

Tourism

4.24 The District is predominantly rural with opportunities for tourism related development in the attractive villages, towns and surrounding areas. However, a balance should be achieved between supporting the rural economy and protecting the countryside, as stated in the 2012 NPPF.

4.25 The District has a number of villages and towns that are popular destinations for tourism due to the high quality of their built or historic environment. Such settlements include Finchingfield, Castle Hedingham and Coggeshall. It is important that within these settlements, facilities for visitors are maintained and enhanced in order to promote tourism, without detracting from the features that make them attractive to visitors.

4.26 To maximise the benefits of tourism to rural economies, tourist development should be located where visitors can access local shops, pubs and other services.

4.27 Camping and caravan sites contribute in an important way to tourism and to the supply of tourist accommodation supporting the rural economy. However, they should be located appropriately and sufficiently screened to avoid any harmful impact on the setting and character of the countryside.

4.28 Appropriate research should be carried out into the local tourism market before submitting an application to show that there is a need for tourist accommodation in that area. In some cases this will be subject to independent verification at the cost of the applicant. Proposals to remove occupancy conditions or to change the use of tourist accommodation to permanent residential use will not normally be approved.

4.29 To ensure that the district's countryside is protected from inappropriate conversions of new tourist accommodation to residential use, a reasonable business case i.e. costings and business model, will be required for new tourist accommodation proposals to ensure the long term viability of such proposals. Major tourism proposals are those which require new buildings of significant scale and/or will generate a significant increase in traffic on the local network.

Policy LPP 8

Tourist Development within the Countryside

Proposals for new tourist accommodation and facilities, including extensions to existing tourist accommodation and facilities, within the countryside, will be permitted provided that all the following criteria are met:

- a. The demand for the development has been clearly demonstrated
- b. Large scale proposals are connected to and associated with existing facilities or located at a site that relates well to defined settlements in the area and are accessible to adequate public transport, cycling and walking links
- c. They would not materially adversely affect the character, appearance and amenity of the surrounding area, any heritage assets and their setting, and should be well screened
- d. Appropriate, convenient and safe vehicular access can be gained to/from the public highway and appropriate parking is provided
- e. They will be served by adequate water, sewerage and waste storage and disposal systems
- f. They will include a high quality landscaping scheme.

The occupation of new tourist accommodation will be restricted via condition or legal agreement to ensure a tourist use solely and not permanent residential occupation.

In addition, tourist accommodation proposals will be required to include a business plan that will demonstrate the long term viability of the scheme.