

Introduction

- 9.1 The term recreation includes a wide range of leisure activities from playing formal sports to informal walking in parks or the countryside. The benefits of taking part in some form of recreation are well known and its value for the health and well-being of all age groups is recognised by both Central and Local Government.
- 9.2 There has been a significant increase during the last decade in participation in sport and recreation, with a growing interest in healthier lifestyles. It is anticipated that this trend will continue, creating greater demands for further and a more diverse range of recreational facilities. The provision of facilities, such as open spaces for informal recreation, equipped children's play areas, playing fields for formal sport and indoor facilities for sporting, entertainment and general community use, has traditionally been the responsibility of the District Council, or Town/Parish Councils. However, the private and voluntary sectors are playing an increased role in meeting leisure needs and this trend is likely to continue.
- 9.3 Whilst there is a wide range of recreational provision throughout the District, a number of localised deficiencies have been identified. The District Council has prepared a Cultural Strategy which was adopted in 2002. It is anticipated that this strategy will positively influence levels of tourism and recreation within the District. In addition, the District Council is developing supplementary strategies which will identify more specific local requirements and set out a strategy to meet the existing and future needs of the community. This chapter sets out the Council's general policies in relation to recreation and tourism; more detailed site specific policies and proposals are considered in the area sections. The Local Plan thus contains the land use policies and proposals which represent an important part of the Council's Leisure and Cultural Strategies.
- 9.4 Tourism encompasses a wide range of activities including travel and visits for business and professional purposes as well as for holidays and recreation. Tourism activity is growing in importance in Mid Sussex and it is expected that this will continue, reflecting increases in leisure time, mobility and personal income. It is anticipated that the trend towards more short break holidays especially out of season and day trips will continue. Inland activity holidays are also increasing in popularity, particularly touring and exploring the countryside.
- 9.5 Economic, social and environmental benefits can be gained by encouraging appropriate tourism. It can provide employment opportunities for the local population and generate income to help support local businesses such as village shops and post offices. It can also aid the process of rural diversification and thus contribute to farm incomes. Tourism generally has the potential to enhance the conservation of both the countryside and the built environment. However, tourism also creates demands and pressures on the very places and areas people wish to visit. For example, tourist traffic can cause congestion and environmental damage at popular locations if not properly managed. Pressure for inappropriate and over intensive development can also arise to accommodate the needs of visitors. A fine balance must be struck between encouraging tourism for the benefit of Mid Sussex whilst at the same time conserving the intrinsic qualities of the environment.

Policy Background

National and Regional Planning Policy

- 9.6 Central Government policy seeks the development of sport and recreation in its widest sense, to enable all people, including the elderly and the disabled, to participate in sport.

It thus seeks to encourage the provision of a wide range of opportunities for recreation. PPG17 'Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation' was published in July 2002. This was too late for the guidance to be taken into account during the drafting of the Plan policies, without causing substantial delays in the Plan's adoption. Therefore policies have not been amended, although content of PPG17 (2002) will be taken into account. PPG17 (2002) does state that 'local authorities undertake robust assessment of the existing and future needs assessment of their communities for open space, sport and recreational facilities'. The Companion Guide states 'most authorities have both planning policies and provision standards relating to open space, sport and recreation in their development plans'. This is the case in Mid Sussex as set out in policies within the Plan. The guide goes on to state that 'there is no point in disregarding them (existing standards) before new ones are available'. Therefore the Standards within this Plan will continue to apply until they are superseded by Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG). The Council is committed to producing SPG setting out its approach to implementing PPG17 (2002) soon after the adoption of the Plan. A Needs Assessment as required by PPG17 (2002) will be produced as part of the Local Plan review.

- 9.7 The Government is committed to 'encouraging tourism in Britain while at the same time conserving those qualities in the environment that are a major attraction for tourism'. This is reflected in Government guidance on tourism (PPG 21). The Government acknowledges that there is a need to strike a balance between the needs of the visitor and the needs of the host community and the local environment.

West Sussex Structure Plan 2001 – 2016 Deposit Draft

- 9.8 The West Sussex Structure Plan 2001 – 2016 Deposit Draft acknowledges that there are a wealth of opportunities for both recreation and tourism in West Sussex. It regards the quality of the environment as a key attraction and the desire to encourage recreation and tourism must be tempered by the need always to protect and improve the environment. In the countryside the emphasis is very much on small scale recreational development which should draw on the character of the countryside itself and its beauty, culture, history and wildlife. Opportunities should be taken to extend quiet informal recreation such as walking, cycling and horse riding in the wider countryside. Recreational development in built-up areas will normally be acceptable in principle and adequate provision should be made for open space within or adjoining built-up areas. Regard must be had to the replacement of any existing recreational land which may be lost to development.
- 9.9 A regional tourism strategy has been produced by the South East England Tourist Board which aims to ensure the development and prosperity of tourism in the region whilst having due regard to the high quality of the environment. The Council has also produced its own Tourism Strategy for Mid Sussex. This is due to be adopted by the end of 2004 and will run until 2009 when it will be reviewed. The West Sussex Structure Plan 2001 – 2016 Deposit Draft recognises the importance of tourism as an industry and as a source of employment in the County and gives encouragement to its promotion provided that development does not damage the qualities which tourists themselves seek to enjoy. Within built-up areas the extension of existing attractions and the development of new facilities including tourist accommodation will normally be permitted. In villages and outside built-up areas such development will need to be small scale, in keeping with the surroundings and should where possible make use of existing buildings (Policies E6 and E7 of the Economy Chapter).

Policy Aims

- 9.10 The aims of this Local Plan with regard to recreation are:

- (a) to secure the provision of an appropriately located range of formal and informal sporting and recreational facilities to meet the needs of all age groups throughout the District;
 - (b) to safeguard and make the most effective use of existing public and private sporting and recreational facilities in general, and outdoor playing spaces in particular;
 - (c) to ensure that within or near new development, adequate provision is made for the recreation needs arising from that development;
 - (d) to seek opportunities for the informal recreational use of the countryside consistent with the primary aim of conserving its character and appearance; and
 - (e) to actively encourage private and voluntary initiatives in the provision and maintenance of sports and recreation facilities.
- 9.11 The aims of this Local Plan with regard to tourism are:
- (a) to encourage growth in tourism subject to environmental considerations;
 - (b) to seek a balance between the needs of the host community, the local environment and the needs of visitors; and
 - (c) to ensure that tourist activities and development respect the scale, nature and character of their surroundings.

