

10 COUNTRYSIDE AND COAST

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Countryside Facts

- o Agriculture, together with horticulture takes up 80% of the Island.
- o Forest and woodland cover 8.5% of the Island.
- o 50% of the Island is nationally designated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.
- o 28 miles of the 60 mile long coastline is defined as Heritage Coast.
- o There are 43 Sites of Special Scientific Interest.
- o There are 6 Local Nature Reserves and 1 National Nature Reserve.

- There are more than 300 Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation and several sites of Regional Importance for Geological or Geomorphological interest.
- Areas within and around the Island have been recognised as being of International Nature Conservation importance.
- The County Sites and Monuments Record identifies over 2,000 sites of known archaeological importance.
- There are 6 Historic Parks and Gardens of National Importance and more than 30 sites of county importance.

Introduction

10.1 The Island's countryside is one of its most important assets. The varied geology, farming practices and pattern of occupation have together created a rich tapestry of landscape which is valued and appreciated by both residents and visitors. The fact that so much of the Island remains attractive is, in part, due to successive planning policies which have sought to restrain undesirable development in the countryside. Nevertheless only some rural activities require planning permission and the majority of changes that are occurring in the countryside today are due to influences over which the planning system has little or no control. In particular, new farming practices being brought about principally by EU agricultural reforms, are changing the look of the countryside. Land is being set aside, new crops are being grown, patterns of land ownership are changing and farmers and landowners are increasingly looking for alternative uses for their land to compensate for reduced incomes.

10.2 Nationally, the Government recognises that many parts of rural England have enjoyed substantial economic growth and diversification in recent decades and have outperformed urban areas. The lifestyle which the countryside can provide has also attracted growing numbers of people to live there, and pressures on the countryside are increasing at the same time as concern about the environment increases.

10.3 The changes taking place and the competing pressures have led the Government to provide a new vision for the countryside which puts the needs of the people who live and work there at its heart. This has most recently been laid down in the Rural White Paper, published in October 1995 and borne out in the latest Planning

Policy Guidance PPG7 (February 1997), entitled *The Countryside - Environmental Quality and Economic and Social Development*.

10.4 PPG7 states that Sustainable development is the cornerstone of both the Government's rural policies and its planning policies. It means managing the countryside in ways that meet current needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet theirs. This entails accommodating necessary change in rural areas, while maintaining and, where possible, enhancing, the quality of the environment for local people and visitors. The appeal of the countryside is central to its economic prosperity and healthy economic activity in rural areas facilitates investment to protect and improve the countryside. New development should respect, and where possible enhance, the environment in its location, scale and design.

10.5 The Council acknowledges this Government advice and will be responsive to the requirements of the rural economy, while at the same time continuing to protect the countryside from unnecessary and undesirable development. With positive help and encouragement as well as effective development control policies, it is hoped that future changes to the countryside will enhance rather than diminish its value.

10.6 Due to their inter-relationship, policies for the countryside need to be considered alongside those for defined settlements as laid down in other parts of this plan. In addition to land use policies, other measures are available to the Council and local bodies to intervene positively in the protection and enhancement of the countryside. These range from the development of management plans, through giving grants for countryside works, to direct works in nature conservation and landscape improvement. It is expected

that the Council and other bodies with countryside interests will draw up implementation programmes for the achievement of objectives. 10.7 There is a long-term commitment

AONB Project

In 1992, an AONB Project was established by the then County Council, South Wight Borough Council and the Countryside Commission. The AONB Projects main role is to encourage policies and practices which can help to safeguard the Island's designated landscape and coast. This has been achieved by the bringing together of representatives of those influencing funding and shaping landscape management, within a Joint Advisory Committee. This body has produced an AONB Management Plan, integrating physical, social and economic pressures, and issues on the landscape. The plan is being implemented with Countryside Commission funding until mid-1998. This helps to target efforts and pool the resources of all the bodies involved.

Landscape Character Assessment

Following a brief provided by the AONB Project, a landscape assessment was completed in 1993, which set out to explain what gives the Island landscape its character. The assessment examined the whole of the Island's landscape including the designated Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Heritage Coast. It examined the main forces for change in the landscape and made recommendations as to how it might be conserved and enhanced, by identifying landscape character zones. These zones share the same basic character and management requirements. Work will be undertaken in the future to examine each of these landscape types and devise detailed policies which are aimed at conserving and enhancing their character by protection of the natural beauty and improvement of degraded areas. The linking of the Countryside Commission's "Countryside Character Programme" with English Nature's "Natural Areas Initiative" will provide a common assessment of the distinctive features of our landscape and natural heritage. The work will form a character map of the Island's countryside, helping to guide landscape and nature conservation management.

Catchment Management Plans

The Environment Agency, established in April 1996, incorporates the former National Rivers Authority, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Pollution, and the local Waste Regulatory Authorities. The Agency has signed up to the production of Local Environment Agency Plans (LEAPs), covering the whole of England and Wales, including the Island. The Agency will prepare a LEAP by the end of 1999 to cover the whole Island and this will contain a broad review of the catchment area and its associated natural resources, together with the activities and uses which put pressure on these. The report will give an Agency vision for the catchment area and identify the issues which need to be tackled and the options for addressing them.

LEAPs lack the status of statutory policy documents, but it is hoped that they provide an insight and understanding into the concerns and issues addressed by the Environment Agency (EA) as background to the consideration of development proposals.

Water Level Management Plans

These plans provide a means by which the water level requirements for a range of activities in a particular area, including agriculture, flood defence, and conservation can be balanced and integrated. These plans were originally drawn up by the NRA under guidance of MAFF. In future, these will be complemented by LEAPs, produced by the EA, where conservation of wetland habitats notified as SSSI, SAC, SPA and Ramsar will be considered a priority.

Plans are in progress for Brading Marshes, Alverstone Marshes (both in the Eastern Yar valley), and Wootton mill-pond. The EA will focus on the Eastern Yar as a pilot for developing WLMP policies across a range of connected designations.

