General Development Principles

3

Introduction

3.1 This Local Plan sets out detailed policies and specific proposals for the development and use of land, and consequently will guide most planning decisions. This chapter highlights basic principles for development which proposals should meet and describes the use of development boundaries as a policy tool.

DEVELOPMENT CRITERIA

3.2 In making decisions on planning applications, the Council will consider the proposed development against the relevant policies and proposals put forward in this Plan. Whilst specific policies and proposals on various developments and land uses are put forward in the relevant chapters, there are a number of common principles for development which it is considered development proposals must meet in order to be acceptable. These are derived from Government guidance (through Planning Policy Guidance Notes and Circulars), from precedent and best practice.

3.3 In this regard the general planning criteria against which development proposals will be considered are contained in the following policies:

- layout and design (Policy EN27)
- landscaping (Policy EN14)
- traffic, access and public transport (Policy TR3)
- car parking (Policy TR16)
- disabled access (Policy EN28)
- surface and foul water drainage (Policy CS2)

DEVELOPMENT BOUNDARIES

3.4 The Council has adopted the use of 'development boundaries' to make a clear distinction between town or village areas where certain forms of development may be appropriate and the rural area where, normally, the protection and enhancement of the countryside is of paramount importance. Structure Plan policies propose the definition of development boundaries for towns and villages where appropriate.

3.5 Development boundaries define the areas where, in principle, new development would be permitted subject to other proposals and policies in this Plan. New development will generally be contained within the development boundaries.

3.6 Outside the development boundaries, the Council will resist development in accordance with the Plan's more restrictive countryside policies, seeking to conserve and enhance the rural environment, although certain forms of development may be allowed such as the re-use of rural buildings and land in the interests of the rural economy and low cost housing for local need. New housing, industrial or commercial development will not be allowed outside the development boundaries unless provided for through the specific policies of the Local Plan.

3.7 The Plan's policies therefore are expressed in the terms of either within or outside the development boundaries or Plan wide. References to the 'countryside' or the rural area in this Plan refer to the area outside the development boundaries, which will include the smaller settlements without such a boundary.

3.8 It is important to note that the development boundary is a policy line applying Structure and Local Plan policies to a specific area, thereby giving a sound basis for development control decisions. It does not attempt to define town or village limits in physical or social terms.

3.9 Development boundaries have full regard to the physical and landscape characteristics of the particular settlement. They are only drawn after a careful examination and consideration of such features on the ground. Development boundaries will often exclude existing development on the periphery of the town or village; this represents a clear statement of policy that normally no further development should be permitted in order to preserve the landscape and environmental quality of such fringe areas. It is in these areas that the gaps and open nature of development are often a major contributing feature to the overall rural character of the area.

GD1 Within the development boundaries, as defined on the Proposals Map, new development will be permitted provided that it is in accordance with the other policies and proposals in the Plan.

GD2 Outside the development boundaries, as defined on the Proposals Map, development will be resisted unless it is in accordance with specific policies in this Plan.

Environment

4

Introduction

4.1 The environmental qualities of the District, its unspoilt villages and coast, attractive countryside, rich architectural heritage and range of flora and fauna are all highly valued and enjoyed by residents and visitors alike. There is a considerable diversity of environments, ranging from the highly wooded High Weald to the rolling chalk hills of the Sussex Downs, both of which are formally designated Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and of national landscape importance. Traditional land use patterns and forms of built development add to the distinctiveness of local environments and provide a strong 'sense of place'.

4.2 The planning system is an important instrument for protecting and enhancing the environment in town and country, preserving the built and natural heritage and conserving the rural landscape. Local planning policies which seek to maintain the District's environmental qualities and protect them from inappropriate development are well established. This Chapter addresses how these policies should be carried forward.

4.3 In addition, the Plan must have regard to broader environmental concerns, such as global warming and the consumption of non-renewable resources. This recognises that development may have longer term implications on the wider environment as well as on its immediate physical environment. The Plan therefore seeks to provide a land use planning framework for 'sustainable development'. In fact, the Plan's policies have been evaluated to assess their contribution, or otherwise, to ensuring that future development is environmentally sustainable. This process is summarised below and in a separate 'Environment Appraisal' of the Plan.

STRATEGY

4.4 Care for the environment, both built and natural, lies at the heart of the Plan's strategy, as set out at Chapter 2. While it is necessary to make adequate provision for development and change, this is set firmly in the context of maintaining and enhancing the environmental qualities of the area and according with the principles of sustainability.

4.5 It is important to protect areas of high landscape quality, notably Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, together with other areas recognised for their important historic and nature conservation value. It is also necessary to accommodate change in rural as well as urban areas. The Plan aims to facilitate such change in a manner that ensures that the existing valued qualities of the natural environment are respected and maintained.

4.6 A high quality of built environment is similarly important. Particular emphasis is placed on historic buildings and areas, as well as historic parks and other important open areas within and between settlements. An accordingly high quality of new development is expected. The character and amenity of existing development should always be respected and, where appropriate, enhanced. In accordance with the Plan's overall strategy, specific environmental objectives are defined; these are:-

(1) to promote appropriate forms of sustainable development taking account of the need for energy efficiency, pollution control and conserving finite resources;

(2) to conserve the important and distinctive landscape, historic, architectural and visual character and appearance of towns, villages and the countryside, including their flora and fauna;

(3) to maintain the development pattern and the character of settlements and their settings, including important open areas between and within them;

(4) to ensure that development and change do not detract from the valued environmental qualities of the locality;

(5) to encourage high quality in new development, in harmony with the environmental character of the area.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

4.7 Sustainable development is that which provides for the needs of the future, including improvements to the quality of life, in a way which minimises damage to the global as well as local environment. It has regard to issues such as global warming and ozone depletion, the use of non-renewable resources and the production of pollutants and wastes, as well as change to the physical environment and wildlife habitats.

4.8 The 'Earth Summit' in 1992 agreed a strategy - AGENDA 21 - setting out how countries will work towards the protection of the local, national and global environment. In response, the Government has produced its own 'Sustainable Development: the UK Strategy (1994)' and local authorities are initiating Local Agenda 21 processes to achieve action through

partnership at the local level. The Council has already addressed and reviewed the impact of its services on the broader environment and has brought these together within a published 'Strategy for the Environment'.

4.9 The Government has identified the role local planning authorities can play in achieving more sustainable development in its White Paper: 'This Common Inheritance' and in a number of recent planning policy guidance notes. These look to local plans to promote land use patterns and transport facilities that are resource and energy efficient, in particular which reduce environmentally damaging traffic emissions, promote energy efficient building designs and waste minimisation and provide scope for greater use of renewable energy sources and recycling. Also, policies should not deny future generations the best of today's natural and built environment, including through the protection of important landscapes and habitats, water and air quality.

4.10 These various aspects of sustainability are considered separately below and in other chapters of the Plan. However, it is also appropriate to set down an overall policy which reflects the desire for sustainable development, defined as improving the quality of life within the carrying capacity of supporting ecosystems, since this is central to the Plan's strategy.

EN1 The Council will pursue sustainable development, having regard to the principles contained in Government guidance and its own Strategy for the Environment, in considering the location, layout and design of development, renewable energy and waste management proposals and in assessing the effects of proposals on the environment, including on water and air quality.

Development pattern and transportation

4.11 Sustainability considerations generally point towards encouraging a distribution of land uses that reduces the need to travel, especially by car, and hence reduces CO^2 emissions in particular. Planning Policy Guidance Note 13: Transport provides advice as to how transport and land use planning should be integrated, with particular regard to reducing environmentally damaging traffic emissions. It proposes that more emphasis is placed on various means of managing the demand for transport and encouraging alternatives to the car. It recognises that more dispersed development tends to be less efficient in transport terms and that uses such as shopping and business should aim to be near public transport facilities.

4.12 Government guidance therefore promotes development within existing urban areas in locations highly accessible to means other than the private car, commenting that this is especially important in respect of major generators of travel demand. This approach also emphasises supporting the community, shopping and employment roles of existing local centres in both urban and rural areas. In order to reduce commuting by car and encourage other means of transport, local housing and employment growth should be well related to each other. Also, an unnecessarily strict division of homes and workplaces may be inappropriate while home-working should be facilitated where it would not impact adversely on local amenities.

4.13 Locally, the established development strategy, continued in this Plan, generally accords with this sustainable approach. It seeks to concentrate new development in the towns, with some growth in certain villages and more restrictive policies elsewhere in the countryside. The substantial existing housing commitments in the District reflect this approach, and are considered to enable efficient access to goods and services without unnecessary increase in demand for transport and road space or a degradation of environmental quality. Therefore, any change to the pattern of future development implied by existing commitments would be inappropriate. Furthermore, no major new developments are proposed in the Plan which would significantly change this pattern.

4.14 Nonetheless, all large developments and those which generate large number of traffic movements should be located so as to reduce the need to travel and encourage the use of public transport and rail freighting facilities. It is recognised that within rural areas, development inevitably generates proportionally more car traffic than that in urban areas due to lesser public transport and poor accessibility to many facilities. However, set against this, development in villages may support valuable local services and otherwise help maintain viable communities.

EN2 The Council will seek to maintain the existing settlement pattern and ensure that major new developments generating significant travel movements are located efficiently in relation to existing development and to public transport.

4.15 The Plan's transport policies are contained principally in Chapter 9. These recognise that road improvements which are necessary for economic and quality of life reasons must be sensitive to their landscape and environmental impact; such considerations therefore receive policy attention. Moreover, the Plan is promotional in terms of improvements to the public transport system and to facilities for cyclists and pedestrians, with a number of specific policies and proposals.

Energy

4.16 The environmental implications of the generation and use of fuel for energy consumption are threefold. It involves the use of non-renewable resources, principally fossil fuels, the emission of greenhouse gases and other pollutants and has a physical impact on the landscape. Government stresses the need for plans to promote energy conservation, through encouraging energy efficient modes of travel and forms of building and to consider the potential for renewable energy sources. Accordingly, the Council encourages measures to minimise overall energy consumption in the consideration of the layout, design and construction of buildings.

4.17 The Government's planning policy approach to renewable energy, as set out in Planning Policy Guidance Note 22: Renewable Energy states that it wishes to stimulate the development and use of renewable energy resources wherever they have prospects of being economically viable and environmentally acceptable. Local authorities are also charged with taking account of local, regional and national requirements in terms of renewable energy exploitation, and must consider the contribution that their area can make in meeting those needs. However, the harnessing of some forms of renewable energy can have adverse local impacts, often of a landscape or ecological nature, by virtue of their locational requirements and physical form.

4.18 A Department of Transport and Industry led study has assessed the potential for renewable energy exploitation in the South-East. The most likely areas of potential relate to power from wood and crop residues, reflecting the high level of agricultural activity and woodland/forestry cover, solar power, although with small scale application, and wind power. In relation to wind power, while the area does not have the wind speeds of the west of the country, locally, winds are greatest on the high ground of the South Downs and the ridges of the High Weald. However, these areas are also environmentally most sensitive and development should not compromise their unique landscape character, as recognised by their national designation as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The stark landform of the Sussex Downs in the District would be especially vulnerable to the effect of wind farms. Consideration may be given to the possibility of siting off the coast.

EN3 The Council will support the development of renewable forms of energy, particularly those which reflect the existing land use pattern of the area, where it is demonstrated that there will be an acceptable impact on local amenities and environmental character.

Waste Management and Recycling

4.19 Waste Management is increasingly being regarded in sustainability terms. Government policy is to place more emphasis on, respectively, waste reduction, reuse and recovery, including recycling, as well as on generating energy from waste disposal, either by solid waste combustion or harnessing landfill gases. East Sussex County Council is the Waste Planning Authority and Waste Disposal Authority. The Environment Agency is the Waste Regulation Authority. The County Council has prepared the non-statutory East Sussex Waste Strategy jointly with Brighton and Hove Council, which provide the overall policies to enable the County Council to carry out its various responsibilities for dealing with waste, in partnership with others, and to prepare the more detailed plans for waste required by law.

4.20 The Waste Strategy proposes a more sustainable approach to waste management based upon a hierarchy of options in an integrated approach in which the order of preference will normally be reduction or minimisation of waste, reuse of products and materials, recovery of resources by recycling, composting and energy recovery, with disposal of remaining waste to landfill as a last resort. Borough and District Councils have sole responsibility for collecting the County's household waste and are responsible for the majority of household waste and recycling. In this Plan, the policy commitment to pursuing sustainable development in considering waste management proposals relates primarily to the District Council's own responsibilities for the provision of recycling facilities in line with its Recycling Plan. Waste management and disposal is discussed further in Chapter 12.

Pollution control

4.21 There is extensive pollution control legislation administered by a number of organisations including the District Council. PPG23 Planning and Pollution Control advises that local planning authorities should not duplicate controls which are the statutory function of these other bodies. However, it also advises that planning decisions should take account of potential pollution in considering land use proposals. To ensure effective environmental protection and co-ordination, pollution control authorities are consulted on relevant individual applications.

Water resources

4.22 Planning decisions should have regard to water resources in several ways. They need to consider the availability of supplies to meet development requirements, the impact of climatic change on water levels and, hence on the location of development, as well as the need to conserve valuable water resources and environments. The provision of any new strategic water resources should be compatible with

environmental policies and take account of the potential for water conservation measures.

4.23 There are general concerns about the long term effects of global warming on coastal defences and the associated risk of flood inundation into low-lying areas. Locally, part of the Coastal Levels inland of Pevensey Bay is identified by the Environment Agency as vulnerable to deep tidal flooding. There are proposals for enhanced sea defences, as discussed in the Pevensey Bay Chapter; until such works are carried out, it is prudent to restrict further development in areas at risk. Similar considerations apply to land close to eroding cliffs and to development that would prejudice river floodplains. Information on the extent of river floodplains and areas at risk of tidal flooding is provided by the Environment Agency.

EN4 New development will be resisted within areas at risk of deep tidal flooding, coastal erosion or within river floodplains.

4.24 Regard is given to overall water supply in Chapter 12. It is particularly important when considering new development to ensure that adequate water supplies are available and that such resources, whether in watercourses, aquifers or other water storage areas, are not likely to be unacceptably prejudiced. The Environment Agency's advice will be sought in appropriate circumstances.

EN5 New development will only be permitted where adequate water resources are available and where it would not present an unacceptable risk to such resources.

LANDSCAPE CONSERVATION

4.25 Landscape quality makes a particularly important contribution to the essentially rural character of the District. It derives, in part, from its geology, being based largely on the ancient anticline of the Weald. The High Weald is characterised by an intricate network of well-wooded ridges and valleys, giving way to the more open and gently undulating Low Weald. This, in turn, ends abruptly in the scarp slope of the imposing Sussex Downs, which culminate in the dramatic cliffs of the Seven Sisters and Beachy Head. To the east of Eastbourne, the flat, low-lying expanse of the Coastal Levels provides a further contrast of distinct landscape type.

Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty

4.26 Both the High Weald and the Sussex Downs are designated as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty by the Countryside Commission. Their extent in Wealden is shown on the Proposals Map. Alongside National Parks, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty represent the finest countryside in England and Wales. The primary purpose of designation is to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the Area. Government guidance recognises that the siting of major development in the Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty would normally be inconsistent with the aims of designation, and that only proven national interest and lack of alternative sites can justify an exception. Account should be taken of the needs of agriculture, forestry, other rural industries and the economic and social needs of local communities. Provision is accordingly made for appropriate small scale development by the respective policies of the Plan. Unlike National Parks, promoting recreation is not an objective of designation, but the demand for recreation should be met so far as this is consistent with the conservation of natural beauty and the needs of agriculture, forestry and other uses. In order to secure this part of our landscape heritage, development should be carefully controlled.

4.27 As a statutory designation, it is not open to the Council to amend Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty boundaries, even though apparent anomalies, perhaps because of subsequent development, exist. The Countryside Commission has indicated that there is no early review of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty boundaries planned and incremental amendments are not favoured. However, these anomalies are taken into account in the exercise of development control.

Other Important Landscapes

4.28 Certain landscapes are acknowledged as valuable by non-statutory designations. The undeveloped coastal area between Beachy Head and Seaford Head is designated as 'Sussex Heritage Coast' for its scenic importance. Ashdown Forest has a special status, being the subject of a specific Act of Parliament to protect and manage its environmental character.

4.29 Woodland prevails over a significant area of the District. 'Ancient woodlands' which have existed since 1600, are identified by English Nature as being of particular ecological importance as well as historic landscape value. Agricultural land is the other dominant land use; indeed, the pattern and nature of farming has been and continues to be a major influence on the appearance and character of the countryside. Certain traditionally farmed areas which are of landscape, historic and wildlife value and are also sensitive to pressures of agricultural change have been designated Environmentally Sensitive Areas by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, including a large part of the Sussex Downs.

4.30 Generally, while Government guidance, notably Planning Policy Guidance Note 7, places less emphasis on the productive capacity of land, it still attaches considerable weight to safeguarding the best and most versatile land and, moreover, recognises that the countryside should be safeguarded for its own sake. The pattern of agriculture, together with woodland, is integral to this character. Hence, they should remain the dominant land uses in the countryside. Also of particular significance in the countryside are those areas which, through their relative remoteness from main urban centres and principal lines of communication, have remained relatively unspoilt and retain a traditional pattern of activities.

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS

4.31 As indicated earlier, there are considered to be four basic landscape types across the District - High Weald, Low Weald, Sussex Downs and Coastal Levels. These are illustrated on Figure 3. Their respective principal landscape characteristics are highlighted in turn below. They provide the background for general planning policies and management approaches for each area, as well as a context for the consideration of particular types of development. Policies for specific forms of development in the countryside are considered separately in Chapter 5. Development within settlements is considered in the respective town or village chapter.

4.32 It is considered that the fundamental identification of landscape characteristics should not seek to distinguish between urban and rural areas because of the continuity of landscape and the interaction between the two. It is acknowledged that variations exist within the principal landscape areas. This is most evident in respect of Ashdown Forest which because of its particular landscape characteristics creates a distinctive sub-area within the High Weald. Also, it is recognised that most landscape areas are not discrete. For example, the southern slopes of the High Weald display a gradual transition into the Low Weald.

HIGH WEALD

4.33 Wealden's High Weald covers 45,500 hectares, nearly one-third of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which was designated in 1983. It extends into four Counties, from Horsham in the west to the cliffs at Fairlight, east of Hastings.

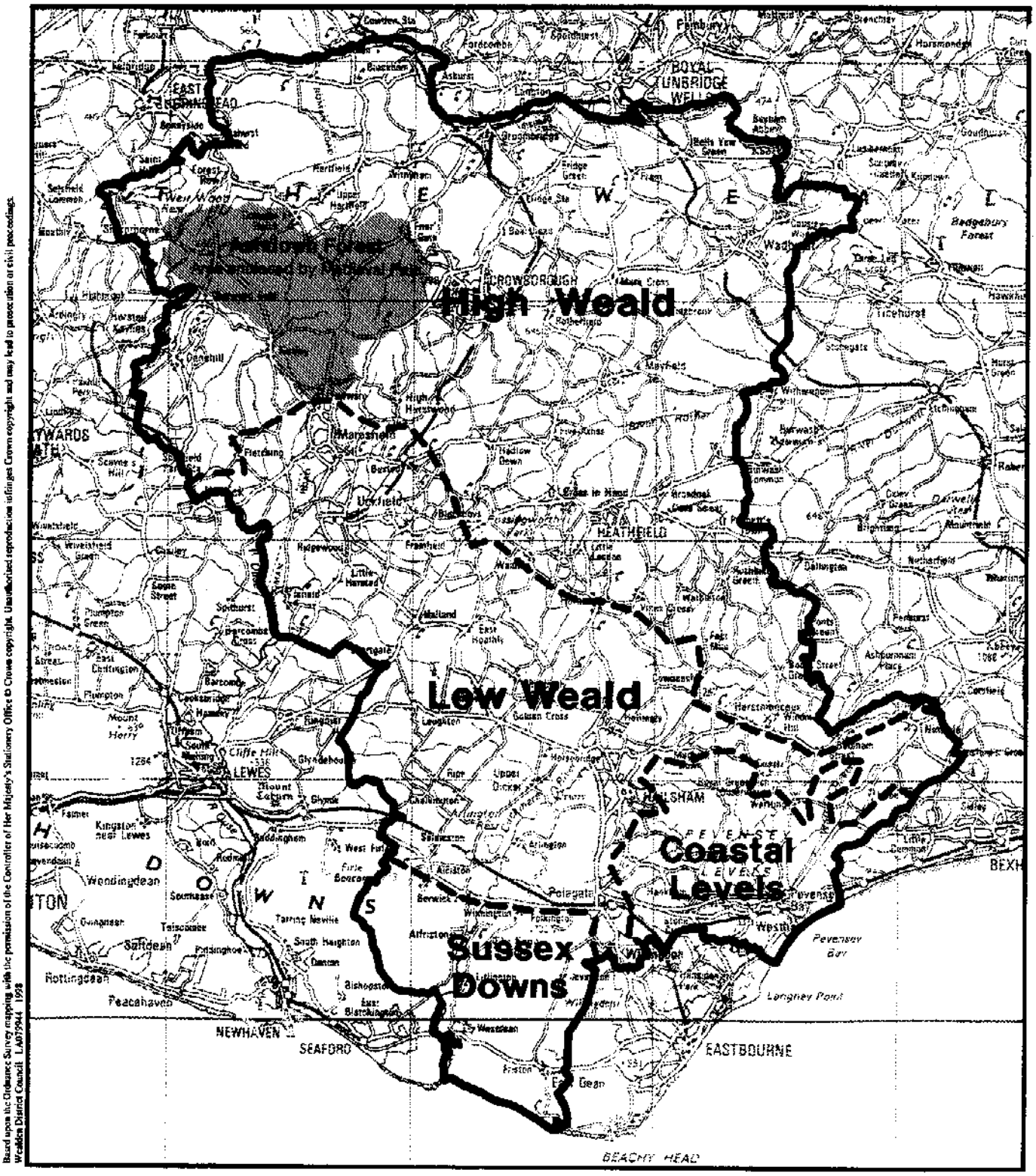
4.34 The distinctive topography of the High Weald is formed from sands and sandstones intermingled with clays in the centre of the ancient Wealden anticline. This results in a hilly country of ridges and valleys. The major ridges run roughly east to west, and two main 'Forest Ridges' can be identified. These main ridges are deeply dissected by streams into a close network of smaller ridges and valleys, or ghylls, giving the relief a highly intricate appearance. Many of these valleys are steep-sided and bands of harder sandstone sometimes form weathered outcrops within them, as seen around Waldron and Groombridge for example.

4.35 The vegetation of the High Weald accentuates its physical character. It is still well wooded, with some large mixed and coniferous woodland areas on the hillsides, the steep valleys and ghylls often being thickly wooded. There are also countless small woods and copses, ridgeline and roadside tree belts and hedges, wooded banks and hedgerow trees. Occasional pines also stand out as distinctive features in ridge positions. These combine to give a heavily wooded appearance. Much of the woodland is remnants of the dense Wealden Forest that gave the area its name.

4.36 Notwithstanding its wooded appearance, higher vantage points reveal a close patchwork of small fields patterning the rolling ridges and valleys. Grassland is pre-eminent, but still with significant areas under arable production.

4.37 A number of landscape character areas have been identified, originally in the Statement of Intent, in the County Trees and Woodland Strategy, and most recently, through the comprehensive landscape

Landscape Character Areas



Wealden Local Plan

Figure 3

This plan is for illustrative purposes only, and does not form part of the Proposals Map.

0 5 10 kilometres

Not to scale

assessment entitled "The High Weald – Exploring the Landscape of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty" (Countryside Commission 1994). This latest and most comprehensive assessment provides a particularly valuable supplement to the broad landscape information in this Plan and has been endorsed by this Council. The most distinctive of these sub-areas is the heathland landscape of the Ashdown Forest. Because of its particular history, and vegetation and overall sensitivity, this is given separate consideration below. Elsewhere, the Upper Rother Valley is much a broader and relatively more open valley than others, including the adjoining Dudwell Valley.

4.38 The pattern and appearance of built development is also distinctive. Settlements have typically developed on the ridges and other high ground. The main lines of communication also follow the ridgelines. Crowborough occupies a pronounced hilltop position, while Heathfield straddles the South Forest Ridge. The valleys are correspondingly far less developed. There are many attractive villages as well as country houses and farms with buildings traditionally of Wealden stone and brick; weatherboarding and tile-hanging are also prevalent.

4.39 The objectives and principles for the approach to the co-ordinated management of the High Weald landscape which were set out in the Statement of Intent (June 1988 revision) have been reviewed and elaborated upon in The High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan (September 1995). This is an advisory document produced by the High Weald Forum, of which this Council is a partner member. It primarily promotes an integrated and positive approach to landscape management based on a strategic view of the whole area.

4.40 In line with the purpose of designation, it is necessary and appropriate to conserve and enhance the natural beauty through both positive management measures and judicious control of development. Government policy and Structure Plan Policies, most notably S19, seek to particularly carefully control development and change in Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. This should relate to the location and scale, as well as layout and design of development.

EN6 Development within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, as defined on the Proposals Map, will only be permitted if it conserves or enhances the natural beauty and character of the landscape. Particular care will be paid to the siting, scale, layout and design of development. In considering any proposals, particular regard will be had to:-

(1) the landscape characteristics of the sub-areas identified in the High Weald landscape assessment;

(2) the well-wooded appearance, especially Ancient Woodlands, together with other woods, tree belts and hedges;

(3) undeveloped steep valleys and ghylls;

(4) open heathland;

(5) undeveloped ridge positions and other visually exposed locations;

(6) areas of unspoilt or remote character;

(7) the traditional settlement pattern, building styles and materials;

(8) the High Weald Management Plan.

Ashdown Forest

4.41 Ashdown Forest incorporates the largest area of land in the South East of England which has never been under the plough. Much of the woodland was cleared for agriculture and to produce charcoal for the iron industry and kept open by grazing. There are a number of archaeological remains associated with earlier activities. Today the Forest is mainly open lowland heath covered with heather, bracken, gorse and grasses. Remnants of woodlands remain, consisting mainly of oak, beech and birch together with landmark clumps of scots pine. Tree cover is greater around the edges of the Forest and in the valleys and ghylls, with pine scattered over the heathland. The Forest's elevated position and broad open ridges afford outstanding views, notably towards the Sussex Downs. There are few buildings; scattered houses and lodges are located mainly around the edges.

4.42 In accordance with the County Structure Plan, local planning policies for Ashdown Forest apply to the whole area enclosed by the boundary of the Medieval Pale of 1372, but excluding land within the development boundaries of Fairwarp, Forest Row and Nutley. This area was once a royal hunting forest bounded by a bank and ditch, known as the Medieval Pale and covers 5,260 hectares. Approximately half of this area is now commonland managed by a Board of Conservators in accordance with the Ashdown Forest Act 1974, which renewed an earlier Act of 1885.

4.43 Freehold ownership of the area covered by the Act, amounting to some 2,500 hectares, has been acquired by a Trust set up by East Sussex County Council with contributions from Wealden District Council and others.

4.44 The Board of Conservators has a Management Plan for the area covered by the Ashdown Forest Act, which was last reviewed in 1993. The Council

supports this Plan. Also, as Local Planning Authority, the Council has an important role to play in the conservation of the Forest by the control of inappropriate development. Additional protection is afforded to the area managed by the Conservators and some private land within the Pale due to its international nature conservation value. It is designated as a Special Protection Area (SPA) under the E.C. Directive for the Conservation of Wild Birds, as well as being a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

4.45 The open nature, vegetation and history of the Forest, underlined by the special consideration afforded by its SPA and SSSI status within the High Weald, make most forms of development inappropriate. The Forest is a valuable recreation resource within the District, but its landscape and character are particularly susceptible to encroachment and erosion. The approach to recreational development on Ashdown Forest is set out in Chapter 5, while traffic management is considered in Chapter 9.

EN7 The Ashdown Forest is defined on the Proposals Map as the area enclosed by the Medieval Pale of 1372, excluding land within the development boundaries of Fairwarp, Forest Row and Nutley. Development will only be permitted if it conserves the landscape and historic character of this area. In considering any proposals, particular regard will be had to:-

(1) extensive open heathland areas;

(2) wet flush grassland;

(3) remnants of Ancient Woodland, together with other landmark tree clumps;

(4) unspoilt and distant views;

(5) the Ashdown Forest Management Plan;

(6) the landscape characteristics of the Ashdown Forest area identified in the High Weald Landscape Assessment;

(7) the archaeological interest.

