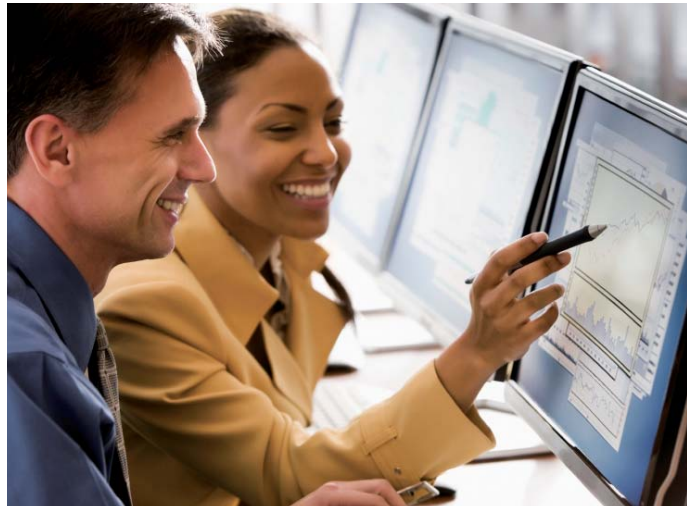


Mid Sussex Economic Development Strategy 2010



Introduction

This document sets out the District Council's Economic Development Strategy for Mid Sussex. It replaces the Economic Development Strategy Statement adopted in 2003. The new Strategy has been prepared in consultation with the business community of Mid Sussex. It contains a number of objectives and actions intended to help achieve the overall aim of a healthy, vibrant and sustainable economy in Mid Sussex. As this is the District Council's strategy it focuses on the role that the Council will itself play in economic development activity. This will be primarily in the areas of facilitation, promotion and communication. However, the achievement of the strategy's objectives will also require the support and participation of a number of other partner organisations.

This document comprises the following elements:

- The strategic and specific objectives that the strategy seeks to achieve;
- A brief background to the reasons for preparing the strategy and its purpose;
- Its links with other strategies, both of the Council and other organisations;
- The importance of working with partners, in particular the local business community;
- The actions the Council will undertake to help achieve the objectives;
- An appendix summarising the key strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats affecting the Mid Sussex economy.



It is important to emphasise that this is an overarching document that describes the Council's strategy in broad terms. The actions relating to each of the objectives are not described in detail here. The Strategy is a programme for the future that will be rolled forward each year. It will be supported by detailed annual action plans that will describe the nature, timescale and resources required for the short, medium and longer term activities to be undertaken to help secure these objectives.



Objectives of the Economic Development Strategy

The District Council's objectives for economic development activity are set out below. They comprise a single strategic objective and seven specific objectives relating to particular areas of activity or aspects of economic development. Actions to be undertaken in relation to each of these objectives are considered in more detail later.

The Economic Development Strategy, through the Council's intervention, seeks to achieve the following objectives:

