

Polegate and Willingdon

(Inset Map No. 47 - Mapsheet)

Introduction

16.1 Polegate and Willingdon are adjacent communities located at the foot of the South Downs to the north of Eastbourne. Polegate, which lies on an east-west ridge, is situated to the north of Willingdon, although the two settlements are substantially interwoven. Both communities are mainly residential in nature with a high proportion of elderly residents.

Polegate

16.2 Polegate is the larger of the two settlements. The A27 and the Lewes to Hastings railway line run west to east through the town while the A22 passes north to south through Polegate to Willingdon. Programmed improvements to these roads will have a significant impact on the settlement. The High Street shopping area provides an important central focus for the town, while the Chaucer Industrial Estate to the east provides some local employment opportunities.

16.3 In landscape terms Polegate is dominated by the South Downs which flank the western edge of the settlement. To the north the landscape is characterised by attractive, gently undulating countryside, while to the south and east the open land falls away towards the Willingdon Levels.

Willingdon

16.4 Willingdon has an historic core around Church Street to the west of the A22, which contains numerous listed buildings and has been designated a Conservation Area. For the larger part, it comprises mainly open plan estates. Small neighbourhood shopping centres cater for the day to day needs of the local residents.

16.5 Situated between Polegate and Eastbourne, Willingdon is dominated by Coombe Hill, part of the South Downs which abut the western edge of the settlement. To the east of the A22 the countryside is open and relatively flat, providing pleasant views outwards from the surrounding residential development.

STRATEGY

16.6 While the Local Plan properly recognises the separate communities that exist in Polegate and Willingdon, with respective primary schools and other community facilities, in other respects they share

common issues including their relationship to Eastbourne, similar population structures, patterns of development and the road network. It is therefore appropriate to consider the objectives and policies for these settlements together, while still respecting their separate identities and dealing with specific issues affecting each community separately where appropriate. This approach also recognises that Polegate and Willingdon have separate Town and Parish Councils respectively, the latter including Jevington which is considered later in Chapter 20.

16.7 It is considered that the Council's strategy for Polegate and Willingdon should seek to maintain and where possible enhance local services and facilities to meet local needs, including of the elderly, at the same time encouraging a broadening of the range of housing types, particularly family accommodation. Equally important is the need to conserve the attractive countryside setting of the settlements, which includes the Sussex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the open land between the settlements to the east of the A22.

16.8 The considerable commitment to road improvements in the locality should maximise the community benefits whilst minimising the adverse local impacts of proposed new roads themselves and associated developments. In relation to services and employment, the importance of Eastbourne in terms of employment and shopping must be recognised, but the role of Polegate town centre and other local centres in providing for local needs should be supported.

16.9 The objectives of the Plan with regard to Polegate and Willingdon can therefore be defined as follows:-

(1) to protect the attractive landscape setting of the settlements;

(2) to maximise the potential benefits of an improved transport network whilst minimising the adverse local impacts of proposed new roads and associated facilities;

(3) to maintain and enhance the local role of Polegate's main shopping area and to encourage the provision of local services and community facilities;

(4) to maintain the residential character whilst encouraging a mix of housing types and sizes.

POPULATION AND HOUSING

16.10 Polegate and Willingdon have a combined population of approximately 13,650 persons, of which Polegate accounts for some 7,900 and Willingdon for 5,750. The populations of both Polegate and Willingdon are characterised by a high proportion of elderly persons and small household size.

16.11 Overall, the population is expected to remain relatively stable. Based on housing projections, it is estimated that the population of Polegate and Willingdon will increase by 100 to 13,750 by 2001, falling to 13,550 by the end of the Plan period.

Housing

16.12 The amount of land currently committed in planning terms, together with unidentified sites which may come forward for development within the built-up areas, is likely to result in the construction of around 300 new dwellings in Polegate and Willingdon during the Plan period. Nearly two-thirds of these are expected to be in Polegate.

