

Business

Introduction

7.1 The Council believes that a healthy economy is integral to the vitality of the District and the general welfare of its residents. Business development is necessary to meet growing employment needs, to foster local enterprise and to enable firms to respond to changing market conditions. It can also be a positive element in conserving and improving the environment.

7.2 Wealden's economy is dominated by 'service sector' jobs, notably in retailing, hotels and catering, public services, banking and other local services. Together these account for over two-thirds of all employment in the District, which in 1991 totalled about 30,000 (excluding self-employment). The manufacturing sector is relatively small, but includes good representation in growth industries such as food and drink, several forms of engineering, plastics and data processing. Small businesses predominate in all sectors, with some 10,000 people in self-employment.

7.3 A feature of local employment patterns is the significant proportion of people who find work outside the District, mainly in the nearby larger towns such as Eastbourne and Tunbridge Wells. This is particularly so for residents employed in professional and managerial jobs. Even so, some 60% of local people are employed locally and employment opportunities have increased at a relatively high rate compared to neighbouring Districts in recent years. Unemployment in the District is currently low, representing some 1.7% of the workforce at October 1998.

STRATEGY

7.4 The Council recognises the importance of industrial and commercial development to help both the local and national economy prosper. It is also important to integrate this with environmental objectives. Indeed, the balance between economic, social and environmental objectives is a central issue for the Local Plan, as reflected by the overall strategy set out in Chapter 2. In accordance with the Plan's economic aims (Aims 6 and 7), the strategy for business seeks to provide for continuing growth in the number and quality of available job opportunities well related to job requirements in the towns and villages, while still protecting the attractive, largely rural character and unspoilt countryside of the District.

7.5 Due regard is paid to Government guidance, notably Planning Policy Guidance Note 4 (PPG4): Industrial and Commercial Development and Small Firms, and PPG7: The Countryside – Environmental

Quality and Economic and Social Development, as well as to the approved County Structure Plan. The policies and proposals of the Local Plan should contribute to boosting the County economy in accordance with the County Structure Plan. In endeavouring to accommodate likely business development requirements, careful consideration will be given to the needs of local firms.

7.6 The Plan's land use policies for employment provision complement the Council's "Economic Development Strategy". This Strategy, which is reviewed annually, identifies the District Council's activities "to develop a sustainable and prosperous economy which recognises and maintains the environmental qualities of the area". It dovetails with the East Sussex Economic Strategy for the regeneration of the County economy.

Amount

7.7 The Plan looks to provide for a realistic expectation of local job needs, including those arising from the unemployed, together with a reduced reliance on out-commuting, a greater proportion of 'high quality' jobs and a reasonable choice of sites and premises. Provision should still be consistent with the County Structure Plan aim of striking a sustainable balance with the demands for housing and the protection of the environment. In particular, the overall amount of industrial and commercial development should not fuel demand for further housing growth.

Quality

7.8 Full regard is paid to the County Structure Plan's aim to replace as far as possible the characteristic low quality, low wage jobs by providing for longer term, well-rewarding employment. It endorses measures to broaden the range of available jobs, including the promotion of appropriate major new high quality 'business park' allocations that will attract key growth sectors, such as high technology industries, banking and finance, and other prestige office users. It is also important that all development achieves high standards of layout and design, respecting and enhancing environmental qualities.

Distribution

7.9 The County Structure Plan strategy acknowledges that the larger coastal towns of Eastbourne, Bexhill and Hastings are intended to be the focal points of business development, aided by improving transport

infrastructure. Locally, the Local Plan essentially continues established policies, seeking to guide the majority of business development to the towns within the District.

7.10 Within the more rural parts of the District, the Council is concerned to improve accessibility to jobs, to reduce the 'affordability gap' between house prices and earnings, to sustain the vitality of settlements, and maintain local services. Therefore, policies and proposals will seek to maintain rural employment, mainly in the villages, especially those with established service and employment functions, consistent with environmental considerations. In the wider countryside, the conservation of the environment is a primary consideration. New development is normally resisted, although this need not preclude certain sensitive small-scale developments and other appropriate responses to agricultural changes.

7.11 Objectives with regard to the local economy are accordingly defined as:-

(1) to ensure an adequate supply of land and premises for business use to meet local employment needs;

(2) to provide for a distribution of employment well related to planned housing development and consistent with environmental objectives;

(3) to improve the overall range and quality of employment opportunities, through 'high tech' and other prestige developments;

(4) to enable reductions in unemployment and out-commuting;

(5) to encourage local enterprise and the growth of indigenous businesses;

(6) to provide for most business development in the towns;

(7) to support the rural economy with suitable employment opportunities in the villages and wider countryside, as appropriate.

