

## Introduction

- 12.1 East Grinstead is one of the three main towns in Mid Sussex and with a population of around 25,000 is the largest settlement in the northern part of the District. It is also one of the oldest towns in the County, and its importance as a market, industrial and commercial centre dates back to medieval times. In common with other towns its character and role has evolved gradually over many centuries as economic and social circumstances have changed. Nevertheless, it retains its historic core, centred on the High Street, where many buildings date back as far as the 14th and 15th centuries.
- 12.2 The town is set in very attractive countryside, which extends to the edges of the built up area and which includes, to the south and east, part of the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The town has been developed on a flat topped ridge which extends from Ashurst Wood in the south east to Imberhorne Lane in the west. A ridge also extends along Holtye Road to the north east, and southwards towards Saint Hill Green. These ridges are dissected by steep-sided wooded river valleys to the south of the town. This physical form has given the town a distinctive character and setting in relation to the surrounding area. It has been a major factor in shaping the nature of the past development of the town and also acts as a constraint for the future.
- 12.3 East Grinstead went through a period of expansion in the 1980s and early 1990s. New housing estates were developed within and on the outskirts of the town, the latter extending the built up area into the surrounding countryside. A number of major office developments were built in the town centre, and industrial estates were extended to the north west of the town. Since then the pace of development has slowed considerably, reflecting the environmental and infrastructure constraints which affect the town and which are considered further below.

## Future Development at East Grinstead

- 12.4 Two important constraints have affected the amount of new housing and commercial development which the town has been able to accommodate in recent years. The first constraint is environmental, reflecting the character and high visual quality of the area, and in particular the surrounding countryside. Three designations restrict the potential for future development at East Grinstead. Firstly, the areas to the south and east of the town fall within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), the limits of which extend to the edges of the built up area. The primary purpose of AONB designation is the conservation of natural beauty. Significant new development could prejudice this objective and would therefore be inappropriate. Secondly, the area to the west of the town between East Grinstead and Crawley, and the area to the east between East Grinstead and Ashurst Wood, both fall within strategic gaps. While not necessarily of the same high quality as the AONB these areas of countryside are nevertheless very attractive and fulfil a vital role by preventing the coalescence of these settlements and maintaining their separate identity. Thirdly, the area to the north of East Grinstead lies within the adjoining County of Surrey where it is designated as Metropolitan Green Belt. Here development will normally only be permitted in exceptional circumstances.
- 12.5 The second major constraint relates to infrastructure and, in particular, roads. New highway provision at East Grinstead has not kept pace with the rate of earlier development and general traffic growth and the existing highway network is no longer adequate to cope with the traffic demands now being placed upon it. Unless significant improvements are made further large scale development would only exacerbate this situation and would not be appropriate. Whilst the District and County Councils are currently studying a range of roads and transport issues at East Grinstead, new road

provision sufficient to cater for major new development is unlikely to be achieved in the near future. Until these studies have been completed, the existing infrastructure will continue to be a firm constraint on the amount of future development at East Grinstead in the short term, and certainly for the period covered by this Local Plan.

- 12.6 As a result of these environmental and highway constraints, and the current uncertainties relating to future highway and transport provision the overall strategy for the future development of East Grinstead is one of restraint. It is proposed that there are only very modest amounts of new housing or business development at East Grinstead over the Plan period, with only a small number of allocated sites, mostly within or adjacent to the existing built up area. In the case of housing, five sites are allocated which together are estimated to have a capacity of up to 179 dwellings. The amount and location of this new development are considered in the following sections of this Chapter.

### **Policy Aims**

- 12.7 The aims of the Local Plan with regard to East Grinstead are as follows:
- (a) to safeguard the character and appearance of the setting of East Grinstead, and in particular to protect the landscape of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty;
  - (b) to protect the separate identity of East Grinstead by maintaining the strategic gaps between the town and Crawley to the west and Ashurst Wood to the east;
  - (c) to restrict new development to within the defined built up area boundary of East Grinstead other than in exceptional circumstances;
  - (d) to provide for only a limited amount of new housing and business development;
  - (e) to improve the quality of the environment and traffic conditions at East Grinstead by seeking ways of minimising congestion and reducing the amount of traffic passing through the town centre;
  - (f) to maintain and increase existing shopping facilities and enhance the attractiveness of the town centre as a location for shopping, leisure, recreation and other activities, and as a place to live and work;
  - (g) to improve the attractiveness of parts of the High Street and London Road by seeking ways of minimising the impact of traffic, of reducing the danger and inconvenience to pedestrians, and of improving the physical environment;
  - (h) to safeguard and enhance the character and appearance of the High Street Conservation Area and Areas of Townscape Character within East Grinstead;
  - (i) to improve the range of car parking facilities; and
  - (j) to maintain and where possible enhance the range and provision of community, recreation and leisure facilities within the town, including the protection of existing areas of open space.

## The Built Environment

- 12.8 The undulating pattern of ridges and valleys in and around East Grinstead gives the area a distinctive character and appearance. This topography and the extensive tree cover provide an attractive setting for the town and, in places, also help to screen new development and to minimise its impact. East Grinstead's ridge-top location also affords extensive views both into and out of the town. As a result, some buildings are prominent features on the skyline and are clearly visible from outside the town, particularly from the south. Some of these buildings, such as the tower of St Swithun's church, are long-standing features on the skyline and are readily accepted as part of the townscape. Others, such as some of the more recent office developments, do not blend in so well and are prominent when viewed from outside the town.
- 12.9 There is a designated Conservation Area in the town centre, and this Local Plan also identifies eight new Areas of Townscape Character. These areas are considered in more detail below. In addition there are a number of other features within the town which make an important contribution to the quality of the local environment. These include:
- the tree lined approaches to the town, particularly London Road, West Hill, and Lewes Road;
  - the fingers of woodland which extend into the town (including for example along the disused railway lines), and the trees and tree groups which help soften building lines and act as a foil to new development;
  - the outcrops of sandstone in road cuttings such as in Hermitage Lane and Blackwell Hollow; and
  - the attractive grounds of East Court which provide a very important and accessible local amenity, close to the town centre and the neighbouring residential estates.
- 12.10 The Council will seek to protect and enhance this setting and the important visual characteristics outlined above. It will also resist development which would be visually obtrusive when viewed from outside the town.

**EG1** Development which would detract from the overall appearance and character of the town or its setting or that of a part of the town will not be permitted. Particular care will be taken to ensure that new development within East Grinstead does not appear visually intrusive when viewed from outside the town or from its approaches.

### High Street Conservation Area

- 12.11 The Conservation Area centred on High Street was originally designated in 1969 and was identified as 'outstanding' by the Department of the Environment in 1976. As well as the High Street it includes Middle Row, parts of Ship Street and West Street, and the east side of Church Lane. It was extended in 1985 to include an area known as 'The Portlands' to the south, and again in 2003 to include properties on the west side of Ship Street.
- 12.12 The High Street contains the longest continuous run of 14th century timber-framed

buildings in England. Other buildings date from the 15th and 16th centuries, together with examples from the Georgian and Regency periods. Particularly notable buildings include St. Swithun's Church and Sackville College, the latter being a Grade 1 listed building dating from Jacobean times. Despite the intrusive effects of traffic the High Street has retained its outstanding distinctive and historic character and appearance.

