

SECTION 2.1 EMPLOYMENT

1. Introduction
2. Local economy
3. Problems and opportunities
4. Employment strategy
5. Existing and proposed employment land allocations
6. Other potential sites
 - a) Sites within built up areas
 - b) Redundant rural and other buildings
 - c) Outside development boundaries and allocated areas
7. Home based and existing business operations
 - a) Working from home
 - b) Other businesses
8. Office development
9. The loss of rural employment and services
10. Farm diversification schemes

SECTION 2.1 EMPLOYMENT

1. Introduction

This section provides for new employment uses within the context of the Norfolk Structure Plan and Government planning policy guidance on the need for “sustainable” development. The Plan refers to local economic trends, employment and unemployment factors and some of the current problems to be addressed. The Council provides for new employment both through the provisions of this Plan and the Council’s Economic Development Strategy.

2. Local economy

The Plan Area as a whole has above national average employment in the manufacturing sector and below average employment in the services sector. While the area may be perceived as predominantly rural, the agricultural sector is a minor employer, although a significant number of firms supply farms and handle their products. Over the decade prior to the base date of the Plan, the District experienced an above average growth in employers. This included a small growth in manufacturing employment contrary to a national decline, and over twice the national average rate of growth in services sector employment, much of which was due to growth in banking and financial services, and part time jobs taken by women. Unemployment has been well below the national average, with the exception of certain localities detailed below.

Overall within the District, major employers exist in vehicle manufacturing, food processing and electronics, the last named found particularly in a cluster of companies around Diss. In terms of business size, over 1700 of the District’s businesses employ 1-5 people, whereas only 60 employ over 50 people. The relatively few manufacturing companies in the District tend to be the larger companies. The employment of the residents of the Plan Area also depends upon the economies of the Norwich Area, part of Breckland District, Great Yarmouth, Lowestoft and the market towns of north Suffolk, in particular Beccles and Bungay.

Employment in the northern part of the Plan Area depends more closely on the Norwich Area employment structure. In the Norwich Area, unemployment levels are currently low but increasing contrary to national trends. The employment base although diverse is over reliant on the financial services sector, which is rapidly shedding jobs. Norwich’s manufacturing base is also declining.

In the southern part of the Plan Area, job opportunities are diffuse. Employment is more localised in small businesses based largely in Diss and Harleston. Unemployment is above the national average in the eastern Waveney Valley. In the west of the Plan Area, Hingham has experienced steady job growth in recent years.

3. Problems and opportunities

While above average employment growth has recently taken place within the District, of all Norfolk Districts, South Norfolk businesses have shown conservative attitudes to business development in general.

The District’s relatively low unemployment rate also creates a false impression of reasonable prosperity. Incomes and earnings are below national average, the percentage of long term unemployment is above average, and certain significant localities such as Costessey, Wymondham and part of the Waveney Valley suffer particular unemployment problems. In the Waveney Valley, several major local employers have ceased trading in recent years.

Problems concern the variable quality of available labour and property, the lack of access to finance for small businesses (which comprise over half of businesses in the Plan Area) and the relatively poor level of accessibility to the District.

The Council considers that an adequate amount of employment land is available for development, but some has been found to be owned as a long term investment by financial institutions not interested in releasing it for development in the shorter term. Other land has remained on the market at unrealistically high prices having been bought during the mid-1980s economic boom. Some land requires servicing which would place disproportionate financial burdens on the initial occupiers of the site. Evidence also suggests that some developers lack interest in providing modern and high quality office and industrial premises in advance of significant demand.

The Council has the opportunity to take the role of an enabler, to promote the economic development of the District and to assist the development of existing and new businesses and also to allocate land for new development.