LOW WEALD

4.46 The Low Weald essentially lies between the High Weald and the Sussex Downs. Its gently undulating topography is formed from the softer underlying Wealden clays. On the fringes of the High Weald, sandstones produce small ridges and occasional outcrops, while towards the Downs the topography is flatter. The landscape is accordingly more open than the High Weald. A few large woods, many small woods, hedgerow trees and field boundary hedges punctuate a primarily agricultural landscape of traditionally mixed arable and pastoral farming.

4.47 Streams and ghylls flow south from the slopes of the High Weald feeding the River Cuckmere and the River Uck, the latter in turn flowing into the River Ouse. Uckfield to the north lies close to the High Weald, while Hailsham is on the edge of the Low Weald where it gives way to the Coastal Levels. Similar landscape characteristics exist within a belt extending eastwards between the Coastal Levels and the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

4.48 Whilst not covered by a national landscape designation, the Low Weald is nevertheless a very attractive countryside and contains a number of unspoilt villages, historic buildings including moated houses together with a preponderance of vernacular buildings. Away from the main towns and the A22 and A267, it is crossed by a lattice of narrow country lanes which has contributed to a general lack of intrusive or extensive development. Overall, the area retains a strong rural character. This character is evident in the many views across the Low Weald from the higher land to the north and south. The area beneath the scarp slopes of the Sussex Downs is particularly exposed and accordingly sensitive to change.

4.49 There has been considerable growth in recent years of the Low Weald towns in particular, as well as in certain other settlements and along the main road corridors. However, elsewhere the character of the countryside is largely unspoilt. It is almost universally attractive and worth retaining for its own sake. Accordingly, development should be expected to fully comply with the appropriate policies of the Plan.

EN8 Development within the Low Weald will only be permitted if it conserves the low rolling agricultural character of the landscape. In considering any proposal, particular regard will be had to:-

(1) areas of unspoilt and remote countryside;

(2) the setting of settlements;

(3) areas on the fringe of adjacent statutorily designated landscapes;

(4) the retention of woods, boundary trees and hedges;

(5) attractive vernacular buildings and groups of buildings.

SUSSEX DOWNS

4.50 The Sussex Downs comprise the length of the chalk downland through East and West Sussex

traversing the south-western coastal part of the District before terminating at Beachy Head near Eastbourne. They were designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in 1966. The area of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty extends into the margins of the adjacent Low Weald at the foot of the Downs, which act as a foil to the scarp slope.

4.51 The Downs are characterised by the bold rolling landform of the chalk hills. The striking north-facing scarp slope rises sharply from the Weald. Beyond this, more gentle slopes extend toward the sea, finishing in the dramatic cliffs of the Seven Sisters. The slopes contain a number of coombes and dry valleys that give the Downs their characteristic sculptured appearance.

4.52 The landscape primarily comprises large, hedgeless fields, mainly in arable use, resulting in an open stark appearance. The little remaining traditional Downland turf, which is of particular wildlife importance, is mostly on the scarp face. A return to grazing is being encouraged as part of the management regimes and incentives associated with the designation of much of the Sussex Downs as an Environmentally Sensitive Area. Indeed, small round dewponds for watering sheep are a traditional recurring feature. There are small areas of scrub and woodland, but the past woodland cover has been lost by clearance. The beech and coniferous plantation of Friston Forest is a significant exception to the general openness. Lullington Heath, a chalk heathland, is designated as a National Nature Reserve in recognition of its scarce habitat type.

4.53 Between Eastbourne and Seaford the Downs have been cut by the lower reaches of the River Cuckmere to form a broad alluvial valley. The massive meander close to its mouth at Cuckmere Haven is an outstanding natural feature. Inland, the valley contains many water meadows dissected by ditches. In contrast with the surrounding Downland, trees and tree groups are more in evidence along the valley sides and around settlements, although the area was badly affected by the 1987 gales.

4.54 Alfriston, situated on the bank of the River Cuckmere, functions as a local service and tourism centre while smaller, neighbouring Alciston is a 'spring-line' village. East Dean and the more elevated Friston are more residential in character. There is little built development on the Downs themselves. The vernacular flint walls of buildings and enclosures, with red brick dressings, are still very much in evidence, especially in the many smaller Downland villages and the historic cores of Alfriston and East Dean. Scattered agricultural buildings are also often of traditional construction, generally located in more sheltered situations. The Downs have a strong cultural heritage which is reflected in the numerous archaeological remains.

4.55 In recognition of the considerable sensitivity of the landform and landscape of the Sussex Downs, and the pressures upon them, the Sussex Downs Conservation Board was established in 1992. The Board comprises representatives of the local authorities together with interested organisations. Its objectives reflect those of Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty designation. A Management Strategy was published following consultation in 1996 and has been endorsed by the District Council.

4.56 The Conservation Board commissioned "A Landscape Assessment of the Sussex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty" which was published in March 1995. This elaborates upon the various landscape types and highlights issues and priorities for landscape management. This has also been endorsed by the Council.

4.57 In line with the purpose of designation, it is necessary and appropriate to conserve and enhance the natural beauty through both positive management measures and judicious control of development. Government policy and Structure Plan Policies, most notably S19, seek to particularly carefully control development and change in Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. This should relate to the location and scale, as well as layout and design of development.

EN9 Development within the Sussex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, as defined on the Proposals Map, will only be permitted if it conserves or enhances the natural beauty and character of the landscape. Particular care will be paid to the siting, scale, layout and design of development. In considering any proposals, particular regard will be had to:-

(1) the characteristic sculptured landform and appearance;

(2) the exposed scarp slope and adjacent foothills;

(3) the undeveloped coastline, especially the Heritage Coast;

(4) the Cuckmere Valley, especially Cuckmere Haven;

(5) traditional land uses and agricultural practices;

(6) the setting of important historic and natural features;

(7) well-managed public access;

(8) the traditional forms, materials and detailing of buildings and enclosures, notably the use of flint in walls;

(9) other landscape qualities and characteristics identified in the Sussex Downs Landscape Assessment;

(10) the Management Strategy for the Sussex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

4.58 The Council's approach to various development pressures, including recreation and tourism activities, other commercial and residential proposals in the villages as well as in the countryside of the Sussex Downs is set out in subsequent chapters.

Sussex Heritage Coast

4.59 The coastline of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty between Eastbourne and Seaford inland to the A259, which is essentially undeveloped and of outstanding scenic importance, has been designated 'Sussex Heritage Coast' by the Countryside Commission. The definition covers the downland in the District between the coast and the A259, and extends beyond to include Beachy Head to the east and Seaford Head to the west.

4.60 The objectives of designation, as set out in PPG20, which is non-statutory, are to conserve, protect and enhance the natural beauty of the coastline, including its important habitats and distinguishing built features, and to facilitate recreational use insofar as this is consistent with long term conservation. Regard should also be had to water quality and to the economic and social needs of local people. In that the Heritage Coast lies within the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and, in part, is a Site of Special Scientific Interest, the objectives of those statutory designations apply with equal weight here.

4.61 Heritage Coast designation is regarded as providing a flexible management tool for balancing the requirements of conservation and access in the coastal zone. The Government has stated in its planning policy guidance on Coastal Planning (PPG20) that Local Plan policies for the Heritage Coast should relate to both their protection and enhancement, and that it will seldom be appropriate for new development to be located on the undeveloped coast.

4.62 This section of the Heritage Coast includes Birling Gap, which provides facilities for visitors including access to the beach, and the Seven Sisters Country Park covering 280 hectares on the east side of Cuckmere Haven. The Country Park provides public access for quiet enjoyment whilst also pursuing conservation and agriculture objectives. A range of visitor facilities are provided at Exceat. However, further commercialisation would be detrimental to the essential natural charm of the locality. The conservation and study of the marine flora and fauna of the Heritage Coast is promoted by the establishment of the Seven Sisters Voluntary Marine Conservation Area.

EN10 Within the Sussex Heritage Coast, as defined on the Proposals Map, the Council will resist new development. It will support proposals, including management measures, which facilitate public access for the purposes of the quiet enjoyment of the area where such proposals are consistent with conservation, protection and enhancement of the natural beauty.

Any sea defence works must be consistent with the objectives of designation, in particular to conserve, protect and enhance the natural beauty of the coast.

COASTAL LEVELS

4.63 For the greater part, this is an extensive open area of former marshland, reclaimed in medieval times to facilitate grazing, which still retains a peculiarly untouched character. Today it is criss-crossed by an extensive network of well maintained 'drains' or ditches, which affords scope for arable farming, although it is still mostly permanent pasture. Where the Levels meet the coast, a low shingle bank has formed, behind which Pevensey Bay has grown up. Inland, the villages of Stone Cross, Westham and Pevensey have developed on a low, irregular east-west ridge which extends from Polegate through the Levels towards Pevensey Castle.

4.64 The Coastal Levels are not a single entity but a collection of several Levels. The Pevensey Levels, comprising several smaller Levels, extend to the north of these villages towards Herstmonceux and Hailsham to the west. The Levels to the south of the low ridge - Mountney Level, Langney Level and Willingdon Level - are similarly low-lying but somewhat less remote in character as development has encroached from adjacent higher ground, particularly by the eastward spread of Eastbourne.

4.65 Being essentially flat, with virtually no natural tree cover, the landscape is extremely visually exposed. The openness of the Levels provides the historic setting for the ridge villages and Pevensey Castle. Also, around the edges of the built-up area, they are important in maintaining the separation of those villages from Eastbourne, as well as an amenity and recreation resource for the urban area.

4.66 The Pevensey Levels is for the greater part designated as an Site of Special Scientific Interest. This area of some 3,500 hectares is particularly valuable as a habitat for migrating birds as well as for the flora and

fauna associated with the drainage ditches. Accordingly, the Government has proposed that the Pevensey Levels becomes a Wetland of International Importance under the provisions of the Ramsar Convention. Part of the area is also a National Nature Reserve. This is designated by English Nature, which is also promoting a scheme to encourage environmentally sensitive farming on the Levels.

4.67 Although the Coastal Levels does not benefit from any formal recognition of its landscape value, its openness and patchwork of fields created by the extensive system of drains is distinctive. Moreover, the traditional land uses, unspoilt and virtually undeveloped landscape and other historic associations are considered to constitute a remote, very rural character of particular beauty and charm. The County Structure Plan draws attention to the 'wetlands of the Pevensey Levels' in Policy CA/EN1 which sets out to conserve the landscape, natural resources, woodland and agriculture of the rural areas in determining development boundaries.

4.68 Development in the Coastal Levels needs, for the greater part, to be very carefully controlled because of the potentially substantial visual impact over a wide area. Built forms within the Levels themselves inevitably tend to be incongruous. Concern also exists about the use of the land for various recreation and leisure activities. This is most evident in the more remote areas. Also, many activities may impinge adversely on the nature conservation value of a large part of the area.

4.69 While those Levels adjoining the built-up areas do not have the same environmental qualities, allied to remoteness, that others possess, they are important in forming the setting of settlements and providing strategic gaps between them. This role is recognised by County Structure Plan Policy CA/EN2 in respect of the open undeveloped gaps between Eastbourne, Pevensey, Westham, Stone Cross, Pevensey Bay and Polegate.

EN11 The Council will seek to ensure that development proposals within the Coastal Levels conserve its generally open and exposed landscape character, with particular regard to:

(1) the Pevensey Levels Site of Special Scientific Interest and candidate Wetland of International Importance.

(2) other remote areas;

(3) the setting of Pevensey Castle, the Pevensey and Westham Conservation Area and the ridge villages;

(4) promoting environmentally sensitive farming;

(5) the traditional hydrology of the area.

4.70 In recognition of the landscape value of the Coastal Levels, it is proposed that a planning and management statement be prepared following consultation with local community interests. This should identify the principal landscape features and character of the Levels worth conserving, important views and other amenity considerations. Guidelines for the management of the area, including land use, will be provided consistent with the above general policy for the area.

4.71 As the Levels extend into adjacent Districts and are particularly important as part of the setting of Eastbourne, close liaison would be sought. It is envisaged that this could parallel a joint study with Eastbourne Borough Council into the strategic gap area between Eastbourne and the surrounding settlements of Polegate, Stone Cross, Westham, Pevensey and Pevensey Bay and also cover the land north of Eastbourne Park defined by Policy PW5 in Chapter 16. The Borough Council has suggested this, also recognising that some of the land lacks visual appeal. The study would examine how best to manage the area to retain its open countryside aspect. The prime objective would be that the land should remain as open countryside. A Catchment Management Plan for the Pevensey Levels is currently being prepared by the Environment Agency, and which will embrace a Water Level Management Plan. Due regard will be paid to these, where relevant, taking account of the consultations undertaken and any formal resolution by the Council.

TREES, WOODLAND AND LANDSCAPING

4.72 The Weald, particularly the High Weald, is a well-wooded landscape. Indeed, its trees and woodland cover are integral to its natural beauty and diversity. It is estimated that between 15% and 20% of Wealden's area is woodland. This includes 10,000 hectares of 'ancient woodland sites'. The overriding character of woodland is broadleaved; the dominant species are oak, birch, ash, hornbeam and sweet chestnut. There is also a significant amount of plantation forestry which is largely coniferous. The nature of tree cover in each landscape character area is discussed in the previous section. In view of their widespread landscape importance, as well as being the basis of a vital rural industry, it is considered essential to retain and enhance existing tree and woodland cover.

4.73 Woodland areas and tree groups often adjoin settlements and make a particular contribution to their setting, either screening or softening the visual impact of development from the countryside, as well as providing a natural backcloth which helps integrate the

built-up area within its countryside setting. It is considered important to ensure the retention of trees and woodland areas in such rural fringe locations.

4.74 Within built-up areas, semi-mature and mature trees can contribute significantly to the overall quality of the environment, providing a natural setting for buildings or views. Indeed, they help integrate development into the landscape. Treed areas can also provide wildlife havens and can afford privacy or screening. The retention of such landscape features is therefore normally sought. As expressed in Chapter 11 of the Plan, wooded areas also have a valuable role in terms of their recreational and amenity potential.

4.75 In order to protect trees and woodland areas that contribute significantly to the local environment and its enjoyment by the public, Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) may be served. More particularly, trees may be worthy of preservation for their intrinsic beauty or for their contribution to the landscape; or because they serve to screen future development or an existing eyesore. The value of trees may be enhanced by their scarcity, and the value of a group of trees or woodland may be collective only. For a reasonable degree of public benefit to accrue, trees should normally be visible from a public place. The effects of a TPO are to require permission to top, lop or fell trees so covered. There are presently approaching 1,000 TPOs in force throughout Wealden, some protecting specimen trees, other covering tree groups and woodland areas. Trees in Conservation Areas are similarly protected.

4.76 A Trees and Woodland Strategy for East Sussex was published by the Woodland Forum for East Sussex in 1990. The District Council is represented on this and has formally endorsed its principles and guidelines. This Strategy addresses the recent decline in both the quality and quantity of woodland resulting from natural disasters, most notably Dutch Elm Disease and the October 1987 storm, and from human pressures and neglect. Losses have occurred in characteristic small woodlands, shaws, shelter belts, hedgerow trees, historic parkland and other groupings, such as in ghylls and along ridgelines.

4.77 The variation in tree species and pattern of woodland across the County and within the District is recognised in the Strategy. By defining detailed landscape areas, guidance is provided on selecting trees that grow satisfactorily in the location and are appropriate to that area. It also highlights the manner in which trees are characteristically integrated into the local landscape. The application of the Strategy at the local level by the development of local Trees and Woodland Conservation and Management Plans is promoted.

4.78 It is appreciated that the conservation of a large proportion of woodland will depend upon its commercial value. Indeed, forestry activities are a traditional industry within the rural economy and may develop further, particularly as land comes out of agricultural production. Hence, it is appropriate to encourage forestry/woodland enterprises and the use of traditional local timber products. Simple neglect is itself a cause of woodland decline; the Council supports schemes which promote positive woodland management and offer incentives to farmers and others to plant woodland trees as well as restore hedgerows. Participation in these, such as the Woodland Grant Scheme, is commended in principle. Woodland planting/management may also be secured as part of development proposals and be regarded within the scope of Policy EN14 below. A considerable contribution to countryside conservation is made by the voluntary sector, and the Council will continue, where appropriate, to support bodies such as The Woodland Trust, The British Trust for Conservation Volunteers and The Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group.

EN12 The Council will seek to retain and enhance the contribution of trees and woodland areas to the landscape character of the District, including the amenity value of trees in built up areas. This will be promoted by:-

(1) endorsement of the principles and guidelines contained in the Trees and Woodland Strategy for East Sussex;

(2) support for the preparation of local Trees and Woodland Conservation and Management Plans;

(3) encouragement for woodland management through participation in tree and hedgerow planting schemes by farmers, voluntary organisations and others, and where appropriate, as part of development proposals;

(4) making Tree Preservation Orders where appropriate to protect trees and woodland areas of significant amenity value;

(5) giving weight to proposals, including business proposals, that help to sustain and manage forestry and woodland areas when considering them against other policies of the Plan;

(6) resisting development proposals which would result in the loss of trees which make a valuable contribution to the character of the landscape, a settlement or its setting.

Ancient Woodlands

4.79 There are a number of ancient semi-natural woods in the District where there has been continuous tree

cover since at least 1600. The location of these is identified by English Nature in its 1989 Ancient Woodland Inventory for East Sussex. Such woodland represents the closest approximation to natural broad-leaved forest to be found in Britain and is therefore the most ecologically valuable. A common feature of many such woods is a substantial natural element in their ground flora, underwood and canopy species. In order to maintain these areas, selective or group felling as part of normal woodland management may be appropriate, but clear or complete felling of a designated woodland would not be readily acceptable. Similarly, such woodlands should be protected against developments that would threaten to seriously damage their ecology. This accords with County Structure Plan Policies S12 and S27.

EN13 The Council will resist development proposals that involve the clear felling or otherwise prejudice the ecology of Ancient Semi-Natural Woodlands, as defined by English Nature.

Landscaping

4.80 The Council's desire to achieve high standards of design and appearance in new development extends to landscaping, both planting and hard surfacing. This recognises the role that landscaping can play in enhancing the appearance of new development. Therefore, landscaping aspects should properly be considered as an integral part of the formulation of a development proposal. Particular regard to landscaping proposals will be appropriate in relation to prominent sites, large scale developments, rural fringe locations and other areas of a sensitive landscape character. Also, landscaping may be used to reduce the apparent massing of large buildings, such as industrial developments, or to break up large urban spaces, such as car parks. In all such cases, a sufficient level of landscape design should accompany applications to enable the visual impact of the development as a whole to be assessed, and the submission of further details may be made the subject of planning conditions.

4.81 New housing developments can benefit considerably from effective landscaping, either around its edges, along thoroughfares or in amenity or other open areas, as well as within curtilages. It is vital that adequate allowance is made for trees to grow without pressure for frequent lopping. This applies to existing trees as well as new planting. It is also important to ensure that trees, including their root systems, are adequately protected during development.

4.82 Planting proposals should normally aim to incorporate existing site features, such as trees and hedges, and maximise the use of native species in order that new development can be sensitively integrated within the landscape. Regard should also be had to potential nature conservation benefits, such as establishing 'wildlife corridors'. Careful consideration needs to be paid to practical aspects, including the relationship to underground services, proximity to buildings when fully grown and associated overshadowing and structural effects. Planting should be carried out as early as possible, before development commences where practicable, or otherwise in the first planting season thereafter. Proposals for the future management of landscaped areas may well be appropriate, and the Council would normally require replacement during the period while planting becomes established. This period will depend on the type and size of stock to be planted.

EN14 In appropriate cases, the Council will require landscaping, including surface treatments, to be carried out as part of development proposals. Where required, such schemes should:-

(1) seek to retain existing trees, significant hedgerows and other valuable site features;

(2) normally comprise primarily native species;

(3) complement the scale and character of the proposed development and the locality;

(4) have regard to associated nature conservation benefits;

(5) be implemented at the earliest practicable opportunity and thereafter satisfactorily maintained during the early years.

NATURE CONSERVATION

4.83 Government guidance in PPG9 : Nature Conservation emphasises its commitment to conserving the natural heritage, including the sound stewardship of wildlife through the protection of the habitat on which it depends. This commitment is expressed both in the principal legislation, notably the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, as well as in European and other international obligations.

4.84 English Nature has a statutory function to designate and advise upon areas of biological and geological significance, and to help safeguard these areas from development and conflicting land uses. Sites of outstanding biological and geological importance are designated Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs). Some SSSIs which are primarily used for nature conservation and are managed accordingly are designated as National Nature Reserves (NNRs). Sites of international importance may be designated

under the Ramsar Convention, relating to wetland areas, or under E.C. Birds or Habitats Directives.

4.85 Two areas within Wealden are of international nature conservation interest. Ashdown Forest SSSI is designated as a Special Protection Area (SPA) under the EC Birds Directive, while Pevensey Levels SSSI is a proposed Ramsar Site. There are also two National Nature Reserves. These are at Lullington Heath and Pevensey Levels, as shown on the Proposals Map. There are twenty-nine SSSIs, of which by far the largest is Pevensey Levels SSSI covering 3,500 hectares. In addition, by declaring sites as Local Nature Reserves, local authorities are able to help to safeguard the areas from development which could be detrimental to their intrinsic biological or geological importance. There are five Local Nature Reserves at Arlington Reservoir, Weir Wood, Old Lodge - Nutley, Seven Sisters Country Park and West Park - Uckfield; all of these, except West Park, lie within SSSIs. There are also several other non-statutory nature reserves managed by bodies such as the Sussex Wildlife Trust. A Voluntary Marine Conservation Area has been designated along the Heritage Coast.

4.86 Protection to the designated areas is afforded through Structure Plan Policy S12, while Policy S17(c) and Policy S27(c) extend this to encompass other areas regarded as being 'of demonstrable wildlife importance'. This acknowledges that many valuable semi-natural areas which have not been given statutory designation may be defined as being important wildlife habitats and geological sites, or local 'Sites for Nature Conservation Importance' (SNCIs). Nearly 100 SNCIs have now been formally designated within the District, although it is not regarded as an exhaustive listing of important wildlife sites beyond those statutorily designated. The dossier of sites is held by the District Council.

4.87 East Sussex County Council has agreed the principle of preparing a Nature Conservation Strategy for East Sussex which, when progressed, will provide a broader framework for local planning and development control considerations of ecological factors, as well as for the establishment of Local Nature Reserves and for drawing up management agreements.

4.88 Protection should be afforded for both formal and informal designated sites, having regard to their international, national or local significance. In addition, PPG9 highlights the value of undesignated sites and features which provide wildlife corridors, links or stepping stones from one habitat to another. The Council will continue to give consideration to nature conservation in the exercise of its development control function. This includes the impact of proposals on important habitats such as woodland, heathland, water meadows, unimproved pasture, marshes, streams, ponds or parks. Proposals should aim to provide for their retention, restoration and future management, as well as consider the potential for habitat creation.

EN15 The Council will seek to safeguard designated nature conservation sites by resisting development or land use changes which would be likely to adversely affect their nature conservation value.
The weight to be afforded to nature conservation interests will have regard to their status:-

(1) Within Ashdown Forest SSSI and Special Protection Area for Birds, and Pevensey Levels SSSI (proposed "Ramsar" site), development which would be likely to have an adverse effect on the nature conservation interest will not be permitted, unless otherwise in accordance with international obligations.

(2) Within SSSIs, including Lullington Heath NNR, as shown on the Proposals Map, development which would be likely to have an adverse effect on the nature conservation interest will not be permitted unless there is no reasonable alternative means of meeting the development need which also outweighs the nationally recognised nature conservation interest.

(3) Development which would be likely to have an adverse effect on a Local Trust Reserve or a Site of Nature Conservation Importance will not be permitted unless it can be demonstrated that the need for development outweighs the identified nature conservation interest and that there are no reasonable alternative means of meeting that development need.

In all cases, every effort should be made to minimise any damage to the nature conservation interests. Where appropriate, conditions and/or planning obligations may be used to provide appropriate compensatory measures.

EN16 In the consideration of any development proposal, including its design and layout, the Council will have regard to the implications for nature conservation and wildlife habitats. Particular regard will be had to the need to safeguard the active residence of protected species, to the integrity and continuity of landscape features of major importance for wild flora and fauna, and to appropriate

opportunities for encouraging habitat protection, enhancement and management.

IMPORTANT COUNTRYSIDE GAPS

4.89 It has been a longstanding planning aim to contain the sprawl of the urban areas, to safeguard surrounding countryside from unnecessary encroachment and to prevent neighbouring settlements from merging. This broad principle is expressed in County Structure Plan Policy S12(b) which states that the location of development will be governed by, inter alia, preventing development which would reduce strategic and important gaps between settlements. Policy CA/EN2 applies this general policy locally, seeking to prevent coalescence of settlements, including between:-

(1) Polegate and Hailsham;

(2) Eastbourne, Pevensey, Westham, Stone Cross, Pevensey Bay and Polegate;

(3) Hailsham and Hellingly;

(4) Uckfield and Maresfield;

(5) Forest Row and Ashurstwood.

4.90 The protection of these and other important gaps represents an additional constraint over and above normal countryside policies. Inclusion of land within a gap is based on its contribution to the separation between settlements. Therefore, they need not necessarily follow development boundaries, although for the areas under consideration they are found to coincide. It is proposed to subsequently define the lateral extent of identified countryside gaps through the publication of supplementary planning guidance following public consultation. However, in the interim, Policy EN17 will provide an adequate basis for determining whether individual proposals would impinge on a countryside gap.

4.91 In addition to the gaps identified above, there are certain other settlements in the District where the open countryside separating them is particularly vulnerable to development pressures that would tend to erode their separate identities and their rural settings. Whilst the Uckfield-Maresfield gap is specifically referred to in the County Structure Plan policy, the Council also attaches importance to preventing the coalescence of Uckfield with Five Ash Down, either by the development of open land or intensification of scattered and ribbon development.

4.92 The past expansion of Heathfield has lessened the break between it and the surrounding villages of Cross-in-Hand, Broad Oak, Cade Street, Old Heathfield and Maynards Green. These gaps are particularly sensitive, being visually exposed within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Previous planning policy has acknowledged the significance of these areas and it is considered that specific protection from development should continue to be expressed.

4.93 Elsewhere, the gap between Rotherfield and Town Row was identified in the deposit North Wealden Local Plan as one where any intensification of existing scattered development would erode their separate identities as well as be intrusive in this sensitive Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty location.

4.94 Some agricultural development or conversion of farm buildings may be compatible with this policy and could therefore be approved. Where there is a conflict between this policy and policies in Chapter 5, it may be overcome by careful attention to siting and design. In considering whether the impact on the gap is acceptable, regard should be had to the benefit to agriculture or the rural economy.

EN17 Development will not be permitted which would reduce countryside gaps between the following settlements:-

(1) Polegate and Hailsham;

(2) Eastbourne, Pevensey, Westham, Stone Cross, Pevensey Bay and Polegate;

(3) Hailsham and Hellingly;

(4) Uckfield, Maresfield and Five Ash Down;

(5) Forest Row and Ashurstwood;

(6) Heathfield and Cross-in-Hand, Broad Oak, Cade Street, Old Heathfield and Maynards Green;

(7) Rotherfield and Town Row.

OPEN AREAS WITHIN SETTLEMENTS

4.95 Open, undeveloped areas within settlements often make an important contribution to their character and local amenities, as well as any functional value, such as for recreation. They may take the form of village greens, ponds, parks and gardens, playing fields, churchyards or small woodlands for example, as well as farmland and private gardens. Such areas can also provide refuges, including for wildlife. This role is emphasised where such areas are linked with each other and the surrounding countryside to form 'wildlife corridors'.

4.96 The value that such open spaces and gaps in development can have to local amenity and character is

reflected in national concern about town and village 'cramming'. Their retention and enhancement receives expression in County Structure Plan Policies S13(b) and S15(e), relating to towns and villages respectively. While the value of such areas in individual settlements is reflected where possible in the drawing of development boundaries (see Chapter 3), the fact that they are sometimes within the boundary does not diminish their importance.

EN18 The Council will resist the loss of open areas and undeveloped gaps within settlements which contribute to the character or amenities of the locality.

