

# **CHAPTER 8 – TOURISM**

**GENERAL**

**Objections - First Deposit Draft**

0006/0157 BIRCHINGTON PARISH COUNCIL

**Issue**

- Should the Plan clarify land designations at the Court Mount caravan park?

**Conclusions**

1. The Parish Council asks for ten additional sites to be designated in various locations. However, the Plan is not intended to be a land-use document covering the existing status of land; it shows policies and proposals where some plan-led development will follow. Court Mount is an existing, exceptionally well landscaped and mature estate of prefabricated homes. No modifications are needed.

**Recommendation**

2. **I recommend no modifications in response to this objection.**

**Objections - First Deposit Draft**

0009/0178 ST NICHOLAS AT WADE & SARRE PARISH COUNCIL

**Issue**

- Should agricultural land be used for irreversible development such as caravan sites?

**Conclusions**

3. The Parish Council's concern about the loss of prime agricultural land is sensible and timely. Government policy in PPS7 re-emphasises the importance of our best and most versatile agricultural land, alongside other sustainable considerations. It is a key objective of the Plan to protect the best and most versatile agricultural land from irreversible development in the interests of long-term agricultural production. Any proposal for a caravan site would be subject to Policy T5. This would be considered on its merits bearing this objective in mind. No modifications are needed.

**Recommendation**

4. **I recommend no modifications in response to this objection.**

**Objections - First Deposit Draft**

0032/0535 LIBERAL DEMOCRATS BROADSTAIRS, RAMSGATE & ST PETER'S

### Issue

- Does the Plan sufficiently promote Tourism with its potential to regenerate?

### Conclusions

5. The objectors point out that tourism is employment-intensive and feel that there has been little District investment. They seek a more holistic approach.
6. I find the RDD shares a remarkably radical vision of the tourist industry. The Council's vision comes little short of re-inventing the image of Thanet by 2020; developing new strategies, with specific proposals, whilst facing up to the fact that the traditions of the seaside are still vital and the seasonal nature of tourism is a constraint. Employment figures updated to 2000 show the scale of the industry's contribution to the local economy. No modifications are needed.

### Recommendation

7. **I recommend no modifications in response to this objection.**

### Objections - First Deposit Draft

|           |               |
|-----------|---------------|
| 0045/0832 | J PARRY LEWIS |
| 0045/0833 | J PARRY LEWIS |

### Issues

- Does Thanet need a major attraction for young people?
- Should visitors arriving at Dover be attracted to an exhibition of Britain?

### Conclusions

8. The objector suggests Thanet should become the regional centre for skating, concerts, staged competitions and indoor sports contests. It should be an essential place to visit, and attractive to stop. A large exhibition of Britain, with models of the country and regions, exhibitions and events, folk museum, and restaurants serving regional dishes would encourage visitors to linger.
9. These ambitious suggestions are consistent with the Council's stated objectives. The Plan need not be more specific or explicit in this respect. No modifications are needed.

### Recommendation

10. **I recommend no modifications in response to these objections.**

### Objections - First Deposit Draft

|           |               |
|-----------|---------------|
| 0407/1957 | MRS R ENGLISH |
|-----------|---------------|

### Issue

- Should reasonably priced all weather entertainment be encouraged for residents and visitors?

### Conclusions

11. Policy T1 is based on an evaluation of the coast as a major asset, and on the need to revitalise the tourist industry and improve Thanet's image and appearance. The Policy is extremely positive towards development which upgrades the range of facilities, increases the attractions and extends the season. No modifications are needed.

### Recommendation

12. **I recommend no modifications in response to this objection.**

### Objections - First Deposit Draft

0474/2181 S A FISHER  
0109/1148 R SIMPSON

### Issues

- Should Broadstairs have leisure centres and chalets for all weather all year facilities?
- Should a site-specific Policy identify Vere Road Broadstairs as a venue for indoor tourist/recreation?

### Conclusions

13. Bearing in mind the different characteristics of Broadstairs, Ramsgate and Margate, I think the Plan promotes local distinctiveness in a sensible and sensitive way. The more radical proposals for redevelopment are directed to towns which need them most. The tourist economy of Broadstairs would benefit from all-year family attractions in Thanet, even if they are located in another town. Vere Road Broadstairs is not exceptionally suitable for a site-specific Policy to promote development. No modifications are needed.

### Recommendation

14. **I recommend no modifications in response to these objections.**

### Objections - First Deposit Draft

0032/0536 LIBERAL DEMOCRATS BROADSTAIRS, RAMSGATE & ST PETER  
0473/2175 JACQUELINE MARTINET – ROBERTS

### Issues

- Should Broadstairs bandstand be included in regeneration and tourism policies?
- Would it be folly to destroy the potential of family and 'green' tourism in Broadstairs?

### Conclusions

15. Broadstairs holds a special place among the tourist locations in Thanet. It is particularly attractive in the traditional and historical sense and does not seem to be in need of radical initiatives of the kind proposed in other seaside

## **Chapter 8 - Tourism**

centres. There is little indication of decline. The bandstand exemplifies the point – it is attractive, it is old-fashioned and it is regularly in use. There is no apparent need for a specific regeneration policy for Broadstairs. No modifications are needed.

### **Recommendation**

16. **I recommend no modifications in response to these objections.**

#### **Objections - First Deposit Draft**

|           |              |
|-----------|--------------|
| 0066/0966 | KEN WILLIAMS |
| 0557/2423 | BRIAN ROOT   |
| 0490/2226 | P E O'DWYER  |

#### **Issues**

- Should Thanet have a museum of local history and archaeological finds?
- Should it have a theme park, transport museum, craft industries?
- Should there be an undercover holiday complex for visitors out of season?

#### **Conclusions**

17. Thanet has an outstanding history, which could be exploited as the theme for visitor attractions. The objectors suggest museums. In principle, TDC would support any such initiative or under-cover attraction, if submitted by a prospective developer because it would be consistent with the objectives of the Plan. No modifications are needed.

