

APPENDIX 5: ESSAY WRITING COMPETITION EAST GRINSTEAD SOCIETY

ESSAY-WRITING COMPETITION 2003

In the November 2002 issue of the Society's Newsletter, we published articles by Imberhorne School and Sackville Community College on their programmes of citizenship studies. We subsequently invited all members of Year 7 (i.e., students aged 11-12) of both schools to write essays, for publication in the March 2003 issue, of up to 1,000 words, suggesting the positive factors about living in (or, for those resident outside the town, visiting) East Grinstead, and also outlining its problems with suggestions as to how those might be solved and highlighting one major improvement desired, with reasons.

We received a total of 35 essays—27 from Imberhorne and eight from Sackville—selected by the schools from all the students who entered the competition. Essays by the following students from Imberhorne were submitted for judging : Sophie Alderson, Giada Azzopardi, Alana Cane, Ben Casey, Hollie Cleaver, Amber Cloney, Eleanor Cobb, Claire Davenport, Edward Entecott, Emily Godbeer, Jemma Gould, Samantha Grantham, Holly Grigor, Simon Grisman, Andrew Hatswell, William Irwin, Gareth Johns, Daniel Knight, Brian Mansi, Irene Messinger, Zoe Mitchell, Laura Purton, Joshua Spindler, Daisy Stack, Nicholas Templeman, Rachel Van Loocke and Jordan Williams. From Sackville we received entries from Josie Andrews, Katie Baldwin, Amy Collinson & Natasha Rhone (joint), Rachel Day, Matthew Game, Katie Handscomb, Sarah Hume and Jenny Ottman.

Each was double-marked by members of the Society's Committee—Angela Cole, Laura Sansom, George Topping and Christopher Wheatley—assisted by Deidre Neville. Up to ten marks were awarded for identifying the positive factors about East Grinstead, and another ten for listing the problems associated with the town ; 30 marks were given for suggesting solutions, and a further 25 for highlighting a major improvement, with reasons. Originality and enthusiasm could also attract another ten marks each. Up to five marks were awarded (or deducted) for presentation, and five marks might be lost through poor grammar or spelling. Thus, the potential maximum mark was 100 (i.e., a combined total of 200 from both markers). The winning essay attracted a combined mark of 159 and the runner-up 135. Sincere thanks are recorded to those who carried out the marking and assessment, and to John Bridle for organising it.

It was heart-warming to read the essays, because not only had considerable effort been put into them in terms of both content and format, but also all the authors were upbeat about the town and the positives certainly outweighed the negatives. Furthermore, some interesting suggestions for improvement were made. (Please note that the quotations that follow, in italics, are reproduced exactly.)

A number of students considered that East Grinstead is well placed : "Its location in the very centre of the South-East of England, midway between London and the South Coast, close to Gatwick Airport and with direct rail links to London, yet in a quiet and rural setting, makes it an ideal centre for trade, shopping and tourism," observed Rachel Van Loocke. Several essays referred to the history of the town and extolled its ancient centre. Hollie Cleaver considers East Grinstead a "lovely place" and Rachel Van Loocke says it is a "quiet, pleasant town, full of tradition". Gareth Johns suggests that "tourists may also want to see where the witches were burnt at the stake". Sackville College and the Town Museum are recommended for visiting. Many referred to the town being surrounded by countryside, "which I like," wrote Hollie Cleaver, "because there are many walks, which I like to explore".

The size of the town was commented on favourably by several authors. Matthew Game observed, "It has everything we need but isn't too big". As a result, the town is thought to have a friendly atmosphere. "It is small enough to bump into people you know, but big enough to get a bit lost in," wrote Samantha Grantham. Linked to this is its community spirit, referred to by several entrants. This is exemplified by such things as the range of societies and clubs and the various town events throughout the year. "As for the street fairs that go on in east Grinstead they are some of the best," wrote Katie Baldwin, adding: "They're jam packed full of friendly people and many different stalls and attractions. There is many bric-a-brac stalls, places to eat and the magnificent steam engine show appears every year. You can go to them every may, and even if it's raining the show will still go on!" Katie Handscomb wrote, "There is a whole range of clubs and organisations for children including ; Guides, Brownies and Scouts [...]. There are also many sports classes and teams like, tennis, football, netball, cricket, trampolining and lots of others, all of them can be played at the Kings Centre and other places. There are singing, dancing and drama classes for all ages, Stagecoach is just one of them. They're all brilliant if you're into that, but if you're not and you just want something to do there are other Youth Clubs for children and teenagers to just have a good time. [...] At the elderly people home some of the clubs do Christmas dinners and special presentations for the residents."