Policies and Proposals: Recreation

General

- 9.12 The District contains a wide variety of recreational and sporting facilities (both indoor and outdoor) which contribute to the quality of life in Mid Sussex as well as being an attraction to visitors from outside the District. The provision of indoor and outdoor sports facilities has readily improved within the District in recent years. This has been the result of public and private investment and the initiatives of a range of voluntary organisations. For example, purpose-built leisure facilities are located at Haywards Heath, (the Dolphin Leisure Centre), East Grinstead (the Kings Leisure Centre) and at Burgess Hill, (the Triangle Leisure Centre). New playing fields have been provided at Berrylands Farm, in Sayers Common, a new community theatre in Burgess Hill and a purpose-built community leisure facility in Turners Hill (The Ark). A new community arts facility has also been provided at Chequer Mead in East Grinstead.
- 9.13 In Burgess Hill, the new Triangle Leisure Centre has replaced the need for indoor facilities at the Sidney West Centre which has been demolished. It is however the Council's intention to retain the Sidney West site for future leisure and/or community use.
- 9.14 Despite these improvements there remain deficiencies in existing provision. In order to help remedy these and to encourage the provision of additional facilities, the Council will generally take a positive approach towards new development proposals related to sport and recreation. Proposals which would enhance the range and quality of sport and recreation facilities within the District will normally be favourably considered subject to other policies in this Local Plan.

R1 Within defined built-up areas, proposals for new sporting and recreational development will be permitted where they will enhance the range and quality of facilities within the District providing such development would not be detrimental to the character of the area or the amenity of nearby residents and where the following criteria are met:

- (a) they are suitably located in relation to their intended catchment area;
- (b) they are accessible by a choice of means of transport;
- (c) they are of a design and scale appropriate for the purpose intended; and
- (d) other policies and objectives of this Local Plan are satisfied.

Proposals should be flexible in their design so that different need groups and activities can be accommodated.

Protection of Existing Recreational Open Space

9.15 Many areas of open space within built-up areas and in the countryside provide valuable opportunities for sport and recreation. They may take the form of playing fields or smaller areas which are used on a more informal basis. Some may be accessible to the general public, others may be restricted to private use. Whatever their size and function they provide an important recreational amenity for those who live and work in the District. They also contribute to the visual character and appearance of their surroundings. These areas are especially important in those parts of the District where there is a deficiency in the provision of recreational open space.

9.16 It is considered that the retention of existing areas of recreational open space is vital to the quality of life in the District. The Council will therefore seek to protect them from development in line with PPG17 (2002). Unless there are exceptional circumstances which would justify a change of use or redevelopment, or appropriate replacement provision is to be made elsewhere, the Council will strongly resist proposals which would result in the loss of public or private recreational or sporting facilities. The following policy protects such facilities from development:

R2 Proposals which would result in the loss of existing formal or informal open space with recreational or amenity value whether privately or publicly owned, will only be permitted where the applicant can demonstrate that a replacement site has been identified and will be developed to provide facilities of an equivalent or improved standard. This new site must be fully operational prior to development commencing on the original site.

9.17 The issue of protecting open space within built-up areas for amenity and wildlife purposes

is considered in the Built Environment Chapter.

Standard Adopted for Outdoor Playing Space Provision

- 9.18 The District Council has adopted the standard recommended by the National Playing Fields Association (NPFA) for assessing the provision of outdoor playing space. The NPFA was established to ensure that every man, woman and child has access to recreational space within easy reach of their homes. It urges the adoption of a minimum standard for outdoor playing space of 2.43ha (6 acres) per 1000 population. This was originally established as a target in 1938 and subsequent reviews have substantiated its continuing validity, showing that the demand for outdoor playing space has not diminished. The NPFA urges Local Authorities to supplement the standard by considering local needs and circumstances in assessing the adequacy of outdoor playing space provision. The Council has adopted the minimum standard as the basis for assessing the adequacy of outdoor playing space provision in Mid Sussex in conjunction with a detailed investigation of local needs. This investigation has been undertaken in the production of the Council's Playing Pitch Strategy for Mid Sussex, published in 1997.
- 9.19 It is emphasised that the District Council regards the National Playing Fields Association standard as a minimum level of provision. Where the opportunity exists the Local Planning Authority will seek to secure provision above this minimum standard.
- 9.20 The NPFA defines outdoor playing space as *'space which is available for sport, active recreation or children's playspace which is of suitable size and nature for its intended purpose and safely accessible and available to the general public'*. The NPFA recommend that the overall minimum standard of 2.43ha per 1000 population is met by a combination of two types of playing space. The first is 1.6 - 1.8ha of space for formal sport for youth and adult use which comprises pitches, greens, courts, athletic facilities and pitch and putt golf courses which are available for use to local people. Included within this figure is a specific allocation of 1.2ha for pitch sports. The second category is children's playing space, for which the standard is 0.6 - 0.8ha. This includes equipped playgrounds and casual play space within housing areas, which should meet the needs of children of different ages. The NPFA standard excludes school facilities not available for public use, informal open space, landscaped amenity areas, ornamental parks and gardens, golf courses, open water, indoor sports and leisure centres. Full details of the standard are contained in the NPFA document 'The Six Acre Standard' published in 1993.
- 9.21 As part of the preparation of this Local Plan an extensive survey has been carried out of outdoor playing space provision throughout the District compared with the NPFA standard. The survey is published as Technical Report No 4. This survey is currently being updated and is due to be published in June 2004. The current survey shows that the overall provision of outdoor playing space within the District is at present 199ha - 67% of the overall figure recommended by the NPFA given the District's population. With regard to children's playing space 45ha is provided (52% of the standard) and 154ha is provided for formal sport (74% of the standard).
- 9.22 In the light of these survey results the Local Planning Authority aims to remedy significant deficiencies in outdoor playing space provision. Various proposals are put forward to this end. However, opportunities to address the shortfall in facilities within some established residential areas are limited because of a lack of suitable sites. In rural areas, whilst having regard to the NPFA standard, the Local Planning Authority cannot realistically provide the full range of facilities in all villages and account will therefore be taken of the opportunities available in nearby settlements and the possibilities of increased dual use.

- 9.23 Specific proposals aimed at remedying existing deficiencies by providing new outdoor playing space facilities are contained in the area sections.

Provision of Outdoor Playing Space in New Housing Developments

- 9.24 In the past a wide range of outdoor play space has been provided in new housing developments. It is the intention of this Local Plan together with the Development Briefs that have been or will be prepared for major housing sites, to be precise about the play space required, so that landowners and prospective developers will know at the outset when planning a development what the requirements will be. Developers are advised in any case to consult the Planning Department and the Leisure and Amenities Department at the earliest opportunity regarding the detailed implementation of outdoor play space standards on each site.
- 9.25 The National Playing Fields Association minimum standard for the provision of outdoor playing space will be applied to all new developments. Any new residential development adds to the demand for recreational facilities. The Council will therefore normally expect developers to provide the full range of open space facilities as an integral part of each development. The basic requirements for each type of outdoor play space are set out below. These include an indication of the size of development where the Council will normally require outdoor play space to be provided. However these indications are a general guide only; when determining the precise requirements for any development, the following four factors will be taken into account so that in some circumstances facilities may be required on a site which is smaller than the indication given:
- (i) the type of housing proposed;
 - (ii) the amount of private garden space provided;
 - (iii) the location of the site; and
 - (iv) any local open space/play area deficiencies in the locality.