### **Recommendation**

18. **I recommend no modifications in response to these objections.**

#### **Objections - First Deposit Draft**

|           |          |
|-----------|----------|
| 0400/1933 | G MARTIN |
|-----------|----------|

#### **Issue**

- Does the Plan make adequate provision for affordable family accommodation in view of the recent closure of hotels?

#### **Conclusions**

19. TDC is aware of evolution in the hotel industry, and sought to protect hotels in the Cliftonville area in the outdated Thanet Urban Local Plan (1984). It would be impracticable to stem the tide of change now, merely by adopting restrictive Policies in the Plan. However, self-catering accommodation is protected to some extent by Policy T5 (3).
20. A reference to ongoing decline in serviced accommodation has been deleted from paragraph 8.17 of the FDD. A reference to quality hotels is inserted in the RDD. This reflects a more positive approach to an obvious, ongoing problem. I consider the most germane Policy in the Chapter is Policy T4 to which there are no objections. It says proposals for new serviced accommodation, extensions and conversions, will be approved in towns and

## **Chapter 8 - Tourism**

villages. This blanket approval is moderated, in the second clause of the Policy, with a reference to the merits of the proposal. Nevertheless, it is a highly permissive policy which would facilitate affordable accommodation to meet the objection. Policy EC9 encourages business hotels near the airport. This is consistent with the emerging KMSP - Deposit Plan 2003 Policy FP11. No modifications are needed.

### **Recommendation**

21. **I recommend no modifications in response to this objection.**

### **Objections - First Deposit Draft**

0454/2118          ROS      FACEY

### **Issue**

- Should Westwood have an ice rink, leisure complex and athletics track instead of a retail centre?

### **Conclusions**

22. The retail centre at Westwood Cross is already open. Planning permission has been granted for leisure development nearby in the EuroKent Business Park. There is no proposal for a skating rink or athletics track, but the Plan in general would facilitate such a scheme in an appropriate location. No modifications are needed.

### **Recommendation**

23. **I recommend no modifications in response to this objection.**

### **Objections - First Deposit Draft**

0557/2426          BRIAN ROOT

### **Issues**

- Should the Plan encourage better quality hotels, theatres, conference centres, restaurants, casinos and entertainment for visitors and locals?
- Should tourist areas provide pavement cafes, bistros and restaurants?

### **Conclusions**

24. The objector offers many constructive ideas, all of which are well-received by the Council and consistent with Policies T1, T4, T5 and the general aims of the Plan. The evening economy is a recognised objective. The planning record shows several significant schemes have already been granted permission. No modifications are needed.

### **Recommendation**

25. **I recommend no modifications in response to this objection.**

**Objections - Revised Deposit Draft**

4018/10296 MRS L MANNING

**Issue**

- Should poor local facilities, such as Hartsdown Park, be improved?

**Conclusions**

26. Local parks are said to lack attractive gardens, trees and picnic areas, and parks should have a duck pond to encourage wildlife. I saw that the open spaces at Hartsdown Park Margate are somewhat featureless and lacking biodiversity. The Council agrees that local parks need to be enhanced and improved. An audit of open spaces should be carried out in accordance with Government guidance in PPG17; and a commitment to carry out such an audit has been introduced in RDD, at paragraph 9.33.1 of the Sport & Recreation chapter. The relevant Public Open Space Policy, SR7, merely says Public Open Space will be protected from development; it says nothing about enhancement. However, Hartsdown Park Leisure Complex is identified as a key location for facilities in Paragraph 9.19 of the Plan.

**Recommendation**

27. **I recommend no modifications to the Tourist chapter of the Plan in response to this objection.**

**POLICY T1 – TOURIST FACILITIES**

**Objections - First Deposit Draft**

0077/0997 MR AND MRS I P A SMITH  
0166/1404 NATIONAL TRUST

**Objections - Revised Deposit Draft**

0017/10052 THE COUNTRYSIDE AGENCY

**Issues**

- Should specific references to Green Tourism be included?
- Should the last sentence of Policy T1 be reinstated?
- Should land north and south of Chalk Hill at Pegwell be identified to provide tourist facilities in association with the expansion of Ramsgate Port?

**Conclusions**

28. The National Trust suggests a separate policy be introduced to promote 'Green Tourism'; or else a specific reference be included in Policy T1 to the effect that priority should be given to environmentally related tourism.

29. The term 'Green Tourism' is open to wide interpretation. Rural Green Tourism is encouraged in Policy T12, so I do not think an additional reference to it would add to the clarity of the Plan. This term is generally understood to imply tourist development which has minimal impact on the environment. I can confidently infer that this kind of tourism would be

## **Chapter 8 - Tourism**

acceptable within the aims of the Plan, and that existing policies facilitate it. According to paragraph 8.21.1 in the RDD, a Coastal Park, defined in Policy CC13, will encompass Green Tourism issues.

30. The National Trust also suggests Policy T1 in the FDD be amended to say that all proposals should be consistent with other policies in the Plan. A phrase has been deleted from the RDD, so that the Policy no longer says development for tourism will be required to be compatible with the environmental policies. The Countryside Agency is disappointed by this deletion. The Agency thinks the Policy should be broadened to say that development should be consistent with all other policies. However, as the Plan is a corporate document, which must by law be read as a whole, these suggestions are unnecessary. I also report objections regarding Chalk Hill in the Countryside & Coast and Housing Chapters.

### **Recommendation**

- 31 **I recommend no modifications in response to these objections.**

## **POLICY T5 – SELF CATERING ACCOMMODATION**

### **Objections - First Deposit Draft**

0001/0012CW GOSE

### **Issue**

- Should the word “supported” be replaced with a more definitive word, to clarify the meaning?

### **Conclusions**

32. Policy T5 is in three parts. The stated objective is to retain self-catering facilities and support any improvements. The first clause relates to static and touring caravan sites. It is generally permissive, though it does not apply to the coastal area. There is no policy to suggest that caravan development is to be restrained in or near the coast. Policy CC2 implies some restraint in Landscape Character Areas.
33. The second clause applies to self-catering facilities. Upgrades, diversification and improvement are permitted subject to certain interests of acknowledged importance. In the RDD, the word ‘permitted’ is preferred to the word ‘supported’. This is done in response to an objection by GOSE and the objection is conditionally withdrawn. I agree that the wording in the RDD is acceptable.
34. The third and final clause restricts self-catering facilities being developed for other uses - but only if the effect on maintaining a reasonable choice of tourist accommodation in the District is deemed to be serious. All in all, the Policy imposes very little restraint on self-catering and caravanning.

