

Worthing Local Plan

# 3 Spatial Strategy

3.1 The presumption in favour of sustainable development established in this Plan means that the Council must plan for and support sustainable growth that seeks to meet identified needs, particularly the needs for housing. However, the NPPF also requires local authorities to take account of the different roles and character of their area. When considering the most appropriate spatial strategy for Worthing, national guidance is clear in that:

- the intrinsic character of the countryside should be recognised;
- heritage assets should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance;
- patterns of growth should be managed so that development is focussed in locations which are, or can be made, sustainable;
- previously developed land should be reused effectively;
- full account should be taken of flood risk and coastal change;
- adequate infrastructure is delivered alongside development;
- allocations of land for development should prefer land of lesser environmental value - this will help to conserve and enhance the natural environment.

3.2 Therefore, although national planning guidance places a very strong emphasis on meeting development needs within Local Plans, this must be balanced against other considerations. Ultimately, this informs the level of development that can be delivered in a sustainable manner. In turn, this 'balance' influences the overall spatial strategy.

### Sub-Regional Context

3.3 The spatial strategy for Worthing also needs to respond to the sub-regional planning context. In this regard, a key document is the second version of the Local Strategic Statement (LSS2) which has been produced by the Coastal West Sussex authorities together with Brighton & Hove City Council to provide the sub-regional context for delivering sustainable growth for the period 2015-2031. The Statement, which was signed off by the Strategic Planning Board in 2016, sets out the long term strategic objectives and spatial priorities for the coastal authorities to be addressed through a coordinated approach across the area in terms of planning and investment. It sets the following strategic objectives for the area:



**Delivering Sustainable Economic Growth** - to promote regeneration in the coastal towns and support the employment needs of the area;



**Meeting Strategic Housing Needs** - by the constituent authorities working proactively together and with their partners to meet housing needs;



**Investing in Infrastructure** - to address deficits in capacity and to facilitate growth;



**Managing Environmental Assets and Natural Resources** - by managing growth, whilst at the same time protecting the designated ecological, and landscape assets.

- 3.4 LSS2 sets out a number of spatial priorities for the different parts of the sub-region. Spatial Priority 4, that relates to Worthing, seeks to deliver infrastructure and transport improvements required to help stimulate and maximise investment opportunities in the town centre. Priorities include: regeneration of the seafront; improved levels of accessibility and connectivity; regeneration of key gateway sites; increased vitality of the town centre; and the delivery of new employment floorspace at Decoy Farm.
- 3.5 Since the publication of LSS2 the 'geography' of the Strategic Planning Board has been extended and it now represents the local planning authorities of Adur, Arun, Brighton & Hove, Chichester, Crawley, Horsham, Lewes, Mid Sussex, Worthing, together with West Sussex County Council and the South Downs National Park Authority. The Board is currently in the early stages of preparing the third revision to the Local Strategic Statement (LSS3) and there is a clear commitment from all authorities to develop a statement that will develop a long-term and 'deliverable' strategy for the sub-region over the period to 2050. The work being undertaken will explore options for meeting the area's unmet needs for housing, employment and infrastructure. Whilst LSS3 will be a non-statutory strategic planning framework, it will influence all of the constituent Local Plans and will help to guide the future location and delivery of development across the sub-region.
- 3.6 The Strategic Planning Board maintains a close working relationship with the Coast to Capital Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), particularly in relation to the LEP's priorities included in the Strategic Economic Plan. This is achieved through joint working between officers from the local planning authorities and the Partnership's technical support groups. Similarly, there are close links with the Greater Brighton Economic Board, a partnership across the public and private sectors, which grew from the 2014 City Deal. The Greater Brighton City Region is a functional economic area, stretching from Crawley and Gatwick Airport in the north to Lewes in the east and Worthing in the west. The board's ultimate aim is to attract investment to bring jobs and prosperity to the area.

## Local Context

- 3.7 The spatial strategy has also been shaped by a wide range of local evidence including:

- demographic projections and the need to provide for a variety and mix of homes that are needed to support and maintain sustainable communities;
- the need to deliver sites to meet the needs of new and existing businesses and other essential uses;
- the amount of land available and the level of development that could reasonably be built there;
- infrastructure capacity;
- environmental constraints – including flood risk, environmental designations and landscape quality, the historic environment and settlement character;
- representations received during consultation periods; and
- the Sustainability Appraisal of options and policies which also encompasses the Health Impact Assessment and Equalities Impact Assessment.





## Strategy for Worthing

- 3.8 As previously highlighted, the most significant constraining factor when considering future development is land availability. Worthing is tightly constrained and there is little scope to grow beyond the current Built Up Area Boundary without merging with the urban areas of Ferring (to the west) and Sompting/Lancing (to the east) and without damaging the borough's character and environment. Furthermore, the town is relatively compact and there are very few vacant sites or opportunity areas within the existing Built Up Area that could deliver significant levels of growth.
- 3.9 Therefore, the reality is, that when compared to many other local authority areas, there are relatively few options for growth. As a result, in many respects, the spatial strategy taken forward in this Plan is similar to that incorporated within the Worthing Core Strategy (2011) which placed a strong emphasis on regeneration and transforming key previously developed sites within the urban area. This approach reflects the NPPF which encourages local authorities to make as much use as possible of brownfield sites to meet development needs. However, in response to the need to meet as much as possible of the housing need for Worthing, one key change has been the need to now look more positively at potential development options located around the edge of the borough.
- 3.10 The spatial strategy seeks to achieve the right balance between planning positively to meet the town's development needs (particularly for jobs, homes and community facilities) with the continuing need to protect and enhance the borough's high quality environments and open spaces within and around the town. The overarching objective is therefore to maximise appropriate development on brownfield land and add sustainable urban extensions adjacent to the existing urban area. The core principles, set out in the policy below, take account of the characteristics of the borough and provide a clear direction for development in and around the town. The spatial strategy will help to steer new development to the right locations whilst at the same time helping to protect those areas of greatest environmental value / sensitivity.

