

Introduction

- 6.1 Mid Sussex has traditionally enjoyed a healthy and prosperous local economy, and in common with other parts of Central Sussex has experienced considerable economic growth over the last 20-30 years. Its location at the heart of a large regional market with excellent transport links by road, rail, sea and air, an outstanding physical environment and a skilled local workforce have all been significant factors in attracting business development and economic investment over this period.
- 6.2 Along with the remainder of the region, the performance of the District's economy has been subject to periodic variations in recent decades. However, the local economy has remained relatively resilient when compared to the rest of West Sussex, the south-east region and the UK as a whole. For example, unemployment has remained well below the regional and national averages throughout this period, and even at the depths of the recession, the economy was performing better than that of any other West Sussex district. This trend has continued into the new century, with the overall health of the economy reflected by unemployment levels amongst the lowest in the country.
- 6.3 This resilience and relative health makes Mid Sussex one of the most attractive locations for new business development. However, the outstanding environmental quality of the District means that such pressures must be handled sensitively and balanced against the need to protect those resources which attract many businesses here in the first place. This chapter examines the extent and location of new business development in Mid Sussex over the period to 2006.

A Definition

- 6.4 It should be noted that throughout this Local Plan in general and in this chapter in particular, the term 'business' is used to cover commercial/office, industrial and storage/warehousing uses, but not shopping, which is considered separately in the Shopping Chapter of this Local Plan.

The Nature of the Mid Sussex Economy

- 6.5 The economy of Mid Sussex is particularly diverse with a wide range of businesses engaged in a variety of activities. There are around 40 companies with over 100 employees, and a number of important companies have established their national or regional headquarters in the District. However, in common with the rest of Sussex the great majority of businesses are small, employing under 25 people. In terms of employment, the service sector is predominant within the District. However, there are significant local variations. For example, in Burgess Hill approximately one third of employment is in manufacturing, whereas in Haywards Heath the service sector clearly predominates. The economies of the three main towns are generally complementary, with an emphasis on general and, increasingly, 'high tech' industries in Burgess Hill, offices in Haywards Heath, and a more even spread in East Grinstead. This diversity and the absence of any reliance on the fortunes of a few large companies is a particular strength which has contributed to the overall resilience of the local economy during wider economic downturns. Mid Sussex is also fortunate in possessing a number of companies in potential growth sectors in the economy including electronics, engineering, science based industry, commercial and financial services and travel and tourism. There is also a high quality labour force with a range of skills and a history of good labour relations.
- 6.6 Most employment opportunities occur in the three main towns of Burgess Hill, East Grinstead and Haywards Heath and this will continue to be the case as a result of policies in this Local Plan and its predecessors. However, while employment in the traditional

rural industries of agriculture and forestry will continue to decline, there are also numerous firms located in the villages and the countryside throughout the District. These continue to make an important contribution to the local economy and provide local employment opportunities for those living in the rural area. This Local Plan will seek to ensure that this contribution is safeguarded, subject to the protection of the rural environment.

- 6.7 While local towns and villages are important centres of employment, a number of local residents also work outside the District, for example, in London, Brighton, Crawley and, to an increasing extent at Gatwick Airport. On the other hand, there is also some commuting into the District from elsewhere to employment centres in Mid Sussex. Due to advances in communications technology, the importance of home working within the District continues to grow.

Policy Background

- 6.8 The Introduction to this Local Plan outlines the general strategy for the future of Mid Sussex over the period to 2006. This includes the need to balance appropriate economic growth with the protection of the environment, and the need to ensure that any development which does take place is carried out in a sustainable manner. All policies and proposals in the remainder of this chapter must be set against this general background.
- 6.9 New business development in Mid Sussex is subject to a range of policy guidance at national, regional and Structure Plan level. This background is considered in the following paragraphs.

