

CREATING A VIBRANT ECONOMY



**YOUR PLACE
YOUR PLAN.**
Winchester District Local Plan

BACKGROUND

10.1

Nationally and locally there is the need to de-carbonise the economy and address climate change. The council has declared a climate emergency and developed a Green Economic Development Strategy to create a greener, more sustainable and inclusive economy, in line with its ambition for the Winchester district to be carbon neutral by 2030.

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Winchester district has historically had a strong economy with low unemployment. Winchester Town Centre has also been a vibrant retail and commercial centre, with a growing leisure and tourism economy.

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There have been dramatic changes recently in the economy related to the COVID-19 pandemic and the global and European economic situations. There was an increase in home-working, which has impacted working patterns and employment space. Town centres in particular have been subject to rapid change, as the effects of lockdowns have added to economic uncertainties in retail and the town centre shopping economy. There has been a rapid growth in the role of the internet and on-line trading that has rapidly accelerated as a direct result of the pandemic, which has negatively impacted physical retailing.

10.4

The effect of recent events are still evolving and there are likely to be further changes to the economy of the country and locally, which are as yet unknown. With this background, it is vitally important that Local Plan policies are flexible to allow for the changes that may occur and support a green and robust economy.





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10.5 Green Economic Development Strategy

The council's Green Economic Development Strategy (GEDS) (2021) sets out the direction for the next ten years to bring green economic growth and transition to net zero carbon. The GEDS has six propriety themes covering all elements of green economic development and a range of proposed actions that will deliver the GEDS outcomes for people, businesses, and the lived experience. The GEDS themes are also relevant to other topics within the Local Plan.

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With regards to this topic, it is considered that the following policies and themes are of most relevance:

Innovative business and economy

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This theme focuses on Winchester district staying competitive and relevant to large and growing businesses by strengthening the relationship management process, refreshing propositions for the major regeneration sites and employment sites and being a catalyst for nature recovery and biodiversity management businesses. The action for this theme is to improve coverage and speed of internet by helping to secure the extension of the digital spine from Basingstoke through the whole of Winchester district.

Skills and competitiveness

10.8

This theme focuses on supporting the link of the foundational and knowledge economy sectors. The key action is to co-ordinate development of a low carbon offsite and Sustainable Construction Skills Academy. This has the benefit of creating lower carbon homes but also creates jobs and economic growth.

Culture, creative and visitor economy

10.9

This theme focuses on a more independent-led, experiential retail and leisure experience. The main action for this theme is to collaborate with the district's education institutions to grow opportunities for the creative and cultural sector. There are opportunities in underused properties or new developments for creative start-up space, skills hub, and flexible public facing creative exhibitions and events.

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As part of the GEDS, a Sustainable Tourism Strategy and an Arts and Cultural Strategy are being prepared.

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Outside of the local plan itself, the GEDS provides an opportunity to focus on green growth; encouraging local food production, sustainable tourism development and innovation and knowledge sharing in the rural economy.

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The Local Plan seeks to support the aims of the GEDS, by encouraging new economic development where appropriate, focussing new development in sustainable locations and prioritising the sectors that have been identified in the GEDS. The aim is to support a wider range of economic opportunities that allow sufficient flexibility to respond to rapid changes in the economy.

Employment and Town Centre Uses Study 2024

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The economic strategy of the local plan has been informed by an updated employment land study; the Employment and Town Centre Uses Study 2024 (ETCUS). The main findings of this study regarding future needs for employment land are set out below:

- Additional employment land need 2022-2040 of between 27.6ha – 37.8 ha for the Winchester Plan area.
- The current identified supply suggests sufficient land to meet identified needs.
- No need for large warehousing or logistics sites, but localised needs for mid-sized units, with flexibility between B2/B8 uses.
- Rural areas are an important contribution to supply, development is coming forward, no justification to change current approach.

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The ETCUS Study used several different established methodologies for calculating future employment land needs. The methodologies produced differing requirements, and as a result the study concludes that a range of land could be needed between the lower and higher estimates of need. The lower estimate being based on extending the pattern of past completions, whereas the higher estimate is based on a reasonable estimate of future economic growth. The current (2022) supply of employment land is outlined below.

Employment land supply 2022- 2040

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The following sites have full or outline consent as at 31 March 2022. Some are also allocated for development. Where sites are partially developed, it is remaining undeveloped land which is shown in table A below.

Table A: Sites with Permission 31 March 2022

Site name and notes	Area of employment land remaining as at 31 March 2022 (ha)
West of Waterlooville (policy SH1) Remainder of employment land permitted on site allocated for major mixed use development.	15.25
Sun Lane, New Alresford (Policy NA2) Employment part of mixed use allocation and outline planning consent	3.0
Bottings Industrial Estate, Curdridge Employment part of mixed use planning consent	0.88
New Barns Farm Drove Road Southwick Remainder of site partially completed	0.41
Gentian House Moorside Road Winnall Winchester	0.09
Cavendish Centre Winnall Close Winchester	0.27
Masons Meadow, Hambledon	0.05
Selhurst Poultry Farm, Soberton	0.23
Total employment land on sites with permission 31 March 2022	20.18



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The following table sets out the sites allocated in full or in part for employment uses. For some sites, there are uncertainties about how much employment land will be delivered, because the exact layout and types of uses on those sites has not yet been determined. Therefore, the table sets out an estimate of the amount of employment land which will be delivered on that site. Further details of each are set out in the description of each site in the spatial distribution of economic growth (policy E2). The estimates are not a cap on the amount of employment land which can be delivered on these sites but are considered a prudent assessment of what can be anticipated to be delivered.

Table B:
Allocated Sites and Estimated
employment land

Site name and notes	Total area of site (ha)	Estimated amount of employment land (ha)
Bushfield Camp (Policy W5)	20.0	11.8
Central Winchester Regeneration (Policy W7)	4.5	1.0
Solent Business Park (Policy SH4)	4.0	4.0
Tollgate Sawmill (Policy BW3)	2.2	2.2
Morgan's Yard (Policy WC1)	2.8	0.18
Total	33.2	19.18

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Therefore, in total the Plan makes provision for an estimated 39.36 ha of employment land, against an identified need of 27.6ha – 37.8 ha.

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Further to this headline target, it is worth considering if the type of employment land required is being met. The ETCUS Study included a range of needs for offices (use class E(g)) and other employment land (use classes B2 and B8). The lower and upper ranges identified in the ETCUS included 3.3 ha and 12.2 ha of land for office development respectively (though some scenarios identified needs as high as 17.5Ha). Using details from extant planning permissions listed in Table A, and the analysis of the emerging allocations in Table B, the estimated amount of office land which will be delivered from the sites included in tables A and B above is about 17ha (see Table C below).

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The lower and upper ranges in the ETCUS included 24.3 ha and 26.7 ha of land for industrial or warehousing development (use classes B2 and B8) respectively. Using details from extant planning permissions listed in Table A, and the analysis of the emerging allocations in Table B the estimated amount of industrial and warehousing land which will be delivered from the sites included in tables A and B above is about 22ha.

10.20

Therefore, the estimated total amount of employment land (office, industrial and warehousing) which will be delivered from the sites included in tables A and B above is about 39ha. The figures are summarised in the table below –

Table C: Comparison of need and supply by type of employment land

Site name and notes	Land requirements (ha)		
	Offices	Industrial and warehousing	Total
Identified need – Lower Range	3.3	24.3	27.6
Identified need – Upper Range	12.2	26.7	37.8
Supply – current expectations of uses where known	17.29	0.28	17.57
Supply – sites with no particular prescription		21.79	21.79



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The ECTUS noted that historically approximately 20% of developments, and 35% of all gross employment floorspace, have come forward on farm sites within the plan area. This is expected to continue under policies E9, E10 and SP2 and it is anticipated that further windfall will come forward to make good any shortfall in land for industrial and employment uses. Therefore, it is considered the types of employment land are broadly being met.

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Uncertainty over the forecast scenarios and continuing economic structural changes all emphasise the need for flexibility regarding the specific make up of employment land between particular use classes. It is acknowledged that a large percentage of jobs and economic activity will occur outside of the specific office, B2 and B8 uses covered by the ETCUS. Policy E1 therefore provides for a reasonable amount of land for these uses, whilst factoring in flexibility regarding future economic development.



VIBRANT ECONOMY – STRATEGIC POLICIES

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The Local Plan has an important role in ensuring a suitable amount of land and premises are available for economic development and ensuring that its policies are sufficiently flexible to accommodate the need of a changing economy, whilst having regard to the aims of the plan as a whole as expressed in the Spatial Strategy SP2.

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Policy E1 therefore makes provision for the need for additional employment land as set in the ETCUS described above. However, the policy also recognises the contribution made to the local economy by activities outside of the traditional office and industrial sectors.

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The district has particular strengths in the education sector, with the Universities of Winchester and Southampton having campuses within Winchester Town, alongside further education opportunities provided at Peter Symonds College and the specialist Sparsholt College which specialises in land, animal and leisure-based industries.

10.26

Town centres will be promoted as lively multi-functional areas that are supportive of food and drink, entertainment as well as tourism, alongside their traditional retailing, commercial and administrative roles. As part of a more flexible approach, support will be given for community activities, temporary uses, pop-up business and meanwhile uses.

