

Chapter 14

Crowborough (Inset Map Nos. 12 & 13)

Context

14.1 Crowborough is the largest inland town in East Sussex with an estimated population of 20,830. 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 the Ashdown Forest. The fine landscape setting, attractive views and extensive tree cover give Crowborough an arcadian character that is particularly evident on the western side of the town.

Strategy

14.2 The East Sussex and Brighton & Hove Structure Plan 1991 – 2011 sets out broad policy guidance for future development in Crowborough. Within the constraints imposed by the town's setting within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and its transport network the Structure Plan recognises that only limited allocations of land for housing should be found.

14.3 In the light of Structure Plan policies and the Local Plan distribution strategy, the objectives for Crowborough are:

- (1) *to strengthen Crowborough's role as a residential and local employment, shopping and service centre;*
- (2) *to regenerate the town centre, increasing accessibility and improving the range and quality of shopping and other services;*
- (3) *to provide additional local employment opportunities to serve both existing and future residents;*
- (4) *to provide for around 375 new homes with appropriate infrastructure, community services and facilities, minimising the impact of development on the landscape setting of the town; and*
- (5) *to ensure that development respects the character and qualities of the town, and makes a positive contribution to its townscape and local environment.*

Housing Allocations

14.4 In line with Government guidance in PPG3, the Council has followed a search sequence and in the first instance identified, through the Urban Capacity Study, the potential for some 175 new dwellings within the urban area of the town. Within the constraints identified, it is considered that Crowborough could also accommodate around a further 200 dwellings as urban extensions.

14.5 The work on the Plan's distribution strategy showed that other land on the periphery of the town, including that not within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, is not considered suitable for development in view of the detrimental impact it would have on the landscape quality and because of constraints imposed by the local road network.

Land Within the Urban Area

14.6 Five sites have been identified including areas of undeveloped land previously allocated for housing purposes and extensive residential curtilages. In total these sites could contribute in the region of 175 dwellings within Crowborough subject to compliance with relevant policies in the Plan. The identification of the sites listed below, in Policy CR1, does not however negate the need for peripheral expansion on greenfield sites in order to contribute to District-wide housing requirements.

Policy CR1

The following sites, as defined on the Proposals Map, are allocated for housing purposes: -

- (1) land off Cornford Close;**
- (2) the Fairground site, off Crowborough Hill;**
- (3) land off Blackness Road;**
- (4) land and buildings, off Crowborough Hill;**
- (5) land off Millbrook Road.**

Developers will be required to provide affordable housing and children's play space in accordance with the Plan's policies. Developer contributions for offsite provision will be required in accordance with the Plan's policies to secure the provision of youth/adult play space; new primary school places, foul and surface water drainage, highways and transportation works and schemes.

Urban Extensions

Land at Steel Cross

14.7 This gently sloping site lies to the west of Green Lane and north of Beacon Community College (see Figure 14.1) and is considered suitable for housing development being generally well contained by mature woodland and frontage development.

14.8 It is estimated the site could accommodate some 40 dwellings with vehicular access gained from Green Lane. The creation of a pedestrian link from the site to the A26, through Pellings Wood and housing to the west, should be investigated. The existing bus service should be improved.

14.9 The design and layout should integrate the development into the landscape context of the site through provision of an appropriate landscape belt within the development and should also take account of the need to protect the setting of the nearby listed buildings. Existing trees and hedgerows should be retained and boundaries strengthened, particularly along Eridge Road. A landscape buffer area should be provided within the development to protect the woodland and provide amenity space.

14.10 This site lies adjacent to a watercourse. As the extent of the 1 in 100 year floodplain associated with this watercourse is not known, the boundary of the developable area has been drawn in order to retain a significant buffer alongside the watercourse. However, any developer will be required to undertake a flood risk assessment, in accordance with Appendix F of PPG25 and policies in Chapter 13 of this Plan. This will need to demonstrate that the development itself would not be at risk from flooding and that it would not increase the risk of flooding elsewhere. Particular attention should also be paid to surface water drainage for the

development to ensure that it does not increase the rate of run-off to any watercourse.

