

4. ECONOMY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

4.1.1 Employment should be focused in places where it will provide people with the opportunity to work locally, helping to reduce the need to travel and promote social inclusion. The type and scale of new employment development should also be appropriate to its location.

4.1.2 Economic development is a key priority for both Councils. The Dorset Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) has identified sectors where there is the need and scope to improve the performance of already significant sectors, and/or the opportunity to enhance environmental performance. Accordingly, the Councils will work with the Local Enterprise Partnership to encourage and support the development of:

- Tourism, leisure, hospitality and international education
- Food and drink industry
- Environmental goods and services, including support for the renewable energy sector
- Precision engineering, including marine related business
- Creative industries
- Health and social work
- Finance and banking.

4.1.3 The plan area has an outstanding natural and historic environment which makes an important contribution to the economy by making the area an attractive place to live, work and visit. The high quality of the coast and countryside, with its designated landscapes and heritage assets, is particularly valuable for tourism and attracting inward investment.

Economic development can have a significant impact on the quality and character of the area, particularly in rural or residential locations. Development should not, either on its own or cumulatively in combination with other established or proposed developments in the vicinity, significantly adversely affect the area's landscape, heritage and built environment, or the amenities of the resident population. The potential increase in vehicle movements generated by the development and the impact on the highway network must also be acceptable.

AN ECONOMIC VISION FOR THE AREA

Economic development will play a key role in:

- Providing the necessary flexibility to support businesses, and enable them to grow
- Facilitating inward investment to create better paid jobs
- Regenerating the area's vibrant town centres

A BROAD DEFINITION OF EMPLOYMENT

4.1.4 Employment uses have previously been defined as offices, light industrial, general industrial, storage and warehousing, often referred to as B class uses. Traditional industries will continue to be supported, however there are a number of other sectors in the plan area which are large employers and make a significant contribution to the economy, for example tourism in its many facets. A broader definition of employment has therefore been adopted in this local plan.

Employment

For the purposes of this plan employment includes development in the B Use Classes such as offices, workshops and industrial premises, storage and distribution warehouses and sui generis uses commonly found on industrial estates. It also applies to non B class development which provides direct, on-going local employment opportunities such as tourism and retail. It does not apply to businesses such as farming, care homes and tourist accommodation providers, which are covered in other policies of the plan or to development that indirectly benefits the local economy (such as housing),

Employment sites are land or premises that are presently in an employment use, or previously in an employment use if now vacant.

- 4.1.5 Retail and visitor attractions are an inherent part of the economy of the local area, but have quite different impacts and needs. Specific policies are included on these types of economic development. Tourist accommodation in its many forms also plays a major part in the tourism industry, and policies for these uses are included in this chapter, although they are not within this plan's definition of employment.

STRATEGIC APPROACH

A continuing supply of land and premises suitable for employment uses is needed, of a type and scale appropriate to the characteristics of the local area, to provide sufficient opportunities for employment needs to be met locally, to reduce the need to travel and promote economic growth and social inclusion. This will be delivered through the allocation and provision of new sites (with the greater proportion of development at the towns), the suitable protection of existing employment sites (taking into account their significance), and flexible policies to allow development to come forward on other suitable sites.

The development of new retail and town centre uses will be directed to the town centres of Weymouth, Dorchester, Bridport, Sherborne and Lyme Regis. Outside the town centres, smaller scale development of shops, financial and professional services, food and drink, office, leisure and community uses will be directed towards local centres. Development should not undermine the functioning of any centre, or adversely affect its vitality or viability.

4.2 THE SUPPLY OF EMPLOYMENT LAND AND PREMISES

- 4.2.1 If future economic growth is to be successfully delivered it is vital that enough land, and the right kind of land, is provided for these uses. A flexible approach and a ready supply of employment sites in suitable locations are fundamental to the economic performance of the area. The larger settlements have a key role to play because of their accessibility to labour, support services and infrastructure.
- 4.2.2 To help meet the anticipated demand for employment land, sites for employment uses have been identified and allocated at the main towns (see Table 3.3 for where these are set out in the site specific chapters). Flexible policies for the rural areas have been included

instead of specific allocations in and around the smaller settlements. Further employment allocations may come forward through neighbourhood development plans.

- 4.2.3 The expansion of existing employment sites and premises, and sensitive small scale development in and around suitable settlements, can help bring about economic activity and local job opportunities. Live-work developments provide an opportunity for people to adopt more flexible working practices, and therefore are also encouraged where housing would otherwise be acceptable. While the plan generally seeks to concentrate development in the areas which are most accessible, it is recognised that small-scale employment development in rural areas, through well-designed new buildings on the edge of existing settlements, the re-use and adaptation of existing buildings, or farm diversification schemes, is of value even though such development is unlikely to be served by public transport. Proposals for development in less accessible locations may be required to provide information on the long term viability of the enterprise and a clear justification of why such a location is needed. Consideration will be given to the removal of permitted development rights in such locations where they may otherwise change to non-employment uses or result in a more harmful impact.

