

Crowborough

(Inset Map No.9 - Mapsheet)

Introduction

13.1 Crowborough is the largest inland town in East Sussex with an estimated population of around 19,600. It is situated some six miles south of Tunbridge Wells, occupying a prominent position on the northern forest ridge of the High Weald, to the east of Ashdown Forest. Its elevated position affords extensive views over the attractive, undulating landscape of woodland, farmland, ridges and ghylls within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, with distant southerly views towards the Sussex Downs. The fine landscape setting, attractive views and extensive tree cover give Crowborough an arcadian character which is particularly evident on the western side of the town.

13.2 Crowborough has experienced significant growth over the last decade or so with the highest rate of new housing development among the Wealden towns; this has resulted in a population increase of over 2,000 persons since 1981. Development at the Millbrook Business Area, and more recently on the former Brickworks site at Farningham Road, has helped to provide for the employment needs of the expanding community.

STRATEGY

13.3 Crowborough already has a significant commitment for housing and business development. There is an existing commitment for around 300 new dwellings in Crowborough and there is no numerical requirement to release further areas of land for residential development in order to meet County Structure Plan housing provision. There is also considered to be sufficient business land and premises available in the town to meet the anticipated employment needs of both existing and future residents. In view of the significant rate of development and change that has taken place in the town in recent years, the Council considers that this provides a welcome opportunity for Crowborough to assimilate, both physically and socially, past development and further development that is committed. Furthermore, a period of consolidation is considered important in order to enable the necessary provision of community services to take place.

13.4 There are also considered to be significant environmental constraints to the outward expansion of the town due to its sensitive landscape setting within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Furthermore, the limited capacity of the local

road network to accommodate significant new development is considered to be an additional constraint.

13.5 On this basis, the Council's strategy for Crowborough is to provide for a level of development over the Plan period which is consistent with the protection of the character and amenity of the town, its landscape and highway constraints, and the availability of local services. Further expansion to facilitate significant growth is not favoured by the Council.

13.6 Increased emphasis is put on meeting local housing and local employment needs while encouragement will be given to improving infrastructure and community services for both existing and future residents. Priority will be given to maintaining and enhancing the vitality and viability of the town centre by encouraging new investment, creating a safe and attractive shopping environment, and improving accessibility.

13.7 In relation to this strategy, the objectives are:-

(1) to protect the character and amenity of the town, and its sensitive landscape setting;

(2) to maintain and enhance the function of the town as a local employment, shopping and service centre;

(3) to provide for a broad range of new employment opportunities which primarily relate to the anticipated needs of existing and future residents;

(4) to maintain and enhance the vitality and viability of the town centre;

(5) to maintain and encourage an improvement in the availability of local services and community facilities;

(6) to encourage improvements to the local road network through appropriate traffic management measures.

13.8 The Council's strategy for Crowborough is consistent with the County Structure Plan which states that the role of the town as a housing, local employment, shopping and services centre will be maintained and developed consistent with the setting within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the road network. Provision for further development should maintain the spacious layout of the town and allow for a reduced rate of growth.

POPULATION AND HOUSING

13.9 The population of Crowborough is estimated to be 19,600 persons. This figure is expected to rise to around 20,500 by 2004. Population and housing statistics for Crowborough are contained in Appendix 1.

Housing Policy

13.10 The amount of land in Crowborough committed for development through planning permission or allocated for housing, together with unidentified sites which may come forward for development through infilling, redevelopment and conversions within the built-up area, could result in the construction of around 450 new dwellings during the Plan period. Commitments are illustrated in Figure 9. The future incidence of unidentified sites within the development boundary will depend on the extent to which proposals satisfy normal planning criteria and conform with the policies in the Plan.

13.11 This overall level of housing provision represents a marked reduction in the previously high rate of development that has taken place over the past decade or so in line with planning policy. However, in view of the environmental constraints to outward expansion and the fact that there is no numerical requirement for additional housing development, the Council considers the release of further land for housing to be inappropriate and unnecessary.

CR1 Within the Crowborough development boundary, as defined on the Proposals Map, new housing development will be permitted on allocated land at Mead House, on undeveloped land, by infilling, by redevelopment, and by conversion of a building to residential use, providing that the proposals conform with all other relevant policies in the Plan.

