4.5  **Hailsham & Polegate**

**Overview**

4.5.1  As shown on Figure 4.5a, Hailsham is situated approximately three miles to the north of Polegate, in the central southern part of Wealden District. It is the largest settlement in the southern half of the District and is situated between the middle reaches of the River Cuckmere to the west and the Pevensey Levels to the east. The extensive Wilmington Wood abuts the south-western edge of the town.

4.5.2  Hailsham is a large nucleated settlement, which has grown around several north-south orientated road corridors. It has been an established market town since 1252 and still retains its historic core around the market square and St Mary’s Church. The town has experienced considerable growth during this century, with significant residential estate development occurring in the Post-War years. More recently, house building has taken place on the western and southern edges of the town.

4.5.3  Shops are concentrated within the town centre and also at The Quintins and St Mary’s Walk. A variety of shops, offices and other businesses provide facilities for the town. The majority of the town’s business activity is contained within two business areas at Diplocks Way and Station Road. A number of smaller, light industrial units are also located at Old Swan Lane and Leap Cross Business Centre on London Road. There are few large areas of recreational open space or playing fields within the town.

4.5.4  As shown on Figure 4.5a, Polegate is situated at the south-eastern edge of Wealden District, to the north of Willingdon/Eastbourne and south of Hailsham. The south-western edges of the settlement abut the northern edge of the South Downs National Park. The town is situated on an east-west ridge.

4.5.5  Polegate is a medium-sized linear town, which has developed along the Lewes to Hastings railway line and the A27 main road corridor. The A22 road corridor also passes north to south through the town. The town comprises a series of post-war housing estates, with a High Street shopping area running through the centre of the town. In the east of the town, Chaucer Industrial Estate provides a key employment base. There is some formal recreational use of the large tract of open, relatively low-lying fields between Polegate and Willingdon at the eastern edge of the town; however this area is predominantly agricultural.
FIGURE 4.5a
HAILSHAM & POLEGATE:
CONTEXT PLAN
Audit

Biodiversity

4.5.6 The following designated biodiversity and geodiversity sites are found around Hailsham & Polegate (see Figure 4.5b):

- Hellingly Cemetery LWS
- Jarvis Wood, Nobody’s Wood & Park Wood Complex LWS
- Michelham Priory LWS
- Beatons Wood LWS
- Abbots & Wilmington Wood & Milton Hide LWS
- Bramble Grove LWS
- Diplocks Wood LWS
- Cranedown & Middle Brow LWS
- Pevensey Levels SAC, Ramsar site, NNR and SSSI
- Wilmington Downs SSSI
- Folkington Reservoir SSSI

4.5.7 The condition of the Pevensey Levels SAC, Ramsar site, NNR and SSSI is ‘poor’ but improving\(^{163}\). The condition of the Wilmington Downs SSSI is 100% in a favourable or unfavourable but recovering condition\(^{164}\). The condition of the Folkington Reservoir SSSI is 100% in a favourable or unfavourable but recovering condition\(^{165}\).

4.5.8 As shown on Figure 4.5c, wildlife habitats around Hailsham & Polegate are dominated by deciduous and mixed and coniferous woodland to the west and significant areas of floodplain grazing marsh to the east. Freshwater habitats include numerous ponds in Hailsham and small tributary streams/ditches in and around Polegate. Ponds, lakes and watercourses (streams and ditches) are common close to both Hailsham and Polegate. As shown on Figure 4.5d there are a large number of individual trees and tree groups associated with amenity spaces and streets within the urban area, many of which are protected by Tree Preservation Orders (see Figure 4.5c), particularly located along the western part of Hailsham and around the edges of Polegate.

