

Management of the Built and Historic Environment

Management for an Urban Renaissance

1.1 Government policy seeks a renaissance of urban areas, to make them places that people choose to live because of the high quality of life they offer. This aim is clearly set out in the Urban White Paper and the Sustainable Communities Plan with the planning policy implications clearly established in national planning guidance.

1.2 Urban renaissance is a multi-dimensional concept which goes far beyond the simple notion of concentrating the majority of development in urban areas. It is about making our towns and cities places where people will choose to live, work and spend their leisure time. Research undertaken for the Government Office for the South East identified five pillars of urban renaissance, all of which are fundamental to raising urban quality of life:

- i Good Governance** (establishing a shared vision through community engagement, positive planning, partnership working)
- ii Achieving Built Excellence** (using design guidance to promote mixed use, higher densities, public realm enhancements and open space strategies)
- iii Promoting Economic Strength** (supporting town and local centres, promoting regeneration and a diverse and evolving economy)
- iv Environmental Responsibility** (requiring sustainable construction, enhancing accessibility, utilising urban potential and built heritage, re-using of buildings and land)
- v Social Inclusion** (designing out crime, developing mixed communities, promoting healthy environments, providing community infrastructure).

1.3 The five pillars should reinforce each other within the overall objective of raising quality of life. They apply equally to suburban neighbourhoods and small towns as they do to large cities. The widespread applicability of urban renaissance is particularly important to the South East with its polycentric settlement structure and its dominant suburban form. If the region is to continue to provide a high quality of life for all its inhabitants, it is vital that urban and suburban renaissance is adopted as a key policy objective by all local authorities and pursued with vigour (see map BE1 opposite).

1.4 Good Governance – The starting point for promoting urban renaissance is the establishment of a clear vision for an area, for example within a community strategy. The implementation of the vision requires an integrated approach to implementation and service delivery including:

- i** a clear spatial strategy set out within the Local Development Framework (LDF) and the Local Transport Plan, identifying the role of urban areas and providing clear guidance on appropriate forms of development
- ii** working with key service providers (eg transport, education, health, utilities, etc) to ensure that social and physical infrastructure is phased in accordance with planned development and population growth
- iii** a proactive approach to development planning, working closely with the development industry to achieve stated objectives
- iv** developing the skills of elected representatives, professionals and communities
- v** ongoing and effective engagement with local communities.

1.5 Built Excellence – Focusing development within urban areas will require careful attention to the form and design of development to ensure that urban areas are attractive places to live, work and spend leisure time. All too often in recent decades, our urban and suburban areas have been blighted by poor quality design which pays little or no attention to local character or context.

1.6 In many areas this will mean that new development will need to respect the historic character of the existing buildings, while in other towns redevelopment will provide an opportunity to improve upon existing urban design. Increasingly creative solutions are being found which:

- i maximise the opportunities for renewal and intensification
- ii strive for a greater mix of building types, land uses and tenures
- iii seek to optimise development density in proximity to public transport hubs and facilitate access by foot and cycle
- iv incorporate high standards of sustainable construction.

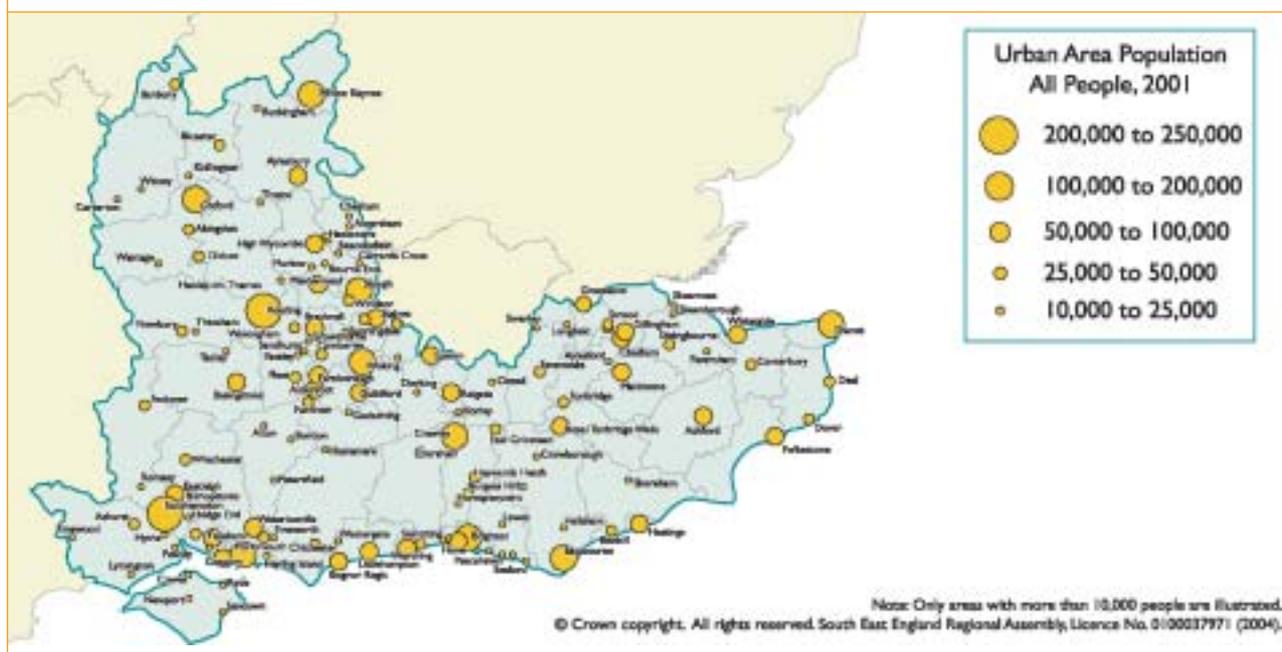
1.7 The importance of high quality design is emphasised in national planning policy

guidance, which encourages local authorities to establish clear design policies and principles. The Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) plays a key role in raising design standards by raising awareness, disseminating good practice and developing professional skills in relation to design. Further sources of guidance and good practice are listed in **Box BE1** overleaf.

1.8 Good design will become increasingly important as more opportunities are taken to maximise densities and intensify development. Although they have gradually increased in recent years, densities of new residential development in the South East continue to be some of the lowest in the country, thereby increasing the amount of greenfield land taken for new development. There is, therefore, considerable scope within the South East for accommodating development in ways which save land and create viable catchments for local services and public transport in accordance with national planning guidance and Policy H5 of this Plan (Housing Density and Design). In addition, within many urban and suburban areas across the South East, which benefit from good public transport and existing

MAP BE1

Urban Structure of the South East



higher levels of development density, there are significant opportunities to provide high quality housing development in excess of 50 dwellings per hectare net. Local authorities should take a positive approach to developing proposals for these areas to assist in meeting housing need.

1.9 It will be important that higher density forms of development are accompanied by an increasing mix of different land uses throughout urban areas, in order to provide an enhanced range of employment, leisure and residential opportunities for an increasingly diverse population. Significant progress has been made in promoting mixed use development in many of the region's larger town centres, and it will be important for local authorities to seek opportunities to encourage this good practice to spread to smaller centres and suburban areas. On large residential schemes, developers may need to subsidise community facilities and services to ensure they are available to the new occupants before the entire scheme is fully completed and occupied.

BOX BE I

Policy and Good Practice Guidance

Policy and Guidance

Draft PPS1 – Creating Sustainable Communities, ODPM

Achieving Quality of Design in Local Plans, RIBA

Protecting Design Quality in Planning, CABE

By Design, better places to live. A Companion Guide to PPG3, DTLR/CABE

By Design, urban design in the planning system, towards better practice, DETR/CABE

Councillor's Toolbox: making the best use of land, South East England Regional Assembly

Buildings in Context, English Heritage/CABE

Urban Design Compendium, English Partnerships and Housing Corporation

Creating Successful Masterplans, CABE

Safer Places: The Planning System and Crime Prevention, Home Office/ODPM

Green Space Strategies: a good practice guide, CABESpace

1.10 Environmental Responsibility and Social Inclusion – A fundamental outcome of urban renaissance should be an enhanced and enjoyable urban environment, accompanied by a more environmentally sustainable form of development which minimises use of natural resources. Within the context of urban areas, local authorities, service providers, the local community and developers should pay particular attention to:

- i** the essential contribution which high quality public realm, private gardens, open spaces, streets, squares and green corridors can make to urban areas in terms of their benefits for wildlife habitats, recreational and cultural value and wider environmental and social benefits
- ii** the best ways to further promote the management of traffic to achieve a better urban environment, including measures which improve road safety, give priority to pedestrians, cyclists, buses and essential business users, parking management and opportunities to improve integration between modes of transport
- iii** incorporating crime prevention considerations into the design of new development
- iv** encouragement of environmentally sustainable design and construction techniques which use recycled materials, minimise water use, facilitate the use of renewable energy, maximise energy efficiency.