Crowborough Warren

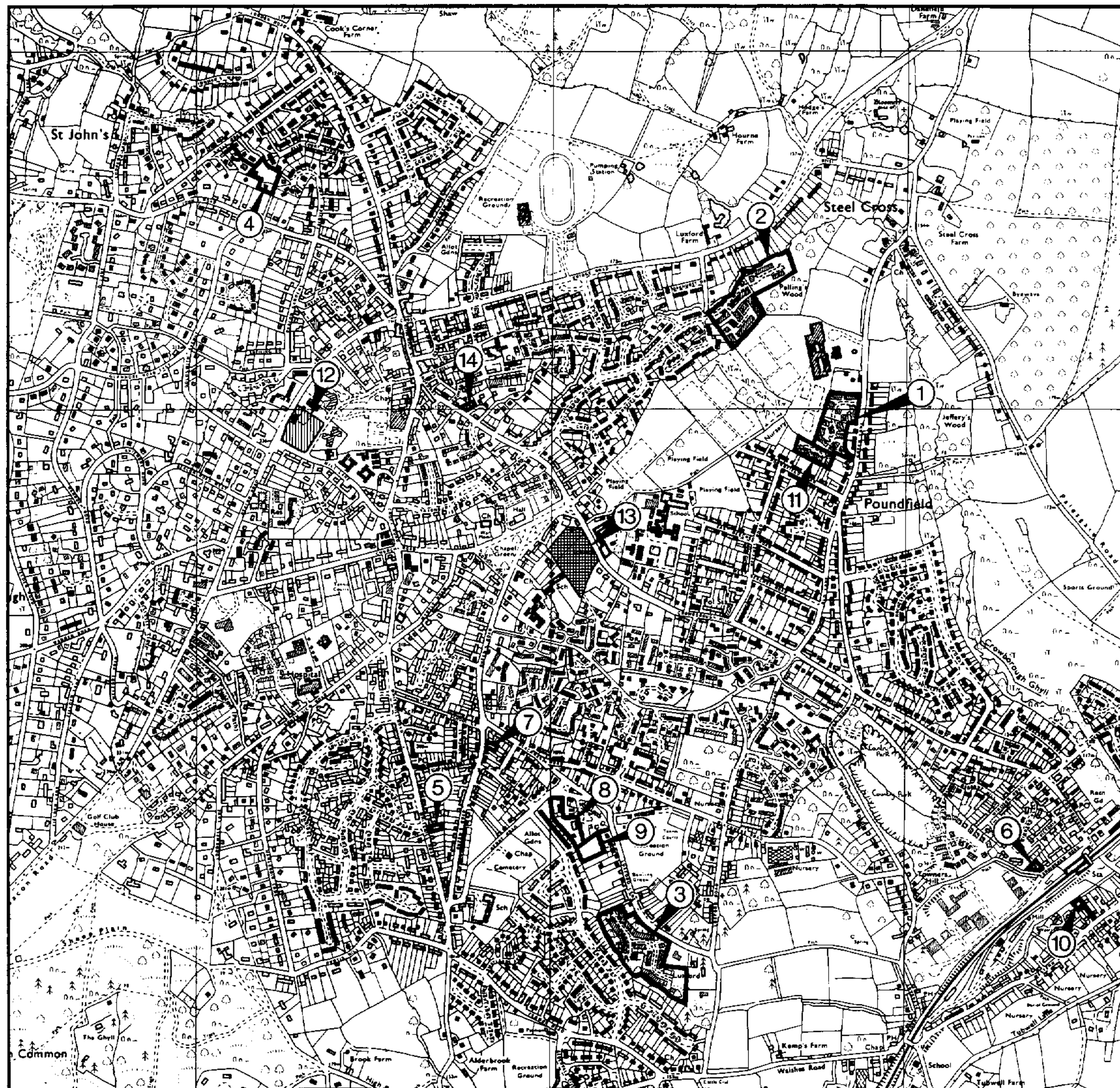
13.12 On the western side of the town, Crowborough Warren has a distinctive character created by large detached properties set in extensive gardens where mature tree cover, hedgerows and landscaping are the dominant visual elements that give the area an attractive arcadian quality, abutting the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, on the edge of Ashdown Forest. Although the vast majority of the area is included within the development boundary where new residential development will normally be acceptable in principle, the Council will require any development proposal to respect and harmonise with the particular character of the area.

13.13 On this basis it is considered essential to include an appropriate policy to control new housing development in the area, over and above other policies in the Plan. Particular attention should be given to the characteristics of the site, in terms of its topography, tree cover and other landscape features, as well as the character of adjoining development. In considering plot sizes, prospective developers and landowners are advised that they should not always bring forward proposals at the higher end of the density range as if it were a target to be achieved.