CONSERVATION AREAS

4.97 Conservation as an instrument of planning policy is concerned to maintain and improve the visual, architectural and historic quality of the environment and involves the sensitive management rather than the total prohibition of change. Comprehensive policies on conservation are vital in view of the number of attractive villages and historic buildings in the District and the relationship between the buildings and the natural environment that makes the area particularly distinctive.

4.98 Conservation Areas are designated under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 which requires local planning authorities to determine which parts of their District are areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance.

4.99 There are currently thirty three designated Conservation Areas in the District, as shown on the Proposals Map, covering the historic parts of the following towns and villages:

Alciston
Alfriston
Berwick
Cade Street
Chiddingly
Cousley Wood
Danehill
East Dean
East Hoathly
Fletching
Forest Row
Framfield
Frant
Hailsham
Hartfield
Hellingly
Jevington
Litlington
Maresfield
Mayfield
Old Heathfield
Pevensey & Westham
Ripe
Rotherfield
Rushlake Green
Selmeston
Uckfield
Wadhurst
Waldron
Westdean
Withyham
Willingdon, Church Street
Wilmington

4.100 Each Conservation Area has its own particular character and important buildings, groups of buildings, spaces and other features that combine to create its special qualities that form the basis of designation. These are fully amplified in *Designation Reports* for most of the respective Areas which are available from the Planning Department.

4.101 The Council will continue to investigate further appropriate designations as resources permit. When new or extended conservation areas are considered there will be public consultation with Parish Councils, local businesses and local residents on their extent and principal features, and the Council will adopt the guidance set out in Part 4 of *Conservation Area Practice* published by English Heritage. This guidance has been used in the assessments already carried out.

4.102 The character and high visual quality of the Conservation Areas is an important factor in the attractiveness of the District, and it is intended therefore that the conservation of this character and quality will be a prime consideration of this Plan. This is consistent with the County Structure Plan which includes policies to ensure that development does not damage Conservation Areas and, where appropriate, provides for the conservation and enhancement of a building or the area (Policies S13, S15 and S27).

4.103 It is important that proposals for development in Conservation Areas contain appropriate details, with particular regard to layout, design, building materials and other features. Consequently, a full detailed application will normally be required.

4.104 Where the character or appearance of a Conservation Area is likely to be threatened, the Council may also consider bringing minor works to dwelling houses under control by making Directions under Article 4(2) of the General Permitted Development Order to withdraw certain permitted development rights. The Council will give publicity to all such Directions and will take into account representations received before deciding whether to confirm a Direction.

EN19 Within Conservation Areas, proposals which do not preserve or enhance their existing character, scale and visual amenity will be resisted. In particular:

(1) the Council will not normally grant outline planning permission for development in a Conservation Area. A full detailed application showing siting, design, external appearance, landscaping and means of access will normally be required;

(2) proposals to demolish a building or part of a building will be resisted unless it can be shown that it is wholly beyond repair, incapable of reasonable beneficial use, of inappropriate structure or design, or where its removal or replacement would enhance the character or appearance of the Conservation Area. Where development is envisaged demolition will only be permitted where there are approved detailed plans for new development;

(3) any proposals for development should respect the character of the existing buildings, important views and spaces and the historic settlement pattern in terms of scale, height, form, grouping and density, and should preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Conservation Area;

(4) in considering any proposals for development, the Council will require the use of building materials appropriate to the locality and sympathetic to those of nearby buildings. Walls, gates and fences should be of a kind traditionally used in the immediate locality;

(5) the Council will seek to retain, require the reinstatement and encourage the use of traditional features which contribute to the character and appearance of the area. In addition to buildings and groups of buildings, these features will include trees, hedges, walls, fences, gates, open spaces, ground surfaces, lamp posts and other appropriate street furniture;

(6) proposals that would generate traffic, car parking, noise or other activities which would adversely affect the character of the Conservation Area will be resisted;

(7) applications for advertisement consent will only be granted where the advertisement respects the character and appearance of the area and meets highway safety considerations;

(8) the felling or extensive lopping of trees will be resisted. Where consent is exceptionally given, replacement planting with the same species or others in keeping with the character of the area will be required.

4.105 Government guidance in the form of PPG15 states that the desirability of preserving or enhancing conservation areas should also be a material consideration in considering planning application which are outside of a conservation area, but would affect its setting or views into or out of the area. The Council would therefore give careful consideration to proposals adjacent to conservation areas in order to ensure that their character and appearance is respected.

EN20 Proposals for development outside a Conservation Area, but which affect its setting or views into or out of it, should respect its character and appearance.

4.106 In addition, the Council will bring forward schemes for enhancement of Conservation Areas, and will encourage Parish Councils and other appropriate bodies to prepare enhancement schemes for consideration. The availability of technical advice or assistance from the Council would be dependent upon other commitments.

BUILDINGS OF SPECIAL ARCHITECTURAL OR HISTORIC INTEREST

4.107 Buildings which the Secretary of State for the Environment, advised by English Heritage, considers to be of special architectural or historic interest are included on a list under the provisions of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. These statutorily 'listed' buildings represent the best of the nation's built heritage and are subject to specific safeguards and powers to ensure their proper preservation. Government advice on the conservation of listed buildings is contained in PPG15. The County Structure Plan Policies S13, S15 and S27 provide the development plan context for preserving and enhancing listed buildings and their settings.

4.108 The District has a rich heritage of some 2,400 listed buildings of special architectural or historic interest. Some 48 (2%) of listed buildings are classified as Grade I, being of exceptional interest. The majority of these are churches or other former ecclesiastical buildings, such as St Leonard's School, Mayfield, and Michelham Priory. Non-religious buildings include Herstmonceux Castle, Sheffield Park House and the Tithe Barn, Alciston. Groombridge Place, a Grade I listed building set in Grade II* historic parkland, lies adjacent to the District boundary in

Tunbridge Wells Borough. A further 92 buildings in Wealden are regarded as being of more than special interest and are classified Grade II*.

4.109 These buildings should always be preserved and, where necessary, improved. Where such buildings are substantially unused or only partly used, it is important that their potential for rehabilitation and the accommodation of new uses is fully investigated before redevelopment is contemplated.

EN21 There is a general presumption in favour of the preservation of Listed Buildings, and proposals for their total or substantial demolition will not be permitted unless the Council is convinced that:-

(1) all reasonable efforts have been taken to sustain existing, or to find new, uses;

(2) preservation in charitable or community ownership is not possible or suitable;

(3) redevelopment would provide substantial community benefits which would decisively outweigh the loss.

4.110 In order to preserve the character of a listed building, careful attention needs to be given to the area around it as well as to the works involved in any alteration, including the proposed building materials, doors, fenestration and architectural features. It may be appropriate in exceptional cases to relax planning policies or to explore the possibility of relaxing Building Regulations to preserve the listed building.

4.111 Limited grant aid may be available, in accordance with the Council's Buildings Conservation Grant Scheme, for the repair and maintenance of listed buildings and other buildings, structures or features which have importance in a social, historical or landscape sense, and are not normally suitable for residential or commercial use.

EN22 In order to protect the character and appearance of buildings listed as being of special architectural or historic interest:

(1) proposals for any external or internal alteration, change of use, addition to a listed building, or display of signs and advertisements which would have an adverse effect on its character and appearance will be resisted;

(2) all building materials, doors, windows and other architectural features should respect the character and appearance of the listed building;

(3) proposals which would adversely affect the setting of a listed building will be resisted;

(4) in very exceptional cases and where demonstrated to be necessary in order to secure the retention of a listed building, the Council may relax normal development control policies.

HISTORIC PARKS AND GARDENS

4.112 There are a number of parks and gardens in Wealden which are included on the Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest in England, which is prepared by English Heritage. These are:-

Bayham Abbey, Frant (part)	(II)
Buckhurst Park, Withyham	(II)
Buxted Park, Buxted	(II)
Charleston Manor, Westdean	(II*)
Cotchford Farm, Hartfield	(II)
Eridge Park, Frant	(II*)
Groombridge Place (part)	(II*)
Hammerwood Park, Forest Row	(II)
Heathfield Park, Heathfield	(II)
Herstmonceux Castle, Herstmonceux	(II*)
The Hoo, Willingdon (part)	(II*)
Horsted Place, Little Horsted	(II)
Kidbrooke Park, Forest Row	(II)
Old Buckhurst, Withyham	(II)
Penns in the Rocks, Withyham	(II*)
Rotherfield Hall, Rotherfield	(II*)
Sheffield Park, Fletching	(I)
Wadhurst Castle, Wadhurst	(II)
Wych Cross Place, Maresfield	(II)

Details of these properties are given in the Register which is available for inspection at the Planning Department. Their extent is shown on the Proposals Map.

4.113 Whilst not a statutory designation, these parks and gardens are regarded as an essential part of the nation's heritage and should be recognised and

protected accordingly. In appropriate circumstances, this will include their restoration. This is consistent with Structure Plan Policies S17 and S27. The Council will seek specialist advice when dealing with proposals affecting registered parks and gardens, as advised in Circular 9/95.

EN23 Proposals which would adversely affect the site or setting of any registered Historic Park or Garden, as shown on the Proposals Map, will be resisted.

In considering any development proposals affecting a registered Historic Park or Garden, the Council will seek to encourage their conservation and restoration.

ARCHAEOLOGY

4.114 There are some 97 scheduled Ancient Monuments in the District, as well as many other sites of local archaeological interest. It is therefore considered appropriate to provide specific policy guidance. Information on Ancient Monuments is contained in the Sites and Monuments Record for East Sussex compiled by the County Archaeological Officer, who also advises on any proposal likely to affect an archaeological site. It is noted that in respect of scheduled Ancient Monuments, it is the Secretary of State, advised by English Heritage, who compiles the list and gives consent for works to monuments on it.

4.115 Government policy on archaeology is contained in Planning Policy Guidance Note 16 'Archaeology and Planning' published in November 1990. It sets out the Secretary of State's policy on archaeological remains on land and how they should be preserved or recorded both in an urban setting and in the countryside.

4.116 PPG16 states that where nationally important archaeological remains, whether scheduled or not, and their settings are affected by proposed development, there should be a presumption in favour of their physical preservation in situ. Appropriate planning policies in development plans and their implementation through development control will be especially important. Local Plans should include policies for the protection, enhancement and preservation of sites of archaeological interest and their settings.

4.117 The County Structure Plan includes specific policies on archaeology which provide for the protection, investigation and preservation in situ or by record of archaeological sites and areas of interest (Policies S17 and S27). These policies are in line with PPG16 and provide the context for Local Plan policies. These are supplemented by the County Council's 'Strategy for Archaeology in East Sussex' which elaborates on the importance of archaeology, its own role and that of the broader planning process in protecting the archaeological heritage.

EN24 There is a clear presumption against development proposals which would adversely affect scheduled Ancient Monuments and other sites of national archaeological importance and their settings.

EN25 In considering development proposals affecting archaeological sites or areas of interest, the Council will not normally grant planning permission in advance of an adequate examination and evaluation of the archaeological implications.

EN26 Where, exceptionally, permission is granted for development on sites of demonstrable archaeological importance, the applicant will normally be required to provide for the in situ preservation of valuable remains. On sites where the Council is satisfied that this preferred approach is not justified, proper provision should be made for the excavation and recording of archaeological remains prior to the development.

DESIGN

4.118 The Council is concerned to ensure that the attractive environment of its towns, villages and countryside, enjoyed by residents, workers and visitors alike, is maintained and enhanced. It, therefore, attaches great importance to good design in new development, whether within or outside the development boundaries. Developers are expected to aim for a high quality of design in all proposals and early consultation prior to the submission of planning applications is encouraged.

4.119 In the consideration of development proposals, regard will be had to the sensitivity of the design and use of materials in relation to both the immediate surroundings and the general locality. In particular, the scale of the proposals and the proportion of site coverage by buildings should be compatible with that of adjoining developments. The vernacular architecture of the District displays a range of styles and materials, from weatherboarding and tile hanging in the High Weald to the traditional flint and red brick dressings of the South Downs. The design and materials of buildings should normally reflect the local vernacular and promote local distinctiveness. Regard to prevailing building traditions will be an important consideration in historic areas. Policies relating to Conservation

Areas and Listed Buildings are set out elsewhere in this Chapter.

4.120 Development will not be permitted if it would result in the loss of privacy or have an otherwise detrimental effect on the amenities of nearby occupiers. Overlooking of ground floor living rooms or of private gardens will be a particularly important consideration where relevant. Proposals should also ensure the creation of an attractive environment for future occupants and give adequate attention to reducing the opportunities for crime having regard to the guidelines published by the police force in 'Secured by Design'.

EN27 Proposals for development will be permitted when the following layout and design criteria are met:-

(1) the scale, form, site coverage, density and design of the development and the use of materials and landscaping should respect the character of adjoining development and, where appropriate, promote local distinctiveness. The design, materials and landscaping should be of an appropriate high standard;

(2) the proposed development should not create an unacceptable adverse impact on the privacy and amenities of adjoining developments and the neighbourhood by reason of scale, height, form, noise and traffic movements;

(3) the proposed development should ensure a satisfactory environment for the future occupants, including adequate provision for daylight, sunlight, privacy, garden space and/or appropriately landscaped amenity areas;

(4) the proposed development should not constitute an unacceptable backland or 'tandem' form of development;

(5) regard has been paid to crime prevention measures whenever possible and appropriate.

Access for the Disabled

4.121 Within Wealden, around 12% of residents have a limiting long-term illness, health problem or handicap which limits their daily activities or the work they can do, including problems which are due to old age (1991 Census). As outlined in Chapter 2, the Council is committed to creating an accessible environment for all persons, including wheelchair users and people with other disabilities, the elderly, and people with children in pushchairs. The development of land and buildings provides the opportunity to secure a more accessible environment for everyone.

4.122 When a new building is proposed, or when planning permission is required for the alteration or change of use of an existing building, developers should consider the needs of disabled people who might use the building. Indeed, the Council is required to bring to the attention of those applicants seeking permission for premises open to the public their statutory obligations under the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970. The Act requires developers to provide suitable means of access, parking and toilet facilities to meet the needs of people with disabilities in most buildings other than dwellings.

4.123 Under the Building Regulations, which enforce the 1970 Act, a developer will need to consider the needs of the disabled in designing corridors, doorways, lifts and toilet facilities, as well as the spaces around new buildings which will be open to the public. Provision for the disabled should include a level or ramped approach facilitating wheelchair access with dropped or ramped kerbs between pedestrian and vehicle areas, suitable car parking spaces, as well as appropriate signposting of disabled entrances. Regard should also be had to the layout, dimensions and construction of pedestrian areas, and positioning of any street furniture and lighting.

4.124 Comprehensive guidance on the design of buildings and the external environment is contained in the Sussex Coast and Countryside Access Guide produced by the Access Officers of the Borough and District Councils of East Sussex. In the case of alterations to, or change of use of, existing buildings to which the public will have access, the scope to undertake adaptations to provide for the disabled may be more limited by what is practicable and reasonable having regard to the characteristics of building and site. Particular care will be needed for proposals affecting Listed Buildings and other buildings of architectural or historic interest.

4.125 The policy set out below is intended to complement the requirements under the Building Regulations by seeking a co-ordinated approach to design at an early stage, both inside and outside a building. The Council has nominated an Access Officer who acts as a central point of contact for advice and guidance. A reference to the Council's objectives for provision of housing for the disabled is contained in Chapter 6. A policy for disabled provision in pedestrian environments is contained in Chapter 8. The Council's standards for the provision of car parking for the disabled are contained in Appendix 6.

EN28 Proposals for the development of land and buildings that are open to the public or used for employment and education purposes, including extensions, alterations and changes of

use of buildings where reasonable and practicable, should provide suitable access and facilities for people with disabilities.

Light Pollution

4.126 New development within areas which were previously unlit can contribute to 'sky glow' at night which is a form of light pollution. This is caused by the scattering or spillage of artificial light and can be particularly intrusive within a rural environment. Furthermore, it is wasteful of the Earth's finite energy resources and can lead to unnecessary emissions of greenhouse gases. In recent years a number of national initiatives have been launched, such as the 'Campaign for Dark Skies', which have sought to draw attention to the impact of light pollution within the environment and have called for measures for its reduction. The Council fully supports these initiatives, acknowledging the visual intrusion which can be caused in the countryside by the illumination from poorly designed lighting systems.

4.127 It is recognised that in some instances the lighting of buildings is necessary for night-time security or safety reasons. The lighting of certain outdoor recreational facilities, such as golf driving ranges, may also be appropriate when these facilities are used at night. However, in all cases the level and intensity of lighting should be appropriate to the locality and unnecessary light spillage should be minimised. The Council will expect downward directed light systems to be used in appropriate cases which can contribute to minimising light spillage and sky glow. While the lighting of major road junctions is required on safety grounds, they should be afforded sensitive treatment, especially where they involve a change in levels. The Council's policy regarding the environmental impact of overhead lighting within road improvements and new road schemes is contained in Chapter 9.

EN29 In considering development proposals which include external lighting, the Council will require:

(1) light spillage to be minimised;

(2) the use of the minimum intensity of light necessary to be compatible with safety and security objectives.

ADVERTISEMENTS

4.128 Advertisements and signs are generally regarded as essential to commercial and business activity. They may identify the name and nature of a business being carried on at a property, promote products and services, announce events or simply give directions. By their nature, advertisements will be expected to be visible, to attract attention and convey information. However, they can, if insensitively designed or positioned, appear brash, over-dominant or incongruous. This may be to the detriment of the design of a building, the character of the built environment or the appearance of the countryside. They may also impact on highway safety. Such objections can be emphasised where there is a proliferation of advertisements.

4.129 Many signs need the 'express consent' of the Local Planning Authority, although some are either exempt or benefit from 'deemed consent' so long as certain conditions are met. The Department of the Environment's 'Outdoor Advertising and Signs - A Guide for Advertisers' provides a useful guide to the system of advert control, and is available from the Council's Planning Department. Control over advertisements can be exercised in the interests of 'amenity' or 'public safety'.

4.130 It is found that outdoor advertisements can, without close control, be particularly intrusive in certain settings. In the countryside, away from buildings, advertisements will generally appear conspicuous against an open, rural backcloth. The high environmental quality of the countryside, much of which is of national landscape value, emphasises the sensitivity of rural locations. The main road corridors through the countryside are particularly vulnerable to a proliferation of signs and advertisements out of keeping with their rural setting. Within many settlements there are areas of high environmental sensitivity, some of which are recognised by their designation as Conservation Areas.

4.131 Somewhat stricter controls already apply within Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Conservation Areas, and a measure of additional control may be gained through designation of an 'Area of Special Control of Advertisements'. The Council believes that the enhanced protection afforded by such a status is warranted throughout the High Weald and Sussex Downs Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and elsewhere outside the development boundaries of Crowborough, Hailsham, Heathfield, Uckfield and Polegate/Willingdon and Pevensey Bay. It is also considered that in Hailsham and Uckfield Conservation Areas the scale and form of built development and the traditional approach to shop design may warrant tighter control and these areas will be the subject of further investigation. It is therefore the Council's intention, subject to further investigation as necessary, to seek approval from the Secretary of State for the Environment for the designation of these areas as an Area of Special Control of Advertisements. Before seeking approval, consultations will be held with Parish Councils, local businesses, and other interested parties.

4.132 In individual circumstances where an advertisement which is displayed with the benefit of 'deemed consent' is considered to cause substantial injury to the amenity of the locality or a danger to members of the public, the Local Planning Authority may serve a 'discontinuance notice' requiring its removal. The Council may exert judicious use of this power, having regard to the sensitivity of the location.

4.133 The form of acceptable advertisements will always depend on the consideration of individual merits. Consideration should be given to the choice of materials, colour, size and proportion, lettering and illumination as well as the location of advertisements. The subject matter of signage is beyond the scope of planning control. In rural, residential and other areas away from commercial areas, advertisements should generally be more restrained. Traditional materials, such as handpainted lettering, and designs may be more acceptable. Internally illuminated signs tend to appear garish in such locations, particularly where there is no background illumination, such as street lights. Occasionally, attractive signs may be spot-lit to pleasant effect on commercial premises such as public houses.

4.134 It is clearly advisable to have full regard to the signage requirements of a development at the outset. Outdoor advertisements added as an afterthought often appear incongruous and may be unacceptable. Early consideration of the scope, siting and design of advertisements associated with new developments, including conversions, is expected.

4.135 There is specific concern about the proliferation of roadside signs, particularly along main roads in the countryside. Specific reference is given to signs directed at attracting visitors to the area in Chapter 10. Within the highway, it is the County Council's policy, as Highway Authority, only to allow direction signs when needed on traffic grounds and not otherwise. The County Council will be urged to use its powers requiring removal of unauthorised signs on or adjacent to the highway.

4.136 It is acknowledged that more positive guidance on ways in which advertising can be satisfactorily and effectively incorporated into shopfronts, on commercial buildings, business premises and in other circumstances could help everyone involved in their display to ensure they contribute to the appearance and vitality of the environment. It is proposed that such guidance, which would also give greater expression of general policies and thereby ensure consistency, be prepared. This may also cover shopfronts themselves.

EN30 Advertisements and signs should not detract from the character of their surroundings or, where appropriate, the style, scale and proportion of the building, and should otherwise be acceptable in terms of amenity and public safety. In this consideration, the Council will also have regard to the need to avoid an inappropriate proliferation of signs.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

4.137 Developments in telecommunications - that is, all forms of communication by electrical and optical wire, cable and radio signals - are moving apace. The Government has opened up the public communications market, technology is spreading and there is much wider use of telecommunication satellites and mobile radio systems. Satellite television dishes are discussed separately below.

4.138 Government guidelines are contained in Planning Policy Guidance Note 8: Telecommunications. The main issue in relation to telecommunication development and apparatus is its visual impact, potentially from over a wide area. The legislation acknowledges the sensitivity of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Sites of Special Scientific Interest and Conservation Areas, where consultation with the Local Planning Authority regarding certain installations by code licence operators is required. In addition, in considering the sensitivity of particular locations to telecommunications development, regard should be had to the important landscape characteristics of the various areas of the District highlighted earlier.

4.139 In weighing the impact on environmental qualities with the need for reasonable provision, taking account of technical/operational requirements and avoiding radio interference, careful consideration will be given to minimising the proliferation of equipment. Mast sharing can assist in keeping such equipment to a minimum and applicants for large masts will be expected to demonstrate that they have explored the possibility of erecting antennas on an existing mast or other structure.

4.140 It is recognised that, on occasions, telecommunications development, notably masts, will have an appreciable visual impact. Therefore, it is considered reasonable to ensure that such apparatus is removed when no longer required for its approved use. This would be similar to a requirement upon "code system operators" under the Telecommunications Code. It is appropriate to complement this provision, particularly in relation to telecommunications development undertaken by other operators.

EN31 In considering proposals for telecommunications developments, the Council will seek to minimise the visual impact on the landscape and other amenities of the area, whilst acknowledging the need for the reasonable provision and operational requirements of such apparatus. It should be

demonstrated that there is no reasonable possibility of sharing existing facilities. Particular regard will be had to conserving the important landscape characteristics identified in the Plan in the consideration of the location, appearance and landscaping of any mast or associated equipment and buildings.

The Council will consider imposing a condition requiring the removal of masts and/or other apparatus when no longer needed for the approved use.

4.141 The proliferation of telecommunications equipment, including masts, wires, aerials, dishes and supporting structures, may be reduced by installing ducting and other services underground and in buildings. This is strongly favoured by the Council and will be encouraged at the outset of new development proposals. Existing overhead cables - electricity as well as telephone - can significantly detract from the character of the countryside, historic areas and buildings. In such circumstances the relevant operator will be encouraged to use undergrounding methods. The siting of other service equipment may appear similarly incongruous in such settings, as well as in open countryside, and should be sensitively sited and designed.

EN32 The Council will promote appropriate provision for telecommunications equipment to be accommodated underground and within buildings, including existing telephone cables (together with electricity cables) where these are intrusive in areas of landscape, historic or architectural value.

4.142 Satellite television dishes raise similar issues in meeting the needs of changing demands for telecommunication apparatus while preserving the appearance of buildings, particularly the character of individual buildings, and the wider environment of town and country. The size, form, design and colour of dishes can be incongruous, particularly when prominently sited. Accordingly, the relevant legislation requires such dishes to be sited as inconspicuously as possible. This will often mean a position away from front facing walls or roofs, especially in areas or on buildings of notable quality. A very useful summary of the relevant considerations and the circumstances in which planning permission is needed is given in a Department of the Environment booklet 'A Householder's Planning Guide for the Installation of Satellite Television Dishes', which is available from the Council's Planning Department.

EN33 Proposals for satellite television dishes will only be permitted where they have an acceptable and minimal impact on the appearance of the building to which it relates and on the amenities of neighbouring properties. Regard will be had to siting, design and colour and, where appropriate, to the potential for shared dish systems.

Implementation

4.143 All the policies in the Environment Chapter will be implemented by the Council primarily through its development control function.
4.144 In addition, Policies EN5, EN7 and EN9 will be the responsibility of the Council, in part through discussions with the relevant Agency.

Monitoring

4.145 Monitoring the effectiveness of the Environmental policies is clearly more subjective than other policies which can be measured in numeric or more objective terms. The Council will, however, endeavour to monitor and assess the environmental implications of new development, both in physical terms on the natural and built environment and in terms of sustainable development.

Development in the Countryside

5

Introduction

5.1 The countryside is integral to the character of Wealden, yet it is subject to increasing pressure for change. This relates to both development pressures and those brought about by the need to reduce food surpluses within the European Union. These factors are interwoven, as Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) reforms tend to reduce farm incomes and result in land coming out of agricultural production, with consequent pressures to find beneficial alternative uses for rural land and buildings.

5.2 At the same, time there is a wider awareness and appreciation of the attractive traditional rural landscape character of the countryside and its associated nature conservation value. Both residents and visitors enjoy the countryside for informal recreation.

STRATEGY

5.3 Government policies for the countryside are contained principally in Planning Policy Guidance Note 7: The Countryside – Environmental Quality and Economic and Social Development. This states that, as a guiding principle, development should both benefit economic activity and maintain or enhance the environment. It adds that the countryside should be safeguarded for its own sake and non-renewable and natural resources should be afforded protection. More specific policies to integrate these objectives should be determined by local planning authorities in ways which reflect the different types of countryside and the economic and social circumstances found in their areas.

5.4 As Aim 8 of the Plan shows, the Council is committed to helping the rural community through the promotion of new employment opportunities. This must be balanced, however, against the need to protect the landscape and wildlife importance of the District, as set out in other policies in the Plan. It is also essential to promote an efficient pattern of development to meet the Council's commitment to the objectives of sustainable development.

5.5 Although there is now less importance attached to retaining land in productive agricultural use, the Council recognises the need to sustain the agricultural industry, and will resist the loss of the best and most versatile agricultural land. Moreover, there has been an increasing range of other commercial activities in the countryside which make valuable contributions to sustaining a healthy rural economy. Research has shown that many firms are setting up and thriving in countryside locations. Indeed, many of these are now an established part of the rural scene, often utilising former farm buildings. In view of the need to improve the local economy, provision should continue to be made for appropriate diversification, with priority attached to employment generating uses.

5.6 For the purposes of the Plan, countryside policies apply to all areas outside the development boundaries defined in Chapter 3 and GD1 and GD2. Dealing with countryside recreation, the Plan places an emphasis on quiet enjoyment to reflect the high landscape quality and vulnerability of much of the countryside to development pressures. It is noted that, unlike National Parks, recreation is not an objective of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, although such activities may be acceptable provided that they are consistent with the primary landscape objectives. Housing in the countryside is generally resisted, although there are special needs which may be met, such as agriculture, forestry or affordable housing. Replacement dwellings may also be appropriate.

The particular objectives for the countryside are:-

(1) to balance the needs of the rural economy with the protection of the District's landscape and wildlife;

(2) to assist the rural economy by providing for appropriate alternative uses of land and buildings;

(3) to protect the best and most versatile agricultural land;

(4) to encourage quiet informal recreational enjoyment of the countryside, and to provide a policy framework for organised recreation;

(5) to resist housing development unless it meets particular needs and requires a countryside location.