7.12 The approach in the Deposit Structure Plan Review maintains a balance between economic and environmental objectives, seeking to integrate these in a more sustainable manner. It encourages a strengthening of the economic base which will help reduce unemployment and long distance commuting. It proposes means to boost the supply of business land, including the release of 'flagship' business parks and some new employment sites as well as the bringing forward of existing land and premises. The emerging policy direction is regarded as in line with the business strategy of this Plan. Consideration is given to the level of provision over the Local Plan period below.

DEVELOPMENT REQUIREMENTS

Labour Supply and Job Requirement

7.13 There is a forecast increase in economically active people (that is those either in work or seeking work) of 4,000, a 6% growth over ten years up to 2004. Having regard to the need to cater for the existing unemployed and taking account of commuting patterns, with a reduced rate of net-out-commuting in accordance with the Plan's strategy, it is estimated business employment provision should aim to provide for the order of an additional 1,300 jobs over the Plan period.

Labour Demand

7.14 Consideration is also given to likely labour demand as a result of business growth. While this will be greatly influenced by the overall state of the economy, it is evident that the Plan's proposals together with existing commitments will enable a rate of employment growth comparable to that of the last ten years.

7.15 Actual floorspace completions have fluctuated somewhat in recent years. Although planned floorspace growth is comparable with an average rate of development since 1986, it should be recognised that the Plan's strategy is not to promote unconstrained growth but to relate primarily to local needs, fully respecting the particular environmental qualities of the area.

Land Requirement

7.16 Converting the additional job requirement to land requirements is not an exact science; latitude is necessary to allow for a variety of sites to meet differing needs and changing assumptions, as well as for the reasons referred to above. Also, the ability to meet qualitative objectives depends on the nature and availability of individual sites.

7.17 In quantitative terms, it is estimated that the amount of business floorspace required over the Plan period to meet the needs arising from population growth, a return to low unemployment, changing employment patterns and a reduced level of out-commuting amounts to some 16-22 hectares. Assumptions made in reaching these figures are shown in Appendix 2. It should be recognised that a higher level of provision will be needed to ensure a choice of sites and continuity of supply.

7.18 Monitoring carried out by the Council shows that at April 1997 there were outstanding commitments for business development, as represented by existing Local

Plan allocations and planning permissions, for some 139,000 square metres of floorspace, equivalent to approximately 34 hectares of land, mostly on new sites. Additional supply exists in the form of current vacant units and the potential for future extensions or redevelopment of premises.

7.19 It is evident that even allowing for a generous additional supply to provide sufficient choice and flexibility, the identified business land and premises commitments should readily meet forecast need in line with economic objectives over the Plan period. Also, it provides for a rate of development similar to that which has taken place over the last 10 years, which includes both boom and recessionary periods.

7.20 Business sites are well distributed within the District, mainly within towns, and otherwise in accordance with Structure Plan and Local Plan strategies. Also, many sites are currently available for development. Where constraints do exist, they are not likely to prevent development as market conditions improve within the Plan period. Notwithstanding the evident adequacy of allocated and available business land, the situation will be monitored. This is particularly significant in the southern part of the District in view of the contribution of certain key sites to supply, both in Wealden and Eastbourne, and the importance of planned transport improvements. This will also assist in ensuring that land supply is responsive to any unforeseen changes in local economic circumstances.

BS1 The Council will undertake annual studies of business land supply in the District to ensure an adequate level of provision in terms of the scale, type, location and timing of development well-related to local needs.

7.21 Such studies will build upon existing monitoring of business commitments and completions and involve collaborations with relevant local authorities and other bodies with an interest in local economic development, as well as owners/developers of identified sites. Action to address any demonstrable shortage of available land will depend upon the circumstances giving rise to it, but may include efforts to advance infrastructure provision or otherwise remove any constraints on already identified sites. Any new land use proposals to meet longer term requirements should be furthered through a formal review of the Local Plan once the Structure Plan Review is approved. A further land release outside of the formal Local Plan process would be contemplated only in the event of any significant constraints being unlikely to be overcome in a reasonable period of time and this having a major effect on the adequacy of the Plan's employment land provisions. The carrying out of studies needed to identify a major business park in the Polegate area are considered separately below.

Business Park Development

7.22 The approved County Structure Plan makes provision for new high quality "business parks" as a means of expanding and broadening the economic base of the Eastbourne/Wealden area. These include two allocations in Eastbourne Park, for an office park and a science and technology centre, as well as one at the former Maresfield Camp near Uckfield. Each of these has already been identified in adopted Local Plans.

7.23 In addition, Structure Plan Policy CA/E1 proposes another major land allocation for employment purposes in association with the completion of the A27 Polegate Bypass, the A22 New Route and related investigation of the potential for rail access. Any allocation is also to be subject to further investigation of the scale, type and timing of development required. The Deposit Draft County Structure Plan 1991-2011 reaffirms the proposal for a major, high quality business park at Polegate, similarly subject to the outcome of studies to determine the precise location, size and nature but also dependent upon the commencement of sections of the A27 road improvements which will bypass Polegate.

