

7.6 Certain employment areas are situated in open countryside, away from established settlements. Facilities such as West Hay Farm (King's Cliffe) have resulted from previous farm diversification schemes. Similarly, the Islip Furnace/ automobile storage (formerly Inchcape) site, while associated with the Thrapston urban area, has been developed as a result of the District's historic legacy (until the 1970s) of ironstone quarrying and associated industrial processes situated within the open countryside.

Protection of existing employment sites

7.7 The Employment Land Review recommends that all assessed sites are judged to require ongoing protection. Given the isolated situation of some open countryside employment sites (particularly King's Cliffe Industrial Estate and West Hay Farm); any alternative uses to employment on such sites are likely to be contrary to national policy and the principles of sustainable development.

7.8 The majority of sites are located within, or closely related to, existing settlements or urban areas. All of these, except Addington Park, relate to the three service centres (Oundle, Thrapston and King's Cliffe). Sites perform differing roles in relation to their respective localities. In accordance with the Core Strategy and recommendations from the Employment Land Review, these 13 sites will be safeguarded for employment use.

Policy 16 – PROTECTED EMPLOYMENT AREAS

The existing employment sites, identified in Appendix 5, are protected for employment use. Proposals for re-development or changes of use of existing buildings should ensure that the overall provision of employment after development is no less than that of the current use or most recent use. A reduction in the level of employment or development for non-employment uses will be permitted only when it can be demonstrated that:

- a) there is no realistic prospect of the site or buildings being used or re-used, including redevelopment, for employment purposes; or
- b) constraints associated with the site or buildings mean these would be unsuitable for re-use, in terms of siting, design, access, layout and relationship to neighbouring buildings and uses.

Indicator:

- Total area of employment uses

Targets:

- Zero net loss of key employment areas

Sites occupied by single enterprises

7.9 Some significant employment sites in the Plan area, identified by the Employment Land study, are currently fully-utilised, but occupied by a single business, offering comprehensive redevelopment opportunities if these are vacated by the current user. Given the varied nature of the following sites, it is not appropriate for the Plan to have a single policy covering all of these:

- Automobile storage and adjacent 1.66 ha site at Islip Furnace (total 23.13 ha);
- West Hay Farm (4.72 ha);
- Oundle Marina (9.21 ha).

7.10 The Islip Furnace automobile storage and West Hay sites are both occupied by Class B8 storage and distribution businesses, including large proportions of the site for the open storage of goods. In contrast, Oundle Marina includes both facilities for the manufacture and repair of boats, together with facilities serving pleasure boats operating along the River Nene, but is also situated in Flood Zone 3, the highest risk of flooding. A separate policy for the possible redevelopment of the Oundle Marina is contained in the Tourism section of this Plan (Policy 21).

Policy 17 – EMPLOYMENT SITES OCCUPIED BY SINGLE BUSINESSES

If the protected automobile storage, adjacent under-utilised land at Islip Furnace and West Hay Farm employment sites, as shown on the Proposals Map, are vacated by their current occupier, schemes for their redevelopment should consist of the following:

- 1. At least 40% of new floorspace as offices (B1 usage);**
- 2. At least 20% of new floorspace for general industry (B2 usage);**
- 3. Not more than 40% of new floorspace for storage, distribution or warehousing (B8 usage).**

Planning conditions will be used to ensure the longer term retention of office or general industrial (B1 and B2) uses or an appropriate mix of employment uses as set out in this policy.

Indicator:

- Use status of sites

Target:

- 100% of redevelopment applications approved to meet the criteria set out in Policy 17

Sites with potential for additional development or intensification

7.11 The Employment Land Review identifies certain employment locations within the Plan area which, while in most cases being occupied, contain under-utilised or vacant areas. These are all occupied by multiple numbers of businesses, but the roles and types of operation vary greatly within and between the sites.

7.12 The Acorn (Islip) and King's Cliffe industrial estates contain primarily business and general industrial premises, with a large part of King's Cliffe Industrial Estate in distribution and storage (Class B8) uses. As such these perform a role as locally important employment locations, but have scope for additional development or intensification of uses.