12.13 The following features in particular contribute to the character of this Conservation Area:

- the varied mix of building styles and ages;
- the wide range of building materials, including timber frame, brick, sandstone, tile hanging, timber cladding and Horsham stone, slate and tiled roofs;
- the almost continuous run of outstanding timber framed buildings on the south side of High Street;
- the width of the High Street- almost 30m- contrasting with the sense of enclosure at the ends, due in part to Middle Row, an island of buildings dividing the eastern end of High Street in two;
- the raised brick pavements on either side of High Street reflecting the original medieval ground level, up to 2m above the current road;
- the prominent tower of St. Swithun's Church on the skyline;
- important individual buildings including Sackville College, a Grade 1 listed building;
- the narrow burgage strips of land (known as the Portlands) to the south of High Street;
- the importance of tree planting and other landscaping; and
- the range of attractive street furniture and the war memorial.

### **Estcots Conservation Area**

12.14 Land at East Court and Estcots, College Road, was designated as a Conservation Area in 2003. The boundaries are shown on the Proposals Map. The area includes East Court mansion and its parkland, East Court Lodge at the entrance to East Court and the area of Estcots Farmhouse, Estcots Barn and Estcots Cottage. The following features in particular contribute to the character of this Conservation Area:

- Its open rural quality on the edge of the town
- East Court, a Grade II listed building, its attractive and extensive grounds, landscaped gardens and extensive views across the High Weald
- The attractive sunken lane leading to Estcots and
- The attractive grouping of Estcots Farmhouse, Estcots Barn (both listed) and Estcots Cottage.

### **The Portlands**

12.15 The area to the south of 58-84 High Street is known as the 'Portlands', and is a very important legacy of the medieval layout of the town. There were originally 47 long strips of land extending behind each property to the south of the High Street. Their primary use was for domestic agriculture comprising mostly arable farming with some animal

husbandry. The Portlands began to be enclosed in the 14th century and buildings were constructed on some of them. The section to the rear of Nos 58-84 represents the only surviving block of whole and undeveloped medieval Portlands within the town and as such is an important surviving feature of the early urban landscape. Their undeveloped character and appearance is an important visual feature of the town centre and the High Street Conservation Area.

- 12.16 The Council is concerned that this area may become vulnerable to development pressures. Part has previously been the subject of proposals for new housing. These have been refused by the Council. It is considered that development here would destroy the important medieval character of this area, would detract from the setting of the adjacent listed buildings in the High Street, and would adversely affect the Conservation Area.
- 12.17 The Portlands are an extensive area, parts of which have become overgrown. They are also in private ownership with no public access. The Council considers that the amenities of the town would be greatly enhanced if such public access could be secured to those areas which are currently unused. It will therefore investigate the feasibility of part of the Portlands being used as informal public open space for the benefit of the community at large, at the same time ensuring their protection from development. This would also open up extensive views of the countryside to the south as well as of the rear elevations of the buildings in High Street which are themselves of architectural importance.

**EG2** In view of their character and appearance, historic importance, and contribution to the Conservation Area, proposals for the development of the Portlands to the rear of 58-84 High Street will not be permitted.

### Areas of Townscape Character

- 12.18 The Council has identified eight Areas of Townscape Character (ATCs) in East Grinstead in accordance with policy B16 of the Built Environment chapter in this Local Plan. These areas are identified on the Proposals Map.

**EG3** Areas of Townscape Character have been designated at:

- North End/Furze Lane/Sackville Lane;
- Grosvenor Road/Crescent Road/Maypole Road;
- Copyhold Road/Brooklands Way;
- West Hill/West Lane;
- De La Warr Road;
- College Lane/Old Road;
- Holtye Road; and

□ Furzefield Road, Baldwins Hill.

## Housing

- 12.19 As outlined above, due to significant highway and environmental constraints on the level of new development East Grinstead can make only a modest contribution to future new housing provision during the period covered by this Local Plan. Large scale housing development could only be considered in principle in the event that the highway constraints are satisfactorily resolved. Even then the outstanding environment on the edges of the town will continue to limit the extent of new housing development beyond the existing built up area. Within this built-up area, the attractive townscape, the density of existing development, the need to avoid over-intensive development and the need to retain existing areas of open space will limit options for further development within the town. However, all opportunities to use previously developed sites or vacant buildings will be fully explored.
- 12.20 As a result of the housing strategy and constraints outlined above only a small number of sites are specifically allocated for residential development at East Grinstead. These sites are considered in the following paragraphs and are identified on the Proposals Map. Together they would have a total estimated capacity of up to 179 dwellings. The particular circumstances of each site will affect the nature of their development and these are considered in the following paragraphs and related policies. In addition to these specific requirements, all proposals for these sites will be expected to have regard to the policies contained in the topic chapters of this Local Plan.

### ~~Former Gas Works, Moat Road~~

~~12.21 This site has an area of 0.6ha and comprises a former gas works. It is bounded by housing to the north and east and south east. To the south and south west are the Council owned car park and a number of commercial properties including a large DIY store. The railway line adjoins the site to the west. In view of its size and location close to the town centre the site is considered to be suitable for a mix of residential units including a proportion of affordable housing. The site is allocated for residential development to provide 59 dwellings, 30% to be affordable housing units. Planning permission has been granted for 59 units, with a financial contribution for the provision of affordable housing offsite.~~

~~**EG4** Land at the Former Gas Works, Moat Road (approximately 0.6ha) is allocated for residential development to provide 59 dwellings, 30% to be affordable housing units. Permission for residential development will be subject to the general requirements of the Local Plan, particularly policies G3 (Infrastructure), B2 (Design), H2 (Dwelling Mix), H4 (Affordable Housing), T4 (New Development) and R3 and R4 (Outdoor Playing Space).~~

~~Additionally, permission will be subject to the following requirements:~~

~~(a) the provision of vehicular access from Tower Close, including the construction of a turning head to regularise traffic movements and a study of traffic impact on the wider road network and junctions;~~

~~(b) the provision of adequate noise attenuation measures within~~

~~the development;~~

~~(c) a detailed investigation into possible sources of on-site contamination and the completion of any remedial works required before building works commence; and~~

~~(d) a financial contribution towards the provision of additional library, primary school and civic amenity facilities.~~

### **East Grinstead Lawn Tennis and Squash Club, Ship Street**

- 12.22 This site has an area of approximately 0.7ha. It is currently occupied by the East Grinstead Lawn Tennis and Squash Club and comprises buildings used by the club and a number of outside tennis courts. It also includes a small area of unused land to the north of the tennis club site. It is bounded by housing on its north-west, south and east sides. To the north it adjoins properties located on the south side of High Street, including a doctors' surgery and car park. Vehicular access to the allocated site is from Ship Street. The site is located in the town centre and has excellent access to existing services and facilities, including public transport and especially buses.
- 12.23 In view of its location and its relationship to neighbouring properties, the site could accommodate a relatively high density development up to three storeys and in the form of one or two bedroom flats. It is estimated that it could accommodate up to 40 dwellings. This should include a proportion of affordable dwellings.
- 12.24 Redevelopment of the site will be an opportunity to secure other benefits. These include the provision of a footway along the Ship Street frontage of the site; and the provision of vehicular access through the site to the doctors' surgery and car park at the rear of the High Street, subject to safeguarding the right of way to other neighbouring properties and to that part of the allocated site to the rear of 6 High Street. This will allow the existing unsatisfactory vehicle access to the surgery at Judges Close to be closed. This will greatly enhance the environment and safety of pedestrians in this part of the High Street.
- 12.25 Redevelopment of the site for housing will require the relocation of the existing lawn tennis and squash club to a site elsewhere. This is considered further in paragraphs 43.21 - 43.23 and policy RA7 in Chapter 43 of this Local Plan.

