

# East Sussex Rail Strategy – ‘Shaping Rail in East Sussex’ and Action Plan

October 2013

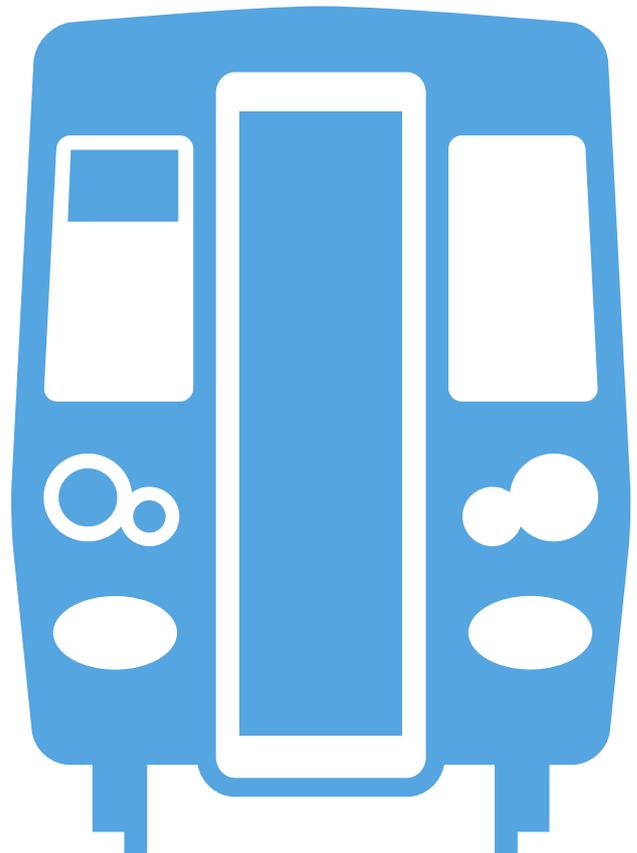


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# 1. Introduction

- 1.1** Historically, East Sussex had a well connected rail network, linking most towns in the County. However, a number of these railway lines were removed in the 1960's, mainly because of the competing bus services which ran parallel to the railway, improvements to roads and the increased popularity of the car.
- 1.2** Nowadays, East Sussex has a restricted rail network, although it is reasonably well connected to destinations along the coast and to London. However, the lack of overall capacity on the rail network serving the county, the frequency of services and journey times, especially to London, inhibits economic growth in the county.
- 1.3** This Rail Strategy sets out our future vision for rail in East Sussex in terms of the infrastructure and service improvements to address these key issues – capacity, service frequency and journey times – and help deliver the county's key objective of delivering economic growth. It builds on the approach set out in our Local Transport Plan 2011 – 2026 and Economic Development Strategy for Strategic Rail Improvements as well as wider rail improvements which are discussed in more detail later in the Strategy. The Rail Strategy's Action Plan identifies the County Council's immediate priorities for delivery, focusing on how rail can deliver economic growth by improving access to jobs, education and training.