### **Recommendation**

35. **I recommend the Plan be modified by the proposed changes to Policy T5 in the RDD but that no further modifications be made as a result of this objection.**

### POLICY T6 – HOVERPORT SITE, PEGWELL BAY

#### Objections - First Deposit Draft

|           |                                |
|-----------|--------------------------------|
| 0043/0751 | MR KIRKALDIE                   |
| 0027/0481 | PEGWELL & DISTRICT ASSOCIATION |
| 0041/0616 | KENT WILDLIFE TRUST            |
| 0042/0678 | THE RAMBLERS' ASSOCIATION      |
| 0043/0757 | MR KIRKALDIE                   |
| 0043/0758 | MR KIRKALDIE                   |
| 0087/1029 | MR WREN                        |
| 0101/1111 | DAVID JARMAN                   |
| 0105/1128 | MISS P A SMITH                 |
| 0107/1139 | MRS ARNETT                     |
| 0132/1226 | DR A J NEDEN                   |
| 0132/1227 | DR A J NEDEN                   |
| 0133/1241 | T HOLMES                       |
| 0133/1242 | T HOLMES                       |
| 0133/1243 | T HOLMES                       |
| 0166/1405 | NATIONAL TRUST                 |
| 0419/2001 | R DEAN                         |
| 0043/0759 | MR KIRKALDIE                   |

#### Issues

- Should policy T6 include reference to the three Thanet landings and the Viking Ship?
- Should permanent industrial or residential development be prevented on site?
- Should Policy T6 be deleted?
- Should the site be left to go back to nature?
- Will any development be harmful to nearby nature conservation?
- Should a specific allocation for 'Green Tourism' be made; is this the only acceptable kind of employment?
- Is a maximum height of 16 metres AOD appropriate?

#### Conclusions

36. In my opinion the Policy area is an extremely sensitive site. Pegwell Bay is a beauty spot, highly prominent, surrounded by wildlife conservation areas of the highest order, and cherished by the local population. By an exceptional quirk of planning history it has been blighted by the erection of a huge slipway, which is now derelict and the site cleared of buildings. It was built in the light of very special circumstances of overriding need. It was England's Hoverport.
37. The Hoverport had a brief heyday at the forefront of British technology, as a launch-pad for cross-channel services, until events left the site vacant and disused. The site-specific Policy T6 in the FDD is introduced by a statement that the Hoverport site now "*provides a development opportunity,*" particularly for tourism use, within the District. This is the background to many objections. A reference in paragraph 8.23 to the 20 acre area should

be corrected to metric measure: over 8 hectares.

38. Although the Council owns the site, Policy T6 does not actually define any specific purpose or land-use. TDC merely commits itself to "finding a practical and economic form of development...which will provide employment opportunities on the site without damage..." to any SSSI or other conservation area. Local people, including Mrs Randall, fear that something very harmful might happen, unless the Plan prevents it. Their objections therefore cannot be focused on any proposal in particular.
39. The existing Policy is carried forward from the Adopted Plan of 1998 (Policy BC8, with minor additions). The Policy boundary on the Proposals Map still more-or-less follows high water mark at the edge of the Hovercraft slipway. No significant change of circumstance has happened there since – apart from the stringent conservation policies which now surround it. Inevitably some policy decision must be made during the Plan period.
40. I understand the slipway and hardstanding were built on a foundation of colliery waste, the removal and disposal of which would be beyond the Council's resources. A contamination report has been commissioned. I see that the vast concrete surface is starting to break up.
41. The planning history of the site is complex but it is simply a matter of record. Notably, planning permission in 1995 for a holiday park, swimming pool, ice rink and ski-slope failed to materialise. That scheme underwent Environmental Assessment. It is mentioned in paragraph 8.27, even though the permission is no longer extant and circumstances have changed in so far as wildlife conservation is concerned. There is no extant permission.

### **Objections to the First Deposit Draft**

42. The replica of a Viking ship on the clifftop symbolises the outstanding historic significance of the area and so does St Augustine's Cross nearby. Mr Kirkaldie suggests the Plan should refer to historic landings in Thanet. However, I do not think land-use policies concerning the Hoverport site need to be confused or elaborated by adding educational or geographical information about local history.
43. Pegwell and District Association support proposals for a heritage centre, but object to industrial or residential development (apart from a warden's accommodation). They suggest an additional criterion in Policy T6 to preclude any such development; but there are no such proposals in the Plan anyway. Any scheme would be considered on its merits, subject to the requirements of Policy DNP1, because it is such a sensitive site, and also subject to other Development Plan policies and Environmental Assessment.
44. I do not think it would be practicable or desirable to let the site fall apart and revert to nature. Although I saw that unusual vegetation grows on the disused hectares of concrete, and birds roost there when the tide covers the mud-flats, one cannot assume that it would all pleasantly crumble away, or ignore the extensive dereliction of this prominent coastal site, and the impending release of contaminants as erosion eats away the hardstanding.
45. Kent Wildlife Trust is concerned that development will be allowed even if it does not need to be on the coast and does nothing to enhance nature conservation. The Ramblers' Association favours 'green tourism'. Several other objectors feel the same. Some suggest that the National Trust should take charge.
46. In general the National Trust [NT] would prefer environmentally related

## **Chapter 8 - Tourism**

development. NT however, supports Policy T6, except in so far as T6 (3) allows development up to a height of 16 metres above sea level. NT also says development should not result in unacceptable harm to Landscape Character Areas. I think the acceptability of any scheme would be the subject of a very stringent Environmental Assessment and there is no reason to doubt that an interpretation centre and management would be included in any scheme.

