

CHAPTER 8

TOURISM AND RECREATION

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8.0 INTRODUCTION

8.0.1 Leisure time has increased dramatically over the last century with increasing life span, longer and paid holidays and a shorter working week. One of the effects on this increase in leisure time has seen tourism become one of the major growth industries in the UK.

8.1 TOURISM

8.1.1 Tourism is a major factor in the local economy and contributes to the maintenance and enhancement of employment opportunities and services. Whilst it is the quality of the natural and built environment of the District that attracts most visitors, Teesdale contains a number of tourist attractions such as Barnard Castle, Bowes Museum, High Force and the Pennine Way. As well as having its own attractions within the district, Teesdale is also an ideal base for visiting many major attractions such as, Beamish Museum, Durham Cathedral, Hadrians Wall, Hartlepool Marina, Metro Centre and Tees Barrage. As interest in environmental issues and conservation grows, so will the number of people wishing to take short breaks based on the enjoyment of the countryside.

8.1.2 Tourism directly and indirectly assists the local economy by creating employment and providing a valuable source of income, particularly in retailing and catering.

8.1.3 The economic development strategy recognises the importance of tourism in the local economy. It is therefore an activity that will be encouraged in a way which maximises the benefits to visitors and residents alike, and minimises its potential impact on social, economic and environmental interests.

8.2 RECREATION

8.2.3 Teesdale, due to its sparse population and the predominance of high quality countryside throughout the area, presents both residents and visitors with a range of easily accessible informal recreation opportunities, such as walking, riding, sports and active recreation. The area is fortunate in this respect compared to many areas where such opportunities are much less accessible. The geographical size and the low population density

present problems for more formal recreation opportunities and other service provision by virtue of their lack of viability, as facilities are often unavailable or located a considerable distance from many of their potential users.

8.2.4 A major achievement has been the building of the Sports Centre in Barnard Castle and this is likely to be the centre for the expansion of any further formal recreation provision by the local authority. Most of the other facilities which exist at the present time are the result of the efforts of various sporting clubs, or have been developed as commercial enterprises. Provision by the District Council continues to be limited by the financial resources of the authority.

8.2.5 The main role of the plan, in the formal recreation opportunities, is to maintain at least the existing levels of provision and to enable the enhancement of existing facilities.

8.3 POLICY OBJECTIVES

8.3.1 The policies of the plan will aim to achieve the following objectives:-

- ◆ To encourage the development of tourism schemes, that do not damage the environment, disturb wildlife or detrimentally effect the interests of local residents.
- ◆ To promote sustainable tourism.
- ◆ To encourage the provision of a wider range of holiday accommodation.
- ◆ To develop an increased level of recreation provision in the district.
- ◆ To encourage the development of formal recreation facilities which are sensitive to the environment and do not detrimentally affect the interests of local residents.

8.4 POLICIES

8.4.1 TOURIST ACCOMMODATION

8.4.2 Tourist accommodation is characterised by small scale bed and breakfast businesses, self-catering in farm cottages, caravanning and camping sites and relatively small hotels.

8.4.3 New visitor accommodation is required to service the needs of both tourist and business people. It is expected that most of this new accommodation will be located within existing settlements. Proposals will only be acceptable where it will not adversely affect the amenities, neighbouring land uses or the character of the area as a whole.

POLICY TR1

NEW HOTELS, MOTELS, GUEST HOUSES, BED AND BREAKFAST AND SELF-CATERING ACCOMMODATION OR EXTENSIONS TO EXISTING ACCOMMODATION ON SITES WITHIN SETTLEMENTS AS IDENTIFIED IN POLICY H3, WILL BE PERMITTED PROVIDED THAT:-

- A) THEY SATISFACTORILY RESPECT THE FORM, CHARACTER AND SETTING OF THE SETTLEMENT; AND**
- B) ADEQUATE SERVICING AND ACCESS ARE PROVIDED; AND**
- C) THE PROPOSAL DOES NOT ADVERSELY AFFECT THE AMENITY OF OCCUPANTS OF ADJOINING PROPERTIES; AND**
- D) ITS DESIGN IN TERMS OF SCALE, PROPORTION, MATERIALS AND ARCHITECTURAL DETAIL IS SYMPATHETIC TO ITS SURROUNDINGS.**