7.13 The East Road, Kingsmead and Addington Park sites each have their own particular characteristics and play an existing or potential future role in delivering the employment needs of the Plan area. These sites are considered in more detail in policies OUN2, KCF1 and AP1 respectively.

Town Centres and Retail

7.14 National guidance stresses the importance of maintaining the vitality and viability of town centres. The strategic approach to development in and around the town centres is defined by Policy 12: Distribution of Retail Development, in the Core Strategy. These policies are reflected locally with Thrapston and Oundle fulfilling much more than a retailing function for their surrounding areas.

7.15 In their roles as Rural Service Centres these towns will attract wider interest from the surrounding area; in particular Oundle has been identified as serving an extensive rural hinterland. Each of these towns has many unique characteristics; Oundle has historic interest along with many individual shops that cater for the area and has recently acquired Fair Trade status; Thrapston is diversifying at the moment with many new retailers arriving complementing the existing provision, the proposed regeneration in Thrapston will also bring more retail and town centre opportunities.

7.16 Primary Shopping Frontages have been identified along with a Town Centre Boundary for both towns; these boundaries are shown on the Proposal Map (Town Centre Insets 1A and 2A).

7.17 In accordance with PPS6⁵², the strategy is to positively and proactively support the town centres by encouraging uses, activities and investment that will sustain or enhance their character, attractiveness, vitality and viability.



⁵² Planning Policy Statement 6: Planning for Town Centres (CLG, March 2005)

Policy 18 – TOWN CENTRES

Within the defined shopping frontage the presumption will be to retain A1 uses.

Within the town centre boundaries a change of use from A1 to other uses with the A classes will be acceptable providing the proposal would result in a positive benefit to the vitality and viability of the town centre.

To maintain vibrancy within the town centre boundary, the change of use of spaces above shops will be considered favourably for further retail use, leisure, employment, community facilities and residential units.

Indicators:

- Number of A1 units
- Number of other 'A' use class units
- Number of vacant units

Targets:

- Number of vacant units does not exceed 3 in Thrapston, and 2 in Oundle
- 100% of proposals for the use of spaces above shops adhere to Policy 18 requirements

Tourism

7.18 The Core Spatial Strategy identifies a niche role for East Northamptonshire as a focus for rural recreation and tourism by building on its existing strengths in this area. The current Sustainable Communities Strategy 2008 – 2015 also identifies good environmental quality, natural beauty and high tourism value as key strengths and opportunities for East Northamptonshire, setting as a goal a high quality and accessible countryside.

7.19 Strategic planning policy encourages the focus of tourism development in larger settlements, with appropriate small scale schemes in rural settlements where they assist farm diversification or the retention of buildings which contribute to the rural character. Visitors to the area must be managed in a sustainable way and a balance reached between the local environmental concerns about traffic and pollution and the need to support local businesses which provide services to visitors to deliver economic prosperity.

River Nene Regional Park

7.20 The East Midlands Regional Plan defines regional priorities for strategic river corridors, including the Nene Valley (Policy 33). The River Nene Regional Park initiative (RNRP)⁵³ was set up in 2004 as the implementation body for green infrastructure at a sub-regional level, centred on the growth areas around Northamptonshire. Much of the RNRP is situated within the Plan area, so emerging green infrastructure proposals will be considered against Policy 33 in the Regional Plan and Core Strategy Policy 5.

⁵³ RNRP Feasibility Study (Landscape Design Associates, June 2004)

7.21 The vision for this Plan emphasises the role of tourism in developing a vibrant local economic base, for which the River Nene provides an important focus. The specific role of the river, both as a major green infrastructure corridor and navigation route for pleasure boats, is a major opportunity for the Plan to set out proposals for riverside related developments.

Riverside Developments

7.22 The Navigation Strategy 2004-2007⁵⁴ sets out the Environment Agency's approach to the enhancement of its navigable waterway network, including the River Nene. The Strategy places a high priority on providing more visitors' moorings, support facilities and other associated infrastructure, while setting out a spatial strategy that focuses the provision of new facilities close to towns and villages, centres of economic, cultural and social activity, and the strategic transport network.

