

## ROLE OF DORKING TOWN CENTRE

- 9.1 Dorking town centre fulfils the valuable role of being the long-established and attractive focus of many activities that together provide the essential identity and cohesion for the town itself and surrounding rural communities. The largest and closest villages that look to Dorking as being their main centre are Brockham and Westcott. Dorking town centre offers a range, choice and scale of activities that cannot be viably matched in the more local centres and need to be protected in the community interest. They are also collected together in a location that is the most accessible to public transport. A successful town centre with the services, facilities and focus it provides makes a significant contribution to the quality of life to the local communities.
- 9.2 The continued and evolving role of town centres is under threat from developments which seek to locate outside town centres. It is one of the purposes of the policy below to prevent such developments which would have a detrimental effect on Dorking town centre.
- 9.3 Following a policy in the Consultation Draft Local Plan the Council established in 1994 a Town Centre Forum for Dorking in order to bring together those principally involved in, or with a particularly strong interest in, the town centre to achieve a more holistic approach. The Council recognises that it takes both the private and public sectors together with the voluntary sector, to produce and implement a concerted strategy to improve facilities in Dorking town centre. The Forum consequently develops and formalises the forging of a partnership between the Council and Surrey County Council, the Chamber of Commerce, retailers and business interests as well as local amenity bodies.
- 9.4 Additionally, a town centre manager has been appointed to be the point of contact and co-ordinator between businesses, the public, statutory undertakers, the Council and Surrey

County Council concerning the management, promotion and improvement of the town centre.

### POLICY DTC1 – ROLE OF DORKING TOWN CENTRE

The role of Dorking town centre as the primary location for shopping, social, cultural and community and commercial facilities will be promoted and proposals which would detract significantly from that market town role will not be permitted.

## STRATEGY

- 9.5 The Council wishes to see Dorking town centre continue to be a busy, architecturally valued historic centre of a traditional scale and character which provides an important focus for local people and visitors. It is intended that it will retain its own unique sense of place and change will be of a relatively small scale. Conservation of the historic character is at the core of this strategy. Town centre facilities will serve the shopping and some of the business needs of an essentially local population, together with visitors. Another important role is to offer a complementary range of non-retail facilities including eating and drinking establishments with which Dorking is well served. The antiques shops for which Dorking is renowned will fulfil a wider role.
- 9.6 Major new road proposals for Dorking were investigated in detail and rejected during preparation of the 1983 Dorking Area Local Plan. One of the principal reasons was that they would unacceptably harm the town's character. A consequence is that the shopping streets will still need to accommodate vehicular traffic. Measures proposed in the Dorking Movement Study seek to reduce the more harmful effects of vehicles in these streets and give greater priority to the interests of the pedestrian and the environment.

- 9.7 When judging town centre proposals against the policies in this Plan the contribution each individual policy makes to the overall town centre strategy must be taken into account.
- 9.8 The objectives of the strategy for Dorking town centre are as follows.

### Shopping

- *To sustain and enhance the vitality and viability of Dorking town centre which acts as the focus and serves the whole community of Dorking and the surrounding rural area and where the proximity of competing businesses facilitates competition from which consumers benefit.*
- *Not to allow any shopping development on the edge of or outside Dorking shopping centre that would undermine the above objective.*
- *To concentrate retail uses in the town centre as being the most accessible location by a choice of means of transport and in order to facilitate multi-purpose trips.*
- *To encourage improved town centre supermarket provision.*
- *To allow the principle of small-scale extensions to shops and additions to town centre shopping. Larger scale shopping schemes are not planned and will only be allowed in the longer term if there is clearly a need.*
- *Preclusion of any further non-retail units in the prime shopping locations so as not to dilute their shopping function and efficiency. Allied to this is limited flexibility for further non-retail units in secondary shopping areas.*
- *Recognition of the importance and protection of the antiques trade centred on West Street, which forms an essential part of the character of Dorking and acts as a draw for visitors.*
- *Continuation of the open air market on its site adjacent to St. Martin's Walk.*