Objectives

The objectives of the plan are:

- to protect and enhance the landscape character and beauty of the countryside and coast from inappropriate development;
- only to allow development in the countryside that is essential to a viable rural economy;
- to safeguard that part of the agricultural, horticultural and forestry industries which are essential to the viability of the rural economy:
 - by protecting the best and most versatile agricultural land;
 - by preventing the fragmentation of farm land holdings;
 - by allowing appropriate farm diversification;
 - by promoting good practice and more environmentally sensitive farming, including organic farming;
 - by encouraging good husbandry of woodland and trees in the rural landscape;
- to safeguard and enhance wildlife and wildlife habitats:
 - by protecting features of importance in sites of international, national and local interest;
 - by preventing disturbance or damage to wildlife and its habitats;
- to safeguard historic landscape features by protecting them from adverse development;
- to maintain landscape diversity.

Landscape

Protection of Landscape Character

C1 Planning applications for appropriate development in the countryside must maintain and protect the landscape whether viewed from the land or sea, and should be for the benefit of the rural economy and the people who live there. Development which may be acceptable in the countryside must take account of the landscape character and local distinctiveness of the area.

through both national and local policy to protect the landscape beauty and character of the Island's countryside and coasts for its own sake and non-renewable and natural resources should be afforded protection. Although all of the countryside and coasts will be protected from inappropriate development, there is additional protection on those areas which have been designated of national significance as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Heritage Coast. There is also a need to recognise the public access and recreational resource aims of the Heritage Coast as distinct from other countryside designations.

10.8 PPG7 states that priority now is to find new ways of enriching the quality of the whole countryside, whilst accommodating appropriate development, in order to complement the protection which designations offer. The Countryside Commission and English Nature have analysed the distinctive features of the English countryside (including the Isle of Wight) in both landscape and nature conservation terms, identifying areas (or zones) of cohesive character, which can be described in terms of their landscape character, sense of place, local distinctiveness, characteristic wildlife and natural features and nature of change. (This

method) can help ensure that development respects or enhances the distinctive character of the land and the built environment. It is descriptive, and not an additional layer of countryside protection or designation .

10.9 Apart from the defined Heritage Coasts there are other parts of the coastline remaining undeveloped. The image of the Island to visitors and potential investors is heavily influenced by the appearance of the landscape and development in coastal locations. Exposed from the sea, development often has a far greater visual impact on the environment than when viewed from the land. Therefore views from the sea should be a strong consideration in assessing the contribution made by the design and location of development proposals to the seaside character of the Island s coastal areas. It is important to maintain their unspoilt character as this represents part of the natural beauty of the Island as seen from the sea as well as the land.

10.10 Previous development plans for the Island have included Areas of Great Landscape Value. This local designation defined by the local authority, carried less weight than the nationally designated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and structure and local plan policies were designed accordingly. However, Government policy states in PPG7, that such local designations may unduly restrict acceptable development and economic activity, without identifying the particular features of the local countryside which need to be respected or enhanced. Local authorities should only maintain or extend local countryside designations where there is good reason to believe that normal planning policies cannot provide the necessary protection .

10.11 The Council considers that policies contained in this plan have the effect of upgrading all countryside and coast outside the designated Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and provide a level of protection which exceeds that of the former AGLV status.

Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty

C2 Within the Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) planning applications will only be approved where they do not have a detrimental impact on the landscape and:

- a meet a proven national need where there are no alternative sites; or*
- b specifically involve the maintenance or development of agriculture, horticulture or forestry and/or be for the benefit of the local rural economy and the people who live there; or*
- c involves the low-key improvement of an area used for informal leisure and recreation; or*
- d reduce the impact of, or upgrade an existing development, or*
- e are within a defined development envelope.*

10.12 In all cases, development will be expected to maintain, protect and enhance the special quality of the landscape whether viewed from land or sea, meet the highest standards of design and reflect local character and distinctiveness. Development which will have a detrimental effect on the landscape will not be permitted. Therefore low-key improvements for informal leisure and recreation should be taken to constitute no permanent changes to the landscape or no development that appears to be of a permanent nature.

10.13 Since 1963 around half of the countryside and coast of the Isle of Wight has been nationally designated as AONB (189

sq.km). Although mostly in the south and west, parcels extend right across the Island, including all of the Heritage Coast. The Island AONB, when compared to the other protected areas, is unusually fragmented.

10.14 The AONB encompasses the whole variety of landscape found within the Island. Grand chalk cliffs, rolling downs, muddy creeks, estuaries, lush green pastoral landscapes, all share the same designation. This variety accentuated by maritime influences make the Island AONB special. Within AONBs there are stronger planning controls over the extent and quality of development.

10.15 The policy recognises that there is existing development within AONB and does not wish to preclude alterations or extensions which improve or upgrade facilities. There should be no presumption against appropriate development within defined settlements or on allocated sites. The Countryside Commission's policy for AONBs is that plans should exercise rigorous control

to preclude all forms of development that are either incompatible in an area of fine natural beauty by reason of scale, siting, design, noise, disturbance and traffic, or which adversely affect heritage features, flora and fauna or other environmental qualities or remote stretches of coast or access to them.

Coast

10.16 The varied nature and character of

Development of the Coast Outside of Development Envelopes

C3 Development will not be permitted on or near the undeveloped coast or tidal estuaries, unless the Council is satisfied that a coastal location is essential and the proposal is environmentally acceptable. Proposals for development of coastal and estuarine locations will only be approved if :

- a a coastal location is required for the development;*
- b the development is restricted to uses requiring access to the shore;*
- c public access to the shore is maintained or provided where appropriate and desirable.*

Development which could be more appropriately accommodated or sited away from the coast will not be approved in coastal locations.

the coast is of particular significance on the Island. Some of the most scenic and important undeveloped stretches have been defined as Heritage Coast and other areas fall within AONBs. The protection and conservation of these natural, undeveloped areas is considered of paramount importance because of their landscape and nature conservation value. These areas also form an important asset for the Island's tourist industry.

additional development on the coast. However, the Council recognises the importance of industrial, commercial, transport, recreational and tourist uses of coastal locations and seeks to reserve the limited opportunities for those uses which specifically require a coastal location. Non statutory documents such as a Coastal Zone Management Plan or an Estuary Management Plan represent a holistic approach to decisions on development proposals in coastal areas. These documents are considered to be invaluable sources of information and the Council will continue to promote their production and use.