## SS1 SPATIAL STRATEGY

Up to 2036 delivery of new development in Worthing will be managed as follows:

The Local Plan will:

- a) seek to provide for the needs of local communities and balance the impact of growth through the protection and enhancement of local services and (where appropriate) the safeguarding of employment sites, leisure uses, community facilities, valued green/open spaces and natural resources;
- b) help to deliver wider regeneration objectives, particularly in the town centre and seafront, through the allocation of key urban sites;
- c) seek to increase the rate of housing delivery from small sites.
- d) The strategy for different parts of the Borough is as follows:
  - i) Land within the Built Up Area Boundary - development will be permitted subject to compliance with other policies in the Local Plan. Development should make efficient use of previously developed land but the density of development should be appropriate for its proposed use and also relate well to the surrounding uses and the character of the area. Within the existing urban fabric nine key regeneration sites are allocated for development.
  - ii) Edge Of Town Sites - six edge of town sites are allocated for development.
  - iii) Open Spaces / Countryside / Gaps - valued open space and landscapes outside of the Built Up Area Boundary are protected. This includes important gaps between settlements, the undeveloped coastline and the features which provide connectivity between these areas.

- 3.11 The principles established in the policy above helped to inform the related spatial policies that follow in this section of the Plan. These overarching policies are then supported by more specific policies set out in Chapter 4 (Development Sites) and Chapter 5 (Development Management Policies).

## Developing a Target for Housing Delivery

- 3.12 Historically there has not been a strong relationship between housing targets set for Worthing within regional Plans and the need / demand for new dwellings in the borough. This is because previous targets took account of the development physical and environmental constraints faced by Worthing and were therefore strongly influenced by the capacity of the borough to accommodate new development.

- 3.13 However, the NPPF now requires that local planning authorities meet their full need for both market and affordable housing as far as is consistent with other policies in the Framework. The most up-to-date assessment of objectively assessed housing need (based on the standard method as set out in national planning guidance and the 2014 household projections published in September 2016) is 14,160 dwellings over the Plan period (2020 to 2036) which currently equates to 885 dwellings per annum. Further information as to how this figure has been calculated (and capped) is set out in the Housing Implementation Strategy.

- 3.14 Worthing's current minimum level of identified housing need for the plan period (885 dwellings per annum) is a much higher level of housing delivery than the borough has previously planned for or delivered. To put this into context, the Core Strategy (2011) set a housing requirement of 200 dwellings per annum and the average annual delivery rate since 2006 has been 306 dwellings (which includes a significant level of housing delivered on a large greenfield site at West Durrington).

- 3.15 In line with the NPPF, the Council has sought to plan positively to establish whether housing delivery could be increased significantly to help close the gap between the level of identified need and recent delivery levels.

- 3.16 The Council's Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) has provided the mechanism through which the quantity and suitability of land potentially available for housing development has been determined. In order to maximise the use of previously developed land the Government also requires all local authorities to publish a Brownfield Register annually and this has also helped to inform the Council's development strategy.

- 3.17 Broadly, there are two forms of site allocated for development. The first are previously developed sites within the urban area (brownfield sites). These nine allocations present the best opportunity to deliver positive change and renewal within the existing built-up area boundary as they are already well served by sustainable transport and infrastructure. The redevelopment of the majority of these sites, particularly those in the town centre, has been embedded with a range of documents and strategies over a number of years. Work to deliver these opportunities has gathered pace in recent times and their regeneration continues to be a corporate priority that also helps to meet some sub-regional objectives set out in the Local Strategic Statement.





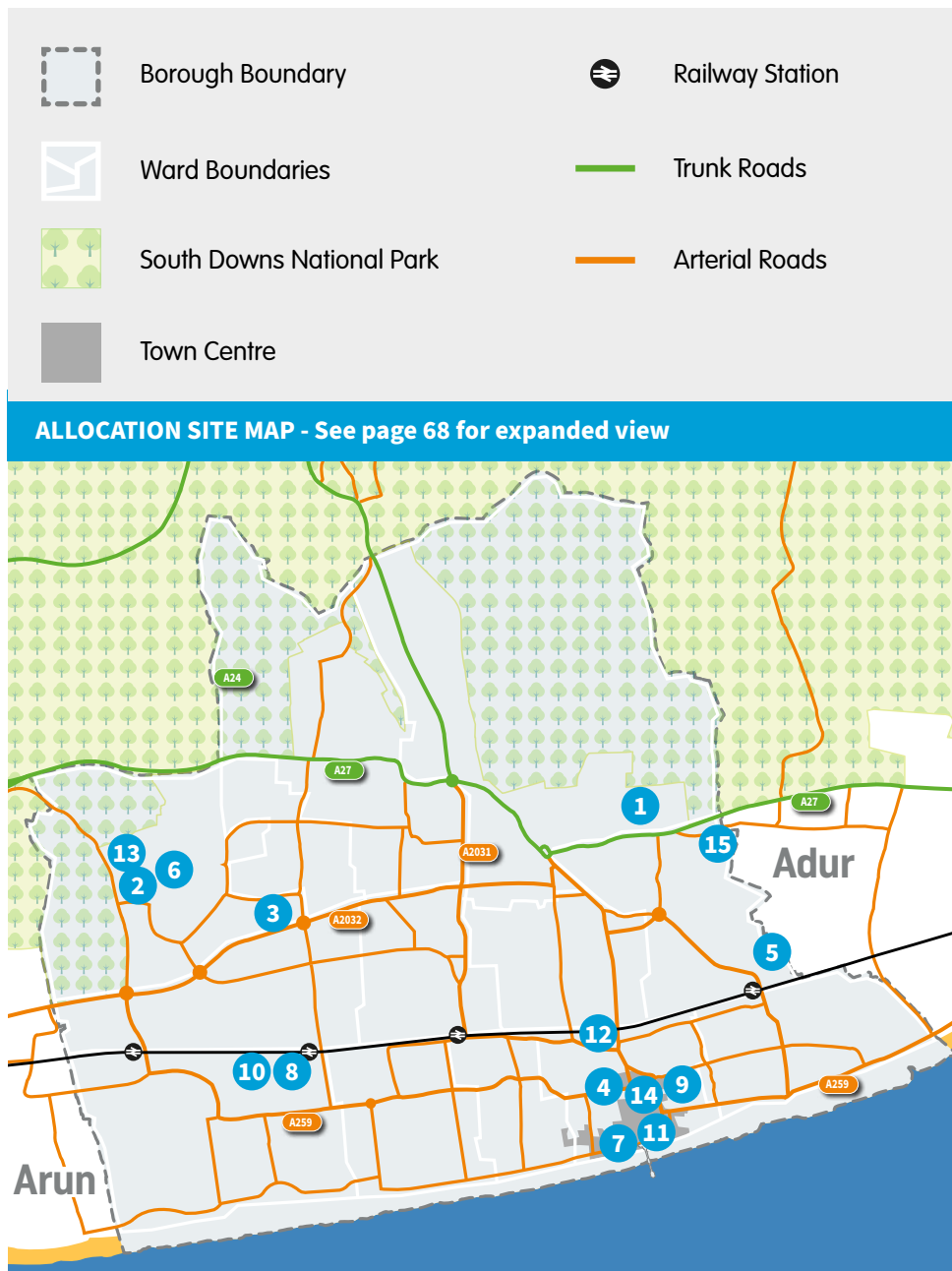
- 3.18 Given the levels of development needed and the requirement to plan positively to meet housing needs, brownfield sites alone are not sufficient. Therefore, the other type of site allocated for development are those located on the edge of the town. The Sustainability Appraisal together with associated evidence studies (including biodiversity, flood risk, accessibility, landscape and infrastructure capacity) were used to assess all potential sources including edge of town sites (most of which are greenfield). The conclusion of this comprehensive assessment has resulted in the allocation of six sites on the edge of Worthing which will contribute towards meeting some of the borough's development needs. The proximity of these development sites adjacent to existing urban areas will allow for integration with existing communities and will provide access to nearby facilities, services, and public transport. The built up area boundary will be amended to incorporate these sites.
- 3.19 Robust evidence has also demonstrated that there are areas on the edge of town that are not suitable for development and this has helped to inform the Spatial Strategy and associated Policies SS4 (Countryside and Undeveloped Coast), SS5 (Local Green Gaps) and SS6 (Local Green Spaces) below.
- 3.20 In addition to the sites allocated in this Plan it is expected that small sites will play a greater role in housing delivery. As such, the Council supports well-designed new homes on small sites in order to:
- increase the contribution of small sites (under 10 dwellings) to meeting Worthing's housing needs;
  - diversify the sources, locations, type and mix of housing supply;
  - support small and medium-sized housebuilders; and
  - support those wishing to bring forward custom and self-build housing.