16.13 In accordance with the strategy for Polegate and Willingdon, particularly the environmental constraints to outward growth, it is not proposed to allocate any new areas of land for housing development. The future incidence of unidentified sites through infilling, redevelopment and conversion will depend on the extent to which proposals conform with policies to protect the character and amenity of the town, and other planning criteria, including highway considerations.

PW1 Within the Polegate and Willingdon development boundary, as defined on the Proposals Map, new housing development will be permitted on undeveloped land, by infilling, by redevelopment and by the conversion of a building to residential use, providing that the proposals conform with all other relevant policies in the Plan.

EMPLOYMENT

16.14 Within the Polegate and Willingdon area, the majority of local business activity is concentrated on the Chaucer Industrial Estate, in Polegate town centre and in the various local services. Polegate and Willingdon relate closely to Eastbourne in terms of employment opportunities as nearly a half of the local employed population work there.

16.15 The Chaucer Industrial Estate provides for a range of industrial uses and is an important local business area. Appropriate policies for such areas are contained in Chapter 7. There are now few opportunities for further development here and

consideration has been given to the possible extension of this estate. However, its proximity to residential properties, the open exposed nature of the surrounding countryside and the need to maintain the gap between Polegate and Stone Cross mitigate against its expansion.

16.16 The approved County Structure Plan provides for additional business park land to serve the Eastbourne area. This includes, at Policy CA/E1, provision for a major land allocation for employment uses, in association with the completion of the A27 Polegate Bypass and the A22 New Route. The Deposit Draft County Structure Plan 1991-2011 reaffirms the proposal for a business park in the Polegate area. Policy BS2 in Chapter 7 of this Plan carries forward this proposal. The District Council intends to identify a potential site or sites within the Plan period via a development brief which will be subject to public consultation. Any new business site in the area would inevitably have a significant impact. Consequently, full regard will be had to environmental and amenity as well as economic factors in identifying a potential site.

DEVELOPMENT BOUNDARY

16.17 There are clear landscape and environmental constraints to the further outward expansion of Polegate and Willingdon. Development to the north or east would conflict with Policy EN17 to maintain the existing open countryside gaps between Polegate and the settlements of Hailsham, Stone Cross and Eastbourne. The proximity of the South Downs, designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, constrains further expansion to the west. The development boundaries for Polegate and Willingdon therefore seek to restrict the physical expansion of these communities to preserve their attractive countryside setting.

16.18 The hard northern edge of Polegate is further defined by the line of protected trees between Sayerland Road and Levett Road. Although the route of the proposed A27 Polegate Bypass cuts through the open countryside to the north, the land between this and Polegate has an attractive, mainly agricultural character which provides an important countryside setting for Polegate.



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



1:10000

16.19 At the eastern end of Polegate the development boundary tightly envelopes frontage development along Dittons Road, cutting across longer curtilages in order to prevent inappropriate backland development and expansion into the open rural landscape to the north. Also, further development eastwards along Dittons Road would erode the strategic open gap between Polegate and Stone Cross. Dittons Farm maintains an essentially rural character in an open and exposed location within this gap and is therefore outside the development boundary. The edge of the Chaucer Industrial Estate and the former railway line to the south provide clearly defined physical limits to the town in this area.

16.20 The tract of open, relatively low lying countryside between Polegate and Willingdon to the east of the A22 is important to both the amenity and setting of these two settlements. Although there is some formal recreational use, the majority of the land is agricultural and of rural character. It has a very open aspect and provides a significant break in the built up frontage along the eastern side of the A22. The development boundary therefore follows the well defined built-up boundaries around the area. To the south of Lower Willingdon, it follows the District boundary.

16.21 To the west of Polegate and Willingdon, the development boundary is drawn tightly to the existing built-up area at the foot of the Downs to resist further expansion into the exposed and very sensitive countryside within the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

16.22 Further north, the development boundary protects the trees along the A27, while the area to the north of the railway and west of the A22 lies beyond the well-defined boundary of the built-up area of Polegate and forms part of the open, attractive countryside extending along the foot of the Downs. The proposed construction of the A27 Wilmington Bypass through this area will open up the countryside to public view, making its importance as part of the setting to the Sussex Downs more pronounced.