47. As to the 16m height of future development, the RDD has been changed so that it says the maximum height of buildings should not exceed "the height of the cliff face." That is consistent with scenic and landscape policies in the Plan. The National Trust and others suggest this criterion should be deleted, on the grounds that development up to the top of the cliff would be objectionable in landscape terms. This might be so: but it would depend on the design and appearance of any development. This criterion of the Policy is restrictive; it prevents anything showing above cliff-top height. I saw on my visits to the surrounding area that this is appropriate. The Policy neither encourages, nor facilitates development up to that height, and need not be modified or deleted. Geological and geomorphological features are protected by Government policies in PPS9.
48. Finally, it is suggested that Policy T6, the designation on the Proposals Map and the supporting text should all be deleted entirely; they are too vague and could include all sorts of land uses including residential - whereas the site is too sensitive for major development, and the location is unsustainable. I consider these are rational objections, to be taken into account in my conclusions.

### **Summary**

49. Development on the site, large as it is, is tightly constrained by a suite of conservation policies which surround it or include it:

It is included in Policy T6 which permits development only within the designated boundary, and subject to restrictive criteria. It is also subject to the following Policies:

CC16 - Undeveloped Coast;

EP10 - Wantsum Channel Flood Risk Area;

NC1 - District-wide Habitat protection;

CC2 - Landscape Character of the Wantsum North Shore;

CC4 - Island Approach Route;

CC13 - Coastal Park;

CC14 - Development along the Coast;

CC17 - Coastal defence;

It is surrounded by:

NC2 - (National Nature reserves);

NC2 - (Site of Special Scientific Interest);

NC3, SPA, SAC and Ramsar Sites;

CC2 - Landscape character of Pegwell Bay.

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50. The Hoverport site is not in a sustainable location for development at all. Cliffsend is merely a village, not well served by public transport; road and rail routes pass close by, but most visitors would come by car. A more sustainable location should be sought for recreational or leisure uses in the light of PPG17. It is therefore somewhat optimistic to describe it in paragraph 8.23 of the Plan as a 'development opportunity'.
51. In terms of PPG3 it is 'previously developed land.' This might convey a false impression to any prospective developer seeking plan-led guidance. But paragraph 8.23 refers particularly to tourism, and the theme of the chapter is tourism. Objectors should not therefore be too anxious about the risk of residential development or industry on this sensitive site – attractive as it might seem for people who want a house by the sea. It is not designated as a prospective housing site. It would be well to make the emphasis on tourism more explicit in the Plan.
52. I agree with the Inspector who examined the adopted Local Plan in 1996, that it is reasonable for the Council to seek development at this disused site. TDC is anxious to keep various options open, and thinks it unwise to base any policy on current proposals or initiatives, in case nothing happens and they are left to preside over dereliction. Clearly I have insufficient evidence to recommend any specific plan-led designation – but the Plan process is intended to produce firm plan-led guidance, explicit enough to attract prospective developers.
53. Paragraph 8.27 refers to a 'previous consent', when there is, as yet, still no subsequent consent. This alludes to a consent which is no longer extant, was never implemented, and is not necessarily a precedent to be followed. The history of that consent is of little more relevance than the applications which preceded it and unless paragraph 8.27 is deleted it will 'date' the Plan needlessly during the ensuing period. There is no need to amend or update paragraph 8.26 because it simply relates to an ongoing situation.
54. Nevertheless, surrounded as it is by the most stringent environmental safeguards, of national, international and local importance, I consider something positive and constructive should be done with the site during the Plan period. The prospects of development are very limited, but nonetheless significant. A site-specific policy along the lines of T6 is necessary, to establish the limits of what may be done in the foreseeable future; even though the Council, as landowner, may be unable to implement a scheme. The Policy serves a precautionary purpose and should not be deleted.
55. Policy T6 does not preclude the use of the site as a 'green tourism' facility. KMSP 2003 indicates the potential for Regional Conservation Parks (Policy QL19 paragraph 3.22). This suggests a way forward. A new paragraph should be included in the Plan, relating to these emerging proposals for 'green tourism' and thereby offering a positive initiative. Any subsequent scheme would have to be subject to rigorous Environmental Assessment in terms of PPS9.
56. Although the text of Policy T6 has been carried forward largely from the adopted Local Plan of 1998, I consider the opportunity should be taken to re-word the premise of the Policy: that planning permission "*will be granted to proposals for the development or redevelopment of the Hoverport*" within its existing boundaries, subject only to five specific criteria. In the light of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, these words mean that permission should not be refused, for any kind of development which meets the criteria, unless the Planning Authority has sufficient grounds to justify a

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departure from their own generalised policy. The words 'redevelopment of the Hoverport' also imply that something like a hoverport may be rebuilt within the designated boundary. This is not the true intention of the Plan.

57. I suggest a simpler form of words which more closely reflect the stated aims of the Policy, followed by the criteria listed in the RDD.

### **Recommendations**

58. I recommend:

- (i) that the Plan be modified by deleting paragraph 8.27.
- (ii) that paragraph 8.23 be modified by the deletion of "20 acres" and substituted with "8 hectares."
- (iii) that the Plan be modified by inserting the following paragraph after 8.28:

**"The Hoverport site is suitable for a Regional Conservation Park located around the Stour and Wantsum Channel. The Area Investment Framework Action Plan (involving Thanet, Canterbury and Dover Councils) includes the Regional Park Initiative and, as part of the development of a green heart for East Kent, identifies the Hovercraft site as a visitor centre for green tourism. The Regional Conservation Park will work in conjunction with Thanet's Coastal Park Initiative which draws together policies, proposals and projects at the coast, developed from the preparation of the Management Scheme for the Thanet Coast Marine Special Area of Conservation (SAC)."**

- (iv) that Policy T6 be modified by deleting the words "PLANNING PERMISSION WILL BE GRANTED TO PROPOSALS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OR REDEVELOPMENT OF THE HOVERPORT WITHIN ITS EXISTING BOUNDARIES, PROVIDED:" and replacing them with the words :

**"APPLICATIONS FOR DEVELOPMENT WITHIN THE EXISTING HARDSURFACED AREA WILL NOT BE PERMITTED UNLESS:"**

- (v) that no further modifications be made to the text of the RDD in response to these objections.