1.11 There are valid concerns in many parts of the South East about the impact of urban development and intensification on local infrastructure and services, and the potentially adverse implications for quality of life. The development of mixed communities at higher densities requires a more proactive approach to the management of urban environments to ensure that change to the physical environment is accompanied by the necessary investment in social infrastructure, including healthcare, education, public open space, public



transport and affordable housing. This requires an integrated approach to urban management and change, to ensure that all service providers are working towards the same objectives.

- 1.12** Guidance on sustainable design and construction is provided in Section D5 Sustainable Natural Resource Management.

POLICY BE1: MANAGEMENT FOR AN URBAN RENAISSANCE

Local authorities, public agencies and private sector partners should initiate active programmes of urban management linked to appropriate development, in order to raise standards, promote urban renaissance throughout the region, make better use of land and resources and encourage the use of public transport.

In particular local authorities should:

- i** support higher density and mixed use development schemes
- ii** seek greater intensity of development in places with good transport accessibility
- iii** identify key sites for which briefs and masterplans need to be developed
- iv** establish innovative management arrangements to mobilise resources, gain community support and raise standards
- v** give attention to specific measures to improve the public realm and public spaces.

Managing Neighbourhood Change

- 1.13** The South East is especially characterised by its suburban settlement structure. However, these suburbs vary enormously in terms of their physical, social and environmental make up. They range from the most affluent to some of the most deprived neighbourhoods and vary in character from mixed use inner suburbs to executive residential areas on the urban-rural fringe. Although traditionally considered inherently stable, economic change has placed very different pressures on many of these areas. Some are experiencing the loss of their original purpose (eg to support industries that no longer exist) others are experiencing considerable pressures for development which threaten to change their character, but which may also present real opportunities for more sustainable forms of development.
- 1.14** There is a strategic requirement to make the best use of all urban land in the region, including suburban land. To this end sub-regional strategies and local development frameworks should seek to identify neighbourhoods at risk or which may present significant development opportunities, and take action to develop clear policy frameworks for maximising the opportunities they may present for more sustainable forms of development.
- 1.15** **Areas of Opportunity** – Many suburban areas in the South East are facing considerable pressure for new development to a far greater extent than most other parts of the country. The scale of the pressures for development and intensification over the foreseeable future and their impact on quality of life is a

strategic issue for the region. New development should be treated as an opportunity to improve the sustainability and quality of life in our suburbs.

I.16 At present much of the infill and intensification taking place in suburban neighbourhoods is viewed in a negative way, and dealt with on an incremental and piecemeal basis, thereby placing undue pressure on local infrastructure and services. The result is often characterised by:

- i** ad-hoc, incremental (and often poorly designed) intensification which threatens to adversely affect character
- ii** a failure to provide adequate housing choice for all sections of the community
- iii** increasingly unsustainable patterns of travel leading to increasing congestion and pollution, and in many cases a decline of local centres
- iv** a loss of employment land and a lack of developer interest in non-residential (particularly mixed-use) development.

I.17 To capitalise on the opportunities presented by strong housing markets and high land values, a more proactive and holistic approach to neighbourhood planning will be needed, which can harness growth in order to enhance the physical environment, protect local character, improve local services and support local businesses. For example, in neighbourhoods that are highly accessible by public transport, local authorities should seek to strengthen the range of facilities and services at and around the transport node. In many cases this will require local authorities to take a more proactive approach to land assembly or enter into joint ventures with development institutions to achieve their planning objectives. Area Action Plans focused on suburban neighbourhoods (c5,000 – 7,000 population) provide a useful framework for taking forward this approach. It will be essential that these establish clear mechanisms for securing funding for local community infrastructure through land value capture, and that the

funds accrued are reinvested within the neighbourhood in accordance with clearly identified priorities.

I.18 **Neighbourhoods at Risk** – Many suburbs are experiencing a different kind of pressure from physical decline and social and economic deprivation. In many of these suburbs local retail, health and education facilities may be of poor quality or absent. Such neighbourhoods demonstrate characteristics more commonly associated with inner urban areas. Where this is the case there is a need for a more integrated approach to neighbourhood management, whereby local service providers (eg health, education, housing etc) work together to maximise opportunities to provide co-ordinated services in ways which meet local needs and assist regeneration. In specific areas local authorities, in partnership with other service providers, could lead the production of Neighbourhood Management Frameworks to facilitate this process.

POLICY BE2: MANAGING NEIGHBOURHOOD CHANGE

Local Development Frameworks should identify neighbourhoods, especially in suburban areas, which would benefit from a proactive and integrated approach to land use planning and/or area management.

For those neighbourhoods identified, local authorities should work with their partners to develop either:

- i** **Area Action Plans. Based on extensive community engagement, AAPs should set out a clear and coherent development framework and guidelines for a neighbourhood informed by character appraisal. This may include, where appropriate, design guidance, development briefs, or masterplans for key sites. Delivery and funding mechanisms should be clearly identified alongside key infrastructure requirements.**

- ii **Neighbourhood Management Plans.** An NMP should set out a clear framework for the integrated development, management and delivery of key community services and infrastructure (eg public transport, open space, health and education). It should be developed through partnership working with residents, service providers, employers and developers.

Managing the Urban Rural Fringe

- 1.19** The urban rural fringe serves an important role both functionally and structurally in the South East. It provides an essential element in the structure of the physical form of the South East and is a key conditioner of the relationship between urban and rural areas. Recent work¹ has shown the multi-functional role of the urban rural fringe as being of significant importance (see box BE2). It can provide a green resource for both urban and rural communities and its quality has a powerful influence that can nurture and develop healthy and sustainable communities or carefully planned extensions of existing communities.
- 1.20** The urban rural fringe can be best considered as the areas that geographically lie around urban areas. It serves functions relating to both urban and rural areas, including communication corridors. It is often a complex, fragmented area of mixed land use, rapid change and, particularly in some parts of the South East, many competing pressures for land. It can also be subject to poor maintenance, neglect and vandalism.
- 1.21** Effective policies are needed to secure the benefits available to the people of the South East region in the urban rural fringe. Policies that support both careful management and positive planning can enable the realisation of the many opportunities available in the urban rural fringe and minimise the problems of deterioration to which it might otherwise be subject.

BOX BE2

Unlocking the Potential of the Urban Rural Fringe

Ten key functions of the urban rural fringe:

- 1 A bridge to the country**
A network of new and improved parks, woodlands and other green spaces linked to the urban centre and wider countryside by footpaths and cycle ways. Continuous green corridors between town and country. Allowing many more people regardless of social and economic circumstances to easily and safely enjoy a high quality countryside experience close to where they live.
- 2 A gateway to the town**
The quality of the urban rural fringe as an indicator and advert for the quality of an urban area and its rural hinterland. Creating a powerful first impression to visitors and possible investors.
- 3 A health centre**
An invaluable respite from the stresses of urban living. Providing for safe and enjoyable walking, cycling or horse riding or a place to relax as well as meeting the demands for more adventurous sports and recreation. Society and economy benefit as more people enjoy better mental and physical health.
- 4 A classroom**
Providing hands-on opportunities in a variety of outdoor classrooms. Supporting parts of the national curriculum. Lifelong learning opportunities for adults in the practical skills needed to maintain the environment and recreational fabric of the area.
- 5 A recycling centre**
The fringe makes an important contribution to the sustainable processing of waste, management of water resources and pollution control close to urban centres thus minimising transport distances and costs.

FOOTNOTES

¹ *Unlocking the potential of the rural urban fringe. Groundwork and the Countryside Agency. 2004.*

BOX BE2 (continued)

Unlocking the Potential of the Urban Rural Fringe

6 A power plant

The regeneration of land, property and infrastructure in the fringe creating opportunities to install renewable energy technologies.

7 A productive landscape

Farmers in the fringe taking advantage of proximity to large urban markets, supplying high quality produce directly. Farmers and land managers also engaged in creating and maintaining a wide range of other valuable goods and services.

8 A place to live sustainably

New communities established in the fringe to meet need for new development. Genuinely balanced communities combining homes, employment and community and commercial services needed to support them.

9 An engine for regeneration

The fringe used as a tool to help communities develop their own confidence, skills and prospects. Residents involved in creating and managing recreational spaces, community gardens and allotments and other environmental improvements to make their neighbourhoods more liveable. The result, better understanding of the rural environment and a direct stake in the countryside at their doorstep.

10 A nature reserve

The fringe contains new and reinstated areas of woodland, wetland, meadow and a broad array of other natural habitats.

POLICY BE3: MANAGING THE URBAN RURAL FRINGE

Local Development Documents (LDDs) should:

- i identify issues and opportunities that require specific attention to assist in delivering a sustainable multi-functional urban rural fringe.

