

Chapter 7 – Employment and Tourism

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7. EMPLOYMENT AND TOURISM

LOCAL PLAN OBJECTIVE:

Support a prosperous economy sustaining a range of business enterprises, including in particular the diversification of the rural economy and promotion of the district's tourism industry.

7.1 Introduction

- 7.1.1 Government guidance emphasises the need for continued economic development,¹ and encourages local planning authorities to identify preferred areas and sites for employment that *"offer realistic, safe and easy access by a range of transport modes"*². In some cases this may mean protecting existing industrial sites that are in accessible locations, in order to retain sufficient employment land in a given area³. In rural areas, such as West Dorset, such development should be focused in or near to local service centres, such as market towns and main villages, in order to support the rural economy and reduce the need for commuting to jobs. However, such locations, particularly in the remoter areas, may not always be readily accessible by a choice of transport modes, and, as such, a flexible approach is required⁴.
- 7.1.2 The Structure Plan includes economic policies to facilitate the growth of Dorset's economy. The District Council is required to identify an adequate choice of sites to ensure that about 71 hectares are developed for employment uses between 1994 and 2011⁵.
- 7.1.3 Government planning guidance acknowledges that tourism makes a major contribution to the economy and contributes to the prosperity of many cities, towns and rural areas. Continued growth in tourism can generate economic activity and employment and consideration needs to be given to helping the industry grow whilst identifying and protecting the high quality environment upon which it often depends⁶. Sustainable tourism development should achieve both economic growth and the conservation of the environment. In this respect Government guidance states that *"the tourism industry should flourish in response to the market, while respecting the environment which attracts visitors but also has far wider and enduring value"*⁷.
- 7.1.4 The Structure Plan recognises the importance of the tourism industry to the economy of Dorset, and also the potential conflicts between tourism and environmental interests, which need to be addressed. It recognises the need for limitation in sensitive areas, particularly the Heritage Coast, and seeks to ensure that tourist development which will contribute to regeneration and/or extension of the tourist season is encouraged but particularly within the main coastal resorts (referring specifically to Lyme Regis in West Dorset)⁸.

1 Para. 1, PPG4: Industrial and Commercial Development and Small Firms, 1992, DoE

2 Para. 19, PPG13: Transport, 2001, DETR

3 Para. 2.3.6 Planning for Sustainable Development: Towards Better Practice, 1998, DETR

4 Para. 43, PPG13: Transport, 2001, DETR

5 Economy Policy A, Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole Structure Plan (CSP 28), 2001, – this figure is likely to change to incorporate the period to 2016 as the Structure Plan is reviewed.

6 Para. 1.1, PPG21: Tourism, 1992, DoE

7 Para. 1.2, PPG21: Tourism, 1992, DoE

8 Tourism Policies A, Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole Structure Plan (CSP 28), 2001.

7.2 West Dorset's Economy

- 7.2.1 West Dorset has a diverse economy, and its coastal towns and villages are heavily dependent on the tourist trade. The special character of West Dorset, with large tracts of unspoilt countryside and coastline, attractive and heritage-rich towns and villages, prehistoric, historic and literary associations, draws many visitors.
- 7.2.2 The District has relatively low levels of unemployment and a relatively affluent economy. However, anomalies such as low average wage levels, high house prices and pockets of deprivation reveal a hidden need for economic support. Problems exist in remote rural areas due to dependence on agriculture, seasonal employment and difficulties of access to training and employment opportunities. There are a number of local and national financial support packages to assist business establishment and development. These schemes are liable to change and up-to-date information can be obtained from the Business Support Team in the Community Enabling Division at West Dorset District Council or via the District Council's website.
- 7.2.3 West Dorset's economy is likely to change and evolve over the plan period. The various problems faced by the agricultural sector – increasing global open market competition, recovery from BSE, Foot and Mouth, reduction in direct subsidies through the Common Agricultural Policy - may well continue to affect the rural economy and continued management of the countryside. A decline in manufacturing and retail is predicted due to stiff global competition and the growth of purchasing through e-commerce. However, growth in services, tourism and leisure, and food and drink production is anticipated, due to the growing demand for locally distinctive, niche foods and other local products, and the relatively low production costs compared to urban centres. It is acknowledged that the tourism industry is also subject to global competition and needs to be able to adapt to changing markets. In this respect there is scope to improve the standard of holiday accommodation and tourist facilities within the district and also lengthen the holiday season in order to maintain and improve the economic and social benefits derived from tourism. The aim is to achieve these changes without detriment to the special qualities of West Dorset's environment. A number of strategies that have been prepared to tap the potential and opportunities of the World Heritage status of the Dorset and East Devon coast seek to realise this potential.

7.3 Employment Strategy

- 7.3.1 The review of the Local Plan provides a key opportunity to support the local economy, by the identification of a variety of sites and locations suitable for the growth of local businesses and inward investment, and by ensuring that policies are sufficiently flexible to adapt to the likely changes in the economy.

