

7. Economy



The Traverse, Bury St Edmunds

Introduction

- 7.1 The activities of a number of bodies, including the East of England Development Agency, the East of England Inward Investment Agency, the Suffolk Development Agency and District Councils in Suffolk will influence the future economy of the county. Some of these are touched upon in section 5 of this Plan.
- 7.2 One of the County Council's corporate objectives in its Policy and Performance Plan 2001 is "to seek to make economic growth sustainable in order to preserve and enhance the quality of life." Within this objective, the Council's priority is to support the development of new and existing small and medium-sized enterprises. The County Council's economic regeneration role embraces:
- (a) business support and community enterprise;
 - (b) local regeneration programmes, as a lead and contributing partner;
 - (c) external funding, to ensure Suffolk maximises its "take" from European and UK funding programmes in tackling the county's urban and rural regeneration needs, for example, at Lowestoft, Ipswich and the market towns and in the Rural Priority Area;
 - (d) inward investment and tourism promotion;
 - (e) rural programmes;
 - (f) European policy and funding;
 - (g) partnership development and support, for example, the Suffolk Development Agency and links and liaison with business.
- 7.3 Structure Plan policies have an important part to play in promoting employment growth and competitiveness, by guiding the scale and location of employment land use, by providing the framework for investment in infrastructure and by fostering a high quality environment within which to encourage investment.
- 7.4 Town centres are important concentrations of retailing, commercial activity and employment and the Plan seeks to maintain and enhance the vitality of these centres and their contribution to a healthy retailing sector. The Plan also provides a policy framework for the development of tourism.
- 7.5 Government guidance relevant to the policies in this section includes: PPG4 "Industrial and Commercial Development and Small Firms"; PPG6 "Town Centres and Retail Developments"; PPG7 "The Countryside - Environmental Quality and Economic and Social Development"; and PPG21 "Tourism". The policies that follow are consistent with this guidance and with Regional Planning Guidance.

Employment Development

- 7.6 Unless otherwise stated, "employment development" refers to development in Classes B1, B2 and B8 of the Use Classes Order 1987 (as amended). Guidance is also given in the economy policies on uses such as retailing, leisure and office development which can all generate significant levels of employment.

Existing Uses

- 7.7 The County Council recognises the importance of maintaining the well-being of existing businesses for the competitiveness of the Suffolk and national economies and the plan provides for their continued development.

ECON1 Expansion of an existing employment use will be acceptable where there is no material conflict with residential amenity or with policies for transport or protection of the environment.

Location of New Employment Development

- 7.8 Most employment uses should continue to be located in or near towns which are the focus of labour supply, service provision and communication networks. Unless there is an overriding need to be located in the countryside outside towns and villages such development should not be located there except as provided for in policies CS2 and ECON4.

ECON2 Most new employment development, including major development, will be located in or adjoining towns on areas allocated in local plans. Such development will not be acceptable in the open countryside other than as provided for by other policies in the Plan. New allocations should

- (a) have good access to the Primary Route Network;
- (b) be easily accessible by means other than the private car and lorry;
- (c) be well related to major housing areas, contributing to a mix of uses in large development areas where possible.

In allocating sites, preference will be given to development areas within the built up area of towns.

7.9 For certain types of employment development such as major offices where a substantial number of trips are likely to be attracted, the sequential approach to the location of such development should be adopted, as set out in policy ECON10.

7.10 Planning Policy Guidance note 6 stresses that planning applications for retail development should not normally be allowed on land designated for other uses in an approved development plan. The same is true for many other land uses. Land should normally be used for the purposes for which it is allocated in Local Plans. In order to ensure that the desire to see the redevelopment of brownfield sites does not result in a shortage of sites for employment uses, policy ECON3 provides guidance on the circumstances where the redevelopment of existing and allocated employment sites will be acceptable.

