

Introduction

- 17.1 The village of Ardingly is located approximately four miles north of Haywards Heath, on the B2028. It is situated on rising ground and has an extremely attractive countryside setting, being surrounded on all sides by high quality landscape, all of which is within the designated High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Its elevated position affords extensive views from the village, reaching as far as the Downs to the south, and West Hoathly and Highbrook to the east. Whilst this setting is an attractive feature of the village, it also acts as a significant constraint on prospective future development.
- 17.2 The village contains a number of shops, public houses, and a garage together with community facilities such as the village hall and the recreation ground. The High Street is adversely affected by the volume and speed of through traffic on the B2028, together with considerable on-street car parking arising from a shortage of off-street parking provision.
- 17.3 Adjacent to the village are a number of sites which have significant implications in planning terms and these are dealt with in more detail below. These are Ardingly Reservoir, the South of England Agricultural Society Showground, Ardingly College, Wakehurst Place, the Bluebell Railway and the depot at Ardingly Railhead.

Policies and Proposals

Built-up Area Boundary

- 17.4 A built-up area boundary is defined for Ardingly which seeks to conserve the rural setting of the village and to protect the surrounding countryside from unnecessary development. The boundary seeks to prevent coalescence between the different sections of the village and so excludes greenfield sites on the edge of the village including the area to the south of Street Lane.

Conservation Areas

- 17.5 In 1984 two parts of Ardingly were designated as a Conservation Area. In 1990 the western section, centred on the junction of Church Lane and Street Lane, was extended to include the southern end of Church Lane. The eastern section, centred on the High Street, was extended to include Butchers Shaw, the area of woodland immediately south of Street Lane.
- 17.6 The western section contains the 14th century church and 19th century school, which together with several buildings dating back to the 17th century or earlier are listed. This part of the village is residential with large dwellings set in spacious grounds. Church Lane is not made up and is not a through road; it has a tranquil, secluded feel.
- 17.7 The eastern section contains a number of buildings dating from the 17th century. However the area has expanded considerably and now forms the main centre of the village.
- 17.8 The following features, in particular, contribute to the character of the Conservation Area:
- the spacious secluded gardens which include an abundance of mature trees and hedgerows in Church Lane;
 - the Listed Buildings in the western section;

- ❑ the views across the countryside;
- ❑ the significant presence of individual trees and tree groups in Street Lane, Butchers Shaw and Oaklands Green;
- ❑ groups of trees at the north end of the High Street; and
- ❑ sandstone walls, especially along the front boundaries of Hapstead Farm and Fairlight Cottages, Fairlight House and along to Hapstead House, High Street.

Transport

Heavy Goods Vehicles

17.9 Arising from its position on the B2028, its proximity to Haywards Heath, and the existence of large commercial concerns adjacent to the village, Ardingly is adversely affected by the volume, nature and speed of through traffic. It is particularly vulnerable to the movement of heavy goods vehicles (HGVs), some of which are passing through to locations elsewhere, with others gaining access to existing commercial sites. High Street, College Road and Copyhold Lane are particularly affected in this respect, and heavy traffic causes danger and inconvenience to other road users because the roads themselves are poorly suited to accommodate it. Where HGVs are seeking access, effective measures to restrict their movement are limited. Nevertheless, the Council will continue to press the Highway Authority to introduce controls to prevent the use of inappropriate roads by HGV traffic wherever it is practicable and expedient to do so, for example in the form of weight and width restrictions. With regard to through traffic, the District Council will, in conjunction with the Highway Authority, seek to encourage compliance with preferred lorry routings.

Village Crossroads

17.10 At its southern end the High Street meets with Street Lane, Lindfield Road and College Road. The previous layout of the junction was not considered to be of a sufficient standard to cope with the appreciable levels of traffic carried by these roads, resulting in vehicle conflicts and a highway hazard. Minor improvements to this junction have been carried out by the Highway Authority. However, the Council will continue to press the Highway Authority to consider the construction of a mini-roundabout at this junction.

College Road

17.11 College Road is one of the principal routes into the village from the south. It carries appreciable levels of traffic, some of it passing through but a proportion is gaining access to a number of sites along its length. It is, however, a winding road with varying gradients, and in parts there is poor visibility. This combined with the volume and speed of traffic, and the turning movements to and from adjacent sites, results in a degree of danger for road users. The District Council will urge the Highway Authority to give further consideration to possible improvements in the vicinity of the entrance to Ardingly College and will press for their inclusion in the minor works programme.

