

Villages

Introduction

18.1 The District contains a large number of villages and small settlements which vary in their nature from the larger villages which provide local services and employment to their surrounding areas, to small hamlets which are entirely residential in character.

18.2 The villages are diverse in their form and character, and many retain a distinct local identity based on historic buildings, traditional settlement patterns and attractive landscape settings.

18.3 The wider issues of housing, employment, transportation, etc, together with general policies that apply throughout the District, have been considered in previous chapters of this Plan and are briefly referred to later.

STRATEGY

18.4 The Plan's overall strategy, as set out in Chapter 2, provides for the majority of new development in the main towns, but also recognises that some villages will accommodate limited growth. The villages are a key part of the settlement pattern in the District and play an important role in the provision of housing for a large section of the population as well as jobs and services to the local community and surrounding rural areas.

18.5 The Council recognises this important role which the strategy for the villages seeks to maintain and enhance whenever possible. In determining the scale and nature of development and change in the villages, the Council has regard to their function and location in relation to neighbouring towns and villages, the need to protect their established character and rural setting, and the availability of local services.

18.6 As part of this strategy, the objectives of the Plan with regard to the villages are:-

(1) to conserve the established character of the village, its surrounding countryside and its landscape setting;

(2) to maintain and, where appropriate, enhance the residential nature of the villages;

(3) to promote the provision of affordable housing on appropriate sites through the 'exceptions' policy;

(4) to maintain and, where appropriate, improve the level and choice of local employment opportunities;

(5) to maintain and, where possible, improve the level and range of community services and facilities;

(6) to encourage the highway authority to implement appropriate traffic management measures.

18.7 The County Structure Plan strategy for the villages looks to the District Councils in their Local Plan preparation to determine the scale and nature of development (if any) in the villages. The strategy sets out criteria for village development, including the provision of local employment and housing opportunities for local need, whilst preserving and enhancing village character. Local Plans are to define village development boundaries where appropriate.

ENVIRONMENT

18.8 The villages and smaller settlements in the District are set within attractive countryside, and many are within the undulating landscapes of the Sussex Downs and High Weald Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The landscape quality of this rural setting normally dictates against further outward development of the villages which would be to the detriment of their character. Many of the villages have a distinctive character, often established around an historic core with areas of more scattered development on the rural fringe.

18.9 It is these environmental considerations, together with the location and function of the village in terms of providing employment and local services, that set the context for the development policies that apply to villages.

Development Boundaries

18.10 It is an important role for the Local Plan to identify those villages which the Council consider could accommodate some small scale new housing and employment development over the Plan period. Many villages will have reached the limit of their natural growth while in others some limited provision can be made for modest development without significant harm to the countryside or to the settlement itself. Whilst only limited provision is made for new development in the villages, major expansion has occurred and is committed at Stone Cross on land previously allocated for housing.

18.11 An assessment of all the villages and small settlements has been made in the context of County Structure Plan policies and the knowledge that no further housing land is required to meet the Structure Plan housing provisions. The study assessed

environmental considerations, including the character of the settlement and its setting, the location and function of the settlement, and the availability of services and infrastructure.

18.12 Where some limited new development would be considered acceptable in principle, either within the settlement or at its periphery, a development boundary has been drawn. As explained in Chapter 3, a development boundary does not attempt to define the physical or social limits of a village but defines the area to which Policy GD1 applies to give a sound basis for development control decisions.

18.13 In general terms, a development boundary seeks to prevent inappropriate outward encroachment into the surrounding countryside, an intensification of development in peripheral areas and ribbon development along roads. It excludes areas of more scattered development where the spaces and gaps around buildings contribute to a more rural character. Outside the development boundary, more restrictive District-wide policies apply which strictly control new housing, industry and many other forms of development.

Villages with Development Boundaries

18.14 The villages listed below have development boundaries and the considerations relating to the definition of the boundaries, together with the specific policies that apply within them, are set out in the individual village chapters, which follow this chapter, in alphabetical order.

Alfriston	Isfield
Berwick Station	*Lower Dicker
Blackboys	Lower Horsebridge
Broad Oak	Maresfield
Buxted	Mark Cross
Cross-in-Hand	Mayfield
East Dean and Friston	Maynards Green
East Hoathly	Ninfield
Fairwarp	Nutley
Five Ash Down Five Ashes	Pevensey Pevensey Bay
Forest Row	Punnetts Town
Framfield	Rotherfield
Groombridge	Stone Cross

Hadlow Down	Upper Dicker
Halland	Vines Cross
Hartfield	Wadhurst
Herstmonceux	Westham
Hoe Common	Windmill Hill
Horam	

* whilst not having a development boundary, Lower Dicker has been included in this list in view of housing and business allocations in the settlement.

Settlements without Development Boundaries

18.15 There are a number of other smaller villages and settlements where development boundaries have not been defined as the Council considers that new housing or commercial development would be inappropriate. This is normally because new development would be damaging to the character of the settlement and its rural environment, but may also reflect the lack of services and facilities. The following smaller villages and settlements fall within this category:-

Alciston	High Hurstwood
Arlington	Jevington
Balls Green	Laughton
Bells Yew Green	Litlington
Berwick	Little Horsted
Best Beech Hill	Magham Down
Blackham	Muddles Green
Bodle Street Green	Old Heathfield
Boreham Street	Ripe
Cade Street	Rosers Cross
Chelwood Common	Rushlake Green
Chelwood Gate	Selmeston
Chiddingly	Town Row
Colemans Hatch	Upper Hartfield
Cousley Wood	Waldron
Cowbeech	Wartling

Danehill	West Dean
Fletching	Wilmington
Frant	Withyham
Hankham	
Hellingly	

18.16 Each of these settlements is briefly referred to in alphabetical order in Chapter 20. In these cases the more restrictive Plan-wide 'countryside' policies outside the development boundaries apply which seek to prevent new development which would harm the character and appearance of such areas.

18.17 It is recognised that the lists set out above are not exhaustive of all the smaller settlements and hamlets in the District. However, the restrictive policies outside development boundaries would also apply to any other settlement or hamlet not listed in those paragraphs.

HOUSING

18.18 The Local Plan makes provision for a limited amount of new housing in the villages but, in overall terms, significant new housing development is not proposed in the rural part of the District. The main exception is the new settlement at Stone Cross where development has commenced. This is consistent with the Plan's housing strategy, principally for environmental and landscape reasons and because further land is not required numerically to meet the County Structure Plan housing provision.

18.19 However, the District Council is concerned about the lack of affordable housing, particularly in the villages where high house prices prevent local people on modest incomes, often the young or elderly, from buying or renting in the normal housing market. As part of its corporate approach to meeting local housing need, the Council's 'exceptions' policy may allow the release of small sites for affordable housing to meet a specific need outside village development boundaries.

18.20 With regard to general housing provision within the villages, new housing will be restricted to the area within the village development boundary in accordance with Policy GD1 and where proposals accord with other policies and proposals in the Plan.

18.21 It is particularly important to recognise the distinctive character of the village when considering new housing proposals. This character varies widely within Wealden through such factors as historic growth, landscape and topography, layout and the building materials used. Contrast, for example, the small linear Downland settlements and their traditional

flint buildings set within a rolling landscape with the larger ridge-top villages in the High Weald with brick or stone buildings, and hung tiles or weatherboarding.

18.22 It is especially important that new development should respect and harmonise with the particular character of the village. The Council will have careful regard to the density, scale, form and detailed design of the proposed development, together with the materials used and the quality of the environment being created.

EMPLOYMENT

18.23 Many of the villages within the District are important employment centres for their local communities and surrounding rural areas. The Council's employment strategy as set out in Chapter 7 seeks to maintain existing employment within the villages and encourage an improvement in the level and choice of local employment opportunities available. Government guidance on the rural economy emphasises the need to accommodate local commerce and industry in villages by the re-use and adaptation of existing buildings and by making provision, where appropriate, for sensitive, small-scale new development. In addition, the conversion of rural buildings, often on the periphery of villages, provides important opportunities for new employment, and this is discussed further in Chapter 5.

18.24 A number of existing business areas are identified in the larger villages which provide the focus for development within the rural area. In view of the character of the villages in the District and their sensitive countryside setting, particularly in the Sussex Downs and High Weald Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, the opportunities to allocate further land for new business development are limited. This Plan contains allocations for land to accommodate new business uses at East Hoathly, Forest Row, Lower Dicker and Westham, and these are described further in the relevant village chapter.

18.25 The Council wishes to encourage small scale employment uses within the village development boundaries, particularly where the village has an employment centre function, but this will be subject to environmental considerations including traffic, access and impact on residential amenities and village character. In the majority of cases, in view of the residential character of the village and the need to prevent encroachment into the countryside, there is little scope to expand opportunities for local employment. A policy against which new employment proposals in villages can be considered is put forward in Chapter 7.

18.26 In the light of the environmental constraints that exist for new business development in the villages, it is

particularly important that as many sites and premises as possible are retained in employment use. The Council recognises the pressure to convert small premises to other uses, usually residential. However, small premises form a vital part of the rural employment pattern, bringing vitality to the settlement and often helping the viability of local services. A policy seeking to resist the loss of such premises is put forward in Chapter 7.

CONSERVATION

18.27 The development policies for the villages recognise and reflect the importance of maintaining the character and amenity of each village, and the need to conserve the attractive surrounding countryside, particularly where the village lies within one of the Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

18.28 Many of the villages in the District are based on historic settlements which contain a rich heritage of listed buildings, and in a number of cases, their special architectural and historic character has been recognised by the designation of a Conservation Area. The Council attaches particular importance to the control of development in Conservation Areas and development affecting Listed Buildings, and District-wide policies are put forward in Chapter 4.

TRAFFIC

18.29 It is recognised that the residential amenities and general environment of many villages are adversely affected by the movement of traffic, particularly through traffic. The Council supports the Department of Transport and the County Council in their programme of work to improve the primary road network, and indeed urges the early completion of this programme. New roads and bypasses are providing relief to a number of villages, and more will be helped in this way, particularly along the A27/A259 route (see Chapter 9).

18.30 It is also recognised that many villages will have to continue to accept through traffic movements. In such cases it is important to consider whether traffic management measures, including traffic calming, can be introduced to reduce traffic speed and create a safer, more pleasant environment. The Council will urge the County Council to introduce measures to control and manage traffic wherever possible. In the majority of cases, the County Council as Highway Authority has no major proposals in the villages. In addition, the need for further car park provision in the villages will be monitored.

SERVICES

18.31 Local village shops, often with sub-Post Office facilities, play an important role in providing principally for food and day to day goods. Village halls and areas of public open space which provide playing pitches and children's play areas are important community facilities. The Council will seek to maintain and improve the level and choice of village shops and services; the appropriate policies are put forward in Chapter 8.

18.32 The village recreation grounds and village halls are important facilities serving the local community and surrounding areas. The village hall is often a focal point for a local community providing opportunities for limited indoor recreation, public meetings and meetings by local clubs etc. Thus it is an aim of the Plan to maintain and where possible improve the level and choice of recreation and community facilities in the villages and resist their loss to alternative uses. The provision of community facilities is primarily the responsibility of the Parish Councils whose resources for new schemes are extremely limited. In certain cases, however, the Council will consider giving financial assistance towards community facilities.

WEALDEN LOCAL PLAN

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* Whilst not having a development boundary, Lower Dicker has been included in this list in view of housing and business allocations in the settlement.

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[illegible]

Inset Map No.54

Uckfield Town Centre

KEY

- Inset Map boundary
- Development boundary
- Main shopping area
- Secondary shopping and service areas
- Office and residential policy area
- Public car park
- Framfield Road development policy
- Safeguarded route of former Uckfield to Lewes railway
- Riverside walk
- Conservation Area

Plan wide policies are listed on the main Proposals Map.

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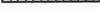
- Inset Map boundary
- Development boundary
- Town Centre Inset Map boundary
- Business areas
- Framfield Road development policy
- Public open space
- Riverside walk
- Safeguarded route of former Uckfield to Lewes railway
- Local Nature Reserve/Local Trust Reserve
- Site of Special Scientific Interest
- Conservation Area
- Historic Park and Garden



Proposals Map

0 200 400 metres 1:10,000

Wealden Local Plan December 1998

-  Inset Map boundary
-  Development boundary
-  Main shopping area
-  Secondary shopping and service areas
-  Office and residential policy area
-  Public car park
-  Framfield Road development policy
-  Safeguarded route of former Uckfield to Lewes railway
-  Riverside walk
-  Conservation Area

Plan wide policies are listed on the main Proposals Map.