National and Regional Planning Policy

- 6.10 A number of Planning Policy Guidance Notes are of particular relevance to economic development. These include PPG 4 (Industrial and Commercial Development and Small Firms) and PPG 7 (The Countryside and the Rural Economy). PPG 13 relating to Transport is also important with regard to the location of new development, reducing the need to travel and to the concept of sustainability. PPG3 (Housing) encourages Local Authorities to re-examine existing employment allocations in view of the need to minimise the consumption of green field sites.
- 6.11 At regional level, RPG 9 (issued March 2001) sets the broad context for planning in the south-east. The objectives of RPG 9 are economic growth, sustainable development, environmental improvement and opportunity and choice. The guidance reflects the generally buoyant nature of the region's economy, but highlights areas which have lagged behind in terms of economic progress and which stand in need of further development.
- 6.12 For the purposes of the guidance, Mid Sussex broadly falls within the 'Crawley/Gatwick/M23' sub-region of the Western Arc. The RPG recognises that Gatwick Airport is the single most important element in the area's economy, and that the expected additional demand for labour will need to be met if the associated economic benefits are to be maximised. However, local authorities should accommodate the economic and associated housing growth in a sustainable manner which minimises additional pressures on land and labour resources, and which takes into account restraints in terms of infrastructure, congestion and the high quality of much of the area's environment.

West Sussex Structure Plan Background

- 6.13 Since publication of the Revised Deposit Draft Local Plan, the West Sussex Structure Plan has progressed to the Deposit Draft stage, covering the period from 2001 - 2016. However, the employment policies of this Local Plan have been prepared against the strategy of the Third Review of the West Sussex Structure Plan, later embodied in the West Sussex Structure Plan 1998 (not formally adopted), and so the policies which follow should be considered against that background. That strategy is based primarily on a sustainable approach to new development in terms of its location, amount and type. Two of the Structure Plan's twelve strategic objectives are the economic and social well-being of the County's inhabitants, and the growth of its business enterprises. However, these must be balanced against other objectives including those relating to the protection and improvement of the urban and rural environment and reducing the need for travel, particularly the use of the private car.
- 6.14 The Structure Plan determines the amount of new business development to be provided in the District up to 2011 (longer than the period covered by this Local Plan). In doing so it recognises that the provision of housing and business development are interlinked and balancing the provision of homes and jobs is an aim of the Plan. However, it also recognises that, in Central Sussex, which includes Mid Sussex, unrestrained economic growth would lead to a demand for new house building beyond the environmental capacity of the area. The inability to provide sufficient housing to meet labour demands may lead to inward commuting by workers from elsewhere, contrary to the aim of the Structure Plan to reduce the demand for travel. The Plan therefore acknowledges that there will need to be a degree of restraint on economic growth in Central Sussex and states in Policy E1 that the total allocations for business development in Local Plans should generate additional employment no faster and, if possible, more slowly than the increase in the resident workforce. This will avoid adding to, and if possible reduce, the pressure of labour demand.
- 6.15 It is against this background that the Structure Plan sets the business floorspace requirement for Mid Sussex at 150,000m² for the period from 1995 to 2011 (Structure Plan Policy E1). This provision is for development within Use Classes A2 (financial and professional services), B1 (including offices and light industry), B2 (general industry) and B8 (storage or distribution) of the Use Classes Order 1987.
- 6.16 At the time of the publication of the 1998 Structure Plan (not formally adopted), the position in Mid Sussex was that once land already identified in Local Plans, existing commitments and permissions, and an allowance for development on unidentified sites are all taken into account, the provision of new business development over the Local Plan period to 2006 already met the Structure Plan requirement (to 2011).
- 6.17 Since that time it has been the case that a number of sites with business allocations or planning permissions have been developed, or have gained planning permission, for alternative purposes. Similarly, a number of previous business allocations and buildings previously in office use are now designated as housing sites in this Local Plan. In terms of future provision, there is a level of uncertainty associated with the amount of business land which will be required in order to balance additional housing distributions arising from the review of the 1998 Structure Plan.
- 6.18 Given the factors outlined above, it is likely that there will be a medium-term need to identify additional land for business purposes in the District. However, in view of the current uncertainty regarding the Structure Plan, and the shorter period of this Local Plan, it is not considered necessary to identify additional business land over and above the remaining allocations which have been brought forward in policy E1 below. Given the existing low levels of unemployment and the comparatively low demand for new business

premises currently experienced throughout the District, any additional requirements which may arise should be satisfactorily accommodated through the subsequent review of this Local Plan.

