

Character

Introduction

293. Protecting the distinctive character of the towns and villages, countryside and coast of West Sussex is one of the three aims of this Plan. This chapter sets out policies which reflect this aim and the specific objectives identified in the Background Chapter. These include protecting and reinforcing the distinctiveness of the main natural character areas; safeguarding the Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty; protecting woodlands and forests; protecting rivers, waterways and the coast; retaining the separate identities of towns and villages; and protecting and enhancing towns and villages and the historic heritage of the County.
294. West Sussex has an exceptional character. More than half of it is designated as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and despite urbanising pressures for over a century, significant portions of the coastline remain undeveloped. It also has a rich urban legacy. Arundel and Chichester are two historic towns of national importance. Most of the population lives in the coastal area and in the towns in the north east of the County. The settlement pattern is one of mainly small to medium-sized towns and villages. The rest of the County is largely rural and tranquil. Nowhere in the County does the countryside seem far away.
295. The character of West Sussex is cherished by people living in and visiting the County and many factors have shaped the distinctive character of different parts. These include the underlying geology and successive weathering climates which have determined the form of the land and the vegetation which covers it, human activity, and the exploitation of its resources. This character continues to evolve. The priority of this Plan is to maintain and reinforce the distinctiveness of the main natural character areas and of more local areas. It is important to protect those features and elements which contribute to distinctiveness. Policy CH1 sets out the general policy framework on character for the whole of the County, town and country alike, and other policies of this Plan cover specific elements.

Targets

- To ensure that new development protects and, where possible, reinforces the character of the area.
- To ensure that new development safeguards the natural beauty, distinctive character and remote and tranquil nature of the AONB.
- To ensure that there is no development within strategic gaps which undermines their fundamental integrity and purpose.
- To ensure that new development protects and, where possible, enhances the character of towns and villages.
- To ensure that new development protects and, where possible, enhances historic heritage.

Character

Policy CH1

- (a) **Development should not be permitted unless it maintains and, where possible, enhances the character, distinctiveness and sense of place of the settlements and different areas and features of the County, including the woodlands, forests, rivers, waterways, wetlands, and the coast, and that it reflects and, where possible, reinforces the character of the main natural character areas of the County - the South Coast Plain, the South Downs, the Wealden Fringe, the Low Weald, and the High Weald.**
- (b) **Local plans will include policies to:**
- (1) **maintain and, where possible, enhance the cohesive and distinctive character and sense of place of the settlements (including specific areas or neighbourhoods) and different areas and features of the County, including the woodlands, forests, rivers, waterways, wetlands, and the coast; and**

(2) ensure that development within built-up areas and the countryside reflects and, where possible, reinforces the distinctiveness and sense of place of the main natural character areas (including the retention of important features or characteristics) taking into account the various elements which contribute to their distinctiveness such as geology and landform, habitats, scenic quality, tranquillity, settlement patterns, historic heritage, local vernacular, and land use.