TRANSPORT

16.23 Polegate and Willingdon are both directly affected by major road proposals which are outlined in Chapter 9. The approved route for the Polegate Bypass runs through the countryside to the north of the town from a grade separated roundabout on the A22 north-west of Sayerland Avenue to a double roundabout near Dittons Farm in the east, where it will join the Pevensey Bypass and, in due course, the A22 New Route into Eastbourne. This and the A27 Wilmington Bypass are preferred routes that the Council will

protect. The routes are shown on the Proposals Map and Figure 6.

16.24 These highway improvements will bring relief from traffic congestion, noise and fumes to many Polegate and Willingdon residents, particularly those living along the existing A22 and A27. They will also improve access to the major industrial areas and other new developments on the eastern side of Eastbourne and help the local economy. The Council will encourage the Highway Authority to consider traffic management measures on the existing highways to complement the new network and further improve local amenities.

16.25 The proposed highway improvements, particularly the proposed roundabouts, will have a significant impact on the landscape and local environment. In accordance with Policies TR1 and TR2, the Council will seek to minimise these effects through the provision of landscaping, planting, mounding and sensitive overhead lighting when required. The Polegate Bypass and A22 proposals include significant areas of planting and mounding in order to reduce their visual and noise impact.

16.26 The 1991 Census indicated that a high proportion of households in Polegate and Willingdon do not have a car. Importantly, one of the objectives of Eastbourne Area Transport Forum's Strategy is to improve and promote public transport in the area.

16.27 The Lewes to Eastbourne railway line which runs through Polegate provides an important local transport link which also allows longer distance commuting to London. As discussed in Chapter 9, the County Council wish to see the reinstatement of a direct railway link from Polegate to Pevensey via a new short link just north of the Hampden Park junction. To facilitate this, Policy TR18 is included in the Plan which states that the Council will not permit development which would significantly prejudice the reinstatement of a Polegate to Pevensey rail link.

Cycling

16.28 Polegate and Willingdon fall within the area covered by the 'Healthy Cycling Plan for the Eastbourne Area', as described in Chapter 9. It is proposed to develop a network of cycle routes, together with associated traffic measures, which will improve access by bicycle to Polegate station and shopping centre, Willingdon School and the Cuckoo Trail, including its extension to Eastbourne Park. The key elements of these proposals are set out in Policy PW2.

PW2 The Council will promote measures to encourage cycle use along a network of routes, as defined on the Proposals Map, in Polegate and Willingdon. These measures will include:

(1) a shared cycle/pedestrian path along the existing carriageway of the A22 between Willow Drive, Polegate and Oxendean Gardens, Willingdon;

(2) a shared cycle/pedestrian path linking Polegate Station with Station Road through the existing car park;

(3) a shared cycle/pedestrian path linking Lynholm Road with Brightling Road, Polegate;

(4) facilities to enable cyclists to cross the A22 safely at Church Road, Polegate, and Oxendean Gardens, Willingdon;

(5) facilities to enable cyclists to cross the A27 safely at Lynholm Road and School Lane, Polegate;

(6) the upgrading of the public right of way between the Cuckoo Trail and Shepham Lane, Polegate.

Roadside Facilities

16.29 There is a strategic policy requirement for the provision of roadside facilities in connection with the road improvements programme, as outlined in Chapter 9. An assessment of the potential sites along the existing and proposed highways was undertaken. For landscape and traffic movement reasons, the search focused on sites around the junctions at either end of the proposed Polegate Bypass.

16.30 The preferred area lies to the north-west of the proposed Polegate roundabout adjacent to Cophall Farm, as shown on the Proposals Map (Inset Map 47). This site is subject of a current outline application which, upon the completion of an appropriate legal agreement, the Council has resolved to approve. This site is considered to have the least impact on environmental and landscape considerations, particularly as the character of the area would already be substantially altered through the construction and lighting of the roundabout and because some of the land lies at a lower level than the surrounding countryside and woodland. It is also considered that a site at the western roundabout would best serve existing and projected traffic movements.

