

Supplementary Planning Document

Securing Appropriate Development in the
Countryside

Sustainability Appraisal Report to High Peak
Borough Council

CountryScape in Partnership with the
Planning Co-operative

March 2006

the planning cooperative

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Introduction

The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 introduced a new regime for setting out the planning policies and proposals of local council's. A portfolio of documents is to be created, with each document dealing with a specific aspect of planning policy. This will enable policies to be kept up to date more easily as only those that need review will be updated. Part of this new system requires all these documents to be the subject of Sustainability Appraisal (SA).

SA is a way of measuring the effects that planning policies and proposals are likely to have on the area. It is based on the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) European Directive which became operative in the UK in October 2004. SA adopts the approach of SEA to the identification, evaluation and mitigation of likely effects, but extends the scope to include economic and social well-being as well as environmental concerns within the district.

The final guidance from ODPM requires the signposting of sections of the SAR that are in response to the SEA Directive. This has been achieved by a distinctive font that denotes the appropriate sections of text, as follows **Font indicates conformity with the SEA Directive.**

SA is in essence a check, or audit of how the local planning authority chose what policy or proposal to put forward and how that compares with alternatives that might have been chosen. It also considers measures to minimise any adverse effects that might result. Its purpose is to make clear the reasons for the document being prepared and what is it likely to happen – both good and bad – as it is implemented.

The Sustainability Appraisal Report (SAR)

The job of the SAR is to record the whole process of SA and make this information available to those who wish to see it, including members of the public. Some documents go to Examination before an Inspector and the SAR will form an important part of the local authority's case as to why the document should be adopted so as to form part of the statutory development plan for the area.

This SAR relates to a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) which is not subject to Examination. However the authority is required to consult on the SPD before adopting it. The consultation is intended to ensure that people understand the document itself and the reasons why it is being proposed. This SAR has been written with these aims in mind. It attempts to set out the process and findings of the SA in simple and clear terms to aid that understanding so that the authority get useful and positive responses from the consultation exercise.

The SA was undertaken by The Planning Cooperative, in partnership with Countryside between May and July 2005. The consultants also drew up this Report.

Responses must be made in writing, either by post, email or via the website.

<http://www.highpeak.gov.uk/planning/>

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The Purpose of the SPD

The SPD gives guidance on the design of new development in the rural parts of High Peak District. It is based on the areas identified by Derbyshire County Council's Landscape Character Assessment. The areas are shown on Plan 1 on the following page. These are taken as the spatial structure for the guidance. Each area forms a section of the SPD in which the defining characteristics that make up the landscape and the implications of them for the design of new development are set out.

"Design" here is used in its widest sense to include siting, form, appearance, materials, hard and soft landscaping and any other aspect of the proposed development that might have an impact, positive or negative, on landscape character. The purpose of the SPD is to assist those making applications to bring forward appropriate designs that can be approved. Equally it will assist the authority to reject schemes that do not secure appropriate design. It is seen as an enabling document that will foster the delivery of sustainable development.

Appraisal Methodology

The advice from government is that the scope of SA should reflect the nature of the document being appraised. The SPD to which this SAR relates is very tightly focussed. It concerns the design of buildings allowed in the countryside of High Peak under current policies. Policy OC4, on which the SPD depends, requires development to respond to the character of the landscape. The full policy is reproduced in Annex 1.

The role of the SPD is to promote design that is appropriate to the character of the landscape. This is a fixed position given that OC4 is already in place. The scope of the SPD is therefore very specific and the approach taken to the SA process reflects that fact. The appraisal framework takes the four threads of sustainability from national policy in PPS1 and identifies simple objectives under each heading that relate to the aims of the SPD and OC4.

These were set out in the Scoping Report in June 2005. The four environmental authorities were consulted, as required by regulations. English Heritage made no comment. English Nature and the Countryside Agency made suggestions for minor additional items and these have been incorporated into the framework and the report. The Environment Agency had no comments on the report itself.

Given these responses from the statutory consultees, and with the minor additions they proposed, the appraisal framework is regarded as appropriate and has been used to assess the options considered for preparing the SPD.