296. It is important to appreciate, as a whole, the character of different parts of the County. Policy CH1 lists the five main natural character areas of West Sussex (identified in the County Council's Landscape Strategy). These range from the predominantly flat South Coast Plain, the grand sweep of the South Downs, the intricate escarpments and valleys of the Wealden Fringe, to the intimate landscapes of the Low Weald, and the wooded hills and valleys of the High Weald. Each has a unique configuration of geology and soils, biodiversity, appearance, settlement patterns, locally distinctive architecture, patterns of land use and economy, visible and perceived history, and degree of tranquillity which help distinguish one from another.
297. These five main natural character areas are broken down further into about forty character areas, representing a high level of local detail. No judgement is made about the relative worth of either the main or the smaller character areas. The main areas match closely the broad areas of cohesive character identified nationally by the Countryside Agency, English Nature and English Heritage.
298. The areas derive from the interaction of physical and ecological features (including geology, landform, soil and wildlife) with land use and other human activity such as farming patterns, settlement pattern and forms, building design and vernacular. Cohesiveness is described in terms of landscape character, sense of place, local distinctiveness, tranquillity, characteristic wildlife and natural features, and the nature of change within the area.
299. The towns and villages of the County have their own distinctive character which derives partly from the buildings and open space within them and the relationship between them, the local vernacular, and the mix of land uses and activities. Treescapes are also a cherished part of the urban scene, including specimen trees, sometimes ancient and historic, decorative planting and providing a backdrop to development. It also derives from the relationship between the settlements and the open areas and countryside around them, including the historic heritage, nature conservation or recreational value of the countryside.
300. The towns and villages of West Sussex include the historic towns of national importance such as Chichester and Arundel, market towns of greatly varied character such as Billingshurst, Midhurst and Petworth, and larger places like Horsham and Haywards Heath which grew in the heyday of the railways. Together with the coastal towns and seaside resorts, Crawley new town and a host of villages, these settlements contribute to the wider character of the five main natural character areas and of West Sussex as a whole.
301. The environment and character of settlements will continue to evolve as they grow and adapt to social and economic needs. This must be weighed with the need to protect historic aspects of the environment. Conservation itself can play a part in promoting economic prosperity by ensuring that an area offers attractive living and working conditions.
302. Making better use of previously-developed land within towns and villages can play an important part in protecting and enhancing the character of settlements although care is needed to ensure that important features or characteristics are not lost, for example, public open space. Opportunities should be taken to improve the appearance of settlements as seen from open countryside. Change affecting towns and villages of special historic character, the listed buildings, and valuable historic features will need to be handled with great sensitivity.
303. It is also important to protect the settings of towns and villages. Land adjoining settlements will benefit from management and actions to improve it. Such land may also provide locations for activities, including certain kinds of recreation, which maintain or actually improve the setting of the settlements nearby. District planning authorities should consider allocating land for uses which maintain or enhance the setting of the settlements, which may include woodlands, waterways, and informal open space, but which do not involve substantial buildings or large areas of hardstanding.

304. The coast of West Sussex varies in character from east to west. From Shoreham to the Witterings, the coast is largely built-up including the seaports of Littlehampton and Shoreham and the main seaside resorts of Worthing, Littlehampton, Bognor Regis and Selsey. The main river estuaries are of the Adur and the Arun. Between the coastal towns and villages, there are a number of important areas of undeveloped land, some of which extend to the coastline, including Pagham Harbour and the sand dunes at Climping. Further coalescence of the coastal towns is prevented under Policy CH3. From the Witterings to the Hampshire border, the coast is predominately undeveloped with a small number of villages around Chichester Harbour.
305. West Sussex is one of the most heavily wooded counties in England. Woodland covers slightly more land than all the urban areas put together, and is second in area only to farmland. Together with the extensive hedgerow network, woodland is a major element in the character of West Sussex as well as an economic, recreation, environmental and biodiversity resource (see Policy ERA2). Therefore, protection and enhancement are important. The semi-natural and ancient woodlands in particular are important for nature conservation and many are protected by designation for that reason. Of the ancient woodlands, few large ones have survived. The remainder are small and scattered, other than in the extensive woodlands in some of the hilly parts of the County.
306. Woodlands and forests determine character strongly along the sandy hills of the Wealden fringe and especially so in the well-wooded High Weald. A mixture of hedgerow, copse and woods characterise the Low Weald. Notable are the woodland swathes ('shaws') remaining from when the land either side was cleared for agriculture. The downland east of the Arun valley is mainly open, but the western downs are heavily wooded in some places, ranging from large plantations to the 'hangers' on the downland edge. On the exposed coastal plain, remnant woodland is of special importance in the low-lying landscape. Re-plantings and new plantations are a more recent feature of West Sussex, especially on the western downland and in the High Weald.
307. Although the County is well-wooded, there is a continuing deterioration in the quality of some woodlands. The problem of quality must be addressed by a wide range of interests and partners, if woodland is to continue as an essential element of the West Sussex scene. The proper management of woodlands is very important. Moreover, the character of the West Sussex countryside and parts of some urban areas are coming under increasing threat from the planting of non-native tree and shrub species, particularly cypresses, which soon become dominant in open landscapes. However, national forestry policy in the last ten years has emphasised the planting of native trees and incorporating biodiversity measures including open spaces within the woods.
308. The rivers, waterways and wetlands of West Sussex carry and distribute water and, in so doing, have shaped the landscape and character of the County. They are also important resources for recreation, transport, and nature conservation. Therefore, the Plan seeks to protect and enhance them, where possible.
309. The river system centres on the extensive catchments of the Arun and Adur. These drain the entire Low Weald and much of the rest of the County. The River Ouse drains most of the High Weald in West Sussex, running to the sea via Lewes in East Sussex. The Mole and Eden have their headwaters in the High Weald. Where the Arun and Adur meander through the Downs as tidal rivers, they have created broad floodplains characterised by flat water meadows known as "wild brooks". The River Rother forms a western arm of the broad Arun catchment. The Ouse is the dominant High Weald river. Many downland valleys are normally dry for much of the year including the Lavant, through Chichester.
310. In accommodating change, development must respect and enhance the distinctive local character of the land and the built environment. Where land needs to be allocated to meet the development requirements of this Plan and local plans, the development should respect the character of the settlement and, where appropriate, its setting (see Policy DEV6). The descriptions and natural profiles in the County Council's Landscape Strategy for each character area provide guidance and information to assist in the implementation of the policy.
311. Much has already been done to assess the character of the County, at least in its constituent parts. Comprehensive knowledge about the biodiversity and geology of the County is available, channelled through the County Council's Nature Conservation Strategy and the Sussex

