

# Chapter 11

## Tourism

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### ***Corporate Aims***

To develop a strong and sustainable local economy, encouraging business and investment into Eastbourne.

To enhance the opportunities for enjoyment within Eastbourne through active pursuits and simple relaxation.

### ***Corporate Objectives***

- P1: Promote Eastbourne as a place for business investment and as a tourist destination.
- P2: Work with all agencies and landowners to retain and grow existing businesses.
- EN1: Maintain quality spaces for relaxation and play.
- EN3: Develop and promote Art and Heritage activities.
- EN4: Develop and promote a wide range of events for residents and in support of the tourism industry.

## ***Policy Objectives***

1. To retain a stock of serviced and unserviced tourist accommodation which will support Eastbourne's role as a major resort.
2. To retain and provide for a diverse range of tourist attractions and facilities.

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## ***Introduction***

- 11.1 This chapter has been prepared taking into account the objectives of the Borough Council's Tourism Strategy Statement. Where relevant the relationship between planning policy and these objectives is identified.
- 11.2 The tourist industry is a vital component of Eastbourne's economy. The 1998 Eastbourne Tourism Study indicated that about one-third of a million staying visitors and 2.25 million day visitors spend £118 million in the Town every year, and that approximately 4,100 jobs are supported by this expenditure. Though not so quantifiable, it is clear that local residents also benefit from the greater range of entertainment and other facilities provided by the resort. For instance the promotion of Eastbourne as a primary sports resort (an objective of the Tourism Strategy Statement) may provide additional facilities for residents that would not usually be available in a similar sized town.
- 11.3 This chapter concentrates upon planning for the specific needs of visitors, the accommodation and the attractions and facilities used by them. However policies elsewhere in this Plan will also help to sustain the Town's role as a major resort. For instance, the 1998 Eastbourne Tourism Study showed that visitors greatly value the Town's good shopping facilities, with the Arndale Centre an important visitor destination, so policies to support and promote the Town Centre will also benefit the Town's tourist industry. This synergy is recognised both in the Council's Tourism Strategy and the Town Centre Strategy.
- 11.4 The 1998 Study also showed that visitors greatly value the Town's environment. The "elegant seafront" and the "nice parks and gardens" were important to over two-thirds of visitors, and there are indications that the Town's natural environment is becoming increasingly popular, with one-fifth of visitors having visited the South Downs Way. It is clear, therefore, that environmental policies elsewhere in this Plan will also make a vital contribution to Eastbourne's role as a quality tourism destination. However it is also clear that if Eastbourne is to remain a primary tourist destination protection and enhancement of this important environmental quality must be sought.

## ***Accommodation***

- 11.5 Eastbourne is one of the largest providers of tourist accommodation in the South East, outside London. Since 1976 planning policy has actively sought to retain accommodation in the main tourist areas and it is clear that this has played a part in maintaining an adequate stock of serviced accommodation and in promoting the development of unserviced accommodation which has increased by 25% since 1990.
- 11.6 Since 1990 the numbers of hotels and guest houses has declined, with a loss of almost 1000 rooms and over 2000 bedspaces. The greatest decline being in the number of small size establishments. However there has been a significant improvement in the quality of the remaining establishments, with 83% of serviced accommodation now providing en-suite facilities.
- 11.7 Maintaining the stock of serviced establishments is vital if Eastbourne is to seek to capitalise further on the increasing trend toward short-break holidays, especially for older couples with grown-up families. This stock is also important in the market for conference and business

related tourism. It is, therefore, important to continue with the policy of retaining holiday accommodation in the areas of the Town where visitors expect to find such accommodation. In itself it would appear that the loss of one property providing serviced accommodation does not materially affect the stock of such accommodation available. However it is the cumulative effect of allowing a number of establishments to disappear that is of concern and which could, if uncontrolled, significantly affect Eastbourne's role as a major resort.

