

Chapter 6

Development in the Countryside

Context

6.1 The countryside is integral to the character of Wealden, yet it is subject to increasing pressure for change. In recent years there has been a major shift in the Government's agricultural policies away from increasing agricultural production and keeping land in agricultural use, in response to large agricultural surpluses. There is likely to be a continuing need for farmers to diversify into appropriate new farming and business activities, including the production of new or alternative crops.

6.2 In this context, the England Rural Development Programme marks a major step by the Government, in accordance with European policy, towards switching farm spending from production based support to schemes which boost the wider rural economy, advance environmentally beneficial farming practices and which help to modernise and restructure the farming industry. The Rural White Paper emphasises the importance of diversifying the rural economy whilst also protecting the environment. In addition, DEFRA's Strategy for Sustainable Farming and Food (2002) outlines the Government's approach to addressing the current needs of the agricultural and food industries. At a local level, the Council's objectives for economic development support a range of projects and initiatives aimed at maintaining and diversifying the rural economy, for example, the Council has been a partner in a national pilot land management initiative in the High Weald (see paragraph 6.29).

6.3 With regard to planning policies for the countryside, Government guidance in Planning Policy Statement (PPS) 7: *Sustainable Development in Rural Areas* (August 2004) advises planning authorities to support sustainable development in rural areas to:

- revitalise country towns and villages;
- facilitate economic activity/rural diversification;
- improve community facilities and services;
- meet rural housing needs;
- enable farmers to become more competitive;
- support equestrian enterprises that maintain environmental quality; and

- provide for a range of tourism and leisure facilities.

6.4 In seeking to achieve the above, PPS7 advises that planning authorities should continue to protect the countryside for the sake of its character and beauty, the diversity of its landscapes and wildlife and the wealth of its natural resources. Structure Plan policies for the countryside state that agriculture and woodland will remain the main land uses and development will continue to be strictly controlled with the emphasis on economic diversification.

6.5 This chapter contains the land use planning policies that are considered appropriate to balance the need for economic diversification with protecting and, where possible, enhancing the environment. These policies apply to all areas outside the development boundaries, including the fringes of some settlements, and cover others where no development boundary is drawn.

6.6 Agricultural development, farm diversification, recreational and equestrian developments, as well as certain residential development in the countryside are considered below. Policies for business, shopping, transport, tourism and recreation development which also relate to the countryside are contained in the respective subject chapters of the Plan.

Strategy

6.7 In line with national, regional and local policies, the emphasis is on appropriate diversification in the rural economy, finding new uses for agricultural buildings and new sources of employment in the rural areas with the aim of helping maintain a living and working countryside. Broadening the base of the rural economy must, however, be balanced with protecting the countryside for the sake of its beauty, diversity of landscape, wildlife, recreation and natural resource value. Care also needs to be taken to avoid the harmful affects of rural diversification, including the introduction of intrusive development, increased traffic on narrow lanes and the negative impacts that can arise as a result of the fragmentation of farm holdings, such as the severance of farm buildings from the land and the creation of small plots of

land which would lead to the diminution of landscape character. The aim is to prevent sporadic and unnecessary development and normally only permit that which is regarded as conserving the character of the countryside. It is also an important aim of the Plan to protect those areas of vulnerable countryside around towns and villages which contribute to their setting and unique identity and which prevent the merging of nearby settlements.

6.8 In terms of countryside recreation, the emphasis is on quiet enjoyment to reflect the high landscape quality and vulnerability of much of the countryside to development pressures. Of particular note, the protection of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty from major development is now equivalent to that afforded to National Parks. Housing in the countryside is generally resisted, although there are special needs which may be met in relation to agriculture, forestry or affordable housing, as well as the extension or replacement of existing dwellings.

6.9 In the light of Government guidance, Structure Plan policies and the Council's objectives for economic development, the Plan's objectives for development in the countryside are:

- (1) *to balance the needs of the rural economy with the protection of the District's landscape and wildlife;*
- (2) *to assist the rural economy by providing for appropriate alternative uses of land and buildings;*
- (3) *to protect the best and most versatile agricultural land;*
- (4) *to encourage quiet informal recreational enjoyment of the countryside, and to provide a policy framework for organised recreation;*
- (5) *to resist housing development unless it meets particular needs and requires a countryside location;*
- (6) *to support national and local initiatives for sensitive countryside management, particularly in areas vulnerable to change and in relation to agricultural practices.*

Agricultural Land and Development

6.10 Measures being taken to reduce overall production are likely to continue to have a major influence on the agricultural economy and hence, on the significant number of jobs (2,700) in farming in the District. Locally, the generally poor soil and land drainage conditions make farms vulnerable to changes in agricultural support policies which may be exacerbated by the small size of many farms. This threatens not only the viability of farming but, moreover, the integrity and attractiveness of the countryside itself.

6.11 In order to retain and enhance Wealden's highly valued landscape character, it is particularly important to maintain a viable agricultural economy and to encourage greater integration of environmental objectives with agricultural support policies. This may be promoted in several ways including appropriate protection of agricultural land, resisting the damaging effects of severance and fragmentation of holdings, accommodating new agricultural practices and looking at sensitive alternative uses for rural land and buildings.

6.12 The Council will encourage the retention and enhancement of traditional agricultural landscapes and related features such as hedgerows, trees and woodland, ponds and ditches, principally through its support for appropriate environmental schemes.

Agricultural Land

6.13 Farming activity varies across the District according to differing soils, topography, drainage and tradition. It is Government policy that where the development of agricultural land is unavoidable, areas of poorer quality land should be used in preference to that of higher quality land (the latter defined as land in Grades 1, 2 and 3a of the Agricultural Land Classification) except where environmental considerations suggest otherwise. The decision whether to utilise the best and most versatile land for development is a matter for each local planning authority in the light of local conditions. Within the Wealden context Grade 3a agricultural land is important as there is virtually no Grade 1 or 2 land.

Policy DC1

Development on land classified as Grade 1, 2 or 3a under the Agricultural Land Classification will not be permitted unless there is an overriding need for the development, and either insufficient land is available in lower grades, or available lower grade land has an environmental, amenity or heritage value which outweighs the agricultural considerations.

Agricultural Dwellings

6.14 There is continuing pressure for new dwellings to meet the essential needs of enterprises that require a countryside location. Notwithstanding the generally poor prospects for the agricultural economy as a whole and the existing stock of agricultural workers dwellings, there continues to be some pressure for new agricultural dwellings. While countryside policies generally presume against new housing outside development boundaries, agricultural dwellings will be permitted where strict criteria are met as set out in Policy DC2 below. There are also pressures for dwellings to serve other enterprises which need to be located in the countryside, and similar considerations as set out in the text below and in Policy DC2 will apply to such proposals in the same way that they apply to agricultural dwellings.