The students were generally fulsome in their praise of the facilities available to residents and visitors. "Our Leisure facilities are great for the amount of people living in East Grinstead," wrote Rachel Van Loocke. The main focus of favourable comment was the Kings Centre, which is considered to have a wide range of activities for young people at a reasonable price. The premises are said to be in good condition, but Matthew Game comments, "The cafe is not always kept clean". Katie Baldwin pointed out, "the King's centre has kids club and creche so the kids can be cared for in a safe and responsive environment whilst you relax in the pool or play energetic sports such as squash, badminton, basket ball or even trampolining. The king's centre is the ideal place to hold a kids birthday as the roller disco and jester's club parties offer hours of fun for all ages." But Josie Andrews observed, "I think that the Kings Centre is out of date compared to other centres. All of its sports as far as I can make out are affected by this. For example the Triangle is a brilliant place to go swimming for galas, competitive swimming and fun, enjoyable swimming. [...] The reason why we hardly ever have galas that East Grinstead is because of the poolside space and the gallery over looking the pool are too small".

Amber Cloney thinks the centre needs some good slides. Jemma Gould suggested that "the swimming pool could have some flumes !" Samantha Grantham commented that, "The Kings Centre swimming pool is also a bit boring except for the floats which are also getting a bit boring. The Triangle swimming pool [in Burgess Hill] however is much better with waves and it goes down gradually and it also has a giant slide and a bubble pool." Josie Andrews wrote: "I think that the roof at either side should not slop down. This will help. Because we could build the gallery around all walls which will improve the space of the viewing. Also to build outwards so that the poolside edge will widen. [...] My mother often visits the Kings Centre for a swim or something different that she might like. She feels that the Kings needs to have a steam-room at the very least."

The town's other sporting facilities were remarked upon favourably, for example by Jordan Williams who said, "There are good rugby, football and hockey clubs, also badminton, squash, tennis and cricket". Equally enthusiastic was Edward Entecott: "East Grinstead has one of the best hockey clubs in the area. The England squad frequently train at the hockey club which is called Saint Hill. I think that is great inspiration to anybody wanting to learn hockey. The Hockey club and the Rugby Club have super club houses and facilities for players, members and visitors. The excellent rugby club has high standards and high hopes for the future with a large youth section representing every age group. Everybody that runs the clubs, training or holiday activities that I have ever attended like Star Track, East Grinstead Rugby

Football Club, East Grinstead Football Club, the Charlton football academy, roller skating and the Felbridge & Sunny Side Cricket Club have all been super and all the coaches have all been really helpful. All the clubs encourage and support children and I met and made many friends with children from other junior schools. Now that I have started at Imberhorne I am in the same year as lots of friends I already knew from the sports clubs. Because I know so many people I am really enjoying secondary school."

Many of the students commented, generally approvingly, on the range of shops and supermarkets in the town and the good value of the items sold. However, Hollie Cleaver thinks that, "It doesn't really have many toy shops or gadget shops". Rachel Van Loocke referred to the "many restaurants offering different menus from around the world".

Reference was made by several to the cinema, which, according to Irene Messinger, has the latest releases and where the tickets are cheaper than in Crawley.

Chequer Mead Arts Centre was the subject of positive comment. Ben Casey considers the theatre "truly amazing". "The Galleria café is an ideal place to relax," according to Amy Collinson & Natasha Rhone (joint entry); and Josie Andrews comments, "The Chequer Mead Art Centre is a absolute favourite place to go for ideas on homework and just for inspiration. Also the theatre is a good place to go when your feeling down in the dumps and you want to cheer yourself up".

