollington Stream in particular, should address any or all of the following matters which are relevant to its location and the particular proposal:

- a) potential flood risk from Combe Haven or Hollington Stream; and/or**
- b) rising sea levels; and/or**
- c) groundwater levels; and/ or**
- d) surface water run-off**

Development proposals in the plan area shall be designed and constructed to reduce the overall level of flood risk on the application site and the surrounding areas.

All planning applications within the plan area must demonstrate how the design of buildings and the surrounding environment (including pavements, highways, parking areas, driveways, gardens, public green spaces, planting and drainage) has been planned to be resilient to the ongoing and increasing risk of flooding (from all sources) as a result of climate change, including the design of road surfaces and drainage systems to cope with more frequent episodes of extreme heat and rain.

Priorities	Policy or project recommendations
Old properties and derelict land	<p>A single policy or series of site specific policies could be included in the plan on what development can take place on these sites. However, Strategic Policy 6 Enhancing the Historic Environment of the emerging (Reg 18) Local Plan already includes the intention:</p> <p>The Council will work with partners to restore, reuse and secure the long-term viability of historic buildings. This will include working with owners and forming partnerships with external funders, to tackle those historic buildings that have been identified as vulnerable on the national Heritage at Risk Register. Where resources allow, the Council will also focus regeneration efforts on vulnerable high status heritage assets and those historic buildings that occupy prominent locations in the town.</p> <p>The following buildings within West St Leonards are identified as vulnerable:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tramsheds – Colemans • Hastleon Hall • Shop fronts on Bexhill Road • Also buildings on cliff side of West Hill
Bathing pool site	<p>A policy or set of policies could be included in the Neighbourhood Plan for this site. A masterplan is being developed as well. Care will need to be taken to ensure that the policies are in general conformity [and don't duplicate] with the most up to date Local Plan.</p>

Economy

Objective: For the economy we will improve opportunities for independent retailers and start-ups, develop an all-year economy linked to our seaside position, culture and the arts. Where the market is unable to provide, we will seek inward investment from the public and charitable sectors. We will provide more opportunities for young people.

At the Visioning event held on 22nd February, participants completed a SWOT analysis for the economy. Strengths included good local small businesses and creative studios, free parking which aids local businesses and the mainline station. Weaknesses included seasonal and limited employment opportunities. Threats were more generic if significant such as flooding, wind and salt damage. Opportunities included the Old Bathing Pool, leisure including water sports activities, more small businesses particularly those supporting all year round employment and a skills cluster to be developed with local schools and colleges (see full SWOT in Appendix).

The Local Plan (2015) and emerging Local Plan (Reg 18) already make provision for improving skills and access to jobs, tourism and visitor attractions but neither mention pop-ups, supporting small scale and independent retail or water related sports. This shorter section will aim to address those short-comings while reflecting the particular circumstances of West St Leonards.

This section also takes into account recent developments such as the new Aldi on Bexhill Road and the associated Greggs and Costa Coffee which have arguably undermined the viability of the existing, established, mainly independent row of shops at Marina Park, further east along the Bexhill Road between Seaside Passage and Grosvenor Gardens. The shops include: an estate agent, hair studio, small supermarket, pharmacy, Appleyard butchers, launderette, post-office, Barefoot Herbs, the Dove Café, kebab shop, bridal shop, Chinese takeaway, Hooked and Cooked fish and chip shop and Sussex Fruits (greengrocer).

There are a couple of scruffy and empty units, one conversion to residential use (permitted?) which suggests that the row of shops is struggling. Opposite is the somewhat incongruous TKMaxx, Carpetright and Bensons for Beds (warehouse) stores. Together these create a mix of local and destination shopping but they are divided by the busy and unattractive A259 with no pedestrian crossing points until further down outside the historic Bo Peep Public House.

It has been suggested that the parking along Marina Park could be better sited on the opposite side of the road to enable the widening of the pavement on the shop side and encourage planting of trees and shrubs (possibly in planters) along the south side to create a better pedestrian and retail experience. However, it also has to be acknowledged that this may be resisted by the shops themselves or people who are visiting by car (passing trade). However, what might assist in enabling this is making the current overflow car park (which has parking restrictions in place) for cMaxx etc which is owned by Hastings Borough Council into a public car park serving all the shops along this stretch of road. The current leaseholders appear reluctant to allow

this but this should be seen as a long-term goal when the lease becomes up for renewal.