6.15 Detailed scrutiny of residential proposals seeking an agricultural justification is necessary to avoid abuse and an unwarranted proliferation of development in the countryside. In cases where the local planning authority is particularly concerned about possible abuse, it may be helpful to investigate the history of the holding to establish the recent pattern of use of land and buildings and whether, for example, any dwellings or buildings suitable for conversion to dwellings have recently been sold separately from the farmland concerned. Such a sale would constitute evidence of lack of agricultural need.

6.16 Policy DC2 closely accords with Government advice in PPS7 in which Annex A recommends “functional” and “financial” tests to ensure that proposals are genuine, that they are reasonably likely to materialise and are capable of being sustained for a reasonable period of time such as to justify the scale of the residential proposal.

6.17 A functional test will be necessary to demonstrate that it is essential for one or more full time workers to be readily available to meet the established needs of the enterprise at most times, day and night, such as to provide for the proper supervision of agricultural processes or livestock. It will not be sufficient that it is merely convenient or desirable to live on the holding. Security is not itself a sufficient justification.

6.18 In relation to demonstrating genuine need, it will also be necessary to apply a financial test to assess whether a farming enterprise is economically viable and planned on a sound financial basis. To this end, the enterprise should have been established for at least three years and has shown a profit for at least one of these years. The enterprise should be financially sound and clearly demonstrate that it is likely to remain so. The Council will draw upon independent professional advice when considering these proposals.

6.19 Where a genuine need is accepted, consideration should be given to the siting, size, form and access arrangements for a proposed dwelling such that it blends with the landscape setting and is also able to serve the functional requirement of the holding. A proposed dwelling should be the minimum required for the holding and should wherever possible be well integrated within an existing group of buildings. PPS7 advises that size should be commensurate with the established functional requirement of the holding. While each case will be considered accordingly, an individual dwelling, including any subsequent extensions, would be expected to be no more than an average sized family house. Unduly large dwellings, including extensions, would be inappropriate in a rural setting. Also, it should be apparent that the long term availability for farm workers would not be unduly restricted by the future value of a property, and so the size of dwelling and any subsequent extensions should be relative to the income the holding can sustain in the long term.

6.20 If a new dwelling is essential to support a new farming or other rural activity, whether on an established or newly-created unit, but the financial test is not met, the accommodation should be of a temporary form, such as a caravan or mobile home for the first three years, after which the justification or otherwise for a permanent dwelling should normally be determinable and the temporary dwelling removed.

6.21 It follows from the special treatment of dwellings essential for the needs of a rural enterprise that they should be kept available for such purposes. Hence, a condition restricting its use and, where appropriate, that of other dwellings on the holding will be appropriate. Occupancy conditions will enable a dwelling to be available for other rural enterprises even if the original enterprise no longer seeks to retain it. They will only be lifted where it can be demonstrated that there is unlikely to be a need for the accommodation for such purposes in the area within a reasonable period of time.

6.22 In appropriate circumstances, a planning obligation will be sought to tie the dwelling to the adjacent buildings or to the land forming the holding. Exceptionally, not all of the land forming the holding need be the subject of a planning obligation, provided sufficient is included to justify the dwelling.

6.23 Agricultural land within Wealden is generally of poor quality and divided into small land holdings. There has been a history of fragmentation of properties, where land has been sold away from the original farmhouses. Fragmentation can have an adverse impact upon the valued character of the Wealden countryside, through the intensification of activities on the land, the erection of scattered buildings and the need for fencing to enclose the smaller parcels of land. The use of planning obligations in appropriate circumstances assists in preventing the harmful effects of continuing fragmentation. It is recognised that such planning obligations can place an additional constraint on the operation of rural businesses, such as the ability to raise loans and the time involved in completing the planning obligations. However, their use in appropriate circumstances is considered to be justified and accords with Government advice.

Policy DC2

Outside the development boundaries, as defined on the Proposals Map, new permanent dwellings will be permitted for those employed in agriculture or forestry, or exceptionally in another enterprise where a countryside location is necessary, where it can be demonstrated to the satisfaction of the Council that the following criteria are met:

- (1) there is a clearly established existing functional need;

- (2) no other suitable accommodation is available on the unit or elsewhere in the location;
- (3) the enterprise has been established for at least three years, has been profitable for at least one of them, is currently financially sound and has a clear prospect of remaining so;
- (4) the dwelling, and any subsequent extension, is of a size commensurate with the established functional requirement. Dwellings and any subsequent extensions which are unusually large in relation to the needs of the unit or unusually expensive to construct in relation to the income it can sustain in the long term will not be permitted;
- (5) the dwelling is suitably located to meet the identified functional need of the enterprise, integrates well with existing buildings wherever possible, is not intrusive in the landscape, and its general design is appropriate to the character of the area.

Where the functional requirement is proven but Criterion 3 is not met, a temporary permission will be granted for a caravan or mobile home, where it can be demonstrated to the satisfaction of the Council that the following criteria are met:-

- (i) Criteria (2) and (5) above;
- (ii) there is clear evidence of a firm intention and ability to develop the enterprise concerned;
- (iii) there is clear evidence that the proposed enterprise has been planned on a sound financial basis.

The temporary caravan or mobile home should be removed at the end of the permitted period. Permission for a permanent dwelling will only be given when criteria (1) to (5) are met.

Occupancy conditions will be imposed on dwellings permitted in accordance with this policy and, where appropriate, on other dwellings within the holding. The removal of occupancy conditions will be resisted unless it is demonstrated to the satisfaction of the Council that there is unlikely to be any need

for such dwellings in the area in the foreseeable future.

In appropriate circumstances, the Council will seek a planning obligation to tie a permanent dwelling to adjacent buildings or to the land forming the holding.

Agricultural Buildings and Other Farm Development

6.24 There will be a continuing need for a range of farm buildings and structures in response to changing agricultural practices, restructuring of farm holdings and the need to replace older buildings that are no longer suitable for efficient modern farm usage.

6.25 Legislation requires farmers to notify the Council of virtually all developments, including the construction of new farm buildings, significant extensions and alterations, farm roads, and certain excavations and waste depositing. Where a proposed development is likely to have a significant impact on its surroundings, the formal submission of details would be expected. On smaller holdings (less than 5 hectares), all buildings require planning permission and approval is also required for all poultry buildings in much of the District by virtue of an Article 4 Direction.