# 2. East Sussex Rail Network

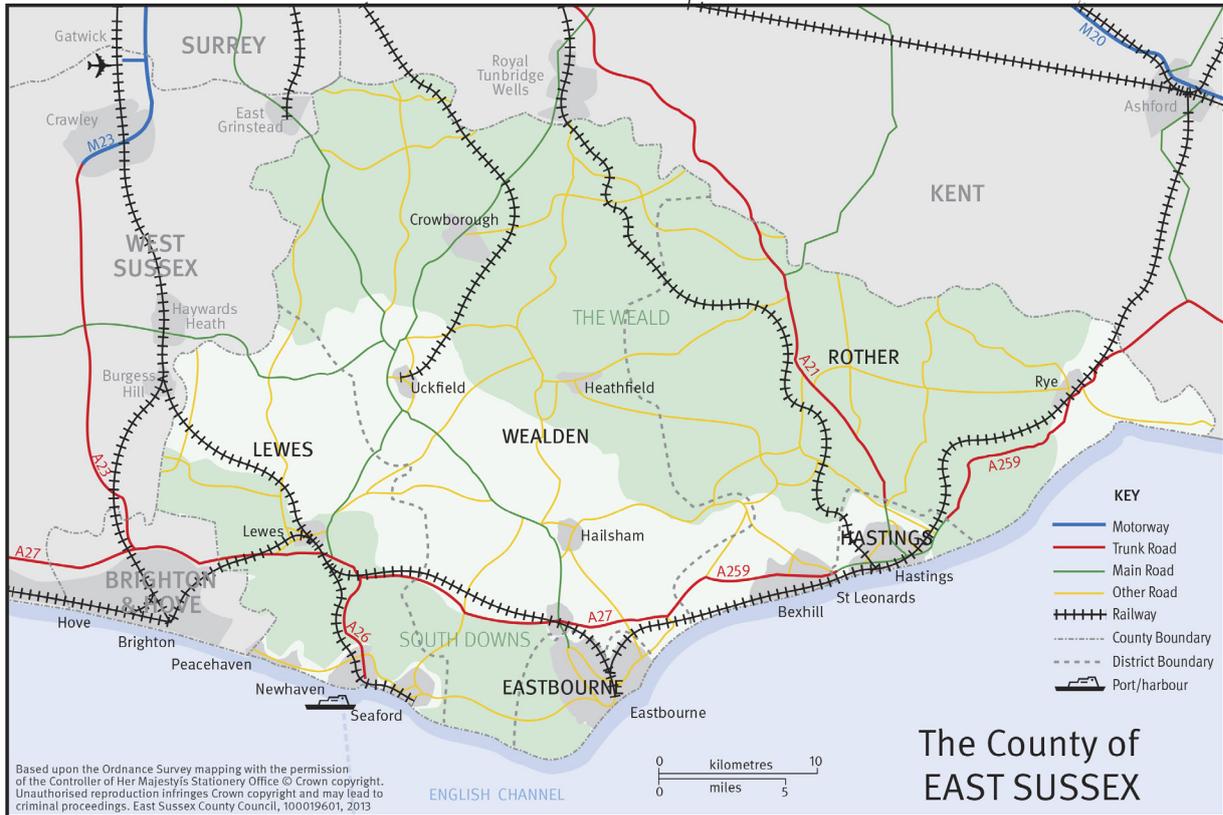


Figure 1: Map of East Sussex and rail routes in the county

**2.1** There are essentially three main rail routes in East Sussex, as shown on Figure 1. These are:

**East Coastway Line (Brighton-Ashford) and Brighton Main Line to London**

**2.2** The main coastal urban areas are linked east-west by the East Coastway rail link between Brighton and Ashford. Within East Sussex, Lewes is the most westerly station and Rye the most easterly.

**2.3** The East Coastway links with the Brighton Main Line between Lewes and Haywards Heath, providing key links to Gatwick Airport, East Croydon, Clapham Junction and the London termini at Victoria and London Bridge.

**2.4** The Seaford branch line, which serves Seaford and Newhaven, links onto the East Coastway route at Lewes which has limited direct services to London.

**2.5** The route provides links to HS1 and services to the continent and forms part of the Trans European (Transport) Network (TEN-T). The route is not electrified between Ore and Ashford. Those living to the west of the East Coastway utilise the Brighton Main Line to get to London, and those further to the east tend to travel on the HS1 service from Ashford.

**Hastings-London Line (via Tonbridge)**

**2.6** The Hastings railway line to London via Tunbridge Wells links both urban and rural

locations along the route, connecting directly to the city of London and the termini's of Charing Cross, Waterloo and London Bridge as well to Cannon Street in the peak. Frant is the most northerly East Sussex station on this line.

- 2.7** The line is electrified but has a limited power supply. There are regular 12 car services on the Hastings line, however, the line is at its effective capacity and it is challenging to add more 12 car trains without significant investment in the power supply.

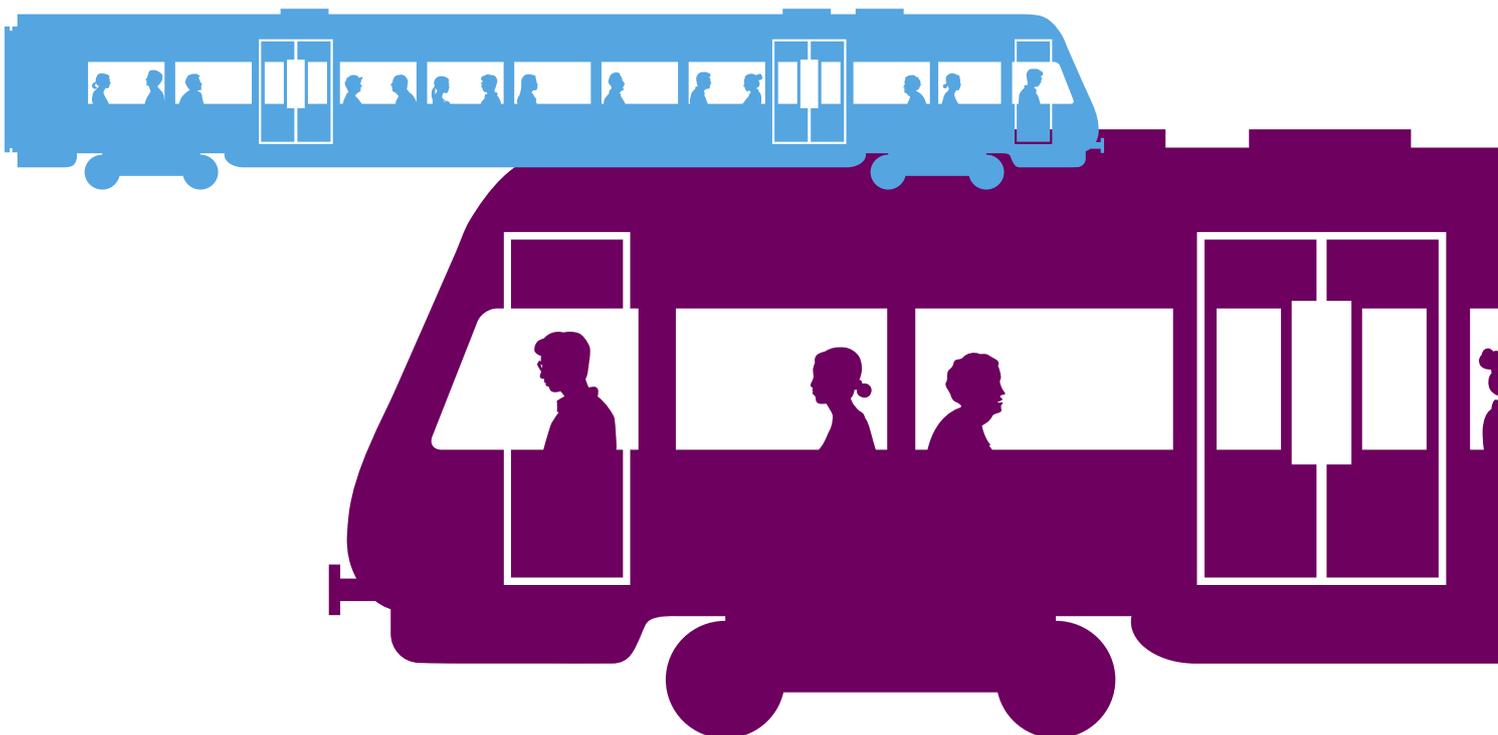
### Uckfield-London Line

- 2.8** The Uckfield line provides a direct rail service for urban and rural commuters from the centre of the County to London Bridge via East Croydon, and is a popular commuter route; Eridge is the most northerly East Sussex station on this line. The route is not electrified between Uckfield and Hurst Green and runs one train per hour off peak with additional services in the morning and evening peaks.