Economic Development Strategy

- 6.19 As a result of the effects of the recession of the early 1990s on the local economy, and in particular the rapid rise in unemployment, the District Council resolved to prepare an Economic Development Strategy for Mid Sussex. Initially adopted in December 1993 the Strategy incorporates a range of objectives and courses of action designed to assist in the recovery and growth of the Mid Sussex economy. It does so in the context of existing and emerging planning policies, and in such a way that the environment of the District is safeguarded. The overall objective of the Strategy is:

To enable and encourage the development of a prosperous, well balanced and sustainable local economy capable of meeting the economic and employment needs of the Mid Sussex community whilst safeguarding the amenities and high quality environment of the District.

- 6.20 To help achieve this the Strategy focuses on three distinct areas of activity:

- Business Development
- Business Promotion, Advice and Information
- Training

A number of initiatives have already been implemented, many in association with other organisations in the wider business community. The Strategy is an ongoing project, and the courses of action and objectives are subject to regular review, the most recent of which took place in 2003. It is also designed to complement those of other bodies such as the County Council. As such this is an important element in the background to economic development and policy issues in Mid Sussex.

Policy Aims

- 6.21 The aims of the Local Plan with regard to the economy are:
- (a) to ensure the continued prosperity of Mid Sussex by enabling and encouraging growth in the local economy and to provide a range of job opportunities for the local population whilst at the same time safeguarding the amenities and environment of the District;
 - (b) to ensure that the growth in employment is kept in balance with the rate of additional house building provision;
 - (c) to ensure that new business development takes place in a sustainable manner and in particular to seek to locate such development so as to minimise the need for travel;
 - (d) to seek to meet the needs of established local firms and to make adequate provision for their expansion, and for the relocation of other firms to Mid Sussex so far as is compatible with the other objectives of the Local Plan;

- (e) to ensure the continued contribution of small firms to the local economy by providing them, through the application of its policies, with as wide a range of business opportunities as is possible;
- (f) to ensure that new business development is satisfactorily located and designed, particularly from the point of view of appearance, traffic and local amenity;
- (g) to seek, where possible, improvements to existing industrial and commercial sites where this will raise the standard of the environment and amenity of the area;
- (h) to make provision, where practicable, for the relocation of unneighbourly business uses to more appropriate sites; and
- (i) to take full account of the importance of the rural economy in maintaining the high quality of the District's environment.

Policies and Proposals

The Provision of New Business Development

- 6.22 Policy E1 of the 1998 Structure Plan (not formally adopted) states that provision should be made for 150,000m² of new business development in Mid Sussex over the period from 1995 to 2011. The Structure Plan states that this figure is not intended to be prescriptive or inflexible and may need revision to ensure job growth matches housing provision. However, the policy also indicates that in Central Sussex, which includes Mid Sussex District, Local Plan allocations should, if possible, generate jobs at a slower rate than growth in the resident workforce in order to help reduce the pressure of labour demand.
- 6.23 As set out in paragraphs 6.16 to 6.19 above, the business land provision in Mid Sussex over the period of this Local Plan (to 2006) meets, on a pro-rata basis, the requirements of policy E1 of the 1998 Structure Plan (to 2011). While the Structure Plan requirements are intended to be flexible, in view of the need to reduce the rate of job growth this Local Plan does not seek to allocate land over and above the District's strategic requirement. Any excess would only be considered as a result of policies and proposals relating to specific sites or where individual circumstances indicate that additional business development would be appropriate.
- 6.24 Most of the sites allocated for business development in this Local Plan are allocated in Burgess Hill, East Grinstead and Haywards Heath. Due to its comparatively recent preparation and similar Plan period extending to 2006, unimplemented business allocations in the Burgess Hill Local Plan have been carried forward where appropriate. Redevelopment of the railway station and Mill Green Road Depot sites represent the major opportunity for new business development in Haywards Heath. In the case of East Grinstead, the options for new large-scale business development are more limited due to the restricted capacity of the town. Nevertheless, major sites identified in the 1985 East Grinstead and Worth Local Plan which have yet to be implemented have been re-examined and where appropriate carried forward into this draft Local Plan. The opportunity has also been taken to examine other potential development sites where local circumstances permit, and a limited number of additional sites have been identified. The contribution of the villages and rural areas to the overall level of business development is more modest. However, where appropriate, a limited number of sites

have been identified in those areas.

