

westsussex.gov.uk



Annual Report

2023–2024



View of Douster Lake, Crawley

Foreword

The period covered in this year's annual report was yet again another momentous time, most notably as the country celebrated the Coronation of His Majesty King Charles III in May.

Here in West Sussex, I was delighted to attend the opening of Platinum House in November, our brand new, state-of-the-art training centre and fire station in Horsham, to mark the start of a prosperous new era for our Fire Service.

Throughout the year we continued our proud track record of transforming the ways in which we work to make the best use of limited resources and deliver effective services.

Details of our achievements and performance are evidenced within this report and include improvements in children's and adults' social care, the Fire Service and our digital services.

I extend my thanks to former Chief Executive Becky Shaw, who returned to East Sussex County Council full time this year, and whose leadership has taken us from strength to strength.

Leigh Whitehouse was appointed as our new full-time chief executive in March. With more than 25 years' local government experience, I am confident he will build on our successes and lead the council through the challenges ahead.

Not least among these is the uncertainty of future funding from the new national government, the impact this will have on our budget and council tax, and the decisions we will have to make to sustain the essential services we provide, including to the most vulnerable.

National pressures continue with increasing need for children's and adults' social care, more extreme weather events affecting our highways, and the impact of high inflation on goods and services.

The county council will continue to lobby government for adequate funding for local authorities and I look forward to working with the county's new and existing MPs.

Together with my fellow councillors, partners and the dedication of our staff, we will meet the challenges as we always have done; by focusing on the priorities in Our Council Plan, delivering effective services that provide value for money, and putting the people we serve at the heart of everything we do.



Councillor Paul Marshall
Leader of West Sussex County Council

Keeping people safe from vulnerable situations

To help us meet ongoing challenges and build on recent progress, we continued our focus on improving services that keep people safe from vulnerable situations.

Our Adult Social Care improvement programme launched in April supporting our ongoing strategy *'The life you want to lead.'* With performance on assessment timescales affected by capacity pressures, the programme focuses on people who use our services to deliver models of care that meet growing and increasingly complex needs.

It was a strong year for our Children and Young People's Services. The new Family Safeguarding Model helped improve performance and outcomes for vulnerable young people, while a redesign of the Fostering Service led to a greater number of applications for in-house carers, reducing the need for external resource. We continued renovating our six children's homes, including work on a carbon neutral Contact Centre at Orchard House, which will improve the lives of young residents and reduce energy use and carbon emissions.

We launched a plan with partners to improve outcomes for children with special educational needs and disabilities, worked to reduce timescales for completing Education and Health Care Plan assessments, and achieved targets for the number

of children with a plan accessing mainstream education.

Our Worth Service celebrated 20 years supporting victims and survivors of domestic abuse. The team receives on average 100 referrals a week and supports more than 700 people at any one time, the majority feeling safe as a result.

We allocated £9.7m of funding from the Household Support Fund to help vulnerable households. Our Community Hub supported thousands of people throughout the year, including requests for urgent assistance, practical support and food.

Our Fire & Rescue Service had a busy year responding to emergencies during severe weather and flooding. Teams once again exceeded the target for visits to homes across the county to improve safety and help prevent fires.

Our Trading Standards and Public Health teams introduced two new enforcement officers to continue the crackdown on illegal vape and tobacco sales.

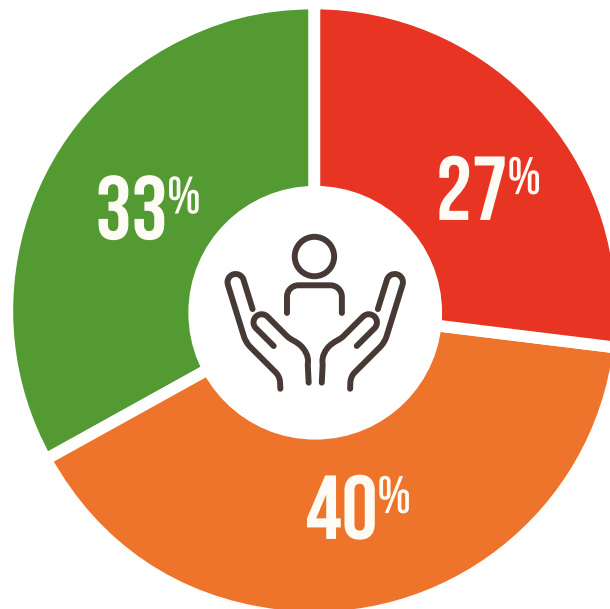
Keeping people safe from vulnerable situations

How did we do?

