

Wadhurst

(Inset Map No.57 - Mapsheet)

Introduction

19.37.1 Wadhurst is located on the B2099 and B2100 cross-country routes around seven miles east of Crowborough. It is one of the largest villages in the District, serving as an established residential area, as a local employment centre providing jobs in the retail, office and service sectors, and as a local shopping centre for residents and surrounding rural area. The current population is estimated at 2800 people. Wadhurst Station lies to the north-west of the village on the Hastings to London line and provides convenient access to the larger centre of Tunbridge Wells, and London itself, for employment, shopping and leisure purposes.

19.37.2 It is the Council's aim for Wadhurst to maintain and enhance its residential character and its role as a local employment and service centre whilst protecting its environment, the rural fringe areas and the surrounding countryside from development that would be detrimental to its character.

Environment

19.37.3 The village lies on a south-east/north-west ridge, from which land falls away in a southerly direction to provide long distance views over ghylls, ridges and woodland within the attractive undulating landscape of the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. To the north, views are generally more limited, mainly of surrounding farmland and scattered buildings, although Bewl Water and the Kent countryside beyond are prominent features in the landscape.

19.37.4 Along the High Street and around The Square there are a large number of listed buildings which provide an attractive, tight-knit frontage. St Peter and St Paul's Church is a focal point within the village and a prominent feature within the wider landscape. These buildings, together with other attractive buildings, tree groups, walls and other local features, all contribute to the special architectural and historic character that has been recognised by its designation as a Conservation Area. Proposals have been put forward to extend the Conservation Area and to undertake a scheme of environmental improvements in The Square. In contrast, modern cul-de-sac development has taken place off Washwell Lane and at the south-eastern end of Lower High Street.

19.37.5 The larger settlement of Durgates, Sparrows Green and Turners Green comprises principally residential estate development. To the north-east of Station Road, existing development is relatively

compact in its form and comprises both modern cul-de-sac and older terrace and semi-detached development served off narrow winding roads, often 'country lane' in their character. In contrast, development south of Station Road is more spacious and includes modern estate development currently under construction. Development along Mayfield Lane has a distinctive character created by large detached houses set in extensive grounds with mature tree cover, to which a specific policy applies.

Development Boundary

19.37.6 The development boundary has been defined to take full account of the sensitive ridge-top setting of the village within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the diverse character of existing development, in particular the separate identities of Durgates and the High Street area. It seeks to prevent an outward encroachment of new development into the surrounding countryside, ribbon development along the main roads and an intensification of development in a number of fringe areas which would be detrimental to their more rural character. In a particular case, this could lead to the coalescence of Durgates with the historic High Street area.

19.37.7 Balaclava Lane forms a clear northern boundary to development in Turners Green, beyond which any new development would erode the open countryside separating the village from the small rural hamlets of Woods Green, Osmers Hill and Pell Green. The development boundary follows Cousley Wood Road and the rear of properties along its eastern side, excluding further land to the south-east to prevent encroachment into open countryside. The primary school's playground and playing fields have not been included in view of their more open aspect, which makes an important contribution to the gap between Durgates and the High Street.

19.37.8 Land south of Castle Walk comprises a number of large properties set in extensive curtilages and an expansive area of woodland around Wadhurst Castle which together contribute to a more rural character. Similarly, the area of land around Windmill House, east of Windmill Lane, has considerable mature tree cover and is parkland in its nature. To maintain their character, these areas are excluded from the development boundary.

19.37.9 Development extending out of the village along Mayfield Lane is principally frontage in its form, despite properties being set back in their curtilages. The development boundary reflects this, but excludes the full extent of curtilage in most cases in order to

prevent inappropriate backland development or an extension of ribbon development.

19.37.10 The development boundary excludes areas of open countryside and woodland to the west along Tapsells Lane as any new development would be intrusive and detrimental to the rural character. Along Station Road there are a number of large detached properties set in extensive grounds which have been excluded from the development boundary to protect their more loose-knit rural character. However, due to the well enclosed nature of the land, small scale residential development has taken place at Great Durgates within the curtilage of the existing house. This clearly marks the end of new development and beyond which further new development will be very strongly resisted.

19.37.11 Along the north-western edge of Durgates and Sparrows Green, the development boundary excludes open undulating countryside to the north of Jonas Drive and Queens Cottages together with open land to the north of Western Road in order to prevent outward encroachment and intrusion on the landscape. A number of large properties along Old Station Road have been excluded in view of their more rural character. Along South View Road the development boundary seeks to prevent development encroaching onto the recreation ground, and excludes property at the junction with Balaclava Lane in view of its open and more rural character.

19.37.12 Along the southern part of the High Street and the Lower High Street, the development boundary closely follows existing properties to prevent peripheral expansion into surrounding countryside and rural fringe areas, particularly where intensification of new development would be detrimental to the special architectural and historic character. Towards Stone Cross, a number of large detached properties south of Lower High Street have been excluded from the development boundary in view of the spacious setting of the buildings, where new development would be detrimental to the more rural character. The development boundary excludes the full depth of the Uplands Community College campus in view of its countryside location.

19.37.13 It is important to maintain the existing separation of Durgates and Sparrows Green from Wadhurst, as the characters of these two settlements are distinctly different. Separate development boundaries have been drawn to prevent any intensification of the existing development north of the High Street or an encroachment of new development into the more rural area to the south around Wadhurst Castle, which would lead to coalescence of the settlements. Any proposals for development in this gap will be strongly resisted.

Housing

19.37.14 Wadhurst has been subject to relatively large scale development in recent years. In light of this and the significant environmental constraints that exist to outward expansion, the Local Plan does not contain any new allocations of housing land.

19.37.15 In view of the diverse character of development within the defined development boundary for Durgates, Sparrows Green and Turners Green, opportunities exist for housing development on allocated land, by infilling, by redevelopment of existing sites and by conversion of buildings to residential use. In contrast, within the defined development boundary for Wadhurst High Street, the compact form of existing development provides limited opportunity for new housing other than by redevelopment of existing sites and conversion of buildings to residential use, subject to protecting the character of the area, particularly within the Conservation Area.

Mayfield Lane

19.37.16 As outlined previously, on the western approach to the village, development along Mayfield Lane has a distinctive character created by large detached properties set in extensive gardens, with mature tree cover and landscaping. Development has taken place principally in a frontage form with many of the houses set back from the road in deep plots; their wide frontage to Mayfield Lane is also a characteristic feature. Along the southern side of the road, spaces between buildings offer occasional views of open countryside. Although the development boundary excludes the full depth of curtilage in many cases to prevent backland development, it is important that special regard is had to the impact of new development on the character of the area within the development boundary. On this basis, it is considered appropriate to apply a policy to protect the established character of the area when considering any development proposals.

VB37 Within the Mayfield Lane 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 frontage character of adjoining dwellings and the spaces around them, existing building lines and characteristic frontage widths;

(2) 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;

(3) landscaping should remain a dominant element of any scheme in accordance with the character of the area;

(4) the proposed development should not have an adverse visual impact on the surrounding countryside.

Employment

19.37.17 The village is an important local employment centre in the northern part of the District providing jobs mainly in the retail, office and service sectors. The village business areas are situated at Durgates and to the north-west of the main village at the junction of Faircrouch Lane and Station Road. The policies for the village business areas are contained in Chapter 7. A large number of jobs are also available in shops and local services situated along the High Street and around The Square, and along Station Road and Cousley Wood Road at Durgates.