

5. *EMPLOYMENT*

INTRODUCTION

5.1 South Cambridgeshire totally encircles the university City of Cambridge with a high profile in terms of its national and international reputation for excellence in scientific education and research. The economy is heavily dominated by service sector employment including the high technology/research and development sector and its associated support services. The establishment of the Cambridge Science Park by Trinity College in the 1970's provides one of the earliest examples of an environment where such companies are accommodated in landscaped surroundings whilst enjoying significant opportunities for interaction and partnership with the academic establishments within and around the city.

5.2 Many firms are now located within the District as part of the purpose built parks (listed below), or have used the existing resource of rural buildings.

- Babraham Research Campus
- Buckingway Business Park
- Cambourne Business Park
- St John's Innovation Park
- Cambridge Science Park
- Cambridge Research Park
- Fulbourn and Ida Darwin Hospitals
- Granta Park
- Melbourn Science Park
- Longstanton Business Park

Recent economic growth, particularly in this sector, include investment by the Wellcome Trust at Hinxton Hall to the south of Cambridge to establish the European Bio-informatics Institute, the Sanger Centre and the Human Genome Mapping Project Resources Centre on one site. Nearing completion, this development will contribute to one of the largest and most prestigious cluster of research institutes in Europe and confirms the emergence of an internationally recognised concentration of biotechnological / pharmaceutical firms and companies.

5.3 The overall employment strategy for the District is to encourage high technology and related industries that are primarily concerned with research and development in the Cambridge Area, recognising the importance of these industries to the economy. Where high technology firms do not need to be close to Cambridge, it also encourages these, and other businesses, to disperse into other parts of the County. This is consistent with the Structure Plan 1995 and Regional Planning Guidance for East Anglia (RPG6).

5.4 This broad strategy is implemented through land use policies, including the Cambridge Green Belt, and includes a presumption against employment sites other than those identified in the Plan. New research employment development is primarily to be accommodated in the northern areas of the district including the expansion of the Cambridge Science Park, employment allocations at Landbeach, Swavesey and at Cambourne west of Cambridge. Through these sites and others identified in the Plan, together with unimplemented employment commitments, it is anticipated that this will provide for 14,000 jobs to the year 2006.

5.5 As a result of the continued growth, the area continues to exhibit the characteristics of a vibrant local economy. Unemployment at February 1998 stood at 2.2% in the District, compared to a County rate of 4.2% and 6.5% in the United Kingdom. Where there is unemployment this is anticipated to be a mismatch between the skills in the labour force rather than a shortage of jobs.

5.6 The largest sector of the workforce is the service sector with some 58% employed in jobs such as health and social welfare, business services, public administration and defence. The second largest sector is manufacturing, where the presence of major companies such as Ciba Polymers, AgrEvo and Marshalls employ some 27% of the District's workforce. The primary and construction sectors employ the remaining 14.4%.

5.7 Due to the economic success of the area, the District has seen a growth of 100% population since 1951 substantially due to in-migration. Of the 60,000 South Cambridgeshire residents in employment, almost 30% commute daily to Cambridge for work, putting a strain upon the area's infrastructure and resulting in daily congestion and consequent costs to business and the environment. Already, there are 10,000 more jobs than workforce in the Cambridge Area and looking ahead, 30,000 more jobs are anticipated to be created by existing permissions and land allocated within the City and South Cambridgeshire.

5.8 It is therefore important that the Council selectively manages new employment growth that does not need to be located in or close to Cambridge, if it is to protect the very characteristics that attract firms and businesses to South Cambridgeshire. This expresses a general preference towards existing firms in the area.

OBJECTIVES

- To support the Cambridge Area's position as a world leader in research and technology based industries and in the fields of higher education and research.
- To carefully manage development pressures in South Cambridgeshire by favouring those uses which need to be located near to Cambridge.
- To support existing businesses by applying positive policies towards the expansion of existing firms and the conversion/adaptation of buildings to business use.
- To reduce commuting distances and the need to travel, particularly by car, by bringing home and workplace closer together by encouraging employment opportunities in accessible locations and by supporting home-based working.

BACKGROUND

Regional Policy

5.9 The District Council will continue to support organisations such as the East of England Development Agency which can be a valuable partner in attracting investment into the region as well as supporting existing companies and small businesses.