\(^{163}\) https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/SiteSearch.aspx accessed April 2017
\(^{164}\) https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/SiteSearch.aspx accessed April 2017
\(^{165}\) https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/SiteSearch.aspx accessed April 2017
FIGURE 4.5b
HAILSHAM & POLEGATE: DESIGNATED BIODIVERSITY & GEODIVERSITY SITES

KEY
Designations:
- Special Protection Area/Special Area of Conservation/Ramsar
- Site of Special Scientific Interest
- National Nature Reserve
- Local Wildlife Sites
- Ancient Woodland
- Regionally Important Geological Sites

0 0.5 1 Kilometre

Local Wildlife Sites
Special Protection Area/Special Area of Conservation/Ramsar
Site of Special Scientific Interest
National Nature Reserve
Local Wildlife Sites
Ancient Woodland
Regionally Important Geological Sites
FIGURE 4.5c
HAILSHAM & POLEGATE:
WILDLIFE HABITATS

KEY

Main BAP Priority Habitats:
- Coastal and Floodplain Grazing Marsh
- Coastal Saltmarsh
- Coastal Vegetated Shingle
- Deciduous Woodland
- Good Quality Semi-improved Grassland
- Lowland Calcareous Grassland
- Lowland Dry Acid Grassland
- Lowland Ferns
- Lowland Heathland
- Lowland Meadows
- Lowland Heathland
- Lowland Heathland
- Lowland Heathland
- Maritime Cliff and Slope
- Mudflats
- Purple Moor Grass and Rush Pastures
- Reedbeds
- Saline Lagoons
- Traditional Orchard
- No Main Habitat but Additional Habitats Present

Mixed and Coniferous Woodland Habitats (National Forest Inventory)

Freshwater Habitats (Main Watercourses & Waterbodies)

Tree Preservation Orders
FIGURE 4.5d
HAILSHAM & POLEGATE: TREES & WOODLAND

NB. See Figure 4.5a for Tree Preservation Orders
The key landscape setting/townscape features and characteristics that contribute to the character of Hailsham and are sensitive to change are summarised below:

- **Remnant Historic Landscapes**: A patchwork of small-scale historic fields surrounds the settlement, often abutting the settlement edge. These are interspersed with large areas of Ancient Woodland, at the south-western edge of the town. The un-wooded ancient landscapes to the west of the settlement are cohesive and aggregate assarts. To the north are scattered areas of regular and irregular piecemeal enclosure, and to the east, regular piecemeal enclosure and consolidated strip fields. Further to the east and south east (within the levels landscape), is a landscape of brooks innings and saltmarsh innings.

- **Culturally Important Landmarks**: Horselunges Manor complex, to the north of the settlement is a key Culturally Important Landmark, as is Michelham Priory, at some distance from the western edge of Hailsham.

- **Landscape detractors** include large industrial and commercial buildings to the south of the town, sewage works to the east of the town and a Chalet Park also at the eastern edge of the town.

- **Urban Edges**: The town is predominantly lined by treed, sensitive edges and woodland, with a few pockets of exposed or prominent urban edges along the northern edges of the town, often associated with new or partially complete new development sites.

- **Watercourses/Waterbodies**: The valley of the River Cuckmere is a key landscape feature, running to the north and west of the town. Several smaller tributaries (and associated ponds) feed this main river system. To the east of the settlement, the vast expanse of Pevensey Levels, with its associated drainage ditches is a key feature.

- **Significant Views/Key Ridgelines**: Key views southwards from the town are dominated by the backdrop of Wilmington Wood.

- **Footpaths/Bridleways**: A network of footpaths and bridleways connects Hailsham to its landscape setting, including the Cuckoo Trail.
The key characteristics of the Landscape Setting Areas around Hailsham & Polegate\textsuperscript{167} (see Figure 4.5e) are:

**Hailsham**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Landscape Setting Area</th>
<th>Distinctive Characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1                      | • A small-scale patchwork of arable and pastoral, ancient fields which are interspersed with small patches of woodland (much of which is ancient).
• A strong landscape structure, resulting from the network of mature hedgerows and trees (often lining road corridors). |
| 2                      | • A small-scale patchwork of arable and pastoral fields which are often lined with mature hedgerows;
• Open views eastwards across the Open Levels contribute to recognisable sense of place.
• West-east orientated stream corridors that feed the Levels to the east. |
| 3                      | • A small scale patchwork of predominantly pastoral fields, with stronger historic continuity in terms of field pattern in the north than in the south.
• Open views eastwards across the Open Levels contribute to recognisable sense of place. |
| 4                      | • A caravan park in the east, which is considered to be a landscape detractor.
• West-east stream corridor, which is lined in places by mature trees and vegetation.
• Open views southwards across the Open Levels contribute to recognisable sense of place. |
| 5                      | • Several isolated farmsteads and houses;
• A patchwork of predominantly pastoral fields with an ancient field pattern;
• Open views southwards across the Open Levels contribute to recognisable sense of place. |
| 6                      | • Small to medium-scale pockets of ancient and more recent, predominantly pastoral fields.
• Several narrow rural road corridors. |
| 7                      | • Strong sense of enclosure as a result of the several large areas of woodland
• Numerous stream corridors run through the woodland. |
| 8                      | • A small-scale, ancient landscape of arable and pastoral fields which are lined with a mature network of hedgerows. In the northwest of the area, ancient strip fields are a feature.
• The Knockhatch adventure farm and several other farmsteads are dotted across the landscape. |
| 9                      | • Gently meandering corridor of the River Cuckmere, which is lined with a patchwork of predominantly pastoral, ancient fields;
• A22 road corridor crosses the northern part of the area, introducing a source of noise and movement. |

\textsuperscript{167} Wealden Landscape & Settlement Character Assessment, CBA (2014)
FIGURE 4.5e
HAILSHAM & POLEGATE:
LANDSCAPE SETTING AREAS

Landscape Setting Areas (Wealden Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment, 2014):

- Hailsham Landscape Setting Areas
- Polegate Landscape Setting Areas
Polegate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Landscape Setting Area</th>
<th>Distinctive Characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1                      | • A small-scale patchwork of ancient fields of drained alluvial grazing marsh, lined with reed-fringed ditches;  
                          • A strong sense of openness throughout.  
                          • Urban fringe land uses (including roadside services and a hotel) associated with the A27 main road corridor which reduces overall sense of remoteness and tranquillity. |
| 2                      | • Large-scale, drained fields of alluvial grazing marsh;  
                          • Reed-fringed drainage ditches;  
                          • A series of minor, rural road corridors. |
| 3                      | • Playing fields and recreation grounds at the settlement edges in the west, with mature trees;  
                          • Predominantly pastoral fields, lined with occasional hedgerows. |
| 4                      | • An intricate landscape pattern of spurs and slopes which form the eastern edge of the South Downs (National Park) and facilitate open views across the settlement and adjacent landscapes;  
                          • This area also includes a series of ridges at the top of the slopes.  
                          • Patches of Ancient Woodland provide an intermittent sense of enclosure. |
| 5                      | • A small-scale, ancient patchwork of drained grazing marshes, with reed-fringed ditches at field boundaries. |

4.5.11 The key landscape setting/townscape features and characteristics that contribute to the character of Polegate and are sensitive to change are summarised below:

- **Remnant Historic Landscapes:** Pockets of small-scale historic fields, comprising cohesive assart and regular piecemeal enclosure to the northwest, and brooks innings with some regular piecemeal enclosure and consolidated strip fields to the southeast of the town; and the ancient landscape complex of a Premonstratensian Abbey (founded in 1180) to the east of Ottenham Court and north of Polegate. Also of historic interest is an area of prehistoric earthworks on the ridge to the southwest of the town.

- **Culturally Important Landmarks:** Two Culturally Important Landmarks within the setting of the town – the remains of a Premonstratensian Abbey to the north of the town, and Filching Manor at some distance to the south of Polegate and Willingdon; and several landmark churches within the urban fabric.

- **Landscape Detractors:** Several landscape detractors, including industrial buildings to the south of the B2247 at the eastern edge of Polegate and the Motel and services at the large roundabout junction between the A22 and A27 main road corridors at the north-western edge of the town.