Options

The heart of the SA process is the testing of options. SA is required to assess realistic alternatives, including the option of not preparing the SPD, so that the choice of the preferred option is seen as logical and justified. In the case of this SPD the alternatives are limited by the very clear policy context. The alternatives that had to be considered were confined to the way in which the guidance was presented rather than to the substance of the guidance. This issue was discussed in the Scoping Report as follows:

19 In its simplest terms, the requirement of OC4 is that there should be a clear response in the design of new development to the nature of the landscape in which it is located. Design that takes no account of landscape setting results in development that appears out of place: it looks wrong. That is unwelcome in itself and also weakens the character of the wider landscape, making it doubly unacceptable. This is supported by national and regional policies, so the scope for substantial alternatives to the approach set out in OC4 is effectively nil.

Options for the Sustainability Appraisal

20 The options that fall to be evaluated are:

- (i) the base line position, not to prepare the SPD and rely on OC3 and OC4 as written
- (ii) to prepare the SPD as a prescriptive design guide based on detailed illustrations
- (iii) to prepare the SPD as a prompt to thinking about design issues in the landscape context, including wider issues of sustainability and allowing contemporary solutions to be considered where appropriate
- (iv) to include within option (iii) the requirement for a simple concept statement to be prepared by applicants for each individual site, outlining how the proposed design has responded to its landscape setting

The environmental authorities endorsed this approach. There were no comments made in relation to the selection of the options to be tested.

In addition to the consultations above, two community workshops were held to inform the preparation of the SPD. The second of these was presented with a summary of the SA process and the assessment of the options. This resulted in clear endorsement of the approach and the selection of the preferred option with only one delegate questioning the wisdom of abandoning the SLAs.

Sustainability Issues Identified in the SA

Development in rural areas illustrates the conflicts that the planning system has to address and the role of sustainable development in overcoming the resultant difficulties. The Scoping Report presented the issues as follows:

Relationship between the Sustainability Objectives and the SPD

21 Development in the countryside inevitably raises conflicts between various objectives of the planning system. The desire to meet community needs, especially for affordable housing, and to strengthen and diversify the rural economy clashes headlong with a desire to maintain aspects of the rural landscape strongly associated with traditional farming. Rising aspirations for leisure time activities, access to entertainment and to the countryside itself poses an obvious threat not only to the appearance of the landscape but also to the essential nature of rural areas, associated as they are with a lack of bustle, activity and traffic.

22 This central dilemma is addressed by both national and local policy for rural areas. The resolution to it is seen to lie in good design that supports, rather than erodes the character of the countryside, coupled with positive measures to offset any residual impacts and bring about environmental improvements where that is seen as desirable and beneficial to the area. This is the very essence of sustainable development in the countryside as expressed in PPS1 PPS7 and PPS9.

23 This SPD will help development be designed in a way that responds to landscape character. It is therefore the principal means of delivering both strands of this fundamental policy stance, by securing necessary development without detriment to the essential characteristics of the landscape. As such, it aims to make a significant contribution to sustainable development.

Evaluation of Options

Option 1 is not to prepare the SPD but continue to rely on the existing policies OC4 and OC3. OC4 is the policy requiring that development, when it is allowed, should be design appropriately in terms of landscape character. OC3 is applied within special landscape areas. It imposes very strict control over development in the interest of preserving the scenic beauty of the landscape.

Reliance on these two existing policies raises a number of problems.

First, OC4 is expressed in very general terms, establishing the principle that design should respond to landscape character and be appropriate to the landscape in which the building sits. This is an accepted approach and one that commands widespread support. However, while the policy necessarily requires that this should be achieved it does not give enough guidance as to how that can be done, nor does it indicate how the authority would decide what kinds of design were regarded as satisfactory, and those that would be seen as inappropriate.

So while OC4 clearly sets out to applicants the need for appropriate design it leaves them in the dark as to what that might be and how they should achieve it. Without the explanatory guidance that the SPD seeks to provide, applicants are shooting in the dark to a larger extent.

A further problem is that the authority has to make a judgement on the appropriateness of a wide range of different development proposals with a similar lack of guidance. It is inevitable that different officers will interpret 'appropriate' in different ways under various circumstances and this can lead to apparent inconsistencies in decisions.

Experience that is common to many authorities across the country suggests that applicants do not undertake design exercises unless required to do so and that the quality of proposals for new buildings is often inadequate as a direct result. This is widely acknowledged. Poor quality applications lead to two possible outcomes neither of which are desirable.