Local authorities should work with neighbouring planning authorities and with partners including the private sector, agencies and county wildlife and other trusts in formulating and implementing strategies and action plans for urban rural fringe areas

- ii ensure better management of the urban rural fringe, including those areas currently or potentially subject to dereliction due to under-use
- iii be proactive in identifying opportunities for sustainable developments including where appropriate urban extensions in the urban rural fringe. Plans should positively encourage patterns that preserve pockets of quality countryside, interlacing of built environments with quality greenspace and easy access for inhabitants to the greenspace and countryside areas.

Rural Communities and Management

1.22 Whilst it is recognised that the majority of the development needs of the South East will be met in urban areas, there is a need to ensure the development necessary to maintain and develop thriving and socially-inclusive rural communities and economies is appropriate, balancing development with environmental constraints. In particular, this means ensuring rural communities have access to a good range of affordable housing, key services and employment.

1.23 There is a need to encourage and support positive planning and design in rural areas, and foster vibrant communities which have the capacity and knowledge to plan for their future through community-led initiatives. eg Parish Plans, Village Design Statements, Market Town Healthchecks, Local Community Strategies.

The Role of Small Rural Towns ('Market' Towns)

1.24 Small rural or 'market' towns play a key part in the economic and social functioning



of the region, and in contributing to its character and built form. They are defined by their capacity to act as a focal point for trade and services for a rural hinterland, and such towns can have a variety of backgrounds – they are not just limited to those which have a traditional agricultural market or strong historic character. In this Plan they are defined as between 3,000 and 10,000 population.

1.25 In recent years small market towns have been relatively successful in economic and social terms. They have seen substantial economic and housing growth. Under this strategy they will not be a main focus for development, but they will still need to foster economic vitality and appropriate development. This local character and identity should be reinforced and enhanced. Individuality is the key to the success of market towns, which will depend on their appeal as a commercial business and retail centre, an attractive residential location and visitor destination.

1.26 Many small towns also have social problems and here community engagement and capacity building, and the management and resourcing of community initiatives (such as Market Town Programmes) can help address disadvantage and social isolation, linked with LDFs, Local Transport Plans and Community Strategies. Consideration should also be given to extending the role of small rural towns as centres for education and training, and to a more innovative approach to the use of existing infrastructure, such as schools, libraries and public transport to develop this role.

POLICY BE4: THE ROLE OF SMALL RURAL TOWNS (‘MARKET’ TOWNS)

Local planning authorities should encourage and initiate schemes and proposals that help strengthen the viability of small rural towns, recognising their importance to the wider rural areas. Local planning authorities through their LDDs and other means should:

- i support and reinforce the role of market towns as local hubs for employment, retailing and community facilities and services**
- ii provide for small scale housing development in market towns (especially for affordable housing) where this would reinforce and develop the distinctive character and role of the town, and meet appropriate needs**
- iii protect and enhance the character and appearance of individual market towns**
- iv develop public transport networks which meet the needs of both the market towns and their surrounding rural area.**

Village Management

1.27 Villages form an important part of the network of settlements in the region, and are often the subject of pressures arising from their location in a highly dynamic region, but also from stagnation or exclusion, in some cases resulting from a loss of services or changing community structure. Villages are defined in this Plan as settlements with populations less than 3,000. Limited small scale development can help meet the specific local housing,

business and service needs of individual rural settlements, preferably through community led mechanisms such as Parish Plans. Development must be guided by strong design requirements which respect the character of settlement and be carefully assessed by sustainability criteria, for example through Village Design Statements. Community and service needs may be partially met through better use of under-used facilities, mobile and joint services, co-location and information technology. In some cases, development may serve a group of villages.

POLICY BE5: VILLAGE MANAGEMENT

In preparing their Local Development Documents, local planning authorities should positively plan for limited small-scale affordable housing, business and service development in villages to meet defined local needs (eg affordable housing) and protect or extend key local services in accordance with rigorous design and sustainability criteria.

Management of the Built and Historic Environment

1.28 It is widely recognised that the South East has a rich and diverse historic environment. This is a tremendous asset, a precious and irreplaceable expression of our history, heritage and culture, visibly so, where it lies at the heart of local and regional character and sense of place. The historic buildings and landscapes that characterise the region add much to the quality of life that underpins the region's economy. Like the rural landscape, the historic urban fabric influences investment decisions of individuals and businesses. The historic environment is part of the wider environment of the region that is a 'draw' for those investing in the area.

1.29 The historic environment includes the physical evidence of past human activity. It is all around us as part of everyday life,

and it is therefore dynamic and continually subject to change. It is not limited to the built environment and archaeological sites, but includes landscapes, both urban and rural and as an example of its great diversity, marine heritage sites around the coast. These environments are fragile and require protection, but also have an enormous potential to contribute to a sense of place and identity and add to the quality of our daily lives through understanding and appropriate management and access. Regionally significant features and sites in the South East include those listed in **box BE3**.

BOX BE3

Examples of regionally significant historic environment features in the South East

- Historic cities of Canterbury, Chichester, Oxford, Rochester, Southampton and Winchester.
- Maritime heritage relating to the Thames Estuary, Solent, the Channel Coast including naval dockyards of Chatham, Portsmouth and Sheerness, Regency Brighton and the seaside built heritage of the Kent and Sussex coasts.
- An historic countryside of varying character reflecting both Midlands Inclosure on top of open field systems and more organically developed landscapes of Kent and Sussex.
- An outstanding archaeological heritage from the Palaeolithic sites of Boxgrove and the Thames gravels, through a rich prehistory reflecting the development of agriculture, through Roman centres of Canterbury, Chichester and Silchester and the wider network of smaller towns, villages and other rural settlements, through major Saxon and medieval ecclesiastical and urban centres.
- The network of historic market towns and villages with their medieval churches and other historic buildings.

BOX BE3 (continued)**Examples of regionally significant historic environment features in the South East**

- The stately homes and historic parks and gardens ringing London from Oxfordshire round to Kent.
- The defence heritage of the region which has always been in the front line of the defence of England.

I.30 The Government recognises² the importance of the historic environment in contributing to sustainable development. 'A Force for Our Future' sets out the historic environment's potential for regeneration, tourism and social inclusion as well as for conservation. The revitalisation of the historic dockyards at Chatham and Portsmouth are just two examples of this in action within the region. National planning guidance for the identification and protection of historic buildings, conservation areas, archaeological remains and other elements of the historic environment is set out in PPG15 and PPG16.

I.31 This South East Plan has been prepared at a time of reform of the heritage protection system³. This seeks to establish a legislative framework that provides for more positive management and enabling of change, rather than its prevention. Some reforms will take effect from April 2005, others require primary legislation that will take longer to come into force. The unified 'Register of Historic Sites and Buildings' will identify those features considered to be of special significance based upon national criteria. A 'local' section will contain a record of all conservation areas and other local designations. Local planning authorities and others should have regard to this Register when considering strategies and development proposals affecting scheduled ancient monuments, listed buildings, historic parks and gardens, battlefields, conservation areas including their settings.

FOOTNOTES

² *A Force for Our Future (December 2001)*

³ *Review of Heritage Protection: The Way Forward (June 2004)*

BOX BE4**Historic environment designations in the South East**

- more than 76,000 listed buildings (> 5,500 Grade I and Grade 2*) including more than 200 buildings at risk (more than any other region)
- almost 2,000 conservation areas
- about 2,600 scheduled monuments
- more than 350 registered historic parks and gardens and six registered battlefields
- two inscribed World Heritage Sites (and three on the Tentative List).

I.32 Although some of the most significant historic features have statutory legal protection, there is widespread and growing recognition of the importance of the wider historic environment that contributes so much to regional and local character and distinctiveness. Sustainable management of the historic environment through the planning system should be based upon an understanding of its significance and vulnerability to change. This is critical given that the pace and scale of change faced by the region has the potential, for far greater and irreversible damage when compared with much that has evolved over previous generations. The standardisation of much new development almost inevitably leads to a dilution of local character, and should be discouraged.

**POLICY BE6:
MANAGEMENT OF THE BUILT AND
HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT**

Local Development Frameworks should adopt policies and proposals which support the conservation and, where possible, the enhancement of the historic environment and the contribution it makes to local and regional distinctiveness and sense of place. Proposals that make sensitive use of historic assets through regeneration, particularly where these bring redundant or under-used buildings and areas into appropriate use, should be encouraged.