The chart below summarises how our initiatives performed against a range of targets and measures.

GREEN shows the percentage that were on track;

RED those off track; **AMBER** those near target.



Visit our [performance dashboard](#) to see our current progress.

11,211

people received
long-term adult
social care support,
with 20,782
assessments
completed

5,335

Safe and Well Fire
Service visits to
homes to improve
fire safety, an
increase of 14%

4



Celebrating the opening of Platinum House



£18.5M



5

projected capital investment on improving children and young people's social care facilities over ten years to 2029

90%



of people supported felt safe on leaving the Worth Domestic Abuse Service

25,000+

adults and young people supported by Worth Domestic Abuse Service in 20 years

A sustainable and prosperous economy

A sustainable and prosperous economy in West Sussex is built on solid partnerships and a focus on innovation and investments in local communities, businesses and the environment.

Works as part of our Growth Deals with district and borough councils were completed in Worthing, Southwick, Littlehampton and Crawley.

We supported more than 4,600 businesses to start, revive, innovate and grow through initiatives including The Track in Bognor Regis, Digital Future West Sussex, and a new Careers Hub.

A continued focus on rural areas helped increase uptake of gigabit capable broadband, exceeding our target for access and remaining on track to achieve 85% coverage by 2025.

West Sussex was named one of ten 5G innovation regions in a project led by us to develop the use of technology in commercial farming that will help increase and sustain productivity.

We invested £60.7m delivering more than 540 schemes to improve and modernise roads, footways, bridges, traffic signals, road safety, public rights of way, drainage and transport systems across West Sussex.

In July, we officially opened two new sections of dual carriageway on the A259. The £29.5m scheme is helping to reduce journey times between Angmering and Littlehampton, while cutting emissions and supporting commerce.

A combination of extreme weather and limited availability of materials led to a record number of safety repairs needed on our roads. To manage the pressures, we invested £14.5m, brought in an extra Velocity Jet Patcher and prioritised safety works. Teams worked overtime and continued the 'right first time' approach to ensure repairs last longer.

Hosted by our Experience West Sussex Tourism Partnership, the Tourism Symposium in March brought together more than 70 industry representatives in Midhurst to share ideas and plans.

Our ambitious joint bid with partners in East Sussex and Brighton & Hove for a Local Visitor Economy Partnership to boost the visitor economy was approved by Visit England.

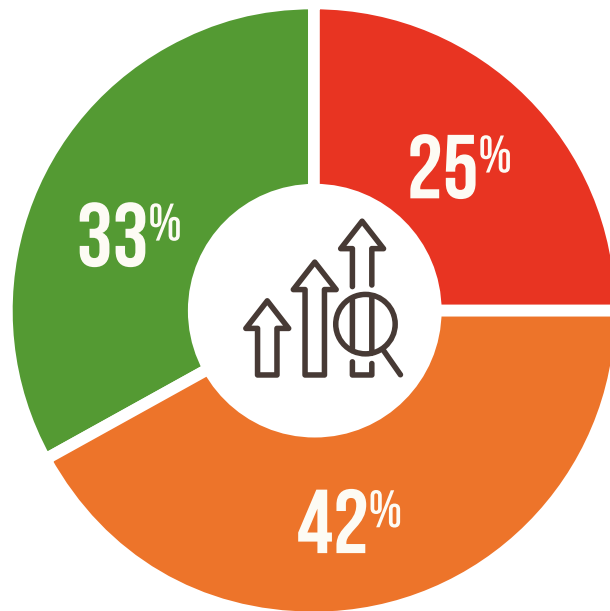
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Completing Manor Royal improvements in Crawley

