

CHAPTER 12 - TOURISM

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12.1 **INTRODUCTION**

- 12.1.1 Tourism includes a range of activities, from family holidays to festivals, conferences, meetings and day trips. Its impact extends deeply into other sectors of the economy; nationally, 28% of expenditure by domestic day visitors goes to retailers. Short breaks and business trips constitute a significant growth area.
- 12.1.2 Epsom has catered for tourists for many years. The reputed healing powers of the well and spa attracted visitors from far and wide at the end of the 17th century. The Downs attracted royal patronage for horse-racing from at least the 17th century, and the Derby was established in 1780.
- 12.1.3 Many facilities now located in and around Epsom and Ewell are aimed at local people but cater for customers over a wider area. The Epsom Playhouse operates as a cinema and concert hall as well as a major venue for professional and amateur theatre companies. Bourne Hall, Nonsuch Park, Horton Country Park, the Hook Road Arena, the Common and Downs, and the Rainbow Centre all provide leisure and recreational facilities for those living in the Borough itself and those living in neighbouring communities.
- 12.1.4 The Borough continues to attract visits from further afield. The RAC Golf Club attracts international visitors, whilst the Racecourse has diversified its role into conference provision and the Derby Day Experience tour for pre-booked parties. Conferences and receptions are also arranged at other non-residential facilities including Bourne Hall and Glyn House.

12.2 **POLICY CONTEXT**

Government Policy

- 12.2.1 The Government indicates that tourism policy should strike a balance between helping the industry grow and protecting the features which help to attract tourists. Guidance includes emphasis on design quality and protection for those communities which cater for tourism but which may experience some negative impacts.
- 12.2.2 The Government also has particular views regarding the region's role, advising that tourism is a major industry in the South East and that planning authorities should adopt a positive approach towards provision of facilities for visitors. However, it highlights the scope for new leisure facilities to cater for the region's residents as well as for tourists.
- 12.2.3 Specific Government guidance on hotels indicates that developers should approach the local planning authority at an early stage to discuss proposals. It suggests that development in the open countryside will be as strictly controlled in the case of hotels as it is for other development.
- 12.2.4 National legislation also provides for many measures which protect our heritage and thereby assist the tourism industry. These measures include the designation of Green Belts, Conservation Areas and Listed Buildings.

County Structure Plan Policy

12.2.5 Surrey County Council urges the promotion of a broader range of overnight accommodation, including budget hotels, bed-and-breakfasts and self-catering facilities. The Structure Plan makes provision for such developments, but indicates that only limited extensions, adaptation of rural buildings and farm diversification will usually be permitted in the countryside.

12.3 OBJECTIVES

12.3.1 The Council is keen to promote the economic development of the Borough. In particular, the Borough should provide ample employment opportunities and sufficient trade to support local retailers.

12.3.2 Drawing visitors into the Borough is one way of boosting the local economy. Tourists can help to support retail, service, cultural and leisure facilities which simultaneously provide for the needs of the local community. Tourists also create demand for an additional range of goods and services which contribute to employment, such as souvenirs, gifts, restaurants and hotels.

12.3.3 Whilst recognising the benefits of tourism, the Council stresses the importance of maintaining a high quality of life for residents of the Borough and the quality of environment which attracts visitors. The Council has therefore identified the following objectives:-

1. To provide for visitor facilities which will help tourism to reinforce commercial, cultural and leisure and recreational activities enjoyed by residents of the Borough;
2. To encourage the siting of visitor facilities in locations which are not currently overloaded and which can therefore be publicised to attract people from outside the Borough;
3. To encourage environmental measures and visitor management which will maintain the attractiveness of the Borough to residents, employees and tourists.

12.3.4 These objectives need to be considered in the wider context of tourists staying in the area to visit London and other parts of Surrey. Surrey County Council's Leisure and Tourism Unit produces a Visitor Strategy, and both the County Council and the South East England Tourist Board produce promotional material aimed at tourists. The Borough Council will consider promoting tourism initiatives to meet the wider needs of the Borough, provided that any proposals address the Local Plan objectives and the concerns of other relevant bodies.

12.3.5 In addition to measures identified in this chapter, detailed objectives and policies for new leisure and recreational provision and environmental protection and

improvement are set out in Chapters 3, 4, 5, 6 and 15 ("Green Belt", "Open Space and Recreation", "Natural Environment", "Built Environment", "Implementation, Resources, Monitoring and Review"). Local plan policies dealing with other topics are also important in ensuring that land uses are distributed in a way that respects the qualities that underpin the tourism industry.