Biodiversity Action Plan. Also published by the County Council, the Archaeological and Landscape Strategies for West Sussex give access to a very detailed picture of the archaeological record and the nature of the landscape. The Landscape Strategy also contains landscape management guidelines for each area, for the use of local authorities, developers and landowners.

312. Local plan policies should seek to maintain and reinforce the cohesiveness, distinctiveness and sense of place of character areas. Where necessary, additional guidance should be prepared.

District planning authorities should:

- *assess the character of towns and villages, including their landscape setting, and identify areas or neighbourhoods which have a coherent or recognisable character, identity or sense of place;*
- *assess the character and sense of place of the countryside outside built-up area boundaries and identify character areas within the main natural character areas which have a coherent or recognisable character, identity or sense of place;*
- *identify the important features or characteristics which contribute to local distinctiveness;*
- *assess the need for the creation of new or the extension of existing woodland and forest habitats, particularly in areas of degraded landscape or where significant tree loss has occurred or is expected*
- *assess the whole-catchment of rivers, waterways and wetlands and identify important features and characteristics; and*
- *where necessary, prepare supplementary planning guidance which will help to maintain and reinforce local distinctiveness, including the cohesive and distinctive character of towns and villages.*

Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Policy CH2

- (a) **Development should not be permitted unless the natural beauty, distinctive character and remote and tranquil nature of the Sussex Downs, High Weald, and Chichester Harbour Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) will be maintained and, where possible, enhanced. Development to meet proven local needs should be permitted provided that it is consistent with the purpose of AONB. Proposals for major development within AONB for any purpose should only be permitted in very exceptional circumstances and providing that they are consistent with national designation.**

- (b) **Local plans will include policies to ensure that:**

- (1) **within Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty:**

- (i) **development is allowed only where it is either essential to meet proven local social or economic needs or it is in the national interest and there is no alternative site available elsewhere or the need cannot be met in any other way; and**
- (ii) **development is compatible with or enhances the distinctive character and quality of the landscape and that it is designed and sited to enhance visual quality and to minimise noise, light, or air pollution or disturbance; and**

- (2) **outside Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, development does not detract from the natural beauty, distinctive character and remote and tranquil nature of the Areas.**

313. An Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) displays a range of unusual, unique or exceptional qualities, combining to give it a distinctive and cohesive character and natural beauty which is deemed 'outstanding'. More than half of West Sussex is included in designated Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty: along the Sussex Downs; in the High Weald; and in and around Chichester Harbour. The primary purpose of this national designation is to conserve

natural beauty although the rural economy needs to be sustained as does the economic and social well-being of the villages and small towns they contain. They also attract many visitors and provide for a wide range of mainly quiet, informal recreation. There are also larger attractions such as Goodwood Racecourse and Petworth House.