- **Urban Edges:** The town is predominantly lined by sensitive, soft, treed/hedged edges, however there are pockets of prominent, harsher urban edges at the eastern edge of the Industrial Area (as above) and along Hyperion Avenue and Sunstar Lane at the western edge of the town.
• **Significant Views/Key Ridgelines:** At the northern and eastern edges of the town, open views north, south and east across a landscape setting of open levels are characteristic. Vice versa, there are several key views to the settlement edge from the Levels. Views southwards from several parts of the settlement are dominated by the steep rising scarp slopes of the South Downs ridge to the southwest of the town. Polegate can also be viewed within the foreground of views from the edges of the South Downs scarp slopes, resulting in high inter-visibility between the town and the South Downs National Park. A ridgeline runs east west through the town.

• **Footpaths/Bridleways:** A network of footpaths and bridleways connects Polegate to its landscape setting. The 1066 Country Walk runs to the south of the town, connecting the settlement within the Levels and settlements to the east and the South Downs to the west. The Cuckoo Trail also joins the northern edge of the town, connecting Polegate with Hailsham and Heathfield to the north.

4.5.12 In addition, key historic environment assets that also contribute to the character of the town include (see Figure 4.5f):

• 1 Registered Historic Park and Garden: Grade II Listed Wootton Manor
• 3 Conservation Areas including: Hellingly, Halisham, and Church Street, Willingdon

Energy & Food

4.5.13 There are no known coppiced woodlands around Hailsham & Polegate that represent a potential source of local fuel.

4.5.14 As shown on Figure 2.4, the quality of agricultural land around the town is mainly Grade 3 (good to moderate).

Water Resources

4.5.15 The Cuckmere River flows around the northern edge of Hailsham and the Pevensey Haven is a major water body to the east of the towns. Smaller water bodies which run through the towns include Puckeridge Stream, Hurst Haven, Drockmill Hill Gut, Wannock Mill Stream, Shinewater Lake, New Stream Ditch and Mill Ditch. Whelpley Sewer, Horse Eye Sewer, Holm Sewer, Glynleigh Sewer, Saltmarsh Sewer, Willingdon Sewer, Willingdon and West Langney Sewer also run through the towns.
FIGURE 4.5f

HAILSHAM & POLEGATE: HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT

KEY

- Registered Historic Park and Garden
- Scheduled Monuments
- Conservation Areas
- Listed Buildings

0 0.5 1 Kilometre
4.5.16  **Table 4.4** below shows the quality of watercourses within or close to Hailsham and Polegate. The majority of watercourses are in good condition for their chemical status. Ecologically most watercourses are in moderate to poor condition.

**Table 4.4: Water Quality around Hailsham and Polegate**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Catchment</th>
<th>Water Quality</th>
<th>Chemical Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ecological Status or Potential</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bad</td>
<td>Poor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper Cuckmere</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Accessible Natural Greenspace & Access Links

4.5.17  Accessible natural greenspace sites in and around Hailsham & Polegate are shown on **Figure 4.5g**. This shows that significant accessible natural greenspace sites are located to the west of Hailsham and Polegate. These include Open Access Land, such as Wilmington Woods at the south-eastern edge of Hailsham and north-west of Polegate. Accessible Natural Greenspace is limited in other directions around Hailsham and Polegate.

4.5.18  Within Hailsham, accessible greenspace is concentrated in the southern part of the urban area. Further north accessible natural greenspace is much more limited. As shown on **Figure 4.5h**, the northern part of the town is deficient in neighbourhood scale accessible natural greenspace. Within Polegate accessible natural greenspace is fairly evenly spread throughout the town, but many of these sites are small. As a result much of Polegate remains deficient in provision at the neighbourhood-scale. Open spaces in and around the towns are shown on **Figure 4.5i** and comprise:

- 8 No. allotments (such as Marshfoot Lane Allotments and Westham Allotments)
- 27 No. amenity greenspaces (such as Land adjacent to Grovelands Primary School and Meadow Road AGS)
- 21 No. churchyards and cemeteries (such as Hailsham Cemetery and St John’s Church, Polegate)
- 18 No. parks and recreation grounds (such as Western Road Recreation Ground, Hailsham and Polegate Pleasure Ground)

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169  As identified and mapped for the Wealden Open Space, Sport and Recreation Study (Ethos for Wealden DC, forthcoming)
FIGURE 4.5h

