

AGRICULTURE

6.17. PARA. 6.3.2 & CHANGE NO 123

Conditionally withdrawn objection

119	Council for the Protection of Rural England
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Supporter of PC123

2454	Council for the Protection of Rural England
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Inspector's note

PC123 responds appropriately to the original objection regarding the significance of sheep farming, subject to an insertion that I shall recommend in the interest of intelligibility

6.17.1. RECOMMENDATION

I recommend that the Plan be modified by PC123, subject to the insertion of 'farming' after 'livestock'.

6.18. LOCAL PLAN OBJECTIVE & CHANGE NO 124

Objection

1100	Countryside Commission
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Issue

Whether appropriately clear reference is made to the function of farming in conserving and enhancing the quality and diversity of the countryside.

Inspector's reasoning and conclusions

I support PC124 which adds a Local Plan Objective in the words of the aim stated in the objection.

6.18.1. RECOMMENDATION

I recommend that the Plan be modified by PC124.

6.19. POLICY A/1 & CHANGE NO 125

Objection

817	Government Office for the South West
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Supporters

218	Greenslade Taylor Hunt
397	Country Landowners Association
498	Rural Development Commission

Conditionally withdrawn objection

1070	Hon R T Lytton
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Objection to PC125

2535	The National Farmers Union
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Supporter of PC125

2031	Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food
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Inspector's note

Objection 1070 was conditionally withdrawn in the inquiry in response to PC125.

Issues

- (i) Whether the Policy is sufficiently explicit regarding the nature of farm diversification.
- (ii) Whether criterion (iii) is overly rigid.

Inspector's reasoning and conclusions

Issue (i)

In my view PC125 clarifies the Policy by omitting the ambiguous term 'business' and by introducing the theme of farm diversification. I note that explanatory advice on farm diversification is contained in paragraphs 6.3.5 and 6.3.6 of the Plan.

Issue (ii)

I consider the emphasis in criterion (iii) on minimal additional traffic generation is necessary in the light of the overall objective of reducing the need to travel and is consistent with the national guidance in paragraph 3.9 of PPG7 and paragraph 44 of PPG13. Though the application of the Policy is clearly dependent on the discretion of the LPA in my view the need to reduce private road travel applies equally to sites easily accessible from major roads as to more remote ones.

6.19.1. RECOMMENDATION

I recommend that the Plan be modified by PC125.

6.20. PARA 6.3.8 & CHANGE NO 126

Objection

616	Somerset Wildlife Trust
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Conditionally withdrawn objection

818	Government Office for the South West
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Objection to PC126

2582	Somerset Wildlife Trust
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Supporters of change

2032	Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAFF)
2536	The National Farmers Union

Inspector's note

Objections 818 is conditionally withdrawn in response to PC126.

Issues

- (i) Whether that land of a lower agricultural quality can often be of a high nature conservation quality should be recognised in this paragraph.
- (ii) Whether criterion (ii) should embrace land subject to non-statutory designations in view of their importance to biodiversity conservation of County Wildlife Sites.

Inspector's reasoning and conclusions

Issue (i)

The LPA concedes that, consistently with paragraph 2.17 of PPG7, land of lower agricultural quality may merit protection for non-agricultural reasons. However such protection is afforded by Policies LC/3 (as amended by PC28) and (new) NC/5 (PC50).

Issue (ii)

PC126 revises paragraph 8.3.2 by recognising the need to balance the consideration of agricultural quality against the weight of environmental designations. However, I also concur with the further change proposed by the LPA which acknowledges that the environmental value of a non-statutorily designated site may nevertheless outweigh its high agricultural quality.

6.20.1. RECOMMENDATION

I recommend that the Plan be modified by PC126, subject to the insertion of 'or non-statutory' after designation'.

6.21. PARA 6.3.8 & CHANGE NO 127

Conditionally withdrawn objections

337	Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAFF)
819	Government Office for the South West

Objection to PC127

2583	Somerset Wildlife Trust
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Supporters of PC127

2032	Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food
2536	The National Farmers Union

Inspector's note

Objections 337 and 819 are conditionally withdrawn in response to PC127.

Issue

Whether non-statutory wildlife designations should be added to criterion (ii) of PC127.

Inspector's reasoning and conclusions

PC127 inserts a new Policy A/2 protecting the best and most versatile agricultural land and acknowledging the need to take account of the significance of statutory environmental designations when the development of agricultural land, in particular that of lower quality, is under consideration. In accordance with the advice in paragraph 2.17 of PPG7 I support the LPA's proposal to insert 'non-statutory' in criterion (ii) of (new) Policy A/2 (PC127).

6.21.1. RECOMMENDATION

I recommend that the Plan be modified by PC127, subject to the insertion of 'or non-statutory' after 'statutory'.

6.22. PARA. 6.3.12 & CHANGE NO 128

Objection

726	Environment Agency-South West Region
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Issue

Whether the reference to Policies R/8 and R/9 in paragraph 6.3.12 should be deleted since diversification could, for instance, include such activities as fishing lakes, water sports, or activity centres.

Inspector's reasoning and conclusions

I agree with the objector that the passing reference to Policies R/8 and R/9 in this paragraph gives an impression of a somewhat narrow range of activities which can contribute to the diversification of the rural economy in the interests of tourism, sport and recreation. While in PC128 the LPA cites Policy R/7 to quote the full range of activities specifically covered by sports policies I am not convinced that that outlook is significantly widened thereby. I shall therefore suggest a minor change of wording to imply that the activities cited are not an exclusive list of those that might take place in the countryside

6.22.1. RECOMMENDATION

I recommend that the Plan be modified by PC128, subject to the insertion after 'R/9 for' of 'such activities as'.