314. The Chichester Harbour AONB, an enclosed expanse of marine water, contains tidal mudflats, shingle, marsh, wetland scrub and small creeks providing a mosaic of precious inter-tidal habitats. It also includes the surrounding low-lying agricultural land, with some significant woodland. It is internationally important for wildlife. Despite heavy use for sailing and recreation generally, the area retains a secluded feel, strongly contrasting with a spacious quality in the broader reaches of the Harbour.
315. A large part of the High Weald AONB lies in West Sussex with the remainder in Kent and East Sussex. The sandstones and clays of the Wealden centre rise above the clay vales surrounding them. The headwaters ('ghylls') of rivers have cut deeply into the upland, producing a characteristic maze of intricate deep valleys and long ridge shanks. Extensive woodlands combine with the terrain and restricted views out to the surrounding plains and downland to create a secret and secluded character.
316. The South Downs, which run from Eastbourne to Winchester, are covered by the South Downs AONB within West and East Sussex and the East Hampshire AONB within Hampshire. Within West Sussex, the South Downs AONB includes the classic rolling chalk scenery of the South Downs themselves together with the intricate valleys and wooded greensand ridges of the northern part of Chichester District. The AONB includes a number of small towns and villages including Midhurst and Petworth.
317. The local authorities administer the High Weald and Chichester Harbour AONB, supported by advisory groups which co-ordinate action: the joint High Weald Forum (HWF) and the Chichester Harbour Conservancy (CHC) respectively.
318. The Sussex Downs Conservation Board (SDCB) manages the South Downs AONB through collaborative management and action by the thirteen local authorities covering the AONB. In 1999, the Countryside Agency started the process of designating a National Park within the general area of the Sussex Downs and East Hampshire AONB. The Designation Order for the South Downs National Park was signed in November 2002. A boundary for the proposed National Park has been published and is a material consideration in all planning decisions. The Public Inquiry, called by the Secretary of State, is expected to be completed before the end of 2004 with the Inspector's report expected in autumn 2005. If the Order is confirmed, this will be in 2006 with a National Park Authority fully operational in 2008. The strategy of the Structure Plan will need to be revised to take account of the designation of a National Park.
319. The Countryside Agency and its partners have prepared Statements of Intent on, and descriptions of, the AONB. Further plans and policies, including management plans and landscape assessments have been published by the SDCB, the HWF, and the CHC. The policies and management guidelines in the Rural, Coastal and Landscape Strategies for West Sussex published by the County Council are also relevant.
320. The Structure Plan seeks to prevent development that would threaten the natural beauty of the AONB. Proposals will be supported only where they are compatible with the aims of the designation, they are of an appropriate scale, form and method of construction, any disturbance or pollution is minimised, and, where possible, they enhance distinctive character. Where appropriate, a proposal should be accompanied by an environmental assessment.
321. Well-planned and carefully located proposals to meet the local economic and social needs of rural communities should be supported. The siting of major development is unlikely to be consistent with the aims of designation. Only proven national interest, a lack of alternative sites or the fact that the need cannot be met in any other way could justify an exception. However, proposals which would deliver overall benefits to the AONB, significantly outweighing any harm, may be supported: for example, where development achieves substantial improvements by restoring a derelict site or eyesore, such as Shoreham Cement Works (see Policy NE6).
322. Proposals for new or extended mineral workings and for new or improved roads will be subject to rigorous examination to ensure that the development is needed and that harm to the

environment is minimised. Development outside but near to an AONB should not detract from the natural beauty, distinctive character and remote and tranquil nature of the Area. This includes development which would be unduly prominent in the Area, or detract from views into or out of the Area, particularly when viewed from roads, rights of way or other public places.

