

Planning Policy
Wealden District Council
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please reply to:

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2024-05-10

Dear Wealden Planning Policy,

Wealden Local Plan – Regulation 18 draft

Raifuture is Britain's leading, longest-established, national independent voluntary organisation campaigning exclusively for a better railway across a bigger network for passenger and freight users, to support economic (housing and productivity) growth, environmental improvement and better-connected communities (planned development and sustainable transport co-located).

We seek to influence decision makers at local, regional and national levels to implement pro-rail policies in development and transport planning.

Please find below our response to your consultation, specific to Chapter 9 Infrastructure and in particular Policy INF5: Safeguarding of Infrastructure, and exclusively section 1 and paragraphs 9.64-9.66 therein:

“As defined on the Policies Map, development will not be permitted which would prejudice the reinstatement of the following railway lines:

- a) Lewes to Uckfield; and
- b) Eridge to Tunbridge Wells”

Question 65:

a. Do you agree with draft Policy INF5 - Safeguarding of Infrastructure?

We agree with the principle of a Lewes-Uckfield Railway Line.

We agree with the principle of an Eridge to Tunbridge Wells rail link.

b. Should we change anything? if so, what should we change and why?

Include additional references to East Sussex County Council refreshing the East Sussex Rail Strategy and Action Plan, and to TfSE's Strategic Investment Plan which also includes Lewes-Uckfield and Eridge-Tunbridge Wells rail links. Both organisations' Strategies and Plans contribute important additional strategic transport policy support.

c. Have we missed anything? If so, what have we missed and how should it be included?

The principle of the first is to re-establish a new rail link between Uckfield in Wealden District and Lewes in Lewes District. Reinstating one of the two historic alignments, via Isfield in Wealden District and crossing Whitfield Lane and Ivors Lane south of Hamsey in Lewes District, is only one of the possible options, depending on objectives defined for the scheme which are agreed by all key stakeholders. Its disadvantages would include entering Lewes facing Eastbourne rather than the principal target destinations of Falmer and Brighton, and requiring additional consents as a result of entering the South Downs National Park.

www.raifuture.org.uk www.raifuturescotland.org.uk www.raifuturewales.org.uk
www.railwatch.org.uk



While it may be probable that most of any new route in Wealden District heading south from Uckfield will adhere to the historic alignment as far as Isfield, it is conceivable that - depending on agreed scheme objectives - another new route option would turn south-eastwards after Isfield and proceed via Ringmer to serve an additional and growing community there (the principle of planned development and sustainable transport co-located), skirt around the South Downs National Park, and connect east of Glynde station and possibly face both Brighton and Eastbourne with a 'delta' junction.

Local Plan Policy INF5 should therefore reflect both the need to safeguard the historic alignment between Uckfield and the District boundary and also acknowledge the omission of consideration of options, that across the duration of the Plan period to 2040 development of a scheme for a new rail link between Uckfield and Lewes may include at least a partially-new alignment within Wealden District.

The principle of the second is to establish a rail link suitable for mainline services between Eridge and Tunbridge Wells. What has been omitted is any clarity concerning processes to determine the choices between the retention, or the removal, of the long-established heritage railway operation the Spa Valley Railway, and to clarify Wealden's aspirations for the destination station in Tunbridge Wells - the Spa Valley Railway or Southeastern station - albeit that neither is in Wealden District.

Yours faithfully,

Roger Blake BA, MRTPI (Rtd), MTPS
Railfuture
Vice-Chair London & South East regional branch
Director for Infrastructure & Networks, national Board