

## Introduction

- 7.1** The Borough has a buoyant economy, partly due to its proximity to London. Most of the 47,900 jobs (Annual Business Inquiry, 2003) are concentrated in Royal Tunbridge Wells, Southborough and Paddock Wood, although there is a net loss of workers commuting to other centres, principally London. Employment opportunities have increased significantly over the last decade with service sector jobs now comprising over 88% of total employment (2003), mainly in commercial offices, retail outlets and public services. There is concern at the rate of expansion in view of possible labour shortages and transport constraints.
- 7.2** In rural parts of the Plan area, non-agricultural employment is concentrated in villages within schools, shops, service industries and tourist accommodation. However, a larger proportion is dispersed throughout the countryside, in particular within converted rural buildings and other institutions. Furthermore, as communication technology develops and becomes more widely available, more people are choosing to work from home.
- 7.3** This Local Plan aims to maximise the use of brownfield sites for all new development and make better use of existing employment land resources.
- 7.4** This Chapter sets out general policies which seek to guide economic development proposals to the most appropriate location, and the proposed amount and location of additional land to be allocated for economic development. The Chapter concludes with a section on economic development outside the Limits to Built Development.

## Aims

1. To ensure that the provision of economic development does not exacerbate skills and labour shortages or stimulate demand for housing, transport infrastructure and community facilities beyond that which is intended to be provided over the Plan period.
2. To make provision for economic development in the light of Kent Structure Plan 1996 and the Kent & Medway Structure Plan 2006 guidelines, taking into account the policy and environmental constraints, and market conditions within the Plan area.
3. To facilitate economic development which helps sustain the vitality and viability of town centres and business/industrial areas and provide for the appropriate expansion of existing business premises.
4. To support the rural economy through the appropriate expansion and establishment of employment uses, including in the agricultural sector, outside the Limits to Built Development.
5. To locate large-scale economic development where good access to all modes of transport can be achieved to reduce the need to travel, and where it does not create unacceptable traffic conditions.
6. To seek opportunities to improve the environmental quality of the existing economic development areas and to ensure a high standard of design and landscaping in new proposals.
7. To facilitate the relocation of inappropriately located businesses or industrial activities.

## Economic Development

### ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROVISION

- 7.5 Regional Planning Guidance does not identify this area as a priority for economic regeneration or growth. The guidance recommends that the Local Plan should take full account of local economic development strategies which will need to reflect local capacity in terms of labour, land availability and transport infrastructure, build on local skills and reflect changing work and living patterns.

### Area of Restraint

- 7.6 The Kent Structure Plan 1996 and the Kent & Medway Structure Plan 2006 identify West Kent, including Tunbridge Wells Borough, as an area of restraint due to Green Belt and environmental constraints. In particular, the Kent Structure Plan 1996 Policy WK2 and the Kent & Medway Structure Plan 2006 Policy WK4 state that there is an overriding need to ensure the conservation of the built environment and setting of the town of Royal Tunbridge Wells, and to respect its location within the Metropolitan Green Belt and the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. There is also concern at the rate of expansion of economic development in view of labour supply, transport constraints and the need to avoid undue overheating of the local economy.

### Kent Structure Plan Guidelines

- 7.7 The Kent Structure Plan 1996 and the Kent & Medway Structure Plan 2006 set out floorspace guidelines for the amount of land to be allocated for employment purposes within the Borough. These indicate the scale of provision appropriate to Tunbridge Wells Borough and are based on the uses defined by the Use Classes Order 1987 (as amended). The distinction between A2/B1 and B2/B8 reflects the role of Royal Tunbridge Wells as a centre for financial and business services and takes account of opportunities for industry and warehousing, particularly at Paddock Wood. Employment-generating development falling outside of these Use Classes, such as retail and tourism, are not considered against the guidelines within the Kent Structure Plan 1996 and the Kent & Medway Structure Plan 2006.
- 7.8 The Kent Structure Plan 1996 indicates that the provision of floorspace in West Kent should remain within the guidelines, although variations from them may be warranted as a result of local adjustments to land provision justified through the Local Plan process. In addition, the precise mix of development to be provided (A2/B1 and B2/B8) is a matter for the Local Planning Authority to determine in light of specific local circumstances.

### Economic Development Trends

- 7.9 The period since 1991 has seen moderate job growth within Tunbridge Wells Borough with a net decrease in jobs of 1,100 between 1995 and 2003 (Annual Business Inquiry, 2003). This decline masks an overall increase in jobs in the service sector with an additional 1,000 jobs created within this sector over the same period. In particular, the opening of Royal Victoria Place in 1992 generated significant employment in the retail sector. In 2002, total jobs peaked at 52,300, falling back to 47,900 in 2003. In this period, all sectors except for construction and other services had a decrease in the number of jobs. This employment change has been accompanied by low unemployment rates within the Borough in recent years, declining to 1.0% by June 2005 (ONS/Kent County Council, July 2005). Labour and skills shortages have been experienced. It should be noted, however, that pockets of higher unemployment do exist in several local areas.
- 7.10 Conversely, the period since 1991 has seen relatively low business, industrial or warehouse floorspace completed compared with Kent Structure Plan 1996 guidelines, including on land allocated in the adopted Local Plan (1996). Historic trend

demonstrates that, with the exception of warehousing development at Paddock Wood, new employment opportunities within the Borough are not provided principally through traditional economic development areas, but through other means, such as:

- company expansion within existing premises (as more efficient use is made of existing floorspace);
- company expansion within existing sites, such as extensions and mezzanines, to gain additional space;
- increased shift working within the same space ('hot desking');
- the conversion of rural premises;
- home working; and
- expansion in other sectors such as retail, food and drink, tourism and the public sector.

