

Chapter 9

EMPLOYMENT AND TOURISM

The South Somerset Local Plan (SSLP) was adopted on 27 April 2006 and “saved” until 26 April 2009 pending the preparation of replacement Local Development Framework (LDF) documents.

The Government Office for the South West have agreed to extend most Policies and Proposals beyond the 3 year saved period”.

Policies that have not been extended are struck through in the text. For ease of reference these are:

Chapter 6: Utilities	Policy EU1	Renewable Energy
	Policy EU2	Wind Turbines
	Policy EU5	Flooding
Chapter 10: Housing	Policy HG5	Replacement Dwellings in the Countryside
	Policy HG13	Sites for Travelling Show People
	Policy HG14	Sites for Travelling Show People

A number of **Proposals** have also not been extended as they have already been implemented or have Planning Permission and are under construction. These are:

Chapter 12: Area East	Proposal ME/CACA/3(ii)	Torbay Road, Castle Cary
Chapter 13: Area North	Proposal HG/SOME/4	The Mill House, Sutton Road, Somerton
	Proposal HG/SOPE/2	Land at Lightgate Lane, South Petherton
	Proposal TP/SOME/5	Widening of Cartway Lane, Somerton
	Proposal TP/SOME/6	Pedestrian Priority in West Street, Somerton
Chapter 14: Area South	Proposal CR/FIVE/1	Land at existing playing field, Fivehead
	Proposal HG/YEOV/2	Former Factory site, west of Larkhill Road, Yeovil
	Proposal HG/YEOV/3	Former Jewsons Yard, Newton Road, Yeovil
	Proposal ME/YEOV/6	Land east of Buckland Road, Pen Mill, Yeovil
Chapter 15: Area West	Proposal CR/BRYM/3	Land at Abbey Farm, Yeovil
	Proposal HG/CHAR/2	Land off Lower Touches, Chard
	Proposal HG/ILMI/1	Land north of Summervale Medical Centre, Wharf Lane, Ilminster
	Proposal MU/ILMI/2	Land off Shudrick Lane, Ilminster

CHAPTER 9: EMPLOYMENT & TOURISM

EMPLOYMENT

INTRODUCTION

- 9.1 The district provides a wide variety of jobs in a range of locations and, overall, the local economy has performed well in recent years. This had been reflected in lower unemployment rates when compared to the rest of the South West region. The main concentrations of employment are in the Towns of Yeovil, Chard, Crewkerne, Ilminster and Wincanton, particularly on the various industrial/trading estates (see Appendix 8). Manufacturing and defence related industries continue to be a major part of the local economy, particularly in and around Yeovil. However, according to the Joint Structure Plan Review, the employment potential of such industries is at best likely to remain static. In addition to the manufacturing base, the town centres in the Plan Area provide employment in the service sector, particularly shops and offices.
- 9.2 Outside the main Towns, there is generally a limited range of employment opportunities, centred primarily in the Rural Centres of Castle Cary, Bruton, Langport, Martock and Somerton.
- 9.3 There are also several concentrations of major employers in rural areas, such as around Chard Junction and at Henstridge Airfield. However, agriculture and agro-processing still has an important local employment role in the villages and in many of the rural areas. Figures from 2002 show that round 4.0% of the workforce are employed in agriculture and related activities. This compares to a national average of just over 1.0%.
- 9.4 Since the early 1980's, there has been a marked change in local economic activity, clearly reflecting the influence of the national economic cycle and also Government policies. Unemployment peaked at 7.9% in January 1993, and in the following decade it decreased markedly with figures for 2004 showing unemployment at 2.0% in the Yeovil

travel to work area, and closer to 1.0% in the market towns of Wincanton and Crewkerne.

- 9.5 There are currently moderate amounts of vacant industrial land across the District, which is either allocated in existing Local Plans or with planning permission. Also, some of this land is not immediately available. There is at present vacant land in the main towns, including Yeovil. In addition, there are vacant premises in many locations, available in a variety of size, tenures and locations.