(6) to support national and local initiatives for sensitive countryside management, particularly in areas vulnerable to change and in relation to agricultural practices;

GENERAL DEVELOPMENT

5.7 As set out in Chapter 3, the areas of towns and villages where new development is acceptable in principle are defined by 'development boundaries'. For the purposes of the Local Plan, countryside policies apply to all areas outside the development boundaries, including the fringes of some settlements, and covers

others where no development boundary is drawn. The Plan's approach to new development outside development boundaries is to prevent sporadic and unnecessary development and normally only permit that which is regarded as conserving the character of the countryside.

5.8 Agricultural development, including farm diversification, recreational and equestrian developments, as well as certain residential development in the countryside are considered below. Business activities are considered separately in Chapter 7, while shopping policies, including garden centres and farm shops, are in Chapter 8. Transport proposals, which may have particular environmental implications on the countryside are considered in Chapter 9. Tourism and recreation development are also addressed in Chapters 10 and 11 respectively.

AGRICULTURAL LAND AND DEVELOPMENT

5.9 The landscape of the countryside has been largely moulded by the nature and pattern of farming activity, which remains its principal land use. It follows that the future of the countryside is closely bound with the trends and policies affecting agriculture. Measures being taken to reduce overall production and thereby cut current food surpluses resulting from Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) reforms are likely to continue to have a major influence on the agricultural economy and hence, on the significant number of jobs (3,000) in farming in the District.

5.10 Securing an economic future for the agricultural industry is primarily a matter for co-ordinated discussion between the Government, the European Union and the agencies involved. This should provide a long term agricultural policy rather than rely on short term land use solutions to the issue. Notwithstanding this, the Council appreciates that, locally, the generally poor soil and land drainage conditions make farms vulnerable to changes in agricultural support policies. This may be exacerbated by the small size of many farms. This threatens not only the viability of farming but, moreover, the integrity and attractiveness of the countryside itself.

5.11 Notwithstanding the reduced emphasis on agricultural production, it is Government policy that the countryside should be safeguarded for its own sake. In order to retain and enhance the role of agriculture as an integral part of Wealden's highly valued landscape character, it is particularly important to maintain a viable agricultural economy and to encourage greater integration of environmental objectives with agricultural support policies. This may be promoted in several ways. These include appropriate protection of agricultural land, resisting the damaging effects of severance and fragmentation of holdings, accommodating new agricultural practices and looking at sensitive alternative uses for rural land and buildings.

Agricultural Land

5.12 It is estimated that there are some 1,320 farm holdings in the District, based on Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAFF) statistics, covering some 51,440 hectares, or about 62% of the area of Wealden. Farming activity varies across the District according to differing soils, topography, drainage and tradition. In the High Weald, the small tree and hedge-lined fields, interspersed with woodland, are still mainly grazed, although dairying has declined in recent years. There are several, albeit small, vineyards on south-facing slopes. Into the Low Weald, there is a greater proportion of arable farming, increasing southwards and onto the Downs, which is now also seeing something of a return to open grazing. Improved drainage within the Coastal Levels has brought about œreal growing, although much is still permanent grazing land due to the low-lying ground.

5.13 It is Government policy to protect the best and most versatile agricultural land, which is defined as Grades 1, 2 and 3a under the MAFF agricultural land classification. County Structure Plan Policy S12 aims to protect such land wherever possible. In view of the predominantly clay soils locally, with virtually no Grade 1 or 2 land, it is considered that within Wealden it is particularly important to protect Grade 3a agricultural land. Proposals for alternative uses of agricultural land will normally need to indicate the grade of land concerned, based on a survey carried out to MAFF criteria.

DC1 Land falling within Grades 1, 2 and 3a of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food agricultural land classification system will be protected from development, wherever possible.

5.14 Integration of agricultural practices with environmental objectives may be promoted in a number of ways. MAFF has designated much of the Sussex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty as an 'Environmentally Sensitive Area' under the 1986 Agricultural Act. This encourages a reversion to traditional farming methods through incentive payments to farmers, in recognition of the sensitivity of its historic landscape to agricultural change. Within the Pevensey Levels SSSI, English Nature has introduced a Wildlife Enhancement Scheme which provides payments for managing land in a way sympathetic to wildlife. There are also generally available schemes of assistance towards environmental and wildlife conservation for farmers. These include Countryside Stewardship and the Farm Woodland Premium, as well as targetted initiatives by English Nature.

5.15 The Council will encourage the retention and enhancement of traditional agricultural landscapes and related features such as hedgerows, trees and woodland, ponds and ditches, principally through its support for appropriate environmental schemes.

Agricultural Dwellings

5.16 There is continuing pressure for new dwellings to meet the essential needs of enterprises that require a countryside location. Notwithstanding the generally poor prospects for the agricultural economy as a whole and the existing stock of agricultural workers dwellings, the principal interest is in new agricultural dwellings. However, there are also pressures for dwellings to serve the essential needs of other enterprises which need to be located in the countryside, and similar considerations as set out in the text below and in Policy DC2 will apply to such proposals in the same way that they apply to agricultural dwellings. While countryside policies generally presume against new housing outside development boundaries, agricultural dwellings may be accepted where circumstances require a farm worker to live at or in the immediate vicinity of the holding. The settlement pattern of the District should afford reasonable proximity of accommodation to farms within nearby towns and villages suitable for many farm workers.

5.17 Detailed scrutiny of residential proposals seeking an agricultural justification is necessary to avoid abuse and an unwarranted proliferation of development in the countryside. In cases where the local planning authority is particularly concerned about possible abuse, it may be helpful to investigate the history of the holding to establish the recent pattern of use of land and buildings and whether, for example, any dwellings or buildings suitable for conversion to dwellings have recently been sold separately from the farmland concerned. Such a sale would constitute evidence of lack of agricultural need.

5.18 Policy DC2 closely accords with Government advice in Planning Policy Guidance Note 7 in which Annex I contains detailed advice. The Annex recommends "functional" and "financial" tests to ensure that proposals are genuine, that they are reasonably likely to materialise and are capable of being sustained for a reasonable period of time such as to justify the scale of the residential proposal.

5.19 A functional test will be necessary to demonstrate that it is essential for one or more full time workers to be readily available to meet the established needs of the enterprise at most times, day and night, such as to provide for the proper supervision of agricultural processes or livestock. It will not be sufficient that it is merely convenient or desirable to live on the holding. Security is not itself a sufficient justification.

5.20 In relation to demonstrating genuine need, it will also be necessary to apply a financial test to assess whether a farming enterprise is economically viable and planned on a sound financial basis. To this end, the enterprise should have been established for at least three years and has shown a profit for at least one of these years. The enterprise should be financially sound and clearly demonstrate that it is likely to remain so. The Council will draw upon independent professional advice when considering these proposals.

5.21 Where a genuine need is accepted, consideration should be given to the siting, size, form and access arrangements for a proposed dwelling such that it blends with the landscape setting and is also able to serve the functional requirement of the holding. A proposed dwelling should be the minimum required for the holding and should wherever possible be well integrated within an existing group of buildings. Planning Policy Guidance Note 7 advises that size should be commensurate with the established functional requirement of the holding. While each case will be considered accordingly, an individual dwelling would be expected to be no more than an average sized family house. Unduly large dwellings would be inappropriate in a rural setting. Also, it should be apparent that the long term availability for farm workers would not be unduly restricted by the future value of a property, and so the size of dwelling should be relative to the income the holding can sustain in the long term.

5.22 If a new dwelling is essential to support a new farming or other rural activity, whether on an established or newly – created unit, the accommodation should be of a temporary form, such as a caravan or mobile home for the first three years, after which the justification or otherwise for a permanent dwelling should normally be determinable.

5.23 It follows from the special treatment of dwellings essential for the needs of a rural enterprise that they should be kept available for such purposes. Hence, a condition restricting its use and, where appropriate, that of other dwellings on the holding will be appropriate. Occupancy conditions will enable a dwelling to be available for other rural enterprises even if the original enterprise no longer seeks to retain it. They will only be lifted where it can be demonstrated that there is unlikely to be a need for the accommodation for such purposes in the area within a reasonable period of time.

5.24 In appropriate circumstances, a planning obligation will be sought to tie the dwelling to the adjacent buildings or to the land forming the holding. Exceptionally, not all of the land forming the holding need be the subject of a planning obligation, provided sufficient is included to justify the dwelling.

5.25 Agricultural land within Wealden is generally of poor quality and divided into small land holdings. There has been a history of fragmentation of properties,

where land has been sold away from the original farmhouses. Fragmentation can have an adverse impact upon the valued character of the Wealden countryside, through the intensification of activities on the land, the erection of scattered buildings and the need for fencing to enclose the smaller parcels of land. The use of planning obligations in appropriate circumstances assists in preventing the harmful effects of continuing fragmentation. It is recognised that such planning obligations can place an additional constraint on the operation of rural businesses, such as the ability to raise loans and the time involved in completing the planning obligations. However, their use in appropriate circumstances is considered to be justified and accords with the advice given in Planning Policy Guidance Note 7.

DC2 Outside the development boundaries, as defined on the Proposals Map, new permanent dwellings will be permitted for those employed in agriculture or forestry, or exceptionally in another enterprise where a countryside location is necessary, where it can be demonstrated to the satisfaction of the Council that the following criteria are met:

(1) there is a clearly established existing functional need;

(2) no other suitable accommodation is available on the unit or elsewhere in the location;

(3) the enterprise has been established for at least three years, has been profitable for at least one of them, is currently financially sound and has a clear prospect of remaining so;

(4) the dwelling is of a size commensurate with the established functional requirement. Dwellings which are unusually large in relation to the needs of the unit or unusually expensive to construct in relation to the income it can sustain in the long term will not be permitted;

(5) the dwelling is suitably located to meet the identified functional need of the enterprise, integrates well with existing buildings wherever possible, is not intrusive in the landscape, and its general design is appropriate to the character of the area.

Where the functional requirement is proven but Criterion 3 is not met, a temporary permission will be granted for a caravan or mobile home, where it can be demonstrated to the satisfaction of the Council that the following criteria are met:-

(i) Criteria (2) and (5) above;

(ii) there is clear evidence of a firm intention and ability to develop the enterprise concerned;

(iii) there is clear evidence that the proposed enterprise has been planned on a sound financial basis.

Occupancy conditions will be imposed on dwellings permitted in accordance with this policy and, where appropriate, on other dwellings within the holding. The removal of occupancy conditions will be resisted unless it is demonstrated to the satisfaction of the Council that there is unlikely to be any need for such dwellings in the area in the foreseeable future.

In appropriate circumstances, the Council will seek a planning obligation to tie a permanent dwelling to adjacent buildings or to the land forming the holding.

Agricultural Buildings and Other Farm Development

5.26 There will be a continuing need for a range of farm buildings and structures for storing machinery and foodstuffs, livestock, etc. This will reflect both changing agricultural practices and any restructuring of farm holdings; also, older traditional farm buildings may need replacing or are otherwise no longer suitable for efficient modern farm usage.

5.27 While larger developments have required planning permission, many of these buildings and associated works have for long been largely exempt from planning control, which has resulted in many essentially utilitarian structures becoming widespread in the countryside. They nonetheless can represent a harsh feature, particularly when prominent in the landscape. In particular, the scale and materials of the larger, modern portal framed buildings can be inharmonious with a sensitive landscape setting.

5.28 Legislation requires farmers to submit details of virtually all developments, including the construction of new farm buildings, significant extensions and alterations, farm roads, and certain excavations and waste depositing. On smaller holdings (less than 5 hectares), all buildings require consent. Also, approval is required for all poultry buildings in much of the District by virtue of an Article 4 Direction. The siting, design and external appearance of buildings are the main considerations, taking account of the impact on the landscape and on important historic, archaeological and nature conservation interests, as well as on the relationship with their surroundings, including rural and residential amenities. Account may also be taken of

the operational requirements of the farm, particularly in considering appropriate siting. The design of agricultural buildings is a particular concern, especially in areas of high landscape value, and it is appropriate that sympathetic external treatments are ensured. Development within the Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty is likely to be sensitive in landscape terms and will warrant a high standard of appearance.

5.29 In circumstances where the Council is notified of a proposed development which is likely to have a significant impact on its surroundings, including because it would be unduly prominent in the landscape or would affect sites of recognised historic, archaeological or nature conservation interest, the formal submission of details would be expected. Particular regard will be paid to the detailed advice in Planning Policy Guidance Note 7 Annex E in considering agricultural development proposals.

5.30 All farm buildings should be designed for modern, functional agricultural purposes, and be reasonably necessary for the purpose of agriculture on the holding. Criterion (5) of Policy DC3 gives guidance on the provision of buildings for storage, packing or processing of produce. It applies essentially to activities that could be regarded as freestanding, in particular to proposals for larger scale uses and those which are for the shared use of a number of holdings. In these circumstances it will first be necessary to demonstrate that the use could not be carried out within the business areas. However, it is not intended that this test should apply to small scale developments ancillary to the agricultural activities of a farm. In fact, the Council is supportive of initiatives to promote local produce in order to sustain and diversify the rural economy.

DC3 Proposals for new farm buildings, extensions and alterations, and other ancillary development will be permitted subject to the following criteria:

(1) buildings are reasonably necessary for the purposes of the agricultural holding and are clearly designed for such use;

(2) development is integrated with existing structures, as far as practicable;

(3) the siting, design and external appearance of buildings and other structures is not intrusive within the landscape and does not detract from local amenities or interests of recognised historic, archaeological or nature conservation interest;

(4) particular care is taken to siting, design and appearance within Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty;

(5) where buildings for storage, packing or processing are for the use of one holding or shared use of a number of holdings, it will first be necessary to demonstrate that the use could not be carried out within a business area.

DC4 Proposals for agricultural or forestry buildings, structures or operations within the scope of notification procedures will be considered having regard to the siting and design criteria at Policy DC3. The Council will require the formal submission of details for approval where such buildings, structures or operations are likely to have a significant impact on their surroundings.

5.31 In order to advise farmers and to assist in the operation of these policies, the Council will publish detailed guidelines setting out the circumstances in which details may be required and the relevant considerations in due course.

Agricultural Diversification

5.32 Measures being taken to reduce agricultural output by support and subsidies are resulting in land coming out of production as well as pressures for farmers to diversify their activities to protect incomes. As a consequence, there is likely to be pressure for alternative uses to be sought for both land and buildings. The Council believes that it is important to provide for appropriate agricultural diversification, both to assist the rural economy and to help maintain traditional, principally agricultural landscapes. This recognises the continuing stewardship of the countryside by the farming community and should also be seen in the context of the long term environmental and landscape objectives of the Plan.

5.33 Diversification can involve a re-orientation of the type of farming carried out, including the cultivation of "new" crops, taking advantage of assistance for environmentally sensitive farming, including woodland planting, the introduction of various forms of leisure or recreation elements or the conversion of agricultural buildings to alternative uses. The Council will encourage diversification proposals which are compatible with and, where appropriate, assist the maintenance of farming activities to ensure the long term agricultural management of the land. It is desirable that an integrated approach to development and land use is taken, such as via preparation of a "farm management plan", when large sites or holdings are involved. Where a change of use is involved, preference will normally be given to proposals which assist the rural economy and provide local employment opportunities.

5.34 The nature and extent of diversification should respect the landscape qualities of the countryside and accord with the protection of its distinct character and appearance, as elaborated upon in Chapter 4. It should also take account of the Plan's sustainability strategy which seeks both to relate development to existing centres of population and to reduce reliance on the car for journeys to work. General infrastructural difficulties in servicing dispersed development should also be recognised. Development proposals should respect their rural setting, and may often be small-scale. Certain types of development, such as those which generate high traffic volumes or significant movements of heavy goods vehicles, may be inappropriate in this context.

5.35 In tandem with policies to protect the landscape character of the countryside and environmentally sensitive agricultural practices within it, the Council also believes that diversification proposals should support the retention of viable farm holdings and discourage the inappropriate fragmentation of land. The latter process can occur where land and farm buildings are separated or where small plots are acquired, often for keeping horses, small holdings etc. This can be particularly damaging within areas which retain a very traditional pattern of land uses. Planning obligations or the removal of permitted development rights may be sought where there is a particular concern in this respect.

5.36 The Council encourages the preparation of farm management plans to indicate clearly the implications of diversification proposals on the continued operation of the whole farm. These would be informal and complementary to a planning application. They may be used to support proposals and assist in weighing the environmental and economic issues, particularly where these are finely balanced. The plan may cover matters such as the implications for other land and buildings, possible demolition of unsightly buildings, landscape management, habitat improvement, public access, etc, as appropriate.

DC5 The Council will permit proposals for the alternative use of agriculture and other land and buildings which provide for the appropriate diversification of the rural economy and which do not adversely affect the character or appearance of the countryside or conflict with other policies of the Plan.

5.37 This policy will be applied in conjunction with those relating to the alternative uses of land and buildings for which specific consideration is given in the following sections. The impact of signage in the countryside is covered in the Advertisements section in Chapter 4.

CONVERSION OF FARM OR OTHER RURAL BUILDINGS

5.38 With landowners and farmers wishing to diversify their operations, there has been a marked increase in proposals for the conversion of farm and other rural buildings in the countryside to alternative uses, principally residential, office, workshop and tourism uses.

5.39 The conversion of existing buildings in the countryside for small businesses may help local employment and contribute to a healthy local economy. It is believed that this can be achieved within the overall objective of protecting the countryside from inappropriate and intrusive development. Such conversions will be primarily small scale developments for local employment, including small workshops and offices, recreation, tourism or institutional use. Priority will be given to such uses, particularly for local employment, over conversion to residential use. The latter may be acceptable in certain circumstances as an exception to the normal restrictive policies for housing development in the countryside. This is considered later at paragraph 5.49.

DC6 In considering proposals for the conversion of agricultural or other rural buildings in the countryside (outside the development boundaries as defined on the Proposals Map), the Council will give priority to small scale commercial uses over residential uses.

5.40 It should be recognised that not all buildings in the countryside are suitable for conversion or adaptation to new uses. Some existing rural buildings are often badly designed and sited and poorly constructed, having been erected before planning controls existed or by using agricultural permitted development rights. If converted to an alternative use, such buildings would be permanently retained as intrusive features in the landscape, in obvious conflict with policies seeking to conserve and enhance the rural environment. There are also many minor sheds and shelters in the countryside which, due to their lightweight construction, do not readily lend themselves to conversion and, once redundant, are best demolished.

5.41 Where existing farm buildings are converted to alternative uses, additional agricultural buildings may subsequently be constructed under permitted development rights. This could result in a gradual increase in sporadic development within the countryside to the detriment of the landscape. In such cases, the Council will seek to control the replacement of old farm buildings by new ones by attaching to the planning permission a condition withdrawing permitted development rights for new agricultural buildings in respect of the particular agricultural unit or holding.

5.42 Where buildings have been constructed under permitted development rights, but are not apparently to be used for agricultural purposes, the Council will investigate the history of the building, consider the owner or applicant's intention for the building and, where appropriate, will consider whether it is expedient to take enforcement action.

5.43 Planning consent will normally only be granted where modifications can be carried out without materially altering the character and appearance of the building. This may need to be demonstrated through the submission of a structural survey. All proposals for the conversion of farm buildings should be capable of complying with Building Regulations. In the case of the conversion of listed rural buildings, the relevant policy criteria must also be complied with.

5.44 In order to protect the character of the building and its setting, permission will not normally be granted for the extension of existing buildings or for their replacement by the erection of new buildings. Where appropriate, the right to make further extensions under the General Permitted Development Order 1995 will be removed by condition and/or legal agreement, and the planning permission would be subject to conditions restricting outside development and activities such as sheds, fencing, storage and other operations. Planning permission will only be granted for the change of use of any associated land if the Council is satisfied that this can be done without detriment to the character and appearance of the surrounding area.

Conversion for Non-Residential Uses

5.45 Favourable consideration will be given to proposals for developments to meet local employment, tourism or community needs within existing farm buildings in the countryside if the buildings are proved to be of sound construction, not intrusive, and in keeping with their surroundings, and if there would be no significant harmful environmental effects as a result of the development. Within the designated Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, particular attention will be given to ensuring that proposals conserve or enhance their natural beauty in accordance with Policies EN6 and EN9 of the Plan.

5.46 Where conversion to business use is proposed, the impact of any associated storage or parking requirements on the character and appearance of the immediate locality and the surrounding countryside will be taken into account. All applications will be expected to incorporate clearly defined limits of development, together with an indication of the use of all open areas.

5.47 The Council's intentions for development patterns and transportation are set out in EN2 in Chapter 4, and are aimed at ensuring a distribution of uses which reduces the need to travel. There are concerns regarding the compatibility of Government policies for rural building business conversion with those for transport, but the local approach recognises the need to assist the rural and agricultural economy and to reduce long distance out-commuting. Nonetheless, proposals for conversion or new uses which could generate a significant number of jobs should be well related to towns or villages. The Council would also expect such proposals to be part of a farm diversification scheme with a management plan and bring an overall environmental improvement to the locality.

5.48 Farm management plans may also be helpful in indicating how various uses of land and buildings, particularly those associated with farm diversification, relate to each other. This may be particularly significant where potential conflicts between activities may arise, where there are other buildings in a complex that are, or are likely to become, redundant, or where there is a need for new buildings or a change of use of land. In such cases, a farm management plan would help enable a full and proper assessment of particular proposals. In some instances where a farm building conversion is proposed, it may also be appropriate to tie it to the land so as to discourage subsequent fragmentation where this would be likely to result in an erosion of landscape character.

DC7 Proposals for non-residential development (including workshops, offices, tourist accommodation and recreational use) through the conversion of agricultural or other rural buildings in the countryside (outside the development boundaries as defined on the Proposals Map) will be permitted where the building's form, bulk and general design are in keeping with its surroundings. In addition, all proposals should meet the following criteria:

(1) the building is of sound construction and capable of conversion without significant rebuilding, or extension. The Council may require this to be demonstrated through the submission of a structural survey;

(2) any proposed alterations to the building (e.g. fenestration, doors, internal subdivision) or to its associated operational area (e.g. parking, storage) would not harm its appearance as a rural building or adversely affect the rural setting of the building in the locality;

(3) the nature and intensity of the proposed use would be compatible with its rural location;

(4) the proposed use would not adversely affect the residential amenities of the

neighbourhood, particularly by reason of noise, disturbance and fumes;

(5) the proposed use would not create an unacceptable impact on the local road network and there is a satisfactory means of vehicular access and parking arrangements;

(6) proposals which would be likely to create a significant number of jobs should be well located in relation to towns and villages.

Conversion to Residential Use

5.49 Consent for the conversion of existing rural buildings to residential use may be granted as an exception to normal restrictive policies controlling new housing development in the countryside, provided that such buildings are in keeping with their surrounding. However, this exception to normal restraint policies will only be made where it can be demonstrated that every reasonable attempt has been made to secure suitable business re-use or where a residential conversion is a subordinate part of a scheme for business re-use.

5.50 In all cases, it will be necessary for the applicant to demonstrate that the proposal is achievable without damaging or substantially altering the existing character and appearance of the building or harming its countryside setting. The building itself should be of sound construction and capable of conversion without significant rebuilding, modification or extension. An important consideration will be whether the creation of a residential curtilage and associated paraphernalia (tended gardens, fences, clothes dryers etc) would have a harmful effect on the character of the surrounding countryside.

5.51 Where residential conversion is part of a scheme for the re-use of a building or complex of buildings for employment purposes, a condition will be imposed requiring the works necessary for the establishment of the enterprise to have been completed before the dwelling is occupied. In appropriate cases, the Council will seek to tie occupation of the dwelling to the operation of the business re-use, by means of a condition or a planning obligation, in order to prevent it being sold separately.

DC8 Proposals for the conversion of agricultural or other rural buildings in the countryside (outside the development boundaries as defined on the Proposals Map) to residential use will not be permitted unless either:-

(a) the applicant has made every reasonable attempt to secure suitable business re-use, and the application is supported by a statement of the efforts which have been made; or

(b) residential conversion is a subordinate part of a scheme for business re-use.

In all cases, proposals should meet the following criteria:-

(1) the building's form, bulk and general design are in keeping with its surroundings;

(2) the building is of sound construction and capable of conversion without significant rebuilding, modification or extension. The Council will normally require this to be demonstrated through the submission of a structural survey;

(3) any proposed alterations to the building (e.g fenestration, doors, internal subdivision) would not harm its architectural integrity nor materially change its appearance as a rural building. In the case of listed buildings, Policy EN22 will apply;

(4) the proposed use and its associated activities, including garaging, would not detract from the rural setting of the building through the formation of a domestic curtilage. The curtilage should not be intrusive in the landscape. Where appropriate, conditions will be imposed to exclude permitted development rights to extend or alter the building and erect other ancillary buildings, fencing etc;

(5) the proposal would not create an unacceptable impact on the local road network and there is a satisfactory means of vehicular access and parking arrangements.

TEMPORARY USES IN THE COUNTRYSIDE

5.52 Under the provisions of the Town and Country Planning General Permitted Development Order 1995, the occasional use of land is normally exempt from planning control. The frequency of use depends on the type of activity, being 14 days in any calendar year for markets (including boot fairs) and motor sports, and 28 days for clay pigeon shooting, 'war games' and other activities. Such permitted development rights do not apply within Sites of Special Scientific Interest. There is an increasing level of such temporary land uses, sometimes associated with farm diversification proposals, but often on a commercial basis involving

small plots of land, which fall outside the scope of normal planning control.

5.53 Where uses are more frequent than the relevant permitted limits and planning permission is required, the Council will consider proposals against its overall diversification policy and, where appropriate, specific policies for that particular use, such as motor and gun sports, which are put forward later. It is clear that even the periodic use of land for temporary uses can cause substantial nuisance to local residents, significantly detract from rural visual amenities or disturb important wildlife habitats.

5.54 This is reflected in the increasing public concern expressed about many of the above uses. The Council has made representations about bringing temporary uses into proper planning control, and the Government is currently reviewing the situation. In the current circumstances, the Council may properly seek to remove these 'permitted development' rights where substantial nuisances are created. A general background and approach to the use of such Article 4 Directions is set out in Chapter 4.

COUNTRYSIDE RECREATION

5.55 For all recreational development in the countryside, careful regard needs to be given to the likely impact on the environment, its landscape and rural amenities. This will relate to both the physical and visual change involved, including traffic generation. Special protection will be given to the Sussex Downs and the Ashdown Forest by only allowing recreational development in association with the quiet enjoyment of the countryside. This approach accords with Policy S18 of the County Structure Plan and recognises the particular vulnerability of these areas to visitor pressure, arising from their open and remote landscape characters.

> **DC9 Within the Sussex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the Ashdown Forest (defined as the area enclosed by the Medieval Pale of 1372) only recreational development which is in association with the quiet enjoyment of the area and conserves its landscape character will be permitted.**

5.56 In view of their demand for countryside locations, specific consideration is given to golf courses, equestrian developments, motor and gun sports, clay pigeon shooting and air sports below.

Golf

5.57 Proposals for golf course developments in Wealden have risen markedly in recent years, with some 24 applications submitted since 1988, as well as others for driving ranges. This is seen as a reflection of golf's growing popularity and profile, coupled with a generally recognised national deficiency in provision. It has also coincided with pressures for land coming out of agricultural production.

5.58 In response to increased pressures for golf-related developments across East Sussex, the County Council published 'Planning Guidance for Golf Course Development' in March 1991. These informal guidelines have been 'adopted' by the District Council, and strong regard is paid to them when considering golf proposals. It is now considered that in view of the number of golf course proposals and their potential environmental impacts, specific policy coverage should be incorporated in the Local Plan. This draws upon the substantial experience of dealing with recent proposals.

5.59 The Council has sought to reconcile the legitimate demands for golf development with the potential environmental and amenity objections in accordance with overall Structure Plan policies, the Local Plan's objectives for the countryside and recreation, taking due account of Government advice, particularly Planning Policy Guidance Note 17 - Sport and Recreation. It has recognised that golf courses can be an appropriate land use in the countryside, assisting rural economic diversification, but that they may also have detrimental effects on the structure and pattern of the countryside, its landscape, historic and nature conservation value and, indeed, overall rural character. Disturbance may also be caused to local residents, farm holdings as well as through intrusive effects of people, activity and traffic, including traffic generation on unsuitable roads.