- 6.25 Monitoring of the business floorspace which comes forward from these sites will be undertaken on an annual basis. A plan, monitor and manage approach will be applied to this to ensure that adequate business floorspace is provided within the District and that a balance between jobs and homes is maintained.
- 6.26 The identified sites are considered in more detail in the area-specific chapters of this Local Plan.
- 6.27 In addition to the allocated floorspace provision, further sites, as yet unidentified, may come forward which may be suitable for business development. Such uses will normally be small scale, but will nevertheless contribute to the overall floorspace requirement for the District.

Types of Business Development

- 6.28 In order to provide owners of business property with a greater degree of commercial freedom, The Use Classes Order 1987 established a broad classification of business uses (see paragraph 6.16 above). Changes of use within a particular Use Class generally do not require planning permission. Similarly, changes of use between certain Use Classes, for example from Class B2 (general industry) to B1 (light industry and office), can be carried out without consent. This system of classification reflects the advice contained in PPG 4 that increasingly, a mix of industrial and commercial activities can often take place without causing unacceptable disturbance in terms of increased traffic, noise and pollution.
- 6.29 Whilst office uses and light industrial processes are now incorporated within a single use class (B1), the Council considers that, exceptionally, a distinction between the two uses should be retained on certain allocated sites. This is particularly relevant in the case of office developments where location and design constraints, or the inclusion of business floorspace as part of a mixed use scheme, makes the inclusion of industrial accommodation impractical or undesirable.
- 6.30 The sites allocated for business use within the District are set out in policy E1 below. The policy numbers in brackets refer to the detailed proposals included in individual area chapters. These set out the particular characteristics and constraints of each site, together with the uses for which they had been allocated.
- 6.31 In accordance with the policy aims set out in paragraph 6.22 above, the allocations seek to meet the demand for the range of industrial, storage and general business accommodation within the District over the Plan period, whilst at the same time recognising the need to protect the environment. Accordingly, the business allocations in area chapters may refer to development within a particular Use Class, either solely or in combination with or as an alternative to other uses. For example, sites considered suitable for general industrial use (B2) may be allocated in association with Class B8 (storage and distribution) uses.

E1 Land at the following sites is allocated for new or extended business development which may involve an increase in business floorspace:

- i) Land to the south of Maltings Park, Burgess Hill (BH9)
- ii) Land to the north of Maltings Park, Burgess Hill (BH10)
- iii) Land between Pookebourne Stream and York Road West, Burgess Hill (BH11)
- iv) Former Sewage Treatment Works, Burgess Hill (BH12)
- v) Extension to Birches Industrial Estate, East Grinstead (EG9)
- vi) Christopher Road, East Grinstead, (EG10)
- vii) King Street/Christopher Road/London Road, East Grinstead (EG11)
- viii) Railway Approach, East Grinstead (EG12)
- ix) Haywards Heath Station (HH8)
- x) Land to the rear of Mill Green Road, Haywards Heath (HH13)
- xi) Bolney Grange (BO2)
- xii) Borers Yard, Copthorne (CO3)
- xiii) Hassocks Goods Yard (KH3)
- xiv) Land adjacent A23, Pease Pottage (PP2)
- xv) Rowfant Business Centre, Rowfant (RA2)
- xvi) Land at High Grove, Imberhorne Lane, East Grinstead (RA3)

Land at the following sites is allocated for redevelopment where no extension to the current floorspace will be permitted:

- xvii) Land north of Ivy Dene Lane, Ashurst Wood (AW2)
- xviii) Horsted Keynes Industrial Park, Horsted Keynes (HK1)
- xix) Rear of 135/137 High Street, Hurstpierpoint (HU4)
- xx) Land in Parish Lane, Pease Pottage (PP4)

Retention of Land for Business Purposes

6.32 In view of their importance to the economy and as a source of local employment, the Council will seek to safeguard existing businesses (as defined in paragraph 6.4 above) throughout the District. It is acknowledged that some businesses are currently inappropriately located, and a policy dealing with those is considered below (policy E8).