6.26 The siting, design and external appearance of buildings are the main considerations, taking account of the impact on the landscape and on important historic, archaeological and nature conservation interests, as well as on the relationship with their surroundings, including rural and residential amenities. Account may also be taken of the operational requirements of the farm, particularly in considering appropriate siting. The design of agricultural buildings is a particular concern, especially in areas of high landscape value, and it is appropriate that sympathetic external treatments are ensured. In particular, the scale and materials of large, modern portal frame buildings can be inharmonious with a sensitive landscape setting. Development within the Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty is likely to be sensitive in landscape terms and will warrant a high standard of appearance.

6.27 All farm buildings should be designed for modern, functional agricultural purposes, and be reasonably necessary for the purpose of agriculture on the holding. Criterion (4) of Policy

DC3 gives guidance on the provision of buildings for storage, packing or processing of produce. It applies essentially to activities that could be regarded as freestanding, in particular to proposals for larger scale uses, and those which are for the shared use of a number of holdings. In these circumstances it will first be necessary to demonstrate that the use could not be carried out within the business areas. However, it is not intended that this test should apply to small scale developments ancillary to the agricultural activities of a farm. In fact, the Council is supportive of initiatives to promote local produce in order to sustain and diversify the rural economy.

Policy DC3

Proposals for new farm buildings, extensions and alterations, and other ancillary development will be permitted subject to the following criteria:

- (1) buildings are reasonably necessary for the purposes of the agricultural holding and are clearly designed for such use;**
- (2) development is integrated with existing structures, as far as practicable;**
- (3) the siting, design and external appearance of buildings and other structures is not intrusive within the landscape and does not detract from local amenities or interests of recognised historic, archaeological or nature conservation interest;**
- (4) where buildings for storage, packing or processing are for the use of one holding or shared use of a number of holdings, it will first be necessary to demonstrate that the use could not be carried out within a business area.**

Policy DC4

Proposals for agricultural or forestry buildings, structures or operations within the scope of notification procedures will be considered having regard to the siting and design criteria at Policy DC3. The Council will require the formal submission of details for approval where such buildings, structures or operations are likely to have a significant impact on their surroundings.

Agricultural Diversification

6.28 The switch in Government policy away from measures to support agricultural production towards a more integrated approach to rural development puts emphasis on the need for appropriate rural economic diversification and other land management initiatives. At the national level, the England Rural Development Programme sets out a framework for action.

6.29 At a local level, the High Weald Land Management Initiative has been set up to promote integrated rural development by helping groups of farmers and other rural businesses diversify their activities, obtain new skills and add value to existing products, and to assist local communities. Initiatives include skills development, integrated farm appraisals, joint product marketing, business advice, green tourism and woodland management. The aim is to ensure long term sustainable rural land management which can be maintained beyond the end of the programme in 2006.

6.30 As part of the move towards wider land management initiatives in general, it is important to allow for appropriate agricultural diversification which recognises the continuing stewardship of the countryside by the farming community and the need to find appropriate alternative uses for both agricultural land and buildings, particularly for employment purposes.

6.31 The nature and extent of diversification should respect the landscape qualities of the countryside and accord with the protection of its distinct character and appearance. It should also take account of the Plan's sustainability strategy which seeks both to relate development to existing centres of population and to reduce reliance on the car for journeys to work. General infrastructure difficulties in servicing dispersed development should also be recognised. Certain types of development, such as those which generate high volumes of traffic or which would generate significant additional movements of heavy goods vehicles, particularly on unsuitable roads, may be inappropriate.

6.32 Diversification proposals should also support the retention of viable farm holdings and discourage the inappropriate fragmentation of land. This can be particularly damaging within areas which retain a very traditional pattern of land uses. Planning obligations or the removal of permitted development rights may be sought

where there is a particular concern in this respect.

6.33 The Council encourages the preparation of farm management plans to indicate clearly the implications of diversification proposals on the continued operation of the whole farm and assist in weighing the environmental and economic issues, particularly where these are finely balanced. These are informal and complementary to a planning application. The plan may cover matters such as the implications for other land and buildings, possible demolition of unsightly buildings, landscape management, habitat improvement, public access, etc, as appropriate.

Policy DC5

Proposals for the alternative use of agricultural and other land and buildings will be permitted where they provide for the appropriate diversification of the rural economy and do not adversely affect the character or appearance of the countryside or conflict with other policies of the Plan.

6.34 This policy will be applied in conjunction with those relating to the alternative uses of land and buildings for which specific consideration is given in the following sections.

Conversion of Farm or Other Rural Buildings

6.35 The conversion of existing buildings in the countryside for small business and tourism uses can assist rural economic diversification and can be consistent with the objective of protecting the countryside from inappropriate and intrusive development. Within the Wealden countryside, employment creation and economic diversification are important objectives and therefore, in accordance with Government guidance and Structure Plan policy, priority will be given to business, tourism and also recreational uses over conversion to residential uses. This is particularly important as there is demand for such accommodation, opportunities are limited within villages and conversions can help reduce pressure for new development within the countryside. Residential use will only be acceptable in certain circumstances as an exception to the normal restrictive policies for

housing development in the countryside. This is considered at paragraph 6.44.

Policy DC6

In considering proposals for the conversion of agricultural or other rural buildings in the countryside (outside the development boundaries as defined on the Proposals Map), the Council will give priority to business, tourism and recreational uses over residential uses.

6.36 It should be recognised that not all buildings in the countryside are suitable for conversion or adaptation to new uses. Some existing rural buildings are often badly designed and sited or poorly constructed, having been erected before planning controls existed or by using agricultural permitted development rights. If converted to an alternative use, such buildings would be permanently retained as intrusive features in the landscape, in obvious conflict with policies seeking to conserve and enhance the rural environment. There are also many minor sheds and shelters in the countryside which, due to their lightweight construction, do not readily lend themselves to conversion and, once redundant, are best demolished.

6.37 Where existing farm buildings are converted to alternative uses, additional agricultural buildings may subsequently be constructed under permitted development rights. This could result in a gradual increase in sporadic development within the countryside to the detriment of the landscape. In such cases, the Council will seek to control the replacement of old farm buildings by new ones by attaching to the planning permission a condition withdrawing permitted development rights for new agricultural buildings in respect of the particular agricultural unit or holding.

6.38 Where buildings have been constructed under permitted development rights, but are not apparently to be used for agricultural purposes, the Council will investigate the history of the building, consider the owner or applicant's intention for the building and, where appropriate, will consider whether it is expedient to take enforcement action.