7.23 The Plan considers the need to enable the enhancement of existing, or provision of new facilities for hiring and maintaining boats along the course of the river. Considering the general approach to sustainable development related to tourism set out in PPS7 and the Core Strategy, together with the Navigation Strategy, the general approach to the location of such facilities is for these to be situated close to established service centres along the course of the river.

⁵⁴ *Your Rivers for Life – A strategy for the development of navigable rivers 2004-2007* (Environment Agency, 2004)

Policy 19 – WATER RELATED FACILITIES ALONG THE RIVER NENE

Subject to compliance with other policies in the Plan, and the completion of an Appropriate Assessment where this is found to be required, there will be a presumption in favour of the development of facilities for hiring and maintaining boats, visitors' moorings, support facilities and other associated infrastructure along the course of the River Nene. These facilities shall be situated within, or near to the established service centres, particularly Oundle, Thrapston, Nassington and Warmington.

Where new proposals are located away from an established service centre, evidence should demonstrate that there are no suitable sites available closer to such centres.

Indicators:

- Increase in the number of water based leisure and tourism facilities
- Provision of boat hire facilities in association with Oundle, Thrapston, Nassington or Warmington

Target:

- At least one boat hire facility within the Plan area by 2021

Riverside Hotel

7.24 The Oundle Healthcheck (September 2006)⁵⁵ has identified economic priorities in and around the town, including gateway improvements, the provision of more tourist accommodation and the provision of local jobs and training opportunities. The Preferred Options consultation process (January – March 2006) identified a particular redevelopment opportunity along the river with potential to address these priorities, namely the disused Riverside Hotel on the A605 near Oundle.

7.25 Outline planning permission was granted in November 2005 for the development of a new hotel, incorporating the existing Riverside Hotel as an annex. However, given that consent has existed for such a development since 1993, the likely delivery of such a development remains uncertain. Considering the former use of the site as a small hotel/guesthouse and its prominent position adjacent both to the River Nene and A605, it is appropriate to seek the reinstatement of this as a hotel, restaurant or public house, providing a useful facility serving tourism at Oundle.

Policy 20 – RIVERSIDE HOTEL NEAR OUNDLE

The priority for the re-use of the Riverside Hotel near Oundle, should be its reinstatement as a restaurant, public house or hotel, providing tourist accommodation. Alongside this, projects to improve and enhance accessibility for pedestrians and cyclists to the town and Green Infrastructure along the River Nene will be supported.

If reinstatement of the Riverside Hotel is proved not to be viable, alternative uses should be considered in the following order of preference:

- 1. New training facility or resources centre to enable “hard to reach” groups to access local services and opportunities; otherwise**
- 2. Conversion to Class B1 office or business uses.**

Indicator:

- Use status of Riverside Hotel site

Target:

- To have the site in use as stipulated in Policy 20 by 2015

Oundle Marina

7.26 Oundle Marina is an existing facility, well related to Oundle, where there are opportunities for enhancement and tourist related development. It is important to encourage Fairline Boats (the sole occupier of the site) to remain within the town; however, if the firm vacates the site, Policy 21 aims to secure the optimum alternative use and contribution to green infrastructure at the heart of the emerging River Nene Regional Park.

Policy 21 – OUNDLE MARINA

If the Oundle Marina site is vacated by its current occupier, redevelopment schemes for the site should have a tourism and water based leisure focus and consist of a mix of uses which could include:

- a) **Class B1 uses**
- b) **Class A3 or A4 uses**
- c) **Class D1 and D2 uses**
- d) **Tourist accommodation**
- e) **Ancillary retail uses**

A Concept Statement should be prepared for the site, with input from a range of stakeholders. This should go on to inform preparation of a full development brief which will establish the mix of uses based on the above range.

Indicator:

- Use status of site

Target:

- 100% of redevelopment applications approved to meet the criteria set out in Policy 21

Lilford Hall

7.27 In addition to the key riverside features of tourist interest around Oundle, other sites of natural and historic interest are located along the course of the River Nene, including Fotheringhay, Lilford Hall, Thrapston Lakes and Titchmarsh Local Nature Reserve. Until 1990, Lilford Park was an important recreational resource for local people and attracted visitors from outside the District. A major restoration project for the Grade I Listed Lilford Hall is underway and as part of this the Council will aim to improve public access through the grounds, along the River Nene.

