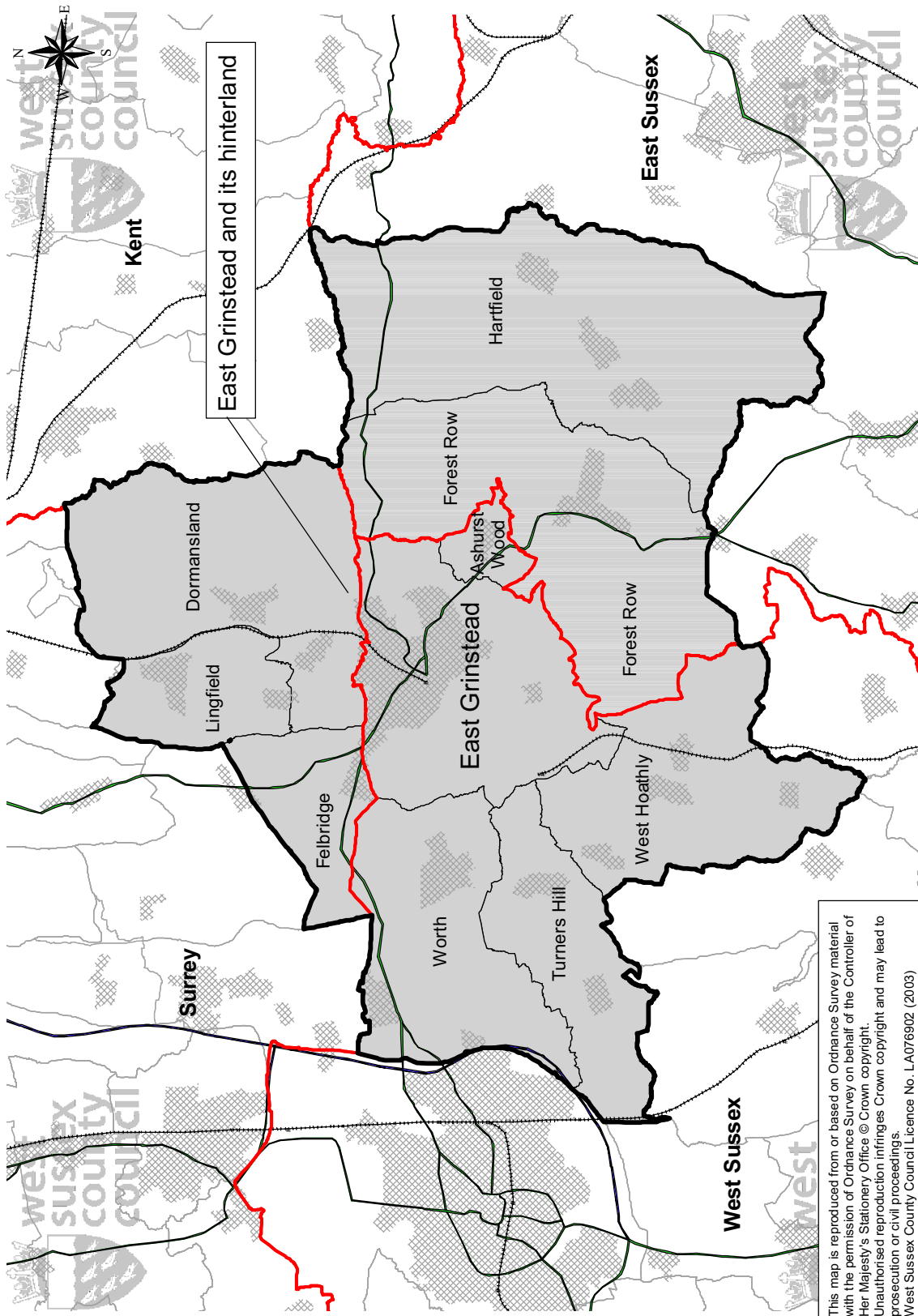


1. Introduction

- 1.1. In September 2002 East Grinstead Town Council took the initiative in drawing together a representative steering group to undertake a town healthcheck leading to the development of a local Action Plan for the town. It was decided at that time to use the Market Towns Healthcheck process identified by the Countryside Agency as this would provide the steering group with a recognised route towards developing an Action Plan.
- 1.2. East Grinstead employed Action in rural Sussex, who have experience of Action Plans and the healthcheck process, to assist the community to undertake the healthcheck and to guide them through the process. The funding for the work came from East Grinstead Town Council and a grant was received from West Sussex County Council.
- 1.3. This report provides a summary of the process as well as a detailed Action Plan. It is of necessity a summary report. More details of the worksheets and the consultation process are available as a separate document and can be viewed in the library or on the East Grinstead website (www.eastgrinstead.gov.uk) or can be purchased from the Town Council offices.
- 1.4. East Grinstead is a town of some 22,928 (2001) population that is situated in the north east of the County of West Sussex. It is situated in fact close to the points where four counties meet and therefore has boundaries with or close to East Sussex, Kent and Surrey. Its economic and social hinterland comprises the directly adjoining group of parishes, but its influence in terms of certain services extends further than that. For the purposes of this study the hinterland of East Grinstead has been defined as East Grinstead with its surrounding parishes of Ashurstwood, West Hoathly, Turners Hill, Worth, Dormansland, Felbridge, Lingfield, Forest Row, and Hartfield. Figure 1 shows the location of East Grinstead and its defined hinterland.
- 1.5. It was acknowledged from the beginning that some of the current issues within East Grinstead are of a strategic nature and that decisions will ultimately be made by strategic planning or transport bodies. It is important that the views of East Grinstead are known and the healthcheck process has helped to identify the issues and priorities from the town's point of view. The actions for East Grinstead concerning these strategic issues are much more about influencing and informing external decision-makers about the views of the East Grinstead community. Other actions identified in the following plan involve direct actions by the community, with its partners that will achieve improvements and developments in East Grinstead that address the identified current issues.



Map 1 – East Grinstead and its Hinterland

What is an Action Plan?

- 1.6.** A Town Action Plan is a document that itemises agreed actions that the community has identified as important and requiring local action. The Action Plan is a statement of how the community sees itself developing over the next few years and it identifies specific actions and policies that reflect the views of the town as a whole.
- 1.7.** It is intended to be a document that is kept under review and is updated regularly and is therefore a working document for the whole town. It is intended that the Action Plan complements and helps to deliver existing strategies but importantly it will also try to influence the future policies and actions of more strategic bodies from the grassroots.
