

Environment

Introduction

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

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

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

STRATEGY

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

4.5 It is important to protect areas of high landscape quality, notably Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, together with other areas recognised for their important historic and nature conservation value. It is also necessary to accommodate change in rural as well as urban areas. The Plan aims to facilitate such change in

a manner that ensures that the existing valued qualities of the natural environment are respected and maintained.

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

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

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

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

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

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

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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

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

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

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

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

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

Development pattern and transportation

4.11 Sustainability considerations generally point towards encouraging a distribution of land uses that reduces the need to travel, especially by car, and hence reduces CO² emissions in particular. Planning Policy Guidance Note 13: Transport provides advice as to how transport and land use planning should be integrated, with particular regard to reducing environmentally damaging traffic emissions. It proposes that more emphasis is placed on various means of managing the demand for transport and encouraging alternatives to the car. It recognises that more dispersed development tends to be less efficient in transport terms and that uses such as shopping and business should aim to be near public transport facilities.

4.12 Government guidance therefore promotes development within existing urban areas in locations

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

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

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

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

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

Energy

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

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

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

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

Waste Management and Recycling

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

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

Pollution control

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

Water resources

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

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

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

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

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

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

LANDSCAPE CONSERVATION

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

Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty

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

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

Other Important Landscapes

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

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

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

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS

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

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

HIGH WEALD

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

4.34 The distinctive topography of the High Weald is formed from sands and sandstones intermingled with clays in the centre of the ancient Wealden anticline. This results in a hilly country of ridges and valleys. The major ridges run roughly east to west, and two main

'Forest Ridges' can be identified. These main ridges are deeply dissected by streams into a close network of smaller ridges and valleys, or ghylls, giving the relief a highly intricate appearance. Many of these valleys are steep-sided and bands of harder sandstone sometimes form weathered outcrops within them, as seen around Waldron and Groombridge for example.

