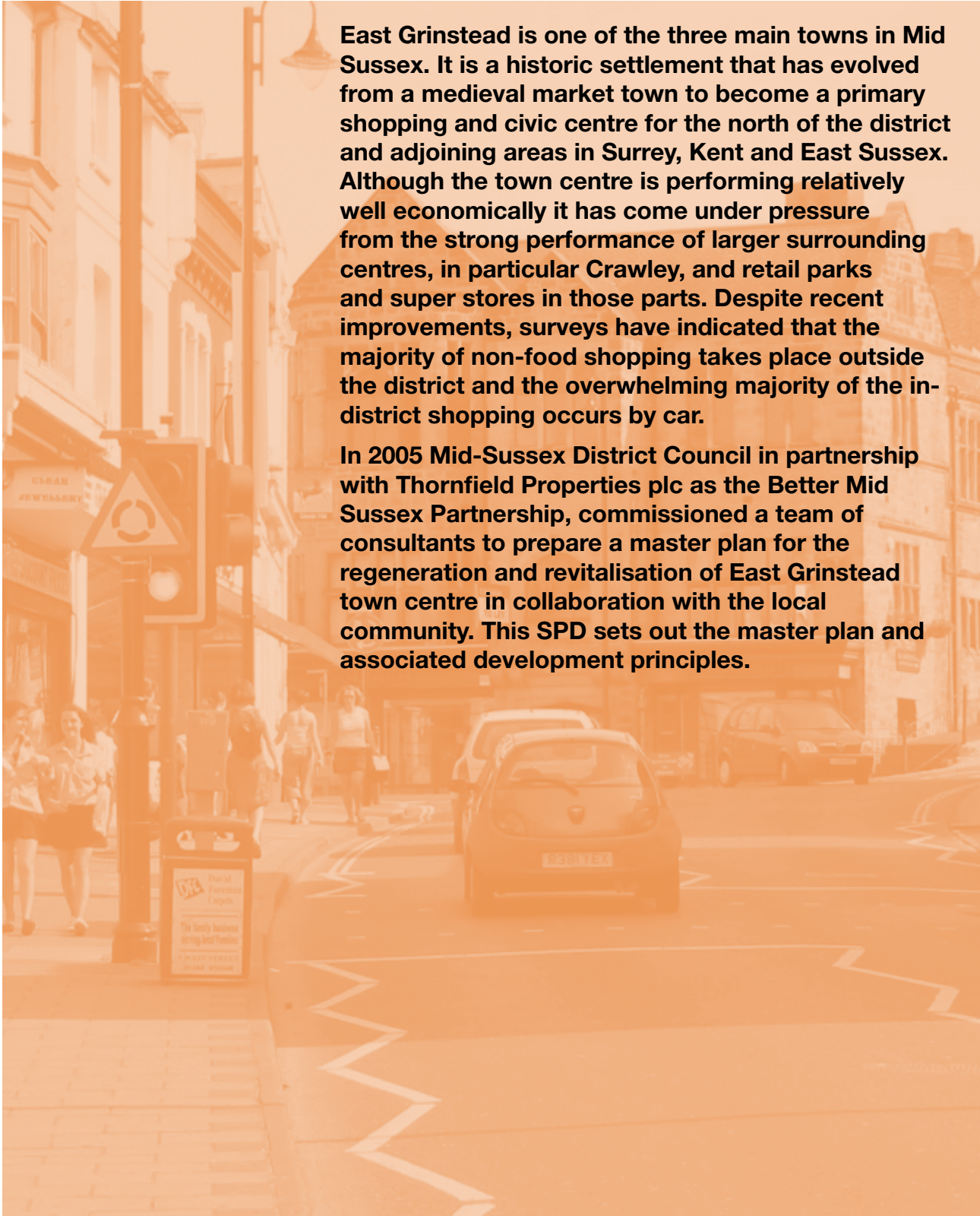


01

INTRODUCTION

East Grinstead is one of the three main towns in Mid Sussex. It is a historic settlement that has evolved from a medieval market town to become a primary shopping and civic centre for the north of the district and adjoining areas in Surrey, Kent and East Sussex. Although the town centre is performing relatively well economically it has come under pressure from the strong performance of larger surrounding centres, in particular Crawley, and retail parks and super stores in those parts. Despite recent improvements, surveys have indicated that the majority of non-food shopping takes place outside the district and the overwhelming majority of the in-district shopping occurs by car.