**7.11** In any event, the strategic location of Royal Tunbridge Wells in relation to the road network means that the town is not as attractive as many of its competitors for warehousing development. Equally, demand for new office development has been limited within the town. Speculative office development in the Longfield Road area has not attracted significant demand.

**7.12** In contrast, Paddock Wood has proven to be a successful location for warehousing use with better links to the motorway network (M20).

**7.13** Recent evidence points to a demand for small industrial and warehouse premises, up to 200 square metres, particularly in the Royal Tunbridge Wells area.

#### **Economic Development Land Provision**

**7.14** Table 3 below sets out the Local Planning Authority's proposed provision towards the Kent Structure Plan 1996 and the Kent & Medway Structure Plan 2006 economic development guidelines to 2011.

**7.15** A total of over 23.5 hectares of land is allocated for economic development in the period up to 2011, with the estimated floorspace contribution discounted for appropriate landscaping, access and car parking. The estimated contribution from each allocation site to A2/B1 and B2/B8 provision given in Table 3 is based on site characteristics, market evidence and past trends.

**7.16** In accordance with Regional Planning Guidance and Government advice in PPG3, an assessment of the suitability of retaining undeveloped economic development allocations within the adopted Local Plan (1996) has been undertaken. As a consequence two sites previously allocated for economic development have been allocated for housing.

**7.17** Between 1991 and 2003 over 94% of economic development floorspace completed in the Borough has taken place outside of allocated sites (Economic Development Monitor). Projections of windfall completions to 2011, based on past trend and capacity considerations, result in a net loss (minus 14,407 square metres) of floorspace, mainly due to the effect of office conversions to residential within Royal Tunbridge Wells. Some development has taken place or has been permitted since 2003 on some of the allocated sites, but this is not included in the table below, nor is it reflected in the site areas for each of the allocations in POLICY ED4.

Table 3

**Tunbridge Wells Borough Local Plan Economic Development  
Land Provision 1991-2011**

	<b>A2/B1 (square metres)</b>	<b>B2/B8 (square metres)</b>	<b>TOTAL (square metres)</b>
Economic Development Allocations	26,000	39,500	65,500
Development completed (1991-2003)	-3,562	9,496	5,934
Projected windfall completions	-3,741	-10,666	-14,407
Net planning permissions (at 2003)	7,588	13,588	21,176
<b>Total Provision</b>	<b>26,285</b>	<b>51,918</b>	<b>78,203</b>
<b>Kent and Medway Structure Plan 2006 guidance 2001-2021</b>			<b>74,000</b>

*Source: Kent & Medway Structure Plan 2006  
Tunbridge Wells Borough Council Development Monitor, March 2003*

**7.18** There would have been a shortfall between the proposed economic development provision and Kent Structure Plan 1996 floorspace guidelines. This shortfall was justified for a number of reasons:

- the overriding need to ensure that provision for additional economic development would not create the potential to fuel unsustainable levels of housing demand and infrastructure which are not catered for within this Plan, or exacerbate skills and labour shortages;
- the potential for further employment growth in other sectors, such as retail, tourism and public services proposed in the Plan;
- the requirement of the Kent Structure Plan 1996 to remain within the floorspace guideline; and
- the level of market demand for additional releases of economic development land, in spite of a buoyant local economy.

**7.19** The Kent and Medway Structure Plan 2006 recognises the strategic constraints within Tunbridge Wells Borough and considers that sufficient employment land has already been committed to meet projected needs to 2021. The figure of 74,000 square metres quoted by the Kent and Medway Structure Plan represents the level of commitments at 2001.

**7.20** The Strategic Planning Authority recognises that employment generation in the Tunbridge Wells area does not only rely on employment land allocations for the reasons set out above. However, it is important that the existing Economic Development allocations are husbanded effectively in order to achieve maximum employment generation from these sites.

## **Hierarchy of Settlements**

**7.21** In accordance with strategic advice, the Local Planning Authority's strategy is to concentrate larger-scale economic development activity primarily in the urban areas of Royal Tunbridge Wells and Southborough, and to serve the small rural towns of Paddock Wood, Cranbrook and Hawkhurst. This has the advantage of locating jobs in

proximity to housing and a range of transport provision, with the aim of reducing the need to travel, particularly by car.

### **Royal Tunbridge Wells and Southborough**

- 7.22** The main employment areas within the towns are the town centres, the Longfield Road area and the High Brooms Industrial Estate in Southborough. Royal Tunbridge Wells town centre is the focus for B1 office development benefiting from good public transport access and other services in the immediate vicinity. The remaining employment areas are located in the north-eastern part of the town, which historically have accommodated industrial and warehousing floorspace. The close proximity of High Brooms Station to the Chapman Way and Longfield Road industrial estates assists in making the sites more sustainable, as outlined in the Transport and Parking Chapter of this Plan. These areas retain the capacity for further development or redevelopment of larger-scale buildings where they cannot be accommodated in the town centres.

### **Paddock Wood**

- 7.23** Paddock Wood is identified in the Kent Structure Plan 1996 as being able to accommodate general industry and warehousing development.
- 7.24** The town has experienced the development of major warehousing and distribution facilities arising from its good road connections to the A228 and M20 motorway and its situation on a railway connection. In making proposals for economic development in Paddock Wood, the Local Planning Authority recognises the potential impact of additional HGV traffic on parts of Paddock Wood and other settlements.
- 7.25** Paddock Wood remains a popular location for B8 uses, but only limited scope exists for new development on the established Transfesa Estate due to the development of virtually all suitable sites, and a limited likelihood that existing premises will be redeveloped. This area, together with the Eldon Way Industrial Estate and land west of Maidstone Road, is located close to the railway.

