**Explanation**

2.20 The Sussex Downs were designated an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty by the Countryside Commission in 1966 because of the national importance of their landscape quality. The Sussex Downs Conservation Board and West Sussex County Council have published Landscape Assessments and these will be used in assessing the impact of development.

2.21 In assessing proposals, regard will be had to the following documents:

- Planning Policy Guidance Note No. 7
- South Downs Planning Guidelines
- Management Strategy for the Sussex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
- Sussex Downs Landscape Guidelines
- Landscape Assessment of the Sussex Downs AONB.

**POLICY AREA 10  Strategic Gaps**

Strategic Gaps, as identified on the Proposals Map will be maintained and protected between the following settlements:

(i) Worthing and Ferring
(ii) East Preston and Ferring
(iii) Littlehampton and Middleton-on-Sea
(iv) Pagham and Selsey
(v) Bognor Regis and Chichester
(vi) Arundel and Littlehampton

Proposals for development within a Strategic Gap will be subject to the most rigorous examination.

Development will only be permitted if:

(i) it is demonstrated to be necessary to meet the requirements of, or is consistent with, other policies of the Development Plan; and
(ii) it would not compromise, either individually or cumulatively, the objectives and fundamental integrity of the strategic gap; and
(iii) attention is given to the long term enhancement of the landscape, amenity and conservation value within the gap and, where possible, to the improvement of public access.
Reason

To prevent coalescence and retain the separate identity and amenity of settlements and to protect the undeveloped coastline.

Explanation

2.22 The West Sussex Structure Plan sets out the policy framework for strategic gaps and identifies six strategic gaps within Arun District. The objectives of the strategic gaps are to prevent coalescence and to retain the separate identity and amenity of settlements and protect the undeveloped coastline. The protection of the strategic gaps along the District's coastline has been a main aim of planning policy in the District for some years.

2.23 Proposals will be subject to 'rigorous examination', which includes an assessment of the type of use, the proposed level of activity, the scale of the proposed buildings, the impact on the surrounding environment in terms of contributing to the coalescence of settlements and the reduction in openness of the strategic gaps.

POLICY AREA11 Local Gaps

Local Gaps, as identified on the Proposals Map will be protected and maintained between:

(i) Findon and Worthing
(ii) Angmering and Rustington/East Preston
(iii) Felpham and Bognor Regis
(iv) Walberton and Barnham
(v) Eastergate and Barnham

Development in the Local Gaps will only be permitted if:

(i) it is demonstrated to be necessary to meet the requirements of, or is consistent with, other policies of the Development Plan; and

(ii) either individually or cumulatively it does not contribute to the coalescence of settlements; and

(iii) attention is given to the long term enhancement of the landscape, amenity and conservation value within the gap and, where possible, to the improvement of public access.

Reason

Local Gaps between settlements are important in order to prevent coalescence and to retain the separate identity of settlements.

Explanation

2.24 The local gaps designated in this Local Plan are regarded as vitally important to protect the separate identity of the towns and villages they separate. Designation of local gaps provides an additional level of policy protection for land between towns and villages which are vulnerable to development pressures. The term 'gap' is used to emphasise policy objectives and it is not necessarily descriptive.