East Court is also well liked. Josie Andrews wrote, "The town has wonderful walking areas for example East Court. It has brilliant forest surrounding the place with a police station and ambulance service. The memorial gardens are just a place to go in the summer only to see the colours." Jordan Williams stated, "East Court is a nice place to visit. The schools cross country races are held there and firework displays too. When it snows you can use your sledge there on the slopes." The town's other open spaces also attracted support. Irene Messinger suggested, "I think it's better to live in East Grinstead instead of a big town because there are loads of green places to take a walk and it isn't so polluted because of the trees and plants". Jemma Gould commented, "The parks near the town are excellent for meeting your friends at", and Ben Casey thinks there are "plenty of places where you could walk your dog/other pet". "Mount Noddy," said Matthew Game, "is good in the summer. It has tennis courts and playing fields. It has a playground for children and is a good place for cycling".

Many of the other facilities were also favourably referred to, including public transport ; the town's medical facilities and retirement homes ; and even our petrol stations and b & b accommodation ! The Public Library and the associated Tourist Information Office attracted positive comments from a number of students. Nicholas Templeman added, "Today the town is also famous for its cult churches, like the Scientology church with regular visits from stars like Tom Cruise, John Travolta and many more".

The new pavements currently being constructed were welcomed by one student. Several referred to the housing stock in the area : "The housing estates are hugely popular" (Ben Casey). Giada Azzopardi pointed out, "There are over 25,935 people living here and 110 of them come from year 7 in Imberhorne !".

A number of essays commented on the high standards of schools in and around the town, both primary and secondary, state and private. Ben Casey, for example, wrote, "the schools are jam-packed full of students eager to learn because the schools are so good", Giada Azzopardi adding, "There are good schools where lots of interesting activities take place in East Grinstead (even Sackville I think)".

Rachel Van Loocke referred to there being "plenty of local beauty spots and attractions within easy reach". Giada Azzopardi wrote : "East Grinstead is also a great tourist attraction and has had over 4.100 visitors since April 2002. This is

because of the thousands of attractions in East Grinstead. Here are some : Tulleys Farm (my favourite !), Kings Leisure centre (great swimming pool) Godstone Farm, Deer's Leap Park and last but not least Wakehurst. Those are some of my favourites but there are more on the East Grinstead web site." Other places mentioned in the essays were Ashdown Forest and Winnie the Pooh country, the Bluebell Railway, the British Wildlife Centre, Weir Wood Reservoir and even the Meridian Line !

But it's not all good news. We really wanted to know what are the negative factors about East Grinstead, as seen from Year 7's perspective, and what can be done about them.

Traffic and parking clearly emerged as their *bête noir*. There is too much traffic in the town centre. Parking is difficult and expensive, and vehicles are often parked on yellow lines. Laura Purton noticed that "since the money for parking has gone up people are parking outside of residents houses which is very inconvenient to those who are being trapped in their own home". Road safety is a related problem. "There are too many dangerous roads, which makes it more dangerous for young people to cross. There are hardly any cycle lanes on the pavement or on the road. Lollipop men and women are in the wrong places as well at London Road there is a lollipop lady for the people who go to Halsford Park School. This would be great, but there are already traffic lights on that particular part of the road ! I think this is quite silly" (Samantha Grantham). "Streets are ever so unsafe to cross" (Irene Messinger). The noise and fumes from traffic are also thoroughly disliked.

Litter is seen as the next most important problem. Ben Casey wrote : "Today you can barely walk down the road without seeing a crisp packet or a bottle lying in the side of the road. You could introduce more bins or people to pick the rubbish because litter will degrade your popularity for tourists." Sophie Alderson thinks, "It's been there ever since the new Mc Donald's has been built".

The third complaint was about the lack of facilities for young people. The recent closure of the bowl-ing alley was lamented by several. The skating facilities were decried by Brian Mansi : "The skate parks as you should already know are too small and cramped making it hard to use the half pipes without hitting people. A way you could solve it is by restricting the number of people on at a time or enlarging the parks."

Next in line for criticism were the shops, as many of them are quite small and there are no large department stores. Amy Collinson & Natasha Rhone commented, "there are lots of shops for young girls like New Look, Makays and Peacocks also there are some for boys but they don't sell things for 12 years and up". There aren't any large sports shops for young people, according to Holly Grigor.

Vandalism was mentioned as a problem, as was graffiti. Brian Mansi observed : "it looks horrible and its bad for the ozone layer. I don't mind stylish graffiti but that graffiti is just sprayed on to insult people. The words they spray are rude and not suitable for young children and it looks horrendous and also makes the area around it look terrible to." Samantha Grantham noted that "there are too many people drinking on the streets at night, which is very dangerous for them and us". Under-age smoking in the town was also disparaged by some of the authors.