10.27

The Winchester economy has an established role in relation to day visitors and the tourist economy from the historic character of Winchester City and the market towns, through to the attractive rural area and links into the adjacent South Downs National Park (SDNP). The visitor and tourism economy is to be supported and is expected to grow over the Plan-period.

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A large part of the local plan area is comprised of countryside, which also contains the larger market towns and many smaller rural settlements. This provides opportunities for the development of land-based industries such as forestry and farming as well as traditional industries, tourism industries and others that benefit from being in a rural location. There are many businesses in rural locations, including various clusters and existing industrial estates and as part of farm complexes. Policies E9 (Economic Development in the Rural Area) and E10 (Farm Diversification) set out how applications for general economic development and farm diversification will be considered in these locations.

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The creative sectors and arts and culture are an important part of the district economy, which would benefit from the availability of accessible flexible studio and workspace. There are strengths in digital and information technology within the district and there are opportunities to support innovative start-up businesses within these sectors.



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VIBRANT ECONOMY – STRATEGIC POLICIES

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The need to de-carbonise the economy and address climate change is likely to result in the development of new forms of economic development, with a much greater focus on green energy and associated supporting infrastructure. The Local Plan supports the development of innovative low carbon industries that are compatible with the policies of the plan as a whole.

10.31

The Local Plan seeks to provide support for a digital economy and a more geographically diverse economy, including self-employment and home working, by supporting digital infrastructure (e.g. broadband) co-locating hubs across the district and developing sustainable transport options. These actions support the creation of sustainable 20 minute neighbourhoods throughout the plan area.

10.32

All large-scale planning applications (10 or more houses/1000sq.m plus floor space) will be required to enter into an employment and skills plan to provide a range of employment, volunteering, apprenticeship, training and development opportunities for local people, particularly those that enhance green construction skills, such as the installation of insulation, ventilation, heat pumps and solar panels. The council's approach follows the Construction Industry Training Board (CITB) guidance, and this will support the Skills and Competitiveness theme of the city council's GEDS and the Carbon Neutrality Action Plan.

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The spatial variations of the economy strategy are set out below in Policy E2 that follows. Further policies of this chapter set out detailed economic strategies and development management criteria for specific areas, such as town centres and the rural economy.

Strategic Policy E1**Vibrant Economy**

The city council will encourage economic development and diversification that supports the council's Carbon Neutrality Action Plan and Green Economic Development Strategy and is in accordance with the Local Plan vision.

The Local Plan will make provision for about 39 hectares of employment land. This will be achieved through the retention of appropriate premises and sites, supporting new development that is consistent with the spatial strategy (including appropriate retention, regeneration, the refurbishment and modernisation of sites and premises and intensification of previously developed land) and by allocating land as necessary to support employment growth at sustainable locations.

The plan recognises the contribution to the local economy of employment opportunities outside of traditional industrial use classes. Existing strengths in education and creative sectors, the visitor and tourism economy, including food and drink and entertainment will be encouraged especially where it can be demonstrated that they will create footfall and assist with the night-time economy within town centres.

The rural economy is an important part of Winchester's economy. Local businesses play an important role in supporting the sustainability of rural communities and the plan will support these activities where they are compatible with the plan as a whole. Land-based industries, tourism-related

activities and the hospitality industry all have important roles in the rural economy. The local plan seeks to support an increasingly diverse rural economy, whilst maintaining and enhancing the quality of the rural environment.

The Local Plan will support the development of small business and start-up proposals of appropriate scale in accordance with the spatial strategy and new creative industries will be encouraged. Co-location and temporary meanwhile uses will be encouraged.

Appropriate opportunities to expand the economic base and foster innovation in the district will also be encouraged. New forms of business that develop innovative technologies and will help to support a low carbon economy will be encouraged. Consideration will be given to locating development associated with the green economy and low carbon energy generation/renewable energy facilities where appropriate, recognising that this may be in locations not normally considered for economic development.

The local planning authority will support measures to promote self-employment and working from home, consistent with other policies of this Plan, including the development of live-work accommodation and ensuring good access to modern communications technology including high speed broadband.

The Local Plan will support the enhancement of skills in the local area particularly green skills, through the securement of employment and skills plans in relation to large scale developments.



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SPATIAL DISTRIBUTION OF ECONOMIC GROWTH

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Strategic Policy E2 sets out the allocations that will assist in meeting the identified need for additional employment land (office and industrial floorspace) across the plan area, along with indicating the different approaches that should be taken to new economic development. Developments that provide floorspace for other employment opportunities will be encouraged where they accord with the plan.

10.35

The site allocations referred to in this policy are those where employment use is specifically sought, or where it is likely to be provided as part of mixed-use developments. Some allocations are also listed below where employment is specified on a portion of a larger allocation – such as a part of major housing allocations.

WINCHESTER TOWN

10.36

Winchester town is the main economic centre in the district. As the County Town located on a main line station with access to the wider region and London, Winchester is also an important focus for administration and regional and local government. Economic development will generally be permitted within the settlement boundary of Winchester Town. Town centre uses will be encouraged to locate within the Town Centre boundary shown on the Policies Map.

Bushfield Camp (Policy W5)

10.37

Up to 20 hectares of new development is proposed within the total site area of 43 hectares (ha). The site is allocated for high quality business employment and complementary uses. The Council has approved a Concept Masterplan which indicates that approximately 59% of the total development of 20 ha will be offices. Therefore, it is considered prudent to estimate that this site will deliver 11.8ha of those uses over the plan period.

Winnall (Policy W6)

10.38

The existing policy approach of allocating and protecting traditional employment uses within the Winnall area of the city is to be continued. The policy is aimed at retaining the core of the 43 hectares of the area in sub-area 1, for industrial (B2) and storage and distribution (B8) employment, with more flexibility in other parts of Winnall.

Mixed Use Allocations – 10.39

Several sites within Winchester Town are being allocated for regeneration. The sites will deliver a wide range of benefits to the city as a whole, including business and employment generating activities. The nature of development on these sites is being developed via a series of masterplans.

Central Winchester Regeneration (CWR) (Policy W7)

10.40

CWR includes 4.5 ha of land for mixed uses to reinforce and complement the town centre, including retail, leisure, other town centre uses and residential. The exact nature of the scheme is being developed through the planning process with the Council's Development Partner. In 2018 the Council adopted a SPD to guide the development of the area. That SPD estimated that between 2,700 sqm – 13,000 sqm of mixed uses including employment could be delivered on the site.

Station Approach Regeneration area (Policy W8)

10.41

The Station Approach area includes a number of land parcels comprising a total area of c 7ha. A number of potential uses are being explored. It is estimated that a mix of new employment floorspace, housing and complimentary food and beverage commercial uses will be proposed. The concept masterplan for the site is currently being prepared. Further development of the site is expected to come forward in phases with detailed masterplans being developed to support each phase.

Employment development as part of major housing allocations -

Kings Barton Major Development Area (Policy W1)

10.42

A new local centre is being developed as part of the major housing development at Kings Barton, Winchester. Retail development to meet locally generated needs and small-scale employment uses are sought as part of the development of the local centre. However, at present it is not anticipated that the centre will include significant amounts of employment land.



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SPATIAL DISTRIBUTION OF ECONOMIC GROWTH

SOUTH HAMPSHIRE URBAN AREA

10.43

This area comprises the major source of modern large-scale business development within the district. It is appropriate that this continues and supports growth throughout the wider South Hampshire Area. There are several large employment sites which have been under development for a number of years and the plan provides for these to continue, with no additional allocations proposed.

Solent Business Park (Policy SH4)

10.44

Outstanding area remaining of Solent Business Park. Approximately 11,000 sqm is allowed, within the 4 ha area, for a range of high technology and business use within Use Class E(g).

Employment development as part of major housing allocations -

West of Waterlooville (Policy SH1)

10.45

Provision of about 23 ha of employment land within the larger development. The ETCUS indicates that of the 23 ha of employment land allocated at this location, as at 31 March 2022 15.25 ha remains available. A local centre is also proposed, which should provide a small amount of retail, along with commercial and mixed housing/commercial uses. It is envisaged that the employment offer at the local centre will be focused on offices, which will complement the more general employment land within the main commercial area.

MARKET TOWNS AND RURAL AREA

10.46

The Local Plan encourages opportunities to diversify the economy within the settlements, and proposals that reinforce their role as locations for local employment and important service centres will be supported. There are a number of existing site allocations at Bishops Waltham, New Alresford and Waltham Chase that have been demonstrated that they are deliverable, but no new allocations are proposed.

10.47

Outside the settlement boundaries, development is strictly controlled in the interests of preserving the rural environment. Economic development will be supported where it supports the diversification of the rural economy and limited development consistent with the high quality environment, as specified in Policies SP3 or E9, E10, and E11.

Tollgate Sawmill, Bishops Waltham (Policy BW3)

10.48

A 2.6 ha site of which at least 2.2 ha should be employment use, with a limited amount of enabling residential development if necessary. The employment uses should be research and development (E g(ii)), light industrial (E g (iii)) and storage and distribution (B8). A small amount of general industrial use (B2) will be allowed on part of the site.

Employment development as part of major housing allocations -

Sun Lane, New Alresford (Policy NA2)

10.49

Approximately 5 ha of land to provide business development was allocated to form part of this 30 ha site. Further work and subsequent planning applications 17/1528/OUT and 23/02845/REM indicate that 3.0 ha of employment land will be delivered.