10.17 With other policies of the plan resisting the development of the undeveloped coastal and estuarine areas of the Island, there are likely to be limited opportunities for

Heritage Coast

C4 Within the defined Heritage Coasts of Hamstead and Tennyson, development will only be permitted where it protects and enhances the unspoilt and undeveloped character of the coast. Approvals will be granted for development which facilitates improved public access and enjoyment of the Heritage Coast for informal open air recreation.

10.18 The Island has two stretches of coast named Hamstead and Tennyson, which have been formally defined as Heritage Coast by the Countryside Commission and fall entirely within the designated AONB. These coastal areas have particular characteristics because of their natural landscape beauty, distinctive flora and fauna and their heritage features of archaeological and architectural interest. In

order to maintain and protect the quality and individual character of the Hamstead and Tennyson coasts and allow these areas to be enjoyed by the public, the Council will need to take positive steps by a variety of methods. Planning Policy Guidance Note No. 20 advises that local authorities should include development plan policies for the protection and enhancement of Heritage Coasts; the

undeveloped coast will seldom be the most appropriate location for new development and there is no reason to expect such areas to accommodate new housing or commercial or

industrial development that could be located inland. The types of development which would be acceptable include viewpoint car parks, picnic sites and visitor centres and

Coastal Protection Works - Developed Coastline

C5 Proposals for coastal protection works and flood prevention should be limited to areas of the built-up coastline and to specific areas requiring intervention for the protection of natural and historic landscapes and archaeological sites and monuments. In the countryside and more rural areas, managed coastal retreat is considered a more sustainable long-term option. New development which will increase the pressure for coastal defence or flood prevention measures will not be permitted.

ancillary facilities.

10.19 In accordance with the overall settlement pattern, policies of this plan relating to the developed coastline would be limited to the extent of coastal settlements and development. The visual and undeveloped character of much of the coastline is a recognised asset for tourism and as a scientific resource which could be harmed by the introduction or extension of coastal protection works.

10.20 Areas of the Island which are subject to coastal erosion or flooding should be regarded as being significant natural

constraints on development. This is particularly the case where the effect of a proposal, or cumulative effects of incremental development will have an urbanising effect and increase pressure for additional coastal defence or flood protection measures, which will have an inappropriate impact on the coastal environment.

10.21 The Council, as the Coast Defence Authority produce a Shoreline Management Plan which will identify the appropriate defence strategy for each length of the Island's coast and identify proposed coastal defence works. This will be material when considering planning applications in coastal

Coastal Protection Works - Undeveloped Coastline

C6 Whilst development will not be permitted along the coastline outside the limits of defined settlements, works required for coastal protection may exceptionally be approved. Where such development is acceptable, the Council will seek to minimise the visual and environmental impact so as to protect the undeveloped appearance of much of the Island's coastline. Public pedestrian access will be required to be protected or provided where appropriate.

areas.

10.22 The coastline has been for centuries a focus for a variety of activities including development, agriculture, recreation and fisheries. These are the nation's economic assets and have developed and flourished despite constant changes in the physical characteristics of the coast. The coastline is a national heritage and in order to sustain it for future generations, proper management of coastal development, including the planning of its defences, is a necessity.

10.23 The Council recognise that much of the character of the Island's coastline is a result of natural processes and its undeveloped nature. Whilst the Council seek

to retain the natural coastal character it is recognised that in some exceptional circumstances coastal protection works will be required. These circumstances could, for example, relate to the protection of the ends of defences of the developed coast, specific points of access to the coast, or to development such as boatyards which require and are acceptable in coastal locations. These should be of the least visual intrusion, with a preference for soft protection measures which would minimise the effect on natural beauty, nature conservation and archaeological interests, rather than hard engineered solutions.

10.24 Recent advances in the understanding of coastal processes have revealed

influences over long stretches of coastline and not just isolated locations. A structure on one section of coast may upset the balance of natural processes and cause erosion on an adjacent stretch. With the benefit of this knowledge, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAFF) has produced guidelines for the development of Shoreline Management Plans (SMP) to promote co-operation between local authorities, the Environment Agency and other organisations

involved with coastal defence.

10.25 The Isle of Wight Council with the Environment Agency and MAFF are producing a Shoreline Management Plan to create the strategy for sustainable coastal defence for the Island. This plan will guide the planning of coastal defence policies and managing future development of the shoreline. They take into account coastal processes, the natural environment, planning

River Corridors and Estuaries

C7 The Council will seek to protect and promote river corridors, estuaries and associated wetlands as important areas of open space by only approving development which:

- a conserves existing areas of amenity or wildlife value and seeks to restore and enhance the natural elements of the river and associated wetlands;*
- b supports initiatives which will result in improvements to water quality;*
- c where appropriate will allow for the identification and promotion of locations for water-related recreation and sport;*
- d extends public footpath access alongside rivers and watercourses except where this would harm acknowledged areas of conservation importance;*
- e sustains water supply to archaeological and palaeoecological sites of scientific value.*

issues, coastal defence needs and current and future land-use.

10.26 River corridors by their nature provide natural links between and through urban areas and the countryside. These have, or potentially have, amenity and wildlife value as

well as providing routeways along riverbanks. The current balance between wildlife interest and human use may be delicate but it will be seldom that areas should be used exclusively for one at the expense of the other. The Council will seek to protect such areas from development and inappropriate uses which

Nature Conservation

Nature Conservation as a Material Consideration

C8 Only in exceptional circumstances will development be permitted if it adversely affects ecologically sensitive areas, protected or endangered species and their habitats. The level of protection afforded to such areas will be related to international, national, or local importance.

would damage amenity or wildlife, or reduce the potential for quiet recreational uses.

10.27 Important areas of nature conservation or scientific interest require special protection to ensure that wildlife habitats are protected. In other areas where policies may allow development, consideration must be given to ways of minimising the effect on these habitats. Where appropriate the Council will consider the use of conditions and/or planning obligations to provide compensatory measures appropriate to the significance of the designation.

flora and fauna and their habitats, and sites of geological or geomorphological interest, are protected and remain as large and diverse as possible. This aim has been achieved through the protection and management of sites and features of special interest and through the protection of individual species.

10.29 However, the natural heritage needs to be conserved not only in special designated areas, but also elsewhere, so that an environment rich in wildlife interest is part of people's everyday experience. Wildlife has aesthetic and inspirational value, as well as providing for scientific study, recreation and education.

