

17. VILLAGES

17.1 Introduction

17.1.1 The purpose of this Chapter is to set out the planning issues, and the Council's policy intentions in respect of the District's settlements, other than the six main ones identified in the Housing Provision Strategy, as outlined in Chapter 3 (Housing).

17.1.2 East Hertfordshire is characterised by a dispersed settlement pattern of market towns, and over a hundred villages and hamlets reflecting thousands of years of human activity in the area. This has resulted in a valuable heritage in terms of the built environment, producing an abundance of listed buildings and conservation areas.

17.1.3 As elsewhere in the country the District has seen the closure of village shops and schools, centralisation of health care facilities, loss of bus routes, and in particular, in common with other areas in the southeast, sections of the community unable to access the private housing market. Further information on rural housing needs can be found in the latest Housing Needs Survey.

17.1.4 Changes in agricultural practice have meant there are fewer jobs on the land and this has consequently increased the need to travel to find work. Where employment sites have become redundant in villages, there has been a tendency for them to be redeveloped for residential purposes. This has led to further loss of employment opportunities.

17.1.5 Where growth has occurred, it has in recent years been focused on a few villages. However, their expansion has not necessarily been accompanied by a similar increase in shops, jobs, and other services, thereby exacerbating their social and economic imbalance.

17.1.6 Government policy emphasises the need to ensure vital and viable rural communities, whilst at the same time conserving the countryside. It suggests that the main focus of new development should be on existing settlements. This, it considers, promotes sustainable development by strengthening villages and market towns, protecting the open countryside, and sustaining local services and moving towards a better balance

between employment and housing in rural communities, thereby reducing the need to travel.

17.1.7 The main thrust of the Structure Plan is to direct development to the main settlements, but it does allow for other settlements to be selected within, and beyond, the Green Belt, to maintain the viability of an area. In addition smaller settlements may be chosen for development where it meets the needs of that settlement and the surrounding area. The protection of environmental assets, however, is considered to be fundamental to the principles of sustainability and to the main aim of the Plan.

17.1.8 Changes in the rural economy, the need for local affordable housing, and the need to reduce car journeys, by ensuring that opportunities for employment, shopping, and other facilities (at an appropriate scale) are available locally, mean that limited development within the rural area is appropriate. However, this must be balanced with the need to protect the District's environmental assets. This Local Plan seeks to ensure that both can be realised, without damage to the other, thereby achieving a sustainable pattern of development. The aim and objectives of the Local Plan, in respect of the District's villages and smaller settlements, are as follows:

Aim

To protect and enhance the quality and character of the countryside, whilst meeting the needs of all who live and work there in a sustainable manner, ensuring vital and viable communities.

Objectives

1. To prevent the coalescence of settlements and urbanisation in the Metropolitan Green Belt and Rural Area Beyond the Green Belt.
2. To protect the best and most versatile agricultural land, rivers and their corridors, areas of nature conservation value, and to retain land in agricultural, forestry, and related uses.

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3. To encourage high quality in design and promote local distinctiveness and diversity in the landscape and built form.
4. To ensure a sustainable pattern of development, providing a balance between the needs of housing and other land-uses, whilst protecting natural assets.
5. To facilitate the provision of rural affordable housing to meet local needs, and the provision of small-scale employment opportunities.
6. To sustain village services and facilities, and encourage better passenger transport.
7. To encourage suitable linkages, within and between villages and towns, to provide opportunities for alternative modes of transport other than the car, including walking, cycling, and passenger transport.

17.2 The Village Development Strategy

17.2.1 The purpose of the Village Development Strategy is to ensure that new development meets the aim and objectives identified above. That is development, which is planned and sustainable, which meets the needs of the local area without damaging the District's environmental assets. This is intended to be achieved by establishing a hierarchy of settlements, spread across the District with development, at the appropriate scale, being directed towards selected villages. To be considered suitable for development, villages have been selected on the basis of the level of their facilities and services, size, availability of passenger transport, capacity of the highway network, and capacity to accommodate development.

17.2.2 This has resulted in a strategy for village development based on three categories of villages.

17.2.3 Category 1 Villages are villages wherein limited small-scale and infill development for housing, employment, service and community facilities may be permitted, in order to help sustain vital and viable rural communities. Limited sustainable development within the confines of

these villages is possible without affecting their overall character, compromising the openness of the Green Belt or damaging the character of the Rural Area.