7.28 Currently, the Nene Way path passes Lilford Hall by way of the Pilton – Clopton road, with access to Oundle via Wigsthorpe and Barnwell; up to 3 km away from the River Nene. A public footpath connects Oundle Marina and Lilford Lodge Farm, though no right of way exists through Lilford Park itself.

7.29 A key action/ outcome of the County Council's Rights of Way Improvement Plan (November 2007) is to improve links between communities, involving working with communities and Councils to identify, plan, create and improve routes linking different communities. Furthermore, Core Strategy Policy 5/ Figure 10 (Green Framework) support improvements to green infrastructure, including sub-regional corridors such as the Nene Valley.

Policy 22 – LILFORD PARK

In association with restoration proposals for Lilford Hall, improved public access will be sought as follows:

- 1. Riverside access, between Lilford Bridge and the Hall**
- 2. New footpath link between Lilford, Lilford Hall and public footpath NG1 at Lilford Lodge Farm, providing additional Nene Way linkage to Oundle Wharf.**

Within Lilford and Lilford Park, these routes should be constructed and maintained to a suitable standard for use by cyclists and/ or horse riders. The linkage to public footpath NG1 should be prepared and maintained to a suitable standard for pedestrians, and will ultimately form a more direct alternative route for the Nene Way between Thorpe Achurch, Lilford Bridge and Oundle.

Indicator:

- Improved public access to and around Lilford Park

Target:

- Creation of new footpath link between Lilford, Lilford Hall and public footpath NG1

Rural Buildings

7.30 Although the preferred development strategy for North Northamptonshire targets most development over the Plan period to the main settlements and to a much lesser extent to the villages, certain types of activity will still be appropriate in the countryside. These relate to proposals that can positively help to support the diversification or development of the rural economy and the relative sustainability of the communities that live in these areas. However, it is necessary for this to be controlled in order to conserve the environment of the countryside and amenity that also contributes towards sustainability.

7.31 Although the majority of the countryside is of an open nature, it also contains a large stock of farm and other buildings, such as farmsteads. Many of these buildings are well related to existing settlements and are no longer needed for their original purpose. The re-use of these buildings can help bring under-used buildings into productive use, and if used for business purposes can help to boost the economy.

7.32 Evidence indicates that smaller businesses are more likely to be in rural and town and fringe areas than urban, and that these businesses are more likely to relocate and expand. It will therefore be essential to provide locations for these businesses to remain within the Plan area. In accordance with the Core Strategy (Policy 11), to support sustainable economic development within rural areas, the Plan will provide general

support for the retention of rural buildings for existing rural enterprises and other employment generating uses.

Policy 23 – RURAL BUILDINGS – GENERAL APPROACH

Planning permission will be granted for the adaptation or re-use of buildings in the countryside for employment generating or tourism, including tourist accommodation, or residential use, where the location or building is more appropriate for such a use and provided that:

- a) **The character of any buildings of historic or visual interest is conserved, with proposals supported by detailed drawings indicating the layout, design and external appearance of the building after conversion, the materials to be used, the means of access and landscaping proposals;**
- b) **Schemes are limited to situations where buildings are substantially intact, though structural surveys will be required for proposals relating to buildings which are unoccupied and show evidence of some dereliction; and**
- c) **Conditions are imposed withdrawing permitted development rights to prevent future extensions, where these would result in an adverse impact on the character of the surrounding area.**

When considering proposed schemes for premises vacated by existing small businesses, rural enterprises and other employment generating uses, such projects should be assessed against the criteria set out in Core Strategy Policy 11.

Indicator:

- Number of approvals for the re-use of rural buildings in the countryside

Target:

- 100% of approved applications to adhere to the criteria set out in Policy 23

7.33 The national approach to the re-use of existing rural buildings set out in PPS7 is that business re-use is preferable to conversion to housing. Residential conversion of barns for example can harm the character of historic buildings and conflicts with the PPS7 sustainability objective of limiting residential development in the countryside. Due to the demand for business premises throughout the area it is preferable to re-use rural buildings for an economic use and limit conversion to residential development.

Replacement dwellings in the open countryside

7.34 If replacement buildings are not controlled in the countryside they could have adverse visual and environmental impacts. Policy 24 sets out the criteria against which provisions for replacement dwellings will be considered.