5.60 There are now eleven golf courses in Wealden, with a further seven approved and one other scheme agreed in principle. In addition, course extensions are approved at two existing courses. This would result, if implemented, in up to fifteen 18 hole courses and six 9 hole courses. This would represent a considerable level and concentration of provision, well in excess of the standard for the Royal and Ancient Golf Club of St. Andrew's 'unambitious' level of provision of one course per 25,000 population. This may be regarded as much a reflection of current interest in golf development as of the rural nature of the District, its proximity to larger urban areas and potential 'honey pot' impact of the East Sussex National Golf Club at Little Horsted. Therefore, it is considered that there is no overriding need to accommodate further golf course proposals. Other proposals would not be ruled out, but they should comply with the policies which seek to maintain and enhance the character and appearance of the countryside and meet other more local considerations. The availability of water resources to service such developments will be a particularly important consideration and the Council will seek the advice of the Environment Agency, in accordance with Policy EN5, when assessing new proposals.

5.61 A golf course can be an alien feature in the countryside, since it can present a manicured appearance which is not characteristically rural. In addition, the level of activity can be far greater than is normal in the countryside. Policies for the main landscape areas of the District are set out in Chapter 4, and they will be the Council's starting point in judging the impact of golf course proposals. The same chapter also includes policies for the conservation of historic landscapes and nature conservation which will be taken into account.

5.62 It is evident that in all cases, the course siting, form, layout, groundworks, management regimes, clubhouses, other buildings and structures, parking areas and access arrangements will need careful attention to assess the impact on the overall character of the site and its setting, its topography, site features and public views. Applications should be in sufficient detail to enable proper assessment. They should indicate, as far as possible, the total extent of development envisaged, as approval does not imply that any future proposals would necessarily be favourably considered.

5.63 In particular, new buildings are normally resisted in the countryside, especially within the Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and strategic gaps. Accordingly, proposals should seek to re-use existing buildings in accordance with Policy DC7. In countryside areas, the scale, massing, siting and design of all buildings should blend in with the landscape and local building character. Future extensions would be considered in the light of the relevant criteria of Policy DC19. Residential building must clearly be essential in accordance with Policy DC17. Parking areas need to be carefully sited, landscaped and surfaced to blend in the landscape.

5.64 The most appropriate locations for golf courses are generally accepted as being in urban fringes, especially where the landscape is degraded in some way or otherwise of poor quality. Policy PW5 identifies an area between Polegate and Eastbourne Park where a golf course development could represent a positive amenity in visual, environmental and nature conservation as well as recreation terms.

DC10 Within the countryside (outside the development boundaries as defined on the Proposals Map), proposals for golf courses and related development may be permitted where they have no adverse effect on the character and appearance of the area. In addition, they should:-

(1) meet the requirements of policies elsewhere in the Plan for the protection of landscape, nature conservation, woodland, archaeology and the best and most versatile agricultural land;

(2) be readily accessible to urban areas;

(3) wherever possible use existing buildings;

(4) provide for the maintenance and where, appropriate, enhancement of public access in the layout and design.

Proposals should be presented in sufficient detail, including topographical and landscape changes, to enable proper assessment.

Driving Ranges

5.65 Driving ranges represent a distinct form of golf-related development. They are often independent of golf courses, are more intensive in their level of usage and urban in character, involving specifically designed range of 'bays' for players, an extensive well fenced 'hit area', associated car parking and, normally, floodlighting.

5.66 An intrusive impact on the character and appearance of the countryside is therefore most likely. Areas of high landscape quality and of particularly unspoilt character would be especially vulnerable. There may also be considerable effects, through outlook, noise and disturbance, on residential amenities, as well as on traffic conditions and public safety. The impact of illumination, which is uncharacteristic in rural, countryside areas, may also be substantial and thereby unacceptable. The overall intensity of activity, especially lighting, would mean that the locational criteria for general golf development would be rigorously applied.

DC11 Proposals for golf driving ranges will only be permitted when it can be demonstrated that there will be no significant effect on the character or appearance of the countryside, residential amenities, traffic conditions or public safety, having regard to:

(1) the size and number of bays and the impact of the bulk and design of buildings and enclosure fencing;

(2) the impact and suitability of floodlighting, including reflected light;

(3) the degree of physical change and visibility.

Equestrian Development

5.67 Equestrian activities are an increasingly popular form of leisure pastime and also make a recognised contribution to the rural economy, attracting a significant number of planning applications for related developments of both domestic and commercial nature.

Commercial equestrian centres, riding schools and livery stables are now widespread, although the majority of proposals for equestrian development relate to the provision of essentially small-scale or private stables. In some circumstances (as specified in the Town and Country Planning General Permitted Development Order 1995), the erection of stables or loose boxes within the curtilage of a dwellinghouse for the domestic needs or enjoyment of the occupants of the dwelling may enjoy permitted development rights and therefore not require planning permission.

5.68 The grazing of horses can be akin to agricultural use and may be an acceptable alternative use of agricultural land, although the random proliferation of horse-related activities and associated buildings within rural areas may be detrimental to the character and appearance of the countryside. The subdivision of farm holdings and formation of numerous paddocks with individual stables or field shelters can create a fragmented landscape and a pattern of enclosures out of keeping with the locality. The degree of visual intrusion created by horse-related development is likely to be more significant in areas of special landscape quality and other areas of an open character.

5.69 Where stabling or loose boxes are proposed solely for private and domestic purposes, development should be of an appropriate modest scale and physically well related to the associated dwelling. Careful attention should be given to siting and landscaping details to avoid exposed or prominent locations. Traditional style and materials should be used. In appropriate circumstances where the structures proposed are of a temporary nature, time limitations may be imposed. Development should not create or perpetuate a serious traffic hazard.

5.70 Developments such as maneges or sand schools, particularly those which are illuminated, and larger scale stables for domestic and commercial use, as well as large and small scale commercial equestrian enterprises, including livery stables and riding schools, entail a potentially greater intensity of activity which is likely to have a substantial impact upon the character and amenity of the countryside. The cumulative impact of such developments can be very marked.

5.71 The Council recognises that a rural location is usually required for equestrian enterprises. Isolated development, being away from existing buildings, would represent inappropriate scattered development in the countryside. This refers to either the dwellinghouse in relation to domestic stables or existing, normally farm, complexes in respect of liveries. Similarly, such development on exposed or prominent sites which are poorly related to vehicular access or bridleways will be resisted. The potential impact of horse-related development may be reduced by compactly grouping new buildings and by the provision of an appropriate landscaping scheme to help absorb features into the landscape.

5.72 New equestrian development should be well related to existing public bridleways in order to minimise the need to exercise horses on the highway, but regard will be had to increased levels of erosion of both bridleways and the wider countryside arising from over-intensification of use. Particular concerns over the level of usage of Ashdown Forest are partly addressed by the special controls of the Board of Conservators. Potential traffic generation, effects on the amenities of local residents and other normal planning considerations will be assessed in relation to other policies in this Plan.

DC12 Applications for small scale stables or loose boxes principally for domestic and private purposes will be permitted where the following criteria are met:-

(1) appropriate siting, scale and design in keeping with the locality, with adequate pasture to support the horses. Particular regard will be had to the potential impact, including the cumulative effect, of proposals within an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty;

(2) proposals should not be sited in prominent or isolated locations.

DC13 Applications for small scale commercial stables and larger equestrian developments and uses of land, including sand rings and maneges, will only be permitted where the following criteria are met:-

(1) appropriate siting, scale and design in keeping with the locality, with adequate pasture to support the horses. Particular regard will be had to the potential impact of proposals within an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty;

(2) proposals should not be sited in prominent or isolated locations, and should be satisfactorily integrated with existing buildings;

(3) the impact of floodlighting, changes in levels or other ancillary operations on the surrounding countryside and local amenities is acceptable;

(4) satisfactory integration with the public bridleway network;

(5) the proposal does not create an unacceptable impact on the local road network.

Motor and Gun Sports

5.73 The Council supports and encourages the development of sport and recreational activities in the District, and outdoor recreation is generally viewed as an activity which is appropriate to a rural location. However, some recreational pursuits, such as motor sports, clay pigeon shooting and combat gaming, can radically affect the character of the countryside. By their very nature, such activities involve generating noise and disturbance, and consequently often cause concern in terms of their potential impact upon the natural environment or other people's enjoyment of the countryside.

5.74 Participation in motor and gun sports, as well as newer forms of leisure which require a countryside setting, has increased significantly in recent years, partly in association with the diversification of farming activities. This frequently occurs on an occasional basis without requiring express planning permission, under the provisions of the Town and Country Planning General Permitted Development Order 1995. However, where such activities are proposed on a permanent basis, planning controls can be used to ensure that issues such as noise, disturbance, access, etc, are adequately taken into account and, where appropriate, controlled by conditions.

5.75 In the consideration of proposals for motor and gun sports, it is important to ensure that a balance is struck between the needs of such pursuits and the conservation and amenity aims of the Plan. The Council has therefore formulated a set of criteria against which proposals for these types of sporting and recreational activities will be judged to ensure there are no adverse effects in terms of noise nuisance, nature conservation, visual intrusion, etc. In respect of noise nuisance, it should be recognised that noise levels considered to be unacceptable in planning terms may not necessarily constitute a statutory nuisance under Environmental Health legislation.

5.76 Planning permission is unlikely to be granted for such activities within or adjacent to areas where it is intended to provide only for recreational development in association with the quiet enjoyment of the countryside or where the protection and enhancement of wildlife habitats is paramount. Sites where such activities are unlikely to be appropriate include ancient semi-natural woodland, Sites of Special Scientific Interest, national and local nature reserves, sites of nature conservation interest, and sites and monuments of archaeological importance.

Motor Sports

5.77 Motor sports are distinguishable from most other sporting activities principally in terms of their noise emission. Ecological disturbance and physical erosion can also be a significant problem, both for organised events and informal motor vehicle activities. At sites within Wealden, four-wheel drive events and motorcycle scrambling and racing have led to concerns over noise and dust, and occasionally resulted in serious damage to sites of high nature conservation or landscape value.

5.78 Clearly, the capacity of individual sites to withstand the pressure of recreational vehicular use is highly variable. The Council operates an agreed code of conduct with the Auto Cycle Union for the staging of organised one-day motorcycle events in the District, in order that the suitability of the proposed location can be determined in advance. However, the temporary use of sites within the District for off-road motor sports indicates a clear demand for more permanent facilities, particularly for young people who wish to 'scramble' or race motorbikes, preferably reasonably close to home.

5.79 Suitable locations would include well screened sites at least a quarter of a mile from residential properties but close to a main road. Degraded land, former mineral sites and set-aside farming land which meet these criteria may be appropriate. A comprehensive management approach would also be a requirement of any proposal for motor sport provision, either through the lease or ownership of land by a private operator or club, or through the integration of individual site management with wider countryside management initiatives.

Clay Pigeon Shooting

5.80 Clay pigeon shooting is a traditional rural sport which is growing rapidly in popularity. Shoots usually take place on farmland on an occasional basis without requiring planning permission. However, the noise levels generated can cause disturbance to residential properties over a wide area, and in Wealden have been a frequent cause for complaint by local residents. Shooting can also adversely affect sensitive wildlife habitats, in terms of both noise disturbance and pollution by lead shot.

5.81 Where permanent facilities are proposed, a limited reduction in the impact of noise levels can be achieved by careful location, e.g. disused mineral workings, or by the provision of acoustic screening, such as willow walls or earth banks. Clearly, however, clay pigeon shooting is not suitable on sites in close proximity to residential areas and any noise attenuation measures should be carefully assessed to ensure that there is no adverse impact on the character or appearance of the countryside.

Combat Games

5.82 Newer leisure activities can cause danger, as well as noise and disturbance. 'Combat' or 'adventure'

gaming is a team activity increasingly used by companies for staff assessment, training and recreation. The games are played by two opposing teams of between 20 and 30 adults and generally take place in a fairly large area of woodland in the countryside. Participants wear protective goggles and are provided with small air pistols or guns which fire dye pellets. The games usually involve stealth but can be more war-like with the use of pyrotechnics, such as fireworks or thunderflashes.

5.83 The nature of combat games requires relatively remote woodland sites without public access which, by virtue of their relative lack of disturbance, are often valuable for wildlife. The presence of large numbers of people moving around in such areas therefore has the potential to cause serious ecological damage. Clearly, the degree of damage will depend upon the intensity of use and the nature of the site, but, in general, woodlands are likely to be particularly sensitive due to their soil structure and the nature of their vegetation and birdlife.

5.84 Ancient semi-natural woodland is a habitat that is generally of a high significance for nature conservation and, wherever possible, recent secondary woodland should be sought in preference to ancient woodland for the playing of combat or adventure games. However, in all cases proposals for such activities will be very carefully assessed to ensure that there are no adverse effects in terms of nature conservation, noise nuisance, public rights of way, new buildings, access and car parking.

DC14 Proposals for motor or gun sports, including combat games, will not be permitted within or adjacent to the Sussex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, the Pevensey Levels Site of Special Scientific Interest, or the Ashdown Forest (defined as the area enclosed by the boundary of the Medieval Pale of 1372). Elsewhere, such proposals may be permitted outside the development boundaries, as defined on the Proposals Map, provided that the following criteria are met and can be controlled by condition:

(1) the Council is satisfied that the proposal will not generate an unacceptable level of noise and activity in the locality.

(2) the proposal will not be visually intrusive in the landscape and will be well screened by existing vegetation, particularly within or adjacent to the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty;

(3) the proposal will not adversely affect areas which are of importance for flora, fauna, geological or landform features, or adversely affect ancient semi-natural or other important woodland. Where appropriate, a woodland management plan should be submitted and approved by the Council and implemented within a programme agreed by the Council;

(4) the proposed activity will take place within a clearly defined area with an appropriate buffer zone to the boundaries of the site and any public rights of way;

(5) any buildings or structures must be sited to minimise their impact on the countryside and must be removed from the site on cessation of the recreational use.

In all cases, conditions will be attached to any permission controlling the hours and frequency of use, the type and nature of the activity, and fencing of boundaries. Normally, the Council will only be prepared initially to grant temporary planning permission so that the environmental impact can be fully assessed.

Angling

5.85 The popularity of angling, together with pressures to reduce the amount of land in agricultural production, have led to an increase in proposals to create or improve ponds and lakes for private and commercial fishing. Commercial fisheries can be an appropriate land use in the countryside, often assisting with rural economic diversification whilst securing environmental and amenity gains in terms of landscape, wildlife habitat and public access enhancement. However, such proposals may not always be compatible with the conservation of the character and appearance of the countryside, particularly where significant physical changes to the landscape or topography are required or a site of existing nature conservation importance is affected.

5.86 A pond or lake that has been carefully designed for wildlife, fish and anglers will support a wide variety of wetland plants and animals, as well as being an attractive place for visitors. However, a proposed pond site can sometimes be valuable for wildlife already, particularly if it is waterlogged or uncultivated, and the loss of important areas for nature conservation may not be acceptable under other policies in the Plan. Commercial fishing proposals can also cause damage at existing pond sites through the clearance of aquatic or bankside plants or the trampling of bankside vegetation by anglers. The Council will therefore normally require such proposals to be accompanied by a landscape management scheme,

which provides for the retention and enhancement of existing features of nature conservation importance.

5.87 It is also evident that a new pond or lake may have a significant impact on the countryside through the creation of spoil or the construction of dams or embankments, which can appear as alien or intrusive features in the landscape. The disposal of excavated material is another important consideration since spreading it around the site or using it to fill in low lying areas nearby may cause unnecessary harm to valuable wildlife habitats or landscape features. Parking and access arrangements, together with any new buildings or lighting, will also need careful attention in terms of the impact of the proposal on the overall character of the site and its setting. Applications should provide sufficient detail to enable a proper assessment of all the above considerations.

5.88 The creation of a pond or lake, particularly on-line of an existing watercourse, can have significant implications on the downstream flow due to water loss through evaporation and seepage. Commercial fisheries can also have a detrimental impact in terms of water quality. The Council will therefore need to be satisfied that the proposal will not have a detrimental impact on the quality or quantity of flow in the downstream watercourse. The Environment Agency, whose consent is required for proposals to impound or abstract water, advises that the creation of ponds or lakes upstream of the Pevensey Levels SSSI is likely to damage its special interest and should not normally be permitted.

DC15 The creation or improvement of ponds or lakes for private or commercial fishing in the countryside (outside the development boundaries as defined on the Proposals Map) will be permitted where the following criteria are met:-

(1) the proposal will not be visually intrusive in the landscape through the construction of embankments or other earthworks;

(2) the proposal, including the disposal of any excavated material within the site, will not adversely affect areas which are of importance for flora, fauna, geological or landform features, or adversely affect ancient semi-natural or other important woodland. Where appropriate, a landscape management plan should be submitted and approved by the Council, and implemented within a programme agreed by the Council;

(3) the size and scale of the proposal would be compatible in terms of the nature and intensity of use with its rural location;

(4) the proposal will not adversely affect the residential amenities of the neighbourhood by reason of noise or disturbance;

(5) any buildings or structures will be sited to minimise their impact on the countryside and should be removed from the site following cessation of the activity;

(6) the maintenance and enhancement of public access, where appropriate;

(7) there will be no detriment to the quality or quantity of flow in the downstream watercourse;

(8) the proposal is not created on-line of a watercourse upstream of the Pevensey Levels Site of Special Scientific Interest.

Airstrips and Air Sports

5.89 Although presently at a relatively low level, there is growing interest in recreational flying, including hang-gliding, gliding and use of microlight aircraft which do not require an airport or airfield from which to operate. In addition, the flying of model aircraft is a well established hobby sport.

5.90 There are various legislative controls over such developments, particularly relating to operational requirements. The principal planning concern of such uses relates to noise generation. This may be a particularly sensitive issue in areas close to housing areas and areas of important nature conservation value. In assessing the likely impact of noise, regard should be paid to Government guidance. The introduction of a high level of activity into the countryside may itself be out of keeping with its quiet, rural amenities.

DC16 Proposals for the development or use of land and buildings related to small airfields, airstrips and air sports will only be permitted where they accord with the Plan's environmental policies, with particular attention to noise and landscape impact.

RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

5.91 The defined settlement "development boundaries" provide for the housing needs of the District over the Plan period. Outside of the development boundaries, residential development is generally resisted in accordance with Policy GD2. In such areas, housing development will not be permitted unless it is:-

(1) essential for the purpose of agriculture or forestry or other rural enterprise for which a rural location is essential, in accordance with Policy DC2;

(2) an acceptable scheme for affordable housing in accordance with HG3;

(3) the conversion of an existing agricultural or other rural building, in accordance with Policy DC8;

(4) a replacement dwelling of an appropriate size, in accordance with Policy DC18;

(5) an extension or alteration of an appropriate scale, in accordance with Policy DC19;

(6) the conversion of an existing property, in accordance with Policy DC20;

(7) accommodation to meet the acknowledged needs of gypsies or travelling showpeople, in accordance with DC21.

5.92 The prior existence of sporadic and scattered housing within the countryside is recognised, but it is considered that any intensification or addition to this would be contrary to the Plan's overall development strategy and be detrimental to rural amenities as well as making abnormal demands on services. The individual settlement chapters and, in respect of certain other settlements without development boundaries, explain the considerations in determining the area within which new housing may be permitted.

DC17 Housing development will not be allowed outside development boundaries, as defined on the Proposals Map, unless it conforms with other policies in the Plan.

Replacement Dwellings

5.93 Notwithstanding the general policy of restraint in relation to housing in the countryside, the suitable replacement of existing properties, normally on a one for one basis, is considered reasonable. This approach is accepted in principle by County Structure Plan Policy S21(2). This does not apply to derelict buildings or others where the residential use has been abandoned; such 'replacements' would be regarded as new dwellings.

5.94 In view of the strong environmental and rural character considerations in the countryside, it is particularly important to minimise the visual, landscape, amenity and traffic impact of replacement dwellings. The size of the replacement would be limited to a similar scale as the original, normally measured by its gross floorspace. An exception may be made for substandard accommodation in order to enable reasonable amenities to be achieved. Siting should also be similar to the original, unless repositioning can significantly reduce the impact of development. Replacement may provide the opportunity for development to better harmonise with the locality. The Council would endeavour to avoid abuses of the policy whereby lawful uses become established and new building is subsequently sought.

5.95 The redevelopment of listed buildings and those in Conservation Areas are not normally permitted (Policies EN19 to EN22 refer). Furthermore, it is evident that the countryside is particularly rich in vernacular buildings which contribute to the character of rural areas, and their retention would normally be encouraged.

DC18 Outside development boundaries, as defined on the Proposal Map, the replacement of an existing dwelling by another dwelling in the same curtilage will be permitted where the following criteria are met:

(1) the proposal is of a comparable size and massing to the existing building;

(2) it is in keeping with the character of the locality, having regard to the appearance and general design of the original building;

(3) it is similarly sited within the plot, unless an alternative position would result in clear landscape, highway access or local amenity benefits;

(4) it does not result in the loss of a property of valuable local character, unless it is not reasonably capable of being made structurally sound or otherwise improved.

In sensitive locations, permitted development rights relating to future extensions and other structures may be removed.

Residential Extensions

5.96 Within countryside locations, residential extensions and alterations may have a greater environmental impact than those to dwellings within development boundaries by virtue of their visual openness, landscape impact and the rural character of either the property or its setting. Careful consideration to rural extensions is consistent with the general approach of minimising the intrusion of development in the countryside.

5.97 Therefore, in addition to the criteria for residential extensions within development boundaries, as set out at Policy HG10 (relating to the protection of the character and amenities of the property,

neighbouring dwellings and the locality), greater attention may be given to the need to maintain and enhance rural amenities.

5.98 Accordingly, residential extensions in the countryside should normally be appropriate in size and character in relation to the original dwelling or group of dwellings. Extensions and alterations to listed buildings and buildings in Conservation Areas are specifically covered by Policies EN19 to EN22. Other traditional buildings of rural character, including oasts, farmworkers' cottages, lodge houses, toll houses and converted agricultural buildings, also warrant careful regard to their character. Extensions to agricultural dwellings should also have regard to the considerations at Policy DC2. Policy DC8 above sets out the Council's approach to extensions when considering proposals for the residential conversion of rural buildings.

5.99 Account shall properly be taken of the cumulative impact of extensions, including the effect on the character of the original property. Ancillary buildings within the curtilages of residential properties such as garden sheds, garages and summer houses can frequently be erected without the need for planning consent. Nevertheless, when permission is required, it is appropriate that proposals be subject to the same considerations as for residential extensions and alterations. Annexes to existing dwellings would be considered similarly, providing that they are unambiguously intended for that purpose. A legal agreement may be sought to tie an annexe to the main property where these involve the change of use of a rural building, under Policy DC8. Detached annexes would normally be treated as new dwellings.

DC19 Outside development boundaries, as defined on the Proposals Map, proposals for extensions and alterations to existing dwellings and for ancillary buildings within their curtilages should meet the following criteria:

(1) the proposal should accord with the criteria of Policy HG10;

(2) the proposal should not be intrusive in the landscape or detrimental to the rural setting;

(3) the proposal should normally be of an appropriate size and character relative to the original dwelling, and not visually dominate or otherwise adversely change the character of the existing building or, where appropriate, the group of buildings;

(4) in the case of an annexe, the proposal should normally be physically attached to the dwelling and not lend itself to future subdivision to form a new dwelling.

5.100 Proposals for the extension of residential curtilages within the countryside will be considered in relation to the potential change in rural character and amenities that may result from the resulting enclosure, domestic use, associated minor buildings, structures, hard surfacing and other paraphernalia. In order for such extensions to be acceptable in environmental terms, it may be necessary to minimise the visual impact by ensuring sensitive boundary treatment and limiting new buildings and structures on the land. However, in many circumstances, the outward encroachment of residential activity forms and associated enclosure may detract from the rural landscape character, particularly where a generally open appearance prevails.

Subdivision of Larger Properties

5.101 There is a substantial legacy of larger properties, especially in countryside locations, including houses which are now too large for single family occupation together with certain other buildings, such as hotels and institutions of a residential nature. Such buildings are usually well integrated within the rural scene and their retention thereby encouraged. As well as affording the potential for institutional or employment uses, they may represent a valuable resource for a variety of housing needs.

5.102 The conversion and subdivision of larger properties may be appropriate where it maintains the integrity and character of the property, including its grounds, as also referred to in Policy HG9 for properties within development boundaries, as well as meeting the normal residential amenity, access and parking criteria. In addition, within particularly quiet, remote areas, the creation of a large number of dwelling units, with associated increases in activity, may be inappropriate. The conversion of typical, family-type accommodation would normally be inappropriate, as referred to in Chapter 6.

5.103 In order to maintain the character of any important features of the property, including gardens, restrictions on permitted development may on occasion be considered necessary. Extensions and alterations would be considered in accordance with Policy DC19, although in order to maintain their visual integrity and character, only very limited additions may be appropriate.

DC20 Outside development boundaries, as defined on the Proposals Map, the conversion and subdivision of a larger property into smaller dwelling units may be permitted where:-

(1) the character and integrity of the property, including its grounds and setting are suitably retained, including where appropriate by the removal of permitted development rights;

(2) no significant extension or alteration is involved.

Gypsy and Travelling Showpeople Sites

Gypsies

5.104 Gypsies are defined by their nomadic habit of life. The term excludes travelling showpeople, who are considered in the following section. The Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 removed the duty on Councils to provide gypsy sites, although a discretionary power remains. However, it is necessary to give clear planning policy guidance in the Plan in line with recent Government advice in Circular 1/94: Gypsy Sites and Planning for both private and public sites, particularly in view of the increased onus on private provision.

5.105 There is no apparent unmet need to allocate sites for gypsies. The area does not have a strong gypsy tradition, the level of provision was accepted in 1987 as adequate by virtue of 3 public sites across the District, and the regular counts show a relatively low occurrence of unauthorised sites. Latest statistics (for July 1998) record 23 caravans on authorised sites and 22 caravans on unauthorised encampments.

5.106 Consideration should nonetheless be given to the treatment of extensions to existing sites and new private sites. Circular 1/94 states that it will not generally be appropriate to make such provision in areas of open land where development is particularly restricted, including Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. It does not exclude sites in rural or semi-rural settings, but points out that care is needed to ensure consistency with environmental, agricultural and other countryside policies. Locations on the outskirts of built-up areas may be appropriate where these afford reasonable access to facilities and services, but should still avoid encroachment into open countryside. Amenity and access factors are also important, particularly as gypsy sites often combine both residential and business elements.

5.107 In view of the above factors and the limitation imposed by the Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, other high quality countryside and the general absence of 'urban fringe' land around settlements, it is likely that very few suitable sites will come forward.

Travelling Showpeople

5.108 Specific consideration has also been given to the provision of sites for travelling showpeople, in accordance with Government guidance in Circular 22/91. Accommodation needs are unusual in that they combine residential, storage and maintenance uses.

5.109 Wealden has not been traditionally closely associated with showmen's sites, perhaps due to its relative remoteness from large urban centres. There is presently only one site with planning permission for 'winter quarters' in the District, at Hackhurst Lane, Lower Dicker. There have been a few enquiries about additional sites, essentially as a consequence of people moving onto unauthorised sites in the District and of the displacement of showmen in other parts of the region. However, there has been no recorded demand arising from the local area, from displacement or otherwise.

5.110 It must be recognised that such development can, by its very nature, be visually intrusive in a rural or other sensitive landscape setting. Conversely, close proximity to residential properties can also be inappropriate because of the potential disturbance from the maintenance and testing of equipment during winter months, as well as its visual impact. However, proximity to schools and other community facilities is normally sought. Circular 22/91 therefore suggests urban fringe locations may be appropriate.

5.111 In the absence of a clear local need for such sites, and as no specific site has been identified as being suitable, it is appropriate to set out a criteria-based policy. Where a site is considered suitable, it will normally still be appropriate to control the extent of storage and times of testing equipment to minimise its impact on local amenities. Also, the future availability of the site for such purposes should be ensured.

DC21 Proposals for new gypsy sites, extensions to existing gypsy sites and sites for travelling showpeople will not be permitted unless the following criteria are met:

(1) the site is conveniently located in relation to schools and other community facilities;

(2) there is no adverse impact on the character of the countryside, particularly having regard to Policies EN4-12;

(3) the local environment and residential amenities will not be adversely affected;

(4) there is a satisfactory means of vehicular access and the local road network is adequate.

Where appropriate, controls to limit the hours of testing equipment and to ensure the future occupancy by travelling showpeople would normally be sought.

