

What the PRC argues for - the PRC vision

1. Since its formation in 2003, by all the main resident associations in the East Grinstead and the surrounding area to fight local planning authority proposals to encourage excessive local development, the PRC has campaigned to see East Grinstead revived as a vibrant place in which to live, work and play within the constraints of its historic market town character, high quality countryside, deficient roads and other infrastructure shortfalls.

The PRC published its own Alternative Action Plan in 2006 and later helped to develop, and supports, the Town Council's own published vision "The Town Council's Alternative Approach to the Area Action Plan" (October 2006). This reflects local needs and local support for a smaller scale of development. We wish to work with the Town Council to secure that vision, and not have one imposed from outside.

2. Recognising the development constraints at East Grinstead

The Core Strategy will supercede the current Local Plan but should use the current policies as its starting point. These stress two major constraints on development at East Grinstead – infrastructure (especially transport) and environment (including Ashdown Forest). Those constraints apply with equal force today. Development proposed in the Core Strategy must either include *deliverable* plans to overcome these constraints, or be *scaled* within them. In any event, all development proposals must be founded on a credible and robust evidence base. The current inadequate evidence base, such as it is, does not justify the level of development in the Town that MSDC is seeking to promote through their Core Strategy draft.

3. A Coherent Plan

The PRC says that decisions taken by MSDC as to the overall number and location of houses to be built in the locality must only be taken after, and be based, on a realistic plan for the Town's economic development. All development plans must be founded on a credible and robust evidence base, involving proper assessments of traffic effects throughout the town and the surrounding area, of other infrastructure needs, and the protection of our surrounding countryside, as required by planning law and Government spatial planning policy. Any new development here must also be correlated to firm, realistic plans to expand the employment base within the Town proportionately (as well as the allocation of employment land and infrastructure improvements), to reduce out-commuting. East Grinstead must not be turned into a commuter satellite of Crawley.

4. No strategic development at East Grinstead

The PRC insists that no strategic development around East Grinstead, and no 'Relief' Road, be included within the Mid Sussex Core Strategy. It is clear from the evidence gathered for the abandoned East Grinstead Area Action Plan proposals, that the Town's traffic congestion problems will not be solved by more house building or by a 'Relief' Road, and that these would cause unacceptable environmental problems. Nothing has happened to change those conclusions. The Council needs to review its spatial strategy to take account of new evidence that reveals more brownfield sites and other sites (particularly nearer Crawley) that are more sustainable. That evidence was not considered earlier.

5. Capping the amount of development

The number of new houses and business sites allowed to be built within East Grinstead must be capped to take account of these major constraints. The Council should set measurable targets within the Core Strategy for the timely delivery of infrastructure improvements, the implementation of mitigation measures and new job delivery. They should only allow ongoing development to proceed to the extent that those targets are met.

6. Housing mix & quality

The PRC looks to the Core Strategy to set out policies for the mix of property types that MSDC wishes to encourage within the Town, that this mix include 40% affordable homes, and that increased planning attention be paid to the quality of design and layout of new property developments, and their sustainability.

7. Overcoming the existing infrastructure deficit & costing the improvements

The PRC looks for an itemised list of the existing infrastructure deficiency, especially with regard to roads into and through the town, to be agreed with the Town Council now. New housing must be conditional on the deficit being made good out of public funds; otherwise East Grinstead & the surrounding villages will continue to suffer from the consequences of a sub-standard road network and poverty of other local facilities indefinitely. The Core Strategy should include a clear, costed statement of all the infrastructure improvements (including the long overdue 'on-line' junction improvements) that Mid Sussex expects to provide for East Grinstead as part of its Core Strategy, when, by whom, and how they will be funded.

8. Management & delivery safeguards

The PRC believes that it is vital that the Core Strategy contains sufficiently clear and detailed 'development principles' to safeguard East Grinstead. MSDC's intention to relegate detailed plans for our area to a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) - a document which is not subject to any independent test of soundness - must not be used to sidestep or undermine these 'development principles'. All plans for East Grinstead must be based both on robust evidence of their sustainability, and on local support involving full and transparent local public consultation.

9. North Mid Sussex Area Action Plan

The PRC Alternative Plan proposes an Area Action Plan (AAP) for the whole of the northern part of the district. This would address all aspects of development (including strategic, small-scale development, town centre regeneration and windfalls). This North Mid Sussex Area Action Plan would be subject to proper local consultation and an independent inspection process. By deciding the allocation of sites within the North Mid Sussex area in this subsequent AAP the Council can proceed immediately with the generic policies in the Core Strategy whilst accumulating the evidence needed to choose the most appropriate sites in the northern area for development.

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