Children's Playing Space (minimum standard 0.6 - 0.8ha per 1000 population)

- 9.26 Included within the overall allocation of a minimum of 0.6 - 0.8ha per thousand population the NPFA recommends a hierarchy of provision in order to satisfy the needs of different age groups. They recommend the following three categories:
- (a) Local Areas for Play (LAPs)
 - (b) Local Equipped Areas for Play (LEAPs)
 - (c) Neighbourhood Equipped Areas for Play (NEAPs).
- (a) A LAP is a small area of unsupervised open space specifically designed for young children to play close to where they live. At least one LAP should be located within one minute's walking time of every home (100m walking distance), catering mainly for 4-6 year olds and be suitable for children with disabilities. The main activity area should be a minimum of 100m² with a buffer zone surrounding it which can include footpaths and planted areas to minimise disturbance to nearby residents. Within new developments at least one LAP per 15 units or 0.4ha (1 acre) should be provided. Although LAPS are unsupervised, the Council will seek to ensure that they are located in areas that enjoy a large degree of natural surveillance.
- (b) A LEAP is an unsupervised play area equipped for children of early school age (4-

8 years old). LEAPs should be located within five minutes walking time from every home (400m walking distance). The main activity area should be a minimum of 400m² with a buffer between it and the boundary of the nearest residential property. This buffer zone can include footpaths and planted areas. At least one LEAP per 50 units or 0.8ha (2 acres) is required. Although LEAPs are unsupervised, the Council will seek to ensure that they are located in areas that enjoy a large degree of natural surveillance.

- (c) A NEAP is an unsupervised site, equipped mainly for older children, which should incorporate a kickabout area and opportunities for wheeled play. A NEAP should be provided within 15 minutes walking time from every home (1000m walking distance). The activity area should be a minimum of 1000m² with a buffer between it and the boundary of the nearest residential property, so as to minimise any disturbance to nearby houses.
- 9.27 The developer will be expected to fund the provision of all play equipment which must conform to British Standards. Playgrounds must be laid out and equipment installed before 25% of the houses are occupied. Signs to the satisfaction of the Council must be erected on the development site and leaflets made available in site show houses which clearly indicate to prospective house buyers where play areas will be located. In line with Council policy safety surfacing should be provided under and around the equipment. Arrangements for the future maintenance of play areas must be agreed with the Council.

Areas for Formal Sport (minimum standard 1.6 - 1.8ha per 1000 population)

- 9.28 Formal sport areas comprise pitches, courts, athletic tracks and greens for a variety of sports. The minimum size should be 1.5ha and in addition provision should be made for car parking and a pavilion. Areas for formal sport should be included within or close to any development where more than 200 dwellings are proposed.
- 9.29 When developments are proposed for less than 200 dwellings it will probably not be practicable for an area for formal sport to be laid out. However, these developments add to the overall demand for such facilities and, as users are prepared to travel some distances to play formal sports, it will be appropriate for financial contributions to be made to enable the facilities to be provided elsewhere in the locality.

Off Site Provision

- 9.30 Most new residential development, with the exception of some specialised forms of housing, will create a demand for new recreational or play facilities. The cumulative effect of a series of small developments without any open space provision on site would be to fail to provide for these new demands and would exacerbate any existing deficiencies.
- 9.31 Consequently the Council operates a policy whereby developers whose schemes do not include provision for the full requirement of outdoor playing space are expected to make a financial contribution towards the provision of equivalent facilities elsewhere. This approach is in line with Government advice in PPG17 (2002) paragraph 33. The contribution per dwelling is standardised for each element of play space.
- 9.32 Developers will be required to enter a legal obligation with the Council under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 to secure the financial contribution before planning permission is issued. The Council will only seek contributions in respect of

outdoor play space proposals which are proposed in the Local Plan or are in a future programme of leisure provision. Proposals for five dwellings or less will not be subject to the commuted payment scheme and proposals for specialised housing may also be exempt where it can be shown that future occupants are unlikely to make use of certain categories of playing space.

- 9.33 More detailed guidance setting out the Council's policies relating to off site open space provision and the calculation of 'The Provision of Service Infrastructure Related to New Development: Part 2 Mid Sussex: A Guide to Planning Obligations' (February 2003).

R3 New residential development will not be permitted unless it incorporates appropriate outdoor playing space in accordance with the NPFA recommended minimum standard of 2.43ha per 1,000 population. The provision of open space is to be made up, as appropriate in the circumstances, of land in the following categories:

- (a) **Children's Playing Space at the level of 0.6 - 0.8ha per 1,000 population.**
- (b) **Formal Sports provision at the level of 1.6 - 1.8ha per 1,000 population of which playing pitch provision should be 1.2ha per 1,000 population.**

Outdoor playing space shall be easily accessible to residents, properly drained, laid out, equipped and landscaped as appropriate to the site and subsequently maintained as required by the Council. This will be in addition to incidental amenity and landscaped areas. Signs must be erected on agreed playing space sites prior to the surrounding housing development commencing to inform prospective residents of their location.

R4 Where it is not practicable or appropriate for outdoor playing space to be provided on site as part of a proposed residential development, the Council will expect to enter into a planning obligation with the developer involved to secure appropriate financial contributions so that the outdoor playing space requirement generated by the development can be provided elsewhere.

- 9.34 Mid Sussex District Council operates a policy which can relieve the developer of the responsibility of maintaining open space and play areas after development is completed. The Council will firmly encourage developers to enter into such an arrangement in order to ensure that open space and play areas are maintained to an acceptable standard. Developers are therefore advised to discuss the matter with the Council's Director of Leisure and Property at an early stage in order to establish the likely cost.

Dual Use

- 9.35 If available for public use, educational establishments and private leisure facilities can

make a valuable contribution towards the community, leisure and recreational needs of an area. Provision of additional outdoor playing space can be achieved through public use of school and private sports grounds. The availability of other facilities such as meeting facilities, sports halls and swimming pools can also help to meet local needs. Where appropriate this Council will encourage the dual use of educational and private leisure facilities (see Policy CS2 of The Community Services and Resources Chapter).