(i) The application is refused, on the basis that it is of inappropriate design. In this case the opportunity offered by the development is lost. That can take many forms and includes economic success for a local company, the viability of an existing farm, employment opportunities for local people and facilities serving the community including the basic provision of affordable housing accommodation. These are increasingly recognised as essential for the well being of rural areas.

(ii) The application is allowed, in acknowledgement of the importance of the above benefits, but causes detriment of the landscape and the character of the area. This is more than just a matter of visual harm to pleasant surroundings. In areas such as High Peak tourism and day visitors make up a very substantial element of the local economy, and those visits in turn are rooted in a desire to experience the quality of the countryside. The cumulative effect of such permissions may be to no long term economic advantage.

The SLA policy, OC3 presents a more severe version of the above dilemma. Development is even more restricted to the point where it is now recognised as potentially damaging to social and economic well being. On the other hand, the landscape is regarded as particularly sensitive, with the

result that where development is allowed, the damage to the landscape is all the more obvious and substantial.

The aim of the SPD is to provide useful guidance so that development that is beneficial to rural communities can take place without detriment to the landscape thereby avoiding the unsatisfactory alternatives outlined above.

Assessing the continued use of the current position against the appraisal framework produces clear disadvantages compared to the prospect of the guidance in the SPD.

The table on the following page presents the objectives and indicators that form the appraisal framework (as modified) together with an assessment of the effects of continuing with the current policy position and not producing the SPD, in red.

SUSTAINABILITY OBJECTIVE Option 1	INDICATOR
Sustainable economic growth and diversification of the rural economy	
Expansion of the rural economy	New jobs created Hindered by restrictive policy and poorly designed proposals leading to refusals
Diversification of the rural economy	New job types introduced / new skills
Social cohesion	
Access to facilities and services	New facilities in the area for recreation, retail, health etc. Hindered by restrictive policy and poorly designed proposals leading to refusals
Meeting local housing needs	Number of affordable new homes provided
Meeting the needs of young people	Provision for young people, education / training, recreation, employment.
Protection and improvement of the environment	
Maintain and enhance the quality of the local landscape Achieved where development has not been permitted, lost when new buildings have been allowed	Development that is in keeping with the intrinsic character and has positively contributed to the appearance of the area Limited due to restrictive policy and lack of design guidance
Enhance bio diversity / establish green space / wildlife corridors	Area of land of nature conservation interest created or improved / wildlife corridors Limited scope due to the restrictive policy, poor design and lack of a requirement for this in existing policy
Prudent use of natural resources	
Conserve water resources Reduce energy demands Minimise the need to travel by private car	Sustainable drainage schemes approved Non renewable energy sources approved / included in new development Journey lengths to work and to access facilities, green transport plans secured None of these are required by OC3, OC4

Option 2 was to produce a prescriptive design guide based on the vernacular style of traditional buildings. This approach has clear support, especially from some members of the public for whom the historic nature of rural buildings is the most important issue. However, there are a number of problems with this approach in terms of the more comprehensive aims of sustainable development.

First, as a matter of principle, there is a degree of discomfort in slavishly copying the styles of the past. It suggests that no progress has been made and that only by relying on design skills of a previous era can acceptable buildings be created.

Second, and much more pertinent, most copies are poorly executed and fail to capture the essential quality of traditional buildings. As a result, not only are they themselves unsatisfactory (and meaningless in terms of design) but they also diminish the quality of the vernacular buildings that they attempt to emulate.

Third, they may not meet current standards of day lighting, ceiling heights, access arrangements, insulation standards and so on. Failing them creates one problem: trying to meet them runs the risk of weakening the essential character being sought.

Fourth they rely on materials that may now be in short supply or involve new-won minerals and they deny contemporary designs that exploit more sustainable construction and operation. They also have high costs which can affect the financial viability of proposals.

Fifth and finally, prescriptive drawing-based design guides have resulted in duplication of a few favoured forms leading to a uniformity of new buildings that erodes the essential uniqueness of individual vernacular buildings within a shared set of characteristics.

These issues, among others, have led to national and local policies that reject a pastiche copy as a satisfactory and sustainable way forward. The characteristics of the areas need to be interpreted in a contemporary context as encouraged by the Countryside Agency's New Vernacular approach. The table on the following page summarises the effects on the objectives and indicators of the appraisal framework.