The Joint Structure Plan Review Strategy

- 9.6 The Joint Structure Plan Review provides a framework for business, industry and warehousing development in this Local Plan. It indicates, in general terms, the amount of land to be made available for employment purposes within Classes B1, B2, and B8 of the Use Classes Order 1987, in South Somerset for the period 1991-2011.

- 9.7 The Joint Structure Plan Review aims to ensure that future development will be more sustainable by minimising its impact on the existing built and natural environment through the strategy of 'focused development'. Its strategic objectives in relation to the economy aim to:

- Allocate sufficient employment land to encourage the development of a diverse and prosperous economy;
- Distribute employment development in a way which reflects the anticipated growth in the labour force;
- Ensure that employment land is allocated which meets the requirements of businesses in terms of location, accessibility and environment.

The Local Plan Strategy: Future Employment Pattern

- 9.8 In preparing this strategy for future employment development for the period up to 2011, the District Council has had regard to Government guidance in PPGs and PPSs on the location of development, which

encourages new development in locations which: minimise travel; help sustain transport links; and which can be served by energy efficient transport. New development that would add to congestion is to be discouraged.

- 9.9 Planning Policy Guidance note 4: Industrial, Commercial Development and Small Firms (PPG4) gives more detailed evidence about planning and commercial development and small firms. The Government has emphasised that, in preparing all development plans, authorities should strike a balance between economic considerations such as broadening the local economy and stimulating employment opportunities and maintaining and improving environmental quality. PPG 4 states that:

“Development Plans provide the policy framework, weighing the importance of industrial and commercial development with that of maintaining and improving environmental quality. The principles of sustainable development require the responsible use of man-made and natural resources by all concerned in the way that ensures that future generations are not worse off. Careful attention to environmental issues makes good economic sense for business and industry”.

- 9.10 The encouragement of economic development is one of the Government's key policy objectives and rural areas are expected to play a part. Planning Policy Statement 7: Sustainable Development in Rural Areas (PPS7) deals with the countryside including economic development. It makes the point that wealth-creation and environmental quality are increasingly inter-connected. 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. Rural development should be sustainable and integrate the Government's objectives.

- 9.11 As an expression of its commitment to maintaining a successful local economy, the District Council is also responsible for

preparing an economic development and tourism strategy for the District. The next revision of the strategy is due in 2006 and will reinforce the role of the District Council in local economic development; explain the range of initiatives carried out by the Council; provide a means of prioritising the Council's actions, and aim to ensure that future economic development activity by all agencies forms part of a co-ordinated strategy.

LOCAL PLAN OBJECTIVES

- 9.12 In developing its policies for employment, the Local Planning Authority has sought to safeguard the local economy and provide for enough jobs for the local population and at the same time protect and maintain the character of the local environment. There will be opportunities to apply the principles of sustainability where new commercial development is permitted. The objectives of the Local Plan are:
1. To provide adequate employment opportunities for all the existing and future inhabitants of the plan area through the controlled growth of its industrial and business sector whilst at the same time maintaining the quality of the environment and the amenities of local residents.
 2. To direct new commercial development so that it is sustainable, that is that it would not compromise the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. In particular, that it would avoid substantial increases in car use and encourage the use of public transport. Employment uses on proposed allocations will need to have regard to site accessibility and travel demands likely to be generated.
 3. To meet the accommodation requirements of local firms and firms who relocate to the district of South Somerset is important nationally because it will assist in the development of new technology or the expansion of national output, as far as compatible with other objectives of the plan.
 4. To facilitate the relocation of badly sited commercial uses.

5. To encourage improvements to the environment of existing industrial and commercial areas and ensure high quality environments are provided in new developments.
6. For locations defined within the RDA, to facilitate the RDA's objectives with respect to key issues like: employment; economic development; area regeneration; environmental improvements, public and community transport.

POLICIES

Provision for New Employment Land

9.13 Table 9.1 illustrates the Joint Structure Plan Review requirement for employment land in the district to 2011. Policy ME1 contains the amount of business, industrial and warehousing development (Use Class B1, B2 and B8 of the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987) required in South Somerset District for the period 1991 to 2011, to meet this requirement. This provision includes: those sites which have planning permission for commercial development but which have not yet been implemented, those sites which are under construction and an allowance for vacant land. Policy ME2 schedules the employment allocations made in this plan, a number of which have been identified within key site developments, the advantages of which have been explained in paragraphs 2.51 - 2.57 of the Local Plan.