### Development Provision

- *Provision for limited office development but resistance to large-scale schemes.*
- *Enhancement of cultural, recreation and leisure facilities.*
- *Provision for a new Dorking museum adjacent to the antiques area off West Street in order to enhance the facilities for visitors.*
- *Provision for more small dwellings over shops, in redevelopments and the resistance to the loss of town centre dwellings.*

### Traffic

- *The carrying out of further public works to the shopping streets and pedestrian areas to give greater priority to the needs of pedestrians and cyclists and the enhancement of the historic character of the town rather than facilitating the easy movement of through traffic.*
- *Maintenance of at least the present level of shoppers' parking.*
- *All new business development to be provided with appropriate car parking and opportunities taken in appropriate cases to secure dual use of parking at weekends.*

### Environmental Enhancement

- *Continuing the High Street enhancement programme into West Street and South Street.*
- *A planned programme to continue improvements to shopfronts and advertisements, where necessary.*
- *Insistence upon a high quality of design for new buildings.*
- *Encouragement given to the improvement of the appearance of existing buildings in the Conservation Area through grant aid in specified areas.*
- *A tree planting programme in the town centre areas behind the main shopping street.*

- *Creation of a nature reserve off Archway Place and amenity area off Vincent Walk.*

## Management

- *Promotion of arrangements for more effective day-to-day town centre management and liaison with town centre interest groups to produce a cleaner, better functioning and more attractive environment.*

## SHOPPING

- 9.9 Policies relating to new foodstore provision and retail warehousing are set out in Chapter 8 of this Plan.

## NON-RETAIL UNITS IN SHOPPING STREETS AND THE ANTIQUES TRADE

- 9.10 A shopping centre the size of Dorking needs to retain a strong core of retail floorspace in the heart of the shopping centre in order to attract shoppers through its convenience of use, efficiency and quality of shopping. This forms a central tenet of this Plan's strategy for Dorking town centre. The linear nature of the shopping centre makes it all the more important to retain a concentration of shops in the prime central area otherwise it will become inconvenient to use and off-putting to shoppers with serious consequences for the centre's retail function. The prime shopping area already contains various non-retail units such as banks, building societies, and the White Horse Hotel, although most of them have been long established. It is considered that the point has been reached in this prime area that further non-retail units would be likely to reduce Dorking's shopping appeal and vitality. Bearing in mind the flexibility allowed for in the Town and Country Planning Use Classes Order, additional losses of shops through planning permissions in this area are likely to have a detrimental effect on its viability and vitality. Complementary to this restrictive approach in the prime locations is a greater flexibility in the secondary areas where non-retail units can, in some circumstances, have the most to contribute.

But even here careful control of non-retail uses is justified to ensure that an undue concentration of such uses in any particular section of street frontage is avoided. If these locations are to continue to provide premises for the smaller specialist shops which are a part of the function of Dorking, then a pool of shops needs to be precluded from a change to higher rental or value uses.

- 9.11 Taking the shopping centre as a whole, the percentage of non-retail units (Class A2 - financial and professional services and Class A3 - food and drink) in 2000 was 22% of the total occupied areas in the shopping centre. This was comparable to Leatherhead (23%) and other Surrey town centres of similar size. The policy below provides for further non-retail units in the secondary areas where certain criteria are met.
- 9.12 Policy DTC4 refers to assisting and retaining or expanding the Dorking antiques trade. Policy DTC2 below resists the change of use of shops in West Street where most of Dorking's antiques shops are located in order to retain shops capable of occupation by antiques businesses. In this way the retention of the critical mass of antiques shops necessary for Dorking to fulfil its function as a centre for the antiques trade is more likely to be achieved. With the cyclical nature of the antiques trade, the future of the antiques shop function of this area would be damaged if higher value uses were allowed to displace them. The policy seeks to prevent changes to other uses which would dilute the concentration of antiques shops.

**POLICY DTC2 – NON-RETAIL UNITS**

Development proposals affecting shops in the three distinct areas indicated on the Proposals Map in Dorking town centre will be considered against the following criteria:

**ZONE 1. PRIME SHOPPING AREAS**

Where the loss of any shops (Class A1) will not be permitted.