87%

of highways
defects repaired on time

46,300

reactive safety repairs
carried out to roads across
the county, a record number



£14.5M

invested in year to
maintain our roads



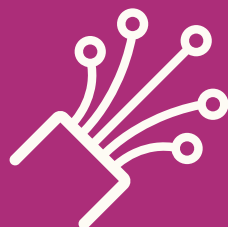
4,616

West Sussex businesses supported
to start, revive, innovate and grow



70%

of premises had access to
gigabit-capable connectivity



26,000m²

of road patching completed by three
jet patchers, removing around 23,000
safety defects from the network



The new look High Street in Littlehampton

Helping people and communities fulfil their potential

Providing opportunities to learn, improve health and feel connected is at the heart of our ambition of helping people and communities to fulfil their potential.

Helping people live independently is at the core of our adult social care strategy. Progress this year included securing £1.2m to innovate support for carers and expand shared lives carer schemes in Sussex, plus winning a national award for our meals on wheels provider. To help reduce the need for long-term care, we will be recommissioning reablement services and continuing to promote strength-based approaches that support and empower people.

We conducted a post-pandemic survey into the wellbeing of our communities, the results of which will help plan Public Health services. Hundreds of people in West Sussex quit smoking this year with help from our support services and promotional campaigns.

All children who applied were offered a school place, with almost 98% of secondary applicants offered one of their first three preferences. We accepted the findings of an independent review into the provision of secondary places in Adur, and our teams are working with schools and partners to ensure there is long-term sufficiency.

The year ended with more than 94% of pupils attending a West Sussex school rated 'good' or 'outstanding' by Ofsted.

Our new model for Adult Community Learning achieved a 'good' Ofsted rating and praise for its 'clear vision for education and skills.' Our Multiply Bus promoted free maths training, and a new Careers Hub launched with partners helped young people into work.

Fire & Rescue Service performance remained strong, with the target for attending critical fires exceeded for the sixth consecutive quarter.

The launch of the new on-demand Book-a-Bus service helped thousands of passengers connect with their communities. It's part of our Bus Service Improvement Programme, which also saw the launch of a discounted bus fare for young people.

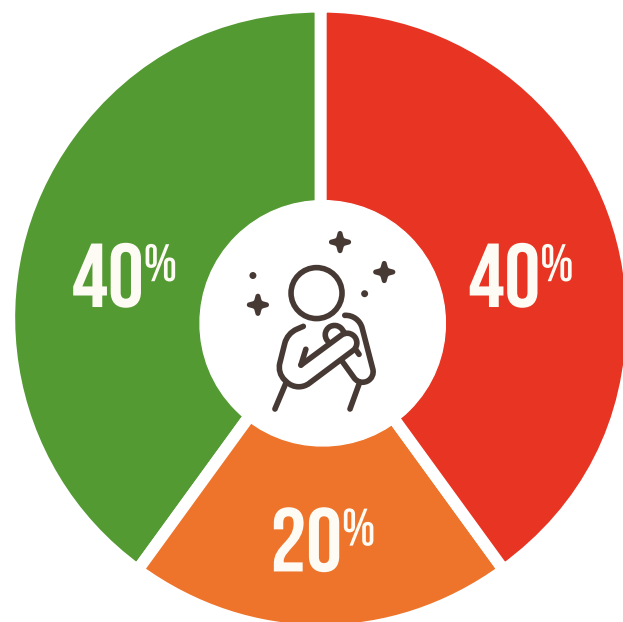
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239

older people completed falls-prevention programmes, reducing the risk of injuries



7.89M

uses of our libraries' digital and virtual services by residents



94.2%

of pupils and students in West Sussex attend a school rated 'good' or 'outstanding' by Ofsted



97.8%

of secondary school applicants offered one of their first three preference schools, up from 96.1% last year



91.7%

of maintained schools in West Sussex rated 'good' or 'outstanding' by Ofsted

Making the best use of resources

Drives to modernise our services and deliver value for money helped us prepare for future challenges and improve outcomes for our communities.