Morgans Yard, Waltham Chase (WC1)

10.50

Employment uses to be provided as part of the development of the site for housing. Details will be developed as part of masterplanning of the site and should include employment generating uses to replace some of the existing jobs lost on the site. Further work and subsequent planning application 21/02439/FUL indicated that approx. 1.8 ha of employment land will be delivered.

Strategic Policy E2

Spatial Distribution of Economic Growth

New employment floorspace will be encouraged throughout the district to fulfil identified needs in accordance with the vision and objectives of the plan, the spatial strategy, the strategic employment policy E1 and the site allocations listed below:

Winchester Town Area -

- Bushfield Camp (Policy W5)
- Winnall (Policy W6)

Mixed use allocations;

- Central Winchester Regeneration Scheme (Policy W7)
- Station Approach Regeneration Area (Policy W8)

As part of major housing allocations;

- King Barton Major Development Area (Policy W1)

South Hampshire Urban Area -

- Solent Business Park (Policy SH4)

As part of major housing allocations;

- West of Waterlooville (Policy SH1)

Market Towns and Rural Area -

- Tollgate Sawmill, Bishops Waltham (BW3)

As part of major housing allocations;

- Sun Lane, New Alresford (NA2)
- Morgans Yard, Waltham Chase (WC1)

Appropriate growth and maintenance of existing employment within the key settlements will be supported in accordance with the principles set out in SP2.

Outside settlement boundaries economic development will be supported where it supports the diversification of rural economy and limited development consistent with the high quality environment, as specified in policies SP3, E9, E10 and E11.



TOWN CENTRES STRATEGY AND HIERARCHY

10.51

The plan policies in respect of strategies for town centres and developments for retail and other town centre uses have been informed by two recent studies –

- The Retail and Town Centre Uses Study 2020 (RTCUS)
- Employment and Town Centre Uses Study 2024 (ETCUS)

10.52

The 2024 Study contains the most up-to-date forecasting in terms of needs for additional retail and other town centre uses and reviewed many of the findings of the 2020 Study. However, both studies should be looked at in conjunction as they focussed on different elements of town centre uses as set out below:

Issue	2020 RTCUS	2024 ETCUS	2020 &/or 2024 Study
Capacity	Yes	Yes	Use 2024 figures
Boundaries of town centres & primary shopping areas	Yes	No	2020
Hierarchy	Not in detail	Yes	2024
Larger Centres	Yes & strategies	Health Check & commentary	2024 & 2020
Local Centres	No	Yes	2024
Planning Policy Updates for new legislation	No	Yes	2024
Impact Threshold	Yes & detailed rationale	Review only	2024 & 2020

10.53

The main findings of the 2024 Study are set out below:

- Capacity – need for 395 sqm additional convenience floorspace and 741 additional comparison floorspace over the plan period.
- Hierarchy – Generally appropriate.
- Local Centres – Generally appropriate. Weeke is performing more than expected for a local centre. Kings Worthy is small in terms of its provision.
- Amendment to Policy E7 Maintaining the vitality and viability of town centres to reflect recent legislative changes.
- Confirmation of the 350 sqm impact threshold for retail and leisure uses out of centre. (See Policy E4)

10.54

The detailed capacity findings are set out below –

Retail Capacity up to 2040 (sqm net sales area)			
Retail Capacity	2020 RTCUS	2024 ETCUS	2020 &/or 2024 Study
Convenience	507	516	395
Comparison	906	1,401	741



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TOWN CENTRES STRATEGY AND HIERARCHY

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These figures indicate a reduced need from those identified in the 2020 Study - particularly in respect of comparison shopping - as a result of the changing economic situation and updated expenditure forecasts. The identified need takes account of proposed town centre developments including the regeneration sites within Winchester Town Centre. The most recent study therefore concludes that there is no need to make any additional allocations or expansion of the boundaries of town centres to accommodate the identified need, as the requirement identified is so small and is likely to be met through changes of use between different town centre uses and the redevelopment of town centre sites. The 2024 Study did not identify any specific requirements for leisure or other town centre uses apart from retail.

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In the light of this, the study emphasises the need to be flexible in respect of uses within town centres to maintain and enhance viability and the town centre strategy of the plan set out in E3 follows this approach.

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The 2024 Study also highlighted that long-term forecasting of retail and town centre floorspace is unreliable. Government guidance recommends reviews in ten years. Given the pace of recent structural changes in retailing and the ongoing fluctuations in the economy, the study recommends that caution is applied to the floorspace figures, which gives further emphasis to the need for town centre policies to be flexible and responsive.

10.58

Taken as a whole, the 2020 and 2024 Studies confirm the town centre hierarchy and strategies of the plan are broadly appropriate. The 2024 Study looked in detail at the local centres. It concluded that they were generally functioning as expected. Weeke is currently performing higher than would be expected for a local centre, however it does not offer the range of activities and services that would be expected at a district centre. Kings Worthy centre was found to be smaller than usual for local centres. It is acknowledged that planned developments over the plan period, may change the balance of centres within the district. It is therefore considered that the hierarchy could be considered further in any subsequent review of the Local Plan when larger scale developments will have taken place.

10.59

The other findings of the 2024 Study in relation to plan policy have been incorporated within Policy E7 Maintaining the Vitality and Viability of Town Centres (in respect of new use class and permitted development changes) and Policy E4 Retail and Main Town Centre Uses (in respect of impact thresholds).

10.60

In consideration of recent social, economic and legislative changes, town centres will need to change and adapt with retail development being supported by a much wider range of uses and activities, such as green space, leisure, arts and culture and health and social care services combined with housing to create a space based on social and community interactions. The key will be to encourage uses that will generate and increase the footfall, activity and the appeal of the high street with retail development still at the heart of the centre.

10.61

Appropriate uses and activities will be those that support the economy of the centre, including retail, commercial and office and the growing sectors of entertainment, food and drink and tourist development. The main town centre uses as defined in the NPPF will be generally supported, in summary these are: retail, indoor leisure, entertainment, intensive sport and recreation uses (e.g. cinemas, restaurants, bars and pubs, nightclubs, health and fitness) offices, arts, culture and tourism development (including theatres, museums, galleries, concert halls, hotels).

10.62

Other uses that are primarily aimed at visiting members of the public are appropriate within town centres, such as banks, building societies, estate agents and other professional services health and beauty services, such as hairdressers and beauty salons as they generate footfall.

10.63

Uses that attract large numbers of people will be encouraged within the town centres, where they are of an appropriate scale in relation to the centre's role in the hierarchy. Public buildings that serve visiting members of the public, or attract a large number of visitors such as community halls, libraries, administration centres, educational institutions, and religious buildings may also be considered as town centre uses depending on their scale and operation. Policy E7 sets out detailed criteria for new developments, including where particular uses will be encouraged to locate.

10.64

Uses and activities that enhance the visitor experience and increase the attractiveness of centres will be encouraged along with activities that widen the role of centres beyond retail, add to viability and increase vitality. Temporary uses, 'pop up' activities, markets and special events can all add to the vibrancy of centres. Some of these activities will not require planning permission, but consideration will be given to developments that support and assist the promotion of these activities, such as improvements to the public realm, provision of outdoor seating, canopies and outdoor installations etc. Support will be given for the creative economy, which is a vital part of the Winchester economy and Winchester Town in particular.

10.65

The visitor economy is an important element of the economy of the district and facilities should be focussed within the town centres. Winchester City and the historic market towns of the district are attractive to visitors and developments that enhance this role will be supported. This includes hotel development, which will need to be considered in accordance with the sequential test set out in Policy E4.



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TOWN CENTRES STRATEGY AND HIERARCHY

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Proposals that develop and support the night time economy within the town centres will generally be encouraged, such as new entertainment and food and drink offers that can offer a variety of experiences at different times of day. Such uses support the visitor economy and provide useful facilities for residents of the town centres. Activity during the evenings, can mitigate against dead frontages and make the town more welcoming by providing natural surveillance. There can be pollution and amenity issues related to these uses, so they may not be appropriate in all locations and may need particular restrictions in relation to their activities.

10.67

Town centres should also be places to live, where that would support the economic functions of the centre and enhance vitality and viability and support the night time economy. Residential development can play a useful supporting role, but it is not a main town centre use and does not contribute towards maintaining active frontages within streets. This will therefore generally be encouraged above ground floor within the primary shopping areas.

10.68

Exceptionally, residential development may be considered as part of large-scale regeneration schemes, such as within the CWR. Opportunities to provide specialist forms of housing that would benefit from being within town centres will also be considered, having regard to the effects on the economy and the strategy of the plan.

10.69

The centres of Winchester Town, Bishops Waltham, New Alresford and Wickham contain conservation areas. Proposals within these areas will need to maintain and enhance their historic character.

10.70

Developments that enhance the quality of the local environment and increase its attractiveness as a place to visit will be encouraged. Proposals that enhance the sense of place will be supported, along with improvements to the built environment, the public realm, or provide public open space. Opportunities should be taken to improve the access to the centres and individual buildings and ensuring that they are accessible to all members of the community including those living with dementia, people with disabilities and reduced mobility.

10.71

The town centre hierarchy supports the spatial strategy of the Local Plan, setting out a network of various centres comprising a variety of different scales and roles. Winchester, Whiteley, Bishop's Waltham, New Alresford and Wickham are the higher level centres. Primary shopping areas (PSA) are identified within these centres and are illustrated on the policies map.