**PRIME SHOPPING AREAS ARE:**

- 1-155 High Street (north side)
- 2-136 High Street (south side)
- 1-11 South Street (east side)
- 2-58 South Street (west side)
- 1-7 and 20-25 St Martin's Walk

**ZONE 2. SECONDARY SHOPPING AREAS**

Proposals involving the change of use of a shop (Class A1) to use for professional and financial services (Class A2) and/or food and drink including takeaways (Class A3) will be permitted provided that:

- a) they would not result in a concentration of such uses either in a part of, or across the secondary shopping area as a whole, that would be harmful to the centre's vitality and viability as a district shopping centre;
- b) they would not otherwise have an unacceptable impact on the character, appearance or amenities of the area;
- c) they would not result, individually or cumulatively with existing premises, in nuisance and/or disturbance to neighbouring residents or in conditions prejudicial to road safety.

Development involving a change to other uses will only be permitted if the new use would have overriding community benefits.

**SECONDARY SHOPPING AREAS ARE:**

- 157-311 High Street (north side)
- 138-350 High Street (south side)
- 5-8 New Parade, London Road
- 15-19 and 62-140 South Street
- 8-19 St Martin's Walk
- Old Kings Head Court

**ZONE 3. WEST STREET ANTIQUES SHOPS AREA**

Where the loss of shops (Class A1) will not be permitted. This area covers the length of West Street.

- 9.13 The expansion of an existing non-retail unit that displaces a neighbouring shop in the Prime Shopping Areas will only very exceptionally be acceptable if there are no practical alternatives such as extensions to the rear, use of upper floors, or relocation and provided the improved facility makes a positive contribution to the shopping centre.
- 9.14 Outside the Prime Shopping Areas the Policy is deliberately not prescriptive in terms of defining the maximum percentage of non-retail units along a given frontage, in terms of unit numbers or frontage distance, or the maximum number of non-retail units that can be clustered together. The circumstances of each case needs to be considered against the overall intentions of the Policy, the location, the width of shop frontage concerned, and the effect upon the retail character of the street. However, rarely will the clustering of any more than two non-retail units be acceptable. Any endeavours the owner has made to let the premises as a shop and the availability of suitable vacant Class A2 or Class A3 uses elsewhere will be considered. At the same time consideration will be given to the existing shop vacancy rate in the town, the realistic likelihood of the premises being occupied as a shop and the need to achieve interest and activity in the Prime Shopping Areas.
- 9.15 While the specific use applied for may not be damaging in itself, the subsequent ability to change to certain other more damaging uses without the need for planning permission may justify in particular circumstances, the imposition of a planning condition restricting the proposed use within financial and professional services (Class A2) or food and drink (Class A3). In each case of this applying, a reason for the planning conditions will be given.

**Loss of Non-Retail Uses Within Dorking Shopping Streets**

- 9.16 It is recognised that some premises for professional and financial services and food and drink have a function in the shopping centre, and in certain circumstances proposals can be acceptable. However, the Council does not consider other non-retail uses such as general

offices are appropriate to shopping frontages. If Class A2 and Class A3 uses are allowed to be displaced by other uses which do not have to be located in shopping streets, the subsequent possible need for the replacement of those Class A2 and Class A3 uses may be seen as a reason for further losses of shops.

#### **POLICY DTC3 – LOSS OF NON-RETAIL UNITS IN DORKING SHOPPING STREETS**

In Dorking shopping streets the loss of any ground floor units used for financial and professional services (Class A2) or food and drink (Class A3) to any use other than a shop or residential use will not normally be permitted.

The change of use from premises for financial and professional services (Class A2) to food and drink (Class A3) may be acceptable provided no significant problems of neighbourliness or parking would result.

### **Dorking's Antiques Trade**

- 9.17 Dorking is well established as an important centre for the antiques trade, an activity which the Council sees as being complementary to the historic nature of the town centre and which attracts visitors. In addition to the antiques shops which are predominantly in West Street, some of the businesses often include some restoration work and the mixed uses involved form an integral part of the character and atmosphere of Dorking town centre.