Other problems mentioned included :

- Lack of hotel accommodation in the town centre
- "There is not many tourist places in East Grinstead, mainly because not many exciting things have been done" (Zoe Mitchell)
- Narrow pavements in the town centre
- "some of the buildings are dirty" (Eleanor Cobb)
- "Buses in the morning are always too early and if people want to get to work by nine there isn't a bus that actually gets there by nine it's either too early too

late" (Irene Messinger).

So, how do the students suggest that these problems are solved? Here are their solutions:

Traffic

Build a bypass "to stop transport bombarding the town itself it would make it easier for shoppers to relax while shopping instead of cars speeding up the road. This would improve the town and will make younger children more confident to go shopping alone" (Rachel Van Loocke). Clare Davenport hopes that, with a bypass, "when I go on the bus to school it won't take as long to get to school". Or, as suggested by Hollie Cleaver, build a bridge to take the traffic over the town. Ban traffic (apart from public transport) from the High Street. Build more car parks—perhaps in place of empty office blocks. Introduce park-and-ride schemes. Install another set of traffic lights. Have more cycle lanes. Improve bus and train timetables.

Bring in the tram—Samantha Grantham wrote: "I think I have one good idea in particular. I think we should have a Tram Station. If we had a tram station running through the whole of East Grinstead and its surrounding area it would make a lot of peoples lives easier. If they worked in East Grinstead, but lived in the surrounding area and couldn't get to work on time because of the traffic, they could just catch the tram. Plus it would cut down on the traffic and you could cross the roads easier."

Litter

"But by far the biggest problem is the litter. IT'S EVERYWHERE! The council should really sort it out; they should get more people to clean the town. Maybe they could get people to pay a fine for throwing stuff on the floor, and that way the council would have more money to clean the town and to solve other problems that the town faces" (Irene Messinger).

Facilities for young people

- A replacement bowling alley
- A games arcade
- A proper skate park (and skateboarding shops)
- More swimming pools for children
- An ice-skating rink
- Dry ski slopes
- More youth clubs and after-school activities
- A bigger leisure centre
- An amusement park
- A theme park
- A swap shop
- "Children's World", as envisaged by Hollie Cleaver: "Have you ever wanted to do the things adults do? Drive a car, own a house, and work in a shop or café? Then here is your chance. I have created a land where all this possible. There are go-carts for cars, big Wendy houses, shops, a factory and café to work in. You will have to work in the shop or factory, to be able to pay rent for your house. You can take a driving test on our safe roads, but don't break any rules or you could find yourself in jail. This will be a great day out for children."

Shops

- Build a shopping mall
- Locate major supermarkets outside the town
- Open a Pizza Hut or Pizza Piazza
- Have more designer shops

- "A few more shops that teenagers like, such as HMV, Oddballs, the gadget shop and Game" (Jordan Williams)
- "Put a big shop that sells things for young people in one of the spaces [empty shops]" (Holly Grigor)
- Build "a big food court in the shape of a burger" (Emily Godbeer).

Smoking

Katie Handscomb has the answer : "First put up signs around the town where gangs hang around, for example the atrium, but don't just have a mild poster saying don't smoke, make it show the really terrible effects that smoking has on the body to really get the message through that smoking kills. Have people come into schools to talk to the children, but not a gentle talk, I've had talks about smoking at school before and I know that if it is just a gentle warning it just gets boring and the children tune it out and don't listen to a word. So make it scare the children to make them understand. The next step is to stop advertising smoking as a cool thing on the TV., radio or anywhere if smoking has to be advertised, make it look bad I know for a fact, young people take a lot of notice to things in movies and television programmes. After that if there is still a problem enforce a rule that suppliers don't sell cigarettes without seeing ID first in fact I think cigarettes should be locked up somewhere that they couldn't even be stolen. If underage people are spotted smoking by a police officer they should be taken to the police station and have the cigarettes confiscated, their parents should be called and the matter should be taken up with them. If the parents are the suppliers they should be fined. The most important thing I think is to get the message through that smoking is bad for you when children are young so they grow up knowing the effects. I hope my solutions would work and who know ; maybe it would save a few peoples live."