CR2 Within the Crowborough Warren housing policy area, as defined on the Proposals Map, the established character will be protected and proposals which adversely affect its character will not be permitted. Planning applications for new residential development within the policy area will be determined with reference to the following criteria:

- (1) the form, scale, site coverage and siting of the proposed development should reflect the low density character of the adjoining buildings and the spaces around them, existing building lines and characteristic frontage widths;**
- (2) landscaping should remain the dominant element of any scheme in accordance with the spacious, low density character of the area;**
- (3) the proposed development should not result in the loss of trees, shrubs, hedges or other features which contribute to the special character of the area;**
- (4) the proposed frontage and other boundary treatment should have regard for the arcadian character of the area. Hedges will be the most appropriate form of enclosure and open plan schemes will not be acceptable;**

Housing Commitments in Crowborough (April 1997)



KEY

-  Sites with planning permission
-  Allocated site
-  Other available sites
- ② Ref. No. (see Appendix 1)

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



Figure 8

0 200 400 metres

Not to scale

(5) the proposed development should not have an adverse visual impact on the adjoining countryside.

Although proposals will be determined with reference to (1)-(5) above, there shall be a resulting plot size of between 0.1 hectare (0.25 acre) and 0.4 hectare (1 acre) for both existing and proposed dwellings, which should exclude all access roads except that part of the driveway located within the garden of the dwelling. The precise density will depend on the criteria listed above.

EMPLOYMENT

Existing Situation

13.14 The majority of business activity in Crowborough is contained on the Millbrook, Farningham Road and Lexden Lodge Business Areas, and in the Park Road area of the town centre where a variety of offices and other businesses are also located. These areas provide a range of local employment opportunities in manufacturing, service and distribution industries. Land at Farningham Road Business Area and to the north of Millbrook Business Area provides the principal opportunities in the town for firms wishing to set up, expand or relocate from elsewhere. Out-commuting to centres such as Tunbridge Wells, East Grinstead, Gatwick, Croydon and even London itself via the Uckfield to Victoria rail service is significant, particularly for professional and managerial employment.

13.15 Elsewhere in the town, there are smaller areas of industrial and commercial activity at Park Road, Connors Yard and on the former railway goods yard off Western Road. These areas provide many important local employment opportunities but offer little scope for expansion or intensification due to physical, environmental or highway constraints. A policy for the Western Road goods yard is discussed below.

Business Land

13.16 Over the Plan period, in order to provide for the increase in the local workforce as well as to improve the balance between homes and jobs and help revitalise the town, additional business floorspace will be required. However, considerable potential already exists through the development of land with planning permission and land allocated for development. Whilst there is no apparent numerical requirement to release new areas of land for business development, the Council recognises that Crowborough has a key role to play in providing jobs

for the north Wealden area, particularly in view of the development constraints that apply.

Land north of Millbrook Business Area

13.17 In considering new areas for business development, expansion into the countryside is not favoured because of the landscape impact, particularly within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Most areas on the perimeter of the town, including those near the A26 which would have the advantages of a primary road location, are considered too environmentally sensitive for business development. For these reasons an extension to the north of the Millbrook Business Area is considered an appropriate location for further business development.

13.18 The rough pastureland to the north-west of the existing estate provides a further 2 hectares of business land. This land is well screened and development would not intrude into the countryside but would form part of the existing urban edge on the south-eastern side of the town. The sloping triangular site abuts business development to the south and is separated from the District Council depot and the rear of several residential properties in Forest Dene, to the north-west, by the railway line. There is a substantial tree belt along the eastern perimeter of the site which screens the land from public views when entering the town from Rotherfield Hill.

13.19 It is considered that this area could accommodate around 7,000 square metres of floorspace with associated car parking and landscaping. In order to provide a visual barrier to the proposed development and protect the amenities of development to the north, a mixed planting strip on the north-west boundary will be required as part of any development. The existing trees and hedgerow along the perimeters of the site should be retained and improved for amenity purposes. Access to the site, which would need to cross the ghyll, should be gained via the existing estate road of Furness Mead, affording access onto Rotherfield Road. In design terms, developers should note that a large diameter gas main crosses the site.

CR3 Land to the north of Millbrook Business Area, Jarvis Brook, as defined on the Proposals Map, is allocated for business use. Proposals for new development will be permitted when the following criteria are met:

(1) vehicular access is provided from Furness Mead;

(2) provision is made for a landscape barrier/screen of mixed planting on the north-west boundary of the site with an average width of 15 metres (which at no point shall be less than 10 metres);

(3) existing trees or groups of trees on the site's boundaries and within the site shall be retained and included with an appropriate landscaping scheme;

Within the development, uses falling within Use Class B1 will be appropriate. Uses falling within Use Classes B2 and B8 may be accepted when the criteria in Policies BS12 and BS13 respectively are met.

Western Road Goods Yard

13.20 The former railway goods yard is situated between residential properties along the northern side of Western Road, the Uckfield to London railway line and the Farningham Road Business Area beyond. The land is currently occupied by a number of business and commercial uses utilising the former goods sheds, other buildings and areas of disused railway land. The overall level of activity on the site is low-key in its nature. The area offers opportunities for those firms who require generous outside storage space and who would not necessarily need or choose to locate on an industrial estate.