#### **POLICY DTC4 – DORKING'S ANTIQUES TRADE**

The antiques shop function of West Street will be supported and proposals that assist in the retention or expansion of the Dorking antiques businesses will normally be permitted provided they do not create problems of unneighbourliness.

- 9.18 Policy DTC2 resists the change of use of shops in West Street, in order to retain shops capable of occupation by antiques businesses in an attempt to retain the critical mass of antiques shops necessary for Dorking to fulfil its function as a centre for the antiques trade.

## **BUSINESS AND INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT**

- 9.19 The business and industrial development policies and proposals are set out in Chapter 7 of this Plan. It is recognised that the activity and custom generated by offices and other businesses in the town centre contribute significantly to its viability and vitality. Consequently a business area boundary for the town centre has been identified in the Dorking Town Centre Inset of the Proposals Map within which some business development can take place subject to the controls set out in Policy E7. So far as Dorking town centre is concerned, business development is defined as encompassing offices and premises for research and development.

## **HOUSING**

- 9.20 One of the characteristics of Dorking town centre is the juxtaposition of dwellings with shops and businesses. Significant areas of attractive housing lie immediately behind the shopping streets, some of which have resulted from planning policies in the last 20 years. The advantages of town centre housing have been emphasised elsewhere in this chapter.
- 9.21 Some accommodation over shops is unused. In spite of planning permission in recent years for the residential conversion of accommodation over shops there is still an untapped potential for more small dwellings to be created above shops. In an area of relatively high house prices this form of often rented accommodation assists in providing much-needed lower-cost housing particularly for younger people out at work during the day. The Council will consequently encourage owners to use floors above shops for residential use, possibly for their own staff. Property owners with vacant accommodation over shops or indeed elsewhere in the town centre, may wish to contact the Council for information, including possible grants, on the "Living Over The Shop" project.
- 9.22 Policy HSG1 resists the loss of any existing residential accommodation throughout the District. This policy will be particularly rigorously applied in Dorking town centre even where due to the location and size of the dwelling it may be argued the amenities are sub-standard.

**POLICY DTC5 – ADDITIONAL TOWN CENTRE HOUSING**

Further residential accommodation in Dorking town centre will be encouraged and in principle will normally be permitted particularly in the conversion of accommodation over shops, business premises and in mixed-use developments.

- 9.23 The provision of car parking will be flexibly applied where clearly there is no physical scope for such car parking provision, or full provision will prejudice townscape objectives, and the overriding need is for residential accommodation in the town centre.

**ENTERTAINMENT, CULTURAL, RECREATIONAL AND COMMUNITY FACILITIES**

- 9.24 The area on both sides of Reigate Road forms the general civic area of Dorking and comprises the Council Offices, Library, Surrey County Council Area Offices, Magistrates Court, bowling green and public tennis courts, Dorking Halls, the Swimming Centre and car parks. There are a number of outbuildings and other buildings behind Dorking Halls that are occupied by a variety of bodies many of which are community related. In addition there is the former Baker's Garage which the Council acquired in 1997 for redevelopment to meet the needs of the local community for a use listed in Policy DTC6.
- 9.25 The Council has already made significant improvements to Dorking Halls. Planning permission has been granted for the development of a sports centre on the site of Baker's Garage. The Council hopes to carry out this development if the necessary finance can be assembled. The scheme involves the removal of the existing Swimming Centre and rearrangement of the car park and vehicular access.
- 9.26 The overall scheme involves the redevelopment of the existing Swimming Centre to give the necessary financial support for the construction of the Sports Centre. The first preference for

such a development will be a use that falls within one listed in Policy DTC6. If there is no requirement for such a use an alternative enabling form of development may be acceptable provided it accords with the strategy of the Plan and relates satisfactorily to adjoining uses.