- 1.8.** The Action Plan is based on sound research, data collection and community surveys and participation. This analysis has been translated into issues, priorities and actions for the community to work together to achieve.
- 1.9.** Village and Town Action Plans have been encouraged in recent years by the Government as a means whereby towns and villages can vocalise their needs and wishes. It is current Government policy to increase active community participation and to develop a role for local action plans to help to influence local authority and other public sector strategies and policies.

Relationship with Local Strategic Partnerships

- 1.10.** The Government has also required local authorities to establish Local Strategic Partnerships within their areas. The core task of the Local Strategic Partnership is to prepare and implement a community strategy that reflects the views and wishes of the local community. The Local Strategic Partnership is required to have local representation from public sector organisations, the voluntary and community and local businesses.
- 1.11.** In Mid Sussex the Local Strategic Partnership has met and has developed a local structure based around Area Community Forums. One of the identified areas is the North Area Community Forum covering East Grinstead and its surrounding West Sussex parishes. There is a similar Local Strategic Partnership that covers Wealden District and in Kent.
- 1.12.** At a County level West Sussex County Council is also preparing a community strategy covering the whole County.

- 1.13.** The East Grinstead Action Plan forms part of the building blocks for both the Mid Sussex Community Strategy and the West Sussex Community Strategy. Some of the strategic issues and actions identified within the Action Plan will be ones that East Grinstead hopes that the Mid Sussex Local Strategic Partnership will acknowledge and adopt within their own Community Strategy. The Local Strategic Partnership is currently in the process of compiling its Community Strategy and the needs assessment associated with that process, that has involved local community consultation, has been incorporated into the healthcheck process.

The Market Towns Healthcheck

- 1.14.** The Market Towns Healthcheck provides a structure and process whereby town partnerships can develop a local action plan. It was developed and promoted by the Countryside Agency (see website www.countryside.gov.uk/market-towns). The healthcheck process is divided into five headings, namely: -
- The economy,
 - The environment,
 - Transport and Access,
 - Social and Community and
 - Partnership development.

It leads the town through a process, comprising worksheets and data analysis, that help to identify issues, priorities, a vision for the future leading to the agreed Action Plan.

- 1.15.** At the heart of the process is a series of community consultations that help to identify the priorities and actions but also importantly help to establish local interest and ownership. The completed worksheets are included as a supplementary report which also includes summaries of some of the focus group discussions (for details about availability see 4.1). Section 2 of this report also provides a brief summary of the healthcheck worksheets. The report aims to summarise the range of views within East Grinstead. With some issues however, a consensus view cannot currently be reached. The report has tried to accurately record all views.