SUSTAINABILITY OBJECTIVE Option 2	INDICATOR
Sustainable economic growth and diversification of the rural economy	
Expansion of the rural economy <div data-bbox="343 441 949 525" style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin: 10px auto; width: fit-content;"> <p>Limited by the problems of traditional construction and design, including costs, for new employment space</p> </div> Diversification of the rural economy	New jobs created New job types introduced / new skills
Social cohesion	
Access to facilities and services <div data-bbox="343 787 1053 871" style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin: 10px auto; width: fit-content;"> <p>Cost implications of traditional materials and construction methods on the viability of local needs housing, local facilities etc.</p> </div> Meeting local housing needs Meeting the needs of young people	New facilities in the area for recreation, retail, health etc. Number of affordable new homes provided Provision for young people, education / training, recreation, employment.
Protection and improvement of the environment	
Maintain and enhance the quality of the local landscape <div data-bbox="406 1218 1013 1281" style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin: 10px auto; width: fit-content;"> <p>Achieved only if the design and construction quality is very high Often degraded by poor attempt</p> </div> Enhance bio diversity / establish green space / wildlife corridors	Development that is in keeping with the intrinsic character and has positively contributed to the appearance of the area Area of land of nature conservation interest created or improved / wildlife corridors <div data-bbox="175 1386 1197 1459" style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin: 10px auto; width: fit-content;"> <p>Possible as part of new development but not necessarily a characteristic of vernacular style. Achieved only if the design and construction quality is very high. Often degraded by poor attempt</p> </div>
Prudent use of natural resources	
Conserve water resources Reduce energy demands Minimise the need to travel by private car <div data-bbox="406 1606 702 1753" style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin: 10px auto; width: fit-content;"> <p>Traditional buildings are responsive to these issues but are constrained by the building techniques of their time</p> </div>	Sustainable drainage schemes approved Non renewable energy sources approved / included in new development Journey lengths to work and to access facilities, green transport plans secured

Option3 is a different approach based on an analysis of traditional buildings in their landscape setting, leading to design principles to be used to evolve a satisfactory proposal. This is not prescriptive of an outcome: it is prescriptive of a process. Essentially it requires the design of the proposal to be thought about and worked at in order to achieve the objective of making a positive contribution to landscape character, as defined for each area in the SPD.

This approach seeks to put together the key characteristics of the landscape area with the attributes and immediate context of the particular site. The aim is to create buildings that have individuality, avoiding uniform styles, but which exhibit sufficient elements of shared character to root them firmly in the traditions of the landscape. This is essential if the two driving objectives of rural policy are to be achieved, namely promoting development needed to secure economic success and social progress, without detriment to the environment, landscape character or biodiversity. This is now enshrined in national planning policy in PPS1, PPS7 and PPS9.

There is undoubtedly an element of the best of both worlds in this approach and some choose to argue that as a weakness. However, the whole concept of sustainable development rests upon the premise that it is possible, indeed it is imperative, to undertake development in such a way as to avoid detrimental effects and to deliver on the three agendas, social, economic and environmental.

The scepticism that frequently greets this approach may be due in large measure to the simple fact that this has been achieved only exceptionally to date, and that damage, intrusion and ugliness has become so closely and universally associated with new development that it is assumed to be an intrinsic part of it and therefore inevitable. That is not the case, and it is the role of design policies and guidance to demonstrate that fact.

The appraisal table on the following page summarises the effects of this approach to the SPD.

SUSTAINABILITY OBJECTIVE Option 3	INDICATOR
Sustainable economic growth and diversification of the rural economy	
Expansion of the rural economy	New jobs created
Maximised by designs that provide what is needed in a way that allows the development to be accepted	
Diversification of the rural economy	New job types introduced / new skills
Social cohesion	
Access to facilities and services	New facilities in the area for recreation, retail, health etc.
Maximised by designs that provide what is needed in a way that allows the development to be accepted	
Meeting local housing needs	Number of affordable new homes provided
Meeting the needs of young people	Provision for young people, education / training, recreation, employment.
Protection and improvement of the environment	
Maintain and enhance the quality of the local landscape	Development that is in keeping with the intrinsic character and has positively contributed to the appearance of the area
Secured by sensitive design and positive measures to restore elements of character that have been lost	
Enhance bio diversity / establish green space / wildlife corridors	Area of land of nature conservation interest created or improved / wildlife corridors
Secured by positive measures as an integral part of the design of proposals	
Prudent use of natural resources	
Conserve water resources	Sustainable drainage schemes approved
Reduce energy demands	Non renewable energy sources approved / included in new development
Secured by positive measures as an integral part of the design of proposals	
Minimise the need to travel by private car	Journey lengths to work and to access facilities, green transport plans secured