Artificial Turf Pitches and Floodlighting

- 9.36 Artificial surfaces can make an important contribution to outdoor playing space as they increase the amount of use possible. These 'all weather pitches' are growing in popularity, and increasingly required by certain sports such as hockey. The floodlighting of synthetic pitches may be appropriate in certain circumstances and allows play in the evenings throughout the year. The Council will seek to encourage the provision of artificial turf pitches on new sites where appropriate, although great care must be exercised because such proposals can have a serious impact on nearby residential property.

R5 Proposals will be permitted for the provision of artificial turf pitches on appropriate sites provided there is no unacceptable impact on the amenities of neighbouring residents. Conditions regarding hours of use may be applied on any planning permission granted. Proposals for floodlighting will be considered under Policy B24.

Informal Open Space

- 9.37 Informal open space is not included within the NPFA's minimum standard for outdoor playing space. However, the Council considers that informal open space is an important part of the overall provision for recreation within the District, an importance which is enhanced where there are deficiencies in the provision of more formal 'playing space' facilities. Areas of informal open space can vary considerably in size. They may be open land or areas of woodland, local nature reserves or 'pocket parks'. They may be used for walking, children's casual play or other forms of informal recreation. 'Pocket Parks' are variable in size and managed by the local community mostly for the purpose of nature conservation. Informal open space may also serve to enhance the natural and built environment of the area. Such open space areas are highly valued within or adjacent to the built-up areas, and on the edge of a town can provide a buffer between the built-up area and rural uses such as agriculture.

- 9.38 As part of the preparation of this and previous Local Plans, the Council has considered what opportunities may exist for increasing the area of land available for informal open space accessible to the general public. A number of proposals are contained in the area sections of the Local Plan. Extensive areas of informal open space have been secured on the periphery of Burgess Hill - the 'Green Crescent' - and, within the built-up area of Haywards Heath, the creation of a linear walkway is partially complete. The Council will seek further opportunities to increase provision of informal open space to be made available for use by the public. Examples might include areas of attractive landscape, woodland, ponds or land rich in wildlife that become available within or adjacent to development sites. Particular attention will be paid to seeking to increase opportunities on the edge of built-up areas, as such proposals tend to benefit the greatest number of people and can act to prevent undesirable development.

- 9.39 The majority of land presently available as informal open space is in the ownership of the

District or Town/Parish Councils. With the aim of improving facilities for public access and informal recreation the Local Planning Authority will seek the provision of additional areas of easily accessible informal public open space within existing built-up areas where this is compatible with adjacent uses or alternatively, will negotiate suitable agreements with landowners to allow public access. The Council will seek to retain all existing areas of informal open space in line with Policy R2.

R6 The Local Planning Authority will seek the provision of informal open space within or adjacent to new housing developments in addition to the outdoor playing space requirements set out in Policy R3.

Community Facilities

- 9.40 The Council recognises that facilities accommodating local leisure, recreation and community activities play a vital role in contributing to the well being of the local community. Such facilities are diverse and include, for example, village halls, community centres, scout headquarters and civic halls. The Council supports the maximum use and retention of existing facilities. Alternative uses or the redevelopment of such facilities will be resisted where it would result in their loss to the community. The Council also supports the provision of new, extended or improved community facilities where appropriate (see Policies CS8 and CS9 in The Community Services Chapter).

Rights of Way

- 9.41 The Rights of Way network is an important and well used part of the range of recreation facilities available in the District. Rights of Way include, Footpaths, Bridleways, RUPPs (Roads Used as Public Paths), BOATs (Byways Open to All Traffic) and unclassified county roads. The network provides an inexpensive opportunity for walkers, riders and off road cyclists to explore the countryside and assists in reducing conflict with motorists on the road network. Rights of Way within towns and villages are also important, providing access within settlements and providing links between built-up areas and the countryside.
- 9.42 The importance of the Rights of Way network in providing an opportunity for informal recreation in the countryside is recognised in the West Sussex Structure Plan 2001 – 2016 Deposit Draft. The County Council as Highway Authority will keep the network under review, and may from time to time make proposals for revising or extending it. The Countryside Agency's view is that the Rights of Way network will remain the single most important means by which the public can enjoy the countryside. Voluntary organisations, such as the Ramblers Association, the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers and riding groups play an important role in the maintenance and way marking of rights of way.
- 9.43 In addition to the general footpath and bridleway network there are a number of other special categories of rights of way within the District. The first are long distance bridleways such as the South Downs Way and secondly, long distance footpaths such as the Sussex Border Path. Both of these pass through Mid Sussex. The third category comprises rights of way which follow the lines of disused railway tracks, two of which, the Forest Way and the Worth Way, pass through the northern part of the District. These routes act as 'green corridors' which are ideally suited to a range of informal pursuits such as walking, riding and cycling. Their gentle gradients mean that with suitable surfacing they can be used by the disabled. The District Council together with the County

Council will seek to safeguard these routes and to maximise their potential for appropriate recreational activity. Development and promotion of the South Downs Way and management of the rights of way network within the South Downs generally are the responsibility of the Sussex Downs Conservation Board.

- 9.44 The Local Planning Authority will seek to retain the existing Rights of Way network in the District and will support appropriate proposals for its revision and extension. Encouragement will be given to schemes which provide circular or way marked routes along public rights of way, particularly those which originate from built-up areas, railway stations and existing parking areas. The District Council will work closely with West Sussex County Council to identify and implement any such opportunities.

Provision for Cyclists

- 9.45 There has been a significant increase in cycling for leisure purposes in the last decade and the Council recognises the benefits which may accrue from encouraging its wider use. West Sussex County Council's document 'Pedalling Ahead in West Sussex' sets out proposals aimed at realising the full potential of cycling for leisure and tourism in the County.
- 9.46 Three publicised circular cycle routes exist within the District, 'The High Weald Route' a 33 mile route based around East Grinstead is in the north of the District predominantly in the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. 'The Central Mid Sussex Route' is also 33 miles in length and is located around Haywards Heath and Burgess Hill. 'The Downs View Route' is approximately 25 miles set to the south west of Burgess Hill passing through the Sussex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. These circular leisure routes largely use minor roads with very few off road sections included. A new cyclepath / footway has recently been completed at Southway, Burgess Hill. In addition, a new cycleway connecting Crawley and East Grinstead is being completed along the Worth Way. When completed, this route will become part of the National Cycle Network. Finally, a cycle path has been installed alongside the route of the A273, providing a direct link between Burgess Hill and Hassocks. In association with the County Council the District Council will seek to improve facilities for cyclists in Mid Sussex by encouraging the development and promotion of leisure cycle routes.