- 9.27 For the purpose of this Policy the terms "civic and community purposes" shall include any local or central government or public sector function, even if provided by a private body, which serves primarily the needs of the Mole Valley area.
- 9.28 The amount of car parking to be provided in this area will depend upon the need created by Dorking Halls and any sports centre or alternative community project taking into account the area's proximity to public transport facilities. It will also depend upon an assessment of the degree to which this area should provide long-stay car parking for the business community of Dorking.

**POLICY DTC6 – REIGATE ROAD AREA OF CIVIC, ENTERTAINMENT, CULTURAL, RECREATIONAL AND COMMUNITY FACILITIES**

The Reigate Road area shown on the Proposals Map is identified for civic, entertainment, cultural, recreational and community purposes. Proposals which would prejudice the provision of development for these purposes will not normally be permitted.

**DORKING TOWN CENTRE TRAFFIC**

- 9.29 The street pattern is still essentially medieval with no new roads that often characterise the edge of other town centres. As a result the shopping streets suffer from the effects of traffic, some of it through traffic. Their pedestrianisation is not possible without building new roads which in the circumstances of Dorking would be environmentally too damaging. Consequently, a fundamental tenet of the strategy must be to control or calm the effects of traffic so far as is possible.
- 9.30 The design of roads and pedestrian areas is influential in shaping the character of towns. Arresting the increasing dominance of traffic and

the carriageways and widening some of the pedestrian pavements in places in the shopping streets should assist in the overall strategy of reinforcing the historic character of the centre.

- 9.31 The Council wishes to create a town centre environment where motorists will be conscious of driving into a special environmental area where their demands for ease of movement are tempered in the interests of shoppers and the environment.
- 9.32 A consequence of this approach may lead to further traffic on the Chalkpit Lane/Ashcombe Road route. The environmental implications of this are being examined as part of the Dorking Movement Study. Nevertheless the town centre will still continue to accommodate substantial traffic flows associated with those primarily having a business there and other locally-based trips.
- 9.33 The County Council carried out a Dorking Movement Study in conjunction with the District Council's Environmental Enhancement Strategy for the town centre. Especially within Dorking's historic core, it is important that the design of new highway works, pedestrian areas and street furniture respects and enhances its special character and appearance.
- 9.34 The Dorking Movement Study proposals, as set out in the Local Transport Plan 2001/2 – 2005/6, include:
- provision for a new "Quality" Bus Service between Dorking Station, the town centre and Goodwyns estate with associated signals and traffic management measures, including making part of Old London Road one way, to enhance its attractiveness as an alternative to the car;
  - provision of cycleways from Brockham, North Holmwood and Ashcombe Road focusing on the town centre;
  - improvements to Vincent Lane, with possible longer-term conversion to two-way traffic;
  - a 20mph zone in the core of the town centre;
  - traffic signals at the junction of Westcott Road and Vincent Lane and associated junction improvement of the Station Road and West Street junction;

- pedestrian safety measures particularly associated with schools;
- Dene Street made one-way southbound at the narrow length near the High Street;
- a range of different traffic management and environmental measures aimed at improving the environment of the town centre.

The package of measures has been put forward for inclusion in the Surrey Local Transport Plan for Government funding. The land use policies of this Local Plan, including Policy DTC7 on car parking, and Policy E5 Vincent Lane are consistent with the strategy and policies emerging from the Movement Study.

## CAR PARKING

- 9.35 Shoppers' car parks are well distributed along the length of the shopping centre. At present the supply is just adequate to meet demand but parking demand can be expected to rise in future. There should therefore be no reduction in provision which would make the town centre become less convenient to use. In accordance with Central Government guidance in Planning Policy Guidance Note 6 - Town Centres and Retail Developments, and Note 13 - Transport, together with the Surrey Transport Plan, which seek to discourage travel to work by car by limiting town centre car parking, this Plan does not allocate land for any new off-street long-stay car parks.
- 9.36 The County Council's current car parking standards are set out in 'A Parking Strategy for Surrey' which was published in November 1999 as interim Supplementary Planning Guidance. The District Council has adopted them for the purposes of development control. To encourage the change of use to residential purposes and the development of small unit new housing on restricted town centre sites, the parking standards may be relaxed. In the case of business and industrial development, the parking provision should not exceed the maximum standards set out in 'A Parking Strategy for Surrey' to discourage car travel to work. Also, where appropriate, shared usage of the spaces by the public at weekends shall be sought to enhance shoppers' parking provision.