7.24 The District Council will undertake such studies in accordance with the County Structure Plan policy in close consultation with the County Council and other agencies, such as the Highways Agency, MAFF, utility providers and railway operators. It is intended that the site(s) will be identified within the Plan period and brought forward via a development brief. This will be subject to public consultation. An ad-hoc land release prior to the approval of this development brief would be inappropriate and unacceptable.

7.25 The studies will include consideration of the scale and type of development appropriate to meet the strategic purpose, the timing of proposed road improvements which will ensure the good access necessary for its success, the findings of investigations into rail access and the relationship with other major business allocations, as well as the environmental impacts of development. Any new business site in the area would inevitably have a significant environmental impact, but the Council will seek to minimise encroachment into the attractive countryside setting of Polegate, to retain critical countryside gaps and otherwise ensure that development does not unduly prejudice local amenities. The Council must also have regard to the Deposit Structure Plan Review, which proposes significant new housing development in the Low Weald with specific reference to Polegate.

BS2 The District Council will carry out the studies referred to in CA/E1 of the approved Structure Plan, and will identify a site or sites to conform to sub-paragraph (1)(a) of that policy.

DISTRIBUTION OF DEVELOPMENT

7.26 Within the District, the nature and dispersed pattern of development has resulted in a broad spread of business activity. The towns are clearly the main centres of employment, with each having at least one sizeable established industrial estate or business area. Many of the villages also play an important employment role for their surrounding rural area both through their local services and in some cases distinct business areas. The main business areas in Wealden are shown on Figure 4.

7.27 Government planning policy guidance on the provision for business development is contained in PPG4 and PPG7. PPG4 encourages locational policies which minimise the need to travel, especially by car, and which utilise energy efficient modes of transport. This is endorsed in PPG13 – Transport, which applies this principle particularly to activities which attract a large number of trips. Such activities should be located in urban areas. It also seeks a better balance between homes and jobs, including facilitating home working. PPG7 highlights that many businesses can operate successfully in rural areas with benefits to the local economy and employment prospects. New development should be sensitively related to the existing settlement pattern.

7.28 The whole of Wealden may be regarded as a rural area. However, for the purposes of the Plan, the term 'rural areas' is applied to all those parishes which do not contain a town. This reflects their essentially rural character as well as low population density. The limited differences in economic characteristics and trends between the urban and rural parts of the District partly reflect the nature and spread of towns around the District. Accordingly, and taking account of environmental factors, the towns should continue to be the main locations for employment serving the rural parts of the Plan area. Even so, it is appropriate for reasons of accessibility, support for local communities and services and other socio-economic considerations to provide for some new employment within the rural areas themselves.

7.29 In considering the appropriate distribution of employment in accordance with the stated objectives, regard is also had to the distance from larger settlements, including towns close to the District. Policies appropriate to the various locations are developed below.

TOWNS

7.30 As discussed above, the towns are intended to continue to be the focus of development in their localities. In relation to business development, this relates to the existing industrial estates that serve them

and, where appropriate, to any extension or addition to them. It is thought preferable for environmental, traffic and servicing reasons to continue to concentrate industrial uses and business investment within these 'town business areas'. Accordingly, new firms wishing to locate in the District and existing ones seeking to expand will be encouraged to locate principally in these areas.

7.31 The scale and location of business development appropriate in each town is separately addressed in their respective chapters, reflecting their function of meeting essentially local employment needs. It may be seen that there are several proposed additions to existing business areas:

- at Crowborough, the allocation of an extension to Millbrook business area;
- near Hailsham, the allocation of an extension to Hackhurst Lane business area;
- at Hailsham, the allocation of land at Station Road/Old Swan Lane and a small extension to the Diplocks Way business area;
- at Heathfield, the allocation of an extension to Ghyll Road business area.

7.32 Also, at Heathfield, there is additional potential for development through some redevelopment and consolidation of business uses at Burwash Road to complement the existing industrial estates at Station Road and Ghyll Road.

BS3 The Council will seek to concentrate business development principally within the town business areas, as defined on the Proposals Map, namely:

- (1) Millbrook, Crowborough**
- (2) Farningham Road, Crowborough**
- (3) Lexden Lodge, Crowborough**
- (4) Diplocks Way, Hailsham**
- (5) Hackhurst Lane, Lower Dicker**
- (6) Station Road, Hailsham**
- (7) Station Road/Old Swan Lane, Hailsham**
- (8) Ghyll Road, Heathfield**
- (9) Station Road, Heathfield**
- (10) Chaucer, Polegate**

(11) Bellbrook, Uckfield

(12) Ridgewood, Uckfield

7.33 Within the areas listed above, uses falling within B1 of the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (see Appendix 7) will be acceptable in principle. Proposals for B2 (general industry) and B8 (warehousing) uses will be determined in accordance with Policies BS11 and BS12 below. Retail uses within town business areas will only be permitted where they accord with relevant policies in Chapter 8. All development, including new building, redevelopment and extensions, should meet the general design and layout criteria at Policy EN27.