10.28 The main aim of nature conservation is to ensure that the national heritage of wild

10.30 Outside of statutory sites and non-statutory sites, the remaining countryside and coast provides a matrix of wildlife habitats including wildlife corridors, hedges, hedgebanks, ponds, green lanes, meadows etc. These are no less important in wildlife terms than statutory sites and should be afforded conservation where appropriate. Legal protection is provided for wild birds and wild plants, under the provisions of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, which also provides for specific species protection. The Act prohibits certain methods of killing or taking wild animals and it restricts the

introduction into Great Britain of certain animals and plants. The protection of individual species is also provided through European Directives and complementary legislation. The Badgers Act 1992, in particular provides legal protection for badger setts

10.31 National and local designations for nature reserves and SSSIs now identify the most important areas for nature conservation. Within these areas the Council considers that development should not normally be permitted. In all other areas, development

Sites of International Importance for Nature Conservation

C9 Development will be permitted where the Council can ensure the protection of features of international importance which have been identified by the designation (or proposed designation) of sites under international conventions and directives. Where overriding public interest leads to development being permitted, compensatory measures to ensure the coherence of the international site will be secured.

should ensure that the impact on wildlife habitats is minimised.

10.32 It is imperative to protect internationally important sites of nature conservation value from development which would adversely impact upon the reasons for its designation. Decisions on proposals affecting sites designated as a SAC or SPA will need to take full account of activity generated by development, in accordance with relevant government guidance and the views of English Nature.

10.33 SPECIAL PROTECTION AREAS (SPAs) are classified under the European Directive on Wild Birds to conserve the habitats of rare and migratory birds. The Solent and Southampton Water have been identified as a Special Protection Area for its breeding gulls and terns and wintering waterfowl. These birds are concentrated within the areas defined as SSSIs and the Solent and Southampton Water SPA is restricted to these areas.

10.34 SPECIAL AREAS OF CONSERVATION (SACs) are complementary to Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and serve to protect key habitats. Four candidate SACs have been submitted to Europe by the UK Government and are known as Solent and IW lagoons; Isle of Wight Downs; Solent Maritime; and South Wight maritime. SACs are designated under the Habitats Directive and may extend beyond the local authority boundary.

10.35 RAMSAR SITES. The United Kingdom is a party to the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of international importance especially as waterfowl habitats. This convention requires the Government to conserve wetlands generally and sites designated under the convention in particular. The Solent and Southampton Water is a proposed Ramsar site and is considered to be of international importance as it is one of very few major sheltered channels between a substantial island and mainland in European waters.

Sites of National Importance for Nature Conservation

C10 Development will not be permitted if it would be likely to destroy or adversely affect, directly or indirectly, a Site of Special Scientific Interest or National Nature Reserve.

10.36 There is a strong presumption against any development that would directly or indirectly adversely affect an SSSI or nature reserve. As with sites of international importance, full consideration will be given to

the potential impact of the proposal on the features of interest of the site, eg its habitats, plant or animal life, geology or geomorphology. This should include potential off site impact such as disturbance, pollution, drainage and water table changes, which may detrimentally affect the habitats, features or species involved.

10.37 SITES OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST (SSSIs). There are currently 43 SSSIs on the Island. An SSSI is an area of land of special interest by reason of any of its

flora, fauna or geological or physiographical feature. They are designated by English Nature and are considered to be of national, sometimes international, importance for nature conservation. Besides being an important consideration in planning, many activities which are not subject to planning control are controlled in SSSIs through a notification procedure to English Nature.

10.38 All National Nature Reserves, terrestrial Ramsar Sites, Special Protection Areas and (in future) Special Areas of

Sites of Local Importance for Nature Conservation

C11 When approving proposals for development affecting SINC's, RIGGs and Local Nature Reserves or other locally identified designated areas, the Council will require the retention and management of the important wildlife habitats and features, within and adjacent to the development site.

Conservation are SSSIs under national legislation. In addition, some SSSIs have been identified as potentially qualifying for SPA classification. All international sites also have national SSSI designations.

10.39 This policy applies in particular, to sites the Council has identified locally as Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC's) and Regionally Important Geological and Geomorphological sites (RIGGs). These sites include local nature reserves. Whilst these sites do not have the same level of protection as statutory designated sites, their identification indicates that there are known issues of local nature conservation importance which will be material to the consideration of any proposals for development.

10.40 NATURE RESERVES. There are currently 7 Local Nature Reserves (INRs) on the Island, at Afton Marshes, Shide, Alverstone Mead, Dodnor Creek and Dicksons Copse, Rew Down, Sibden Hill and Newtown, the majority of which is also a National Nature Reserve. Local Nature

Reserves are managed for the purpose of providing, under suitable conditions and control, special opportunities for the study of, and research into, matters relating to the fauna and flora of Britain and the physical conditions in which they live, and for the study of geological and physiographical features of special interest in the area.

10.41 SITES OF IMPORTANCE FOR NATURE CONSERVATION (SINC's). Over 300 SINC's have been identified by the Council and listed in Appendix C. These include woodlands, unimproved grasslands mosaics of heathland, scrub and hedgerows, as well as coastal and estuarine habitats. The Island has a particularly rich wildlife resource and the Council considers that these areas are important in contributing towards its overall nature conservation objectives. Many of the sites are important to local communities. Statutory and non-statutory sites, together with countryside features which provide wildlife corridors, links or stepping stones from one habitat to another, all help to ensure the maintenance of the current range and diversity of our flora, fauna

Woodland, Trees, Hedgerows

Development Affecting Trees and Woodland

C12 Development which would result in loss or damage to trees, forest or woodland of individual importance or which contribute to the character or amenity of the area will not be approved, unless the Council is satisfied that there is an overriding need for the development and appropriate replacement planting is undertaken on the site. Where this is the case a condition of approval is that the applicant must show a strategy for after-care and maintenance that the Council feel is both satisfactory and enforceable.

and geological and landform features and the survival of important species. A small number of these sites cover Regionally Important Geological and Geomorpho-logical sites.

10.42 Whilst there are some specific landscapes which do not feature trees and shrubs, such as chalk downland, heathland or wetlands across much of the Island, woodland trees and hedgerows, particularly ancient sites, are important. Woodland trees and hedgerows are important features of the environment and are often of significant amenity and/or historical value, both in towns and the countryside. These features should, wherever possible, be protected during development, but where this proves impractical, replacement planting will normally be required. Replacements should be of appropriate size and species for the location.