17.2.4 The number of dwellings considered to be appropriate will vary from village to village and be dependent on the size of villages. Such developments will need to cater for a range of house types, sizes, and tenure. The scale and size of any employment, service or community facility must be appropriate for the size of village and community that it is serving. All new development should be sensitively designed and ensure that unacceptable highway problems are not created.

OSV1 Category 1 Villages

(I) The following settlements are identified as Category 1 Villages:

Braughing	Puckeridge
Hertford Heath	Tewin
High Cross	Walkern
Hunsdon	Watton-at-Stone
Much Hadham	

(II) Within the confines of Category 1 Villages, as defined on the Proposals Map, limited small-scale and infill housing development, and suitably sized employment, service, leisure, recreation and community facilities may be permitted, provided that:

- (a) there would be no unacceptable resultant loss of housing, employment, sport, recreation, open space or community facilities, in accordance with Policies EDE2, LRC1 and LRC11;
- (b) proposals for housing development make provision for up to 40% affordable housing, in accordance with Policies HSG3 and HSG4; and comply with the criteria set out in Policy HSG7;
- (c) proposals for suitably sized employment, service, leisure, recreation and community facilities,

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contribute to the vitality and viability of that village and surrounding parishes;

- (d) the proposal would not be significantly detrimental to the amenities of the adjoining area or nearby occupiers;
- (e) the site does not represent a significant open space or gap important to the form and/or setting of the village;
- (f) the proposal would not unacceptably block important views or vistas within the village or of open countryside beyond the village, and would not significantly detract from the appearance of the village from the surrounding area;
- (g) the proposal is sensitively designed, respecting the character, visual quality, and landscape of, and is satisfactorily integrated into, the village or the surrounding area.

17.2.5 Category 2 Villages are villages wherein infill development only, that meets an identified need of the village or parish, may be permitted. In these villages, within the built up area, there is some scope for infill development to support existing facilities and services and/or local housing. In addition small-scale employment development may also be permitted.

17.2.6 Fulfilment of the identified housing need, need not be restricted to affordable housing but could include for example, smaller units provided on the open market, or sheltered accommodation. The development should be appropriate for the size of village or locality and comply with Policies OSV2, OSV6, and OSV8.

OSV2 Category 2 Villages

(I) The following settlements are identified as Category 2 Villages:

Aston (excluding Aston End)

Bayford	High Wych
Benington	Little Hadham
Brickendon	Standon
Dane End	Stapleford
Datchworth	Thundridge
Furneux Pelham	Wadesmill
Great Amwell	Widford
Hadham Ford	

(II) Within the built-up area of Category 2 Villages, infill housing development, and small-scale employment, service, leisure, recreation and community facilities may be permitted, provided that:

- (a) there would be no unacceptable resultant loss of housing, employment, sport, recreation, open space or community facilities, in accordance with Policies EDE2, LRC1, and LRC11;
- (b) proposals for housing development meet a local need, which has been identified either through the latest District Housing Needs Survey or a subsequent Parish Survey;
- (c) proposals for housing development make provision for up to 40% affordable housing, in accordance with policies HSG3 and HSG4 and comply with the criteria set out in Policy HSG7;
- (d) proposals for small-scale service, leisure, recreation and community facilities, are accommodated only to support the facilities and services needed by that village and/or the surrounding parishes;
- (e) proposals for small-scale employment are of a scale and nature appropriate to their location;
- (f) the proposal would not be significantly detrimental to the amenities of the adjoining area or nearby occupiers;
- (g) the site does not represent a significant open space or gap

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important to the form and/or setting of the settlement;

- (h) the proposal would not unacceptably block important views or vistas within the village or of open countryside beyond the village, and would not significantly detract from the appearance of the village from the surrounding area;
- (i) the proposal does not represent an extension of ribbon development or an addition to an isolated group of houses;
- (j) the proposal is sensitively designed, respecting the character, visual quality, and landscape of, and is satisfactorily integrated into, the village or the surrounding area.