## Summary

- 2.9** The rail network itself is relatively poor, with little obvious significant investment having taken place for many years. Journey times on the East Sussex rail network are notoriously slow, and there is often overcrowding arising from insufficient rolling stock. There are limited freight movements by rail in East Sussex, but by upgrading the rail network, further opportunities could be achieved. However, this Rail Strategy will only be looking a improvements to passenger rail services.

- 2.10** There have been some positive changes to the rail network, which are highlighted later on in this document, but there are many opportunities for investment which would further improve connectivity and encourage more people to travel by rail. This Strategy identifies the key rail infrastructure and service improvements required in East Sussex to improve the rail passenger experience.



# 3. Rail Responsibilities

**3.1** There are a range of different organisations and groups which have differing responsibilities within the rail industry.

**3.2** Some of these responsibilities are statutory whilst others are more because the organisation or group has a keen interest in preserving and improving the rail network for the benefit of passengers (such as Councils and local groups).

**3.3** The main groups have been identified below, and are accompanied by a brief synopsis of what their role entails:

## **Department for Transport (DfT) (Rail)**

**3.4** The DfT is responsible for the overall strategic and financial responsibility for the railways. It procures rail services (rail franchising) and projects and produces the High Level Output Specification (HLOS) which specifies what the Government wants from the railway – capacity, performance, and safety – accompanied by Statement of Funds Available (SoFA) and a long term strategy.

## **Office of Rail Regulation (ORR)**

**3.5** The independent safety and economic regulator for Britain’s railways. The ORR regulates how Network Rail manages and operates the rail network, and rewards Network Rail for doing a good job, or enforces compliance if it fails to fulfil its obligations.

## **Network Rail**

**3.6** Network Rail owns and operates Britain’s rail network. It runs, maintains and develops Britain’s rail tracks, signalling, bridges, tunnels, level crossings and viaducts.

## **Train Operating Companies (TOC)**

**3.7** The TOCs operate passenger trains on the rail network, and lease and manage stations from Network Rail, apply for franchises to run specific routes from the Department for Transport, and undertake track and station access agreements which require ORR approval.

## **Passenger Focus**

**3.8** Passenger Focus undertakes research throughout the year, seeking the views of passengers across the country. It seeks to influence decisions on behalf of passengers and work with the industry, passenger groups and national and local government to secure journey improvements.

## **Local Enterprise Partnerships and Local Transport Boards**

**3.9** The South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SE LEP), which covers East Sussex, Essex, Kent, Medway, Southend and Thurrock, brings together key leaders from business, local government, further and higher education, exploring opportunities for enterprise whilst addressing barriers to growth.

**3.10** The South East Local Transport Board (SE LTB), which covers the same geographical area, is responsible for how funding is prioritised and allocated to transport schemes via the South East LTB. Both the LEP and LTB have taken a keen interest in rail issues since their formation and have responded from a business / local authority perspective on a range of Government consultations on how improvements to rail could address barriers to growth in their area.

**3.11** The Coast to Capital LEP and LTB covers Brighton & Hove, West Sussex, the east of Surrey. Croydon and also includes Lewes District.

### East Sussex County Council

**3.12** Although the County Council has no statutory responsibility for rail and has limited ability to influence outcomes, it has significant interest in how it connects people to, from and within East Sussex, and how rail can support economic growth in the county.

**3.13** The County Council works with the rail industry and rail groups to address issues, and to identify and assess opportunities for improvement. It also contributes and responds to rail consultations and reports regarding rail infrastructure and services affecting the County.

### District and Borough Councils

**3.14** The District and Borough Councils have a keen interest in rail, but have limited ability to influence outcomes. They feed into and respond to key areas of work and rail consultations regarding services and infrastructure improvements affecting the district / borough.

### Community Rail Partnership

**3.15** Community Rail Partnerships work to reconnect the community with the railway. They draw together local authorities, railway companies, Network Rail, Passenger Focus and local communities to improve the facilities and usage of local railways.

**3.16** In East Sussex, there are three community rail partnership line groups – the Uckfield and East Grinstead line, the Seaford to Brighton line, and the Marshlink (Hastings to Ashford) line.

### Commuter groups

**3.17** Commuter groups work independently and with others to lobby for rail improvements which improve rail services in or affecting a particular area or part of the network. East Sussex benefits from having a passionate and knowledgeable populace, reflected in the range of groups lobbying for and seeking rail improvements to the rail network.



# 4. Rail Industry Processes and Timescales

**4.1** There are some key rail industry processes and timescales which can provide suitable opportunities to lobby for rail service and infrastructure improvements which are outlined below:

## High Level Output Specification (HLOS)

**4.2** In 2012 Government published the HLOS which details what it wants the rail industry to deliver in Control Period 5, 2014-2019. Government gives the Office of Rail Regulation (ORR) the HLOS and a statement of funds available (SoFA) to clarify what they want the railway to deliver for the public funds they are prepared to make available. The ORR determines the outputs that Network Rail must deliver to achieve the HLOS, the cost of delivering them, and the implications for the charges payable by train operators to Network Rail for using the railway network.