Residential Mobile Homes

5.112 Policy HG13 sets out the Council's overall approach to residential mobile homes, including caravans. Their form, design and materials are fundamentally out of keeping with the character and appearance of the countryside, as well as potentially representing a sporadic introduction of residential uses contrary to the Plan's development strategy. Therefore, residential mobile homes would not normally be appropriate in the countryside.

5.113 An exception may be made for the temporary stationing of a residential mobile home or caravan in association with an agricultural or similar rural enterprise in accordance with Policy DC2 above. Also, where existing mobile home sites exist within the countryside, some rationalisation within the sites' well defined limits may be appropriate if this would bring about significant improvements in local visual amenities.

5.114 Residential mobile homes can provide low cost accommodation, thereby improving access to the housing market. Their redevelopment by permanent dwellings may result in the loss of more affordable housing and be visually or environmentally unacceptable and such proposals will therefore normally be resisted.

DC22 Residential mobile homes, including caravans, will not be permitted in the countryside unless these are on a temporary basis and are essential for the proper functioning of the farm, woodland or other enterprise in accordance with Policy DC2. The rationalisation of existing sites may be permitted only where significant environmental benefits would result. The redevelopment of existing mobile homes by permanent dwellings will be resisted unless on an individual basis where proposals meet the criteria of Policy DC2.

Implementation

5.115 All the policies in the Development in the Countryside chapter will be implemented by the Council primarily through its development control function.

Monitoring

5.116 The key areas to be monitored will include:

(1) new agricultural dwellings;

(2) planning applications to remove agricultural occupancy conditions;

(3) number of rural building conversions and their use;

(4) applications for golf courses, equestrian activities and gun or motor sports;

(5) applications for replacement dwellings and extensions.

Transport

9

Introduction

9.1 The Local Plan has been prepared against a national background of rising car ownership and increasing car use, growing levels of road freight, both in terms of volume carried and size of heavy goods vehicles, and a declining public transport facility, both in terms of level of service and number of passengers carried. At the same time, there is increasing public concern over the environmental impact of road traffic, particularly traffic congestion, pollution, road safety, energy conservation and the impact of new roadbuilding on the countryside.

9.2 Within Wealden, transport matters are primarily the responsibility of the County Council, the Highway Authority, in terms of maintenance and improvement of the highway network (excluding trunk roads), the provision of support for public transport, and the management and control of traffic. The Department of Transport is responsible for maintenance and improvement of the A27/A259 South Coast trunk road. Wealden District Council is responsible for the provision of off-street public car parks and, as Local Planning Authority, for controlling the scale and location of new development.

STRATEGY

9.3 The Government clearly has a major role to play in influencing the balance of transport demand away from the private car and lorry towards public transport, with more freight on railways. However, as PPG13 advises, development plans should aim to reduce the need to travel, especially by car, and the policies in this Plan have been framed accordingly.

9.4 As set out in Chapter 2, the Council aims to provide a strategy for transport seeking to reduce the need to travel, especially by car, whilst encouraging a safe efficient and environmentally conscious system for the movement of goods and people. Furthermore, it will place increased value on environmental considerations in transport planning, particularly on amenity and the landscape, traffic calming and public transport.

9.5 As part of this strategy, the objectives of the Plan with regard to transport are:-

(1) to promote a transport system to complement the settlement pattern in the District, which seeks to reduce the need to travel, especially by car, and encourages the conservation of energy and natural resources;

(2) to promote modern and efficient transport links for people and goods to and from the District as a fundamental necessity for a healthy local economy;

(3) to support and encourage planned highway improvements which would reduce the impact of through traffic on communities, help the economy and improve safety;

(4) to minimise the landscape, environmental and ecological impact of new road proposals and other highway schemes, and wherever possible seek environmental improvements;

(5) to promote and actively support the safe and convenient movement of cyclists and pedestrians, including provision for the needs of the disabled and others with special access requirements;

(6) to encourage a comprehensive and co-ordinated system of public transport;

(7) to provide an appropriate level of off-street public car parking in towns and villages;

(8) to protect and, where possible, enhance the character and amenity of towns and villages by reducing congestion and pollution, and improving road safety;

(9) to ensure that access, car parking and local highway conditions are satisfactory when determining the scale and location of new development;

(10) to make appropriate provision for roadside facilities on primary routes whilst minimising the environmental impact.

9.6 The County Structure Plan supports improvements to the 'trunk road box' in East Sussex and adjoining counties (M25, M23, A23, A27, A259 and A21) in order to cater for longer distance traffic, providing connections between the County's main coastal towns and major centres outside the County such as Crawley/Gatwick and Greater London. The improvement of the A27/A259 South Coast trunk road is seen as vital for the economic well-being of the County. Some limited improvements to the cross country A26 and A22 primary routes may be appropriate to deal with localised problems of safety and to achieve economic or environmental improvements. The maintenance and enhancement of public transport services is supported and increased use of the rail network encouraged.

Transport Policies and Programme

9.7 The County Council's Transport Policies and Programme (TPP) is the annual statement of plans and programme for implementing the County Structure Plan policies on transportation. It is also the bid to the Government for Transport Supplementary Grant and approval to borrow for capital expenditure purposes.

Transport and Environment Strategy for the Eastbourne Area

9.8 In June 1995, a Transport and Environment Strategy for the Eastbourne area was approved by the County Council. The District Council was involved in the preparation of the Strategy which, whilst concentrating on Eastbourne, also works to maximise opportunities presented by the proposed A27 and A22 highway improvements for Polegate, Willingdon, Stone Cross, Westham, Pevensey and Pevensey Bay. This will include traffic calming schemes and environmental improvements. The Strategy will enable joint bids for future funding to be made for transport infrastructure as part of the "package" approach through the TPP.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

9.9 Although many of the policies in this chapter are environmentally based, there are a number of issues that are specifically environmental in their nature. These include considerations of the environment and landscape impact of new road proposals and the traffic impact of new development. Energy conservation issues associated with transport and the settlement pattern are considered in Chapter 4.

Road Proposals : Environment and Landscape Impact

9.10 As outlined in Chapter 4, the District has a high quality landscape, large parts of which are covered by Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, together with a rich heritage of historic buildings, traditional settlement patterns and areas of designated nature conservation and woodland importance. In the light of this, the Council attaches great importance to making a careful assessment of the environmental and landscape effects when considering new road proposals. In appropriate cases, the Council will seek the submission of an Environmental Statement. Furthermore, the Council will encourage the relevant highway authorities to actively seek and consider local views.

TR1 All new road schemes should have regard to the constraints of the environment both natural and built to minimise their environmental impact.

In assessing the potential impact of such schemes, the Council will pay particular attention to:

(1) the amenities and character of the countryside, towns and villages;

(2) the effects on local communities;

(3) Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and other areas of important landscape value;

(4) areas of designated nature conservation, woodland and historic importance;

(5) the character and setting of listed buildings and Conservation Areas.

9.11 At a more detailed stage, such as following the selection of a preferred route, the Council is anxious to ensure that any potential noise and visual intrusion is minimised. To this end, significant landscaping will normally be required to provide sensitive and effective screening, and where overhead lighting is necessary every effort will be made to minimise its visual impact, particularly in countryside areas, subject to achieving the necessary safety standards.

TR2 In considering detailed road proposals, the Council will seek to ensure that the relevant highway authority undertakes measures to minimise the degree of visual and noise intrusion through sensitive overhead lighting where this is required, and appropriate landscaping, including earth mounding, contouring and planting.

Traffic Impact of New Development

9.12 The Council is concerned to ensure that when considering planning applications, the proposed development should not create nor perpetuate unacceptable traffic conditions. Proper provision should be made for access for vehicles, cyclists and pedestrians. Developers will be expected to make adequate provision for car parking and, where appropriate, cycle parking in all new developments. The Council's parking requirements are set out in Policies TR11 and 16. In addition, in appropriate cases, developers will be expected to make provision for public transport which may include laybys, bus shelters and adequate turning areas.

TR3 Planning applications for new development will be permitted where the following criteria are met:

(1) the proposed development does not create or perpetuate unacceptable traffic conditions;

(2) a satisfactory means of access (vehicular, cycle and pedestrian) is provided to meet Local Planning and Highway Authority standards;

(3) where appropriate, the provision of suitable public transport facilities.

TRUNK ROAD PROGRAMME

9.13 Within Wealden the A27/A259 route is part of the 'trunk road box' formed by the M25, M23/A23, A27/A259 and A21 motorways and trunk roads, which longer distance traffic in this part of the South East is encouraged to use. The A27/A259 forms part of the Folkestone to Honiton South Coast Trunk Road.

9.14 A number of improvement schemes were to have been completed or under construction in time for the opening of the Channel Tunnel. However, parts of the Department of Transport's programme have continued to slip, and for a number of years both the County Council and District Council have consistently expressed their concern over the slow progress being made.

9.15 Of particular importance to the District are the four proposed schemes in the Department of Transport's trunk road programme. These are the A27 Wilmington and Selmeston bypasses, Polegate Bypass, A259 Pevensey - Bexhill improvement and the Bexhill-Hastings Western Bypass. All these schemes are illustrated on Figure 6 and are discussed in detail below.

9.16 The Government has completed its comprehensive national review of trunk road schemes, to determine the role which roads should play in an integrated transport policy and to establish a forward investment programme for the trunk road network. All of the trunk road schemes in Wealden have been subject to this review. The outcome of the review has resulted in the A27 Polegate Bypass being included in the targeted programme of improvements. However the remaining trunk road schemes in Wealden are to be the subject of further studies.

9.17 It is vital to Wealden that these road proposals are implemented as early as possible to provide traffic relief to towns and villages along the existing roads as well as helping the local economy through improved access, as recognised in the Council's Economic Development Strategy.

9.18 On this basis the Council will continue to support the earliest implementation of these road proposals but will wish to further consider details of the preferred routes (other than the Polegate Bypass where all the statutory procedures are complete). The Department of Transport's proposed and published routes for these schemes, as indicated on the Proposals Map will be safeguarded from prejudicial development.

TR4 The Department of Transport's route of the A27 Polegate Bypass and published routes of the A27 Wilmington and Selmeston Bypasses, A259 Pevensey-Bexhill Improvement and Bexhill-Hastings Western Bypass, as shown on the Proposals Map, will be safeguarded from prejudicial development.

A27 Lewes-Polegate Improvement

9.19 In 1993, the Department of Transport published a preferred option for improvements to the A27 between Lewes and Polegate to dual carriageway standard. This scheme was subsequently included in a review as a potential candidate for smaller scale improvements. The outcome of this review was announced in November 1996 and put forward three locations for road improvements between Lewes and Polegate, comprising bypasses for the villages of Wilmington, Selmeston and Alciston, and a new alignment between Southerham and Beddingham.

9.20 The Council has advised the Department of Transport that it welcomes the principle of upgrading the A27 between Polegate and Lewes, subject to a full assessment of the detailed proposals.

A27 Polegate Bypass

9.21 The Department of Transport's proposed route for a dual carriageway bypass to the north of Polegate extends from a grade separated roundabout junction on the A22 north-west of Sayerland Road to a double roundabout junction near Dittons Farm in the east where it will join the Pevensey Bypass as shown on Inset Map 47. A wide variety of landscaping, planting and contouring is proposed along the length of the new road and in association with the proposed roundabouts, in order to help minimise the visual and noise impact. The proposals include a new pedestrian and bridleway bridge over the bypass to enable continuation of the Cuckoo Trail from Polegate to Heathfield, and a new footbridge at Sayerland Road which the Council supports subject to minimising its environmental impact through careful design and the use of materials. All necessary statutory procedures for the bypass are complete.

Pevensey Bypass

9.22 This single lane carriageway route, running from Dittons in the west and bypassing Stone Cross, Westham and Pevensey and coming out at the start of the A259, was opened in December 1990. Its completion has helped relieve the historic cores of

these villages of through traffic and resulted in a significant environmental improvement.

A259 Pevensey-Bexhill Improvement

9.23 The Department of Transport has published its preferred option for an improvement to the A259 between the Pevensey Bypass and the proposed Bexhill-Hastings Western Bypass. The scheme proposes the construction of a new dual carriageway. The existing carriageway would then be used solely for westbound traffic and a new carriageway to the north of the existing road would be used for eastbound traffic. The draft Orders were published in the latter part of 1994 and a public inquiry was subsequently held. The Secretary of State proposes that further studies be carried out prior to making a decision on the draft Orders.

9.24 Although the Council fully supports the need for an improvement to this part of the A259, it remains concerned over the environmental impact on the Pevensey Levels Site of Special Scientific Interest, which is proposed for additional designation as a Ramsar site, i.e. a Wetland of International Importance, under the provisions of the Ramsar Convention.

A259 Bexhill-Hastings Western Bypass

9.25 Whilst the greater part of the bypass will be located within Rother District and Hastings Borough, its most western part will fall within the rural south-east of Wealden. A preferred route for the dual carriageway bypass which leaves the existing A259 south of New Lodge Farm was announced in December 1990 and the draft Orders were published in the latter part of 1994. A public inquiry has been held, concurrent with the A259 Pevensey – Bexhill Improvement proposals. The Secretary of State proposes that further studies be carried out prior to making a decision on the draft Orders.

COUNTY ROAD PROGRAMME

9.26 The three County primary routes which pass through the District are the A22 London to Eastbourne road, the A26 Newhaven to Maidstone (North Kent) road and the A272 west of Maresfield. These all serve to link the towns and villages of the District to the main motorway and trunk road network. A number of important schemes have been completed including the A22 Maresfield and East Hoathly bypasses and the A26 Boars Head to Eridge improvement.

9.27 The County Council is proposing a number of further improvements to the A22 and A26 in the District, principally on grounds of road safety, traffic volume and environmental improvement. New schemes are proposed for an A22 New Route into Eastbourne, dualling of the existing A22 between Nightingale Farm and the planned Polegate Bypass, and a programme of gap closures in the central reservation on the A22 between Boship Roundabout and the proposed Polegate Bypass. The District Council will encourage the County Council to implement these proposals at the earliest opportunity.

A22 New Route

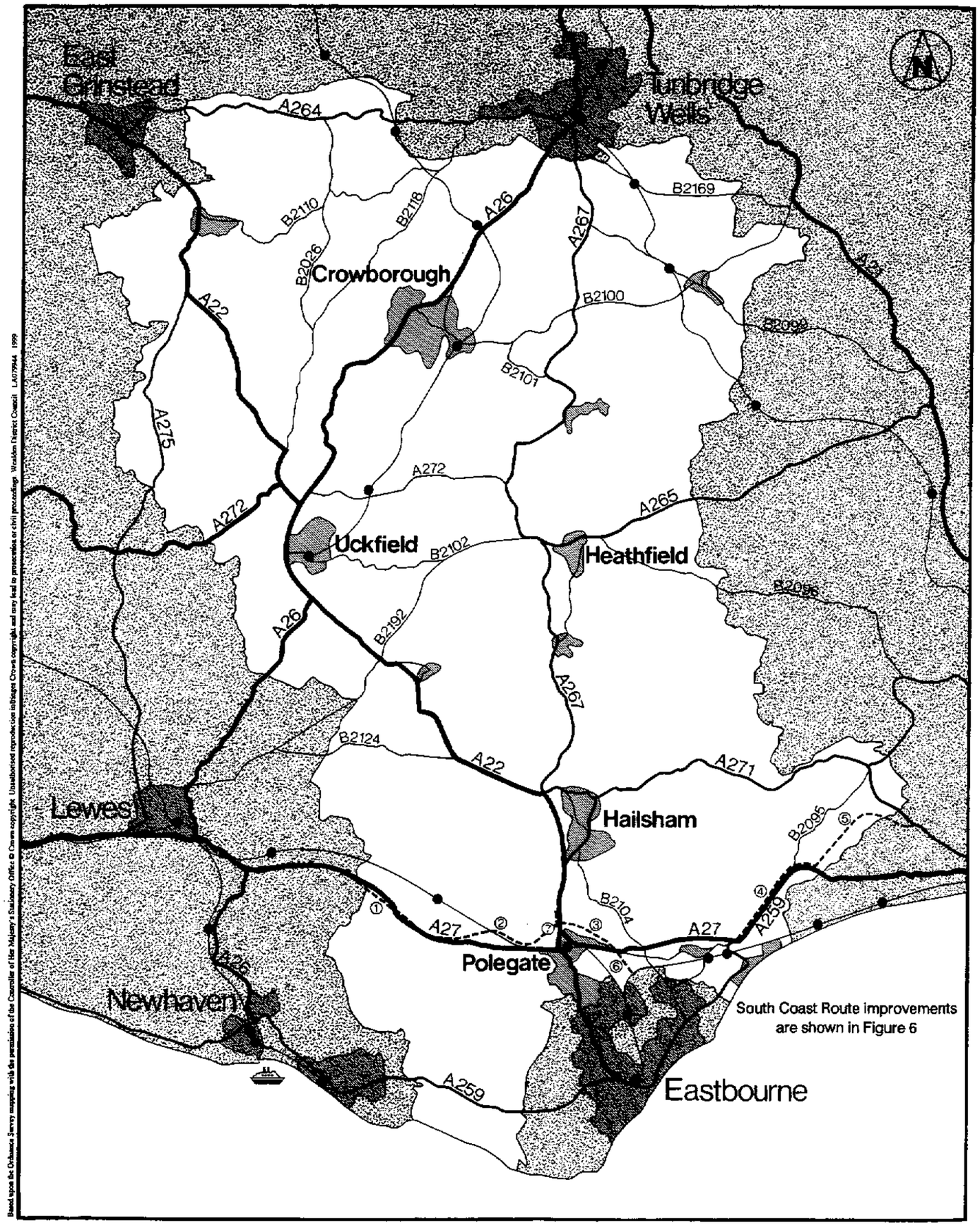
9.28 The A22 is the main route into Eastbourne town centre. The County Council's proposal for an A22 New Route into Eastbourne bypasses Willingdon, where severe traffic congestion occurs at peak times, and provides improved access to the expanding eastern parts of Eastbourne. The first section of the road, between Willingdon Drove and Seaside, opened to traffic in 1995 and it is anticipated that the remaining section, between Willingdon Drove and Dittons, will be completed in 1998/99. It is intended that the new road will connect with the existing A27 Pevensey Bypass and the proposed A27 Polegate Bypass. The route, which is indicated on the Proposals Map, will be safeguarded from prejudicial development.

TR5 The area of land for the A22 New Route into Eastbourne Borough, as defined on the Proposals Map, will be safeguarded from prejudicial development.

A22 Dualling - Nightingale Farm to A27 Polegate Bypass

9.29 The dualling of the short, heavily trafficked section of A22 from Nightingale Farm to the proposed A27 Polegate Bypass has not been implemented as it is dependent upon a start being made on the Polegate Bypass. Its implementation will result in a complete section of dual carriageway

Transport Network



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KEY

- Primary routes
- Major distributors
- Railways
- ① A27 Selmeston Bypass preferred route
- ② A27 Wilmington Bypass preferred route
- ③ A27 Polegate Bypass, proposed route
- ④ A259 Pevensey - Bexhill improvement, preferred route
- ⑤ A259 Bexhill - Hastings Western Bypass, preferred route
- ⑥ A22 New Route, proposed
- ⑦ A22 proposed dualling

This plan is for illustrative purposes only, and does not form part of the Proposals Map

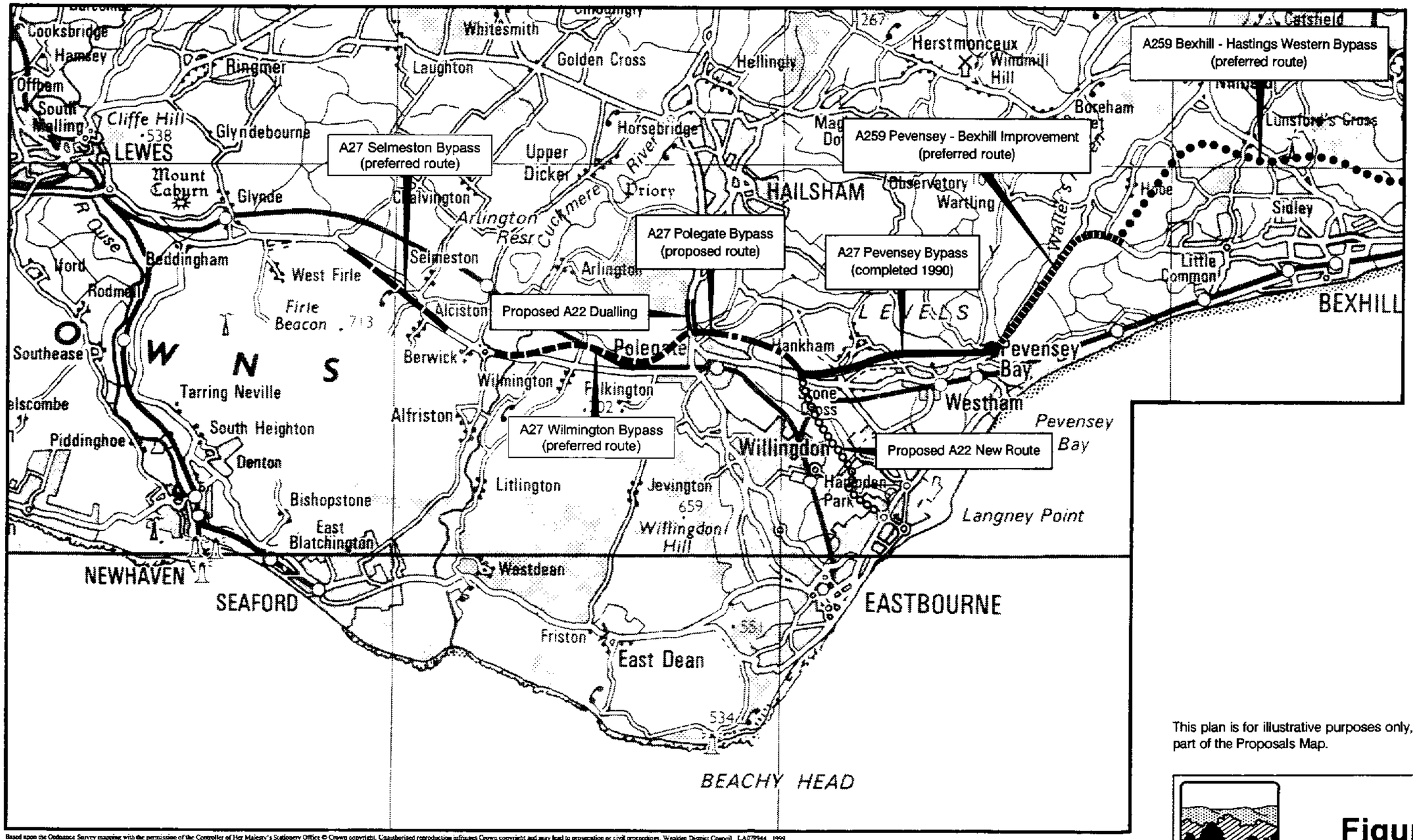
Wealden Local Plan

Figure 5

0 1 3 5 7 kilometres

Not to scale

A27 and A259 South Coast Route Improvements



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This plan is for illustrative purposes only, and does not form part of the Proposals Map.

Wealden Local Plan

Figure 6

0 2 4 kilometres 1:100,000

between the junction with the proposed Polegate Bypass and Boship Roundabout. The affected land will be safeguarded from prejudicial development.

TR6 The area of land reserved for the dualling of the A22 south of Nightingale Farm, as defined on the Proposals Map, will be safeguarded from prejudicial development.

A22 Boship Roundabout to Polegate Bypass gap closures

9.30 In conjunction with the dualling scheme referred to at Paragraph 9.29 above, it is proposed to close a number of gaps in the central reservation of the existing dual carriageway section of the A22. This section of road has a very high accident rate, principally due to these gaps which allow traffic to either cross the dual carriageway or join it without the provision of proper slip roads. An additional roundabout was completed in 1994 to cater for turning traffic once the gaps are closed. As with the dualling scheme, implementation of the gap closures is dependent upon a start being made on the Polegate Bypass.

A22/A26 Future Improvements

9.31 The County Council, as Highway Authority, considers that some limited improvements to the A26 and A22 primary routes may be appropriate, but only where there are clear local safety, economic or environmental benefits. It is acknowledged that the very sensitive nature of the environment, particularly in the area of Ashdown Forest, will place severe constraints on any schemes which may be acceptable. The identification of a need with respect to accident studies and traffic forecasts does not therefore automatically mean that proposals will be acceptable. Each will have to be given very careful consideration.

9.32 Whilst the Council fully supports the early consideration of any such schemes, it will wish to ensure that a full assessment of the landscape and environmental impact is undertaken, particularly where schemes are proposed within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Ashdown Forest.

High Weald Transport and Environment Strategy

9.33 The County Council has started to introduce traffic calming and management measures in the High Weald area as part of the High Weald Transport and Environment Strategy. It will oppose schemes for East Grinstead in West Sussex, which would lead to a significant increase in traffic in East Sussex, and it will not support bypasses for Forest Row and Nutley. The County Council will investigate, in conjunction with West Sussex County Council, the upgrading of the A272 west of Maresfield, together with traffic management measures in the area between the A22 and A23/M23, north of the A272. However, the District Council supports further investigation of improvements to the A22, including bypasses to Forest Row and Nutley.

ROADSIDE FACILITIES

Primary Routes

9.34 Motorists travelling along major routes have come to expect a wide range of roadside services, including commercial facilities such as a petrol filling station, restaurant and overnight accommodation as well as non-commercial facilities for public use such as toilets, telephones, picnic and children's play areas, and tourist information. Government guidance suggests that the precise number, location and frequency of filling stations and related facilities will depend in the first instance upon private sector responses to market demands as well as upon normal planning and safety considerations. The Government is keen to encourage the development of individual key sites to become the focus for a range of facilities for all motorists, including lorry drivers.

9.35 Of local relevance is the County Council's strategy "Roadside Facilities on the Primary Routes in East Sussex", published in July 1988. This suggests criteria for the frequency of provision of roadside facilities on primary routes, together with suggestions for provision of lorry parks and overnight accommodation.

9.36 Facilities including a new petrol filling station and restaurant have been provided on the A259 at the junction of the A27 Pevensey Bypass, at the Boship Roundabout at the junction of the A22, A267 and A271 and at the junction of the Uckfield and Maresfield Bypasses. In the light of the Structure Plan policy requirement for the provision of roadside facilities in association with planned improvements to the A27 and A22 routes, land has been allocated under Policy PW3, to the west of the proposed A27/A22 roundabout at Polegate for this purpose. Further details are given in Chapter 16.

New Facilities

9.37 The provision of commercial roadside facilities on primary routes in Wealden is now considered adequate having regard to Government guidance, County Structure Plan policy and the County Council's roadside facilities strategy.

9.38 In line with District-wide policy set out in Chapter 4, it is not considered that new roadside facilities will be appropriate within the environmentally sensitive character areas of the High Weald and Sussex Downs Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the Coastal Levels. Outside these

areas, where the need for the facilities and the site in question can be demonstrated to the satisfaction of the Council, particular attention should be given to ensure that the visual intrusion arising from the new built form, lighting and signage is minimised by careful design, including the use of traditional building forms and materials, wherever practical, and appropriate landscape screening. A comprehensive range of facilities will normally be required in order to prevent further proliferation of facilities on separate sites.

TR7 Proposals for new commercial roadside facilities along primary routes outside the development boundaries, as defined on the Proposals Map, will not be permitted within the High Weald and Sussex Downs Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty or the Coastal Levels.

Elsewhere such proposals will only be permitted on primary routes outside the development boundaries, as defined on the Proposals Map, if the following criteria are met:

(1) a need can be demonstrated for both the proposed facilities and the particular location that cannot be met by either existing or planned facilities;

(2) where appropriate, the Council will encourage a comprehensive range of both commercial and non-commercial facilities to be provided;

(3) the layout and form of development and use of materials should respect the character and appearance of the locality and ensure an appropriate standard of amenity within the site;

(4) substantial landscape planting, including buffer strips and mounding, shall be provided along the site boundaries prior to the completion of development, wherever practicable.

Non-Primary Routes

9.39 There are many other roadside facilities throughout the District on non-primary routes, mainly providing petrol filling stations. Along these routes, traffic flows are considerably lighter than on the primary routes and are normally more local in their nature. On this basis it is unlikely that any proposals for new commercial roadside facilities or the large scale expansion of existing ones along the non-primary routes will be justified as an exception to normal policies of countryside restraint.