Other improvements

- Improve disabled access
- Have more public toilets, and improve the existing ones : "Because of the smell and the disadvantages of those who maybe have push chairs and are in a wheelchair [...] the public toilets are very unhygienic" (Laura Purton)
- "I would like to see hot showers at East Court playing field" (Edward Entecott)
- Create another park "but not a play park but a grown-up park with flower beds and benches" (Zoe Mitchell)
- Have "more romantic places in town for newly married couple or already married couples or even unmarried couples" (Zoe Mitchell)
- Install a few more screens in the cinema
- Have street parties
- Introduce a charity rock festival with a parade : "you could even have fire breathers because I don't know anyone who dislikes them" (Brian Mansi)
- Build a chocolate factory!

The essays have demonstrated that the young people who wrote them are sensible, thoughtful and creative. Most of the essays were prepared and printed via computer, and a number included graphics, photographs (whether downloaded from the web or taken specially) and maps. The hand-written essays were often enlivened with colour and drawings.

Several went into some detail about the history of the town, demonstrating an encouraging interest in it (although it was not referred to in the competition specification).

The overall conclusion was that the students enjoy living in, or visiting, our town. Brian Mansi undertook a survey, and in answer to one of the questions, 19 respondents said they liked living here and only four disliked it. Here are some of the authors' own conclusions :

- "I enjoy living in East Grinstead, as it is a pleasant place for children and

- adults alike." (Eleanor Cobb)
- "I do not think that East Grinstead has any bad points and in my opinion it is perfect. [...] (I was lying I don't like the shops !..... East Grinstead is nearly perfect). [...] East Grinstead is a safe, friendly town and I love living here. " (Giada Azzopardi)
- "It can be fun, interesting, amusing but everything always needs improving. (Even if it just a little bit!)" (Sophie Alderson).

The Society's Committee is now giving careful consideration as to how to follow up the ideas generated, and this report has also been passed to the East Grinstead "healthcheck" team in connection with their current review of key issues affecting the town. Here are the winning entries :

FIRST PRIZE (£75) — RACHEL DAY (SACKVILLE)

Before I even write an introduction, I have to tell you that the following will be slightly biased, as East Grinstead is my home.

East Grinstead is a great town, not perfect, but a lot closer than most. I am not saying that it is completely without fault, but that it has much less wrong with it than some towns, and that it is an extremely pleasant place to live.

East Grinstead boasts many things—a huge range of shops, several wonderful housing estates, a cinema, leisure centre, and many youth facilities, yet perhaps most of all, a brilliant sense of community and community spirit. The previously mentioned probably being one of the most important aspects of East Grinstead. Take into account the Lions May Fayre, and the Town Spectacular, which happen annually, not to mention the hundreds of charity events that take place every single year. One of these that best symbolises East Grinstead is the Annual Christmas Light Appeal Fund that raises over £30000 a year. The range of groups that raise this money encompass elderly residents, local businesses, donations from dozens of local groups and individual donations. Another very special local organisation provides transport for the elderly and disabled via Egdart and Egbus. A quick trip to the library will reveal listings of hundreds of activities ; ranging from basketball to embroidery to singing, in other words, something for everyone ! While at the library, you might want to include a visit to Simon Kerr, the East Grinstead Tourism Officer. He can provide you with information from Bed and Breakfasts, East Grinstead Twinning to Museums and Stately Homes.

East Grinstead is geographically located in an area of outstanding natural beauty. It is right on the doorstep of Ashdown Forest, with a nature reserve situated almost on top of a local housing estate. In addition, it is a 30-minute drive away from the beautiful South Downs, which is a hikers paradise. For those who fancy the Sea Side, Brighton is a 40-minute ride away. As well as being in a beautiful location, East Grinstead is practical too. It is within commuting distance of Central London, which is useful for workers and tourists too. In addition, it is only 20 minutes away from Gatwick Airport, so it is useful for travelling abroad. It is a good opportunity for tourists to get to the town easily too.

The schools in East Grinstead have a very good reputation and consistent exam results. The choice of State or Private schools is also extremely good. As a pupil myself, I have found all of the opportunities presented to numerous, and varied. For example, during the summer, for my trial day at Sackville, we were all presented with a small booklet, 'Living Languages'. This was aimed at helping us to learn the basics in some languages, as well as finding out about East Grinstead itself. This was a brilliant book in more than one way. It showed the community working together with the local businesses, both secondary schools, and the local government. It was a brilliant accomplishment. Also, the schools both receive excellent funding, which means that Imberhome can specialise in Languages and Sackville in Engineering. Both schools offer a wide range of after school clubs and

activities, not to mention in school opportunities and extra curricular events.