For Guidance the following definitions are given for housing development:

Limited small-scale development: whilst there is no absolute definition, this would typically comprise sites of up to 15 dwellings, occasionally somewhat more, but rarely more than 30 dwellings.

Infill development: is the erection of up to five small dwellings on a site within the built-up area of the village, where such development can take place without damage to the character or appearance of the locality. Infill development does not constitute the linking of two separate built up areas within a settlement, separated by a significant gap, or the consolidation of an isolated group of buildings.

17.2.7 Category 3 Villages represent the remaining settlements where no new building will be permitted except for that appropriate in the Rural Area as defined in Policies GBC3 & GBC6 and Rural Exceptions Affordable Housing in accordance with Policy HSG5.

OSV3 Category 3 Villages

- (I) The remaining rural settlements not identified in Policies OSV1 and OSV2, are identified as Category 3 Villages, wherein

development will not be permitted except for:

- (a) that appropriate in the Green Belt and Rural Area Beyond the Green Belt and in accordance with Policies GBC1 and GBC3; and
 - (b) rural exceptions affordable housing, required to meet the identified needs of the Village or Parish and in accordance with Policy HSG5.
- (II) Proposals which may be permitted, in accordance with Part (I) of this policy, will be subject to the following criteria:
- (a) there would be no unacceptable resultant loss of housing, employment, sport, recreation, open space or community facilities, in accordance with Policies EDE2, LRC1, and LRC11;
 - (b) the proposal would not be significantly detrimental to the amenities of the adjoining area or nearby occupiers;
 - (c) the site does not represent a significant open space or gap important to the form and/or setting of the settlement;
 - (d) the proposal would not unacceptably block important views or vistas within the village or of open countryside beyond the village, and would not significantly detract from the appearance of the village from the surrounding area;
 - (e) the proposal does not represent an extension of ribbon development or an addition to an isolated group of houses;
 - (f) the proposal is sensitively designed, respecting the character, visual quality, and landscape of, and is satisfactorily integrated into, the village or the surrounding area.

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17.3 Village Boundaries

17.3.1 PPG2 requires villages to be inset (i.e. excluded from the Green Belt), where more than infill development is proposed. In East Hertfordshire a similar policy of restraint is used for the remaining two thirds of the District. It is, therefore, considered appropriate to identify Village boundaries for the larger Villages both within and beyond the Green Belt.

17.3.2 In accordance with the Village Development Strategy boundaries have, therefore, been defined for all the Category 1 Villages and are shown on the Proposals Map. These have been defined by the outer extent of the built-up areas of the villages. Boundaries have been drawn using, wherever possible, physical features on the ground, such as roads and garden boundaries, thus providing a clearly identifiable and defensible boundary. This does not mean, however, that development will be permitted right up to the boundary line. New development must respect the built form and character of the settlement, and will be subject to the criteria set out in Policy OSV1.

17.3.3 The following Green Belt alterations are proposed at Watton-at-Stone and Tewin as part of this Local Plan Review:

*Land south of Station Road, east of railway line
Watton-at-Stone*

In accordance with Policy OVS4, land to the south of Station Road is proposed to be excluded from the Green Belt, and is identified as a Housing Site Allocation.

Village of Tewin

In accordance with Policy OSV1, the village of Tewin is identified as a Category 1 Village, and is proposed to be inset (i.e. excluded) from the Green Belt.

17.3.4 The Selected Rural Settlement limits for Standon and Puckeridge, as shown in the 1993 First Review Local Plan, have been redrawn to exclude most of Standon village, east of the River Rib, and to take account of new housing allocations in the Local Plan Review.

17.3.5 PPG2 states that where development is for infill only, then villages may be either inset (that is excluded from the Green Belt), or washed over (that is included within the Green Belt, with Green Belt designation being carried across it). The Council considers that Category 2 Villages will be afforded more protection if they remain washed over. Village boundaries have, therefore, not been defined for Category 2 Villages, and they will continue to be washed over by the Green Belt or Beyond the Green Belt Rural Area designation.

17.4 Housing

17.4.1 Based on the Housing Provision Strategy, as detailed in the Housing Chapter, the villages need to make provision for an additional 300 net dwellings, on sites of a size capable of accommodating five or more dwellings, between 1999 and 2011.