9.40 However, in certain cases there may be opportunities for the small scale expansion or redevelopment of existing facilities to serve the needs of the non-primary routes which would have an acceptable environmental impact. For example, reference is made in Chapter 15 to the possible development of local roadside facilities within the Burwash Road Commercial Area, at the junction of the A265 with the B2096 Battle Road, Heathfield. As in the case of new roadside facilities, the Council will seek to ensure that the visual intrusion resulting from any redevelopment or small scale extension proposals will be minimised.

TR8 Proposals for new commercial roadside facilities and the large scale expansion of existing facilities along non-primary routes outside the development boundaries, as defined on the Proposals Map, will be resisted. Proposals for small scale extensions and the redevelopment of existing facilities may be permitted where the criteria set out in Policy TR7(3) and (4) are met.

TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT

Road Safety and Traffic Calming

9.41 Whilst the planned road improvements will assist the efficient movement of through traffic, the Council wishes to see these increasingly supported by measures to manage and control the movement of local traffic in order to provide safer conditions for road users, a more efficient use of the road system and overall environmental improvements for residents and visitors. In particular, measures are needed to reduce the speed and volume of traffic which is often detrimental to the safety and amenity of villages, town centres and residential areas.

9.42 The Council will encourage the County Council to increase the necessary funding and introduce road safety and traffic management schemes in the District, where appropriate, including traffic calming measures. Particular care should be taken in any traffic management scheme to ensure that suitable provision is made for people with disabilities. In addition, consideration should be given to the need for servicing properties and other essential access requirements. The Local Plan identifies various locations where there is considered to be a need for measures to mitigate the effect of traffic, as set out in the relevant town and village chapters.

9.43 In recent years, the wider use of 'traffic calming' measures to physically restrain traffic for safety and amenity reasons in both urban and rural situations has received much attention. Such measures can include the provision of road humps, chicanes, road closures, planting areas and street furniture as a means of reducing vehicle speeds and discouraging unnecessary

through traffic. Traffic calming measures can often be part of a wider traffic restraint policy for a town or village which could also include speed limits, cycle provision, on-street parking controls, lorry management and pedestrianisation.

9.44 In considering proposals for new housing development, the Council is concerned that the associated traffic generation on local roads does not have a detrimental effect on road safety or residential amenity. Traffic calming measures may be preferable to other highway improvements made necessary by development such as road widening, which in some cases may not be possible. Following consultation with the Highway Authority, the Council will seek the provision of appropriate traffic calming measures by the developer, both within the proposed development and on the relevant parts of the wider road network. These will normally be secured by the completion of an appropriate legal agreement.

TR9 In considering proposals for new housing development, where necessary and appropriate, the Council will seek the provision of suitable traffic calming measures.

Heavy Goods Vehicles

9.45 The Council is concerned that heavy goods vehicles using narrow country lanes and travelling through villages on roads not designed for that purpose have a detrimental effect in terms of safety and amenity. However, in many cases, such vehicles need to gain access to farms and businesses located within the rural areas. Also, it is the policy of the County Council to allow heavy lorries to disperse over the available road network rather than to concentrate on selected roads, themselves perhaps little more suitable than the rest. Restrictions are, however, placed on particularly unsuitable roads. The aim is to improve the environment for residents and other road users.

9.46 As part of the Local Plan strategy to encourage through traffic to use the trunk and primary road network, the Council will seek to control the movement of heavy goods vehicles within the District. This could be achieved by resisting development proposals where the effects of lorry generation and attraction would be environmentally unacceptable, by encouraging the County Council to introduce Traffic Regulation Orders to control the movement of heavy lorries, and by making representations to the Licensing Authority with regard to applications for goods vehicle operating licences.

TR10 The Council will seek to control the movement of heavy goods vehicles within the District by resisting development proposals which would have a detrimental impact on the environment by reason of a material increase in the generation and attraction of heavy goods vehicles within villages and along unsuitable country roads.

Cycling

9.47 The Council recognises that cycling has important health and fitness benefits and can play a significant role in achieving a more efficient and sustainable transport system. The County Council's Cycling Strategy, which was adopted in 1994, sets out to 'promote cycling as a safe, convenient, attractive, low-cost, healthy and environmentally friendly mode of transport for both utility and recreational journeys, and thereby to increase the proportion of journeys made by bicycle'. It is an objective of this strategy that 'cycle audits' of roads, rights of way and development proposals be carried out to ensure that the needs of cyclists are taken into account as far as possible. An integrated network of cycle routes is also being developed to cater for both utility and recreational journeys.

9.48 The Council recognises the vulnerability of cyclists and will ensure the relevant Highway Authority takes the needs of cyclists into account when designing new road schemes or alterations to the existing road network, and in preparing traffic management schemes. Furthermore, in carrying out its development control function, the Council will take into consideration the needs of cyclists to ensure opportunities are taken to provide facilities such as cycle parking areas, where appropriate, and promote safety in general. Cycle parking standards are to be drawn up for use in considering proposals for new development as part of the implementation of the Cycling Strategy.

TR11 In major development schemes, particularly in town centres, developers should provide covered and secure cycle parking areas.

TR12 In dealing with development proposals the Council will take into account the Cycling Strategy for East Sussex.

A Healthy Cycling Plan for the Eastbourne Area

9.49 A 'Healthy Cycling Plan for Eastbourne' has been produced by consultants on behalf of the Council, Eastbourne Borough Council, the County Council and East Sussex Health Authority. It follows from and builds upon the County Council's Cycling Strategy and puts forward policies and measures to encourage cycling in Eastbourne and the surrounding area, including Pevensey, Polegate, Westham and

Willingdon. Proposals for Polegate and Willingdon are set out in Chapter 16.

Footpaths and Bridleways

9.50 Within the towns and villages, the provision of a comprehensive footpath network is vital for safe and convenient pedestrian access within housing areas and to places of work, schools, shops and other community facilities. The County Council, as Highway Authority, is responsible for providing new footpaths alongside public highways. The District Council, as Local Planning Authority, secures the provision of footpaths within new developments and, where appropriate, links with the existing network.

TR13 The Council will seek to secure the provision of safe and convenient pedestrian routes in new developments, which should link to the existing footpath network where appropriate.

CAR PARKING

9.51 Car ownership in East Sussex increased from 247 vehicles per 1000 population in 1980 to 361 vehicles per 1000 population in 1990, an increase of 46%. Within East Sussex, Wealden had the highest level of car ownership in any District in 1991, with 38% of households having two or more cars compared to 23% of households for East Sussex as a whole. In the light of continuing growth in car ownership and the likely traffic generation from the high level of housebuilding and industrial commitments in the District, the provision of adequate car parking is an important issue for the Local Plan.

9.52 Recent Government advice in PPG13 says that local authorities should adopt planning policies to limit parking provision for developments and other on or off-street parking provision to discourage reliance on the car for work and other journeys where there are effective alternatives. In the Council's view, reducing, or not meeting the demand for car parking without these effective alternatives would affect the vitality and viability of town centres. Moreover, Wealden residents have to travel to towns and villages for many services and, since the District is largely rural, may never be able to make these journeys easily, if at all, by public transport.

9.53 For these reasons, it is not realistic at present to reduce parking provision, particularly in town centres, as the alternative means of transport do not exist. Future opportunities to reduce existing levels, or not to meet demand, may also be limited by the dispersed nature of the District. Nevertheless, the Council has adopted the advice in PPG13 on reducing the need to travel, and it lies at the heart of the objectives of the Plan, both towards sustainable development generally and transport in particular. Indeed, the improvement of public transport is likely to rely on a co-ordinated approach with parking provision.

9.54 The Council will therefore keep the provision of parking under review during the lifetime of the Plan as part of its overall policy towards travel, and particularly in the light of the effect on public transport of the actions described in Chapter 9. This review will also consider the relevant level of parking standards to be applied under policy TR16.

Off-Street Car Parking

9.55 The District Council is responsible for and active in providing and maintaining public car parking spaces. The Council operates a system of long and short stay parking spaces on all its car parks throughout the District. The Council has limited financial resources available for the provision of new car parks or extending existing ones, and through necessity, priority is normally given to towns and larger villages where demand is greatest. In some cases the availability of suitable sites can be a problem.

TR14 Throughout the Plan period the Council will review the need for off-street parking spaces, and the level of parking to be provided as part of development proposals, in the light of the objectives of reducing the need to travel, especially by car, and of improving public transport. New car parks will only be provided when the review shows a need for them, and where resources and sites are available.

9.56 The Council operates a commuted payment car parking policy in Crowborough, Hailsham, Heathfield, Polegate and Uckfield, and other settlements, where appropriate. The policy enables payments from developers to be accepted in certain cases towards the provision of public car parking spaces where the necessary provision cannot be met on individual sites, and the alternative would be normally to refuse planning permission.

TR15 In Crowborough, Hailsham, Heathfield, Polegate and Uckfield, and other settlements where deemed appropriate, the Council may accept commuted payments for vehicle parking spaces by agreement with intending developers where:-

(1) there is a need to provide a reasonable number of parking spaces which cannot be met on individual sites but which can be met in a reasonable time in proposed public car parks nearby;

(2) the settlement in which the development is proposed appears in the Council's approved car parking capital programme.

Car Parking Standards in New Development

9.57 The Council, as Local Planning Authority, operates a set of standards in order to ensure that adequate off-street parking and servicing provision is made to accommodate the traffic generated by new development. These standards have been produced by the County Council and adopted by the District Council. It is the policy of the Council that all developments should normally provide for the parking and servicing demand that they create on site, unless provision can be secured elsewhere, e.g. garage courtyards, or public car parks through commuted payments.

9.58 A summary of the Council's parking standards, including provision to be made for the disabled, is set out in Appendix 6. These provide guidance to developers, forming a consistent basis for development control purposes, and are therefore included as part of the Local Plan.

TR16 In considering all development proposals, the Council will require the on-site provision of vehicle parking and servicing in accordance with the standards set out in Appendix 6.

Park and Ride

9.59 Tunbridge Wells Borough Council proposes a Park and Ride scheme to serve Tunbridge Wells. This is a scheme where large surface car parks are provided at the peripheries of the town with regular bus services into the town centre and back. Whilst this Council supports the principle of a park and ride scheme for environmental and traffic reasons, it does not accept that sites should necessarily be provided within the Wealden area, where clear environmental objections exist.

9.60 To date, no suitable site has been found where a park and ride car park would not harm the rural character of its surroundings or the landscape of the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and where these concerns would be outweighed by the benefits of park and ride. It is proposed that the two Councils continue to work together through a methodical approach of landscape analysis to explore whether alternative sites would be more acceptable in terms of their landscape and environmental impact.

PUBLIC TRANSPORT

9.61 Although there has been a significant increase in car ownership over the last ten years, there are still a large number of households without the use of a car who are dependant on bus and rail services for access to shopping, employment, recreation and other community facilities. In view of the rural nature of the District, in many cases people are reliant on more than one form of public transport for their needs. Furthermore the provision of a comfortable, economic and convenient public transport system is essential if, in the longer term, there is to be a reduction in the reliance on the private motor car, a reduction in overall vehicle trips and the conservation of energy which could only be achieved by providing a real choice between different modes of travel.

9.62 Land-use policies in the Local Plan, such as Policy EN2, seek to reduce the need to travel by influencing the location of development. Whilst the maintenance and improvement of public transport services are not strictly land-use matters, except for the protection of former rail lines, the Council has wider corporate aims relating to public transport which are outlined below.

9.63 The Council will continue to encourage and support the County Council, as public transport authority, and the relevant railway organisations to maintain and enhance the quality and reliability of public transport services, and wherever possible, co-ordinate the provision of bus and rail services. In addition, the railway service has a role to play in reducing the need for freight to travel by road and the Council would wish to encourage the switch of road freight onto the railways wherever possible.

9.64 Since deregulation in October 1986, bus operators are able to schedule routes and the frequency of services that they believe to be commercially viable. The County Council, in order to retain the levels of service that existed prior to deregulation, is providing "Local Rider" services on less popular routes. This is particularly important in a rural district like Wealden where the dispersed nature of the population makes the guarantee of passenger numbers more difficult.

9.65 There are three railway lines which run through the District, each of which terminates in London. The Hastings to Charing Cross line has stations at Wadhurst and Frant, the Uckfield to Victoria line has further stations at Buxted, Crowborough and Eridge, and finally the Hastings and Eastbourne to Victoria line has stations at Pevensey Bay, Pevensey and Westham, Polegate and Berwick.

9.66 In recent years, the withdrawal of a number of peak hour trains on the Uckfield to London line has served to undermine the quality of the service and has given rise to concern over the whole future of the line. The Council feels strongly that an improved service and an increased level of investment on the line is needed for the social and economic well-being of

Uckfield residents, particularly in view of the growing population. The Council will continue to urge the relevant railway organisations to maintain and improve the quality and reliability of this rail service, particularly the electrification of the Uckfield – Hurst Green section of the line.

Uckfield-Lewes Reinstatement

9.67 Although the Uckfield-Lewes line was closed in 1969, Policy CA/T8 of the County Structure Plan seeks to restrict development which would significantly prejudice the possible reinstatement of a railway along the route of the former line north of the junction of the Hamsey Loop at Hamsey. Possible routes to connect with the Lewes to Haywards Heath line would need to be investigated.

9.68 In the past, British Rail consistently maintained that the scale of investment needed to reinstate the line was not justified in relation to the likely passenger demand and that a significant financial commitment from an outside body would be necessary. For this reason, British Rail made no financial provision for re-opening the line and, furthermore, stated that it would be in competition with funds for electrification of the Uckfield-Hurst Green line.

9.69 The prospects for reinstatement of the line are uncertain in view of rail privatisation. It is possible that in the medium to long term a franchisee will express interest in running the Uckfield-Hurst Green section of the line and wish to re-open the section to Lewes to connect in the longer term with the main Eastbourne-London line at Lewes now that the Railways Act 1993 encourages such possibilities. Indeed the Lavender Line Preservation Society has expressed interest in a longer term proposal to open up the Lewes to Uckfield line. The Society currently operates a limited service as a leisure attraction along part of the former line from Isfield station to the north. The Society's proposals are the subject of an ongoing examination by the County Council together with this Council, Uckfield Town Council and other interested parties.

9.70 Despite this uncertainty, the Council recognises that there would be benefits to local residents of a reinstated rail service providing a direct link between North Wealden, Lewes, and the coastal towns as an alternative to road transport. On this basis, and in line with Structure Plan policy, the Council will not permit development on the former railway line that would significantly prejudice its reinstatement.

TR17 Development which would significantly prejudice the reinstatement of the former Uckfield to Lewes railway line shown on the Proposals Map will not be permitted.

9.71 A study is being undertaken by East Sussex County Council, Wealden District Council and other local authorities on the potential for introduction of a regional rail service between the South Coast and north and east Kent using existing and disused railway lines between Lewes, Tunbridge Wells and Ebbsfleet. The possible future reinstatement of an Uckfield to Lewes rail service is being included as part of this study.

Polegate-Pevensey Link

9.72 The Structure Plan includes a policy that development which would significantly prejudice the reinstatement of a Polegate to Pevensey rail link will be restricted (CA/T9). The County Council considers that a short link just north of Hampden Park junction would be practical if it is needed and can be justified. The County Council's objective is to provide an improved train service on the South Coast route between Ashford and Brighton with the option of not stopping at Eastbourne, although the relevant railway organisations do not consider this to be supportable.

TR18 Development which would significantly prejudice the reinstatement of a Polegate to Pevensey rail link via a short link north of the Hampden Park Junction shown on the Proposals Map will not be permitted.

Spa Valley Line

9.73 The closure of the Eridge to Tunbridge Wells branch line effectively removed the rail link between the Uckfield line and the Tunbridge Wells line. However, the Tunbridge Wells and Eridge Railway Preservation Society has established a private railway between the Tunbridge Wells West and Eridge stations to be known as the Spa Valley Line. This is hoped to comprise the reinstatement of a limited public transport service as well as a steam and diesel tourist service which would then connect with the regular Connex South Central services at Eridge. The Society has successfully obtained financial backing for the project and has purchased the section of the former line between Birchden Junction to the south of Groombridge and Tunbridge Wells West Station. The laying of this section of the line is complete. The remainder of the line between Birchden Junction and Eridge will stay in the ownership of Railtrack.

9.74 The Council supports the Preservation Society in its efforts to reinstate the use of the line and views it as a potential recreational and tourist attraction connecting the Pantiles area of Tunbridge Wells with the attractive countryside of the north Wealden area.

9.75 In the light of the Preservation Society's commitment to the re-opening of the railway service, a policy to protect the route from prejudicial development is appropriate.

TR19 Development which would significantly prejudice the reinstatement of the former Eridge to Tunbridge Wells West railway line shown on the Proposals Map will not be permitted.

Stone Cross Railway Station

9.76 Policy CA/T7 of the County Structure Plan proposes the investigation of a new railway station to serve Stone Cross, North Langney and Eastbourne Park. At present, there is no commitment to a particular site. However the County Council, Eastbourne Borough Council and this Council have commissioned a study to evaluate the need for and the impact of a new station in the Stone Cross area. The Consultant's report concluded that the investment case for a Stone Cross station is not made purely in financial terms but that once externalities are included, then the broader case for the investment can be made. The appraisal results are however sensitive to key assumptions. Whilst the Council has given its support in principle for a new station, it is considered that at the present time there is insufficient justification for the provision of a specific site for this purpose.

Implementation

9.77 Policies TR1-TR4 inclusive, TR6-TR13 inclusive and TR15-TR19 inclusive in the Transport Chapter will be implemented by the Council primarily through its development control function.

9.78 Policies TR5 and TR14 will also be implemented by the Council through discussions and negotiations with the East Sussex County Council and other agencies.

Monitoring

9.79 The key areas to be monitored will include:-

(1) the progress on the A27/A259 Trunk Road Schemes;

(2) the progress on Primary Road Schemes;

(3) traffic management/calming schemes;

(4) new or improved pedestrian/cyclist routes;

(5) car parking provision and usage in the towns and villages;

(6) public transport services - routes and timetabling.

Leisure and Recreation

11

Introduction

11.1 Participation in sport and recreation has increased significantly during the last decade in line with rising disposable incomes, increasing leisure time and the growth of public interest in health and fitness. Most people now take part in some form of active recreation, whether it is playing a sport or simply walking in the countryside. This trend seems likely to continue in the foreseeable future, with greater demands for further and better recreational facilities.

11.2 In Wealden, the Town and Parish Councils have traditionally been responsible for the provision of recreational open space, including children's playgrounds, playing fields, and other facilities for outdoor sport. Indoor recreational facilities are largely concentrated in the three multi-purpose leisure centres managed by the District Council at Crowborough, Hailsham and Uckfield. However, financial constraints are increasingly limiting the ability of public bodies to make direct provision for such facilities, and it is likely that the private and voluntary sectors will play a growing role in meeting future leisure requirements.

11.3 This chapter addresses recreation and open space requirements within the District, focussing principally on the need for outdoor playing space within the towns and villages. Proposals for leisure-related developments which may arise in the countryside, such as additional golf courses, facilities for motor sports or 'combat' gaming, are considered within the context of Chapter 5, while tourism-related proposals are covered by the policies in Chapter 10. Site specific proposals are detailed in the appropriate settlement chapter of the Plan.

STRATEGY

11.4 The Council recognises the important contribution that recreation can make both to the individual's health and sense of well-being, and to the general quality of life enjoyed by those living and working in Wealden District. It therefore aims to promote the development of sport and recreation in the District, to achieve greater levels of participation in sporting and recreational activities, and to encourage the provision of a wide range of recreational opportunities to benefit all sections of the community. In seeking to achieve these aims, it will work in partnership with a wide range of public, private and voluntary agencies.

11.5 The Council will seek the retention and provision of recreational open space in towns and villages, together with the development of an appropriate range and standard of facilities for indoor sport and recreation. It is the aim of the Council's corporate Leisure Strategy to develop and promote the role of Crowborough, Hailsham and Uckfield as local centres for indoor sports and leisure activities in view of their overall accessibility and existing level of facilities. At the same time the Council will support and encourage Town and Parish Council initiatives to improve the existing level of recreational provision in other towns and villages, in recognition of their important role in meeting the leisure needs of the wider community.

11.6 Within the countryside further opportunities for quiet, informal recreation will be sought and encouraged. The Council aims to develop the potential for access to the countryside through the public rights of way network, the further improvement and extension of the Cuckoo Trail, and the provision of publicity and information for both residents and visitors.

11.7 In accordance with this strategy, the main objectives for recreation are:-

(1) to encourage the provision of a wide range of opportunities for both formal and informal recreation where this would not adversely affect the amenities of adjoining occupiers or the attractiveness of the countryside;

(2) to safeguard, and make the most effective use of, existing outdoor playing space, and to improve the level of provision wherever possible;

(3) to seek to ensure that adequate provision is made for outdoor playing space and informal amenity areas within new residential developments;

(4) to improve access to the countryside;

(5) to encourage Town and Parish Council and voluntary initiatives in the provision of sports and recreational facilities, where appropriate.

11.8 These aims have been formulated having regard to Government guidance, particularly in Planning Policy Guidance Note 17, 'Sport and Recreation', and the strategic framework provided by the Council's corporate Leisure Strategy and the County Structure Plan. The policies of the County Structure Plan make provision for more and better recreational facilities but in a carefully controlled and managed way to protect the environment, both for its own sake and as a recreational asset.

OUTDOOR PLAYING SPACE

11.9 Government advice in Planning Policy Guidance Note 17 states that it is the Local Planning Authority's responsibility to take full account of the community's need for recreational space, to have regard to current levels of provision and deficiencies, and to resist pressures for the development of open space which conflict with the wider public interest.

11.10 The standard most generally applied to the provision of outdoor playing space is that recommended by the National Playing Fields Association (NPFA), of a minimum of 2.4 hectares per thousand population. This comprises 1.6-1.8 hectares of space for youth and adult use (including playing pitches, courts and greens) and 0.6-0.8 hectares of children's play space (defined as equipped playgrounds and casual play space within housing areas). The standard specifically excludes informal amenity space, ornamental gardens, parks and woodland.

11.11 Appendix 8 indicates the overall provision of outdoor playing space in Wealden's towns, illustrating those that fall below the NPFA recommended levels and the particular deficiencies in the provision of children's play space. However, a reasonable level of provision is achieved in many of the rural areas of the District, with most of the larger villages possessing at least one recreation ground. Areas of deficiency are considered in more detail in the following sections.

11.12 The principal requirement for youth and adult use derives from the four team sports of cricket, football, hockey and rugby. In previous years, the provision of sports pitches has been achieved in association with large new housing developments. However, Local Plan studies have identified a need for additional sports pitches in all Wealden's towns, with a number of facilities suffering from over-use. Unfortunately the opportunities for providing additional pitches are limited due to the lack of sites in Town or Parish Council ownership, although land has been identified for the provision of further playing fields at Crowborough, Hailsham, Heathfield, Polegate and Uckfield, as described in the relevant town chapters. Consultations carried out with Parish Councils indicate a degree of satisfaction with the overall level of pitch provision in rural areas, except at Danehill, Framfield, Hellingly and Maresfield. Areas of the District deficient in facilities for tennis and bowls are listed in Appendix 8. Town and Parish Council initiatives for the provision of further outdoor recreational facilities will be supported where appropriate.

11.13 The opportunities for rectifying the shortfall in children's play space are limited due to financial constraints and the fact that the worst deficiencies occur within existing residential areas, where there is little prospect of suitable sites becoming available. However, a number of potential locations for additional provision are identified in the individual settlement chapters where appropriate, and the Council will normally require the provision of adequate children's play space in all large new residential developments, in accordance with Policy LR3.

11.14 It is clear from the deficiencies in outdoor playing space identified above that there is a need for this Council and the Town and Parish Councils to realise opportunities to secure the provision of additional facilities where appropriate. Policy LR1 states the Council's intention to ensure that adequate recreational open space is provided to meet the needs of existing and future residents.

11.15 In order to provide an appropriate basis for the provision of outdoor playing space, the Council has adopted as a minimum standard the recommendation of the NPFA, as outlined above.

LR1 The Council will seek to ensure that adequate outdoor playing space is provided in towns and villages within the District in accordance with the levels recommended by the National Playing Fields Association. This will be achieved by:

(1) protecting existing outdoor playing space or other open space with recreational or amenity value (Policy LR2);

(2) the provision of children's play space in new residential developments of 30 or more dwellings (Policy LR3);

(3) the provision of artificial turf pitches on appropriate sites.

Existing Outdoor Playing Space

11.16 In view of the shortages of outdoor playing space within the District and the difficulties in securing new public open space, it is important that existing facilities are retained and their use maximised. It is also important that other recreational open space which is, or could be, of benefit to the local community is retained for public use. Playing fields, whether owned by public, private or voluntary organisations, are regarded as particularly significant for their recreational and amenity value. The Council will therefore protect such facilities from development, in accordance with the advice set out in Planning Policy Guidance Note 17, unless specific circumstances apply.

LR2 Development proposals which would result in the loss of existing outdoor playing

space, or other open space with recreational or amenity value, will not be permitted. In particular, planning permission will not be granted for the loss of existing playing fields, whether privately or publicly owned. An exception may be made where the redevelopment of part of the site would enhance the recreational facilities available, where alternative provision of equivalent community benefit is made available nearby, or where it can be demonstrated to the satisfaction of the Council that there is an excess of outdoor playing space in the area.

Outdoor Playing Space in New Housing Developments

11.17 It is now widely accepted that new residential developments should make adequate provision for recreational open space to meet the needs of the prospective occupants. The standards adopted for such provision are usually related to the NPFA target of 2.4 hectares per thousand population, as outlined above. However, whilst the provision of outdoor playing space in accordance with NPFA standards can generally be readily achieved on large new residential development, for smaller schemes it is seldom possible to provide a worthwhile and usable level of open space on site.

11.18 In view of the limited size and number of the housing sites likely to come forward in the period to 2004, over and above the committed situation, it is considered that it would be unrealistic in this Plan to require all new residential developments to incorporate the full range of open space facilities recommended by the NPFA. The Council has therefore identified a threshold above which developers will normally be required to provide play space for children, as set out below. In determining the precise requirement for any individual development, the following factors will also be taken into account:-

(i) the type of housing proposed;

(ii) the location of the site;

(iii) any local play space deficiencies.

Children's Play Space

11.19 It is considered that the provision of adequate play space for children should, in most circumstances, be an essential requirement of all developments of 30 or more dwellings. Within such developments, the Council will therefore require the provision of safe and readily accessible play areas at a rate of 0.6-0.8 hectares per thousand population. This overall allocation should comprise both an equipped children's play area at a rate of 0.2-0.3 hectares per thousand population, and casual or informal play space at a rate of 0.4-0.5 hectares per thousand population, as described below. An exception to this policy will be made in the case of sheltered housing or other specialist accommodation for the elderly/retired.

11.20 Equipped play areas should be located within a short walking distance of each home, with safe and convenient pedestrian access. They should include provision for the under fives, be provided with seating, and allow easy supervision by parents. Particular attention should be given to minimising disturbance to adjoining residents and avoiding the risk of vandalism and crime by means of layout, design and location. Play equipment should conform to British Standard 5696 and normally be installed by first occupation of the associated housing. Appropriate safety surfacing will be required in all equipped play areas.

11.21 Casual play space, or kickabout areas, are important to meet the needs of children for casual play, informal games and other activities which cannot normally take place within an equipped playground or sports field. To fulfil their purpose, such areas should be situated within a short walking distance of each home and sited to avoid the risk of road accidents or nuisance to neighbours. They are not meant for organised team games nor do pitches need to be marked out. They should be carefully landscaped, free-draining and for the most part reasonably level to allow for ball games. Where appropriate, provision could be made for part of these areas to be hard-surfaced to allow opportunities for activities such as cycling.

LR3 The Council will require new residential development of 30 or more dwellings to contain children's play space at a rate of 0.6 – 0.8 hectares per thousand population, including an equipped area at a rate of 0.2 – 0.3 hectares per thousand population. This space should:-

(1) be located where it can be used safely, conveniently and without causing excessive noise or other disturbance to adjoining areas;

(2) be properly drained, laid out, equipped and landscaped;

(3) be additional to any amenity, incidental or other open space.

A capital sum, or other arrangement to the satisfaction of the District Council, will be sought for future maintenance.