- 3.21 In addition to the allocations referred to above, housing land supply figures include ‘windfalls’ which are sites that deliver development but that have not been specifically identified in the Local Plan. An explanation as to how this figure is calculated can be found in the Council’s Housing Implementation Strategy. Other sources of supply include recent completions and commitments (sites with planning permission including developments that have commenced but not yet completed). These are summarised and incorporated within the table below:

| SOURCES OF HOUSING SUPPLY (2020-2036)                         | NUMBER OF DWELLINGS |
|---|---------------------|
| Commitments   | 909                 |
| Windfalls   | 871                 |
| SHLAA Sites (not including those incorporated as allocations) | 139                 |
| Local Plan Allocations  | 1753                |
| HOUSING SUPPLY (From all sources 2020 - 2036)                 | 3672                |
| ANNUAL TARGET (2020 - 2036)                                   | 230                 |

## Other Development Needs

- 3.22 Although the delivery of housing provides a key focus of this Plan, it is vital that other uses such as commercial, community and leisure facilities are not overlooked. A number of the development sites listed in the policy below will help to contribute towards meeting some of these needs. Related policies in Chapter 5 will also seek to protect and improve these uses.
- 3.23 The strategy is to plan positively for sustainable economic growth, promoting and enhancing the economic role of the town and guiding its role within the wider sub-region. The Local Plan will help to achieve this by establishing a clear policy framework that facilitates growth and helps to meet quantitative and qualitative demand for all types of economic activity over the Plan period. The Council’s Economic Research and Employment Land Review (2016 & 2020 update), the Retail & Town Centre Uses Study (2017 & 2020 update) and other related studies have informed the policy context in this Plan and provide the robust evidence base in regard to sectors or locations where employment uses are to be promoted or protected.
- 3.24 The research undertaken to inform this Plan has highlighted the need to retain employment premises and land in the borough. In addition, the study recommends planning to accommodate a minimum of 32,000 sqm (or 6.8ha) employment floorspace, with the need roughly split for office space (9,000 sqm) and warehousing and distribution (23,000 sqm). The Council’s Retail Study estimates a need to provide a maximum of 9,200 sqm of comparison floorspace (non-food) and 1,250 sqm of convenience retail (food) to 2026. As with housing, the lack of suitable development sites around the borough means that the delivery of the employment and commercial needs identified in these studies will be very challenging. However, a number of the development sites outlined below provide an opportunity for mixed use development and one site, Decoy Farm, provides an opportunity to deliver a significant extension to the town’s main industrial estate.



## SS2 SITE ALLOCATIONS

During the period 2020-2036

- a) a minimum of 3,672 dwellings (net) will be delivered in Worthing.  
The following allocations will make a significant contribution to this figure.
- b) a minimum of 28,000 sqm of employment floorspace (industrial and warehousing) and 10,000 sqm of commercial (retail and leisure) floorspace will be provided

| WLP Ref      | SITE                          | DWELLINGS    | MAIN OTHER USES<br>(APPROXIMATE FLOORSPACE)                |
|--------------|-------------------------------|--------------|--|
| A1           | Beeches Avenue                | 90           | N/A  |
| A2           | Caravan Club, Titnore Way     | 100          | N/A  |
| A3           | Centenary House               | 250          | 10,000 sqm - Office space (part re-provided)               |
| A4           | Civic Centre, Stoke Abbott Rd | 0            | 7,000 sqm - Integrated health hub                          |
| A5           | Decoy Farm                    | 0            | 18,000 sqm - Industrial / Warehousing                      |
| A6           | Fulbeck Avenue                | 120          | N/A  |
| A7           | Grafton                       | 150          | 2,500 sqm - Commercial / Leisure / Retail                  |
| A8           | HMRC Offices, Barrington Rd   | 250          | Care home / Sheltered accommodation                        |
| A9           | Lyndhurst Rd                  | 150          | N/A  |
| A10          | Martlets Way                  | 0            | 10,000 sqm Industrial / Warehousing                        |
| A11          | Stagecoach, Marine Parade     | 60           | 2,000 sqm Commercial / Leisure                             |
| A12          | Teville Gate                  | 250          | 4,000 sqm - Commercial / Leisure / Retail and 80 bed hotel |
| A13          | Titnore Lane                  | 60           | N/A  |
| A14          | Union Place                   | 150          | 700 sqm - commercial / 90 room hotel / cinema extension    |
| A15          | Upper Brighton Rd             | 123          | N/A  |
| <b>TOTAL</b> |                               | <b>1,753</b> |  |