Option 4 is a repeat of Option3 but with an additional element that formalises the design exercise it seeks to foster by encouraging the preparation of a Concept Statement to accompany the application. Concept Statements are a way of getting a design process off on the right lines, positive, responsive to the site and its setting, and seeking the best possible outcome.

The methodology has been developed and promoted by the Countryside Agency as a way of bringing a conscious design input to even the simplest development proposals. Guidance and advice on how to do this is available and is intended to be easy to follow, universally applicable and rewarding – even enjoyable - to undertake. (Concept Statements and Local Development Documents, Countryside Agency, 2003)

The Council wish to encourage the production of a concept statement as part of an application for development in the countryside. This will help the applicant devise a scheme that meets the requirement of policy and will help justify and explain the proposal to the authority in the interests of securing a positive outcome.

The requirement to undertake a concept statement will add to the effectiveness of the guidance and increase the positive effects that are illustrated in the table above. The exercise will inform the application by increasing awareness of the attributes of the site / setting and the opportunities for the development to make a positive contribution to the objectives of policy OC4 and the SPD.

The guidance recommends summary tables of the options.

The tables below summarise the discussion on the previous pages as to the relative merits of each Option.

- 1 No change**
- 2 Conventional prescriptive design guidance**
- 3 Design based on Landscape Character Assessment and Evaluation**
- 4 The above, plus a concept statement**

Sustainability Objectives	Score Option 1			Score Option 2			Comments
	Short term	Med. term	Long term	Short term	Med. term	Long term	
Social objectives							
access to services	-	-	-	+	+	+	
local housing needs	0	0	0	0	0	0	Local needs housing is allowed, with possible impact on landscape / env.
young people's needs	-	--	--	?	+	+	Some new development might be encouraged
Environmental objectives							
Quality of landscape	-	--	--	-/0	-	-	Poor / uniform design erodes distinctiveness.
Bio diversity	-	-	-	0	0	0	Op 2 does not include response to local circumstances that allow opportunities for enhancement
Water resources	-	-	-	0	0	0	ditto
Energy demands	-	-	--	0	0	0	ditto
Reduce need to travel	-	-	--	?	?	?	local employment / services may reduce travel needs in long term under Op 2.
Economic objectives							
Expand rural econ.	0	0	0	?	+	+	Some increase in local economy
Diversify rural econ.	-	-	-	?	+	+	ditto

Sustainability Objectives	Score Option 3			Score Option 4			Comments
	Short term	Med. term	Long term	Short term	Med. term	Long term	
Social objectives							
access to services	+	+	+	+	++	++	
local housing needs	+	+	+	++	++	++	Local needs housing is allowed, more widely due to less impact on landscape / env.
young people's needs	+	+	+	++	++	++	new development encouraged
Environmental objectives							
Quality of landscape	+	+	+	++	++	++	Individual design promotes distinctiveness.
Bio diversity	+	+	+	++	++	++	Op 3 & 4 include response to local circumstances that allow opportunities for enhancement
Water resources	+	+	+	+	+	+	ditto
Energy demands	+	+	+	+	+	+	ditto
Reduce need to travel	?	?	+	?	?	+	local employment / services may reduce travel needs in long term
Economic objectives							
Expand rural econ.	+	+	+	+	++	++	Economic potential realised through sensitive design
Diversify rural econ.	+	+	+	+	++	++	ditto

The tables above clearly demonstrate that the preferred option produces far more positive impacts than the other three. It is substantively the same as Option 3 but with the addition of a requirement for a Concept Statement to be produced that formalises the evaluation and

the recording and presentation of the design philosophy behind the proposals. This is explained in full in the report above.

Predicted effects of the Preferred Option

The preferred option is expected to have a beneficial effect on social and economic objectives by facilitating development that is needed to support the well being of rural communities. It should be stressed here that the SPD is not relaxing the criteria that need to be met for development to be allowed, nor seeking to open up the countryside to development pressures. The key policy tests remain in OC1 and restrict development to that associated with elements of the rural economy and other uses appropriate and necessary in the countryside. This policy also contains an important proviso that the overall impact of the proposed uses must be acceptable.