PROPOSALS SHOULD COMPLY WITH THE CRITERIA OF POLICY GD1 WHERE RELEVANT TO THE DEVELOPMENT INVOLVED

8.5 ACCOMMODATION WITHIN THE COUNTRYSIDE

8.5.1 Whilst it is anticipated that most new visitor accommodation will be provided within the built-up area, in certain instances, where there is an existing farmstead or similar group of buildings, there may be an opportunity to convert existing buildings or construct new ones, provided that development does not have an adverse impact on the amenities of the countryside or neighbouring land users.

8.5.2 In order to prevent permanent occupation or use of visitor accommodation within the countryside by one or more persons, and therefore the effective creation of new residential property, approvals for such development will only be acceptable with a condition or planning obligation.

POLICY TR2

WITHIN THE COUNTRYSIDE, PLANNING PERMISSION WILL BE GRANTED FOR NEW VISITOR ACCOMMODATION WITHIN CONVERSIONS OF EXISTING BUILDINGS OR WHERE NEW BUILDINGS CAN BE ADDED TO AN EXISTING FARMSTEAD OR EXISTING TRADITIONAL GROUP OF BUILDINGS, PROVIDED THAT:-

- A) THE PROPOSAL DOES NOT DETRACT FROM THE CHARACTER OF THE AREA; AND**
- B) THE SCALE, DESIGN AND MATERIALS OF THE PROPOSAL ARE APPROPRIATE TO THE EXISTING GROUP OF BUILDINGS; AND**
- C) THE PROPOSAL IS NOT DETRIMENTAL TO ROAD SAFETY; AND**
- D) WHERE IT INVOLVES CONVERSION OF AN EXISTING BUILDING THEN THAT CONVERSION ACCORDS WITH POLICY BENV13.**

AND SUBJECT TO COMPLYING WITH THE CRITERIA OF POLICY GD1, WHERE RELEVANT.

8.6 CAMPING, CARAVANS AND CHALET DEVELOPMENT

8.6.1 Chalet, caravan and camping sites are an important element of tourist accommodation provision. These developments are considered appropriate within certain locations in the countryside.

8.6.2 The development of caravans or chalet sites within the countryside, can, however have a severe effect on the landscape, and careful attention must be paid to ensure that new sites do not detract from the appearance of the surrounding environment. The development of a site where the layout has been comprehensively planned so chalets and caravans are adequately concealed throughout the year, would be encouraged provided that the scale of development in any one area would not adversely affect the landscape, amenities of the local residents or result in an excessive concentration of such a use in that area.

- 8.6.3 In instances where the tree cover is deciduous and the site is left exposed during the autumn and winter months, the Council will impose a condition that the caravans will be removed between the 31st October and 1st March in any year.

POLICY TR3

WITHIN THE COUNTRYSIDE, PERMISSION WILL BE GRANTED FOR CAMPING, AND/OR CARAVAN SITES AND CHALETS WHERE:-

- A) THE PROPOSAL DOES NOT DETRACT FROM THE CHARACTER OF THE AREA; AND**
- B) THE SITE IS ADEQUATELY SCREENED BY THE LOCAL TOPOGRAPHY OR EXISTING TREE COVER IS WITHIN THE CONTROL OF/OR MANAGED BY THE APPLICANT; AND**
- C) SCALE, DESIGN AND MATERIALS OF CHALET DEVELOPMENT ARE APPROPRIATE TO THE LOCALITY; AND**
- D) SITE SERVICES ARE LIMITED IN SCALE TO THE NEEDS OF THE SITE RESIDENTS ONLY AND DESIGNED TO SUIT THE LOCATION; AND**
- E) THE SITE IS SERVED BY ADEQUATE INFRASTRUCTURE; AND**
- F) THE PROPOSAL DOES NOT ADVERSELY AFFECT THE AMENITIES OF NEIGHBOURING OCCUPANCIES.**
- G) THE PROPOSAL IS NOT AT RISK FROM FLOODING OR INCREASES THE RISK OF FLOODING ELSEWHERE, IN LINE WITH POLICY ENV15.**

PROPOSALS SHOULD COMPLY WITH THE CRITERIA OF POLICY GD1 WHERE RELEVANT TO THE DEVELOPMENT INVOLVED.