### Overall Development Capacity

- 3.25 The delivery rates set out above indicate that a realistic housing capacity figure for the borough from 2020 to 2036 is a minimum of 3,672 dwellings. This housing target is a 'capacity-based' / 'policy-on' figure based on the level of housing that can be delivered within the Plan period, having regard to the identified constraints and development capacity.
- 3.26 Taking the above into account, the Plan sets an average minimum housing target of 230 homes per annum to be achieved by 2036. As explained further within the Housing Implementation Strategy, this is a target that is significantly higher (15%) than the levels of growth planned for within the Worthing Core Strategy. This, in part, reflects the positive actions taken by the Council to facilitate and support development in the borough. This increase beyond previous targets represents a challenging but realistic level of housing development that takes a positive approach to the allocation of sustainable sites whilst also providing the appropriate balance between meeting development needs and protecting the environment and character of the borough.
- 3.27 It is clear however that, despite taking a positive approach to development, the delivery rate for housing will fall significantly below the levels of housing need identified (14,160 dwellings). Approximately 26% of the overall housing need will be met and this would result in a shortfall in housing delivery over the Plan period of 10,488 dwellings. Whilst acknowledging that this is a very high level of unmet need the Council has robust evidence to demonstrate how all options to reduce this figure and increase the rate of development have been exhausted. Put simply, the tightly drawn boundary around the borough and lack of available land means that there is simply no way that a higher proportion of development needs can be delivered in a sustainable manner.

### Duty To Co-operate

- 3.28 The fact that not all of Worthing's identified development needs will be met within the borough places great importance on Duty to Co-operate considerations. For this reason, the Council has been working with other local authorities across the sub-region to address key strategic matters. Whilst positive progress has been made, it is evident that currently only a very small proportion of the borough's shortfall might be met elsewhere in the sub-region.
- 3.29 A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) / Statement of Common Ground (SOCG) has been signed by all the authorities represented within the Sussex Coast Housing Market Area (as well as the West Sussex authorities of Crawley, Horsham and Mid Sussex). This commits the authorities to continue to engage constructively, actively and on an ongoing basis with other local authorities and organisations to address sub-regional issues and to work together to explore longer-term solutions for housing delivery. More information can be found in the Duty to Co-operate Statement which accompanies this Plan.

### Worthing Town Centre

- 3.30 Significant constraints and limited options for growth requires a Local Plan response that maximises the opportunities for appropriate development within the most sustainable locations. Worthing's main Town Centre and associated seafront offer one of the greatest opportunities for major redevelopment and change. The area incorporates a number of key regeneration sites that provide an opportunity to deliver housing alongside identified floorspace needs for retail and other town centres uses and experiences. For these reasons the Plan includes this specific Spatial Policy.
- 3.31 Worthing town centre is the largest area in a hierarchy of centres across the borough serving the needs of our local communities. It provides a focus for retail, leisure, tourism, cultural and community activities and is an important economic driver providing employment and business opportunities. It also has a large residential population, located in a highly accessible location that helps to support sustainable modes of living and working.

- 3.32 The NPPF acknowledges that town centres are at the heart of communities and it advocates the ‘town centre first’ approach that requires planning policies to positively promote competitive town centre environments and manage the growth of centres over the plan period. At the sub-regional level the Coastal West Sussex & Greater Brighton Local Strategic Statement (LSS2) seeks to deliver infrastructure and transport improvements required to help stimulate and maximise investment opportunities in Worthing town centre.
- 3.33 Town Centres and high streets have always faced challenges, but the scale and complexity of the issues and challenges faced over the last few years may have the most profound impact to date. The growth of internet shopping and general retail trends have changed the way we shop and therefore the role of our centres and high streets. That is without factoring in the impact of the recent Covid 19 pandemic along with recent changes to planning regulations that may make managing changes within our towns to meet local aspirations much more challenging. It could be argued the Covid 19 pandemic has accelerated these changes.
- 3.34 Evidence demonstrates that, compared to similar towns, Worthing Town Centre has fared relatively well in recent years but it is now clear a step change is required to retain the centre as the ‘heart’ of the town. The Council has proactively responded to the challenges presented and, for example, a significant amount of progress has already been made to improve public realm through the preparation of a public realm strategy to encourage a more ‘walkable’ town centre. In addition, there are plans to further enhance open spaces for public events to increase the level of activity within the Town Centre providing opportunities for a range of activities such as markets and entertainment that will draw people into the town. This Local Plan has a key part to play in achieving the corporate objectives to renew and reimagine our town centre.
- 3.35 Whilst retail is still a relevant and important element of any town centre strategy, evidence is clear that to be successful it now needs to offer a much wider range of uses. The town centre has to become more multi-dimensional and to offer an ‘experience’ for visitors who are increasingly seeking to combine retail and leisure activities as part of a single ‘going out’ trip, something that the internet is unable to match. This might include for example, specialist markets, independent cinemas, street food and seasonal events. It needs to be a genuine hub for the community and to offer vibrant social, commercial and cultural destinations. In addition, town centre living not only provides much needed homes in a sustainable living location but it also helps increase vitality in town centres helping them to become more resilient.
- 3.36 The Council’s corporate aspirations to support the renewal and reimagining of the Town Centre are set out within a number of key strategies and plans. Recently, in response to the Covid -19 pandemic, the Council has reaffirmed its commitment to the Town Centre whilst also recognising that it needs to ‘act fast and differently’ given the even greater challenges it now faces. Some of the overarching aspirations for the Town Centre are outlined in the list below. Some of the key elements are then incorporated within the graphic that follows:
- Retail - continue to support retail as valuable use but as part of a wider mix of uses.
  - Encouraging alternative uses - support a mix of uses that support both daytime and evening economies to encourage activity and vibrancy throughout the day.
  - New Creative uses - support the creation of spaces for new business taking advantage of the attractions of the town centre location.

- A Place to Work - the town centre is home to a wide range of jobs and is a key economic driver for the borough. Support the provision of new flexible space and establish digital opportunities within the town centre to retain and attract new business and investment.
- Town Centre Living - an aspiration to increase the amount of residential development will help increase vitality, activity and footfall and enable regeneration. Increasing densities in sustainable locations, as part of well designed schemes, will help ensure that the most efficient use of land is made.
- A Smart Town Centre - to deliver digital opportunities within the Town Centre to benefit business, residents and visitors.
- Seafront Attractors - to realise the ambition to improve linkages between the town's main shopping area and the seafront. To deliver the Seafront Investment Plan which supports vibrant active uses that encourage people to stay and dwell.
- Enhance Cultural offer - build on the town's wealth of cultural venues to create local distinctiveness and vibrancy. Maintain a strong support for cultural development of the town and the creation of new opportunities such as the proposed additional cinema provision for the Connaught Theatre.
- Heritage - conservation and heritage assets, such as the iconic Pier, play a key role in creating the distinctiveness of the town centre. The approach seeks to protect and enhance and proactively promote the town's history to improve the visitor experience.
- Public Realm - a strategy of improvements to the public realm will help to enhance the town centre; promote its distinct offer; encourage dwell time; and to increase activity and promote sustainable travel.