6.39 Planning consent will normally only be granted where modifications can be carried out without materially altering the character and appearance of the building. This may need to be demonstrated through the submission of a

structural survey. All proposals for the conversion of farm buildings should be capable of complying with Building Regulations. In the case of the conversion of listed rural buildings, policies BE6 – BE8 should also be complied with.

6.40 In order to protect the character of the building and its setting, permission will not normally be granted for the extension of existing buildings or for their replacement by the erection of new buildings. Where appropriate, the right to make further extensions under the General Permitted Development Order 1995 without planning permission will be removed by condition and/or legal agreement, and the planning permission would be subject to conditions restricting outside development and activities such as sheds, fencing, storage and other operations. Planning permission will only be granted for the change of use of any associated land if the Council is satisfied that this can be done without detriment to the character and appearance of the surrounding area.

Conversion for Non-Residential Uses

6.41 Favourable consideration will be given to proposals for business, tourism and recreational uses within existing farm buildings in the countryside if the buildings are proved to be of sound construction, not intrusive, and in keeping with their surroundings, and if there would be no significant harmful environmental effects as a result of the development. Within the designated Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, particular attention will be given to ensuring that proposals conserve or enhance their natural beauty in accordance with policies NE5 and NE8 of the Plan.

6.42 Where conversion to business use is proposed, the impact of any associated storage or parking requirements on the character and appearance of the immediate locality and the surrounding countryside will be taken into account. All applications will be expected to incorporate clearly defined limits of development, together with an indication of the use of all open areas.

6.43 Whilst the policies for rural business conversions raise issues regarding the need to travel, the Council recognises the need to assist the rural economy and to reduce long distance out-commuting. Nonetheless, proposals for conversion for new uses which could generate a significant number of jobs should be well related

to towns or villages. The Council would also encourage proposals to be part of a farm diversification scheme with a management plan and bring an overall environmental improvement to the locality. In some instances where a farm building conversion is proposed, it may also be appropriate to tie it to the land so as to discourage subsequent fragmentation where this would be likely to result in an erosion of landscape character.

Policy DC7

Proposals for non-residential development (including workshops, offices, tourist accommodation and recreational use) through the conversion of agricultural or other rural buildings in the countryside (outside the development boundaries as defined on the Proposals Map) will be permitted where the building's form, bulk and general design are in keeping with its surroundings. In addition, all proposals should meet the following criteria:

- (1) the building is of sound construction and capable of conversion without significant rebuilding, or extension. The Council may require this to be demonstrated through the submission of a structural survey;**
- (2) any proposed alterations to the building (e.g. fenestration, doors, internal subdivision), its associated operational area (e.g. parking, access, storage, provision of services, amenity space and outbuildings) would not harm its appearance as a rural building or adversely affect the rural setting of the building in the locality;**
- (3) the nature and intensity of the proposed use would be compatible with its rural location;**
- (4) the proposed use would not adversely affect the residential amenities of the neighbourhood, particularly by reason of noise, disturbance and fumes;**
- (5) the proposed use would not create an unacceptable impact on the local road network and there is a satisfactory means of vehicular access and parking arrangements;**

- (6) proposals which would be likely to create a significant number of jobs should be well located in relation to towns and villages or be readily accessible by public transport.**

Conversion to Residential Use

6.44 Consent for the conversion of existing rural buildings to residential use may be granted as an exception to normal restrictive policies controlling new housing development in the countryside, provided that such buildings are in keeping with their surrounding. However, this exception to normal restraint policies will only be made where it can be demonstrated that every reasonable attempt has been made to secure suitable business re-use or where a residential conversion is a subordinate part of a scheme for business re-use in accordance with Government guidance in PPS7 and Policy DC6.

6.45 In all cases, it will be necessary for the applicant to demonstrate that the proposal is achievable without damaging or substantially altering the existing character and appearance of the building or harming its countryside setting. The building itself should be of sound construction and capable of conversion without significant rebuilding, modification or extension. An important consideration will be whether the creation of a residential curtilage and associated paraphernalia (tended gardens, fences, clothes dryers etc) would have a harmful effect on the character of the surrounding countryside.

6.46 Where residential conversion is part of a scheme for the re-use of a building or complex of buildings for employment purposes, a condition will be imposed requiring the works necessary for the establishment of the enterprise to have been completed before the dwelling is occupied. In appropriate cases, the Council will seek to tie occupation of the dwelling to the operation of the business re-use, by means of a condition or a planning obligation, in order to prevent it being sold separately.

Policy DC8

Proposals for the conversion of agricultural or other rural buildings in the countryside (outside the development boundaries as defined on the Proposals Map) to residential use will not be permitted unless either:-

- (a) the applicant has made every reasonable attempt to secure suitable business re-use, and the application is supported by a statement of the efforts which have been made; or**
- (b) residential conversion is a subordinate part of a scheme for business re-use.**

In all cases, proposals should meet the following criteria:-

- (1) the building's form, bulk and general design are in keeping with its surroundings;**
- (2) the building is of sound construction and capable of conversion without significant rebuilding, modification or extension. The Council will normally require this to be demonstrated through the submission of a structural survey;**
- (3) any proposed alterations to the building (e.g fenestration, doors, internal subdivision) would not harm its architectural integrity nor materially change its appearance as a rural building;**
- (4) the proposed use and its associated activities, including garaging and the provision of services and access, and the formation of a domestic curtilage, would not detract from the rural setting of the building. The curtilage should not be intrusive in the landscape. Where appropriate, conditions will be imposed to remove permitted development rights to extend or alter the building and erect other ancillary buildings, fencing etc;**
- (5) the proposal would not create an unacceptable impact on the local road network and there is a satisfactory means of vehicular access and parking arrangements.**

Countryside Recreation

6.47 For all recreational development in the countryside, careful regard needs to be given to the likely impact on the environment, its landscape and rural and residential amenities. This will relate to both the physical and visual change involved, including traffic generation.

Special protection will be given to the Sussex Downs and the Ashdown Forest by only allowing recreational development in association with the quiet enjoyment of the countryside. This approach accords with Policy EN4 of the County Structure Plan and recognises the particular vulnerability of these areas to visitor pressure, arising from their open and remote landscape characters.

Policy DC9

Within the Sussex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the Ashdown Forest (as defined on the Proposals Map) only recreational development which is in association with the quiet enjoyment of the area and conserves and enhances its landscape character will be permitted.

