

## 10. INTRODUCTION

- 10.1 Tourism is set to be the world's largest industry, contributing over £37 billion a year to Britain's economy and providing direct employment to over one and a half million people in the country. Over the last 30 years, there has been growth in short breaks, second holidays and day trips, and at the same time the longer seaside holiday has been in decline. Worthing has been affected by these changes, and direct employment in tourism in the town is now marginally below the National and West Sussex average. The industry still has a major role in the local economy - it remains in the town's top ten employment sectors and for this reason, Worthing must continue to adapt to the requirements of the tourist visitor if it is to both protect its current tourism business and also gain its full share and benefits from the growing national tourism economy.
- 10.2 The Borough Council continues to promote Worthing as a holiday destination, although the short stay holiday now dominates. A full market segmentation exercise has recently been completed identifying market sectors to promote to. The town is also promoted as a destination for group excursions, business tourism and foreign language students. To help market the town, the Borough Council is a member of the South East England Tourist Board, the British Association of Conference Towns and the West Sussex Tourism Initiative.
- 10.3 In response to changing tourism trends, the Borough Council commissioned consultants to produce a new tourism strategy for the town and this was published in October 1997. The strategy was adopted by the Council following full consultation with the local business community. It recommended five key aims to form the continued basis for the successful promotion of the town:-
- (i) repositioning Worthing as an attractive town by the sea, on the edge of the Sussex Downs;
  - (ii) promoting it as a pleasant tourism base and holiday centre for adults seeking quality products and excellent service;
  - (iii) developing and growing a small number of specialist, added value niche markets where Worthing has natural or current advantages;
  - (iv) encouraging business tourism as an integral part of the town's economic development;
  - (v) developing a pro-active approach to marketing and changing the image of Worthing.
- 10.4 As a land use document, the Local Plan does not directly impact on all the work carried out by the Council and other parties in achieving the aims of the tourism strategy. Nevertheless, it can play an important enabling role to ensure that the type and quality of the tourism infrastructure – accommodation and facilities – meets the needs of changing visitor requirements and complements the marketing activities of the Borough Council.

## STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

- 10.5 Current Government Policy advice is set out in Planning Policy Guidance Note 21 - Tourism. It stresses the contribution that tourism can make to the economy and to the protection of the environment. The tourism industry should be allowed to develop in response to changing market conditions, although the conversion of hotel stock to

alternative uses can weaken a seaside resort's ability to retain its status as a tourist destination. The planning system should not be used to perpetuate out-dated forms of activity for which there is no longer demand from tourists.

### **West Sussex Structure Plan**

- 10.6 Both the adopted 1993 West Sussex Structure Plan and the West Sussex Structure Plan Review highlight the importance of tourism and recognise that it has its own special land use requirements. The Structure Plans give it appropriate encouragement, particularly within built-up areas. This is balanced against the need to acknowledge the importance of sustainability and the environment.

## **HOTELS AND SERVICED ACCOMMODATION**

- 10.7 Worthing has over 80 hotels, guest houses and bed and breakfast establishments (serviced accommodation). With hotel occupancy in 1997 at 59% there is still some capacity for growth using existing accommodation stock in Worthing. There is, however, the potential for further growth through the development of new high quality accommodation which serves new conference or specialist markets which would stimulate and bring new business to the town and complement existing hotels. There is also a continued need for existing hotel and serviced accommodation to upgrade.
- 10.8 In response to the increasing expectation of the tourism industry the Council has been working in partnership with local businesses and other organisations to upgrade accommodation standards. This has been one of the central themes of the "Heart of Worthing Initiative" through which Government's Single Regeneration Budget Grant has been used to upgrade the standard of accommodation in 20 guest houses and provide improved facilities for disabled visitors in five hotels.
- 10.9 The potential for new hotel development on the Grafton Site is discussed in Policy MS4. There is also a need for accommodation, which caters predominantly for the needs of the business visitor. Castle Goring and Swandean Hospital may be suitable locations for this type of use on the A27 and are referred to in Policies MS3 and SC6.
- 10.10 Subject to the effect on local amenity and the need to retain the Borough's stock of small dwellings referred to in Policy H10, proposals for new and upgraded hotels and serviced accommodation will be supported, in principle, in the Built-Up Area. This includes proposals on the A27 where the development of a business hotel was identified as an advantage to meet the needs of business tourism in the new Tourism Strategy. Outside the Built-Up Area, there are no hotels or other serviced accommodation and developments will be expected to make use of existing buildings in this area.
- 10.11 In the Central Accommodation Area, as shown on the Proposals Map, it is often difficult for new hotels and guest houses to meet parking standards. To encourage more visitors to the town by public transport, parking standards for new developments close to the town's railway stations could also be reduced.

