

Policies - Rural and Natural Environment Policies

The Rural Environment

C1

The District Council will endeavour to protect, restore and improve the natural beauty and amenity of the District.

C2

Development in the countryside will be strictly limited and will not be permitted unless it would benefit the local economy and maintain or enhance the environment.

C3

Small scale development required by the public utilities undertakers and private companies for the efficient provision and operation of public utilities will be permitted in the countryside provided that;

(i) such development cannot suitably be located within a settlement;

(ii) it can be demonstrated that there is no alternative, more environmentally acceptable site; and

(iii) satisfactory measures can be taken to minimise its impact on the environment, the landscape and on nearby properties and land uses.

Landscape Conservation

C4

Within the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty development will not be permitted if it would harm the natural beauty of the landscape. Major industrial or commercial development proposals will not be permitted unless there is a proven national need and no suitable site is available outside the AONB.

C5

Within the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty small scale development proposals will only be permitted where they are in accordance with the policies of this Local Plan and provided that:

(i) the siting and scale of development are sympathetic with the landscape of the AONB in general and of the particular locality; and

(ii) standards of landscaping and design are high, using materials which are appropriate to the locality and reflect the character of the area.

Regard should also be had to the social and economic well-being of the area.

C6

Within the Special Landscape Area, proposals for development in the countryside will be considered having particular regard to the high quality of the landscape. Where proposals which would not have an adverse effect on the quality on the landscape are acceptable, they will be subject to the following criteria;

(i) the siting and scale of development to be sympathetic with the landscape; and

(ii) high standards of landscaping and design, using materials which are appropriate to the locality and reflect the character of the area.

C7

Within the Landscape Setting of Salisbury and Wilton as defined on the Proposals Map, new development will not be permitted during the lifetime of this Plan to ensure there would be no detriment to the visual quality of the landscape and to enable allocated developments to be assimilated.

C8

In order to maintain the quality and variety of the countryside new development which would result in the loss of trees, hedges or other features that contribute to the character of the landscape will only be permitted where provision is made for replacement planting and the creation of new landscape features.

C9

Using the limited powers available to it (such as imposing Tree Preservation Orders and planning conditions, and commenting on felling licence applications and forestry/woodland grant applications) the Local Planning Authority will seek to prevent the loss of woodland of landscape, historical or nature conservation value and to encourage the planting of indigenous tree species appropriate to the area. Tree planting proposals which are detrimental to the landscape or nature conservation value of downland or river valley meadows will not be supported.

Nature Conservation

C10

Development affecting a Site of Special Scientific Interest will not be permitted unless it is consistent with the objectives of the statutory designation and can be subject to conditions which would prevent damaging impacts on wildlife habitats or important physical features, or if the importance of the development is sufficient to override nature conservation interests and the national policy to safeguard the national network of such sites, in accordance with statutory obligations.

Development proposals in, around or likely to affect an SSSI will be subject to special scrutiny including consultation with English Nature as required by national legislation.

Designated or potential sites of international importance (for example, Special Protection Areas, Special Areas of Conservation, Ramsar sites and Biogenetic Reserves) will be afforded the same protection as SSSIs. In addition, development likely to have a significant effect on such sites will only be allowed only where there is no alternative and if there are imperative reasons of overriding public interest and compensatory measures are provided. Where such a site hosts a priority habitat, as listed in the EC Habitats Directive, development should only proceed if required for reasons of human health and public safety or where there would be beneficial consequences of primary importance to nature conservation or other imperative reasons of overriding public interest in the opinion of the European Commission. The ability to find replacement value for any environmental loss will also be a consideration.

C11

Development which would have a significant detrimental effect on non-statutory sites or areas such as Areas of High Ecological Value, County Wildlife Sites, or other non-statutory sites which are of local rather than national or international wildlife or geological importance, will only be permitted where the importance of the development outweighs the local nature conservation interests present.

Where permission is granted, conditions will be used to ensure that harm to wildlife or geological interests is minimised and to secure replacement value for any lost habitats or features. This will be particularly important where the habitat or species is subject to a Biodiversity Action Plan.