- 7.3.2 The District Council will seek to safeguard its existing stock of employment sites and premises⁹, and allocate new sites for employment purposes primarily in or near to the main towns, to reflect the local need for development opportunities and provide some certainty over the future distribution of employment land across West Dorset¹⁰. In order to support the rural economy, the District Council will also allow the development of businesses within or adjoining the smaller settlements, including the extension and conversion of buildings for employment uses, as well as supporting agricultural diversification projects. It is important that new development does not harm the rural character of the area, on which the local economy depends. (Cross reference is made to Policies SA1 Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty; SA2 Heritage Coast Protection; SA3 Landscape Character Area; DA5 the Scale and Positioning of Buildings).
- 7.3.3 Between 1994 and 2001, 20ha of land have been developed for business / industrial / storage and distribution (as defined under B1, B2 or B8 use classes), and a further 28 ha had extant planning permission¹¹. To ensure that there is a reasonable supply and choice of employment sites, of different sizes in a variety of locations, to meet the Structure Plan's requirement of "about 71ha", the Local Plan identifies 32.7 hectares of land for employment use, as detailed in Table 7.1. Details of the allocations are within the policies in chapters 13-15 which relate to specific sites.
- 7.3.4 In line with the spatial strategy as set out in paragraph 7.3.2 above, new employment allocations have been focused in, or close to, the main towns in the District. In addition, some land is allocated in association with the most sustainable villages, with the aim of improving the self-containment of those settlements. The villages of Charlton Down, Crossways and Puddletown have employment allocations. The village of Charmouth is situated close to the town of Lyme Regis and there is an employment allocation at Catherston Manor Farm (see policy WA23).

¹⁰ Table 7.1 and Table 7.2 along with the associated text at paragraphs 7.3.1 – 7.3.6 and Policies ET1 – ET4 refer to employment uses falling within Use Classes B1, B2, and B8 or a similar sui generis use. They therefore refer solely to employment uses and land in connection with the Structure Plan target. Policies covering tourism related employment are in sections 7.7, 7.8 and 7.9 of chapter 7.

¹¹ as of September 2001, <http://www.dorset-cc.gov.uk/corporatehome/EnvironmentalServicesHome/DorsetDataOn-Line>

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Table 7.1: Employment Site Allocations

Sites Allocated for Employment	Use	Hectares	Proposal	Policy
Beaminster: north of Broadwindsor Road	B1/B2	3.7	Allocation carried forward from 1998 Adopted Plan	WA1
Bridport: land adjoining St Andrews industrial estate	B1	2.0	Allocation carried forward from 1998 Adopted Plan	WA12
Bridport: land at North Mills	B1/B2	0.5	New allocation - land adjoining existing industrial units	WA14
Charlton Down	B1	0.8	Allocation carried forward from 1998 Adopted Plan	EA1
Charmouth: Catherston Manor Farm	B1	0.28	New allocation	WA23
Chickerell: Putton Lane	B1/B2	4.0	Allocation carried forward from 1998 Adopted Plan	EA7
Chickerell: Radipole Lane (Chafeys Lake site)	B1/B2	4.2	Existing allocation extended	EA7
Crossways: land to the west of Warmwell Road	B1	2.1	Allocation carried forward from 1998 Adopted Plan	EA11
Dorchester: Poundbury	B1	3.86	New allocation	EA17/
	B2	2.14		EA18
Lyme Regis: Woodberry Down	B1	0.9	New allocation	WA24
Puddletown: Northbrook	B1/B2	1.7	New allocation	EA31
Sherborne: Former Gas Depot	B1/B2	0.8	New allocation	NA3
Sherborne: Barton Farm	B1/B2	3.48	New allocation	NA1
Sherborne Hotel	B1/C1	2.2	New allocation	NA2
TOTAL		32.66		

7.3.5 Government advice stresses the need to allow for tourism development whilst protecting the environment for its long term value¹². The countryside and coast of West Dorset are amongst its chief attractions for tourists and require sensitive visitor management to ensure that the volume of tourists does not harm the environment that they come to see. Therefore, the District Council seeks to improve visitor management and provide counter attractions away from the Heritage Coast in order to reduce peak season problems and support the wider local economy. The Council will encourage new tourist attractions that are accessible by means other than the private car. Attractions that are accessible by public transport help reduce reliance on the private car and accord with current Government guidance on sustainable development and reducing the need to travel. They also contribute to objective vii) in chapter 2 which is to 'achieve a safe and integrated transport network, reduce the need to travel by car and facilitate walking, cycling and the use of public transport'.

¹² Para. 3.13, PPG21: Tourism, 1992, DoE.

- 7.3.6 In order to improve the standard of holiday accommodation and tourist facilities within the district and also lengthen the holiday season in order to maintain and improve the economic and social benefits derived from tourism, policies ET7 – ET16 specifically address the provision of new tourist attractions, built holiday accommodation, camping, caravan and holiday parks, site facilities and the storage of caravans. The aim of these policies is to support, where appropriate, new and existing tourism businesses so that they can adapt to changing markets and customer needs by providing new attractions, facilities or accommodation or by improving existing provision.

7.4 Retention of Employment Sites

- 7.4.1 Employment uses within the District's towns, villages and countryside contribute towards the mix of uses within settlements, provide valuable opportunities for jobs close to where people live, and benefit the local economy. The loss of land currently in employment use can increase commuting and unemployment, and reduce opportunities for certain types of employment (such as that generated by small firms requiring relatively inexpensive locations, and businesses that are not compatible with residential areas). Suitable existing employment sites (and allocated sites) may be difficult or impossible to replace.
- 7.4.2 In order to ensure that there are a variety of locations for employment uses in the District, provide security of tenure for tenants, certainty for developers and land owners and choice for the changing needs of business, it is considered important to retain existing employment land and buildings and to prevent the development of existing or allocated employment sites for other uses¹³. The District Council places particular emphasis on the need to retain B1 (light industrial / office), B2 (general industrial) and B8 (storage) uses, and Policy ET1 has priority over the Local Plan policies that allow for conversion of rural buildings to other uses. The definition of employment in Table 7.2 is to be applied only to Policy ET1.

Table 7.2: Definition of Employment

Employment Uses = uses falling within Use Classes B1 (light industrial / office), B2 (general industrial), B8 (storage) as defined in the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order, 1987, and Sui Generis¹⁴ uses which are commonly found in industrial estates, such as haulage yards and MOT testing stations.