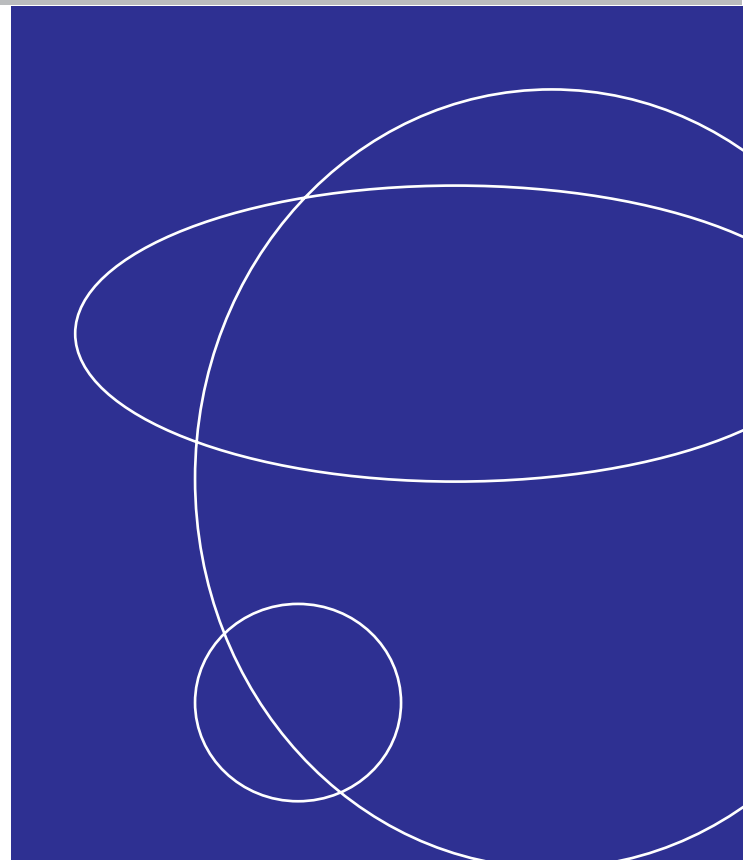
Strategic Objective

- To maintain and enhance a healthy and vibrant local economy that provides in a sustainable way for the well-being of all those who live, work, visit or run a business in Mid Sussex.

Specific Objectives

To help to secure the following:

- A. The allocation and development of sufficient and suitable employment land and high quality premises to meet the needs of various types and sizes of businesses, now and into the future;
- B. Town centres that are vibrant, attractive and successful and that meet the needs of the community for shopping, employment, leisure and other uses;
- C. A healthy economy in the villages and rural areas
- D. A strong tourism and visitor economy;
- E. A business community that receives support and encouragement for start-up, growth and development, including small, home-based and potential growth sector businesses, and where inward investment by existing and incoming companies is facilitated;
- F. The promotion of education, training and skills development required to meet the needs of the Mid Sussex business community.
- G. Progress towards the provision of enhanced transport infrastructure, including integrated public transport and highway improvements.



Background to the Economic Development Strategy

The District Council has been involved in economic development projects and initiatives for several years. In 2009 it adopted an Economic Development Action Plan to cover the period 2009/10. This includes a number of actions, including the preparation of a revised Economic Development Strategy Statement, which was last adopted in 2003. That document contains an overriding strategic objective followed by six key aims and specific actions relating to aspects of the local economy. A number of these remain relevant today, but with the passage of time and subsequent changes in the economy, it needs to be refreshed and updated.

The following factors have led the District Council to prepare a new strategy:

- The impact of the economic downturn. While the Mid Sussex economy has been more resilient than some, it has not been immune from the impact of the downturn. The District Council needs to address what specific actions it can take to help in its recovery and future growth.
- Based on the requirements for future housing provision in the South East Plan, future population growth in Mid Sussex could be considerable. This could have significant implications for future economic growth.
- The development of a number of other related initiatives, including the Gatwick Diamond, which are addressing the future direction of the local economy on a sub-regional basis.
- Potential changes in the economy including the growth and decline of particular business sectors relevant to Mid Sussex.
- Increased opportunity for joint working with other organisations addressing the local economy, including in particular the local business associations who have recently grown in strength, resulting in increased opportunity for dialogue and joint working between them and the Council.
- Feedback from the business community that the District Council should play a more active role in economic development activity.
- The Mid Sussex Partnership's Sustainable Communities Strategy 2008-2018 has identified the Promotion of Economic Vitality as a Priority Theme. The Economic Development Strategy will help to meet this priority.