### **Cranbrook and Hawkhurst**

- 7.26** To achieve the creation of balanced and sustainable rural communities, PPG13 advises that significant provision of economic development in rural areas should be located in or near existing local service centres, where employment and housing can be located close together and where there is access to a range of transport. The need for such development is highlighted by recent trends in the Plan area, which show that a high proportion of residents in the rural Parishes work outside of the Borough. Within this Plan, Cranbrook and Hawkhurst (Highgate) have been identified as rural service centres serving the eastern area of the Borough, in part because they contain more employment opportunities than other rural Parishes.
- 7.27** Cranbrook is the largest of the two rural towns identified above and supports a large resident workforce. It has a high ratio of jobs to workers and retains some 41% of its resident workers within the Parish. Hawkhurst is the smaller of the two settlements but supports a greater diversity of employment. However, it displays a lower ratio of jobs to workers and also retains a significantly lower number of resident workers within the Parish (26%). The allocation of a site for economic development is considered important in order to provide the opportunity for residents to work locally and further reduce the level of out-commuting. The provision of economic development land will serve to strengthen their role as rural service centres and provide additional employment opportunities for those living in surrounding villages.

### **Villages**

- 7.28** A number of villages classified within the Plan as RS2 Settlements in the Kent Structure Plan 1996 and Policy SS1(d) in the Kent & Medway Structure Plan 2006 (see para 2.28

of this Plan) still contain a limited number of economic development sites within the Limits to Built Development. However, many of these sites have been redeveloped for housing during the past 20 years. Nevertheless, villages remain appropriate locations for small-scale economic development activity.

### **Countryside**

- 7.29** With PPS7, the Government has sought to introduce a more flexible approach outside the Limits to Built Development to strengthen the rural economy, particularly by giving encouragement to small businesses. The provision of employment opportunities in the wider rural area of the Borough is important to the economic and social wellbeing of rural communities. The Plan facilitates the conversion of appropriate rural buildings for economic development and the extension of existing businesses.
- 7.30** The policies set out below provide a framework of enabling policies against which economic development proposals in the Plan area will be assessed and identify land appropriate for economic development.

## **Making the Best Use of Land and Buildings Within Limits to Built Development**

### **Unidentified Sites**

- 7.31** It is the aim of this Local Plan to maximise the use of brownfield land. Regional Planning Guidance targets for 60% of all new development to be located on previously-developed land. In respect of economic development, precedence should be given to the re-use of developed land or buildings over the release of new land and, wherever possible, the intensification of use on existing sites should be encouraged.
- 7.32** Regional Planning Guidance seeks better use of existing employment land resources including, wherever possible, the intensification of use on existing sites.

### **Expansion of Premises**

- 7.33** Within the Plan area there is evidence of the extension of existing premises within existing curtilages by, for example, the development of storage areas or land devoted to car parking where reduced parking standards allow. This is likely to be especially feasible in Royal Tunbridge Wells Central Parking Zone (Commercial) where parking standards require only operational parking to be located on-site. In addition, the provision of a wide range of means of transport to large-scale business development wherever it is located within the Limits to Built Development will result in reduced on-site parking requirements.

### **Efficient Use of Internal Building Space**

- 7.34** There has been a trend for businesses to make more efficient use of internal space, for example through the erection of mezzanines within larger buildings. Furthermore, a number of office refurbishments have taken place in the past decade, particularly in Royal Tunbridge Wells. There is the opportunity for this to continue during the Plan period.

### **Change of Use and Redevelopment**

- 7.35** Considerable redevelopment has occurred of out-moded units in the Longfield Road area of Royal Tunbridge Wells. Further units may be renewed during the Plan period.
- 7.36** The change of use of premises to business use is restricted by policies which seek to retain existing houses, tourist accommodation and certain community services. However, outside the Limits to Built Development, the Plan permits the conversion of certain previously-used rural buildings to economic development use. This has brought

forward considerable floorspace within the past decade and policies included in this Plan continue to make this feasible.

- 7.37** This Local Plan sets a target of 45% of B1, B2 and B8 new floorspace gains to take place on previously-developed land during the Plan period.
- 7.38** The following sections define the Local Planning Authority's policy toward proposals for each of the principal economic development uses (Classes B1, B2 and B8) of the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (as amended) outside of the sites allocated for economic development. In fulfilling the key objectives of this Local Plan, control over the location of types of economic development is needed and separate policies apply to different parts of the Borough.
- 7.39** Government advice on industrial and commercial development is contained in PPG4. The advice states that planning permission should normally be granted unless there are specific and significant objections, such as a relevant development plan policy, unacceptable noise, smell, safety and health impacts, or excessive traffic generation. All proposals will be assessed against POLICY EN1 and other relevant policies in the Plan, to ensure that economic development achieves an acceptable environmental impact. In addition, policies contained in the Transport and Parking Chapter of this Plan will be important in assessing the sustainability of sites.
- 7.40** The Local Planning Authority seeks to guide major generators of travel demand, such as large-scale B1 office development, to the most appropriate locations through the application of a sequential approach throughout the Plan area. The term large-scale refers to schemes where the total additional gross floorspace area is 500 square metres or greater.
- 7.41** In addition, this Local Plan identifies 'Economic Development Areas' (EDAs) which comprise the main concentrations of economic development activity in the Plan area outside of town centres, as well as sites allocated for economic development. They include the industrial estates on the edge of Royal Tunbridge Wells, Southborough and Paddock Wood and all economic development allocations where less intensive forms of business and industrial development are focused and where the capacity exists for further development or redevelopment.