Employment Land = Land presently used for employment uses, or previously used for employment uses but now vacated.

- 7.4.3 An exception to this policy for retention would be where employment uses are causing significant problems to the local environment, including highway problems that cannot otherwise be overcome. Where a noisy, smelly use is in a sensitive area such as adjacent to housing or schools, then changes to a more environmentally acceptable use may be permitted. In such cases, the District Council will encourage redevelopment for a less harmful employment use (such as B1 business use) as the first preference, followed by other uses that generate employment, including tourism uses or retail development (subject to Policies ET7, ET8 and C1), and seek to ensure that the development would facilitate the relocation of the existing business to a more suitable site. The District Council will require applicants to demonstrate that real effort (through appropriate advertising at values that reflect the local market conditions) has been undertaken to achieve alternative employment uses on that site.

¹³ As defined in the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) (Amendment) (England) Order, 2005

¹⁴ Uses that do not fall within any use classes as defined in the Use Classes Order 2005 – "without class"

- 7.4.4 In some situations, the size, location and characteristics of an existing employment site mean that there is the potential for mixed-use development which could provide greater benefit to the community, in terms of addressing local needs, than if the site was retained solely in employment use. In this respect, Government advice supports the reuse of vacant or under-used employment sites where it can help promote the regeneration of towns and cities¹⁵. Such a site has been identified in Dorchester (Policy EA15 – Weymouth Avenue Area). The Council will however expect, where appropriate, any regeneration proposals to retain an equivalent amount of employment (in terms of job numbers) on the site, although the site may be developed more intensively to accommodate other uses. The benefits of mixed use development could include housing that addressed a local need.
- 7.4.5 The loss of acceptable sites for general industrial (B2) uses within easy reach of the main towns is of particular concern, due to the difficulties of providing new sites for such uses. This arises either because of proximity to residential or other sensitive uses in such locations or other constraints on development. It is, therefore, important that existing B1, B2 and B8 uses in appropriate locations, such as industrial estates, are retained wherever possible.

POLICY ET1 RETENTION OF INDUSTRIAL AND COMMERCIAL SITES

Proposals which would lead to the loss of employment (as defined in Table 7.2) land and/or premises will not be permitted except where:

- i) the current use is causing, or if vacant or derelict the previous lawful use would cause, significant highway, environmental or amenity problems and it has been demonstrated that no appropriate viable alternative employment uses could be attracted to that site; or
- ii) the mixed-use redevelopment of the site would offer important community benefits and opportunities for regeneration and it can be demonstrated that the development will not result in a significant loss of jobs in the area.

There is no Policy ET2.

- 7.4.6 To promote an attractive and efficient business environment the District Council will, where appropriate, encourage landscaping schemes (including boundary treatments) and improved signposting to existing industrial and trading estate areas. Furthermore, the District Council will enforce existing planning conditions associated with development, particularly those relating to noise mitigation, car parking provision, or the prevention of pollution.

¹⁵ Paras 22 & 49 PPG3: Housing 2000, DETR

7.5 Employment Uses within Defined Development Boundaries

- 7.5.1 Proposals for small scale employment development within existing settlements can help to sustain the economy and provide employment opportunities that are easily accessible to local residents. Business (B1) uses, including office or light industrial uses, can take place in or near residential areas without harm to the environment or residential amenity, and there are increasing opportunities for home-based or community-based working, including teleworking. Existing industrial estates provide opportunities for a wider range of industrial uses (including B2), located away from sensitive areas such as adjacent to housing or schools.
- 7.5.2 The Plan adopts a flexible approach to the development of new employment sites or the expansion of existing employment uses within settlements, subject to appearance, environmental nuisance, traffic generation and parking (cross-refer to policies in Chapter 11, Design and Amenity, and Chapter 9, Transport). Restrictions to working hours may sometimes be appropriate if the development is particularly close to residential or other noise-sensitive uses, and is likely to generate levels of noise which could harm the amenities of such uses. Outside the main settlements, the sequential approach will be applied to employment proposals that will attract large numbers of people. Within villages, new employment will be supported where it is of a scale appropriate to serving local needs and enhancing the self-containment of the settlement.
- 7.5.3 To promote an attractive and efficient business environment, the District Council will expect a high quality of design on new employment sites.

POLICY ET3 EMPLOYMENT USES WITHIN DEFINED DEVELOPMENT BOUNDARIES

Proposals for employment uses will be permitted:

- a) on existing industrial sites, provided that it is for business (B1), general industrial (B2) or warehousing / storage (B8) or a similar Sui Generis use; and
- b) within the defined development boundaries of main towns and villages provided that it is of a scale compatible with its surrounds and location.

In all cases, the proposed employment use will only be permitted provided:

- i) the impact on the local highway network would be acceptable to the Highway Authority; and
- ii) it would not cause unacceptable environmental or amenity problems.