	Hectares
1. Structure Plan requirement (July 1991 to June 2011)	about 125.00
2. Supply:	
Completions July 91 to March 2000	22.8
Under construction	2.0
With planning permission	36.4
Vacant land	4.7
3. Total Supply	65.9
4. Net Requirement (Ha)	about 59.1

9.14 The Policy ME1 figure is not prescriptive or inflexible but, in general terms, it would lead to a level of new job creation which is broadly in step with the workforce growth associated with the level of new house building proposed in this Local Plan (See Chapter 10).

9.15 For the District as a whole, at present there is no need in numerical terms, to allocate further additional sites (as identified in Policy ME2) in the Local Plan period. It should be noted that there are examples where the amount of employment land to be generated through "mixed use" development is, at present, unclear. Employment uses on proposed allocations will need to have regard to site accessibility and travel demands likely to be generated. All these allocations are explained in more detail in the relevant part of the Local Plan.

Policy ME1

Provision is made for the development of about 125 hectares (309 acres) for employment use (use class B1, B2, B8) in the plan area for the period from April 1991 to April 2011

Policy ME2

The provision in policy ME1 includes an allowance for the following sites which are allocated for employment use (use class B1, B2 and B8):

	Area	
	Ha	Acre
Area East		
<u>Town</u>		
Wincanton key site (Proposal KS/WINC/1)	2.1	(5.2)
Land between Lawrence Hill & A303 (Proposal ME/WINC/3)	0.9	(2.2)
<u>Rural Centres</u>		
Torbay Road, Ansford/Castle Cary (Proposal ME/CACA/3(i))	1.2	(2.96)
Torbay Road, Ansford/Castle Cary (Proposal ME/CACA/3(ii))	7.9	(19.5)

Area North		
<u>Rural Centres</u>		
Land west of Ringwell Hill, Bower Hinton, Martock (Proposal ME/MART/2)	1.8	(4.4)
<u>Villages</u>		
Lopen Nursery, Lopen (Proposal ME/LOPE/1)	1.8	(4.4)
Area South		
<u>Yeovil Town</u>		
Lufton Key Site (Proposal KS/BRYM/1)	4.7	(11.6)
South of Airfield (Proposal ME/YEOV/4)	4.8	(11.9)
Land at Higher Farm Trading Estate, Preston Road (Proposal ME/YEOV/5)	2.42	(6.0)
Land east of Buckland Road, Penn Mill Trading Estate (Proposal ME/YEOV/6)	0.13	(0.3)
Land off Buckland Road, Penn Mill Trading Estate (Proposal ME/YEOV/7)	0.4	(1.0)
Land off Bunford Lane – high quality business park (Proposal ME/WECO/1)	16.50	(40.80)
Area West		
<u>Towns</u>		
Chard Key Site (Proposal KS/CHAR/1)	13.0	(32.0)
Chard, north of Millfield (Proposal ME/CHAR/6)	2.5	(6.2)
Crewkerne Key Site (Proposal KS/CREW/1)	10.5	(26.0)
North of Fire Station, Blacknell Lane (Proposal ME/CREW/4)	0.3	(0.7)
North of Cropmead Trading Estate (Proposal ME/CREW/5)	0.8	(2.0)
Ilminster west of Horlicks Ltd., Hort Bridge (Proposal ME/ILMI/3)	3.0	(7.5)

Off Station Road, Ilminster (Proposal ME/ILMI/4)	12.9	(31.7)
Adjacent to Powmatic Ltd., Hort Bridge (Proposal ME/ILMI/5)	5.1	(12.6)
Total	91.85	(226.76)

Other employment allocations and unspecified employment provision within mixed use allocations

Land between Boden Street and Silver Street, Chard (see proposal MU/CHAR/4)*

Chard sewage treatment works (see proposal MU/CHAR/5)*

Land north of Shudrick Lane, Ilminster (see proposal MU/ILMI/2)*

*Note: "mixed use" development where exact amount of employment land generated is at present unclear.