4. Employment strategy

The County Strategy set out in the 1993 Norfolk Structure Plan is to accommodate employment growth and to provide employment opportunities in selected locations, with regard to environmental, pollution and infrastructure considerations. Defined locations for employment growth relevant to South Norfolk are Norwich, selected locations along the strategic routes of the A11, A47 and A140, and the towns of Diss, Harleston and Loddon/Chedgrave. This strategy has been reviewed by the new (1999) Structure Plan, which moves away from the "strategic routes" approach towards an "urban concentration" strategy. The 1999 Structure Plan indicates that the main strategic locations for new employment growth in South Norfolk will be at Longwater, Costessey, at Wymondham, and at Colney.

Within the overall context of the 1999 County Strategy, South Norfolk's strategy for employment development is set out in Strategic Principle 1 and focuses upon:

- Achieving sustainable employment development by providing alternatives to commuting into Norwich and other large towns;
- Providing work opportunities for local people through the promotion of small businesses and self-employment;
- Attracting modern growth industries to the District; and
- Addressing localised unemployment problems.

South Norfolk's employment strategy also reflects policy ENV 7, which sets out the general distributional framework for new development in the District. The main locations for new development under ENV 7 are settlements in the Norwich Area close to, and with good communications to, Norwich; and in the Rural Area, Diss, Harleston and Loddon/Chedgrave, plus selected villages that are well related to the transport network and where a range of facilities are available.

Within this overall context the Council aims to promote the economic prosperity of the District, whilst protecting and enhancing the environment that contributes significantly to its good quality of life. The Council will do this in two ways, that is, through the implementation of the policies of this Plan and the implementation of the Council's Economic Development Strategy. It is the Council's policy to assist the development of industry and employment within the Plan Area by allocating land and by granting permission for industrial and commercial development where appropriate.

The Council's Economic Development Strategy is complementary to the Local Plan and contains a range of promotional, training, business support and development initiatives. The Council's economic development function is led by the Economic and Community Development Manager and includes the provision of financial incentives and advice on the availability of land and premises across the District. Management of Council owned land and premises is coordinated by the Head of Property and Facilities.

The Plans' policies for the location of new employment development in the District, set out in this chapter of the Plan, include the allocation in policy EMP 1 of sites in the Norwich Area located in settlements well related to the city, and in the Rural Area in the settlements of Diss, Harleston, Loddon and Hingham, and are thus in accordance with the Plan's general locational strategy as established by policy ENV 7. In addition to this provision, there are some existing commitments for employment developments in other settlements, as referred to in section 5 of this chapter.

It is important that the implementation of allocated employment sites is monitored. The total amount of land allocated by EMP 1 provides a target for the provision of employment land during the Plan period against which take-up can be monitored. The District Council annually monitors the take-up of employment land so that adequate supply can be maintained. Recent monitoring of rates of take-up indicates no cause for concern relating to supply during the lifetime of this plan. Should a shortage of land arise for a specific use-class, or in a specific location, during the plan period, this would be a material consideration for the Council when considering applications for non-allocated sites.

Planning applications for new employment development must also accord with the Plan's overall distributional strategy. Policy EMP 2 seeks to guide the distribution, nature and scale of employment development on unidentified sites (ie. those not identified under policy EMP 1) to reflect the provisions of ENV 7. Employment proposals outside Development Limits and Village Boundaries are guided by policies EMP 3 (changes of use, or conversions, of buildings for employment use), EMP 4 (employment development outside Development Limits and Village Boundaries) and EMP 5 (agricultural development).

Throughout the Plan Area the Council provides for the alteration and extension of existing businesses (EMP 6), while seeking to resist development proposals that would involve the loss of jobs or land and premises suitable for continued employment uses (EMP 7).

The Plan seeks to protect the environmental assets of the District and to enhance the quality of life for residents through the development of employment opportunities.

The Council considers that its employment allocations and policies are in accordance with Strategic Principle 1. In particular they address the problems of localised unemployment referred to in section 3, as well as the need to maintain an adequate supply and choice of sites to counteract the factors which are otherwise slowing the release of employment land within the District.