However, the great majority of firms operate with little or no impact on their surroundings. Therefore, wherever possible, the Council will seek to retain appropriately located businesses in Mid Sussex. Other than in exceptional circumstances, for example where redevelopment or a change of use may bring about other overriding benefits to the wider community which cannot be achieved in any other way, the Council will resist the change from business to other uses. In order to retain the integrity of the District's industrial estates, proposals involving a loss of business floorspace in such areas will be subject to particularly strong restraint.

- 6.33 When considering what might constitute an exceptional circumstance, the Council will take into account the guidance contained in Planning Policy Guidance Note 3 (Housing). In order to relieve the intense pressure for housing development on greenfield sites, PPG3 emphasises the need for local authorities to recycle urban land, which may include the conversion of vacant commercial buildings for residential purposes. Similarly, whilst regard must be had to maintaining a balance between employment and housing supply, allocations of land for non-residential purposes should be reassessed where they cannot realistically be taken up over the Plan period.

E2 Other than in exceptional circumstances, such as where an existing business use is inappropriately located, or where new development will bring about wider community benefit, proposals for redevelopment or changes of use which would result in the loss of existing business floorspace will not be permitted.

Storage and Warehousing

- 6.34 The Council is of the opinion that, having regard to the environmental constraints and the nature of the road network within Mid Sussex, proposals for large scale storage and warehousing serving regional needs would not be appropriate and will not therefore be permitted. Smaller scale storage or warehousing developments, including those which may be required in connection with local industrial or service firms may, however, be considered favourably provided they are of an appropriate scale and character, they comply with other relevant policies in this Local Plan and access and highway criteria are satisfied.

E3 Proposals for storage and warehousing development on existing industrial land or in suitable existing buildings will be permitted where they are of an appropriate scale and character, and where access and highway criteria can be met.

Proximity of Residential Property to Established Business Areas

- 6.35 A number of industrial sites in the District are bounded by residential areas. In some cases, the industrial uses preceded development of the houses.
- 6.36 In many cases, these uses can satisfactorily co-exist side by side. However, problems can occur when business premises change hands and new commercial uses, which may or may not require planning permission, become established. Nuisance can also result

from changes in working practices, for example, night time working or changes to collection and delivery arrangements. In some cases, although a change of use is not involved, the new occupants need to carry out alterations to premises which require planning permission. This can provide an opportunity for the Council to impose planning conditions which reasonably relate to the proposed development, in order to safeguard the amenities enjoyed by nearby residents.

- 6.37 When considering proposals relating to business premises, the Council needs to strike a careful balance between, on the one hand, encouraging business activity and employment, and on the other hand, safeguarding the interests of local residents. Applications will be subject to particularly careful scrutiny where they would result in activity outside of normal working hours.

E4 When considering applications for the alteration or change of use of business premises on established industrial estates, full account will be taken of the implications of the proposed development on the residents of neighbouring dwellings. Planning permission will not normally be granted for the change of use of premises close to residential properties from B1/B8 to B2 or other industrial uses. In considering applications which may result in additional disturbance, appropriate planning conditions will be imposed to protect residential amenity.

Additional Business Development

- 6.38 No sites other than those referred to in Policy E1 above and in the area Chapters of this Local Plan are specifically allocated for business development. However, it is acknowledged that there may be particular circumstances where further provision of business development may be appropriate and where the Council may wish to consider granting planning permission. Some of these circumstances are considered in detail elsewhere and will include the following:

- for the extension or redevelopment of existing business premises within the built-up area boundaries, where there would be no adverse environmental effects;
- the re-use of some existing buildings in the countryside for a use consistent with the building's location;
- the re-use of buildings of special interest where this may be the only means of retaining such buildings;
- for local firms, where it can be satisfactorily demonstrated that accommodation cannot conveniently be found within the allocations for new business development already made in the Local Plan. In this instance such a permission may be subject to a local user condition where appropriate;
- for the erection of new business premises within the defined town centres, where the development would increase vitality without causing conflict with other policies in this Plan; and
- for the erection or re-use of a building within the built-up area boundaries to provide small units (normally 300m² or less each) where it can be shown that there is a shortage of such units within the allocations for business development already made in the Local Plan and where this is not likely to be resolved by any other means.