Proposals Map

0 50 100 metres 1:2500

Wealden Local Plan December 1998

Wealden Local Plan

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Annex 3

Wealden Local Plan

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Villages with Development Boundaries

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VB7	Old Willingdon Road and Western Downlands housing policy area, Friston
VB8	Business allocation: NE of South Street Business area, East Hoathly
VB12.1	Park Road housing area, Forest Row
VB14	Florance Lane, Groombridge housing policy area
VB22.1	Lower Dicker traffic on A22
VB22.2	Business allocation: land adjacent Hackhurst Lane business area, Lower Dicker
VB23	Public open space allocation: Lower Horsebridge
VB24	Maresfield Park housing area, Maresfield
VB26	The Warren, Station Road, Knowle Park Road housing policy areas, Mayfield
VB31	Coast Road housing policy area
VB37	Mayfield Lane housing policy area

Hellingly Hospital

HH1	Hellingly Hospital
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Strategy

Introduction

2.1 The Local Plan puts forward planning proposals and policies which seek to provide for a diverse range of environmental, economic and social interests. These can range, for example, from new industrial development in a town to help the local economy to the protection of habitat for wildlife in the countryside. The Plan's policies must strike a balance between these different and sometimes conflicting interests.

2.2 It is therefore important that the Plan puts forward a clear strategy with its main aims, objectives and targets. They will help to identify priorities and focus the Plan on the main land use issues concerning development. The aims and objectives are not part of the Plan's policies but form the basis for their preparation. The policies and proposals of the Plan seek to achieve its objectives.

2.3 The aims and objectives will also provide a basis for monitoring whether the Plan is achieving what it sets out to do. Monitoring and review will show whether policies need to be strengthened, maintained or changed. The key areas to be monitored are stated at the end of the relevant chapters.

2.4 This chapter looks at the issues, the strategy and its aims while the more specific objectives or targets are put forward in the respective topic, town and village chapters.

2.5 Before turning to the issues that the Plan addresses and the resultant strategy, it is appropriate to look briefly at the context set by national, regional and Structure Plan policies and consultations on the Plan.

Government Guidance

2.6 The Plan is being prepared in the context of Government guidance, principally through the Department of the Environment's Planning Policy Guidance Notes (PPGs). These provide national guidance on a wide range of matters including housing, industry and commerce, the rural economy, the countryside, wildlife, other environmental issues, sport and recreation, tourism and coastal planning. PPG12 provides the specific guidance on the format and content of Structure and Local Plans.

Regional Planning Guidance

2.7 Advice on regional planning is given to the Secretary of State for the Environment by the London

and South East Regional Planning Conference (SERPLAN). The Secretary of State endorses such guidance through the publication of Regional Planning Guidance.

2.8 The Department of the Environment published Regional Planning Guidance for the South East in March 1994. The guidance embodies three objectives: enhanced economic performance; sustainable development and environmental improvement; opportunity and choice. The guidance seeks to achieve an appropriate balance between these objectives.

2.9 It also emphasises the vital role of South East England in the development of the United Kingdom economy. It contains guidance reflecting the principles set out in the Environment White Paper 'This Common Inheritance' of September 1990 and 'Sustainable Development : the UK Strategy' published in January 1994. In particular, it develops the scope for coordinating land use and transport planning policies to meet environmental objectives and is concerned with protecting the quality of the environment both in urban and rural areas. It also continues the approach underpinning previous regional guidance on the balance for development between the west and the east of the region.

East Sussex County Structure Plan

2.10 Structure Plans are prepared by County Councils to provide an overall strategic framework for development within which Local Plans are prepared.

2.11 The East Sussex County Structure Plan 1991 was approved by the Secretary of State for the Environment in 1991. The current Structure Plan policies are for the period to 2001, but the County Council has embarked on a Review of the Plan looking ahead to 2011.

2.12 The Local Plan has been prepared so as to generally conform with the approved 1991 County Structure Plan and the Deposit Draft Replacement Structure Plan November 1996 for the period up to the year 2004.

1991 County Structure Plan

2.13 The approved Structure Plan recognises that the demand for housing from people wishing to move into East Sussex is greater than the County can accommodate within acceptable environmental limits. The strategy considers that the key factor in

determining future population levels and house building should be the availability of jobs.

2.14 The Structure Plan strategy is therefore one of striking a sustainable balance between the demands for housing, a reasonable expectation of the number of jobs and the protection of the environment. It looks to a package of measures to develop the County's economy and increase jobs, together with an amount of housebuilding equivalent to that experienced in the last fifteen years. More attention is paid to the housing and employment needs of local people.

2.15 The approach to transport aims to balance the requirements of transport users and the need for economic revitalisation with the protection and improvement of the environment. Improvements to strategic road and rail routes are sought together with measures in other areas to improve the environment.

2.16 The quality of the environment has long been recognised as a major asset of East Sussex which is worth protecting and enhancing for its own sake, as well as for its benefits as a leisure and tourism resource. An integral part of the strategy is a concern for the quality of the environment, both through conservation of the existing features and character and through the requirement for new development to respect these qualities and be of a high standard.

Deposit Draft Replacement Structure Plan 1996

2.17 The Deposit Draft Replacement Structure Plan continues the above mentioned strategy but looks ahead to the year 2011 with particular emphasis on an environmentally sustainable future and the improvement of the local economy.

2.18 In terms of housing provision, the Deposit Draft states that existing commitments across the County should meet the Regional Guidance figures up to the year 2006. Beyond that date the County Council considers further land will be required to meet the suggested guidance figures. The Council believes it can accommodate the proposed District housing provision required to the year 2006, some 6600 dwellings from 1991 to 2006. This is explained in Chapter 6.

2.19 However, the situation in housing and employment terms is less certain up to the year 2011. The County Council decided to hold an Examination in Public to hear objections and other representations that have been received on the policies and proposals in the Deposit Draft Replacement Structure Plan. This took place in Spring 1998, but it is unlikely that the Structure Plan will be finally approved before mid 1999. Consequently the Council has decided, in line

with Government advice, on a ten year plan period up to the year 2004 with a review of the Local Plan policies in the context of the new Structure Plan policies when they are finally approved.

Local Plan Consultations

2.20 During preparation of the Local Plan the Council has had careful regard to the representations it has received. The Draft Wealden Local Plan was published in September 1993 for public comment. Exhibitions and meetings were held in the area to help explain the Plan's policies and proposals. All the representations received, some 1200, were carefully considered and the Council made a number of changes which were incorporated into the Deposit Plan, published in January 1995. The objections and other representations on the policies and proposals in the Deposit Plan were carefully considered by the Council when further changes were made to the Plan prior to the Public Local Inquiry held from January to May 1996. Following the Inquiry and receipt of the Inspector's Report in March 1997, the Council published modifications to the Plan in January and July 1998 for further public comment.

THE PLAN'S STRATEGY

DEVELOPMENT PRESSURES AND THE ENVIRONMENT

2.21 The major issue for the Plan is the need to strike an appropriate balance between the demand for development for housing, employment, leisure and tourism with the conservation of the environmental quality and character of Wealden's countryside, towns and villages.

2.22 The quality of the natural and built environment that we enjoy should not be denied to future generations by allowing harmful development. The existing qualities should be sustained and enhanced where possible. Consideration must also be given to wider environmental concerns such as global warming, the consumption of non-renewable resources and energy conservation.

2.23 The Government's White Paper - 'This Common Inheritance' - looks to Local Planning Authorities to draw up plans taking environmental considerations comprehensively and consistently into account. At the same time, the development plans should make adequate provision for development and growth for homes, employment, and associated facilities such as schools and community facilities.

2.24 Conservation and development should not be seen as necessarily in conflict. Policies for land use should

weigh and reconcile priorities in the public interest. The development plan (Structure and Local Plans) has an essential role to play in achieving the appropriate balance by providing guidance and a framework for decisions rather than allowing arbitrary change.

AIM 1 *To strike an appropriate balance between the demand for development and the conservation of the environmental quality and character of the District.*

AIM 2 *To pursue sustainable development, having regard to the principles contained in Government guidance and the Council's own Environmental Strategies.*

QUALITY OF THE ENVIRONMENT

2.25 The conservation and enhancement of the built and natural environment in the District will form a key part of the Plan's strategy. The Council wish to maintain and enhance the quality of the environment in which people live, work and spend their leisure time as well as creating an accessible environment for all persons including those with disabilities and special access requirements. Caring for the environment relates not only to the physical environment including countryside, towns and villages, but also to nature conservation, energy conservation and pollution, which have become increasingly important issues in recent years.

2.26 The Council will seek to ensure that the effects on the environment of any proposed development are acceptable and, where appropriate, that new development contributes to environmental improvements.

2.27 With regard to the built environment, there has been understandable public concern over 'town cramming' and inappropriate development. It is recognised that there is a wide diversity of character in the towns and villages that should be conserved and enhanced. It is clearly important to ensure that new development respects and harmonises with this established character and is in sympathy with its surroundings. Equally, the open spaces and gaps which contribute to this character should be maintained.

2.28 Turning to the rural environment, the Council believes it is essential to continue to restrain development that is not justified in the countryside, seeking to protect its high quality character, much of which is nationally recognised as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Some small scale development will be justified in terms of agricultural diversification, the local economy, tourism and leisure activities as discussed later. However, any such development should be of an appropriate high standard

respecting the existing qualities of the rural environment.

2.29 Positive measures for landscape enhancement and management designed to improve the environmental quality and character should be sought, particularly with appropriate development proposals.

2.30 The District has a rich heritage of buildings listed as being of architectural or historic value, together with historic parks and areas of archaeological importance. It also has a number of important ecological areas. Assets such as these should be conserved and protected against harmful development.

AIM 3 *To maintain and enhance the quality of the environment, for all persons, seeking an appropriate high standard of development and positive measures for environmental improvements.*

AIM 4 *To place increased value on the need for new development to respect and harmonise with the character of existing development and the surrounding landscape.*

THE LOCATION OF DEVELOPMENT

2.31 Structure and Local Plan policies have sought to maintain the existing settlement pattern in the District by giving priority to locating development in the towns, generally restricting development in the rural areas, including the villages, and giving added protection to the designated areas of countryside significance and other vulnerable areas.

2.32 No fundamental reason can be seen to depart from the strategy of protecting the countryside from inappropriate development and maintaining the physical separation of countryside, towns and villages. The Plan will, through the use of 'development boundaries' as explained in Chapter 3, define where town and village policies end and countryside or rural policies apply.

2.33 The continuation of the settlement pattern will assist in the aim of energy conservation and the need to reduce the emission of greenhouse gases by minimising the amount of travel by car compared with a policy for a more dispersed or scattered form of development.

AIM 5 *To maintain the existing settlement pattern in the District, generally restricting development in the rural area.*

LOCAL ECONOMY

2.34 The Council is keen to promote a healthy local economy which in turn contributes to the general well-being of the District. However, important as this aim is, it must not be at the expense of the environmental quality of the District.

2.35 There is likely to be a growth in Wealden's workforce of some 4,000 persons by 2004. Land and premises are allocated and available for business purposes which should accommodate the anticipated growth and provide further local employment opportunities for existing residents.

2.36 However, the issue is more than one of numbers. It is acknowledged there is a need to provide a greater diversity of local job opportunities, particularly in high technology, and to reduce unemployment and commuting. Efforts will continue to be made to provide a range of opportunities from a prestige, high technology business park to equally important small workshops for embryonic firms, often through the conversion of rural buildings.

2.37 Employment development should be well related to centres of population to serve the urban and rural areas. Business development is concentrated in towns and this should continue. Efforts must be made to maintain and enhance the vitality and viability of the town centres. However, it is also important to serve the rural area through villages acting as local employment centres and the re-use of rural buildings in appropriate cases. The rural economy is considered later.

2.38 The Plan must also consider the differing employment needs within the District and the strong relationship with adjoining centres such as Tunbridge Wells and Eastbourne, in relation to existing commitments and in relation to Structure Plan policies and improving communications in the south.

2.39 Care must be taken in these efforts not to detract from the quality of the environment, which is a key attraction for those residing, working or looking to invest in the District. A balance must be struck between the employment needs of the area and the protection of the environment. To allow too much employment development would fuel the demand for further housing in the District, to the detriment of the natural and built environment.

AIM 6 *To encourage a prosperous local economy whilst recognising and maintaining the environmental qualities of the area.*

AIM 7 *To ensure an adequate supply of land and premises for business use and promote a range of job opportunities including 'high tech' industries.*

THE RURAL AREA

2.40 Wealden District is predominantly rural, with the small towns and villages providing the bulk of local employment and services for those residing in the District. Concern over the 'rural economy' relates to the changes in the agricultural climate, social changes and the general rise in unemployment in the early 1990's.