Employment within Development Areas

9.16 In addition to the above allocations, within the main Towns and Rural Centres, further land and premises with potential to accommodate employment development may be expected to become available during the plan period. For example, where appropriate, the redevelopment of existing redundant sites within development areas for employment use would be encouraged, provided the potential uses would not adversely affect the local environment or conflict with other relevant planning policies like Policy ST6.

9.17 There may also be increased small scale employment opportunities in villages, which may make an important contribution to the local economy. It is important, however, not to spoil the character of towns and the villages and the amenity of residents by the erection of poorly located and designed industrial buildings.

Policy ME3

In addition to any site specifically allocated for development, proposals for employment use will be permitted within the development areas of the following settlements, subject to the proposals being

in scale with the settlement. Where the site is not well served by public transport or otherwise readily accessible to a local residential workforce only small scale development will be permitted.

Area North

Ash
 Barrington
 Compton Dundon
 Curry Rivel
 Ilton
 Kingsbury Episcopi
 Langport/Huish Episcopi
 Long Load
 Long Sutton
 Martock/Bower Hinton
 Norton-sub-Hamdon
 Seavington St. Mary
 Seavington St. Michael
 Shepton Beauchamp
 Somerton
 South Petherton
 Stoke-sub-Hamdon
 Tintinhull

Area East

Ansford and Castle Cary
 Barton St. David
 Bayford
 Bruton
 Charlton Adam
 Charlton Horethorne
 Charlton Mackrell
 Galhampton
 Henstridge: Village,
 Camp Road,
 Landshire Lane,
 Marsh Farm

 Holton
 Keinton Mandeville
 Kingston
 Milborne Port
 North Cadbury
 Queen Camel
 South Brewham
 South Cadbury
 South Cheriton
 Sparkford
 Templecombe
 West Camel
 Wincanton

Area South

Alvington
 Barwick/Stoford
 Hardington Mandeville
 Higher Odcombe
 North Coker
 West Coker
 Yeovil

Area West

Broadway
 Chard
 Combe St. Nicholas
 Crewkerne
 East Chinnock
 Haselbury Plucknett
 Ilminster
 Merriott
 Misterton
 Tatworth and South Chard
 West Chinnock
 Winsham

9.18 In the event of any major development proposal coming forward, the opportunity should be taken to encourage use of part of the site to provide employment opportunities, as this *Statement of Intent* indicates:

- *The District Council will encourage the provision of employment opportunities within major development sites.*

Workplace Homes

9.19 A workplace home comprises a dwelling and a light industrial workplace; the business is operated from the site on which the owner of the business lives. The workplace may either form an integral part of the dwelling (the more usual arrangement) or be located within its curtilage. In either case, the dwelling must be occupied by the operator of the business in the workplace. Although workplace homes are an attractive proposition in theory, experience both locally in South Somerset and elsewhere shows that there are considerable difficulties in bringing schemes to fruition and their continuing to function as planned. Nevertheless, the District Council supports the principle of workplace homes and any initiatives to provide them.

Employment Development in the Countryside and the Conversion of Buildings

9.20 It is considered inappropriate for new employment development to be permitted outside the defined Development Areas because of the adverse effect that this could have on the countryside and the character and setting of the settlements. However, there are many small-scale rural enterprises, located in the countryside outside of Development Areas, which provide a valuable source of local employment. These businesses have often made significant investments in existing sites and may be restricted in choices of suitable alternative sites within the District for expansion. Under the following policy, the expansion of rural businesses will be permitted especially where buildings are re-used or additional use made of the land within the curtilage of the development. Whilst substantial development of greenfield sites in the countryside will not be supported, it is important not to jeopardise the future of rural enterprise.

9.21 The expansion of sites will be permitted where development does not harm the local environment and there is no significant increase in traffic generation. Where the proposal results in a scale of development that is clearly beyond that which is in accordance with the development plan strategy, the Council will give every assistance to employers to find an alternative, more appropriate location.

9.22 Policy EH6: The Conversion Of Buildings In The Countryside will also be relevant to applications for the expansion of existing businesses in the countryside.

