



Preferred Options for  
**Geographical areas  
of District  
(POG)**

## **POG 1: What role should Lewes have in the future?**

### **Background to the Preferred Option**

Lewes is an attractive historic town located in the Sussex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The town is well located in terms of its proximity to Brighton and Eastbourne and its good rail link to Gatwick Airport and London. This makes it a popular town in which to live and work and its environmental and economic assets add to the quality of life in the town.

Lewes has a good level of services and facilities with doctors, dentists, leisure centres etc that can satisfy the day to day needs of the people living in the town and so it works well as a self sustaining centre. One disadvantage for many people is that there is a high demand for housing in the town resulting in prices well above the average for the area (average house price Oct 2004 £217,084 - Lewes District being £199,747 - East Sussex). Further housing is therefore required to meet the recognised need in the town, particularly affordable housing. However, it must be ensured that the town does not become a dormitory town by losing employment in place of housing.

The main employment, in terms of number of people, is in the public sector e.g. the County and District Councils and the HQ for the Sussex Police. This over reliance on a few public organisations could have a significant impact on the town's economy if any were to relocate or close. Lewes needs to expand and strengthen other sectors of its economy to address the over reliance on the public sector. The financial and business sectors remain fairly small and will need to continue to grow to ensure that the town's economy is sufficiently diverse to withstand any potential losses in public sector employment. The qualifications of people in Lewes town are generally higher than those in the rest of the District, so there is a good pool of labour to help grow and support high-tech businesses. The town's location close to Brighton and Sussex Universities, and the quality of the town and its surroundings, give it the potential for the establishment of further Knowledge based enterprises.

The town is the main focus for retail and leisure activity in the District, with one of its main attractions being the diverse character that is created by the independent niche shops. Indeed, its old buildings house an eclectic mix of shops, galleries and restaurants which attract visitors and provides a distinctive alternative to the larger shopping centres of Brighton and Eastbourne. This makes it a popular historical visitor destination, which is a role that should be strengthened. The town's cultural heritage and its setting within the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty is already a strong draw for tourists, but tourism is an economic activity which can be developed further, especially if the proposed National Park is designated. Conservation and creation of quality buildings and spaces in Lewes is therefore an economic investment, as well as a quality of life issue.

### **The Preferred Option**

The Preferred Option is to support and develop the existing well functioning and varied roles of the town; its leisure role, self sustaining local centre, independent retail niche, tourist centre and provider of employment. To rely on one role/sector could leave the town susceptible to unknown future changes. For example, too heavy a reliance on the employment in the public sector may be unwise, as this employment sector may not always be available and is vulnerable to decisions made elsewhere.

The Town should diversify its economy to develop other sectors such as the retail and hospitality/tourism sectors and high-tech businesses. New investment should be directed into the town centre in order to maintain and enhance its role as the District's principal leisure, cultural and visitor destination. This should aim to reinforce the centre's distinctive character and enhance the eclectic mix of specialist/niche retailer and service operators.

Priorities for Lewes town are the generation of more business activity, diversification of the economy and the strengthened presence of growth sectors, provision of affordable housing to maintain the workforce, recognition of the natural and man made environment as an economic resource for tourism and the maintenance of the distinctive and vibrant town centre.

Another priority is to safeguard the character of the town whilst encouraging good modern development which works well with its surroundings.

The vitality and viability of the town centre will be protected by protecting the food anchor store at Eastgate and ensuring that any new retail floorspace in the town will not have an adverse impact on the Town Centre.

The Council will seek to retain employment sites and buildings unless they are clearly unsuitable. Mixed use redevelopment schemes may be acceptable where they deliver business or enterprise employment on a site only if there is no prospect of its delivery by any other mechanism.



## POG 2: What role should Newhaven have in the future?

### Background to the Preferred Option

Newhaven is in a unique location as it is surrounded by the Sussex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and also has the advantage of immediate access to the river, sea and countryside. In addition, it has a good supply of employment land and premises, good public transport (rail and bus), the cross channel ferry and opportunities for tourism with infrastructure such as Newhaven Fort and Paradise Park.