5.10 Regional Planning Guidance for East Anglia to 2016 (RPG6) was published by the Government Office for the East of England in November 2000. This contains policy advice for the Cambridge Sub-Region, including Policy 23, which states that new employment generating development should be in accessible locations within or by extensions of the built-up area of Cambridge or the market towns (none of which are within South Cambridgeshire) or in the new settlement close to Cambridge. (This policy has been reproduced in Chapter 1). However Policy 26 is clear that:

"Development plans should continue to include policies for the selective management of development within the area close to Cambridge, discriminating in favour of uses that have an essential need for a Cambridge location".

This is necessary to manage the intensive development pressure in and around Cambridge.

Cambridgeshire Structure Plan 1995

5.11 The Structure Plan 1995 provides for economic policies and proposals on a District basis and as a Guiding Principle, in the context of economic development and employment, states:

“The potential for economic development and employment growth in the County is to be fulfilled within a positive guiding framework, which encourages some selective dispersal of investment in jobs from the congested areas in the south and west to centres in the north and east.” (Guiding Principle 2, page 7, Cambridgeshire Structure Plan 1995)

5.12 It is an essential theme of the Structure Plan to improve job prospects in the north and east of the County. However, this principle does recognise the reputation and particular qualities of the Cambridge Area which can stimulate and foster high technology growth. This principle recognises that the growth of high technology firms in and around Cambridge (the Cambridge Phenomenon) is of national, if not international importance and is an important element of the County’s economy. Hence, there will only be a presumption in favour of a Cambridge Area location when a special need can be demonstrated.

Provision for Industry and Business

5.13 During the late 1980s and early 1990s, there was a sharp increase in take-up rates for commercial land within the Cambridge Area (i.e. Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire) to the extent that the Structure Plan 1995 firmly recognises that both Districts, in terms of provision, are broadly sufficient to meet the needs of industry, warehousing and offices, including technology, for the period up to 2006. Policy SP5/1 states that provision for industry and business will be constrained close to the level of existing commitments and Local Plan allocations - for South Cambridgeshire this means 140 hectares (346 acres) including a maximum of 45,000sq.m. (484,000 sq.ft.)

5.14 Table 5.1 below illustrates the existing level of employment land commitments in the District at March 2002 according to the County Council’s Research Group.

Table 5.1
Employment in South Cambridgeshire March 2002

	Completions 1991 to Mar 2002	Under Construction at Mar 2002	Planning Permission (not started) at Mar 2002	Land Residue of Local Plan Allocations ⁱ	Total
Industrial Land (ha)	69.93 ha	3.89 ha	58.53 ha	11.13 ha ⁱⁱ	143.48 ha
Office Land (ha)	45.5 ha	12.81 ha	56.14 ha	1.35 ha ⁱⁱⁱ	115.80 ha
Office Floor Space (sq m)	87,817 sq m	10,175 sq m	42,279 sq m	n/a	140,271 sq m
Research & Development Floor Space (sq m)	56,395 sq m ^{iv}	40,299 sq m	105,903 sq m ^v	n/a	202,597 sq m
Total Provision (ha)	115.43 ha	16.70 ha	114.67 ha	12.48 ha	259.28 ha

Source: Cambridgeshire County Council Research and Monitoring Team (January 2004)

ⁱ The land allocations figures do not include the land reserved on the Cambridge Northern Fringe for employment use. Also not included is land adjacent to the Genome Campus (Hinxton Hall) allocated in Policy EM2 for 24,000 sq m of B1(b) development. See also footnote v below.

ⁱⁱ This figure is the residue of Policy EM3 land allocations, that do not have planning permission at 31 March 2002.

ⁱⁱⁱ This figure is the residue of Policy EM2 land allocations that do not have planning permission at 31 March 2002.

^{iv} This figure for the Research and Development completions is for the period 1 January 1999 to 31 March 2002 only.

^v This figure does not include the 24,000 sq m of B1(b) development at the Genome Campus (Hinxton Hall), which received planning permission on 2 December 2002. See footnote i above.

5.15 Within the strategies adopted by South Cambridgeshire District Council, Cambridge City Council and the County Council, the western part of the Cambridge Northern Fringe (CNF) is identified for a mixed use housing-led development. As part of this proposed mixed use development, the Plan allocates up to 18,000 sq. m. of B1 employment floorspace at the CNF West (Arbury Camp) site (policy CNF1) in chapter 103 of Part 2. It is anticipated that some or all of this provision may be completed by 2006.