- 6.39 The last category reflects the major contribution that small sized firms make to the local

economy. Their importance has been increasingly recognised in government guidance and general planning policies, reflected in the more positive approach towards their development, both in towns and in the countryside. The Council has generally taken a sympathetic approach towards the development of small firms in appropriate locations, taking an active role in a number of small business developments throughout the District. There is likely to be a continuing demand for small business units over the Plan period and therefore favourable consideration will continue to be given to the provision of such accommodation in appropriate locations, either by the development of new premises or the conversion of suitable existing buildings. Proposals for such development in the AONBs will be subject to particular scrutiny.

- 6.40 Attention is drawn to the Local Plan policies set out in E6 and E7 regarding Business Development in the Villages and Business Development Outside the Built Up Areas respectively. The criteria from each of these policies will be applied to proposals, as appropriate.

E5 In addition to the sites specifically allocated for business use in this Local Plan, permission will be granted in appropriate circumstances, for business development on other sites where the proposal is for:

- (a) the extension or redevelopment of existing premises within the built up areas;
- (b) the reuse of some rural buildings, with a use on a scale consistent with the building's location;
- (c) the reuse of buildings of special interest;
- (d) development to meet an identified need of a local firm which can be met in no other way;
- (e) the erection or change of use of small buildings (defined as being of less than 300m² gross floor area) in the built-up areas in order to help meet a shortfall in such accommodation. The subsequent extension or intensification of the use of such buildings which results in the loss of a small unit of business accommodation or has a detrimental impact upon the surrounding area will not be permitted; or
- (f) development proposals in the defined town centres.

Business Development in the Villages

- 6.41 Whilst the majority of new business and industrial development will be provided within the District's main urban areas, the Council wishes to ensure that local employment opportunities in the villages are maintained and, where appropriate, increased. It will therefore consider favourably proposals for new small scale business development in suitable locations, where there is no detrimental impact on the surrounding area (e.g. by reason of noise, smell, safety, health or excessive traffic generation). Together with the provision for small units made in Policy E5 above, this approach will contribute towards a

wider range in the size and type of employment opportunities throughout the District.

E6 In order to meet demands for local employment permission will be given to proposals for new business development in appropriate locations within the defined built-up areas of the villages in the District where all the following criteria are met :

- (a) the proposal is small in scale, defined as being normally no more than 300m² of floorspace;
- (b) the proposed development would not adversely affect the character and appearance of the village or its countryside setting;
- (c) the proposal would not harm the amenities of surrounding development; and
- (d) the proposal would not have a detrimental impact in terms of highway or environmental issues.

Proposals for storage uses will be subject to particularly close scrutiny in accordance with Policy C4, with regard to their impact on the surrounding area including that arising from traffic generation.

The subsequent extension or intensification of the use of such buildings which results in the loss of a small unit of business accommodation will not be permitted.

New Business Development in the Countryside

- 6.42 A number of companies of various sizes and types are located in the rural areas of Mid Sussex and together make a significant contribution to the District's economy. A healthy rural economy is also important to the quality of life in the countryside and is a vital source of local employment. Current planning policy guidance recognises the need to sustain a healthy rural economy in order to safeguard this important contribution and also as a way of managing the rural area.
- 6.43 At the same time there is widespread recognition of the need to safeguard the countryside for its own sake and to protect it from inappropriate development, particularly in areas with special designations, such as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. It is therefore an important objective of planning policy to seek to balance the encouragement of a healthy rural economy with the need to safeguard the environment of the countryside.
- 6.44 In order to minimise the need for travel, especially by private car, and to encourage housing and centres of employment to locate close to each other, national and strategic planning policy guidance is seeking to steer larger scale business development to the urban areas and particularly those where there are good public transport facilities. This policy forms the basis of the business development strategy of the draft Structure Plan and of this Local Plan. Most new development will take place in the three main towns together with a limited amount in some villages.