2.41 Whilst agriculture remains the dominant use of the countryside, the economy of the rural areas is becoming more diverse as less land and buildings are required for food production. Farmers and landowners, encouraged by Government, seek to diversify their operations to include new land uses and conversions of buildings to compensate for loss of income. If we wish the character and landscape quality of the attractive Wealden countryside to be maintained as we know it, other financial incentives such as the 'set aside scheme' will also be necessary for farmers.

2.42 New technology, communications and cleaner manufacturing processes have enabled a much wider range of businesses to locate in the countryside, primarily through the conversion of farm buildings. While this adds to local job opportunities, it is unlikely to help those leaving the land. The growth of leisure activities and tourism also impose more demands on the countryside and can provide alternative uses of land such as open farms or golf courses. Such demands can be difficult to balance with the main aim of protecting and enhancing the environmental quality of the Wealden landscape.

2.43 Increased personal mobility has enabled people to live in the countryside (including the villages) and to work in the towns. Equally, those living in towns are able to drive to new businesses in the countryside. The lack of 'affordable housing', public transport and other facilities compounds the view of a more affluent society living in the rural area. The Plan must look to policies to help the rural economy and to sustain and improve local employment opportunities and services.

AIM 8 *To assist the rural community through the promotion of new employment opportunities and the maintenance and improvement of local services in the rural areas.*

HOUSING

2.44 During the 1980's the Council had to make provision for a considerable increase in the supply of land for housing in order to meet the Structure Plan requirements as approved by the Secretary of State for the Environment. The land was allocated primarily in the towns and at Stone Cross. The total number of dwellings has been magnified by previously unidentified or 'windfall' sites coming forward. There

was, in April 1997, a commitment for some 1,640 dwellings in the District over the Plan period.

2.45 The Council has to maintain an adequate supply of housing land in accordance with the 1991 County Structure Plan requirement of some 8,500 dwellings in the period 1986 - 2001. In fact, the current high housing commitment together with housing completions since 1986 already meets and exceeds this figure to the extent that the emerging requirement in the 1996 Deposit Draft Replacement Structure Plan for some 6,600 dwellings up to 2006 should also be met. It is clear that, in numerical terms, no new major allocations of housing land are required in Wealden within the plan period.

2.46 However, it is recognised that the large housing commitment will need time to be assimilated into the towns and villages both in physical and social terms. Two key issues flow from this statement. Firstly, that the provision of services and community facilities keep pace with the new development - the Council will urge the appropriate authorities to achieve this goal. Secondly, new development should respect and harmonise with the character of the towns and villages and should not result in 'town cramming'.

2.47 The large housing commitment is not, in itself, helping those in real housing need, that is those persons on modest incomes who cannot compete in the private housing market. The provision of 'affordable housing' is also a key issue which the Council is addressing through the use of both housing and planning policy, although the granting of planning permission on 'exceptional sites' is most unlikely to meet all the true need.

AIM 9 To ensure an adequate and available supply of housing land to meet Government and Structure Plan requirements.

AIM 10 To seek and encourage the provision of affordable housing for those in local housing need.

MOVEMENT

2.48 This Plan is being prepared at a time when, along with increasing car ownership, there is greater public awareness of the environmental issues associated with road traffic, namely congestion, safety, pollution and landscape impact. Government guidance in PPG13 is also very clear that in preparing development plans, local authorities should aim to reduce the need to travel, especially by car.

2.49 Whilst supporting and encouraging planned highway improvements to reduce 'through traffic', help the economy and improve safety, the Council wish to see this increasingly supported by traffic management

measures, including 'traffic calming'. The latter can help create more pleasant and safer living environments by reducing traffic speed, giving priority to pedestrians and cyclists, and reducing pollution levels.

2.50 The Council supports the early implementation of the planned improvements to the A27/A259 South Coast trunk road which will cater for longer distance traffic and help the local economy. In addition, some improvements to the cross country A22 and A26 routes will be appropriate for safety and environmental reasons. The Council recognises the importance of road and rail transport to business.

2.51 Equally, the Council will support the maintenance and enhancement of public transport services, so vital for those without access to cars, particularly in the rural areas. There is increasing concern over the reduction in the Uckfield to London railway service, and the Council will continue to press for improvements such as the electrification of the line.

AIM 11 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.

AIM 12 To place increased value on environmental considerations in transport planning.

SERVICES AND FACILITIES

2.52 Considerable public concern has been expressed over the issue as to whether the provision of services and community facilities keeps pace with development. The issue was mentioned above under 'Housing', but it relates to all forms of development.

2.53 The Council will seek to maintain and improve the level and choice of shopping facilities in the District to meet the needs of all sections of the community. Particular attention will be paid to the town and village centres.

2.54 The Council is keen to ensure that all the infrastructure and community facilities required by any development will be provided as part of that development by the appropriate public or private agencies. Infrastructure includes services such as education and health as well as roads, water supply and sewers. Local Plans enable the providers of such services to programme their own investments with more certainty.

2.55 Community facilities include open spaces, playing areas and indoor facilities. The Council will continue its policy of requiring major new developments to

provide for an appropriate level of such facilities in association with that development.

AIM 13 To ensure that all the works, services and community facilities required by development will be provided at the appropriate time.

General Development Principles

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.

Development in the Countryside

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. In 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 cereal 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 targeted 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 Pevensy 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.

Housing

Introduction

6.1 It is an important function of the Local Plan to provide an adequate and continuous supply of land for housing within the context of the County Structure Plan, whilst ensuring that the required new development has the least harmful impact on the environment and respects the character of existing development. On this basis, this chapter contains policies for controlling the amount, type and location of new housing development in the District.

6.2 There are an estimated 138,000 people living in the District, with around half living in the five main towns. The population shows a relatively uniform age structure with the largest proportion of people in the 30-44 age group, although the southern part of the District is characterised by a higher proportion of elderly persons. There are some 59,200 dwellings in the District, an increase of 7,400 since 1986, with around 83% owner occupied, 7% local authority and some 6% rented privately.

6.3 There is an existing housing commitment over the Plan period for some 1,640 dwellings in the District and it is estimated that a further 1,230 dwellings could be built on unidentified or 'windfall' sites. This could result in the population growing to around 140,000 by 2004.

6.4 A more detailed breakdown of population and housing characteristics is given in Appendix 1. Further information on the towns is given in the relevant chapters.

STRATEGY

6.5 The Plan's strategy, as set out in Chapter 2, seeks to give priority to protecting and enhancing the quality of the environment by maintaining the existing settlement pattern and ensuring that new development respects and harmonises with the character of existing development and the surrounding landscape.

6.6 In terms of housing, the Council's strategy seeks to ensure that future housing requirements are met for all sections of the community, including those in local housing need. In achieving this aim, careful consideration will be given to the availability of local services and community facilities whilst creating a safe and attractive residential environment, maintaining the existing character and amenity of towns and villages, and protecting the countryside.

6.7 As part of this strategy, the objectives of the Plan with regard to housing are:-

(1) to ensure that an adequate and continuous supply of housing land is available in relation to County Structure Plan policies;

(2) to assist in the provision of affordable housing for those in a local housing need;

(3) to protect and enhance the character and amenity of the towns and villages;

(4) to promote a high standard of amenities, design and layout in new housing developments;

(5) to encourage a mix of housing types on new developments;

(6) to encourage the retention and improvement of the existing housing stock.

(7) to encourage the provision of special needs housing including housing for the disabled.

6.8 In formulating the strategy for housing, the Council has had regard to Government guidance, particularly Planning Policy Guidance Note 3: Housing, and to the policies in the County Structure Plan. As outlined in Chapter 2, the approved County Structure Plan provides for a level of new housebuilding for the period 1986-2001 which takes account of the natural change in population and local housing need, is related to the supply of jobs and is consistent with a reduced level of net in-migration. The housing policies in the Deposit Draft Replacement County Structure Plan 1996 imply reductions in the average house building rate, net in-migration and the level of population growth compared to recent years.

HOUSING PROVISION

6.9 As outlined in Chapter 2, the County Structure Plan requires provision to be made in Wealden District for 8,500 dwellings for the period 1986-2001. The Deposit Draft of the Replacement County Structure Plan proposes the provision of 6,600 dwellings in Wealden for the period 1991-2006. Whilst this level of housing provision will be subject to careful examination during the latter stages of the Structure Plan Review, the Council considers it appropriate to accommodate a proportion of the growth within the Local Plan's timescale to 2004. On this basis, there is a pro-rata requirement for the provision of a further

1,320 dwellings in Wealden for the period 2001 to 2004.

6.10 However, there is already a substantial commitment to new housing on land with planning permission and allocated in the Council's existing Plans, including major housing and associated development at Stone Cross. When this is added to the estimated number of dwellings likely to be built on unidentified sites (as discussed below), it is evident that the resulting housing supply figure exceeds the County Structure Plan requirement. Therefore, as illustrated in the table below, in numerical terms no new major allocations of housing land are required to be made in the Local Plan.

Housing Provision to 2004

	Dwellings
Approved Structure Plan Requirement 1986-2001	8,500
+Deposit Draft Structure Plan Requirement 2001-2004 (proportion)	1,320
	9,820
-Housebuilding Completions 1986-97	7,430
Balance	2,390
Housing Land Supply to 2004	
Existing housing commitments (planning permission, allocations)	1,640
+Future development on unidentified sites (estimated)	1,230
Therefore, housing provision exceeds Structure Plan requirement by	480

6.11 The relatively high level of housing land supply is due in part to the incidence of large previously unidentified sites (sometimes known as 'windfall' sites) coming forward, together with the subsequent allowance made for future development on such sites (in the range 0.4ha to 1ha) which Government guidance advises may be made. Similarly, an allowance is made for future development of smaller sites in view of the pressure that exists for infilling, conversion of larger properties, changes of use of buildings and redevelopment of existing sites. It must be recognised that where such development conforms with the relevant policies in the Plan, it cannot realistically be resisted, even when there is no numerical requirement for new housing development. It is assumed that there will be a decline in the rate that

large and small unidentified sites come forward over the Plan period and, in the case of large unidentified sites, that not all permissions will be implemented.

6.12 While new housing allocations are not required, the Council recognises that the large housing provision will need time to be assimilated into the community, both physically and socially, particularly with regard to the provision of local services and community facilities such as health and education. However, a limited number of allocations have been retained from previous Local Plans in Crowborough, Buxted, Lower Dicker and Friday Street, and some limited new allocations are made in Hailsham. The housing allocations and the main committed sites are described in the relevant town or village chapter.

6.13 The housing position over the 2006-2011 period is less clear and is beyond the timescale of this Local Plan. The Deposit Draft of the Replacement Structure Plan includes a County provision figure of 10,400 dwellings. It proposes new land allocations of 3,300 dwellings to be concentrated mainly in the Low Weald with strategic allocations focused upon peripheral expansions of Hailsham, Polegate and Uckfield but also including about 500 dwellings to be dispersed among the other smaller towns and villages. Only when the new Structure Plan has been approved following the Examination in Public in Spring 1998 and the likely publication of modifications, will the amount and strategic location of new housing development in Wealden for the period 2006-2011 be known. This will then form the basis for a future review of the Wealden Local Plan.

HOUSING LAND SUPPLY

6.14 It has already been shown that the Council can meet the County Structure Plan housing provision for Wealden for the period up to 2004. In addition, in line with Government guidance, the Council aims to ensure the availability of a five year supply of housing land in relation to the housing provision in the County Structure Plan in accordance with its Policy S3. At 1st April 1997 the Council was able to demonstrate 7.4 years supply of land in relation to the housing policies in the 1991 County Structure Plan and the Deposit Draft Replacement County Structure Plan 1996.

HG1 The Council will aim to maintain a minimum of a five year supply of available housing land in relation to the housing provision in the approved County Structure Plan.

COUNCIL'S HOUSING STRATEGY

6.15 The Council, like many other Councils across the country, is concerned about the lack of affordable

housing for local people, particularly in the villages. The problem has increased in recent years due to escalating house prices and the decline in the provision of public sector housing which has traditionally been the principal source of new social housing.

6.16 The Council has developed a corporate approach to meeting local housing need which has resulted in the adoption of an 'exceptions' planning policy (discussed further below), the completion of a Parish survey of local housing needs, the establishment of the Anderida First Housing Association as a District-based association, the recent completion of a number of schemes providing housing to rent on assured tenancies for local people, and the identification of further development opportunities across the District.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Affordable Housing on New Development

6.17 Recent Government guidance advises local planning authorities that a community's needs for affordable housing is a material planning consideration which may properly be taken into account in formulating Local Plan policies. Where there is a demonstrable lack of affordable housing to meet local needs, planning authorities may reasonably seek to negotiate with developers for the inclusion of an element of affordable housing in large new developments on allocated land and other suitable housing sites. Planning authorities may include policies in Local Plans indicating their intention to do so. Such policies should give clear guidance on what the authority regards as affordable housing and on the arrangements expected to ensure that it is reserved for those who need it.