In 2005 Mid-Sussex District Council in partnership with Thornfield Properties plc as the Better Mid Sussex Partnership, commissioned a team of consultants to prepare a master plan for the regeneration and revitalisation of East Grinstead town centre in collaboration with the local community. This SPD sets out the master plan and associated development principles.



PURPOSE OF THIS DOCUMENT

1.1 This SPD provides additional guidance for East Grinstead town centre and will be used to supplement relevant policies within the adopted Mid Sussex District Local Plan. In particular this SPD will supplement policies B1, B9, B11, H2, S1, S2, T4,T5, R14 and the East Grinstead chapter.

1.2 This document will set out the key spatial planning and design issues, principles and recommendations that Mid Sussex District Council will use to help determine planning applications in the East Grinstead town centre master plan area as shown in the Figure 1 Study Area.

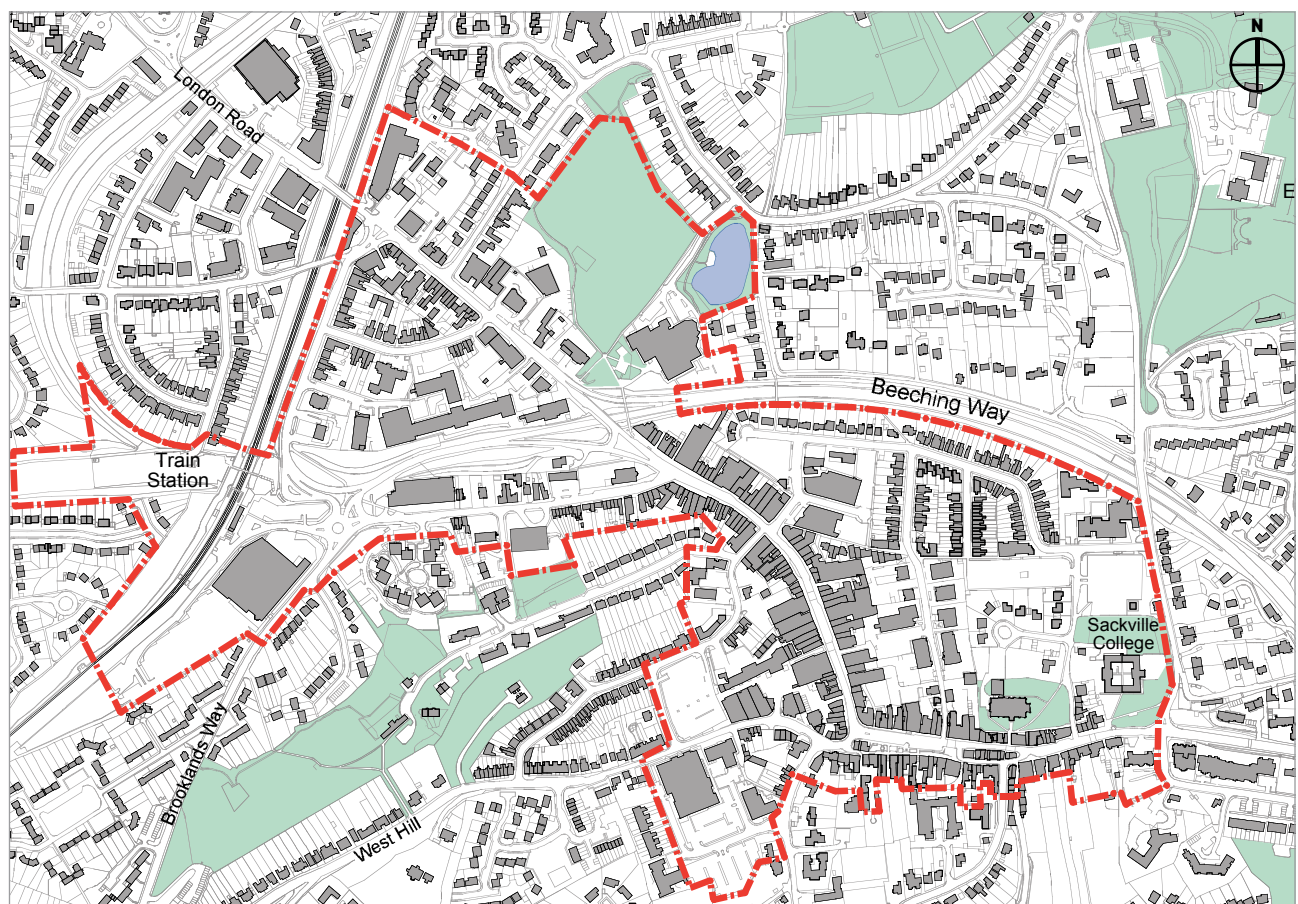


FIGURE 1: Study Area

THE NEED FOR REGENERATION AND REVITALISATION

1.2 Mid Sussex District Council recognise the importance of East Grinstead in its Local Plan, and this is articulated through its East Grinstead chapter, which whilst acknowledging the need for restraint arising from environmental and infrastructure restrictions, sets out a series of policy aims.

1.3 Key aims, which the SPD has sought to provide further guidance on are:

- the provision of new housing and business development,
- improving the quality of environment and traffic conditions;
- the maintenance and increase of shopping facilities and ensuring the town centre is an attractive location for shopping, leisure, recreation and other activities and as a place to live and work;
- to improve the attractiveness of High Street and London Road by minimising the impact of traffic and reducing danger to pedestrians;
- to safeguard and enhance the character of the town;
- to improve car parking and to maintain and enhance the provision of community facilities including open space.