10.43 Town and country planning legislation enables local authorities to make tree preservation orders on woodland areas, groups or individual trees and important hedgerows, to protect an important landscape feature or safeguard the contribution these make to the amenity or scenic beauty of the countryside, and keep these matters under review. Where appropriate, proposals would include new woodland, tree and hedgerow planting and management proposals for existing features. As trees are living plants and subject to disease, decay and death, it is important to review the changes taking place. A tree preservation order should not be used to prevent appropriate management of woodland or trees to promote healthy growth. Woodland grants are available to support the management of coppices and other small woodland areas.

10.44 In order to maintain their long term

Hedgerows

C13 Development proposals which are likely to adversely affect an important hedgerow or its location directly or indirectly, will not be permitted.

Island could stimulate improved management of neglected private woodlands as a rural enterprise (90% of private woodlands are not managed).

10.47 Recent surveys by the Government have shown that, despite the gains from new planting, there is still on average a loss of some 3,600km of hedge nationally and

viability for amenity, landscape and forestry, woodlands and trees generally require management. This is not always true, but as dynamic living systems, tree establishment, aftercare and long-term use, and landscape and wildlife management are vital considerations. Ancient semi-natural woodlands (continuous since 1600 AD) require special attention as they generally support a more diverse flora and fauna. When considering new woodlands it is important to assess long-term use of the end products, in relation to local needs and processing facilities. This is especially important as Government targets are to increase woodland cover by 50%.

10.45 It is the policy of the Council to seek the protection of ancient and semi-natural woodland for amenity, nature conservation and historical reasons, but also to allow for appropriate cropping to take place within approved management plans. The Council has instigated the setting up of a Woodland Forum, tasked amongst its objectives to produce a woodland strategy. The strategy identifies opportunities for the planting of new woodlands. The Council will comment on grant schemes in consultation with the Forestry Authority to ensure local landscapes and nature conservation targets in management plans are met. Forest Enterprise (formerly the Forestry Commission) currently manage the Wight Estate, consisting of 1500 hectares of commercial forest and woodland, including Parkhurst and Brightstone Forests, Combley Great Wood and Firestone Copse.

10.46 Although there are several small milling operations on the Island, there is no major sawmill to deal with timber arising from Forest Enterprise operations, or the numerous private woodlands. The development of an appropriate facility on the

important hedgerows remain vulnerable to destruction or removal.

10.48 In the 1990 White Paper This Common Inheritance, the Government expressed its commitment to give local authorities new powers to protect hedgerows of key importance and to provide appropriate payments to farmers to look after them

properly. The Hedgerow Regulations 1997 came into force in June giving local authorities new powers to protect hedgerows of key importance by controlling their removal through a system of notification. Important hedgerows are those which have an historic, landscape or wildlife value, but exclude those that are less than 30 years old. The scheme applies to hedgerows on or adjoining land used for agriculture or forestry, the breeding or keeping of horses, ponies and donkeys, common land, village greens, Sites of Special Scientific Interest or Local Nature Reserves, but does not apply to garden hedges.

criteria with which hedgerows of significant historic, wildlife or landscape value can be identified, without preventing the removal of all hedgerows.

10.49 The Regulations are to be exercised by the Secretary of State for the Environment and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. The Government considers that the best means of meeting their objectives is through a notification system, backed up by

Safeguarding Best Agricultural Land

C14 Development which would result in the loss of the Island's best and most versatile agricultural land will only be permitted in exceptional circumstances, where there is an essential need for development affecting agricultural land which cannot be met elsewhere. In such a case, the best and most versatile land shall not be used if suitable lower quality land is available.

Farming and Horticulture

10.50 The most recent Government advice contained in PPG7 states that Agriculture will remain the major user of rural land, and the use that most influences the physical appearance and character of the countryside. Farmers are increasingly diversifying into other activities to supplement their incomes and to fill niche markets. Whilst farming's primary role is to produce food, and

will remain so, the environmental consequences of agricultural production, have assumed growing importance, and now environmental objectives are being integrated into agricultural policies.

Appropriate Agricultural Diversification

C15 Development in connection with the diversification of the business of an existing farm or estate will be permitted so long as evidence is provided, preferably in a Whole Farm Plan, to show that the proposed enterprise will be well integrated with the existing operation and is likely to provide a long term source of employment and income to support the business as a whole.

Proposals which would cause unacceptable severance or disruption of farm units and are likely to threaten the viability of farm units will not be permitted.

10.51 Government advice in PPG7 states that Land in grades 1, 2 and 3a should only be developed exceptionally, if there is an overriding need for the development, and either sufficient land in lower grades is

unavailable, or available lower grade land has an environmental value, which is recognised by the statutory landscape, wildlife, historic or archaeological designation, and outweighs the agricultural

considerations. If there is a choice between sites in different grades, development should be directed towards land of the lowest grade. The majority of land on the Island is classified as Grades 3 and 4, with only 3% classified as Grades 1 & 2. This is in part due to the proximity of the sea and maritime influences. Agricultural land in grades 3b, 3c, 4 and 5 is of moderate or poor quality and is less significant in terms of the national agricultural interest, and in Island terms is valuable for a wide range of uses and often contains valuable habitats.

10.52 Lower quality agricultural land often has a high conservation and landscape value and care should be taken to avoid conflicts. While agriculture will remain the principal land use in the countryside, it is estimated

that up to 25% of productive agricultural land could be taken out of production in the future. There will be demands to make use of at least some of this for alternative uses.

10.53 Farmers are increasingly looking to diversify and fill niche markets, for example, by growing baking potatoes, garlic and sweetcorn, or by developing visitor facilities, farm trails, holiday accommodation and fishing activities.