7.6 Employment Uses outside Defined Development Boundaries – including Farm Diversification Projects and Agriculture

- 7.6.1 Small-scale commercial and industrial enterprises can provide economic activity in rural areas and contribute to both local and national competitiveness, and provision should be made for such developments. It is recognised that accessibility in rural areas may be limited, but it is considered that the reuse and adaptation of existing rural buildings, the expansion of existing business premises and sensitive small scale development for business use in and around suitable settlements may be acceptable, provided the potential increase in daily vehicle movements and the impact on the local highway network would not be significant. In supporting such developments, the Council is seeking to provide opportunities for the diversification of the rural economy, which will address local employment needs and enhance the self-containment of rural communities. It is not intended that large new industrial sites should be established in remote rural locations, as this is contrary to the spatial strategy and Government guidance on sustainability and reducing the need to travel.
- 7.6.2 Existing businesses in the rural areas of the District provide valuable employment opportunities locally, and their retention will be encouraged (see Policy ET1). Some of these businesses may have needs for expansion or additional facilities in the future, which if not allowed on the existing site, may result in them having to move outside the area. Extensions to existing rural business buildings or sites will be supported, provided that they are small in scale, do not generate a significant increase in activity within or to and from the site, do not adversely affect the surrounding countryside and are in accordance with other policies of the Plan.
- 7.6.3 The Council supports the conversion of existing buildings located outside the Defined Development Boundaries (see the section in Chapter 5 regarding the re-use and adaptation of rural buildings) for farm diversification projects, or for other employment uses as this can provide valuable employment accommodation without the need for additional buildings in the countryside. Where such buildings are currently redundant or under-used, it can often be an opportunity for saving an important building from demolition or disrepair. In line with Government guidance, once the buildings are no longer required for their original purpose, their reuse should be considered at an early stage, rather than their being left to become derelict.
- 7.6.4 The Government in PPS7 is supportive of the replacement of suitably located, existing buildings of permanent and substantial construction in the countryside for economic development purposes. The replacement of buildings should be favoured where this would result in a more acceptable and sustainable development than might be achieved through conversion, for example, where the replacement building would bring about an environmental improvement in terms of the impact of the development on its surroundings and the landscape¹⁶. Furthermore the replacement building must be no greater in footprint or mass than the building to be replaced. Proposals will be considered having regard to Policy SS5 Replacement of Rural Buildings.

¹⁶ Para 19 PPS7: Sustainable Development in Rural Areas, 2004, ODPM.

- 7.6.5 There may also be limited opportunities for new buildings for rural employment uses adjoining towns or villages with defined development boundaries, or within or adjoining the villages listed at paragraph 5.5.6, that are considered appropriate for limited additional employment to support the rural economy. Other opportunities are through the small scale addition of new buildings into an existing complex, provided that this does not adversely affect the surrounding countryside, is well related to existing buildings and is not of a scale that would generate unacceptable levels of traffic on rural lanes.
- 7.6.6 Employment proposals involving farm diversification should also refer to Policy ET5; tourist attractions or accommodation should refer to Policies ET8 - ET11; those involving retail outlets or community facilities should refer to Policies C4 and C5; and for countryside recreation policies C8 and C9 apply. Any proposal for development in the countryside will also be subject to other relevant policies in the plan, particularly Policies SA1, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty; SA2, Heritage Coast Protection; SA3, Landscape Character Area; and DA5, the Scale and Positioning of Buildings. Depending on the scale of the proposal, the District Council may require a Travel Plan to be prepared in order to reduce the potential impact of trips by car (see Policy TRAN12).

POLICY ET4 EMPLOYMENT USES OUTSIDE DEFINED DEVELOPMENT BOUNDARIES

Outside defined development boundaries, development for business (B1), general industrial (B2) or warehousing / storage (B8) or similar Sui Generis use, will be permitted provided that all the following criteria are met:

- i) the development is of a scale compatible with its surrounds and location;
- ii) the site either:
 - comprises the reuse or replacement of a rural building (subject to Policies SS4 and SS5), or
 - is within or next to a town or village (as listed at paragraph 5.3.5 or 5.5.6) or
 - comprises a farm diversification project (subject to Policy ET5), or
 - is within or immediately adjoining an established employment site and the development comprises the extension of the existing employment premises;
- iii) the site has good access to the local highway network and the potential increase in vehicle movements and impact on the local highway network would be acceptable to the Highway Authority;
- iv) the site is well contained by clear boundaries and designed with sufficient landscaping to ensure that the proposed activity can be carried out without becoming intrusive in the wider countryside; and
- v) the development would not cause unacceptable environmental or amenity problems.

Farm Diversification Projects

- 7.6.7 In the open countryside, away from established settlements, the Government wishes to strictly control new development but exceptions may be made where development both benefits economic activity and maintains or enhances the environment¹⁷.
- 7.6.8 With ever-increasing competition from abroad and consumer demands, agriculture has undergone significant changes. The modernisation of traditional farming techniques has meant that many of the processes are less labour-intensive, increasing rural unemployment and under-employment, and farmers are having to diversify in order to supplement their incomes. The changes in farming techniques and farm mergers, which provide economies of scale, have also resulted in a growing number of redundant buildings. Farmers' ability to act as "guardians of the countryside" is under threat.
- 7.6.9 The District Council, therefore, wishes to support farm diversification projects, where these provide alternative employment / supplemental income to support existing farming businesses, provide appropriate and on-going maintenance of the countryside, help balance location of rural population / employment opportunities, and provide alternative, productive uses for redundant farm buildings (if available). Cross reference is made to Policy ET4, Employment Uses outside Defined Development Boundaries, Policy SS4, The Adaptation and Change of Use of Rural Buildings and Policy SS5, Replacement of Rural Buildings.
- 7.6.10 Not all farm diversification projects will require planning permission but set out below are examples of farm diversification projects that the District Council is keen to encourage:
- projects related to the growth of locally distinctive produce or produce grown specifically for local markets where minimisation in "food miles" can be demonstrated;
 - projects that encompass "on farm" or local processing which "adds value" to locally grown produce, including forest and woodland products;
 - projects to grow alternative (non-food) crops for sustainable energy production or other purposes.

Other examples of farm diversification projects include:

- the use of land for a small camping and/or touring caravan site.
- the re-use of an existing building as a camping barn or other holiday accommodation.
- equestrian facilities.
- the re-use of existing buildings as offices and workshops.

The above farm diversification projects are all covered by other relevant policies in the plan as well as Policy ET5. The District Council supports the preparation of long term business plans for whole estates as a context for sustainable farm diversification.