**POLICY DTC7 – CAR PARKING**

1. The Council will manage its public car parks to give priority to meeting shoppers' parking demands in those car parks closest to the shops with long-stay parking for those working in the town centre being less centrally located.
2. The Council will seek the agreement of owners of large private and institutional car parks in the town centre for arrangements to be made, where practical, for the use to be made of those car parks by weekend shoppers. Similar arrangements agreed at the planning application stage for larger office and commercial proposals will be taken into account in the overall consideration of the application.
3. In applying the Council's current parking standards to business and industrial development, including changes of use, account will be taken of:
  - a) the developer's own requirements, subject to road safety and/or traffic management implications, and
  - b) the accessibility of the location to means of transport other than the private car, and
  - c) the possibility of commuted payments being made to assist in public transport provision.

**TOWN CENTRE ENHANCEMENT**

- 9.37 Dorking's key advantages are that it has remained relatively unspoilt and easy for shoppers to park. Its distinctive character as a historic country town makes it a pleasant place to visit. Consequently this advantage needs to be conserved and reinforced. At the same time the more modern demands of the public have to be recognised and where possible catered for sensitively so as not to prejudice the very qualities that make Dorking special.
- 9.38 As standards rise in competing centres and public expectations of shopping centres also rise so Dorking needs to build upon its strength as an attractive historic market town and at the

same time meet modern demands for convenience as far as possible. The following package of policies in this section seek to do that through recognising and enhancing Dorking's unique character.

**Street Enhancement Works**

- 9.39 The Council has already invested in street enhancement works such as the York stone paving on the raised pavement, the works around Pump Corner and protection of footways with bollards. The approach taken by the Council is to contribute to highway works that need to be carried out by the Surrey County Council in order to secure improved design and the use of higher quality materials more appropriate to the Conservation Area. The Council envisages continuing this programme of enhancement work in Dorking Conservation Area and considers there is scope for such works in West Street and South Street. It is considered that West Street lends itself to similar York stone paving as in the raised pavement in the High Street and around Pump Corner.

**Improving the Appearance of Existing Buildings**

- 9.40 If Dorking is to be successful in building upon its historic origins to retain and attract shoppers and visitors, then appropriate measures need to be taken to improve the appearance of buildings in the town centre. The Council proposes to do this in two ways. First by continuing to offer grants for facelifting improvements to the front elevation of buildings in the town centre. Second by encouraging greater sensitivity in the design of shop fronts and fascias to reflect more closely the architecture of the building of which they form part. This need not entail slavish adherence to traditional styles provided modern designs are well proportioned, use suitable materials and give a quality appearance.
- 9.41 The Council has already negotiated improvements to shop fronts and fascias, and in some cases provided grant aid. Policy ENV38 provides for the Council to take discontinuance action against an advertisement display that is sufficiently harmful to the amenity of the Conservation Area. Such

action will only be taken where efforts to secure changes through agreement have been unsuccessful. It needs to be fairly applied and demonstrated that it will be of benefit to all Dorking retailers through an upgraded centre. The Council will seek the support of the Dorking Chamber of Commerce and Town Centre Forum to this approach.

- 9.42 Considerable harm to the character of Dorking is caused by a few discordant post-war buildings. The Council will welcome in principle their replacement with better quality, higher value developments. However, the density of such developments can be a limiting factor compared to new design guidelines and development standards, including car parking. Consequently, on viability grounds developments are often put forward to lengthen the life of these unattractive buildings. The Council will discourage their retention and facilitate as far as possible their redevelopment.