7.34 Other employment proposals could come forward elsewhere in towns, as defined by their development boundaries. To be acceptable, these should be compatible with local environmental and amenity considerations, and of an appropriate scale. This approach is considered consistent with Government advice concerning the need to avoid unreasonable restrictions on business activities of an appropriate scale in residential areas. (Homeworking is considered separately at Policy BS15 below). Large-scale proposals would conflict with the priority attached to the main business areas and pose far greater risks of intrusion upon their surroundings.

BS4 Within town development boundaries but outside the town business areas, as defined on the Proposals Map, large scale proposals for new business development, redevelopment or extensions will be resisted. Small-scale proposals may be permitted, subject to the following considerations:

(1) the proposal is of a nature and scale appropriate to the function and character of the settlement and its immediate environment;

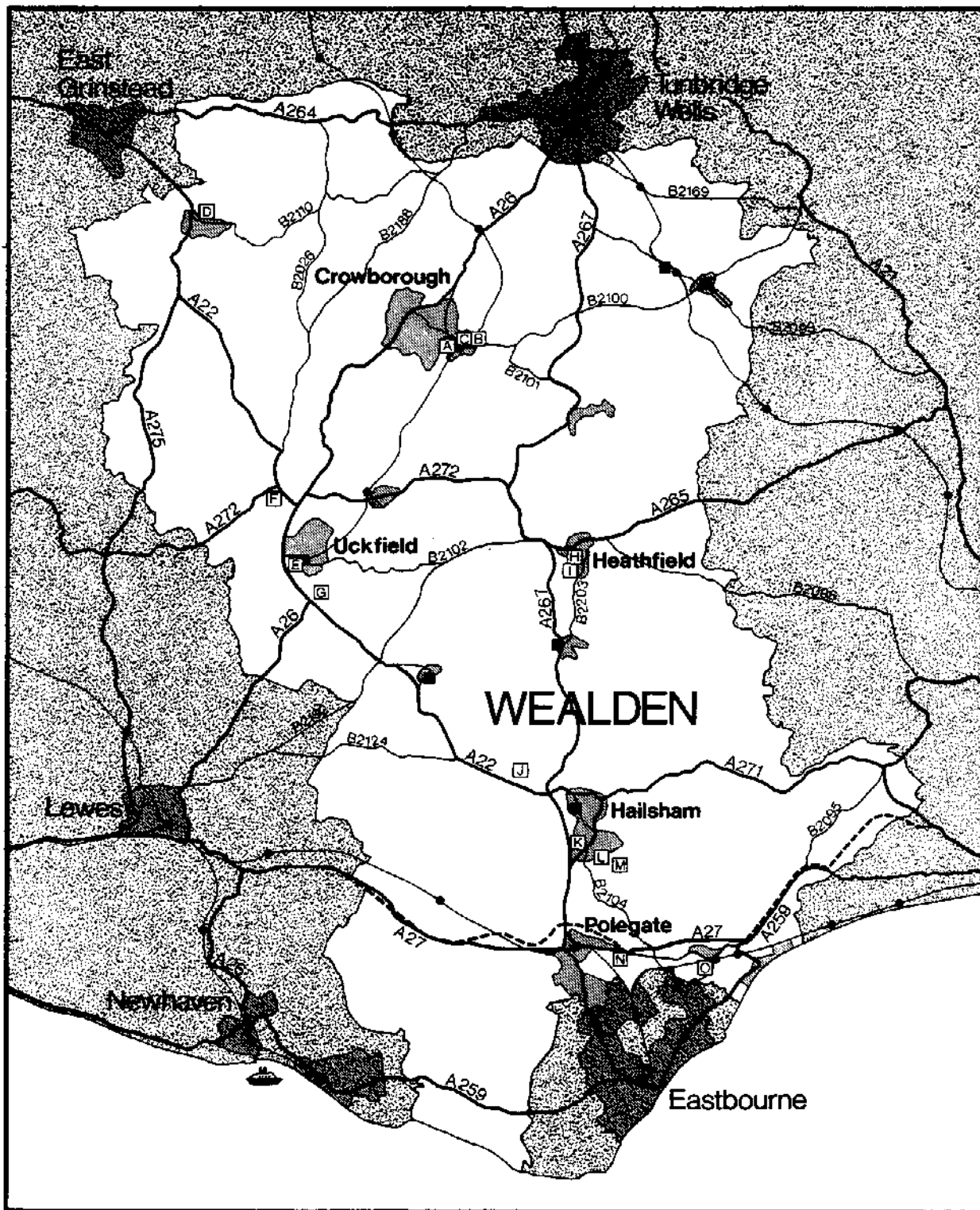
(2) the likely volume and nature of traffic movements would not have an adverse impact on the local road network, highway safety or local amenities.

