

CHAPTER 2 - STRATEGIC AIMS

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2.1 **INTRODUCTION**

- 2.1.1 The Borough of Epsom and Ewell lies in the County of Surrey fifteen miles to the south-west of the centre of London. With its good accessibility to London, to the M25 and to the international airports of Heathrow and Gatwick, the Borough has prospered and provides a relatively high standard of residential and other amenities.
- 2.1.2 However, although these advantages and the associated economic success made possible the achievement of some major environmental improvements, they also led to development on a scale which has resulted in serious problems of traffic congestion and a density of development within parts of the urban area, particularly within Epsom town centre, which threatened the character and heritage of the Borough.
- 2.1.3 The Borough of Epsom and Ewell is relatively small covering some 3,411 hectares (8,428 acres). Although the rural areas of the Borough have been successfully defended by the application of strict Green Belt policy controls, the Borough, with a population of 70,300 residents, is the most densely populated in Surrey and Epsom has the most severe problems of traffic congestion in the county.
- 2.1.4 The Borough was affected, as was the South East generally, by the economic recession of the early 1990's. Unemployment levels increased significantly and there were a significant number of empty shops and offices. However, many firms continued to see the Borough as a desirable place in which to locate and expand, as the economy within the South East recovered, the Borough was again successful in attracting significant levels of investment, which provided for a return to prosperity.
- 2.1.5 There are, however, constraints on the capacity of the Borough to accommodate major new developments in terms of the size of the workforce, the high cost of land and premises, and increasingly the cost and inconvenience of traffic congestion. Development, if not carefully controlled, could destroy many of the features of the Borough which make it so attractive for development and threaten the ability of the Borough to sustain the benefits which have been achieved.
- 2.1.6 The District-wide Local Plan is needed to shape and direct, stimulate and encourage, and, as appropriate, to control and restrain development pressures to ensure that development makes a positive contribution to the Borough. At the same time, the policies of the District-wide Local Plan need to take full account of central government guidance and to be in general conformity with the provisions of the Surrey County Structure Plan.

2.2 **CENTRAL GOVERNMENT GUIDANCE**

- 2.2.1 In the White Paper "This Common Inheritance", the Government committed itself to the principle of sustainable development. This is defined as "ensuring that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs".

- 2.2.2 Development plans are at the heart of the planning system and have a key role to play in ensuring that development and growth are sustainable. Development plans should therefore be subject to an environmental appraisal, which clearly shows the individual and combined impact of the policies of the plan on the environment.
- 2.2.3 In March 1994 the Government published updated Regional Guidance for the South East for the period 1991 - 2011. This advice is intended to form the framework for the production of structure and local plans throughout the region.
- 2.2.4 The guidance continues to emphasise the vital role of South East England in the development of the national economy, but reflects the principles set out in the White Paper "This Common Inheritance". The guidance offers three broad objectives to which planning policies within the region should be directed:
- Enhanced economic performance;
 - Sustainable development and environmental improvement;
 - Opportunity and choice.

Enhanced economic performance

- 2.2.5 Providing a framework for economic growth to maintain and develop the South East's competitive position in Europe, and to give employment to its people is considered a key objective. Sustaining and enhancing the attractions of the South East for inward investment and for the location of international corporate headquarters, is considered to be a matter of national interest. Planning policies should be responsive to the needs of the market.

Sustainable development and environmental improvement

- 2.2.6 A significant challenge is to achieve development that is compatible with the objectives of sustainable development. Development should help to improve, as well as to avoid unnecessary damage to the environment, whether in global, regional or local terms. Development plans should avoid the wasteful use of land or other natural resources and seek the optimum use and re-use of urban land. Plans should also protect valuable environmental features both natural and built.

Opportunity and choice

- 2.2.7 Economic prosperity is seen as vital in offering people improved opportunities and quality of life. Sufficient housing to meet the requirements of the region's population is needed. The transport system must provide for movement without increasing dependence on forms of travel likely to have an adverse environmental effect.

2.3 **COUNTY STRUCTURE PLAN**

2.3.1 The broad planning strategy put forward in the Surrey Structure Plan 1994, builds on and extends the approach of the Surrey Structure Plan 1989. The Secretary of State accepted that Surrey can only make a limited contribution to demands for development in the South East and that a degree of restraint on market pressures is appropriate. The key aims for the future of Surrey for the period to the year 2006 are:

- To resist the further urbanisation of the County.
- To slow down the rate of development.
- To ensure that development protects and enhances not only features of recognised importance but also the quality of life generally.
- Not to meet in full the demand for travel, particularly in peak periods or in town centres.
- Within the environmental and infrastructure constraints, to give priority for development to meet the needs of Surrey's population for social, community, health and specific housing needs, together with provision for retailing, leisure and recreation.
- To provide for development which contributes to the maintenance and renewal of the County's economy within environment and infrastructure constraints.

2.4 **STRATEGIC AIMS**

2.4.1 The District-wide Local Plan is formulated within the wider planning context provided by the Surrey Structure Plan. The Structure Plan itself, reflects an extensive body of national and regional policies. Government policy is principally set out in the advice given in Circulars issued by the Secretary of State for the Environment and in Planning Policy Guidance Notes first issued in 1988. The Structure Plan further reflects the guidance given by the London and South East Regional Planning Conference as endorsed by the Secretary of State.

2.4.2 Local plans are required to conform generally with the provisions of the Structure Plan for their area. The basis of this Local Plan is to a large extent determined by the strategy of the Surrey Structure Plan. However, the interpretation of the strategy at local level is a matter for the Local Planning Authority and it is in this respect that the Local Plan strategy is defined in this chapter.

2.4.3 The Borough Council has therefore established a set of strategic aims which seek to ensure that development is accommodated in an environmentally sustainable manner and that the Borough contributes to the achievement of national, regional and county objectives. These strategic aims have been environmentally appraised and have provided the basis for the formulation of more detailed objectives which

have been set out under the chapter headings for individual topics. These more detailed objectives have in turn guided the formulation of the individual policies and proposals of the Plan.

2.4.4 The Borough Council has accordingly identified the following strategic aims which are not listed in order of priority:

- 1 To make the Borough safe for residents and for visitors;
- 2 To ensure equal opportunities for all and in particular for those with disabilities;
- 3 To enable local housing needs to be met;
- 4 To enhance the range and quality of employment opportunities within the Borough;
- 5 To ensure an appropriate range of shopping facilities throughout the Borough;
- 6 To protect and enhance the role of Epsom town centre as an important and attractive focal point for retail, business and community activities for the residents of the Borough, for residents of adjoining districts in Surrey and for nearby residents of adjoining London Boroughs;
- 7 To create an attractive new residential community on the Epsom Hospitals Cluster area whilst conserving and enhancing the open Green Belt surroundings;
- 8 To protect and enhance the quality of the built environment;
- 9 To protect natural resources and enhance the quality of the natural environment;
- 10 To secure the retention and improvement of community facilities including those for education and health-care;
- 11 To encourage the provision of an appropriate range of recreational, cultural and leisure facilities;
- 12 To produce a balance in the use of different forms of transport, which reduces the need for travel by car and encourages the increased use of public transport and other alternative forms of transport;
- 13 To improve accessibility within the Borough.