Recreation in the Countryside

- 9.47 The countryside in Mid Sussex contains a rich variety of attractive landscapes, over half of the area being of such high quality that it is included within Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The District thus forms an attractive environment for recreation and tourism catering both for local people and for those from further afield. Public interest and awareness of the countryside in general and nature conservation in particular continues to grow. While rural recreation is at present mainly limited to a network of footpaths and bridleways, in the countryside generally there is growing pressure for new and improved facilities such as car parks, picnic sites and overnight accommodation.
- 9.48 However, these pressures must be balanced against the need to protect the character and appearance of the countryside for its own sake and prevent inappropriate development from damaging those qualities which attract people to it in the first place.

Retention of Existing Facilities in the Countryside

- 9.49 Countryside recreation and tourism are important because they provide local employment and form a growing sector of the local economy. Where existing facilities have no

adverse impact the Council will seek their retention, and where appropriate, their improvement.

R7 Development that would result in a reduction of existing recreation facilities in the countryside, including public rights of way and other recreational routes, will not be permitted.

Policies for New Countryside Recreation Facilities

9.50 Government Guidance in PPG17 (2002) states that all development in rural areas should be designed and sited with great care and sensitivity to its rural location. The Structure Plan 2001-2016 Deposit Draft Policy NE10 encourages small scale development where it is associated with quiet informal recreation and where it complies with other policies, particularly those relating to the countryside. Informal recreation includes pursuits which are quiet, spontaneous and uncompetitive such as walking, cycling and horseriding in the wider countryside. Large scale development will not normally be permitted.

R8 Permission will be granted for small scale development in the countryside associated with quiet informal recreation or the extension of existing facilities, provided that such development will not have a serious effect on the resources and character of the rural area, particularly in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The cumulative effect of such development will be taken into account.

Proposals will be considered favourably if:

- a) a need can be demonstrated for the activity to be located in the area;
- b) the development makes full use of any existing buildings that are available and appropriate for the purpose;
- c) the development would result in recreational pressure being drawn away from Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty; or
- d) the proposal is located so as to provide a buffer between urban and rural land use.

9.51 The County Council will itself carry out and support practical measures such as the construction of small car parking areas, picnic sites, country parks and nature trails where they are associated with quiet informal recreation. The District Council will support appropriate initiatives and will also initiate schemes which will enhance existing recreational facilities in the Countryside. Any proposals in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty will have particular regard to the primary objective of safeguarding the landscape.

9.52 The District Council will support initiatives that will increase opportunities for quiet informal recreation in the countryside where they do not adversely affect the rural environment and where they comply with other policies in this Local Plan. Proposals within Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty will need to be consistent with the aims of this designation and comply with Policy C4 in the Countryside Chapter of this Local Plan.

Countryside Recreation Management

- 9.53 The management of countryside recreation is very important, for example to prevent conflict with agricultural land uses, to ensure that particularly important countryside features are not damaged by high numbers of visitors, and to enable people to enjoy and understand the countryside fully by providing information about it. Countryside recreation management can range from the introduction of wardens or rangers who patrol particularly pressurised areas, to the provision of clear 'way making', information boards, interpretation panels, map guides and information leaflets.
- 9.54 In Mid Sussex countryside recreation management is mostly visible in the form of well defined and maintained footpaths and bridleways, the provision of stiles and gates and the establishment of local nature reserves and pocket parks. These allow people to gain access to and enjoy the countryside with minimal disturbance to farmers and other landowners. The voluntary sector is of great importance in the District especially through the activities of the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers which have significantly increased in the last few years. A number of other bodies are engaged in providing for public access to the countryside, and these include the Forestry Enterprise at Gravetye Woods, Southern Water at Ardingly Reservoir, and the National Trust/Royal Botanic Gardens at Wakehurst Place. In addition, the District Council's Leisure and Property Directorate, in conjunction with the County Council, is undertaking initiatives in countryside recreation management. The District Council considers it is important that all these agencies should continue to encourage the enjoyment of the countryside for recreational purposes, but that this should be effectively managed in order to conserve and protect the distinctive quality of the countryside in general and the Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty in particular.
- 9.55 In order to allow people to enjoy and understand the countryside fully and to protect important countryside features, the District Council, in co-operation with the County Council and other bodies will continue to support and, where possible, introduce its own countryside recreation management schemes and projects.

Golf Courses

- 9.56 Proposals for the construction of golf courses rose considerably in the late 1980s and early 1990s both in Mid Sussex and in the region as a whole. This reflects a growing popularity of the sport and is probably also related to the decreasing emphasis on the retention of agricultural land for food production, as landowners are being encouraged to seek alternative uses for farmland. There are ten existing golf courses in Mid Sussex (one of which is for private use only). This provision meets the standard proposed by the Royal and Ancient Golf Club. Whilst golf courses add to the range of recreational facilities available they do require large areas of countryside and therefore can have a significant impact on the area both visually and through increased activity and traffic in a rural location.
- 9.57 In September 1991 West Sussex County Council published guidance in order to assist Local Planning Authorities in dealing with golf course applications and this has been adopted by Mid Sussex District Council as Supplementary Planning Guidance.
- 9.58 An appropriate location for a golf course might be on the urban fringe, on lower grade agricultural land, on degraded land where there would be material improvement to the landscape, wildlife habitats or amenity generally. Permission will normally be restricted to

facilities directly associated with golf, and applicants will be expected to enter into a management agreement covering maintenance to the landscape and wildlife habitats within the area of the course.

- 9.59 The District Council supports this general approach. It acknowledges that golf courses can be an appropriate use in the countryside, can improve low quality countryside landscapes and can diversify the rural economy. However, it is equally important to ensure that they have no adverse impact on the environment and applications will, therefore, need to be in sufficient detail to enable a proper assessment to be made. There will be particularly careful scrutiny of golf course proposals in Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Sites of Special Scientific Interest and/or Strategic Gaps or where they would have an impact on nature conservation interests or sites of archaeological and historical importance. Proposals should meet the criteria set out in Policies C2 (Strategic Gaps), C4 (AONBs), C5 (Areas of Importance for Nature Conservation) in the Countryside Chapter and B18 (Archaeological Sites) in the Built Environment Chapter. Careful control will be exercised over the siting and design of buildings, the development of ancillary facilities, means of access, impact on neighbouring properties and on public rights of way.
- 9.60 The availability of water resources to service the development of a golf course is a particularly important consideration and the Council will seek the advice of the Environment Agency in this respect.
- 9.61 In order to maintain the quiet rural character of the countryside areas within the District it is essential that the golf course is seen as the primary land use, where permitted, and that all other facilities are provided on a scale which is clearly ancillary to the main use. Consequently, the District Council will normally restrict the area of any golf clubhouse to a maximum of 600m² gross floorspace. A reasonable level of ancillary provision can be made within a building of this scale. Existing buildings should be re-used wherever possible.
- 9.62 The Council will also have regard to advice from Sport England and the English Golf Union, relating to the size of courses, which will normally be a minimum of 49ha (120 acres) in the case of 18 hole golf courses. Finally, in recognition of the deficiency throughout Mid Sussex of 'pay and play' golf facilities as opposed to private golf clubs, the District Council will seek to encourage the use of courses by the general public and will seek as even a distribution of courses as possible subject to the above criteria.
- 9.63 Golf driving ranges are not considered to be acceptable in a countryside location owing to the intrusive nature of their design requirements, including lights, nets, targets and shelters.

