

East Grinstead Snapshot

Environment

Snapshot	Issues raised at Steering Group 19 Nov	Issues raised at Community forum
<p>The town of East Grinstead is located in the very North East of West Sussex, where its parish shares borders with the counties of East Sussex and Surrey. To the South of the town and to the South and West is the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).</p>	<p><i>The location of the town at the furthest extremity of the County, and on the borders of Surrey, East Sussex and Kent is itself an issue, impinging on the different support for discretionary services, such as support for voluntary organisations. There are also perceptions of distance from decision-makers in District and County Councils, which are particularly significant in terms of regional growth, and the concern to maintain the distinctive character and environment of the town.</i></p>	<p>What do you value most about your area?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Historic town area <input type="checkbox"/> AONB <input type="checkbox"/> Each community has its own identity <input type="checkbox"/> Cleanliness <input type="checkbox"/> Good recycling services <p>What doesn't work so well?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Rubbish in the streets <input type="checkbox"/> Amenity tip not user friendly <input type="checkbox"/> Fly-posting <input type="checkbox"/> Gatwick – noise pollution <p>Concerns for the Future:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Over-development <input type="checkbox"/> Concern will get housing without effective bypass <input type="checkbox"/> Crawley city <input type="checkbox"/> Another runway at Gatwick <input type="checkbox"/> Effect of the bypass on rural areas <input type="checkbox"/> Landfill <input type="checkbox"/> Environment <input type="checkbox"/> Inadequate recycling
<p>Within East Grinstead parish there are two Conservation Areas, these being the Weir Wood reservoir just south of the town, and the 14th Century buildings on the high street. Weir Wood also has the recognised status of a Special Protection Area, a Local Nature Reserve, and a site of importance for nature conservation.</p>	<p><i>The High Street area is seen as one of the "jewels in the crown" of East Grinstead, helping to define its essential character.</i></p> <p><i>There are also some areas of lower environmental quality, such as the Railway Approach and station areas generally.</i></p> <p><i>Other parts of the town also have their own distinct identities e.g. Herontye, Stone Quarry and Sunnyside.</i></p>	
<p>The town is surrounded by attractive countryside, and access out to it is good. There are ten bridleways and seven byways open to all traffic (BOATs), as well as numerous footpaths, so access is not always restricted to walkers only. Footpaths lead outwards from the town in Northerly, Southerly and Easterly directions, and a bridleway leads out to the West. There are also paths which link from and to rural areas outside the town. The national trails of the North and South Downs Ways are located to the North and South respectively of the town, and are not part of East Grinstead or its hinterland, but the long-distance routes of the Worth Way and Forest Way pass through the town.</p>	<p><i>The parkland at East Court is a significant open space resource, but in need of improvement – see below.</i></p>	

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<p>Sackville College is classed as a grade one listed building, and East Court, the town council offices, as a grade two listed building. Within East Grinstead there are approximately 100 listed buildings, in an historic core centred on High Street.</p> <p>An enhancement and traffic management scheme is currently under way along the whole town centre lengths of High Street and London Road.</p>		
<p>The hinterland of East Grinstead is rural and consists of large and small villages. It probably includes some or all of the settlements in the neighbouring parishes of Worth, Turners Hill, West Hoathly, Forest Row, Lingfield and Dormansland.</p>	<p><i>East Grinstead is seen as not yet coalescing with neighbouring large settlements. There is controversy and there are different viewpoints, on the proposals for major housing development west of the town, with its suggestions of 2500 new houses and a southern relief road.</i></p>	