ECON 1. PROVISION OF EMPLOYMENT

i) Employment development will generally be supported:

- within or on the edge of a settlement,
- through the intensification or extension of existing premises,
- as part of a farm diversification scheme,
- through the re-use or replacement of an existing building, or
- in a rural location where this is essential for that type of business.

ii) Proposals for live-work developments will be supported in locations considered suitable for open market residential development.

4.3 PROTECTING EMPLOYMENT SITES

- 4.3.1 Existing employment sites and premises provide valuable opportunities for jobs close to where people live, and benefit the local economy. However there is increasing pressure for change of use from employment to non employment generating uses. The loss of employment uses can impact negatively on local access to employment and the economic competitiveness of local areas. This in turn would potentially undermine economic growth.
- 4.3.2 “Key employment sites” are the larger employment sites that contribute significantly to the employment land supply for B class uses. These are safeguarded for B class uses and other employment uses which would achieve economic enhancement without detrimental impact to the site or wider area. In considering economic enhancement, regard will be given to issues such as wage rates, achievement of higher level skills, job numbers, and key sectors identified by the Local Economic Partnership.
- 4.3.3 The councils are committed to ensuring they do everything they can to support sustainable economic growth. Where there are recognised viability issues preventing the delivery of sites the councils will work with developers to understand and seek to address potential barriers.

Table 4.1: Key Employment Sites

Town	Site	Status
Weymouth	Littlemoor urban extension	Proposed
	Mount Pleasant	Under development
Portland	Portland Port	Existing
	Southwell Business Park	Existing
	Inmosthay Industrial Estate	Existing
	Tradecroft Industrial Estate	Existing
Chickerell	Granby Industrial Estate	Existing
	Lynch Lane Industrial Estate	Existing
	Link Park	Under development
Dorchester	Poundbury Parkway Farm Business Park	Existing (extension proposed)
	Marabout & The Grove Industrial Estate	Existing
	Poundbury West Industrial Estate	Existing
	Loudsmill	Existing
	Great Western Industrial Estate	Existing
	Railway Triangle	Existing
	Casterbridge	Existing
Crossways	Land at Crossways	Proposed
	Hybris Business Park	Existing
Bridport	Vearse Farm	Proposed
	North Mills Trading Estate	Existing
	Amsafe	Existing
	Dreadnought Trading Estate	Existing
	St Andrews Trading Estate	Existing
	Crepe Farm	Existing
	Gore Cross	Existing
	Pymore Mills	Existing
Beaminster	Broadwindsor Road	Existing
	Horn Park Quarry	Existing
	Danisco Site	Existing
	Lane End Farm	Proposed
Lyme Regis	Lyme Regis Industrial Estate / Uplyme Business Park	Existing
Sherborne	Barton Farm	Proposed
	Hunts Depot	Existing
	Coldharbour Business Park	Existing
	South Western Business Park	Existing
Broadmayne	Roman Hill Business	Existing
Charminster	Charminster Farm	Existing
Piddlehinton	Enterprise Park	Existing

ECON 2. PROTECTION OF KEY EMPLOYMENT SITES

- i) **Within key employment sites (as identified on the proposals map) applications for B1 (light industrial), B2 (general industrial), B8 (storage and distribution) and other similar uses will be permitted subject to proposals not having a significant adverse impact on surrounding land uses.**

- ii) **The use of key employment sites for employment purposes other than B1, B2 and B8 may be appropriate if it can be proven that the use provides on-site support facilities or demonstrates an economic enhancement over and above B1 / B2 / B8 uses. Such development will not prejudice the efficient and effective use of the remainder of the employment area.**
- iii) **Retail uses will not generally be supported. Exceptionally, uses which have trade links with employment uses or are un-neighbourly in character (such as car showrooms, tyre and exhaust centres, or trade counters) may be permitted on employment sites which have good access to a range of transport options.**
- iv) **Other uses that do not provide direct, on-going local employment opportunities will not be permitted.**

Monitoring indicator: area of land granted permission for non employment uses on Key Employment Sites

4.3.4 Other employment sites are also valued for the job opportunities that they provide, but a more flexible approach will be taken on these to help facilitate a broad range of economic development, which is vital for the future sustainability and development of the area's economy. The policy also recognises that some existing employment sites may be causing significant environmental or amenity problems that cannot be overcome. In some circumstances there may not be a need for that site to remain in employment use, if there are sufficient alternatives available in the local area, and it would not benefit the local economy for it to remain vacant. And in some cases, the size, location and characteristics of a site may mean that more intensive, mixed use development could provide greater benefit to the community, in terms of addressing local needs, than if the site was retained solely in employment use. Proposals for mixed-use redevelopment will be expected to retain an equivalent amount of jobs on the site (and in the case of vacant or underused sites, consideration will be given to the potential of that site for job creation rather than the existing number of jobs). Where employment sites are proposed for mixed-use development, the following information will be sought:

- Description of community and regeneration benefits
- Description of economic benefits (for example skills and training provision)
- Any local employment or other needs addressed by the proposal
- Existing job numbers (full time and part time) by job type
- The amount and type of any employment development to be retained / provided
- Expected job numbers (full time and part time) by job type, and how this is justified

4.3.5 Where there is no reasonable prospect of an employment site being used for employment purposes, alternative uses may be considered. Where an application is made for an alternative use other than employment, the following information will be sought:

- Description of any problems caused by the employment use, the measures considered to try and mitigate these issues, and an explanation of why these problems could not be overcome
- Any other reasons why the site is thought unsuitable for employment uses
- Details of how the property has been marketed, over what period and for what price (and how the asking price was calculated), what use/s it was marketed for, where it was advertised, and whether there have been any offers received

- What other suitable, viable, alternative sites are available locally for employment uses (this should include an assessment of existing sites and premises in addition to land allocated by the Local Plan)
- 4.3.6 The Councils will require applicants to demonstrate that real effort has been undertaken to achieve alternative employment uses on that site. In assessing this information, consideration will be given to current market trends and the future land needs in that location.

ECON 3. PROTECTION OF OTHER EMPLOYMENT SITES

- i) **Outside key employment sites, the redevelopment of existing employment sites to an alternative employment use will normally be permitted.**
- ii) **The redevelopment of employment land and premises for non employment uses that are in accordance with other planning policies will be permitted where it will not prejudice the efficient and effective use of the remainder of the employment area and:**
 - **the present (or where vacant or derelict, the previous) use causes significant harm to the character or amenities of the surrounding area and it has been demonstrated that no other appropriate viable alternative employment uses could be attracted to the site; or**
 - **a substantial over-supply of suitable alternative employment sites is locally available; or**
 - **redevelopment of the site would offer important community benefits or no significant loss of jobs / potential jobs.**

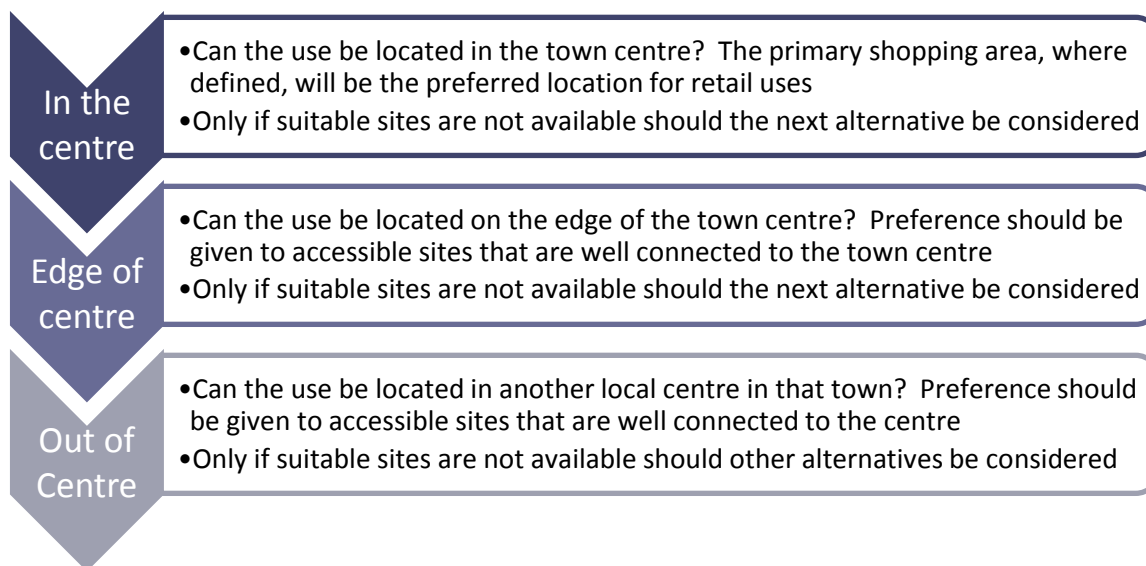
Monitoring indicator: loss of employment land/premises to non employment uses
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4.4 RETAIL AND TOWN CENTRE DEVELOPMENT