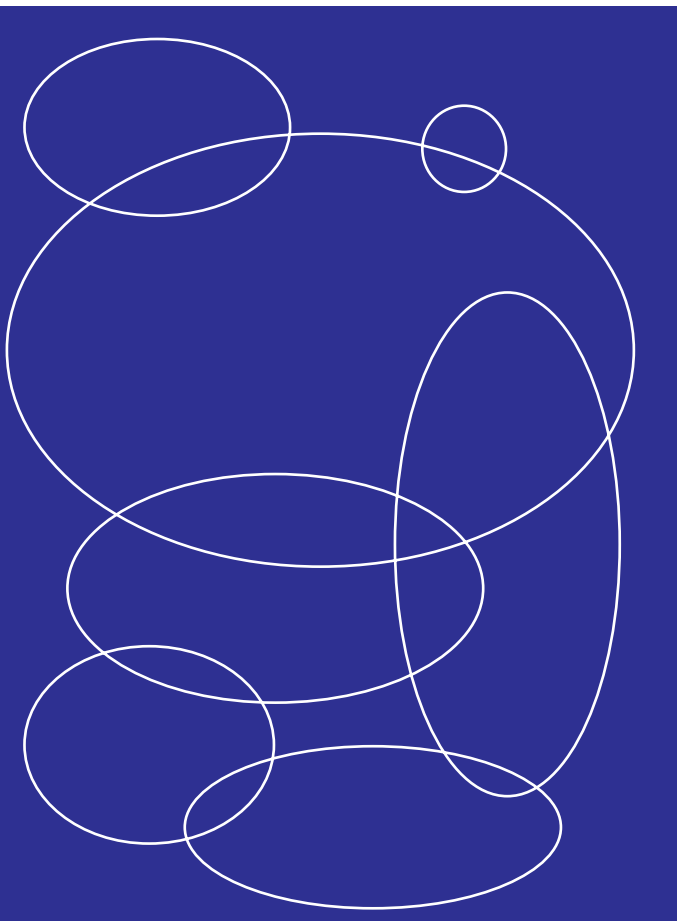


Role of the Economic Development Strategy for Mid Sussex

This Strategy is designed to:

- Provide a framework for the Council's future involvement in economic development and promotion;
- Facilitate interventions by the District Council to support or enhance the local economy;
- Set out the Council's key objectives and actions intended to support the growth of the economy of Mid Sussex
- To forge closer links with the District's business community and to champion their concerns;
- To develop and enhance partnership working with other organisations to jointly contribute to the development of a healthy local economy;
- Coordinate with and inform other policies and strategies including the Sustainable Communities Strategy, the Local Development Framework, the Better Mid Sussex Initiative, and the Gatwick Diamond Initiative; and
- Provide the context for detailed annual action plans, which will set out the programme of activities intended to help achieve these objectives and outcomes.

As a rolling programme supported by detailed annual action plans, the Strategy will be regularly reviewed and updated to reflect changing circumstances and priorities.



Links with Other Strategies

The Economic Development Strategy must be compatible with other strategies and plans, both within and outside the District Council. Externally these include the South East Plan, the Regional Economic Strategy and the Gatwick Diamond Future Plan and Business Plan. In the case of District Council policies, plans and strategies, it is intended to be compatible with and inform the planning policies within the Local Development Framework, including the Core Strategy, future site allocations development plan documents and the town centre master plan supplementary planning documents and their implementation. Other related documents include the District

Council's Parking Strategy.

The promotion of economic vitality is one of the key themes contained within the Mid Sussex Partnership's Sustainable Communities Strategy. The Partnership has identified a number of priority actions to help to meet this objective. The new Economic Development Strategy will complement any strategies or action plans prepared and implemented by the wider membership of the Mid Sussex Partnership.

It is also essential that new economic development is sustainable, with an emphasis on resource and energy efficiency, including recycling. The District Council will work with other relevant bodies to secure a sustainable approach to new economic development by the business community as a whole.

Working with Partners

The Strategy focuses on the District Council's actions. However, it is also important to recognise the involvement of other organisations in economic development activity. In many cases joint working will be needed to facilitate actions, provide information and advice and carry out initiatives. In some instances delivery will be almost exclusively the responsibility of other organisations. It is also important that the Strategy does not seek to duplicate any activities that are already being undertaken by others.