ECON3 The use of land for non-employment purposes which is currently or was last in employment use and/or allocated for employment use will only be acceptable where:

- (a) **adequate provision exists elsewhere having regard to all the criteria of ECON5; and**
- (b) **the site is inaccessibly located and otherwise constrained so that it is unlikely to be developed for employment purposes within the plan period; and**
- (c) **redevelopment of the site would assist in urban regeneration or bring about environmental improvements to an underused and/or derelict site; and**
- (d) **there is no material conflict with residential amenity or with policies for transport or protection of the environment.**

7.11 In support of promoting employment growth, regeneration and competitiveness, the development of small scale employment uses such as craft, service or light industrial activities in suitable premises or locations in both urban and rural areas is supported.

ECON4 New small scale employment uses will be acceptable:

- (a) **in existing buildings;**
- (b) **on unallocated sites within towns;**

(c) on sites in or closely related to villages, where there is no material conflict with residential amenity or with policies for transport or protection of the environment.

Provision of Land for Employment Development

7.12 The provision of employment land is a key element in the Structure Plan. It is necessary to ensure a readily available supply of developable land in a variety of locations, scales and types, to enable an immediate response to the needs of businesses.

7.13 Forecasts of future change in employment tend to rely on the extrapolation of historic data and should be treated with caution as a basis for long term planning. Furthermore, many of the new employment opportunities likely to arise in Suffolk over the next 15 years are likely to come about through changes on sites that are already used for employment purposes, particularly those in town centres. Difficulties may also arise in matching the demand for and supply of employment land, owing to timing, servicing, ownership and marketing factors. Given these considerations, policy ECON5 does not provide statistical guidance on the scale of provision for new employment development to be made through Local Plans. Instead the policy sets down those factors which should be taken into account in determining the scale of any new allocations to be made in those plans, and their location.

7.14 EEDA's vision of a knowledge-based economy is referred to in paragraph 5.14. In order to maximise opportunities to increase the number of technology and research-based establishments within Suffolk, local planning authorities will wish to consider whether there is sufficient provision of high quality sites for such uses, in line with the guidance in policy ECON5.

ECON5 Provision will be made for new employment taking into account:

- (a) **the locational guidance in policies CS2, CS6, CS10, ECON2, ECON4, ECON6, ECON7, ECON9, ECON10 and T15;**
- (b) **the amount, location and availability of existing commitments for employment uses;**
- (c) **historic rates of take up of land for employment uses;**

- (d) the needs of existing and new businesses, including special needs such as port related and high technology development;**
- (e) the need to seek to ensure the availability of a range and variety of sites;**
- (f) policies for transport and protection of the environment.**

The Economy of Rural Suffolk

- 7.15 This section looks at issues surrounding the economy of rural Suffolk, the policy response in this Plan and how this relates to the broader activities of the County Council and other agencies.
- 7.16 Agriculture is going through a period of major change, in part generated by review of the Common Agricultural Policy and Government support for the industry, and levels of employment are continuing to fall. Further uncertainty has been created by the impact of diseases such as swine fever and foot and mouth. The continuing decline of employment in traditional rural activities has been partly offset by growth in "footloose" industries located often through choice rather than necessity, to the extent that the rural economy is increasingly difficult to define.
- 7.17 The limited range of job opportunities and relatively low wages associated with the traditional rural economy need to be addressed through a positive approach to diversification. PPG7 "The Countryside - Environmental Quality and Economic Development" stresses that rural areas can accommodate many forms of development without detriment providing location and design of development is handled with sensitivity. It also emphasises the importance of focusing development on existing towns and villages thereby strengthening their local economy and sustaining local services whilst protecting the open countryside and reducing the need to travel. Policies ENV2, ECON2 and ECON4 allow for both the re-use and adaptation of existing buildings and the introduction of appropriate new development for employment purposes, to assist diversification in an environmentally sustainable way. The spread of information technology has an important role to play in this respect. Policy ECON11 seeks the introduction of new rural services and facilities, and the retention of existing ones.
- 7.18 Recreation, leisure and tourism make a major and growing contribution to employment in rural areas. If marketed effectively, small-scale provision linking attractions and promoting sustainable tourism can help to regenerate rural areas. EU and EEDA funded projects have broadened the tourism base by creating new tourism products such as cycle routes and visits to historic houses, improved the quality of existing facilities and provided enhanced signing and tourist information.
- 7.19 Tourism needs to develop in a way which avoids inappropriate pressure of visitor numbers or adverse landscape or amenity (e.g. noise) impacts of development such as golf courses or motor sports. Sustainable tourism offers particular opportunities for employment development in rural areas. Policies ECON12, ECON13, ECON14 and REC3 provide for potential economic benefits to be realised while retaining appropriate environmental safeguards.
- 7.20 The issue of high technology development is addressed in paragraphs 7.26-7.28. However, the issue of new technologies should not be regarded solely in an urban context. The greater use of information technology, both within businesses and homes and opportunities for remote working offer potentially significant benefits to rural areas. Not only could the use of such technologies result in economic and employment benefits, but by reducing the need to travel and retaining population in rural areas during the day, environmental and social benefits may also result.
- 7.21 Maintaining and strengthening the health and vitality of rural communities cannot be achieved by land-use policy alone. Parts of rural East Suffolk are designated by the EU as an Objective 2 Transitional Area and by the Countryside Agency as a Rural Priority Area. These designations have been made on the basis of a range of statistical indicators of disadvantage and give access to sources of funding for rural regeneration through partnership between organisations including local authorities.
- 7.22 Although these designated areas represent a concentration of rural disadvantage, many similar issues are experienced at a lower intensity or degree of severity across the rural county. The Suffolk Development Agency Rural Economy Working Group provides a means for sharing of good practice, replicating or adapting economic development projects from designated areas across the county and for developing new county-wide schemes. An example is the Village Shop Development Scheme, with £160,000 funding over two years from October 1998, which is a partnership between all Suffolk's local authorities, the Countryside Agency, the

