

Environment

Introduction

4.1 The environmental qualities of the District, its unspoilt villages and coast, attractive countryside, rich architectural heritage and range of flora and fauna are all highly valued and enjoyed by residents and visitors alike. There is a considerable diversity of environments, ranging from the highly wooded High Weald to the rolling chalk hills of the Sussex Downs, both of which are formally designated Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and of national landscape importance. Traditional land use patterns and forms of built development add to the distinctiveness of local environments and provide a strong 'sense of place'.

4.2 The planning system is an important instrument for protecting and enhancing the environment in town and country, preserving the built and natural heritage and conserving the rural landscape. Local planning policies which seek to maintain the District's environmental qualities and protect them from inappropriate development are well established. This Chapter addresses how these policies should be carried forward.

4.3 In addition, the Plan must have regard to broader environmental concerns, such as global warming and the consumption of non-renewable resources. This recognises that development may have longer term implications on the wider environment as well as on its immediate physical environment. The Plan therefore seeks to provide a land use planning framework for 'sustainable development'. In fact, the Plan's policies have been evaluated to assess their contribution, or otherwise, to ensuring that future development is environmentally sustainable. This process is summarised below and in a separate 'Environment Appraisal' of the Plan.

STRATEGY

4.4 Care for the environment, both built and natural, lies at the heart of the Plan's strategy, as set out at Chapter 2. While it is necessary to make adequate provision for development and change, this is set firmly in the context of maintaining and enhancing the environmental qualities of the area and according with the principles of sustainability.

4.5 It is important to protect areas of high landscape quality, notably Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, together with other areas recognised for their important

historic and nature conservation value. It is also necessary to accommodate change in rural as well as urban areas. The Plan aims to facilitate such change in a manner that ensures that the existing valued qualities of the natural environment are respected and maintained.

4.6 A high quality of built environment is similarly important. Particular emphasis is placed on historic buildings and areas, as well as historic parks and other important open areas within and between settlements. An accordingly high quality of new development is expected. The character and amenity of existing development should always be respected and, where appropriate, enhanced. In accordance with the Plan's overall strategy, specific environmental objectives are defined; these are:-

- (1) *to promote appropriate forms of sustainable development taking account of the need for energy efficiency, pollution control and conserving finite resources;*
- (2) *to conserve the important and distinctive landscape, historic, architectural and visual character and appearance of towns, villages and the countryside, including their flora and fauna;*
- (3) *to maintain the development pattern and the character of settlements and their settings, including important open areas between and within them;*
- (4) *to ensure that development and change do not detract from the valued environmental qualities of the locality;*
- (5) *to encourage high quality in new development, in harmony with the environmental character of the area.*

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

4.7 Sustainable development is that which provides for the needs of the future, including improvements to the quality of life, in a way which minimises damage to the global as well as local environment. It has regard to issues such as global warming and ozone depletion, the use of non-renewable resources and the production of pollutants and wastes, as well as change to the physical environment and wildlife habitats.

4.8 The 'Earth Summit' in 1992 agreed a strategy - AGENDA 21 - setting out how countries will work

towards the protection of the local, national and global environment. In response, the Government has produced its own 'Sustainable Development: the UK Strategy (1994)' and local authorities are initiating Local Agenda 21 processes to achieve action through partnership at the local level. The Council has already addressed and reviewed the impact of its services on the broader environment and has brought these together within a published 'Strategy for the Environment'.

4.9 The Government has identified the role local planning authorities can play in achieving more sustainable development in its White Paper: 'This Common Inheritance' and in a number of recent planning policy guidance notes. These look to local plans to promote land use patterns and transport facilities that are resource and energy efficient, in particular which reduce environmentally damaging traffic emissions, promote energy efficient building designs and waste minimisation and provide scope for greater use of renewable energy sources and recycling. Also, policies should not deny future generations the best of today's natural and built environment, including through the protection of important landscapes and habitats, water and air quality.

4.10 These various aspects of sustainability are considered separately below and in other chapters of the Plan. However, it is also appropriate to set down an overall policy which reflects the desire for sustainable development, defined as improving the quality of life within the carrying capacity of supporting ecosystems, since this is central to the Plan's strategy.

EN1 The Council will pursue sustainable development, having regard to the principles contained in Government guidance and its own Strategy for the Environment, in considering the location, layout and design of development, renewable energy and waste management proposals and in assessing the effects of proposals on the environment, including on water and air quality.

Development pattern and transportation

4.11 Sustainability considerations generally point towards encouraging a distribution of land uses that reduces the need to travel, especially by car, and hence reduces CO2 emissions in particular. Planning Policy Guidance Note 13: Transport provides advice as to how transport and land use planning should be integrated, with particular regard to reducing environmentally damaging traffic emissions. It proposes that more

emphasis is placed on various means of managing the demand for transport and encouraging alternatives to the car. It recognises that more dispersed development tends to be less efficient in transport terms and that uses such as shopping and business should aim to be near public transport facilities.

4.12 Government guidance therefore promotes development within existing urban areas in locations highly accessible to means other than the private car, commenting that this is especially important in respect of major generators of travel demand. This approach also emphasises supporting the community, shopping and employment roles of existing local centres in both urban and rural areas. In order to reduce commuting by car and encourage other means of transport, local housing and employment growth should be well related to each other. Also, an unnecessarily strict division of homes and workplaces may be inappropriate while home-working should be facilitated where it would not impact adversely on local amenities.

4.13 Locally, the established development strategy, continued in this Plan, generally accords with this sustainable approach. It seeks to concentrate new development in the towns, with some growth in certain villages and more restrictive policies elsewhere in the countryside. The substantial existing housing commitments in the District reflect this approach, and are considered to enable efficient access to goods and services without unnecessary increase in demand for transport and road space or a degradation of environmental quality. Therefore, any change to the pattern of future development implied by existing commitments would be inappropriate. Furthermore, no major new developments are proposed in the Plan which would significantly change this pattern.

4.14 Nonetheless, all large developments and those which generate large number of traffic movements should be located so as to reduce the need to travel and encourage the use of public transport and rail freight facilities. It is recognised that within rural areas, development inevitably generates proportionally more car traffic than that in urban areas due to lesser public transport and poor accessibility to many facilities. However, set against this, development in villages may support valuable local services and otherwise help maintain viable communities.

EN2 The Council will seek to maintain the existing settlement pattern and ensure that major new developments generating significant travel movements are located efficiently in relation to existing development and to public transport.