17.4.2 The principles of sustainability and the policies of the Structure Plan require that the new housing for the Rural Areas should meet local need. This will mean ensuring that up to 40% of housing provided is affordable. This will be achieved in any one of three ways: through the development of Registered Social Landlord schemes on their own or Council owned sites throughout the District; through local needs and rural exception sites, in Category 2 and 3 Villages respectively; and through mixed market and affordable housing schemes, using Section 106 Agreements (or as subsequently revised) in Category 1 and 2 Villages.

17.4.4 The affordable housing provision, which the Council will seek on specifically allocated village sites, is detailed in Policy OSV4. During the plan period, other sites, in the form of limited small-scale and infill housing development, are anticipated to come forward. In recognition of this greater policy flexibility and the need to provide a range of new dwellings, a mix of market and affordable housing on all but the smallest sites will be sought, in accordance with Policies HSG3 and HSG4, with dwelling numbers being rounded as appropriate.

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17.4.5 Despite efforts to limit the amount of greenfield land take, the District Council found little scope within the Category 1 Villages for further housing to be accommodated on previously developed land. Following a rigorous appraisal of sites suggested in response to the Pre-Deposit Consultation Document and other sites considered suitable, sufficient land for housing has been allocated for residential development within these

villages. The release of these sites will be in accordance with Policy HSG2 in Chapter 3 (Housing).

17.4.6 Sites identified in the Deposit Version of the Local Plan, completed between April 1999 and March 2003, have been removed from Policy OSV4 and are detailed in Table 17.1:

Table 17.1 Completed Deposit Version Housing Allocations (included in Table 3.2 (b) in Chapter 3, Housing)

Village	Location	Ref No	Brownfield/ Greenfield	Estimated Number of Dwellings		
				Open Market	Affordable	Total
Watton-at-Stone	Area adjacent Great Innings N&S	328	Greenfield	14	0	14
	Area 2, adjacent Great Innings N&S	329	Greenfield	17	0	17
	Garage, High Street	331	Brownfield	12	0	12
			TOTAL	43	0	43

OSV4 Housing Allocations - Category 1 Villages

In accordance with Policy HSG2 (II) the following sites as identified on the Proposals Map are allocated for residential development:

(I) In Phase 1:

Permitted Deposit Version Housing Allocations (pre-April 2003) (included in Table 3.2 (c-e) in Chapter 3, Housing)

Village	Location	Ref No	Brownfield/ Greenfield	Estimated Number of Dwellings		
				Open Market	Affordable	Total
Much Hadham	Adjacent Windmill Way	301	Greenfield	10	12	22
Walkern	Sworders Coachworks	300	Brownfield	19	4	23

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Village	Location	Ref No	Brownfield/ Greenfield	Estimated Number of Dwellings		
				Open Market	Affordable	Total
Watton-at-Stone	Remaining land adjacent Great Innings N&S	330	Greenfield	0	10	10
			TOTAL	29	26	55

Deposit Version Housing Allocations (included in Table 3.2 (h) in Chapter 3, Housing)

Village	Location	Ref No	Brownfield/ Greenfield	Estimated Number of Dwellings		
				Open Market	Affordable	Total
Braughing	Pentlows Farm	115	Brownfield	18	12	30
Hunsdon	Land off Wicklands Road	129	Greenfield	7	5	12
Puckeridge	Adjacent former Public House, High St	204	Brownfield	5	2	7
Walkern	Land adjacent Yew Tree Public House	19 & 19a	Greenfield	13	5	18
			TOTAL	43	0	67

(II) In Phase 2:

Village	Location	Ref No	Brownfield/ Greenfield	Estimated Number of Dwellings		
				Open Market	Affordable	Total
Watton-at-Stone	Land South of Station road, East of railway line*	30 whole site	Greenfield	50	33	83
			TOTAL	50	33	83

*Vehicular access to Site 30 at Watton-at-Stone should be restricted to Station Road at the eastern boundary of the site.

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17.4.7 Deposit Plan allocated sites, granted planning permission but not completed between April 1999 and March 2003, contribute towards the original required provision and are, therefore, incorporated in Policy OSV4 above. The remaining provision will come from the other allocated sites listed in Policy OSV4.