13.21 The Council recognises this important role but is also concerned that any future proposals to utilise the extensive areas of vacant land by new development, redevelopment or by the conversion of existing buildings could result in the increased generation of traffic along the Sheep Plain to Western Road route, which would be detrimental to highway safety and residential amenity. In particular, Western Road is residential in character and already suffers from traffic congestion and road safety problems caused by the volume of through traffic that negotiates the relatively narrow carriageway and vehicles parked along the roadside.

13.22 Furthermore, the Council is concerned that an intensification of activity on the site could be detrimental to the residential amenities of dwellings along Western Road in terms of noise, smell and general disturbance. Whilst the Council would wish to retain employment use on the land in accordance with Policy BS5, it is considered important to have a restrictive policy for the site in view of the clear constraints that exist.

CR4 Within the Western Road Goods Yard, as defined on the Proposals Map, the Council will seek to retain the low-key business and storage use of the site. Proposals for new development, redevelopment, conversion of buildings or extensions for business or commercial use that would have a detrimental impact on the local

road network by reason of the volume and nature of traffic generated or on the residential amenities of nearby dwellings by reason of the processes carried on will not be permitted.

DEVELOPMENT BOUNDARY

13.23 The development boundary for Crowborough seeks to protect the sensitive landscape setting of the town and prevent outward encroachment of development into the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and other areas of attractive countryside on the eastern and southern edges of the town, which would be intrusive and detrimental to its character. The development boundary follows existing development, includes current housing and industrial commitments, but excludes some peripheral areas in order to prevent an intensification of development that would be detrimental to their loose-knit, more rural character or an extension of ribbon development along the roads into the town.

13.24 Along the northern edge of the town, the development boundary follows the clear physical boundary provided by Eridge Road and the built-up area to the east of London Road. Development in this area occupies a prominent ridge-top location with extensive views over open countryside of the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Any outward encroachment of development would be intrusive in the landscape.

13.25 The development boundary excludes the ribbon of development around Steel Cross in order to prevent an intensification that would be detrimental to its more rural character. Land west of Green Lane has extensive tree cover and rises to a ridge at Pellings Wood, whereas to the east the open land falls to the wooded area around Crowborough Ghyll. These areas have been excluded in order to protect their landscape character. At Beacon Community College, the upper school buildings and playing field to the east are included but the extensive areas of playing fields and woodland elsewhere on the campus have been excluded in view of the open nature of much of the landscape which is exposed to long distance views to the north and where new development would be intrusive and detrimental to the rural character on the edge of the town.

13.26 Along the eastern edge of the town, the development boundary follows the existing built-up area in order to protect the landscape and character of Crowborough Ghyll and the Palesgate area, for which the Local Plan has a specific policy contained below. The Crowborough Ghyll is extensively wooded along its length and provides a buffer which screens the eastern edge of the town. Beyond the Ghyll, the land

risers steeply to Palesgate Lane and is exposed to long distance views. The development boundary includes the Forest Rise housing development together with Millbrook Business Area and the proposed extension to the north. However, further land to the east is excluded in view of the open nature of the landscape which is particularly exposed to views from Rotherfield Hill.

13.27 To the south-east the development boundary excludes the garden centre as it is considered a more intensive built form would be intrusive on this prominent site. Further south the more loose-knit development around Clackhams Lane, Tubwell Lane and Tollwood Road has been excluded as an intensification of development would be detrimental to their more rural character. Elsewhere along the southern edge of the town, the development boundary tightly follows the built-up area to prevent an undesirable encroachment of development into the countryside, parts of which are within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

13.28 The development boundary closely follows the edge of development on the western side of Crowborough Warren in view of the clear objections to development in the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Ashdown Forest. In addition, land at Glenmore Road and to the rear of properties along Fielden Road has been excluded to prevent further development, probably of a 'backland' nature, which would be detrimental to the more rural character as well as existing residential amenities.

13.29 At St John's, the area west of properties fronting Coopers Lane and north of properties in Innhams Wood has been excluded from the development boundary in view of the loose-knit nature of development, together with the significant areas of open land and gaps between buildings which create a more rural character. Further west, the Horder Centre for Arthritics is excluded in view of its countryside setting whilst the Phie Forest Garden is excluded in view of its strong countryside character abutting the Ashdown Forest Site of Special Scientific Interest.

TRANSPORT

13.30 The A26 (Maidstone to Newhaven) primary route is the principal road through Crowborough which carries a significant amount of through traffic in addition to locally generated traffic movements. The A26 links the town to the main trunk road network. The B2100 is classified as a Minor Distributor but it is an important route for local traffic in the town as well as through traffic travelling from Forest Row and the East Grinstead area to Rotherfield, Wadhurst and beyond. There are many other important routes in the town that act as local distributors channeling traffic to and from the

residential, commercial and industrial areas and linking with the A26 and B2100.