Settlement pattern and strategic gaps

Policy CH3

- (a) **In order to ensure that West Sussex continues to be a county with a network of small to medium-sized towns and villages, the separate identity and character of all settlements will be maintained and, where possible, enhanced. Development which would undermine this objective or lead to the actual or perceived coalescence of settlements should not be permitted.**
- (b) **Development should not be permitted unless the strategic settlement pattern of the County will be maintained. The following gaps between settlements within West Sussex are of strategic importance and development should not be permitted which would undermine their fundamental purpose and integrity:**
- (1) Emsworth and Chichester;**
 - (2) Chichester and Lavant;**
 - (3) Chichester and Bognor Regis;**
 - (4) West Wittering and East Wittering;**
 - (5) Bracklesham Bay and Selsey;**
 - (6) Selsey and Pagham;**
 - (7) Middleton-on-Sea and Littlehampton;**
 - (8) Arundel and Littlehampton;**
 - (9) East Preston and Ferring;**
 - (10) Ferring and Worthing;**
 - (11) Worthing and Sompting/Lancing;**
 - (12) Lancing and Shoreham;**
 - (13) Burgess Hill and Hurstpierpoint/Keymer/Hassocks;**
 - (14) Burgess Hill and Haywards Heath;**
 - (15) Haywards Heath and Cuckfield;**
 - (16) Haywards Heath/Lindfield and Scaynes Hill;**
 - (17) Crawley and East Grinstead;**
 - (18) Crawley and Gatwick Airport/Horley;**
 - (19) Crawley and Pease Pottage;**
 - (20) East Grinstead and Ashurst Wood;**
 - (21) Horsham and Crawley; and**
 - (22) Horsham and Southwater.**
- (c) **District planning authorities will:**
- (1) identify how the separate identity and character of all settlements will be maintained and, where possible, enhanced;**
 - (2) define in local plans, the boundaries of the strategic gaps identified in (b) and, where appropriate, of any gaps identified in the structure or local plans of adjoining authorities; and**

(3) include policies in local plans to:

- (i) ensure that the separate identity and character of all settlements will be maintained and, where possible, enhanced and prevent their perceived or actual coalescence;**
- (ii) ensure that development within strategic gaps:**
 - is consistent with, or is necessary to meet the requirements of, this Plan and local plans;**
 - would not compromise, either individually or cumulatively with other development, the objectives and fundamental integrity of the gaps; and**
 - would maintain and enhance the predominantly open and undeveloped character of gaps; and**
- (iii) where appropriate, allocate land within gaps for uses which will maintain and enhance their predominantly open and undeveloped character.**

323. The County is typified by a pattern of mainly closely-spaced small and medium-sized towns and villages. The loss of gaps between settlements would threaten not only the separation and setting of the settlements on both sides but also the overall character of the County. The need to avoid the loss of separate identity continues. Therefore, in order to maintain the overall character of the County, this Plan seeks to maintain the separate identity and character of all settlements and prevent them coalescing. Policy CH3 seeks to achieve this by placing greater restraint on development within gaps than is usually applied in the countryside to prevent creeping coalescence, for example, through the proliferation of development which would otherwise be acceptable outside built-up area boundaries under Policy LOC2.
324. Coalescence does not mean exclusively the physical joining of settlements but also includes a perceived joining of settlements due to physical development and/or a level of activity which reduces their visual separation and the sense of travelling between settlements. The towns and villages of the County have their own distinctive character which derives partly from the relationship between the settlements and the open areas and countryside around them and the relationship between the towns and villages. In order to protect their separate identity, the predominantly open and undeveloped character of the land between settlements should be maintained to ensure that there is an actual and perceived visual break between the settlements. Attention will need to be paid to the impact of development either on its own or cumulatively with other development in reducing this visual separation and diminishing the sense of an absence of activity. The essential feature of gaps is the relative absence of development not their landscape quality.
325. Some gaps between settlements are of strategic importance. Accordingly, strategic gaps are planning policy designations which are applied to areas between certain settlements which should be kept apart in order to maintain the strategic settlement pattern of the County. In general, these areas are the gaps between the main settlements and the main settlements and adjoining settlements. The concept of strategic gaps has been important to West Sussex for many years and is well-understood within the county. The essential feature of them is the relative absence of development rather than their landscape quality.
326. Policy CH3 lists the gaps which are of strategic importance. Some of the Strategic Gaps include existing villages and small towns within them which should be kept apart, for example, Southbourne, Nutbourne, Chidham, Bosham, and Fishbourne within the Emsworth to Chichester Gap and Copthorne and Crawley Down in the Crawley to East Grinstead Gap. There is a need to protect the separate identity of the settlements within gaps as well as the identity of the settlements which they lie between.
327. Local plan reviews must consider how the character, separate identity and separation of all settlements will be maintained, and where possible, enhanced, for example, through the designation of local gaps. They must also consider the function of, and justification for, the designation of the strategic gaps when they define their boundaries which should follow physical features on the ground, taking into account the need to accommodate the