Learning and Skills Council and the private sector with funding from the EU.

- 7.23 During the period covered by this Plan, the framework for rural regeneration funding is likely to undergo fundamental change. A review of European Structural Funding to cover the period beyond 2006 will result in a concentration of support, and is likely to mean fewer resources for areas such as the East of England whose needs will increasingly be set alongside those of eastern European countries. In parallel with this, the UK Government is reviewing its own approach to regeneration following the setting up of the Regional Development Agencies, and will review the current Rural Priority Area boundaries in 2004. It is hoped that these reviews will provide some flexibility to support projects outside designated areas where they are addressing acknowledged issues. A bid for funding from the Leader + programme is being prepared by Suffolk ACRE on behalf of a wider partnership, to cover the rural parts of Babergh and Forest Heath Districts and St Edmundsbury Borough.
- 7.24 Throughout this period of change, it will be important to emphasise problems such as poor accessibility, reducing levels of local services, low income levels, social exclusion, a limited range of employment and dependence on a small number of employers, which typify the economy across rural Suffolk.

Warehousing and Distribution

- 7.25 The transport sector plays an important role in the Suffolk economy. Additional land for distribution activities related to port traffic growth, and any distribution facilities other than those for purely local purposes, should be located on employment sites well related to the primary route network, so as to minimise the environmental problems caused by heavy goods vehicles using unsuitable roads. It should be noted that not all employment sites with good access to the road network will necessarily be suitable for warehousing and distribution development. In the case of this policy, "good access to the primary route network" means that goods vehicles from the new facility should be able to gain direct access to the primary route network within a short distance and without causing material damage to the built or rural environment or creating safety hazards. A Lorry Route Network has been identified to provide additional guidance on this matter. There may be circumstances where a new distribution facility is largely rail-served and access of lorry traffic to the primary route network may be less critical in the consideration of proposals.

ECON6 Warehousing, haulage depots and container compounds for non-local distribution purposes will only be acceptable on employment sites:

- (a) with good access to the Primary Route Network, or in cases where minimal lorry traffic would be generated, with good access to the railways;**
- (b) where there would be no material conflict with policies for transport or protection of the environment.**