6.18 In the light of the evident need for affordable housing in the Parish Surveys, the Council considers it important that large new housing developments in the District should include such provision where appropriate. The Council considers that subsidised housing for rent should be provided in order to cater for those people in urgent need. In line with the Government's guidance, it is considered that the policy should be flexible, with the amount of affordable housing on individual sites depending on the overall scale of the proposed development, the mix of dwellings proposed, and the need for such housing in the area. The policy will apply to housing developments of 25 or more dwellings, or residential sites of 1 hectare or more, irrespective of the number of dwellings. In accordance with Circular 6/98, the Council will undertake further survey work on local housing need and the available supply of land for housing to ascertain whether lower thresholds are appropriate. The Council will normally look towards 30% of the dwellings being in the affordable category

although on appropriate sites a higher proportion would be acceptable. Although the assessment of local housing need will normally relate to a town or parish, the Council will also have regard to wider needs within the District as contained on the housing needs register. The policy would not normally apply to small-scale or infill sites.

6.19 Proposals for the development of affordable housing will be subject to a planning obligation that the housing is only used for the purposes of providing housing accommodation to meet the objectives of a registered social landlord, except where tenants exercise their right to acquire a property under the purchase grant scheme under the Housing Act.

HG2 Within the development boundaries, as defined on the Proposals Map, where there is a demonstrable lack of affordable housing to meet local needs, the Council will seek the provision of an element of affordable housing in new, large-scale housing developments.

The amount of affordable housing will depend upon the overall size of the development proposed, the mix of dwelling types proposed and the demonstrable need for affordable housing in the area.

6.20 As the vast majority of housing land in Wealden is already committed through planning permissions and, as stated previously, there is no need for major new allocations of housing land in the District, there will be limited opportunity to implement this policy.

Affordable Housing 'Exceptions' Policy

6.21 In many rural areas of Wealden there are particular difficulties in securing an adequate supply of affordable housing for local needs. Government guidance advises local planning authorities that the existence of arrangements to ensure that new housing would be available for local needs would be a material consideration which the authority should take into account in deciding whether to grant planning permission, particularly when considering the release of small sites which would not otherwise be released for housing. Such sites will be released as 'exceptions' to normal policies for housing development and would be additional to the provision made in the development plan for general housing demand within or adjoining existing villages. The release of such sites will essentially be a matter for local judgement.

6.22 The Council's local housing needs 'exceptions' policy is an integral part of the corporate approach to meeting housing needs in the rural areas, and is recognised as such in the Wealden Housing Strategy. In line with Government guidance, the policy permits small-scale housing development outside the defined development boundaries in order to meet an identified

housing need among those local people who are unable to compete in the normal housing market. To date, several schemes have been successfully implemented and some further development is in the pipeline.

6.23 However, the Council believes that the most appropriate and effective means of addressing local housing need would be through allocating land specifically for affordable housing, and thereby creating a new planning use class. In planning terms, it is very unlikely that sufficient 'exceptions' land will be found to meet all local housing need, as experience shows that most sites will not be acceptable in relation to the environmental, character, services and traffic considerations.

6.24 In all cases put forward under the exceptions policy, the Council will seek to ensure that the scheme can be assimilated into the local area, both physically and socially, and will look for support from the local community.

6.25 The Council's policy has regard to Government guidance on the locational aspects, environmental considerations, assessment of need, definition of 'local', and the provision of cross-subsidy when considering proposals for affordable housing.

6.26 As the policy relates to land outside the development boundaries where development will not normally be permitted, the principal issue is whether a site is suitable in planning terms. The Council attaches particular importance to the location of a site in relation to an existing settlement and local services, the scale of development proposed, the impact on the character of surrounding development, the landscape and countryside, as well as other normal planning criteria.

6.27 With regard to need, the Parish surveys provide an initial indication of the general extent and nature of local housing need, as a basis for further detailed investigation by the Council's housing department or a housing association when a suitable development site has been identified (see Appendix 4). The initial evidence from the survey and schemes that have been implemented suggests that, in the light of income levels among those in need, the appropriate tenure is rental through assured tenancies, i.e. with no right to buy. Shared ownership of usually up to 50% equity may also be appropriate in some cases. With the likely building cost of around £40,000 to £45,000 for a two-bedroom dwelling (1997 figure), the land cost should be low compared to housing market value in order to help ensure that the dwellings can be truly affordable.

6.28 Outright purchase of a property would be inappropriate, partly because the cost of provision is likely to exceed the purchasing power of local people in need, even when initial discounts are offered, but principally due to the difficulty of retaining the

property for meeting local needs on a subsequent change of occupant. This latter consideration is relevant to the policy of preventing 'staircasing' to outright ownership in shared ownership schemes.

6.29 Although the policy would not preclude any developer carrying out a suitable scheme with appropriate covenants on the land or legal agreements, the Council will normally require the involvement of a Housing Association or a Village Trust with an appropriate lettings policy.

6.30 While the policy does not allow general demand housing outside the development boundary to cross-subsidise the funding of affordable housing, it could apply where the private housing is in the development boundary and the affordable housing is outside as an exception to policy.

6.31 The Statutory Instrument identifying exemptions from the purchase grant scheme for housing association tenants (the right to buy) defines the areas where the principle of development may be acceptable under the policy, i.e. only exception sites which fall under an exempt area will be considered under the policy.

HG3 In exceptional circumstances, planning permission may be granted for small scale residential development in rural areas outside development boundaries in order to meet an identified local housing need among those people unable to compete in the normal housing market.

(A) Proposals for such development will only be permitted where the Council is satisfied that the following criteria are met:-

(1) the proposed development is located within or adjacent to an existing village or other settlement and provides good accessibility to local services, e.g. shops and schools;

(2) the proposed development is not intrusive in the countryside and is not harmful to the character of the landscape;

(3) the scale of the proposed development is appropriate in relation to the size of the settlement. Development should be in keeping with the character of adjoining development and the locality, and with local building styles;

(4) the proposed development conforms with the Plan's policies for access, parking, retention of trees, landscaping and impact on neighbouring properties;

(5) there is clear evidence of an unsatisfied local housing need in the parish that cannot be met through normal market mechanisms;

(6) the proposed development is of a size, type and cost, whether for rent or shared ownership, directly appropriate and affordable for those people in proven local housing need identified in (5) above;

(7) the future control of any dwellings can be ensured forever through the imposition of covenants and/or appropriate legal agreements;

(8) the proposal can be shown to be viable and achieve affordable housing.

(B) Applicants for planning permission will be asked to demonstrate how their proposals meet criteria (5)-(8) above, which will then be the subject of assessment by the Local Planning Authority, advised as appropriate by the Local Housing Authority or a Housing Association.

(C) Proposals which include the provision of general demand housing outside the development boundaries to cross-subsidise the funding of low cost housing will not be acceptable.

(D) Proposals for shared ownership housing must be of a form that will not allow 'staircasing' to outright ownership.

(E) For the purposes of this policy, the categories of need are defined as:-

(1) existing residents needing separate affordable accommodation in the area (including young persons, the elderly in inappropriate accommodation, and families in cramped or otherwise unsuitable accommodation);

(2) previous residents who have been obliged to leave the village or parish through lack of affordable accommodation and who now wish to return to such accommodation;

(3) persons whose work provides an important service to the community and who need to live within or close to the local community but need affordable housing;

(4) persons with the genuine offer of employment locally who are unable to take up

such an offer due to the lack of affordable housing.

With preference given in the following order to:-

(a) persons living for at least 12 months or brought up in the village and other people who would meet the criteria for need in (E)(2)-(4), provided that if an insufficient number of such people are available then:

(b) the same considerations outlined in (E)(a) would apply to the Wealden Parish and then

(c) to neighbouring Wealden Parishes and then

(d) to Wealden District and finally

(e) to a suitable applicant nominated by the Council from its Housing Waiting List if, within six weeks of any dwelling becoming available for letting, the vacancy cannot be filled under the provisions of (E)(1)-(4), (a)-(d).

NEW HOUSING DEVELOPMENT

Development Boundaries

6.32 Past experience has shown the value of defining the extent to which the Council will allow new housing development around towns and villages. As explained in Chapter 3, the Council has adopted the use of development boundaries to make a clear distinction, in policy terms, between town or village areas where certain forms of development may be appropriate and areas outside development boundaries, which are primarily rural and where the protection and enhancement of the countryside is of paramount importance.

6.33 On this basis, in the light of Policy GD1, planning permissions for new residential development will normally be granted only on land which is located within the development boundaries, provided that the development conforms with the relevant policies and proposals in the Plan.

Residential Character

6.34 In recent years, many settlements in the District have accommodated a significant amount of residential development in the form of infilling and redevelopment, sometimes at a higher density than surrounding development. While this has undoubtedly helped to relieve the pressure on rural land in line with Government and County Structure Plan policies, the Council is concerned that any such 'town cramming' may gradually erode the character and amenity of the

towns and villages, especially when new development involves the loss of trees, hedgerows, gardens and other important open space.

HG4 Within the development boundaries, as defined on the Proposals Map, the established character of existing residential areas will be protected.

6.35 Since the overall density of development suitable on a particular site will depend upon a number of factors, including the nature of the site and the character of adjoining development, the need to protect the amenities of adjoining properties and the type of accommodation proposed, the adoption of firm density standards could lead to a regimented and monotonous approach and is therefore not considered appropriate. Normally, however, the density of new residential development will be expected to reflect and complement the character of its surroundings, as set out in Policy HG4.

6.36 On certain sites, particularly close to the centres of towns and the larger villages, an increase over prevailing density levels may be acceptable in the case of small unit accommodation, normally in the form of flats, to meet the needs of smaller households (including sheltered housing for the elderly), but only where there is no detrimental effect on the character of the area.

6.37 In contrast, there are a number of residential areas with an established and distinctive character normally created by large detached houses set in spacious gardens with mature tree cover, hedgerows and other landscaping. Where such areas are within development boundaries, the Council is concerned that pressure for redevelopment and infilling could erode the particular character of these areas. On this basis, specific policies are contained in the relevant town and village chapters to protect the established low density character of certain areas.

Estate Development

6.38 A mix of dwellings throughout the District is important to meet the wide range of housing demand, from first time buyers, single people, families and the elderly as well as creating visual interest and character in new housing development. However, experience has shown that densities in excess of 135 habitable rooms per hectare are not normally appropriate for estate forms of development, having regard to the need to create a satisfactory environment for future occupants, including adequate provision of daylight, sunlight, outlook, privacy, garden space, play space and amenity areas.

6.39 In addition to meeting the planning criteria set out in Policy EN27, particular attention should be paid in new estate development to creating smaller individual

housing areas, wherever possible, each with a well defined structure creating a sense of identity within it. This can be achieved by making good use of existing tree and hedgerow belts, open spaces, other natural features, the road network, house layout and design. Particular care will be taken to ensure that satisfactory arrangements are made for off-street parking which do not result in a proliferation of parking on estate roads.

HG5 Within the development boundaries, as defined on the Proposals Map, the Council will seek a mix of dwelling types and sizes, on new estate developments.

Wherever possible, estate development should provide for the creation of smaller individual housing areas by making good use of existing tree belts and hedgerows, open spaces, natural features, road network, and dwelling layout and design.

Crime Prevention

6.40 In line with Government advice, the Council is concerned to ensure that the design, layout and landscaping of new housing development makes crime more difficult to commit, increases the risk of detection for potential offenders and provides people with a safer, more secure environment. In considering proposals for large new housing developments, the Council will consult with the Police Authority at an early stage.

HG6 Within large new housing developments, regard should be paid to crime prevention in the design and layout of the housing areas, particularly in terms of street lighting, security of property and surveillance of access roads, footpaths, amenity space, parking areas and landscaping where this is consistent with good layout and design.

Energy Conservation

6.41 Government guidance emphasises the important role that development plan policies may play in conserving energy and reducing the emissions of greenhouse gases, particularly in relation to the location of new development. With regard to new housing development, the guidance suggests that full and effective use of land should be made within existing urban areas, that development should be closely related to public transport networks and located so as to minimise car use for journeys to work, school and other local facilities, and with provision made for walking and cycling.

6.42 Within housing developments, factors such as housing type, orientation and general aspect can influence energy conservation and are important considerations in the design and layout of new housing areas. Energy efficiency within dwellings themselves is primarily covered by the Building Regulations. The Council's Energy Plan seeks, among its objectives, to promote high standards of energy efficiency in the Council's housing stock.

HG7 Within housing development, consideration should be given to energy conservation in the design and layout of new housing areas, particularly with regard to the aspect of the development, the housing type proposed and the orientation of the dwellings.