There is a need to create a more sustainable community in Newhaven.

Newhaven provides 17% of employment within the District. However, 37% of this is within the manufacturing sector with only 5% in the financial and business services. Although the port is important to the town, and indeed sub-region, as a gateway to mainland Europe it does not generate a significant amount of employment.

Several successful regeneration schemes have been achieved in the town and a considerable amount of new housing has been built, and there is capacity for more through regeneration of brownfield land.

The creation of a vibrant and viable town centre is important in order to give the community a strong sense of place and focus. The town centre primarily serves a local convenience shopping and services function. It suffers from strong competition from outside shopping centres such as Lewes, Brighton and Eastbourne and struggles to capture expenditure from outside the town. In retail terms it is considered that Newhaven is a district centre rather than a prominent retail destination within the District. However, it does have an important role to play in meeting the needs of the local community. There is limited scope for any significant additional retail floorspace in the centre but it is important to retain and enhance the main food anchor store, and to continue to enhance the town centre's wider appeal (see also Issue POE 5).

Residential accommodation has the potential to reinforce the vitality and viability of the town centre and the Council will encourage residential development within it. The introduction/intensification of residential development of the town centre could have a positive effect in terms of security and surveillance particularly in the evening.

As well as encouraging the town centre to become a stronger focus in the town it is also important to create strong physical linkages between it and other areas of the town. It is important, therefore, to create a strategy which strengthens linkages between the town centre and West Quay, the Marina, the Fort and Castle Hill/West beach, Denton Island, the railway station, Railway Quay and the port. However, any new developments in these locations would need to ensure that they complement the town centre and do not function as a destination in themselves. Landmark buildings in prime locations, such as West Quay and Railway Quay, could enable Newhaven to enhance its identity and attract appropriate uses, such as, food and drink outlets along the waterfront.

It is recognised that the economy is changing. Therefore, it is important that opportunities are provided for the restructuring of it by retaining and improving the economic infrastructure. In particular the Newhaven economy needs to adjust to the decline in the general manufacturing sector and opportunities that will arise through the development of specialist manufacturing such as advanced engineering. There are opportunities for Newhaven to take advantage of the Newhaven Enterprise Centre by attracting and retaining companies associated with it by providing quality office accommodation. Also, it is necessary to aim to attract other types of

businesses to the area to counter balance the manufacturing losses and gain from growth in financial and business services, particularly by upgrading and renovating existing business premises to make it suitable for modern activities 'knowledge businesses'. All partners need to work together to identify creative solutions to bring forward and renovate sites, particularly for B1 and B2 uses (i.e. business and general industrial uses). Newhaven has the main supply of such land in the District and it is important to retain it in enterprise and employment related uses, and to encourage development and regeneration for a wider variety of such issues.

As well as providing the land/premises for economic activity it is equally important to ensure that the workforce is trained to cater for the changes in the economic structure.

Also, in order to develop a sound economic profile of the town it is important that the town's residential stock is robust. It is recognised that there is a relatively high level of unfitness in the private residential housing stock as well as a substantial shortfall in affordable housing stock in the town. Therefore, the potential of the waterfront should be utilised as well as tackling the issue of poor housing stock and lack of affordable housing. Once tackled these issue should provide a strong base for the urban and economic renaissance of the town

It is important to take advantage of Newhaven's location adjacent to the coast and countryside (a 'gateway' to the proposed national park), the major tourist attractions of Brighton and Eastbourne, its good access to mainland Europe through Newhaven Port and to develop its role as a tourist destination (including educational and environmental tourism). However, Newhaven does not have a critical mass of tourist accommodation. With the exception of the Travel Inn the other accommodation is mainly small scale (i.e. 1 - 5 rooms). In other towns in the District there has been pressure to redevelop tourist accommodation sites for housing. Therefore, there is a need to ensure that existing tourist accommodation is retained where there is evidence of market demand. In addition, the provision of new, higher quality tourism accommodation is desirable and waterfront regeneration provides an opportunity. However, accommodation is rarely the 'attractor' of a visit; usually accommodation services the needs of those motivated to visit on business, transit for a short break or a longer holiday. Therefore, investment is needed in attractors (i.e. tourism infrastructure) to e.g. the Fort, the waterfront, walking and cycling routes, and events development.