**Large-Scale Business Use (Class B1): Royal Tunbridge Wells and Southborough, Paddock Wood, Cranbrook and Hawkhurst**

- 7.42** A variety of economic development activities fall within Business Class B1, including office uses (other than financial and professional services), research and development, and industrial processes that can be carried out in any residential area without detriment to the amenity of that area. Consequently, the traffic-generating characteristics of different B1 activities are varied.
- 7.43** To guide business development to the most appropriate sites, Government advice encourages the use of locational policies in Local Plans. PPG4 and Regional Planning Guidance advocates economic development in locations that minimise the need to travel, especially by car, and that utilise energy-efficient modes of transport. This is endorsed by PPS6 and PPG13, which advise that new employment opportunities that are major generators of travel demand should be highly accessible by public transport and focus on town centres or near to major public transport interchanges.
- 7.44** PPS6 identifies B1 offices as a key town centre use. All proposals for large-scale B1 office space should accord with the sequential approach set out in POLICY CR2, and should be compatible with POLICIES H1 (retention of existing housing stock), T2 (retention of existing tourist accommodation), CR13 (retention of neighbourhood or village community facilities) and CS6 (retention of community buildings).

- 7.45 Proposals for less intensive, large-scale light industrial B1 uses will be guided to the defined Economic Development Areas in Royal Tunbridge Wells, Paddock Wood and Gills Green (serving Hawkhurst and Cranbrook) or outside the Limits to Built Development in compliance with POLICY ED5. Light industrial uses are seldom satisfactorily accommodated in other locations due to their bulky form, whereas the Economic Development Areas are considered suitable due to the existing concentration of such activities at these locations. This clustering of uses supports the provision of transport measures, through the improvement of public transport, walking and cycling facilities.

### **POLICY ED1**

**Proposals for large-scale B1 light industrial development of 500 square metres gross floorspace or greater should be located within the Economic Development Areas as defined on the Proposals Map.**

### **Small-Scale Business Use (Class B1) within the Limits to Built Development**

- 7.46 It is now recognised that it is not appropriate to separate small-scale businesses from residential areas for which they can be a source of employment and local services. However, the intensity of the proposed use and the impact on the character or amenities of an area will be important in determining the acceptability of a proposal (POLICY EN1).
- 7.47 Proposals should not have an adverse environmental impact on the locality, and should be compatible with POLICIES H1 (retention of existing housing stock), T2 (retention of existing tourist accommodation), CR13 (retention of neighbourhood and village centre community facilities) and CS6 (retention of community buildings).

### **POLICY ED2**

**Proposals for small-scale B1 development up to 500 square metres gross floorspace will be permitted within the Limits to Built Development, as defined on the Proposals Map.**

### **General Industry (Class B2) and Distribution and Storage Uses (Class B8): Economic Development Areas in Royal Tunbridge Wells, Southborough, Paddock Wood, Cranbrook and Hawkhurst**

- 7.48 General industrial uses (Class B2) are those which may cause disturbance if located in residential areas, depending on the level of associated noise, vibration, smell, fumes or other emissions. B2 development may be capable of being satisfactorily located in the Economic Development Areas, as defined on the Proposals Map, subject to its environmental impact on the locality.
- 7.49 Distribution and warehousing uses (Class B8) occupy substantial areas of land and tend to generate lower levels of employment than other business uses.
- 7.50 Given the access available to the strategic road network, further proposals for B8 development within the defined Economic Development Areas will be acceptable. The exception is the High Brooms Industrial Estate, which is located close to established residential areas with poor access to the strategic road network. HGV routing to and



from the industrial estate is via the A264 east of Royal Tunbridge Wells or the A26 north of Royal Tunbridge Wells, both of which are congested routes, and through the residential areas of High Brooms or Sherwood. In addition, the highway network in the immediate vicinity is constrained. For these reasons, proposals that would result in a net increase in traffic movements on the local highway network, or have an adverse impact on adjacent residential areas, will not be permitted.

- 7.51** Within the Limits to Built Development, subject to meeting the criteria in POLICY EN1 and other relevant policies in the Plan, there may be scope for the expansion of existing B2 and B8 uses outside the defined Economic Development Areas.

### **POLICY ED3**

**Within the Economic Development Areas, excluding the High Brooms Industrial Estate, as defined on the Proposals Map, proposals for general industry (Class B2) and distribution and storage uses (Class B8) will be permitted.**

### **ALLOCATION OF LAND FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

- ~~**7.52** A re-appraisal of existing undeveloped economic development land allocations in the adopted Local Plan (1996) has taken place in the light of this Local Plan's objectives and more detailed advice contained in Government guidance, in particular Regional Planning Guidance, PPG3, 4 and 13, and the Tunbridge Wells Borough Transport Strategy.~~
- ~~**7.53** The selection of appropriate economic development sites has taken full account of the need to fulfil this Local Plan's sustainable development objectives. These aim for development to protect and enhance the high-quality environment of the Plan area, conserve finite and non-renewable resources, such as land, and achieve less energy-intensive forms of development, whilst at the same time meeting community needs and priorities.~~
- ~~**7.54** Of the existing undeveloped allocations, land south of Dowding Way and land north of Kingstanding Way, Royal Tunbridge Wells, and land west of Maidstone Road, Paddeck Wood remain suitable for a range of B1, B2 and B8 uses.~~
- ~~**7.55** The allocations not carried over from the adopted Local Plan (1996) comprise the site at Goods Station Road; land at Tunbridge Wells Northern Telephone Exchange, Royal Tunbridge Wells; land adjoining Barnetts Wood, Southborough; and land at Swattenden Lane; Cranbrook, for the following reasons:~~
- ~~• Land at Goods Station Road, Royal Tunbridge Wells is no longer considered viable for economic development by reason of site and access constraints. Due to the close proximity of the site to a residential area, B2 uses are not appropriate and the poor access creates problems for the location of B8 use;~~
  - ~~• St John's Telephone Exchange, Royal Tunbridge Wells: the site is considered too peripheral to the town centre for large-scale B1 office development;~~
  - ~~• Barnetts Wood, Southborough: the proposed link road between Dowding Way and North Farm Road is no longer proposed and an adequate access to the site is no longer available; and~~
  - ~~• The Swattenden Lane allocation at Cranbrook is deleted because it is not available for development over the Plan period.~~