The aim of the SPD is to reduce the potential impact on environmental objectives thereby making the development sustainable, as required by PPS1. It does this firstly by seeking higher design standards and prompting designs that support landscape character, and secondly by suggesting measures that address wider environmental issues as part of the design concept. These include the following:

- protection, enhancement, restoration and expansion of bio-diversity, in whatever ways are most appropriate to the site concerned, as required by PPS 9**
- conservation, enhancement, improvement or restoration of landscape character, as appropriate, as an integral part of a scheme for development in the countryside. This is the central role of the SPD in support of policy OC4.**
- water resource management, sustainable drainage schemes, water conservation for non-potable uses (environmental concerns outlined in PPS 1)**
- energy efficiency in construction and operation, green building techniques and low energy consumption measures (environmental concerns outlined in PPS1)**

Conclusion

The conclusion of the sustainability appraisal is that this SPD as proposed by the council is a useful means of promoting sustainable development and should be regarded as the best of the realistic alternative approaches that were considered.

Mitigation Measures

The SEA directive requires mitigation measures to be identified and documented in the Environmental Report. That requirement is based on the fact that SEA is a requirement for documents that are expected to have significant environmental effects.

The view of the council and their consultants, supported by the environmental authorities is that this SPD will not give rise such effects. Indeed, the effect of the SPD will be to reduce whatever impacts on landscape and the environment that might otherwise occur under existing policies. As such, it is not considered necessary to identify further measures over and above the content of the SPD itself to address the mitigation of effects.

The final version of the ODPM guidance requires the prediction of the likely effects of the preferred option on the SA objectives, together with any measures that are necessary to mitigate any adverse consequences. As explained in the report above the focus of this SPD is to reduce impacts on the landscape and environment through improvements in design that fully take account of such factors. As this is mitigating approach in itself, there are no negative effects, and no further mitigation measures therefore need to be identified.

The effects are summarised in the table below.

Key

- major negative impact
- minor negative impact
- 0 neutral impact
- + minor positive effect
- ++ major positive effect
- ? impact uncertain

Plan objective**To promote design that contributes to rather than erodes landscape character**

SA Objective	Criteria for appraisal	Impact rating score	Comments: Effects and any Mitigation
Social objectives			
access to services	Provision of local services	++	Effects: positive No mitigation needed
local housing needs	Provision of local needs housing	++	
young people's needs	Provision aimed particularly at young people	+	
Environmental objectives			
Quality of landscape	Impact of new buildings	++	Effects: positive no mitigation needed innovative green transport plans in rural business development
Bio diversity	New habitat	++	
Water resources	Lower demands	+	
Energy demands	Reduced in new build	?	
Reduce need to travel	Travel impacts of development		
Economic Objectives			
Expand the rural economy	more jobs / stronger local firms	+	Effects: positive No mitigation needed
Diversify the rural economy	new types of jobs / skills	+	

ANNEX 1

OC1 - COUNTRYSIDE DEVELOPMENT

THE COUNTRYSIDE WILL COVER ALL LAND BEYOND THE BUILT-UP AREA BOUNDARIES DEFINED ON THE PROPOSALS MAP, INCLUDING THE GREEN BELT AND SPECIAL LANDSCAPE AREA.

WITHIN THE COUNTRYSIDE, PLANNING PERMISSION WILL BE GRANTED FOR DEVELOPMENT WHICH IS AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE RURAL ECONOMY AND WHICH CAN ONLY BE CARRIED OUT IN THE COUNTRYSIDE

PROVIDED THAT INDIVIDUALLY OR CUMULATIVELY:

- THE DEVELOPMENT WILL NOT DETRACT FROM AN AREA WHERE THE OPEN CHARACTER OF THE COUNTRYSIDE IS PARTICULARLY VULNERABLE BECAUSE OF ITS PROMINENCE OR THE EXISTENCE OF A NARROW GAP BETWEEN SETTLEMENTS; AND
- THE DEVELOPMENT WILL NOT GENERATE SIGNIFICANT NUMBERS OF PEOPLE OR TRAFFIC TO THE DETRIMENT OF RESIDENTIAL AMENITY, HIGHWAY SAFETY, LANDSCAPE OR AIR QUALITY OR OTHERWISE HAVE AN UNACCEPTABLE URBANISING INFLUENCE; AND
- THE DEVELOPMENT WILL NOT HAVE A SIGNIFICANT ADVERSE IMPACT ON THE CHARACTER AND DISTINCTIVENESS OF THE COUNTRYSIDE

