

Surrey Hills National Landscape Management Plan 2025-2030

Non-Technical Summary to the Environmental Report

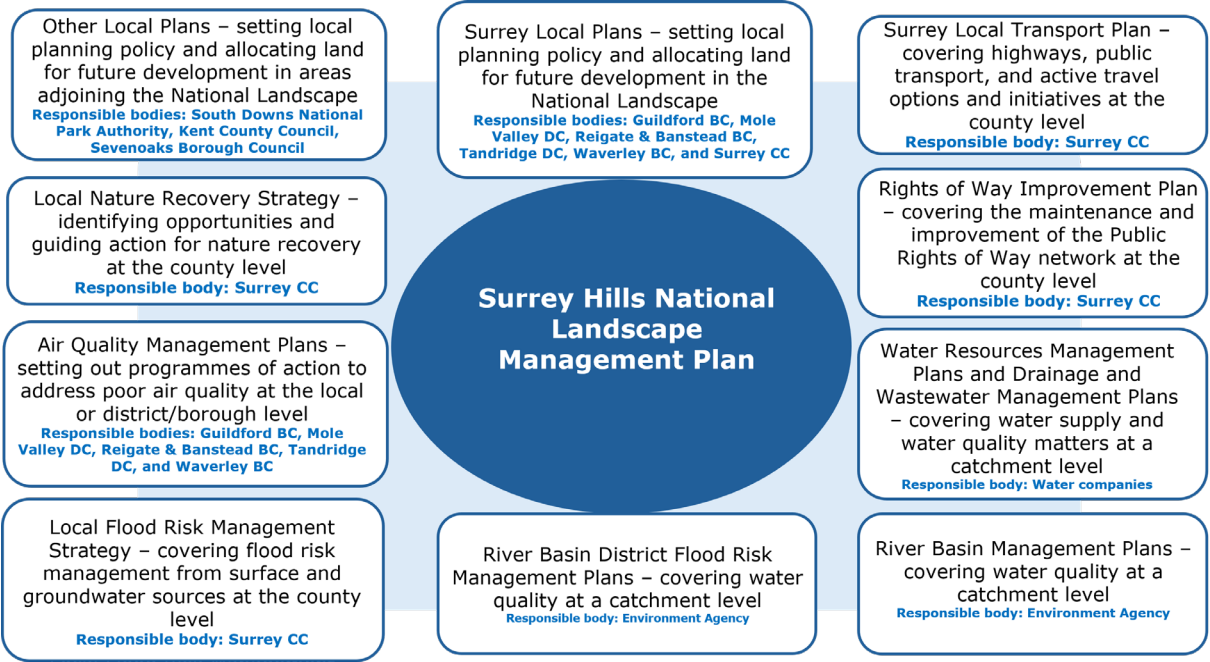
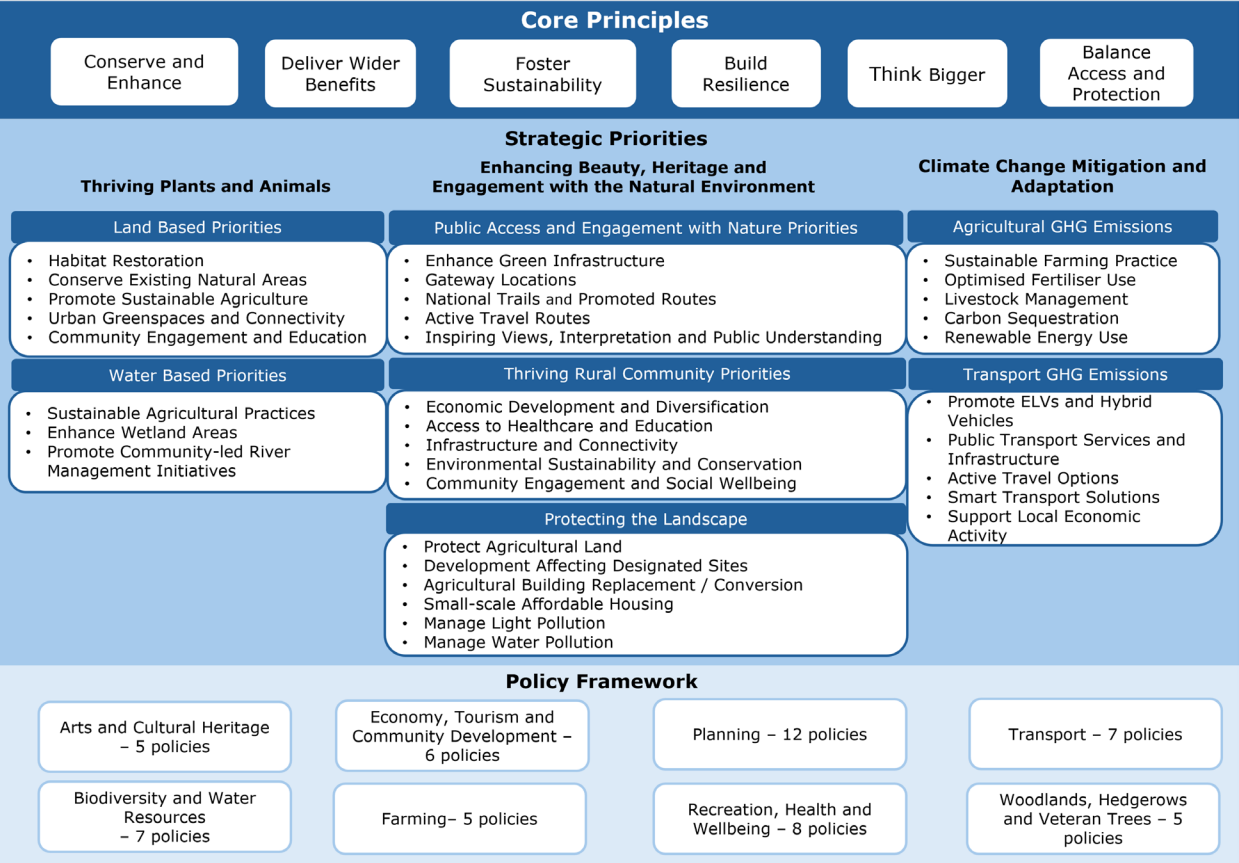
1. The Plan

