

TOURISM



Introduction

6.1 The District has a well-established tourism industry with its origins in domestic long stay holidays at the seaside areas of Folkestone, Hythe and the Romney Marsh. The District is still extremely popular as a tourist destination and tourism provides valuable local employment and recreational facilities.

6.2 Tourism has changed significantly during the last thirty years with, for example, a strong growth in interest in the countryside and history. These trends present new opportunities for tourism development in the District which benefits from having an exceptionally attractive countryside and coastline, and a richly diverse built heritage of towns, villages and hamlets.

6.3 Recent trends in domestic tourism have shown a growth in short breaks and a decline in long holidays (except in camping and caravanning). There is a need for the district to respond to such trends in order to strengthen its position in domestic and overseas markets. With the opening of the Channel Tunnel in 1994 and the associated improvements in transport links the District will further strengthen its key tourism role as a Gateway to and from Continental Europe.

6.4 With this combination of factors the opportunity exists for the continued growth of tourism within the District throughout the Plan period. A tourism strategy has been produced based on a number of marketing / product themes, namely capitalising on the rural hinterland and supporting the development of Folkestone seafront and harbour area with a maritime theme.

6.5 This chapter provides policies regarding the development of visitor accommodation, rural tourism, and major tourism opportunities.

Tourism aims and objectives

6.6 The broad tourism aims of the Plan are: -

1. To maximise the economic, environmental and social benefits that tourism has the potential to provide for the District.
2. To protect and support the development of tourism and in particular new tourist facilities in the District where there is no overriding conflict with environmental and economic objectives and where such facilities diversify the tourist attraction base of the District and will help to lengthen the tourist season.
3. To ensure that any new tourism development has the maximum benefit for local communities and to improve the quality and choice of transport accessibility to new tourism attractions, reducing the reliance on the private car.
4. To support policies for the protection, enhancement and promotion of the District's unique built and natural environment as its major tourism asset.

5. To exploit the District's role as a Gateway to and from Continental Europe.

6.7 The tourism objectives of the District Plan are: -

1. To secure the provision of new tourist facilities to benefit the District's tourism industry, visitors and residents and help broaden the products offered.
2. To facilitate rural tourism developments where these draw on and enhance the District's built and natural heritage in order to support the countryside's economy, social life and environment.
3. To identify sites suitable for new hotel development to encourage Eurotunnel users and other transit tourists to remain within the District.
4. To maintain the role of the area as a tourist destination by protecting the stock of hotel and guesthouses and other holiday accommodation from conversion to non tourist related uses and encourage improvements to this accommodation.
5. To prevent the establishment of environmentally detrimental caravan, camping and chalet sites areas and where sites are acceptable to provide firm guidelines for potential developers.
6. To encourage improvements in the standards of accommodation of caravan, chalet and camping sites.

New tourist development.

6.8 Tourism can contribute significantly and positively to the local economy, help to achieve environmental improvement objectives, provide socially desirable leisure facilities, and if developed appropriately help to attract investment by presenting a positive image of the District.

6.9 However, poorly controlled tourism can present problems such as congestion, visual and noise intrusion. Much of the District's tourism potential is tied to its natural and built heritage and new tourism development should aim to enhance or improve these environmental assets. The Council is actively pursuing both urban and rural environmental improvement projects, which are described in the Countryside and Built Environment Chapters.

POLICY TM1 The District Planning Authority will, subject to environmental and highway considerations, grant planning permission for proposals for the development of new tourism facilities and in particular for developments which extend the tourism season; contribute to the upgrading and diversification of the tourism base; draw on and not detract from the area's natural and built heritage, and lead to local environmental improvements. The appropriateness of tourism developments will also be assessed according to their employment generating potential; direct economic benefits; secondary benefits such as attracting additional tourists to the local plan area to the benefit of the local economy, and environmental impact.

6.10 The Structure Plan Third Review identifies the need for one or two major developments in the county over the next ten years which would have at least countywide impact and would exploit new market opportunities arising from closer links with mainland Europe. Policy TO2 identifies East Kent as suitable for the development of such a project. Examples given are a self-contained holiday village, exhibition centre or major new visitor attraction. Such developments would have significant economic and tourism benefits, contributing to local employment and incomes, and improving the image of the local area.