Economy

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In mid-1998, there were an estimated 11,900 jobs in the four wards in East Grinstead town, and there seems to have been little change in this number since the 1991 census.	<i>The impression of heavy dependence on London commuting is actually not true – more accurate picture is a balance of in and out-commuting, and the dominance of the Gatwick/ Crawley employment area.</i>	<p>What do you value most about your area?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Low unemployment <input type="checkbox"/> Proximity to Gatwick – jobs/travel <input type="checkbox"/> Tourism
The unemployment rate of the town was at 0.6% in May 2001 which is low. Of those who were unemployed and claiming benefit in September 2002, only a quarter of them (49 people) had been without a job for more than six months, so the turnover between jobs is relatively fast. The nearest job centre is in Crawley.	<i>By and large, the feeling is of a prosperous and comfortable town, although there are some pockets of deprivation – Sackville Gardens, King Georges Avenue, Lester and Newton Avenues and the, Stone Quarry Estate.</i>	<p>What doesn't work so well?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Variety of shops in E.G. <input type="checkbox"/> Too many empty offices – not enough houses <p>Concerns for the Future:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Rural economy <input type="checkbox"/> Economic viability of market towns <input type="checkbox"/> Skills shortage <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of inward investment
The 1998 statistics for East Grinstead shows a ratio of 0.9:1 jobs to economically-active residents, which is almost optimal. Within the hinterland the ratios were mostly lower, varying from 0.3:1 in Crawley Down, up to 0.9:1 in Forest Row. These values indicate that the residents are probably employed in East Grinstead or another neighbouring town like Crawley. The exception is Dormansland, which has almost 2 jobs per economically active resident.		
Most businesses are of a medium to small size, and within the town there were no businesses employing more than 250 staff, and only five employing 20-249 staff. East Grinstead has its own chamber of commerce.		

<p>East Grinstead has a service-oriented economy, as demonstrated by the numbers of jobs in different employment sectors.</p> <p>In the town and its hinterland, roughly a quarter of the jobs in the year 2000 were in each of the sectors of: distribution, hotels and restaurants (5720 jobs), banking, finance and insurance (5380 jobs), and public administration, education and health sectors (4630 jobs). Of the remaining quarter, about 9% (1970 jobs) were in manufacturing, none in energy and water, or in agriculture and fishing. There were 1500 jobs in restaurants and hotels in the year 2000</p>	<p><i>There are potential additional tourist-related development opportunities, especially with the planned extension of the Bluebell Line to link with main line services at East Grinstead.</i></p>	
<p>There were no industrial units built in 2000. There were also no shops built or converted in that year.</p> <p>The rent for prime retail unit was £45/sq ft in 1998 when there were 4.5% vacant shops.</p>		
<p>There is a good number of shops in East Grinstead which offer comparison goods, (comparison goods are those such as clothing, DIY goods, computer/electrical equipment.)</p>	<p><i>The shopping centre is perceived as inadequate for the size and nature of the town, with heavy reliance on neighbouring centres for more significant shopping trips. There are however a number of national chains located in the town, and a large number of quality independent retailers. There are seen to be opportunities to extend and improve the Queens Walk shopping centre, but would need also to address the issues of car parking and congestion.</i></p>	
<p>East Grinstead has three supermarkets and eight other convenience stores. Lingfield has four convenience stores, Copthorne three, Forest Row two, and Crawley Down and West Hoathly have one each.</p> <p>Every Saturday morning there is a market in the town, and twice a month there is the addition of a farmers' market.</p>		

<p>There are thirteen pubs in the town, six hotels, eighteen restaurants, one café and nine takeaways. Hotel bed spaces are 396, and Bed and Breakfast bed spaces are 75. In terms of other leisure-time facilities available in the town, there are 18 restaurants, a café and nine take-away outlets. There is no community centre, but the town does have five halls. Chequer Meads arts centre houses a 320-seat theatre, and occasionally shows films as does the exhibition centre. There is also the Moat Pond cinema complex. For more formal meetings, there are five public halls, although no community centre. East Court is open to the public for a short period twice a week, which is the only museum facility in the town, and there is a library close to the High Street. There are three public toilets in the town centre.</p>	<p><i>There is a lively evening economy, with a new cinema, theatre and a growing number of restaurants etc and a trend to conversion to A3 use in parts of the town centre. Nevertheless, Crawley is seen by some as offering a wider range of entertainment.</i></p>	
<p>East Grinstead has five secondary schools (three of which are independent) and eight primary schools. The surrounding settlements all have at least one or the other, with Forest Row having two primary and two secondary schools. For post-16 education, Sackville Community College, and Imberhorne School are both in East Grinstead town, and in Copthorne there is Worth College which is independent.</p>	<p><i>There are real concerns about the lack of opportunity for vocational training locally – most have to travel to Crawley.</i></p>	