Policy ME4

Proposals for the small scale expansion of existing businesses (classes B1, B2 and B8 of the use classes order) outside defined development areas shown on the proposals map will be permitted provided that they satisfactorily meet the following criteria:

- **It is demonstrated that the proposal is both needed and appropriate in this location;**

- Existing buildings are reused where possible;
- Use is made of land within the curtilage of the development, beyond the curtilage it is demonstrated that additional land is essential to the needs of the business;
- There should be no adverse effect on the countryside with regard to scale, character and appearance of new buildings; and
- There should be no substantial additional traffic generated to the site.

9.23 Exceptions to the strict control of employment development outside development limits in the countryside may be made in the case of the reuse of existing buildings, which can provide for small-scale employment development. Such proposals would be considered against the criteria set out in Policy EH6 and the advice contained in Paragraphs 4.22 and 4.23. The extension or alteration of such buildings would be considered against Policy ST4 and Paragraphs 2.73 and 2.74.

Farm/Rural Diversification

9.24 Agriculture remains the primary land use over the greater part of the Plan Area and will continue to be a major determinant in shaping the character and appearance of the countryside. Traditional, “environmentally friendly” farming practices have, since 1947, been replaced by new and more efficient agricultural methods, designed to expand domestic food production. These modern approaches to farming have, however, had a noticeable impact on the countryside and at the same time there have also been substantial surpluses in the main agricultural products. The Government’s policies for the countryside are set out in the Rural White Paper, Our Countryside: The Future – A Fair Deal and Planning Policy Statement 7: Sustainable Development in Rural Areas (PPS7).

9.25 It is likely that, during the Plan period, the amount of land in agricultural use will continue to decline if the Government encourages farmers to reduce production levels by taking land out of farming use. The Local Planning

Authority will encourage diversification in the rural economy to ensure that farmers can supplement their income in order to maintain their land and buildings in a manner which conserves ecological and landscape features.

- 9.26 The District Council supports the principle of seeking to provide more varied employment opportunities in rural areas and is aware of the need for many farmers to diversify in order to ensure their continued financial viability. As such the authority will be supportive of well conceived farm diversification projects of appropriate scale for their location. In particular, the sensitive conversion of rural buildings to new uses can help reduce the demand for new buildings in the countryside and encourage enterprise. Although it is preferable for farm diversification schemes to reuse existing buildings, new buildings may sometimes be acceptable provided that they satisfy sustainability objectives and are of a design and scale appropriate to their rural surroundings.
- 9.27 When assessing proposals for farm diversification, the District Council will have particular regard to plan policies on landscape preservation, nature conservation, recreation, the need to protect the best quality agricultural land and the water environment and the conservation of buildings, as contained in other chapters of the Local Plan. PPG13 indicates that farm diversification projects which have access by public transport, walking or cycling should be encouraged, but a realistic view of the availability of alternatives to the car should be taken. Schemes should also be supported where there would only be a moderate increase in daily traffic movements and the impact on minor roads would not be significant.
- 9.28 The Local Planning Authority would also be aided by an overall “farm plan” which should show how alternative uses will supplement farm income.

Policy ME5

Well conceived proposals for farm diversification schemes for business purposes which are consistent in their

scale with their rural location will be permitted subject to their compliance with other plan policies and provided that no unacceptable harm is caused.

Retention of Land and Premises

- 9.29 The Joint Structure Plan Review states that it is essential that employment opportunities are maintained and created in rural areas, both within settlement boundaries and in the open countryside, to help sustain rural communities and reduce the need to travel.
- 9.30 This reflects the fact that employment land can be vulnerable to pressure from other uses, such as housing and retailing and also that parts of this Plan Area are economically and socially vulnerable rural areas. Over time, increasing areas of employment land have been lost to other uses and maintaining supply is important, particularly in the rural areas where employment opportunities are limited and where land-based industries, particularly agriculture, are experiencing continued change. It is important, therefore, to retain employment uses (land or buildings) which are in industrial use or which were last used for this purpose, i.e. uses falling within Part B of the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987. Not only is it important to retain and protect the overall availability and distribution of employment opportunities, but to do so would restrict the need for additional green field sites to compensate for the lost land.
- 9.31 Without such policies, land or buildings tend to be converted to other uses, e.g. residential, which may offer a greater return to the land owner but which may not represent the most appropriate use for the community as a whole. On the other hand, retention of such land and buildings can avoid the cost of developing new sites and may facilitate the establishment of smaller firms in relatively inexpensive accommodation. When considering proposals which would result in the loss of such premises, the District Council will attach importance to the continuing support of the local community for such businesses.

