

APPENDIX 8 – Extracts from Existing Wyre Planning Policy

1.1 Small Hotels, Guest Houses and Youth Hostels

1.1.1 Policy (TOUR2)

The conversion of existing residential properties for small hotel, guest house, self catering or youth hostel accommodation and the extension of existing forms of tourism provision will be permitted, provided that the proposal:

- 1. Does not involve extending to a scale which is inappropriate to the existing buildings, the extension must not dominate the existing building, and*
- 2. Includes satisfactory access and servicing arrangements, especially for visitors with special needs, and appropriate numbers of car parking spaces, and*
- 3. Does not adversely affect residential or visual amenity, and*
- 4. Does not require additional public expenditure on infrastructure and services.*

1.1.2 Justification

The development of a successful and well managed tourism industry depends on the provision of adequate, satisfactorily accessed and serviced tourism accommodation which is a key element of tourism infrastructure. This aspect is critical to the extension of day visits to overnight and multi-night stays, in order to create the circumstances for the release of higher levels of tourism expenditure into the economy.

The Council will impose a condition on all planning approvals to prevent permanent occupation. It is evident that using holiday accommodation as a permanent residence can detrimentally affect the character and function of a tourist area particularly where there is multiple occupation of a building.

Both regional and county planning guidance specifically recognise the importance of tourism development in the locality.

This policy seeks to address certain gaps in the tourist accommodation market.

1.2 Static Caravans and Chalet Developments

1.2.1 Policy (TOUR5)

Proposals for extensions to existing static holiday caravan sites or chalet developments will only be permitted where such an extension is intended to accommodate the existing number of caravans or chalets, to improved standards and:

- 1. The proposal does not relate to land in green belt areas, the area of outstanding natural beauty, special protection areas, national nature reserves, sites of special scientific interest, or local nature reserves, and*
- 2. The proposal does not relate to the best and most versatile agricultural land, and*
- 3. The proposal accords with policy envt13 in respect of flood risk issues, and*
- 4. The proposal will not injure the visual amenity and character of the landscape, and incorporates suitable screening/landscaping in accord with policy core11, and*
- 5. The interests of nature conservation would not be harmed.*

Proposals for new sites will only be permitted where they form a subsidiary part of a wider scheme of existing or planned recreational facilities which accords with policy tour1, and do not have an adverse impact on the environment, consistent with criteria A-E of this policy.

Proposals for the conversion of touring to static pitches will not be permitted where this would result in an increase in the number of static pitches currently on the site.

1.2.2 Justification

Static holiday caravan and chalet sites create a built environment, consisting not only of the structures themselves, but also of service roads and domestic facilities, such as gardens. Due to their visual impact, permanent caravan site developments can be difficult to assimilate into the landscape.

Given the existing high level of provision in the Borough, applications for further permanent developments will therefore be resisted. In accordance with TOUR1 however, which generally seeks to promote suitable forms of tourist development which extend the range of tourism and visitor attractions in the Borough, proposals for new sites may be deemed acceptable where they form a subsidiary part of a wider scheme for recreational development. They should in such circumstances, demonstrate a clear linkage to the main feature of the development.

The static caravan industry is tending towards the provision of larger vans. The Council recognise the need to provide for the suitable expansion of existing sites to allow the siting of such vans, allowing parks in the Borough to remain viable and to continue to contribute positively to the local economy. Given the potentially intrusive nature of such development however, proposals for expansion need to be closely assessed and demonstrate full accordance with criteria A-E in all cases. Extensions to static sites are considered highly inappropriate forms of development for the green belt, visually or ecologically sensitive areas or sites of historic importance. Further, such developments cannot be regarded as reversible and so should not be located in areas of best and most versatile agricultural land. Generally, extensions to existing sites should improve the overall quality of the local environment. Appropriate schemes may include proposals for lower density layouts, additional tree planting or landscaping of the site.

Recent years have seen an increase in proposals to convert touring to static pitches. The two types cater for different markets. It is the view of the Council that a continuation of this trend could therefore undermine an important element of the tourist economy of the Borough. In addition, static sites, due to their permanent nature, can have a greater impact on the local landscape than touring sites. Planning permission will therefore only be granted for such conversion proposals as part of a scheme which seeks to accommodate existing numbers of static caravans on a site to a higher standard, in accordance with criteria A-E of this policy.