development requirements of this Plan and local plans. Strategic gaps should not necessarily include all the land between the settlements; only land which is necessary to secure the objectives of strategic gaps on a long-term basis should be included within them. Continuity with strategic and local gaps designated in adjoining districts and counties must be maintained. This includes the Emsworth Strategic Gap, identified in the Hampshire County Structure Plan 1996-2011 (Review), predominantly between Havant and Emsworth but which extends into West Sussex to Westbourne (in Chichester District).

328. Once a gap has been defined, development within it which would undermine or erode the fundamental purpose and integrity of the gap should not be allowed except in exceptional circumstances (see paragraph 329). Individual developments which do not undermine the fundamental purpose of strategic and other gaps may be acceptable within them, such as agricultural or informal recreational use, such as playing fields. However, regard must be had to the cumulative effects of such development in reducing visual separation and diminishing the sense of an absence of activity.
329. Once the boundary of a strategic gap has been defined taking into account the development requirements of this Plan and local plans, the siting of major development within a strategic gap is unlikely to be consistent with the aims of designation. A lack of alternative sites and the fact that the need cannot be met in any other way could justify an exception.
330. In considering land allocations and proposals for new development, the district planning authorities should consider ways in which to maintain and enhance the predominantly open and undeveloped character of all gaps and the land between all settlements: for example, by allocating land for uses such as woodland, which would have an environmental benefit, or informal recreation, which would have a social benefit. They should also look at ways of improving the landscape and amenity of strategic gaps to enhance their value as open countryside and improve the environment in particular local habitat especially where this may have been lost or harmed due to other nearby development.

District planning authorities should:

- *identify settlements which are at risk of actual or perceived coalescence and identify how the character, separate identity and separation of those settlements will be maintained and, where possible, enhanced for example, through the designation of local gaps;*
- *review the boundaries of the strategic gaps identified in Policy CH3 taking into account the development requirements of this Plan and local plans and the need to secure the objectives of the strategic gaps on a long-term basis; and*
- *ensure a consistent and co-ordinated approach to the treatment of land across administrative boundaries taking into account any gaps identified in the development plan of adjoining authorities.*

Conservation areas and historic towns and villages

Policy CH4

(a) Development should not be permitted unless conservation areas will be preserved and, where possible, enhanced. Development should not be permitted unless the character of the historic towns and villages of the County will be protected and, where possible, enhanced and provided that the overall perception of each historic town or village as an entity, including Arundel and Chichester which are of national importance, will be retained.

(b) Local plans will include policies to ensure that:

- (1) the character and appearance of conservation areas is preserved and, where possible, enhanced; and**
- (2) the setting, character, fabric (including open space), public views in and out, and general ambience of historic towns and villages as a whole are protected and, where possible, enhanced.**

331. Some areas or groups of buildings make a significant contribution to the character of the County. Many are designated as conservation areas recognising their special architectural or

historic interest, the character or appearance of which should be protected. These include groups of buildings which together take on a character and value of their own, especially where they form an important part of the street scene, are built of local materials, are characteristic of the town or the countryside, or are associated with the social and industrial past of communities.