~~7.56~~ The sites allocated for economic development within the Plan provide a range of development opportunities in accordance with the advice in PPG4 and 12. Where it would benefit the preparation of proposals for an allocated site, the Local Planning Authority will prepare a brief in consultation with the public and landowners. This will provide more detailed guidance and explanation regarding the development of that site based on the policies in the Plan.

~~7.57~~ A Transport Assessment will need to be submitted for sites of a certain scale in accordance with POLICY TP1.

### **Royal Tunbridge Wells**

~~7.58~~ In order that B1 office provision is well located in relation to a wide choice of means of transport and becomes an integral part of town centre economies, all proposals for large-scale development should satisfy the sequential test set out in POLICY CR2. This may include the expansion of existing premises or the development of new B1 office accommodation. Specific provision for large-scale B1 office development is made on a number of Mixed Use Development sites in the Town, Neighbourhood and Village Centres (incorporating retail development) Chapter within POLICY CR4. On these sites it is envisaged that B1 use will form part of a larger mixed use development. This will strengthen the vitality and viability of the centre and generate further employment opportunities.

~~7.59~~ The allocated sites at Dowding Way and Kingstanding Way adjoin existing employment areas in the Longfield Road area. Both sites are allocated for B1, B2 and B8 uses, but only where the use would cause no adverse impact to residential amenity or adjacent uses. Given the poor availability of sustainable means of transport, each site will need improved links to the wider transport network, to include pedestrian and cycle provision, contributions to public transport facilities and, where necessary, highway improvement.

~~7.60~~ Both allocations are located on the edge of the urban area and abut open countryside of high landscape value, including the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Kent Special Landscape Area, and are visible over a long distance. High-quality landscaping is expected in order to minimise the impact of development and to achieve an environmental upgrade of the area generally. An environmental enhancement scheme is required at the southern end of the Dowding Way site, including landscaping along the frontage to North Farm Road.

### **Paddock Wood**

~~7.61~~ Land west of Maidstone Road is allocated for economic development. This will ensure that large-scale B1, B2 and B8 uses remain concentrated to the north of the railway line. This allows the impact of heavy goods vehicles to be restricted to routes to the north of the railway line and for any detriment to residential amenity to be minimised. In addition, the site enables the rounding-off of the north-western sector of Paddock Wood.

~~7.62~~ In order to facilitate the development of the site in the light of PPG13 advice, the access requirements set out in the adopted Local Plan (1996) have been revised. The requirement to provide an access road through the site prior to its development has been replaced by a phased approach, and the creation of a road link through to Eldon Way has been removed. It is also envisaged that the location of the junction providing access into the site from Maidstone Road will be moved further north to avoid the need to relocate essential services.

~~7.63~~ Access to the site from Maidstone Road should be from a new priority junction (including right-turning lane) sited immediately north of its existing junction with Eastlands Lane, with a new road following the line of the lane before turning to enter the site from the north. This new access, coupled with existing weight restrictions to the south, would ensure that traffic to the site would not use Maidstone Road south of

~~Eastlands Lane. A gateway measure should be provided at the entrance to the site, to include traffic-calming measures.~~

- ~~7.64 — To improve transport links between the site, the town centre and housing areas south of the railway line, a toucan crossing is required on Maidstone Road to the north of the junction with Nursery Road. Direct pedestrian and cycle routes should also be provided from Maidstone Road and along Nursery Road into the site, with the pedestrian route extending to link up with the existing public footpath which runs along the western boundary of the site. Contributions will be sought towards pedestrian/cycle improvements and public transport facilities in the vicinity.~~
- ~~7.65 — The site abuts open countryside to the north and west, and residential properties are located on the eastern boundary. Structural planting will be required along the north, east and west boundaries to soften the impact of development on the surrounding countryside and residential properties. Informal open space will be required to act as a buffer to residential properties to the east of the site. Residential amenity will be further protected by restricting the northern and eastern parts of the site to Use Class B1. High-quality, low rise buildings should be provided in a well-landscaped setting.~~
- ~~7.66 — Adjacent to the allocation site lies the Tudeley Brook watercourse, which acts as a buffer to the development from the surrounding countryside. A public footpath runs alongside the brook. A 10-metre strip along both its banks is proposed in order to retain this buffer to the countryside and help protect the amenity of the footpath.~~
- ~~7.67 — The allocation is within the active floodplain of the River Medway where the Environment Agency has identified a risk of flooding occurring, on average, once in every one hundred years. This means that, in consultation with the Environment Agency, applicants will be required to carry out an assessment of flood risk and development proposals will need to incorporate adequate flood protection and mitigation measures in accordance with POLICY EN18.~~