- 11.8 It is recognised that in exceptional circumstances the continued use as holiday accommodation may not be appropriate. In particular the Council accepts that tourist accommodation may no longer be financially viable, but it is important that objective criteria are available to enable proper consideration of such proposals in order to ensure that viable tourist accommodation establishments are retained. In addressing these criteria the Council would wish to see a full exploration of a property's suitability for modernisation or for conversion into unserviced accommodation, as there continues to be a demand for high quality self-catering accommodation.
- 11.9 The Council recognises that operating costs must be met if the use of the land as tourist accommodation is to be viable. When considering profitability, it is recognised that for many small hotels and guesthouses the integration of a family home and the convenience and independence of working from home have a value that pushes the market price above the pure business value of the premises. This makes a commercial return on investment targets inappropriate as a measure of viability. The policy acknowledges the reality of this sector of the business. Accordingly factor g) in Policy TO2 is only appropriate if the investment has the sole objective of generating a competitive commercial return. For smaller hotels and guesthouses, where the operator's private use represents at least 10% of the building (defined in terms of the proportion of the total habitable floor area, excluding hallways and landings), due consideration will be given to the value of non-financial factors in assessing whether the use as tourist accommodation is viable. Further explanation of the assessment of the viability of tourist accommodation will be set-out in Supplementary Planning Guidance.
- 11.10 An area for tourist accommodation is designated, and shown on the Proposals Map, which reflects the area of greatest demand for tourist accommodation. It includes most of the Town's larger hotels, as well as smaller less expensive establishments. It is important to recognise that this area is essentially a business area, with property values reflecting the tourist accommodation use, and it is appropriate that the needs of tourists should prevail in considering other developments within this area. This means that the different lifestyles, and special requirements, of tourists should be recognised in deciding whether a proposed development is compatible with the tourist accommodation use of the area. These requirements might include, for example, the important aspects highlighted in the 1998 Eastbourne Tourism Study of "a place that is clean and tidy", "an elegant seafront" and "a safe place to walk around at night". Day-time commercial uses may, therefore, be incompatible because tourists may feel vulnerable to crime when walking past such establishments at night. Whilst businesses open 24 hours a day may also be incompatible because of night-time noise and potential nuisance.

**Policy TO1: Tourist Accommodation Area**

Within the tourist accommodation area, shown on the Proposals Map, planning permission will be refused for proposals which are incompatible with the tourist accommodation use.

In considering proposals for development within this area regard will be made to the different lifestyles and special requirements of tourists. This consideration will include the following;

- a) the effect on residential and visual amenity (see Policies HO20 and UHT4);
- b) the likely hours of operation;
- c) safety and security implications.

**Policy TO2: Retention of Tourist Accommodation**

Within the tourist accommodation area identified on the Proposals Map planning permission will not be granted for the redevelopment or change of use of tourist accommodation to any other use. In this Policy "tourist accommodation" means serviced tourist accommodation (Class C1 use) and unserviced tourist accommodation.

Only in exceptional circumstances will planning permission be granted for any other use. This means that the applicant must demonstrate that the continuing use of land as tourist accommodation is not viable.

In determining viability the following factors will be taken into account:

- a) the location of the premises;
- b) the physical condition and cost of repair of the premises;
- c) the potential for refurbishment, including the cost of works;
- d) the potential for conversion to other tourist uses, including the cost of works;
- e) the market valuation of the property reflecting the above factors;
- f) whether the direct costs of running the business can be covered; and
- g) whether a commercial rate of return on investment can be achieved.

However, factor g) above will be excluded from the viability analysis in all instances where the operator has private accommodation on the premises comprising at least 10% of the building (defined in terms of the proportion of the total habitable floor area, excluding hallways and landings).

**Note:** Supplementary Planning Guidance will be prepared giving further details assessment of viability of tourist accommodation.

**Policy TO3: Tourist Accommodation Outside the Designated Area**

Outside of the tourist accommodation area planning permission will be granted for the change of use of tourist accommodation to class C3 use (dwellinghouses) subject to Policy HO9 of this Plan.

- 11.11 Continuing the up-grading and improvement of properties is seen as vital to the success of the tourist accommodation industry. To retain or increase occupancy, as proposed in the Tourism Strategy, requires regular investment in, and maintenance of, quality, innovative facilities. Planning policy should, wherever possible, support such improvements. The Council is particularly keen to see improvements made to the quality of conference facilities so that economically valuable business tourism can be attracted to the Town. (Again an objective for the Tourism Strategy). Improvements which improve the number of bedrooms accessible to people with disabilities will also be welcomed.