- 4.4.1 Town centres and local centres are places where people can access a range of local services and facilities. They are also places that people identify with strongly, as a place to meet and socialise. And many of them have strong links to the past, with Listed Buildings and other historic features or connections. However they can decline through lack of investment, particularly where there are other centres or outlets providing competition for potential customers.
- 4.4.2 Town centre areas have been defined in Weymouth, Dorchester, Bridport, Sherborne and Lyme Regis where the retail shops are concentrated, together with leisure, business and other main town centre uses. The main shopping frontages and secondary shopping frontages are also shown, reflecting the main streets and passages onto which the shops face. In the larger centres of Weymouth and Dorchester, the primary shopping area has also been identified where the concentration of retail is particularly high.
- 4.4.3 Sites that may provide suitable locations for future expansion to the town centre or primary shopping areas at Weymouth, Dorchester, Bridport and Sherborne are identified in the area specific chapters, to help these centres to continue to meet the needs of their catchment populations.
- 4.4.4 More local centres exist in the smaller towns and neighbourhood areas, relative to the size of the area they serve. Local centres, such as Easton, Fortuneswell and Beaminster, have an important role in delivering small scale development to meet local need.

- 4.4.5 Supporting the vitality and viability of existing centres means that these centres should be the first priority when locations are being considered for new retail development (or for other town centre uses such as hotels, leisure, offices and the arts). Planning applications for main town centre uses will be considered through the sequential approach and applicants will be expected to carry out a thorough assessment to explore alternative options.

Figure 4.1 The Sequential Test



- 4.4.6 The sequential test means wherever possible seeking to focus new development within, or failing that, on well located sites on the edge of existing centres. Only if centre or edge of centre sites are not available will out of centre locations be appropriate, provided they are acceptable in other respects.
- 4.4.7 As part of the sequential assessment applicants will need to consider the extent of the catchment area likely to be served by the proposal and identify nearby centres that may represent suitable locations to accommodate the scale and form of development proposed. The appropriate area of search will vary and should be agreed by the council. Some proposals will serve a purely localised need (eg local foodstores) whereas others are likely to serve a much wider catchment. In some instances it may be appropriate to include centres outside of the plan area, for example Yeovil.
- 4.4.8 Some larger settlements may have more than one centre. In such settlements, where development can not be located within or on the edge of the town centre, the other local centres should be looked at in preference to an out of centre site. All development will be expected to be appropriate in scale and type to the centre in which it would be located.
- 4.4.9 Applications for retail or other town centre uses that do not pass the sequential test should be refused because of the likely impact on the vitality and viability of an existing centre. There may be instances where a specific need for a certain type and form of development can only realistically be accommodated in specific locations. Genuine difficulties which are likely to occur in operating the proposal from a sequentially preferable site will be taken into account. Any reasons for rejecting more central opportunities or not adopting a more flexible approach to accommodating demand more centrally will need to be clearly explained and justified. The commercial objectives of a developer or occupier are not location specific requirements.

- 4.4.10 While the sequential test applies to all main town centre uses it will be necessary to consider the relative priorities and needs of different main town centre uses, particularly recognising their different operational and market requirements. The sequential approach does not apply to applications for employment trade related uses on key employment sites or for small scale community uses/small scale rural development.
- 4.4.11 Proposals for retail or other town centre uses exceeding 1,000m² floorspace in locations outside of the town centre areas, and proposals for smaller-scale retail developments in locations outside of any existing centres, will be required to submit an impact assessment including the following information:
- The availability, suitability and viability of potential alternative town centre sites, and where appropriate, edge of centre sites
 - The impact of the proposal on town centre vitality and viability, including local consumer choice and trade in the town centre and wider area, up to 5 years from the time the application is made. For major schemes where the full impact will not be realised in 5 years, the impact should also be assessed up to 10 years from the time the application is made
 - The impact of the proposal on existing, committed and planned public and private investments in the town centres within the catchment area of the proposal
- 4.4.12 Impact assessments will not be limited to new development, they may also be required for extensions, redevelopment or the variation of conditions where this would alter the effects of a development. Where a proposal is likely to lead to significant adverse impacts the application should be refused. What constitutes a significant adverse impact will be based on the circumstances of each case. The cumulative impact of recent/committed proposals may also be relevant. Where the evidence shows there is no significant adverse impact the positive and negative effects of the proposal will be balanced, together with locational and other considerations, to reach an overall judgement.
- 4.4.13 The impact test applies to all main town centre uses, but is particularly relevant to retail and leisure/entertainment proposals. Other main town centre uses (including offices and arts, culture and tourism) will require impact testing, but the scope and level of detail required will vary according to local circumstance.
- 4.4.14 The concentration of a variety of shopping and other services within a town centre is a major component of maintaining its vitality and viability. Arts, creative and cultural development can also contribute to healthy and vibrant centres and communities. Buildings that open later in the evening, such as theatres, pubs and restaurants, can complement retail uses and prolong the activity and vibrancy of a centre into the evening. The use of upper floors for offices or residential uses adds vitality to town centres without fragmenting the retail and services on the ground floors.
- 4.4.15 The loss of ground-floor retail uses to other uses can have an adverse impact within the primary and, to a lesser extent, secondary shopping frontages if they would fragment the retail offer to such an extent where it would make the centre less attractive and convenient. The loss of an active retail use, however, cannot be prevented, and no-one wants to see units remain vacant for long periods. In recognition of the importance of maintaining the attractiveness of existing centres a degree of flexibility, rather than a rigid insistence on certain uses, is needed during times of economic change. Changes of use should be permitted where it is clear that without redevelopment or significant remodelling the existing use of the property cannot continue.
- 4.4.16 Where development would result in the loss of a retail use in the primary shopping frontage, or the loss of a town centre use in the secondary shopping frontage, the impact

