Topic Paper 7

Agriculture, farm diversification and rural economy

June 2007
NOTE: Please see topic paper on the economy for the main executive summary.

Executive Summary

PPS7 encourages planning authorities to support a wide range of economic activity in rural areas at an appropriate scale in sustainable locations through identifying suitable sites for future economic development and through identifying criteria by which economic development would be permitted together with extensions to premises.

PPS7 also identifies the need to promote a competitive, sustainable, diverse and adaptable agricultural sector which achieves high environmental standards, minimising impact on natural resources, managers valued landscapes and biodiversity and contributes directly and indirectly to rural economic diversity. The best and most versatile agricultural land should also be protected. PPS7 also encourages both farm and non-farm diversification for farmers. Commercial equestrian activity is also encouraged, together with the sustainable management of existing woods and forestry and the re-use or replacement of existing buildings.

The RSS further encourages the development of small businesses in the smaller settlements and in rural areas in sustainable locations that meet organic growth and rural investment. The RSS also recognises that changes to the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) will encourage greater diversification away from agricultural activities.

The Structure plan seeks to provide scope to existing employers moving into Wiltshire to create sufficient high quality jobs for the growing population. A strong and diverse rural economy should also be maintained.

Salisbury district is pre-dominantly rural, and a large proportion of the population lives and works in the rural parts of the district. Maintaining an employment base within the rural area is important because the farming industry is changing and because we need to reduce the amount of rural to urban community to work. At the same time the best and most versatile agricultural land should be protected to ensure it is available for food production. The council will ensure this is achieved.

By supporting existing and creating small-scale businesses in the countryside, people who live in the countryside would have a greater range of opportunities to work near to home and should result in a more competitive, thriving, diverse rural enterprises. A fine balance needs to be struck between reducing rural to urban commuting, whilst also not encouraging the urban population to commute to new employers in the countryside. For this reason, the size of businesses in the countryside generally needs to be small scale.

In some situations, it may be appropriate to allow farmers to diversify by developing small scale businesses on their land that are either related to farming or unrelated to agriculture such as holiday cottages or small scale offices and the conversion of redundant buildings to commercial re-use. Local food producers should also be supported.

Rural businesses as well as urban ones need to become more environmentally friendly. Therefore farmers in the process of food production should ensure that water is used to best effect. Farmers should also be encouraged to develop renewable energy on their land whether this is for example bio mass production or food to waste energy solutions, although this could have a landscape implication.
Being predominantly rural equestrian activity also can make an important contribution to the local economy, especially with the presence of Salisbury Racecourse in the district. Support should therefore be provided towards the needs of horse training, breeding and livery businesses and other commercial equine enterprises in the countryside.

Should the council promote positively farm diversification to enable farmers to diversity to increase their incomes, should this be related to their farming business or unrelated? Should farmers be able to re-use redundant farm buildings for commercial enterprise / farm diversification schemes.

Should small-scale business development in the countryside be supported?

Should the small-scale business development in rural areas be focussed in or near local service centres?

Should the council encourage farmers to develop renewable energy on their land?

Should the importance that commercial equestrian activity makes to the rural economy be recognised? Which aspects need to be supported?

Should local food production companies also be supported?

Should farmers be encouraged to use water to best effect?
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INTRODUCTION

Salisbury district is a predominantly rural district and therefore the prosperity of the rural area is important.

Changes in agriculture over recent decades have resulted in a decline in farm-related jobs, and an increase in the stock of land and buildings that are no longer required for agricultural purposes. Since 2003/04 the average farm income has fallen from £24,700 to £17,500 in 2005/06 (source defra, http://statistics.defra.gov.uk/esg/quick/agri.asp, accessed 26/03/2007) this is a trend that has been occurring for several years. The structure and type of farm has also changed. At the same time there are increasing environmental demands following on from legislative and policy commitments and public expectation, which will potentially make the role of farmers and growers more challenging and complex. Simultaneously, the recent Common Agricultural Policy reform requires farmers to become more self reliant and market focused rather than subsidy based upon farm production. It has therefore become increasingly important for farmers to be able to diversify their economic base in order to supplement their incomes and ensure the continued survival of farms and land management.

1. ISSUES FACING SALISBURY DISTRICT

Since 1990 within Salisbury district both the number of full time farmers and the number of holdings that have been farmed have reduced in number, conversely the number of part time farmers and holdings farmed has increased.

At the same time the number of small farms and the very largest has increased whilst those of medium size have declined. However it should be noted that the data from and including 2000 includes minor holdings and therefore it would be expected that the number of small farms would increase.