**EG5** The site of the East Grinstead Lawn Tennis and Squash Club together with adjacent land to the north (approximately 0.7ha) is allocated for residential development to provide approximately 40 dwellings, 30% to be affordable housing units. Permission for residential development will be subject to the general requirements of the Local Plan, particularly policies G3 (Infrastructure), B2 (Design), H2 (Dwelling Mix), H4 (Affordable Housing), T4 (New Development) and R3 and R4 (Outdoor Playing Space).

Additionally permission will be subject to the following requirements:

- (a) satisfactory resolution of the relocation of the Lawn Tennis and Squash Club to an alternative location elsewhere;

- (b) the provision of vehicular access to the site from Ship Street;
- (c) the provision of vehicular access through the site from Ship Street to the doctors' surgery and car park at Judges Close;
- (d) the provision of a 2m wide footway along the length of the Ship Street boundary of the site; and
- (e) a financial contribution towards the provision of sustainable transport and traffic management measures, off site play space, additional primary school places, library facilities and civic amenity facilities.

### **Car Park, Railway Approach**

~~12.26 This site has an area of approximately 0.5ha. It is owned by the District Council and is currently used for public car parking. It is steeply sloping and is bounded on three sides by residential development. The Council considers that this site is suitable for redevelopment and is prepared to consider a range of potential uses, including housing. However, in view of the importance of this site for car parking it will seek an increase in the overall provision of public car parking as part of a mixed use redevelopment of the site. Other potential uses include community uses, leisure, offices or a combination of these. It is estimated that this site can accommodate up to 28 dwellings, and that flats are likely to be the most appropriate form of housing having regard to the character of the surrounding area and the mixed use nature of any redevelopment. These are to be affordable housing units. This site is also considered further in paragraphs 12.41-12.42 and policy EG12 below.~~

~~**EG6** Land at Railway Approach Car Park (approximately 0.5ha) is allocated for mixed use development comprising public car parking together with a range of other potential uses including community uses and housing. (See also policy EG12 below) It is estimated that this site can accommodate up to 28 flats as part of a mixed use redevelopment. Permission for development will be subject to the general requirements of the Local Plan, particularly policies G3 (Infrastructure), B2 (Design), H2 (Dwellings Mix), H4 (Affordable Housing), T4 (New Development) and R3 and R4 (Outdoor Playing Space).~~

~~Additionally permission for redevelopment will be subject to the following requirements:~~

- ~~(a) the provision of an overall increase in the amount of public car parking on the site;~~
- ~~(b) the provision of a comprehensive landscaping scheme for the site, including the retention of important existing trees and the provision of screening along the southern boundary; and~~
- ~~(c) financial contributions towards off site play space, primary school, civic amenity and library facilities.~~



## 2-4 Orchard Way

- 12.27 This site has an area of 0.17ha and is occupied by two no. two storey buildings which are currently in use by West Sussex County Council as a social services centre and a day centre. The site is surrounded by residential development consisting mainly of a mixture of four and five storey blocks of flats. The site slopes down steeply from the north and it is likely that this will affect the form of development. In view of its location close to the town centre and public transport facilities, it is felt that a high density development comprising flats would be most appropriate for this site. It is estimated the site can accommodate approximately 12 flats.

**EG7** Land at 2-4 Orchard Way (approximately 0.17ha) is allocated for residential development to provide approximately 12 flats. Permission for development will be subject to the general requirements of the Local Plan, particularly policies G3 (Infrastructure), B2 (Design), H2 (Dwellings Mix), T4 (New Development) and R3 and R4 (Outdoor Playing Space).

Additionally permission will be subject to the following requirements:

- (a) the provision of vehicular access onto Orchard Way, including on site turning space;
- (b) the retention of important on site trees, and
- (c) a financial contribution towards off site play space, primary school, civic amenity and library facilities.

## Stonequarry Woods

- 12.28 This site is approximately 1.8ha and is located on the northern edge of the built up area of East Grinstead. The site includes part of Stonequarry Woods, some open hospital land and the garages to the rear of St. Margaret's Road. It is allocated for residential development and it is estimated it can accommodate approximately 35 dwellings, 40% to be affordable housing. Residential development would involve the loss of some woodland. However, the woodland area to the east of the site, at present in common ownership, will be retained and secured, by means of a legal agreement, as public open space. Upon completion of the development the remainder of the woodland shall be conveyed to the District Council. Woodland and the pond at the south of the site should also be retained and the ecological survey should be used to identify requirements for the mitigation of any ecological impact and the enhancement of the site. In view of the size and location of the site, it is considered suitable for a mix of dwelling types.

**EG8** Land at Stonequarry Woods (approximately 1.8ha) is allocated for residential development to provide approximately 40 dwellings, 40% to be affordable housing units. Permission for development will be subject to the general requirements of the Local Plan, particularly policies G3 (Infrastructure), B2 (Design), H2 (Dwellings Mix), H4 (Affordable Housing), T4 (New Development), R3 and R4 (Outdoor Playing Space) and R6 (Informal Open Space).

**Additionally permission will be subject to the following requirements:**

- (a) the provision of vehicular access from Oakfield Way, including the provision of a lay-by along Oakfield Way and a mini-roundabout at the junction with Blackwell Farm Road/Hackenden Lane;**
- (b) the provision of a comprehensive landscaping scheme, including the retention of tree screens to minimise the impact on neighbouring residents and, where practicable, the retention and protection of all mature trees;**
- (c) the provision of an area of public open space to the east of the development site;**
- (d) financial contributions towards management of the public open space, the provision of off-site play space, and contributions to primary school, civic amenity and library facilities; and**
- (e) the provision of a wildlife survey**

### **Other Housing Development**

12.29 While other, currently unidentified, sites will continue to come forward over the Plan period, the sites considered above are the only ones specifically allocated for residential development at East Grinstead in this Local Plan. Proposals for other sites will be assessed against the policies set out in the topic chapters of this Local Plan.

### **Business Development**

12.30 East Grinstead is an important centre for business - defined here as encompassing offices, industry, warehousing and storage - and is the focus for employment in the northern part of the District. There is a wide range of businesses in the town and a number of firms have established their main or regional headquarters here. Among the attractions of the town for business are its location midway between London and the south coast, its road and rail links, and its proximity to other important centres such as Crawley and Gatwick Airport.

12.31 Although the majority of employment is in the service sector there is still a significant manufacturing base. However, while East Grinstead is an important source of jobs for many people in the town and the surrounding area, it has to compete with other employment centres nearby as well as further afield. A number of local residents work elsewhere, commuting to centres such as London, Crawley and Gatwick Airport.

12.32 A number of commercial developments took place in the town during the 1980s and early 1990s, including new office buildings in the town centre and extensions to the industrial estates on the periphery. More recently the rate of development has slowed down.

12.33 Due to the environmental and infrastructure constraints affecting the level of future development at East Grinstead the town can make only a modest contribution to the overall provision of new business development in the District over the Local Plan period.

The following paragraphs consider those sites which are allocated for business development.

