

1 THE COUNTRYSIDE (CO)

COUNTRYSIDE CONTEXT

The countryside in this Borough contributes to meeting the needs of a wide population, including residents of Southampton. Consequently its protection is a key objective. However, allowance must be made for appropriate changes to take place in order to ensure that genuine development needs can be accommodated.

There are several links between countryside and other policies of the local plan including the following:

- NC policies: nature conservation
- BE policies: general design, advertisements
- LB policies: archaeology, listed buildings
- T policies: environmental impact of traffic
- H policies: agricultural workers dwellings, gypsy sites
- E policies: boatyard
- OS policies: leisure proposals, footpaths, noisy sports, open space
- ES Policies Noise, pollution, contaminated land

Countryside Objectives

1.1 The Council is keen to protect and enhance the countryside within the Borough and the policies in this chapter provide the means by which the protection of the countryside can be achieved. In particular the Council aims to:

- protect the countryside from inappropriate development, whilst accommodating genuine development needs
- improve opportunities for access to the countryside and other appropriate outdoor recreational facilities, particularly by means other than the car
- facilitate more positive management of those areas in which agricultural activity may be in decline

Protection of the Countryside

1.2 The Council recognises that the countryside is important for many reasons including agricultural production, landscape value, providing a setting for our towns and villages, recreational provision, nature

conservation interest and for its own sake. However, the countryside is a diminishing resource and there is a need to be particularly vigilant about its future use.

- 1.3 For the purpose of this Plan all land outside the defined urban edge is classified as countryside.

1.CO Planning permission will not be granted for development outside the urban edge unless:

- i. it is necessary for agricultural, forestry or horticultural purposes and a countryside location is required; or
- ii. it is for an outdoor recreational use or is genuinely required as ancillary to such a use and does not require the provision of buildings, hardstanding or structures which, are of a form, scale or design which would demonstrably harm the character of the locality; or
- iii. it is essential for the provision of a public utility service or the appropriate extension of an existing education or health facility and it cannot be located within the urban edge; or
- iv. it meets the criteria in the other policies of this Plan.

The extension of private gardens into the countryside will not be permitted.

Strategic Gaps

- 1.4 Within the countryside there are areas of land between major settlements which perform the specific function of protecting the individual identity of those settlements and of preventing their coalescence. The Structure Plan (policies G1 and G2) identifies two strategic gaps in the Borough: (see the Proposals Map and Appendix I).

Southampton - Eastleigh
Southampton - Hedge End/Bursledon/Netley

- 1.5 Development which is essential in the countryside and which is otherwise acceptable, for example for agricultural or recreational purposes, might have to be directed to countryside areas outside the gaps if the key objective of the gaps is to be safeguarded. Alternatively, it may be necessary to reduce the size of a building to ensure that it is sited less obtrusively before it can be regarded as

acceptable.

2.CO	Planning permission will not be granted for development which would physically or visually diminish a strategic gap as identified on the proposals map.
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Local Gaps

- 1.6 The Structure Plan also provides, in Policy G3, for local gaps to be identified in local plans in order to protect the separate identities of smaller settlements at risk of coalescence with other settlements. The Borough Council has identified the following local gaps (see the Proposals Map and Appendix I).

Eastleigh - Bishopstoke
Boyatt Wood - Otterbourne Hill and Allbrook
Hedge End - Horton Heath
Botley - Boorley Green
Hedge End - Botley
Hedge End - Bursledon
Bursledon - Hamble - Netley Abbey
Fair Oak - Horton Heath

3.CO	Planning permission will only be permitted for appropriate development in a local gap, if: <ul style="list-style-type: none">i. it cannot be acceptably located elsewhere; andii. it would not diminish the gap, physically or visually.
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Agriculture, Forestry and Farm Diversification

- 1.7 The Council wants to see the highest quality agricultural land continue in agricultural use and it will therefore be protected from development. Even if the land is not used for agriculture it will continue to be safeguarded from development. However, there has been a steady decline in agricultural production in recent years, which has led to the need to establish farm diversification projects possibly through funding from the England Rural Development Plan (ERDP). Such projects may include provision for appropriate holiday accommodation, craft workshops, woodland management or appropriate rural sports. Any proposals relating to agricultural or forestry holdings will also be subject to policy 1.CO.