This is what residents and some of the shop keepers have said they want for their Parade:

- Widened pavement from Seaside Passage to Grosvenor Gardens with loading bays at either end and in the middle.
- Appleyards butcher's; shoppers' parking along the southern side of the east end of Seaside Road; an additional zebra crossing opposite.
- Sussex fruits; benches and planters all along the Parade pavement as buffer between shoppers and traffic; improved walking and cycling route from WSL station to shops and a rain garden at the bottom of Keats Close.

Designs for these could be included with the design codes or worked up in due course as a project. Also see EN4 Public Realm.

Encouraging new innovative businesses

In order to support the viability of these shops it is proposed to have the following policies. Policy Ec1 is aimed at encouraging more innovative shops / cafes in the existing voids or when new leases become available.

Policy Ec1: Encouraging new innovative businesses

The development of new Class E(g) business space with superfast broadband in existing retail outlets along Marina Park will be supported. Amongst other business space, this includes support for the development of social and cultural enterprises and/or affordable workspace at rents below the market average.

Retail offer

The current poor state of some frontages along Marina Park detracts from the attractiveness of the shopping area as a whole and is a disincentive for passing trade or people visiting TKMaxx, Benson Beds and Carpetright from crossing the road. Where current or future businesses are considering improving or altering their shopfronts, they should be encouraged to develop a more attractive coherent or even unified appearance in keeping with the end of the 19th Century historic appearance of the buildings for example Barefoot Herbs which retains its Victorian windows, pilaster and corning.

Policy Ec2: Retail frontages

Development proposals that involve alterations to, or the creation of, shopfronts must demonstrate how they have taken account of relevant guidance in the Design Guidance and Codes.

As mentioned, the importance of parking for passing trade for the shops needs to be offset by the desire to make the south side pavement more appealing for pedestrians or even for café style seating as has been done in Kings Road also in St Leonards.

During the pandemic when outside seating was the only option for protracted periods for cafes and restaurants, bold and successful experiments took place in a range of settings to create attractive outdoor spaces for tables and chairs with planters and cycle parking.

Parking and pedestrianisation

Policy Ec3: Short term parking for local businesses / pavement improvements

Proposals for the provision of well-located cycle and short term parking spaces to meet the needs of local business, cyclists and pedestrians will be supported. In key streets the community will work with the borough and county council (highways authority) to investigate measures to enhance the viability of local business through new pedestrian crossings, expanding pavements (build outs) to accommodate café tables and chairs, planters and cycle parking as well as car parking provision, which enables businesses to maximise the benefit from both pedestrians, cyclists and passing trade.

Seafront and old bathing pool site

As mentioned, a Masterplan is being developed for the old bathing pool site which sits behind the shops and consideration needs to be given for the new residents and businesses associated with the improvements there and linking to and hence enhancing the vibrancy and viability of Marine Park parade. However, focussing on the old bathing pool site, consideration needs to be given to the retail offer related to this site and the adjacent seafront including the passing trade provided by NCN2 and King Charles III England Coastal Path. The SWOT analysis suggests support for:

- OBP developed could support a better, more vibrant economy – jobs
- Leisure activities
- Decent café by the sea like at Glyne Gap
- Make trip OBP have many attractions to draw people and their money
- Water sports etc
- Small businesses

It is therefore proposed that a policy that enables these activities to be developed alongside the promenade, homes and green spaces which will be created.

Policy Ec4: Seafront adjacent to old bathing

- 1. Support will be given to planning applications on the promenade and beach that:**
 - a. seek to provide additional and appropriate small-scale facilities, including pop-up artisan, food and drink outlets and water-sport facilities**
 - b. support and maintain the beach area as a safe and pleasant place to use for all ages and abilities.**
- 2. Any impacts of planning proposals that would impact the coastal flora**

and or fauna should be assessed through an Ecological Impact Assessment and fully mitigated.

- 3. Support will be given to planning applications from not-for-profit organisations wanting to provide additional built facilities on the shingle beach in the vicinity of the old bathing pool site including but not limited to a tidal pool or wheel chair access to the sea.**

Community and recreational facilities

Objective: West St Leonards will be cohesive with great community spirit and a network of local cultural and community centres and facilities.

