

CHAPTER 11 ECONOMY	
POLICY EC1	Sustainable economic prosperity and investment
Q73 a) Do you agree?	We agree with the overall policy.
b) Should we change anything?	-
c) Have they missed anything?	<p>We agree with the overall policy, in particular the concentration on increasing skilled employment, sustainability (net zero targets), start-ups, connectivity (cycle paths for example) and infrastructure (5G and fibre broadband). However this policy is to enable the growth and expansion of businesses by encouraging the provision of suitable premises.</p> <p>Policy EC1(g) refers to start-ups – more support and encouragement could be provided to these. A large amount of employment is provided by growth start-ups e.g. TR Fastenings first started in one room in Hooke Hall, London Road, Uckfield, and now a multi-million pound company. Parkers Building Supplies was also a one-man business based out of the old station yard in Uckfield, and now a multi-million pound business with sites across Kent and Sussex.</p> <p>In general, there needs to be more liaison with education facilities, to enable students to gain work experience and develop work ethics to prepare them for going out and getting jobs, and to show them the huge variety and range of jobs and skills that are available for their futures.</p> <p>We would make a strong recommendation that youth employment investment (16-24 years old) and an awareness of the impact of artificial intelligence (generative and large language model) be included in the rubric of this apparently primary policy, as generational and technical factors will underpin future regional economic growth. No young people, no growth. No facility for incorporating the effects of AI in planning policy, no automatic public sector contact point with IT capital.</p> <p>We would also reflect on the following areas being vital to economic prosperity and investment in Wealden District:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - consider maintaining local and original forms of employment utilising modern technologies– e.g. farming, use fields to grow bio-crops; - should a policy or objective be incorporated to welcome and support any development of facilities to support the learning and updating of key skills and trades; - push for further improvements to WI-FI and mobile phone coverage in the rural areas, to ensure businesses can develop and expand; -encourage and support small/medium sized enterprises in High Street through business rate initiatives and incentives, to balance all rates in the town and compensate for the internet; - expand parking provision in town and village centres to support growth; -tie up public transport to job opportunities;
POLICY EC2	Existing strategic employment sites
Q74 a) Do you agree?	We agree with the policy.
b) Do you agree with the list of existing strategic	Yes. The only additional would be small rural business sites, such as in Waldron, Ringmer, and Framfield, but not sure if these meet the definition.

employment sites defined in this policy?	
c) Should we change anything?	<p>Although of the 19 sites listed, 11 are in the generally north and 8 in the general south, there needs to be a better spread in relation to the working population and more coverage in the 'centre' area.</p> <p>We would only offer the comment that the net loss of light industrial space over the past two years, taking in conjunction with the net gain in office space in the past year, suggests that there is an apparent tension between the data and the observation early in the Local Plan that demand for distribution space is stronger than that of office space. However, the data set is not robust enough to evidence this tension beyond doubt. We would also comment that the concentration of strategic employment sites, particular potential new sites is towards the southern area of the district. Some thought may be given to supporting a diversified geographical approach should appropriate brownfield sites become available in the central and northern areas, particularly when you consider the importance of accessibility, and proximity in north Wealden to M23, A22, A21, Gatwick Airport and Croydon rail gateway.</p>
d) Have they missed anything?	<p>Providing employment facilities where people work helps improve the environment by seeking to reduce commuting times, and providing a better work/life balance for a healthier and content population. There needs to be adequate premises of all sizes to accommodate all levels of business development and kept up to date and improved.</p> <p>Business parks should be for businesses and not retail which than excludes companies from locating and developing.</p>
POLICY EC3	Retention and/or loss of non-strategic employment sites
Q75 a) Do you agree?	We agree.
b) Should we change anything?	Yes. Very strict controls needed to enforce this.
c) Have they missed anything?	-
POLICY EC4	Rural economy
Q76 a) Do you agree?	We agree with the general thrust of EC4.
b) Should we change anything?	<p>The NPPF confirms that planning policies should support sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas by taking a positive approach to development. In general, we would agree with this aim. Consideration needs to be given to public access and facilities.</p> <p>Employment in rural areas can be a very positive policy. It can provide employment space for growing companies at a lower rental/and business rate cost and employment for residents in their own locality. With changes in modern farming procedures, there is often less need for some buildings and/or relocation of procedures i.e. for example the loss of chickens growing in this area. It enables farmers to put redundant buildings to better economic use and to support their businesses.</p> <p>We would add to a specific reference to EC4 to local food production and cultivation, which would align with the statement concerning resilience early in the draft Plan. Too much investment in alternative rural development (tourism, alternative use for agricultural buildings etc) may undermine the need to encourage the local production and cultivation of food for both humans and animals. The conversion of</p>