Town Centres

Introduction

- 1.1** In this chapter the term town centre is used to cover both city and town centres. The policies in this chapter apply to all development in town centres, including business accommodation, residential, leisure, arts, culture, tourism and retail. Reference should also be made to policies on economy and tourism. South East England's town centres are vital elements of the regional economy and provide for a mixture of uses including residential, business accommodation, service provision, retail, leisure and tourism. The South East has a complex pattern of town centres and the relationships between centres vary throughout the South East and into adjoining regions.
- 1.2** By far the biggest external influence on the South East's town centres is the relationship with London. In addition to the importance of central London as a centre of employment, retail, culture and other services, the outer metropolitan centres of Hounslow, Kingston, Sutton, Croydon, Bromley and a major centre at Uxbridge compete with towns in the London Fringe.
- 1.3** Also of importance are links to other regions. Centres in Kent are integrated into the East of England through the Thames Gateway. Town centres to the west of the region are linked to the South West through the M4 corridor to Swindon while Southampton is only 30 minutes away from Bournemouth/Poole. Aylesbury and central Milton Keynes in the north of the region are heavily integrated into the economy of the East Midlands.

Development of Regional/Sub-regional Town Centres

- 1.4** Focusing development on town centres is central to the achievement of sustainable development in the South East. These policies promote distributing growth to middle and lower order centres of regional/sub-regional importance and working across administrative boundaries in developing policies at a local level for other town and district and local centres. At a local level, town centre policies are likely to include providing a focal point for some, but not necessarily all development and should develop the distinctive features and nature of the centres.
- 1.5** Town Centres offer a mixture of functions:
- i** 'A Place to Work' – thriving places will be created for emerging independent businesses as well as established players
 - ii** 'A Place to Visit' – as well as being a market place the centres will have networks of abundant and high quality open spaces, waterfronts and a quality public realm
 - iii** 'A Place for Leisure' – city and town centres will be the focus for culture and events as well as promote a buoyant evening economy
 - iv** 'A Place to Live' – these uses will be promoted within managed strategies, which retain attractive residential environments
 - v** 'A Place to Access Transport Services' – the concentration of these developments in centres provides the opportunity to rebalance the structure and use of the transport system in a way that reduces dependence on the private car.



1.6 Growth and development will be supported in appropriate urban centres in the South East which will include the growth areas at Milton Keynes, Ashford and the Thames Gateway and existing major centres as well as promoting the growth of middle and lower order centres to avoid over-concentration of growth in higher order centres and ensure that people's everyday needs are met at a local level. Growth will be focused in these areas as opposed to the creation of new major centres.

1.7 In planning for growth, the special relationship with the metropolitan centres in west, south and east London will be developed to create networks of urban centres which complement each other whilst being self-sufficient in terms of employment provision, retail, leisure and culture. In other areas the polycentric nature of the settlement pattern will be taken account of in planning for the sustained growth of regional, sub-regional and primary town centres.

1.8 Reference will be made to the distinctive character of particular centres whether planning for growth or change. For example, in Oxford new development will need to build on the architecture, cultural amenity as well as value of new services to the local community and tourists alike. In accommodating new growth, best practice in urban design and development will be encouraged along with quality in the public realm and better access by public transport, cycling and walking. This will be achieved through the development of effective town centre management, partnerships and strategies.

1.9 All town centres should be developed as multi-use nodes to enable people to shop,

work, live and visit other services without having to make multiple journeys. Urban areas should be the prime location for new development and redevelopment. They should enable economic growth to take place and a wider range of uses will enhance vitality and viability. The Regional Transport Strategy promotes regional transport hubs. These provide the opportunity to focus the development of quality transport services in a way that supports urban communities and urban renaissance while maintaining the levels of accessibility to goods and services.

POLICY TC1: DEVELOPMENT OF REGIONAL/ SUB-REGIONAL TOWN CENTRES

Accessible, attractive and vibrant town centres are fundamental to the sustainable development of South East England and will continue to be the focal point for development of a mixture of uses including leisure, services, retail, residential and commercial. Good quality development will be promoted which will regenerate and renew town centres as places where people want to live, work and visit. Networks of urban centres will be created which together will offer a balance of facilities.

Regional Network of Town Centres

1.10 As outlined above the focus of these policies is to distribute growth to middle and lower order centres, avoiding over-concentration of growth in the highest order centres, to achieve an even distribution of facilities and ensure that people's everyday needs are met at the local level. Policy TC2 summarises the network of

town centres. This includes all centres which are of sub-regional and regional importance in the South East and this network will be the focus for large-scale developments. However, growth will not be restricted to these centres (see map TCI).

- 1.11** The network has been developed through considering the centres' functional areas and their inter-relationships, and they should be seen as complementary rather than competing centres. A number of individual indicators were used to create the regional network. These included both retail and non-retail uses. Reference should be made to the Assembly's research on town centres⁴ for further information on this methodology. This network of centres includes all the centres designated as regional hubs in the Regional Transport Strategy. The policy will take into account pipeline developments, trends and proposed changes and set out a network of town centres for 2026. This is however a flexible process and a centre's role will be tested through regular town centre assessments as part of the annual review process. Centres can be reclassified in the light of these through revisions or alterations to this plan.

POLICY TC2: REGIONAL NETWORK OF TOWN CENTRES

A network of strategic town centres will be developed across the region as set out below. This is a network of town centres for 2026 taking into account pipeline development and proposed changes. A centre's role will be tested through regular assessments and changes to the network can be made through revisions or alterations to this plan.

FOOTNOTES

⁴ DTZ, November 2004, *Town Centre Futures: The Need for Retail Development in South East England*, commissioned by the Regional Assembly's Town Centre and Retail Task Group

⁵ Centres listed are based on data available in 2004. The inclusion of pipeline developments and spatial options policy may change the network

Provisional list of town centres⁵

Aldershot	Hastings
Andover	High Wycombe
Ashford (Kent)	Horsham
Aylesbury	Maidenhead
Banbury	Maidstone
Basingstoke	Margate
Bluewater	Milton Keynes
Bognor Regis	Newbury
Bracknell	Newport
Brighton	Oxford
Camberley	Portsmouth
Canterbury	Reading
Chatham	Redhill
Chichester	Sittingbourne
Crawley	Slough
Dartford	Staines
Dover	Southampton
Eastbourne	Southsea
Eastleigh	Tonbridge
Ebbsfleet	Tunbridge Wells
Epsom	Walton-on-Thames
Fareham	Winchester
Farnham	Windsor
Folkestone	Woking
Gravesend	Worthing
Guildford	

This network of town centres will be the focus for:

- i** major retail developments (see also policy below on retail)
- ii** uses which attract large numbers of people including major cultural, tourism, social and community venues (see also tourism policies)
- iii** large scale leisure and office (Class B1a) developments (ie those of 5,000 square metres or more gross floorspace).

Growth will not be restricted to the centres listed above. There are many other centres within the region that meet local needs. Local Development Documents should identify and develop policies for such centres within their respective areas. Local authorities should be proactive in encouraging appropriate development to maintain and enhance the function of their centres.

Creating and Supporting Town Centres

1.14 Sequential approach – This plan supports the sequential approach set out in Government guidance for identifying the preferred location for retail and leisure development. Town centre sites should be considered for new development prior to a consideration of edge-of-centre and out-of-centre sites. The development being considered should be appropriate to the centre's role within the network. To facilitate the rigorous application of the sequential test local planning authorities should carry out assessments of the capacity of each town centre to accommodate additional development appropriate to its role.

1.15 Policy T1 of the approved Regional Transport Strategy also reinforces this approach through providing the opportunity to focus the development of quality transport services in a way that supports urban communities and urban

renaissance. Inadequate transport infrastructure in town centres should not be the cause for development on edge-of-centre and out-of-centre sites.

1.16 The network of town centres is an important element of the spatial strategy. The role and regeneration of these centres should not be undermined by large-scale out-of-centre retail development. No need has been identified for any further out-of-centre regional or sub-regional shopping centres or large-scale extensions to existing centres during the period to 2026. However, if there are no sequentially suitable sites it may be appropriate to consider an intensification of development on existing out-of-centre sites.

1.17 Promotion of efficiency in land-use of out-of-town development can be more sustainable than allowing development of a new greenfield site. In developing these sites local authorities should promote the quality design standards. In particular, there will be a need

BOX TCI

Categories of activity linked to the use of town centres

Visit

Leisure

- Cinemas/video stores
- Pubs/restaurants/cafes
- Amusement arcades
- Casinos

Tourism/Culture

- Natural or built heritage
- Museums/galleries
- Libraries
- Accommodation if more than day trip

Access to personal services

- Health (doctors, dentists etc)
- Beauty (hairdressers, nail bars etc)
- Banking – post office, bank, building society

Access to transport services

- Bus or train station

Work and Study

- Business accommodation
- College, university or library
- Health clubs
- Easy access healthcare
- Sandwich bars
- Dry cleaners
- Retailers

Live

- Live-work units
- Affordable housing
- Sports facilities

Shop

- Multiple retailers
- Enclosed shopping centres
- Department stores
- Independent stores
- New formats



to consider connections to the town centre and to promote good public transport accessibility. Higher density and mixed use development should be promoted.