Social and Community

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<p>In 2000 the town was estimated to have 25,935 residents, which has decreased slightly by a few hundred since 1991. Within this population, in 1998 21% were aged below 16, and 19% were over retirement age (60/65), so there is a substantial number of residents who are not economically-active.</p>	<p><i>Most significant is the redistribution of the age and family household profile, with a tendency for an aging population, and implications for health and other services. There are several sheltered housing schemes in and around the town centre.</i></p> <p><i>Because of the town's position in the growth areas of West Sussex, there are important decisions to be made about the appropriate location for growth, and the availability of affordable housing.</i></p>	<p>What do you value most about your area?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Recreational opportunities <input type="checkbox"/> Low crime <input type="checkbox"/> Healthy people <input type="checkbox"/> Good schools <input type="checkbox"/> Good GPs <input type="checkbox"/> Good community life <input type="checkbox"/> Good hospitals <input type="checkbox"/> Good standard of service from 3 tiers of Local Govt <input type="checkbox"/> Friendly <input type="checkbox"/> Theatre and arts <input type="checkbox"/> Good sports provision but beginning to lag behind <input type="checkbox"/> Strong and accessible local government <input type="checkbox"/> Queen Victoria hospital <p>What doesn't work so well?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> House prices <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of police (in rural areas) <input type="checkbox"/> Hospital waiting times <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of childcare <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of activities for young people <input type="checkbox"/> Social exclusion – juxtaposed with affluence <input type="checkbox"/> Don't use voluntary organisations very well – could increase service provision and support for special needs children and carers <input type="checkbox"/> Parental choice of schools <input type="checkbox"/> Hospital services <input type="checkbox"/> Elderly support services <input type="checkbox"/> Community mental health – limited to weekday working hours <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of 24 hour backup from facility providers <input type="checkbox"/> Safety in EG at night <input type="checkbox"/> Criminal damage – hooliganism at night <input type="checkbox"/> Rural leisure provision <input type="checkbox"/> Anti-social behaviour <input type="checkbox"/> Border location <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of community spirit <input type="checkbox"/> After school and holiday activities <input type="checkbox"/> Provision of more local hospice facilities
<p>The average house price in East Grinstead between April-June 2002 for all house-types, was £200,939, and has been steadily increasing for many years.. This average is brought up considerably by the very high price of detached houses (of which East Grinstead has many), and it is much higher than the average for house prices in the southeast.</p>	<p><i>There had been a number of negative equity problems in the early 1990's – as a result, the impression was that people are now more static, improving their homes rather than moving.</i></p>	
<p>East Grinstead is known for its religious diversity, and within the Christian faith there are nine churches in the town; five Church of England, and one each of Roman Catholic, United Reformed, Zion chapel, and Methodist.</p>	<p><i>Many people in East Grinstead are members of a number of faith organisations in addition to Christianity. The international headquarters of the Scientology movement is based in East Grinstead and as a consequence many in the community are practising scientologists and a number of local businesses are run by scientologists. Some members of particular faiths have to travel out of the town for their religion.</i></p>	
<p>East Grinstead falls in the policing area of 'Wealden', and for this whole area in July 2002 the number of recorded crimes was 911, which is 4.45/1000 population. The town has a police station; the nearest magistrates' court is in Crawley, and the nearest county court is in Horsham. The town has its own fire station. East Court is the town hall, and the registry office is combined within the public library. The Citizens Advice Bureau is at Cantelupe road.</p>	<p><i>The position of the town on the county borders makes the opportunity for "joined-up" services between councils and funding bodies of community services a significant issue.</i></p> <p><i>The group felt that East Grinstead had a particular strength in being able to offer a secure environment, in contrast to some of the coastal areas in particular, and therefore a stable and less troublesome environment.</i></p>	