## Long Term Planning Process (LTPP)

**4.3** The LTPP supersedes Route Utilisation Strategies. It aims to develop the network to meet future demand through market studies, cross-boundary analysis and route studies, and looks at how this can support economic growth.

## Strategic Business Plan (SBP)

**4.4** SBPs are Network Rail's formal response to Government on the HLOS and SoFA, They set out Network Rail's strategy and detail the schemes they think should be taken forward in that control period.

## Control Period (CP)

**4.5** CPs are the 5-year period over which Network Rail decides priorities for rail investment based on the targets, income and costs set by the ORR. CPs start on 1 April and end on 31 March. We are currently in CP4 (2009-2014).

## Franchises

**4.6** The Department for Transport is responsible for the design and procurement of new and replacement rail franchise services on the national rail network. The new franchising programme will deliver no more than 3 to 4 competitions per year, which means some franchises have been extended to accommodate this.

**4.7** There are currently two train operating companies (TOCs) in East Sussex:

### 1. Southern

- Operates the South Central Franchise on the East Coastway (Brighton to Ashford) including the Seaford branch line; East Coastway to Victoria (via the Brighton Mainline) and Uckfield line.
- The Southern franchise has been extended from September 2013 to July 2015. Thereafter it will be integrated into the new Thameslink, Southern and Great Northern franchise.

### 2. Southeastern

- Operates the Integrated Kent Franchise on the Hastings line to London via Tonbridge.
- The Southeastern franchise has been extended by 50 months, and will finish in June 2018 as opposed to April 2014.

# 5. Rail's Role in Supporting Economic Growth in East Sussex

**5.1** Rail plays an important role in East Sussex in getting people to work and education, for business as well as for shopping and leisure purposes. East Sussex has seen an increase in rail travel to work between 2001 and 2011, rising from 5.3% of the East Sussex population in employment (aged 16-74) in 2001 to 6.5% in 2011. Lewes has the highest level of commuters at 7.5% (excludes underground, tram and light rail data. Source: ESiF, Mode of Travel to Work data, ONS, QS701EW) This increase in rail use is reflected in trends in ticket sales with some stations, such as Uckfield, Seaford, Hastings and Bexhill experiencing notable growth in ticket sales in recent years.

**5.2** The improvement of the rail network and services serving the county is a key element to improving connectivity of the county and delivering our key priority of supporting economic growth, as reflected in the East Sussex Local Transport Plan and Economic Development Strategy, and employment space and housing development as identified within the Borough and District Local Plans.

## **Local Transport Plan (LTP) 2011 – 2026 (2011)**

**5.3** The East Sussex Local Transport Plan sets out the overall approach for planning and providing transport infrastructure and services needed to deliver sustainable economic growth and to support additional housing in the county over the period 2011 to 2026. The LTP identifies two main priorities for the county, one of which is to improve economic competitiveness and growth. The LTP highlights that, whilst the County

Council does not have a statutory duty for rail, it has a significant interest in how it connects people to and from East Sussex.

**5.4** The LTP identifies that making passenger rail a more attractive option, by improving the connectivity of the county along and to the coast as well as to destinations such as London, will bring benefits to the local economy by:

- Opening up opportunities for new business to locate in the area as well as existing businesses to grow,
- Improving connections to key centres of business in the south east, London and Europe, and
- Widening employment opportunities by reducing journey times and attracting a more skilled labour, whether living in and commuting out, or commuting into the county.

**5.5** The LTP identifies a package of interventions, both infrastructure and service improvements, that would need to be delivered by or in partnership with the rail industry that would deliver these benefits and support economic growth in the county. These are highlighted in more detail in Section 6 of the document.

## **Economic Development Strategy (2012)**

**5.6** The Economic Development Strategy (EDS) sets out the issues and opportunities for East Sussex for the next 10 years (at least) and puts forward a strategy for economic growth.

**5.7** Strategic Priority 3 of the EDS highlights that improved connectivity (rail, road and broadband) is critical for the County Council to take advantage of its privileged

location. The EDS also identifies, in common with the LTP, that improvements to rail services and infrastructure is required to improve both passenger experience and freight opportunities, and that partnership working with the rail industry would help to achieve this.

### Future Employment and Housing Development – Borough and District Local Plans

**5.8** Local Plans prepared by the District and Borough Councils in East Sussex identify the employment and housing allocation for their respective areas over the next 20 years.

**5.9** One of the impacts the construction of additional employment space and

housing will have on East Sussex is to increase rail demand for commuters, either travelling in, within or out of the county, as well as demand to travel for education and social purposes. With many of the existing services suffering from overcrowding, further investment is needed in East Sussex’s rail infrastructure to accommodate this expected future demand, supporting the creation of jobs and delivery of housing as well as enabling people to access education and training and travel by rail for leisure journeys.

**5.10** The following table identifies projected growth figures for the districts and boroughs in East Sussex as of May 2013:

Authority Local Plan	Status of Plan	Housing Allocation		Employment Allocation
		Total over Plan Period	Per Annum	
<b>Wealden</b>	Adopted	9,440 (2006 -2027)	450	128,695 sqm
<b>Eastbourne</b>	Adopted	5,022 (2006 -2027)	222	55,430 sqm
<b>Lewes</b>	Proposed Submission Draft	4,500 (2010 -2030)	225	74,000 sqm
<b>Hastings</b>	Examination	3,400 (2011 -2028)	200	70,000 sqm
<b>Rother</b>	Examination	5,700 (minimum) (2011 – 2028)	335	100,000 sqm

# 6. Rail Improvements to Support Economic Growth

**6.1** The following sets out the rail improvements, both infrastructure and services, that the County Council consider are required to support the economic growth in the county.

