

Introduction

- 42.1 The neighbouring twin villages of West Hoathly and Sharpthorne are located, approximately six miles to the north of Haywards Heath and three miles south of East Grinstead. They are situated on a ridge which affords extensive views into the surrounding countryside. These villages lie within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.
- 42.2 West Hoathly initially grew around St Margaret's Church and the Manor House and contains a number of historic buildings dating back to the 15th century. Compared to West Hoathly, Sharpthorne has developed more recently. It originally grew up around the railway station, which opened in 1882 and closed in 1958. On the northern fringe of Sharpthorne is the West Hoathly brickworks, a major land use covering approximately 11 ha, which has been worked for over 100 years. It is an important source of employment in the area.
- 42.3 Both Sharpthorne and West Hoathly have limited local shopping facilities. Community and recreation facilities include a village hall, a recreation ground, with a children's play area and other sporting facilities.

Policies and Proposals

Built-up Area Boundary

- 42.4 Distinct built-up area boundaries are defined for Sharpthorne and West Hoathly respectively. These seek to protect the surrounding countryside from unnecessary development and so preserve the rural setting of both villages.
- 42.5 The built-up area boundary does not include Hoathly Hill which comprises low density development with a rural character which would be adversely affected by residential infilling. It is therefore treated as part of the countryside but is the subject of a specific policy against which proposals for further development will be assessed.

Conservation Area

- 42.6 The southern part of West Hoathly was designated a Conservation Area in December 1972. This includes the area commonly known as Queen's Square based on St Margaret's Church, a Grade I Listed Building believed to have Norman origins, around which the village initially grew. Many of the Listed Buildings in the village date from the 14th to 16th centuries although West Hoathly is reputed to date from the 11th century. The Conservation Area includes such buildings as the Priest House dating from 1450 and the Cat Inn already known as the Ale House in 1615. North Lane is generally of more recent development and features tile hanging, horizontal boarding with roof slates or clay tiles varying in age from the 15th century to the Victorian era.
- 42.7 The following features contribute to the particular character of the Conservation Area:
- the lack of building line and pavement in North Lane which creates a semi rural feel;
 - the age and variety of buildings, a number of which are Listed Buildings;
 - the grass banks, groups of trees and ornamental hedges particularly those around

the Manor House and Priest House;

- ❑ the views of St Margaret's Church spire;
- ❑ the unusual terraced churchyard with its magnificent views; and
- ❑ the extensive views of the countryside from the bowling and cricket green.

Local Gap

42.8 West Hoathly and Sharpthorne are situated very close to each other and are just about 400m apart along Church Road. In view of the narrowness of this gap and the important contribution made by all of the land outside the built-up areas to the separation of the two settlements, the boundaries of the built-up areas and local gap coincide. The boundaries of the gap are shown on the Proposals Map.

Hoathly Hill

42.9 Hoathly Hill, a small community comprising 27 dwellings, a number of communal buildings and approximately 3 ha of agricultural land, lies within the local gap to the west of Hammingden Lane. Established in 1973, a number of consents at this time included the conversion of various buildings to residential use, the establishment of a farm study centre and a craft centre and the use of the land for agriculture, forestry, educational and residential uses. Since that time uses at the site have been controlled by virtue of legal agreements, the most recent of which is dated 29th December 1986. Despite its development during the last twenty years the site is extremely well screened and causes little loss of amenity to the locality. Nevertheless, due to the sensitive location of Hoathly Hill, proposals involving further development in the local gap beyond the existing developed area of the community (shown on the Proposals Map) will not normally be permitted. Any proposals for development within the policy area will be expected to respect the current character of the community.

WHS1 Any proposal for further development at Hoathly Hill will only be permitted where:

- (a) the use, scale, design and location of the development are in keeping with the current character of the community;**
- (b) there is no detrimental impact on the character of Hoathly Hill in terms of loss of open space within, or loss of views from, the community; and**
- (c) the landscape setting of the community is safeguarded in order to minimise any impact on the local gap.**

Employment

West Hoathly Brickworks

42.10 West Hoathly Brickworks, located to the north of Sharpthorne village, is a significant land

use within the area, both in environmental terms and in its contribution to the local economy due to the employment provided. The decision on planning applications for development of mineral sites rests with the County Council, taking into account any representations made by the District Council. Any proposals for the intensification or extension of the use, in the form of new plant and buildings or extraction areas, will be considered on their merits against the relevant mineral policies of the Structure Plan, the Minerals Local Plan, and against the policies of this Local Plan. Particular attention will be paid to the environmental and highway impact of any proposals.