Partners include the following organisations:

- Local business associations including those based in the three towns, the Federation of Small Businesses and the Gatwick Diamond Business Association (formerly CADIA)

Business Link



Sussex Enterprise

SEEDA

Government departments

West Sussex Economic Partnership



West Sussex County Council

West Sussex Sustainable Business Partnership



Adjoining local authorities

Town and Parish Councils



Gatwick Diamond Initiative

Universities and Colleges



Jobcentre Plus



Communication and Engagement

Any economic development and promotion activities undertaken by the District Council must have the involvement and support of the local business community. For this reason, consultation and engagement with local businesses on related matters is vital. The Economic Development Action Plan adopted in July 2009 includes increased engagement and consultation with local businesses and championing local business concerns, ensuring their views are heard and taken into account in the Council's planning and decision making processes. This Strategy has also been prepared in consultation with the local business community and other partners. This degree of engagement will continue throughout the Council with regard to any actions, policies or strategies that may have an impact on the business community in Mid Sussex.



Economic Development Strategy

- Objectives and Actions

The District Council seeks to achieve the following strategic objective:

To maintain and enhance a healthy and vibrant local economy that provides in a sustainable way for the well-being of all those who live, work, visit or run a business in Mid Sussex.

To help secure this strategic objective the District Council has identified seven specific objectives that cover a variety of areas of activity. In consultation with the local business community and other partners the District Council has also identified a number of actions that it will undertake, either alone or with others, to help to achieve these more specific objectives. These are outlined in the following paragraphs. They focus on the actions that the Council will itself undertake, with the emphasis on facilitation, promotion and communication.



A. The allocation and development of sufficient and suitable employment land and high quality premises to meet the needs of various types and sizes of businesses, now and into the future.

A1. To secure, through the Local Development Framework, including the Core Strategy and subsequent Site Allocations Development Plan Documents, the allocation of employment land and / or floorspace sufficient to meet the needs of existing businesses and future employment growth;

A2. To encourage and support, through Local Development Framework policy and development management, the provision of a range of business units including, in particular, affordable premises designed to enable small businesses to start up, grow and develop within the Mid Sussex area;

A3. To assist growth in the local economy by the flexible and sympathetic application of planning policies relating to appropriate new business development in the towns, villages and rural areas;


A4. To seek to safeguard appropriate existing or allocated business sites and premises from changes to other uses unless suitable alternative provision can be made elsewhere.

B. Town centres that are vibrant, attractive and successful and that meet the needs of the community for shopping, employment, leisure and other uses

B1. To help market and promote the towns as locations for shopping, leisure, recreation and tourism;

B2. To support programmes, events, including cultural events, and activities designed to attract shoppers and visitors into the town centres, including buy local campaigns;

B3. To facilitate and support the use of vacant shops for temporary uses or displays to help improve the appearance of the town centres;