4.CO	Development proposals which would cause the permanent loss of the best and most versatile agricultural land will not be permitted (Grades 1,2 and 3a in the MAFF Agricultural Land
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Classification system) unless it can be demonstrated to the satisfaction of the Borough Council that there are no appropriate alternatives and there are over-riding sustainability benefits.

5.CO Proposals for farm diversification will be permitted provided they meet all the following criteria:

- i. they are appropriate to the locality;
- ii. they respect the quality of the built and natural environment;
- iii. they are of a suitable scale, type and form for the location;
- iv. they include appropriate measures for the management of the site;
- v. they are directly linked to an existing agricultural enterprise;
- vi. they are not significant generators of traffic; and
- vii. the Council is satisfied that the proposal will assist in maintaining the long term viability of the enterprise.

Agricultural Workers' Dwellings

- 1.8 Agricultural workers' dwellings will only be permitted as exceptions to the countryside policies of the Plan. The Council will follow the advice in Annex A of Planning Policy Statement 7: Sustainable Development in Rural Areas which emphasises the requirement for a functional test to be undertaken to determine the need for a new agricultural dwelling and also states that it may be appropriate to apply a financial test.
- 1.9 The protection of animals or crops from theft or injury by intruders will not by itself be sufficient to justify a new dwelling in the countryside.
- 1.10 In circumstances where there is uncertainty about the viability of a farm holding temporary planning permission may be granted for a mobile home in the first instance, in order that the prospects for the unit can be assessed. The size of the property will be restricted in order to ensure that if sold on, the property value is such as to make it affordable to other agricultural workers.

- 1.11 Extensions to existing agricultural workers dwellings will not be supported (see policy 9.CO).

6.CO Proposals for new dwellings for agricultural, horticultural or forestry workers will only be permitted where all the following criteria are met:

- (i) the size, design and layout of the proposed dwelling is appropriate to the landscape characteristics of the locality and the scale and nature of the enterprise and the identified operational need;
- (ii) It has been demonstrated to the satisfaction of the Borough Council that the activity is currently viable and likely to remain so, and that a dwelling is essential to the continued viability of the holding;
- (iii) there are no suitable redundant buildings on or adjoining the holding which are capable of being converted to residential accommodation;
- (iv) there are no existing suitable dwellings available within a reasonable distance; and
- (v) a dwelling serving or closely connected with the holding has not recently been sold separately or recently alienated in some way from the holding.

- 1.12 When planning permission is granted for a new dwelling outside the urban edge on the basis of an agricultural, horticultural or forestry need, the occupancy of the dwelling will be restricted to persons solely or mainly employed or, if retired, last employed locally in agriculture, horticulture or forestry, and to their immediate dependants.

- 1.13 The Council recognises that the needs of agriculture, horticulture and forestry are continually changing and that there will be occasions when permission is sought for the removal of an occupancy restriction.

7.CO Planning applications for the removal of agricultural occupancy conditions will not be permitted unless:

- i. the Borough Council is satisfied that there is no longer a long-term need for an agricultural, horticultural or forestry workers' dwelling in the locality and there is no evidence of a continuing need for housing for persons employed or last employed in the locality in these categories; and
- ii. every reasonable effort has been made to sell or lease the property at a reasonable price reflecting the restriction on occupancy to people who could occupy it in accordance with the agricultural occupancy condition.

Replacement Dwellings and Extensions

- 1.14 Subject to criteria on size and design, the replacement of, or extensions to existing lawful dwellings (including independent permanently sited mobile homes) in the countryside will be acceptable. The only exception is dwellings which are subject to an agricultural occupancy condition. It may not be appropriate to allow extensions to such dwellings because it is important that the value of such housing is retained at a lower level than open-market housing. This may enable it to remain available for agricultural workers and also reduce the pressure for the removal of occupancy conditions. Agricultural workers dwellings are allowed as exceptions to the normally restrictive countryside policies and policy 6.CO aims to minimise their adverse impact.
- 1.15 In recent years there has been increasing pressure to replace or extend properties in the countryside. These developments have often resulted in significant changes to the scale and character of the dwellings, which in turn have had a cumulative detrimental impact on the rural environment. Large new dwellings and extensions which don't reflect the rural vernacular and are insensitive to their location are not acceptable. Where replacement dwellings are permitted, consideration will be given to the removal of permitted development rights, meaning that extensions could not be constructed without planning permission. A more restrictive approach will be taken within the Old Bursledon Special Policy Area (see paragraph 11.29).
- 1.16 The use of basements and rooms in the roof, which would minimise the overall visual impact, should be considered by applicants.