### **Birches Industrial Estate**

- 12.34 Located to the northwest of East Grinstead the Birches Industrial Estate is part of the town's largest industrial complex. Previously allocated extensions to the estate have now been implemented, together with associated infrastructure improvements. While there is no numerical requirement to allocate additional business floorspace during the Local Plan period, it is accepted that it would be appropriate to make some limited provision for further expansion of the local economy in the short term. This will help to provide a degree of flexibility and choice of sites for firms wishing to relocate to or expand within East Grinstead.
- 12.35 It is considered that the Birches Industrial Estate is the most appropriate location in East Grinstead for such an expansion, and a site to the west of the existing estate is allocated for business development. However, this is a large site, with an area of 5.3ha and an estimated floorspace capacity of up to approximately 23,000 sq m. Development of the whole site over the relatively short timescale of this Local Plan would represent a significant addition to the overall total business floorspace within the town, out of step with the rate of housing development in the area. Therefore while the whole site is allocated for business use, development will be phased, with a maximum of approximately 9000 sq m being permitted during the Local Plan period.

**EG9 Land adjacent to the Birches Industrial Estate is allocated for development within Use Classes B1, B2 and B8. Development of the site will be phased, with a maximum of 9000 sq m being permitted during the Local Plan period.**

### **Land in Christopher Road**

- 12.36 The western section of Christopher Road includes a group of six detached dwellings (Nos 16-26) and a single building comprising four flats (Jubilee Court). In 1990 the Council resolved that a supplementary policy to the 1985 Local Plan be adopted with regard to these properties. This informal policy stated that, subject to the provision of car parking and the satisfaction of other development control criteria, favourable consideration would be given to the change of use (but not the redevelopment) of these properties to offices within Use Class B1(a) of the Use Classes Order 1987. This allocation reflected the particular circumstances of this part of the town, having regard to the unsatisfactory relationship of these dwellings to surrounding existing and future land uses. Planning permission has subsequently been granted for the change of use of four of the detached houses to offices.
- 12.37 As outlined below, the Council is considering the possibility of a comprehensive redevelopment of the area centred on King Street at some time in the future. That area includes this part of Christopher Road. However, until such a scheme comes forward, the previous informal policy should be retained in order to allow for the change of use (but not redevelopment in isolation) of these properties.

**EG10** Nos 16-26 Christopher Road and Nos. 1-4 Jubilee Court are allocated for a change of use to Class B1(a). Redevelopment of these properties will not be permitted other than as part of a comprehensive scheme covering the potential area of development opportunity as defined in Policy EG11 below.

### **London Road / King Street / Christopher Road**

- 12.38 The Proposals Map identifies a part of the town centre as an area of development opportunity. This area comprises part of London Road (between Nos. 61 and 133), together with King Street and the western end of Christopher Road. The range of existing land uses includes secondary shopping in London Road, two Council owned surface car parks, a leisure complex, a car showroom and repair garage, housing and offices. Whilst the housing and the leisure complex are of a high standard some parts of this area are unattractive and of poor townscape quality. Although the car showroom is an attractive building, the related repair garage is not ideally located here in the town centre.
- 12.39 The Council therefore considers that there is an opportunity here for a comprehensive form of development which would enhance the character and appearance of this important part of the town centre and at the same time improve the range of services, facilities and infrastructure within the town. Appropriate land uses could include additional shopping and leisure facilities together with business uses such as offices. In addition, any development should include a significant increase in off street public car parking spaces to replace the current inadequate surface level provision. Development here would also provide an opportunity to secure additional benefits. These could include rear servicing to London Road shops; improved pedestrian links between the town centre and other areas, including eastwards via Institute Walk and northwards to the Kings Leisure Centre and Moat Road areas north of the Inner Relief Road; and improved bus and taxi facilities. It would also be an opportunity to relocate the car repair garage to a more suitable site outside the town centre. It is emphasised that, in view of the size of the area subject to this allocation, not every building will necessarily be included in redevelopment proposals. Indeed, some, including the car showroom, may be worthy of retention as part of a comprehensive scheme.
- 12.40 Any large scale development in this location would clearly have significant implications for local traffic generation, access, public transport and other highway related issues, and it is unlikely that this could be accommodated by the existing highway network in the town centre. Any proposals may therefore be medium to long term, although they may still come forward within the life of this Local Plan. In these circumstances it is considered appropriate to put forward these broad proposals at this stage in the Local Plan process in order to assess reaction to such a scheme in principle. The Council will prepare a development brief to help guide future development proposals for this extensive area.

**EG11** An area comprising King Street and parts of London Road and Christopher Road is identified as an Area of Development Opportunity. Appropriate uses for this site include a mix of shopping, leisure facilities, offices and housing. Proposals for this area should include provision for:

- (a) additional off street public car parking;
- (b) rear servicing to existing and proposed properties in London Road;

- (c) enhanced pedestrian routes via Institute Walk and between the town centre and the area to the north of Beeching Way; and
- (d) improved public transport facilities.

Any major development of this area, which should be on a comprehensive basis, should await the implementation of appropriate and complementary traffic management measures in the town centre. Any scheme must also have regard to the relationship with surrounding development, and in particular with neighbouring residential properties. Prospective developers will be required to consider the retention of the best buildings within this area as part of any scheme, including the existing car showroom building. The Council will prepare a development brief for the site.

### **Railway Approach**

~~12.41—Railway Approach is located to the north-west of the town centre and comprises a mix of commercial, residential and secondary shopping land uses. There is also a large surface level public car park. It serves as an important link between the main town shopping area at one end and the railway station and Sainsbury's foodstore at the other. This role will be further enhanced upon completion of the extension of the Bluebell Railway to East Grinstead, which is expected to occur during the Local Plan period. However, the Council considers that the current quality of the townscape of Railway Approach does not adequately reflect its important role of linking these two parts of the town centre, and that it should be enhanced. The Council will therefore investigate the potential for environmental improvements in Railway Approach in association with the Town and County Councils and relevant landowners, with a view to carrying out a townscape enhancement scheme during the period of this Local Plan. This could be implemented in association with other enhancement schemes in the town centre.~~

~~12.42—There is an existing surface level car park in Railway Approach which contains around 80 car parking spaces. The District Council, which owns the site, considers that this site could accommodate a sizeable development in view of its steeply sloping nature and the relationship with neighbouring properties. The 1985 Local Plan allocated the site solely for car parking. However, in view of the major capital cost involved in developing the site because of its topography, the Council recognises that car parking alone would not be economically feasible and considers that a mixed development of car parking with other uses would be the most appropriate form of development. Redevelopment of this site would also represent an opportunity to help with the townscape enhancement of Railway Approach referred to above. In addition to public car parking the Council considers that a range of other potential uses may be appropriate including housing, community uses, shopping, leisure or offices, or a combination of some of these. Whatever the form of the development the Council will seek an increase in the overall public car parking provision currently on the site. It will also seek the provision of public conveniences as part of any development. (See also paragraph 12.26 and Policy EG6 above).~~

~~**EG12—The site of the existing surface level public car park in Railway Approach is allocated for a mixed development comprising public car parking together with housing, community uses,**~~

~~shopping, leisure or offices, or a combination of these. Any development will be expected to provide an overall increase in off-street public car parking provision, together with public conveniences.~~

## Shopping

- 12.43 East Grinstead is the most important retailing centre in the northern part of Mid Sussex. Ranked as a district shopping centre it provides a range of shops in both the food and non-food retail sectors. The main shopping frontage is in London Road between the High Street and King Street junctions, and includes a small pedestrianised area, Queens Walk. To the north of King Street, London Road and Railway Approach comprise an important secondary shopping area, while the High Street, the historic core of the town and a Conservation Area, provides a very attractive area of speciality shopping mixed with a range of other uses.
- 12.44 Studies carried out in 1999 show that East Grinstead is generally performing well as a district level shopping centre. Shop vacancy rates are low, there is continued demand for premises from prospective retailers and shop rental values are rising. It is the dominant centre for the local population for convenience shopping, and the independent and specialist retail provision is a particular strength and attraction. It performs less well in terms of comparison shopping and has to compete with larger centres elsewhere, such as Crawley and Tunbridge Wells. Nevertheless, overall it is a healthy centre for its size and type.
- 12.45 However, these studies and a subsequent public consultation exercise relating to town centre enhancement also indicated that there are some issues which need to be addressed in order to ensure that the attraction of the town as a shopping centre is maintained and enhanced. These relate primarily to the effects of traffic in the town centre; the amount of car parking; improvements to the physical environment; and enhanced shopping provision. These aspects are considered in the following paragraphs and subsequent sections.