Policy CR2

Land at Steel Cross, as defined on the Proposals Map, is allocated for housing purposes. Proposals for new housing development will be permitted when provision is made for all of the following:

- (1) provision of approximately 40 dwellings of which around 12 shall be affordable housing and around a further 8 shall comprise small units;
- (2) vehicular access taken from Green Lane;
- (3) a flood risk assessment should be undertaken in order to demonstrate that development will neither be at risk to flooding or exacerbate the risk of flooding elsewhere;
- (4) a children's play area;
- (5) appropriate measures to protect the setting of listed buildings east of Green Lane;

Developer's contributions will be required in accordance with the Plan's policies to secure the provision of off-site youth/adult playing space, new primary school places, highways and transportation works (including bus service improvements).

Land at Heatherview Farm

14.11 This site, which lies east of properties on Green Lane and west of the Crowborough Ghyll Site of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCI), is considered suitable for housing development being generally well contained by residential development and dense woodland (see Figure 14.2). The woodland will need to be retained in order to prevent development from damaging the ecological interest of the adjacent SNCI. Existing trees and hedgerows within the site shall be retained and boundaries strengthened.

14.12 It is considered that the site could accommodate in the region of 80 dwellings. Vehicular access should be gained from Hillrise and as with the site at Steel Cross the existing bus service requires improvement. The creation

of public access from the site into the adjacent Crowborough Ghyll area should be investigated, although it will need to be ensured that increased activity will not damage the ecological interest of the SNCI.

Policy CR3

Land at Heatherview Farm, as defined on the Proposals Map, is allocated for housing purposes. Proposals for new housing development will be permitted when provision is made for all of the following:

- (1) approximately 80 dwellings of which around 24 shall be affordable and around a further 16 shall comprise small units;**
- (2) vehicular access taken from Hillrise;**
- (3) a children's play area.**

Developer's contributions will be required in accordance with the Plan's policies to secure the provision of offsite youth/adult playing space, new primary school places, highways and transportation works (including bus service improvements).

Land at Alderbrook

14.13 This sloping site is located on the side of a shallow valley, to the west of the Alderbrook recreation ground and east of a heavily wooded ghyll (see Figure 14.3), which effectively screens the site from distant views. It is estimated that the site could accommodate some 80 dwellings. Vehicular access should be obtained from the cul-de-sac Brooklands Avenue.

14.14 The adjacent woodland should be protected through the creation of a landscaped buffer area within the development. The upper parts of the site are visible in local views, and where appropriate planting should be strengthened to help screening.

14.15 Due to the limitations of the local road network a transport assessment should be undertaken to identify the need for any offsite highways works. An enhanced town bus service should be provided to reduce the impact of additional traffic on the local road network. A pedestrian link into the adjacent recreation ground and Alderbrook Estate should also be provided for the convenience of new residents.

The creation of a pedestrian/cycle link through to Stone Cross Road should be investigated.

14.16 There are thought to be several small areas of inert landfill within the site. Further investigation should therefore be undertaken and where appropriate unsuitable materials removed in order to eliminate ground contamination.

14.17 This site lies adjacent to a watercourse. As the extent of the 1 in 100 year floodplain associated with this watercourse is not known, the boundary of the developable area has been drawn in order to retain a significant buffer alongside the watercourse. However, any developer will be required to undertake a flood risk assessment, in accordance with Appendix F of PPG25 and policies in Chapter 13 of this Plan. This will need to demonstrate that the development itself would not be at risk from flooding and that it would not increase the risk of flooding elsewhere. Particular attention should also be paid to surface water drainage for the development to ensure that it does not increase the rate of run-off to any watercourse.

Policy CR4

Land at Alderbrook, as defined on the Proposals Map, is allocated for housing purposes. Proposals for new housing development will be permitted when provision is made for all of the following:

- (1) approximately 80 dwellings of which around 24 shall be affordable housing and around a further 16 shall comprise small units;**
- (2) vehicular access taken from Brooklands Avenue;**
- (3) a flood risk assessment should be undertaken in order to demonstrate that development will neither be at risk to flooding or exacerbate the risk of flooding elsewhere;**
- (4) safe and convenient pedestrian access shall be provided to Alderbrook Recreation Ground and Alderbrook Estate;**
- (5) further investigation into, and the removal of, contamination on the site shall be undertaken before development commences;**

- (6) a children's play area;
- (7) appropriate measures to protect the adjacent ghyll woodland;
- (8) a significant landscape buffer along the south west boundary.