6.48 In view of their demand for countryside locations, specific consideration is given to golf courses, equestrian developments, motor and gun sports, clay pigeon shooting and air sports below. Temporary uses of land often involve recreational pursuits as well as other activities such as 'boot fairs'. Whilst these can cause substantial nuisance to local residents, significantly detract from rural visual amenities or disturb important wildlife habitats, they are normally exempt from planning control.

Golf

6.49 Whilst golf courses can be an appropriate land use in the countryside, assisting rural economic diversification, they can also have detrimental effects on the structure and pattern of the countryside, its landscape, historic and nature conservation value and, indeed, overall rural character. A golf course can be an alien feature in the countryside since it can present a manicured appearance which is not characteristically rural. Disturbance can also be caused to local residents, farm holdings as well as through intrusive effects of people, activity and traffic, including traffic generation on unsuitable roads.

6.50 In all cases, the course siting, form, layout, groundworks, management regimes, clubhouses, other buildings and structures, parking areas and access arrangements will need careful attention to minimise the impact on the overall character of the site and its setting, its topography, site features and public views. Wherever possible,

existing buildings should be used for clubhouse and ancillary purposes, but where new development becomes necessary, the scale, massing, siting and design of all buildings should blend in with the landscape and local building character. Residential buildings must clearly be essential in accordance with Policy DC15.

6.51 Applications should be in sufficient detail to enable proper assessment. They should indicate the total extent of development envisaged, as approval does not imply that any future proposals would necessarily be favourably considered. The most appropriate locations for golf courses are generally accepted as being in urban fringes, especially where the landscape is degraded in some way or otherwise of poor quality.

6.52 In addition to Policy DC10, regard will be had to 'Planning Guidance for Golf Course Development' published by East Sussex County Council and adopted by the District Council.

Policy DC10

Within the countryside (outside the development boundaries as defined on the Proposals Map), proposals for golf courses and related development will be permitted where they have no adverse effect on the character and appearance of the area. In addition, they should:-

- (1) be compatible with the protection of landscape, nature conservation, woodland, archaeology and the best and most versatile agricultural land;**
- (2) be readily accessible to urban areas;**
- (3) wherever possible use existing buildings;**
- (4) where new buildings and other structures, including extensions, are essential their form, bulk and design should be in keeping with the landscape and local building character, and sited to minimise their impact on the countryside;**
- (5) not adversely affect the amenity and safety of residents in the locality;**
- (6) provide for the maintenance and where appropriate, enhancement of public access in the layout and design.**

Proposals should be presented in sufficient detail, including topographical and landscape changes, to enable proper assessment.

Driving Ranges

6.53 Driving ranges represent a distinct form of golf-related development. They are often independent of golf courses, are more intensive in their level of usage and urban in character, involving specifically designed range of 'bays' for players, an extensive well fenced 'hit area', associated car parking and, normally, floodlighting.

6.54 An intrusive impact on the character and appearance of the countryside needs to be avoided, particularly in areas of high landscape quality and unspoilt character. There may also be considerable effects, through outlook, noise and disturbance, on residential amenities, as well as on traffic conditions and public safety. The impact of illumination, which is uncharacteristic in countryside areas, may also be substantial and thereby unacceptable. The overall intensity of activity, especially lighting, would mean that the locational criteria for general golf development would be rigorously applied. The most appropriate locations for golf driving ranges are generally accepted as being in urban fringes.

Policy DC11

Proposals for golf driving ranges will only be permitted when it can be demonstrated that there will be no significant adverse effect on the character or appearance of the countryside, residential amenities, traffic conditions or public safety, having regard to:

- (1) the size and number of bays and the impact of the bulk and design of buildings and enclosure fencing;**
- (2) the impact and suitability of floodlighting, including reflected light;**
- (3) the degree of physical change and visibility.**

Equestrian Development

6.55 Equestrian activities are an increasingly popular form of leisure pastime and also make a recognised contribution to the rural economy, attracting a significant number of planning applications for related developments of both domestic and commercial nature. Commercial equestrian centres, riding schools and livery stables are now widespread, although the majority of proposals for equestrian development relate to the provision of private stables. Government policy encourages small scale equestrian enterprises to assist with agricultural diversification. In some circumstances, the erection of stables or loose boxes within the curtilage of a dwellinghouse for the domestic needs or enjoyment of the occupants of the dwelling may not require planning permission.

6.56 Whilst the grazing of horses can be an appropriate alternative use of agricultural land, the random proliferation of horse-related activities and associated buildings within rural areas may be detrimental to the character and appearance of the countryside. The subdivision of farm holdings and formation of numerous paddocks with individual stables or field shelters can create a fragmented landscape and a pattern of enclosures out of keeping with the locality. The degree of visual intrusion created by horse-related development is likely to be more significant in areas of special landscape quality and other areas of an open character.

6.57 All equestrian development, whether domestic or commercial, should be of an appropriate scale and design and careful attention should be given to siting and landscaping details to avoid an adverse impact on the countryside. Exposed or prominent locations should be avoided. Traditional style and materials should be used. Particular care is needed where floodlighting is proposed in order to avoid an unacceptable impact on the countryside and local amenities. In appropriate circumstances where the structures proposed are of a temporary nature, time limitations may be imposed. Adequate pasture may be necessary depending on the feeding and grazing regime (for example the British Horse Society recommends between 0.4 and 0.6 hectares per horse). The cumulative impact of proposals can be very marked and will be taken account of.

6.58 Isolated development, being away from existing buildings, would represent inappropriate scattered development in the countryside. New development should be well related to the

dwellinghouse in the case of small scale domestic stables or to existing, normally farm, complexes in respect of larger scale domestic and commercial facilities.

6.59 Commercial equestrian facilities should be well related to existing public bridleways in order to minimise the need to exercise horses on the highway. Regard will be had to increased levels of erosion of both bridleways and the wider countryside arising from over-intensification of use. Particular concerns over the level of usage of Ashdown Forest are partly addressed by the special controls of the Board of Conservators. Potential traffic generation, effects on the amenities of local residents and other normal planning considerations will be assessed in relation to other policies in this Plan.

Policy DC12

Proposals for equestrian development outside development boundaries, whether domestic or commercial, will be permitted when the following criteria are met:

- (1) appropriate siting, scale and design, including materials and landscaping, in keeping with the locality, with adequate pasture to support the horses where necessary. Particular regard will be had to the cumulative effect of proposals;**
- (2) proposals should not be sited in prominent or isolated locations away from existing buildings;**
- (3) sand rings and manèges, and commercial riding schools, livery stables and other commercial facilities should be satisfactorily integrated with existing buildings;**
- (4) commercial riding schools, livery stables and other commercial facilities should have access to the public bridleway network without the use of unsuitable roads;**
- (5) the impact of floodlighting, changes in levels or other ancillary operations on the surrounding countryside and local amenities is acceptable; with particular regard to safeguarding the privacy and amenities of nearby residential properties.**

(6) the proposal does not create an unacceptable impact on the local road network.