## Enhanced Town Centre Shopping Provision

- 12.46 The Council will seek to maintain the shopping function of East Grinstead, and where possible improve the range and quality of shopping facilities. With the exception of minor developments in local shopping parades or appropriate neighbourhood shopping proposals, all new retail development will be concentrated within the town centre. In accordance with national planning policy guidance and the policies in the Shopping chapter of this Local Plan, new shopping proposals outside the town centre will have to satisfy the "sequential" test and will need to demonstrate that a suitable town centre site is not available if they are to be considered favourably. Proposals for large scale shopping developments outside the town centre or on the edge of the town's built up area will normally be strongly resisted. For the purposes of this policy approach to new shopping development the area defined as the town centre shopping policy area is indicated on the Proposals Map.
- 12.47 With regard to new shopping provision at East Grinstead, this Local Plan identifies land at Queens Walk for development of additional shopping, and for public car parking. This is considered further below (paragraphs 12.49 to 12.51). In addition parts of London Road, Christopher Road and King Street are identified as an area of development opportunity on the Proposals Map. Shopping is one of a range of potential uses for that site when future circumstances permit. This is considered further in paragraphs 12.38 to 12.40 and

Policy EG11 above.

- 12.48 The Council considers that these allocations, together with policies to retain the existing shopping frontages within the town centre (see below), will significantly enhance the quality and range of shopping provision at East Grinstead.

### **Land at Queens Walk**

- 12.49 Queens Walk is a small pedestrianised shopping mall located on the west side of London Road. It adjoins the Queens Road public car park, which is owned by the District Council. The 1985 Local Plan identified the mall and adjoining land as a site for a mixed development of shopping and offices, together with multi-storey car parking. Planning permission was subsequently granted in 1989 for a new pedestrianised shopping precinct with car parking on three levels, but this was not implemented. Following the relocation of the Sainsbury's foodstore to a new site elsewhere in the town centre the south side of Queens Walk was refurbished with new shop units. In 1996 outline planning permission was granted for a comprehensive retail development on the remainder of the allocated site, which this time also comprised an enlarged surface level car park. This scheme comprised a range of shop units of varying size, and totalling approximately 4,900 sq.m. of new retail floorspace. Since then new shop units have been developed on the London Road frontage, and Queens Walk itself has been partially upgraded with new surfacing, entrance canopy and kiosks. However, it has not been possible to implement the remainder of the approved retail scheme, and so the redevelopment of this area remains unfinished. As a result, while its overall appearance has improved recently, Queens Walk is still relatively unattractive, and its full potential as a shopping mall remains unrealised.
- 12.50 The Council has consistently supported the redevelopment of Queens Walk for retail purposes and believes that this is vital to the future success of East Grinstead as a shopping centre. It will not only enhance considerably the amount of shopping provision in East Grinstead, but will also greatly improve the environment and appearance of the town centre. The degree of the District Council's support is such that in March 2000 it resolved to compulsorily purchase the land still required to enable the approved retail redevelopment scheme to go ahead. It is intended that this will resolve any continuing impasse and that it will enable progress on the redevelopment to be made as soon as possible.
- 12.51 While the previous Local Plan allocation was for a mixed development of shopping and offices, the approved scheme is for shopping only. The Council considers that this is the most appropriate use for this site, coupled with enhancements to the existing public car park adjoining the site, including if possible an increase in the numbers of spaces, together with specific provision for motor cycles and bicycles and the provision of public conveniences and mother and baby changing facilities.

**EG13 Land between Queensway, Queens Road and London Road, including the north side of Queens Walk, is allocated for shopping, and enhanced public car parking. The first stage of any development shall include the provision of public conveniences and mother and baby changing facilities. Development of the site should pay particular regard to safeguarding the amenities of neighbouring dwellings and to the provision of appropriate access and shop servicing arrangements.**

### **Non-Shop Uses in the Town Centre**

- 12.52 The Council remains committed to the view that, in order to secure a lively and successful shopping centre in East Grinstead, it is essential to retain a degree of control over the introduction of non-shop uses. Some non-shop uses undoubtedly have their place in the town centre. However, it is important to ensure that their number and distribution does not reach a level which would damage the shopping character and function of a particular frontage.
- 12.53 The town centre shopping area has been divided into three distinct areas of retailing character. These are:
- London Road south (i.e. between King Street and High Street), and Queens Walk;
  - High Street and Middle Row; and
  - London Road north (i.e. between King Street and Station Road), Railway Approach, King Street, West Street (part) and Ship Street.

### **London Road (south) and Queens Walk**

- 12.54 The section of London Road between King Street and High Street, together with Queens Walk, comprises the principal retailing area in the town centre. It is important to protect these frontages from uses which may detract from their function and attractiveness as the primary shopping area in East Grinstead, a role which will be reinforced following the proposed redevelopment of Queens Walk, and the implementation of town centre enhancements in this part of London Road. Any new development at Queens Walk arising from its allocation in this Local Plan will be regarded as primary shopping frontage and will be similarly protected from the introduction of any changes to non-shop uses which would detract from the attractiveness of the shopping centre. These areas are therefore subject to Policy S3 in the Shopping Chapter of this Local Plan.

### **High Street / Middle Row**

- 12.55 The High Street has been at the heart of the commercial life of the town since medieval times. Today it retains much of its historic character and forms the focus of a very attractive Conservation Area with a large number of listed buildings. The area to the rear of Middle Row has been pedestrianised and this has improved its character and appearance. Although London Road and Queens Walk are now the main retailing areas, High Street and Middle Row still fulfil a valuable shopping role, providing a range of speciality shops not found elsewhere within the town. These speciality shops have been shown to be one of the main attractions of the town centre. There are also a number of A3 food and drink establishments which for the most part contribute to the character and atmosphere of this part of the town centre. Overall this area provides an attractive shopping experience in an area of historic character. These areas are allocated as secondary shopping frontages and so are subject to Policy S4 in the Shopping Chapter of this Local Plan. However, while the variety of land uses contributes to the character of High Street and Middle Row, the Council will seek to ensure that the introduction of further non-retail uses in the High Street or Middle Row will enhance their vitality and viability and not jeopardise their shopping character and function, to the detriment of the attractiveness of the town centre as a whole.



**London Road (north) / Railway Approach / King Street  
West Street / Ship Street**

- 12.56 These frontages include those sections of London Road between the King Street and Beeching Way junctions, and between Beeching Way and Station Road together with Railway Approach; and the short shopping frontages in King Street, the eastern end of West Street and the northern end of Ship Street. Some changes to non-shop uses have been allowed, but shopping generally remains the predominant land use in these locations. The Council considers that these areas should continue to serve mainly as secondary shopping frontages. However, it will consider favourably changes to non-retail uses where these accord with Policy S4 in the Shopping Chapter of this Local Plan.
- 12.57 Railway Approach is considered further in paragraphs 12.41 to 12.42 above.