7.35 Development in accordance with this policy will often involve the re-use, redevelopment or extension of existing business land and buildings. Such sites, which are scattered throughout the towns, can be important to the local economic structure and, collectively, provide a significant number of jobs. The loss of such sites to other uses may not be readily compensated for by provision elsewhere. This may well occur if a larger business site is involved or, conversely, where small workshops would be lost and no alternative opportunities exist on the recognised business areas or elsewhere in the locality. Also, business premises adjacent to town centres may be valuable in

complementing the commercial functions. Therefore, in appropriate circumstances the loss of existing business sites to other non-employment uses will be resisted so long as this would not perpetuate local environmental or amenity concerns.

BS5 Within town development boundaries but outside the town business areas, as defined on the Proposals Map, the Council will seek to retain business land and premises which afford important local employment opportunities and, where appropriate, complement provision in the town business areas or town centres. The continued business use should not be likely to cause demonstrable harm to the environment or the amenities of local people.

Main Business Areas



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- | | |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| [A] Farningham Road, Crowborough | [I] Ghyll Road, Heathfield |
| [B] Millbrook, Crowborough | [J] Hackhurst Lane, Lower Dicker |
| [C] Lexden Lodge, Crowborough | [K] Diplocks Way, Hailsham |
| [D] Station Road, Forest Row | [L] Station Road, Hailsham |
| [E] Bellbrook, Uckfield | [M] Old Swan Lane, Hailsham |
| [F] Ashdown Business Park | [N] Chaucer, Polegate |
| [G] Ridgewood, Uckfield | [O] Mountney Bridge, Westham |
| [H] Station Road, Heathfield | ■ Other business areas |



Figure 4

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

0 5 10 kilometres

Not to scale

VILLAGES

7.36 Villages represent the focus of rural life. The general approach to the villages is explained in Chapter 18. Development boundaries are defined for those villages where some degree of development is considered appropriate. The need for local employment is one consideration in determining the scale and nature of change to be permitted in villages. In individual villages, the scale and nature of employment provision, if any, should reflect its function, location, relationship to other settlements, character and transport facilities, as well as accord with environmental and other site considerations.

7.37 Many larger villages within the District provide a broad range of local services for their surrounding area, often serving nearby smaller settlements as well the more dispersed development in the countryside around them. This varies by degrees; it is perhaps most apparent in Forest Row, Wadhurst, Mayfield, Horam, Herstmonceux, East Hoathly and Ninfield. Pevensey Bay, Alfriston and Pevensey/Westham have local services boosted by the tourism trade, while Buxted, East Dean/Friston and Rotherfield have a similar function even though they are relatively close to neighbouring towns. This is not exclusive, but is indicative of the important role of the villages in the settlement pattern.

7.38 Service employment is often complemented by other business activity. Significant concentrations are found at:-

Forest Row	-	Station Road
Wadhurst	-	Durgates and Wadhurst Business Park
Horam	-	Merrydown PLC
Westham	-	Mountney Bridge
East Hoathly	-	South Street

7.39 These villages and their respective business areas offer employment opportunities within the rural areas, and are well distributed across the District. In order to maintain and where possible enhance local job opportunities in these locations, it is proposed that they be appropriately defined and their focal business employment role within the rural area, complementing the principal town business areas, recognised.

7.40 The potential for further allocations of land suitable for small-scale, sensitive business development, including extensions to the above areas, has also been assessed. Proposed additions to existing business areas include:

- at East Hoathly, the allocation of a small extension to the South Road business area;

- at Westham, the allocation of a small extension to the Mountney Bridge industrial estate.

7.41 Also, at Horam, planning permission has been granted for extensions to the Merrydown site, while at Forest Row, permission exists for an office development at Pilstye within the Station Road business area.

BS6 Within the rural parts of the Plan area, the Council will seek to concentrate business development within the village business areas, as defined on the Proposals Map, namely:

(1) Station Road, Forest Row

(2) Durgates, Wadhurst

(3) Wadhurst Business Park

(4) Merrydown, Horam

(5) Mountney Bridge, Westham

(6) South Street, East Hoathly

7.42 Within these areas, uses falling within Class B1 of the Town and Country Planning (Uses Classes) Order 1987 (see Appendix 7) will be acceptable in principle. Uses falling within Classes B2 and B8 may be acceptable in certain circumstances having regard to the criteria at Policies BS12 and BS13 below. Retail uses within village business areas will normally be resisted, but may be permitted where they accord with the relevant policies in Chapter 8.

7.43 Business activity in the villages is by no means exclusive to the above areas. Smaller concentrations exist in many more villages besides, and which also play an important part in providing local employment opportunities and in contributing to the vitality of settlements. Government guidance refers to the need to accommodate small businesses in villages as a material consideration in redevelopment proposals.