Visitor accommodation

6.11 The District Planning Authority wishes to retain a range of good quality accommodation in the District, which will appeal to all types of tourist and seeks to resist the loss of visitor accommodation where this would be detrimental to the tourism role of the District. The upgrading of existing stock or conversion to other tourist related uses would be supported subject to environmental considerations.

6.12 There will be a requirement by 2002 for all accommodation, which is included in the Districts holiday guide to be AA/RAC or English Tourist Council rated. This will ensure standards are raised and provides a quality assurance. However, it is recognised that some older hotels maybe unable to upgrade facilities due to the substantial cost involved. In order to help hotels meet the standards required for official rating, it is proposed that a Hotel Improvement Scheme is introduced.

6.13 In the operation of this Policy the District Planning Authority will have regard to the views of the local

hotel and tourist organisations concerning tourist demands and requirements. Supplementary Planning Guidance on Policy TM2 has been produced which provides further detail and information for applicants.

POLICY TM2 Applications for the change of use or redevelopment of hotels/guest houses, self-catering units or caravan and camp sites, which would result in a loss of visitor accommodation will only be permitted where it can be shown that it is no longer practicable to use the premises as holiday accommodation by reason of one of the following criteria:-

1. The standard and type of accommodation that is, or could be provided at reasonable cost, is unsuited to meet visitor demands.
2. In the case of hotels and guest houses, the premises or site are poorly located in relation to the areas of main tourist activity or tourist routes, and uses in the immediate vicinity are predominantly unrelated to tourism or incompatible with continued tourist use of the premises.

In the case of caravan and camp sites, applications for change of use to residential use will only be permitted where:

1. the site is within an existing settlement boundary and is well related to the built up area
2. The site is acceptable in terms of highway access and
3. The site does not have a significant impact on the surrounding countryside, particularly in areas of landscape importance.
4. The standard and type of accommodation that is or could be provided at reasonable cost is unsuited to meet visitor demands.

Hotels

6.14 The opening of the Channel Tunnel in 1994 increases the District's role as a Gateway to and from Continental Europe presenting the opportunity to encourage visitors to stay in the area when arriving or departing. There has already been considerable demand for development of hotels in the M20 corridor west of the Tunnel Terminal site. This is a particularly sensitive area within the District given the high quality of landscape through which the corridor passes. Sites at Folkestone Seafront (which are not shown on the proposals map) should be in accordance with Policies FTC6 & FTC8. In areas at risk from flooding, applicants may be required to submit a flood risk assessment as part of an application.

POLICY TM3 The District Planning Authority will grant planning permission for proposals which would encourage visitors to stay by providing serviced accommodation within the District subject to environmental and highway considerations. Hotel developments will be acceptable, subject to detailed design matters, at the following locations: on land at [Stanford Interchange \(North\)](#), [Stanford Interchange \(North\)](#), Lydd Airport, [Beachborough Park](#), Sands Motel, St Mary's Bay and [Running Waters, New Romney](#), as shown on the Proposals Map and also at sites at [Folkestone Seafront](#). Where the hotel site is within an area at risk from tidal flooding which is defended to an adequate standard, appropriate measures will be required to ensure the safety of occupants.

However, given the high level of existing and proposed hotel provision within the M20 corridor and the environmental sensitivity of the area, the District Planning Authority will not permit further hotel development (other than that listed above) in the M20 corridor unless the need for a particular location can be justified and there is a lack of alternative sites.

Self catering accommodation

Caravan, camping and chalet sites

6.15 In certain circumstances permitted development rights are available to the larger caravan organisations for the establishment of small caravan sites. In most cases, however, planning permission will be required for the establishment of caravan sites. There is a need to distinguish between static caravan or chalet sites and touring caravan and camping sites in view of the different environmental impact likely to result from these two types of development.