#### **POLICY DTC8 – IMPROVING THE APPEARANCE OF EXISTING BUILDINGS**

The District Council will take the following action to seek the improvement of the appearance of buildings in Dorking town centre:

1. offer advice on the improvement of the appearance of buildings and in selected areas to be agreed, approach owners and offer grants for agreed facelift schemes including those involving shopfronts and fascias;
2. negotiate the removal and more sensitive replacement of advertisements and shop fascias that damage the character of the Conservation Area and where the advertisements are sufficiently harmful and agreement cannot be reached, take discontinuance action in accordance with Policy ENV38;
3. encourage the redevelopment of unattractive buildings. Where redevelopment of such buildings is impractical, any proposals to extend their life, including changes of use, will be assessed against any associated proposals to improve their external appearance.

- 9.43 In criterion 1 of Policy DTC8 the selected areas to be agreed are not defined as these will change from time to time. The Council concentrates grants in specific areas for the maximum effect to be gained from the available finance. In criterion 3 of Policy DTC8 many of the unattractive buildings in the town centre are the post war buildings built in the 1950s, 60s and early 70s, but this is not exclusively the case.

#### **Building Design and Respect for Distinctive Dorking Features**

- 9.44 A feature of Dorking town centre is its Conservation Area with its collection of small buildings that have grown organically over the ages. The townscape comprises a pleasant and naturally derived amalgam of uses and building styles along streets, and in small informal clusters of buildings behind the main streets. In these areas new developments would normally be subdivided into a number of smaller components in order to reflect the physical fabric and townscape of their surroundings.
- 9.45 Replacement buildings should primarily involve modest but high quality detailed infill. Any reproduction designs must be faithful in their detailing and not be superficial. Modern designs can be difficult to assimilate satisfactorily in a country town like Dorking but where with skill they are successfully executed they add vitality and interest. Their success depends upon the sensitivity of the architect for the locality and such factors as architectural proportions and the use of quality materials.
- 9.46 There are certain features that contribute to the distinctiveness of Dorking and therefore need to be protected. They are its roofscape, the prominent spire of St. Martin's Church, the exposed sand banks and the flint walls.
- 9.47 The roofscape of Dorking town centre is an important traditional feature of its character. It is formed by mostly steep pitched clay tile and natural slate roofs at irregular angles and levels. The introduction of flat roofs or roofs that are not finished in traditional materials will spoil that character and quality. Due to

the many changes in levels in and around Dorking the roofscape is particularly noticeable and contributes to the perception of the town.

- 9.48 The spire of St Martin's Church rising high above other buildings is a part of the total composition of roofs in the town centre and forms a dominant, attractive and familiar focal point. Some of the best views of the spire are against the backcloth of the North Downs. Its presence in numerous views contributes strongly to their quality and interest.
- 9.49 In the past there had been extensive excavation of sand in Dorking town centre which has left exposed sandbanks, many of them treed. They form an additional unusual and attractive characteristic of Dorking which warrants protection. Development in the vicinity of these sandbanks needs to take account of the potential dangers from falls of material. Generally the construction of high retaining walls to allow development to proceed in close proximity will not be favoured. Instead, wherever structurally appropriate the natural form of the banks should be retained, with netting and additional planting to assist in their stability. Buildings should be located a safe distance away.
- 9.50 Flint and brick walls are another feature associated with Dorking which should be retained. Where unavoidably a wall needs to be replaced, for instance for visibility purposes, it should be along the new boundary. The provision of further flint walls would reinforce this attractive characteristic of Dorking and will be encouraged. Flintwork on buildings can also be successfully incorporated, as in the case of St Martin's Walk Shopping Centre.

#### POLICY DTC9 – BUILDING DESIGN AND RESPECT FOR DISTINCTIVE DORKING FEATURES

The design of new buildings will be required to capture the spirit of their setting, respect distinctive Dorking features and make a positive contribution to the country town characteristics of Dorking town centre through:

1. respect for the bulk, proportion and scale of the surrounding development;
2. incorporation of mixed uses, unless the development is small scale or in a residential area;
3. where applicable reflection of the architectural proportions of any attractive traditional neighbouring buildings and incorporation of well-designed detailing and the use of good quality and natural external building materials;
4. roof design reflecting the existing varied and interesting roofscape built of natural materials;
5. not obstructing or spoiling public views of St Martin's Church spire;
6. preservation of the form and features of existing sandbanks, wherever structurally appropriate;
7. retention of flint walls unless they are to be replaced like for like. New flint walls and flintwork on buildings will be encouraged.