5.16 At paragraph 5.23 of the Structure Plan 1995 it was estimated that the anticipated take-up rate for South Cambridgeshire during the plan period will be 130 hectares (320 acres). However, there is a significant amount of land with planning permission not yet implemented that could come forward during the remainder of the plan period, and for some considerable time beyond 2006. The take-up rate of these commitments is regularly monitored.

EMPLOYMENT ALLOCATIONS

5.17 An essential theme of the County Council's economic strategy is the application of restraint policies in the Cambridge Area - a recognition that selective policies are necessary to protect the unique character of Cambridge and the important environmental qualities of the surrounding villages and the countryside. However, the importance of high technology industry to the Cambridge Area is acknowledged. The main activities in the field of high technology are software applications, computer aided design/computer aided modelling, micro-electronics, opto-electronics and bio-technology research and development. There are strong links between the University Colleges and the science-based industries and research industries working in these fields. It is vital, in terms of the national and local interest, that the planning strategy continues to enhance the character of the area, including its attractiveness and prestige, if the high technology sector is to remain a significant contribution to the County's economy.

5.18 The Cambridgeshire Structure Plan 1995, consistent with its policies of dispersal towards the north and east, therefore proposes selective restraint policies in the Cambridge Area and does not encourage those employment uses which could equally well locate elsewhere in the County.

Allocations for Class B1 Employment Uses

POLICY EM1: The following sites are allocated for employment development for uses within Class B1 of the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1995 (offices; research and development; and light industry):

- (1) Longstanton: 6.3 hectares north of Hattons Road up to the proposed bypass. (The District Council has granted outline planning permission).**
- (2) Pampisford: 2.3 hectares west of Eastern Counties Leather, London Road.**
- (3) Hinxton: 24,000 square metres for B1(b) genomics, biotechnology and medicine on land adjacent to Genome Campus, Hinxton Hall.**

Allocations for Class B1 and B2 Employment Uses

POLICY EM2: The following sites are allocated for employment development for uses within Classes B1 and B2 of the Town and Country (Uses Classes) Order 1995 (offices; research and development; light industry and general industry).

- 1) Gamlingay: 4.05 hectares south of Station Road.**
- 2) Histon: 2.9 hectares south of Somerset Road and Home Close.**
- 3) Over: 1.72 hectares south of Norman Way (residue of 1993 Plan allocation)**
- 4) Papworth Everard: 6.55 hectares east of Ermine Street South (Phase 2).**

5.19 These allocations provide the opportunity to bring forward employment in South Cambridgeshire to assist reducing commuting into Cambridge thus making the District less of a dormitory area and at the same time contributing to the dispersal of employment benefiting the north of the County. (Pampisford is excluded from the latter.)

5.20 The employment allocations bring forward sites for both B1 and B2 uses.

5.21 Some two thirds of the villages have less than 1,000 inhabitants. The District Council considers that many of these smaller villages have environmental qualities and characteristics which make it difficult to identify sites for new employment. Therefore employment allocations are provided in, or close to the larger villages where established employment areas exist and where there is a larger resident population.

5.22 Significant commitments of employment land exist within the District including a 20 hectare business park at the new settlement and the development of a 17.6 hectare research park at Landbeach Marina.

5.23 The emphasis in the Cambridge Area will be on high technology/research and development and related industries which will be predominantly within the Business Use (B1) of the Use Classes Order.

5.24 The three sites in Policy EM2 are allocated for B1 and B2 - in Papworth Everard this will allow for the relocation of existing B2 uses in the centre to the allocated site to the south of the village. The sites in Over, Histon and Gamlingay are extensions of the existing industrial areas.

Limitations on the occupancy of new premises in South Cambridgeshire

POLICY EM3: Development, including change of use, within Class B1 of the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1995 will only be permitted if it is subject to a condition or Section 106 Agreement of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 which, for a period of 10 years from the first date of occupation, limits:

- (1) offices over 300 sq.m. to the provision of a local or sub-regional service or administrative facility principally for persons resident or organisations situated in the Cambridge Area excluding national or regional headquarters offices; or**
- (2) research and development to those firms which can show a special need to be closely related to the universities or other research facilities established in the Cambridge Area is essential, in order to share staff, equipment or data, or to undertake joint collaborative projects with such organisations necessary for the investigation, design, and development of an idea, concept, instrument, product or process, up to and including production for testing, but excluding manufacture;**
- (3) light industry to a maximum of 1,850 square metres (20,000 sq.ft.) of floorspace; large scale expansion of such firms will not be permitted.**

Definitions

5.25 Policy EM3 contains a number of clauses which are important to the interpretation of the policy.

- (i) Cambridge Sub-Region: The Cambridge Area and the surrounding ring of market towns - Huntingdon, St Ives, Ely, Newmarket, Haverhill, Saffron Walden, Royston, St. Neots.
- (ii) Local and sub-regional services: A service with the majority of its business based in the Cambridge Sub-Region. Services might include banking, finance,

management and business services, property services, legal and accounting services, educational, housing and recruitment services, medical and other professional scientific service and patent agents.