8.CO The replacement of an existing dwelling in the countryside

which enjoys a lawful residential use will be permitted, provided all the following criteria are met:

- i. the existing dwelling is not the result of a temporary permission;
- ii. the proposed dwelling:
 - is of an appropriate design which reflects its countryside location
 - would not be disproportionate in size to neighbouring properties or disproportionate in relation to its plot
 - does not have a greater impact physically or visually on the character and appearance of its immediate surroundings, or on the countryside in general, than the existing dwelling
- iii. the proposal includes the demolition of the dwelling to be replaced; and
- iv. no additional units of accommodation are created.

9.CO Extensions to existing dwellings in the countryside will only be permitted if all the following criteria are met:

- i. the dwelling is not subject to an agricultural occupancy condition;
- ii. the development is not likely to facilitate the subdivision of the property into more than one dwelling;
- iii. the extension does not result in the dwelling becoming disproportionate in size to neighbouring properties or disproportionate in relation to its plot; and
- iv. the design of the extension does not materially worsen the impact of the dwelling on its immediate surroundings or the countryside in general.

Non-Residential Buildings in the Countryside

- 1.17 There are many agricultural, recreational and commercial enterprises located outside the urban edge. Whilst extensions to associated buildings would not normally be allowed because this would result in an intensification of built form in the countryside and may have traffic implications, their replacement may be acceptable. The re-use of buildings in the countryside may be supported (see 15.CO and 16.CO).

10.CO The replacement of an existing non-residential building in the countryside which enjoys a lawful use will be permitted provided all the following criteria are met:

- (i) the existing building is not the result of a temporary permission;
- (ii) the proposed building is of an appropriate design and scale and would not have a greater impact physically or visually on the character and appearance of the locality than the existing building;
- (iii) the replacement building is to be used for the existing lawful use and would not generate significant additional traffic; and
- (iv) the proposal includes the demolition of the building to be replaced.

11.CO Proposals to extend non-residential buildings in the countryside will be permitted if it can be demonstrated to the satisfaction of the Borough Council that all the following criteria can be met:

- i. it would not have an unacceptable physical or visual impact on the countryside;
- ii. it would not generate significant additional traffic; and
- iii. the existing building is not the result of a temporary permission.

Hamble Community Sports College

- 1.18 Hamble Community Sports College lies outside the urban edge, within the Hamble--Bursledon-Netley Abbey local gap. The presumption is against further development in such a location. However, with an increasing school roll it would be inappropriate to prevent the natural evolution of the campus to accommodate the growing requirements of

the school and the wider community. Consequently a Special Policy Area has been established within which appropriate development will be permitted.

12.CO Appropriate development which is related to the educational or community uses on the campus, will be permitted within the Hamble Community Sports College Special Policy Area, provided it does not have an adverse visual impact and is subject to a campus green travel plan.

Hampshire Police Headquarters, Hamble Lane

1.19 The Hampshire Police Headquarters is located outside the urban edge and within the Netley Abbey - Hamble local gap where there is a presumption against development. Under normal circumstances development in such a location would not be supported but the unique characteristics of the Police Headquarters may justify an exception being made to the restrictive policies. However, this is an established use, the requirements of which may change over time. Therefore a Special Policy Area has been identified which sets out the criteria against which any development proposals will be assessed. The boundaries have been drawn relatively tightly in order to restrict the scale of development to that which is appropriate in this location.