10.54 Care should be taken to minimise the potential for future conflict between neighbouring land uses. PPG7 states that local planning authorities should exercise particular care when considering planning applications for houses or other new protected buildings within 400 metres of

New Dwellings Supporting Agricultural and Forestry

C16 New agricultural and forestry dwellings will only be permitted in the countryside when an independent appraisal is submitted with the application, which shows clearly that:

- a there is a functional need for the proposed dwelling;*
- b it is of appropriate size and siting; and*
- c the business as a whole is capable of providing the whole or main source of livelihood for its occupant;*
- d the occupation of the dwelling shall be limited to a person solely or mainly working, or last working, in the locality in agriculture or in forestry, or a widow or widower of such a person and to any resident dependants.*

Any approval will be subject to an occupancy condition. In specified, appropriate circumstances, planning obligations may be used to tie a farmhouse to adjacent farm buildings.

established livestock units. The Government has recognised the potential risk of nuisance. This recognition should similarly apply to applications for new protected buildings. It is important also for local planning authorities to keep incompatible development away from polluting or potentially polluting areas.

10.55 To be effective, the diversification of individual farms and estates needs to be of lasting economic benefit, by providing continued employment, a long-term source of income and opportunities for ancillary business in the wider rural economy. The Council believes that the relationship of the diversification proposal to the future of the farm or estate as a whole, is a material planning consideration. This will also encourage farmers and landowners to take a longer term view of their business, by producing Whole Farm Plans, something which is greatly encouraged by NFU, CLA &

MAFF.

10.56 PPG7 (Annex 1) states that, One of the few circumstances in which isolated residential development in the countryside may be justified is when accommodation is required to enable farm or forestry workers to live at, or in the immediate vicinity of, their place of work. Normally it will be as convenient for such workers to live in nearby towns or villages as it will be for them to live where they work. It is important to establish that stated intentions to engage in farming or forestry are genuine, are likely to materialise, and are capable of being sustained for a reasonable period of time.

10.57 With regard to farmers and farm employees, there is a need to ensure all dwellings on the holding are on an agricultural occupancy basis, not just new dwellings, to prevent the selling of the original

farm properties separately from the holding. Approval for additional agricultural dwellings on a holding will be subject to an agreement or conditions, ensuring agricultural occupancy of other dwellings on the holding.

10.58 PPG7 states that New permanent dwellings should only be allowed to support existing agricultural activities on well established agricultural units, providing:

- a there is a clearly established existing functional need;
- b the need relates to a full-time worker, or one who is primarily employed in agriculture, and does not relate to a part-time requirement;
- c the unit and agricultural activity concerned have been established for at least three years, have been profitable for at least one of them, are currently financially sound, and have a clear prospect of remaining so;
- d the functional need could not be fulfilled by another dwelling on the unit, or any other existing

accommodation in the area which is suitable and available for occupation by the workers concerned; and other normal planning requirements, for example on siting and access, are satisfied.

10.59 Agricultural dwellings should be of a size commensurate with the established functional requirement. It is the requirements of the enterprise, rather than of the owner or occupier which are relevant to determining the size of dwelling that is appropriate to a particular holding.

10.60 In assessing applications for new agricultural or forestry dwellings the Council will therefore apply functional and financial tests. To meet the functional test, the dwelling must be essential to the day-to-day operation of the business (eg, certain types of livestock operation, particularly those which are intensive, where machinery or plant is involved that requires constant attention). An assessment will also need to be made as to whether it is essential that the dwelling is

Conversion of Barns and other Rural Buildings

C17 Planning applications for the reuse and adaptation of a rural building for employment, recreational or tourism purposes will be approved, provided that:

- a the building is of substantial, sound and permanent construction and is structurally capable of reuse and adaptation without major or complete reconstruction;
- b the proposed conversion respects local character, building styles and materials and would not entail any loss of significant archaeological or architectural features, both internal and external, which contribute to the character of the building and its surrounds;
- c the traffic generated by the new use can be safely accommodated by the site access and local road system and there is sufficient room within the curtilage for servicing and vehicle parking without detriment to the visual amenity of the area ;
- d no new fences, walls or other structures associated with the use will be erected if they would harm the amenity of the area;
- e if within an agricultural holding, it will not lead to the erection of new buildings and conditions or agreements are applied prohibiting further extensions, alterations or outbuildings;
- f approval may be subject to reduced time limits for implementation, so that any structural survey remains relevant;
- g the form, bulk and general design of the building are in keeping with its surroundings.

Planning applications for reuse and adaptation for residential use must comply with all of the above and will be refused unless:

- 1 Every reasonable attempt has been made to secure a suitable employment, recreational or tourism use for the building; or
- 2 Residential conversion is a subordinate part of a scheme for employment, recreational or tourism use, and
- 3 the building is of historic and architectural merit;
- 4 conditions or agreements are applied prohibiting further extensions, alterations or outbuildings.

located on site, as well as the availability of alternative forms of accommodation in the locality. Requirements arising from food processing, as opposed to agriculture cannot be used to justify an agricultural dwelling; nor can agricultural needs justify the provision of new dwellings as retirement homes for farmers.

10.61 Farms vary considerably in size, type of farm business and layout. The loss of part of a holding can have important implications for the remainder, by rendering the resultant farm unit too small to be effectively and efficiently worked. The sub-division of agricultural units may also create additional demands for farmhouses and other buildings contrary to countryside protection policies. Similarly, the poor location of a new use within the existing farm complex could lead to working difficulties which may render the farming operation uneconomic.

10.62 The reuse and adaptation of rural buildings has an important role in meeting the needs of rural areas for employment, tourism and recreation. It can reduce demands for new buildings in the countryside, provide jobs and reduce vacancy and dereliction. Reuse for business purposes can have a major impact on local employment, particularly on the Island where rural employment is a priority and the economic situation is reflected by its designation as a Rural Development Area. Residential conversion is likely to have a minimal economic impact although in some cases it could play a role in meeting identified housing needs. In the past, many of the Island's finite resource of barns and other agricultural buildings have been allowed to convert to residential use, sometimes resulting in unsympathetic refurbishment and treatments which have detracted from their original appearance as an intrinsic part of the traditional Island countryside.