5. Existing and proposed employment land allocations

Table 3.1 summarises the land currently committed and allocated for employment purposes within the Plan Area at the base date of the Plan (1 January 1994), showing a total of over 217 hectares of land either committed/allocated. This table excludes sites smaller than 0.5 hectares in size. There are many small sites falling into the latter category which are existing commitments and which contribute to providing a choice of employment sites and help maintain the vitality of the Plan Area.

Table 3.1
Employment land commitments in the Plan Area at 1 January 1994

(excluding sites under 0.5 hectares)

Location	Area (hectares) not started				Total
	Previous Allocations (i)		Other Sites (ii)		
	With P.P.	Without P.P.	With P.P.	Without P.P.	
Bracon Ash (Hethel)			16.48 (iv)		16.48
Colney		20.00	4.01		24.01
Costessey		35.00 (iii)		54.10	89.10
Diss		22.30	5.47	0.77 (vii)	28.54
Harleston	2.70	4.60			7.30
Hingham		2.50			2.50
Loddon		13.70(v)	3.72		17.42
Long Stratton		5.00			5.00
Wymondham	0.70	26.11 (vi)			26.81 (vi)
Total	3.40	129.21	29.68	54.87	217.16

- Notes:(i) From the Norwich Area and Rural Area Local Plans (NALP/RALP).
(ii) Major permissions or remaining land from informal local plan allocations made prior to the NALP and RALP.
(iii) Part is permitted for 'roads and sewers'. In addition a 6ha site was allocated in the Norwich Area Local Plan for a retail warehouse park, which has since been built.
(iv) Potential Lotus expansion forms part of a 22.25 ha site which includes recreation facilities.
(v) 8.51 ha has permission for 'roads and sewers'.
(vi) Wymondham total includes reduction in Cemetery Lane allocation from 2.30 ha (NALP) to 1.21 ha in this Plan and an increase in the Harts Farm allocation from 12.90 ha (NALP) to 18.36 ha. Approximately 0.5 ha with outline permission due to expire shortly into the Plan period is reallocated.
(vii) Part of 1982 Diss Local Plan employment land allocation since permitted (but not developed) for housing

Most of the sites in Table 3.1 have been previously allocated in Local Plans or other policy documents. The District Council has analysed recent rates of take-up of employment land in the District and considers that, in general, sufficient employment land exists or has been allocated to cater for demands within the Plan period. On this basis there is no need to allocate additional land for employment purposes on top of that allocated in previous plans, other than some small allocations or extensions to allocations as mentioned in the text below. All the allocations in EMP 1 accord with the Plan's general locational strategy, being either in settlements close, or with good communications, to Norwich, or in selected settlements in the rural area, as specified by policy ENV 7.

As land is taken up, careful consideration will have to be given to the allocation of further land for employment development. Every encouragement will be given to bring allocated employment sites in to use. This will include the identification of development constraints and their means of solution through the production of development briefs by the District Council where necessary.

Development briefs play an important role in communicating the Council's concepts for an area to potential developers at an early stage. Briefs currently exist for many of the site specific provisions in policy EMP 1. The preparation of new and revised briefs will include consultations with, and contributions from, the public and all major interested parties. They will be published separately as Supplementary Planning Guidance, available from the Council's Planning Services Department.

Policy EMP 1: Employment land allocations

Land at the following locations totalling some 140 hectares is allocated for employment development in Use Classes B1, B2 and B8, on the sites detailed in Part 2 of the Plan:

- i) Harleston - 4.6 hectares**
- ii) Loddon - 6.5 hectares**
- iii) Diss - 22.3 hectares**
- iv) Hingham - 2.5 hectares**
- v) Norwich Research Park - 35 hectares
(restricted uses – see policy COL 1)**
- vi) Longwater - Costessey south of River Tud – 37 hectares**
- vii) Wymondham – 25.4 hectares**
- viii) Long Stratton - 5.0 hectares**

(33 hectares are already permitted on significant sites at the base date of the plan).