### **POLICY T11 – DREAMLAND**

#### **Objections - First Deposit Draft**

0001/0045CW GOSE

#### **Objections - Revised Deposit Draft**

4038/10329 STADIUM DEVELOPMENTS LTD  
0014/10047 ENGLISH HERITAGE  
0043/10132 MR M S KIRKALDIE  
0167/10280 STEPHEN A VILLETTE  
4006/10277 SAVE DREAMLAND CAMPAIGN  
4006/10278 SAVE DREAMLAND CAMPAIGN  
4006/10279 SAVE DREAMLAND CAMPAIGN

|            |                   |
|------------|-------------------|
| 4007/10281 | PATRICIA RATCLIFF |
| 4007/10282 | PATRICIA RATCLIFF |
| 4008/10283 | MR I BLACKBURN    |
| 4009/10284 | ESTEBAN IBAROLA   |
| 4010/10285 | SARAH VICKERY     |
| 4010/10286 | SARAH VICKERY     |
| 4011/10287 | IAN BRINE         |
| 4011/10288 | IAN BRINE         |
| 4012/10289 | ROY EASTLAND      |
| 4013/10290 | KEVIN JAMES       |
| 4016/10293 | ROBERT NUTTER     |
| 4017/10294 | MICHAEL TWYMAN    |
| 4018/10295 | MRS L MANNING     |

### For further objectors see Appendix 4

#### Issues

- Does the word 'normally' make the policy ambiguous?
- Should the allocation include retail and leisure uses, and the Proposals Map be amended to identify Dreamland for future town centre expansion?
- Should the original Policy be reinstated to secure the future of the site as an amusement park as new policy would allow other development on the site?
- What will be the future of the Grade II listed Scenic Railway?

#### Objections to the First Deposit Draft

59. The FDD version of Policy T11 was fundamentally different from the RDD version (which is the subject of this Inquiry). Only the first sentence of the Policy is carried through to the RDD. This sentence says proposals that seek to extend upgrade or improve the attractiveness of Dreamland Amusement Park will be permitted. To overcome any misapprehension that the Policy permits anything to increase the attractiveness of the site as something *other than* an amusement park, the words 'As an' amusement park were agreed as a change at the Inquiry. Use *as an* amusement park clearly remains the Council's preferred option.
60. The original text of T11 states 'Development that would lead to a reduction in the attractiveness or tourist potential will *normally* be resisted.' GOSE objects to the use of the word 'normally' in this context, on the grounds that the policy should be no more flexible than is provided in the legislative requirement - which is: to have regard to all provisions of the Development Plan as a whole, with other material considerations. I agree that if 'normally' is deleted the policy becomes more explicit. Any development that reduces the tourist potential or attractiveness of Dreamland would consequently be resisted. However, in the RDD this whole sentence has been deleted. I return to this point in my conclusions.
61. Nobody else objected to the original FDD version of Policy T11.

#### Revised Deposit Draft

62. T11 is a site specific Policy. About 6½ hectares are designated on the Proposals Map. This area excludes the frontage of Marine Terrace, which is in a Conservation Area. It does include a factory building behind the Marine Terrace frontage, which is not part of the Dreamland complex at present.

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This leaves room for extension. It includes the Cinema, which is a Building of Architectural and Historic Interest. The residential tower block at Arlington House is excluded. All the relevant policies in the Development Plan have to be considered as a whole. Dreamland is subject to Policy T10, which differentiates between amusement *centres* (permitted in town centres), and amusement *arcades* which are permitted on this site and along Marine Terrace. This area is defined on the Proposals Map as the appropriate place for the "brash holiday atmosphere" of arcades. Part of the site is in the Margate Flood Risk Area Policy EP11 (not EP12). Part of it (but not the coach park) is in a town centre Parking Zone Policy TR17B. I shall consider the land-use options in turn.

### **Redevelopment as a town centre**

63. Stadium Developments Ltd supports the principle of redevelopment on part or all of the site in the RDD, but they object to the restrictions and criteria imposed by Policy T11. These objectors would prefer a more flexible policy. Referring to the superseded PPG6, they consider the site should be sequentially selected as an edge-of-centre site for retail development; with a new Policy to include the clause "Proposals for redeveloping the site for retail and leisure uses will be permitted and positively encouraged to address the District's loss of retail expenditure to other centres outside the District". Accordingly, they suggest the Proposals Map should designate Dreamland as a site for future town centre expansion.
64. However, edge-of-centre sites are defined in Annex A of PPS6 as sites within easy walking distance of the primary shopping area. I find the shortest distance, up the short, steep Grosvenor Hill from the Belgrave Road gate of Dreamland, is about 173m. The nearest part of the designated town centre is the top end of The High Street, which is secondary shopping frontage. It is not therefore an edge-of-centre site.
65. Any proposal to extend the town centre area to cover Dreamland would more than double the size of the designated town centre of Margate. It would moreover affect several intervening primarily residential streets. Any major extension of Margate town centre on that scale, and in this direction, would be of strategic significance to the District as a whole. It would be inconsistent with the retail strategy in the Plan.
66. The RDD version of Policy T11 states that a significant component of any proposals for the site will entail leisure uses of a type appropriate for both a seaside and 'edge-of-town centre' location. As the site is not edge-of-centre I consider the phrase would prejudice any logical and sequential approach to any future land-use to which PPS6 applies.
67. This objection is one of a series of written representations made by Stadium Development Ltd on this issue, all of which have been taken into account.

### **Retention as an Amusement Park**

68. Several objections to the RDD Policy T11 were presented, ably orchestrated and supported by the Save Dreamland Campaign. The general theme of these objections seeks to restore the original, *virtually unopposed* policy of the FDD.
69. Paragraph 8.50 has been extensively redrafted to justify the revised Policy T11. It still affirms that the Council's preference will be for Dreamland to continue to provide a core leisure facility, to underpin the holiday destination that is Margate. There are objections to the phrase 'core leisure facility'

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from those who would prefer a direct reference to an amusement park. Others object to the word 'preference', because it is not positive enough. The remainder of paragraph 8.50 presages the revised wording of the Policy.

