

# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (ED)

## POLICY ED7

### BUSINESS, TOURISM AND LEISURE DEVELOPMENT IN THE COUNTRYSIDE

- 1.1 The Scottish Borders is a very distinctive place which is largely rural in character with considerable natural and cultural heritage. The Council however considers that opportunities exist at appropriate locations outwith settlements where economic activity and diversification can take place. This may include development linked to tourism and farm diversification which can not only protect but also enhance the Scottish Borders natural and cultural heritage. In addition, the Scottish Government acknowledges that one of the core values of the planning service is to play a key role in facilitating sustainable economic growth, particularly the creation of new jobs and the strengthening of economic capacity and resilience within communities.
- 1.2 The aim of the policy is to allow for appropriate employment generating development in the countryside whilst protecting the environment and to ensure that business, tourism, and leisure related developments are appropriate to their location. This policy will be applied to any applications that involve economic diversification in rural areas, for example diversification of agricultural land. Any diversification must involve land uses that are complementary to or appropriate for the area.
- 1.3 Developments that involve both business/industrial and housing uses will be assessed against this policy and Policy HD2: Housing in the Countryside. Proposals for housing development will not be treated as farm diversification and will be assessed under the Policy HD2: Housing in the Countryside. Furthermore, where the proposal is for a guest house or a bed and breakfast, that proposal will also be assessed against Policy HD2.
- 1.4 The policy recognises that some tourism related developments may not be able to be easily accommodated within settlements and may be satisfactorily located in certain countryside locations subject to compliance with environmental policies. Decision making will be guided by reference to the VisitScotland Tourism Development Plan as well as the Scottish Borders Tourism Strategy and Action Plan, which require all tourism developments to be of high quality, sustainable and customer focussed. The Council will also take into consideration where appropriate advice from VisitScotland. Other current strategies or any others which are produced within the Plan period that are relevant will also apply.
- 1.5 The policy also relates to farm diversification as well as timber processing facilities. Forests rarely serve only a single purpose and at their best provide a combination of benefits such as timber production, opportunities for recreation, enhancement of the landscape and the creation of new habitats. The Council recognises both the importance of forestry as a long-term land use, and the need to balance the economic value of forestry with a need to protect the environment. Forestry may provide an appropriate form of farm diversification, particularly in the uplands, and can often be a suitable form of land cover for land restoration, for example, quarries or waste

disposal sites. The Forestry Commission's 'The UK Forestry Standard' (2017), provides a series of guidelines, and outlines the context for forestry in the UK. The document also sets out the Government's approach to sustainable forest management, defines standards and requirements, as well as a basis for regulation and monitoring. The Scottish Borders Woodland Strategy, and its associated Technical Note are also relevant.

- 1.6 In relation to any proposal that may come forward for a new timber processing facility, where possible, the Council will seek that the new development be accessible to the strategic road and rail network, with preference given to the line of the former Waverley Railway, and the Kielder Branch line.

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Proposals for business, tourism or leisure development in the countryside that assist in strengthening communities and retaining young people in rural areas will be approved and rural diversification initiatives including farm buildings will be encouraged provided that:

- a) the development is to be used directly for agricultural, horticultural or forestry operations, or for uses which by their nature are appropriate to the rural character of the area; or
- b) the development is to be used directly for leisure, recreation or tourism appropriate to a countryside location and, where relevant, it is in accordance with the Scottish Borders Tourism Strategy and Action Plan;
- c) the development is to be used for other business or employment generating uses, provided that the Council is satisfied that there is an economic and/or operational need for the particular location, and that it cannot reasonably be accommodated within the Development Boundary of a settlement;
- d) where a new building is proposed, the developer will be required to provide evidence that no appropriate existing building or brownfield site is available, and where conversion of an existing building of architectural merit is proposed, evidence that the building is capable of conversion without substantial demolition and rebuilding.

In addition the following criteria will also apply:

- a) the development must respect the amenity and character of the surrounding area,
- b) the development must have no significant adverse impact on nearby uses, particularly housing,
- c) the impact of the expansion or intensification of uses, where the use and scale of development are appropriate to the rural character of the area,
- d) the development meets all other siting, and design criteria in accordance with Policy PMD2, and
- e) the development must take account of accessibility considerations in accordance with Policy IS4.

Where a proposal comes forward for the creation of a new business including that of a tourism proposal, particular weight will be given to the economic business case and its potential to create employment and rural prosperity. A business plan including a marketing strategy that supports the proposal and that is relevant to the locality will be required to be submitted as part of the application process.