## **East Coastway Line (Brighton-Ashford) and Brighton Main Line to London**

### **Opportunities for Economic Growth: East Coastway (Brighton to Ashford) and East Coastway to Victoria**

**6.2** Bexhill and Hastings are one of the County Council's priority areas for growth, and improvements along the East Coastway route will help to secure investment in coastal communities. Improving this coastal rail service will assist in reducing journey times and improving reliability, increasing frequency of services, and increasing capacity along the route. These improvements will improve accessibility, which in turn will attract businesses and skilled workers to the area, thus contributing to economic growth. It will also encourage more people to move to the area through improved connectivity to key employment areas within or outside of East Sussex.

**6.3** The Eastbourne / South Wealden and Bexhill / Hastings area will see significant growth as identified in the respective Local Plans. A quantum of over 10,000 homes and 80,00sqm of employment will come forward in Eastbourne / South Wealden in the period up to 2027, whilst 130,000sqm of employment space and over 7,500 homes in Bexhill and Hastings will be delivered by 2030. In the west of the county, over 2,400 new homes (including commitments) will come forward in the town of Lewes and Newhaven.

**6.4** The total number of jobs requiring access in East Sussex is highest along the East Coastway, with Brighton & Hove having the second highest number of jobs in all districts / unitary authorities. Hastings has the lowest percentage of people commuting into the borough for employment at only 22%, and only 30% out-commute. Eastbourne's out-commuting is similar at only 27%, but 28% of people employed in Eastbourne commute into the borough. Lewes has the highest percentage of in-commuting at 34% and out-commuting is also relatively high at 43% of working residents (ESiF, commuting flows 2001).

**6.5** Access to the strategic growth locations will also be improved. There will be better access and improved journey time reliability for existing and potential new businesses and improved access opportunities along the coastway, to London (via HS1 and the BML) and the continent – for those currently in or seeking employment, for education, leisure and social purposes.

**6.6** There are a number of colleges, universities and training facilities at Brighton, Lewes, Newhaven, Eastbourne, Ore and Hastings (includes full and part time students) situated along the East Coastway with a significant number of students and employees using the railway as a means of getting to and from study or work at either the main or satellite campuses. The student population and employment generated by each are:

- University of Sussex (Falmer): student population = 13,000; employment = 2,200 (expected to be 2,700 by 2018)

- University of Brighton (Falmer, Eastbourne and Hastings): student population = 22,000; employment = 2,600
- Sussex Downs College (Lewes and Eastbourne): student population = 15,800; employment = 1,300
- Sussex Coast College (Hastings and Ore): student population = 5,000; employment = 600

**6.7** There will also be a benefit to rural locations along the line where there is potential for additional stopping services. The likelihood of an additional hourly service (in part) arising from these

improvements would strengthen the rural economy through improved connectivity.

**6.8** Network Rail is currently in the process of undertaking study work looking at rail improvements in the Hastings area, which includes electrification of the line between Ore and Ashford as well as dual tracking along with other potential improvements to rail capacity in the area.

**6.9** Our aspirations for improving rail infrastructure and rail services on the East Coastway (Brighton to Ashford) and East Coastway to Victoria are:

<b>East Coastway (Brighton to Ashford) including Seaford branch line</b>	
<b>Infrastructure Improvements</b>	<p>Electrification of the line between Ore and Ashford.</p> <p>Dual tracking of the line between Ore and Appledore.</p> <p>Reinstatement of the Willingdon Chord, or alternative (e.g. new station in the locality north of Hampden Park) – not affecting the additional service level to Eastbourne.</p> <p>New station in the Stone Cross / Polegate locality.</p> <p>Extend High Speed 1 service from Ashford International Station to Eastbourne.</p>
<b>Service Improvements</b>	<p>Additional train per hour (at least) comprising:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A fast hourly service stopping at main stations.</li> <li>• An hourly service calling at all stations.</li> </ul> <p>Although preference is to retain the direct Brighton – Ashford service, consideration should be given to splitting / joining service at either Hastings or Eastbourne to address capacity issues in the short term.</p> <p>Extend the Lewes-Brighton shuttle to Eastbourne.</p> <p>Provision of additional carriages to relieve overcrowding.</p> <p>Trains should run an hour later on the Marshlink line in both directions.</p> <p>Maintain existing services to smaller stations.</p> <p>Provide a Three Oaks and Winchelsea Sunday service.</p> <p>Introduction Saturday / Sunday services at rural stations where a need has been identified.</p>

East Coastway to Victoria	
<b>Infrastructure Improvements</b>	Signalling improvements to enable faster line speeds, reducing journey times.
<b>Service Improvements</b>	<p>Run Thameslink trains to Eastbourne as originally planned.</p> <p>Shorter journey times from Eastbourne to London.</p> <p>End the splitting/joining of trains at Haywards Heath – reducing journey times for passengers, whilst retaining existing service levels.</p> <p>Reduce journey times on the East Coastway services to London.</p> <p>Continue to stop longer distance trains – from London (Victoria) that serve the Sussex coast (including Bexhill) at Gatwick Airport, Croydon and Clapham Junction.</p> <p>Maintain direct services to London (Victoria) from stations east of Eastbourne, e.g. Bexhill.</p>

### Opportunities for Economic Growth: Brighton Mainline

**6.10** Improved connectivity to London via the Brighton Main Line (BML) is an important issue for the County Council. Addressing the rail bottleneck at East Croydon would support the Government’s priority, and the South East and Coast to Capital Local Enterprise Partnerships’ (LEPs) strategic objectives, of supporting economic growth. It would also encourage more businesses to locate to coastal areas, opening up labour markets, and thereby supporting the creation of jobs within our coastal communities.