70. Several objectors point out that any significant residential or retail development on the site would be contrary to the Council's policy of expansion at Westwood. They say redevelopment would be disastrous for Margate and its tourist economy and the site should remain as an amusement park.

### **Scenic Railway**

71. English Heritage suggests that the modified paragraph 8.49 should refer to Buildings of Architectural and Historic Interest at Dreamland. Apart from the Cinema, the most prominent Listed Building is the Scenic Railway, which dominates the central area of Dreamland's open space. Mr Kirkaldie and many other objectors suggest the scenic railway should be retained as the centrepiece of an ongoing amusement park.
72. The 'Scenic Railway' is an extraordinary Building of Architectural and Historic Interest, recently listed Grade II. It is Britain's oldest wooden roller-coaster ride, built in 1920 and still operational. Unchallenged evidence from the operator affirms that it is viable, even as a stand-alone attraction.
73. This structure is already protected by Policy HE1, whereby demolition or partial demolition will not be permitted; unless there is special overriding justification. I can see that the structure could not be dismantled and re-erected elsewhere, without entailing demolition. The setting of the Listed Building is also to be conserved, in accordance with Government policy in PPG15. This restriction would seriously prejudice any proposal to use the site for anything other than an amusement park. I consider a constraint of such overriding magnitude should be mentioned in the text of the Plan.

### **Counter-objection**

74. Late written representations on behalf of the current owner of Dreamland were taken into account at the Inquiry, and a response was subsequently received from the Save Dreamland Campaign. The landowner supports the RDD version of T11. However, he presents no firm concept as to the nature of development he has in mind.
75. The owners' statistics indicate a decline in the number of visitors paying for rides; but it is beyond dispute that Dreamland does receive a great number of visitors when the gates are open, and is a major tourist attraction in the District. Whereas the owner estimates the number of visitors spending on rides as 200,000 in 2002, the Visit Britain National Tourist Board estimates 680,000 visitors came to Dreamland.
76. I perceive a symbiosis between Dreamland and the other amenities of Margate seaside, town and historic centre. It is the most popular attraction. I am convinced that considerable investment has been sunk in the site since 1993, but the owner now has little commitment to it as an amusement park and would prefer a flexible 'mixed development'. Reference is made to the Margate Masterplan in this context.
77. No evidence about the viability of Dreamland was submitted to the Inquiry. Activities are being run down, the park was recently opened only for part of the season, and my own conclusion is that it could be managed much more intensively. I also think it probable that optimal commercial redevelopment

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on the site would exceed its asset-value as a traditional amusement park. The change would not necessarily be in the public interest, particularly if it conflicts with the aims of the Development Plan. These issues can be resolved by a balanced plan-led policy.

### **"Margate Masterplan"**

78. The Margate Masterplan, CD/105, is a recent report on an urban design framework for central Margate, published after public consultation, in March 2004. It is sponsored by KCC, TDC, and also Stadium Developments (i.e. the development partner of the Dreamland site owner). This Masterplan has no formal status, the Local Planning Authority has not endorsed it and it is not part of the Council's case. Its proposals do not therefore carry weight. Nevertheless, it offers the most up-to-date appraisal of Dreamland and its surroundings.
79. English Heritage supports its proposals for 'leisure tourism' on the Dreamland site, but points out that Arlington House residential tower block has a major detrimental impact. On the other hand English Heritage rejects any implication that demolishing the Scenic Railway, in whole or in part, can be a realistic option.

### **Summary**

#### *Appraisal*

80. I saw that Dreamland is an extensive hard-surfaced open space, in a highly accessible location with coach parks, close to a railway station and multi-storey car park. Gates lead in from surrounding streets, but the main entrance for customers passes through an amusement arcade up an alley, between a public house and cinema. This entrance is opposite a Major Holiday Beach, designated in Policy SR15. It has a prime location. During my visits the arcade was trading vigorously: about half the open area was occupied as a funfair by mobile units, and the Scenic Railway was in operation.
81. This Inquiry relates to the RDD, in which Policy T11 has been radically rewritten since the FDD was published for public participation. The FDD contains a site-specific proposal to retain Dreamland as an amusement park with, exceptionally, a 'limited' amount of enabling development to fund regeneration.
82. The FDD, after extensive consultation, was subject to one simple objection (from GOSE), to achieve closer focus for the Policy as originally written. The word 'normally' was to be removed. This objection is conditionally withdrawn. Subsequently TDC then revisited the Policy to make it even more specific – the word 'limited' was not considered sufficiently restrictive. The owner of the site still made no formal objection. This original FDD Policy is a considered, plan-led proposal, virtually unopposed at public consultation stage.
83. Dreamland has recently been disused for part of the summer. I am convinced by the evidence that this reduced the number of visitors, reduced the length of season, reduced the spin-off for other holiday activities and the tourist economy in Thanet. Closure was largely a matter of management. Nevertheless, Dreamland reopened for part of the season in 2003, and again for part of the 2004 and 2005 seasons and was seen to be flourishing while it was open. Half the open space was occupied and the arcades were busy. So it currently retains its existing use as an amusement park. There is no

direct evidence as to whether it is financially viable or not.

84. The original plan-led proposal in the FDD therefore does not constitute a change of use; it endorses the existing use. It is not provoked by nostalgia. There is no good reason to suppose this is the wrong use for the site.

### *Policy T11*

85. Policy T11 was re-written after private discussions with the owner of the site. This took place after the consultation period on the FDD. No record of the meeting has been presented in evidence. Elected members were apparently persuaded that Dreamland is not likely to continue trading in the traditional form and were influenced by the risk of dereliction.
86. The RDD version of Policy T11 subsequently attracted two kinds of objection. Firstly, a substantive objection from Stadium Developments Ltd, on grounds that the RDD does not designate Dreamland to expand the town centre core area – specifically for shopping, and potentially a food store. Secondly a contrary campaign, led by a well-supported ad-hoc organisation, to revert to the FDD version and “Save Dreamland”.