Retention and Improvement of Housing Stock

6.43 The Council considers it important to maintain and where possible improve the existing housing stock. In terms of planning policy, this can be achieved by the Council seeking to resist the loss of residential accommodation, permitting the conversion of large properties to smaller units, and allowing extensions and alterations to existing dwellings.

HG8 The Council will resist the loss of residential accommodation (by change from residential to another use or by redevelopment), unless the following special circumstances apply:-

(1) the residential use is not appropriately located;

(2) the building is unsuitable for residential use in its present form and is not capable of being readily improved or altered in order to make it suitable; or

(3) the retention of the building or use for residential purposes would prevent an important development, redevelopment or other change of wider benefit to the community.

6.44 In appropriate cases, the housing stock can be increased by converting larger properties into smaller unit accommodation, thereby making a valuable contribution to the supply of smaller dwellings. This would only be acceptable subject to normal planning criteria being met, and it would usually be inappropriate for normal family-type accommodation to be converted.

HG9 The Council will, in appropriate cases within the development boundaries as defined on the Proposals Map, permit the conversion of larger houses into smaller dwelling units when this is acceptable in terms of the character and suitability of the premises and site.

6.45 The extension of existing dwellings is often an effective means of improving the housing stock. Small-scale extensions can often be built without the need to seek planning permission from the Council. Where extensions do need permission, the Council would wish to ensure that the scale and design of the extension is generally appropriate in relation to the existing dwelling and surrounding area, and that the amenities of neighbours are not adversely affected.

HG10 Within the development boundaries, as defined on the Proposals Map, the extension and alteration of existing dwellings will be permitted where the scale, style, design and materials are appropriate and sympathetic in relation to the existing buildings, and there is no significant adverse effect on the amenities of the occupiers of neighbouring properties.

SPECIAL NEEDS HOUSING

6.46 Within the community there are those people, mainly the elderly and disabled, who are in special need of care and support, and for whom conventional housing may not be suitable. In such cases, specialist accommodation is required, normally in the form of nursing homes providing direct nursing care, residential care homes providing physical and emotional care and support, sheltered housing providing shared accommodation and supervision, and group homes providing shared accommodation for special needs groups such as the disabled or handicapped.

6.47 Whilst the Council recognises the demand that exists for special needs accommodation, it is also concerned about the impact on the character and amenity of an area from the high density nature of such development, the possible concentration of such uses causing an influx of elderly people into the area, and the ability of local health and social services to provide the care needed.

6.48 Whilst the development of special needs accommodation would be appropriate within development boundaries, normal planning criteria would need to be met in accordance with Policy EN27 particularly with regard to protecting character and amenity. The Council's car parking standards provide for the differing requirements of nursing homes,

residential care homes, sheltered housing and other schemes designed for the retired/elderly. In considering proposals for special needs accommodation, the Council will also have regard to the accessibility of the necessary support services such as health care, as well as other community facilities, shops and public transport. The Council will encourage development to conform with the standards for mobility housing contained in Appendix 5.

HG11 Within the development boundaries, as defined on the Proposals Map, proposals for special needs housing will be permitted when appropriate community facilities are reasonably accessible.

6.49 The development of special needs accommodation is not generally considered to be appropriate in the countryside in view of the significant visual and environmental impact that can result as well as the relative remoteness from the necessary community facilities. However, in line with countryside policies as set out in Chapter 5, the conversion of large residential properties may be appropriate, particularly where a higher level of care is provided as part of the proposal.

HG12 Outside the development boundaries, as defined on the Proposals Map, special needs housing will not be allowed unless it involves the extension of existing accommodation in accordance with Policy DC19, or the conversion of a large residential property in accordance with Policy DC20.

Housing for the Disabled

6.50 In line with the Plan's strategy in Chapter 2, the Council recognises the importance of securing an accessible environment in new housing development for both residents and visitors, including wheelchair users and other people with disabilities or special access requirements. Public sector housebuilding in Wealden accounts for a relatively small proportion of total housing development and the scope for making a significant contribution to meeting the housing needs of the disabled is clearly limited. There is, therefore, an important role to be played by the private sector in the provision of such housing, particularly as the Government's 'Care in the Community' initiative encourages more elderly and disabled people to remain in their own homes.

6.51 Within Wealden, some 22% of households have residents with a limiting long-term illness, health problem or handicap which limits their daily activities or the work they can do (1991 Census). It is estimated that there are around 2,300 wheelchair users in the District. Within the public sector housing stock in

Wealden, there are only 45 dwellings that are specifically designed for the disabled.

6.52 It is the Council's intention that as far as is reasonable through the planning system, new housing will contribute to meeting the needs of people with disabilities and enable them to live as independently as possible in the community. If an increasing proportion of the general housing stock is designed to a standard which makes this possible, it will allow people with disabilities more choice of housing and will make it increasingly unnecessary for people to move or restrict their visits to neighbours if they become less mobile, and will reduce public expenditure on costly adaptations when people become disabled. It is widely accepted that there are two levels of provision for disabled people, namely, general mobility housing and wheelchair housing.

General Mobility Housing

6.53 General Mobility Housing is housing that can be visited by, or adapted for use by, people with mobility problems, including those who may use wheelchairs.

6.54 A summary of design standards for mobility housing, as contained in the Sussex Coast and Countryside Access Guide produced by the Access Officers of the Borough and District Councils in East Sussex, is included in Appendix 5. The Council will encourage developers to build new dwellings to these standards, including conversions and alterations wherever practicable

Wheelchair Housing

6.55 Wheelchair Housing is usually provided in a single storey building or at ground floor level. It is designed and built specifically for use by families who may have one or more members who are wheelchair users. All rooms and facilities in the property are accessible to and can be used by those confined to a wheelchair.

6.56 A summary of design standards for Wheelchair Housing, as contained in the Sussex Coast and Countryside Access Guide referred to above, is included in Appendix 5. The Council will encourage the provision of an element of Wheelchair Housing to be built to these standards within large new housing developments. These dwellings should be evenly distributed throughout the development and should cater for a varying number of occupants. Such sites should normally be located close to shops, services and public transport, and be in an area of level ground.

6.57 In the light of these standards developers are encouraged to consider the needs of disabled people and others with special access requirements at an early stage in the design process, and the Council has nominated an Access Officer who acts as a central point of contact for advice and guidance.

Residential Mobile Homes

6.58 Government guidance advises that residential mobile homes may have a part to play in providing low cost accommodation for small households. However, in considering such developments, the Council will have regard to the impact of development on the landscape and character of the area and require normal provision for access and parking, children's play and amenity space, landscape, and all other relevant planning criteria that normally apply to new housing development. Residential mobile homes in the countryside are covered by Policy DC22.

HG13 In considering proposals for residential mobile home sites, the Council will require development to conform with all relevant housing policies in the Plan.

Implementation

6.59 All the policies in the Housing Chapter will be implemented by the Council primarily through its development control function.

Monitoring

6.60 Key areas to be monitored include:-

- (1) housing completions;
- (2) housing land availability;
- (3) incidence of 'unidentified' sites;
- (4) the mix of dwelling types and sizes;
- (5) housing needs;
- (6) affordable housing completions and commitments;
- (7) population levels.

Shopping

Introduction

8.1 Shopping is a vital activity for the well-being of residents in the District, particularly with regard to essential goods and services. Furthermore, in employment terms, retailing is an important sector of Wealden's economy. The Local Plan provides the framework for meeting the shopping needs of a growing population whilst also having regard to the expected increase in different types of expenditure and the changing pattern of shopping. The latter is brought about by changes in consumer preference and increasing personal mobility which widens the catchment of major retail centres and widens the choice available to residents.

8.2 Within Wealden, the majority of shopping facilities are concentrated in the town centres of Crowborough, Uckfield, Heathfield, Hailsham and Polegate, which provide for their population and surrounding area as well as being important locations for employment. Neighbourhood centres, village centres and 'corner shops' principally meet important day to day needs for food and other convenience goods. Several retail warehouses provide mainly for the needs of car-borne shoppers often purchasing bulky goods, e.g. DIY. Outside the District, the sub-regional shopping centres of Tunbridge Wells and Eastbourne have a major influence on shopping patterns, particularly with regard to the provision of higher value comparison goods, e.g. furniture and clothes, and the provision of food in large 'edge of town' stores. Other types of retailing such as discount and club shopping, and factory outlet centres, which have emerged nationally are considered unlikely to establish in Wealden in view of the limited population catchment.

STRATEGY

8.3 The Plan's strategy, set out in Chapter 2, provides for the maintenance of the existing settlement pattern by giving priority to locating new housing, business and shopping development in the towns, which are the main centres of population served by public transport, in order to protect the countryside and minimise unnecessary vehicle trips.

8.4 In this regard, the Plan's strategy for shopping is to maintain and where possible improve the level and choice of shopping facilities in the District in order to meet the needs of all sections of the community whilst recognising the existing pattern of shopping provision, the demand for new forms of retailing, and the importance of protecting and enhancing the vitality and viability of the town centres.

8.5 As part of this strategy, the objectives of the Plan with regard to shopping are:

- (1) to promote the town centres as the principal shopping locations in the District through encouraging new development and improving the environment, infrastructure and services;*
- (2) to complement the town centres by supporting local shopping and service provision within the smaller centres, 'corner shops' and 'edge-of-town' facilities where appropriate;*
- (3) to maintain the provision of village shops and services;*
- (4) to carefully control new shopping development outside recognised centres and ensure it does not result in a significant loss of existing facilities;*
- (5) to promote high quality shopping environments.*

8.6 In formulating the strategy for shopping, the Council has had regard to Government guidance, particularly Planning Policy Guidance Note 6 'Town Centres and Retail Developments', and to the policies in the County Structure Plan. The County Structure Plan gives priority to maintaining and enhancing the quality, range and character of the main town centre shopping areas through shopping and other proposals (including traffic management). County Structure Plan policies would normally allow new shopping facilities within or contiguous with existing centres, and carefully control out of town development.

NEW SHOPPING DEVELOPMENT

8.7 In line with the shopping strategy and objectives, it is the Council's policy to direct the majority of new shopping development to the town centres as part of its firm commitment to maintaining and enhancing their vitality and viability, reducing reliance on the private car and encouraging alternative means of travel. Government guidance in PPG6 puts emphasis on a plan-led approach to promoting development in town centres, both through policies and the identification of locations and sites for development. The guidance also puts emphasis on the sequential approach to selecting sites for development and includes support for local centres.

8.8 The Council also recognises the important role of local neighbourhood centres, and small individual shops within the towns and villages in meeting mainly

local day to day needs, and will encourage further small scale provision where appropriate. In order to complement the role of the town centres, appropriate provision is made for non-food retail warehousing at Hailsham and Uckfield.

SH1 Within the District, new shopping facilities will be directed to the town centres of Crowborough, Uckfield, Heathfield, Hailsham and Polegate. Local shopping and service provision within neighbourhood centres and individual shops within towns and villages will be supported. Appropriate provision is made for non-food retail warehousing.

TOWN CENTRES

8.9 During the 1990's a number of new shopping developments have been completed in Wealden's town centres, principally based on large new supermarkets, with the most recent in Hailsham. Generally, there has been an increase in the number of service uses in the town centre e.g. building societies, estate agents.

8.10 The town centres are also important locations for a wide range of financial and professional services, business uses, leisure facilities and housing. A healthy and prosperous shopping centre is a key factor in attracting such investment, not only to the town centre itself but also to a much wider area. As well as being a focus of commercial and community activities, the town centres also provide an important source of employment.

8.11 The Council's commitment to maintaining and improving the vitality and viability of the town centres is based on a comprehensive and co-ordinated approach which includes a wide range of policies, proposals and initiatives. These include the following elements:-

- (1) encouraging the preparation of town centre strategies, action programmes and management plans;
- (2) encouraging a high quality of new shopping development within the main shopping areas and resisting the loss of retail floorspace;
- (3) encouraging new services, office development, community facilities and residential use, where appropriate;
- (4) promoting environmental improvements;
- (5) encouraging traffic management measures, including traffic calming and pedestrian schemes;
- (6) encouraging improved access and signing for cars and other motor vehicles, public transport, cyclists and

pedestrians, including the disabled and others with special access requirements;

(7) improving the level, quality and management of public car parking;

(8) maintaining a high standard of refuse collection and street cleaning.

8.12 The emphasis is placed on good management, which should relate to an agreed strategy and action plan for the centre. In pursuit of this the District Council will work closely with the Town Councils and Chambers of Commerce.