High Technology Development

- 7.26 "High technology" generally refers to companies which use telecommunications or information technology or make or research products that further the spread of technological advance, such as microelectronics or biotechnology. Such companies are frequently found in clusters, where symbiotic relationships can develop in commercial activity, research projects and the interchange of ideas. Government policy stresses the importance of encouraging cluster development.
- 7.27 British Telecom's Advanced Communications Research Centre at Adastral Park, Martlesham Heath is the largest high technology development in the county and is of major significance to the local economy. This facility has begun to act as a focus and catalyst for further high technology development, for example through its 'Brightstar' incubator, and Supplementary Planning Guidance has been issued for the wider area, including a proposal for a new Innovation Park. The strong growth of research-based and technology industries in the Cambridge area also offers the opportunity to diversify the economy of various parts of Suffolk. This applies particularly to those towns close to Cambridge, such as Haverhill and Newmarket, and to Ipswich, where the IP-City cluster and links to Cambridge are being actively promoted. Smaller scale high technology development is likely to be accommodated within the terms of policy ECON4.

Business Clusters

- 7.28 In consultation with EEDA, local planning authorities should make particular efforts to facilitate the development of business clusters. These are of increasing importance as sources of innovation and drivers of economic growth. Adastral Park at Martlesham Heath is suitable as one such significant focus for a cluster in the technology and knowledge-driven sector in

Suffolk. Opportunities to promote the clustering of other types of activity, in line with the EEDA and SDA Economic Development Strategies should also be considered.

ECON7 The establishment and growth of business clusters is supported, and provision for them will be considered in local plans, taking into account:

- (a) the role such development will play in meeting national, regional and county economic development and competitiveness objectives;**
- (b) opportunities for clusters of telecommunications and information technology businesses in the Ipswich Policy area;**
- (c) opportunities to attract high technology businesses offered by links to Cambridge;**
- (d) special needs of other particular sectors and innovative activities;**
- (e) the need for clusters to be well related to centres of population and employment and to respect policies for transport and protection of the environment.**

Land allocated for business clusters in accordance with these criteria will be protected from other forms of development.

Adastral Park at Martlesham Heath is suitable as one significant focus for a business cluster in Suffolk

Town and Local Centres and Villages

7.29 In the context of Suffolk, there are three groups of centres to which different policies may be applied. These are:

- (a) town centres, which provide a broad range of facilities and services and which function as a focus for the whole community of that settlement;
- (b) local centres, generally located within existing urban areas and comprising a small group of shops often including at least a newsagent, general grocery store, sub-post office and possibly a pharmacy. Larger local centres could also include non-retail services such as banks, building societies, health centres and restaurants: this definition excludes single 'stand alone' supermarkets and superstores;

- (c) villages, where a number of services may be provided. These may be concentrated in one centre or distributed through the settlement.

7.30 In Suffolk **town centres** form the focus of the urban communities and their wider hinterland. They represent a substantial amount of public and private investment which it makes sense to build upon through town centre management strategies and similar initiatives. For the purposes of policy ECON8, towns are defined as: Aldeburgh; Beccles; Brandon; Bungay; Bury St Edmunds; Debenham; Eye; Felixstowe; Framlingham; Hadleigh; Halesworth; Haverhill; Ipswich; Leiston; Lowestoft; Mildenhall; Needham Market; Newmarket; Saxmundham; Southwold; Stowmarket; Sudbury and Woodbridge.

7.31 The proximity of a considerable number of uses promotes competition. All of the town centres have a variety of facilities grouped together, such as leisure, public services, commercial offices and libraries as well as shopping. Thus one journey to a centre can serve several purposes. Furthermore as they act as a node for public transport services, greater use of these facilities can be encouraged than would be the case with a location away from the centre, easy access being possible for those without the use of a car.

7.32 Therefore from the standpoint of sustainable development and social equity it is reasonable to place considerable emphasis on the role of the town centre as a location for a variety of different uses. Government guidance reflects this conclusion. PPG13 "Transport" and the revised PPG6 "Town Centres and Retail Developments" stress the importance of town centres and reaffirm the commitment to help safeguard the vitality of towns and the economic viability of their centres in particular. They advise that this should be achieved not only by supporting their retailing role but by maintaining a wide range of other uses there, including certain types of employment such as offices which attract a significant number of trips, as well as leisure, entertainment, hospitals, higher education and other such uses.