6.16 The Structure Plan Policies TO3 - TO4 give qualified support to the establishment of touring caravans and camping facilities and to the upgrading of existing holiday chalet and static caravan sites, but there is no policy for new static caravan and chalet sites. All types of caravan, chalet and camping sites can have an adverse effect on the landscape and on the agricultural or ecological value of locations in which they are set, but static sites can be particularly intrusive. There is a decreasing demand for static caravans and any need in the future can be accommodated within existing sites or in extensions to existing sites already permitted.

6.17 The majority of touring sites are located along the coastline, however there are opportunities further inland in Romney Marsh for developing a touring camp site to support a growing requirement for outdoor activities (cycling and walking trails). The suitability of a location for any new site will be judged against the criteria laid out in Policy TM5. In areas at risk of tidal flooding, applicants may be required to submit a flood risk assessment as part of an application.

6.18 Visitor demand is still growing for touring caravan pitches or higher-grade accommodation. The following policies are therefore aimed at seeking the upgrading of existing sites and controlling new sites so that they do not result in unacceptable visual intrusion within the countryside or near the coast especially in areas designated for landscape quality. The upgrading of existing caravan, chalet and camp sites could include minor extensions, limited infill and diversification to other forms of self-catering accommodation.

6.19 Although Policies TM4 and TM5 impose restrictions on the establishment of new sites, the upgrading of existing caravan, chalet and camp sites is encouraged. Such proposals could include minor extensions, limited infill and diversification to other forms of self-catering accommodation subject to the defined criteria in Policy TM5. Therefore new chalet and static caravan sites will not be permitted.

POLICY TM4 The District Planning Authority will not permit the establishment of new static caravans or chalet sites. Proposals for the upgrading of existing holiday accommodation at static caravan and chalet sites will only be acceptable subject to the criteria a-e in Policy TM5, would not be at an unacceptable risk from flooding and would lead to an improvement in the range and quality of tourist accommodation in the area.

POLICY TM5 Proposals for new or upgraded touring caravan and camping sites will be permitted where they can meet the following criteria:-

- a. The proposal would not harm the character or appearance of the countryside or coastline or conflict with other countryside and environmental protection policies.
- b. Sites should have good access via a local distributor road to the primary road network, and any local roads involved in gaining access to the site should be capable of accommodating the extra traffic generated without undue hazard or inconvenience to local residents or other road users.
- c. Sites should be situated so as to minimise their effect upon local amenity, and should as far as possible, be screened from public roads, open spaces or footpaths and where necessary a scheme of landscaping should be submitted with the proposal to achieve this.
- d. The proposal should not significantly affect the best and most versatile agricultural land.
- e. The proposal should not substantially interfere with the amenities of residents in nearby dwellings.
- f. The applicant should be prepared to enter into an agreement to secure good regular on-site resident management throughout the holiday season, and where there is no suitable dwelling on or adjoining the site in the control of the applicant, the Council may be prepared to permit the stationing of a single residential caravan on the site for the temporary use of the on-site manager, with appropriate safeguards and conditions.
- g. The site shall be used only from 1 March to 31 January in each year and shall be completely cleared of all caravans and tents by 1 February in each year, together with all temporary structures. No individual touring caravan or tent shall remain on the site for more than 28 consecutive nights and site operators will be asked to adopt a system of registration to facilitate the enforcement of this condition.
- h. The site must be capable of meeting the requirements of the Council's adopted standards for touring caravans and tented sites and essential services should be readily available and of sufficient capacity, ie. water, power, sewage disposal and refuse disposal.
- i. Within the defined areas at risk from flooding as referred to in Policies U5 and U6 of the Plan, sites will be restricted in their occupation to the months of May - August, inclusive.

Tourism in rural areas

6.20 The district's high quality countryside is an important tourist asset and there is a great and growing interest in the countryside as a place to visit. One of the aims of the tourism strategy is to capitalise on the attractions of the rural hinterland and encourage holidays and short breaks, which are based on rural pursuits. At the same time farmers are under pressure to remove land from agricultural production so that many are seeking alternative sources of income.

6.21 Rural tourism can satisfy visitors' demands for leisure in the countryside while supporting rural economies and helping to maintain the countryside's attractiveness. The special qualities of the District's countryside provide opportunities for rural tourism and the District Plan supports such enterprise provided that it is carried out in a safe and environmentally acceptable way.