13.CO A development proposals within the Hampshire police Headquarters Special Policy Area will only be permitted if all the following criteria are met:

- i. it is a use specifically related to the operations of the Hampshire Constabulary;
- ii. it does not cause harm to the listed building or its setting;
- iii. it does not generate traffic which would significantly add to traffic problems in Hamble Lane or on the road network in the locality;
- iv. a travel plan for the whole site is adopted; and
- v. it does not have an adverse visual impact on the countryside.

Mobile Home Parks

- 1.20 Mobile home parks in the countryside (ie. a group of individual mobile homes which are adjacent to one another) make an important contribution to the dwelling stock of Eastleigh, enabling people to have a home who either cannot afford to buy or rent a permanent dwelling or who do not wish to live in a permanent dwelling.
- 1.21 The Borough-wide Housing Needs Survey undertaken for the Council in 2002 identified a need for affordable housing in all parts of the Borough. The loss of mobile home parks could exacerbate this problem by depleting the supply of affordable housing. The Council therefore wishes to ensure that the existing mobile home parks are retained.

14.CO	In order to safeguard the stock of lower cost housing in the Borough, to maintain the availability of alternative forms of housing and to prevent visually intrusive housing development on isolated sites in the countryside, planning permission will not be granted for the replacement of mobile home parks in the countryside by permanent housing.
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Re-Use of Buildings in the Countryside

- 1.22 Although the change of use of buildings in the countryside to certain uses, for example light industry (B1) may be acceptable, and have economic benefits, a change of use to residential is more likely to be considered inappropriate. Conversion to residential usually leads to substantial external changes, including windows, chimneys, garaging and the provision of private garden areas, all of which are likely to detract from the rural character of the locality and the architectural value of the building. The limited extent of the Borough's rural areas and their proximity to urban centres, indicates that in most cases, sustainability objectives are unlikely to be met by residential conversions. This approach is supported by Government advice in Planning Policy Statement 7 (August 2004) on 'Sustainable Development in Rural Areas'.

15.CO	Proposals for the use for employment purposes of appropriate existing buildings in the countryside will only be permitted where all the following criteria are met: <ul style="list-style-type: none">i. the Council is satisfied that the building is not required nor is likely in the foreseeable future to be required for agricultural purposes;
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- ii. the building is of a sound construction with a reasonable expectation of life and lends itself to conversion without significant building work being required. A structural survey will be required to support any application;
- iii. the design of any conversion or alterations retains the intrinsic qualities of the building and avoids inappropriate external alterations;
- iv. the proposal takes the form of a self-contained conversion, with no new buildings and any extensions comply with Policy 11.CO;
- v. the development does not affect the amenity of any existing residential properties by reason of noise, smell, fumes, vibration or lighting;
- vi. the development does not result in an unacceptable level of traffic generation, including heavy goods vehicles, or endanger existing road users, or necessitate changes to the highway network that are considered unacceptable and includes a green travel plan;
- vii. the proposal does not include extensive hard surfaced areas or open storage; and
- viii. any office development proposed has been subject to a sequential approach assessment.

- 16.CO Proposals for the residential use of existing buildings in the countryside will not be permitted unless they meet all the following criteria in addition to those in policy 15.CO:
- i. a residential use is preferable because it ensures the protection of the amenities of nearby housing and/or the rural environment and generates less traffic;
 - ii. a residential use is the most appropriate means of protecting and retaining the character of a building of architectural or historical interest or its setting; and
 - iii. new domestic features, such as garages, sheds and amenity areas are sited as close together and inconspicuously as possible, preferably enclosed within an existing group of buildings or a walled yard.

1.23 Where permission is granted for a change of use of agricultural buildings, the Council will normally rescind permitted development

rights in order to prevent an intensification of use occurring. The Council will also normally seek to restrict the erection of additional agricultural buildings elsewhere on the farm holding by means of a legally binding agreement.

Established Employment Sites Outside the Urban Edge

- 1.24 There are a number of employment sites in the Borough that lie outside the defined urban edge but which are long standing lawful uses. The Borough Council recognises the important role such sites play in providing a range and variety in the type of commercial premises available, particularly for small commercial enterprises and supports, in principle, their continuing operation. At the same time, however, it is keen to ensure that employment uses in the countryside do not operate to the detriment of either the character and appearance of the area, the surrounding highway network in terms of traffic generation or the residential amenity of the occupiers of nearby properties. Major trip generators are more appropriately located in town centres.