1.3 Touring Caravans

1.3.1 Policy (TOUR6)

Applications for touring caravans or camping sites will be approved subject to the following criteria:

- 1. That they are restricted to short stays (that is, no stay by an individual should exceed 28 days) or overnight stops, and*
- 2. That they relate, or are in close proximity, to existing tourism/leisure facilities, or to a range of attractions of particular interest to tourists, and*
- 3. That they are well screened and the creation of hardstandings, power and hook-up points, refuse collection points, shower/toilet blocks and other facilities such as shops, would not have an unacceptable impact on the environment, and*
- 4. That they can provide satisfactory access and are located in close proximity to the primary route network, and*
- 5. That they are not sited on land between the first line sea defence and the main defence.*

1.3.2 Justification

Whilst protecting the countryside the Council do not wish to place onerous restrictions on appropriate tourism related development. Touring caravans and camping sites meet a demand for less formal based accommodation and applications will be considered subject to conditions ensuring that they are short stay sites and can be satisfactorily absorbed into the surrounding environment.

Short stay is a reflection of occupancy by an individual. This criterion is intended to ensure that pitches remain available to genuine touring users and are not displaced or precluded by operational changes which effectively change pitches to permanent holiday sites.

Any proposals will be expected to include a closed period in the winter months with the maximum period of occupation extending for ten months from 1st March to 4th January. Again this is necessary to ensure that the pitches are not used on a year round basis or as permanent housing accommodation.

1.4 Preserving the Seaside Resorts

1.4.1 Policy (TOUR7)

Within the Prime Holiday areas of Cleveleys and Fleetwood, as identified on the proposals map, the borough council will permit the provision of new hotels, guest houses, holiday flats and other tourist related uses, and extensions to existing facilities, subject to the following criteria:

1. *That the design and scale of new accommodation, including extensions to existing facilities, do not undermine the character, quality or visual amenities of the locality, and*
2. *That there is safe and adequate access to the site together with adequate parking facilities, and*
3. *The proposal does not prejudice residential amenity.*
4. *The change of use of existing tourism related uses in these primarily tourist areas to non-tourism related uses or the development of new non-tourism related uses including rest homes, nursing homes, residential flats and offices will be refused.*

1.4.2 Justification

The Borough Council have defined two prime holiday areas in the seaside resorts of Cleveleys and Fleetwood. The majority of the resorts' guest houses, holiday flats and other tourist related activities are located within these mixed residential/holiday areas and are conveniently situated for ease of access to the promenades and main shopping streets.

They are ideal for the future location of tourist related accommodation, close to other tourist activities and where a mix of holiday and residential uses has been generally accepted by residents and property owners alike. Consequently, the development of new holiday accommodation and the extension of existing facilities within their boundaries will be encouraged. The provision of additional holiday accommodation will not be permitted where residential amenities would be prejudiced.

The Borough Council attaches great importance to the prime holiday areas in terms of the income and employment they provide. Further, it realises that their character and the scale of activity must be protected if the function of Cleveleys and Fleetwood as holiday resorts is to be maintained and strengthened in the future.

There has been an ongoing problem in recent years where holiday flats have been used for permanent residential accommodation. This can have a seriously negative effect on the attractiveness and image of the holiday area. In response to this situation

the Borough Council has also published Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG8) which defines smaller sub areas known as Tourist Accommodation Zones (TAZs) within the boundaries of the Prime Holiday Areas. Within these areas the retention of holiday accommodation is considered a priority and applications for changes of use of holiday flats, guesthouses etc., to non-tourism related uses will be refused. Generally support has been expressed for the PHA's and TAZs in Cleveleys and Fleetwood although a number of concerns have also been voiced. The Council will continue to promote the Prime Holiday Areas and Tourist Accommodation Zones and use this policy and Supplementary Guidance Note to determine planning applications or take enforcement action as appropriate within the existing legal framework.

Further development which is incompatible with the established primary use of the areas for holiday accommodation, and associated activities will undermine the aim of protection leaving the resorts without a definite focus. This can only weaken the tourism industry which is a particularly important element in the overall popularity and prosperity of not only Cleveleys and Fleetwood but the Borough as a whole and will be resisted.

1.5 Diversification of the Rural Economy

1.5.1 Policy (EMPL3)

Proposals for employment generating uses which would facilitate the diversification of the rural economy will be approved where:

1. The scale and nature of the activity is not detrimental to the character of the area, and
2. Any new buildings are shown to be necessary and appropriate to a rural location, and
3. The proposed use does not conflict with adjacent land uses nor adversely affect the economic viability of a farming or other unit, and
4. The proposal fully satisfies policy core11.

1.5.2 Justification

National guidance in PPG7 'The Countryside - Environmental Quality and Economic and Social Development' (1997), promotes the diversification of the rural economy as a way to provide wide and varied employment opportunities for rural people, given that major changes in the agriculture industry and the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy have meant agriculture is no longer a major employer in many areas.

Similarly, Policy 5 of the Joint Lancashire Structure Plan Deposit Edition aims to compensate for increasing unemployment in the agricultural sector by encouraging the process of diversification whilst maintaining the quality of the rural environment.