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1 Defra Agricultural Census: data relates to main and minor holdings – from and including 2000, Data relates to main holdings only – pre 2000.
The type of farming within the district has also been changing with a large increase in the percentage of farms farming ‘other’ whilst a reduction in the farms producing cereals, general cropping, horticulture, specialist pigs, diary and mixed. This would suggest an increase in more specialist farming activities.

These changes to the structure and type of farms in the UK have been against a backdrop of declining farm incomes and increased environmental pressures. Since 2003/04 the average farm income has fallen from £24,700 to £17,500 in 2005/06 (source defra, http://statistics.defra.gov.uk/esg/quick/agri.asp, accessed 26/03/2007).

Environmental Stewardship Schemes were introduced in 2006 and reward financially, good land management and address some of the environmental issues affecting the wider countryside including diffuse pollution, soil erosion and the conservation of farmland birds. The new scheme provides an opportunity for those responsible for managing our countryside to be rewarded for the successful conservation and enhancement of the English countryside. This
scheme replaces the previous Countryside Stewardship Schemes and Environmentally Sensitive Areas.

Although the schemes represent a stream of income that is available to farmers, the recent Common Agricultural Policy reform simultaneously, requires farmers to become more self reliant and market focused rather than subsidy based upon farm production. There is also continuing uncertainty surrounding the future direction of the European Union Common Agricultural Policy that altogether trigger an additional need to support the rural and farming economy.

Salisbury is also in a fortunate position to have a flat racing horse racing facility located between Salisbury and Wilton as well as holding many point to point races on Larkhill (Salisbury Plain). This can assist the rural economy, and the needs of horse training, breeding and livery businesses together with commercial horse riding stables, should be encouraged as part of farm diversification enterprises. However these need to be achieved whilst maintaining environmental quality and countryside character. Please also see topic paper 9 – Employment land, the economy, agriculture and farm diversification.
2. THE NATIONAL AND REGIONAL POLICY FRAMEWORK

National Guidance

Planning Policy Statement 7 (PPS7) Sustainable Development in Rural Areas

Identifies the following issues that should be addressed:

- Need to develop competitive, diverse and thriving rural enterprise that provides a range of jobs and underpins strong economies

Agriculture and farming

- Need to promote sustainable, diverse and adaptable agriculture sectors where farming achieves high environmental standards, minimising impact on natural resources, and manages valued landscapes and biodiversity, contributes both directly and indirectly to rural economic diversity; is itself competitive and profitable, and provides high quality produces that the public wants.

- Recognise the important and varied roles of agriculture, including the maintenance and management of the countryside and most of our valued landscapes. Support development proposals that will enable farming and farmers to:
  - Become more competitive, sustainable and environmentally friendly
  - Adapt to new and changing markets
  - Comply with changing legislation and associated guidance
  - Diversify into new agricultural opportunities (e.g. renewable energy crops) or
  - Broaden their operations to ‘add value’ to their primary produce

- Recognise that diversification into non-agricultural activities is vital to the continuing viability of many farm enterprises:
  - Set out criteria to be applied to planning applications for farm diversification projects
  - Be supportive of well-conceived farm diversification schemes for business purposes that contribute to sustainable development objectives and help to sustain the agricultural enterprise, and are consistent in their scale and their rural location.

- Encourage the re-use or replacement of existing buildings where feasible and have regard to the amenity of nearby residents or other rural businesses that may be affected by new types of on-farm development.

- PPS7 suggests that LPAs should provide policies to protect specific areas of the best and most versatile agricultural land from speculative development

Forestry

- Manage existing woods and forests sustainably
- Encourage the continued expansion of woodland areas to provide more benefits for society and the environment
- The planning system is the principal means for regulating the rate at which land is transferred from woodlands to other rural and urban uses.

Commercial equestrian activity

- Recognise that horse riding and other equestrian activities are popular forms of recreation in the countryside that can fit in well with farming activities and help to diversify rural economies.

- Horse training and breeding businesses play an important economic role. Local planning authorities should set out policies for supporting equine enterprises that maintain environmental quality and countryside character.

- These policies should provide for a range of suitably located recreational and leisure facilities and, where appropriate, for the needs of training and breeding businesses.

- They should also facilitate the re-use of farm buildings for small-scale horse enterprises that provide a useful form of farm diversification.