- (iii) Research and Development is defined as the investigation, design and development of an idea, concept, material, component, instrument, machine, product or process, up to and including production for testing (but excluding mass production) where the work routine requires daily discussion and action on the part of the laboratory and design staff.
- (iv) Cambridge Area: The area covered by Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council as defined in the Cambridgeshire Structure Plan 1995.
- (v) Planning Policy Guidance Note No. 4 - "Industrial and Commercial Development and Small Firms" advises that small offices of less than 300 square metres will primarily be occupied by local firms and therefore specific user restrictions are not necessary. A condition or agreement under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 will however be necessary to prevent such offices being combined or multiple units let to a single office user who does not comply with the provisions of Policy EM3(1).
- (vi) Administrative facility: offices providing managerial, financial recruitment, and other services to a business or research facility.

5.26 The employment policies of the Structure Plan 1995 seek to plan for the selective growth of jobs in the Cambridge Area sufficient to meet the needs of the workforce, but not to encourage a substantial influx of manufacturing, warehousing, high technology and office firms which could equally well locate elsewhere in the County. Structure Plan 1995 policies SP5/4 and SP18/4 resist those high technology firms which do not need close proximity to the City. Policy SP18/5 restricts office development to those uses which provide a local or sub-regional service. The policy reinforces Structure Plan 1995 Policy SP5/1 restraining future permissions or allocations of land having regard to the existing high level of commitments.

Research Establishments

POLICY EM4: Proposals for the development of new research establishments (and for the expansion of existing research establishments) will normally be permitted if it can be demonstrated that:

- (a) such development is intended to provide accommodation for organisations whose primary purpose is to research or investigate ideas, theories and concepts and/or to design and develop instruments, processes or products, up to and including production for testing, but excluding manufacture; and**
- (b) that the organisations are required in the national interest to be located close to existing major establishments in related fields (such as the universities, the teaching hospital or private research establishments) in order to share staff, equipment or data, or to undertake joint collaborative working for the purposes specified in (a) above.**

Where there is any conflict between such proposals and other policies and proposals in the development plan this must be outweighed by evidence of need in the national interest as referred to above.

Development under this policy will be regulated by way of a condition(s) or, where appropriate, a planning obligation, to restrict the future occupation and use of the premises for the purposes specified.

5.27 Cambridge and the surrounding areas of South Cambridgeshire contain many research establishments of major national and international importance. RPG6 recognises the significance of the 'Cambridge Phenomenon' – a group of developing technology clusters, based upon a concentration of research activity linked to the University, the Hospital and a group of independent and company research centres. The RPG points to the need for development plans to ensure the availability of a range of premises to allow continued expansion of these research and technology based clusters.

5.28 For the purposes of this policy research establishments are defined as those whose primary function is to research or investigate ideas, theories and concepts or to design and/or develop instruments, processes or products, up to and including production for testing, but excluding manufacture.

5.29 It will have to be demonstrated that proposals made under the policy are in the national interest and that they have a specific need to be geographically close to existing related establishments in the Cambridge area. Support service and ancillary establishments which demonstrate a clear need to be located close to Cambridge and a relevant research establishment will be encouraged to locate on allocated and committed sites within South Cambridgeshire. Proposals for new development should be well-related to the built-up area and not conflict with policies concerning the environmental impact of new development.

5.30 Proposals permitted under this policy will not be constrained by the floorspace limits that may otherwise apply under other development plan policies. However, the use of

floorspace permitted under the policy will be regulated by condition or, where necessary, by planning obligation to remove use rights that would otherwise allow the development to be occupied for purposes beyond those specifically permitted.

Employment at Cambourne

POLICY EM5: Within Cambourne, a 20 hectare business park is proposed for development within Class B1 of the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1995. In addition a 2 hectare site will be reserved for General Industrial uses falling within Class B2 of the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1995.