**East Grinstead Market**

- 12.58 East Grinstead has a long history as a market town and received its first charter in the 13th Century. More recently, a Saturday market was held in Cantelupe Road until 1982 when the site was redeveloped, and the market transferred to Railway Approach where it continues today, although on a reduced scale. The Council supports the continuation of a market in East Grinstead since it is an attraction in its own right and complements the range of shopping facilities in the town centre. The nature of the market and its location will be considered as part of the Council's consideration of the future enhancement of the town centre.

**Transport**

- 12.59 As outlined earlier in this chapter, the nature of the existing highway network has a significant impact on East Grinstead and on its potential for future development. The principal highway issue is the relief of traffic congestion on the way into and within the town, and the removal of through traffic from the built up area. Whilst the Council has previously supported the provision of a bypass or relief road, this is not included in the Local Transport Plan covering the period up to 2006. The District and County Councils will be assessing possible options for dealing with a range of highway and transport issues at East Grinstead, including investigations into possible relief road options. However, that particular aspect will be for implementation beyond the timescale of this Local Plan. In the meantime this Local Plan considers a number of other measures designed to address roads and transport issues in the short and medium term.
- 12.60 The District Council is a member of the East Grinstead Transport Forum which comprises a wide range of organisations under the chairmanship of the County Council. This Forum is consulted on highways and transport related issues affecting East Grinstead and has contributed to the preparation of the Urban Transport Plan (UTP) for the town. The UTP contains a package of measures relating to all aspects of roads and transport in East Grinstead and formed the basis of a successful 'package' bid for funding from the then Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions in 1998. The UTP in turn contributes to the County-wide Local Transport Plan prepared by the County Council.

**Specific Measures**

- 12.61 The Council will support the implementation of a variety of highway related improvements designed, for example, to enhance the environment for pedestrians or to provide better facilities for cyclists. Owing to their short term nature, and their dependence on annual funding, it is not possible to detail such measures in this Local Plan. Such schemes will, however, continue to come forward, including through continued liaison between the highway and planning authorities, and in consultation with the Transport Forum. Examples of previous measures of this type include the provision of dropped kerbs to aid pedestrians; high quality “finger-post” signing for pedestrians to local places of interest and facilities; provision of cycle parking stands; and various footway improvements. The Council will continue to support the implementation of appropriate works of this nature over the Plan period.
- 12.62 Among other measures being considered for implementation during the local plan period is the completion of a series of junction improvements along the A22. A number of these junctions suffer from regular traffic congestion which impedes the flow of both through and local traffic, and also adversely affects highway safety and the quality of the local environment. Whilst it may no longer be possible or desirable to satisfy all the demands of road traffic, relieving the worst effects of congestion will be of benefit to road conditions and highway safety generally, as well as to the environment and the local economy. The Council therefore supports the principle of improvements to some junctions along the A22 as part of a wider programme of traffic management in the town as a whole. These junctions include those at London Road/Station Road, London Road/Moat Road, Station Road/Park Road, London Road/Lingfield Road, Lewes Road/Herontye Drive/Bourg-de-Peage Avenue and Lewes Road/Woodbury Avenue. The feasibility and effectiveness of any such improvements as well as their precise nature will need to be the subject of further study in association with the Highway Authority. (A proposed improvement to junction of Lewes Road with Hammerwood Road is considered in the Ashurst Wood Chapter below).
- 12.63 In order to avoid congestion and delay on main roads, some traffic uses minor roads within the built up area instead. This ‘rat-running’ on roads not designed for it compromises road safety. It also has a significant environmental impact since many of the affected roads pass through residential areas. The Council supports the introduction of traffic calming and management measures in appropriate locations in the built up area in order to deter rat-running traffic. In association with the Highway Authority and the Transport Forum, the Council will continue to investigate those locations where it would be appropriate to introduce traffic calming and signing measures and will press for their early implementation. The details of any proposed measures will be the subject of full public consultation.

### **Cycling**

- 12.64 The Highway Authority has commissioned a study for a potential cycle route network within East Grinstead and in association with the Council it will endeavour to identify safe and secure cycle routes. Such studies will continue to be developed as part of the Urban Transport Plan for East Grinstead.
- 12.65 The Worth Way, which links East Grinstead with Crawley, and the Forest Way, which runs south east from the town to Forest Row and into East Sussex, are important long distance bridleways. Both have been designated as part of the sustainable transport charity Sustrans’ national cycle route from Inverness to Dover. A programme of upgrading and resurfacing has been carried out on these two sections of the route. Further work is required to define the line of the national cycle route where it passes through East Grinstead town centre, and this will be considered as part of the wider traffic

and highway studies into the town referred to above.

- 12.66 The Council supports the increased use of cycling as a sustainable means of transport and as an alternative to the private car. It therefore supports the completion of the national cycle route through East Grinstead, together with other appropriate measures to improve the safety and convenience of cycling at East Grinstead.

### **Car Parking**

- 12.67 Where practicable the Council will encourage the greater use of alternative means of transport at East Grinstead. However, in view of the nature of the town, its relationship to the surrounding villages and rural area and, currently, the limited availability of public transport, many residents, employees, shoppers and visitors to East Grinstead will continue to rely on the use of the private car. Indeed, the recent public consultation exercise relating to town centre enhancements identified a local demand for increased public car parking provision. For all these reasons, and in view of the need to protect and enhance the local economy, the Council will continue to seek the provision of adequate public car parking space at East Grinstead.

### **Future Parking Provision**

- 12.68 There are currently approximately 1350 off-street public car parking spaces in East Grinstead town centre, including those at the railway station, plus on-street parking in and around the centre, much of which is within the controlled parking zone (see paragraph 12.72 below). Previous surveys have shown that town centre car parking provision has been under some pressure with some car parks being operated at or near capacity for most of the day, especially the short stay car parks. This in turn has led to difficulties in on-street parking and associated congestion in the town centre.
- 12.69 For the reasons outlined in paragraph 12.67 above the Council considers that there will be a requirement for some additional off street parking provision in East Grinstead town centre during this local plan period. The 1985 Local Plan identified two sites where additional off street car parking provision should be made: at Railway Approach, on the site of the existing car park; and at Queens Walk, where increased public car parking provision was included as part of the allocation for redevelopment. Both these sites are the subject of specific policy proposals elsewhere in this chapter, and in each case the Council considers that any redevelopment should aim to provide a net increase in the amount of off-street public car parking.
- 12.70 The Council has also identified land at London Road/Christopher Road/King Street as an area of development opportunity, and which could include a mix of potential uses (see Policy EG11 and paragraphs 12.38 to 12.40 above). Any comprehensive development arising from this allocation should include additional off street public car parking provision. This would replace and enhance the existing car park in King Street and would provide a valuable facility at the heart of the town centre.
- 12.71 The Council also considers that the provision of additional car parking facilities at East Grinstead station is vital, both for commuters and other railway users and also for visitors to the Bluebell Railway when the line to East Grinstead is ultimately completed. The Council will therefore initiate studies in association with other interested parties, in order to identify a suitable location for the provision of such additional parking space.

**EG14** The following sites are identified as locations for the provision of additional off street public car parking space:

- Land at Railway Approach (see also policy EG12);
- Land at Queens Walk (see also policy EG13); and
- Land at King Street/London Road/Christopher Road (see also policy EG11).