Main Shopping Area

8.13 Main shopping areas have been defined in order to provide an identifiable focus for shopping within which increased retail activity could take place by new development, redevelopment of existing floorspace and the more efficient use of existing floorspace and land. The main shopping areas have been carefully defined having regard to the extent of the existing shopping centre, the nature and character of land uses contiguous with it, and any future requirements for new shopping facilities. Where the Council is promoting new shopping development proposals, these have been included within the main shopping area together with any other areas contiguous with the existing shopping centre that are considered suitable for retail purposes.

8.14 On this basis, the main shopping areas represent a clear policy statement that further shopping proposals outside the defined area will normally be resisted. Whilst the main shopping areas as defined provide a focus for retail activity, they also serve to prevent inappropriate outward growth of the existing shopping centre, to protect the amenities of residential areas from encroachment by commercial activities and to resist the loss of housing and business land. The detailed considerations relating to the definition of each of the main shopping areas are contained in the relevant town chapter. The policies that apply within the main shopping areas are set out in the following paragraphs.

New Shopping Development

8.15 It is considered important to include a policy for encouraging new retail uses within the main shopping areas where the prime objective is to create a high quality shopping environment for residents, visitors and the business community itself. In addition to the general principles of layout and design in Policy EN27, particular emphasis will be placed on achieving a high standard of design and layout in new shopping development which should enhance the character and appearance of the town centre. For environmental and safety reasons, satisfactory rear service access should be provided where possible. Where necessary,

developers will be expected to contribute towards highway improvements.

SH2 Within the main shopping areas, as defined on the Proposals Map, new development and the redevelopment or conversion of existing properties for shopping uses will be encouraged and permitted when the following criteria are met:

- (1) the proposed development makes a positive contribution to enhancing the character and appearance of the town centre;**
- (2) for larger scale proposals, where appropriate, a comprehensive approach to development is taken;**
- (3) satisfactory rear service access is provided wherever possible;**
- (4) contributions are made by developers towards highway improvements should these become necessary because of the additional traffic generated.**

Service Uses

8.16 Within the main shopping areas, the prime consideration will be the continuity of the shopping frontage. However, the Council recognises that a variety of uses can help sustain and enhance the vitality and viability of the town centres. Financial and professional services provided direct to the visiting public (Use Class A2), often in shop type premises, are an established part of the shopping scene, e.g. building societies, estate agents, banks. Similarly premises providing food and drink (Use Class A3) are often located in shopping areas, e.g. restaurants, hot food takeaways and public houses.

8.17 Whilst the Council wishes to support a degree of diversification within the town centres, a careful balance needs to be struck between the occasional provision of service uses at ground floor level and the detrimental effects of a concentration resulting in areas of 'dead' frontage in terms of retail activity. Within the main shopping areas in Wealden, existing A2 uses are generally well dispersed, although there are some small groupings in certain locations. The incidence of A3 uses and other non-retail uses tends to be less frequent. However, a continuing concentration of service uses could undermine the retail function of the main shopping areas, and the Council will continue to resist proposals where this could result.

8.18 Where service uses at ground floor level are considered acceptable, it is important that visual amenity is maintained wherever possible by the

provision of a shop-type window display in keeping with the character of the shopping area. Whilst helping to improve the vitality of town centres, A3 uses are often available to the public outside normal shop hours, sometimes until late at night, which can bring associated environmental problems of smell, litter and noise. In considering A3 proposals, the Council will have full regard for the likely impact on the amenity of the area, particularly if there is residential property in the locality, and where necessary will require appropriate measures to be taken to ameliorate the effects.

SH3 Within the main shopping areas, as defined on the Proposals Map, proposals for the conversion of ground floor shops for financial and professional purposes within Use Class A2, food and drink purposes within Use Class A3 or other service uses will only be permitted where the following criteria are met:

- (1) there is no disruptive effect on the shopping frontage through a concentration of non-retail uses;**
- (2) provision is made for a window display appropriate to a shopping frontage which is in keeping with the character of the shopping area;**
- (3) there is no detrimental effect on the character or amenities of the area through smell, litter or noise.**

Amusement Centres

8.19 Proposals for amusement centres incorporating fruit machines, pin tables, video games, etc, within shopping areas, whilst adding to the vitality of a town centre, can often result in many objections being raised. In planning terms these normally relate to a loss of retail floorspace, the noise and disturbance that can result from both the activities carried on and the clientele using the centre. Those problems can be heightened by long opening hours and the external appearance of the premises, particularly where proposals include open fronted facades, outside display and use of machines, and illuminated signs. Open fronted facades and outside activities can add significantly to the noise and disturbance created. Other considerations of a more social or moral nature are the responsibility of the Council as a licensing authority under the Gaming Act 1968 and are not planning matters.

8.20 Although amusement centres are not frequently proposed in Wealden's main shopping areas, in considering such proposals the Council will pay full regard to protecting both their retail function and their

character and amenity. To this end, as with A2 and A3 uses, the Council will resist proposals which result in a concentration of non-retail uses which would result in areas of 'dead' frontage in terms of retail activity. In order to protect visual amenity and reduce noise and disturbance, a shop-type window display in keeping with the character of the main shopping area will be required and no open fronted facade with outside display and activity will be permitted. Where appropriate, the Council will require adequate noise attenuation measures to be undertaken such as sound-proofing and self closing doors, and will consider the use of conditions in any planning permission to limit opening hours.

SH4 Within the main shopping areas, as defined on the Proposals Map, proposals for the use of ground floor shops for amusement centres will only be permitted when:

(1) the criteria in Policy SH3 (1) and (2) are met;

(2) there is no display or activity outside the premises;

(3) there is no detrimental effect on the character or amenities of the area through noise and general disturbance.

Where appropriate, planning permission will be subject to conditions relating to noise attenuation, opening times and outside activities.

Offices

8.21 Other 'office' uses within the town centres that do not fall within Use Class A2 fall within Use Class B1. Conversion of existing premises above ground floor level within the main shopping area can provide valuable accommodation for local firms, provide additional job opportunities and generally broaden the base of the town centre without compromising the function of the main shopping area as a focus for retail activity. Such uses will normally be encouraged and permitted when the proposal conforms with the relevant policies in the Plan. However, the conversion of ground floor shops to B1 use would not normally be acceptable within the main shopping areas.

SH5 Within the main shopping areas, as defined on the Proposals Map, proposals for the use of existing premises above ground floor level for business purposes within Use Class B1 will be encouraged and permitted. The conversion of ground floor premises to business use within Use Class B1 will not be permitted.

Residential Uses

8.22 Within the town centres, there are often flats above existing shops and offices providing a valuable type of residential accommodation which helps to give a vitality to the area outside normal shopping hours as well as improving security of property. Government guidance emphasises the scope that may exist for bringing empty and under-used floorspace above shops back into use for housing purposes which, in certain cases, may be of an affordable nature. New residential uses above ground floor level would be acceptable subject to meeting normal planning criteria relating to parking and amenity. Although unlikely, the conversion of ground floor shops to residential use would not normally be acceptable.

SH6 Within the main shopping areas, as defined on the Proposals Map, proposals for the use of existing premises above ground floor level for residential purposes will be encouraged and permitted. The conversion of ground floor premises to residential use will not be permitted.

LOCAL SHOPPING

Neighbourhood Centres

8.23 Outside the town centres, neighbourhood centres such as Jarvis Brook and Whitehill Road, Crowborough; Framfield Road, Uckfield; and Hailsham Road, Heathfield, cater for the daily or casual needs of nearby residents and those passing by, as well as containing a number of more specialist shops. The important role of village centres is discussed later.

8.24 The Council recognises the importance of local shopping and service facilities for meeting the day to day needs of the community and has promoted small scale shopping proposals in association with major housing development at Stone Cross, Grovelands Farm, Hailsham, and Rocks Park, Uckfield. The Council wishes to support further provision within or contiguous with neighbourhood centres, but only when this is acceptable in terms of the scale of the proposal (including the impact on trade in the town centres), local need, and environmental, amenity and traffic considerations. Most neighbourhood centres include residential properties and are surrounded by residential areas.

8.25 Furthermore, some centres already suffer from traffic congestion and road safety problems, often resulting from a lack of off-street parking and servicing. Care will need to be taken to ensure that any new proposals would not be detrimental to the character and amenity of the neighbourhood centres, and in this regard the Council will ensure that proper

provision is made for access, car parking and servicing. Specific policies for the Jarvis Brook and Whitehill Road areas in Crowborough and Framfield Road, Uckfield, are contained in the relevant town chapter.

SH7 Outside the main shopping areas and the neighbourhood centre of Jarvis Brook, Crowborough, as defined on the Proposals Map, proposals for new shopping facilities within or contiguous with neighbourhood centres may be permitted when the following criteria are met:

(1) the need for the particular site and scale of proposal can be demonstrated to the Council's satisfaction;

(2) the proposals do not have a detrimental effect on the residential character and amenity of the area, particularly with regard to traffic congestion, access and parking.

'Corner Shops'

8.26 Outside the town and neighbourhood centres there are a large number of small individual 'corner shops' mainly serving important day to day needs in residential areas, particularly for the less mobile members of the community, as well as catering for occasional passing trade. Garage shops associated with petrol filling stations sometimes provide ancillary sales of food and other convenience goods. Whilst these are aimed principally at the travelling motorist, they can be of particular benefit to the community where provision in an area is lacking or where the shop remains open until late at night. The Council supports the provision of small convenience goods shops, when appropriate in their scale and location to serve local needs and where there is no detrimental impact on the residential character and amenity of an area, particularly with regard to car parking and traffic generation. The important role of village shops and services is discussed later.

SH8 Proposals for small individual shops which are not within the main shopping areas, as defined on the Proposals Map, nor within or contiguous with neighbourhood centres, may be permitted when the criteria at SH7 are met.

NEW RETAIL SITES – THE SEQUENTIAL TEST

8.27 Government guidance in PPG6 advises that in drawing up their development plans, local planning authorities should, after considering the need for new development, adopt a sequential approach to selecting sites for new retail development. A sequential

approach means that first preference should be for town centre sites, where suitable sites or buildings suitable for conversion are available, followed by edge-of-centre sites, district and local centres and only then out-of-centre sites in locations that are accessible by a choice of means of transport.

8.28 However, in view of the policies towards town centres, protecting the countryside and minimising vehicle trips, proposals for new retail facilities outside development boundaries will be resisted unless they conform with specific policies in the Plan.

8.29 In line with the sequential approach, the Council has made provision for new retail development in the town centres by the inclusion of development opportunities within the main shopping areas. As other sites will continue to come forward for retail development, a criteria based policy in line with the sequential test in PPG6 is considered appropriate. Priority is given to locating new retail development within the main shopping areas in the town centres which define the areas where new shopping development will be encouraged and permitted. Proposals within or contiguous with neighbourhood centres will also be considered in the light of Policy SH7 and the scale and function of the centre as set out in PPG6.

8.30 Whilst it is not the role of the Council to inhibit competition between retailers or methods of retailing, in line with County Structure Plan policy and Government guidance, the Council will wish to be satisfied that the impact of a proposal outside the main shopping areas on the viability and vitality of the town centre as a whole is acceptable, either individually or cumulatively with other proposals. The Council will require the submission of a retail impact study in appropriate cases.

8.31 The retention of an adequate supply of business land and premises in terms of amount, quality and distribution reflects County Structure Plan policy and is vital in relation to the aims of the Council's Economic Development Strategy. Similarly, the Council is required to maintain an adequate supply of housing land in relation to the County Structure Plan, in line with Government guidance. Therefore the Council would resist a significant loss of either housing or business land.

8.32 New shopping proposals, particularly large-scale schemes, can generate high amounts of traffic which can create or perpetuate problems of traffic congestion or road safety where the local road network is inadequate for the level of traffic involved. Such problems can also occur through inadequate car parking and substandard access which can often arise from the conversion of existing premises. In all cases provision should be appropriate for retail use.

8.33 In terms of accessibility, PPG6 advises that edge of centre locations will be determined by what is an easy walking distance for shoppers walking to, but more importantly away from, the store carrying shopping. The limits will be determined by local topography, including barriers to pedestrians, such as major roads and car parks, the strength of attraction of the town centre, and the attractiveness of the route to or from the town centre. However, most shoppers are unlikely to wish to walk more than 200 to 300 metres, especially when carrying shopping. The definition of edge of centre will vary between places, with large centres usually able to attract people to walk further than small centres.

8.34 In the case of out of centre locations, developments should be genuinely accessible by a variety of modes of transport, so that a significant proportion of customers and staff will be able to get to the development by means other than the car. The Council would seek to establish whether public transport would be sufficiently frequent, reliable, convenient and come directly into or past the development from a wide catchment area, although this may be less of a consideration with small developments to serve local needs. Development should be easily and safely accessible for pedestrians, cyclists and disabled people from the surrounding area.