HAILSHAM & POLEGATE:
ACCESSIBLE NATURAL GREENSPACE ANALYSIS

KEY
- Wealden Local Plan Boundary
- Accessible Natural Greenspace >2ha
- 10km catchment - all accessible natural greenspace >500ha
- 5km catchment - all accessible natural greenspace >100ha
- 2km catchment - all accessible natural greenspace >20ha
- 300m catchment - all accessible natural greenspace >2ha
FIGURE 4.5i
HAILSHAM & POLEGATE: OPEN SPACE TYPOLOGY
As shown on Figure 4.5g, the Hailsham & Polegate area is connected to the surrounding landscape by the following access links that need to be maintained and improved where appropriate:

- Public footpaths between Polegate and key sites such as Shinewater Park and Wilmington Woods.
- Public footpaths between Hailsham and key sites such as Arlington Reservoir and Wilmington Woods.
- Public bridleway between the wider countryside and the Cuckoo Trail.
- The Wealdway long distance promoted route which passes along the northern edge of Hailsham.
- The 1066 Country Walk long distance promoted route which passes through Pevensey Levels and into Polegate.
- National Cycle Network Route 2 running along the coast – this route once complete will run from Dover to St. Austell along the south coast.
- National Cycle Network Route 21 (the Wealdway) – this route runs from Greenwich to Eastbourne.

### Needs and Opportunities

The GI assets that make a significant contribution to the GI network in and around Hailsham & Polegate include a range of biodiversity, landscape and historic environment features; the farmland, woodland and allotments that provide local sources of energy and food; the ‘blue infrastructure’ provided by water resources that support a healthy environment; and the accessible natural greenspaces and access links that contribute to health and well-being. In summary, the key needs and opportunities for the provision of GI in and round the towns are considered to be:

- Where appropriate, promote opportunities for retaining and enhancing existing wildlife habitats, and/or creating new habitats, related to residential development sites around Hailsham & Polegate (see the Wealden Local Plan Sites Landscape and Ecological Assessment Studies for details).
- Opportunities exist to improve the existing urban edges of Hailsham through the provision of new development and GI associated with growth of the town to enhance the surrounding landscape.

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170 Wealden Local Plan Sites Ecological and Landscape Assessment Studies (CBA and TLP for Wealden DC, 2017)
Where appropriate, promote opportunities for landscape enhancements related to residential development sites around Hailsham & Polegate (see the Wealden Local Plan Sites Landscape and Ecological Assessment Studies171 for details).

Opportunities exist within Hailsham to create improved links between development and GI provision, to restore and improve degraded landscapes by increasing woodland areas, protecting landscape features and creating multifunctional green networks focussed on existing tree belts and hedgerows connected to the Cuckoo Trail green corridor.

Some of Polegate's rural landscape has been degraded by urban fringe pressures including urban fringe uses and commercial development. The relatively recent road development at Cophall roundabout to the west of the town has also resulted in the loss of landscape structure.

Opportunities exist to strengthen Polegate's landscape structure and mitigate the visual impact of the A27 through the provision of open space and the creation of multifunctional green networks.

Seek opportunities to provide better access links between development and green spaces around Polegate through the provision of access routes, and to enhance the landscape in respect of the setting of the South Downs National Park.

Where appropriate address the need to improve pedestrian access within Hailsham town. Consider how these improvements might be an opportunity to deliver additional multiple benefits in the town such as through incorporating tree planting to improve access for wildlife, drainage, and address poor air quality, whilst improving the experience of walking through green corridors within the town.

Where appropriate to do so, promote and encourage the use of best practice innovative architectural and planning solutions that take inspiration from local distinctiveness and character.

Where appropriate, seek to improve water quality and manage local flood risk through promoting the use of SuDS, green roofs and rain gardens for example, particularly within new housing developments.

Explore opportunities to promote gardening for wildlife and growing food within existing and new residential areas.

Where appropriate, seek opportunities to safeguard and enhance existing wildlife sites in and around Hailsham and Polegate and through sensitive management improve their overall condition.

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171 Wealden Local Plan Sites Ecological and Landscape Assessment Studies (CBA and TLP for Wealden DC, 2017)