Pedestrian Crossing

17.12 The High Street is a busy through route with dwellings, shops and other services on both sides of the road. Pedestrians trying to cross the road encounter the hazards of parked

vehicles and often fast, heavy flowing traffic. The need for a pedestrian crossing in the High Street is supported by the District Council. Currently most pedestrian demand is towards the south end of the High Street. However, the development at Hapstead House could significantly shift the demand towards the recreation ground and the footpath through it to the primary school.

Car Parking

17.13 One of the issues affecting Ardingly is the lack of off-street car parking provision. There is one long-stay public car park next to Hapstead Hall, administered by the District Council, allowing parking for 24 vehicles. This is generally full throughout the day. This factor, combined with the lack of adequate off-street car parking spaces for older dwellings, and a number of businesses and community facilities such as the village hall, results in considerable parking on-street, particularly in the High Street. This has one advantage in that it tends to slow down through traffic, although it can at times cause a hazard and inconvenience to other road users and pedestrians due to obstruction, restricted visibility and parking on the pavement. Although there will be additional parking provided as part of the proposed community hall development, it is considered that the provision of further off-street parking is desirable. Such a facility must be conveniently located in order to encourage its use, but due to the closely built-up nature of the High Street opportunities are inevitably limited. The District Council will continue to explore various possibilities for the development of an additional off-street car park.

Community/Recreation Use

17.14 Within Ardingly there is a need for a new Community Centre to provide improved indoor facilities for community/recreation use. An outline planning application, which was submitted by the Parish Council for such a facility on land to the north of the Recreation Ground off Selsfield Road, was approved in 1999.

Other Land Uses

Hapstead House and Grounds

17.15 Hapstead House is situated to the east of the High Street just north of the village. The House is a large stone building dating from around 1887 and forms an important feature within the Ardingly Conservation Area. The site consists of three distinct parts: Hapstead House and gardens, previously in use as a residential care home; the land to the north of the house which includes woodland and an overgrown orchard; and the grassed area between Hapstead House and the High Street.

17.16 Various planning permissions for the conversion of Hapstead House to private houses/flats, social housing units and a Nursing Home have been implemented and building works have now been completed.

Ardingly Rail Depot

17.17 This depot is currently used for the storage, processing and distribution of aggregates. The County Council as Minerals Planning Authority states in Policy 39 of the Minerals Local Plan (Adopted July 2003) that existing minerals railheads will be safeguarded to ensure adequate facilities for the transportation of minerals by rail. The District Council accepts the importance of the continuation of access to this existing depot by rail.

However, the routes by road to and from the depot involve lorries passing through Ardingly village or along High Beech Lane/ Portsmouth Lane from Lindfield. Neither approach route is suitable for additional heavy vehicular traffic. The Council will raise objections to any applications submitted to the Minerals Planning Authority for development on this site which would involve an increase in road traffic generation.

AR1 The Council will raise objections to any application for development proposals at the Ardingly Rail Depot which would involve an increase in heavy vehicular traffic using the site.

Bluebell Railway

17.18 The Bluebell Railway PLC owns the former railway trackbed between Ardingly and Horsted Keynes. An opportunity does exist for the reinstatement of this line, with the potential to link East Grinstead to Haywards Heath by rail. The Council will safeguard this route, shown on the Proposals Map, from development which would prejudice its reinstatement. Further information on the Bluebell Railway is contained within the Recreation and Tourism, East Grinstead and Horsted Keynes chapters of the Local Plan.

AR2 The route of the disused railway branch line between Horsted Keynes and Haywards Heath is safeguarded for possible reinstatement of the railway link.

Proposals for the reinstatement of, or the opening of further stations or stopping places on, the disused branch line between Horsted Keynes and the main London-Brighton line will be subject to particularly close examination.

Ardingly College

17.19 Ardingly College stands in open countryside about half a mile to the south west of the village. It comprises a group of substantial buildings, a number of which are listed, together with playing fields and grounds which extend to the reservoir in the south and to the edge of the village to the north. It is an imposing and prominent feature in the surrounding landscape, and a landmark when approaching the village from the south. As the College has grown, a number of additional buildings and facilities have been provided, and it is anticipated that further proposals will be forthcoming in the future. The College is a long established use, and an important source of local employment. The Council will seek to accommodate the reasonable needs of the College as and when they arise. Nevertheless, in view of its setting and prominence within the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, the Council will give special scrutiny to future development proposals in order to ensure there is no damaging impact on the character and appearance of the site itself, nor on the landscape of the surrounding area.

AR3 Proposals for the erection of additional buildings or the provision of further facilities at Ardingly College will only be permitted where there would be no detrimental impact on the character, appearance or setting of the site, or on that of the surrounding area.