SH9 Proposals for retail development should be located within main shopping areas, as defined on the Proposals Map. Where suitable sites within the main shopping areas are not available, proposals for sites on the edge of the main shopping areas or within or contiguous with neighbourhood centres will be permitted when criteria (1) to (5) below are met.

Proposals for out of centre development will not be permitted unless located within the development boundaries, as defined on the Proposals Map and suitable sites are not available either within or on the edge of the main shopping areas or within or contiguous with neighbourhood centres. Where such proposals are made they would be considered against criteria (1) to (5) below.

(1) either individually or cumulatively with other proposals or developments, there would be no serious effect on the vitality and viability of a town centre as a whole;

(2) there would be no significant net reduction in the amount, quality or distribution of land and premises available for business development;

(3) there would be no significant net reduction in the amount of land available for housing;

(4) the local highway network is adequate to accommodate the amount of additional traffic to be generated;

(5) proposals on the edge of main shopping areas should be within easy walking distance of the main shopping areas; out of centre proposals should be accessible by a choice of means of transport.

VILLAGE SHOPS

8.35 Several of the larger villages within the District provide a wide range of shopping facilities and services for both residents and passers-by as well as serving the needs of the surrounding rural areas. In many smaller villages, single shops, often with sub-Post Office facilities, play an important role in providing principally for food and other day to day needs. Generally, there has been a decline in village shopping provision as increased car ownership, personal mobility and customer choice has led to main food shopping at large supermarkets within the towns. This trend has clearly been to the detriment of the less mobile members of the community and has resulted in the need for longer car journeys.

8.36 In a number of cases village shops have been replaced by more specialist shops, such as antiques or furniture, particularly in areas attractive to tourists. However, such a change is outside the control of the Council. The conversion of village shops to residential use is difficult to resist when the continued commercial use has been demonstrated not to be economically viable. In these circumstances, the Council has limited control over the loss of village shops and Post Offices.

8.37 It is recognised that the retention of village shops and the provision of new shopping and service facilities in the villages will be based largely on commercial considerations and, in many cases, the personal commitment of the shopkeeper concerned. In a few smaller villages, following closure of a shop, Post Office facilities and newsagencies have been accommodated in alternative premises such as village halls or public houses, often with the encouragement of the Parish Council and the Sussex Rural Community Council. The Council undertakes a number of initiatives itself and in association with the Sussex Rural Community Council to encourage investment in village shops.

8.38 The Council wishes to see the current level and choice of village shops and services maintained and improved. New shopping facilities should be

appropriate to the village concerned and proposals will therefore be considered in the light of local need, scale and location, and the requirement for a particular site as set out in Policies SH7 and SH8.

8.39 Adequate and convenient parking is important in order to maintain the viability of village centres, and this needs careful examination when considering the provision of off-street car parks and traffic management measures.

SH10 Within the villages, the Council will seek to maintain and improve the level and choice of village shops and services by:

(1) supporting proposals for new shopping facilities when they conform with the criteria in Policies SH7 or SH8;

(2) considering the needs of shops and local services in planning the provision of off-street public car parks;

(3) considering the trading viability of shops and services in the future implementation of traffic regulations or traffic management measures.

SHOPPING IN THE COUNTRYSIDE

Farm Shops

8.40 The Council is anxious to prevent a proliferation of retail development in the countryside in view of the landscape and environmental impact, the possible effect on existing shopping centres, local and village shops, and the Plan's strategy to minimise unnecessary vehicle trips. However, a number of retail uses such as garden centres and farm shops do occur in the countryside, and it is recognised that the sale of produce derived wholly from the relevant holding or enterprise does not itself normally require planning permission. Whilst an element of imported produce is sometimes sold in farm shops, particularly in view of the seasonal nature of produce, this should not be of such a scale as to create a separate retail use, unrelated to the original farm holding or enterprise. Where permission is granted for the sale of produce not from the holding, planning conditions will be required to ensure that the sale of home grown produce remains the principal use. In these circumstances the Council will also take into account the advice in Paragraph 3.21 of PPG6. Proposals for garden centres will be considered in the light of Policy SH12.

SH11 Outside the development boundaries, as defined on the Proposals Map, proposals involving the sale of agricultural, horticultural and other produce which is not principally derived from the relevant holding or enterprise will not be permitted unless:-

(1) the sale of produce derived from the relevant holding or enterprise remains the principal use;

(2) the proposed development is not intrusive on the landscape nor detrimental to the rural character of the locality;

(3) the additional traffic generated does not have an adverse impact on local roads by reason of their inadequate capacity or rural character;

(4) the site has good accessibility to an existing settlement and is not in an isolated countryside location;

(5) the proposals would not reduce countryside gaps which are considered important to prevent the coalescence of settlements.

Garden Centres

8.41 In recent years, as leisure time has increased, garden centres have become increasingly popular with car-borne shoppers who are able to buy a wide range of goods, often in bulk, which can meet most of their gardening needs. Garden centres usually require large areas of land for open display of plants, garden buildings, furniture and ornaments and other goods, as well as large buildings providing additional sales areas and sometimes refreshment facilities. Furthermore, such development often includes exterior lighting, advertisements and signs, large areas of car parking and new access arrangements. These characteristics can be intrusive on the landscape and detrimental to the rural character although in some cases new planting can help mitigate their visual impact over time. In terms of their impact, garden centres contrast sharply with a nursery where glasshouses or polythene tunnels are normally the main features.

8.42 In view of the large areas of land required for garden centres, there has been pressure to locate in the countryside, with some having grown incrementally from a small nursery operation. Whilst a countryside location may be appropriate, particular care will be taken to ensure that development is acceptable in terms of its impact on the landscape and rural character of a locality, the associated traffic generation, accessibility considerations and protection of countryside gaps. For these reasons an isolated countryside location would not be favoured.

SH12 Proposals for new garden centres and the expansion of existing ones outside the development boundaries, as defined on the

Proposals Map, will be permitted when the following criteria are met:

- (1) the proposed development is not intrusive on the landscape nor detrimental to the rural character of the locality;**
- (2) the additional traffic generated does not have an adverse impact on local roads by reason of their inadequate capacity or rural character;**
- (3) the site has good accessibility to an existing settlement and is not in an isolated countryside location;**
- (4) the proposals would not reduce countryside gaps which are considered important to prevent the coalescence of settlements.**

Implementation

8.43 All the policies in the Shopping Chapter will be implemented by the Council, primarily through its development control function. Whilst a countryside location may be appropriate, particular care will be taken to ensure that development is acceptable in terms of its impact on the landscape and rural character of a locality, the associated traffic generation, accessibility considerations and protection of countryside gaps.

Monitoring

8.44 The key areas to be monitored include:-

- (1) new retail/service floorspace;*
- (2) loss of retail floorspace;*
- (3) ground floor changes of use in main shopping areas;*
- (4) non-food retail warehouse planning applications.*

Tourism

Introduction

10.1 The tourism industry has shown considerable growth in recent years, reflecting greater affluence, more leisure time and increased mobility. Tourism is now a widespread and highly varied activity which makes a significant contribution to the national economy. All the signs suggest that tourism will continue to increase both in scale and significance, whilst changing in response to the growing numbers of overseas visitors, the continuing trend towards short break holidays, and the increase in day visits.

10.2 Tourism can bring significant economic, social and environmental benefits to the area. It not only contributes towards the local economy in terms of creating jobs and generating income, but often helps to safeguard and support local services and amenities. It has the potential to assist the conservation of the countryside and historic buildings, to stimulate improvements to infrastructure, and to generally enhance the District as a place in which to live, work and invest.

10.3 However, it is also recognised that tourism can have environmental costs as well as benefits. For example, tourist traffic, if not carefully managed, can cause congestion and damage at popular locations, while the needs of visitors sometimes generates pressure for inappropriate development. The quality of Wealden's environment is its greatest tourism asset and it is essential to ensure that the growth of tourism does not erode the very character and appearance of the areas that visitors come to see and enjoy.

STRATEGY

10.4 The Council has adopted a positive stance towards tourism in recognition of the important contribution it can make to the quality of life and economic prosperity of the District. At the same time, the Council recognises that tourism and the environment are mutually dependent and that it is in the long term interest of tourism to protect and enhance the environment that sustains it. Furthermore, the environment has an intrinsic value which outweighs its value as a tourism asset. Its future enjoyment and its long term survival must not be prejudiced by short term considerations. The Council's main objectives in relation to tourism are:

(1) to support the development of tourism, whilst recognising the need for a balance between such development and the protection of the heritage and environment of the area;

(2) to promote environmental quality as the key tourism resource of the District;

(3) to encourage the development of tourism that is compatible with the District's environment and which can help maintain and support it;

(4) to recognise that tourism is a positive activity with the potential to benefit the community and the place as well as the visitor and in any location to seek a balance between their needs;

(5) to ensure that tourism activities and developments respect the scale, nature and character of the place in which they are sited;

(6) to encourage high quality tourism developments, whilst seeking to extend the geographical spread of tourism within the District;

(7) to develop visitor management and education especially targeted at sensitive and fragile areas.

10.5 These objectives have evolved within the framework provided by the Council's overall Economic Development Strategy for the District, the County Structure Plan, the County Tourism Strategy and the South East England Tourist Board Tourism Strategy, and endorse the 'Principles for Sustainable Tourism' set out in the recent Government Task Force report on Tourism and the Environment. The objectives also take account of the Government's Planning Policy Guidance Note on Tourism (PPG21).

TOURIST ATTRACTIONS AND FACILITIES

10.6 In Wealden, the high quality of the natural and built environment is the principal attraction for visitors. The Downs, the Weald, the coastline, historic properties and gardens, the country lanes, villages and farms offer an attractive and accessible resource of immense diversity and appeal. At the same time, it is recognised that tourism developments which provide a range of things to see and do can be important in encouraging longer stays, providing somewhere of interest in wet weather and catering for different interests. However, public enjoyment of the District ultimately depends upon its conservation. The Council therefore attaches a high priority to maintaining the quality of Wealden's environment, particularly its countryside, and to ensuring that the standard of tourist facilities are of a similar high quality.

10.7 The scale and nature of appropriate tourism development will vary according to the nature of the area under consideration. The further promotion of tourist enjoyment of the countryside should be primarily aimed at small-scale enterprises that draw on the character of the countryside itself: its beauty, culture, history and wildlife. Tourist facilities which assist the purposes of conservation and recreation, for example by bringing appropriate new uses to historic buildings or opening up new opportunities for access to the countryside, will be encouraged. The planning, design, siting and management of all new tourism developments should be in keeping with the landscape and, wherever possible, seek to enhance it.

10.8 In the countryside, small-scale, locally run enterprises to service the needs of visitors will be encouraged, provided that the development is in accordance with other policies in this Plan and the conservation and enhancement of the landscape, woodland and wildlife. Within the Sussex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the Ashdown Forest, new tourism and leisure-related development outside of the village development boundaries will be restricted to the conversion of existing buildings and informal recreation in association with the quiet enjoyment of the area.

TM1 Outside the areas identified in Policy TM2, proposals for new or extended tourist attractions and facilities will be permitted where the following criteria are met:

(1) the proposed development would respect, and where possible, enhance the character, heritage and environmental quality of the area;

(2) the proposed development would make an important contribution to diversifying and upgrading the tourist attractions and facilities in the District in keeping with changing demands;

(3) within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, particular care is given to siting, design and appearance in accordance with Policy EN6.

TM2 Within the Sussex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the Ashdown Forest (defined as the area enclosed by the boundary of the Medieval Pale of 1372), proposals for new small-scale tourist attractions and facilities outside of the village development boundaries will be permitted only where it can be demonstrated that the proposed development:

(1) represents the use of an existing agricultural or other rural building in accordance with Policy DC7;

(2) is compatible with the character of the Downland or the Ashdown Forest;

(3) complements, and is consistent with, the quiet informal enjoyment of the countryside.

10.9 The Council is examining the accessibility of existing tourist attractions and facilities for wheelchair users and other groups with impaired mobility. The needs of these groups will be taken into account in the consideration of new development proposals, in accordance with Policy EN28, and the Council will support measures to improve accessibility for such groups whenever possible.

HISTORIC VILLAGES

10.10 Wealden has a wealth of attractive and historic villages, many of which benefit from the employment and income generated by tourist expenditure and also from the support that visitors give to local services and facilities. However, small communities can feel overwhelmed by the sheer numbers of visitors and a careful balance therefore needs to be struck in all villages between the needs of the visitor and the resident population. New visitor attractions should enhance the unique appeal of an individual village, relate to its heritage or contribute towards environmental conservation and enhancement. Tourism proposals which are unsympathetic or out of scale or character with their surroundings will be firmly resisted.

