

development. It is also important that the character of Crawley as a town in an attractive rural setting is protected.

Objective 2

To encourage the positive use and management of all areas of the countryside and the diversification of agricultural land.

- 5.13 The positive use of land will help enhance the appearance of the landscape and increase opportunities for rural activity and economic prosperity. There is a need to identify uses which can make use of existing buildings and enhance the landscape whilst maintaining the predominantly open character of the area.

Objective 3

To maintain and improve public access to the countryside.

- 5.14 Public access to appropriate areas is important to enable the full potential of the countryside for recreation and education to be realised. Public access has to be balanced with the needs of agriculture and with the protection of wildlife habitats, but it can help raise public awareness of the local countryside which benefits its protection.

Objective 4

To promote the sustainable use of the countryside.

- 5.15 Limiting unnecessary development beyond the built-up area helps protect valuable natural resources which cannot be replaced. It also helps concentrate development in the built-up area which reduces the need to travel. Some uses can be sustainable in the countryside, particularly if they involve the open use of land, and are accessible by a variety of means of transport.

POLICIES

PROTECTION OF THE COUNTRYSIDE

Development Beyond the Built-up Area Boundary

Policy C1

Planning permission will not normally be granted for development beyond the built-up area boundary which is unrelated to the needs of agriculture or forestry. Where the proposal is fully justified, development for the purposes of rural diversification, park and ride car parks, waste disposal, recreation and leisure, and the generation of renewable energy may be acceptable, provided its impact on the appearance and character of the surrounding countryside is minimised.

- 5.16 The built-up area boundary has been defined on the Proposals Map, in accordance with guidance given in Policy G3 of the Structure Plan. The boundary includes the existing built-up area and sites which are allocated or have planning permission for development which is not normally acceptable in the countryside. The boundary around the North East Sector encloses the area currently being considered for development and may be altered once the proposals for the development of the area have been finalised. The countryside beyond the boundary is the area which should be protected from irreversible development and change as it is an important natural

resource and provides the setting for the urban area. Development for rural

diversification is acceptable if it helps support the economy of the area and provides a

positive measures which will help enhance the landscape quality of the strategic gaps in the borough whilst maintaining their objectives. One such proposal is the Millennium Forest, the aim of which is to create a multi-purpose mixed woodland as an attractive landscape feature to clearly separate Crawley, Gatwick Airport and Horley. This would strengthen the strategic gap and give it long term protection. The existence within the strategic gap of a secure area of Forest encompassing most, if not all, of its length and breadth could result in changes to the planning context for the area. If the Forest is secured, the Borough Council will consider whether it would be appropriate to bring forward alterations to the Plan to reflect the new situation.

Implementation: CBC forward planning process.

Policy C3

Within the policy framework set by Policy C1, only in compelling circumstances will development be permitted in strategic gaps. Compelling circumstances are more likely to be demonstrated with regard to proposals for development for the following purposes than for any other type of development :

- a) agriculture**
- b) forestry**
- c) waste disposal**
- d) recreation and leisure which meets the criteria of Policy C13**
- e) development necessary to satisfy the operational requirements of Crawley Sewage Treatment Works.**

The potential impact of these, and any other developments for which there are compelling arguments, upon the countryside and the objectives of the strategic gap, will be given full regard.

- 5.20 In order to fulfil the objectives of strategic gaps, it is necessary to keep them generally free from built development and urban activity. Development which has a limited visual impact or which is low density and well-landscaped may not be appropriate in a strategic gap because residential, employment and traffic activity can still reduce the perception of a break between settlements. There must, therefore, be compelling circumstances for any development in the gap. The Structure Plan recognises that the

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Policy C5 (cont.)

Where, exceptionally, planning permission is to be granted, development should be of a high standard of design and in sympathy

Implementation: CBC development control process. Applications for the diversification of parts of agricultural holdings should indicate how the entire farm will be maintained as a working unit.

Agricultural Development

Policy C10

Proposals for development in the countryside reasonably necessary for the purposes of agriculture or horticulture will be permitted if its impact on the countryside, landscape and existing buildings is minimised.