5.31 In April 1994, the District Council granted outline planning permission for a new settlement of 3,000 dwellings (and 10% reserve) to the west of Cambridge and to the south of the A428. This permission is a result of Policy P20/2 of the Cambridgeshire Structure Plan 1989 which proposed a new settlement on the A428 west or east of Cambridge. The site is known as Cambourne.

5.32 A Master Plan for the new settlement was approved by the District Council in November 1996.

5.33 As a part of the new settlement, a business park of 20 hectares is proposed to be constructed. Conditions on the decision notice ensure that no more than 18,600 sq.m. of this business park can be occupied before the A428 trunk road has been dualled over a length of 2km fronting the site and a grade separated junction has been constructed to facilitate access to and from the site at the A428. When complete, development within the 20 hectare business park will total some 69,675 square metres of Class B1 development.

5.34 In addition, a site of up to 2 hectares is planned for general industrial uses falling within Class B2 of the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1995.

5.35 In order to ensure a mix of employment uses on any industrial and commercial land within the new settlement, the Section 106 Agreement states that the first 5% to 10% of gross internal floorspace falling within Class B1 or B2 of the Use Classes Order shall be for small units (defined as units of up to 465 sq. m.) Such units should be advertised locally with preference given to those local firms which wish to re-locate or expand. Unless permitted by the District Council these small units cannot be amalgamated or consolidated with other premises to form a larger planning unit.

EMPLOYMENT IN VILLAGES

5.36 In October 1995 the Government published "Rural England: A Nation Committed to a Living Countryside" - this White Paper sets out a vision for the future of the living and working countryside and recognises that the rural area is a vital component in the context of the national economy. Structure Plan 1995 Policy SP5/9 endorses this approach by supporting small scale employment provision in villages where proposals would maintain and improve the vitality of community life, are environmentally acceptable and are consistent with other Structure Plan policies. Accordingly, the District Council will encourage appropriate development within village frameworks which would sustain the rural economy.

New Employment at Rural Growth and Limited Rural Growth Settlements

POLICY EM6: Within village frameworks, and on suitable brownfield sites next to or very close to the village frameworks of RGS and LRGS, planning permission will be granted for small-scale development in classes B1 – B8 provided that:

(a) there would be no adverse impact on residential amenity, traffic conditions, village character and other environmental factors, and

(b) the development would contribute to a greater range of local employment opportunities, especially for the semi-skilled and unskilled, or where initial development is dependent on the use of locally-based skills and expertise.

5.37 In the context of the above policy, “small-scale development” is considered to be development for those firms who employ 25 people or less.

Expansion of existing firms at villages

POLICY EM7: Development for the expansion of existing firms within village frameworks or on suitable brownfield sites next to or very close to the village frameworks will be permitted subject to the provisions of Policy EM3 and EM6. A firm or business will be considered as “existing” if a significant element of its operations has been based in the Cambridge Area for a minimum of two years prior to the date of any planning application for development.

5.38 Policy SP5/6 of the Cambridgeshire Structure Plan 1995 provides for the expansion of existing firms. Subject to the policies of restraint applying in the Cambridge Area, the expansion of existing firms will generally be given preference over development by firms wishing to move into the area, provided the scale of growth does not conflict with other policies of the Structure or Local Plan e.g. SP5/1 (limitations on new employment land), SP5/4 (dispersal of high technology firms from the Cambridge Area) and SP18/5 (restriction on office development).

5.39 Whilst the expansion of existing firms will be generally acceptable in principle, it will also be important to consider the local impact of development. Development will not be permitted where it would consolidate a non-conforming use or cause problems with traffic, noise, pollution or other damage to the environment.

5.40 Where an “existing” firm is located within the village framework and any proposed extension would require development beyond this boundary, the District Council will consider the merits of each proposal having regard to all other policies in the Local Plan, including the scale of the proposal, the impact on the landscape, together with policy constraints affecting the land (e.g. Green Belt/Landscape Character Areas), and more detailed matters such as access, siting and materials.

Loss of employment sites in villages

POLICY EM8: The conversion, change of use or re-development of existing employment sites to non-employment uses within village frameworks will be resisted unless the existing use is generating environmental problems such as noise, pollution or unacceptable levels of traffic or where it is demonstrated that the site is inappropriate for any employment use to continue having regard to market demand.

5.41 A main aim of the Structure Plan and the Local Plan policies is to reduce the need to travel, particularly commuting and thereby minimise pollution, travel costs and energy use. The Council recognises that the implementation of planning policies which encourage appropriate employment provision in villages will not force people into living and working in the same village. However, these policies help provide alternatives in terms of location for many people who travel to Cambridge or further afield for employment.