Agriculture must focus on using available water to best effect.

http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/subjects/waterres/137651/?version=1&lang= e

England Forestry Strategy (1999) has two main aims that are the sustainable management of existing woods and forests; and a continued steady expansion of woodland area to provide more benefits for society and the environment.

http://www.forestry.gov.uk/efs

Regional Guidance

The Draft Regional Spatial Strategy for the South West 2006-2026

Businesses in rural areas now and in the foreseeable future are likely to have little connection with the land-based industries but should be supported where they secure jobs for local people and improve the viability of rural communities. The Rural Development Regulation is likely to encourage greater diversification away from agricultural activity, and an increased desire on the part of farmers to diversify their capital assets. Encouragement should be had for the development of small businesses in the 'market towns' and smaller settlements throughout the region. Small businesses in rural areas should be based in sustainable and accessible locations to avoid pressures on local environments and roads.

The draft RSS recognises that the region is characterised by farmland, woodland and forestry alongside being a place to live, work and enjoy and identifies that as changes to agricultural policy and industry takes place less land is likely to be used primarily for food production. Therefore the RSS identifies that local authorities should promote an integrated approach to land management by developing area-specific packages that achieve multiple benefits, reinforce and enhance the specific natural and cultural features or local areas.

The RSS further identifies that the Best and Most Versatile Agricultural land should be protected for food production, as they are the most flexible in terms of food production.
With respect to commercial forestry the RSS identifies that the wider economic use of woodlands and forest should be promoted for example with respect to wood fuel.

http://www.southwest-ra.gov.uk/ngcontent.cfm?a_id=836

Regional Woodland and Forestry Framework

Our woods and forests make a significant contribution to the region’s economy, of over £500m per annum forestry should directly contribute to renewable energy and increase the contribution of woodfuel to renewable energy supplies in the South West, measured by installed capacity.

http://www.forestry.gov.uk/sw-rff
3. LINKING IT TOGETHER – WHAT DO OTHER LOCAL STRATEGIES SAY?

South West Biodiversity Implementation Plan

Requires the provision of enhanced conditions for the maintenance and return of biodiversity to arable land and improved grassland.

http://www.swbiodiversity.org.uk/Regional/swbippage.htm

The Delivery Plan for Sustainable Farming and Food industry in the South West 2004

Relevant objectives from the delivery plan are to:

- Reduce rural inequalities and supporting viable livelihoods, particularly by improving access to relevant schemes and initiatives;
- Increased viability of local and regional food and farming businesses.
- Create more opportunities for farmers to supplement their incomes from agri-environment schemes geared to the region’s needs and opportunities.
- Encourage farmers and food companies to develop renewable energy on their land or in their buildings.
- Encourage District Councils to encourage renewable energy developments
- Identify localised agricultural and food waste-to-energy solutions, particularly centralised anaerobic digestion.
- Alternative uses to be found for farm buildings, such as leisure, offices and workshops.
- Farmers to diversify into alternative crops, and tourism & leisure activities
- Maintaining our countryside industries: farming, fishing, forestry

http://www.gos.gov.uk/gosw/envrural/farmandfood/
4. PRIORITIES AT COMMUNITY LEVEL.

2005-2009 Community Strategy

Little mention of the rural economy within the community strategy.

http://www.salisbury.gov.uk/living/your-community/community-planning/community-strategy

Local Community Plans (Parish, Ward and Market Town Plans)

Two of the community area plans, that of Mere and the Southern area, do identify the need to maintain the farming industry and to assist farmers in identifying, as well as finding other uses for redundant farm buildings.

- Changes likely to exist in the future – renewable crops
- Local production

It is not just the farming industry that needs support in rural areas, other types of rural employment also needs supporting to maintain a strong rural economy.

Several parish plans have also been produced however only the parish plan for Pitton and Farley identifies the need to enable farmers to diversify.

http://www.salisbury.gov.uk/living/your-community/community-planning/community-strategy
5. LEARNING FROM EXPERIENCE

a) How do our existing policies perform?