	agricultural land, on either a permanent or temporary basis, should be balanced against the aspirations of Wealden residents to cut food miles (net zero targets).
c) Have they missed anything?	Positive consideration when granting change of use needs to be given to the importance of access to these sites/units re: the use of country lanes for lorries etc and the provision of utilities i.e. sewerage, waste disposal, energy efficiency of buildings, power supplies etc. The use or conversion of redundant buildings should be encouraged to avoid them falling into disrepair and dangerous condition. Redundant buildings should not become additional dwellings.
POLICY EC5	Equestrian development
Q77 a) Do you agree?	Will respond no, as need our comments to be taken into account, although generally considered acceptable.
b) Should we change anything?	Consideration needs to be given to public access and facilities.
c) Have they missed anything?	As with our response to Policy EC4 - Positive consideration when granting change of use needs to be given to the importance of access to these sites/units re: the use of country lanes for lorries etc and the provision of utilities i.e. sewerage, waste disposal, energy efficiency of buildings, power supplies etc. The use or conversion of redundant buildings should be encouraged to avoid them falling into disrepair and dangerous condition. Redundant buildings should not become additional dwellings. The use of bridleways should be controlled to avoid them being reduced to a state where walkers are inhibited from using them through degradation.
POLICY EC6	Tourism facilities and attractions
Q78 a) Do you agree?	Yes. We would agree.
b) Should we change anything?	Generally considered acceptable but more consideration needed to promote and control Airbnb accommodation. The statement saying development would not be granted if it affected tourism – this comment is a bit throwaway, as if there is much more development in our town nobody will want to come here as the roads will be too busy.
c) Have they missed anything?	Planning the development of future housing, needs better control to deliver the provision of low cost and smaller houses to allow a more diverse working population to support the tourism industry and encourage service jobs and employment.
POLICY EC7	Visitor accommodation
Q79 a) Do you agree?	Yes.
b) Should we change anything?	Generally considered acceptable. More consideration needed of how to promote and control Airbnb accommodation. Where this policy concerns caravan sites for holiday occupation, we would make same comment as our response to Q.76 – too much investment in alternative rural development may undermine the need to encourage the local production and cultivation of food for both humans and animals. The conversion of agricultural land, on either a permanent or temporary basis, should be balanced against the aspirations of Wealden residents to cut food miles.
c) Have they missed anything?	To promote tourism in Wealden, we definitely need more caravan and camping sites. The demand is already significant. This needs to have green tourism accreditation. It is important to retain existing locations and not lose them to housing and other non-employment uses. We are not sure of the procedures to set up and register visitor accommodation, and worry that if homeowners extend for visitors' accommodation, this could then be sold off at a later stage and housing infills developed through this loophole. We wouldn't agree with caravan sites only being used for holiday lets as residential caravan sites are in short supply and could be in some cases the only affordable option for housing.

POLICY EC8	Retention of sites in economic or tourism use
Q80 a) Do you agree?	Agreed.
b) Should we change anything?	It would be useful to reference the Asset of Community Value (Localism Act Community Right to Bid) procedures in this section and make reference to this having also been reviewed in the policy after 1b). This is an important opportunity that gives the community chance to retain importance community facilities whether they have economic or tourism uses. Parish and Town Councils are also seeing more services and facilities devolved to them as we move forward, and their ability to manage such facilities is ever expanding.
c) Have they missed anything?	As above. It would be useful to reference the Asset of Community Value (Localism Act Community Right to Bid) procedures in this section and make reference to this having also been reviewed in the policy after 1b). This is an important opportunity that gives the community chance to retain importance community facilities whether they have economic or tourism uses. Parish and Town Councils are also seeing more services and facilities devolved to them as we move forward, and their ability to manage such facilities is ever expanding.