7.44 The considerable environmental constraints on the outward expansion of villages and the need to protect their countryside settings support the retention of existing business sites that may assist the rural economy. It is particularly important to retain these sites in villages with dispersed business locations, especially those which are environmentally sensitive and which have few suitable alternative locations.

BS7 Within village development boundaries, but outside the village business areas, as defined on the Proposals Map, the Council will seek to retain business land and premises which provide

important opportunities for local employment unless the existing use causes demonstrable harm to the environment or the amenities of local people.

7.45 As in towns, the Council will also support suitable employment proposals elsewhere in village development boundaries which are consistent with local amenity and environmental considerations. This will normally require that proposals are small in scale. It is recognised though that in certain villages, especially smaller ones, there may well be very little scope for further development without intruding into their landscape setting or the residential, historic or rural character of the settlement. Nonetheless, the Council will consider each proposal individually and only resist employment generating development when there are sound planning reasons for so doing.

BS8 Within village development boundaries but outside village business areas, as defined on the Proposals Map, large-scale proposals for new business development will be resisted. Small-scale proposals may be permitted taking account of the likely contribution to employment within the rural area.

THE COUNTRYSIDE

7.46 Agricultural employment in the District has fallen by over 600 jobs since 1987, to some 2,840 jobs in 1995. It is still an important sector of the local economy, especially in rural parishes. Former farm buildings provide an important means of diversifying employment in the rural areas, through their conversion for a range of business purposes.

7.47 The Council's general policies relating to the countryside are contained in Chapter 5. The main thrust of these is to continue to restrain development and to maintain the essential environment and landscape character of the countryside, with particularly careful control in the Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty together with other designated areas and especially vulnerable landscapes.

7.48 New industrial and commercial development outside development boundaries is resisted in accordance with Policy GD2. Such development, both buildings and use of land, can very rarely be satisfactorily incorporated in the landscape and the activity, including traffic, associated with it is generally intrusive in the rural scene, especially if in open countryside or more remote areas. The provisions made for employment serving the rural areas in towns and villages, as well as through suitable conversions and expansions, should be readily sufficient to provide both wide and varied employment opportunities for rural people.

7.49 There is already a number of industrial and commercial concerns located outside of settlements, often having been operating for many years prior to current planning controls. These may now form an integral part of the rural economy and provide readily accessible jobs for local people. To help promote the rural economy, proposals for expansion, redevelopment or intensification may be permitted within existing sites. However, environmental considerations remain critical, and such development should only be permitted where it can be demonstrated that the landscape and rural character of the countryside would be conserved or improved and that other environmental, local amenity, traffic, access, layout and design considerations are satisfactorily handled in keeping with the surroundings.

BS9 Proposals for expansion, redevelopment or intensification within existing business sites outside development boundaries will be permitted only where the following criteria are met:-

(1) there would be no adverse effect on the landscape or on the character of open countryside and, in appropriate cases, would provide for environmental improvements;

(2) it would not detract from the rural environmental qualities by virtue of the use of the site or traffic generation.

Proposals which would be likely to create a significant number of jobs should be well located in relation to towns or villages.

7.50 Certain new business activity may be satisfactorily introduced into the countryside through the conversion of suitable rural buildings. Appropriate criteria are set out in Policy DC7. The value of such opportunities as a means of diversifying the rural economy is recognised by the priority given to business conversions over those to other uses, including residential. Policies for tourism and leisure development in the countryside are set out in Chapters 10 and 11 respectively.

TYPES OF BUSINESS ACTIVITY

7.51 The Council is mindful, in accordance with Government advice, of the needs of different forms of business activity, from high technologies and prestige offices to 'bad neighbour' industries and distribution oriented operations, and small firms in particular.

High Technology and Prestige Developments - Ashdown Business Park

7.52 Overall provision for high technology industries and other office-based activities has been discussed above. Within the District, the proposed Ashdown Business Park near Uckfield is planned to serve such uses. Centrally situated adjacent to the A22/A272 junction, and benefiting from good accessibility to Crawley and to the coastal towns, it should provide a focus for prestige development in inland East Sussex. As such, the Council believes that it will be a major source of jobs, particularly high quality jobs, that are important to broadening the economic opportunities in the District. It is recognised that the economic climate has not been favourable to the implementation of this Business Park, but the Council will continue to promote its development at the earliest opportunity.

7.53 The site is allocated for a Business Park in the Uckfield Local Plan and the majority of the site gained outline planning permission in 1988 for that use. However, circumstances have changed over time such that a review of the policy and the original Maresfield Camp brief is considered necessary.

7.54 The term 'Business Park' is now often used to describe an industrial estate. The Council's intention at the Ashdown Business Park is to create a landscaped parkland setting principally for 'high tech' and office use. These proposed uses are intended to complement rather than duplicate the more conventional industrial developments at the Bellbrook Business Area, Uckfield, and at other industrial areas in the District.