East Grinstead also has a rich and interesting history, which can be viewed in full at the Chequer Meads Arts Centre. Perhaps one of the most interesting part of it's history was in the Middle Ages, when the High Street was built and the rich and poor lived on opposite sides of the town, and when it was a market village. Originally, Greensteede, East Grinstead is registered in the doomsday book as containing 14 men and 11 women, the beginnings of the town. It was composed of a few small huts, and was mostly farmland. Then, as the population grew, and other villagers made a home here, it gradually grew into modern day East Grinstead. Sackville College was originally an Alms house for the poor, and even today, some retirees still live there. Certain times of the year, Sackville College holds open days for the general public—if you have not been then it is well worth a visit. The same man who wrote a famous Christmas carol built it and his remains still lie in the St Swithuns Churchyard across the road.

I have mentioned the local library before, but it deserves a few more sentences. I have a personal affinity with the library, as I have been going there since I was three years old. Ever since I started going with my brother and Mum, we have been every three weeks and checked out 20 books each; we probably hold the record! The fact that every time, we can find new books to read definitely says something about the quality and range of material. I have also used it as a base for researching my homework.

In addition, another facility that is important to me is the Chequer Meads Arts Centre. I have been there on numerous occasions; watching pantomimes, plays, school competitions, Military bands, poetry competitions, concerts, special displays, lunches with visitors, and countless snacks with my American grandparents. Whenever they come, we always walk up there and rest for a while and order tea and shortbreads. They always comment upon how wonderful it is to have something like this in the local community. I think that the Arts Centre does so much for the community and hosts so many special events, that it definitely deserves extra funding from a variety of councils.

Up until now, I have just been saying how wonderful East Grinstead is. Whilst it is wonderful, a few things could be improved. I would like to tell you what they are and how I personally think that they could be improved upon.

My main point is facilities for disabled people in the town centre. I am not saying that it is terrible and awful, but that there is still scope for improvement. I will say that obvious effort has been put into improving these facilities, i.e. the pedestrianising of the town, and all of the benches provided. The pedestrianising will mean smoother pavement for wheel chairs, and easier walking for older people plus a newer look to the whole town. A few other good points about these facilities are the ramp that is installed in Woolworths, and the new ramp across from Barclays.

In my opinion, there is stil room for improvement. Entrances to shops could be changed from steps to ramps, and slightly wider aisles, as in some shops access would be extremely difficult. I recently visited the High Street with a slightly disabled person, and discovered these difficulties. One thing I noticed (aside from the point) was that most people gave way, and let us through, which was very kind. I think that just a few more ramps, and one pedestrian crossing suitable for blind people, would help to make the town almost as easy for disabled people as it is for able people, which is how it should be in my opinion.

The other thing is that traffic in the town centre, across from pizza express for example, can often be diabolical. It can take a long time to get through this area; it creates unnecessary delays throughout the town. Although it would cost a lot of money, I would suggest that the council should begin planning a bypass. This would relieve traffic throughout East Grinstead and make it easier for drivers of all ages. Even though building a bypass would mean the end of some fields and

housing estates, I think that the general opinion would be that having a bypass around East Grinstead would be worth the loss. Also, the bypass would be expensive, and time consuming, however to solve the problem of expense, it would be a good idea to organise some fundraising events, and put an appeal in one of the local newspapers. East Grinstead would definitely benefit from the installation of a bypass and its time that the council went about putting in a bypass. Controversial issues about the positioning of the bypass could be easily solved with a little work and compromise.

The two above paragraphs are the only things that I can think of in East Grinstead which really need changing. The rest of the town is not perfect, yet each day, a small improvement is made, and these do not need mentioning. The town is pretty much a well-rounded healthy, safe environment.

I like living in East Grinstead. It is convenient for all of my family; even my dog, who seems to enjoy the many walks and routes provided for dog walking and recreation, i.e. East Court. There is always something to do, whether it is at the cinema or at a local school faire, life is never dull.

Therefore, my essay comes to an end; with a conclusion that whilst it is not perfect, East Grinstead comes extremely close.