The background to the new allocations is as follows:-

- a) Norwich Research Park:** The Council's Norwich Area Local Plan (NALP) allocated an area of 20 hectares for research and development uses, which is carried forward and reallocated in this plan. An additional 15 hectares at Colney Hall is also now allocated as an extension to the Norwich Research Park. Together these two sites form the 35 hectare allocation detailed in policy EMP 1. For more detail concerning this allocation see policy COL 1 and its supporting text, as well as Inset Map 16.

A 14 hectare contingency reserve is also proposed for the Norwich Research Park (see policy COL 2 for details) as well as 5 hectares for hospital expansion (policy COL 4). Both of these are shown on Inset Map 16.

- b) Longwater, Costessey:** Table 3.1 shows that in the longer term there could be some 89 hectares of land potentially available for employment development. This land comprises partially semi-derelict land and various mineral workings. It would be unrealistic to assume that this could be redeveloped within the Plan period, hence the allocation by the Plan of part of this area totalling 37 hectares (see Inset Map 17C). In the draft plan a further 6 hectares was allocated for a retail warehouse park adjacent to the employment allocation to form an overall employment and retailing area of 43 hectares. This retail warehouse park has since been completed and opened and any further retail development in this location would be guided by policy SHO 3.
- c) Wymondham:** A number of sites were allocated for employment in the NALP. A small increase is proposed to the Harts Farm allocation to reflect its locational advantages and the interest being shown in its development. A reduction is also proposed in the Cemetery Lane allocation for environmental reasons. Those not yet developed or without the benefit of planning consent are detailed in Part Two, policy WYM 5 (see Inset Map 62A).
- d) Long Stratton:** A site west of Chequers Road was allocated for employment uses in the NALP. Following the take up of this land a new allocation of 5 hectares (net 4 hectares after landscaping) is made south of Long Stratton. This is to provide more employment land in the Long Stratton area following the success of the Chequers Road site, but at a location where employment traffic is not forced to travel through residential areas (see policy LON 3 and Inset Map 35).

- e) **Harleston:** The Rural Area Local Plan (RALP) allocated 7.3 hectares of land for employment purposes, which has not yet been taken up. Since 1990 some 2.7 hectares has been permitted for employment development, roads and drainage. This Plan re-allocates the remaining part of the existing allocation (see policy HAR 5 and Inset Map 44A).
- f) **Loddon:** An area east of Low Bungay Road was allocated in the RALP for employment uses. In view of the commitment of land on the existing industrial estate (at Little Money Road) and the need to preclude development from the floodplain of the stream adjacent to it the District Council has re-allocated part of the area east of Low Bungay Road (see policy LOD 1 and Inset Map 34A).
- g) **Diss:** The RALP allocated 22.3 hectares of land for employment development at Sawmills Farm. The Plan re-allocates the Sawmills Farm employment land both to meet the needs of the Diss catchment and to provide for a viable scale of development that can off-set the costs of the works necessary to overcome the site's infrastructure constraints (see policy DIS 3, Inset Map 19A and the Sandy Lane East/Sawmills Farm Development Brief (1990)).
- h) **Hingham:** The RALP allocated a 2.5 hectare eastwards extension to the Ironside Way industrial estate. This Plan proposes to maintain the 2.5 hectare allocation detailed above (see policy HIN 1 and Inset Map 32A).

6. Other potential sites

a) Sites within built-up areas

Whilst the majority of employment development will take place on serviced land specifically allocated for such a use, certain industrial uses will require other locations or can take advantage of existing buildings because of their scale, or the nature of the business. South Norfolk's employment strategy, described in section 4 above, reflects both the policies of the 1999 Structure Plan in relation to sustainable development and the Council's general locational strategy for new development (expressed in policy ENV 7). By restricting new employment development within built-up areas to those settlements with Development Limits (where the basic framework of roads, public transport and related facilities already exists), policy EMP 2 below helps to implement the employment strategy's goals of sustainable employment development.