R9 Within the countryside permission will be given to proposals for the development of golf courses provided that they would not detract from the character and appearance of the countryside and only if the following criteria are met:

- (a) **the development will not adversely affect an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Site of Special Scientific Interest, nature reserve or other site of nature conservation interest;**
- (b) **in a Strategic Gap any buildings are located close to the**

- edge of the built-up area boundary where possible and the range and size of buildings is particularly restricted;
- (c) the development will be on lower grade agricultural land or, if it can be demonstrated that no suitable alternative site on such land exists, that best and most versatile agricultural land (Grades 1, 2 and 3A) is not the subject of construction work which would prejudice its reversibility;
 - (d) particular attention is paid to the scale, siting and design of the proposal including clubhouse facilities, the location of the site with regard to access and visual impact on the countryside, the provision of landscaping, the materials to be used, and the extent to which existing buildings are re-used in preference to the construction of new buildings;
 - (e) in the case of 18 hole golf courses the development will normally be accommodated on at least 49ha (120 acres) of land, depending upon topography;
 - (f) the proposals are restricted as far as possible to the golf course itself and those ancillary buildings essential to the course with, in the case of clubhouses, floorspace restricted to a maximum of 600m². Buildings should be of single storey construction;
 - (g) the development will pay due regard to the safety of users of public rights of way and of neighbouring properties;
 - (h) the development will not cause unacceptable traffic problems on local roads;
 - (i) the development will not cause an unacceptable disruption to public rights of way;
 - (j) existing features of the site will be retained and incorporated into the scheme as far as possible; and
 - (k) areas of parking will be appropriately surfaced and extensively landscaped in order not to detract from the character of the area.

Developers will be encouraged to make such golf courses available for general public use. The granting of permission for a golf course will not imply that permission will be forthcoming for a range of other facilities on the same site.

Applicants will be expected to enter into a management agreement with the Local Planning Authority covering the maintenance of the landscape and wildlife habitats within the area of the course.

Proposals for golf driving ranges which require flood lighting, high fencing and covered tees in the countryside will not be permitted.

After Use of Mineral Workings

- 9.64 There are a small number of mineral workings in the District, some of which are extensive in area. Whilst their use is expected to continue for some time, it is appropriate to consider their after use in the event that operations cease during the Plan period. The Council considers that restoration plays an important part in ensuring that mineral extraction complies with sustainable principles. It represents an opportunity to provide sites suitable for recreational use, including land and water based activities and can create wildlife habitats and landscape enhancement opportunities. Whilst the acceptability of any particular development would depend upon the scale and nature of the individual proposals concerned, the Council will consider the principle of recreational use on these sites. Any such proposal will need to have regard to the impact on neighbouring areas especially existing dwellings, landscape considerations and also normal development control and highway criteria.

R10 In the event that existing mineral workings cease to be used for that purpose, the Local Planning Authority will consider restoration for recreational use where it is satisfied that normal development control and highway criteria can be met, and subject to the interests of neighbouring property and nature conservation. Proposals which would be likely to adversely affect an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty will not be permitted.

- 9.65 Issues relating to mineral working, including the restoration and aftercare of mineral sites are set out in both the West Sussex Structure Plan 2001 – 2016 Deposit Draft and the West Sussex Minerals Local Plan 2003, the County Council being the Mineral Planning Authority for West Sussex.

Noisy Sports

- 9.66 Activities such as motor sport, war games and gun sports including clay pigeon shooting are growing in popularity. This is partly due to the diversification of farming, but such activities often conflict with other land uses and can give rise to objections due to their impact on the environment. They can also cause nuisance to neighbouring residents, particularly from the effects of noise.
- 9.67 Some noisy activities enjoy permitted development rights under the provisions of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995 and so may not require specific planning permission provided they occur on a temporary basis. However, such provisions do not apply in Sites of Special Scientific Interest. The Local Planning Authority can also, in appropriate circumstances, make a direction under Article 4 of the GPDO withdrawing permitted development rights and requiring a specific planning application to be made for such temporary uses.
- 9.68 The Council will only permit proposals for these types of sporting and recreational activities where they meet certain criteria relating to noise, nuisance, nature conservation and visual intrusion. Account will also be taken of any code of conduct produced by the governing body of the relevant sport. Sites which are unlikely to be appropriate for such activities include ancient woodland, national and local nature reserves, Sites of Special Scientific Interest and other sites of natural or archaeological importance.

R11 Proposals for noisy sports will only be permitted where:

- (a) the proposal will not create an unacceptable level of noise or have an adverse effect on the amenities of local residents or other users of the countryside;
- (b) the proposal meets the requirements of other policies including those for the protection of the countryside particularly areas with special qualities;
- (c) the proposal would not result in irreversible loss of the best and most versatile agricultural land;
- (d) the proposal is not on a prominent or exposed site conspicuous in the landscape from roads, public rights of way or view points;
- (e) any temporary structures will be placed so as to reduce the impact on the countryside and be removed when the organised activity has ceased. No permanent structures or building will be allowed on the land; and
- (f) the proposal would not generate a level of traffic which would result in unacceptable additional use of the local road network or which would prejudice highway safety.

In all cases conditions will be attached to any permission restricting the hours and frequency of use, the nature of the activity and fencing of boundaries. In most cases the Local Planning Authority will only be prepared to grant a temporary planning permission in the first instance.

Equestrian Development

9.69 Equestrian activities have become increasingly popular in recent years, a trend which is expected to continue. Planning applications for equestrian related development can range from those of a commercial nature including riding schools, stud farms, liveries and sandschools to small scale domestic stables. For the purpose of this plan the definition of 'equestrian development' includes all forms of horse related activity. Government advice in PPG7 recognises that new opportunities for employment and land use can be created by equestrian activities. It also emphasises that a positive approach should be taken towards granting consent for horse based development which respects the rural environment.