## **POLICY T1**

**The renewal and improvement of visitor facilities will be promoted by permitting proposals for new or upgraded hotel or serviced accommodation providing:-**

- (i) the character, appearance and amenity of the area are not adversely affected;**
- (ii) access and parking arrangements would be in accordance with Policy TR9, unless the development is within the Central Accommodation Area, as shown on the Proposals Map, where policy TR10 applies, or is in the vicinity of a railway station; and**
- (iii) that if the development is proposed outside the built-up area, as shown on the Proposals Map, it takes the form of a conversion of an existing building and complies with Policy C8 of this Plan.**

10.12 Hotels are an important element in a seaside town's status as a tourist destination - this is recognised in Government guidance. It is therefore necessary to control the conversion of hotels and other serviced accommodation to alternative uses. It is however, important that activities are not perpetuated for which there is no longer demand. For this reason, controls on use are only applied to the Central Accommodation Area, as shown on the Proposals Map, which is the centre of the town's tourist industry. The area contains over 40 hotels and other types of serviced accommodation, representing the most concentrated area of this type of activity in the Borough. Within its boundary are the town's main visitor attractions: the Promenade, Pier, Lido and central shopping area. It is the area, which is most popular with tourists and is subject to a programme of investment to upgrade the visitor environment. This includes improvements to Beach House Park, South Street and the Promenade. The demand for overnight accommodation has also been considered in applying controls on alternative use. The promotional activities of accommodation owners and the Borough Council have contributed to a 13% rise in occupancy in the larger hotels, between 1994 and 1997, supporting the retention of accommodation within the Central Visitor Area.

## **POLICY T2**

**Within the Central Accommodation Area, as shown on the Proposals Map, the loss of a hotel, boarding house and guest house will only be permitted where:-**

- (i) there is clear evidence that the property concerned can no longer be operated as a profitable business; or**
- (ii) proposals result in a reduction in bedspaces but retain hotel or serviced accommodation, which would provide improved visitor standards.**

10.13 In operating Policy T2, hotels, boarding houses and guest houses are defined as establishments which provide accommodation and breakfast and at least one other meal and service to residents and fall within Class C1 of the Use Classes Order. In assessing whether a hotel is not viable, Worthing Borough Council will seek the independent views of the South East England Tourist Board. Applicants reducing the number of bedspaces, but retaining hotel and serviced accommodation, either in whole or part of the establishment, will be expected to provide clear evidence that their plans are

consistent with the English Tourist Board's requirements to achieve an upgraded standard under their approved hotel rating scheme.

### **SELF-CATERING HOLIDAY FLATS**

- 10.14 This type of accommodation is becoming increasingly popular with Worthing's visitors. The provision of further accommodation will broaden the appeal of the town as a visitor destination and should be encouraged within the built up area, provided proposals satisfy the requirements of policies relating to flat developments as set out in Chapter 8. Such accommodation may also be acceptable in the countryside, for example, as part of a farm diversification scheme – Policy C6, or conversion of an existing building – Policy C8, subject to other Countryside policies.

### **TOURING CARAVANS AND CAMPING SITES**

- 10.15 There is one site for touring caravans in the Borough, off Titnore Way in West Durrington. This type of accommodation, although increasingly popular nationally, has never provided a major element of Worthing's visitor accommodation. The need to protect the environment and competing demands for the limited development land in the Borough has meant that this type of development has been strictly controlled in the past and this approach continues to be applied.

### **POLICY T3**

**New touring caravan and camping sites will only be permitted where the development:-**

- (i) is appropriate in scale to the surrounding area;**
- (ii) is not visually intrusive;**
- (iii) will have no adverse impact on the local environment or the amenity of residents;**
- (iv) is served by suitable access; and**
- (v) complies with all relevant policies in the Countryside chapter of this Plan.**

### **CHALETS, HOLIDAY CAMPS AND STATIC CARAVANS**

- 10.16 These types of development are land intensive. The demands for residential and employment land within the Built-Up Area makes development of chalets, holiday camps and static caravans inappropriate. Exceptions may be made for smallscale developments, which are unobtrusive.
- 10.17 Beyond the Built-Up Area boundary, the Borough's countryside is dominated by strategic gaps and the Sussex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Developments of this nature will normally not be acceptable in these areas due to the protection afforded to the Borough's countryside. Policies C6 and C8 would apply to any development associated with farm diversification schemes or conversion of existing buildings in the countryside.