At the Visioning event held on 22nd February, participants completed a SWOT analysis for community and recreational facilities. Strengths included nearby cultural centres in St Leonards and Hastings, the GP surgery, the Compound, Saturday Park Run, play areas, pharmacist and post office (although both also seen as a weakness).

Weaknesses included the lack of facilities north of the A259 and disabled access at the station. Threats included the cost or will of long term maintenance, repair or replacement. Opportunities included: better public toilets, another / better café on the seafront and facilities for teenagers (see Appendix for full SWOT). Threats included that investment decisions focused on the single bottom line of profit instead advocating for a more holistic – triple bottom line⁵ - referencing social and environmental as well as economic benefits.

Existing community facilities

There are only limited community facilities in West St Leonards and poor or non-existent community facilities further inland from the A259 with the exception of schools and the Comet Pub. Even those in the vicinity of the A259 are limited to:

- Bulverhythe Recreation Ground pavilion and football grounds and disused changing rooms
- Carrisbrooke Surgery / St Leonards Medical Centre – 126 Bexhill Road
- Compound – double decker bus, building and court yard for the creative arts in all guises, Bexhill Road
- Dove Café – a community café and inclusive space welcoming refugees, asylum seekers and recent immigrants to the UK, Bexhill Road
- Education Forward Trust, Ex Church Hall, 464 Bexhill Road
- Electra Studio – exhibition space for artists with studios to rent
- Hastleon Hall, Bexhill Road – exclusively used by Hastleon Amateur Dramatic Society – facebook <https://www.facebook.com/Hastleons/>
- Sea, Air and Army Cadets centres – facilities limited to these groups only although the Army Cadet Centre may become more widely available when they have built their new hall. Could the main existing building be re-purposed as a community centre.
- St Ethelburga Church – has been adapted for communal use, but also has an abandoned church hall

⁵ Triple bottom line is a business framework that considers a company's social, environmental and economic impact. Also known as the three Ps: People, Planet and Profit.

- St Leonard’s Medical Centre
- West St Leonards Community Centre and Social Club on the Bexhill Road – a licenced bar and hall serving the local community

There are no sports and limited leisure facilities in the area (outside schools) with the exception of outdoor play / sports. A policy protecting the limited but important existing community facilities is therefore proposed:

Policy CF1: Safeguarding existing social or community infrastructure
WSLNF has identified several sites and buildings which should be safeguarded for community use:

- Carrisbrook Surgery / St Leonards Medical Centre
- Compound
- Dove café
- Electra Studio
- Sea, Air and Army Cadet Centres
- West St Leonards Community Centre and Social Club

The enhancement of these community facilities will be supported. The loss of community facilities will not be supported unless it can be demonstrated that any of the following can be met:

- 1. There is no existing or future need or demand for such uses, including reuse for other community services locally, and adequate alternative accommodation is available to meet the needs of the area.**
- 2. Replacement facilities are proposed on or off site of better functionality to serve the needs of the area.**
- 3. Where diversification through the inclusion of additional uses can sustain the existing community space.**

New community facilities

The Local Plan (2015) states that: *Major sports or leisure facilities should be centrally located.*

The emerging Local Plan (Reg 18) Strategic Policy 10: Community facilities and digital infrastructure states:

The Council will consider the cumulative impact of development on social infrastructure and planning obligations will be requested to mitigate the impacts on community facilities, including schools, health facilities and libraries. Where appropriate, planning obligations (Section 106 Agreements) will be used to secure financial contributions in line with Policy DP8.

This has meant that no new sports or leisure facilities have been created in the last 10 years, despite as the Housing Chapter shows, 406 new homes are envisaged for the area but no new community / sports facilities.

Given the dearth of community facilities or even shops outside of the A259 corridor this policy seems to be failing to meet the needs of the substantial existing and new communities living along and to either side of the Harley Shute Road. The existence of the Compound and Dove Café strongly suggest that there is an unmet demand for community facilities. These might include but aren't limited to:

- A modern community centre with indoor sports facilities for badminton, table tennis, dance classes/aerobics/Zumba/pilates also for groups to meet
- Building suitable for one or more play groups, parent and toddler groups
- Youth café or club
- Corner shop and café (inland)

There are two approaches to achieving these. One similar to the slightly passive policies from the Local Plans is to have an enabling policy along the lines of:

Policy CF2: Community facilities

Proposals that include the provision of community facilities including:

- **A modern community centre**
- **Play group or pre-school**
- **Youth club or café**
- **Corner shop and café (inland)**

Or a combined building accommodating all or some of these will be supported as long as it is within easy cycling or walking distance of new developments particularly in the north of the Neighbourhood Area.