on the function of that area will need to be assessed. The impact on the number and frontage length of retail (and in the case of secondary frontages, other town centre uses) in that stretch (from junction to junction) should be submitted with the proposal.

ECON 4. RETAIL AND TOWN CENTRE DEVELOPMENT

- i) **Development proposals for retail and town centre development should be appropriate in type and scale to the particular centre and its catchment population.**
- ii) **Small scale development of shops, financial and professional services, food and drink, office, leisure and community uses will be permitted in local centres.**
- iii) **A sequential approach will be taken to planning applications for new (or major extensions to) retail and town centre uses, except in the case of:**
 - **small scale rural development (including offices)**
 - **small scale community facilities**
 - **employment trade related uses on key employment sites**

Development likely to lead to significant adverse impacts on existing centres will be refused.

- iv) **Development will be expected to maintain an appropriate concentration and mix of retail and other town centre uses in the centre, to protect its vitality and viability. Retail uses should normally make up about 75% or more of the nearby ground floor primary shopping frontage. Retail and other main town centre uses should make up about 75% or more of the nearby ground floor secondary shopping frontage. Development in these locations will be expected to have its main access and windows onto the primary (or secondary) frontage.**
- v) **The use of upper floors of premises in the town centre areas for residential or commercial uses will be encouraged subject to the ground floor use not being undermined and, where possible, separate access to the upper floors being provided.**

Monitoring indicator: map of primary and secondary frontage in use by retail, town centre and other uses. **Target:** no more than 25% non retail uses in the primary frontages and no more than 25% non town centre uses in secondary frontages (measured by length)

Monitoring indicator: amount of completed retail development each year and amount located in town centres

4.5 TOURISM

Tourism

For purposes of this plan tourism refers to all activities of visitors, including overnight visitors and same-day visitors, visits for business purposes as well as for holidays and recreation.

- 4.5.1 Tourism is very important for the area's economy. The Councils will look favourably on investment in new and improved attractions, facilities and accommodation so that the tourism industry can continue to be vibrant and competitive. However it is also important to make sure that the environment and those features that are so important to visitors, such as the coastline and outstanding landscapes, are not damaged by this development.
- 4.5.2 The designated landscapes and historic settlements, are particularly valuable for tourism and attracting inward investment. They attract visitors yet also bring visitor pressures

which need to be managed. It may not be possible to accommodate new tourism development in designated areas such as the Heritage Coast without harming the character. And on the other hand, sensitively located and screened sites of an appropriate scale in sustainable inland destinations could spread the benefits of tourism and reduce the pressure on the sensitive coastline. Whatever the location, development should fit well with its surroundings and be in harmony with the local environment.

- 4.5.3 Allocating specific sites for tourism-related development is not considered to be a pragmatic approach, as the right location will vary depending on the particular market and niche being targeted. For example, accommodation catering for those seeking to enjoy the natural environment through walking and outdoor recreation may be better located in a more rural area, rather than in a major town centre some distance away from the attractions it serves. Therefore the approach taken is to make sure that the general policies will support the right types of tourism in the most appropriate locations.
- 4.5.4 In certain cases, staff accommodation may be needed to provide 24 hour supervision on site in a rural location. This may be allowed as an exception to normal policy, under policy HOUS 6.