10.72

PSA are described in national policy as defined areas within town centres where the main retailing activity takes place. These centres serve an important function within the retail hierarchy and it is important that this role is supported where feasible. Retail development will be encouraged to locate within the PSAs of the centres listed above, which form the centre for the purposes of the sequential test in respect of retail development.

10.73

The different town centres of the district have distinct characters that should be supported as described below:

10.74

Winchester Town. The City of Winchester acts as a sub-regional centre and has a wide range of shopping, entertainment, cultural facilities and a significant role as a commercial employment area, particularly within the administrative, public services, health and further and higher education sectors.

10.75

It is important to reinforce Winchester Town's position as a sub-regional shopping centre for comparison shopping by enabling a variety of different retail opportunities to occur with a range of different sizes and configurations of retail units. New retail development will be supported within the town centre and particularly encouraged to locate within the PSA to maintain the concentration of retail development in and around the historic high street. The availability of shopping and independent shops in particular in historic and attractive buildings/setting is key to the attraction of the centre. The historic setting of the city with its conservation area and many listed buildings, means it is a significant attraction for day visitors and overnight stays. Tourism and visitor development will continue to play a large role in its future economy.

10.76

There are a number of areas within the town centre that require regeneration and specific sites and proposals are identified within the site allocation section of this plan. This includes the Central Winchester Regeneration (CWR) which is located in the heart of the city and will play a key role in relation to future proposals around the city centre along with plans for the Station Regeneration Area.

10.77

Whiteley town centre. Whiteley is still a developing settlement. The town centre is modern and purpose-built, having recently been redeveloped. Whiteley town centre is considered of a scale and function to act as a district centre, serving both the town and a larger catchment area for comparison goods. It also provides a wide range of modern attractions such as indoor leisure and recreation, including a large cinema. It has a wide range of food and drink opportunities.

10.78

Bishop's Waltham, New Alresford and Wickham. These market towns are relatively small centres in terms of the retail hierarchy. Despite this, their function as market towns/villages at the heart of larger rural areas means that they act as centres for their catchment areas and a PSA acts as an important focus for activities. These towns have attractive historic cores, comprising of conservation areas. There are growing centres for food and drink outlets and have established attractions of markets and specific events. They are attractive to visitors and are located nearby to the South Downs National Park. These market towns have potential to increase the role of tourism and visitor-related development and attractions.



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10.78

TOWN CENTRES STRATEGY AND HIERARCHY

10.79

Denmead, Kings Worthy, Oliver's Battery, Stockbridge Road/Andover Road and Weeke. These are at the lower level of centres in the hierarchy and function as local centres, providing clusters of town centre uses within their locality. These centres have a variety of uses and act as important community hubs that provide the opportunity for residents to be able to shop locally for their day-to-day needs and avoid the need to travel. It is therefore important to maintain uses within these centres that support that role and do not undermine the vitality and viability of the centre.

10.80

In addition to the centres identified in this policy, there are a number of smaller centres or clusters of shops which are too small to be identified in the Plan as local centres but which nevertheless provide important local facilities, which are protected by Policy E8.

10.81

Proposals should not be out of scale in relation to the size and function of the centre where they will be located. In these cases, developments will be directed to centres higher up in the town centre hierarchy.

10.82

Specific guidance on how proposals within town centres will be assessed is set out within the development management Policy E7.

Strategic Policy E3

Town Centres Strategy and Hierarchy

The Town Centre Strategy is to maintain and enhance the role of centres as thriving areas for community and economic activities and enhance the quality of the environment of the centres.

The required need for retail and main town centre uses development will be met within the identified town centres of the hierarchy, by the development within the site allocations set out in the plan and the approval of new development within town centre boundaries.

The vitality and viability of town centres will be enhanced by encouraging a wide range of uses and activities within the centres, of a function and scale appropriate to their position within the town centre hierarchy.

Within the town centres, the main town centre uses of retail, office, indoor leisure uses, will be supported, along with similar uses that are aimed primarily at visiting members of the public and add to the vibrancy and attractiveness of centres, such as those related to entertainment,

Strategic Policy E3**Town Centres Strategy and Hierarchy**

food and drink, cultural and art and activities that support the evening and nighttime economy.

Developments that support the visitor economy and tourism, including hotel accommodation, will be encouraged, having regard to the hierarchy and subject to the scale and impact of the proposals.

Residential and commercial development will be encouraged above ground floor level.

Developments will be supported where they:

- i. Support the vitality and viability of centres;
- ii. Support the visitor experience and support the centres as destinations for shopping, leisure and entertainment activities;
- iii. Respect and enhance the existing character of the centres, including the historic character and intrinsic qualities of the built environment within conservation areas;
- iv. Would complement and, where possible, make improvements to, the built environment, public realm and incorporate public open space; and
- v. Maintain and enhance the existing role of centres as community hubs or for local administration.

New developments and changes of use within the identified centres (listed below & indicated on the Policies Map) will be assessed having regard to the detailed criteria set out in Policy E7 and by taking into account their location and the scale of development proposed, in relation to the town centre hierarchy as set out below:

Sub-regional town centre –
Winchester

Town Centre – Whiteley

District Centres – Bishops Waltham,
New Alresford, Wickham

Local Centres – Denmead, Kings
Worthy, and in Winchester; Olivers
Battery, Stockbridge Road/ Andover
Road, Weeke.

The boundaries of the identified centres are indicated on the Policies Map. Winchester, Whiteley, Bishops Waltham, New Alresford and Wickham have Primary Shopping Areas within the wider town centre area and these are also shown on the Policies Map. New retail development will be directed towards the Primary Shopping Areas of centres, where one is identified.



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10.82

Policy
E3

MAIN TOWN CENTRE USES OUT OF CENTRE

10.83

Strategic Policy E4 sets out the council's approach to considering proposals for town centre uses in out of centre locations.

10.84

Proposals for the main town centre uses in edge-of-centre or out-of-centre locations will be required to demonstrate why they could not be located on a sequentially preferable site in accordance with the NPPF. Winchester, Whiteley, Bishops Waltham, New Alresford and Wickham have Primary Shopping Areas within the wider Town Centre boundaries, which is relevant for the consideration of retail development, as set out in the NPPF.

10.85

Proposals for retail and leisure developments that are outside of defined town centres and have floorspace of 350 sqm gross or more, will also require the submission of an impact assessment.

10.86

The 2020 RTCUS found that the current local thresholds within the adopted Local Plan did not prevent the incremental growth of small retail and leisure developments. The thresholds also did not allow the city council the opportunity to identify impacts associated with incremental increases to existing facilities or the change of use or applications to vary conditions on individual units within a retail park. In the light of this, the new 350sqm gross threshold will ensure that proposals for smaller stores and applications to incrementally expand existing edge and out of centre retail offer are appropriately assessed in terms of their potential impact on existing centres. This approach has been confirmed by the ETCUS 2024.

10.87

Consideration of impacts on town centres will include assessment of the effect of the proposal on planned or future investment within centres or the overall planning strategy for the centre, including any regeneration sites identified in the Local Plan.

10.88

When assessing out of centre applications for retail or large-scale leisure developments, regard will be had to the nature of the use being proposed and any specific format or locational requirements that may apply.

10.89

Applicants should agree the scope of any required sequential and impact assessments with the local planning authority prior to the submission of the application.

10.90

If such proposals are approved, conditions may be sought restricting the range of goods sold or the exact nature or the proposed use, or permitted development rights may be removed, where considered justified and necessary in order to protect the integrity of nearby town centres and avoid unnecessary development of town centre uses in inappropriate locations.



10.91

Small scale town centre uses that provide a facility or service which is aimed at serving the immediate locality, will generally be acceptable outside of defined centres. When assessing whether a proposal can be considered as a local facility or service, account will be taken of the nature of the proposed use, its value to the local community, its expected catchment and

the amount of traffic generation as well as its size. Shops that are primarily intended to service everyday needs such as convenience goods and are under 280 sqm net (c 3,000 ft) in size, are considered provide a local facility under Policy E8 (Local Facilities and Services).

Strategic Policy E4**Main Town Centre Uses Out of Centre**

Outside of the centres listed in Strategic Policy E3 above, proposals for new or expanded retail and other main town centre uses will be considered where they comply with the sequential test, which requires applicants to demonstrate why the proposal could not be accommodated within a town centre, or – failing that – on the edge of a town centre.

Where the development is for retail or leisure development, an impact assessment will also be required when the proposal is over 350sqm gross.

New or expanded retail development or large-scale leisure development outside of the identified town centres will not normally be permitted unless the requirements of the sequential test and any required impact tests have been satisfied.

Shops or other town centre uses that are considered to provide a local facility or service, will generally be acceptable outside of defined centres.

In all cases, the local planning authority will consider the requirements for town centre uses in relation to the sequential test on a case-by-case basis and applicants will be required to submit sufficient information to enable the sequential test to be appropriately assessed.

STRATEGIC POLICY



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10.91

Policy
E4

ENHANCING EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

10.92

Strategic Policy E1 sets out the Local Plan approach to the economy within the district. This includes support for a wide range of employment opportunities. Policy E5 below specifically supports the development of traditional employment uses within the industrial and office uses.