## The Preferred Option

The Preferred Option is to strengthen the role of the town centre as a district centre in order to give it a stronger central focus and identity. Also, non retail attractions, such as leisure and residential uses should be provided within the town to encourage it to be more vibrant. There should be strong linkages from the centre to other major regeneration sites (both existing and proposed) within the town.

In the major regeneration sites the provision of landmark buildings should be considered. It is also important to make links between the towns open spaces, environmental sites and the wider countryside as part of the regeneration strategy.

Newhaven should remain a focus for enterprise and employment. Therefore, its economic base should be strengthened and encouragement given to the diversification of economic activity to widen local employment opportunities. The town needs to attract some of the new economic growth sectors such as financial and business services and the 'knowledge sector', and employment can mean many different types of businesses. To enable this to happen existing employment land and premises should be retained. Only if it is demonstrated that they are incapable of meeting the needs of modern business, or where it is necessary to stimulate regeneration, should there be some flexibility for mixed use development (not including retail).

The provision of good quality smaller units should be encouraged. There should also be the provision of facilities to enable businesses to move on from the Enterprise Centre. Also, the training needs of the work force need to be identified and appropriate provision made for new training opportunities.

The town should also take advantage of its location, between the sea and the South Downs, and develop its tourism role in a number of ways, such as seeking the optimum level of high quality tourism accommodation across the sectors and investing in the wider tourism infrastructure. This will encourage more tourism spend in the immediate local economy rather than seepage into the larger tourism areas such as Brighton and Eastbourne. This can be assisted by ensuring that new development contributes to the urban renaissance of the town through ensuring the development of high quality modern buildings which create a sense of place, especially on the waterfront development.

The opportunity for providing housing development on the sites already allocated and brownfield sites should be maximised, providing that it does not conflict with the strategic priority for Newhaven as a centre for economic activity. Any new housing should be accompanied by the necessary infrastructure. Waterfront development and an improvement in the housing stock (both market and affordable) should act as the stimulus for the economic and urban renaissance of the whole town.



### **POG 3: What role should Peacehaven, Telscombe have in the future?**

#### **Background to the Preferred Option**

Peacehaven, Telscombe are located between the cliffs and sea, and the Sussex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The main road in the towns is the A259. This road has a weight limit on it which means that HGVs are only permitted along it if they require access to the areas. Also, the A259 does suffer from congestion at peak hours during the day. Peacehaven, Telscombe and East Saltdean are primarily residential areas made up of a grid iron pattern of development. There are inadequate services and facilities in relation to the size of the town.

The Meridian Centre is the main focus for shopping and also accommodates a range of local facilities such as the library and health services. It currently has a limited retail offer which needs to be addressed if a more sustainable settlement is to be achieved. All these uses in, and in proximity to, the Meridian Centre should provide the community with the opportunity to provide more of a heart for the town. An improved Meridian Centre would reduce the need to travel out of town for services and facilities.

The A259 provides a useful linear area for small shops and other businesses which provide services both to the local area and to passers-by.

Peacehaven has very limited local work opportunities with just 6% of the District's employment within Peacehaven. Just 1,700 people were employed in Peacehaven in 2002 compared with 13,500 in Lewes, 5,500 in Newhaven and 4,400 in Seaford. This again means that most of those living in Peacehaven have to travel out to work.