Revenue expenditure this year totalled £719.9m, with an additional investment of £119.3m in our Capital Programme.

Growing demand, complexity of needs and a record number of road repairs put pressure on our social care and highways expenditure.

Our Digital Strategy Programme sought residents' and stakeholders' views to help make the best use of technology and digital ways of working to improve outcomes.

An online system for booking a trip to our recycling centres was rolled out countywide in February. It has already been used millions of times since 2021 and is helping to make the service more efficient.

The drive to support people to self-serve helped reduce the number of calls to Customer Services that could have been resolved online, meaning we can focus resources on helping the most vulnerable.

The Fire & Rescue Service's new state-of-the-art training centre and fire station at Platinum House is modernising our approach

to training and reducing the need for firefighters to travel out of county to test emergency responses.

The service delivered further operational improvements in line with the Community Risk Management Plan including cutting the number of calls out to false alarms.

The budget for 2024/25 was agreed at Full Council in February. The council will invest £2bn to support residents, communities and businesses, including an extra £81.9m of funding for vital day-to-day services.

We plan to spend £131.6m of our £695m five-year Capital Programme, including investments in highways, schools and the environment.

While budget gaps in future years remain, our lobbying of central government resulted in additional funding, which eased the pressure on our reserves.

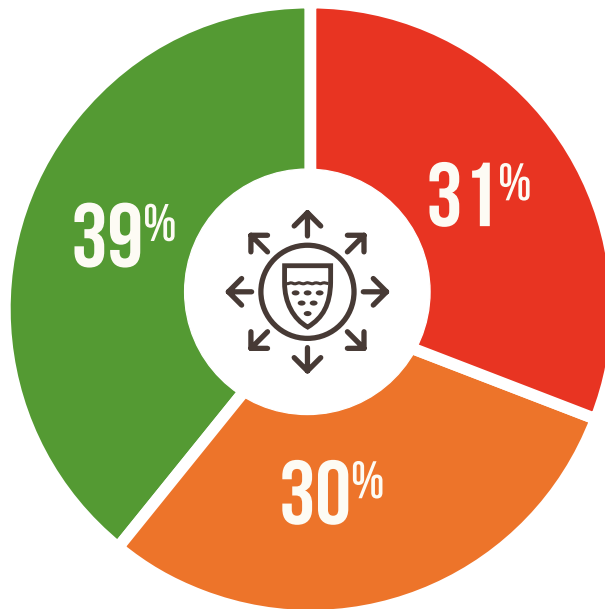
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6,429 

members of county council staff (5,785 full-time equivalents) as of 31 March 2024

90.7% 

of staff agree they are treated with dignity and respect by work colleagues

115,276M² 

of operational property, a reduction of 3.5% from the previous year

2M+ 

visits booked to a Recycling Centre via the online booking system since it was introduced

Protecting the environment

Encouraging positive behaviours, minimising our carbon emissions and planning for nature recovery all formed part of our work this year protecting the environment.

It was a strong year for our Community Food Hub partnership with UKHarvest. The scheme expanded across the county, secured funding for a further 12 months, and the team received a national award for their work preventing tonnes of food waste each year.

Work to promote recycling, reusing and composting household waste is ongoing. The introduction of separating hard plastics and vapes is seeing a positive response. Our campaign and engagement work saw teams speak with almost 5,000 people at 76 events across the county. Over coming years, our Waste Partnership will implement national policies to make recycling simpler.

On our journey to net zero the council received a national award for encouraging companies to invest in clean energy while our Green Business Champions shared their insight to help others.

We committed £5.5m of a total £7.9m to decarbonise county council buildings. Seven libraries, six fire stations and one day centre were renovated in phase one with work to replace boilers, install solar panels and improve insulation.

The third round of the Solar Together Sussex group purchasing scheme attracted a record number of residents wanting to install panels. Since 2020, more than 2,500 systems have been delivered generating a capacity of 11.8 megawatts.