#### **Cranbrook and Hawkhurst**

- ~~7.68 — Due to the unavailability of land and environmental constraints, no sites suitable as an economic development allocation are available within, or adjoining, either Cranbrook or Hawkhurst. However, a previously used site between the settlements, at Gills Green, is available. The site, formerly Hawkhurst railway station and sidings, is partially occupied by a variety of B2, B8 and sui-generis uses. The brownfield site comprises former railway buildings and several modern units, as well as outdoor storage.~~
- ~~7.69 — The Local Planning Authority considers that there is potential for more efficient use of the site layout to provide modern, fully serviced economic development premises. The site is suitable for Class B1, B2 and B8 uses subject to the uses causing no significant harm to the amenities or character of the area in accordance with POLICY EN1.~~
- ~~7.70 — The site is located in the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and, due to its slightly elevated position, parts of the site are visible from the north and the south on the A229. In accordance with POLICIES EN25, EN26 and EN27, there is considerable opportunity to bring about environmental enhancement by introducing landscaping measures to relate the site more effectively to its adjacent countryside character.~~
- ~~7.71 — Substantial hedgerow and tree planting will be required around the edge of the site, including those parts of the site that are already developed, to create a visual boundary and screen the site from the surrounding countryside and nearby residential properties.~~
- ~~7.72 — The existing site frontage to the main road is considered to be of poor quality and future proposals will require careful design to reduce the impact on the surrounding landscape. Single-storey, high-quality development of appropriate scale, form, bulk, general design and materials will be sought.~~

~~7.73~~ The site abuts the A229, but further development of the site will require improvements to the access, including the provision of a dedicated right-turn lane. Pedestrian access to the site should be provided on the western side of the A229 through an extension to the existing footway to the south up to the site entrance. The site is served by a frequent bus service, linking Cranbrook and Hawkhurst, and a contribution to local public transport will be sought in the form of a bus lay-by and shelter on the A229 for northbound services. Linked pedestrian facilities should be provided to enable improved pedestrian access to an existing footpath and bus stop for southbound services on the eastern side of the A229.

### ~~Capel (adjoining Tonbridge)~~

~~7.74~~ Tonbridge lies to the north of Royal Tunbridge Wells and Southborough, and adjoins the area covered by this Local Plan. At its eastern end Woodsgate Way encloses a small site (covered by this Local Plan) separating it from the open countryside and the Somerhill Historic Park and Gardens to the south. This site relates visually and functionally to Tonbridge, and the road provides a new and recognisable feature which defines the Metropolitan Green Belt boundary. The scale of the site is not significant in relation to the size of Tonbridge. South of Woodsgate Way, which marks the southern boundary of the site, are the grounds of Somerhill, a Grade I Listed Building, designated as an Historic Park and Garden protected by POLICY EN11.

~~7.75~~ Given the adjoining land uses, the Tonbridge and Malling Borough Local Plan (adopted 1998) allocation of the abutting site for business development, and the objectives and policies of the Local Plans covering the two areas, the site is allocated for economic development.

~~7.76~~ The parkland character of that part of the site between Woodsgate Way and Five Oak Green Road (at the southern end of the site) should be retained because of its location and the important visual function which it performs. This part of the site will need to be handled sensitively because of its proximity to Woodsgate Way. All development on this site should be of a high quality in view of its prominent location.

~~7.77~~ The allocation site falls within an area of high flood risk as identified by the Environment Agency. Applicants will need to carry out an assessment of flood risk and development proposals will need to incorporate adequate flood protection and mitigation measures in accordance with POLICY EN18.

### **POLICY ED4**

~~The following sites, as defined on the Proposals Map, are allocated for economic development. The Local Planning Authority will seek the access, density, form and layout, and landscaping provisions set out below:~~

#### **ROYAL TUNBRIDGE WELLS**

##### **a) LAND NORTH OF KINGSTANDING WAY, ROYAL TUNBRIDGE WELLS**

##### **Site Area:**

**7.03 hectares**

##### **Type of Use:**

~~The site is suitable for Class B1, B2 or B8 use, subject to the uses causing no significant harm to the amenities or character of the area.~~

##### **Access:**

~~The site will be accessed from Kingstanding Way. Additional transport~~

~~measures to serve the development will be required. These include the signalisation of the existing junction between Kingstanding Way and Longfield Road, upgrading of North Farm Lane to a standard appropriate to serve as an emergency access, the extension of the existing footpath on the north side of Longfield Road eastwards to the junction with Kingstanding Way, and the completion of the proposed cycleway along Longfield Road eastwards to the junction with Kingstanding Way. A financial contribution will be sought for the provision of public transport facilities in the vicinity.~~

~~Form, Layout and Landscaping:~~

~~A high-quality development of low rise buildings in a well-landscaped setting will be required, to include a proportion of small units. The western part of the site, together with the eastern boundary, contains a number of mature trees which should be retained. Structural planting will be required along the eastern boundary. Special attention must be paid to landscaping along the northern boundary.~~

~~b) LAND SOUTH OF DOWDING WAY, ROYAL TUNBRIDGE WELLS~~

~~Site Area:~~

~~1.46 hectares~~

~~Type of Use:~~

~~The site is suitable for Class B1, B2 or B8 use, subject to the uses causing no significant harm to the amenities or character of the area.~~

~~Access:~~

~~Infrastructure measures for the site have already been brought forward: the need for further contributions to transport infrastructure will be considered in accordance with POLICY TP1.~~

~~Form, Layout and Landscaping:~~

~~As the site is located on rising ground, development should be of a high quality with the buildings on the higher parts of the site being low rise and generally small-scale to minimise their visual impact. A high standard of landscaping should be provided throughout and particularly along the western boundary opposite the Barnetts Wood housing area. Environmental enhancements are also required at the southern end of the site on a small area of undevelopable land which falls within the site, to include landscaping along the frontage to North Farm Road.~~