C12

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Where permission is granted, conditions will be used to ensure that harm to wildlife or geological interests is minimised and to secure replacement value for any lost habitats or features. This will be particularly important where the habitat or species is subject to a Biodiversity Action Plan.

C13

Proposals for development which are acceptable under other policies in this Local Plan should retain and enhance as far as possible any existing value of the site as a wildlife habitat. Sympathetic siting of development, suitable planting and seeding, and appropriate site management will be required.

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C15

The enhancement of nature conservation interests and promotion of habitat creation will be sought in connection with major new development proposals, by means of environmental enhancement schemes and by direct action on District Council-owned land.

C16

In appropriate circumstances the District Council will designate areas of ecological importance as Local Nature Reserves.

Rivers and River Valleys

C17

The conservation and enhancement of the rivers and other watercourses, river corridors and associated wetlands will be promoted within the District.

C18

Planning permission will not be given for development which would adversely affect the water quality, amenity, visual quality or public enjoyment of a river or floodplain or its value as a wildlife habitat.

Approval will not be granted for the culverting of watercourses unless there is a demonstrable need for granting an exception

Bank protection works, which will only be permitted where property or statutory rights of way are threatened, should involve the use of appropriate materials and should protect nature conservation interests.

Agriculture

C19

The best and most versatile agricultural land (Grades 1, 2 & 3a) will be protected from development. Where either sufficient land in lower grades

is unavailable, or lower-grade land has an environmental value recognised by a statutory landscape, wildlife, historic or archaeological designation which outweighs the agricultural considerations, the best and most versatile agricultural land may be used for development. If such land does need to be developed, and there is a choice between sites in different grades, development will be directed towards land of the lowest grade.

C20

Development which is essential to meet the needs of agriculture, forestry and horticulture will be permitted in the countryside provided that it can be demonstrated that;

(i) the development would be inappropriate in an urban area;

(ii) the proposed development is directly related to a nearby holding or group of holdings; and

(iii) measures are included to prevent the pollution, over-abstraction and degradation of water courses and groundwater sources.

Farm Diversification

C21

Proposals for diversifying employment opportunities and traditional farming activities will be permitted provided that:

(i) access is suitable at all times of the year;

(ii) the proposal will not prejudice the viability of nearby village shops;

(iii) the proposal does not result in inappropriate levels of traffic generation;

(iv) any building necessary to implement the new activity is of an appropriate scale to that activity and of a high standard of design; and

(v) there is no adverse impact of the activity or any building associated with the activity on either the landscape, the local built environment or nature conservation interests.

Change of Use & Conversion of Buildings

C22

The change of use of buildings in the open countryside to alternative uses will be permitted, subject to the following criteria;

(i) the existing building is not the result of a temporary planning permission

(ii) the building is not made of flimsy prefabricated materials and is constructed in a permanent manner which enables its conversion without

substantial reconstruction;

(iii) the building is not visually intrusive or inappropriate to its setting and can be adapted without detriment to its external appearance or harming its setting; and

(iv) the proposal does not involve additional development or require future extensions which would not be permitted under the policies of this Local Plan;

(v) the proposal will not prejudice the vitality of a nearby town or village

Where the proposal is for a mixed business/residential use, the residential element will be expected to be ancillary to the business use. Where the proposal is for full residential use, the council will require the applicant to demonstrate that every reasonable attempt has been made to secure a suitable business or community re-use. The Council will seek, wherever possible, the removal of structures that are temporary and of insubstantial construction.

C23

The change of use of large houses in the countryside to flats, hotels, restaurants, public houses, offices or institutional uses, will be permitted provided that:

(i) the house is of architectural or historic interest and is worthy of retention;

(ii) it can be demonstrated that the conversion will be achieved without detriment to the character of the building; and

(iii) the proposals incorporate the retention of surrounding grounds, including arrangements for their future maintenance, so that the landscape setting of the building is preserved in the longer term.

Where extensions or new buildings in the grounds are involved, these will only be permitted if there is no adverse impact on the character of the building or its surroundings.

Extensions to Buildings

C24

Extensions and additions to buildings in the countryside will only be permitted if they are sympathetic in scale and character with the existing building and surroundings, and fall within the existing curtilage.