- 17.20 Where it would be compatible with the existing use of the site, and subject to other policies contained in the Plan, the Council will seek to encourage the use of recreational and other facilities at the College by local residents and organisations. The dual use of school facilities is dealt with in the Community Services Chapter of this Local Plan.

Ardingly Reservoir

- 17.21 As well as fulfilling an important role for water supply Ardingly Reservoir is also a significant attraction in its own right. Its beautiful setting within attractive wooded valleys, and its peaceful and tranquil atmosphere make it a popular centre for quiet informal activities such as walking, riding, fishing and nature study. Ardingly Reservoir has been declared a Local Nature Reserve (LNR). The Nature Reserve Agreement between West Sussex County Council and South East Water will ensure commitment to the management and use of the site. Enhancement work has included the upgrading of the perimeter footpaths and bridleway and the provision of a viewpoint and bird hides.
- 17.22 The reservoir is also a venue for more organised non-motorised water sports. Many of these pursuits are associated with education and youth training and this limited amount of activity has meant that they have continued for a number of years without an adverse impact on the amenities of the locality. It is important that any expansion of these pursuits does not have an adverse environmental impact, and that the use of the reservoir is for activities which would not adversely affect the nature of the surrounding area by reason of noise, vehicular activity (including informal parking along the approach to the reservoir) and disturbance. The Council will support the use of the reservoir for activities which would not adversely affect the character of this attractive part of the AONB.

AR4 Proposals for the intensification of recreational activity on or around Ardingly Reservoir will be resisted where these would be likely to result in an adverse environmental impact or where they would conflict with other existing recreational uses.

South of England Agricultural Society Showground

- 17.23 The Showground, located to the north of the village, covers an area of some 60ha. Since its establishment in 1967 the use of the site has expanded to the extent that it is now one of the most significant land uses within the Mid Sussex area. In the period since 1967 the

range of events held and the number of days per year on which they may take place has increased on an incremental basis by virtue of a series of planning permissions. At the same time the Society has entered into a succession of legal agreements with the Council limiting the range of the activities which can be carried on at the Showground and, in some cases, their frequency. The most recent of these agreements was completed on 15th November 1988. Facilities at the Showground now include a range of permanent agricultural buildings, a members' pavilion, parade rings, stables and banks. A variety of functions now take place, the premier event being the annual show, held over three days in June.

- 17.24 Whilst the Council has sought to accommodate the reasonable aspirations of the Society, it has, at the same time, sought to balance these against the need to protect the countryside and the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty as well as the amenities of the residents of Ardingly village and the surrounding area. The Council considers that the stage has now been reached where an appropriate balance exists between the reasonable objectives of the Society and the protection of the environment. The Council is concerned that the character and appearance of the site, which is predominantly rural, should not be eroded and any further development which would result in an increase in the number or size of buildings at the Showground will normally be resisted. Similarly the Council will critically examine proposals for additional activities at the Showground and will normally resist those which would increase the impact of the site on the surrounding area. Of particular concern has been the two-day antique fairs which the Showground has undertaken to limit to 10 a year.

AR5 Proposals for additional buildings or extensions to existing buildings at the South of England Agricultural Society Showground will not be permitted where excessive traffic would be generated. Proposals which would increase the range or intensity of activities beyond those contained in the agreement of 15th November 1988 will only be permitted where such proposals relate to agricultural activities.

Wakehurst Place

- 17.25 Wakehurst Place is located approximately one and a half miles north of Ardingly. The house itself is a Grade I Listed Building and is set in picturesque landscaped grounds which cover over 40ha and comprise a famous collection of trees and shrubs. Originally bequeathed to the National Trust Wakehurst Place is now managed by the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, and is listed in English Heritage's Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest. It is open to the public throughout the year and has become a significant tourist attraction, receiving approximately 290,000 visitors per annum.
- 17.26 The Millennium Seed Bank was officially opened by HRH The Prince of Wales in November 2000. This is a large prestigious development for seed research and conservation located just to the north of Wakehurst Place. The project aims to collect and conserve samples of all the UK's native plants and a representative sample of the world's flora. The building, although large, is set into the slope of the ground with a significant element of floorspace underground. The location and finished height of the building are designed to ensure that the views across the valley to the west are not interrupted.

- 17.27 However, whilst these latest developments were regarded as acceptable, in view of the need to protect the character and quality of the site and of the surrounding landscape, it is considered important that any proposals for development in the future continue to be subject to particularly close scrutiny. The likely impact of additional vehicles will be of particular consideration and proposals for development should include possible measures to encourage visitors to arrive by alternative modes of transport.

AR6 Proposals for the erection of additional buildings or the provision of further facilities at Wakehurst Place will only be permitted where there would be no detrimental impact on the character, appearance or setting of the site, or on that of the surrounding area.