1.4 Regional policy also emphasises the importance of vibrant and attractive town centres, which contain a mix of uses to ensure sustainable development and to make them multi-use nodes, so cutting down on the number of journeys people need to make. Fundamental to this is the role of retail and leisure. Mid Sussex District Council commissioned a Retail Study in January 2005 (updated June 2006), to inform and guide retail planning in the district. The conclusions highlighted that it is critical for Mid Sussex town centres to improve their retail offer in light of growing competition in the wider sub-region. Where smaller centres have been unable to diversify their offer or create niche markets they have suffered.

1.5 At present Haywards Heath, Burgess Hill and East Grinstead retain only 37% of total comparison goods expenditure within the survey area, leaving 63% to leak to competing shopping destinations including Crawley, Brighton and Royal Tunbridge Wells. These centres all have proposals in the pipeline to considerably enhance their retail offer, thereby increasing the level of trade leakage from Mid Sussex District, and East Grinstead town centre.

1.6 Within the town centre there has been a lack of major development for some considerable time and this lack of investment has caused the town to suffer. The Retail Study identifies that the town has a number of weaknesses and areas of opportunity/improvement for the period to 2016 and beyond, including a below average representation of clothing/fashion retailers, key attractors and falling retailer demand. Furthermore, the main town centre foodstore (Waitrose) is poorly integrated into the primary shopping frontages, and the centre is failing to attract the full potential of AB/C1 higher income earners in the catchment area.

STUDY PROCESS

1.7 This SPD is the result of a collaborative process between Mid Sussex District Council, East Grinstead Town Council, West Sussex County Council, Thornfield Properties plc and the local community. Thornfield Properties plc are the District Council's appointed development partner.