Developer's contributions will be required in accordance with the Plan's policies to secure the provision of offsite youth/adult playing space, new primary school places, highways and transportation works (including bus service improvements).

low density character of the area; hedges will be the most appropriate form of enclosure and open plan schemes will not be acceptable;

- (3) development should not result in the loss of trees, shrubs, hedges or other similar features which contribute to the special character of the area;
- (4) development should not have an adverse visual impact on the adjoining countryside.

Crowborough Warren

14.18 Crowborough Warren lies on the western side of the town abutting the High Weald AONB, and on the edge of the Ashdown Forest.

14.19 The area 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.

14.20 It is considered essential that development proposals within the area respect its existing character. As such, Policy HG9 (Densities) will not apply. In essence, development proposals should demonstrate very high standards of design and landscaping.

Policy CR5

Within Crowborough Warren, as defined on the Proposals Map, proposals which adversely affect its established character will not be permitted. Proposals for new development will only be permitted when provision is made for all of the following:

- (1) the form, scale, site coverage and siting of the proposed development should respect the low density character of the adjacent buildings/spaces, existing building lines and characteristic frontage widths;
- (2) landscaping, including frontage and other boundary treatment, should remain the dominant element of any scheme in accordance with the arcadian, spacious,

Business

14.21 The majority of business activity in Crowborough is located within the Millbrook, Farningham Road and Lexden Lodge business areas, all of which are on the south-east edge of the town, close to the railway station. There are also a number of smaller areas of activity, including Park Road, off the town centre and the former railway goods yard off Western Road. These areas provide many important local opportunities but offer little scope for expansion or intensification due to physical, environmental or highway constraints. Land at Farningham Road Business Area and to the north of Millbrook Business Area therefore provide the principal opportunities in the town for new or existing firms to set-up, expand or relocate.

14.22 At present out-commuting to nearby centres such as Tunbridge Wells, East Grinstead, Gatwick, and London is significant. Additional business floorspace is required over the Plan period in order to improve the balance between homes and jobs, reduce the need for out-commuting and help to revitalise the town.

14.23 The Council's business land study illustrates the importance of existing commitments, particularly the proposed extension to the Millbrook Business Area, and suggests that additional land for business development may also be required.

14.24 Studies have recently been carried out by the District Council to identify suitable sites to satisfy this requirement. However, due to environmental constraints and access problems, no suitable sites are considered available either within or on the edge of the town.

14.25 As such, priority is given to the retention of existing business and commercial sites, and,

where appropriate, the creation of additional floorspace within existing business areas.

Land north of Millbrook Business Area

14.26 In view of the importance of the proposed extension north of the Millbrook Business Area in meeting an identified need for business land in Crowborough, it is proposed to maintain the allocation from the Adopted Wealden Local Plan.

14.27 Located to the north-west of the existing estate, the allocated area provides an additional 2 hectares of business land.

14.28 In order to screen the development and protect the residential amenities of development to the north, a strip of mixed planting on the north-west boundary will be required. The existing trees and hedgerow around the margins of the site should also be retained and improved for amenity purposes.

14.29 Access to the site, using a clear span bridge in order to cross the ghyll, should be gained via the existing estate road of Sybron Way, affording access onto Rotherfield Road.

14.30 In 2003 the District Council resolved to grant planning permission (subject to a Section 106 agreement) for 6,500 sq.m. of light industrial uses and a retail unit of 1,700 sq.m (ref: WD/2001/1813/F) on the land to the north of Millbrook Business Area.

Policy CR6

Land to the north of Millbrook Business Area, as defined on the Proposals Map, is allocated for business use. Proposals for new development will be permitted when provision is made for all of the following:

- (1) vehicular access taken from Sybron Way;**
- (2) a landscape barrier/screen of mixed planting shall be provided 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 on the site boundaries and within the site shall be retained and included with an appropriate landscaping scheme.**

Western Road Goods Yard

14.31 The Council recognises the importance of the former railway goods yard at Western Road to address the demand for low-key business and storage space in the town, particularly for firms who do not need or choose to be located in an industrial estate. The existing policy in the Adopted Wealden Local Plan has therefore been retained.

14.32 The impact of any future proposals on increased traffic generation along the Sheep Plain to Western Road route, and on the residential amenities of dwellings along Western Road, will be given careful consideration.