**The Council will also seek to identify a suitable location for the provision of additional off-street car parking at East Grinstead station.**

12.72 In May 2000 the Highway Authority introduced a Controlled Parking Scheme in East Grinstead town centre following extensive consultation with the community. This is designed to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of parking on street, and at the same time to help to prevent unauthorised or inappropriate parking and relieve traffic congestion within the town centre. This scheme has been introduced with the full support of the Council. It is seen as an important component of the future traffic management and enhancement strategy for East Grinstead considered elsewhere in this Local Plan.

## Recreation, Sport and Leisure

### Outdoor Playing Space

12.73 The Council has adopted the NPFA minimum standards for the provision of outdoor playing space and is committed to meeting this provision as far as is practicable. In East Grinstead there is a variety of open space provision including formal sports grounds and playing fields, children's casual play areas and equipped children's playgrounds. Currently 70% of the NPFA standard for outdoor playing space is met at East Grinstead. However, this figure masks wide variations in the level of provision of different types of open space and its location within the town. For example 88% of the NPFA requirement for the provision of children's playgrounds and casual space is satisfied, but only 62% of the standard for formal sports provision. Also, the provision of such playing space varies between wards within the town.

12.74 These figures are derived from the District Council's detailed survey of outdoor playing space carried out in 2000.

12.75 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 when the proposals in this Local Plan were prepared. The Guidance requires Local Authorities to undertake robust assessments of existing provision and future requirements for open space and recreation. This work will be undertaken by the Council as part of the review of this Local Plan. Until this work has been carried out, the proposals in this chapter will represent the policy of the District Council in respect of open space and recreation in East Grinstead.

### Children's Playspace

12.76 As indicated above, under the NPFA standard for East Grinstead 88% of the required provision is met, although there are local variations within the town. Three sites are identified for equipped children's playspace- two on the Estcots estate and one at

Sackville Gardens. No other sites are allocated at this stage but the Council will continue to investigate the feasibility of further provision, having regard to the location and suitability of available sites, in order to secure as wide a distribution of outdoor playing space as possible within the built up area.

**EG15 Land for children's equipped outdoor playing space is identified at the following locations:**

- Estcots Estate, off Court Crescent;
- Estcots Estate, off Estcots Drive; and
- Sackville Gardens.

### **Sports Provision**

~~12.77 There is currently provision for a range of formal sporting activities in and around East Grinstead. These include, for example, playing fields at East Court and King George's Field, and provision for cricket, rugby and hockey, including a synthetic pitch, at Saint Hill to the southwest of the town. However, the minimum NPFA standard is not met at East Grinstead and research conducted by the Council in the production of the Mid Sussex Playing Pitch Strategy has confirmed a shortfall in playing pitches in the area. Investigations will continue in an attempt to address this shortfall.~~

~~12.78 With regard to indoor sports provision, there is a local authority leisure complex at the Kings Centre between Moat Road and Beeching Way. A number of other indoor sports facilities are also available provided by the private and voluntary sectors. This includes a sports hall available for community use at East Grinstead Sports Club at Saint Hill.~~

~~12.79 An opportunity for the dual use of school sports facilities by the community has arisen at Imberhorne School, Imberhorne Lane, which has received National Lottery funding to construct an all weather athletics and training facility and multi-use sports area on part of the school playing fields. Although intended primarily for use by the school, these facilities will also be made available to athletics clubs, youth associations and the local community. The Council supports this development, subject to suitable controls safeguarding neighbouring residential properties and the site is allocated for sports and recreation purposes.~~

~~**EG16 Land at Imberhorne School is allocated for leisure and recreation facilities, for use both by the school and by the community. Use of the facilities outside school hours will be strictly controlled in order to safeguard the amenities of neighbouring residents.**~~

### **Dunnings Mill**

12.80 The area generally known as Dunnings Mill is actually a group of buildings located on the southern edge of the town on the west side of Dunnings Road. Centred on the former Mill building this is a privately owned sports and leisure complex and comprises facilities for a range of activities including swimming, squash, snooker, health and fitness and indoor bowls. It also includes a restaurant and a public house. The Council considers

that this is an appropriate use in this location; and the site is allocated for sports and leisure. It also adjoins an area allocated for informal public open space. However, in view of its location outside the proposed built up area boundary of the town, the inclusion of part of the site within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and the proximity of neighbouring residential properties, proposals for further sports and leisure development will be subject to particularly close scrutiny. The Council will only permit further intensification of use or new development where it is satisfied that this would have no adverse impact on the amenities of the locality and of neighbouring residents.

**EG17 At the area referred to in this Local Plan as Dunnings Mill only proposals for additional leisure and recreation related development that would have no adverse impact on the amenities of the countryside, the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty or neighbouring residential properties will be permitted.**

### **Informal Public Open Space**

- 12.81 As well as children's play areas and more formal sports facilities, there are extensive areas of land used for informal recreation. These vary in size but provide an important and highly valued element in the range of recreational facilities available within the town. A number of sites are allocated for informal open space. These include land at Ashplats Wood, an extensive wooded area adjoining East Court; land between Southlands and Dunnings Mill, where consideration will also be given to a new footpath link between the site and the adjoining housing; land at the junction of Holtye Road and Blackwell Farm Road; land between St Leonard's Park and Brooklands Park where consideration will also be given to the provision of a footpath link and where the existing trees and stream will be retained as landscape features; and land at Spring Copse. The Council will also investigate the possible use of part of the Portlands as informal public open space (see paragraph 12.17 above).
- 12.82 In the case of Ashplats Wood, this is also designated as a Site of Nature Conservation Importance. It will therefore be important to ensure that there is no conflict of interest arising from its allocation for informal public open space. Any such use, including cycling, must be managed in such a way that the interests of nature conservation are safeguarded.

**EG18 Land at the following locations is identified for informal public open space:**

- Ashplats Wood;**
- between Southlands and Dunnings Mill;**
- at the junction of Holtye Road and Blackwell Farm Road;**
- between St Leonard's Park and Brooklands Park; and**
- at Spring Copse.**

- 12.83 Where appropriate the Council will also encourage cycling in areas of informal open space where this will not conflict with other users.
- 12.84 A particular feature of East Grinstead is the geographical arrangement of some important areas of formal and informal open space. For example, it is possible to walk from King George's Field in the town centre to the open countryside beyond Ashplats Wood using an almost unbroken chain of open spaces. This is an important feature of the town which the Council will safeguard. It will also investigate opportunities for further linking these areas.
- 12.85 The Council will also investigate the feasibility of the development of a strategy for the management of informal open space, to maximise the potential for urban wildlife / nature conservation, informal recreation, education, enhancement of the local landscape and community involvement. This should be implemented with a view to linking with the wider countryside.

### **St Margaret's Loop Railway Cuttings**

- 12.86 The disused railway cuttings, also known as St Margaret's Loop, are situated to the west of the town centre and are large and prominent features in the townscape. They have become largely overgrown and now contain a number of substantial trees, many of which are subject to a Tree Preservation Order. Public access to them is restricted at present. Nevertheless, because of their very attractive appearance and their location in the heart of the built up area, they represent an opportunity to enhance informal open space provision, including perhaps a linear walkway and cycleway. The Council will investigate whether these areas can practicably be made available for use as open space by the public. In the meantime it will seek to safeguard them from development and, because of their visual importance within the town, protect their existing character and appearance.