THE COAST

10.11 Wealden's coastline is a valuable tourism resource, combining good weather, attractive beaches, the dramatic and famous feature of the Seven Sisters, and proximity to well known resorts and marina developments. It comprises two contrasting stretches either side of Eastbourne: the largely undeveloped cliffs and downland between Cuckmere Haven and Belle Tout to the west, and the resort of Pevensey Bay to the east. Although only six miles in total, these stretches of coastline represent important areas for tourism and recreation.

Birling Gap

10.12 Birling Gap is one of only two places between Cuckmere Haven and Eastbourne which offers access to the beach. The National Trust supported by this Council and others has undertaken improvements to

enhance the general appearance and to provide appropriate facilities for visitors to the area. The District Council has replaced the steps to the beach and has produced a Beach Management Plan. It will continue to provide and encourage the improvement and sensitive management of this prominent location within the Sussex Heritage Coast area.

Pevensey Bay

10.13 Pevensey Bay is a small but popular seaside resort which receives a large influx of holidaymakers during the summer. Most overnight visitors stay either on the large caravan sites along the A259 to the west of the resort or in rented holiday homes. In order to improve the seafront environment and public access to the beach, the Council will promote and encourage appropriate enhancements, including the consideration of relevant development proposals.

Water Quality

10.14 The public's growing awareness of and increased expectations with regard to the cleanliness of beaches means that a significant improvement in the water quality of Wealden's bathing beaches is essential, particularly if the quality theme of the tourism strategy is to be realised.

ACCOMMODATION

10.15 A successful tourist industry is clearly dependent upon the availability of a high quality and wide range of visitor accommodation. Generally, therefore, the Council will view favourably additions and improvements to the range and quality of tourist accommodation in the District, provided there is no conflict with policies for the conservation of the countryside. The following section outlines the current levels of provision for all types of accommodation and establishes policies for controlling and managing provision in the future.

Hotels and Serviced Accommodation

10.16 There are over 120 hotels and guest houses in the District providing around 1,850 bedspaces. However, an accommodation survey carried out by the Council in 1991 identified scope for an improvement in the type and range of accommodation offered. In particular, there is a need for further purpose-built budget or mid-range hotels if suitable sites can be found. Proposals for this type of accommodation on primary routes in the countryside will be considered against Policy TR7.

Self-Catering Accommodation

10.17 Within the countryside there is a growing demand for good quality self-catering accommodation. The provision of this type of accommodation through the conversion of farm buildings is often possible, and this would be a particularly appropriate means of meeting the need for simple hostel or bunkhouse accommodation accessible from the South Downs Way. In the latter case, provision should be made for stabling or pasture for horses where bridleway access exists and such provision would not conflict with other policies in the Plan.

TM3 The Council will support proposals to convert farm buildings to a hostel or similar facility to provide overnight accommodation to serve those walking or cycling in the District. This applies particularly to locations where there is no access for ordinary vehicles, although access for emergency vehicles must be available.

10.18 The extensive storm damage to the District's woodland in 1987, together with the changing financial arrangements affecting woodland cultivation and planting, has resulted in some woodland areas being investigated for the development of holiday village or chalet accommodation. Such developments are virtually synonymous with low-density residential development, though with more scope for sympathetic design and screening, and, in view of the significant landscape quality of the District, require very careful consideration. It is considered important for environmental reasons to resist new holiday village or chalet park proposals within Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the Coastal Levels, and elsewhere such proposals will only be considered where both a specific holiday need can be demonstrated and an environmental planning gain can be achieved.

TM4 Proposals for new holiday villages or chalet parks will be strongly resisted in the Sussex Downs and High Weald Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the Coastal Levels. Outside of these areas, such proposals will only be permitted where the following criteria are met:

- (1) a specific holiday need can be demonstrated;**
- (2) the proposal would restore a damaged or derelict site or offer some other form of environmental enhancement;**
- (3) the size and scale of the proposal would be compatible in terms of appearance and intensity of use with its location;**
- (4) the proposal would not be visually intrusive in the landscape and would be well screened by**

existing vegetation, particularly in locations adjacent to Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty;

(5) the proposal would be adequately landscaped both within and around the site.

Caravan and Camping Sites

10.19 Pevensey Bay has the highest concentration of holiday caravans in Wealden, reflecting its role as the major resort in the District and the high demand for holiday accommodation along the South Coast generally. There are currently around 500 static caravans and 200 touring pitches, representing about 37% of the total District provision. The Low Weald area contains a similar number of pitches, probably reflecting its easy access to the coast and policy constraints on the provision of caravan and camping sites within the Sussex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the Coastal Levels. By contrast, the High Weald has only 200 pitches, or 10% of the total provision. The average size of sites in this area is much smaller than elsewhere, reflecting the high proportion of certificated sites and the landscape quality of the area.

10.20 Whilst the Council wishes to ensure that there are adequate facilities for caravanning and camping in the District to meet future demands, this objective must be balanced with the need to protect and conserve the environment that attracts holidaymakers in the first place. Holiday caravan sites can be very intrusive in the landscape, especially on the coast, and static caravan sites can have a particularly damaging impact. Touring caravan and camping sites generally have a lesser impact due to their lower density, seasonal use (mainly during the summer when vegetation cover is greatest). The Council will encourage the improvement of landscaping on existing caravan and camping sites, particularly along the coastline. The South East England Tourist Board sees little scope for the further development of static caravan parks; the main emphasis should be placed on the upgrading and improvement of existing facilities to satisfy an increasingly sophisticated and discerning market, rather than any additional provision of sites. However, a growing demand for touring caravan and camping facilities is anticipated.

10.21 In view of the above considerations, proposals for new static caravan sites or for a change of use from touring pitches to static pitches will not be permitted. However, the Council will seek to encourage improvements to existing static caravan sites by allowing their expansion where this would enable improved layouts or better landscaping to be implemented.

TM5 Proposals for new static caravan sites for holiday purposes, or the change of use of touring pitches to static pitches, will not be permitted. Proposals for extensions to such sites may be permitted if this would result in better layouts and landscaping.

10.22 The high quality of the landscape in Wealden limits the number of locations where the further provision of touring caravan and camping facilities might be permitted, and careful consideration needs to be given to proposals for new sites, especially in designated areas. On the Ashdown Forest, it is considered that new caravan or camping sites would be unacceptably damaging to the open, unspoilt quality of the landscape and its sense of remoteness and seclusion. Proposals for such facilities will therefore be strongly resisted in this location.

TM6 Within the Ashdown Forest (defined as the area enclosed by the boundary of the Medieval Pale of 1372) proposals for touring caravan and camping facilities will be strongly resisted.

10.23 The Sussex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty similarly has a landscape of exceptional sensitivity where caravan or camping parks would inevitably be visually intrusive or otherwise damaging to its unspoilt, rural character. The Coastal Levels, including the Pevensey Bay area where demand for caravan and camping facilities is highest, comprise a flat, open and visually exposed landscape, which forms the setting for Pevensey Castle and the historic villages of Pevensey and Westham. It is not considered that the further provision of such facilities can be sustained in this location without unacceptable damage to its landscape character. However, extensions to existing sites may be permitted where the proposals would result in improved layouts and landscaping. Within both the Sussex Downs and the Coastal Levels, small sites for lightweight tents may be permitted in appropriate locations.

TM7 Within the Sussex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the Coastal Levels, proposals for touring caravan and camping facilities will be strongly resisted, with the exception of small sites for lightweight tents. Extensions to existing sites may be permitted if this would result in better layouts and landscaping.

10.24 The demand for touring caravan and camping facilities has been and can continue to be partly met by providing new sites in the Low Weald area, where the gently undulating nature of the landscape is more suited to accommodating such facilities than the adjoining areas. However, in recognition of the need to disperse tourism around the District and away from the

areas most under pressure from visitors, it is considered that some further limited provision for touring sites can also be made within the High Weald Area, outside of the Ashdown Forest, particularly in view of its heavily wooded character and pronounced valleys. Any sites in this area should be small-scale, well dispersed throughout the area, and have good local access. Extensions to existing sites may provide a valuable opportunity for improved layouts or better landscaping to be implemented.

TM8 Outside of the areas identified in Policies TM6 and TM7, proposals for new or extended touring caravan and camping facilities will be permitted where the following criteria are met:

- (1) there is good accessibility from the primary or secondary route network, but preferably no direct access onto a primary or trunk road;**
- (2) the size and scale of the proposal would be compatible in terms of appearance and intensity of use with its location;**
- (3) the proposal would not be visually intrusive in the landscape and would be well screened by existing vegetation, particularly in locations within or adjacent to Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty;**
- (4) the proposal would be adequately landscaped, both within and around the site;**
- (5) on large sites, adequate provision would be made for the recreational needs of site users;**
- (6) the proposal would not result in an unacceptable concentration of caravan or camping sites;**
- (7) in the case of extensions, the proposals should result in an improved layout and landscaping.**

Within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, particular care will be taken to ensure that proposals respect and maintain the landscape character in accordance with Policy EN6.

Caravan Storage

10.25 There is a demand for storage facilities for touring caravans in the countryside where sites are perceived by caravan owners to be more secure and less expensive than elsewhere. However, it must be recognised that the storage of caravans can, by its very nature, be visually intrusive in a rural or other sensitive

landscape setting. Typically, caravans are stored outdoors in close proximity to one another and are normally only removed for short periods during the summer. The resulting visual impact can be as harmful as that of a static caravan site or other forms of outside storage and will rarely be compatible with policies which seek to maintain the character and appearance of the countryside.

10.26 Generally, therefore, the outdoor storage of caravans in the countryside will be resisted by the Council and such proposals will be expected to locate on appropriate business areas in accordance with the criteria set down for storage uses in Policy BS13 of Chapter 7. Small-scale proposals for the storage of caravans within existing buildings in the countryside may also be permitted, provided that the criteria in Policy DC7 of Chapter 5 are met.

TM9 Proposals for the outdoor storage of touring caravans will not be permitted in the countryside (outside the development boundaries as defined on the Proposals Map).

VISITOR MANAGEMENT

10.27 The quality of the visitor experience is based, in large part, on the quality of the local environment. However, there are a number of locations in the District where the inherent quality of the place is in danger of being lost or damaged by mounting pressures on the site. These pressures can be caused by a combination of too many visitors, limited capacity or fragility of the site, and concentrated periods of use dictated by visitor demand. The results are overcrowding, physical wear and tear and, occasionally, conflict with the local community.

10.28 Where these problems do exist, they are often concentrated at particular points and specific times and many, although not all, can be resolved by better management of visitors. Information and interpretation can give people a greater understanding and appreciation of a locality and site which, in the long term, can make for responsible visitors who have a greater awareness of the sensitivity of the environment. The Council will therefore support and encourage the development of information and interpretive facilities to increase visitors' understanding and enjoyment of the District's natural and built heritage, provided that these are sensitively designed and sited and comply with the policies of this Plan.

TM10 Proposals for interpretative facilities for the natural and built environment should be sensitively designed and sited, and should comply with other policies in the Plan.

10.29 Other measures which can be taken to alleviate visitor pressures include controlling the volume of visitors through traffic management and alternative marketing strategies or adapting the site to cope. A number of bodies are involved in a range of visitor management initiatives at sensitive sites and locations around the District, for example the Sussex Downs Conservation Board and the Ashdown Forest Conservators. Such initiatives, whilst important, lie beyond the scope of the Local Plan but the Council will support and encourage them and, where possible, introduce its own schemes and projects.

10.30 The Council recognises that well-positioned and effective tourist information can broaden the visitor's awareness of what the District has to offer, make it easier for the visitor to locate what they are seeking and help to disperse tourism around the area. The Council is responsible for existing tourism information centres and points, and is promoting the provision of a new centre within the proposed roadside facility at Polegate. It will also seek to identify deficiencies in tourist information points in the District and promote further provision in appropriate schemes.

10.31 Given that the vast majority of visitors arrive by road, primarily by car, the Council will also support and encourage traffic management initiatives, such as the positive routing of visitor traffic to avoid areas of congestion and sensitive sites as well as the investigation of traffic restrictions, traffic calming measures and pedestrian priority schemes in areas under pressure from large numbers of visitors. It will also seek to identify, provide and ensure the effective management of off-street car parks in such locations.

Implementation

10.32 Policies TM1 to TM10 inclusive will be implemented by the Council primarily through its development control function.

Monitoring

10.33 The key areas to be monitored will include:-

- (1) the provision of new tourism attractions and facilities;
- (2) tourist accommodation in converted rural buildings;
- (3) touring caravan and tent pitches;
- (4) information and interpretative facilities in the District.

Leisure and Recreation

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.

(3) provision of new indoor community facilities;

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;