Our efforts to encourage people to leave the car at home and choose more sustainable travel options continued with projects promoting walking and cycling, as well as £420,000 worth of improvements to streets around schools and three trials in Arundel, Shoreham and Worthing focusing on school-run alternatives.

The next phase of plans to install electric vehicle chargepoints across West Sussex got underway, and with partners we launched new bus services and secured £10m of government funding for a fleet of hydrogen buses for the South East.

This year was the tenth anniversary of funding hundreds of flood prevention schemes through Operation Watershed, and work started on a Local Nature Recovery Strategy for West Sussex after the council was appointed a responsible authority.

29,948 

equivalent tonnes of CO2 emissions
produced by council activities, a
reduction of 11.4% from 2019/20

51% 

of all household waste recycled,
re-used or composted

10.5km 

of new cycle infrastructure

2,500

systems delivered through
Solar Together since 2020

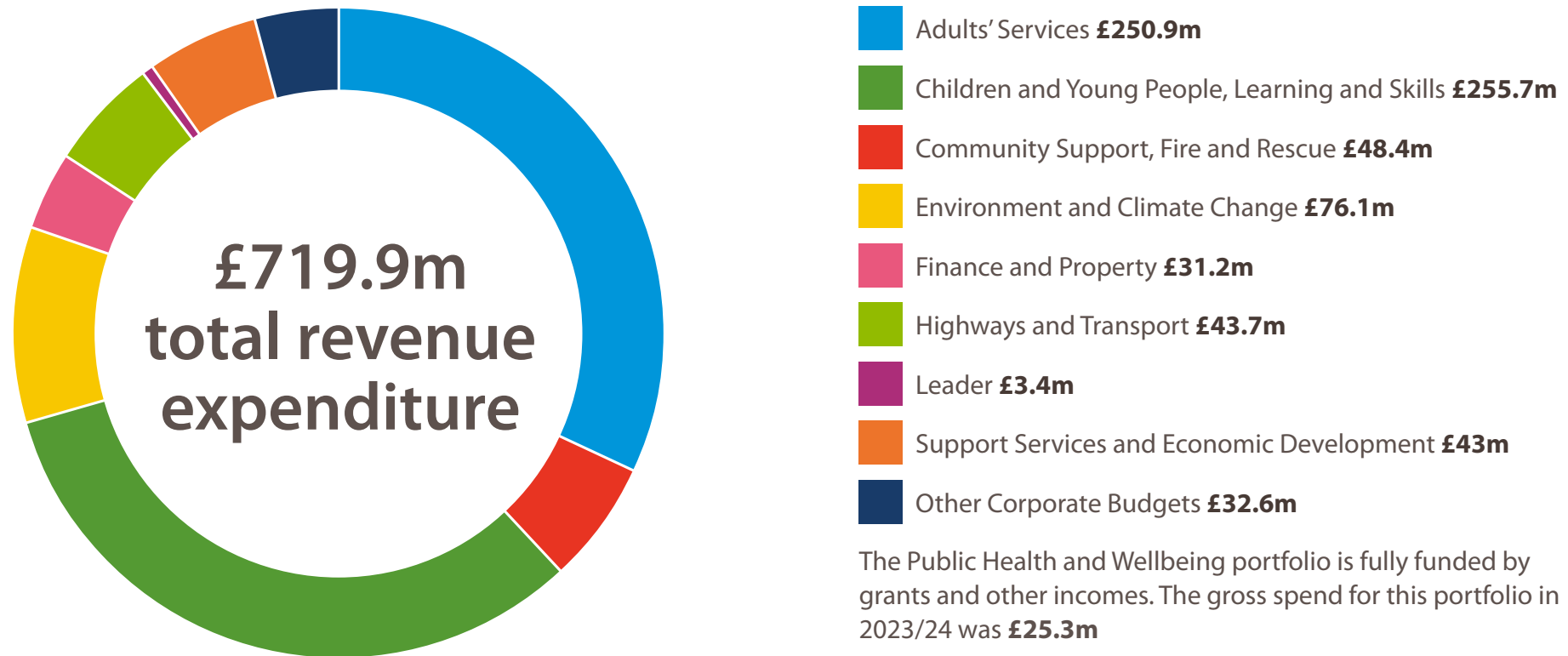
£6.5m

launch of three-year programme to
upgrade traffic signals and crossings
with LED technology