13.31 The possibility of a Crowborough Bypass has been raised over a number of years. However, the County Council has concluded that there is no justification on traffic growth or economic grounds. Furthermore, it is considered that a bypass would be extremely damaging environmentally and would be contrary to policies which protect the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

TOWN CENTRE

13.32 The town centre is the commercial core of Crowborough with a variety of shops, offices and other businesses providing services and employment opportunities for the town and its surrounding area. It is also the location for a number of civic and community uses, including the District Council offices, public library and the Town Hall, as well as a large number of homes, ranging from detached houses to one-bedroomed flats.

13.33 The commercial town centre has developed in a linear form from London Road, north of The Cross, along the High Street, Broadway and Croft Road to the south, and in an east-west direction either side of The Cross along parts of Beacon Road and, to a lesser extent, Eridge Road. The town centre comprises a number of areas with different shopping and business characteristics.

Main Shopping Area

13.34 In line with District-wide policies for maintaining and enhancing the vitality and viability of the town centres contained in Chapter 8, a main shopping area has been defined in order to provide an identifiable focus for shopping within which increased retail activity can take place by new development, redevelopment of existing floorspace and the more efficient use of existing floorspace and land. The main shopping area has been carefully defined having regard to the extent of the existing shopping centre, the nature and character of land uses contiguous with it, and any future requirements for new shopping facilities. Any major improvement in the quality of shopping floorspace in the town centre will require some redevelopment of existing properties.

Future Retail Development

13.35 During the early 1990's, Crowborough witnessed the building of larger, modern supermarkets in Uckfield and in Tunbridge Wells. It has become evident that an increasing number of Crowborough's residents are making their main food shopping trips to these stores and as a result trade in Crowborough

town centre has suffered. In order to maintain and improve Crowborough's trading situation both for shopper and trader alike it is important for the Plan to indicate where new retail development, principally in the form of a new larger supermarket could be provided within the town centre. This would be likely to replace an existing store, if the private market is prepared to make the investment.

13.36 Interest is being shown in the provision of new retail development in the town and in line with the sequential test in Policy SH9, the Council wishes to bring forward a town centre site in order to maintain the vitality and viability of the centre. The area considered to have the greatest potential for new development or redevelopment for retail purposes comprises land and buildings in the main shopping area which fronts Croft Road between the Fernbank Centre and the Croft Road car park itself, together with the large surface car park to the west. New shopping facilities at this location would relate well to the existing shops and services in the town centre that are focussed along the High Street, Broadway and Croft Road.

13.37 The area in question could accommodate a new or extended supermarket and smaller unit shops together with the possibility of office and residential uses above ground floor. Offices would help the local economy whilst residential use would help add vitality to the town centre. A retail study should be carried out to quantify the need for further food shopping floorspace in Crowborough and assess the likely impact on the town centre.

13.38 Within this area, any redevelopment should maintain a shopping frontage to Croft Road and reflect the existing building heights in order to respect the present street pattern and scale, and provide for uses at upper floors. The existing footway along the western side of Croft Road should be widened where possible.

13.39 The provision of adequate car parking will be an important factor in determining the scale of development and range of uses that would be acceptable to the Council. The public car parking spaces in the town centre, including the Croft Road car park, operate more or less at capacity during peak times.

13.40 The impact of traffic generated by any new development on the area to the west of Croft Road on the highways and their junctions around the town centre will need to be carefully considered. In this regard a traffic impact study of the town centre access roads and the local highway network will be required to be carried out, in consultation with the Highway Authority.

13.41 The Council is pursuing a town centre design framework as part of the Crowborough revitalisation

initiative in order to guide environmental improvements, traffic management and redevelopment proposals. This is being prepared as supplementary planning guidance.

Secondary Shopping Area : North of The Cross

13.42 The area to the north of The Cross contains a mixture of both specialist and general shopping uses together with other local services, such as restaurants and hot food takeaways. Although on the periphery of the town centre, it performs an important role as a secondary shopping area, complementary to the main shopping area. It is considered that this function should be maintained but a significant expansion of shopping uses resisted in view of the policy to concentrate new shopping floorspace in the main shopping area, and the traffic congestion and parking problems that presently occur. In this area, on the edge of the main shopping area, new retail proposals will also be considered under Policy SH9. Small scale proposals for shopping, office and other service uses may be acceptable subject to access, parking and amenity considerations. References to use classes in the following policy relate to the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 - see Appendix 7.