5.42 New employment sites will often be inappropriate within frameworks due to the potential impact of development on village character. Full use should therefore be made of potential sites and existing premises for employment use within villages. This will help to reduce the pressure for such development in the countryside where restrictive planning policies apply.

5.43 Applications for changes of use of premises in or last occupied for employment use will need to be accompanied by documentary evidence that the sites are not suitable or capable of being made suitable for continued employment use, including evidence that the property has been adequately marketed for a period of not less than 12 months on terms that reflect the lawful use and condition of the premises.

Teleworking

5.44 Advances in technology are having an increasing impact on employment. The 1991 Census (10% sample) showed that 7% of South Cambridgeshire's workforce worked at home. It can be assumed that these figures will increase given the pace of technological change. Such a shift in reducing travel-to-work is encouraged through Structure and Local Plan policies and is consistent with the Government's guidance contained within Planning Policy Guidance Notes (PPGs). In this context of travel-to-work, PPG 13 1994 (paragraph 5.6) states that in their Local Plans, local authorities should facilitate home working and the provision of facilities for small groups of employees to work together locally. This will assist in creating a better balance between employment and population and enable people to live near their work.

5.45 Such working from home could mean setting up workplace homes or local centres equipped with information technology and other appropriate services (sometimes known as "telecottages"). The benefits of this approach are numerous - as organisations become more flexible and responsive, the potential for commuting, and ultimately congestion, is reduced.

5.46 Home working does not necessarily require planning permission where the use of part of a dwelling house for business purposes does not change the character of the property's use as a single dwelling (PPG 4, paragraph 32).

POLICY EM9: The District Council will support proposals for teleworking schemes which bring home and workplace physically together.

- (1) on sites within village frameworks;**
- (2) by conversion or adaptation of rural buildings outside village frameworks.**

Provided that there would be no adverse impact on residential amenity, traffic, character and the environment generally.

EMPLOYMENT IN THE COUNTRYSIDE

Conversions of rural buildings and future extensions

5.47 Structure Plan 1995 policy SP5/11 states: *“The re-use and adaptation of redundant rural buildings for small scale employment generating uses will be encouraged provided it does not cause unacceptable damage to the environment or conflict with other policies of the Plan”.*

POLICY EM10: Outside village frameworks planning permission will be granted for the change of use and conversion of rural buildings to employment use provided that:

- (1) the buildings are of permanent and substantial construction and are capable of conversion without major or complete reconstruction;**
- (2) conversion does not lead to dispersal of activity on such a scale as to prejudice town and village vitality;**
- (3) the form, bulk and general design of the buildings both before and after conversion are in keeping with their surroundings;**
- (4) the buildings are capable of re-use without materially changing their existing character or impact upon the surrounding countryside;**
- (5) safe and satisfactory vehicular access can be provided together with adequate space within the curtilage to accommodate ancillary requirements such as car parking and lorry manoeuvring without significant detriment to the setting of the building and the landscape within which it is located;**

(6) the scale and frequency of traffic generated by the proposal can be accommodated on the road system without undue adverse effects.

Where the proposal involves the conversion of historic, traditional or vernacular barns, relevant policies of the Environment and Conservation chapter of the Plan will also apply.

5.48 Changing agricultural patterns in the countryside are increasing the numbers of potentially disused rural buildings in the countryside. PPG7 acknowledges that the stock of buildings has an important role in meeting the needs of rural areas for rural diversification, including projects for commerce and industry, and for tourism, recreation and sport. It recognises that there should be no reason for preventing the conversion of such rural buildings for business use provided that certain criteria are met.

5.49 Because most rural buildings in South Cambridgeshire are small the potential scale of activity in converted buildings will usually be similarly modest. Any elements of increased floorspace contained within conversion proposals will be strictly controlled and usually limited to that which may be necessary to achieve an enhanced design or integrate the scheme with its surroundings. Incidental uses such as car parking and storage should be accommodated within the group of buildings or on well-related land where landscaping can reduce the visual impact of the new use.

5.50 Projects which attract members of the public in manageable numbers can bring in new sources of income and support the rural economy. Such projects will be supported provided that they do not cause significant traffic problems or other environmental harm. Local marketing of local products will be supported but the establishment of general retailing will not.

5.51 Special consideration will be given to ensure that no unacceptable harm is caused in the case of schemes to adapt buildings of architectural interest or sites that accommodate protected species (eg. barn owls and bats).