¹⁷ Para. 1, PPS7: Sustainable Development in Rural Areas, 2004, ODPM

- 7.6.11 The District Council will normally expect applicants to submit a “whole farm plan” to explain the proposed diversification project and how it will support the existing farming enterprise in the long term. Applicants will also be expected to demonstrate that the proposal would not lead to the realisation of a ‘one off’ capital receipt through asset stripping or the breaking up of the working farm. Where it is considered appropriate and necessary, the Council may seek a planning obligation under section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 to ensure that the project remains as part of the agricultural unit, and is not sold off separately. When farm diversification projects are no longer ancillary to the agricultural enterprise and expand to such an extent that their impact is considerable (generally when they require larger premises or will employ a large number of people), they will be expected, and encouraged, to relocate closer to an existing town or village.

POLICY ET5 FARM DIVERSIFICATION PROJECTS

Farm diversification projects will be permitted provided they comprise:

- i) the use of land for non-agricultural uses (providing it does not compromise the visual or traditional appearance of the countryside or ability to meet biodiversity targets); or
- ii) the reuse or replacement of an existing building or buildings (subject to Policies SS4 and SS5), or
- iii) new ancillary development immediately adjoining an existing farm building or groups of buildings (provided there are no redundant buildings capable of re-use / conversion and the proposed new development is of a size appropriate to the projects' functional requirements).

In all cases, development will not be permitted if it would result in harm to the rural character of the area by reason of its scale, massing and visual appearance.

Permission will be subject to the site having good access to the local highway network and the potential increase in vehicle movements and impact on the local highway network being acceptable to the Highway Authority; and

the development not causing unacceptable environmental or amenity problems.

New Agricultural Buildings

- 7.6.12 Many types of new agricultural buildings do not require planning permission as they have permitted development rights¹⁸. However, prior notification is required for certain aspects of development for which planning permission is not required¹⁹. The District Council will assess such submissions to ensure that development does not harm the character of the rural landscape, whilst also taking into account the operating requirements of the farm.

¹⁸ Part 6 of Schedule 2 to the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995 grants permitted development rights for a range of agricultural buildings and operations.

¹⁹ For example, for the siting, design and external appearance of new farm buildings.

- 7.6.13 Where planning permission is required for new agricultural buildings or extensions to existing buildings, the District Council will need to be satisfied that there is sufficient agricultural justification for the proposed development in terms of the established needs of the existing agricultural enterprise, its expansion or appropriate diversification. In order to minimise the amount of land lost to development, every attempt should be made to re-use existing buildings where they are available and, if possible, site buildings on existing hard surfaced areas. New agricultural buildings should not be situated in prominent locations and, where possible, should be grouped with other buildings to reduce the visual impact and minimise the length of any new access road. They should be compatible in scale and colour with existing buildings and the countryside setting. When assessing proposals for new livestock buildings, consideration will be given to the protection of residential amenity. Other Local Plan policies will also need to be taken into account, and attention is particularly drawn to Policies SA1 (Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty), SA3 (Landscape Character Areas), DA7 (Detailed Design and Materials).

POLICY ET6 NEW AGRICULTURAL BUILDINGS

New agricultural buildings, or extensions to existing buildings, will be permitted provided that the development is necessary for the purposes of agriculture within the unit and there are no existing buildings on the unit which are capable of re-use / conversion. In addition:

- i) the scale, siting, design and external appearance of the development should minimise any adverse visual impact on the landscape and existing buildings;
- ii) where opportunities exist and operational requirements allow, new buildings should be grouped with other buildings rather than in isolation;
- iii) the development should not have an unacceptable impact upon residential amenity.

7.7 Tourist Attractions

- 7.7.1 From a survey carried out in 1999²⁰, it is estimated that there are around 48 visitor attractions in West Dorset, including historic homes; museums; art/craft galleries; gardens; and animal centres (zoos, aquaria, farms etc). The majority of attractions operate on a seasonal basis, generally being open for around 240 days a year, with 78% of all visits taking place during the five months of May to September. Three attractions²¹ receive more than 100,000 visitors a year, whilst most receive less than 20,000 visitors, and few reach maximum capacity levels.
- 7.7.2 People are often willing to travel considerable distances for high quality, interesting and exciting attractions, and the more successful attractions tend to be those that continue to invest in capital improvements to maintain or increase their visitor numbers.

²⁰ Dorset Tourism Data Project 1999.

²¹ Tutankhamun exhibition, Dorchester; Dinosaur Museum, Dorchester; Abbotsbury Swannery.

- 7.7.3 Major new attractions will need to comply with the sequential approach set out in Chapter 8²²; however, it is acknowledged that some attractions are tied to a countryside location, such as those related to historic houses in the countryside. Within the main holiday towns of West Dorset - Dorchester, Bridport (including West Bay), Lyme Regis, Sherborne and, to a lesser extent, Beaminster - opportunities for the development of new tourist attractions may occur through redevelopment or conversion of buildings, or infilling between buildings. Attractions within these towns can also be accessed by public transport, providing the opportunity for the use of transport other than the private car. Provided that these developments are in keeping with the character of their surroundings, do not harm the surrounding environment and do not jeopardise the economic and social needs of residents, they will be encouraged as a means of supporting the local economy. New tourist attractions, based on the heritage of the towns and their surrounding areas and of educational use, will be encouraged.
- 7.7.4 The District Council will also encourage appropriate proposals for countryside recreation outside the Heritage Coast and AONB, to help relieve recreational pressures in these areas and improve access to and enjoyment of the countryside. In some cases, small scale tourism development in the AONB may be appropriate, particularly where it helps to improve employment opportunities in rural areas or allows for the diversification of an agricultural business. Such proposals should be sensitively designed and located, in keeping with the special character of West Dorset (cross-refer to Policies SA3, Landscape Character Areas; and DA5, the Scale and Positioning of Buildings), not have a significant adverse effect upon the amenity of nearby residents (Policy DA6) and not cause or exacerbate traffic / parking problems (cross-refer to Policy AH14, Road Safety).
- 7.7.5 Depending on the scale and nature of the proposal, the District Council may require a Travel Plan in order to ensure the proposal is designed to reduce the potential impact of trips by car (Policy TRAN 12). A Business Plan may be required for proposals outside Defined Development Boundaries to explain the proposed project and how it will support the rural economy in the long term.