Motor and Gun Sports

6.60 Whilst outdoor recreation is generally viewed as an activity which is appropriate to a rural location, some recreational pursuits, such as motor sports, clay pigeon shooting and combat gaming, can radically affect the character of the countryside. By their very nature, such activities generate noise and disturbance, and consequently often cause concern in terms of their potential impact upon the natural environment or other people's enjoyment of the countryside.

6.61 Participation in motor and gun sports, as well as newer forms of leisure which require a countryside setting, has increased significantly, partly in association with the diversification of farming activities. This frequently occurs on an occasional basis without requiring express planning permission. However, where such activities are proposed on a permanent basis, planning controls can be used to ensure that issues such as noise, disturbance, access, etc, are adequately taken into account and, where appropriate, controlled by conditions.

6.62 In the consideration of proposals for motor and gun sports, it is important to ensure that a balance is struck between the needs of such pursuits and the conservation and amenity aims of the Plan. The criteria in Policy DC13 aim to ensure that the impacts in terms of noise nuisance, nature conservation, visual intrusion, etc. are acceptable. In respect of noise nuisance, it should be recognised that noise levels considered to be unacceptable in planning terms may not necessarily constitute a statutory nuisance under Environmental Health legislation.

6.63 Planning permission will not be granted for such activities within or adjacent to the Sussex Downs AONB, the Ashdown Forest or the Pevensy Levels, which are essentially open and remote, and as such their landscapes and character are particularly susceptible to noisy or intrusive activities. Planning permission is also unlikely to be granted for such activities in other sensitive areas (e.g. ancient woodland, national and local nature reserves, sites of nature conservation interest, sites and monuments of archaeological importance etc).

Policy DC13

Proposals for motor or gun sports, including combat games, will not be permitted within or adjacent to the Sussex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, the Pevensy Levels Site of Special Scientific Interest, or the Ashdown Forest (as defined on the Proposals Map). Elsewhere, such proposals will be permitted outside the development boundaries, as defined on the Proposals Map, provided that the following criteria are met and can be controlled by condition:

- (1) the proposal will not generate an unacceptable level of noise and activity in the locality;
- (2) the proposal will not be visually intrusive in the landscape and will be well screened by existing vegetation;
- (3) the proposal, including the disposal of excavated material within the site, will not adversely affect areas which are of ecological, historical or geological importance; landform features, or ancient woodland. Where appropriate, a woodland management plan should be submitted, approved and implemented within an agreed timescale;
- (4) the proposed activity will take place within a clearly defined area with an appropriate buffer zone to the boundaries of the site and any public rights of way;
- (5) any buildings or structures must be sited to minimise their impact on the countryside and must be removed from the site on cessation of the recreational use and the land restored to an acceptable condition.

In all cases, conditions will be attached to any permission controlling the hours and frequency of use, the type and nature of the activity, and fencing of boundaries. Normally, the Council will only be prepared initially to grant temporary planning permission so that the environmental impact can be fully assessed.

Angling

6.64 The popularity of angling, together with pressures to reduce the amount of land in agricultural production, have led to an increase in proposals to create or improve ponds and lakes for private and commercial fishing. Commercial fisheries can be an appropriate land use in the countryside, often assisting with rural economic diversification whilst securing environmental and amenity gains in terms of landscape, wildlife habitat and public access enhancement. However, such proposals may not always be compatible with the conservation of the character and appearance of the countryside. Significant physical changes to the landscape or topography can result through the construction of dams or embankments, or spreading of excavated material, and damage to nature conservation interests can occur by the loss of existing wildlife or damage to aquatic or bankside vegetation. The Council will normally require such proposals to be accompanied by a landscape management scheme, which provides for the retention and enhancement of existing features of nature conservation importance and Sites of Special Scientific Interest.

6.65 Parking and access arrangements, together with any new buildings or lighting, will also need careful attention in terms of the impact of the proposal on the overall character of the site and its setting. Applications should provide sufficient detail to enable a proper assessment of all the above considerations. Proposals should not have a detrimental impact on the quality or quantity of flow in the downstream watercourse. The Environment Agency, whose consent is required for proposals to impound or abstract water, advises that the creation of on-line ponds or lakes upstream of the Pevensey Levels SSSI is likely to damage its special interest and should not normally be permitted.

Policy DC14

The creation or improvement of ponds or lakes for private or commercial fishing outside the development boundaries, as defined on the Proposals Map, will be permitted where the following criteria are met:-

- (1) the proposal will not be visually intrusive in the landscape through the construction of embankments or other earthworks;**

- (2) the proposal, including the disposal of any excavated material within the site, will not adversely affect areas which are of ecological, historical or geological importance; landform features; or ancient woodland. Where appropriate, a landscape management plan should be submitted and approved by the Council, and implemented within a programme agreed by the Council;**
- (3) the size and scale of the proposal would be compatible in terms of the nature and intensity of use with its rural location;**
- (4) the proposal will not adversely affect the residential amenities of the neighbourhood by reason of noise or disturbance;**
- (5) any buildings or structures will be sited to minimise their impact on the countryside and should be removed from the site following cessation of the activity and the land restored to an acceptable condition;**
- (6) the maintenance and enhancement of public access, where appropriate;**
- (7) there will be no detriment to the quality or quantity of flow in the downstream watercourse;**
- (8) the proposal is not created on-line of a watercourse upstream of the Pevensey Levels Site of Special Scientific Interest.**

Residential Development

6.66 The defined settlement development boundaries, which include new housing allocations, provide for the housing requirements of the District over the Plan period in line with Structure plan policies. Outside of the development boundaries, residential development is generally resisted in accordance with Policy GD2 which appropriately reflects Government guidance in PPS7 and Structure Plan policies. In such areas, housing development will not be permitted unless it is:-

- (1) essential for the purpose of agriculture or forestry or other rural enterprise for which a rural location is essential, in accordance with Policy DC2;

- (2) an acceptable scheme for affordable housing in accordance with HG5;
- (3) the conversion of an existing agricultural or other rural building, in accordance with Policy DC8;
- (4) a replacement dwelling of an appropriate size, in accordance with Policy DC16;
- (5) an extension or alteration of an appropriate scale, in accordance with Policy DC17;
- (6) the conversion or subdivision of an existing property, in accordance with Policy DC18;
- (7) accommodation to meet the acknowledged needs of gypsies or travelling showpeople, in accordance with DC20.