10.93

Employment uses are defined as office, industrial and some sui generis uses, as set out in Policy E5 below. It is recognised that there are also a large number of other activities that generate employment that do not fall within this definition. These activities also make a large contribution to the economy of the district and they will be considered in relation the principles set out within Strategic Policy E1.

10.94

Changes to the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 came into effect on 1 September 2020, through the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2020.

10.95

The Uses Classes Order now has a Commercial, Service and Business Class E. Sub-class g of which consists of the office, research and development and light industrial uses which were previously within the Industrial Class B as set out below;

- i. General, office administration use,
- ii. Research and development and
- iii. Light industrial that can be carried out within a residential area in principle

10.96

Sui generis uses are uses that do not fall within any specified use class. Whether a particular proposal that is sui generis will fall within the terms of this policy will therefore need to be considered on a case-by-case basis. Some activities that are specifically referred to in the legislation as being sui generis, that would fall within the terms of this policy however, are - scrap yards and car breakers yards, fuel stations, car sales sites, retail warehouse clubs and mineral storage and distribution sites.

10.97

Subject to compliance with the policies of the development plan as viewed as a whole, employment development as described within Policy E5 and the text above, will generally be supported within the settlement boundaries of the district. Within the countryside, proposals will be considered in the light of the rural economy approach set out in policies E9, E10 and E11.

10.98

In order to maintain a suitable mix of employment uses across the plan area, it may be necessary to limit permissions to particular use classes of industrial and office development or impose conditions to remove certain permitted development rights, where this would be necessary and reasonable to with regard to the plan strategy and national policy.

10.99

In particular, office/light-industrial development will generally be restricted to use within the sub-class E(g), in order to prevent changes to other uses within Class E which would otherwise be permitted under the GPDO and would be inappropriate within industrial areas or outside of town centres.

10.100

Class E comprises commercial, service and business uses that should first be considered within town centres in line with the sequential approach. Offices [E(g) i] will therefore be carefully considered in accordance with the approaches set out in Strategic Policies E3 and E4 above.

Policy E5**Enhancing Employment Opportunities**

Employment development will be supported within the settlement boundaries, including new development, extensions to existing businesses, modernisation and refurbishment and the redevelopment of existing sites for alternative employment uses, subject to meeting the requirement of other policies in the Plan.

Employment uses are considered to be the following:

- i. Offices, light industrial research and development such as can be carried out within a residential area (Use Class E(g))
- ii. Industrial, warehousing and distribution (Classes B2-B8)
- iii. Some Sui Generis activities where they are employment and business-led, to be determined on an individual basis

Uses that attract significant amounts of visitors or are primarily aimed at visiting members of the public will not generally be acceptable within industrial areas and will be directed to town centres in accordance with the sequential approach. Office development will be restricted to sub-class E(g) in order to prevent unregulated changes to other uses within Class E that are appropriate within town centres.

Permissions may be restricted to particular use classes or sub-divisions thereof and/or restrictions may be placed on permitted development rights where appropriate and reasonable.

Where appropriate, applicants will need to demonstrate that they have taken amenity issues into account and it may be necessary to restrict the range of employment uses within residential areas, or in the vicinity of sensitive uses, such as residential accommodation, health facilities and education sites.



10.92
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10.100

Policy
E5

RETAINING EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

10.101

Due to high land values, and the attractiveness of the district as a location and a place to live, there are continuing pressures for the redevelopment of existing employment sites for other uses, particularly residential. Employment uses are therefore particularly vulnerable to redevelopment, and it is important to ensure they are adequately protected to support the economy of the Winchester district.

10.102

It is also important to ensure that activities are not developed in inappropriate locations. Retail and other town centre uses that are proposed in industrial areas or on employment sites, will be considered in accordance with the sequential approach set out in Policy E4 above. Residential development is unlikely to be appropriate within general industrial areas.

10.103

Other forms of redevelopment may also not be appropriate in employment locations where they do not support the spatial strategy of the plan, or contribute to an unacceptable increase in travel contrary to sustainable travel goals and efforts to reduce carbon emissions. Examples of this may include activities that have large travel implications, such as hospitals or educational establishments. There are a number of existing employment uses on sites within the countryside. These comprise an important component of local employment opportunities across the district and should also be retained where appropriate..

10.104

This policy sets out criteria against which changes of use from established, or allocated, employment land and premises should be assessed. This also applies to land or buildings that are currently vacant but were last used for an employment use.

10.105

It is recognised that it may not always be appropriate or reasonable to retain employment uses and therefore this policy specifies criteria that will be used to assess the merits of changes of use.

10.106

The ETCUS recommends retaining existing employment sites, the onus will be on applicants to demonstrate why that would not be reasonable or practical in any particular case. Policy E6 sets out a number of criteria that will need to be satisfied. It is recommended that applicants approach the council in advance of submitting applications to agree the scope of supporting evidence that will be necessary to determine the application.

10.107

The criteria set out in Policy E6 requires exploring the possibilities of using the premises or site for alternative employment uses in the first instance. This will usually include the submission of viability assessments and details of marketing undertaken to demonstrate that the existing or an alternative employment use would not be practical or viable.

10.108

The exercise should be able to demonstrate that the price and terms on which the land or premises were marketed were reasonable by comparison with similar examples in the local area. Information should be provided detailing any interest received from potential buyers or tenants since the marketing commenced. Where interest has been received and that interest has not been pursued, this must be documented and submitted with the planning application.

10.109

Proposals should consider the possibilities for relocation of any current businesses on the site. The terms on which any current, or recent occupiers have been offered in relation to the site will form part of the consideration of the proposal.

10.110

Occasionally, it may be desirable for sites not to continue in their current use on grounds of amenity or adverse traffic impacts or other environmental grounds. In these cases, the possibility of alternative employment uses should be considered in the first instance, having regard to the spatial strategy of the Local Plan.

10.111

Proposals that involve the loss of other activities and uses that provide employment, but do not fall within employment uses as defined in Policy E5, will be considered on their own merits, taking into account the overall benefits of the new development compared with the existing use and assessed against the general policies of the plan.

Policy E6**Retaining Employment Opportunities**

Proposals that involve the loss of existing or allocated employment land and floorspace, or land that was last used for an employment use, will only be permitted where it can be demonstrated that continued employment use is no longer practical or viable, taking account of the following considerations:

- i. The redevelopment potential for other employment uses including the scope for intensifying or providing an effective use of the site or building, and the potential to improve and extend the range of modern employment floorspace;
- ii. Whether the building or use meets, or could meet, a specific local business requirement - such as providing low cost start up accommodation;
- iii. The potential of the site or building to be developed for a mixture of uses, that include a significant amount of employment;

- iv. The impact of continued employment use on the local environment and amenity;
- v. The suitability of access arrangements for the site/buildings, by road and public transport; and
- vi. The benefits of the proposed use compared to the benefits of retaining the existing use.

Proposals that involve a loss of employment use will be expected to demonstrate that the factors set out above have been satisfactorily addressed. As part of the assessment of proposals, applicants will be expected to provide viability assessments of the sites and evidence of the appropriate marketing of sites for potential employment uses. Marketing should be undertaken for at least 12 months.



MAINTAINING THE VITALITY AND VIABILITY OF CENTRES

10.112

Locating uses together that attract large numbers of people generally has the most benefit in terms of sustainability. The vitality and viability of centres is best served by the clustering of complementary uses together in order to promote visits and encourage linked trips. This principle applies whatever the size of the centre. Changes of use from main town centre uses do not generally improve the vitality and viability of the centre but may exceptionally be considered where they meet the criteria set out within the policy.

10.113

Proposals should contribute to the maintenance of active frontages within centres, particularly on the main high streets or town squares where footfall is the most important, by installing windows and doors on the main frontages and avoiding areas of blank façade.

10.114

Uses such as pubs, nightclubs, hot food takeaways are generally appropriate and supported within town centres, however as they may result in adverse amenity or pollution issues, they will be carefully controlled and limits on the hours of operations may be appropriate in particular locations, taking account of the character of the vicinity.

10.115

For all town centre uses, in order to secure acceptable amenity in the vicinity, the local planning authority may impose conditions on hours of operation, delivery and parking arrangements and require particular lighting or noise abatement measures or ventilation and pollution control measures. Regard will be had to the location of the development, the nature of the proposal and the character of the surrounding area in relation to this.

10.116

Residential development can play a useful supporting role in supporting centres, but is not a main town centre use. This will generally be encouraged above ground floor, along with commercial uses that support the function of the town centre. It is important that residential development is able to achieve acceptable living standards for future occupiers. Residential development may not always be feasible where it is difficult to achieve safe access for residents, or where necessary conversion would not be compatible with the maintenance of the historic features of listed buildings.

10.117

Uses other than residential that make use of empty floor space above ground floor level, or behind street frontages will be encouraged where they support the viability and vitality of the centre, including the main town centre uses, offices and professional services, galleries, studios, workspace for creative industries and studios, community uses, health services. Any other uses will need to demonstrate their contribution to the vitality and viability of the centre.

10.118

Office and light industrial uses will not always be appropriate within town centres or the main shopping street, where they do not contribute positively to the vitality and viability of the function of the centre.

10.119

In order to achieve and preserve a suitable mix of uses and avoid areas of 'dead frontage' or over-concentrations of specific uses, it may be necessary to limit permissions to particular uses or sub-classes, impose conditions on permission relating to restricting range of goods or activities, or remove permitted development rights, where it is necessary and reasonable to do so.