Business uses within Use Class Order 1987 Class B1 are deemed to be acceptable within residential areas. There may also be scope for suitable scaled mixed use developments, in town centres in particular, including housing, employment, retail, leisure, tourism and community facilities development, which provide for employment in a broader sense in a way which reduces the need for travel.

The settlements referred to in clause i) of EMP 2 below are set out in section A of policy ENV 7 (ie those settlements with defined development limits). The definition in clause ii) of "small" businesses is units of no more than 500 sq m each in size; and "modern growth industries" such as those contained within Use Class B1(b) of the Town and Country Use Classes Order 1987 (as amended). Consideration will also be given, under clause ii), to proposals for employment development in areas with local unemployment problems. Planning conditions may be applied, in accordance with Circular 1/97, to ensure that the objectives of the policy are met after planning permission is granted.

Clause iii) relates the scale and nature of development in these settlements to their character, size and function. This meets the requirements of policy EC.5 in the 1999 Structure Plan, which limits provision in villages to small-scale development, without preventing larger schemes in appropriate settlements. The environmental safeguards set out in sections 1.1 and 1.2 of the

Plan apply to such employment development. The “residential” areas referred to in clause iii) are defined as areas in predominantly residential use, falling outside defined employment areas and Central Business Areas. Under this definition most larger villages in the District will be considered wholly “residential”, unlike the market towns and Costessey which have distinct residential, employment and other areas.

Policy EMP 2: Distribution, nature and scale of employment development on unidentified sites

Development for employment purposes on sites not identified under policy EMP 1 of the Plan will only be permitted if:

- i) The site is within the Development Limits or Village Boundaries of a policy ENV 7 settlement identified on the Proposals Map; and**
- ii) The development is for small businesses, modern growth industries, or would specifically address local unemployment problems; and**
- iii) The nature and scale of the proposed development would be in keeping with the character, scale and function of the settlement concerned. In residential areas, proposals will be limited to those falling within Class B1 of Class B of the Schedule to the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (as amended).**

b) Redundant rural and other buildings

Rural and other buildings can become redundant because of changing agricultural, industrial and commercial practices. In certain cases, these could be brought back into economic use by conversion to other industrial or commercial uses. The District Council is concerned, however, about the quality of rural and other buildings in the countryside being proposed for such conversions, and wishes to protect the character of the rural landscape and to provide for a high standard of development. Rural buildings of architectural importance or landscape value are often more suitable for employment uses rather than for residential conversions. However, the Council has considerable reservations about the conversion of certain farm buildings constructed under permitted development rights which are inappropriate for conversion.

The Council is concerned that redundant buildings permitted for commercial or industrial uses should not be substantially extended. This is in order to avoid detrimental impacts on their appearance, landscape setting, and agricultural, environmental, nature conservation and neighbouring uses’ amenity considerations. Extensions to existing businesses are provided for by policy EMP 6 and where detrimental impacts preclude further business expansion, the Council may be able to assist in the search for alternative accommodation.

Government guidance states that the focus of new employment development should be in existing centres and areas allocated in development plans to enable a co-ordinated provision of housing and services to reduce the need to travel. The potential widespread dispersal of employment opportunities through large scale conversions of rural buildings to business uses could undermine the vitality of nearby towns and villages and the pursuit of sustainable development. The impact of such conversions will be carefully considered before planning permission is granted.

Government planning policy advice (in Planning Policy Guidance Notes (PPGs) 4 “Industrial, commercial development and small firms” (November 1992), 7 “Countryside – Environmental Quality and Economic and Social Development” (February 1997) and 13 “Transport” (March 2001)) encourages the need to locate development in a way that minimises the need for motor vehicle trips. Major developments, employment intensive uses and activities attracting large numbers of trips will require easy access for a local residential workforce by foot, cycle and public transport. In certain cases, improvement to the local highway network may be required at the developer’s expense (see policy TRA 17).