8.7 OCCUPANCY CONDITIONS FOR CARAVANS AND CHALETS

- 8.7.1 Visitor accommodation in the form of static caravans, chalets and other forms of self service accommodation is not normally designed, built or located for permanent residential use. In order to ensure that visitor accommodation is prevented from being a permanent home in the countryside (thereby reducing the stock of visitor accommodation within the District), the Council will impose an occupancy condition on all new sites which are approved.

POLICY TR4

PERMISSION FOR STATIC CARAVANS CHALETS AND OTHER DWELLINGS PERMITTED EXPRESSLY FOR HOLIDAY ACCOMMODATION WILL ONLY BE GRANTED IF OCCUPATION BY ANY ONE PERSON OR GROUPS OF PERSONS IS LIMITED TO NOT MORE THAT 6 WEEKS IN ANY ONE CALENDAR YEAR

8.8 STORAGE OF CARAVANS

8.8.1 The availability of storage sites for caravans especially in winter will ease the problems caused by caravans kept on drives at home, or on farms without planning permission. Storage may be acceptable within appropriately screened areas of caravan sites or on sites such as industrial estates.

POLICY TR5

THE STORAGE OF TOURING CARAVANS WILL BE PERMITTED IN THE OPEN COUNTRYSIDE IF:

- A) THE CARAVANS ARE NOT PROMINENT IN THE LANDSCAPE FROM EITHER LONG OR SHORT RANGE VIEWS; AND**
- B) YEAR ROUND SCREENING IS PROVIDED.**

8.9 OUTDOOR RECREATION

8.9.1 Outdoor recreation for Sport and Leisure may take the form of parks and playing fields or informal open space. All such areas, whether in private or public ownership, are valuable in a number of other ways. They form part of the character and identity of a locality; and are refuges for wildlife. They may offer opportunities for quiet relaxation and provide contact with the natural world.

8.9.2 The Council therefore considers it desirable to protect all existing areas of open space which are currently used for recreation.

POLICY TR6

DEVELOPMENT WHICH WOULD RESULT IN THE PERMANENT LOSS OF PUBLIC AND PRIVATE OPEN SPACE USED FOR RECREATION PURPOSES, AND SPORTS FACILITIES AND PLAYING FIELDS, WILL NOT BE PERMITTED UNLESS:-

- A) SPORTS AND RECREATION FACILITIES CAN BEST BE RETAINED AND ENHANCED THROUGH THE REDEVELOPMENT FOR THE SMALL PART OF THE SITE; OR**
- B) ALTERNATIVE PROVISION OF EQUIVALENT COMMUNITY BENEFIT IS MADE AVAILABLE. THE DEFINITION OF EQUIVALENT COMMUNITY BENEFIT IN THIS CASE WOULD BE THAT AN ALTERNATIVE PROVISION SHOULD BE OF SIMILAR SIZE AND LOCATION WHICH IS EQUALLY ACCESSIBLE TO THE COMMUNITY IT SERVES. OR**
- C) THE LAND IS NOT REQUIRED TO SATISFY KNOWN LOCAL NEEDS.**

8.9.3 Outdoor recreation can be an appropriate use of land along the urban fringes. It can act as a buffer between agricultural and urban use, protecting the former from vandalism and trespass.