10.120

New development, including demolition and redevelopment and changes of use, should not have adverse effects on the character of the centre. The town centres of Winchester, Bishops Waltham, New Alresford and Wickham are conservation areas and also contain listed buildings. Proposals in these locations must protect and enhance the character and appearance of the conservation areas. The effects of necessary internal changes will need to be taken into account in relation to listed buildings.

10.121

Planning applications and applications for prior approval within the conservation areas will be assessed against the requirement to protect and enhance the appearance of the character of the area. This will include consideration of the effects of the proposal on the vitality and viability of the centre, in terms of how it may effect the existing commercial character of the centre, as well as the effects on the built environment and historic interest.

10.122

Notwithstanding any special considerations that may apply in relation to historic settings, developments should ensure they are accessible to all members of the community. Proposals that make use of the public realm, such as pavements and pedestrianised areas, should pay special attention to the needs of all members of the community including those living with dementia, people with disability or those with reduced mobility. Appropriate street furniture and careful siting can assist with this. Sensitively designed lighting can be used to enhance security and surveillance within centres. Detailed guidance can be found in the Design topic, the High Quality Places SPD or its successor and any local Design Guides or Codes that cover the relevant location.

10.123

Primary Shopping Areas (PSA) indicate where retail development is concentrated within town centres. The close proximity of retail and related activities supports linked trips which enhance the overall vitality and viability of centres. These uses benefit from being clustered together with minimal breaks in active frontage to encourage footfall.

10.124

Within the PSA, to support the core function of the area, it is particularly important that vitality and viability is maintained during usual shopping hours. Therefore, proposals that result in a loss of retail or other Class E uses within the PSA will be required to demonstrate how they will contribute to the daytime vitality and viability of the centre.

10.125

Furthermore, as the core area identified for retail and related commercial activities, it is important that these uses within the PSA are retained where possible. Proposals that result in the loss of these uses will therefore also have to demonstrate to the satisfaction of the local planning authority that the premises are no longer required for such uses by means of marketing evidence and viability assessments.

10.126

When considering planning applications for change of use, account will be taken of the suitability of the unit concerned, the period of any vacancy, adequacy of the marketing of the unit, and footfall volumes and patterns.



10.112

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10.126

Policy E7

Maintaining the Vitality and Viability of Town Centres

New development within the centres identified in the town centre hierarchy set out in Strategic Policy E3 should reflect the strategy of E3 above and enhance the vitality and viability of the centre. As part of the assessment of proposals, applicants may be required to demonstrate how their proposal will enhance vitality and viability. Viability assessments of the site may be required (as set out below) if the local planning authority considers the proposal is likely to have an adverse effect on vitality and viability.

Permissions may be restricted to particular use classes or sub-divisions thereof and/or restrictions may be placed on permitted development rights where appropriate and reasonable.

Within the Primary Shopping Areas of Winchester, Whiteley, Bishop's Waltham, New Alresford and Wickham, as defined on the Policies Map, activities within the main town centre uses will be encouraged and

the loss of main town centre uses at ground floor level will be resisted. Residential development will be permitted above ground floor, where the proposal will result in safe and acceptable standards of living for residents.

Proposals for a change of use or the redevelopment of premises away from retail or other Class E uses, will only be supported where it can be demonstrated that:

- i. The proposal will contribute to the centre's vitality and viability during daytime trading hours; and
- ii. Proportionate evidence has been provided to demonstrate that the premises are no longer required for retail or other Class E uses.

As part of the assessment of such proposals, applicants will be expected to provide viability assessments of the site and evidence of the appropriate marketing for alternative town centre uses. Marketing should be undertaken for a minimum of at least 12 months.

LOCAL SHOPS, FACILITIES AND SERVICES

10.127

Local services and facilities provide an important function in supporting the viability and viability of local neighbourhoods, the market towns and more local service centres. Outside of the settlement's areas, local services and facilities can provide a vital role in supporting local communities and more isolated areas.

10.128

The availability of local services and facilities supports the self-sufficiency of areas and reduces the need for unnecessary travel. Maintaining a network of local services and facilities supports the council's goal of reducing carbon emissions, the overall strategy of this plan and the Carbon Neutrality Action Plan.

10.129

Within the rural area, the provision and retention of local services and facilities is particularly important, where there is often a lack of choice and easily accessible alternatives and may be limited opportunities for public transport to access wider areas. Some facilities and services may be particularly critical in certain communities, such as the local school, shop or pub or health centre.

10.130

It is therefore important to retain any existing provision at the same time as encouraging new facilities and services.



Policy
E7

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LOCAL SHOPS, FACILITIES AND SERVICES

10.131

Local services and facilities fall into the following categories:-

- Community centres and village halls;
- Indoor sports and recreation facilities, including allotments;
- Educational, health and care establishments (including nursing/care homes);
- Premises for the emergency services, public utilities and infrastructure;
- Local pubs and shops;
- Libraries, cultural and arts facilities;
- Churches, places of worship and cemeteries/burial grounds.

10.132

The above list is illustrative and is not considered exhaustive. Convenience stores, mostly selling essential goods, including food, that are less than 280 sqm (floorspace) in size are considered to provide a local facility.

10.133

Because of the need to conserve the district's undeveloped countryside, development is generally limited to that which has an operational need for a countryside location or for extensive areas of undeveloped land. To override the normal presumption against non-essential development in the countryside, there must be a need for the development proposed and it must provide an essential local facility or service. The development may either need to be located on the site proposed for operational reasons, or it should be demonstrated that it is not practical or feasible to locate the development within a defined settlement.

10.134

Examples of such development may include community or education facilities, premises for emergency services or development by statutory undertakers and public utility providers.

10.135

Shops, pubs, arts and cultural services and facilities that attract visiting members of the public are town centre uses, which should be located with regard to the town centre hierarchy of Strategic Policy E3 and detailed considerations set out in Policy E4. These uses are not generally appropriate within the countryside, due to their traffic implications and impacts on the rural character.

10.136

Exceptionally such uses may be considered as part of rural economic development or tourism as set out in policies E9 – E11 below. Such proposals will not fall within the terms of this policy as they are not primarily aimed at providing a service or facility for local communities.

10.137

Due to the importance of retaining local facilities and services, proposals that involve the loss of a local facility or service will be expected to demonstrate that it is not practical or viable to retain the facility or site in the existing use or a use that would benefit the local community.

10.138

Applicants will be expected to provide evidence of why it is not practical or viable to retain the facility or service, such as recent accounts and business plans. Evidence should also be submitted that the potential for altering the business model and making full use of the premises and site in order to make it viable have been fully explored. In the case of shops and pubs there may be the potential to use parts of buildings for alternative supporting uses or make better use of ancillary rooms or outbuildings within the site.

10.139

In cases where services and facilities are no longer commercially viable, they have occasionally been taken over by the local community. Examples include local shops and pubs. Therefore, sites should be offered for community purchase. Communities can ask their local council to register local facilities – such as pubs - as Assets of Community Value (ACV) and information is provided on the city council's website of the process for this:

www.winchester.gov.uk/community-recreation/crtb



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10.139

LOCAL SHOPS, FACILITIES AND SERVICES

10.140

Where the sale involves an ACV the nominator and wider community will be informed about the proposed sale (or long-term lease). The community has six weeks to express its interest in making a bid and can then prepare and submit a full bid within six months. Any community bids will then be considered along with any other bids. The owner is under no obligation to sell the property to the community and can sell to any bidder at any price. The successful bidder then takes over ownership of the property. The City Council has a list of Assets of Community Value on the web site: winchester.gov.uk/community-recreation/crtb.

10.141

Applicants will be expected to provide evidence of the marketing of the site in support of their proposals. This will include viability assessments and details of the marketing undertaken, such as the terms and conditions under which the site was marketed, where and for how long the site was marketed. Marketing should be undertaken for a period of at least 12 months.

10.142

When considering applications that involve the loss of services and facilities, the council will take into account the accessibility of suitable alternative facilities. The access by sustainable and active travel will be part of this considerations, as will physical distance. The lack of any suitable alternative facilities within rural settlements, or nearby settlements will be a key consideration.

10.143

Facilities such as shops and pub and health centres, can play a vitally important role in the vitality and viability of settlements and local communities. They have the potential to act as hubs and meeting places for the local community, often in combination with other activities. The City Council will therefore consider carefully the role that the premises/site do or could provide as part of the assessment of any application.

Policy E8

Local Shops, Services and Facilities

Proposals for the development of new, extended or improved facilities and services will be supported in accordance with the Local Plan vision SP1 and objectives and the spatial strategy set out in SP2. Within settlements, facilities and services that do not serve a local function should be located within the centres in accordance with Strategic Policy E3 above.

In the countryside, shops, pubs, arts and cultural services and facilities that attract visiting members of the public will not generally be permitted, except within the terms of Policy E10 below.

In the countryside, the development of essential facilities and services to serve local communities may exceptionally be permitted, where they comply with the plan as a whole and:



Policy E8

Local Shops, Services and Facilities

- i. There is an identified need for the development within that area.
- ii. A location in the countryside is essential for operational reasons, or
- iii. there are no suitable alternative sites for the proposed development within the defined built-up area of the settlement(s) which the development is intended to serve.
- iv. There are no unacceptable impacts on the natural environment or the rural character of the area.