9.70 Certain permitted development rights are set out in the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995 and in these cases planning permission is not required. This is the case where buildings such as stables or loose boxes are erected within the curtilage of a dwelling house for the domestic needs or enjoyment of the occupants of the dwelling (i.e. not for any commercial purpose), although there are limitations on the size and siting of such buildings.

9.71 There has been an increasing trend towards the use of agricultural land for horse and

pony breeding and as paddock land for grazing purposes. These uses (sometimes described as 'horsiculture') are normally associated with recreation and consequently do not fall within the definition of agriculture. Planning permission is thus needed for field shelters, stables and other buildings required in this connection.

- 9.72 Riding schools, livery stables and the small scale development of individual equestrian buildings and structures such as jumps and fences can create a significant change to the open and undeveloped appearance of the landscape to the detriment of its overall character, particularly in areas of special landscape quality. The cumulative impact of such development can also have an adverse impact on the countryside and this issue will be carefully considered by the Council before any equestrian proposals are permitted.
- 9.73 The effects on the landscape of farm fragmentation can be the subject of extra control through the use of Directions under Article 4(1) of the General Permitted Development Order requiring specific planning approval for the erection of buildings, structures or fencing. This is dealt with in the Countryside Chapter see Policy C8.
- 9.74 Where there are particular concentrations of private stables and riding schools problems of erosion on nearby bridleways can result. Therefore any new equestrian development should be well related to the existing bridleway network. The network is already heavily used and the adequacy of the network to accommodate additional riding use will be taken into account.

R12 Proposals for all forms of equestrian development ranging from horse shelters to riding schools will only be permitted where:

- (a) the siting, scale and design of the proposal, individually or cumulatively, would not adversely affect the quality of the landscape or its surroundings, nor the amenity of nearby residential property;
- (b) the proposal is well related to any existing buildings and is not sited in a prominent or isolated location;
- (c) the proposal meets the requirements of other policies in this Local Plan, including those for the protection of the countryside and areas with special qualities; and
- (d) where appropriate the proposal is well related to the existing bridleway network and that network is able to accommodate any increased use which will result from the proposal.

Proposals for the use of suitable existing buildings for equestrian development will be given preference.

Policies and Proposals: Tourism

General

- 9.75 The Mid Sussex area contains some extremely attractive scenery of high landscape quality which is reflected in more than half the District being designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. There are several tourist attractions in the District which draw visitors in large numbers. These include the Bluebell Railway, Wakehurst Place,

Nymans Gardens, Borde Hill, Standen and Jack and Jill Windmills. Many visit the area as a result of specific events such as the South of England Agricultural Show at Ardingly or Show Jumping at Hickstead. A number of the historic villages are attractions in their own right and of course many tourists pass through Mid Sussex on their journeys by road and rail between London and the South Coast.

- 9.76 The District Council recognises the contribution tourism can make to the local economy and has adopted a policy of positive encouragement towards it. The Council is actively involved in the management and development of tourism in the District as one of the objectives of its Economic Development and Tourism Strategies. The Council has, for example been directly involved in a joint initiative involving West and East Sussex County Councils, Connex and Metrobus to establish a tourist bus route linking up all major attractions in the area. The project has been run on an experimental basis. In addition, joint marketing initiatives with other organisations are underway with the publication of a range of tourist literature promoting the attractive features of the District and facilities available for the visitor.
- 9.77 In line with Policy NE11 of the West Sussex Structure Plan 2001 – 2016 Deposit Draft the Council will support proposals for suitable new tourist facilities such as museums, information centres, and craft centres in appropriate localities. It will seek to ensure that effective use is made of existing facilities, but will prevent tourism related development which would compromise the conservation or countryside objectives of the Local Plan. It will therefore resist any development proposals which would have a detrimental effect on the environment or the local community.
- 9.78 In association with other relevant organisations the District Council will investigate, promote and support ways in which the tourism potential of Mid Sussex can be realised and enhanced, whilst continuing to protect the existing built and natural environment from inappropriate development and activity.

R13 Within defined built-up areas proposals for new or extended tourist facilities which are of a scale and type compatible with the surroundings will be permitted subject to compliance with other policies in this Local Plan.

Outside defined built-up areas permission for new tourist facilities will only be permitted where they are of an appropriate scale which is in keeping with the surroundings and where they would not have a detrimental impact on the character or appearance of the countryside.

- 9.79 The Council will assess existing levels of accessibility for wheelchair users or other groups with restricted mobility with regard to tourist facilities in the District, identifying cases where provision is good and those that could be adapted to be more accessible. In the case of new development, the needs of these groups will be taken into account in accordance with Policy B5 in the Built Environment Chapter and as advocated by the English Tourism Council in 'Tourism for All'.

Bluebell Railway

- 9.80 The Bluebell Railway is a privately owned and managed company which has been running scheduled passenger steam railway services since 1960. Originally it ran

between Sheffield Park in East Sussex and Horsted Keynes. In 1985 planning permission was granted to extend the line northwards towards East Grinstead where it will ultimately connect with the existing mainline station. Since 1985 steady progress has been made and the line has now reached as far north as Kingscote, approximately two miles to the southwest of East Grinstead. When the line reaches East Grinstead the new station will take over from Kingscote as the main access point to the Bluebell Railway at the northern end of the line.

- 9.81 The Bluebell Railway attracts around 200,000 visitors per year and is now one of the most important tourist attractions in the south-east. This importance will be further enhanced when the final section of the line to East Grinstead is completed. As the Bluebell Railway line approaches East Grinstead it will pass over a viaduct which crosses Garden Wood Road. It is anticipated that the historic trains passing over this impressive structure will become an attraction for visitors in the area. At Horsted Keynes, important maintenance and restoration work is carried out on train carriages and this in itself is a significant visitor attraction.
- 9.82 Immediately south of Horsted Keynes Station is a disused branch line linking Horsted Keynes and Haywards Heath. The opportunity exists for reinstatement and this will serve to further increase the potential of the line.
- 9.83 In view of its value to the local and regional tourist economy and as a public transport link, the Council supports both the completion of the line to East Grinstead and the reinstatement of the disused branch line between Horsted Keynes and Haywards Heath.
- 9.84 The Council wishes to safeguard the amenities of those areas through which the Bluebell Railway passes and will therefore carefully balance the needs of the railway company and the benefits to tourism and the economy on the one hand with environmental protection on the other. It is acknowledged that proposals for future development of the Bluebell Railway would enhance its attractiveness and viability. Subject to environmental considerations (and, particularly those relating to the location of much of the Line within an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty), the Council will support appropriate development proposals which can be implemented without causing unacceptable harm to the character and appearance of the Area and which would serve to preserve or enhance the natural beauty of the landscape.