The Plan includes 6 core principles, 7 strategic priorities, and 99 policies. The Plan sets out a 75-year vision for the Surrey Hills. The Plan’s policies will guide the work of organisations and individuals across numerous sectors operating in the Surrey Hills National Landscape. The Plan includes a delivery strategy, which sets out monitoring and reporting arrangements and key targets. The main components of the Plan are shown below.

The Plan’s relationships to key statutory plans relevant to the Surrey Hills National Landscape are shown below.

The Plan will contribute to three goals from the national Environmental Improvement Plan (2023) – for climate, the natural environment, and heritage.

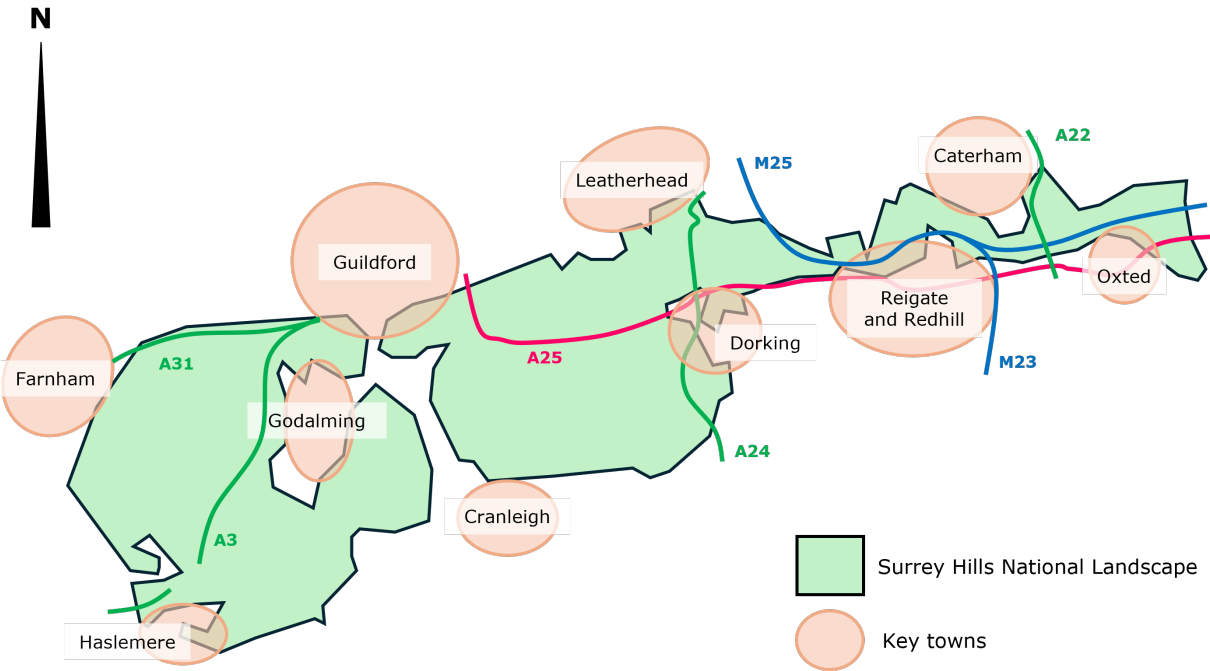
There is limited scope for alternatives to the Plan. All National Landscapes must have current management plans. Those plans must prioritise protection of the National Landscape over other considerations.



2. The Plan area

The Plan covers the whole of the Surrey Hills National Landscape, around 423 square kilometres. The proposed extension to the National Landscape would add another 129.5 square kilometres.

The National Landscape (see below) extends across the boroughs and districts of Waverley, Guildford, Mole Valley, Reigate and Banstead, and Tandridge. The National Landscape is dissected by several major roads, including the M25 and M23 motorways and the A22 main road in the east, the A24 and A25 main roads in central Surrey, and the A31 and A3 in the south-west.