12.4 POLICIES

- 12.4.1 The Council is working to ensure that visitors will both enjoy the qualities of the Borough and help to support its shops, businesses and leisure facilities. The Borough's potential for tourism is assisted by its extensive areas of open land criss-crossed by footpaths and bridleways. In addition, the Borough's formal and informal parkland, historic buildings, narrow lanes and passageways could make many parts of the urban area attractive to visitors. Opening-up these attractions often requires only promotion and enhancement of existing provisions rather than adding to built facilities and the Council will seek to ensure that the potential for quiet relaxation and enjoyment of these features is not damaged. Epsom Common, Epsom and Walton Downs, the Hogsmill River, Horton Country Park and Nonsuch Park could all contribute further to local tourism through initiatives such as the "Round the Borough" walk, the "Hogsmill Safari", additional signposting and interpretation, and selective provision of cycle access.
- 12.4.2 The Council is also actively seeking development of built facilities which will cater for Borough residents and attract visitors. Recent investments in Epsom Town Centre include a multi-screen cinema and a lifestyle centre development incorporating a library and gym. A range of cultural, museum and entertainment facilities is provided for by Policy OSR9 of Chapter 4 - Open Space and Recreation. Provision for a new leisure centre at the Rainbow is made in Chapter 15 - Implementation, Resources, Monitoring and Review. However, a policy is needed to deal with other proposals which may emerge, including visitor centres, themed interpretations like the Derby Day Experience, and viewing points with car parks and picnic areas.
- 12.4.3 Facilities geared to visitors may generate special requirements, in terms of the concentration of visits to particular places and at particular times of year (such as during the Derby), in terms of car and coach parking, and in terms of the displacement of housing by activities such as hotels, tea rooms or antique sales. Some of these concerns are addressed elsewhere in the plan. The Council seeks to ensure that developments do not conflict with residents' quality of life or with protection of the environment through chapters 3, 4, 5, 6 and 14. The Council considers that tourism should not add unacceptably to private car use, and will apply policies in Chapter 13 to ensure that facilities are accessible by alternative modes, and to ensure that car and coach-parking provision is at appropriate levels. Where the Council considers that proposed facilities could have an unacceptable impact on amenity, environment or travel, a visitor management strategy will be sought. In addition, the Council will apply the following specific criteria to non-residential facilities geared towards tourists.

TOR1 PLANNING PERMISSION WILL BE GRANTED FOR DEVELOPMENT OF NON-RESIDENTIAL TOURISM RELATED FACILITIES WHICH MEET THE FOLLOWING CRITERIA:

- (I) THE DEVELOPMENT HAS NO ADVERSE IMPACT ON THE GREEN BELT;**
- (II) THE DEVELOPMENT DOES NOT RESULT IN THE LOSS OF RESIDENTIAL ACCOMMODATION;**
- (III) THE DEVELOPMENT IS ACCESSIBLE BY PUBLIC TRANSPORT AND FROM THE MAIN ROAD NETWORK, AND IS NOT PREJUDICIAL TO HIGHWAY SAFETY AND EFFICIENCY.**

12.4.4 New and enhanced facilities for overnight stays would encourage visitors to the Borough to contribute more to the local economy and would also improve the attraction of non-residential conference facilities in the Epsom and Ewell area. The Borough might particularly benefit from a residential conference centre and from additional visitor accommodation at reasonable prices, including bed and breakfast establishments. For planning purposes, the class "hotels" includes similar uses like guest houses and bed and breakfast accommodation for visitors, and Policy TOR2 below will apply. Hostels are a distinct land-use, and are covered by Policies HSG7 and HSG8 in Chapter 7 - Housing.

12.4.5 Overnight visitor facilities in the countryside may detract from its rural character, unless they make use of existing rural buildings. Facilities in the urban area may also be inappropriate if they reduce the stock of permanent residences or change the character of residential streets, and will have to satisfy the requirements of Policy DC1.

12.4.6 Hotels will therefore generally be limited to locations which avoid rural and residential areas, and satisfy the Plan's general development policies. Two facilities which have recently been developed in urban locations are the 40-bed hotel on Dorking Road, Epsom, and the 29-bed hotel at the Queen Adelaide on Kingston Road, Ewell.

TOR2 PLANNING PERMISSION WILL ONLY BE GRANTED FOR DEVELOPMENT OF NEW HOTELS OR HOTEL EXTENSIONS WHICH MEET THE FOLLOWING CRITERIA:-

- (I) THE DEVELOPMENT DOES NOT RESULT IN THE LOSS OF RESIDENTIAL ACCOMMODATION;**
- (II) THE DEVELOPMENT IS NOT PREJUDICIAL TO HIGHWAY SAFETY AND EFFICIENCY.**

12.4.7 The County Council has identified a need for more diversity in Surrey's range of overnight accommodation, focusing particularly on lower cost facilities. The Borough presently has no overnight camping facilities for tourists, and therefore proposals in appropriate locations will be favourably considered. Such facilities would provide only for mobile accommodation (such as tents, caravans or camper vans) normally kept elsewhere, as the Council does not consider that temporary accommodation can meet permanent housing needs or that a caravan hire facility would be compatible with a site for touring visitors.

12.4.8 The Council is aware that such developments may be intrusive in terms of their visual impact and the disturbance they can cause through traffic movement and site facilities. The Council is also aware of the possible impact of such proposals on sustainability where vegetation or habitats are damaged, and where trips are only practical by private motor vehicle. The Council will therefore assess proposals carefully against all plan policies, paying particular attention to the need to protect residential amenity set out in Control of Development Policy DC1.

TOR3 PLANNING PERMISSION WILL BE GRANTED FOR DEVELOPMENT OF SUMMER CAMPING AND TOURING CARAVANNING SITES PROVIDED THAT:-

- (I) THE DEVELOPMENT DOES NOT INCLUDE STATIC CARAVANS, OTHER ACCOMMODATION RETAINED ON THE SITE FOR RENT OR HIRE BY A SUCCESSION OF OCCUPANTS OR PERMANENT RESIDENTIAL USE;**
- (II) THE DEVELOPMENT HAS NO OVERALL ADVERSE IMPACT IN TERMS OF LANDSCAPE FEATURES, ECOLOGICAL INTERESTS AND WATER RUN-OFF; AND**
- (III) THE DEVELOPMENT IS ACCESSIBLE BY PUBLIC TRANSPORT AND FROM THE FOOTPATH, CYCLE ROUTE AND EXISTING ROAD NETWORKS, AND IS NOT PREJUDICIAL TO HIGHWAY SAFETY AND EFFICIENCY.**