However, a more proactive approach could be to require contributions for such a facility from new developments commensurate on their size. Allocating a site for a proposed facility and having a policy setting out the expectations for contributions from developers might achieve this with HBC holding the contributions until sufficient funds can be accumulated. At present such a building would cost in the region of £1.5-2 million. It has been suggested that the former Army Cadet Centre could be repurposed as a community centre or part of the MOD site be utilised for this as well and both would be supported. Otherwise no obvious site for such a facility exists but another approach would be to find and allocate a site.

Other suggestions

Priorities	Policy or Project recommendations
Tidal pool – wind surfing/sea sports school	As well as allocating a site above the high tide mark, it may be possible to adapt West Saltdean’s draft Neighbourhood Plan Policy WS15 which states: “Support will be given to planning applications on the undercliff, promenade and beach ... that seek to provide additional and appropriate small scale facilities including popup outlets and water

	sports facilities” which also comply with the strategic policies in the Local Plan.
Skills cluster at schools	This would be a partnership project with local schools unless a site is required for this to go ahead. Normally this would take place on a school site and for this the county council is the planning authority. Some care may need to be taken if for example designating a school playing field as a Local Green Space that this wouldn't block the aspiration for developing a skills cluster at the site.
Better access to the beach	A general or site specific policy could be included which requires site owners to provide public access through their site to the beach so that, should new development be proposed that requires planning permission, such access can be made a requirement. As a general principle, this could be included in the Design Codes.

Skills cluster at schools

The first and last of these have been addressed in the Economy section of the plan. However, the idea of a new skills cluster at the schools might require an additional enabling policy similar to the one for a new community facility. It is fair to say that HBC's plans focus on the town centre although the creation of the Sussex Coast College facility at Ore shows how alternative centres can be a success. A simple policy might be worded as:

Policy CF3: New skills cluster

New development that creates a skills centre or cluster based at the St Leonards Academy will be supported.

Projects

The list below sets out wider community aspirations that sit outside the scope of planning policy but residents consider them important to the future of the Neighbourhood Area.

The following projects may be delivered in a variety of ways, including developer contributions from Section 106 agreements, or working alongside community groups who have been instrumental in undertaking small projects across the Neighbourhood Area to date. The projects presented are subject to relevant consents and funding being secured.

These projects are put forward by the local community and represent examples of locally supported projects which fulfil the objectives of this plan. WSLNF is aware that projects and programmes will evolve, priorities will change, and costs and the flow of funding will fluctuate, meaning that mechanisms will be required for WSLNF to update and reprioritise plan aspirations and secure local consensus to the outcomes of this process from time to time.

1. Tidal pool adjacent to the Old Bathing Pool site.
2. Park and ride.
3. Sea-front shuttle

Design survey comments

Other comments

Poor infrastructure

[Unreadable] leisure facilities and a restaurant

Need street cleaning, dog poo collection, and policing - CCTV against graffiti and crime

Anything that puts streets and housing into shadow shouldn't be allowed. Eg

Cycling and walking infrastructure and must be joined up better

Greenway links to trains - services, shops and people

Network Rail West St Leonards to be a desination travel area to electro studios, coffee shops, the sea and marine life e-business

Architectural competition to design new beach chalets something exciting and ambitious

Architectural competion to design a housing complex - co-op something ambious and innovative

Walk in the neighbourhood - talk pleae

The design here does not corelate for single people and small families or join to the landscape

I do not in any way support any building developments over any current

green spaces in West St Leonards.

No new buildings

No comment

Building appearance - Use of materials and their relevance to the local area

- How buildings relate to one another and to the street or other public areas
- Building height and size should be incorporated
- Gardens sizes- Boundary treatment (walls, hedges, paving etc.)
- Car parking
- How friendly it is for pedestrians and cyclists
- Sustainability (energy saving measures, efficient use of land, wildlife etc.)

The defined West St Leonards area includes some vastly different places and spaces, from the seafront to back lot suburbia and these call for a variety of different approaches - taller buildings and higher densities would be good along the seafront and around the station, whereas the more suburban areas would benefit from terraced housing, courtyard housing etc. Higher densities everywhere would help as long as active travel and public transport is established and prioritised. The area has a highly eclectic mix of building styles and characters and this quality should be extended and enhanced, not 'restricted' to some sort of idealised historical 'matching the neighbours' approach. Pedestrian and cycle-friendly streets are very important.