Policy ME6

Proposals for the alternative use of existing and allocated employment land and premises which would have a significant adverse effect on employment opportunities will not be permitted except where:

1. There is an overriding need which outweighs the employment value of the land or premises and for which there is no suitable alternative site; or
2. Significant environmental benefits would result which outweigh the employment value of the land or premises.

Such exceptions will only be permitted where the following criteria are satisfied:

- The development satisfactorily respects the form, character and setting of the settlement and its historical and architectural heritage;
- There is no significant adverse impact on the amenities of nearby residents resulting from noise, disturbance, smell, or litter;
- The development would not give rise to serious problems of access, road safety or traffic congestion;
- Proposals attracting large numbers of people should be easily accessible by a variety of means of transport, including public transport.

Retention of Land and Premises in Rural Areas

- 9.32 In both urban and countryside locations, efforts should be made to maximise the use of previously developed land but careful consideration should be given to redevelopment proposals for existing employment sites in the countryside. PPG13 makes it clear that housing redevelopment proposals for previously developed land in rural areas should be evaluated as advised in PPG3 (paragraphs 30-31) and states that “the availability of previously developed land is not, in itself, a sufficient reason for developing in such locations.” The Joint Structure Plan Review advises that any redevelopment

proposals should clearly demonstrate that the proposed use is both appropriate and needed in that location and cannot be accommodated within existing settlement boundaries. Redevelopment proposals will also be judged against other policies within the plan for control of development in the countryside.

Policy ME7

Proposals for the alternative use of existing employment land and premises in the countryside, outside defined development areas, will not be permitted except where:

1. It is clearly demonstrated that the activity is both needed and appropriate in that location and the benefits of redevelopment outweigh the employment value of the land or premises, and
2. The proposal cannot be accommodated within existing settlement boundaries.

Land Availability

- 9.33 The industrial and warehousing sites which have been allocated for development are believed to have a realistic proposition of being developed in the Plan period. Nevertheless, the availability and up-take of land for industry, warehousing and business will be monitored to ensure that there is an adequate supply of such land. If a shortfall of employment land arises in the Plan Area then the Local Plan will be reviewed and additional sites identified.

- *The availability and take-up of land for industry, warehousing and business will be monitored annually by the District Council in order to ensure that there is an adequate supply of such land.*

“Notifiable Installations”

- 9.34 As explained in Chapter 5, Planning Policy Statement 23: Planning and Pollution Control (PPS23) deals generally with the relationship between Planning and Pollution Control.

9.35 Policy ME8 deals with development proposals involving hazardous installations. Certain sites and pipelines are designated as notifiable installations by virtue of the quantities of hazardous substance stored or used. The siting of such installations will be subject to planning control aimed at keeping these separated from housing and other land uses with which such installations might be incompatible from the safety viewpoint. To this end, the Planning Authority will seek the advice of the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) on the suitability of that development in relation to the risks that the notified installation might pose to the surrounding population.

9.36 The area covered by the Local Plan already contains a number of high pressure natural gas transmission pipelines. Whilst they are subject to stringent controls under existing health and safety legislation, it is considered prudent to control the kinds of development permitted in the vicinity of these installations. For this reason, the Planning Authority has been advised by the HSE of consultation distances for each of these installations. In determining whether or not to grant consent for a proposed development within these consultation distances, the Planning Authority will take account of the advice it receives from the HSE about the risk to the proposed development from the notifiable installation. These consultation zones are included on the Proposals Maps under Policy ME9.