<p>The Kings Leisure Centre has a swimming pool. For outdoor sports there are five recreation grounds and a playing field. Indoor facilities can be found at the six health and fitness centres.</p>	<p><i>The land at East Court, some of which is used for sports, is vested in a number of landowners although the War Memorial Company and East Grinstead Town Council own the freehold of the bulk of the land. The Company is seeking a new master plan and fresh investment for the estate.</i></p>	<p>Concerns for the Future:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Apathy of local electorate <input type="checkbox"/> Keeping young people here – housing <input type="checkbox"/> Mobile phone masts – health <input type="checkbox"/> Retention of key staff – housing <input type="checkbox"/> Central government policy threat to future of playgroups <input type="checkbox"/> Danger of loss of social services provision <input type="checkbox"/> Isolation of individuals – especially in rural areas <input type="checkbox"/> Inadequate provision for increasing number of elderly <input type="checkbox"/> Community resource centre too small <input type="checkbox"/> Adequate police provision – prime area for drugs <input type="checkbox"/> Unplanned influx of refugees <input type="checkbox"/> Growing old – dependency ratio <input type="checkbox"/> Drugs <input type="checkbox"/> Children's health <input type="checkbox"/> Massive increase in bureaucracy <input type="checkbox"/> Shortage of resources <input type="checkbox"/> House prices
<p>In terms of everyday facilities, East Grinstead is well supplied: there are five post offices, and eight banks and building societies. There are also fifteen accountancy firms, and six solicitors</p>		
<p>In East Grinstead and its hinterland there are 82 voluntary organisations and societies.</p>	<p><i>The town has a particularly strong voluntary sector, especially the retired population. There are community-led trusts for the theatre and museum, and a variety of partnerships.</i></p>	
<p>East Grinstead's Queen Victoria hospital has a range of community facilities, as well as a significant international specialist centre for a range of other services including the burns unit. There are also four doctors' practices and eight dental practices (both including those which are private). There are six opticians shops/practices.</p>	<p><i>The hospital has the status of a centre of excellence for its specialist services, but is seen as continually under threat from larger hospital trusts in the area.</i></p>	

Transport and Accessibility

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<p>There is no bus or coach station in East Grinstead. Buses between the town and neighbouring settlements mainly stop on the High Street and often also at the station. East Grinstead rail station, as well as Lingfield and Dormans stations, are on a direct line to London Victoria and the journey takes approximately an hour.</p>		<p>What do you value most about your area?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Location: urban/rural/commuters: good strategic location <p>What doesn't work so well?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Traffic congestion <input type="checkbox"/> Public transport – lack of buses <input type="checkbox"/> Poor communications <input type="checkbox"/> Parking – lack of/cost <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of traffic wardens <input type="checkbox"/> Road maintenance <input type="checkbox"/> Don't look south – transport <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of by-pass <input type="checkbox"/> Parking <input type="checkbox"/> HGV's in town centre <input type="checkbox"/> Spreading the word on new things e.g. community bus – not known about and used
<p>There are about 1600 parking spaces in the town centre, which excludes those provided at Sainsburys and at the rail station. 578 are short-stay, 320 are long-stay and 700 are on-street</p>		
<p>To travel to Crawley, the nearest large town, takes 37 minutes by bus, 30 minutes by car – there is no direct rail link.</p>		<p>Concerns for the Future:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Public transport (accessible) <input type="checkbox"/> Infrastructure must be related to housing <input type="checkbox"/> Transport gridlock
<p>East Grinstead is served by more than fifteen bus routes between the surrounding villages and nearby rail stations. Between the town itself and its hinterland there are at least twelve.</p>		
<p>The town is served by two major roads - the A22, 11 miles south from its junction with the M25, and the A264, 7 miles east from its junction with the M23.</p>	<p><i>There is much concern about the level of congestion on the A22 and A264. The "relief road" proposal is intended to deal with some of these problems, but is not a complete solution.</i></p>	
<p>East Grinstead has been identified as part of the national Sustrans cycle route from Inverness to Dover.</p>		