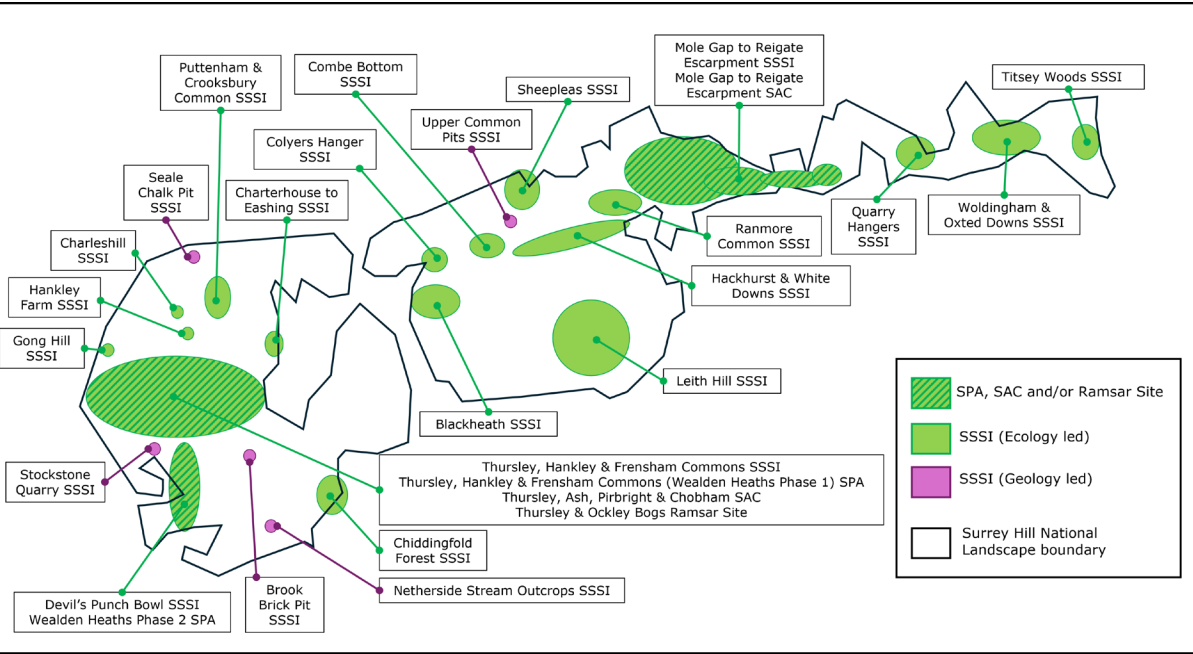


3. The Surrey Hills environment – key facts

Most land within the Surrey Hills area is undeveloped. About 40% is agricultural land, of good, moderate or poor quality. The areas soils are influenced by its geology, and include chalky, sandy or clayey soils.

Key habitat types encountered across the Surrey Hills area include woodland, downland including remnant chalk grassland (c.1% of the designated landscape), and heathland. About 40% of the area is wooded, of which 14% is Ancient woodland. Some 18% of the area is heathland or commons.

24 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) covering c.4,529 hectares account for 10.7% of land within the Surrey Hills. Some 3,124 hectares of SSSI land is also designated as Special Area of Conservation (SAC), Special Protection Area (SPA), or a Ramsar Site. The Wealden Heaths National Nature Reserve – designated on 4 March 2025 – is mainly within the Surrey Hills.



The Surrey Hills National Landscape encompasses parts of the following three NCAs:

- NCA 119 North Downs, which forms a chain of chalk hills extending from the Hog’s Back in Surrey to Dover in Kent.
- NCA 120 Wealden Greensand, which runs parallel to and south of the North Downs through Surrey.
- NCA 121 Low Weald, a broad, low-lying clay vale which wraps around the northern, western and southern edges of the High Weald.

Key viewpoints within the Surrey Hills include, amongst others, Leith Hill , Box Hill the Devil’s Punch Bowl (Gibbett Hill), St Martha’s Hill at Chilworth, Colley Hill above Reigate. National Trails passing through the Surrey Hills include the North Downs Way, the Greensand Way, the Downs Link, and the Vanguard Way.

A diverse range of heritage assets are distributed throughout the Surrey Hills. Those include 61 Scheduled Monuments, covering c.96 hectares, of which 8 are recorded as being ‘at risk’. There are 19 Grade I and 59 Grade II* Listed Buildings, and numerous Grade II Listed Buildings. There are 12 Registered Parks and Gardens, covering c.975 hectares. There are 47 Conservation Areas covering settlements wholly or partly within the Surrey Hills.

There are extensive opportunities for public access to the natural environment throughout the Surrey Hills. There are 1,170 kilometres of public rights of way - 51% are bridleways, restricted byways or byways open to all traffic (BOATs) – the Surrey average is 36%. The density of bridleways, restricted byways and BOATs in the Surrey Hills is 1.42 kilometres per square kilometre, compared with the average Surrey density of 0.75 kilometres per square kilometre. Open access land across the Surrey Hills is mainly managed by the National Trust, Surrey County Council, or wildlife charities such as the Surrey Wildlife Trust and the RSPB.

Rural communities across the Surrey Hills face several distinct challenges.

- An older age profile, with more than 25% over 65 years.
- Relatively high rural deprivation in parts of Tandridge, particularly access to housing and services.
- Less than satisfactory GP access particularly for those without a car.
- High house prices which limit housing affordability. Around 7% of rural residents rent.
- Around 35% of rural residents do not have mains gas supply.
- Most rural residents depend on the car for travel. Public transport provision is limited.
- Broadband speeds are lower across rural Surrey than for the county overall.
- Mobile phone signal coverage is an issue, with one in five residents experiencing poor signal quality.

4. Key topics and sustainability objectives

The Plan’s assessment used the following sustainability objectives.

Climate and Air

- A1: Address the causes of climate change and adapt to its impacts.
- A2: Protect and/or improve air quality.
- A3: Protect tranquillity and/or intrinsically dark night skies.