Policy CR7

Within the Western Road Goods Yard, as defined on the Proposals Map, the low-key business and storage use of the site shall be retained. Proposals for new development, redevelopment, conversion of buildings or extensions for business or storage use will not be permitted if they would have a detrimental impact on:

- (1) the local road network, by reason of the volume and nature of traffic generated; or**
- (2) residential amenity, by reason of the processes carried out.**

Town Centre

14.33 Crowborough's main shopping centre, as defined on the Proposals Map, includes properties along the High Street, Broadway and Croft Road, and to the north of Crowborough Cross, many of which are included in the primary shopping frontage.

New Shopping Development

14.34 Crowborough competes with Tunbridge Wells and Uckfield for convenience (day to day) shopping. A retail study commissioned by the Council indicates that for the period to 2011 Crowborough town centre could support some 700 square metres net of additional convenience

goods floorspace, which should help to increase its vitality and viability.

14.35 The redevelopment of the Fernbank Centre and land to the west are considered to represent the main opportunity for new shopping and other commercial development in the town.

14.36 In May 2002 the Council resolved that subject to a legal agreement it would grant planning permission for a new retail store with ancillary café and a petrol filling station. It is anticipated that this new foodstore, together with the other shops in the town will help to meet the needs of the local community, compete with the large foodstores in nearby Tunbridge Wells and Uckfield and help to revitalise the town. Permission has also been granted for a new retail store on the former garage site at Beacon Road.

Beacon Road

14.37 Land and buildings to the south-east of Beacon Road, outside the main shopping centre, comprise a mix of office, former hotel and community uses. This mixed-use function should be maintained and enhanced in order to complement the primarily retail function of the town centre and to encourage diversity. Within this area, a mix of uses will be permitted including residential, office, community and leisure uses.

Policy CR8

Within the Beacon Road mixed use area, as defined on the Proposals Map, residential, office, community and leisure uses will be permitted subject to access, amenity and design considerations.

Town Centre Highways

14.38 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.

14.39 Crowborough Local Area Transport Strategy puts emphasis on improving accessibility to the town centre by all modes of transport with priority given to improving the

environment for public transport, pedestrians, cyclists and those with mobility problems. In this regard, a scheme for environmental and accessibility improvements in the town centre, including traffic calming and improved public transport and pedestrian facilities is being promoted by The Crowborough Partnership in association with the District Council, County Council, Town Council and the local business community.

Car Parking

14.40 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.

14.41 An increase in short stay parking spaces will be provided at the Fernbank Centre if the proposed new supermarket is developed. The Council will monitor and review parking provision during the Plan period for both long and short stay parking including the future of the temporary provision of long stay spaces at Mead House.

Revitalisation

14.42 The Council will continue to work with the Crowborough Partnership and the Town Council to further revitalise the town centre by improving its attractiveness through traffic management and environmental improvements. In March 2001 the Crowborough Partnership produced Supplementary Planning Design Guidance for Crowborough Town Centre in order to promote a high standard of design which enhances the character and appearance of the town centre. This guidance will be taken into account in determining applications for planning permission within the town centre.

Community Facilities

14.43 The Council will assist the Crowborough Town Council, the Crowborough Partnership and Community Association in looking to provide a new indoor community facility on appropriate land within Crowborough town centre.

Jarvis Brook

14.44 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 specialist shops, restaurants and hot food takeaways.

14.45 A neighbourhood centre has been defined within which proposals for shopping, services and business uses will normally be permitted subject to design, access and amenity considerations. 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.

14.46 Within recent years there have been a number of vacant premises within the neighbourhood centre and there has been pressure to convert the ground floors of such premises to a residential use.

14.47 Such applications will only be permitted where it can be satisfactorily demonstrated, through the marketing of the premises, that shopping, service or business uses can no longer continue. It will also need to be shown that the terms on offer compare favourably with other similar premises/locations being let or sold for such uses.

Policy 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, subject to design, access and amenity considerations.

Where it is demonstrated that premises can no longer continue for shopping, service or business uses, alternative uses (including residential) will be permitted.

Recreation and Leisure

14.48 There is a shortfall of outdoor playing space in the town, estimated to be about 10 hectares in relation to the National Playing Field Association's standards (see Appendix 4). Furthermore the proposed new housing allocations in the town will be required to provide approximately 2 hectares in accordance with Policy LR2 of this Plan.

14.49 In addition to the identified shortfall in outdoor playing space, local sports clubs and the Town Council have identified a demand for additional outdoor playing space and improved facilities.