The following policies from within the existing Local Plan address a wide range of issues related to community and cultural activities. While many have proved to be effective, they will need to be thoroughly reviewed as part of the LDF process.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policy</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C19</td>
<td>Protects the best and most versatile agricultural land</td>
<td>A similar policy needs to be carried forward to be in conformity with PPS7 and the draft RSS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C20</td>
<td>Allows development which is essential to the needs of agriculture, forestry and horticulture subject to criteria which include the development would be inappropriate in an urban area, it is directly related to a holding and measures are included to prevent pollution, over-abstraction and degradation of water courses and groundwater sources</td>
<td>A similar policy should be carried through.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C21</td>
<td>Permits farm diversification</td>
<td>A similar policy should be carried through that is more positive.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following policies will be reviewed under other topic paper areas:

- **G3** (water environment) (Topic Paper 12)
- **E19** (employment sites in the countryside) (Topic Paper 9)
- **E21** (new employment sites in the countryside) (Topic Paper 9)
- **E20** (change of use to employment use in countryside) (Topic Paper 9)
- **C2** (Limited development to that which would benefit the local economy or the environment) (Topic Paper 9)
- **C4** (Prevents development that would harm the AONB) – (Topic Paper 5)
- **C9** (prevents the loss of woodland, encourages planting of indigenous species) (Topic Paper 5)
- **C22** (promotes change of use of buildings to employment first) (Topic Paper 9)

b) What are others doing to tackle similar problems?

A short benchmarking exercise was undertaken to understand how some other local authorities have dealt with retailing within their Core Strategies. This was achieved through a random internet search.

**Maldon** - have suggested a range of options from continuing their current policies of restricting diversification to encouraging rural farm scale business clusters to allow clusters subject to criteria, or the ability to suggest another option. This appears in Generic development issues and options. Within the same paper the first section is ‘Strategic Issues and Options’ which is preceded by a spatial portrait of the area. This section deals with issues such as restricting out-commuting, increasing skills of the workforce, increasing access to the wider community, making public transport more attractive, and establishing the retail hierarchy.

**Suffolk coastal** - have proposed a ‘preferred’ option and then proposed other alternative options. They have further asked if there are any further options that should be pursued.
East Cambridgeshire - have put together a three page summary for economic development which explains the background to the district and the policy requirements. It then has three policy options which are associated with employment sites and whether they should be sustained, the protection of employment sites and the degree that farmers should be able to diversify to.

Bradford metropolitan - have used the Topic paper approach, this goes through the economic trends, the policy guidance, the employment land supply, the location of employment, protection of existing employment sites, and rural diversification. There are then questions throughout the topic paper asking consultees to comment.....
6. KEY ISSUES AND SPATIAL PATTERNS

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Should the small-scale business development in rural areas be focussed in or near local service centres?
Should the council encourage farmers to develop renewable energy on their land?
Should the importance that commercial equestrian activity makes to the rural economy be recognised? Which aspects need to be supported?
Should local food production companies also be supported?
Should farmers be encouraged to use water to best effect?

Forestry and Woodland
PPS7, the England Forestry Strategy and the Regional Woodland and Forestry Framework try to ensure that existing woods and forests are managed sustainably. PPS7 and the England Forestry Strategy would like to see the expansion of forests in order for benefits for society and the environment to be provided. At the regional level the RSS and the Regional Woodland and Forestry Framework encourages a wider economic use for woodlands.
### 7. OPTIONS

Based on the issues identified and the policy framework in place, this section draws together options. The tables below represent a long list of options which may sit more comfortably within either the core strategy or a more specific DPD. The impacts identified are compared against the sustainability criteria in the Appendix of this topic paper.