Policy EMP 3: Adaptation and re-use of rural buildings for employment purpose

Proposals for adaptation and re-use of buildings for employment use, outside the Development Limits and Village Boundaries shown on the Proposals Map, will be permitted if:

- i) The existing building is soundly constructed, and suitable for adaptation and re-use without extensive alteration, re-building and/or substantial extensions, including outbuildings; and**
- ii) The proposal would conserve or enhance the intrinsic qualities of the building and its setting in the landscape; and**
- iii) In the case of farm buildings, the proposal would not cause demonstrable harm to the viability of the farm concerned; and**
- iv) Road access is of a sufficient standard to serve the scale and nature of development proposed without causing demonstrable harm to the safe and free flow of traffic; and**
- v) The proposed use would not lead to dispersal of activity on such a scale as to prejudice the vitality of local towns and villages.**

Where permission is granted, the District Council may, in appropriate circumstances, attach a condition to that permission withdrawing permitted development rights for the converted building and its curtilage and similarly impose a limitation excluding from the permission the right to stand a caravan or portable cabin within the curtilage. In addition, in the case of the conversion of farm buildings, the Council will normally require to be satisfied that the granting of permission is not likely to result in the need for provision of other buildings on the agricultural unit or holding.

Where the proliferation of farm buildings could have a seriously detrimental effect on the landscape the Council may attach a condition to that permission withdrawing permitted development rights for the particular agricultural unit or holding.

The intention of clause ii) of the policy is to seek to improve the visual quality of the rural environment. However, in the light of PPG 7 it would not be appropriate to place undue burdens on proposals for rural/farm diversification. Therefore, the Council will seek improvements to the external appearance having regard to the use proposed and the practicality of potential improvements. Additionally, it may be appropriate to seek new, or improvements to existing, landscaping to screen buildings as an alternative.

c) Outside development boundaries and allocated areas

The preceding policies should meet most anticipated employment requirements, but there will also be proposals for employment uses which cannot be met by these policies. Policy EC.6 in the 1999 Structure Plan reflects PPG7 by allowing for economic development in the countryside where there are sites and premises which can accommodate small-scale businesses without detriment to the local environment, and which encourage the sustainability of local economies. Policy EMP 4 below makes provision for proposals for employment developments that are small in scale and sensitively designed in locations adjacent to settlements (defined as those with Development Limits and Village Boundaries), where it can be shown that the location is justifiable in the context of government guidance, and where there are no alternative suitable sites or premises (including allocated sites) within the locality. Policy EMP 4 also makes allowance for exceptional provision for three categories of relatively large-scale development, including agriculturally related development. Where permitted, the further extension of such

proposals shall be considered within the context of policy EMP 6. The re-use of redundant industrial or commercial sites under EMP 4 shall be preferred to greenfield sites. Proposals for small-scale retailing shall also be considered within the context of policy SHO 8.”

Policy EMP4 does not override the provisions of policies ENV 1, ENV 2, ENV 3, ENV 5 and ENV 6 in relation to “inappropriate development” (see glossary) in the Norwich Area

Policy EMP 4: Employment development outside the Development Limits and Village Boundaries of identified town and villages

Employment development outside the Development Limits and Village Boundaries defined on the Proposals Map under policy ENV 7 will only be permitted if:

- i) There are no alternative sites or premises within the identified Development Limits or Village Boundaries which are either suitable or available; and**
- ii) The proposed site is on land adjacent to a town, village or other area of development with a defined Development Limit or Village Boundary; and**
- iii) Road access is of a sufficient standard to serve the scale and nature of development proposed without causing demonstrable harm to the safe and free flow of traffic;**

And the proposal is:

- iv) For small businesses, modern growth industries, or would specifically address local unemployment problems; and**
- v) Small in scale and designed to blend with the setting of the settlement concerned;**

Or, exceptionally, if the proposal is:

- vi) For agriculturally related industry, which must be located close to the farms to which it relates; or**
- vii) “Unneighbourly”, and therefore unsuitable for locations within an existing built-up area; or**
- viii) Reliant on large areas of open storage, and would therefore represent an inefficient use of serviced employment land**

Subject to the foregoing requirements being first satisfied, the re-use of existing or previously developed land will be preferred to the use of green field sites.