TOURIST ATTRACTIONS AND FACILITIES

- 4.5.5 There are many different tourist attractions within the plan area, including places like Weymouth Sea Life Centre, Abbotsbury Swannery, the fossil museum in Lyme Regis, the many harbours and beaches, and the historic towns and villages such as Sherborne and Cerne Abbas. The coast and countryside with its landscape and nature designations and extensive public rights of way network are attractions in their own right. Some developments attract huge numbers of visitors annually, appealing to national and international markets. Some, such as arts and cultural tourism, help widen the appeal of the area beyond the traditional tourist season. These types of development will be encouraged and supported.
- 4.5.6 In addition to attractions and facilities, widening the appeal of the plan area beyond the traditional tourist season will also require the provision of appropriate accommodation. However, accommodation is not included in definition of attractions and facilities, and is dealt with by Policies ECON6 and ECON7.
- 4.5.7 Tourism development should be as sustainable as possible in transport terms. Town centres, followed by adjoining sites, are the preferred location for major new attractions compatible with urban areas, as they provide greater opportunity for more people to access these locations other than by car. In turn, the tourist attractions can help to support the economy of the town centres. Outside the towns, the preference is for development to be located within or close to a settlement, as this is likely to provide more local benefits and be more accessible by means other than the car. But some tourist attractions, by their nature, will not lend themselves to a town or village location. Such a choice may be determined by a functional need, such as a visitor centre for a specific site. In considering such proposals, the benefits of the tourism development will be weighed up against any disadvantages arising from its location. In these cases it is recognised that there may be limited opportunities to make the development accessible by sustainable modes of transport or to reduce the number or proportion of visits made by car, and although the transport impacts will be taken into account, access by public transport is unlikely to be a determining factor.
- 4.5.8 The information required in support of applications is likely to vary greatly depending on the nature of the proposal, its scale and location. Proposals for major attractions and attractions located in less accessible locations should normally include information on:

- The nature of the visits expected to the development, how many they will be, how long and when they will occur, what seasonal fluctuation is likely and the extent to which there may be synergy with other activities in the locality
- The longer term viability of the enterprise, levels of spend and the amount of money expected to be drawn into the local economy, and likely impact on the vitality and viability of nearby town or local centres.

ECON 5. TOURISM ATTRACTIONS AND FACILITIES

i) Proposals for new, or extensions to, tourism attractions and facilities will be encouraged and supported, particularly where they would:

- **enhance an existing attraction or facility; or**
- **provide wider environmental benefits, such as helping maintain an historic building; or**
- **provide wider community benefits, such a new recreational facility that will be used by the local community as well as visitors; or**
- **increase the quality and diversity of the tourism offer in the local area and benefit the local economy**

ii) Development should, where possible and practicable, be located within or close to established settlements, or make use of existing or replacement buildings.

iii) Major tourism attractions should preferably be located within the towns and will be expected to provide adequate visitor facilities, such as parking and toilets, rather than relying on community facilities in the area.

4.5.9 The retention of tourism attractions is covered under the general policy on the protection of other employment sites, and as such other alternative employment uses may be permitted. However in some situations a tourist attraction or facility will be of such importance to the economy that it should be retained for tourism uses – such sites have been identified at Lodmoor and Bowleaze Cove, and site specific policies for these have been included within the Weymouth chapter.

4.5.10

BUILT TOURIST ACCOMMODATION

4.5.11 The tourism sector needs good quality built tourist accommodation, to cater for the range of visitors and reflecting their needs, so as to continue to be vibrant and competitive.

Built tourist accommodation

For purposes of this plan built tourist accommodation refers to permanent tourist accommodation such as hotels, guesthouses, B&Bs and holiday lets (residential homes restricted to holiday use). It excludes more temporary and mobile units such as caravans (even though these may remain in situ for many years) and second homes.

Where built tourist accommodation is permitted in a location where open market housing would normally be refused, the Councils will restrict its occupancy to ensure it remains in use as tourist accommodation.

4.5.12 The most appropriate locations for large new hotels and guest houses are within the town centres, as tourist attractions are concentrated in these locations and public transport provision is greater. However visitors also come to enjoy the many attractive rural areas and coastline, and smaller-scale serviced accommodation and self-catering accommodation

will also be appropriate within other settlements (listed in Section 3.5), for those businesses targeting tourists who are seeking such an experience.

- 4.5.13 Permanent built tourist accommodation is likely to be occupied all year round. If allowed in locations away from existing settlements this could lead to a significant level of development in the open countryside, weakening patterns of sustainable development. There may be cases where built holiday accommodation may be justified in a more rural location, for example through the conversion of existing buildings. In addition to new built development, tourist accommodation from the change of use of existing buildings will increase the stock and variety of accommodation the area has to offer and can bring back into use buildings that may otherwise be left vacant, help maintain historic buildings and have a positive impact on the surrounding area.
- 4.5.14 It would also be unduly restrictive to limit the extension of existing accommodation in the countryside. In order to support existing businesses, the expansion of built tourist accommodation and sites will be allowed to improve the quality of the accommodation on offer and the appearance of the site, provided that there is no significant harm.
- 4.5.15 The information required in support of applications is likely to vary greatly depending on the nature of the proposal, its scale and location. Proposals for accommodation in less accessible locations should normally include information on the long term viability of the enterprise, a clear justification of why such a location is needed and the benefits to the local economy. As a town centre use, hotels should also comply with policy ECON4. Where the impact of a new out of centre hotel would undermine the viability and contribution of more central hotels, or prejudice the potential to secure further hotel development on a more central site, development should be refused.
- 4.5.16 Tourist accommodation provides critical support to tourist attractions and facilities, and contributes to the economy through its support of retail, food and drink and travel services. It is therefore important to ensure that the loss of stock is carefully considered, particularly with regard to the hotels and larger guesthouses in the area (as a guide this means those that have at least 6 guest bedrooms). However it is also important to recognise that changes in the market will mean that some types of built tourist accommodation may become less attractive to visitors, and if the offer cannot be improved, falling profits would result in poorly maintained and ultimately failing accommodation, neither of which is a desirable outcome. As such a flexible approach will be needed in assessing to what extent the loss of such facilities should be resisted. Applicants will be required to demonstrate that real effort has been made to retain the tourist accommodation. Evidence submitted should typically include:
- Reasons why there is no longer a market for the premises in its tourist function
 - Details of how the property has been marketed, the length of time that the marketing was active and any changes during this period, the asking price, the level of interest generated and any offers received.
 - In the case of a reduction in size, the economic impact on the ongoing viability of the business