New agricultural development and buildings should not be located in prominent locations, should be grouped where possible and should be compatible in scale and colour with existing buildings and the countryside.

- 5.27 Agriculture is an appropriate activity in the countryside. Planning permission is required for some agricultural development, particularly larger scale development, and this policy will help ensure that such development respects the objective of protecting the environment and does not introduce intrusive, urban or large-scale buildings which affect the appearance of the countryside.

Implementation: CBC development control process.

Policy C11

Proposals for the development of farm shops will be permitted if :

- i) the shop is ancillary to the operation of the farm holding;**
- ii) the shop is situated on or adjacent to the holding;**
- iii) the majority of goods sold are grown on the holding or neighbouring holdings.**

- 5.28 Farm diversification is encouraged and farm shops selling produce grown on the farm can help provide some added income. Significant retail activity is, however, inappropriate in the countryside and therefore the shop should only be of a scale justified as an outlet for goods primarily produced on the holding or neighbouring holdings.

Implementation: CBC development control process.

Policy C12

The Borough Council will only permit agricultural or horticultural developments outside the built-up area which are not associated with the open use of adjacent land if :

- (i) the impact of the proposal is minimised and maintains the rural character and appearance of the surrounding area;**
- (ii) the proposal is carefully designed and sited and is compatible in scale with existing buildings.**

The Borough Council will permit, undertake and encourage proposals which increase public access to the countryside through access agreements, the provision of new public rights of way and the improved maintenance of existing routes. Particular emphasis will be given to the maintenance and creation of routes which can be used by people with mobility problems and to new routes which will link existing rights of way.

- 5.33 Public access to the countryside provides the opportunity for quiet, informal recreation. The maintenance and increased provision of public rights of way (footpaths, bridleways and cycleways) is therefore important. People with mobility problems have difficulty using rural rights of way which are often narrow, with uneven surfaces and obstacles such as stiles. Improved provision is therefore important.

Implementation: CBC forward planning and development control processes, WSCC as highway authority, Countryside Management Projects.

ENHANCEMENT OF THE COUNTRYSIDE

Policy C17

The Borough Council will permit, undertake and encourage proposals to improve and enhance the landscape outside the built-up area through countryside management initiatives and other improvement programmes.

Measures which will be promoted include:

- (i) tree and hedgerow planting;**
- (ii) improved management of woodlands for their nature conservation, amenity and recreation value and as a source of renewable energy;**
- (iii) the removal or screening of eyesores;**
- (iv) the restoration of landfill sites, mineral workings and other degraded land to an appropriate after-**

Council will continue its programme of tree planting on its own land and will encourage other landowners to plant trees. Improvement programmes and initiatives are often introduced by various organisations to enhance the countryside. These may involve public, private and voluntary sector interests crossing District and County Council boundaries and can be very beneficial. The Borough Council will therefore support these initiatives.

- 5.35 The Borough Council submitted a bid for a grant from the Millennium Commission for the creation of a multi-purpose, mixed woodland between Crawley and Gatwick Airport. The proposed Forest would enhance the local landscape, mitigate the environmental impacts of the airport, increase local bio-diversity and provide new opportunities for public access, recreation, education and employment. Unfortunately, the bid was unsuccessful but the Borough Council will now consider whether the proposals can still be achieved. If the Forest is secured, the Borough Council will consider whether it would be appropriate to bring forward alterations to the Plan to reflect the new situation.

Implementation: CBC forward planning and development control processes, CBC Leisure Services, Countryside Management Projects, WSCC through the Minerals and Waste Local Plans.

MONITORING

- 5.36 The main test of the strategy adopted in this chapter and of the effectiveness of its policies and proposals, is the extent to which are met. These stress achievement of the correct balance between protection of the countryside and its positive use.
- 5.37 Most policies require monitoring through regular review of planning decisions and of the implementation of proposals. In addition, periodic assessment is required of:
- the general situation, or degree of progress made in protecting and improving the countryside;
 - the extent of new or improved rights of way and of access to new development (C16);
 - the impact of changes of use and conversions (C4, C7 and C13);
 - the extent of urban fringe problems (C17), together with an audit of tree cover.