Development proposals should not threaten or result in the loss of premises or sites used to provide services and facilities unless it can be demonstrated that:

- i. The site/premise is not required because the service or facility has been satisfactorily relocated or is no longer needed to serve the locality;
- ii. The service/facility is no longer practical or viable and cannot be made so; and
- iii. The site or building has no reasonable prospect of being used for an alternative service or facility which would benefit the local community.

As part of the assessment of proposals, applicants will be expected to provide viability assessments of the sites and evidence of the appropriate marketing for alternative services or facilities. Marketing should be undertaken for a minimum of at least 12 months.

When considering proposals, account will be taken of:

- i. Whether the loss of the service or facility would cause harm for those living within the neighbourhood, settlement, or rural catchment with a reasonable need to access such facilities in the future;
- ii. Whether the loss of the facility would have a detrimental impact upon the overall vitality and viability of the settlement;
- iii. The role that the facility provides – or could provide – within the local community, including whether the facility is an Asset of Community Value, and
- iv. Whether the loss is part of an agreed plan to provide improved local services in equally accessible location.

Any alternative uses or proposals for sites and premises will be assessed with regard to the spatial strategy and strategic policies of this plan.



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10.143

Policy
E8

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN THE RURAL AREA

10.144

The spatial strategy sets the context for development across the plan area, as part of which development within the countryside will be strictly controlled. Strategic Policy E2 sets out the economic aspects of the spatial strategy, including the rural area.

10.145

The rural character and the high quality of the local environment of the district's countryside is a much-valued asset. It is important that developments within the countryside do not harm the integrity of this asset. The rural economy is also a valued aspect of the district. The GEDS seeks to develop a lower carbon economy, with opportunities for small scale business development in sustainable locations, growing the green economy, supporting low carbon infrastructure and the development of Sustainable Tourism and Cultural Strategies.

10.146

In recognition that the rural area is different to the urban parts of the district, there is justification for widening the scope of economic development allowed in a manner that respects the valued aspects of the rural character. This can be in the form of supporting the expansion of existing facilities which will widen rural employment opportunities. This will enhance the development and viability of local service centres and can enable local clusters of complimentary activities.

10.147

Local employment opportunities can help to support the Local Plan aim of reducing carbon emissions, by reducing the need to travel, provided they are carefully located in relation to nearby facilities and services and local transport routes that will support active travel. Therefore, development should be assessed in accordance with these principles.

10.148

A balanced approach will need to be taken, using the principles set out in this policy against the objective of preventing unacceptable harm to the rural environment.

10.149

There are strict limits to development outside settlements. Accordingly, Policy E9 focuses on the re-use of existing buildings, with limited new development in the specific circumstances as set out in the policy.

10.150

Where proposals are put forward outside of settlements, they must be supported by a statement and robust business plan setting out the operational/functional need for the scale of development proposed and the justification for its location including, an assessment of other potential sites and buildings that have been considered. Any such development should be appropriate to the proposed location in terms of scale and must not have an unacceptable impact on the character of the countryside or the form and setting of the settlement.

10.151

The contribution that proposals could make to enhancing the vitality and viability of nearby settlements will be taken into consideration. In order to promote sustainable development and minimise car travel, proposals should be located so as to allow for access by active travel where possible. The contribution that proposals will make to the development of the 20 minute neighbourhood will be taken into consideration when assessing the benefits of proposals.

10.152

Proposals that will contribute to the development of hubs that service the local area will be favourably considered. There are benefits to developments co-locating, subject to the resulting scale of environmental impacts. Rural enterprise hubs where a number of small businesses are located in a cluster with shared broadband connection and other essential facilities are of value, making use of existing employment sites or rural buildings, such as farm complexes.

10.153

In order to minimise additional impacts on the local environment, all proposals should explore the possibilities of using existing buildings in the first instance. There are often redundant farm buildings which can be utilised, rather than adding new built development to the landscape. It may be necessary to extend them to use for economic development. Where new or replacement buildings are required, where possible they should be in close proximity to an existing group of buildings and the siting, form, scale, design and external materials of the new buildings should not detract from the existing buildings nor the character of the surrounding area.

10.154

It is recognised that existing buildings may not always be visually attractive or appropriately sited and it may occasionally be of overall benefit to the environment to construct new buildings or redevelop the site.

10.155

Strategic Policy E1 supports the development of more localised working and working from home. Extensions of residential properties to enable business activities and proposals for small scale economic development within the curtilage of existing residential properties will be supported, subject to careful consideration of visual intrusion, the physical scale of development proposed and the nature of any proposed business. Developments that adversely impact on the amenity of the area will not be supported.

10.156

The city council wishes to encourage new forms of development to develop a new greener low carbon economy. This is in line with the Carbon Neutrality Action Plan and the GEDS. Locations will be required for decentralised energy generation and storage. It is acknowledged that some of these developments may have impacts on the environment, so location in association with existing development such as farms may be helpful.



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10.156

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN THE RURAL AREA

10.157

In relation to new development related to the green economy, special consideration will be given to the contribution of the proposal to the national energy strategy, reduction of carbon emissions or other mitigation of the effects of climate change, when considering the merits of the proposal. The weight of any benefits will be weighed against any harmful effects on the character of the rural area.

10.158

All proposals for economic development within the countryside will be assessed in the context of their impact on the rural character. The visual impact of proposals, the suitability of the site and access to it and the amount and type of traffic generated by the proposal will be taken into consideration. Issues of noise, light and other pollution will be important in view of the countryside location.

10.159

Economic development within the countryside should comply with the plan as a whole, with particular attention to policies that maintain and enhance the character of the rural area and the natural environment (Policies NE1-NE17 and also those relating to sustainable transport (Policies T1-T4) and pollution (Policy D7).

10.160

In order to protect the character of the rural environment and prevent the future development of unacceptable uses or forms of development, conditions may be imposed restricting the range of uses, and permitted development rights in relation to changes of use and physical extensions may be imposed where they are justified and reasonable.

Policy E9

Economic Development in the Rural Area

Outside of the defined settlement boundaries, the primary consideration is that new development must not have an adverse effect on the rural character of the area and be compatible with the need to preserve and maintain the quality of the natural environment.

Economic development outside of settlements will be supported when:

i. The development has an operational need for a countryside location, such as for agriculture, horticulture or forestry; or

- ii. The proposal is for the purposes of business use in association with residential accommodation within the same curtilage; or
- iii. The proposal is for the reuse of existing rural buildings for employment or visitor accommodation; or
- iv. The development will be solely within the confines of established purpose built industrial estates; or
- v. The proposal is for the use of existing buildings - including extensions to such buildings - in order to facilitate the expansion onsite of established businesses or to meet an operational need.

Policy E9**Economic Development in the Rural Area**

POLICY

Proposals for additional buildings in association with existing businesses will be considered where it can be demonstrated that there is a need for the development and that this need cannot be provided within the existing buildings on the site or extensions to such buildings.

The redevelopment of existing sites/buildings on established business sites may exceptionally be considered where proposals relate to established businesses on the site and it can be demonstrated that existing buildings will not meet the requirements of the business.

Proposals for new industrial and commercial development outside the settlement boundaries that do not fall within the above criteria will not usually be permitted. However, proposals may exceptionally be considered where the following criteria can be satisfied:

- i. There is a recognised and demonstrable need within the locality, for the development proposed;
- ii. Sequentially preferable sites are not suitable or available; and
- iii. The site is well related to a nearby settlement and in a sustainable location.

Where planning permission is required, extensions of residential properties to enable business activities and proposals for small scale economic development within the curtilage of existing residential properties in the countryside, will be supported, subject to careful consideration of visual intrusion, the physical scale of development proposed and the nature of any proposed business.

All proposals for economic development within the countryside will be assessed in the context of their impact on the rural character and the suitability of the location and the nature of the development proposed, including access to the site.

Where planning permission is required, permissions may be restricted to particular use classes or sub-divisions thereof and/or restrictions may be placed on permitted development rights where appropriate and reasonable.

Proposals that may be acceptable in principle will nonetheless be refused if they result in unacceptable impacts on the rural environment.



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Policy
E9

FARM DIVERSIFICATION

10.161

Agriculture and land related activities are appropriate uses in rural locations. The need to address climate change issues including flooding, loss of biodiversity, and the development of new food sources and products are creating new challenges in the rural areas. Wider economic and societal changes may also result in new activities in traditional agricultural areas.

10.162

There are also opportunities to take advantage of these wider changes in a positive way, to promote a more diverse rural economy and to move towards a more low carbon green economy. This may involve new forms and scales of development in rural locations. Examples would include renewable energy schemes, which will be supported where they do not have unacceptable impacts on the local environment. Agrivoltaic projects allow for farming to continue in association with solar energy production.

10.163

The city council seeks to support the viability of existing enterprises with policies that are sufficiently flexible to meet the anticipated challenges in agriculture and the rural economy and provide wider benefits in terms of sustainability and carbon reduction.

10.164

Within the bounds of planning legislation, farm diversification proposals will therefore be considered with regard to a number of factors, including the continuing viability of the farming enterprise, impacts on the local environment (including impacts from increased levels of activity and traffic generation) improvements in local food production and supply chains, the need to preserve productive land and any wider benefits in terms of carbon reduction and climate change mitigation.