### *Shopping*

87. Dealing firstly with the criteria restricting retail development: Policy T11 is criteria-based; it is not a proposal. It does not rule out continued use as an amusement park. It is permissive in that respect. It requires a ‘Masterplan’ to be prepared but offers no guidance on the end-use of the site - apart from ‘entailing a significant component of leisure uses’. This component is not defined, though it has to be appropriate to both a seaside and edge-of-town centre location. Even if a leisure component turned out to be incidental, it would still comply with the Policy. This leaves the nature, scale and proportion of leisure uses open to extremely wide and flexible interpretation.
88. The town centre is defined in the Local Plan. Dreamland is not contiguous with the town centre. It is not even within convenient walking distance of the town centre. But Policy T11 encourages uses appropriate to the edge-of-centre. Explicitly it says that Dreamland would be treated as if it is adjacent.
89. The RDD presumes a contracting town centre. It is a sound presumption. I find the existing and designated town centre of Margate is already limited in capacity and size. There are no sites within it, suitable for major retail development. Stadium suggests expanding the town centre, to make Margate a retail centre to compete with other centres in Kent. If Policy T11 enables the site to be treated as if it were an edge-of-centre location for leisure purposes, it would be difficult to resist a logical argument that it must be edge-of-centre for the other purposes of PPS6 as well. This would feature in any sequential approach to a location for major retail development. But TDC does not want major retail development here. It would conflict with the aims of the Development Plan as a whole.

### *Plan-led policy*

90. If Policy T11 is adopted in its revised version, I inquired how the District Council would resist major retail development here. The criteria of Policy T11 do not preclude it. The answer given at Inquiry is that the Council would rely on Policy TC1, concerning the location of new retail development. However, Policy TC1 could not restrain major retail development at Dreamland. TC1 is not a prohibitive Policy. It merely states a preference for locations in town centres. Outside town centres, schemes are to be considered on their merits. It would be difficult to demonstrate that a major

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store on a so-called "edge-of-centre" site at Dreamland would seriously impact on the vitality and viability of Margate, in terms of Policy TC1.

91. So Policies T11 and TC1, as drafted in the RDD, do not serve the Council's primary objective of supporting retail development at the new Westwood town centre, whilst restricting retail at Dreamland. And the RDD policy does not explicitly promote tourism either. This outcome conflicts with the aims of the Structure Plan and Local Plan as a whole, and I do not recommend it.
92. If Dreamland is not to be developed for retail, what does Policy T11 require? Policy T11 does not include any proposals. It does not require redevelopment to be comprehensive; so piecemeal development is not ruled out. It merely requires a Masterplan/Action Plan to accompany whatever is proposed. But even this requirement depends on the scale of redevelopment. So if the scale of development is small but incremental, or if piecemeal development takes place, it may not depend on a Masterplan or Action Plan.
93. This much is common ground, confirmed at the Inquiry: that the RDD policy is open to interpretation, that it does not provide that Dreamland will remain an amusement park, and that any future proposal will be assessed on its merits. The owner reasonably points out that the merits of any scheme would have to be assessed against any harm done to interests of acknowledged importance. Policy T11 fails to acknowledge the most relevant interests of importance. Such a 'policy' maximises speculative interest in the site and encourages hope-values beyond any ordinary expectation. The owner anticipates high values – unquantified in evidence – for purposes which remain unspecified. This scenario would hinder any prospect of compulsory purchase, should such an eventuality ever arise.
94. It is also common ground that Dreamland is a key site in the town, and District, if not in the whole East Kentish economy. PPG12 and PPS1 emphasise development should be plan-led; particularly on key sites. Policy T11 is not a plan-led policy.

### *Saving Dreamland*

95. Dreamland is a core leisure facility, currently in place. There is no suggestion that the continuance of Dreamland would be harmful to the local economy, the environment, or that it has become unsustainable in modern terms. So there is no case that it ought to be closed for planning reasons. Indeed paragraph 8.50 of the RDD confirms that the Council's preference will be for Dreamland to continue to provide a core leisure facility, to underpin the holiday destination that is Margate. This is an unequivocal statement, which is almost a plan-led policy.
96. The Plan goes so far as to say "there is real concern that there may be pressure for redevelopment in the future for an alternative use, thus losing a significant attraction" at paragraph 8.49. This paragraph confirms that such pressure would be harmful. For the foregoing reasons, Policy T11, in the RDD version, would generate the very harmful pressure which the Development Plan seeks to avert.
97. I recognise that Margate is trying to attract a different kind of person, not necessarily day-trippers. Thanet has aspirations to move up-market, with fewer low-paid jobs and a change in the candy-floss image. Necessary initiatives are already in place. These involve diversification and choice. There is no overriding planning need to get rid of Dreamland. However, Arlington House is an eyesore.

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98. A policy to facilitate and encourage tourism would not imply a complete ban on retailing – souvenir shops and craft shops could continue to flourish on a minor scale, providing spin-off for the local economy.
99. The worst-case scenario is that Dreamland might become derelict. I do not think the RDD does anything to avert, or delay, that prospect. It encourages speculation. Dereliction would be the most likely outcome, if the speculative value of the site is higher than the value which it can realise at any given time. If it became vacant it would amount to a 6½ hectare 'brownfield' proposition in a prime location. However, Dreamland is still a going concern – even when it is opened only for part of the season. Its 'run down' ambience, referred to in paragraph 8.49, is partly a matter of management.
100. Convincing expert evidence was brought to the Inquiry to show that other prospective leisure operators consider an up-to-date amusement park at Dreamland is an attractive venture. The Listed Scenic Railway, which would be a serious constraint on any piecemeal or comprehensive redevelopment scheme, would be retained in its appropriate setting. I need not enlarge on the fact that this is the preferred option, because the Plan already says so. If the plan-led policy is made more explicit, the risk of dereliction would become far less likely.
101. I therefore conclude that the existing use is an amusement park, and the principal use should continue to be a designated amusement park. This coincides with the considered judgement published in the FDD. It also meets the objectives of PPG21 and PPS6.
102. Regeneration remains a key objective for the Plan. In the absence of a plan-led proposal, the most recent appraisal of Dreamland is the Margate Urban Design Framework. It shows the retention of the Scenic Railway in situ, as the centre of a landmark open space, and the Cinema on the frontage as a key historic landmark. This Framework is based on a false assumption that the amusement park is no longer in operation; but even so, it correctly reflects the TDC's brief against retail development. It points towards the feasibility of a step-change in the quality of the environment, opening up access to the beach, building a road around the back of the Dreamland site. It seeks to redress the decline in visitor numbers and alleviate local deprivation. This would not harm the future prosperity of Dreamland at all. It opens up many options. However, such issues are beyond the remit of this report. I can offer no recommendations on the Masterplan.
103. The FDD Policy T11 is a well-tested, positive and appropriate plan-led proposal for this key site; it meets TDC's stated aims and it turns out to be consistent with the latest up-to-date appraisal of its potential.