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

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

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

Landscape Character Areas

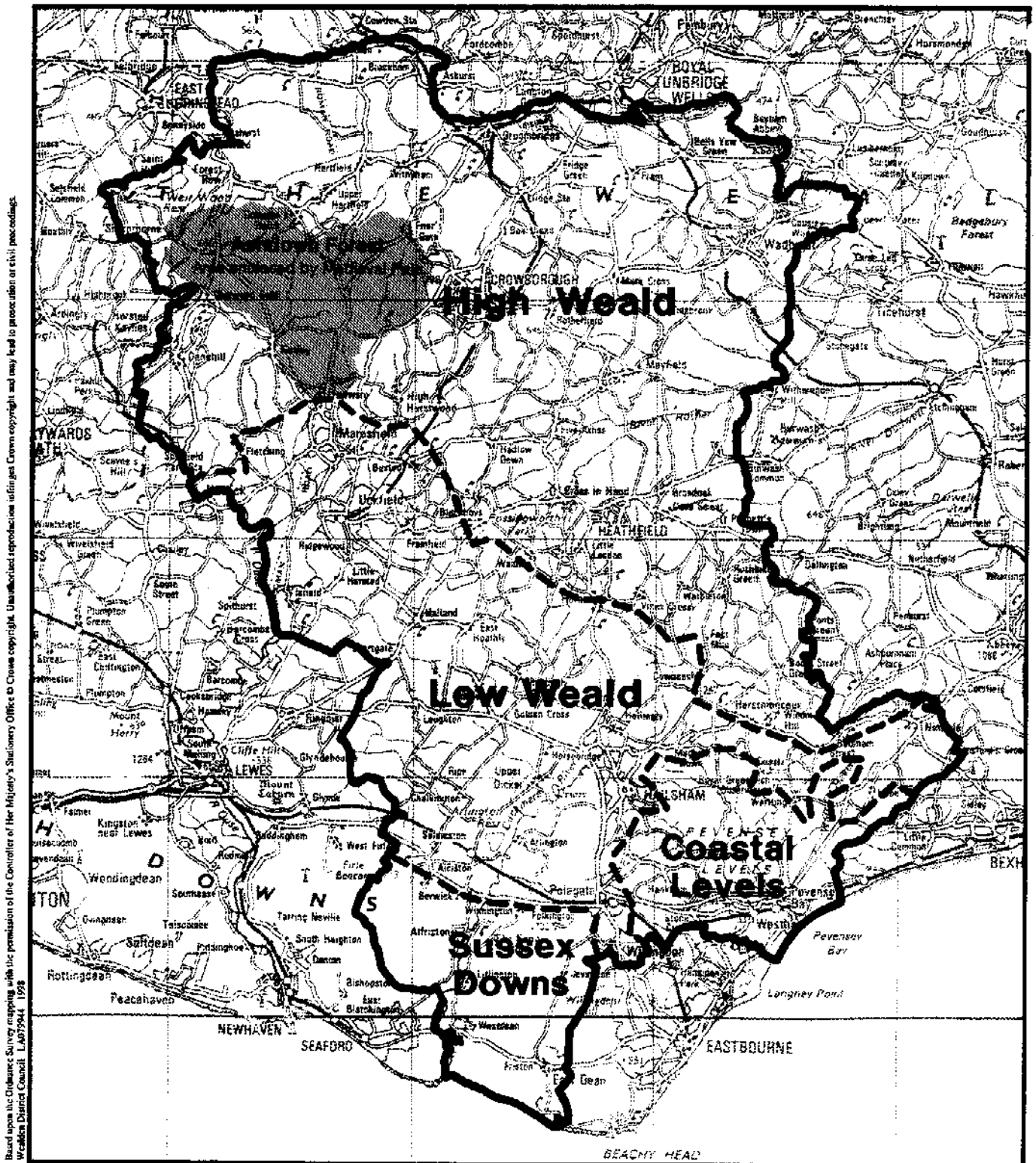


Figure 3

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

0 5 10 kilometres

Not to scale

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(3) undeveloped steep valleys and ghylls;

(4) open heathland;

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

(6) areas of unspoilt or remote character;

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

(8) the High Weald Management Plan.

Ashdown Forest

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

- (1) extensive open heathland areas;**
- (2) wet flush grassland;**
- (3) remnants of Ancient Woodland, together with other landmark tree clumps;**
- (4) unspoilt and distant views;**
- (5) the Ashdown Forest Management Plan;**
- (6) the landscape characteristics of the Ashdown Forest area identified in the High Weald Landscape Assessment;**
- (7) the archaeological interest.**

LOW WEALD

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

punctuate a primarily agricultural landscape of traditionally mixed arable and pastoral farming.

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

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

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

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

- (1) areas of unspoilt and remote countryside;**
- (2) the setting of settlements;**
- (3) areas on the fringe of adjacent statutorily designated landscapes;**
- (4) the retention of woods, boundary trees and hedges;**
- (5) attractive vernacular buildings and groups of buildings.**

SUSSEX DOWNS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

- (1) the characteristic sculptured landform and appearance;**
- (2) the exposed scarp slope and adjacent foothills;**
- (3) the undeveloped coastline, especially the Heritage Coast;**
- (4) the Cuckmere Valley, especially Cuckmere Haven;**
- (5) traditional land uses and agricultural practices;**
- (6) the setting of important historic and natural features;**
- (7) well-managed public access;**

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

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

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

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

Sussex Heritage Coast

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

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

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

4.62 This section of the Heritage Coast includes Birling Gap, which provides facilities for visitors including access to the beach, and the Seven Sisters Country Park covering 280 hectares on the east side of Cuckmere Haven. The Country Park provides public access for quiet enjoyment whilst also pursuing conservation and agriculture objectives. A range of visitor facilities are provided at Exceat. However, further commercialisation would be detrimental to the

essential natural charm of the locality. The conservation and study of the marine flora and fauna of the Heritage Coast is promoted by the establishment of the Seven Sisters Voluntary Marine Conservation Area.

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

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

COASTAL LEVELS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(2) other remote areas;

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

(4) promoting environmentally sensitive farming;

(5) the traditional hydrology of the area.

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

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

TREES, WOODLAND AND LANDSCAPING

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

4.78 It is appreciated that the conservation of a large proportion of woodland will depend upon its commercial value. Indeed, forestry activities are a traditional industry within the rural economy and may

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

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

- (1) endorsement of the principles and guidelines contained in the Trees and Woodland Strategy for East Sussex;**
- (2) support for the preparation of local Trees and Woodland Conservation and Management Plans;**
- (3) encouragement for woodland management through participation in tree and hedgerow planting schemes by farmers, voluntary organisations and others, and where appropriate, as part of development proposals;**
- (4) making Tree Preservation Orders where appropriate to protect trees and woodland areas of significant amenity value;**
- (5) giving weight to proposals, including business proposals, that help to sustain and manage forestry and woodland areas when considering them against other policies of the Plan;**
- (6) resisting development proposals which would result in the loss of trees which make a valuable contribution to the character of the landscape, a settlement or its setting.**

Ancient Woodlands

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

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

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

Landscaping

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

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

4.82 Planting proposals should normally aim to incorporate existing site features, such as trees and hedges, and maximise the use of native species in order that new development can be sensitively integrated within the landscape. Regard should also be had to

potential nature conservation benefits, such as establishing 'wildlife corridors'. Careful consideration needs to be paid to practical aspects, including the relationship to underground services, proximity to buildings when fully grown and associated overshadowing and structural effects. Planting should be carried out as early as possible, before development commences where practicable, or otherwise in the first planting season thereafter. Proposals for the future management of landscaped areas may well be appropriate, and the Council would normally require replacement during the period while planting becomes established. This period will depend on the type and size of stock to be planted.