Most of the employment in Peacehaven is in the public administration, health, and education sectors, with 33.5% of workers in these sectors in 2002. Existing allocations for employment sites have not yet been developed. Research carried out in the Analysis of Business Growth Potential in the Lewes District (by Stepahead) concluded that Peacehaven was not generally viewed as an attractive location for modern businesses and was perceived to lack a "business centre". This suggests that there is unlikely to be a significant demand for employment space in the town and the development needs of the Lewes District may have to be met in other areas that are perceived to more attractive business locations. However, in order to encourage the settlement to become more sustainable, opportunities for employment should be encouraged in the town. This could be achieved by the Lewes District Council working closely with developers and landowners to identify creative solutions to bring forward and renovate sites.

The structure of the settlement, the lack of business opportunities, and the limited range of facilities/services, results in the need for many people to travel out of town in order to meet their needs. Although there is only a limited service operating to the north of the town there is a frequent bus service along the A259 coast road, between Seaford and Brighton. The fact that Peacehaven has no railway station or line limits the ability to use public transport for journeys, by comparison with other towns in the District.

## The Preferred Option

The Preferred Option is to encourage Peacehaven to become a more self sufficient community. We will work to increase local work opportunities by working with partners to encourage investment to the existing allocated employment sites and by supporting improvements to the Meridian Centre and the main anchor food store.

The A259 corridor will remain as a second focus for retail, food and drink outlets, services and offices services serving the locality. The areas previously allocated for business uses will remain the focus for enabling new business, services, and employment to be created in Peacehaven. In addition there will also be some flexibility to allow mixed use development in appropriate locations (except retail) in order to further stimulate growth in enterprise, services and facilities locally.

An increase in the sustainability of Peacehaven and Telscombe will be supported by working with the service providers to enable the provision of an effective road link out of the area by public transport e.g. a bus corridor.



## **POG 4: What role should Seaford have in the future?**

### **Background to the Preferred Option**

The town of Seaford is located in an attractive position between the coast and the Sussex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. It is mainly a residential town, where businesses and the town centre provide services for local markets. The economy is stable, with many jobs being in the public sector, mainly in health and education. The town has the largest population of any settlement in the District, being over 20,000, and has the largest proportion of elderly people in the District (nearly one third are over the age of 60). Therefore there are many support services in the town.

The town centre has a good range of shops providing for both day to day and specialist retailing. However it is located at some distance away from much of the newer housing in the town, which can result in access problems. Given its location close to the seafront it is surprising that there is no direct linkage to attract people from the town to the seafront and vice versa, and this therefore needs to be improved.

Seaford has important assets for tourists with a seafront and beach, close links to the nationally and internationally famous landscapes of the South Downs at Seaford Head, the Cuckmere Estuary and Seven Sisters and also to the west Tidemills Ouse Estuary Project nature reserve. A particularly important feature of Seaford is the non commercial character of the seafront, which is an unusual and distinctive feature for Seaford. It has the widest expanse of beach in the District which is a real asset that should be promoted.

There are also three very distinct Conservation Areas in the town; the Town Centre and two downland villages which have been absorbed by the growing town.

Seaford is well served in terms of leisure facilities, with the Downs Leisure Centre and Seaford Head swimming pool providing important facilities for the town. However, playing fields are under pressure.

The main focus for business in the town is at the Cradle Hill Industrial estate, and smaller businesses are scattered around the town. However, Seaford only provides 16% of the jobs in the District which, when considering against the fact that it has the largest population, highlights significant out-commuting and could raise future problems with the town becoming a purely dormitory settlement if employment cannot be retained and increased.

Housing size and type is very mixed in the town with some attractive large older properties on large plots, and also a sizeable amount of new family housing.

The town's valuable role providing local services, often related to the elderly services sector, should be developed and encouraged further, whilst at the same time encouraging local business growth. The economy of the town could benefit considerably by more actively promoting the area to tourists in terms of providing a wider range of shops and facilities, maintaining existing jobs and creating more employment.