10.63 It is recognised that certain agricultural buildings in the countryside may become surplus to agricultural requirements

Agricultural Support Activities

C18 The development of new, or the extension of existing activities related to and supporting agriculture will be permitted where they:

- a require a rural location;*
- b are of benefit to the rural economy;*
- c are well designed and landscaped;*
- d do not have a significant impact on any nearby residential properties;*

as farms diversify and practices change. As the rural economy develops in line with PPG7 the emphasis should be to sustain and diversify the rural economy by promoting the reuse and adaptation of rural buildings for commercial and other similar uses where local employment is a priority. Rural buildings can be split into two categories; those having architectural and historic merit, mostly constructed before 1919, and more recent structures which tend to have little aesthetic value. In the case of those historic structures the principle of reusing these buildings should generally be to secure their survival with an alternative use, but without alterations damaging their essential character or setting. Any policy should therefore seek to avoid:

- situations where barns are not being conserved, but in effect new buildings are being created;
- uses which disrupt the peaceful countryside and are incompatible with farming;
- undue change in architectural and historic character;
- extensions, additions and ancillary uses which will detract from the environment;
- the creation of hybrid buildings of limited visual appeal, unrecognisable from the existing structure.

10.64 Whilst residential conversions are likely to be most detrimental to the fabric and character of historic buildings, in some cases it may not be possible to find a suitable reuse, particularly where it is listed. In line with the general principle to resist housing in the countryside, residential use will only be allowed where it is proven to be the only method of serving the retention of a building having architectural and or historic value. Before considering residential schemes for approval, the Council will need to be convinced that every reasonable effort has been made to secure a more appropriate use (including residential use as a subordinate of a larger scheme) and applicants will need to provide evidence to show:

- e have adequate road access;
- f do not detract from the landscape beauty, nature conservation or cultural and historical heritage;
- g maximise the re-use of water.

Preference will be given if these enterprises are linked to the diversification of existing farms and built within farm building complexes.

- 1 the steps taken to market the building for a range of alternative uses;
- 1 why alternative uses are not economically viable based on a clear understanding of the costs involved in refurbishment in relation to the likely returns including the availability of grants
- 1 that works required to maintain the building would not undermine its character particularly if the scheme involves the sub-division into a number of units and the further sub-division of rooms which would add to external alterations such as windows and doors.

Management of Rural Water Resources

C19 Planning applications for facilities such as reservoirs, holding ponds and tanks designed for the efficient use of surface, underground and recycled water resources for agriculture, fisheries and horticulture will be approved where the development will:

- a not affect the water resource to the detriment of other interests;
- b not adversely affect features of importance for nature conservation or archaeology;
- c be landscaped or constructed to allow natural vegetation to regenerate to provide a new landscape and wildlife habitat feature.

10.65 There has been a trend in recent years towards the processing of local agricultural and forestry produce on, or adjoining, the farm complex. This could range from packaging of farm produce, to the production of sawn timber for use as fencing. For economies of scale, this may result in a group of producers using a common facility.

10.66 As a commercial industrial process this could normally be expected to take place on employment allocated land. There may however be circumstances, due to the type of local produce, together with the scale, size and location of the development and the overall benefits to the rural economy, where a processing operation may be acceptable in a countryside location. Preference will be given to a farm diversifying its operation using existing buildings, although in all cases consideration will need to be given to the potential impact on the landscape, highway network and the effect on nearby residents

10.67 Water is a vital and finite resource

whether it is derived directly from surface watercourses (from springs, streams, river or rainfall run-off) or from underground sources via boreholes. The increasing demand for consistently good quality food crops and the growing of more exotic crops such as sweetcorn where the Island's climate and soil conditions allow has led to increasing demands for water for spray irrigation. Such watering is also vital to ensure that crops are not lost and can reach the market place at the most economically favourable time.

10.68 The abstraction of water from water courses for drinking supplies and agricultural spray irrigation is now licensed by the Environment Agency after careful consideration of the effects of the proposed abstraction of the water table, downstream water course, other licensed abstractions and the effect on any wildlife habitat or species. When considering related planning applications, the Council will expect evidence that the abstraction is, or will be, licensed to be submitted to show that no adverse effect

on the water resources is anticipated. Abstractions in some areas have reached the limit of what the system can tolerate and it is vital that new abstractions, where acceptable,

make the most efficient use of the resource. The retention of winter rainfall run-off, which would otherwise only be lost to the sea or estuary, in reservoirs for use during the spring

Pre-Consultation For The Development of Agricultural Buildings

C20 In determining whether details should be submitted for formal approval, when consulted on proposed permitted development for agricultural units, the Council will assess the proposal in respect of:

- a siting, design and external appearance and its relationship to the landscape and its surroundings;*
- b the desirability of preserving historic monuments and buildings in their settings;*
- c the protection of sites of nature conservation interest.*

and summer is one method of harvesting water.

10.69 Reservoirs are likely to be located on the least productive land on a farm which may also have the greatest wildlife value. Whilst it is clear that reservoirs and fish ponds as new water features will change the habitat of the locality such features also have the potential to create new and diverse habitat types in an area, perhaps replacing more traditional water features of the landscape such as ponds, water meadows and wetlands lost to improvements to assist modern farming practices. To maximise this potential benefit and ensure that the feature, when mature, will fit within the landscape, proposals for such development will be expected to illustrate how the techniques of construction, shape, form and landscape management will lead to an appropriate feature acceptable in the landscape.

10.70 Planning legislation allows for a range of permitted developments associated with agricultural and forestry uses of land. However, in certain cases, planning permission cannot be exercised unless the farmer or other developer has applied to the Council for determination as to whether prior approval will be required for certain details. The Council has 28 days for initial consideration of the proposed development. In operating these controls, the Council should always have regard to the agricultural or forestry case for the development. The

Council will also need to consider the effect of the development on the landscape and the desirability of preserving ancient monuments and listed buildings and their settings, and sites of nature conservation value. Guidance on design and materials are provided elsewhere in this Plan.

Horticulture

10.71 Census data shows that horticultural crops remain an important sector in terms of agricultural production. This type of farming includes orchards and small fruit production, outdoor vegetables, hardy nursery stock and indoor glasshouse production of salad items, especially tomatoes.

Glasshouse Development

C21 Planning permission for horticultural and commercial glasshouse development will only be approved where:

- a it is outside, and does not adversely impact upon, an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty; or*
- b it is an extension to an existing glasshouse complex.*

In all cases, development must be acceptable in terms of its visual impact and appropriate conditions and agreements will be applied to ensure the development remains in horticultural or commercial glasshouse use.

10.72 Over the past thirty years, since the Arreton Valley was singled out in the 1960s as a suitable area for intensive glasshouse production in Southern England; there have been fluctuations in demand and supply, particularly for the type of products grown under glass, and not least because of technological advancement.