#### Agriculture and equestrian

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option No.</th>
<th>Nature of the Option</th>
<th>Key Drivers</th>
<th>Positive Impacts</th>
<th>Negative Impacts</th>
<th>Viability of proceeding with the option?</th>
<th>How will success be measured</th>
<th>Where is the option best pursued?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Should the council promote positively farm diversification to enable farmers to diversity to increase their incomes, should this be related to their farming business or unrelated.</td>
<td>PPS7, RSS, Delivery plan for sustainable farming, Pitton and Farley Parish Plan</td>
<td>Helps to support farm incomes to enable continued food productions.</td>
<td>Some diversification schemes could be very successful but not be in accessible locations.</td>
<td>Fair / good</td>
<td>Increased number of farms with successful diversification schemes and increasing farm incomes</td>
<td>Core strategy and General Development DPD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Should small scale business development in the countryside be supported?</td>
<td>PPS7, Mere and Southern community plan.</td>
<td>Rural areas become more sustainable.</td>
<td>May involve a small increase in car use.</td>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>Continued existence of small businesses in rural areas.</td>
<td>Core strategy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Protect the best and most versatile agricultural land</td>
<td>PPS7 and RSS</td>
<td>The best quality land is preserved for agricultural production.</td>
<td>May prevent land being developed in strategically beneficial directions.</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Amount of best quality agricultural land lost to development.</td>
<td>Core Strategy and General Development DPD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Should farmers be able to re-use redundant farm buildings for commercial enterprise / farm diversification schemes?</td>
<td>Mere and southern community plan.</td>
<td>Ensures that redundant farm buildings are re-used.</td>
<td>Some farm buildings may not be suitable for other uses or may be in inaccessible locations.</td>
<td>Fair/good</td>
<td>Successful re-use of farm buildings.</td>
<td>Core Strategy and General Development DPDs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Do not promote farm diversification nor support small businesses.</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Few</td>
<td>Farm incomes and the rural economic with diminish</td>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>Decline of the rural economy.</td>
<td>Do not pursue.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Should the council encourage farmers to develop renewable energy crops on their land?</td>
<td>PPS7, regional woodland and forestry framework. Mere and southern community plan.</td>
<td>Meet renewable energy targets.</td>
<td>The traditional landscape of the district could change due to the changing crops.</td>
<td>Fair / Good</td>
<td>Amount of land farmed for biomass production.</td>
<td>Core Strategy and General Development DPD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Do not encourage renewable energy crops.</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>There would be little change in the landscape.</td>
<td>Renewable energy targets are not met.</td>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>No change to renewable energy crop production.</td>
<td>Do not pursue.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Should the importance that commercial equestrian activity makes to the rural economy be recognised?</td>
<td>PPS7.</td>
<td>Equestrian activity can help provide prosperous rural economies.</td>
<td>It is not only horse livery, breed and</td>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>The continued prosperity of the industry.</td>
<td>Core Strategy and General Development DPD</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Support not only farmers but also local food production businesses.</td>
<td>The delivery plan for Sustainable Farming and Food industry in the South West 2004</td>
<td>To ensure that not only food is grown but to support the farmers through the ability to have local food production and processing facilities.</td>
<td>Food processing that is not relevant to the local agricultural economy may not support local farmers.</td>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>Successful food production business in the district.</td>
<td>General Development DPD.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Do not encourage agriculture to use water to best effect.</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Few</td>
<td>Water resources become more scarce.</td>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Do not pursue.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Commercial Forestry**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option No.</th>
<th>Nature of the Option</th>
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<th>Viability of proceeding with the option?</th>
<th>How will success be measured</th>
<th>Where is the option best pursued?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Ensure existing woods and forests are managed sustainably.</td>
<td>PPS7, England Forestry Strategy, Regional woodland and forestry framework</td>
<td>Ensure that forestry and woods are sustained into the future.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Fair / good</td>
<td>Maintenance of woodland and forestry.</td>
<td>Core Strategy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Expand forestry to provide benefits for society and the environment</td>
<td>PPS7, England Forestry Strategy.</td>
<td>Forestry can provide benefits to health through recreation and to the environment.</td>
<td>Increased forestation could cause changes to the landscape</td>
<td>Fair / good</td>
<td>Increase in hectares of land covered by forestry.</td>
<td>Core Strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Encourage a wider economic use for woodland</td>
<td>RSS, Regional Woodland and Forestry Framework</td>
<td>Benefits to the rural economy and the environment through the promotion of say wood fuel production.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Fair / Good</td>
<td>Increase in economic contribution forestry makes to the local economy.</td>
<td>Core Strategy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Do not encourage commercial forestry.</td>
<td>None.</td>
<td>Forests are not intensively managed.</td>
<td>Woodlands that are not managed could be destroyed.</td>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Do not pursue.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
8. INITIAL CONSULTATION

Copy sent to Cllr Draper. Contacts provided at NFU for actual consultation exercise.

Copy sent to:
Wiltshire Rural Regeneration Partnership – no response received.
Wiltshire Rural Regeneration Partnership – no response received.
Wiltshire Market Towns Partnership – no response received.
9.0 BIOBIOGRAPHY

England Forestry Strategy (1999)
http://www.forestry.gov.uk/efs

Local Community Plans (Parish, Ward and Market Town Plans)
http://www.salisbury.gov.uk/living/your-community/community-planning/community-strategy

Planning Policy Statement 7 (PPS7) Sustainable Development in Rural Areas

Regional Woodland and Forestry Framework
http://www.forestry.gov.uk/sw-rff

Salisbury District Council - 2005-2009 Community Strategy
http://www.salisbury.gov.uk/living/your-community/community-planning/community-strategy

South West Biodiversity Implementation Plan
http://www.swbiodiversity.org.uk/Regional/swbippage.htm

The Delivery Plan for Sustainable Farming and Food industry in the South West 2004
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