14.50 An extensive assessment of land in and around the town has been undertaken. This has shown that all sites capable of accommodating recreational facilities lie within and adjacent to the High Weald AONB. In assessing the suitability of sites it was borne in mind that development within the AONB should be in accordance with the primary purpose of designation, which is to conserve and enhance its natural beauty and the character of its landscape, but that economic and social considerations i.e. the needs of the town, can be relevant.

14.51 The adopted Local Plan allocated some 10 hectares of outdoor playing space on land to the north and east of Goldsmiths Recreation Ground. In order to meet the requirements referred to above, it is intended to retain some, but not all, of this long-standing allocation.

14.52 The previously allocated land to the north of Goldsmiths is no longer considered to be appropriate for public open space. The whole of this site drops away fairly steeply and its eastern half is now maturing oak wood. It is considered that the development of this site, even with relatively low-key recreational uses, would represent an unacceptable visual intrusion into the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

14.53 The previously allocated land to the east of Goldsmiths, comprising some 5 hectares, is still considered to be appropriate to accommodate outdoor playing space, together with some small-scale ancillary facilities, subject to careful consideration of their siting and design.

14.54 The development of additional facilities at the Goldsmiths complex would help to create a

centre of sporting excellence essentially within the town. Furthermore, the northern part of the allocation site is particularly well screened and the presence of a natural dip in the landform is such that some built development could be capable of being accommodated through careful design within the contours of the land without any significant impact on both the wider High Weald AONB and on the residential amenities of properties in Eridge Road. Contributions to fund the open space will be secured in accordance with policies CR2, CR3 and CR4.

14.55 The Plan also allocates land at Steel Cross Farm for open space and recreational use. The development of additional recreational facilities at Steel Cross Farm, adjacent to the rugby club and golf driving range, would also help to create a secondary focus of recreational activity on the edge of the town.

14.56 If the need for any floodlighting is demonstrated on either site, it would have to be carefully considered against Policy BE15 (Light Pollution) of the draft Plan, the major concerns being impact on the High Weald AONB and the amenities of adjoining occupiers. Access roads and associated car parking would need to be carefully sited to minimise their impact on the localities.

Policy CR10

The following sites, as defined on the Proposals Map, are allocated for open space and recreational use:

- 1) Land to the east of the Goldsmiths Recreation Ground; and**
- 2) Land at Steel Cross Farm.**

Buildings and facilities may be permitted, subject to careful consideration of their siting and design and where there is no unacceptable impact on either the High Weald AONB or on the amenities of neighbouring residents.

Crowborough Ghyll/Palesgate Area

14.57 The Adopted Wealden Local Plan includes a policy covering the extensive and attractive wooded valley at Crowborough Ghyll. The Ghyll 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 the Ghyll/Palesgate Lane area would be very damaging to the landscape and overall environmental character.

14.58 The Town Council has acquired a large amount of land at the Ghyll with the aim of providing an area for informal recreation and walking that stretches from Green Lane south to Forest Rise at Jarvis Brook. This could take the form of a public footpath/nature trail and will require negotiations for public access with private landowners where necessary.

Policy CR11

Within the Crowborough Ghyll and Palesgate Lane 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.

Infrastructure

Education

14.59 The County Council, as the Local Education Authority (LEA), has advised that the Beacon Community College has sufficient capacity to accommodate the likely increase in pupil numbers arising from the proposed level of new residential development in the town. The LEA has however advised that additional primary school places will be required, and as such contributions will be sought from developers, in accordance with Policies CR1, CR2, CR3 and CR4, to secure the provision of two classrooms at one of the primary schools.

Health Care

14.60 The Sussex Downs and Weald NHS Primary Care Trust has advised that the proposed level of development may generate the need for a part-time GP, together with additional

community services, but that there would be sufficient capacity within existing premises in the town to accommodate these needs.

Drainage

14.61 Southern Water, the relevant drainage authority, has advised that there is sufficient capacity within the drainage system to accommodate the scale of development proposed at Crowborough

Power/Utilities

14.62 The supply of water and power is a statutory responsibility of South East Water, EDF Energy Networks Ltd and British Gas. No significant constraints have been identified in meeting the needs generated by new development at Crowborough. Some localised reinforcement works may be necessary to upgrade the existing supply networks and new site connections will be required which may necessitate some diversions. These works will need to be requisitioned under the appropriate statutory procedures and will be subject to standard connection charges, both of which are outside the scope of planning control.