7.33 Government guidance also notes that mixed-use development including residential development can increase activity in the centre throughout the whole day and stimulate other activities in the centre so adding to their vitality. Many town centre sites have opportunities for a range of different types of housing responding to the increasing diversity of household types envisaged in the future.

7.34 **Local centres** can vary from a small parade of shop units up to centres which contain several dozen shops. In some areas they may be described as district centres. They tend to meet people's day-to-day needs and with their wide distribution through the urban area enable a substantial proportion of the population to reach them by foot or cycle, thus reducing dependence on the car.

7.35 It has not been considered appropriate to sub-divide town centres. The reference to the character of a town centre in ECON9(a) and application of the environment policies should ensure that development is of a scale and nature appropriate to a town's position in the settlement hierarchy. However, there may need to be some flexibility in the interpretation of this policy since the role of individual town centres may change over time.

7.36 Within the period of this Structure Plan, the introduction of e-commerce and home shopping may have an impact on shopping patterns. Local planning authorities should keep these matters under review and amend their strategies for the town centres and other shopping facilities as appropriate.

ECON8 The extent of town and local centres will be defined in local plans. The vitality, viability and character of these centres will be maintained and enhanced by:

- (a) **improving the quality and range of retailing facilities;**
- (b) **providing for service, business, educational, leisure and residential uses;**
- (c) **improving the environment and transport facilities through both public and private sector investment.**

ECON9 New development which is likely to attract a substantial number of trips will only be acceptable where there is no material adverse impact on:

- (a) **the vitality, viability or character of a town centre;**
- (b) **the local plan strategy for a town centre;**
- (c) **future investment necessary to safeguard the vitality and viability of a town centre;**

subject to the locational guidance in ECON10 and where there is no material conflict with residential amenity or policies for transport or protection of the environment.

7.37 Policy ECON10 adopts a sequential approach towards the location of the uses identified in policy ECON9. This gives priority to development in town centres, in order to derive benefits from the advantages identified in paragraph 7.31 above. In addition the role of local centres is recognised.

ECON10 Development consistent with ECON9 will be acceptable:

- (a) **within town centres;**
- (b) **adjoining a town centre where a need for the proposed development can be demonstrated and there are no suitable alternative sites available within the town centre;**
- (c) **away from but within easy walking distance of the town centre or within a local centre where a need for the proposed development can be demonstrated and there are no suitable alternative sites available within or adjoining the town centre;**
- (d) **within towns but outside of local centres and not within easy walking distance of the town centre where a need for the proposed development can be demonstrated and:**
 - (i) **there are no suitable alternative sites available within the town or a local centre or within easy walking distance of the town centre; and**
 - (ii) **the proposed site is easily accessible from a wide catchment area by pedestrians, cyclists and users of public transport.**
- (e) **outside towns only where a need for the proposed development can be demonstrated and:**
 - (i) **there are no suitable alternative sites available within the town; and**
 - (ii) **the proposed site is easily accessible from a wide catchment area by pedestrians, cyclists and users of public transport.**

The types of goods sold and services offered in retail developments outside of town centres will be controlled and the sub-division of units restricted where necessary.

7.38 In considering whether suitable alternative sites for any development are available within or adjoining a town centre to meet the terms of policy ECON10 developers will be expected to be flexible in their requirements. For example, they may need to consider reasonable variations in their proposals for the overall size and form of site, area of floorspace or scale of parking provision, where necessary to enable such a site to be used. Where potential sites exist which are subject to constraints such as multiple ownership, local authorities should where possible assist in resolving those constraints.

7.39 Applications for retail developments resulting in an increase of 2,500 sq.m. or more of gross floorspace should be supported by evidence that the proposal does not conflict with policy ECON9. 2,500 sq.m. is the cut-off point identified in PPG6 for such evidence. However the PPG notes that assessments of impact may also be necessary for smaller developments, such as those likely to have a large impact on market towns. Many of the smaller market towns in Suffolk may be adversely affected by development of less than 2,500 sq.m. gross floorspace. Local Planning Authorities may request Retail Impact Assessments where such an impact is considered likely.