POLICY ET7 TOURIST ATTRACTIONS WITHIN THE DEFINED DEVELOPMENT BOUNDARIES

The development of new tourism attractions / facilities (excluding accommodation) within the Defined Development Boundaries (as shown on the Proposals Map) will be permitted provided:

- i) it does not, either on its own or cumulatively in combination with other established or proposed developments in the vicinity, harm the historic and or environmental character of the settlement and the amenities of the resident population; and
- ii) it is accessible by a choice of means of transport and the likely impact on the local highway network would be acceptable to the Highway Authority.

22 Para 1.8, PPS6: Planning for Town Centres, 2005, ODPM

POLICY ET8 TOURIST ATTRACTIONS OUTSIDE THE DEFINED DEVELOPMENT BOUNDARIES

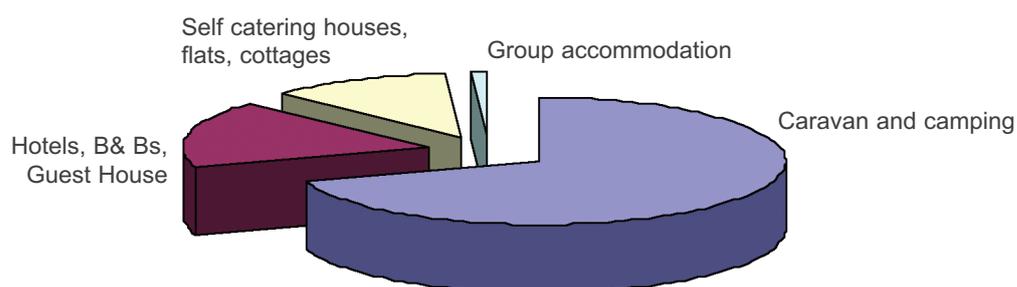
The development of tourist attractions / facilities (excluding accommodation) outside Defined Development Boundaries (as shown on the Proposals Map) will not be permitted unless:

- i) their scale is in keeping with the surrounding environment and they would not be visually intrusive in the wider landscape;
- ii) they either utilise, or are close to, existing buildings if the proposed development lies within the AONB;
- iii) they do not, either on their own or cumulatively with other established or proposed developments in the vicinity, harm the landscape character or rural amenity of the countryside and resident population; and
- iv) the potential increase in daily vehicle movements and the impact on the local highway network would be acceptable to the Highway Authority.

7.8 Tourist Accommodation

7.8.1 Staying visitors make a significant contribution to the local economy and are an essential part of a prosperous tourism industry. Total average expenditure per person per day for a visitor staying in West Dorset was £27.69 and for a day visitor £14.00 in 1999-2000.²³ Within West Dorset, there is a predominance of self-catering type of accommodation and, in particular, of Holiday Parks (see Figure 7.3). The serviced accommodation stock is predominantly made up of small guesthouses and Bed & Breakfasts, although the limited number of hotels have the highest occupancy levels in the off-peak season. The average number of people visiting in a group, their length of stay and their average level of overall spend varies with the type of accommodation used. For example, visitor groups staying in a hotel tend to spend considerably more than a group staying in a touring caravan or tent²⁴.

Figure 7.3: Range of Accommodation in West Dorset 2001 ²⁵



²³ Dorset Visitor Survey 1999-2000

²⁴ Dorset Tourism Data Project 1999.

²⁵ Southern Tourist Board, South West Tourism, 2001

- 7.8.2 Within the accommodation sector, the general trend is towards improvements in quality and the provision of associated facilities or added value as a result of growing visitor expectations (both domestic and foreign) and media criticism. B & Bs and small guest houses/hotels are increasingly finding that they need to upgrade their accommodation to all ensuite or at least private bathroom facilities as well as making other quality improvements, such as the provision of central heating and improving facilities and accessibility for the disabled. The continuing trend amongst more affluent visitors to take off-season short breaks is also contributing to the move 'up-market' and to the provision of higher quality hotel accommodation.
- 7.8.3 It is considered that the accommodation and facilities at West Dorset's Holiday Parks is already of a high standard. However, current and future trends are likely to see a demand for a move to more landscaped parks with improved facilities, where accommodation has a less regimented layout with greater space between units / pitches and environmental enhancement.
- 7.8.4 In order to encourage staying visitors, it is important that an adequate range of accommodation of suitable quality is provided.

Built Holiday Accommodation²⁶

- 7.8.5 In order to increase the availability and quality of serviced hotels and guesthouses in West Dorset, and particularly the main holiday resorts, the District Council will encourage the retention and improvement of existing built holiday accommodation and allow new built holiday accommodation through infilling and the conversion or replacement of existing buildings within settlements. In general, such facilities should be concentrated in the main holiday towns of West Dorset²⁷, where the tourist attractions are concentrated and public transport provision is highest. Additional facilities can also be provided through the extension of existing hotels and guesthouses in these and the remaining settlements.
- 7.8.6 Outside the settlements, new built development is generally resisted through the policies of this Plan in order to protect the open character and natural beauty of the countryside. Development outside settlements is also less likely to be accessible by public transport and within reach of facilities. The District Council will permit the conversion of rural buildings outside Defined Development Boundaries for holiday accommodation subject to Policy SS4 regarding the adaptation and change of use of rural buildings.
- 7.8.7 In all cases, the impact on the surrounding area, particularly in terms of visual impact and parking provision, will be carefully considered.