6.67 The prior existence of sporadic and scattered housing within the countryside is recognised, but it is considered that any intensification or addition to this would be contrary to the Plan's overall development strategy and principles of sustainable development as well as being detrimental to the character and appearance of the countryside, notwithstanding the advice in PPS7 regarding the development of 'country houses'.

6.68 Whilst there is a presumption in PPG3 that previously developed sites should be developed before greenfield sites, the Government guidance emphasises that the focus of additional housing should be on existing urban areas with urban extensions likely to prove the next most sustainable option after building on appropriate sites within urban areas. The housing land requirements in this Plan are met through sites within towns and villages and through urban extensions to these settlements.

Policy DC15

Housing development will not be allowed outside development boundaries, as defined on the Proposals Map, unless it conforms with other policies in the Plan.

Replacement Dwellings

6.69 Notwithstanding the general policy of restraint in relation to housing in the countryside, the suitable replacement of existing dwellings, normally on a one for one basis, is considered reasonable. This does not apply to derelict

buildings or others where the residential use has been abandoned; such 'replacements' would be regarded as new dwellings.

6.70 In view of the strong environmental and rural character considerations in the countryside, it is particularly important to minimise the visual, landscape, amenity and traffic impact of replacement dwellings. The size of the replacement would be limited to a similar scale as the original, normally measured by its gross floorspace but excluding any ancillary detached structures. An exception may be made for substandard accommodation in order to enable reasonable amenities to be achieved. The siting and footprint of the replacement dwelling should also be similar to the original, unless repositioning can significantly reduce the impact of development. Replacement may provide the opportunity for development to better harmonise with the locality. The Council would endeavour to avoid abuses of the policy whereby lawful residential uses become established in buildings and replacement dwellings are subsequently sought under Policy DC16.

6.71 The redevelopment of listed buildings and buildings in Conservation Areas are not normally permitted (see Chapter 5 for relevant policies). Furthermore, it is evident that the countryside is particularly rich in vernacular buildings which contribute to the character of rural areas, and their retention would normally be sought.

6.72 The following policy does not apply to the replacement of dwellings converted under Policy DC8. Such conversions have met strict criteria to retain their character as rural buildings whereas new dwellings are likely to be more of a more modern residential character and appearance which could not therefore retain a building of valuable local character.

Policy DC16

Outside development boundaries, as defined on the Proposal Map, the replacement of an existing dwelling by another dwelling in the same curtilage will be permitted where the following criteria are met:

- (1) the proposal is of a comparable size and massing to the existing building;**
- (2) it is in keeping with the character of the locality, having regard to the appearance and general design of the original building;**

- (3) it is similarly sited within the plot, unless an alternative position would result in clear landscape, highway access or local amenity benefits;**
- (4) it does not result in the loss of a property of valuable local character, unless it is not reasonably capable of being made structurally sound or otherwise improved.**

In sensitive locations, permitted development rights relating to future extensions and other structures may be removed.

This policy does not apply to the replacement of dwellings converted under Policy DC8.

Residential Extensions

6.73 Within countryside locations, extensions and alterations to dwellings may have a greater environmental impact than in the case of dwellings within development boundaries by virtue of their visual openness, landscape impact and the rural character of either the property or its setting. Careful consideration to rural extensions is consistent with the general approach of maintaining the character and appearance of the countryside.

6.74 Residential extensions in the countryside should be appropriate and sympathetic in scale, style, design and materials in relation to the original dwelling or group of dwellings, and account taken of the cumulative impact of the extensions. Extensions and alterations to listed buildings and buildings in Conservation Areas are specifically covered by the policies in Chapter 5. Other traditional buildings of rural character, including oasts, farmworkers' cottages, lodge houses, toll houses and converted agricultural buildings, also warrant careful regard to their character. Extensions to agricultural dwellings should also have regard to the considerations at Policy DC2. The impact on amenities of neighbouring occupiers is also an important consideration.

6.75 Ancillary buildings within the curtilages of residential properties such as garden sheds, garages and summer houses can frequently be erected without the need for planning consent. Nevertheless, when permission is required, it is

important that such buildings are appropriate in size, design and appearance for their intended use in order to protect the character and appearance of the countryside and minimise the possible future pressure for conversion to residential use. Annexes to existing dwellings would be considered similarly and a legal agreement may be sought to tie an annexe to the main property where these involve the change of use of a rural building, under Policy DC8. Detached annexes would normally be treated as new dwellings.

6.76 The following policy does not apply to the extension or alteration of dwellings converted under Policy DC8 as such conversions have met strict criteria to retain their character as rural buildings.

Policy DC17

Outside development boundaries, as defined on the Proposals Map, proposals for extensions and alterations to existing dwellings and for ancillary buildings within their curtilages will be permitted when the following criteria are met:

- (1) the proposal should not be intrusive in the landscape or detrimental to the rural setting;**
- (2) the scale, style, design and materials are appropriate and sympathetic to the original dwelling or, where appropriate, the group of dwellings. Account will be taken of the cumulative impact of extensions;**
- (3) there is no significant adverse effect on the amenities of the occupiers of neighbouring properties;**
- (4) ancillary buildings should be appropriate in size, design and appearance for their intended use;**
- (5) in the case of an annexe, the proposal should normally be physically attached to the dwelling and not lend itself to future subdivision to form a new dwelling.**

This policy does not apply to the extension or alteration of dwellings converted under Policy DC8.

6.77 Proposals for the extension of residential curtilages within the countryside will be considered in relation to the potential change in rural character and amenities that may result from the resulting enclosure, domestic use, associated minor buildings, structures, hard surfacing and other paraphernalia. In order for such extensions to be acceptable in environmental terms, it may be necessary to minimise the visual impact by ensuring sensitive boundary treatment and limiting new buildings and structures on the land. However, in many circumstances, the extension of residential curtilages may detract from the rural landscape character, particularly where a generally open appearance prevails.

Subdivision of Larger Properties

6.78 Within the countryside there are many larger properties, including houses which are now too large for single family occupation together with other buildings, such as hotels and institutions of a residential nature. Such buildings are usually well integrated within the rural scene and their retention thereby encouraged.

6.79 Emphasis is given to creating sustainable forms of development, and to maintaining rural employment opportunities and meeting special housing needs in the case of nursing and residential care homes, as there is a growing elderly population. Proposals for sub-division for residential use will therefore be required to demonstrate that the building cannot be retained in its existing use or a similar use. The conversion of typical, family-type accommodation would normally be inappropriate.