**6.11** Addressing capacity constraints on the BML will also unlock opportunities for rail improvements elsewhere on the network, including:

- Reduced journey times from the Sussex coast into London,
- Enabling additional rail services to be operated into London from the East

and West Coastway routes and the Uckfield line, as well as improving the business case for the reinstatement of the Lewes-Uckfield line,

- Helping to meet the needs of a high quality Gatwick Express service, as well as the increasing number of commuter passengers travelling along the BML,
- Aiding the delivery of a through Kent-Gatwick rail service, and facilitating the provision of this service on its route between Redhill and Gatwick Airport, and
- Releasing more capacity for additional services on the Brighton Main Line.

**6.12** Network Rail is in the process of undertaking a rail study to identify opportunities for addressing capacity constraints on the BML, which we support.

**6.13** Our aspirations for improving rail infrastructure and rail services on the BML are:

Brighton Main Line	
<b>Infrastructure Improvements</b>	<p>Removing the bottlenecks Clapham Junction and (addressing platform capacity issues at) East Croydon.</p> <p>Provide relief of conflicts at Windmill Bridge Junction.</p> <p>Realign track geometry at Stoats Nest junction.</p> <p>Grade separation at Keymer junction.</p> <p>Implement any other identified infrastructure improvements from BML study currently being undertaken by Network Rail.</p>
<b>Service Improvements</b>	<p>Service access to Gatwick airport should be improved including services to coastal destinations.</p> <p>Reconsider how the train paths are allocated to the greatest benefit to passengers.</p>

## Uckfield to London Line

### Opportunities for Economic Growth

**6.14** The Uckfield line is an extremely popular line that suffers from overcrowding in the peak hours. A recent additional early morning train has been introduced which has proved extremely popular. There is a wide catchment area for the Uckfield line due to limited rail infrastructure in the county; people travel from Heathfield and surrounding villages to use the Uckfield line. Development of 1,000 new homes and over 12,000sqm of employment space in Uckfield and 300 new homes in Crowborough will come forward during the life of the adopted Wealden Local Plan Core Strategy.

**6.15** Wealden has a high number of business enterprises (7,390 – ESiF, 2012), although this is not surprising given the size of the district compared to other East Sussex districts/boroughs, and the majority of businesses employ up to four members of staff. Wealden has a high number of local business units at 8,160 (2013, ONS UK Business Activity, Size and Location (UKBASL) data via ESiF) and over three-quarters employ less than five people. There were 46,500 jobs in 2012, 43,600 of which were as employees. (ONS Business Register and Employment Survey (BRES) via ESiF).

**6.16** In Wealden 46% of all working residents out-commute; this is the highest proportion out of all the districts – 26% of those employed in Wealden commute in for work, and 34% of those employed in Lewes travel into the district. Wealden district has the longest commuting distances with 22% of employed residents travelling over 20km, and Lewes district has the highest proportion of residents travelling between 5km-20km, at 35%.

**6.17** Lewes District has 4,255 local business units, 71% of which employ less than five people (2013, UKBASL via ESiF); there were 31,800 jobs in 2012, 29,900 of which were as employees. (BRES via ESiF).

**6.18** Improving the Uckfield line to London will contribute to economic growth through improved accessibility (for work, education and social purposes), reducing the number of car journeys – in turn reducing congestion and carbon emissions – and will provide an alternative route to London from the coast (including the BML, Seaford and Newhaven) when engineering works or faults occur on the line.

**6.19** Our aspirations for improving rail infrastructure and rail services on the Uckfield to London line are:

<b>Uckfield to London Line</b>	
<b>Infrastructure Improvements</b>	Dual tracking between Uckfield and Hurst Green.
	Electrification between Uckfield and Hurst Green.
	Increase overall rail capacity in the county by reinstating Lewes-Uckfield railway line or as part of providing a new route (BML2) between Brighton and London via Uckfield,
	Reinstate Eridge – Tunbridge Wells railway line to enable Uckfield service to run to Tunbridge Wells,
<b>Service Improvements</b>	Improve early morning commuter services into London to address overcrowding.
	Increase the number of late trains from London to Uckfield.
	Introduce earlier trains on a Sunday morning.
	Provision of additional carriages on the line to address overcrowding issues.
	Additional train services per hour – would be feasible upon dual tracking of the line and addressing capacity constraints north of the line at East Croydon.
	More early morning Uckfield trains,

**Hastings – Tonbridge Line**

**Opportunities for Economic Growth**

**6.20** Hastings is one East Sussex’s priority areas for growth and has seen significant investment in jobs, education and infrastructure in recent years. Over the next 15 years, over 3,400 new homes will be built and 130,000sqm of new employment space will become available as identified in the Hastings Local Plan. In addition, the University of Brighton and Sussex Coast College both have campuses in Hastings town centre, close to the rail station.

**6.21** Hastings has the lowest percentage of people commuting into the district for employment, at only 22%, and only 30% out commute (ESiF, commuting flows 2001). Almost 60% of people in Hastings travel less than 5km to get to work (2001 Census,

ESiF), and only one third of households in Hastings have access to a car.