R14 The line of the Bluebell Railway is shown on the Local Plan Proposals Maps and will be safeguarded from any development which could prevent its completion. Proposals for additional development associated with the Bluebell Railway will only be permitted where the Local Planning Authority is satisfied that such development would have no significant adverse impact on the environment such as through visual intrusion, excessive traffic generation, noise and disturbance or loss of amenity to neighbouring residential properties. Proposals for the opening or re-opening of further stations or stopping places will be subject to particularly close examination.

- 9.85 The issue of a new station at East Grinstead is considered further in the East Grinstead Chapter of this plan. Proposals for additional development at Horsted Keynes Station and the possible reinstatement of the disused branch line between Horsted Keynes and Haywards Heath are considered in the Horsted Keynes and Ardingly Chapters of this

plan.

Accommodation

- 9.86 To support a successful tourist industry in the district it is important that there is a range of tourist accommodation of sufficient quality. The following sections deal with the various types of accommodation and set out the policies for facilitating the development of tourist accommodation in the District.

Hotel and other Serviced Accommodation

- 9.87 The District contains a number of hotels, guests houses and other establishments offering a range of overnight accommodation. Proposals for new serviced accommodation within built-up areas will be permitted subject to compliance with other policies in this Local Plan. However within the countryside a more restrictive approach will be followed in line with Policy NE11 of the West Sussex Structure Plan 2001 – 2016 Deposit Draft. Permission will only be approved for the change of use of existing buildings to provide serviced accommodation or for modest extensions to existing premises, subject to normal development control and highway criteria.

R15 Within defined built-up areas the development of tourist accommodation in the form of hotels, guest houses and other types of serviced accommodation, including extensions to existing premises, will be permitted provided normal development control and highway criteria are met.

Outside defined built-up areas proposals for the development of new serviced tourist accommodation will only be approved if they involve the use of existing buildings which are of permanent and sound construction, and where the proposals comply with the criteria contained in Policies C13 and C14 of this Local Plan. Proposals for the modest extension of existing serviced accommodation will be considered on their individual merits with particular regard to access and environmental considerations.

Self-Catering Accommodation

- 9.88 There has been a significant increase in short break holidays which are now taken virtually all year round and not just in the Summer months. This trend is likely to continue, resulting in an increased demand for high quality self-catering accommodation. Self-catering accommodation can obviously be located within existing built-up areas but there is growing interest for the conversion of agricultural buildings and other rural buildings for self-catering holiday letting. Such accommodation, provided the conversion is sensitively carried out, can form an important part in the development and diversification of the rural economy. There is a distinction however between conversions for such accommodation and permanent housing which is less appropriate in the countryside.
- 9.89 PPG21 advises that Local Planning Authorities should respond positively to the trend towards short stay self-catering breaks by allowing conversion schemes and restricting their use for holiday accommodation only. Less pressure is placed on local services by

holiday accommodation than is the case with permanent residential accommodation and there is less demand for ancillary development such as garages and sheds. Conditions restricting the use to seasonal occupancy or holiday use only will be imposed or alternatively a legal agreement under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 will be required.

R16 Within defined built-up areas proposals for the development of self-catering accommodation will be permitted provided that their scale and type are compatible with the surroundings and they comply with other policies in this local plan.

Outside defined built-up areas proposals for the development of self-catering accommodation will only be approved if they involve the use of existing buildings and comply with the criteria contained in Policies C12 and C13 of this Local Plan. Planning permission for the conversion of a building for self-catering accommodation in such areas will be subject to a condition restricting the use to holiday accommodation only, or alternatively, a legal agreement under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 will be required.

Hostels

- 9.90 The Countryside Agency has identified a need for basic low cost accommodation for long distance walkers and 'backpackers'. It suggests this can be in the form of bunkhouse barns. With an extensive rights of way network, including two long distance routes within the Local Plan area, the District Council supports the provision of such accommodation by the conversion of existing buildings, subject to such proposals having no adverse impact on the environment. In appropriate locations, the Council will favourably consider proposals to convert an existing rural building to a hostel or similar facility to provide low cost overnight accommodation for walkers and riders.

Static Holiday Caravan Sites

- 9.91 In view of the high quality of the rural landscape in the District, the Council considers that the creation of static holiday caravan sites in the countryside would be intrusive and out of character. Proposals for new or extended static holiday caravan sites will therefore not be permitted.

R17 The establishment of new or extended static holiday caravan sites within the District will not be permitted.

Touring Caravan and Camp Sites

- 9.92 There are a number of Certified Touring Caravan and Camp Sites within the District which are available for use by members of recognised organisations. Under the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995 and the Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act 1960 the larger camping and caravanning organisations have certain permitted development rights and are able to certify sites for use by up to 5 members' holiday caravans or tents. Government advice in PPG21 states that this 'is a useful means of providing small sites in sensitive rural areas where larger

sites would be unduly intrusive and should help to contribute to the local economy in those areas'. However, as tourism increases, it is likely that there will be demand for further sites for touring motorised caravans as well as tents and trailer tents. Touring caravan and camp sites are less intrusive than static caravan sites as they require few permanent buildings and are cleared when not in use. Any proposals for new sites, however, will need to be of a scale which is appropriate to their countryside setting, and sited so as not to be visually intrusive in the landscape, particularly in the open downland of the Sussex Downs AONB.

R18 Proposals outside defined built-up areas for touring caravan and camping sites will only be permitted if the site has an acceptable road access, a limited range of well designed on-site facilities are proposed and the site is well screened by existing or proposed vegetation. Proposals must be of a scale which is appropriate to their countryside setting, particularly in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Information Provision and Signposting

- 9.93 Signposting and visitor information are important factors in the management and promotion of tourism. The County Council as the Highway Authority are responsible for local Highway signing which is important to assist traffic to reach tourist destinations along the most appropriate route. The County Council's policy on tourism signs allows for signing for visitor attractions if they meet a range of criteria, including number of visitors, location in relation to the road network, catchment area and opening times. The County Council will permit such signing in appropriate cases but at the site operator's cost. Strict control of all signing will continue in order to avoid the proliferation of signs. Wherever possible, in areas where more than one visitor attraction requires signage, the County Council will pursue a policy of joint signing. In line with their 'Stepping Ahead Policy' the County Council also propose to review the signing of places of interest for the benefit of pedestrians.
- 9.94 Tourist information centres provide focal points for visitors to obtain information on local facilities and broaden visitors' awareness of what sites of interest there are in the vicinity. The Council will support the provision of additional tourist information in appropriate locations. A recent innovation has been the installation of a number of electronic information booths located at various places around the District. The booths provide a range of up to date information about Mid Sussex and their provision is likely to increase in the future. As part of its Economic Development and Tourism Strategies, the District Council will also continue to promote the District in order to realise the tourism potential of the area.