#### **POLICY T4**

**Development involving the provision of chalets, holiday camps or static caravan pitches will not normally be permitted. An exception may be made for small-scale developments within the built-up area, which would not adversely affect the character, appearance or amenity of the area.**

#### **SPECIAL INTEREST HOLIDAYS AND LANGUAGE SCHOOLS**

- 10.18 Worthing has developed as a major centre for foreign language students and this has significant value for the local economy, especially during the Summer months. Attracting additional students to the Borough remains one of the key aims of the Borough Council's Tourism Marketing Strategy.
- 10.19 The proximity of the sea and countryside are important attractions for Worthing's visitors. 18% of visitors (1994) spend time walking on the South Downs during their stay in Worthing. Windsurfing, sailing and Worthing's role as the premier venue in the country for outdoor bowls are also important features for visitors with special interests.
- 10.20 Permission will normally be granted, in principle, for proposals associated with language schools and special interest holidays within the Built-Up Area provided there is no loss of small dwellings as referred to in Policy H10, there is no serious nuisance or loss of amenity and access and parking is satisfactory. Outside the Built-Up Area, proposals will only be acceptable if they involve the use of an existing building.

#### **POLICY T5**

**New development for language schools or special interest holidays or extension to, or intensification of existing premises, will be permitted providing that:-**

- (i) the character, appearance or amenity of the area are not adversely affected;**
- (ii) access and parking arrangements would be in accordance with adopted standards; and**

- (iii) if the development is proposed outside the built-up area, as shown on the proposals map, it takes the form of a conversion or an extension to an existing language school or building used for special interest holidays and complies with Policies C8 or C9, as appropriate, of this Plan.**

## **COACH BASED TOURISM**

- 10.21 The economic impact of this type of tourism is growing; national research indicates that the spending from coach visitors at tourist destinations is rising. Nevertheless, the parking of day coaches can cause problems in terms of residential amenity and needs to be managed carefully. The parking needs of coach based tourism are referred to in Chapter 7 at paragraph 7.26.

## **TOURIST ATTRACTIONS**

- 10.22 It is important that attractions (other than accommodation) for visitors to Worthing are improved, enabling the town to remain competitive with other tourist locations. In addition to facilities in the heart of the town and on the beach, the town's leisure facilities in other parts of the Borough are also important to the tourism industry, such as Highdown Gardens and Brooklands (see Chapter 11). Proposals which improve the town's stock of attractions will therefore normally be acceptable. The open and predominantly non-commercial character of the Seafront Area, as defined on the Proposals Map, is, however, a popular feature of Worthing as a visitor destination and this should not be undermined. Nevertheless, there may be opportunities to add to the ambience of this area by the limited introduction of uses that add to the vitality and viability of the town centre, such as street cafes, as recommended in the new Tourism Strategy. Opportunities for development outside the Built-Up Area will be limited and will need to comply with all relevant policies in Chapter 3. Facilities, which are covered, can help to reduce the dependency of the town on outdoor activities. Opportunities for this type of development on the Grafton Site and to the south of the Aquarena are set out in Policies MS4 and LR10.
- 10.23 New and improved visitor attractions will inevitably generate significant numbers of trips. To encourage travel by public transport, this type of development will be expected to comply with Policy TR3 of this Plan.

## **POLICY T6**

**Proposals for new or improved visitor attractions within the built-up area will be permitted providing that:-**

- (i) the character, appearance and amenity of the area are not adversely affected; and**

- (ii) development in the seafront area, as shown on the Proposals Map, comply with Policies CT3 and CT4 controlling commercial uses and design in the seafront area.**

### **BUSINESS AND CONFERENCE FACILITIES**

- 10.24 The Borough Council is working closely with principal hotels to promote Worthing as a conference destination. The conference delegate is important to Worthing's tourist economy, helping to extend the peak season for hoteliers and having the highest average daily spend of any tourist visitor to the town.
- 10.25 Conference and meeting rooms also provide a valuable service to businesses within the town helping to improve the competitiveness of hotels. New or improved conference facilities in the Built-Up Area were a recommendation of the Tourism Strategy as a means to encourage business tourism and will be acceptable in principle. Opportunities outside the Built-Up Area, will only be acceptable if they involve the conversion of existing buildings.

### **POLICY T7**

**Proposals for new or improved conference facilities, will be permitted providing that:-**

- (i) the character, appearance and amenity of the area are not adversely affected;**
- (ii) access and parking arrangements would be in accordance with adopted standards; and**
- (iii) if the development is proposed outside the built-up area it takes the form of a conversion of existing buildings and complies with Policy C8 of this Plan.**

# TOURISM

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