- Community Uses - bringing community uses within the town centre is encouraged and supported. Current projects include an integrated health-hub and the transformation of the library into a community hub bringing together library, registration services and children's & youth services.
- A Place for Events - supporting a strong programme of events with regular markets/festivals etc will create a 'draw' to the town centre and provide more for visitors and residents to do and see throughout the day and the year.
- Green and Open Spaces - retaining and enhancing valued greenspaces, promenade and beach to offer space for people to enjoy nature, provide for active event spaces and play a key role in delivering a 'livable' town centre.
- Visitor Economy - encouraging the provision of a wide range of visitor attractions and but also places people want to stay, to support both tourism and business. As part of the 'Time for Worthing' place brand the Council are actively promoting the area as an attractive place to 'Invest, Live and Discover'.
- Family friendly - help ensure that the town centre is welcoming to all sectors of our community, providing a safe friendly environment that encourages all ages to visit. This will be achieved through improvements to the physical environment and by encouraging the right uses and activities.
- Accessibility - aim to improve the accessibility and legibility in and around the town centre. Improve the experience of cyclists and users of public transport together with a car parking strategy to improve the quality of the town's parking spaces.

### 3 Spatial Strategy







### Development Sites

1. **A12** - Teville Gate
2. **A4** - Civic Centre, Stoke Abbott Road
3. **A14** - Union Place
4. **A9** - Lyndhurst Road
5. **A7** - Grafton
6. **A11** - Stagecoach, Marine Parade



Important Greenspaces



Parking Upgrades



### Public Realm improvements

Planned Projects



Potential Future Projects

### Transport Links



Arterial Road



Walking and Cycling Network



Key Town Centre Gateways



### Character Areas

1. Teville Gate
2. Chapel Road North
3. High Street
4. Chapel Road Cultural & Civic Quarter
5. Chapel Road South
6. Warwick Street/Brighton Road
7. South Street
8. Montague Street
9. Rowlands Road

## Spatial Approach for the Town Centre

- 3.37 Enabling our town centres to be places that people want to live in, work in and visit is more than just the collection of uses within them. It's about creating places that encourage investors to invest and that people want to spend time in. This Policy therefore provides a spatial expression for the policies contained elsewhere in this plan and forms part of the overall approach to development within the Town Centre. It has a key role in supporting the delivery of those wider corporate and partner aspirations by seeking to manage and steer change, where possible, to the most suitable locations.
- 3.38 The Policy sets out the key overarching development principles for the Town Centre and associated seafront, it is the starting point against which all proposed development in these areas will be assessed. In conjunction with other key policies it will ensure that the types of uses and activities that best meet the aspirations and vision for the Town Centre are realised. It seeks to maximise the opportunities presented by the town centre locations and supports the allocation of appropriate sites to deliver identified development needs. This will build on what's already special about the town and exploit its 'unique selling points' including its seafront setting, historic and cultural assets, green spaces and burgeoning creative sector and digital sectors. In turn, this will strengthen the Town Centre as a location for shopping, leisure, community, culture, business and enhance its tourist appeal. This coordinated but flexible approach will ensure that the Town Centre is distinctive, safe, vibrant, green and colourful - a great place to live, work, do business, enjoy and visit.
- 3.39 This policy helps to guide the interpretation of a number of the allocations that are located in or close to the main town centre (Chapter 4). In addition, it is also the starting point for applying the detailed Development Management policies in Chapter 5, particularly:

DM6 PUBLIC REALM

DM12 THE VISITOR ECONOMY

DM13 RETAIL AND TOWN CENTRE USES

DM14 DIGITAL INFRASTRUCTURE

## SS3 TOWN CENTRE

- To ensure that Worthing Town Centre continues to fulfil its sub-regional role, it is important to provide development that meets both quantitative and qualitative needs. New retail, leisure, office and other town centre use development will therefore, usually be directed to the Town Centre.
- Improving and increasing the mix of uses in the Town Centre particularly retail, employment, community, residential, leisure, recreation, cultural and tourist facilities through maximising development around key development sites and through the more efficient use of existing sites.
- Making it easier and more convenient to move around and spend time in the Town Centre by identifying key public realm enhancements, opportunities for new public spaces and improving sustainable movement patterns particularly pedestrian, cycle and public transport provision.
- Establishing a stronger Town Centre identity and structure by reinforcing and improving the interrelationship between key locations including the railway station, the shopping areas, and the seafront, and making the Town Centre more cohesive and legible.
- Ensuring that the Town Centre and seafront are one integrated and linked destination. Active and vibrant uses along the key Town Centre seafront area will be supported.
- Delivering development, which has high architectural, urban design and environmental performance and sustainability standards.

## Land Outside of the Built Up Area Boundary

- 3.40 Although Worthing is primarily an urban area it does contain important open areas including the South Downs to the north, the undeveloped coast to the south, gaps between settlements to the west and east and a multi-functional green infrastructure network. As the population density of Worthing increases, the demand for and use of parks, open spaces and green infrastructure throughout the borough will increase. The Plan will protect and enhance these assets and provide new green spaces within development to promote health and well-being in our communities.
- 3.41 The spatial strategy seeks to manage the pattern of development by identifying the Built Up Area Boundary within which development can be sustainably located. To ensure that the most valued and sensitive land/seascapes are protected, and that the existing character of Worthing is maintained, all land outside the Built Up Area Boundary will be designated as ‘countryside and undeveloped coast’ to protect landscape and coastal character including its environmental and recreational value. In addition some areas outside the Built Up Area Boundary are also designated as:
- Local Gap - to preserve Worthing’s character and identity by preventing settlement coalescence; and/or
  - Local Green Space - to protect green areas of particular importance to the local communities they serve.
- 3.42 The allocation of some edge of town sites will result in some parts of the previous Built Up Area Boundary (Core Strategy 2011) being amended.