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

- (1) seek to retain existing trees, significant hedgerows and other valuable site features;**
- (2) normally comprise primarily native species;**
- (3) complement the scale and character of the proposed development and the locality;**
- (4) have regard to associated nature conservation benefits;**
- (5) be implemented at the earliest practicable opportunity and thereafter satisfactorily maintained during the early years.**

NATURE CONSERVATION

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

management, as well as consider the potential for habitat creation.

EN15 The Council will seek to safeguard designated nature conservation sites by resisting development or land use changes which would be likely to adversely affect their nature conservation value.

The weight to be afforded to nature conservation interests will have regard to their status:-

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

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

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

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

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

opportunities for encouraging habitat protection, enhancement and management.

IMPORTANT COUNTRYSIDE GAPS

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

- (1) Polegate and Hailsham;
- (2) Eastbourne, Pevensey, Westham, Stone Cross, Pevensey Bay and Polegate;
- (3) Hailsham and Hellingly;
- (4) Uckfield and Maresfield;
- (5) Forest Row and Ashurstwood.

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

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

4.92 The past expansion of Heathfield has lessened the break between it and the surrounding villages of Cross-in-Hand, Broad Oak, Cade Street, Old Heathfield and Maynards Green. These gaps are particularly sensitive, being visually exposed within the High Weald Area of

Outstanding Natural Beauty. Previous planning policy has acknowledged the significance of these areas and it is considered that specific protection from development should continue to be expressed.

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

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

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

- (1) Polegate and Hailsham;**
- (2) Eastbourne, Pevensey, Westham, Stone Cross, Pevensey Bay and Polegate;**
- (3) Hailsham and Hellingly;**
- (4) Uckfield, Maresfield and Five Ash Down;**
- (5) Forest Row and Ashurstwood;**
- (6) Heathfield and Cross-in-Hand, Broad Oak, Cade Street, Old Heathfield and Maynards Green;**
- (7) Rotherfield and Town Row.**

OPEN AREAS WITHIN SETTLEMENTS

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

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

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

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

CONSERVATION AREAS

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

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

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

Alciston	Jevington
Alfriston	Litlington
Berwick	Maresfield
Cade Street	Mayfield
Chiddingly	Old Heathfield
Cousley Wood	Pevensy & Westham
Danehill	Ripe
East Dean	Rotherfield
East Hoathly	Rushlake Green

Fletching	Selmeston
Forest Row	Uckfield
Framfield	Wadhurst
Frant	Waldron
Hailsham	Westdean
Hartfield	Withyham
Hellingly	Willingdon, Church Street
	Wilmington

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

BUILDINGS OF SPECIAL ARCHITECTURAL OR HISTORIC INTEREST

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

HISTORIC PARKS AND GARDENS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

ARCHAEOLOGY

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

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

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

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

elaborates on the importance of archaeology, its own role and that of the broader planning process in protecting the archaeological heritage.

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

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

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

DESIGN

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Access for the Disabled

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

land and buildings provides the opportunity to secure a more accessible environment for everyone.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Light Pollution

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

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

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

(1) light spillage to be minimised;

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

ADVERTISEMENTS

4.128 Advertisements and signs are generally regarded as essential to commercial and business activity. They may identify the name and nature of a business being

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

EN30 Advertisements and signs should not detract from the character of their surroundings or, where appropriate, the style, scale and proportion of the building, and should otherwise be acceptable in terms of amenity and public

safety. In this consideration, the Council will also have regard to the need to avoid an inappropriate proliferation of signs.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

EN33 Proposals for satellite television dishes will only be permitted where they have an acceptable and minimal impact on the appearance of the building to which it relates

and on the amenities of neighbouring properties. Regard will be had to siting, design and colour and, where appropriate, to the potential for shared dish systems.

Implementation

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

4.144 In addition, Policies EN5, EN7 and EN9 will be the responsibility of the Council, in part through discussions with the relevant Agency.

Monitoring

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