7.55 When first promoting this former Army Camp for employment use, the opportunity was seen for a carefully planned low density business development in a high quality landscaped setting, taking advantage of the substantial woodland areas. Within the overall area a 'developable area' was defined. Past storms have significantly reduced the woodland and this led to a re-examination of the proposals. It is considered that the developable area could be enlarged, providing the opportunity to develop at a lower site coverage to the overall benefit of the scheme. Advantage should be taken of the natural regeneration on the site and a central water feature could be created.

7.56 It is considered appropriate to maintain the allocation for a Business Park and that a new planning brief be prepared to guide future development.

BS10 Land adjacent to the A22/A272 junction south-west of Maresfield, as defined on the Proposals Map, is allocated for a Business Park.

The Council will actively promote the early implementation of the Business Park.

A new planning brief will be prepared by the Council to set down the development principles for the site which will include, inter alia:

- (1) a planned landscaped setting, taking advantage of the existing tree cover;**
- (2) a low site coverage and buildings restricted to two storeys;**
- (3) a high standard of design and materials;**
- (4) significant new landscaping;**
- (5) a management agreement for existing and proposed planting;**
- (6) users will be restricted to office, research and development, training and certain industrial uses, principally those of a high technological nature;**
- (7) vehicular access from the A272.**

Business Activity within Business Areas

7.57 The vast majority of existing business development is of either a light industrial (within Class B1) or general industrial (within Class B2) nature as defined by the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (See Appendix 7). Class B1 activities are defined as relating to an office use (other than financial or professional services), research and development or industrial processes which can be carried out in any residential area without detriment to the amenity of that area by reason of noise, vibration, smell, fumes, smoke, soot, ash, dust or grit. By implication, such uses should be acceptable within any recognised business area subject to them meeting site specific criteria including those of layout and design.

BS11 Uses falling within Use Class B1 will be appropriate on all town and village business areas, as defined on the Proposals Map.

7.58 B2 uses are those which may cause disturbance if located in residential areas and are hence better segregated from dwellings. B2 development is, for the greater part, capable of being satisfactorily located within the town business areas. In the village business areas, they may be satisfactorily accommodated, but proximity to houses may limit scope in some sites. This is amplified in relation to individual areas in the relevant village chapter. Any proposal will be considered in relation to strict environmental, traffic and amenity criteria.

BS12 Uses falling within Use Class B2 will be permitted in the town and village business areas, as defined on the Proposals Map, where the following criteria are met:-

(1) the scale and nature of manufacturing process involved is compatible with local amenities;

(2) the likely volume and nature of traffic movements would not have an adverse impact on the local road network, highway safety or local amenities.

7.59 There may be circumstances where existing businesses, often long-established, are intrusive either to adjacent residential properties or within their general setting. The Council will use its planning and enforcement powers to prevent undue disturbance to local amenities and would encourage the re-use of such sites in a manner more compatible with the surroundings. In relation to intrusive 'established uses', enforced relocation is not practicable, but the Council would support alternative uses where a clear environmental gain would result.

7.60 Many of the larger business areas have good access to the primary road network and, hence, are well suited to distribution-oriented businesses. Indeed, it is considered that existing and committed sites should satisfy local demand for such businesses over the Plan period. Future increase in interest as a result of improvements to the A27 South Coast Route will be monitored, although priority in the economic strategy is afforded to more intensive, high quality development and employment. Also, there are strong environmental arguments against further release of major sites in this area.

BS13 Warehouse uses falling within Class B8 may be acceptable on the town and village business areas, as defined on the Proposals Map, where the following criteria are met:-

(1) the scale and operation of the proposed development shall be compatible with local amenities;

(2) the likely nature and volume of traffic movements would not have an adverse impact on the local road network, highway safety or local amenities;

(3) the proposed development would not unduly prejudice the availability of suitable

local manufacturing premises or employment opportunities.

7.61 Other commercial activities not falling within a specific use class may also be accommodated on business areas. However, the Council is cautious about significant retailing activity in business areas because of the potential effects on promoting and maintaining viable and attractive town and other centres, the availability of business accommodation and related traffic generation and congestion. Specific provision is made on certain main business areas where it can be demonstrated that complementary rather than adverse effects will occur. Otherwise a more restrictive approach exists. Retailing policies are set out in Chapter 8. Residential development is also precluded from business areas, where environmental conditions are not generally consistent with proper residential amenities.

Business Activity Outside Business Areas

7.62 The Council's policies for business development outside defined Business Areas but within settlement development boundaries are provided by Policies BS2 and BS3 (for towns) and Policies BS5 and BS6 (for villages), while such development in the countryside is governed by Policies GD2 and BS8. However, the appropriateness of particular types of business activity in these locations will depend largely upon amenity considerations, such as noise and disturbance, visual impact or associated traffic generation.