~~PADDOCK WOOD~~

~~c) LAND WEST OF MAIDSTONE ROAD, PADDOCK WOOD~~

~~Site Area:~~

~~10.53 hectares~~

~~Type of Use:~~

~~The proximity of residential use to the north and east of the site makes adjoining parts of the site suitable for B1 use only. The remainder of the site would be suited to B1 and B8 development. Class B2 use would also be considered on parts of the site, subject to the uses causing no significant harm to the amenities or character of the area.~~

~~Access:~~

~~Access should be obtained by constructing a new road into the site from~~

~~the north with a new priority junction, including right turning lane, on Maidstone Road near the existing Eastlands Lane access. Traffic calming is required at the entrance to the site. A toucan crossing on Maidstone Road, north of the junction with Nursery Lane, should be provided, together with segregated cycle and pedestrian routes from Maidstone Road and along Nursery Road into the site. The pedestrian route should link up with an existing public footpath which runs along the western boundary. Pedestrian and cycle routes should be attractively landscaped. A financial contribution will be sought for the provision of pedestrian/cycle improvements and public transport facilities in the vicinity.~~

**Form, Layout and Landscaping:**

~~High-quality, low rise buildings should be provided in a well-landscaped setting and the layout should respect the Tudeley Brook watercourse adjoining the western boundary of the site. Watercourses on the site should be protected in an open state to protect riparian habitat and provide a positive site feature. Substantial screening in the form of structural planting is required along the site boundaries, including the road access to the north. In addition, a landscaped informal open space will be required to be provided as an integral part of the development. Within these landscaped areas appropriate provision will be made for overcoming any flooding problems by the inclusion of balancing facilities in the form of 'natural ponds'. An area of scrubland/grassland/woodland should be maintained as a bird habitat within the areas of structural planting. Flood protection and mitigation measures should be provided in accordance with POLICY EN18.~~

**CRANBROOK AND HAWKHURST**

**d) ~~LAND AT THE FORMER HAWKHURST RAILWAY STATION, GILLS GREEN~~**

**Site Area:**

~~1.98 hectares~~

**Type of Use:**

~~The site is suitable for Class B1, B2 and B8 use, subject to the uses causing no significant harm to the amenities or character of the area.~~

**Access:**

~~The site is to be served by an improved highway access to the A229, including a dedicated right-turn lane. The existing footpath south of the site on the western side of the A229 should be extended northwards to the site entrance. A contribution to local public transport in the form of a bus lay-by and shelter on the A229 for northbound services is required. Linked pedestrian facilities should be provided to enable improved pedestrian access to an existing footpath and bus stop for southbound services on the eastern side of the A229.~~

**Form, Layout and Landscaping:**

~~High-quality, low rise development, of appropriate scale, form, bulk, general design and materials in keeping with the character of the landscape and surrounding area will be required. Existing hedges, trees and tree belts on the boundary of the site should be retained and reinforced by substantial screening in the form of hedgerow and tree planting along the entire site boundary.~~

**e) ~~LAND AT BROOK FARM, CAPEL (NEAR TONBRIDGE)~~****Site Area:**

~~2.57 hectares~~

**Type of Use:**

~~The site is suited to uses within Classes B1 and B8; development within Class B2 would also be acceptable provided there would be no adverse impact on adjoining uses.~~

**Access:**

~~Access to the allocated site should be from Five Oak Green Road.~~

**Form and Layout:**

~~Development on the southern part of the site between Woodsgate Way and Five Oak Green Road should retain its parkland character. A high-quality development will be required in view of the site's prime location alongside a main road around Tonbridge (Woodsgate Way). Proposals should respect the rural character of land south of Woodsgate Way, which is designated as an Historic Park and Garden, and ensure no adverse impact on the setting of Somerhill, a Grade I Listed Building.~~

~~Development on the easternmost part of the site should be low-density in view of its proximity to the open countryside to the east of Woodsgate Way.~~

~~Flood protection and mitigation measures should be provided in accordance with POLICY EN18 and any development should enhance the existing watercourse that runs through the site, making it a positive environmental feature.~~

**Landscape:**

~~Landscaping on the southern part of the site should be to a high standard which reflects the location and respects the rural, parkland character of the land south of Woodsgate Way. Existing mature trees should be retained.~~

~~Structural landscaping should be provided on the easternmost part of the site, adjacent to Woodsgate Way.~~

**ABATTOIR**

- 7.78** SEEDA has carried out a study (Livestock Revival in the South East – Report and Action Plan, February 2001) of the meat and livestock sector in the South East of England to identify the main issues following the foot and mouth outbreak. Of particular concern is the closure of the abattoir in Lamberhurst. The potential for a new high-quality similar-sized facility for the region has been investigated. This study concluded that, from evidence provided so far, there would seem to be a case on competitive grounds in helping to safeguard the future for South East livestock producers by providing a new facility which would be well-placed in the eastern part of the South East region. This sub-region covers an extensive area and includes central/south Kent and East Sussex. There is no certainty that provision will be made and clearly a wide range of locations could serve this large catchment. Consequently, although a specific allocation for a new abattoir in the Borough has not been made, the Local Planning Authority would test any such proposal against the policies and sustainable objectives of this Plan.