POLICY ET9 BUILT HOLIDAY ACCOMMODATION

New serviced and self-catering holiday accommodation (as well as conversions, extensions and alterations to existing premises) will be permitted within Defined Development Boundaries of Dorchester, Bridport (including West Bay), Lyme Regis, Sherborne, Beaminster, Chickerell and Charmouth.

Elsewhere, new holiday accommodation will only be permitted if it is either within a village listed at paragraphs 5.3.5 or 5.5.6 or provided through the conversion of existing buildings, subject to the criteria of Policy SS4 (adaptation and change of use of rural buildings).

²⁶ Built holiday accommodation refers to permanent structures and excludes more temporary / mobile units such as chalets and caravans although such structures may remain in situ for many years.

²⁷ Dorchester, Bridport (including West Bay), Lyme Regis, Sherborne and, to a lesser extent, Beaminster, Chickerell and Charmouth.

Chalet / Static Caravan / Touring Caravan and Camping sites

- 7.8.8 As Figure 7.3 shows, most holiday accommodation within West Dorset is provided by sites containing fixed chalets, static caravans, pitches for touring caravans and/or tents. Such sites are likely to remain an important part of the self-catering holiday sector and continue to make a significant contribution to the local economy. At present, the sites range in terms of size and mix of accommodation, and length of use²⁸. It is considered important that the wide range of sites and types available is maintained as it ensures that there is likely to be accommodation to suit a range of potential holidaymakers. In this respect, the Council's Tourism Strategy 2003-2008²⁹, aims to maintain and increase the value of tourism in the district, ensure that a high quality of visitor experience is available for everyone, and support and promote existing tourist attractions. The Council will, therefore, support appropriate improvements in the quality of accommodation on offer and proposals that enable existing sites to extend the visitor season.
- 7.8.9 However, this support needs to be balanced with the fact that such sites can have a significant visual impact on the landscape, particularly in designated areas, and their distribution, layout and design needs to be considered carefully. The Structure Plan states that the development of new chalet, caravan and camping sites should not be allowed in the Heritage Coast, and proposals within the AONB should be subject to the most rigorous examination. Elsewhere, sites should be permitted, provided the proposal complies with other relevant policies and where the development would not result in an undesirable concentration in any one area³⁰.
- 7.8.10 Some existing sites are in prominent locations and lack the landscaping which would help them to blend into their environment. Their impact can be lessened by changing site layouts (internal reorganisation) to make them less cramped and by incorporating appropriate landscaping, or through the replacement of static holiday caravans by holiday chalets that use more appropriate materials. Such improvements may also increase the site's attractiveness to future visitors. Government guidance encourages local planning authorities to seek improvements to the quality of existing sites, and the relocation of sites away from particularly sensitive locations, including Heritage Coasts³¹.
- 7.8.11 The change of use of sites to larger and/or more permanent units may provide a more economically viable site and provide flexibility for operators to respond to customer needs, but it may also have a number of disadvantages that need careful consideration. Change of use refers to the change of sites, either wholly or in part, from tents and/or touring caravans to touring units or tents, touring caravans and touring units to static caravan/chalet accommodation, thereby losing some of the tent or touring accommodation. Such changes may result in a localised shortage of lower cost accommodation, reduce the range and choice of available accommodation and have a greater impact on the local landscape, nature conservation interests and residential amenity. The term "touring unit" is intended to cover the different types of touring accommodation e.g. tent, trailer tent, touring caravan and motor home.

28 Some of the touring caravan / camping sites do not require planning permission - General Permitted Development Order 1995, Parts 4, 5 and 27 - allows: the use of land as a caravan site in those cases where a caravan site licence is not required (and excluding use for winter quarters) - eg: occupied and supervised by exempt organisations (such as Caravan and Camping Club and the Caravan Club); development required by the conditions of a site licence (under the Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act 1960); the use of land by members of an exempt organisations for the erection of placing of tents; and the temporary use for tented accommodation (up to 28 days per annum)

29 WDDC "Tourism Together" Our Plan for Tourism in West Dorset 2003-2008. Adopted 15 May 2003

30 Tourism Policy D, Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole Structure Plan (CSP 28), 2001.

31 Para. B8, PPG21: Tourism, 1992, DETR

- 7.8.12 Due to the potentially detrimental impact of touring caravan and camping sites and chalet / static caravan sites on the exceptionally high quality of the District's landscape the District Council's policy is to resist the establishment of new sites in the Heritage Coast, which is in accordance with Tourism Policy D of the Structure Plan. New sites though can support the rural economy and provide opportunities for farm diversification. The District Council will, therefore, permit additional touring caravan and camping sites and chalet/static caravan sites outside the Heritage Coast provided they do not harm the landscape or amenity of the countryside. Further sites in the Heritage Coast would be detrimental to the coastline's unspoilt character. The relocation of an existing site to a less environmentally sensitive location will be encouraged where appropriate.
- 7.8.13 Internal reorganisation to reduce the visual impact of the entire site and improve its attractiveness to visitors will be encouraged. In some cases such improvements can only be facilitated by an increase in the overall site area, if existing pitch numbers are not to be reduced. By maintaining the same number of pitches over a different or extended area, the redesigning of sites and their surroundings, through layout, orientation, unit type and landscaping could substantially reduce their visual impact and allow improvements to visitor accommodation and facilities necessary to sustain an economically viable business. Where such a situation occurs, proposals will be given careful consideration and the increase in size balanced against any benefits that could be achieved in terms of site quality and appearance. In the case of proposals for changes of use or extensions to existing sites within the Heritage Coast, the proposals will be expected to demonstrate that the proposal forms part of a long term management, layout and landscaping plan to improve the quality and appearance of the site and reduce its visual impact on the landscape.
- 7.8.14 The District Council's published document "Coastal Caravan Parks in West Dorset"³² provides useful guidance on mitigating measures to reduce the visual and traffic impacts of caravan sites in some of the District's most sensitive areas.