11.22 Rather than applying an average household size to calculate the population of a proposed development, it is considered more appropriate to base such an assessment on the number of people likely to occupy

each dwelling. The method which will be used to implement the above policy is detailed in Appendix 8.

Artificial Turf Pitches

11.23 Artificial turf or 'all weather' pitches can theoretically accommodate 30 times more hours of play than natural grass and are now gaining wide recognition, particularly by sports such as hockey. Whilst synthetic pitches do not normally solve the problem of peaking usage (e.g. at weekends), they do allow for play throughout the year and, with floodlighting, can substantially alleviate pressures on existing playing fields. Such facilities are most beneficially located within school sites in order to maximise day time usage.

11.24 The Sports Council has identified Crowborough as a priority area for a floodlit artificial turf pitch. In East Sussex such facilities are currently limited to Seaford and Portslade. Whilst the Council seeks to encourage the provision of artificial turf pitches on appropriate sites in Crowborough and other parts of the District, it recognises that floodlighting, together with increased levels of activity in the evenings, can be of particular concern in some areas. Proposals for artificial turf pitches will therefore only be permitted where the amenities of adjoining occupiers and the character of the locality would not be unacceptably affected.

LR4 Proposals for the provision of artificial turf pitches may be permitted where there is no unacceptably adverse impact on the amenities of adjoining occupiers or the character of the locality. Control over hours of operation may be required by condition of any planning permission.

INFORMAL AMENITY AREAS

11.25 In addition to the provision of outdoor playing space, informal open space has a valuable role in terms of its recreational and amenity potential. This type of space, which includes both open and wooded areas, offers opportunities for passive recreation and often makes an important contribution to the character of an area and to wildlife conservation, particularly within built-up areas.

11.26 Whilst it is desirable that everyone should have convenient access to informal open space, this does not fall within NPFA guidelines nor are there any other generally accepted standards which can be applied. However, in order to offset to some extent the deficiencies in formal outdoor recreation facilities, the Council will take every opportunity to increase the amount of informal amenity space which is accessible to the public. This will include utilising the amenity potential of existing features and providing additional open space in association with the development of new sites.

11.27 A number of opportunities for the provision of informal open space have been identified and are described in the relevant settlement chapters. In addition, Policy LR5 seeks to secure informal amenity areas, additional to the children's play space required to meet minimum standards, in all large housing developments.

LR5 The Council will seek the provision of informal amenity space, additional to the outdoor playing space required under Policy LR3, in all large new housing developments, where appropriate, incorporating existing landscape features such as trees, hedgerows, etc.

ALLOTMENTS

11.28 The District Council, Town Councils and many of the Parish Councils maintain allotments. The existing provision within the District is generally adequate, with evidence of vacant plots in many areas, and there is no known requirement to allocate additional land for allotment purposes at present. However, it is considered that existing allotments represent a valuable facility, particularly in view of the trend towards increased leisure time. Proposals to develop allotment land will therefore normally be resisted unless it can be demonstrated that suitable alternative provision will be made elsewhere or that other exceptional circumstances prevail.

LR6 Proposals for the development of allotment land will not be permitted unless it can be demonstrated that adequate and suitable alternative provision can be made elsewhere.

INDOOR SPORTS FACILITIES

11.29 Wealden is relatively well-equipped in terms of indoor sports facilities. Goldsmith's Leisure Centre in Crowborough, Utopia in Uckfield and the Lagoon in Hailsham, each offer an extensive range of facilities for indoor sports, including swimming, squash, badminton, 5-a-side football, basketball, gymnastics, trampolining, weight training and fitness classes. Since the completion of the dual use sports hall at Heathfield Community College, 80% of the District's population now live within three miles of public indoor leisure facilities.

11.30 In view of this wide range of provision, the often very high costs of providing new facilities, and current constraints on public spending, the Council's Corporate Leisure Strategy gives priority to maximising the usage of the existing leisure services rather than making direct provision for additional indoor facilities. Initiatives such as the Oasis Project, which aims to increase participation in recreational activity through partnership between the Council and health agencies, are already achieving success in this respect at all three Leisure Centres..

11.31 Whilst there is unlikely to be further public sector provision of purpose-built indoor sports facilities during the Plan period, it is recognised that there may be a demand for commercial facilities catering for sports such as tennis, squash and fitness-training. Such facilities need to be as accessible as possible and do not generally require a rural location. They usually involve substantial new buildings and car parking and, in view of the strategy of protecting the countryside from inappropriate development, it is considered that new proposals for indoor sports facilities should normally be located within the town or village development boundaries. Small-scale proposals may be acceptable in the countryside where they are ancillary to an existing use or represent the use of an existing building. However, planning permission is unlikely to be granted for such uses in the Sussex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty or on the Ashdown Forest, where it is intended to provide only for informal recreational activity in association with the quiet enjoyment of the countryside in accordance with Policy S18 of the approved Structure Plan.

LR7 Proposals for indoor sports or leisure facilities will not be permitted outside development boundaries, as defined on the Proposals Map, unless they are small in scale and are ancillary to an existing use, or represent the use of an existing agricultural or other rural building, in accordance with Policy DC7.

11.32 Whilst the leisure centres in the towns have extensive catchment areas, covering the north, south and centre of the District, it is recognised that recreational opportunities for a significant proportion of Wealden's population remain limited. The more rural areas lack facilities for indoor sport and recreation, and access to the towns is often restricted due to a lack of private transport or the inadequacy of public transport. This particularly affects those sections of the community who characteristically have low sports participation rates, i.e. women, children, the elderly and disabled.

11.33 Obviously, most small rural communities are not able to support the provision of a purpose-built sports hall. Such facilities, as well as being expensive to construct, will usually accrue heavy revenue costs and will rely on a large catchment population to be financially viable.

11.34 However, in most parts of the District, community halls already make a vital contribution to village life and, with minor adaptations, many could accommodate a wide range of recreational pursuits. These facilities are managed by a variety of different organisations, including Parish Councils, voluntary bodies and churches. Consultations with the Town and Parish Councils have identified a need for new community halls at East Dean, Herstmonceux, Laughton, Polegate and Willingdon. Specific proposals are contained in the relevant settlement chapter where appropriate, but Policy LR8 provides for new, extended or improved facilities where other opportunities arise.

LR8 Proposals for new, extended or improved community halls will be permitted within the development boundaries, as defined on the Proposals Map. In exceptional circumstances, proposals for such facilities will be permitted outside the development boundaries provided that the following criteria are met:

(1) the proposed development is essential to meet the needs of the local community;

(2) the proposed development cannot be accommodated satisfactorily within the development boundaries;

(3) the proposed development would not be unduly intrusive in the landscape, or detrimental to the character and appearance of the countryside.

COUNTRYSIDE RECREATION

11.35 The importance of the countryside for recreation lies in the wide variety of opportunities it offers to people of all ages, capabilities and interests. Countryside recreation is now the most popular form of outdoor leisure activity and covers an enormous range of pursuits, including well established sports such as angling and newer activities such as hang gliding. The vast majority of people, however, visit the countryside to enjoy casual or informal activities that require no particular skills and few, if any, special facilities.

11.36 Whilst recognising the landscape and other environmental constraints to development in much of the District, the Council is aware of the need to improve and extend opportunities for both residents and visitors to enjoy the countryside and its wildlife. It will therefore support and encourage measures to

facilitate access to the countryside for informal and passive recreation, where this is consistent with other policies and proposals in the Plan. Such measures will include negotiating access agreements with landowners, promoting and developing safe routes for walkers, cyclists and horse riders, and the introduction, where appropriate, of picnic areas, car parks and other visitor facilities at access points to the wider countryside.

Footpaths and Bridleways

11.37 The public footpath and bridleway network represents a valuable recreational resource, enabling walkers and riders to gain access to and enjoy the countryside with minimal disturbance to farmers and other landowners. The Council will promote the use of this network by encouraging its maintenance and improvement where possible, seeking to ensure that all routes are appropriately surfaced, signposted, waymarked and kept free of obstruction and seeking to promote, where development affects public rights of way, the maintenance of these routes by preventing their obstruction or promoting a sensitive diversion.

The Cuckoo Trail

11.38 An important existing facility is the Cuckoo Trail, a traffic free path for shared use by walkers, cyclists, the disabled and, in parts, horse riders between Heathfield and Polegate. The Council, in association with Sustrans Ltd, is working with the County Council and local Parish Councils to extend the Trail northwards to the Kent border and southwards to Eastbourne, where it will link with similar facilities being provided in the Eastbourne Park area. It is envisaged that within ten years the Trail will form a key link within the National Cycle Network, a series of high quality, safe and attractive routes reaching all parts of mainland Britain. In addition the Council will promote the use of other leisure cycle routes and seek new opportunities for recreational cycling.

Implementation

11.39 Policies LR1 to LR8 inclusive will be implemented by the Council primarily through its development control function.

Monitoring

11.40 The key areas to be monitored will include:-

(1) the overall provision of outdoor play space in the towns and villages;

(2) the provision of outdoor play space in new housing developments;

(3) provision of new indoor community facilities;

Community Services

12

Introduction

12.1 This chapter gives consideration to the availability of infrastructure and other community facilities to serve existing and new development. It outlines the responsibilities of the various agencies involved in the provision of community services and includes the Council's planning policies relating to the provision of infrastructure and other community services in association with new development.

STRATEGY

12.2 The Council is keen to promote a full range of local community services to be available and accessible within the District to meet the reasonable expectations of existing and new residents. This is especially pertinent to new housing development. The concerns about such services becoming stretched by major new developments or about delays or other inadequacies in accompanying services and community facilities are recognised and will be addressed as fully as possible.

12.3 With the exception of recycling facilities, the District Council is not the Authority or Agency responsible for directly providing the services. Its influence is principally as the Local Planning Authority responsible for local plan preparation and development control. The service providers, who have been consulted during the preparation of this Plan, will be able to take account of the Plan's proposals and policies in their own programmes.

12.4 Certain services are provided locally, for example libraries, while others have nationally determined levels of service. There are changes in the form of delivery of many services, particularly as some move into the private sector. This necessitates continued close liaison between the Council and the relevant agencies to ensure service provision and development is properly co-ordinated and is not disrupted or prejudiced.

12.5 It is the aim of the Plan's strategy to ensure that all works, services and community facilities required by development will be provided at the appropriate time. In accordance with this the following objectives are defined:-

(1) to support the provision of a wide range of community services to meet the needs and expectations of the existing and future residents;

(2) to assist the relevant service providers to assess and develop their own programmes to meet the requirements of the existing and the projected population and developments of the Local Plan in an efficient manner;

(3) to avoid any delays or other inadequacies in the availability of community services.

GENERAL APPROACH

12.6 In view of the prior need to secure the necessary infrastructure to service new development and the important contribution that the community services referred to above make to the quality of life, it is appropriate to clearly set down the policy framework within which to consider development proposals, including ones for the supply of those services. Accordingly, in line with Structure Plan Policies S4 and S5 and the above strategy, the following policy is put forward:-

> **CS1 Development will not be permitted before the Council is satisfied that the capital works directly required to service the development are provided at the time development takes place or will be provided at the appropriate time.**

12.7 In accordance with this policy, in appropriate cases developers and landowners will be expected to provide the works and services made necessary by proposed developments or will be expected to make financial contributions to such works. Where necessary and appropriate these will be secured through legal agreements. This policy is in line with Government guidance in Circular 1/97 which states that such works should be directly related to and made necessary by the proposed development. The policy should not be taken to infer that development which is otherwise unacceptable would be made acceptable through the provision of such works and services.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES

12.8 The provision of health care within Wealden underwent a fundamental administrative change in April 1993 with the formation of a new County-wide East Sussex Health Authority, effectively merging the former Brighton, Eastbourne and Hastings Health Authorities. The new Health Authority, which is organised to relate to District and Borough boundaries, is responsible for the 'purchasing' of health care, while the actual provision of health services throughout

Wealden now rests with the Eastbourne and County Healthcare NHS Trust.

12.9 Hospital care for residents of the northern parts of the District is currently met by facilities in Tunbridge Wells together with those in Crowborough and Uckfield. The Crowborough War Memorial Hospital in Southview Road provides a locally valued range of primary health care and maternity services. Grove House has been built within the grounds of the hospital and provides both psychiatric and elderly day care facilities. The Uckfield Community Hospital provides a wide range of comprehensive health care facilities.

12.10 In terms of general hospital health care, the southern part of the Plan area is served by the hospitals in Eastbourne. These include the Eastbourne District General Hospital and All Saints' Hospital. Planning policies applicable to nursing homes are contained in Chapter 6.

12.11 The County Council's County-wide Community Care Plan 1998/2001 examines existing services and outlines proposals for the provision of a wide range of community care services, including group homes which are operated jointly by Social Services and the Health Authority.

12.12 The East Sussex Family Health Services Authority (FHSA) co-ordinates and partly funds the provision of doctors' surgeries as well as the services provided by dental practitioners, pharmacists and opticians. A number of the doctors' practices in the District have tentative plans to alter and expand their premises owing to cramped conditions. However, the FHSA generally considers that there is no shortfall in the provision of general practitioner services.

12.13 The Council considers it important that doctors' and dental surgeries be adequately provided for within the towns and villages of the District. Accordingly, the Council would look sympathetically on any proposals for new, replacement or extensions to surgeries in accordance with the relevant policies in the Plan. In particular, they should not have a detrimental impact on residential character and amenities, particularly with regard to car parking and traffic generation.

12.14 The County Council Social Services Department is responsible for the provision of a range of social services throughout the District.

EDUCATION

12.15 The County Council is the Local Education Authority responsible for the maintained education service in the District. The County Council is aware of the planned housing developments across the District and the likely increases in population and school aged children arising from such developments. Its programme for school places into the next century takes account of these and other factors.

12.16 The dual use of educational buildings and playing fields for community purposes can make a valuable contribution to providing for additional community use and recreational provision. It is therefore considered appropriate that, whenever possible, land and buildings in the ownership of educational bodies be made available for community use. Indeed, in relation to playing fields, their availability for public use is the policy and practice of the Local Education Authority, and other educational institutions often make a significant contribution to meeting the recreational needs of local communities.

12.17 It is also the policy of the County Council, as the Local Education Authority, that new local authority buildings should normally be designed to facilitate community use. The Council will work closely with the County Council to apply this policy to the proposed primary schools in the District.

MAGISTRATES COURTS

12.18 In 1993 the East Sussex Magistrates' Courts Committee carried out a review of the provision of services within the District. In response to the Courts Committee's consultation, the Council expressed its concern over the rationalisation of courthouse provision within the District which could result in a reduction of services and the closure of the existing courthouses in Hailsham, Mark Cross and Uckfield. It emphasised the importance of retaining a permanent courthouse within the District as an essential public facility. The Courts Committee took the decision to close all three Courts with effect from October 1993 for Hailsham and April 1994 in the case of Mark Cross and Uckfield, thereby leaving Wealden without a Court in its area.

12.19 The Magistrates' Courts Committee is committed in principle to a courthouse in the north Wealden area and considers that Crowborough is the best location.

EMERGENCY SERVICES

12.20 The emergency services - police, ambulance and fire - have been advised of the Plan's housing and commercial proposals. They will consider their future services in the light of these developments and population increases.

UTILITIES

General

12.21 Developers and property owners are advised to contact the respective utility service authorities at an early stage regarding water supply, foul drainage, surface water drainage, electricity, gas or telephones. This will help ascertain particular site requirements, and costings where appropriate. Consideration should also be given to the implications for development of services crossing a site, both for the built form and landscaping. Principal services affecting land allocations in the Plan are discussed in the relevant chapter.

12.22 In general terms, there are no significant constraints on the provision of water, gas, electricity and telephones. Particular issues in relation to water supply, foul and surface drainage are discussed below.

12.23 The Water Industry Act 1991 provides for infrastructure charges to be collected by Statutory Sewerage and Water Undertakers. In cases where development is conditional on a particular utility service being completed, occupation may be restricted until such provision is available.

Water Supply

12.24 South East Water Ltd incorporates the previous Eastbourne, Mid Sussex and West Kent Water Companies and is responsible for the supply of water throughout the District. In terms of existing water resources, although there is currently greater capacity in some parts of the Plan area than others, there is not considered to be an overall shortage of supply across the Plan area to meet planned development and hence meet its obligation to provide supplies to all new development. The Environment Agency is responsible for the overall management of water sources. Abstractions from both ground and surface waters require a licence from the Agency.

12.25 In order to provide for the projected increases in water demand, South East Water's resource strategy is aimed at developing a number of sources which are able to supplement supply. Water supplies, although currently adequate to meet existing demands, will become critical during the Plan period and therefore, developers are advised to contact the Water Company as soon as possible to ensure that a water supply can be provided.

Drainage

12.26 The Council will expect that wherever possible new development is connected to the foul sewerage systems and that surface water is able to be disposed of efficiently and adequately.

CS2 Planning applications will be permitted only where adequate provision is made for surface and foul water drainage to meet Local Authority standards, taking into consideration the adequacy or otherwise of the existing systems it will feed, to avoid increasing the risk of flooding by surcharging mains or increasing surface water run-off to watercourses.

Foul Drainage

12.27 Southern Water Services Ltd. is the statutory sewerage undertaker for the District. The majority of the settlements in the District are served by sewers and several inland wastewater treatment works. Pevensey, Westham, Pevensey Bay and part of Stone Cross are served by the Pevensey Bay Sea Outfall. The flows to this outfall are to be transferred to a new outfall at Langney Point as part of the Eastbourne Wastewater Treatment Scheme. The works that are being carried out are part of Southern Water Services Ltd. Operation Seaclean in order to comply with the European Union's Bathing Water Directive.

Surface Water Drainage

12.28 The Environment Agency is responsible for safeguarding the quality of all water resources. It controls the discharge of any effluent, which includes surface water from any commercial development or new road into any surface or groundwater source. The Agency is also concerned with protecting such water resources from the contamination of land and physical disturbance.

12.29 Under the Water Resources Act 1991 and the Land Drainage Act 1991, the Environment Agency has a statutory duty to exercise general supervision over all matters relating to flood defence. Both the Environment Agency and the Council have permissory powers relating to ordinary watercourses, other than those lying within the Upper Medway Floodplain. This comes under the jurisdiction of the Upper Medway Internal Drainage Board. The Environment Agency also has permissory powers to undertake work on main river and sea defences.

12.30 In many parts of the District, particularly the rural areas, there are no public surface water sewers available and surface water disposal must be achieved by discharge to private surface water sewers, watercourses or soakaways. Where appropriate, the provision of new private surface water sewers will be encouraged.

12.31 Surface and groundwater resources require protection from pollution and disturbance arising from new development. Damage can occur due to the physical disturbance of groundwater by quarrying, road construction and new mineral workings, or through contamination by waste disposal, industrial processes and disturbance of contaminated land. Surface water from major new developments will generally discharge

into existing watercourses. However, where these watercourses are considered inadequate to accept the increased run-off, or where it is considered that the development may cause flooding, the developers will be required to provide adequate on-site surface water attenuation facilities or improve the watercourse where appropriate, all to the satisfaction of the Council and the Environment Agency, if necessary following appropriate investigations.

12.32 There is a need to ensure harmonisation in the activities of the four agencies which have responsibility for drainage. The Environment Agency and Wealden District Council are Land Drainage Authorities with responsibilities for land drainage, Southern Water Services is responsible for public surface water sewerage and East Sussex County Council is the Highway Authority responsible for highway drainage. Such accord may best be achieved through the preparation of detailed development and maintenance plans.

Willingdon Levels Catchment Area

12.33 Eastbourne Borough Council has proposed a major drainage and flood mitigation scheme in the Eastbourne Park area, comprising a series of artificially created storage lakes, as well as an improved drainage outfall to the sea via the Crumbles Sewer. This will allow future development within parts of the Willingdon Levels Catchment Area lying within Eastbourne Borough to be implemented without creating flooding and surface water run-off problems. Figure 8 indicates the general extent of the Catchment Area. The area within Wealden District is fully defined on the Proposals Map.

12.34 Development proposals within or discharging into the Willingdon Levels Catchment Area will receive particular attention in order to ensure the maintenance of an efficient drainage system within the whole of the Catchment Area and the proper protection of the Levels. The Council will continue to liaise closely with Eastbourne Borough Council and the Environment Agency on all developments with surface water drainage implications proposed within the Willingdon Levels Catchment Area.

CS3 All development within the Willingdon Levels Drainage Catchment Area shown on the Proposals Map will be required to make adequate provision for drainage. Such provision should accord with the level of development proposed and with surrounding developments, in order to ensure that no overall reduction in flood storage capacity or increased surface water run-off occurs without adequate compensatory measures.

WASTE DISPOSAL

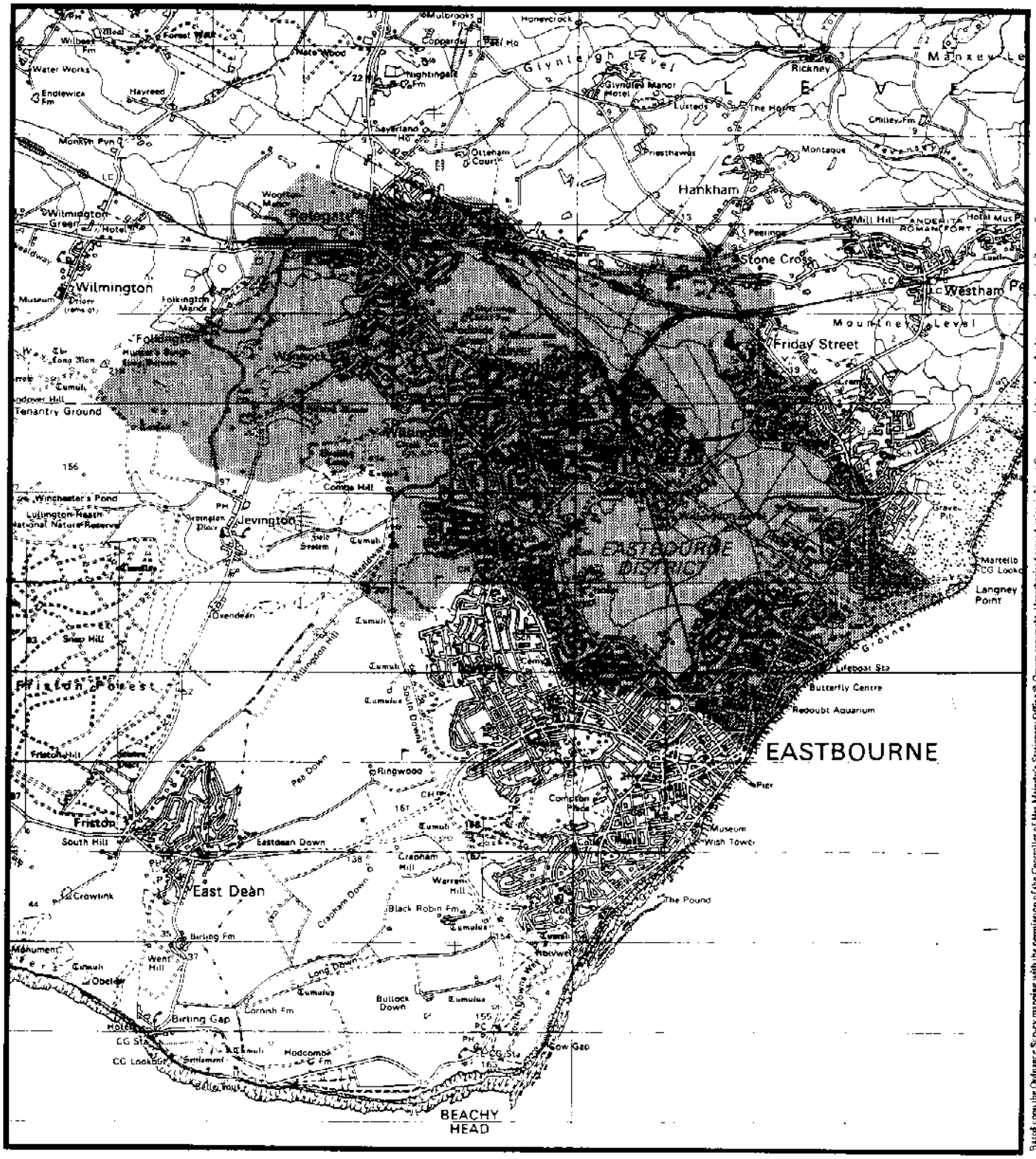
12.35 East Sussex County Council, as Waste Planning Authority, has reviewed its policies for waste in the County Structure Plan and is preparing a Waste Local Plan for the whole County, jointly with Brighton and Hove Council, which will identify sites and set out planning criteria for waste developments. This Plan will set out in more detail how waste should be dealt with in East Sussex within the context of Structure Plan policies and the East Sussex Waste Strategy discussed in Chapter 4. The County Council is also responsible for deciding planning applications for waste operations and enforcing controls over waste developments.

12.36 As Waste Disposal Authority, the County Council is responsible for arranging for the disposal of household and other waste collected by Borough and District Councils, through contracts with private waste companies who actually provide or operate the disposal facilities. The County Council also provides Household Waste (or Civic Amenity) Sites, which include recycling centres, and supports recycling schemes operated by Borough and District Councils and others. The County Council's current policies and proposals for waste disposal, together with operational matters, are contained in the "Waste Disposal Plan 1988-98".

12.37 As Waste Regulation Authority, the Environment Agency's responsibilities include issuing and enforcing management licences to operators of waste facilities, regulating the handling and transport of waste.

12.38 Borough and District Councils have sole responsibility for collecting the County's household waste and are responsible for the majority of household waste recycling. Most commercial and

Willingdon Levels Drainage Catchment Area



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Wealden District Council LA079844 1999

Wealden Local Plan

Figure 7

This plan is for illustrative purposes only and does not form part of the Proposals Map.

0 10 20 30 kilometres

Not to scale

industrial waste is collected and disposed of entirely within the private sector.

12.39 It is a policy of the County Council's Waste Disposal Plan that a new landfill facility be sought in or near the northern part of the District.

12.40 The District Council is responsible for the collection of domestic waste throughout Wealden, while the provision of household waste facilities is the responsibility of the County Council as the Waste Disposal Authority.

Recycling

12.41 The District Council has a commitment to the recycling of waste, not only to assist the conservation and sustainable use of natural resources but also to reduce the demand for landfill and waste incineration sites. In response to the Environmental Protection Act 1990, the Council updates its Recycling Plan on an annual basis, demonstrating how it proposes to achieve the Government's target of recycling 25% of all household waste materials by the year 2000.

12.42 Sixty-seven recycling centres have been provided by the Council in Wealden, some of which have been specially constructed. These centres comprise newspaper, rag, can and bottle banks and, in one case, a plastic bottle bank. In addition a considerable number of bottle banks are located on private sites. Neighbourhood Recycling Points are being introduced in accordance with the Council's Recycling Plan.

12.43 Subject to the Council's policy on neighbourhood recycling points within new housing areas, within new housing developments over 40 dwellings, when appropriate, a purpose built enclosure should normally be provided to accommodate recycling containers for use by local residents. Screen walls and a roof should be provided to minimise the environmental impact of the facility both in terms of appearance and noise containment. The recycling area should be suitably located to avoid excessive disturbance to residents but should be adjacent to an access road for convenient emptying of the containers. On safety grounds, facilities should not be placed near to children's play areas. The management and maintenance of these neighbourhood recycling centres will be the responsibility of the District Council.

CS4 Within new housing developments over 40 dwellings, when appropriate, the Council will seek the provision of a purpose built enclosure for the containment of recycling facilities which should be located where it can be used safely and conveniently, without causing nuisance or excessive disturbance to residential amenities, and be accessed directly from the main estate road.

12.44 In addition, the Council will seek the provision of recycling areas in association with various commercial and community uses, e.g. supermarkets, hotels, community halls, household waste sites and public car parks. Recycling areas should be conveniently located, accessible by vehicles and should normally be screened. The management and maintenance of these recycling areas will be the responsibility of the District Council.

CS5 Within new commercial and community development, where appropriate, an area for recycling facilities should be provided which should be conveniently located, accessible by vehicles and should normally be screened.

Implementation

12.45 Policies CS1 - CS5 will be implemented by the Council primarily through the use of its development control functions.

Monitoring

12.46 The key areas to monitor will be the ability of the community service providers to meet the demands placed on them and the progress in meeting the stated objectives of both this Plan and their own plans and programmes.