10.165

In order to maintain the character of the countryside, new built development is generally kept to a minimum. Where permission is required for development on agricultural land, proposals should therefore use existing buildings where possible and provide justification where this is not the case. Diversification may require additional built development, or re-development. The case for this should be evidenced by viability assessments and farm plans.

10.166

Typically farm diversification provides for tourism and leisure activities, and in some cases the sale of farm produce. Other activities include small-scale industrial and commercial uses.

10.167

Proposals that attract visitors to the farm (e.g. retailing, cafés, visitor activities, education and leisure activities) are considered in Policy E11 (Visitor-related Development in the Countryside) The Natural Environment section of the local plan contains a number of policies that are relevant in relation to leisure and recreation activities in the countryside, such as NE12 (Equestrian Development).

10.168

Proposals for renewable and low carbon energy schemes, including solar farms, will be assessed against Policy CN5.

10.169

Proposals for industrial and commercial development, such as offices, workshops and storage and distribution will be assessed with regard to Policy E9 (Economic Development in the Rural Area).

10.170

The setting-aside of land for biodiversity benefits, such as habitat creation, soil regeneration and nitrate or phosphate mitigation, or for carbon sequestration or flood risk mitigation, will generally be supported as part of farm plans although in isolation such initiatives are likely to fall outside of the planning regime. These may assist in the viability of land holdings as well as providing benefits in relation to biodiversity and the mitigation of climate change.

10.171

Promotion of sustainable forms of agriculture which include environmentally sensitive organic and locally distinctive food production together with its processing, marketing and retailing will be encouraged as part of a thriving and diverse rural economy.

10.172

Development related to produce from the farm and the local area may be supported along with development that brings benefits to the local community and economy beyond the farm itself. Small scale produce or farming-related activities, e.g. micro-breweries, vineyards, bakeries etc may be acceptable dependant on exact nature of the activity.

10.173

However, some forms of development such as large-scale food processing may be of such a scale that they should be located in industrial locations. This is due to their visual impacts, possible noise, light, additional transport movements and other pollution. These uses are more akin to factories and may also have unacceptable levels of traffic from deliveries and employees. They should be sited where they are accessible by sustainable transport.

Policy E10**Farm Diversification**

Farm diversification will generally be supported, and should utilise existing buildings in the first instance, where practical and feasible. Proposals will be expected to justify why existing buildings cannot be used. Additional buildings will only be permitted where it is demonstrated they are essential.

Common forms of farm diversification include visitor accommodation and farm shops. Farm shops should primarily sell products from the farm and nearby area.

Diversification proposals that support the development of a low carbon economy are generally welcomed subject to unacceptable impacts on the local environment. These can take a variety of forms involving new uses for land or new constructions and can assist in supporting the viability of the farm. Diversification that provides biodiversity benefits or contributes to climate change or pollution mitigation will be encouraged and supported.

Additional new development on agricultural holdings that will enhance the viability of the existing farm may also be acceptable, including the development of buildings and associated uses that use produce from the farm or farms from within the local area, such as food processing operations, subject to careful consideration of their scale and impacts.

Proposals for diversification on agricultural holdings should provide evidence to indicate how the development will assist in the continued viability of the enterprise.

Complete redevelopment of agricultural holdings may exceptionally be justified on grounds of viability and should be for other economic uses and in a form that is acceptable in the rural environment.



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10.173

Policy
E10

VISITOR-RELATED DEVELOPMENT WITHIN THE COUNTRYSIDE

10.174

The visitor economy is an important part of the rural economy of the Winchester district and this is expected to grow.

10.175

Opportunities exist to make use of the natural assets and beauty of the area and take advantage of links to South Downs National Park and the wider south-east area, the coast, and relative accessibility to London and regional airports. Visitors are attracted by the natural beauty of the area, its rivers and countryside, the historic attractions of Winchester City and traditional character of the market towns and attractive smaller rural settlements. There are unique activities which attract visitors such as vineyards, recreational fishing areas and opportunities for recreation on local rivers such as the Itchen and Hamble. Also of note are a number of large country hotels that attract visitors and business/conference uses.

10.176

The SDNP plays an important and unique role within the district. The SDNP is located in the south-eastern part of the district and extends up to the boundaries of the City of Winchester, Bishops Waltham and New Alresford and comprises approximately 40% of the land area of the district as a whole. Although the SDNP area is not part of the Winchester Local Plan area, the importance of the SDNP is recognised and this is particularly so in relation to the visitor economy. The SDNPA similarly recognises the potential of the towns listed above to act as gateways into the National Park. The Winchester Local Plan encourages visitor-related development in and around these towns where it is in accordance with the plan and will take into consideration the potential to enhance links into the National Park from these areas.

10.177

Visitor-related activities can make a valuable contribution to the sustainability and viability of rural settlements from the smaller rural villages to the larger market towns. The visitor economy supports local food and drink business in the rural area, such as rural pubs and restaurants, attractions associated with local farms, such as around farm shops. Such businesses can enhance the local economy, supporting the local supply chain and providing local employment. The visitor economy can also assist in supporting the viability of sustainable travel options in these areas through their increased custom.

10.178

There are opportunities for event venues in association with existing buildings, attractions or in an attractive location. Visitor development may enable the restoration or enhancement of historic buildings and other heritage assets. Visitor accommodation and associated leisure activities may form part of farm diversification plans. New opportunities may arise in relation to eco-tourism proposals that benefit the environment. There are also opportunities for development in association with long-distance walking, cycling and equestrian routes into the SDNP and beyond.

10.179

Larger-scale developments such as hotels should be situated within settlements and other policies of the plan cover these – particularly E3 (Town Centres Strategy and Hierarchy) and E7 (Town Centres).

10.180

This policy considers development outside of settlements, where development is strictly limited. Accordingly, it is necessary for proposals to outline the benefits to the local economy as part of the justification for their proposals, including when proposing additional development in relation to existing accommodation or facilities. In order to minimise impacts on the rural environment, proposals should make use of existing buildings in the first instance and will be expected to provide justification when this is not the case.

10.181

As well as considering the impacts of proposals, the council will take into account any benefits that the proposal may provide such as in relation to improvements to biodiversity, such as habitat creation, restoration of historic buildings and features or enhancements to active travel routes in the area. Applicants should therefore set out any such benefits as part of their proposals.

10.182

A variety of accommodation is necessary to provide for the varied needs of visitors, ranging from hotels, to bed and breakfast and self-catering accommodation, to camping and caravanning sites. Larger scale hotels are directed to towns and village centres to support the range of activities there and where they are more accessible by a variety of means of transport and sites are more likely to be available to accommodate their larger footprint.

10.183

There is a need for a range of smaller scale accommodation to support the rural visitor economy. For some of these forms of development, their situation in isolated locations, or away from built areas is part of their appeal. However, these may have the potential for disproportionate impacts on the local environment so will need to be carefully controlled. The situation in relation to existing settlements, local attractions and long-distance routes will be taken into consideration when considering the appropriateness of the location in relation to the creation of rural hubs and support for 20 minute neighbourhoods. The accessibility of the site by existing active travel and sustainable travel means will also be considered as contributing to carbon reduction.

10.184

Important factors will be the amount and scale of development in terms of its visual impact. Even camp sites may have ancillary facilities such as amenity blocks, site shops or cafés which will also have an impact, both visually and in terms of potential pollution issues from light, sound, and traffic generation.

10.185

The location of the site in terms of accessibility and traffic generation will be very important. Limits may need to be imposed on the amount of development permitted as a result – to mitigate negative environmental impacts and minimise traffic issues. Long-term management plans may be sought to ensure that the proposals support the characteristics of the rural environment.



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VISITOR-RELATED DEVELOPMENT WITHIN THE COUNTRYSIDE

Policy E11

Visitor-Related Development within the Countryside

Visitor related development, including accommodation and improvements and associated development to existing visitor attractions and accommodation in the countryside will be supported where the proposals are in accordance with the development plan, promote the rural economy and contribute positively towards the ongoing protection and enhancement of the countryside.

Proposals will be expected to make use of existing buildings in the first instance. Proposals which involve new buildings should provide justification as to why it is not feasible to use existing buildings.

Proposals will be expected to provide evidence to support new development in terms of the benefits to the local economy and demonstrate how the proposal will minimise impacts on the local environment, by its location, scale and detailed design.

Traffic assessments of proposals will be necessary and travel plans will be required to show how impacts can be mitigated.

Where proposals are being proposed as part of ensuring the viability of existing commercial development within the countryside (such as pubs or food and drink facilities) this should be made clear in the application.

Any benefits of proposals in terms of enhancing sustainable and/or active travel opportunities in the area, or improvements to the local environment and biodiversity will be taken into account as part of considerations of proposals.

In assessing proposals for overnight accommodation within the countryside, account will also be taken of the following factors:

- i. Potential to use existing buildings.
- ii. Location in relation to existing settlements, local attractions, other visitor and tourist uses and long distance sustainable and active travel routes.
- iii. Accessibility by active travel and sustainable transport.
- iv. Scale of development in relation to the character of the area and the characteristics of the site, and
- v. The suitability of local infrastructure and access arrangements.

Visitor accommodation that is of a large scale in terms of its physical size or the amount of traffic it generates will not be appropriate within the countryside. Hotels should be located within settlements. Residential or commercial uses, proposed in association with tourism, recreational and leisure developments in the countryside, but not directly essential to their operation, will not be permitted.