1.8 The process began with visioning work carried out with key stakeholders in 2004. This identified problems, opportunities and aspirations from a community's perspective. A master planning exercise was then undertaken to respond to these issues through the creation of a physical framework. The master planning exercise involved further workshops with key stakeholders to explore the emerging master planning proposals.

1.12 This SPD builds on existing policies in the Mid Sussex Local Plan and the West Sussex Structure Plan. Other information sources include:

- Draft Area Action Plan for the East Grinstead Strategic Development
- North Mid Sussex Area Transport Plan
- Extensive Urban Survey

- Small Scale Housing Allocations Preferred Options Report
- Mid Sussex Community Strategy
- Mid Sussex Retail Study
- Railway Approach Development Brief

1.9 The master plan was then incorporated into a SPD and public consultation undertaken. Comments arising from the consultation were then considered with amendments to the master plan made accordingly.

1.10 As part of the SPD process a Sustainability Appraisal (SA) was carried out. This is to ensure that the proposals put forward in the SPD are fully considered in regard to how they contribute to sustainable development. The SA is a document that is subject to the same consultation process as the SPD and is available to the public.

1.11 Once adopted, the SPD and SA will be regularly monitored and reviewed against base line objectives to ensure that objectives are being met, the guidance remains relevant and that sustainable development is being delivered.

POLICY CONTEXT

1.12 A full summary of national, regional and local policy is set out in Appendix B. Set out below is a short policy context overview.

National and Regional Policy

1.13 Guidance at the national level through Planning Policy Statements (PPS) and Planning Policy Guidance Notes (PPG) inform the overarching policy context. PPS6 Planning for Town Centres was published in March 2005 and replaces PPG6: Town Centres and Retail Developments. The statement outlines the Government's key objectives of promoting vital and viable town centres, focusing on retail, leisure, commercial and arts and cultural uses as well as housing in mixed-use developments. This is to be achieved through applying the sequential approach, as set out in paragraph 2.4 of PPS6, which seeks to prioritise growth and development of existing centres rather than edge or out of town locations.

1.14 National guidance is interpreted at the regional level through the South East Regional Plan, published as Regional Planning Guidance 9 (2001-2016). This sets out key development principles for the region including increasing the attractiveness of urban areas, intensifying and strengthening existing towns and encouraging economic development. These policies are broadly reiterated in the draft South East Plan which covers the period up to 2026. Within this framework, the West Sussex Structure Plan 2001-2016 emphasises the need to maintain and enhance the quality of the existing town centres in policies NE9 and NE10.

Local Policy

1.15 The Mid Sussex Local Plan sets out the aims and policies to guide development in East Grinstead town centre. The plan identifies East Grinstead as the main shopping centre for its catchment areas and aims to 'improve the quality of the environment and traffic conditions (and) to maintain and increase existing shopping facilities and enhance the attractiveness of the town centre as a location for shopping, leisure, recreation and other activities, and as a place to live and work' (p198). Policy S1 of the Local Plan supports development that maintains and enhances the range, quality and vitality of existing shopping areas in the town centre and resists out-of-town development which erodes the countryside. It supports redevelopment of the Queens Walk shopping area to provide for new retail floor space.

1.16 The Local Plan defines a series of key projects in and around the town centre. This will help to coordinate and integrate these proposals within a comprehensive framework for town. These projects are:

- Significant Development Opportunity at the King Street Area for a mixed-used development including shopping, leisure, offices and housing uses and improvement of existing facilities (EG10-11 and EG21);
- Redevelopment of Queens Walk for additional shopping and car parking (EG13-14); and
- Redevelopment of the railway station to improve facilities and allow for the extension of the Bluebell railway (EG23).

1.17 The Local Transport Plan for East Grinstead recognises the problems of increasing growth in traffic and the poor interface between the railway station and other transport modes in the town centre.



East Grinstead Aerial View