POLICY TR7

OUTDOOR RECREATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS WILL BE PERMITTED PROVIDED THAT;

- A) THE BEST AGRICULTURAL LAND IS PROTECTED FROM IRREVERSIBLE DEVELOPMENT; AND**
- B) NEW BUILDINGS ARE SITED, DESIGNED AND LANDSCAPED TO COMPLEMENT THE SURROUNDINGS; AND**
- C) THERE IS NO UNDUE DISTURBANCE TO OCCUPIERS OF NEARBY PROPERTIES OR OTHER COUNTRYSIDE USERS; AND**
- D) THE ROAD NETWORK IS CAPABLE OF ACCOMMODATING THE DEVELOPMENT.**
- E) PROPOSALS SHOULD CONFORM WITH POLICIES GD1, ENV5, ENV6, ENV7, ENV8 & BENV11.**

8.10 PROVISION OF FORMAL RECREATION AREAS

8.10.1 The need for formal recreation areas has been identified in Butterknowle and Gainford. The Council recognises the important role that formal recreation can have in a community and will support the development of formal recreation areas adjoining settlements. As a particular need has been identified in the above mentioned settlements land has been identified in the Plan for the provision of a formal recreation area.

8.10.2 It is the intention to provide a recreational facility close to the village to provide a community and social facility. This would involve a cricket pitch, full size football pitch and possibly smaller football pitches for youth football. The size of area allocated is almost identical to that which would be required for a village the size of Gainford under Policy TR11 and the National Playing Fields Association Standards. The population of Gainford at 1991 was 1,073 which would equate to the provision of up to 1.93 hectares of outdoor sport, the site allocated is approximately 1.95 hectares.

POLICY TR8

THE COUNCIL WILL ENCOURAGE THE PROVISION OF FORMAL RECREATION AREAS IN OR ADJOINING SETTLEMENTS.

POLICY TR9

LAND IS ALLOCATED FOR FORMAL RECREATION PURPOSES IN BUTTERKNOWLE AND GAINFORD AS SHOWN ON THE INSET PLANS

8.11 PROTECTION OF RIGHTS OF WAY AND RECREATIONAL PATHS

8.11.1 The existing footpath network of public rights of way, and other routes across open space and private land within the District, provides many opportunities for both long and short distance recreational walks. The most important of these walks are the Teesdale Way and the Pennine Way.

8.11.2 Durham County Council are the relevant authority with responsibility to maintain and protect public rights of way, and the Council will work with them to ensure that the rights of way network is safeguarded.

POLICY TR10

DEVELOPMENT WHICH WOULD DIRECTLY AFFECT A PUBLIC RIGHT OF WAY WILL ONLY BE PERMITTED IF AN ACCEPTABLE AND EQUIVALENT ALTERNATIVE ROUTE IS PROVIDED. WHERE POSSIBLE, DEVELOPMENT SHOULD FACILITATE THE INCORPORATION RATHER THAN DIVERSION OF PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY.

POLICY TR10A

THE DISTRICT COUNCIL WILL SEEK TO MAINTAIN EXISTING MAJOR RECREATIONAL ROUTES AS INDICATED ON THE PROPOSALS MAP. THE DISTRICT COUNCIL WILL ALSO SEEK, IN CONJUNCTION WITH DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL AND LANDOWNERS, THE PROVISION OF NEW ROUTES.

8.12 PROVISION OF OPEN SPACE

8.12.1 The Council supports the recommendation of the National Playing Fields Association which sets a minimum standard for 2.4 hectares per 1,000 population. The figure is subdivided as follows:

1.6 – 1.8 ha for outdoor sport (youth and adult use)

0.2 – 0.3 ha for equipped childrens playgrounds

0.4 – 0.5 ha for informal children’s play space within housing areas

POLICY TR11

THE COUNCIL WILL SEEK TO ENSURE THAT THE PROVISION OF OPEN SPACE FOR OUTDOOR RECREATION WITHIN THE DISTRICT IS EVENLY DISTRIBUTED AND IS MAINTAINED AT A LEVEL, WHICH MEETS THE NEEDS OF ITS POPULATION. A MINIMUM OVERALL STANDARD OF 2.4 HA. OF OUTDOOR SPORTS AND PLAY SPACE PER 1,000 POPULATION WILL BE SOUGHT