- 1.18 Development of town centres –** There are six main reasons people come to a town centre: to visit, to access services, to access transport services, for work or study, because they live there or to shop. Further, the patterns of people's use vary depending on the time of day: morning, evening or night time. The promotion of these six uses and a people-focused rather than function-focused approach is essential if our town centres are to continue to be attractive places to live. Sufficient flexibility is required to support the different centre experiences and the mix of uses. Examples of the categories of activity linked to the use of the centre are set out in **Box TCI**.

- 1.19** It is envisaged that gaming law will recognise three categories of casinos. A policy on regional casinos is included as part of the tourism policies. Small (minimum area for table gambling of 500 sqm and a minimum non-gambling area available to customers of 250 sqm) and large (minimum area exclusively for gambling tables of 1,000 sqm and a minimum non-gambling area available to customers of 500 sqm) casinos are an appropriate town centre use.

- 1.20 Good Governance –** Leadership and vision are critical to thriving town centres. A clear vision should be established specifically for town centres, for example within a community strategy or, if applicable, the town centre strategy. This should be consistent with adjoining centres. Town centres' development should promote quality, individuality and diversity.

- 1.21** Town Centre Management Partnerships, through the work of local Town Centre Managers, play a vital role in helping town centres become prosperous locations for businesses and investment and focal points for vibrant and inclusive communities. Town Centre Managers should seek to change their centres through the channelling of money, skills, enthusiasm and ambitions of key town centre stakeholders into a shared vision and common strategy which will result in co-ordinated action that addresses their mutual interests. Town Centre Strategies should be adopted by Town Centre Management Boards, local authorities and Local Strategic Partnerships to give an agreed vision, strategy and action plan for the centre.

- 1.22** In developing Town Centre Strategies and LDF policies Town Centre Managers and local authorities should analyse the character and function of the centre in detail to establish the unique characteristic niche for the centre. The analysis should seek to establish:

- i what types of visit the centre is used for and what types of visit predominate
- ii the existing resident population in the centre and what potential there is for this to change
- iii the economic character and potential of the centre
- iv the physical history and character of the centre and its physical potential with this informing a clear design vision for the future development of the centre
- v the 'cosmopolitan factor' – a sense of what is unique about the area including creative/cultural agenda
- vi qualitative user perceptions of centres.

BOX TC2

Town Centre Assessments

As part of its research into the analysis of town centres and retail in the South East, the Regional Assembly co-ordinated the completion of town centre assessments of regional, sub-regional and principal centres in the South East. Local authorities should use the same assessment form as part of their health checks to ensure that information is collated on as comparable and consistent basis as possible. The main objectives of the survey were:

- to work in partnership with local authorities to assess the vitality and viability of town centres and in particular to identify capacity of different centres to meet the South East's likely future needs
- to draw on existing work, ensure that data collection is as streamlined as possible, is collected in a consistent way and benefits local as well as strategic stakeholders
- to strengthen inter-regional working. The assessment form used was based on the Greater London Authority (GLA) form to allow comparison of results with London.

The survey form is available from the Regional Assembly and asks questions on:

- scale and function of town centre uses
- capacity
- financial performance
- accessibility
- town centre initiatives
- environment and amenity.

1.23 Design Excellence – A flexible framework is required for town centres recognising their role as both public and private service centres as well as providing retail, business accommodation and a place to live. When actively encouraging residents to town centres the design of space is critical to the perception of density. In town centres, particularly, space needs to be well designed and robust.

1.24 There is more scope in town centres to maximise densities, intensify development and promote a mix of land uses. This can be achieved through initiatives such as housing above shops that require designs that allow independent access. A relaxation of the type of use of a particular site where vacancies perpetuate can create a better mixture of uses. Active frontages need to be maintained and there is a need to ensure that some uses do not come to dominate.

1.25 Environmental Responsibility and Social inclusion – Fundamental to the urban renaissance of town centres is the quality of the environment and social inclusion. To enable this, policies should not be prescriptive about uses but focus on the environmental impact of proposals. Reflecting the service centre ethos, uses such as health centres and schools should be encouraged back into town centre locations.

1.26 The promotion of attractive residential environments with a mix of house types and tenures will help to introduce vitality back into centres. A key policy objective should be to make town centres places where people want to live again. Lifestyle issues associated with encouraging different residents to town centres, particularly families with children, the elderly, disability groups and those on lower incomes should be considered.

1.27 To achieve urban renaissance objectives there is a need to recognise and proactively address crime and environmental issues as central to encouraging families with children into town centres. Local Development Documents should put in place systems for assessing the impact of development on different town centre users with a particular focus given to assessing the impact on the child (including impact on different age groups) and adopt policies that discourage the exclusion of children. Development should be planned to accommodate different age groups eg open space provision for children and teenagers.

- 1.28** The promotion of tourism and related leisure uses in urban centres will assist the diversification of functions and services and the re-use of land and historic and redundant buildings. In turn, the provision of new or upgraded facilities, supplemented by regular cultural events, can help increase the attractiveness of these urban centres not only as places to visit but also places to live and work. Associated visitor spend can also significantly underpin and enhance town centre retail provision. Accompanied by complementary management initiatives (eg visitor management, town centre management) tourism and leisure industries have the potential to support the promotion of an urban renaissance. This is equally applicable in more affluent urban centres and market towns across the region as it is in the regeneration areas. Waterside sites are increasingly attractive foci for urban regeneration schemes, with numerous recent examples across the region. However, care should be taken to avoid loss of waterside sites to uses which do not require deep water access in areas where there is a shortage of deep water moorings.
- 1.29** **Access** – Good design works well when developments are realistic about the need to accommodate car parking:
- i residents living in town centres should not need to use a car but some may need to store a car
 - ii visitors and workers should be encouraged to use public transport
 - iii shoppers are the group who are most likely to need to use a car to transport heavy or bulky goods but should be encouraged to use public transport where appropriate.
- 1.30** Major traffic generators in town centres should be required to prepare green travel plans and explore non-physical solutions such as car clubs. These should be developed as part of a package of mobility management measures as set out in the Regional Transport Strategy. The focus should be on maintaining and, where appropriate, improving the overall level of accessibility to goods and services in a way that considers more positively the inter-relationship between all elements of the transport system.
- 1.31** The health and survival of small retailers and services in towns that are not primary retail destinations is highly dependent on convenient and available parking. Care needs to be taken not to discourage visits whilst at the same time minimising car use and prioritising the needs of pedestrians where possible. It is recognised that minimal car usage does not always mean minimal parking provision.
- 1.32** Parking policy in Local Development Documents and Local Transport Plans should enable centres to compete with out of town uses. Underground parking should be encouraged in major centres. Imaginative solutions should be adopted for surface parking elsewhere, for example experimenting with different layouts, eg diagonal parking, and these should be an integrated element of a landscape strategy.
- 1.33** Local Development Documents and Local Transport Plans should be developed in conjunction with a movement strategy that includes a parking strategy reviewing as appropriate the local authority's parking policy eg Controlled Parking Zones, disability access. This should accommodate the type of retail and geography of the town.
- 1.34** **Management and Maintenance** – Service centres' ethos requires a focus on support facilities. Local Development Documents and Local Transport Plans should link planning policy to appropriate mechanisms for managing and maintaining centres.
- 1.35** The Government has now passed legislation that allows Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) to be introduced in England. These are only possible where a gap in the services provided has been identified and agreed, and where the businesses of a designated area determine by vote to fund the provision of the missing services.

The introduction of a BID could, for example, fund new Christmas lights, an increase in policing levels, the maintenance of the town centre's environment, or the promotion of the centre.

- 1.36** Some of the issues relating to the maintenance of a centre can be addressed through preventing the problem in the first place. For example, the provision of good quality, well-maintained 24-hour toilets around the centre or frequently spaced litter bins which are resistant to vandalism and are hardwearing.

POLICY TC4: CREATING AND SUPPORTING TOWN CENTRES

As outlined in draft Planning Policy Statement 6 (PPS6), local planning authorities should adopt a sequential approach in selecting appropriate sites for allocation within centres.

In exceptional cases, where there are no sequentially suitable sites, upgrading an existing out-of-centre site should be considered. The role and regeneration of town centres should not be undermined by an intensification of uses on out-of-centre development. The development should promote public transport links between the site, town centre and surrounding communities and quality design standards should be promoted.