6.22 There is a growing demand for quality rural self-catering accommodation and the conversion and restoration of rural buildings for this use can help to satisfy demand. Due to this growing demand for rural accommodation, the loss of such facilities will be resisted. Proposals for the conversion or redevelopment to another use will be judged against Policy TM2.

~~**POLICY TM6** Planning permission will be granted for the provision of small scale rural tourist attractions and holiday accommodation by means of the re-use of buildings. Small scale purpose built tourist accommodation or attractions will be permitted only if they are well related to existing building complexes. All small scale rural tourist development should satisfy highway, built environment and countryside conservation policies.~~

Specific development sites

Sands Motel, St Mary's Bay

6.23 The site of the former Sands Motel at St Mary's Bay is considered to be an important location for tourist related uses, especially in relation to its location next to the beach. Residential development on part of the site will be acceptable only where an element of tourism related development or open space is provided. This site is an integral part of the proposed A259 roadside corridor environmental enhancements, which provide for a new public open space and improved car-parking facilities for the beach. The environmental enhancement of the area will provide support for the local tourist attractions.

POLICY TM7 Proposals for residential development of land at the former [Sands Motel, St Mary's Bay](#) will be permitted subject to the inclusion in any proposal for a replacement tourism element in recognition of the former use of the site for holiday accommodation, or another comparable community facility.

Princes Parade, Hythe

6.24 The Princes Parade site is an extensive area of open land next to the seafront at Seabrook, Hythe. The site includes the Royal Military Canal which is a scheduled ancient monument of national importance. It was designed as a long distance defensible fortification and communication system and there are no comparable works surviving elsewhere. For this reason, this site has potential for tourism uses which are closely related to the use of the canal but also due to its proximity to the sea. This site is also a suitable location to provide a local park, which would address the open space deficiency in Seabrook.

6.25 In order to preserve the open character of the site and to enhance the setting of the Canal, any use should be low key. Built development will only be acceptable where it is essential for the use, and should be limited in scale.

POLICY TM8 Planning permission will be granted for recreational/community facilities on land at [Princes Parade, Hythe](#) as shown on the Proposals Map subject to the following criteria:-

- a) The use should take advantage of, and enhance the appearance of, the Canal and the coastline
- b) The majority of the site should remain open
- c) Proposals should not adversely affect the character and setting of the Scheduled Ancient Monument
- d) Built development will only be permitted if justified as essential to the use, and should be small scale, low

rise and of a high quality design.

Folkestone seafront and harbour area

6.26 The redevelopment of the seafront, port and harbour area in Folkestone will play a significant role in the regeneration of the town centre as a whole. Folkestone Town Centre Chapter contains Policies FTC5-8 to guide development at the harbour and seafront, to include a new marina facility, new hotel(s) and a major indoor leisure area. The District Planning Authority will support proposals which improve visitor attractions in this area, subject to compliance with the FTC policies.

Battle of Britain Museum, Hawkinge

6.27 The Aerodrome at Hawkinge is recognised as one of the airfields which played an important part in the Battle of Britain in 1940. In recognition of the historical significance of the site, a museum was established on Aerodrome Road, utilising some of the original airfield buildings. The Battle of Britain museum contains an important collection of artefacts and memorabilia from the Second World War.

6.28 Buildings on the present site are used to capacity and the museum has plans to extend the facilities as funds allow. In view of the expanding residential development on the adjacent part of the Aerodrome, it is important to secure the long term future of the museum. Therefore, as part of future plans to improve and diversify the facilities at the museum, an area of land to the south west of the existing site is safeguarded for the museum's expansion.

POLICY TM9 Planning permission will be granted on land at Aerodrome Road, as shown on the Proposal Map, for tourism use in connection with the [Battle of Britain Museum](#), subject to the following criteria:

- a) Any built development should be on a scale consistent with other buildings on the site.
- b) Adequate car parking should be provided within the site.
- c) Any use must seek to protect the amenity of the adjacent residential areas.