### **Worth Way and Forest Way**

- 12.87 East Grinstead is particularly fortunate in that two long distance bridleways, the Worth Way and Forest Way, lead from the town into the surrounding countryside. Both follow the trackbeds of disused railway lines. The Worth Way extends westwards to Crawley while the Forest Way runs southeast to Forest Row and beyond towards Hartfield. The Worth Way is also designated as a Site of Nature Conservation Importance. These bridleways are well used and are a highly valued recreational amenity for the residents of the town. The Council will safeguard them from development and will, in association with the County Council, which manages them, seek ways of further enhancing their recreational value. It will also investigate ways in which the two routes can be linked, if not physically, at least by appropriate signposting, in order to provide an improved recreational route into and through the town.

**EG19 The Worth Way and Forest Way are identified as linear open spaces. These routes will be safeguarded and any development which would inhibit or detract from their function as recreational footpaths and bridleways will not be permitted.**

**East Court**

- 12.88 The area generally known as East Court lies to the east of the town, outside the built up area. The buildings are used for a variety of purposes including the Town Council offices, a multi- purpose hall and meeting room, town museum, and police and ambulance stations. These buildings are set in very attractive and extensive grounds, which include formal landscaped gardens, with extensive views eastwards across the High Weald. East Court itself is a Listed Building dating back to the 18th century. To the east of the complex of buildings is a large area of playing fields. These are an important visual amenity as well as providing for formal sports. In the northern part of this area is East Grinstead Football Club which lies to the south of neighbouring dwellings.
- 12.89 This area has become established as the focus for the town's civic functions, and the grounds fulfil a valuable role as a particularly attractive area of informal public open space within easy reach of the town. These, together with the playing fields also provide a semi-rural setting to the town. Having regard to these various factors the Council considers that this range of low intensity uses is appropriate and should be retained in this location. The area at East Court is therefore identified for civic, cultural and recreational use on the Proposals Map and changes to other uses will be resisted other than in exceptional circumstances. In view of its sensitive location proposals for development associated with the existing uses will only be permitted where the Council is satisfied that there will be no adverse impact on the character or appearance of the site or the setting of the town. Particular attention will be paid to proposals for any intensification of the use or development at East Grinstead Football Club. The Council will resist proposals which would have an adverse impact on neighbouring dwellings.

**EG20 The land and buildings at and around East Court are allocated for civic, cultural and recreational use. Proposals for additional development in association with these uses will only be permitted where there will be no adverse impact on the character or appearance of the site or the setting of the town. Proposals for development or intensification of use of East Grinstead Football Club will be subject to particularly close scrutiny. Proposals which would have an adverse impact on the amenities of neighbouring residential properties will not be permitted.**

**Changes to other uses within the area covered by this policy will not be permitted other than in exceptional circumstances.**

**'The Atrium', King Street**

- 12.90 Following the grant of planning permission in 1990 an entertainment centre has been located on the site of the former cinema in King Street. 'The Atrium' includes ten pin bowling, restaurants, a night club and two cinemas. The use of the entertainment centre is subject to a condition restricting the hours of opening, imposed to safeguard the amenities of neighbouring dwellings. Proposals to relax these restrictions have been refused by the Council and subsequently dismissed on appeal by the Secretary of State.
- 12.91 The Council considers this is an appropriate use for this site having regard to its location in the town centre, its accessibility and its former use as a cinema over many years. The



site is therefore allocated for entertainment and leisure purposes in this Local Plan. Although in the town centre, the site is close to housing and the Council wishes to ensure that the amenities of local residents are adequately safeguarded from inappropriate uses and activities at the site. Therefore proposals for new development or intensification of use at the site will only be permitted if the Council is satisfied that there will be no adverse impact on the amenities of those properties. This site is also included within the Area of Development Opportunity which is considered in paragraphs 12.38-12.40 and policy EG11 above.

**EG21 Proposals for further development or the intensification of use of The Atrium, King Street beyond that already agreed will only be permitted where there will be no adverse impact on the amenities of neighbouring residential properties.**

## Tourism

12.92 Tourism is increasing in its importance in terms of its contribution to the local economy. East Grinstead is promoted as a tourist destination in its own right and as a centre for the surrounding area. The Council will consider favourably proposals which enhance provision and facilities for tourism at East Grinstead, including new serviced accommodation, provided there is no adverse impact on the amenities of the area. The Council will also support the provision of enhanced tourist information facilities at East Grinstead.

**EG22 Proposals at East Grinstead for tourism related development, including the provision of additional serviced accommodation, will be permitted where there will be no adverse impact on the amenities or environment of the surrounding area.**

## Bluebell Railway

12.93 Planning permission was granted in 1985 for the extension of the Bluebell Railway line to East Grinstead, where it will connect with the existing rail network and station. The precise nature of any new station is not currently known and will be the subject of future proposals. In view of its importance to the local and regional tourist economy the Council supports the completion of the extended railway line to East Grinstead. An area for the development of a new station or railway related facilities is allocated on the Proposals Map (Town Centre Inset). The Council will resist development or change of use of that area for any other purpose. However, in view of the location of the site close to the town centre and its proximity to existing housing the Council will scrutinise railway related proposals particularly closely. Such development will only be permitted where there will be no unreasonable adverse impact on the environment of the surrounding area and in particular on neighbouring residential properties. The District Council will prepare a development brief for the station area, in association with other interested parties.

**EG23 Land adjacent to the existing station at East Grinstead is identified for the extension of the Bluebell Railway and the development of a new or replacement station. Permission for a**

**station and any other related facilities will be permitted where there will be no unreasonable adverse impact on the amenities of neighbouring residential properties. Development or use of this land for purposes other than those associated with railway use will not be permitted.**

- 12.94 As the Bluebell Railway line approaches East Grinstead it will pass over a viaduct which crosses Garden Wood Road. This is a particularly impressive structure which is very prominent in the landscape. It is anticipated that historic trains passing over this viaduct will become an attraction for visitors to the area. In order to protect the amenities of neighbouring residents and to prevent difficulties on surrounding roads due to on-street parking by visitors, the Council considers that some provision will need to be made for a viewing and parking area close to the viaduct. It will therefore seek to address this issue, in association with landowners, the Bluebell Railway and the Town and County Councils, in order that suitable provision can be made.
- 12.95 The route of the extended Bluebell Railway line itself is safeguarded from other forms of development and this, together with general issues relating to the Railway, is considered in more detail in the Tourism and Recreation chapter of this Local Plan.

### **Green Belt**

~~12.96 Following changes to the boundary between West Sussex and Surrey in 1993 five small sections of Metropolitan Green Belt north of East Grinstead were transferred to Mid Sussex District. The Council has considered whether these Green Belt designations should be retained in the new Local Plan, and has concluded that it would be unnecessary and inappropriate to do so. These areas, plus others at Copthorne, would be the only areas of Green Belt in the whole of West Sussex. The Structure Plan contains no policies relating to the Green Belt and the County Council is opposed to the retention of this designation. The District Council considers that to retain this designation would be an anomaly in planning policy terms, and that, since other policies in this Local Plan provide equal protection for these areas, its retention would be unnecessary. The Council therefore proposes to seek the deletion of these Green Belt designations at East Grinstead from this draft Local Plan. They will be re-designated as falling within the Countryside Area of Development Restraint.~~

~~**EG24 Areas of Metropolitan Green Belt at East Grinstead as indicated on the Proposals Map shall be removed from the Green Belt and shall instead be included in the Countryside Area of Development Restraint.**~~