Beauty is important. A beautiful building is how the old architects worked to achieve this. Decimus Burton cared for the area and he should be considered as a mark of respect in the scheme of things. Beautiful street lights and brighter street lights for safety. More seating for disabled and the elderly. A new olympic size swimming pool which should be all weather with solar roof and heated all year round. The sea is no longer clean enough to swim in.

Low rise, with parking - parking in the area already oversubscribed.

Regulations required about not planting forest trees in urban areas.

Not too many structures over 3 or 4 stories high. Integrate the development with the coastline and sea. It would be good to make west St Leonard's a destination in itself through the development.

All new buildings need to fit in sympathetically with the existing styles, so that as far as possible existing views are maintained. Since much of West St Leonards is already built, renovating existing buildings should be a priority - rather than demolition and complete rebuild.

Materials used should as far as possible be natural and in any event recyclable.

On particular sites, thought should be given to the amount of car parking needed in the area - at the moment most working families need cars to get to work, but hopefully as public transport and cycle routes are improved this will reduce. So planning for cars could include communal car parks, which could be reduced and purposed into open spaces as car use reduces. Such spaces

would also provide places for co-owned cars.

In my responses I have emphasised the need for cycle and pedestrian routes, with as much green space as possible.

They must attract net contributors rather than supplicants. People who bring wealth must want to live and feel they belong in the area.

Nothing too large. Medium sized housing, small, but useable gardens, bounded by walls. Parking spaces/ garages.

good survey - thank you!

My biggest concern is potential sealevel rises and potential flooding ;into Combe Haven especially ,so efficient use of land to provide maximum drainage,reduce use of concrete and paving where possible,maximise green spaces as not everyone can/desires to look after gardens. Also density and height should maximise views and access to natural areas including the beach

Priorities should be green open spaces and no high rise development.

Development on the bathing pool site should connect to the sea and beach - e.g. open air lido, beach front cafe.

Buildings should be designed to encourage community interaction, informal encounters with neighbours, by way of public realm, incidental play, shared garden areas or allotments. Area character including building materials is very important, and anything that will reduce reliance on private cars.

All new housing should be affordable, eco-friendly to the environment and built with sustainability in mind. Buildings should blend into the environment - not stand out - and be attractive to the eye. Parking spaces should be more than the 1.6? allocated. Most houses are two car households. Having said that it is noted that pedestrian and cycle access should also be encouraged along with complete accessibility for those less able. West St Leonards is always considered the Cinderella of the town. There is nothing to draw people to the area so footfall remains low. I feel it is the shabbier part of the town. It needs careful and sustainable investment, offer affordable homes and leisure facilities which will draw people to the area. A new Community Centre offering first class facilities would be an asset and children's play facilities should be included in any scheme. The sea is so nearby so lets link leisure activities with the enjoyment of the coastline and help promote a healthier lifestyle. Let Cinderella go to the ball!

I would like to see good quality housing built to accommodate people from all economic backgrounds. I would welcome innovatively designed buildings and architecture that fit the requirements of the inhabitants (e.g light, enough space, warm, affordable to heat, with communal areas where appropriate). To this end, I welcome building materials and styles that are not 'traditionally' from this area, but that are chosen to fulfil these requirements as affordably as possible. I believe contemporary design and architecture (outside of existing templates) can enable new ways to live and unite communities. I

would like to see housing which enables communities to come together and flourish, with outdoor green spaces, play areas, space to grow things, have events, and for all ages to be together.

I consider it important that any new development (genuinely) takes into account the views of immediate neighbours and should be in keeping with existing local architecture. Flood plains need to be respected and existing open spaces should be retained. The one, main access road running between St Leonards and Hastings is always busy and already subject to mini traffic lights on a regular basis for maintenance and service issues; any development(s) along this road, or creating traffic with no option but to use it, should be discouraged.

Any flats should be inland and away from the seafront. Due to the congestion of traffic no more housing should be built in this area. The surrounding roads floods with sewage several times a year and the air quality from traffic is terrible as it gets trapped by the hills particularly as the road is used by large delivery vehicles who often speed past while looking at their phones. Unless you live within the area you should not be making decisions for the area. This area is at capacity but there are many homes that are not in use and they should be utilized. Second homes are the destruction of the local economy.