332. West Sussex has well over two hundred conservation areas, nearly half of which are in Chichester District. Most were designated in the 1970s and 80s although fewer have been designated since and some have been extended. They range from the grand Victorian neighbourhoods of the seaside resorts and the historic cores of medieval towns to traditional market town and village centres. They will be protected for their architectural and historic importance and for their contribution to the character of the County as a whole.
333. The district planning authorities will continue to review the boundaries of existing conservation areas and designate new ones, with the aim of preserving and, where possible, enhancing their character and appearance. Particular attention will be paid to the identification of important features or characteristics in historic towns and villages, which need to be protected.
334. It will be important to protect or enhance the fabric and character of conservation areas and prevent the demolition or alteration of buildings which make a positive contribution to their character, appearance or quality. New development should be of an appropriate scale, form and construction and enclose space or relate to roadways in a similar manner to existing development. Priority should be given to conserving the fabric and scale of the built environment over meeting demands for additional floorspace or improvements in vehicular access. New development should use traditional or appropriate materials. Important views from public places into and out of conservation areas should also be protected.
335. Collectively, conservation areas serve to protect and enhance the character of towns and villages including the safeguarding as entities, of the nationally renowned and valued historic centres of Arundel and Chichester. Local plans should protect the setting, character, fabric and ambience of historic towns and villages.

District planning authorities should:

- *assess existing conservation areas (including a review of their boundaries) and formulate proposals to preserve or enhance their character or appearance;*
- *designate new conservation areas where it is desirable to preserve or enhance areas of special architectural or historic interest and formulate proposals to preserve or enhance their character or appearance;*
- *assess the character of historic towns and villages and identify important features or characteristics which need to be protected.*

Buildings of architectural or historic interest

Policy CH5

- (a) Development should not be permitted unless statutorily listed buildings of special architectural or historic interest, and their settings, will be preserved and, where possible, enhanced. Development should be permitted provided other buildings within the County which are important and interesting features in the street scene, or in the landscape, or which have a place in local history, will be protected.**
- (b) Local plans will include policies to:**
- (1) ensure that the character and setting of listed buildings is preserved and, where possible, enhanced;**
 - (2) permit, in exceptional circumstances, changes of use which in other circumstances would be resisted, where they are necessary to ensure the future retention of listed buildings, their character and features; and**
 - (3) ensure that the character and setting of other (unlisted) buildings or groups of buildings of local importance are protected and, where possible, enhanced.**

336. West Sussex has many buildings of architectural and historic interest. They cover every kind and age, reflecting the traditions and history of West Sussex, and include the great country houses, such as Petworth House, medieval townhouse and farm buildings, and modern architectural masterpieces. Over 7,000 buildings are statutorily listed as being of special architectural or historic interest (known as 'listed buildings'), nearly half of which are in Chichester District. Some historic towns contribute greatly to the total number, notably Chichester, Arundel and the small market town of Petworth.
337. Listed buildings and their settings should be preserved. Where the demolition or alteration of a listed building or any material change is unavoidable, provision should be made for recording its historic fabric in advance of proposed works. Listed buildings are an irreplaceable asset and they should continue to be adapted to new uses, which is often the only guarantee of a future for the building. However, strict control should be exercised over their alteration and the preservation of their settings - if new uses are judged to be beyond the capacity of the building or will otherwise harm it, they should not be permitted. High standards of design, work, materials and construction should be required where alteration is allowed. New uses which would in other circumstances be resisted in that location may be acceptable in a listed building if it would be the only way of retaining or refurbishing it.
338. Other buildings deemed by the district planning authorities to be of architectural and historic importance should be included on non-statutory 'local lists'. Priority should be given to protecting them and their settings from loss or damaging alterations and, where possible, seeking their enhancement. The local planning authorities will issue design guidance and material on building styles where appropriate.