ECON 6. BUILT TOURIST ACCOMMODATION

- i) **New built tourist accommodation will be supported:**
- **Within an established settlement of more than 200 population**
 - **Through the re-use of an existing building**

- Through the replacement, intensification or extension of existing premises where the expansion would improve the quality and appearance of the accommodation and site

- ii) **Larger hotel/guesthouse developments should be located within the town centres.**
- iii) **Proposals that would result in the permanent loss or reduction in size of hotels and larger guesthouses will be resisted unless it can be demonstrated that their tourist function is no longer viable and there is no market for the business as a going concern.**

CARAVAN AND CAMPING SITES

- 4.5.17 Caravan and camping sites are key components of the area's stock of self catering tourist accommodation. The Councils will support appropriate improvements in the quality of accommodation on offer and proposals that enable existing sites to extend the visitor season.

Caravan and camping sites

For purposes of this plan caravan and camping sites are those which primarily provide accommodation in temporary and mobile units such as static caravans, pitches for touring caravans, tents or yurts.

Where a site is permitted in a location where open market housing would normally be refused, the Councils will restrict its occupancy to ensure it remains in use as tourist accommodation.

- 4.5.18 Proposals for new caravan and camping sites where possible should be well located in relation to existing facilities. However there will be circumstances where a more flexible approach is appropriate. Some larger sites are relatively self-contained with on-site facilities, which can also be used by the local community. New sites and facilities may be provided as part of a farm diversification project, provided they are in keeping with the rural character and make an on going contribution to the business that is diversifying. However, sites in more rural locations tend to increase traffic on the nearby rural roads and impact on the general amenity and character of the countryside. Some sites, especially the larger coastal ones, can be visually intrusive in the landscape. In considering proposals for caravan and camping sites in isolated or sensitive locations these impacts must all be taken into account, weighing up the benefits of development against any disadvantages arising from the location.
- 4.5.19 It is unlikely that new sites will be able to be accommodated within the Heritage Coast area without harming the landscape character, so such proposals are only likely to be permitted in very exceptional circumstances.
- 4.5.20 There is some demand from site operators for enhanced facilities, especially on the larger holiday parks, for example to provide better entertainment and indoor facilities on site so as to encourage use through a longer season. By improving facilities in this way, existing sites can attract visitors for a longer part of the year, providing a greater economic benefit to the area. However such improvements often involve a greater amount of built development, the visual impact of which needs to be carefully assessed, particularly in coastal areas and other landscapes with an open character.
- 4.5.21 A site operator may wish to change the use of a site, either wholly or in part, from touring accommodation to static accommodation. This could have a greater impact on the local landscape.

- 4.5.22 Caravans may vary in appearance. Consideration should be given to the materials and colours of development as this can greatly reduce the visual impact. Schemes to replace existing static caravans with units that would improve the appearance or quality of the accommodation will be looked upon favourably.
- 4.5.23 Internal reorganisation to reduce the visual impact of existing sites and improve their attractiveness to visitors will be encouraged. In some cases such improvements can only be achieved by an increase in the overall site area, if existing pitch numbers are not to be reduced. Where such a situation occurs, proposals will be given careful consideration and the increase in site size balanced against any benefits that could be achieved in appearance.