Local authorities should:

- i work with Town Centre Management Partnerships to develop a vision for the town centre drawing on the unique characteristics of the area and based upon an analysis of the character and function of the centre**
- ii strengthen the wider role of town centres through the promotion of urban regeneration, quality urban design, an attractive and safe environment, improved access by public transport, cycling and walking and a mix of uses**

- iii ensure a budget is allocated for on-going maintenance of the town centre and support and encourage management and maintenance through strategies and partnerships.**

Retail

- 1.37** The retail sector is an important driver of both the regional economy and the function of town centres. The retail market has experienced some profound changes over recent years and the mix of social and economic conditions which prevailed in the 1980s has triggered the arrival of a more mobile and discerning customer seeking not just value for money, but also increased choice in terms of good shopping and leisure environments and experiences.

- 1.38** These conditions continue to impinge on the nature and location of today's retail and leisure provision. Increasingly, shopping locations have been able to fulfil the role of a destination location. This means providing a wide range of shopping and leisure facilities able to attract and retain the interest of the entire family.

- 1.39** It is evident, however, that whilst town centre development has increased over the last 20 years, out-of-centre investment has squeezed the market share of the traditional high street. There is also growing evidence of polarisation between centres in regions, with the larger more dominant centres benefiting from increased investment and between prime and secondary/tertiary locations on the high street. As a result, the larger cities have continued to outperform the smaller and medium-sized centres in terms of average rental growth.

- 1.40** The emergence of e-commerce over recent years also represents a major challenge to the future vitality and viability of the high street. Town centres will increasingly need to adapt and diversify their roles and activities to

differentiate themselves from the 'physical' and 'virtual' competition.

1.41 Regional Priorities for Retail

Development – A regional study into Town Centre Futures (November 2004) commissioned by the Regional Assembly's Town Centre and Retail Task Group has informed regional priorities. The study forecast future retail growth to 2026 taking into account known future developments. The consultants applied their Re: Map model which they have developed specifically to forecast the potential residual expenditure for new comparison retail floorspace.

1.42 The research showed very substantial growth in residual retail expenditure and development in the period to 2026, even when the model's assumptions were sensitivity tested through reducing levels of expenditure growth and increasing levels of turnover efficiency and growth of e-commerce. However, for the rest of this decade there is no significant forecast capacity when the current proposals in the South East are taken into consideration. In accordance with PPG6 and the sequential test, this residual expenditure should be directed towards the town centre and edge-of-centre locations in the first instance. If there are no sequentially suitable sites any proposals for retail warehousing will need to satisfy the tests set out in PPG6. It will need to demonstrate that new retail warehousing will not have an adverse impact on the vitality and viability of neighbouring town and local centres. Local planning authorities should also consider the need to impose planning conditions on any retail warehouse proposals to restrict future developments to the sale of bulky goods only and to prevent the development of mezzanines.

1.43 At a regional level the study also concluded that:

- i** there is increasing concern in relation to the homogeneity of our high streets. There is a need to promote and market the individuality of retail centres

- ii** planning and managing change on the high street due to the impact of the Internet and new technological advances represents a major challenge to all town centres in the future. There is a need to monitor the growth of e-commerce and its impact on high street performance
- iii** quantitative forecasts should be supplemented by a wider assessment of each centre's role as a focus for employment, leisure and recreation.

1.44 The Assembly is assessing the scale of need for retail facilities at a sub-regional level, and these will be included once the work is completed.

POLICY TC5: RETAIL

The regional network of town centres will be the prime focus for major retail development to meet identified needs. In particular, major new retail investment should be targeted to these main centres taking into account:

- i** the need to support the pre-eminent town centre's functions, viability and capacity to accommodate change and growth within each sub-regional catchment area
- ii** the need to respect the historic character, environment and cultural value of existing town centres
- iii** where it would assist the regeneration of vulnerable centres, new investment of the appropriate level and scale should be promoted
- iv** where it would support sustainability objectives including the role of regional transport hubs
- v** the potential impact on the vitality and viability of nearby town centres.

Appropriate growth should also be promoted in smaller centres to meet local needs.

Social, Cultural and Health Dimensions

Introduction

- 1.1** To influence social, cultural and health issues in the region, and effective implementation, the South East Plan must help ensure the most effective co-ordination of the contributions of the various stakeholders, working in partnership to ensure:
- i** that social, cultural and health infrastructure keeps pace with development and population growth
 - ii** strong and inclusive partnership with relevant statutory authorities, and reference to professional standards, to co-ordinate development
 - iii** that development takes account of the regional, sub regional and local context in which it takes place.
- 1.2** The Assembly is currently undertaking research into the issue of the ageing population, and health service and community service provision, and this will be used to check the policy approaches proposed.

Reducing Disparities

- 1.3** In an increasingly competitive world, there is a need to ensure that all parts of the South East are contributing to the pursuit of widely shared social, economic and environmental objectives. Although the South East is one of the most successful regions in the UK, our economic performance is characterised by substantial variations in economic performance and concentrations of social exclusion (see map SI opposite).
- 1.4** Using key indices of income, wealth, employment and access to services there is clear evidence that the South East is characterised by a relatively wealthy core

(a belt around London) and a poor periphery (in coastal areas). Prosperity and exclusion in the South East is highly correlated with distance (travel time) to London, and the location of traditional industries within the periphery (for example, the Kent coal mines). Both the concentrations of deprivation, and the dispersed nature of disadvantage in other areas, create challenging demands for infrastructure and public services.

- 1.5** It is a fundamental objective of the South East Plan to strengthen economic and social cohesion and reduce disparities by facilitating appropriate patterns of development and other activity. To achieve this objective the Plan facilitates the development of health, education, cultural and leisure amenities necessary to meet the needs of a growing population.

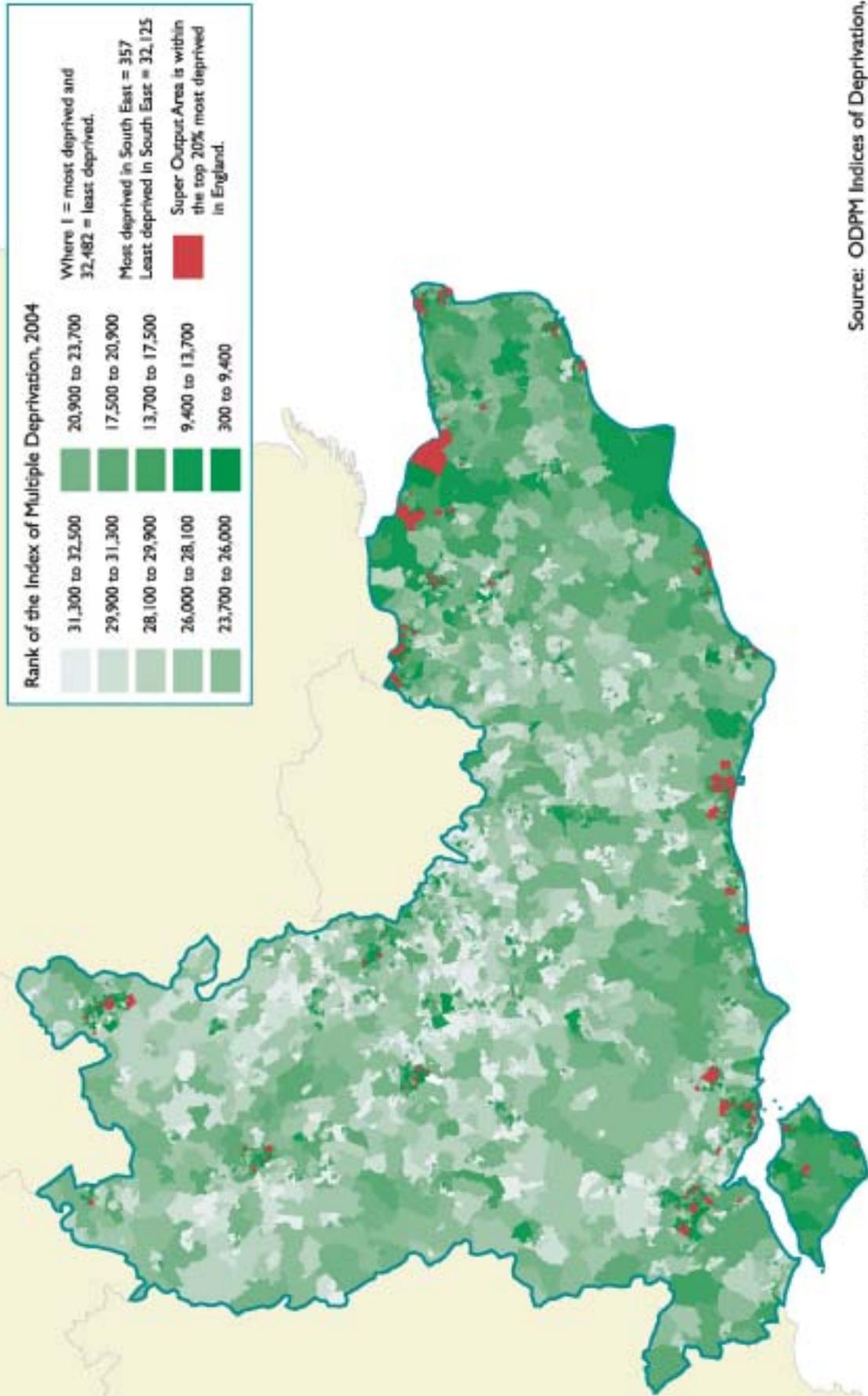
POLICY SI: REDUCING DISPARITIES

During the period of the Plan the intention is to improve the health of the region's population by at least the same rate of improvement achieved over the period 1991 – 2001. Poverty and social exclusion, which are so often linked to poor health, will also be a priority for significant improvement (to be measured by reference to SEEDA's Regional Outcome Target related to deprivation).