## The Countryside

- 3.43 A significant amount of land (24.1%) in Worthing borough falls within the South Downs National Park, all of which lies outside the Built Up Area Boundary. It is a nationally important resource because of its distinctive landscape, wildlife, cultural heritage, and opportunities for recreation. Whilst the South Downs National Park Authority took on planning responsibility for the Park in 2011, Worthing Borough Council must still consider whether development within the Worthing Local Plan area could adversely affect the National Park or its setting, including its status as an International Dark Skies Reserve.
- 3.44 The South Downs National Park Authority is a statutory consultee for development which is likely to affect land in the National Park. The Council will continue to work with the Park Authority on issues that affect Worthing, particularly where development may impact on views, the setting of the Park or where opportunities exist to improve access to the South Downs.
- 3.45 Outside of the National Park, there are small pockets of countryside that represent a very small and finite resource that is valued for its open space, respite from intense urban activity, and intrinsic character. Therefore, the countryside should be protected and enhanced, particularly in terms of the additional benefits it can offer through agriculture, green infrastructure (for example to biodiversity and flood management/storage) and informal recreation such as cycling, walking, horse-riding and other Non-Motorised Users (NMUs). Given the limited amount of countryside in Worthing, it is important that the few uses that may be allowed in the countryside genuinely require a countryside location; cannot be located within the Built Up Area Boundary and maintain its rural character.

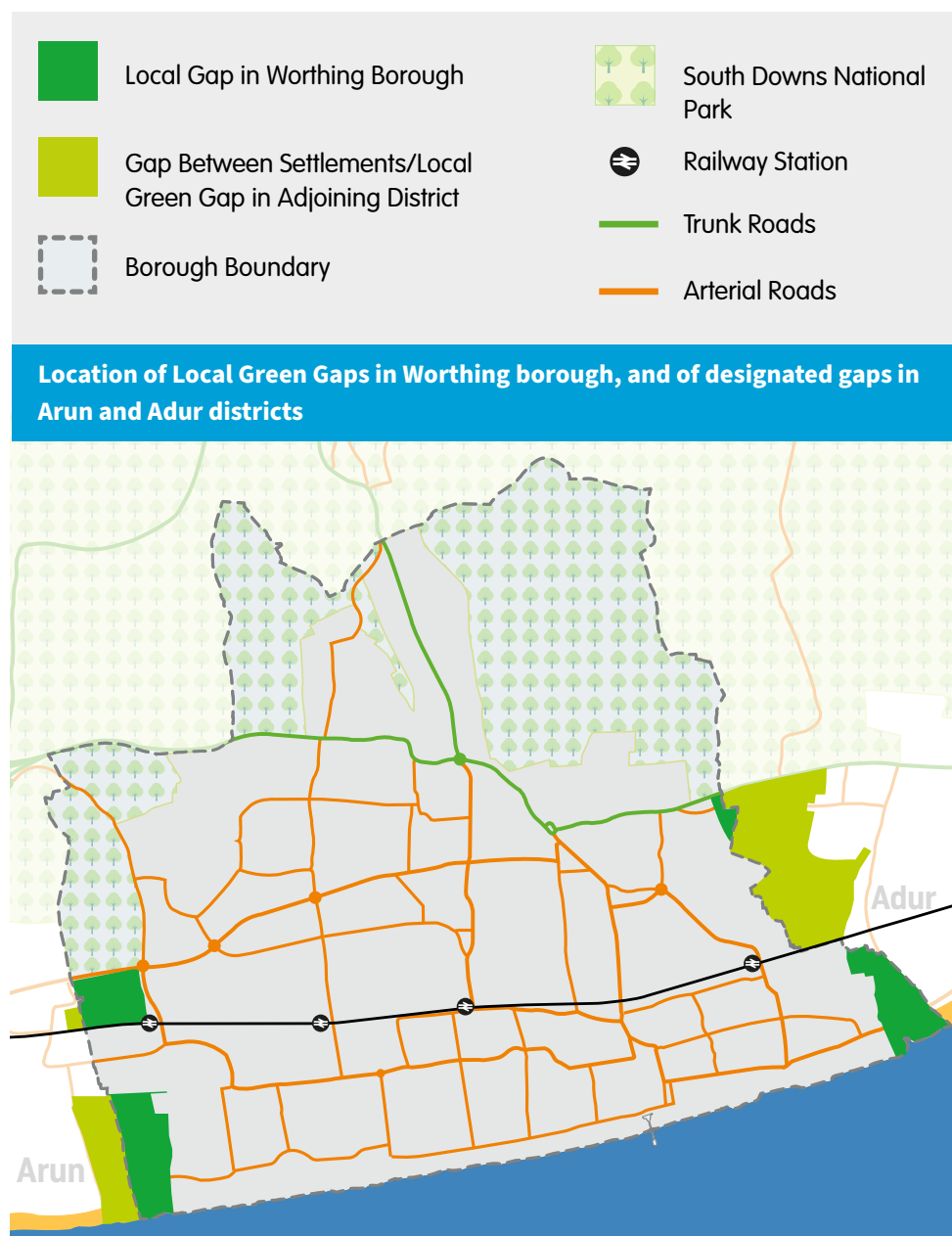
## The Undeveloped Coast

- 3.46 Worthing's coastline and beaches are valuable because the shingle beaches are sea defences that are important for shoreline management. The coastal waters and beaches contain important marine habitats including shallow reefs and areas of vegetated shingle. Furthermore, they are used for active pursuits, such as watersports, and for informal recreation. Any development on Worthing's coastline and beaches is likely to jeopardise their function and value. They will therefore remain outside the built-up area.
- 3.47 The coastal habitats are one of Worthing's key environmental assets and opportunities to protect and enhance the area will be sought as part of any development proposals in the seafront area. Marine planning has important links and interactions with land use planning as the intertidal zone between high water and low water mark is covered by both planning systems. The South Marine Plan (which includes Worthing) was adopted in July 2018. Decisions that might or will affect the marine area will now need to take appropriate consideration of the relevant marine planning documents, including the South Marine Plan under the terms set out in the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 (section 58).
- 3.48 The use of the beaches for sport and recreation is generally supported, however permanent built facilities required to support recreational uses should usually be located within the adjacent Built Up Area and be of a design appropriate to the character of the area. In considering any proposal for new recreation or ancillary facilities, flood risk and the need to maintain and improve sea defences will be taken into account.
- 3.49 The coastline south of the Built Up Area Boundary, excluding that defined as countryside, will be defined as undeveloped coast for the purposes of this policy.