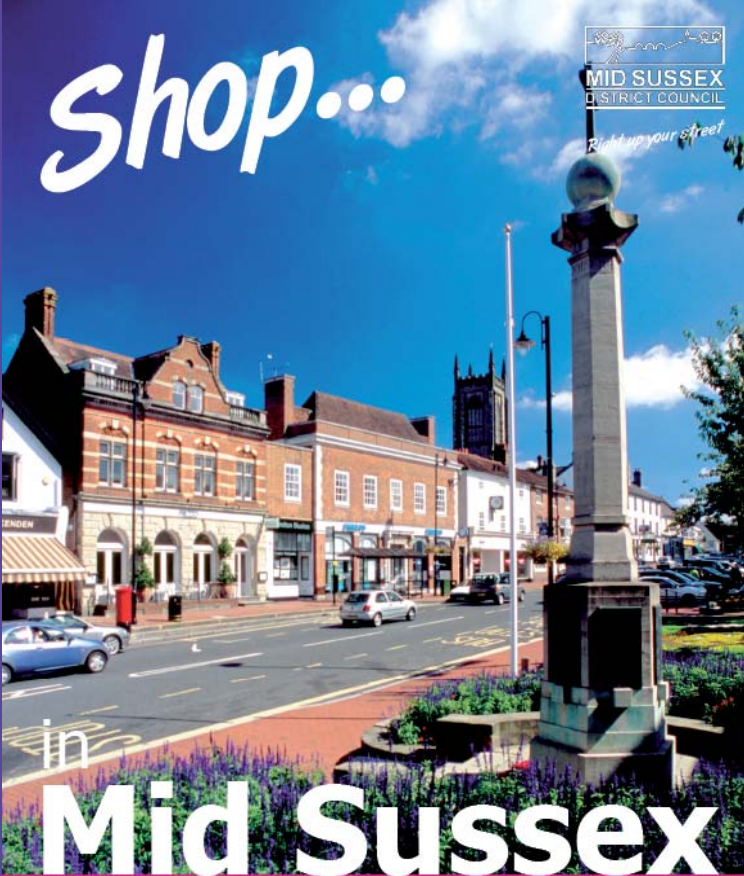
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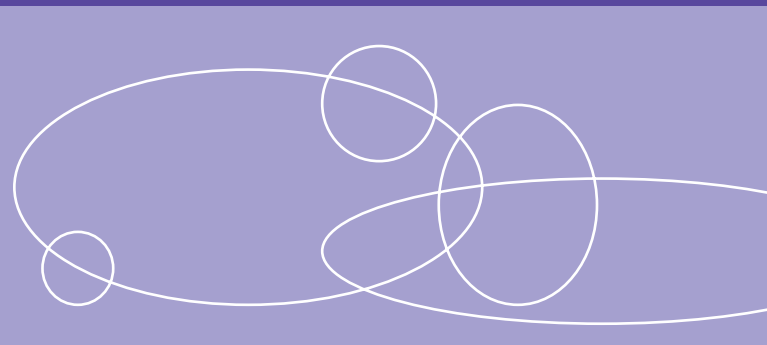

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B4. To facilitate and support the appropriate development of additional, varied and quality retail provision, including markets, in the town centres in order to enhance their role as shopping centres for the population of the towns and the surrounding areas, and having regard to the town centre master plans and sufficient public car parking provision;

B5. Likewise to facilitate and support the development of appropriate leisure, recreation and community uses in the town centres including the development of attractive public spaces; and

B6. To support the appropriate development of the evening and night time economy in the town centres to enhance their attractiveness as places to visit.



C. A healthy economy in the villages and the rural area

C1. Through the Local Development Framework, to make provision for future business growth of an appropriate type and scale in the villages and rural areas of Mid Sussex;

C2. To assist rural businesses in securing funding and other assistance through national, regional and local grant and support initiatives;

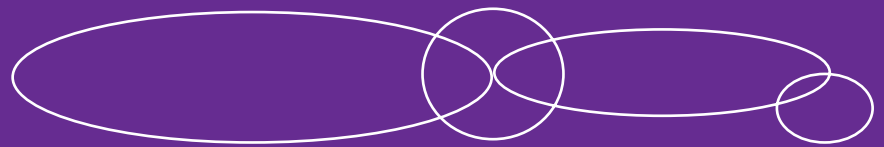
C3. To work with the Parish Councils in communicating the nature and extent of advice, information and support available to assist rural businesses;

C4. To support rural diversification including through the introduction of appropriate new business or tourism uses;

C5. To assist villages and the rural areas in maximising the economic opportunities arising from the designation of the South Downs National Park;

C6. To support the retention, growth or appropriate new provision of shops, post offices, pubs, leisure, community facilities and social enterprises in the villages and rural areas, including shared provision of services in some locations; and

C7. To lobby for an improved information network infrastructure in the rural areas, particularly enhanced broadband provision.



D. A strong tourism and visitor economy

D1. To promote strongly the towns, villages, countryside and attractions of Mid Sussex, including the South Downs National Park, as destinations for tourists and visitors;

D2. To support locally based initiatives that seek to enhance and promote their town or village as tourist or visitor destinations;

D3. To support the growth of businesses that contribute to the tourism economy of Mid Sussex, including visitor attractions, hotels and other forms of overnight accommodation;

D4. To support the provision of new hotel and other serviced accommodation in the towns, including in accordance with the town centre masterplans, and in appropriate locations in the villages and rural areas; and

D5. To support and encourage appropriate development associated with the 2012 Olympics and Paralympics and their legacy.