In support of this policy a suite of measures will need to be developed by a wide range of public agencies, including local authorities. The latter will need to introduce positive measures through their Local Development Documents and other strategies and programmes. At the regional level, agencies will need to sharpen the focus of their programmes.

MAP S1

Index of Multiple Deprivation, 2004



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 Source: ODPM Indices of Deprivation, 2004.

Supporting Healthy Communities

1.6 The living environment has a fundamental impact on the health of a population, often by providing opportunities for healthy lifestyles. This issue is recognised by the region's residents, who give priority to the health and well being of the population. There are two main areas where health interfaces with planning:

- i the health implications of spatial planning decisions – including impacts such as those of transport planning on physical activity, noise and air pollution, access, injuries, climate change, and social networks
- ii the spatial aspects of planning for health services – including the requirement for health services and infrastructure (and related issues such as access).

1.7 Relatively high levels of health across the South East mask profound differences in health between affluent and deprived communities. The reasons for these differences in health are linked to age and gender, but also to wider factors such as education, employment, housing, air and water quality, social networks, safe

environments, access to healthy affordable food and access to social and public services. Many policies included within this plan have a part to play in promoting good health and seeking to address inequalities in health.

Figure S1 shows life expectancy at birth for the South East compared to England.

POLICY S2: SUPPORTING HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

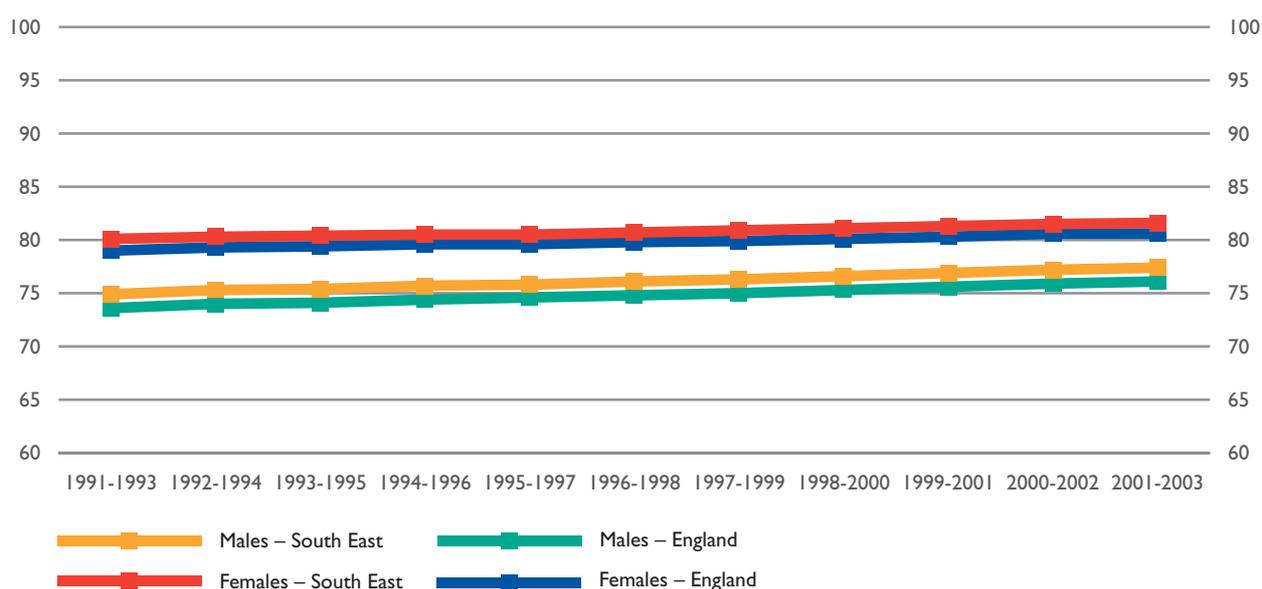
Local Development Documents should highlight and respond to the key role the planning system can play in developing and shaping healthy sustainable communities.

The documents should:

- i **embrace preventative measures and tackle the causes of ill health at the source, for example by providing access to open space or recreational opportunities at an early stage in new developments**
- ii **take into account health impact assessments and advice on public health in order to maximise the opportunities for tackling the root causes of ill health.**

FIGURE S1

Life Expectancy at Birth (1991-2003)



Source: Office of National Statistics, 2004



Promoting Accessible Health Services

- 1.8** Over the last two decades, local decisions about health facilities have sometimes had little regard for the principles of sustainable development. Facilities have been located with relatively little regard for wider access, especially by public transport.
- 1.9** Over the lifetime of this Plan many major developments are scheduled in the acute, community and mental health fields. The NHS and Local Delivery Plans provide the vision and plan for how the NHS, at the local level, will modernise services, improve the health of the local population and narrow inequalities in health. There is now a move away from big district hospitals serviced by small GP practices, to a variety of specialist and generalist hospitals linked to a range of primary health care services including larger practices with GPs and other professional staff, NHS walk-in centres and healthy living centres.
- 1.10** This new approach can offer scope for a more sustainable pattern of service allocation and provision. It is therefore important that the NHS and its local agents work more closely with local authorities to ensure that local plans and spatial provision deliver the opportunity for sustainability. Plans should, for example, contribute towards addressing disparities in access to healthcare services, by securing the provision of primary care facilities as part of new residential and commercial developments and encouraging further provision in areas identified to be in need of additional primary care facilities.

- 1.11** The NHS in the region is also a major employer and a powerful buyer of goods and services. As a consumer of energy, a producer of waste, a cause of travel and a commissioner of building works, its potential impact on health, on the environment and on the social and economic fabric of the region is without parallel. There is a need for health services that deploy their resources in ways that promote health and sustainable development.

POLICY S3: PROMOTING ACCESSIBLE HEALTH SERVICES

In developing or renewing health facilities, locations should be developed which accord with sustainable development principles and the policies of this Plan and meet the following criteria:

- i** be accessible for clients and staff by public transport services
- ii** have minimal impact on the environment through green travel plans, more efficient supply chains and sustainable procurement.

Supporting an Ageing Population

- 1.12** Demographic changes highlight the need to take account of the ageing population. Available projections for the UK suggest that the South East will have the third largest number of people over 65 of all the English regions. The South East already has some of the greatest concentrations of those aged over 75 in the country, particularly along the South Coast. More older people will be living in

the southern part of England in the next 20 years due to migration at retirement and higher life expectancies.

- 1.13** Although to date the elderly are tending to live longer and be healthier this major rise in the very elderly will present a demand for more health and social support. At present 25% of pensioners live alone and this may increase as more people chose to remain single. There will be a need for ongoing policies that support older people living alone at home, enable them to maintain active lives physically and socially and provide social and hospital support when required.
- 1.14** There will need to be careful consideration within transport plans to ensure continued mobility of the elderly. Housing policies should specifically consider how to enable people to stay at home and urban and rural planning should consider the needs of the very elderly. There is a shortage of residential and nursing home places in the region as that sector finds it hard to exist in the market. The continued increase in growth in the region, high land prices and difficulty in employing people in the low pay sector will exacerbate this. The increase in the elderly will continue to put pressure on those still economically active, a group falling in size, and the young elderly as carers and supporters. All policies should consider this.

POLICY S4: SUPPORTING AN AGEING POPULATION

In order to reflect the increased proportion of older people in the region, which will be a feature of the Plan period, local authorities should pay particular regard in their Local Development Documents and other programmes to assessing and planning for the housing and other needs that arise, and especially the location of specialist facilities with access to services and public transport.