Policy 24 – REPLACEMENT DWELLINGS IN THE OPEN COUNTRYSIDE

Proposals for replacement dwellings in the open countryside will be granted on a one for one basis where:

- a) **The original dwelling has not been abandoned or allowed to fall into a state of dereliction and disrepair, so that any replacement would in effect be treated as a 'new' dwelling;**
- b) **The original dwelling is not a temporary or mobile structure;**
- c) **The replacement dwelling is located within the site boundary of the original dwelling; and**
- d) **The replacement is of a size, scale and massing similar to the original dwelling.**

Indicator:

- Number of approvals for replacement dwellings in the open countryside

Target:

- 100% of approved applications for replacement dwellings to adhere to the criteria set out in Policy 24

7.35 If the existing dwelling shows signs of dereliction or disrepair or has not been occupied for some time a structural survey may be required to be submitted by the applicant in support of the proposal. If the footprint of the proposed dwelling does not match the footprint of the existing dwelling a Section 106 agreement/ condition will be required to ensure that the existing dwelling is fully removed from the site and therefore does not result in an additional dwelling.

Farm Diversification

7.36 Within the Plan area there are 52 businesses classified as agriculture, hunting and forestry businesses. To meet the overriding aim of the strategy; to increase tourism opportunities in the Plan area and to bring into economic use vacant buildings (14% of farming businesses have vacant buildings), farm diversification will be supported. Diversification for current farming practices is sometimes necessary to enable the viability of the business.



7.37 Farm diversification includes a range of different activities such as tourism, equestrian, storage/ haulage and offices, all these activities will boost the local economy. To ensure that the market does not become saturated in terms of tourism uses, the need for this type of diversification should be identified to ensure that other businesses do not suffer.

7.38 PPS7 provides particular support for equestrian enterprises. The Plan area is within the Welland sub-region, one of the most important

equestrian areas in the UK. The Welland Partnership prepared a draft Equestrian Strategy (August 2005)⁵⁶, to develop business support and safe off-road networks in order to enhance the development of equestrian enterprises. The nature of equestrian development varies greatly, from small scale private, single-berth stables and horse shelters; to commercial stables, riding schools and training facilities. Developments associated with these are likely to include new stables, ancillary on-site accommodation and engineering works such as menageries.

⁵⁶ *Equestrianism in the Welland - SSP Strategy and Action Plan 2005 (August 2005)*

POLICY 25 – FARM DIVERSIFICATION

Diversification projects relating to farm uses throughout the Plan area will be supported in accordance with the following:

- a) where buildings for re-use are well related to existing built up areas, a mix of uses will be permitted, including business, tourism activities, tourist accommodation and live work units;
- b) where buildings are located in the open countryside away from built up areas, conversion for general residential uses will not be permitted;
- c) where the proposal involves the establishment of a farm shop, 50% of merchandise sold should be produced on the farm or have local origins;
- d) the diversification activity should be additional to the main agricultural/ farm use and utilise existing buildings.

Expansion or encroachment of new buildings into the countryside as part of farm diversification proposals will not be permitted.

Indicator:

- Mix of uses associated with farm diversification proposals

Target:

- Increase in farm diversification projects in the Plan area
- 100% of approved applications for farm diversification schemes to adhere to the criteria set out in Policy 25

Lorry Parks

7.39 There is a shortage of suitable lorry parking in the Plan area, considering the strategic road links that are present. Currently heavy good vehicles are parking on side roads around the Thrapston Business Park as well as in non dedicated areas, which causes highway and safety issues. Policy 26 sets out the criteria against which a new facility would be considered.

POLICY 26 – LORRY PARKING

Proposals for the provision of strategic lorry parking should:

- a) be located adjacent to the major road network;
- b) include a small range of facilities for drivers of the vehicles;
- c) not be located adjacent to or accessed through a residential area;
- d) the design of the park should apply “Secured by Design” principles; and
- e) be screened and landscaped to minimise landscape impacts.

Indicator:

- Location of new lorry parking facilities across the Plan area

Target:

- 100% of approved lorry park applications to adhere to criteria set out in Policy 26