7.63 While Class B1 uses are defined by their appropriateness within residential areas, their physical scale and visual impact, as well as traffic generation, may warrant certain controls. Class B2 uses involve processes which normally warrant a degree of segregation, particularly from residential properties. However, the revised Use Class encompasses a range of activities with varying degrees of noise, smell, fumes, etc. Therefore, each use must be judged on its own merits, although the potential in villages or other areas with an established residential character will be very limited, whereas more scope may exist in countryside locations or certain mixed use areas. Storage and distribution uses within Class B8 raise particular concerns of traffic generation, such that larger operations should have ready access to the main road network. The introduction of significant traffic volumes, particularly of lorries, on residential roads or narrow country lanes is normally inappropriate.

BS14 Outside town and village business areas, proposals for changes of use between alternative business uses, including warehousing, should meet the following criteria:-

(1) the scale and nature of the use, including ancillary activities, is compatible with the residential amenities of the locality;

(2) the likely nature and volume of traffic movements would not have an adverse impact on the local road network, highway safety or local amenities;

(3) the proposed development would not unduly prejudice the availability of suitable local manufacturing premises or employment opportunities;

(4) the proposed development would not adversely affect the character of the countryside.

Small Firms

7.64 Small businesses are a key element in the employment pattern within Wealden. Nearly 80% of firms employ less than 10 people. There are also some 11,000 self-employed residents, representing 20% of all jobs in the District. Like East Sussex as a whole, the area can be described as having a “small firm economy”.

7.65 The Council’s Economic Development Strategy recognises the important role of small businesses in the local economy. It supports their development through sponsorship of business counselling provided by the Eastbourne and District Enterprise Agency (EDEAL), providing managed small workshops and promoting training schemes.

7.66 The Council’s Leap Cross Enterprise Centre continues to offer valuable accommodation for rent to start up businesses on easy “in/out” terms. Further provision of small units will be encouraged, either by new build, sub-division or conversion. Policies BS4 and BS8 enable such provision in settlements, while Policies DC6 and DC7 encourage the conversion of suitable rural buildings for employment generating uses. Existing premises are valuable in enabling small firms to establish and expand into, and Policies BS5 and BS7 seek to ensure appropriate business land and premises are retained in towns and villages.

Home Working

7.67 The 1991 Census indicates that some 4,500 people in the District work from home. It is forecast that this phenomenon will increase as communications technologies develop. A consequence of this trend is to retain more employment in areas distant from commercial centres, including the rural areas. This may benefit the local economy as well as bring about reduced commuting.

7.68 For several activities involving no change in the residential character of a dwelling, planning permission is not required. In accordance with Government advice,

the Council does not seek to enforce a rigid separation of residential and business activities. A wide range of businesses may be satisfactorily carried on in residential or rural areas without unreasonably interfering with the enjoyment of amenities or prejudicing the character of the area. However, if a business does become unduly dominant or intrusive to local amenities as a consequence of either the nature of the operations or its expansion, then the Council would properly seek to restrict such activity and would, in appropriate circumstances, take enforcement action. It would normally expect the business to relocate to a recognised business area. It follows that suitable business activities will generally be small scale, not noisy in nature and not generate abnormal traffic flows.

BS15 Proposals for home-based business activities in residential areas may be permitted where the following criteria are met:-

(1) the business is not likely to have a detrimental effect on the amenities of properties or the character of the area by virtue of its nature or scale of operation;

(2) the accommodation, including parking, is likely to meet the long term needs of the business.

Proposals for the significant expansion of businesses in residential areas will not be permitted.

DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS

7.69 The Council aims for a high standard of design in all industrial development. Policy EN27 identifies general layout and design considerations. Proposals should combine fitness for purpose with quality buildings and spaces around them to the benefit of both ‘users’ and the wider environment. A range of design approaches may normally be entertained within the main business areas, although proposals should still take account of the general nature of adjacent development and have regard to the prominence of the site.

7.70 Notwithstanding the design of built form, sites should incorporate landscaping to contribute to the overall appearance of development, and schemes will be required under Policy EN14. This is particularly important within large developments and on the boundaries of business areas, where screen planting may often be necessary to ‘soften’ the impact of industrial buildings on adjacent areas. Where external storage is acceptable, this should be well screened from public vantage points and should not interfere with areas set aside for parking, etc. Developments are

expected to fully provide for and retain sufficient parking and manoeuvring space within the site in accordance with approved standards.

Implementation

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

7.72 Policy BS10, the proposed Ashdown Business Park, will be promoted through direct Council action in association with the East Sussex County Council, other landowners and appointed developers.

Monitoring

7.73 The key areas to be monitored include:-

- (1) industrial land availability;
- (2) floorspace completions - size and use class;
- (3) vacant premises;
- (4) take-up rates;
- (5) loss of industrial land/premises;
- (6) unemployment rates;
- (7) commuting patterns.