E. A business community that receives support and encouragement for start-up, growth and development, including small, home-based and potential growth sector businesses, and where inward investment by new and existing companies is facilitated

E1. Through policies within the Local Development Framework, to make provision for a quantity, quality and variety of land and premises sufficient and suitable for existing, new and incoming businesses;

E2. To support and facilitate the development, growth and future expansion of start up and existing businesses in Mid Sussex including supporting home based businesses and the provision of 'move-on' units for business expansion;

E3. To support and facilitate the relocation of appropriate businesses into Mid Sussex, including in association with partner organisations, through the promotion of Mid Sussex as a desirable business location;

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E4. To take an overseeing and facilitating role in helping to secure improvements to business estates, sites and premises;

E5. To establish strong, regular and effective communications with the Mid Sussex business community through business-related events, the website, business directory database and direct contact with businesses and their associations;

E6. To publicise and provide information on the range of advice and support available to businesses of all kinds in Mid Sussex, including start up, small and home based businesses and growth sectors including through the Council's website and by direct communication with businesses and their associations;

E7. To seek to secure, through new development or by lobbying of Government and other appropriate organisations, the provision of infrastructure necessary for the Mid Sussex business community to grow and prosper;

E8. To ensure all Council services work to provide appropriate support, advice and information to businesses in their particular areas of responsibility; and

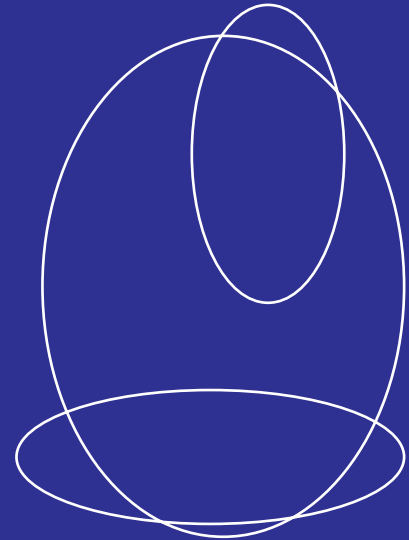
E9. To support local businesses directly through measures including local procurement procedures and prompt payment of invoices.

F. The promotion of education, training and skills development required to match the needs of the Mid Sussex business community

F1. To act as a broker in the development of links between the business community and education and training providers at all levels to help match the skills of employees from all sections of the community with the needs of existing and future businesses, including those in potential growth sectors;

F2. To promote and provide information on the range of skills development and training initiatives available nationally and locally to businesses and their employees; and

F3. To promote the upskilling of the workforce and young people and optimise local higher education graduate talent for the benefit of businesses.



G. Progress towards the provision of enhanced transport infrastructure, including integrated public transport and highway improvements

G1. To seek to secure, through new development or lobbying of Government and other organisations, the provision of appropriate new transport infrastructure and highway improvements to help relieve traffic congestion and enhance traffic flows;

G2. To seek to secure and lobby for the provision of improved public transport facilities, including progress towards an integrated public transport system within Mid Sussex; and

G3. To seek to secure the provision of improved public transport links between the principal business areas and the town centres and between the main residential areas and the town centres and stations.

Delivering the Strategy

These objectives and actions focus on the activities of the District Council itself, and the outcomes we feel we can and will seek to deliver. As this document is intended to be an overarching strategy, it does not describe in detail the steps that will be taken to achieve these outcomes. These will be contained in the individual annual action plans that will follow adoption of the Strategy. An action plan for 2009/10 has already been approved and is being implemented. A new action plan will be prepared for 2010/11, in consultation with the business community and other interested parties. The same procedure will be followed for subsequent action plans.