The need for the retention and, if necessary, restoration of any buildings or other features which by association, design or use have a significance for the local community will also be considered in proposals involving redevelopment.

#### Dorking Museum and the Redevelopment of the Foundry Works, West Street and North Street

- 9.51 The present Dorking Museum occupies inadequate premises, leased from the Council off West Street, parts of which are not conducive to visitors. One of the options for an improved museum would be to reprovide it in the same location in the antiques quarter and historic core of the town centre adjacent to the prime shopping area. A

new museum here, possibly including the refurbishment and extension of part of the existing museum, should reinforce the locality's historic character and add to the attractiveness of the town to local residents and visitors. The issue of a new museum will have significant financial implications for the Council but the purpose of this Plan is to make provision in land use terms.

- 9.52 Besides the existing museum the site comprises garage workshops which are an unsightly feature in this important location in the Conservation Area and some are immediately adjoining houses. To maintain the interesting mixed-use character of the immediate area and in view of other policies in this Plan promoting housing, it is proposed that the remainder of the site be redeveloped for housing and offices with associated car parking. Shopping is considered to be inappropriate as there would be insufficient draw off the main shopping area.

#### **POLICY DTC10 – DORKING MUSEUM AND THE REDEVELOPMENT OF THE FOUNDRY WORKS, WEST STREET AND NORTH STREET**

The District Council will promote a mixed redevelopment scheme for Dorking Foundry and Dorking Museum to include small dwellings, small offices, and a new museum.

- 9.53 Vehicular access is proposed to be taken off North Street as existing. The timing of the scheme will depend upon market conditions, the Council's availability of finance and any necessary facilities to relocate the existing workshop users.

#### **Tree Planting and Proposed Archway Place Nature Reserve And Vincent Walk Amenity Area**

- 9.54 The many glimpses of the North Downs and Box Hill emphasise the green setting of the town centre and are an essential element of Dorking's character. While the A25 Westcott Road western approach to Dorking and Ashcombe Road to the north have avenues of lime trees, within the town centre itself there are few trees. Many of the streets, particularly the shopping streets, do not lend themselves to tree planting because the spaces are too confined and attractive facades

would be hidden. However the setting of the late 19th and early 20th century housing streets in the town centre that are dominated by parked cars would be improved by the introduction of trees of appropriate species. The presence of underground services may however limit the scope for such tree planting and will need to be investigated. Affected local residents would be consulted. There may also be a case for the planting of individual specimen trees in appropriate locations elsewhere in the town centre and this will be studied.

- 9.55 The following policy recognises these deficiencies and the growing public awareness of the amenity and ecological value of trees in urban areas. An area of unused land adjacent to Archway Place, a well-used footpath, is owned by the Council. It offers the opportunity for a local nature reserve.
- 9.56 Surrey County Council own an undeveloped area shown on the Town Centre Inset adjacent to Dorking Nursery School, and next to the public footpath leading from West Street around behind Mount Street (Vincent Walk). If planted with trees and shrubs this area would make a significant contribution to the amenities of the town centre. With the agreement of County Council it could be made available to the adjacent school for nature projects.
- 9.57 Some residential areas may be subject to residents' parking schemes. In these cases any tree planting schemes will form part of an integrated plan to upgrade these areas.

#### **POLICY DTC11 – TREE PLANTING, PROPOSED ARCHWAY PLACE LOCAL NATURE RESERVE AND VINCENT WALK AMENITY AREA**

The following amenity area projects to enhance Dorking town centre will be investigated by the Council:

1. a residential street tree planting scheme;
2. a nature reserve on Council land between Dorking Football Club Ground and the public footpath in Archway Place, and
3. the creation of an amenity area on wasteland adjacent to Dorking Nursery School and Vincent Walk.