Cultural and Sporting Activity

- 1.15** The cultural sector – defined in terms of the arts, sport and physical activity, tourism, libraries, museums and archives and the historic environment – make a major contribution to the identity and quality of life of the South East.
- 1.16** The activities of the cultural and creative sectors permeate many of the key concerns of the South East Plan. A rich and varied cultural ‘landscape’ is essential to delivering a competitive information-led economy. Successful cultural policies can help make regeneration and urban renaissance work. They can improve and enrich the daily lives of those living in the new Growth Areas. They can protect the unique sense of place that has attracted firms and people to the region for many years. At a personal level, cultural activities promote health, including physical and mental well-being.
- 1.17** Cultural facilities and the activities they support are key to creating an attractive region in which people will continue to want to live and work, and to attracting inward investment. Major new developments, especially residential, will place great pressure on these key facilities and activities by increasing demand. To successfully engage people in cultural activities it is vital that wide ranges of opportunities are available and easily accessible, for example in one mixed-use location.
- 1.18** Cultural and community facilities – such as libraries, community and sports centres along with village halls – can provide lifelong learning and skills development in an environment that may be more suitable to groups excluded from, or less able to access, mainstream services. The provision of mixed use facilities (encompassing sport and cultural activity) and the activities they support offer a method of bringing together existing and new communities in areas of growth.



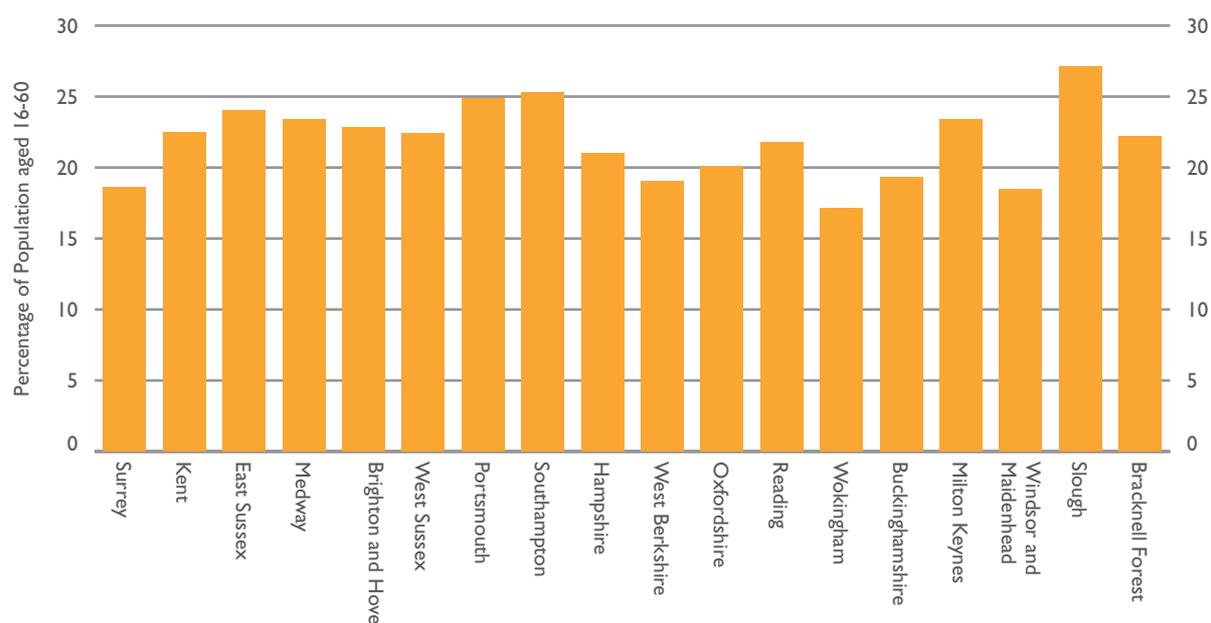
- 1.19** Participation in sport and active recreation can promote healthy lifestyles and social inclusion by building social capital through the development of personal skills and social networks. If the social and economic benefits of sport and recreation are to be realised it is essential that it is promoted within the workplace in order to make it easier to fit such activity into people's daily lifestyles.

POLICY S5: CULTURAL AND SPORTING ACTIVITY

Increased and sustainable participation in sport, recreation and cultural activity should be encouraged by local authorities, public agencies and their partners through Local Development Documents and other measures in order to improve the overall standard of fitness, enhance cultural diversity and enrich the overall quality of life.

FIGURE S2

Proportion of population aged 16 to 60 with poor literacy in the South East



Source: Basic Skills Agency, 2001

Education and skills

- 1.20** New and enhanced access to high quality education, throughout a person's life, is fundamental to an individual's life chances and the economic and social well being of the region. The qualification profile of the region's workforce is higher than in many other English regions. The challenge for the region is to find new ways of working, to raise skills and qualification levels throughout the workforce and to compete with other 'world class' regions (see Figure S2). Local authorities have substantial land holdings for educational and other purposes, and universities, colleges and schools also have significant land holdings.
- 1.21** Government departments (including the Ministry of Defence), local authorities and other public landowners should recognise the need for additional schools and colleges at an early stage when major new housing development is planned. The phased provision of primary and secondary education, along with early years and lifelong learning, will be needed throughout the region, to meet the demands associated with the expected increase in population. Demand for additional pre school facilities is likely to increase because of changing work and lifestyle patterns. The identification of suitable sites should be carried out taking into account their accessibility by public transport and by foot. Consideration should be given to the use of school and college buildings after hours, to support learning among the wider community.
- 1.22** The universities and further education colleges in the region provide high quality learning opportunities and cutting edge research. Universities and further education resources need to be expanded to serve the increasing education and training needs of the region's population, and to provide the increase in skills and qualifications the workforce will need. Such provision must be in easily accessible locations. This has
- a key part to play in the region's growth, in the context of increasing its knowledge-based economy, and providing properly resourced university and college facilities of a scale and excellence befitting a prosperous and dynamic region.
- 1.23** Under Government policies, there will be substantial capital investment programmes in colleges and schools. It is important that this investment has regard to broader community benefits as described in this guidance. It is also important that related planning decisions have regard to wider educational benefits – for example, where the release of some land for employment or housing purposes would release capital funding for improvements in educational provision.
- 1.24** Although in many parts of the region participation levels in higher and further education are above the national average, there remain significant pockets of low participation where full potential of an area's young people is not being realised and where opportunities for those wishing to return to education on a full-time or part-time basis are not fully developed. Locations should be chosen and planning decisions on new or existing locations should be made which reflect a need for better accessibility and more focused public spending for both the economic and social development of the region.



POLICY S6: EDUCATION AND SKILLS

In developing or renewing education facilities, at whatever level and age group, locations should be chosen which reflect the principles of sustainable development and the following criteria:

- i** take account of the future development needs of the economy and the community sector, including the provision of new facilities and potential for expansion of existing provision
- ii** encourage a ‘mixed economy’ that includes community facilities alongside ‘formal’ education facilities
- iii** seek to ensure access for all sections of society with encouragement for locations with good public transport access.

Working with partners (including the local Learning and Skills Councils), policies should advocate the widening and deepening of participation through better accessibility and a strategic increase of education and skills provision.

Community infrastructure

- 1.25** Sustainable communities depend upon the joined up delivery of community infrastructure. Given the expected growth in the region’s population, there will inevitably be a need for additional investment in community infrastructure – childcare; community centres; fire and rescue stations; leisure centres; libraries; police stations; social services facilities; and waste and recycling facilities.
- 1.26** There is already exciting and innovative thinking on mechanisms to ensure and enhance community infrastructure (for example, cultural hubs, multi sports clubs and healthy living centres). Many are buildings and spaces which can be readily adapted to changing requirements, and which can respond to community wishes. Others combine a number of services in one building, such as finding a job and developing a leisure time skill. An assessment should be made of the models that are currently being implemented and planned, together with some assessment of their long term potential to deliver sustainable community facilities.
- 1.27** Local assessments of need will help to identify gaps in the provision of community infrastructure that the development process can then seek to address. This is in line with concepts of sustainable communities. In some areas, additional community facilities may be necessary.
- 1.28** Access to this community infrastructure is also vital. For those who are reliant on the availability of key services, access can mean the difference between a mere existence and a fulfilling life, between poverty and a decent standard of living. However many factors can affect access to services for the individual travelling to get to services, including health issues and the time and cost involved (and reliability of public transport for those without access to a car). Although a major consideration for all parts of the South East, accessibility to community infrastructure and services is of particular concern for those living in

rural areas where the dispersed nature of the resident population, combined with a broad reliance on use of the private car, can lead to difficulties for service delivery.

POLICY S7: COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE

The mixed use of community facilities should be encouraged by local authorities, public agencies and other providers, through Local Development Documents and other measures in order to make effective use of resources and reduce travel and other impacts. Policies should seek to ensure that:

- i creative thinking and action on new mixes of cultural and community facilities is encouraged**
- ii appropriate facilities are provided, accessible to all sections of the community – including rural communities**
- iii all sectors of the community are encouraged to participate.**

Adequate provision for these facilities is particularly important in major areas of new development and regeneration.