**Policy TO4: Improvements to Existing Accommodation**

Developments and alterations which upgrade and improve the quality of

**accommodation and other related facilities will be granted planning permission, subject to the residential and visual amenity considerations set-out in Policies HO20 and UHT4.**

- 11.12 There have been few proposals for additional holiday accommodation properties in recent years, but the Borough Council is generally supportive of proposals for further high quality accommodation as it will contribute to the Town's 'tourist offer'. Planning permission was granted for a motel off Willingdon Drove, adjacent to the A22 New Route, and a hotel adjacent to the Mill Public House, Willingdon Drove has been completed. There has been a proposal in the past for a hotel at Sovereign Harbour, which would complement the range of facilities offered there. Schemes for the development of visitor accommodation and the provision of associated facilities on farms could well be eligible for funding under the England Rural Development Programme. Any such proposal on the Downland would be subject to Policies D1 and D5 of this Plan. Where approval is sought for unserviced accommodation it will be supported and a condition will be imposed on the permission to restrict it to holiday/tourist use during the season from 1 April to 31 October.

#### **Policy TO5: New Tourist Accommodation**

**Within the tourist accommodation area planning permission will be granted for additional serviced (use class C1) and unserviced tourist accommodation, subject to the residential and visual amenity considerations set-out in Policies HO20 and UHT4.**

**In exceptional circumstances planning permission will be granted for new class C1 uses (hotels and guest houses) outside the tourist accommodation area where it can be satisfactorily demonstrated that:**

- a) **there is a need for the proposed development that cannot be met within the tourist accommodation area;**
- b) **the development would link to and complement an existing or proposed tourism or leisure facility;**
- c) **there would be no detrimental effect on residential, visual or environmental amenity (see Policies HO20, UHT4, and NE28), including views from the Downland (UHT3).**

- 11.13 There is no provision for camping and touring caravans in the Borough, although there are sites just outside at Pevensey Bay. There is, however, a recognised need for a camping and touring caravan site, as it provides reasonable self-catering accommodation of interest both to domestic and overseas visitors, whilst at the same time benefiting the local economy due to the need to purchase food and drink locally.
- 11.14 The Council has a long-standing commitment to a site in the Southbourne Sector of Eastbourne Park but due to the built-up nature of much of the Borough, and the Downland's designation as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), it is unlikely that provision can be made elsewhere. A planning brief will be prepared setting out the way in which the development of a quality site in the Southbourne Sector is envisaged, including identification of likely appropriate ancillary facilities, such as sanitary arrangements, cafés and leisure facilities. Static caravans would not be permitted on site, and the location would be expected to complement other leisure facilities in the area. In particular the planning brief will need to give guidance on appropriate measures to enable the proposed site to be developed in an area at risk of flooding. (PPG25 counsels that camping and caravanning sites should not generally be located in an area at high risk of flooding).

#### **Policy TO6: Camping and Caravanning**

**Planning permission will be granted for the development of a camping and touring caravan site within the Southbourne Sector of Eastbourne Park to complement leisure facilities within the area, subject to:**

- a) **compliance with Policies NE24 and NE25 of this Plan, including provision of appropriate landscaping to limit the visual intrusiveness of the development;**
- b) **compliance with Policy LCF10 of this Plan;**

- c) provision of pedestrian and cycle links to existing and any proposed tourism/leisure facilities within the Southbourne sector;
- d) no detrimental effect on residential, visual and environmental amenity (see Policies HO20, UHT4 and NE28);
- e) any building associated with the development to be ancillary to the camping and touring caravan use of the site;
- f) no static caravans to be permitted on the site.

**Note:** A planning brief will be prepared to guide this development.

### ***Attractions and facilities***

- 11.15 Eastbourne has a diverse range of tourist attractions with a particular strength in family entertainment and attractions that are unique to a traditional seaside resort (attractions such as the Pier, Bandstand and Carpet Gardens). Underpinning the main supply of attractions is a strong support market of secondary attractions (such as the Sovereign Centre, putting greens and boat trips).
- 11.16 The Council's Tourism Strategy Statement recognises that regular investment in new and existing attractions is necessary if Eastbourne is to maintain and promote its status as a major resort and capture a wider share of the tourism market. This would also comply with the County Structure Plan Policy LT3 which supports new tourist attractions, activities and facilities to enable coastal resorts to meet the challenges of changing markets. Moreover investment is also vital if the Tourism Strategy's objectives of increased levels of real tourist expenditure and increased local tourism employment are to be achieved.
- 11.17 The preferred location for such development is in areas where there are already existing attractions. However, as the character of each of the identified areas is different, some areas will be more suited to certain attractions than others. Two areas are identified away from the traditional areas for attractions: Eastbourne Park, where a particular opportunity is perceived for facilities complementing both the existing model railway and the proposed camping and touring caravan site; and at Sovereign Harbour, complementing the new "Waterfront" development. In particular Sovereign Harbour Ltd have expressed interest in developing marina related leisure and commercial activities on land to the east of the Outer Harbour. A planning brief will be prepared for the area of land between the wastewater treatment works at Langney Point and the Harbour Arm. The brief will indicate appropriate tourist-related uses for the site and consider small areas for residential development within the scheme to link to existing housing on the harbour frontage. It will also consider appropriate uses for the Martello Tower as part of the wider scheme.