In rural Wyre, unemployment figures are generally lower than elsewhere in the Borough varying from 1.3% in Hambleton to 1.6% in Preesall as at March 2003. However, the numbers employed in agriculture continue to decline and a high percentage of the working rural population (35%) commute to areas outside the Borough.

Encouraging appropriate new employment uses into the rural area to provide alternative sources of job creation is essential to ensure its economic well being. It is, in addition, a necessary prerequisite of sustainability and one of the Lancashire Structure Plan's main objectives to reduce the need to commute by providing jobs locally.

Policy EMPL4 makes provision for the change of use of non domestic buildings to industrial/commercial uses subject to certain environmental considerations and provides the perfect opportunity for locally based employment creation.

There may however be situations where new small scale industrial or commercial development would be appropriate, for example where a particular proposal is well related to other rural activities or has special locational requirements. Where such an enterprise cannot be adequately accommodated within existing buildings, the Council may, in certain circumstances, consider that there are legitimate reasons to allow the construction of new buildings. This will however be the exception rather than the normal course of action.

If such a development is permitted, strict control will be exercised in terms of its scale, location and design. The buildings will be expected to reflect the local style and relate well to other existing buildings and the character of the rural area. Such controls are necessary if a balance is to be maintained between conservation and development in the open countryside.

1.6 Conversion of Rural Buildings in Countryside Areas

1.6.1 Policy (EMPL4)

The change of use of rural buildings in countryside areas, for employment generating uses will be permitted providing that all of the following criteria are met:

1. The building is structurally sound and capable of retention without substantial rebuilding, and
2. The proposed use does not conflict with adjacent land uses nor adversely affect the economic viability of a farming or other unit, and
3. The conversion respects local building styles and materials wherever possible and does not have a detrimental effect on the fabric and character of any adjacent buildings or the local landscape generally, and
4. The building is capable of conversion and use without alteration to its external appearance, including any requirements for parking and outside storage and advertising material that would detract from its character and attractiveness, and
5. Services can be provided and the building has easy access to a metalled road without creating traffic hazards and without involving extensive road improvements that would be detrimental to the buildings rural setting, and
6. The proposal fully satisfies policy core11, and
7. The proposal is in accordance with the nature conservation policies of this plan. Proposals for haulage and related uses will in addition to satisfying those criteria listed above, be required to demonstrate that:
8. The scale, character and frequency of the traffic generated will not create environmental or traffic problems or that suitable measures are proposed in conjunction with the development that will satisfactorily ameliorate such problems.

1.6.2 Justification

In the past, rather than allowing non domestic buildings such as barns, mills and stables which were no longer of agricultural use to fall into dereliction and decay, the Council has generally been supportive of their conversion to residential, commercial, industrial or tourism use. The majority of such proposals have been influenced by property market considerations and have resulted in them being converted to residential use, with varying degrees of success. In many cases, although a new use has been found for the building, the introduction of alien features for example, chimneys, large windows, garaging and garden curtilage, means that the overall simplicity and character of the rural building has been lost.

Guidance contained within PPG7 urges local planning authorities to examine applications for changes to residential use with particular care and in a manner which is consistent with the general restrictions on new housing in the open countryside. The potential for re-use of buildings for a variety of commercial, industrial, tourism, and recreational activities is thus seen to offer beneficial uses for buildings, whilst stemming the demand for new buildings in the countryside. By contrast therefore the document emphasises these forms of development which can assist local economic sustainability.

Increases in the size of commercial vehicles over recent years, together with often unsocial hours of operation in the haulage industries, have raised particular issues of traffic and safety. The problems perhaps have been most apparent where historically those activities have been located in rural areas and where improvements to the local highway network have not been commensurate with changes in the character of the haulage industry. With potentially increasing opportunities for such activities to relocate in surplus or vacated rural buildings it is particularly important that the impact of such developments are assessed not only in terms of their immediate locale, but also, in relation to their wide traffic and environmental implications. The onus will be on an applicant to provide supplementary information in relation to such proposals to substantiate the use of the premises. In relation to the traffic and environmental issues, this may be necessary in the form of a Traffic Impact Analysis by a professional independent assessor.

The number of surplus agricultural buildings in Wyre is a reflection of changes in farming practices and the reducing importance of agriculture in local employment. In order to provide alternative employment without the need for new buildings or long distance commuting, an adequate supply of local buildings suitable for employment related uses must be retained. This will enable small businesses to locate who cannot necessarily afford to build on those allocated industrial sites nor pay the rents for purpose built accommodation and will encourage the diversification of the rural economy.

Conversion to residential use does not provide for the diversification of the rural economy and if permitted in ever increasing numbers will adversely affect the future character and appearance of the countryside. The Council will therefore generally favour the conversion of non domestic rural buildings to industrial, commercial or tourist use in line with Government advice.