District planning authorities should:

- *identify buildings (and their settings), not on the Statutory List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest, which should be protected and compile a 'local list' of buildings or buildings groups; and*
- *assess the potential of local listed buildings for inclusion on the Statutory List and undertake appropriate action.*

Historic parks and gardens

Policy CH6

- (a) Development should not be permitted unless the historic parks and gardens of the County will be protected and, where possible, enhanced taking into account their contribution to the character of the built-up areas and countryside.**
- (b) Local plans will include policies to ensure that historic parks or gardens, their settings, or public views into or out of them are protected and, where possible, enhanced.**
339. The historic parks and gardens of West Sussex complement the historic buildings and historic landscape of the County and contribute to the character of the built-up areas and countryside. The treescapes of historic and other parks and gardens are a precious legacy. English Heritage maintains a Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest. Many of the larger ones lie in the west of the County, centred on great houses. Notable examples include Cowdray Park, Goodwood, Petworth, Stansted, Uppark, Wakehurst Place, West Dean and the Norfolk Estate at Arundel. The County Council has assisted the Sussex Gardens Trust in identifying historic parks or gardens of local importance. Some have been developed with housing, some have been converted to arable or other agricultural use but there are a number of survivors which fall below the threshold for inclusion in the English Heritage Register.
340. It is important not only to protect and enhance the features of the historic parks and gardens on the English Heritage Register as well as those of local importance but also to protect their settings, and public views to and from them.

District planning authorities should identify historic parks and gardens including those on the national Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest.

Archaeology

Policy CH7

- (a) **Development should not be permitted unless the archaeological heritage of West Sussex is protected and preserved and, where possible, opportunities are taken to promote the educational and amenity value of sites and areas (historic landscapes).**
- (b) **Local plans will include policies to ensure:**
- (1) **the physical preservation in-situ of nationally important archaeological areas, sites or monuments, whether scheduled or not, and their settings;**
 - (2) **the protection of other important archaeological areas and sites including, where appropriate, the preservation of remains in situ;**
 - (3) **where necessary, that site evaluation is undertaken to define the character and significance of the archaeological or historic interest of proposed development sites; and**
 - (4) **the excavation and recording of archaeological remains, the preservation of any finds and the subsequent publication of results.**

341. West Sussex has an exceptionally rich archaeological heritage which contributes to its character. The County contains important areas and sites from all eras of human activity, notably Bronze and Iron Age forts and burial sites and a rich legacy of Roman remains typified by the mosaic pavements at Fishbourne and Bignor and remains of the Wealden iron industry. The County contains over 200 Scheduled Ancient Monuments, including early fortifications and burial sites on the downs. In addition, some 1,500 sites and places have been defined as Archaeologically Sensitive Areas, worthy of protection. Whilst most of these are in the countryside, the historic towns and other urban areas also contain invaluable reminders of the past comprising sites, monuments and ancient buildings.
342. Archaeological or historic features are often associated with rivers and waterways. The most visible are the bridges crossing the rivers together with canals and other buildings associated with industry. West Sussex was connected to London via an extensive system of waterways. This system is now largely lost, although significant stretches remain. Today, the Chichester and the Wey and Arun Canals have considerable wildlife value. A balance needs to be struck between attempts to restore them to navigation for recreational use and their protection as important habitats and as part of the historic environment.
343. Archaeological remains are a finite, non-renewable resource and can contain irreplaceable information about our past. They are vulnerable to damage and destruction and, therefore, there is a need to preserve and record important archaeological remains. Further guidance and background information is provided in the *Archaeology Strategy for West Sussex* (published by the County Council in 1995 – currently under revision).
344. Scheduled Ancient Monuments are legally protected and works cannot be carried out on them without the consent of the Secretary of State. Other, non-scheduled, monuments and sites of importance and their settings must also be protected and, where possible, enhanced.
345. Where development may affect known archaeological remains, a site of archaeological potential or a site which may contain archaeological remains, the developer should be expected to commission an archaeological field evaluation by a professional archaeological contractor. If preservation in situ is not possible, a full investigation should be required, with proper recording, the preservation of finds, and publication. Where possible, conflicts between land use and the preservation of known archaeological sites should be resolved by management agreements.

District planning authorities should identify sites or areas of known or potential archaeological importance which should be protected and, where possible, enhanced.