## SS4 COUNTRYSIDE AND UNDEVELOPED COAST

- a) Outside of the Built Up Area Boundary land will be defined as 'countryside and undeveloped coast'.
- b) Development in the countryside will be permitted, where a countryside location is essential to the proposed use, it cannot be located within the Built Up Area Boundary, and it maintains its character and function for natural resources.
- c) Development to support recreation uses on the coast will normally be permitted subject to:
  - i. built facilities being located within the adjacent Built Up Area Boundary;
  - ii. the need to maintain and improve sea defences.
- d) Any development in the countryside and undeveloped coast should not result in a level of activity that has an adverse impact on the character or biodiversity of the area.
- e) Improvements to green infrastructure, including (but not restricted to) enhanced pedestrian, cycle, equestrian access, and better access for those with mobility difficulties will be supported.
- f) The setting of the South Downs National Park and the Designated International Dark Skies Reserve must be respected and opportunities to improve access to the National Park will be sought through joint working with other organisations including the Park Authority, West Sussex County Council, Highways England and landowners.





## Local Green Gaps

3.50 The designation and protection of 'Local Green Gaps' helps to avoid coalescence and preserve the separate characters and identities of different settlements by providing physical and visual breaks. This is particularly important given the compact nature of Worthing and how few and fragile the breaks in development are on the coastal strip between Brighton and Chichester.

3.51 Four areas are designated as 'Local Green Gaps' - two between Worthing and Ferring to the west:

- Goring-Ferring Gap;
- Chatsmore Farm;

and two between Worthing and Lancing/Sompting to the east:

- Brooklands Recreation Area and adjoining allotments;
- Land east of Upper Brighton Road (see Allocation A15).

3.52 These areas are open and either undeveloped or a managed landscape for recreational use. They create a sense of travelling between urban areas and form a critically important component of Worthing's landscape setting. The designation of these areas as 'gaps' has been informed by the Council's evidence base (particularly the Landscape & Ecology Study) and supported by a high proportion of respondents at each consultation stage. The associated Topic Paper provides detailed information of the history of the gaps and how they have previously been protected through planning policy.

3.53 Neighbouring authorities have similarly sought to protect these gaps. The western gaps are contiguous with gaps in Arun district which will be protected through Policy SD SP3 'Gaps Between Settlements' of the Arun Local Plan (2018). The eastern gaps are contiguous with gaps in Adur district which are protected through Policy 14: Local Green Gaps of the Adur Local Plan (2017). At the sub-regional level the Coastal West Sussex & Greater Brighton Local Strategic Statement (LSS2) includes a strategic

objective to protect and enhance the character and distinctiveness of individual settlements. Therefore, Worthing's approach to protecting these areas is part of a strategic approach shared with adjoining authorities that are concerned to address the same issues of preventing settlement coalescence and protecting settlement identity.

## SS5 LOCAL GREEN GAPS

The four areas listed below are designated as Local Green Gaps between the settlements of Worthing & Ferring and Worthing & Sompting/Lancing, and will be protected in order to retain the separate identities and character of these settlements.

- a) Goring-Ferring Gap;
- b) Chatsmore Farm;
- c) Brooklands Recreation Area and abutting allotments; and
- d) Land east of proposed development (site A15) at Upper Brighton Road.

Development within these Gaps will be carefully controlled and will only be permitted in exceptional circumstances. Any development must be consistent with other policies in this Plan and ensure (individually or cumulatively):

- i) it does not lead to the coalescence of settlements;
- ii) it is unobtrusive and does not detract from the openness of the area;
- iii) it conserves and enhances the benefits and services derived from the area's Natural Capital; and
- iv) it conserves and enhances the area as part of a cohesive green infrastructure network.

## Local Green Space

3.54 The NPPF introduced Local Green Space designation as a mechanism for local communities to identify and protect green spaces which are of particular importance to them. It provides special protection equivalent to that afforded by the Green Belt. The designation should only be used where the land is not extensive, is local in character and reasonably close to the community it serves. It must also be demonstrably special, for example because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value, tranquillity or wildlife.

3.55 There are three areas that the Council has designated as Local Green Spaces: Goring-Ferring Gap; Chatsmore Farm; and the Brooklands Recreation Area.

3.56 The first two areas have been proposed for designation by the local community. Brooklands Recreation Area has been added as the area has recently attracted a growing and active 'friends of Brooklands' community group and there is considerable interest in the development of a long-term management plan for the park. All three areas were assessed by a landscape consultant on behalf of the Council to determine their potential for designation as Local Green Space (June 2018) and were found to fully meet the NPPF criteria for designation. A brief summary of each Gap is set out below - further detailed information on all aspects can be found within the associated Topic Paper.

## Goring-Ferring Gap

3.57 The Goring-Ferring Gap, that comprises flat arable fields, provides a valued break in the coastal conurbation and a visual connection between the undeveloped coastline and the South Downs National Park to the north. The Goring Residents' Association and the Ilex Conservation Group (with the support of the Ferring Conservation Group, Ferring Parish Council and Ward Councillors) presented information in support of its request to designate this gap as Local Green Space. It is valued for its historic associations, views, wildlife, (it is a designated Local Wildlife Site), and opportunities to bird-watch, stargaze and enjoy quiet recreation.