CR5 The function of the area north of The Cross as a secondary shopping area, as defined on the Proposals Map, will be maintained. Major expansion of shopping uses within Use Class A1 (Shops) will not be permitted, although small scale extensions to existing premises may be acceptable. Proposals for small scale development, extensions and changes of use of existing premises to uses within Use Class A2 (Financial and Professional Services), A3 (Food and Drink) and B1(a) (Offices) will normally be permitted.

Business Areas

13.43 Two main areas, namely land south-east of Beacon Road and land around Park Road, are established business areas.

13.44 In the interests of the local economy, it is considered appropriate to allocate land where office development can take place, either by redevelopment or conversion of existing property, and the business area south-east of Beacon Road allows for such development.

13.45 Within the area east of the High Street, centred around Park Road, there is a concentration of industrial premises, retail and office uses. However, access to the area is along Croham Road and Park Road, and there is often congestion caused by customer parking, service vehicles and the lack of off-

street parking for residential properties. Although the area is important in economic and employment terms, proposals for new development will need to be carefully considered in the light of traffic generation, parking and impact on residential amenities. Expansion of business uses into the residential area will be firmly resisted. Business use for light industrial purposes is not considered appropriate along Beacon Road. References to use classes in the following policies relate to the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) order 1987 - see Appendix 7.

CR6 Within the Park Road business area, as defined on the Proposals Map, new development, redevelopment and conversion of existing property for business purposes within Use Class B1 (Business) will be permitted, whereas within the Beacon Road business area, as defined on the Proposals Map, such development will only be permitted for Use Class B1(a) (Offices).

13.46 Within the business areas, proposals for shopping use will be resisted in view of the policy to concentrate retail uses in the main shopping area and, in the case of Park Road, the increased traffic generation that would take place and the lack of adequate off-street car parking. In this area, on the edge of the main shopping area, new retail proposals will also be considered under Policy SH9. However, within the business area along Beacon Road, certain town centre uses such as banks, building societies or estate agents (Use Class A2) and restaurants, public houses (Use Class A3) may be acceptable subject to traffic, access, parking and amenity considerations.

CR7 Within the Beacon Road and Park Road business areas, as defined on the Proposals Map, new shopping facilities within Use Class A1 (Shops) will not be permitted. Within the Beacon Road business area, as defined on the Proposals Map, proposals for development within Use Class A2 (Financial and Professional Services) and Use Class A3 (Food and Drink) may be permitted.

Mead House Site, Beacon Road

13.47 This prominent town centre site extends to 0.9 hectare and is bounded on three sides by Beacon Road, Mill Lane and Pine Grove respectively. In view of the town centre location, a flexible approach is taken and the site is allocated for flatted residential accommodation, office development or community development or a mix of these uses. In view of the current level of housing land supply and the excess of housing provision over the County Structure Plan requirement, it will not be necessary to allocate additional land for housing purposes if the site is

developed for office or community use. The site was originally held for a magistrates court facility and whilst this would still be acceptable in land use terms, other community facilities may also be appropriate.

13.48 The site has a relatively dense cover of trees but these are generally of poor quality with few good specimens, and much of the density is achieved through large shrubs and bushy trees. For amenity purposes, it is considered appropriate to retain and strengthen a landscaped area of trees and shrubs along Mill Lane, Pine Grove, Beacon Road and the Beaconwood access road.

13.49 Development will need to relate well to the built form of the adjoining premises and have satisfactory car parking arrangements and suitable amenity areas. In this regard, whereas part of the development could be up to a maximum of three storeys in height, in the area adjacent to Mill Lane this should not exceed two storeys.

13.50 As vehicular access from Beacon Road and Mill Lane would not be acceptable in highway terms, access from Pine Grove should be used.

13.51 The amount of residential, office or community use development would be determined by the above mentioned planning conditions, adequate car parking and servicing arrangements. Although office development would fall within the B1 Use Class, it is considered necessary to restrict the use of the site to offices specifically as the site is not considered suitable for light industrial purposes, principally on amenity grounds.

13.52 In planning terms, a mixed scheme would be acceptable providing for residential, community use and office uses, subject to the considerations discussed above.

CR8 Land at the Mead House site, Beacon Road, as defined on the Proposals Map, is allocated for housing, community and/or office purposes. Proposals for development will be permitted where the following criteria are met:-

(1) for residential purposes, the exact number of flats to depend upon the appropriate balance between car parking, tree retention, amenity space and dwellings that is satisfactory to the Council;

(2) for office or community purposes, the amount of floorspace to be developed shall depend upon the appropriate balance between car parking, tree retention, amenity space and built form that is satisfactory to the Council;

(3) for a mixed use scheme, the amount of development to be provided shall depend on the appropriate balance between car parking, tree retention, amenity space and built form that is satisfactory to the Council;

(4) the height of the building(s) shall not exceed two storeys adjacent to Mill Lane or three storeys elsewhere on the site;

(5) development shall be set back at least 10 metres from Beacon Road;

(6) vehicle access shall be taken from Pine Grove;

(7) a safe and convenient footpath system should be provided within the site to link with Pine Grove and Beacon Road;

(8) a 6 metre area of trees and shrubs shall be retained along Mill Lane, Pine Grove, Beacon Road and the Beaconwood access frontage. A landscaping and management scheme shall be prepared and implemented for the tree groups. Additional planting within the tree groups and within the site will be required;

(9) for office purposes, notwithstanding the provisions of the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987, the use to be permitted on the site shall be limited to Class B1(a).