6.80 It is important that the conversion and subdivision of larger properties maintains the integrity and character of the property, including its grounds, in order to reflect its countryside location as well as meeting the normal residential amenity, access and parking criteria. In addition, within particularly quiet, remote areas, the creation of a large number of dwelling units, with associated increases in activity, may be inappropriate.

6.81 In order to maintain the character of any important features of the property, including gardens, restrictions on permitted development may on occasion be considered necessary. Extensions and alterations would be considered in accordance with Policy DC17, although in order to maintain their visual integrity and

character, only very limited additions may be appropriate.

Policy DC18

Outside development boundaries, as defined on the Proposals Map, the conversion and subdivision of a larger property into smaller dwelling units will be permitted where:-

- (1) the conversion to residential use is demonstrated to be the only effective means of re-using the building;**
- (2) the character and integrity of the property, including its grounds and setting are suitably retained, including where appropriate by the removal of permitted development rights;**
- (3) proposals for extension or alteration are consistent with criteria (1)-(3) of Policy DC17.**

Special Needs Housing

6.82 The development of special needs housing in the form of nursing homes, residential care homes, sheltered housing and group homes is not generally considered to be appropriate in the countryside in view of the significant visual and environmental impact that can result as well as the relative remoteness from the necessary community facilities. However, in line with countryside policies the conversion of large properties may be appropriate, particularly where a higher level of care is provided as part of the proposal.

Policy DC19

Outside the development boundaries, as defined on the Proposals Map, special needs housing will not be allowed unless it involves the extension of existing accommodation in accordance with Policy DC17, or the conversion or subdivision of a large property in accordance with Policy DC18.

Gypsy and Travelling Showpeople Sites

Gypsies

6.83 The Caravan Sites and Development Act 1968 defines gypsies as people who pursue a nomadic habit of life for economic purposes. This definition specifically includes other travellers but excludes members of an organised group of travelling show people or circus people, travelling together as such. The Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 removed the duty on Councils to provide gypsy sites, although a discretionary power remains. However, it is necessary to give clear planning policy guidance in the Plan in line with Government advice in Circular 1/94: *Gypsy Sites and Planning* for both private and public sites, particularly in view of the increased onus on private provision.

6.84 The Council's approved strategy for *Managing Unauthorised Camping* concluded that there is no evidence to suggest that additional permanent residential sites are required in the District other than, perhaps in individual cases, but it is acknowledged that travellers passing through the District have no legitimate sites to go to. Further needs assessment for this Plan has concluded that there is no significant unmet local need which would justify the allocation of sites for gypsies.

6.85 The area does not have a strong gypsy or other traveller tradition, and the level of provision is generally adequate by virtue of three public sites across the District, and a number of small privately owned sites that have been granted planning permission. The regular counts show a relatively low occurrence of unauthorised sites. Whilst there is a lack of transit sites and temporary stopping places for gypsies, this should be addressed on a county-wide basis having regard to the main centres of population and the road connections between them.

6.86 Consideration should nonetheless be given to the treatment of extensions to existing sites and new private sites through a criteria-based policy. Circular 1/94 states that it will not generally be appropriate to make such provision in areas of open land where development is particularly restricted, including Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. It does not exclude sites in rural or semi-rural settings, but points out that care is needed to ensure consistency with

environmental, agricultural and other countryside policies. Locations on the outskirts of built-up areas may be appropriate where these afford reasonable access to facilities and services, but should still avoid encroachment into open countryside. Amenity and access factors are also important, particularly as gypsy sites often combine both residential and business elements.

Travelling Showpeople

6.87 Specific consideration has also been given to the provision of sites for travelling showpeople, in accordance with Government guidance in Circular 22/91: *Travelling Showpeople*. Accommodation needs are unusual in that they combine residential, storage and maintenance uses. Wealden has not been traditionally closely associated with showmen's sites, perhaps due to its relative remoteness from large urban centres. There is presently only one site with planning permission for 'winter quarters' in the District, at Hackhurst Lane, Lower Dicker.

6.88 Such development can, by its very nature, be visually intrusive in a rural or other sensitive landscape setting. Conversely, close proximity to residential properties can also be inappropriate because of the potential disturbance from the maintenance and testing of equipment during winter months, as well as its visual impact. However, proximity to schools and other community facilities is normally sought. Circular 22/91 therefore suggests urban fringe locations may be appropriate.

6.89 In the absence of a clear local need for sites, it is appropriate to set out a criteria-based policy rather than allocate sites in the Plan. Where a site is considered suitable, it will normally still be appropriate to control the extent of storage and times of testing equipment to minimise its impact on local amenities. Also, the future occupancy of the site by travelling showpeople should be ensured.

Policy DC20

Proposals for new sites and extensions to existing sites for gypsies, other travellers and travelling showpeople will be permitted when the following criteria are met:

- (1) the site is conveniently located in relation to schools and other community facilities;**

(2) there is no adverse impact on the character of the countryside, particularly having regard to Policies NE5 to NE9;

(3) the local environment and residential amenities will not be adversely affected;

(4) there is a satisfactory means of vehicular access and the local road network is adequate.

Where appropriate, controls to limit the hours of testing equipment and to ensure the future occupancy by travelling showpeople would normally be sought.

permitted only where significant environmental benefits would result. The redevelopment of existing mobile homes by permanent dwellings will be resisted unless on an individual basis where proposals meet the criteria of Policy DC2.

Residential Mobile Homes

6.90 Residential mobile homes, including caravans, are generally out of keeping with the character and appearance of the countryside in view of their form, design and materials, and potentially represent a sporadic form of residential development contrary to the Plan's development strategy. Therefore, residential mobile homes would not normally be appropriate in the countryside.

6.91 An exception may be made for the temporary stationing of a residential mobile home or caravan in association with an agricultural or similar rural enterprise in accordance with Policy DC2 above. Also, where existing mobile home sites exist within the countryside, some rationalisation within the sites' well defined limits may be appropriate if this would bring about significant improvements in local visual amenities.

6.92 Residential mobile homes can provide low cost accommodation, thereby improving access to the housing market. Their redevelopment by permanent dwellings may result in the loss of more affordable housing and be visually or environmentally unacceptable and such proposals will therefore normally be resisted.

Policy DC21

Residential mobile homes, including caravans, will not be permitted in the countryside unless these are on a temporary basis and are essential for the proper functioning of the farm, woodland or other enterprise in accordance with Policy DC2. The rationalisation of existing sites may be