ECON 7. CARAVAN AND CAMPING SITES

- i) New caravan and camping sites should be well located in relation to existing facilities or make appropriate provision for facilities on site. Farm diversification projects (for agricultural and other land-based rural businesses) for new caravan and camping sites will be supported, provided they are in keeping with the rural character and the development makes an on going contribution to the business that is diversifying.**
- ii) Proposals for the expansion, intensification or reorganisation of existing sites must clearly demonstrate that development forms part of a long term management plan to improve the quality and appearance of the accommodation and site.**
- iii) All development (including the change of use from touring to static units) must not, individually or cumulatively, have a significant adverse impact on the distinctive characteristics of the areas landscape, heritage or built environment. Proposals in the Heritage Coast are unlikely to be supported.**
- iv) Development proposals must include an appropriate landscape scheme and provision for its ongoing maintenance**

Monitoring Indicator: planning applications approved in the Heritage Coast for the development of new/extensions to existing caravan and campsites

4.6 FARMING AND THE DIVERSIFICATION OF LAND-BASED RURAL BUSINESSES

- 4.6.1 A significant proportion of the plan area is in agricultural use. Farming and other land-based rural businesses have a great influence on the landscape and character of the area, although they now employ a relatively small proportion of the population. It is important to support the farming industry as vital part of the rural economy, and so that farmers can continue to actively manage the countryside.
- 4.6.2 Agriculture has undergone significant changes over the last half century. Many modern farming processes are less labour-intensive, reducing employment and resulting in additional redundant buildings (some of which make a significant contribution to local character). In order to ensure the most efficient and effective use of land and premises new development should only be permitted where there are no redundant buildings capable of conversion or replacement. The replacement of a farm building that makes a positive contribution to the local character will be resisted. There may be cases where existing buildings are inefficient or inappropriate for the proposed uses. In these instances new development may be permitted.
- 4.6.3 An increasing number of farmers are seeking to diversify in order to supplement their incomes. Policies in this plan are therefore intended to promote the development and diversification of agricultural and other land-based rural businesses, where this will help

support the ongoing good management of the land. Development may be required to be tied by legal agreement to the agricultural unit where it has been provided in a location where it wouldn't ordinarily be permitted. Where a land based rural business is hoping to supplement its income through the conversion of an existing building for tourist accommodation or housing for rent, this will be considered under policy SUS3. Proposals for caravan and campsites will be considered under policy ECON7.

ECON 8. FARM DIVERSIFICATION

- i) Farm diversification projects (for agricultural and other land-based rural businesses) for the use of land or buildings for non-agricultural employment purposes will be supported, provided they are in keeping with the rural character and comprise:**
 - **The use of land; or**
 - **The re-use or replacement of an existing building or buildings; or**
 - **New ancillary development that relates well to existing development provided that there are no redundant buildings capable of re-use/replacement .**
- ii) The proposed diversification must make an on-going contribution to sustaining the enterprise and may be required to be tied by legal agreement to the business that is diversifying.**

NEW AGRICULTURAL BUILDINGS

4.6.4 The councils recognise the need to support modern farming practices. However the trend towards larger agricultural buildings, which have a more industrial appearance, can have a significantly adverse impact on the local landscape character and also result in more traditional farm buildings falling into disrepair. New agricultural buildings can be allowed under 'permitted development rights', but where this is controlled under the planning system applicants will be encouraged to locate development where it won't impact on the openness and attractive character of the countryside, for example by re-using existing buildings or locating new ones close to existing buildings or on areas of existing hard standing. The impact on residential amenity, including that arising from farm traffic movements, will also be a consideration.

ECON 9. NEW AGRICULTURAL BUILDINGS

- i) The development of new agricultural buildings, or extension of existing buildings, will be permitted where the development is necessary for the purposes of agriculture on the unit or locally where facilities are to be shared, and there are no existing buildings on the unit which are capable of re-use. The scale, siting design and external appearance of the buildings should be designed to minimise adverse impact on the landscape character and residential amenity.**

EQUESTRIAN DEVELOPMENT

4.6.5 Riding and horse keeping are popular leisure activities which can be located in and around built up areas but generally require a rural location. Equestrian businesses can contribute to the rural economy, and provide opportunities for farm diversification. Equestrian development can range from field shelters and domestic stables to livery yards, riding schools, stud farms and racing stables and can also include all-weather training areas and gallops. These uses vary in their impact on the surroundings, and in the numbers of people visiting them, and these factors need to be taken into account in assessing

proposals. Possible adverse impacts include fragmentation of agricultural land, and harm to the character of the countryside through poor land management the proliferation of stables and other related equipment.

ECON 10. EQUESTRIAN DEVELOPMENT

- i) Equestrian developments, including extensions to existing premises, will be permitted where:**
 - Schemes would not, individually or cumulatively, harm the landscape character or rural amenity of the countryside
 - The scale of development is appropriate to the proposed use and the number of horses to be kept; and
 - Adequate supervision can be provided without the need for new or additional on-site residential accommodation; and
 - In the case of substantial built development proposals, a satisfactory independent assessment is submitted regarding the long term economic viability of the enterprise.
- iv) Development should make use of existing buildings where possible and must otherwise relate well to existing development.**
- v) Proposals to re-use or adapt substantial purpose-built equestrian holdings for non-equestrian uses will only be permitted where it can be demonstrated that continued equestrian use is inappropriate or unviable. Proposed uses must be in accordance with other plan policies.**