Town Centre Highways

13.53 The two main traffic routes through the town centre, the A26 Beacon Road/Eridge Road and the B2100 London Road/High Street perform important strategic highway functions. However, they also give rise to problems of traffic congestion, pollution and road safety within the town centre. Some congestion is caused at The Cross, the intersection of these two routes, often by vehicles turning across the flow of on-coming traffic, thereby blocking the junction for other traffic movements which is a hazard both for drivers and pedestrians.

13.54 The use of the High Street as a busy through route with its narrow footway is to the detriment of the overall shopping environment. There is no acceptable alternative route for traffic that would enable pedestrianisation of the High Street to take place. However, improvements could be made if a new access road running from Croft Road through to Pine Grove with a possible extension through to Beacon Road were constructed. This option is worthy of further investigation.

Car Parking

13.55 The provision of adequate off-street parking in the town centre is important in order to reduce traffic congestion, improve road safety and generally improve the attractiveness of the town centre for shopping and business activity.

13.56 Public car parking provision in the town centre which amounts to some 630 spaces operates virtually at capacity, particularly during peak periods. Over the Plan period, extra car parking may be required to meet additional demand arising from the projected growth in population and new development on land to the west of Croft Road, as well as to replace any displaced by new development.

OTHER SHOPPING FACILITIES

13.57 Outside the town centre, a number of local shops and services are available in neighbourhood centres at Jarvis Brook and Whitehill Road. Non-food retail warehouse development has taken place at Millbrook Business Area.

Jarvis Brook

13.58 The neighbourhood centre of Jarvis Brook plays an important role in the provision of local shops and services to a wide catchment area. In addition to a number of convenience shops catering for day to day needs, there are also a number of more specialist shops, restaurants and hot food takeaways.

13.59 In line with District-wide policy contained in Chapter 8, the Council wishes to maintain and support further shopping and service provision within or possibly contiguous with neighbourhood centres, but only when this is consistent with environmental, amenity and traffic considerations. The Jarvis Brook centre is relatively compact and is served by a public off-street car park which is conveniently located for local shopping trips. The provision of rear service access would relieve Crowborough Hill of some congestion but in the current economic climate is unlikely to be achieved.

13.60 For development control purposes, a neighbourhood centre has been defined within which proposals for shopping, services and business uses will normally be permitted. The defined area reflects the current pattern of land uses in the area and seeks to prevent encroachment into residential areas, the Lexden Lodge Business Area and the recreation ground.

CR9 Within the neighbourhood centre of Jarvis Brook, as defined on the Proposals Map, proposals for new shopping, service and

business uses as defined by Classes A1, A2, A3 and B1 of the 1987 Use Classes Order will be permitted.

Whitehill Road

13.61 Whitehill Road contains a number of shops and other small businesses that meet important day to day as well as more specialist needs. These commercial uses are interspersed with residential properties.

13.62 Whitehill Road is very busy as it carries traffic to and from the town centre as well as locally generated traffic from residential areas, the Whitehill and Herne Primary Schools and commercial and business premises. In contrast to Jarvis Brook, there is no off-street public car parking, and although some businesses have made limited forecourt provision, car parking and servicing is primarily on-street. However, in order to aid the flow of traffic, there are parking and waiting restrictions in force. The problems of traffic congestion and road safety that result have a detrimental effect on the amenity of the area, particularly for local residents, shoppers and school children.

13.63 Although it has been the Council's intention to seek to secure local and convenient off-street public parking spaces, further careful assessment has shown that there is no land available for car parking use that would be conveniently and effectively located close to the shops and other business premises. Furthermore, traffic management measures to further restrict on-street parking in favour of the free flow of through traffic would be detrimental to residential amenity, business interests and road safety. After due consideration, the Council believes that the only realistic approach is to strictly control new commercial development that would result in further on-street parking and servicing. On this basis, it is no longer considered appropriate to define an area within which new shopping and business uses may be permitted but rather to consider proposals in the light of Policy SH7 and a more restrictive policy for Whitehill Road itself.