**6.22** Upgrading the electricity of this line (or drawing power from rolling stock rather than upgrading the power supply) would enable additional capacity on the line and improve journey time reliability, thus improving the passenger experience. Improvements on this line will improve accessibility, which in turn will attract businesses and skilled workers to the area. They will also encourage more people to move to the area through improved connectivity to key employment areas within or outside of East Sussex. This will strengthen the rural economy through improved connectivity.

**6.23** By upgrading the power supply between Hastings and Tunbridge Wells, capacity and access to strategic growth locations will be improved. There will be better access for existing and potential new businesses and improved access opportunities along the coastway, and to London, for those currently in or seeking employment, for education, training, leisure and social purposes.

**6.24** Network Rail is currently in the process of undertaking study work looking at rail improvements in the Hastings area, including on the Hastings-London line, which includes consideration of upgrading the electricity supply between Hastings and Tunbridge Wells to enable a 12-car service to operate on a more frequent basis.

Our aspirations for improving rail infrastructure and rail services on the Hastings line (via Tonbridge) are:

<b>Hastings line (via Tonbridge)</b>	
<b>Infrastructure Improvements</b>	Upgrade the power supply south of Tunbridge Wells to enable a regular 12-car service to run to Hastings.
<b>Service Improvements</b>	Reduce journey times on the route. Provision of additional trains to London.

### Wider Improvements

**6.25** In addition, there are a number of wider improvements to the rail network in the county that would complement the infrastructure and service improvements identified for each of the lines above. Our aspirations include:

<b>Wider improvements</b>	
<b>Access to Stations</b>	Work with Network Rail and the TOC's to improve car parking and address local issues on residential roads near stations. Increase cycle parking at all stations. Improve bus/rail interchange at key stations in the county – Bexhill, Hastings, Eastbourne, Lewes, Polegate, Rye, Uckfield, Crowborough. Improve bus links from Hailsham to Polegate rail station to support housing and employment development.
<b>Community Rail Partnerships</b>	Continue to work with Sussex CRP and existing line groups to promote rail usage on these lines (Uckfield, Seaford – Brighton, Marshlink). Investigate other opportunities for further line groups in the county.

# 7. Delivering the Strategy: Rail Strategy Action Plan

## Context

- 7.1** Shaping Rail in East Sussex identifies the County Council's aspirations for the rail infrastructure and service improvements the County Council wish to see come to fruition in East Sussex.
- 7.2** Recognising that in order to achieve a greater likelihood of securing investment towards specific rail infrastructure improvements, and a need to focus our efforts, the Rail Strategy Action Plan (RSAP) identifies the County Council's immediate priorities for delivery, focusing on how rail can deliver the County Council and the Local Enterprise Partnership's key priority of economic growth by improving access to jobs, education and training. This reflects how the rail industry is assessing future improvements through the imminent Route Studies which form part of the Long Term Planning Process (LTPP).
- 7.3** In identifying the County Council's priorities a number of factors have been taken into consideration:

## Rail Strategy Consultation

- 7.4** A four week consultation was undertaken on the draft strategy. As part of the consultation on the draft strategy, a rail symposium was held with key stakeholders in September to seek their views on the rail priorities for the county that would deliver economic growth and create jobs. Information received on rail infrastructure improvements has fed into the RSAP, and the comments received on rail service improvements will aid future discussions with the rail industry – namely the train operating companies – on improvements which should be made to improve the passenger experience.

## Views of Business on Rail Priorities

- 7.5** Businesses were asked by the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SE LEP) in November 2012 to identify the strategic transport priorities for the road and rail network. From a rail perspective, the businesses who responded identified the need for improving overall transport links between the South Coast and London and increasing rail capacity as important to supporting their growth.
- 7.6** Specific schemes that businesses identified as particularly important were improving rail capacity between Hastings and Ashford, and the electrification and dual tracking of the Uckfield line.

## Scheme Appraisal

- 7.7** Rail infrastructure schemes have been assessed and appraised in relation to their contribution towards local and LEP objectives, delivering jobs and housing, their deliverability including risks and acceptability, and their environmental and social impacts.

## Our Priorities

### Electrification and dual tracking of Ashford – Hastings

- 7.8** From the consultation, business survey and scheme appraisal, the electrification and dual tracking of the Ashford – Hastings line scored most favourably.
- 7.9** The electrification and dual tracking of the Ashford – Hastings line is considered to be critical to economic growth in the county. Reducing journey times, improving frequency of the services, and enabling electrified services to run along the length of the East Coastway, will benefit and make

it more attractive for commuters travelling to key employment and education and training destinations along the route; such as Lewes, Eastbourne, Bexhill, Hastings and Ashford.

**7.10** It will help to promote investment in the coastal communities in East Sussex and strengthen the economic advantage of our strategic growth locations, which includes Hastings, Eastbourne and South Wealden, as well as provide an improved link to High Speed services at Ashford International Station and those to the Continent.

**7.11** It will also lead to increased patronage and demand on the line, which in the medium / long term help the business case for other improvements identified as aspirations along the East Coastway.

### **Electrification and dual tracking of Uckfield – Hurst Green**

**7.12** From the consultation process, improvements to the Uckfield – London line were identified as the second priority in the county.

**7.13** We see the electrification and dual tracking of the line between Uckfield and Hurst Green as the immediate priority for delivering economic growth, which will help to promote links from the centre of the county into London. This will increase the capacity along the existing line and help to reduce journey times and improve the frequency of services. As with the Ashford – Hastings line, this would enable the train operating companies to run electric trains across the whole of their network thereby using their rail units on a more efficient basis rather than using the current diesel units. The consequential increase in patronage and demand on the line will help the business case for other aspirations for improvements on the Uckfield – London line to come forward in the future.