### *Detailed wording of the Local Plan*

104. Reinstating the text of the FDD would satisfy most objections. As to the details, I agree with GOSE that the word 'normally' is unnecessary in the Policy and should be deleted. The objective of the land-use policy is to upgrade Dreamland primarily as an amusement park, so the words 'as an' would be appropriate here. In the light of issues which arose in Council debates before the RDD was published, I have considered whether the word 'limited part of the site' is restrictive enough; but as any limit must be resolved by negotiation I think the word is appropriate. It has a potential in leisure as well as tourism. Dreamland is an amusement park, not a theme park, and this word should be used in the Policy.
105. There is no need to refer to the listed buildings in Policy T11, as they are all

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protected by Policy H1; but the presumption in favour of retention, explained in PPG15, is a significant constraint on any comprehensive scheme. It should be mentioned in paragraph 8.50. The text of paragraphs 8.49-8.50 is otherwise appropriate, particularly if the first sentence of the RDD version of 8.50 is added to the text from the FDD, because it contains a clear statement of the Council's preferences.

106. In the re-instated text of Policy T11, the words 'as an' are inserted in the first sentence; the word 'normally' is deleted from the second sentence; the word 'require' is deleted from the phrase 'require a legal agreement' and the phrase 'negotiate a legal agreement' is substituted. Dreamland has potential in leisure as well as tourism. It is an amusement park, not a theme park.

### **Recommendations**

107. **I recommend:**

- (i) that no modifications be made to paragraph 8.49 in the RRD in response to these objections.**
- (ii) that paragraph 8.50 be modified by deleting the text of the RDD after the words 'Holiday destination that is Margate' and replacing it with the following:**

**"8.50 The Council's preference will be for Dreamland to continue to provide a core leisure facility to underpin the holiday destination that is Margate. There is a presumption in favour of retaining the listed Cinema and Scenic Railway on site. The Council acknowledges that for there to be investment, part of the site may have to be redeveloped for non-leisure related uses that are compatible with continued use as an amusement park. However, it is important that revenue from such development is reinvested into the provision and improvement of facilities so that the attractiveness and viability of the park is maintained. To develop part of the site and not reinvest into the park is not acceptable. This would make the amusement park less viable and would ultimately lead to the loss of the whole attraction and therefore this important asset. The Council will therefore negotiate a legal agreement that will tie the development of part of the site with the improvements to the amusement park."**

- (iii) that the Plan be modified by deleting Policy T11 and replacing it with the following Policy:**

**"POLICY T11 DREAMLAND**

**PROPOSALS THAT SEEK TO EXTEND, UPGRADE OR IMPROVE THE ATTRACTIVENESS OF DREAMLAND AS AN AMUSEMENT PARK WILL BE PERMITTED. DEVELOPMENT THAT WOULD LEAD TO A REDUCTION IN THE ATTRACTIVENESS, LEISURE OR TOURIST POTENTIAL WILL BE RESISTED.**

**EXCEPTIONALLY, DEVELOPMENT OF A LIMITED PART OF THE SITE MAY BE ACCEPTED AS A PART OF A COMPREHENSIVE SCHEME FOR THE UPGRADING AND IMPROVEMENT OF THE AMUSEMENT PARK. THE SCHEME WILL BE REQUIRED TO DEMONSTRATE THAT THE FUTURE VIABILITY OF THE AMUSEMENT PARK CAN BE ASSURED AND THE COUNCIL WILL NEGOTIATE A LEGAL AGREEMENT TO ENSURE**

**THAT THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT AND THE AGREED INVESTMENT IN THE AMUSEMENT PARK ARE CARRIED OUT IN PARALLEL.”**

- (iv) that no further modifications be made in response to these objections.**

## **POLICY T12 – RURAL TOURISM**

### **Objections - First Deposit Draft**

0017/0380 THE COUNTRYSIDE AGENCY

### **Objections - Revised Deposit Draft**

0017/10053 THE COUNTRYSIDE AGENCY  
0001/10001 GOSE

### **Issues**

- Should the Policy be broadened to include social and economic considerations?
- Does the use of the word 'encouraged' render the Policy unclear, imprecise or ambiguous?

### **Conclusions**

108. The Policy relates to the conversion of buildings in rural settlements, rather than isolated buildings in the countryside. In this respect it is consistent with the sustainable objectives of PPS7, published since the FDD was issued. Having regard to the Development Plan as a whole, there is no need to broaden Policy T12, because social and economic considerations are taken into account anyway.
109. The second clause of the Policy, added at RDD stage, says that modest facilities, promoting green tourism, would be encouraged. This relates to all rural areas, district-wide. GOSE suggests the word 'encouraged' renders the Policy imprecise or ambiguous, but I do not think the Plan would be improved by greater precision in this context. Picnic areas, nature walks and such, benefit from general support and encouragement. I recommend only that the word 'will' be inserted, instead of 'would', for the sake of greater clarity.

### **Recommendations**

110. **I recommend:**

- (i) that the Plan be modified by deleting the word "WOULD" in the second clause of Policy T12 in the RDD and replacing it with the word "WILL".**
- (ii) that no further modifications be made in response to these objections.**