## Economic Development Outside the Limits To Built Development

### Conversion of Rural Buildings to Economic Development Uses

- 7.79** There has been a continued decline in the number of people employed in agriculture in recent years. As a consequence, landowners and farmers have looked to diversify their operations. The Government recognises, in PPS7, that diversification into non-agricultural activities is vital to the continuing viability of many farm enterprises. It supports the re-use of appropriately located and suitably constructed existing buildings, stating that re-use for economic development purposes will usually be preferable.
- 7.80** Within the Plan area there has been a marked increase in proposals for the conversion of rural buildings to economic development uses, providing a total floorspace of 33,000 square metres between 1991 and 2003. In addition, at March 2003, 13,000 square metres of economic development floorspace had planning consent in the form of rural conversion proposals. Such proposals have primarily been small-scale developments of approximately 500 square metres gross floorspace for employment, including small workshops and offices.
- 7.81** Government advice and the Kent Structure Plan 1996 and the Kent & Medway Structure Plan 2006 policies state that development in the open countryside should be strictly controlled. However, small enterprises of an appropriate type can increase local employment and contribute to maintaining the rural economy and the creation of sustainable rural communities. In accordance with advice in PPG2, the conversion of rural buildings to business use will be acceptable within the Green Belt, subject to certain safeguards to ensure its openness. Nonetheless, proposals for conversion to economic development which could generate a significant number of jobs should be well-related to towns and villages.
- 7.82** The change of use or conversion of an existing building may be permitted if it would provide the best reasonable means of conserving the character, appearance, fabric and setting of a listed building or a building whose loss would be detrimental to the character of the countryside. The conversion of rural buildings of permanent and substantial construction may also be permitted provided that the scale, form, bulk, general design and materials are in keeping with the surroundings. In particular, all proposals must comply with POLICIES EN1, EN25, ~~EN26 and EN27~~.
- 7.83** Not all buildings will be suitable for re-use or adaptation for economic development use. For example, temporary insubstantial buildings requiring substantial reconstruction, alteration or extension are not suitable unless they are of special architectural or historic interest. Proposals for conversion will need to demonstrate how the implications of complying with appropriate Building Regulations will affect the building. In most cases this will entail the submission of a structural appraisal of the existing building together with details of any proposed new work.
- 7.84** There is considerable concern, given the high quality of much of the rural environment of the Plan area and the pressures for development that exist, that permitted development rights in respect of agricultural buildings should not be abused as a way of obtaining residential development in the countryside. The Local Planning Authority will, in accordance with Government advice, examine the history of buildings recently erected under agricultural permitted development rights, where these come forward with proposals for changes of use. Where such a building has been erected and falls out of agricultural use within 10 years, the building should be removed and the site restored to its original condition before the building was erected. If a building has been recently erected (within the last four years) for a specific agricultural purpose and then proposals are brought forward for a change of use out of agriculture, the Local Planning Authority will carefully investigate the history of the building and consider the consequences of its conversion. Where the conversion of an existing building would lead directly to a need for a replacement building and this could have a significant detrimental effect on the landscape, the Local Planning Authority will consider the need



to attach a condition to the permission removing permitted development rights for the erection of new buildings.

- 7.85** Reference should be made to the Local Planning Authority's Supplementary Planning Guidance relating to the conversion of rural buildings. This offers advice on the suitability of buildings for conversion, expected standards of design and how a proposal should fit into the setting.
- 7.86** ~~In the case of the conversion of listed buildings the provisions of POLICY EN3 also apply.~~ POLICIES EN14 and EN15, covering nature conservation issues, may also apply to proposals to re-use rural buildings, particularly if they would affect protected species.
- 7.87** Access requirements and parking associated with rural buildings are an important factor in considering the impact of change of use proposals on the setting of the building and the character of the countryside. Local roads should have the capacity to accommodate the additional traffic generated by the proposed use without detriment to the character or amenities of the area, the amenities of local residents, or road safety. The impact of additional traffic on a rural lane identified in the Borough Council's Rural Lanes Supplementary Planning Guidance as possessing special character, will also be a material consideration.

#### **POLICY ED5**

**Outside the Limits to Built Development, as defined on the Proposals Map, the change of use or conversion to economic development use of a listed building, a building whose loss would be detrimental to the character of the countryside, or a building whose scale, form, bulk, general design and materials is in keeping with its surroundings, will only be permitted provided all the following criteria are satisfied:**

- 1 The building would be capable of conversion without extensive alteration or rebuilding and/or extension;**
- 2 The conversion can be achieved without detrimental effect on the building's fabric or character;**
- 3 The creation of a curtilage, access and car parking facilities could be achieved without harm to the character of the countryside; and**
- 4 The Local Planning Authority is satisfied that, in the case of a recently constructed building, there was a genuine agricultural justification for the erection of the building originally.**

#### **EXTENSION OF BUSINESSES OUTSIDE THE LIMITS TO BUILT DEVELOPMENT**

- 7.88** The Planning Strategy is to concentrate all large-scale economic development within town centres or Economic Development Areas within the Limits to Built Development. However, historically, there are a number of large-scale economic development sites located in the countryside.
- 7.89** PPG2, and the Kent Structure Plan 1996 and the Kent & Medway Structure Plan 2006 clearly state that the extension of business premises outside of the built up area should be strictly controlled, since the progressive enlargement of rural buildings and the scale of development can lead to over-development of the countryside. For this reason, outside of the Green Belt the Local Planning Authority will only permit small-scale

extensions to existing economic development uses which comply with the provisions of POLICIES EN25, ~~EN26 and EN27~~ and other relevant policies in the Plan.

### Implementation

7.90

<b>Policy Number</b>	<b>Implementing Agency</b>
ED4	Private Sector

7.91 Other policies and paragraphs in this Chapter will be used to control and guide the location, quantity and quality of new economic development in accordance with the sustainable objectives of this Plan.