Hazardous Installations

9.37 Under the Planning (Hazardous Substances) Act 1990, the Local Planning Authority is able to exercise control over the presence of hazardous substances, whether or not associated development requiring planning permission is involved. The controls are designed to ensure that hazardous substances can be kept or used in significant amounts only after the responsible authorities have had an opportunity to assess the degree of risk arising to persons in the surrounding area. The concern would be over the storage and use of those substances which could, in quantities at or above specified limits, present major fire, explosion or toxic hazards to the people within the vicinity.

9.38 Where planning applications for new hazardous installations are received they will be considered in the context of Policy ME8 and only after extensive consultation with interested parties, including the HSE, will a decision be made.

9.39 At present, there are two existing hazardous installations in the District, although the “consultation zones” of a further two sites in Dorset impinge on the Plan Area. The HSE is responsible for notifying the Local Planning Authority of the relevant “consultation zones” around hazardous sites. Some categories of development, such as schools and hospitals, are regarded as more sensitive than others, for example, light industry. The Local Planning Authority is required to consult the HSE on all residential developments; retail, office and industrial development above a certain floor space as defined in the General Permitted Development Order and in any development likely to result in a material increase in the number of persons working within or visiting the notified area. These consultation zones are included on the Proposals Maps under Policy ME9.

Policy ME8

Proposals involving hazardous installations will only be acceptable on land allocated for employment use or on existing employment sites. However, such proposals will not be permitted if there are unacceptable health and safety risks taking account of the likelihood of an accident as well as its consequences.

Policy ME9

Development proposals within the consultation zone around existing notifiable and hazardous installations will not be permitted if there are unacceptable health and safety risks arising from the proposed development taking account of the likelihood of an accident at these installations as well as its consequences.

Environmental Improvements

9.40 In order to promote an attractive and efficient business environment, certain industrial areas and trading estates would benefit from improvements such as landscaping, provision of additional car parking and/or some restriction to on-street car parking, and improved signposting from the main group network. The District Council is already aware of the need for improvement to some of its own trading estate developments. This objective is included in the Local Plan as the following *Statement Of Intent*.

- *The District Council will assist in undertaking of environmental improvements to industrial and trading estate areas.*

TOURISM

INTRODUCTION

9.41 There is a complex relationship between tourism and recreation. For the purposes of this Local Plan a distinction is made between these two activities. Recreational facilities are seen as those which meet the needs of local people and as such recreation is included in Community Facilities and Recreation Chapter of the plan. On the other hand, tourism facilities, are accessible to both the local community and are geared towards visitors from outside South Somerset. Tourism is therefore an important part of the District's local economy and is included in this chapter of the plan. Indeed, tourism presently injects in excess of £50 million a year into the Local Plan area. Whilst acknowledging the importance of tourism economically, the District Council is committed to ensuring that the growth of the industry does not compromise any of the Plan's sustainable objectives, as recommended in Planning Policy Guidance Note 21: Tourism (PPG21). This commitment is explained more fully in the District Council's annual Economic Development and Tourism Strategy.

9.42 The District is rich in visitor attractions by virtue of the attractive and varied countryside and also the range of historic towns and villages. Major tourist attractions include: the Fleet Air Arm

Museum at Yeovilton, Sparkford Motor Museum, Cricket St Thomas Wildlife Park near Chard, Montacute House and Barrington Court House and Gardens (National Trust). South Somerset also offers a diverse natural environment. Overall, the Plan Area offers a number of attractions which can form the basis for country holidays and day trips, or it is an area to visit on the way to or from other tourist areas in the south-west of England.

LOCAL PLAN OBJECTIVES

9.43 The Local Plan's objectives in respect of tourism are:

- To facilitate the demand for tourism activities, whilst protecting the natural, built and historic environment of South Somerset.
- To retain and enhance existing tourist facilities within the District.

POLICIES

Sustainable Tourism

9.44 The concept of 'sustainable tourism' is central to the District Council's tourism work. Environmentally friendly holiday activities such as walks along the Leland and Parrett Trails are strongly promoted, as are the District's various cycle routes. In addition, the District Council is aware of the importance of accessibility (both in terms of access by disabled people and by public transport), and as a result the Tourism Unit's promotional material includes information regarding access by public transport. The objective to encourage sustainable tourism initiatives is included in the Local Plan as a *Statement Of Intent*.