Water

- W1: Protect and/or enhance the quality of the water environment
- W2: Protect and/or enhance the extent and availability of water resources.
- W3: Protect landscapes, ecosystems and communities from future flood risk.

Land, Soils and Natural Resources

- LS1: Prioritise the use of previously developed land over agricultural or other greenfield land.
- LS2: Promote good soil management practices.
- LS3: Promote efficient and sustainable natural resource use in line with circular economy principles.

Nature

- N1: Contribute to the positive management of irreplaceable biodiversity assets and/or designated sites.
- N2: Support or enhance the integrity and resilience of ecological networks, including through positive management of local wildlife sites.
- N3: Contribute to the positive management of earth heritage sites or features.

Landscape

- L1: Protect and/or enhance the integrity of the main landscape character typologies and areas within and adjoining the National Landscape.
- L2: Ensure new build development responds positively to townscape and landscape character within and adjoining the National Landscape.
- L3: Protect and/or enhance the integrity and setting of key views from within and into the National Landscape.

Heritage

- H1: Contribute to the positive management of nationally important heritages assets and/or designated sites.
- H2: Contribute to the positive management of sites or features of local heritage importance.
- H3: Protect and/or enhance the context and setting of designated heritage assets within the National Landscape.

Community

- C1: Promote and support access to and positive engagement with the protected landscape and natural environment.
- C2: Promote and support healthy, vibrant and inclusive rural communities, with affordable housing, prosperous business, accessible services, and diverse employment and learning opportunities.
- C3: Promote and support improved physical and digital access for all, across the National Landscape.

5. How the assessment was carried out

The alignment of each part of the Plan – that is principles, strategic priorities and policies – with each sustainability objective was assessed.

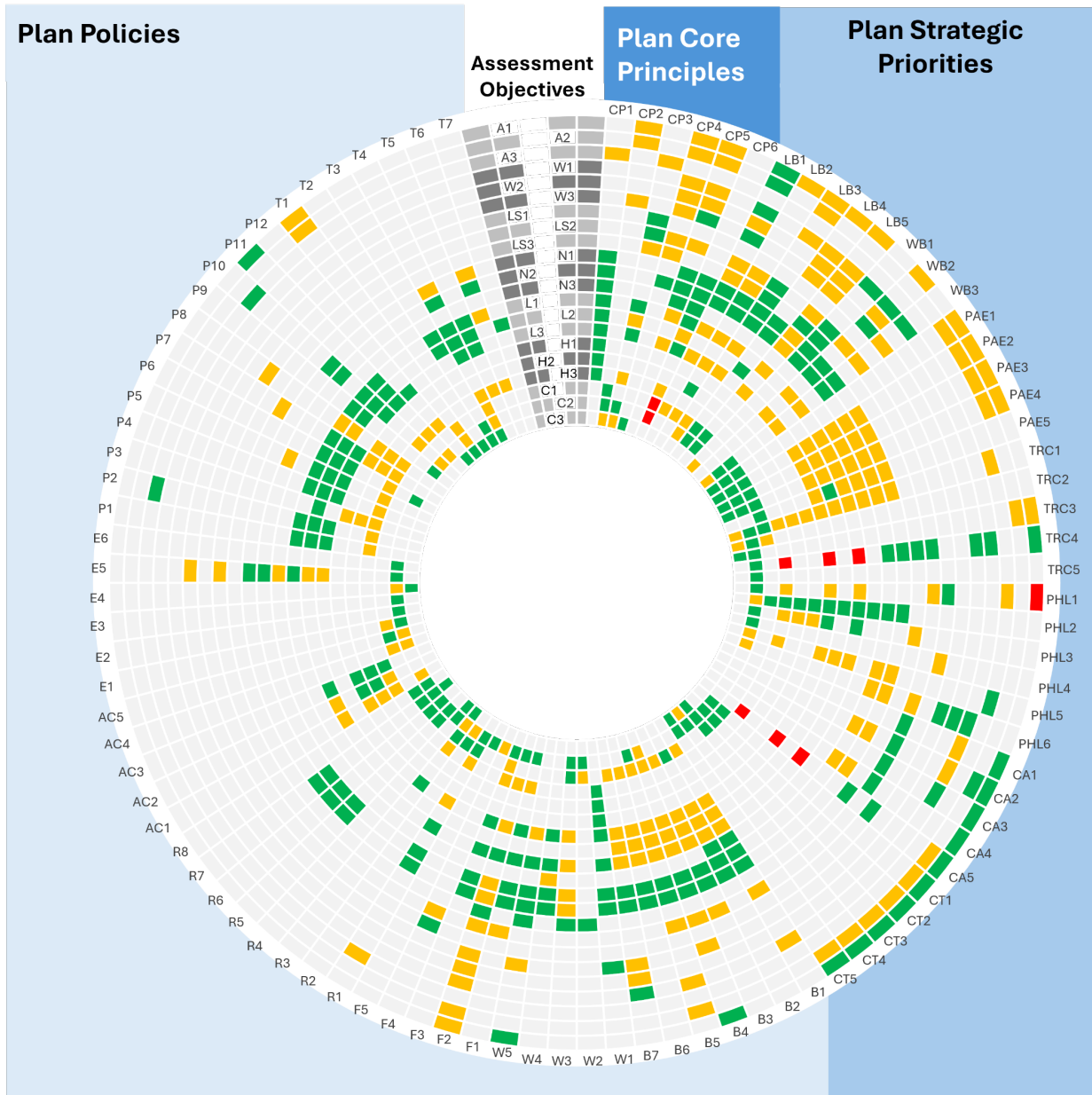
A simple ‘red’, ‘amber’ and ‘green’ system was used to indicate the relative alignment of plan parts and objectives. No interaction was indicated with ‘grey’.