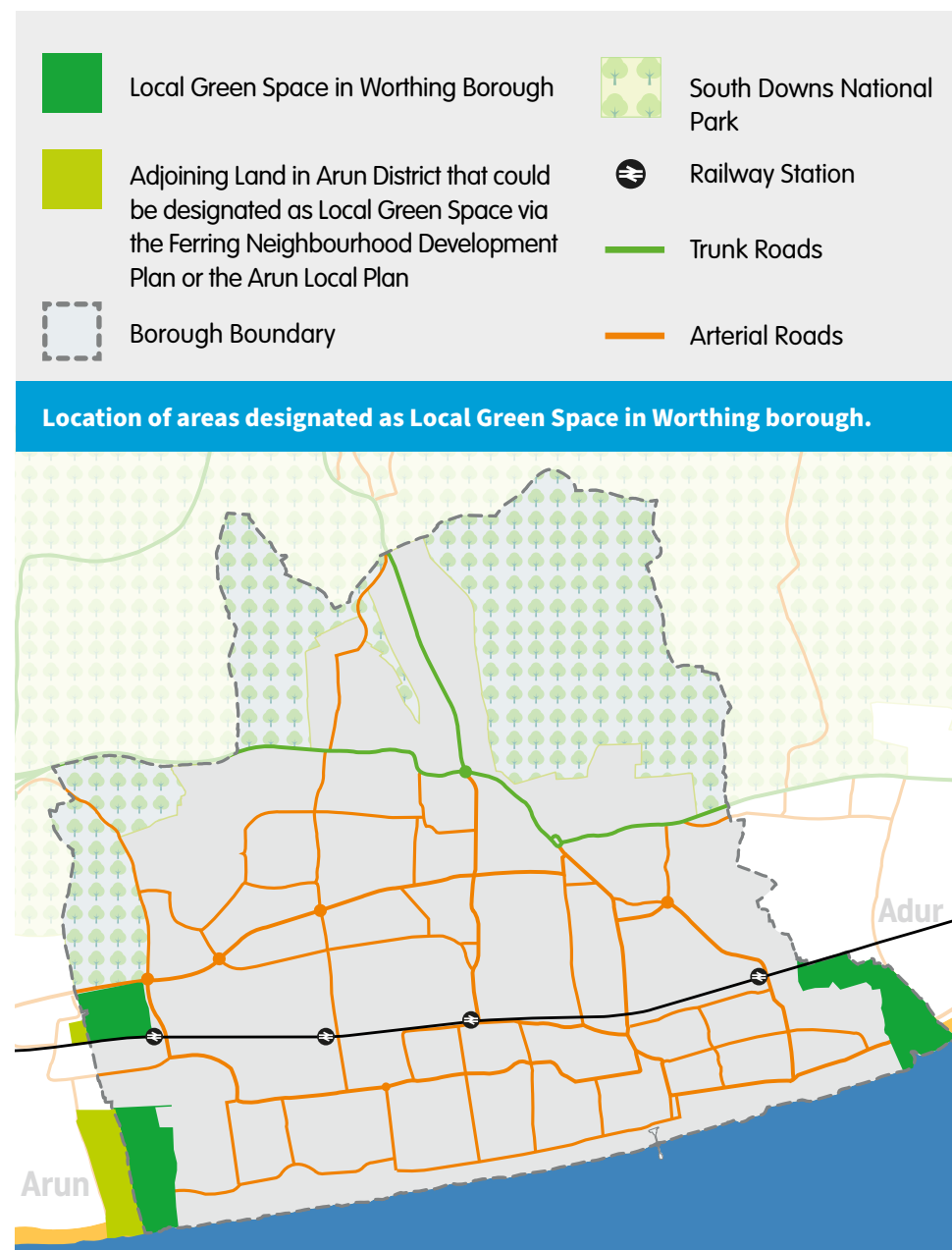
It is also recognised for the relative tranquility it affords in an otherwise heavily built up area. On the matter of landscape sensitivity, in the wider context it should be noted that this Gap covers 33 hectares in Worthing Borough and adjoins 29 hectares in Arun District. Of the sites assessed within Arun to support the development of their Local Plan this gap was shown as being the most sensitive in nature.

### Chatsmore Farm

- 3.58 Chatsmore Farm, that covers 28 hectares in Worthing and 2 hectares in Arun, comprises arable fields with the Ferring Rife flowing east to west crossing the middle of the site. The Goring Residents' Association's request to designate the green space between Goring and Ferring included this area. The request highlighted its historic associations, wildlife and recreational value, and its offer as a haven of relative calm within the urban area. In addition, the land is in the setting of the South Downs National Park and the Grade II\* Registered Park and Garden 'Highdown Garden' which lie to the north.

### Brooklands Recreation Area

- 3.59 The 30 hectare Brooklands Recreation Area, located on the eastern edge of Worthing, is a well-loved local amenity that comprises a lake, play areas, recreation facilities and extensive areas of semi-natural open space. It is designated as Local Green Space for its local significance to recreation, wildlife and beauty. The site also provides the wider ecosystem service benefits of drainage and flood protection relief.
- 3.60 Brooklands has attracted significant levels of public support for the environmental improvements already made and those that are being planned. In 2017 a 'friends of Brooklands' community group was established, and in early 2018 local residents were consulted about plans to create a management plan for the park. More recently, the Brooklands Park Masterplan has been prepared which has taken account of feedback from the local community and the results of an ecological study. Forthcoming enhancements, a limited amount of built development and the implementation of the Masterplan proposals for a science adventure park will increase Brooklands' recreation and wildlife value and enhance its scenic beauty.



## SS6 LOCAL GREEN SPACE

The three areas listed below are designated as Local Green Space:

### a) Goring-Ferring Gap:

The Goring Ferring Gap is designated as Local Green Space because the community value: its historic associations including important views that contribute strongly to a sense of place; wildlife; opportunities for bird-watching, stargazing, and quiet recreation; and the provision of relative tranquility in an otherwise unrelieved urban conurbation.

- i) Increased quiet and informal recreation would be compatible with this designation. However, additional formal recreation or structures to support informal recreation could damage the qualities for which the Goring-Ferring Gap is valued. Any proposal would have to demonstrate that it does not conflict with those values.

### b) Chatsmore Farm:

Chatsmore Farm is designated as Local Green Space because the community value: its setting to the historic environment and the South Downs National Park; important views that contribute strongly to a sense of place; wildlife, especially along the Ferring Rife; and the offer of escape from the urban environment for relaxation and exercise.

- ii) Increased quiet and informal recreation would be compatible with this designation. Whilst some formal recreation space could be considered it would be important that it did not conflict with the qualities for which Chatsmore Farm is valued.

### c) Brooklands Recreation Area:

Brooklands Recreation Area provides a mix of semi-natural open space and recreation/leisure facilities on a scale that is suitable to this area of open and managed landscape. The lake itself has three main functions providing drainage and flood prevention relief; leisure and amenity; and wildlife value.

- iii) Development in Brooklands will not normally be permitted unless it is for recreation and/or landscape enhancement; does not compromise the functions of the lake or its long term maintenance; is compatible with the park's long-term management plan; uses the existing road access or a new access taken from Western Road; does not adversely impact on nearby residents significantly; and adequately investigates and takes measures to deal with contaminated land and potential for landfill gas emissions.
- iv) Land to the north of the managed park area, which is currently overgrown with scrub and mature trees, could benefit from management. Proposals that may be acceptable, subject to the above points, could include a more managed woodland area with the possibility of open green space and/or an additional recreational facility of suitable scale and materials that sits appropriately screened in the semi-natural environment. Enhancement of boundary and internal tree cover will be required to conserve the separation between East Worthing and Lancing including when viewed from the National Park.