- *The District Council will continue to support Sustainable Tourism Initiatives.*

Access for People with Disabilities

9.45 As well as recognising the need for public transport links to tourist facilities and venues, the Council is committed to promoting access for those with disabilities to tourist attractions and accommodation across the district. As such the District Council Tourism Unit have

produced a guide for visitors listing attractions and accommodation with good access and facilities, the location of accessible toilet facilities and RADAR keys and the availability of designated parking spaces in public car parks.

Tourist Attractions

9.46 As explained earlier in the text, tourism is of major consequence to the local economy. Policies 22 and 23 of the Joint Structure Plan Review recognise the importance of tourism development. Furthermore, Planning Policy Statement 7: Sustainable Development in Rural Areas (PPS7) considers that there may be opportunities for the use of existing buildings for business in the countryside to benefit economic activity, to develop rural tourism in a way which draws on the character of the countryside and to maintain or enhance the environment. The District Council supports schemes for new and enhanced tourist attractions which fulfil these objectives but which do not destroy the character of the countryside on which they depend. However, there may be concerns regarding issues such as accessibility, traffic generation, and the effect on the natural and built environment. The majority of tourist developments are small-scale, but opportunities do occur for larger scale or innovative projects. These can bring major benefits to national, regional and local economy, which should be taken into consideration in planning decisions. However, full details of proposed development will need to be submitted in order to assess the merits of the proposal and to demonstrate that the proposal does not conflict with other plan policies.

Tourist Accommodation

9.47 Visitors to South Somerset stay in a variety of different types of accommodation including hotels, guest houses, 'bed and breakfasts', static caravans, chalets, holiday lets, touring caravans, and tents. Before any owner considers using part of a building/dwelling for tourist accommodation, he/she is advised to contact the Local Planning Authority, as planning permission may well be required.

9.48 It is considered that a limited amount of new tourist accommodation in suitable locations would make an important contribution to maintaining the attractiveness of the area to visitors, although it is acknowledged that a proliferation of tourist development in sensitive locations is not desirable. As with other developments, the District Council aims to concentrate development in the Towns and larger Rural Centres as explained in Chapter 2 of the plan. However, farm based holiday accommodation can make good use of otherwise redundant farm buildings and can help to regenerate rural employment. Generally proposals for new or improved tourist accommodation outside Development Areas will be permitted provided that their scale is consistent with their rural location and subject to their compliance with other plan policies.

9.49 In some exceptional cases, conversion of a building in the countryside to holiday accommodation or the provision of mobile homes may be allowed, where conversion to permanent residential use is not acceptable due to an unsustainable location in terms of accessibility of everyday facilities e.g. schools. In legal terms, both dwelling houses and holiday accommodation fall within Use Class C3. In circumstances where proposals would result in the creation of accommodation which is capable of being occupied for residential purposes on a permanent basis but where permanent residential accommodation is not acceptable the Council will impose conditions on any permission granted specifying its use as holiday accommodation only.

Policy ME10

Proposals for new or improved tourist accommodation outside development areas will be permitted provided that their scale is consistent with their rural location and subject to their compliance with other plan policies. Where proposals would result in the creation of accommodation which is capable of being occupied for residential purposes on a permanent basis, the council will impose conditions on any permission granted specifying its use as holiday accommodation only.

Touring Caravan and Camping Sites

- 9.50 Caravanning and camping is a significant tourism activity and should be facilitated in such a manner that does not damage the environment and the amenity for both visitors and local people. Many camping and caravan sites do not require planning permission, as sites for 5 units or less which are certified by certain organisations, such as the Caravan Club or the Camping and Caravanning Club, are exempt. Sites larger than this would have an increasing impact, visually and on local roads.

Static Caravans, Chalet or Cabin Development

- 9.51 Even more care must be observed when considering holiday accommodation which becomes a permanent feature in the landscape. These types of development include static caravans, chalet or cabin development which are not removed or decreased in numbers on a seasonal basis. Such development proposals will be judged against other policies within the plan for control of development in the countryside.