- 42.11 A scheme of restoration works, to include the management and aftercare of the site for at least five years, has been submitted to the County Council as Minerals Planning Authority.

WHS2 The Council will only favourably support proposals for the intensification or extension of the existing brickworks site where they comply with the policies relating to mineral working in the Structure Plan, the Minerals Local Plan and with the environmental and access policies of this Local Plan.

- 42.12 The Brickworks currently employs about 50 people and hence provides important employment opportunities. Should the Brickworks use cease the Council would support the continuation of employment opportunities by the development of industrial uses on the site. Access and egress to the site is however through residential roads and the junction with Top Road, itself a minor road, is not easy for HGVs to negotiate. As part of any proposals for industrial uses on the site the Council will seek to ensure a reduction in the number of vehicle movements, particularly of HGVs, because of their impact on the residential amenity of the neighbouring area.

WHS3 Should the Brickworks use cease the Council considers that the site should be retained for employment purposes, by the development of industrial uses. Any proposals should safeguard and improve the amenities of the area and, in particular, aim to reduce the amount and impact of traffic to and from the site.

Transport

- 42.13 One of the most significant problems affecting the two villages is the volume, nature and speed of traffic along Selsfield Road, Chapel Row, The Hollow and Top Road. Whilst some of this is locally generated, it appears that much of it is through traffic which does not need to be there. Indeed, a proportion is traffic travelling between the A22 and M23/M25 which uses this route to avoid congested roads further north through East Grinstead. The overall level of traffic, which includes heavy vehicles, has a particularly detrimental impact in both environmental and highway safety terms. The roads pass through residential areas, are narrow and winding with sub-standard junctions, and the traffic using them is unrestricted in terms of weight and width. West Sussex County Council has undertaken some 'gateway' treatment to the highway at the entrance to both villages and recently has implemented further traffic management measures in the form of rumble strips and improved signing aimed at reducing the speed of traffic. Traffic

volume and speed will continue to be monitored by the County Council and the District Council will urge the implementation of further measures if potential improvements can be identified.

Other Land Uses

Finche Field

42.14 West Hoathly and Sharpthorne are generally well provided with public open space in the form of children's playgrounds and playing fields. In addition, there is a large area of informal open space between the villages, known as Finche Field. This area includes grassed areas, a picnic site and allotments and is served by a vehicular access and a car park. It has a total area of 6.2 ha, not including the allotments. This forms the major part of the gap between West Hoathly and Sharpthorne, and offers extensive views across the surrounding countryside. It is a very valuable amenity and an important part of the setting of the two villages. The area's inclusion within the local gap will safeguard it from development. To ensure its continued use as an amenity for local residents the area is designated as an informal public open space. Any proposals to enhance the informal open space must be compatible with the nature conservation interest. It is intended that the existing allotments will be retained.

WHS4 Finche Field is allocated as informal public open space. Only proposals which would enhance the informal public use of the site will be permitted.

Bluebell Railway

42.15 The future development and extension of the Bluebell Railway is dealt with in the Recreation and Tourism, Horsted Keynes and East Grinstead Chapters of the Local Plan. Trains currently run through Sharpthorne Station and terminate at Kingscote Station. The extension of the Bluebell line to East Grinstead is supported and proposals to re-open the station at Sharpthorne or to provide other facilities to serve the Bluebell line at this point will be carefully considered.

WHS5 Suitable proposals to re-open Sharpthorne Station will be permitted. Any development scheme submitted shall pay special attention to the need to safeguard the character and appearance of the buildings and their surroundings, having regard to the location of the site within an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Proposals will take the form of a re-instatement of the original buildings and their features. It will need to be demonstrated that the development would not impact unacceptably on the wider area or amenities of the nearby residents through factors such as car parking, access arrangements and general disturbance.