7.40 Proposals outside town centres should demonstrate need and show that the sequential approach set out in policy ECON10 has been adopted in the site selection process. A site defined as adjoining a town centre for the purposes of policy ECON10(b) should be within easy walking distance of the primary shopping area and without any significant barriers to pedestrian movement (such as having to cross main roads), permitting one trip to serve several purposes.

7.41 As with local centres in towns, shopping, service and community facilities in **villages** reduce the need to travel and allow access for those without the use of a car. In recent years many Suffolk villages have seen the loss of facilities such as shops, post offices and public houses. While changes in social habits and travel patterns may mean that not all local facilities can survive in future, it is important to ensure that careful consideration is given to development proposals that would result in the complete loss of particular types of facility. In addition it is important to encourage the creation of new facilities where appropriate. This approach is consistent with guidance given in PPG6 and reflects local concern in many parts of the county.

7.42 Community facilities include convenience shops, post offices, public houses and community halls.

Convenience shops are those that derive over 50% of their turnover from the sale of food and other groceries.

ECON11 Proposals for new community facilities in keeping with the character and scale of villages will be encouraged where there is no material conflict with residential amenity or with policies for transport or protection of the environment. Development that would result in the complete loss of a particular type of community facility from a village will not be acceptable unless it can be demonstrated that the facility cannot be made viable in the foreseeable future.

Tourism

7.43 Tourism embraces travel for business and social purposes as well as for holidays and recreation. The industry is a substantial employer, and labour intensive. A study commissioned by Suffolk Local Authorities and produced by the East of England Tourist Board (EETB) estimated that in 1998 the overall value of tourism in Suffolk County was £550 million and tourism expenditure supported 14,000 full time equivalent jobs. Consequently the promotion of tourism is an important part of the County Council's economic development strategy, which also seeks to support the EETB in delivering its responsibilities for the overall development of tourism in the region, including marketing, research, accommodation, quality management and the tourist information network.

7.44 The industry has potential for rapid change, reflecting shifts in demand for different types of activity, and innovation. Planning policy needs to be sufficiently flexible to accommodate these characteristics. The Structure Plan seeks to ensure that tourism flourishes, while paying due regard to environmental quality, and the interests of communities under pressure from tourist activity.

7.45 The principal assets which attract visitors to Suffolk are:

- (a) the natural beauty and wildlife interest of the countryside and coast. Levels of use vary widely depending on accessibility and the intrinsic qualities of different areas;
- (b) the architectural heritage of castles, churches and country houses; the high quality built environments of towns such as Bury St Edmunds and Hadleigh; the wool settlements such as Lavenham and Kersey; and historic/archaeological sites such as West Stow, Landguard Point and Sutton Hoo;