## The Preferred Option

The Preferred Option is to emphasise the strengths of Seaford, encourage more tourism and promote the role of the town centre in providing services and facilities locally. Tourism related activities would be supported provided they are sympathetic to the town's character, setting and maintenance of the largely non commercial seafront.

Strengthening the economy will be supported by retaining employment sites that provide employment opportunities, unless they are clearly unsuitable, and by encouraging home working.

The vitality and viability of the town centre will be maintained by protecting the food anchor store on Dane Road (this is set out in the issue relating to retail).

Priorities for the town are the generation of more business activity, diversification of the economy, strengthened presence of growth sectors, provision of affordable housing to maintain the workforce, recognition of the natural and man made environment as an economic resource for tourism and maintenance of a distinctive and vibrant town centre.



## **POG 5: What role should the rural area have in the future?**

### **Background to the Preferred Option**

Much of the rural area is made up of high quality landscape which is diverse in character. Part of it is within the Sussex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (the proposed South Downs National Park), and other parts include rivers, associated floodplains and Low Weald landscape. There is a lot of pressure on the countryside for both new development and to provide the opportunity for leisure uses.

In addition to food (and possibly biomass fuel) production, agriculture is crucial in its land management role. However, although the majority of the countryside is in agricultural use, the majority of the rural workforce is now not directly associated with agriculture.

The viability of farms has become increasingly difficult; some farm businesses have been helped by diversification into non-farming activities, such as tourism, recreation, or the conversion of redundant buildings into business premises. Much of the business activity is now based in converted barns and, also, home-working is making an important contribution to the establishment of a working countryside and is likely to increase even more with the availability of broadband.

Employment in rural parts of Lewes District increased by a third between 1995-2002 to comprise 22% of the District's employment, which is more than any of the District's towns, apart from Lewes. The role of the countryside in the local economy is likely to grow as the whole District is broadband enabled, creating more opportunity for home working from rural locations and the potential for further development of high quality business accommodation.

Many of the village services such as post offices, shops and pubs, have been contracting as services are increasingly centralised in the towns and provided electronically. However, the provision of services is important for those who do not have access to a private car and/or do not have access to a computer. Furthermore, although much of the rural community is relatively affluent and well qualified, there are pockets of economic and social deprivation comparable to some wards within the towns.

Due to planning restrictions (both nationally and local) on a large part of the rural area, the opportunity to provide affordable housing is even more limited in the rural area than it is in the towns. This results in many of the local people (especially the young) moving away from the area to more affordable housing areas. This in turn can impact upon the level of facilities/services provided in the rural area because the more affluent residents are more likely to commute out of the rural area for employment and, therefore, their spending power is not likely to contribute towards the rural economy and its sustainability.

The maintenance of a working countryside, rather than a dormitory area is considered important. This means that a new balance needs to be struck between the provision of housing, employment opportunities and the necessary infrastructure (both community and transport).

## The Preferred Option

The Preferred Option for the rural area is to strengthen local services and facilities which will help the rural area become more sustainable. Also, due to the attractive nature of the countryside there is the potential to encourage the rural tourism and leisure employment sectors to become stronger (providing that they are appropriate in scale and design).

The countryside has a good stock of farm buildings and they provide the potential to accommodate new enterprise. However, such development should be primarily linked to maintaining the viability of land based activities. In addition, opportunity must be taken to support niche businesses associated with the rural area, such as organic food, and farm related activities, which add value to local products. Small scale businesses run from home will be supported, provided they do not become dominant or intrusive.

Housing sites in the rural area should be allocated specifically for affordable housing in selected communities, as well as mixed tenure development and “exception” sites. Exception sites are affordable housing sites which would be outside the village boundary and would not normally be released for housing. However, there should be a proven need for the housing in the specific community and preference should be given to occupiers in the immediate community (see also Preferred Option POH1).