17.CO	Proposals to alter or redevelop existing authorised commercial, industrial or storage sites outside the urban edge will be permitted provided that the development meets all the following criteria: <ul style="list-style-type: none">i. it is for a use, and of a design, scale and lay-out which is in keeping with its surroundings and it is to be constructed in appropriate materials; andii. it would not result in a significant increase in traffic generation associated with the site.
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Landscape Character

- 1.25 A wide range of landscape types can be found within the Borough and they are identified in the Landscape Assessment carried out in March 1997. It is important that development proposals should reflect local landscape character by protecting, enhancing and restoring the key landscape characteristics. They should also take into account the broad landscape character areas identified in the County Council's document "The Hampshire Landscape: A Strategy for the Future (2000)".

18.CO	Development which fails to respect, or has an adverse impact on the intrinsic character of the landscape, will be refused.
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Landscape Features

- 1.26 To protect the character of the Borough's countryside (and open areas within the urban edge) it is important that features which contribute to the quality of the landscape are retained. Many of these features are also of considerable wildlife value. Where the Council is satisfied that the loss or dilution of a feature is unavoidable, developers will be expected to include appropriate replacement features.

19.CO	Development in the countryside or in urban areas will be refused if it would result in the loss of, or damage to locally important features in the landscape, such as water courses, ponds and lakes. Where the Council is satisfied that the loss or reduction of a feature is fully justified, it will require appropriate replacement features to be included in the proposals.
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Landscape Improvements

- 1.27 The Council is keen to secure landscape improvements and enhance biodiversity wherever appropriate.
- 1.28 Areas proposed for environmental enhancement are shown in diagrammatic form on the Proposals Map. If other opportunities arise, the Council will encourage further improvements throughout the Borough but in particular the Council will seek to:
- i. achieve the removal or amelioration of eyesores such as derelict buildings, dilapidated fences and unauthorised signs;
 - ii. improve and bring into positive use derelict, disused, under-used and de-graded land.
 - iii. improve the landscape along major transportation corridors;
 - iv. improve and reinforce boundaries between built-up and green areas and link these areas through appropriate landscape treatment;
 - v. plant trees and shrubs, tree groups and hedgerows on expanses of open land in order to improve visual amenity, whilst acknowledging the need to avoid blocking important long views;
 - vi. control inappropriate and non-conforming uses of land; and
 - vi. control advertising and the erection of inappropriate notices and signs.

- 1.29 The Council will seek to secure improvements in the appearance and quality of the landscape through negotiations with landowners and developers. Priority will be given to those areas identified on the Proposals Map for landscape improvement.

20.CO In the areas identified for landscape improvements, as shown on the Proposals Map, proposals which would prejudice such improvements or which in themselves would be detrimental to the quality of the landscape in these areas, will not be permitted. Developers' willingness to contribute towards landscape improvements will be a material consideration in the assessment of planning applications.

- 1.30 Countryside Stewardship, a voluntary Agri-Environmental scheme within the England Rural Development Plan, also exists to help in conserving and improving the environment.

Minerals and Waste Disposal

- 1.31 Hampshire County Council is responsible for minerals and waste disposal and the Hampshire Minerals Local Plan (adopted in December 1998) provides more detailed guidance.
- 1.32 The Borough Council is consulted by the County Council on proposals for mineral extraction and waste disposal and will take into account the policies of this Plan in formulating its views. The Borough Council will in particular take into consideration:
- i. the impact of the proposal on the local transport network;
 - ii. the impact of the proposal on the countryside, sites of nature conservation value, woodland, best and most versatile agricultural land, the historic environment and other interests of acknowledged importance;
 - iii. the effect of the proposal on adjoining land uses;
 - iv. the need to secure the highest standard of restoration, which includes measures to maximise the nature conservation potential of the site;
 - v. the impact of the proposal on the quality of life of local residents:
and
 - vi. the need to ensure an appropriate after-use for agriculture, nature conservation or amenity, which takes into account the quality of the restored land.