In addition to the above provision, it is acknowledged that agriculture remains a source of employment with development demands for which positive provision should be made. Many types of agricultural building can be constructed without the need for planning permission under ‘permitted development’ rights, but recent changes to Government legislation have increased the degree of local authority control. The District Council is concerned about the quality of agricultural buildings and will seek to exercise control over them in appropriate circumstances to avoid intrusions into the landscape. Siting is an important issue in relation to landscape impact. New agricultural buildings should ideally be located as closely as possible to existing agricultural buildings, although in some cases this may not be possible or desirable (where for example the existing buildings are unduly conspicuous, or where there are no existing buildings). Protection of existing trees is also an important consideration (although this can only effectively be secured by Tree Preservation Orders in accordance with policy ENV 19).

Where buildings may be constructed as ‘permitted development’, the following provisions will also be taken into account with regard to informal discussions between the developer and the Council.

Policy EMP 5: Agricultural development

Proposals for the erection of agricultural buildings which exceed general development order permitted development tolerances will be permitted if:

- i) The proposal is required for existing or proposed agricultural operations on the holding concerned; and**
- ii) The siting, design and scale of the proposal would relate well with other existing and proposed buildings on the holding, and respect the character of the surrounding landscape; and**
- iii) Road access is of a sufficient standard to serve the scale and nature of development proposed without causing demonstrable harm to the safe and free flow of traffic.**

7. Home based and existing business operations

a) Working from home

Many small businesses are started by people working at home and planning permission is not normally required where such a use of part of a dwelling does not change the overall character of the property's use as a single dwelling. However those considering working from home should consult the District Council first.

Once a business or non-residential use of a property ceases to be ancillary to its use as a single dwelling because, for example, the business has grown and the use of the dwelling for activities related to the business has intensified, a material change of use for which planning permission is required is likely to have taken place. Such a change may be indicated by the business generating visitors, traffic, noise or fumes over and above what might be expected if the property were in use as a single dwelling without an ancillary use. In general terms, where planning permission is required, proposals will be considered within the context of policies EMP 2, EMP 3 and EMP 6. Where the District Council considers that a use is detrimental to the locality, it may recommend the relocation of the business to more appropriate premises.

b) Other businesses

It is important that established businesses should be able to develop their existing sites where they are of sufficient size. Some firms may have outgrown their existing sites and will not be able to expand without detriment to the landscape, neighbours' amenities or due to access, highways and public transport considerations. Where such detrimental impacts preclude further business expansion, the Council may be able to assist in the search for alternative accommodation.

Policy EMP 6: Alterations and extensions to existing business premises

Alteration and extensions to existing premises will be permitted provided that:

- i) The size and design of the proposals would be in keeping with the existing building and its surroundings.**
- ii) The existing landscaping of the site would not be seriously compromised and that full and effective landscaping for the proposed alteration or extension would be incorporated.**
- iii) All necessary parking, servicing, access and circulation can be accommodated on site for both the existing building and the proposed extension.**

The definition of "necessary" parking, servicing, access and circulation referred to in clause iii) above is that which is required for the operation of the existing building, or buildings, and proposed extension as a whole unit, in accordance with Norfolk County Council's adopted parking standards (see Appendix 3).

8. Office development

This section is concerned with employment development of which office development is an integral part. The preceding policies will therefore be applicable to any proposals for office development that arise during the Plan period, for example, office proposals in employment areas, within built-up areas or involving the conversion of redundant farm buildings. Certain types of proposals, however, will need to be considered in the context of other policies contained in this Plan, for example, proposals for financial/professional services in central business areas. When considering proposals for office development it is therefore important to make reference to other policies in the Plan, in particular policies HOU 18, SHO 4, SHO 5, SHO 6 and SHO 7.