How the outside space is designed, even balconies and terraces, it's important to have an outside space for health and wellbeing.

New buildings should help make the area look more aesthetically pleasing. Not just chuck 'em up cheap housing that doesn't age well. Green spaces and children's play areas should be incorporated into design and not as an add on to housing. And parking for new buildings in the area has to be provided to minimise additional pressure on those of us living on nearby roads - or use CPZs. It would be great if public transport were a better option in the area and better served any new buildings. Ultimately I want people to feel pride in this area and therefore to stop trashing it!

New buildings should not be too high but be bold and modern with exciting designs. Cafes and restaurants with a cultural and heritage centre.

Buildings and landscape should harmonise with existing, be pleasing on the eye and functional whilst adding character and a unique identity for WSL.

NA

We need green spaces. Also a lot of consideration is needed about impact on existing housing and infrastructure and the significantly high potential of any further building work creating bigger floods. The wetlands already struggle to soak up excess water in winter and the streams overflow. Bexhill Road flooded badly last winter at times and pedestrians couldn't get past the bit by Colemans as the floodwater was too deep on the pavement. The Edinburgh road footpath is inaccessible at times due to rain runoff meeting high tides and flooding it. It's all very well putting footpaths and cycleway in, but no use

if they flood!

Glossary

Term	Acronym	Description
Adopted Hastings Local Plan	Local Plan (2015)	Comprising the Hastings Planning Strategy (2014) and Development Management Plan (2015)
Development Plan	DP	The suit of plans including NPs that are used to determine planning applications in the borough.
Emerging Local Plan	Emerging Local Plan (Reg 18)	Still at an early pre-submission stage – prior to being submitted to the government’s Planning Inspectorate.
Housing Needs Assessment	HNA	An objective analysis of the housing requirements for the NA based on national guidance.
National Cycle Network 2	NCN2	Sustrans have developed a national network of strategic cycle routes including NCN2 that runs from Dover to Penzance.
National Planning Policy Framework (2024)	NPPF (2024)	The government’s new land-use planning framework to which all local and neighbourhood plans must be in general conformity.
Neighbourhood Area	NA	The legally recognised area covered by the NP
Neighbourhood Plan	NP	A legally recognised and enforceable land-use planning document
West St Leonards Neighbourhood Forum	WSLNF	The only qualifying body recognised in law as able to develop a neighbourhood plan

Definition of Affordable Housing (NPPF 2024)

Affordable housing: housing for sale or rent, for those whose needs are not met by the market (including housing that provides a subsidised route to home ownership and/or is for essential local workers); and which complies with one or more of the following definitions⁹⁰:

a) **Social Rent:** meets all of the following conditions: (a) the rent is set in accordance with the Government’s rent policy for Social Rent; (b) the landlord is a registered

provider; and (c) it includes provisions to remain at an affordable price for future eligible households, or for the subsidy to be recycled for alternative affordable housing provision.

b) **Other affordable housing for rent:** meets all of the following conditions: (a) the rent is set in accordance with the Government's rent policy for Affordable Rent, or is at least 20% below local market rents (including service charges where applicable); (b) the landlord is a registered provider, except where it is included as part of a Build to Rent scheme (in which case the landlord need not be a registered provider); and (c) it includes provisions to remain at an affordable price for future eligible households, or for the subsidy to be recycled for alternative affordable housing provision. For Build to Rent schemes affordable housing for rent is expected to be the normal form of affordable housing provision (and, in this context, is known as Affordable Private Rent).

c) **Discounted market sales housing:** is that sold at a discount of at least 20% below local market value. Eligibility is determined with regard to local incomes and local house prices. Provisions should be in place to ensure housing remains at a discount for future eligible households.

d) **Other affordable routes to home ownership:** is housing provided for sale that provides a route to ownership for those who could not achieve home ownership through the market. It includes shared ownership, relevant equity loans, other low cost homes for sale (at a price equivalent to at least 20% below local market value) and rent to buy (which includes a period of intermediate rent). Where public grant funding is provided, there should be provisions for the homes to remain at an affordable price for future eligible households, or for any receipts to be recycled for alternative affordable housing provision, or refunded to Government or the relevant authority specified in the funding agreement.