SECOND PRIZE (£25) — DAISY STACK (IMBERHORNE)

East Grinstead started off as a cluster of houses and farms, narrowly missed by the Romans. Since then, it has changed a great deal, good things and bad. My name is Daisy, and I live on the border of East Grinstead. I have lived here all my life, and I know East Grinstead almost as well as I know myself!

It is a busy, bustling little town, where many people live. However, like all human inhabited places, it has bad points. For example, they recently closed down the bowling alley in the Atrium, to make room for another night club! I can remember going to the bowling alley as a little child, and being thrilled by the bright lights, warm feeling and buzzing atmosphere. How can they close it down to make room for another, sleezy nightclub?

The only things for children to do are swim at the leisure centre, and go to the cinema! If there were more activities, less children would hang around on the streets, smashing windows, shoplifting and dropping litter! 1 plea, can we not have one more suitable thing to do?! Another thing—why is there so much litter?! McDonald's wrappers and plastic shopping bags dominate the high street! You cannot take a step without treading on a crisp packet! When I get home from going to Town, my shoes are plastered with chewing gum! Why not place more bins, hire a street cleaner, or make a law against littering our fair Town?

Also, a bit more parking space, please! It is almost impossible to find parking space on a Saturday afternoon! We could eliminate this problem by turning wasteland into parking lots, or introducing multi-storey car parking. Why not make cycle paths, so that we don't have to use as many cars? This would also help get rid of parking fumes!

One thing that bothers me—why is there no pavement going down baldwins hill? It is dangerous to walk there without one.

East Grinstead also has plenty of good points. It has lots of shops and housing accommodation, but has also managed to keep the charm of a dear little Town, a rare dignity nowadays! I love living here, and would not move for the World! If we can better these few points, we will know that we can do anything we put our minds to—not as individuals; not as a group; but as a Town!

SPECIAL COMMENDATION (£25) — DANIEL KNIGHT (IMBERHORNE)

Where Do I Live

I live at XXX but I recently moved out of East Grinstead from XXXXXXXXXXXX. Ashurst Wood is a small quiet village but I did not want to move from East Grinstead I think this proves that I think East Grinstead is a perfect Area to live and I think most people will have the same view.

Is it difficult to park

I think it is a hard place to park especially around schools. I think near every school there should be an average sized car park for public cars. I think there is enough car parks in the main part of the town where all the shops are. I also think the law needs to be more aware of people parking on the double yellow line because it happens alot.

Does it have all the shops It needs

I don't think It has all the Shops because they do not have good enough facilities for clothes shops because they are not varied enough. I also think they need more chemists all there is, is Boots which only mostly sells perfumes and isn't selling much medicine so maybe one or two chemists.

Is It attractive to tourists

I don't think it is attractive to tourists because people throw litter on the floor. there is too much crime in the town centre in the Shops. There is only one hotel in East Grinstead so there is not enough room.

How often do I visit East Grinstead and why

I visit East Grinstead five or maybe 6 days a week, from Monday to Friday I go to school sometimes I will stay after school to play with my friends down my old road but rarely. Sometimes on a Saturday I come to have a hair cut and shopping. I very rarely may visit on a Sunday to play with my friends at crossways Avenue's big section of green to play football.

What do I like about the town

My favourite building in East Grinstead is Pizza Express because I love pizza and it is my favourite food. I also like the cinema because it is cheap and they don't stop playing films. Saying my favourite things about the town brings me to what I don't like. Firstly there are 9 churches I think this is way to many and should at least be halved. Secondly there are too many supermarkets which take up to much space. I think this needs to be Improved.

What would Improve your life In general

A Bypass would Improve the town because if you are going to school you would not be so worried about arriving late.

What Will improve the town in general

More facilities for children like an amusement park or a swap shop where you can bring in a thing you don't like and swap it for something else around the same value.

Well done to all the entrants—it was a pleasure reading the essays that we received—and many congratulations to the three prizewinners.

The final stage in the Citizenship competition will be a debate between teams of Year 12 students (one from Imberhorne and one from Sackville) on the motion "East Grinstead is a dead-end town". This will be held at 5 p.m. on Tuesday 15 July 2003 in the Meridian Hall. The chairman will be the Society's President, Mr Michael Leppard, and a distinguished judging panel has been assembled. The winning team's school will receive £200 and the other school £100.