- Direct alignment – The Plan component clearly supports the objective.
- Indirect or implied alignment – The Plan component does not explicitly address the objective but supports actions that imply support for the objective.
- Non-aligned – there is tension between the Plan component and the assessment objective.

6. Key Findings and Recommendations

Across most sustainability objectives the Plan performs relatively well. The Plan performs particularly well with respect to protection of the landscape, natural environment, and heritage, and in terms of land management and communities across the Surrey Hills.



The only areas of notable tension between the Plan and sustainability objectives was for climate change adaptation. That tension arose around renewable energy technology – such as wind turbines and solar panels - and was addressed by Plan policies for land use planning.

Overall, the new Plan would not cause significant adverse environmental effects. That conclusion takes account of mitigation measures built into the Plan.

The Plan’s likely significant environmental effects would be beneficial, particularly to the natural environment, the landscape and heritage. The Plan would also deliver significant beneficial effects for communities, both within and beyond the boundaries of the Surrey Hills.

The Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA), reported separately, concludes the Plan would have likely significant effects on Habitats sites within or close to the protected landscape.

7. Key Targets and Monitoring

The new Plan includes several targets set by Defra for protected landscapes. Progress towards those targets will be reported on by the Surrey Hills Board. The specified targets link to the sustainability objectives the Plan is expected to deliver significant beneficial effects against.

- Wildlife Rich Habitats (deciduous woodland, heathland and chalk downland): (1) 14,560 ha to 20,000 by 2100; (2) 5-year Plan target of additional 1,000 ha.
- Trees Outside Woodland (under 5 ha, agroforestry and tree belts): (1) 6.5% of land cover to 10% by 2100; (2) 5-year Plan target of 50 ha.
- Hedgerows: (1) 6,900 km to 10,000 km by 2100; (2) 5-year Plan target of 20km
- Protected sites (SSSIs): (1) 75% in Favourable Condition to 95%; (2) 5-year target 80%.
- National Heritage at Risk: (1) From 8 to 2 assets by 2100; (2) 5-year target 4 assets.
- Climate mitigation and adaptation: (1) Net Zero by 2050 (national target); (2) -0.5 by 2075, -1.0 by 2100.
- Fixed Point Surveys (various locations in the SHNL): (1) Monitor landscape changes over 75-year period; (2) Landscape changes formally reviewed every 5 years as part of Management Plan review.