### **Next Steps**

**7.14** The RSAP will be used to inform Government, the rail industry, LEPs and stakeholders, of the County

Council's priorities for rail infrastructure improvements in East Sussex. It is important to highlight the economic growth benefits which would be achieved from the implementation of the infrastructure priorities identified in the RSAP, i.e. schemes along the East Coastway line and the Uckfield to London line.

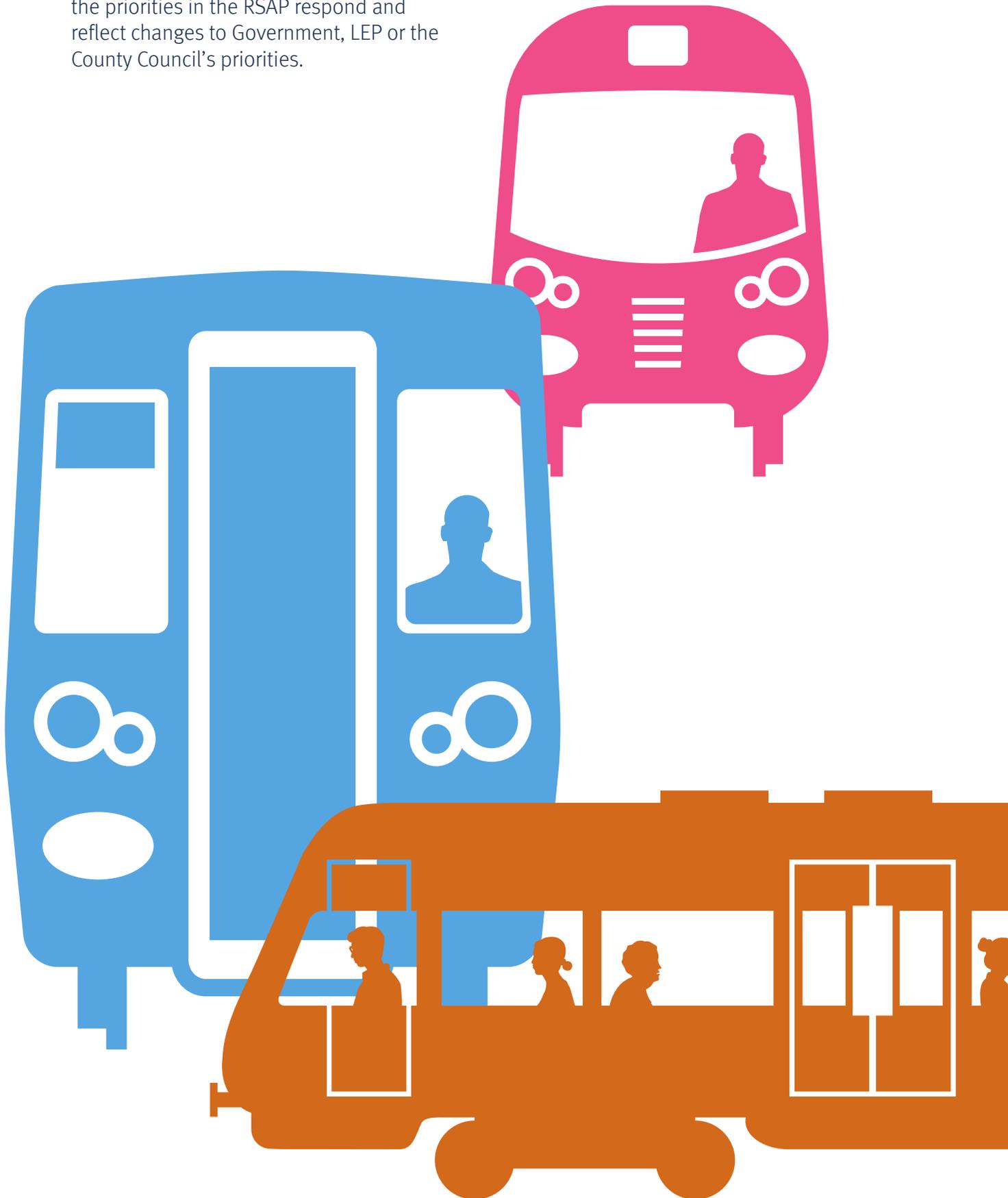
**7.15** The priorities identified in the RSAP will be used to focus the County Council's efforts, including working with stakeholders in order to progress these schemes, securing funding, and achieving the inclusion of these projects within the relevant strategies and forward programmes for delivery.

**7.16** There are some forthcoming opportunities which the County Council will take advantage of to promote its priorities. These include:

- Network Rail's Long Term Planning Process 'Route Studies'.
- Informing, and liaising with Government on our top priorities for rail investment.
- Presenting a case for investment through the South East and Coast to Capital LEPs.
- Ensuring the South East Plan chapter corresponds with the outcomes of the Rail Strategy and RSAP.
- Continued engagement on the Thameslink franchise with the shortlisted bidders / successful bidder to make them aware of our intentions to progress this project, and to seek support, evidence and funding to secure these improvements in the short term.
- Continued engagement with Southeastern on our aspirations for rail improvements on the Hastings-London line and the connecting rail network.

**7.17** As time progresses, policies and the scale / type of development in the county may change, and these factors may influence the viability and need for certain aspirations. For this reason the RSAP will be reviewed on an annual

basis to consider changes to policy, local development etc which may influence the hierarchy of priorities. This will ensure that the priorities in the RSAP respond and reflect changes to Government, LEP or the County Council's priorities.



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