9. The loss of rural employment and services

District Council policy is to assist the development of industry and employment in South Norfolk. In the rural area (which is defined as everywhere in the District outside the main market towns and Costessey), where there are fewer job opportunities and where their loss can be very damaging to local communities, the Council seeks to support the retention of rural services and employment opportunities where appropriate. Rural employers including shops and public houses can contribute greatly to the diversity and vitality of their settlements.

PPG 7 requests local authorities to have regard to the vital role of small scale enterprises in promoting a healthy rural economy. It states (in paragraph 3.15) that, *“The conversion of buildings which are currently in industrial or commercial use to dwellings may have an adverse impact on local economic activity. Residential conversion of buildings which have ceased to be used for industrial or commercial purposes can have a minimal economic impact, while business conversion may have a more positive impact on local employment”*. Local Planning Authorities are advised to consider the local needs for business and residential conversions and may limit the latter subject to certain criteria where the creation of local employment is a priority.

The Council therefore seeks to maintain the presence of sites and premises that would be suitable for the provision of employment and service uses, and to resist the redevelopment of such provision that would result in the loss of existing jobs or the potential for future employment, subject to the considerations set out in policies EMP 7 and HOU 10. In considering proposals under EMP 7, the Council will also take into account the level of employment in the business/enterprise, the level and nature of existing employment opportunities in the locality, and the contribution of the business/enterprise to the vitality of the local community. The efforts to explore retention of the site for employment use, referred to in clause iv) of ENV 7, should be supported by a statement of the efforts made

Policy EMP 7: The retention of rural employment and services

The use of employment land and buildings for non-employment uses will only be permitted if:

- i) The buildings/land housing the business or enterprise are unsuitable for employment uses or, in the case of buildings, in poor condition; and**
- ii) Existing or previous employment uses have had/are having a detrimental effect on residential amenity and the environment; and**
- iii) There is adequate access available and adequate capacity in the local highway network to accommodate the associated traffic generation.**
- iv) The retention of the site for employment use has been fully explored without success.**

10. Farm diversification schemes

National and European agricultural policy is having an important impact on all farming operations. Recent high profile crises (e.g BSE, swine fever, foot and mouth) have increased pressure on the income of farmers. Many farmers are now seeking to supplement farm incomes through alternative uses for land and buildings. The District Council wishes to support schemes for farm based diversification, provided that its operation is ancillary to and supports the existing agricultural operation. Examples of farm diversification schemes include woodland management, farm shops, craft workshops and holiday accommodation. A more exhaustive list can be found in Annex C of PPG 7. Diversification schemes can help to supplement farm income, provide employment, increase local trade and make use of redundant or under utilised buildings. As such farm diversification has a number of benefits for the local economy. However, whilst there are potential benefits it is important that proposed diversification schemes do not have an adverse impact upon existing rural facilities or the character of the countryside. For example – farm shops, even if small in scale may have an impact on nearby village shops.

Other schemes may have to be carefully reconciled with conservation interests and some, such as car boot sales, may be significant generators of travel demand in their own right. Diversification of farming activity should avoid detrimental impact from HGVs on the environment and local roads and be commensurate with the ability of the local highway network to cater for development traffic.

Policy EMP 8: Farm diversification schemes

Proposals for farm diversification schemes will be permitted if the proposal would:

- i) Be ancillary to, and facilitate, the continued agricultural use of the farm holding, and would enable existing farmland to remain in, or available for, agricultural use; and**
- ii) Make a positive contribution to the rural economy, and would not adversely affect the vitality and viability of established local centres; and**
- iii) Not have a demonstrably harmful impact on the local countryside in terms of landscape, nature conservation, public access, or on the living conditions of local residents; and if the scheme is likely to attract workers additional to those employed in farming the holding, or other visitors:**
- iv) The site is accessible by means other than a private car.**