17.4.8 In respect of Much Hadham, because of its unique character and road capacity, the Council consider there to be few, if any, opportunities for limited small scale and infill development, beyond that identified in the Local Plan on the Windmill Way site.

17.4.9 Watton-at-Stone has seen a considerable amount of house building in recent years. This is set to continue in the short term with the completion of development on the Great Innings site. It is, therefore, proposed that its additional housing allocation should be phased for release after 2006, in accordance with Policy HSG2. The development of this site will facilitate access to

adjacent school land, which has been identified for community facilities, including a replacement doctor's surgery and an Early Years Centre.

17.4.10 It should also be recognised that an additional contribution to the housing provision, for the Rural Area, can be made from the conversion of suitable buildings, or the use of vacant buildings, or the use of vacant space above or within shops, and other commercial premises, by infill development and windfall sites, in line with Policies STC5 and HSG7.

17.4.11 Should, however, the number of dwellings provided by these means not reach the estimated figure, it may be necessary to find additional land towards the end of the Plan period. Therefore, as a contingency measure, Reserve Housing Land has been identified, that will only be released when, and if monitoring reveals a significant shortfall in numbers, achieved through allocated and windfall sites and conversions.

OSV5 Reserve Housing Land - Category 1 Villages

(I) In accordance with Policy HSG2 (II) the following site is identified on the Proposals Map as Reserve Housing Land for residential development in Phase 3:

Village	Location	Ref No	Brownfield/ Greenfield	Estimated Number of Dwellings		
				Open Market	Affordable	Total
Puckeridge	West of Buntingford and north of Mentley Lane East	101	Greenfield	28	19	47
			TOTAL	28	19	47

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17.5 Economic Development and Employment

17.5.1 The District Council provides support for rural businesses and the rural economy, through its planning policies and through the implementation of its Economic Development Strategy, which is discussed in more detail in Chapter 6 (Economic Development and Employment).

17.5.2 As stated above, the restructuring of the rural economy has resulted in the loss of jobs on the land. In addition, the conversion and redevelopment of employment sites in the rural areas has resulted in the further loss of employment opportunities.

17.5.3 It is important that such opportunities should be retained to ensure there is a range of jobs accessible, including for those who do not have access to a car, so that communities can seek to be vital and viable, and to reduce the distance and need to travel. For this reason, Policy EDE2 states a preference for the continued use of employment sites for employment purposes within the villages.

17.5.4 The District Council recognises that in order to ensure the continued viability of such uses there will be a need, from time to time, to invest in such premises. This may involve minor extensions or alterations. Whilst recognising this, the District Council places considerable importance on safeguarding the character and appearance of the countryside, ensuring the openness of the Green Belt is maintained and ensuring the principles of sustainable development are met.

17.5.5 However, applications for minor extensions or alterations to uses, which provide essential facilities, or are an important source of local employment, and cannot easily be relocated, without damage to the local economy or community, will be viewed sympathetically subject to the criteria in Policy OSV6.

OSV6 Extensions and Alterations to Premises in Employment Use

In the Green Belt and Rural Area Beyond the Green Belt, outside the Main Settlements and

Categories 1 and 2 Villages, small-scale extensions or alterations to existing premises in B1 and B2 use, may be permitted, subject to the following criteria:

- (a) the use is considered to provide an essential facility, or be an important source of local employment;
- (b) the scale of the use is appropriate to the locality;
- (c) the proposals are compatible with the character of the Green Belt and/or Rural Area Beyond the Green Belt;
- (d) the proposal would not be significantly detrimental to the amenities of the adjoining area or nearby occupiers;
- (e) the proposals are sympathetic to their surroundings, including surrounding countryside, in terms of local character, design, scale, landscape, and visual impact;
- (f) the site is capable of accommodating the proposal along with the necessary access, parking, and servicing arrangements; and
- (g) the proposal will not have a significant adverse impact in terms of traffic generation.

17.5.6 The East Hertfordshire Local Plan (December 1999) designated an Employment Area south of the A120 at Standon, in the area bounded by the A120, the dismantled railway and the River Rib. This designation has been retained. In addition, the following sites have also been designated as Employment Areas:

- (i) Land on the east side of Station Road, Standon;
- (ii) Warrenwood Industrial Estate, Stapleford;
- (iii) Ermine Point Business Park, Nr. Ware;
- (iv) Thundridge Business Park;
- (v) Oakleys Horseboxes, High Cross;
- (vi) Silkmead Farm, Hare Street.