CR10 Development proposals which result in an increase in on-street parking or on-street servicing along Whitehill Road, as defined on the Proposals Map, will not be permitted.

COMMUNITY SERVICES

Education

13.64 There are currently six primary schools serving the Crowborough area. The County Council has undertaken a review of primary education in

Crowborough. In order to provide better facilities and accommodation for Whitehill Infant School, the County Council relocated the school in early 1998 to a 2.3 hectare site on land off Luxford Road.

13.65 The Beacon Community College provides secondary education for Crowborough and the surrounding villages. Further and higher education for young people living in the Crowborough area is provided by establishments outside the Plan area.

Household Waste Site

13.66 As outlined in Chapter 12, the existing household waste site at the northern end of Herne Road is considered too small to meet increasing public usage and, due to its location in a predominantly residential area, there are a number of environmental problems. Given the need to find an alternative site for this important facility the County Council, in consultation with the District Council, has undertaken an extensive site finding exercise but most alternatives have been unacceptable from an environmental or residential amenity point of view. Whilst it will be the responsibility of the County Council to identify a preferred location for a new household waste site in its forthcoming Waste Local Plan, the District Council believes that a more appropriate location for the household waste site would be on either of the existing or proposed business areas at Jarvis Brook.

Recreation and Leisure

13.67 The Goldsmiths Leisure Centre offers a range of indoor recreational facilities. Outdoor play space provision enables a wide variety of activities to be undertaken and ranges from traditional recreation grounds such as the Wolfe, Alderbrook and Limekiln to more specialist facilities at Goldsmiths Recreation Ground. Outdoor playing space in the town is currently below the minimum standard recommended by the National Playing Fields Association as discussed in Chapter 11. Furthermore, the vast majority of existing provision is in the form of playing pitches for youth and adult use. The level of provision of children's play space is therefore well below the recommended standard.

13.68 The Town Council proposes to extend the Goldsmiths Recreation Ground to the north and to the east, in order to meet its projected requirement for additional sporting and recreational facilities including playing pitches and other outdoor activities. The areas of land in question are extensive areas of open countryside within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Whilst public open space in the form of outdoor recreation and leisure pursuits would be appropriate, any uses requiring new buildings, including purpose-built indoor facilities, and other development of an intrusive nature would

not be acceptable. However, small scale facilities associated with outdoor recreational uses may be permitted subject to careful consideration of their siting and design.

CR11 Land to the north and east of the Goldsmiths Recreation Ground, as defined on the Proposals Map, is allocated for public open space. Proposals for purpose built indoor sports facilities and other development of an intrusive nature will be firmly resisted. Small scale facilities in association with outdoor recreational uses may be permitted subject to careful consideration of siting and design.

Crowborough Ghyll/Palesgate Area

13.69 The attractive wooded valley at Crowborough Ghyll is accessible from several large residential areas on the east of the town. The Town Council has acquired a large amount of land with the aim of providing an area for informal recreation and walking that stretches from Green Lane southwards to Forest Rise at Jarvis Brook.

13.70 The Town Council is seeking to complete a link between Green Lane and Jarvis Brook, in the form of a public footpath/nature trail along Crowborough Ghyll by negotiating for public access with private landowners where necessary. The intention is to create an informal footpath which would follow a natural route meandering through the woodland alongside Crowborough Ghyll and respecting the rural character of the area. The exact route would be decided after the Town Council has given consideration to a number of matters including the protection of wildlife habitats, soil erosion, land drainage, the protection of residential amenities and arrangements for regular maintenance, hopefully through a comprehensive management plan.

13.71 In addition, the Crowborough Ghyll and Palesgate area is important in landscape terms. The Crowborough Ghyll is extensively wooded along its length and this provides a significant landscape feature along the eastern side of the town. Beyond the Ghyll, the land rises quite steeply to Palesgate Lane and is exposed to views from the eastern part of the town. Any development in this area would be very damaging to the landscape and overall environmental character. The area is outside the development boundary and the more restrictive countryside policies would apply, as outlined in Chapter 5. In order to emphasise the importance of this area for the town, it is considered appropriate that a special policy should apply to protect and enhance the character of the area and improve public access whenever possible.

CR12 Within the Crowborough Ghyll and Palesgate landscape policy area, as defined on the Proposals Map, the quality of the landscape will be protected and enhanced where possible and inappropriate development will be firmly resisted.

Opportunities will be taken whenever possible to improve public access, subject to the availability of resources and ecological considerations, including a public footpath along Crowborough Ghyll.

Implementation

13.72 The Policies CR1-10 and CR12, will be implemented by the Council primarily through its development control function.

13.73 The public open space under Policy CR11 will be implemented by the Crowborough Town Council, otherwise, the policy will be implemented by the District Council, primarily through its development control function.