10.73 Between 1982 and 1987, the area of the Island devoted to horticultural crops increased by almost a third, followed by almost a halving of this area between 1987 and 1992. In fact, in 1992, there was a lower hectareage of land in horticultural production on the Island than in 1982. However, the hectareage of horticultural crops on the Island increased by 25% from 360 ha in 1992 to 452 ha in 1995, since when there has again been a steady increase in production to the present

day. These changes reflect national trends in a fluctuating market for vegetables and flowers and latterly for salad produce, relating to the changing buying practices of supermarket chains in the past decade.

10.74 In particular, the boom in glasshouse tomato growing in the Arreton Valley since 1993, where there has been a doubling of production over the past four years, is set to expand still further during the next decade. Large capital investment has been matched by the development of a marketing company serving all the main UK multiple retailers.

10.75 By their nature commercial glasshouses can have a significant impact on the environment due to their size and appearance. This is particularly true when viewed from higher or distant ground, where

Development Involving Horses

Keeping of Horses for Recreational Purposes

C22 Planning applications involving the use of land for the keeping of horses for recreational purposes will be approved where the following criteria are met:

- a the individual paddock(s) provides natural shelter for the horses using existing trees, hedgerows, topography or other natural features and exposed sites are avoided;*
- b the use will not have a detrimental impact on areas designated for landscape or nature conservation;*
- c it is adjacent to a settlement or residential curtilage and not isolated in the countryside; and*
- d conditions and/or legal agreements are applied to prevent incremental development such as feed stores, tack rooms, shelters, caravans or similar structures and to ensure the removal of jumps and other associated equipment when not in frequent use.*

there can additionally be significant light reflection. In general, such development would be expected to take place on an existing horticultural holding with careful consideration given to siting and screening.

10.76 PPG7 states that Commercial

glasshouses normally exceed the area for which permitted development rights are available. The UK faces intense competition from overseas growers and it is important that the horticultural industry is not held back by over-restrictive approaches to developments which could be sited without detriment to the

surrounding area. Glasshouses can have a significant environmental impact and wherever practicable new ones should be sited adjacent or close to existing ones .

10.77 Due to continual pressure in recent years for glasshouses to become garden centres, new development will be subject to conditions and legal agreements, where

necessary, to ensure they are retained in agricultural use.

10.78 It is considered that there are now sufficient garden centres to meet local needs for the foreseeable future and therefore it is essential to apply conditions and/or agreements attached to planning approvals to ensure that commercial glasshouses and

Stables and Field Shelters in the Countryside

C23 Planning applications for stables and field shelters associated with the use of land for the keeping of horses for recreational purposes will be approved where all the following criteria are met:

- a they are sensitively sited to avoid harming the visual amenity of the countryside for occupiers of adjoining land or buildings;**
- b they are of a scale, design and construction appropriate for the location and are of timber construction;**
- c conditions and/or legal agreements are applied to prevent incremental developments such as feed stores, tack rooms, mobile field shelters, caravans or similar structures, and the removal of jumps and associated equipment when not in frequent use.**

plant nurseries do not change to garden centres over time.

10.79 The keeping and riding of horses for recreational purposes is increasingly popular in the countryside and close to urban areas.

Keeping a horse as a pet within a residential curtilage or for breeding livestock for agricultural purposes does not require planning approval. A full planning application is however normally required for the use of land for keeping horses for non-agricultural

Commercial Riding Establishments

C24 Planning applications for new commercial riding establishments and extensions to existing premises will be approved where:

- a it involves the reuse of an existing farm complex or group of farm buildings;**
- b it minimises any impact on adjoining residential occupiers;**
- c it will not result in unacceptable conflict between riders and vehicles on the nearby road network;**
- d they have direct access to the rights of way network.**

purposes. High standards of design, construction and maintenance of buildings and care of the land are necessary to ensure that equestrian activities do not have an adverse effect on the countryside.

10.80 It is important to ensure that sites are

appropriate for the keeping of horses, in that they provide natural shelter and screening from the elements. In certain circumstances this may allow for the future consideration and acceptable siting of additional shelter .

10.81 In line with the broad strategy to

All-Weather Riding Facilities

C25 Planning applications for maneges will be approved provided that:

- a it is not detrimental to areas of nature or landscape conservation as designated elsewhere in this plan and does not adversely impact on the AONB;**
- b it is acceptable in relation to existing buildings and is appropriately screened;**
- c it does not result in the over proliferation of such facilities in the locality.**

minimise the need to travel, it is anticipated that proposals would be best located adjacent to existing residential areas or groups of properties, thereby enabling easy access and use without reliance on the private car. In addition, this would minimise potential impact on isolated areas of the countryside, including those of nature conservation value.

10.82 The Council seeks to limit the proliferation of buildings in the countryside. However, the need for shelter for horses is recognised, through the provision of simple open field shelters or stables, constructed and sited to minimise their impact on the countryside and or adjoining residential occupiers. Timber construction is considered appropriate as this is more acceptable in the rural environment and will enable their dismantling and removal in the event that they are no longer needed.

10.83 Commercial riding establishments

provide the potential for agricultural diversification, particularly the re-use of under-used or redundant farm buildings, thereby benefiting the rural economy. Being a popular recreational activity in the countryside, there is the potential for detrimental impact to adjoining residential occupiers and conflict with other road users. The scale of the proposal will therefore need to address both of these issues, as well as minimising impact on the landscape and nature conservation interests

10.84 All weather riding facilities are known as maneges and provide for the safe schooling of horses and training of riders and are particularly useful in wet weather and during the winter. Whilst the demand is recognised there is a need to ensure that the provision of maneges minimise any adverse impact which may arise from excavations, surface materials, fencing, lighting and related facilities. The potential for such development to have an urbanising and adverse visual impact in the countryside and in particular on Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty may be increased to unacceptable levels by the use of floodlighting, or the proliferation of a number of maneges in a locality which change the rural character of an area. There is a need to enable the provision of maneges, whilst minimising the environmental impact which will arise from the excavations, surfacing materials and fencing involved in their construction. This impact would be unacceptably increased by floodlighting in countryside areas. Given this impact and the concerns of over-proliferation, it is considered that maneges are inappropriate within AONBs.