#### **Policy TO7: Preferred Area for Tourist Attractions and Facilities**

**The following areas are identified as the preferred location for new quality tourist attractions and facilities:**

- King Edwards Parade-Grand Parade-Marine Parade-Royal Parade-Prince William Parade;
- Devonshire Park (see PoliciesTC9 and LCF6);
- Eastbourne Park (Southbourne Sector);
- Sovereign Harbour (two specific areas are identified on the Proposals Map);
- Land adjacent to the A22 New Route and Willingdon Drive.

#### **Policy TO8: New Tourist Attractions and Facilities**

In the preferred areas for tourist development proposals for new quality tourist attractions and facilities and extensions to existing tourist attractions and facilities will be permitted, provided they do not conflict with other policies in this Plan, and meet the following criteria:

- a) a high quality of building design and landscaping, sympathetic to the setting of the site, including the re-use and refurbishment of existing buildings, where appropriate;
- b) development to be subject to the residential, visual and environmental amenity considerations set-out in Policies HO20, UHT4 and NE28 and to conform with retail policies set-out in SH3, SH4 and SH5;
- c) development to reflect the area's character and, wherever possible, complement existing facilities;
- d) provision of access for the disabled and others with mobility problems;
- e) development to enjoy good, safe convenient access by public transport, on foot and by bicycle and adequate car parking provision to be made (see Policy TR11);
- f) agreement of a satisfactory travel plan in appropriate circumstances (see Policy TR3);
- g) provision of appropriate safety and security measures, including crime prevention measures in layout and design (see Policy UHT1);
- h) compliance with policies in this Plan in respect of environmentally sustainable development, including NE3 (conservation of water resources); NE4 (sustainable drainage systems); NE5 (minimisation of construction waste); NE6 (recycling facilities) and NE11 (energy saving measures).

- 11.18 Eastbourne's clean and elegant seafront is the Town's most important feature for 70% of visitors, and is a feature that distinguishes the Town from most other seaside resorts. An important component of the Seafront is the relatively uncommercialised façade of hotels and guest houses between King Edwards Parade and Prince William Parade. The Tourism Strategy Statement seeks to maintain the condition of the Seafront buildings to a high standard so that it is distinguished from the Seafronts of other resorts. Planning control has an important role to play in achieving this objective, particularly as much of the Seafront lies within a Conservation Area.

#### **Policy TO9: Commercial Uses on the Seafront**

The change of use of properties in King Edwards Parade, Grand Parade, Marine Parade, Royal Parade and Prince William Parade, to commercial or retail uses other than hotels and guest houses and their ancillary restaurants/bar facilities will not be permitted, unless:

- a) no material change to the external appearance of the building is involved, including any advertising; and that
- b) it can be satisfactorily demonstrated that the proposed use would be compatible with the designated tourist accommodation use (see Policy TO1).

- 11.19 The Tourism Study estimated that 41,000 foreign language students visited Eastbourne in 1998, predominantly staying with host families, and providing income of over £5.5 million for the Town. There are 29 foreign language schools in Eastbourne, either in permanent premises or using temporary facilities, such as educational and community buildings, during

the summer season. Foreign language students are an important component of Eastbourne's tourism market and it is appropriate for planning policy to support this sector, provided that residential amenity, in particular, is not affected.

**Policy TO10: Language Schools**

**Planning permission will be granted for the establishment and development of new, or expansion of existing, English Language Schools subject to other policies of this Plan, provided that:**

- a) they are in or adjoining commercial areas;**
- b) they are not in predominantly residential areas (see Policy HO2);**
- c) the impact on residential, visual and environmental amenity is acceptable (see Policies HO20, UHT4 and NE28); and**
- d) a travel plan can be agreed in appropriate circumstances.**