It is inevitable that many of the actions in this Strategy will be carried out alongside or in association with other partners involved in economic development. The Council will work with these partners to research existing best practice prior to the implementation of any actions. It will also need to ensure that its actions complement those being carried out by other organisations, and do not compete with or duplicate their work. In some cases, for example the promotion of the town centres for shopping and other activities or the promotion of Mid Sussex for inward investment, the District Council will be working alongside or in partnership with other organisations, and may be just one of a number of parties carrying out a particular activity. These will be developed in more detail in the annual action plans. Whichever way these initiatives are carried out, individually or in partnership, it is important that all involved seek similar outcomes, which will ensure a greater chance of success.



Mid Sussex Business Directory



Measuring Success

The annual action plans will contain details of the actions that will be undertaken to help secure the strategy's objectives. A set of success criteria relating to these actions will be established in order to measure the extent to which the particular objectives have been achieved. These measures will be set out in detail in the action plans when they are adopted.

A Summary of the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats relating to the Mid Sussex economy

Mid Sussex is among the most successful economies in Sussex.

Its particular strengths include the following:

- High levels of economic activity rates;
- Low unemployment
- High rates of new business formation and business survival;
- Relatively high business density with small business focus;
- Diverse business base, no reliance on a few large firms or sectors;
- Strengths in key sectors such as knowledge and creative industries, aircraft simulation and precision engineering;
- Strong skills and educational achievement levels;
- Locational benefits - road, rail air and sea / tunnel;
- Outstanding environment and quality of life;
- Key part of Gatwick Diamond;
- Strengthening home based working sector.



However, there are some weaknesses too. These include:

- Actual numbers of people in local employment has declined in recent years;
- Some key sectors of the local economy are seen as vulnerable for the future, with consequent risk to employment base;
- Significant net out-commuting to employment centres elsewhere;
- Town centres are under performing and are in need of regeneration / investment;
- There are skills shortages in some areas / sectors;
- A lack of suitable business premises in some areas / sectors / company sizes, and some outdated business sites;
- Allocated employment sites have not been brought forward;
- Inadequate supporting infrastructure / accessibility in some areas;
- Inadequate broadband provision in some rural areas.

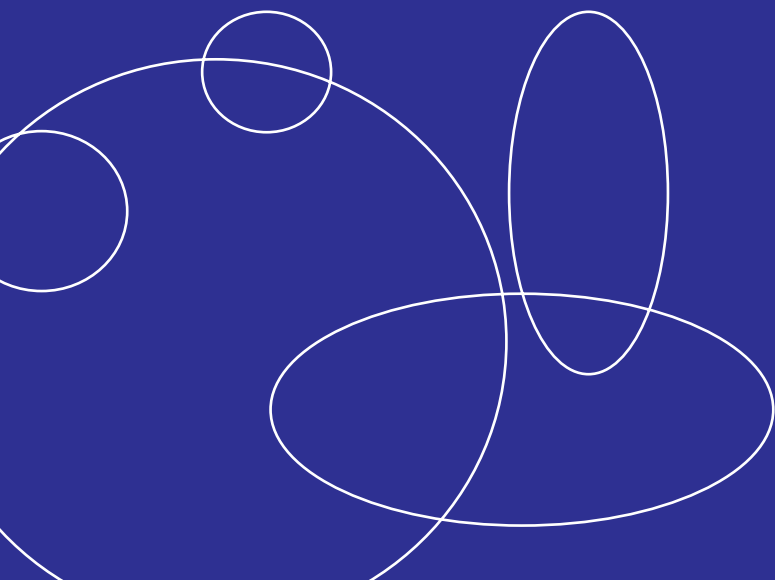
Future opportunities include:

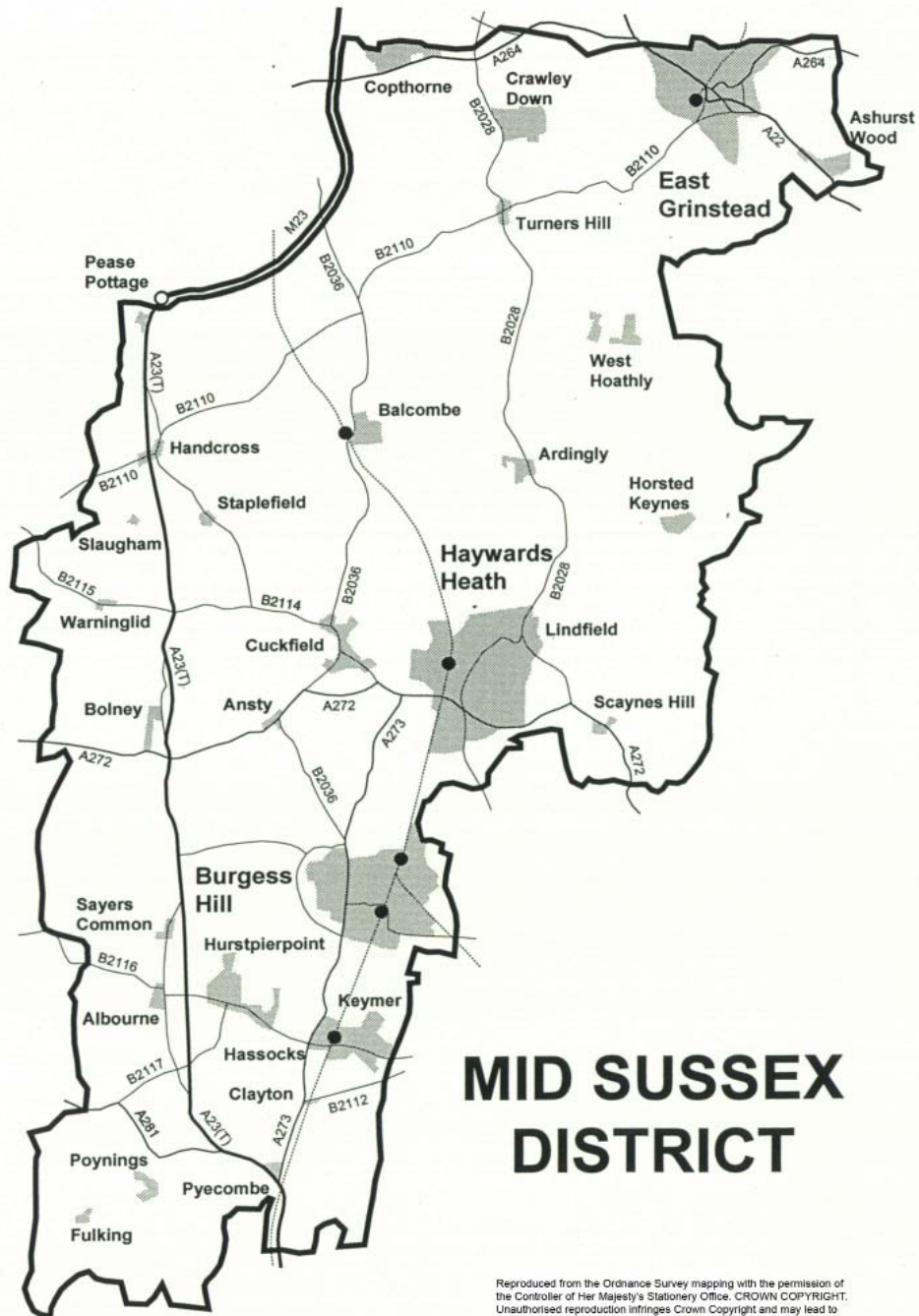
- Economic growth arising from planned housing and population increases in the medium term, which will support the labour market and consumer related and public services;
- Implementation of town centre regeneration projects;
- Creation of new shopping / leisure / cultural / recreation areas in the town centres;
- The Gatwick Diamond initiative;
- Development in growth sectors, including some in which Mid Sussex is already strong.



Potential threats include:

- Significant economic growth in competing areas nearby;
- Increased competition through growth in retail parks and internet shopping;
- Reduction in some key business sectors;
- Failure to address infrastructure and accessibility issues;
- Adverse impact on the environment and quality of life arising from new development;
- Resistance to change / new development in some locations.





MID SUSSEX DISTRICT

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For more information on Economic Development activity in Mid Sussex:

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