- 6.45 In view of this strategy, and the need to safeguard the rural environment, opportunities for anything other than small scale business development will be extremely limited. In view of their particular circumstances, a very small number of sites have been identified for small scale business development, and these are considered in more detail in the Villages and Settlements and the Rural Area Chapters of this Local Plan. Otherwise, the erection of new commercial, industrial or storage buildings will rarely be permitted in the countryside.
- 6.46 Many firms are located in the countryside and make a valuable contribution to the local economy and employment. The majority operate with little or no adverse impact on their surroundings, and the Council does not wish to unreasonably inhibit their future development. However, a small number are not appropriately located and where practicable the Council will encourage their relocation to more suitable sites elsewhere (see Policy E8).
- 6.47 Where such businesses propose to extend or intensify their operations in a rural location, the Council will need to balance development of the local economy against the likely impact of the rural environment (e.g. by reason of noise, smell, safety, health, vibration, traffic generation or visual intrusion). In accordance with the policies of restraint elsewhere in this Local Plan, and with the strategic need to steer major development towards existing urban areas, large scale expansions of such operations will rarely be acceptable in the countryside.
- 6.48 However, where an existing firm can demonstrate that such a development is essential to their operations and there will be no material adverse environmental impact such as in terms of traffic, access, amenity, layout and design considerations, the Council will generally permit small scale expansion or intensification of business uses in the countryside. Proposals for such development in the Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and in the Strategic Gaps will be subject to particularly close scrutiny.
- 6.49 One of the few opportunities for new business development in the countryside is provided in the case of the conversion of existing rural buildings. These can provide useful, low cost accommodation of small businesses, whilst at the same time providing valuable job opportunities for the rural community. The view is supported by government guidance and Structure Plan policies.
- 6.50 The criteria against which such proposals will be considered are set out in policies C12, C13 and C14 of the Countryside chapter of this Local Plan. Business, recreation and tourism uses will be strongly preferred over residential conversions, where physical changes to the building and its surroundings generally have a greater impact on the rural character of the area. In view of the general policy background of severe restraint in the countryside, proposals for the reuse of rural buildings will be very strictly controlled. In particular, proposals for the subsequent extension or redevelopment of converted buildings will be resisted.

E7 Outside the defined built-up area, proposals for new business development will only be permitted where:

(a) they involve small scale extensions to existing industrial, office or storage premises and the following criteria are satisfied:

(i) the extension is essential to the operation of an established business, and can be

- accommodated satisfactorily within the existing boundaries of the site;**
- (ii) the proposal would not harm the amenities of the surrounding area;**
 - (iii) access arrangements are satisfactory and additional traffic generation would not have an adverse impact on local roads;**
 - (iv) the layout and detailed design are in keeping with its countryside location.**
- (b) they involve the reuse of existing rural buildings for business, tourism or recreation purposes and the criteria contained in Policies C12, C13 and C14 of this Local Plan are complied with.**

Inappropriately Located Uses

6.51 The Council will keep under review those businesses operating from premises outside established industrial or commercial areas. In total they provide an important source of local employment. In some cases they may cause little disturbance. However, in other instances they may be unsuitably located, for example, within or very close to a residential area, or where they have an adverse impact on the environment or where the traffic generated is excessive for the surrounding road network. Proposals to expand such activities will only be permitted in very exceptional circumstances, and the Council will, wherever possible, seek to encourage the relocation of such businesses to more suitable sites elsewhere.

E8 Development which would intensify an existing unsuitably located use will not be permitted unless the proposal includes specific measures for environmental improvement such as screening and noise attenuation.

Minerals

6.52 The County Council is the Minerals Planning Authority responsible for determining applications and forward planning. Policies relating to the exploration, appraisal and extraction of minerals are contained in the Structure Plan and the County Minerals Local Plan. Together these provide the policy framework for mineral extraction in the County. Reference should therefore be made to those documents.