- (c) the cultural heritage exemplified by the associations of Constable with Dedham Vale, Gainsborough with Sudbury, and Benjamin Britten with Snape and Aldeburgh;
 - (d) the traditional seaside resorts of Felixstowe and Lowestoft, and smaller towns such as Southwold and Kessingland, offering beaches, leisure activities and entertainment;
 - (e) the county town of Ipswich, with its historic buildings and waterfront, sport and leisure facilities and extensive parks;
 - (f) Newmarket, a world centre of horse racing;
 - (g) "activity tourism" such as sailing, walking, cycling and horse riding;
 - (h) the "Holiday Village" concept, such as that provided by Center Parcs at Elveden.
- 7.46 There are some important longer term trends in tourism of relevance to Suffolk. The domestic holiday market is generally static, but this conceals a decline in long, single destination holidays, and an increase in shorter breaks. Business tourism has increased slightly and related expenditure substantially over the last ten years and further growth is considered likely. Overseas visitors to East Anglia are continuing to increase but still form a small proportion of the total market, though significant in expenditure terms. Numbers of day trips into and within the region are also significant: it is estimated that there were over 19 million 'tourism' day visits in 1998.
- 7.47 The decline in the single-destination long holiday suggests that the seaside resorts will need to make continued provision for facilities, attractions and accommodation that are up to date, of high standard, and responsive to changing tastes. There appears to be scope for growth in short breaks, activity holidays and day trips in these centres to help offset reductions in long stay demand, but they face intense competition from both domestic and overseas destinations.
- 7.48 With a growing interest in heritage, countryside and the environment as an influence on holiday choice, further increases in visitor numbers are anticipated to take advantage of the attractions referred to in paragraph 7.45. There are particular opportunities for growth in countryside-based activities as a result of increases in overseas and day visitors. Heritage will remain a key attraction with particular emphasis on better presentation and interpretation of existing assets rather than a need to create new 'heritage experiences'.
- 7.49 The county's position, accessible from centres of population in London, the South East and the Midlands and with good links to Harwich International Port and the developing Stansted Airport, is favourable to the further growth of overseas tourism, day trips and short breaks.
- 7.50 Policy ECON12 gives support to the principle of further tourism development in Suffolk. However, there is potential conflict between tourism development and landscape and conservation objectives, particularly in sensitive designated areas. The need to resolve such conflicts is underlined by the degree to which the tourist industry is based upon the county's natural and built heritage. Although nowhere in the county currently experiences sustained unacceptable levels of visitor pressure, peak conditions at certain places on the coast and estuaries are a cause for concern.
- 7.51 There can be problems of pedestrian/vehicle conflict, damage to natural habitats and adverse visual impact. These are being addressed through the Constable Country Visitor Management Action Plan and the Suffolk Coast and Heaths AONB Project. Policy ECON12(c), in referring to development which may help to resolve existing conflicts, embraces proposals which may help to divert pressure from 'honeypot' locations. Policy REC3(d) covers such proposals elsewhere. New recreational facilities may also assist with urban regeneration. Particular examples of where this may be the case are the Ipswich Waterfront and at Lake Lothing in Lowestoft.
- 7.52 The Countryside Agency and English Tourist Council and their predecessors have produced useful guidance for developing rural tourism, most recently in "Working for the Countryside: a Strategy for Rural Tourism 2001-2005". The essence is that tourism in the countryside could draw on and benefit the countryside itself including its beauty, culture, history and wildlife, and should benefit those who live and work there. Proposals for new or improved tourist attractions should be determined in the light of the leisure and environment policies set out elsewhere in the Structure Plan, and the following supportive tourism policy.

ECON12 Subject to the environment and transport policies and to the more detailed guidance in policies ECON13, ECON14, REC2, REC3 and REC4, development of accommodation and facilities for tourists will be acceptable, in particular development which:

- (a) extends the tourist season and/or enhances the range of tourist attractions, particularly at Lowestoft and Felixstowe;**
- (b) provides employment in areas of special need, including the Rural Priority Area;**
- (c) relieves existing conflicts, leads to the improvement of derelict or under used sites, or brings about the conservation or improvement of significant environmental assets;**
- (d) assists with urban regeneration initiatives.**

ECON14 The development of tourist accommodation in the countryside in cabins, chalets, caravans and camping sites may be acceptable where there is no material conflict with policies for transport or protection of the environment. It will not however be appropriate:

- (a) in the Dedham Vale AONB;**
- (b) adjoining the estuaries of the Suffolk Coast and Heaths AONB;**
- (c) in the Heritage Coast.**

7.53 A key issue in provision for tourism is the availability of adequate and suitable accommodation. A wide range of accommodation is available. Hotels tend to be concentrated in the urban areas. Holiday centres and self-catering flats are mainly found on the coast, camping, caravanning and farm accommodation is concentrated in the rural areas, and bed and breakfast and cottages to let are found throughout the county.

ECON13 In towns and villages proposals for tourist accommodation will be acceptable where there is no material conflict with policies for transport or protection of the environment.

7.54 Outside settlements accommodation for tourists may be provided by the conversion of buildings from other uses, as covered by policy ENV2, and by the provision of types of accommodation which are mainly used on a seasonal basis, such as caravans, chalets and cabins, together with sites for touring caravans and tents. To ensure that buildings and sites are not occupied as permanent homes, conditions are often imposed requiring all units/land to be vacated for a certain period in the off-season each year. Provision of these forms of accommodation for visitors is important in enabling the industry to cope with the summer peak. However, it would not be acceptable in the most sensitive and vulnerable parts of the countryside.