POLICIES RELATING TO SPECIFIC CATEGORIES OF DEVELOPMENT ACCEPTABLE IN THE COUNTRYSIDE CAN BE FOUND UNDER INDIVIDUAL TOPIC HEADINGS ELSEWHERE IN THE PLAN.

OC2 - GREEN BELT DEVELOPMENT

IN THE AREA OF GREEN BELT DEFINED ON THE PROPOSALS MAP APPROVAL WILL NOT BE GIVEN, EXCEPT IN VERY SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES, FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF NEW BUILDINGS FOR PURPOSES OTHER THAN:

AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY;

ESSENTIAL FACILITIES FOR OUTDOOR SPORT AND RECREATION AND CEMETERIES;

LIMITED EXTENSION, ALTERATION OR REPLACEMENT OF EXISTING DWELLINGS;

LIMITED INFILLING OR REDEVELOPMENT AT EXISTING MAJOR DEVELOPED SITES;

OTHER DEVELOPMENT, INCLUDING MATERIAL CHANGES IN THE USE OF LAND AND BUILDINGS, WILL ONLY BE PERMITTED WHERE IT MAINTAINS THE OPENNESS OF THE GREEN BELT AND DOES NOT COMPROMISE GREEN BELT PURPOSES.

OC3 - SPECIAL LANDSCAPE AREA DEVELOPMENT

WITHIN THE SPECIAL LANDSCAPE AREA DEFINED ON THE PROPOSALS MAP, DEVELOPMENT IN ACCORDANCE WITH POLICIES OC1 AND OC2 WILL BE PERMITTED, PROVIDED THAT IT WILL NOT DETRACT FROM THE SPECIAL QUALITIES AND CHARACTER OF THE SPECIAL LANDSCAPE AREA.

WHERE DEVELOPMENT IS PERMITTED IN THE SPECIAL LANDSCAPE AREA THE DEVELOPER WILL BE REQUIRED TO HAVE SPECIAL REGARD TO THE LANDSCAPE QUALITY OF THE AREA IN RELATION TO SITING, DESIGN AND LANDSCAPING.

OC4 - LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AND DESIGN

PLANNING PERMISSION WILL BE GRANTED FOR DEVELOPMENT CONSIDERED APPROPRIATE IN THE COUNTRYSIDE PROVIDED THAT ITS DESIGN IS APPROPRIATE TO THE CHARACTER OF THE LANDSCAPE.

APPROPRIATE DESIGN OF DEVELOPMENT SHALL ACCORD WITH THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE TYPE OF LANDSCAPE WITHIN WHICH IT IS LOCATED INCLUDING HAVING REGARD TO AND CONSERVING:

THE LANDFORM AND NATURAL PATTERNS OF DRAINAGE;

THE PATTERN AND COMPOSITION OF TREES AND WOODLAND;

THE TYPE AND DISTRIBUTION OF WILDLIFE HABITATS;

THE PATTERN AND COMPOSITION OF FIELD BOUNDARIES;

THE PATTERN AND DISTRIBUTION OF SETTLEMENTS AND ROADS;

THE PRESENCE AND PATTERN OF HISTORIC LANDSCAPE FEATURES;

THE SCALE, LAYOUT, DESIGN AND DETAILING OF VERNACULAR BUILDINGS AND OTHER TRADITIONAL MAN MADE FEATURES.

EXISTING FEATURES WHICH ARE IMPORTANT TO THE LOCAL LANDSCAPE CHARACTER, SHALL BE RETAINED, INCORPORATED INTO THE DEVELOPMENT AND PROTECTED DURING CONSTRUCTION WORK.

WHERE APPROPRIATE THE LOCAL PLANNING AUTHORITY WILL IMPOSE PLANNING CONDITIONS AND/OR SEEK TO ENTER INTO A PLANNING OBLIGATION UNDER SECTION 106 OF THE TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990.