POLICY ET10 DEVELOPMENT OF NEW CAMPING, CARAVAN OR CHALET SITES

The development of new camping, caravan or chalet sites will be permitted provided that the proposed development:

- i) is outside the Heritage Coast;
- ii) would not, either on its own or cumulatively in combination with other established or proposed sites in the vicinity, harm the landscape character or rural amenity of the countryside and resident population;
- iii) is conveniently and well located in relation to an adequate road system which can accommodate the traffic generated; and
- iv) where possible has convenient access to frequent public transport services.

³² Coastal Caravan Parks In West Dorset, 1993, David Carman for West Dorset District Council

POLICY ET11 THE EXTENSION IN AREA OF EXISTING CAMPING, CARAVAN AND CHALET SITES AND THE CHANGE OF USE OF EXISTING SITES FOR TENTS, TOURING CARAVANS, 'TOURING UNITS', STATIC CARAVANS OR CHALETS

The extension in area of existing camping, caravan and chalet sites and the change of use of land within existing sites will be permitted provided the proposal:

- i) would not, either on its own or cumulatively in combination with other established or proposed sites in the vicinity, harm the landscape character or rural amenity of the countryside and resident population;
- ii) is conveniently and well located in relation to an adequate road system which can accommodate the traffic generated;
- iii) where possible has convenient access to frequent public transport services; and
- iv) would not significantly reduce the range and choice of available accommodation as a result of a loss of tent and/or touring caravan pitches.

In addition, sites within the Heritage Coast will be expected to demonstrate that the proposal forms part of a long term management, layout and landscaping plan to improve the quality and appearance of the site and reduce its visual impact on the landscape.

The change of use either wholly or in part of an existing site from tents or touring caravans to 'touring units' will be permitted provided that it complies with the above criteria.

POLICY ET12 NEW SITE FACILITIES, INTERNAL REORGANISATION AND INTENSIFICATION OF EXISTING SITES

Proposals for the intensification (increase in pitch number within the existing permitted area), the reorganisation of uses/layout (within the existing sites) and new site facilities in connection with existing sites for tents, touring caravans, static caravans and chalets will be permitted provided the proposal:

- i) would not, either on its own or cumulatively with the remainder of the site or in combination with other established or proposed sites in the vicinity, harm the landscape character or rural amenity of the countryside and resident population.
- ii) is conveniently and well located in relation to an adequate road system which can accommodate the traffic generated;
- iii) where possible has convenient access to frequent public transport services, and
- iv) includes landscape improvements relevant to the development and a scheme for their maintenance.

There are no policies ET13, ET14 or ET15.

Holiday Occupancy Conditions

- 7.8.15 Where any tourist accommodation development is permitted within the District, the Council will normally apply a condition restricting its occupancy to holiday use only. This can help to ensure that the property, once permitted, remains in tourism use, and prevents the property from coming into general residential use. In some cases, it may also be appropriate to apply a seasonal occupancy condition restricting the use to a number of months per year (avoiding the quieter period from mid-November to the beginning of March), where this would be necessary to retain the quiet character of the area.

7.9 Caravan Storage

- 7.9.1 As caravan holiday accommodation has improved, there is increasing demand to bring touring caravans down to Dorset for the whole season to be used on an occasional basis for weeks / weekends throughout that time. This has led to pressure for sites to store the caravans away from active pitches when they are not in use, in order to maximise the caravan site's potential. Government guidance states that planning policy should seek to *"give sympathetic consideration to applications to extend the opening period"*³³ and this is one means of achieving this, thereby supporting the local tourist economy, as well as reducing the amount of unnecessary caravan traffic on local roads in the peak season.
- 7.9.2 However, there are potential problems associated with this approach, particularly where the storage is proposed outdoors. Caravans are visually prominent and inappropriate as relatively permanent features in rural areas, particularly within the Heritage Coast and the AONB. Such outdoor storage can have a similar impact to static caravan sites, as people are encouraged to use their caravans over a longer season, with caravans on-site during the winter months. At that time of year there is less natural screening so the sites are more visible and there is a greater need for artificial light. In addition, some nature conservation interests are more fragile at this time for example, winter feeding. Stored caravans could also become more akin to a "second home", resulting in pressure for higher standards of access, parking, private (garden) space etc. Therefore, the District Council will not allow the development of new outdoor caravan storage unless it can be accommodated without harming visual amenities or the rural character of the area. The use of existing enclosed buildings for caravan storage is encouraged as it would not have the same detrimental impact upon visual amenity and could provide an opportunity for farmers to diversify to provide such storage.

POLICY ET16 STORAGE OF CARAVANS

The storage of caravans will not be permitted unless

- i) the site is outside the Heritage Coast and is physically and visually contained and the storage does not harm the landscape character or rural amenity of the countryside; or
- ii) the storage constitutes the reuse of an existing rural building (subject to Policies SS4, the Adaptation and Change of Use of Rural Buildings and ET5, Farm Diversification Projects).

33 PPG21 : Tourism, 1992, DETR.