

# Joint Local Plan Review for West Dorset, Weymouth and Portland

TOURSIM BACKGROUND PAPER  
PREFERRED OPTIONS CONSULTATION VERSION

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## 1. Introduction

### PURPOSE OF THE BACKGROUND PAPER

- 1.1 This document is one of a number of background papers produced to support the West Dorset, Weymouth & Portland Local Plan Review. This background paper provides a general overview of issues relevant to tourism attractions & facilities, built tourism accommodation and camping & caravan sites. It is a working document which will be updated as evidence is acquired and the consultation process proceeds.

### LOCAL PLAN AND THE REVIEW

- 1.2 In October 2015, West Dorset District Council and Weymouth & Portland Borough Council adopted their Joint Local Plan<sup>1</sup>. In his report on the examination of the local plan, the Inspector indicated that he considered it to be "*imperative that an early review is undertaken*". The objective of the review is to identify additional housing land capable of meeting housing need to 2036. Through the Local Plan Review the councils will also consider revisions to other policies in response to changes in national policy and legislation.

### NATIONAL POLICY AND GUIDANCE

- 1.3 Planning policies should support economic growth in rural areas in order to create jobs and prosperity by taking a positive approach to sustainable new development. To promote a strong rural economy the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that planning policies should enable "*sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments which respect the character of the countryside*".
- 1.4 Planning Practice Guidance expands on the NPPF explaining that tourism is extremely diverse and covers all activities of visitors. Local planning authorities, where appropriate, should articulate a vision for tourism in the Local Plan, including identifying optimal locations for tourism. When planning for tourism, local planning authorities should:
- consider the specific needs of the tourist industry, including particular locational or operational requirements;
  - engage with representatives of the tourism industry;
  - examine the broader social, economic, and environmental impacts of tourism;
  - analyse the opportunities for tourism to support local services, vibrancy and enhance the built environment; and

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.dorsetforyou.gov.uk/jointlocalplan/west/weymouth>

- have regard to non-planning guidance produced by other government departments.
- 1.5 Visit England has prepared non-formal planning guidance on their website (cross-referenced by PPG) that seeks to draw together further useful guidance on tourism related matters. In particular this guidance discusses how the economic benefits of tourism can be maximised, how tourism can be accommodated in urban or rural areas and discusses the key locational considerations in choosing the best site for tourism.

## 2. Current Approach

- 2.1 The adopted West Dorset, Weymouth & Portland Local Plan (2015) contains policies ECON5, ECON6 and ECON7.

### POLICY ECON5 - TOURIST ATTRACTIONS AND FACILITIES

- 2.2 Town centres, followed by adjoining sites, are the preferred location for major new attractions compatible with urban areas, as they provide greater opportunity for more people to access these locations other than by car. Policy ECON5 recognises that these tourist attractions can help to support the economy of the town centres.
- 2.3 Outside the towns, the preference is for development to be located within or close to a settlement, as this is likely to provide more local benefits and be more accessible by means other than the car. But some tourist attractions, by their nature, will not lend themselves to a town or village location. In considering such proposals, the benefits of the tourism development will be weighed up against any disadvantages arising from its location.

### POLICY ECON6 - BUILT TOURIST ACCOMMODATION

- 2.4 The most appropriate locations for large new hotels and guest houses are within the town centres, as tourist attractions are concentrated in these locations and public transport provision is greater. However visitors also come to enjoy the many attractive rural areas and coastline, and smaller-scale serviced accommodation and self-catering accommodation will also be appropriate within other settlements.
- 2.5 It is also important to recognise that changes in the market will mean that some types of built tourist accommodation may become less attractive to visitors. A flexible approach is applied to an assessment to what extent the loss of such facilities should be resisted.

### POLICY ECON7 - CARAVAN AND CAMPING SITES

- 2.6 Proposals for new caravan and camping sites where possible should be well located in relation to existing facilities. However, there will be circumstances where a more flexible approach is appropriate such as farm diversification proposals.
- 2.7 There is some demand from site operators for enhanced facilities, especially on the larger holiday parks. Improvements often involve a greater amount of built development, the visual impact of which needs to be carefully assessed. Internal reorganisation to reduce the visual impact of existing sites and improve their attractiveness to visitors is encouraged.

### 3. Proposed Approach

3.1 The Local Plan Review – Preferred Options document makes the following changes.

#### POLICY ECON9 - TOURISM ATTRACTIONS AND FACILITIES

3.2 The NPPF defines ‘cultural and tourism development’ as a town centre use. The wording to Policy ECON5 (now ECON9) has been revised to better reflect the sequential approach and the expectation that major tourist attractions should be located firstly within town centres followed by edge of centre locations before out of centre sites are considered. Examples of visitor facilities have been removed from the policy but remain in the supporting text. Policy criteria and supporting text have been reordered and criteria ii) now more clearly applies to development outside town centres.

#### POLICY ECON10 - BUILT TOURIST ACCOMMODATION

3.3 The NPPF defines ‘cultural and tourism development’, including ‘hotels and conference facilities’, as a town centre use. The wording to policy ECON6 (now ECON10) has been revised to better reflect the sequential approach and the expectation that larger hotel / guesthouse development should be located firstly within town centres followed by edge of centre locations before out of centre sites are considered. The policy clarifies that out of centre proposals that undermine viability of central hotels or prejudice future investment should be refused. A new criteria iii) has been added to require applications for new built tourism accommodation in less accessible locations to demonstrate; why such locations are needed, the long term viability of the enterprise and any benefits to the local economy. Policy criteria and supporting text have been reordered.

**4-ix Former Policies ECON5 and 6 (now ECON9 and 10) now set out the circumstances when the ‘sequential test’ for town centre uses will be applied to tourist attractions and accommodation developments. Do you have any views on this, or any other changes to new Policies ECON9 and 10?**

#### POLICY ECON11 - CARAVAN AND CAMPING SITES

3.4 Criteria i) of policy ECON7 (now ECON11) has been split and criteria iv) of ECON7 has been deleted. Policy criteria and supporting text has been reordered.

3.5 Supporting text has been amended to give greater clarity in relation to the expansion, intensification and reorganisation of existing caravan and camping sites and to set out how proposals for caravan and camping sites as part of farm diversification schemes will be considered.

**4-x** Former Policy ECON7 (now ECON11) and supporting text have been amended to give greater clarity in relation to the expansion, intensification and reorganisation of existing caravan and camping sites and to set out how proposals for caravan and camping sites as part of farm diversification schemes will be considered. Do you have any views on these, or any other changes, to new Policy ECON11?