16.31 It is proposed to prepare a planning brief to guide development. Within the preferred area the layout and form of development should seek to minimise its impact on the locality and should use traditional building forms and materials whenever practical. As full planning permission has not yet been

granted, it is still appropriate to retain a policy relating to the preparation of such a brief in this Plan.

PW3 Land to the west of the proposed A27/A22 Polegate roundabout, as defined on the Proposals Map, is allocated for roadside facilities. A Planning Brief will be prepared to guide development on the site. Proposals for the development of roadside facilities shall comply with the Planning Brief which will include, inter alia, the following criteria:

(1) the precise southern boundary of the site shall be formed by the extent of the A27 Wilmington Bypass, and the development shall not prejudice implementation of the preferred route;

(2) provision shall be made for a petrol filling station, restaurant and motorist shop facilities, overnight accommodation, associated parking, including lorry parking, together with public toilets and telephones, tourist information centre and a picnic area, incorporating a children's play area;

(3) vehicular access shall only be directly from the proposed roundabout;

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

(5) the layout and form of development shall seek to minimise the impact of the development on the locality and ensure an appropriate standard of amenity within the site, and shall respect the character and appearance of the surroundings.

POLEGATE TOWN CENTRE

16.32 The town centre in Polegate provides an identifiable focus for retail activity, providing an important range of local goods and services. The Council's shopping policies seek to maintain and improve the vitality and viability of the town centre.

16.33 Polegate's shopping area is concentrated around the High Street. The A27 Hailsham Road to the north somewhat isolates the parade of shops at Millfields while the Lewes to Eastbourne railway line cuts across the southern part of the shopping centre. The extent of the main shopping area, as defined on Inset Map 47, reflects the linear form of existing commercial

premises fronting onto the High Street, being tightly enveloped by established residential development, and incorporates the larger development adjacent to Polegate Railway Station.

16.34 Within the main shopping area, appropriate new development or redevelopment for retail and associated activities will be permitted subject to the criteria put forward in Chapter 8. Although there is limited scope for expansion of the main shopping area, it is considered that the role of Polegate's town centre as a local shopping and service centre should be maintained.

Car Parking and Traffic Management

16.35 The main shopping area of Polegate is served by an existing car park north of the railway line which provides some 160 spaces for shoppers in close proximity to the High Street. A separate area of the car park, adjacent to the railway line, is set aside for commuter parking in association with Polegate Station. A limited number of 'on-street' spaces are available in laybys along the High Street.

16.36 Surveys of the shoppers' car park have not demonstrated any lack of capacity to serve the town's needs. The improved management of on-street parking will be pursued, including the extended provision of on-street spaces within the town centre itself. Improvements to the A27 and A22 will influence the current pattern of traffic flows through the town centre.

COMMUNITY SERVICES

Education

16.37 This area is served by two County Primary Schools, in Polegate and Willingdon respectively, and a secondary school in Lower Willingdon. Additional provision, including higher education establishments, is available in Eastbourne.

Recreation and Leisure

16.38 There is one public recreation ground within Polegate and two equipped children's playgrounds. These outdoor recreation facilities, together with informal play space within housing areas, total some 2 hectares of playing space, which is significantly less than the National Playing Fields Association's recommended target stated in Chapter 11. The Town Council is aware of a shortfall in recreation provision and a particular need for community swimming facilities.

16.39 An area of some 5 hectares to the east of Brightling Road is allocated in the Plan for public open

space and will address this shortfall. The principle of utilising about 1 hectare of this land for affordable housing has been accepted and this would realise the capital to provide access works and the laying out of the remaining 4 hectares for recreational purposes. The land remains allocated for public open space.

PW4 Land east of Brightling Road, Polegate, as defined on the Proposals Map, is allocated for public open space.