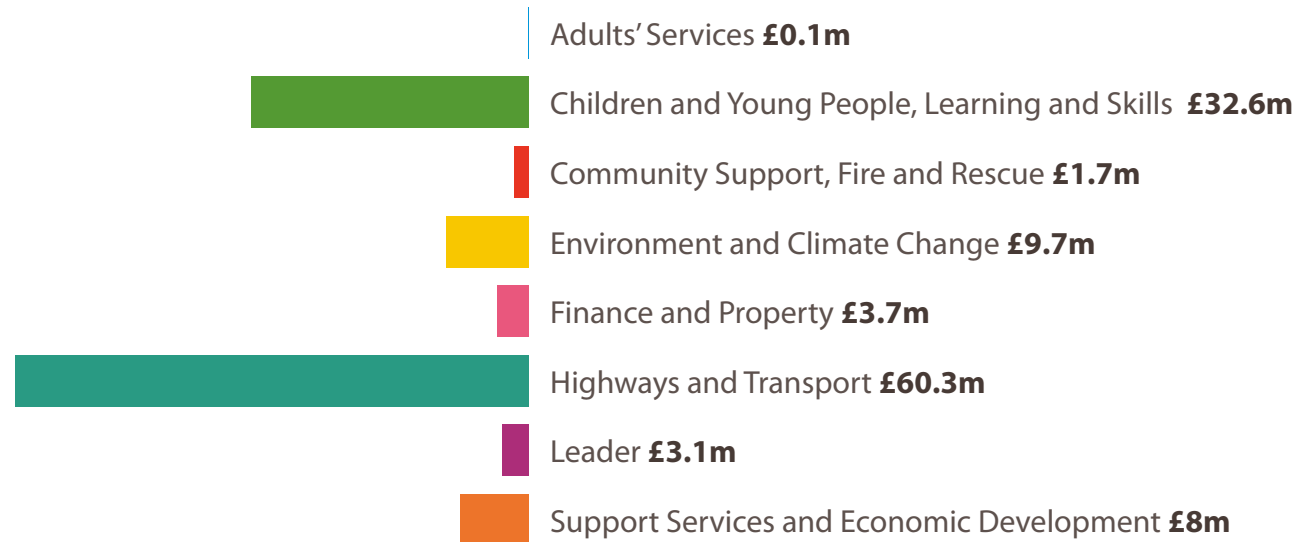


Our expenditure for the year 2023 to 2024

How we spent your money



Our total portfolio capital expenditure for the year 2023 to 2024



Total £119.3m

Our Cabinet

The county council is made up of 70 councillors (sometimes called members), who are elected every four years to represent one electoral division in the county.

Functions are allocated to councillors across the full council, to members of the Cabinet and members of a range of committees. Many functions are delegated from the Cabinet and committees to officers.

The West Sussex Cabinet (also known as the 'Executive') currently has nine members selected from the Conservative majority. The Cabinet proposes the key policy decisions for the council, which are subject to agreement by the full county council.

Each member is allocated a portfolio of work for which they take personal responsibility. Most decisions will be made by Cabinet members individually.



Paul Marshall
Leader of the
County Council



Duncan Crow
Cabinet Member for
Community Support,
Fire and Rescue



Joy Dennis
Cabinet Member
for Highways
and Transport



Jeremy Hunt
Cabinet Member for
Finance and Property



Amanda Jupp
Cabinet Member for
Adults' Services



Bob Lanzer
Cabinet Member
for Public Health
and Wellbeing



Jacquie Russell
Cabinet Member
for Children &
Young People,
Learning and Skills



Deborah Urquhart
Cabinet Member for
Environment and
Climate Change
(and Deputy Leader)



Steve Waight
Cabinet Member for
Support Services
and Economic
Development

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View of Ouse Valley Viaduct, Haywards Heath