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OSV7 Employment Areas

(I) In accordance with Policy EDE1 the following sites are defined as Employment Areas on the Proposals Map and will be reserved for industry comprising Classes B1 Business and B2 General Industrial Uses, subject to sub-section (II) of this policy; and, where well related to the transport network, B8 Storage and Distribution Uses:

- (a) area bounded by the A120, the River Rib and the dismantled railway, Standon;
- (b) area east of Station Road, Standon;
- (c) Warrenwood Industrial Estate, Stapleford;
- (d) Ermine Point Business Park, Nr. Ware;
- (e) Thundridge Business Park;
- (f) Oakleys Horseboxes, High Cross; and
- (g) Silkmead Farm, Hare Street.

(II) Proposals for the alternative use and/or development of:

- (a) area bounded by the A120, the River Rib and the dismantled railway, Standon;
- (b) area east of Station Road, Standon;

will be considered against the employment needs for East Hertfordshire.

In addition, evidence must be supplied to demonstrate that retention of the sites for employment uses has been explored fully without success.

Any proposed alternative use and/or development of the area bounded by the A120, the River Rib and the dismantled railway, will be expected to be subject to a Development Brief prepared or approved by the District Council.

17.6 Village Shops, Community and Leisure Facilities

17.6.1 Village shops play a key part in rural communities, often acting as post office, newsagent, and general store, and can act as a lifeline to those unable to get into town on a regular basis. There has been a substantial loss of village shops in recent years and unfortunately once lost they are seldom replaced.

17.6.2 Farm shops can have an adverse impact on village shops and their location needs to be carefully considered. However, they can serve a vital function helping to meet a demand for fresh produce, provide a source of local jobs and an alternative or additional source of income for those engaged in agriculture. Garage shops may also have an adverse effect on village shops but where there is no village shop they can also provide a vital service providing basic essentials.

17.6.3 The District Council has provided business support for village shops through the implementation of its AGRE (Action for Growth in the Rural Economy) programme funded by the European Union and through rate relief scheme. The Council will look to seek further funding in order to continue this support.

17.6.4 The Village Hall plays a vital part in the life of a village offering a multi-function building, housing a variety of uses such as crèches, doctors surgeries, telecottages, as well as providing a venue for social events. The provision of play facilities, kick-around areas and sports facilities are important, particularly for the young who will tend to be more dependent on passenger transport. The provision of locally based facilities is, therefore, particularly important.

17.6.5 The village pub is a traditional part of village life, which in recent years has come under threat. They often provide an important focus for the community providing a venue for meetings, leisure activities, eating establishments, and occasionally acting as part-time post office or village shop.

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17.6.6 Policies STC8, LRC1, and LRC11 state a presumption against the loss of village, farm, and garage shops, village pubs, leisure, recreation, and community facilities. Community facilities as defined in paragraph 10.1.3 of Chapter 10 (Leisure, Recreation and Community Facilities), includes schools, libraries, health care facilities, places of worship, and allotments.

17.6.7 In addition, it may be that existing facilities, essential to the vitality and viability of the village, may require minor extensions or alterations, which would not compromise the openness of the Green Belt or the character and appearance of the Rural Area Beyond the Green Belt. In these circumstances, Policy OSV8 below will apply.

OSV8 Village Shops, Community and Leisure Facilities

In Category 1, 2, and 3 Villages, small-scale extensions or alterations to existing village shops, pubs, leisure and community facilities may be permitted, subject to the following criteria:

- (a) the use is considered to be essential to the vitality and viability of the village;
- (b) the scale of the use is appropriate for the size of the village;
- (c) the proposals are compatible with the character of the Green Belt and/or Rural Area Beyond the Green Belt;
- (d) the proposals would not be significantly detrimental to the amenities of the adjoining area or nearby occupiers;
- (e) the proposals are sympathetic to their surroundings, including surrounding countryside in terms of local character, design, scale, landscape, and visual impact.