16.40 There are two recreation grounds within the built-up area of Willingdon which provide limited facilities. These are supplemented by sports facilities at Willingdon School and Brighton University's grounds east of the A22, although these are only available at limited times for local community use. In addition there are children's play areas at Tott Yew Road and at Huggetts Lane.

16.41 These outdoor recreation facilities, together with informal play space within housing areas, total some 12 hectares of playing space in Willingdon, which compares favourably with the National Playing Fields Association's recommended target. However, this is heavily qualified by the restrictions on availability of educational facilities and the desire for bowling and tennis provision. Indeed, the Town Council is aware of an unsatisfied demand for recreation areas, particularly outdoor bowling and tennis facilities.

Willingdon Levels Recreation Policy Area

16.42 Approved planning policies for Eastbourne provide for the broad swathe of open and undeveloped land extending through 'Eastbourne Park' to be retained as such, with certain leisure and recreational facilities. It is considered appropriate to extend this area northwards into Wealden District, linking the strategic gap between Polegate and Stone Cross to the countryside beyond.

16.43 The roughly triangular area between the Eastbourne boundary and A27 around Dittons is enclosed by the two active railway lines into Eastbourne and, to the north, by the now disused Polegate-Pevensy link. Its visual qualities are also somewhat lessened by a number of electricity pylons and cables; the area will be dissected by the new A22 in due course. Therefore, and in view of its urban fringe location adjacent to Eastbourne Park, it is considered that increased public access to the area and certain forms of recreational development would be appropriate.

16.44 Informal recreational use and increased public access to this area may be encouraged. It is envisaged that the Cuckoo Trail long distance walking and cycle route may be extended through this area to integrate with routes identified in the Eastbourne Park Plan.

Cycle provision should be incorporated into proposals for the A22 New Route. Other links beyond the proposed Recreation Policy Area, including across the attractive open countryside towards Willingdon and Brightling Road recreation proposal, may also be fostered.

16.45 Any proposed leisure development should respect and, wherever possible, enhance the character and quality of the rural landscape. Regard will be had to the potential impact of any proposed recreational development upon drainage and nature conservation in the locality. The nature of recreation proposals, particularly built form, should be carefully controlled in order to retain the open and rural character of the locality, as recognised by its status as part of the strategic gap between Eastbourne, Polegate and Stone Cross. Also, long-distance views across the open agricultural landscape from the surrounding urban areas should be protected.

PW5 Within the Willingdon Levels Recreation Policy Area, as defined on the Proposals Map, the Council will normally support proposals for recreational uses which maintain and enhance the open character of the area, in particular:

- (1) the proposed Cuckoo Trail long distance walking and cycling route extension through this area to integrate with routes proposed in the Eastbourne Park Plan;**
- (2) informal recreational uses which integrate with the provisions of the Eastbourne Park Plan;**
- (3) golf course proposals subject to the criteria at Policy DC10.**

All proposals have an acceptable impact upon drainage in the area, as well as maintaining and enhancing nature conservation interests.

16.46 Detailed consideration of the integration of land uses and management measures within this area with those within Eastbourne may most appropriately be undertaken in conjunction with Eastbourne Borough Council in parallel with a broad joint study of such issues affecting the Levels.

Community Facilities

16.47 Polegate has a Community Centre, Amenity Centre and three church halls which are used for a variety of community purposes. The Town Council has also expressed concern about the lack of cemetery facilities in Polegate and further consideration is to be given to the provision of such facilities in consultation with the Town Council and others.

16.48 Willingdon Parish Council states that there is an outstanding need for a separate community hall. Clearly the provision of this facility will depend upon identifying a suitable site and the necessary financial resources. Local concerns have been expressed about the adequacy of local health care facilities. However, the Family Health Service Authority is not seeking additional provision, although the situation is being monitored.

Implementation

16.49 Policies PW1, PW3 and PW5 will be implemented by the Council, primarily through its development control function, whilst the measures outlined in PW2 will be promoted by this Council but carried out by the County Council as Highway Authority.

16.50 Polegate Town Council will implement policy PW4.